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Game of Thrones and Ancient Rome

By

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Honors in
the Department of Classics**

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Abstract

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Ancient Roman society to this day influences different aspects of modern life. One of these aspects includes visual media and entertainment. Renowned by ancient sources and secondary sources as one of the most successful and powerful empires throughout history, the actions of the Romans inspire spectacles of amusement on contemporary award-winning movies and television shows. This would include movies like *Gladiator* and *Spartacus* along with television shows like *Rome*. This study investigates the award-winning, HBO television series *Game of Thrones*. The show is adapted from a novel series entitled *A Song of Ice and Fire*, written by George R.R. Martin. *Game of Thrones* is adapted for television from the novel series and written by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss. The study first compares the lives, personalities and character of the figure King Joffrey and the Roman Emperor Caligula. Following the first section, the study examines the assassination of Julius Caesar and assassination of Jon Snow. The examination structured throughout this thesis focuses on the influence of ancient Rome on *Game of Thrones* and how the writers of the award-winning show strengthen its storylines and characters.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1.....	3
1.1 Introduction.....	3
1.2 Emperor Caligula.....	5
1.3 King Joffrey.....	19
1.4 Conclusion.....	30
Chapter 2.....	33
2.1 Introduction.....	33
2.2 Our Two Victims.....	35
2.3 The Scenery, the Assassins and the Cause.....	45
2.4 Conclusion.....	58
Conclusion.....	61
Bibliography.....	63

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the connections between ancient Rome and the HBO award-winning series *Game of Thrones* written by David Benioff and D.B. Weiss and inspired by the novel series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin. The first section of the study analyzes a set of figures from ancient imperial Rome and the first four seasons of *Game of Thrones*. The second section of the study compares the assassination of Julius Caesar and the assassination of Jon Snow, a prominent character in the *Game of Thrones* universe. The set of figures that are studied in the first section are Caligula, the controversial Roman emperor who ruled in the early 1st century AD, and King Joffrey of House Baratheon, whose reign extends from the latter parts of the first season to his death in season 4 episode 3. Caligula's character is first analyzed through ancient sources, which include Suetonius, Cassius Dio, and Josephus. The description and analysis of the Emperor Caligula is supplemented through the secondary sources of Robert S. Katz and A.T. Sandison's literary works. Following the review of the secondary sources, the next section describes King Joffrey in detail. When describing Joffrey's character, the section is broken down into three sections: appearance, sadism, and treatment of regal duties. In each of the three sections Joffrey is compared and contrasted to Caligula with respect to each topic of the sections. The final segment of the first section of this study concludes the similarities and differences of Joffrey and Caligula, mainly focusing on the differences, which augment Joffrey's antagonistic character in *Game of Thrones*. The second section of this study compares the assassination of Julius Caesar and Jon Snow. The section is largely organized differently than the first of this thesis. Following the introduction, both victims' lives, paths of success, and assassinations are described. Suetonius, Plutarch and Appian serve as the

primary sources to recount Julius Caesar's life and assassination. As a prominent character in the *Game of Thrones* series, Jon Snow's entire role in the show serves as the source of his description, which begins in the first season when he is the bastard of Winterfell and young steward of the Night's Watch up to his assassination. Following the description of both victims, the section examines three themes to compare and contrast each assassination. The three themes are the scenery, the assassins, and the cause for which each victim was assassinated. The second section of the overall study concludes with an overall look at both assassinations and what similarities and differences augment the death of Jon Snow as a character of *Game of Thrones*.

Chapter 1

Imperator Caligula and King Joffrey

I. Introduction

Gaius Julius Caesar, also known as Caligula, was the third Roman Emperor and ruling *principate* of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty. His reign lasted only four years (37-41 A.D) and was defined by excess, brutality, and impiety. The beginning of his reign as *imperator* saw several pieces of political legislation passed that were considered rather favorable among the Roman people. However, his rule rapidly transitioned into one that demonstrated his true self. Numerous primary sources, such as Suetonius, and recent academic research show that Caligula was cruel, maniacal and a sadist, who took pleasure in the pain of others. His relationship with members of his family was extremely dysfunctional, and is considered even for ancient standards extremely abnormal. Altogether, Caligula's cruelty, misuse of imperial power, sexual deviance and atypical familial relationship are staples of Roman imperialism.

King Joffrey Baratheon in the popular HBO series *Game of Thrones* is the second king and eldest son of former King Robert Baratheon and Queen Regent Cersei Lannister. His reign as king of Westeros is brief and is defined by cruelty, abuse of power and excess. As king, his abuse of power knows no bounds and exhibits savage behavior that contradicts accepted political practice in the realm. Due to his young age, the elder members of his family easily manipulate him during the preliminary stages of his rule. However, as he ages and becomes more autonomous as king, his sadistic nature and desire to be viewed as powerful becomes more evident. Although short lived, his reign is wholly unpopular among the Great Houses of Westeros and primarily the people of King's Landing, which is the capital of Westeros. All things considered, King Joffrey is maniacal, sadistic, cowardly, and unloved as the ruler of the realm.

King's Joffrey's actions and personality mirror Caligula's personality and activity as Emperor of Rome. Caligula's traits align well with Joffrey's character and are demonstrated through his actions throughout the television series. In this chapter I examine Caligula and Joffrey separately as individuals, discussing their personal traits, appearance and actions as rulers of their respective dominions.

In the second section of this chapter, I analyze Caligula through primary and secondary sources. The writing of Suetonius, Cassius Dio and Josephus serve as the primary sources. An explicit focus on the use of language, including form and function, and imagery is considered when examining the primary sources. Previous academic research that discusses Caligula's life and reign as emperor that consider ancient sources serve as the secondary sources.

In the third section of this chapter, I analyze the character of King Joffrey, through his portrayal in seasons 1-4 of *Game of Thrones*. Please note that the analysis of Joffrey is restricted to the *Game of Thrones* television series (2011-2014). This study does not consider the novel series *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R.R. Martin on which the television series *Game of Thrones* is based.

Chapter 1 concludes with a direct comparison of Caligula and Joffrey. The focus is on the similarities and differences of the two characters. The principal concern of the comparison of the two characters is to demonstrate how the character's differences augments or lessens Joffrey as a character in the *Game of Thrones* series. This chapter is an aspect of the overarching argument that Roman imperial figures and the Assassination of Julius Caesar readily influence the award-winning series *Game of Thrones*.

II. Emperor Caligula

Born Gaius Julius Caesar in 12 A.D. to Germanicus Julius Caesar, a revered Roman general, and Agrippina the Elder, who was Germanicus' second cousin. He is the nephew of his successor, Claudius. At a young age, the future emperor was given the nickname Caligula, from the Latin word for the footwear worn by soldiers, *caliga*. He was given this name because from the age of two, according to Suetonius, the boy accompanied his father into battle in a gear similar to a Roman soldier. Following the death of Rome's first *principate*, Augustus, Tiberius, the successor to the throne adopted Caligula's father. The adoption was executed at the request of Augustus, but was not favored by Tiberius. At this point in Germanicus' career, he had already proved his military prowess and was highly supported by the Roman people. Tiberius viewed this as a threat to his regime and after commanding Germanicus and his troops to travel to Syria, ordered the revered father of Caligula to be poisoned. This event is highly disputed among modern and ancient sources, however it is certain that following the death of his father, Tiberius adopted Caligula as his stepson. In the fourth section of Suetonius' *The Lives of the Caesars*, it is noted that Tiberius' own cruelty flourished following the death of Germanicus.

“The fame of the deceased and regret for his loss were increased by the horror of the times which followed, since all believed, and with good reason, that the cruelty of Tiberius, which soon burst forth, had been held in check through his respect and awe for Germanicus”

Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* 4.6.2

Translation via Bill Thayer, University of Chicago¹

¹ All translations of Suetonius are from Bill Thayer

It is important to note the cruelty and abuse of power exhibited by Caligula's stepfather, Tiberius, as it surely influenced the heir to the throne. Upon his adoption, Caligula lived with Tiberius in the royal villa at Capri. It is at Capri while living with his stepfather where Caligula's true sadistic nature and vicious character becomes wholly evident in the ancient sources. In the following sections, Caligula's life in whole is investigated through primary and secondary sources. In the first sections each primary source is examined individually. After completing the analysis of primary sources, I examine previous academic research and conclude with a holistic review of the Roman Emperor Caligula.

Suetonius

In the fourth chapter of *The Lives of the Caesars*, Suetonius recounts the life of the fourth Julio-Claudian Roman Emperor, Caligula. The life of the Roman Emperor is written in chronological order, ending with his death. Suetonius illustrates Caligula as a cruel and sadistic Roman Emperor who subjected Rome, its constituents, and even the *principate's* own family to abuse. Through the eyeglass of Suetonius' work Caligula's brutality, deviance and delusion on imperial prowess is apparent.

At a young age, Caligula's horrid character has already manifested and is clear through his actions. His stepfather, Tiberius, is completely permissive of this behavior and acts as an agent for his grotesque nature to evolve.

naturam tamen saeuam atque probrosam ne tunc quidem
inhibere poterat, quin et animaduersionibus poenisque ad
supplicium datorum cupidissime interesset et ganeas atque
adulteria capillamento celatus et ueste longa noctibus obiret
ac scaenicas saltandi canendique artes studiosissime
appeteret, facile id sane Tiberio patiente, si per has
mansuefieri posset ferum eius ingenium.

Yet even at that time 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, passionately
devoted besides to the theatrical arts of dancing and
singing, in which Tiberius very willingly indulged him, in
the hope that through these his savage nature might be
softened

Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* 4.11.1

While living at Capri, Caligula began to grow into his own identity. He found pleasure in other's pain and punishment and satisfied his sexual desire. Caligula reveled in the torture and physical pain people endured. In the first line of the above passage Suetonius uses *saeuam*, meaning savage or fierce, to describe Caligula's nature². This word is usually used in the context of war or when describing animals and barbarians in other ancient texts. The choice of the word augments Caligula's savage personality and provides a powerful image that can be related to a fierce beast or relentless warrior. The form of the word *saevam* is the singular, feminine, accusative completing the present active infinitive use of the verb *inhibeo* in the sentence. The form and function of the two words implemented by Suetonius embellishes Caligula's cruel character and magnifies the degree to which the reader already perceives the future emperor as barbaric. Caligula does not choose to be cruel or savage but rather is by his nature. Suetonius' description of

² See Lewis and Short, the first use of *savus, a, um*

his character is confirmed by Caligula's action to actively witness and take pleasure in the punishment and torture of others. Another interesting aspect from the passage above is the inclusion of Tiberius. In the passage Tiberius actively permits for Caligula to take part in and witness corporal punishments and to quench his sexually deviant desires. In the passage Suetonius employs an ablative absolute when describing Tiberius' role in indirectly honing Caligula's character: *facile id sane Tiberio patiente*. The use of the ablative absolute in this context is in a sense, an "after the fact statement" which brings the reader's attention back to the description of Caligula's character. The ablative absolute also designates Tiberius as an agent by which Caligula's cruelty grew. In this passage Tiberius allows for Caligula to indulge himself in any abnormal nature he desires with the hope that these inclinations will alleviate themselves. This detail is intriguing because it shows that Caligula's family actively knew about his character and allowed it to happen thereby indirectly enabling his savagery to thrive.

In the 22nd section of Caligula's chapter in *The Life of the Caesars*, Suetonius recounts Caligula's ascension to the throne and starts his description of his rule as emperor.

Hactenus quasi de principe, reliqua ut de monstro narranda
sunt... nec multum a fuit quin statim diadema sumeret
speciemque principatus in regni formam conuerteret.

So much for Caligula as emperor; we must now tell of his
career as a monster... And he came near assuming a crown
at once and changing the semblance of a principate into the
form of a monarchy.

Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* 4.22.1

The first aspect that draws attention relative to this argument is Suetonius' transition into discussing Caligula's rise to the throne. Suetonius starts by labeling

Caligula *principe*, a widely used term among ancient authors and the formal title of the Roman Emperor. The author then moves on to state that it is time he must describe Caligula's career as a monster. The use of *narranda sunt* and *monstro* are noted to be of particular importance in this passage. *Narranda* is the gerundive feminine ablative form of the verb *narro* which means "to tell" or "to recount". The choice of word is not necessarily of interest but rather the form and function. Suetonius' use of passive periphrastic implies obligation that at this juncture he must tell the story of Caligula as emperor. Furthermore, the use of the passive periphrastic insinuates that Caligula's career is not necessarily one that he enjoys describing. Perhaps this is due to Caligula's cruel nature or inability to be Rome's proper leader. However, it is clear through Suetonius' use of the passive periphrastic that the tale of Caligula's career is not of the highest quality. Suetonius' use of *monstro* confirms this by illustrating that Caligula was not an ideal leader. *Monstro* in this context is a neuter singular, ablative noun. The word is traditionally translated as "wonder" or "supernatural appearance," however Thayer interprets the word to mean "monster."³ Considering the traditional translation, Caligula's character is labeled as so abnormal that it must be supernatural or not of this world. Thayer's translation is more brazen and describes the emperor as inhuman. Accepting either method still demonstrates that Caligula's work, as the Emperor of Rome is nothing short of atypical and perhaps frightening. The combination of the passive periphrastic in this passage and the use *monstro* wholly illustrates Suetonius' opinion on Caligula as a beast-like or abnormal emperor whose story is one that the author doesn't necessarily want to tell. A final point of interest in this passage is the use of *regni*. *Regni* in effect

³ See Lewis and Short third use of *monstro*

means “kingly government” which conjures up memories, at least for Romans, of a time where kings ruled prior to the formation of the Roman state. The description provided by Suetonius in this section of the passage connects the new emperor, Caligula, to the previous kings of Italy. This description combined with the use of *monstro* separates Caligula from former emperors like Augustus, who enriched the Roman state. Altogether, Suetonius signals that Caligula’s sadistic nature defined his reign as emperor and reverted the respected office of principate into a monarchy with absolute power.

In a latter section of Suetonius’ work on Caligula, the author describes the emperors overall disrespect for senators and describes an event exemplary of his cruelty.

Nihilo reuerentior leniorue erga senatum, quosdam summis honoribus functos ad essedum sibi currere togatos per aliquot passuum milia et cenanti modo ad pluteum modo ad pedes stare succinctos linteo passus est

He was no whit more respectful or mild towards the senate, allowing some who had held the highest offices to run in their togas for several miles beside his chariot and to wait on him at table, standing napkin in hand

Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* 4.26.2

In this section, Suetonius shows that Caligula’s cruel nature knew no bounds. The emperor not only subjected random people to his vicious nature but also senators who held the “highest offices”. This event shows a complete lack of respect for Roman politicians and a deficient valuation of those who could support his regime through politics. Suetonius’ use of the phrase *summīs honoribus* demonstrates this. *Summis* differentiates regular senators from those who hold the highest offices thereby augmenting the viciousness of Caligula’s actions. Overall, this passage demonstrates Caligula’s sadistic nature and his abuse of power as emperor.

In one of the last sections of Suetonius' recount of the life of Caligula, he demonstrates a different aspect of the emperor that is not readily seen throughout the entirety of the text. The first and only section of chapter 52, describes Caligula's role in military campaigns. The imagery provided shows Caligula's delusion as a powerful and triumphant Emperor of Rome.

triumphalem quidem ornatum etiam ante expeditionem assidue gestavit

He frequently wore the dress of a triumphing general, even before his campaign
Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars* 4.52.1

In this passage Caligula is described as adorning himself with the gear of a victorious warrior and statesmen prior to the beginning of his campaign. On the surface, the only problem with this scene is that Caligula is assuming he is going to win a war. However, the tradition of Roman triumphs, where successful generals and emperors parade through the city usually wearing white armor riding a white steed, was thought of as a sacred, almost religious occurrence. Thus, Caligula wearing the armor of a triumphant general prior to the start of a war can be seen as sacrilegious. It also shows that Caligula is under the impression he is a successful general which is a delusional thought.

Cassius Dio

Lucius Cassius Dio, better known as Cassius Dio, was an author, Roman soldier, politician and historian. Born of Greek descent in the Eastern regions of the Roman Empire, Dio is best known for his historical narrative of Rome entitled *Historia Romana* or *Roman History*. This work begins with Aeneas' arrival to Italy and ends with Dio's final consulship in 229 CE. Although there are some portions of the literature that are

missing, the overall work provides an ample view on early Roman history up until the youthful years of the Empire.

Historia Romana, is written in Greek and due to my own inability to read ancient Greek, this section will focus primarily on the message Dio is trying to get across rather than the form and function of the language. This section exclusively focuses on Book 59 of *Historia Romana*. Book 59 describes the life of Caligula and highlights the excesses throughout the former *princeps*' life.

Book 59 is broken up into thirty chapters, of which the first seven describe the transition from Tiberius to Caligula as head of the Roman state. The chapters following the first seven describe Caligula's work as emperor of Rome. At a very early point in Book 59, Cassius Dio describes the deterioration of Caligula as emperor and his excesses. Furthermore, he includes the names of past emperors to amplify the description of Caligula's raw nature.

“He went through the same deterioration, too, in almost all other respects. Thus, he had seemed at first most democratic, to such a degree, in fact, that he would send no letters either to the people or to the senate nor assume any of the imperial titles; yet he became most autocratic”

Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, 59.3

Translation via Loeb Classical Library Vol. VII⁴

It is evident through Dio's initial description of Caligula that he was honorable in and could have been represented as democratic in some aspects. However, similar to the emperors before him, particularly Tiberius, time showed his true character. Caligula's reign as Roman Emperor transitioned from democratic to tyrannical rather quickly. The transition that Dio conveys in an early section of Book 59 is indicative of Caligula's true

⁴ All translation of Cassius Dio are from Loeb Classical Library

character. Dio provides his own description of Caligula's character and embellishes it by comparing it to former emperors.

“For Gaius invariably went so by contraries in every matter, that he not only emulated but even surpassed his predecessors licentiousness and bloodthirstiness, for which he used to censure him, whereas of the qualities he praised in the other he imitated not one”

Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, 59.4

In the above passage, Caligula's "bloodthirstiness" and sexual promiscuity are described. Dio notes that Caligula is invariably similar to his predecessors but also surpasses Emperors before him in areas that are deemed unsavory to Romans. Furthermore, the qualities that previous emperors possessed that are deemed praiseworthy, Caligula could not emulate. The manner in which Cassius Dio describes Caligula's inability to even imitate how previous emperors acted strengthens the qualities of bloodthirstiness and licentiousness. Cassius Dio's description of Caligula refers back to these two qualities throughout Book 59. In Chapter 13 of Book 59, Caligula is described as totally self-absorbed in murder without any regard or care for his constituents. Cassius Dio's description is a demonstration of Caligula's cruelty, savage nature, and ignorance to justice.

“In fact, there was slaughter; for the emperor no longer showed any favour even to the populace, but opposed absolutely everything they wished, and consequently the people on their part resisted all his desires. The talk and behavior that might be expected at such a juncture, with an angry ruler on one side, and a hostile people on the other, were plainly in evidence.”

Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, 59.13

Caligula clearly knew no bounds of cruelty or civility. The uncontrolled savagery and murder is indicative of Caligula's true character and shows his overall demeanor as

Emperor. In this next passage Cassius Dio describes the tutelage that was paid to Caligula, the sources of those payments and his treatment of all types of Roman Citizens as his own “playthings”

“One might, indeed, pass over in silence the wares and the taverns, the prostitutes and the courts, the artisans and the wage-earning slaves, and other such sources, from which he collected every conceivable tribute; but how could one keep silent about the rooms set apart in the very palace, and the wives of the foremost men as well as the children of the most aristocratic families that he shut up in those rooms and subjected to outrage, using them as a means of milking everybody alike? Some of those who thus contributed to his need did so willingly, but others very much against their will, lest they should be thought to be vexed. The multitude, however, was not greatly displeased by these proceedings, but actually rejoiced with him in his licentiousness and in the fact that he used to throw himself each time on the gold and silver collected from these sources and roll in it.”

Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, 59.28

The paragraph above further supplements Caligula’s established character. Cassius Dio adds another aspect to Caligula’s personality that has not been previously seen. The aspect is the idea that Caligula treats his constituents as objects, not as people. Cassius Dio’s differentiation of those subjected to Caligula’s cruelty is important to note as well. It is stated that Caligula derives his income from citizens with off-putting occupations and from the wealthiest elite. Furthermore, the “most aristocratic” families and commoners alike are subject to his rage. The closing statement also provides another spin to Caligula’s character. The emperor didn’t necessarily care about the money, as we can see in his actions, but it seems that he rather enjoyed the process of torturing or obtaining it from his entire constituency.

Cassius Dio's description of Caligula throughout the entirety of *Historia Romana* aligns well with Suetonius' description. Cassius Dio's characterization of Caligula is, however, more focused on bloodthirstiness and untamed nature. Furthermore, from some of the paragraphs in Cassius Dio's text a psychological factor is evident, where Caligula is depicted as a total sociopath without any feelings or concern for his actions.

Josephus

Josephus is the last source that serves as a primary literary work to fully describe the Emperor Caligula. Flavius Josephus was born in the year 37 CE in Jerusalem, Israel and died 100 CE in Rome. He is one of the most valued authors in antiquity due to his focus on *Romano-Jewish* relations and histories. His work provides an understanding of the earliest formation of Judaism and Christianity in the Roman Empire. Josephus is best known for his works entitled *The Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews*. Although quite the extended work, this section will focus exclusively on Chapter 19 of *Antiquities of the Jews*, which provides a brief description of Caligula as *principate*. The primary focus of Caligula's section is to show the extent of his cruelty and his religious impiety.

NOW this Caius did not demonstrate his madness in offering injuries only to the Jews at Jerusalem, or to those that dwelt in the neighborhood; but suffered it to extend itself through all the earth and sea.

Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 19.1.1

Translation via Perseus provided by Tufts University⁵

In this passage Josephus describes the magnitude of not only Caligula's cruelty but also his madness. From Josephus' view, the emperor's cruelty is a result of insanity. Furthermore, Josephus states that the emperor is not a chauvinist in his instability and

⁵ All Translation of Josephus are from the website Perseus provided by Tufts University

applies injury to Jews and all those around the globe. The measurement that Caligula injures everyone in the world is not necessarily consequential that but rather, as Josephus writes, his madness would drive him to do that. It is evident in this portion that Josephus, our last primary source, agrees with our first two sources that Caligula was overwhelmingly barbaric. In the next section Josephus explains Caligula's religious impiety and delusion that he is a god himself.

He also asserted his own divinity, and insisted on greater honors to be paid him by his subjects than are due to mankind. He also frequented that temple of Jupiter which they style the Capitol, which is with them the most holy of all their temples, and had boldness enough to call himself the brother of Jupiter. And other pranks he did like a madman

Flavius Josephus, *Anitquities of the Jews*, 19.1.1

In this passage, Josephus describes Caligula's impiety and connects his religious sacrilege to his craziness. It isn't foreign for emperors to direct divinity to themselves, particularly through public works or writings, however Caligula's actions seem greatly heretical. However, to compare yourself to Jupiter, the supreme god of the Roman religion is over the top relative to emperors prior to Caligula. It is vital to note Josephus' connection of impiety to Caligula's madness. This is a prevalent theme in Josephus' writing concerning Caligula. The author does not necessarily treat it as a sickness but rather an important aspect of the emperor's disposition that dictates the entirety of his actions. Josephus' description of Caligula as emperor of Rome agrees with the prior two primary sources. Furthermore, the manner in which Josephus treats Caligula primarily focuses on the insanity of the emperor, thereby augmenting the overall description.

Secondary Sources

This section is primarily focused on secondary sources that draw their own arguments from the primary sources. The sources examined in this section prove to supplement and further build upon Caligula's character established in the prior section. In *The Illness of Caligula* the author Robert S. Katz, describes Caligula's overall character as lustful, cruel, and generally insane. Katz's argument however, is based on the possibility that Caligula had a mental or health defect, which caused his abnormal behavior. Katz concludes that "Caligula was never a normal man...were Caligula alive now, he would most certainly be under a doctor's care." Thus, Katz attributes Caligula's distasteful actions and comprehensive personality to physical illness. In *The Madness of the Emperor Caligula* by A.T. Sandison, Caligula is described as the most notorious sadist in history. Sandison discusses the legitimacy and credibility of several sources in *The Madness of the Emperor Caligula*, both ancient and contemporary. Sandison's conclusion echoes a similar conclusion as Katz's, agreeing that Caligula's self-deification, sadism and perversion were due to the presence of severe illness. However, this examination is not concerned with the cause of Caligula's callous character, but rather a holistic description.

Katz starts *The Illness of Caligula* by simply stating that Caligula is generally thought to have been a madman. He goes on to say that many classicists believe Caligula's sadistic and tyrannical actions were entirely due to mental insanity. However, in this text Katz takes a health-oriented approach and argues "that Gaius was not insane, in a psychiatric sense, but was instead the victim of a glandular disturbance".⁶ Katz starts

⁶ *The Illness of Caligula*, Robert S. Katz, pg. 223 (1972)

by reviewing ancient resources, stating that major historians like Cassius Dio and Suetonius treat Caligula like a megalomaniac and “stark lunatic”.⁷ Furthermore, Katz somewhat disregards Josephus’ work by arguing that the authors pro-Jewish approach is skewed and results in the emperor being cast a prosecutor alone. Katz then delves into a description of the emperor’s physical appearance and state of health. He considers Suetonius’ physical description of Caligula to be an indicator of hyperthyroidism, thereby explaining Caligula’s actions or the notion that he may be insane. Katz’s argument, while maybe not farfetched, does not directly apply to the focus of this study. However, Katz’s piece confirms the emperors lunacy and savage nature. “After his collapse, the rash and tyrannical acts that have made the later Caligula infamous appeared...His actions were clearly those of someone who was ‘not well’”.⁸

In *The Madness of Caligula*, Sandison offers a similar framework to Katz in which he describes the character of Caligula. When summarizing the ancient sources, Sandison writes that “Suetonius portrays Caligula as a perverted sadist who imagined himself divine” and “Josephus thought of him as a person unbalanced by absolute power”.⁹ Sandison provides the view of some contemporary authors as well. “Maranon regards Caligula as a mad epileptic with a bad family history while Ireland sees him as a man corrupted by power, for the acquisition of which he was ill-educated”.¹⁰ Sandison’s introduction of Ireland’s writing is particularly worth noting. Ireland lobbies that Caligula’s lack of education leads to ignorance on behalf of the emperor on how to treat power. It is not necessarily formal education, but rather education by his family and

⁷ Katz (1972) pg. 223

⁸ Katz (1972) pg. 225

⁹ *The Madness of the Emperor Caligula*, A.T. Sandison, pg. 206 (1958)

¹⁰ Sandiston (1958) pg. 206

politicians around Caligula. This is evident in Suetonius' writing where the author states that Tiberius, Caligula's uncle, indulged Caligula's perversions and cruelty. Sandison's final conclusion in *The Madness of the Emperor Caligula* is in a sense, neutral. He agrees that Caligula's actions were rather barbarous and cruel throughout his tenure as emperor. Furthermore, Sandison writes that it is not improbable that the emperor could have had a health issue resulting in his actions, however it is hard to say. Thus, Sandison's literary piece does not provide an explicit characterization of the emperor Caligula but sufficiently confirms the opinions of the ancient sources and sheds light on contemporary academic opinions.

It is evident through the secondary sources that during his time as emperor, Caligula proved to be cruel, sexually deviant and impious. Although the contemporary sources have apologized by providing physical and mental health issues as a reason for his madness, this study focuses on the classical interpretation of Caligula: the interpretation being that Caligula's reign as Roman *principate* is defined by his savage nature, deviant, and sometimes incestuous sexual nature as well as wrongful self-deification.

III. King Joffrey

Joffrey Baratheon is a major character in the first, second, third, and fourth season of the HBO series *Game of Thrones* and king of Westeros for the majority of the episodes produced thus far. He is the supposed eldest son of Queen Cersei Lannister and King Robert Baratheon; however his true parentage is the incestual relationship between Queen Cersei and her brother Ser Jamie Lannister. Joffrey is the second king to rule the realm following the rebellion of the five kingdoms also known as "Robert's Rebellion,"

when Robert Baratheon and supporting forces from the other regions of Westeros overthrew the Targaryen Dynasty. After King Robert dies due to a drunken hunting incident, his alleged biological son, Joffrey Baratheon ascends to the throne. After his father's death, Joffrey assumes the title King Joffrey of Houses Baratheon and Lannister, First of His Name, King of the Andals and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms and Protector of the Realm. King Joffrey's character evolves throughout the series to become a cruel and sadistic king who puts on the façade of being powerful. His character becomes absolutely obsessed with hurting his constituents, no matter who they are for his pleasure. Furthermore, he proves to be an overall immature sadist as ruler of Westeros. King Joffrey's portrayal in *Game of Thrones*, is extremely similar to that of the ancient representations of the Roman emperor Caligula. In this section, King Joffrey's character and its development throughout the series is examined particularly considering Joffrey's appearance, sadism, and treatment of political duties.

Appearance

Throughout the first four seasons of *Game of Thrones* Joffrey's appearance is particularly worth noting. Joffrey is, especially following his ascension to the throne, continually in regal attire and sometimes equipped with a sword and/or armor as if he were about to head into war. On the surface, his appearance provides an intense impression of manliness, vitality, and strength. However, his actions show an entirely different type of character. Thus, there is an apparent juxtaposition between Joffrey's portrayal, in terms of appearance, and his behavior that defines his true identity. Furthermore, the actor who plays Joffrey, Jack Gleeson, is young, short and has a wiry figure. Thus, the representation presented by the writers and directors of *Game of*

Thrones provides another facet of Joffrey's juxtaposition. This contrast augments Joffrey's distasteful character and provides a stronger negative portrayal of the king.

In *Game of Thrones* Joffrey's strong and royal portrayal through his attire and mannerisms contrasts harshly with his childish, manipulative, and sadistic behavior. In the second episode of the first season, entitled "Kingsroad," the young prince is in battle-like armor and equipped with a large sword when escorting Sansa Stark, his betrothed on a walk. During the walk, Joffrey is in a way talking down to her, sarcastically calling her "my lady" continually and occasionally offering wine. It is evident through Sansa's overall mannerisms and the ways in which she is talking to him, that she is completely enamored by his superficial prestige and appearance. At the end of their walk, they run into Sansa's sister Arya sparring with "the butcher's boy" using sticks. Before approaching Arya and her unexceptional sparring partner, Joffrey says to Sansa "don't worry you are safe with me" to show off and seem tough. After "the butcher's boy" states that he wants to be a knight, Joffrey talks jeeringly towards him and cuts the "butcher's boy" with his real sword, as opposed to the stick "the butchers's boy" is wielding. Arya hits Joffrey and before the young prince can kill the girl with his sword, Arya's direwolf jumps on him and bites his arm. Joffrey pleads and cries, exclaiming that he would "get" Arya and her direwolf. Following the scene by the river, Arya is brought before her father and Joffrey's father, the king. During this trial-like scene, Joffrey pleads like a child, lying to King Robert about what occurred. Furthermore, Joffrey is quite secondary in the scene showing no vitality or strength as a prince, allowing his mother, Cersei, to defend his fabrication of the truth incessantly. The scene concludes with Sansa herself lying for Joffrey instead of defending her sister, her own family member. Joffrey's actions show

his impotence and his childish behavior as well as the control his prestigious appearance can have. Sansa's actions are evidence of Joffrey's manipulation and how his outward appearance is not indicative of his true character.

Another instance in which Joffrey's outward appearance exudes strength but his actions prove otherwise is in season 2 episode 9 titled "Blackwater" when the forces of Stannis Baratheon are attempting to storm the Red Keep and overthrow King Joffrey. In the scene in which Joffrey is preparing for battle, Sansa is ordered to see him off into battle. As Sansa enters the throne room, Joffrey is being suited with heavy armor that is in the colors of House Lannister. Furthermore, he tells Sansa that he has had a new sword constructed for the battle, that he has called it "Heart eater" and commands her to kiss the blade. When she does kiss it, Joffrey has a look of pleasure and satisfaction on his face. Before proceeding to the battlefield, Joffrey swanks about the upcoming battle and the victory his army will experience. In the proceeding scene, Joffrey is escorted to the battlefield with his personal guard, the Kingsguard, and the Hound, his personal bodyguard. Although, he "talked a big game" to Sansa, no type of guard leaves his side during the battle, nor does Joffrey make it to the field of battle itself. Furthermore, Joffrey questions his uncle's orders showing his lack of military experience and personal immaturity. In his final act during the battle, Joffrey is cowardly escorted away from the battlefield to his mother's side, while all of his armies watch as their King abandons them. In this scene Joffrey, equipped with "heart eater" and extremely large armor, is continually guarded by two sets of guards and eventually escorted back to the Red Keep to be with his mother. It is evident more so through this scene that Joffrey's appearance

sharply contrasts with his actions, thereby augmenting his cowardly and immature nature as a character of the series.

Sadism

Joffrey's nature and overall persona can be characterized as one of savage nature. Particularly after he ascends to the throne, it becomes extremely clear to the viewer that Joffrey takes satisfaction in his cruel actions and behavior. While it is not clear that Joffrey takes sexual pleasure from his horrid deeds, the young king has several chances to engage in traditional sexual acts, refuses, and on at least one occasion prefers torture over sex. Thus, the way in which Joffrey is portrayed in the series can be associated with sadism. His sadistic nature is evident through his actions throughout the series that include the physical and mental torture of those around him, an unappreciation and lack of understanding of modesty, and the lack of grieving at his death by his extended family. In this section Joffrey's sadistic nature via cruel behavior and the manner in which he treats his constituents is discussed. The portrayal of Joffrey as king in *Game of Thrones* is defined by sadism.

In the third episode of the first season, Joffrey's mother Cersei is tending to his wound inflicted by Arya Stark's direwolf in the episode prior. As she is cleaning the wound, Cersei begins to explain that Joffrey is a warrior just like his father. Cersei does not specify whom she is talking about, but it is inferred that she is talking about Robert Baratheon. Joffrey immediately retorts and says that he is not like him, with a look of disgust on his face. Whether or not Joffrey is truly disgusted with his father or realizes his true parentage in Jamie Lannister, Cersei's twin brother and known to be one of the best swordsmen in Westeros, is unclear. However, as the scene continues Cersei begins to

bolsters the prince's ego by stating that he fought off the direwolf like a true warrior, even though he did not. This statement brings up the conflict between Sansa/Arya and Joffrey from the prior episode with the boy stating that he does not want to marry Sansa. Cersei says that Joffrey has to for politics' sake and that if he does not like her, he only has to see her on formal occasions. "If you want to fuck painted whores, then you will fuck painted whores...the world will be exactly what you want it to be" (Cersei Lannister, *Game of Thrones*, S1E03). This scene, although not representative of Joffrey's nature, provides insight into the prince's train of thought. From an early age he is told lies to prop up his confidence. Furthermore, he is, in essence, told by his mother that he can do whatever he wants to and that the world around him will be however he decides it to be.

In the last two episodes of season 1, Ned Stark, Arya's father, is killed at the hands of Joffrey. Prior to the scene that depicts Ned's trial, Joffrey agrees with Sansa and Cersei, that if Ned "bends the knee" and confirms that Joffrey is the true ruler then he will give Ned an honorable trial and send him to the wall to serve on the Night's Watch having been stripped of all of his titles and lands. During Ned's trial, Joffrey is standing above everyone else adorned with a regal-looking tunic in Lannister house colors. Ned is presented to Joffrey bound by the wrists and on his knees. After Ned confirms that Joffrey is the true king and the rightful heir to the Iron Throne, a look of extreme satisfaction comes across Joffrey's face. Joffrey's pleasure is due to that fact that the king knows this is not how Ned feels and that the pain he has caused Sansa through his own manipulation has worked. When it is time to give Ned his judgment, Joffrey acknowledges Sansa's pleas for mercy on her father and explains that Cersei would have

Ned renounce all his titles and serve out his sentence with the Night's Watch. Following his explanation, he states "but they have the soft hearts of women" and commands Ser Illyn Payne to behead Ned with his own sword. As Sansa begins to cry and plea for her father's life, Cersei, Joffrey's own mother, attempts to stop Joffrey. However, the young snickering king does not stop and allows for Ned to be beheaded, all the while smiling and looking around at his family and his constituents. This scene is completely representative of Joffrey's cruel nature and the satisfaction that he takes from other people's pain. Cersei's reaction to Joffrey's command to behead Ned Stark in this scene augments the King's sadism as a character.

In Season 2 Episode 4, titled "Garden of Bones", Joffrey's sadistic nature hits an all-time high when he punishes his wife-to-be, Sansa Stark, for her brother's victory against Lannister armies and tortures two prostitutes. In the beginning of the episode Joffrey has Sansa kneeling in the throne room, screaming at her about the recent Stark victories in the north against Lannister armies while he points her crossbow at her. As an aside, it is important to note that Joffrey's crossbow, a weapon that can fatally hurt someone, in this scene is completely gold. The decadence of his weapon of choice supplements his sadistic and barbaric personality. Following his command of her to answer "for his [her brother, Robb Stark] treasons," Joffrey orders one of his Kingsguard to beat her. After threatening to have his guard kill her, Joffrey says "leave her face, I like her pretty." While all of this is happening the Small Council, which is a group of people who work closely to advise the King, and a sizable crowd is gathered watching this all happen. It is clear that the public humiliation and torture of the young girl is extremely satisfactory to him and that he take pleasure through her own pain. Joffrey's uncle,

Tyrion Lannister, comes to her aid and escorts her out of the throne room. After having a handmaiden accompany the beaten Sansa to her room in the castle, the scene turns to Tyrion and his personal guardsman, Bronn, chatting about Joffrey and his “issues.” The two men, although crass in the way the talk about the matter, come to the conclusion that Joffrey is sexually frustrated. Tyrion’s idea of treatment for Joffrey’s sexual frustration is to send two prostitutes to his room as a name-day or birthday present. Several scenes later in the episode, Joffrey enters his room at night to find the two prostitutes that were sent by his uncle. Clearly unsure of what to do or uninterested in the matter, Joffrey shrugs off the first prostitute who tries to touch him when he enters the room. When they explain that they will do anything, the King backs away, takes off his belt and tells the two prostitutes to touch each other. After only several seconds Joffrey asks, “Could you hit her?” The first thought that pops up in Joffrey’s mind is if whether or not one girl could hit the other. After the prostitute nods, Joffrey hands the prostitute his belt. As she begins to lightly hit the other girl, Joffrey gets closer to watch and is clearly unhappy with the current rate at which the prostitute is being hit. He tells her to hit the other girl harder but it is still not enough for what Joffrey wants. The young sadistic King then grabs the girl quipped with his belt by the throat and tells her in a stern way to hit her harder. Both prostitutes are clearly unhappy and uncomfortable at what is happening. Following a considerable period of one prostitute being mercilessly struck by the other with a leather belt at Joffrey’s command, the King grabs a small pike that is smooth on one side and adorned with the antlers of the Baratheon stag on the other. He hands the pike to the prostitute previously with the belt, winds up his crossbow, points his crossbow threateningly at both women, and instructs the woman with the pike to sodomize the

other prostitute using the horned side. Joffrey watches, smiling as the younger prostitute is tortured by his own command, thereby fulfilling the King's sadistic desires. This episode as a whole is the most indicative of Joffrey's sadism. He relentlessly tortures those closest to him, such as his betrothed, in a mentally and physically debilitating manner without any remorse. Furthermore, this episode is an explicit portrayal of a king who, is uninterested in sexual pleasure even when the opportunity is unambiguously in front of him. Joffrey prefers to seek pleasure through the suffering of others even if it may result in death. Although it is not the culmination or the climax of his character's savage nature, these scenes shows Joffrey's true monstrous nature.

The example listed above show the evolution of Joffrey's character from a prince being told that he can do whatever he pleases to a king whose fury knows no bounds for reasons that can only be derived from gathering pleasure from other's pain. The portrayal of King Joffrey in *Game of Thrones* is one that is defined by grotesque deeds that resemble a leader of Westeros who either has a psychological problem or is too immature to understand how a true king should act. Beyond the reason behind Joffrey's barbarous nature, it is clear to see the qualities of the *Game of Thrones* character are extremely similar to those of the Roman Emperor, Caligula.

Treatment of Regal Duties

In the early seasons of *Game of Thrones*, Joffrey is a young prince who is only expected to do what his family tells him, particularly in the political arena of Westeros. The only task that has any meaning, in terms of politics, is his marriage to Sansa. However, throughout the series his immature actions and behavior prove that he does not consider his duties as King of Westeros a priority. Throughout the entirety of the series

Joffrey is completely negligent of his political duties and demonstrates an overall disrespect to those who truly “rule” Westeros. Although a minor point relative to his false façade of prestige and sadistic nature, Joffrey’s attitude towards politics and ruling is one of ill-treatment and augments his already established immaturity.

In episode 3 of season 1, Cersei Lannister, Joffrey’s mother, is tending to a wound the young prince sustained from Arya Stark’s direwolf when he states that he does not want to marry his betrothed. Prior to this episode, Joffrey’s father, King Robert Baratheon, agrees with Ned Stark to marry Sansa, Ned’s daughter, to Joffrey as a political alliance between the North and the South. This proposed marriage is rather ideal in terms of politics due to the sheer size of the North and its cult-like population that sometimes exclusively follows the Stark family as “Kings of the North.” Thus, if Joffrey and Sansa were to marry, the North and the South of Westeros could truly be seen as aligned as one in union. When Joffrey complains that he does not want to marry Sansa, Cersei says that he must due to politics. It is clear Joffrey cannot recognize the importance of the marriage and what it would mean for peace amongst the kingdoms. As the conversation continues Cersei asks what Joffrey would do as king, in terms of handling relations with the North. Joffrey replies that he would double the North’s taxes and killing Northern brethren in the name of the King, in effect destroying the North. This scene shows that even prior to his ascension to the throne that at a young age, Joffrey is extremely tyrannical, unpopular, and immature. Joffrey’s immaturity is resembled in his lack of understanding the importance of his marriage to Sansa and his approach to kingship. Joffrey in this scene treats his future duties as an immature tyrant who has no concern for Westeros, but rather for his own personal vendettas.

In the final episode of season 1, entitled “Fire and Blood”, Joffrey for the first time since gaining power as King of Westeros holds royal court. During this time people come to either plea for the King to do something for them, to sing his praises or are brought in front of the court for a crime or offense they have committed against the crown. In this episode, a man is brought forward to sing a song about the Baratheon family. The song, however, is one of satire and recounts Robert’s demise as well as Cersei’s controlling nature. Following the song, Joffrey jeeringly claps at the man and then asks “Tell me, which do you favor? Your fingers or your tongue?” (Joffrey Baratheon, *Game of Thrones*, S01E10). After the man answers, Joffrey, truly showing his savage nature, has the man’s tongue cut out. Subsequent to that, Joffrey stands from his throne, removes his crown and walks back to his quarters. His treatment of the songstress, although a degree perhaps overboard, is not too abnormal even for an average king. What is important to note in this scene is that Joffrey’s first royal court appearance, where he can spread his political policy and improve his constituent’s perspective on him, is defined by a sole contribution of punishment. From this scene we can gather that Joffrey’s approach to his regal and political duties is inadequate as well as childish. He solely contributes pain and suffering driven by revenge in his royal court and then retires soon after.

Joffrey Baratheon as a primary character in the HBO series *Game of Thrones* is portrayed as falsely powerful, sadistic, and immature. His character evolves throughout the series and changes immensely when he ascends to the throne at the end of the first season. His appearance, mannerisms, and the way he carries himself comes off as extremely manly and powerful. However, his look is juxtaposed with his actions, which

show his true character. When arriving for the battle on the Blackwater in season 2 he arrives equipped with extremely heavy armor ready for the conflict, yet he never touches the battlefield and retreats to the Red Keep before the conclusion of the battle. Joffrey as a sadist, throughout the four seasons of *Game of Thrones*, is extremely evident. The king gains pleasure from others' pain and suffering. His sadism knows no bounds as he tortures his family members and those who are closest to him. Furthermore, he prefers inflicting physical pain and torture on people to sexual pleasure. In a scene where Joffrey is sent two prostitutes, he tortures one woman to death due to sodomy with a pike. Instead of giddily enjoying the two young women like any typical young king would, he nearly kills one of them. Furthermore, as evident through his actions, Joffrey treats his duties as a real, admirable king would. At his first chance to show what kind of king he is, he maims a man by cutting out his tongue. In another scene he is traveling through the city when the mob begins to throw rocks at him because he has not introduced food programs for those of the less fortunate. Instead of doing something about it, he orders his guards to move faster so that he may get into the castle quicker. Altogether, Joffrey's appearance provides an experienced and powerful self that is intensely contrasted with his actions. He suffers from sadism and gains all of his pleasure from the affliction of pain onto others. Lastly, he is ignorant of his kingly duties and immature as the leader and protector of the realm.

IV. Conclusion

King Joffrey Baratheon of the hit HBO TV Series *Game of Thrones* is similar to the ancient Roman Emperor Caligula. Both characters are described as monstrous from a young age and derive personal pleasure from torture and the pain of others. Caligula was

known for putting people to death for unknown reasons, while Joffrey enjoyed mentally and physically debilitating people, even those who were closest to him. Furthermore, Caligula often dressed up in armor that would have been known to be worn by a general who was experiencing a triumph. However, Caligula did nothing to deserve a triumph. Similarly, Joffrey Baratheon is continually portrayed throughout the series often wearing battle armor when there is no battle he will enter or carrying a large sword even though the young man is without any military experience. The two leaders of their respective realms also treated their duties as nothing short of a joke. Caligula used his powers as Roman Emperor to torment people around him, to satiate his sexual desires, and to deify himself in the eyes of his constituents. Joffrey on the other hand used his powers to, in effect, make Westeros his playhouse. He tortured and killed whomever he wanted, created statues of himself conquering enemies yet he had no active hand in it, and had a decadent wedding in his name with more food ingested than the amount of food he ever provided the poor. Lastly, Caligula and Joffrey both have extremely public deaths for the same reason that each leader, in a way, upset powerful and wealthy. More importantly, however, both were unfit leaders and were killed because of it. It is natural to see that the George R.R. Martin as well as the HBO series writers, David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, derived the character of Joffrey from the ancient Roman Emperor Caligula. Although there are numerous amounts of similarities between the two figures, it is more important to note the differences. The differences between the two men are what truly augment Joffrey as a character in *Game of Thrones*.

Unlike Caligula, Joffrey has no sexual desire whatsoever. Caligula was known to indulge openly with prostitutes as well as his own family members relentlessly. Joffrey

however, is a true and explicit sadist in that he experiences his ultimate pleasure from other's pain. Furthermore, Joffrey has plenty of chances to indulge in sexual pleasure yet he does not. When his second betrothed, after Sansa Stark, visits him in a one on one situation where she is clearly attracted to him, he instead shows her his crossbow. This difference in Joffrey is portrayed perhaps to further separate the character from the audience. The average human being has sexual desire and portraying a major character without it makes the young king less personable. It is as if the audience is meant to hate him. Another important difference is the venue in which Caligula and Joffrey die. They both die similarly in public in front of their families, however at different events. Caligula is slain by the Praetorian Guard during the games of Divine Augustus while attempting to instruct the actors performing. Alternatively, Joffrey is poisoned at his wedding feast with a glass of wine. The difference here is that Joffrey is at an extremely personal and monumental event in his life when he is murdered. Although his personal guard does not murder him, intimate noble peoples who formally supported him kill him. Furthermore, while Caligula's family was torn to see him killed, the only two people who rush to his aid are Cersei and Jamie Lannister, his incestuous parents. The difference here is to augment the hatred felt for Joffrey and to show how much of a monster he truly is. In short, Joffrey's death is a triumph for fans because of how easily it was to hate him through his portrayal throughout the series. Through the primary and secondary sources that provide a horrid image of the Roman Emperor Caligula, similarities are easily drawn to the portrayal of King Joffrey Baratheon in *Game of Thrones*. However, the differences between the two figures expand the monstrous nature of Joffrey.

Chapter 2

Julius Caesar and Jon Snow

I. Introduction

Gaius Julius Caesar was assassinated on the Ides of March, March 15, in 44 BC as the result of a conspiracy led by Gaius Cassius Longinus and Marcus Junius Brutus. Years before, Julius Caesar along with Marcus Licinius Crassus and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus formed the First Triumvirate as the three leading men of the Roman Republic. Following the death of Marcus Licinius Crassus, Caesar's relationship with Pompey the Great began to break down at a rapid pace. As the two most powerful politicians and Roman Statesman at the time, the degradation of the former political pact began a civil war between the two generals. Following Julius Caesar's victory at the Battle of Pharsalus, Pompey fled to Egypt where he and his family were assassinated. After Pompey's death, the Senate began heaping honors upon Caesar including one-year dictator and another consulship. Upon his return to Rome, he was appointed dictator once more for a 10-year period, named "Father to the Country," and *imperator*. Although historians list several different reasons, Caesar was assassinated for acting for what he believed in the most, the Republic. From his standpoint, everything he was doing was in order to preserve the Roman Republic. However, the conspirators and assassins viewed Caesar's actions as him attempting to become king. Ironically, the consequences of Caesar's death led to the beginnings of the Roman Empire.

In Episode 2 of Season 5, the assumed bastard of Eddard Stark, Jon Snow, is voted in and becomes the youngest Lord Commander of the Night's Watch to command the Wall. Further along in the season, Jon makes the tough decision to instead of fight, to embrace the Free People, also known as the Wildlings, who previously lived North of the

Wall. This action is the first of its kind. No Lord Commander of the Night's Watch has ever allowed or been defeated by the Wildlings when defending the Wall. However, Jon is the first. Jon believes that the only way to battle the Whitewalkers, also known as the Others, is to decrease the "meat" for their army. Thus, to embrace the Wildlings would be to increase the armies of the living that will fight the Whitewalkers once "winter comes." Furthermore, Jon's previous experiences with the Wildlings allows for him as Lord Commander to view them as people, rather than just savages. Keeping these two aspects in mind, Jon decides to allow the Wildlings who were previously defeated by the Night's watch to pledge their fealty to the crown and remain south of the Wall. Furthermore, Jon agrees to sail further north to a Wildling stronghold to save more of them and bring them back, south of the Wall. Jon's large acceptance of the Free People is highly disagreed by several of the top ranking officers in the Night's Watch and those brothers whose families were murdered by the Wildlings. Jon in his mind is doing what is right by his own moral compass and contributing to the prosperity of the realm. As Lord Commander, Jon believes that he is protecting not only the North but also the entirety of Westeros by accepting the Wildlings as citizens and actual human beings. In doing so, Jon encourages a coup against him and his own brothers assassinate the youngest Lord Commander with a sign behind him that has "traitor" written on it.

Like Jon Snow, Julius Caesar is killed by his fellow Senators and politicians who previously approved and supported him. In the eyes of the Senate and Caesar's conspirators, Caesar is destroying and betraying the Republic by acting like a king. The other brothers of the Night's Watch do not agree with Jon's belief that he is saving the realm by accepting the Wildlings south of the wall. Instead, Jon's conspirators believe he

is betraying the Night's Watch and the King of Westeros. This section argues that there are plenty of similarities between Jon Snow's and Julius Caesar's deaths and the differences chosen by the writers of the HBO series augmented Snow's overall story.

II. Our Two Victims

*Julius Caesar*¹¹

Julius Caesar, born Gaius Julius Caesar, is one of the most well-renowned and well-known figures in Ancient Roman society. Celebrated as a general and statesman, his most notable achievements include the victory of the Civil War against Pompey the Great and becoming Dictator of Rome. Born in July 100 BCE, the once-revered ruler died via assassination on March 15, 44 BCE also known as the Ides of March.

After the first triumvirate, composed of Gaius Julius Caesar, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus and Marcus Licinius Crassus, was formed, the majority of political power in Rome was concentrated between these three men. To further solidify the political alliance, Pompey married Caesar's only child, Julia. Following the official formation of the Triumvirate through political pact and marriage, Julius Caesar quickly left to conquer the rest of Gaul. During his campaign, Caesar met huge success thereby greatly increasing his power in the grand scheme of Ancient Roman politics. Although to not such a degree, Pompey also found success through grain and land legislation in Rome and several conquests in the Eastern regions of the Roman Republic. However, only a few years after the formation of the First Triumvirate in Rome, struggles and jealousy ensued within the political alliance. Pompey became jealous of Caesar's immense success

¹¹ General background information from Julius Caesar's life is attained from Encyclopedia Britannica Online and Biography.com

and growth in not only wealth but also political Prowess, while Crassus jealous of Pompey's prestige within the Roman capital. Furthermore, as an aside, Crassus at this point, in a sense, feels irrelevant and inactive within the political alliance. Following the death of Crassus during a campaign in Mesopotamia and the death of Julia, the effective First Triumvirate of the Roman Republic was dissolved. Pompey no longer had any reason to be allied with Caesar and with the younger statesman's power and armies growing, Caesar had no reason to be allied with Pompey. Furthermore, due to the renewal of his proconsulship in Gaul, the Senate had no legislative or technical means to remove Caesar from power. The attempts that were made to remove him from power by the Senate were vetoed by the then Tribune of the Plebs on one occasion by Mark Antony, or Marcus Antonius, and on another by Gaius Curio. Several inconsistent demands were made by the reigning consuls originally to have Caesar lay down his commands, then Pompey and then both lay down the command of their colossal armies simultaneously. Instead however, the Senate and reigning Consuls at the time empowered Pompey with all of the Italian forces in addition to his enormous army. What ensues are the Civil Wars between Pompey supported by his army of united Italians and Julius Caesar supported by his remaining forces in Gaul. Caesar's act of war is marked by his crossing the river Rubicon that separates Gaul and Italy. Although neither general approved of fighting a war and preferred more to work for peace, the separation that had occurred between the Senate and Caesar along with the upper class or *optimates* and Caesar was so intense that war was deemed the most viable option. After crossing the river Rubicon, Caesar drove Pompey's forces out of Italy towards Greece. Caesar followed Pompey's retreating forces where the soon to be dictator won a decisive victory at Pharsalus in August of 48 BCE.

Following Caesar's victory, the general returned to Rome, received several honors and also passed legislation concerning public works and citizenship. In Suetonius' *Life of Caesar's*, the author primarily focuses on the honors that were placed upon Julius Caesar and the honors he accepted, however, he also provides the legislation that Caesar enacted as well.

Then turning to the reorganization of the state, he reformed the calendar...he filled the vacancies in the senate...he shared the elections with the people on the basis: that except in the case of the consulship, half of the magistrates should be appointed by the people's choice...He administered justice with utmost conscientiousness and strictness

Suetonius, *Life of the Caesars*, Julius Caesar 41.1-43.1

He accepts excessive honours, such as uninterrupted consulship...the surname of Father of his country...in the meantime holding no elections except for tribunes and plebian aediles and appointing praefects instead of praetors, to manage the affairs of the city during his absence

Suetonius, *Life of the Caesars*, Julius Caesar 76.1-2¹²

Through Suetonius' writing it is evident that Caesar accepted honors and declared triumphs in his own name but also worked as dictator to include more of the Roman population in government. While one may connect this back to his opposition to the *optimates* or the conservatives at the time, Caesar's actions in his own belief were to better the Roman Republic.

In Appian's *The Histories*, the writing expresses similar tones however, is more focused on the honors that were placed upon Caesar. Appian also mentions that his honors are intricate in the sense that they are not for conquering a foreign enemy but rather a domestic one. Furthermore, the Senate as a character like in Suetonius, is not

¹² All translation of Suetonius are from Bill Thayer, University of Chicago

embodied by an intense anti-Caesar nature. In fact, Appian states more than once that Caesar was in no way attempting to become the “King” of Rome.

I am not King, I am Caesar
Appian, *The Histories*, 108.1¹³

In Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*, a much more critical version of Caesar is presented. Plutarch’s Caesar is impious and has deathly hatred applied to him throughout the writings.

There was added to these causes of offence his insult to the tribunes... The experiment having thus failed, Caesar rose from his seat, after ordering the wreath to be carried up to the Capitol; but then his statutes were seen to have been decked with royal diadems
Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, 61.1-8¹⁴

Although, the three Caesars that are presented through the primary sources vary in degree of justness and decadence alike, an overarching message is found. Caesar was not a proponent of Civil War between him and Pompey. It is noted in Appian’s text that Caesar, left statues of Pompey untouched and those that had fallen, Caesar re-erected. Furthermore, in his own mind, Caesar was performing actions that would reinstall the former prestige of the old Republic, such as including more people in the government. The goal of his actions was to remedy the extreme hierarchical nature of Roman politics that had been formed, particularly representative through the political factions of the *populares* and the *optimates*. To be able to accomplish this goal, Caesar would have to fully embrace his role as Dictator. Unfortunately, this ultimately led to Caesar’s demise

¹³ All translations from Appian are from Loeb Classical Library

¹⁴ All translations from Plutarch are from Loeb Classical Library

because to the Senate, Caesar's actions were representative of the Kings who formerly ruled Rome, prior to the Republic.

Although each of the primary sources differ in their accounts, this study considers a mixture of the three. On the Ides of March, Caesar entered the Senate and upon his entrance was greeted. Much of the Senate rose in his honor or lauded him with respect as a fellow Roman statesman, politician and friend. After Caesar settled into his seat, the conspirators congregated around him. Then Tillius Cimber and Casca initiated the act of violence toward Caesar, with Tillius ripping his toga down and Casca delivering the first stab while the other conspirators stood with their daggers concealed. Then the onslaught commenced with Brutus, a former political ally of Caesar's, delivering the final blow. Each of the primary source accounts differ in this regard. Suetonius claims that Caesar says in Greek "You too, my child?" when Brutus approached the dictator to stab him. However, Plutarch and Appian write similarly in saying that at the point when Brutus approaches, Caesar stops fighting for his life and allows for it to happen, finally pulling his toga over his head. Finally, Appian and Plutarch both include that Caesar is killed at the foot of Pompey the Great's statue. As mentioned previously, the three primary sources differ in the retelling of the assassination of Julius Caesar. However, it is clear that Caesar, in the eyes of the Senate is a traitor to the Republic rather than a savior. Caesar embodies the opposite of what the earliest Romans fought for. Instead of instilling old Republican values to ensure the prosperity, the Senate sees Caesar's actions as those of a tyrant. Alternatively, Caesar was doing what he truly believed in, which was the preservation of the Roman Republic. Like Marius before him, Caesar was ready to rid Roman society of decadence and include the entirety of the people. Although the means

by which he attempted to accomplish this were not favorable to the majority of the Roman Republic Senate, Julius Caesar died for trying to accomplish what he believed to be the “greater good”.

Jon Snow

The second victim examined in this study is Jon Snow, the bastard son of Eddard Stark who is Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North. Although heavily theorized by fans, Jon’s supposed mother has never truly been revealed. In the very first episode of Game of Thrones, it is noticeable that Jon is treated differently by his step-mother Lady Catelyn Stark (nee Tully). However, Jon has a deep, intimate connection to his older step-brother Robb and his younger step-sister Arya. He is also close with his uncle Benjen Stark who is the younger brother of Eddard. In the first episode of the first season, Jon explains to his uncle Benjen that he has been thinking of joining the Brotherhood of the Night’s Watch, of which his Uncle Benjen is a part. The Brotherhood of the Night’s Watch is a military order that guards, maintains, and holds the Wall, which separates Westeros or the Seven Kingdoms from the northern lands. The northern lands are known to be inhabited by savage people, giants and monstrous creatures. To put in a classical sense, the Wall in Game of Thrones can be equated to the Roman Emperor Hadrian’s wall, which was built to separate Roman provinces from the Britannic “savages.” When describing his train of thought to join the Night’s Watch to his Uncle Benjen he emphasizes the idea that no one’s past, family, or nobility matters. Every Brother of the Night’s Watch is equal and even those who may see odd in the Seven Kingdoms can achieve greatness in rank and in their own right whilst serving on the Wall. In the second episode of the first season, Jon departs Winterfell, his home, to join the Night’s Watch.

After arriving, experiencing extensive training, and taking his oath, to his dismay Jon is assigned to be the steward of the then Lord Commander of the Night's Watch Jeor Mormont. Although disappointed he was not assigned to be a Ranger like his Uncle Benjen originally was, Jon finds out later in the first season that he was chosen to be steward because Lord Commander Mormont feels that Jon would make a great future Lord Commander. Thus, Jon is being bred to achieve the highest rank in the Brotherhood.

In the second season, several hundred brothers of the Night's Watch travel north beyond the wall to search for Jon's Uncle Benjen and to survey any future potential threats. Furthermore, there has been word that Wildling tribes are allying themselves to form a massive army and march south to take the Wall. When Lord Commander Mormont decides to head back to the wall, one of his most leading Rangers, Qhorin Halfhand, suggests that a small group of Rangers stay beyond the wall for an extended period of time to gather more information about the Wildlings and their enlarging army. To clarify, Wildlings are the people who live north of the Wall. Some are human beings just like those who live south of the wall and others are fictional creatures such as giants. The Wildlings are also known as the Free Folk due to the fact they are not loyal and do not serve any king like those who live south of the Wall. Lord Commander Mormont grants Halfhand a small band of brothers from the Night's Watch to continue their search for intelligence on the Free Folk. At this point in the episode (Season 2 Episode 5) Jon requests to join Halfhand's small group of brothers. Originally, due to Jon's status as Steward, Lord Commander Mormont does not allow for this to happen. However, Jon retorts by saying that there is a possibility that his Uncle Benjen was taken by Wildlings, thus he feels rather obligated to join Halfhand's group of brothers. After some

consideration, Lord Commander Mormont allows for Jon to continue his journeys with Halfhand's men to learn more about the Wildlings, their united army, and the potential whereabouts of his Uncle.

In the following episode, Jon and the rest of the members of Qhorin Halfhand's brothers run into a group of four wildlings. After killing three of the Wildlings, Jon subdues one, allowing Qhorin to question their new captive. The captive is a red-headed Wildling named Ygritte. After questioning her for a brief time, Qhorin decides that she must die. Just before unleashing his sword to execute Ygritte, Jon steps in and says he will do it. The others walk away as Jon readies himself to execute her. When he finally swings down, he hits the rock just next to her head and spares her life. Believing he did the right thing, Jon then has his legs kicked out from under him by Ygritte, as she runs away from him still bound. Realizing he has made a mistake, Jon quickly tries to remedy it by sprinting after Ygritte to capture her. Finally, Jon recaptures Ygritte but has been largely separated from Qhorin and the other brothers, as nightfall approaches. Since Wildlings hunt at night, the two make camp but must lay next to each other for warmth. This is the first connection that Jon makes with the Wildlings, as people.

The next day Jon and Ygritte set off further into the north to find Qhorin and the others when an argument ensues. Although it starts as a petty argument over the oath of chastity that all brothers of the Night's Watch must take it turns into one that may mark the point in which Jon begins to view the Free Folk as more than savage people. In the scene, Jon states that Wildlings have been raiding "our" lands just over the wall for hundreds of years, that his own brother was attacked by Wildlings, and there has always been conflict between the Night's Watch and the Free Folk. Ygritte responds by saying

that the only reason those things happen is because “Southern Lords like you” put up a wall and claimed the territory. Ygritte goes on to state that she has the blood of the First Men in her veins and has as much a claim as Jon Snow does. Jon then states that he also has the blood of the First Men, as do most people throughout Westeros, particularly the North. Before walking away from him Ygritte emphatically asks “So why we fighting then?” This argument is a turning point for Jon Snow and allows for him to begin to realize that the Free Folk, other than living on the other side the Wall, are people just like him.

Following their quarrel, she trips him and runs away. By the time he finds her, he is surrounded by a large group of Wildlings and finds out that Qhorin has been captured as well. Although acting as a double agent to gain more information about the Wildling army, Jon strengthens his connection with the Wildlings when he kills Qhorin Halfhand and pledges allegiance to Mance Rayder, the King-Beyond-the-Wall. Through the rest of Season 2 and up until Episode 9 of Season 3, Jon eats, sleeps and drinks like and with the Wildlings. Furthermore, his relationship with Ygritte becomes quite intimate and they eventually have sexual intercourse in a cave. The cave scene, which is in Season 3 Episode 5, is pivotal. As the scene develops further, it is evident that Jon and Ygritte love each other. The scene concludes with Ygritte stating that she never wants to leave this cave. This scene and Jon’s deep established connection with the Wildlings provides reason for why he thinks of the Free Folk as equals. Furthermore, through his journeys with the Wildling army, Jon understands the true reason for why all of the tribes have joined together: to live once winter comes. Winter will bring the Whitewalkers and the army of the undead. The Wildlings as an entire peoples will be hit by the armies of the

undead. Thus, it is revealed to Jon that the Free Folk, just like any other sort of persons who live south of the Wall, are fighting for survival.

After climbing the Wall with the Wildlings, defecting, and escaping from a fight with the group of Free Folk he was traveling with including the girl he loved, Ygritte, Jon Snow returns to the Wall and the Night's Watch. Although, he has broken his vow of chastity and slew a brother of the Night's Watch, Jon is allowed to remain a brother. He provides the Night's Watch with valuable information about the upcoming war that will occur with the Wildlings, from his experiences in season 2 and 3. Unbeknownst to Jon, while he was away with the Free Folk, the former Lord Commander, Jeor Mormont, was slain through mutiny. Thus, a vote for who will become the new Lord Commander occurs in the beginning of season 5. Although Jon originally was not a favorite for the vote, but his sacrifices, knowledge of what is to come, and leadership ability contribute to the former bastard of Winterfell being voted in as the youngest Lord Commander in history. However, prior to his ascension to Lord Commander, Jon and the Night's Watch successfully defended the Wall against all odds in a battle against the united Wildling army. Some Wildlings flee to Hardhome, a Free Folk village north of the Wall, while the Night's Watch holds other Wildlings as prisoners of war. Thus, as Lord Commander Jon must make a vital decision to kill the Wildlings present at the wall or allow them to settle somewhere south of the Wall. Furthermore, through Jon's close connection with Mance Rayder and Tormund Giantsbane he is informed that there are thousands of Wildlings at Hardhome who in the near future are fated with death due to the approaching army of the undead. Jon, as Lord Commander, makes the decision to sail with brothers of the Night's Watch and some of his former Wildling companions to Hardhome to rescue him. In Jon's

eyes the Free Folk at Hardhome are equals and would only prove to be fodder for Whitewalkers, thereby growing the army of the undead. Jon sails to Hardhome and saves thousands of Free Folk, allowing them to find solace south of the Wall. In the concluding minutes of the final episode of season 5 entitled “Mother’s Mercy”, Jon is alerted that it looks as if his Uncle Benjen, who has been gone for a lengthy period of time now, is approaching the Wall. Enthused by this news Jon races into the courtyard of Castle Black where a group of his brothers are standing around a torch hinged to a post, the only light in the courtyard. As he approaches, the crowd spreads to allow the Lord Commander to see his supposed Uncle. What he sees instead is a sign with the word “traitor” written on it. After reading the sign, Jon turns around and is stabbed several times by his brothers with each saying “For the Watch” as they dig their blades into his body. Jon is assassinated by his brothers and former supporters for allowing thousands of Wildlings, people with whom the Night’s Watch have been fighting to keep out of the relative south, to come through the Wall for safety. In the eyes of Lord Commander Jon Snow he is doing what he believes is right and what is good for the realm. Yet the means by which he executed it, represented a betrayal in the eyes of his brothers and those what he thought to be friends.

III. The Scenery, the Assassins, and the Cause

The Scenery

In both assassinations it is important to consider the scenery in which they occur. For Julius Caesar, his death occurred in the Theatre of Pompey the Great at the base of a statue¹⁵ for which the theatre was named. The Theatre of Pompey was an addition to the

¹⁵ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 66.1-7

Senate building and was occasionally used for formal Senate meetings. The Senate however, was also a place in which Julius Caesar made his name. Prior to Caesar being named *dictator perpetuo* or dictator in perpetuity, simply dictator for life, Caesar made his name in the Senate buildings as a young orator and politician. After his father's death and due to his connection to Marius, a young Caesar struggled to return to Rome due to Lucius Cornelius Sulla's regime of supremacy within Rome. Thus, for Caesar, the Senate in a way represented the culmination and rejuvenation of his family within ancient Roman society. Alternatively, Jon Snow was murdered by his fellow brothers of the Night's Watch at the foot of a sign with the words 'traitor' written upon it in the courtyard of Castle Black. For Jon Snow, Castle Black was his new home away from his old. As a bastard and illegitimate son of the Warden of the North, Jon is seen acting rather awkward around his step-brothers, step-sisters and particularly his step-mother. Furthermore, his last name, Snow, already separates him from the rest of his step-family, thus it is evident that Jon would feel uncomfortable at Winterfell, which has been the home of the Stark family for centuries. Thus, similar to Caesar's culmination and rejuvenation in the Senate, Castle Black, the home of the Night's Watch, served as Jon's first true home and a place where he could be treated as an equal. In terms of scenery and locale of assassinations there are plenty of similarities between the two. Nevertheless, the differences are what supplements and augments each death.

The similarities in the scenery for both assassinations is evident and primarily concerning the significance of each. Julius Caesar's rise to dictator was not immediate nor was it hereditary. Around the same time Julius Caesar experienced his coming of age, Lucius Cornelius Sulla defeated both Gaius Marius and Gaius Marius the Younger in

what was known as the Social Wars. In the aftermath, Lucius Cornelius Sulla, more commonly known as Sulla, became dictator, stripped Caesar of his priesthood, and committed other atrocities to Caesar's family for being formerly allied with Marius. It is evident that early on, Caesar was destined to be a politician, particularly due to his patrician status, yet at his first chance it is swiped away from him by an unlawful tyrant. In ancient Roman Society to ascend the social and political ladder experience in military or politics was a necessity. Thus, Caesar joined the Roman military where as a soldier and general he succeeded to a great degree. After gaining some military experience abroad and Sulla meeting his end, Caesar returned to Rome to pursue his political career. However, being stripped of his original political position and at the disgrace of his family Caesar began a career in orating and lived in a poorer region of Rome, as reported by Suetonius. It is evident from his political career and familial career that the Senate served as a beacon for Julius Caesar to guide his career. Following his return to Rome, Caesar served Pontifex Maximus, Praetor, Proprætor, Proconsul, Consul and eventually Dictator. The Senate, which is representative of the governing and overseeing branch of the Roman state, is what drove Caesar to define himself throughout his career. In a sense it is what defined him. Similarly, Castle Black is what transformed Jon Snow from the bastard of Winterfell to the youngest Lord Commander in the history of Westeros. Furthermore, Jon Snow's ascension to the highest position possible at Castle Black is echoed through Caesar's ascension, as well. Castle Black, like the Senate, served as a beacon for Jon Snow to not only succeed and make a name for himself but to redefine his understood role as a bastard. Therefore, both the Senate and Castle Black can be

personified as redeemers for both Julius Caesar and Jon Snow, respectively. Ironically, however both places, which serve to define both men, also serve as their place of death.

Another similarity that is worth noting is the figure or object under which both men are killed. According to both Appian¹⁶ and Plutarch, Caesar is stabbed by the band of assailants at the foot of the statue of Pompey the Great. Jon Snow, on the other hand, is stabbed by his fellow Brothers of the Night's Watch in front of and eventually dies at the foot of a sign marked 'traitor.' For Julius Caesar, the ironic detail that Appian and Plutarch include in the versions of his death, can be assimilated to betrayal as well. Caesar's struggle and Civil War with Pompey the Great allowed for him to ascend to the highest role possible in the *cursus honorum* of ancient Roman Republican society. However, this vital detail indicative of Caesar's success, like the senate, betrays him and leads to his death. Jon Snow is killed at the foot of a sign with the word 'traitor' after he successfully defeats the Wildlings but then saves thousands of them for what he believes to be the good of the Realm. What in some eyes would be considered a huge success denotes Jon to be a 'traitor.' For both men, they are killed in front of what, in some eyes provides their success.

While the similarities of the locations of the two deaths are worth noting, the differences provide a more intense meaning. Castle Black for Jon served as an outlet for him to differentiate himself from a bastard, while the Senate provided a means for Caesar's life. Through this detail one can see that a more positive spin can be put on Jon Snow's life relative to Caesar's. Jon was not part of the patrician class like Caesar was and Castle Black is viewed by many in the *Game of Thrones* universe as a bad thing.

¹⁶ Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 2.117

Rapists, murderers and thieves are sent to Castle Black to serve on the Wall rather than a death sentence. The Senate, in the society of the Roman Republic, is not only a place that holds prowess and prestige, it is representative of a branch of Roman government. The differentiation in the two may speak to the notoriety of each death. This is evident in the most recent season of *Game of Thrones* when even the then Warden of the North, Roose Bolton, is not aware of Jon Snow's death. Although it is easy to assimilate each location of both assassinations in similarities, the difference provides a magnified overall view of both Julius Caesar and Jon Snow's death.

The Assassins

The next point to further examine, with respect to our two characters, is the participants in the murder or the assassins who killed Julius Caesar and Jon Snow. On the Ides of March, Julius Caesar was killed in the Amphitheatre of Pompey in the Senate by his fellow Senators. Although the number of participants varies throughout different primary sources it seems that Caesar was stabbed a total of 23 times. According to the ancient historian Eutropius¹⁷, there were more than 60 conspirators while other ancient sources state there were almost 200 Senators in the Senate that day who participated in the assassination of the then Dictator. Nonetheless, it is concretely established that Caesar was stabbed 23 separate times. Prior to the conspirators executing their plan to kill the dictator, one of the conspirators distracted Marcus Antonius, more commonly known as Marc Antony and a loyal supporter to Julius Caesar. Once inside, the Senators Cimber and Casca initiated the assassination by pulling back his toga and dealing the first knife

¹⁷ Eutropius, *Abridgement of Roman History*, 6.25

wound. At these actions, as Suetonius writes, Caesar says “Why, this violence”¹⁸ and Plutarch says that Caesar stated in Latin “Casca, you villain what are you doing?.” After the inception of his assassination, the remaining conspirators surrounded Julius Caesar and continued their assault. The final blow was dealt by Marcus Junius Brutus the Younger or more simply referred to due to his fame, Brutus. Following the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great, Brutus was in a sense taken under Caesar’s wing. Julius Caesar first forgave Brutus following the Civil War because he had supported Pompey the Great. Following his forgiveness, Caesar helped to support and further Brutus’ political career. Thus, for Brutus to deliver the final blow to the dying dictator was an extreme surprise. It is most famous in William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, the dictator said “Et, tu Brute?” meaning “and you too Brutus?.” However, Plutarch¹⁹ and Appian²⁰ both write that Caesar said nothing. Suetonius, on the other hand, does speculate in his writings that Caesar said “you too, child?”, with the idea being that Caesar is so shocked that even Brutus, a man who the dictator helped, is betraying him. What is of the utmost importance in Caesar’s narrative, with respect to who killed him, is that these Senators at one or another time supported him. This is evident in the act of making Caesar *dictator perpetuo* or dictator in perpetuity. Furthermore, many of these Senators supported Caesar’s rise to power and were considered part of his inner circle and to be friends. This degree of betrayal adds an extra layer to Caesar’s assassination as an event. Lastly, in a particular political context, Brutus can be considered an apprentice.

¹⁸ Suetonius, *The Lives of Caesar*, The Life of Julius Caesar, 82.1

¹⁹ Plutarch, *Caesar*, 66.1-13

²⁰ Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 2.117

Therefore, an apprentice striking the final knife wound and in effect, finally killing Caesar after a lengthy struggle is a point worth noting.

The nature of the assassins who participated in the death of Jon Snow is very similar to those in the death of Julius Caesar. After defeating the Wildlings at The Battle at the Wall, Lord Commander Jon Snow was faced with a hard choice on whether or not to allow the Wildlings south of the Wall or let them stay beyond the Wall to become fodder for the Others. The Others, as mentioned earlier, are the Whitewalkers and the Army of the Undead and once killed, Whitewalkers can resurrect the dead, in a sense to become zombies to fight in their Army. If Jon had allowed for the Free People to remain beyond the Wall, the entirety of them most likely would have been slaughtered, thereby adding hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the Army of the Undead. Instead, Jon not only allowed for all of the conquered Wildlings to come through the wall and either face judgment or kneel to the king, he also organized a journey to an established Wildling stronghold to rescue them. The deliberation, rather arguing, prior to the rescue primarily concerned the idea of the first Lord Commander bringing Wildlings south of the Wall. For centuries people of the north of Westeros along with the Night's Watch have battle the Free People who live north of the Wall. Thus, it is unprecedented for a leader of the Brotherhood of the Night's Watch to allow this. Many senior and more conservative members of the Night's Watch are against Jon, some of whom he has saved in battle or called friends. In the final episode of Season 5 of *Game of Thrones*, Jon is called to the courtyard because supposedly his Uncle Benjen, who has been missing since the first season of the TV-Series, has returned. The conspirators goading Jon into coming to the courtyard hit a chord in Jon's character. Jon values the Watch and his Brothers but like

many of the Starks throughout the show, values family the most. Once he reaches the Courtyard, Ser Allister Thorne, one of the most senior members of the Night's Watch and brother who said he supported his commandship, turns him around and stabs him first. The reason he turns him around is because when Jon reaches the courtyard of Castle Black, he does not find his Uncle but rather a sign with the word 'traitor' on it. Several members of the Watch have now surrounded him, they each begin to stab him one after another, with each Brother saying "For the Watch" after their respective incision. The final wound was executed by Olly, a young boy of the Night's Watch who Jon had grown to train and become a mentor to. Just like the others, Olly exclaims "For the Watch", before Jon falls to the ground beneath the sign 'traitor.'

There are two significant similarities that stand out in the assassins or executors of each of our character's deaths. The first is the most plain that both the Senate and fellow brothers of the Night's Watch were once supporters and friends to Julius Caesar and Jon Snow, respectively. The Senate, although not keen on Caesar's actions following the Civil Wars with Pompey the Great, supported Julius Caesar in numerous undertakings of his. The Senate chose and sent Julius Caesar to conquer the Gauls in modern day France, which was a continual problem for ancient Rome throughout its history. Furthermore, the Senate allowed and in some cases promoted the formation and actions of the First Triumvirate. In many ways the conspirators were friends of Julius Caesar. Although they believed he was betraying the Roman Republic by echoing the actions of the Roman Monarchs, the conspirators betrayed Julius Caesar. Similarly, Jon Snow was betrayed by those he fought alongside and took oaths with. Furthermore, the process to become Lord Commander of the Night's Watch is completely democratic. Thus, when Jon was elected

as the youngest Lord Commander in the history of the Night's Watch, political and social support was echoed throughout the Brotherhood. Jon Snow and Julius Caesar were killed by friends, in some cases family, and those who politically supported both characters.

The second significant similarity is the association of Brutus to Olly. Both Julius Caesar and Jon Snow acted as mentors to these people, yet in the end they betrayed them. On the surface, it is clear to see a similarity between Brutus and Olly because they both delivered the final strikes to our victims. However, both Jon and Caesar have intimate and for Caesar also political relationships with the two assassins. As mentioned above, Caesar, speculatively, says "and you my child" implying that this conspiracy is so serious that what he believed to be his own kin would participate. In *Game of Thrones*, Jon acts as a mentor and an older brother to Olly, who joined the watch because his family had been killed by Wildlings. During the assassination of Jon Snow, Olly, as mentioned, is the last of the murderers. When Olly steps up to "finish him off," Jon looks up with some pain in his expression but briefly grins when he sees the boy's face. This, in effect, is Jon's "Et tu Brute" or "you too, my child." Jon protected this boy during a war and served almost as an older brother to him, therefore this moment during his assassination is Jon's way of saying "and you too Olly?."

While there are two similarities, this study's focus on the differences is what provides insight into the examination of ancient Rome and the HBO-series *Game of Thrones*. The largest difference is the closeness and intimacy Jon has to his brothers and the bond they share. While Julius Caesar shares a bond with fellow Senators in their devotion to Rome, the oath that is taken and the daily closeness in living quarters that the men of the Night's Watch participate in is on a higher level. As a brother of the Night's

Watch, one is truly a brother to other Watchmen wearing black next to them. They sleep, eat, fight, and train altogether as well as depend on each other in a psychological way.

The only way out of the Night's Watch is through death. The ways out of the Senatorial class are few but mostly depend on monetary net worth. Thus, there is a deeper sense of community that echoes a bonded fraternity. Therefore, the gravity and meaning behind the death of Jon Snow is augmented because it is not only at the hands of assassins but also his Brothers with whom he swore an oath with and lived with for years.

The Cause

Each of our characters were assassinated for much different reasons. Julius Caesar in the eyes of the Senate, the upper class of Rome and as a whole the majority of the Republic, felt as if he had too much power and would not ever relinquish it back to the state. If this were to have happened Caesar, in effect, could be considered the king of Rome, a title that had not been bestowed upon a person since the Monarchy period of ancient Rome. To any Roman citizen the idea of a king was blasphemous considering that the last king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus or Tarquin the Proud, was an oppressing tyrant. In *Game of Thrones*, Jon Snow was assassinated because he allowed thousands of Wildlings or Free Folk through the Wall to settle as people of Westeros. After defeating the Wildlings in the Battle at the Wall with the help of Stannis Baratheon, Jon Snow felt it just to allow those Wildlings who would live civilly to be allowed to live south of the Wall, protected from the Whitewalkers and the Army of the Dead. Furthermore, Jon's train of thought was that if these people, were protected by the Wall they would not die thereby not adding to the size of the Army of the Undead. Lastly, in seasons 2 and 3 of the show, Jon served the Night's Watch as a double agent by acting undercover as one of

the Wildlings. Through his experience Jon made an intimate connection with the Free Folk and even fell in love with one. Due to this established connection Jon viewed the Wildlings not as barbarians nor as a savage people but as a people who, just like any Westerosi citizen, were trying to survive, protect and flourish as a community. Jon's humanization of the Wildlings added a facet to his decision to allow them to come through the Wall and live. However, in the centuries of the existence of the Night's Watch, no Lord Commander ever allowed this. Westerosi history showed that the brothers of the Night's Watch as well as the people of the north who lived near the Wall have always conflicted with the Wildlings in a violent manner. The primary reason for this conflict was the idea that all Wildlings were barbarians. The concept that all Wildlings were barbaric is echoed with many experienced and senior brothers of the Night's Watch throughout the TV-series. Thus, many members of the Night's Watch viewed Jon's actions as not only traitorous to the traditions of the Night's Watch but also a betrayal to Westeros as well. The view that Jon's actions of betrayal are the primary reason for his assassination. This is representative in the final scene of Season 5 Episode 10 entitled *Mother's Mercy*, when Jon is assassinated in front of a sign that is labeled 'traitor.' The cause for his death is also evident through the words that each conspirator said when stabbing Jon: "For the Watch". When considering the cause for each of our character's deaths, it is the similarities from the point of view of each victim that is worth noting rather than the differences.

All of our primary sources, including Suetonius²¹, Appian²² and Plutarch²³, agree that Julius Caesar did in fact embrace some sorts of king-like behaviors. The first is

²¹ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, The Life of Julius Caesar, 49.3

evident on the surface, the Senate elected Caesar ‘dictator for life.’ This title in meaning can be associated with one claiming supreme and absolute political power just as a king would. However, this superficial aspect is not enough to label Caesar as king-like because the Senate, who beyond advising, does have the power to appoint a Roman citizen dictator, which they did in the case of Julius Caesar. To fully examine Caesar’s king-like behavior this study must look elsewhere. Firstly, it is noted by our primary sources that Caesar would frequently wear the laurel wreath in public and adorn his clothing with the royal colors of red or purple as well. During the times of the Roman Republic, the laurel wreath was usually only worn during triumphs, when a conquering general would parade through Rome with his troops on white horses or in a chariot led by white horses. Thus, if Caesar were to continually wear the laurel wreath in daily life then it conveys a message to the Roman people that he is the perpetual conqueror of Rome itself. Furthermore, wearing the royal colors evokes the time of the kings, which would literally infer that Caesar is the king of Rome.

In the case of Jon Snow, his actions go against centuries of history. Growing up in the north at Castle Winterfell as a bastard of a noble family like House Stark, Jon is knowledgeable of the history of the north. More simply, Jon is aware of the continual conflict experienced by northern families and the Night’s Watch with Wildlings. Therefore, in some eyes, like the veteran members of the Night’s Watch, such as Ser Allister Thorne, Jon’s action to allow Wildlings to settle south of the Wall is an act of betrayal. Furthermore, one of the youngest members of the Night’s Watch, Olly, saw in one of the first episodes of Season 5 his mother and father brutally slain by Wildlings.

²² Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 2.84

²³ Plutarch, *The Life of Caesar*, 61.5

Olly was also told by one of the Wildlings during the siege of his village that he, the Wildling, would “eat his mama and his papa.” Thus, the friction and strife between the Free Folk and those who live south of the Wall is evident throughout the TV-series. Considering this, Jon’s actions can indefinitely be thought of as traitorous.

The similarities from the perspective of our victims is more important, however, to consider when examining the death of Julius Caesar and Jon Snow. Following his victory against Pompey the Great, Julius Caesar openly accepted the title of dictator for life from the Senate of Rome. However, as noted by Plutarch²⁴, Caesar never called himself king, in fact on one occasion Caesar stated that he is just Caesar, not a king. Furthermore, unlike the dictator before him, Sulla, Caesar exercised no proscription lists that named certain Roman citizens as his enemies. During this time of the Republic, proscription lists usually led to either death or exile. Instead of exercising this practice, Caesar pardoned all of his enemies. Furthermore, upon returning to Rome, Caesar felt that the aristocracy and inequality in Roman society led to a dysfunctional government with no central power. Without a well-functioning and efficient government, the Roman Republic could not be sustained. Thus, Caesar welcoming the title of dictator for life was to readjust and remedy the problems ancient Roman society had endured during the late Republic. In Caesar’s eyes his actions were in an attempt to restore the traditions of early Rome and the Roman Republic as a whole. This is evident through his constitutional reform which was to restore centralized power in the Roman government, cure the warring provinces of the Roman Republic and unite Rome as one. Thus, from the perspective of Caesar he was doing the “right thing” by taking supreme power over the

²⁴ Plutarch, *The Life of Julius Caesar*, 60.3

Republic. Similarly, Jon Snow, through his sincere connection with the Wildlings and realization of the wars to come with the Whitewalkers and the Army of the Undead, the then Lord Commander allowed thousands of Free Folk south of the Wall as a means to protect them. This is evident in Season 5 Episode 9, entitled “Hardhome”, when Jon along with several other brothers of the Night’s Watch sail to a Wildling community in hopes of bringing them south of the Wall. Jon’s intentions were to not only save a people’s whose purpose was to just live but also to protect the Wildlings and not provide any potential ammo for the Army of the Undead. In Jon’s mind the just and right action in this situation is to save these people who are not barbarians but humans from a deadly enemy and save Westeros from an enlarged Army of the Undead.

Thus, Julius Caesar and Jon Snow, from their perspectives were acting with valid reason. This similarity augments their assassinations and may even provide a more positive insight into both of their deaths. From each character’s point of view their actions were what was best for their own respective societies. Julius Caesar was concerned with the unraveling of the Republic and through his concentration of power he hoped to reestablish a society similar to the Early Roman Republic. To Jon Snow, his attempts to save the Wildling people and reduce any potential future soldiers of the Army of the Undead were so that Westeros and the Realm could face an enemy they knew better. Considering these aspects relative to the cause of each of their assassinations, both Jon Snow and Julius Caesar’s deaths could be viewed as unjust.

IV. Conclusion

As part of the entirety of this study, this chapter examines the similarities and differences between the assassinations of the Roman general, statesman and dictator

Julius Caesar and the Lord Commander of the Night's Watch Jon Snow. The first section provides a brief introduction of both of victims and establishes what facets of each death are examined. Following the introduction, a more in depth description of Julius Caesar and Jon Snow including their early lives, careers, and the events leading up to each of their deaths. The third section of this chapter delves into the main concepts in which Julius Caesar and Jon Snow's assassination are investigated. These concepts include the scenery in which both victims are assassinated, the identity of the assassins, and finally the cause for which each man is murdered. Julius Caesar is murdered in the Senate in front of the statue of Pompey the Great, while Jon Snow is assassinated in front of a sign with the label 'traitor' written on it in the courtyard of Castle Black. Both the Senate and Castle Black serve as beacons of hope, achievement, and differentiation in each victims respective lives. However, as locales of their own death they become personified as traitors presenting an irony because each man is killed for traitorous deeds. Furthermore, Julius Caesar is killed by his fellow Senators, one being a political apprentice of his, and those who formerly supported the dictator. Jon Snow is killed by his fellow Brother's of the Night's Watch including Olly, who Jon's mentored and treated as his younger brother. The one vital difference in the two groups of assassins is the seriousness in which Jon's conspirators are. Jon's assassins, who are also his Brother's, took an oath and lived together with him since he was a steward to when he was the youngest Lord Commander in the history of Westeros. Essentially, the Night's Watch is Jon's family thereby adding an even more intense element to his death. Finally, the most vital facet of this portion of our examination is the cause for which Jon and Caesar are assassinated.

Although each cause is different in their own respect, both character's die for what they truly believe is just and right.

Conclusion

King Joffrey and the Roman Emperor Caligula are similar in character and actions. Throughout their youth lives and regal rule, both figures are savage in nature and obtain pleasure from inflicting pain on others. Through an examination of the primary and secondary sources, it is evident that Caligula haphazardly hurt his constituents and even members of his own family. Furthermore, Caligula was a sexual deviant and enjoyed perverted and sometimes incestuous sexual acts. Similarly, throughout the *Game of Thrones* series Joffrey continually tortured people in a physical and mental manner. For example, Joffrey physically tortured and killed two prostitutes in an episode during the third season. Furthermore, he mentally abused his first fiancée, Sansa Stark. In one instance, Joffrey forces Sansa to stare at the severed head of her late father, Ned Stark and in another he mocked and screamed at her in a public setting for the actions of her brother. Joffrey and Caligula also both falsely portrayed themselves to the public thereby presenting a façade to those around them as conquering heroes. Caligula on several occasions experienced triumphs in Rome for which he did not deserve but rather put on as an event to demonstrate his power as emperor. Joffrey, on the other hand, in several episodes adorned himself with regal looking armor in his house colors and even had a Valyrian sword named “Hearteater.” Although providing a manly and war-experienced exterior, Joffrey’s actions defined him as a boyish, sadistic and cowardly king. Lastly, both rulers of their respective dominions mistreated their regal duties and proved to be ill fitting for their roles. Joffrey’s lack of sexual deviance and immaturity, in comparison to the Emperor Caligula, augmented the negative portrayal of the late king.

The assassination of Julius Caesar and Jon Snow is extremely similar in terms of the place in which both deaths occurred. Both Castle Black and the Senate of Rome serve as a beacon for Jon Snow and Julius Caesar to redefine them and prosper in their own right. However, being the locale for which both men are killed, the scenery in a way serves as traitors to both of our victims. The assassins are close to and former supporters of both Julius Caesar and Jon Snow. Although this serves as a similarity for their deaths, the fact that the brothers of the Night's Watch took oaths with Jon Snow to serve adds a degree of seriousness to the Lord Commander's death. The cause for both figures assassination is not similar however, Julius Caesar and Jon Snow were acting from their own perspective to better the Roman Republic and the Realm alike.

The similarities and differences described in the two sections of this thesis provide a framework to see how ancient Roman events and figures inspire the *Game of Thrones* series. Altogether, the in-depth examination of Caligula as well as the assassination of Julius Caesar supplement and augment the *Game of Thrones* aspects of this study.

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