

an eye-witness of the revolt in Egypt. Needless to say, much more material than is supplied by the two brief fragments of Appian's work is needed before a definite link can be established between the two authors. It also seems well within the realm of possibility that Rufinus read Arrian's work or a source deriving therefrom; it is noteworthy, for instance, that both Rufinus and Dio who is known to have read Arrian, refer to the leader of the Jews without his royal title⁷. The textual parallelism becomes even more striking when one considers the accounts of the Mesopotamian revolt. As already indicated above, Rufinus states that Trajan decided *delere provinciam funditus ac totam gentem penitus excidere* (H.E., IV, 2, 5). This passage finds a close parallel in a statement of Arrian's recorded in the *Suidae Lexicon*, which mentions Trajan's decision of destroying "all the inhabitants of Mesopotamia": 'Ο δὲ Τραϊανὸς ἔγνω μάλιστα μὲν, εἰ παρείκοι, ἐξελεῖν τὸ ἔθνος εἰ δὲ μή, ἀλλὰ συν-τρίψας γε πάσαι τῆς ἄγαν ἀτασθαλίας⁸.

Consultation of Eusebius' sources by Rufinus, remains, therefore, a definite possibility, even if the present state of our knowledge does not allow for a definitive stand to be taken on this issue. One can, however, assume that Oulton's theory relative to Rufinus' perusal of original sources other than Eusebius is also plausibly valid with respect to the account of the Jewish revolt during Trajan's reign.

Consequently, irrespective of the question of the actual sources used, Rufinus' version proves to be of considerable importance by reason of his emendations of Eusebius' text and his personal insights regarding the historical events under investigation.

⁷ It should be noted that what Rufinus' and Dio's accounts share in common here is the omission of the royal title not the proper name itself which is 'Ανόγειας in Dio. Concerning the Jewish leader's two names, see my article *Qualche osservazione sulla tradizione letteraria della rivolta ebraica al tempo di Traiano (115-117 d.C.)*, "Riv. Stor. Ant.", IX (1979), pp. 65-67.

⁸ *Suidae Lexicon*, s.v. 'Ατάσθαλα, n. 4325 on page 400, ed. A. Adler, I, Lipsiae 1928 = M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, II, Jerusalem 1980, fr. 332 a, p. 152. For the discussion of this passage, see the article cited in note 3, p. 171.

RSA 11, 129-137 1981

K.R. BRADLEY

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *SPECTACULA* IN SUETONIUS' *CAESARES*

The nature of the relationship between the Roman emperor and his subjects has recently received a great deal of scholarly attention, and in the process the topic of popular entertainments, or *spectacula*, has figured prominently¹. As a result the following points can be safely stated. Although the public persona of the emperor was multi-faceted, the importance of his role as benefactor is now indisputable, even from the inception of the principate, and with that role the concept of imperial liberality is closely associated². Public spectacles given by the emperor can thus be understood as demonstrations on the grand scale of mass generosity to the urban population at Rome (and sometimes elsewhere), benefactions which supplied very visible evidence of the emperor's concern for his people. It is also equally clear that the assemblage of large crowds in the circus, theatre and amphitheatre permitted expression to the emperor of mass popular sentiment in a unique way; and in view of the various difficulties which attended access to him by the ordinary subject, such expression was one of the few means of direct communication between ruler and ruled. Popular feelings about certain individuals prominent in public life had of course been voiced at

¹ See especially F. Millar, *The emperor in the Roman world*, London 1977, pp. 368-375; A. Cameron, *Circus factions*, Oxford 1976, pp. 156-192; H. Kloft, *Liberalitas Principis*, Cologne 1970, pp. 110-115; Z. Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps*, Oxford 1969, pp. 18-24, on all of which the remainder of this paragraph draws. Cf. also W. Steidle, *Sueton und die antike Biographie*, Munich 1951, p. 112.

² On liberality see especially Kloft, op. cit., pp. 167-170.

spectacula in the last decades of the Republic; but with the imposition of one figure alone at the head of the Roman system — and particularly after the early abolition of free popular elections³ — it seems likely that the function of the *spectacula* as a medium for transmitting popular views towards the emperor increased in importance.

If then modern scholars are correct to emphasise a connection between popular entertainments and imperial liberality, one would expect to find some evidence from the emperors themselves illustrating the association and its significance in their thinking. And indeed one can immediately turn to the *Res Gestae* of Augustus, a source whose imperial bias is unquestionable, for a particularly valuable expression of an individual emperor's pride in having throughout his reign provided *spectacula* for the Roman populace. In two sections of this document the numbers and types of entertainments for which Augustus had been directly or indirectly responsible during his lifetime are carefully paraded, various gladiatorial and athletic contests, *ludi*, *venationes*, a *naumachia*, and of course the Secular Games, celebrated in 17 B.C.⁴; and unless Augustus himself had believed these spectacles to have fulfilled a genuine function in his relationship with the Roman people at large, there could have been no point to his commemoration of them in a document intended principally for their eyes⁵.

Augustus' catalogue of entertainments provided a precedent for emulation by his successors. But the *Res Gestae* is an exceptional document, and so perhaps the best evidence of the significance of liberality in imperial ideology at large comes from the coinage, control over the issue of which lay firmly in the emperor's hands. By the time of Hadrian *liberalitas* had indeed become an imperial virtue, the legend appearing then on coinage for the first time, but bringing to a culmination the earlier process of depicting the goddess

³ Tac., *Ann.*, 1, 15, 1, a notoriously difficult text, for a brief summary of opinions on which see F.R.D. Goodyear, *The Annals of Tacitus: Volume I*. Cambridge 1972, p. 193, together with A.H.M. Jones, *Studies in Roman government and law*, Oxford 1960, pp. 46-48.

⁴ RG, 22-23. Cf. Kloft, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁵ P.A. Brunt-J.M. Moore (edd.), *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Oxford 1967, pp. 3-4.

Liberalitas as an imperial associate⁶. More narrowly, events such as imperial *congiaria* had been commemorated on the coinage in earlier generations, and whereas it would presumably have been impracticable to celebrate on coins all spectacles all the time, it is noteworthy that some of the more distinctive entertainments, such as the Secular Games of Augustus and of Domitian or the *quinquennale certamen* of Nero, had been so celebrated⁷.

The connection between the emperor's *liberalitas* and *spectacula* was obviously intended to be appreciated by the emperor's subjects, and an exclamation such as Pliny's *Quam deinde in edendo liberalitatem... exhibuit* (*Pan.*, 33, 2), despite its effusiveness, shows that it was. But the contention of this paper is that the connection helps to explain why Suetonius in his imperial biographies devotes a lot of space to spectacles, and that the individual details he has compiled under the recurring rubric of *spectacula* are not necessarily to be interpreted as a sign of the generally inferior quality of the *Caesares* as a literary and historical work⁸. To be sure, information of the sort that a seventeen pound dwarf appeared in a *ludus* during Augustus' reign, or that Nero compelled four hundred senators and six hundred knights to fight in the arena⁹, is not of a kind to excite the admiration of the modern historian in search of headier matters. Moreover, the *Caesares* inevitably have to stand in the shadow of the great historical works of Tacitus and cannot be allowed a degree of substance or artistry which is plainly lacking. Even so, any evaluation of Suetonius' lives must proceed in the first instance from their contents and from the organisation of those contents, rather than from modern preconceptions about what the lives could or should have included.

The first point to make is that the subject of *spectacula* appears in practically all the lives, the three exceptions being the biographies

⁶ *BMC Imp.*, III, pp. LXXIII, CXI, CLXII, and Index V s.v. *Liberalitas*.

⁷ *BMC Imp.*, 1, pp. CIV, CVf., CXII, 13, 16, 74; II, pp. LXXXVII, XCvf. (cf. XC), 392ff. For *congiaria*, I pp. 224-226, 261; II, pp. 139, 263; III, pp. 147, 161-162.

⁸ Cf. R. Syme, *Biographers of the Caesars*, "Mus. Helveticum", XXXVII (1980), pp. 104-128 at pp. 119-120.

⁹ Suet., *Aug.*, 43, 3; *Nero*, 12, 1; the latter text may require emendation, see K.R. Bradley, *Suetonius' Life of Nero: An historical commentary*, Brussels 1978, p. 86.

of the shortlived emperors of 68/69 A.D., where the reason for the omission is obvious: Galba, Otho and Vitellius did not survive long enough to have become remembered for their provision of urban spectacles¹⁰. Secondly, it can be observed that the types of spectacle included in the lives are precisely the same as those which appear in the *Res Gestae*, gladiatorial and athletic contests, circuses, wild beast hunts and naval battles, whose commemoration caused Augustus no difficulty (though Suetonius has incorporated many diverting details Augustus would presumably have thought better to omit)¹¹. Thirdly, the distribution of the rubric within the several biographies requires comment. It is clear from certain unambiguous statements in the *Caesares*, as also from their structure, that Suetonius had definite opinions of his own about his biographical subjects¹²: the famous *divisiones* in the *Caligula* and *Nero*¹³ illustrate perfectly well Suetonius' views about two of his more infamous subjects, for example, but as statements of opinion they are far from exceptional¹⁴. Nevertheless, whether Suetonius' final opinion of a given emperor is favourable or unfavourable, the spectacles which he records always appear in a context that is positive, that is, a context in which (in Suetonius' judgement) the commendable items of a given reign are being listed. Thus, for instance,

¹⁰ The relevant texts are Suet., *Iul.*, 39; *Aug.*, 43-45; *Tib.*, 47; *Cal.*, 18-20; *Claud.*, 21; *Nero*, 11-13; *Vesp.*, 19, 1; *Titus*, 7.3; cf. 8.2; *Dom.*, 4. The references in *Vesp.* and *Titus* show less formalised attention to the topic than elsewhere, which may be associated with other signs of a decline in standards in the later lives; see G.B. Townend, *Suetonius and his influence* in T.A. Dorey (ed.), *Latin Biography*, London 1967, pp. 79-111 at pp. 90-91; but the interest is there nonetheless.

¹¹ A possible connection between the *RG* and the construction of Suetonius' life of Augustus was perceived long ago; see A. Macé, *Essai sur Suetone*, Paris 1900, pp. 135-163, and J. Gagé, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Paris 1977³, pp. 39-40 for a summary of subsequent opinions on the extent of that connection. Cf. also C. St. Tomulescu, *Les Douze Césars et le droit romain*, "Bull. Ist. Diritto Romano", LXXX (1977), pp. 129-158 at pp. 131-132.

¹² Despite assertions to the contrary as from Townend, art. cit., pp. 92-93.

¹³ *Cal.*, 22.1, *Hactenus quasi de principe, reliqua ut de monstro narranda sunt; Nero*, 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*.

¹⁴ Cf., for example, *Iul.*, 76, 1; *Aug.*, 72, 1; *Tib.*, 57, 1; 63; *Cal.*, 11; *Claud.*, 25, 5; 34, 1; *Galba*, 14, 1-2; *Otho*, 12, 1; *Vit.*, 10, 1; *Vesp.*, 16, 3; *Titus*, 1, 1; 8, 1; *Dom.*, 3, 2.

in the *Augustus* they are placed between examples of generosity (*Aug.*, 41-42) and examples of Augustus' reorganisation of Italy (*Aug.*, 46), all in a very long section on the achievements of Augustus; and in the *Caligula* they appear between details on Caligula's liberalities (*Cal.*, 17) and details on his building projects (*Cal.*, 21), all clearly set off from Suetonius' depiction of Caligula the monster (*Cal.*, 22, 1). The procedure is standard throughout the biographies¹⁵.

From these remarks on the regularity with which the rubric of *spectacula* appears in the lives and its disposition within them, it can be legitimately inferred that in Suetonius' view the subject of spectacles was of some consequence, that there was nothing inherently reprehensible in or trivial about them, that they accrued to the benefit of an emperor whose reign he set out to evaluate, and that he looked on them with approval. Suetonius' implied criticism of Tiberius for having given no spectacles at all¹⁶ serves to corroborate these ideas, and in fact the only passage which might possibly be out of line with them is *Dom.*, 4, 1, where in the statement, *Spectacula assidue magnifica et sumptuosa edidit, sumptuosa* could be taken as a form of reproach. But even here the difficulty is more apparent than real, for although in the *Domitian* Suetonius has by and large followed the technique used also in the *Caligula* and *Nero* of separating 'good' from 'bad' and of piling up the latter at relative length, hostile bias against Domitian is so pervasive that his favourable accomplishments are belittled throughout¹⁷.

¹⁵ See further *Iul.*, 38, 2 and 39, 1; *Tib.*, 46 and 47; *Claud.*, 21, 1; *Nero*, 11, 2; *Titus*, 7, 3; *Dom.*, 4, 1 and 4, 5.

¹⁶ *Tib.*, 47, *Princeps ... neque spectacula omnino dedit; et iis, quae ab aliquo ederentur, rarissime interfuit*. The passage is placed between examples of sparing generosity (*Tib.*, 46) and munificence (*Tib.*, 48), and in conjunction with a record of no public building activity by Tiberius.

¹⁷ The construction of the *Dom.* leaves no doubt about the bias of the biography and Suetonius' opinion of Domitian. The early sections, dealing with life before accession (1, 1-2, 3) are given their tone from such expressions as *tanta infamia, corruptum Domitianum, omnem vim dominationis tam licenter exercuit*, etc. A cruelly anecdotal is given immediately the reign begins (3, 1), and although at 3, 2 Suetonius announces the *mixtura aequabilis vitiorum atque virtutum* visible in Domitian's *administratio imperii* (3, 2-10, 1), it is of course the vices which come last and predominate, thus resuming the introductory attitude and leading naturally to the account of Domitian's assassination.

If therefore there can be no real doubt about Suetonius' general approval of imperial *spectacula*, what explanation for his attitude can be sought? One reason for his inclusion of so much detailed information on spectacles could come from assuming a purely pedantic or antiquarian interest in the subject, because among Suetonius' now lost writings there were two books respectively on Greek and Roman games¹⁸. In these, however, Suetonius was probably concerned with the history of spectacles *per se*, whereas in the *Caesares* his primary focus is obviously on the emperors themselves, and in the selection of his material for each life he adhered to what has been called a "Law of biographical relevance"¹⁹. The degree of relevance to the main purpose thus has to be defined, and for this antiquarian interests are of little account. Nor can it be contended that Suetonius offered information on spectacles merely for the amusement of his readers. Certainly that information might well have had a diverting effect (it perhaps still does), but the relevance question is not thereby explained. Indeed, if it can be assumed that Suetonius was presenting his readers with material on a topic in which they would have a strong interest, the question of why so much material was assembled and arranged under the rubric is only further sharpened.

Within the *Caesares* themselves there are certain details which strongly suggest that Suetonius understood well how spectacles could be exploited to his own political advantage by the emperor as far as his relationship with the urban population was concerned. He makes his readers conscious of the fact that the games permitted the emperor to display wealth, and hence power, on a scale that other members of the Roman elite could not match²⁰, and of the

¹⁸ For the testimonia see G. Funaioli, *Suetonius, PW*, IV, A1 (1931), cols. 625-6.

¹⁹ Townend, art. cit., p. 84. Cameron, op. cit., p. 58, believes that the *Caesares* reflect "an informed interest in the history of public entertainments" but this is not Suetonius' primary focus of attention. The fact that public entertainments might form the subject-matter of literary works, however, is of value for highlighting their importance in Roman life in general. Suetonius was not of course alone in writing on the topic: he had been preceded by Varro and was to be followed by Tertullian, though from a vastly different perspective; cf. T. D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A historical and literary study*, Oxford 1971, pp. 93-96. Martial's composition of a book *De spectaculis* under Titus is also noteworthy as a means of personal advancement for an author celebrating a particular emperor's *spectacula*.

²⁰ *Aug.*, 43, 1.

fact that the games allowed the emperor to advertise his accomplishments in diplomacy and expansionist warfare: thus he mentions that Augustus once took Parthian hostages with him to the games, and that Claudius put on a pageant at Rome depicting the conquest of Britain²¹. Whatever the true motive behind Caligula's bridge of boats at Baiae²² moreover, that spectacle was at least again a demonstration of imperial power, as also the unique spectacle Nero contrived from the visit to Rome of the Armenian king Tiridates in 66 A.D., which culminated in an imperial salutation and the ceremonial closing of the temple of Janus²³. Suetonius was aware too that the populace expected to see the emperor at the *spectacula*, that it was incumbent upon him to attend, a detail frequently commented on²⁴, and that the emperor needed not just to make himself visible at the games and shows but that he had to be seen to be enjoying them and not concerning himself with administrative paperwork, a practice for which Caesar incurred popular displeasure²⁵. Further, as a form of liberality the spectacles were comparable to the emperor's provision of *congiaria*, a subject in which Suetonius was also interested²⁶, and it is not surprising in the lives to find the topics of largesse and spectacles closely associated, or even conjoined. The *congiaria* of Domitian, for example, follow immediately Suetonius' description of his Secular Games and *Quinquatria Minervae*, while Caligula and Nero are said to have distributed gifts to audiences during spectacles, one form of liberality providing the occasion for another²⁷. The general popularity of the *spectacula*²⁸ is hardly surprising.

The significance of these details cannot have been lost on

²¹ *Aug.*, 43, 4; *Claud.*, 21, 6.

²² *Cal.*, 19, on which see the discussion by J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *The Emperor Gaius*, Oxford 1934, pp. 50-54.

²³ *Nero*, 13, for vindication of which see Townend, *Tacitus, Suetonius and the Temple of Janus*, "Hermes", CVIII (1980), pp. 233-242.

²⁴ *Aug.*, 45, 1; *Claud.*, 21, 5; *Nero*, 12, 1; *Titus*, 8, 2; *Dom.*, 4, 2; 4; cf. *Cal.*, 18, 1.

²⁵ *Aug.*, 45, 1.

²⁶ Cf. *Claud.*, 21, 1; *Nero*, 7, 2; *Dom.*, 4, 5. For *liberalitas* in Suetonius cf. K.R. Bradley, *Imperial virtues in Suetonius' Caesares* "Journ. Indo-Europ. St.", IV (1976), pp. 245-253 at p. 250.

²⁷ *Dom.*, 4, 4-5; *Cal.*, 18, 2; *Nero*, 11, 2.

²⁸ Cf. *Iul.*, 39, 4; *Aug.*, 44, 3.

Suetonius' readers, and both he and they were just as aware as moderns of the role, as outlined above, played by the *spectacula* in the emperor's dealings with his subjects. Consequently if Suetonius was aware of the obligation that by his day had fallen on the emperor to present spectacles with some regularity, since this was one of the modes of behaviour now expected of him²⁹, it follows that he has evaluated his biographical subjects in part by measuring how expectation had been met in actual reality. In other words, the rubric of *spectacula* in the lives should be seen not simply as a device for the antiquarian display of randomly amassed pieces of information, but as one means among others of how the performance, and hence the character, of an emperor could be estimated³⁰: the emperor's responsibility towards his subjects at Rome could be judged by the extent to which he had entertained them and demonstrated the liberality it was his duty to show.

Such a view of the recurring topic of *spectacula* in the *Caesares* does not make Suetonius a better writer, or more of an artist, than is really the case. But it does account for the 'relevance' of the inclusion of the spectacles in the lives. It suggests too that other recurring topics, such as those comprising *ius* or *opera*³¹, might also have been influenced by the ethos of the principate in Suetonius' own lifetime, for they similarly reflect imperial activities which gradually became vital aspects of the public performance of all emperors. It is of course often the case that the individual items of information which Suetonius records under rubric headings can be paralleled in other literary sources, and this is certainly true of the spectacles. But the *Caesares* are arranged in a manner which demands attention to the organisation of material as well as the material itself. The topical arrangement could be seen as a means

²⁹ The notion of behaviour expected from the emperor is amply illustrated by Millar, *op. cit. passim*, and it is consequently safe to speak of imperial expectations for Suetonius' period.

³⁰ Cf. Kloft, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

³¹ *Ius*: *Iul.*, 43, 1; *Aug.*, 33, 1; *Claud.*, 14; *Nero*, 15, 1; *Dom.*, 8, 1. *Opera*: *Iul.*, 44, 1; *Aug.*, 29, 1; *Tib.*, 47; *Cal.*, 21; *Claud.*, 20, 1; *Nero*, 16, 1; *Vesp.*, 8, 5; 9, 1; *Titus*, 7, 3; *Dom.*, 5. On the economic significance of the emperor as builder see now P.A. Brunt, *Free labour and public works*, "Journ. Rom. St.", LXX (1980), pp. 81-100 at pp. 96-98. It seems plausible to trace the convention of the emperor as builder back through the activities of such late Republican figures as Pompey ultimately to those of the hellenistic kings.

by which Suetonius simply wished or hoped to set himself off from a superior and more artistic annalistic historian with whom he could not compete on equal terms. Yet from the perspective suggested here it may make more sense to believe that in several ways the *Caesares* reflect the concerns of the population of the Roman empire as far as perception of their emperor was concerned, and that those concerns became part of an independent technique of evaluation in Suetonius' biographies³².

³² I am grateful to Marsh McCall and Gordon Shrimpton for suggesting improvements to a draft of this article.



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 :IMPRINT: Bologna, P`atron Editore.
 :ARTICLE: Bradley, K.; The significance of the spectacula in Suetonius'...
 :VOL: 11 :NO: :DATE: 1981 :PAGES: 129-137
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