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Nero and Britannicus in the pompa circensis: The Circus Procession as Dynastic Ceremony in the Court of Claudius

https://doi.org/10.1515/klio-2019-1008

Summary: As part of the events marking Nero's assumption of the toga virilis in 51 CE, he along with Britannicus led the circus procession (pompa circensis) in advance of games in the Circus Maximus. The aim of this paper is to reconstruct this pompa circensis, both in its processional elements and route through the city. The presence of potential successors along with images of the deified and honored dead of the imperial family shows how this ceremony evolved and expanded in the Principate to become a dynastic ceremony. The route of the newly modified pompa circensis, marked by monuments built by or dedicated to members of the imperial family, also had become increasingly dynastic. An essential element of the pompa circensis was the participation of the senate and equestrian order as well as the urban plebs, an act of performed consensus fully realized when the procession ended in the Circus Maximus. This circus procession, as reconstructed here, has further implications for the larger question of the imperial succession under Claudius.

Keywords: Circus Procession, pompa circensis, Dynastic Succession, Nero, Britannicus, Claudius

I. Introduction

In the year 51 CE Nero, now 13 years of age and recently adopted by Claudius, celebrated his entry into public life (tirocinium fori), which included his assumption of the toga virilis and the conferral of political offices and honors (by both the senate and equestrian order), and cash distributions to the army and people, all of which culminated in games in the circus (Tac. Ann. 12.41.1–2; cf. Suet. Nero 7; Dio 61 [60].33.2c). In advance of these games, as I will argue further below, Nero, along with his adoptive brother and Claudius' biological son, Britannicus, led the procession (the pompa circensis) that traditionally preceded all games in the circus. The pompa circensis was one of the three great pompaes of imperial

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Rome – along with the triumph and the funeral procession – all of which dated back to the Roman Republic. In the Principate these republican ceremonies were transformed into grand ceremonial stages for the emperor to demonstrate not only his power and authority but also his right to rule within Rome’s historical and cultural traditions. This was one of the ways that the Republic never really perished but rather was transformed to accommodate monarchy. These imperial *pompeae* have been described not only as acts of a performed consensus, a consensus around the acceptance and legitimacy of the emperor by all orders of Roman society, but also enactments of imperial power. The participation of other members of the imperial family, including those who might one day accede to the throne, marked them out as dynastic ceremonies.

The circus procession became a dynastic ceremony in the Principate not only for the reasons outlined above, but also, as we will see further below, because it evolved from Republic to Principate and came to include the most complete assemblage of images of the deified and honored dead of the imperial family. Since the circus procession in 51 CE marked the coming of age of Claudius’

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1 The triumph and imperial funerals have received due attention from scholars: on the imperial triumph, Benoist 2005, 189–239; Beard 2007; Itgenshorst 2008 and 2017; Östenberg 2009; Popkin 2016; and the collected essays in Goldbeck – Wienand 2017; Flower 2020; on imperial funerals, Arce 1988 and 2010; Benoist 2005, 103–146. The circus procession, on the other hand, was comparatively neglected until recent scholarship began to redress this imbalance; see especially Arena 2009 and 2010, 53–102; Latham 2016; cf. also Fless 2004. This paper builds on this recent work.

2 Augustus declared in an edict his commitment to what he called the *res publica* and his role in preserving it for all time: *ita mihi saluam ac sospitem rem p. sistere in sua sede liceat atque eius rei fructum percipere quem peto, ut optimi status auctor dicar et moriens ut feram mecum spem, mansura in vestigio suo fundamenta rei p. quae iecero* (Suet. Aug. 28.2).

3 Noreña – Ewald 2010, 41; it should be noted, however, that they omit the circus procession from their discussion of these important imperial ceremonies. On the concept of aristocratic consensus in the Roman Republic, Hölkeskamp 2006. This concept was transformed in the Principate to meet the needs of the emperor and imperial family, the most succinct expression of which is R. Gest. div. Aug. 34.1: *in consulatu sexto et septimo, postquam bella civilia exstinxeram, per consensus universorum potentissime rerum omnium, rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transstuli*; for the text and discussion with relevant bibliography, Cooley 2009, ad loc.; cf. Lobur 2008, 12–36, for a discussion of this passage and its larger implications for the ideology of the Augustan Principate. Similar expressions of consensus appeared in connection with the conferral of posthumous honors for imperial princes; e.g., the cenotaph for L. Caesar [ILS 139 (= E] 68), l.12]. For a discussion of consensus in a much broader scope, Ando 2000, 131–205.

4 Other examples include Tiberius and his son Drusus delivering *laudationes* at Augustus’ funeral (Dio 56.34.4); and Germanicus’ children joining him in the chariot at his triumph (Tac. Ann. 2.41.2–3).
adopted son and included his own son, Britannicus, both potential successors, it more explicitly adumbrated the continuity of the dynasty. The presence of two successors further communicated a secure and prosperous future for the imperial family and as a consequence for Rome itself. The participation of all orders of Roman society – senate, equestrians, plebs – created the performed consensus that approved at least implicitly this succession plan.

Underpinning this notion of the *pompa circensis* as dynastic ceremony was the route that it traced through the city, which, evidence suggests, did not change from Republic to Principate. But the monuments and buildings along the route certainly did; some were significantly refurbished by the Julio-Claudian emperors, which resulted in a new dynastic topography of the city. The circus procession celebrating Nero’s *tirocinium fori*, then, was a dynastic ceremony processing through a cityscape that itself had become increasingly dynastic, creating a dynamic between the processional elements and the monuments along the route of the procession.

The aim of this paper is to reconstruct the *pompa circensis* featuring Nero and Britannicus in 51 CE, both in its processional elements and its route through the city. This reconstruction has further implications for our understanding of how Claudius dealt with the larger question of the succession. To this end, I will discuss the evidence and chronology for Nero’s *tirocinium fori* and the *pompa circensis* in section II as well as the larger question of the succession in the Julio-Claudian period; section III highlights the changes in the processional elements of the *pompa circensis* from Republic to Principate, which will lay the foundation for the discussion in section IV that reconstructs the circus procession featuring Nero and Britannicus; section V focuses on the dynamic between the dynastic elements of the circus procession and its route through Rome’s increasingly dynastic topography; and section VI will offer concluding remarks.

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5 Suetonius records the story that Nero, near the end of his reign, was advised in a dream to lead the sacred cart (*tensa*) of Jupiter from its shrine (*sacrarium*) to Vespasian’s house and on to the circus, which indicates that Suetonius, or his source, could envision the circus procession as a ceremony that indicated a transfer of imperial power (Vesp. 5.7; cf. Dio 65 [66].1.3).
II. The Evidence for the *pompa circensis* of 51 CE, Nero’s *tirocinium fori*, and Their Implications for the Succession under Claudius

In this section we will review the evidence for Nero’s *tirocinium fori*\(^6\) – literary, epigraphical, and numismatic – in order to establish the larger context for the *pompa circensis* featuring Nero and Britannicus, including its chronology and planning. As an act of performed consensus, it has further implications for understanding the succession under Claudius. We begin with the main source, Tacitus’ brief passage in book 12 of the *Annales*:

“In the consulship of Claudius (his fifth) and Servius Cornelius\(^7\) (51 CE) the toga of manhood was made ready for Nero ahead of his time (*maturata*), so that he would be regarded as fit for engaging in public affairs. And Caesar gladly yielded to the senate’s toady, by agreeing that Nero would become consul in his twentieth year and in the meantime would possess the *imperium* of a consul outside the city as consul designate and further would hold the title *princeps iuventutis*. A donative was offered to the army and a cash handout (*congiarium*) to the people in his name, and in circus games, which [Claudius] sponsored to win over the support of the populace, Britannicus wearing a purple-bordered toga and Nero in triumphal dress rode past: the crowd was supposed to observe the latter decked out like a military commander, and the former in the dress of a boy, and in so doing, anticipate the future of each one” (Tac. Ann. 12.41.1–2).\(^8\)

Other sources add further details: on this occasion Nero also delivered a speech of thanks to Claudius in the senate house and led a parade (*decursio*) of the praetorian guard (Suet. Nero 7.2). He was also co-opted into all four major priestly colleges.\(^9\) Nero was only two months removed from his thirteenth birthday when he assumed the *toga virilis*. Such a young age for this *rite de passage* was an apparent

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\(^6\) No source uses the term *tirocinium* in describing Nero’s coming of age ceremony. Suetonius, however, uses it for other princes of the imperial family (e.g., Gaius and Lucius Caesar [Aug. 26.2], Nero and Drusus Caesar [Tib. 54.1]; Gaius [Cal. 10.2]), and in his account of Nero’s coming of age, he states that Nero entered the forum as a *tiro* (*deductus in Forum tiro*; Nero 7.2).

\(^7\) On this man and his name, PIR\(^2\) 1, no. 1181. Nero later had him put to death (Suet. Nero 37.1).

\(^8\) Ti. Claudio quintum Servio Cornelio [Orfito] consulibus virilis toga Neroni maturata, quo capessendae rei publicae habilibis videretur. et Caesar adulationibus senatus libens cessit, ut vicesimo aetatis anno consulsaturn Nero intret atque interim designatus proconsulare imperium extra urbem haberet ac princeps iuventutis appellaretur. additum nomine eius donativum militi, congiarium plebei, et ludico circensium, quod adquirendis vulgi studiis edebatur, Britannicus in praetexta, Nero triumphali veste travecti sunt: spectaret populus hunc decore imperatorio, illum puerili habitu, ac perinde fortunam utriusque praesumeret.

\(^9\) RIC\(^1\), no. 75, p. 125 [Claudius].
departure from the earlier practice of Julio-Claudian emperors, which generally had young men wait until they had reached their fourteenth birthdays before taking part in this ceremony.\textsuperscript{10} Nero’s advancement at such a tender age (which Tacitus notes: \textit{virilis toga [...]} \textit{maturata}) allowed his coming of age ceremonies to occur in the same year that Claudius celebrated his \textit{decennalia} and sixtieth year – all significant milestones in the life of the imperial family. For these reasons it is not surprising that he chose to be one of the \textit{consules ordinarii} for the year 51 (only the fourth consulship of his Principate) and apparently to hold that office for the entire year. Such a lengthy consulship was a departure from his previous practice as well as that of his predecessors.\textsuperscript{11}

Some of the titles and honors conferred on Nero as part of his \textit{tirocinium fori} are recorded on coins of the period. One coin was minted with a bust of Claudius on the obverse and a bust of a youthful Nero on the reverse whose legend includes \textit{PRINC IVVENT} (\textit{princeps iuventutis}; fig. 1).\textsuperscript{12} Another coin records the same title and the order that conferred it; it shows a similar portrait of Nero on the obverse, including the title \textit{COS DESIGN} with a shield and spear on the reverse and the legend \textit{EQVESTER ORDO PRINCIPI IVVENT} (fig. 2).\textsuperscript{13} A third coin (already noted above) has a similar portrait of the youthful Nero on the obverse with the symbols of the four priestly colleges on the reverse, celebrating his co-optation as a supernumerary member into these colleges (fig. 3).\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{10} Augustus was likely 15 (Nic. Dam. 8–9 = FrGH 90, F127; cf. Suet. Aug. 94.10; Oct. 19: Fast. Antiat[es] ministr[orum] dom[us] Aug[ustae] [Inscr. Ital. 13.1, p. 329]), while his grandsons Gaius and Lucius Caesar were 14 years old, having come of age in 5 and 2 BCE, respectively (inferred from Augustus’ desire to hold the consulship when they came of age so that he might accompany them into the Forum for their \textit{tirocinium} [Suet. Aug. 26.2; cf. R. Gest. div. Aug. 14]); Tiberius was also 14 (Fast. Praen. [Inscr. Ital. 13.2, p. 131]; cf. Suet. Tib. 7.1) as was his son Drusus (born in 13 BCE, he assumed the \textit{toga virilis} in 2 CE [Suet. Tib. 15.1]). Agrippa Postumus, however, was likely 16 years old when he assumed the \textit{toga virilis} (born in 12 BCE he assumed the \textit{toga virilis} in 5 CE [Dio 55.22.4]); and Gaius did so in his nineteenth year (Suet. Cal. 10.1), as did Tiberius Gemellus (Suet. Cal. 15.2); the latter’s age at assumption of the \textit{toga virilis} is inferred from the date of his birth (October 19 CE) and the date of Gaius’ accession (March 37 CE). Since we know that he assumed the \textit{toga virilis} after Gaius came to power, he must have been at least 18 years old and more likely 19.

\textsuperscript{11} On the structure of the consular year under Claudius, Tortoriello 2004, 413f.; Levick 2015, 111f.; for the \textit{fasti} of 51 CE, Tortoriello 2004, 426. Under Claudius a \textit{consul ordinarius} holding office for the first time did so for six months, for the second time, only two months.

\textsuperscript{12} RIC I\textsuperscript{1}, no. 82, p. 126 [Claudius]; cf. no. 108, p. 129 [Claudius]. On the honors conferred on Nero at this time, see also Osgood 2011, 228–231.

\textsuperscript{13} RIC I\textsuperscript{1}, no. 78, p. 125 [Claudius]; cf. no. 108, p. 129 [Claudius].

\textsuperscript{14} RIC I\textsuperscript{1}, no. 76, p. 125 [Claudius]; cf. no. 107, p. 129 [Claudius]; also ILS 222, 4, which lists all four priesthoods.
Fig. 1: Obv. head of Claudius with diadem (r.). TI CLAVD CAESAR AVG GERM P M TR POT P P. Rev. bust of young Nero (l.). NERO CLAVD CAES DRVSVS GERM PRINC IVVENT. RIC 1², no. 82, p. 126 [Claudius]. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society (1944.100.39359).

Fig. 2: Obv. bust of young Nero (r.). NERONI CLAVDIO DRVSO GERM COS DESIGN. Rev. EQVESTER ORDO PRINC IVVENT in four lines on shield with spear behind. RIC 1², no. 78, p. 125 [Claudius]. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society (1944.100.39405).

Fig. 3: Obv. bust of young Nero (l.). NERO CLAVD CAES DRVSVS GERM PRINC IVVENT. Rev. priestly implements (simpulum on l., lituus on r. above, tripod on l. below, patera on r. below). SACERD COOPT IN OMN CONL SVPRA NVM EX S C. RIC 1², no. 76, p. 125 [Claudius]. Image courtesy of the American Numismatic Society (1954.256.7).
It is possible to date Nero’s *tirocinium fori* to 4/5 March based on two notices in the *acta* of the Arval Brethren – one on 4 March to commemorate Nero’s election to the consulship (*ob comitia consularia Neronis*) and another of Nero’s co-optation into the pontificate on 5 March (*ob pontificatum*).\(^{15}\) This evidence, combined with a coin indicating Nero’s co-optation as a supernumerary member into the four major priestly colleges (noted above), suggests that Nero was enrolled in all four colleges at the same time – presumably on 5 March.\(^ {16}\) It is therefore likely that many of the events referenced above occurred within this two-day period.\(^ {17}\) Nero could have assumed the *toga virilis* on 4 March, whereby he was enrolled among the *iuventus* and been acclaimed *princeps iuventutis*; he then entered the senate on the same day to be elected consul, receive proconsular power, and deliver his speech of thanks to Claudius. As for the donative and *congiarium*, it was already customary in the Republic for a young man of the senatorial aristocracy who assumed the *toga virilis* to mark his entry into the Forum with gifts (*sportulae*) to

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\(^{15}\) CIL 6.2041.65–70 [4 March] (= Smallwood 1967, no. 21), dating to the years 58/59 CE, and CIL 6.2042.1–4 [5 March] (= Smallwood 1967, no. 22), dating to the years 59/60 CE; on the date of Nero’s *tirocinium fori*, Aveline (2004) suggests 17 March, citing the *Liberalia* as the traditional date for the assumption of the *toga virilis*, while acknowledging that he was elected *consul designatus* on 4 March. In fact, the *Liberalia* was not as traditional a date for the assumption of the *toga virilis* as often believed; Dolansky 2008, 49 f.

\(^{16}\) The addition of the *septemviri epulonum* to the *pontifices*, *augures*, and *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* to create the four major priestly *collegia* of the Principate was apparently an innovation of Augustus; Suet. Aug. 100.2; Dio 53.1.5; Hoffman Lewis 1955, 11.

\(^{17}\) This same question arises in connection to the elevation of Gaius and Lucius Caesar; on the chronology of their assumption of the *toga virilis* and ceremonies associated with the *tiroconium fori* of each, Hurlet 1997, 122–125.
clients and other well-wishers.\textsuperscript{18} For a member of the imperial family, a congiarium and donative seem to have replaced these republican era gifts.\textsuperscript{19}

The circus games commemorating Nero’s change in status were likely ludi votivi, that is games not regularly on the Roman calendar, and therefore could have occurred soon after Nero’s assumption of the toga virilis, as Tacitus’ narrative suggests. The next ludi on the calendar after 4/5 March were the Megalenses commencing on 4 April or the Ceriales on 12 April. It made little sense, however, to sponsor games weeks after the events marking Nero’s change in status. Sponsoring ludi votivi to celebrate Nero’s tirocinium fori would have further exalted the occasion and focused the attention on the young members of the imperial family. This evidence, in sum, suggests early March for these ceremonies, including the circus games.

Tacitus asserts that circus games were sponsored to celebrate Nero’s tirocinium fori with the aim of winning the support of the people and describes Nero and Britannicus as “riding” (travecti sunt) in view of the people – Britannicus wearing the toga praetexta, Nero the vestis triumphalis. I believe that they appeared in the pompa circensis, first because the verb travecti sunt can be used to describe those participating in a procession,\textsuperscript{20} such as the transvectio equitum, the annual parade of knights. As princeps iuventutis (Prince of Youth), it is possible that Nero had a role to play in leading young men of equestrian families in this procession, which by tradition occurred each 15 July.\textsuperscript{21} It was typical for the divisions of these same young men to ride on horseback in the circus procession (as we will see further below), and one possible scenario is that Nero as Prince of Youth was called upon to lead these young men, also on horseback. Nero’s dress, the vestis triumphalis, however, argues against this reconstruction. The sponsor of circus

\textsuperscript{18} Ov. Fast. 3.787–88; cf. Plin. Ep. 10.116.1; Dolansky 2008, 51f.
\textsuperscript{19} In the case of Nero Caesar, the son of Germanicus, for instance, a congiarium was distributed on 7 June 20 CE (Fast. Ost. Inscr. Ital. 13.1, p. 187), the same day he donned the toga virilis (cf. Suet. Tib. 54.1 for his congiarium as well as one for his brother, Drusus Caesar). Nero Caesar also was allowed to bypass the vigintivirate and was enrolled into the pontifical college (Tac. Ann. 3.29.3; cf. 4.4.1, when Nero Caesar’s brother Drusus came of age). The Roman plebs, beneficiaries of Tiberius’ generosity, were especially pleased to see the progeny of Germanicus reaching the age of maturity. See below, n. 25 for the congiaria Augustus distributed when Gaius and Lucius came of age. On congiaria more generally, van Berchem 1939; Spinola 1990; Virlouvet 1995, esp. 15f., 60–81.
\textsuperscript{20} OLD, s.v. transveho, 3b.
\textsuperscript{21} Hence the coin referencing the ordo equester: RIC 1\textsuperscript{e}, no. 79, p. 125 [Claudius] (fig. 2). On the princeps iuventutis in the transvectio equitum, Poulsen 1991, 122–126 (referring to Gaius and Lucius Caesar); Champlin 2011, 98, has now argued against the princeps iuventutis leading the transvectio equitum; cf. Horster 2011, 77, who points out that the title was at least “connected to the duties of the organized knights”, which included the transvectio equitum.
games, usually a praetor in the imperial period, typically rode in the procession in a chariot (biga) dressed in the vestis triumphalis. The most likely scenario, then, is that Nero was riding in a biga dressed as the nominal sponsor of these games, in the same way that the donative and congiarium of his tirocinium fori were distributed in his name (nomine eius). Augustus, in his Res Gestae, lists the number of times he sponsored public entertainment – sometimes in his own name and other times in the names of his sons and grandsons (R. Gest. div. Aug. 22.1). In fact, Gaius and Lucius Caesar supervised the ludi circenses celebrating the dedication of the Temple of Mars Ultor in 2 BCE – the same year that Lucius came of age (whether one or both led the circus procession is not expressly stated; Dio 55.10.6). As we will see further below, for many of the elements of Nero’s tirocinium fori, Augustus’ treatment of Gaius and Lucius Caesar set the precedent. Nero, it seems, was allowed to be the nominal sponsor of these games while the princeps provided the actual funding.

Tacitus also hints at a problem faced not only by Claudius but also his predecessors, that is securing the future of the dynasty through the promotion of a potential successor or successors. In Claudius’ Principate the Julio-Claudian dynasty was still in its infancy, and the problem of the succession had yet to be resolved. No firm and fast rules for the succession existed, and even what appeared to be the best laid succession plans often ended in failure. There are indications that Claudius had the succession in mind when he advanced Nero in 51 CE. As noted above, Claudius chose to advance Nero in a year that he held the consulship, which was just one of the ways that he was looking to the apparent precedent set by Augustus in his promotion of Gaius and Lucius Caesar. Augustus largely relinquished the consulship in 23 BCE, only holding it on two occasions thereafter – in 5 and 2 BCE, when his grandsons came of age and, like Nero, assumed the toga virilis. In these years Gaius and Lucius (respectively) also, like Nero, were named consul designatus each at the age of 14 and hailed princeps iuventutis by the equestrian order. Augustus, in his Res Gestae, lists among the

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22 The vestis triumphalis was the traditional dress of magistrates sponsoring the games. Tacitus remarks that when the tribunes of the plebs petitioned to institute games in honor of Augustus following his death (the ludi Augustales), they were allowed to wear triumphal dress in the circus (per circum – presumably the pompa circensis is meant) but were forbidden the use of a chariot. Praetors later took responsibility for these games as well (Tac. Ann. 1.15.2–3).

23 Tacitus’ language is non-committal, since he uses the passive voice when describing the sponsorship of these circus games (Ann. 12.41.2: edebatur).

24 On their tirocinium fori, R. Gest. div. Aug. 14.1; Dio 55.9.9 (Gaius); 55.9.10 (Lucius); cf. 55.12.1; Suet. Aug. 26.2; as principes iuventutis, R. Gest. div. Aug. 14.2; Tac. Ann. 1.3.2; RIC 1, no. 205, p. 55 [Augustus]; also, e.g., ILS 131, 132. An honorary decree from Sardis celebrating Gaius’ assumption of the toga virilis shows that this event was felt in the provinces as well; I. Sardis 71, no. 8
many examples of his generosity, two congiaria, one in 5 and the other in 2 BCE, coinciding with his last consulships, which likely were distributed in honor of his grandsons’ coming of age ceremonies. All of this suggests that Claudius was emulating Augustus and had the succession in mind when he and members of his court arranged the ceremonies surrounding Nero’s tirocinium fori.

The other problem of the succession was the atmosphere of palace intrigue and rivalry it fostered. Tacitus includes in his account of Augustus’ potential successors a subtle allusion to Livia’s role in securing her son Tiberius’ accession through the untimely deaths of Gaius and Lucius (Ann. 1.3.3; cf. Dio 55.10a.10). Later, Agrippa Postumus was put to death, in part we are told, to obviate a dynastic rivalry (Tac. Ann. 1.6). The existence of such stories shows that Romans were willing to believe that palace intrigue fostered rivalries among potential successors, and in fact such intrigue lay behind Tiberius’ accession to the throne.

This same sense of palace intrigue informs Tacitus’ account of Nero’s entry into the imperial family and ultimate accession. Tacitus alludes to a rivalry between Britannicus and Nero on at least three important public occasions. The first is his description of Claudius’ revival of the Ludi Saeculares in 47 CE, when Britannicus and Nero (then still known as Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus) performed the intricate equestrian maneuvers known as the Lusus Troiae. Nero, Tacitus tells us, acquitted himself admirably and earned the more boisterous applause (favor acrior) from the spectators (Ann. 11.11.2–3). The second is the pompa circensis in 51 CE, which we will discuss in more detail below. The third is Nero’s accession in 54 CE, when he emerged from the palace following Claudius’ death, and members of the praetorian guard on duty are made to wonder where Britannicus was and in the absence of an alternative, accepted with apparent resignation Nero’s accession, an episode that implicitly casts doubt on Nero’s legitimacy (Tac. Ann. 12.69). Throughout his narrative Tacitus further describes the machinations behind the scenes – with Agrippina advocating for her son, with the support of

25 Augustus, for instance, gave 60 denarii each to 320,000 Roman citizens in 5 BCE, the year that Gaius entered public life (R. Gest. div. Aug. 15.2) and repeated the distribution to 200,000 Roman citizens in 2 BCE when Lucius entered public life (R. Gest. div. Aug. 15.3). Sixty denarii were the cash equivalent of 60 modii of grain (at the price of 1 modius/denarius), which was the usual quantity in an annual distribution of grain. Augustus thus wanted to be sure that the cash amount distributed in these congiaria could purchase sufficient grain to sustain a Roman family for one year (Cooley 2009, 172).

26 On Claudius’ succession plan, see further Levick 2015, 82–86; cf. Osgood 2011, 225–233, who suggests that Nero’s promotion might have been improvised rather than planned.
some members of the imperial household, while others supported Britannicus, to such an extent that the imperial household was riven with rivalry and intrigue.27

Such intrigue is not surprising when so much was at stake. Hence, it is also likely that several members of the imperial household were involved in planning Nero’s *tirocinium fori*. Claudius no doubt had a hand in arranging some of the elements,28 along with members of the senate who drafted the decrees conferring the various titles and honors.29 Leading members of the equestrian order likely would have been consulted for the acclamation of the title *princeps iuventutis*.30 Agrippina’s involvement in advocating for her son is attested throughout the source tradition, most pointedly by Tacitus who has Agrippina claim after the fact that she was responsible for his adoption by Claudius, the conferral of proconsular power, the title of *consul designatus*, and all the other factors that ensured his accession.31 Agrippina’s involvement in Nero’s *tirocinium fori* follows a pattern of imperial women planning such important events in the lives of imperial family members, especially those occurring at transition points in life. A family council (*consilium*) convening to determine the posthumous honors for Germanicus, for instance, likely including Livia and Germanicus’ mother, Antonia.32 Whether this

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27 Narcissus, one of Claudius’ imperial freedmen, supported Aelia Paetina for Claudius’ wife after Messalina’s demise (Tac. Ann. 12.1.2–2.1) and Britannicus’ fortunes (Ann. 12.65); in any event, Agrippina’s hatred for Narcissus was manifest (e.g., Ann. 12.57.2). Pallas supported Agrippina (12.1.2; 2.3) and later convinced Claudius to adopt Nero (12.25.1–2); cf. Dio 61 [60].32–33 for Agrippina’s promotion of Nero and consequent displacement of Britannicus.

28 The appearance of Britannicus in the circus procession, apparently alongside Nero (already noted above), was more likely Claudius’ doing than Agrippina’s. As I will argue in more detail below (section IV), the joint appearance of Nero and Britannicus was another way that Claudius dealt with the problem of the succession.

29 For a list of those senators most closely tied to Claudius, Michel 2015, 134–140. The posthumous honors for Germanicus are a possible analogy. At a senate meeting the consuls proposed various honors, as recorded in the *Tabula Siarensis*, the details of some of which were left up to Tiberius to work out (Tab. Siar. frag. (a) 22–23).

30 In his speech to the senate now preserved as the Lyons tablet (ILS 212 = Smallwood 1967, no. 369, col. II, l. 10), Claudius, for instance, references one L. Vestinus, an *eques* and close adviser (*familiarissime diligo et hodieque in rebus meis detineo*); he later rose to be prefect of Egypt (PIR2 I.622; cf. OGIS 668 = Smallwood 1967, no. 419).

31 [...] *meis consiliis adoptio et proconsulare ius et designatio consulatus et cetera apiscendo imperio praeparentur* (Tac. Ann. 13.21.3–4). Agrippina’s statement is part of her rebuttal to charges brought against her by a rival, Junia Silana. For Agrippina’s promotion of Nero as Claudius’ successor, see also Dio 61 [60].32–33; cf. Barrett 1996, 110–118; Ginsburg 2006, 22–35; Drinkwater 2019, 32–35.

32 Tab. Siar. frag. (a) 3–8, with Lott’s note (2012) ad loc. (pp. 213 f.); cf. Seager 2013, 52. A few additional examples: Atia, Octavian’s mother, was the keeper of the instructions for Caesar’s funeral (Nic. Dam. 17.48 [FGrH 90, F130]). Livia, it appears, was also involved in the planning
of triumphs; Flory 1998, 492, citing Ov. Pont. 3.4.95–96 (quid cessas currum pompamque parare triumphis/Livia?); cf. Cons. Liv. 26.

33 Suet. Nero 7.2; Suetonius also adds that Nero gave speeches on behalf of the people of Bononia and Rhodes, although Tacitus places these speeches in 53 CE (Ann. 12.58). There is no easy way to resolve this discrepancy in the two accounts. The authors may have been following variant source traditions; or, as Bradley suggests (1978, 60), Suetonius may have confused the date of the three speeches in the senate with Nero’s speech of thanks to Claudius.

34 Scheid 2003, 141–143, although it is not certain whether the same procedure would have been followed in Nero’s case since he joined these colleges as a supernumerary member. Suetonius records that one of Nero’s ancestors (Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus) was responsible for the change in procedure (Suet. Nero 2.1).

35Tacitus says that Nero was to be “acclaimed” (appellaretur) princeps iuventutis (Ann. 12.41.1); Augustus uses the same verb (appellarunt) to describe the conferral of the same title on Gaius and Lucius Caesar (R. Gest. div. Aug. 14.2); on the theater as the meeting place for the equestrian order, Rowe 2002, 79–83; Davenport 2019, 375–380.

36Cameron 1974, 157–192; Zanker 2010, 67–70.

Council included freedmen is uncertain but likely. Agrippina’s ally in the household was Claudius’ freedman Pallas, who helped engineer Nero’s adoption (Tac. Ann. 12.25.1).

Since so much was at stake in the succession – it not only affected the imperial household but it also had implications for the larger populace of Rome – a performed consensus among all orders of Roman society was necessary in order to legitimate any succession plan. Such a performed consensus was probably not an innovation of Claudius and his advisers, for we have already seen some of the precedents readily available to them, but it was an essential element of Nero’s tirocinium fori: Nero received titles and powers that were senatorial and harkened back to the Republic (consul designatus and imperium proconsulare), and then appeared in the senate house to deliver a speech of thanks to Claudius.33 Moreover, election to the major priestly colleges usually required a vote in the senate that was confirmed by the comitia tributa.34 The equestrian order acclaimed him Prince of Youth (princeps iuventutis), perhaps in the theater, which in the Principate had become the meeting place for this order as a corporate body.35 Cash gifts were given in his name to the soldiers and plebs (donativum and congiarium). All of this culminated in games in the circus, an important locus of interaction between princeps and people.36 The pompa circensis was an essential element in this process since it was itself an act of performed consensus, involving all orders of Roman society, in a ceremony that, as we will see in the next section, evolved from the Republic to Principate to privilege the imperial family.
III. The *pompa circensis* from Republic to Principate

In order to understand the circus procession in 51 CE involving Nero and Britannicus as a dynastic ceremony, it is necessary to discuss the evolution of the *pompa circensis* from its origins in the Republic to the Principate and by extension its broader role in celebrating the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Our starting point, then, will be the circus procession’s traditional processional elements and route through the city while highlighting the changes introduced in the Principate.37

The *pompa circensis* proceeded from high to low, from the head of Rome and its empire – the citadel (*arx*) of the Capitolium – to the valley between the Palatine and Aventine hills, occupied by the Circus Maximus, linking together three important political and religious centers of Rome: the Capitolium, the symbolic and sacred head of the city, the Forum Romanum, its political and religious heart, and the Circus Maximus, a venue for the interaction between the princeps and people (map 1). The appearance of all of these spaces changed under the Julio-Claudian emperors. The procession involved all orders of Roman society, including the highest ranking magistrates who went in advance of the procession, highlighted by the magistrate in charge of the particular games, who rode in a chariot garbed in triumphal dress, a conveyance and outfit that evoked the triumph.38 For the praetor sponsoring *ludi circenses* under the Principate the *pompa circensis* was his triumph, at least in terms of the dress he wore and the conveyance to the circus, during a period when the triumph was restricted to the emperor and members of the imperial family. The praetors who had presided over games enjoyed a permanent memorial of their participation in the form of

37 For a fuller description and discussion of both the processional elements and itinerary, Latham 2016, 17–101. I will also discuss the itinerary of the circus procession during Nero’s *tirocinium fori* in more detail below. My reconstruction of the processional order is based primarily on Dion. Hal. 7.72. Dionysius, a Greek writing during the Principate of Augustus, provides the most complete description of a *pompa circensis*, which must be read with caution, inasmuch as Dionysius by his own admission was writing a history of Rome’s earliest days to prove that it was founded by Greeks. The circus procession, in his mind, was Greek in origin, and shows Greek influence on Roman institutions. Moreover, since Dionysius’ source is Fabius Pictor, we have to assume that aspects of his description of a circus procession are from Fabius’ day, around the end of the third century BCE. See also Latham 2016, 21–36; cf. Schultze 2004.

38 That is, the *tunica palmata* and *toga picta*; he clutched an ivory scepter, while a slave rode with him, balancing a gold crown above his head (Iuv. 10.36–46); dress and apparatus evoked the triumph (Iuv. 11.194–96: *similis triumpho*). The scepter and crown, although they were magisterial insignia, nonetheless became regular iconographic features on reliefs commemorating careers of senators who had sponsored games; Schäfer 1989, 180–182.
Map 1: Map of central Rome, showing the major monuments and possible route of the circus procession featuring Nero and Britannicus in 51 CE.
a statue of themselves riding in a two-horse chariot (*biga*).\(^{39}\) It should be noted, too, that with the advent of the Principate, Augustus transferred the sponsorship of games from aediles, who had enjoyed this privilege under the Republic, to praetors and consuls, magistracies that were integral to the *cursus honorum* and therefore in the hands of magistrates who owed their career advancement to the *princeps* himself. Thus through this ceremony the emperor’s role as dispenser of honors was evident, while members of the senatorial order in turn demonstrated their proximity to the center of power.

The youngest members of the two higher orders of Roman society were also represented in the divisions of youths in military formation – first, the sons of members of the equestrian order on horseback and then sons of those serving in the infantry.\(^{40}\) Following these young men were the charioteers, athletes and other performers, including dancers and musicians. Most of the youthful leaders of these cavalry divisions (the *seviri equitum*) were in fact young members of the senatorial order who were enrolled among the *iuventus* upon donning the *toga virilis*.\(^{41}\) Hence, this procession traditionally included those young men who had recently celebrated their *tirocinia*, much like Nero in 51 CE. In the *pompa circensis*, then, just as in the *transvectio equitum*, the future leaders of the Roman aristocracy were an abiding and visible presence.\(^{42}\)

An important purpose of the circus procession was to usher the images of the gods from the Capitoline to the circus, thus forming (arguably) the single, most important display of deities in Rome.\(^{43}\) Attendants carried the images (*simulacra*) of the Olympian gods on their shoulders, probably on litters (*fercula*), while boys led sacred carts (*tensae*) containing physical symbols (*exuviae*) appropriate to each deity. The next generation of deities was present as well, as were demigods.\(^{44}\) Ovid calls the *pompa circensis* the “golden procession” (*aurea pompa*) in his poetical reimagining of a circus procession at games he attended with his mistress (Ov. Am. 3.2.44), while in another poem he describes statues of the gods made from ivory (*caelistibus [...] eburnis*; Ov. Ars 1.147), conjuring the image of a parade of gold and ivory statues of the principal gods and goddessesses.\(^{45}\)

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\(^{39}\) Plin. *HN* 34.20; it is not known where these statues were erected.

\(^{40}\) Leaders of the divisions of knights were the *seviri equitum* who also led these same divisions in the Parade of Knights (*transvectio equitum*) on 15 July each year and in the Julio-Claudian period participated in the *Lusus Troiae*; Taylor 1924.

\(^{41}\) Taylor 1924; cf. Demougin 1988, 241; Davenport 2019, 209 f., 385 f.

\(^{42}\) Latham 2016, 29.

\(^{43}\) Feeney 1998, 96.

\(^{44}\) For *fercula* in the circus procession, Macr. Sat. 1.23.13; Latham 2016, 50–59; for *tensae*, Latham 2016, 61–65.

\(^{45}\) On the procession of the gods (*pompa deorum*), Latham 2016, 44–66.
Parading the images of the gods in the circus procession was a traditional form of religious devotion that the Julio-Claudian emperors readily preserved. It is also true that in the Principate the world of the gods expanded to include members of the imperial family, first Caesar and then Augustus himself, and in due course the circus procession too was expanded to reflect this larger divine world. Included among the many honors for Julius Caesar were a *ferculum* and *tensa* in the *pompa circensis*, the ceremonial conveyances for a statue and divine symbols. A new honor was invented, it seems, for the deified Augustus – a seated statue conveyed in the circus procession in a cart drawn by four elephants (*currus elephantorum*; fig. 4). Statues of the princes of the imperial household also were conveyed in the circus procession. We have direct evidence of such an honor for Germanicus, and since his posthumous honors were based on the precedent of those for Gaius and Lucius Caesar, it is likely that their statues also were conveyed in the circus procession. The honors for Augustus' nephew Marcellus at his death in 23 BCE, which included a golden image, crown and *sella* in the theater during the *Ludi Romani* (Dio 53.30.6), increases the probability that his image appeared in the circus procession as well.

Tacitus’ language (*praeiret*) suggests that Germanicus’ statue went in advance of the circus procession, and so it is possible to imagine the images of the deified and honored dead of the imperial family being conveyed in advance of the images of the traditional gods and demigods. The precise order in which the various processional elements marched or were conveyed is uncertain. But in any case, the insertion of statues of members of the imperial family in the procession showed that the religious position of the imperial family stood in close proximity to the traditional deities and in fact formed a link between the mortal world and the divine.

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46 Suet. Iul. 76.1. On these divine honors, Latham 2016, 103–132.
47 Illustrated on the reverse of a coin minted under Tiberius; RIC 1’, no. 62, p. 98 [Tiberius]; on this coin the statue of Augustus is depicted holding a laurel branch in his right hand and a scepter in his left. Cf. Dio 62 [61].16.4, who relates the story that on one occasion during the reign of the emperor Nero the elephants pulling the chariot with Augustus' image advanced in the Circus Maximus only as far as the senators' seats before stopping; cf. Anth. Pal. 9.285 (Phillip 4) 116.
48 Tac. Ann. 2.83.1; cf. Latham 2016, 118 (most likely leading the *pompa deorum*, the procession of the gods); for a discussion, see further below.
49 The honors for Gaius and Lucius Caesar are recorded by decrees from the town council of Pisa; CIL 11.1420; ILS 139 = EJ 68 (for Lucius’ honors); and CIL 11.1421; ILS 140 = EJ 69 (for Gaius’ honors); for English transl. of these documents, see now Lott 2012, 63–65 [Lucius] and 73–77 [Gaius]; see also Rowe’s discussion of these documents (2002, 102–123).
50 Arena 2010, 73f.
These honors for members of the imperial family, originating with Julius Caesar, were still evolving in the Julio-Claudian period. Gaius expanded those eligible for such honors by including his mother, the elder Agrippina, who received, after her remains were interred in the Mausoleum of Augustus, the posthumous honor of circus games and her image conveyed on a *carpentum* in the procession.\(^{51}\) Gaius celebrated his sister Drusilla’s birthday, following her death, with circus games, which included the appearance of her image on an elephant chariot in the procession (Dio 59.13.8), just one of the many divine honors accorded her.\(^{52}\) Claudius conferred the same honor on Livia in 42 CE, following her formal deification, but the precedent was Augustus, not Drusilla.\(^{53}\) Livia’s cult statue was also added to the *cella* of the Temple of Divus Augustus.\(^{54}\) Claudius also included in the procession a *carpentum* for his mother, Antonia Minor (Suet. Claud. 11.2), usually depicted on coinage as a wagon or cart being drawn by two donkeys.\(^{55}\) Claudius thus evinced a keen interest in the circus procession by creating a hierarchy of honors for the deified members and honored dead of the Julio-Claudian dynasty that apparently prevailed beyond his reign.\(^{56}\)

Claudius’ British triumph in 44 CE offers a point of comparison that echoes some of the features of the *pompa circensis* in 51. Claudius seems to have established, or attempted to establish, a similar hierarchy of military honors, for he conferred triumphal honors (*ornamenta triumphalia*) on all commanders who had served under him in the conquest of Britain, even those who had not yet held the consulship – the implication being that here he was departing from precedent (Dio 60.23.2; cf. 60.20.4). These men wearing the *toga praetexta* followed the triumphal chariot on foot. M. Licinius Crassus Frugi, by contrast, since he had

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\(^{51}\) Suet. Cal. 15.1. Livia had previously been allowed this same ceremonial conveyance following an illness in 22 CE, but it seems not to have been used in the *pompa circensis*.

\(^{52}\) For a full list of her funerary honors, Dio 59.11; cf. Sen. dial. 11.17A–6; apocol. 1.2–3; ILS 197; see also Gradel 2002, 295–297 (focusing on the witness to her ascension to heaven). Drusilla’s deification was likely never revoked but it may have been ignored: Gradel 2002, 164, 181.

\(^{53}\) On Livia’s elephant chariot, Suet. Claud. 11.2; cf. Dio 60.5.2, who relates the other honors for Livia, including a statue in the Temple of Divus Augustus (see below, n. 54). Suetonius implies that Livia received the same honor, but in future, empresses’ statues in the circus procession were drawn on elephant *bigae* (Latham 2016, 122–128). On these honors, see also Gradel 2002, 165–186, for his discussion of the relief of the Vicomagistri and its connection to the cult of Livia; see also Brännstedt 2015 for Livia’s presence in processions.

\(^{54}\) Dio 60.5.2. The two cult statues, Augustus and Livia together, are depicted on a coin minted under Antoninus Pius after he restored the temple in 140 CE; BMCRE 4, nos. 2063–2066, p. 352.

\(^{55}\) A fine specimen was minted by Gaius in memory of his mother, the elder Agrippina; RIC 1\(^2\), no. 55, p. 112 [Gaius].

\(^{56}\) On Claudius’ regularization of these honors, Latham 2016, 121; for these honors in the Flavian period and beyond, Latham 2016, 122–128.
been awarded triumphal honors for the second time, rode a caparisoned horse (*equus phaleratus*), wearing the *toga palmata* (Suet. Claud. 17.3). These were the trappings of an *ovatio*.

Another innovation of Claudius’ British triumph was the sight of Messalina, riding in a *carpentum* behind his triumphal chariot – but in front of the commanders distinguished by triumphal honors. The *carpentum*, a ceremonial conveyance traditionally reserved for priestesses in religious processions, had become an honor conferred on female members of the imperial family. Family members often accompanied the triumphal chariot, usually the sons of the commander on horseback. At Octavian’s triumph in 29 BCE, for instance, both Marcellus, his nephew, and Tiberius, the elder of his stepsons, accompanied his chariot (Suet. Tib. 6.4). Germanicus’ triumph in 17 CE was distinguished by the appearance of his five children in his triumphal chariot (Tac. Ann. 2.41.2–3), including Nero’s mother the younger Agrippina, although she would have been no more than two years old. Messalina’s appearance in a *carpentum* at Claudius’ triumph is the first one so attested of the wife of a commander at a triumph. This innovation, along with Claudius’ honors for Livia and Antonia in the circus procession, show his intention to honor female members of the imperial family in the grand processions of the imperial age.

The changes in the *pompa circensis* from Republic to Principate (highlighted in the above description) begin to show in sharper relief its function as dynastic ceremony. This ceremony evoked the revered republican past, as did Augustus’ Principate more generally, which rested firmly on the framework of republican political institutions – senate, magistracies, assemblies. At the same time, the *pompa circensis* celebrated the central role of the imperial family by honoring deceased and deified members with statues and other ceremonial accoutrements. The *pompa circensis* showed the imperial family at the head of the Roman aristocracy, both senate and equestrian order, while the display of the images of members of the imperial family, the deified and honored dead, ushering the images of the gods into the circus evoked the religious position of the emperor and his family: the newly deified members of the imperial family, the new family of gods, accompanied the traditional deities in the circus procession. The religious position of the emperor and members of his family remained a point of tension. The emperor was not divine, at least not until the senate decreed him so after his death, yet he was the central figure in the state cult and temples to

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57 Vervaet – Date 2018, 333–339; Sumi 2011b.
58 Suet. Claud. 17.3; Flory 1998.
59 Rowe highlights the dynastic house as a central component of the political culture of the Principate (2002, 1).
Roma and Augustus abounded in the provinces, especially in the east. The ambiguity of Augustus’ religious position was evident in a circus procession at a certain ludi votivi when he led the tensae reclining on a litter as he recovered from illness. His posture and presence among the images of the divine might have made him appear as a divinity himself.

The above description of the pompa circensis also supports the contention I made earlier, namely that the circus procession was especially suited for use as a dynastic ceremony, perhaps even more so than the other two great pompae in imperial Rome – the triumphalis and funebris – since as it occurred more frequently it offered more opportunities to present greater dynastic assemblages of the deified and honored dead of the imperial family. Circus processions, by tradition, preceded all games in the circus – certainly those games fixed on the calendar from the Republic (Ludi Romani, Plebeii, Ceriales, Florales, Apollinares) as well as those added in the imperial age (e.g., Ludi Martiales and Ludi Augustales), and further those that were vowed for a specific occasion (ludi votivi), which means that Romans typically witnessed several circus processions in a given year. The comparative frequency of this type of procession, on the other hand, should not lead us to believe that these were quotidian events of little significance. The dynastic assemblage on display at these processions reaffirmed the central role of the imperial family in Roman politics and society. Furthermore, the coming of age of an imperial prince, as occurred in 51 CE, was a rare event, and it could only have elevated the importance of the circus procession on this occasion.

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60 Scholarship on the imperial cult is vast. Of particular note are Taylor 1931 (on the divinity of the emperor); on the imperial cult in the east, Price 1984; on the imperial cult in the west, Fishwick 1987; see also Clauss 1999; Gradel 2002; Koortbojian 2013.
61 Suet. Aug. 43.5; Humphrey 1986, 79; Latham 2016, 113.
62 Latham 2016, 17 f. By the reign of Claudius, the narrower timeframe of this paper, triumphs had long been restricted to members of the imperial family, and while Claudius himself celebrated a triumph in 44 CE for his victory in Britain, his was the first since his brother Germanicus’ triumph in 17 CE. On triumphs in the Julio-Claudian period, Goldbeck 2017. Imperial funerals were similarly rare: after the lavish funeral for the dynasty’s founder in 14 CE, Tiberius was allowed a funeral mainly to secure Gaius’ precarious succession (amid shouts of “into the Tiber with Tiberius!”; Tiberium in Tiberim!, Suet. Tib. 75.1); on Tiberius’ funeral, Suet. Tib. 75.3 and Cal. 13–15.1.
63 Latham 2016, 3 f.
IV. Nero and Britannicus in the *pompa circensis*

The previous two sections – covering first the evidence for Nero’s *tirocinium fori* and implications for the succession and second the evolution of the circus procession from Republic to Principate – established the larger context for the *pompa circensis* in 51 CE. With this larger context in mind, we can see in sharper relief the additions and omissions that characterized the procession featuring Nero and Britannicus. The insertion of Britannicus in a procession celebrating the coming of age of Nero is especially striking, and the appearance of both young men – their clothing and conveyance into the circus – evoked the triumphal imagery so important to imperial ideology.

The first point to note is the presence of Nero and Britannicus at the head of the procession. Such appearances of living members of the imperial family in the circus procession are rarely attested. On one occasion during votive games (*ludi votivi*), as I noted above, Augustus led the procession of ceremonial carts (*tensae*) while reclining on a litter (Suet. Aug. 43.5). Gaius, it seems, in advance of the games commemorating the dedication of the Temple of Divus Augustus (ca. 37 CE), led the circus procession riding in a six-horse chariot. 64 I also noted that there were precedents for most of the honors and titles granted to Nero on the occasion of his *tirocinium fori* (e.g., Gaius and Lucius Caesar), including circus games. We should regard the appearance of potential successors leading a circus procession as a rare occurrence if not an innovation on Claudius’ part.

The appearance of the two young men further informs our understanding of the use of the circus procession as dynastic ceremony. The dress of both young men in this procession, as we have already noted, was especially telling. Britannicus, now aged 10 years, was dressed in a *toga praetexta* and Nero, aged 13, in the garb of a magistrate presiding at the games (*vestis triumphalis*). Tacitus further distinguishes their dress by describing Nero’s as the “decoration of a commander” (*decus imperatorium*), while Britannicus’ was a “boy’s outfit” (*puerilis habitus*). Although Tacitus makes much of this distinction in dress, it was appropriate for the occasion, since Britannicus had yet to assume the *toga virilis*. Nero’s dress, however, was not just the customary dress of the presiding magistrate, but also the *decus imperatorium*: it was an honor or distinction (*decus*)

64 Dio 59.7.4. The meaning of Dio’s text is not entirely clear. He mentions a performance of the *Lusus Troiae*, Gaius’ six-horse chariot, and then races in the circus. Since the *Lusus Troiae* was likely a part of the circus procession, and the races Dio mentions clearly occurred after such a procession, the mention of Gaius’ six-horse chariot between the two other events, makes it likely that he rode this chariot in the procession. It is difficult to imagine another opportunity during these games.
usually reserved for an *imperator*. This term recalls that Nero had received at his assumption of the *toga virilis* proconsular power outside the city (*proconsulare imperium extra urbem*), a privilege that seems not to have been granted to any of the other previous princes of the imperial family at so young an age, and it was conferred long before he would actually exercise it. Tacitus anticipated that the distinguishing dress would induce the crowd witnessing the event to foresee the divergent fortunes of the two young men. Nero, of course, as Tacitus’ readers well knew, was destined to succeed Claudius while Britannicus, forever a boy, would perish before ever donning the *toga virilis* himself. Perhaps not lost on Tacitus was the irony of a thirteen year old outfitted like a Roman commander, without the benefit of being hailed *imperator* by the troops – and further that this privilege was granted at the behest of an emperor who himself lacked meaningful military experience.

Tacitus emphasizes Claudius’ promotion of Nero, his now adopted son, over Britannicus, his biological son, as the consequence of the influence of the freedman Pallas and Claudius’ wife Agrippina, creating a rivalry that Tacitus highlights in his account by comparing the two potential successors, with greater sympathy shown to the doomed Britannicus. Nero is presented in Tacitus’ narrative as the interloper in the imperial household (the adopted son displacing the biological son). Claudius had good reason to favor Nero – he was older and as the great-great-grandson of Augustus and the grandson of Germanicus, boasted descent from both the Julian and Claudian *gentes*.\(^{65}\) There was also precedent for this in the history of the Julio-Claudian succession, for Tiberius adopted Germanicus although he had a son already in Drusus.\(^{66}\)

What is striking, however, is that into the circus procession celebrating Nero’s *tirocinium fori*, Britannicus was inserted in a prominent position, and this must have been the work of Claudius and those in the imperial household, such as the freedman Narcissus, who supported Britannicus. It is worth considering more closely, then, Britannicus’ appearance to see how it might inform our understanding of the circus procession as well as its larger implications for Claudius’ view of the succession.

Britannicus was wearing the *toga praetexta*, which Tacitus pointedly describes as a boy’s garb (*puerilis habitus*). Dangling from Britannicus’ neck was

\(^{65}\) On Claudius’ efforts to elevate the Claudian branch and therefore create a truly Julio-Claudian dynasty, Rose 1997, 39–45, with visual evidence drawn from the provinces as well. On Nero’s priority over Britannicus, Levick 2015, 80 f.; Drinkwater 2019, 14 f.

\(^{66}\) Tac. Ann. 1.3.5; Suet. Tib. 15.2; Dio 55.13.1a–3; but cf. Levick 1966, 230–233, who argues that as a result of the adoptions of 4 CE, Drusus was not displaced by Germanicus or put in a secondary position but was actually equal.
likely the *bulla*, a golden amulet or locket, worn by young boys to ward off evil. The two accoutrements are usually paired as symbols of boyhood and freeborn status.\(^\text{67}\) Moreover, a young man dedicated both the *toga praetexta* and the *bulla* to the household Lares on the day that he donned the *toga virilis* to mark his transition from boyhood to manhood (Pers. 5.30–31). There is also a tradition that these symbols of boyhood were of Etruscan origin and worn by kings.\(^\text{68}\) There is a further tradition that Tarquinius Priscus awarded his son the *toga praetexta* and *bulla*, as emblems of military valor, for slaying an enemy in battle while still a boy.\(^\text{69}\) These are obscure traditions, to be sure, perhaps familiar only to Roman antiquarians and pedants; but someone like the emperor Claudius, himself a scholar of Etruscan history, would have known them.\(^\text{70}\) This second tradition, moreover, extends into the historical period in the case of M. Aemilius Lepidus (*cos*. 187 BCE), who similarly killed an enemy in battle while still a boy.\(^\text{71}\) Coins minted later by another M. Aemilius Lepidus, the future triumvir, in 61 BCE, show his ancestor on horseback and an abbreviated legend referencing the act, which was further commemorated by a statue erected on the Capitolium, likely of Lepidus on horseback, as the coins show, wearing the *toga praetexta* and *bulla*.\(^\text{72}\) Finally, the *toga praetexta* was also the dress of one who celebrated an *ovatio* and rode into the city on horseback.\(^\text{73}\)

These obscure traditions might have been known to Claudius but whether they were also known to any of the spectators watching Nero and Britannicus lead the circus procession in 51 CE is uncertain. If we imagine, however, Britannicus riding on horseback alongside Nero in the *biga*, dressed in the *toga praetexta* and *bulla*, then these associations – with Etruscan kingship, acts of precocious military valor, and victory – might have become more apparent. In this scenario, then, the triumphal elements of the circus procession would have been

\(^\text{67}\) Palmer 1989 [1998].  
\(^\text{68}\) Festus, p. 428/430L; for the *toga praetexta* as an inheritance from Etruria, see also Macr. Sat. 1.6.7, introduced to Rome by Tullus Hostilius, along with the curule chair, lictors, and the *toga picta*, as the insignia of Etruscan magistrates.  
\(^\text{69}\) Macr. Sat. 1.6.8; cf. Plin. HN 33.10; Plut. Mor. 287F–288A.  
\(^\text{70}\) Claudius showed off his knowledge of Etruscan history, and even engages in source criticism, in his speech calling for the enrollment of Gauls in the senate, preserved as the Lyons tablet (CIL 13.688 = ILS 212 = Smallwood 1967, no. 369).  
\(^\text{71}\) Val. Max. 3.1.1. Lepidus’ act of bravery took place during the Second Punic War.  
\(^\text{72}\) RRC 419/1–3: *an[norum XV pr[ogressus] h[ostem] o[ccidit] c[ivem] s[ervavit]*. This legend can be filled out from the text of Val. Max. 3.1.1. Cf. Plut. Mor. 288A, which states explicitly that Lepidus slew the enemy while on horseback, and more generally, Palmer 1989 [1998], 24.  
\(^\text{73}\) Dion. Hal. 5.47.3; cf. Vervaet – Dart 2018. The *bulla* was also worn by commanders in triumphs containing *remedia* to ward off evils (Macr. Sat. 1.6.9).
underscored. In this scenario, too, their respective outfits still indicated unequal status – one evoking an ovatio, the other a triumph – but not in the way that Tacitus asserts. This is not to suggest that Tacitus is simply wrong – after all the toga praetexta was the dress of Roman boyhood – but only that Britannicus’ outfit had other associations, too, and ones that might have been evoked especially on this occasion.

Nero riding in a biga dressed in vestis triumphalis, Britannicus on horseback dressed in an outfit that evoked military valor and victory offered the spectators a view of future leaders of the imperial family, of potential successors who might one day accede to the throne. It is also worth pointing out that featuring both Nero and Britannicus in the circus procession in this way adhered to a Julio-Claudian practice of elevating a pair of successors: one might begin with Marcellus and Tiberius, who appeared together in Octavian’s triumph in 29 BCE (Suet. Tib. 6.4), although the Principate had yet to take form. Tiberius and Nero Claudius Drusus, sons of Livia and stepsons of Augustus, were each given magistracies and commands and celebrated victories, but they were soon supplanted by Augustus’ grandsons and later adopted sons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar. Tiberius, Augustus’ eventual successor, adopted Germanicus and regarded him as a potential successor alongside his own son, Drusus.74 Germanicus died in the east and Drusus in the imperial palace under suspicious circumstances, both victims, it is alleged, of poisoning. After Drusus’ death a mournful Tiberius entrusted to the senate Nero and Drusus Caesar, sons of Germanicus, establishing them as potential successors (non dubia successio; Tac. Ann. 4.12.2). When they too had succumbed to the machinations of Sejanus and after Sejanus’ demise, Tiberius selected Gaius (Caligula), the third of Germanicus’ sons, and Tiberius Gemellus as potential successors. Tiberius named these two as heirs in equal portion (Suet. Tib. 76). Gaius later named Tiberius Gemellus princeps iuventutis (Suet. Cal. 15.2), apparently marking him out as his own successor, and perhaps following Tiberius’ plan to have a clear line of succession from himself to Gaius and then Tiberius Gemellus.75 Of these imperial princes and the predecessors of Nero and Britannicus (e.g., Marcellus, Tiberius, Nero Claudius Drusus, Gaius and Lucius Caesar, Nero and Drusus Caesar) only a statue for Germanicus in the circus procession is attested explicitly, but it is likely that the others would have been honored in

74 Above, n. 66. On Marcellus’ succession, see also Brandt 1995; on the early careers of Tiberius and Nero Claudius Drusus, Vervaet 2020.
75 Such a succession plan of elevating a pair of successors is known as a “Doppelprinzipat” (Rowe 2002, 17 f.; for a fuller explication, Kornemann 1930). On Britannicus and Nero as paired successors, Levick 2015, 80 f. Such a pair is also suggestive of the republican principle of collegiality; Osgood 2013, 32.
the same way. Whether their statues would have appeared as pairs is unknown, although it seems likely to be the case for Gaius and Lucius Caesar and Nero and Drusus Caesar since they were often named together.\textsuperscript{76} Tacitus asserts Nero’s priority over Britannicus in this procession. Other evidence, however, shows that even after Nero assumed the \textit{toga virilis}, Britannicus remained in the priority.\textsuperscript{77} Finally, Claudius’ insertion of Britannicus into this circus procession also allowed him to display the full glory of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and the security of two potential successors,\textsuperscript{78} with a public show of the harmony between the two brothers.\textsuperscript{79}

It is also worth noting other additions to the procession as well as salient omissions. An important part of the procession, as noted above, was the assemblage of the honored dead of the imperial family, including Augustus and Livia in chariots drawn by elephants and a \textit{carpentum} for Claudius’ mother Antonia Minor. These last two honors, since they had been conferred by Claudius himself, were reminders of his own intervention in the processional elements of the \textit{pompa circensis}.

Omissions included Claudius’ two most recent predecessors, Tiberius and Gaius, who, since they were never deified, did not receive the honor of an elephant chariot. Would images of them as imperial princes been on display instead? Gaius’ absence would have been especially striking since his image was annually borne up to the Capitolium (Dio 59.16.10), and, we are told, he had statues of the gods from throughout the empire sent to Rome to have their heads replaced with his own portrait.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{76} And these pairs of brothers appeared on coins together: for Germanicus – Drusus, RPC 1.1, no. 2994 [Sardis?]; for Gaius and Lucius Caesar, e.g., RIC 1², no. 205, p. 55 [Augustus]; for Nero and Drusus Caesar, RPC 1.1, no. 179 [Carthago Nova]; RIC 1², no. 49, p. 111 [Gaius].
\textsuperscript{77} Britannicus appears in first position in an inscription (ILS 220), which seems to be dated after Nero’s adoption, and on the obverse of a coin minted in Sinope (Bithynia/Pontus), dated after Nero’s assumption of the \textit{toga virilis}, indicated by the use of \textit{PRINC IVVENT} (RPC 1.1, no. 2135 [Sinope]).
\textsuperscript{78} The appearance of Nero and Britannicus in the circus procession in 51 CE is prefigured in Tacitus’ narrative by their joint appearance in the performance of the \textit{Lusus Troiae} during the \textit{Ludi Saeculares} in 47 CE (Tac. Ann. 11.11.2).
\textsuperscript{79} This concept of fraternal harmony was especially seen in the relationship between Tiberius and Nero Claudius Drusus; Sumi 2009, 133–136, with sources cited in n. 85 on p. 133; cf. Champlin 2011, who further develops the connection between Tiberius and Drusus and the heavenly twins, Castor and Pollux. See further (below) the discussion of the Temple of Concordia Augusta, dedicated in the names of Tiberius and Drusus, which played an important role in the circus procession.
\textsuperscript{80} On the memory of Gaius after his reign, Flower 2006, 148–159, 280–283.
Participating in the circus procession were those besides members of the imperial family, including younger members of the nobility many of whom were descendants of famous noble families that forged close relations with the imperial house through ties of marriage. Nero, as the product of such a union, being the son of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos. 32 CE) and the younger Agrippina, was himself a reminder of the close connections between these noble gentes and the domus Augusta.81 These nobiles, moreover, were indebted to the princeps for their offices and honors, and in turn, he relied on them to help him administer the empire through these same offices and honors, thus creating a spirit of interdependency between the senatorial aristocracy and the imperial family. Yet now that Nero had been adopted into the imperial family, he was accorded honors at an age when such honors would have been unavailable to members of the senatorial aristocracy, no matter how noble or historically important their families might have been. Hence this ceremony was a reminder of the responsibilities of empire shared among the great families of Rome, but with a clear priority conferred on the domus Augusta, Rome’s first family.82

V. The Route of the pompa circensis in 51 CE and the Dynastic Topography of Julio-Claudian Rome

The processional elements of the pompa circensis, our focus thus far, is only part of the story, for the circus procession was (of course) not a static ceremony, but a moving one, and in its passage from the Capitolium down through the Forum Romanum and into the Circus Maximus, it passed through and linked public and indeed sacred spaces filled with republican era monuments and honorific statues.83 But as the emperors refurbished many of these republican era monuments

81 As Tacitus reminds us, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus was also the grandnephew of Augustus’ sister Octavia and therefore also related to the founder of the dynasty (Ann. 4.75).
82 It is also true that the composition of the senate under Claudius’ Principate changed; on his relationship with the aristocracy, Levick 2015, 109–121, Tortoriello 2004, 399–341, and further below.
83 I follow here Latham’s contention that the traditional route of the pompa circensis is the only one securely attested (2016, 133f.), contra Arena, who posits changes in the processional route based on the new temples housing statues of the newly deified (2011, 80–93). I do concur with her contention, however, that some of the monuments along this traditional route might have played a direct role in the procession; see further below.
as well as constructed new ones, they created a new topography, a cityscape now filled with dynastic monuments and resonant of the new Principate. But it still rested firmly on the foundations of the republican city and thus spoke to the transition from a multi-centered system of power to one dependent upon the princeps and his family. Much of this new topography was ceremonial inasmuch as it was used as the setting for the grand processions of the Principate. At the same time, since this new ceremonial, and indeed dynastic, topography still included republican era monuments, it also formed a commemorative landscape, evoking the memory of those who built the monuments or in whose honor the statues were dedicated as well as the events surrounding these dedications, which Augustus and his Julio-Claudian successors treated in much the same way they treated the Roman republican constitution: they did not erase it, but rather they built on it, modifying and reshaping it to suit their needs. As the circus procession inscribed a new ceremonial topography of Julio-Claudian Rome, it also evoked this memory landscape.

In the discussion that follows, I will treat in turn each major space along the processional route – the Area Capitolina, Forum Romanum, and Circus Maximus (map 1). This is not intended as an exhaustive survey, but I will rather highlight those monuments that express the dynamic between the processional elements of the pompa circensis and its processional route through the dynastic topography of Julio-Claudian Rome.

One of the most important changes to the circus procession in the Principate, as we noted earlier, was the conspicuous presence of the imperial family, some of whom were featured as the new gods alongside the Olympians and demi-gods. This priority is in evidence in the new topography of Rome as well, beginning with the starting point of the pompa circensis, the Area Capitolina. First,

84 For the interrelated concepts of the representation of the emperor’s power and authority in the city of Rome through space and ritual, Noreña – Ewald 2010, esp. their introductory remarks on pp. 1–43. On the itinerary of the pompa circensis in the Republic, Latham 2016, 67–101, along with his additional remarks on the itinerary of the imperial version, covering the Julio-Claudian to the Severan dynasties (132–144).
85 On Augustus’ building program, R. Gest. div. Aug. 19–22, which involved refurbishing many old and venerable monuments; his famous boast that he found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble is recorded in Suet. Aug. 28.3.
86 On the dynamic between Rome’s memory landscape and processions, see Hölscher 2001 and Hölkeskamp 2005, 2007, 2008; Latham 2016, 14 f.; Popkin 2016, 11–22.
87 On this notion of a procession “inscribing” the city’s topography, Fless 2004, 34. More generally on ritual movement as a way of experiencing ancient Rome, Östenberg – Malmberg – Bjørnbye 2015; see also Latham 2016, 94 for the way that the circus procession enabled Romans to “[know] the city”.
a general perspective to set the scene: as Nero and Britannicus appeared at the head of the procession, Nero riding in a *biga* and Britannicus likely on horseback, they could look around the Area Capitolina and see evidence of Augustus’ extensive building and refurbishment of monuments in Rome, beginning with the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the most venerable and most ancient of Roman temples, which Augustus restored (map 1.1). Augustus claims to have built (*fece*) the Temple of Jupiter Feretrius, probably also in the Area Capitolina, as well as the Temple of Jupiter Tonans (R. Gest. div. Aug. 19.2). The former evoked the memory of Rome’s founder and first king, Romulus, who celebrated the first triumph by offering spoils of the enemy commander killed in hand-to-hand combat, the so-called *spolia opima*, to Jupiter Feretrius (Liv. 1.10.5–7; Dion. Hal. 2.34.4; Plut. Rom. 16.5–8). The construction of this temple is likely connected to Augustus’ own claim to this rare honor in 27 BCE. Augustus further claimed that he built Jupiter Tonans as a doorkeeper (*ianitor*) for Jupiter Optimus Maximus, even adorning the gable of the new temple with bells to give it the look of a front door. Jupiter had long been seen as guardian of the community and overseer of the empire (as noted above), but the origin myth, which turned Jupiter into Augustus’ personal guardian, redefined the relationship between Jupiter and

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88 It has been said that Augustus privileged the Palatine Hill over the Capitoline, shifting emphasis from the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus to the Temple of Apollo Palatinus; Favro 1996, 201–206. Indeed, Augustus transferred the Sibylline Oracles from the Temple of Jupiter to the Temple of Apollo Palatinus; Beard – North –Price 1999, 198.

89 Its historical and symbolic importance need not be rehearsed in detail here; LTUR, s.v. *Capitolina, Area*, 1.114–17 [Reusser]; for a chronology of Augustus’ architectural interventions on the Capitolium, Reusser 1993, 49–51. For the importance of the Area Capitolina as the starting point for the *pompa circensis*, in particular, Latham 2016, 74–78.

90 Perhaps after damage from a lightning strike and fire in 9 BCE that was later interpreted as an ill omen foretelling the death of Drusus, Augustus’ stepson; R. Gest. div. Aug. 20.1; Dio 55.4; cf. LTUR, s.v. *Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, Aedes* (fasi tardo-repubblicane e di età imperiale), 3.148–53, esp. 150 [De Angelis]. Most of his building in this area occurred earlier, probably between 26 and 20 BCE.

91 LTUR, s.v. *Juppiter Feretrius, Aedes*, 3.135–36 [Coarelli]; LTUR, s.v. *Iuppiter Tonans, Aedes*, 3.159–60 [Gros]. In Augustus’ Secular games in 17 BCE the *quindecimviri* offered sacrifices in front of this temple (CIL 6.32323.29–34).

92 On Augustus’ claim to the *spolia opima*, Rich 1996; Flower 2000.

93 Suet. Aug. 91.2; Dio 54.4. The origin myth of the Temple of Jupiter Tonans was more recent but equally evocative. During his Cantabrian campaign in 26 BCE, Augustus’ litter was struck by lightning, killing a slave who was lighting the way but miraculously sparing the new *princeps* (Suet. Aug. 29.3). This temple has never been located with certainty, but literary evidence affirms that it stood near the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Augustus, Suetonius recounts, dreamed that Jupiter Capitolinus admonished him for stealing his worshipers.
Augustus’ role as an intermediary between the mortal world and the divine.

Another monument on the Capitolium offers intriguing evidence for the priority of the Julio-Claudian dynasty in the sacred spaces connected by the pompa circensis. A concrete base (measuring 15 m x 15 m) has been found just to the east of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus (map 1.18). An intriguing theory posits that this base once supported the Ara Numinis Augusti, dedicated to Augustus and erected on the date of Tiberius’ adoption when Tiberius formally became Augustus’ successor. After Augustus’ death this altar was renamed the Ara Divi Augusti Patris, and after Livia’s consecration became known as the Ara Gentis Juliae. Livia was named Augusta after Augustus’ death in 14 CE by decree of the senate, and later in 42 CE she was given the title diva by Claudius, at which time, as noted above, he also honored her with an elephant chariot in the circus procession (Suet. Claud. 11.2). A sacrifice at this altar occurred in observance of Augustus’ birthday. Finally, it was dedicated on 17 January, the anniversary of Livia and Augustus’ marriage, and the date that Livia became a diva. Livia was the link connecting the Julian and Claudian gentes through her marriage to Augustus, and this monument celebrated this marriage as well as the birthday of the dynasty’s founder and Tiberius’ succession.

Populating the cityscape from the Area Capitolina down to the Forum Romanum were statues honoring members of some of the most distinguished families, including some of the great heroes of Roman history. Living Romans confronted such statues mostly on ritual occasions, it has been argued, especially during processions, and we can imagine that in the Republic magistrates or their sons marching in the circus procession encountering statues of their own famous ancestors. Changes occurred in the Principate, however, that are worth noting. Augustus reportedly removed, due to a lack of space, statues of distinguished men (viri illustri) from the Capitoline to the Campus Martius. But some

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94 Fears 1981, 59; Rea 2007, 56–61.
95 LTUR, s.v. Gens Julia, Ara, 2.369–70 [La Rocca]. Another suggestion is that this altar was once the Ara Pietatis Augustae, vowed in 22 CE when Livia was ill and dedicated by Claudius in 43. This identification, however, has yet to enjoy wide acceptance; LTUR, s.v. Pietas Augusta, Ara, 4.87–89 [La Rocca].
96 Recorded in the Acta Fratrum Arvalium under the reign of Claudius; CIL 6.3234/94–9 = 6.2035.4–10 (= Smallwood 1967, no. 15), for the years 43–45 CE; Scheid 1998, nos. 18 and 19; on the date, which is uncertain, see Panciera 1968, 331.
97 Torelli 1982, 79.
98 Stewart 2003, 150–153.
99 Suet. Cal. 34.i: proper angustias. The removal of statues from the Area Capitolina occurred in the Republic as well. Livy tells us of one such removal in 179 BCE by the princeps senatus and
statues portraying figures from early Roman history clearly remained. A statue of Q. Marcius Rex, for instance, is attested as late as 64 CE (CIL 16.5), located behind the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. A statue of Numa Pompilius remained as well (CIL 16.24), which makes it probable that the statues of all seven kings remained (Plin. HN 33.9; 34.23), along with statues of L. Junius Brutus and Julius Caesar. The processional interactions between living and long deceased members of the same famous noble families, while more frequent during the Republic, likely still occurred even after Augustus cleared away some statuary. Augustus likely removed these statues not as a way to erase the memories of these families but rather to limit the opportunities for senatorial advancement.

After departing from the Area Capitolina the procession marched down the Clivus Capitolinus into the Forum Romanum, squeezing between the Temple of Saturn (map 1.4) and the Temple of Concordia Augusta (map 1.3). The priority of the imperial family was further shown topographically in the Forum, which at this point in the imperial period had become a ceremonial space dedicated to the

censor M. Aemilius Lepidus. Livy includes this among Lepidus’ other acts as censor, which suggests that Lepidus was motivated by reasons that went beyond the need to ease overcrowding. As Stewart suggests (2003, 129 f.), it was a way to curb ambitio, a potentially destabilizing force in the delicately balanced political culture of the Roman Republic; Liv. 40.51.3: […] aedem Iouis in Capitolio columnasque circa poliendas albo locauit, et ab his columnis, quae incommode opposita uidebantur, signa amouit, clipeaque de columnis et signa militaria adfixa omnis generis demp- sit; cf. L. Cassius Hemina FRHist 6, F43 = fr. 23 [Peter]: et in area in Capitolio signa quae erant demoliiunt. (For the meaning of demolire as “remove” and not “destroy,” see OLD, s.v. demolior/demolio, 1a.) See further L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi, FRHist 9, F39 = fr. 37 [Peter], who describes the removal of statues near the Forum by the censors P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica and M. Popilius Laenas (158 BCE); cf. Forsythe 1994, 404; Briscoe 2008, 543. In this case, the statues removed had not been erected with the approval of the senate and people. It is unclear whether Hemina is referring to either instance of removal, in 179 or in 158; see J. Briscoe (FRHist 3.183–84). In any event, both instances are evidence that the removal of statues was seen as a censorial task. On the accumulation of dedicatory statues in the Area Capitolina during the Republic and Lepidus’ removal, Russell 2016, 105–110, esp. 110.

100 The elder Pliny lists statues of many Roman heroes of old (HN 34.20–32), some of which survived to his day: e.g., C. Duillius, who celebrated the first naval triumph in 260 BCE (cf. Liv. Per. 17; CIL I1.25).

101 Latham points out that emperors in the procession would have likely encountered their statuary double, but other aristocrats less so (2016, 141).

102 Stewart 2003, 128–136, who quotes Lahusen 1983, 11. On the limitations of senatorial self-promotion during the Principate, Eck 1984 and 2010. Gaius and Claudius also removed statues, the latter in addition requiring permission of the senate for the erection of future statues (Dio 60.25.2–3). We should not regard the removal of republican era statues as utterly thorough and complete, since some statues clearly remained. For a list, Reusser 1993, 51, n. 119. It is possible, however, that no new statues were added.
Julio-Claudian dynasty. The republican Forum Romanum has been described as an extension of the many houses of the elite nearby, since it functioned as a kind of common forecourt. In the Julio-Claudian period the Forum Romanum still served as an extension, not so much of the houses of the elite but rather of the imperial palace, the Domus Tiberiana, situated on the northwestern end of the Palatine (map 1.12).

It is important to keep this larger point in mind as we consider how other monuments along the route of the pompa circensis interacted with the procession to varying degrees. The monuments we will be focusing on all had a dual tradition: they were, on the one hand, monuments dating to the Republic, while on the other, they had been rebuilt and in many cases rededicated either by Augustus or a member of the imperial family. There is further evidence to suggest that a few monuments had a specific role to play in the pompa circensis. One such monument was the Temple of Concordia in the Forum Romanum, which, according to one tradition, had been built by M. Furius Camillus in 367 BCE, amid the Struggle of the Orders (Plut. Cam. 42.3; Ov. Fast. 1.637–50), while another tradition holds that L. Opimius (cos. 121 BCE) built this temple in the aftermath of the suppression of C. Gracchus’ followers (App. BC 1.26.120; Plut. CG 17.6). It was also the site of often contentious meetings of the senate in the late Republic. In 10 or 12 CE Tiberius, when he stood ready to succeed Augustus, refurbished and expanded this temple, using the spoils of his campaigns in Germania, rededicated it in his name and that of his brother Drusus as the Temple of Concordia Augusta (map 1.3). Tiberius considerably expanded the temple, reorienting the cella on a transverse axis so that it could fit in its original location, abutting the Tabularium on the eastern slope of the Capitolium. On its high podium it was an imposing structure, towering some ten storeys above the forum floor. As Ovid

103 LTUR, s.v. Forum Romanum (the Republican Period), 2.325–36 [Purcell].
104 Claudius’ immediate predecessor, the emperor Gaius, created a striking topographical expression of this extension in his apparent transformation of the Temple of Castor into a ceremonial vestibulum of the palace; Suet. Cal. 22.2; cf. Dio 59.28.5; Ios. ant. iud. 19.115; LTUR, s.v. Domus Gai, 2.106–8 [Hurst]; on the Domus Tiberiana complex more generally, Tomei 2011. On the larger notion of the Forum Romanum as an extension of the Palatine, Hurlet 2001, 166 f.; and further below.
105 E.g., Cic. Sest. 26; dom. 11; this temple was also where the senate debated the fate of the Catilinarian conspirators; Catil. 3.21.
106 Suet. Tib. 20 (12 CE); Dio 56.25.1 (10 CE); Ov. Fast. 1.637; LTUR, s.v. Concordia, Aedes, 1.316–20 [Ferroni]. On its decorative program, Kellum 1990. The usual impetus for this restoration — that the temple had been damaged by fire — has recently been called into question; Champlin 2011, 82f.
107 Packer 2015, 81, with n. 21 on p. 83.
tells it (Fast. 1.637–50), Tiberius’ rededication shifted the temple’s foundation story from one of internecine strife, resulting in a secession of the plebs (367 CE), to conquest of a foreign enemy (causa recens melior), revealing how the concept of concordia was redefined in the Principate and linked closely with Augustus and the imperial family. The dedicatees of this temple, Tiberius and his brother Drusus, became (as noted above) exemplars of fraternal harmony, especially in their identification with Castor and Pollux.108 At the other end of the Forum, the Temple of Castor had also been refurbished by Tiberius and rededicated in his name and that of his brother (map 1.11).109

The day of dedication of the Temple of Concordia Augusta also changed, from 22 July to 16 January, the anniversary of Octavian’s assumption of the title Augustus, thus linking the temple closely to the founding of the Principate.110 Housed in this temple was an image of Germanicus on horseback, which was conveyed in the circus procession, one of many posthumous honors accorded him (Tac. Ann. 2.83.1). A passage in the Tabula Siarensis informs us that this statue was brought out on ceremonial occasions.111 P. Arena has plausibly argued that this was the statue of Germanicus that adorned the pompa circensis, but we do not know how it joined the procession; it was likely carried on a ferculum, resting atop the shoulders of attendants, the means of conveyance of the images of the gods, and might have been taken up to the Capitolium before the procession started and then conveyed with the rest of the images of the gods and the deified. Alternatively, and more likely in my view, it might have joined the procession as the procession passed the Temple of Concordia Augusta on its way through the Forum. We have to imagine, in other words, the circus procession halting at the Temple of Concordia Augusta while Germanicus’ statue was loaded onto its ferculum and joined the procession. It is possible, too, that the statues of Gaius and Lucius Caesar were housed in this temple and brought out at the same time, since their
posthumous honors so closely paralleled those of Germanicus.\textsuperscript{112} Germanicus, the emperor Claudius’ brother and Nero’s grandfather, was once Tiberius’ designated successor. Moreover, Tiberius and Drusus, the dedicatees of the Temple of Concordia Augusta, also had once been seen as potential successors to Augustus, and in the end Tiberius did in fact succeed. This temple, in its long history, evolved from a monument to the Struggle of the Orders and the popular upheaval of the late Republic to a repository for ceremonial apparatus honoring a one-time successor that spoke of the fraternal harmony within the imperial household. Through such associations it had also become a dynastic monument resonant of the imperial succession.

Another monument that seemed to play a similar role in the \textit{pompa circensis} was the Temple of Divus Augustus. Vowed under Tiberius, this temple was completed and dedicated by Gaius in the beginning of his reign (Dio 59.7.4), and likely stood just south of the Basilica Julia (map 1.8), between the Vicus Jugarius and the Vicus Tuscus, on the northwestern slope of the Palatine Hill, along the route of the \textit{pompa circensis}.\textsuperscript{113} The \textit{cella} of this temple held cult images of Augustus and Livia and was also a likely repository for ceremonial apparatus. The magisterial chairs (\textit{sellae curules}) of Germanicus were to be stored in the Temple of Mars Ultor (in the Forum Augustum; map 1.7a and 7b) until the completion of the Temple of Divus Augustus, from where they would be put on display (\textit{proferatur}).\textsuperscript{114} If indeed this was the case, then it is possible that the statue of Augustus that was borne along on the elephant chariot was also housed in this temple and brought out for its appearance in the circus procession. Since Augustus’ statue on the elephant drawn chariot was a divine honor, the temple to his divinity was the appropriate place to house it. Such a procedure would have also obviated the need to lead the elephants up to the Area Capitolina at the start of the procession and then drive them back down the steep and precarious Clivus Capitolinus.\textsuperscript{115}

The evidence for these monuments supplying the apparatus for the circus procession is admittedly exiguous, but one can discern a pattern in how the

\textsuperscript{112} Cf. Champlin 2011, 99.

\textsuperscript{113} Coarelli (2007, 74) suggests that the Temple of Divus Augustus opened onto a street near the Vicus Tuscus, at the corner of which stood the statue of Vertumnus, identified as marking the route of the \textit{pompa circensis} (Cic. Verr. 2.1.154).

\textsuperscript{114} Tab. Heb. ll. 253–54 = EJ no. 94a, ll. 51–54. Arena 2010, 43–45; 82.

\textsuperscript{115} As with its location, so too the orientation of the Temple of Divus Augustus is uncertain. As noted above, Coarelli (n. 113) believed it was oriented toward the Vicus Tuscus. Carandini (2017, Tab. 40), however, orients it toward the Vicus Jugarius. Augustus’ elephant chariot might in that case have joined the procession near the Temple of Concordia Augusta, after driving down the Vicus Jugarius. We should note, too, the possibility that the statue of Divus Julius was housed in its temple (see further below).
Julio-Claudian emperors incorporated new monuments into imperial ceremonies. Octavia, for instance, lay in state following her death in 11 BCE on the rostra of the Temple of Divus Julius (map 1.10; Dio 54.35.4). This rostra was also the site of Tiberius’ laudatio at Augustus’ funeral. Similarly, also at Augustus’ funeral, an image of gold of Augustus likely emerged from the Curia Julia to join his funeral cortege (map 1.20).

Another monument along the route of the pompa circensis, the Basilica Aemilia or Paulli (map 1.9a), evoked the nature of Augustus’ transformation of the Forum and indeed much of the urban landscape. The original building on the site, the Basilica Aemilia, was constructed in 179 BCE, during the censorship of M. Aemilius Lepidus and M. Fulvius Nobilior (Liv. 40.51.4–5). An extensive rebuilding was begun in 54 BCE by L. Aemilius Paullus and completed in 34 BCE by his son, L. Aemilius Lepidus Paullus, after which the building became known as the Basilica Paulli. At a later date (22 CE) a scion of this family, M. Aemilius Lepidus (cos. 6 CE), sought and received permission from the senate to restore this monument, a rare instance, Tacitus remarks, of aristocratic building in the Principate (publica munificentia).

Between the renovations by members of the gens Aemilia, Augustus also intervened. After this structure burned to the ground in 14 BCE, he rebuilt it once again and later, probably after 2 CE, added a front porch, or porticus, dedicated to his grandsons and now adopted sons and heirs apparent, Gaius and Lucius Caesar (map 1.9b). This portico provided a convenient covered viewing space for spectators at the pompa circensis. The interior frieze depicted famous scenes from early Roman history, but surviving bases once supported statues of

116 Dio 56.34.4.; cf. Sumi 2011a, 224–229.
117 Dio 56.34; Sumi 2005, 257–259.
118 On the original building, Cic. Att. 4.16.8; see also LTUR, s.v. Basilica Paul(l)i, 1.183–87 [Bauer]; Freyberger – Ertel 2016, 37–45.
119 PIR², 1, no. 369, pp. 60 f. His daughter provided another connection to the imperial family through her marriage to Drusus Caesar, son of Germanicus (Tac. Ann. 6.40); cf. Vell. 2.114.5, who declares his proximity to the imperial family with these words: vir nomini ac fortunae [Caesarum] proximus.
120 Tacitus records this anecdote, which compels him to remark further that in the same year Tiberius promised to restore the Theater of Pompey, which had been damaged by fire, since no member of Pompey’s family had the means to undertake the restoration; yet the theater retained the family name (Ann. 3.72.1–2), in adherence to what was in a sense an Augustan protocol for restoring dilapidated or damaged republican buildings; see, e.g., R. Gest. div. Aug. 20.1, in reference to the Capitolium and Theater of Pompey.
121 LTUR, s.v. Porticus Gai et Luci, 4.122–23 [Palombi]. cf. LTUR, s.v. Basilica Paul(l)i, 1.183–87 [Bauer]; Freyberger – Ertel 2016, 92–118.
122 As it was utilized during triumphs as well; Popkin 2016, 104.
eastern peoples, and it is possible that the statuary adorning the outside of the upper storey showed Parthian officials, perhaps in a gesture toward Augustus’ recovery of the Parthian standards in 20 BCE. The *porticus* of Gaius and Lucius commemorated the ill-fated princes of the imperial family, one of whom perished on his return journey from the east.

As the procession turned sharply right after passing the *porticus* of Gaius and Lucius, it likely halted at the Temple of Divus Julius, so that his image could be loaded onto its *ferculum*. This building was fronted by a speaker’s platform, constructed to accommodate the altar erected by the people in Caesar’s memory and decorated with the beaks of ships captured at Actium. The procession then rumbled past the arch of Augustus, adjoining the Temple of Divus Julius and the Temple of Castor, topped with a statue of the *princeps* in a triumphal *quadriga*. The Temple of Castor, recently rebuilt and rededicated in the names of Tiberius and Drusus, was next before the procession proceeded down the Vicus Tuscus toward the Circus Maximus, likely passing along the way the Temple of Divus Augustus, where, as noted earlier, it again halted to load the statues of Augustus and Livia onto their elephant chariots.

After departing from the Area Capitolina and traversing the Forum Romanum, Nero and Britannicus arrived at the Circus Maximus (map 1.13), likely entering through the starting gates (*carceres*) and then making a circuit of the arena before stopping at the imperial box (*pulvinar*; map 1.14), the seating area for the imperial family. Like the Area Capitolina and Forum Romanum, the Circus Maximus was subject to the attention of the Julio-Claudian emperors, who transformed it into one of the principal venues for the interaction of the *princeps* and the urban plebs. But the circus also differed from these other areas in that it was an enclosed space, a venue devoted to public entertainment, where the spectators crowded together in a festive atmosphere anticipating the races to come. It was therefore the appropriate venue for Claudius to introduce his successors to the people.

Claudius likely watched the circus procession from the *pulvinar* that Augustus built as a separate seating area for himself and members of his family, thus

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123 LTUR, s.v., *Basilica Paul(I)i*, 1.183–87, at 185 [Bauer]; Freyberger – Ertel 2016, 107–109. Since the remains are fragmentary, their placement is disputed.

124 On this monument, see further Sumi 2009.

125 Dio 51.19.1; 54.8.3; Schol. Veron. ad Verg. Aen. 7.606; RIC 1, no. 359, p. 68 [Augustus].

126 Above, n. 36.

127 On the circus as a venue for watching the passage of a triumphal procession, especially after Trajan’s expansion of the seating area, Popkin 2016, 108–125.

128 R. Gest. div. Aug. 19.1 (*feci*); cf. Suet. Aug. 45.1; Humphrey 1986, 78–83. Whether Augustus’ successors used the *pulvinar* is less certain (Humphrey 1986, 79f.): Tiberius often watched the
highlighting the priority of the imperial family in the seating area of the circus.
The *pulvinar* had both political and religious features. The word is used for the
sacred couches (*pulvinarïa*) where the images of the gods paraded in the *pompa
circensis* were displayed, as probably were the images of the deified and honored
dead of the imperial family. The Greek translation of Augustus’ *Res Gestae*
refers to the *pulvinar* as a *naos* (“temple”). Just as the *pompa circensis* evoked the
tension surrounding the religious position of the emperor and his family through
its assemblage of the deified and honored dead parading with the traditional
gods, so too did the *pulvinar*.

Suetonius remarks that Augustus on occasion watched circus games from
the apartments of friends and freedmen, but when he watched from the *pulvinar* he did so with his wife and children (Suet. Aug. 45.1). Augustus had barred
the young Claudius from the *pulvinar* to keep him from being too conspicuous
a figure before the assembled people at the games (Suet. Claud. 4.3), which sug-
gests that Augustus envisioned the *pulvinar* not only as a seating area reserved
for the emperor and his family, and perhaps larger household, to see the games
but also where he and his family in turn could be seen by the spectators. It was
thus a way for the emperor to display his privileged position and therefore his
power and authority before the assembled crowd of the Roman people. This
evidence also increases the probability that Claudius watched the circus proce-
sion in 51 CE from the *pulvinar*. And indeed, his presence on the *pulvinar* would have further underscored his own improbable reversal of fortune, from one in his
youth deemed by Augustus unsuitable for public display to the *princeps* oversee-
ing this dynastic ceremony and by implication the preservation and extension of
the dynasty.

Likely joining Claudius on the *pulvinar*, as Nero and Britannicus led the
circus procession into the circus and around the central barrier (*spina*), were
other members of the imperial household who had a stake in the succession, such

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129 Jucker 1980 makes this claim for the image of Agrippina Maior.
130 On these issues, see van den Berg 2008, whose view of the imperial *pulvinar* I follow here; Stupperich 1989; Hugoniot 2006; Rodriguez 2005. On the placement of the images of the gods on the *pulvinar* near members of the imperial family, La Rocca 2007.
as the younger Agrippina, Claudius’ wife and niece and the mother of Nero. She was a stately and conspicuous presence at other public events, enjoying the privilege of a carpentum within the sacred boundary of the city. The statue of Livia and the carpentum of Antonia were reminders of the honors that awaited imperial women after their deaths. Other members of the imperial family included Claudius’ daughter, Octavia, whose betrothal to Nero was another means of securing his succession. The presence of Claudius and Agrippina together was another opportunity to present both branches of the Julio-Claudian dynasty: Agrippina, the great-granddaughter of Augustus and daughter of Germanicus, Claudius descended from Nero Claudius Drusus.

The presence of other members of the imperial family or by extension Nero’s birth family is even more a matter for conjecture. In the absence of his mother Agrippina, who had been banished under Gaius, Nero was raised in the household of his aunt, Domitia Lepida, his father’s sister, who remained an influential presence in Nero’s life and a rival to Agrippina for his affections. She died in 54 CE, at the instigation of Agrippina.

Claudius, as we noted earlier, seems to have taken an interest in the processionals elements of the pompa circensis through the honors granted Livia and his mother Antonia. Among the several interventions in the physical structure of the Circus Maximus the most important for our purposes are the seats he set aside for members of the senatorial aristocracy. This is one piece of evidence that seating in the circus had not been in accord with the practice of arranged seating that prevailed in the other public entertainment venues, the theater and amphitheater. Augustus regularized this practice through legislation that is generally believed to have applied only to the theater and amphitheater. Augustus may

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131 E.g., at the presentation of the British leader Caratacus (Tac. Ann. 12.37.4; cf. 12.56.3). Use of a carpentum: Tac. Ann. 12.42.2.
132 On their betrothal in 53 CE, Tac. Ann. 12.58.1; Suet. Nero 7.2.
133 Suet. Nero 6.3; Tac. Ann. 12.64.2; note that Domitia Lepida was the daughter of Antonia Maior, not Antonia Minor, as Tacitus claims in this passage.
134 Dio 60.7.4; cf. Dio 62 [61].16.4. Livy claims that Tarquinius Priscus already set aside seats for senators and knights when he first built the Circus Maximus (1.35.8; an “invented precedent”, according to Rawson 1987, n. 174). Claudius also adorned the circus with marble starting gates (carceres) and gold turning posts (metae) (Suet. Claud. 21.3).
135 Reserved seats in the theater were set aside for senators as early as 194 BCE at the Ludi Romani, and later in the same year the Ludi Megalenses were included in the practice; Liv. 34.44.5 and 54.3–8, with Rawson 1987, 107–110; Arena 2010, 103–110. In accordance with the Lex Roscia of 67 BCE, seats in the fourteen rows behind the senators were set aside for members of the equestrian order; Rawson 1987, 102–107; Davenport 2019, 119–123.
136 Usually called the Lex Julia Theatralis; see Suet. Aug. 44 for his description of Augustus’ regulations; on this law and its prescriptions, Rawson 1987.
have attempted to set aside seats for senators and members of the equestrian order in the circus as well (Dio 55.22.4), but the fact that Claudius had to do so again for senators and Nero later for members of the equestrian order indicate that Augustus’ order failed to obtain (Suet. Claud. 21.3; Nero 11.1).

As we imagine the sight of Roman senators sitting together in the Circus Maximus to welcome the procession led by Nero and Britannicus, we should bear in mind that under Claudius’ Principate the composition of the senate changed significantly, at first caused by Claudius’ fraught relationship with the senate, in part as a result of his unusual accession and later conspiracies, to which he responded with harsh measures. As censor, a magistracy revived in 47/48 CE, Claudius reviewed the senate and encouraged some senators to remove themselves voluntarily, because they had been unable to maintain the requisite property qualification or moral standing, while expelling others (Tac. Ann. 11.25.3; cf. Dio 61 [60].29.1). He then replenished the senate’s depleted ranks by adding new men – some from the leading *equites*, others from Gallia Comata. Claudius counterbalanced the addition of these new men by also shoring up the patrician ranks with the addition of some of the oldest and most distinguished senatorial families.

A change in the nobility of the magistrates under Claudius can also be observed. The number of members of old republican families holding the consulship under Claudius declined significantly (21 per cent, compared to 50 per cent under Augustus). Claudius seems to have followed the system established by Augustus of having *consules ordinarii* serve for six months and then replaced

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137 For a summary of Claudius’ relationship with the senate, above n. 82. One estimate puts the death toll at some 35 senators and 321 *equites*; Sen. apocol. 14.1. Cf. Calp. ecl. 1.69–71, who describes a senate depopulated by the end of Claudius’ reign; on the larger historical context for this poem, Wiseman 1982.

138 Suet. Claud. 16.1. This office had been in abeyance since 22 BCE, when it was held jointly by L. Munatius Plancus and Paulus Aemilius Lepidus ("an ill-assorted pair", Syme 1986, 41).

139 Claudius’ argument for enrolling the leading men of Gallia Comata is partially preserved in the Lyons tablet (CIL 13.1668 = ILS 212; for Tacitus’ version, Ann. 11.23–24). In the end, he compromised and admitted only the Aedui, who could boast a longstanding alliance with Rome, at times against their wishes; Suet. Claud. 24.1. Talbert (1984, 134, with n. 19) adduces only three adlections by Claudius.

140 Tac. Ann. 11.25.2. For a list of some individuals with patrician status, Malloch 2013, 381f., based on Tortoriello 2001. Some 33 individuals representing 14 families were elevated to patrician status (Levick 2015, 117, with n. 22). One measure of the impact of the elevation of families to patrician rank is the ratio of patricians to plebeians among the *fratres arvales* (the only priestly college for which the evidence allows a calculation): under Tiberius the ratio of patricians to plebeians was two to one, while under Claudius it increased to six to one; Hoffman Lewis 1955, 156.

141 Levick 2015, 110f.
by suffecti for the remainder of the year. In 51 CE Claudius was consul ordinarius along with Servius Cornelius, and seems to have held the office the entire year.\textsuperscript{142} Of the new men recently elevated to senatorial rank were two of the suffecti of this year: L. Calventius Vetus C. Carminius, probably holding office in September–October, and the future emperor Vespasian, in November–December (cf. Suet. Vesp. 4.2). It is not certain, however, whether any of the suffecti would have marched in the procession along with the other magistrates, since they did not officially hold office until later in the year.

Some members of Claudius’ new senate, now seated in their reserved seats, welcomed the circus procession in 51 CE. Claudius imposed strict rules on attendance at senate meetings, and it is probable that attendance at an event as important as Nero’s tirocinium fori would have been expected as well.\textsuperscript{143} Newly adlected members, then, some of whom had previously been of equestrian status, and individuals of those families recently elevated to patrician status were likely present – all of them garbed in the dress that signified their new status. Whether the Gallic Aedui, recently enrolled in the senate, were present is not known. Despite Claudius’ strict attendance rules they may have been allowed to wear the latus clavus, but not expected to attend senate meetings.\textsuperscript{144}

Members of the equestrian order would likely have been present in the Circus Maximus to greet the procession in 51 CE as well, although, as noted above, it was not until Nero’s reign that they had reserved seats in the circus (Suet. Nero 11.1). Claudius tried to maintain a close relationship with members of the equestrian order, and in fact he could boast that earlier in his reign they had acclaimed him their patron, when they rose in a body to greet him as he entered the theater (Suet. Claud. 6.1). Claudius as censor in 47 CE had also reviewed the equites, assigning a mark of humility for some, while exhibiting clemency to others.\textsuperscript{145} They had already played a part in Nero’s tirocinium fori by proclaiming him princeps iuventutis, perhaps in the theater, their usual meeting place (as I argued earlier). At the circus, even if they were not sitting in assigned seats, all members of the equestrian order would have been visible wearing the angustus clavus and gold

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\textsuperscript{142} For the consular fasti of 51 CE, Tortoriello 2004, 424.
\textsuperscript{143} Attendance at senate meetings in the imperial period was an abiding challenge for emperors; for a full discussion, Talbert 1984, 131–152. Approximately 90 senators out of a roll of 600 might have been absent from Rome in any given year on public duty (id. 150). On Claudius’ efforts to ensure attendance, Talbert 1984, 139–145. But cf. the senate meeting when posthumous honors were conferred on Germanicus: only 285 senators were present, the others being absent, presumably, due to other administrative commitments (Tab. Siar. frag. (b) col. 2, l. 30).
\textsuperscript{144} Levick 2015, 117.
\textsuperscript{145} Suet. Claud. 16; Suetonius narrates this episode in order to show the inconsistency in Claudius’ behavior.
rings, both symbols of their rank. Those with the additional status of the public horse (equites equo publico) would have been distinguished wearing the trabea, a cloak with a scarlet band, which they wore during the transvectio equitum. It is also likely that some of the new members of the senate had sons marching in the circus procession. The result was a remarkable spectacle: two potential successors to the throne leading a contingent of the next generation of the recently reshaped aristocracy. Claudius could show that under his care the future of Rome appeared bright indeed.

Claudius and Agrippina in the pulvinar, the senators in their designated seats, and members of the equestrian order watched as Nero and Britannicus rode into the circus, leading the images of the gods and deified and honored dead of the imperial family, magistrates, the next generation of the senatorial aristocracy and equestrian order, as well as the performers. I noted earlier how Nero’s tirocinium fori drew the attention of all orders of Roman society and the army: Nero’s titles and honors (consul designatus, imperium proconsulare extra urbem) as well as his speech to the senate introduced him to the senatorial aristocracy; he was hailed princeps iuventutis by the equestrian order; a congiarium was given to the people and a donative to the soldiers in his name. But it was only in the Circus Maximus where all orders of society were present to receive the new heir and successor, the only venue – and by far the largest – where such an act of performed consensus at the heart of this dynastic ceremony could be fully realized.

The previous discussion has touched on some of the points of interaction between the processional elements of the pompa circensis and the increasingly dynastic topography along the route of the procession, providing a glimpse of these two aspects of the pompa circensis. In the discussion that follows we will bring these points of interaction to the fore, and in the process a few themes will emerge: the imperial succession; imagery of victory, conquest, and triumph; the divinity of the imperial family; and the interdependency between the aristocracy and the imperial family.

Leading the pompa circensis in 51 CE were two potential successors to Claudius, Nero and Britannicus. The Temple of Concordia Augusta and the Temple of Castor, refurbished in Augustus’ Principate and rededicated in the names of Tiberius and Drusus, evoked the fraternal harmony that underpinned the succession, which was further underscored by the identification of Tiberius and Drusus with Castor and Pollux. The use of the Temple of Concordia Augusta

146 On the symbols of equestrian rank, Davenport 2019, 112–118.
147 Vespasian’s elder son Titus was eleven years old and therefore likely ineligible to participate in this procession. Titus later honored Britannicus with two statues, one of which he accompanied in the circus procession (Suet. Tit. 2).
as a repository for the equestrian statue of Germanicus and possibly the statues of Gaius and Lucius Caesar that were included in the procession further underscored it as a dynastic monument especially resonant of the imperial succession. Britannicus on horseback could be viewed as a living incarnation of Germanicus also shown on horseback. The *porticus* of Gaius and Lucius commemorated two other imperial princes and potential successors, both of whom had received the titles of *consul designatus* and *princeps iuventutis*, which had been recently conferred on Nero, and a monumental inscription bearing these titles dedicated to Lucius has been found in the proximity of this monument (CIL 6.36908).

The commemorative reorientation of the Temple of Concordia now underscored Tiberius’ conquests, and the name of Drusus on the dedicatory inscription and statue of Germanicus stored there evoked their significant military careers as well. When Augustus rebuilt the Basilica Paulli, he changed in part the decorative scheme perhaps to include images of the Parthian wars, which not only celebrated his recovery of the captured standards but also recalled Gaius’ own brief career in the east where he died after suffering wounds received on behalf of the state.\textsuperscript{148} The images and symbols of victory contained in the *rostra* of the Temple of Divus Julius as well as the *quadriga* resting atop the arch of Augustus similarly spoke of the military victories claimed by the first *princeps*. The appearance of Nero and Britannicus, the one dressed in triumphal garb, the other in a *toga praetexta* on horseback, as I argued earlier, emphasized the triumphal elements of the circus procession and, placing them at the head of a procession including their distinguished predecessors, promised future conquests. Nero in particular, already the holder of proconsular power, constitutionally had the right to command the legions.

All of this had to happen within the traditions of Roman history and politics. Nero’s titles and honors were all granted by the senate and equestrian order with the likely cooperation and approval of the Roman people. When the procession entered the circus, this approval was made manifest through the presence and applause of all orders of Roman society. The conquests alluded to above, furthermore, funded the kind of manubial building that fit neatly into a republican tradition which members of the imperial family had to be seen to be preserving and continuing. The history of the Basilica Paulli adhered to an offshoot of this tradition. Originally built by censors during the Republic and rebuilt by descendants of the *gens Aemilia*, even in the early Principate a scion of this same family sought the permission of the senate to rebuild. One way to view this basilica, then, is as

\textsuperscript{148} Dio 55.10.18–19; cf. the Pisa inscription which boasts of Gaius’ significant conquests; ILS 140 (= J 69).10–12.
a hybrid monument, in that it exemplified the interdependency between the *princeps* and noble families that the processional elements of the *pompa circensis* also highlighted. It bore the name and thereby evoked the memory of an important republican family, but at the same time, especially after Augustus refurbished it, it showed the dependence of the aristocracy on the goodwill and generosity of the *princeps*. The movement of the circus procession, along with the members of the senate marching in it, would have only put these factors into sharper relief.

The processional elements of the *pompa circensis*, as we noted earlier, evoked the tension in the religious position of members of the imperial family. A hierarchy of honors was established, which allowed a statue and *tensa* for Divus Julius, an elephant chariot for Divus Augustus and Diva Augusta. The use of the temples for the *divi* (Julius and Augustus) as likely repositories for these images reinforced their divine status. Statues for the honored dead (such as Germanicus, and likely Gaius and Lucius and the other imperial princes) celebrated those with significant achievements whose lives were cut short before they could realize their divinity. Other images were apparently missing entirely. Tiberius’ memory, including his military victories and relationship with his brother, was evoked in the dynastic topography traversed by the *pompa circensis*, in the *Ara Gentis Juliae* on the Capitolium and especially in the Temples of Concordia Augusta and Castor, but absent from the procession was an elephant chariot with his image; he acceded to the throne but was denied divine status. In the circus procession and the dynastic topography Tiberius was remembered more as Augustus’ stepson and successor than as *princeps*. Gaius is credited with some modifications of recent memory to the topography of the city in his short reign, including using the Temple of Castor as a *vestibulum* to his house, where he stood between the statues of the twin gods and received visitors who greeted him as Jupiter Latiaris, his own apparent claim to divine status. But this particular modification likely had been reversed, and along with his missing elephant chariot – the senate never decreed him a god – contributed to the effacement of his memory.

The circus procession in 51 CE marked a celebratory occasion, when the reigning *princeps* presented two potential successors, including one who now was ready to enter public life, a display of fraternal harmony connecting both

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149 Suet. Cal. 22.2; cf. Dio 59.28.5; Ios. ant. lud. 19.115. A close analysis of these passages along with the available archaeological evidence led Gradel to question whether Gaius physically modified the Temple of Castor to function in this way (2002, 150–155). He still admits, however, that the temple likely stood in close proximity to Gaius’ palace extension and sanctuary; see also LTUR, s.v. *Domus Gai*, 2.108 [Hurst]. The state of these modifications after Gaius’ death is uncertain, although Dio’s claim that Claudius “gave back” the temple to the gods suggests that he reversed the modifications (60.6.8).
branches of the dynasty, and the continuation of the dynasty and the resultant prosperity and security that this promised for the Roman empire, much of which was reinforced by the dynastic topography. And some spectators might indeed have come to this procession in order to see the imperial family celebrated through its young members. Others, like Ovid, might have wanted to see the images in gold and ivory, still others, the musicians and dancers – their favorite horses and charioteers. There were races to be run, after all.

Still, missing elephant chariots and images of imperial princes who perished before acceding to the throne were reminders of all the imperial family had lost. Tacitus’ account of this procession, in which he focuses on the distinguishing dress of the two young men captures the ambivalence of an otherwise celebratory occasion. He underscores the rivalry implicit in the appearance of Nero and Britannicus. Most of the other imperial princes commemorated in this procession – both by the processional elements and by the dynastic topography – had suffered untimely deaths before ever acceding to the throne, several under suspicious circumstances. The images of Germanicus and of Gaius and Lucius, for instance, were reminders of their accomplishments but also their tragic fate.150 These losses suffered by the imperial family and the Roman people further precipitated rumors of court intrigue and foul play. The display of fraternal harmony in the pairing of Nero and Britannicus in the *pompa circensis* in 51 CE only concealed the rivalry and tensions within the imperial household.

### VI. Conclusion

The *pompa circensis* in 51 CE, reconstructed here, reveals the complexity of a dynastic ceremony that evolved from Republic to Principate to privilege the imperial family, both in its processional elements and its route through the evocative topography of the city of Rome. The procession itself, like the route it traversed, found its origins in the old Republic. Yet in the Principate the procession was expanded to include the deified and honored dead of the imperial family, and in 51 CE featured two potential successors to the throne, Nero and Britannicus, one of whom was celebrating his entry into public life with extraordinary honors and titles. The topography of Rome was also transformed by the building projects of

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150 Even Augustus describes the deaths of Gaius and Lucius in emotional terms ([... ] *filios meos, quos iuvenes mihi eripuit fortuna [...]*), in a document generally devoid of emotion (R. Gest. div. Aug. 14.1); he apparently used similar language in his will; Suet. Tib. 23; noted by Scheid 2007, 48.
Augustus and his successors. Although as a dynastic ceremony the *pompa circensis* came to privilege the imperial family, the participation of members of the leading aristocratic families, both senatorial and equestrian, as well as the urban plebs, was an essential concomitant, an act of performed consensus fully realized in the entry of the procession into the Circus Maximus. In the Principate a new political system was still situated in the footprint of the old Republic and the privileged first family of Rome, who bequeathed its power and authority as a family right (Tac. Hist. 1.16.1), could only rule with assent and approval of all orders of society. These essential features of the political culture of imperial Rome can be seen in the performance of the *pompa circensis* of 51 CE.

**Acknowledgments:** An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Classical Association of New England; my thanks to those in attendance for their comments and questions. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Josiah Osgood and Frederik Vervaet, whose questions and suggestions to an earlier draft forced me to rethink a number of issues. I am of course solely responsible for any errors that remain.

Figures 1–4 are sourced from the Online Coins of the Roman Empire (numismatics.org/ocre) and used by permission of the American Numismatic Society. Map 1 was produced by Madison Walters, Fimbel Maker and Innovation Lab, Mount Holyoke College, adapted from “Mapping Augustan Rome, Central Area” (Haselberger et al. 2002).

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