

## CHAPTER 12

### The Censorship of the Emperor Claudius

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In 41 CE, upon the assassination of Gaius Caesar, Tiberius Claudius Drusus was hailed emperor by the Praetorian Guard. Assuming the name Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, Claudius became the fourth emperor of Rome. There were some hesitations about Claudius at the outset.<sup>1</sup> Although there was no doubt about his membership in the *domus augusta*—he was the grandson of Augustus' wife, Livia, and uncle to the newly deceased emperor Gaius—Claudius lacked any significant military or political achievements that would qualify him for the role of emperor. The Senate debated installing someone of their choosing who had the military and political experience Claudius lacked, while some even argued that the time was ripe for discarding the princeps altogether and restoring the long-dead Republic.<sup>2</sup> From the outset, Claudius had to assert his legitimacy as the rightful ruler of Rome and he did so, first and foremost, by self-consciously emulating Augustus, modeling his self-presentation on that of the first emperor. While also asserting his connection with the Julian *gens*, he sought to elevate the Claudians, which he did by recalling his connection with his popular late brother Germanicus (hence his new name), deifying his grandmother Livia Augusta (in 42 CE), and emulating illustrious ancestor such as Appius Claudius Caecus, who was censor in 312 BCE.

Claudius also strove to cast himself, like Augustus before him, as a new re-founder of Rome. Augustus' explanation and justification of his exceptional position rested largely on his claim that he was Rome's savior and the sole guarantor of its future peace and stability. The *Res Gestae* provide the framework for interpreting the rhetorical deployment of Augustus' military and diplomatic achievements in terms of a legitimizing discourse of re-foundation.<sup>3</sup> Throughout, Augustus returns to themes of salvation and augmentation, notionally related features in the discourse of founding. He presents the civil wars as campaigns against factions whose lawlessness threatened the very survival of the *res publica*. He undertook foreign campaigns to correct past wrongs and restore Rome's previously diminished prestige. He augmented the prestige of the Roman people and secured lasting peace by expanding and fixing the borders of the empire. In exchange for these services, Augustus was granted extraordinary honors, the most conspicuous of which was his name.<sup>4</sup> We are told that Augustus initially wanted to be called "Romulus,"

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<sup>1</sup> The surviving literary accounts (Joseph. *AJ.* 19.2; Suet. *Claud.* 10; and Dio 60.1) each provide slightly different versions of events. What they most have in common is that there was hesitation.

<sup>2</sup> Claudius' family subjected him to ridicule and isolation. Augustus and Tiberius both saw to it that Claudius was kept out of the limelight. Gaius granted him a consulship, but because he repeatedly humiliated his uncle publicly, it is not unreasonable to conclude that office was conferred as a cruel joke—or so our literary sources would lead us to believe. As such, Claudius had no political or military accomplishments to speak of, and it is not difficult to imagine why, in the wake of Gaius' disastrous reign, some senators might have been reluctant to see Claudius as princeps.

<sup>3</sup> Angelova 2015: 44 argues that the public display of the *Res Gestae* on Augustus' mausoleum, and the form and location of the monument, constituted "an audacious statement in the discourse of founding" that later emperors (in particular Hadrian and Constantine) would appropriate.

<sup>4</sup> Augustus makes it quite clear that he received his new name and other exceptional honors in exchange for (*quo pro merito meo*, *RG* 34.2) putting an end to civil war and restoring the *res publica*.

because by saving the state from destruction, he founded it anew. He is said to have accepted “Augustus,” however, because it was novel, had special religious significance, and had associations with the city’s foundation.<sup>5</sup> Angelova argues that it was no coincidence that Augustus accepted his new name and other extraordinary religious honors on the day he surrendered his *potestas* to the senate, announcing that he would thereafter guide the restored *res publica* by his *auctoritas*. Pointing to the religious significance of words derived from *augere*, she argues that Augustus meant for his name to be understood as a synonym for “founder.”<sup>6</sup> By taking the name he did, Augustus was able to associate himself with the foundation of Rome, while avoiding the stigma of Romulus himself, whose fratricide and rapes would have been a constant reminder of Augustus’ own bloody rise to dominance.<sup>7</sup> An integral part of Claudius’ emulation of Augustus’ claims of re-foundation and renewal was his revitalization of the censorship—an ancient office then in abeyance for nearly 70 years—which he did in 47 CE (Suet. *Claud.* 16.1).

The question is why then, six years after his elevation to the purple? The answer lies in the concurrence of Claudius’ censorship and the expansion of the *pomerium*—the sacred boundary of the City—in the 800<sup>th</sup> year of Rome’s founding (Tac. *Ann.* 11.11.1). Claudius used his censorship, in part, to explain and justify his extraordinary powers as princeps by becoming a new re-founder of Rome.<sup>8</sup> As important as the revived censorship was to Claudius’ self-presentation as emperor, no coherent narrative of Claudius’ censorship survives from antiquity, and the extant sources are quite hostile. Therefore, in this paper I lay out Claudius’ achievements as censor. In so doing, I show the extent to which Claudius’ censorship hearkened back to Rome’s distant past and connected it with renewal and re-foundation.

The imperial biographer Suetonius discusses Claudius’ censorship briefly in one chapter (*Claud.* 16), while there are reports of other acts consistent with the office scattered throughout his biography of Claudius. The censorship is not explicitly mentioned in the epitome of Cassius Dio’s account of the years 47 and 48, though there are references to various acts consistent with the office, especially regarding Claudius’ policing of public morality. Tacitus provides us with what is closest to a concise extant literary account of Claudius’ censorship, but his report is deeply problematic. Tacitus’ own rhetorical project and his political disposition significantly color his representation of Claudius’ reign. However, piecing together reports from Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio, and other literary and epigraphic sources, allows us to gain insight into the lengths to which Claudius went to revitalize the ancient office.

The primary function of the censors was to conduct the census. From its inception, the purpose of the census was to organize Rome’s citizen-soldiers into ranks based on each man’s

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<sup>5</sup> The question of Augustus’ name is not unproblematic. Angelova 2015:10–12 provides an excellent overview of both the ancient sources and recent scholarship. Suetonius writes that “Romulus” was proposed because Octavian was Rome’s second founder, but that “Augustus” was chosen because of its novelty, and its association with the holiest things (*Aug.* 7.2). Cassius Dio writes that Octavian “strongly desired to be called Romulus” (ὁ Καῖσαρ ἐπεθύμει μὲν ἰσχυρῶς Ῥωμύλος ὀνομασθῆναι, 53.16.7), but that “Augustus” showed Octavian to be more than human (ὡς καὶ πλεῖόν τι ἢ κατὰ ἀνθρώπους ὦν, 53.16.8), and notes that all of the most precious and holiest things were called *augusta* (πάντα γὰρ τὰ ἐντιμώτατα καὶ τὰ ἱερώτατα αὐγουστα προσαγορεύεται, 53.16.8).

<sup>6</sup> Suetonius (*Aug.* 7.2) explains the etymology of *augustus*, which he connects to the foundation of Rome directly by reciting a line from Ennius (*Ann.* 155 [Skutsch]): *augusto augurio postquam incluta condita Roma est*, “after Rome was founded by august augury”.

<sup>7</sup> It is an association that authors like Ovid were not quick to forget (e.g., *Fas.* 2.127–48).

<sup>8</sup> O’Neill 2020.

ability to arm himself. Legend has it that the first census was taken by the king Servius Tullius in the sixth century BCE (Livy 1.44). He counted up and assessed the citizenry, turning a mass of individuals into a well-organized fighting force. After the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic, responsibility for conducting the census fell to the consuls, Rome's chief executive officers. However, the burden of such an undertaking proved too much for the consuls and in the middle of the fifth century BCE, the first censors were elected (Livy 4.8). By the middle-republican period, the census had become "one of the most essential functions of the state," producing, among other things, the voting, taxation, and conscription rolls that formed the basis of civic life at Rome.<sup>9</sup> Even as political realities changed over the centuries, the census remained the formalized set of procedures according to which the Roman body politic was constituted.<sup>10</sup> It continued to determine who belonged, and where. It turned a mass of individuals into the Roman body politic, the *populus Romanus*. Throughout the republican period, censors were elected every five years or so until the disruptions of the civil wars that brought about the demise of the Republic. The last censors were Paullus Aemilius Lepidus and Lucius Munatius Plancus in 22 BCE (Suet. *Claud.* 16.1). During his reign, Augustus did conduct censuses, and performed other duties associated with the old *munia censoria*, but he did so in his capacity as princeps. Augustus never assumed the censorship.<sup>11</sup>

In his report of the year 48, Tacitus writes that Claudius completed the census (*Ann.* 11.25.5). Tacitus' phrasing is telling. He writes (11.25.5):

*condiditque lustrum, quo censa sunt ciuium LVIII.LXXXIII.LXXII.*

And he conducted the *lustrum*, in which 5,984,072 citizens were enrolled.

Tacitus' emphasis is on the *lustrum*, the ritual purification of the *populus Romanus*, not the counting itself—the counting is subsumed under the *lustrum* in order of precedence, as if the ritual purification were the main event. This represents the grand finale of Claudius' censorship, arguably the most important part of the office. Going back to the legendary monarchy, the census concluded with the *lustrum*, the rite that purified and inaugurated the newly formed body politic.<sup>12</sup> It is generally regarded as a kind of closing ceremony, but it originally may have been what actually turned a group of Roman bodies into the Roman body politic.<sup>13</sup> As we shall soon

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<sup>9</sup> Soulahti 1963: 20–21.

<sup>10</sup> Direct taxation ceased after 167 BCE, but the census remained important for determining class for military service and voting (Suolahti 1963:38). After the Marian reforms, the census remained important because it determined voting privileges in the centuriate assembly (Wiseman 1969:59–60). By 27 BCE, the responsibilities of the centuriate assembly passed to the Senate, but direct taxation had been reintroduced, so the census remained necessary.

<sup>11</sup> Osgood 2011: 158.

<sup>12</sup> Wiseman 1969:64 argues that, at least in theory, there could be no *lustrum* without a census, nor would a census be valid (or I would argue, even necessary) without the *lustrum*. From at least the middle of the 2nd century BCE, *lustrum condere* and *lustrum facere* became synonymous with the taking of the census, suggesting the importance of the rite.

<sup>13</sup> Habinek 2005:8–9 argues that ritual mimetic movement allows for the creation of collective identity and is essential for transforming a group of individuals into a community. The *lustrum* must be one such ritual. Collective movement

see, the *lustrum* also inaugurated a new temporal cycle. It is difficult to reconstruct all the details of the ritual, but it is apparent that its defining feature was the purification of the newly constituted *populus Romanus* with a circumambulatory procession and triple sacrifice. The censors either led the *populus* out of, around, and back into the city, or they conducted the sacrificial victims around the *populus*, who, assembled as they were in the Campus Martius, were outside of the religious boundary of the city.<sup>14</sup> What matters was that the newly-constituted *populus Romanus* was outside the city, whether literally or symbolically, so that it could re-enter as a new entity. After the procession, either the circumambulation of the people around the city, or the victims around the people, the purificatory sacrifice of the pig, ram, and bull—the *suouetaurilia maiora*—was made (Varro *Rust.* 2.1.9; Livy 1.44.1–2). With the conclusion of the rites, the newly constituted *populus Romanus* was purified and inaugurated, and the census rolls—the list of who belongs and where—were deposited in the temple of the Nymphs in the Campus Martius where they would remain until the next census. Rome was founded anew.

The *lustrum*, however, did not only inaugurate a new *populus Romanus*. It also marked the beginning of a new period of time in the life of Rome. The etymology of *lustrum* is not well understood, but it is a word that refers to both circular motion, and purification. It is possible that the double meaning of *lustrare* (“to move around something” and “to purify”) relates to the rotation of the heavenly bodies.<sup>15</sup> Such a connection would imply a natural relationship between the *lustrum* and the passage of time. *Lustrum*, in fact, came to mean a period of time, an interval of approximately five years, and formed a basic unit of temporal reference in the life of the state.<sup>16</sup> The notion of a *lustrum* as five-year period is typically said to derive simply from the fact that censuses happened to have been taken about every five years. That is, the occurrence of the magistracy determined the timing of the census, which determined the timing of the *lustrum*. It is unlikely, however, that the intervals between *lustra* were set so arbitrarily. It seems plausible that the appropriate times for the *lustra* (and therefore the censuses) were originally determined ritually, perhaps based on the observation of portents, just as the beginnings of new *saecula* were originally determined (Verg. *Ecl.* 9.46–50; Plut. *Sulla* 7.3). That is, the *lustrum*, a “significant rhythmical pattern in the life of the city” may have been attended by reconstitution of the body

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in imitation of, say, planets or stars, or even ambling livestock, *turns* many individual Romans into the Roman citizen body.

<sup>14</sup> Varro (*Ling.* 6.87, 93) supports the notion of the people moving around the city. Evidence from the Column of Trajan, depicting a *lustratio exercitus*—notionally similar to the censorial *lustrum*—supports circumambulation of the *exercitus/populus* with the sacrificial victims around the city walls (scene 53), see Ogilvie 1961:pl. I. Ogilvie 1961:36 further cites as evidence for circumambulation of city walls or camp palisades the Augustan arch at Susa, the column of Marcus Aurelius, the arch of Constantine, and the Bridgeness relief. Granted, these are military *lustra*, but it must be remembered that, in Rome’s earliest days, the most basic configuration of the *populus Romanus* was the citizen militia (Suolahti 1963L45–46). The census frieze on the so-called altar of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, however, suggests circumambulation of victims around a stationary *populus* (Ogilvie 1961:pl. II). See also Gruen 1992:147–50, 172. A remark by Cicero seems to support this interpretation (Cic. *Div.* 103). Cato’s discussion of the *suouetaurilia* suggests that all purificatory rituals required sacrificial victims be led around the thing to be purified (*Agr.* 141). It is not implausible that originally, the *populus/exercitus* (Livy uses the terms interchangeably, 1.44) were literally led out of the city and then led back in, but as the city and its population grew, the ritual was adapted.

<sup>15</sup> See Ogilvie 1961 for a detailed discussion of the possible etymologies of *lustrum/lustrare*. Plutarch discusses worshippers’ turning during religious rites, perhaps in imitation of “the rotation of the *kosmos*” (ἡ περιφορὰ τοῦ κόσμου, *Numa* 14.4).

<sup>16</sup> For discussions of *lustrum* as a period of time, see *RE* 13.2 (2046.2), Ogilvie 1961:34, and Feeney 2007: 176–77.

politic, and not the other way around.<sup>17</sup> In short, if the census was the procedure for formally constituting the *populus Romanus*, and if the *lustrum* marked the end of one period of time and the beginning of another, then the essential function of the censors was the inauguration of a new cycle in the life of Rome.

Claudius revived the censorship so that he could ritually renew the *populus Romanus*—an essential part of his legitimizing discourse of re-foundation. He did so by counting up the citizens—no insignificant feat in a pre-industrial society—and ritually reconstituting the body politic with the *lustrum*.<sup>18</sup> However, there are other duties that befall the censors which Claudius' enacted as part of his revival of the office. These *munia censoria* are ancillary responsibilities assumed over time by the censors and include the censors' *cura morum*, or policing of public morality, their responsibility for overseeing public contracts and public works, and the *lectio senatus*, their duty to maintain the rolls of senators.

Apart from census-taking, the duty most strongly associated with the censorship is the *cura morum*, the censor's policing of morality (Livy 4.8.2).<sup>19</sup> This responsibility was likely added to the censors' purview in the fourth century BCE soon after the censors became responsible for the *lectio senatus*. The *lectio senatus* was the censors' duty to determine membership of the senatorial order.<sup>20</sup> Members of the order could be removed if they failed to meet the minimum wealth requirement, but soon senators could be removed on account of perceived immoral behavior. It was a short step from policing the morality of members of the senatorial order to that of the general public—hence the *cura morum* (Plutarch *Cat. Ma.* 16. 1–3).

The first mention of Claudius as censor in the extant *Annals* of Tacitus is at 11.13, where he reports that Claudius was fastidiously exercising his censorial duties despite being oblivious to the fact that his own household was in disarray (11.13.1):

*At Claudius, matrimonii sui ignarus et munia censoria usurpans, theatralium populi lasciviam seueris edictis increpuit.*

But Claudius, clueless about the state of his marriage, enjoying his censorial duties, chastised the lewd behavior of people in the theater in strongly-worded edicts.

There is serious trouble in the imperial household—Claudius' wife, Messalina, was “distracted by a new love that came close to insanity” (*nouo et furori proximo amore distinebatur*, 11.12.1). This new love was the consul-designate C. Silius. While the *nouus amor* distracted Messalina from making new denunciations against perceived rivals, Claudius was distracted from mastering his *domus* by playing the scold, clicking his tongue at rowdy theatergoers. The people's misbehavior in the theater—they were hurling abuse at the consular Publius Pomponius and illustrious

<sup>17</sup> The quote is from Feeney 2007: 177, who discusses the smaller temporal units that organized Roman political and social life, including the consular years and the *lustrum*.

<sup>18</sup> For the “breathtaking accomplishment” of counting up and enrolling over five million citizens, see Osgood 2011: 158–59.

<sup>19</sup> Astin 1988:14.

<sup>20</sup> The *lectio senatus* was transferred from the consuls to the censors by the Ovinian *pōlebiscite*, which was passed sometime between 319 and 312 BCE.

ladies—commanded the censor’s attention, not his wife’s affair that saw the transfer of the emblems of power to Silius’ house (11.12.3). Messalina’s affair—or Claudius’ obliviousness—would prove disastrous to the empire. Messalina’s downfall would ensure that Claudius would burn for an incestuous marriage with his niece, Agrippina (*ut deinde ardesceret in nuptas incestas*, 11.25.5), a marriage that would bring about the tyranny of Nero, the end of Augustus’ bloodline, and the return of civil war. The hollowness of Julio-Claudian rhetoric, that the stability of the imperial *domus* determined the stability of the empire, is laid bare. But the efficacy of Tacitus’ criticism depends on the censorship—here, Claudius’ *cura morum*. Tacitus appears to be relying on his readers’ implicit preconceptions about the censors’ role in policing public morality in order to highlight the irony of Messalina’s husband issuing moralizing edicts. The criticism of Claudius that arises from the elision of fastidious censor and clueless cuckold depends on the censorship being an important aspect of Claudius’ identity as princeps.

Suetonius’ brief mention of Claudius’ censorship highlights the emperor’s alleged inconsistency in carrying out the *munia censoria*. It is another example of the ancient sources’ hostility towards Claudius. However, it is possible to read through the criticism in order to see Claudius’ intentionality in his resurrection of the ancient office. Moreover, Suetonius’ account demonstrates the interconnectedness of the censors’ *cura morum* and the *lectio senatus*. Suetonius’ account focuses on instances where Claudius failed to censure people for moral lapses as part of his review of the rolls of senators and equestrians. For example, Suetonius cites the case of an unnamed young man who was of evil character (*probri plenum*, 16.1). Rather than publicly censure the young man, Claudius let him off (*sine ignominia dimisit*, 16.1) with a remark praising the rectitude of the man’s father. On the other hand, Claudius is said to have affixed the *nota*, or mark of disgrace, next to the names of senators presumably guilty of minor offences, such as those who had left Italy without suing Claudius for a leave of absence. Suetonius goes on to recount instances where Claudius tried to degrade other senators for offenses they did not commit, accusing men of celibacy who were married, of childlessness who were fathers, of penury who were wealthy. Claudius even is said to have had a silver chariot destroyed in his presence as a check against public displays of *luxuria*. Regardless of whether he was successful or even consistent, Claudius can be seen to be exercising the *cura morum* and *lectio senatus* diligently and with relish—a point on which Tacitus appears to agree.<sup>21</sup>

The epitome of Cassius Dio’s account of the year 47 also contains allusions to Claudius’ censorial acts consistent with the *cura morum* and the *lectio senatus*. For example, it reports that Claudius expelled some senators on account of their poverty (60.29.1), checked the misbehavior of freedmen (60.29.2-3), forbade senators from traveling past the seventh marker without his permission (60.29.7a), and prohibited anyone from riding in a vehicle through the city (60.29.7b).<sup>22</sup> These notices are included despite the passing over of Claudius’ revival of the censorship.

Tacitus next reports that Claudius carried a law against creditors who lent money at interest to sons repayable upon the deaths of their fathers (11.13.2). This very brief notice once more calls to mind the censors’ *cura morum*. Claudius presumably disapproves because borrowing against the promise of an inheritance is banking on the death of a parent, and it is

<sup>21</sup> *Claudius . . . munia censoria usurpans* (Tac. Ann. 11.13.1).

<sup>22</sup> cf. Suet. *Claud.* 25.2, Claudius’ destruction of a silver chariot.

doubtful money acquired in such a way would be spent in a manner the likes of Cato would approve. But Claudius' action is not actually against the sons, or even the creditors themselves. At issue seems to be the *faenus*, the interest the creditors are charging on the loans (11.13.2). This puzzling notice appears to refer to the censors' role in overseeing contracts, a responsibility which predates the *cura morum* and is tied directly to the census.<sup>23</sup> Servius Tullius is said to have not only conducted the first census, but that he also used the opportunity to collect taxes to fund construction of the defensive walls that to this day bear his name (Livy 1.44).<sup>24</sup> The responsibility for counting up and organizing the citizen militia, and overseeing the collection of taxes to fund public building projects passed eventually to the censors. Because the censors were involved in the collection of taxes, they came to be responsible for overseeing the execution of contracts awarded to tax collectors. They also became responsible for collecting revenues earned off public land. These responsibilities evolved to include the censors' general supervision of contracts both public and private. Hence Claudius' action against the *saeuitia creditorum*. What at first glance appears to be another example of Claudius fastidiously exercising his *cura morum*—defending the dignity of the *pater familias* while his own wife carries on an affair that threatens the stability of the empire—actually reveals Claudius exercising one of the oldest of the censors' prerogatives, one tied closely to the census and the foundation of the Roman body politic. Claudius appears to have done his homework.

Tacitus next mentions the completion of an aqueduct that Tacitus assigns to Claudius in the year 47. He states that Claudius brought new sources of water into the city from the Simbruine hills (*fontisque aquarum Simbruinis collibus deductos urbi intulit, Ann. 11.13.3*). This would appear consistent with Claudius' emulation of Appius Claudius Caecus, who used his censorship to initiate massive public works, including the road to Brundisium that bears his name. However, the placement of this notice among Claudius' acts of 47 has caused some controversy.<sup>25</sup> For one thing, emperors built things. Why should such a brief mention of a public building project be mentioned here, especially considering that, apart from Tacitus' reference, there is no evidence for the completion of aqueducts during Claudius' censorship? In 46, Claudius made repairs to the Aqua Virgo, which originates near Collatia—not anywhere near the Simbruine hills.<sup>26</sup> Two aqueducts were dedicated by Claudius in 52/3 CE, the Aqua Claudia and the Aqua Anio Novus. Both rise in the Apennines and might be the *fontes aquarum* Tacitus mentions.<sup>27</sup> Both were begun by Gaius in 38 (Suet. *Claud.* 20.1). None of the dates line up with Claudius' censorship. Yet Tacitus' use of the perfect of *inferre* implies completion, but what was supposed to have been completed is entirely unclear. It has been suggested that the censorship provided Claudius with the “happy opportunity to attend to a public need in a traditional manner,” and that Tacitus therefore chose to include supervision (if not actual completion and dedication) of the aqueducts in his report of 47 simply because Claudius was censor at that time.<sup>28</sup> Tacitus would have done so in order to

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<sup>23</sup> The *cura morum* likely came about after the censors became responsible for the *lectio senatus* in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

<sup>24</sup> For a further discussion on the connection between census-taking and public works at the time of Tullius, see Suolahti 1963: 57.

<sup>25</sup> See Malloch 2013: 214–16 for a summary of arguments.

<sup>26</sup> *ILS* 205=Smallwood 308b.

<sup>27</sup> Malloch 2013: 215 and *CIL* VI 1256 = *ILS* 218 = Smallwood 309.

<sup>28</sup> Malloch 2013: 215–16.

point up the censorship itself at this point in his narrative to sharpen his criticism of Claudius and Julio-Claudian rhetoric. Tacitus presents a Claudius who is so preoccupied with playing the Appian censor that he is utterly blind to the imminent threat to his *domus* and the stability of the empire.

Another possible link between the censorships of Appius Claudius and Claudius Caesar is the latter's addition of three letters to the Roman alphabet.<sup>29</sup> Tacitus says that the letters were new (*Ann.* 11.13.1). They were in fact archaic Greek letters that had fallen into disuse. Claudius ingeniously repurposed them. The most widely attested letter was the inverted digamma (Ϝ), which represented the consonantal V. The second letter resembled the Boeotian heta (Ϟ), and represented the sound between u and i. Augustus seemed to recognize the need for a new way to represent this sound, consistently writing, for example, *simus* for *sumus* (*Suet. Aug.* 87.2). Claudius appears to have found a solution. The third letter is unattested but was meant to represent bs and ps (*Prisc. Gramm.* II 33. 3–4). There has been much debate about the precise form of this letter. It is referred to as an antisigma, so is often thought to be an inverted lunate sigma (Ϛ). It seems more likely, based on illustrations in the Priscian manuscripts and the other letters' origins in archaic Greek, to have been a variation of the Locrian and Arcadian psi (Ϙ or ϙ).

Ryan argues that Claudius' orthographic intervention is directly related to his censorship.<sup>30</sup> He argues that the *plebiscitum Ouinium*, which transferred responsibility of the *lectio senatus* from the consuls to the censors, in practice established a connection between the censorship and Latin orthography. As the censors became responsible for determining eligibility for membership in the senate, they needed to create and maintain an accurate list of senators' names. The first censor to conduct the *lectio senatus* was none other than Appius Claudius Caecus. He is said to have spelled the names of senators phonetically, writing Valerii for Valesii, Furi for Fusii, and so forth (*Mac. Sat.* 3.28, *Dig.* 1.2.2.36).<sup>31</sup> With Appius' execution of the *lectio senatus* in 312 BCE, a link was established between the censorship and orthography. Claudius, Ryan argues, intervened in Latin orthography in order to perform the censorship according to the model established by Appius.

Tacitus, however, is the only ancient author to connect Claudius' invention of the new letters and his censorship. No epigraphic evidence has yet been found that suggests that the letters debuted in 47 or 48 CE. Furthermore, Suetonius claims that Claudius invented the letters, and published a book on their usefulness, while still a *priatus* (*Claud.* 41.3). It is possible that Claudius invented the letters before he became emperor, and that he took advantage of his position to foist the fruits of an idiosyncratic hobby on a captive audience. However, as with the aqueducts, Tacitus seems to be creating his own version of Claudius' censorship, one that keeps calling to mind the career of Appius Claudius to suit his own rhetorical aims. Tacitus presents his readers with an emperor so preoccupied with antiquarian frivolities that he puts the peace and stability of the empire in jeopardy. Yet Tacitus' attempt at misdirection clues us in to how Claudius might have been trying to spell out his legitimacy. In any event, we see Tacitus assuming Claudius'

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of sources, see Oliver 1949: 253–254 and Malloch 2013: 228.

<sup>30</sup> Ryan 1993: 612.

<sup>31</sup> This is a reference to the rhotacization of medials in Latin, a phenomenon observable from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Other examples include Papisii becoming Papirii (*Cic. Fam.* 9.21) and *asae* becoming *arae* (*Mac. Sat.* 3.2.8). Several ancient sources associate Appius with this process. Pomponius goes so far as to credit Appius with the invention of the letter R (*Dig.* 1.2.2.36).

emulation of Appius Claudius and attending to public works and orthography as part of the *munia censoria*.

Wrapping up his account of Claudius' censorial acts of 47, Tacitus reports a motion before the senate proposing that the *haruspices* be organized into a priestly college (*Ann.* 11.15.1). The *haruspices* were called upon in the past whenever the state was in danger, their divinations helping to restore divine favor in times of national crisis. Claudius believed that the ancient practices of the *haruspices* were in danger of being lost, so he proposed that the transmission of the diviners' science be put under state supervision. Claudius' proposal recalls Appius' controversial decision to use his authority as censor to reorganize the cult of Hercules at the Ara Maxima. To put it briefly, Appius placed the cult of Hercules under state control (*Livy* 9.29.9–11).<sup>32</sup> Claudius' proposal also invites a rather obvious comparison with Augustus, who was particularly concerned with restoring lapsed religious practices. Among his many reforms, Augustus revived the *augurium salutis*, the practice of seeking through divination when to perform rituals to guarantee the safety of the Roman people, and in what form (*Suet. Aug.* 31.4). It seems a relatively minor intervention compared with all of Augustus' other religious reforms and restorations, but its similarity to Claudius' attempt to revitalize the practices of the *haruspices* cannot be coincidental. It has been observed that Claudius "made a show of reverting to the maintenance of ancestral customs," partly in an effort to reassert the norms established by Augustus that Tiberius and Gaius appear to have transgressed.<sup>33</sup> In other words, Claudius wanted his reign to be seen as a return to Augustan rectitude. But he also "made a show" of returning to ancestral practices precisely because Augustus did too. However, just as important as reverting to the old ways is establishing something new. In the *Res Gestae*, Augustus boasts of temples restored and lapsed practices reinvigorated, but he also established new rites. Suetonius says the same of Claudius: he made corrections to ritual practice, restored lapsed rites, and established new ones, civil and military, at home and abroad (*Suet. Claud.* 22.1). It is likely, based on his emulation of Appius Claudius Caecus, who used his position as censor to restore the worship of Hercules at the Ara Maxima (*Livy* 9.29.9–11), that Claudius Caesar did so in his capacity as censor.

The last of Claudius' *munia censoria* reported by Tacitus are reforms made to the senate (*Ann.* 11.23–25), and so we return once more to the *lectio senatus*. Claudius purged the senate of unworthy members and admitted new ones—acts consistent with *munia censoria* going back as far as the Ovinian plebiscite. Plans to supplement the senate included the admission of the *primores* of Gallia Comata. Claudius' speech concerning the matter provides additional clues about how he conceived of his censorship in relation to the rhetoric of re-foundation.<sup>34</sup> It is particularly instructive because Tacitus' version of Claudius' speech closely resembles one preserved on a bronze tablet discovered in Lyon in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup> Both versions of the speech repeatedly return to the theme of salvation by augmentation. In Tacitus' version, after rooting his

<sup>32</sup> Livy seems to have understood it this way. The matter is, of course, not quite so straightforward. See Palmer 1965.

<sup>33</sup> A most appropriate choice of words if Claudius' return to ancestral customs was for the sake of his self-presentation (*Beard*1998: 209–10).

<sup>34</sup> Levick 1978:98–99 argues that Claudius was attempting to emulate Julius Caesar's generosity with the Roman citizenship. Ryan 1993:613–614 argues that Claudius was emulating Appius per the Ovinian plebiscite. Neither explanation is mutually exclusive, nor inconsistent with Claudius' presentation as (re-)foundational figure.

<sup>35</sup> *CIL* XIII.1668=ILS 212=FIRA I.43=Smallwood 369. On the similarities between the two and various interpretations of the Lyon speech, see Syme 1956:317–19, Momigliano 1961: 10–16), and Osgood 2007: 165–67.

family in the fog of Rome's distant past, Claudius presents himself as one in a line of leaders who have guaranteed the continued survival of the Roman state by augmenting it. He invokes the Lacedaemonians and Athenians, whose "extinction" he credits to their refusal to allow foreigners to be admitted as citizens and contrasts them with "our founder Romulus" (*conditor nostri Romulus*), in whose wisdom was so inclusive as to call one group enemies and fellow citizens on the same day (11.24.4). This tactic appears in the Lyon tablet as well. Claudius discusses the careers of the various kings, each of whom contributed to the survival of Rome by augmenting its population with foreigners, even former enemies. He pays special attention to Servius Tullius, saying that, although foreign born, Servius became king of Rome "to the greatest benefit to the state."<sup>36</sup> In both speeches, a large part of Claudius's argument hinges on Rome's survival through the ages having depended on the augmentation of the body politic, logic which he applies to the continued welfare of the senate. In both, we see the censor invoking augmentation as a form of foundation, aligning himself with figures from the past who have been responsible for saving the state by adding to it.

As we have seen, Claudius assumed the censorship and exercised many of its ancient prerogatives to "make a show" of his revitalization of an ancestral office with origins in the semi-mythical past. Claudius' censorship consisted of a number of individual acts that signal renewal and augmentation and recall not only the ancient censorship as reimagined by Claudius, but also figures from the past associated with acts of re-foundation, primarily the first emperor, Augustus, and Claudius' distant ancestor Appius Claudius Caecus. Claudius' censorship culminated in the formal reorganization of the body politic—the *populus Romanus* made anew—and the inauguration of a new period in the social, religious, and political life of Rome. The censorship allowed him to overcome the problem of salvation. Claudius may not have saved the state from destruction, but by remaking the Roman body politic (*census*) and initiating a new cycle in the rhythm of Roman life (*lustrum*), he could nevertheless found Rome anew.

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<sup>36</sup> *CIL* XIII.1668=*ILS* 212=*FIRA* I.43=Smallwood 369, col 1. 23–24.

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