

## Suetonius' Boundaries

"It is in the failure of a structure that one most easily perceives its function, and ... the anxieties underlying the hiding and withdrawal are illuminated. The feeling is one of exposure, of hypersensitivity, of vulnerability ..." (P. Slater)<sup>(1)</sup>.

### I

In Suetonius' account of Nero's last hours, Nero awoke at midnight to find himself abandoned by both guards and friends, his bedroom stripped of clothing, his box of poison removed<sup>(2)</sup>. Amidst panic and thoughts of suicide, he decided to seek a refuge wherein he might compose himself (48, 1). He sought to disguise his identity by covering his head and holding a handkerchief over his face, but when his horse suddenly reared, his face was uncovered and he was recognized by a former praetorian guardsman (48, 2). Upon reaching the back wall of his freedman Phaon's villa, a narrow tunnel was dug into the building: Nero crawled through this into a small room. In this secure womb he should have been safe but his anxiety and insecurity grew to the point where he determined to make a tomb: he ordered a grave to be dug in the floor, gathered some pieces of marble, and requested water and fire for the washing and burning of his corpse (49, 1). His terror intensified when he learnt that the senate had decreed that he be put to death *more prisco*, which amongst other things, Suetonius tells us, involved the indignity of being stripped naked (49, 2). Nero's pursuers appear to have discovered his hiding place: hearing the sound of horsemen, Nero drove a dagger into his throat, with assistance from his *a libellis* Epaphroditus (49, 3). Throughout the narrative there is a constant interplay between hiding and exposure, protection and abandonment. The theme of this account, the unreliability and failure of surfaces and structures, is continued when a centurion, pretending to help Nero, burst in and put a cloak over the wound to staunch the

(1) *The Glory of Hera*, Boston, 1968, p. 270.

(2) 47.3. All references are to the *De Vita Caesarum* unless otherwise indicated. On this episode, see G. B. TOWNEND, in *Latin Biography*, ed. T. A. DOREY, London, 1967, p. 93ff. and K. R. BRADLEY, *Suetonius' Life of Nero. A Historical Commentary*, Brussels, 1978, p. 273 ff.

outflow of blood and life: Nero's apparent loyalty (49, 4).

Thematically, this is not an isolated work: instances abound of people, insecurity and failing to achieve it, penetrated, hiding places are revealed. And often episodes are narrated in a way with an oscillation and ambivalence and rupture<sup>(3)</sup>. It so happens that *Caesarum* tells of Julius Caesar in his (2): the insecurity of his refuge is that Caesar came to being caught, the freedman Cornelius Phagites<sup>(4)</sup>. Withdrawal away from the public gaze and enjoyed (42, 1). Tiberius reacted savagely when away from the island to present himself at the back of the island to present himself at the security of Capri were such that Tiberius elsewhere if his moves to overthrow Sejanus was executed, Tiberius, *nihil* nine months (*Tib.*, 63, 1: 65, 2). Suetonius' attempt upon him, Claudius refused to give a vivid portrayal of Claudius' insecurity. Narcissus plotted the destruction of Claudius' bedroom one morning, present himself to attack Claudius; and then Appius was thrown into the palace<sup>(5)</sup>. Claudius could scarcely express his gratitude when he thanked Narcissus when he (Narcissus) was asleep – appealing to the deeply insecure. But

(3) *Otho*, 11, 2; *Tib.*, 14, 4: 40: 66:

(4) *Iul.*, 74, 1: Caesar, *aegeus* as well as cover from his pursuers.

(5) *Tib.*, 60. The sentence that follows exemplifies the way the thematic elements below p. 120 and n. 7, on the end of *Vitae quasi civitatis oculis remotis* and cf. *Tib.*, 60, 1, on seclusion and its liability to interruption in contrast to his earlier withdrawal to Rhodes: he *longissime amouere* (10, 1) but though Tiberius lived in danger and fear, constant cf. *Ner.*, 34, 1.

(6) *Inrupit ... vim inlatam ... inrumpe*

## boundaries

the failure of a structure that one most gives its function, and ... the anxieties the hiding and withdrawal are illuminating is one of exposure, of hypersensitizability ..." (P. Slater) (1).

hours, Nero awoke at midnight to find friends, his bedroom stripped of clothing, panic and thoughts of suicide, he decided to hide himself (48. 1). He sought to disguise his face with a handkerchief over his face, but when it was uncovered and he was recognized by a centurion. Upon reaching the back wall of his villa, he was dug into the building: Nero crawled into a secure womb he should have been safe but at that point where he determined to make a break through the floor, gathered some pieces of marble, and the burning and burning of his corpse (49. 1). The senate had decreed that he be put to death. Nero's pursuers appear to have consisted of horsemen, Nero drove a dagger through his *libellis* Epaphroditus (49. 3). The constant interplay between hiding and exposure. The theme of this account, the boundaries, is continued when a centurion, Nero put a cloak over the wound to staunch the

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outflow of blood and life: Nero died, taken in, it seems, by the centurion's apparent loyalty (49. 4).

Thematically, this is not an isolated incident in Suetonius. Throughout his work instances abound of people, mainly emperors, desperately seeking perfect security and failing to achieve it: disguises are uncovered, sanctuaries are penetrated, hiding places are revealed, people are imperfectly kept at a distance. And often episodes are narrated in similar fashion to the above example, that is, with an oscillation and ambivalence between concealing and revealing, restraint and rupture (2). It so happens that the very first extant chapter of the *De Vita Caesarum* tells of Julius Caesar in hiding during the Sullan proscriptions (*Iul.*, 1. 2): the insecurity of his refuge is later revealed when Suetonius tells how close Caesar came to being caught, thanks to the traps and treachery of Sulla's freedman Cornelius Phagites (4). Withdrawing to the island sanctuary of Capri, away from the public gaze and enjoying the freedom offered by seclusion (*Tib.*, 42. 1), Tiberius reacted savagely when his privacy was unexpectedly interrupted by a fisherman who had climbed up the rugged and assumedly impassable terrain at the back of the island to present him with a large mullet (5). Doubts about the security of Capri were such that Tiberius prepared contingency plans for flight elsewhere if his moves to overthrow Sejanus proved unsuccessful, and even when Sejanus was executed, Tiberius, *nihilo securior*, did not step outside his villa for nine months (*Tib.*, 63. 1: 65. 2). Similarly after an unsuccessful assassination attempt upon him, Claudius refused to appear in public for a long time (*Cl.*, 36). In a vivid portrayal of Claudius' insecurity, Suetonius tells how Messalina and Narcissus plotted the destruction of Appius Silanus: Narcissus rushed into Claudius' bedroom one morning, pretending to have dreamt that Appius had attacked Claudius; and then Appius was falsely reported to be breaking his way into the palace (6). Claudius could surely make no more heartfelt declaration of gratitude when he thanked Narcissus in the senate for ensuring his security even when he (Narcissus) was asleep – a fantasy of course, but one immensely appealing to the deeply insecure. But in fact, as Claudius publicly bemoaned after

(3) *Otho*, 11. 2; *Tib.*, 14. 4: 40: 66: cf. below, n. 11.

(4) *Iul.*, 74. 1: Caesar, *aeger* as well as *latens*, was like a wounded animal seeking cover from his pursuers.

(5) *Tib.*, 60. The sentence that follows is also about an intrusion into a sanctuary, and exemplifies the way the thematic elements tend to cluster in Suetonius' narrative. (Cf. below p. 120 and n. 7, on the end of Vitellius). Note Suetonius' language at *Tib.*, 42. 1: *quasi ciuitatis oculis remotis* and cf. *Tib.*, 34: 40: 72. 1. The strength of Tiberius' wish for seclusion and its liability to interruption is emphasized by Suetonius' language in referring to his earlier withdrawal to Rhodes: he decided to retire to Rhodes *seque e medio quam longissime amouere* (10. 1) but though hidden (*abditus*) in the interior of the island, Tiberius lived in danger and fear, constantly interrupted by unwelcome visitors (12. 1): cf. *Ner.*, 34. 1.

(6) *Inrupit ... uim inlatam ... inrumpere* (37. 2).

an attempt on his life when he was sacrificing and when he should therefore have been inviolable, there was no safety for him anywhere (*Cl.*, 36).

Suetonius marvels at the way in which Galba's protection (like Nero's) could so easily melt away leaving him naked, exposed, defenceless (*Gal.*, 20, 1). Most closely resembling the futile final efforts of Nero to hide is Suetonius' account of Vitellius' last day: fleeing secretly with only a baker and cook to his father's house, returning then to a deserted palace, abandoned there even by the baker and cook, Vitellius surrounded himself with a money belt and barricaded himself in a small room, tying a dog before the door. When the Flavian troops burst in, they dragged him from his hiding place: even then Vitellius successfully hid for a while his true identity before that defence was penetrated, whereupon he begged to be confined to prison. The horror of Vitellius' final day, already brought out by Suetonius detailing how each protective barrier or device failed, is intensified as the full consequences of those failures are brought out: humiliating, degrading exposure as Vitellius' hands were tied behind his back (a form of restraint that now only posed threat, not security, as did the noose put round his neck): his clothes were torn so that he was paraded half naked: his head was held back by the hair and the point of a sword was placed beneath his chin so that he could not look down and achieve the minimal relief provided by a bent-over posture. Paraded along the *Sacra Via*, exposed to ridicule, defamation and taunts about his physical defects (which Suetonius here enlarges upon), Vitellius was pelted with mud and dung balls before being tortured, killed and his corpse exposed to further violence and insult (?). At a time of political and personal danger in 62 B.C., Caesar secretly sought refuge in his house (?). Augustus hid underground at any

(7) On the death of Vitellius see Appendix and E. CIZEK, *La Mort de Vitellius dans «des Vies des Douze Césars» de Suétone*, in *REA*, 75 (1975), p. 125 ff. Cizek has a useful comparison with Tacitus' much less sadistic account of Vitellius' end and suggests that part of the reason for Suetonius' hostility to Vitellius, so that he positively enjoys the spectacle of Vitellius being punished *more maiorum* (cf. *Ner.*, 49, 2), is Vitellius' earlier violation and destruction of the sanctuary of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol. Vitellius had suddenly and contrary to a promise attacked Sabinus and other Flavians when they thought themselves safe (*nihil iam metuentis*, *Vit.*, 15, 3).

(8) Obviously, Suetonius could hardly avoid reporting, say, Tiberius' withdrawal to Rhodes and to Capri, or occasional withdrawal by any emperor to villas or resorts for rest and recuperation e.g. *Aug.*, 72, 2. But thoughts of retirement (and the fantasies of security such a course might offer) are often explicitly portrayed as direct reactions to feelings of insecurity and to weariness with being the constant object of scrutiny: *Aug.*, 28; *Tib.*, 51, 1; *Cal.*, 50, 2; *Cl.*, 35, 2; *Ner.*, 34, 1; 47, 2; *Oth.*, 7, 2; 10, 2; *Vit.*, 15, 2; and cf. *Tib.*, 50, 2; *Iul.*, 20, 1. Even in Vespasian the strain of the public exposure required by the celebration of a triumph evoked doubts about the wisdom of the supreme power and its pitiless limelight, (*Ves.*, 12). And note Domitian's withdrawal into prolonged periods of solitude, undisturbed even by flies, when he first encountered the strain of the emperorship (*Dom.*, 3, 2).

sign of a storm (*Aug.*, 90): in similar c his head and hid under the bed (*Cal* unsuccessfully hid behind a curtain I temple of Capitoline Jupiter, Domiti. Tiber, despite a thorough search for h been thus endangered: he, along w supporters should have been safe in enemies burst in (*Dom.*, 1, 2). Even w deliberately hiding, they are sudden should be secure. A man with a ki bedroom, the outer gatekeepers havi Fleeing from some of Sextus Pompey out-of-the-way tracks when he sougl companion Aemilius Paulus: but in 16, 3). Danger was everywhere, cons seclusion of Campania and supposedl rock. Tiberius was nearly killed by a 39). Claudius should have been able and while sacrificing in the temple c even there (*Cl.*, 13, 1; 36). Otho st without praetorians, bloodstained ar bursting in (*Oth.*, 8, 2; cf. *Ves.*, 5, 4) Domitian, murdered in his own bed hidden under his pillow and which secretly removed: attendants were c protection or protectors (?). Domitia within the palace that he had the w lined with phengite, the mirror-like his back (*Dom.*, 14, 4). Other empe moments of crisis or fear (*Aug.*, 90: emperors wishing to retire to the frequently throughout the *De Vita C* Suetonius, almost with relish, des abandoned, vulnerable and stripped desolation and humiliation of Nero's upon. Gaius and Domitian are stabl Galba has his head cut off, stuck o (*Gal.*, 2, 2). Tiberius, too, old, frail version of his lonely end denied sust

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sign of a storm (*Aug.*, 90): in similar circumstances, Gaius shut his eyes, covered  
 his head and hid under the bed (*Cal.*, 51, 1). On the death of Gaius, Claudius  
 unsuccessfully hid behind a curtain (*Cl.*, 11, 1-2). After the destruction of the  
 temple of Capitoline Jupiter, Domitian successfully hid in a house across the  
 Tiber, despite a thorough search for him. Nevertheless Domitian should not have  
 been thus endangered: he, along with his uncle Flavius Sabinus and other  
 supporters should have been safe in such a holy precinct: nevertheless, their  
 enemies burst in (*Dom.*, 1, 2). Even when Suetonius' characters do not seem to be  
 deliberately hiding, they are suddenly exposed to danger in places where they  
 should be secure. A man with a knife is discovered at night near Augustus'  
 bedroom, the outer gatekeepers having been deceived (*Aug.*, 19, 2: cf. 79, 1).  
 Fleeing from some of Sextus Pompey's men, Octavian should have been safe in  
 out-of-the-way tracks when he sought refuge – safe at least from a slave of his  
 companion Aemilius Paulus; but in fact he was nearly killed by the slave (*Aug.*,  
 16, 3). Danger was everywhere, constant vigilance was necessary. Retiring to the  
 seclusion of Campania and supposedly safe when dining in a villa hewn out of the  
 rock, Tiberius was nearly killed by a sudden fall of rock from the cave roof (*Tib.*,  
 39). Claudius should have been able to feel secure while in his bedroom at night  
 and while sacrificing in the temple of Mars but attempts were made on his life  
 even there (*Cl.*, 13, 1; 36). Otho should have been able to dine in the palace  
 without praetorians, bloodstained and demanding the execution of the senators,  
 bursting in (*Oth.*, 8, 2: cf. *Ves.*, 5, 4): and, most powerful example of all, there is  
 Domitian, murdered in his own bedroom, finding that the dagger which he had  
 hidden under his pillow and which might have saved his life, had had its blade  
 secretly removed: attendants were called in vain. Domitian was left without any  
 protection or protectors<sup>(9)</sup>. Domitian is represented as feeling so insecure even  
 within the palace that he had the walls of colonnades in which he used to walk  
 lined with phengite, the mirror-like surface of which enabled him to see behind  
 his back (*Dom.*, 14, 4). Other emperors sought or clutched security objects at  
 moments of crisis or fear (*Aug.*, 90; *Ner.*, 6, 4). It is no wonder that the theme of  
 emperors wishing to retire to the supposed security of private life occurs  
 frequently throughout the *De Vita Caesarum*.

Suetonius, almost with relish, describes the end of emperors he hated: they die  
 abandoned, vulnerable and stripped of the last vestiges of human dignity. The  
 desolation and humiliation of Nero's and Vitellius' ends have already been dwelt  
 upon. Gaius and Domitian are stabbed in the genitals (*Cal.*, 58, 3; *Dom.*, 17, 1).  
 Galba has his head cut off, stuck on a spear and paraded about to be jeered at  
 (*Gal.*, 2, 2). Tiberius, too, old, frail and needing nursing, was according to one  
 version of his lonely end denied sustenance when he asked for it: or, according to

(9) *Dom.*, 17. Should Gaius have been able to feel safe from intrusion when caught by  
 his grandmother Antonia *in concubitu* with Drusilla (*Cal.*, 24, 1)?

another version, his final collapse was forced by him getting up when no servant answered his call for help (*Tib.*, 73, 2). By recording four separate ideas for disposing of Tiberius' corpse that people entertained, Suetonius seems to be expressing his own sense of the fitness of such violation for rulers who violated the dignity, integrity and security, whether physical or psychic, of so many of their subjects – or even insects, for Domitian achieved freedom from disturbing flies by transfixing them with a stylus<sup>(10)</sup>. By contrast, Suetonius' "good" emperors die with their physical or psychic defences more or less intact, in a degree of womb-like security<sup>(11)</sup>.

Related to their constant fear of having their defences penetrated is Suetonius' emperors' interest in disguises. In fact, it is the other side of the coin of preoccupation with security. For in disguise they are able both to protect themselves and to more securely penetrate the defences of the generalised Other that they see as constantly striving to pierce their own defences<sup>(12)</sup>. In different ways the public or the audience unknowingly becomes the performer or object of scrutiny. Part of Suetonius' interest in clothing stems from the two functions clothes offer their wearers – protection from discomfort, unease or danger<sup>(13)</sup>, or a means of deceiving others: emperors had good reason to believe that assassins

(10) *Dom.*, 3, 1. Compare *Ner.*, 5 and the miserable end of Nero's father, a ferocious violator of the bodily integrity of others. On "good" and "bad" emperors in Suetonius, see E. CIZEK, *Structures et idéologie dans «les Vies des douze Césars» de Suétone*, Paris, 1977, p. 65 f. The former group includes Augustus, Otho, Vespasian and Titus; the latter, Tiberius, Gaius, Nero, Galba, Vitellius and Domitian. Julius Caesar and Claudius are intermediate. Suetonius' sensitivity to the shrinking from the public gaze into a semi-voyeuristic seclusion may be evident in *Ner.*, 12, 2 – Nero watches games through small openings in the balcony covers: later he preferred to view with the whole balcony uncovered, becoming generally *impatiens secreti* (20, 2). Suetonius attributes to Nero a tendency towards secretive behaviour in the theatre – of all places. This suggests a certain fascination with some of the manifestations of ambivalence about exposure to the public and the wish to hide: *Ner.*, 6, 2 (*clam*), 22, 2 (*clam*), 42, 2 (*clam*). Away from the public gaze Tiberius is able to observe the nudity of others, *Tib.*, 42, 2; 43, 1.

(11) Thus Suetonius reports not only that Caesar covered his head in his toga when he saw himself surrounded by his assassins but suppresses a detail found in Plutarch (66, 6) that Caesar was stabbed in the genitals and adds that Caesar let fall a fold of the toga so that it reached down to his feet and so that he might fall the more decently "with the lower part of his body also covered" (*Iul.*, 82, 2). The detail is also absent in the account of Dio (44, 19, 5). It appears in Appian (*BC*, 2, 117) but without Suetonius' gloss (in italics).

(12) To take a quite literal example of penetrating the physical integrity of others while incognito. Nero joins in a theatre riot and splits a praetor's head (*Ner.*, 26, 2): or Nero, wearing a cap or wig roamed the streets at night, assaulting and stabbing victims, and breaking into shops (26, 1). Again, Nero covered in the skin of a wild animal, attacks the genitals of men and women tied to a stake (29, 1).

(13) Augustus is spoken of as fortifying himself (*muniebatur*) with thick clothing in winter – *Aug.*, 82, 1.

came in disguises or used clothes to hide. Sometimes disguises seem to be effective matter (*Cal.*, 25, 3; 52; cf. 54, 2). Public to the unimpeded scrutiny of others<sup>(16)</sup>.

It might be argued that by the very nature of the barrier, the fear and insecurity were inescapably experienced by ruler or ruled. However these themes in Suetonius' narrative in his biographies, he had a vast range of observation and oral tradition: pamphlets (buildings, statues, paintings etc.); archives; and notes or letters by emperors. This material formed a kind of gigantic ink blot. Suetonius' concerns, interests, anxieties and preoccupations led him to perceive and select for inclusion. He dealt of himself into the material that he had.

One of the spectra along which individuals are placed is the Barrier. Barrier is an index of how well they do their bodies seem to offer a strong barrier container for internal impulses? Or permeable? Most people cluster around the Barrier. High Barrier (High Barrier) be isolated and designated as High Barrier. Low Barrier (Low Barrier) they have an unusually firm feeling of Barrier. Penetration) if an unusually weak one. High Barrier (High Barrier) a high degree of validity in indicating Barrier by a variety of other tests. A distribution associated with High Barrier or Low Barrier upon below. The feeling of bodily solid.

(14) *Iul.*, 82, 2; *Aug.*, 35, 2; 79, 2; *Cl.*, 19, 3. Suetonius reports that Nero tried to penetrate (*penetrasse*) to Caesar's wife Diocletiana (43, 2).

(15) *Iul.*, 58, 2; *Cal.*, 11; *Ner.*, 22, 2; 26, 2. Suetonius reports that Nero tried to be too effective. Thus the bewigged and unrecognisable Nero attacked a senator in the street at night (*Ner.*, 26, 2).

(16) *Cal.*, 25, 3; *Cl.*, 19, 3; *Ner.*, 32, 3.

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came in disguises or used clothes to hide weapons with murderous intent<sup>(14)</sup>.  
 Sometimes disguises seem to be effective<sup>(15)</sup>. At other times it does not seem to  
 matter (*Cal.*, 25, 3; 52; cf. 54, 2). Public removal of all clothing exposes the body  
 to the unimpeded scrutiny of others<sup>(16)</sup>.

## II

It might be argued that by the very nature of his subject matter, Suetonius was  
 compelled to dwell on deeds of hiding and intruding, secreting and exposing, and  
 that fear and insecurity were inescapable facts of life in the principate, whether  
 experienced by ruler or ruled. However, as I shall argue below, the salience of  
 these themes in Suetonius' narrative is unusual. When Suetonius came to write  
 his biographies, he had a vast range of material to draw on - earlier writers,  
 whether they be historians, biographers, poets or other prose writers; personal  
 observation and oral tradition; pamphlets, graffiti, inscriptions, physical remains  
 (buildings, statues, paintings etc.); documents from private and imperial  
 archives; and notes or letters by emperors, their relatives or others<sup>(17)</sup>. The  
 material formed a kind of gigantic ink blot, in which Suetonius perceived what his  
 concerns, interests, anxieties and preoccupations conditioned, shaped or directed  
 him to perceive and select for inclusion. In other words, Suetonius projects a great  
 deal of himself into the material that he presents to us.

One of the spectra along which individual personalities can be arranged is that  
 of Barrier. Barrier is an index of how well bounded persons feel themselves to be:  
 do their bodies seem to offer a strong barrier to external forces and serve as a solid  
 container for internal impulses? Or is the body experienced as fragile and  
 permeable? Most people cluster around the middle of the scale but extremes can  
 be isolated and designated as High Barrier (or Low Penetration) personalities if  
 they have an unusually firm feeling of boundedness, Low Barrier (or High  
 Penetration) if an unusually weak one. Tests using Rorschach ink blots give a  
 high degree of validity in indicating Barrier tendencies; scores can be confirmed  
 by a variety of other tests. A distinct cluster of personal characteristics is  
 associated with High Barrier or Low Barrier subjects, which will be elaborated  
 upon below. The feeling of bodily solidity or fragility appears to be projected onto

(14) *Iul.*, 82, 2; *Aug.*, 35, 2; 79, 2; *Cl.*, 35, 1; 35, 2; *Dom.*, 17, 1. Clodius was able  
 to penetrate (*penetrasse*) to Caesar's wife disguised as a woman - (*Iul.*, 6, 2). Cf. Dio, 56,  
 43, 2.

(15) *Iul.*, 58, 2; *Cal.*, 11; *Ner.*, 22, 2; 26, 1; 26, 2; 42, 2; *Dom.*, 1, 2. Disguises could  
 be too effective. Thus the bewigged and unrecognized Nero was almost beaten to death by  
 a senator in the street at night (*Ner.*, 26, 2).

(16) *Cal.*, 25, 3; *Cl.*, 19, 3; *Ner.*, 32, 3; *Dom.*, 12, 2; cf. *Gal.*, 3, 4.

(17) Cf. CIZEK (at n. 10), p. 44 ff. and J. O. LOYS, *Books in Suetonius' De Vita Caesarum*,  
 Diss. U. of N. Carolina, 1969.

the world at large and is closely related to the individual's basic feeling about his safety in the world. Thus Low Barrier personalities, on being asked to say that they see in the ink blots, report images that revolve around destruction, penetration, mutilation, exposure, dissolution, deformity, disease, decay, porosity and insubstantiality (e.g. squashed butterfly, volcano erupting, ghost, ruined building). High Barrier personalities tend to see images concerned with solidity, boundedness, camouflage, armouring, covering and containing (e.g. tank, vase containing flowers, cloak, alligator, cocoon). Most Rorschach responses of Low Barrier or High Barrier personalities concentrate into one or the other of the above groups of images. But, it seems, when Low Barrier persons project their perceptions of the world in writing (novels, poems or non-fiction) the process is different in that there is a high incidence of both Barrier and Penetration imagery. It is as if an awareness of fragility and vulnerability produces a compensating drive to fantasize and dwell upon images of solidity and security<sup>(18)</sup>.

We can measure the frequency of references in Suetonius to firm surfaces, boundaries or structures, and their preservation; to objects that have been shown to have particular Barrier significance, such as any form of bodily decoration or covering; to boundary definers such as walls, ramparts, mountain ranges; and to covering, concealing and containing. Likewise we can collect references to the collapse of surfaces and to disorder, distortion and weakness; to unveiling and exposing; and to blood and other bodily effusions which denote a leaky container. If we compare the frequency of such references in Suetonius with frequency in authors writing in comparable genres and on similar material we should have a valuable clue as to how Suetonius experienced his world<sup>(19)</sup>. Awareness of some of the idiosyncrasies of Suetonius' perceptions and projections should be handy in using him as a source for imperial history.

### III

In the section that follows three different portions of Suetonius' work are matched with portions from Tacitus, Plutarch and Dio<sup>(20)</sup>. Each pair of samples is

(18) A classic example of this is E. A. Poe, whose work pullulates with Barrier and Penetration imagery. For some observations on probable Low Barrier writers such as John Updike, Kafka, Jonathan Swift, R. L. Stevenson and Lewis Carroll, see S. FISHER, *Body Consciousness*, Prentice Hall, 1973, p. 131 ff. My own work, *Boundaries and Bodies in Late Antiquity*, in *Arethusa*, 12 (1979), p. 93 ff. also shows simultaneous elevation of Barrier and Penetration scores in a group of authors in the late Empire, authors who had good reason to perceive boundary weakness all about them and to fantasize about seclusion.

(19) See further S. FISHER and S. CLEVELAND, *Body Image and Personality*, 2nd ed., New York, 1968; S. FISHER, *Body Experience in Fantasy and Behaviour*, New York, 1970 and S. WAPNER and H. WERNER (edd.), *The Body Percept*, New York, 1965.

(20) As far as possible attention was confined to material involving actual physical

the same size and excludes material dealing with the aid of homogeneity of subject matter (ve partly because battle narrative inevitably the proportion of warfare narrative therefore crucially influence the scoring Penetration in any reference or episode civic crown (*Jul.*, 2), a means of covering simple reference to devastation of the Penetration 1. To stab or to cover scores but to stab with a stylus (*Jul.*, 82, 2 Penetration idea) scores Penetration 2: head with a toga scores Barrier 2 (*Jul.* piercing armour etc. are scored for illustration of scoring is given in the a

The results of the analysis were as f

Suet.

Tac.

Suet.

Plut.

Suet.

Dio

Combining the three Suetonius total Barrier reference every 21.74 lines and Compare:

surfaces and structures, inanimate or animate is in decay" or "veiling his intentions" and confusion, turmoil, stability, restrained behaviour and intentions were excluded. They would scores if they had been admitted but I the actually occurring.

(21) (i) 3699 ll. of Loeb text, from SUET., TAC., *Ann.* made up from 3 sub-sections scored with Tiberius, Claudius and Nero matches 1, 1-10 (up to *decernuntur*), 2, 27-40 (*respon* 1-14 (*perfregit*), 11, 1-7, 11-15, 21-34 (*simu*, 13, 1-5, 10-20 (*id*), 14, 1-14 (*necessitatis*), 1 (*praefereantia*).

(ii) 1977 ll., from *Jul.*, (omitting cc. 25, 3 9), and PLUTARCH, *Jul.* (omitting cc. 1, 12, 15-16, 23-9, and *Otho* 1-3, 6 and 15-18.

(iii) 1534 ll. from *Aug.*, 19, 28-101 and *Dio* 1-4, 4: 6, 1-10, 3: 16, 4-17, 2: 55, 1, 1-9



to the individual's basic feeling about his personalities, on being asked to say that images that revolve around destruction, mutilation, deformity, disease, decay, porosity, butterfly, volcano erupting, ghost, ruined and to see images concerned with solidity, covering and containing (e.g. tank, vase, bon). Most Rorschach responses of Low concentrate into one or the other of the when Low Barrier persons project their (vels, poems or non-fiction) the process is of both Barrier and Penetration imagery. vulnerability produces a compensating es of solidity and security (18).

ferences in Suetonius to firm surfaces, irvation ; to objects that have been shown such as any form of bodily decoration or walls, ramparts, mountain ranges ; and to likewise we can collect references to the distortion and weakness ; to unveiling and bodily effusions which denote a leaky y of such references in Suetonius with *table genres and on similar material we w Suetonius experienced his world* (19). of Suetonius' perceptions and projections ce for imperial history.

## II

ifferent portions of Suetonius' work are arch and Dio (20). Each pair of samples is

be, whose work pullulates with Barrier and s on probable Low Barrier writers such as Stevenson and Lewis Carroll, see S. FISHER, 31 ff. My own work, *Boundaries and Bodies* 93 ff. also shows simultaneous elevation of authors in the late Empire, authors who had ess all about them and to fantasize about

p, *Body Image and Personality*, 2nd ed., New Fantasy and Behaviour, New York, 1970 and y *Percept*, New York, 1965.

efined to material involving actual physical

the same size and excludes material dealing with military engagements, partly to aid homogeneity of subject matter (very little such material in Suetonius) and partly because battle narrative inevitably is richer in Barrier and Penetration, and the proportion of warfare narrative as chanced to be in any sample could therefore crucially influence the scoring (21). In scoring, all examples of Barrier or Penetration in any reference or episode are counted. Thus, a simple reference to a civic crown (*Jul.*, 2), a means of covering part of the head, scores Barrier 1, and a simple reference to devastation of territory by Mithridates (*Jul.*, 4, 2) scores Penetration 1. To stab or to cover scores Penetration 1 or Barrier 1 respectively, but to stab with a stylus (*Jul.*, 82, 2 – the stylus reinforces and amplifies the Penetration idea) scores Penetration 2 ; and with similar reasoning, to cover the head with a toga scores Barrier 2 (*Jul.*, 82, 2). References to tearing clothes, piercing armour etc. are scored for both Barrier and Penetration. Further illustration of scoring is given in the appendix.

The results of the analysis were as follows :

	<i>Barrier</i>	<i>Penetration</i>
Suet.	165	209
Tac.	99	165
Suet.	81	123
Plut.	41	88
Suet.	85	85
Dio	21	37

Combining the three Suetonius totals, we find that, on average, we have a Barrier reference every 21.74 lines and a Penetration reference every 17.24 lines. Compare :

surfaces and structures, inanimate or animate : hence metaphorical references like "state is in decay" or "veiling his intentions" were excluded, as were general references to confusion, turmoil, stability, restrained behaviour, etc. Material involving dreams, fears and intentions were excluded. They would not have made much difference to the relative scores if they had been admitted but I thought it best to stick to what was reported as actually occurring.

(21) (i) 3699 ll. of Loeb text, from Suet., *Tib.* (omitting cc. 9, 16-19), *Cl.* and *Ner.*, and Tac., *Ann.* made up from 3 sub-sections so that the amount of Tacitean material dealing with Tiberius, Claudius and Nero matches the amount of material in the Suetonius' lives : 1, 1-10 (up to *decernuntur*), 2, 27-40 (*respondisse*), 3, 1-16 (*exegisset*), 4, 1-13 (*insulam*), 6, 1-14 (*perfremit*), 11, 1-7, 11-15, 21-34 (*simul*), 12, 1-9, 22-6, 41-3, 42-3, 56-67 (*uinolentia*), 13, 1-5, 10-20 (*id*), 14, 1-14 (*necessitatis*), 15, 18-23 and 32-44 (*Proserpinaque*), 16, 1-18 (*praeferentia*).

(ii) 1977 ll., from *Iul.*, (omitting cc. 25, 34-6, 58, 60, 62-70), *Gal.* and *Otho* (omitting c. 9), and PLUTARCH, *Iul.* (omitting cc. 1, 12, 15-16, 18-20, 22-27, 32-54, 56), *Gal.*, 4, 5, 7, 15-16, 23-9, and *Otho* 1-3, 6 and 15-18.

(iii) 1534 ll. from *Aug.*, 19, 28-101 and Dio, 51, 20, 1-23, 1 ; 53, 1, 1-11, 1 (*μὲν*) ; 54, 1, 1-4, 4 ; 6, 1-10, 3 ; 16, 4-17, 2 ; 55, 1, 1-9, 5 (*τινάξ*) ; 56, 1, 1-11, 2 (*τοῦτο καὶ*).



	<i>Barrier</i>	<i>Penetration</i>
Tac.	37.36	22.41
Plut.	48.21	22.46
Dio	73.04	41.45

The above figures should suggest that *the prominence of Barrier and Penetration in Suetonius is a function of the author rather than the historical raw material*. Comparison of incidents described by Suetonius and by other authors obviously relying on much the same material shows Suetonius including extra elements of Barrier or Penetration (22). It is not enough to say that Suetonius had antiquity's modal authoritarian personality and that he was therefore much concerned with order and fixity (23). He was, but Tacitus, Plutarch and Dio are probably just as authoritarian in their general attitude, yet in their perceptions the issue of boundary strength is less pressing. Suetonius' is a concern that is strongly located in the body. Of his total 331 Barrier references, 176 or 53.16% are to do with clothing and bodily adornment, protection or camouflage (jewellery, badges, armour, veil etc.) compared with Tacitus' 35.35%, Dio's 19.04% and Plutarch's 39.01%. And of Suetonius' total of 417 Penetration references, 24 or 5.75% concern unusual size or shape of the body – dwarfs, cripples, etc. – or a bodily defect (blindness etc.): compare Tacitus – 1.81%, Dio 2.70%, Plutarch 2.27%. 36 or 8.63% concern bodily enfeeblement, exposure or lack of confidence in its strength: compare Tacitus – 2.24% Dio – 0%, but Plutarch – 12.50%. Activity indicating the porosity of surfaces in Suetonius mainly concerns the human body (vomiting, urinating, spitting, sweating etc.) and make up 57 references or 13.66% of Suetonius' Penetration score: compare Tacitus – 8.48%, Dio 5.40%, Plutarch 9.09%.

## IV

Apart from the above evidence there are other suggestions that Suetonius rates as a Low Barrier personality. The basic characteristic of such a personality is: a hazy, less developed sense of individual identity, uncertainty as to just where one's body boundaries lie (24). This gives rise to a corresponding feeling of uncertainty about where one's base of operations and control is – is it within or

(22) Cf. *Gal.*, 20, 2 with *Plut.*, *Gal.*, 27, 1, where Plutarch omits the detail about the soldier sticking his thumb into Galba's mouth, so as to be able to carry the hairless head – an act which stresses bodily porosity. Or cf. the death of Claudius (42, 2-3) and the detail about the enema with *Tac.*, *Ann.*, 12, 67.

(23) Cf. T. F. CARNEY, *How Suetonius' Lives reflect on Hadrian*, in *PACA*, 11 (1968), p. 14-15.

(24) For discussion of High Barrier and Low Barrier syndromes see the works cited at nn. 18 and 19.

without? Hence, a lesser feeling of auto and therefore greater susceptibility to consequence is greater consciousness of stomach, rather than of the skin and body's outer coverings tend to equip those social intercourse, so that they tend to be Groups composed of High Barrier personalities of Low Barrier personalities spend much authority structure or rules of debate or of being structured and ordered equips the situations better. Fluidity is more than dissolution themselves. Low Barrier inanimate, static objects which can be p and made to behave to a fixed pattern more at a distance, being more fearful of and ill-defined personal space. In fact, a bly close range may be experienced a experiment whereby subjects were from miniature stage, the average distance between Barrier subjects was significantly greater. There was more isolation, less group figures. The greater confidence of High strength leads them to engage more muscular activities or games, whereas they to seek activities offering forms of self boundary definition. This can take the also sado-masochistic "discipline and bound is vividly experienced and fear Barrier personalities are less sure of the periphery, they are considerably more deformity and physical defect as being, what they could so easily become. A re contain the eruption of impulses from from without: hence impulsive, such common feature of Low Barrier personalities, Low Barrier personalities expect identities, Low Barrier personalities expect of incorporation by others, fears sadistic behaviour in an effort to asser

(25) Hence the use of straight jackets to p those who become frantic and violent in 1 (1968), p. 241 ff.: *op. cit.* (1973), p. 23 ff.

Barrier	Penetration
36	22.41
21	22.46
04	41.45

that the prominence of Barrier and the author rather than the historical raw material shows Suetonius including extra is not enough to say that Suetonius had ability and that he was therefore much was, but Tacitus, Plutarch and Dio are general attitude, yet in their perceptions the g. Suetonius' is a concern that is strongly Barrier references. 176 or 53.16% are to do detection or camouflage (jewellery, badges, 35.35%, Dio's 19.04% and Plutarch's 7 Penetration references, 24 or 5.75% dy - dwarfs, cripples, etc. - or a bodily - 1.81%, Dio 2.70%, Plutarch 2.27%. nt. exposure or lack of confidence in its - 0%, but Plutarch - 12.50%. Activity tonius mainly concerns the human body etc.) and make up 57 references or compare Tacitus - 8.48%, Dio 5.40%.

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without? Hence, a lesser feeling of autonomy, of controlling one's own destiny, and therefore greater susceptibility to external control and direction. Another consequence is greater consciousness of internal organs, such as the heart and stomach, rather than of the skin and muscles: High Barrier awareness of the body's outer coverings tend to equip those personalities better for the buffetings of social intercourse, so that they tend to be more sociable and relaxed in company. Groups composed of High Barrier personalities compared with groups composed of Low Barrier personalities spend much less time worrying about establishing an authority structure or rules of debate or conduct, since their greater innate sense of being structured and ordered equips them to handle the fluid and unpredictable situations better. Fluidity is more threatening to people who feel close to dissolution themselves. Low Barrier personalities are more at ease with inanimate, static objects which can be positioned in space, kept in compartments and made to behave to a fixed pattern more readily: they tend to keep people more at a distance, being more fearful of intrusion on their somewhat precarious and ill-defined personal space. In fact, anything occurring within an uncomfortably close range may be experienced as a happening inside themselves. In an experiment whereby subjects were free to arrange toy human figures on a miniature stage, the average distance between the figures as arranged by the Low Barrier subjects was significantly greater than those of the High Barrier subjects. There was more isolation, less grouping and implied interaction amongst the figures. The greater confidence of High Barrier personalities in their bodily strength leads them to engage more frequently in vigorous and competitive muscular activities or games, whereas the Low Barrier personality is more likely to seek activities offering forms of skin stimulation that provide reassuring boundary definition. This can take the form of gentle massage or grooming but also sado-masochistic "discipline and bondage" - the skin when beaten or tightly bound is vividly experienced and fears of dissolution ease<sup>(25)</sup>. Because Low Barrier personalities are less sure of the permanence and security of their bodily periphery, they are considerably more repelled and disturbed by mutilation, deformity and physical defect as being threatening reminders of disorder and what they could so easily become. A reduced sense of boundedness is less able to contain the eruption of impulses from within as well as irruption of alien forces from without: hence impulsive, sudden and unpredictable behaviour is a common feature of Low Barrier personalities. Less certain of their separate identities, Low Barrier personalities experience a greater fear of depersonalization and of incorporation by others, fears which can burst forth into violent, even sadistic behaviour in an effort to assert that needed sense of independence and

(25) Hence the use of straight jackets to produce a tight sense of boundedness: it calms those who become frantic and violent in fear of bodily dissolution. See FISHER, *op. cit.* (1968), p. 241 ff.; *op. cit.* (1973), p. 23 ff.

individuality<sup>(26)</sup>. Such feelings may also find a narcissistic expression, that is, the constant seeking of confirmation of one's real existence, whether that is sought by long gazing into mirrors or by worrying about the health and safety of one's own body or by seeking attention or flattery (a form of grooming) from other people<sup>(27)</sup>. Being the focus of attention enhances body image but threatens it if exposure to the public eye is too prolonged or unstructured, so that imagining such a state is safer than experiencing it. In sum, the disorder within Low Barrier personalities is projected onto the world without. The threat to identity produced by that external disorder produces an anxious craving for security and seclusion, a constant dread of violated sanctuaries and a chronic sense of alienation, plus a dependence upon and susceptibility to the activities and opinions of others that may develop into paranoia or megalomania.

In so far as Suetonius' work is a revelation of himself, there are present signs of all the above features. Taken by themselves they need not be significant but together they form a cluster highly suggestive of a Low Barrier personality.

Tacitus, Plutarch and Dio are not reluctant to supply details about cruelty and suffering but Suetonius seems to be especially keen on detailing how human bodies can be tortured and degraded. The topic fascinates him and an interest in the pain which can provide such a sharp sense of separate existence has its masochistic as well as sadistic aspect. Similarly ambivalent is this attitude to bodily deformity and defect. Suetonius' fascination with the subject<sup>(28)</sup> suggests a Low Barrier focus of bodily concern. He seems to empathize with Augustus recoiling from dwarfs and cripples<sup>(29)</sup>. Suetonius' comparatively frequent references to such persons must have caused him some discomfort and unease

(26) Cf. FISHER, *op. cit.* (1973), p. 15 ff.

(27) In so far as schizophrenia involves a sense of depersonalization and uncertainty about what is inside or outside one, and whether certain parts of the self are outside or lost, there is an overlap here too with part of the Low Barrier syndrome – a tendency to cling to security objects, which symbolize the replacement of the outside or "lost" part of the self. For discussion of the complex relationship between Low Barrier and schizophrenia, see FISHER, *op. cit.* (1968), p. 17, 238 ff. and *op. cit.* (1970), p. 156 ff., and SLATER, *op. cit.* (at n. 1), p. 92. Slater's remarks about schizoid fluctuation between cutting the umbilical cord and asserting independence, and regressing into cave and womb fantasies are extremely pertinent to the material presented in section I of this article. Some of the sado-masochistic activities indulged in by Low Barrier personalities, while they may provide a temporary sense of relief, can have long term destructive effects upon self-image in general. This can generate a hostility to the self that increases feelings of disintegration and bodily decline: FISHER, *op. cit.* (1968), p. 16. In so far as it lowers self-esteem, there is a tendency to project unworthiness upon others – something Suetonius can be said to be doing. See further p. 131 below.

(28) E.g. *Aug.*, 43, 3; *Gal.*, 21; *Vit.*, 17, 2; *Ves.*, 23.

(29) *Aug.*, 83 – *pumilos atque distortos et omnis generis eiusdem ut ludibria naturae malique omnis abhorrebat*. The attitude of some of Augustus' successors was less fastidious: *Tib.*, 61, 6; *Ner.*, 30, 2; *Dom.*, 4, 2.

(masochism); yet there is pleasure too (sadism).

If Suetonius is a Low Barrier person, adornment is natural. Clothing not only categorize people and provides valuable information but also takes much of the uncertainty out of a person's matter of concern to someone relying on a person's appearance used to disguise and deceive, particularly appearing on the stage as a prisoner in a false identity that badly confused at least one who rushed out to free him (*Ner.*, 20, 3).

A biographer can exercise considerable discretion. If a central figure dominates the material of the biography, social and historical background, and family, relatives, friends, enemies and other factors are given less weight. In Suetonius' biography, more weight is given to the subject's impacted life. In Plutarch's fairly comprehensive list of physical attributes, more than Julius Caesar engage in these activities. In Suetonius there are 53 references, in 52 instances contemporaries say or write about the whole of Plutarch's life there are 21 such words. Plutarch's supporting cast do more with each other<sup>(34)</sup>. In Suetonius, the interest more for their opinion of Julius Caesar towards "facing" Julius Caesar. Of course, for these differences between the two biographies is projected by Suetonius a picture much

(30) Compare M. E. ROACH and J. B. EICHLER, *Order*, New York, 1965, p. 124 ff. Physio-physiology. Suetonius' interest in this, compare J. COUSIN, *XII Césars*, in *REL.* 31 (1953), p. 234 ff.

(31) Cf. J. GARRATY, *The Nature of Biography*.

(32) Since Suetonius' biography of Caesar is 3 out of every 5 pages of Plutarch's text with

(33) Viz: to see, speak, touch, move self or others, seize, hit, place, give, check, and write.

(34) And not only do they speak more often than they see (11 v. 3), go somewhere (71 v. 20), and restrain or confine others (5 v.

find a narcissistic expression, that is, the real existence, whether that is sought by about the health and safety of one's own (a form of grooming) from other enhances body image but threatens it if unstructured, so that imagining in sum, the disorder within Low Barrier without. The threat to identity produced a chronic craving for security and seclusion, and a chronic sense of alienation, plus a the activities and opinions of others that

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sense of depersonalization and uncertainty whether certain parts of the self are outside or the Low Barrier syndrome – a tendency to replacement of the outside or "lost" part of relationship between Low Barrier and 7, 238 ff. and *op. cit.* (1970), p. 156 ff., and is about schizoid fluctuation between cutting hence, and regressing into cave and womb ial presented in section I of this article. Some in by Low Barrier personalities, while they have long term destructive effects upon self-tility to the self that increases feelings of *cit.* (1968), p. 16. In so far as it lowers self-ithness upon others – something Suetonius below.

2: *Ves.*, 23.

omnis generis eiusdem ut ludibria naturae of some of Augustus' successors was less 4, 2.

(masochism): yet there is pleasure too in recording the afflictions of others (sadism).

If Suetonius is a Low Barrier personality, his high interest in clothing and adornment is natural. Clothing not only protects, it distinguishes. It helps categorize people and provides valuable clues for appropriate interaction and takes much of the uncertainty out of social encounters (30). Yet it would be a matter of concern to someone relying on such evidence that clothes were so often used to disguise and deceive, particularly by emperors. Nero, for example, appearing on the stage as a prisoner in one of his tragic roles, was projecting a false identity that badly confused at least one member of the audience, a soldier who rushed out to free him (*Ner.*, 20, 3).

A biographer can exercise considerable discretion in the degree to which the central figure dominates the material of the life. How much space is devoted to the social and historical background, and how much attention is given to the relatives, friends, enemies and other figures generally? Generally, the more forceful and autonomous the biographer perceives his subject to be, the more weight is given to the subject's impacted surroundings (31). With this in mind, it is instructive to compare Suetonius' and Plutarch's treatment of Julius Caesar (32). A fairly comprehensive list of physical activities was drawn up (33). People other than Julius Caesar engage in these activities 184 times in Plutarch, 102 times in Suetonius. In Suetonius there are 53 references to Others speaking or writing: in 52 instances contemporaries say or write something about Julius Caesar: in the whole of Plutarch's life there are 21 such Caesar-oriented references. In other words, Plutarch's supporting cast do more, and talking and writing about Julius Caesar is only a minor part of their activities. They speak to and interact much more with each other (34). In Suetonius, Others are of less importance, and are of interest more for their opinion of Julius Caesar: they are almost all turned towards, "facing" Julius Caesar. Of course there are many possible explanations for these differences between the two biographies, but the fact remains that there is projected by Suetonius a picture much closer to a narcissist's ideal imaginary

(30) Compare M. E. ROACH and J. B. EICHER (edd.), *Dress, Adornment and the Social Order*, New York, 1965, p. 124 ff. Physiognomy would serve a similar function. For Suetonius' interest in this, compare J. COUSSON, *Suetone physiognomiste dans les vies des XII Césars*, in *REL*, 31 (1953), p. 234 ff.

(31) Cf. J. GARRATY, *The Nature of Biography*, London, 1958, p. 20.

(32) Since Suetonius' biography of Caesar is only 59% of the length of Plutarch's, only 3 out of every 5 pages of Plutarch's text were used for a comparative sample.

(33) Viz: to see, speak, touch, move self or others across space in any manner, to hold, seize, hit, place, give, check, and write.

(34) And not only do they speak more often than Suetonius' Others (56 v. 30), but more often they see (11 v. 3), go somewhere (71 v. 23), move persons or objects across space (27 v. 20), and restrain or confine others (5 v. 3).

situation, and social interaction generally is reduced to a level which a Low Barrier personality might find more comfortable. Although Suetonius' Caesar is more active vis-a-vis his supporting cast, he is less active overall than Plutarch's Caesar, being involved in 146 actions, as against Plutarch's 172. Plutarch's Caesar has successfully hardened his body to withstand buffeting (Plut., *Jul.*, 17, 3). Less often than Plutarch's does Suetonius' Caesar see (6 v. 9), speak (14 v. 41), go somewhere (42 v. 60), move others (36 v. 44) or restrain others (3 v. 4). In general, the interior landscape of Suetonius is populated by characters who are less vigorous, less self-directed and less other-directing<sup>(35)</sup>.

The insecurity and unreliability of Suetonius' world is further emphasized by the frequency with which persons or things act and move suddenly, unexpectedly, unpredictably. Not only do his characters tend to lack the well-defined, confident sense of identity that permits an active, life-engaged orientation, they tend to lack the control of impulse that a firm sense of the self permits: and this enfeebled capacity for containment manifests in the non-human environment too, animal, vegetable or mineral. Suddenness is comparatively common in Suetonius and sometimes his insertion of *repente*, *subito* etc. seems gratuitous<sup>(36)</sup>. The following figures were drawn mostly from references that were not scored for Penetration because they do not involve the impairment or distortion of surfaces and structures. They provide further evidence for the instability of Suetonius' world, a world of sudden impulses, attacks, changes of plan, and movements by inanimate objects. Instances of suddenness in the samples: Suet. - 12. Plut. - 1; Suet. - 8; Dio - 1; Suet. - 20. Tac. - 11<sup>(37)</sup>.

## V

Suetonius had plenty of opportunity to observe and reflect upon what being a Roman emperor entailed. To a degree he himself is the Roman emperor. He projects images of *generally* fearful and insecure beings, less able to control their fragile selves and their arbitrary, violent and unpredictable environment than

(35) Combining the total actions for both Caesar and Others in Suetonius we get 248, in Plutarch 356. The comparative anaemia of Suetonius' world is borne out by a count of the listed (at n. 33) activities in samples of 1500 ll. of Loeb text that I compiled from Suetonius, Plutarch and Tacitus for a different study. The Suetonius sample was drawn from every 4th page of Latin text from *Aug.*, *Tib.*, *Cl.*, *Ner.* and *Gal.* 1-12: the Tacitus sample came from every 5th page of *Ann.*, 1, 2, 3, 12, 13 and *Hist.*, 1-64: the Plutarch from *Marcellus*, *Cato Maior*, *Marius* and *Pompeius*, 1-79. The respective activity totals were - 130: 187: 231.

(36) E.g. *Aug.*, 58, 1; *Ner.*, 31, 4; *Gal.*, 17: cf. *Tac.*, *Ann.*, 15, 34, 1 with *Ner.*, 20, 2.

(37) The following figures are corroborative. The *De Vita Caesarum* and *Tac.*, *Ann.*, 1, 1-13, 8 each fill 254 pages of Teubner text. (*de*)*repente/repentinus* occurs 60 times in Suetonius, 21 times in Tacitus: *subitus/subito* 29 times in Suetonius, 8 times in Tacitus.

other sources (literary and numismatic discard all the factors that previous scholars likes and dislikes, a precarious sense of additional determinant in Suetonius' depiction principle that it takes one to know one and what we find unacceptable about ourselves imperial villains Low Barrier characteristics of certain traits in himself and which he censures: Tiberius' and Domitian's secret impulsiveness, Nero's narcissism (perfect gave his friendship or declared his enemies praised him freely or sparingly" - *Ner.*, 2 and Vitellius' lack of appetite control<sup>(38)</sup>); characteristic and it was this combination of autonomy and impulse control that made

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(38) On Cizek's rating, Vitellius is the most far as immature and Low Barrier person incorporated, there is something rather threatening *gulam* - 7, 1) who eats his way through a prisoner 14, 2) upon an execution. (On fears of incorporation of the eye, cf. SLATER, *op. cit.* (at p. 405 ff. Suetonius' picture of Claudius is a model of negativity towards Claudius focuses on lack of control (30, 2) or for food and drink (33): lack of control (41, 1); his extreme fear of being stabbed (35) head-shaking (30); sadism too (34). Low Suetonius' Nero. Nero lacked consistent, avowed parental models (6, 3-4; 28, 2; 34, 1). Nero's condition and reputation (20, 1; 20, 2; 25, 3; dressing up. Ambivalent about the spotlight (Suetonius building a secluded villa in the heart of the frontier erecting a colossal bronze statue therein for charioteering (22, 1) are a common means of Nero's alleged fantasies of destroying the cities of commanders and provincial governors, all existing (1), whatever their historical basis, are quite characteristic of Low Barrier personalities: cf. W. J. SPRING, *Observer The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 8 (1939), p. 48. Suetonius also finds worthy of record a supposition by a certain monstrous Egyptian who could (37, 2).

(39) Emperors who innovated and disturbed which Suetonius preferred to be left untouched

y is reduced to a level which a Low  
portable. Although Suetonius' Caesar is  
he is less active overall than Plutarch's  
against Plutarch's 172. Plutarch's Caesar  
nstand buffeting (Plut., *Jul.*, 17, 3). Less  
esar see (6 v. 9), speak (14 v. 41), go  
44) or restrain others (3 v. 4). In general,  
populated by characters who are less  
-directing (35).

tonius' world is further emphasized by  
or things act and move suddenly,  
o his characters tend to lack the well-  
that permits an active, life-engaged  
of impulse that a firm sense of the self  
ontainment manifests in the non-human  
mineral. Suddenness is comparatively  
s insertion of *repente, subito* etc. seems  
re drawn mostly from references that  
they do not involve the impairment or  
They provide further evidence for the  
of sudden impulses, attacks, changes of  
objects. Instances of suddenness in the  
8 : Dio - 1 ; Suet. - 20, Tac. - 11 (37).

o observe and reflect upon what being a  
he himself is the Roman emperor. He  
nsecure beings, less able to control their  
nt and unpredictable environment than

caesar and Others in Suetonius we get 248, in  
etionius' world is borne out by a count of the  
500 ll. of Loeb text that I compiled from  
nt study. The Suetonius sample was drawn  
., *Tib.*, *Cl.*, *Ner.* and *Gal.* 1-12 : the Tacitus  
., 2, 3, 12, 13 and *Hist.*, 1-64 : the Plutarch  
*Caesari*, 1-79. The respective activity totals

7 : cf. Tac., *Ann.*, 15, 34, 1 with *Ner.*, 20, 2.  
ve. The *De Vita Caesarum* and Tac., *Ann.*, 1.  
.. (*de repente/repentinus* occurs 60 times in  
to 29 times in Suetonius, 8 times in Tacitus.

other sources (literary and numismatic) would suggest. Without wishing to  
discard all the factors that previous scholars have adduced to explain Suetonius'  
likes and dislikes, a precarious sense of boundedness may be an important  
additional determinant in Suetonius' depiction of the various emperors. On the  
principle that it takes one to know one and that we most fear and detest in others  
what we find unacceptable about ourselves, Suetonius may have recognized in his  
imperial villains Low Barrier characteristics that were uncomfortable reminders  
of certain traits in himself and which he then projected onto his subjects for  
censure : Tiberius' and Domitian's secretiveness, Gaius' unpredictability and  
impulsiveness, Nero's narcissism (perfectly recognised and described - "Nero  
gave his friendship or declared his enmity to many to the extent to which they  
praised him freely or sparingly" - *Ner.*, 25, 3), Galba's susceptibility to influence,  
and Vitellius' lack of appetite control (38). In all these emperors sadism is a marked  
characteristic and it was this combined with the unpredictability of low  
autonomy and impulse control that made them so abhorrent to Suetonius (39) (40).

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(38) On Cizek's rating, Vitellius is the most detested of all Suetonius' emperors. In so  
far as immature and Low Barrier personalities strongly fear being eaten up and  
incorporated, there is something rather threatening about an insatiable glutton (*profundam  
gulam* - 7, 1) who eats his way through a province and feasts his eyes (*pascere oculos* -  
14, 2) upon an execution. (On fears of incorporation and the way this is associated with  
gastronomy of the eye, cf. SLATER, *op. cit.* (at n. 1), p. 87 ff. and FISHER, *op. cit.* (1970),  
p. 405 ff. Suetonius' picture of Claudius is ambivalent and CIZEK, *op. cit.* (at n. 10), p. 104,  
147 ff., is unable to rate him as either good or bad. However, much of Suetonius'  
negativity towards Claudius focuses on lack of control over his appetites, whether for sex  
(30, 2) or for food and drink (33) ; lack of control over his thoughts and emotions (38, 3 ;  
41, 1) ; his extreme fear of being stabbed (35) and his physical defects and uncontrollable  
head-shaking (30) ; sadism too (34). Low Barrier characteristics cluster strongly in  
Suetonius' Nero. Nero lacked consistent, available, self disciplined and non-intrusive  
parental models (6, 3-4 ; 28, 2 ; 34, 1). Narcissistically preoccupied with his physical  
condition and reputation (20, 1 ; 20, 2 ; 25, 3 ; 53), he loved changing his appearance and  
dressing up. Ambivalent about the spotlight (see n. 11 above) he indulged a fantasy about  
building a secluded villa in the heart of the frenetic, chaotic capital, while at the same time  
erecting a colossal bronze statue therein for all to see (31, 1-2). Violent activities like  
charioteering (22, 1) are a common means of combating feelings of depersonalization.  
Nero's alleged fantasies of destroying the city of Rome (38, 1), the senate, all army  
commanders and provincial governors, all exiles and all men of Gallic birth at Rome (43,  
1), whatever their historical basis, are quite congruent with the fantasies of certain Low  
Barrier personalities : cf. W. J. SPRING, *Observations on World Destruction Fantasies*, in  
*The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 8 (1939), p. 48 ff., FISHER, *op. cit.* (1973), p. 9, 14, 22-8.  
Suetonius also finds worthy of record a supposed Neronian desire to have men eaten alive  
by a certain monstrous Egyptian who could chew up and incorporate almost anything  
(37, 2).

(39) Emperors who innovated and disturbed the social and administrative hierarchy  
which Suetonius preferred to be left untouched did not endear themselves to Suetonius :

## APPENDIX

Here is how part of Suet., *Gal.* was scored : B = Barrier, P = Penetration.

1 – *silua omnis exaruit radicitus, et quidquid ibi gallinarum erat interiit* – P3 (besides the death of the wood and the hens, the extent and origin of the former's decay is given) : 1 – *tacta de caelo Caesarum aede capita omnibus simul status deciderunt, Augusti etiam sceptrum e manibus excussum est* – P3 ; 3, 1 – *oppidum ... succenderit* – P1 ; 3, 1 – *ualitudine* – P1 ; 3, 2 – *milibus ... trucidatis* – P1 ; 3, 3 – *gibber* – P1 ; 3, 4 – *Corinthum excidit* – P1 ; 3, 4 – *uitium corporis posita ueste detexit* – P2, B1 ; 3, 4 – *uoluntaria morte obiit* – P1 ; 4, 2 – *exta* – P1 ; 4, 2 – *partus* – P1 (parturition is a sign of bodily porosity) ; 4, 3 – *toga* – B1 ; 6, 2 – *manus paenula continerent* – B2 ; 6, 3 – *qui iam in Galliam usque proruperant* – P1 ; 6, 3 – *scuto* – B1 ; 7, 1 – *ualitudo* – P1 ; 7, 2 – *fame extabuit* – P1 ; 7, 2 – *capite inuolutus* – B1 ; 9, 1 – *manus amputauit mensaeque eius adfixit* – P2 ; 10, 1 – *occisorum* – P1 ; 10, 3 – *anulorum aureorum* – B1 ; 10, 4 – *anulus ... sculptura gemmae Victoriam cum tropaeo exprimente* – B2 (the article of apparel has a decorated and fortified surface).

Suetonius' account of Vitellius' end was not part of the samples. It is richly interwoven with B and P. Here is how it would have been scored : 16 – *zona se ... circumdedit* – B2 ; 16 – *religato pro foribus cane* – B1 ; 16 – *lecto et culcita obiectis* – B2 ; 17, 1 – *irruerant iam agminis antecessores ac nemine obuio rimabantur ... singula* – P3 ; 17, 1 – *religatis ... manibus* – B1 ; 17, 1 – *iniecto ceruicibus laqueo* – B1 ; 17, 1 – *ueste discussa seminudus* – B1, P2 ; 17, 2 – *corporis uitia* – P1 ; 17, 2 – *femur subdebile impulsu olim quadrigae* – P2 ; 17, 2 – *ictibus excarnificatus atque confectus* – P3 ; 17, 2 – *unco tractus* – P1. In addition, notice Vitellius' unsuccessful (and hence not admitted, according to our criteria) request that he *custodiretur interim uel in carcere* (17, 1).

in his mind, conservative, caretaker emperors were featured by an ability to refrain from making waves : cf. CARNEY, *art. cit.* (at n. 23), p. 18 and nn. 59, 68, 69. Such an emperor was Augustus. Despite Augustus' various phobias, which Suetonius dwells upon, our author was impressed by his abstemiousness (76-77), and he transfers to Agrippa and Maecenas the very lack of self-control which a different source has Maecenas deploring in Augustus (66, 3 : cf. DIO, 55, 7, 1 : 3-4).

(40) My thanks to my colleague Hugh Lindsay for commenting on a draft of this paper. All shortcomings are my own.

### Hercules at the Lactantius, *Divine In:*

*Apparet tamen anticium esse hunc in Saturnus in Latio eodem genere sacrificii immolaretur, sed ut in Tiberim de ponte quodam factitatum Varro auctor est : cu*

*καὶ κεφαλὰς Ἀϊδῆ καὶ τῷ πατρὶ πέ*

*[id est hominem] quod quia uidetur ambig id genus sacrificii ab Hercule, cum ex His tamen permanente ut pro ueris hominibus in Fastis docet :*

*donec in haec uenit Tiryntius aru tristia Leucadio sacra peracta n. illum stramineos in aquam misisse Herculis exemplo corpora falsa i*

*haec sacra Vestales uirgines faciunt, ut a*

*tum quoque priscorum uirgo simul mittere roboreo scirpea ponte sol*

A number of writers describe the anc which, on a day in mid-May, straw dolls, bridge into the river Tiber (1). Lactantiu

(\*) The work for this article was done Research Fellow in Religious Studies of Wolf Fellow for Research of Gonville and Caius Co his gratitude to both these colleges for their s

(1) The text of the *Divine Institutes* (herei BRANDT and G. LAUBMANN in *Corp. Script. Ecc. C.S.E.L.*, XXVII). The *sexagenarii de ponte* is 44 ; DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS, *Antiq. Rom.*, *Quaest. Rom.*, 32 ; MACROBIUS, *Sat.*, I, 11, 47 *R.E.* I, cols. 689-700 s.v. *Argei* ; H. STEUDING *it und Römischen Mythologie*, cols. 496-500 and 1929, IV, p. 74 ff.



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