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Augustus and the Architecture of Masculinity

By

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History

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Introduction:

Many previous studies have been completed on ancient Rome, including studies on Augustus, gender issues, and the Roman games, which have helped create a timeline of Augustus's rise to power, an architectural layout of the Circus Maximus and a social hierarchy based on gender. The purpose of this study is to illustrate the relationship between these three areas of research. The thesis will address the political agenda of the Emperor Augustus and will argue that the perceived notions of masculinity that were prevalent in Roman public life largely impacted his actions. In addition, the thesis will demonstrate how politics and masculinity were intimately related to the games, focusing mainly on the events Augustus hosted in the Circus Maximus. Finally, the work will illustrate how the architecture of the Circus Maximus, especially the location and importance of the obelisk Augustus placed on the barrier, was a political statement that embodied the social order of the empire, reminded the Roman citizens of the army's victories over foreign peoples, and aligned Augustus with the gods, legitimizing his sovereignty in Rome.

The first chapter addresses Augustus's political agenda and the major changes he was making throughout the Roman world. When Augustus came to power the Roman Republic had collapsed and the state had fallen into fourteen years of civil war. For Augustus, this made it difficult when establishing his authority and making the bold shift into an empire. The fragile state of Rome during the rise of Augustus is significant for this study, because it explains why Augustus was so eager to please the people, and why he did so many public works, such as hosting games and adorning the city with monuments. It will be important in this paper to link both Augustus's brutality and his willingness to work for the people to the games he put on and the monuments with which he adorned the city and the Circus Maximus. In these social acts,

however, it is important to understand Augustus's personal agenda of establishing his absolute authority in Rome and the social ideals of masculinity that he had to maintain.

Manliness was the driving force behind the Roman elite. It shaped legislation, social hierarchy, and sexual protocol. The second chapter will discuss masculinity in terms of penetration within sexual relationships, brutality, and the Roman gaze, or visual penetration. The inclusion of a discussion of the Roman gaze is imperative to this thesis, because it underscores the relationship among masculinity, sexuality, and visual stimulation associated with visual spectacles, such as the games. For this reason, visual penetration will be defined within the realm of the Circus Maximus and architecture in Rome.

To create a complete definition of the games and the political statement Augustus intended to make when hosting them the third chapter will include discussion on what took place in the arena, what the political and social roles of games were, and the role of the audience in the arena. It was important for Rome to be reminded of its militaristic identity and violent ways, because through these actions the Roman system of social hierarchy was based on manliness. Also, the games were a way for Augustus to remind the citizens of his personal accomplishments and the positive changes he brought to the people of Rome through his military successes.

The final example that will be used to demonstrate the intimate relationship between Augustus's political acts of establishing an empire, masculinity within Roman society, and the social and political life of the Roman games is the obelisk of Augustus. Augustus placed this obelisk on the barrier of the Circus Maximus in 10 B.C.E., and it stood as a symbol of his masculinity, extreme wealth, military successes, political legitimacy, and relationship with the gods. The obelisk physically symbolized Augustus's political agenda of establishing an empire, displayed at the games under a curtain of masculinity and social order, and it supports the

argument that physical improvements to the city were one of the methods Augustus used to win over the support of his citizens, which was key to his political success.

In conclusion the thesis will demonstrate the relationship between Augustus's political agenda, the social construct of gender, and the Roman games. The overall argument is that to create an empire Augustus had to gain the support of the Roman citizens, which he did by upholding the Roman ideal of masculinity and by making improvements in the physical and cultural life of the citizens. Augustus had to walk a fine line while establishing his legitimacy, and it is the purpose of this paper to define the line and show how Augustus overcame and became and first emperor of Rome.

Chapter 1: Augustus

Born in 63 B.C.E., in the ancient town of Velitrae, Gaius Octavius was the great nephew of Julius Caesar on his mother's side, and because Caesar had no biological heir, Octavius was one of the dictator's closest male relatives.¹ It was not until his adolescence that Octavius was able to form a relationship with his great uncle, but, once the two men met, it did not take long for Caesar to take a liking to his great nephew. After Octavius came of age, Caesar invited his nephew to join him on one of his military conquests in Spain.² The special bond between the two men was made obvious in Caesar's will in which he left three-quarters of his inheritance to Octavius and only one-quarter to the other two male relatives.³ With the inheritance of money, Octavius also received his great uncle's name, clientele and the opportunity to enter the Roman political world. With the acceptance of the inheritance also came the responsibility of avenging the assassins, and, for this reason, Octavian's mother and stepfather advised him not to accept it.⁴ Octavian did not listen to his parents, however, and accepted the inheritance, immediately returned to Rome, and changed his name to Gaius Julius Caesar Octavian, Octavian for short.⁵ It also seemed that Octavian had inherited his great uncle's political ideas and attitudes.

The purpose of this chapter is to define Octavian's actions after receiving the inheritance of Caesar and illustrate the careful steps he had to take to successfully establish himself as the first emperor of Rome, while avoiding the fate of his great uncle. The chapter will discuss the

¹ Werner Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 7.

² Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, trans. Alexander Thomson (Williamstown: Corner House Publishers, 1978), 78-79. While the use of Suetonius as a source is necessary because of the great detail he includes in his work about Augustus, it must be addressed that he is writing one hundred years after the reign of Augustus. Many of the opinions he expressed and what he chose to emphasize in his writing is skewed from the truth due to the success of the empire Augustus created. Suetonius is writing about the legacy Augustus left and not necessarily the full truth of his reign. While this raises questions about what really happened during Augustus's time, it is important to note that it was acceptable for him to twist the truth in favor of Augustus, because he had been so successful at what he had set out to do, which was creating an empire.

³ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 7.

⁴ Jim Whiting, *The Life and Times of Augustus Caesar* (Hockessin: Mithcell Lane Publishers, 2005), 10.

⁵ Anthony Everitt, *Augustus: The Life of Rome's First Emperor* (New York: Random House, 2006), 57.

military, legislative, and social moves Octavian made in the name of restoring the republic that actually led to its demise and the start of imperial Rome.

One year after the death of Caesar, it became obvious to the people of Rome that Octavian meant to carry on the legacy of his great uncle. In 45 B.C.E., following the example of Julius Caesar, Octavian entered into the Second Triumvirate with Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, one of Caesar's generals, and Marc Antony, Octavian's greatest rival, and the three men made plans to take over the state.⁶ The secret agenda of the Triumvirate was exposed quickly when the three men began killing hundreds of senators and Roman elites who they accused of being involved in the plot against Caesar; proof of the victims' involvement in the plot was rare, but the wealth confiscated from them was great.⁷ One of the men killed during this terror was Cicero, who had been a key supporter of Octavian's inclusion in Roman politics. His death was the first sign of Octavian's interest in his own advancement over the advancement of others.⁸

Of the three men in the Triumvirate Octavian was the least experienced politically and weakest militarily. All three hoped for absolute authority in the end, but until that time they were united on the common ground of getting vengeance on Caesar's assassins.⁹ In his writing, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, Suetonius commented, "The motive which gave rise to all these wars was the opinion [Octavian] entertained that both his honor and interest were concerned in revenging the murder of his uncle, and maintain the state of affairs he had established."¹⁰ The wars mentioned in the passage were the civil wars Octavian led against Brutus, Cassius, and, later, Antony.

⁶ Mariam Greenblatt, *Augustus and Imperial Rome* (New York: Benchmark Books, 2000), 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 14. The Triumvirate was in desperate need of money to raise troops for their military campaign against Brutus and Cassius, the true conspirators of Caesar's death.

⁸ Whiting, *The Life and Times of Augustus Caesar*, 14.

⁹ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 15.

¹⁰ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 79.

In Roman society it was very important that political leaders were successful in their military campaigns, and, unfortunately for Octavian, his early campaigns were failures.¹¹ In 43 B.C.E. he was awarded with the rank of proprietor with imperium, which gave him the right to command troops in battle.¹² Octavian wrote about his early battles in his autobiographical writing, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, stating:

Those who slew my father I drove into exile, punishing their deed by due process of law, and afterwards when they waged war upon the republic I twice defeated them in battle. Wars, both civil and foreign, I undertook through the world, on sea and land. Twice I triumphed with an ovation, thrice I celebrated curule triumphs, and was saluted as imperator twenty-one times.¹³

Octavian was smart with his writing in leaving out the detail that it was not always he who was necessarily leading the troops to these victories, but instead his fellow triumvirate Marc Antony, when the two were not fighting one another, and his lifetime friend Agrippa, who had prove himself a competent and brave military leader.¹⁴ Octavian had an unfortunate habit of falling ill on the eve of great battles, and his rival for power, Antony, did not hesitate making this known to the public and questioned whether it was illness or cowardice that kept the commander off the battlefield.¹⁵ Octavian learned from his mistake, however, and after only a few major setbacks his troops began to increase in size and power, thanks largely to the success they were having with Agrippa in command.¹⁶

Since the time of Julius Caesar's assassination, the senate had continued to be the ruling body of Roman daily life, however, the state had not transitioned back to a full republic due to the looming presence of Octavian and Antony, both who claimed they were the rightful heir to

¹¹ Everitt, *Augustus*, 78-185.

¹² Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, trans. Frederick W. Shipley, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), 347.

¹³ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 347-351.

¹⁴ Everitt, *Augustus*, 78-185.

¹⁵ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 17-18.

¹⁶ Everitt, *Augustus*, 78-185.

Caesar's position of authority. Prior to the creation of the Second Triumvirate the two men met in battle, with the senate on Octavian's side. Suspiciously both consuls who were fighting with Octavian were killed in battle leaving their positions open, which Octavian immediately claimed for himself despite being younger than the age required by law.¹⁷ Suetonius commented on the event in his writing, stating:

[Octavian] seized the consulship in the twentieth year of his age, quartering his legions in a threatening manner near the city, and sending deputies to demand it for him in the name of the army. When the senate demurred, a centurion, named Cornelius, who was at the head of the chief deputation, throwing back his cloak, and showing the hilt of his sword, had the presumption to say in the senate-house, 'This will make him consul, if ye will not'.¹⁸

Again, this was an example of Octavian's first priority being his own power and advancements as well as a step away from the tradition of the republic.

During the reign of the Second Triumvirate the men were busy fighting off common enemies, such as Brutus and Cassius, but soon the union took the same turn as the preceding triumvirate had, and in 33 B.C.E. Octavian and Antony were gearing up to fight one another.¹⁹ In 32 B.C.E. Antony began moving his troops west into Greece, and Rome prepared for another civil war.²⁰ Once again, knowing his own faults, Octavian handed over control of his troops to Agrippa, who designed the army's battle plan, and it was an instant success. The war quickly began to favor Octavian and his men, and by 31 B.C.E. the final battle of the war was upon them when the two sides met at Actium for a naval battle.²¹ Agrippa's fleet largely outnumbered and outmaneuvered Antony's and within one day of battle Antony and Cleopatra, his military and political partner as well as new lover, retreated back to Egypt and Octavian was named

¹⁷ Whiting, *The Life and Times of Augustus Caesar*, 12.

¹⁸ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 95.

¹⁹ Everitt, *Augustus*, 169-172.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 169-172.

²¹ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 38.

victorious.²² It was not enough for Octavian to be victorious on the battlefield; he wanted to completely eliminate his enemy and any possibility of a future uprising, so in 30 B.C.E., this time without Agrippa, Octavian led forces into Egypt and won the end of his and Rome's civil war.²³

The decision to invade Egypt without the assistance of Agrippa was a very smart move on Octavian's part. Due to the large number of Antony's men who changed their allegiance to Octavian following their defeat in 31, the invasion of Egypt was an easy victory, one that Octavian was capable of winning without the help of Agrippa, and thanks to this decision, Octavian was able to boast of his sole command of the victorious army, and Egypt became his personal booty.²⁴ The invasion of Egypt was as easy as hoped for, and as Octavian and his troops approached Alexandria, the capital city where Marc Antony was staying, both Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide, leaving their city to be taken and Egypt finally to become part of the Roman Empire.²⁵ The victory over Antony and the end of the civil wars provided Octavian with a very special privilege, for only the third time since the founding of Rome the gates to the Temple Janus Quirinus were closed, signifying true peace throughout the state.²⁶

Throughout the past decade, while Octavian had been fighting the civil wars, he had also been busy establishing himself as a political leader. Nine years after he had made himself consul he was reelected for the position.²⁷ The years between these two elections to the consulship were the years in which Octavian was a member of the leading Triumvirate, which was a position the three men forced the Senate to approve of and renew after the first five years.²⁸ In the agreement

²² Everitt, *Augustus*, 182-188.

²³ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 39.

²⁴ Everitt, *Augustus*, 189.

²⁵ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 38-40.

²⁶ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 365.

²⁷ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 95.

²⁸ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 15-31.

of the Triumvirate, all of Italy was neutral territory; however, Octavian was the prominent power in the city, and he used this position to his advantage, making his personal time and money benefit the people of Rome.²⁹ Octavian described some of the donation he made to Rome out of his personal fund stating, “To the Roman plebs I paid out three hundred sesterces per man in accordance with the will of my father, and in my own name in my fifth consulship I gave four hundred sesterces apiece from the spoils of war.”³⁰ Besides monetary donations Octavian also built many infrastructures and restored many monuments within the city walls, such as the Temple of the Divine Julius, the Temple of Apollo, which included libraries of Greek and Latin text, and the Forum Augustum.³¹ Suetonius notes that Octavian is claimed to have said, “I found [Rome] of brick, but left it of marble.”³² Octavian’s presence in the city and the positive image he built for himself helped gain great popularity with the Roman people even before he was victorious over Antony and was finally able to bring Rome to peace.³³

Octavian’s status as a much supported and loved leader was proven by the homecoming he was presented with after his successful invasion of Egypt. He was the first Roman leader to be greeted by a crowd of senators and citizens outside of the city walls.³⁴ The people had traveled a great distance to pay tribute to Octavian, and, once he returned to the city of Rome, he put on a triple triumph to celebrate his victories at Actium, Alexandria, and Illyricum.³⁵ Velleius Paterculus, a general in the Roman army under Tiberius who also lived during the reign of Augustus, wrote about the feelings surrounding the return of Octavian in his work:

There is nothing that man can desire from the gods, nothing that the gods can grant to a man, nothing that wish an conceive or good fortune bring to pass, which

²⁹ Everitt, *Augustus*, 163-166.

³⁰ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augustus*, 367.

³¹ Diane Farvo, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 96-97

³² Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 99.

³³ Everitt, *Augustus*, 163-166.

³⁴ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 363.

³⁵ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 40.

Augustus on his return to the city did not bestow upon the republic, the Roman people, and the world.³⁶

Another major change took place with the end of the civil wars; the entire military was for the first time under the control and command of a single leader, Octavian, and it was Octavian's past actions of paying the veteran soldiers their promised rewards and giving them the land entitled to them as payment for their duties out of his own funds that allowed him to keep the respect of the soldiers.³⁷

The political success of Octavian up through the end of the civil wars along with his military dominance made him the supreme power in Rome, but the question was what was the next step going to be.³⁸ Was Rome ready for a dictator, and was Octavian willing to risk the same fate as his great uncle by becoming one? What was the senate's role in the future, and were they willing to concede their power to one man? The answer to all these questions came first with the change of name.

In 27 B.C.E. Octavian's name changed once again from Gaius Julius Caesar Octavian to Emperor Caesar divi filius Augustus, Augustus for short.³⁹ The title "divi filius" had been added earlier when Julius Caesar had become deified, because it literally meant "the son of a god."⁴⁰ Having this title included in his name permanently demonstrated Augustus's intent to align himself with the gods. The title of Emperor was a hereditary title that Augustus had earned by defeating Marc Antony, which symbolized Augustus as a victorious military general.⁴¹ The title Augustus was bestowed upon him by the people of Rome in 27 B.C.E. as a gift of

³⁶ Paternus, *History of Rome*, trans. Frederick W. Shipley, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924), 237.

³⁷ H. Galsterer, "A Man, a Book, a Method: Sir Ronald Syme's Roman Revolution after Fifty Years," *Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate*, eds. Kurt A. Raaflaub and Mark Toher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990): pp. 1-20.

³⁸ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 40.

³⁹ Galsterer, "A Man, a Book, a Method," 15.

⁴⁰ Everitt, *Augustus*, 85.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 197-198.

thanks for returning the government back into the hands of the senate, which Augustus had formally done in the beginning months of the year during a speech in the senate.⁴² In Augustus's record of this event, he was awarded with the title on account of his, "valor, clemency, justice, and pity."⁴³ Paterculus, however, gives a list of more tangible reasons for the thanks and recognition, stating:

The civil wars were ended after twenty years, foreign war suppressed, peace restored, the frenzy of arms everywhere lulled to rest; validity was restored to the laws, authority to the courts, and dignity to the senate; the power of the magistrates was reduced to its former limits, with the sole exception that two were added to the eight existing praetors. The old traditional form of the republic was restored.⁴⁴

Along with being awarded the title of Augustus, Augustus was presented with a golden shield, a crown above his door, and laurel wreaths around the door of his house.⁴⁵ These actions showed how much respect and thanks the city had for Augustus's achievements.

To make the act of restoring the state back to its republican form seem genuine, and not just a front as it truly was, the first years after the shift in governmental power Augustus spent in the provinces, leaving Rome to appear as if under complete senate rule.⁴⁶ The truth was, however, that even though Augustus had restored public elections and handed back the power to the senate, he was still in control. Suetonius stated:

He twice entertained thoughts of restoring the republic; first immediately after he had crushed Antony. The second time was in consequence of a long illness. But reflecting at the same time that it would be both hazardous to himself to return to the condition of a private person, and might be dangerous to the public to have the government place again under the control of the people, he resolved to keep it in his own hands.⁴⁷

⁴² Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 44-49; P.A. Brunt, "The Role of the Senate in the Augustan Regime," *Classics Quarterly* 34 (1984): pp. 423-444.

⁴³ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 402.

⁴⁴ Paterculus, *History of Rome*, 237.

⁴⁵ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 401.

⁴⁶ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 53-54.

⁴⁷ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars* 98.

Even though he had no intention of restoring the Republic like he claimed, Augustus was very good at keeping his agenda of monopolizing the power of Rome for himself very well masked. He did not treat the senate as if they were inferior to him. He still stood anytime a senator entered a room and continued to turn to the senate for advice.⁴⁸ He continued his consulship with consecutive terms until 23 B.C.E., and, even then, he was awarded the proconsulship in his provinces and was given special privileges with his imperium so his power would still stand in Rome.⁴⁹

After the formal act of returning the government to the senate had taken place, Augustus made some major changes to the organization of the government and the distribution of power. Augustus created fourteen administration regions of the city, each of which was managed by a magistrate who was elected by the people of the region and who answered to appointed officials.⁵⁰ Though the creation of fourteen regions of administration looks like a republican move, it was a way for Augustus to take away power from the senate. Suetonius claims that Augustus would personally chose the candidates for elections.⁵¹

The power in the provinces was also redistributed. They were divided into two groups, senatorial provinces, which were under the power of the senate, and imperial provinces, which Augustus had control of himself.⁵² The imperial provinces were mostly the boarder provinces that housed the majority of the military, of which Augustus had remained supreme commander.⁵³ Augustus knew that the legitimacy to his claim to power rested in keeping the army under control, and, for this reason, he did not return the army to its previous state of being, which was

⁴⁸ Greenblatt, *Augustus and Imperial Rome*, 17.

⁴⁹ A. H. M. Jones, "The Imperium of Augustus," *Journal of Roman Studies* 41 (1951): 112-119.

⁵⁰ Farvo, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*, 138.

⁵¹ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 113.

⁵² Whiting, *The Life and Times of Augustus Caesar*, 28.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 28; Galsterer, "A Man, a Book, a Method," 15.

militia whose men only spent short times in the service and was continuously recruiting.⁵⁴ The result of the new military structure was an army of 28 legions, a total of 170,000 men, plus additional auxiliary units, and, to maintain high numbers, Augustus occasionally had to pay for his men out of personal funds.⁵⁵

Not only did Augustus make sure he was the dominant force in the military and government, but also in the social life of Rome. He insisted on being called *princeps*, meaning first citizen or first among equals; however, he also passed many laws that made him far from an equal.⁵⁶ When Licinius Crassus sought to celebrate his military triumphs in Macedonia by dedicating the armor of the fallen enemy to Jupiter, Augustus immediately refused to allow the event to take place, because doing so would give Crassus the right to have a public celebration of a higher degree than Augustus had been able to celebrate himself.⁵⁷ This single event was not the only one its kind, following 19 B.C.E. only Augustus and his family members were celebrate triumphs.⁵⁸ Along with limiting triumphs Augustus passed legislation that limited the number of games, and who was allowed to host them. In addition, Augustus also limited the size and cost of the games, so no occurrence could be more lavish than games that he hosted personally.⁵⁹

For Augustus's plan to work, however, he did have to disguise his actions in a cloak of humility. In 22 B.C.E. on order of the people of Rome, Augustus was asked to take the role of dictator, and declined it by saying, "I refuse to accept any power offered me which is contrary to the traditions of our ancestors."⁶⁰ Another position that Augustus opted to turn down upon initial request was the role as the cities religious leader under the title of Pontifex Maximus. Following

⁵⁴ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 85.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

⁵⁶ Whiting, *The Life and Times of Augustus Caesar*, 25.

⁵⁷ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 73.

⁵⁸ Diane Farvo, "Pater Urbis: Augustus as City Father of Rome," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51 (March, 1992): pp. 61-84.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁰ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 355.

the model of Julius Caesar, Augustus rejected the position until the current holder had passed away.⁶¹

A third public display of humility is also evident in the house he had built for himself on the Palentine hill. To the public the house seemed extremely small for a man of such prestige, power, and wealth, but despite its size the house sent a very important message of Augustus's authority, because he strategically placed it adjacent to the Temple of Apollo he had built, and it was on the same hill top as the Temple to Romulus, which aligned him with the gods and the birth of the city.⁶² Another addition to the status of Augustus's house on the Palentine was the movement of the Sibylline Books and the Vestal Virgins into the vicinity, making the house a cultural center where authors would give public readings of their works, and the hearth of the city signifying Augustus's role as father of the city.⁶³ The title of Father of his Country was awarded to him in 2 B.C.E., and it was decreed that the given title would be engraved on different fixtures throughout the city, such as the senate house.⁶⁴

Along with masking his motive of becoming a dictator from the public, Augustus also had to please the Roman people and keep their support. The main way he accomplished this was by improving the physical city of Rome for its citizens. According to Suetonius, it was believed that Augustus was inspired by Alexandria in to makeover the city of Rome into a city that deserved to be the capital of an empire.⁶⁵ In order to recreate Rome into a magnificent city Augustus had to pass laws, such as building codes that regulated the height of buildings to create a safer and more uniform city.⁶⁶ Also, to help make the city safer, he created an institution of

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 363.

⁶² Everitt, *Augustus*, 200-201.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 200-201; Beth Severy, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 153.

⁶⁴ Farvo, "Pater Urbis," 75.

⁶⁵ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 87.

⁶⁶ Farvo, "Pater Urbis," 73.

watchmen who were on duty even throughout the night.⁶⁷ Among the other government positions, he created a surveyor of the roads, buildings, aqueducts, and the Tiber River to help prevent floods and improve the layout of the city and established a permanent fire department, because much of the city was built of wood and fires were a common problem.⁶⁸ For the public, “The new works which he built were the Temple of Mars, of Jupiter, Tonans, and Fetetrius, of Apollo, [and] of the Deified Julius. He restored the Capitol and scared buildings to the number of eighty-two.”⁶⁹ It was especially important to he citizens that Augustus improved the status of religious building because religion was such a big part of Roman culture. Also, by appearing to have to gods on his side made Augustus a more attractive city leader.

Beyond improving the physical city for the public he also passed legislation to help Rome maintain prosperity. These laws included the law that regulated adultery, the law restricting divorce, and the law limiting the time for consummation after espousal, which were all passed to keep the population growth rate up since the civil wars had led to a decrees in population.⁷⁰ He even offered bonuses to men with large families for doing their civic duty.⁷¹ Due to his immense wealth from conquering foreign area he was able to make donations of money, food, and clothes to the general public.⁷² These acts of generosity not only helped him gain support from the public, but they also gave him opportunities to support the people in ways the senate could not. Establishing himself as a better provider than the senate was central to Augustus founding an empire.

⁶⁷ Whiting, *The Life and Times and Augustus Caesar*, 29.

⁶⁸ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 110.

⁶⁹ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 403-405.

⁷⁰ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 107-108.

⁷¹ Greenblatt, *Augustus and Imperial Rome*, 22.

⁷² Whiting, *The Life and Times of Augustus Caesar*, 28.

The last area of life that Augustus worked to improve for his citizens was their cultural life. As noted, he created a massive library of Greek and Latin works.⁷³ Beyond this, however, he also hired Virgil to write the *Aeneid*, an epic poem comparable to Homer's works about the Greece culture.⁷⁴ The story was about a Greek war hero, Aeneas, who helped rescue the gods after the Trojan War and whose descendant was Romulus, one of the founders of Rome. The story supported the emphasis on military success that was prevalent in Roman leaders, and included line that maintained the idea of a single powerful ruler of the state.⁷⁵ Augustus also paid to have art pieces displayed around the city; however, most of these were statues of himself or his family acting as a reminder to the citizens of who gave them their prosperity and peace.⁷⁶ The self-promoting artwork and subliminal messages in the *Aeneid* bring back the idea that in all of Augustus's actions was hidden a secret agenda of promoting himself and his authority. Even creating the library was a way of claiming his authority, because the library was connected to his house, making his home the center of Roman intellectual culture.

The final step in Augustus's plan of creating an empire was the passing of power to his successor once he died. In 13 C.E. Augustus awarded his adopted son Tiberius with an imperium equal to his own, signifying him as the rightful successor.⁷⁷ When Augustus died in 14 C.E. it was a sad day for Rome, but his legacy lived on in the city he recreated, the government he restructured, and the line of successors that followed in his footsteps of being the emperors of Rome. The line Augustus had to walk while establishing his dynasty was thin, but in the end he was a success. Through careful advertisement of his military campaigns, slight changes in the government, and the overwhelming support he received from the public, which he

⁷³ Farvo, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*, 96-97.

⁷⁴ Greenblatt, *Augustus and Imperial Rome*, 18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁷⁶ Whiting, *The Life and Times of Augustus Caesar*, 28.

⁷⁷ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 118.

gained through legislation, public works, and the humble front he put on for the people, Augustus was able to become the first Roman emperor.

Chapter 2: Masculinity

Augustus was able to successfully change Rome from a Republic to an empire through his manipulation of the people through his successful military campaigns, the inheritance of his great uncle's legacy, legislation he passed, and a restructuring of the government and physical city (see Chapter 1). Chapter 2 will address the social roles Augustus filled and the Roman values he had to maintain to persuade the people of Rome he was deserving of his position and power in relation to the gendered Roman idea of masculinity. Claiming to be first among equals was not enough; Augustus had to act as first among equals. He had to prove himself to be a capable military leader, a wealthy head of house, and he had to be an active and respected politician. None of these things mattered, however, unless he was truly man enough to lead the state in the first place. This chapter will define what the Romans considered masculine enough for their leader, and it will show how Augustus fit the mold.

To define what was considered masculine in ancient Rome is extremely hard, because it includes many attributes of society, such as military success, bravery, wealth, political involvement, control of family, a legitimate male heir, virtue, the correct balance of honor and humility, the ability to withstand the gaze, to find favor with the gods, intelligence, and more. The reality was no one was perfect, so for any one person to live up to this ideal was extremely difficult; however, it had to be accomplished or else there would be no one capable of running the state.⁷⁸ It was this almost impossible ideal of masculine that Augustus had to fulfill to claim his legitimacy as the emperor of Rome. The purpose of this chapter is to prove that Augustus was able to make the Roman people believe that he met all of their social constructs of masculinity. The chapter will define the different aspects of masculinity, such as the hierarchies

⁷⁸ Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), 3.

of sexual penetration, physical penetration (brutality), and visual penetration, and it will explain where Augustus fit into each of these hierarchies. It will conclude with a discussion on masculinity in architecture and art and how the social constructs of gender influenced Augustus's building projects in Rome.

To understand gender in the Roman world one must look at the Latin terms the Romans used in reference to gender. For example the word for man, *vir*, which was used to describe only a man of the social elite, also formed the root for the Latin term *virtus*, which means virtue, courage, and masculinity.⁷⁹ The obvious relationship between the two words shows that men were expected to portray the characteristics of *virtus*. Women and lower-class men, however, were also expected to uphold a moral code of virtue, but it was expected that elite males would exhibit the greatest amount. For example, elite males were expected to display a greater amount of self-control than elite women who were expected to display more self-control than lower-class women and men. Augustus would fall into the status of *vir* and, because of his position as emperor, would be judged more harshly than even the normal elites. Other words were used to describe male youth, male slaves, and lower-class men, such as *pueri*, *adulescents*, and *homines*.⁸⁰ The term *mollitia* was used to describe a feminine person or action.⁸¹ The term was related to softness and effeminacy, and was used as a derogatory term toward men who acted too feminine. Actions deemed effeminate included walking like a woman, talking with a lisp, paying too much attention to one's appearance, using one finger to scratch one's head, or in the most extreme cases, taking on the passive role in sexual intercourse.⁸² In the realm of sexual

⁷⁹ Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, 19-20.

⁸⁰ Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought," *Roman Sexualities*, eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 29-42.

⁸¹ Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, p. 21

⁸² Catherine Edwards, *Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 63-73.

intercourse, the terms *muliebria pati*, which means “Having a woman’s experience,” was actually used to refer to men who took on the passive role in sexual activities, while *puer*, which means “boy,” was used to refer to a penetrated female.⁸³ What all these terms together illustrate is sexual relationships in Roman culture were made up of a man, *vir*, and an other, which could be a woman or man of different social status.

In terms of sexual activity the passive role of being dominated was the feminine role, leaving the masculine role to be the active role of domination.⁸⁴ The definitions of active as masculine and passive as feminine were explained in the relationship between sexual activity and power. In Roman society power was a masculine trait; therefore, it was only acceptable for the masculine role in sex to be the role of power and the feminine role to be the weaker role.⁸⁵ The *vir* were seen in society as “impenetrable penetrators” who displayed their power not only in their sexual activities, but also in their political life, household, and society.⁸⁶ Though there are exceptions of males taking on the passive role it is impossible for women to take on the active role due to their lack of a penis.⁸⁷ Without a penis a women could not penetrate and therefore could not be the active partner.⁸⁸ The passive sexual role, though described as feminine, was not explicitly for women; instead it was open to anyone who was not *vir*.⁸⁹ There were rules, however, about who it was acceptable to have sex with, and these rules were derived from the social hierarchy of society.⁹⁰

⁸³ Walters, “Invading the Roman Body,” 30-31.

⁸⁴ Holt Parker, “The Teratogenic Grid” *Roman Sexualities* eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 47-63.

⁸⁵ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 74-75. It is imperative to remember that the word feminine does not mean female.

⁸⁶ Walters, “Invading the Roman Body,” 32.

⁸⁷ Parker, “The Teratogenic Grid,” 50.

⁸⁸ Marilyn B. Skinner “Quad Multo Fit Aliter in Graecia” *Roman Sexualities* eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 3-25.

⁸⁹ Parker, “The Teratogenic Grid,” 56-58.

⁹⁰ Walters, “Invading the Roman Body,” 30 -36.

In Roman society it was acceptable for a male of the social elite to have sex with anyone no matter what their sex was as long as he took on the active sexual role with a few exceptions, including the wives of other men of the same social status, young boys who would mature to be elite males, and other elite males.⁹¹ The most problematic group of these three is the young boys of elite families. In ancient Roman culture, until a male had fully been through puberty, he was thought of as feminine and a legitimate object of sexual pleasure. At the same time, however, an elite boy's future position of a leader of the city prohibited him from being identified with the passive female role.⁹² It was in the interest of the future of the Roman state that its young leaders were not to be tainted with unmanliness by being made to undergo a woman's role, which would interrupt the natural progression of the youth to their position as a future *vir*.⁹³ A passage from the jurist Paulus describes the act of seducing and dishonoring a freeborn youth as being punishable by exile to an island or death.⁹⁴ Freeborn males wore bullas around their necks as a sign of their social status and as a mark of inapproachability for other citizens, so they would not be mistakenly sought out for sexual purposes.⁹⁵

In addition to freeborn youths, other men of the same social status were also not supposed to engage in sexual activity with one another. It must be pointed out, however, that there were documented accounts of these types of activities taking places. Cicero accused Marc Antony of playing the effeminate role for his master Curio in his second Philippic.⁹⁶ Whether this truly happened is unknown, but these types of accusations were not uncommon among the senatorial males. To be accused of being effeminate was one of the worst insults that could be used against

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 30- 35.

⁹² Marilyn B. Skinner, "Ego Mulier: The Construction of Male Sexuality in Catullus" *Roman Sexualities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 129-150.

⁹³ Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 33.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹⁶ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 64.

another man because it undermined the accused abilities to be a leader and questioned their manliness.⁹⁷ Another side to the accusation made against Antony that must be taken into consideration is that his actions were at first deemed socially acceptable, because he accepted the passive position to seek political favors.⁹⁸ A second example of rumors about an elite male playing the passive role was actually made against Augustus during his rise to power. It was rumored that Augustus only received the inheritance from Caesar, because he allowed himself to be Caesar's sexual partner; however, after Augustus gained control of the empire and the support of the public these rumors were put to rest.⁹⁹ It would have looked bad for all Romans if their leader had been linked to any type of feminine act. Catherine Edwards, an expert on Roman gender studies, draws the conclusion that in Roman society financial and political advancements were the only acceptable reason for two men of the social elite to engage in sexual activity with one another.¹⁰⁰

The same struggle for power that led to false accusations and occasionally submissive behaviors by men of high status was also used to suppress women into a never-ending role of passiveness. Seneca provided a clear illustration of the status of women in the Roman Empire when he wrote, "Women are born to suffer."¹⁰¹ The role of women playing the passive was not specific to sexual activity; instead it was intertwined into all of Roman society. Male dominance could be seen in the structure of the family and the role of the paterfamilias as well as in the passing of the adultery and marriage laws during Augustus's reign.

The authority of the paterfamilias, the oldest living male relative, was over all inhabitants of the household, including children, grandchildren, and slaves, and no family member could do

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 63-66.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 84-85

⁹⁹ Otto Kiefer, *Sexual Life in Ancient Rome* (New York: Barnes and Nobel, 1964), 299.

¹⁰⁰ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, p. 85

¹⁰¹ Parker, "The Teatrogenic Grid," p. 50.

business on their own until they were emancipated from their paterfamilias.¹⁰² The paterfamilias was in charge of the estate, including the business, the house, and the slaves. He had the authority to divorce his wife at any time, the right to choose whether a child should be left out to die of exposure at birth, the ability to sell his children into slavery or even collect their son's wages.¹⁰³ Since he was the ultimate authority in the family he automatically acquired children in the event of a divorce and had the ability to choose who his children married and what amount of property they received.¹⁰⁴ While Augustus was the paterfamilias of his family and the emperor of Rome he sent his own daughter into exile for her disgraceful actions.¹⁰⁵ For political reasons it was more important to keep the family reputation good than it was to actually have relationships with family members.

The position of the paterfamilias was so vital to family life in ancient Rome, because he was in charge of the women in his household, and wild untamed women were linked to the possible demise of the empire.¹⁰⁶ In the works of Musonius, he writes about the equal treatment of women. Even with his views, however, he expresses the opinion that men were stronger in judgment and self-control, and that women lacked something valuable that was necessary for the appropriate and full development of humans.¹⁰⁷ For this reason, women were blamed for adultery, religious disruptions, civil wars, and the final collapse of the empire.¹⁰⁸ The Vestal Virgins of ancient Rome exemplified the importance of women's purity and chastity and the relationship between the morals of women and the life of the empire by caring for the city

¹⁰² Florence Dupont, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, trans. Christopher Woodall (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1989), 103-104. The authority of a paterfamilias extended for three generations through male descendants only.

¹⁰³ Greenblatt, *Augustus and Imperial Rome*, 49.

¹⁰⁴ Beth Severy, *Augustus and the Family at the Birth of the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 133.

¹⁰⁶ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 44

¹⁰⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Incomplete Feminism of Musonius Rufus, Platonist, Stoic, and Roman," in *The Sleep of Reason: Erotic Experience and Sexual Ethics in Ancient Greece and Rome*, eds. Martha C. Nussbaum and Juha Sihvola (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 303.

¹⁰⁸ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 44.

through their sexual abstinence. They were recognized as priestesses in the city and their main job was to tend to the city hearth, which was the heart of the city.¹⁰⁹

Further proof in the mistrust of women was evident in the adultery and marriage laws passed by Augustus. The *lex Iulia de adulteriis* was passed in 18 B.C. in the name of the Republic by Augustus and was aimed at the punishment of adulterous women.¹¹⁰ The law, which was documented in Justinian's *Digesta*, made it legal for the father of the adulterer to kill the two parties involved in the crime, made it a requirement for the husband of the adulterer to divorce his wife or else he could be charged, and it made adultery a public offence that would be tried in the permanent law courts.¹¹¹ In the same year, Augustus also passed the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, the marriage law, which controlled who married whom and the number of years a person was allowed to spend not married following death or divorce.¹¹² Both of these laws were passed in the name of the Republic by Augustus who claimed in his *Res Gestae*, "Through new laws passed on my proposal, I brought back many of the exemplary practices of our ancestors which were falling to neglect."¹¹³ By claiming he was working in the name of the Republic, the laws gained the support of the Roman people, and it helped gain himself popularity in the changes he was making in the overall structure of Rome.¹¹⁴ A second reason Augustus passed these laws was to undermine the masculinity and power of the other elite males. By claiming that the women of Rome were acting out of order was a way of accusing the men of not

¹⁰⁹ Severy, *Augustus and the Family*, 53.

¹¹⁰ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 38

¹¹¹ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 37-39. The *Digesta Justiniani* was not written until the sixth century and therefore it is not known what parts of the law documented at that time were truly passed by Augustus and which parts, if any, had been added. It is known for certain that the adultery law was passed in the name of the Republic by Augustus in the year 18 BC, which is the most important piece for this discussion

¹¹² Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 39-41.

¹¹³ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 347.

¹¹⁴ For an explanation of the governmental changes Augustus was making see chapter 1.

being capable of controlling their wives or homes.¹¹⁵ Augustus was communicating the idea that his presence and authority was needed to restore true virtue back into Rome and to keep society and its women in order.

One issue that must be dealt with when discussing the adultery law is Augustus's own habit of committing acts of adultery himself. Suetonius writes, "Not even his friends deny that he often committed adultery: but they plead his motive was not lust but policy, since he could more easily discover the plans of his enemies by making love to their wives."¹¹⁶ As noted, when an elite male engaged in sexual activities with another elite male his motives were more important than his actions. It was the same way for elite males who committed acts of adultery. As long as the man committing adultery was not acting out of uncontrolled lust he was seen as powerful.¹¹⁷ This was opposite for women, who no matter what their status in society was, were always viewed as acting out of irresponsible lust and uncontrollable weakness.¹¹⁸

In Rome penetration was found in more forms than just phallic penetration, it also included the penetration of the skin through the act of beating and penetration by the eyes, referred to as the Roman gaze.¹¹⁹ Brutality was a practice that was built into the sexual activity of Romans through beating, biting, and the rough nature of their sex.¹²⁰ It was a way for the penetrators to show their dominance over their passive partner. More than this, however, brutality was used for punishment of adulterers, slaves, and soldiers.¹²¹ The beating of slaves was a sign of their low social status and is evidence that they were thought of as property and were

¹¹⁵ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 47.

¹¹⁶ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 78

¹¹⁷ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 48-49

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 47

¹¹⁹ Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 37-42. There is also a fourth form of penetration not discussed in this study, the penetration of the ears through sounds.

¹²⁰ David Fredrick, "Reading Broken Skin: Violence in Roman Elegy" *Roman Sexualities* eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 172- 190.

¹²¹ Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 36-40.

used to fulfill the sexual desires of their masters and the scars left by beatings were a mark of the slave's weakness and penetrability.¹²² Unlike slaves, soldiers were the ideal form of masculinity who were praised for their bravery and whose scars were a mark of their strength and manliness.¹²³ Punishments that were explicitly violent yet commonly used in the Roman army included decimation, execution, and flogging.¹²⁴ Of the three, flogging was the most common, and it left the scars that set soldiers apart from the common Roman citizen. The soldier's role in society was to protect the empire and expand its boundaries over lesser groups of outsiders. The life of the empire and its reputation of being the most virtuous and prosperous state relied on the soldiers being successful in their military duties.¹²⁵ During times of peace when soldiers returned from the provinces they were put to work in the city and were given jobs that added to their status of providers for the empire. For example, the army was one of the main builders of the road, aqueducts, and canal systems throughout Rome.¹²⁶ Livy wrote in his work, *Periochae*, "No country has even been greater or purer than our own, or better endowed with noble precedents. Nor has any country managed for so long to keep itself free from avarice and luxury."¹²⁷ All these qualities that Livy writes about are attributes of the soldiers position in society.¹²⁸ The issue that both slaves and soldiers were defined as penetrable by brutality is the consequence of both groups being on the bottom of their social hierarchies. Slaves were the lowest group of people on the social hierarchy of Roman citizens and the soldiers that were being punished with beatings were the lower ranked soldiers.¹²⁹ The difference between the penetrability of slaves and soldiers was the possibility of sexual penetration with the slaves and

¹²² *Ibid.* 39-40.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 40-42.

¹²⁴ G.R. Watson, *The Roman Soldier* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 119-125.

¹²⁵ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 21

¹²⁶ Watson, *The Roman Soldier*, 143-144.

¹²⁷ Livy, *Periochae*, trans. Jane D. Chaplin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 219-308.

¹²⁸ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 21

¹²⁹ Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 39-42.

the complete lack of sexual penetrability of the soldiers.¹³⁰ It was a sign of social status to be able to protect your body from sexual penetration, giving the soldier a higher social standing than a slave.¹³¹ If a soldier was penetrated sexually, it would mean that he was weak and it effeminate, and in the defense of the empire there was no room for weak men.¹³²

The emphasis on the masculinity of soldiers made it very important for senators and emperors to be able to align themselves with successful military campaigns. In Augustus's rise to power his failure to be a successful military commander in his first battles against Brutus and Cassius were incredibly detrimental to his reputation and were an easy target for his enemies to use against him in public.¹³³ It was also for the purpose of proving his masculinity and ability as a military commander that before he met with Antony in the final battles of civil war, while he was raising support for his right to power in Rome, that he had his troops go to battle in the region of Illyricum.¹³⁴ This region had long been a possible threat due to its close proximity to Rome, and it was also an easy target for Augustus's large experienced army.¹³⁵ The campaign assisted him by allowing him the ability to continue to proclaim military success for Rome under his command, which was especially important because Antony was not having as much success in his campaign in the far east.¹³⁶ Augustus for the first time seemed like the more masculine, able military commander, which in the Roman world made him a more capable political leader.

¹³⁰ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 72. Young male slaves were often bought for the sole purpose of being called upon to fulfill their master's sexual desires to make up for the inability to have sex with the young male freeborn citizens discussed above.

¹³¹ Walters, "Invading the Roman Body," 36.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 40

¹³³ Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, 15- 17.

¹³⁴ Everitt, *Augustus*, 120-140.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 120-140.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 120-140.

The last form of penetrability that played a role in distinguishing the social hierarchy of ancient Rome was visual penetration, otherwise known as the Roman gaze.¹³⁷ During the time of the Roman Empire it was believed that the phenomena of sight was accomplished through physical particles that a person omitted from their eyes onto an object that would reflect back an image; consequently, this belief made the concept of vision a very physical act that was highly capable of penetrating the person or object being looked at by the viewer.¹³⁸ The penetration of a person through vision had the same capability of degrading them socially as the act of physical penetration; however it was also believed to be a means of attack against one's enemies, which was where the idea of the evil eye came from.¹³⁹ To protect one's self against penetration of the evil eye Roman's used phallic symbols, such as the amulets worn by the elite youth, to keep away the possibility of being sought after for sexual activity.¹⁴⁰ While entertaining Rome with one of its grandest triumphal processions, Augustus wore a golden amulet on his chest. For him, however, the amulet was not used to protect him from the view of others, but to protect them from being envious of him as they watch the procession.¹⁴¹ It was also common to find phallic statues and pictures in front of and above the entryway to public buildings for protection against the evil eye and evil spirits.¹⁴²

Because it was believed to be so dangerous to be looked at by others, there were socially accepted roles of viewer and viewed that were defined in Roman social life. To be capable of enduring the gaze, a person had to have the perfect balance of honor and shame, which allowed

¹³⁷ David Frederick, "Invisible Rome," *The Roman Gaze* ed. David Fredrick (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 9-30. The term "gaze" is dated to the 1970's when its use for the consequences of vision began.

¹³⁸ Shadi Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), 3-4.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 139

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁴¹ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 92.

¹⁴² Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self*, 143-144.

themselves to be put on display.¹⁴³ Individuals in Roman life that were defined as being able to bear the act of vision were the emperor, the senators, and other members of the high social standing who were trained with the appropriate actions and behaviors defined as honorable by society.¹⁴⁴ On the other end of the spectrum, vision was used as a tool of punishment for those individuals that were not masculine enough to withstand physical viewing, which in most cases were the same groups of individuals who were subject to sexual penetration and beating.¹⁴⁵ The relationship between being seen and being punished existed because to be put on display for the pleasure of others was a way to force low social standing on another.¹⁴⁶ Suetonius wrote that, “Augustus rejoiced if a sharp look from him made a man lower his head as if blinded by the sun’s rays.”¹⁴⁷ This idea of turning away is due to the penetrability of the eye itself and the Roman belief that the eye was the most accessible entryway into the body.¹⁴⁸

The best examples that can be given to describe those who could withstand the gaze and those that could not, were the honorable act of the triumphal march performed by Augustus after his victory in Egypt, and the dishonorable professions of the Roman gladiators. A triumphal procession was a public display of a victorious general through the city and the highest honor for military services in Rome. They included musicians who played triumphal songs, animals to be sacrificed at the end of the procession, the war booty won at the battle, the enemy prisoners of war, dancers, the victorious general who rode in a golden chariot, the senators, and lastly the victorious army.¹⁴⁹ In 29 B.C., after he had defeated Antony and Cleopatra in the final civil war,

¹⁴³ Carlin Barton, “Being in the Eyes: Shame and Sight in Ancient Rome” *The Roman Gaze* ed. David Fredrick (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp 216-235.

¹⁴⁴ Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self*, 138.

¹⁴⁵ David Fredrick, “Mapping Penetrability in Late Republican and Early Imperial Rome” *The Roman Gaze* ed. David Fredrick (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 236-264.

¹⁴⁶ Fredrick, “Mapping Penetrability,” 236-239.

¹⁴⁷ Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self*, 149.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁴⁹ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 91-92.

Augustus celebrated his success with a triple triumph through the Roman forum.¹⁵⁰ In his procession Augustus aligned himself with Apollo, his favorite god, by riding on a chariot and dressing in robes that portrayed divinity, making him capable of withstanding any amount of gaze.¹⁵¹ Just as in any normal triumphal procession the war booty and captives were paraded in front of the citizens to show the new wealth of the empire. The tradition also acted as a reminder to the audience of the riches they were not capable of having, and their status below the emperor.¹⁵² To add to the visual stimulation of the audience the slaves and captives were made to appear extra exotic and nude in many cases, only adding to their social embarrassment and shame.

Unlike Augustus, who put himself on display for his own glory and pleasure, gladiators and other performers who put themselves on display for the pleasure of others were seen as not being able to withstand the gaze. In Roman society these people were denoted by the term *infamia*, which referred to anyone in Roman society who had lost their political rights due to a lack of honor, and the group also included adulterers, women, effeminate men and criminals.¹⁵³ Gladiators were seen as being shameful because of the sexual arousal they could bring upon audience members and their position of being forced into the public view and scrutiny.¹⁵⁴ The relationship between gladiatorial fighting and sexuality was first seen in the root of the word gladiator, gladius, meaning sword, but referring to not only a sword as a weapon, but also to the

¹⁵⁰ John F. Milner, "Triumphus in Palatio" *American Journal of Philology* 121 (2000): pp. 409-420. Ten years after this procession, Augustus passed a law prohibiting everyone from performing triumphal processions except for the emperor and his family members.

¹⁵¹ Everitt, *Augustus*, 189-203.

¹⁵² DuPont, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, 50.

¹⁵³ Catherine Edwards, "Unspeakable Professions: Public Performance and Prostitution in Ancient Rome" *Roman Sexualities* eds. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 66-95.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-81.

phallic as a sword.¹⁵⁵ The sexual arousal of the audience was actually one of the bad qualities a gladiator possessed, because the audience was socially superior, which meant they should be the active sexual participant causing arousal, not being aroused.

Gladiators were negative objects of the direct gaze, believed to be too shameful to withstand its harshness; however, in the audience the seating arrangement played an important role by defining who was able to be positive objects of the gaze. Seating arrangements had to be built into the sexual constructs of masculinity in terms of being seen and unseen. In theatres and arenas the seats closest to the performers were reserved for the senatorial elite, because it allowed them to be distinguished from the rest of the crowd as their bodies were on exhibit, but only as the acceptable role of a spectator.¹⁵⁶ Augustus mandated the seating arrangement of the entire audience in public venues, including the Circus Maximus, the higher a person's social rank the lower their seat.¹⁵⁷ The seats closest to the arena were reserved for the most prominent Roman citizens, such as senators, priest, and the Vestal Virgins.¹⁵⁸ For himself, Augustus built the pulvinar, or a special box that not only aligned him with the gods and victory, but it also made him visible to all spectators at the games.¹⁵⁹ To be impenetrable was masculine, and to be victorious was masculine, so, by aligning himself with both ideals at once, Augustus was creating the ultimate illustration of his supreme masculinity.

The concept of being seen and unseen that defined the seating arrangements in the circus and other public arenas also related Roman architecture as a whole. The rhetoric of art and structure was defined by the same ideals of honor and shame that construed the gaze as well as

¹⁵⁵ Keith Hopkins, *Death and Renewal; Sociological Studies in Roman History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 22.

¹⁵⁶ Cindy Benton, "Split Vision: The Politics of the Gaze in Seneca's Troades," *Roman Gaze* ed. David Fredrick (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp. 31-56.

¹⁵⁷ Alison Futrell, *Roman Games: A Sourcebook* (Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 52

¹⁵⁸ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 18

¹⁵⁹ John Humphrey, *Roman Circuses: Arenas for Chariot Racing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 78-83.

the entire social construct of masculinity.¹⁶⁰ In artwork if the person portrayed in the piece was nude it was either an act of honoring the person or subjecting them to permanent shame, which was based off their social position just as in the vision of an actual person.¹⁶¹ A person's genitals were their most sacred and shameful parts, and for them to be shown depicted extreme honor or horrible shame.¹⁶² For example, in the base of the victimarii the slaves accompanying the procession were depicted as nude to visually define their low, shameful social status; however, on the same picture the deity Mars was also pictured nude, but his nakedness was a symbol of his divinity and high status, which is even greater than the emperor's in the picture who is wearing a toga.¹⁶³ An area of Roman life where pictures of nudity and pornographic scenes were common was in the baths.¹⁶⁴ These pictures were placed in the baths for a very specific purpose, to remove the gaze of the bathers away from one another's nudity onto something else.¹⁶⁵

The last issue to be addressed is that of masculinity and social hierarchy as they were related to social space and architecture. The first type of building to address is the house, and its importance in Roman society and the division between public and private space. The house in Roman culture was the most important piece of a man's wealth once he became the paterfamilias, because it was the boundary of the paterfamilias's authority and the house reflected a family's status in society.¹⁶⁶ Houses were meant to communicate the power of the

¹⁶⁰ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 137-172.

¹⁶¹ Jas Elsner, *Imperial Roman and Christian Triumph: The Art of the Roman Empire AD 100-450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 91-94. Although the focus of this article is after the time of Augustus, it is still a desirable source because the ideas and concepts of the social issues discussed in it were present during and prior to his reign.

¹⁶² Barton, "Being in the Eyes," 218.

¹⁶³ Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph*. 93-95. It is unknown if in the actual ceremony being portrayed the figures were dressed in this fashion, because art was a depiction of the views and opinions of the social elite who commissioned the pieces. It is important still that the slave class would be shown as naked because it is a metaphor of their social standing.

¹⁶⁴ John R. Clarke, "Look Who's Laughing at Sex: Men and Women Viewers in the Apodyterium of Suburban Baths at Pompeii," *The Roman Gaze* ed. David Fredrick (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp.149-181.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁶⁶ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 138.

paterfamilias.¹⁶⁷ Augustus changed the order of imperial housing when he built his house on the Palentine hill, making it very modestly sized.¹⁶⁸ The modesty of his house, however, must not be praised too highly, because though he built a house that did support his claim of being ‘first among equals,’ its location was nothing close to modest. Augustus had his house built on the Palentine hill, which was an optimal location for an emperor’s palace, because it backed up to the Circus Maximus, looked out over the Roman forum, and was also home to the temple of Apollo.¹⁶⁹ The location of his house on a hill also communicated the idea of the constant all-Seeing Eye of the emperor. The gaze and the house were intimately related to one another based on the belief that a true Roman man was suppose to behave as though he was always being watched. This meant that no part of his life or home was truly private.¹⁷⁰

Other buildings and structures played into the roles of masculinity and social hierarchy, such as the arena, the forum, and buildings built for the public by the elite men. Not only were senators given a specific area to sit in, but the entire Roman public was sat according to social status, such as the women and slaves who had to stand at the top of the arena and the emperor who sat apart from everyone in his own box with the imperial family and select friends.¹⁷¹ There was more built into the arena and the games than the position of the audience. The entire stadium was an arena for politics, and starting with the reign of Augustus, only specific assigned people were allowed to host games in the name of the emperor.¹⁷² For Augustus, putting on games was a way of showing his power and masculinity, because he was fulfilling the active sexual role of providing visual pleasure for the whole city. Also, at the festivals all spectators

¹⁶⁷ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

¹⁶⁸ Farvo, “Pater Urbis,” 72

¹⁶⁹ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 164-168.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150; Wallace-Hadrill, *House and Society*, 5.

¹⁷¹ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 17-18. The seating arrangement was built off of the ideals of masculinity and the principals of the Roman gaze explained above.

¹⁷² Farvo, “Pater Urbis,” 76.

were fed at the cost of the host, and many times the food they were given were the animals killed during the games.¹⁷³

The final piece to building rhetoric and its link to masculinity were the buildings and structures elite males had built for the public's use, especially those located within the Roman forum. Every morning in the forum there were processions of senators on the way to the courthouse with their clients and friends, allowing the public the opportunity to view the senators on display daily, subjecting them to the gaze.¹⁷⁴ By erecting a building or structure in their name, a man of the Roman elite could bring his name in the form of inscription in front of the public eye.¹⁷⁵ Also, the more money and works an individual donated to the public, the more opportunity they had to boast their wealth and good deeds.¹⁷⁶ Augustus established a monopoly on the right to build structures within the city limits. He limited the works done for the public almost entirely to members of his family, which was a way to ensure his position as the ultimate provider for the city and its people.¹⁷⁷ By being the ultimate provider, Augustus was assuming the role of the paterfamilias of the city, and the position of utmost authority and masculinity.

In conclusion, what this chapter has worked to prove is the existence of a gendered social hierarchy that drove the daily life of the Roman Empire, including the political, militarily, and personal life of the Emperor Augustus as well as the structures he left in his legacy. The hierarchy that Augustus had positioned himself on top of was not based off biological differences of male versus female, but rather a distinction between masculine and feminine with the masculine role being the active leadership role of power and domination. The social roles of the paterfamilias, the elite youth, gladiators, and women all were based off the concept of

¹⁷³ Donald G. Kyle *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome* (New York; Routledge, 1998), 187-190.

¹⁷⁴ Bartsch, *The Mirror of the Self*, 118.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁷⁶ Edwards, *Politics of Immorality*, 167.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 163-164.

masculinity with the ideal form being that of a Roman soldier. All men of the elite status had specific guidelines they were expected to live up to that formed their legitimacy as a Roman leader. The reality of such a hierarchy is seen not only in the sexual life of Rome, but also in the military life, the political accusations and laws that were made, the idea of vision being a physical action, and the social ordering of space, artwork, and architecture.

Chapter 3: Circus Maximus

The Circus Maximus was erected in the valley Murcia between the Aventine and Palentine hills in the 600s B.C. by the elder Tarquinius and was claimed to be, “one of the most beautiful and most admirable structures in Rome.”¹⁷⁸ Due to its greatness and splendor it became the model for all other circuses built within the Roman Empire. For Augustus, it was also the model for his political and social agendas, which were put on display at the games and other events held at the circus. The purpose of this chapter will be to show how Augustus combined the concepts of masculinity, social hierarchies, and architecture introduced in Chapter 2 with his rise to power and the shift of the Republic into an empire into the actions and physical dialogue of the circus. The chapter will discuss the layout of the circus, the additions and changes Augustus made to the structure, the obelisk he placed on the barrier, and how all these architectural pieces were related to the his political agenda and the shift from Republic to empire. It will also explain the relationship between the circus and the religious ideas of the time and the social construct of gender in relation to masculinity and the Roman gaze. It will use the Circus Maximus, and then more specifically the obelisk placed on the barrier, as physical evidence that the driving force of Augustus’s political life was to establish an empire, which he accomplished using a curtain of masculinity.

The site of the Circus Maximus had been used for games and festivals prior to the time of Tarquinius, but a permanent structure had not been established.¹⁷⁹ From the time of its original construction up to the reign of Augustus continuous improvements were made by elite Romans,

¹⁷⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquates: Book III and IV*, trans. Earnest Clay, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), 241.

¹⁷⁹ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 60. Due to the lack of excavations done on the sight of the Circus Maximus, in his book Humphrey relies on ancient representations of the circus and literary descriptions given by different authors to build his claims. He also relies on the more successfully excavated and in tact circus structures, such as the Circus of Maxentius and the Lepcis Magna.

including major additions and changes made by Julius Caesar.¹⁸⁰ During the time of Augustus the Circus Maximus was capable of holding 150,000 people in its three stories of continual seating along three sides of the horseshoe shaped structure.¹⁸¹ The fourth end was free of seating and housed the starting gates and one of the judge's boxes located above the starting gates, which a flag would be dropped from to signal the start of the race.¹⁸² Built into the three sides of seating were many structures, including temples, shrines, and special boxes that housed seating for the emperor and the judges, including the temple of the Sun and Moon and the shrine of Murcia.¹⁸³ The judge's box was aligned with the finish line, and the imperial box built by Augustus was known as the pulvinar.¹⁸⁴ The outside of the circus was lined with shops located at each entrance, which contained a second story dwelling space for the shopkeeper and his family.¹⁸⁵ The entrances at these shops included a ground level entrance into the bottom of the first section of seating as well as stairs that led to the top of the third section.¹⁸⁶ The first tier of seating was constructed out of stone while the second and third were made from wood.¹⁸⁷ The division in building material was a physical symbol of the social divisions in the audiences seating arrangements defined by the gaze. During Augustus's reign there was a ten-foot wide water feature known as an euripus that acted like a canal dividing all the seating from the arena floor, which had been added by Julius Caesar as a safety element for the audience.¹⁸⁸ Running down the center of the sandy circus floor was a barrier adorned with monuments, such as the

¹⁸⁰ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 73.

¹⁸¹ Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquates*, 243.

¹⁸² Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 90.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 91-95.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁸⁵ Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquates*, 243.

¹⁸⁶ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 75.

¹⁸⁷ Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquates*, 243.

¹⁸⁸ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 74. The euripus was added by Caesar shortly after an elephant being used in games put on by Pompey charged at the audience, bending the iron fence that had been used as the previous divider. It is also thought that canals put in place by Caesar were also to help control the frequent floods by acting as a drain into the Tiber.

obelisk of Augustus, which gave the chariots an object to race around.¹⁸⁹ After the canals that divided the circus floor from the seats were filled in by Nero the barrier became the water feature of the circus with water filled basins running along its one side.¹⁹⁰

Circuses were mainly used for chariot and horse races; however the Circus Maximus, especially during the reign of Augustus, was used for many other large scale events, such as additional sporting events, wild animal hunts, staged battles, triumphal processions, and various other forms of entertainment.¹⁹¹ Chariot races, hosted by the emperor, were competitions between the racing factions, or professional organizations of chariot racers each with their own color.¹⁹² Each person had their favorite team, and made bets for their color.¹⁹³ The excitement and involvement of the crowd during the games was proof that they were an important aspect of Roman culture, and it also gives reason for Augustus using the games as a tool for gaining public support. The charioteers were dressed in short tunics and head coverings and would be lined up in the arched starting gates prior to the race beginning.¹⁹⁴ After the seven-lap race was complete the victorious charioteer was allowed a victory lap before being given his prizes, which were normally an amount of money and the palm of victory.¹⁹⁵ The prizes were often times handed to the victor by the emperor to illustrate the relationship between the emperor and victory, which supported the emperor's masculinity in terms of military victory. The other forms of

¹⁸⁹ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 175.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 293. The barrier is sometimes referred to as the spina, however, this term actually refers only to the walls on the outside of structure, not the entire structure.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 11

¹⁹³ John Henderson, "A Doo-Dah-Doo-Dah-Dey at the Races: Ovid 'Amores' 3.2 and the Personal Politics of the Circus Maximus," *Classical Antiquity* 21 (April, 2002): pp. 41-65.

¹⁹⁴ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 17

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 87. Depending on where the emperor was seated in the arena he would sometime be the one to present the prizes, however, if he was inaccessible the head magistrate performed the duty.

entertainment listed above occasionally took place within the Circus Maximus, but more commonly gladiator fights were held in private stadiums or out in the forum.¹⁹⁶

More important than the events taking place on the circus floor, however, were the religious and political experiences the audience encountered while in attendance. Religion had long been related to the site of the Circus Maximus dating all the way back to the time of Romulus and the cult of the god Consus.¹⁹⁷ The earliest games that historians have proof of were actually thrown in honor of Consus and the rape of the Sabine woman and even up to the time of Augustus the recognition of Consus as an early god of the games was continued with an underground shrine below the far turning post where the Vestal Virgins would make offerings.¹⁹⁸ It can be assumed that, while Augustus took on the position of commissioner of the grain for the city, he would attempt to align himself with Consus, the god of stored grain. The goddess Murcia, who the valley between the Aventine and Palentine hills was named after, had a shrine built to her within the seating on the Aventine side of the circus proving her relationship to the games.¹⁹⁹ Not much is known about the cult of Murcia except that her name lived on in the name of the valley; however, historians believed she was related to the worship of Venus and the location of the temple within the circus was on the spot of an ancient myrtle tree, which she was also linked with.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 5. Upon the completion of the Colosseum in the year 80 A.D. by the emperor Titus, many of the smaller scale events such as gladiator fights and wild animal hunts were no longer performed in the circus due to all the excess space no used.

¹⁹⁷ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 62.

¹⁹⁸ J. B. Poynton, "The Public Games of the Romans," *Greece and Rome* 7.20 (February, 1938), pp.76-85; Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 62.

¹⁹⁹ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 61. The valley was not named the valley Murcia until after the rise of the Roman Empire, and at this time the shrine was also expanded and rebuilt into an actual temple.

²⁰⁰ James Hastings editor, "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics," Vol. 8 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916). 179; *Ibid.*, 96.

Also built into the seating of the circus was a temple dedicated to the Sun and Moon.²⁰¹ At the time of Augustus it is believed that there were two separate structures dedicated to the Sun and Moon.²⁰² The temple dedicated to the Sun was located within the circus and the temple to the Moon was outside the circus on Aventine hill. Between the time of the first races and Augustus's reign the entire circus structure had been dedicated to the Sun making it logical for the temple of the Sun to be located at the finishing line.²⁰³ The Sun was also connected to victory, which was another reason why the temple was located at the finish line, and this relationship between the relationship between the Sun and victorious charioteers was easily translated into a connection between the Sun and the emperor's victories.²⁰⁴ The relationship between the Sun and Moon and the circus was also evident in the iconography of the Sun riding in a quadriga, a four-horse chariot, and the Moon in a biga, a two-horse chariot, because being the patron gods of the circus they were the ideals of supreme, victorious charioteers.²⁰⁵ Other deities that were acknowledged within the circus structure were a variety of early agricultural goddesses, such as Seia, Mesa, and Tutulina who were personified in monuments on the central barrier around the second century B.C. and Neptune who was glorified by the dolphin structure that counted the laps of the race, which had been dedicated by Agrippa.²⁰⁶

The entire barrier in general was an importance feature of the Circus Maximus, because it was the central focal point of the arena, and the audience could not help but see it. It contained some structures that were necessary in the functioning of the games, such as the turning post and

²⁰¹ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*. 91.

²⁰² Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 93. The idea of two separate structures is in opposition to the structure built by Nero that was dedicated to both gods.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 94. It was believed that the gods would come into the temple to see the races, and by positioning the temple at the finish line it was as if the gods were choosing the victor.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 94-95.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 94

²⁰⁶ Futrell, *Roman Games*, 74; *Ibid.*, 268. Although the dolphins were dedicated by Agrippa, his position of Augustus's family member, military commander, and right hand man made the dedication of the structure also related to Augustus.

the dolphin structure that counted the laps of the race.²⁰⁷ It also allowed emperors an opportunity to leave their legacy in the circus through monuments they placed along it, which normally represented important military battles. Along the barrier's two sidewalls it was lined with statues of captives and trophy monuments celebrating the military success of the empire.²⁰⁸ Prior to the dolphins dedicated by Agrippa, the barrier had been adorned with a different lap counting device, the eggs. The eggs were symbolic of Castor and Pollux, twins born from the same egg, which was interpreted to mean the birth of good luck and good fortune to the competitors.²⁰⁹ The barrier also included towers used during animal hunts, columns dedicated to different figures of Roman religion, the obelisk of Augustus and later the one of Constantius, plus a slew of statues and altars added by individual emperors in memory of an important religious movement of their reign.²¹⁰ All of the adornments on the barrier made its overall purpose not only to give the chariots and object to race around, but also to show how the gods and emperors had brought success to Rome.²¹¹

Outside of the Circus Maximus on the Palatine and Aventine hills were a number of temples that also had a close relationship to the circus and the events that took place within it, such as the Temple to Apollo and the Temple to Hercules. Hercules had two shrines in the valley of the circus, which symbolized bravery, good fortune, and victory. During the reign of Augustus, however, the Temple of Apollo was more important than that of Hercules due to the fact that Augustus personally chose to favor Apollo among all other deities.²¹² Augustus credited his military victories to Apollo, supported rumors that Apollo was his real biological

²⁰⁷ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 255-260.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 260.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 265- 282.

²¹¹ Henderson, *A Doo-Dah-Doo-Dah-Dey at the Races*, 45.

²¹² Farvo, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*, 100.

father, and during his triumphal processions he portrayed himself as Apollo.²¹³ By doing these things Augustus was portraying his authority as legitimate and illustrating to the citizens that he had the favor of the gods on his side. To Augustus, “Hercules stood for brute strength, oriental hedonism, and disinterest in the appearance and propriety of the city,” while Apollo was the symbol for, “learning, refinement, and the union of classical Greece and Rome.”²¹⁴ For Apollo to be perceived as anything but the purest form of masculinity would have been problematic, because he was one of the defenders of the city. So, by aligning himself with Apollo, Augustus was claiming pure masculinity for himself as well. Due to the popularity of Apollo created by Augustus, Apollo became linked with the Ludi Apollinares, which was an old festival that included two days of circus games.²¹⁵ Other structures that were close to the Circus Maximus and linked to cults of religion and games included the Temple of Flora, the Temple of Mercury, and the Temple of the Magna Marta.²¹⁶

While at the actual games in the Circus Maximus, the crowd was reminded of the religious importance of the games by the beginning procession, the timing of the games, and the seating arrangements including the emperor’s box. The opening procession was lead by the presiding magistrate, which starting in the reign of Augustus was a position he limited to himself and members of the imperial family through law.²¹⁷ The procession was so sacred that if it was not performed perfectly it was believed that the gods would not be satisfied with the games and they must be restarted.²¹⁸ By limited the honor of leading the sacred processions to himself and his family, Augustus was claiming that they were superior to other citizens and had

²¹³ Milner, *Triumphus in Palatio*, 418; Farvo, *Urban Images of Augustan Rome*, 100.

²¹⁴ Farvo, *Urban Images in Augustan Rome*, 100. Oriental hedonism and disinterest in the city were signs of the effeminate, while learning and refinement were masculine characteristics.

²¹⁵ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 63.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* 63.

²¹⁷ Poynton, *The Public Games of the Romans*, 76-77. Processions being discussed are not the same as a triumphal procession, which were only complete when the emperor celebrated a great military battle.

²¹⁸ *Idib.*, 77.

more favor from the gods. Included in the procession were images of gods and sacrificial animals, and according to Poynton, “the average man was roused to the wildest excitement.”²¹⁹ Dio Cassius told the story that to spite Sextus Pompey Antony and Augustus removed Neptune, Sextus Pompey’s favorite deity, from the group of gods in the opening procession of the games causing great objections from the crowd.²²⁰ Dio’s story supports the claim that religious ritual was an imperative part of the circus atmosphere.

The games of the Etruscan and Republican Rome were celebrated on days that were dedicated to certain gods, such as the games held twice a year in honor of Consus and those held in honor of Cerces, the daughter of the Sun.²²¹ When Augustus came to power, however, hosting the games was more than a way to glorify a god. He used them to glorify himself and gain popularity from the Roman people, which he needed to establish his legitimacy as a ruler. To ensure that he was the most popular of the Roman elite Augustus passed a law that monopolized the right to host game.²²² The law did not include gladiatorial games, however, it did limit the number of these events a person could host and it limited the number of gladiators allowed to participate in any of these events.²²³ The one exception to this law was if a member of the elite host games in the name of the emperor, which was allowed as long as they received the emperor permission to do so first.²²⁴ Even though he was the only person with the power to host games did not mean that he discontinued the tradition of celebrating games for the gods. It was actually extremely important for his political agenda of gaining power by reestablishing Rome in the

²¹⁹ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 91-92; Poynton, *The Public Games of the Romans*, 78.

²²⁰ Henderson, *A Doo-Dah-Doo-Dah-Dey at the Races*, 46.

²²¹ Ronald Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization: The Roman Games* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 120.

²²² Carl J. Sommer, *We Look for a Kingdom: The Everyday Lives of the Early Christians* (Fort Collins: Ignatius Press, 2007), 86.

²²³ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 6.

²²⁴ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 12. An example of this would be the senate’s continuation of hosting the games dedicated to Mars, which Augustus started. When the senate hosted these games they were done in order to celebrate the military success of Augustus.

name of the republic to continue the traditions of the past, such as hosting games in honor of deities. In his writings of the *Res Gestae* he wrote about the numerous occasions he host games for the people including a new celebration he started honoring Mars, the war god.²²⁵

Augustus also added to the religious zeal of the circus by building the pulvinar into the seating of the Circus Maximus opposite of the finish line.²²⁶ The word pulvinar, derived from the Latin word meaning cushion, was used to refer to a seating place for the gods, so by building a pulvinar Augustus was inviting the gods to join the circus on his behalf.²²⁷ Beyond this, however, Augustus actually used the pulvinar as a private viewing box for himself and his family placing himself on the same level as gods and giving himself a god like demeanor to the crowd.²²⁸ The fact that Julius Caesar was made into a deity in 42 B.C. by the senate allowed Augustus to claim favor with the gods since he was *divi filius*, or the son of a god.²²⁹ In the *Res Gestae* while listing some of the structures he built during his reign, Augustus included, “the state box at the Circus Maximus,” which is referring to the pulvinar, proving that it was a structure of high importance to him.²³⁰

Augustus’s placement in the pulvinar was only one of the special seating arrangements made for the circus. Augustus mandated the seating arrangement of the entire audience in public venues, including the Circus Maximus, the higher a person’s social rank the lower their seat.²³¹ The seats closest to the arena were reserved for the most prominent Roman citizens, such as senators, priest, and the Vestal Virgins.²³² The performers in the circus were objects of the gaze in the negative sense just like the actors in a theatre, because they were believed to be too

²²⁵ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 383.

²²⁶ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 78

²²⁷ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 78.

²²⁸ *Ibid.* 80.

²²⁹ Everitt, *Augustus*, 85.

²³⁰ Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 375.

²³¹ Futrell, *Roman Games*, 52.

²³² Hopkins, p. 18

shameful to withstand its scrutiny; however, in the audience the seating arrangement played an important role by defining who was able to be positive objects of the gaze, which is the reason for Augustus's mandate. Since the seats closest to the arena were reserved for the senatorial elite and other prestigious citizens it allowed them to be distinguished from the rest of the crowd as superior because their bodies were on exhibit in the acceptable role of a spectator.²³³ The separation of seating was made obvious by the dress of the different social groups, such as the senatorial togas, which were white with purple trim, and the gray cloth, which was related to mourning, that the poorest citizens had to wear.²³⁴ There was more than one show going on in the circus at all times because the audience was actually a show within itself. As John Henderson writes, "The line between audience and players blurs and the circle of the arena is broken, once viewing is recognized as active performance... Spectators come into view as the locus of the spectacle, seeing, seeing seeing, seeing being seen, being seen seeing, and seeing that."²³⁵

The ultimate position of viewing, however, was not located within the structure of the Circus Maximus, but rather from the top of the Palentine hill from Augustus's palace. The relative relationship between the locations of the pulvinar, the Temple of Apollo, and Augustus's palace created a link between emperor and spectacle.²³⁶ Not only was it the Temple of Apollo that had close proximity to his house, but also the Temple of Magna Mater, Temple of Victoria, Temple of Vestal Virgins, and the Temple of Castor ad Pollux.²³⁷ Having all these temples located so close around his house added to his reputation of being favored among the gods, and helped him visually align himself with the gods for others. His plan was successful, and

²³³ Benton, *Split Vision*, 42-43.

²³⁴ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 17-18.

²³⁵ Henderson, *A Doo-Dah-Doo-Dah-Dey at the Races*, 46.

²³⁶ Futrell, *Roman Games*, 70.

²³⁷ Farvo, *Urban Images of Augustan Rome*, 202.

following his death his palace was known as the “house founded by the gods.”²³⁸ If Augustus was ever not present at the circus he was still capable of seeing everyone, giving the illusion of the all Seeing Eye due to the location of his house and the reputation of being associated with the gods. The other side was true as well, because whether Augustus was in his pulvinar, which was viewable by the entire arena, or at home, he was always capable of being seen.²³⁹ The same kind of importance was not linked with the view from atop the Aventine hill because it lay outside the jurisdiction of the four regions of Rome.²⁴⁰

As discussed in chapter two Gladiators were deemed *infamia* and were looked down upon for their lack of honor. Gladiators, however, had a double standard attached to their profession, because, while putting themselves on display was deemed as shameful, during their performances they were portraying the idea of the Roman soldier, which was the most honored ideal of masculinity. Rome was a militaristic society with brutality and violence built into the culture, which is why in early games the blood that shed in the arena was collected and poured onto a statue of Jupiter, god of the gods, as a sign of honor.²⁴¹ The concept of brutality in the military was translated into the circus and games through the role of gladiators, making their fighting in the arena an illustration of the fighting on the battlefield. For Augustus putting on games to celebrate his war victories was a way of making himself more masculine. Not only was he in control on the actual battlefield, but he also had the power to order gladiators and charioteers to perform for his and his subject’s pleasure. The games were so popular because they allowed the audience to feel reassured of their empire’s strength, and because they allowed

²³⁸ D. Wardle, “Valerius Maximus on the Domus Augusta, Augustus, and Tiberius,” *The Classics Quarterly* 50 (2000): pp. 479-493.

²³⁹ Futrell, *Roman Games*, 70.

²⁴⁰ Farvo, *Urban Images of Augustan Rome*, 43-44

²⁴¹ Paul Plass, *The Game of Death in Ancient Rome: Arenas of Sport and Political Suicide* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 29.

the audience to always be on the winning side.²⁴² The games put on in the Circus Maximus were for the most part chariot races, not gladiatorial battles; however, the same rules of public performance applied.

The last type of arena that the Circus Maximus held was the arena for the political side of the games. The importance of the politics at the games only grew with the onset of the empire started by Augustus. For the Roman people, after the Republic was ended, the circus was still an arena of popular participation and public opinion.²⁴³ Political figures would be cheered or hissed at when they entered the arena, and the audience had the opportunity to sway the emperor's decision when he decided the fate of a gladiator.²⁴⁴ The host of the games had the opportunity to win great favor with the people, and this became only Augustus during the rise of the empire, by what he gave the audience at the games. At the festivals all spectators were fed at the cost of the host, and many times the food they were given were the animals killed during the games.²⁴⁵ Besides just giving the people food, the emperor also gave away tokens for other prizes, such as clothes to please the people and help him keep order in the arena.²⁴⁶ Many time the games also included criminals and prisoners who were put to death in the arena either in a battle or through public execution.²⁴⁷ All of these elements combined gave the emperor hosting the games a great opportunity to win public favor and to establish his legitimacy by putting his wealth on display and giving the people what they wanted. During Augustus's reign the Circus Maximus was

²⁴² Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 30.

²⁴³ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 14

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 14-16.

²⁴⁵ Kyle *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*, 187-190.

²⁴⁶ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 18.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10. After the start of Christianity it was also common for Christians to be put to death at the games as a spectacle of imperial power.

partially destroyed twice, once by a flood and once by a fire, and both time the emperor donated vast amounts of money to have the structure rebuilt for the people to enjoy.²⁴⁸

One of the best examples available of the entire political, social, and religious agendas of the Circus Maximus combined together is the obelisk Augustus placed on the barrier of the circus. The obelisk was a phallic shaped monument that became a symbol of masculinity, standing for Augustus's claim that he was masculine enough to take on the role of emperor. Brought over from Egypt in 10 B.C. it was placed on the center of the barrier making it not only the center of the race but also the center of the crowds view. It was religiously linked to Helios the Egyptian Sun god, making it the perfect monument to be placed in a circus already dedicated to the Sun god of Rome. Achilles Tattius wrote in his work, "Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of the god, chief priest, after Egypt had been returned to the power of the Roman people, gave this gift to the sun-god."²⁴⁹ Since it was an Egyptian obelisk it also stood for imperial power, and Augustus's key victory over Antony by which he was able to add the long sought after Egyptian state to Roman rule.²⁵⁰ To add to the importance of the obelisk as an imperial symbol Augustus added his own inscriptions to the hieroglyphics already on the monument.²⁵¹ The same excitement brought on by bringing exotic animals into the arena for games would be felt with an exotic monument from a conquered area. To the Romans Egypt was a land of vast wealth, so the obelisk also was a symbol of Augustus's extreme wealth and his willingness to give to his people, which when added with the money he was paying to put on the games where the people would see the obelisk was the perfect illustration of immense wealth.

²⁴⁸ Humphrey, *Roman Circuses*, 73.

²⁴⁹ Futrell, *Roman Games*, 74.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 74

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* 74

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the rhetoric of the architecture of the Circus Maximus in terms of the political, social, and religious agendas of Augustus. It has maintained that the structure of the Circus Maximus included more than just seats and an arena. It also included temples, monuments, and special seating for the gods and the emperor. The games themselves were a religious event, being hosted in honor of certain gods and the display of these gods being paraded around the arena before the start of the events. They also functioned as a social dialogue between the position of a person seat, what they were wearing, and who they could see as well as who could see them. The concept of the Roman gaze and the idea that vision was a physical act was also true in the arena placing the performers of the games in the same group of infamia that actors were placed into for putting themselves on display for the pleasure of others. The last agenda that the public games fulfilled was the political one, which was defined by what the host did for the people, the participation of the audience in public opinion, and the legislation that was passed to put control of the games into the hands of the emperor. Lastly, the chapter ended with a discussion of the obelisk Augustus placed on the barrier of the arena, and how it was a symbol of all the aspects of the game. It was a symbol of masculinity, of religious importance, and a political movement by Augustus establishing his legitimacy as ruler. The combination of the all the elements of the games made the Circus Maximus, “a representation of Rome as Universe.”²⁵²

²⁵² Henderson, *A Doo-Dah-Doo-Dah-Dey at the Race*, 45.

Conclusion:

In 44 B.C.E. when Julius Caesar was assassinated the future of the Roman state was unclear. What was clear, however, was that the Roman people would not be happy with a dictator in power. For this reason, it was incredibly hard for Augustus to successfully establish a legitimate dynasty and supreme position of authority. The shift of Rome from Republic to empire took careful planning and execution on Augustus's part. To establish an empire Augustus had to confirm his legitimacy, gain the support of the Roman people, and monopolize control of the government all in the name of the Republic. His military successes, dedication to public works, and manipulating legislations made it possible for Augustus to be successful. The key to establishing his legitimacy was for Augustus to demonstrate his masculinity, which was defined in terms of sexual, physical, and visual penetration. By defining himself as an impenetrable penetrator, Augustus gained the support and respect of the Roman people.

The political and social agendas of Augustus were visually illustrated within the structure of the Circus Maximus. The games acted as a reminder of Rome's military superiority over foreign powers and importance of religion in maintaining their culture. The obelisk Augustus placed on the barrier of the Circus Maximus symbolized the intimate relationship between Augustus's political agenda, masculinity, and the games. It is physical evidence that the establishment of the Roman Empire included not only a monopoly of governmental authority, but also of the social and cultural aspects of Roman society. Augustus walked a fine line while establishing his dynasty, but in the end he was successful. Augustus was the first emperor of Rome.

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