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In 1999, donning a false beard, King Abdullah II of Jordan disguised himself as a television correspondent and talked for hours with Arab citizens in a free-trade zone in El-Zarkaa, 20 miles from Amman, about the atmosphere for investment. He only revealed his identity when the region’s officials interrupted, saying that he had no license or prior permission for the interviews. Disguised in a curly wig and jeans, Abdullah later posed as a taxi driver, and recently, sporting a white beard and wearing shabby white Arab gear with traditional headdress, he has slipped out of his hilltop Amman palace to find out how his subjects are treated at the tax department. All of this, of course, he did to learn the public opinion of his rule, and to assess efficiency and the level of bureaucracy to be found at government offices in Jordan. At least, that is what palace officials say.

In touring his country in disguise, Abdullah follows a long-established and accepted tradition, also taken up by his father king Hussein, and by the prime minister of Syria, Muhammad Mustafa Miru, who, as governor of the Aleppo province, habitually travelled the streets in disguise, earning him a reputation for honesty and intolerance of corruption. The best-known predecessor of these modern masters of disguise is the famous and well-regarded late eighth century Caliph Haroun al’Rashid (A.D. 786-809), whose nocturnal tours through Baghdad to do good deeds and give justice have been extensively celebrated in the stories of a Thousand and One Nights. Similarly, James V of Scotland (AD 1512-1542) wandered his kingdom as ‘Gudeman of Ballengeich’, celebrated in the ballad ‘The Gaberlunzie Man’. And of course Henry V on the eve of the battle of Agincourt is also said to have observed his men in disguise, to better understand the problems of ruling well.

Interestingly enough, though Roman rulers roamed round the realm wearing wigs and costumes, they are inevitably said to have done so for the wrong reasons. Antony and Cleopatra, according to Plutarch, rambled round the streets, dressed as servant and servant-woman, ‘to disturb and torment people at their doors and

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2 Middle East Intelligence Bulletin 2.3 (2000).
3 Clot 1986.
4 Paterson 1861.
5 Shakespeare, Henry V, 4.1.
windows'.

With a sole monarch in control the situation was even more alarming. Thus, Suetonius says of Gaius that even in the period when Tiberius was still alive, and Gaius' main daily occupation was not to get killed:

He could not control his natural cruelty and viciousness, but he was a most eager witness of the tortures and executions of those who suffered punishment, revelling at night in gluttony and adultery, disguised in a wig and a long robe.

Naturam tamen saeuaat atque probrosam ne tunc quidem inhibere poterat, quin et animaduersionibus poenisque ad supplicium datorum cupidissime interesseret et ganeas atque adulteria capillamento celatus et ueste longa noctibus obiret.

In a much later period of the empire, Elagabalus is accused of worse behaviour still:

He would go to the taverns by night, wearing a wig (κόμαι χρώμενο?), and there take up the trade of a female whore – frequenting the notorious brothels (τά πορνεία τά περιβόητα) and driving out the prostitutes (Dio, 80.13.2-3).

It is hard to see how the emperor in doing so could have remained in disguise. But perhaps this latter event is rather an attempt to link Elagabalus to the Assyrian ruler Sardanapalus, whose name, in fact, Dio used for the emperor. Interestingly, the Assyrian king’s public invisibility is also lamented, for instance in Ctesias’ Persian History, as described by Diodorus:

Sardanapalus ... outdid all his predecessors in luxury and sluggishness. For not to mention the fact that he was not seen by any man residing outside the palace, he lived the life of a woman, and spending his days in the company of his concubines and spinning purple garments form the softest of wool, he had assumed the feminine garb and covered his face and indeed his whole body with whitening cosmetics and the other unguents used by courtesans, that he rendered it more delicate than that of any luxury-loving woman

Σαρδανάπαλλος ... ύπερήρεν άπαντα τούς πρό όυτος τρυφή και ραθυμία, ξωρίς γάρ του μηδ’ ύψι ένδος τών έξωθεν όράσθαι βίον έξος γυναίκας, και διαιτώμενος μὲν μετά τών παλλακίδων, πορφύραν δέ και τά μαλακώτατα τών έριων παλασιουργών, στολήν μὲν γυναικείαν ἐνεδδύκει, τὸ δέ πρόσωπον καὶ πάν τό σώμα ψιμυθίοις καὶ τῶν άλλων τοῖς τῶν ἐταιρῶν ἐπιτηδεύμασιν ἀπαλότερον πάσης γυναικός τρυφεράς κατεσκεύαστο. (Diodorus, 2.23.1-2):

Dio’s story about Elagabalus could well form part of a general literary assumption in which Roman emperors who display female associations were perceived as bad

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6 Plut. Ant. 29.1-2.
7 Suet. Gaius 11. Translations are adapted from the Loeb Classical Library.
8 On the use of nicknames for Roman emperors, see Bruun 2003, esp. 95-96 on Elagabalus. On Dio’s attitude towards Elagabalus, see Millar 1964, 168-70
emperors – a perception of which oriental luxury, and indeed wigs, form an inherent part.9

A clear example, however, of an emperor disguising himself with the express purpose of doing evil deeds unobserved, is Nero. He went round Rome at night, hiding under a cap or a wig, for an anonymous display of bad behaviour:

[He] beat up men as they came home from dinner, stabbing any who resisted him and throwing them into the sewers. He would even break into shops and rob them, setting up a market in the Palace, where he divided the booty which he took, sold it at auction, and then squandered the proceed

\[\textit{siquidem redeuntis a cena verberare ac repugnantes vunerare cloacisque demergere assuerat, tenebras etiam effingere et expilare. Quintana domi constituta ubi partae et ad licitationem dividenda praedae pretium absumeretur} (\textit{Suet. Nero, 26.1. Cf. Dio 61.9})\]

Inevitably, however, matters became complicated. One night Nero, in disguise, assaulted the wife of Julius Montanus, a senator who in reprisal almost beat to death his wife’s assailant. Montanus had been in a difficult situation. Not reacting to an assault on one’s wife would be rather curious behaviour, and disclose the fact that he had only refrained from doing so because he had recognised the attacker as the emperor, notwithstanding the latter’s disguise. Thus, if he wanted to continue the imperial charade, and pretend not to recognise Nero, he had to hit – which he did with some relish. Though hitting the emperor was a dangerous act, in the circumstances, the senator was safe. Nero could not take revenge without disclosing that he had been the ‘anonymous’ attacker of Montanus’ wife – thus admitting to his own shadowy behaviour. However, the senator foolishly asked Nero for forgiveness, thereby admitting to seeing through the disguise all along and indeed knowingly thrashing the emperor. He was instantly forced to commit suicide.10 Other ‘bad emperors’ are accused of similar vices, with Otho, Vitellius, Lucius Verus and Commodus blamed for wandering through taverns and brothels at night, hiding their identities, and engaging in brawls.11

Shadi Bartsch, in her wonderful \textit{Actors in the Audience}, has convincingly placed these events in a framework of theatricality, and surely, the role that one would expect an emperor to play and the relation to the role he chose to actually play are of great importance here, as are the problems of the role of the audience.12 Equally, though, the story – or even the negative stories on emperors disguising themselves in general – could be looked at in the context of royal imagery. From that point of view it does not even matter whether the stories are

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9 Cf. Gambato 2000 and Lenfant 2001. Commodus was said to pay much attention to his hair (\textit{HA, Comm. 17.3; Hekster 2002, 128-9}), and Nero’s extravagant coup received similar attention (Cf. Sande 1996). Also, note how Juvenal 6.120 describes Messalina putting on a yellow wig (\textit{flavo crinem}) to visit ill-reputed places. The scholiast to the passage adds that a yellow wig was characteristic for courtesans. On Elagabalus cf. Kaizer 185-7 in this volume.


11 \textit{Suet. Otho 2.1; SHA, Verus, 4.6} (also commenting on Vitellius); \textit{Comm. 3.7.}

invented or not. They give an indication of the types of direct imperial display that the Romans expected from their rulers and show what was certainly the wrong way to go about it.

Disguised 'invisibility' never gets a good press in the Roman world. There is a semi-positive reference in Polybius, who explains how Hannibal through a 'truly Punic artifice (Φοινικικός στρατηγικός)' avoids being assassinated. He has a number of wigs made, 'dyed to suit the appearance of people differing widely in age ... at the same time also dressing in a style that suited the wig (ταῖς χρυσίς περιθέταις)' (3.78.1-3), so that everyone had difficulty recognising him. The Carthaginian cunning may be appreciated, yet only as far as it shows Hannibal's capacity to avoid his assailants. Romans might occasionally resort to the same option if there were no alternatives. Thus, Caesar is said to have disguised himself as a slave to undertake the perilous journey from Apollonia to Brundisium - but disclosed his real identity to inspire bravery in his men.13 The only person travelling round in disguise and reaping rewards is one of Rome's greatest enemies, Mithridates Eupator. He travelled round Bithynia in disguise taking note of 'whatever might aid him in attempting the conquest of it' (Just. Epit. 37.3), and used that knowledge to defeat the Romans. Still, this is all very different from going round one's own realm after conquest. Disguising oneself might be a useful tool in war, perhaps,14 but it is not an example of the right way to rule.

VISIBILITY, PRESENCE AND POWER

The right way to rule, however, can be closely connected to 'sight-power'. Recently, in a stimulating paper called 'The Observed of all Observers', Holt Parker has distinguished two typical approaches to the relations between visibility and power in general. On the one hand, he recognises the notion that 'difficulty of approach is proof of power', found in its most dogmatic form by Chinese Emperors in their Forbidden City.15 One could add, similarly, that even in modern-day Japan the Imperial Compound in Tokyo is an inaccessible 5km² area, surrounded by a several metres' high wall. Indeed, to enter the compound of the former palace in Kyoto, uninhabited since 1869, one needs to sign a statement emphasising some sort of 'moral purity' - even then, the actual imperial rooms are still out of bounds.16 On the other hand, and perhaps more common for a society that was founded upon systems of patronage and power networks, there is

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13 Plut. Caes. 38.2-3. In Plautus’ Captivi, Philocrates manages to escape slavery by hiding behind Tyndarus’ identity (40: huius illic, hic illius hodie fert imaginem: today each bears the mask of the other), but the passage is characterised by references to trickery. I owe this reference to Matthew Leigh.
14 It is, however, noticeably not mentioned as an example in Florusin’s Stratagemata, though it may have been included in his lost work on the Art of War.
16 Cf. Ankersmit 1997, 283-290, on the 'empty centre versus the sovereign centre'.

the notion that ‘the more powerful the man, the more visible he is’. When ‘life is lived in the open spaces of the city’, then power is proved by ‘the size of the retinue’, by being visible and larger than life.\(^\text{17}\)

Is this, perhaps, the reason for the bad press of ‘invisibility’ as a choice for royal image? Did ‘invisible’ emperors choose a wrong type of image? Before turning to a model that might be helpful in answering this question, some attention must be paid to a related problem: how relevant is personal presence in discussing invisibility? Is there, in other words, a substantial distinction between invisibility as a result from actual absence, and ‘invisibility’ of someone who is physically present? Some differences are obvious. Rulers who cannot be seen or reached, though they are present, more clearly choose to be inaccessible. Chinese and Japanese rulers made a point by being highly visibly invisible. Perhaps rulers who are continuously away from their capital are also making a point – but it is a different one, if only because their absence from the capital usually means presence (and being seen) elsewhere. So, for instance, when Hadrian was touring the provinces, the provincials who formed such an important part of his ‘imperial policy of unification’ saw him and could talk to him.

He was, furthermore, on display to the armies who may have needed appeasement after Hadrian’s abrupt break from Trajanic expansion. Hadrian’s famous address to the Third Augusta in AD 128 may testify to this, as does the equally well-known inscription of the soldier, who, ‘with Hadrian as a judge was able across the vast waters of the deep Danube to swim in full battle gear’.\(^\text{18}\) Similarly, the many representations of Hadrian hunting may have been aimed at showing the empire at large the martial qualities which Hadrian did not display leading his troops. But Hadrian’s tours may simply have been a way to avoid confrontation with a hostile senate in Rome after the murder of the ‘four consulars’.\(^\text{19}\) His itinerant absence from Rome was, in any case, different from the period in which he was not travelling, but still chose to reside outside of the city of Rome, in a secluded villa, which had Rome as the background of a self-contained micro-cosmos.\(^\text{20}\)

In this context, reactions to Tiberius’ behaviour are extremely interesting. When the emperor moved from Rome to Capri, Suetonius comments how he was ‘as it were, removed from the eyes of the citizens’ \((\text{quasi civitatis oculis remotis})\) (Suet. Tib. 42.1), and finally able to act on his depraved instincts, now that he was no longer held in the public gaze. Tiberius’ absence, much like Hadrian’s in Tivoli, was highly conspicuous. Neither of them was absent in order to fight wars,


\(^{19}\) Dio, 69.2.5-6; HA, Hadrian, 5.5-6; 7.1-3; Syme 1988, 297-308; Birley 2000, 135.

\(^{20}\) On the Villa Hadriana at Tivoli, see Beard/Henderson 2001, 102-5; Giuliani 1999; Packer 1998. It is worth emphasising that Rome is visible from the villa, making it literally the background to Hadrian’s imperial display.
Captured in the Gaze of Power

or even tour the realm. Both removed themselves from the sight of the people of Rome for what were perceived to be personal purposes. This may also be a relevant, and somewhat underestimated, factor in the discussion on whether Nero’s *Domus Aurea* was open to the public or not. The question is, perhaps, not just about luxury, decadence, or even hampering access to a substantial part of Rome’s city centre.

Whether people were allowed and able to see the emperor as he went about his business may also be a relevant issue. The emperors’ daily activities, in normal circumstances, were a public affair; whether they were presiding over elections or simply walking round Rome. Being accessible was as much part of life for the emperor, the *patronus patronorum*, as it had always been for the leading families in the Roman Republic. Whatever the exact causes, it appears that in Rome, imperial invisibility – at least without a very good reason – was a bad course of action. Emperors should not remove themselves *civitatis oculis*.

**EMPOWERING VISION**

Why was it so important for Romans to keep their rulers in the public eye? A passage in Varro’s *De Lingua Latina* may provide an insight: *Video a visu, <id a vi>: qu<n>que enim sensuum maximus in oculis* (‘I see’ from sight, that is, from ‘vis’, “force”, since the strongest of the five senses is in the eyes) (6.80). Varro derives *video* from *vis*, and then goes on to quote a verse on the Actaeon myth: *Cum illud o<c>uli<s> violavit <is>, qui invidit/ invidendum* ‘When he violated with his eyes, who looked upon what ought not to be seen’. Again, the link between seeing and force, or violence, is apparent. David Fredrick rightly points out that: ‘the derivation ... though mistaken, may express social truths’. Similarly, even if some – or many – of the examples from ancient literature that are mentioned in this article are not necessarily factually accurate, they nevertheless say a lot about Roman conceptions. One could even argue that *because* Varro is mistaken, the passage tells us all the more about Roman thought. The conceptual link between viewing and power is also expressed in other cultural manifestations. Indeed, Actaeon and Diana are specifically used as a testimony to the dangers of viewing and being seen in wall paintings from the so-called House of Octavius Quartio (or Loreius Tiburtinus) at Pompeii.

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23 On related notions and problems, see esp. Wallace-Hadrill 1996.

24 Fredrick 2002a, 1. For an overview of the various aspects of *vis*, Ernout 1954 remains fundamental.

25 Expertly set out by Platt 2002, with further references.
If seeing is thought to mean force, than seeing someone is connected with having power over that person. A number of Roman imperial anecdotes testify to this point of view. Augustus, according to Suetonius,

... had clear and shining eyes and liked it to be thought that there was some kind of divine power in them. He would be pleased if, when he looked at someone intently, the man would drop his gaze before him as though from the radiance of the sun

Oculos habuit claros ac nitidos, quibus etiam existimari volebat inesse quiddam divini vigoris, gaudebatque, si qui sibi acrius contuenti quasi ad fulgorem solis vultum summitteret (Suet. Aug. 79.2).

This emphasis on the power of vision may go some way in explaining the intense gaze and muscular eyes of some tetrarchic portraiture. The exaggerated eyes may illustrate the emperor’s fulgor oculorum, emphasised by the anonymous orator of AD 310, praising Constantine as an emperor:

whose eyes flash and whose awe-inspiring yet agreeable majesty dazzles us at the same time as it invites our gaze.

in quo hic fulgor oculorum, haec veneranda pariter et grata maiestas praestringit simul et invitat adspectus.26

The eyes of the good emperor of the panegyric are both awe-inspiring and draw our gaze. This ruler wanted to be looked at. The emperor’s vision and gaze, it appears, were related to that emperor’s effective power.

Though relatively positive examples about the relation between Roman emperors, power, and seeing seem to exist, the better-known stories are inevitably negative ones. The most famous scene features in Tacitus’ Agricola. Domitian was a monster for many reasons, but foremost amongst them was that he watched and was seen whilst committing atrocities:

Nero after all withdrew his eyes and, though he ordered crimes, he did not watch them; the worst part of our sufferings under Domitian was to see him and be watched by him – that our sighs would be noted down, that not a pale face from all those men escaped his savage face – that ruddy complexion which saved him from ever being seen to blush with shame

Nero tamen subtraxit oculos suos iussitque scelera, non spectavit: praeclua sub Domitian o miseriarum pars erat videre et aspici, cum suspitria nostra subscriberentur, cum denotandis tot hominum palloribus sufficeret saevus ille vultus et rubor, quo se contra pudorem muniebat (Tacitus, Agricola, 45).

By looking at his victims the emperor gained an even stronger hold over them. Being able to look without displaying emotion made his power more unbearable. As so often in Tacitus, Domitian and Tiberius were much alike. Whilst Drusus, Tiberius’ grandson, was starving to death in his Palatine prison, watchers,

26 Pan. Lat. 6(7).17.1; Smith 1997, 182.
allegedly, stood by him, watching his every move, and reporting it to the emperor— who made the knowledge public.

That for so many years the watchers should have been at his side, to catch his looks, his sighs, even his half-articulated murmurs, and that his grandfather should have endured to hear all, read all, and divulge it to the public, might have passed belief. adstitisse tot per annos, qui vultum, gemitus, occultum etiam murmur exciperent, et potuisse avum audire, legeret, in publicum promere vix fides (Tacitus Annals, 6.24).

Unlike Domitian, Tiberius did not look his victim directly in the eye, but again, the power to look at one’s victim in a degraded state, and the willingness to do so publicly, are emphasised. Similarly, Suetonius (Claud. 34.1) accentuated Claudius’ cruelty by pointing out how the emperor wanted to be personally present at the torture of prisoners and the execution of parricides. It is noticeable that Suetonius does not challenge the punishments in themselves. The sentences were proper—but to watch them was to demonstrate cruelty. This cruelty is further highlighted in the same passage: ‘at any gladiatorial show ... Claudius gave orders that even those who fell accidentally should be slain ... so that he could watch their faces as they died’ (Qvocumque gladiatorio munere ... etiam forte prolapsos iugulari iubebat ... ut expirantium facies videret).

One could argue that most societies would describe persons who particularly enjoy the sight of viciousness as displaying signs of cruelty. But ‘visual assassinations’ appear to be a particular cause of anxiety in imperial Rome. Whilst Germanicus lies dying, he explicitly worries that he dies under the eyes of Piso: ‘if he must surrender his breath under the eye of his enemies’. As Barton comments: ‘To force another to watch you watching them with soul-withering contempt was a form of violence’. Hence, the true ruthlessness of Gaius’ behaviour—far from polite by any notion—becomes clear:

These [women of rank] as a rule, he invited to dinner with their husbands, and as they passed by the foot of his couch, he would inspect them critically and deliberately, as if buying slaves, even putting out his hand and lifting up the face of anyone who looked down in modesty

Quas plerumque cum maritis ad cenam uocatas praeterque pedes suos transeuntis diligenter ac lente mercantium more considerabat, etiam faciem manu adleuans, si quae pudore submitterent (Suet. Gaius 36.2).

There could even be an element of cannibalism in the occasional glance. Vitellius allegedly stated after the death of Blaesus that he ‘feasted his eyes on the sight of his enemy’s death bed’. Similarly, Encolpius, in Petronius’ Satyricon 96, says

27 Barton 2002, collects a great number of relevant examples, amongst which are those mentioned above.
how, staring through a hole in the door, he 'gorged' himself on the miseries of Eumolpus 'like a dainty dish' (velut quodam cibo me replebam).\textsuperscript{31}

It seems clear, then, that in Roman society there was the perception that, as Varro indicated, one can gain power – or at the least express power – over someone by capturing him or her in one’s gaze. Emperors who, like Tiberius in Capri, Hadrian in his Villa, or Nero in disguise, attempt to be invisible whilst ruling, in doing so took power away from their subject. The image they sent out is that of an emperor who could not be controlled.

THE GAZE OF POWER

Before including the role of spectacles in the framework sketched above, it is useful to further explore some aspects of ‘sight-power’. The late eighteenth century philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) takes a crucial role here. Bentham, on various occasions, thought and wrote about a perfect prison, one in which visibility was the crucial element, and which, as a project, in the end came to nothing – the Panopticon. The concepts related to this Panopticon may provide a theoretical framework through which it is possible to approach the problems surrounding the visibility of Roman emperors, whilst shedding some light on the problems of looking and being seen. Some preliminary explanation as to what the Panopticon is and how it works might, however, be called for. In Bentham’s words:

The building is circular. The apartments of the prisoners occupy the circumference. You may call them, if you please, the cells. These cells are divided from one another, and the prisoners by that means secluded from all communication with each other, by partitions in the form of radii issuing from the circumference towards the centre ... The apartment of the inspector occupies the centre; you may call it if you please the inspector’s lodge. It will be convenient in most, if not all cases, to have a vacant space or area all round, between such centre and such circumference.\textsuperscript{32}

All cells, he continued, are illuminated, and have as inner circumferences iron grating, 'so light as not to screen any part of the cell from the inspector’s view'. The inspector’s lodge has windows which are as large as possible, but which are covered by blinds. Through doors and partitions, there is no light coming from the back of anyone looking through the windows of the lodge at the cells.\textsuperscript{33} In a Postscript, Bentham realises the problem of getting lights in the lodge organised

\textsuperscript{31} Note, however, that this ‘cannibalism’ might also be a literary trope. Cf. Seneca’s Thyestes, especially line 895, when Atreus, during Thyestes’ cannibalistic meal, emphasises: quod sat est, videat pater.

\textsuperscript{32} Bentham, Panopticon Letter II (= Bowring 1843, 40).

\textsuperscript{33} Bentham, Panopticon Letter II (= Bowring 1843, 41); Bentham, Postscript I, section 8 (=Bowring 1843, 80).
properly, and talks about intricate systems of lanterns, partitions, and corridors instead – the eighteenth century equivalent of mirrored windows.

In short – all prisoners are continuously visible, in all parts of their cell, to whomever watches them from the lodge (fig.1). They, for their part, will never be sure if someone is actually watching, though someone might be watching all the time: ‘The essence of it consists, then, in the centrality of the inspector’s situation, combined with the well-known and most effectual contrivances for seeing without being seen.’\(^{34}\) The inspector can even let his voice be heard in cells without being seen, through small tin tubes leading from the lodge to individual cells.\(^{35}\) The prisoners, thus, are confronted by a voice and gaze that are detached from any visible entity. As a recent commentary on the Panopticon Letters has pointed out: ‘A gaze and a voice that cannot be pinned down to any particular bearer tend to acquire exceptional powers, and by themselves, as it were, constitute divine attributes’\(^{36}\) This notion of a potentially fictional god keeping people in order is very relevant to Bentham’s thought.

The inspector of the Panopticon, however, also has a penetrating gaze facing his way; that of the public. In that way Juvenal’s question, *sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes*, can be answered.\(^{37}\) ‘You see’, Bentham wrote:

> I take for granted as a matter of course, that ... the doors of these establishments will be ... thrown wide open to the body of the curious at large – the great open committee of the tribunal of the world.\(^{38}\)

The importance of the visibility and accountability of the inspector to the world at large was crucial to Bentham, and has been clearly recognised and emphasised by Michel Foucault:

> Ce panoptique, subtilement arrangé pour qu’un surveillant puisse observer, d’un coup d’oeil, tant d’individus différents permet aussi à tout le monde de venir surveiller le moindre surveillant. La machine à voir était une sorte de chambre noir où épier les individus; elle devient un édifice transparent où l’exercice du pouvoir est contrôlable par la société entière.\(^{39}\)

For Bentham, finally, the theatricality of his *new principle of construction*, applicable to *any sort of establishment, in which persons of any description are to be kept under inspection* (which is the subtitle of the work), was continuously obvious. Indeed, he himself pointed out that: ‘in a well-composed committee of penal law, I know not of a more essential personage than the manager of a theatre’\(^{40}\). This emphasis on spectacle and visibility makes the concepts of

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\(^{34}\) Bentham, *Panopticon Letter V* (= Bowring 1843, 44).

\(^{35}\) Bentham, *Panopticon Letter II* (= Bowring 1843, 41).

\(^{36}\) Bozovic 1995a, 11; Bozovic 1995b.

\(^{37}\) Juv. 6.347.

\(^{38}\) Bentham, *Panopticon Letter VI* (= Bowring 1843, 46).


\(^{40}\) Bentham, *Postscript I*, section 7, note † 3 (= Bowring, Bentham IV, 80).
Bentham’s prison particularly applicable to an area where imperial imagery and visibility came dramatically to the fore; the Roman Games.

SPECTACLES, VISIBILITY AND RECIPROCITY

Spectacles in the city of Rome form a good and well-known case study for the ‘swings and roundabouts’ of imperial visibility. Certainly in the early empire the people of Rome could, with some justification, expect the emperor to reside in the capital. Where, for the provinces, the emperor’s presence would be an important event, for the inhabitants of Rome it was only important that the emperor was not there. With the ‘normal’ situation in early-imperial Rome of the emperor’s presence, demands about the ways in which this presence was made visible became more pronounced. There were high expectations as to how often, and to whom, the emperor would show himself. Indeed, the manner in which people were received was highly commented upon.41 Note for instances how Vespasian receives his guests, ‘not only senators but also people in general’ (Dio, 65.10.4), in the Horti Sallustiani rather than in Nero’s Domus Aurea and contrast this with Tacitus’ complaint on Nero that ‘the emperor rarely left home and secluded himself in his palace or gardens’.42 The emperor ought to be in Rome, and prominently visible.

Contact with the higher echelons of society could still be at a personal level, but to the people at large, the emperor really had to manifest himself in more structured arrangements. Public sacrifices were important occasions to do so.43 At the triumph – a prerogative of the imperial family from Augustus onwards44 – the emperors could reach even larger audiences. Indeed, the triumph is often described in terms of display and visibility.45 Evil emperors inevitably are said to abuse the system, and it is surely no coincidence that stories of ‘fake’ triumphs circulate surrounding Gaius, Nero, Domitian and Commodus.46 The triumph was a way for the princeps to show himself victorious and capable to the populace at large. Emperors who are portrayed as disregarding traditional behaviour are similarly blamed for faking this supreme manifestation of virtus. Still, though the triumph, in all its splendour, showed the emperor, it did not allow for interaction with Rome’s subjects.47 To achieve this, the emperors’ presence at the theatre, amphitheatre and circus was instrumental. The importance of theatres as a mirror

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41 Wallace-Hadrill 1996; Winterling 1999, 139-144.
42 Tac. Ann. 15.53: Caesar rarus egressu domoque aut hortis clausus. But, as noted above (supra p. 162) the discussion on whether this ‘home’ was publicly accessible or not is crucial. See further Benoist 2001, 251-252; Royo 1999, 119-208.
43 Gordon 1990a, 201-19
47 Brilliant 1999, 222, 225.
of Roman society, with a clearly indicated hierarchy, is well known, with Cicero’s reference to theatro populoque Romano, or his placing of ludorum gladiatorumque consessu alongside contiones and comitia, illustrative examples.\(^4\) At the theatre, as Ovid put it in his Ars Amatoria: ‘They come to see, but also to be seen themselves’ (Spectatum veniunt, veniunt spectentur ut ipsae; 1.99). Thus, it was understandable that the emperor was expected visibly to occupy his place on top of the hierarchical ladder there.\(^4\) The emperor needed to show his rightful place by physically manifesting himself in locations where the public assembled at large, in its various social stratifications. In doing so, he laid himself open to the requests and comments of the assembled people. Examples of such requests or political opinions being made known in the theatre, circus or amphitheatre are numerous, in both Republic and Empire. Nor were they easy to ignore.\(^5\)

Not manifesting oneself could, however, lead to even more criticism and unpopularity. Tiberius found out as much when he avoided going to the munera.\(^5\) Noticeably, the same emperor, already blamed for his absence at Capri, is also said to have stopped giving festivals.\(^5\) Tiberius also delayed – and indeed failed to finish – the rebuilding of Pompey’s theatre after a fire in AD22 destroyed it.\(^5\) Thus, the murmillo Triumphus complained during Tiberius’ reign about the lack of proper munera.\(^5\) Games under Tiberius seem to have been scarce, and less spectacular. This did not help the reputation of an emperor who was already seen as aloof and overly absent. At the Games, the amassed audience took over, to an extent, the role of political assemblies as representations of popular sovereignty; which makes both the need for the emperor’s presence, and the problems relating to it, perfectly understandable.

The Roman games and the role of the emperors therein have been the subject of numerous insightful studies in recent years. Thus, for instance, the importance of the mythological element has been emphasised, and of the emperor’s auctoritas

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\(^4\) Cic. Sest. 116; Cic. Sest. 106. Rawson 1987 (= Rawson 1991, 508-545) remains the starting point. Important issues are also raised in Parker 1999.

\(^5\) Cf. the Theodosian column base in the Hippodrome of Constantinople – though it is of course an example from outside Rome, and from a much later period of the empire, with possibly different ‘rules’; Kiilerich 1998, 34-66, esp. 55-7.
over life and death, in so-called 'fatal charades' that preceded the gladiatorial games proper.\textsuperscript{55} Likewise, anthropological, philosophical and sociological frameworks have been applied (with different measures of success), further to analyse the spectacles in a ritual context, and in the light of power relations.\textsuperscript{56} The art-historical component of the games, alongside a great number of representational issues, has also been brought to the fore.\textsuperscript{57} Finally, attention has been given to some more practical elements connected to the games (such as the actual disposal of the dead bodies).\textsuperscript{58} What has received less attention, however, is the presence or absence of the emperor at spectacles, and his actual visibility. For an analysis of this aspect, Bentham's \textit{Panopticon} notions provide a good starting point.\textsuperscript{59}

One important characteristic of the \textit{Panopticon} is substantially different from Roman spectacle. For Bentham, understandably for a thinker at the change of the 18\textsuperscript{th} to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, with interest in the collection and study of species (humanity in a petri dish, as it were), the importance of his model is that a hidden, unidentified, power looks at and controls its subjects. At the Roman Games, however, reciprocity is the key-element.\textsuperscript{60} Those who control the inspector are, in Bentham's model, not the same people as those who are guarded by the inspector, whilst in an amphitheatre or theatre they could be. After all, the audience could watch the emperors' reaction to events as much as the emperors could watch events and audience. Indeed, there is an important motif in ancient literature that seems to focus entirely on right and wrong imperial behaviour at the spectacles. Whether or not these anecdotes are entirely factually true seems, again, less important than what they betray about popular perceptions.

Emperors should not, for instance, show disdain for spectacles, as Caesar is said to have done by reading letters and memoranda, and writing rescripts while attending.\textsuperscript{61} Augustus learnt from this, and showed 'genuine' enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{62} But one should not show too much enthusiasm either. Claudius' enjoyment of

\textsuperscript{55} Coleman 1990.
\textsuperscript{56} Anthropology is of crucial influence in Wiedemann 1992; Barton 1993; Futrell 1997. Althusser's propositions about the functioning of ideology forms the basis for Gunderson 1996, whereas Plass 1995 applies, among other approaches, game theory on political suicide and events in the arena.
\textsuperscript{57} Bergmann / Kondoleon 1999.
\textsuperscript{58} Kyle 1998.
\textsuperscript{59} The \textit{Panopticon} notions are similarly employed in an extremely interesting analysis of visibility and 'self-observation' of Roman orators by Gunderson 1998, 176.
\textsuperscript{60} But reciprocity seems to be absent in what appears to be a Roman application of the 'Panopticon-model' away from Rome. The suggestion applies to a workers' camp near a small Roman stone quarry in the lower Nahal Zohar region. An analysis of the layout of the site in terms of 'what could be seen and what was hidden from each spot' by Yuval Yekutieli (presented at the annual conference of the \textit{British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology}, 2003) indicates that the topography of the site was used to construct a 'Panopticon', in order to increase 'discipline, order, and hegemony'. I owe this reference to Lindsay Allen.
\textsuperscript{61} Suet. Aug. 45: \textit{inter spectandum epistulis libellisque legendis aut rescribendis vacaret}.
\textsuperscript{62} Suet. Aug. 45; Tac. Ann. 1.54.
gladiatorial affairs betrayed his cruelty, and Commodus' gladiatorial
performances were described with horror by much of the literature discussing his
reign.\textsuperscript{63} Imperial reactions to popular requests also adhered to strict unwritten
rules. Pliny praises Trajan for his generousness in reaction to requests at the
Games. Even if it is a sycophantic statement, the passage still shows how such
behaviour was deemed to show the right attitude.\textsuperscript{64} Caligula's threatening joke, on
the other hand, proclaiming that he wished that the Roman people 'had but a
single neck', was deemed illustrative for his tyrannical rule. The threat even
became proverbial as an action to avoid.\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, ignoring popular requests
and asking for silence was a rapid way of losing popularity – Hadrian is even said
to have praised a herald for diffusing a problematic situation:

Once at a gladiatorial contest, when the crowd was demanding something very urgently
(και ποτε ἵσχυρώς αὐτοῦντι τι ἐν ὀπλομαχίᾳ), he not only would not grant it, but
also asked the herald to proclaim Domitian's command 'Silence'. The word was not
uttered however, for the herald raised his hand and by that very gesture quieted the
people as heralds are accustomed to do ... and then, when they had become quiet, he
said: 'That is what he wishes' ("τὸντι ἐδέλει"). And Hadrian ... actually honoured him
for not uttering the rude order. (Dio, 69.6.1-2)

This 'rude order' was also known as Domitian's command, showing that a bad
reputation at the Games, once gained, was difficult to shed. Domitian's reputation
did not improve when he forced people to acclaim him in the amphitheatre:

He delighted to hear the people in the amphitheatre shout on his feast day: 'Good
Fortune attend out Lord and Mistress'

\textit{Adclamari etiam in amphitheatro epuli die libenter audiit: Domino et dominae feliciter!}
(Suet. Dom. 13.1).

Worse, it is alleged, was still to come. Lucius Verus, like Gaius and Nero a fan of
the Green faction at the Games, so obviously supported his own colour that 'he
suffered many insults from the Blues (\textit{a Venetianis})'\textsuperscript{66} Caracalla took this to the
extreme. When a crowd jeered at one of his favourite charioteers, he took offence:

Believing himself to have been humiliated, he ordered the soldiers to set upon the people
and arrest and slaughter those who had made aspersions against the charioteer

\textit{ο δὲ οἴηθει αὐτὸς ὧρισθαι κελεύει τῷ πλήθει προσπεσεῖν τὸ στράτευμα,}
\textit{ἀπάγειν, τε καὶ φονεύειν τοὺς κακῶς τὸν ἰμιόχον αἰτῶντας.}\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{63} Suet. \textit{Claud.} 34.2. See \textit{supra} p. 164 On Commodus the gladiator, see Hekster 2001a, 58-72;
Hekster 2002, 137-162.
\textsuperscript{64} Plin. \textit{Pan.} 33.2-3.
\textsuperscript{65} Dio, 59.13.6; Suet. \textit{Calig.} 30.2: \textit{Utinam populus Romanus unam cervicem haberet}; Beacham
1999, 182: 'The threat about the collective Roman neck became proverbial for its provocative
\textsuperscript{66} SHA, \textit{Ver.} 4.8; 6.2; Suet. \textit{Cal.} 55.2; Suet. \textit{Nero} 22.1. On the factions, see Cameron 1976.
\textsuperscript{67} Herod. 4.6.4; Cameron 1976, 179-80.
The carnage, it appears, was considerable. Again, as before, this may reflect tropes in literature as much as historical events, but the importance of these anecdotes as reflections of unacceptable types of behaviour remains pivotal.

When emperors ignored requests, or publicly slaughtered opponents, reciprocity was strained. The audience could mock the ruler, and inevitably did so in reaction to the above mentioned negative exempla, but jeering is hardly an adequate response to being set upon by soldiers. Sometimes, however, reciprocity was completely discarded – and this type of indiscretion, directly connected to visibility, brings us back to Bentham. Nero, again, is the culprit:

> Nam perraro praesidere, ceterum accubans, parvis primum foraminibus, deinde toto podio adaperto spectare consueverat (Suet. Nero, 12.2).

When Nero watched the games through a small hole (parvum foramen), spectators would have been unable to see him. The reciprocity between emperor and audience thus disappeared, making the emperor, like Bentham’s inspector, an overpowering figure in respect of those whom he could watch. If you could not see the emperor, the emperor might be watching you, displaying so-called ‘invisible omnipresence’. Later in his reign, Nero made amends for this lapse in judgement. By uncovering the entire balcony – bringing it adaperto, the emperor was, once more, visible to all and the balance was restored.

Pliny blames Domitian for a comparable error in judgement, and puts emphasis on the fact that Trajan, once more, displays himself openly to the public, whereas the last Flavian had hidden himself in an imperial enclosure:

> Licebit ergo civibus tuis invicem contueri: dabitur, non cubiculum principis, sed ipsum principem cernere: in publico, in populo sedentem (Plin. Pan. 51.5).

By sitting in his cubiculum, Domitian could see without being watched. Unlike Bentham’s inspector, furthermore, ‘the doors of [this] establishment’ will not have been ‘thrown wide open to the body of the curious at large’. Nobody, effectively, had any control over what the emperor saw and did, making the audience at the games not unlike inmates in a circular prison. This notion was strengthened by the clear restrictions that emperors put on behaviour that was tolerated. Augustus, for instance, rebuked drinking equestrians in a less-than-kind way. More spectacularly, Domitian ordered Manius Acilius Glabrio, consul ordinarius in AD 91, to kill a lion in his Alban amphitheatre, and afterwards put him to death for

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68 Dinwiddy 1989, 92; Bozovic 1995a, 9.
69 Quint. Inst. 6.3.63. Cf. Digest (Ulpian) I.XII.1.12-13; Suet. Caes. 39.4; Aug. 43.1.
fighting wild beasts.\textsuperscript{70} Audiences, as much as forced performers, were clearly watched.

Tacitus dramatically describes such behaviour during Nero's reign, in a passage that is worth being quoted at length:

All, however, who were present from remote towns, and still retained the Italy of strict morals and primitive ways; all too who had come on embassies or on private business from distant provinces, where they had been unused to such wantonness, were unable to endure the spectacle or sustain the degrading fatigue, which wearied their unpractised hands, while they disturbed those who knew their part, and were often struck by soldiers, stationed in the seats, to see that not a moment of time passed with less vigorous applause or in the silence of indifference. It was a known fact that several knights, in struggling through the narrow approaches and the pressure of the crowd, were trampled to death, and that others while keeping their seats day and night were seized with some fatal malady. For it was a still worse danger to be absent from the show, as many openly and many more secretly made it their business to scrutinize names and faces, and to note the delight or the disgust of the company (quippe gravior inerat metus, si spectaculo defuissent, multis palam et pluribus occultis, ut nomina ac vultus, alacritatem tristitiamque coeuntium scrutarentur). Hence came cruel severities, immediately exercised on the humble, and resentments, concealed for the moment, but subsequently paid off, towards men of distinction.\textsuperscript{71}

Tacitus' story is followed by a well-circulated (though not necessarily accurate) story that Vespasian lost Nero's goodwill by falling asleep in the theatre. If the audience was aware that their behaviour during games was as much scrutinised as the spectacle itself, it must have been unnerving not to be able to see where (or who) the emperor was looking at.\textsuperscript{72} As mentioned before, even if the anecdotes about Nero's and Domitian's 'invisibility' during the games are later literary inventions, it is still highly noticeable that the stories arose in the first place. To return to the above-mentioned dichotomy in modes of representing power, it seems clear that, with the population of Rome, being visible was much more popular than being invisible. That population, by expectations, reactions, and acclamations to the emperor, largely defined the role and image of the ruler.

There are, however, some obvious advantages in being, like Bentham's inspector, in total control of those whom you see. He who observes without being observed becomes, to an extent, godlike. It may be more than coincidental that both Nero and Domitian have been accused of overly divine aspirations. Making themselves 'invisible' in their presence elevated them to a superior rank. A parallel to this can be found on the Theodosian column base. Note, for instance,

\textsuperscript{70} Dio, 67.14.3; Letta 1985.

\textsuperscript{71} Tac. Ann. 16.5. Cf. Suet. Nero 20.3: 'Not content with that, he selected some young men of the order of knights and more than five thousand sturdy young commoners, to be divided into groups and learn the Alexandrian style of applause ... and to ply them vigorously whenever he sang'.

\textsuperscript{72} Bartsch 1994, 8-9. Cf. Tac. Ann. 14.5.5; Dio, 61.20.3-5.
how on its repeated relief ‘an impassive emperor gazes serenely down from his box, towering above the tiny spectators’ – no longer a princeps but a sacred autocrat, scrutinising his subjects.\textsuperscript{73} The behaviour of Nero and Domitian at the games parallels the changing style that can also be observed in other facets of their rule.\textsuperscript{74}

It may, with this in mind, be worthwhile to look for a moment at the behaviour of Commodus, another emperor whose divine aspirations are well known, and whose interest, and actual personal participation, in gladiatorial games has given rise to longstanding criticism. Commodus, too, changed his own visibility at the games, but in a rather more dramatic way. By placing himself in the centre of the arena, he made himself the subject of scrutiny. Indeed, many seem to have wanted to take up that opportunity. People travelled widely to gaze at an emperor who would be spectacle rather than spectator:

Commodus now gave orders for the celebration of public shows, at which he promised he would kill all the wild animals with his own hand and engage in gladiatorial combat with the stoutest of young men. As the news spread, people flocked to Rome from all over Italy and the neighbouring provinces to be spectators at something they had never seen or heard of before … At last the day of the show came and the amphitheatre was packed. (Herodian, 1.15.1-2)

Commodus’ behaviour created an extreme form of reciprocity. Rather than being an anonymous inspector, the emperor was there to be looked at. Those who were subjects could see to whom they were subjected, and what he did to merit his position at the top.\textsuperscript{75}

There was a catch, though. Nero, after his initial reticence in displaying himself publicly, later showed willingness similar to that of Commodus in subjecting himself to the judgement of his audience. But in doing so, he showed himself in a rather peculiar way:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Cameron 1976, 177; Mayer 2002, 115-129; Kiilerich 1998, 34-65, especially 39 (northwest side), 46-9 (southwest side), and 55-7 (southeast side), depicting the emperor emphatically towering over rows of spectators.
  \item Cf. for similar observations, specifically on the reign of Nero, the articles in Elsner/ Masters 1994, especially Alcock 1994 and Edwards 1994. It might be worthwhile to see Domitian’s famous black dinner (Dio, 67.9) in analogous light. This striking section describes how the emperor assembled the ‘foremost men’ in ‘a room which was pitch black on every side’ (1). In it were symbolical gravestones with the guests’ names on it. They were given black food and had nude boys performing exotic dances to them, all in dead silence ‘as if they were already in the realm of the dead’ (3-4). After that, the knights and senators were dismissed, only to find a messenger of the emperor at their homes, who not only gave them their ‘gravestone’ but also ‘that particular boy, who had been each guest’s familiar spirit’ (5). The purpose of this theatrical scene (id indeed it took place) must be to emphasise Domitian’s divine power over life and death of his subjects.
  \item Hekster 2002, 159-160.
\end{itemize}
He also put on the mask and sang tragedies representing gods and heroes and even heroines and goddesses, having the masks fashioned in the likeness of his own features or those of the women of whom he chanced to be enamoured

Tragoedias quoque cantavit personatus heroum deorumque, item heroidum ac dearum, personis effectis ad similitudinem oris sui et feminae, prout quamque diligeret (Suet. Nero 21.3).

On one such occasion, whilst acting the role of ‘Hercules insanus’, a young soldier was so confused seeing the emperor in a mask with his own features, ‘bound with chains, as the subject required’ that he ‘rushed forward to lend him aid’.76 In Shadi Bartsch’s words: ‘Nero’s mask of himself serves as a catalyst of confusion, making it seemingly impossible for the spectator to apply either “representation” or “reality” as a consistent frame for viewing’.77 Nero, whilst displaying himself, was hiding behind his mask – making it difficult to see imperial emotions and reactions. Similarly, Commodus wore a helmet whilst fighting, though he regularly showed himself in the arena without one.78

More importantly, we have already seen how during Nero’s shows third parties would watch the audience on the emperor’s behalf. Thus, the story about Vespasian could arise. At Commodus’ games, too, the public was painfully aware that the emperor could inspect at least some people from his place in the arena. Famously, whilst in the arena, Commodus demonstrated his attention to some senators who were present by approaching them holding a freshly severed head of an ostrich in his left hand, and a bloody sword in his right. Also, the absence of Ti. Claudius Pompeianus from the games was sufficiently noteworthy for Dio to write it down.79 The emperor’s information was not restricted to what he himself saw, though he could see a lot, even from the centre of the arena.80

Still, whilst in the centre of the arena, others could inspect the emperor as well. When the audience could watch the emperor, they could see what he was doing and whom he was watching. This must have made an emperor less unpredictable – and less frightening. Imperial behaviour at the games was one element in a much more intricate balance of power. Whether an emperor was willing to show whom he was looking at, or allowed himself to be seen or even judged, could be a clear indication of how he chose to represent his position. In

76 Suet, Nero, 21.3. Cf. Dio 63.9.5.
77 Bartsch 1994, 49.
78 E.g. Dio, 73.21.3, SHA, Comm. 16.6-7, with Hekster 2002, 147.
80 Indeed, the fact that those performing in the arena can see the spectators is crucial for the dynamics in any stadium: Eichberg 1995, 336: ‘The Stadium ... does not function when its terraces are empty. The visibility of the observers is an important part of the game’. He illustrates his argument (p. 326) with the shock of the Austrian emperor Joseph II when at a visit to Verona in 1771 he was brought into the Roman amphitheatre and ‘the arena opened to his view as the thousands of spectators on the terraces rose to their feet and applauded him’. The visibility, in stadium-context, of assembled viewers made the spectacle overwhelming.
the end, an emperor needed to be seen, but only in the right circumstances. After all, he formed a potent symbol of the unity of the Empire.  

Most of the evidence assembled in this contribution has been literary and mainly anecdotal. As stated above, there is the possibility that it does not consistently reflect historical actualities. But even if all these anecdotes are a form of 'reception', rather than fact, they can still function as relevant representations. Does such a function make them 'true'? One might usefully compare the example of notions surrounding orators. Conceptions about how Roman orators ought to move, behave and be dressed became prescriptive for how they wanted to move, behave, and be dressed, and indeed for how they needed to move, behave, and be dressed to be successful. Did stories about proper and improper types of behaviour similarly influence Roman emperors, who were as much in the public eye as orators, in their daily routine, thereby making the transfer from literary commonplaces to almost preset rules of behaviour?

It may, with this question in mind, be relevant to point at the continuous emphasis in imperial art on the emperor performing before audiences. The scenes of clementia, triumph and sacrifice in the panel reliefs of Marcus Aurelius, now in the Capitoline Musea, systematically show the emperor surrounded by spectators, as do Marcus' profectio, lustratio, and adlocutio scenes which are now on the Arch of Constantine. Watching audiences are emphatically present on many reliefs showing the emperor making a sacrifice, whilst on-looking soldiers are dominant in the repetitious depictions of Trajan's and Marcus Aurelius' contiones on their columns and on the coinage of almost all emperors. The relation between emperor and audience, and to an extent the accessibility of the emperor, is categorically put forward in forms of art that must have been looked at and approved by the emperor. Even in that most private reflection of imperial thought, Marcus' Meditations, the emperor seems to create a private audience of perfect Stoic listeners. To define an emperor, internally or externally, audience was paramount. The anecdotes surrounding visibility may well have been more than merely commonplaces.

The figure of the emperor, as stated above, was a central element in Roman ideology. The more this figure became clearly defined, the more the individual

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81 See above all: Hopkins 1978, 197-242, Ando 2000, especially 336-405, and Walzer 1967, 194: 'Politics is an art of unification; from many it makes one ... The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived'. See supra p.11.


83 Scott Ryberg 1967, 9-27 (Capitoline Musea), 28-56 (Arch of Constantine), with plates II, IX, XV, XXII, XXVII, XXXVI.

84 Noticeably the Louvre Suovetaurilia, the scenes on the Ara Pietatis Augustae, and the sacrificial reliefs on Trajan's arch at Beneventum and Galerius' arch at Thessaloniki. See Kleiner 1992, 142 fig. 117, 143 figs. 119-20, 226 fig. 191; Gordon 1990a, 216 fig. 26.


86 Cf. for similar themes in a different context Allen in this volume.
who occupied the position became the incarnation of the position, rather than an individual – and the more difficult it would be to encounter that individual in other contexts than those in which one would expect to encounter the emperor.\textsuperscript{87} On the other hand, the increasing importance of the emperor also made it vital to be able to see the emperor when one needed to. Philo’s anxiety whilst waiting for his embassy to be received by Gaius (though nothing compared to his disappointment over the actual reaction of the emperor) is but one well-known example.\textsuperscript{88} ‘The emperor was what the emperor did’.\textsuperscript{89} This is clearly true. But part of what the emperor did was being seen, and the emperor was, therefore, what he appeared to be as well. If, as has been argued in this paper, seeing – and especially direct visibility – was intrinsically connected to power, than the greatest display of superior status was letting people second-guess one’s own imperial image, or indeed royal presence, whilst keeping a close eye on them. Invisibility, paradoxically, may have been a very royal kind of image.

\textsuperscript{87} Cf. Beard 1998, 32.
\textsuperscript{88} For further references and discussion of the emperor’s physical presence at hearings: Millar 1992, 228-240.
\textsuperscript{89} Millar 1992, 6.