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EDWARD CHAMPLIN

Seianus Augustus

*Sed quid
turba Remi? Sequitur fortunam, ut semper, et odit
damnatos. Idem populus, si Nortia Tusco
favisset, si oppressa foret segura senectus
principis, hac ipsa Seianum diceret hora
Augustum.*¹

I. Is there a more colorless villain in Roman history than Lucius Aelius Seianus? Demonized after his headlong fall and horrific death in the autumn of 31, he is reduced by our sources to a paper-thin figure, a monster with but one feature, his boundless, all-consuming lust for power. *Sejanus, His Fall*: such is the title both of Ben Jonson's well-known play first performed in 1603, and of what is easily the best modern introduction to the whole matter of Sejanus, Professor A. R. BIRLEY's paper published in 2007.² In the aftermath, relatives, friends, and associates followed him to the grave, but then came the ultimate historical indignity: he disappeared into the history books. That is, with the single brilliant exception of a long passage in Juvenal's 10th satire, posterity lost interest. Sejanus did not become a general exemplum for the vanity of power, the mutability of fortune, the inevitability of retribution, nor was any sub-

¹ Juv. 10. 72–77: «But what of Remus' mob? They are followers of Fortune, as always, and hate those who are condemned. This same crowd, if Nortia had supported her Etruscan, if the aged emperor had been smothered off his guard, would be hailing Sejanus as Augustus this very moment.» (Loeb translation, S. M. BRAUND, modified)

Except as otherwise indicated, I use what I believe to be the best available English translations of the works of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio, viz.: WOODMAN 2004, HURLEY 2011, CARY 1924.

This paper was first delivered at a symposium held in December of 2007, to honor the retirement of Professor T. D. BARNES from the University of Toronto. I am grateful for the invaluable remarks of TONY BIRLEY, BOB KASTER, TONY WOODMAN, and my teacher TIM BARNES.

² Soon after delivering the first version of the present paper, I received a copy of Professor BIRLEY's essay, which is referred to below, *passim*. Readers will note that while covering much of the same ground this paper is concerned to explain more Sejanus' rise than his fall. Jonson's play includes several long translations of passages from Tacitus into good English blank verse.

sequent villain compared with him.³ Modern historical scholarship has compounded the injury by confining itself largely to the questions that interested Tacitus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio: intense speculation about factional strife at Rome, from AD 20 onwards; extravagant conjecture about the nature and extent of Sejanus' conspiracy against Tiberius (if it occurred at all); and bewildering reconstruction of his kinships by blood and marriage, kinships which were rendered particularly contentious by the publication of two precious but frustratingly lacunose inscriptions in the last century. In all of this, it is impossible to see just what is *interesting* about the man. Were the senate, knights, people, and armies of Rome held quiescent by fear and self-interest alone? And what of Tiberius Caesar? The First Citizen was notoriously a man of great intelligence, deep suspicions, and formidable culture. How could he, of all people, be enthralled by such a cipher, such a man without qualities? Sejanus is a mystery.

II. The familiar story is told quickly. His equestrian father, Seius Strabo, was prefect of Augustus' *praetorium*, his mother came of a senatorial family with close consular connections, and he had «brothers» who were actually consuls. When Tiberius acceded to sole power in 14 he made Sejanus joint prefect with Strabo, and the son soon became sole prefect when his father was transferred to Egypt, presumably in the year 15. We hear little about him in the first years of Tiberius' principate, when our narratives are dominated by Tiberius' tortured relations with Germanicus, his nephew and son by adoption. But Germanicus died mysteriously in 19. In 20 or 23 (the year is uncertain) Sejanus is first noted as markedly increasing his power through the concentration of the praetorian guard into a single camp on the outskirts of Rome. Previously they had been distributed in barracks throughout the city, and how actively they were employed we do not know, but this was considered a particularly sinister moment by Tacitus and later historians: at 10,000 men the praetorian guard was the only significant military force in Italy. Also in 23, Drusus Caesar, Tiberius' remaining son and no friend of Sejanus, died; long afterwards the prefect would be charged with arranging the young man's demise. It was then, in the tenth year of their association, that he allegedly began his drive to seduce and eventually to supplant the bereaved First Citizen.

The standard narrative of his drive to domination between 23 and 31 has three interwoven strands.

First, the corruption and destruction of Tiberius' relatives and their supporters. The initial step is to lure Drusus' wife into an affair. Drusus is done away with and

³ Recounting Sejanus' demise, Dio asserts in passing (58. 14. 1) that he had more power than any other prefect before or after him, with the exception of Plautianus – but the historian notably foregoes any comparison of the two men. He does reflect on the change of fortune, but it is the mutability of the crowd that concerns him: 58. 11. 1–3. LA PENNA 1980 makes the attractive but unprovable suggestion that Seneca's portrait of the usurper Lycus in the *Hercules Furens* is modeled on Sejanus.

then, gradually and systematically, the machiavellian Sejanus roots out opposition within Tiberius' family through the seduction, harassment, confinement, exile, and judicial murder of his nearest relatives, most notably of Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus, and of their two older sons, Nero and Drusus Caesar. And, likewise during the years after 23, Sejanus' sinister agents remove the adherents of Germanicus' family through a series of trials for treason and other crimes. These stories dominate our surviving narratives, but will be considered here only in passing.⁴

Second, the accumulation and dispensation of patronage on a massive scale. As early as 23, to judge by what we are told, the man acted as a *princeps* himself. Dio assures us that the leading men of the city, including the consuls, attended his *salutatio* at dawn in that year, both to submit private requests for transmission to Tiberius and to discuss public business; while at the end of his account of the year 28 Tacitus draws a vivid, Juvenalian caricature of senators, knights, and plebs laying siege to Sejanus in Campania, whenever he and Tiberius crossed over from their stronghold on Capri. They are spurned by him as «that filth in the forecourt», *foedum illud in propatulo*, but they lie in wait in fields or on the shore by night and by day, and fawn on his doorkeepers until turned away.⁵ Offices and honors are the prime pursuits. Tacitus assures us that in 23 Sejanus indulged in canvassing for senatorial office (for others) and bestowed honors and provinces on his clients. This is probably anachronistic, but by 28 the only way for a man to win the consulship was said to be through Sejanus. Juvenal likewise has him assigning curule chairs and armies, and examples of Sejanus' influence in promoting his adherents are scattered throughout the pages of Tacitus.⁶

But above all, third, there is the tightening grip on Tiberius himself, which gives his prefect the power to harm his enemies and to promote his supporters and his own interests. Allegedly Sejanus is the one who persuades the 66-year-old Princeps to withdraw from Rome in 26, never to return. And in that fateful year of 26, the year of Tiberius' withdrawal, Sejanus' remarkable good fortune intervenes.

As the pair move south toward Campania they stop at the grand and isolated imperial villa at Spelunca, on the coast about 75 miles south of Rome, below Terracina.⁷ There they dine in the splendidly appointed seaside cave for which the villa was named. In the course of the banquet a sudden rock fall crushes guests and servants to death. Soldiers rush to the rescue, to discover their prefect on his hands and knees,

⁴ HENNIG 1975, 41–67 neatly deflates Sejanus' role in the treason trials and as an enemy of Agrippina and her family before 26.

⁵ Dio 57. 21. 4; Tac. Ann. 4. 74. 3–4 (with the notes of MARTIN – WOODMAN 1989). Cf. Tac. Ann. 6. 8. 5, Sejanus' friend M. Terentius defending himself after the fall: «We paid homage to [Sejanus' cronies] Satrius and Pomponius; we even thought to be noticed by his freedmen and his doorkeepers, *ianitores*, a great honor.» A commonplace of the era: e.g., Colum. 1 pr. 9–10; Plut. Mor. 814D.

⁶ Tac. Ann. 4. 2. 3, 68. 2; Juv. 10. 91–92. For examples: MARTIN – WOODMAN 1989, 90, ad loc. cf. Dio on benefits bestowed: 58. 4. 1. HENNIG 1975, 101–121, on his followers.

⁷ Tac. Ann. 4. 59.

shielding his master with his body. From that moment on Tiberius trusts him absolutely, and in the following year the Princeps settles his headquarters on Capri.

Thereafter men begin to treat Sejanus in Rome as if he were already First Citizen himself, dismissing the reclusive Tiberius as a mere nesiarch, the lord of an island.⁸ Tacitus believes that it was the solitude of the island that attracted Tiberius, its lack of harbors and the ease with which his guards could control the few landing places. In retreat he could enjoy the mild climate, the beauty, and supposedly the secret vices which he had so long concealed. While he was resident in Rome Sejanus had already worked on his suspicious nature. Now, Tacitus suggests, the distance and the solitude made Sejanus' charges against his enemies even more plausible. The man who had saved his master's life at the risk of his own now worked to destroy his master's family and their friends. And whatever his influence had been before Tiberius' withdrawal from the capital, it was surely now, from 27 on, as the main conduit between Capri and Rome, that his power increased enormously, in terms of both the patronage exercised and the actual honors and offices accumulated for himself.

In 23, to the great annoyance of his son Drusus, Tiberius took to calling Sejanus his «Assistant in Command», *adiutor imperii*. But by 30 he has become his «Partner in Toil», *socius laborum*, «my Sejanus», «a part of my own body and soul».⁹ He is involved with and perhaps engaged to Tiberius' niece and former daughter-in-law. His images, along with those of Tiberius are displayed, sacrificed to, and even worshipped around the empire.

On January 31st, 31, Sejanus enters upon the consulship: henceforth the year will be known by his name, linked forever with that of his colleague, the long absent Tiberius Caesar. Since his accession in 14 Tiberius has held that office only twice, each time as colleague with one of his sons and heirs presumptive. Indeed in the last two or three years Tiberius has showered a vast and glittering and unprecedented array of honors on his Sejanus, culminating in the grant of proconsular imperium, perhaps after he has stepped down from the consulship on May 1st 31. Now, in the early autumn of that year, Sejanus looks forward to sharing the ultimate prize, the tribunician power, with Tiberius, which will give him the essential authority, the legitimacy, to run the republic. With that he will, in name as in fact, become co-ruler of the Roman world.

Dio's narrative of the events of October 18th, 31, is enthralling: swift, colorful with convincing detail, it surely transmits an eyewitness account. Tiberius has been playing a puzzling game of cat-and-mouse with Sejanus for some months, alternating praise,

⁸ Dio 58. 5. 1, with 58. 4. 1 (Xiphilinus). As Dio's source presumably knew, the reference may recall the flatterers of Demetrius Poliorcetes, who disparaged his rival monarchs with demeaning titles, among them «nesiarch» for Agathocles of Syracuse: Plut. Demet. 25, Mor. 823 C–D. There were also Ptolemaic officials called «nesiarchs» in the Aegean islands in the third century BC. In the unlikely event that Tiberius' detractors knew of them, TARN's summary is striking (TARN 1911, 151): «The nesiarch ... had no military authority and very little power; he was the Ptolemaic Resident.»

⁹ Dio 58. 4. 3, 9. *Socius laborum*: see n. 26 below.

rewards, and promises with puzzling checks and oblique snubs, but now the end is in sight.¹⁰ A letter has arrived from Capri, and its bearer, Sutorius Macro, assures the anxious Sejanus at dawn that he brings the tribunician power for him. Thrilled, Sejanus rushes into the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, where the senate now meets to confer the ultimate power on fortune's favorite. The senators cheer him wildly, and settle down to listen to the words of Tiberius. The epistle is rambling and verbose. The cheering dies down as they listen to irrelevant matters, interspersed with slight criticism of Sejanus. Increasingly puzzled, the senators grow nervous and men begin to move away from him, but he sits unconcerned by the triviality of the complaints, thinking each one no matter of great concern. The presiding consul summons him to step forward as the letter continues, but he ignores him, not out of contempt but because he is not accustomed to having orders addressed to him. The consul raises his voice, points at him, calls him a second and a third time. «Sejanus, come here.» «Me? You are calling me?» He stands up and the prefect of the night watch, acting on secret orders, comes to stand next to him.

The letter concludes ominously, with the request that two of his closest associates be punished and that Sejanus himself be held under guard. A firestorm of abuse erupts. Stunned, the great man is led out of the senate. A mob attacks him in the street, he is mocked and beaten and, most significantly, we are told that, «They hurled down, beat down and dragged down all of his images» before his eyes. Later that same day, encouraged by the anger of the people and by the conspicuous absence of his soldiers, the senate meets to condemn him, and he is executed. «His body was cast down the Steps [of Mourning, outside the prison], where the rabble abused it for three whole days and afterwards threw it into the river.»¹¹

We will never be able to reassemble the prefect's *disiecta membra* into a coherent biography.¹² His Fall is everything. The narratives of Tacitus and Dio are wholly confined to the monster's misdeeds, real or alleged, the deep intrigues, the crafty machinations, the subtle manipulation of his master: it is superficial, monotonous, and thoroughly distorted by the outcome. Any talents and accomplishments are lost or

¹⁰ Cat-and-mouse in 31 detailed at Dio 58. 6–8: conflicting health bulletins, praise and blame of Sejanus, honor and disgrace for his friends, priesthoods for Sejanus and his son along with Gaius (Caligula) but no summons to Campania and instructions to remain in Rome and expect Tiberius momentarily, immunity for a senator charged in court by Sejanus' cronies, naming of Sejanus without his titles in a letter to the senate, no sacrifices for living men, no honors for himself (putting Sejanus' honors in a bad light) – with the result that people began to avoid Sejanus. Then the final trick, spreading the rumor of the imminent grant of tribunician power while composing the damning letter and secretly appointing Macro prefect of the guard.

¹¹ 58. 11. 5. Abuse of the corpse: cf. Juv. 10. 85–86 (*curramus praecipites et / dum iacet in ripa, calcemus Caesaris hostem*); Val. Max. 9. 11. ext. 4 (*omni cum stirpe sua populi Romani viribus obtritus*); Sen. Tranq. anim. 11. 11 (*populus in frusta divisit ... ex eo nihil superfuit, quod carnifex traheret.*).

¹² Easily the best introduction is now BIRLEY 2007, offering a notable survey of «some modern views» at 129–134. HENNIG 1975 is sound and cautious.

subverted, goals and motivation remain controversial, personality is non-existent. The shock of October 18th was enormous: almost everyone was taken by surprise. But how did they perceive the man on October 17th, when he seemed poised to grasp a share of supreme power? «Do not think of Sejanus' last day, but of his sixteen years.»¹³

III. From the beginning he had *magna auctoritas* with Tiberius. Tiberius advanced him to *summa potentia*.¹⁴ Not formal, sanctioned *potestas*, but naked *potentia*: the phrase *summa potentia* is found in Suetonius, but Tacitus uses the simple noun *potentia* five times in connection with Sejanus and his schemes. What was the source and significance of this *potentia*, the brute power to do good or ill?

The age was tremendously uncertain, poised between two worlds, the dying republic and the nascent monarchy. Despite the anachronisms through which we express events, when Augustus died in 14 there was no «throne» to be behind, no «dynasty», no «court», certainly no «emperor» to «succeed», no «princes of the blood» or «heirs apparent». Indeed, there was no office of «praetorian prefect», if we think of it as it developed over the following centuries, with its later array of military, legal, and financial powers. There was a *princeps*, surrounded by his family, the *domus Caesarum*,

¹³ So Terentius, defending himself in 32, Tac. Ann. 6. 8. 5: *Ne, patres conscripti, ultimum Seiani diem sed sedecim annos cogitaveritis.*

I deliberately avoid here the nature and extent of his «conspiracy», and the long drawn out bloodbath of family, friends, and followers. Modern scholarship on the conspiracy is well summarized at BIRLEY 2007, 129–134. Much of it, however attractive, seems to be speculation often based on dubious assumptions. HENNIG 1975, 144–156 rightly concludes that there is no good evidence for any conspiracy. SYME's oft-repeated dictum (1958, 406) stands up well after fifty years: «the only plot that can safely be assumed and narrated is the plot devised and executed by Tiberius Caesar.»

The official treatment of Sejanus' memory is a puzzle. Pace VARNER 2004, 92–93, there was no *damnatio memoriae*, indeed the only «memory sanction» (the more accurate term) was the forbidding of mourning, part of a much longer senatorial decree (Dio 58. 12. 4–5 and 7–8 [not 12. 2]); only one inscription (the fragmentary CIL X 898) is known from which his name seems to have been removed and, significantly, the erasure not left blank but filled in with a longer version of Tiberius' title; and there are more than two coins from Bilbilis with his name removed – and an equal number from which it has not been removed (see n. 15, below). The meager evidence is correctly gathered and discussed at FLOWER 2006, 172–174, with notes. What must strike observers is that this was not a case of *damnatio memoriae* as the modern term is commonly understood: the brutal treatment of the man and his family is prominently recorded in the Fasti Ostienses and the mysterious speech from the Aventine; his name remains intact on three inscriptions commemorating freedmen at Rome (CIL VI 6030, 10769, 13532); he is simply ignored in the consular fasti; and his removal is referred to only vaguely and with great circumspection on three public inscriptions (ILS 157, 158, 159, Interamna, Gortyn, Capena). How to account for this unusual mixture? Perhaps the uncertain reaction reflects the horrifying suddenness of his fall, or even the power of his survivors. And how do we account for the fact that, despite the existence of all those thousands of statues, no one has identified a single portrait of the man whether intact, mutilated, or reworked, let alone a recognizable iconography?

¹⁴ Tac. Ann. 1. 24. 2; S 55; other references to his authority and his power at PIR² A 255.

which enjoyed certain public honors and privileges. The reluctant First Citizen, Tiberius, who held pre-emptive military *imperium*, employed a private agent, Sejanus, to direct his *praetorium*. For the last five years of his career that agent had the inestimable advantage of an absentee employer whose life he had saved, dramatically, and who trusted him implicitly. It is startling to recall that up until the last year of his life Sejanus held no official power at all. It was only after he had entered on the consulship on January 1st, 31, that it came with a rush: the consular *imperium*, followed by some form of proconsular *imperium*, and the hope for its partner, the *tribunicia potestas*, dangled before him by Tiberius Caesar.¹⁵ Indeed, Sejanus was not even a senator before he became consul. For sixteen years and more he was a knight in charge of the *praetorium*: *praetorii praefectus*.¹⁶

Of course before 31 the *potentia* of Sejanus lay in his proximity to, and control of access to, the *potestas* of Tiberius, but there are two important qualifications to its definition.

First, it is striking how little we hear of the Praetorian Guard in the narratives of the 20s and 30s. We may think of their commander as «the all-powerful praetorian prefect», and of course the soldiers were always a threat – the common source of Tacitus and Dio found their concentration into a single camp a particularly sinister step¹⁷ – but there is no record that Sejanus ever had *any* military career. He may have travelled with Gaius Caesar on his eastern tour between 1 BC and AD 4 (though that is mere conjecture) and he certainly accompanied Drusus Caesar to Pannonia in 14, but there is nothing about experience of either combat or command, no anecdotes, no praise, no blame. The guards are mostly absent from the tale of his machinations at Rome and, however much he cultivated them, they were remarkably quiescent at his fall. It was only after his death that they rioted, not because of their love for Sejanus but, we are told, because their loyalty had been suspected and the night watch had been preferred to them in suppressing him: if anything, this indignation suggests that they did not much care for their commander, at least in retrospect. As LAWRENCE KEPPIE observed, in these early days the prefects were not so much prefects of the praetorian cohorts as prefects of the headquarters: «Scholars should not therefore be surprised if

¹⁵ For the consulship, to the references in PIR, add AE 1953. 88 = 1969/1970. 233, (Juro-menha, Lusitania), dated January 21st, AD 31, with Sejanus' name as consul intact. The coins from Bilbilis naming Tiberius and him as consuls (why Bilbilis?), many of them with his name carefully chiseled off, are now conveniently available as RPC I. 398–399. (Mr. J. Geranio of Oakdale, California, informs me that a careful survey of sale catalogs over the last twenty-five years has turned up some 15 to 20 examples of these coins for sale, about half with the name intact and half erased.) *Imperium proconsulare*: Dio 58. 7. 4. *Spes tribuniciae potestatis*: Suet. Tib. 65. 1; Dio 58. 9. 2, 4, 10. 3.

¹⁶ The *ornamenta praetoria* granted in 20 (see below) did not confer senatorial rank. At some point in 31, Sejanus, his son, and Tiberius' grandson Gaius were made priests: Dio 58. 7. 4, 5; cf. Suet. Calig. 12. 1. Prefect: Tac. Ann. 1. 24. 2; cf. 6. 8. 2 and Dio 57. 19. 6.

¹⁷ Tac. Ann. 4. 2. 1; Dio 57. 19. 6.

they were not men of high military calibre; partly, even chiefly, the job was administrative. The prefects took charge of the administration of the *praetorium*, and were responsible for the emperor's security, whether he was in Rome or on campaign. In diplomas, the close link between the emperor and the cohorts is emphasized; the prefect is not mentioned. The cohort on duty at the Palatine looked to the emperor for the nightly password.»¹⁸ There is thus no reason at all to conceive of Sejanus as the bluff military man or the idolized commander, no reason to suppose that he was anything but an efficient administrator.

On the other hand, his position at the heart of the aristocracy has surely been undervalued. This is partly because of Tacitus' sneers about the municipal adulterer, the knight polluting the nobility of the *domus Caesarum* (an attitude not shared by Tiberius Caesar), and partly because of the prosopographical tangles and uncertainties in identifying his relatives by blood and marriage, questions raised by those problematic inscriptions and by the enigmatic description of his kin by Velleius Paterculus. But it should suffice to emphasize what Velleius tells us. On his mother's side he «embraced» – *complexum*: a notably vague term – ancient families which were distinguished by public honors, that is, senators and nobiles; and he had brothers, cousins, and an uncle who had reached the consulship: all of this information can be confirmed.¹⁹ His father, L. Seius Strabo, Velleius describes as a (or the) leader of the eques-

¹⁸ KEPPIE 1996, 120. – Sejanus and the praetorians: Dio 57. 19. 6, single camp; 58. 4. 2, Tiberius fears his hold over the praetorians, in AD 30; 58. 9. 2, 5, Macro appointed commander secretly, shows to praetorians guarding Sejanus and senate (!) letter from Tiberius giving him command and promising them rewards, and sends them back to camp; 58. 11. 4, emboldened by mob and by guards' absence, senators condemn Sejanus to death; 58. 12. 2, soldiers riot because suspected of good will to Sejanus and because upset night watch preferred to them; 58. 18. 26, Tiberius honors them with words and money, AD 32. Suet. Tib. 48. 2: 1,000 sesterces per man for not siding with Sejanus. Tac. Ann. 4. 2. 1–3, into single camp, Sejanus wins affections by familiarity and knowing names, appoints officers personally; 4. 59. 2, rescue Tiberius and Sejanus at Spelunca. Note that at Dio 57. 24. 5 Tiberius seems to be ordering the guard directly rather than through Sejanus.

Sejanus was a follower of Gaius Caesar (Tac. Ann. 4. 1. 2: *prima iuventa C. Caesarem, divi Augusti nepotem, sectatus*), and the two were probably contemporaries, but the common assumption that he was with him in the East is pure speculation (why does Tacitus not mention it?); and, even if he was with him, there is no need to assume that his role was military. In 14 he escorted Drusus Caesar to deal with the mutiny in Pannonia (1. 24. 20); praetorian cavalry accompanied them, but Sejanus' role was as *rector iuveni*, no fighting was involved, and indeed he plays no part at all in Tacitus' narrative. At Cons. Marc. 22. 5 Seneca calls him *perfidus miles*, but that is to make the rhetorical contrast with Pompey, the *maximus imperator*, whose theater Sejanus polluted with his own statue.

¹⁹ 2. 127. 3: *materno vero genere clarissimas veteresque et insignes honoribus complexum familias, habentem consulares fratres, consobrinos, avunculum*. I forego here close examination of the heated controversies over the identities and relationships of Sejanus' distinguished kin. SYME's discussion at SYME 1986, 300–312, with Table XXIII, is masterly; see also BIRLEY 2007, 123–126. Some of the conclusions at HENNIG 1975, 5–18 are debatable.

trian order, *princeps equestris ordinis*, an apt designation for one of Augustus' closest agents, prefect of his *praetorium*, and then prefect of Egypt under Tiberius, and husband in his second marriage of a great patrician lady.²⁰ And Sejanus himself was married to a woman of senatorial family; he himself may have adopted a son from another senatorial family; and he himself was surely adopted, most likely by another *princeps* of the equestrian order, a one-time prefect of Egypt.²¹ That is to say, whatever the precise identities of his kin, it is quite misconceived to assume that a municipal adulterer, a mere knight, controlled the aristocracy by fear and favor alone. In the stunned reaction to the letter from Tiberius on October 18th, 31, even as senators denounced Seja-

There can be no certainty, much is beyond recall, but the following seems a plausible minimum. (1) The distinguished families, ancient and notable for their honors, which Sejanus «embraced» through his maternal line, included Aelii Tiberones and Cassii Longini. (2) The consular brothers included half-brothers, Q. Aelius Tubero (consul 11 BC) and Sex. Aelius Catus (AD 4), and a brother (by adoption?), L. Seius Tubero (AD 18). (3) The consular maternal uncle is Q. Iunius Blaesus (AD 10), and one of the consular cousins is that man's son, also Q. Iunius Blaesus (AD 28). Velleius is studiously vague, not claiming actual descent from senatorial families, merely relationship with them.

²⁰ PIR² S 322. – Again, the following seems plausible. (1) Strabo came from Vulsinii: his son was born there (Tac. Ann. 4. 1. 2, 6. 8. 3; Juv. 10. 74) and he himself received a dedication there, CIL XI 2707. And he surely sprang from the local aristocracy, for two brothers, A. and L. Seius, sons of Aulus, are now attested as *curatores aquae* at Vulsinii under Augustus: CORBIER 1983, whence AE 1983. 395 (to be added to PIR²). (2) Strabo must be, as all would now agree, the prefect of Egypt whose name is lost on the fragmentary inscription from Vulsinii, CIL XI 7285 = ILS 8896, which has aroused so much speculation. That prefect dedicated a bath along with his mother Terentia A. f. and his wife Cosconia Gallitta, daughter of a Lentulus Maluginensis. (3) This Cosconia should be Sejanus' stepmother, and was presumably the sister of Ser. Cornelius Lentulus Maluginensis (*cos.* AD 10), from a grand patrician family. (4) Terentia A. f., who should be Sejanus' grandmother, may be a member of the old senatorial family of the Terentii Varrones and a sister of the wife of Maecenas (the conjecture of CICHORIUS 1904, which seems to be commonly accepted). But if that were so, how could Velleius have overlooked such lofty and direct connections which were so pertinent to his theme? Cf. PIR² A 102, rightly dubious. (5) Be that as it may, there is a strong case to be made for Strabo's father marrying a second time, into the lesser senatorial family of the Teidii, based on the compelling restoration of CIL I² 1328 by WISEMAN 1963. In sum, no direct senatorial connections on the paternal side (hence the silence of Velleius Paterculus), but still useful step-connections, taking in the patrician Cornelii and Sex. Teidius Valerius Catullus (*cos.* AD 31), not to mention all of *their* unknown relatives.

²¹ Again, plausibilities. (1) Sejanus' wife Apicata was surely a close relative, presumably a sister, of T. Apicatus Sabinus, *quaestor pro praetore* of Cyprus around the turn of the millennium: AE 1961. 9, 1994. 1756. The partial homonymity with Sejanus' acquaintance, the gourmand Apicius, on whom see below, is fortuitous. (2) Sejanus' son, Capito Aelianus, known only from the record of his execution in 31 in the *Fasti Ostienses*, is usually presumed to have been adopted by a senatorial Capito, but there is no certainty. (3) Sejanus himself, born the son of Seius Strabo, was surely adopted by a Lucius Aelius, hence becoming L. Aelius Seianus. The most likely candidate for the adoptive father is Aelius Gallus (*praenomen* unknown), prefect of Egypt in 24 BC, especially when we remember the mysterious Aelius Gallus who fled for his life after the execution of Sejanus, Tac. Ann. 5. 8.

nus, the consul in charge was still afraid to put anything to a general vote, let alone to propose execution. There might yet be opposition and uproar, «for,» says Dio, «he had many relatives and friends.» As RONALD SYME put it succinctly, «The «potentia» of Aelius Sejanus is intertwined about the very roots of the dynasty.»²²

Where he was brilliantly innovative was in the creation and development of an image to convey his power. As was recognized some time ago, from correspondences among our surviving authors, we can conclude, «that during the twenties Sejanus cultivated an «official image» of himself, modeled perhaps on Agrippa, the archetypal man of *labor* ... It was the image of an indispensable state servant, just the kind that the diffident Tiberius would appreciate.»²³

Twin virtues are the heart of the image. Tacitus disparages the man's *industria ac vigilantia*. Velleius praises his *labor* and the fact that he is *animo exsomnis*: in other words, just as in Tacitus, industry and vigilance. And this pairing of industry and vigilance crops up elsewhere, in words assigned by Tacitus to the two protagonists. Sejanus' success in containing the blaze at the Theater of Pompey in AD 22 is attributed *labore vigilantiaque*, apparently in a speech delivered by Tiberius to the senate. And in a letter addressed in 25 to Tiberius, begging for a marriage connection with him, Sejanus claims, in Tacitus' summation, that «he had never pleaded for the glitter of honors; he preferred lookouts and toils, *excubias ac labores*.»²⁴

A third quality is added to this constant industry and constant vigilance in the service of the state: the man's noble serenity, the grace with which he fulfils his duties. This is a virtue in Velleius but a mask in Tacitus.²⁵

Fourth, there is his becoming modesty, as incarnated in the refusal of rewards. Again a great virtue to Velleius: others estimated his worth far higher than he did himself. But Tacitus twists the knife in the letter seeking marriage with the widow of Drusus Caesar, by having Sejanus immodestly call attention to his own modest refusal.

In short, tireless industry and constant vigilance, wrapped in noble serenity and becoming modesty. The real, supreme reward for all of his service was the two new, unofficial titles created for him by Tiberius himself, bland and imposing, and in the best Augustan tradition of presenting new wine in old bottles: *adiutor imperii*, in circulation by the year 23, and superseded around 30 by advancement to the much superior *socius laborum*.²⁶

²² 1958, 384; Dio 58. 10. 8. Similarly Jos. Ant. Jud. 18. 181: many of the senators and the (imperial) freedmen supported Sejanus, and the army had been suborned.

²³ WOODMAN 1977, 252–253.

²⁴ Tac. Ann. 3. 72. 3, 4. 39. 2.

²⁵ Vel. 2. 127. 4: *vultu vitaeque tranquillum*. Tac. Ann. 4. 1: *palam compositus pudor*.

²⁶ The chronology has been muddled by Tacitus' great character sketch of Sejanus at Annals 4. 1–3. For the historian, 23 was to be the year of the momentous change in the reign, with Sejanus as the central villain. Therefore everything is packed in here, looking *both* backward and forward, although Sejanus had been a powerful figure at least since 14, and had been mentioned in

This extraordinary, indeed unique, position, is best appreciated not through actions but through images, not through Sejanus' alleged abuses of power, but through the progression of rewards, the honors and distinctions bestowed on him in the decade from 22 to 31:

– In 22, Tiberius praised him for limiting the damage caused by fire to the Theater of Pompey. The senate responded by voting him a statue at the theater, according to Tacitus; Dio adds (under 23) that it was of bronze and set up by Tiberius. The historian Cremutius Cordus, witty but unwise, remarked, «Now the theater is truly dead!» But many private citizens followed the senate's lead and erected statues, while the prefect was publicly praised by speakers before people and senate.²⁷

– In 28, for reasons unrecorded, the senate voted to erect an Altar of Clemency and an Altar of Friendship, with statues of Tiberius and Sejanus flanking each. The programmatic implications of these two virtues for the partners in power would be hard to miss. There is no record that the altars were ever dedicated but K. K. JEPPESEN has argued compellingly that the portly middle-aged figure standing in military garb to the left in the Grand Camée de France is none other than Sejanus himself. The man faces right. Central to the cameo is Tiberius seated as Jupiter, with his mother Livia sitting at his side. Both face left. Standing between the *princeps* and «Sejanus», and physically binding the two men together, is a female figure tentatively identified by JEPPESEN as *Amicitia*: that is, we may have precisely the concatenation of figures decreed by the senate in 28, the year to which JEPPESEN dates the cameo on other

the Annals earlier. Tacitus ends his sketch in 23 with Sejanus' image being worshipped throughout the empire – something that Dio suggests happened much later – and with Tiberius calling him *socius laborum*.

The distinction between *adiutor imperii* and *socius laborum* is significant, the gulf between «helper of the imperium» and «partner in labors». From the start, Tiberius was eager to share the burden of power (cf. *sociatis laboribus* at Tac. Ann. 1. 11. 1), and Germanicus and Drusus Caesar, however unsatisfactory, were duly groomed for the role. Sejanus was certainly *adiutor* in 23: Drusus, who died in 23, called him that; and Velleius expounds at length upon his role as *singularis principalium onerum adiutor*. But he was not yet *socius*: Velleius, writing in 29 or 30, does not call him that. Dio first mentions Tiberius' use of the phrase as one of his weapons to sooth suspicions in the year 30. And, above all, Tacitus himself tells us that Drusus Caesar, speaking as the outraged son, complained of Sejanus that someone else was called *adiutor imperii* and that it would not be long before that person was called *collega*. From which we should conclude that Sejanus was *not* called *socius* (surely *collega* is a Tacitean synonym for *socius*) in 23: Tacitus has been purposely anachronistic in naming him as such.

In sum, Sejanus was powerful for decades, but it was only in the last three years, 29–31, that he became a true political marvel, just as it was only in 31 that he ceased to be a knight. Cf., briefly, BELLEMORE 1995, 258–259.

²⁷ Tac. Ann. 3. 72. 3; Dio 57. 21. 4; Sen. Cons. Marc. 22. 4. Sejanus' honors are treated at HENIG 1975, 122–138, to be used with some skepticism.

grounds. Be that as it may, by 28 Tiberius had settled on Capri, and the senators added to their vote a formal plea that he and Sejanus allow people to see them in Rome.²⁸

– In 29, the senate voted to celebrate Sejanus' birthday as a public holiday, and it decreed yet more statues to him: so both Dio and Suetonius, the latter adding that the statues were of gold. The knights, the tribes, and leading citizens followed suit with statues beyond number. Dio continues: Tiberius and Sejanus each received separate embassies from the senate, the knights, and the people as represented by their tribunes and plebeian aediles. People prayed and sacrificed for each, and swore by their Fortunes.²⁹

– In 30, while already preparing to undermine him (so we are told), Tiberius honored Sejanus with designation to the consulship, and he continued to speak and write of him as the Partner of his Labors and «my Sejanus». In response, «people» (unspecified) set up bronze statues to both men everywhere, wrote their names together in documents, and brought gilded chairs into the theater to honor them. The senate voted that they should be consuls together every five years, and that they should be welcomed in the same manner whenever either came to Rome. «And in the end,» Dio concludes, «they sacrificed to the images of Sejanus as they did to those of Tiberius.» It was probably in 30 as well, or possibly in 29, that the image of Sejanus was added to the *signa* of each legion.³⁰ In his introductory sketch of the prefect, Tacitus had noted that Tiberius allowed his images to be worshipped, *coli*, in theaters and forums and in the headquarters, *principia*, of the legions: surely anachronistic for 23, but true in 30.³¹

– And then, in 31, he became ordinary consul with his good friend Tiberius, *consulatus socius*, and he received proconsular imperium and the promise of tribunician power. By that time he was also betrothed, possibly even married, to a close relative of the *princeps*.³²

²⁸ Tac. Ann. 4. 74. 2. JEPPESEN 1993. As BIRLEY 2007, 137–138, notes, «This interpretation, surely the most convincing yet, has hardly been noticed in recent scholarship.» The scholars he mentions are classicists. Curiously, there seems to be little reaction to JEPPESEN's paper among art historians: it is apparently ignored by the standard monographs of GIARD 1998 and GIULIANI 2010 (whose identification of the figure is not possible). VARNER 2004, 92–93, at n. 82, finds the identification «entirely unconvincing», and concludes after a brief critique of JEPPESEN that «the gem must be Claudian ... as proposed by Jucker ...»: needless to say, not all art historians would agree.

²⁹ Dio 58. 2. 7, cf. 6. 2; Suet. Tib. 65. 1. Suetonius adds that the statues were worshipped (*coli*) presumably conflating the actions of the years 29 and 30.

³⁰ Dio 58. 4. 4, 11. 2: senators worship and sacrifice to him as to a god. Sejanus among the *signa*: Suet. Tib. 48. 2 reports in passing that after the fall of Sejanus Tiberius rewarded the Syrian legions because they alone had not placed his bust among their standards. Could there possibly be some connection with the fact that the governor of Syria throughout the years of Sejanus' ascendancy was Tiberius' old friend L. Aelius Lamia, who remained in Rome and governed the province *in absentia*? Tac. Ann. 6. 27; PIR² A 200.

³¹ Tac. Ann. 4. 2. 3.

³² A desperately obscure problem: betrothed, or married? And to Julia, daughter of Drusus Caesar, granddaughter of Tiberius; or to her mother, Livia/Livilla, widow of Drusus Caesar and Tiberius' niece? For a clear discussion, see BELLEMORE 1995, making a strong case that Livia's is

Over this decade the statues are a key indicator of the accumulation of honors and the growing proximity to the *princeps*: one in 22, perhaps two more in 28, but then an explosion. Repeatedly Tiberius praises his friend, the senate responds with statues, ordinary citizens follow suit, and Sejanus rapidly acquires the divine aura associated with the images of the *domus Caesarum*. In 29: gilt statues, a sign of cult;³³ prayers and sacrifices for the imperial pair; and prayers to their Fortunes. In 30: gilt chairs brought into the theater, another sign of cult, though ambiguous; and prayers to their statues, now included even among legionary *signa*. Tacitus speaks of their images in theaters, forums, and camps, and Suetonius of their inclusion among the standards. The step from sacrificing for Sejanus to sacrificing to him is of course enormous, and not only did others everywhere sacrifice both for and to his image, Dio even paints for us a bizarre picture of Sejanus sacrificing to a statue of himself in the last year of his life.³⁴ No wonder then that Juvenal devotes no fewer than eight brilliant lines precisely to the destruction and melting of his ubiquitous statues, with their *facies toto orbe secunda*, the number two face in the whole world, now transformed into «little jugs, basins, frying pans, and chamber pots».³⁵

Other exceptional marks of distinction kept pace, all packed into the last three years, from 29 to 31, and in aggregate they paint a stunning portrait. Formal embassies from the orders in Rome; birthday as a public holiday; gilt chairs in the theater; oaths and vows; consulship every five years with his senior partner: no one but the *princeps* and his immediate family ever had honors like these.³⁶ First non-senator to be granted *ornamenta praetoria*. Consul with no previous senatorial experience. Colleague in the consulship with a *princeps* who had previously shared that honor twice only, with his presumptive successors. Holder of proconsular imperium and, at any moment now, tribunician power. Member of the *domus Caesarum* by betrothal or marriage. Statues everywhere. Prayers for and to him. Partner in Toil. My Sejanus. As Seneca, who was there, would later remark to his friend Serenus, prefect of the night watch, «You have held the highest honors, but were they as great, as unexpected, and as all-encompassing as those Sejanus had?»³⁷

the name lost on the *Fasti Ostienses*, where they record that the wife (?) of Sejanus committed suicide on October 25th, 31. BIRLEY 2007, 141 allows that, «The case seems very plausible», but some items of evidence remain stubbornly irreconcilable.

³³ SCOTT 1931, 112–114 and *passim*.

³⁴ Dio 58. 7. 2. See further below.

³⁵ 10. 58–64, at 63 (Loeb translation, S. M. BRAUND). Statues toppled and abused on the day of his downfall: Dio 58. 11. 3.

³⁶ WEINSTOCK 1971 offers convenient context for the cultic aspect of these honors: birthdays as public celebrations, 206–212; golden chairs in public, 281–284; oaths and vows, 212–214, 217–220.

³⁷ Sen. *Tranq. anim.* 11. 11: *Honoribus summis functus es: numquid aut tam magnis aut tam insperatis aut tam universis quam Seianus?* On Sejanus' honors, cf. *Juv.* 10. 74–77, discussed below.

The evidence is overwhelming. To think of this man as the all-powerful praetorian prefect of Tiberius Caesar is to misrepresent his last years. Again we should resist hindsight, with its conviction that no knight could dream of becoming «emperor». We should look rather to the *precedents* for Sejanus in the uncertain world of the late republic and early principate. Knights of senatorial family like Pompey and Octavian, two of the greatest men in Roman history, who had first entered the senate as consul, as did Sejanus. And above all the new man Agrippa, who shared supreme power and a marriage alliance with Augustus, and who would have taken over had he been the survivor. Moreover, as we have seen, unlike the utterly new man Agrippa, Sejanus had broad and deep roots in the aristocracy of Rome, and he went much much further in the arrogation of power and image than Agrippa had ever done, as he too rose from helper to partner.³⁸ It is wrong to see him as the intended «regent» for a young «Julio-Claudian» «prince» who was to «succeed» to the non-existent «throne» of an «emperor». By January 1st, 31, he was the junior colleague and thus, insofar as the role existed, the heir apparent of the *princeps*.³⁹

IV. Dio sums up the situation in the final months: «Sejanus was so great a person by reason of both his excessive haughtiness and of his vast power.»⁴⁰ The uniformly hostile tradition thus concentrates exclusively on the brute currency of fear and favor, but the tremendous public honors and the ubiquitous statues should prompt us to look for echoes of something else in the months and years before October 18th. Roman statesmen, Augustus above all, were great traditionalists, comfortable among their peers, surpassing all others in the quantity and quality of their achievements but within the ancestral norms of competition. Can we perhaps detect in Sejanus signs of a way of life more appropriate to a Roman *princeps*, a life acceptable and perhaps even attractive to his fellow citizens?

In AD 22, the noble C. Iunius Silanus, just returned from the proconsulship of Asia, was accused *repetundarum* by the provincials. Tacitus is our only source for the incident, in the third book of his Annals, but he is not much interested in extortion. What engages his attention is the sycophancy of the senate. He chooses the trial to illustrate some general remarks on the subject, which he caps with Tiberius' notorious quotation, when leaving the senate-house, of a line of Greek tragedy on men so ready to be slaves. So a brief half-sentence in Tacitus on the central accusation of extortion is followed by a paragraph on the supplementary charges which really interested him, that is, that the *numen* of Augustus had been violated and that the *maiestas* of Tiberius had been spurned.⁴¹

³⁸ Agrippa's *novitas*, a standard subject, is brilliantly characterized by his younger contemporary Seneca at Contr. 2. 4. 13.

³⁹ So BIRLEY 2007, concluding at 148.

⁴⁰ Dio 58. 5. 1, cf. 4. 1

⁴¹ Tac. Ann. 3. 66–69.

Three men attached these charges to the original indictment: the ex-consul Mamerus Scaurus, the praetor Junius Otho, and the aedile Brutteditius Niger. Tacitus scorns all of these new accusers. Mamerus Aemilius Scaurus, citing precedents that included a famous prosecution by his great namesake, was a disgrace to his ancestors, *obprobrium maiorum*. Junius Otho, once a mere schoolmaster, had become a senator through the *potentia* of Sejanus, and, in WOODMAN's translation, «he polluted his dark beginnings still further by unabashed acts of daring». «As for Brutteditius,» the historian continues, with grandiloquent obscurity, «abounding in honorable attainments and – if he had proceeded along a straight path – destined to reach every brilliance, speed spurred him on, inasmuch as he had intentions of outstripping his equals, then those ahead of him, and finally his very own hopes – something which has sent to the bottom many good men too, who, spurning rewards which are late but trouble-free, hasten those which are premature but actually terminal.»

After further discussion of the case, Tacitus adds a long comment on a supposedly toadying proposal made in its wake by another patrician senator.

It is all a prime example of how Tacitus shapes history to his own ends. We almost overlook his passing comment that Silanus was a savage who had indeed extorted money from the provincials, and that the man's own quaestor and his own legate joined in his prosecution. Just as interesting is something the historian leaves out. The three prosecutors are presented as types of senatorial decadence: the bad aristocrat, the bad parvenu, the man of ability ruined by excessive ambition. Junius Otho is also picked out as a creature of Sejanus. But what Tacitus knew and chose not to tell here, is that Otho's two colleagues were likewise cronies of the praetorian prefect: under the year 34 he remarks in passing that it was not the friendship of Sejanus that brought Scaurus down then (as it almost had in 32), but the hatred of Macro; and his dark allusion to the grim fate of Brutteditius is confirmed by the man's agitated appearance in Juvenal's account of the aftermath of Sejanus' fall.⁴² Tacitus, so prone to innuendo about Sejanus' – or anyone's – motives, was not yet ready to attack the prefect, beyond the proleptic hint with Otho. That was to come a few chapters later with the character sketch introducing the fourth book of the *Annals* and its great theme, the change for the worse in Tiberius. The target here, in the third book, is not the evil genius behind the emperor but the servile senate at his feet.

Which is to introduce a second and related aspect of the Silanus affair, likewise irrelevant to Tacitus and ignored today: all three of his prosecutors on the charge of treason were rather distinguished men of letters. Scaurus, the witty and scandalously elegant patrician, was an orator of great ability, who published seven of his own speeches. A poet as well, he produced a tragedy on «Atreus», which led to his downfall, and his trenchant criticism of Ovid happens to be recorded in passing. Otho likewise is not to be dismissed as the mere former master of a *litterarum ludus*, for he was in fact a

⁴² Tac. Ann. 6. 29. 3 (34), cf. 6. 9. 3–4 (32); Juv. 10. 83.

leading declaimer who published four books of rhetorical *colores*. And the mysterious but talented Brutteditius wrote some sort of historical work that included a description of the death of Cicero.⁴³ Lively company for a bland and efficient civil servant.

We do not have to look far to find men of letters paying court to the praetorian prefect. In a vicious epistle addressed to the senate, after Sejanus' fall, Tiberius attacked Junius Gallio for presuming to suggest that retired praetorian guardsmen be given seats in the first fourteen rows of the theater. What possible reason could a «satellite of Sejanus» have for interfering with the soldiers? The senate took the hint and banished Gallio. In the same letter the *princeps* assailed Sextius Paconianus, an action much more to the senate's liking, says Tacitus, since the man was an audacious malefactor, a wormer out of secrets and Sejanus' assistant in undermining Gaius (Caligula). Regrettably, the scoundrel saved his skin at the last moment by turning informer.

Again, what Tacitus saw no need to record was that these two were also distinguished senior senators and men of letters. Gallio, who had been urban praetor as long ago as 18, is the *Gallio noster* of the elder Seneca, who praised his wit and elegance, ranked him as one of the four leading declaimers of his generation, and even gave him his eldest son in adoption. More to the point: Gallio discussed literary matters with Messalla Corvinus and with Tiberius himself; he was a friend of Ovid, *Naso suus*, who sent him a poem of consolation on the death of his wife; and he left behind some writing on rhetoric.⁴⁴ Sextius Paconianus, evil henchman or not, has been revealed by an inscription to be L. Sextilius Paconianus, peregrine praetor in 26. His career as informer was short-lived. In 35 we find him still in prison where, Tacitus tells us, he was strangled because of poems he actually wrote there, attacking the *princeps*. These were not, it happens, his first foray into poetry, as four lines of verse have survived, studiously describing the four winds.⁴⁵

⁴³ Scaurus as orator: Sen. Contr. 10. pr. 2–3. His Atrous: Dio 58. 24. 3–4, Tac. Ann. 6. 29. On Ovid: Sen. Contr. 9. 5. 17, cf. 1.2. 22. Otho's Colores: Sen. Contr. 2. 1. 33. Brutteditius *historicus*: Sen. Suas. 6. 20–21. Otho and Niger also acted together for the defense in a case of adultery: Sen. Contr. 2. 34–35. Seneca's memories here of Otho happen to conclude with a tart criticism of the man's talent by none other than Aemilius Scaurus, 2. 39.

⁴⁴ Tac. Ann. 6. 3. 1–4, Dio 58. 18. 3–4. Gallio: urban praetor AE 1991. 307; praised by Seneca: Contr. 2. 1. 33, 9. 3. 14; *noster* at Contr. 2. 5. 11, 13, 3 pr. 2, 7 pr. 5, Suas. 3. 6.; son PIR² I 757. Messalla, Tiberius, *Naso suus*: Suas. 3. 5–7; Ov. Pont. 4. 11. Rhetoric: Quint. 3. 1. 21.

⁴⁵ Peregrine praetor: AE 1987. 163, a fragment from the Arval fasti. Therefore PIR² S 675 = S 656: both articles rightly suggest the identification, but overlook the new fragment that confirms it. Carmina: Tac. Ann. 6. 39. 1; COURTNEY, FLP 343–344. Now that his true name seems to be revealed as Sextilius, not Sextius, one wonders whether there might be some relationship with another fragmentary poet, Sextilius Ena of Corduba, an acquaintance of Valerius Messalla, Asinius Pollio, and Cornelius Severus: COURTNEY, FLP 329, from Sen. Suas. 6. 27. Also a relationship might be inferred with M. Paconius, the legate of C. Iunius Silanus who joined in his prosecution in 22 (see above), was later held to be a martyr to Tiberius (Suet. Tib. 61. 6; Tac. Ann. 16. 28. 1, 29. 2), and was presumably the father of the senator-philosopher Q. Paconius Agrippinus (PIR² P 27).

Not to labor the point, the cluster of literary men around Sejanus – precisely: orators and poets – is extraordinary. Lentulus Gaetulicus, a powerful patrician, governor of Germania Superior for the last seven years of Tiberius and beyond, was also a versatile and accomplished poet in Latin and (probably) in Greek, and one whose reputation lasted for centuries: he betrothed his daughter to the son of Sejanus. Pomponius Secundus, consul under Claudius and a man praised by Tacitus, was likewise a well-known and highly respected poet and writer of tragedies: after the Fall, in late 31, he was prosecuted, as Tacitus tells us, «for his friendship with Aelius Gallus, who had fled to Pomponius' suburban estate as if to the surest source of support.» This Gallus, it is agreed, must have been a kinsman of Sejanus, and Pomponius Secundus should be the Pomponius, otherwise unknown, who, along with Satrius Secundus, had to be courted by anyone who wanted to reach the prefect in his heyday.⁴⁶ We could add more names with literary pretensions, not least that of Pinarius Natta, the «client» of Sejanus who prosecuted Cremutius Cordus, in collaboration with the same Satrius Secundus: he is on chance record for a witty and perceptive criticism offered at a recitation given by Julius Montanus, who was «a tolerable poet known both for his friendship with Tiberius and for their falling-out», as the younger Seneca tells us.⁴⁷ But more names are not necessary. Mamercus Scaurus, Lentulus Gaetulicus, and Pomponius

⁴⁶ Gaetulicus: PIR² C 1390. Latin verse: COURTNEY, FLP 345–346; and later reputation at Mart. 1 pr.; Pliny Epist. 5. 3. 5; Sidon. Carm. 9. 259, Epist. 2. 10. 6. Greek verse: PAGE, FGE 49–60. Betrothal: Tac. Ann. 6. 30. 2. Secundus: PIR² 754, with references to his literary influence; and especially SWAN 1976. Praised by Tacitus: Ann. 5. 8. 2, 12. 28. 1. Prosecution: Tac. Ann. 5. 8. 1–2. Gallus: SYME 1986, 308–309. Sejanus' Pomponius: Tac. Ann. 6. 8. 5. I see no reason to identify this man as low-born (despite PIR² P 687, which misleadingly suggests that Tacitus calls him Sejanus' *clients*), and it is wrong automatically to assume that a friend of Sejanus could not be noble in either birth or character.

⁴⁷ Sen. Epist. 122. 11. Again, it is quite wrong to assume, as at PIR² P 410, that he was not connected with the Pinarii Nattae, obscure patricians by the time of the late republic: Sejanus, after all, came from the heart of the aristocracy. Ovid seems to have shared the opinion of Montanus' talent with Seneca and Pinarius (Pont. 4. 16. 11), but Seneca's father thought him *egregius* (Contr. 7. 1. 27).

Other literary connections: (1) Apicius (on whom see below) wrote on cooking, even if the cookbook surviving today under his name is a later compilation: Tac. Ann. 4. 1. 2. (2) Sejanus' cousin, Q. Iunius Blaesus (consul in 26) was a friend of the historian and critic Asconius Pedianus, whom he brought to a dinner hosted by Apicius: Suda, s.v. Apicius Marcus. (3) C. Cassius Longinus (consul in 30), probably Sejanus' nephew and one of the great jurists of the age, wrote at least ten books on civil law. (4) The future emperor Claudius, whose son was betrothed to the daughter of Sejanus, was a voluminous author who was already writing history under Augustus. (5) And perhaps to be added is Q. Curtius Rufus, the author of the surviving Histories of Alexander the Great. The standard assumption, unprovable but eminently plausible, identifies him with Q. Curtius Rufus, *cos.* 43, and with a contemporary Q. Curtius Rufus, a professional rhetor discussed in a now-lost part of Suetonius' work on rhetors (cf. the senator-rhetor Otho). In an influential paper (Curtius Rufus and the *Historiae Alexandri*, AUMLA 15, 1961, 30–39), G. V. SUMNER argued from Tac. Ann. 11. 21. 2 that Rufus was a follower of Sejanus and suffered a setback in his career after his patron fell.

Secundus were leading *nobiles* and nothing less than the literary heavyweights of their age, for all that their works have not survived. Junius Otho, Junius Gallio, Sextilius Paconianus, and Brutteditus Niger were high-ranking senators and serious men of letters. That is a critical mass.

Such prosopography suggests a plausible alternate history, one of a community with shared literary tastes, the memory of which was swept away by political catastrophe. At the least, the friends and followers of Sejanus are not automatically to be dismissed in hindsight as mere toadies and cowards, obscure strivers and decayed aristocrats. What is more, Sejanus enjoyed the intimate friendship of yet another passionate lover of learning (*artes liberales utriusque generis studiosissime coluit*), a lifelong student and author who makes the mass critical indeed, one who routinely discussed at the dinner table what he had read during the day, a man praised by the learned Philo of Alexandria himself as unsurpassed in his era for wisdom and erudition: Tiberius Caesar. «My Sejanus», «a part of [my] own body and soul»: given all we know of Tiberius' reserved personality and his intense cultural enthusiasm, we might wonder what these two men could possibly have found to talk about in their long hours together in Rome or on Capri. Sejanus surely dined too at Tiberius' learned table. Was he too a lover, perhaps even a patron, of letters?⁴⁸

V. Discussion of the sex life of Aelius Sejanus might put us in mind of snakes in Iceland. Indeed, at first glance there is less than nothing. Sex, we are assured, was in his case simply a means to power. Having introduced the man and his boundless ambition, Tacitus sketches a sort of predecessor of Louis Mazzini in «Kind Hearts and Coronets», the interloper and would-be heir who schemes to work his lethal way through the family tree of the Caesars, starting with Tiberius' son Drusus:

«As Sejanus tested every possibility, he decided that the readiest recourse was to the man's wife, Livia, Germanicus' sister, whose looks at the beginning of her life were unbecoming, but who later excelled in beauty. As if burning with love, he enticed her into adultery and, after he had achieved this first outrage (and, with her modesty lost, a female was unlikely to reject other things), drove her to hope for espousal, partnership in a kingdom, and her husband's execution.»⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Suet. Tib. 56, 70. 1; Philo Leg. ad Gaium 141–142; cf. 167; 33; et al. Love of Sejanus: Dio 58. 4. 3, 9. On Tiberius the intellectual, vintage SYME 1986, 346–366 («The Education of an Aristocrat»).

I am very tempted to identify Sejanus with «that Tuscus», *homo quam improbi animi tam infelicis ingenii*, the man who «had made [Aemilius Scaurus] a defendant on the charge of *maiestas*», but that would require an elaborate and inconclusive interpretation of Sen. Suas. 2. 22. The point is that Seneca's *Tuscus ille* could be read as «that Etruscan» rather than «that (man named) Tuscus»: cf. *Tuscus*, «the Etruscan» (i.e., Sejanus) at Juv. 10. 74.

⁴⁹ Tac. Ann. 4. 3. 3. HENNIG 1975, 33–40 mounts a good case for seeing the «murder» of Drusus as a later fabrication against Sejanus.

So Livia befouls herself with a municipal adulterer and, to lull any suspicions that his mistress might have, the callous Sejanus expels from his house his wife Apicata, the mother of his three children. Dio in epitome has essentially the same sequence of events, which must have appeared in the common source, and Tiberius himself came to believe, or profess to believe, that Sejanus and Livilla (as she was also known) had been responsible for the death of his son.⁵⁰

So whatever mutual attraction the couple may have felt, their affair was simply a mark of Sejanus' greater lust for power. This is just the case with the other allegation against him, that he had affairs with the wives of all the leading men in order to learn what they were saying and doing, even promising to marry the women – the wife of Drusus, son of Germanicus, is cited as an example.⁵¹ The pursuit of adultery in the service of politics is of course not unique to Sejanus, for Augustus was accused of it as well. Indeed with the accusation we enter the world of make-believe, for it merits an entry in THOMPSON'S Motif-Index of Folk Literature, J 155. 2, King has amours with great men's wives so as to learn secrets from them.⁵²

But if we again look away from the concerns of our sources there is some curious information about Sejanus' sexuality which is interesting precisely because they make so little of it. First comes the liaison with, of all people, the rich and prodigal gourmand Marcus Gavius Apicius, the report of which again goes back to a now-lost common source which mentioned it in a character sketch of the prefect. In his youth, says Tacitus, Sejanus was a follower of Gaius Caesar, Augustus' grandson, and he was rumored to have submitted to outrage by Apicius for money. Dio asserts outright, with no hint of Tacitean rumor, that he was once the boyfriend of Apicius, his παιδικά, which presumably represents the Latin *deliciae*.⁵³ Apicius, as it happens, is matched in Sejanus' later company by another man, Geminius, one of three knights who fell at the end of 32 on the charge of conspiracy. Of these men, Tacitus reports, Geminius was a friend of Sejanus not for any serious reason but because of the prodigality of his fortune, *prodigentia opum*, and the softness of his life, *mollitia vitae*.⁵⁴ Extravagance and effeminacy are not the first qualities one would think of as attractive to a Sejanus.

In his Natural History, Pliny the Elder reports that a Sutorius Priscus purchased Paezon from among the eunuchs of Sejanus for the sum of 50 million sesterces.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Dio 57. 22. 2, cf. 58. 11. 6; Suet. Tib. 62. 1.

⁵¹ Dio 58. 3. 8. This marriage of Drusus to Aemilia Lepida was mentioned in a lost part of Tacitus, as were her frequent charges (*crebris criminibus*) against him: Tac. Ann. 6. 40. 3, where she is accused in AD 36 of adultery with a slave and commits suicide.

⁵² Suet. Aug. 69. 1: *adulteria non libidine sed ratione commissa*. Cf. Alexander the Great: Plut. Alex. 48–49, Mor. 339 D.

⁵³ Tac. Ann. 4. 1. 2; Dio 57. 19. 5.

⁵⁴ Tac. Ann. 6. 14. 1.

⁵⁵ HN 7. 129: *nisi si quis in hoc loco desiderat Armeniaci belli paulo ante propter Tiridaten gesti dispensatorem, quem Nero HS [CXXX] manumisit. sed hoc pretium belli, non hominis, fuit tam Hercules quam libidinis, non formae, Paezontem e spadonibus Seiani HS [D] mercante Sutorio Prisco. quam quidem iniuriam lucri fecit ille mercatus in luctu civitatis, quoniam arguere nulli vacabat.*

Pliny's indignation at the astonishing sum of money diverts the reader's attention from the astonishing background: Sejanus – industrious, vigilant, serene, modest – maintained a stable of eunuchs, one of them named «Boytoy». Lest there be any doubt as to at least one of their employments, Tacitus explains. Sejanus selected a slow poison to carry off Drusus Caesar in 23. As came out eight years later, this was administered by the eunuch Lygdus. A little after offering this nugget, Tacitus adds a rumor which he rejects at length, even though – or because – it was current in his own day: «It was said that, after corrupting Livia into crime, Sejanus by means of illicit sex (*stupro*) had constrained the heart of the eunuch Lygdus too, since, because of his age and good looks, he was dear to his master [Drusus] and among his leading servants.»⁵⁶ The most telling aspect of all this is that neither Pliny nor Tacitus shows any interest in Sejanus' private life. They don't bother even to condemn it. Both pursue other themes, the eunuchs are incidental. Again, what a world we have lost here.

Eunuchs go virtually unrecorded in Roman society under the Republic, beyond a handful of references in Plautus and Terence, but under the Principate there is a considerable body of information about their various tasks as servants in private households, and the phenomenon of the court eunuch is transferred from Hellenistic monarchs to Roman dynasts.⁵⁷ It is on the cusp between Republic and Principate that we first hear of sexual services among their possible duties, an employment thunderously

Pliny is incensed by the astronomical prices paid for slaves. Nero, for instance, manumitted a steward for HS 130,000,000 during the recent Armenian war, a sum surely symbolic of the total cost of the war, not the cost of a single slave. «But this was the price of a war, not of a man, just as, by Hercules! it was (the price) of lust, not of beauty, when Sutorius Priscus paid HS 50,000,000 for Paezon, one of Sejanus' eunuchs. But he got away with this outrage, making his purchase during a period of national mourning, since no one was free to accuse him.» (Loeb translation of H. RACKHAM, considerably modified.)

The transmitted sum of 50 million has not been seriously challenged, but *Sutorius* is routinely emended into *Clutorius*. If that is correct, the execution of Clutorius Priscus in AD 21 (Tac. Ann. 3. 49–51; Dio 57. 20. 3) would give us a terminus post quem non, and the two most likely dates for the purchase would then be the periods of public mourning after the deaths of Augustus in 14 and of Germanicus in 19.

But BIRLEY 2007, 148–149, briefly suggested that we accept the transmitted «Sutorio», and that the man could have been a freedman of Sutorius Macro. Per litteras he makes the case more expansively, «that the buyer was indeed Sutorius [*not* Clutorius] Priscus, that he was probably a freedman of Sutorius Macro acting on Macro's behalf, and that the sale was *after* Sejanus' death – I imagined an auction of Sejanus' property (cf. Ann. 6. 2. 1). A «time of national grief, *in luctu civitatis*, could surely perfectly well refer to the state of things in the period after October 31, cf. Ann. 6. 7; 6. 19; 6. 25. 1 on the *dolor* two years later at deaths of Drusus III & then Agrippina; or 6. 26. 2, *mala rei publicae*, and especially 6. 27. 1, *tot luctibus funesta civitate pars maeroris fuit ...*» That scenario is certainly persuasive: «Sutorius» should stand.

⁵⁶ Pliny HN 7. 129; Tac. Ann. 4. 8. 1, 10. 1–3 (with the valuable commentary of MARTIN – WOODMAN).

⁵⁷ GUYOT 1980 for details. His prosopography of court eunuchs runs to some 118 entries.

denounced by moralists and satirists.⁵⁸ The social reality behind this literary disapproval is difficult to gauge, but one thing is clear: the world of these *Lustknaben* is small and sharply defined by a few tropes. The company of historical figures (as distinct from literary creations) who are accused or suspected of keeping eunuchs and enjoying them sexually is very small and very distinguished: Maecenas in the 30s BC; Sejanus; Drusus Caesar (probably); the future emperor Titus; Nero and Domitian as emperors; Nymphidius Sabinus and Otho, both lovers of Sporus after Nero's demise; Vitellius and his general Fabius Valens – and that's about it.⁵⁹ Their time at Rome is pretty much confined then to the first century of the Principate. Their masters stand accused of degeneracy but not necessarily of wickedness, witness Maecenas, Drusus Caesar, and the young Titus before his reform. And eunuchs themselves tend to travel in packs: *greges spadonum* is the common refrain, or phrases like it.⁶⁰ In sum, what we dimly perceive under Tiberius is the fashion, relatively recent in Roman households, for employing eunuchs as servants, normally slaves, sometimes freedmen; and behind that lies the fad, followed for a time by some very eminent men, of ostentatiously maintaining a harem of them.

Sejanus: boyfriend of Apicius, friend of Geminius because of his effeminacy, master of eunuchs for sexual pleasure, and as such in select company, from eastern potentates to future emperors. His only known predecessor at Rome was Maecenas, up until then the most powerful knight in Roman history.

VI. Thus, from different hints, Sejanus' public style of life takes on a shadowy outline, startling in its familiarity. But there is another dimension to his image, harder to detect but as important even as his public offices and honors, and one which goes to the heart of the danger to Tiberius. Under the year 29 Dio records that people took oaths by the Fortunes of Tiberius and Sejanus. Again, under 31, he repeats that they swore

⁵⁸ GUYOT 1980, 59–60, with references.

⁵⁹ Maecenas: Sen. Epist. 114. 6, cf. Porph. Hor. serm. 1. 1. 105; Titus: Suet. Titus 7. 1; Dio 67. 2. 3; Vitellius and Fabius Valens: Tac. Hist. 2. 71, 3. 40.

⁶⁰ Vitellius' followers are *greges spadonum*. The unchastity of the young Titus is marked by his *exoletorum et spadonum greges*. Curtius Rufus, writing earlier in the century, tells us that Darius' palace held *spadonum greges*, «practiced in playing the woman's role»: 6. 6. 8. The declaimer T. Labienus referred, under Augustus, to wealthy *principes viri* who possess *castratorum greges*: Sen. Contr. 10. 4. 17. These «flocks» hark back to the corrupt East, symbolized by Cleopatra and her *contaminato grege turpium morbo virorum* in Horace (Carm. 1. 37. 9–10, cf. Epod. 9. 13–14), which the scholiast Porphyrio dutifully glosses *cum grege spadonum*. During the civil war, Maecenas was accompanied around Rome by two eunuchs; his namesake Trimalchio Maecenatianus played ball with two eunuch attendants (Petron. 27. 3); King Herod had three, all of whom were corrupted by his son Alexander (Jos. Ant. Jud. 16. 230–231). Cf. Marulla with her Coresus and Dindymus at Mart. 6. 39. 21. Ammianus refers much later to a *multitudo spadonum*, following their master through the streets of Rome, *mutilorum hominum agmina* (14. 6. 17), and to a *coetus spadonum* plotting with the *cohors Palatina* (18. 5. 4).

oaths by the Fortune of Sejanus, though now, he adds, «to excess», κατακορώς.⁶¹ These oaths take us into a whole new world.

First, Fortune puts Sejanus into exalted company indeed. The dedication to, the oath sworn by a personal Fortune, a fortune who accompanied and protected an individual, was a cult act, one inherited from the Hellenistic kings, and before them from the Persians, and the idea of the personal fortune, introduced by Julius Caesar to Rome (and called the «Fortuna Caesaris» by STEFAN WEINSTOCK), was taken up by later emperors, from Galba onwards, as the Fortuna Augusti.⁶² Sejanus is the first Roman on historical record as worshipping a personal Fortuna, and it was doubtless this particular fortune that was worshipped by others: a powerful statement of an extraordinary, indeed a unique, position.

The «Fortune of Sejanus» was no abstract deity or mere good luck charm: she was an individual goddess with an historic mission. There are four items of evidence to be considered:

(1) Dio recounts an ominous incident in the last year of Sejanus' life: «Again, there was the behavior of a statue of Fortune, which had belonged, they say, to Tullius, one of the former kings of Rome, but was at this time kept by Sejanus in his house and greatly honored by him: he himself saw this statue turn its back to him while he was sacrificing ...»⁶³ Dio's text breaks off at this point.

(2) Pliny the Elder, discoursing on cloth derived from animals, mentions in passing that, «The purple bordered robes (*praetextae*) of Servius Tullius, with which the statue dedicated by him to Fortune had been covered, lasted until the death of Sejanus, and it was marvelous that they had not wasted away or suffered the attacks of moths in 560 years.»⁶⁴

(3) In a discussion of *phengites*, a translucent stone discovered in Cappadocia in the time of Nero, Pliny notes that, «With it he [Nero] had built the Temple of Fortune, which they call Sejanus' (originally) consecrated by King Servius, encompassing it in the Golden House.»⁶⁵

To which may be added (4), the oblique light cast by Juvenal in his stunning observation of what might have been: the mob follows Fortune and it hates the condemned,

⁶¹ Dio 58. 2. 8 (in epitome), 6. 2.

⁶² WEINSTOCK 1971, 112–127. Note also that desertion by a patron deity is a mark of the highest status: HEKSTER 2010.

⁶³ Dio 58. 7. 2–3: Τύχης τέ τι ἄγαλμα, ὃ ἐγεγόνει μὲν, ὡς φασι, Τουλλίου τοῦ βασιλεύσαντός ποτε ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ, τότε δὲ ὁ Σεϊανὸς οἴκοι τε εἶχε καὶ μεγάλως ἠγάλλεν, αὐτὸς τε θύων εἶδεν ἀποστρεφόμενον. Immediately before this, Dio has recounted another terrifying omen involving a statue, one of Sejanus himself.

⁶⁴ NH 8. 197: *Servi Tulli praetextae, quibus signum Fortunae ab eo dicatae coopertum erat, duravere ad Seiani exitum, mirumque fuit neque diffluxisse eas neque teredinum iniurias sensisse annis quingentis sexaginta*. The figure of 560 is roughly right, calculating from Servius' death in (notionally) 535 BC to Sejanus' death in AD 31. SYME 1956, 261, suggested that, since the robes seem to have perished with Sejanus, the mob assailed and looted his mansion.

⁶⁵ NH 36. 163: text quoted and discussed below.

but if Nortia had favored the Etruscan, and the old *princeps* had been suppressed, the same people would right now be calling Sejanus «Augustus».⁶⁶ Sejanus is the Etruscan, from Vulsinii; the goddess Nortia is the Etruscan version of Fortuna.

At the time of his death, then, Sejanus owned and greatly honored an unimaginably ancient statue of Fortuna, one which he and others thought, or professed to think, was originally the possession of the legendary Servius Tullius, who had ruled Rome as her sixth king some six centuries earlier. This association with Servius and his Fortune is the key to Sejanus.⁶⁷

Let us start with Nero's temple. It has been suggested that Sejanus not only enjoyed a statue which had once belonged to Servius Tullius, but that he had somehow incorporated into his house an ancient temple of the goddess built by Servius, along with its statue.⁶⁸ This seems highly improbable: Dio speaks of the statue as being in Sejanus' house, and says nothing about the temple; Pliny has Nero build, not rebuild, the temple; and it might be wondered why Nero or anyone would ever construct a temple commemorating the name of the reviled or forgotten Sejanus. This last point does raise a question of interpretation, for the second passage in Pliny is highly ambiguous: *hoc construxerat [sc. Nero] aedem Fortunae, quam Seiani appellant, a Servio Tullio rege sacratam, amplexus aurea domo*. Here we must read *quam Seiani appellant* as referring to the statue itself, not to Nero's temple, and the same holds true for *a Servio rege sacratam*. That is to say, we should understand Pliny as describing «the Temple of the Fortune which they call (the Fortune) of Sejanus», not «the Temple which they call (the Temple) of the Fortune of Sejanus». In other words: Nero built a new Temple of Fortune; that temple housed an ancient statue which had belonged to King Servius Tullius; Servius had famously dedicated many temples to Fortune, at least ten of them around Rome; so this particular Fortune was distinguished, not formally, in the name given to its temple by Nero, but informally, by the people (*quam appellant*), as the one that had once been so closely identified with Sejanus. Decades after the prefect's death,

⁶⁶ Juv. 10. 72–77, quoted and translated at the beginning of this paper.

⁶⁷ This section is deeply indebted to SYME's classic paper (SYME 1956), as fresh today as it was 55 years ago. I regret that this paper was written and delivered long before I became aware of PISTELLATO's excellent 2007 essay, which anticipates several arguments in this section, and especially its fundamental point that the relationship between Sejanus and Servius was «il nodo centrale della propaganda ideologica dell'*eques* di *Volsinii* negli anni del massimo prestigio, precisamente indirizzata all'elemento popolare dell'*Vrbs*, a cui la figura del re era particolarmente cara.» Hence the brevity of this section.

⁶⁸ On the temple: LTUR 2, 1995, 278, s.v. Fortuna Seiani, Aedes (L. ANSELMINO – M. J. STRAZZULLA); cf. COARELLI 1988, 265–268 (and 253–277, invaluable on the many Fortunes of Servius Tullius). COARELLI contended, as others have done, that the temple lay within Sejanus' house, and that it is to be identified with the Temple of Fortuna Virgo on the Esquiline. In an important paper of 2001, he argued that the remains of a sixth century BC *sacellum* and a first-century AD house under San Pietro in Vincoli were precisely the temple (along with the tomb) of Servius Tullius and the house of Sejanus itself. Rightly doubted at PISTELLATO 2007, 495–497.

in Pliny's day, as indeed in Juvenal's, however reviled or forgotten Sejanus might be, his association with this particular Fortune was still remembered.

It evokes a complex and potent image derived from the figure of Servius Tullius, a new man indeed, perhaps even the son of a slave woman – but the King of Rome.

Servius was, more than any other figure in Roman history, Fortune's Favorite. According to Plutarch he dedicated himself and his sovereignty to the goddess, and Dionysius affirms that she seemed to favor him all of his life. Indeed, so closely bound was he to the goddess that in one version she was even his lover, and he repaid her devotion by dedicating all those shrines to her.⁶⁹ Sejanus now had one of Servius' actual Fortunes as his own. He honored her greatly, men sacrificed to her in his name, he sacrificed to her himself, she was even wrapped in a miraculous cloth: surely he was suggesting himself as Servius' heir.

Servius was, above all, a *popular* monarch. His influence with the people was said to be enormous, he courted the poor, he was famous as the man who had established and secured liberty for the citizens, he had increased their power, and after his death the plebs had honored his memory with sacrifices on market days – and popular legends accrued around him for centuries.⁷⁰ His connection with the common citizen of Rome is emphasized by his legendary career: son of a slave, enfranchiser of slaves, founder of the Compitalia, founder of the comitia centuriata, creator of the local tribes, coinage, the census, taxation.

In accordance with these achievements, he was also remembered for founding at Rome the cult of the Latin goddess Diana and for building her temple on the Aventine: the day of its foundation, his birthday, August 13th, was a holiday for slaves; the place, the great hill outside the pomerium of the city, would be forever renowned as the refuge of the plebs in the Struggle of the Orders. And it was there on the Aventine, as a mysterious and mutilated inscription tells us, that Sejanus held part (at least) of the election that formally made him consul in AD 31. This astonishing, radical departure from tradition, unreported by any literary source, was surely a bid for popularity, and the time-honored association of the Aventine with the people and with the most popular of kings strongly suggests the role Sejanus meant to play.⁷¹

⁶⁹ The major sources are Plut. Fort. Rom. 10 (Mor. 322E–323D), Quaest. Rom. 36, 74, 281 (Mor. 273B–C, 281D–E, 287E–F); Dion. Hal. Ant. 4. 27. 7.

⁷⁰ In addition to the passages just cited, note Dionysius books 3 and 4, passim; Cic. Rep. 2. 37–42; Val. Max. 3. 4. 3; Florus 1. 1. 6; Ov. Fast. 6. 771–784; Macr. Sat. 1. 16. 33, 13. 18. VERNOLE's monograph of 2002 covers all of the ancient material and modern bibliography; of the latter, RIDLEY 1975 is particularly good on the development of Servius' reputation over the centuries.

⁷¹ The Aventine inscription: CIL VI 10213 = ILS 6044; G. CAMODECA's recent (2000) edition at ILMN 1. 159 supersedes all previous versions. Essential bibliography on «the Aventine election» includes: SYME 1956; HENNIG 1975, 72–76, 140 (bafflingly eccentric); YAVETZ 1998; TORELLI 2006, 268–269, cf. 2011; PISTELLATO 2007; BIRLEY 2007, 38–141. – The restoration of the first word in line 3 [–2/3–] *itatio* remains unresolved, despite many suggestions. I follow here TORELLI's [ag] *itatio*, for which he neatly cites Cic. Mur. 29 [35], discoursing on the *agitationes commutationesque fluctuum* of the comitia (centuriata).

The inscription, broken on all sides, is tantalizing. After a reference to something «of 60 years», when it first becomes decipherable the text is attacking the «impious agitation(?) and the wicked assemblies which occurred on the Aventine when Sejanus was made consul.» It is immediately clear that this is a rhetorical and highly emotional speech, which carries on in the first person, thus: «And I weak, useless, the companion of the staff that I might be a suppliant, I now propose to you with all my strength (?), good fellow-tribesmen, if I have always seemed to you a good and useful tribesman, if I was never forgetful (?) of my duty or of the republic . . .» – and the last two lines sink back into impenetrable obscurity.

The emphasis on the tribe and tribesmen in the speech is surely significant, suggesting that the consular election had been in some way conducted not, as under the Republic, by the *comitia centuriata* in the *Campus Martius* nor, as currently, by the senate in its meeting place, but – absolutely without precedent – by the *comitia tributa* on the Aventine.⁷² That Sejanus did indeed have a special connection with the plebs, specifically as represented by their Tribal Assembly, is confirmed by two notices in Dio. In 29, not only was his birthday celebrated publicly, he received countless statues from the senate, the knights, the tribes, and the leading men. Moreover the senate sent embassies both to him and to Tiberius, as did the knights, and as did the people from *among their tribunes and their (plebeian) aediles* (that is, of course, the magistrates elected by the *comitia tributa*).⁷³ The tribes were then somehow involved in the consular election for 31 on the Aventine Hill, and, whatever happened there, it was a shocking and dangerously popular innovation. Is it mere chance that a post-humous inscription damns him as a most pernicious enemy to the Roman people, *hostis perniciosissimus p(opulo) R(omano)*?⁷⁴

Tradition had it that the tribes had been established by King Servius Tullius. Even better, or worse, as we know from a very learned source, Etruscan historians had disagreed with their Roman rivals on one crucial point about Servius.⁷⁵ They presented the popular monarch not as the son of a Latin slave, but as an Etruscan warrior,

⁷² And of course we suspect but cannot prove that the outraged old man who addresses his fellow tribesmen is none other than Tiberius himself. Cf. BIRLEY 2007, 139 n. 65 for doubts.

So far as I am aware, the point made here about Sejanus' ties with the tribes in Dio has not been noticed before; and only PISTELLATO seems to have contemplated the possibility that the *comitia* referred to was the *tributa*, not the *centuriata*. According to Dio 58. 8. 2, he felt that that the people had been on his side until Tiberius started showing favor in 31 to Gaius (Caligula), the son of their idol Germanicus.

⁷³ Dio 58. 2. 7–8: ὁ δὲ δὴ Σεϊανὸς ἔτι καὶ μᾶλλον ἤρετο, καὶ ἐψηφίσθη ὅπως τὰ γενέθλια αὐτοῦ δημοσίᾳ ἐορτάζεται. τὸ γὰρ τοι πλῆθος τῶν ἀνδριάντων ὧν ἦ τε βουλή καὶ ἡ ἰππᾶς αἶ τε φυλαὶ καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ πρῶτοι ἔστησαν αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ ἐξηρίθμησεν ἄν τις πρέσβεις τε ἰδία μὲν ἢ γερουσία ἰδία δὲ οἱ ἰππῆς τὸ τε πλῆθος ἔκ τε τῶν δημάρχων καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀγορανόμων τῶν σφετέρων πρὸς ἀμφοτέρους αὐτοὺς ἔπεμπον, καὶ εὐχοντο ὑπὲρ ἀμφοῖν ὁμοίως καὶ ἔθουον, τὴν τε τύχην αὐτῶν ὤμνυσαν.

⁷⁴ ILS 157.

⁷⁵ As was noted in a speech by the emperor Claudius himself: ILS 212.

Mastarna, the faithful companion of a warlord of Vulci, who emigrated to Rome. Mastarna was a much more appealing image for the companion of Tiberius Caesar, a freeborn fighter, a loyal follower, and a future king, and that image too may have been part of the pageant.

In sum, the Fortune of King Servius Tullius became the Fortune of the would-be Princeps Aelius Sejanus, a brilliantly multifaceted image. Like Servius, he was the loyal supporter and lieutenant of his king. Like Servius, he was the champion of the people and their choice for the highest office. Like Servius, he was the favorite of the goddess Fortuna, with a mystical closeness. Conspirator or not, it was indeed a dangerous image to project.

Its power is reflected in its longevity, the one part of him that survived, still talked of as Sejanus' Fortune almost fifty years after his fall. The horrific image of the statue turning its back on him is surely part of the posthumous campaign against him, seizing on the salient item in his public persona to make a grand concluding metaphor to his life and career. And there seems to be an echo in Juvenal, when he has Nortia, the Etruscan Fortuna, withdraw her favor from Etruscan Sejanus. Sejanus' Fortune was surely Fortuna Praesens, the Present good Fortune of the prefect bound up, through public oaths, with the good fortune of the empire. Yet it appears that Nortia of Vulsinii was portrayed not just as any Fortuna, but precisely as Fortuna Respiciens.⁷⁶ Now Fortuna Respiciens was a more problematic figure, Fortune turned, Looking Back over her shoulder, the apotropaic goddess akin to Fate and Nemesis, the one who reminds us of sorrow in the midst of success (the deaths of the sons of Aemilius Paullus on the eve of his triumph), the seeds of decay sown in victory (Scipio weeping in the ruins of Carthage). It was no accident, as FILIPPO COARELLI pointed out, that the Temple of Fortuna Respiciens at Rome loomed, as we can now be pretty sure, over the route of the triumphal procession: *Respice et te homo esse memento!* The statue of Fortuna turning her back on her favorite at his moment of triumph could not have been more devastating, when the Fortune of Servius Tullius turned into the Fortune of Vulsinii.

Servius came of course to a very grisly end. A small stone *sors*, the response from an oracle – unique, probably from the fourth century BC, and of uncertain provenance – bears an uncompromising warning in raised letters: *Se cedues, perdere nolo; ni ceduas, Fortuna Servios perit*, «If you obey, I do not want to destroy (you). If you do not obey, (remember that) Servius perished by the workings of Fortune.»⁷⁷ Sejanus too was Fortune's favorite but, obedient to her or not, how the ambitious prefect thought that he could avoid the fate of the ancient king, we will never know.

⁷⁶ This and most of what follows is based on STRAZULLA 1993, 317–349; the significance of *Respiciens* at 331–335.

⁷⁷ ILLRP 1070. Essential are GUARDUCCI 1949–1951 and 1973. I follow her Italian translation of the text in the latter paper, published after ILLRP. In that paper she also argued that the stone may have come, appropriately, from Fanum Fortunae.

VII. Repeatedly we have caught glimpses of a lost world, a life swept away by the cataclysm of October 18th, 31. We will never know for sure what prompted the First Citizen to remove him so swiftly and so savagely. History stepped in to reduce Sejanus to a two-dimensional caricature, a murderous conspirator, an automaton of ambition, and we can never draw more than the faintest sketch of the original portrait. But, however we piece together the exiguous fragments of his life, surely he was more interesting than the caricature suggests.

The real threat he posed, if threat is the correct word, is not that he was a *monstrum*, an upstart driven purely by lust for power, devoid of character, an aberration marring the reign of a non-existent dynasty. He was rather the opposite and far more dangerous: a true insider. Despite the best efforts of Tiberius and of history to disown and to blacken him posthumously, he was by all possible standards the designated successor, a sort of Agrippa and Maecenas combined. A supremely competent administrator, connected through blood, marriage, and friendship with the aristocracy old and new, he accumulated overwhelming power, far more than any previous private citizen. We will never know if he was a man of taste and education, but circumstantial evidence suggests deep roots in the aristocratic literary culture of his age. We will never know whether he lived a princely life, but indirect evidence suggests a certain flamboyance. Above all we can discern along with the enormous power and the appropriate life-style an almost Augustan finesse not merely in his gathering of the reins of power but in his manipulation of their symbolic packaging. First there was the public image of the hard-working and vigilant second-in-command, modest and serene. But as he became the partner of the First Citizen, and as he edged towards the divine, he seems to have developed the perfect public image in his fervent cultivation of an identification with Servius Tullius. Servius too had begun as the loyal supporter and lieutenant of his predecessor, but he had enjoyed the special favor of a goddess and he would win the eternal favor of the people of Rome, whose champion he was. Juvenal got it absolutely right: if Fortune had (truly) favored Sejanus, people would now be calling him Seianus Augustus.

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