

THE SILENT TEMPLE AND EMPTY CRADLE: DECLINING MARITAL AND BIRTH RATES IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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The imperial family walks in a dignified, orderly manner along the south frieze of the *Ara Pacis Augustae* (Altar of the Augustan Peace), capturing the solemnity of the occasion. The scene is calm and the placid, unmoving figures are at ease with one another. The unique faces on each figure represent a member of the Augustan imperial family, capturing a moment from Caesar Augustus' inaugural ceremony of 13 BC. The figures interact with one another quietly, while the children follow their parents dutifully along the procession. The *Ara Pacis Augustae* dedicated on the empress Livia's birthday in 9 BC, signified that the bloody civil war during the last years of the Republic had finally ended, and a new era was beginning.¹ This magnificent and propagandist piece celebrated the first emperor's success in ushering in a new order of the Golden Age of Rome. However, despite the celebratory nature of the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, Augustus' propaganda behind it should not be ignored.

¹ Fred Kleiner and Christin Mamiya. *Gardner's Art through the Ages: The Western Perspective (Volume 1)* 12th edition (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth 2006): 186-188.

As the first Roman emperor, Augustus (63 BC–14 AD, r. 27 BC–14 AD) worried about the overall declining reproductive rates in Rome and the rising trend for couples to remain unmarried or childless. If this trend continued, the future of Rome’s native population, specifically the noble classes, would have been uncertain. A declining population countered Augustus’ imperial plans to establish the legacy of Rome out of the ashes of the Republic. These trends prompted Augustus to enact reproductive legislation during the course of his rule, using incentives and punishments to mitigate the issue. It is no accident that the imperial children made an appearance in this frieze and in other scenes around the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, providing a subtle reminder of the importance of children and reproduction in the Augustan age.

The reproductive legislation enacted by Caesar Augustus included two separate laws. Scholars typically group the *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 BC and the *Lex Papia Popaea* of 9 AD together under the umbrella of marriage laws and reproductive legislation.² The reforms encouraged marriage and procreation while reinforcing traditional gender roles. Specifically, the laws prohibited long engagements, curbed divorce rates, and required widows

² For more on the *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* and the *Lex Papia Popaea*, see: James Field, “The Purpose of the *Lex Julia et Papia Popaea*,” *The Classical Journal*. 40:7 (April 1945), 398. Keith Hopkins, “A Textual Emendation in a Fragment of Musonius Rufus: A Note on Contraception,” *The Classical Quarterly*. 15:1 (May 1965), 73. Richard Frank, “Augustus’ Legislation on Marriage and Children,” *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* Vol. 8 (1975), 44–46. Karl Galinsky, “Augustus’ Legislation on Morals and Marriage,” *Phiologus* 125:1 (1981). 127–8. Lisa Hughes, “Review: The Julian Marriage Laws,” *The Classical Review*. 53: 2 (October 2003). 425. Anthony Everitt, *Augustus: The Life of the First Emperor* (New York: Random House, 2007). 239–40. Adam Kemezis, “Augustus the Ironic Paradigm: Cassius Dio’s Portrayal of the *Lex Julia* and *Lex Papia Poppaea*,” *Phoenix*. 61: 3/4 (2007), 273–274.

and widowers to remarry. Those who complied were rewarded with advancements, while those who did not heed the new rules, faced harsh penalties.³ Ancient historians and modern scholars examined Augustus's life, reign, and impact on Roman history in light of his reproductive legislation, with different perspectives and results.

Historians differ in their approach to Augustus's reproductive legislation, but rely on similar ancient sources to craft their arguments. Antiquity scholars examine Augustus' reproductive legislation in the texts by Quintus Horace (65-8 BC), Cornelius Tacitus (55-120 AD), Gaius Suetonius (62-122 AD) and Cassius Dio (164-235 AD), among others. One group of historians argues that Augustus wrote the reproductive reforms in response to his eugenic and demographic concerns for the Roman Empire. James Field stipulates that the emperor specifically wanted to perpetuate the senatorial and equestrian orders through reproductive means. Keith Hopkins contends that the increasing acceptance and use of contraception, abortions, and/or infanticide among the upper class was the reason for their low reproductive rates.⁴ As such, Augustus attempted to reverse the trend of childlessness not on a moral ground, but rather as an attempt to stimulate the noble class population.

A second group of scholars argue that Augustus designed the legislation to extend his control over the lives of Roman individuals. Richard Frank claims the reproductive reforms suppressed romantic love because the laws condemned a couple's choice to engage in non-marital and non-procreative sex, and that Augustus extended his legis-

³ Allen Ward et al. *A History of the Roman People*. 5th edition (New York: Prentice Hall, 2010), 259.

⁴ Keith Hopkins, "A Textual Emendation in a Fragment of Musonius Rufus: A Note on Contraception," *The Classical Quarterly*. 15:1 (May 1965): 72-74.

lative power too far.⁵ Similarly, Karl Galinsky argues the legislation grossly invaded an individual's privacy and autonomy.⁶ The emperor intruded into individual lives by making personal choices a public offense. Previous scholarship investigated the reproductive reforms through the lens of demography, eugenics, and Augustus' desire to expand his power as emperor. Despite the strength of their arguments, these scholars did not necessarily use the ancient sources as historiographic works to examine Augustus' nationalist goals behind the legislation.

This article demonstrates that from the time the reproductive legislation was enacted to nearly two centuries later, ancient authors used nationalism as a frame of reference to examine the reforms. The ancient authors Quintus Horace, Cornelius Tacitus, Gaius Suetonius, and Cassius Dio interpreted Augustus' reproductive reforms and its nationalist goals in unique ways. Their interpretation of the reforms was influenced by their experiences, the historical context of their lives, and the genre of their writing. According to the four ancient authors, Augustus' reproductive reforms reinforced nationalism in three different categories. Horace (65-8 BC) presented Augustus' reforms in a positive light because they fostered civilian loyalty to Rome and the emperor. Tacitus (55-120 AD), on the other hand, argued the reforms were designed to reinforce his imperial power, primarily for his own benefit. Even though Tacitus and Suetonius (69-122 AD) were contemporaries, their contrasting perspectives of the legislation cannot be mistaken. Both Suetonius (69-122 AD) and Dio (164-235 AD), writing a century apart, argued that Augustus' reform attempted to reinforce nationalism in order to encourage the production of legitimate children who would continue

⁵ Richard Frank, "Augustus' Legislation on Marriage and Children," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 8 (1975): 41-52.

⁶ Karl Galinsky, "Augustus' Legislation on Morals and Marriage," *Philologus*, 125:1 (1981): 126-144.

Rome's legacy. Their perspectives are a sharp contrast to Tacitus' opinions. Dio (164-235 AD) further argued that the reforms encouraged reproduction so Rome's future and imperialist goals could continue.

This article seeks to answer two interrelated questions. First, how did ancient Roman authors interpret Augustus' reproductive legislation and his nationalist agenda? Second, how did their lived experiences, historical context, and genre of writing influence their interpretation of Augustus' reforms? According to the ancient authors, they sought to reinforce nationalism to both foster civilian loyalty to Rome and the emperor; to reinforce his imperial power; or to encourage the production of legitimate children to continue Rome's legacy. A brief discussion of Augustus' rise to power from the transitional period to the Republic (509-27 BC) to the Imperial period (27 BC – 476 AD) must be provided for historical context to the legislation and Augustus' nationalist goals.

The transitional years at the end of the Republic, and especially during the formative years of the empire, were a constant battle to centralize control and stabilize the Roman state. Despite his accomplishments and popularity with the people, Julius Caesar (100–44 BC, r. 49-44 BC) lost favor with a number of senators, who were wary of Caesar's increasing power in Rome. Caesar's desire to solidify his position and expand Roman territories threatened the senators' power. Their fear that Caesar would overthrow the Republic and Senate in order to establish a monarchy was the final straw that prompted them to rebel after years of growing dissatisfaction.⁷ Sixty senators led by Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus brutally assassinated Caesar on the Ides of March in 44 BC. Rome's future seemed uncertain, with numerous players vying for power. These included the rebellious faction led by Brutus

⁷ Ibid.

and Cassius, and the Triumvirate of Gaius Octavian, Marcus Antonius, and Aemilius Lepidus. In 42 BC, Brutus and Cassius' rebellious forces were finally crushed at the Battle of Philippi, proving Antony and Octavian the key players in the Triumvirate. With the resistant forces dealt with, the three men within the Triumvirate had to decide their roles in this transitional period, but broken alliances between the men did nothing to boost Rome's stability. Antony and Octavian went head-to-head as Antony flexed his power in the East with the unpopular Egyptian queen Cleopatra VII. Octavian declared war on Cleopatra in 32 BC, and the Battle of Actium a year later resulted with him as the undisputed victor, the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra.⁸

Octavian, given the honorific title of Augustus in 27 BC, ushered Rome into a new Imperial period (31 BC – 476 AD) as its first emperor. He immediately took steps to centralize his position by encouraging nationalist ideology in Rome and the provinces.⁹ Rome's security and longevity depended on a thriving population, a strong military presence, effective leadership, and a commitment to the state by its citizens. Through shrewd maneuverings, strategic planning, and forethought, he brought peace and prosperity to Rome, centralized his power, and reinforced nationalism during the course of his rule.¹⁰ His unpopular reproductive legislation, the *Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 BC and the *Lex Papia Popaea* of 9 AD, demonstrates how Augustus reinforced nationalism in Rome, solidified his power as emperor, and maintained Rome's imperial presence. The ancient Roman authors Horace, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio recognized these elements in Augustus' reproductive reforms. Horace, the first author to write about the reforms,

⁸ Ward, 208-228.

⁹ Thomas Africa, *The Immense Majesty: A History of Rome and the Roman Empire* (New York: Harland Davidson, 1991), 224.

¹⁰ Ward, 248, 265-270.

interpreted the legislation as having a nationalist goal to reinforce civilian loyalty to Rome and the emperor.

Quintus Horace's (65-8 BC) interpretation of the reproductive legislation, and his view of the nationalist goals embedded in the reforms, were influenced by his personal experiences, the genre of his writing, and the historical context in which the text was produced. Out of the four authors, Horace was the only one who wrote during Augustus' rule, and interpreted the reforms as the emperor's attempt to build the Roman Empire and centralize his control. Horace argued the legislation was designed to reinforce nationalism in order to foster civilian loyalty to Rome. Rome's territory encompassed many cultures and people, and Augustus could not afford to have dissent in any of the provinces, especially not in the center of Rome. Although he supported the emperor's reforms on a superficial level, digging deeper into the historical context of Horace's life sheds some light on the dynamics behind his text.

In his *Carmen Saecular*, Horace supported Augustus and praised the reproductive legislation, rather intensely, given that Augustus himself commissioned it for the Secular Games in 17 BC. The Secular Games were a public celebration that the bloody chaos of the Roman civil war was finally over and a new era was beginning. It was ironically fitting that Horace wrote the hymn to Apollo. Twenty-five years earlier, Horace fought *against* Augustus at the Battle of Philippi with the rebel forces, but was now reconciled with the emperor. Not only did Augustus finally bring peace to Rome, but also employed a former rebel as the mouthpiece for his successes and legislation at the celebration.¹¹ There are clear nationalist elements in Horace's text, designed to reinforce loyalty to Rome and Augustus.

¹¹ Lowrie, 406. See also Emily Gowers, "Fragments of Autobiography in Horace *Satires I*," *Classical Antiquity*, 22:1 (April 2003): 55-91, 58.

Out of all the authors who wrote about Augustus' reproductive legislation, Horace argued the reforms were designed to foster loyalty to the emperor and the state. The poet praised Augustus' rule and pleads for the god Apollo to "Perpetuate for cycles yet to come/ Mightier in each advancing year/ The ever growing might and majesty of Rome." In the hymn, the gods are asked to look favorably on Rome and Horace referred to the reproductive legislation when asking the gods to "Prosper the Senate's wise decree/ Fertile of marriage faith and countless progeny!" This stanza reminds the audience that Augustus used the Senate to further his nationalist goals with the reforms. If the gods truly loved Rome and claimed ownership of the state, they should protect Rome's future and grant "a rich heritage/ [for Rome's youth]/ On Rome herself bestow a teeming race/ Wealth, Empire, Faith, and all befitting Grace."¹² The poem makes a connection between youth, wealth, loyalty, and heritage as part of Rome's empire-building process. Horace, like Augustus, witnessed the glorious ascension and dramatic downfall of Julius Caesar. Augustus clearly used the Secular Games as a propagandist opportunity to promote his own authority. The Secular Games gave Horace the platform to distinguish himself as a poet and maintain his relationship with Augustus, but his hymn did not reflect his personal views of the reforms, as it was a propagandist piece to reinforce Augustus' nationalist goals.

Horace's text had nationalist overtones to encourage loyalty to Rome and the emperor by praising Rome's power in the world and highlighting how noble it was for men to sacrifice themselves for the state.¹³ The poet petitioned the gods to favor Rome so the state could increase its strength with each generation and defeat her enemies as

¹² Quintus Horatius Flaccus, Trans. John Conington, *Carmen Saeculare* (Perseus Digital Library), stanzas 3, 5, and 7.

¹³ Horace, Trans. John Conington, (Perseus Digital Library), *Ode* 3.2.

they arose: “Vouchsafe to Venus' and Anchises' heir/ Justly to rule, to pity and to dare/ To crush insulting hosts, the prostrate foeman spare.”¹⁴ The zealous love for the state was woven into the texts with specific purposes. Because Horace was commissioned to write this piece for Augustus, his hand was forced to be supportive of the emperor and the marriage reforms. Yet, as a staunch bachelor with a prolific and varied love life, Horace’s personal actions did not necessarily match the ideals outlined in the reproductive legislation for monogamous marriages and reproduction.¹⁵ Horace kept his criticisms to himself because he could easily lose the benefits of having Augustus as his patron.¹⁶ The public platform of the *Carmen Saecular* was a propagandist opportunity for Augustus to reinforce loyalty to the state and his rule by reminding the gathered crowds of Rome’s current and future glory. Horace’s rosy portrayal of Augustus’ legislation is a sharp contrast to Tacitus’ harsh criticisms of the laws.

Cornelius Tacitus (55 – 120 AD), in his *Annals*, vented his frustration and sharply censured the emperor and his reproductive legislation. His explosive response, written more than a century later during Hadrian’s reign, severely criticized Augustus reproduction legislation.¹⁷ Unlike Horace, Tacitus did not perceive the legislation as merely encouraging procreation and civilian loyalty to the state and emperor. Rather, he condemned the legislation because Augustus intentionally reinforced nationalism to affirm his own imperial power at the expense of individual autonomy.

¹⁴ Horace, *Carmen Saecular*, stanza 6.

¹⁵ Raymond Marks, “Augustus and I: Horace and ‘Horatian’ Identity in *Odes* 3.14,” *The American Journal of Philology*. 129:1 (Spring 2008): 77-100, 88-89.

¹⁶ Thomas Africa, *The Immense Majesty*, 217.

¹⁷ Anthony Birley, “The Life and Death of Cornelius Tacitus,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 49:2 (2000): 230-247, 241-2.

Over the course of his lifetime, Tacitus held the prestigious positions as a senator, consul, and proconsul for Rome.¹⁸ However, despite his status, Tacitus was not safe from the terrors inflicted by the Roman emperors. Tacitus came of age in the tumultuous years after Augustus' reign, and resented the loss of senatorial power, including his own, as the emperors' power increased. During the course of Tacitus' life, eleven emperors ruled Rome, and their reign benefited and/or terrorized the Roman population.¹⁹ Having witnessed horrors inflicted by despotic rulers, Tacitus interpreted the actions of previous emperors, like Augustus, in light of his traumatic experiences.²⁰ In his *Agricola*, Tacitus recorded a grisly (and most likely exaggerated) description of imperial despotism in his own lifetime:

It was not long before our hands dragged Helvidius to prison, before we gazed on the dying looks of Manicus and Rusticus, before we were steeped in Senecio's innocent blood. Even Nero turned his eyes away, and did not gaze upon the atrocities, which he ordered; with Domitian it was the chief part of our miseries to see and be seen, to know that our sighs were being recorded...²¹

¹⁸ Philip Stadter, "Biography and History," In *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. John Marincola (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007): 528-540, 531-2.

¹⁹ These include: Nero (54-68 AD), Galba (68-69 AD), Otho (69 AD), Vitellius (69 AD), Vespasian (69-79 AD), Titus (79-81 AD), Domitian (81-96 AD), Nerva (96-98 AD), Trajan (98-117 AD), Hadrian (117-138 AD), and Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD).

²⁰ Ward, 294.

²¹ Cornelius Tacitus, Trans. Alfred John Church et al. *The Life of Cnaeus Julius Agricola*, Perseus Digital Library, 45. John Matthews. "The Emperor and his Historians." In *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. John Marincola. (Malden: Blackwell, 2007): 290-304, 291.

The horror he witnessed under Nero's and Domitian's reigns greatly affected his perspective on Augustus, who he felt exerted too much control over the lives and decisions of individuals. His experiences played a role in his approach to writing history. Tacitus' *Annals* focused on finding the origins of tyranny in Augustus' regime by tracing how Rome reverted back to monarchy in the imperial period and documented the "slow strangulation of liberty by the emperors."²² This strangulation was evident with Nero's purge of Roman writers, the political tensions under the Flavians, and Vespasian's decision to banish the Stoic and Cynic philosophers from Rome and brutally executed Helvidius Priscus. Domitian also enacted a series of banishments in 89 and 95 AD and did his best to "muzzle his critics."²³ It is no wonder that, given these historical circumstances, Tacitus had a dark view of the emperors and saw their actions as autocratic.

In the introduction of his history of Rome, Tacitus complained that most historians were either sycophants or were too terrified to write truthfully about the emperor. His reasons for writing about Augustus in the *Annals* is outlined in his introduction: "My purpose is to relate a few facts about Augustus – more particularly his last acts... and all which follows, *without anger and without partiality*, from any motives to which I am far removed."²⁴ Tacitus believed "the role of history is to make sure the virtues are not passed over in silence and that the evil words and deeds have the fear of infamy among later generations."²⁵ Since

²² Matthews, 291-292.

²³ Ward, 346.

²⁴ Ellen O'Gorman, "On not writing about Augustus: Tacitus' *Annals* Book 1," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*, 35 (1995): 91-114, 101. Cornelius Tacitus. Trans. Alfred John Church et al. *The Complete Works of Tacitus*, Perseus Digital Library, 1.1. My emphasis added.

²⁵ Ward, 294, quoting Tacitus' *Annals* (3.65.1).

these emperors censored what was written about them, Tacitus had more liberty to criticize the long-deceased Augustus without the risk of consequences. His judgment and condemnation of Augustus is a sharp contrast to Horace, who was forced to praise the emperor, given the context of his *Carmen Saecular*. Although Tacitus repeatedly mentioned his frustration with Augustus' reign, he grudgingly acknowledged the emperor's successes, but was still quick to point out the problems with Augustus' nationalist goals with the reproductive reforms.²⁶

Tacitus rejected the legislation because of Augustus' goal to reinforce nationalism in order to affirm his own imperial power during the formative years of the empire. Tacitus' frustration, anger, and paranoia is reflected in his description of *how* the laws were enforced:

Marriages and the rearing of children did not become more frequent, so powerful were the attractions of a childless state.²⁷ Henceforth our chains became more galling, and *spies were set over us*, stimulated by rewards under the Papia Poppaea law, so that if men shrank from the privileges of fatherhood, the State, as universal parent, might possess their ownerless properties.²⁸

Unlike Horace, Tacitus criticized the extreme measures Augustus took to enforce the laws and keep his power as emperor unchallenged. Since the noble classes disobeyed and flouted the law by remaining unmarried and childless, Augustus had to maintain his authority and could justify using "spies" to enforce the law. If Romans disobeyed the emperor's laws, what kind of message would that send to the provinces, who were the unwilling subjects of Rome?

²⁶ Tacitus 1.9.

²⁷ Tacitus 3.25.

²⁸ Tacitus 3.28. Emphasis added.

In order to reinforce both his nationalist goals and his imperial power, Augustus had to come down hard on the disobedient so as to not appear weak or manipulated by public opinion. Tacitus chafed against this decision and used the laws as an example to affirm how yet another emperor had tyrannical tendencies in Roman history. He recognized that Augustus used the reproductive legislation as a way to flex his imperial power and enforce it with whatever means necessary. In a sense, both Tacitus and his contemporary Suetonius (69-122 AD) had more freedom to criticize Augustus and the nationalist goals in his reforms. Their freedom contrasts with Horace's lack thereof because the emperor had been dead for several decades, and they would not face recriminations for publishing their thoughts about Augustus. Suetonius was not as harsh in his criticisms of Augustus as compared to Tacitus, even though they were contemporaries. Their tone, approach, and interpretation of Augustus and his reproductive legislation sharply contrast with one another.

Gaius Suetonius' (69-122 AD) believed that Augustus' reproductive reforms and its nationalist goals were primarily designed to encourage the production of legitimate children who could continue Rome's legacy. His interpretation contrasts with that of Horace and Tacitus, who argued that the reforms were designed to encourage loyalty to the emperor or assert the emperor's imperial power, respectively. Suetonius and Tacitus were near contemporaries and were ruled under similar emperors, with a few exceptions.²⁹ Suetonius completed his *Twelve Caesars* around 119-122 AD, and had a middle-ground approach about his interpretation of Caesar Augustus. Like Tacitus, he did not shy away from criticizing Augustus, but his criticisms were

²⁹ The emperors during Suetonius' time were: Galba (68-69 AD), Otho (69 AD), Vitellius (69 AD), Vespasian (69-79 AD), Titus (79-81 AD), Domitian (81-96 AD), Nerva (96-98 AD), Trajan (98-117 AD), and Hadrian (117-138 AD).

more light-hearted and pointed out ironic inconsistencies in the emperor's life.³⁰

As a scholar and Secretary for Libraries and Secretary for Correspondence for Trajan and Hadrian, Suetonius had the opportunity to work as a bureaucrat, writer, and scholar.³¹ Although he lived at the same time as Tacitus and was fully aware of the terrors inflicted by despotic emperors, his text does not embody the acerbic tone seen in Tacitus' work. Unlike Tacitus, Suetonius did not let the horrors he experienced dictate his interpretation of the past. Though he criticized Augustus' failings, he did not make the emperor seem like the tyrannical autocrat that Tacitus described in his history, nor did he praise him to the heavens like Horace did in his hymn. Tacitus and Suetonius lived in a turbulent era with autocratic rulers, and they had the opportunity to criticize Augustus' actions in their texts. However, they chose to approach their criticisms differently. Tacitus directly condemned and censured the autocratic actions by the emperor, but Suetonius used sarcasm and irony to reprove Augustus' double standards. The genre and approach of his *Twelve Caesars* played a role in his presentation of Augustus, his perspective of the reproductive reforms, and the nationalist goals embedded in the reforms.

Suetonius argued that Augustus' reproductive reforms had the nationalist goal to encourage the production of *legitimate* children among the Roman population, but this was targeted at the Roman nobility.³² Suetonius

³⁰ Tristan Power, "Pliny, Letters 5.10 and the Literary Career of Suetonius," *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 100. (2010): 140-162. 142.

³¹ He was dismissed from court and his position in 121/2 AD for an apparent slight against the empress Sabina. It is interesting to note that his dismissal occurred around the same time that he completed his *Twelve Caesars*. Stadter, 534.

³² The emphasis on legitimate heirs ties to the concepts of patriarchy, monogamy, and demography in the Greco-Roman world. Scholars who wrote about these issues are: Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller. *The*

showed how, on the surface level, Augustus cared about the future of Rome through legitimate progeny. However, the emperor and his family failed to meet the requirements under the reforms. According to the author, Augustus' reproductive legislation rewarded couples that produced legitimate children to continue the family lineage, maintain property, and add to Rome's citizen population.³³ According to Suetonius, the emperor encouraged this among the people by "distributing a thousand sesterces for those who could lay claim to *legitimate son or daughters*."³⁴ This financial incentive gives proof of how determined, or how desperate, Augustus was for his legislation to be successful. Suetonius emphasized Augustus' goal for couples to have legitimate heirs who would be the leaders of the next generation, yet within his own household, the emperor was unable to implement the law's ideals with his children and grandchildren.

Suetonius criticized Augustus in a more light-hearted, gossiping manner to contrast the emperor's idealistic goals for Rome with his personal failings in the areas of marriage, procreation, and patriarchy. His biography of

Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 142-6. Philip Longman, "The Return of Patriarchy," *Foreign Policy*, (17 February 2006). Walter Scheidel. "A Peculiar Institution? Greco-Roman monogamy in global context," *History of the Family* 14 (2009): 280-291. Walter Scheidel. "Demography" in *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*. ed. Walter Scheidel, Ian Morris, Richard Saller. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 38-86. Claire Holleran and April Pudsey. "Introduction: Studies in ancient historical demography," in *Demography and the Graeco-Roman World: New Insights and Approaches*. Ed. Claire Holleran and April Pudsey. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 1-13. Neville Morley, "Demography and development in classical antiquity" in *Demography and the Graeco-Roman World: New Insights and Approaches*. Ed. Claire Holleran and April Pudsey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 14-37.

³³ Suetonius, "Life of Augustus," 46.1.

³⁴ *Ibid.* My emphasis added.

Augustus embodied praise, criticism, gossip, and facts about the emperor's life, but should be read with a critical eye for poetic license and inconsistencies.³⁵ In his biographies, the author readily pointed out discrepancies between the emperor's public declarations and private acts. Some of these inconsistencies were presented with sarcasm, irony, and humor, and other times in a harsh and critical tone of reproof. His interpretation of Augustus' nationalist goals with the reforms also contrasts with Tacitus' perspective.

Augustus, according to Suetonius, was the epitome of contradictions in his personal and public life, evident in his failures to uphold the ideals of the reproductive reforms. In regards to his second marriage to Livia, there are a number of dynamics that occurred to show this conflict. Augustus first married Scribonia, but divorced her on the same day their daughter, Julia, was born. Not only did Augustus court and pursue Livia *while* she was married to Tiberius and pregnant with her first child, but also caused her to divorce her husband.³⁶ Granted, Augustus and Livia married before the reforms were enacted, but Augustus seemingly did not flinch at the hypocrisy of his own actions, according to Suetonius. Throughout his life, Augustus was known for his sexual activities, adulteries, and promiscuity, yet he wanted Rome to be a moral and upright society.³⁷ Suetonius made several remarks about Augustus' adulterous acts and even in his old age, Augustus is said to have enjoyed "deflowering young maidens" and Livia apparently selected the girls for him.³⁸ As one scholar pointed out, Augustus reinforced and endorsed moral living but had quite a varie-

³⁵ Ward, 347. Africa, 271.

³⁶ Everitt 120. Suetonius "Life of Augustus," 62.2.; 69.1

³⁷ Galinsky 127. Gaius Octavius, Trans. Thomas Bushnell, *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus (14 C.E.)*: 1998.

³⁸ Suetonius, "Life of Augustus," 69.1-71.1

ty in his sex life and had several adulteries.³⁹ These actions were punishable under the law, yet Augustus seemed to be exempt from the requirements his own life and could justify his double standard.

In regards to his own family, especially his daughter and granddaughter (both named Julia), he failed in his role as the *paterfamilias*. The Julias were flagrantly promiscuous, prompting Augustus to banish both of them from Rome.⁴⁰ Augustus' stringent demands for Roman citizens and his family members to follow the law are a sharp contrast to the flexibility he had to ignore his own decree and do what he pleased, as Suetonius eagerly pointed out. Suetonius noted the irony of Augustus' sexual proclivities even though his reproductive legislation tried to discourage adultery and encourage monogamous marriages, reproduction, and legitimate children. These examples capture the tone of Suetonius' biographic text: there is the sensationalism and scandal, but also a critical reproof mixed in with historical truths. The overall portrait of the emperor in Suetonius' work is that a Roman man who, for the most part, embodied the desirable traits of an emperor, but could still be criticized for his failures in his personal and political life. This portrait of Augustus is complementary to Dio's representation of the emperor and his interpretation of the reforms.

Unlike Horace and Tacitus but very similarly to Suetonius, Cassius Dio (164-235 AD) balanced his praise and criticism of Augustus, the reproductive legislation, and the nationalist goals within the reforms. He echoed Suetonius' interpretation of the reforms and its nationalist goals, in that Augustus wanted to encourage the production of children who would continue Rome's imperial legacy. Dio presented Augustus as a benevolent but broken-hearted father who could not understand why Roman men were re-

³⁹ Everitt 257, 287.

⁴⁰ Suetonius "Life of Augustus," 65.1-4. Tacitus. *The Complete Works of Tacitus*. Trans. Alfred John Church. (Perseus Digital Library) 3.24.

luctant or refused to marry and procreate.⁴¹ There is some tension in this portrayal however, because Dio included the emperor's hypocrisies as it corresponded to the reproductive reforms.

Dio's presentation of the Augustan age, and his purpose for writing his history of Rome, is unique compared to the three authors discussed above. His celebratory history of Rome justified the authoritarian actions of the state.⁴² Dio justified Augustus' monarch-like rule of Rome because of the benefits under his reign.⁴³ This is quite different from Tacitus' approach and tone in his own history. While Dio presented Augustus' authoritarian actions as a necessity for Rome's success, Tacitus harshly condemned the emperor's actions and saw no justification for his authoritarian rule. Dio outlined his purpose for writing his *Roman History* in a fragment from Book 1: "It is my desire to write a history of all the memorable achievements of the Romans, as well in time of peace as in war, so that no one, whether Roman or non-Roman, shall look in vain for any of the essential facts."⁴⁴ Dio's perspective is again a contrast to Tacitus but has some similarities to Suetonius. Although Tacitus and Dio claimed to hold the rights of the facts and deeds of the Roman past, their contrasting interpretation of history was greatly influenced by their personal experiences, the historical context of their lives, and the Roman emperors of their time.⁴⁵ The respective texts by Dio and Suetonius have similarities because they were both interested in recording scandals and rumors, sometimes at

⁴¹ Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 56.1.2; 56.4.3; 56.6.1; 56.9.1-3.

⁴² Africa, 315.

⁴³ Dio 56.43.1, 4.

⁴⁴ Dio, fragment Book 1.

⁴⁵ The emperors during Dio's time were: Livius Verus (161-169 AD), Commodus (177-192 AD), Pertinax (193 AD), Didius Julianus (193 AD), Septimius Severus (193-211 AD), Caracalla (198-217 AD), Geta (209-211 AD), Macrinus (217-218 AD), Elagabalus (218-222 AD), and Severus Alexander (222-235 AD).

the expense of the facts.⁴⁶ Dio was influenced by the historical context of his own life and used Augustus as the standard to compare subsequent emperors to him, including the emperors of his own time.⁴⁷

Dio's history of Rome was most likely written in the 210-220s AD during the chaotic period of the Severan age.⁴⁸ Septimus Severus (r. 193-211 AD) proved an effective leader, implementing numerous reforms throughout the empire that harkened back to the Augustan age. His untimely death in 211 AD made his sons Geta and Caracalla joint rulers of Rome, but their cooperation was short-lived. There was a high turnover rate for the emperors after Septimus, given the number of court intrigues, murders, and usurping that occurred. After Emperor Alexander was murdered in 235 AD, the Roman Empire was again thrown into chaos, with usurpers disrupting the flow of government. The frontiers were constantly attacked, draining the empire of its army and resources. This period, coined the Third-Century Crisis by historians, highlights how unstable and fragmented the empire was, primarily because of the lack of strong centralized rule.⁴⁹ With this in mind, it is logical that Dio "presented Augustus as the model of everything an emperor should be and was not," given the many successes and improvements made under his reign, which sharply contrasted with the chaotic rule during his lifetime.⁵⁰

Dio represented Augustus as a type of founding father and the ideal model for the Severan age.⁵¹ In his histo-

⁴⁶ Ward 400.

⁴⁷ Martin Hose "Cassius Dio: A Senator and Historian in the Age of Anxiety" in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. John Marincola. (Malden: Blackwell, 2007): 461-467, 464.

⁴⁸ Adam Kemezis, "Augustus the Ironic Paradigm: Cassius Dio's Portrayal of the Lex Julia and Lex Papia Poppaea," *Phoenix*, Vol 61, No. 3/4 (2007): 270-285. 281.

⁴⁹ Ward 372-389.

⁵⁰ Kemezis 271, 273.

⁵¹ Kemezis 278.

ry, Dio recorded the grief felt by the population upon Augustus' death and praised the emperor's actions during his lifetime.

...the Romans greatly missed him... because by combining monarchy with democracy he preserved their freedom for them and at the same time established order and security, so that they were free alike from the license of a democracy and from the insolence of a tyranny, living at once in a liberty of moderation and in a monarchy without terrors; they were subjects of royalty, yet not slaves, and citizens of a democracy, yet without discord.⁵²

Dio chose to characterize Augustus' death as the end of an era and the loss of a great leader. His positive view of the first emperor, when put into the context of his own life and the events occurring in Rome, reveal that he was looking back at Rome's glorious past with envy. In agreement with Seutonius, Dio interpreted the legislation as an effort by Augustus to reinforce nationalism and to encourage the production of children who would continue Rome's imperial legacy. Augustus was portrayed as a just ruler who had Rome's best interest at heart in and the emperor felt wounded when the Roman population did not adhere to his wishes.⁵³ Instead of focusing on Augustus' shortcomings as a man twice divorced, a prolific adulterer, and the father to only one child (and a daughter, no less), Dio pushed those issues aside and focused on how the Roman population failed to adhere to the emperor's reforms. Dio portrayed Augustus as a pleading, brokenhearted, and angry father who had to chastise Roman men. By remaining unmarried and childless, Roman bachelors counteracted the nationalist goal to reproduce children to maintain Rome's legacy. The

⁵² Dio 56.43.1, 4.

⁵³ Dio 56.1.2.

emperor harshly reproached the bachelors for not fulfilling their duty to Rome and claimed that these men were, in actuality, destroying the State and betraying their country.

How can the State be preserved, if we neither marry nor have children? For surely you are not expecting men to spring up from the ground to succeed to your goods and to the public interests! And yet it is neither right nor creditable that our race should cease, and the name of Romans be blotted out with us, and the city be given over to foreigners — Greeks or even barbarians.⁵⁴

Dio shuddered to think how detrimental their lack of compliance would be to Rome's future and longevity. In Augustus' eyes (as Dio saw it), these men were blatantly disobeying the law, compromising Rome's future, and being disloyal to Rome.⁵⁵ Dio presented the reforms and the emperor in a positive light because of their goals to preserve the Roman state and its future, a commendable deed in his eyes.

Historians of the Augustan age have the unique opportunity to explore the first emperor's reign and actions through multiple perspectives to provide their own interpretations of this period in Roman history. When examining the reproductive legislation, there are multiple avenues for interpreting the motivations and goals Augustus had for the reforms, and their arguments can add to the literature of this topic. In examining the works of Horace, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio through the lens of historiography, it becomes clear that each author had a unique interpretation of the Augustan age and his actions, which was shaped by their experiences and historical context of their life. All of the authors recognized that the reforms were intended to

⁵⁴ Dio 56.7.5-6.

⁵⁵ Dio 56.5.3.

encourage marriage and reproduction, but their interpretation of Augustus' reasons and nationalist goals for this reform differed. Horace, Suetonius, and Dio argued, to a degree, that the reforms were created so the current and future generation of Romans would be loyal to the emperor and the state, and would do their part to continue Rome's legacy. Tacitus, on the other hand, emphasized the cruelty under Augustus' rule and his tyrannical actions with the legislation, regardless of the benefits it could bring to Rome. Their unique perspectives, interpretations, and presentation of the Augustan age encourage scholars to examine the legislation further to understand its goals, impact, and influence on Roman history. As Everitt nicely sums up, "for all of Augustus' flaws, the balance sheet ends in credit. For the most part, the private man lived decently according to the standards of the time, and the public man did things for the public good."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Everitt 326.