

Flavian Visual Propaganda: Building a Dynasty¹**MICHAEL VASTA**

After seizing the throne in the year 69, Vespasian faced an immediate dilemma: he was lacking authority, and, so to speak, majesty.² He undertook a comprehensive program of propaganda designed to remedy this problem, and to establish the legitimacy of himself and his successors. His son, Titus, faced a similar problem on his accession. As the enforcer of Vespasian's regime, and the enjoyer of a rather extravagant lifestyle, his succession was met with widespread hostility. Yet, despite this, he is remembered as "the love and darling of the human race."³

The purpose of this paper is to examine how the first two Flavians established their legitimacy through the usage of visual propaganda, convincing the Roman world to accept an emperor "from nowhere."⁴ This was achieved through a thematic unity in the visual propaganda, focusing on three specific themes: establishing a link with good Roman tradition, especially Augustus and the "good" Julio-Claudians; distancing themselves from Nero, the "bad" emperors, and monarchy; commemorating the victory over the Jews. My study will begin with the triumph of 71, then continue to the restorations following the civil war, and finally the monument building programs that allowed the Flavians to erect permanent symbols of their legacy. In addition to demonstrating the application of the three themes in these instances, I would like to draw

¹ The English translations of Josephus, Cassius Dio, Tacitus, Martial, and Pliny the Elder are courtesy of the Loeb Classical Editions unless otherwise noted. Suetonius translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

² Suet. *Vesp.* 7.2.

³ Suet. *Titus* 1.1: "amor ac deliciae generis humani"

⁴ M. Beard, "The Triumph of Flavius Josephus," in *Flavian Rome: Image, Culture, Text*, ed. A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 557.

particular attention to the interrelation of the following: the misunderstood significance of the Temple of Isis in the Flavian triumph; the refiguring of Nero's Golden House; the Flavian association with *summi viri*; and Titus use of his monuments as a stage in order to rehabilitate the negative image he had gained before ascending to the throne.

I - The Triumph

The story of the triumph must begin with the spectacles held following the fall of Jerusalem. As it was too late to make a journey to Italy, Titus spent the winter with Agrippa and Berenice in Caesarea Philippi.⁵ He showed the same level of showmanship that he would later display in the hundred days of games to celebrate the dedication of the Flavian Amphitheater. He had many of the Jewish prisoners killed, both by wild animals and in gladiatorial battles.⁶ On October 24, he held games in honor of Domitian's birthday, resulting in the deaths of 2,500 prisoners, in "contests with wild beasts or with one another or in the flames,"⁷ and after moving his entourage to Berytus, he held even more extravagant games in honor of Vespasian's birthday on November 17. Titus continued his tour all throughout Syria, again hosting games and spectacles in each city. His procession came to an end shortly after Titus visited Memphis and participated in the consecration of the sacred bull Apis, wearing a diadem, the symbol of a Hellenistic monarch. Augustus himself had declined participation in the ritual,⁸ and it seems that the act of accepting a diadem caused some controversy and suspicion of conspiracy at Rome,

⁵ Jos. *BJ* 7.20.

⁶ *Ibid.* 7.23-25.

⁷ *Ibid.* 7.38.

⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 93.1.

as Titus soon after reaching Alexandria, hastened to Rome onboard a commercial ship, ending his overland procession with his legions.⁹

Titus' procession through the east is significant because it demonstrates the importance that Vespasian and his son placed upon publicly displaying Flavian *virtus*.¹⁰ Indeed, Josephus suggests that each stop should be seen as a minor triumph.¹¹ We are told that in the Syrian spectacles, Titus made the “Jewish captives serve to display their own destruction.”¹² This morbidly ironic display is similar to the way that captive generals would be forced to reenact their defeat during a triumph.¹³ Ando notes that Titus must have made a formal *adventus* into each city, concluding: “what was the formal *adventus* of a victorious *imperator*, when leading thousands of captives, if not a triumph?”¹⁴ The triumph served as the ultimate visual representation of Roman might and power, and in this case, with its focal point upon the heir apparent Titus, Flavian might and power.

Josephus tells us that Rome gave Titus as great a welcome as had been given to Vespasian, and that the “crowd of citizens as thus afforded an ecstasy of joy by the sight (*το βλῆπειν*) of the three princes now united.”¹⁵ It is important to note here that Josephus emphasizes the visual importance of seeing the Flavian family together for the first time

⁹ Suet. *Titus* 5.3.

¹⁰ B. W. Jones, *The Emperor Titus* (London and Sydney: Croon Helm; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 57.

¹¹ Beard, 553.

¹² Jos. *BJ* 7.96: “τῶν Ἰουδαίων τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους εἰς ἐπίδεξιν τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀπωλείας ἀποχρώμενος...” Trans. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 3, p. 535.

¹³ Beard, 553.

¹⁴ C. Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 257.

¹⁵ Jos. *BJ* 7.120-1: “τῷ δὲ πλήθει τῶν πολιτῶν δαιμόνιον τινα τὴν χαρὰν παρεῖχε τὸ βλέπειν αὐτοὺς ἤδη τοὺς τρεῖς ἐν ταύτῳ γεγονότας.” Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 3, p. 541.

since seizing the throne. He uses *τὸ βλέπειν* “to see, look” specifically to denote the impact of the united family on the Roman people. Vespasian’s message of dynasty and family unity could be “seen” in this orchestrated homecoming for the victorious Titus. When the triumph itself would take place, this concept would be repeated again and again.

The Flavian triumph itself was a complex and elaborate pageant that must be examined in each of its parts. It, as Beard persuasively argues, was designed to be the “Flavian *coronation*, the official launch party and press night of the Flavian dynasty.”¹⁶ The usurpers are transformed into an “established imperial dynasty” and Titus changes from “conqueror of Jerusalem to Flavian Caesar.”¹⁷ The triumph is the beginning of the propaganda program designed to give legitimacy to Vespasian and his sons.

First of all, the triumphal procession was a celebration of military glory: Vespasian and Titus were the actual victors of the war, truly deserving of a triumph. Millar states that “of course the first claim made by the new dynasty – and the first, but not the only, contrast to be established with Nero – was the achievement of a major military victory.”¹⁸ The Flavians would not be emperors who took credit for the campaigns of others, but were soldier-rulers themselves, and deserving of such acclaim.

The triumph began uniquely. Instead beginning the night before at the palace on the Palatine Hill, this triumph began at the Temple of Isis in the Campus Martius, near

¹⁶ Beard, 548.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 552.

¹⁸ F. Millar, “Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome,” in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. Jonathan Edmonson, Steve Mason, and James Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 102. For contrast with Nero, look at the procession following Nero’s victory in the Greek musical contests, Suet. *Nero* 25. As E. Makin, “The Triumphal Route, with Particular Reference to the Flavian Triumph,” *JRS* 11 (1921): 31 points out, Nero clearly intended his procession to be seen as a triumph.

the Villa Publica where Vespasian and Titus had spent the night.¹⁹ This deserves to be explained, and most modern scholars take this unique route for granted. Isis, a goddess controversial at best in Rome, certainly was important to the Flavians. Her temple was featured on several coins²⁰ and her cult remained in favor through Domitian. Yet devotion to the Egyptian goddess seems out of place, especially when one considers that Augustus forbade temples to the Egyptian deities to be built within the city limits, even though Julius Caesar had intended to build a Temple of Isis in Rome. Vespasian was careful to follow Augustan traditions, yet here he shows devotion to the patron goddess of Augustus' ultimate enemy: Cleopatra.

The explanation can be found within the personal connections that the Flavians held to Egypt and to Isis. First, Isis represented rebirth and eternal life. The Flavian propaganda campaign envisioned a Rome reborn after civil war and restored to her former glory.²¹ It is reasonable to conclude that the Flavians wished to highlight Isis as a symbol of rebirth in the context of the triumph. There is also a significant connection between Isis and Domitian. During the final fighting between the Vitellians and Flavians in Rome, Vitellius' partisans besieged Domitian and his uncle Sabinus in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. In the chaos that ensued the Temple was set afire. Domitian, however, escaped by dressing himself as one of the devotees of Isis.²² Domitian would later inscribe in hieroglyphs "beloved of Isis," on an obelisk now in the Piazza Navona.²³

¹⁹ Jos. *BJ* 7.123; Makin, 26.

²⁰ H. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, vol. 2, *Vespasian to Domitian* (London: Trustees of the British Museum), xlix, 123, 149, 189, 202.

²¹ On eternal Rome, see "AETERNITAS" coin legends as described in B. Levick, *Vespasian* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 66. For Rome reborn, see Mart. *Spect.* 2.11, and "ROMA RESVRGENS" and "RENASCENS" legends in Levick, 66.

²² Tac. *Hist.* 3.74, Suet. *Dom.* 1.2-3.

²³ Levick, 189.

When we consider that the triumph was just as much theater as parade, another possibility becomes clear. If we view the two temples that framed the triumph, that of Isis and Jupiter Optimus Maximus, as representative of their nations of origin, it follows that the triumph should be seen as a reenactment of the Flavian rise to power: begun in Egypt with the proclamation of Tiberius Alexander, won by means of the Judean War, and concluded in Rome. However, if we rightly assume that Josephus' version of events is the "officially sanctioned" narratives approved by the Flavians, as Josephus himself attests,²⁴ then the primacy of Tiberius Alexander's Egyptian acclamation was not the favored version, but rather, the primacy of the Judean legions' acclamation.²⁵ I contend that the preferred order of acclamation changed during the reign of Vespasian. At first, Vespasian seems to have had no qualms about promoting his association with Egypt and its deities.²⁶ However, as controversy regarding Titus' succession grew and became violent²⁷ and comparisons between monarchy and the principate were drawn by dissidents, it appears that Vespasian and Titus attempted to hide the eastern origins of their power.

Note that we see coins depicting the Temple of Isis only in 71, the year of the triumph, and in 73. Afterwards, the temple is conspicuously missing. It is possible that

²⁴ Jos. *Vitae* 363: "Indeed, so anxious was the Emperor Titus that my volumes should be the sole authority from which the world should learn the facts, that he affixed his own signature to them and gave orders for their publication..."

"ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτοκράτωρ Τίτος [οὕτως] ἐκ μόνων αὐτῶν ἐβουλήθη τὴν γνῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παραδοῦναι τῶν πράξεων, ὥστε χαράξας τῇ ἑαυτοῦ χειρὶ τὰ βιβλία δημοσιῶσαι προσέταξεν" Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 1, p. 135.

²⁵ Jos. *BJ* 4.601. Also important to Josephus' version is the reluctance of Vespasian to challenge for the throne, and that he only began to consider war when Vitellius took Rome. Dio 64.8.3 implies that Vespasian began his plans during the fighting between Otho and Vitellius, and Tacitus (*Hist.* 2.4) implies the same, as Titus consulted the oracle of Paphian Venus about future power for his family.

²⁶ See below for the statues of Nile and his children, and see Robert K. Sherk, ed., and trans., "Acclamation of Vespasian in Alexandria. AD 69," *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian*, vol. 6, Translated Documents of Greece and Rome (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 123-4, for Vespasian called Son of Ammon and Sarapis.

²⁷ Suet. *Vesp.* 25; Dio 65.12.1, 65.12.2, 65.15.3-5.

Vespasian, in his attempt to silence any idea that the Flavian ascension to power would be seen as a reversal of Actium in which the east was victorious over the west,²⁸ purposefully distanced himself from Isis and Egypt.

With the *Bellum Judaicum* published in 79,²⁹ the year when Titus' mistress Berenice was dismissed, another action seen as an attempt to quell the comparisons to monarchy,³⁰ it is reasonable to assume that the reordering of the acclamations, removing the first acclamation from the prefect of Egypt to Roman soldiers, was another aspect of this plan. Thus, it is perfectly compatible to have Isis and Egypt prominent in the early years of dynasty, in association with the Egyptian acclamation, while later Vespasian and Titus seem to distance themselves from the east. Therefore, as well as representing rebirth, eternal life, and the link between the goddess and Domitian, beginning the triumph at the Temple of Isis can also be seen in 71 as representing the origin of Flavian power and her divine protection of the family in the civil wars.

Josephus emphasizes that Vespasian and Titus began the procession in the traditional manner. They are "clad in the traditional (*πατρῴους*) purple robes,"³¹ "recited the customary (*νεμισμένους*) prayers,"³² "dismissed the soldiers to the customary

²⁸ Jones, *Titus*, 62.

²⁹ T.D. Barnes, "The Sack of the Temple in Josephus and Tacitus," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. Jonathan Edmonson, Steve Mason, and James Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 136-42.

³⁰ The dismissal of Berenice is the subject of my senior thesis, where extensive evidence will be provided to support this claim.

³¹ Jos. *BJ* 7.124: "προφυρᾶς δ' ἑσθήτας πατρῴους ἀμπεχόμενοι" Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 3, p. 541, 543.

³² *Ibid.* 7.128: "εὐχὰς ἐποιήσατο τὰς νενομισμένας" Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 3, p. 543.

(*νενομισμένοι*) breakfast,”³³ and processed through the triumphal arch that all other triumphs passed through.³⁴ And at the end of the triumph, following the execution of the Jewish general Simon, the triumphators sacrifices were “duly offered with the customary (*νομιζομέναις*) prayers.”³⁵ By using the words *πατρίους* “ancestral” and *νενομισμένος* “customary,” Josephus shows that Vespasian and Titus both respected the customs of the ancestors, and that this triumph would be performed in the customary manner, not a perversion of the ritual like Nero’s.³⁶

The spectacle begins in earnest after this. The procession passed through the Theater of Marcellus,³⁷ so that the crowds might have a better view of the parade. This route further demonstrates the importance of this triumph as a display of Flavian glory. By ensuring that the masses had an excellent view of the procession, the message of the Flavians would be disseminated to the common people. Vespasian could never be accused of excluding the lower classes from his propaganda and public works, and indeed appeared to show special effort to win them over. The spoils included:

almost all objects which men who have ever been blessed by fortune have acquired one by one – the wonderful and precious productions of various nations – by their collective exhibition on that day displayed the majesty of the Roman empire.³⁸

³³ Ibid. 7.129-130: “τούς μὲν στρατιώτας ἀπέλυσεν ἐπὶ τὸ νενομισμένον ἄριστον αὐτοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων εὐτρεπίζεσθαι” Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 3, p. 543.

³⁴ Ibid. 7.130.

³⁵ Ibid. 7.155: “ταῖς νομιζομέναις καλλιερήσαντες εὐχαῖς” Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 3, p. 551.

³⁶ Suet. *Nero* 25. Note that Nero tried to link himself to Augustus in his version of the triumph by riding in Augustus’ chariot, an attempt of Nero to connect himself with his well-regarded ancestor.

³⁷ Jos. *BJ* 7.131; Millar, 104; Makin, 33.

³⁸ Jos. *BJ* 7.132-34: “σχεδὸν γὰρ ὅσα τοῖς πῶπτοτ’ ἀνθρώποις εὐδαιμονήσασιν ἐκτήθη κατὰ μέρος ἄλλα παρ’ ἄλλοις θαυμαστά καὶ πολυτελῆ, ταῦτ’ ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ἀθρόα τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας ἔδειξε τὸ μέγεθος.” Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 3, p. 545.

Precious metals and riches were brought in not like a procession, but flowing like a river. Following were marvelous tapestries, with life-like portraits and transparent gems. Cult images of the Roman gods came next, then exotic animals of many different species, led by richly attired attendants. Even the prisoners of war were dressed splendidly in elaborate costumes designed to hide the wounds and scars of war and interrogation.³⁹

Next were what we might call floats, traveling stages that towered three and four storeys high, displaying reenactments of scenes of the war. These stages were so beautiful and well crafted that those who had not been present could see the war as if they were there.⁴⁰

Then, there is a detailed description of the spoils taken from the Jewish Temple, all of great religious significance to the Jews. First was the Table of Shewbread, made of gold, then the seven-branched lampstand, the menorah, and finally, the tablet of the Jewish Law.⁴¹ The importance of possessing such important religious artifacts can be seen in the later Arch of Titus. Dedicated by Domitian, the arch features relief sculptures depicting the menorah and the golden table. Owning these relics and parading them in the triumph demonstrated the military and religious nature of the conquest. Here, we can see one of the main purposes of the Flavian triumph: by visually demonstrating the military power and dominance of the Flavians over the Jews, a stern message was sent, designed to crush any desire for revolt, either from the provinces or from within.

Finally, after gold and ivory images of the goddess Victory, came the triumphators themselves. Vespasian, in full triumphal regalia, was followed by Titus in

³⁹ Metals: Ibid. 7.134-5; Portraits and gems: Ibid. 7.135-6; Gods, animals and prisoners: Ibid. 7.136-8.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 7.147.

⁴¹ Ibid. 7.148-52.

his own triumphal chariot. Domitian, who with the aid of Mucianus put down a rebellion in the provinces, rode behind his father and brother on just a horse, albeit, a magnificent horse.⁴² Just as Josephus describes the moment when Titus finally joined his father and brother in Italy,⁴³ the family together, in their full glory, must have been a magnificent sight, glorifying the dynasty. The triumph marked a new era, “for the city of Rome kept festival that day for her victory in the campaign against her enemies, for the termination of her civil dissensions, and for the dawning hopes of her felicity.”⁴⁴

The triumph followed the path of the Sacred Way, in the shadow of Nero’s Golden House.⁴⁵ It is possible that the prominence of the Golden House in the midst of the triumph (after all, the House’s vestibule marked the path of the Sacred Way to the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus) prompted the extravagance and spectacle of the Flavian triumph. Nero was popular to the lower classes, and well known for his wonderful shows and spectacles.⁴⁶ Josephus’ detailed description, written with official approval, leads one to believe that the Flavians wished to emphasize the magnificence of the procession. The usage of new and innovative displays, such as the massive “floats,” implies that the Flavians wanted their triumph to outshine all predecessors in terms of visual flair and awe. Vespasian and Titus put on such a dramatic display in part to win over the masses and attempt to outdo the visual spectacles of the emperors before them,

⁴² Ibid. 7.152.

⁴³ Ibid. 7.119-22.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 7.157: “ταύτην γὰρ τὴν ἡμέραν ἡ Ῥωμαίων πόλις ἐώρταζεν ἐπινίκιον μὲν τῆς κατὰ τῶν πολεμίων στρατείας, πέρασ δὲ τῶν ἐμφυλίων κακῶν, ἀρχὴν δὲ τῶν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας ἐλπιδῶν.” Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 3, p. 551.

⁴⁵ Makin, 25.

⁴⁶ Suet. *Nero* 57.1-2 tells of people leaving flowers on his grave for long after his death, and acting as if he was still alive. See also E. Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 2003) for a much more extensive examination of Nero’s popularity and legacy than can be included here.

but more importantly to allay the fears of civil war through the emphasis on the concord of the Flavian house.

II – The Restorations

After the bloody battle of Cremona, the Vitellians and the Flavians, led by Antonius Primus, fought for control of Rome. During the struggle, Flavius Sabinus, Vespasian's older brother, and Domitian barricaded themselves in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill. In the ensuing combat, the Temple was burned down.⁴⁷ According to Tacitus, “this was the saddest and most shameful crime that the Roman state had ever suffered since its foundation.”⁴⁸ Domitian escaped, but the Vitellians captured and killed Sabinus. Antonius Primus, having already negotiated a peace with Vitellius, was enraged that the Vitellians continued the war, and showed no mercy when he took the city. Vespasian made it one of his primary goals to restore the city, which had already seen catastrophic destruction in the fire of 64 and an earlier round of tremendous remodeling as Nero's Golden House was constructed. Simultaneously, Vespasian would rebuild Rome and erase Nero's memory from the city.

The reconstruction of the Capitoline came to symbolize the “resurgence of Rome” and “the renewal of the relationship between the Roman people and the triad of gods who had overseen their rise.”⁴⁹ As long as the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus remained in ruin, it was a visual reminder of the violent civil struggle between the Vitellian and Flavian partisans, as well as Vespasian's usurpation. The Flavian building program was

⁴⁷ Tac. *Hist.* 3.71.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 3.72: “Id facinus post conditam urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei publicae populi Romani accidit” Trans. Moore, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 2, p. 453.

⁴⁹ Levick, 126.

an act of selective political memory, erasing the disturbing and troubling circumstances of Vespasian's accession. Indeed, the rebuilding began before Vespasian even entered Italy.

The honor of rebuilding the Capitoline became a point of political contention between the emperor and the senator Helvidius Priscus. Priscus "proposed that the Capitol should be restored at public expense and that Vespasian should assist in the work."⁵⁰ The moderate senators passed over the motion and let it be forgotten. However, Tacitus ominously notes, "there were some, however, who remembered it."⁵¹ By merely offering Vespasian the opportunity to assist, Priscus implied that the Senate had jurisdiction, and that the emperor was answerable to the Senate. Assertions of senatorial power against the emperor were a primary reason for Priscus' exile and execution by Vespasian.⁵²

Vespasian appointed Lucius Vestinus, an equestrian, to lead the reconstruction process, and on June 21, 70, a ceremony was held in which the *Lapis Terminus* was set in place on the foundation of the new temple.⁵³ Vespasian himself, Suetonius wrote, upon his arrival in Rome in October, "having undertaken the restoration of the Capitol, was the first to move his hand for clearing away the rubble, and, in fact, carried some away on his

⁵⁰ Tac. *Hist.* 4.9: "Censurerat Helvidius ut Capitolium publice restitueretur, adiuuaret Vespasianus." Trans. Moore, LCL, vol. 3, p. 19.

⁵¹ Ibid: "fuere qui et meminissent." Trans. Moore, LCL, vol. 3, p. 19.

⁵² B.W. Jones, *Suetonius. The Flavian Emperors: A Historical Commentary*, Classical Studies Series (Bristol: Bristol Classics, 2002), 75; The date for Priscus' execution is controversial. Evidence is found in Dio 65.12.3, 14.1, and 15.1. Dio's epitomators state that Priscus' execution occurred at the same time as the death of Vespasian's mistress Caenis. 15.1 concerns the dedication of the Temple of Peace, which took place in the sixth consulship of Vespasian, the year 75. Therefore, Priscus must be dead by 75, and before the arrival of Berenice in that year.

⁵³ Tac. *Hist.* 4.53; Levick, 126; Jones, *Flavian*, 65.

own neck.”⁵⁴ Dio tells us the same, and adds that he took the action in order to spur other leading citizens to action, and thus, leave the rest of the population with no excuse for not doing their duty in restoring the temple of the chief Roman god.⁵⁵ It must have been successful, for by the time of the triumph in June 71, the temple was restored enough to figure as it should in the procession, and was even taller than the old temple, the “only feature that was thought wanting in the magnificence of the original structure.”⁵⁶

The anecdotes contained in Tacitus and especially Suetonius are significant because they show how Vespasian wanted to be personally connected with the restoration of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the Capitoline. By appointing an equestrian, not a senator, Vespasian not only raised support among that class, but also reminded the senators like Helvidius Priscus who hoped for an increase in senatorial powers that the emperor was the most important participant in the restoration.⁵⁷

While the cult of Jupiter Optimus Maximus had lost status following Augustus, Jones states that Vespasian “employed every means of demonstrating his connection with Jupiter,” and that the restored temple was intended “to show that he now had divine approval of all his actions.”⁵⁸ Vespasian could advocate a return to tradition by his

⁵⁴ Suet. *Vesp.* 8.5: “Ipse restitutionem Capitolii adgressus ruderibus purgandis manus primus admovit ac suo collo quaedam extulit.”

⁵⁵ Dio 65.10.2.

⁵⁶ Tac. *Hist.* 4.53: “et prioris templi magnificentiae defuisse credebatur.” Trans. Moore, LCL, vol. 3, p. 103.

⁵⁷ It is important to note that Tacitus (*Hist* 4.9) refers to the senators who allowed Priscus’ proposition to disappear as *modestissimus*, the most moderate. While an outspoken man like Priscus might be at odds with Vespasian, the majority seem to have accepted him. See also P.A. Brunt, “Lex de Imperio Vespasiani,” *JRS* 67 (1977): 95-116 on the *Lex de Imperio* as a *senatus consultum*. It seems reasonable to conclude that most of the Senate wished to work together with Vespasian, and that the appointment of an equestrian to such an important task would not be taken as a slight except by the most radical like Priscus.

⁵⁸ Jones, *Flavian*, 65. For other uses of Jupiter in Vespasianic propaganda, see Suet. *Vesp.* 8.7 for the dream of Nero to take the sacred chariot of Jupiter Optimus Maximus from the shrine and to Vespasian’s house, and also the omen of the eagles at the Battle of Betriacum.

patronage of Jupiter, and at the same time, demonstrate his endorsement by the king of the gods through restoration of his chief temple.⁵⁹

Vespasian's coinage further reveals the message of restoration, peace, and stability. Mattingly writes that the coinage of 71 represents "the considered commentary of the new government on the troubled chapter of history that had just closed."⁶⁰ It is during this year that the mints of Rome begin to produce coins at their normal rates, signaling that the cloud of civil strife had finally dissipated.⁶¹ The images upon the coins offer hope for the future: the restoration of Rome's glory.

In one type of aes, *Roma Resurgens* takes the form of a woman kneeling. A togate Vespasian extends his hand to her, and lifts her up, as the goddess Roma looks on approvingly.⁶² Another features Vespasian raising up the goddess Libertas, again with Roma watching over.⁶³ We also find Victory handing Vespasian the palladium, symbol of eternal Rome.⁶⁴ The message is clear: Rome has returned to her former glory, through Vespasian.

Vespasian further restored three thousand bronze tablets which were also destroyed when the temple was burned. These tablets contained the records dating to the foundation of the Republic, including decrees of the Senate and the People regarding alliances, treaties, and privileges conferred.⁶⁵ Vespasian also restored the Theater of

⁵⁹ D. Wardle, "Vespasian, Helvidius Priscus and the Restoration of the Capitol," *Historia* 45 (1996): 222 states: "With Vespasian can be seen the beginnings of the 'Jovian theology' of imperial power prominent from Domitian and above all Trajan."

⁶⁰ Mattingly, xlix.

⁶¹ Ibid. xxx.

⁶² Ibid. xlvi, 121, nos. 565, 566.

⁶³ Ibid. xlvii, 118, no. 549.

⁶⁴ Ibid. xlvii, 191, no. 786.

⁶⁵ Suet. *Vesp.* 8.5.

Marcellus⁶⁶ and works of art, such as the Coan Venus, and the Colossus.⁶⁷ It is important to note that Vespasian “inscribed upon them, not his own name, but the names of those who had originally built them.”⁶⁸ This nod to the leading citizens of the past gave Vespasian twice the glory he would have gained if he had inscribed his own name. Not only did he demonstrate respect for the past, but also implicitly linked himself with these *summi viri*.

In the same vein, Vespasian restored the Temple of the Divine Claudius. Erected by Nero on the Caelian Hill, its construction ceased after the murder of Agrippina, and was converted into a nymphaeum as part of the Golden House. Not only does this promote Vespasian as the “successor of the last reputable, and with the people deservedly popular, Julio-Claudian ruler,” and pay homage to the emperor that Vespasian served in Germany and Britain, for which he earned triumphal honors,⁶⁹ but as Jones notes, this action is consistent with Vespasian’s efforts to distance the new dynasty from Nero.⁷⁰ Flavian propaganda, as repeated by Suetonius, falsely attributes the construction to Agrippina instead of Nero, and says it “was destroyed nearly to the bottom by Nero.”⁷¹ The rewriting of history in order to disparage Nero and promote Flavian restoration appears again and again throughout the reigns of Vespasian and Titus.

As a way to establish Flavian legitimacy, the memory of Nero had to be destroyed, his rule cast as an aberration, and quell any ideas that the Flavians were

⁶⁶ Ibid. 19.1.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 18.1. See below for restoration/modification of the Colossus.

⁶⁸ Dio 65.10.1A: “καὶ τὰ ἤδη ἐφθαρμένα ἐπανασκεύαζε, καὶ συντελουμένοις αὐτοῖς οὐ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπέγραφεν ὄνομα, ἀλλὰ τὸ τῶν πρώτως δομησαμένων.” Trans. Cary, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 8, p. 277.

⁶⁹ Suet. *Vesp.* 4.1-2.

⁷⁰ Jones, *Flavian*, 67.

⁷¹ Suet. *Vesp.* 9.1: “sed a Nerone prope funditus destructum.”

usurpers, as opposed to the restorers of Rome following civil war and the reign of a tyrant. Nero was still popular both among the masses in Rome and in the East, and so Vespasian and his sons had a difficult task ahead of them. One of the main ways that they transformed Nero's memory was to promote the Golden House as a personal pleasure palace, and thus have justification for demolishing it, and "reclaiming" the land with public buildings.

Martial, in his *Liber De Spectaculis*, written under Titus to commemorate the Hundred Days Games, articulates this program by a dramatic appeal to Rome's hatred of kings:

Where the starry colossus sees the constellations at close range and lofty scaffolding rises in the middle of the road, once gleamed the odious halls of a cruel monarch (*regis*), and in all Rome there stood a single house... Where we admire the warm baths, a speedy gift, a haughty tract of land had robbed the poor of their dwellings... Rome has been restored to herself, and under you, Caesar, the delights that belonged to a master (*domini*) now belong to the people.⁷²

Under Vespasian and Titus, Rome is no longer the domain of a *rex* and a *dominus*, but restored. The visual legacy of Nero would be erased. The Colossus, bearing his image, was changed to that of the Sun,⁷³ the lake of the Golden House was drained and the

⁷² Mart. *Spect.* 2: "Hic ubi sidereus propius videt astra colossus / et crescent media pegmata celsa via, / invidiosa feri radiabant atria regis / unaque iam tota stabat in urbe domus. / ... hic ubi miramur velocia munera thermas, / abstulerat miseris tecta superbus ager. / ... reddita Roma sibi est et sunt te praeside, Caesar, / deliciae populi, quae fuerant domini." Trans. Shackleberry, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1, p. 13, 15, with modifications.

⁷³ Pliny *NH* 34.18.45. Levick, 128, writes of this: Vespasian put on a new head "that of Helius, the original of the Colossus of Rhodes, who brings light daily from the East." This statement raises the speculation that perhaps it was not just the erasure of Nero here, but a reminder of the Flavian origin in the East, as a sun bringing light to the west.

Amphitheater constructed on the spot,⁷⁴ and Titus may have built his public baths out of the foundation left by the baths of the Golden House.⁷⁵

Indeed, “the dismemberment of the Domus Aurea indicated what the Flavians were not... [and the restorations and monuments of the Flavians] indicated what the Flavians were, or rather what they wished to be seen as being.”⁷⁶ The selective memory-making in the visual realm is likewise institutionalized in law. The *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani*⁷⁷ reveals the legal basis of Vespasian’s principate, granting him the extraordinary powers wielded by previous emperors, but only refers to certain emperors for precedent, namely Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius. By only referring to some of the previous emperors, and not to Gaius, Nero, Galba, Otho, or Vitellius, Vespasian and the senators who wrote the *senatus consultum* specifically link him and his successors with the emperors deemed worthy of memory.

Vespasian and his son Titus also used the media of coinage to promote their links with the *summi viri*. Vespasian minted coins featuring legends similar to those of Augustus, and images that suggested the first emperor.⁷⁸ In his reign, Titus issued a series of commemorative coins. He issued only the denomination aes in this series, likely an effort to ensure wider circulation than the more valuable coins.⁷⁹ The restored types appeared on the obverse of the coin, while Titus’ own titles appeared on the reverse, with the explicit statement that Titus had restored the coin.⁸⁰ Types of Divus Augustus,

⁷⁴ Suet. *Vesp.* 9.1.

⁷⁵ L. Richardson, *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1992), 397.

⁷⁶ A.J. Boyle, “Introduction: Reading Flavian Rome,” in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003), 30-1.

⁷⁷ For a more extensive look, see Brunt, 95-116.

⁷⁸ Jones, *Titus*, 121; Mattingly, xxxviii.

⁷⁹ Jones, 121.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Agrippa, Tiberius, Drusus, Livia, Nero Drusus, Germanicus, Agrippina the Younger, Claudius, and Galba⁸¹ were struck, as well as a new coin featuring Britannicus, in honor of Titus' childhood friend.⁸² Through these commemorative coins, Titus assembles a list of his own *summi viri*, similar to the elite group of Vespasian's *Lex de Imperio*.

Through their restorations, the members of the Flavian dynasty manipulated the way they were literally seen. By distancing themselves from Nero, and by promoting a negative image of him as a *rex* and *dominus*, they enhanced their legitimacy, and removed some of the stigma of "usurper." Promoting their arrival as salvation after a dark time allowed the Flavians to promote their reign as one of restoration and rebirth.

III – The Monuments

Vespasian and his sons did not content themselves with merely restoring ancient temples and modifying the propaganda of their predecessors. They were avid builders, creating some of the great monuments of ancient Rome, including the Temple of Peace, the Flavian Amphitheater, the Baths of Titus, and the Flavian triumphal arches.

The Temple of Peace

Josephus tells us that the Temple of Peace was conceived immediately after the triumph⁸³ and from Dio, that the Temple was dedicated in 75.⁸⁴ The name of the monument is deceiving, however, for it is no mere temple to the goddess Peace, but

⁸¹ Mattingly, lxvii-lxviii, 281-292, nos. 261-305.

⁸² Mattingly, lxviii, 293, no. 306; friendship with Britannicus: Suet. *Titus* 2.1.

⁸³ Jos. *BJ* 7.158.

⁸⁴ Dio 65.15.1-2.

rather a Flavian forum.⁸⁵ The forum was located between the Basilica Aemilia and the Argiletum, an area devastated by the fire of 64. It was a 135 x 110 m colonnaded rectangle with either flower-beds, shrubberies, or small pools dotting the courtyard. At the south-east end was the temple proper, a rectangular, axial hall, notably not raised on a podium. In the apse was a base likely for the statue of Peace. Here also were the spoils from the Jewish Temple. On either side of the shrine, also on the same axis, were large rectangular rooms. Certainly at least one of these must have been a library, and it is possible that another contained a pre-Severan Marble Plan of Rome, as the Severan Plan would later be housed here.⁸⁶ Priceless works of art from around the world adorned the Temple of Peace, and Pliny the Elder grouped it with the Basilica Aemilia and the Forum of Augustus as “the most beautiful [buildings] the world has ever seen.”⁸⁷

The Temple of Peace is one of the greatest symbols of Flavian ideology. Josephus describes it in the following way:

Besides having prodigious resources of wealth on which to draw he also embellished it with ancient masterpieces of painting and sculpture; indeed, into that shrine were accumulated and stored all objects for the sight of which men had once wandered over the whole world, eager to see them severally while they lay in various countries. Here, too, he laid up the vessels of gold from the temple of the Jews, on which he prided himself; but their Law and the purple hangings of the sanctuary he ordered to be deposited and kept in the palace.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ It was not known as the Forum Pacis until the fourth century A.D. See Richardson, 287.

⁸⁶ P. von Blanckhagen, “The Imperial Fora,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 3, no. 4 (1954): 22; Levick, 126-7; Richardson, 268-7.

⁸⁷ Pliny *NH* 36.102: “pulcherrima operum quae umquam vidit orbis.” Trans. Eichholz, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 10, p. 81.

⁸⁸ Jos. *BJ* 7.159-62: “τῆ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ πλοῦτου χορηγία δαιμονίῳ χρησάμενος, ἔτι καὶ τοῖς ἔκπαλαι κατωρθωμένοις γραφῆς τε καὶ πλαστικῆς ἔργοις αὐτὸ κατεκόσμησεν· πάντα γὰρ εἰς ἐκεῖνον τὸν νεῶ συνήχθη καὶ κατετέθη, δι’ ὧν τὴν θεάν ἄνθρωποι πρότερον περὶ πᾶσαν ἐπλανῶντο τὴν οἰκουμένην, ἕως ἄλλο παρ’ ἄλλοις ἦν κείμενον ἰδεῖν ποθοῦντες. ἀνέθηκε δ’ ἐνταῦθα καὶ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων χρυσᾶ κατασκευάσματα σεμνυόμενος ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς. τὸν

Just like in Martial's second poem in the *Liber De Spectaculis*, this quotation contains the three major themes of Flavian visual propaganda. By displaying artistic masterpieces from around the world, Vespasian associates himself with Augustus, and separates himself from Nero. Augustus' right hand man, Marcus Agrippa, was known to make speeches, "lofty in tone and worthy of the greatest of citizens, on the question of making all pictures and statues national property, a procedure which would have been preferable to banishing them to country houses."⁸⁹ Pliny the Elder writes that Vespasian continues this, in contrast to Nero. After listing several sculptural masterpieces, Pliny states, "all the most celebrated have now been dedicated by the emperor Vespasian in the Temple of Peace and his other public buildings; they had been looted by Nero, who conveyed them all to Rome and arranged them in the sitting-rooms of his Golden Mansion."⁹⁰ Note that Pliny uses the word *violentia* "with force, violence" in conjunction with Nero, whereas the works *sunt dicata a Vespasiano principe* "were dedicated by the emperor Vespasian." Thus, adorning the Temple of Peace with works of art linked Vespasian to Augustus and Agrippa,⁹¹ and also separated him from Nero.

The victory over the Jews, the third main theme, is found in the public display of the Temple relics. Again, like their appearance in the triumph, by putting two of the

δὲ νόμον αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ πορφυρᾶ τοῦ σηκοῦ καταπετάσματα προσέταξεν ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἀποθεμένους φυλάττειν." Trans. Thackeray, LCL, vol. 3, p. 551, 553.

⁸⁹ Pliny *NH* 35.26: "magnifica et maximo civium digna de tabulis omnibus signisque publicandis, quod fieri satius fuisset quam in villarum exilia pelli." Trans. Rackham, LCL, vol. 9, p. 279.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 34.84: "clarissima quaeque in urbe iam sunt dicata a Vespasiano principe in templo Pacis aliisque eius operibus, violentia Neronis in urbem convecta et in sellariis domus aureae disposita." Trans. Rackham, LCL, vol. 9, p. 191.

⁹¹ von Blanckhagen, 22, suggests that: "The dedication of the temple to the goddess of peace after the completion of the Jewish Wars may indicate that the emperor intended it as a contrast and supplement to the Forum of Mars 'the Avenger.'" While this an interesting speculation, a more apt comparison may be to the Ara Pacis, and Vespasian's Temple serving as a supplement and expansion upon that monument.

holiest items in all Judaism on display like a museum piece, there was a clear demonstration of Roman dominance over the Jewish people. That the artifacts were placed in a temple suggests the ancient ritual of *evocatio*, in which the Romans invited an enemy god to abandon his city and join the Roman side, having been promised a new temple in Rome. As Yahweh lacked a cult statue, it is possible that the golden table and the menorah stood in place of the statue of the Jewish god, and that the relics' placement in the Temple of Peace symbolized that Yahweh had abandoned the Jewish people and gone to the Roman side.

Individual works of art carried ideological messages as well. For example, Vespasian dedicated a massive statue group of Nile with sixteen of his children playing around the god.⁹² This represented the optimum flooding level of the Nile at sixteen cubits,⁹³ as well as the flooding that occurred when Vespasian arrived in Alexandria.⁹⁴ The other works included paintings of a hero by Timanthes, Ialysus by Protogenes, Scylla by Nicomachus, and a sculpture of Venus by an anonymous artist.⁹⁵ Recent excavations have revealed statue bases inscribed with the names of the famous Greek artists [Prax]ite[les], Cephi[sidorus], and Parthenocles.⁹⁶ These acquisitions of art showed a devotion to make Rome the focus of the entire empire. Levick refers to these works of art as in "captivity." They "reminded the conquerors of their position"⁹⁷ and at the same time reminded the conquered of their captive status.

⁹² Pliny *NH* 36.58.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 5.58.

⁹⁴ Dio 65.8.1.

⁹⁵ Timanthes: Pliny *NH* 35.74; Protogenes: *Ibid.* 35.101-2; Nicomachus: *Ibid.* 35.108-9; Venus: *Ibid.* 36.27.

⁹⁶ E. La Rocca, "La nuova immagine dei fori Imperiali: appunti in margine agli scavi," *MDAI(R)* (2001), 196-201, quoted in Millar, 111.

⁹⁷ Levick, 127.

The Flavian Amphitheater

The Flavian Amphitheater's architecture and usage has been described in endless detail by other scholars, and as such, this examination will focus on how the Amphitheater illustrates Flavian ideology. Suetonius writes that Vespasian built the Amphitheater "in the middle of the city, as he had found out that Augustus had intended this."⁹⁸ Nowhere else do we hear that Augustus had intended to build a stone amphitheater in the center of Rome,⁹⁹ but the veracity of the statement is not important when considering matters of propaganda. Just as we have seen elsewhere, here Vespasian wanted to be associated with Augustus.

The Amphitheater was also a monument to the victory over the Jews. Recent work by Géza Alföldy has revealed the dedicatory inscription on the Amphitheater:

[mp(erator)] T(itus) Caes(ar) Vespasi[anus Aug(ustus)]
 amphitheatre[m novum ?]
 [ex] manubi(i)s (vac.) [fieri iussit ?]¹⁰⁰

Imperator Titus Caesar Vespasianus Augustus
 Ordered the New Amphitheater Be Built
 From the Spoils of War

The most relevant part of the inscription is that the Amphitheater was made *ex manubi(i)s* "from the spoils of war". There is no reference to Judaea,¹⁰¹ but as Millar notes, there was no other war that the Flavians fought comparable to the Judaean War, or had resulted in as many spoils, and no other triumph had been celebrated since 71.¹⁰² Therefore, in a

⁹⁸ Suet. *Vesp.* 9.1: "urbe media, ut destinasse compererat Augustum."

⁹⁹ G.W. Mooney, ed. *C. Suetoni Tranquilli De Vita Caesarum, Libri VII-VIII* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.; Dublin: Hodges, Figgis and Co., 1930), 421.

¹⁰⁰ *CIL* 6.40454a = *AE* 1995, 111b quoted in Millar, 118.

¹⁰¹ Millar, 118, suggests that it is possible the gap in the middle of the third line may have referred to Judaea.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

way, “the Amphitheatre, by far the single greatest monument of Imperial Rome, both was and is a memorial to the War.”¹⁰³

However, as Martial’s poems articulate, the dedication of the Amphitheater by Titus in 80, figured it as a symbol contrasting with Nero’s opulence and selfishness rather than as the war monument the dedicatory inscription implies. The lake of the Golden House was drained, and the arena was erected on the spot.¹⁰⁴ As opposed to the personal pleasure palace that the Golden House was portrayed as, the Amphitheater brought together all the people, upper and lower classes, into one location, for the purpose of entertainment. The senatorial and upper classes would be recognized through the privileged seating, while the lower classes received gifts.

While the contrast with Nero and his supposed selfishness was certainly important to Vespasian while building the Amphitheater, it was a central part of Titus’ image. During his father’s reign, due to his reputation as praetorian prefect, as well as the extravagance of his personal life, Suetonius tells us that “people both thought and openly declared he would be another Nero.”¹⁰⁵ Titus’ accession was met with much hostility by all,¹⁰⁶ and in order to secure his position, he needed to rehabilitate his reputation. The Amphitheater provided a mechanism for the rehabilitation.

I contend that Titus directed the focus of the Amphitheater propaganda to promote himself and the building as a contrast to Nero, and thus rehabilitate his negative reputation. He was already known for his military valor in the Judaeen War, and thus, there would be no need for Titus to emphasize the victory of the Jews more than the

¹⁰³ Ibid., 119

¹⁰⁴ Mart. *Spect.* 2.5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Suet. *Titus* 7.1: “propalam alium Neronem et opinabantur et praedicabant.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 6.2; Dio 65.12.1; Suet. *Vesp.* 25.1.

original dedicatory inscription. However, the Amphitheater could serve as a theater for Titus to display his generosity, removing his previous image of luxury and riotous life, and his moderation in government, contrasted to his image as the violent enforcer of Vespasian. As praetorian prefect, Titus tolerated no dissent.

Shortly before the dedication of the Amphitheater, two disasters struck Italy that would shape Titus' reign: the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum, and a terrible fire and plague that destroyed much of Rome, including the recently restored Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.¹⁰⁷ Titus restored as much of the damaged regions as he could with his own money, refusing to accept offers from other citizens.¹⁰⁸ When fire ravaged Rome, Titus took the art and decorations from his personal villas and donated it to ruined temples and public buildings in order to help the recovery efforts.¹⁰⁹ Titus "showed not only the worry of an emperor, but even the unparalleled love of a father."¹¹⁰ This paternalism, in its benign form, implied a personal relationship between Titus and Rome that would reveal itself most in the Amphitheater.

In the shadow of such devastation, Titus dedicated the Amphitheater with the one hundred days games. Suetonius writes that the games were "most sumptuous and lavish,"¹¹¹ but as Jones states, "[i]n these circumstances, liberality and munificence would hardly have seemed out of place."¹¹² Certainly, in terms of spectacle, these games could not disappoint. There were thousands of beasts slain,¹¹³ animals paying homage to the emperor, a "miracle" involving the "birthing" of a baby sow from the spear wound of its

¹⁰⁷ Suet. *Titus* 8.3; Dio 66.21-24.3.

¹⁰⁸ Dio 66.24.4.

¹⁰⁹ Suet. *Titus* 8.4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 8.3: "non modo principis sollicitudinem sed et parentis affectum unicum praestitit"

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 7.3: "apparatissimum largissimumque"

¹¹² Jones, *Titus*, 144.

¹¹³ According to Suet. *Titus* 7.3, five thousand in one day, in Dio 66.25.2, nine thousand all together.

pregnant mother, gladiatorial combat involving men and women, horse races, the acting out of mythological scenes, naval battles within the Amphitheater itself and on the artificial lake that Augustus had used for that purpose, and perhaps most fantastic of all, a full scale marine assault upon an island, in which three thousand men participated in.¹¹⁴

Titus also involved the crowd in the spectacles. During the games, he would throw out wooden balls labeled with the names of prizes, and whoever caught them could claim the gifts, ranging from food, to silver or gold vessels, to even cattle or slaves. He exchanged words and gestures with fans, cheering for his favorite Thracians, like an average person. He declared that he would give it according to the wishes of the spectators, not his own. When the people equally called out for two beast-fighters, Titus brought out both.¹¹⁵ In another instance, two popular gladiators fought to a draw, and instead of allowing one to be defeated, Titus granted victory and freedom to both: “Thus natural bravery produced its reward. This has happened under no emperor but you, Caesar: though two fought, each was the victor.”¹¹⁶

Thus Amphitheater becomes a stage on which Titus could display his contrasts with Nero. Gunderson notes¹¹⁷ that Suetonius, when Titus tells the people that it is their will not his that will decide what games are given, writes: “and that’s clearly what he did (*et plane ita fecit*).”¹¹⁸ Gunderson argues that if we emphasize the visual aspect of *plane* “clearly”, it can be said that “Titus ratified his sentiment by making it visibly

¹¹⁴ Animals paying homage: Mart. *Spect.* 20(17), 33(29;30); sow: Ibid. 14(12), 15(13), 16(14); gladiators: Dio 66.25.1; Mart. *Spect.* 7(6), 8(6b); races: Dio 66.25.4; myth: Mart. *Spect.* 6(5), 9(7), 10(8), 24(21), 25(21b); naval battle: Dio 66.25.2-3, Mart. *Spect.* 34(30;28); marine assault: Dio 66.25.4.

¹¹⁵ Gifts: Dio 65.25.5; exchanges with fans: Suet. *Titus* 8.2; wishes of spectators: Ibid.; beast-fighters: Mart. *Spect.* 23(20).

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 31(27;29): “hoc pretium virtus ingeniosa tulit. / contigit hoc nullo nisi te sub principe, Caesar. / cum duo pugnarent, victor uterque.”

¹¹⁷ Erik Gunderson, “The Flavian Amphitheatre: All the World as Stage,” in *Flavian Rome, Image Culture Text*, ed. A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 644-5.

¹¹⁸ Suet. *Titus* 8.2

manifest.”¹¹⁹ It is also worth noting that the only other time Suetonius uses the phrase *et plane ita fecit*, is when relating an anecdote of Nero: “In conversation someone once said, ‘When I am dead, may the earth be consumed by fire.’ Nero said, ‘No, while I live.’ And that’s clearly what he did (*planeque ita fecit*).”¹²⁰ The Nero of Suetonius displays his power through violence; Titus demonstrates the security of his power by allowing others to wield it. Another anecdote demonstrates this vividly: when two men were convicted of aspiring to imperial power, Titus not only invited them to dine with him, but “on the following day, at a spectacle of gladiatorial games, he purposely placed them near himself, and when the swords of the fighters were offered to him, he offered it to them for inspection.”¹²¹ Whereas Nero put his own step-son to death, merely because the boy had played general and emperor,¹²² Titus, very publicly, allowed two proven conspirators to handle weapons in his presence. In the same vein of contrast, Titus outlawed informers, one of Nero’s primary instruments of maintaining his personal security and a symbol of terror, and put them to death in the arena.¹²³ Titus transformed the Amphitheater into a theater of his own, demonstrating his generosity instead of Nero’s selfishness, his security instead of Nero’s paranoia.

¹¹⁹ Gunderson, 645.

¹²⁰ Suet. *Nero* 38.1: “dicente quodam in sermone communi: ‘έμοῦ θανόντος γαῖα μειχθήτω πυρί.’ immo”, inquit, ‘έμοῦ ζώντος,’ planeque ita fecit.” as quoted and translated in Gunderson, 645.

¹²¹ Suet. *Titus* 9.2: “... insequenti die gladiatorum spectaculo circa se ex industria conlocatis oblate sibi ferramenta pugnantium inspicienda porrexit.”

¹²² Suet. *Nero* 35.5.

¹²³ Suet. *Titus* 8.4; Mart. *Spect.* 4(4.1-4), 5(4.5-6).

The Baths of Titus

All the ancient sources agree that the Baths of Titus were a “speedy gift.”¹²⁴ The Baths opened in conjunction with the dedication of the Amphitheater in 80, and this connection was further emphasized by the physical link between the two monuments: the baths were connected with the square of the Amphitheater by a staircase, “perhaps the most magnificent one in Rome.”¹²⁵ Its construction was innovative, featuring a terraced open area behind the baths themselves, a design that would appear in every subsequent public bath structure in Rome.¹²⁶ The connection with Augustus can be traced through the building programs of Agrippa. Just as Vespasian could link the Temple of Peace’s public art collections to Augustus by way of Agrippa, so could Titus create his own link through the construction of public baths (*thermae*), similar to the baths that Agrippa built on the Campus Martius.

Like the Amphitheater, the Baths could serve as a stage for Titus to demonstrate his contrasts with Nero, specifically Titus’ common touch, as it were, and the security of his own power. Suetonius tells us that “sometimes, he would admit the common folk into his baths while he was bathing.”¹²⁷ Not only does Titus once again mingle with his subjects, but he puts himself into a situation where he is vulnerable, to demonstrate his sense of security in contrast to the image of Nero’s paranoia.

The Baths also represent another aspect of the restoration of Rome, reclaiming the city from the Golden House. The Baths were located on the Oppian Hill, on the territory

¹²⁴ Mart. *Spect.* 2.7; Suet. *Titus* 7.3.

¹²⁵ Richardson, 396.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Suet. *Titus* 8.2: “nonnumquam in thermis suis admissa plebe lavit.”

of the Golden House, facing south.¹²⁸ But it has been noted that the Baths share the exact same east-west axis with the House, and it has been suggested that the Baths are, in fact, the reconstructed baths of the Golden House.¹²⁹ If this is true, the Baths of Titus would be as important to the Flavian restoration of Rome and the deconstruction of Nero's Golden House as the Amphitheater: quite literally, Titus has reclaimed a part of the Golden House, and given it to the public.

The Triumphal Arches

Upon the destruction of Jerusalem, the Senate voted Vespasian and Titus numerous honors for the victory, including, as Dio tells us, triumphal arches.¹³⁰ The triumphal arch offered legitimacy by tying the Flavians into the ancient Republican tradition that rewarded *virtus*. Thus, the link to the past is established in the same way that it was done in the triumphal procession. In a similar manner, the arches provide a separation with Nero by recalling the triumph. The third theme, victory over the Jews, requires the most attention.

The first Arch of Titus, dedicated in 81 shortly before Titus' death, was located in the center hemicycle at the south-east end of the Circus Maximus.¹³¹ It draws immediate attention for its position in the middle of what is one of the largest sporting venues in the world. The arch would have been seen by over one hundred thousand people, reminding them of the victory in Judaea. The dedicatory inscription contains remarkable flattery and

¹²⁸ Richardson, 396.

¹²⁹ Champlin, 206.

¹³⁰ Dio 65.7.2.

¹³¹ Millar, 119; Richardson, 30.

ostentatious claims made by the Senate to glorify Titus and his father. After listing titles, it states:

gentem Iudaeorum domuit et urbem Hierusolymam omnibus ante se ducibus, regibus, gentibus aut frustra petitam aut omnino intemptatam delevit.

he subdued the race of the Jews and destroyed the city of Jerusalem, which by all generals, kings, or races previous to himself had either been attacked in vain or not even attempted at all.¹³²

The remarkable claims, proven to be false by anyone with knowledge of Biblical history, or to Romans who remembered Pompey's conquest in 63 BC and Sosius' in 37 BC, highlight the relationship between Senate and Emperor. The Senate clearly understood that Titus desired for the victory over the Jews to be a main theme of his reign, and as such, offered so dramatic a dedication.

The second Arch of Titus, constructed by Domitian after Titus' death, features similar themes. It features relief sculptures representing the triumph, both historically and mythically. One of the major panels shows the historical: an image of the procession displaying the spoils taken from the Temple: the Table of Shew-Bread, the menorah, and the silver trumpets. The other panel depicts Titus mythically, riding in the quadriga, being crowned by Victory, while the horses are led by Roma. In the same vein, at the peak of the arch, a relief shows the apotheosis of Titus, with his image being carried to the gods by an eagle, the symbol of Jupiter. By displaying his ascension to divinity in conjunction with victory over the Jews, the artist may be inferring that it was Titus' glory earned and valor displayed in that war that justified his deification. At the very least, the arch certainly implies that the triumph was one of, if not the, most important moments in Titus' life. The location of the second Arch of Titus is integral to understanding the

¹³² *CIL* 6.944 = *ILS* 264, as quoted and translated in Millar, 120.

significance of the Judaean War in Flavian propaganda. It was erected on the Sacra Via,¹³³ the path that a triumphator processed along to reach the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. By building the Arch of Titus in this location, Domitian ensured that every subsequent triumph would commemorate, by passing under the arch, the divine Flavians who brought victory in the Judaean War.

IV - Conclusion

The Flavians developed a comprehensive propaganda program in order to provide the legitimacy that their lineage had lacked. Coming to power at the end of bloody civil strife and the collapse of the first dynasty posed a difficult problem. In order to justify the continuation of the principate and Vespasian's seizure of power, links had to be established with those emperors who had positive reputations, namely Augustus. At the same time, Nero, the man whose actions had led to the civil war, must be removed from this chain of emperors. Finally, the Flavians needed to demonstrate that they were worthy of the supreme command of the empire, and found their justification for power in the successful prosecution of the Judaean War.

Vespasian and Titus, each facing a crisis of legitimacy upon their accession, created thematic unity in their visual propaganda, addressing these issues again and again. The Triumph of 71 was carried out in a traditional matter, emphasized the military virtue of the triumphators in contrast to the processions of Nero, and through its spectacle and the display of the holiest of Jewish artifacts, celebrated victory in Judaea. The restoration of Rome following the civil war allowed Vespasian to include himself in the ranks of the *summi viri* like Augustus who had restored the great monuments of the past.

¹³³ Richardson, 30.

The temples and buildings that he restored granted Vespasian the prestige of the original dedicators, and demonstrated to the public who Vespasian viewed as models of good governance, as well as reassure the Empire of Rome's, and by proxy, Vespasian's eternal and divinely sanctioned glory. Titus, in his own reign, continued this program by issuing commemorative coins, creating his own ranks of *summi viri*. The portrayal of Nero's Golden House as a personal pleasure palace, and the subsequent "reclamation" of the House not only damaged Nero's legacy, but allowed the Flavians to assume the role of benefactors of the people. The monuments welcomed the return of peace and celebrated military valor and victory. As gifts to the people, they were in concordance with the example of Augustus, and stood in stark contrast to the selfish Nero. Titus in particular transformed his monuments into stages, where he could remove the negative stigma of his youth and perpetuate the image of a paternal emperor who loved, and who was beloved by, all Rome.

The unity of Flavian visual propaganda reveals the concentrated efforts of Vespasian and Titus to secure their legitimacy. Image was of the utmost concern to both emperors, and through their visual propaganda, they promoted the way they wished to be seen to all Rome. The efforts of the emperors were well received by people of all classes. Senators participated through the *Lex de Imperio*, through their histories and poems; the common people cheered the games and fondly remembered Vespasian and Titus; foreigners wrote works that glorified the very men who subjugated them. Indeed, like the freedwoman who used the motifs of the Judaeian War on her grave altar,¹³⁴ the people

¹³⁴ Diana E.E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 194-5.

took the propaganda of the emperor and made it their own, actively participating in the distribution of image.