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Suetonius’ Organizational Craft

Wesley Joseph Hanson
University of Pennsylvania

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Abstract
Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, a Roman civil servant in the first and second centuries CE, was the author of a biographical collection of Rome’s first twelve imperial rulers. My dissertation focuses on this collection, the Caesars, and in it I describe Suetonius’ organizational and structural methods and show how Suetonius employs them to teach his readers how to analyze Roman autocracy. Suetonius uses the serial biographical form to conduct political analysis and to prompt his readers to do so as well. This dissertation argues that Suetonius’ political insight is an articulation of the nature of Roman autocratic power. Autocracy, as Suetonius depicts it, is a collection of discrete political, social, and cultural powers that cohere into an imperial institution embodied by one man. In order to evoke this political structure and in order to teach his readers how to conceptualize it, Suetonius uses serial biography organized by topics as his literary form: it mirrors the form that power takes in the principate and, therefore, constitutes a reading of the principate itself. Suetonius organizes his biographies around investigations into these discrete topics that pertain to the office of the princeps. Topical organization and topical analysis are central, conceptually and literally, to his literary project. Suetonius’ form is the implicit argument for how power works. In this respect, Suetonius’ articulation of Roman autocracy is inclusive. He includes aspects of Roman politics that might otherwise be overlooked; as important as the civic powers that an emperor holds are, so too are the social and cultural sources of his authority. This dissertation has three chapters. In the first, I analyze Suetonius’ topical organization. The second chapter examines Suetonius’ antithetical thinking and structures. My final chapter argues that Suetonius prompts his readers to read the Caesars recursively in order to understand the institution of the principate that lies behind the individual subjects of his biographical collection.

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SUETONIUS’ ORGANIZATIONAL CRAFT

Wesley J. Hanson

A DISSERTATION

in

Classical Studies

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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Supervisor of Dissertation

Cynthia Damon

Professor of Classical Studies

Graduate Group Chairperson

Cynthia Damon, Professor of Classical Studies

Dissertation Committee

Cynthia Damon, Professor of Classical Studies

James Ker, Associate Professor of Classical Studies

Cam Grey, Associate Professor of Classical Studies
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ABSTRACT

SUETONIUS’ ORGANIZATIONAL CRAFT

Wesley J. Hanson

Cynthia Damon

Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, a Roman civil servant in the first and second centuries CE, was the author of a biographical collection of Rome’s first twelve imperial rulers. My dissertation focuses on this collection, the *Caesars*, and in it I describe Suetonius’ organizational and structural methods and show how Suetonius employs them to teach his readers how to analyze Roman autocracy. Suetonius uses the serial biographical form to conduct political analysis and to prompt his readers to do so as well. This dissertation argues that Suetonius’ political insight is an articulation of the nature of Roman autocratic power. Autocracy, as Suetonius depicts it, is a collection of discrete political, social, and cultural powers that cohere into an imperial institution embodied by one man. In order to evoke this political structure and in order to teach his readers how to conceptualize it, Suetonius uses serial biography organized by topics as his literary form: it mirrors the form that power takes in the principate and, therefore, constitutes a reading of the principate itself. Suetonius organizes his biographies around investigations into these discrete topics that pertain to the office of the princeps. Topical organization and topical analysis are central, conceptually and literally, to his literary project. Suetonius’ form is the implicit argument for how power works. In this respect, Suetonius’ articulation of Roman autocracy is inclusive. He includes aspects of Roman politics that might otherwise be overlooked; as important as the civic powers that an emperor holds are, so too are the social and cultural sources of his authority. This dissertation has three chapters. In the first, I analyze Suetonius’ topical organization. The second chapter examines Suetonius’ antithetical thinking and structures. My final chapter argues that Suetonius prompts his readers to read the *Caesars* recursively in order to understand the institution of the principate that lies behind the individual subjects of his biographical collection.
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INTRODUCTION

“. . . although the cliché says that power always corrupts, what is seldom said, but what is equally true, is that power always reveals.”

-Robert Caro, The Passage of Power

“Power doesn’t tell us the true nature of the man; the man tells us the true nature of the power.”

-David Runciman, Where Power Stops

Discrete Power, Authoritarian Power, Form and Power

Suetonius employs the serial biographical form in his De Vita Caesarum to conduct political analysis and to prompt his readers to conduct political analysis. Writing, as he was, under the emperors, open political critique was not possible; he had to write covertly. Literary form is useful for political critique in the time of autocracy because of its ability to camouflage. Topical organization is Suetonius’ primary camouflage. Form is a necessity for Suetonius because it is how he critiques the autocratic system with a degree of plausible deniability; a necessity for his readers because it is how they access his political critique, and – should they attend to how his use of form nudges them toward critique – conduct critique themselves.

1 From here on out, I will use the English title the Caesars for Suetonius’ De Vita Caesarum.
Suetonius organizes his biographies around investigations into discrete topics that pertain to the office of the princeps. Topical organization and topical analysis are central, conceptually and literally, to his literary project. Suetonius has developed a literary form that corresponds to his conception of how political power is organized in the principate. His form is the implicit argument for how power works. Since power is vested in one man, biography is the natural generic fit. Suetonius’ literary political insight is a recognition and articulation of the nature of autocratic power at Rome: it is a collection of discrete political, social, and cultural powers that cohere into an imperial institution embodied by one man. In order to evoke this political structure and in order to teach his readers how to conceptualize it and think through it, Suetonius uses serial biography organized by topics as his literary form: it mirrors the form that power takes in the principate and, therefore, constitutes a reading of the principate itself. In this respect, Suetonius includes in his analysis aspects of Roman politics that might otherwise be overlooked; as important as the civic powers that an emperor holds are, so too are the social and cultural sources of his authority. Aspects of an emperor’s unofficial duties are, in Suetonius’ conception, as political as his civic duties. A banquet is a powerful tool, even weapon, in the hands of an emperor. His habits of dress, likewise. The personal failings of an emperor (such as Claudius’ propensity to fall asleep in court) threaten the integrity of the state, and all emperors have failings.

No one emperor, in this model, is the paradigmatic Caesar against whom all others are to be compared. Instead, Suetonius establishes a network of Caesars for comparative evaluation. Some emperors might be better at exercising certain powers than others, but they all partake of a system in which individual powers have been accrued in
the hands of one. By attending to the particularities of the individual holders of the office, Suetonius’ readers can best understand and critique the nature of the autocratic system behind them. The form and structure of the *Caesars* argues that autocratic power is additive. It is the accrual, the aggregation, of – in Suetonius’ language – topics: banquets, deification, civic powers, spectacle, etc. Suetonius shows his readers how to find these categories and how to interrogate them. Seeing the topics in action as Suetonius deploys them is to learn how to think through autocracy, how to define it, and how to understand it – and, in some contexts, to undermine it. Suetonius’ biographical form corresponds to this vision of the forms of power: Suetonius almost reproduces this form of power on the page, which is analytically potent as well as didactically instructive. The reader, in attending to Suetonius’ form, learns to think and see past the presentation of a coherent, holistic autocratic office in order to discern the nature of power behind it.

This dissertation, therefore, is principally concerned with Suetonius’ literary form and structure. I yoke these two concepts together under the umbrella word “organization” or phrase “organizational craft.” Structure, properly speaking, is an aspect of literary form, and I use it as such. I also employ the term with a degree of abstraction: Suetonius’ structure is made up of blocks of writing or units. I discuss these further below, but for now it is enough to say that Suetonius’ structure can be the relationship between these units. Suetonius’ organizational craft is his use of literary form and structure to convey meaning to his reader without being explicit. That this meaning is about Suetonius’ political thought enriches, as is my hope, our understanding and appreciation of Suetonius’ literary achievement. But this project is first and foremost formalist. I believe that Suetonius communicates a decidedly negative analysis of autocracy. Even the best
autocrats contribute to the construction of a system that enables destructive personal habits to be matters of state, and the existence of a good autocrat in the Caesars is institutionally impossible. But my claim is that Suetonius’ readers best reach this conception of autocracy by attending to his organizational craft.

Suetonius’ literary approach establishes a network of Caesars through which his readers can conduct comparative analysis and access Suetonius’ critique of autocracy, which lies behind the individual Lives. In this respect, Suetonius’ application of his literary form is didactic. Suetonius employs his topical and serial form in such a way as to participate in the form’s capacity to generate analysis. Suetonius writes about matters that pervade Roman political life: subject matter that overlaps with that found in the Flavian era inscription the Lex de Imperio Vespasiani, subject matter that overlaps with that found in historiographical and other literary texts, and even subject matter, such as what an emperor looks like (or wishes that he looks like), that could be found on a coin. Autocracy girded the civic organization of Rome; the emperor was everywhere. Suetonius’ topical form captures this range of material and presents it in a fashion unlike that of the official organs of the principate. Suetonius teaches his readers to see anew the subject matter that pertains to the emperor, the emperor himself, and even the autocratic system at work behind the person of the emperor.

The Suetonian Principate

This description may prompt further questions about my argument, and there are two in particular I should address immediately: to what degree is Suetonius responding to and
attempting to reproduce an objective, wholistic account of the principate and, relatedly, to what degree am I using Suetonius to deepen or broaden our modern understanding of the principate as an institution of governance? By and large, the majority of scholarship written about Suetonius, in a broad sense, is written by historians who mine the *Caesars* for historical data. Reasonably so, since Suetonius’ topical approach touches on so many aspects of imperial society and politics. Suetonius has much to teach us. My contribution to this scholarly project is a word of caution: it has been supposed that, due to Suetonius’ apparent lack of literary skill, he is a fairly objective compiler of facts.\(^3\) Such a supposition is false. Suetonius shapes the presentation of his material to literary purposes. Attention to this shaping is necessary.

This argument in turn raises the question of Suetonius’ literary ends. I have noted already that Suetonius employs a literary form that suits his conception of how autocratic power operates at Rome. Such a fact leaves open the possibility of reading against the grain – so-called symptomatic reading – in order to access aspects of the principate that remain murky to us in modernity – perhaps because Suetonius writes about them and his contemporaries do not. There is much value in this approach.\(^4\) It is, however, not my approach. I assume that Suetonius is responding to a particular political environment. He is not making up material or even abstract conceptualizations about the principate out of thin air. The *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani* is evidence that autocratic rule could be ascribed to control of discrete powers, even if other literary sources do not present autocracy in such a fashion. Suetonius has a particular theory about the nature of autocratic rule at

\(^3\) See especially Power 2007/8: 7-11 and below.
\(^4\) Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 99-197 remains one of the best examples.
Rome, and in order to convey that theory to his readers, Suetonius creates a network of Caesars for comparison. This process of creation is conceptual – which is to say that Suetonius conceives of and transmits to his readers a Suetonian principate, grounded in reality and the historical, social, cultural, and political record, but proprietary to Suetonius’ own conception of the nature of the principate and his literary characterization of it. My project aims to describe Suetonius’ literary form and demonstrate how Suetonius employs this form to teach his readers to come to understand the principate as he conceives of it. Suetonius does attempt to render accurately the contours of the principate. For example, he accounts for changes in the institution of the principate over time; one can track those changes over the course of the Caesars. My claim is not that he takes an ahistorical view of the principate; rather, Suetonius interprets the principate idiosyncratically and conveys this interpretation to his reader. Part of this process is reconciling the diachronic development of the principate historically with a synchronic analysis of the logic of autocracy. This tension is present in Suetonius’ approach because, for Suetonius, it is a live tension in Roman autocracy. I discuss Suetonius’ use of antithesis below; antithesis is one way by which Suetonius attempts to reproduce for his reader the internal contradictions of Roman autocracy.

In light of Suetonius’ idiosyncratic approach, I employ the terms “Caesar,” “emperor,” “imperator,” and “princeps” synonymously. Although these titles might manifest slight differences in the historical record, I mirror Suetonius’ focus on the autocratic logic of political organization that lies behind the twelve men who constitute the subject matter of the Caesars. What unites these different titles is that they were employed to bolster the authority of an autocrat. If the transmitted title of the collection
can be held up as ancient, then part of what Suetonius suggests by *De Vita Caesarum* instead of *De Vitis Caesarum* is precisely this: each Caesar is only one instantiation of the autocratic system. Together they facilitate Suetonius’ critique of the principate as an institution that conforms to the whims of the man whose authority stems from his appropriation of discrete powers. Suetonius, in writing biographies of the first twelve Caesars, writes the Life of an institution.

**The Scholarly Bibliography**

Scholarship on Suetonius’ *Caesars* has come in waves. I first outline the chronology of this scholarship briefly before treating categories of scholarship that pertain more directly to this dissertation. For the purposes of this overview, I start with the year 1900, bringing earlier work into the discussion as needed.

Maximilian Ihm’s edition of the *Caesars* in 1907, superseding Karl L. Roth’s from 1858 ushers Suetonius into the 20th century. It has only recently been surpassed by Robert Kaster’s 2016 *OCT*. Ihm’s edition joined Alcide Macé’s 1900 *Essai sur Suétone*, which attempted to shed light on the biographer’s biography, focusing on his career. What is most relevant to the subject of this dissertation is Friedrich Leo’s 1901 *Die griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer literarischen Form*, which situated Suetonius within the genre of biography. Leo sets the tone for much of what follows: his opinion of

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5 On the title, see Kaster 2016b: 5. The title is reintroduced by Roth, whose edition of the *Caesars* was published in 1858, on the grounds of a transmitted title attached to the first book of the *Caesars* and John Lydus’ 6th century *De Magistratibus*.

6 I use capitalized “Life” to mean *uita* as a generic marker of genre, synonymous to biography. The lower case “life” refers to the biological lifespan of a person, most often the eponymous subject of a Life.

7 I follow Kaster’s text (Kaster 2016a) in this dissertation unless otherwise noted.

8 This conversation is very much ongoing. See my brief discussion below.
Suetonius’ literary achievement is not high. This assessment would become the predominant view. Further contributions to the literary aspects of the *Caesars* came from Duane Stuart (1928), Wolf Steidle (1951), G.B. Townend (1967), and especially Bohumilá Mouchová (1968), whose *Studie zu Kaiserbiographien Suetons* treats Suetonius’ literary accomplishments with a subtle touch even as she persists in doubting his capabilities. It was the 1970s and 1980s, however, that saw a series of monographs on Suetonius’ literary achievement whose influence continue to shape contemporary scholarship. I discuss these shortly. The 1990s and early 2000s saw a natural lull in major publications after the two previous blockbuster decades, but two significant essay collections were published: the first an edition of the *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* (1991 II 33.5) and the second the proceedings of a 2004 conference titled *Le Présence de Suétone* (2009). In addition, substantial commentaries were published; of note are Donna Hurley’s on the *Caligula* (1993) and *Claudius* (2001) and David Wardle’s on the *Augustus* (2014). Contemporary scholarship has reinvigorated Suetonian scholarship. The essay collection *Suetonius the Biographer* edited by Tristan Power (whose 2007/8 dissertation makes a strong contribution) and Roy K. Gibson (2014) asks many sharp questions of the *Caesars*. In broad strokes, so goes the study of Suetonius for the last 120 years.

**Negative Assessments**

Such broad strokes do not adequately account for the recuperation of Suetonius’ reputation that has had to occur and is ongoing. Some of Suetonius’ own advocates, in fact, labor under outdated assumptions. Leo’s assessment of Suetonius’ literary quality is
negative, even if he rightly recognizes the importance of Suetonius’ topical form. It is
with Leo that the concept of the rubric has its start.\textsuperscript{9} But Leo compares Suetonius to other
biographers and provides an assessment of Suetonius that would echo: he is a mere
compiler of facts. This assessment would become a persistent assumption about
Suetonius’ organization. Syme remarks that he was “merely an erudite compiler;”\textsuperscript{10} Grant
that he had “an almost statistical, scissors-and-paste technique;”\textsuperscript{11} and, Hurley that
“Suetonius often seems disinterested in how he puts his mass of information on the
page.”\textsuperscript{12} Such criticism has a cousin: the claim that Suetonius has a faulty selection
process. Sometimes the claim is that he merely reproduces what his sources say, as
D’Anna remarks, “per quanto riguarda lo stile, e succubo delle fonti.”\textsuperscript{13} Other times the
claim is that he is “gullible.”\textsuperscript{14} Most extreme of all are the inferences that scholars draw
about Suetonius and his intentions. He has been likened to a “writer of pornography,”
despite his “cool, clinical manner,” for his details of vice.\textsuperscript{15} Some scholars even
overinterpret Suetonius’ own sexuality and thoughts on sexuality.\textsuperscript{16}

Suetonius is likewise attacked on stylistic grounds. Norden, in his history of
Roman prose, relegates him to a footnote, where he writes that “Sueton schreibt
farblos.”\textsuperscript{17} This assessment would become the typical assessment of his style for decades.

\textsuperscript{9} Leo 1901: 1-10.
\textsuperscript{10} Syme 1958: 464 n.1.
\textsuperscript{11} Grant 1970: 338.
\textsuperscript{12} Hurley 2011: xxv.
\textsuperscript{13} D’Anna 1954: 208
\textsuperscript{14} Goodyear 1982: 663.
\textsuperscript{15} Wardman 1974: 145.
\textsuperscript{16} Carney 1968: 7-24.
\textsuperscript{17} Norden 1898: 387-388 n.1.
Funaioli writes that “un vero scrittore non è;”\textsuperscript{18} Goodyear that Suetonius “seems largely indifferent to niceties of style” and that “it is clear that he possesses no original mind and that his attitudes, as far as he reveals them, are unsophisticated.”\textsuperscript{19} Even those who often treat Suetonius with a greater degree of sophistication and care find him faulty. I quoted D’Anna above, whose book \textit{Le idee letterarie di Suetonio}, was for decades the only monograph devoted in full to Suetonius’ literary qualities. Wallace-Hadrill carefully and persuasively puts Suetonius in his socio-cultural context, but also claims that “He is mundane: he has no poetry, not pathos, no persuasion, no epigram.”\textsuperscript{20} Mouchová’s treatment of Suetonius’ topical approach is a careful examination of the relationship between topic and narrative, yet she maintains a skepticism about Suetonius’ capacity to utilize the form in her discussion.\textsuperscript{21} Hurley, whose contributions to discussion of Suetonius’ literary achievement is unparallel in contemporary scholarship, sees Suetonius as “working hard” at a task that “could sometimes be difficult for him,” noting that the Suetonius’ “doubters must be granted their point” about the biographer’s compiling impulses.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Literary Methods}

The question of Suetonius’ worth as a writer of literature was opened by Wolf Steidle with his \textit{Sueton und die antike Biographie} (1963/1951). Responding to questions about Suetonius’ place in the biographical genre (on which, see more below), Steidle argues

\textsuperscript{18} Funaioli 1947: 178-179.  
\textsuperscript{19} Goodyear 1982: 662-663.  
\textsuperscript{20} Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 19.  
\textsuperscript{21} Mouchova 1968: 18-64.  
\textsuperscript{22} Hurley 2014a: 21 and 36.
that Suetonius is an especially Roman biographer. His main contribution to the question of Suetonius’ literary merit is the demonstration of how skillfully Suetonius characterizes his subjects. Each Life can be enjoyed in itself, and Suetonius’ characterizations constitute a literary achievement. Giovanna D’Anna’s *Le idee letterarie di Suetonio* follows shortly in 1954. D’Anna’s goal is to discern Suetonius’ own opinions about literary questions of his own day, especially between the rival schools of prose that D’Anna sees emerging in a post-Flavian context. He argues that Suetonius had a moderate Atticist tendency. The debate about Suetonius’ literary methods, not to say his literary worth, became the less dominant part of the scholarly discussion, although contributions were still made by Townend (1960 and 1967), Brugnoli (1968), Berthet (1978), and Sage (1979a and b). The ‘60s and ‘70s saw a greater interest in Suetonius’ political ideology and socio-political status. Francesco Della Corte’s *Svetonio: eques romanus* (1967/1958) starts the debate that culminates with Eugen Cizek’s *Les vies des Douze Césars* (1977). These works do remark on Suetonius’ literary impact, but the biggest contributions from this era are Helmut Gugel’s *Studien Zur biographischen Technik Suetons* (1977), which touches on both general aspects of Suetonius’ literary approach (such as his use of omens as a motif) and specific analyses (such as the structure of the *Otho*), and Bohumilá Mouchová’s *Studie Zu Kaiserbiographien Suetons* (1968), which also treats structural and organizational aspects of the biographical collection but is best for its analysis of the relationship between “Rubrik und Erzählung.”

Suetonius scholarship undergoes a shift in the ‘80s, including in its approach to Suetonius’ literary qualities (and perceived quality). Two initial books tread new ground in older debates. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, in his *Suetonius: The Scholar and his Caesars*
(1983), situates Suetonius in his socio-political context, setting the terms by which scholars would discuss Suetonius until the present day. He argues that Suetonius was a scholar with scholarly interests. The argument has much merit and aptly shows that Suetonius’ interests were often associated with education, rhetoric, and language.

“Scholar” as a title, however, denudes Suetonius of his more literary accomplishments; it is, at best, a partial picture of the biographer. Barry Baldwin publishes his *Suetonius* (1983) in the same year. It covers much the same territory, but with a broader focus and a greater interest in Suetonius’ literary project. Perhaps the most sensitive reader of the *Caesars* from this decade is Jacques Gascou, whose *Suétone historien* (1984) is a study of Suetonius’ historical merit, including discussion of Suetonius’ own historiographical approach, literary technique, and efficacy of biography for historiographical inquiry. Although this approach is not literary in a strict sense, Gascou recognizes how the necessity of the literary to answer his question, and he treats the topic at length. Rounding out the ‘80s is Richard Lounsbury’s *The Arts of Suetonius: An Introduction* (1987). The most explicit literary study of the *Caesars* since D’Anna’s, the book traces Suetonius’ Renaissance reception, his style, and his narrative approach with a particular focus on the *Nero*.

After the scholarly highwater mark of the ‘80s, the quantity of scholarly output about Suetonius waned, although interest in Suetonius’ literary achievements waxed proportionally. The collection of essays in the *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 33.5 contain some significant contributions, not least from Bradley (1991), De Coninck (1991), and Lounsbury (1991). But the most significant for exploring Suetonius’ literary antecedents comes from Lewis (1991) who argues that Suetonius draw

*The Historical Suetonius*

Suetonius himself has attracted a considerable deal of scholarship. The bibliography is vast, and since this topic is not central to the dissertation, I will only briefly treat it here. It is worth mentioning, however, because no bibliographical snapshot would be complete without it. The most relevant type of scholarship for this sort for this dissertation is that which inquiries into Suetonius’ political and social status and how he leverages that status to make political arguments in the *Caesars*, usually directed at Hadrian or emperors in general. The already mentioned contributions from Della Corte and Cizek are good examples. To a degree, Gascou’s work has similarities; so too Carney (1968), Bradley (1976), and, a slight refutation of this approach, Wardle (1998).
More often scholars have tried to map out the course of Suetonius’ own life and especially his career. One animating question has been where Suetonius comes from, but it is impractical to untie this question from that of Suetonius’ career. The discovery of an inscription at Hippo Regius (in modern Algeria) that seems to refer to Suetonius has set the terms of the modern debate. The inscription is honorary and pertains to his career; scholars have taken it as an indication that Suetonius is from Hippo. The inscription honors her native son, so to speak, and details his public roles: jury membership under Trajan, honorific priesthoods, and then the three imperial positions that form the crowning achievements of his civic career, \textit{a studiis, a bibliothecis,} and \textit{ab epistulis.} This inscriptional evidence combines with letters from Suetonius’ friend, Pliny the Younger, to sketch out the contours of his career, including (in light of mentions made in the \textit{Historia Augusta}) Suetonius’ dismissal from office under Hadrian for difficult to parse reasons. He seems to have fallen from grace alongside Septicius Clarus, to whom he apparently dedicated his \textit{Caesars.} Good summaries, in greater depth, of these questions can be found in the first chapters of both Wallace-Hadrill (1983) and Baldwin (1983). Lounsbury (1987) also touches on the subject. The debate starts early, with Macé (1900) framing initial attempts before the discovery of the Hippo inscription. Townend (1961) provides the most persuasive reconstruction of Suetonius’ career in light of the Hippo inscription. Syme (1981), Lindsay (1994), and Wardle (2002) also offer valuable contributions. A related question to that of Suetonius’ career deserves brief mention: that of the production and publication of the \textit{Caesars.} On this question, Townend (1959), Bradley (1973 – responding to Bowersock 1969), Wallace-Hadrill (1983), De Coninck (1991), and Power (2010) each offer stimulating perspectives.
Finally, it must be mentioned that the *Caesars* has been a source of interest for what it has to say about individual aspects of Roman culture and politics, such as religion, law, food, and dress. I discuss these topics where relevant (such as my discussion of banquets and Augustus’ marriage legislation). By and large, this approach lies outside the scope of Suetonius’ structure and organization and, in fact, could on occasion be improved with an awareness of Suetonius’ literary aims. The data that Suetonius includes is not selected nor presented neutrally.

**Biography and Genre**

One final bibliographical category deserves mention: Suetonius’ relationship to the genre of biography. Recent interest in biography generally and ancient biography specifically has made new strides. Hamilton (2007) and Lee (2009) are good introductions to the historical development of biography and theorizations of the genre, although they both present ancient biography superficially (understandable, given the breadth of the topic). 23 Scholarship on the development of ancient biography has built on some of the significant traditional work. After Leo, Duane Reed Stuart’s *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography* (1928) and T.A. Dorey’s (ed.) *Latin Biography* (1967) pushed the conversation forward with a significant contribution from Arnaldo Momigliano’s *The Development of Greek Biography* (1993/1971). Since then, a series of books and edited volumes have greatly enhanced contemporary scholarship on ancient biography, including Burridge (2018/1992), Ehlers (ed.) (1997), Sonnabend (2002), McGing and Mossman (eds.) (2006), Adams (2013) (which has a good chapter on ancient and modern theories of the

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23 See also Kendall 1965.

Worthy of individual notice are Dennis Pausch’s Biographie und Bildungskultur: Personendarstellungen bei Plinius dem Jüngeren, Gellius und Sueton (2004) and Tomas Hägg’s The Art of Biography in Antiquity (2012). Both volumes explore the genre with reference to its form. Pausch connects the form of the genre to the cultural world of the Roman elite. Such an approach has informed my methodology and assumptions about form’s capacity to interact with other cultural forms in the hands of a skilled biographer. Although in many ways Pausch’s readings of Suetonius specifically and his understanding of biography generally differ from my own, the book is an essential part of modern scholarship on ancient biography; its fingerprints can be found in this dissertation. Likewise, necessary for understanding the genre is Hägg’s work, which rewrites traditional literary-historical accounts of the genre by attending to how aspects of literary form connect or differentiate between the different works that make up the genre. He treats as best as he can texts that do not remain but acknowledges his focus on what survives such that he can write more reliably about the literary aspects of the genre.

Hägg’s book broaches another question that pertains to Suetonius and the Caesars: where he fits in the history of the genre. I have already discussed the major works in this tradition (Leo, Stuart, Steidle, and especially Lewis). The question of Suetonius’ antecedents is a vexed one, and arguments come from all directions (including his reliance on Peripatetic models, Hellenistic models, or Roman models). I tend to follow Lewis on this issue, assuming that Suetonius is working with Roman rhetorical and oratorical material more than he is distant biographical material, but I mostly come to
the conclusion that the evidence best suggests: aporia. The evidence is too sketchy as of now to make definitive claims; perhaps the dry and preserving sands of Egypt will assist in the future. What is more helpful is to note similarities (and differences) between the Caesars and Suetonius’ more immediate forerunners (Nepos, Cicero, Nicolaus, etc.) and his contemporaries. My principal generic assumption is two-fold: first, that Suetonius is writing collected or serial biography and, second, that he is writing political biography. While the former suggests aspects of Suetonius’ form and the latter his content, separation between the two is not so easily made, and I assume that the connection between form and content, between serial and political biography, has integrity. Joseph Geiger’ Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography (1985) and Rex Stem’s The Political Biographies of Cornelius Nepos (2012) are the principal works on political biography in Latin.

**Theory and Methodology**

My approach is chiefly formalist. There have been three broad movements of formalist theory in the last 100 years or so. I draw on all three, but the strongest influence on my approach comes from the current work being done by the so-called “New Formalists” – “so-called” because the name is applied externally. So far as I can tell, no scholar working within the New Formalist movement has applied to the name to him or herself. In my brief treatment of the three theoretical movements, I will discuss them with this sort of degree of coherence although it might not always have been so (for example, I will talk about the Russian Formalists without making a distinction between the OPOJAZ and the Moscow Linguistic Circle, and I count T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richards as New
Critics, although they might more accurately be called proto-New Critics or something to that effect). My main goal is not to describe in a complete sense the fullness of each movement’s approach or the connections between them; rather, I highlight the concepts that each pioneered that have formed the theoretical and methodological assumptions that I bring to Suetonius. As a formalist, I am eclectic.

The Russian Formalists developed some concepts that I either employ explicitly or implicitly. Viktor Shklovsky’s *Theory of Prose* (1991/1929) introduces the bulk of these concepts. One of the most basic, and one that is generally assumed in most formalist thought, is that literary language is somehow marked and discernably different from other types of language (on the introduction of “literariness,” see Roman Jakobson’s 1973/1921). The Russian Formalists in general, moreover, assume a degree of autonomy for literary language such that it responds to linguistic laws in addition to socioeconomic conditions. Shklovsky assumes this understanding of language. His longest lasting contribution comes from the first chapter: defamiliarization (or, sometimes, estrangement). He proposes that literary language defamiliarizes the object with which it is concerned. This effect comes about from the employment of literary (what he calls poetic) language; the title of the chapter (originally a 1917 essay) is instructive: “Art as Device” (sometimes “Art as Technique”). Literary language renews the usual or common through devices of form to present them in a new, startling way. This is a helpful metaphor for reading the *Caesars*. Defamiliarization aptly, although not completely, sums up Suetonius’ literary project: he presents in a novel way, through his application of the serial biographical form, the subjects of his Lives and the institution of the principate.
that lies behind it, affording him the opportunity to prompt his readers to analyze the principate with refreshed eyes.

Shklovsky makes two more important contributions. The first is another metaphor that can be employed for understanding how form operates in the *Caesars*: that of motivation. To talk about a form’s motivation is to discuss the logic or rationale of its placement and use. To a degree, this concept is not just Shklovsky’s. Many of the Russian Formalists employ it as it is essential to their sense of how literary genre and technique develops over time (see on this especially Tomashevky 1925, Eichenbaum 1926), but Shklovsky explores the concept in prose (by which he mostly means fictional prose – I refer to these concepts as metaphors for their use in Suetonius because Shklovsky would not have included biographical writing). Because I argue that Suetonius’ form has political ends as he applies it biographically, motivation is a profitable concept: readers who discern a form’s motivation better understand its use.

Slightly relatedly, Shklovsky demonstrates that the selection and inclusion of certain material is itself a decision of form; what an author elects to include and leave out is a method of presentation, a type of communication, and thus a form. I often make a similar observation about Suetonius and the *Caesars*.

One final concept from the Russian Formalists: in his *The Problem of Verse Language*, Yury Tynianov explore what he calls the “constructive factor” of verse (and prose, although it is a secondary concern). He argues that the “constructive factor” of verse – which is to say the aspect of verse that makes it verse – is rhythm. Putting aside the merit of this argument (and his conclusions about prose), the claim is significant because he makes an important claim about how form operates at specific and local
moments in a text: at any one moment in a text, one form (what the ancients would call a figure) is the dominant form, warping the other forms that interact with it. A brief example may help: the epic simile is the dominant form when employed. The way in which a poet introduces and employs an epic simile so strongly controls how a reader responds to the epic that other forms become secondary to it. The expected return of the frame narrative exerts its influence as the reader moves through the simile. In the Caesars, the dominant form is the topical unit, what has traditionally been called the rubric (I introduce the form below in chapter one), such that even in the chronological or narrative portions of the Lives, Suetonius can slip into topical analysis at any moment. The form shapes how Suetonius’ readers read and interpret the Caesars.24

The New Criticism has become a staple of American literary education, especially in secondary education. Its benefits and problems have been much discussed, and it is not my intention to enter into that conversation here. Nor do I think that it is especially helpful to discuss in full some of the more pervasive concepts that the New Critics introduce; they have become generally well-known and incorporated into certain reading and critical practices. Examples include an attention to ambiguity (Empson 1930), the role of irony and paradox in literary form (Brooks 1947 and 1962/1948), and the alleged proper relationship between author, reader, and text (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946 and 1949). The first two concepts, and especially Brooks’ work on irony and paradox, are relevant to my analysis: Suetonius often provides two contradictory elements and

prompts his readers to resolve them. His irony is highly implicit. The aspect of The New Criticism that I want to focus on is the tie between its conception of form and education – or, what I often call Suetonius’ didactic approach or didactic impulse. Part of the New Critical approach is explicitly didactic. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren’s *Understanding Poetry* (1950/1938) and *Understanding Fiction* (1971/1943) are both exercise anthologies. The New Critics move beyond just teaching form to students, however, and often use their own educational goals to consider how form itself shapes interpretation and teaches. I.A. Richard’s occasionally bizarre book of interpretative exercises *Practical Criticism* considers the possible sources of correct or erroneous interpretations of a poem. Without wading too strongly into his theories, I highlight the fact that he notes persuasively how a poem’s own form can nudge readers into interpretation. That he is too strict in his conception of what constitutes proper interpretation (and the proper sources of this interpretation) does not diminish the claim: form explains. Suetonius takes advantage of this didactic capacity in his use of form.

Recent work in formalist (and, relatedly, aesthetic) theory has corrected for some of the critiques levied against the New Criticism; it has also offered its own critiques of the predominant New Historicist approach in literary studies. This work has been called New Formalism. Such a narrative about the course of formalist inquiry is too simplistic, and the best introduction to New Formalism remains Marjorie Levinson’s essay “What is New Formalism?” (2007). Levinson teases out the divergent opinions within the works that have been lumped together and addresses the problems of the narrative that I

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25 Carney 1968: 10 notes that “an undercurrent of wryly satirical humour permeates Suetonius’s writing, appearing … in extended droll narrative passages which, tongue in cheek, poke fun while ostensibly merely describing.”
supplied above.\textsuperscript{26} What marks most of the New Formalist work, and especially the work that I draw on for my analysis, is an attention to the relationship between literary form and social or political forms. The New Formalists also work within the intersection between education / didacticism and form, but there is a greater awareness of the relationship between a work of art and other types of forms than the New Critics generally acknowledged. Verena Theile and Linda Tredennick’s (eds.) \textit{New Formalisms and Literary Theory} is divided into four sections: Introduction, Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy (see also Heather Dubrow’s informative Foreword). This division acknowledges the range that Theile and Tredennick see form and formalist thinking as being able to reach across.

Most influential on my approach has been Caroline Levine’s \textit{Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network} (2017/2015), which spawned a series of responses in an issue of the \textit{PMLA} (2017 132.5).\textsuperscript{27} Two concepts from Levine’s recapitulation of formalism influence my reading of Suetonius. First, Levine, borrowing from design theory, employs the concept of “affordance” for developing her new methodology of formalism. “Affordance” describes what an object allows its user to do. A cell phone’s affordances might include calling, texting, browsing the internet, or pestering a parent by being present at the dinner table. So too do Suetonius’ own literary forms have affordances. I investigate, for example, the affordances of what I call the topical unit form in chapter one. Forms, of all sorts, are full of information that dictate how to interact

\textsuperscript{26} For example, Levinson shows that some of the New Formalists conceive of their project as overturning New Historicism and others think that they are restoring to New Historicist approaches their formalist legacy.

\textsuperscript{27} See especially Bozovic 2017: 1181-1186, which finds in Levine’s approach echoes of the Russian Formalists.
with them. The logic of affordance is a redesign, in new methodological terms, of the didactic capacity of form for the New Critics.

This observation, especially the new methodological aspect that expands the concept of form to include social and political forms, is at the core of the second concept that influences my reading of Suetonius: Levine’s approach articulates a relationship between literary forms and other forms in which the forms clash and compete for attention. In contrast to historicist modes of reading, which sees literary forms as the consequences of social conditions (in effect, copying those conditions), Levine sees the interaction of forms as a way for a text to intervene into the complexity of social organization and life. Literary texts (or, in the case of Levine’s analysis of The Wire, television shows) are not only to be explained by the prevailing social conditions of their production but actually generate their own impressions of the social. The formalist critique, in this methodological frame of reference, analyzes texts as sites where form constitutes the bases for, in the case of my approach to Suetonius, political inquiry. Literary forms afford the capacity to think about political forms. I talk about Suetonius’ use of form, given this understanding, as a prompting or a nudging. He employs his own form to conduct analysis of the principate; more importantly, he prompts his readers to conduct analysis of the principate themselves. He does so by means of the application of form.
Suetonian Methodology

Suetonius often eschews traditional methodological techniques or subordinates them to his own techniques. This claim is, admittedly, easier to make due to the absence of the collection’s opening. Scholars often assume that he would have discussed his methodology in the opening to the Julius. In addition to elements typically found at the beginning of a Suetonian Life (such as ancestry) the collection’s title and a dedication to Septicius Clarus, the praetorian prefect and friend of Suetonius and Pliny, would in all likelihood be present.

How Suetonius would have characterized his methodology at the beginning of the Julius is much more difficult to guess, not least because much of Suetonius’ methodology appears particular to the Caesars. He does make explicit use of form in some easy to demonstrate examples. For example, Gal. 1.1 and Ves. 1.1 both mark transitions from one book to another (the Galba starts Book 7 and the Vespasian Book 8). These books divide a potentially messy group of emperors into a sensible three-by-three structure: the Civil War of 69’s pretenders to the throne receive one book and the Flavians another. The passages that open the Galba and Vespasian and the logic of the book division indicate that Suetonius puts care into certain techniques of form that are staples of ancient literature – in this case, book divisions and transitions. He is not blind to their importance or applicability to his literary project. His literary motivation, however, places them in a secondary role. Suetonius infrequently highlights his application of most methodological

28 Attempts at reconstructing the opening of the Julius have been made. See most recently Garrett 2015: 110-134. The tradition reaches back to Juan Luis Vives’ 1527 attempt at a reconstruction in Latin. These attempts reasonably try to reconstruct the opening by analogy to other Lives in the Caesars. See also Power 2007/2008: 123-127.

29 Our knowledge of the dedication comes from John Lydus’ 6th century De Magistratibus 2.6.4.
techniques—even as he employs them.\textsuperscript{30} His methodological comments are made \textit{en passant}.

It would be a mistake to think that Suetonius does not have a methodology, however— that he is all content and no art, form, or even discernment.\textsuperscript{31} Instead, Suetonius adopts a methodology particular to his project and makes mention of it with enough frequency and frankness that it is possible to make claims about its nature. In this portion of my introduction, I treat different aspects of Suetonius’ methodology as he presents them, either implicitly or explicitly, in passages of programmatic significance. I take the word “methodology” fairly broadly to entail Suetonius’ use of diction, structure, and other aspects that he notes are of significance to his literary approach.

\textit{Presence of Methodological Claims}

Suetonius has a methodology that he employs (and occasionally breaks). Such a claim is no longer novel; the traditionally negative assessments that scholars have offered about Suetonius and his literary achievements have been countered by recent scholarship. Nonetheless, passages of programmatic significance are included at different points in the \textit{Caesars} more frequently than the selective attention to certain passages from scholars would suggest. Suetonius has a method, and he mentions it or aspects of it frequently. In highlighting Suetonius’ discussion of his own methodology, I argue here simply that it is present. This argument also serves as a preview of the individual aspects of Suetonius’ methodology that I will discuss further below.

\textsuperscript{30} See, in general, Gascou 1984: 347-456. I will discuss specific aspects in due course. On stylistic techniques, see Lounsbury 1987: 63-90 and 91-118.

\textsuperscript{31} As I noted above, there are those who have held such an opinion.
The opening of the *Claudius*, instead of discussing the emperor’s ancestry, presents a biography in miniature of his father, Drusus the Elder.²² In this biography, Suetonius anticipates potential objections to his curatorial decisions when he writes about an explanation on offer in the preceding paragraph, “Which [explanation] indeed I have reported more so that I do not omit than because I think it true or close to the truth…” (*Quod equidem magis ne praetermitterem rettuli, quam quia verum aut veri simile putem…*) (Cl. 1.5). Suetonius indicates that some readers might object to his report (*rettuli*) of the preceding information (namely, the explanation that Augustus had Drusus first recalled and then poisoned because he would have restored Rome’s earlier constitution if he could). A rationale is given: Suetonius reports (*rettuli*) this explanation “more so that I do not omit than because I think it true or close to the truth.”

This programmatic passage is explicitly methodological. Suetonius reveals that he has a process for selecting what material he includes in this *Drusus*, so to speak, and by extension the *Caesars* generally. Likewise, Suetonius implies that he has a process for selecting what material he would not include. This process entails certain criteria that may differ from the criteria that readers might want him to employ (that is, a strict fidelity to the truth or an approximation that is close enough). Nevertheless, Suetonius lays claim to a process. This observation highlights one of the methodological points that I will discuss more fully below: Suetonius has criteria for discerning what material to include and what to exclude. In this instance, Suetonius claims to give the reader his

²² Garrett 2013:2-3 discusses the base rationale for why Suetonius opens the *Caligula* and the *Claudius* with biographies in miniature: their ancestries had already been presented. The unique form that the opening of these Lives take offers in some senses a refreshingly different and in other senses conveniently similar comparison between Suetonius’ more typical openings and these openings as well as between Suetonius’ general biographies and these biographies in miniature.
judgement on the value of what he includes – a judgement made all the more valuable, he implies, if what he includes is implausible or untrue. Suetonius flags the relative truth-value of a claim (not its lack thereof) as one criterion for inclusion. In noting his deviation from an assumed rationale, he asks his readers to trust in his method of selecting material (and, perhaps, to discern for themselves his own rationale for cultivating certain material for publication).

I note here as well that Suetonius includes the word *rettuli* in this passage of programmatic importance. This word specifically and compounds of *-fero* generally recur with frequency in passages of programmatic significance in the *Caesars*. I will discuss this aspect of Suetonius’ methodology shortly; I mention it now as an indication of this passage’s methodological import.

These observations are significant for two reasons. First, this passage is relatively small and generally unambitious in comparison to some of the more well known and frequently discussed passages in the *Caesars*, such as *Jul.* 44.4 and *Aug.* 9.1. Suetonius’ inclusion of this passage indicates a desire to provide his reader with methodological passages at different parts of the *Caesars*, not just in the initial two Lives. Second, this passage indicates a particularly strong correspondence between Suetonius’ form and methodology. Even in Suetonius’ biography in miniature of Drusus the Elder, Suetonius employs his methodological techniques. In size and, necessarily, scope, the “Lives” of Drusus and Germanicus (*Cal.* 1.1-7) are more limited than the Lives proper that make up the *Caesars*. That the *Drusus*, so to speak, includes this explicit remark about methodology indicates that Suetonius does have a method and that he makes it clear to his readers at various points what it entails. In selecting a passage of a shorter length from
a relatively obscure, besides the considerations of form, part of the *Caesars*, I have endeavored to show that Suetonius maintains methodological priorities and standards for his efforts in composing the *Caesars* broadly. Suetonius includes explicit methodological claims at different points in the *Caesars* beyond just the typically recognized passages of programmatic importance. In my explication of the aspects of Suetonius’ methodology below, I provide examples across the *Caesars*, incorporating both the larger programmatic passages with the smaller ones.

*Vocabulary and Analysis*

In my discussion of Cl. 1.5, I flagged the word *rettuli* as a marker of methodological significance – of a type with other -*fero* compounds. Suetonius employs either the same or closely related words in passages of programmatic significance or he employs specific parts of speech, especially adverbs, to signal his methodological aims to his readers. In this section of my discussion of Suetonius’ methodology, I argue that Suetonius does in fact employ a consistent programmatic vocabulary and that he alerts his readers to a particularly analytical approach to the data that he has selected for inclusion in the *Caesars*. This analytical stance that he adopts is often aided by his use of vocabulary. Despite my focused argument about Suetonius’ vocabulary that I articulate in this section, my understanding of his programmatic vocabulary usage will inform the first few sections of my inquiry into Suetonius’ methodology generally. Suetonius imbues his words with much meaning – the implications of his word choice can have far-reaching consequences for how his readers come to understand the Suetonian literary project.
At one point in the *Tiberius*, Suetonius slips into a programmatic mode when he writes, “I shall report about these [VICES] one-by-one from the beginning” (*de quibus singillatim ab exordio referam*) (*Tib*. 42.1). In this brief clause, Suetonius pairs two words that appear regularly in programmatic passages: *refero* and the adverb *singillatim*. The regularity is bolstered if compounds of *fero* are grouped together. In passages that I believe are of structural importance for the organization of the *Caesars*, compounds of *fero* appear in *Aug*. 61.1, *Tib*. 42.1, *Cl*. 1.5, *Ner*. 1.2, *Ner*. 13.1, and *Ner*. 19.3.33 Compounds of *fero* are common verbs of programmatic significance that Suetonius employs in these passages; they also belong to a larger category of words whose metaphorical usage entails motion. Almost all of these verbs are compounds. They include metaphors of “following” or “following up” (*sequor* compounds, for example) or “placing” (e.g., *pono* compounds). As I will argue shortly, this sense of motion is a key part of Suetonius’ conceptualization of his analytical stance. For now, I am simply arguing that Suetonius has a consistent programmatic vocabulary. So, in addition, to the *fero* compound passages, this larger category includes: *Jul*. 44.4, *Aug*. 9.1, *Aug*. 61.1, and *Tib*. 61.2.

Key to this metaphor of motion is Suetonius’ use of adverbs, with *singillatim* being the example at hand. Adverbs, of course, are a common part of speech and appear

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with such frequency as to be commonplace. There are, nonetheless, a significant number of occasions when Suetonius employs adverbs to shape and express his programmatic ends in the *Caesars*. These passages include: *Jul.* 44.4, *Aug.* 9.1, *Aug.* 42.1*, Aug.* 61.1*, *Aug.* 85.2, *Tib.* 33, *Tib.* 42.1, *Tib.* 61.2, *Cal.* 22.1, *Cl.* 25.5*, *Cl.* 41.3, *Ner.* 1.2, *Ner.* 13.1, *Ner.* 19.3*, *Ner.* 26.1*, *Ner.* 27.1, *Dom.* 3.2*. I have marked passages whose adverbs establish antithetical structures or thinking in order to distinguish them from the types of adverbs that contribute to the analytical metaphor of movement. But the antithetical adverbs are no less important to Suetonius’ methodology and deserve notice here.

Because I have a chapter on antithesis in this dissertation, I focus on the non-antithetical adverbs for now. The consistent presence of both adverb types in the above passages does testify to the programmatic usage in the *Caesars*: Suetonius employs adverbs to shape his readers’ understanding of his methodology.

One final, though less common, type of vocabulary usage deserves remark: words that indicate Suetonius’ generic presentation of the information that he selects and packages for his readers. This word type can include some of the obvious ones, such as *uita* (*v.* *Aug.* 9.1 and 61.1), but also common words that receive methodological emphasis and generic coloring when employed by Suetonius in these passages: the correlatives *talis* … *qualis* furnish a fruitful example. When used to discuss one of the eponymous Caesars in particular, the correlative strikes an analytic framework on Suetonius’ part: in discovering what sort of man one of his Caesars was, Suetonius conducts a type of analysis suitable to biographical inquiry. In the case of *Aug.* 61.1, for example, where Suetonius writes, “Since I have explained what sort of man he [Augustus] was in holding imperial power and holding the powers of a magistrate and in governing the Republic in
peace and war throughout the whole world…” (Quoniam qualis in imperis ac magistratibus regendaque per terrarum orbem pace belloque re p. fuerit exposui…), the word *qualis* is a marker of analytic purpose: Suetonius discerns the type of man that Augustus is when fulfilling his public obligations and conveys that analysis to his reader. Context and a subject’s nature (or perhaps character) come into play; analysis is what threads the needle between the two and translates the results into a biographical frame of reference. I turn now to this analytical potential of Suetonius’ vocabulary to close this section, examining the adverb *singillatim*.

Suetonius’ methodological vocabulary establishes an analytical approach to his biographical data. In making the approach variably explicit or at least implicitly suggestive to his readers, Suetonius prompts his readers to adopt a similarly analytical perspective on the matter of his biographies. One example is the adverb *singillatim* found in the *Tib. 42.1* passage that started this inquiry into Suetonius’ vocabulary. I mentioned that the adverb works in conjunction with the verb *refero* in the passage. I will discuss this verb in greater detail in the next section on Suetonius’ rhetorical approach in the *Caesars*. In order not to anticipate my argument too strongly, I focus my attention on the adverb itself as much as possible, but this will require me to make some claims about the verbs without substantial argumentation to bolster the claims for now.

Suetonius uses the adverb *singillatim* with some frequency in the *Caesars*. Twice, it appears in passages that have minor or no structural significance. In contrast, it

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34 *Aug. 57.2* and *Ner. 15.1*. The latter could be read meta-structurally. Suetonius writes that Nero had each party forego argumentation that goes from beginning to end (*continuis actionibus omisssis*) and instead plead individual points in turn (*singillatim quaeque per uices quaeret*). In some respects, this resembles Suetonius’ own embrace of topical organization instead of chronological. Moreover, the claim that the
appears in four passages that do have structural significance for the *Caesars: Aug. 9.1, Tib. 42.1, Tib. 61.2, and Cl. 29.1.* These four passages move through specific examples of a topic; Suetonius uses the adverb to signal that he is taking on aspects of that topic individually. Further, the passages imply that the relationship between these aspects are significant. To return to *Tib. 42.1:* “I shall report about these [vices] one-by-one from the beginning” (*de quibus singillatim ab exordio referam*). This sentence occurs at moment in the Life where Suetonius shifts his approach to the material. He had been writing topically (on which, more below) but now modulates his topical focus, re-introducing an element of chronology: he notes that once Tiberius moved out of Rome – out of sight of his countrymen – he indulged freely in the vices that he had only poorly disguised before. Noting this shift, he asserts that he will report about Tiberius’ vices one-by-one. In effect, Suetonius is going to treat Tiberius’ vices in detail, but the adverb adds an element of movement through the vices in addition to a detailed approach, as evidenced by Suetonius’ further claims that he is starting “from the beginning” (*ab exordio*).

This movement is essential to how Suetonius uses the verb in a more frequently discussed passage, *Aug 9.1:*

*Proposita uitae eius uelut summa partes singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exsequar, quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint.*

With this, so to speak, summary of his life having been prefixed, I shall follow along with its parts one-by-one, not chronologically, but topically, so that they can be more distinctly given account of and be recognized.

In this case, the word is closely working in conjunction with the verb *exsequar* (one of the compound verb types), the programmatic word *partes* (signaling the Life’s division

pleaders argued “in turn” suggests that the movement between arguments provides benefit, similar to the second point about *singillatim* that I made above.
into parts but also the corresponding topicality of the middle portion of the Life –
discussion of this word and topical organization to come), and the phrase *per species*
(likewise signaling topical organization – discussion to come). The adverb modifies how
Suetonius will follow along with the parts of Augustus’ life in the coming topical section
(*partes singillatim ... exsequar*). He will move through these parts one-by-one. This
adverb suggests a couple of points about Suetonius’s structure. First, each part can
convey as much analytical value as another. Suetonius does not make a hierarchy of the
parts. Second, the parts of his Life have contextual resonance with each other. This is to
say that by writing about the parts of Augustus’ life one-by-one in the biography,
Suetonius generates meaning through juxtaposition and ordering. This adverb does not
tell in what ways such meaning might be generated (sequential ordering, antithesis, etc.);
Suetonius includes prompts to his readers to that effect elsewhere in the Lives. But it does
prepare the reader to expect such a generation of meaning. These two examples in *Tib.*
42.1 and *Aug.* 9.1 demonstrate the importance of arrangement to Suetonius’
methodology.

Suetonius, at *Tib.* 61.2, takes a slightly different approach to the question of
details; he recognizes that some selection of data is necessary. He first states the problem:
“it is a long task to follow through on his viciously-done deeds one-by-one” (*Singillatim
crudeliter facta eius exsequi longum est*). In this case, Suetonius pairs the adverb with a
verb (*exsequor*) similar to the verb at *Aug.* 9.1 (*exsequor*). These verbs entail motion,
again supporting the idea that the adverb suggests movement through examples. In this
case, however, Suetonius adds the context of wanting to avoid too much detail, which
further suggests that moving through examples one-by-one also entails a degree of
discernment. Hence Suetonius’ solution to the problem: “it will be enough to enumerate so to speak characteristic types of his cruelty” (genera uelut exemplaria saeuitiae enumerare sat erit). In enumerating types that conform to patterns of behavior, Suetonius applies a selective approach to what he includes. Suetonius’ sense of discernment and his literary motivations dictate what constitute topics worth investigating one-by-one.

Finally, Cl. 29.1. The section starts with a reinvocation of an earlier structural remark in the Life (Cl. 25.5); Suetonius asserts that Claudius was dependent on his wives and freedmen. After listing some of the actions that Claudius took under their direction, Suetonius interjects, “And so as not to enumerate even minor [examples] one-by-one…” (ac ne singillatim minora quoque enumerem…). This leading purpose clause acknowledges the necessity of selectivity. Suetonius lets his reader know that he will treat this subject matter with discernment (cf. Tiberius 61.2). Suetonius pairs the adverb with the verb enumerare, which likewise appears at Tib. 61.2 (although not modified in that instance by singillatim). This further parallel between these passages, in addition to the connection between singillatim and the verbs exsequor above, indicates that these moments of structural reflection share a similar vocabulary as well as structural concepts. From Tib. 61.2 and Cl. 29.1, we can say that Suetonius’ use of the adverb singillatim to indicate topics too large to be treated comprehensively signals the selective curation of material that can be presented in an order that has significance. To return to Aug. 9.1, it now appears that Suetonius is setting up his claim to write per species with singillatim: the adverb singillatim describes what Suetonius’ structure can do (it can present select material in an order that matters) and the claim to writing per species shows how it does
it – this is, topically, which is a part of Suetonius’ method to which I will turn later in this section.

For now, however, I end with the claim that Suetonius’ methodological passages share not just the same concepts but also a similar vocabulary. This overlap comes in passages of obvious structural importance, such as *Aug.* 9.1 and *Cl.* 29.1 (to a lesser extent), and in short clauses that are explicit about Suetonius’ methodology, but briefly, such as the *Tiberius* passages. The vocabulary can be analytical: the adverb *singillatim* plays a part with its surrounding vocabulary to establish what Suetonius’ analytical stance is toward his material, that he selects material judiciously for inclusion, and how he divides and then moves through that material. This picture is not complete, however – *Aug.* 9.1 shows that there are more elements to his methodology to be found in other vocabulary usages such as *partes*, *per species*, and *exsequar* (not least the relative clause of purpose *quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint*, which shows the ends toward which Suetonius is working). I turn now to the rhetorical aspects of Suetonius’ methodology and his habit of inflating rhetorical tropes to large conceptual or structural levels – this investigation will occur via Suetonius’ verbs, including the already mentioned *refero*.

*Rhetorical Aspects of the Caesars*

Suetonius is a persuasive writer, even if his powers of persuasion remained hidden from scholars until recently.35 Recent scholarship, more attuned to Suetonius’ rhetorical

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35 The title of Power 2007/2008 is “Suetonius: The Hidden Persuader,” which nicely encapsulates both the scholarly environment that he was confronting and Suetonius’ engagement with rhetorical modes of
capabilities, has perhaps too strongly accommodated Suetonius to traditional rhetorical precepts or other generic precepts in an attempt to show that “beneath the surface of Suetonius’ lack of obvious rhetoric, there is a more covert one.”36 This scholarship has been successful. Suetonius, nonetheless, has his own rhetorical approach, and the impulse to persuade that Suetonius himself is a persuader often smooths out these idiosyncrasies. Garrett, for example, is wary of the reader’s impulse to compare the different Caesars, “the rubric system, with its recurring headings across the Lives, allows the reader to make a comparison with other emperors, or at least to think we can, perhaps a bit dangerously.”37 Comparison – I argue increasingly in my first, second, and third chapters – is essential to the Suetonian literary project. Power cites Cicero’s definition of inventio – “excogitatio rerum uerarum aut ueri similium, quae causam probabilem reddant (Inv. rhet. 1.9: ‘a devising of events true or true-seeming in order to render a case probable’)” – and wonders why more scholars have not applied it to Suetonius.38 As we have already seen in Cl. 1.5, Suetonius has other standards for selecting material to include in his biographies than the truth or what seems like truth. The standard rhetorical models do not so easily apply to the Caesars.

None of this is to say that Suetonius rejects rhetorical methods. Far from it. He employs them in different forms, however. Suetonius tends to expand rhetorical concepts

37 Garrett 2018: 212.
to conceptual or structural levels. For an example of what this looks like in practice, let us return now to one of the most famous passages in the *Caesars, Aug. 61.1*:

> Quoniam quis in imperis ac magistratibus regendaque per terrarum orbem pace belloque re p. fuerit exposui, referam nunc interiorem ac familiarem eius utiam quibusque moribus atque fortuna domi et inter suos egerit a iuuentas usque ad supremum utiae diem.

Since I have explained what sort of man he [Augustus] was in holding imperial power and holding the powers of a magistrate and in governing the Republic in peace and war throughout the whole world, I shall now report on his personal and domestic life, and with what habits and fortune he lived his life at home and with his family from his youth until the final day of his life.

This passage is replete with explicit claims about methodology. We have already seen Suetonius employ *qualis* and *uita* to position his method generically. I focus now on the verb *referam*. The word means, in this context, to report or give an account of— but as is often the case with Suetonius’ diction, an added rhetorical aspect of the word is pertinent. As the *TLL* notes, the verb *refero* can denote, in the rhetorical tradition, the act of balancing (either through contrast or parallelism) parts of a figure of speech. Examples include isocolon, antithesis, and ἀνταπόδοσις. Cicero *De Oratore* 3.206, in discussing isocolon, provides the helpful formulation “what as equals are responded to by equals” (*quae paribus paria referuntur*). This formulation demonstrates how the prefix *re-* works: the rhetorical usage posits a relationship between two parts in a figure of speech in which what comes second is given equal weight as the first. The relationship between the two is not necessarily clear (i.e., contradictory or complementary), but a balanced relationship is evinced. Suetonius uses the verb *refero* to prompt the reader to consider the two halves of this Life’s division between official duties and personal qualities as significant to the

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39 *TLL* Spoth. 11.2.614.45-65.
Augustus. The verb in this passage characterizes both the process of the coming section of the Life (it will be reported) as well as its rhetorical relationship to other parts of the Life.

This understanding of Suetonius’ methodological adaptation of rhetorical techniques unlocks key aspects of his structure and organization. In the case of Aug. 61.1, the balancing component unlocks how Suetonius conceptualizes the antithetical structure of the Augustus’ middle topical section. The passage presents a distinction between Augustus’ official duties and unofficial aspects of his political life.\textsuperscript{40} This division constitutes an antithesis, itself another rhetorical technique that Suetonius expands to structural levels.\textsuperscript{41} In the first half of the antithesis, Suetonius provides three categories of power that Augustus exercised (\textit{in imperis ac magistratibus regendaque ... re p.}) and the scope of that exercise of power (\textit{per terrarum orbem pace belloque}). These two sides of the antithesis pertain to Augustus’ official duties as emperor; by breaking them down into categories (with subcategories – \textit{in imperis} relates to Augustus’ military powers specifically, etc.), Suetonius both reviews the sequencing of the information that had come before (e.g., the material conveyed by the phrase \textit{regendaque re p.} is analyzed in 28.3-50) and he separates out the discrete parts of Augustus’ official powers. This separation builds into Suetonius’ structure the analytic framework that he brings to the principate as an institution.

These observations lead to the second half of the antithesis: Augustus’ unofficial duties, what Suetonius characterizes with the phrase \textit{interiorem ac familiarem eius}

\textsuperscript{40} Wardle 2014: 401.
\textsuperscript{41} I discuss the rhetorical theory of antithesis in my second chapter on antithesis in the \textit{Caesars}. 
uitam. The two adjectives that characterize Augustus’ life (interiorem and familiarem) are no less political than the first part of the antithesis between Augustus’ official duties and these unofficial duties; it would be a mistake to assume that Augustus’ personal life is not part of the function of the state. The adjective interiorem is perhaps more significant for Suetonius’ methodology for being what it is not: the adjective privatus. A word search for the phrase privata uita turns up no examples in the Suetonian corpus. Suetonius is decidedly uninterested in documenting anything private about the Caesars – for him, there is nothing private about the Caesars. The question then becomes what the adjective interior adds that privatus does not. The adjective interior can mean something like “private,” but its dominant meaning is more like “inner” and contains a spatial aspect. Suetonius’ use of the term relies on this metaphor: even Augustus’ withdrawal to a private space is a public act with ramifications for the state. The emperor cannot have a private life, Suetonius suggests, because everything that he does, official or unofficial, is of public interest. The metaphor keeps Augustus at the center, relating everything else to him. Similarly, with the adjective familiarem, which participates in the spatial metaphor with an emphasis on Suetonius’ household. The interests of the state reach into Augustus’ house, which location is echoed shortly (domi). Augustus’ household consists of the people in it (inter suos), too, not just the building. His family members and his slaves are

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42 In addition to the generic claim being made with the word uita, the content of the remainder of this clause is of interest to Suetonius’ conception of biography’s reach for similar reasons. The distinction between Augustus’ character (moribus) and fate (fortuna) demonstrates that agency is not the sum total of what shapes events in an emperor’s life. The distinction may also have relevance to Suetonius’ biographical tradition (see Hägg 2012: 214-238). The invocation of Augustus’ house (domi) and his familiars (inter suos) likewise has relevance to the range of material that Suetonius thinks is worthy of inclusion.

43 The phrase is extant before and after Suetonius, so he seems to be rejecting it as significant to his approach. See, for example, Cic. De Finibus 5.11. Of particular note: the anonymous writers of the Historiae Augustae use the phrase ten times, according to a Phi search of the phrase.
relevant to the function and conceptualization of the state. The reasons they pertain to the Augustan household are numerous: Augustus’ persistent search for an heir, the controversy over his marriage to Livia, and the alleged misdeeds of family members who were sent into exile are just a few examples. These facts of the Augustan household become even more salient in the subsequent Lives.

This conceptualization of the principate as defined by the official and unofficial duties and actions of the emperor, who therefore lacks a private life, is made clear to the reader through Suetonius’ manipulation of traditional rhetorical techniques. In one passage, he expands the traditional clausal balance implied in the word refero to suggest a structural balance at the level of the Life. He then builds onto this foundation an antithesis between official and unofficial duties and actions undertaken by Augustus. This antithesis is, in turn, another rhetorical expansion. I discuss antithesis and the rhetorical theory about it further in chapter two below, but for now I argue that a key aspect to Suetonius’ methodology is his use of rhetoric and that that use is predicated on an expansion of a rhetorical figure to the structural and organizational level.

_Curation_

Another key aspect of Suetonius’ methodology has already appeared in some of the analysis above: his commitment to the judicious selection of material for inclusion. Suetonius signals to his readers at different parts of the _Caesars_ that he brings a level of discernment to the information that he selects. Often, his criteria are left to the reader to
Within the obvious parameters that they pertain to the Caesars who make up the serial biographical collection, it is often the case that Suetonius chooses topics that relate to how an emperor presents himself to the state. Suetonius teaches his readers how to think through this material in ways that do not conform to the official presentation. Other rationales exist too. For the purposes of my argument here, however, I simply want to show that curation is part of Suetonius’ explicit methodology. In addition to the programmatic passages discussed above – Cl. 1.5, Aug. 9.1, Tib. 61.2, and Cl. 29.1 (in order of treatment) – Suetonius indicates that he attends carefully to the curation of his material.

One aspect of curation is the awareness of what readers expect and signaling to them that you, as author, have reasons for deviating from those expectations. Suetonius takes such an action when he writes in the Nero, “Not without cause am I inclined to report the entrance of even Tiridates into the city among the entertainments put on by him [Nero]” (Non immerito inter spectacula ab eo edita et Tiridatis in urbe introitum rettulerim) (Ner. 13.1). Suetonius assumes, and confronts, an implied allegation that his selection of material is faulty. With the phrase non immerito ... rettulerim he forestalls a potential objection to his inclusion of the coronation of Tiridates as part of his analysis of Nero’s spectacula.45 This attempt on his part indicates care in the selection of his material and a recognition that not every reader will agree with his selection process. Suetonius further invites his readers to consider why he has included this material. The phrase non immerito implies that Suetonius has a reason for including Tiridates’ coronation, although

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45 See Bradley 1978: 89 for the historical context of this passage.
he elects not to spell out what that reason is; instead, the reader takes on the assessment as a prompt to consider why the coronation is included. This move is typical of Suetonius’ presentation of his methodology for didactic ends: Suetonius slips into a programmatic mode, prompts his reader to inquire into an aspect of that methodology, and shapes his presentation, and reader’s interpretation, of an event through that prompting. Methodological writing can be a tool for communication as much as a way to shape a reader’s understanding of a text as a whole.

Suetonius’s careful curation of his material and presentation of that material in a topical fashion allows him to control the presentation of that material, especially the order in which he presents it. For example, Jul. 44.4 contains an adverb, summatim, that fits into the adverb vocabulary type that I discussed above. The adverb combines different aspects of Suetonius’ form and methodology to shape his reader’s understanding of how he operates in the Caesars: curation and the order in which material is presented. The passage starts with a moment of narrative mimesis: Suetonius interrupts his narrative to report that, “Death interrupted him [Caesar] enacting and planning such projects” (Talia agentem atque meditantem mors praeventit). It is after this interruption that Suetonius introduces the coming topical approach and his method for undertaking this approach: “Before I shall discuss his death, it will not be out-of-place to set forth summarily the sorts of things that pertain to his physical features, dress, lifestyle, and behavior, not less

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46 For discussion of the structural importance of Jul. 44.4, see Hurley 2014a: 26-27.
47 I quote the whole passage here for context: ‘Death interrupted him enacting and planning such projects. Before I shall discuss his death, it will not be out-of-place to set forth summarily the sorts of things that pertain to his physical features, dress, lifestyle, and behavior, not less the sorts of things that pertain to his pursuit of civilian and military undertakings’ (Talia agentem atque meditantem mors praeventit. de qua prius quam dica, ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad ciuitia et bellica eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summatim exponere) (Jul. 44.4).
the sorts of things that pertain to his pursuit of civilian and military undertakings” (de qua prius quam dicam, ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad ciuilia et bellica eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summatim exponere). In the context of Jul. 44.4, Suetonius employs the adverb summatim to indicate the unfolding analysis of the topics listed in 44.4 as the Life goes on. Individual topics are to be understood within a larger context of other topics (which in turn can be compared against each other). In addition, his treatment of these topics, necessarily brief, will be selective. Suetonius curates the material that he will include for topical analysis.48

The adverb suggests a selection process. Information relevant to the argument at hand is included (the sorting of which Suetonius suggests with the verb pertineant in 44.4). The reader of the Caesars, therefore, has to attend to two practices: 1) what material Suetonius elects to include (which includes his presentation of that material when the adverb is understood with expono) and 2) the order in which the material is presented. This dual observation shows what earlier examples in this part of my introduction have shown: aspects of Suetonius’ methodology cannot be held apart as distinct. They work together. Suetonius’ curation is foundational to his method and easily integrated with other aspects of his methodology.49

Suetonius selects the material that he includes in the Caesars according to a process that he does not reveal explicitly; he hints at it. He prompts his readers to

48 OLD summatim 1a.
49 For example, the verb that summatim modifies, exponere, falls into the category of compound verbs that allows Suetonius to employ a spatial metaphor for how he conceives of his structure. The readers move through topics as they come. Additionally, the verb is an example of Suetonius practice of expanding a rhetorical trope: expono has a strong visual logic that taps into the rhetorical and historiographical tradition of imagery and appeals to the mind’s eye. Suetonius conceives of his spreading out of topical information bit by bit for his reader as a visual process. The structure of his biographies put the emperors on display – the Life-long conjuring of his subject.
consider what that process is, turning his method into a didactic tool. The existence of a selective process is noteworthy: Suetonius’ topical analysis (on which, more soon) relies on the selection of material worthy of inclusion and analysis. Suetonius’ process of selecting material for inclusion can be put to didactic ends or can combine with other aspects of his methodology – but it is sufficient for the argument of this section of my introduction to demonstrate that Suetonius puts effort into selecting material for inclusion, that he communicates this fact to this reader at different points of the Caesars, and that it forms a core part of his organizational methodology.

The Structure of the Lives

Recent scholarship has sharpened our knowledge of Suetonius’ structure in the Caesars.50 The Lives are typically divided into a chronological account of the emperor’s ancestry and rise to power, a middle section structured around topics that pertain to his rule, and a final section that narrates the emperor’s death. Hurley has described this structure as the “Suetonian sandwich;” Damon added a garnish to the sandwich. The middle section is typically divided into two sections by what has traditionally been called a divisio.51 The nature of this middle section still requires further analysis – chapter one on Suetonius’ topical analysis conducts some of this analysis. For the purposes of this introduction, however, I make a simpler point: although Suetonius has a relatively consistent structure for his Lives, he is willing to stretch or manipulate that structure to suit his literary ends.

51 Townend 1967: 84-85.
The *Nero* is one of Suetonius’ more inventive Lives structurally. It some respects, it follows the typical structure of a Life where the middle section is divided into two by the so-called *divisio* (*Ner*. 19.3):

*Haec partim nulla reprehensione, partim etiam non mediocri laude digna in unum contuli, ut secernerem a probris ac sceleribus eius, de quibus dehinc dicam.*

I have brought together these [actions detailed before this passage], some not at all worthy of blame, others worthy of even not a moderate amount of praise, into one place in order to separate [them] from his shameful and criminal acts, about which I will discuss from here on.

Suetonius divides the middle section of the *Nero* into two. A rough characterization of this division: between Nero’s actions that are in some sense good and those that are bad. Suetonius has brought together (*contuli*) Nero’s good actions in order to keep them separate from his bad actions, about which he will talk next (*de quibus dehinc dicam*).

The verb *contuli*, another of the programmatic compound verbs that employ a metaphor of movement, emphasizes the collection process: Suetonius has collected specific material to bring together. The purpose clause emphasizes Suetonius’ selection process, but on a different level of structural arrangement – a familiar level, since this sort of division can be found in other Lives. Suetonius’ ending clause (*de quibus dehinc dicam*) also outlines the division. The structure, at first glance, conforms to that of the other Lives in the collection.

The characterization of Nero’s actions as good and bad is not specific enough, however. Suetonius divides each half of the Life’s middle section again, making a distinction between Nero’s acts that cannot be blamed at all (*partim nulla reprehensione*) and those worthy of some praise (*partim etiam non mediocri laude digna*) and shameful
acts (probris) and criminal ones (sceleribus). This further division is a break from Suetonius’ normal organization and has ramifications for how the reader approaches the remainder of the Life’s structure: the second part of the topical section is divided into two: the section about Nero’s shameful acts stretches from Ner. 20.1 through 25.3 and then the section on his criminal acts stretches from 26.1 to 39.3. This structure is fairly particular to the inventive Nero, but Suetonius’ inventiveness here and his explicit indication of this creative signals a flexibility in the construction of the middle sections of the Lives. The organization of the Nero indicates that Suetonius can introduce variation into his typical structure. The reader who attends to Suetonius’ methodological variation here learns something about Suetonius’ structures that have applicability elsewhere. The programmatically didactic Suetonius appears again.

I interrupt my analysis of the structure of the Nero because it is better suited to my following subsection on topical analysis in the Caesars, and a brief conclusion about structure is warranted before moving on. The structure of the Lives is a pillar of Suetonius’ methodology and their make-up varies between small units that pertain to topics and to larger units that serve as buns, filling, and garnish in the Suetonian sandwich. I treat the nature of these units with more precision in chapter one where I categorize the types of units that Suetonius employs in the Caesars generally. Even without a strongly coherent sense of all the different types of units in the Caesars, we can still see that they exist and that Suetonius’ structure is similar to other aspects of his

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52 Bradley 1978: 119-120 lays out the road map, so to speak, that this passage proposes for the rest of the Life.

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methodology: he is explicit about it, wants his readers to be aware of it, and can even use it to prompt, to teach, and to analyze.

Topical Analysis

The final aspect of Suetonius’ methodology that I discuss in this section of the introduction is, perhaps, the most distinctive feature of Suetonius’ method: his use of topics to organize large parts of the Lives and to analyze the emperors. I take on Suetonius’ topical analysis much more robustly in chapter one, but for now it remains to be seen how Suetonius’ topical approach relates to his methodology and how he talks about his topical approach in passages of programmatic significance.

The possibility of topical analysis is predicated on a particular aspect of Suetonius’ form: his division of parts of his Lives into units. The Ner. 19.3 passage, whose analysis I interrupted momentarily, evokes explicitly the unit form. In its atypical structure, Ner. 19.3 reveals an aspect of Suetonius’ methodology that has near-universal applicability for evaluating and talking about the Caesars generally: Suetonius’ phrase in unum. It is easy to overlook what he is saying here (and perhaps explains why Suetonius embeds it here where he catches his reader’s attention with his inventive structure), namely, that his Lives have units of organization. The logic of what Suetonius claims when he writes that he has brought together Nero’s actions in unum is that there is a section of the Life that is appropriate to the collocation of these data points. By implication, other parts of the Life would not be appropriate for the inclusion of Nero’s acts. This phrase allows us to talk about parts of the Life and Suetonian units. Suetonius’ own explicit methodology includes that type of conceptualization of his structure.
The reader is quickly given practice with the logic of Suetonian units when
Suetonius reintroduces the concept in a less abstract, more concrete form in another
programmatic passage not much farther on in the Life. After discussing Nero’s shameful
acts (probris), he starts his analysis of Nero’s criminal acts (sceleribus). He signals the
beginning of this analysis with a catalogue of Nero’s types of crimes (Ner. 26.1):

*Petulantiam, libidinem, luxuriam, avaritiam, crudelitatem sensim quidem
primo et occulte et velut iuuenili errore exercuit, sed ut tunc quoque
dubitum nemini foret naturae illa uitia, non aetatis esse.*

He practiced impudence, lust, extravagance, greed, cruelty gradually
indeed at first and secretly and as if because of youthful error, but such
that at that time it was doubtful to nobody that these were vices of
character, not age.

This catalogue introduces the individual topics of interest that will occupy Suetonius’
analysis to come; they are headwords of Nero’s coming criminal action. Each of the
initial accusatives (*petulantiam*, etc.) makes up the thematic subject matter of the coming
units of the Life.\(^{53}\) By citing these specific vices and then structuring the remainder of the
topical section of this Life around them, Suetonius indicates the existence of different
units of form for analysis. He does not only write with individual topics (i.e. *petulantiam*,
etc.) in mind but is aware of larger units of form that those individual units slot into – as
signaled by the *ut*-clause, which can apply to all of the individual topics and makes up
what could be called the “Nero’s *scelera*” unit in the Life.\(^{54}\) In making the relatively
abstract *in unum* concrete by providing examples of different types of material that could
slot into a unit and by showing that different types and sizes of units exist, Suetonius uses

\(^{53}\) See Bradley 1978: 153-155 for a breakdown of how this passage sets up the rest of the middle section of
the Life.

\(^{54}\) I treat the different types of units in the next chapter of the dissertation.
the inventive structure of the *Nero* to demonstrate how his structure works generally. As the analysis in *Ner.* 19.3 so the analysis here: what Suetonius says about the structure of the *Nero* has wider applicability in considering the form of other Lives. The reader is forced to slow down and reckon with the *Nero*’s unusual structure; Suetonius takes advantage of that increased attention to indulge his didactic impulses.

In my analysis above, topical organization and topical analysis has been mentioned on occasion and some passages have even presented the concepts. *Ner.* 26.1 presents thematic topics for further discussion with the leading accusative headwords (*petulantiam*, etc.). In *Jul.* 44.4, Suetonius lists the topics for analysis that will occupy much of the coming middle section of the Life (*ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad ciuilia et bellica eius studia pertineant*). These passages and others like them are representative of concrete examples of topics that Suetonius provides for his readers. *Jul.* 44.4, the first programmatic passage that survives if one is reading serially, provides concrete examples that show how significant topics are for Suetonius’ methodology: he wants his readers to understand his approach from the beginning. He saves a more theoretical discussion of topics for *Aug.* 9.1.

The specific examples that Suetonius chooses to provide in *Jul.* 44.4 also shape his reader’s understanding of Suetonius’ topical approach, especially his contrast with historiographical and other political biographical focus on public and official narratives of power and their avoidance of eating habits, sexual appetites, and other domestic topics. At *Jul.* 44.4, Suetonius claims that before he will discuss Caesar’s death, “it will not be out-of-place to set forth summarily the sorts of things that pertain to his physical features, dress, lifestyle, and behavior, not less the sorts of things that pertain to his pursuit of
civilian and military undertakings" (ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad ciuilia et bellica eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summam exponere). This list of subjects mirrors the structure of the middle part of the Julius that comes before the final death narrative: 45.1-2 discusses his physical features and 45.3 his dress. His lifestyle and behavior make up much of the rest of the Life’s middle portion.

The question now raised is why Suetonius chooses “his physical features [and] dress” to introduce the topics that will make up this middle portion of the Life as mirrored by the beginning of Jul. 44.4. This question becomes more urgent when the Julius is compared with the other Lives in the Caesars. Generally, these topics appear much later in a Suetonian Life than they do in the Julius – sometimes even following the death narration. By moving his treatment of these topics up into a more prominent position of the Life, Suetonius highlight the sorts of topics that he will take up for analysis. The sequence of information matters.

Both initial topics (ad formam et habitum) play a role in the traditional self-fashioning of Roman politicians and, especially, the emperor. Widespread imperial iconography (such as coinage) and clothing choices in the rarified circles of Roman politics have strong potential for shaping the perception of an emperor. Caesar is an especially provocative example given his fashion choices. In choosing these two topics as representative of the types of topics that he takes up in his Lives, Suetonius signals that

55 His use of the terms forma and habitus is neutral and general in comparison with the other Lives. Although he introduces these topics here for the middle section of the Julius, their appearance in the other Lives and the consistent structural logic of the other Lives suggests that Suetonius is using these words generally. For instance, forma can denote an attractive physical appearance, but because the different emperors were variably attractive (or not), Suetonius means simply “physical appearance” here. See TLL Kapp. 6.1.1068.77. The TLL article for habitus does not include Jul. 44.4. Suetonius uses the word flexibly (v. Aug. 45.4 for its use with hairstyle), but he does use the word to mean dress (cf. Cal. 32.3). But the development of Jul. 45.1-3 makes it clear that Suetonius here means manner of dress.
he is willing to interrogate topics traditionally employed by an emperor to bolster his public image. Treating topics that pertain to an emperor’s public presentation is not foreign to imperial historiographical authors, but the specific choices that Suetonius presents here and his subsequent treatment of these topics articulate a generic focus. As a writer of biography, instead of history, Suetonius has greater leeway to select material from the domestic or quotidian parts of his subjects’ lives. By giving these particular topics prominence in the *Julius* and by laying out the material that he will treat in the Life, Suetonius focuses his readers’ attention not only on his differences from other genres of imperial political and historical writing but also from other types of political biography. His topical focus, both in form and content, differs from other biographical traditions.56

Suetonius’ introduction of his *Julius* topics does not just serve to differentiate his biographical approach from other historiographical approaches, it also begins to characterize his analytical approach. The next topics that he takes up after physical features and dress, Caesar’s lifestyle (*cultum*) and behavior (*mores*), move conceptually from the specific to the broad. Suetonius, moreover, orders this sentence to suggest a movement from concrete topics of analysis (physical features and clothing) to more abstract (lifestyle and behavior). This order anticipates the coming order of the *Julius* and thus previews how other sentences of this type function in the *Caesars* generally (cf., for example, *Ner.* 26.1): Suetonius employs topical sentences as roadmaps for his Lives.

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56 On this division, see Hägg 2012: 214-231 and 232-238. The opening of his discussion of Plutarch is likewise relevant: 239-244.
The particular question of why Suetonius orders the *Julius* contrary to his normal practice again draws the reader’s attention. Roman readers would already recognize the moral, ethical, and political valence of appearance and dress, so Suetonius orders this sentence of programmatic significance and his Life such that these marked topics come first. In doing so, Suetonius sets the parameters of his inquiry; the conclusions that he will want his reader to draw about Caesar at the conclusion of the Life are set up by what topics he chooses to include and how he treats them. By ending with the more abstract categories of lifestyle and behavior, Suetonius preserves some intellectual leeway for himself: what qualifies under the abstract headings of *cultum* and *mores* is much more open to interpretation than physical features and dress. Suetonius’ characterization of Caesar using precise topics naturalizes his selection process of material for inclusion in the abstract topics. That is to say, he establishes an intuitive formulation about how certain material should be understood, allowing himself room to fulfill that expectation with a conclusion that shapes his analysis of power and the principate. The reader, first encountering this sentence, cannot yet know that Suetonius sets up an expectation that he will fulfill; it takes a return to this passage to notice Suetonius’ tactic. But, upon returning to this passage, it is clear that Suetonius is not only previewing the upcoming structure of the *Julius* but also establishing the range of topics that he will investigate (concrete and abstract) and signaling their analytic potential and his didactic guidance of his readers toward that analytic end.

Suetonius introduces these examples of topics early on in his collection; the reader is quickly equipped with a framework for how Suetonius’ topical analysis will go from nearly the beginning of what survives of the *Caesars*. He withholds only briefly.
further theoretical discussion of his topical approach, broaching it at Aug. 9.1. Suetonius first notes the transition from his prefatory remarks to the topical section of the Augustus: “With this, so to speak, summary of his life having been prefixed” (Proposita uitae eius uelut summa). The term uita, as I mentioned above, situates this programmatic passage generically; its focus will be topical (in this case, a life) and not chronological, the domain of annalistic history and most other biography. Suetonius’ subject matter is the individual, and he employs a particular form to match it. Moreover, Suetonius’ own formulation of the Life’s beginning as a “so to speak, summary,” which follows a passage (8.1-3) that distills the chronological parts of Augustus’ life to its most significant elements, provides a hierarchy of hermeneutical significance: the dominant form of the Life will be topical. Chronological narrative plays a supporting role.57

After this transition, Suetonius explains how he will compose the middle section of the Life, clarifying his topical approach: “I shall follow along with its parts one by one, not chronologically, but topically, so that they can be more distinctly given account of and be recognized” (partes singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exsequar, quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint). This section of the programmatic passage sets out the terms of the middle section of the Augustus. Suetonius characterizes his method before offering a rationale for it in a relative purpose clause; it is his characterization of this method that draws our attention here. The main clause as a whole (partes singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exsequar) articulates Suetonius’

57 This claim is not to deny the importance of chronological narrative in the Caesars. It is to point out that the section of the Life preceding the topical does not need a distinct literary form – it can be summary-ish – because this section of the Life plays a more significant role in Suetonius’ structure as the table-setter for the topical section of the Lives. This is not to say that the opening section (or closing section, for that matter) offers less interpretative potential; word-for-word I expect it to offer as much as any other section. Rather, Suetonius’ point here is one of form: the dominant form of his Lives will be topical.
structural methodology. In sequence, it is periodic in that it withholds its verb until the end of the clause, as is typical. The most striking modification of the verb’s action, the prepositional phrase *per species*, likewise follows the preceding two (*singillatim* and *per tempora*). Suetonius’ presentation acknowledges his innovative method. It is not obvious that he would employ topical thinking and that he would adapt his form to such thinking; in fact, through the contrasts set up by the antithetical formulation *neque per tempora sed per species*, this clause suggests that it might have been more expected to have written chronologically than topically.

The first word of the characterizing clause, *partes*, refers to Augustus’ life. In combination with the coming claim of writing *per species*, this word means something like “aspects” of Augustus’ life, and not just parts or phases, which could be confused for chronological stages of his life. Suetonius, in mentioning parts of Augustus’ life in this passage of structural significance, creates a correspondence between the parts of Augustus’ life and his own biographical Life of Augustus. The word *partes* naturalizes Suetonius’ form of topical organization, making it appear as if Suetonius topical organization stems from the naturally corresponding part of Augustus’ chronological life. By characterizing Augustus’ life as subject matter that is naturally divisible into parts, Suetonius makes his literary organization appear to correspond with it: Suetonius’ Lives have different sections, and these sections match aspects of Augustus’ life (which sections receive explicit treatment at *Aug* 61, which is similar to *Jul.* 44.4 in this respect). In this passage, Suetonius treats parts of Augustus’ life (in a topical manner, as Suetonius makes clear shortly) as discrete elements for investigation, but because they also correspond to the sections of his Life, we can talk about the *Augustus* as also having
parts. The word *partes*, principally a claim of subject matter, invokes Suetonius’ own form: Suetonius draws a correspondence between what he writes about and how he writes about it. The topical becomes, in Suetonius’ methodological framing, the natural approach for writing biography.

This final claim anticipates, to a degree, Suetonius’ other key phrases, *singillatim* and *per species* in this passage. I have already discussed *singillatim* above, but it is with *per species* that Suetonius provides his most explicit characterization of the middle section of his Lives: he writes “not chronologically, but topically” (*neque per tempora sed per species*). Suetonius again asserts the topical over chronological as the motivation of his form. In this theoretical discussion of his structure, Suetonius insists on topicality again and again. Hence the need for a theoretical discussion in the first place: Suetonius’ claim to write topically is less a claim about a specific type of content (such as in *Jul. 44*, for example) and more a claim of method. The dominant form of his biographical collection is topical units.

Because Suetonius’ word for this organization is *species*, a basic understand of its meaning and use is necessary. Its use here indicates that Suetonius’ presentation privileges categorical thinking. The word can mean a subdivision (in this case, discrete aspects of Augustus’ life – *partes*) or a thing of a particular kind. Suetonius, although he does not say that he will do so here, confirms these assessments of the word with his practice of leading off his analysis of any one topic by broaching the topic either with a

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58 *OLD 10.*
word, phrase, or even grammatical or syntactical construction. This type of organization is more analytical than narrative and can incorporate narrative when called for.

Such is the base meaning of the word as Suetonius employs it – but the word encompasses a much broader meaning than just “category” or “topic.” Suetonius could have used other, more specific rhetorical terms in this case, such as locus or materia. Even the generalizing res could have worked. Suetonius appears to be inviting his readers to consider the broader meaning of the word. The word species fundamentally conveys a visual element; it is a spectacular word. This usage includes the physical appearance of things. It even can refer to the artistic representation of a thing. With this word, Suetonius suggests that he is putting on display the emperors for analysis. His Lives construct for his readers a near-visual or, perhaps more accurately, a visualizable emperor, including his description of their facial and bodily features. Suetonius prompts his readers to consider the emperor as a whole, composed of discrete topics.

Topical organization and topical analysis constitute the subject of the next chapter of this dissertation. Let us turn now from a discussion of Suetonius’ structure to a brief preview of my own.

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation has three chapters. I here briefly summarize and preview them.

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59 I discuss this aspect of his topical form in chapter one.
60 OLD 1.
61 OLD 3.
62 OLD 8.
63 The Roman literary tradition of visual thinking is extensive, but one possible correlative to Suetonius’ treatment might be found in Livy’s preface: Livy likewise employs a rhetoric of bringing things to light to prompt his readers toward certain modes of analysis and interpretation. Feldherr 1998: 1-50.
In chapter one, I examine the most recognizable aspect of Suetonius’ form: his organization of the middle part of the Lives according to topics. The primary motivation of form in these middle parts is topical instead of chronological. Chronology can still play a role in the organization. I start the chapter by analyzing the different types of organizational units that Suetonius employs to present his material. What I call the topical unit is the most recognizable, but Suetonius also groups these topical units by theme – creating what I call thematic units. The middle section of the Lives, as I have mentioned, is often divided into two around what traditionally has been called the *divisio.* I then argue for how Suetonius employs the topical unit, using *Cl.* 33.1-2 as an example of a topical unit for my analysis: he uses these units to characterize an emperor under analysis or otherwise to make an argument.

The logic of the form is two-fold: any one topical unit has an internal structure and a context. I employ the spatial metaphor of the vertical aspect of a unit and the horizontal aspect. The vertical aspect of a topical unit pertains to its internal structure. How Suetonius constructs, packages, and presents an individual topical unit is the scope of my inquiry. The internal structure of these topical units varies but I examine one as a representative example of the topical unit: *Cl.* 33.1-2. I draw out the particular technics that Suetonius uses to structure his topical units. For example, I claim that a topic unit has an anatomy of sorts: Suetonius typically announces the topic that he will treat in the unit with either a key word, phrase, clause, or even word form (such as a superlative to denote excess). Elaboration of the topic follows. Finally, a topical unit often has a conclusion. This internal anatomy is only a part of the vertical aspect of the topical unit. I also discuss

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64 Townend 1967: 84-85.
the types of writing styles, what I call facets of writing, in this chapter. Examples include narrative, anecdote, or quotation. Another part of the topical unit structure that I discuss is the sequencing of the material included— that is, what order Suetonius chooses for presenting the material.

The horizontal aspect of a topical unit is its context within the Life. I argue that this horizontal aspect acts as connective tissue: it is what enables the reader to connect any one topical unit to another, its thematic context, or even the broader context of the topical middle section of a Life or the entire Life. I examine Cl. 33.1-2 in these contexts in order to demonstrate how this connective tissue operates. The context for any specific topical unit is different; it is up to the reader to discern how any one topical unit sits in context. The horizontal aspect of the form affords this possibility.

In chapter two, I examine a key part the structural organization and thought in the *Caesars*: antithesis. If the topical unit is Suetonius’ basic form for organizing material, then antithesis is a form that subjects the material contained in topical units to Suetonian analysis. Antithesis is not the only Suetonian technical process by which data goes in and analysis comes out, but it is one of the most prominent ones, and— importantly for this dissertation— it pertains to Suetonius’ structure and organization. The antithetical form is one of a variety of forms by which Suetonius conducts analysis. If the Suetonian process is a machine, data about his subjects the material, and Suetonian analysis the product, then certain forms, such as antithesis, are the gears, belts, and widgets that make up the machine.

I start chapter two with an analysis of antithesis in the Roman and, to a lesser degree, Greek rhetorical tradition. Suetonius’ use of the figure fits the tradition, but on a
larger structural scale than is typical (e.g., antithesis, typically the purview of the clause or sentence, can, in Suetonius’ hands, reach across the Caesars). I then examine examples of some different (but not exhaustive) types of antitheses in the Caesars. First, an antithesis constructed of two passages in two different Lives. I choose the examples of Jul. 85 and Dom. 23.1. Second, an antithesis constructed of two passages from one Life. My examples are Aug. 34.2 and Aug. 68. Third, and finally, an antithesis formed by one passage, such as Ves. 16.3. This literary form is a way for Suetonius to communicate covertly with his reader. He avoids open critique through this more circumspect method. Ultimately, antithesis invokes a central part of Suetonius’ literary project: analysis through comparison. Suetonius’ use of antithesis prompts his reader to read across the Lives.

Chapter three examines Suetonius’ literary analytical end: to prompt his reader to conduct comparative analysis across the Lives. This comparative reading is how Suetonius’ readers access Suetonius’ institution critique of the principate. Suetonius prompts his readers to participate in this comparative analysis through the application of his serial biographical form. This application takes, in turn, the form of internal prompts to the readers of the Caesars to compare certain passages across the biographical collection. I call this process “rewriting.” I do not mean by the term the process of editing. Rather, Suetonian rewriting is the inclusion of internal prompts in the Caesars to signal to the readers that they should examine multiple passages against each other. Crucially this process of rewriting assumes no base text. The passages are instead understood to be situated in a network of sorts: Suetonius’ institutional critique is graspable when all examples of the office’s holders are treated as comparable to the
others. No one Caesar is the assumed preference. Thus, even if Suetonius’ reader initially read the collection chronologically, Suetonius’ internal prompts – his rewriting process – nudge them to read the collection recursively – backwards and forwards, forwards and backwards. In my analysis of recursive writing and reading in the Caesars, I highlight three types of rewriting techniques, although others exist. I first examine single-word rewriting – a technique by which Suetonius prompts his readers to connect one passage to another or others by repetition of one, distinct word. Second, same-scene rewriting, where the same scene, differently narrated, appears in different Lives. Finally, the use of type-scenes, such as death narratives, to prompt comparison. Suetonius’ application of his serial biographical form in this way in turn suggests that readers should understand his collection as itself a network of Caesars. Suetonius uses this network to conduct analysis: by comparing any one Caesar to another, differences and similarities, thought through and considered, highlight the nature of the imperial system that enables these men to control the reins of power over the state.

Coda: A Word on the Epigraphs

To conclude this introduction, I return to its epigraphs. The first, from Robert Caro’s fourth volume of his biography of President Lyndon B. Johnson, The Passage of Power, articulates a biographical understanding of the relationship between power and its holder: “although the cliché says that power always corrupts, what is seldom said, but what is equally true, is that power always reveals.” David Runciman, in his serial biographical collection about modern American Presidents and British Prime Ministers Where Power
Stops: The Making and Unmaking of Presidents and Prime Ministers, responds to Caro: “Power doesn’t tell us the true nature of the man; the man tells us the true nature of the power.” The problem of understanding relationship between power and its holder continues to persist in political biography; so too does Suetonius’ approach, especially as evidenced by the similarities between the Caesars and Where Power Stops. On the merits of the claims themselves, Suetonius walks a middle ground. Runciman and Suetonius are closer in perspective than Caro and Suetonius, but such a claim reduces the triangulation of opinion too much. Nevertheless, both quotations demonstrate the efficacy of political analysis conducted via biographical inquiry. The conversation that Suetonius had a hand in starting continues.

I include the epigraphs not only due to their political biographical claims but also as a deliberate invocation of form. Their relevance to Suetonius’ political thought is clear, I hope; their presence at the beginning of this introduction is a decision of form. The epigraph is a form whose affordances we often take for granted. They are commonplace. But so too has it become commonplace to take Suetonius’ so-called rubrics for granted. Suetonius’ application of topical analysis in the Caesars is much richer than he has been credited. It does not hurt to be reminded of the ubiquity of literary form and its potency for shaping our thinking. In choosing two contradictory quotations, I aim to reproduce Suetonius’ own antithetical approach to political thinking. I suspect that he would be comfortable embracing the middle position between Caro and Runciman. He does not extend that level of comfort to his readers; his use of form nudges, prompts, provokes.
CHAPTER ONE: TOPICAL ORGANIZATION

Scholars have long identified that Suetonius organizes his Lives around topics and have called this organization by rubric. This so-called “rubric,” what I call the topical unit, is the most widely recognized aspect of Suetonius’ literary form in the Caesars; it is also the collection’s most dominant form. Discussion of this form is typically where discussion of Suetonius’ literary form ends. Scholars tend to treat the form as rather inert. They assume that Suetonius stuffs his rubrics full of whatever information he finds, as if the units are containers. I argue instead that they are a reflection of the political form of the principate and, therefore, constitute a reading of the principate itself. The principate is led by individual men who hold power by virtue of the accumulation of authority over discrete aspects of Roman politics and culture. In order to convey this conceptualization of the principate, Suetonius uses the topical unit form to persuade, characterize, shape his reader’s interpretation of information. The example that I investigate below (Claudius 33.1-2) persuades through its characterization of Claudius. In biography, characterization is a type of argument. My subsequent chapters, on antithesis and comparative reading, assume that there is an interactive nature to Suetonius’ structure and his structures of form. To access this interaction, however, one must start where discussion of Suetonius’ form normally ends: with the topical unit, the dominant form of the Caesars. Only by understanding its affordances as a form in Suetonius’ serial collection can his literary project be fully grasped.
Introduction: Moving Beyond “Rubrics”

The internal structure of the *Caesars* is made up of different building blocks. These blocks, or units, come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and they are the dominant form of Suetonius’ serial biography. In this chapter, I analyze the smallest block of a Suetonian Life, traditionally called a “rubric.” But first it is necessary to articulate the building blocks that make up a Life in the *Caesars*, from the large to the small “rubric.” Suetonius organizes the content of the individual Lives of his *Caesars* with relative consistency. This organization, which has recently been called the “rubric sandwich,” consists of 1) a more or less chronological account of an emperor’s life until he assumes imperial power, 2) an account of his time in power arranged not chronologically but by topic, and 3) a narrative account of his death. These are the three largest units of the Suetonian Life: an initial chronological unit, a middle topic-based unit, and a final narrative unit. These three units have received varying degrees of scholarly attention, but the third narrative unit generally receives the highest praise for its accounts of the emperors’ deaths – which is to say that the form of these units is considered less often than their content, although recent scholarship has started to reincorporate considerations of form. The other two

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65 On the topic of Suetonius as a biographer, see Power 2014a: 1-2, 4-11 and the extensive bibliography given in n. 1.
67 This consistent structure sits alongside other, more individual organizational principles, such as embedding ring composition into a Life. See, for example, the discussion of ring composition in the *Caesars*. Lounsbury 1991: 3751-3760 finds it in the *Nero*; Hurley 1993: 216 notes a thematic correspondence between Cal. 1.1 and 60, although she does not label it “ring composition” as such; and Benediktson 1996: 167-173 argues that ring composition provides the structure of the entire *Galba*. Ferguson 2012, an MA thesis, argues for ring composition in every *Life* in the *Caesars*. On Suetonius’ own methodological claims to writing with units, see my discussion of topical organization in chapter one.
68 Damon 2018: 107-127 treats all of the deaths briefly. Mouchová 1968: 52-60 (see under the heading “C. Tod”) considers the category of death as connected to Suetonius’ use of form. Ash 2016: 200-216 is likewise attentive to the literary qualities of Suetonius’ assassination scenes. Scholars also focus on certain
units, chronological and topic-based, also provide fodder for the scholar interested in form.\(^69\)

Although the rubric-sandwich model helps to identify these three units, their form is more complex than that model indicates. While scholars have paid attention to content that appears in the topic-based middle unit of the Lives, an investigation of its form is generally secondary; it is often assumed that the middle unit is a container for Suetonian data or even trivia.\(^70\) Such assessments miss the fact that Suetonius has given these middle units a meaningful form as well. There are three subsidiary units whose forms typically structure the middle, topic-based unit of a Life. In the following few paragraphs, I introduce these three units before turning to the subject of this chapter more fully: the smallest unit in the middle, topic-based unit.

\(^69\) See, e.g., Garrett 2013, which is a dissertation that examines ancestry in the *Caesars*. Ancestry principally appears in the first category of the sandwich model, what I am calling the chronological unit. See especially pages 1-4 for her methodology and her conception of how the ancestry rubric (as she calls it) fits in with the other parts of the Suetonian Life. Gascou 1984: 392-430 is principally about historical thinking and writing in contrast to topical writing, but it includes discussion of the composition of the topic-based middle part of the Lives.

\(^70\) This assumption can be seen in early debates about the nature of the so-called “rubric” as contrasted with narrative. For this debate, see Leo 1901:11-16. Contra see Steidle 1963 (1951): 80-82. Even Mouchová 1968: 17-60, who persuasively moves past this debate and takes Suetonius’ form more seriously than previous scholars, finds fault in Suetonius’ analytic approach, selection criteria, and style. Recent scholars have perpetuated the container assumption. Hurley 2014a: 21 defines rubrics as “facts ordered by topic,” and Lewis 1991: 3641 describes the middle, topic-based unit of a Suetonian Life as “scrutiny by more or less standard criteria of performance as emperor, for the most part essentially static and proceeding by ‘rubrics’ or standardised headings.” Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 44 thinks most topical units follow a prescribed commentary form – a sort of ancient, scholarly FAQs section. Some scholars acknowledge the flexibility of the rubric, notably Lounsbury 1991: 3751 (“flexible”) and Pausch 2004: 277 (“Sueton diese Grobstruktur flexibler handhabt”), but this acknowledge meant is often about the content of the unit, not its form. I discuss Suetonius’ detractors in the introduction.
The first type of unit is the largest possible unit within the middle, topic-based unit – and I call this unit a “polar unit” because they come in pairs, typically as binary pairs. At Aug. 61.1, for example, Suetonius makes a distinction between the material he has already treated (topics that pertain to Augustus’ official duties) and the material that he will subsequently treat (topics that pertain to the unofficial parts of Augustus’ life). In this passage he divides the middle section of the Life into two polar units. This type of division is common in the Lives, although the rationale for the division can vary or even be omitted. I call the dividing paragraph or sentence the “binary divider” because it separates the two components of a binary – or what is structured like a binary even if it is not explicitly polar. Two examples: Aug. 61.1, which is structured around a binary, divides Augustus’ official and unofficial actions as emperor. Cal. 22.1, which divides “emperor” (de principe) from “monster” (de monstro), employs a similar logic and form.

71 I quote the Latin and my translation here for ease of reference: Quoniam qualis in imperis ac magistratibus regendaque per terrarum orbem paces belloque re p. fuerit exposui, referam nunc interiorem ac familiarem eius uitam quibusque moribus atque fortuna domi et inter suos egerit a iuventa usque ad supremum uitae diem. Translation: “Since I have explained what sort of man he [Augustus] was in holding imperial power and holding the powers of a magistrate and in governing the Republic in peace and war throughout the whole world, I shall now report on his personal and domestic life, and with what habits and fortune he lived his life at home and with his family from his youth until the final day of his life.” I discuss some of the methodological aspects of this passage in my introduction.

72 See Townend 1967: 84-87, who reasonably labels this sort of organizational technique divisio. Later scholars continue to use this term. See, e.g., Warmington 1977: 10 and Wardle 2014: 401. Townend also confusingly conflates this type of divisio with Suetonius’ practice of including topic sentences at the start of different so-called rubrics. The term divisio has much to recommend it. I choose a different set of terminology not due to its lack of merit but in order to defamiliarize our conventional approach to Suetonius’ structure so as to review his form with fresh eyes.

73 See Aug. 61.1, Tib. 42.1, Cal. 22.1, Cl. 25.5, Ner. 19.3, and Gal. 14.1 for the different examples with varying rationales. Ves. 11-12 divides the Life between vices and virtues (although not perfectly, as Vespasian’s greed is discussed at 16.3 – but it also appears to function as a pretext to discuss his generosity). No explicit rationale for this division of the Life is given, however, so it stands apart from the others. Tit. 7.1 makes a division between vice and virtue even though Suetonius not only withholds a rationale but also claims that Titus was defined by his virtues. Baldwin 1983: 189 criticizes both Lives as “not admitting much in the way of formal structure or divisions,” although his assessment seems to require explicit markers of structure and division, which is puzzling since he notes that at Dom. 10.1 “the transition to his saevitia and cupiditas is quietly effected.”
even if the examples do not form, strictly speaking, a binary. I call each of the two resulting sides a “polar unit” because each unit makes up half of or a pole of the binary created by the binary divider or implied by what would have been the binary divider (as in Cal. 22.1). Not every Life in the Caesars has a binary divider, but the polar units are the largest units of form that occur in the middle section of a Life in the Caesars.

The second type of unit is what I call the “thematic unit.” A thematic unit is smaller than a polar unit and consists of a series of so-called “rubrics” that cohere to a theme, usually through the similarity of topics that they cover, but other thematic groupings are possible. An example: at Cal. 13-15.4, Suetonius groups together a few “rubrics” about Gaius’ popularity. The general theme is given at the start of this thematic unit: after gaining power in a dubious manner, Gaius is incredibly popular. This popularity stems from memories of his childhood and an affection for Germanicus. What follows is a series of “rubrics” that demonstrate this popularity. Cal. 13-14.1 shows the Senate bowing to the people’s wishes to grant Gaius power even at the expense of Tiberius’ wishes; Cal. 14.2 relates Gaius’ domestic popularity, and 14.3 his foreign popularity; Cal. 15.1-3 narrates the actions that Gaius took to make himself popular, especially his demonstration of piety toward his family; finally, Cal. 15.4 treats the popularity of Gaius’ general amnesty. This last “rubric” ends the thematic unit, and the

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74 Power 2014a: 5 discusses Nero’s popularity. For Nero’s popularity in general, see how Champlin 2003: 1-35 frames the question of Nero’s legacy.

75 Latin: Sic imperium adeptus p.R. – uel dicam hominum genus – uoti compotem fecit, exaptissimus princeps maximae parti prouincialium ac militium quod infantem plerique cognouerant sed et uniuersae plebi urbane... And translation: “Thus having obtained imperium, Gaius granted the prayers of the Roman people – or should I say the human race – the most hoped for prince by the greatest part of the provincials and soldiers, because many had known him as a child, but also the whole population of the city...
Life transitions to another thematic unit about Gaius’ good governance. At different points in this thematic unit, Suetonius includes language that demonstrates Gaius’ popularity in order to string together the individual parts of the thematic unit. Gaius is the “most hoped for princeps” (*exoptatissimus princeps*) (13); during Tiberius’ funeral march he is met by an “incredibly dense and happy crowd of people ready at hand” (*densissimo et laetissimo obuiorum agmine*) (13); it is a mob that breaks into the Senate (*irrumpentis ... turbae*) that solidifies his power which was greeted with “so great a public happiness” (*tanta publica laetitia*) (14.1) that more than 160,000 animals were slaughtered; it was the case that “even the notable favor of foreigners was added to the immense love of the citizens” (*accessit ad immensum ciuium amorem notabilis etiam externorum favor*) (14.2); he made a bid for “every type of popularity” (*omni genere popularitatis*) (15.1) that he could; and finally it was with “equal popularity” (*pari popularitate*) (15.4) that he instituted an amnesty. The language and content of the individual rubrics signal that they cohere into a thematic unit.

The third of these three subsidiary units, and the unit that is the main unit for investigation in this chapter, is the “topical unit.” I define the topical unit as a coherent section of text that analyzes a quality of Suetonius’ subject – usually an emperor – by investigating a topic about or related to that subject. The subject matter taken up in topical units can vary widely, ranging from public actions, such as an emperor’s military campaigns, to personal qualities, such as physical appearance. Topical units are typically

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76 For the structure of this portion of the *Caligula*, I roughly follow Hurley 1993: 36-53. Her commentary shows the interconnected nature of these different passages.

77 Some non-emperor characters in the *Caesars* are subjected to analysis via the topical unit. See e.g., *Cal.* 3.1-3.3 for a topical unit about Germanicus’ qualities of body and mind.
given distinct boundaries by explicit transitions into or out of them. It has been something of a scholarly convention to call these units “rubrics,” but the name is an inadequate one – hence my use of the phrase “so-called rubric.” The term “rubric” is derived from a medieval practice of writing the first sentence or phrase or word of a paragraph in red in order to draw the eye.\textsuperscript{78} The term implies that the most important component of the topical unit is the topic heading. “Rubric” as a term also privileges the content of a topical category over its form, suggesting that the reader only wants to access the information in any topical unit – or that Suetonius took particular care in selecting the heading before indiscriminately grouping the related information below. Suetonius, indeed, chooses what material to include in any topical unit. This inclusion is itself an aspect of form – that is to say, an aspect of how Suetonius’ communicates with his readers. For these reasons, “rubric” is an insufficient term for the topical unit.

In this chapter I examine the form of the topical unit. There are two aspects to the topical unit form, the internal structure of the unit and its context in a life. To make concrete these two aspects, I propose a spatial mode of conceptualizing the topical unit: the topical unit has a vertical aspect and a horizontal one. The vertical aspect denotes the internal structure of a unit and corresponds to Suetonius’ development and construction of an individual topical unit. The reader attending to the vertical aspect of a topical unit might consider in what order Suetonius presents information, what narrative technique (e.g., anecdote, direct quotation, etc.) he employs, and what and / or how many examples he elects to include in one unit. The horizontal aspect of the topical unit form consists of the topical unit’s relationship to other units. Of particular importance is the connective

\textsuperscript{78} See \textit{OED} “rubric” 2a, with the figurative extension at 2c.
affordance of the horizontal aspect of the form: it connects the units that locally surround it, the units that make up its thematic unit, and even the units that make up its polar unit or the Life as a whole.

For the remainder of this chapter, I take *Claudius* 33.1-2 as an example of a topical unit. I first examine the vertical aspect of its form and argue that Suetonius uses this aspect to persuade. The nature of this persuasion shifts depending on the topical unit; *Cl.* 33.1-2 makes its argument through characterization, as biography is wont to do. I then turn to the horizontal aspect, which I argue acts as connective tissue: paying attention to the horizontal aspect of the topical unit form is what enables the reader to connect the topical unit to the thematic unit and polar unit in which it is embedded. The argument that Suetonius makes through any one topical unit is not simply local, but bears upon the themes and interests of the Life in which it is found and the serial biographical collection as a whole. Suetonius’ use of literary form is itself a political analysis of autocracy. The two aspects of the topical unit form shapes how a reader understands a Caesar in the context of his Life and the serialized Lives, which in turn admits the possibility that the topical unit form facilitates the type of comparative analysis that Suetonius’ serial biographical form suggests.

**The Form of the Topical Unit**

In this portion of the chapter, I analyze the topical unit of *Claudius* 33.1-2 and examine the vertical and horizontal form of this unit in order to demonstrate that the form of the

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topical unit makes an argument. I employ the term argument broadly. I do not mean by it a necessarily formal argument, composed of a stated claim and a chain of evidence in a logical order. That type of argument is not open to Suetonius, who, due to his subject matter, must employ form to camouflage his claims. Rather, I mean that Suetonius nudges his readers, through certain literary devices and his application of form, toward an interpretation of the information that he has included in a topical unit. There is subtext beneath the text. This more flexible approach to the concept of an argument has two advantages.

First, it situates Suetonius within the Roman rhetorical tradition. Suetonius’ style of argumentation overlaps with what both rhetorical terms argumentum and demonstratio entail. I discuss Suetonius’ sequencing of information more fully below, but such an approach resembles the rhetorical understanding of argumentum: the formal deduction of a conclusion from presumptive evidence laid out systematically. The epideictic nature of demonstratio is relevant to Suetonius’ approach: literally, with his tendency to characterize his Caesars and their reigns by describing what they look like (I discuss this aspect of the Claudius in my treatment of 33.1-2’s horizontal form below), and metaphorically in his topical approach that implicitly makes a point through description of certain traits, personality quirks, political approaches, etc. by pointing to examples rather than stating an explicit thesis.

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80 I discuss the metaphor of camouflage in my introduction.
82 See Rhet. Her. 2.8.
The second advantage of this approach is that it suits Suetonius’ specific biographical approach. Although Suetonius’ approach is undoubtedly rooted in Roman rhetoric, he adapts it to his biographical genre. A broad understanding of what it means for him to make an argument accommodates that fact. Characterizing the subject of one’s biography is a way for the biographer to make an argument. This approach has a specific potency given Suetonius’ topical approach. Since Suetonius’ diagnosis of autocratic power in Rome is that it is the accrual of authority in discrete aspects of Roman politics and culture, the topical approach constitutes a reading of the principate as an institution. How Suetonius characterizes any one officeholder of that institution becomes a building block in constructing that argument. Such is the function of the argument, what I will often call the “characterization” of Claudius, in 33.1-2. In characterizing Claudius through his application of the topical unit form, Suetonius performs an inquiry into the nature of Roman autocratic power. Form provides this affordance in general, and my discussion below demonstrates how the topical unit form does so specifically. Each topical unit makes its own argument about its individual subject (in the following case, by characterizing Claudius), and these units cohere horizontally to contribute to the analysis of the Life at large.

The Vertical Form of the Topical Unit in *Claudius* 33.1-2

The form of the topical unit affords Suetonius different tools for analyzing an individual emperor, his habits, and his relationship to the other emperors who make up the *Caesars*.

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The vertical aspect of the form is one such tool. In this section of the chapter, I examine *Claudius* 33.1-2 as a topical unit. I first demonstrate that *Claudius* 33.1-2 is, in fact, a topical unit. I then turn to the internal structure of this particular unit: Suetonius’ alternation between generalization and specification. Next, I highlight what is a common part of the vertical form: Suetonius’ use of different narrative techniques in the topical unit (e.g., narrative, anecdote, or quotation), what might also be called a mode of writing or narrative style. This discussion gives way to another common part of the vertical aspect of the form: the parts that make up the anatomy of the unit (e.g., topic announcement sentence, elaboration, and conclusion). I end by examining the sequencing of material in the unit. These four subsections move the analysis of *Claudius* 33.1-2 from particular to general. The four subsections move in the direction of increasing relevance to topical units generally: only a few have the structure of alternating between specific and general information, more will share the specific narrative techniques found in this unit, even more will share in the anatomical parts that make up Cl. 33.1-2, and finally all topical units feature sequencing in some way. *Claudius* 33.1-2 is, by any superficial reading, a typical topical unit about a typical topic (Claudius’ excesses).\(^{84}\) In this respect, it is representative of many other units in the *Caesars* and has been chosen for the following analysis based on its representative aspects. But as I hope to show, its typicality and representativeness are partial, at best: the topical unit form defies strict categorization because the affordances of the form admit a great degree of variation. Discussion of any one unit as “typical,” therefore, runs the risk of under-representing Suetonian play with the form. His analytical approach requires a form that he can shape to the topic at hand.

\(^{84}\) See the subsection on Cl. 33.1-2 as a topical unit for examples in other Lives.
Claudius 33.1-2 as a Topical Unit

Claudius 33.1-2 is a unified unit of text that treats an identifiable topic: Claudius’ excessive habits. It follows a topical unit about Claudius’ banquets and thus shares some material with the previous topical unit, but its topic introduction and internal coherence of topic set it apart as a unit. Claudius 33 begins with Claudius’ appetite: “Claudius [had] a very strong desire for food and wine at any time and place…” (Cibi uinique quocumque et tempore et loco appetentissimus…). With the paired noun phrase cibi uinique Suetonius signals to his reader a shift in subject matter using a technique common in the Caesars: the use of a word or words to announce the subject matter of a new topical unit. Suetonius also chose his diction at the end of the preceding unit to prepare for this shift in topic at Cl. 33.1: he ends Cl. 32 with the anecdote that Claudius considered issuing an edict that excused farting at a banquet (meditatus edictum quo ueniam daret flatum crepitumque uentris in conuiuio emitendti) because he had learned of a man who had risked self-harm after holding back (ex continentia). The word continentia, here bordering on a pun, can mean “self-control” – a meaning that contrasts with the following clause (Cibi uinique quocumque et tempore et loco appetentissimus) in which Claudius does not display a personality that would exert self-control while dining.

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85 This topic is fairly common in the Caesars, even if the topic is treated differently in different Lives. The other Julio-Claudian Lives all feature “lifestyle” units in which excesses appear where applicable (some, but not all, emperors might be faulted for their stinginess, for example). For the term “lifestyle,” see Hurley 1993: 139. Caligula 36 treats extravagant excesses similarly to Claudius 33. Julius 33 is a unit about excess, but his excess is in the command of armies and the holding of political office. Augustus (Aug. 70.2-71.4) has a similarly excessive dice-playing habit. While Tiberius had excessive sexual habits (Tib. 43.1-45), he was stingy with money (46-47), in contrast to Nero’s, whose excess involved the extravagant spending of money (Ner. 30-31).

86 So reads Power 2014a: 5.
The contrast between self-control and Claudian appetite marks a shift between one topical unit and the next.

The reader, in moving from the preceding unit to Cl. 33.1-2, first confronts the phrase *Cibi uinique*. This phrase may be understood as a marker of a transition to a new topic in a new topical unit – the new topic being food and wine consumption.\(^8⁷\) However, Suetonius shortly forces his reader to reconsider what the subject of the topical unit is: after this introductory clause, Suetonius provides examples of Claudius’ excessive consumption, and one of these examples includes the fact that Claudius’ consumption made him fall asleep.\(^8⁸\) Suetonius then shifts his focus to entirely new material – or so it seems, for Suetonius next remarks on Claudius’ sleeping habits: Claudius slept very little (*somni breuissimi erat*) (Cl. 33.2). This apparent shift is anticipated by the inclusion of sleep in the material about Claudian consumption. Suetonius shifts again – this time to Claudius’ strong sexual desire for women, his sexual distance from men (*libidinis in feminas profusissimae, marum omnino expers*) (33.2).\(^8⁹\) Finally Suetonius notes that Claudius played dice very enthusiastically (*aleam studiosissime lusit*) (Cl. 33.2). Having read this far, the reader recognizes that the topic is not food and wine, but Claudius’ excesses as emblematized by Suetonius’ use of the superlative.\(^9⁰\) It is the morphology of the word *appetentissimus* that is the topic signal for the unit, and Suetonius imbues the

\(^8⁷\) See, for example, Power 2014a: 5, who takes it this way.
\(^8⁸\) Cf. *Claudius* 8.
\(^8⁹\) Baldwin 1983: 281 perplexingly thinks that this claim demonstrates Claudius’ disdain for homosexuality and is meant as a compliment from Suetonius.
\(^9⁰\) A superlative occurs in the *Claudius* 34 times (excluding one use of a stock title). That means that this topical unit, with four superlatives, accounts for nearly 12% of the superlatives in the *Claudius*. The boundaries of any one topical unit are up for debate, but according to how I have divided the Life, this is the only topical unit with four superlatives. *Cl*. 17.1-3 (about Claudius’ foreign policy and military conquests) has three superlatives. And only three to four other topical units have two (*Cl*. 14.1, 20.1-6, and 34.1), depending on whether one reads *Cl*. 14.1 as one or two topical units.
unit with an internal coherence by repeating the superlative form with each new example (the words *quicumque* and *omnino* also have a superlative feel in their absoluteness). By including an example of Claudius’ sleeping habits before properly introducing sleep as an example of Claudian excess, Suetonius stitches the unit together: there are four examples of Claudian excess. As a topic, it is an example of a topical unit on a Caesar’s mode rather than matter – that is, it is about how an emperor acts, behaves, or a personality trait (an emperor’s cruelty is another modal topic for a unit, for example) rather than about material related to an emperor (such as a topical unit on a Caesar’s written output). The first sentence of the next section (Cl. 34.1) announces a new topic, thus signaling the start of a new unit of text: “That he was, by nature, angry and bloodthirsty was made clear in big and little matters” (*Saeueum et sanguinarium natura fuisse magnis minimisque apparuit rebus*) (Cl. 34.1). The leading words *saeuem et sanguinarium* introduce the topic of this unit, and Suetonius has moved from Claudius’ excessive choices (e.g., women not men, to have his chariot fitted for a dice board) to Claudius’ natural cruelty (*natura*). The material and the focus of this passage is a break from the

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91 Henderson 2014: 85 demonstrates the organizational capabilities of the superlative in the *Caesars*, although he perhaps underrates its potency by focusing on Suetonius’ use of the superlative in conjunction with “waymarks [that] … aetiologizes the present,” declaring that “it is certainly too much of a rarity to trace an economy.”

92 For the modal topic of cruelty, see Tib. 57-62, Cal. 27-33, Cl. 34, Ner. 33-38 (one of Nero’s five vices highlighted in 26.1), Gal. 12, and Dom. 10-11. Hurley 1993: 111 would include Vit. 14, but I think the topic of that unit is broader than cruelty. The same could be said about Gal. and Dom., making the post-Julio-Claudian Lives a group, but at least in those cases Suetonius uses the word *saeuitia* so they can serve as an example to the modal topical unit here. See also Mouchová 1968: 42-48 for a helpful look at the different manifestations of *saeuitia* and *crudelitas* in the *Caesars*. For the matter-based topic of written output and a Caesar’s education generally, see Jul. 55-56, Aug. 84-89, Tib. 70-71, Cal. 53 (although Gaius does not appear to have much actual written production), Cl. 41-42 (Wardle 2014: 481 would include Cl. 40, but I think this inclusion misreads the structure of the Life and the grouping of the thematic units), Ner. 52, and Tit. 3.2. Domitian feigns an interest in poetry and liberal studies (Dom. 2.2 and 20), but only Dom. 20 could count as a matter-based topical unit by analogy with other Lives, not on its own merits.
material of the previous unit. In short, *Claudius* 33.1-2 stands as a coherent unit of text on one topic as signaled by the superlative morphology.

**Generalization and Specification in Claudius 33.1-2**

Each topical unit has its own internal structure. In crafting his topical unit on Claudian excess, Suetonius alternates between general and specific language and examples. In the process of doing so he demonstrates the interaction between generalized qualities of Claudius’ character and their manifestation in his daily life. This alternation provides the structure of the topical unit, and the reader who notices this alternation is more easily able to understand the characterization of Claudius that the unit presents. I here focus on this first claim, that the unit has an alternating structure, in order to demonstrate that topical units have internal structures, but the argument of the unit itself will appear in the subsequent subsections, and I will often invoke the structural alternation of this topical unit to bring specifically Suetonius’ characterization of Claudius to the fore.

The topical unit starts with a generalization, then shifts to a specific example. Suetonius announces the topic of this topical unit with the superlative *appetentissimus*, the morphology of which, as we have seen, recurs at other points in the unit. But he includes generalizing words that suggest that this trait is typical of Claudius. Suetonius sets the specifying superlative *appetentissimus* and its dependent objective genitives *Cibi uinique* around the generalizing temporal and spatial words *quocumque et tempore et loco*: *Cibi uinique quocumque et tempore et loco appetentissimus*. Although the sentence makes a generalizing claim about Claudius’ appetite, Suetonius alternates his syntax (specific then general then specific) – a preview of the forthcoming alternating structure.
After this generalized claim about Claudius’ appetite Suetonius invokes a specific event: Claudius left the forum of Augustus because he had been lured by the smell of food at the nearby temple of Mars. This anecdote includes the postpositive *quondam*, situating it within an established temporal (and spatial) framework and thus setting it apart from the preceding generalization even as it illustrates it.

This alternating movement recurs in the other parts of this unit. After providing the specific example of Claudius’ temple lunch, Suetonius moves from the specific back to the general: “He essentially never departs from his dining couch except full and wet and in order for a feather to be put in his mouth right away as he lay back and opening his mouth during sleep in order to unburden his stomach” (*nec temere umquam triclinio abscessit nisi distentus ac madens et ut statim supino ac per somnum hianti pinna in os inderetur ad exonerandum stomachum*) (33.1). He signals this alternation with the phrase *nec ... umquam*, entering again the generalized temporal framework. Suetonius then shifts to a different habit that exemplifies Claudius’ excess: lack of sleep (*somni breuissimi erat*) (Cl. 33.2). Sleep had been introduced obliquely in the generalized example about Claudius’ eating (*per somnum*), but now a specific problem about sleep (or the lack of it) is cited as an example of Claudian excess: lawyers take it upon themselves to rouse him from sleep by raising their voices (*uixque ab aduocatis de industria uocem augmentibus excitaretur*) because Claudius did not get enough sleep.

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93 The word *madens* seems to suggest that Claudius is drunk. Hurley 2001: 205 makes this claim, citing the *OLD* and Sen. *Ep.* 47.2. She cites the *TLL* as well. See Richter 8.0.34.33-34. It could be that *madens* refers to oil, but the appeal of Hurley’s reading is that the word *madens* echoes the *uinique* from the beginning of the topical unit. The reader already has a specific type of liquid in mind.
Alternation recurs in the final example that Suetonius offers as a demonstration of Claudian excess: his zeal for playing dice. “He played dice most zealously, about the strategy of which he even published a book, in addition even being accustomed to play while being carried around town, with a carriage and dice board having been adapted in such a way that the game not be jumbled up” (*aleam studiosissime lusit, de cuius arte librum quoque emisit, solitus etiam in gestatione ludere, ita essedo alueoque adaptatis ne lusus confunde retur*) (Cl. 33.2). After the superlative *studiosissime* Suetonius turns to Claudius’ normal practice of playing dice while being conveyed around Rome in a specially adapted carriage. In this instance, Suetonius alternates between the general and the specific by including a general claim about Claudius’ dice habits (*aleam studiosissime lusit*) and specific actions that Claudius took to make it easier to perpetuate this habit (*solitus etiam in gestatione ludere, ita essedo alueoque adaptatis ne lusus confunde retur*). This type of specification reinforces the generalized claim by emphasizing how habitual dice playing was for Claudius. There was no moment at which Claudius did not try to bring it about that he could play dice, not even when being conveyed around Rome. And this observation demonstrates how the structure of this topical unit shapes the reader’s interpretation of it. Claudius’ excesses (consumption, sleep, or even dice) reach into the smallest moments of the day, and it is the topical unit’s structure (generally) and its alternation between generalizing and specificity (in particular) that allows the reader to move through these excessive habits in one topical unit. The unit provides a distillation of excess.

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84 Baldwin 1983: 170 notes the “absurd prejudice against board games” current in Suetonius’ social circles that might have influenced his perspective on Claudius’ dice habit.
For now, it is sufficient to recognize that a topical unit has its own structure. In this case, that structure is provided by the alternation between generalization and specification. Not every topical unit has this structure, but each one is liable to structural analysis. This unit’s structure affords Suetonius the opportunity to illuminate general qualities quickly and memorably, allowing the reader to infer from both the generalized assessment and the specific examples the characterization that the vertical aspect of this topical unit’s form shapes. I quickly previewed that characterization at the end of the previous paragraph: Claudius’ excessive habits and his self-indulgence infringe on his official duties. This characterization plays a larger role in the following subsections about the vertical form of the unit, and I start with the different narrative techniques that Suetonius uses in *Claudius* 33.1-2.

**Narrative Techniques in Claudius 33.1-2**

In constructing a topical unit Suetonius employs different narrative techniques, by which I mean different modes of writing such as – for example – direct quotation, indirect quotation, summary, and the anecdote. Other types of techniques are possible too. These literary devices are not reducible to Suetonius’ style, so I avoid the term – not least because they do not necessarily encompass all that the ancient understanding of style did (such as the grand or slender styles, for example). I employ the term “narrative” in

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95 The most frequently discussed facet of writing in the *Caesars* is the anecdote. See Murphy 1991: 3780-3793 for the anecdote in Suetonius’ lives of the Flavians. See also Townend 1967: 93, who makes clear the pull of the anecdote: “The final proof of Suetonius’ success must be that he is intensely readable. Some readers may have treasured him for the obscenity of some of his anecdotes; but many more have read him again and again for the way in which he makes the Rome of the early emperors come to life, full of vital characters and utterly convincing detail.” The obscene and non-obscene anecdotes both contribute in part to the utterly convincing detail of the *Caesars.*
“narrative technique” in a similar manner to the ancient term argumentum. I noted earlier that Suetonius’ topical unit approach overlaps with the rhetorical meanings of argumentum and demonstratio; in this case, however, by argumentum, I mean the broader definition: the subject matter, theme, story, or narrative of a text. English is impoverished in this respect. It can be difficult to talk about a topical unit’s plot; theme does not seem to capture the topic of a unit. The broad meaning of the Latin word argumentum does capture the subject matter of what Suetonius writes in any one topical unit. This fact means that my phrase “narrative technique” should be understood as broader than what English means by narrative. For example, narration (the style of writing a narrative) would count as a “narrative technique.” This phrasing only feels redundant due to the paucity of English vocabulary relative to Latin rhetorical terminology.96

The topical unit – a form that affords quick movement and precise, illustrative details – accommodates the use of different narrative techniques. Suetonius employs these different devices to persuade: each technique has a different effect, and makes and shapes an argument depending on how it is employed. In this part of the chapter, I examine the narrative techniques found in Claudius 33.1-2 – summary, anecdote, and list – and demonstrate how they contribute to the characterization that this topical unit constructs – namely that Claudius’ personal excess infringed upon his public duties.97

96 I try as often as I can to avoid using Latin terminology in order to defamiliarize how we read Suetonius since he suffers to a larger degree from an accustomed way of reading the Caesars.
97 Gascou 1984: 735, “…il est incapable, non seulement de gouverner l’Empire, mais de se gouverner lui-même.” For Gascou, Claudius is lacking in majesty, and thus the requisite virtues to govern. He does not read this passage as an indictment of an autocratic system that allows the vices of any leader to compromise the state, but as an indication of Claudius’ particular deficiencies. I argue that Suetonius conducts a more institutionally-minded critique.
The first clause of *Claudius* 33.1-2, in which Suetonius announces the topic of the coming topical unit, is an example of summary: *Cibi uinique quocumque et tempore et loco appetentissimus*... This clause summarizes a lifetime habit for the reader. One way in which Suetonius summarizes material is by compressing the subject matter of a topical unit or section of a topical unit into a phrase. Summary might also compress the temporal or spatial framework of a habit into topical unit size. In this instance, it is the generalizing phrase *quocumque et tempore et loco* that serves as the compressed summary (of time and place): Suetonius reduces a lifetime habit into the space of one clause syntactically and to the framework of a topical unit conceptually. Summary affords in its application the advantage of compression. For the serial biographer writing topically this compression allows for the insertion of lifetime habits in short textual spaces – which is to say, the short topical unit capitalizing on summary can make long chronological claims. It is, so to speak, punching above its length class.

In this clause, Suetonius uses summary to describe what part of Claudius’ life the topic of the unit discusses; but summary as a facet of writing occurs outside of the topic announcement in this unit. Later in the unit, after Suetonius shifts the focus of the unit’s topic to Claudius’ lack of sleep at night, he writes (Cl. 33.2): “for he often remained awake in advance of the middle of the night with that result moreover that during the day he sometimes used to fall asleep while holding court and he was with difficulty woken up by the lawyers raising their voices on purpose” (*nam ante mediam noctem plerumque uigilabat, ut tamen interdiu nonumquam in iure dicendo obdormisceret uixque ab aduocatis de industria uocem augmentibus excitaretur*). Two summaries are present and work together here. The *nam ... uigilabat* clause is a temporal summary. The presence of
temporal adverbs again signals temporal summarization. It is followed by the *ut*-clause, another summary, that contributes more detail in the shaping of the characterization. The sentence implies that Claudius’ judicial napping was not an isolated affair, but a manifestation of consistent behavior. Suetonius situates his reader temporally and then spatially, all the while providing illustrative details: Claudius often stays up with the result that he sleeps while holding court.

These summaries show the consequences of Suetonius’ claim that Claudius slept little (*somni breuissimi erat*). The leading *nam* posits a causal relationship with the preceding description of Claudius. The function of these summaries is different than that of the earlier one, but the advantages that it affords are similar: the period of time during which Claudius would be in charge of court hearings – that is to say, his pre-principate political career and especially his imperial reign – is compressed into the space of a summary explanation of the seemingly innocuous, even banal, three-word phrase *somni breuissimi erat*. The reader might reasonably see little value in the assertion that Claudius slept little, so Suetonius compresses the most politically meaningful time period in Claudius’ life into a summarizing explanation to demonstrate how meaningful such trivial details can be. The presence of the lawyers (*aduocatis*) underscores Claudius’ dereliction of duty: it is only by the prodding of certain private agents that the civic head of state can attend to his obligations. His lack of sleep at night puts on display his lack of self-control to the implied internal audience as he nods off during trial. And so, the

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98 Suetonius writes that Claudius was energetic in administering justice as consul and when he was not a consul (*Cl*. 14). This assessment implies that Claudius was overseeing court hearings as early as 37 when he was co-consul with Gaius for two months (*Cl*. 7 and cf. Dio 59.6.1-7.9), but most of his consulships occurred during his principate, and the middle, topic-based unit of this Life focuses on Claudius’ imperial reign. For Claudius’ career, see *PIR* 2.942.
argument is made through the affordance of the summary form: if the argument of this topical unit is that Claudian excess compromises Claudian obligations, then summary is a way to make that threat pervasive. There is no place or moment in time where Claudius is not liable to indulge his excesses to too great a degree. The problem is that Claudius lacks even the most basic sense of decorum and self-regulation, and summary makes this point through its form.

A prominent narrative technique that the reader encounters in this topical unit is the anecdote. In rhetorical theory, the anecdote entails the narration of an action or utterance by the person under discussion. Typically, an anecdote conveys some sort of moral evaluation or enhances the pleasure of the reader through the inclusion of a charming or witty detail. The anecdote, conventionally defined, is usually included in a larger work for didactic or aesthetic ends. Biography, a genre that privileges attention to detail and the short quotation, is a natural home for the anecdote. One affordance of the anecdote is that it illustrates or concretizes a point for the reader and in a new form.

After announcing the initial topic in the first clause, Suetonius turns to an anecdote that demonstrates Claudius’ love of food (Cl. 33.1): “once, presiding over a trial in the forum of Augustus and struck by the strong smell of lunch that was being prepared for the Salii in the nearby temple to Mars, with the tribunal deserted, he walked up toward the priests and reclined with them” (cognoscens quondam in Augusti foro ictusque nidore prandii quod in proxima Martis aede Salii apparabatur deserto tribunali

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99 See Gibson 2008: 43-85 for a brief explication of the anecdote and series of examples from Libanius’ Progymnasmata. See also Quintilian 1.9.3-5 on chreia.
100 Plutarch Alexander 1.1-3, while not about anecdotes per se, argues that small personal details may be more illustrative in a biography than battle narrative.
ascendit ad sacerdotes unaque decubuit). In this case the anecdote concretizes and illustrates the general claim made at the beginning of the topical unit, Cibi uinique ...

appetentissimus. The specifics of the anecdote exemplify a series of failings on Claudius’ part, and it is in these failings that Suetonius’ reader discerns the implicit characterization of the topical unit itself, namely, that Claudius’ personal failings impinge upon his official duties. Because Claudius had a very strong desire for food and wine “at any time and place…” (quocumque et tempore et loco), an anecdote that narrates the excessive indulgence of this while Claudius is in the forum and overseeing a trial demonstrates the infringement that Claudius’ self-indulgence has on the state. Since the power of the head of state is held by a person with a personal life, those two aspects cannot be separated.

This anecdote not only brings to the fore Claudius’ gluttonous character in general, but also 1) puts on display Claudius’ lack of respect for Augustus and the commemorative impact that dedicated fora have for honoring their builders (in Augusti foro) and 2) likewise puts on display his lack of self-control in fulfilling his public duty in the curated space meant for it (in Augusti foro … in proxima Martis aede … deserto tribunalis). These observations bring about moral and political critique by means of the affordance of the anecdote form. Suetonius combines what might otherwise be considered distinct spheres by selecting one detail for his reader that pertains to both: here, the personal sphere of consumption and the public sphere of courts and temples.

The anecdote makes the personal public, the public political; it puts the polis and the bios in political biography. Thus, the anecdote makes clear: the lack of self-control that

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101 Power 2014a: 5-6, “biography is … the most suitable form for history-writing under the rule of a single leader.”
Claudius has in his personal life bears on his ability to conduct public business. Claudius’ problem is his excess, and it is a problem because he is a Caesar. It is by attending to the form that the reader recognizes the argument being made implicitly by the presentation of the content of the topical unit.

The final narrative technique found in this topical unit is the list. It is a minor example, and more robust examples can be found elsewhere. Nevertheless this example still demonstrates some of the affordances that the list provides. Suetonius starts the sleep portion of this topical unit with a genitive of description (*somnī breuissimi erat*) that is interrupted by a summary and then picked up again with the next portion of the unit about Claudius’ sexual preference (*Cl. 33.2*): “[he was] of the most prodigious lust for women, taking altogether no part in men” (*libidinis in feminas profusissimae, marum omnino expers*). The third element in the list displays an emphatic shift in its syntax with the nominative *expers*, capping off the list at three elements. Lists afford the use of asyndetonic juxtaposition and antithetical formulations (such as *libidinis in feminas profusissimae, marum omnino expers*), and this list juxtaposes the realm of sleep and sex, two typically nocturnal activities. But the form also creates juxtaposition through insertion. Because a list has clear and delineated elements, it is easy to insert a bit of text between two elements. In this instance, Suetonius interrupts his nocturnal list with a summary that pairs the nocturnal and diurnal: Suetonius includes the summary about Claudius’ predilection to stay up past midnight resulting in his naps in court. This

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102 See e.g., *Nero* 51.
103 Suetonius often uses genitives of description in his lists.
interruption casts Claudius’ self-indulgence as operable during the night and the day with the further problem that his nocturnal excess infringes upon his diurnal responsibilities.

In this way Suetonius makes Claudius’ excesses temporally consistent. If the phrase *quocumque et tempore et loco* is the initial indication to the reader that the topical unit’s argument will be about Claudius’ lack of temporal and spatial decorum, then the affordances and execution of this list makes clear how forcefully the personal intrudes on the official. There is no moment of the day or night at which Claudius is not liable to indulge in his excesses. The superlative in this example (*profusissimae*) is actually composed from a participle; Claudius does not just have a prodigious lust for women, but he acts on it. Suetonius imbues his list with a verbal element to emphasize the potential for Claudius to act on his excessive desires. Even the list, here an apparently minor technique in the unit compared to the others, makes a strong contribution to the unit’s overall characterization.

Other narrative techniques are possible – such as extended narration, indirect and direct quotation, and source citation – and each technique provides its own affordances to the topical unit form. I take up these techniques in the course of evaluating other topical units in the *Caesars* where appropriate. It will suffice now to conclude this section by noting that Suetonius includes and arranges the different devices in a topical unit in order to persuade. That this particular argument capitalizes on the generalization and specification logic of the unit makes it possible for the reader to intuit how the argument promotes an analytical approach to Claudius’ character and the ramifications of his character on his office of *princeps*. By vesting so much power and authority in the hands
of one man, the Roman state is liable to be ruled by somebody whose lack of self-control is harmful. This analytical framework is built into Suetonius’ use of the topical unit form.

*The Anatomical Parts of the Topical Unit Claudius 33.1-2*

So far, we have seen that Suetonius uses the topical unit form to persuade. His means, in *Claudius* 33.1-2, have thus far been specification / generalization and narrative technique. Suetonius also takes advantage of what I call the anatomical parts of the topical unit in the formation of a unit’s argument. These three parts are: 1) the topic announcement, 2) an elaboration of the topic, and 3) a pithy, occasionally sententious, conclusion. Whereas previous scholarly treatment of the so-called “rubric” tended to understand the topical unit as composed of a topic sentence and (semi-)related tidbits of supporting evidence appended to the topic sentence, I argue that Suetonius employs the different anatomical parts where appropriate to persuade. This process might even involve arranging the parts such that they break the pattern of topic announcement then elaboration then conclusion (as is the case with *Claudius* 33.1-2, as I demonstrate shortly). Although an assumed “typical” topical unit might have each part in the intuitively correct order, that might not be true about any one unit depending on the needs of its argument and Suetonius’ literary and organizational aims. Moreover, of the three parts, the conclusion is especially optional when Suetonius prioritizes the conceptual connectedness of neighboring units.\(^\text{104}\)

In the following section I treat each part as it appears in *Claudius* 33.1-2.

The topic announcement, what might have traditionally been called a topic sentence or the topical unit’s rubric, provides the reader with both the topical and the

\(^{104}\) Lewis 1991: 3662.
thematically oriented thematic orientation that Suetonius wants for the beginning of the unit. The topic announcement need not be an actual sentence or even clause. It can consist of a phrase or single word, but clauses are Suetonius’ most common method for announcing a unit’s topic. Topic announcements, therefore, admit different narrative techniques. Summary, such as the topic announcement of Claudius 33.1-2, and lists are the most typical clause-length topic announcements, but Suetonius employs other techniques as well.105

The topic announcement for Claudius 33.1-2 has been discussed above: it contains a topical tension between the phrase cibi uinique, which appears to be the announcement, and the superlative appetentissimus, which the reader retroactively discovers is the signal that the topical unit is about Claudian excess. In generating the surprise shift from food and wine consumption to excess generally as exemplified in the following four examples, Suetonius emphasizes the degree to which Claudius’ excesses are integral parts of his character, how far-reaching they are, and their capacity to have a negative effect on his execution of the duties of his principate. This impact is generated principally by Suetonius’ manipulation of the typical topical unit form: in shifting from the eating to the sleeping portion of the unit, Suetonius includes another phrase that appears to be a topic announcement in the list element somni breuissimi erat (Cl. 33.2) – another use of tension between the actual topical announcement and what appears to be a new topical announcement. This introduction could have been the start to a separate

105 For example, Claudius 41.1-2, where Suetonius begins a topical unit with the narration facet of writing to describe Claudius’ attempts to write history in a unit about Claudius’ Latin literary output generally. It may be that by introducing this unit narratively Suetonius puts on display his artistry before evaluating Claudius’ own literary (and autobiographical) output. A second example is Nero 51, which is about Nero’s physical appearance. The topic announcement consists of a list, and its juxtapositions of odious and pleasing physical attributes represents an asyndetic mimesis of Nero’s body, (itself a synecdoche of Nero’s principate – a juxtaposition of popular decisions and fatal ones).
topical unit, but here, as a “false” start, it gives the impression of excess: Claudius’ habits compound. This “second” topic announcement is followed by a third (libidinis in feminas profusissimae) and a fourth (aleam studiosissime lusit) (33.2), magnifying the effects. If, in the anatomy of a unit, the topic announcement is the head, then Claudius’ excess is a four-headed monster. It is Suetonius’ control over and subversion of his form that contributes to the unit’s argument and guides the reader to its conclusion.

The topic elaboration is the part of the unit where Suetonius illustrates, expands on, or deviates from the topic announcement. The ranges of possibility are what make the elaboration key for differentiating one emperor from the next and one topical unit from the next. Many of the Caesars were glutinous, but not all in the same way. Topic elaborations, naturally, respond to the different information that Suetonius selects to include in a unit.\textsuperscript{106}

The elaboration portions of the \textit{Claudius} 33.1-2 orient, illustrate, and draw out some important inferences about the topic that the reader may not have gleaned from the announcement alone. My discussion of the specification / generalization logic of the passage has already anticipated one of the ways that topic elaboration and topic announcement can relate to each other. In this section, therefore, I focus on the sorts of inferences that might be drawn from how Suetonius deploys the elaborative sections (in this case, the sections are: the elaboration that follows the first topic announcement about food and drink and the second announcement about sleep). In the first elaborative section,

\textsuperscript{106} See Lewis 1991: 3662 for Suetonius’ selection process.
Suetonius puts an emphasis on Claudius’ movement through specific sites in Rome.\footnote{I reproduce the Latin and my translations of both sections for ease of reference. 33.1: “once, presiding over a trial in the forum of Augustus and struck by the strong smell of lunch that was being prepared for the Salii in the nearby temple to Mars, with the tribunal deserted, he walked up toward the priests and reclined with them” (cognoscens quondam in Augusti foro ictusque nidore prandii quod in proxima Martis aede Salii apparabatur deserto tribunali ascendit ad sacerdotes unaque decubuit). 33.2: “for he often remained awake in advance of the middle of the night with that result moreover that during the day he sometimes used to fall asleep while holding court and he was with difficulty woken up by the lawyers raising their voices on purpose” (nam ante medium noctem plerumque uigilabat, ut tamen interdiu nonumquam in iure dicendo obdormisceret uixque ab aduocatis de industria vocem augmentibus excitaretur).}

The anecdote privileges spatial language. Claudius is in the forum of Augustus (\textit{in Augusti foro}) when he smells food from the nearby temple to Mars (\textit{in proxima Martis aede}). Claudius abandons the tribunal (\textit{deserto tribunali}), climbs up to the priests, and lies down to eat with them. Claudius’ behavior is unusual and, of course, excessive. This elaborative section uses an anecdote to reinforce the point of the topic announcement: Claudius engages in excessive action. But it is worth noting here that topic elaboration and anecdote are not the same; a topical unit’s topic elaboration can include different narrative techniques.

In the next elaborative section about Claudius’ lack of sleep at night, Suetonius builds on his spatial language and transitions to civic language when he notes that Claudius would fall asleep in court after getting too little sleep the night before. This episode contrasts strong civic language (\textit{in iure dicendo} and \textit{ab aduocatis uocem augmentibus}) with sleep language (\textit{obdormisceret} and \textit{excitaretur}). What might be a banal observation (Claudius did not sleep enough) generates negative political outcomes. The characterization of Claudius (that Claudius’ private excess negatively impacts his public duties) is made clear. It takes the prodding of individual actors (\textit{aduocatis}) to awaken the state from its nap. Suetonius uses the topography of Rome in the initial elaborative
section to remind his reader of Claudius’ extensive reach as a public figure into the political and religious spheres of Roman life, then shows Claudius asleep on the job in the second elaborative section. The impact of the civic duties / personal excess interchange in the sleep portion of the topical unit is heightened by being grounded in the important political and religious sites of the capital from the first elaborative section. It is not just that Claudius shirks his duty to sniff out some food; it is that he parades through spaces of remarkable importance to do it. It is not just that Claudius stays up too late; it is that he falls asleep at moments of civic importance. These topic elaborations expand on their individual topics jointly and thereby contribute to the unit’s argument.

The final part of the topical unit’s anatomy is the concluding remark. Often a pithy or sententious statement, it has the power to wrap up a topical unit or even undermine one. Sometimes this can consist of using an emperor’s words against him or undercutting a reader’s own expectations about what the unit seemed to be arguing. Because Claudius 33.1-2 does not properly have a conclusion (the end is an elaboration of the fourth “false” start topic announcement) I skip the analysis of a conclusion here. But in my subsequent analysis of other topical units, conclusions play a role.

The three anatomical parts of a topical unit are simultaneously typical and exceptional. Topical units are so common in the Caesars that the reader sees, for example, a considerable number of topic announcements – so many that it may be tempting to take them similarly or to isolate the form’s effect to announcing a topic alone. But as Claudius 33.1-2 demonstrates, Suetonius can manipulate his supposedly typical

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form. Having a repeated, structured form affords the ability to tinker – and even small changes to the form can generate large effects.

*Sequencing in Claudius 33.1-2*

The final aspect of the vertical form that I discuss in this chapter is the sequence of information that Suetonius selects for presentation. The order in which he presents information in a topical unit provides an implicit argument for how the reader should respond to that information within the unit (and within the unit’s Life and even within the serial collection as a whole).  

To a degree sequencing has already formed a part of my argument thus far. In arguing that *Claudius* 33.1-2 constitutes a coherent topical unit, I noted that sleep appears in the food and wine portion of the unit before becoming its own topic. Suetonius anticipates the second section of the unit by including its topic in the first, thereby indicating to his reader that the unit continues and does not end with the transition to Claudius’ habits of sleep. I also noted how the topic elaboration of the first two examples in the unit work together to contribute to the unit’s characterization: Suetonius starts with the spaces that Claudius treats with an insufficient amount of respect before showing what that lack of respect looks like in the form of Claudius’ courtroom nap. I might further highlight that the topic elaboration of the final excessive Claudius habit (his love of playing dice) returns to a spatial logic (even if it is not the same type of spatial logic as before): not only does Claudius play dice while being carried around town, but he even had his carriage modified so that the game would not be

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109 Hurley 1993: 60, who notes that, in a topical unit about awards given to Gaius for his generosity and clemency, Suetonius has ordered the material in a different way than Josephus and Dio but, in ordering the material thusly, has achieved an “internal logic.”
overturned (aleam studiosissime lusit, de cuius arte librum quoque emisit, solitus etiam in gestatione ludere, ita essedo alueoque adaptatis ne lusus confunderetur) (Cl. 33.2).

Suetonius caps the unit with the image of Claudian excess moving through the city.

So those examples are two ways that sequencing has found a place in my analysis of the form already; the latter is an example of how sequencing might be profitably considered in an analysis of the topical unit form. In this case what Suetonius communicates is reliant on how he communicates (as is true about form and content generally, of course). This unit prompts two more readings from Suetonius’ sequencing. First, the reader might focus on how Suetonius uses interlocking order to structure the unit. The first and third topics are about desire (food and sexual desire respectively) and the second and fourth import mental self-control. Thus the unit follows the pattern: desire, mental control, desire, mental control. This interlocking order locates Claudius’ excess at both the level of his carnal desires and his mental failings.

The second reading takes into account the order in which Suetonius presents especially the first three of the four topics: food, sleep, and sexual preference. In every other Julio-Claudian life, sexual preference (especially sexual deviancy) precedes the topical units that pertain to the “lifestyle” of any one Caesar (i.e., his eating and sleeping habits). This order contrasts with that of the Claudius. Not every life treats all four topics, but the Augustus does in the following order: sex, 68; dice, 71; food, 76; and sleep, 78. Other lives have at least one of the three lifestyle topics that Claudius shares

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110 That the reader might recognize multiple ways to understand how the sequencing of this unit works testifies to its relative lack of importance in this unit in comparison with others, such as Aug. 28.1-2 where the sequence is vital to the success of the unit. That sequencing nonetheless pays interpretive dividends to the reader attending to form in turn demonstrates the importance of sequencing to the form and the careful arrangement that Suetonius employs in presenting his material.

111 See Hurley 1993: 139.
shortly after the sex section: *Nero* 30.3 on dice, 28-29 on sex; *Caligula* 37.1 on food, 36.1-2 on sex; *Julius* 53 on food, 49.1-52.3 on sex.\textsuperscript{112} This inversion of the typical order finds further correspondence with the anatomy of the topical unit: the sex topic is the only of the four that does not receive a topic elaboration. It is both out of place and treated at a shorter length than might be expected when compared with the others. The inversion brings to the fore two of the lifestyle examples, the food and sleep examples, by placing them unexpectedly before the sex example. In the section of this chapter on the horizontal form of the topical unit Claudius’ food consumption will feature prominently, as will sleep, but to a lesser degree. Part of the role that this unit plays in the *Claudius* is as connective tissue from the binary divider of the life to the end narrative of his death. In order not to anticipate my argument in the following section of the chapter, I will leave how the topical unit functions as connective tissue for that section. But it will suffice for my argument here to note that the sequence of presentation is a part of the vertical form of the topical unit. The order in which Suetonius presents information is a key part of how he conveys meaning.

**The Horizontal Form of the Topical Unit in *Claudius* 33.1-2**

The topical unit form also provides structure to and derives interpretability from the surrounding material in a Life. In this section of the chapter, I examine the placement of 33.1-2 in the *Claudius*. Its placement is what I call the horizontal form or the horizontal aspect of the topical unit form. This aspect, in combination with the vertical aspect,

\textsuperscript{112} The *Tiberius* does not break the pattern, but his vices do not overlap with Claudius’.
makes up the whole of the topical unit form. I argue in this section that the horizontal aspect of the form constitutes connective tissue that makes coherent larger units of the life. I use the metaphor of “connective tissue” for a few reasons, but one is worth noting here: connective tissue is found between other tissues, which is to say that topical units connect other topical units, but they also connect other, larger scale, non-topical units. In fact, this connective affordance of the form is what makes the topical unit effective as a means of analyzing a Life’s subject and the principate as an institution made up of these subjects and revealed by their public actions and personalities.

The topical unit is typically short and limited in topical range. Although, as we have seen, Suetonius can use the vertical aspects of the topical unit to persuade, it is through the horizontal aspect of the form that the topical units contribute to the serial biographical form. This section of the chapter has four parts. First, I define the three contexts for the horizontal aspect of Claudius 33.1-2. Second, I examine the first of those three contexts – how Claudius 33.1-2 relates to the immediately preceding and following units, what I call its “local context.” Then I turn to its placement in the thematic unit about Claudius’ behavior. I call this the “intermediate context.” Finally, I turn to what I call the “global context,” which is the unit’s relationship to a larger defined unit of the Life. This defined set might be the whole Life, but in this case, Claudius 33.1-2 belongs to the second polar unit of the Claudius, which follows Suetonius’ assertion that Claudius was too subservient to his wives and freedmen.\footnote{On the subject of wives in the Caesars, see Mouchová 1968: 28-34.} The structure of the Claudius has been
at times denigrated.\textsuperscript{114} I hope to demonstrate in this part of the chapter that the horizontal form of the topical unit, conceived of as connective tissue, allows for a lack of obvious or explicit signposting from Suetonius. What may be useful in one Life (e.g., \textit{Aug.} 61.1) is unnecessary in another because the topical unit form affords different structures through its connective capacities.

\textit{The Three Contexts of Claudius 33.1-2}

The three contexts of the horizontal form are the local context, the intermediate context, and the global context. The intermediate context and the global context, in the case of \textit{Claudius} 33.1-2, roughly correspond to the thematic unit and the polar unit respectively. “Roughly” because the global context in this instance includes the second polar unit in the \textit{Claudius} and the final narration of his death, which is a separate section of the Life from the polar unit since the polar unit ought to be understood as bound by the middle, topic-based section of the so-called “rubric” sandwich. But, as I will argue in the section on this topical unit’s global context, \textit{Claudius} 33.1-2 connects the binary divider of the Life (\textit{Cl.} 25.5) to the narrative of his death (44.2-3). So, for the purposes of this section, it is enough to define the global context of \textit{Claudius} 33.1-2 as the stretch of text that includes the polar unit that starts at 25.5 through the narration of Claudius’ death at 44.2-3.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{114} E.g., see Baldwin 1983: 278-282 who at times calls it “one of Suetonius’ poorest effects,” “particularly amorphous,” “a teeming mess of anecdotes,” [indifferent] to order,” and composed with a “formlessness of … narrative.”

\textsuperscript{115} Baldwin 1983: 278-279 claims that the \textit{Claudius} is “one of Suetonius’ poorest efforts” partly for its amorphous structure. An alleged fault: “Claudius’ vices and virtues are not separated off into categories either formal as in the biographies of Caligula and Nero, or by more subtle transition as in the case of
To take one step down the ladder in size, the next context is the intermediate context. In the case of *Claudius* 33.1-2, I define the intermediate context as exactly corresponding to the thematic unit in which the topical unit is found. This thematic unit is *Claudius* 30-33.2, and its subject is Claudius’ behavior. It has three topical units (30, 31, and 32). The first, at an initial glance, is puzzling by analogy with the other Lives of the *Caesars*. It starts with the topic announcement, “Authority and dignity of form was not lacking in him, at least as he was standing or sitting and especially lying down” (*Auctoritas dignitasque formae non defuit ei, uerum stanti uel sedenti ac praecipue quiescenti*) (*Cl*. 30), and goes on to provide a description of Claudius’ physical features, both the good and the bad, before transitioning to his physical behaviors.116 These include his distinctive gait, the result of weak knees that do not provide support (*ingredientem destituebant poplites minus firmi*), his unsightly laugh (*risus indecens*), his anger-induced drooling mouth and runny nose (*ira turpior spumante rictu, umentibus naribus*), his stutter (*linguae titubantia*), and the shaking of his head both on a regular basis and during even a little bit of physical activity (*caputque cum semper tum in quantulocumque actu uel maxime tremulum*) (*Cl*. 30).

This topical unit might initially appear puzzling by analogy because the physical description of an emperor normally occurs much latter in a Life, closer to the end of the topic-based middle and often close to the topical unit about the subject’s liberal Domitian.” But such an assessment does not take into account that there may have been different structural aims for the *Claudius*. This chapter points to what might have been some of Suetonius’ structural aims.  

116 The readings of α (*et ueterum stanti*) and β (*uel stanti*) have caused scholars trouble. See Hurley 2001: 200-201 who finds the text unredeemable. Kaster 2016b: 192, following Oudendorp and Bentley, rightly prints *ei, uerum stanti* on the grounds that *uerum* anticipates the coming *ceterum et ingredietem ... et agentem*. As I argue below, this thematic unit is about Claudius’ increasingly active negative behaviors. The *uerum ... ceterum* contrast starts with positive features and then moves to negative behaviors that undercut Claudius’ supposed *auctoritas* and *dignitas*. 

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learning.\textsuperscript{117} Some topical units about an emperor’s physical description even follow the narration of his death. Only the \textit{Titus} has a physical description of its subject earlier in the Life than the \textit{Claudius}.\textsuperscript{118} Another reason that this topical unit might initially appear puzzling is the leading phrase \textit{Auctoritas dignitasque formae}. None of these words is out of place in accordance with its typical usage; \textit{auctoritas} in particular can be used to discuss somebody’s physical appearance and how people interpret his or her fitness to have authority over others.\textsuperscript{119}

But only one other Life uses the concept of \textit{auctoritas} to introduce an emperor’s appearance: the \textit{Titus}, the \textit{Claudius’} structural compatriot in physical description. Both the unit in the \textit{Titus} and this unit here deal with their subject’s fitness to rule others based on their physical appearance. That the \textit{Claudius} unit undercut his appearance with his physical behaviors stands in contrast to the \textit{Titus} unit. The sequencing of information in \textit{Claudius} 30 makes a different argument than \textit{Titus} 3 does. But the appearance of a physical description unit so early in both Lives marks a similarity of function: by putting this unit so early in the two Lives, Suetonius adapts the unit to different analytical ends than what might be the ends of the other ten Lives. So, the reader is left to puzzle over the use of the word \textit{auctoritas} at \textit{Claudius} 30. There is a pun at play: the word \textit{auctoritas} can mean the weight of authority derived from one’s physical appearance, but it also has a larger socio-political sense by which the person in a lower social or political role

\textsuperscript{117} See Baldwin 1983: 278-280, who critically notes the unusual placement of this topical unit. The topic of Claudius’ appearance has already been raised in the \textit{Claudius}, moreover: Suetonius includes a letter from Augustus (\textit{Cl.} 4.5) that expresses his displeasure with Claudius “movement and bearing and gait” (\textit{motum et habitum et incessum}). Augustus wishes that Claudius would choose better friends in order to imitate their physical attributes and, by implication, thereby reform his moral character. See Hurley 2001: 79-80.


\textsuperscript{119} See, especially, \textit{OLD} 8 and \textit{TLL} Münischer 2.0.1233.52-53.
recognizes the authority of the person in a higher role to exert power over him or herself as derived from their behavior (in addition to other sources of authority, of course). I treat this topic more fully below when I turn to the intermediate context of *Cl.* 33.1-2, but my argument there is that the three topical units that make up this thematic unit showcase the negative behaviors of Claudius that undermine his *auctoritas* and *dignitas*: his body may display them, but his physical behaviors, habits at the dining table, and excessive habits do not. For now, it is sufficient to claim that *Cl.* 30-33.2 make up a thematic unit about Claudius’ behavior.

The final of the three contexts, and the smallest of the three, is the local context. Like the global context in this case, local context is easier to define and requires less argumentation than the intermediate context: it is simply the relationship between *Cl.* 33.1-2 and its adjacent topical units (*Cl.* 32 and 34). It is worth noting that *Cl.* 33.1-2 may be of particular interest because it is the end of a thematic unit, so its local context is one of transition. I start with the local context.

*Horizontal Form in Claudius 33.1-2: The Local Context*

The local context of the horizontal form concerns how the topical unit in question relates to the preceding and following units. In the case of *Claudius* 33.1-2 the preceding topical unit (*Claudius* 32), introduced to the reader as about Claudian banquets, is about Claudius’ actions at the table. It is structured around banqueting diction (*conuiuia ... conuiuatus est ... conuiuae*) and narrates different actions that Claudius took at the dinner table, so to speak. The unit that follows, *Claudius* 34.1-2, starts off a multi-topical-unit

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120 Hurley 2001: 202-204.
thematic section about Claudius’ character. This individual topical unit is about Claudius’
cruelty. 121 In the following analysis, I focus principally on the relationship between Cl.
33.1-2 and 34 in order to avoid redundancy, since Cl. 32 will feature prominently in the
intermediate context section. But I start with a brief discussion of Cl. 32 since it does
pertain to the discussion of the local context. In the following analysis of the local
context, I first introduce Cl. 32 and 34 as topical units before turning to their relationship
with Cl. 33.1-2.

Claudius 32, nominally about Claudius’ banquets is actually about his actions at
the table. It starts by discussing his habit of having large banquets and mentions a story
where Claudius almost drowns at a lakeside banquet. Next: Claudius always invited
children to sit at the foot of the dining couches. He also invited back a guest who had
stolen a golden cup and set him a clay cup in its place. Finally, Suetonius relates that it
was said that Claudius thought about issuing an edict allowing noisy farts after hearing
about a man who risked his health after holding back. All of these summaries and
anecdotes involve Claudius’ actions during a meal. The unit therefore is not actually
about banquets strictly speaking. The unit’s argument is that Claudius’ table-side
manners are odd relative to the social norms of his time – especially for the princeps,
since banquets and dining could be potent political tools. Sometimes this could be due to
over ambition and a lack of foresight, such as when he almost drowned (paene
summersus) when trying to host a banquet at the outlet to lake Fucinus presumably by not
attending to the conditions that might lead to the water overflowing its banks (cum emissa
impetu aqua redundasset). Other times it is a marker of an old-fashioned attitude (more

121 Mouchová 1968: 43-48 treats as one category “Saevitia, crudelitas.”
uteri), such as Claudius’ decision to have children sit at the feet of the couch as he dines. That Claudius is ill-equipped for certain types of social interaction is clear from other parts of the Claudius.\textsuperscript{122} This social deficiency on his part seems to explain both defects in his moral character and relationships. \textit{Cl}. 32 seems to be offering up unusual behavioral quirks, and not endearing ones, that set Claudius apart from his social circle, using dining as a particularly accessible arena for criticism. The choice of dining is especially apt because it can entail a wide range of relationships. The sequencing of the unit is a good indicator here: Suetonius moves from Claudius dining with six hundred people (\textit{sesceni}) to his children and other noble children (\textit{liberos suos cum pueris puellisque nobilibus}) to the cup-stealing guest, and finally back to a large audience, those who would read the edict that Claudius considered publishing about flatulence (\textit{meditatus edictum}).

But this unit’s specificity of topic and examples stands in contrast to the following topical unit about Claudian excess, which has a specific topic but four wide-ranging examples of that topic; and, this contrast demonstrates the varying levels of impact that Claudius’ behavior can have in different social contexts. In the first, Suetonius provides the reader with specificity and consistency in order to make an argument that Claudius’ habits betray social unease. The banquet, and the dining table in general, is an important social context for the emperor, and Claudius’ inability to act appropriately in that context demonstrates a specific type of behavior problem. This topical unit is the \textit{mise en scène} of a series of Claudian farces: the dining room is the setting for Suetonius’ analysis. The

\textsuperscript{122} See, for example, Claudius’ inability to negotiate the perception that he is stupid, forgetful, and thoughtless \textit{(Cl. 38.3-39.2)}. 101
second unit, however, expands Claudius’ (mis)behavior into different topics and under a more menacing framework: excess is a more destructive vice than social ineptitude, and the public consequences of his habits are made more manifest in *Cl.* 33.1-2. The two units work together to create an increasingly negative analysis of Claudian behavior. The sequencing of the topical units themselves builds a powerful argument about Claudius’ embodiment of the state. Or, to put it another way, the structure of the *Claudius* and the horizontal form of the topical unit reveal the true behavioral impact of the Claudian exercise of power. I will return to the relationship between *Cl.* 32 and 33.1-2 in the intermediate context, although from a different perspective (one that takes into account the whole thematic unit). But for now, I turn to the relationship between *Cl.* 33.1-2 and 34.

*Claudius* 34.1-2 is a topical unit about Claudius’ cruelty. It is introduced by the leading phrase *Saeuum et sanguinarium*, the unit’s topic announcement. What follows this topic announcement is a series of summaries and anecdotes that form the topic elaboration. These summaries and anecdotes move from legal punishment doled out in an excessive manner to Claudius’ appetite for especially fatal gladiatorial combat (beyond the normal level of fatalities) to the forcing of non-gladiatorial combatants into the ring. The unit concludes with the particularly vivid image of Claudius sending even one of his personal attendants to fight in a toga. The sequence of the unit appears to move toward increasingly inappropriate action from Claudius in satiating his bloodlust. It may be socially and ethically problematic to take excessive pleasure in criminal executions, but it
is certainly beyond the pale to send a toga-wearing attendant into the arena.\textsuperscript{123} The implicit claim that the unit appears make is that Claudius’ cruel character distorts normal public affairs into compromised sites of bloodsport and that this is only possible because imperial power gives such a character license to direct the proceedings beyond normative expectations. For example, Suetonius writes that whenever games were held, “either under his control or that of another” (\textit{uel suo uel alieno}) (\textit{C}. 34.1), Claudius would order those who had slipped by accident to be killed so that he could watch the faces of those dying; imperial power run amok, it seems. The final image of the toga-wearing attendant makes clear the dire consequences of a bloodthirsty imperial prerogative: a symbol of Republican debate (\textit{cedant arma togae}) is sent into the arena by order of the \textit{princeps}.

The reader attending to the horizontal aspects of the topical unit form might ask what Suetonius achieves by putting these units next to each other. Two points pertain to this question. First, in finishing his thematic unit on Claudian behavior (I discuss this further shortly) with a topical unit on Claudian excess before moving to a thematic unit on Claudian character that starts with a topical unit on cruelty, Suetonius puts next to each other two qualities that should be dangerous in combination. Behavior and character are, of course, highly related components of a person, with one influencing the other, and in highlighting Claudius’ excessive behaviors as the final topical unit before transitioning to Claudius’ cruel nature, Suetonius suggests that Claudius will have little moderation in his cruel actions. The reader is primed to see the examples that Suetonius gives of

\textsuperscript{123} Readers who want an example of linear sequencing in the vertical form of the topical unit, in contrast to the multivalent sequencing of \textit{Claudius} 33.1-2, find an especially well composed one here. Each example in the topic elaboration seems to elicit a bit more horror until the readers find themselves rather far from an emperor who directs the torture at an interrogation. On Claudius’ complicated history of torture, see Hurley 2001: 207-208.
Claudius’ cruelty as excessive since the reader has just gone through four habits that put on display Claudian excess.

For my second point, I return to the first sentence of Claudius 34.1-2, which I touched on briefly when arguing that Claudius 33.1-2 is a coherent topical unit: Saeuum et sanguinaria natura fuisset magnis minimisque apparuit rebus (Cl. 34.1). There I argued that Saeuum et sanguinarium signaled a transition to a new topical unit. But it may be worth noting here that Suetonius includes a superlative in the adverbial phrase magnis minimisque ... rebus. On the one hand, this adverbial phrase, by balancing the superlative with the positive adjective in magnis, introduces a new scale of analysis of Claudius: Suetonius is not playing on the extreme edges alone, but includes the extreme and the moderate in his depiction of Claudius’ cruelty. On the other hand, it suggests a connection between the two topical units: Claudian extremes still matter, whether the topic is excess or cruelty. So, the nature of the shift in scale should not be exaggerated. The adverbial phrase still does include a superlative (the topic announcement of the unit on Claudian excess). The question then becomes the nature of Claudian excess and cruelty. It is in this respect that the point that I want to make here is related to but slightly different from my first point, and it is based on Suetonius’ use of the word natura: in highlighting excess as a personal vice that impinges on Suetonius’ public activity, Suetonius primes his reader to expect more examples of this vice when moving from the behavior thematic unit of the life to the vice thematic unit. By asserting that Claudius’ is cruel by nature, Suetonius makes the point that Claudius’ excess is not simply habit-forming or derived from his bad behavior: it is part of his nature and will have more consequences than even the habits that preceded this unit showed. In this respect,
Suetonius has carried forward the public / personal argument made in Cl. 33.1-2. The horizontal function here shows how the connective tissue operates at the most local of levels.

**Horizontal Form in Claudius 33.1-2: The Intermediate Context**

The intermediate context takes into account the topical unit’s placement in its thematic section (if it belongs to one) and that section’s placement within its context in the Life. Because Cl. 33.1-2 ends a thematic unit on Claudius’ behavior (Cl. 30-33.1-2) and the next unit concerns his character (Cl. 34-40), some of the analysis above about the local context also applies to the intermediate context, especially in how the buildup of Claudian behavior primes the reader for the vices of his character. The interpretability generated by moving between differently sized units, such as thematic units and topical units, plays a role in the local context horizontal form of Cl. 33.1-2 as well as its intermediate context. This section focuses on the thematic unit itself and its culmination in 33.1-2 as an example of the intermediate context, and in this section I move sequentially through the thematic unit, demonstrating that each section in the unit contributes to a thematic unit about Claudius’ behavior. My argument, as it pertains to Cl. 33.1-2, is that the thematic unit is structured around increasingly active behavior on Claudius’ part such that Cl. 33.1-2, on Claudian excess, treats Claudius’ most active behavior. These behaviors, from the passive to the active, undermine in action what could have been Claudius’ natural claim on the twinned *auctoritas dignitasque*.

As I briefly discussed above in my discussion of the intermediate context, Claudius’ positive physical traits seem to confer on him an authority and dignity, at least
when he is standing, sitting, or lying down. This assertion begins a topical unit (Cl. 30-31) on Claudius’ physical description and behavior. Suetonius explains this initial assertion with reference to Claudius’ physical features: “for he had both a tall and not thin body and a beautiful face and white head of hair, plump neck” (nam et prolixo nec exili corpore erat et specie canitieque pulchra, opimis ceruicibus) (Cl. 30). Claudius’ height and appearance are congruous with the assertion Auctoritas dignitasque formae non defuit ei, and even odd details, such as that about his plump neck, support the assertion. A contrast with Nero may be instructive: Nero has a “fat neck” (ceruice obesa) (Ner. 51); the difference between the adjectives opimus and obesus benefits Claudius, as does Suetonius’ choice to employ the plural for Claudius since it denotes a symmetry of body part.

But Suetonius soon shifts his syntax (ceterum) and examples; instead of Claudius being the subject accompanied by ablatives of description, his physical ticks and behaviors take on the subject position and Claudius the object (Cl. 30) – noteworthy because of how rare it is in the Caesars for a Life’s Caesar not to be the subject of a sentence:

...ceterum et ingredientem desituebant poplites minus firmi et remisse quid uel serio agentem multa dehonestabant, risus indecens, ira turpior spumante rictu, umentibus naribus, praeterea linguae titubantia caputque cum semper tum in quantulocumque actu uel maxime tremulum.

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124 I reproduce here the sentence and my translation for ease of reference: “Authority and dignity of form was not lacking in him, indeed as he was standing or sitting and especially lying down” (Auctoritas dignitasque formae non defuit ei, uerum stanti uel sedentiae praecipue quiescenti) (Cl. 30).
125 See G-L 204.6. Hurley 2001: 201 makes the same assertion. In contrast, see A-G 101.4 note 1, which asserts that ceruices is plural by signification in Latin but best translated into English in the singular. See also OLD ceruix.
...but otherwise his weak knees failed him as he walked and in addition many things made him look disreputable as he did anything leisurely or seriously, his indecorous laugh, his anger rather repulsive because of his drooling mouth, his wet nostrils, in addition the stuttering of his speech and his head that very maximally shook both all the time but especially when he was engaged in the least bit of activity.

The *ceterum* that starts this passage marks a transition from Claudius’ physical features, which bolster his claims to *auctoritas dignitasque*, to his physical behavior, which undermines these claims. Suetonius implies that Claudius’ body itself is pleasing to the eye, but that in the sorts of movements that plague Claudius it is repulsive. It is in Claudius’ physical behaviors that he finds his *auctoritas dignitasque* undercut. The sequencing of this topical unit, therefore, best demonstrates its argument, bolstered by its facet of writing. The juxtaposed lists (set up by the *uerum ... ceterum*) of his features and physical behaviors create a contrast that the sequence of their presentation solidifies. And as the first topical unit of a thematic unit on Claudian behaviors overall, these initial behaviors already invoke the political consequences of Claudius’ personal behaviors under the heading *auctoritas dignitasque formae*.

These behaviors are almost completely passive, however – barely more active than the features of his body as he is standing, sitting, or lying down. So Suetonius’ inclusion of them in this passage inches, rather than leaps, into the realm of behavior. The following topical unit (*Cl*. 32), which I have already discussed in the local context section, portrays a more active Claudius: his behavior has a more explicit impact on other people and demonstrates an implied intentionality or conscious thought at work. The reader moves from the relatively straightforward claim that Claudius “held both large and regular banquets and as a rule in very wide open places” (*Conuiuia agitauit et ampla et*
assidua ac fere patentissimis locis), through a more specific example that “he feasted even next to the outlet of the Fucinian lake” (conuiuatus est et super emissarium Fucini lacus), to two examples of Claudius’ dining habits more generally (the former a summary and the latter an anecdote) – namely that 1) he invited (adhibebat) his children and other noble-born children to dine at the feet of the couches in accordance with the “old custom” (more ueteri) at every dinner (omni cenae) and 2) he invited back a guest thought to have stolen a golden cup and placed (apposuit) a clay cup in its place. The final example that Suetonius musters is that “Claudius is said even to have considered an edict” (dicitur etiam meditatus edictum) that excused people who fart at a banquet since he had learned of a man who risked his health holding back. Claudius, as is typical for Suetonian style, is back to being the subject of the unit’s main verbs (agitauit, conuiuatus est, adhibebat, apposuit, and even meditatus), and this change in subject indicates the increasingly active behavior that is the thread of this thematic unit. In this case, the behavior is restricted to Claudius’ actions at the table – either specific actions (hence the use of anecdote) or general actions (summary).

But I want to focus on the last example (about the rumor that Claudius was mulling over the release of a farting “how-to” for banquets). I have already argued in my discussion of the local context that Cl. 32 and 33 differ in their social context from the table to society at large. A similar line of thought demonstrates how the intermediate context, the thematic unit, is structured around Claudius’ increasingly active behavior, especially in contrast to his behavior in the topical unit that makes up Cl. 30-31. The formulation dicitur etiam meditatus edictum makes two assumptions: 1) it assumes a broadening of the social sphere and 2) an intentionality on the part of Claudius. Claudius
remains in the subject of the sentence, but another agent is implied: those who are spreading the rumor. And the participle *meditatus* makes Claudius’ intentionality explicit. He is an agent in this anecdote. So, a helpful contrast: the assertion that Claudius laughed indecorously (*risus indecens*) lacks both assumptions. It is a behavior on Claudius’ part, and the reader is able infer how other people might react to this behavior (the reader is given a clue: it undermines his *auctoritas dignitas*), but it does not admit another person necessarily in its syntax. Nor does it require much agency from Claudius himself; he laughs indecorously, just like he drools when angry, whether he wants to or not.

*Cl.* 33.1-2 serves as the final topical unit in this thematic unit about Claudius’ behavior, and it is in this unit that Claudius’ behavior is fully active. Two points are worth noting. First, as I mentioned above, the examples are not nearly as focused as they are in *Cl.* 32: Claudian excess encompasses much more than tableside behavior, and Suetonius’ inclusion of Claudius’ sex life, for example, makes for a more robust cap on the thematic unit of behavior than the narrowly focused preceding unit. Second, the syntax is unrelentingly active: gone are any passive verbs which have Claudius as their subject except for one, the verb *excitaretur*, when Claudius is asleep and his passivity is the offending element of his lack of self-control. The active-passive line that Suetonius walks with the formulation *dicitur etiam meditatus edictum* is left in the middle topical unit of this thematic unit. There is a temptation to take Claudius’ behaviors in this polar unit as passive generally because the binary divider states that Claudius was subservient to his wives and freedmen. But the syntax and sequencing of the topic units themselves

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127 Hurley 2014a: 34-35 makes this argument about the second half of the *Claudius* generally and argues that the *Claudius* has its “own awkward moment” as a result of the binary divider’s logic. But this analysis
and the thematic unit as a whole put on display the range of Claudius’ behavior, both passive and active. Despite the causes of turmoil in his private life, Claudius is still the princeps, and his behavior reflects the awesome power that that entails, as well as the consequences of the misapplication of that power. In the next subsection, I take on how this topical unit fits into the Life at large, and the polar unit will be of a significant importance in that analysis.

**Horizontal Form in Claudius 33.1-2: The Global Context**

The global context takes into account a topical unit’s placement within either a polar unit or the whole of a Life or both. Some Lives do not have polar units, and those that do demonstrate different relationships between the polar unit and the whole Life – which is to say that some polar units are more or less integrated into the structure of their Lives. In the case of the *Claudius*, the Life has a binary divider predicated on Claudius’ alleged subordination to his wives and freedmen. This rationale for dividing the Life has specific consequences for the structure of the *Claudius* itself – namely, that there is a strong degree of integration between the logic of the divider and the narrative account of Claudius’ death at the end of the Life. That is to say, the binary divider, second polar unit of the Life, and the narrative account of Claudius’ death are thematically linked. It is *Claudius* 33.1-2, as connective tissue, that partially facilitates this linkage. The topical unit about Claudian excess makes the argument that his personal vices impinge on his public duty, and in this way the unit is a microcosm of much of the Life as a whole: the

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assumes that the binary divider’s role is a clean division when in fact topics and analysis recur on both sides of it.
second polar unit, which focuses on Claudius’ personal qualities, undercuts much of the first, which focuses on his public administration. In this section of the chapter, I show how *Claudius* 33.1-2 connects the binary divider in the *Claudius* to the narrative of his death: the horizontal aspect of the topical unit form constitutes connective tissue between two (seemingly) disparate parts of the Life. In utilizing this connective affordance of the horizontal form, Suetonius provides his reader with an implicit connection between Claudian subordination and his murder.

Two fairly consistent structural components of the Lives in the *Caesars* are the binary divider (when they occur) and the narrative of a Caesar’s death. In the case of the *Claudius*, the two are connected in part by *Claudius* 33.1-2. The global context of that unit, therefore, is best understood as the text between those two markers rather than just the second polar unit of the Life. I turn first to the binary division (*Cl. 25.5*):

*Sed et haec et cetera totumque adeo ex parte magna principatum non tam suo quam uxorum libertorumque arbitrio administravit, talis ubique plerumque qualem esse eum aut expediret illis aut liberet.*

But even these things and the others and in fact almost his whole principate he administered not so much by his own judgment as by that of his wives and freedmen, such a man in all places most of the time as it was either useful to them for him to be or pleasing to them.

In this passage, Suetonius highlights the control over Claudius that his wives (*uxorum*) and freedmen (*libertorumque*) possess. The political implications are made explicit through Suetonius’ diction: *administravit* and *totum ... principatum*. The leading *et haec* refers to the public material that precedes this transition in the Life, and the accompanying *et cetera* indicates that there is more material that has been left out – or
material that might be assumed to be forthcoming. The nature of control over Claudius is even examined. Political decisions are not carried out so much by means of his judgment as those of his wives and freedmen (non tam suo quam uxorum libertorumque arbitrio), and this discrepancy between the nominal and actual process of arriving at a political outcome derives from their general control over Claudius (talis ubique plerumque qualem). Their control is multifaceted too: it is both useful to them (expediret) and a source of pleasure (liberet). Suetonius’ diction suggests that Claudius’ wives and freedmen assert a considerable degree of control over him, that this control has actual political consequences, and that it even has consequences for what sort of person Claudius is (talis).

Suetonius’ narrative of Claudius’ death shows how that malleability of personhood works. It is not that Claudius changes who he is at some imagined innate level, but rather that his wives and freemen have a control over his impulses and desires that can be activated at certain moments. His wife and freedman take advantage of this fact to murder him (Cl. 44.2-3):

et ueneno quidem occisum conuenit, ubi autem et per quem dato discrepat. quidam tradunt epulanti in arce cum sacerdotibus per Halotum spadonem praegustatorem, alii domestico conuiuio per ipsam Agrippinam, quae boletum medicatum auidissimo ciborum talium optulerat. etiam de subsequentibus diuersa fama est. multi statim hausto ueneno obmutuisse aiunt excruciatumque doloribus nocte tota defecisse prope lucem, nonnulli

128 Hurley 2001: 180 suggests the former. I suggest the latter only on the grounds that the binary divider might be looking forwards as well as backwards.
129 See my discussion of vocabulary such as talis in my introduction.
130 On the structure of the end of the Claudius, especially the aftermath of the death scene, see Power 2014b: 65-68. For discussion of Suetonius’ creative deployment of techniques that unite historicity and drama in his assassination scenes, see Ash 2016: 200-216. Damon 2018: 122-124 emphasizes the murkiness of the narrative, showing how Claudius, as the other Caesars, undergoes a transformation into a new “not-Caesar” in his death. Gasco 1984: 281-293 attempts to reconstruct the sources that Suetonius used for his narrative of Claudius’ death.
inter initia consopitum, deinė cibo affluente euomuisse omnia, repetitumque toxico, incertum pultine addito cum uelut exhaustum refici cibo oporteret, an immisso per clysterem, ut quasi abundantia laboranti etiam hoc genere egestionis subuentretur.

And it is agreed that he was indeed killed by poison, but there is a difference of opinion about where and through whom it was given. Some claim that it was given to him while he was dining with priests on the Capitoline by the eunuch Halotus, his food-taster; others that it was given to him at a banquet at home through Agrippina herself, who had offered a poisoned mushroom to him, incredibly inclined to this sort of food. Even of what happened next there are opposing stories. Many say that he fell silent immediately after the poison had been swallowed and that he, tortured by pains throughout the whole night, died close to dawn; some that he passed out at first, then, since the food was abundant, vomited up everything, and was again poisoned, [and] it was uncertain whether it was added to his mush, since it was right that he, as if he were exhausted, be restored by food, or introduced by an enema so that there might be relief for him, as if he were laboring due to the abundance of food, from even this type of purging.

Comparison with *Claudius* 25.5 shows the degree to which Claudius is tempted by his wives and freedmen – and the control they derive from manipulating his temptations. In both narratives presented in 44.2-3, a wife and freedman administer the poison. But there is not much else that concretely connects these two passages of structural and organizational importance in the *Claudius*. Although they both touch on Claudius’ relationship to his wives and freedmen, Suetonius does not exploit that explicitly. Or, rather, he does not exploit it in these two passages; but *Claudius* 33.1-2, as connective tissue between these prominent passages, provides the conditions by which the threat looming in *Cl*. 25.5 is finally realized in a fatal poisoning as described in *Cl*. 44.2-3. It is

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131 Hurley 2001: 237 points out that “the freedman Halotus continued to serve Nero and was made a procurator by Galba.” These events are presumably what allow us to know that he is a freedman and not a slave. Baldwin 1983: 164 praises Suetonius’ dual-narrative approach for being even-handed, especially in comparison with Tacitus’ account.
Cl. 33.1-2 (the topical unit) that illuminates the behaviors of Claudius that allow for his death.

To start with the most basic element, *Claudius* 33.1-2 presents to the reader Claudius’ exclusive sexual drive for women (*libidinis in feminas profusissimae, marum omnino expers*). This sexual drive represents a temptation – combined with Claudius’ lack of self-control made clear generally at *Cl*. 33.1-2 – that provides his wives with a way to manipulate and tempt him. The reader, in being provided these hints, constructs an implied relationship that culminates in Claudius’ death: his wives have control over him (*Cl*. 25.5), Claudius lacks self-control and is tempted by women sexually and food generally (*Cl*. 33.1-2), and in Suetonius’ narrative of Claudius’ death Agrippina tempts Claudius with poisoned mushrooms (*Cl*. 44.2).

Other parts of the death narrative find explanation in *Cl*. 33.1-2. Both narratives of his death provide contexts for how Claudius was poisoned. In the first, Halotus is able to poison Claudius while he was dining with priests on the Capitoline (*epulanti in arce cum sacerdotibus*) (*Cl*. 44.2). This meal would have been to commemorate the *Augustalia* (and Claudius was a member of the *sodales Augustales*). But Suetonius does not provide these details. Instead, he uses the word *sacerdos*, a word repeated from 33.1 (*sacerdotes*), where Claudius also dines with priests on the Capitoline. The word *sacerdos* appears in the *Claudius* only six times, and only twice after the binary divider, *Cl*. 33.1 and *Cl*. 44.2. The structure of the Life gives these two instances prominence. At *Cl*. 33.1, Claudius’ excess led him to the priests for lunch after smelling their food. The

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132 Hurley 2001: 237. For the ambiguity of where the meal might have occurred (the *arx* specifically or the Capitoline generally) see Hurley and Richardson 1992: 69-70.
reader’s memory of Claudius’ love of food is activated by the similarity of these two situations, which might explain Suetonius’ vague formulation *in arce cum sacerdotibus*. These cannot be the same priests with whom Claudius lunched in the Temple to Mars (which is not on the Capitoline), but his lack of detail here allows the reader to call to mind *Cl*. 33.1.

In the second narrative, Agrippina succeeds in poisoning Claudius because she took advantage of his love for mushrooms (*boletum medicatum auidissimo ciborum talium*) (44.2). The superlative phrase *auidissimo ciborum talium* is another echo of 33.1. There the phrase *cibi uinique … appetentissimus* signals that Claudian excess includes a strong craving for food with both superlatives taking objective genitives that are food.

The uneven distribution of superlatives lends credence to this connection above and beyond the similarity in syntax and content. Of the 34 superlatives in the *Claudius*, 20 occur before the binary divider, making the second structural half of the Life lighter on superlatives. If the search is narrowed to exclude irregular superlatives on the assumption that it is the -*issimus*, -*errimus*, or -*illimus* morphology that might trigger a connection between the two passages, five more superlatives drop out of that 20 with no irregular superlatives occurring before the binary divider. One further refinement: only five superlatives occur between *Cl*. 33.1-2 and *Cl*. 44.2-3, with four of those being irregular superlatives, making it one of the most barren stretches in the Life. Given that *Cl*. 33.1-2 is the most superlative-abundant topical unit in the Life, it seems reasonable to expect that Suetonius’ use of *auidissimo ciborum talium* recalls *Cl*. 33.1-2 for his reader. The individual aspects of Claudian excess given in 33.1-2 provide the conditions for how his murder is carried out. Both sexual desire and craving for food constitute part of the
connection between 25.5 and 44.2-3. They are the personality traits that enable the agents of power over Claudius (from Cl. 2.5.5) to kill him (Cl. 44.2-3).

Sexual desire and gluttony are not the only components of Claudian excess that recur in his death narrative. Sleep plays a role too, as does Claudius’ comfort with the insertion of foreign objects into his mouth while sleepy due to discomfort from consumption. In one of the narratives that Suetonius relates, he writes that Claudius was unconscious (consopitum sc. esse) (Cl. 44.3) after eating – a habit mentioned in 33.1 as well. At 33.1 Suetonius shows that Claudius allowed others to put a feather in his mouth in order to alleviate his overburdened stomach. That familiarity with allowing others to put items in his mouth as he sleeps recurs in 44.3. After vomiting due to an excess of food (deinde cibo affluente euomuisse omnia), Claudius allowed himself to be re-poisoned when somebody else fed him mush on the grounds that he must be weak (pultine addito cum uelut exhaustum refici cibo oporteret). The story goes even further: Claudius may have allowed a poisoned enema to be introduced in order to relieve his stomach of the abundance of food (immisso per clysterem, ut quasi abundantia laboranti etiam hoc genere egestionis subueniretur). As with Claudius’ sexual preferences and his craving for food, his post-binge sleep habits set the conditions for those who exert power over him to kill him. The topical unit about Claudian excess connects the binary division to the death narrative.

The final example of Claudian excess, a zeal for dicing, does not recur explicitly, but it may be worth noting that Agrippina attempts to keep Claudius’ death secret by bringing in comic actors as if to entertain him on his request (et inducti per simulationem comoedi qui uelut desiderantem oblectarent) (Cl. 45). The logic of the ruse is that
entertaining diversions easily distract Claudius. Comic actors may not be dice, but the logic that Agrippina employs in bringing them in seems to understand Claudius’ dicing habit as part of a larger component of his personality.

The global context of this topical unit’s horizontal form is its placement within the polar unit that constitutes the second structural half of the *Claudius*. As a topical unit that falls in that polar unit, it functions like connective tissue: in this specific instance, that connective quality is predicated on the ways by which Suetonius previews the conditions by which the sorts of people introduced in *Cl.* 25.5 bring about Claudius’ downfall in *Cl.* 44.2-3.

**Conclusion: The Dominant Form**

The topical unit form, with its vertical and horizontal aspects, is the dominant structural building block of Suetonius’ serial biographical form. Because of its prevalence in the *Caesars* and its analytical and argumentative affordances, the topical unit, and especially its form, is vital to a reader’s comprehension of the *Caesars*. Those who attend to the unit’s form and argument derive maximal meaning from the biographical collection; those who do not do so avoid it at their peril. Suetonius presents his reader with a wealth of information, and much value has been derived from mining it.133 But if the *in situ* context of a gold nugget matters little for the nugget’s overall value, the same cannot be said about, for instance, a Suetonian anecdote. Attempts to free the anecdote from its context will always be, on some level, compromised ventures because Suetonius embeds

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133 A pointed made well by Power and Gibson 2014: v in their preface.
each piece of imperial data into a certain context with certain organizational, structural, and even literary contexts in mind. The responsible miner recognizes the value of context and, therefore, form.

In the case of *Cl*. 33.1-2, the reader who recognizes the topical unit’s characterization better understands Claudius’ appetites as they relate to consumption, sleep, sex, and dicing. This recognition might save some readers from certain assumptions about the nature of the information that Suetonius provides his reader: Suetonius presents the information in *Cl*. 33.1-2 as a whole, and when scholars break the four examples into chunks instead of taking them as a whole, they can import their own assumptions about why Suetonius has included the example. Further benefits beyond the avoidance of error pertain. By recognizing that *Cl*. 33.1-2 is a topical unit whose elements work in conjunction – that is, the topical unit does not just contain information – the reader glimpses the Suetonian biographical project. *Cl*. 33.1-2 argues that Claudius’ personal qualities impinges on the exercise of his public duties. This relationship gestures toward one of Suetonius’ core assumptions about the principate: the office is the man, and the serial biographical form facilitates an analysis of the principate.134 *Cl*. 33.1-2 is not only a collection of scandalous or tawdry traits that compel the reader to keep reading; it is also an argument packaged in a form well suited for analysis.135 This is not to say that Suetonius does not include scandalous material or that the *Caesars* are not

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134 Contra see Baldwin 1983: 214.
135 One way of making this point is with comparison to other authors that treat the topics found in *Cl*. 33.1-2. An example: in the *Apocolocyntosis*, Claudius suffers the punishment of a dice-box from which the dice always fall (14.4-15.1); he is endlessly unable to satisfy his desires. This treatment has more than a bit of mockery and bitterness, and it shows how differently Claudius’ predilection for dice features in a writer with different literary commitments and aims. For further comparisons, see Pliny *Ep*. 1.13.3 for Claudius’ detour to hear Servilius Nonianus recite (instead of leaving in search of lunch) and Tacitus (*Ann*. 11.28-34) and Dio (60.2 and 60.18) treat Claudius’ relationship with his wives and his affairs.
propulsive and fun to read. But to focus on these qualities is to miss the analysis and
Suetonius’ attempt to teach his reader how to conduct an analysis of the principate.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, coming to understand the
affordances of the topical unit as a form is only the start of investigating Suetonius’
literary project, not the end. If the information about the emperors that Suetonius
encounters in his research and as he lives under Roman autocracy is the material that
Suetonius takes up for his analytical process, then the topical unit is how he shapes that
material for his reader and for further analysis. Suetonius employs the topical unit to
conduct analysis, yes, but that is only a part of the analysis to be found in the Caesars;
and, crucially, it is only a part of how Suetonius nudges his own readers to conduct
analysis themselves. Suetonius is as much a process-oriented writer as he is a result-
oriented one: he is giving his readers a method for analyzing information about the
principate that they encounter on their own. He teaches he readers how to take apart and
even see through information about power that might otherwise be understood in
accordance with how the ruling power wants it to be understood. Topical units, as a form,
mirror Suetonius’ conception of the principate; they are themselves an interpretation of
the principate.

Such analysis, and Suetonius’ method of prompting his readers toward it, comes
about through comparative readings. The next chapter, on antithesis, explores the
comparative potential of the structure of the Lives by demonstrating how they interact
with each other and how separate parts of an individual Life interact via antithesis. The
interactive capacity of these structures is further explored in chapter three, which is on
the recursive reading practices that Suetonius prompts his readers to undertake. In this
chapter, the practice of juxtaposition is broadened beyond antithesis. The primary form that serves as the foundation to this literary structure, the form that Suetonius employs most prominently, is the topical unit. Understanding its affordances is to begin to see what Suetonius has built.
CHAPTER TWO: ANTITHETICAL STRUCTURES AND THOUGHT

Antithesis plays a large, although generally under-discussed, role in the *Caesars*. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the formal structures of the *Caesars* interact with one another via antithesis. Antithetical structures, in their application by Suetonius, conduct analysis and encourage analysis. Comparison and the interaction of structures appear in literary forms other than that of antithesis (I examine the most robust version of it in my next chapter on recursive reading), but antithesis is an especially prominent form and an integral one to Suetonius’ process. We might conceptualize how form operates generally in the *Caesars* by suggesting that there is a “Suetonian machine” that processes incoming information about the emperors into an output that not only enables but in fact calls for analysis of the principate. Antithesis is one of the machine’s mechanical devices. In this chapter, we enter the Suetonian machine.

**Introduction: Antithesis in the *Caesars***

Comparison and comparative thinking have a strong presence in the early biographical tradition of the ancient world – and Suetonius expands on comparison and makes it more pointed through antithesis.\(^\text{136}\) While Suetonius’s use of antithesis is more integrated into the *Caesars* than the *prima facie* syncritic *Parallel Lives* and *De Viris Illustribus*, it is nonetheless plausible that Suetonius’ readers would have been expecting the presence of comparative thinking in a biographical collection; or, at the very least, his readers would not have been surprised to encounter it. Plutarch applies a rigid use of comparison in his biographies.

\(^{136}\) For the presence of comparison in early biography, see Hägg 2012: 49 on Xenophon’s *Agesilaus*. The structure of the *Agesilaus* (Hägg 2012: 42-43) is not dissimilar to a Suetonian Life.
Parallel Lives, although some of his other biographies (such as the Galba) demonstrate that biography did not require comparative organization.\textsuperscript{137} Nepos’ De Viris Illustribus almost certainly incorporated comparison as well – he juxtaposes foreign and Roman exemplars.\textsuperscript{138} Given the modern absence of much of the ancient biographical tradition, it is difficult to say how prominently comparison featured in the biographical genre. But Suetonius’ use of the rhetorical conceit to structure his Lives is pervasive and fundamental to his characterization of the individual Caesars and his conception of the principate. In this respect, he aligns himself with, and even transcends, expectations established by his fellow biographers. Suetonius’ innovative contribution to the biographical genre is his use of antithetical structures and analysis.

Antithesis is more prominent in the ancient rhetorical tradition – a tradition with which Suetonius was acquainted given his research interests.\textsuperscript{139} The rhetorical term antitheton, also known as contrapositum or contentio, is most suitable for illucidating Suetonius’ methods.\textsuperscript{140} In its most basic and common conceptualization, antitheton is “the opposition of two res of contrasting content.”\textsuperscript{141} Quintilian includes it in his analysis of different figures of speech.\textsuperscript{142} Putting forward different examples, drawn principally from Cicero, Quintilian shows that antitheton may be expressed through the words, phrases, or sentences. This expression corresponds fairly closely to the modern use of the term antithesis, which usually is taken to be a figure of speech that expresses a

\textsuperscript{137} Hägg 2012: 280-281.
\textsuperscript{138} Stem 2012: 11-30.
\textsuperscript{139} See Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 26-49, especially 41-49.
\textsuperscript{140} In preferring the term antitheton here, I follow Lausberg 1998 (1960), from here referenced by “Lausberg” and the appropriate citation number.
\textsuperscript{141} See Lausberg §787 for the quotation and §§787-807 generally.
\textsuperscript{142} On antitheton, see 9.3.81-86. 9.3 as a whole contains his detailed analysis of different figures of speech (introduced along with figures of thought at 9.1).
contradiction through a parallelism of words that are opposites of each other. Such antitheses appear in the Caesars; examples can be found at Ner. 51, where Suetonius provides a physical description of Nero. But the concept of antithesis was flexible, encompassing antithetical thinking, analysis, and writing, and appeared in disparate parts of the rhetorical tradition (i.e., dispositio or elocutio). I use the word “antithesis” fairly inclusively as a result; Suetonius takes advantage of a flexible technique for organizing and structuring his material.

Quintilian divides his examples of antithesis into different syntactical units (word, phrase, sentence). This division of examples demonstrates a key point for my conceptualization of antithesis in the Caesars: antithesis, and other rhetorical figures, have a tradition of being used as metaphors for structural arrangement. To take this conceptualization to its largest level: the dispositio – the structural arrangement of the material – can feature antithetical formulations. Such formulations fall under a different part of the rhetorical process and under different terminology, but – as Lausberg demonstrates – figures of speech are one way to conceptualize how the dispositio can be arranged. Antithesis is a prominent figure in this conceptualization. There are a variety of different antithetical structures that may be found under the heading of dispositio; I provide here an example that appears in an antithesis examined later in this chapter. Because the dispositio is a division of a whole, it can divide in ways that emphasize tension or completeness. Tension can be elicited by dividing the material in half (as opposed to, say, dividing the material into three). Further variations on this type of

143 See, for example, the following entries in the indices of Lausberg, antithesis, antitheton, contraponere (and contrapositum), ἀντιθέσις, and ἀντιθέτον.
144 See Lausberg §443.
division are possible: for example, one way of eliciting tension while also suggesting the fullness of the whole is to present a three-part division in which the assumed middle part is dropped so that the whole is expressed by only a beginning and end, which encompass an assumed middle. The author generates tension through the antithetical beginning and end but suggests a wholeness by implying a middle between them. Two observations can be made for the purposes of this chapter. First, antithetical structures in the ancient rhetorical tradition do not need to be next to each other on the page. Because the division of the whole is about arranging material throughout a, presumably, speech, it is safe to assume that audiences could follow antitheses that span a work. Second, the use of a beginning and end to comment on a whole is an antithetical technique that Suetonius employs in analyzing the principate. My discussion of an antithesis between two passages in the *Julius* and the *Domitian* below serves as an example.

Bearing this brief survey of the generic and rhetorical tradition in which Suetonius was working in mind, I turn now to how antithesis operates in the *Caesars*. Antithesis, in the *Caesars*, constitutes an organizational technique by which contradictory ideas are brought together for the reader through the juxtaposition of similar, but opposing, elements such as imagery, word choice, or even abstract concepts. As I alluded to above, this usage is broader than that of the figure of speech. The use of parallel words or constructions that unite the contradictory elements at play in a sentence (i.e., “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” etc.) operate similarly in antitheses that appear in disparate parts of the biographical collection. Suetonius’ antitheses are as liable to appear in one spot (i.e., a sentence or clause) as they are in one Life or the *Caesars* as a

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145 For a fuller discussion, see Lausberg §443 1.a.
whole. Hence the need to recognize his use of similar, but contrasting, elements. All three of the examples that I explore in full below must first be shown to be an antithesis before analysis of the antithesis can occur; it is in that demonstration that I make explicit what these elements are in each case. Moreover, Suetonius frequently resists forming true antitheses; what he formulates and presents as an antithesis rarely is from a literal conceptual point of view. Scholars often talk about the public vs. private aspect of Suetonius’ characterization of his subjects, but as I noted in my introduction, the phrase *privata uita* plays no role in the *Caesars*. My previous chapter on topical units explored a contrast between Claudius’ public duties and his personal habits – but in Suetonius’ conceptualization, these habits were anything but private. They had extreme public significance. This topical unit is a good example of Suetonius’ antithetical approach: he formulates an antithesis in form but introduces a small slippage in conception. This slight incongruity is often whence the interpretive force of the antithesis derives: Suetonius uses his form to prompt his readers to see past mere contradiction. Often, a Suetonian antithesis presents two ideas as a contradiction that do not form a strict contradiction.\(^{146}\)

Antithesis, therefore, relies on contradiction or the appearance of contradiction; and antithesis that serves as a structuring device effects more than just contradiction. It also yokes together separate ideas, even from different parts of the collection. Structural antithesis contains the contradiction present in other antitheses, but the most prominent effect of the form comes from its placement within the collection. Structural antithesis reaches beyond a local context; and, in the *Caesars*, Suetonius employs antitheses to

\(^{146}\) For example, see Suetonius’ assessment of Gaius as a sort of emperor and a monster (*Hactenus quasi de principe, reliqua ut de monstro narranda sunt*) (*Cal.* 22.1).
juxtapose contradictory biographical elements in the mind of his reader. While the juxtaposition may not be literal – the passages that form an antithesis can be from any part of the Caesars – the effect of the form is that the two passages are brought together, so to speak, for comparative analysis. Many of these antitheses serve as the foundation for analyses of the principate. The types of analyses vary, from institutional to moral, but the antithesis is capable of accommodating a large range of analyses. Different topics that pertain to the principate can thus be juxtaposed. In this way, Suetonius demonstrates that his topical approach has a comparative function within one unit, one Life, or the Caesars. What this means is that antithesis requires an implicit logic of unity; the two sides to an antithesis cohere into a whole, just as the dispositio is a division of a whole. Antithesis’ logic is that one side, analytically, does not operate without the other. It differs from other types of dualisms because antithesis suggests a yoking of the two elements rather than a pairing off; antithesis forces analysis on the reader who might have missed the progressive element in an antithesis (i.e., the set up or first element) but will go back when prompted by the regressive element (i.e., the second element), which completes and thereby reveals the structure.

This metaphor of yoking brings to light the final two aspects of my definition of antithesis that are important to my analysis below. First, each side of an antithesis ought to be taken by the reader as of equal weight for a reader making a comparison when

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147 In this respect, antithesis functions similarly to how Tynianov 1981 (1924): 52-54 and 120-129 argues that rhyme works in verse. Each figure has at least two elements, the first, which has a progressive aspect, signals the coming of its pair, and the second, which has a regressive aspect, fulfills that expectation. The reader may not know that the progressive aspect is being employed until getting to the regressive aspect, which signals the necessity to read back to the first element in the figure. For Tynianov, this function works because of verse’s successive nature (as opposed to prose’s simultaneous nature); but to put it in his own terms, Tynianov misunderstands prose’s constructive factor and ascribes to it a simultaneity and lack of dynamic flow that appears when treating prose as a tendentious foil for verse and not on its own terms.
prompted to do so by the form. Each side contributes to the analytical affordance of an antithesis. By treating each side of an antithesis as equal, the reader first recognizes the comparative potential of antithesis – each side can be evaluated in light of the other – and then gains new insight about a topic based on the criteria that Suetonius provides his reader in its antithetical pair. When an antithesis is found between two different Lives in the *Caesars*, each side of the antithesis warrants examination regardless of the supposed importance of one Life to the *Caesars* over another. Part of the effect of antithesis is to suggest that the Lives of the *Caesars* cohere into a network of Lives in which each Life has as much analytical importance as the other. The longer Lives (e.g., *Julius* and *Augustus*) can be enriched through comparison with the shorter, post-Julio-Claudian Lives and vice versa.

In prescribing that each side of an antithesis be given equal weight when the reader encounters them in the *Caesars*, I also hint at how antitheses function. I have already suggested that, in the *Caesars*, Suetonius uses antithesis to conduct analysis; he also employs them as prompts for his readers to conduct an analysis of the principate as a political institution. Suetonius is as liable to use antithesis to conduct analysis explicitly as he is to set up an implicit prompt to his readers to engage in the analysis themselves. The political institution of the principate, embodied by Suetonius’ twelve office-holders and structured around discrete elements of power (the topics of Suetonius’ topical and thematic units), can be analyzed by examining how those office-holders differ (or not) from each other and how the individual constituents of power intersect depending on who is exercising them. Antithesis is a powerful structure for organizing the complex into approachable frames of reference, and it is one of Suetonius’ key devices for teaching his
reader how to think through different aspects of the imperial structure. Autocratic leaders are messy, contradictory people, as all people are. In making antithesis such a prominent device in the Lives, Suetonius equips his readers with a powerful, and applicable, heuristic.

Suetonius does include non-antithetical pairs in the *Caesars*. Dual, non-antithetical structures appear frequently. One example of such a pair that does not cohere into an antithesis is Suetonius’ exploration of the claim that Augustus “twice thought about restoring the Republic” (*De reddenda re p. bis cogituit*) (*Aug.* 28.1). As Suetonius explains, the first time was after Octavian defeated Antony. The rationale stemmed from Antony’s challenge that it was Octavian’s fault that the Republic had not been restored. The second time was after Augustus had suffered a long illness. He even went so far as to summon magistrates and senators to his home to discuss state matters but changed his mind upon reflecting that he would potentially be in danger as a private citizen and that entrusting Roman governance to the many presented a risk.

This brief passage closes a thematic unit on Augustus’ holding of civic offices (26-28.2). In this thematic unit, Suetonius traces Octavian’s career and the offices that he held, generating a sort of distorted *cursus honorum* adapted from its Republican context and fitted to a budding autocrat. This brief passage (28.1) contains three different examples of dualistic structural thinking, employed to different analytical ends. I mention them briefly in the order in which I have presented them. First, Suetonius says that Augustus twice thought about restoring the Republic. The reader, noting the differences between these two moments of restorative impulse, witnesses a chronological development of Augustus’ political thinking. Suetonius utilizes biographical time in a
topical unit in order to track changes in Augustus’ thinking. Second, Suetonius provides two reasons for why Augustus chose not to restore the Republic the second time; in doing so, Suetonius provides his reader with the boundaries of Augustus’ thought on the matter: a focused reason (threat to Augustus the individual) and a broader reason (threat to the state). Finally, in ending the thematic unit by referencing the restoration of the Republic, Suetonius prompts his reader to consider how the preceding topical units in the thematic unit operate within the dualistic framework of “Republic” and “Principate.” Octavian’s extra-Republican *cursus honorum* operates within a middle zone between the two, as is fitting for the first princeps. Suetonius makes the two categories collide in order to suggest how Octavian’s political rise played a role in the often opaque transition from Republic to Empire.

None of these three examples forms a true antithesis. The third is the most likely to have been structured as one since the categories “Republic” and “Principate” are easily conceived antithetically. Suetonius’ presentation in this instance relies on different structural analysis, however. The metaphor of layering is more appropriate: a Republican framework (*cursus honorum*) underlies Octavian’s proto-autocratic rise to power. The reader understands the one through the other. These different examples of dualistic thinking contribute to Suetonius’ organization and analysis, and attention to them enhances one’s reading of the *Caesars*, but this chapter focuses on antithesis in particular due to the excessive scale of a wholistic analysis of pairs, the especially comparative affordance of antithesis, and the unique relationship that antithesis has to Suetonius’ use of binary division in structuring the topical sections of his Lives.
Antithesis has been under-discussed and theorized by scholars writing about the *Caesars*. Nonetheless, previous scholarship has noted certain organizational techniques similar to antithesis. I briefly sketch out the general and specific trends that have most strongly influenced my thinking about antithesis in the *Caesars*.

To start with the most influential, John Henderson interrogates the role of the *Julius* in the *Caesars* in his “Was Suetonius’ *Julius* a Caesar?” This playful argument already takes the form of an antithesis: Henderson argues that the *Julius* both does and does not fit the *Caesars*. He reads the Life with reference to the whole of the *Caesars* and other, individual Lives. One of the more compelling readings is the antithetical relationship that he notes between the *Julius* and the *Domitian*. I take up this antithesis, in part, in an example below. The insightful range of interpretation that Henderson generates from this antithesis is compressed but suggestive, making it a challenge to take up and explore. I cannot reproduce Henderson’ idiosyncratic style nor his imaginative argumentation, but my approach fleshes out the implications of what Henderson achieves.

Similarly, Jacques Gascou is a sensitive reader of Suetonius’ literary techniques. Gascou’s primary aim is to explore Suetonius’ value as a historical writer, but he prudently discerns that fundamental to that project is an awareness of Suetonius’ literary fashioning of the text. I discuss Gascou more fully in my next chapter on recursive reading because he notes a small-scale version of Suetonius’s penchant for rewriting certain scenes in new contexts, but part of Gascou’s discussion of this phenomenon

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concerns Suetonius’ use of antithesis. Unlike most of the moralizing scholarship about the Caesars, which has a tabulated approach to evaluating an emperor, Gascou notes how Suetonius’ moralizing use of antithesis intersects with other aspects of individual reigns. One example would be chronological developments: as an emperor ages, his vices overcome his virtues (Gaius is an example). Another would be the metaphor of the mask: Tiberius’ virtues masked his vices, which were inevitably revealed. Gascou does recognize that antithesis is an aspect of Suetonius’ structure. But as with Henderson, so too with Gascou: his discussion is brief and tangential to his other scholarly aims. This observation is not a criticism; it is an opportunity for further work on antitheses in the Caesars.

I should here note Tristian Power’s thesis, Suetonius: The Hidden Persuader, which has a section on what he calls syncretic interpretations of the Caesars. This approach assumes the necessity of comparison in the reading of the Caesars. In as much as that is the case, antithesis plays a role. I discuss Power’s contributions further in my next chapter, however, since it has greater relevance to the argument there.

Another related strain of scholarship investigates aspects of Suetonius’ structure. Of particular relevance is Suetonius’ penchant for ring composition. D. Thomas Benediktson, in his “Structure and Fate in Suetonius’ Life of Galba,” argues that the Life manifests a ring composition. This argument is taken even further by Matthew Ferguson in his MA thesis, “Thematic Rings and Structure in De Vita Caesarum.”

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152 Ferguson 2012: passim.
Ferguson argues that all of the *Caesars* are structured by means of ring composition. Both arguments have persuasive moments, and they are especially valuable for demonstrating the degree to which Suetonius builds internal correspondences between passages in this Lives, but both approaches display too rigid an understanding of Suetonius’ structure. This small quibble aside, Benediktson and Ferguson demonstrate that there is more room for analysis into the comparative potential of Suetonius’ structure: his Lives talk to each other and even to themselves. Antithesis is a prominent example of how Suetonius sets up that dialogue.

Three common types of antithesis are examined in this chapter. Since antithesis can occur in a large variety of structures, this chapter is not an exhaustive treatment of all types of antithesis in the *Caesars* but instead an argument that Suetonius creates antitheses in a range of structural components in the *Caesars*, from Lives down to individual sentences, in order to teach his reader how to analyze the topical nature of the principate. The three types considered here are: 1) The antithesis of two passages drawn from two Lives. This antithesis consists of two discrete passages found in two Lives that Suetonius sets up for comparison. 2) The antithesis of two passages drawn from one Life. This structuring device usually brings together two passages on different sides of the binary divider; one topical unit in the first half of a Life finds its opposite in the second half. The effect is that Suetonius’s reader can never assume that any one topic of discussion stands on its own – another shoe may drop, so to speak, later in a Life. And, 3) antithetical topical units or sentences, in which snippets of information (i.e. description, characterization, or moral judgement) are juxtaposed within the same syntactical unit. I use the word “sentence” broadly with the acknowledgement that a Suetonian sentence or
clause might not correspond to how we might conventionally understand them in English and with English punctuation. In fact, Suetonius’ style often resists English punctuation because his use of antithesis and asyndeton seeks to convey information and analysis in a manner foreign to comfortable English usage. But this version of antithesis is local: the two sides of the antithesis are found next to each other on the page, either within a topical unit or within a sentence (and sometimes both, when a topical unit is one sentence). These three types of antitheses are examined through discussion of one example of each for the remainder of this chapter.

Two Passages from Two Lives

Julius 85 and Domitian 23.1: Establishing the Antithesis

The Julius and the Domitian sit in a broadly antithetical relationship with each other. One opens the Caesars; the other closes it. The subject of the one starts a dynasty; the subject of the other ends his. For Henderson, the Domitian is the “shoddy-farcical finale” to the “tragic-comic prequel” of the Julius.¹⁵³ In addition to the overall antithetical relationship between these two Lives as whole and discrete texts, Suetonius sets up antitheses within them at the level of individual passages. In this section of the chapter, I examine one antithesis comprising two passages: Jul. 85 and Dom. 23.1. Specifically, I examine Suetonius’ inclusion in the Caesars of inscriptions by non-imperial actors to shape a Caesar’s legacy after he dies. This example of antithesis in the Caesars, therefore, differs

¹⁵³ Henderson 2014: 98.
from the antithesis of the Lives generally as well as the antithesis of two passages in one Life, the subject of the following section.

The two passages depict different reactions to the recent death of a Caesar. In the *Dom.* the Senate takes a series of destructive actions (*Dom.* 23.1):

contra senatus adeo laetatus est ut repleta certatim curia non temperaret quin mortuum contumeliosissimo atque acerbissimo adclamationum genere laceraret, scalas etiam inferri clipeosque et imagines eius coram detrahi et ibidem solo affligi iuberet, nouissime eradendos ubique titulos abolendamque omnem memoriam decerneret.

In contrast the Senate was so happy that, after the Senators hurried to fill the House, it did not restrain itself from wounding the dead man with the most abusive and sharp type of name-callings, ordered that ladders even be brought in and that the shields and statues [depicting] him be torn down right before them and dashed right there to the ground, last of all decreed that inscriptions of his name be everywhere erased and all memory of him be obliterated.

I quote all of the Senate’s actions for context, but what pertains to the establishment of this antithesis is what the Senate does last. They decree that inscriptions of Domitian’s name be erased through the political process of memory sanctions, to use Harriet Flower’s term for what is known in modernity as *damnatio memoriae.* Suetonius here connects the destruction of inscriptions with the obliteration of Domitian’s memory, using the connective -*que* to yoke the two (*eradendos ubique titulos abolendamque omnem memoriam*). This action is similar to their treatment of the shields and statues, and it is not unreasonable to connect that destruction with a desire to erase Domitian’s memory, but Suetonius’ presentation gives particular emphasis to the destruction of the

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154 For the Senate’s joy, see Pliny *Pan.* 52.4-5.
155 For attacks on Domitian’s legacy “that appear both more severe and more sustained than those initiated against any previous male in a ruling house,” see Flower 2006: 232-275 (for the quotation, 232-233). For an articulation of the problems with the term *damnatio memoriae,* see Flower 2006: xix-xx.
inscriptions. The destruction of the shields and statues is local – the Senate takes pleasure in destroying this material right there (coram and ibidem solo); but the order to destroy the inscriptive evidence is sent everywhere (ubique).

The populace at Rome, in contrast, set up a commemorative inscription after Julius’ death at Jul. 85:

postea solidam columnam prope uiginti pedum lapidis Numidici in foro statuit inscrisitque PARENTI PATRIAE. apud eam longo tempore sacrificare, uota suscipere, controversias quasdam interposito per Caesarem iure iurando distrahere perseueruit.

Later they erected a monolith around twenty feet high made out of Numidian stone in the forum and inscribed on it “TO THE PARENT OF THE FATHERLAND.” They continued to make sacrifices around it for a long time, to take on vows, to settle some disputes by swearing an oath “by Caesar.”

These actions make up only part of what the people at Rome did after Caesar’s death, but it is here that the reader can discern the antithesis between this passage and Dom. 23.1. After Caesar’s death, the people memorialize him by erecting a monolith and inscribing it with an honorary title. This passage connects the use of an inscription to the memory of a Caesar, similar to what Suetonius depicts at Dom 23.1. By making sacrifices for a long time around the monolith, in addition to taking vows and swearing oaths by Caesar’s name, the people bring a memory of Caesar forward into the future through their ritualized actions. These actions show that the attempt to memorialize Caesar through an inscription is successful. I focus on the inscriptive portion of these two passages as the crux of this antithesis, but it is worth noting here, because it will recur in my analysis below, that Suetonius also sets up an antithesis between the agents: the Senate vs. the People.
No other Lives contain inscriptive evidence to show how non-imperial agents attempted to shape the memory of a recently deceased Caesar. There may be some shared similarities, as there are in the death scenes themselves, but no other post-death narratives stand in an antithetical relationship to each other as do these two. The following relationship thus obtains: the other Lives in the Caesars include narrative post-death analysis of their eponymous subjects, and some of the elements in those Lives connect, through the techniques of intratextuality, with Dom. 23.1 and Jul. 85, but not antithetically. The Augustus shares the most points of contact, with different classes showing various reactions to Augustus’ death, the reading of his will, and a eulogy being given (100.2-101.1). In what come closest to the post-death inscriptions of the Dom. and Jul., Suetonius mentions that Augustus orders the posting of the Res Gestae (101.4). The Tiberius includes his will as well as class reactions (75.1-76). The Senate contemplates memory sanctions at Cal. 60. Gal. 23 sees the use of statues as a memorializing device. Oth. 12.2 and Tit. 11 both depict class reactions after the death narratives. Each post-death narrative includes numerous points of contact with other Lives, and Suetonius nudges his reader to read across the Lives. It is only the Dom. and the Jul., however, that include the use of inscriptive material by certain political classes in establishing a view of a Caesar after his death. In this instance, the two passages present an antithesis.

Before turning to my analysis of the two passages individually and then how they operate together as an antithesis, let me restate how the antithesis works in full, bringing together the various elements discussed above: two passages that occur in the post-death narrative portion of Suetonius’ structure both include inscriptions manipulated by non-imperial agents as part of the formation of a Caesar’s legacy, with one (Dom. 23.1)
depicting the destruction of inscriptions and the other the creation of an inscription (Jul. 85). This antithesis is well suited for analysis of antithesis as an organizational element in the Caesars for a few reasons. The passages appear in a part of the Lives that is of structural importance to the analysis of an individual emperor (the narrative post-death analysis of a Caesar);¹⁵⁶ these Lives are bookends for the collection as a whole, appearing as the first and last Lives of the Caesars; and, these passages pertain to the question of how to remember a Caesar, which is in some ways a meta-question hanging over the readers of the Caesars as they work through the serial collection. In the end, this antithesis establishes the parameters of the principate as a memorialized institution: via the antithesis between Jul. 85 and Dom. 23.1, Suetonius traces the development of the principate as a political institution as his collection progresses. Both passages provide different depictions of how political classes in Rome respond to the murder of an emperor. Autocracy invites vacuums, especially after an assassination. Suetonius’ antithetical form provides his readers with a range of possible outcomes to consider. To understand how the antithesis works in this manner, we first have to understand how each passage works in its own context.

¹⁵⁶ For example, see Dunsch 2015: 327-364.

Dom. 23.1, Class Reactions, and Political Memorialization at the End of the Flavian Era

The actions of the Senate after Domitian’s death demonstrate the negative opinion that the Senate had of Domitian following his death (and, presumably, before it). I requote the passage for convenience:
contra senatus adeo laetatus est ut repleta certatim curia non temperaret
quin mortuum contumeliosissimo atque acerbissimo adclamationum
genere laceraret, scalas etiam inferri clipeosque et imagines eius coram
detrahi et ibidem solo affligi iuberet, nouissime eradendos ubique titulos
abolendamque omne
dememoriam decerneret.

In contrast the Senate was so happy that it, after the Senators hurried to fill
the House, did not restrain itself from wounding the dead man with the
most abusive and sharp type of name-callings, ordered that ladders even
be brought in and that the shields and statues [depicting] him be torn down
right before them and dashed right there to the ground, [and] last of all
deeed that inscriptions of his name be everywhere erased and all
memory of him be obliterated.

Suetonius’ depiction of the Senate and its response presents a political class in
celebration; and his emphasis on the material components of power, such as the packed
curia (repleta ... curia), the destruction of politically-valent shields and statues
(clipesosque et imagines), and – in the passage’s culmination – inscriptions (titulos), not
only underscores the intensity of the Senate’s feeling (adeo laetatus est ut . . .) but also
directs the reader’s attention to how political memory (and even power) is curated and
asserted. With respect to the intensity of the Senate’s judgement of Domitian,
superlatives make the reader aware of how strongly the Senate holds its opinion
(contumeliosissimo atque acerbissimo). Even the packed Senate house creates an image
for the reader that demonstrates this intensity of feeling and serves as a counterpoint to
other packed Senate houses – Tit. 11 shows a mournful Senate in action, and (of course)
the Senate house under Julius Caesar was full of conspirators who surrounded him
(conspirati ... circumsteterunt) (82.1) and attacked him from all sides (undique) (82.2).

This packed curia is vengeful; Suetonius depicts the Senators as rushing to fill the Senate
House now that Domitian is dead (repleta certatim curia). It is almost as if each Senator,
in his haste, attempts to outdo the others to get into the building. The Senate’s antipathy
for Domitian, moreover, appears to be warranted. Domitian killed a number of Senators and engaged in a sort of psychological warfare with them.\textsuperscript{157}

This passage, in addition to a performance of Senatorial intensity, is also a catalogue of actions taken to diminish the legacy of Domitian. In Suetonius’ depiction, the actions represent an excessive form of memory sanction, especially in comparison to other memory sanctions in the \textit{Caesars}. As Flower claims, “The fierceness of these sanctions can be seen, in simple terms, as the logical climax to the evolution of such penalties throughout the first century, as they were extended and refined under successive rulers.”\textsuperscript{158} Suetonius includes concrete details of what happened in the Senate (the insults, ladders, and destruction of statues and shields) before transitioning to the actual process by which Domitian’s memory was sanctioned: “[the Senate] decreed that inscriptions of his name be everywhere erased and all memory of him be obliterated” (\textit{eradendos ubique titulos abolendamque omnem memoriam [sc. Senatus] decerneret}). These concrete details reflect the present reality of the Senate’s actions – they have the power to take action and then decree, in Suetonius’ sequencing; they also demonstrate Suetonius’ attention to the development of the process as it applies to emperors.\textsuperscript{159}

Sanctioning an emperor’s memory is not immediately a clear process at the beginning of the principate, and in Suetonius’ presentation, it is one that becomes clearer

\textsuperscript{157} See \textit{Dom.} 10.2-4 for the killings and 11.2-3 for Domitian’s cruel psychological torments. For other characterizations of the Senate under Domitian, see Tacitus \textit{Histories} 4.8, where Marcellus Eprius calls the Senate a body of slaves, and \textit{Agricola} 45.1, where Domitian uses the display of armed forces as another tool in the psychological warfare toolbox. Mooney 1979 (1930): 605.

\textsuperscript{158} Flower 2006: 237. See also Flower 2006: 148-159 on the sanctioning of Gaius’ memory and 197-233 for the sanctioning of Nero’s.

\textsuperscript{159} See, for example, \textit{Cal.} 60, where the Senate tries to erase the memory of the Caesars (\textit{Caesarum memoriam}), not just Gaius, although Gaius is the clear target and cause of the Senate’s action. But the \textit{damnatio} does not seem \textit{aeterna}; Claudius takes some action to honor Gaius’ memory (\textit{Cl.} 11.3).
over time. So, in the context of the *Caesars*, the Senate here enacts a political process that, through its historical fluidity and contingency, is open to reinterpretation with every use of memory sanctioning. This example is more “Flavian” in the sense that the political possibilities open to the Senate has changed over the course of the Julio-Claudian, Civil War of 69, and Flavian eras. In erasing the inscriptions of Domitian’s name, the Senate takes action that had been innovated over time until it becomes a more regular process of legacy formation. The Senate’s innovation in this instance is the ubiquity with which they treat Domitian’s memory. Their desire to erase his memory everywhere (*ubique*) represents a new approach to the sanctioning process, which often only concerns itself with the shaping of elite memory. What Suetonius’ reader sees in the Senate’s actions is a snapshot of a political moment. The Senate – and presumably Nerva (although Suetonius omits his role) – takes drastic action relative to what previous Senates had done to shape earlier imperial legacies. The flexibility of sanctioning memory allows for this new approach, and the Senate uses the tool before them.

But this antithesis is embedded in a passage that contains more than just the Senate’s response to Domitian’s death; the *contra* that starts Suetonius’ presentation of the Senate’s response signals a transition from what came before it. In order to understand how this passage stands in an antithetical relationship to *Jul. 85*, this context ought to be taken into consideration. The Senate’s intense action is a response to a power

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161 Flower 2006: 234, “The Flavians stand at the center of imperial sanctions against memory, between the contrasting but equally formidable figures of Nero and of their own Domitian.”
162 Flower 2006: xx-xii and 4-9. Flower shows that not all inscriptional evidence was sanctioned for a variety of reasons (245-256), but some particularly striking examples from Puteoli and Misenum “help to corroborate the descriptions by Suetonius and Dio of widespread attacks on statues and monuments” (262).
163 For Nerva’s potential role see Flower 2006: 235-240.
vacuum in Rome as a result of the particular political circumstances at the time –
circumstances that are the result of how different political stakeholders in Rome react to
Domitian’s death. And therefore, at Dom. 23.1, Suetonius relates the various responses to
Domitian’s death. Suetonius first notes that “the people [bore] his death with
indifference” before making an asyndetic turn to the military, “the army bore [it] very
heavily and immediately attempted to call him divine, prepared even to be his avenger
except that leaders were lacking,” adding the coda that the army did eventually avenge
him: “which, indeed a little bit after, it [the army] accomplished, with the authors of the
murder called to punishment very tenaciously” (Occisum eum populus indifferenter,
miles grauissime tulit statimque diuum appellare conatus est, paratus et ulcisci nisi duces
defuissent, quod quidem paulo post fecit expostulatis ad poenam pertinacissime caedis
auctoribus.). It is at this point that Suetonius turns to the Senate.

In this passage Suetonius moves through the reactions of different political
classes. The sequencing, which follows a pattern typical of Suetonian organization, sets
up demographic circles that start big (populus), move through a smaller class (miles), and
then to perhaps the smallest political class outside of the imperial family, the Senate
(senatus).164 Suetonius conveys their reaction to Domitian’s death through adverbs. The
people react indifferently (indifferenter), the army gravelly (grauissime), and the Senate
differently (contra) and in so specific a manner that Suetonius explains with a series of

164 Garrett 2018: 206-209 for the related sequencing phenomenon of concentric circles. On Suetonius’ class
terminology that pertains to the populace of Rome, see Baldwin 1983: 341-342.
result clauses (*adeo … ut*).165 In moving from big to small, Suetonius provides an account of Domitian’s popularity relative to differently sized demographic groups.166 More pertinent for understanding the Senate’s response, through his sequencing of information, Suetonius quickly sketches the political backdrop against which the battles to shape Domitian’s legacy would be fought.

Suetonius’ sequencing, therefore, provides at least a partial rationale for why the Senate might take such a strong response: due to the apathy of one political class, a power vacuum opened up in Rome. The people of Rome, the largest demographic group in this passage, receive the slimmest treatment. This lack of attention is proportional to the lack of attention that they pay to Domitian and his death. Suetonius’ adverb *indifferenter* makes the point. The emergence of the adverb is late. In Pliny, Quintilian, and – a little later – Gellius, the adverb is used with a sense of “indiscriminately” or “without distinction.” It is only in Suetonius that the word means “indifferently.”167 This usage does not indicate the interchangeability in the eyes of the people of approaches to Domitian or his post-death memory – the approaches on offer being, presumably, typified by the dueling approaches of the military and the Senate. Instead, it indicates a totally

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165 Baldwin 1983: 286-287 rightly notes that Domitian is the only princeps whose death “is said to have been received with great grief and attempts at deification by the armies.” He also remarks (303) on the indifference of the populace and “in the senate, mad rejoicing, without parallel in the *De vita Caesarum*.”

166 See, for example *Dom. 7.3*, where Suetonius mentions the substantial pay raise that Domitian gives to the soldiers. Mooney 1979 (1930): 604.

167 The TLL separates Pliny, Quintilian, and Gellius from Suetonius. Suetonius, found at Bulhart. 7.1.1167.14-15, is joined by Augustine as his closest contemporary for this usage (1167.14-18). Related usages (1167.18-27) are likewise employed only by later writers. In contrast, Pliny: *indifferenter haec inventiuntur* (*Dub. Serm. Pomp. Gramm. 5.144.24*), Quintilian: *Nam utroque utimur indifferenter* (9.2.6) and *utroque appellatione indifferenter uti licet* (11.3.1), and Gellius: *consuetum ... fuerit litteris is plerumque uti indifferenter* (10.24.8). See Bulhart. 7.1.1167.69-71. What unites these examples is that they all pertain to a rhetoric of speaking. For another contemporary use, see Scribonius Largus: *opportet tamen non indifferenter remediatos in futurum vivere* (*Compositiones 122*) and Bulhart. 7.1.1166.72-73. As far as the *Caesars*, this example is the only appearance of the adverb. Suetonius’ atypical use may stem from his stretching the meaning of the word to suit his point.
This apathy means that one of the major political classes has withdrawn from the political fight, leaving room for the army or the Senate to stake a claim; the privative prefix suggests an implicit critique, or at least an absence of what would have been expected.

The army has a different, even contrasting, response. It bears Domitian’s murder with the superlative grauissime, a more intense response than the positive indifferenter in morphology as well as meaning. Suetonius’ asyndetic connection of the clauses presents an alternative but simultaneous response. This response to Domitian’s assassination is an attempt to seek vengeance (paratus et ulcisci) and to memorialize him with deification. The army’s response, therefore, is closer in quality, although not in kind, to the Senate’s; it is both emotionally intense and politically forward-looking as it attempts to establish a legacy for Domitian after his murder. It also attempts to bid for political influence in the new political situation. The army’s quest for vengeance, which it pursued with a tenacious zeal (pertinacissime), stretches into the Nervan principate, exceeding the textual bounds of even Suetonius’ Caesars.

The sequencing of the information in the army section of this paragraph highlights both the army’s affective response and its memorializing impulse – and, perhaps more importantly, their attempts to claim a greater amount of political influence after a ruler’s death than they had previously exercised. At the same time (statimque) that the army has its emotional response to Domitian’s death (grauissime), it attempts to shape his legacy by calling for his deification (diuum appellare conatus est). The attempt to speak a title

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Mooney 1979 (1930): 604 connects this attitude to the lack of stakes that the populace has in politics since they are “unaffected by the tyranny of Domitian,” citing Juvenal 10.77 as an example of the people’s general indifference to imperial political affairs. See also Jones 1996: 152 for the same citation.
into reality goes well beyond the king-making power that the army newly finds after the Julio-Claudian dynasty, in Suetonius’ presentation. The development of this practice appears principally in Books Seven and Eight of the *Caesars*. And the deification of an emperor – a process that had happened after the deaths of Domitian’s dynastic predecessors (not to mention his antithetical pair in Julius Caesar) – was one of only a few official ways for the Senate to memorialize an emperor. It was a tool for asserting the Senate’s political power in its new relationship with the emperor and the people. In attempting (*conatus est*) to usurp that power, the army makes an incredibly bold bid to shift who can validate the legacy of the previous emperor and, by implication, approve the incoming ruler. That it takes advantage of the opportunity here speaks to its growing awareness of its unique powers post-69 and the specific political moment that followed Domitian’s death, in Suetonius’ presentation. The political situation after Domitian represented, with respect to the army’s power, a fundamental break with what came before. New powers were up for grabs; the army tried to take them.

The reader confronts, therefore, in these three different class responses to Domitian’s assassination, three varying approaches to a Caesar’s death. The decree that inscriptions about Domitian be erased everywhere closes a passage that runs through these various options, focusing on the political power grabs that arises in response to

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169 See *Gal.* 10.1-11, *Oth.* 6.3, *Vit.* 7.3-8.1, and *Ves.* 6.1-6.4. *Cl.* 10.4 hints at the early development of this practice and, in some ways, looks like an earlier working out of the process by the praetorian guard before Nero’s death prompted the development of new sources of imperial authority. The Claudius passage also includes Claudius’ use of money in cementing his relationship with the army – a familiar tactic to Domitian.

170 On this assessment, see Price 1987: 82-91 (especially 85-87) and 103-105. The validation of a witness testifying to an emperor’s apotheosis during his funeral came from the Senate, and Price persuasively teases out some of the social implications of that process.

171 The relationship between the recently deceased emperor and his successor appears at points in Price 1987: 56-105.
Domitian’s death. Suetonius’ presentation presents a range of options for disputing an emperor’s legacy after his death: apathy, deification, and, finally, memory sanctions. He roots this dispute in a particular political moment: the principate under Domitian functions differently than under, say, Tiberius. The various political classes act differently in response to this new political situation. In putting on display these three demographic responses for his reader, Suetonius makes clear what the political situation was like at the time of Domitian’s death, especially with reference to the dispute about how to respond to Domitian’s assassination. Suetonius seems especially cognizant of showing how the different classes combined to create the political climate through their particulars. This is a political climate that reflects the changing nature of the principate and the princeps’ relationship to the different classes. The people, no longer as central a part of the political process of the state, can take an apathetic stance toward Domitian; the military, responding to Domitian’s treatment of their class, fights for his deification; and, in opposition is the Senate, whose actions Suetonius concretely describes as he shows them applying a weapon honed over time after the deaths of previous emperors.

**Julius 85 and a Monolith of the People**

Suetonius’ depiction of the actions of the populace in Rome after Caesar’s death likewise goes beyond their affective response. He chooses details that illuminate the state of the

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172 See Cl. 10.4, mentioned above, where Suetonius presents money payments for military loyalty as a Claudian innovation. Cf. Dom. 7.3.
contemporary political situation in Rome.\textsuperscript{173} I quote again the section of the passage that pertains to the antithesis:

\begin{quote}
postea solidam columnam prope uiginti pedum lapidis Numidici in foro statuit inscripsitque PARENTI PATRIAEC. apud eam longo tempore sacrificare, uota suscipere, controversias quasdam interposito per Caesarem iure iurando distrahere perseuerauit.
\end{quote}

Later they erected a monolith around twenty feet high made out of Numidian stone in the forum and inscribed on it “TO THE PARENT OF THE FATHERLAND.” They continued to make sacrifices around it for a long time, to take on vows, to settle some disputes by swearing the oath “by Caesar.”

This passage, like the Senate’s decree about Domitian’s inscriptions, is the culmination of its post-death narrative, closing the narrative of Caesar’s funeral. The funeral takes as its principal structure the reaction of different groups to Caesar’s death, making this passage an inversion of Dom. 23.1: the people, not the Senate, give the final word.\textsuperscript{174}

In this passage, Suetonius, through his selection of details, signals a transitionary politics from the Republican to the Imperial, especially through implicit references to Octavian. The monolith that the populace erects where Caesar was cremated in the Forum is the future site of the Temple of the Deified Caesar.\textsuperscript{175} It is variously referred to as either a column, as in Suetonius, or an altar.\textsuperscript{176} There may have been a statue on it. Numidian stone, now called giallo antico, was a relatively new stone from North Africa. Pliny the Elder says that it was M. Lepidus who first introduced giallo antico to Rome for

\textsuperscript{173} Flower 2006: 104-109 illuminates Caesar’s complex relationship to memory and memory sanctions since he both uses sanctions as a political weapon and then is subjected variously to memorialization or sanction after his death.

\textsuperscript{174} On the memorializing function of the monolith, see Flower 2006: 107-109.

\textsuperscript{175} See LTUR\textsuperscript{3} Iulius, Divus, Aedes and Richardson 1992: 213-214. For the temple but not the monolith, see MAR Divus Iulius, Aedes. See also Weinstock 1971: 364-367, Sumi 2011: 207-217, and Flower 2006: 107-109 for general discussion of the monolith and its relevance to the themes of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{176} For discussion of the various sources see Sumi 2011: 212-213.
use in his private home, but not in the form of columns. He was also censured for this import. Its use in public buildings comes later, and it is possible that this monolith is the first use of the stone for a public monument, making it a striking choice. Its colors, gold with some red streaking, may have evoked fire and therefore a funeral pyre, and its relative novelty would have been striking. Suetonius includes three details that illuminate how a Roman audience might read the ideology of the monolith. Of particular importance to my analysis is the connection that Suetonius’ presentation makes between Caesar and Octavian via the establishment of religious sites after Caesar’s deification. These three details are the type of marble, the monolith’s inscription, and the temporal parameters of the people’s ritualized actions.

First, the giallo antico is not only visually striking – one wonders if marble from North Africa would have particular resonance given Caesar’s military success in the region – but it would also remind Suetonius’ Roman reader of other columns made from the same marble. John W. Stamper claims that the “stoalike porticos” that framed the side of the Forum of Augustus contained a façade of Corinthian columns made from giallo

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177 NH 36.49.
178 Sumi 2011: 213 is suspicious that the monolith, as described by Suetonius, could have been erected in actual fact.
179 In making this argument, I follow Sumi 2011: 207-217, in particular. For his use of the term “ideology,” see 206-207. Sumi argues that the monolith would have signaled a specific type of politics that both memorializes Caesar and establishes Octavian as his political heir. This politics is contested, especially in its use of space and by the political actors who want to capitalize on Caesar’s memory after death (such as Octavian and Antony), but Sumi 2011: 217 concludes that the monolith’s politics showed how “Octavian … became the primary purveyor of a Caesarian ideology that the Roman people were instrumental in forming.” This connection between Octavian and Caesar came about through the “popular will that remained in memory for years to come.”
180 Sumi 2011: 207-217 sees an ideological connection between Caesar and Octavian through, principally, an analysis of the monolith’s site in the forum, the divine awards granted to Caesar and their connection to the altar that may have been with or in place of the monolith, the column as a grave-marker, and the use of the phrase parenti patriae (with Antony, in his deployment of the phrase, seeming to compete with the plebs’ monument and Octavian aligning himself with the plebs). On the column as a grave-marker as well as the significance of a burial within the pomerium, see also Davies 2000: 32-33.
antico;\textsuperscript{181} and, Propertius 2.31 contains an \textit{ekphrasis} of the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, which is supposed to have had giallo antico columns (\textit{aurea Phoebi / porticus a magno Caesare aperta fuit. / tota erat in spatium Poenis digesta columnis}) (1-3). Suetonius mentions these buildings as two of the three most important that Augustus built during his renovation of Rome from brick to marble.\textsuperscript{182} Suetonius’ inclusion of the detail that the monolith was made out of Numidian stone may have caused his reader to connect Julius to Augustus.

Second, the inscription itself suggests a strong continuity to imperial politics, but with a Republican history. Caesar seems to be well located to serve as a transition between the two (which is a theme in the Life as a whole). Romulus earns the title \textit{parens patriae} and variations of it, as does Camillus.\textsuperscript{183} Cicero deploys the term with regularity during the Catilinarian speeches and earns the title himself. The title subsequently becomes a contested one during the Late Republic, and after Caesar’s death it becomes associated with him and his cult – on coinage, for example.\textsuperscript{184} It eventually becomes an imperial title, and there are numerous instances in the \textit{Caesars} where the Senate gives the title (or more commonly the related \textit{pater patriae}) to an emperor.\textsuperscript{185} This monolith would have been one of the important means by which the title accrued its post-Caesar ideological meaning – and it happened via Octavian’s association with the cult of

\textsuperscript{181} Stamper 2005: 136.
\textsuperscript{182} See Aug. 28.3-29.3 for Augustus’ construction witticism as well as the buildings.
\textsuperscript{183} For example, respectively, see Ennius 106-108 Sk. and Livy 5.59.7-8.
\textsuperscript{184} \textit{RRC} (n. 11) 480/19 and 20.
\textsuperscript{185} \textit{Parens patriae}: Jul. 85 and Tib. 50.3 (of Livia); \textit{pater patriae}: Jul. 76.1, Aug. 58.1, 58.2, Tib. 26.2, 67.2, Ner. 8, and Ves. 12.
Caesar. By bringing this detail to the fore, Suetonius alludes to a significant moment of political transition for Rome via its political rhetoric.

Third, Suetonius mentions that the people of Rome conducted ritualized action around the monolith for a “long time” (*longo tempore*). Suetonius presents this claim with little indication that some interruptions could have been included. For one, the populace may not have even put up a monolith in the first place. It may have been an altar that was later replaced by a monolith, since an altar would make more sense for the types of ritualized action that Suetonius depicts. Moreover, the monolith itself was leveled by Dolabella, a politician of variable loyalties. Suetonius’ presentation privileges a continuity with the monolith and what came after it, the Temple of the Divine Julius. While the claim that the populace sacrificed in that spot for a long time is, strictly speaking, impossible, broadly speaking, it links the monolith and the Temple that was finished by Octavian. A Roman reader with more knowledge than we have about this spot might more readily make sense of the claim that the *plebs* sacrificed for a long time by connecting the monolith to the Temple. Two points can be drawn from this observation. The first is that Suetonius connects Caesar and Octavian – a point consistent with the other details that Suetonius highlights. The second is that the temporal phrase *longo tempore* shifts the reader’s focus toward the eventual deification and cult of Caesar, tying the location, monolith, and inscription to one of the early tools in shaping public perception of the principate at its beginning.

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186 Sumi 2011: 216-217 gives a snapshot of this process.
188 It was started by the triumvirs.
And so, as with his depiction of the classes after Domitian’s death, Suetonius here provides his reader with a snapshot of the political conditions in Rome after Caesar’s death. That the conditions are different from those in the Domitian will be the subject of my next section, where I conduct an analysis of the antithesis as a whole. But for now, it is sufficient to recognize that Suetonius brings to the fore the political changes that were taking place between the Julius and the Augustus in textual terms, or between Caesar and Octavian in chronological and political terms. The details do not create an image of politics that change on the spot – the reader has not gone from Republic to Empire in the space of a sentence. Rather, Suetonius is careful to point toward evidence of a slowly changing political situation – a situation that is only just becoming the principate in nascent form.

The Antithesis in Action

The antithesis that Suetonius generates in Jul. 85 and Dom. 23.1 privileges the political situation that pertained after the assassination of each ruler. In doing so it contributes to Suetonius’ depiction of the principate as an institution evolving over time. Relationships between different political bodies from the institution are treated here, and the reader who attends to this antithesis sees the shape of the principate at the beginning and end of the Caesars. In the case of Jul. 85, the principate is in its nascent form; Suetonius presents the beginning stages of the imperial cult and its political power in Rome as exemplified by the monolith to Caesar. The monolith, by evoking the Augustan architecture still familiar to Suetonius’ Roman readership, brings to mind the creation of a dynastic political structure. Dom. 23.1 assumes a more stable sense of the principate as, at least, a
Flavian institution. It is in this new imperial context that the Senate’s severe memory
sanctions, as well as the army’s innovative attempts to achieve his deification, occur. The
Senate can take for granted the political organization when molding their use of memory
sanctions to position themselves in the post-Domitian political landscape.

But some modesty is needed – how broadly this antithesis can explicate the
boundaries of the principate is limited.\textsuperscript{189} What is perhaps more instructive is to consider
how the inscriptional antithesis directs the reader’s attention to spatial and temporal
markers, with the two passages working against the other. I turn to the spatial first. I have
already noted the internal spatial antithesis in Dom. 23.1 between the destruction of
Domitian’s shields and statues in the Senate (\textit{clipeosque et imagines eius coram detrahi et ibidem solo affligi iuberet}) and the decree that inscriptions of his name be erased
everywhere (\textit{nouissime eradendos ubique titulos abolendamque omnem memoriam decer neret}). This internal antithesis shows how the Senate thinks it is able to assert its
political power after Domitian’s death. The gleeful Senate that had packed and repacked
the House (\textit{repleta certatim curia}), wills itself to more and more extreme action. Their
emotional response, itself a political act of solidarity, is to destroy the Domitianic
material that was already inside. This act, articulated for the reader through Suetonius’
sequencing and attention to space, reasserts their control over their space.

When the Senate moves away from internal solidarity and toward projecting their
power outwardly, when the Senate makes a decree (\textit{decer neret}) instead of an order
\textit{(iuberet}), it reorients its spatial focus. Suetonius emphasizes how widely they sought the

\textsuperscript{189} It is here that one might remember the rhetorical division of the whole that I discussed in the
introduction to this chapter in which a beginning and end are contrasted, while the middle is skipped. Suetonius, in this antithesis, invites us to “fill-in” the middle to some degree – hence the need for modesty.
destruction of Domitian’s name and obliteration of his memory (*ubique*). There seems to be a recognition of the shifting nature of political power: the Flavian dynasty was made outside of Rome, and Suetonius in his lifetime has seen an Italian emperor (Nerva) yield to a non-Italian emperor (Trajan). The Senate’s decree makes a bid for influence in this changing political landscape. An emperor could be made outside of Italy – it was the Senate’s hope that one could be unmade outside of it too. Suetonius brings a tuned awareness of the Senate’s varying attempts to maintain political influence under the principate. While surviving evidence does not allow us to compare how Suetonius depicts the Senate here with Flavian era material remains, the Tiberian *Tabula Siarensis* and *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre* are instructive. The former, which celebrates Germanicus shortly after his death, and the latter, which enacts memory sanctions on Germanicus’ alleged murderer, were both sent out to be displayed at the Senate’s orders. In each, the Senate considers its spatial reach. In some respects, this reach can be fairly localized: the *Tabula Siarensis* decrees that arches and monuments be set up in Rome, Syria, Germany, Antioch, and Daphne – all places associated with Germanicus. In other respects, the Senate has a broader view: both decrees have empire-wide ambitions. The *Tabula Siarensis* provides instruction that the decree should be set up in towns and colonies in Italy in addition to colonies in the provinces; the *Senatus Consultum* that it should be set up in the most frequented part of the most frequented city of every province as well as in the winter quarters of each legion. This Tiberian evidence makes the Senate’s action after Domitian’s assassination all the more striking. Whereas the Senate had an awareness of their reach across the empire under Tiberius, they used it to negotiate

190 He could not know it, but Nerva was the last fully Italian emperor.
their relationship to him. It is only after Domitian’s death that the Senate weaponizes their reach across the empire against a ruler.

When the reader, weighing this antithesis, returns to *Jul. 85*, the passage feels almost parochial in comparison; politics in Rome is spatially myopic compared to *Dom. 23.1*. This attention to a more local space shows that the greatest political gains would be made in Rome, with Rome being the central place for contesting Caesar’s legacy. And a significant part of that process involved appealing to the people in Rome in a bid for their support.191 Suetonius’ focus on the populace’s use of space seems politically pertinent. The erection of a monolith on the spot of Caesar’s funeral pyre is politically suggestive: the people are memorializing his legacy. The emergence of ritualized cult action around the monolith (*apud eam*) represents a new, proto-imperial articulation of political support: their commemorative inscription sets a stage for ritual action and even deification. The future construction of a temple to the Divine Julius on this site confirms the populace’s actions. So Suetonius’ focus on space in this antithesis contributes to the reader’s understanding of how power is negotiated between different actors and groups. This attention to space is heightened by attending to both halves of the antithesis: the specificity of place in *Jul. 85* is brought to the fore after reading *Dom. 23.1*.192 While battles would be fought outside of Rome over the future of the empire, Suetonius gives the impression that the initial form of the principate was being created in Rome.

191 For the politics of Caesar’s legacy and the role that local architecture, especially the monolith erected on Caesar’s funeral pyre, see Sumi 2011: 207-217.

192 For a reading that assumes a more serial, less recursive mode of reading, see Henderson 2014: 98-99, 108-109.
To touch briefly on the temporal components of the antithesis: a similar logic pertains to Suetonius’ temporal diction in the passages. I have already discussed Suetonius’ claim that the populace undertook ritualized actions for a “long time” (*longo tempore*), noting that in doing so they bring Caesar forward into the future; and, Suetonius’ phrase connects the monolith to the future temple, since the monolith was quickly torn down, and thus Caesar to Augustus. The birth of the principate did not happen overnight. It too took a long time. This sense of time contrasts with *Dom.* 23.1, in which the Senate’s goal is the erasure of Domitian’s place in the future. The antithesis, therefore, presents temporal extension at one spot versus erasure at many. These contrasting temporal depictions reflect the two political tools being used for political ends: deification and memory sanctions. In combination with the spatial aspects of the antithesis, these temporal elements contribute to an analysis of the principate’s shape after Caesar and after Domitian. Where an emperor could be made (or unmade) has changed and what political processes contribute to that process evolve over time. Both *Jul.* 85 and *Dom.* 23.1 are united in at least one way: they both depict novel, or even innovative, methods of claiming political power in an evolving political situation. But this unity is only graspable through attention to the antithetical structure that provides the reader with the parameters of how much the institution has changed. Suetonius’ analytical approach finds expression through his application of antithesis.

**Two Passages from One Life**

*Augustus* 34.2 and *Augustus* 68: Establishing the Antithesis
Suetonius’ Caesars are contradictory creatures – even Augustus, whom scholars so often cite as an exemplar of moral and regal rectitude in the Caesars. These contradictions can be made manifest through the presence of antithesis in a single Life. The typical antithesis appears on both sides of a Life’s binary divider and consists of two topical units or elements of two topical units, but other types of antithesis in one Life occur. In the Augustus, Suetonius establishes an antithesis between Aug. 34.2 and Aug. 68. The first passage concerns Augustus’ moral legislation with an emphasis on the lex de maritandis ordinibus and subsequent compromises that were forced upon Augustus; the second concerns rumors about Augustus’ own sexual deviancy. Both passages provide specific examples to make a generalized point, and these examples cast Augustus as the spectacle at an entertainment venue rather than an audience member.

At Aug. 34.2, the equestrian class objects to one of Augustus’ laws. Augustus in turn marshals the symbolic power of Germanicus’ children in a silent, but ostentatious, display of political intention (Aug. 34.2):

\[
sic quoque abolitionem eius publico spectaculo pertinaciter postulante equite, accitos Germanici liberos receptosque partim ad se partim in patris gremium ostentuit, manu uultuque significans ne grauarentur imitari iuuenis exemplum\ldots
\]

Thus, for example, since the equestrian order, at a public show, was tenaciously demanding its annulment, he summoned Germanicus’ children and displayed them, one of them taken onto his lap, and the other onto their father’s lap, indicating with his hand and facial expression that

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194 For example, the ancestry and death narrative in a Life can function antithetically.

195 This phrase, “for example,” is how I translate quoque here. This slightly idiosyncratic translation serves to show that the example that follows is connected to the point above. I discuss the example’s context in this passage shortly.

196 Likely a draft of the lex Papia Poppaea. I discuss this problem further below.
they [the equestrians] should not hesitate to imitate the example of the young man…

This protest on the part of the equestrian order occurs as an example in Suetonius’ discussion of Augustus’ legislative ambitions; I turn to this discussion shortly when I treat this anecdote’s context in *Aug.* 34.1-2. Two observations serve as the basis for my argument of an antithesis between this passage and *Aug.* 68: 1) Augustus sets himself up as a spectacle-within-a-spectacle (*publico spectaculo … ad se … ostentauit*), using Germanicus’ children (*Germanici liberos*) and his own body (*manu uultuque significans*), and 2) the implication of this act is that Augustus is acting within a normative framework of acceptable social behavior (a framework that he is establishing himself through legislation) to make an exemplary point (*exemplum*). While this anecdote has been criticized for interrupting the logical flow of the topical unit, being “inserted awkwardly,” and as an “irrelevant part” of the legal discussion, its presence connects Augustus’ political tactics to his legislative ambitions and his personal actions to his public.\(^{197}\)

*Aug.* 68 contains a short narrative about an audience’s reaction to an implicit criticism of Augustus in a verse (*Aug.* 68):

\[
\textit{sed et populus quondam uniuersus ludorum die et accepit in contumeliam eius et adsensu maximo conprobauit uersum in scaena pronuntiatum de gallo Matris deum tympanizante, uidesne ut cinaedus orbem digito temperat?}
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But once on a day when the games were being held the entire populace both interpreted a verse as an insult against him and, with the greatest

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\(^{197}\) For the criticism, see Baumann 1982: 85, “irrelevant part,” and Wardle 2015: 194 n. 45, “inserted awkwardly.” Wardle 2015: 185 likewise understands this passage’s context as the *vita publica* of the *Augustus*, which is true enough. But by attending to how Suetonius’ use of antithesis to bridge the public and personal parts of Augustus’ *Life* functions, the reader might better see how the one can always invoke the other. Suetonius’ antithetical reader is always waiting for the other shoe to drop, so to speak. Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 123 criticizes Suetonius’ reports of the emperors’ major legislation as “thin and perfunctory” in general.
assent, approved of it as it was being recited on stage about a priest of the mother of the gods beating a drum, “do you see how the eunuch controls the world with his finger?”

This narrative ends with a joke in which the actor recites a line of verse that puns on the act of beating a drum and ruling the world. The joke is amusing because a eunuch might be thought to be effeminate – a trait that Augustus’ enemies levied at him. This insult is the context for this narrative.\(^{198}\) I discuss this context further shortly. For now, it is sufficient to recognize that, in this passage, Suetonius inverts the two elements observed in the discussion of Aug. 34.2: the audience reads Augustus into the ambiguity of the verse, observing the emperor not at his behest, but despite it, and the joke works because of Augustus’ alleged sexual deviancy, regardless of the credibility of its sources. Both passages weave spectacle, public politics, Augustus’ private life, and examples of fecundity (Germanicus) and impotence (the eunuch), but from opposite positions.

If this antithesis is broken down into its parts, four broadly defined components are seen: 1) slander / rumor, 2) spectacle / entertainment, 3) sexuality / marriage, and 4) legislation / civic organization. I give each part two elements to show how broadly Suetonius treats these topics. These parts overlap: marriage is a key component to Augustus’ legislative program, for example. Given the prominence of these parts in elite Augustan social and political reality, it is no surprise that they appear with regularity (although not evenly – clustering is common) in the Augustus – often paired.\(^{199}\) Nowhere

\(^{198}\) For an extended treatment of the *cinaedus*, see Williams 1999: 172-218. For Aug. 68, see Williams 1999: 176, who notes that the original context for the word, a dancer, was stretched to include men willing to be the passive, penetrated partner in sexual intercourse with another man. The joke here relies upon such a range of possible meanings.

in the *Augustus*, save one other spot (*Aug* 53.1), do the four parts come together as they do in the antithesis between *Aug* 34.2 and 68. Although other passages can be read to show Augustus’ sexual hypocrisy, none use spectacle as the framework for making this point. I do not deny that this antithesis makes a similar point to other passages – it is only part of a Life that portrays Augustus’ positive and negative qualities. My claim here is simply that these two passages, in contributing to a larger characterization of Augustus, are formed into an antithesis by Suetonius to make a point.

*Aug* 53.1, however, contains similar narrative elements to the antithesis under review, although toward different thematic ends (i.e., not about marriage legislation or sexuality). In this thematic unit about Augustus’ imperial restraint (*ciuilitas*) (52-56), Suetonius highlights one incident that occurred during a mime performance (53.1). 200 Although Augustus had always rejected the name *dominus*, the audience takes the line “O just and good master” (*o dominum aequum et bonum!* ) as a reference to Augustus and approves. Augustus responds in real time: “he immediately repressed the indecorous praises with a hand motion and a facial expression” (*statim manu uultuque indecoras adulationes repressit*) and chastised them the following day with an edict. 201 In this brief passage, Suetonius combines certain narrative devices – the audience’s reading of Augustus into a line of poetry and Augustus’ hand / gaze motions to send a public message (the phrase *manu uultuque* appears in both 34.2 and 53.1) – that appear in 34.2

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200 On the thematic unit’s organization, see Wardle 2014: 365-386.
201 On the edict as a form for imperial criticism, see Benner 1975: 78-79. Augustus even goes so far as to prevent his children and grandchildren from calling him *dominus* (*Aug* 53.1), despite the term being a normal form of address by the end of the 1st century BCE (see Dickey 2002: 85-86). Roller 2001: 258 notes that it appears that Augustus attempted to suppress the use of the word to refer to himself entirely.
and 68. That this combination is oriented toward different thematic ends at 53.1 than in
the antithesis under discussion here (ciuilitas vs. sexual hypocrisy) should not distract
from Suetonius’ application of stock narrative elements to make a point. The reader
attending to Suetonius’ use of antithesis should be made more confident about the
antithesis set up between 34.2 and 68 by having seen the stock elements reused together
at 53.1 in the meantime. Suetonius’ ordering of the three passages alerts his reader to the
coming closure of the antithesis. The reader encounters the following three passages:
first, the opening of the antithesis; second, a preview of the antithesis as a whole in a
different context; third, the closing of the antithesis.\footnote{The presence of 53.1 bolsters the
argument that 34.2 and 68 form an antithesis by confirming that some of the narrative
elements that Suetonius sets up in opposition to each other are set narrative elements in
the \textit{Augustus}.

To recap the antithesis before turning to an analysis of the individual passages:
two passages that pertain to Augustus’ relationship to sexuality and the exercise of
sexuality in marriage, one normative and one aberrant, include scenes of Augustus in a
spectacle setting. In the one, he presents himself as a spectacle in order to make a
political point; in the other, the audience interprets a line of verse as about Augustus.\footnote{In
this respect, we can see some thematic overlap with the previous antithesis discussed in this
chapter, between Caesar and Domitian: both of those emperors lack control over messaging
after their deaths. Here, Augustus cannot control his messaging while in power.}
In the one, Augustus aligns himself and his political actions with legislation that attempts
to apply normative marriage and sexual practices; in the other, rumors about Augustus’
aberrant behaviors are strong enough to allow the Roman populace to draw inferences

\footnote{These are the only two times that the phrase \textit{manu uultuque} appears in the \textit{Caesars} as a whole, further
suggesting that this is a preview of a particular antithesis.}
about Augustus’ private habits. This antithesis is well suited to analysis of antitheses in one Life because of its placement within the *Augustus*. Not all antitheses that appear in one Life will cross the binary divider, but most do – and in doing so, they take advantage of the natural reading rhythms that Suetonius’ structure generates. The nature of the principate, as an institution typified by one man, means that contradictions and hypocrisies can always be present. The binary divider acknowledges the potentially contradictory nature of an emperor; antithesis perhaps even more so. Suetonius’ reader, attending to his use of antithesis, comes to expect the other shoe to drop, so to speak. It is not that every trait found before the binary divider will have a corresponding opposite trait; not every emperor was a hypocrite in every instance. But because power is the accumulation of discrete topics of authority, the potential for hypocrisy and contradiction is always present. Antithesis in one Life that crosses a binary divider makes this aspect of power real on the page. Suetonius’ biographical form reproduces the form of the principate.

*Aug. 34, Legislation, Social Control, and Exemplarity*

*Aug. 34.2* depicts Augustus creating an example out of himself and his family to be emulated by the other Romans in attendance. I requote the passage for ease of reference:

> sic quoque abolitionem eius publico spectaculo pertinaciter postulante equite, accitos Germanici liberos receptosque partim ad se partim in patris gremium ostentuit, manu uultuque significans ne grauarentur imitari iuuenis exemplum...

Thus, for example, since the equestrian order, at a public show, was tenaciously demanding its annulment, he summoned Germanicus’ children and displayed them, one of them taken onto his lap, and the other onto their father’s lap, indicating with his hand and facial expression that they
[the equestrians] should not hesitate to imitate the example of the young man…

Some context about this passage and its placement in its topical unit is needed before analysis of the passage can be conducted. In establishing this context, I largely follow the lead of David Wardle. Contributions from Richard Baumann and Thomas A.J. McGinn are likewise significant to my analysis. This anecdote is nested in a topical unit about some of Augustus’ legislative accomplishments (which is in turn nested in a thematic unit about the civic administration of Rome – 32-40). Suetionius first notes that Augustus “revised [old] laws and established some from the ground up” (*Leges retractauit et quasdam ex integro sanxit*) before selecting a few as examples (*ut*) (*Aug*. 34.1): 1) legislation “relating to expense” (*sumptuariam*), the *lex Iulia sumptuaria* of 18 BCE, 2) “about adultery and sexual propriety” (*de adulteriis et de pudicitia*), the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* of 17 BCE, 3) “about electoral bribery” (*de ambitu*), the *lex Iulia de ambitu* of 18 BCE, and legislation “about the marriage obligations of the orders” (*de maritandis ordinibus*), the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* of 17 BCE.

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204 Wardle 2014: 277 is a commentary note on this section (34.2), and he expands his treatment of *Aug.* 34 as a whole in Wardle 2015. Baumann 1982: 83-95 examines Augustus’ legislative program in his Life. The article as a whole looks at legislation as a topic in the *Caesars*. McGinn 2008: 1-32 takes on the social implications of the legislation, declaring the legislation a success when considered through the lens of social control. Much of his discussion is foundational for the conclusions that I draw in this analysis.

205 Suetionius here appears to be giving his reader a snapshot of what might have been approximately 200 pieces of legislation passed under Augustus. See Wardle 2015: 188. Cf. Tacitus *Ann.* 3.25.2 *multitudinem infinitam ac varietatem legum*. For the thematic unit, and an interpretation of the *Augustus*’ structure generally, see Wardle 2014: 10-12.


207 McGinn 2008: 9-22 (especially 18-21) and Wardle 2014: 274.


209 McGinn 2008: 9-22 and Wardle 2014: 275. For a discussion of legislative revision, see Moreau 2003: 473-477, who discusses the relationship between the *lex Papia Poppaea* and the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*. 

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Suetonius focuses on the final piece of legislation, the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, and claims that Augustus was not able to pass it due to outcry against a supposed draft version that was received as too harsh, writing “Since he had amended the latter somewhat more severely than the others, he was not able to carry it through on account of the clamor of those refusing it” (*hanc cum aliquanto seuerius quam ceteras emendasset, prae tumultu recusantium perferre non potuit*). The clamor was liable to continue “until part of the punishments was removed or made more lenient and a three-year gap period was given and rewards were increased” (*nisi adempta demum lenitaue parte poenarum et uacatione trienni data auctisque praemiis*).²¹⁰ It is at this point that Suetonius provides the scene of Augustus with Germanicus’ children as an example (*sic quoque*). But this example represents a temporal jump: it is likely that Suetonius is relating the same story as Dio 56.1.2, which tells an incident from 9 CE.²¹¹ The example is pertinent because it narrates another example of Augustus proposing a draft of possible legislation, only for it to be contested as too harsh – in this case, a draft of the *lex Papia Poppaea*. The example is followed by a sentence about the measures that Augustus took to close loopholes in the law. This example fits because it mimics what had happened in 17 BCE but presumably with a more well-known or more striking example. Or, as I propose, with an example that is better suited to creating an antithesis with the material

²¹⁰ What is meant by a three-year gap is unclear, and it depends on what legislation is meant to be under consideration. I follow Wardle 2014: 276, whose appeal to Occam’s razor is reasonable, but gives a sense of the aporetic nature of the problem: “this ‘period of grace’ (*vacatio*) is a three-year moratorium before the provisions of the *lex Iulia* came into effect.” I translate the phrase *vacatione trienni* without much specificity to reflect this problem.

²¹¹ There are particular questions about how to date this passage, but most revolve around Germanicus’ children. Depending on how one takes *partim ... partim* (two children or more), different dates are possible. I follow Wardle 2015: 202-203, which is a handy chart that summarizes his interpretation and compares it to other interpretations.
that Suetonius had found on Augustus’ sexual deviancy. I hold off on the implications of this argument for now and turn toward articulating how this example works in its topical unit context.

Augustus’ social and moral legislation, often considered a failure, has recently been reevaluated within different parameters. McGinn, citing contemporary theorizing about the social effects of legislation, proposes that the legislation sought to establish and re-enforce norms more than be strictly enforced itself. That it may have been enforced to greater or lesser degrees is debatable, but it is best evaluated as establishing social expectations. Suetonius’ depiction of Augustus, in this context, seems to show an emperor employing exemplary tactics: in particular, the visual prompt on Augustus’ part of his hand and face (manu uultuque) and Germanicus’ children as props. There is reason to suspect that Suetonius undercuts Augustus’ exemplary play in his presentation of the episode, however. Langlands points out that the subsequent sentence implies that nobody actually followed Augustus’ exemplary directive; she also notes that subsequent emperors themselves follow Augustus’ bad example (such as stealing wives from other men). So, how to read this passage? A middle ground between these two approaches can be found: Augustus’ actions can be both in line with exemplary practice and in service of legislation that establishes social norms successfully. Suetonius might also use

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214 For the historiographical use of exemplary thinking about the emperor, see Kraus 2005: 181-200. On biography’s role, see especially 184-186.
215 As Langlands 2014: 112 puts it, “Suetonius … represents Augustus as an emperor who is particularly aware of the power of exempla to influence moral behaviour, and is concerned both to deploy traditional exempla as part of his moral reforms and to present himself and his family as fresh exempla for the new imperial age.” She deftly demonstrates how Suetonius undercuts this depiction, however. See also Gunderson 2014: 130-145.
216 Langlands 2014: 111-129. Her discussion of this passage in particular can be found on pages 117-120.
this example to undercut Augustus’ intended exemplarity. Langlands might overstate the point, however. Suetonius does not seem to assume that the shortcomings of Augustus’ exemplary intentions would so transparent to his contemporary audience; he positions himself instead as teaching his readers how to see through Augustus’ ploy.217

Thus, whereas McGinn (and those who find the scene clumsily included) puzzles over the example’s relevance to the passage and Langlands sees the passage as an example of the open interpretability of exempla, I focus on how Suetonius uses it to bring together what might be disparate themes. The sequencing of the topical unit juxtaposes Augustus’ domestic and private life with his legislative ambitions. In doing so, it suggests an evaluative approach for judging Augustus’ accomplishments as a legislative authority by means of his own conduct and his family’s conduct – and these are parameters that Augustus himself sets. The inclusion of this specific episode functions as much as set-up for the other half of an antithesis as it does an example of Augustus’ need to modify drafts of unpopular legislation: Suetonius is teaching his readers how to see certain aspects of autocratic power (control over the legislative process and the moral example of the ruler and his family being two aspects) as connected and, therefore, applicable beyond the immediate context within which they are encountered. Suetonius anticipates the full structure of the Life, pointing forward to the private qualities of Augustus to come. In order to see this interaction in full, the other half of this antithesis is needed. For now, it is sufficient to note that this passage 1) depicts Augustus’ exemplary attempts to establish social norms as codified in his legislation, 2) is undercut by its own context and

217 Langlands 2014: 112 n. 6 argues for the “openness of exempla to interpretation at the point of reception.”.
by other Lives in the *Caesars*, and 3) gestures toward the rest of the *Augustus*, proleptically, by bringing into the “public” section of the Life the “personal” aspects that are to come.

**Aug. 68, Invective, and Deviant Sexuality**

The passage from *Aug*. 68 has its own topical unit context as well, which starts a thematic unit on Augustus’ shameful behavior (68-71). This thematic unit follows another thematic unit about Augustus’ family that includes prominent discussion of the banishment of the two Julias (65.1-4). I requote the passage for ease of reference (68):

\[
\text{sed et populus quondam uniuersus ludorum die et accepit in contumeliam eius et adsensu maximo conprobauit uersum in scaena pronuntiatum de gallo Matris deum tympanizante, uidesne ut cinaedus orbem digito temperat?}
\]

But once on a day when the games were being held the entire populace both interpreted a verse as an insult against him and, with the greatest assent, approved of it as it was being recited on stage about a priest of the mother of the gods beating a drum, “do you see how the eunuch controls the world with his finger?”

In this short narrative, the audience at the games interprets a recited verse as a double-entendre about Augustus and his sexual habits. Suetonius indicates that the interpretation has some credibility by noting that everybody (*populus … uniuersus*) was of the same mind and received it with “the greatest assent” (*adsensu maximo*). The context fits the interpretation: the priest (*gallo*) in question would have been a eunuch castrated for the Magna Mater (*Matris deum*), the word *cinaedus* – a transliteration of the Greek κίναιδος – originally signified an effeminate dancer but later came to mean a passive sexual partner, and the tambourine represents the world in the cult of the Magna Mater – hence
the pun on the word *orbem*. Suetonius shows his reader how it is that the audience could interpret the line in such a manner.

The topical unit context for this passage also facilitates such an interpretation: Suetonius starts the unit with the claim that, “In his early youth, he [Augustus] endured rumors of various sexual misdeeds” (*Prima iuuenta uariorum dedecorum infamiam subiit*). He then lists a series of allegations made by different political opponents: “Sextus Pompey attacked him as effeminate, M. Antonius for earning his adoption by means of sexual activity with his uncle, likewise L., Marcus’ brother, that he surrendered his sexual purity, infringed upon by Caesar, to even Aulus Hirtius in Spain for 300,000 coins” (*Sextus Pompeius ut effeminatum insectatus est, M. Antonius <ut> adoptionem auunculi stupro meritum, item L. Marci frater quasi pudicitiam delibatam a Caesare Aulo etiam Hirtio in Hispania trecentis milibus nummum substrauerit*). Lucius also alleges that he softened his leg hair with hot nuts (*solitusque sit crura suburere nuce ardenti quo mollier pilus surgeret*).

These allegations all suggest that Augustus was the passive sexual partner and, therefore, allowed himself to be violated in a manner considered unsuitable to an adult Roman male. The veracity of these claims is disputable. It is true that allegations made by Antony in particular appear in clusters at different points in the *Augustus*. Suetonius appears to weave both praise (including self-praise from the *Res Gestae*) and

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218 See Wardle 2014: 239-240.
219 For an in-depth discussion of the sexual politics of each allegation, see Wardle 2014: 436-440.
220 Wardle 2014: 436 argues that “Suet. attaches little credibility” to them. Langlands 2014: 112 does not discuss the veracity of the claims themselves but finds their presence in the Life to be potentially damaging to the reader’s conception of Augustus. Edwards 1993: 47-48 discusses chapter 69, but she sees potential political value to Augustus in those allegations.
221 See Langlands 2014: 113-114.
criticism into the Life. But Suetonius’ selection of material here is perhaps more revealing than its possible veracity: this list of invective come from Republican opponents to Octavian as he navigates a political career pre-27 BCE. In biographical time, this passage belongs in a different part of the structure of the Augustus: if Suetonius’ inclusion of the personal was structurally proleptic in 34.2, the inclusion of Octavian’s rise to power is analeptic. Octavian’s use of sex to gain influence with powerful men is the context for the internal audience of the games, but it is also the context for Suetonius’ audience to consider how Augustus’ own sexual deviancy relates to his personal vices. The joke that ends this topical unit emphasizes the point that the topical unit seems to be making from start to end: there is no evaluating Augustus’ personal vices in a private context, devoid of the public. The binary divider that structures the Life around the domains of the public (i.e. the res publica) and the personal (i.e. his domestic life and private habits) (61.1) does not separate the two; it yokes them.

As a coda to this argument, it is worth mentioning that the subsequent topical unit opens with the more credible allegation (in Suetonius’ assessment – … ne amici quidem negant …) that Augustus committed adultery (the topical indicator of this unit is found in its opening word: Adulteria). Crucially, the allegation suggests that Augustus’ motive was tactical, not lustful; he seduced women to gain information about his rivals.

Catharine Edwards notes that “Augustus … was advantaged by appearing more sexually

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222 On Suetonius’ sources, including the Res Gestae, see Baldwin 1983: 123-146.
223 Analeptic in the sense that it evokes a part of Augustus’ life that would normally, and does, appear earlier in a Suetonian Life. The implication of the passage is that his effeminacy persists into his adult life too.
224 See my discussion of this passage in my introduction.
attractive than his opponents, by winning over their wives.”\textsuperscript{225} Augustus’ political power is, again, wrapped up in his personal habits. Suetonius’ sequencing at the opening of this thematic unit reinforces the yoking function of the binary divider.

Hence, for Augustus, the credibility of his early accrual of influence is at stake when the people interpret the line at the games. He must balance the political gain he might win from the invective of his political opponents against the reputational damage that the rumors might have, as exemplified by the incident at the games. Suetonius’ presentation lends credence to the second possibility: having characterized Octavian’s rise as allegedly the consequence of improper sexual activity, he labels the populace’s interpretation of the line an “insult” (\textit{contumeliam}). It is not just that the audience at the games notices the pun between Augustus’ global hegemony and his so-called effeminate and passive reputation; rather, the audience notices the double-entendre, and Suetonius provides the label for their interpretation, in effect guiding his audience toward correctly interpreting the internal audience’s own interpretation of the line. Suetonius’ presentation of the scene bridges a possible hermeneutic gap between the internal audience and his \textit{Caesars} audience. In doing so, he not only yokes Augustus’ personal sexual activity and his public action (either his rise to power via his political connections or, to reinvoke the implicit argument of the antithesis, his social and moral legislative program), but Suetonius also teaches his own audience what sort of interpretations are possible given certain types of action from a princeps and how those interpretations might be expressed.

\textsuperscript{225} Edwards 1993: 48. See, one page earlier, her well-stated assessment of adultery’s political value: “In some sense, these stories [rumors about adultery] were thought to reflect badly on their subjects. But drawing attention to a man’s disruptive potential by highlighting his propensity for seducing other men’s wives also emphasised his power.”
Rumors about an emperor’s use of sexuality for political gain, whether true or not and whether or not the emperor actually does benefit from them, are liable to be taken as insults to his reputation. By folding young Octavian into old Augustus in this passage, Suetonius provides an implicit argument for the biographical form. Suetonius works in the muddy waters of imperial facts, whose veracity might be difficult to discern; here he teaches his readers how to swim.

*The Antithesis in Action*

The two passages that make up this antithesis privilege different, but related, topics that shape our conception of Augustus’ leadership: legislative programs, spectacle, exemplary thinking, and sexual deviancy. In doing so, they take elements of Augustus’ principate that could be conceived of as separate aspects of his reign – public vs. personal, normative vs. deviant, self-presentation vs. perception by others – and juxtapose them for the antithetical reader. *Aug.* 34.2 discusses Augustus’ moral and social legislation and his attempts to use exemplary signaling at an entertainment venue to reinforce the social control he sought with this legislation. *Aug.* 68 traces Octavian’s rise to power via the alleged trading of sexual favors and how those rumors became fodder for interpretations of even a single line of verse – interpretations that were praised and vocalized by the populace in public. This yoking of the disparate elements models a type of reading and thinking practice for Suetonius’ readers: antithetical readers are conditioned to expect the possibility of a topic’s inverse later in a Life. In conditioning themselves to this expectation, these readers adopt a critical perspective about any information that they
encounter. Suetonius uses any one topic about an emperor not only to teach his readers how to think about that topic specifically but also how to think critically in general.

To return to the antithesis at hand: in the course of this argument, I have highlighted the various topics that these two passages bring before the reader and how Suetonius prompts his reader to consider them afresh. I want to return now to the two aspects of the antithesis itself that I highlighted at the beginning: Augustus’ alignment with normative sexual habits in the first and his deviant behavior in the second, and Augustus’ self-presentation in the first and the audience’s interpretation of his actions in the second. Each passage, as Suetonius presents them, includes the possibility of its opposite. The enforcement of sexual norms entails the existence of sexual deviancy; the presentation of the self allows for the possibility of interpretation by others. What Suetonius’ antithesis does is locate that opposite in the eponymous subject of the Augustus. Of course, the banishment of the two Julias is an embarrassment for the imperial household and a source of irony when compared to Augustus’ legislative efforts. Such a reading is present in Suetonius’ account, and Langlands’ approach makes this comparison to great effect. But Suetonius elects to create so strong an antithesis between the two spectacle scenes not in a topical unit about Augustus’ family, but about Augustus’ own alleged sexual deviancy. He juxtaposes these topics in the person of Augustus himself, emphasizing for the reader the distinction drawn in the Life’s binary divider (61.1). Suetonius’ particular biographical form mirrors the discrete, yet additive, aspects of the imperial Caesars: each man entails contradictions, and thus the power structure of the principate reflects those contradictions.
Thus, when the reader returns to Aug. 34.2 having read the ease with which the public took up praise for the perceived insult against Augustus (et accepit in contumeliam eius et adsensu maximo conprobauit uersum), it comes as less of a surprise that Augustus’ own exemplary actions at a public spectacle (publico spectaculo) do not seem to achieve their desired ends. Reading the other direction achieves a similar effect: Augustus’ use of his body, Germanicus’ body, and the bodies of Germanicus’ children (accitos Germanici liberos receptosque partim ad se partim in patris gremium ostentauit, manu uultuque significans …) appears less like an upstanding example of moral modeling and more like one of a variety of ways Augustus might use his body to achieve power, in this case in the form of social control over the different orders. This reading cuts through the official narrative that Augustus suggests via the use of his hands and face (ne grauarentur imitari iuuenis exemplum) and suggests the possibility that it could be understood differently (et accepit in contumeliam eius et adsensu maximo conprobauit uersum). The exemplary message of the imperial hand (manu uultuque significans) is garbled by a eunuch’s finger (cinaedus … digito).

This type of antithesis, which is a near-constant in Suetonius’ organization of his Lives, can evoke different topics or even aspects of a Life that are not topical, such as narrative. To catalogue all of them is unfeasible; to identify and analyze the principle is what is useful. It is to that end and to demonstrate the frequency and flexibility with which this type of antithesis appears that I briefly present one example for each of the 11 other Caesars.226 At Jul. 32, Caesar pauses before crossing the Rubicon, emboldened by

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226 For those looking for potential sources of antitheses of this type in the Caesars, both Benediktson 1996 and Ferguson 2012 identify ring composition as an essential element of Suetonius’ structure. The former is
the presence of an apparition; at *Jul.* 59, Suetonius presents instances where Caesar – Pontifex Maximus since 63 BCE – does not hesitate to embark on military ventures, even when he had not received divine validation of his actions. Some halves of an antithesis can appear close together: Suetonius makes an implicit argument for tracking where the emperor spends his time by noting a period of Tiberius’ reign where he never leaves Rome (*Tib.* 38) and a period of time where he never returns to Rome (*Tib.* 39). This type of antithesis can appear in the narrative, not topical, portions of a Life and even connect passages about two different people. Both Germanicus and Gaius’ bodies are only partially burned: Germanicus’ heart survived cremation as a medical testament to his poisoning and plays a role in establishing his reputation (*Cal.* 1.2), but Gaius’ body is partially cremated in secret and only fully cremated later (*Cal.* 59). Claudius drains Lake Fucinus as part of his public work projects (*Cl.* 20.1), but also floods an event held at the lake to commemorate this so-called success (*Cl.* 32). Might this antithesis of nearly the same event show Suetonius’ readers how to re-narrativize what might be the official narrative of an accomplishment? At *Ner.* 16.1, Suetonius mentions that Nero had apartment buildings and houses built with the capability to fight fires at his own expense; at *Ner.* 31.1, Suetonius notes that what damaged his finances most of all was the building of a large house called the Passageway House, but later renamed the *Domus Aurea* after it burned down.

an article about the *Galba*; the latter an MA thesis about each Life in the *Caesars.* While I think the ring structure approach presents a too rigid understanding of Suetonius’ structure that leaves certain organizational elements out of one’s analysis, both of these analyses identify copious instances of organizational echoes and supply data sets ready for further analysis. The antithetical reader should still be able to find antithesis outside of their *schemata*, however.
The post-Julio-Claudian Lives likewise include this type of antithesis, although they are less frequent due to the shorter extent of the Lives. At *Gal.* 4.3, Suetonius relates a dream that Galba has in which Fortune portends his ascension to power using the metaphor of a prize (*praedae*); *Gal.* 18.2 sees Galba have a dream about Fortune that portends his death in which Fortune complains that she has been cheated of a gift that he had given to Venus. Otho marries Poppaea Sabina, only for Nero to break the marriage apart (*Oth.* 3.1-3.2); Otho entrusts his remains and memory to Messalina, Nero’s widow (*Oth.* 10.2). Class relationships, while not always presented as direct opposites, can still be explored: Vitellius relies on his relationship with the common soldiers to gain power, which is portrayed with a positive tone (*Vit.* 7.3-8.1); but he also relies on actors, chariot drivers, and freedman to rule, which receives a more negative assessment (*Vit.* 12). Vespasian offends Nero by skipping out on or sleeping through his theatrical performances (*Ves.* 4.4); he also reinstitutes old-style entertainments, including a new theatrical stage and payments to actors (*Ves.* 19.1). Titus is born in a small, dark chamber (*Tit.* 1); he dies in his father’s villa (*Tit.* 11). Even imperial edicts can be given and reversed through the logic of antithesis: Domitian issues an edict (but does not follow through) on the cutting down of vines to make room for grain production (*Dom.* 7.2), but the logic of why he never follows through is not given until *Dom.* 14.2, where the reader learns that it is because he has read pamphlets containing critical epigrams. The production of written material and the reading of it may not be a profitable antithesis for Domitian, but for Suetonius and the antithetical reader there is much to gain.
Antithesis Within One Passage

Ves. 16.3, Establishing the Antithesis

During a thematic unit that compiles examples of Vespasian’s greed, Suetonius pauses to consider source the source of his greed. He first points to one set of arguments about where Vespasian’s greed came from (Ves. 16.3): “Some say that he was very greedy by nature, and that this reproach had been levied against him by an old herdsman, who – after freedom at no cost, for which he was accustomed to beg from Vespasian upon attaining imperial power, was denied to him – proclaimed that a fox changes his coat, not his customs” (quidam natura cupidissimum tradunt, idque exprobratum ei a sene bubulco qui negata sibi gratuita libertate quam imperium adeptum suppliciter orabat proclamauerit uulpem pilum mutare, non mores). At the most basic level, this sentence reproduces a claim from unnamed sources that Vespasian was greedy by nature. An elaboration of that allegation is given in the form of an old herdsman’s complaint that Vespasian, even after becoming emperor, had denied the man’s appeal for freedom at no cost.227 Suetonius gives this herdsman a commanding, almost imperial, verb and a voice in the form of oratio obliqua. That Vespasian is not the subject of the verb should cause the reader some surprise; a more pointed surprise comes from the herdsman’s harsh words (ulpem pilum mutare, non mores).228 On the anonymous claim that Vespasian’s

227 Compare the fate of Cato’s herdsmen, sold to cancel out the cost of feeding them in their old age (Plutarch Cato 4.4).
228 On the strong frequency with which the eponymous subject of a Life is the subject of a verb, see Power 2014a: 4-8. The verb here (proclamauerit) is subordinate, which makes the shift in subject less surprising, although two points still remain: first, Vespasian has yet to be the nominative subject of a verb in this sentence, instead starting the sentence as an accusative subject, and therefore at a distance from the main verb; and second, the act of proclaiming might reasonably be associated with the emperor before a herdsman. Some role reversal is present. On the use of quotation as a sort of sententia, see Damon 2014: 42-43 and 49-50, countering Wallace-Hadrill 1984: 23-24.
greed is natural, a herdsman gets the final word at the expense of the emperor. The herdsman’s perceived financial mistreatment at Vespasian’s hand is at least partially compensated in Suetonius’ depiction of this exchange.

The next sentence in the unit provides a different source for Vespasian’s greed, again presented through an unnamed source: “In contrast, there are those who think that he was compelled by necessity to plunder and theft due to the total poverty of the public treasury and the imperial treasury, about which he attested straight away at the beginning of his principate, alleging that 40 billion sesterces were needed to be able to set straight the Res Publica” (*sunt contra qui opinentur ad manubias et rapinas necessitate compulsum summa aerarii fiscique inopia de qua testificatus sit initio statim principatus, professus quadringenties milies opus esse ut res p. stare posset*) (16.3). This passage provides the opposite explanation for Vespasian’s strong attention to financial gain. Instead of an internal source (his nature), he is compelled by an external source (necessity, in the form of empty treasuries). The actions to which he is compelled are more socially deleterious than the treatment of his slave (*ad manubias et rapinas*), although the force of Suetonius’ diction is likewise striking. Suetonius again leverages *oratio obliqua* to end this sentence, drawing it to a sententious close. Vespasian, the one who accrues money unlike the herdsman, is the one to deliver the final quip.\(^{229}\) Vespasian’s quip does not seem to achieve the same effect as the herdsman’s: I discuss the context of this passage briefly below, but it is plausible that Suetonius doubts Vespasian’s claim to have only the state in mind.

\(^{229}\) For Suetonius’ use of the emperor’s own words, see Damon 2014: 48-57.
Suetonius appends a brief coda to these two sentences. I quote and touch on it briefly before turning to my articulation of the antithesis: “And the latter [the claim *necessitate*] seems closer to reality, since he used his gains well, even though they were badly acquired” (*quod et ueri similius videtur, quando et male partis optime usus est*) (16.3). For now, it is sufficient to say that this sentence confirms the antithetical nature of what preceded it by positing a choice between two options. I discuss further the implications of Suetonius’ use of the comparative shortly, but at least it demonstrates a choice between two options that can be compared.

To define my antithesis: in *Ves.* 16.3, Suetonius juxtaposes two rationales for why Vespasian coveted money, with one rationale positing an internal source for the greed and the other an external source. The phrases that present these oppositional rationales both start with the same sounds, further connecting them in the reader’s mind (*natura cupidissimum* and *necessitate compulsum*). Both sentences end with indirect statements, one made by the allegedly greedy emperor, the other by his victim. The negative social effects of Vespasian’s desire for money are opposites, the first being specific (*sene bubulco*) and the second general (*ad manubias et rapinas*). These three antithetical aspects of the two sentences are what make up the core of the antithesis within this topical unit. As noted, the final sentence of the unit assumes, at least, a dual logic preceding it, if not an antithesis. This antithesis is embedded into a topical unit that presents the reader with a variety of distancing effects: anonymous source citations and indirect statements are the two most prominent ones. The concluding sentence of the unit makes clear that even Suetonius had difficulty discerning the truth about the information that made up the topical unit. In fact, as I argue after I put this antithesis in its context,
this antithesis is a way for Suetonius to reproduce the sort of information that he might have been confronting during his research (source citation and quotations) and present that information to his reader in a manner that shares the difficulties of parsing contradictory information about an emperor. When information that pertains to an evaluation of an emperor concerns vices that might have internal sources, it becomes difficult to understand how to analyze that vice because accessing the internal provides an empirical challenge. Antithesis is an effective means of clarifying these difficulties.

But first, I briefly put this unit in context before analyzing the antithesis as a whole.

**Ves. 16.3 in Context**

*Ves.* 16.3 is one topical unit in a thematic unit that examines Vespasian’s desire for money in general. It starts with the claim that his desire for money was Vespasian’s sole vice (*Sola est in qua merito culpetur pecuniae cupiditas*). The political impact of this trait is enumerated: Vespasian reinstated and invented taxes as well as required tribute from provinces, carried on business dealings shameful even for a citizen (a cross-reference with *Ves.* 4.3), and sold offices and pardons, regardless of the guilt or innocence of the defendant, so that he could extort money from people when funds were needed (16.1-2). The sequencing of this unit argues for the inappropriateness of Vespasian’s behavior and its impact on the public. In moving from the least to most egregious examples, Suetonius characterizes Vespasian’s desire for money as truly beyond the pale, demonstrates how it undercuts both his own dignity as emperor and the public institutions under his protection, and suggests that his less egregious behavior should be understood as part of this larger characterization. Raising taxes and required tributary payments is not
necessarily bad practice, but the credibility of Vespasian’s intent behind these actions is damaged by the subsequent actions that Suetonius chronicles.

It is at this point that 16.3 appears, and I return to it in a moment. But first, what follows it in this thematic unit is worth mentioning. Ves. 17 starts with the claim that Vespasian was generous to people of every class (*in omne hominum genus liberalissimus*). Suetonius supports this claim with examples of generosity, including bolstering the finances of penniless consuls who could not meet the Senatorial property requirements, rebuilding destroyed cities, using imperial funds to pay teachers of rhetoric and giving gifts to poets and artists, bringing back old entertainments, paying actors, throwing dinner parties and thereby patronizing market vendors, and even giving presents to women on the Kalends of March. Despite this generosity, his reputation as a greedy man persisted – a fact that Suetonius illustrates with Vespasian’s Alexandrian nickname (Cybiosactes) and a mime’s performance at Vespasian’s funeral that played on the late emperor’s greed (17-19.2).230 The persistence of Vespasian’s reputation suggests that his generosity did not overcome his greed or make it acceptable; rather, it appears as if his generosity was somehow tactical. Vespasian’s targeted generosity contrasts with his treatment of an individual herdsman, and Suetonius’ presentation of this contrast strikes a political tone. By inserting the examples of Vespasian’s generosity between two passages that depict his desire for money, Suetonius makes this argument for his reader. The sequencing of this thematic unit is suggestive.

I return, with this context in mind, to the most immediate context of the antithesis: Suetonius’ final sentence of 16.3, which caps off the preceding antithesis. Suetonius

230 For the mime performance, see Damon 2014: 52.
writes, “And the latter [the claim *necessitate*] seems closer to reality, since he used his
gains well, even though they were badly acquired” (*quod et ueri similius videtur, quando
et male partis optime usus est*). Two aspects of this sentence can now receive further
elaboration: first, what Suetonius might mean by his assessment given in the word
*optime*, and second, what the force of the comparative might be. When composing this
pithy ending to this unit, Suetonius tinkers with what appears to be almost idiomatic
parallelism: Naevius writes *male parta male dilabuntur* (Trag. 54), Plautus *male partum
male disperit* (Poen. 844), and Livy *male partam victoriam male perdiderunt* (9.9).
Suetonius’ wit in overturning the idiom prompts further scrutiny from the reader to
understand what *optime* means in this context, and the coming material that I detailed
above suggests that something like “strategically well” suits the context. The point is to
build up his own coffers, and maintaining power is key to that endeavor. Generosity to
different classes / groups of people is a tactic undertaken to facilitate his power via the
methods detailed in 16.1-2, and thereby have an excuse (empty treasuries) and the
political means to accrue more money.  

The second word under consideration here is the comparative *similius*. I have
already argued that, by invoking a comparative, Suetonius acknowledges the preceding
antithesis. Such an acknowledgement rests upon an approach to the material that
highlights Suetonius’ own epistemological uncertainty. Suetonius is frank with his
reader: he cannot actually choose one of the two options above with certainty, and it is
possible that a combination of the two might be the truth. Just because one is closer than

231 Later evidence for this reading appears in Ausonius’ reconfiguration of Suetonius’ *Caesars*: “Intent on
procuring, accommodating of moderate use, Vespasian increased, not curbed, his riches” (*Quaerendi
adventus, moderato commodus usu, auget nec reprimit Vespasianus opes*) (Caes. 10).
the other to reality does not preclude both from expressing truth. This reading
complements well the type of antithetical thinking that we have seen in the two other
antitheses discussed in this chapter. Suetonius employs antithesis to make both elements
relevant through the invocation of one. Such a use is easy here, since the elements are
presented back to back – but Suetonius’ attempt to discern which of the two possibilities
is correct, and his admission to his reader that he cannot actually discern cleanly, makes
the reader aware that 1) Vespasian’s desire for money was either caused by nature or
from necessity, or 2) Vespasian was so covetous for money that his greed manifested to
so strong a degree that it appeared as if it was caused by both internal and external forces.
It is with this context in mind, namely that Suetonius is presenting an antithesis that is
difficult to resolve or diagnose, that I turn to my final analysis of the antithesis.

The Antithesis in Action

In Ves. 16.3, Suetonius presents an antithesis structured around the two possible sources
of Vespasian’s attitude about money: either it came from him naturally or it was imposed
upon him by necessity. Each presentation of the two elements is strikingly similar to the
other. Both start with an appeal to anonymous sources for potential rationales for
Vespasian’s desire (quilam ... tradunt and sunt contra qui opinentur), both provide
examples that make concrete the deleterious social effects of Vespasian’s desire (sene
bubulco and ad manubias et rapinas), and both end in oratio obliqua (uulpem pilum
mutare, non mores and quadringenties milies opus esse ut res p. stare posset). What this
antithesis does, therefore, is provide the reader with the sorts of information that
Suetonius might wade through during his research on the Caesars, the sorts of
information that the reader could expect to encounter elsewhere in the *Caesars*, and the sorts of information that might pertain to other emperors in the Nervan-Antonine dynasty. The problems of political biography are not just the content of a ruler’s life but also understanding how that information is conveyed, be it through anonymous sources, anecdotes, or quotations. By appending the final sentence that he does to this antithesis, Suetonius models a type of analysis of how to approach this information. The antithesis is itself an analytic device; its final sentence does suggest a possible way to read and comprehend the information about Vespasian’s greed, but the presence of the antithesis likewise serves as a prompt. Suetonius models the efficacy of dividing information about any given topic antithetically. The antithesis is both a device and a prompt; analysis and a spur to analysis.

**Conclusion: Communicating with Antithesis**

To start this conclusion, I return to the rhetorical tradition with which I started this chapter. Lausberg, in his section on emphasis, explains that emphasis communicates “the more precise meaning of something by means of a less precise semantic content.” The idea is that behind the actual text lies a more precise meaning graspable by the audience. Lausberg offers a few examples; a brief one is of word-emphasis, which “gives a word with a broader semantic range (*vivendum est* ‘one must live’) a narrower semantic range with a more precise semantic content (‘one should know how to win through’).” One way of creating emphasis is through antithesis, including antitheses that are deduced from

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232 Lausberg 1998 §905.
233 Lausberg draws this example from Quintilian 8.3.86.
context (i.e., one half of the antithesis is suppressed). In the first two examples that I
discuss in this chapter, we see Suetonius use temporary suppression; the reader
eventually encounters the second half of both antitheses. Beyond illuminating the
difference between the first two types of antithesis and third type discussed in this
chapter, this rhetorical gambit is illuminating for two reasons. First, it shows that
antithesis had a role in the rhetorical tradition in creating implicit meaning. Much of the
argument of this chapter has been that Suetonius uses antithesis to make implicit,
analytical arguments that his reader can follow by attending to the structural prompts
Suetonius embeds in Lives. Second, and this may be an explanation for the first reason,
as a member of the imperial bureaucracy, Suetonius could not conduct a fully analytical
analysis of the principate’s first twelve officeholders in the open. Some circumspection
would be required. The rhetorical move of antithesis reveals a textually clever Suetonius.
Whether Suetonius achieved an adequate level of circumspection is, and has been, open
to debate.234 But the presence of such elaborately constructed antitheses as have been
touched upon in this chapter indicates some degree of careful argumentation on
Suetonius’ part.

Circumspection and careful argumentation – but to what end? I have argued,
through my analysis of three different antitheses, that Suetonius uses the rhetorical
structure of antithesis as both a device and a prompt. As a device, antithesis yokes two
contradictory ideas, or perhaps motifs, in order to gain analytical insight from the
contradiction. Antithesis as device facilitates Suetonius’ analysis of the principate of the
twelve Caesars who make up his serial biographical collection. This analysis occurs

234 See my discussion of Suetonius’ career in my introduction.
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because of the comparative affordance that antithesis possesses. Yoking and then juxtposing contradictory ideas facilitates analysis of numerous different political and social contexts and presents those analyses in different ways – three of which can be seen in this chapter. It is in attending to the mechanics of the device that the reader notices this analysis in the first place; the presence and use of antithesis is as important to understanding Suetonius’ structure as the analyses that he reaches through the device. This invocation of the reader brings me to the second use of antithesis in this chapter: antithesis as prompt. As a prompt, antithesis not only signals the presence of analysis in the Caesars, but also models how readers can use comparative thinking to perform their own analysis in reading the Caesars. In employing antithesis in his biographical collection, Suetonius applies the modern precept of “show, don’t tell” to his didactic approach. Because Suetonius embeds antithesis in a variety of levels in the Lives, he pulls his readers in; discerning readers come to expect the possibility that any treatment of a topic might be the set-up of an antithesis with its antithetical counterpart coming soon. Readers take their reading cues from the structures of the Caesars.

In my analysis of the Julius-Domitian antithesis above, I did not assume a linear or chronological approach to the comparison; I am as willing to take the Domitian as the starting point for comparison as I am the Julius.\textsuperscript{235} This comparative mode of reading, what I will call “recursive reading” in the next chapter, is the mode of reading that I believe Suetonius himself endorses as the way to read the Caesars in full: comparison can and should be made across the collection, and no one Life ought to be treated as

\textsuperscript{235} In fact, for rhetorical reasons, I tend to privilege the Domitian, but only to make a point against an assumed superiority of the Julius, not to assert an imagined superiority of the Domitian.
primary. In this way, antithesis is a smaller example of the larger comparative reading practices that Suetonius utilizes in the *Caesars*. The Suetonian machine is in working order.
CHAPTER THREE: REWRITING AND RECURSIVE READING

Suetonius’ topical organization mirrors and, thus, interprets the principate; it is the dominant form of the *Caesars*. Antithesis is one of the principal mechanisms of structure in the *Caesars* and facilitates a comparative mode of analysis. Through these two forms, Suetonius builds what I have called the Suetonian machine, his literary organization that can take some input, in the form of information about an emperor or the principate, and subject it to analysis. Through topical organization and antithesis, Suetonius teaches his readers how to confront, dissect, and analyze Roman autocracy for themselves. Because Suetonius’ assessment of the principate is negative – as the accrual of individual powers, the institution admits the weakness of any one emperor with respect to any one power – the tools with which he equips his readers prompt them to perform critique. But what is Suetonius’ literary end? To employ the metaphor of the Suetonius machine, what is the machine’s output? In this chapter, I argue that Suetonius prompts his readers to engage in an implied mode of reading, called recursive reading, by which his readers follow internal prompts to move throughout the biographical collection in a non-linear fashion. I note that this mode of reading is implied for two reasons: the nature of the form of rewriting (the prompts that encourage recursive reading) and Suetonius’ predilection to employ form for political camouflage. As a form, rewriting signals that the reader should create a network of Caesars as a model for analysis. This network assumes the institution behind the incumbents. Through comparison of the officeholders, the recursive reader comes to understand the limits and possibilities of the office of emperor. In this way, serial biography achieves its political potential.
Suetonius has twelve tales to tell. Each Caesar occupies one Life in the *Caesars*, and his place in the text is more or less secure: his Life comes in chronological order by date of ascension. Often, however, each Caesar seems to want to find his way into the other Lives. Tiberius cameos in the *Augustus*, and Augustus in the *Tiberius*. The post-Julio-Claudian emperors insert themselves into the Lives of their predecessors.

Of course, the emperors themselves do not actually push their way into the biographies of their predecessors and successors, even if establishing a relationship to one’s predecessors was a necessary aspect of maintaining power at the height of imperial politics. It is Suetonius who unites his *Caesars* into an interlocking collection through allusion to and the repetition of stories or narratives in different Lives. This cross-referencing habit constitutes a structural aspect of his use of the serial biographical form. As Jacques Gascou puts it, “La mention double ou multiple du même événement … dans deux ou plusieurs Vies, trouve le plus souvent son explication dans la technique de composition de Suétone…”

Suetonius’ biographical project includes the repetition of anecdotes and even distinctive words across the Lives. These repetitions provide his reader with an implicit mode of reading the *Caesars* that privileges dynamic and

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236 E.g., *Aug. 40.3* and *Tib. 21.1-7*. These are two examples chosen from dozens to demonstrate the range of imperial intrusion: the relatively mundane intrusion of Tiberius in the *Augustus* and the forceful intrusion of Augustus in the *Tiberius*.

237 One example will have to suffice of a regularly occurring phenomenon in Suetonius’ final two books (and final six lives): *Oth. 3.1* claims that Otho shared Nero’s plans and secrets when Nero decided to kill his mother.

recursive reading over static and linear reading. The reader may, and plausibly will, read the *Caesars* in chronological order, but Suetonius includes internal cross-references to other Lives in the collection to prompt a mode of comparative reading that moves forward and backward. By comparing the Caesars in this recursive fashion, Suetonius’ readers create a network of Caesars in their heads by means of which they might compare the emperors in numerous ways, prompted by Suetonius’ internal nudges. To build a network of Caesars is to understand better the principate – the institutional foundation of the *Caesars*. Through the creation of this network and his prompting of the reader to engage with it, Suetonius models one way for his readers to analyze the principate: comparing aspects of the office’s incumbents. How each one exercises his authority over discrete aspects of the office reveals the limits and possibilities of the office itself.

Suetonius’ inclusion of triggers that prompt recursive reading is what I call “rewriting.” He prompts the reader to practice comparative reading by rewriting certain components of one Life in another. In this definition of the term, rewriting does not entail a process of revision or redrafting, but rather the re-presentation of material from one context in another. Rewriting is a part of Suetonius’ use of the serial biographical form, and in my treatment here it encompasses three techniques employed to point the reader toward connections between different Lives. Other types of rewriting occur as well. In this chapter the term functions as a shortcut to the set of recursive reading habits that Suetonius endorses. The three techniques are as follows: 1) the connection of one passage to another set of passages by the repetition of a single distinctive word; 2) the narration of

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239 Langlands 2014: 112 notes the possibilities of recursive reading for thinking about exemplarity in the *Caesars*. 

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the same scene in different Lives; and 3) the use of type-scenes, such as death scenes, in different Lives that are specific to the Life in which they appear but invite comparison. Each of these subtypes or techniques can direct the reader to different parts of the Suetonian sandwich; a word that appears in the death narrative of one Life might be paired with the same word in a topical unit in the middle section of another Life. Moreover, rewriting can have variable thematic outcomes. The recursive reader attends to the particularities of rewriting precisely because it is so context-specific. Rewriting affords Suetonius numerous advantages. It better accords with biographical chronology than with traditional annalistic historiography or even some models of chronological biography, especially in the imperial period where time is defined by an emperor’s reign more than by consular years. Imperial chronology conforms to the length of a reign or, especially in a dynastic setting, to the length of a life. Suetonius can eschew chronology, examining events where they have the most narrative impact, not where they fall in the imperial timeline. It contributes to the moral discourse that readers interrogating Suetonius’ exemplary thinking have found.

240 See my discussion of the Suetonian sandwich in the introduction. In its most basic formulation, the metaphor articulates an understanding of Suetonius’ structure as a chronological account of the Life’s subjects’ ancestors and rise to power, a topically organized middle section, and a narrative ending. See Hurley 2014: 21-37 and Damon 2018: 107-127.

241 I here use “affords” roughly in accordance with Levine 2015: 1-23, who repurposes the concept from design theory. Different (literary) forms afford different uses. Levine 2015: 6, “Rhyme affords repetition, anticipation, and memorization … The sonnet, brief and condensed, best affords a single idea or experience…” For Levine, formalist analysis is aesthetic and political because aesthetic forms and political forms intersect: hence the connection between rewriting and the principate.

242 Gascou 1984: 360-390, especially 386-390. I do not deny that a historian has sophisticated tools with which he can make inquiries into the imperial past. Tacitus uses his annalistic structure to provocative effect. The claim is that Suetonian biography has its own temporal tools. Suetonius is not a negative Tacitus; biography is not a negative history. Suetonian biography differs even from its biographical cousins, such as Plutarch’s approach.

It allows for the treatment of different themes to extend beyond the localized context of an emperor in one biography.\textsuperscript{244}

Primarily, and most significantly for this chapter, rewriting establishes a network of emperors for comparative ends. It provides a corrective to the reader who assumes that an individual Life can or should be understood in isolation, that the \textit{Caesars} ought to be read linearly, or that there is a base Life against which all other lives ought to be compared.\textsuperscript{245} Suetonius’ rewriting practice encourages the reader to create a mental Caesarian network. Suetonius prompts the reader, following this method of reading, to consider how the unique eccentricities of individual emperors cohere into the principate: the public and personal actions and habits of a biography’s subject all reveal how accrued authority over discrete aspects of Roman political and social life constitutes the true nature of Roman autocratic power. It is by attending to the elements that create coherence between the Lives that the reader better understands the principate: there can be no separation between the actions of the man and the functioning of the state. Autocracy means the man and his family always matter. Some of these elements include thematic links that undergird Suetonius’ understanding of the principate, the continuity of the Lives and the historical periods that give insight into Suetonius’s historiographical method, and the qualities that make up an individual Caesar and his identity. Ultimately the interpretations that the recursive reader can draw from his or her mental network will vary, and in the following analysis, I highlight some of the different thematic and

\textsuperscript{244} Repetition is also good at developing themes in localized contexts. Gascou 1984: 349-360 examines repetition within the same biography.

\textsuperscript{245} Typically, it is the \textit{Augustus} that is assumed to the base life against which the others are compared. Power 2007/8: 36 takes it as such (see also 165-174). Langlands 2014: 111-129 and Gunderson 2014: 130-145 are the latest to think about what it means for the collection to be structured around the \textit{Augustus} and why such a structure might be privileged.
political interpretations toward which the recursive reader might strive. But to acknowledge the interpretative possibilities of rewriting is to acknowledge its presence as a technique of the serial biographical form, which is the most fundamental argument of this chapter.

Scholars have noticed Suetonius’ use of repetition as a mode of writing, although the connection to an implicit mode of reading has yet to be made. The most thorough treatment is found in Gascou’s *Suétone Historien*, which contains a section on the composition of the *Caesars*. He examines three types of repetitions: the same event mentioned “dans le récit et dans les species,”246 “dans plusieurs species,”247 and “dans plusieurs vies.”248 The first two treat repetitions that occur within a single Life and thus do not fall under the parameters of the types of rewriting examined in this chapter, which focuses on rewritings between different Lives. Gascou also organizes the logic of the first two according to the structural part of the Life in which they are found, whereas I focus on the type of rewriting trigger that Suetonius employs. By focusing on how Suetonius employs form to prompt recursive reading (i.e., the presence of a single word or a type scene), instead of focusing on the structure of the rewritten passage (i.e., the rewriting of topical units in particular), one broadens one’s conception of the scope of the Suetonian network. Rewriting reaches across the different structural parts of the Lives.

Gascou’s final section (“dans plusieurs vies”) roughly corresponds to what I call same-scene rewriting (number two in the list of three above), although Gascou’s “le meme événement” has a narrower sense to it since I would include allusions to an event

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247 Gascou 1984: 360-373.
248 Gascou 1984: 373-386.
within the framework of same-scene rewriting while he only treats scenes that receive extended narration. His treatment of same-scene rewriting effectively emphasizes the chronological flexibility that rewriting affords a biographer as well as explains how moments of seeming contradiction are actually moments where the reader has the opportunity to probe further.\textsuperscript{249} Despite his careful attention to these advantages of the biographical form, Gascou concludes by returning to the moralizing impulses that characterize much of Suetonian scholarship, by questioning the historiographical effectiveness of asynchronous composition, and by even suggesting that repetition can be an undesirable quality.\textsuperscript{250}

My rewriting model is most closely articulated by Tristan Power, although our approaches differ strongly in numerous respects. Power, employing the concept of *synkrisis* that is so prominent a part of Plutarchan scholarship, argues that “Suetonius’ text relies on the reader *no less* than other historical works for a fuller interpretation; to supply historical information, to extrapolate its structure, and to draw moral implications.”\textsuperscript{251} In this respect, he argues for a mode of reading that Suetonius endorses; and, he reasonably notes that linear readers would require fewer structural prompts to understand later Lives in the *Caesars*. Power, for this reason, follows a mostly linear method of interpretation. The reader looks back to the *Julius* and *Augustus* only for assumed and stable structural realities of the *Caesars*. For Power, the reader does not re-interpret aspects of the *Julius* in light of material learned in the *Domitian*. This understanding of the *Caesars* is predicated, moreover, on the possibility of good and bad

\textsuperscript{249} For example, Gascou 1984: 383.
\textsuperscript{250} Gascou 1984: 386-390.
\textsuperscript{251} Power 2007/8: 165.
Lives: Power characterizes Nero as a tyrant and Augustus as an emperor, for example. These titles are fundamentally moral claims, Power implies, not political ones. What matters is the moral characterization of the man, not the shared office that they occupy. My assumption, in contrast, is that “emperor” and “tyrant” are political titles, and both are ways of saying “autocrat.” Suetonius certainly presents divergent characterizations of his Caesars; hence the need to conduct comparative analysis. Behind these characterizations lies the political logic of the principate. Comparative assessments of the emperors’ characterizations are what brings to light the limits and powers of the office.

Power diverges from Gascou’s focus on the structural nature of repetition and instead focuses on the triggers of rewriting. He persuasively demonstrates that shifts in Suetonius’ typical style can cause the reader to register that conceptual development has occurred. For example, he notes that Suetonius shifts to putting the emperor in the accusative case immediately before his death. The passive voice is similarly employed. I would characterize this type of trigger as single-word rewriting where the pertinent aspect is variably morphological, grammatical, or syntactic.

More recent scholarship has noted the effectiveness that repetition affords Suetonius. Rebecca Langlands examines Augustus’ exemplary influences on his successors and notes that his desire to establish exemplary actions is never realized by the actions of his successors. Augustus’ expectation encounters and is overcome by imperial vice. Comparison between Augustus and his successors demonstrates the fruitlessness of Augustus’ desires to be an exemplary figure. In setting up Augustus as the central

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253 Power 2007/8: 170-175.
254 See especially Langlands 2014: 120-129.
figure for comparison, Langlands allows Augustus’ desire to be a comparative focal point to guide her understanding of the structure of the *Caesars*, not Suetonius’ internal prompts.255 Given the length of the biography and the interest that Augustus has in moral action, it is tempting to take the *Augustus* as the center of the *Caesars*. To do so, ironically, is to ignore the means by which Suetonius undercuts Augustus’ exemplary status – which means are what Langlands’ paper illuminates so well. John Henderson also attends to the comparative nature of the lives by focusing especially on the *Julius* in addition to the *Augustus*.256 The arresting paper, structured like Suetonius’ *corpus* and itself a sort-of Suetonian life in miniature, draws out the relationship between the text’s implicit modes of reading and its reader and even highlights the value of “multidirection reading.”257 Like Langlands’ paper, it starts with the premise that one or two texts center the reading practices of Suetonius’ audience. Neither paper is at fault; both take as their premise the evaluation of the *corpus* from a specific vantage point. Nevertheless, prescriptive considerations of any one life as the central one ought to be avoided; the presence of Suetonius’ own internal prompts to conduct comparison is the more persuasive rationale than the assumed importance of Caesar or Augustus.

This chapter has three parts, each corresponding to a type of rewriting, in addition to an introduction and conclusion. Each part, first, explains the example as an instance of rewriting. The argumentation typically consists of comparing the frequency of repetition (i.e., the name “Catulus,” my example of single-word rewriting analyzed below, appears more frequently in the *Caesar* than comparable Republican politicians of similar stature).

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255 See *Aug.* 31.5, 89.2, and 101.4. See also Gunderson 2014: 130-145.
Then, the chapter demonstrates the connections between the passages in which the example occurs and defines the triggers that cue the recursive reader to conduct a comparative analysis. Finally, it highlights interpretations of the passages that are more readily available to the recursive reader than the linear reader.

**Single-Word Rewriting**

Single-word rewriting encompasses a set of intratextual references (when considering the *Caesars* as a whole text – intertextual if one considers the individual lives as discrete texts) whose connection hinges upon the repetition of a single marked word. These words might be marked by their function within a part of a life (the word that functions as a topical unit’s indicator, for example), but it need not exclusively correspond to the structural function of a word since rewriting structures Lives along other logical levels beyond the Suetonian unit. In the case in my analysis below, a name is the word that signals single-word rewriting.\(^{258}\) Generally, the word is relatively rare or noteworthy.\(^{259}\) Single-word rewriting can function like allusions or intertextual references, and thus single-word rewriting constitutes part of Suetonius’ use of the serial biographical form. Implicit in the argument that follows is that single-word rewriting is a component of Suetonius’ organizational artistry and his implicitly endorsed mode of reading the

\(^{258}\) The range of single-word rewriting prompts is large. It includes names, distinctive words, and words of programmatic significance (such as prominent topical indicators). As Power 2007/8: 170-175, the form of a word, rather than its semantic content, also apply. For example, in chapter one, I analyze a topical unit whose indicator is the presence of superlatives. Superlatives might likewise signal a network of passages for comparison.

\(^{259}\) See, for example, Osgood 2013: 36-37, who observes that the word *spes*, especially in the formulation *spes imperii*, takes on a particular importance in the lives that make up the year of the four emperors, although it can be found in earlier lives as well.
Exploiting this element (single-word rewriting) of his organization and structure is one way in which Suetonius guides his reader toward a type of comparative reading that takes into account the whole of the text, and not just individual Lives, when evaluating the principate. In the following analysis, I focus on the name “Catulus” as an example of single-word rewriting. I first introduce Catulus and examine the name as an instance of single-word rewriting. I point out that what connects the passages is Suetonius’ focus on an association between Catulus and the Capitoline and the political context of the emperor in whose Life he appears. Finally, I claim that Catulus guides the recursive reader to consider how an emperor validates his authority in a manner that would be differently apparent to the linear reader. My argument here is that the form of single-word rewriting facilitates a nuanced understanding of one of the discrete categories that make up Roman autocracy: the validation of power.

Catulus

Q. Lutatius Catulus (cos. 78 BCE) was a prominent political figure during the late Republic and died before the first Caesar became a Suetonian Caesar. Notwithstanding his pre-imperial career, he appears four times in the Caesars, twice in the Galba where Catulus is given a place of prominence in Galba’s lineage (Gal. 2). Suetonius depicts Galba, whose claim to imperial authority differs from that of his dynastic predecessors, as bolstering his reputation by promoting his relationship with his great-grandfather, Catulus. In this section of the chapter, I argue that the name “Catulus” is an example of

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260 See MRR: 85 and 173.
261 Suetonius treats Caesar’s dictatorship in 44 BCE as analogous to an imperial reign.
single-word rewriting. Catulus’ appearance as an ancestor in the initial chapters of the
*Galba* is typical of Suetonius’ selective account of a subject’s lineage – often in order to
provide an implicit characterization of the subject (*Gal. 2* and *3.4*). But the frequency
with which Catulus appears in the *Caesars* is atypical. This frequency – combined with
common elements (association with the Capitoline and his political context) shared
among Catulus’ appearance in the *Julius*, *Augustus*, and *Galba* – prompts the reader to
compare the different episodes in which Catulus appears. With Catulus, Suetonius has a
Republican official whose contentious career during the late Republic contributes to an
analysis of the discrete aspects of autocratic power that would be new to his political
context due to the nature of the principate: problems of validating one’s power in a
system predicated on, ostensibly, dynastic succession when this ostensible logic breaks
down in the face of political violence.

*The Connective Form of Single-Word Rewriting*

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262 For Galba’s characterization and its similarity in type to Nero’s, see Garrett 2013: 95-101.
263 Using the *Index Nominum* from Kaster 2016a, I compiled a list of Republican political officials, using
exclusion from the *PIR* to determine who counts as “Republican.” Of the 100 men who fit this category,
only 18 of them are mentioned four or more times (for the sake of this analysis, I am counting multiple
mentions of a single person in one chapter as one mention overall). The majority of these are major players
on the late Republican stage (like Pompey and Cicero), making Catulus’ use and frequency unusual. I focus
on the first three of Suetonius’ mentions of Catulus because they are the most discreet – the fourth serves a
similar role in the *Galba* as the third.
264 The desire for Suetonius to discuss the problems of succession can frustrate readers when they find little
explicit mention of the subject. As Osgood 2013: 19 writes, “Suetonius offers no discussion of Augustus’
plans for succession, nor in subsequent lives is ‘succession’ ever used as a rubric to organize material or
judge emperors.” Nonetheless, he concludes that Suetonius “does after all have a specific approach to the
problem of succession,” which entails divinely preordained surprises that defy contemporary expectations.
In this respect, he expands on Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 192-193, who reads Suetonius’ conception of
succession primarily through predestined signs and omens. This approach underrates the literary and
political importance that power acquisition and succession plays in the *Caesars*; ultimately succession is
one of numerous themes about imperial power and autocracy that appear in the *Caesars*, and I contend that
single-word rewriting is a way for Suetonius to stitch this theme across multiple lives. I turn to this analysis
in my final section on Catulus in the single-word rewriting portion of this chapter.
Suetonius associates Catulus with the Capitoline in the *Galba* through the use of an unconventional agnomen found in Suetonius’ record of Galba’s ancestry (*Gal. 2*). He first notes that “Galba succeeded Nero” (*Neroni Galba successit*) before adding further context about his family lineage, “being not at all related to the house of the Caesars, but nonetheless exceptionally noble and from a great and old family, as one who always added on the inscriptions of his statues that he was the great-grandson of Quintus Catulus Capitolinus” (*nullo gradu contingens Caesarum domum sed haud dubie nobilissimus magnaque et uetere prosapia, ut qui statuarum titulis pronepotem se Quinti Catuli Capitolini semper ascripserit*) and noting the subsequent step that Galba took as emperor to bolster the perception of his lineage: “and when he was emperor he even displayed his family tree in the atrium so that, with it, he might display his origin on his father’s side with Jupiter and on his mother’s side with Pasiphaë, the wife of Minos” (*imperator uero etiam stemma in atrio proposuerit quo paternam originem ad Iovem, maternam ad Pasiphaam Minonis uxorem referret*). Suetonius writes that Galba attempted to bolster his reputation (even before becoming emperor) by appealing to his heritage: Galba “always” (*semper*) includes his relationship to “Quintus Catulus Capitolinus” (*Quinti Catuli Capitolini*) in his *tituli*. He added a new, but similar tactic, upon becoming emperor, invoking a divine lineage. The presence of Catulus situates this portion of the *Galba* within a specific political context for Galba. This context is his uses of his ancestry to promote his imperial authority. Galba, in the position of justifying his succession to Nero (*Neroni Galba successit*), finds himself without a direct connection to the Julio-

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265 Galba’s ancestry was a point of pride for the emperor, as Suetonius implies. See also a speech that Tacitus composes for the emperor at *Hist. 1.15* and Plutarch’s remarks on Catulus at *Galba 3.1*. 197
Claudian household but in possession of a noble heritage (*nullo gradu contingens Caesarum domum sed haud dubie nobilissimus magnaque et uetere prosapia*). Given this advantage, Galba has recourse to two methods of bolstering his political (both imperial and pre-imperial) authority: to claim an important ancestor and divine familial origin. The inclusion of *Capitolinus* as an effective component of political propaganda, as Suetonius presents it, lies in the passage’s focalization: it is Galba who would want the name Quintus Catulus Capitolinus to stick.

Such are Galba’s actions and the supposed rationale for them, which the reader can infer from context. Suetonius’ presentation of these actions raises a question, however, because he presents Catulus in a peculiar fashion. Galba did mint a coin with his head facing to the right and the legend [ΣΕΡΟΥΙ] ΓΑΛΒΑΑΥΤΟΚΑΙΣΣΕ[ΒΑ] on the obverse and, as Kleiner argues, the Capitoline on the reverse.\(^{266}\) Despite this coin, the surviving record does not bolster Suetonius’ claim that Galba “always” included Catulus Capitolinus in his *tituli*.\(^{267}\) The association between the two men is attested, but more striking is Suetonius’ inclusion of Catulus’ agnomen *Capitolinus*. This passage is the only attestation of the agnomen.\(^{268}\) Readers might ask why Suetonius includes this agnomen, and traditional readers of the *Caesars* might point to a lack of historical awareness or a tendency toward hyperbole on Suetonius’ part. The recursive reader

\(^{266}\) See Kleiner 1989: 71-77, who argues that the reverse depicts the Capitoline and that this depiction is part of Galba’s attempt to highlight his association with Catulus. Previously, the reverse had been identified as a Hellenistic arch. The American Numismatic Society is in possession of the coin (ANS 1944.100.53672).

\(^{267}\) The *PIR* entry for Ser. Sulpicius Galba provides his *tituli* in the form of two inscriptions (*CIL Hispanus* II 2779 (1) and *CIL Salonitanus* III S. 8702 (2)) and three military diplomas (*CIL* III pg. 847, III pg. 848, and III S. pg. 1958 (3)) that Galba issued. Catulus does not appear in any. See Gascou 1984: 533 for further interest in the strength of Suetonius’ claim.

\(^{268}\) See Reisch. *TLL* O.2.167.33-34.
comes to a different conclusion, but before the recursive logic at play can be explained, the other two passages that I discuss in this portion of the chapter must be introduced.

The beginning of the passage in the *Augustus* in which Catulus appears hints at an answer. Suetonius makes Catulus’ connection to the Capitoline prominent in this passage, where two of Catulus’ dreams are recounted. The dreams provide divine approval to Octavian’s ascendency. Suetonius starts by introducing Catulus and associating him with the Capitoline: “Q. Catulus, after the dedication of the Capitol, had dreams on two consecutive nights” (*Q. Catulus post dedicatum Capitolium duabus continuis noctibus somniauit*) (*Aug.* 94.8).269 The supposed naturalness of associating Catulus with the Capitoline is a question that I take up in my discussion of Catulus’ appearance in the *Julius* shortly. For now, it is sufficient to note that the beginning of this passage (which passage constitutes an extended thematic unit that details Augustus’ relationship to religion) connects Catulus with his restoration of the Capitoline. Suetonius provides a frame of reference for when these dreams occurred: after the dedication of the

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269 The passage is lengthy, but I reproduce it here for ease of reference. I quote portions of the passage when necessary: “Q. Catulus, after the dedication of the Capitol, had dreams on two consecutive nights: on the first night, that Jupiter Optimus Maximus had separated one from a group of boys playing around the altar and had put in the fold of his clothes an image of the Republic, which he held in his hand; and during the following night, that he had seen the same boy in the lap of the Capitoline Jupiter, and when he [Catulus] ordered that this boy be removed, he was prohibited at the god’s command, as this boy was being brought up to be the protector of the Republic. And on the following day, upon running into Augustus, since he had never seen him before, not without amazement at the sight [of him] he said that he looked just like the boy about whom he had dreamt. Some relate Catulus’ first dream differently, as though Jupiter demonstrated to the group of boys demanding a guardian from him the one to whom they should refer all their desires and, having lightly touched the boy’s lips with his fingers for a kiss, he brought them to his own mouth” (*Q. Catulus post dedicatum Capitolium duabus continuis noctibus somniauit, prima Iouem Optimum Maximum e praetextatis compluribus circum aram ludentibus unum secreuisse atque in eius sinum signum rei p. quod manu gestaret reposuisse, at insequenti animaduertisse se in gremio Capito lini Iouis eundem puerum, quem cum detrahi iussisset, prohibitum monitu dei, tamquam is ad tutelam rei p. educaretur. ac die proximo obuitum sihi Augustum, cum incognitum alias haberet, non sine admiratione contulisse simillimum dixit puero de quo somniauit. quidam prius somnium Catuli alter exponunt, quasi Iuppiter compluribus praetextatis tutorem a se poscentibus unum ex eis demonstrasset ad quem omnia desideria sua referrent eiusque osculum delibatum digitis ad os suum retulisset*).
The phrasing of this opening, which mirrors the opening of the *Julius* passage that I discuss next, provides some rationale for the recursive reader about why Suetonius so strongly associates Catulus with the Capitoline in the *Galba*: Suetonius puts these passages into dialogue.

On the one hand, this association is logical in the local context. In Catulus’ second dream, the Capitoline Jupiter provides the divine approval. On the other hand, the dream passage could have been presented in a much more neutral fashion. Dio introduces his narrative of this dream by mentioning only Catulus and his relationship to Octavian, writing, “Catulus, who had never yet seen Octavian…” (*ὅτε Κάτουλος οὐδ’ αὐτός πω ἐόρακώς τὸν Ὁκτάουιον…*). He only mentions the Capitoline in passing when relating what happened after Catulus’ dream: “amazed by this, he went up to the Capitoline to offer prayers to the god, and finding Octavian there, who had otherwise gone up, he compared his likeness to the one from the dream and confirmed the truth of his vision” (*ἐκπλαγεὶς δὲ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἀνήλθεν ἐς τὸ Καπιτώλιον προσευξόμενος τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐκεῖ τὸν Ὁκτάουιον ἐὗρὼν ἄλλως ἀναβεβηκότα τὸ τε εἶδος αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἐνύπνιον προσήρμοσε καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῆς ὀψεως ἐβεβαιώσατο*) (45.2.3-5). Dio, whose version is more streamlined than Suetonius’, does include a mention of the Capitoline, although he does not associate it as strongly with Catulus as Suetonius does. That Dio also mentions the Capitoline suggests that the initial inventor of Catulus’ dream(s) wanted to include Republican validation of Octavian’s coming power: the dream comes from a man whose

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270 Using this opening sentence to date when the dreams could have happened is challenging. Wardle 2014: 524 lays out some of the challenges but notes that the dreams “are indisputably creations long after their dramatic date.” More important than a precise date is the fact that Catulus is supposed to have had the dreams during the late Republic. For Wardle, Catulus is a Republican ideologue, and his dreams grant Octavian a Republican stamp of approval.
ideological background differs sharply from that of the coming Augustan regime and who had opposed Augustus’ adopted father (as we shall see shortly when I discuss the Julius). Given this tradition, it appears that Suetonius has refashioned certain key details in his presentation of the dreams in order to connect Catulus more strongly to the Capitoline. He takes an element of the tradition and gives it a more prominent position in his fashioning of the two dreams. This prominent position connects the three passages under discussion together more strongly than if he had told a Dio-like version of the story.

These details about Catulus and especially Suetonius’ presentation of them, like those in the Galba, establish the political themes of the passage. Implicit political considerations shared between this passage and the Catulus passage from the Galba are present, and the recursive reader notices them and takes stock of their similarities and differences – a point that I develop further shortly. But for now, my point is that these considerations differ based on their context in the individual Life with Catulus being the sole connector between the two. It is through Catulus, as a political character but literally, on the level of form, through the appearance of the name “Catulus,” that Suetonius connects the passages. Motifs here associated with Catulus continue to bolster his power-validating credentials: these include the religious implications of his relationship to the Capitoline and his authority to interpret divine signs from Jupiter, conceptually connected to Galba’s own attempts to validate his reign through divine imprimatur. Suetonius

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271 For more on this point, see Wardle 2005: 29-47 and Wardle 2014: 524-526, who develops this point at length and explores its implications. Both Dio and Suetonius pair Catulus with Cicero, who also provides Republican validation of an Augustan regime. How forcefully Suetonius himself endorses this validation is suspect, although for now it is sufficient to note that a Republican element is present in Catulus’ dreams, which – combined with the mention of the Capitoline – allows us to see how the literary form of single-word rewriting operates.
situates Catulus within the specific needs of this section of the *Augustus* but does so while still attending to the general associations that Catulus has in the *Galba*. The capacity for these passages to be read together is not an accident of the reader opening two pages at random: Suetonius signals their connection with the inclusion of a word, Catulus. This connection is an example of his application of the serial biographical form. Rewriting begets recursive reading. I explore the implications of this aspect of Suetonius’ form shortly, but first I bring the *Julius* into the conversation.

In the *Julius*, Suetonius includes a contentious dispute between Catulus and Caesar during Caesar’s praetorship in 62 BCE. In narrating this episode, Suetonius foregrounds the dispute over credit and responsibility for the Capitoline restoration. In doing so, he associates Catulus’ name with the Capitoline. Caesar tries to take strong political action against Catulus (*Jul*. 15): “On the first day of his praetorship he called Quintus Catulus to a public hearing concerning the restoration of the Capitol, with a measure proclaimed through which he transferred the responsibility [for the restoration] to somebody else” (*Primo praeturae die Quintum Catulum de refectione Capitoli ad disquisitionem populi uocauit, rogatione promulgata qua curationem eam in alium transferebat*). Suetonius then claims that Caesar was met by strong resistance: “but, unequal to the unanimous resistance of the Optimates, whom he saw had immediately stopped attending the newly-elected consuls and in determined groups had hurried to resist, he tabled this proposal at least” (*uerum impar optimatium conspirationi, quos relictos statim nouorum consulum officio frequentes obstinatosque ad resistendum concurrisses cernebat, hanc quidem actionem deposuit*). Suetonius’ opening of the passage (*Primo praeturae die Quintum Catulum de refectione Capitoli*) presents the
reader with specific information. It draws a natural connection between Catulus and the Capitoline. It also provides a date for the events – the first day of Caesar’s praetorship. By including this information, Suetonius situates the reader in an ongoing political rivalry between the two men, complete with its own backstory. Caesar’s actions during his praetorship appear to be retribution for previous political brawls. For Catulus, the restoration of the Capitoline represents a career achievement (he received the commission during his consulship in 78), and Caesar’s attempt to undercut it is a consequence of growing enmity between the two men (made possible by the long delay in completion).

The phrasing of this passage echoes the opening of the Augustus passage. The inclusion of Catulus’ name and the Capitoline also established a temporal frame of reference for the episode (Primo praeturae die Quintum Catulum de refectione Capitoli and Q. Catulus post dedicatum Capitolium duabus continuis noctibus somniauit): in both instances, Catulus’ name is followed by a prepositional phrase that introduces the Capitoline. The association between Catulus and the Capitoline persist and, therefore, so too do the associations between the three passages under review. Similarly, the political spat between Catulus and Caesar over the Capitoline deepens this association.

272 Catulus and Caesar, often at odds, had developed a rivalry before Caesar’s praetorship. Catulus had thwarted Caesar and Crassus in their attempt to make Egypt a tributary of Rome in 65 (Plutarch Crassus 13.1); Caesar defeated Catulus in the election for Pontifex Maximus in 63 (Plutarch Caesar 7.1); and, Catulus attempted to implicate Caesar in the Catilinarian conspiracy (Sallust Bellum Catilinae 49.1). Catulus allegedly tortured and killed Marius Gratidianus along with Catiline at the tomb of the gens Lutatia as part of the fallout of the Sullan proscriptions and his father’s suicide. Suetonius might be suppressing this part of the narrative by omitting “Lutatius” from Catulus’ name here in order to focus on the rivalry between Catulus and Caesar.

273 Butler and Cary 1927: 58. See also Flower 2006: 106 for Caesar’s potential motivations and his desire to erase Catulus’ memory.

274 Suetonius foregrounds Caesar’s insult to Catulus by inverting the order of events: the ablative absolute rogatione promulgata follows the main verb of the sentence (inverting the order in which Caesar, whose style is associated with the ablative, would have written the sentence). The political mechanics of Caesar’s
Comparison with Dio is again instructive. Dio specifies the charges that Caesar levied against Catulus, writing that Caesar “called him [Catulus] to account for embezzlement and demanded an account of the used money” (κλοπῆς τε γὰρ αὐτὸν ἠθνῦνε, καὶ τὸν λογισμὸν τῶν ἀνηλωμένων χρημάτων ἀπῆτει) before attempting to turn the project over to Pompey (τῷ δὲ δὴ Πομπηίῳ τὰ λοιπὰ προσεξεργάσασθαι ἐπιτραπείη) (37.44.1-2). Suetonius omits both details. He does use the term *resectio*, which may imply fraudulent activity, but not explicitly.\(^{275}\) The inclusion of the phrase *in alium* in lieu of Pompey also points to Suetonius’ focused attention: Pompey would be a red herring in an episode about Caesar and Catulus’ dispute over the Capitoline. Suetonius makes this episode about a dispute between Caesar and Catulus, omitting other named actors who could distract from that pair. Suetonius focuses his attention on the elements that prompt his reader to conduct recursive reading: “Catulus,” the Life’s subject, and the Capitoline.

As in the *Galba*, so in the *Julius*: Suetonius is here playing name games. Catulus’ full name was Quintus Lutatius Catulus (Capitolinus), but Suetonius never includes “Lutatius” when discussing Catulus. Catulus’ nomen might bring to Suetonius’ contemporary audience’s mind another famous story about Catulus – namely that he, alongside Catiline, tortured and killed Marcus Marius Gratidianus at the tomb of the *gens Lutatia* in order to avenge his father’s death. By leaving out Catulus’ nomen, Suetonius occludes this aspect of Catulus’ Republican history, in effect focusing on the political narrative of Catulus’ rivalry with Caesar. He elides material that might distract from the political focus that pertains to his subject. From a rewriting standpoint, this focusing

\(^{275}\) κλοπῆ is more specific than *resectio*. 
effect historically has a networking effect for the *Caesars*. The emphasis on the Capitoline puts the passages into dialogue.

The reference to Catulus provides the episode with a political context: Caesar’s actions are emblematic of partisan contestation for power that was typical of Republican politics before Caesar’s dictatorship (which Suetonius treats as equivalent to an imperial reign). Catulus is a political enemy; Caesar responds with partisan resolve. Catulus’ appearance here contributes to Suetonius characterization of Caesar’s partisan ambition and arrogance before his dictatorship. Suetonius imbues this Catulan episode with late Republican details – details that expand on Caesar’s interaction with Catulus. Caesar’s desire to use his praetorship to attack a political opponent as quickly as possible fronts this episode with the mention of one Republican office (*Primo praeturae die*); a reference to the consulship shortly follows (*consulum*), as does a reference to the Optimates (*optimatum*). By calling the people to a public hearing (*ad disquisitionem populi*), Caesar utilizes the tools of the Republic for his own political gain. The name “Catulus” and the episode afford Suetonius the opportunity to direct the reader to political themes. This depiction of political contestation differs starkly not only from what will come later in the *Julius* after Caesar does validate (at least temporarily) his claim to power but also the *Augustus* and the *Galba*.

*Catulus, Single-Word Rewriting, and the Validation of Power*

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276 For Caesar’s arrogance, see *Jul.* 76.1-77.

277 Baldwin 1983: 327, in looking for Republican terminology in the *Caesars*, characterizes this interaction as “pejorative to Caesar.”
After recognizing that the word “Catulus,” through its consistent association with the Capitoline, is Suetonius’ signal to compare these passages, the recursive reader endeavors to understand what new insights can be gained about any one of the passages in light of the others that would not have been obvious initially. In each of the three passages that I have discussed, Suetonius employs single-word rewriting to present an account of how power is validated, especially in moments when new emergent systems of power are coming into being, such as, in this instance, Caesar’s rise to power as the first of Suetonius’ *Caesars*, Augustus’ founding of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the principate, and Galba’s attempt to formulate the second imperial dynasty after the collapse of the Julio-Claudians. At each moment, it was necessary for the imperial candidate to validate his power. Suetonius, through his application of rewriting, shows the similarities and differences, the limits and possibilities of these acts.

In each instance, therefore, the recursive reader should be able to reread any one of these passages with new insight from having read the others. The interpretative payoffs vary; some passages will engender more ideas than others. I return to the three passages to close this analysis of single-word rewriting, moving from least enhanced by recursive reading to most.

The *Augustus* episode is most effective in as much as Catulus’ Republican credentials and his opposition to Caesar are established in the *Julius*. Given Catulus’ demonstrated association with Republican politics and his hatred for Octavian’s adopted father, Catulus’ endorsement, so to speak, of Octavian’s imperial future contradicts the reader’s intuition of what their relationship would have been and, thus, validates all the more strongly in hindsight Augustus’ claims to power. The association that Suetonius
draws between Galba’s lineage and the importance of divine validation of his power in the *Galba* passage highlights the significance of generating different signs of divine approval. State religion had already incorporated divine signs into the infrastructure of political validation during the Republican period, but innovations appeared with Augustus and the birth of the principate. Suetonius’ uniquely robust treatment of signs that validate Augustus’ power mirrors the unique nature of Augustus’ ascension; comparison with the *Galba* indicates how foundational appeals to divine signs would be for the principate in general. As two men who attempt to start their own dynasties, Galba and Augustus rely on a similar bag of tricks.

Perhaps more significant for the logic of recursive reading is the fact that the Catulus episode in the *Augustus* provides a powerful metaphor for comparative reading: after awakening from his two dreams, Catulus encounters Octavian. In amazement at seeing him, Catulus says that he looked just like the boy from his dreams (*simillimum dixit puero*). By shaping his narrative in this manner, Suetonius sets out the conditions on which Catulus’ dreams secure the oracular sanction that Octavian would presumably rely upon as he became Augustus: to recognize an emperor entails comparison. For Catulus, the word *simillimum* entails a comparison between dream and reality – an inquiry into the look of the boy with the aim of determining whether or not he looks “just like” (*simillimum*) the boy from his dreams. That Catulus can make this comparison is the

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278 Dreams were especially new. See Wardle 2014: 509.
279 Wallace-Hadrill 1983: 192-193 makes the argument that, because future events are predetermined and discernable by reading divine signs, succession is a matter of reading the appropriate signs correctly (see also Gascou 1984: 777-778). This argument is further, and further nuanced, by Osgood 2013: 37-38. Like Vout 2013: 59-77, I am more interested in the political implications of succession. Of primary importance, however, is an investigation into how Suetonius entitles his reader to tease out the varying implications of succession and power acquisition throughout the *Caesars*, with Catulus (and single-word rewriting) serving as an example of this process.
logic of the dream that provides propagandistic support (along with other sources of validation) for Augustus to accrue more and more power so that he could become the protector of the state (*tamquam is ad tutelam rei p. educaretur*). It fulfills some of the plausible conditions that Augustus would have liked for a prophetic dream about his youth to meet, not least that the dreams come from Catulus, whose staunch Republican reputation and enmity with Caesar lend Augustus a degree of credibility. But the reader who compares this passage with other Catulus passages within a larger context of the *Caesars* notes that it uses the theme of power validation as an invitation to dwell on Augustus’ boyhood with particular attention to his upbringing (*educaretur*) and those with whom he associated (*e praetextatis compluribus*). Embedded in the theme of power acquisition in this passage is an argument for attending to the contributions that an emperor’s upbringing and associates can have on his future trajectory in power.

In returning to the *Galba*, I think it worth pausing to note how the logic of single-word rewriting operates. Because I started with the *Galba* passage above, I asserted that Suetonius associates Catulus with the Capitoline. Let me briefly make explicit the recursive logic at work in the passage. The recursive reader notes that the presence of the Capitoline in Catulus’ agnomen is congruous with what is found in the *Julius* and the *Augustus*. The addition of *Capitolinus* bolsters Galba’s claims to a rich heritage and highlights Catulus’ connection to the Capitoline in a manner similar to the proximity between mentions of the Capitoline and Catulus’ name in the earlier lives (*Julius: Primo praeturae die Quintum Catulum de refectione Capitoli and Augustus: Q. Catulus post*
Suetonius’ presentation of Catulus in the *Galba* matches his treatment in the other two lives: Catulus is tied to the Capitoline. This association promotes a recursive mode of reading.

On to the fruits of approaching the *Galba* passage via rewriting. The recursive reader notes the varying ways in which Catulus validates Galba’s authority: he adds a stamp of ideological integrity as a Republican (a similar logic operates in the *Augustus*) and he brings the prestige that Caesar unsuccessfully attempted to take from him (in the *Julius*). That Catulus pairs with Jupiter in Galba’s argument from ancestry is itself of a pair with the *Augustus*. But why this focalization? Suetonius includes Galba’s own framing of his lineage in order to demonstrate for the reader how fraught imperial succession was after the collapse of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Galba’s task in laying claim to imperial authority harkens back to Caesar’s and Augustus’ at the beginning of their dynastic transitions; all the more fitting that the *Galba* harkens back to the *Julius* and the *Augustus*. Catulus, as an example of single-word rewriting, facilitates this connection for the reader.

The recursive reader, drawing a comparison between Catulus episodes, finds that power validation in the *Galba* is connected to but differs from what the reader finds in the *Julius* and the *Augustus*. Galba assigns Catulus a prominent place in his family lineage. Dynastic succession provides the backdrop, and Suetonius can plausibly claim that Galba is not related to the Julio-Claudian household (*nullo gradu contingens Caesarum domum*), which requires that Galba utilize other claims to lineage in seeking a claim to

\[280\] One might also note that *Gal. 2* has a delayed ablative phrase (*sed haud dubie nobilissimus magnaque et uetere prosapia*) after the main clause (*Neroni Galba successit*) similar to *Jul. 15*. 

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authority of being *princeps* (*haud dubie nobilissimus magnaque et uetere prosapia*).\(^{281}\)

The immediate claim that Galba makes by referencing his great-grandfather is that such an important ancestor bolsters his credibility.\(^{282}\) A similar logic is implicit in the coin with (potentially) the Capitoline on it that I mentioned above.

But Catulus represents a Suetonian oddity: in his discussion of an emperor’s lineage Suetonius rarely includes members from the family tree from an emperor’s maternal side, but Catulus is Galba’s great-grandfather on his mother’s side.\(^{283}\) Catulus’ maternal relationship points toward another source of power validation available to Galba: connection to the Julio-Claudian household. Particularly, Suetonius’ privileging of the maternal Catulus directs the reader’s attention to Livia, the role she played in the young Galba’s life, and her occasional role as kingmaker. The first of the two compelling omens (*euidentissimis duobus*) (*Gal.* 1) that opens the *Galba* involves Livia raising a brood of chickens. In his narrative of Galba’s birth and naming, Suetonius says that Galba was adopted by his stepmother Livia Ocella (a relative of Livia Augusta) and changed his name to Lucius Livius Ocella Sulpicius Galba (*Gal.* 4.1). And finally, right before Suetonius narrates the start of Galba’s political life, he mentions that Galba held Livia Augusta in greater regard than any other person (*obseruauit ante omnis Liuiam Augustam*) (*Gal.* 5.2) and that she left him a considerable sum of money in her will.

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\(^{281}\) See Garrett 2013: 95-101, who provides a summary and analysis of the ancestors of Galba that Suetonius lists. She argues that, similar to the lineage that starts the *Nero*, the lineage of the *Galba* shows the virtues that Galba will have a small claim to (comparative to his forbearers) and the vices that he will magnify (greed especially).

\(^{282}\) I read the passage as implying that Galba uses his lineage as a source of authority before and after he becomes emperor. Once he becomes emperor, he adds a divine origin of his family to his other claims. But Suetonius’ framing of the passage suggests a tie between Catulus and Galba’s succession to Nero.

\(^{283}\) See Garrett 2013: 99 who argues that the maternal side of an emperor’s lineage is only included when it is more impressive than the paternal side; but, it does not seem obvious from Suetonius’ presentation of Galba’s lineage that this is the case. Another explanation should be found.
(although Tiberius took most of it). Suetionius mentions Catulus first of all of Galba’s ancestors, thereby privileging his maternal lineage. In doing so, Suetionius not only explores the role that a strong lineage played in the hopeful establishment of a new dynasty, but he also points toward the connective tissue that post-Julio-Claudian emperors might emphasize in their attempts to validate power.

Upon returning to the Julius having read the Augustus and the Galba, the recursive reader can see the ways in which Catulus more fully signals the theme of power validation than might have been apparent at first glance. That is to say, the dispute between Caesar and Catulus not only fulfills an important function in the Julius narrative, but also provides the recursive reader with a way to put the thematic material germane to this local context into conversation with other similar instances signaled by the presence of Catulus and his connection to the Capitoline. The political tension of the episode derives from the differing response between Caesar and the Optimates over Caesar’s attempt to divest Catulus of responsibility for the Capitoline restoration. Caesar, in haste to attack Catulus (Primo praeturae die), is actually countered by the speed of the Optimates (ad resistendum concurrissete). A hint of irony ought to be detected; Caesar’s frequent association with speed is overturned here, and he alone is met by a unified opposition (concurrissete). The Optimates themselves are described as “determined” or

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284 Compare Tacitus Annals 3.18.1 for a characterization of Tiberius as resistant to money’s influence.
285 The germ of a similar comparative logic can be found in Osgood 2013: 22 where he asserts that “For any understanding of what Augustus intended [about his succession], the reader of the Divus Augustus has to turn to the next life.” For Vout 2013: 63 “replication drives the narrative” of “the first few Lives of Suetonius,” which is instructive, although too linear. My claim is that Suetonius includes internal references that signal that the reader should conduct a comparative mode of reading in a recursive fashion – in this case, Catulus and his association with the Capitoline.
286 On Caesar’s speed, see Grillo 2012: 14-36 who argues for speed as a fundamental component of Caesar’s narrative control and self-fashioning in the Bellum Civile.
perhaps even stubborn (obstinatos), a quality that, retrospectively, became attached to Pompey (and Republicanism in contrast to Caesar’s fluid speed and the principate).  

This Catulus passage, then, exemplifies the type of opposition that Caesar would face when he later attempts to accrue more power. Suetonius’ inclusion of imperial rhetoric to characterize Republican actors and his characterization of Caesar as denuded of his efficacious speed reveals an anachronism that is more readily apparent when reading recursively than chronologically or linearly. The reader is liable to see this episode, situated in a Republican framework, as simply reproducing partisan political fighting.

When reading recursively, however, the reader brings an imperial rhetoric into the Republican political space. The stubborn Optimates usurping Caesar’s speed indicates that this passage has significance for the conceptual shape of power going forward, both for Caesar and the principate. The reader is emboldened to find the validating punchline to this political set-up. And Suetonius has armed his reader with clues; in addition to the vocabulary of the passage, the emphasis on divine validation of power in the Augustus and Galba passages is curiously unanswered here. The reader continues, and Suetonius adds a coda, of sorts, to this episode later in the Julius. When narrating Caesar’s Rubicon crossing, Suetonius uses the verb concurro to describe local shepherds and Caesar’s soldiers who rush (concurrissent) to listen to a mysterious apparition who plays music and then crosses the Rubicon. Caesar, who understands this apparition as a divine sign, crosses the river. These are the only two instances of concurro in the Julius. At another fraught moment during which Caesar makes a power play, haste enters the picture; only

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287 See Masters 1992: 1-11 and 180-183 for speed and delay respectively in Lucan’s Bellum Civile. The trope is pronounced in Lucan, but widespread elsewhere in imperial literature before Suetonius.
this time, his soldiers provide him with support. Caesar is not opposed by a political party but supported by a divine apparition and his soldiers. The means to validate his power has shifted.

**Conclusion**

Catulus, as an example of single-word rewriting, provides a connective pathway between the *Julius*, the *Augustus*, and the *Galba* (and back) for the recursive reader. Suetonius associates Catulus with the Capitoline in such a manner as to provide the reader with connective anchors. In doing so, Suetonius implicitly suggests a comparative mode of reading as efficacious for interpreting the thematic content of the passages. The Catulus passages are united by the theme of power validation and associated problems of succession, although differences in each episode arise due to the changing political situation in which each Caesar finds himself. In this respect, single-word rewriting combines the biographer’s impulse to explicate the thematic potentiality of his historical data with an opportunity to demonstrate his literary ability and control over his genre. He provides his reader with an implicit mode of reading that involves comparative analysis. Linear reading is less potent than recursive reading, and Catulus’ largely asynchronous relationship with most of the emperors demonstrates why rewriting provides a better mode of reading than linear, chronological reading. Catulus is dead well before Caesar becomes dictator, but in Suetonius’ hands his actions resonate beyond the rise and fall of an entire dynasty.
**Same-Scene Rewriting**

Same-scene rewriting entails the reproduction of the same scene in different contexts. These scenes can be packaged into a few words or expanded into entire narrations. One of the principal interests a reader might have in same-scene rewriting is in the different packaging with which Suetonius presents the information: differences in presentation can acquire a marked importance. Like single-word rewriting, same-scene rewriting is a structuring device that assists the reader’s movement through the *Caesars*: it suggests that the reader should compare certain material. Same-scene rewriting, therefore, plays a role in the organization of the *Caesars* and the organization of the reader’s thoughts. The impetus to compare narrations of the same scene in the *Caesars* is nearly self-evident; nonetheless, certain elements of same-scene rewriting provide the reader with further reasons to search for and compare repeated versions of the same scene. Some examples of same-scene rewriting occur in sequential Lives, and thus invite the reader to consider the relationship between the same situation and different emperors in order to highlight serial biography’s capacity for chronological organization: the building and maintenance of the theater of Pompey provides a consistent variable for comparative readings.288 Other instances of same-scene rewriting connect chronologically distant reigns, but contribute to Suetonius’ investigation of the principate as an institution best approached through dynamic thinking in the form of a network: Artabanus’ meeting with Lucius Vitellius under Gaius connects two different regimes through one foreign policy event.289

Because same-scene rewritings already promote comparative reading, Suetonius’

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289 See *Cal.* 14.3 and *Vit.* 2.4.
connections between the different passages provides the reader with different possible interpretations of events; how Suetonius connects these passages contributes to the reader’s understanding of why they might be connected. The packaging matters.

In this section of the chapter, I start by introducing Germanicus’ death as an example of same-scene rewriting in the *Caesars* before noting how often his death is narrated in comparison to other important deaths in the Julio-Claudian household. I then turn to the individual episodes themselves. I group them into three narrative categories and highlight conclusions that the recursive reader might more easily draw than the linear reader. Suetonius uses Germanicus’ death to highlight the difficulty of knowing past events and the potential that political actors have to exploit that opacity. Ultimately, I argue that the form of same-scene rewriting demonstrates the chronological flexibility of serial biography: the constant re-interpretation of a single scene in different contexts promotes a type of comparative reading that outstrips linear reading.

**Germanicus’ Death**

Germanicus’ death quickly spawned chatter about conspiracy, and imperial writers struggled to divine what happened and capture the fallout. Tacitus claims that rumors about the death spread among those discussing it at the time and later (*vario rumore*), noting that “so ambiguous are the most important events, when some consider what they have heard from wherever as verification, others turn true things into their antithesis, and each swells in time” (*adeo maxima quaeque ambigua sunt, dum alii quoquo modo audita pro compertis habent, alii vera in contrarium vertunt, et gliscit utrumque posteritate*).

Germanicus himself occupies a hypothetical space: the popular general who could have
been, should have been emperor. Suetonius appears to confront Germanicus and his death with similar considerations in mind, and in this section I assert that Germanicus’ death scene is an example of same-scene rewriting. The beginning of the *Caligula* is a mini-biography of Germanicus that bridges the *Tiberius* and the *Caligula* in ways that can account for the discrepancy in how long each man ruled. This mini-biography also provides an implicit exploration of an alternative emperor – a thirteenth *Caesar*. Suetonius, in narrating Germanicus’ death, combines the ambiguity of events with an awareness of the power of the hypothetical implications of a future emperor Germanicus Caesar. In doing so, Suetonius shapes a Germanicus that is opaque and difficult to know: both the events of his death and his place in the public imagination introduce an epistemological distance between Germanicus and Suetonius’s reader. It is in the course of this mini-biography that the reader confronts one of the seven mentions of Germanicus’ death (*Cal. 1.2-2*). In my analysis of these seven instances of rewriting, I first highlight the high number of narrations of Germanicus’ death and then argue that Suetonius builds a sense of Germanicus’ opacity into his presentation of the material. Suetonius, responding to the ambiguity that Tacitus highlights (which includes contradictory source material), builds the opaque nature of Germanicus’ death into his narration, prompting the reader to compare the passages to discern how different characters frame the narrative to their own ends.

*Rewriting Germanicus’ Death Again and Again*

In contrast to Tacitus, who capitalizes on Germanicus’ death and its fallout to shape a memorable ending to Book Two of the *Annals* and beginning to Book Three, Suetonius
inserts his rewritings of Germanicus’ death into different parts of different Lives. But Germanicus is not the only non-emperor Julio-Claudian whose death receives the rewriting treatment; his brother Drusus shows up in a few of the passages that I discuss below as well as in his own death narrative. Livia is another member of the Julio-Claudian household who has a memorable death in the *Annals* and multiple “deaths” in the *Caesars*. Like Germanicus, Livia is a major player in the Julio-Claudian household, and the repetition of her death scene indicates not only her importance but also Suetonius’ interest in the thematic possibilities therein. But the repetition of rewritings about Germanicus’ and Livia’s deaths also sets these episodes apart from other deaths of Julio-Claudian family members, thus indicating that their deaths are examples of single-scene rewriting. Agrippina, Germanicus’ wife and the person closest to Germanicus in the household, dies only once in the *Caesars*. There are other deaths that one might think would recur multiple times given their importance, such as the death of Agrippa Postumus. Occurring at the beginning of Tiberius’ reign, Agrippa Postumus’ death receives striking treatment in the *Annals* and appears at the chronologically appropriate place in the *Tiberius*. Suetonius appears to find more potential for the type of inquiry that rewriting entails in Agrippa Postumus’ disinheriance and exile than in his death. Germanicus’ death, on the merits of its repetition relative to other comparable deaths, is an example of single-scene rewriting. Seven instances nearly doubles the number of times that Livia’s death is narrated and represents a pattern of rewriting that was available.

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293 See *Aug*. 65.1, 65.4, and *Tib*. 15.2. This example of rewriting is more modest than others, and thus indicates a range of possible rewritings. Some are farther reaching than others.
to Suetonius with Agrippina and Agrippa Postumus, but ultimately rejected. It remains to be seen, however, why Suetonius elects to provide such prominence to Germanicus’ death. The passages in which Suetonius rewrites Germanicus’ death can be broken down into three types: narration of the events and subsequent fallout (Cal. 1.2-2 and Tib. 52.1-3), Germanicus’ death as a context for another story (Tib. 39 and Tib. 54.1), and attempts to control the Germanicus narrative as focalized through the perspective of the aspiring controller (Cal. 5-6.2, Cl. 11.2, and Vit. 2.3).

**Narration of Germanicus’ Death and Fallout**

In the two passages in which he narrates Germanicus’ death and the resulting fallout (especially the allegations of a conspiracy) Suetonius highlights the difficulty of understanding what happened by building the opacity of events and characters into his language. At Cal. 1.2-2, Suetonius relates what happened to Germanicus after he celebrated his triumph in 17 CE for his victory over the Germans:

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consul deinde iterum creatus ac prius quam honorem iniret ad componendum Orientis statum expulsus, cum Armeniae regem deuicisset et Cappadociam in provinciae formam redegisset, annum agens aetatis quartum et tricensimum diuturno morbo Antiochiae obiit, non sine ueneni suspicione. nam praeter liuores, qui toto corpore erant, et spumas quae per os fluebant cremati quoque cor inter ossa incorruptum est, cuius ea natura existimatur ut tinctum ueneno igne confici nequeat. obiit autem, ut opinio fuit, fraude Tiberi, ministerio et opera Cn. Pisonis, qui sub idem tempus Syriae praepositus nec dissimulans offendendum sibi aut patrem aut filium, quasi plane ita necesse esset, etiam aegrum Germanicum grauissemissis verborum ac rerum acerbitatibus nullo adhibito modo adfecit, propter quae ut Romam rediit paene discerptus a populo a senatu capitis damnatus est.
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Then made consul a second time and pushed out before he could take public office [in Rome] to put the status of the East in order, Germanicus, after he conquered the king of Armenia and rendered Cappadocia a
province, at the age of 34, died at Antioch from a long illness, not without suspicion of poison. For beyond the bruises that were all over his body and the foam that flowed from his mouth, it was discovered that his heart, even after he had been cremated, was intact among the bones (the nature of the heart is believed to be such that it cannot be consumed by fire if it has been imbued with poison). Moreover, he died, as opinion held it, due to the trickery of Tiberius, [and] the effort and work of Gnaeus Piso, who having been put in charge of Syria at the same time nor hiding the fact that he had to offend either the father [Tiberius] or the son [Germanicus] (on the grounds that it was plainly necessary) attacked Germanicus, even when he was ill, with the most serious insults in word and action, with nothing held back, on account of which, when he returned to Rome, he was almost torn to pieces by the people and condemned to death by the Senate.

In the first sentence as punctuated, Suetonius signals the difficult-to-pin-down relationship that Germanicus had with the Roman state and emperor. The sentence starts by acknowledging Germanicus’ second consulship in 18 CE, which not only indicates the impressive trajectory of Germanicus’ career but also how non-normative (perhaps, non-Republican) the political institutions had become: Germanicus’ second consulship is only six years after his first in 12 CE, when he was a young 27, and he shares it with Tiberius, now holding his third consulship. To hold a consulship with a family member is unusual – a point that Suetonius’ reference to father and son underlines (aut patrem aut filium).

Germanicus’ relationship to Tiberius is further complicated when Suetonius modifies him with the participles creatus and expulsus. Passive, but with its Tiberian agent suppressed, the participle indicates that Germanicus’ career relies on his familial connections over and beyond his own actions; Tiberius lurks. It also prompts the reader to consider the difficulty in understanding the relationship between Germanicus and Tiberius. The word expulsus reveals Tiberius’ motives – he wants to distance Germanicus
from Rome, the center of Imperial power, and quickly (*prius quam honorem iniret*).\(^{294}\) It also draws a comparison between Germanicus’ and Tiberius’ youths by suggesting that both men suffered an exile of sorts (*explusus*, a near homophone with *exsul*, places Rhodes and Germanicus’ eastern command in the realm of exile). After an early career of military success, both men find themselves in the eastern portion of the empire distant from Roman power. This parallel complicates how the reader understands the relationship between Germanicus and Tiberius, and it is one of the ways that Suetonius nudges his reader to consider Germanicus’ hypothetical as an emperor.\(^{295}\) Suetonius’ word choice poses an implicit question: would Germanicus have followed a similar path to Tiberius’?

At the end of and after the first sentence, Suetonius mirrors the opacity of the narrative of Germanicus’ death in his language. The sequencing of information in the first sentence appears straightforward, at first; the final prepositional phrase “not without suspicion of poison” (*non sine ueneni suspicione*), held back for increased impact, introduces a dramatic twist. The reader is introduced to the allegations of conspiracy that colors the rest of the narrative and, presumably, Suetonius’ reading and use of his source material. Suetonius furthers the ambiguity surrounding the death through the inclusion of two passive voice verbs (*repertum est* and *existimatur*) in the sentence that provides some evidence for the claim. Pliny the Elder, who also writes about Germanicus’ death, cites Publius Vitellius’ prosecution speech as his source for a poisoned heart’s peculiar

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\(^{294}\) Cf. Hurley 1993: 4-5. See also Tac. *Ann.* 2.5.1.  
\(^{295}\) Given that this mini-biography occurs at the beginning of the *Caligula*, there is another implicit comparison between Germanicus and an emperor being made here too.
resistance to fire. Pliny is probably Suetonius’ source here, thus making Suetonius’ choice to suppress P. Vitellius as the authority of this information a choice meant to avoid subsequent explanations of the events. It is the subsequent trial setting that Suetonius leaves out by suppressing P. Vitellius. By staying rooted in narrative presentation contemporary with the events, Suetonius enhances his readers’ appreciation of confusion. As Suetonius moves from Germanicus’ death to the fallout for Piso, Tiberius, and Rome, he employs a particular narrative technique: he focalizes the episode through public opinion. The word order with which Suetonius introduces Tiberius and Piso into the death narrative places particular emphasis on the fact that Suetonius is utilizing source material: the phrase “as opinion held it” (ut opinio fuit) follows on from the striking first word obiit and autem, which signals a development in the story, and is followed by Tiberius’ treachery (fraude Tiberi). By giving such prominence to opinion, Suetonius underlines the opacity of the situation. The opaque is also present in Suetonius’ attempt to enter into Piso’s thought process with the parenthetical “on the grounds that it was plainly necessary” (quasi plane ita necesse esset). Piso is responding to the complicated relationship between Tiberius and Germanicus, the father and the son, the central relationship that dictates (without revealing) how any political actor must act during the principate. In misdiagnosing this relationship, Piso dooms himself.

296 negatur cremari posse in iis qui cardiaco morbo obierint, negatur et veneno interemptis. certe exstat oratio Vitelli, qua Gnaeum Pisonem eius sceleris coarguit, hoc usus argumento palamque testatus non potuisse ob venenum cor Germanici Caesaris cremari. contra genere morbi defensus est Piso. NH 11.187. 297 Pliny is Tacitus’ source as well. See Hurley 1993: 7. Suetonius does know that P. Vitellius played a role in shaping the fallout of Germanicus’ death, as evidenced by his presence at Vit. 2.3.
The fallout from Germanicus’ death receives extended treatment at Tib. 52.1-3, where Suetonius demonstrates the difficulties in interrogating sources and accessing the psychology of those who played a part in the events:

Filiorum neque naturalem Drusum neque adoptiuan Germanicum patria caritate dilexit, alterius <uirtutibus, alterius> uitiis infensus; nam Drusus fluxioris remissiorisque uitae erat. itaque ne mortuo quidem perinde affectus est sed tantum non statim a funere ad negotiorum consuetudinem reedit iustitio longiore inhibito. quin et Iliensium legis paulo serius consolantibus quasi obliterata iam doloris memoria irridens se quoque respondit uicem eorum dolere, quod egregium ciuem Hectoram amississet. Germanico uisque adeo obrectaviit ut et praeclera facta eius pro superaucuibus eleuarit et gloriosissimas uictorias ceu damnosas rei p. increparet. quod uero Alexandriam propter immensa et repentinam famem inconsulto se adisset questus est in senatu. etiam causa mortis fuisse ei per Cn. Pisonem legatum Syriae creditur, quem mox huius criminis reum putant quidam mandata prolaturum, nisi ea secreto ostentant *** quae multifariam inscriptum et per noctes celeberrime adclamatum est, 'reddo Germanicum!' quam suspicionem confirmauit ipse postea coniuge etiam ac liberis Germanici crudelium in modum afflictis.

He [Tiberius] loved neither his biological son Drusus nor his adopted son Germanicus with a father’s affection, enraged with the virtues of one and the vices of the other – for Drusus had a rather dissolute and casual lifestyle. Thus not even when he [Drusus] died was Tiberius accordingly affected, but he returned to his normal habits of business very nearly straightaway after the funeral, and a longer mourning period was forbidden. And indeed when diplomats from Ilium offered their condolences a little while later, joking, as if memory of sorrow had already been blotted out, Tiberius responded that he also mourned for their misfortune because they had lost their outstanding fellow citizen, Hector. As far as Germanicus, he disparaged him to such a degree that he both made light of his outstanding deeds as pointless and reproached his most glorious victories as damaging to the Republic. Tiberius complained in the Senate because – as he says – it was doubtlessly without his permission that Germanicus went to Alexandria on account of a large and sudden famine. He is even believed to have been the cause of Germanicus’ death through the agency of Gnaeus Piso, ambassador to Syria, whom some think that later, on trial for this this crime, would have produced orders, except that they revealed in secret *** which in many places it is written and shouted out at night very often “Give us back Germanicus!” Tiberius himself confirmed this suspicion later since Germanicus’ wife and even his children were treated cruelly.
Germanicus’ relation to Tiberius and the state, similar to Cal. 1.2-2, is investigated here. The start of the narrative emphasizes the familial relationship between the three men (Filiorum neque naturalem Drusum neque adoptiium Germanicum patria caritate dilexit) and introduces a moral element.\(^\text{298}\) Behind this moral and familial justification for Tiberius’ lack of affection may be a political problem: Suetonius asserts that Tiberius “both made light of his outstanding deeds as pointless and reproached his most glorious victories as damaging to the Republic” (et praecclara facta eius pro superuacuis eleuarit et gloriosissimas victorias ceu damnosas rei p. increparet). Lindsay argues that by ascribing these motivations to Tiberius Suetonius alludes to Annals 2.26.4, where Tacitus advises Germanicus to save some glory for his brother.\(^\text{299}\) Suetonius couples a narrative of Drusus’s death with Germanicus’ (a common pairing in the Tiberius) in order to show the lost, hypothetical potentiality of both: Drusus, like Germanicus, is another in a long line of “could have been” emperors, and he comes in for moral assessment (nam Drusus fluxioris remissiorisque uitae erat) like the other emperors in the Caesars. Some of the anecdotal information that Suetonius includes about Drusus’ death mirrors that in Cal. 1.2-2, including a careful attention to the relationship between Drusus and his father, but especially in the use of quasi to access a focalized perspective (in this case, Suetonius appears to be puzzling out Tiberius cryptic reply and grin), which leads to a disruption of normal civic activity, (in this case, the shortening of iustitium).

\(^{298}\) On the formulation alterius <uitutibus, alterius> uitiis, see Kaster 2016b: 146-147.

\(^{299}\) Lindsay 1995: 156. See Baldwin 1983: 262 briefly on Germanicus’ praecclara facta as “familiar turf” of the Tiberian narrative.
In elaborating on Tiberius’ criticisms of Germanicus, Suetonius shifts between different perspectives on his death in the form of actors in the drama (Tiberius and Piso) or sources, thus prompting his readers to adopt an epistemologically distant stance.\textsuperscript{300} The reader, following Suetonius’ sequencing from Drusus’ death narrative to Germanicus’ and thus having Tiberius’ critiques of Germanicus’ insufficient service to the state in mind, next confronts a series of focalization shifts that all shape a perspective of how components of the state respond to the loss of a future heir: First, Tiberius complains in the Senate about the reasons he alleges compelled Germanicus to go to Egypt. Suetonius signals Tiberius’ alleged reason for the reader with a \textit{quod} + subjunctive clause, locating it with Tiberius and not the narrative voice. Second, Suetonius presents information gathered from sources that parcel out responsibility for the death between Tiberius and Piso, who is labeled with his official position (\textit{Cn. Pisonem legatum Syriae}) and whose hypothetical defense in the form of secret papers is speculated. The sources of the information are presented with a passive verb and a suppressed agent (\textit{creditur}) or with an indefinite pronoun (\textit{putant quidam}), similar to what is found in at \textit{Cal.} 1.2-2. And finally, the strong (\textit{celeberrime}) response of the people, who have to call for Germanicus at night (\textit{per noctes}), with the implication being that such calls would be unsafe to make during the day. In all three instances, Suetonius moves through different elements of the Roman imperial state (emperor, Senate, foreign diplomats, the people) demonstrating how much instability the death of an heir causes. Suetonius capitalizes on the confusion of Germanicus’ death to guide the reader to reflect on the confusion that results from the

\textsuperscript{300} It is unfortunate that how Suetonius moves between these different perspectives is unclear due to a lacuna in the text. See Kaster 2016b: 147-148.
loss of the center in imperial politics. The recursive reader coming to this passage after reading the one from the *Caligula* notes the inverse chronological relationship: the narration of the death comes in the subsequent Life from where the fallout is narrated. This “jumbling” affords Suetonius the opportunity to deploy the same scene to different ends for different contexts.

**Germanicus’ Death as Context**

The final sentence of *Tib.* 52.1-3 uses Germanicus’ death as the context for a subsequent anecdote, in this case Tiberius’ treatment of Germanicus’ family. Two of Suetonius’ single-scene rewritings of Germanicus’ death fulfill a similar narratological role as contexts for another anecdote. At *Tib.* 39, Suetonius relates the story about Tiberius’ near-death experience on the way to Capri:

*Sed orbatus utroque filio, quorum Germanicus in Syria, Drusus Romae obierat, secessum Campaniae petit, constanti et opinione et sermone paene omnium quasi neque reediturus unquam et cito mortem etiam obiturus. quod paulo minus utrumque euenit, nam neque Romam amplius redit et paucos post dies iuxta Tarracinam in praetorio cui Speluncae nomen est in cenantem eum complura et ingentia saxa fortuito superne delapsa sunt, multisque conuiuarum et ministrorum elisis praeter spem euasit.*

But after he [Tiberius] was deprived of both of his sons – Germanicus had died in Syria, Drusus at Rome – he sought the solitude of Campania, with there being a persistent opinion and topic of conversation of almost everybody as if he would not return ever and would soon even meet his death. Both of which nearly came to pass: for not only did he not ever return to Rome again but also a few days later, at a country villa near Tarracina, which was called “the Caves,” many huge rocks happened to fall from above onto him while he was dining, and although many of the dinner guests and servants were crushed, he escaped contrary to hope.
Unlike in Tacitus’ account of the episode, at Annals 4.59.1-4, which provides Tiberius with justification for “why he should place more faith in Sejanus’ friendship and constancy” (cur amicitiae constantiaeque Seiani magis fideret) (4.59.1) because Sejanus saves his life, Suetonius isolates Tiberius. Sejanus is nowhere to be seen. The rocks seem to seek Tiberius out (in cenantem eum), and he survives despite the death of those around him (multisque conuiuarum et ministrorum elisis). Suetonius caps the episode with the chilling praeter spem, which implies that there are those who hoped that Tiberius would have died in this accident – a further emotional isolation of Tiberius from other Roman elites.

This sense of isolation suits the later portion of Tiberius’ reign, when he “sought the solitude of Campania” (secessum Campaniae petit) and then Capri, but it is also made especially poignant by the beginning of this paragraph where Suetonius describes Tiberius as “deprived” (orbatus) of Germanicus and Drusus. The participle orbatus is not uncommon in Suetonius (including the noun form of orbitas).301 Twice he uses it with the word lumen to mean that somebody is blind. At Aug. 11, however, Suetonius writes that after Hirtius and Pansa were killed and Antony was routed in 43 BCE, there was a rumor that Octavian was enacting a coup while the Republic was without consuls (re p. consulibus orbata). Much can be made about this interesting parallel between Octavian and Tiberius, Drusus and Germanicus and consuls Hirtius and Pansa.302 My point here is that by framing a narrative in which the emperor almost dies alone with the mention of

301 See Aug. 11, Cl. 16.3 (noun), Ner. 37.1, Gal. 17.1 (noun), Ves. 7.1, and Dom. 22.
302 Another parallel of interest is the opening to Augustus’ will (Tib. 23), Quoniam atrox fortuna Gaium et Lucium filios mihi eripuit, which is quoted in the Tiberius but not the Augustus (101.1-2) in what seems to be a (not-so?) veiled insult to Tiberius.
the death of his two heirs Suetonius capitalizes on the loss of Germanicus as a potential future leader: Germanicus’ death was not simply a blow to Rome because the state lost a groomed heir but also because it meant that Tiberius – the man who should provide stability to the government – is actually fragile. Thus, Suetonius’ recursive readers, seeing another focalizing quasi in conjunction with the “persistent opinion and topic of conversation of almost everybody” (constanti et opinione et sermone paene omnium) better understands the gravity of Tiberius’ departure from Rome because they understand the impact of the fallout from Germanicus’ death from other passages that narrate his death, as was discussed above.

At Tib. 54.1, Suetonius emphasizes the relationship between Germanicus’ death and the state, which is to say significant groups in the Res Publica:

Cum ex Germanico tres nepotes, Neronem et Drusum et Gaium, ex Druso unum Tiberium haberet, destitutus morte liberorum maximos natu de Germanici filiis, Neronem et Drusum, patribus conscriptis commendauit diemque utriusque tirocinii congiario plebei dato celebrauit. sed ut comperit ineunte anno pro eorum quoque salute publice vota suscepta, egit cum senatu non debere talia praemia tribui nisi expertis et aetate prouectis.

Since he had three grandsons from Germanicus (Nero, Drusus, and Gaius) and one from Drusus (Tiberius), when he was left childless by the death of his children he commended the oldest of Germanicus’ sons (Nero and Drusus) to the Senate and celebrated their first forays into public life with a gift to the people. But when he learned at the start of the year that public votive offerings were undertaken for their health too, he took up the matter with the Senate: such great honors ought not to be handed out except to those who are experienced and advanced in age.

In this passage, Suetonius provides a glimpse into Tiberius’ response to Germanicus’ and Drusus’ deaths. The story shows a petty and even jealous Tiberius sending mixed signals to the Senate. He responds to the deaths of his sons by bolstering the standing of his
grandsons, on the one hand, but he chides the Senate for responding in kind, on the other. Suetonius here yokes together key components of the Roman state to Tiberius’ response to his sons’ deaths: both the Senate and the people become pieces to maneuver in Tiberius’ succession plans. This yoking parallels what the recursive reader sees in other same-scene rewritings of Germanicus’ death: at Cal. 1.2-2 Piso faces two threats from the people and the Senate (*a populo a senatu*) and at Tib. 52.1-3 the Senate and people play a role in the fallout, as shown above. The context of Germanicus’ death enhances this example of Tiberius’ pettiness by imbuing Tiberius’ moral character with civic consequences. Tiberius’ pettiness threatens the establishment of peaceful succession as well as the relationship between the Senate, people, and emperor. Germanicus’ death as context helps draw the connection between Tiberius’ character and its political implications for the state.

*Controlling the Germanicus Narrative*

At Cal. 5-6.2, Suetonius presents an extended narrative of how different groups of people reacted to Germanicus’ death in order to demonstrate how highly regarded Germanicus was. Even foreigners shared in grief and temporarily ceased hostilities (5). At Rome the citizen body believed in a false rumor from an unknown source (*incertis auctoribus*) that he was safe, but these citizens were betrayed by their hope in Germanicus’ return (6.1). Suetonius caps the narrative by observing that Germanicus’ death had repercussions for long after the people finally came to terms with his death and mourned: “Even the horror of the time that followed added to his [Germanicus’] glory and the regret for the dead Germanicus” (*auxit gloriam desideriumque defuncti et atrocitas insequentium*)
temporum). In this sentence, the recursive reader sees that the impact of Germanicus’ death is not only germane to the immediate aftermath of his death but also to the evaluation of subsequent emperors. Thus, the recursive reader, upon reading Cal. 6.2, knows to keep Germanicus in mind for further Lives but also to reevaluate portions of the Tiberius where Germanicus’ death is pertinent – passages that I have touched on above. It is in this sentence that Suetonius points to biography’s chronological flexibility. The careful reader reads back into previous Lives information gained from subsequent Lives; the careful reader is a recursive reader.

Much of what Suetonius has done in his packaging of the Germanicus death and fallout narratives has been to encourage the reader to consider the difficulties of digesting information from unknown sources (incertis auctoribus). Suetonius models a type of curious aporia for his reader in the face of unknown sources. It would become profitable for later emperors to solve problem of contradictory understandings of Germanicus in their favor, which is to say, to define Germanicus’ legacy. At Cl. 11.1-11.2, Suetonius relates the first actions that Claudius took after becoming emperor in the wake of Gaius’ assassination. First, he tried to erase from memory the indecision of who should hold power after the assassination through pardons. Second, “he then turned to the obligations of familial piety” (conversus hinc ad officia pietatis) in order to bolster his relationship to the Julio-Claudian household. Suetonius lists the family members that he honored and how, writing about Germanicus “but in commemoration of his brother, whose memory he commemorated at every occasion, he staged even a Greek comedy in the competition at Naples and gave it an award in accordance with the opinion of the judges” (at <in> fratris memoriam per omnem occasionem celebratam comoediam quoque Graecam
Neapolitano certamine docuit ac de sententia iudicum coronauit). Claudius attempts to use Germanicus’ death to his own ends. By electing to commemorate Germanicus’ memory with a comedy competition, he appropriates some of Germanicus’ positive reputation in the eyes of the public. He does so by appealing to one part of Germanicus’ personality; Cal. 3.2 does bolster the notion that Germanicus would have appreciated such a commemoration because he did write Greek comedies. But in picking out this especially scholastic part of his brother’s personality, Claudius highlights the part that is especially congruous with his own personality. Suetonius shows that Claudius’ Germanicus is not the hypothetical emperor (which could undermine Claudius’ own grasp on power) nor is he even a general (the glory of Claudius’ British invasion could be compromised by reminding Rome of the last Julio-Claudian to triumph) but is instead a Greek writing scholar.

The final same-scene rewriting of Germanicus’ death occurs at Vit. 2.3, where Suetonius discusses some of Vitellius’ ancestors. He writes about four brothers, one of whom (Lucius) was Vitellius’ father. Lucius’s brother Publius was a part of Germanicus’ inner circle. As he writes, “Publius, a comrade of Germanicus’, accused Gnaeus Piso of being Germanicus’ enemy and murderer and got him condemned, and after serving as praetor he was arrested as an accomplice of Sejanus and was handed over into his brother’s custody…” (P., Germanici comes, Cn. Pisonem inimicum et interfectorem eius accusauit condemnuaitque ac post praeturae honorem inter Seiani conscios arreptus et in custodiam fratri datus…) (Vit. 2.3). The recursive reader notes that mentions of Publius Vitellius and Sejanus are present here but absent from earlier accounts (Tib. 39 and Cal. 1.2-2). Suetonius’ inclusion of these men attests to serial biography’s
chronological flexibility: it parcels out information in ways that are appropriate to their context. In this context, as is often the case with the post-Julio-Claudian Lives, Suetonius retroactively includes the later Caesars in events found in the earlier Lives. Publius and Sejanus were extraneous to the narratives of Germanicus’ death in the Tiberius and the Caligula but are essential for characterizing Vitellius’ family at the beginning of the Vitellius. Publius appears to be a rather clumsy “hanger-on,” associating himself with people who have political prestige. He appears sloppy: the recursive reader notes that Publius does not employ an appropriate degree of skepticism to understanding how Germanicus died, but comes to a strong conclusion about Piso’s guilt. And after Germanicus died, Publius attaches himself to Sejanus, another major political figure during Tiberius’ principate.

Conclusion

Germanicus’ death appears in the Caesars more often than comparable deaths of other members of the Julio-Claudian household. Much of the language in the passages echoes itself, especially the language that emphasizes the opacity of Germanicus’ death, such as quasi. The recursive reader, responding to these prompts, identifies how Suetonius breaks the natural chronology that might be expected in narrating Germanicus’ death in order to emphasize the contingent role that Germanicus’ death played in negotiating the political reality of an heir’s death – contingent both because of the potential unlikely circumstances of his death (depending on whose narrative one believes) and because Germanicus’ death serves as a context for other events. Certain emperors, understanding the contextual power of Germanicus’ death, shape it to their own ends. The recursive
reader could reverse the order with which I have presented the material in this section of the chapter: starting with Vitellius and Claudius, the recursive reader would see that emperors who come to power after his death promote their interpretation of his legacy for their own interests. With this understanding in mind, the recursive reader more clearly divines how Gaius and Tiberius were already grappling with Germanicus’ legacy at a time when understanding that legacy meant intervening in a more contested space. Rewriting as a technique of the biographical form facilitates these types of comparative conclusions. Germanicus’ death demonstrates the power of the rewriting form to prompt re-interpretation based on context.

**Type-Scene Rewriting**

Type-scene rewriting denotes the deployment of a type-scene, almost always pertinent to the subject of the Life, in different Lives. These scenes can consist of extended narratives or a sentence or two as context for other actions that the emperor takes; Suetonius’ use of narrative techniques is especially flexible in this case. Type-scene rewriting has received a larger amount of scholarly attention in comparison to other types of rewriting: most of this attention has been paid to the death scenes that close the narrative portion of each life’s end. Other type-scenes present themselves in the course of the Lives, and they often have corollaries in other imperial Latin and Greek texts. Four emperors compare themselves (implicitly or explicitly) to Alexander the Great with differing conclusions.

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303 See, most recently, Damon 2018: 107-127, especially 108-112 for the relationship between type-scenes and narrative. Ash 2016: *passim* is another recent treatment. Individual deaths have received extensive treatment, most notably Nero’s, for whose death Lounsbury 1987: 63-89 is the principle scholarly advocate. While there is much to be gleaned from these individual examinations, they lack the cumulative force that rewriting provides.
reached by each Caesar. That this comparison (between emperor and Alexander) is a common trope in imperial Latin literature suggests its potential as a type-scene for Suetonius as he constructs his conception of the emperor. Scenes in which the emperor is offered a name and either accepts it, rejects it, or does not have a chance for either (nicknames given to a Caesar behind his back) could constitute a fruitful collection of multiple occurrences of one type-scene for analysis. Type-scene rewriting introduces a consistent framework through which any one Caesar can be evaluated; this consistency provides potent interpretative possibilities. Conclusions unique to a single emperor can be drawn (in comparison to other emperors), but so too can global observations predicated upon the consistent variable. Type-scene rewriting therefore offers the potential for multiple interpretative outcomes. This version of rewriting provides some additional nuance: Suetonius’ interest in type-scenes dovetails with that of other imperial authors. Incorporating them into his organizational practice is an especially literary move. Type-scenes afford self-reflective possibilities, which may be especially valuable when evaluating the Caesars since the most securely programmatic section of the text is lost.

In this section of the chapter, I examine the final narrated or implied meal of the emperors as an example of type-scene rewriting. I start by situating food within its literary context, particularly its biographical context. I then discuss final meals before examining why final meals constitute a form of type-scene rewriting. Finally, I analyze the final meals themselves by asking what questions each meal prompts the recursive

304 Jul. 7.1, Aug. 18.1, 50, Cal. 52, and Ner. 19.2.
305 See, for example, Lucan 10.1-62.
306 See Damon 2018: 113-127 for the relationship between narrative and principate as an example.
307 See Garrett 2015: 110-134 for a recent discussion of what might be lost and Suetonian introductions generally.
reader to ask of the other meals. This analysis occurs in the context of an individual emperor and his final meal before broadening out to briefly examine the other final meals in light of the question that the recursive reader takes to them. The form of type-scene rewriting best demonstrates the network-based analysis that promotes comparative thinking. Each individual type-scene is enhanced by comparison with every type-scene.

*Food, Biography, and Final Meals in the Caesars*

Food has a long history in ancient literature, stretching as far back as Homer and appearing in prominent genres that found their own way into Latin literature, although not without some controversy. The presence of food, and especially its representation, in a work of literature can provide implicit indications that the work is of a “low” or “high” genre. Such generic categories are less stable than is sometimes attested, but it is the case that a genre such as epic will tend to represent food differently than satire will. Biography, generally, is understudied on this front, and different biographers will have different commitments: “Nowhere is this [the embrace of food as a literary subject] clearer than in ancient biography, where there seems to be a running dispute about the value of eating habits as worthwhile testimony.” In fact, Emily Gowers calls Suetonius’ turn to Augustus’ diet an “afterthought” as evidence of biography’s ambivalent treatment of food: “He ate a small amount of food (I would not leave out even

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308 For overviews of food in ancient literature, see Wilkins and Hill 2006: 247-276 and Leigh 2015: 43-52. Gowers 1993: 1-49 provides an excellent discussion of the controversy that food can cause, especially around questions of food in low vs. high genres and its meta-literary importance.

these details) and quite ordinary too” (Cibi – nam ne haec quidem omiserim – minimi erat atque uulgaris fere) (Aug 76.1).

It is a mistake to confuse Suetonius’ modest assertion (as exemplified here by the perfect subjunctive) of the importance of seemingly trivial details with an ambivalent afterthought.\textsuperscript{310} In a Life that privileges both the public and personal aspects of the emperor, it seems curious not to acknowledge the importance of Suetonius’ uncommon first-person intervention.\textsuperscript{311} This intervention of the narrative voice matches two other instances where Suetonius makes his presence known when discussing events that pertain to food.\textsuperscript{312} Wardle and Gascou flag this sentence as an indication that Suetonius is writing biography. These are not superfluous details, and Suetonius’ modest apology and the phrase ne ... quidem assert that these details serve his characterization of Augustus. Neither scholar has attended to the specificity of the parenthesis’ placement in the sentence: following the word cibi, the parenthesis does not apologize simply for trivial details, but for the discussion of food itself. This specification points the reader toward food as a subject worthy of supposed blame for inclusion over and above other trivial topics. What an emperor eats characterizes him, and these details attain outsized importance in biography relative to other genres.

That the logic of rewriting can be applied to scenes of imperial dining follows on from these considerations – namely, food’s importance in Latin literature generally (and

\textsuperscript{310} See Wardle 2014: 465 and Gascou 1984: 244. Wardle in particular takes this passage as an indication that biography belongs to the “low” class of genre. But Suetonius seems to be the exact sort of author who can demonstrate the slipperiness of these qualifications: public life (i.e., narratives about civic power) is necessarily linked to private life (food consumption).

\textsuperscript{311} Aug. 9 and 61.1.

\textsuperscript{312} Cal. 19.1 (the intervention entails reminiscences of his grandfather’s story about Gaius, but the feast is actually narrated at 32.1, where Suetonius cross-references 19.1) and Oth. 10.1 (where Suetonius mentions remarks that his father heard at Otho’s table).
as a component in meta-literary discourse specifically) and moments when Suetonius’ personal investment in the topic appears in the form of interventions. It is also worth noting the consistency with which eating appears in the *Caesars*. Every life in the *Caesars* has at least a few scenes in which the emperor either eats or takes action within the context of a meal. There are well over 100 instances where food or dining is mentioned in the *Caesars*. Scholars have already gained some insight into Suetonius’ moral thought by comparing how he casts his subjects’ relationship to food. Different dining practices also suggest a comparative impulse: Suetonius describes the private eating habits of the emperors as well as feasts and banquets. My focus is on the final narrated or implied meals of the emperors, including minor acts of consumption, such as drinking water.

Related to death narratives, but separate, are the final meals that the emperors eat. Suetonius may include this meal in his narrative of their deaths (Claudius’ final meal coincides with his death) or as a transition from earlier material (usually topical material) to the death narrative (Tiberius’ final meal). Because food consumption operates at the intersection between public action and personal moral behavior, it presents a powerful backdrop against which to evaluate Suetonius’ characterization of an emperor. That Suetonius often indicates how mindful some emperors are of their coming fate makes their actions before death all the more resonant. But the actions of those emperors who do not foresee their deaths do nonetheless provide material for the reader to contemplate. Final meals present quotidian action at an inflection point. The narration of an emperor’s

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314 See, for example, *Dom.* 16.1, where food serves as Domitian’s tool for foreshadowing his own death.
death negotiates the relationship between the man and the institution of the principate.\footnote{Damon 2018: 125-127.}

A final meal is one of the last type-scenes available to Suetonius for characterizing his subject before killing the man.

\textit{Final Meals and the Form of Type-scene Rewriting}

Eight of the twelve emperors have a final meal that appears proximal to his death in the \textit{Caesars}.\footnote{The Lives that do not contain a final meal type-scene are the \textit{Julius}, \textit{Galba}, \textit{Vitellius}, and \textit{Titus}. Since Galba’s head was bald, a soldier taking it to Otho stuck his thumb into Galba’s mouth in order to carry it (\textit{Gal.} 20.2). Vitellius flees danger with his baker and cook (\textit{Vit.} 16) and is heckled for being a glutton before he dies (\textit{Vit.} 17.2).} Some of these consist of narrative details akin to Barthes’ \textit{effet de réel}.\footnote{See Barthes 1986: 141-148, although the details here are not divorced from any signified.} They share some prompts for the recursive reader to make comparisons. Nero, Otho, and Vespasian drink water, although their context and characterization differs; Caligula and Domitian do not actually partake in their final meal, and Claudius does not survive his; and, Augustus and Tiberius eat their final meals at banquets. In each instance, the recursive reader can draw differences of characterization from similar contexts. But final meals do not only suggest rewriting links through shared context – the recursive reader also notes where they fall in a life’s structure. While Claudius’ final meal is most remarkable for being synchronous with his death narrative, other final meals occupy a similar place in their Lives: Gaius, Nero, Otho, and Vespasian all partake of food or drink during the course of their death narratives. Suetonius includes the final meal of Augustus, Tiberius, and Domitian as character-based anecdotes in the lead-up to their death narratives. These structural positions offer different advantages, and by placing the episodes in these variable (but consistent) spots, Suetonius provides the recursive reader
with an implicit category for use in understanding an emperor’s characterization. Because rewriting operates on a network-based mode of analysis, the recursive reader might group the Lives in his or her head according to both schema or even according to other comparative principles.

*Final Meals within Death Narratives*

1) *Claudius*

Claudius’ final meal almost completely coincides with his death narrative, and its bifurcated narrative emphasizes the presence of certain people (*Cl.* 44.2-3):

\[et ueneno quidem occisum conuenit, ubi autem et per quem dato discrepat. quidam tradunt epulanti in arce cum sacerdotibus per Halotum spadonem praegustatorem, alií domes
tico conuiuio per ipsam Agrippinam, quae boletum medicatum auidissimo ciborum talium optulerat.\]^318

And it is agreed that he was indeed killed by poison, but there is a difference of opinion about where and through whom it was given. Some claim that it was given to him while he was dining with priests on the Capitoline by the eunuch Halotus, his food-taster; others that it was given to him at a banquet at home through Agrippina herself, who had offered a poisoned mushroom to him, incredibly inclined to this sort of food.

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318 I include the remainder of the episode here. I do not treat it in the following analysis, but it continues with bifurcated narratives. Familiarity with the end of the episode is assumed when this passage is compared with other final meal type-scenes below: *etiam de subsequentibus diversa fama est. multi statim hausto ueneno obmutuisse aiunt excru
ciatumque doloribus nocte tota defecisse prope lucem, nonnulli inter initia consopitum, dein
de cibo affluente euomuisse omnia, repetitumque toxico, incertum pultine addito cum uelut ex
ahastum refici cibo oporteret, an immisso per elysterem, ut quasi abundantia laboranti etiam hoc genere egestionis subueniretur.* (“Even of what happened next there are opposing stories. Many say that he fell silent immediately after the poison had been swallowed and that he, tortured by pains throughout the whole night, died close to dawn; some that he passed out at first, then, since the food was abundant, vomited up everything, and was again poisoned, [and] it was uncertain whether it was added to his mush, since it was right that he, as if he were exhausted, be restored by food, or introduced by an enema so that there might be relief for him, as if he were laboring due to the abundance of food, from even this type of purging.”)
Because this final meal is Claudius’ death narrative, it has already received scholarly attention. This previous treatment affords us the opportunity to focus on the elements of this narrative that the type-scene suggests are especially pertinent to the logic of the narrative and might be fruitful elements for the recursive reader to bring to other final meal narratives. In this instance, the type-scene raises a question for the recursive reader: who is present for the final meal?

There are perhaps two prominent narrative decisions that Suetonius makes in presenting this passage: first, the proliferation of alternative narratives, and second, the absence of other *dramatis personae* that play a role in this drama elsewhere, especially Lucusta, whose absence contrasts with her presence in the *Nero* (Ner. 33.2 and 33.3, both of which follow Nero’s perspective on Claudius’ death at 33.1 – an example of single-scene rewriting – and 47.1). These two decisions in effect focus the narrative’s spotlight on the core cast of characters while accommodating two agents whose power over Claudius was allegedly substantial. Claudius plays a prominent role, of course, but so do the two other characters whom Suetonius mentions: Halotus and Agrippina, one of Claudius’ freedmen and his wife. Twice does Suetonius connect the dangers that Claudius poses to the state with his alleged subservience to his freedmen and wives. By proposing two alternative stories, Suetonius includes a freedman agent and a wife agent of Claudius’ death – and in having both present Suetonius shows the ill

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321 Cl. 25.5 and 29.1. It can be deduced that Halotus was a freedman from his later status as a procurator (*Gal.* 15.2). I discuss this connection in part when I establish the horizontal aspect of the topical unit form in chapter one.
consequences of Claudius’ character defects as he brings Claudius to his own end. In order to have Claudius’ final meal work as an effective pay off to the biography, Suetonius brings to the forefront of the type-scene the presence of other characters.

The recursive reader, armed with the question that Claudius’ final meal prompts, asks who is present at other final meals and how asking this question of these final meals might open up interpretative possibilities that might have otherwise been less clear (although not every final meal will benefit). Augustus’ final meal sees him throw a feast for an unusual assortment of people, namely the Greek youths who still do traditional exercises on Capri (spectatuit assidue exercentes ephebos) (98.3). More broadly speaking, it was during the time of this final feast that Augustus had Romans and Greek switch their clothes and languages (Romani Graeco, Graeci Romano habitu et sermone uterentur) (98.3) and Alexandrian sailors sought an audience with him (nautaeque de nave Alexandrina) (98.2). It is almost as if Augustus invited the whole of the learned empire to his final feast: a bi-lingual spectacle of empire was on display for Augustus’ final meal, anticipating his performative death. The synecdochic empire also reminds readers of the political stakes that arise from Augustus’ death – he may not be the first Caesar, but as the first princeps he, and his death, has imperial consequences. In contrast, Tiberius’ final meal is a more much localized affair: his doctor Charicles is present, as is his lictor, who stands by his side as he says farewell by name to his nameless guests (stans in medio triclinio astante lictore singulos valere dicentis appellaret) (72.3). The reader does not know who these guests are, and this lack of knowledge heightens the

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322 In a similar way, Claudius’ gluttony (auidissimo ciborum talium) echoes Suetonius’ earlier assessments of his eating habits: see Cl. 31.1-33.1, especially 33.1.
image of the secretive Tiberius forcing his guests to go through the typical motions of a
dinner party while he attempts to hide his illness. Tiberius performs normalcy. Gaius’
final meal also involves nameless associates – his friends encourage him to get lunch
despite his upset stomach (*suadentibus amicis egressus est*) (58.1). This otherwise
innocuous detail takes on a heightened importance to the recursive reader primed to
question who is, or might be, present at a final meal. Are these friends actually part of a
conspiracy to kill Gaius? The question occurs more readily to the recursive reader than to
the linear reader. Nero is surrounded by different people during the course of his death
narrative, but his final acts of consumption happen in near isolation. The pathos of the
narrative receives a bit more punch by isolating Nero at certain points. Otho, too, is
alone, but as we shall see, he allows his soldiers access to him before killing himself.
Vespasian dies in the arms of some unknown people, but it is unclear if they are present
during his attempts to cure himself by drinking water. Domitian is surrounded by people,
but his paranoia about his death preclude any sort of meaningful action with them.

2) Gaius

Gaius’ final meal also takes place within the narrative space of his death, although it is
not as narratively synchronous with his actual death as Claudius’ (*Cal. 58.1*):

*VIII. Kal. Febr. hora fere septima cunctatus an ad prandium surgeret
marcente adhuc stomacho pridiani cibi onere, tandem suadentibus amicis
gressus est.*

On the ninth day before the Kalends of February, around the seventh hour, doubt
ing whether he should get up to go to lunch, since his stomach still hurt from eating too much food the day before, Gaius finally left [the games] because his friends were urging him to.

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Gaius never eats his intended final meal; he is murdered before he reaches lunch. On his way, Gaius runs into a group of stage performers from Asia. Suetonius reports that Gaius would have watched them if the leader had not begged off because he felt cold (58.1). He is killed shortly thereafter. On the one hand, this failure to reach his final meal is indicative of a moral critique of Gaius’ character. On the other hand, Gaius’ failure to eat also anticipates his death: the possibility that his assassination was a conspiracy grows stronger as his death is narrated, and Gaius’ ambivalence about eating is an initial indicator that something is going wrong. As he walks into the corridor and fails to find food, the reader becomes increasingly aware that something is, ultimately, wrong. And in his final moments, he becomes a sort of food himself: he is a sacrificial victim.324

Suetonius continues by introducing alternative death narratives, similar to what he did in the Claudius. But each narrative is predicated on the set-up: that Gaius is in search of a meal that he will never eat. The recursive reader comparing this episode to the other narratives asks whether or not the emperor actually eats his final meal.

The recursive reader finds fewer emperors for whose final meals this question is applicable than the question of who is present, but it is nonetheless still a profitable recursive question. Domitian orders that some food be set aside for tomorrow (in crastinum) but adds that this is only in case he has a chance to eat it (adiecit, ‘si modo uti licuerit’) (Dom. 16.1). Suetonius includes this detail in a list of omens that presage Domitian’s death. The recursive reader notes that Domitian suspects that he will die, but his response to this knowledge is not to avoid it. Instead he constructs the conditions for a prophecy that will be fulfilled by his death. In asking what is permitted to him (licuerit),

Domitian demonstrates his powerlessness, and Suetonius gives his reader access to the peculiar psychology of an emperor resigned to powerlessness. Nero drinks water as his final act of consumption, but he refuses bread offered to him in favor of this tepid water (*panem quidem sordidum oblatum aspernatus est, aquae autem tepidae aliquantum bibit*) (*Ner. 48.4*). The adjective *sordidum* testifies to the increasingly dire situation that Nero finds himself in and the tepid water speaks to how alienated he is from his typical pretensions of drinking cold water – pretensions that he had earlier tried to keep up (*aquam ex subiecta lacuna poturus manu hausit et, ‘haec est’, inquit, ‘Neronis decocta.’*).

The recursive reader also notices that Augustus and Tiberius are not shown to eat at their final meals: the assumption that they did is not unreasonable, but Suetonius seems to place emphasis on other aspects of these banquets, namely who is at the banquet and why the emperors host these banquets in the first place.

3) *Nero*

Another emperor whose final acts of consumption occur in the “lead-up” portions of his death narrative is Nero. Fitting for one of the longest narrative passages in the *Caesars*, Nero’s death narrative contains his final meal as well as his final acts of consumption (*Ner. 47.1*):

*Nuntiata interim etiam ceterorum exercituum defectione litteras prandenti sibi redditas concerpsit, mensam subuertit, duos scyphos gratissimi usus, quos ‘Homericos’ a caelatura carminum Homeri uocabat, solo inlisit ac sumpto a Lucusta veneno et in auream pyxidem condito transiit in hortos Seruilianos…*

Meanwhile, after the defection of even the other armies had been brought to his attention, he tore up the letters that were handed over to him while he was eating lunch, overturned his table, and dashed to the ground his
two goblets of beloved use, which he called his “Homeric” goblets from the engraved scenes of Homer’s poetry, and, after he obtained a poison from Lucusta and put it in a golden box, he went into the Servilian gardens…

This narrative presents a Nero in distress: his life is coming to a close, and the military uprisings attest to his political failure and present him with a looming choice: suicide or assassination. Suetonius ties Nero’s distress to his musical interests. Instead of being the emperor who abstains from eating certain foods in order to enhance his voice or the emperor who is convinced that he can cement his support with rebelling soldiers through song, Nero becomes angry and destroys his favorite goblets – goblets that he loves because of their attachment to poetry and singing. He destroys them by overturning his table. At the start of this narrative, Nero still has power, but his distress is made manifest in the destruction of the implements of a meal (goblets and tables). Nero dismantles the imperial banquet scene.

This episode is the start of a longer narrative that sees Nero engage in two more acts of consumption where he has less power and lacks the implements of a normal meal (Ner. 48.3 and 48.4):

...ac parumper commoratus dum clandestinus ad uillam introitus pararetur aquam ex subiecta lacuna poturus manu hausit et, ‘haec est’, inquit, ‘Neronis decocta.’

…and waiting for some time while a secret entrance to the villa was provided Nero, being about to drink water from the nearby lake, drew up some up with his hand and said, “this is Nero’s cocktail.”

325 The question of which armies were actually in revolt when Nero received this news is fraught. On Nero’s death, see Warmington 1977: ad loc. and Bradley 1978: 240-283 for discussion.
326 Ner. 20.1 and 43.2
327 Pliny the Elder, who mentions that the goblets were made out of crystal, omits details about the Homeric etching, because his interest is in crystal (NH 37.29). Suetonius, uninterested in the material of the goblets, elides this detail.
...fameque et iterum siti interpellante panem quidem sordidum oblatum aspernatus est, aquae autem tepidae aliquantum bibit.

...and although hunger and again thirst was upsetting him, he refused the paltry bit of bread offered to him, but drank a little bit of tepid water.

That Nero delays prompts the recursive reader to think of Gaius’ final meal: Gaius (cunctatus) and Nero (commoratus) delay for different reasons. Nero, whose drink of choice was boiled water cooled with snow, initially tries to dress up an otherwise bleak situation. After his first drink of water fails to quench his thirst, he resigns himself to drinking tepid water. Nero’s final meal(s) is the culmination of a sequence, with the first final meal giving way to a second and then a third. Each final meal is less and less meal-like, which mirrors the degree to which Nero is less and less Caesar-like: the choice between suicide and assassination gets closer and closer. The recursive reader, tracking this narrative development, asks whether or not an emperor’s final meal includes sequential narration.

The narrative technique of sequencing plays a role in other final meals. The recursive reader is attuned to the placement of final meals within narrative contexts, as was discussed above. The connection between Gaius’ and Nero’s delay demonstrates how the question of sequence can illuminate the dramatic role that final meals play in a larger narrative of death. Nero’s final meal sequence bolsters the larger narrative, but so does the placement of a final meal type-scene in the Claudius, Caligula, Otho, and Vespasian. In each case, the final meal type-scene is one component of a series of narrative choices that cohere to form the end of a biography. The recursive reader,

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328 Dio 63.28.5 and Pliny NH 31.40.
mindful of sequencing, sees how type-scene rewriting contributes to Suetonius’ biographical organization. The recursive reader further notes that the sequencing of consumption also applies to an emperor whose final meal includes multiple instances of eating. Claudius’ consumption does not stop after his final meal finishes. Suetonius reports that there are different stories about what happened after his final meal (etiam de subsequentibus diversa fama est). Many report that the digestion of his meal and the pain it caused lasted the whole night (nocte tota) and that he only died at daybreak (prope lucem) (Cl. 44.3). This emphasis on Claudius’ long digestive process implies an on-going consumption that focuses on the emperor’s digestive tract, reducing him from a man to a set of organs.\(^{330}\) The other story that Suetonius reports says that Claudius vomited and had to be given another dose of poison in gruel (pultine addito), on the grounds that it would give him nourishment, or in the form of an enema (per clysterem). The sequencing of Claudius’ consumption takes a distasteful turn, and in reducing Claudius to his digestive tract, Suetonius emphasizes the power of the actors orchestrating his death. With Claudius and Nero, as the emperor becomes less and less Caesar-like so does his final meal become less and less meal-like.

4) Vespasian

Vespasian also drinks water as his final act of consumption. His death has obvious implications for his dynastic successors since he starts a new dynasty. Vespasian’s relationship to Augustus and his own family is significant as a consequence. In his narrative of Vespasian’s death, Suetonius mentions that he returned to Cutiliae near Reate

where he performed his duties as emperor, “although he had even harmed his health, already getting worse, especially with respect to the intestines, by frequently drinking cold water” (cum super urgentem ualitudinem creberrimo frigidae aquae usu etiam intestina uitiasset) (Ves. 24). Suetonius’ mention of water reinforces Vespasian’s faith in Cutiliae’s curative powers – Vitruvius (8.3.5), Celsus (Med. 4.12), and Pliny the Elder (NH 31.10) all mention the curative powers of Cutiliae’s springs. Vespasian’s faith in this water, despite Suetonius’ evaluation that it was doing more harm than good, stems from his attachment to the place: he was accustomed to summer there (ubi aestiuare quotannis solebat) (24) and was born in the mountainous region (2.1). Suetonius notes that Vespasian was born five years before the death of Augustus, mentioning the emperor by name (Vespasianus natus est in Sabinis ultra Reate uico modico, cui nomen est Falacrinae XV. Kal. Dech. uesperi, Q. Sulpicio Camerino C. Poppaeo Sabino cons., quinquennio ante quam Augustus excederet), before turning to Vespasian’s childhood at Cosa, where he was raised by his grandmother (2.1). The emperor liked to return to his childhood home, which was kept just as he remembered it as a child. Vespasian’s final act of drinking emphasizes his attachment to place, family, and – obliquely – Augustus, the other founder of an imperial dynasty.331 The recursive reader asks what specifically an emperor consumes at his final meal.

That Nero and Otho also consume water is an indication of rewriting (Otho’s consumption will be examined shortly). Vespasian’s consumption of cold water for curative purposes (frigidae aquae) resembles Nero’s tastes: he liked to drink water that

331 For other dynastic implications of Vespasian’s death, see Damon 2018: 117-118
had been placed in a vessel and then plunged into snow in order to chill it.\(^{332}\) There is an inversion of this preference in the fact that Nero drinks tepid water (*aquae autem tepidae*) (*Ner.* 48.4) before dying. Beyond being comparative signals for the presence of rewriting, these details contribute to the reader’s understanding of the consumer. Nero’s preferences are on the one hand luxurious and excessive, but on the other hand his lack of access to them are indicative of his fall from power. Otho drinks ice-cold water (*gelidae aquae potione*) (11.2) too, but his consumption is indicative of his deliberate actions taken before death: he is prepared and resolved to die (*paratus intentusquis iam morti*), carefully speaks (*inquit ... his ipsis ... uerbis*) to those around him, forbids the use of violence (*uetuitque uim*), and allows visitors (*si quis adire uellet, potestatem sui praebuit*) (11.3) before satisfying his thirst and killing himself in the morning. Suetonius enhances Claudius’ susceptibility to being poisoned by underscoring not only the potential agents of his death but also his taste for mushrooms. His editorial gloss that Claudius was especially fond of mushrooms (*auidissimo ciborum talium*) focuses attention on the type of food; the recursive reader notes this narrative focus. Suetonius later provides a gloss on the gruel that re-poisoned Claudius, namely that it was administered on the grounds of providing him nourishment (*uelut exhaustum refici cibo*), and on the enema, on the grounds that he needed relief (*quasi abundantia laborantī*) (*Cl.* 44.2-3). The *uelut* and *quasi* contribute to the narrative bifurcations that serve to direct the reader’s attention to especially relevant details, as discussed above.

5) **Otho**

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\(^{332}\) Pliny *NH* 31.40.
Otho, the final emperor whose final meal occurs within the narrative of his death, is the third emperor to drink water as his final act of consumption. Otho’s deliberate pre-death choices have already been discussed and his consumption contextualized therein. Suetonius writes that he got his affairs in order and forbade the use of violence by his followers, and then (Oth. 11.2):

...et in serum usque patente cubiculo, si quis adire vellet, potestatem sui praebuit. post hoc sedata siti gelidae aquae potione arripuit duos pugiones et explorata utriusque acie

…with his bedroom continuously open until it was late, he offered the opportunity [to seek an audience with him], if anybody wanted to approach. After this, with his thirst sated by a drink of cold water, he took hold of two daggers and tested the sharpness of each.

He next falls into a deep sleep and later kills himself. Nero also tests the point of two daggers, although the tone of each situation sharply divergent: Nero hesitates to kill himself and thereby earns Suetonius’ mockery.\(^\text{333}\) Nero also requires varying amounts of assistance. Otho’s final act of consumption, however, demonstrates a different relationship between the emperor and his entourage: another one of Otho’s precise actions that he takes is to allow his clients and soldiers access to him before death.\(^\text{334}\) The question of who has access to an emperor at his final meal is another fruitful one for the recursive reader to raise. In granting access to his entourage before his death, Otho contrasts with Nero.

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\(^\text{333}\) Ner. 49.2.

\(^\text{334}\) The exact make up of the group that could have access to Otho before his death is unclear. But the context of this narrative is after a military defeat that Otho suffers at Betriacum. It is likely that Otho is providing his soldiers with access to him, especially considering the degree of humility that Suetonius notes in Otho and his treatment of his soldiers (10.1 and to a lesser degree 9.3). Suetonius also notes the presence of Otho’s brother, his brother’s son, and his companions (10.2).
The recursive reader finds an answer to who had access to the emperors at their final meals in other parallel type-scenes. Claudius’ final meal prompts a similar question (who is present), and some of the analysis that pertains to that question applies here. The access that his freedmen and wives had to him makes Claudius’ death seem practically inevitable. Gaius’ nameless friends are perhaps even more suspicious when viewed through the lens of their access to the emperor; with that level of access, conspiracy is easy to foment. The slightly debauched access that Greek youths and cross-culture-dressing Romans had to Augustus speaks to the imperial make up of the partygoers: the traditional Roman apparatus that would separate an emperor from the populace is missing. It is present at Tiberius’ final meal, however, and thus the question of access is germane to the anecdote. The presence of Tiberius’ doctor has already been discussed – and his access to Tiberius is part of the reason given for why Tiberius extends his final feast. Thinking that his doctor was taking his pulse before leaving (existimans temptatas ab eo uenas), he orders his doctor to remain and the dinner party to continue (cenamque protraxit) (Tib. 72.3). At the end of the dinner, he says farewell to his guests by name while his lictor stands at his side (astante lictore singulos valere dicentis appellaret). The contrast between the namelessness of the guests for the reader and their named farewell illuminates the performative quality of this adieu. These guests are the imperial entourage, the hanger-ons in the imperial court, and their access to the emperor is always contingent on his approval, with the presence of the lictor serves as a tacit enforcement of this relationship. Tiberius holds this banquet in part because he hopes to hide his illness (partim intemperantia partim dissimulatione); true access to the emperor could
compromise his dissimulation, so he obscures himself behind the imperial apparatus. The recursive reader is armed with the appropriate question to see past this obstruction.

**Final Meals before Death Narratives**

6) Domitian

Three emperors have their final meals within a relatively close proximity to their death, but with a sufficient degree of distance so as to separate them from the death narrative proper. Domitian’s final meal, like Gaius’, is a meal that he never actually eats, and it appears in the topical category of omens foretelling his death. For the recursive reader it raises the question whether the emperor is aware that he is going to die. The day before his death, in an increasingly agitated state, Domitian orders that a component of his final meal be put aside: “The day before he died, after he had ordered that apples being served be set aside for the next day, he added, ‘at least, if I am permitted to eat them’…” (*Pridie quam periret, cum oblatos tubures servari iussisset in crastinum, adiecit, ‘si modo uti licuerit’…*) (16.1). That Domitian continues to display such histrionic anxieties about his death provides some humor for the recursive reader who contrasts him with the more noble endings of his father Vespasian or even Otho. This humor suits an audience keen to move on from the despised Domitian. But Suetonius is also moving on from his own text: Domitian is the final life, and it ends with a glance toward the Nervan-Antonine period (23.2):

*ipsum etiam Domitianum ferunt somniasse gibbam sibi pone ceruicem auream enatam pro certoque habuisse beatiorem post se laetioremque portendi rei publicae statum, sicut sane breui euenit abstinentia et moderatione insequentium principum.*
They say that even Domitian himself had dreamed that a golden hump grew on his back, and he took this for a certainty that this portended a more fortunate and joyful position for the Republic after him, in trust, just as it did happen quickly under the restraint and moderation of the following emperors.

Domitian is right about both his final meal and his dream, but only in the narrowest sense – which is to say, in as far as both concerned him. His final meal introduces an ironic distance between himself and the recursive reader primed to see the type-scene of a final meal as a source for comparative questions. In this case, the reader understands Domitian’s foresight about his final meal as an ironic jab; Suetonius and his audience know about better imperial practices to come – and, it is tantalizing to speculate, there may be an implicit challenge that Suetonius presents his own emperor: namely, that he be a better (recursive?) reader of his own status than Domitian.

Whether an emperor is aware of his coming death or not naturally breaks the type-scenes into two camps. Gaius, unaware that his death is imminent, falls prey to a conspiracy. So too does Claudius. Vespasian drinks water as his sickness grows worse – the frequent drinking of cold water (*creberrimo frigidae aquae usu*) even seems to have aggravated his illness by harming his digestive system (*etiam intestina uitiasset*) (*Vesp.* 24). But his belief in the curative powers of the water offered hope for a recovery. This drinking is perhaps indicative of stubbornness, but his stubborn insistence on dying on his feet gives his death a degree of nobility. Being aware of his own impending death does not save an emperor from violent ends: Otho dies a violent death (at his own hands); as does Nero (but with much less dignity). Tiberius’ knowledge of his coming death affords Suetonius the opportunity to investigate his motivations; the emperor has a banquet partly because he cannot let go of his normal pleasures and partly to hide his illness (*partim*
intemperantia partim dissimulatione) (Tib. 72.3). Discerning motivation or intention is part of what this question offers Suetonius and his recursive reader. Augustus’ death generally is a performance that he is aware that he is playing.335 His actions at his final meal inch beyond acceptable behavior and suggest that the emperor can take something pleasing and involuntary – like laughter – and make it mandatory (permissa, immo exacta iocandi licentia) (Aug. 98.3). With his death coming, Augustus squeezes every moment of life that he has left; the recursive reader, asking if an emperor is aware of his death, understands his actions differently than Augustus might intend. Suetonius’ type-scene rewriting technique equips recursive readers with the tools to think with a greater awareness than an emperor focusing on his coming death.

7) Augustus

Augustus’ final meal also takes place in the lead up to his death scene, and it shows an emperor taking part in pleasures that he would not have in Rome, introducing a double standard that colors his otherwise proficient death (Aug. 98.3).336

isdem [sc. exerincentibus ephebis] etiam epulum in conspectu suo praebuit permissa, immo exacta iocandi licentia diripiendique pomorum et obsoniorum rerumque <variarum> missilia. nullo denique genere hilaritatis abstinuit.

Augustus even held a banquet for them [Greek youths that he watched exercise], which he attended, with permission for joking allowed, even made mandatory, and for grabbing tokens of fruit and food and various things. Indeed, he abstained from no type of jesting.

335 Dunsch 2015: 327–64.
336 There is some room to dispute whether or not this meal should be included in the parameters of Augustus’ death narrative. Damon 2018: 114-115 includes it, while Wardle 2014: 549 implies that there is a narrative shift at chapter 99.
This final meal comes in the same paragraph in which Augustus compels Greeks and Romans to swap clothing and even languages. He also watches young Greek boys exercise. Although some special pleading has attempted to align this stay near Capri and Augustus’ actions with his character as Suetonius portrays it, there is much here that is hypocritical: as made clear by Suetonius’ antithetical presentation, Augustus himself maintained the public stance that Roman citizens ought to wear a toga in or near the Forum. He also hosted orderly and tightly controlled banquets, contrary to the emperor here who abstains *nullo … genere hilaritatis*. The inclusion of fruit draws a connection with Domitian’s final meal, and the recursive reader can apply the proleptic logic present in that passage here. Domitian’s final meal establishes a moral context for subsequent emperors; Augustus’ does too, but to detrimental effect. Augustus is in control of his actions – the feast takes on highly prescribed courses of action – but the reader notes that Augustus cannot be in control after his death. There are perhaps ways in which Augustus’ actions can be excused – he is not in the Forum, so proper toga etiquette is less necessary. Nevertheless, the seeds of bad action undertaken by future emperors are born here: bad banquet habits plague nearly all subsequent emperors (especially Gaius and Nero), as does the confusion of social hierarchies (especially true of Claudius and his freedmen and Nero’s excessive philhellenism) and perverse treatment of boys near Capri (Tiberius). The control that Augustus exercises operates as he intends locally but not institutionally. The recursive reader asks whether an emperor is in control of his actions and their consequences.

337 See Wardle 2014: 544-545 for the arguments in preview and bibliography.
338 Aug. 40.5.
339 Aug. 74-75.
Some emperors, especially those who are assassinated, are not in control during their last meals. Gaius and Claudius lack control over their final meal, but for different reasons. Gaius requires the prodding of his friends to leave for lunch because he has yet to recover from his previous over-indulgence. He lacks control over his final meal in two ways. Claudius thinks that he is in control by either attending a banquet on the Capitoline or at home, but he goes from eating poisoned food to being force-fed poisoned food (either pultine addito or per clysterem) (44.3). He loses control throughout the meal. Nero and Domitian conduct their final meals in an indeterminate state of control: both men exercise some choice over their final meal, especially in the selection of what food would make up their final meal (Domitian chooses apples; Nero rejects bread and chooses water), but the choice is under the looming duress of death, rendering the choices fruitless in the face of their lack of control overall. Others are in control. Otho, although making small decisions in the face of death, takes a series of deliberate steps to bring about a death of his own choosing. His final act of consumption is part of that deliberateness.

Tiberius is in control, but this control reveals the degree to which he has left behind the proper motivations for holding a banquet. The quotidian pursuit of pleasure and the desire to dissimulate (partim intemperantia partim dissimulatione) (Tib. 72.3) provides an unflattering picture of Tiberius’ motivations.

8) Tiberius

Tiberius, the last emperor whose final meal occurs before his death narrative, holds a banquet, and Suetonius includes details typical of a banquet in his narration (Tib. 72.3):
sustentavit tamen aliquamdiu, quamuis Misenum usque deuectus nihil ex ordine cotidiano praetermitteret, ne conuiua quidem aut ceteras voluptates, partim intemperantia partim dissimulatione. nam Charicles medicum, quod commeatu afuturus e conuiuio egrediens manum sibi osculandi causa apprehendisset, existimans temptatas ab eo uenas remanere ac recumbere hortatus est cenamque protraxit. nec abstuvit consuetudine quin tunc quoque stans in medio triclinio astante lictore singulos valere dicentis appellaret.

He however continued for some time, and although he sailed all the way to Misenum he omitted nothing from his daily routine, not even banquets or other pleasures, partly because of his excess partly to hide his illness. For thinking that his doctor Charicles, because he was about to take a leave from his duty had grabbed his hand in order to give it a kiss as he left the banquet, was taking his pulse, Tiberius ordered him to remain and lie down on his dining couch, and Tiberius continued the feast. Nor did he abstain from his normal practice, but even then standing in the middle of the dining room with his lictor standing nearby he addressed his guests one-by-one as they wished him farewell.

The elements that make up a banquet are present. Suetonius twice uses the word *convivium* (*ne conuiua quidem and e conuiuo*).\(^{340}\) When he thought that his doctor was trying to take his pulse, Tiberius orders him to recline, the assumption being that he would recline on his couch so that the banquet could continue (*uenas remanere ac recumbere hortatus est cenamque protraxit*). It is in the middle of these couches where Tiberius stands in order to say farewell to his guests as they leave (*quoque stans in medio triclinio*). These details have an air of formality to them as well as an air of familiarity; and, in fact, Suetonius notes that this is Tiberius’ usual custom (*nec abstuvit consuetudine*), which observation echoes his earlier one that Tiberius maintained his daily practice by hosting banquets (*nihil ex ordine cotidiano praetermitteret*). The details of this banquet are reasonably assumed to be Tiberius’ normal banqueting practices. The

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inclusion of these details prompts the recursive reader to ask what sort of meal an emperor consumes as his final meal.

Claudius also takes part in a banquet before his death: he either dines with priests on the Capitoline (epulanti) or takes part in a banquet at home (domestico conuiuiuo). Suetonius’ use of the word convivium for a meal at home reinforces his desire for the reader to keep the banquet type-scene at the forefront of his or her mind. The recursive reader attending to what type of meal an emperor eats before his death conducts a meta-literary analysis of this type-scene and notes how Suetonius uses this scene to demonstrate his capacity to parse through different sources (conuenit … discrepat … quidam tradunt … alii … diersa fama est … multi … aiunt … nonnulli … uelut … an … quasi) (Cl. 44.2-3) and how the presentation of plausible alternative narratives might actually come closer to an understanding of Claudius and his weaknesses as an emperor than choosing one narrative for presentation. Augustus also hosts a banquet as his final meal, but his banquet lacks the typical rhetoric associated with banquets that the reader sees in Tiberius’ narrative and earlier in the Augustus (74). The presence of jokes, games, and Greek youths attest to the non-Roman context in which the imperially cosmopolitan Augustus finds himself at the end of his life. Attending to Nero’s meal-types demonstrates the desperate state he finds himself in as his life ends: he goes from eating lunch (prandenti sibi) with his elaborate goblets on the table (duos scyphos) (47.1) to drinking water from his hand (aquam ex subiecta lacuna poturus manu hausit) (48.3) while refusing the paltry bread offered to him (interpellante panem quidem sordidum oblatum aspernatus est) (48.4). The other emperors have eclectic final meals that do not
map easily on to typical meal types, which eclecticism attests to the particularities of individual narratives.

**Conclusion**

Final meals function as an example of type-scene rewriting that connects, conceptually, the different episodes. The inclusion of details related to dining is already noteworthy in a genre that engages with the past since historiographical writing traditionally shies away from including details associated with “low” genres. Each final meal proposes certain questions that the recursive reader can pick up and apply to the other scenes, generating a network of analysis. In formulating these questions, the recursive reader attends to the details that Suetonius privileges and applies these details to the other episodes. This mode of comparative reading provides new interpretations and avenues of inquiry.

**Conclusion: Rewriting and Organizational Artistry**

Rewriting is a part of Suetonius’ use of the serial biographical form. The three examples explored above show the variety of prompts that Suetonius employs and demonstrate the flexibility of rewriting as an application of the serial biographical form. The focus of this chapter concerns literary form – its primary argument is for the existence of rewriting as the culmination of Suetonius’ literary project. Through rewriting Suetonius prompts his readers to follow his implied mode of reading, and therefore analysis of the *Caesars*. The form of rewriting has, as a consequence, local and global applications. I remark briefly on these applications.
The three examples from this chapter demonstrate three different applications of the biographical form. Catulus, the example of single-word rewriting, illustrates how rewriting is an effective tool for developing individual themes through comparative readings. In the case of Catulus, the theme concerns the validation of power, and in each instance where Catulus’ name appears, the linear reader might notice this theme. It is apparent, in different ways, in the "Julius", the "Augustus", and the "Galba". The recursive reader, however, confronts a set of episodes that provide natural complements to each other, and because of this complementarity the recursive reader is better able to develop a more nuanced and complex understanding of power acquisition in the "Caesars". Each Caesar validates his power at different moments in the pre-, nascent, or established history of the principate. This instance of rewriting, then, exposes both the limits and possibilities of political power. An autocratic range of power is, through the comparative affordances of rewriting, put on display for the recursive reader to analyze. Because Caesar, Augustus, and Galba had different relationships to Catulus and utilized these relationships differently, Catulus serves as a consistent variable for evaluating the three emperors. Rewriting generates a usable data set. Catulus reveals how different autocrats validate their power. The principate’s flexibility as an institution for accruing and holding power is thrice examined.

While the Catulus rewriting example takes advantage of the biographical form’s chronological flexibility, it is the Germanicus death example of same-scene rewriting that demonstrates the potential for non-linear comparative analysis that serial biography presents. In re-presenting narratives about Germanicus’ death, changed to suit their context, Suetonius presents his reader with temporally distinct examples of how an
emperor or the wider Roman public engages with the death of an heir. Tiberius’ response to Germanicus’ death is different than that of Claudius or the Roman populace. Because of the opacity of Germanicus’ death, it presents a re-interpretable narrative for subsequent emperors: serial biography, which has recourse to rewriting, best conveys this re-interpretable potential by re-narrating the event in different contexts.

Both the Catulus and Germanicus’ death rewriting examples establish networks for analysis that do not privilege any one life as a consistent part of any comparative pair. But it is perhaps the final narrated meals of the emperors as an example of type-scene rewriting that best demonstrates how Suetonius establishes this comparative network for his reader. Each final meal takes place within a layered context: literary concerns intersect with historical narrative and socio-cultural expectations about consumption and dining. These layers of context, and more importantly Suetonius’ privileging of certain contexts over others, provide internal prompts for the reader to apply to the other type-scenes, opening up room for novel interpretations and uncovering details that might otherwise not occur to the linear reader.
CONCLUSION

Suetonius employs form as camouflage. This argument, which I have pursued throughout the course of this dissertation reveals two aspects of the Caesars as a literary project. First, Suetonius organizes and structures the Caesars in such a fashion as to innovate within the genre of political, serial biography. And second, these innovations of form reveal Suetonius’ literary end: to teach his readers techniques for critiquing the principate as an institution embodied by its incumbents. The Caesars is a fundamentally didactic project; its application of form guides the reader toward a particular mode of reading and a practice of analysis. This mode of reading and practice of analysis pertain to both the Caesars both as a text and as a conceptualization of the principate that Suetonius shapes for his readers. In as much as readers read the Caesars, so too do the structure and organization of the Caesars provide a reading of the principate. I have endeavored to make clear how this simultaneous dual reading occurs: it takes place through Suetonius’ application of form to a curated selection of information that pertains to the principate – a process of curation that, in as much as selecting information for inclusion also constitutes an answer to “how Suetonius communicates,” is itself an aspect of Suetonius’ form. This application requires a degree of subtlety, of camouflage. To critique autocracy, especially when one is a bureaucratic, as Suetonius was, is a fundamentally dangerous proposition. Suetonius’ day job, so to speak, is to serve the emperor, and biography’s relationship to exemplarity might suggest that Suetonius’ imagined audience could be the same emperor. But Suetonius’ project has an alternative orientation. Suetonius’ subjects may be emperors, but his audience is broader: he teaches citizens to analyze autocracy.
Topical units are Suetonius’ leitmotifs. They are not associated with any one emperor, but the institution of the principate, appearing with regularity in the *Caesars*. They unite the collection on the level of form because the topical unit is the dominant form in the *Caesars*. The topical unit warps every other form around it, structuring the collection. As such, the topical unit presents a particular vision of the nature of the principate: the authority of the emperor comes from his power over specific categories of social, cultural, and political importance. Autocratic power in Rome is not, in Suetonius’ conception, unified, integral, and whole – it is the aggregation of authority in these discrete categories. The topical unit form, deployed via topical organization, therefore, is an interpretation of the principate itself. In structuring his biographical collection around the dominant form of the topical unit, Suetonius mirrors the principate, making it concrete for his readers. Making concrete an abstract institution benefits Suetonius’ didactic approach. Suetonius directs his readers toward discernible aspects of the principate that might not otherwise have been readily recognized and expands their understanding of the scope of the emperor’s power. Suetonius treats a broad range of topics. He also presents his topical analysis in such a way as to teach his readers to reconsider topics that may have been presented as propaganda by the emperor.

Suetonius employs antithesis to shape his Lives and guide his reader toward a comparative mode of reading. Suetonius’ Lives follow a fairly regular, tri-partite structure (initial chronological section, topical section, and final death narrative), but include forms that stitch them together. Topical units appear in each of the three parts, not just the middle, topical section of a Life. Antithesis is an especially prominent form that Suetonius employs to structure his Lives. This structuring device operates on
numerous levels in the *Caesars*. Suetonius establishes antitheses across the Lives, in individual Lives, and even at the level of the sentence. Suetonian antithesis creates conceptual juxtapositions, bringing two potentially disparate parts of the *Caesars* together for the reader. Antithesis, as employed by Suetonius, suggests that information about the emperor is often unstable – it is contingent upon presentation and differing contexts. For example, Suetonius often discusses one topic that reflects well on the character or political acumen of an emperor but returns to the same topic in order to characterize the emperor in an inversely negative fashion. This antithetical technique conditions the reader to expect a narrative reversal; a topic that might cast an emperor in a flattering light in roughly the first half of a Life is liable to have the opposite effect later on in the Life.

In this way, Suetonius teaches his readers that alternatives exist to how information is presented in any one context. Information about the emperor is contingent; antithesis builds that contingency into the structure of the *Caesars*. Antitheses is particularly effective camouflage in this way, because it conditions the reader to anticipate the reversal of information rather than Suetonius making the explicit declaration that information is contingent and that readers should consider how one topic about the emperor might be overturned or otherwise conceived conversely. My focus on antithesis after my discussion of the topical unit as the dominant form in the *Caesars* comes from another aspect of Suetonius’ literary methods: his emphasis on comparison. By making antithesis such a prominent aspect of the structure of the *Caesars*, Suetonius prompts his readers to engage in comparative modes of reading and analysis. This prompting stems from Suetonius’ use of the serial biographical form: he puts to use, to
the greatest extent possible, the seriality of his collection. The *Caesars* is not just a
collection of 12 biographies of different emperors; it is certainly that, but only on a basic
level. Through Suetonius’ use of the form, he makes the collection investigate the
institution of the principate behind the emperors. Comparison is a vital aspect of that use
of form.

Comparison and the prompt to read comparatively achieve their fullest
instantiation of form with Suetonius’ rewriting practices. Rewriting, the reproduction of a
set narrative in multiple Lives, prompts the readers of the *Caesars* to read the collection
recursively, not just linearly. Recursive reading is the implied mode of reading that
Suetonius encourages his readers to engage in, and through recursive reading Suetonius’
readers generate a network of emperors behind whom the institution of the principate lies
for analysis and critique. Rewriting, and its implied recursive reading, constitutes
Suetonius’ most ambitious attempt at employing form as camouflage. Recursive reading
requires readers to follow implied prompts; its intersection with the structure of the
*Caesars* is not quite veiled, but it is not spotlighted either. Nevertheless, the interpretative
potency of recursive reading is substantial: recursive reading makes concrete the
aggregative nature of Roman autocracy. Because Suetonius perceives autocratic power as
the accrual of authority drawn from discrete spheres of Roman politics and culture,
coming to know the nature of that power is facilitated through comparison. As Suetonius’
readers encounter instances of rewriting that prompt recursive reading, they come to see
how the principate operates. The repetition of one event, for example, in multiple Lives
makes clear not only one aspect of the principate, but, through variation in repetition,
likewise makes clear the various possibilities latent in Rome’s autocratic political system.
The limits and the possibilities of the office are laid bare; so too is the enabling function of the office. Just because one emperor can exert mastery over or self-control within one aspect of imperial rule does not mean that subsequent emperors will. The structure of the principate always means that the virtues of one emperor might become the vices of another. Rewriting is Suetonius’ articulation of this fact in biographical form; as such, it constitutes a critique of the system.

Rewriting, therefore, represents Suetonius’ greatest innovation within the biographical genre: he pushes serial biography to the height of its formal and political possibilities and makes an argument for why biography is so well-suited for political analysis. In the imperial Roman context, biography captures the temporal realities of the principate in novel ways. The annual model of political power from the Republic slips away; the lifespan of one man is now the normative political imperative. Biography matches in literary form the new political form operating in Rome. Suetonius’ approach intervenes into the political landscape. The man of letters, the "ab epistulis," employs letters to teach his readers how to reckon with what must have appeared as a world-spanning institution of immense power and authority: you break it up into its bits and pieces. From topical units to serial biographies, Suetonius suggests that the parts make sensible the mystery of the whole. Once you can grasp the parts, you can critique the whole. Suetonius writes twelve biographies of twelve men; in doing so, he writes *de vita Caesarum*. 

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Abbreviations

A-G = Allen and Greenough’s New Latin Grammar
CIL = Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
G-L = Gildersleeve’s Latin Grammar
LTUR3 = Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae Vol. 3
MAR = Mapping Augustan Rome
MRR2 = Magistrates of the Roman Republic Vol. 2
OED = Oxford English Dictionary
OLD = Oxford Latin Dictionary
PIR = Prosopographia Imperii Romani.
RRC = Roman Republican Coinage (= Crawford 1975)
TLL = Thesaurus Linguae Latinae

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