

for the rewarding of the winners²¹. Joining a revolt need not have appeared a horrible gamble because, I suppose, careers and ambitions were tied into an immensely resilient fabric of mutual obligations and multiple dependencies. These discouraged both upheavals and reprisal. The fact, combined with the fundamental weakness of the imperial government, allowed for the empire's survival through reigns like Gaius Caligula's, Commodus', and Elagabalus' — with which only penny-dreadful historiography need be much concerned.

KEITH R. BRADLEY

IDEALS OF MARRIAGE IN SUETONIUS' CAESARES

I

The imperial biographies of C. Suetonius Tranquillus provide one of the richest sources of information on the private lives of the early Roman emperors. But to many commentators and historians that information, apparently trivial at worst or of only antiquarian interest at best, has seemed little worthy of serious study — certainly the stuff of biography but not at all fit for historical evaluation proper. One of the aspects of emperors' private lives that seems especially unpromising for historical purposes is that of their marital and sexual behaviour, a subject which regularly appears in the biographies but which has regularly been avoided in discussion because of its often sensationalistic nature. While, broadly speaking, the subject can be admitted to be biographically relevant, perhaps even diverting, modesty and propriety nevertheless dictate that it be left alone, a reaction which is best illustrated by the longstanding convention in the Loeb edition of Suetonius of printing the description of Tiberius' sexual activities on the island of Capri in Latin on the right hand as well as the left hand page¹.

A 69, C 763, C 1206, D 201, E 84, F 91, F 354, M 242 and M 296; before and after A.D. 193, *PIR*², C 1322 and F 27; before and after A.D. 235/8, *PIR*², D 28, H 112, L 452, M 520, O 9, and K. Dietz, *Senatus contra Principem*, Munich 1980, pp. 292 and 296; and even at the turn of the 3rd to 4th century, *PIR*², C 806 and I 36 and *PLRE*, I, p. 977.

²¹ Winners: for example, Antonius Primus and Cornelius Fuscus resume their ambitions at the call of Galba and go on to prominent careers. See *PIR*², A 866 and C 1365, and Syme, p. 592. Vespasian's early supporters are rewarded, including Ti. Julius Celsus (*PIR*², I, 260) and A. Iulius Quadratus (*PIR*², I, 507), and derelict or junior careers are salvaged, see J.K. Evans, "Historia", XXVII (1978), pp. 112 and 120. For Septimius Severus' partisans, see A.R. Birley, "Bonner Jahrb.", CLXIX (1969), pp. 274-279.

¹ One of the strongest statements of condemnation against Suetonius is that of R. Syme, *Tacitus*, Oxford 1958, p. 502: "Suetonius estimated correctly the taste and market of the times. Readers were drawn to the personal items that formal history disdained. There was room for a rival or supplement to the *Annales* — and the chronicle of ancient folly and depravity, compiled by a government official, carried no political danger". Cf., more recently, R.M. Ogilvie, *Roman literature and socie-*

Such topics as *libidines* and *adulteria* continue to be, if not avoided, then certainly downplayed or partially viewed for the most part, even in those new works of scholarship which represent what can be termed a rediscovery of Suetonius in the English-speaking world². The new studies have shown that in composing the lives of the Caesars, Suetonius was not merely compiling miscellaneous pieces of information under a number of meaningless headings, but through the repeated process of categorization along the same lines from one biography to the next was evaluating his subjects against an ideal conception of emperorship which had crystallized by the time the *Caesares* were written in the era of Trajan and Hadrian³. The technique can be seen clearly for example in such an aspect of emperors' public performance as the provision of *spectacula*, which constitutes a rubric in the biographies allowing Suetonius to demonstrate the extent to which individual emperors filled the role of benefactor that became expected of them by their subjects in the first century or so of the Principate⁴. Yet if this view is accurate, that Suetonius in effect was measuring his emperors against an implicit ideal when

ty, Harmondsworth 1980, p. 264: "Suetonius is compiling a series of portraits based upon anecdote, scandal and fact, which are meant to divert, amuse and, on occasion, shock". For the frequency with which sexual behaviour forms a topic in the *Caesares*, see especially *Iul.*, XLIX-LII; *Aug.*, LXVIII-LXXXI; *Tib.*, XLIII-XLV; *Cal.*, XXIV-XXV; XXXVI; *Claud.*, XXXIII; *Nero*, XXVIII-XXIX; *Galba*, XXII; *Vit.*, XII; *Tit.*, VII; *Dom.*, XXII. See W. Steidle, *Sueton und die antike Biographie*, Munich 1963², pp. 54-55; and pp. 29-30; 111 for Suetonius' interest in imperial marriages; B. Moučková, *Studie zu Kaiserbiographien Suetons*, Prague 1968, pp. 28-34; and cf. K.R. Bradley, *Suetonius' Life of Nero: An historical commentary*, Brussels 1978, pp. 153-154.

² Barry Baldwin, *Suetonius*, Amsterdam 1983, pp. 501-507, where Baldwin downplays the sexual element in the *Caesares*, with some justification. He regards the sexual information as a means of character portrayal (p. 507) and as a topic "often introduced mechanically as part of the biographical structure" (p. 506). I agree with that comment, though not only for reasons of character demonstration, as will become clear. For various other remarks see also Baldwin, pp. 257-259; 281; 302 and for Suetonius' "particular aversion" for homosexuality, p. 302 (cf. pp. 228; 281; 503). A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius: the Scholar and his Caesars*, New Haven and London 1983, pp. 183-185, where Wallace-Hadrill sets the sexual information in the context of the Hellenization of upper class Roman society, persuasive-ly but perhaps too narrowly.

³ For discussion of the works cited in n. 2 see Bradley, *The rediscovery of Suetonius*, "Class. Philol.", LXXX (1985), pp. 254-265.

⁴ Bradley, *The significance of the spectacula in Suetonius' Caesares*, "Riv. Stor. Ant.", XI (1981), pp. 129-137.

composing their lives, the ideal ought to extend to their private compartment as well, for the repetition of rubrics concerned with private life is as prominent in the biographies as the recurrence of rubrics devoted to public performance, and it is the simple fact of recurrence or repetition which points up the importance of the rubrics in Suetonius' thinking. One suspects, therefore, that Suetonius' information on emperors' marriages and sexual habits was included not just for the sake of biographical completeness or in order to cater to an appetite for the prurient in his audience, but rather that it says something of historical importance about perceptions of the emperorship in the era of Suetonius. Consequently it is the purpose of this paper to question what ideals of marriage Suetonius works with in the *Caesares*, to trace their source, and to explain why they were significant in contemporary life, if indeed such an assumption can be made.

II

To begin, it is clearly necessary to look at some of the pertinent information from the biographies themselves, and the *Nero* will provide a convenient starting place: since the bulk of the material on Nero's wives and sexual behaviour falls in that long section of the life devoted to the catalogue of Nero's *probra ac scelera* (*Nero*, XIX, 3), Suetonius' overall bias here against the emperor is unmistakable. Thus, once the topic of *libido* has been introduced (*Nero*, XXVI, 1), the items covered include Nero's homosexuality, particularly the outlandish affair with the freedman Sporus, his seductions of married women and the Vestal Rubria, and his incestuous relationship with his mother Agrippina (*Nero*, XXVIII); subsequently, Suetonius illustrates Nero's lack of *pudicitia* by reference to a sexual game invented by the emperor, in which another homosexual partner, the freedman Doryphorus, figured prominently (*Nero*, XXIX). The various items are presented as plain assertions or allegations, with minimal attempt at corroboration. But they should not for that reason simply be dismissed out of hand despite their sensationalistic qualities. Doubtless some of the reports were true, although the issue of strict veracity is largely irrelevant here. Of more importance is Suetonius' presumption that his readers would believe Nero capable of the kinds of behaviour reported, together with Suetonius' lack of objectivity in recording his information, for the material is deliberately construed as reprehensible given its location in the life as a whole. Similarly, Suetonius' information on Nero's wives is tendentiously ar-

ranged. The emperor's marriages are all dealt with together, though not in a neutral rubric on Nero's family life but instead, in view of what happened to the women, as illustrations of Nero's *crudelitas* (Nero, XXXV; cf. XXVI, 1). Nero murdered his first wife, Octavia, killed the second, Poppaea Sabina, by accident, and married the third, Statilia Messalina, when her previous husband had been eliminated to make way for him and after he had sacrificed Antonia, the daughter of Claudius, who had refused to become his wife. Obviously Suetonius could not tamper with or dispute these basic facts, but their collocation is the result of a preconceived plan to exploit them as detrimentally as possible for the emperor's reputation⁵.

A possibly more objective procedure is visible in the *Augustus*. In four sections of this life (*Aug.*, LXVIII-LXXI), Suetonius first introduces rumours of Augustus' homosexuality in early life, and goes on to speak of Augustus' adulterous affairs, giving the detail of Scribonia's unwillingness to tolerate his infidelities and mentioning the illicit relationship with Livia Drusilla before she became his wife; moreover, he names five women who were Augustus' mistresses after his marriage to Livia, who is said indeed to have procured for her husband. However, Suetonius divulges the source responsible for much of his information: none other than M. Antonius. Hence it is easy to see that most of the material derives from that period of intense political rivalry when Octavian and Antonius were competing for mastery of the Roman world⁶. Not that Suetonius rejects the information as baseless for that reason; rather, he goes out of his way to make clear that not even Augustus' friends could deny the allegations of adultery, but that the charges were defended on the grounds of political expediency. He reports too that Augustus himself refuted the reports of homosexuality⁷. There is, therefore, a more ratio-

nal assessment of information on display here, but it seems to be controlled by a general tendency on Suetonius' part to present Augustus in a good light. He cannot exonerate Augustus of all impropriety, but he reduces its extent to a minimum and softens the impact of what is left by the blanket statement which introduces the next portion of the biography: 'In the other details of his life it is generally agreed that he was most temperate and without the suspicion of any fault' (*Aug.*, LXXII, 1)⁸. If Augustus' behaviour was not perfect, little is made of the fact.

As in the *Nero*, Suetonius deals in the *Augustus* with the emperor's wives en bloc, but not this time for any purpose of condemnation but as part of a straightforward description of Augustus' family history (*Aug.*, LXII). The political nature of his marriage to Claudia, the stepdaughter of M. Antonius, is brought out; his disgust for his second wife, Scribonia, is emphasized; and his devotion to his third wife, Livia Drusilla, is stated unambiguously: 'he loved and esteemed her to the end without a rival' (*Aug.*, LXII, 2)⁹. Whether this relatively fulsome language and phraseology betrays Suetonius' approval of this final love-match, the material as a whole is presented in neutral terms at the least, and it should be noted that Suetonius is not critical or judgemental of Augustus' divorces from Claudia and Scribonia or of the subsequent marriages which followed divorce.

The *Augustus* is one of the qualitatively superior Suetonian biographies and the possible signs of deliberation which have been observed in it are comparatively infrequent elsewhere. Indeed, what seems to emerge in the *Caesares* as a whole is that Suetonius' attitude to the sexual and marital details recorded is based less on rational deliberation than on his general estimate of any given biographical subject. For Caesar, Suetonius was able to provide a long litany of details on adulterous affairs (*Iul.*, L-LII) and to establish that Caesar's reputation in his own day was far from exemplary: «But to remove all doubt that he had an evil reputation both for shameless vice and for adultery, I have only to add that the elder Curio in one of his

⁵ For remarks on Suetonius' presentation of material in these sections of the *Nero* see Bradley, *Suetonius' Life of Nero*, (above note 1), pp. 160-165; 207-214. Cf. also J.P. Sullivan, *Literature and politics in the age of Nero*, Ithaca 1985, p. 26.

⁶ *Aug.*, LXVIII; LXIX, 1; LXIX, 2 (M. Antonius is not, however, the only source). Cf. J.M. Carter, *Suetonius, Divus Augustus*, Bristol 1982, pp. 190-191; Baldwin, *Suetonius*, (above note 2), pp. 139-141.

⁷ *Aug.*, LXIX, 1, *adulteria quidem exercuisse ne amici quidem negant, excusantes sane non libidine, sed ratione commissa, quo facilius consilia adversariorum per cuiusque mulieres exquireret. Aug.*, LXXI, 1, *ex quibus sive criminibus sive maledictis infamiam impudicitiae facillime refutavit et praesentis et posterae vitae castitate.*

⁸ *In ceteris partibus vitae continentissimum constat ac sine suspicione ullius vitii.* (Loeb translation).

⁹ *dilexitque et probavit unice ac perseveranter.* (Loeb translation). There is no need to doubt the statement, despite *Aug.*, LXXI, 1. On Augustus' marriages see Carter, *Divus Augustus* (above note 6), pp. 182-183.

speeches calls him "every woman's man and every man's woman"¹⁰ (*Jul.*, LII, 3). It is not altogether surprising therefore that Suetonius reaches the eventual conclusion, when many other unpleasant details have been added, that Caesar was believed to have been *iure caesus* (*Jul.*, LXXVI, 1). His portraits of Tiberius, Caligula and Domitian are hostile in the main. Thus the *libidines* of Tiberius (*Tib.*, XLIII-XLV) are described after a blanket statement heralding the record of the *cuncta simul vitia male diu dissimulata* (*Tib.*, XLII, 1); the material on Caligula's incest with his sisters, his disgraceful marriages and lack of *pudicitia* (*Cal.*, XXIV-XXV; XXXVI) are presented as part of the picture of Caligula the *monstrum* (*Cal.*, XXII, 1); and the section on Domitian's *libido*, which culminates with the detail that Domitian caused the death of his niece when she attempted to abort his child (*Dom.*, XXII) is similarly contrived to damn the emperor¹¹. Further, the sexual conduct of Otho and Vitellius is condemned through respective associations with Nero and Tiberius (*Otho*, II-III; *Vit.*, III). By contrast, Galba, Vespasian and Titus, the last two of whom at least receive a generally good press from Suetonius, come off fairly well. Suetonius knew of Galba's homosexuality (*Galba*, XXII), but he also points out that Galba, rather unusually, remained a widower after his wife's death and resisted the shameful approaches of Agrippina (*Galba*, V, 1). He records that Vespasian resumed a liaison with the freedwoman Caenis after the death of his wife Flavia Domitilla and that Vespasian had several mistresses after the death of Caenis, but in neither case with any strong sign of reproach (*Vesp.*, III; XXI). Finally, he reports on Titus' homosexuality and the affair with the queen Berenice before Titus became emperor, but he emphasizes firmly that Titus' behaviour changed dramatically after his accession (*Titus*, VII); and although the rumour of an affair between Titus and Domitian's wife is included, Domitia's denial of the charge is stressed (*Titus*, X, 2), and the reputation of Titus, whom Suetonius particularly admired, remains little tarnished¹².

¹⁰ *at ne cui dubium omnino sit et impudicitiae et adulteriorum flagrasse infamia, Curio pater quadam eum oratione omnium mulierum virum et omnium virorum mulierem appellat.* (Loeb translation). Cf. Baldwin, *Suetonius* (above note 2), pp. 113-114; 228.

¹¹ Less blatantly tendentious, see also *Cal.*, XI; XII, 2; *Vit.*, XII; *Dom.*, I, 3.

¹² Cf. H. Martinet, *C. Suetonius Tranquillus: Divus Titus*, Königstein/Ts. 1981, pp. 111-112; J.A. Crook, *Titus and Berenice*, "Amer. Journ. Philol.", LXXXII (1951), pp. 162-175.

To the degree, therefore, that an ideal of individual sexual or marital conduct is perceptible in the *Caesares*, it has to be inferred from the far from ideal behaviour often tendentiously chronicled by Suetonius, an ideal more visible in the breach than in the maintenance and one not altogether surprising: the emperor, it appears, was to avoid imputations of homosexuality, adultery and incest, a situation presumably to be achieved, in positive terms, through a faithful and enduring union of marriage to a suitable woman. None of Suetonius' subjects can be commended for accomplishment of the ideal, though perhaps Augustus comes closest to success with his marriage of over fifty years to Livia. The ideal can be summed up in the Suetonian phrase, *vitae castitas* (*Aug.*, LXXI, 1), a phrase notable for its single occurrence in the full sequence of biographies and one which would presumably exclude such actions as Caligula's conversion of the palace into a brothel (*Cal.*, XLI, 1).

III

In tracing the development of the imperial ideal as it applied to the emperor's public demeanour and functions, it is possible to see how the several roles which had traditionally been associated with the Republican magistracies, or even with aspects of Hellenistic kingship, all coalesced in the first century or so of the Principate as the single figure of the emperor came to supersede both magistrates and kings; for example, the *novus status* (*Aug.*, XXVIII, 2) made an imperial monopoly of liberality almost inevitable¹³. But can the same kind of process be expected for such a personal area of the emperor's life as his marital behaviour? Could a special mode of private comportment become synonymous with the new political dispensation? In other words, what is the historical context which controlled Suetonius' information on the failure of successive emperors to behave in ideal marital terms?

To answer these questions it is clearly of relevance to look to contemporary imperial behaviour when the *Caesares* were conceived and composed, which means above all to look to the example of Trajan. In the present state of knowledge there can be no absolute certainty about the chronology of the composition of the *Caesares*, but

¹³ On the theme of imperial liberality see especially H. Kloft, *Liberalitas Principis*, Cologne 1970; F. Millar, *The emperor in the roman world*, London 1977, pp. 133-139. For coalescence, Tac., *Ann.*, I, 2 is apposite.

the most plausible view is that Suetonius began to collect material for them while holding administrative positions in the late years of Trajan and early years of Hadrian, that composition extended well into Hadrian's reign after Suetonius' dismissal from the emperor's service, but that some of the lives, perhaps the *Iulius* and the *Augustus*, had appeared before the year 119¹⁴. If that is correct, the reign of Trajan must be regarded as the formative period for the *Caesares*, as Suetonius moved, in all probability, from the composition of lives of famous men to lives of emperors¹⁵. And indeed the oblique reference to the *abstinentia et moderatio insequentium principum* which concludes the biography of Domitian (*Dom.*, XXIII, 2) suggests a highly positive influence, though on a cynical interpretation the phrase could be considered a means by which Suetonius might hope to evade any personal danger incurred as a result of his work. Suetonius of course has not left any detailed information on Trajan, but it is notable that the *Panegyricus* of Pliny, which undoubtedly exercised a profound influence on Suetonius, does incorporate material on Trajan's private life, of the very sort, moreover, that appears in the *Caesares*¹⁶.

First, speaking of Trajan's journey to Rome from the Danube in 99, Pliny writes, 'It is not for me to call it a virtue in you if neither father nor husband dreaded your approach; others have made a point of cultivating moral purity (*castitas*), but in you it is natural and inborn, and not something to be counted to your credit' (*Pan.*, XX, 2)¹⁷. The use of the word *castitas* here, the single appearance of

¹⁴ For a summary of views see Bradley, *The rediscovery of Suetonius* (above note 3).

¹⁵ It is usually assumed that composition of the *Caesares* followed that of the *De viris illustribus*; see for example Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius* (above note 2), pp. 59; 66. But certitude is impossible; see Baldwin, *Suetonius* (above note 2), p. 380. It should be noted that in what remains of *De viris illustribus*, for instance in the lives of Virgil and Horace, there is a sporadic interest on Suetonius' part in sexual details; see also *Gramm.*, XVI, 1; XXIII, 2, 5-6 (Brugnoti). If indeed the work preceded the *Caesares*, such details could be regarded as foreshadowing Suetonius' interest in emperors' sexual behaviour in the later work. But the details recorded do not suggest a developed and consistent rubric of assessment.

¹⁶ For the influence of the *Panegyricus* on the *Caesares* see Bradley, *Suetonius' judgement of roman emperors*. ANRW (forthcoming).

¹⁷ *Nec vero ego in laudibus tuis ponam, quod adventum tuum non pater quisquam, non maritus expavit: adfectata aliis castitas, tibi ingenita et innata, interque ea quae imputare non possis.* (Loeb translation).

which in Suetonius has already been observed, is of interest. Secondly and similarly, Pliny is able to work in the general point that Trajan was 'unspotted by any form of vice' (*Pan.*, LXXXIII, 2)¹⁸, and thirdly, and most importantly, he has a glowing description of Pompeia Plotina as the incarnation of the ideal wife whose virtues have been nurtured by her husband. The description is worth quoting in full:

Many distinguished men have been dishonoured by an ill considered choice of a wife or weakness in not getting rid of her; thus their fame abroad was damaged by their loss of reputation at home, and their relative failure as husbands denied them complete success as citizens. But your own wife contributes to your honour and glory, as a supreme model of the ancient virtues; the Chief Pontiff himself, had he to take a wife, would choose her, or one like her — if one exists. From your position she claims nothing for herself but the pleasure it gives her, unswerving in her devotion not to your power but to yourself. You are just the same to each other as you have always been, and your mutual appreciation is unchanged. Success has brought you nothing but a new understanding of your joint ability to live in its shadow. How modest she is in her attire, how moderate the number of her attendants, how unassuming when she walks abroad! This is the work of her husband who has fashioned and formed her habits; there is glory enough for a wife in obedience. When she sees her husband unaccompanied by pomp and intimidation, she also goes about in silence, and as far as her sex permits, she follows his example of walking on foot. This would win her praise even if you did the opposite, but with a husband so moderate in his habits, how much respect she owes him as his wife, and herself as a woman! (*Pan.*, LXXXIII, 4-8)¹⁹.

¹⁸ *te ab omni contagione vitiorum reprimis ac revocas.* (Loeb translation).

¹⁹ *Multis inlustribus dedecori fuit aut inconsultius uxor adsumpta aut retenta patentius; ita foris claros domestica destruebat infamia, et ne maximi cives haberentur, hoc efficiebatur, quod mariti minores erant. Tibi uxor in decus et gloriam cedit. (5) Quid enim illa sanctius, quid antiquius? Nonne si pontifici maxima eligenda sit coniunx, aut hanc aut similem (ubi est autem similis?) elegerit? (6) Quam illa nihil sibi ex fortuna tua nisi gaudium vindicat! Quam constanter non potentiam tuam, sed ipsum te reveretur! Idem estis invicem quod fuistis; probatis ex aequo, nihilque vobis felicitas addidit, nisi quod scire coepistis, quam bene uterque vestrum felicitatem ferat. (7) Eadem quam modica cultu, quam parca comitatu, quam civilis incessu! Mariti hoc opus, qui ita imbuat ita instituit; nam uxori sufficit obsequi gloria. (8) An, cum videat quam nullus te timor, nulla comitetur ambitio, non et ipsa cum silentio incedat, ingredientemque pedibus maritum, in quantum patitur sexus, imitetur? Decuerit hoc illam, etiamsi diversa tu facias; sub hac vero modestia viri quantum debet verucundiam uxor marito, femina sibi! (Loeb translation).*

The tone of this passage is obviously determined by the nature of the *Panegyricus* as a whole, but Pliny's remarks suggest how the ideal imperial union might be conceived by a member of the Roman senate addressing the body of his peers in the early second century. The reality may have been very different, for doubts have been expressed about the success of Trajan's marriage to Plotina²⁰. Nevertheless, Plotina remained his wife throughout Trajan's reign, a fact which suggests that the successful public image of the marriage was long maintained over time, and image may have been far more important than reality. Suetonius may well have been impressed by Trajan and Plotina.

However, it seems too restrictive to believe that the marriage of one emperor alone had a truly determining, decisive impact on Suetonius, particularly if through his incorporation within the court circle in the latter part of Trajan's reign Suetonius came to experience first hand some of the tensions which appear to have existed between the emperor and his wife. Furthermore, the marriage of Hadrian and Trajan's grandniece Vibia Sabina, compacted in 100, was also the subject of gossip of which Suetonius must have been aware by the time of his dismissal²¹. Accordingly, without necessarily dismissing the impact of Trajan's marriage as mediated through the *Panegyricus*, Suetonius' imperial ideal should perhaps be sought not so much in contemporary imperial conduct as in various conventions which had always characterized marriage in the Roman upper class. In other words, in comparison with those aspects of ideal imperial behaviour which centered on the exercise of power, a broader social context needs to be created in this particular instance.

IV

Roman marriage had at least three ideal characteristics: first, that a woman was to be married only once during her lifetime, so that she might consequently be praised as *univira*; second, that a woman was to obey her husband unquestioningly; and third, that marriage was to be of lifelong duration, terminated only by spousal

²⁰ Syme, *Roman papers III*, Oxford 1984, p. 1262.

²¹ Syme, *Tacitus* (above note 1), p. 249; *Roman papers III* (above note 20), pp. 1261-1262. For Suetonius' dismissal, *HA Hadr.*, XI, 3.

death²². These features, it has been said, "reflect the ... importance and dignity which Romans attached to the institution of marriage, one-sided though their conception of its obligations often was, and the dignified and important position in society which they accorded to married women"²³. Doubtless the ideal was at times realized, and it is easy to see how it conforms with the image of marriage that can be inferred from the *Caesares*. Moreover, the marriage of Trajan and Plotina, as portrayed in the *Panegyricus*, also fits the traditional mould. But in view of what is known about the realities of upper class Roman marriage, potential for realization of the ideal was in fact minimal.

It is well known that men of the Roman upper class would expect to marry in their mid-twenties, shortly before tenure of the quaestorship if they were entertaining prospects of entering the senate, whereas women were usually much younger, in their teens in fact, when they married²⁴. It was very difficult for a member of the upper class to avoid marriage, especially after Augustus' legislation, but the decision to marry was one over which the principal parties concerned had little control. Most marriages, that is to say, were arranged by other family members for political and social reasons²⁵. Under these circumstances, there was little expectation that marriage would be based on an affection mutually shared by two people, though the hope might be that sentiment would grow once marriage had taken place, and production of the next generation was promptly looked for²⁶. But in consequence, many marriages were only of brief dura-

²² Gordon Williams, *Some aspects of roman marriage ceremonies and ideals*, "Journ. Rom. St.", XLVIII (1958), pp. 16-29. See also M. Humbert, *Le Remariage à Rome*, Milan 1972, pp. 59-75.

²³ Williams, *Some aspects of roman marriage ceremonies and ideals* (above note 22), p. 28.

²⁴ For the age of men at marriage see Syme, *Roman papers II*, Oxford 1979, pp. 666; 672; 783; 807; 808; *Roman papers III* (above note 20), pp. 1160; 1225; 1330; cf. A.N. Sherwin-White, *The letters of Pliny: a historical and social commentary*, Oxford 1966, pp. 476; 496. For women, see M.K. Hopkins, *The age of roman girls at marriage*, "Population Studies", XVIII (1965), pp. 309-327; cf. Syme, *Roman papers III*, pp. 917; 1237.

²⁵ Cf. K. Hopkins, *Death and renewal: Sociological studies in roman history 2*, Cambridge 1983, pp. 86-89; 94. For the tension between compulsion and consent in arranging marriage see S. Treggiari, *Consent to roman marriage: Some aspects of law and reality*, "Class. Views/Echos du monde classique", I (1982), pp. 34-44.

²⁶ cf. Lucr., IV, 1278-1287; Plin., *Epp.*, IV, 19, 6; VI, 26, 3. I am not convinced

tion, either because of fluctuations in politics, or incompatibility between partners, or premature spousal death, and divorce was easy and common; commemorating his wife of forty-one years, the author of a famous inscriptional eulogy which belongs to the late first century B.C. wrote: 'Such longlasting marriages, brought to an end by death, not broken by divorce, are rare'²⁷. It makes sense to believe, therefore, that most members of the Roman upper class would anticipate not one but a succession of marriages in the course of their adult lives, and there is indeed a considerable volume of evidence to show the reality of serial marriage²⁸. The classic example is provided by Vistilia, the mother of Cn. Domitius Corbulo: married a total of six times, in the approximate period of c. 15 B.C. to A.D. 5 she gave birth to seven children, only two of whom were full siblings, and five of her children were born to four husbands within a six year period. Vistilia was not quite the kind of woman Lucretius had in mind, when he wrote that a woman who had produced no children in several marriage might do so in a subsequent union; but Lucretius obviously understood the rate of spousal turnover²⁹.

The realities of Roman marriage continued unchanged in the age of Suetonius, as items from the correspondence of Pliny amply demonstrate. The consular L. Julius Ursus Servianus, for instance, is seen arranging the betrothal of his daughter to Cn. Pedanius Fuscus Salinator: the talk was at once of the children to be anticipated from

by the argument of P. Veyne, *La famille et l'amour sous le haut-empire romain*, "Annales", XXXIII (1978), pp. 35-63, that a moral transformation occurred in Roman society under the early Principate, as part of which the concept of conjugal love became more prominent than in earlier ages.

²⁷ Dessau, 8393 (27) (= M. Durry, *Eloge funèbre d'une matrone romaine*, Paris 1950, p. 9; E. Wistrand, *The so-called laudatio Turiae*, Lund 1976, pp. 21, 36, understands the length of the marriage as "fully forty years"). On divorce see Humbert, *Le remariage* (above note 22), pp. 131-137; cf. S.B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, whores, wives and slaves: Women in classical antiquity*, New York 1975, pp. 158-159; S. Dixon, *A family business: women's role in patronage and politics at Rome 80-44 B.C.*, "Classica et Mediaevalia", XXXIV (1983), pp. 91-112 at pp. 101-104. Note that according to Suet., *Iul.*, L, 1, Pompeius incurred widespread reproach for divorcing a wife who had borne him three children in order to marry Caesar's daughter; cf. also *Claud.*, XXVI, 1, the breaking of a betrothal for political reasons. For the belief that divorce was not common in the lower reaches of society see I. Kajanto, *On divorce among the common people of Rome*, "Rev. Etud. Latines", XLVII bis (1970), pp. 99-113.

²⁸ For copious evidence see Humbert (above note 22), pp. 80-87.

²⁹ Syme, *Roman papers II* (above note 24), pp. 811-814. Lucr., IV, 1251-1253.

the match³⁰. In the process of arranging a betrothal, a man would solicit advice from his friends, as happened with Junius Mauricus who looked to Pliny to recommend a candidate for the hand of his niece; in the event Pliny came up with the name of Minicius Acilianus, a man who at the time had already held the praetorship and so would have been considerably older than the niece herself³¹. When the young senator Junius Avitus died, having been elected to the aedileship but not yet having entered office, he was survived by a wife married only a year previously and an infant daughter³². Pliny himself, it can be recalled, married three times during his life, the sequence being due to spousal deaths, however, rather than divorce³³. Moreover, Suetonius records a multiplicity of details in the *Caesares* which illustrate the same realities in earlier times. He reports that Caesar, in order to retain Pompeius' political support, offered Pompeius his sister's granddaughter, Octavia, in marriage, despite the fact that she was already married, and that Caesar sought the hand of Pompeius' daughter, despite the fact that she was already betrothed (*Iul.*, XXVII, 1). He notes that Augustus' second marriage, to Claudia, the daughter of Fulvia and P. Clodius, was based on the hope of an alliance with Claudia's stepfather, M. Antonius (*Aug.*, LXII, 1), and he gives a detailed account of the ways in which Augustus disposed of his daughter Julia in marriage, first to Marcellus, then to Agrippa and finally to Tiberius (*Aug.*, LXIII; cf. *Tib.*, VII, 2). Both Agrippa and Tiberius were already married when they were compelled to become Julia's husbands, but Suetonius allows no suspicion that he believed compulsory marriages and divorces undertaken for dynastic purposes to be reprehensible in any way. He was well aware that Claudius' marriage to Agrippina was based on political considerations (*Claud.*, XXVI, 3), and that rejection of a political match could lead to a woman's death (*Nero*, XXXV, 4). Yet

³⁰ Plin., *Ep.*, VI, 26. On betrothals see S. Treggiari, *Digna condicio: betrothals in the roman upper class*, "Class. Views/Echos du monde classique", III (1984), pp. 419-451.

³¹ Plin., *Ep.*, I, 14.

³² Plin., *Ep.*, VIII, 23. Cf. Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (above n. 24), p. 476: "His recent marriage suggests that he had married for the sake of his public career, about the time of his quaestorship, as was common."

³³ See Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (above note 24), pp. 71; 559-560. Cf. Syme, *Roman papers II* (above note 24), p. 327, for Pliny's avoidance of mentioning divorce.

items of this sort tend to be recounted without emotion for the most part, with little of the strong bias that attaches to those portions of the *Caesares* which deal with *adulteria* and *libidines*¹⁴.

Roman marriage was a malleable institution, and, as noted above, it allowed little opportunity for the fulfillment of romantic love. It is rare to find evidence of sentiment determining a marriage union in the Roman upper class, though odd examples emerge such as that of Augustus and Livia Drusilla. Suetonius' comment on Augustus' affection for Livia has already been seen, but similar statements appear only infrequently in the *Caesares*: Suetonius mentions the attachment of Caligula to Caesonia and of Nero to Poppaea (*Cal.*, XXV, 3; *Nero*, XXXV, 3); and he points up Caesar's devotion to Servilia, the mother of Brutus (*Iul.*, I, 2), but in that instance of course the relationship was not marital¹⁵. And indeed it is not surprising that the incidence of adultery in the Roman upper class appears to have been so great when marriage, by definition, catered so minimally to the emotional appetites of individuals. Adultery did provide grounds for divorce, and Suetonius has several references to emperors, sometimes when still private citizens, divorcing wives on that charge: Caesar divorced Pompeia at the time of the Bona Dea scandal (*Iul.*, VI, 2); Claudius divorced Plautia Urgulanilla for adultery and suspicion of murder (*Claud.*, XXVI, 2; and Domitian divorced Domitia for adultery committed with the actor Paris, though he was later to remarry her (*Dom.*, III, 1; cf. X, 4). The issue, however, was

¹⁴ See also *Iul.*, XXI, Caesar betrothing his daughter Julia to Pompeius; *Aug.*, LXIV, 1, Augustus arranging the marriages of his granddaughters; *Cal.*, XII, 1, the death of Caligula's wife Junia Claudilla in childbirth; *Claud.*, XXVI, 1, the untimely death before marriage of Livia Medullina; *Claud.*, XXVII, Claudius arranging the marriages of his children. *Iul.*, XLIII, 1 may imply disapproval of rapid remarriage after divorce. Cf. also *Iul.*, XLVIII, and *Aug.*, XXXIV, 2 (with Carter, *Divus Augustus*, above note 6, p. 145); *Aug.*, LXVII, 1; *Tib.*, IV, 3; XXXV, 1.

¹⁵ Statements of strong sentiment in the *Caesares* are notable by virtue of their rarity: *Iul.*, I, 2, *sed ante alias dilexit Marci Bruti matrem Serviliam*; *Aug.*, LXII, 2, *dilexitque et probavit unice ac perseveranter* (cf. *Aug.*, XCIX, 1); *Cal.*, XXIV, 3, *reliquias sorores nec cupiditate tanta nec dignatione dilexit*; *Cal.*, XXV, 3, *Caesonia...et ardentius et constantius amavit*; (cf. *Cal.*, XXXIII); *Nero*, XXXV, 3, *Poppaeam... dilexit unice*; *Dom.*, XXII, *ardentissime palamque dilexit*. Note also *Tib.*, VII, 2, *bene convenientem*; *Tib.*, VII, 3, *amore mutuo* (of Tiberius and Julia, a text not always noticed; cf. G. Bowersock, *Augustus and the east: The problem of the succession*, in F. Millar, E. Segal, edd., "Caesar Augustus: Seven aspects", Oxford 1984, pp. 169-188 at pp. 183-184); *Claud.*, XXXVI, *amorem flagrantissimum* (Claudius for Messalina).

not so much infidelity *per se*, as the impairment of prestige suffered by the husband. For as long as sexual attractiveness could be condemned as a valid basis for marrying, and when a clear distinction could be drawn between sexual enjoyment outside marriage and emotionless reproduction within¹⁶, the extramarital love affair was inevitable; and when arranged marriage did not lead even to sentiment of the companionate sort between spouses and failed to offset homosexual attraction, the degree of personal emotional injury occasioned by an affair is not likely to have been great. The only significant factor was discretion and avoidance of scandal, as when Caesar accounted for his divorce of Pompeia with the remark that members of his family should be free from any suspicion, let alone any charge, of criminality (*Iul.*, LXXIV, 2)¹⁷. So, from this perspective, it follows that in Suetonius' records of *adulteria* and *libidines*, there was nothing intrinsically unusual about the events themselves, only about the notoriety which stemmed from the involvement in them of men who were or who became emperors.

V

If then the traditional ideals of Roman marriage were for many little more than ideals, and if failure to realize them was common in society, why should Suetonius have been so concerned to document and to write of emperors' shortcomings and to promote, implicitly at least, an image of the perfect union, akin perhaps to that of Trajan and Plotina? Recent explanations point to Suetonius' interest in the portrayal of character, and the increasingly Hellenized aspect of upper class Roman society¹⁸. But other factors may be worth consideration.

It must be emphasized that the ideals of the past had not lost vogue but were still being cultivated in the era of Suetonius. That much is clear not only from the way Pliny spoke of Trajan and Plotina but also from statements on his marriage to Calpurnia. In a letter written to Calpurnia's aunt, Pliny composed what amounts to a progress report on how his young wife, whom he had only recently married,

¹⁶ *Plut.*, *Sulla*, XXXV; *Lucr.*, IV, 1073-1120; 1268-1276. Cf. Treggiari, *Digna Conditio* (above note 30), pp. 433-434.

¹⁷ On this theme cf. Syme, *Roman papers II* (above note 24), pp. 510-517.

¹⁸ See above, note 2.

was turning out in her new role, in which the stress falls on Calpurnia's domestic virtues and her devotion, that is to say subordination, to her husband³⁹. Pliny was presumably her first husband and there was a certain prospect that she would dutifully provide children for him in the course of time⁴⁰. Perhaps Pliny hoped at last for a union comparable to that of a certain Macrinus, who, he informs, had enjoyed thirty-nine years of marriage at the time of his wife's death⁴¹. In Pliny's view Macrinus' wife had been an exemplary woman, displaying various virtues but especially 'reverentia marito'⁴², wifely deference, stress on which is highly visible in other places in Pliny's correspondence, notably in the remarkable story of Thræsea Paetus' wife Arria, of the woman who committed suicide with her husband to avoid incurable disease, and of Domitius Tullus' second wife who was selfless enough to devote herself to a wreck of a man⁴³. Such anecdotes recall Tacitus' statement that the era he was to describe in the *Historiae* was not lacking in instructive examples of self-effacing wives who accompanied their husbands into exile⁴⁴.

Like all Roman ideals that of a woman's subordination to her husband had a practical aspect to it. The unequal partnership between superior husband and inferior wife was only one of a series of comparable traditional relationships which laid the foundations on which Roman social stability was built. Seneca, for example, offers a partial catalogue of them, significantly calling them *imperia* (both *magna* and *minora*): the relationships between emperor and subject, father and children, teacher and pupils, officer and soldiers; and

³⁹ Plin., *Ep.*, IV, 19. Of Plin., *Epp.*, VI, 4; VI, 7; VII, 5 it has been said, "These three letters are a valuable document for social history. They blend together, for the first time in European history, the role of husband and lover, and like other letters of Pliny cast a favourable light on the attitude of his social equals to marriage"; Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (above note 24), p. 407. That view, however, may be overstated: although Pliny's letters to Calpurnia have a tender side to them, one suspects a certain posturing, and what Calpurnia's feelings were is unknowable. But she figures minimally in the daily regimen of *Ep.*, IX, 36; cf. also *Ep.*, VIII, 10, where Pliny's wish for children is based on socio-political aspirations.

⁴⁰ Plin., *Ep.*, VIII, 10.

⁴¹ Plin., *Ep.*, VIII, 5.

⁴² Plin., *Ep.*, VIII, 5, 1.

⁴³ Plin., *Ep.*, III, 16; VI, 24; VIII, 18. Note, however, that Pliny speaks of Macrinus' marriage as 'sine iurgio sine offensa' (*Ep.*, VIII, 5, 1), which recalls the essentially loveless records of tombstone commemorations.

⁴⁴ Tac., *Hist.*, I, 3, *secutae maritos in exilia coniuges*.

that between master and slave could of course be added⁴⁵. These were the structures of authority which conventionally shaped Roman society, and there was value in promoting them if the hierarchical nature of society, and indeed society itself, was to be preserved. When intellectuals frequently regarded the present as the low point on a line of steady historical decline, a call for the perpetuation of ideal structures offered the only hope for immediate circumstances. Moreover, marriage ideals in particular may well have been enjoying a new lease of life in the age of Suetonius and Pliny, in view of what is usually termed the Flavian reaction against the excesses of the Julio-Claudian period, despite the reputation of Domitian⁴⁶. Thus ideal perception of Roman marriage still retained vitality and validity, and made evaluation of imperial performance possible and meaningful to an author interested in the 'abstinentia et moderatio insequentium principum' as well as the *virtutes* and *vitia* of their predecessors.

It should be emphasized too that what made such evaluation almost impossible to avoid by Suetonius was the lack of distinction between emperors' public and private lives, itself the product of their preeminent position of authority. In the *Iulius* and the *Augustus* Suetonius could draw a clear line between his subjects' public and private comportment, a line of obvious organizational convenience as he arranged the mass of material at his disposal⁴⁷. But as the wealth of private details he conveys reveals, the life of the emperor was open to scrutiny to an extent applicable to no other member of the Roman upper class. Pliny again puts the matter bluntly and accurately: "One of the chief features of high estate is that it permits no privacy, no concealment, and in the case of princes, it flings open the door not only to their homes but to their private apartments and

⁴⁵ Sen. *Clem.*, I, 16, 2; *Ben.*, III, 18, 3. On this topic in general see R.P. Saller, *Personal patronage under the early empire*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 7-39.

⁴⁶ Sherwin-White, *The Letters of Pliny* (above note 24), pp. 117; 431; Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius* (above note 2), pp. 186-189.

⁴⁷ *Iul.*, XLIV, 4, *Talia agentem atque meditantem mors praevnit. de qua prius quam dicam, ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad civilia et bellica eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summam exponere. Aug.*, LXI, 1, *Quoniam qualis in imperis ac magistratibus regendaque per terrarum orbem pace belloque re p. fuerit, exposui, referam nunc interiorem ac familiarem eius vitam quibusque moribus atque fortuna domi et inter suos egerit a iuventa usque ad supremum vitae diem.*

deepest retreats; every secret is exposed and revealed to rumour's listening ear" (*Pan.*, LXXXIII, 1)¹⁴. Yet Pliny had discovered nothing new; the price of celebrity had long since been known: "If humble men, who pass their lives in obscurity are provoked by anger to do wrong, few know of it, because few know anything about such unimportant people. But men in positions of great power live, as it were, on an eminence, and their actions are known to all the world. The higher our station, the less is our freedom of action. We must avoid partiality and hatred, and above all anger; for what in others would be called merely an outburst of temper, in those who bear rule is called arrogance and cruelty". Thus Caesar in Sallust's report of the senatorial debate on the Catilinarian conspirators¹⁵. What the *Caesares* suggest, within this context, is that in the way the Roman emperor, as a paternalist monarch, had come to be seen as the embodiment of munificence and beneficence, so too, as the leading citizen, he had come to be expected to preserve the old standards of private morality. It was the emperor after all who set the tone of society, and to conservative opinion of the sort represented by Pliny and his circle, which of course included Suetonius, there was much to be said in favour of encouraging traditional structures and social norms for the wellbeing of the present, and indeed the future. This does not altogether mean that the *Caesares* have to be considered a didactic work in the strictest sense, specifically designed in the manner of Seneca's *De Clementia* for the instruction of one particular emperor, for Suetonius was not addressing himself in the first instance to an audience of emperors. But the work can be regarded as one shaped and governed by the aspirations of the new aristocracy at Rome for an emperor who would avoid private excess for the sake of society's improvement as a whole. In the sense that Suetonius was recording facts not only for their intrinsic interest but also because of their contemporary relevance, support and enhancement of marriage ideals was appropriate.

¹⁴ *Habet hoc primum magna fortuna, quod nihil tectum, nihil occultum esse patitur; principum vero non domus modo sed cubacula ipsa intimosque recessus recludit, omniaque arcana noscenda famae proponit atque explicat.* (Loeb translation).

¹⁵ *Sall., BC, LI, 12-14: qui demissi in obscuro vitam habent, si quid iracundia deliquere, parci sciunt, fama et fortuna eorum pares sunt: qui magno imperio praediti in excelso aetatem agunt, eorum facta cuncti mortales novere. ita in maxuma fortuna minima licentia est; neque studere neque adisse, sed minime irasci decet; quae apud alios iracundia dicitur, ea in imperio superbia atque crudelitas appellatur* (Trans. S.A. Handford).

VI

To summarize. The information contained on emperors' sexual and marital lives in Suetonius' *Caesares* can be attributed on a superficial view to a putative penchant for gossip and the salacious on the part of their author or of his audience or of both. Whether the material has entertainment value is largely a matter of taste, but Suetonius' own attitude to the information is generally critical even in those biographies of whose subjects he has left favourable impressions. The topic of sexual behaviour occurs regularly in the lives, a fact which suggests, when set alongside the recurrence of other topics, that it was of particular importance to Suetonius' manner of evaluating his subjects, and the generally critical attitude he displays connotes evaluation against an implicit standard of private behaviour which, he found, was never attained. The marital standard or ideal can be related to traditional views of Roman marriage rather than to modes of comportment in public life which had become narrowly associated with the figure of the emperor in the early Principate, and although Suetonius was well aware that conventional ideals were often difficult to realize, he lived in an age when they still found favour with his contemporaries. The maintenance of longstanding marriage ideals represented maintenance of the status quo in Roman society, and when the climate and tone of society owed everything to its most visible member, they could be enjoined upon the emperor in particular because he was society's leader, the one chiefly responsible for the direction of society. The failures of past emperors demonstrated the importance of and necessity for success if the present and the future if the wellbeing of society was to be preserved, and perhaps in the reign of Trajan there was some cause for optimism. But as Suetonius continued the composition of the *Caesares* under Hadrian, that feeling is likely to have given way to one less hopeful¹⁶.

¹⁶ This paper was read before an audience at Stanford University in February, 1985. I am grateful to Professor Marsh McCall and to Professor Susan Treggiari for marking the occasion possible, and particularly to the latter for pointing out to me the precedent of the Republican provincial governor displaying *abstinentia*, for which see *Cic., Att.*, V, 15, 3; XVII, 2, 5; XXI, 5.



LIB. HAS 1- 1971-

Borrower:**141.222.44.128**

Record 9 of 16

ILL pe

Record 9 of 16

CAN YOU SUPPLY ? YES NO COND FUTUREDATE

:ILL: 9495412	:Borrower: VZS	:ReqDate: 20020903	:NeedBefore: 2002100:
:Status: IN PROCESS 20020903	:RecDate:	:RenewalReq:	
:OCLC: 1445612	:Source: OCLCILL	:DueDate: N/A	:NewDueDate:
:Lender: *BMC,BNG,UPM			

:TITLE: Rivista storica dell'antichit`a.

:IMPRINT: Bologna, P`atron Editore.

:ARTICLE: Bradley, K.; Ideals of marriage in Suetonius' Caesares

:VOL: 15 :NO: :DATE: 1985 :PAGES: 77-95

:VERIFIED: OCLC ISSN: 0300-340X [Format: Serial]

:PATRON: Curley, D DEPT: clas st STATUS: fac

:SHIP TO:

ILLSkidmore College Library

815 No.Broadway
 Saratoga Springs
 NY
 12866

:BILL TO: Same

:SHIP VIA: Fastest at no chg. :MAXCOST: \$0 IFM :COPYRT COMPLIANCE: CCL

:FAX: (518)580-5540 *** ARIEL ADDRESS 141.222.44.128

:E-MAIL: ILLDESK@skidmore.edu

:BORROWING NOTES: SUNY/OCLC Deposit Account# w/ UMI:D#800108 Oberlin Grp.
 Mem/CANNOT PAY INVOICE WITHOUT COPY OF REQUEST We do not charge for ILL
 services. Please reciprocate.

:AFFILIATION: SUNY/OCLC, Oberlin Grp., LVIS

OCLC Number:

ILLSkidmore College Library
 815 No.Broadway
 Saratoga Springs
 NY
 12866