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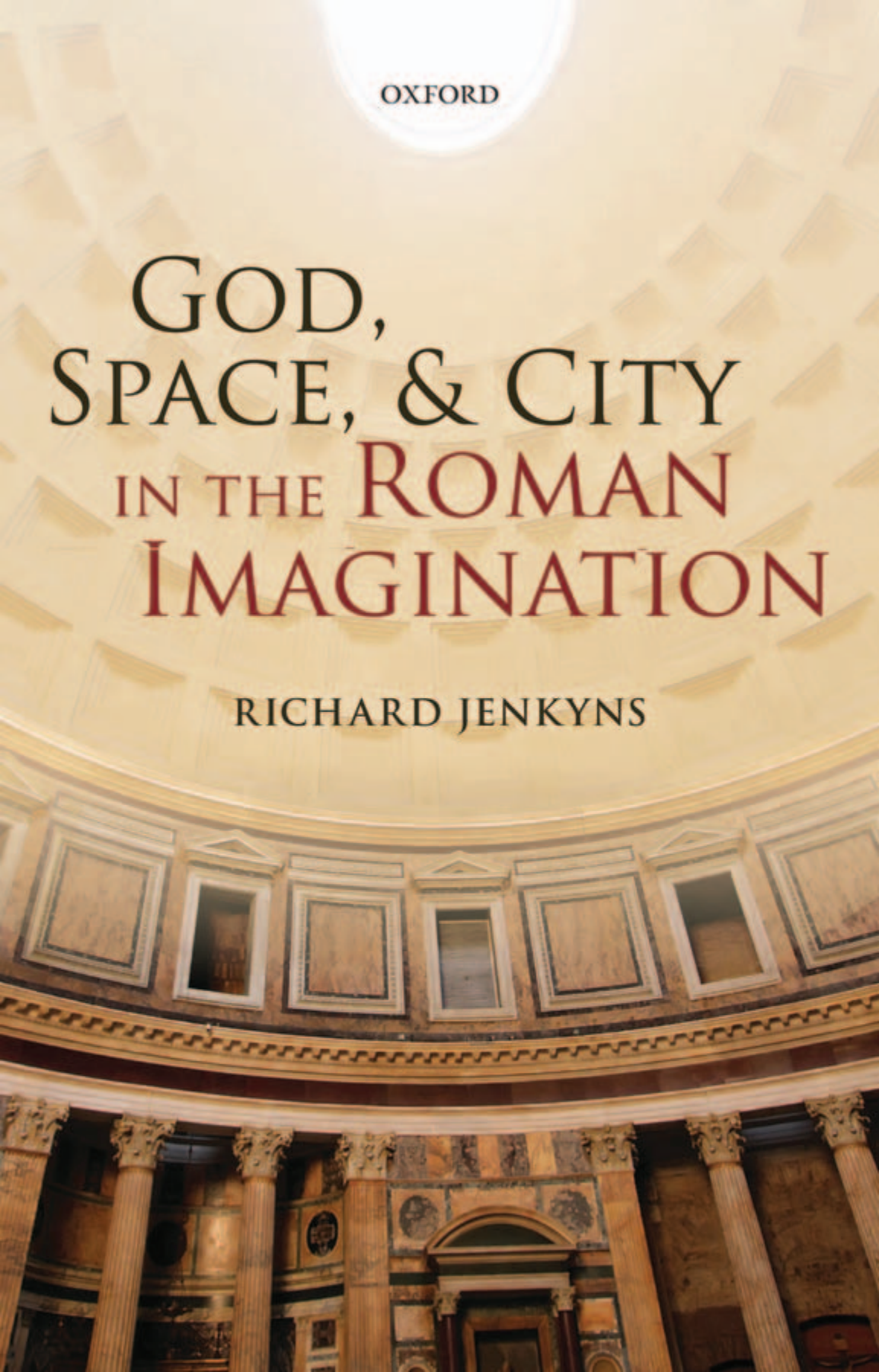
God, Space, & City in the Roman Imagination

RICHARD JENKYNS



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To Ann

Preface

This book explores part of the ancient Romans' experience; I have conceived it as a single though diverse enquiry, with three principal elements, indicated by my title. I am concerned with the senses and with the life of the mind, with what the Romans saw and felt, and with how they interpreted the objects and ideas that they encountered. Sight is the sense that plays the largest, although not the only, part in this story. I examine the Romans looking at one another and at their city, and I discuss how they thought metaphorically about the way in which the gods and even the physical fabric of the city looked at them. The secular aspect of this takes me to the ways in which the Romans moved up, down, and around their metropolis, their attitudes towards it, for and against, and its place in their emotions and imagination. The sacred aspect leads me to consider how they apprehended the divine realm, in what sense they supposed that the gods were present in their town and in what sense they supposed that they were not. Both aspects take me to the body of the city: to its streets and open places and above all to its buildings.

Space has become a fashionable term in scholarship. Sometimes it is merely a modish alternative to place, or to distance; elsewhere it commonly denotes open space, considered in two of its dimensions—the parks, piazzas, and streets of a town, for example. In this book I usually employ the word 'area' for space in this sense. I have mostly reserved the word space itself for space in which all three dimensions signify—length, breadth, and height; that is, for the interior of buildings. Since the forums and porticos of Rome can be understood as interiors, rooms without roofs, they are also examples of space under this particular definition.

I have taken a period of about two hundred years, between the early first century BC and the early second century AD. I have also allowed in a few witnesses from the later second century. I have strayed beyond these time limits only occasionally, and then to cast light on the period from outside. I have used Greek and Roman historians who wrote about much earlier times, and here my interest has been primarily in the authors themselves and in how they interpreted those older epochs. Potential readers may want to know, and reviewers sometimes ask, what audience a book is meant for. I hope that this one will inform students and scholars, but I like to think that it has something to offer to anyone who is interested in the Roman world or in the kinds of human experience that it investigates. When I quote Greek and Latin authors in their own language, I translate them, sacrificing elegance if need be to preserve as much original nuance as possible. When I discuss the significance of a particular word, the issues at stake should be clear.

All study of the ancient world is a struggle against limitations. The historian of a more recent time can cite hundreds, even thousands, of voices; the historian of antiquity is not so lucky. Although I have used both visual and written evidence, and drawn on a wide range of sources—verse and prose, moralists and mischief makers, rich men and their hangers on, historians, orators, philosophers, technical

writers—for most of the book I have had to rely on only about four dozen authors. In principle, many thousands of 'authors' remain from the ancient world—the anonymous composers of those inscriptions which survive in such abundance—but my topic has invited only a very slight use of these. Notoriously, the sources are unrepresentative: women, children, slaves, and the peasantry who made up most of the population under Roman rule figure hardly or not at all, and most of what we can learn about them derives from witnesses who may be tendentious or uncomprehending. Even among the literate minority, those who were wealthy or secure enough to write, in a world where no livelihood could be earned by the pen except through patronage, were not typical, by virtue of having literary ambition. That, however, is always true: in every society, most people are not authors and do not wish to be. The cultural historian faces a further and fascinating difficulty. Some of my witnesses are deeply original minds, 'riders in the chariot', men who have seen a vision that others have not seen. Such genius is precious for its own sake, but it may not tell us much about the tone of the time. The issue is not simple: for example, some parts of Virgil's vision were taken up, to become a permanent addition to the western imagination; other parts were not. For visionary mind I think especially of four among the authors of this period: Virgil and Lucretius (who play a large part in this book) and St Paul and the Fourth Evangelist (who do not). There is also a case to be made for Apuleius, the chief among those writers of the later second century AD to whom I have given room. I have brought together writers from different generations and of diverse type. I have been always conscious of the differences between them; sometimes I have spelled these out explicitly, but often not. Complete explicitness would have been unbearable for the reader.

Perhaps what we need for a study of the imagination is a mixture of the original and the commonplace. Luckily (for this purpose) a good deal of the writing that has survived from antiquity is the product of conventional minds, and we can often observe both originality and ordinariness and the interplay between them. Given the comparative paucity of sources, perhaps all one can say is this: we do the best that we can. I have written in the awareness that in any account of the ancient world there is rather little of which one can be absolutely sure, but again it would have been tedious for the reader if I had reported a scintilla of doubt every single time that I felt it. I add, however, that such scepticism might also be directed to more recent times, including our own. Anyone who has read the life of someone known to them, or an account of events in which they have been involved, will know how immediately factual errors occur, how invariably incident and anecdote are embroidered, quotations improved, and, more subtly, how easily tone, context, and character are distorted or misunderstood.

From one point of view, this is a lesser problem for my theme than for some other kinds of history. In general, I believe that the dead deserve justice as well as the living, and that we should be ready to praise and blame them, where the evidence allows; but because I am studying perception and emotion, for my own purposes it matters less whether (for example) Nero was a monster than that the Romans declared him to have been so. But in another way my subject may seem especially slippery, for it includes subjective states: the senses, thoughts, and emotions. However, the study of subjectivity is not, of itself, a surrender to subjectivity. It is an objective truth that subjective states exist; that people think,

love, grieve, hate, imagine, rejoice, believe, admire, worship. Any account of the past that leaves out the emotions leaves out much of the past as it actually was. To this it might be retorted that all history is necessarily incomplete and that, anyway, however desirable it might be to get inside the head of an ancient Roman, it is in practice impossible. The question of mentality—in the sense of a society's shared outlook—has interested historians a great deal. That in itself can seem elusive enough, and it may well be thought that the minds of individuals who lived two thousand years ago must be entirely inaccessible.

I address this issue in the course of the book. Here I will say only two things. The first is baldly practical: let us examine the evidence and see how far it takes us. The second is this: historians, it seems to me, have not sufficiently recognized the uses of imaginative literature. They cite poets on matters of fact, but seldom as evidence of inward states. So historians of religion mine Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* for information about what happened at a particular ceremony; but there is more to be learnt about religious experience by looking in the 'wrong' places, in Horace's informal verse, for example, or in Lucretius. Even pure literary criticism, which is one of the methods that I have used, can convey historical insights. Conversely, of course, literary study benefits from a historical grounding; some commonly held views about Augustan poetry, for instance, do not survive historical scrutiny. Insofar as there is a gap between aesthetic and historical methods of enquiry, I have tried to bridge it.

On almost every page I have been conscious of trespassing on other people's fields (though 'trespassing' is not quite the word, for there are rights of way). I have sought to write as far as possible from the primary sources, but where buildings are concerned, that claim needs a special qualification. We can still walk into the Pantheon, and a few other Roman monuments remain spatially expressive, but others are ruinous or have disappeared almost entirely. I could not have written about the Forum of Trajan without using the reconstructions of modern archaeologists. Since I am not an archaeologist, it is fortunate that some of those who are have explained ancient Rome to the layperson so clearly. For instruction on buildings and topography I have leant especially on the guides by Claridge and Coarelli and on the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*. It is an exciting if disconcerting truth that our understanding of several of Rome's most important monuments has changed dramatically in the past few years, and there may be startling discoveries yet to come. I am not an expert on Roman religion either. In the very large literature on this subject, much is good and some things are outstanding; I have drawn on this work gratefully. Some questions that interest me, however, do not seem to have interested the scholars in this field, as far as I have been able to find; I have also come to think that certain generally held opinions about Roman religion need reconsideration. Some of these issues do not fit this book, but I have raised one or two of them.

To make the book I have had to read, look, think, ask, discuss, and write, all of which I have enjoyed. My greatest debt is to the Leverhulme Trust, for awarding me the Major Research Fellowship from 2007–10 that enabled the book to be written; I am grateful too for the light touch of their administration. Essentially, the whole book was written during that time, although I have made a few changes and additions since. A version of Chapter 8 appears also in *Memoria Romana*, ed. Karl Galinsky (2013). I owe thanks for help of various kinds to Darius Arya, Mary

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THE PUBLIC EYE

How do we apprehend a city? We can bring to the immediate moment the power of imagination, drawing upon thought and memory, on what we have read and on what we have been told. Body and mind come together to give the fullness of our experience of town and country alike. Our senses are five—sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell—and there exists also that mysterious sixth sense, our awareness of where each part of our body is placed and how it is situated in relation to its surroundings. Of these senses, taste will not concern us in this book: taste might after a fashion be part of our feeling for a particular city through recollection of the local types of food and drink consumed there, but this issue does not arise significantly in accounts of ancient Rome. Cities may be odorous, and some cities may even have an aroma distinctive to themselves; it will indeed be a question how much Rome smelt, and how far people noticed it. Cities are likely to be noisy, because of traffic and voices always, and because of the music and applause of celebrations sometimes, or cries and shrieks at times of crisis and danger. There may also have been intervals of silence: before gas or electric lighting, cities were probably quieter (and more dangerous) at night that they have since become, although of course there were always drunks and revellers. Silence might also carry an emotional meaning, on occasions of grief or horror, for example. Even that elusive sixth sense will play a part in this enquiry, when we come to consider the experience of being within an enclosed space. But of all the senses, it is sight that takes the largest part in our sources, not least because looking and being looked at were so bound up with their ideas of politics, society, and religion, and it is here that we shall begin.

For his account of the Augustan age the historian Cassius Dio invented a speech by Maecenas in which that shrewd counsellor advises the emperor how to conduct himself: you will live, he says, 'in a sort of theatre of the whole world'.[1] Had Maecenas ever delivered such a speech, he would have spoken it in Latin, but Dio writes in Greek, and so the root meaning of 'theatre' is fully alive in his text: 'a looking on'. This is a third-century writer's idea of how a statesman more than 200 years earlier might have spoken, but it is accurately imagined. Cicero, inspecting the province of Sicily in the office of quaestor, told himself that 'the eyes of all' were casting their gaze upon him, and that he should suppose himself to be going about his business 'as it were in a kind of theatre of the world'.[2] A few years later,

[1] Dio 52. 34. 3. [2] Cic. *Verr.* 2. 5. 35.

he developed the metaphor further in an epistle of advice to his brother Quintus, off to serve as proconsul of Asia: Quintus must appreciate that he has been granted a theatre, the whole of Asia, for him to show off his virtues—a theatre packed with people, vast in its dimensions, and with so impressive an acoustic that cries and demonstrations in it resonate as far away as Rome.[3] That brings sound as well as sight into the metaphor, and reminds us that the idea had power in part because it came so close to a political reality: it was indeed in theatres that the populace made known its views of public men and public affairs.[4] Recurrent in Cicero's letters are comments that such-and-such a statesman (himself especially) is being applauded in the theatres, while another is getting a cool or a hostile reception.[5]

Quintus was to serve as governor for a period of three years, and this led his brother to a further thought. Cicero's last and most vehemently urged exhortation is that Quintus should 'like good poets and conscientious actors' take especial pains with the concluding part of his work: let him be sure that his third year in post is 'perfectissimus atque ornatissimus', the most highly finished and splendidly adorned of all.[6] In this last expansion of the metaphor the theatricality of the public man's life becomes more than spectacle and visible grandeur: it is now process, story, unfolding drama. This is an example of a Roman way of thinking and feeling which we may need some effort to appreciate. We tend to think of 'spectacle' as light, entertaining, even frivolous, but to the Romans it is visible glory, an expression of man's greatness.[7] Similarly, the word 'theatrical' suggests to us artifice, insincerity, and self-advertisement, but in the Roman mind theatricality could be magnificent, solemn, and even tragic. So Livy does not diminish but rather heightens the awfulness of the national plight when he describes the Roman people, under attack from the Gauls, looking down from their fortress upon their city full of the enemy and turning their eyes and minds in terror this way and that, as though they had been placed by fortune to watch the spectacle ('ad spectaculum') of their country in collapse.[8]

To the philosopher even the divine realm could appear as show. In Cicero's dialogue *On the Nature of the Gods* Balbus, his spokesman for the Stoic faith, declares that among the great gifts of the deities to humankind, nature has made them stand upright, so that they may look up at the sky and receive knowledge of the gods. For men live upon the earth not as mere inhabitants but 'like spectators, as it were, of the heavenly things above, a spectacle which concerns no other kind of living being'.[9] In this conception the universe itself is spectacle and man the spectating animal. In a much lighter and more fanciful context Apuleius has Venus say that she must smear on a little beauty before joining the theatre of

[3] Cic. *Q. fr.* 1. 1. 42 (1 SB). [4] Nicolet (1980), 361–73.

[5] Cic. *Att.* 1. 16. 11, 2. 19. 3, 4. 15. 6 (16, 39, 90 SB); *Fam.* 8. 1. 1, 8. 7. 4 (78, 92 SB). Cf. Dupont (2003), 119–23.

[6] Cic. *Q. fr.* 1. 1. 46 (1 SB).

[7] Asked who 'this ubiquitous "we"' might represent, Williams (1993) answered that '"we" operates . . . through invitation . . . It is not a matter of "I" telling "you" what I or others think, but of my asking you to consider to what extent you and I think some things and perhaps need to think others' (171). The same applies here. 'We' in this book usually indicates either the author and reader together or what I take to be the common outlook of people today. 'Common outlook' does not of course imply that everyone thinks the same.

[8] Liv. 5. 42. 3. [9] Cic. *Nat. Deo.* 2. 140.

the gods; and when the gods are assembled, the phrase is 'completo caelesti theatro', 'now that the heavenly theatre was full'.[10] In this there lurks a sense that even deity enjoys the spirit of ceremony and display.[11]

To the historian Polybius' Greek eye a pervasive theatricality in public life appeared distinctively Roman. It was also important: a matter of policy and social cohesion.[12] In his account of Roman institutions two ideas are recurrent: *enargeia*, brilliance of adornment and display, and *tragōidia*, a word not easily translated. Aristotle's understanding of tragedy seems not far from our own, not surprisingly, since it has done so much to shape it. But the Greek application of the term is not coterminous with our own usage. On one level, anything written for performance at the festival of the Greater Dionysia at Athens, other than the satyr plays, was a tragedy, and these included works with triumphant conclusions, like Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, and pieces like Euripides' *Ion* and *Helen*, which are closer in spirit to *Twelfth Night* than to *Hamlet*, and which we might prefer to class as comedies of manners. Sometimes 'tragedy' seems to denote something not far from 'the serious depiction of men and women in action'. Greatness or grandeur was also a large part of the idea, as Aristotle too insisted, and when prose writers use the term, public ostentation or magnificence is often prominent in their minds. But if we translate 'tragedy' merely as 'pomp' or 'theatre', we miss something important: we lose the sense of enactment, of a kind of storytelling, of inner significance behind the outward show, and even perhaps, at times, a kind of brilliant darkness. So it is worth putting up with the oddity and trying the experiment of preserving 'tragedy' in the translation.

The Romans' polity, Polybius thought, was superior above all in its attitude to the gods: *deisidaimonia* (literally, fear of the divine), which among other peoples is a matter of reproach, holds their state together. To an exceptional degree the visible religious being of the city is 'made tragic' (*ektragōidetai*) and this spirit is introduced widely into both private life and public affairs. It is done, the historian supposes, mostly for the sake of the populace, which, being fickle and susceptible to violent and irrational emotions, must be held in check by invisible terrors 'and suchlike tragedy'.[13] Another Greek observer uses a like language: Plutarch tells of the ill feeling aroused by the house of Valerius Publicola on the Velia, hanging over the Forum, and adds that it was indeed 'rather tragic' (*tragikōteron*). And in another place he describes Antony in Alexandria: the gymnasium was thronged with people, and he and Cleopatra sat in golden thrones on a silver dais, with his sons below him, spectacularly dressed. Here he allocated kingdoms to the queen and to his sons, but the people thought this 'tragic and arrogant'.[14] In such places 'tragic' may seem to mean little more than 'haughty' or 'overbearing', and indeed the conventional loftiness of tragedy (often symbolized by the buskins or high boots worn by the actors) is surely in Plutarch's mind as he writes about Valerius' house; but he can use the same language of a much more terrible event: the mass

[10] Apul. *Met.* 6. 16, 23.

[11] On the words *theama*, 'spectaculum', etc.: Bergmann (1999), 10–13.

[12] Political use of spectacle: Feldherr (1998), 4–19.

[13] Polyb. 6. 56. 6–11; cf. Bell (1997), 3–5. On the importance of the gaze elsewhere in Polybius: Davidson (1991).

[14] Plut. *Publ.* 10. 2; *Ant.* 54. 3–6.

suicide of the Xanthians 'appeared as a tragic sight to behold'.[15] The significant fact is that a single word covers a range from the statesman going about his business in the city to the extremity of human disaster; the public life of Rome pulsates with a larger and deeper resonance.

Another historian, Florus, describes a battle at which the slaughter was so savage 'that tradition relates that the gods themselves were present at the spectacle (interfuisse spectaculo)'.[16] And Seneca was sure (so he said) that the gods 'looked on (spectasse) with great joy' at the last hours of Cato. The great man's first attempt to kill himself failed, 'for it was not enough for the immortal gods to look upon (spectare) Cato only once'. 'Why indeed', Seneca adds, 'should they not look (spectarent) gladly upon their nursling as he slipped from life in so glorious and memorable a departure?'[17] Here we ourselves may feel that the nobility of the spectacle has been allowed to crush compassion, but that is probably not what the philosopher meant. Like Florus (or Florus' source) he is likely to have had in his thoughts Homer's idea of the gods as divine spectators, looking on at Achilles' pursuit of Hector, for example, as though it were a sporting competition, a race run for the prize of a tripod or a slave.[18] The Homeric conception both dignifies the heroes and belittles them: the gods observe them eagerly, but their emotions are not deeply engaged. Like a sporting partisanship, their feelings are the simulacrum of passion rather than the real thing. They do not need to care, and therefore are they gods. In Seneca's conception, however, there seems to be no belittlement: the gods care for Cato, he is their 'nursling', and they grant him the privilege of performing his last act before the grandest of all audiences.

The most Roman of all Roman enactments, and the one most laden with import, was the triumph. Polybius writes about 'what they call triumphs', in which the *enargeia* of military achievements is brought by generals under the view (*hupo tēn opsin*) of the citizenry.[19] For him brilliance and public show are the essence of this institution. But we might go beyond *enargeia* and press a little further Polybius' other idea, that of the tragic city. Plutarch relates that when Perseus' children were led in Aemilius Paulus' triumph, the Romans felt pity for them, many wept, 'and for all of them the spectacle (*tēn thean*) was a mixture of grief and gratification until the children had passed by'.[20] It is possible to take this to mean that the two emotions were entirely distinct—the people felt nothing but sadness for the children and nothing but delight at the rest of the show—but this seems somewhat rigid and artificial. More natural is to understand it as a single experience in which pity and pleasure are intermingled. On this account the experience resembles the puzzling pleasure that we take in being moved by reading or seeing a tragedy. Aristotle said that tragedy stirs pity and terror; we might hazard the notion that the Roman spectators felt pity and a kind of awe.

It has been claimed that the triumph was an edgy and perilous affair; that the star of the show knowingly took a risk, aware that the parts of the ceremony might go wrong (as, for example, when Pompey was unable to get his elephants through

[15] Plut. *Brut.* 31. 4: *tou theamatos tragikou phanentos idein*. The three almost consecutive words for seeing are striking. And the noun *theama* brings the ideas of seeing and theatre together in a way that translation cannot reproduce.

[16] Flor. 1. 11. 4. [17] Sen. *Prov.* 2. 11–12. [18] Hom. *Il.* 22. 162–4 (and cf. 159–60).

[19] Polyb. 6. 15. 8. [20] Plut. *Aem P.* 33. 4.

the gates of the city), or the victor's glory be eclipsed by the nobility of the defeated and the sympathy that their plight might arouse.[21] That is very improbable. Throughout Roman history, until the emperors reserved this honour for themselves and their family, great men were always passionately eager to be awarded a triumph, and there is really no evidence at all that when they climbed into the victor's chariot, they thought themselves to be taking a gamble. One thinks of Cicero's endless wheedling to try and get himself a triumph on the basis of some petty skirmishing up country in Cilicia. Indeed, we can judge the power of the triumph over the Roman imagination by the way in which the moralists who try to deny its splendour seem to stumble in the attempt. Cato, fending off one of Cicero's importunities, told him that the Senate's judgement that a governor had administered his province in peace, with justice and clemency, was 'much more glorious than a triumph'. Cicero replied, with bitter courtesy, that he would not think of comparing the *triumphator*'s chariot and laurel crown to the higher honour of Cato's praise.[22] One can almost hear the grinding of the orator's teeth. Cicero disliked Cato, Cato must have known it, and both men were surely aware of the sarcasm behind the outward *politesse*. A few years earlier Cicero had jeered that Piso, as a good Epicurean, would disdain the triumph: 'These are empty things', he might tell himself, 'hardly more than gratifications for children'.[23] This was scurrilous and unscrupulous: the orator attributes such sentiments to his opponent because they are contemptible.[24] He does not suggest that Piso was afraid of a triumph because it might fall flat; the idea never occurs to him.

Livy describes a struggle between two consuls for public honour after a success in war. M. Livius secured the triumph, but his colleague, C. Claudius Nero, won the moral victory. The talk of the onlookers who followed Claudius all the way to the Capitol, says Livy, was that the other consul might go aloft on a chariot drawn by many horses, but the true triumph was to ride through the city on a single horse, and Nero, even if he went on foot, would be memorable either for the glory that he had won in the war or for the glory that he had spurned in this triumph.[25] This may seem to suggest that the outward apparatus of glory is unimportant—but no, not quite. Nero's spurning turns out to be not the refusal of public enactment but a visible representation of eloquent simplicity. Like the *triumphator* he has moved through the city, through the throng, and up to the Capitol; he has not so much rejected the triumph as created an alternative triumph. Livy calls the crowds 'spectantes', spectators, even though they are actors and participants in this event, it being their presence and enthusiasm that give Nero the victory in this battle for influence.

Juvenal includes triumphs and victory parades as instances of the vanity of human wishes, but in the very same poem he acknowledges that Marius would have been supremely fortunate had he died on the day of his triumph.[26] Propertius, asserting the primacy of private fulfilment over public honour, declares that

[21] This is a recurrent theme in Beard (2007), especially ch. 4.

[22] Cic. *Fam.* 15. 5. 2 (111 SB); 15. 6. 1 (112 SB). [23] Cic. *Pis.* 60.

[24] Brilliant (1999), 225, on this passage: 'Cicero . . . had criticized the triumph most severely.' On the contrary.

[25] Liv. 28. 9. 15–16. [26] Juv. 10. 133–41, 278–82.

the faithful embrace of his mistress is a victory worth more to him than conquering the Parthians: 'This shall be my spoils, this my kings, this my chariots.'[27] And Lucan alleges that he would rather 'lead the triumph' that was Cato's desperate march through the African desert than thrice climb the Capitol in Pompey's chariot.[28] But these extravagances only celebrate the triumph in the act of declining it: the highest praise that the poets can find for anything is to say that it exceeds even this greatest felicity. Vespasian is the one man who may genuinely have thought little of the honour: notoriously leery of pomp and show, he is said to have told himself on the day of his triumph that he was being an old silly.[29] But even if this was not ostentatious modesty (for after all, who would know what he said to himself if he had not let it be known?) or simple fiction, it is an exception that confirms the rule, for the point of the anecdote is to tell us something distinctive about this particular man. In any case, the triumph, now reserved for the emperor and his kin, had become less significant; and the fact remains, too, that he did go through with it.

When Julius Caesar triumphed over Gaul, his chariot axle broke as he passed through the Velabrum and he was almost thrown out, but the procession continued and he climbed the Capitol by the light of torches, with forty elephants bearing lamps to left and right of him. Suetonius notes the accident as a matter of record, but there is no sign that he regards it as ominous or embarrassing.[30] The expectation that public ceremony should be flawless in execution is very modern, and owes a great deal to photography and television, which have given these events colossal audiences and ensured that they will be endlessly replayed. In any case, the triumph was an interaction of the general and his soldiers with the people, and perhaps we should not even call it ceremony. We might think of the open-top bus inching its way through the town with the Cup Final winners aloft rather than, say, the State Opening of Parliament. As for those tears for the defeated, it runs counter to everything that the Romans tell us to suppose that they somehow subverted or endangered the glory of the day. It is also too simple: a fuller understanding of human nature and an appreciation of the theatricality of the Roman imagination may even see them as a further enrichment of the thrill.

So, at least, Seneca seems to have thought. In his *Trojan Women* a messenger describes two atrocities carried out by the victorious Greeks after Troy's defeat: Astyanax, Hector's young son, tossed to his death from a height, and the maiden Polyxena sacrificed to the dead Achilles. In most accounts the killing of Astyanax is a bluntly ruthless business, an act of realpolitik; Seneca turns it into a vast spectacle.[31] Homer had shown Priam and the elders of the people watching the battle by the Scaean Gates, on a tower—a good viewpoint, it seems, but nothing special.[32] Seneca makes it lofty, a summit from which the king directed the fighting, a showpiece of the city ('muri decus'). Every Greek and most Roman schoolboys knew that Troy was surrounded by a plain: this was the field on which the heroes fought and died. Despite this, Seneca has created crag and hill outside the city, close enough for the mass of the Greeks to look down upon the event,

[27] Prop. 2. 14. 23–4.
[28] Lucan 9. 599–600. He has referred before to Pompey's three triumphs, 8. 553.
[29] Suet. *Vesp*. 12. [30] Suet. *Jul.* 37. 2. [31] Sen. *Tro*. 1068–87.
[32] Hom. *Il.* 3. 146–55.

though since the boy is to be hurled from that topmost tower, one would naturally expect the watchers to look up. Surely he has Roman spectacle in his mind.

Some of the crowd stood on tiptoe on a high cliff to get the best view. Others hung from trees, so that the whole woodland trembled with their weight, others from the ruined walls; one spectator (Latin 'spectator' is Seneca's own word) was heartless enough to sit on Hector's tomb. The Greeks' lust for the show is elaborately described. And yet when the child is led to his death, he is the only one to hold back his tears:[33]

> moverat vulgum et duces
> ipsumque Ulixem. non flet e turba omnium
> qui fletur.

[He had moved the people and their leaders and even Ulysses. Of all that multitude, he alone who was wept for did not weep.]

Seneca is a melodramatist, and most of his characters are praters and poseurs. Habitually he sacrifices human truth to epigrammatic effect (as here with the serenity of the slaughtered boy—quite unbelievable), but he has at least understood something of the psychopathology of mass spectacle. When he passes to Polyxena, the theatrical idea becomes fully explicit. This is the site for her sacrificial death:[34]

> adversa cingit campus, et clivo levi
> erecta medium vallis includens locum
> crescit *theatri more*. *concursus* frequens
> implevit omne litus.

[There is a flat area facing, and the side of the valley, sloping gently upwards, encloses the space between and rises in the fashion of a theatre. A packed gathering filled the whole shore.]

While as for the onlookers,[35]

> magna pars vulgi levis
> oditque scelus spectatque.

[The greater part of the shallow mob both hates the crime and watches it.]

Marvell was to evoke the Roman sense of public event as tragic performance when he described King Charles I at his execution as 'the royal actor' and acknowledged that 'He nothing common did or mean | Upon that memorable scene.' He called his piece 'An Horatian Ode', recalling Horace's commemoration of the death of another royal tyrant, Cleopatra.[36] That poem ends with the word 'triumph', referring to the show that the queen was too proud to endure, preferring suicide to a staged humiliation. Horace, as Marvell understood, achieves a nicely calculated blend of rejoicing at the end of a bad woman with an austerely limited admiration. She had a kind of greatness, the poem implies; and had she lived to be led in triumph, the occasion would have mingled glory and tragedy. In Marvell's seventeenth-century English, 'scene' is not the very general term that it is for us

[33] Sen. *Tro.* 1099–100.
[34] Sen. *Tro.* 1123–6. On the messenger's description: Benton (2002), 35–40.
[35] Sen. *Tro.* 1128–9. [36] Hor. *Carm.* 1. 37.

today but preserves the metaphor in Latin 'scaena', originally 'backdrop', then more broadly 'stage' or 'setting'. The word is recurrent in descriptions of public life: great men knew that their lives were acted out upon a stage, and on the whole they liked it. Philip V of Macedon before the city of Athens, in Livy's telling, felt the thrill of glory because people were thronging the walls to see the spectacle (spectaculum) and he was looked upon (conspici) by an immense crowd.[37] Caligula had the ashes of his mother and brother brought up river from Ostia to Rome and then borne to their mausoleum on the shoulders of the most distinguished knights, and Suetonius called it a piece of theatre (nec minore *scaena*).[38] Philip was a Greek, Caligula a madman, and we catch the note of condescension in the historians' words. Philosophers might add their own reproofs: Seneca describes the setting in which the great live as 'a *scaena* shining with empty rewards that soon slip away'.[39] But like much moralizing, this is a conscious swimming against the tide, and though like the Roundheads he may wish to close the theatre down, he cannot deny that it exists. Indeed, the metaphor had become a cliché, to judge from some words of Cicero to Brutus: 'You have now to serve the people and the *scaena*, as they say; for the eyes not only of your army but of all the citizens and almost of the nations are upon you.'[40] He likes the idea of oratory as theatre: he lets drop the words '*in scaena*, that is, at a public assembly', and he takes the metaphor half-way to literalness in one of his speeches, when he brings the stones of Rome themselves into the picture, gesturing to the Aurelian Steps and declaring that when they were new, they seemed to have been built 'as though for a theatre' for the trial being held there.[41]

'All the world's a stage', says Shakespeare's Jaques, but that is not quite how the Romans saw it. For them all the world was a theatre—a significantly different conception. Their usual notion is not that all the men and women are players; rather, the stage is for the great to strut and speechify upon, and the rest of humankind make up the audience.[42] The Shakespearian idea is not easily found in Latin literature, but it does appear in Lucian's *Nigrinus*, in which the eponymous philosopher explains that when he first came back to Rome, he wondered as he got near the city why he had made the journey: why leave the light, freedom, and happiness of Greece for the great city's tumult of informers, dinners, flatterers, murders, legacy-hunting, and false friendships? So he decided to stay at home, conversing with philosophy, Plato, and truth, 'and seating myself as though in a theatre filled with countless people, as a spectator (*theōros*) I look down from on high upon what is going on'.[43] A little later he adds that one can indeed admire philosophy when one looks upon (*paratheōrounta*) the follies before one's eyes, and one can despise (*kataphronein*, literally 'think down upon') the gifts of fortune, 'seeing as on a stage (*skēnē*—the word that gives us Latin 'scaena') and

[37] Liv. 31. 24. 13. On battle as spectacle in Greek historians: Walker (1993).

[38] Suet. *Cal.* 15. 1. [39] Sen. *Ben.* 6. 30. 6.

[40] Cic. *Ep. Brut.* 1. 9. 2 (18 SB). [41] Cic. *Am.* 97, *Clu.* 93.

[42] On looking at the great in general, Bell (2004), ch. 1, and on looking at Julius Caesar in particular, his ch. 2. On the 'theatrical paradigm' under the empire, Bartsch (1994).

[43] Lucian, *Nig.* 17–18. On the philosopher as spectator in Plato and Aristotle: Nightingale (2001), esp. 36, 40, 43–8.

in a drama with many characters' the servant turning into a master, the rich man reappearing as poor, another figure appearing as a friend and then as an enemy.[44] The point here does appear to be that 'one man in his time plays many parts': on the stage the same actor plays beggar and tycoon, so-and-so's friend and his foe, and this is like the changes of fortune that the philosophic spectator observes in real life. The essay is interesting in combining philosophical generality with a concrete sense of particular place; as we shall see, one of the ways in which the Romans frequently imagined their city was in terms of looking down upon it from an upper level. And just as Lucian applies the motif of looking down in Rome with a kind of moral contemplation that has universal application, so he gives a new twist to the metaphor of the theatre by making it a stage not only for the elite but for all.

As in our own world nothing has really happened unless it has been on television or the Internet, so for the Romans events, moods, and processes acquired their reality by being seen. At the heart of their experience was what has been called 'the ideology of publicity'.[45] From one side came the pressure of a political and social imperative: much of the people's stake in the Roman system of governance came from their being able constantly to look upon their ruling class, both on and off duty, in the Forum, in the theatres, exercising on the Campus Martius, and in the more public parts of their grand town houses. Some things were a matter of law: according to Cicero the censors might not assign the contracts for tax-farming except in the sight of the Roman people (in conspectu populi Romani).[46] But the matter went far beyond strict legal requirement: the people's witness was almost a part of the mixed constitution, an informal kind of accountability, and at times a means by which the populace could literally make its voice heard. Likewise, the corona or circle of spectators around the law courts in the Forum, and their reactions to what they heard, were effectively if not technically a contribution to the judicial and political process. It was not only that the courts should be open to the public, as ours are; they were immediately open to the public gaze, out in the air, and in the city's heart.

On the other side stood the elite's own desire to be gazed upon. What was the purpose of a triumph, after all? Livy puts the answer into the indignant mouth of Servilius:

> Where shall go these statues, golden, marble and of ivory, these pictures and fabrics, so much embossed silver, so much gold, such masses of royal money? Are they to be carried to the treasury by night like stolen property? Is not the greatest of all spectacles (spectaculum maximum) the sight of a truly noble and vastly wealthy king in captivity, when he is shown off (ostentatur) to the victorious people?[47]

Publicity, in the sense of open knowledge or widespread proclamation, is not enough. These things should not merely be known, they should be seen: the argument of the eye, the potency of the gaze, are paramount. Servilius' words bring out the element of display: 'spectaculum', 'ostentatur'. And we might also notice the stress on the nobility and magnificence of the vanquished king: the parading of a merely bad or sordid enemy would not, it seems, do as well. In this the tragic sense is again present.

[44] Lucian, *Nig.* 20.
[45] Millar (1978), 45.
[46] Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 1. 7.
[47] Liv. 45. 39. 5–6.

Virgil represents his annexation of Greek poetry through the imagery of triumph: 'victor ego et Tyrio *conspectus* in ostro'.[48] Conspicuous (literally, 'looked upon') in Tyrian purple—for him too the eyes of others (and splendour of raiment) sum up the triumph's essence. The importance of being seen and the sense of grand life as theatre lead Seneca to push his moralizing beyond plausibility. No one, he writes in one of his letters, arrays himself in purple if he cannot show it off to anyone or makes a solitary meal off gold plate. 'No one is chic for his eyes alone, or even for those of his household or a few friends, but he enlarges the elaboration of his vices to match the size of the mob of spectators (pro modo turbae spectantis) . . . Ambition, licentiousness and self-indulgence demand a stage (scaenam); you will cure these things, if you hide yourself away.'[49] Though some of this is persuasive enough, the idea that even the sensual pleasures have no charm unless they are observed, that self-discipline is the natural consequence of privacy, is incredible. That a philosopher could be lured into so unlikely a claim is eloquent of the grander Romans' lust for an audience. Plutarch agreed, more or less, remarking in one of his Roman lives that most people suppose their wealth to have been taken from them if they are prevented from displaying it.[50]

Critical moments in a man's life could be conceived in theatrical terms. In Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, the narrator Lucius' trial attracts so large an audience that the cry goes up for it to be moved to the theatre. There too the crowd is so packed, with some hanging from the columns, others peering in through windows and skylights, that people are putting themselves at risk 'studio visendi', through their passion for seeing. Then the defendant is led in through the *proscaenium* and placed in the middle of the *orchestra*.[51] Lucius adds that it was like those occasions when 'public priests' (publica ministeria) used to bring out a victim for sacrifice, thus suggesting that official religion too had its theatrical side. Plutarch says that there was no sight (*theama*) for which the Roman people so longed as to see Tigellinus being led out (to punishment, that is), and they never ceased calling for it in all the theatres and circuses.[52] It is significant that, as Plutarch's Greek brings out, the theatres are where the mob call for their *theama*. The eve of battle could stir similar thoughts. On the night before the fatal conflict at Pharsalia, says Florus, Pompey dreamt that he was in his own theatre, but the applause reverberating around him bore the sound of lamentation.[53] Lucan's version is magnificent:[54]

> at nox felicis Magno pars ultima vitae
> sollicitos vana decepit imagine somnos.
> nam Pompeiani visus sibi sede theatri
> innumeram effigiem Romanae cernere plebis
> attollique suum laetis ad sidera nomen
> vocibus et plausu cuneos certare sonantes;
> qualis erat populi facies clamorque faventis
> olim, cum iuvenis primique aetate triumphi . . .
> . . . plaudente senatu
> sedit adhuc Romanus eques; . . .

[48] V. *Geo.* 3. 17. [49] Sen *Ep.* 94. 69–70. [50] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 18. 3.
[51] Apul. *Met.* 3. 2. [52] Plut. *Galb.* 17. 4. [53] Flor. 2. 13. 45.
[54] Lucan 7. 7–14, 18–19.

[But the night, those last moments of the happy part of the Great Man's life, deceived his troubled slumber with an empty image. For he seemed to be on his seat in the Theatre of Pompey, viewing the countless appearance of the Roman people; his name was being lifted to the stars with joyful cries and the echoing tiers were vying with one another in their applause. Such had the look and clamour of the eager people been before, at the time of his first triumph, as he sat, young and still merely a Roman knight, with the Senate applauding . . .]

The people look upon Pompey; that need not be directly said, though the thought is in fact made explicit a few lines later when the poet laments, 'How happy your Rome would be if it could see you even as you are now.'[55] But at the same time he also inverts the theatrical image, for the phrases 'innumeram effigiem Romanae . . . plebis' and 'populi facies' bring out how the masses look to the great man, the prospect that he has before him. We enter his own experience, and see through his eyes: the people gaze upon Pompey, and Pompey gazes upon them.[56]

This is probably the most powerful paragraph that Lucan ever wrote, and perhaps the only place where he is genuinely tragic.[57] It may seem curious that he, who was so often theatrical in the derogatory sense of the word, sacrificing authenticity to immediate effect, achieves the note of tragedy in a scene that is theatrical in the most literal sense.[58] This is partly because it is grounded in a Roman reality. Pompey had built the first permanent theatre of stone in Rome, and this complex, with its Temple of Venus attached and his own house newly erected nearby, was the most visible evidence of his greatness in the fabric of the city. This was a political as well as an architectural novelty. Hitherto theatres, temporary and made of wood, had usually been put up in the Forum, politics and entertainment sharing the same territory. The construction of a permanent theatre was part of the long process of diversification by which the various functions originally coalesced so remarkably in a single site found their separate areas within the city, but it also gave the people's political participation a new arena. The Theatre of Pompey was not only the house that Pompey built; it was a social and political truth that he was on display there.[59] Lucan was never more real than when he invented a dream and made that dream theatrical.

He also achieves a concentration of effect by bringing into the dream so many aspects of greatness in the city: noise, for one thing, the roar of the populace and the Senate's more decorous applause. And then there is the importance of name. 'Nomen' often means fame, as indeed it can do in English, though less commonly and naturally. As we shall see, 'name' is a pervasive presence in Rome: masons

[55] Lucan 7. 29. [56] Cf. Parker (1999).

[57] For human and political force one might compare Cato's measured obituary of Pompey at 9. 190–214. But that draws its dignity from a certain coolness, from having the restraint to eschew the tragic note.

[58] He has in fact just begun the book disastrously with the Sun breaking eternal law and rising later than usual, through reluctance to look upon the field of disastrous battle. The sun did nothing of the sort. (One can contrast the rueful comedy of Ovid, making a lover's plea to the Dawn to delay her rising and noting, with the pretence of surprise, that she rose exactly the same as ever; *Am.* 1. 13. 48.) But Lucan, who can so often collapse, can also recover.

[59] There is much on gazing in Lucan from Leigh (1997); only a few lines, however, on this passage, and 'Lucan's Pompey is a showman' (114) surely misses the historical reality: applause in the theatre hails the statesman.

have nailed Pompey's name in bronze and carved it in stone upon the city's fabric; the people now take it and lift it heavenward.[60] Lucan will come back to the word when he describes Pompey's makeshift grave on the Egyptian shore, with the sentence 'Here lies the Great One' scratched on a stone with a burnt stick:[61]

> surgit miserabile bustum
> non ullis plenum titulis, non ordine tanto
> fastorum; solitumque legi super alta deorum
> culmina et extructos spoliis hostilibus arcus
> haud procul est ima Pompei nomen harena
> depressum tumulo, quod non legat advena rectus . . .

[It is a pitiable tomb that arises, not full of any titles or with the long sequence of his inscribed achievements; the name that used to be read up high on the lofty gables of the gods and on arches built with treasure seized from the enemy is now brought down to the lowest shore on a tomb which a passer-by would have to stoop to read . . .]

Once his name and titles had been high in Rome, metaphor made actual on the city's structures; and we may notice that it inhabits the temples of the gods as well as the secular monument. The great name was already aloft among the deities before the assembly in the theatre took it up and raised it to the stars.

The gaze in the theatre, tragic in Lucan, had been light-heartedly handled by Ovid. Women like to attend these places: '*spectatum* veniunt, veniunt *spectentur* ut ipsae' (They come to look, they come to be looked at themselves).[62] This is not, or at least not primarily, the reciprocal gaze, for the people look at the women, while the women look at the stage; but perhaps they have eyes too for some of the audience who are looking at them. One of Cicero's taunts suggests a failed reciprocity of gaze, a distortion of the proper mutuality of onlooking that is a symptom of Verres' corruption:[63]

> numquamne tibi iudici, numquam contionis, numquam huius tantae frequentiae quae nunc te animo iniquissimo infestissimoque *intuetur* venit in mentem? numquam tibi populi Romani absentis dignitas, numquam *species* ipsa huiusce multitudinis in *oculis* animoque versata est? numquam te in horum *conspectum* rediturum, numquam in forum populi Romani venturum, numquam sub legum et iudiciorum potestatem casurum esse duxisti?

[Did the thought of a trial, of the public assembled, of this great gathering, which now stares at you with the most bitter and hostile feelings never come into your mind? Did the dignity of the absent Roman people and the appearance itself of this multitude never pass through your eyes and mind? Did you never consider that you would be returning to the view of these men, coming into the Forum of the Roman people, and falling under the authority of the laws and the courts?]

Again, Verres looks at the multitude (or should have done), and they at him. There is a constant oscillation in this passage between the abstract and the concrete. The Forum is filled with lawsuits being argued, literally, but also with the invisible authority of the Senate. Public opinion (existimatio) is present, and so are the people themselves. The mind's eye of Verres should have taken in the dignity of the Roman people and their actual appearance. To come into the Forum

[60] The inscribed name: see the end of this chapter.
[61] Lucan 8. 793, 816–21.
[62] Ov. *AA* 1. 99.
[63] Cic. *Verr.* 2. 5. 144.

is to come under the 'conspectus' of the people as a matter of physical reality and to come under the power of law as an imaginative truth. 'Conspectus' is an ever recurrent word in the Romans' social and political discourse, because for them seeing is not only believing, it is participation. In our own political language 'transparency' is purely a metaphor; for the Romans visibility was political fact.

The repetition of the idea of seeing and the variation in the verbs expressing it is extended further when Cicero returns to the motif later, now in savagely bitter spirit, as he relates the judicial murder of Gavius of Compsa at Messana.[64] He explains that the citizens of this town usually set up the cross on a street behind the town, but Verres ordered it to be planted in the place which looked towards (spectaret) the Strait of Messina, so that the victim, who had pleaded that he was a Roman citizen, could see (cernere) Italy from the cross and look out (prospicere) at his home. Thus Gavius and Italy regard each other in an obscenely mocking parody of the reciprocal gaze. And still Cicero lingers on the theme: '"*spectet*", inquit, "patriam; in *conspectu* legum libertatisque moriatur"'('Let him stare at his country', Verres said; 'let him die in the sight of laws and liberty'). Pressing his case a long way beyond probability, the orator suggests that Verres was disappointed that he could not crucify Roman citizens in the Forum itself, and on the very Rostra, but had to be satisfied with choosing the corner of his province nearest to Rome, wanting the memorial of his crime to be 'in conspectu Italiae' and visible to those sailing across the strait. The context makes clear that 'in the sight of Italy' means that here too it is Italy doing the looking.

'Conspectus' was disgrace for the wicked or the unlucky, but for the successful it was a reward. In the same speech Cicero is frank about the return he gets for his public career: a special toga, a special chair, the right for his bust (imago) to be displayed for posterity to remember and admire—visible show, in other words, both now and in the future.[65] One wonders if this rising advocate thought himself to be laying it on a bit thick with his fantasy of Verres lusting to nail Roman citizens on the very Rostra; but he cannot have imagined how nearly this would apply to his own case. Much later he would mock Mark Antony by telling him that he had drunk so heavily 'that you were forced to vomit yesterday in the sight of the Roman people (in populi Romani conspectu)'.[66] Here Cicero produces a kind of parody of the Roman gaze upon political action. But the deadliest of his enemies was to have the last, hideous laugh. After Cicero's murder, his severed head and hands were set up on the Rostra at Antony's order.[67] In death the orator still haunted the Forum that he had so loved in life. The conspectus continued: his sightless eyes still 'looked' at the Forum, and the people in the Forum looked at his mutilated remains. And it was not an image that they stared upon, as a younger Cicero had fondly expected, but the man himself.

We may ourselves feel that this act degraded Antony more than his victim, but that only goes to show our distance from the Romans. If Antony paid a price at the time in terms of his reputation (and perhaps he did not), it was worth the cost: the visible humiliation of his foe outweighed any disdain towards himself which his opponents could at best express only in words. Why did he do it? To shame his

[64] Cic. *Verr.* 2. 5. 169–70. [65] Cic. *Verr.* 2. 5. 36.
[66] Cic. *Phil.* 2. 63. [67] Plut. *Ant.* 20. 2.

enemy, of course. The anthropologists have distinguished between shame cultures and guilt cultures, and the distinction has proved a valuable means of analysing societies.[68] But although it seems intuitively true that shame and guilt are real and powerful emotions, it has been notoriously hard to define what that difference is. Perhaps the most useful tool has been to picture the psychological model of each emotion as an internalized figure: on this account, the shame feeling is like the sense of a watcher or witness.[69] It is not shameful to be naked in the shower; it is shameful to be seen naked. The guilt feeling has been compared to an enforcer; or it might be likened to a voice. A man starving alone in the desert might think about ending his misery by suicide (no one will ever know), but he might nonetheless decide not to. This might be for a guilt reason: an imagined voice commands, 'Thou shalt not'—it is against the law of God or some other compelling ordinance. Or it might be for a shame reason: the deed would be unmanly, unworthy of oneself. The imagined witness looks on, and disapproves.

If this analysis is on the right lines, it may illuminate a good deal in Roman society. This was, to a very large extent, a shame culture, a culture of the eye, real or imagined. To be sure, the sages denounced the falsity of the outward show. Thus Seneca holds that if the soul is true to itself, it will say, 'The things which people watch (quae spectantur), by which they stop, which they point out to one another in amazement, glitter outwardly but are wretched within.' Instead he urges us to 'seek that which is good not in appearance (in speciem) but that which is solid, consistent and lovelier (formosius) in its more hidden part'.[70] But he could not altogether escape the argument of the eye; even here, indeed, his word for 'lovely' is 'formosus', literally 'shapely', beautiful in form, rather than the more generalized 'pulcher'. Conscience, in his teaching, is certainly a watcher, not a voice. In one of his letters he writes, 'God is near you, he is with you, he is within you . . . A sacred spirit abides within us, the watcher (observator) and guardian of our actions, bad and good.'[71] Here the half-realized image seems to be one of interior space: we penetrate the inner chamber and find that even here there is an observer, still looking on.

Elsewhere Seneca assimilates the gaze of conscience to the political and social idea of conspectus. Instead of the witness in the secret room, the notion is now that there is no secret room, or at least that we should behave as though there were none. 'We should certainly live as though we lived in open view (tamquam in conspectu)', he declares in another letter. 'What does it avail for a thing to be hidden from man? Nothing is hidden from god.'[72] Though a Stoic, he quoted approvingly one of Epicurus' maxims: 'Do everything as though Epicurus were watching you (tamquam spectet).'[73] And he sums up yet another letter with an adage in which Epicurus expressed much the same sentiment but less self-regardingly: 'We should cherish a good man and keep him always before our eyes (ante oculos), so that we may live as though he were watching (tamquam illo

[68] The distinction was popularized in Benedict's (1967) study of Japanese culture and brought to bear on ancient Greece by Dodds (1951), 17–18 and ch. 2, *passim*.

[69] Wollheim (1984), 220–1; Williams (1993), 78, 82, 89, 219–23; Bartsch (2006), 132–4; comprehensive discussion (and a somewhat different approach) in Cairns (1993), 14–26.

[70] Sen. *Vit. Be.* 2. 4, 3. 1. [71] Sen. *Ep.* 41. 1–2.

[72] Sen. *Ep.* 83. 1. [73] Sen. *Ep.* 25. 5.

spectante) and do everything as though he saw (tamquam illo vidente).'[74] The good life is the observed life, open to gaze. Writing to Nero, Seneca packs metaphorical inward looking and literal outward looking into a single moral parcel, explaining that he is writing to the emperor to perform the function of a mirror. 'It is a pleasure', he adds, 'to look into a good conscience and walk around it (inspicere et circumire bonam conscientiam), and then to cast one's eyes upon this vast multitude.'[75] Moral reflection is conceived both as looking into oneself and promenading around oneself on the one hand, and as looking outward to the mass of people on the other.

Satire, like philosophy, is in the morality business, and Juvenal is another author who may appear to assail the outward show and yet ends up saying something different. What would Hannibal have been if he had succeeded in riding victorious through Rome? A one-eyed man on a monster. 'O qualis facies, et quali digna tabella', the poet comments: what a *sight* that would have been, what a *picture* it would have made. What are triumphs and their memorials, in the end? Broken, fragmentary, beaten things: a corselet fastened to a stump, a cheek-piece hanging from a shattered helmet, a yoke shorn of its pole, a flagstaff wrenched from a warship, a sad captive carved upon an arch—and these things are reckoned above all human blessings![76] The line of attack here is not (as we might expect) that people are using their eyes rather than their heads, but that they are not looking hard enough. Juvenal wants us to gaze not less but more: though the spectators believe themselves to be using the power of sight, they are really thinking about significance. And that is why, to our reckoning, the poet's argument fails, for all the vigour and invention of his verse, because the inner meaning of outward signs does matter. Just as when Juvenal elsewhere reduces the sexual act to a few pulsations or the passage of a little moisture from one body to another, he speaks truth but not the whole truth, so here while he exposes an undeniable reality, he also leaves out something genuinely important.[77] Perhaps he is more the child of his time and place than he knows: although he attacks convention in dispraising military glory, he is conventionally Roman in giving the last authority to the argument of the eye.

As success was actualized in the gaze of the many, so conversely failure brought shame, and shame expressed itself in an abhorrence of seeing and being seen.[78] Occasionally the reaction was more complex: Livy tells the curious story of his namesake M. Livius, who felt the ignominy of a verdict against him so keenly that he retired to the country and for many years kept away from the city and from all human company. When finally persuaded to return he dressed shabbily, with long hair and beard, 'displaying in his face and clothing a conspicuous remembrance of the disgrace that he had met with', until the censors made him shave, smarten up, and do his duty as a senator.[79] First Livius refuses to be seen, then he makes a parade of his misery—opposite reactions, and yet each the product of shame culture, making humiliation visibly conspicuous, through the ostentation of either

[74] Sen. *Ep*. 11. 8. [75] Sen. *Clem*. 1. 1. 1.
[76] Juv. 10. 157–8, 133–7. [77] Juv. 3. 134, 10. 223–4.
[78] On the interplay between shame, honour, and the desire to be seen: Barton (2002). Cf. Bartsch (2006), 115–21.
[79] Liv. 27. 34. 3–6.

presence or absence. Cicero's reaction to the collapse of his hopes was sometimes simply to say that he could not bear to look. 'What is the Forum to me', he asked Atticus, 'without the courts, without the Senate, and with people running up against my eyes whom I cannot see with equanimity?'[80] Some years earlier, at another bad time, he had congratulated his friend Curio on being far away in Asia, 'either because you are not seeing the things that we see or because your merit is planted in a high, shining place, in the view (conspectu) of a great many of our citizens and allies'.[81] Cicero, frustrated, can merely do the looking; Curio, in authority, can be looked at. Here visuality is combined with another metaphor, that of height and situation; as we shall discover, the idea of the gaze and the recognition of political importance were often entangled in the topography of Rome, its hills and declivities.

These were letters, dashed off to meet the moment; in a philosophical text Cicero became a touch more elaborate: 'So I, who once lived so much in the throng (in maxima celebritate) and in the eyes of the citizens (in oculis civium), now flee the sight (conspectum) of the criminals who abound everywhere, hide myself, as far as I may, and am often alone.'[82] Again, the change is one from success, which is being seen, to defeat, which is seeing the swagger of others. 'Celebritas' is not easily translated: though the primary meaning refers to the press of people watching and listening to Cicero orate, the secondary meaning of 'celebrity', in the English sense, is also present. But indeed it is telling that one Latin word embraces both crowd and fame: celebrity is bound up with the physical crowd around the great man. For Livius and Cicero alike the shrinking from vision is inseparable from the eremitical impulse. At another shaming time Cicero told his brother, 'Is it that I didn't want to see you? No, no, I didn't want to be seen by you.'[83] We might think that if we could not bear to see or be seen in public, we should want the society of our friends all the more; Romans, however, retired from politics not to spend more time with their family but to spend more time with themselves. It is as though they cannot conceive of company without public visibility. In this the imperatives of a shame culture are again at work.

Seneca proclaims his contempt for the vulgar, in which large class he includes, as he makes plain, the smartly dressed votaries of ambition and pleasure. 'For I do not see (aspicio) the colour of the garments in which their bodies are clad. I do not assess a man with my eyes; I have a better and surer light by which to distinguish true from false.'[84] But that only goes to show how potent the judgement of the eye is for the vulgar, or in other words for all but the few who share Seneca's rare enlightenment. Other writers, from diverse viewpoints, confirm the primacy of vision among the senses. The Younger Pliny finds that he does his best thinking in the dark, before rising: 'for . . . I follow not my eyes with my mind but my mind with my eyes, which see the same things that the mind sees when they see nothing else.'[85] The intention is plain, the expression interestingly muddled. Pliny meant to say, 'When the eyes see nothing, the mind can picture things clearly'; but even when talking about cogitation, he cannot get himself free from the tyranny of vision, and he has his eyes—his actual eyes—doing the imaginary picturing as well

[80] Cic. *Att.* 12.21.5 (SB 260). [81] Cic. *Fam.* 2.5.49 (SB 49). [82] Cic. *Off.* 3. 3.
[83] Cic, *Q. fr.* 1. 3. 1 (3 SB). [84] Sen. *Vit. Be.* 2. 2. [85] Plin. *Ep.* 9. 36.

as the mind. 'Oculi sunt in amore duces', Propertius tells Cynthia, recalling their romps in bed and bringing the pre-eminence of the eye to the most intimate experience: 'In love it is the eyes that take the lead.' The act is spoiled, he explains, if the lovers cannot see what they are doing; it becomes mere 'blind movement' (caeco . . . motu).[86]

When Cicero tries to resist the dominance of the eye, he finds himself unable to do so, as we find from a series of letters to M. Marcellus, who had taken himself off into exile after the victory of Julius Caesar. 'Even if you had decided to prefer permanent absence to seeing what you didn't want to see (videre), you should have reflected that, wherever you might be, you would be in the power of the very man you were avoiding.'[87] In this case we might be able to claim that sight stands for all the senses—'video', after all, is the lightest and most general of the words for seeing—but in his next letter Cicero tries to press his argument further: 'You will perhaps see (videbis) many things you do not want to, but no more than you hear (audis) every day. It is unworthy of you to be upset by one sense only, that of the eyes (uno sensu solum oculorum), but to be less disturbed when you perceive the same thing with your ears (auribus percipias)'.[88] The distinction is now emphatic and repeated, between seeing and hearing, eyes and ears. It is also illogical: there is a slippage in the argument, made because Cicero takes 'hearing about' to be the same as 'hearing'. The real difference for Marcellus, we would say, is not between one sense and another but between presence and absence: between merely knowing that his enemies are triumphant and having the fact intruded on his immediate experience. Cicero's elision is made possible because the sense of sight is so pre-eminent in this mode of feeling. Indeed, a few sentences on he appeals to the preciousness of the gaze, telling Marcellus that nothing should be dearer to him than his country and urging him not to love her less now that her beauty is marred (quod deformior est): 'Instead, you should rather pity her, and not, now that she is bereft of so many noble heroes, deprive her of the sight of you (aspectu tuo).'[89] Not only is the nation's fall described in terms of visible beauty and its loss—indeed, human beauty, for there is a half-realized image of a mother bereft of her sons or perhaps a woman who is losing her admirers as she loses her beauty—but the idea of the reciprocal gaze returns in another guise. Marcellus should not shrink from the sight of his country's loveliness now disfigured; and the country, in its turn, feels the need to look upon Marcellus. We shall see more in due course of the importance of various abstract or metaphorical kinds of looking—by gods, buildings, places.

In a further letter Cicero continued to press his point upon Marcellus: 'If you had no sense but that of the eyes, I could readily forgive you, if there were certain people whom you did not wish to see; but since things heard are not much lighter to bear than things seen, I fancy that it will be much to the advantage of your affairs to come right away'.[90] But at about the same time he was urging exactly the reverse argument on Torquatus, who was chafing at being away from Rome: true, one feels the same bitterness at the ruinous state of things wherever one is, 'but the eyes increase one's grief, for they force one to look upon (intueri) what

[86] Prop. 2. 15. 11f. [87] Cic. *Fam.* 4. 7. 4 (230 SB). [88] Cic. *Fam.* 4. 9. 1 (231 SB).
[89] Cic. *Fam.* 4. 9. 3 (231 SB). [90] Cic. *Fam.* 4. 10. 2 (233 SB).

others only hear, and do not allow one to turn one's thoughts away from miseries.'[91] What the two opposing arguments share is their assumption of the special potency of sight. In fact, it is possible to avert or prevent one's gaze—Sophocles' Oedipus, who has put his eyes out, laments that he cannot destroy his sense of hearing in the same way—and in a culture where visuality matters so much not-seeing acquires its own import: seeing and not seeing become two sides of one coin.[92] Thus Seneca describes how Tiberius praised his dead son before the Rostra in the Forum: he stood by the body laid in open view (in conspectu) but wore a veil 'which was to protect the eyes of the pontifex from the sight of a funeral; and while the Roman people wept, his face made no movement'.[93] The emperor's inflexible visage is a demonstration of no demonstration; and his not-looking—the ritual obligation laid upon him as a priest—is a proper part of public ceremony, under the observation of all.

Cicero, like most letter-writers, adapts his tone to his correspondent; to persuasion in the one instance, to consolation in the other. What did he really think? We seem to hear his true feelings a couple of years later, when he unburdened his sense of humiliation on to M'. Curius in distant Greece. How farsighted Curius has been to get away: 'Although these things are bitter even to hear, it is nonetheless more bearable to hear them than to see them.'[94] And to Plancus he gives the theme a new and angry twist. This time it is the winner who is upset by what he sees. Antony's insolence has become so monstrous, Cicero says, that he abhors not only that anyone should have a free voice but even the look of a free man ('vultum . . . liberum', literally 'a free face').[95] To control what a man says to others is bad enough; to control how he appears to them is the final outrage.

As the defeated wish to avoid visible shame, so the victors wish to inflict it. Here the shame idea fuses with the ideology of publicity. Punishment should be meted out in public, both to degrade the punished and so that the people as a whole may share in this aspect of their polity as they do in others. In some of our sources we also catch a resemblance to the dark splendours of the triumph, with its exultant and occasionally 'tragic' spirit. It is significant that Plutarch describes the Roman people's hope for retribution simply as 'Tigellinus being led out'.[96] The Romans have the processional habit, as we shall see: ceremony, of a sort, is the essence of the event, and no word for 'torment' or 'execution' is needed. That can be left implicit.

Cicero is shocked that Verres tortured Gavius with hot metal plates in the forum at Messana, while the people looked on weeping and groaning, but that is because Verres had picked the wrong person.[97] Elsewhere, the man's fault is that he has not made suffering public enough. Cicero takes the case of a captured pirate chief.[98] We all know, he says, how gladly anyone who has caught a bandit or enemy leader lets him be shown openly before the eyes of all (palam ante oculos omnium). And yet no one in Syracuse says that he saw this pirate, 'although everyone, as the habit is, ran to assemble, asked questions, and longed to see' (concurrerent, quaererent, videre cuperent). In this sequence of verbs the lust of

[91] Cic. *Fam.* 6. 1. 1 (242 SB). [92] Soph. *OT* 1386–9. [93] Sen. *Marc. Cons.* 15. 3.
[94] Cic. *Fam.* 7. 30. 1 (265 SB). [95] Cic. *Fam.* 10. 1. 1 (340 SB).
[96] Plut. *Galb.* 17. 4; see further, Ch. 5. [97] Cic. *Verr.* 2. 5. 163. [98] Cic. *Verr.* 2. 5. 65–6.

the eye is connected with other kinds of behaviour which, as we shall find, are very frequent in accounts of urban activity: running, gathering, murmuring, looking; speed, crowd, sound, and gaze. And 'lust' is not too strong a word for the sentiments that Cicero goes on to describe. No one, he declares, was given 'potestas aspiciendi', the power of looking, although all the seafarers of the town 'wanted to feed their eyes and glut their spirit on the torture and execution of the man (cum eius cruciatu atque supplicio pascere oculos animumque exsaturare vellent)'. This greedy joy, compared by Cicero himself to eating and feasting, goes some way even beyond the entertainment of the London mob, gathered to see the condemned being topped at Tyburn. And he thinks it a praiseworthy feeling.

How different, the orator continues, were the actions of the admirable Servilius: when he caught some pirates, far from concealing them, he gave everyone that most delightful spectacle (iucundissimum spectaculum) of enemies bound and captive, and people everywhere collected to see ('concursus fiebant'; literally, 'there were runnings together'). 'Spectacle' is a telling word, and indeed it is not long before Cicero makes a direct comparison with the triumph, declaring that Verres kept his prisoner in his own house, whereas successful generals, though they may keep their captives alive for a while, lead them in triumph to provide a brilliant spectacle (pulcherrimum spectaculum) and so that the Roman people may behold the fruits of victory.[99] Privacy, it seems, is an important part of Verres' offence. Seneca offers a lurid picture of the crazed Caligula having his victims beheaded in his mother's gardens at night, as he strolled there with some ladies and senators by the light of torches. Then the argument takes an unexpected turn: 'What is so unheard of as execution by night? Whereas robberies are usually hidden in darkness, punishments are of more service as an example and a warning the more they are publicised.'[100] To be sure, Caligula's executions are unjust; but it seems almost as reprehensible that he has kept them to himself. To the modern mind Seneca's new thought seems an almost risible anticlimax (he watched the last agonies of his victims—and after dark too!); to the Roman, perhaps not. Livy says that after the town of Sora was taken, those brought to Rome were scourged and beheaded in the Forum, 'summo gaudio plebis', to the people's sheer delight.[101] It is not only that punishment must be done or even that it must be seen to be done; it is to be revelled in as well.

Livy gives much space to a law passed in 195 BC decreeing that no woman should own more than an ounce of gold or wear a multicoloured garment or ride in a carriage in Rome except as part of a religious festival. The women protested loudly.[102] The historian invents two speeches for the occasion: Cato the Censor opposes repeal of the law, and Valerius answers on the other side. Their debate brings the brilliance of finery and display into connection with other matters which, as we shall see later, pervade the Romans' imagining of their city and its life: the competition to occupy and command the public areas of the city; movement through the city, and its speed and character; procession, ceremony, and triumph; and the debated question of male and female spheres. The women, as Livy tells us in his own voice, could not be kept behind their thresholds and

[99] Cic. *Verr.* 2. 5. 77. [100] Sen. *Ira* 3. 18. 4, 19. 2.
[101] Liv. 9. 24. 15. [102] Liv. 34. 1.

under the command of their menfolk (imperio virorum) but blocked the streets and approaches to the Forum, importuning their menfolk—one notices the repetition of the word—as they came down to the Forum.[103] The descent to the Forum is a literal description of the men's passage through Rome, but at the same time it is a familiar shorthand, found again and again in our sources (as we shall also see in due course).

Cato begins by reminding his audience that there is a sex war on. The women have already vanquished 'our liberty' at home, in the private sphere, 'and now here too in the Forum it is being ground underfoot and trampled upon by female rampaging (impotentia muliebri . . . obteritur et calcatur)'.[104] This language rams an abstract noun up against two vividly physical verbs. 'Impotentia' (lack of self-restraint, violent or lawless behaviour) gets jackboots: 'calco' is the verb from 'calx', heel; 'tero', rub, here intensified by the prefix *ob-*, is used by other writers of wearing down the city by tramping its streets. These terms evoke the actual, physical Rome through words of friction, erosion, grinding. The Censor thus brings the urban fabric up against his political argument, for the struggle is acted out in the areas of the city and to an extent is actually about who should have possession of them. He would like to have asked these women, he says, 'What is this business of running out into public space (in publicum procurrendi) and blocking the streets and accosting other women's menfolk?' Our ancestors, he continues, kept women in their place, whereas we actually allow them to meddle in public affairs (rem publicam capessere) and mingle in the Forum and public gatherings and legislative meetings (et foro quoque et contionibus et comitiis immisceri). Why is it that these women have run out into public ('procucurrerint in publicum' again—we notice how Cato harps on two improprieties, their speed and their visibility) and scarcely kept away from the Forum and public assemblies? He imagines how one of them might reply: 'So that we may glitter in gold and purple; so that we may ride through the city . . . as though celebrating a triumph over a law vanquished and repealed and over your votes, captured and torn from you.'[105] All that this is describing, let us remember, is a woman going through the town in a carriage handsomely dressed; but Cato (in Livy's imagining) can hardly think of movement in the city without turning it into procession, or of procession without turning it into the demonstration of power.

In reply, Valerius slows down the speed of the women's protest. What new thing have they done, he asks, 'quod frequentes in causa ad se pertinente in publicum processerunt' (in coming out in throngs about a matter which concerns them)?[106] 'In publicum pro- . . . '—it is almost Cato's own phrase, but now steady, orderly movement has replaced the disorderly rush of the Censor's account. The matrons of Rome are indignant, Valerius continues, at seeing the wives of Latin allies allowed decorations that are refused to themselves, 'when they see them distinguished (insignes) in gold and purple, and being carried through the city while they themselves follow on foot, as though the authority (imperium) resided in those other women's cities and not in their own'. So Valerius agrees with Cato in associating public glitter and procession with political power, but he draws a

[103] Liv. 34. 1. 5. [104] Liv. 34. 2. 2.
[105] Liv. 34. 2. 9, 11; 34. 3. 6, 9. [106] Liv. 34. 5. 7.

different conclusion: 'Women cannot attain public office, priesthoods, triumphs, decorations (insignia), or the gifts and spoils of war; elegance, adornment, style—these are ladies' decorations (insignia), in these they delight and glory (gloriantur), this is what our ancestors called the world of women.'[107] It is interesting to see what Valerius does not say. He does not argue, as speakers would have done in many periods of history, that women are silly little butterflies and that they should be permitted the harmless vanity of showing themselves off in their finery. Rather, he claims that there are distinctive forms of public dignity belonging to the female sphere; we notice such words as 'insignia' and 'glorior' carried across from the masculine realm. The difference between the antagonists is that Cato supposes the women to be invading the male area of public splendour, while Valerius supposes them to be aiming for public splendour of a distinctively feminine kind. The two men agree, however, about the importance of being seen, and of being seen in movement.

The question of which matters most, the achievement itself or the outward signs that the achievement has been recognized, is as old as European literature. Homer's Achilles is wrestling with it when he rejects the glittering tokens of his importance that Agamemnon has offered him, hardly understanding why but asserting that he has sufficient honour from Zeus.[108] The value system of the *Iliad* has puzzled many scholars, but really this part of it is not very obscure or even remote from our own world. Men have always valued both success and its symbols: of course, the professor is proudest of those ground-breaking articles which have transformed his subject, but it is good to have the knighthood too. Indeed, the blatant importunity with which people cadge knighthoods and peerages is well attested. The charm of these accolades, no doubt, is that they are perpetually present: whenever the successful name is written or spoken, the shiny handle is attached. The difference with the Romans was that so many of these symbols were literally visible: even titles derived much of their potency through being inscribed on the city's stones. Though the American constitution forbids titles of nobility, American senators wear their rank before their surnames; Roman senators wore a broad stripe on their togas.[109] Describing a conflict between the orders in the fifth century BC, Plutarch declares that distinctions of dress were not needed to tell the classes apart: one could see from the looks on each face. The assumption is that a man's rank is readily known from his garb.[110] Our own society is perhaps unusual in its lack of visible markers of rank: today even children's clothes are not very different, and the phrase 'not yet out of short trousers' has fallen from use. Certainly, visible status was important throughout the ancient world. We can compare the Gospel stories about rivalry for the seat at Jesus' right hand in the Kingdom, or the parable about the wedding guest being invited to come up higher. 'Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king', says the Book of Proverbs, 'and stand not in the place of great men: for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be

[107] Liv. 34. 7. 6, 8–9. [108] Hom. *Il.* 9. 314–429, 608, etc.

[109] In Robert Harris's novel *Imperium* top Romans are addressed as 'senator', presumably to imply a similarity between ancient politics and our own. That is wholly alien to Roman usage.

[110] Plut. *Cor.* 20. 5.

put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.'[111] There were recurrent squabbles about seating in the public areas of Rome.[112] Livy relates that the censors pleased the senatorial order greatly when they ordered their seats to be separated from the people at the Roman Games; the decision was much debated, some considering this distinction for the Senate to be long overdue, while others thought that what elevated the Senate detracted from the people's dignity, and that such discriminations were a threat to freedom and harmony. The struggle was essentially about prestige, it would seem, rather than getting the best view of the show.

A law passed in 63 BC allowed Pompey to wear a gold crown, and sometimes triumphal dress too, on certain occasions. Julius Caesar's refusal of a crown, when Antony offered it to him at the festival of Lupercalia, was the reverse of that coin: the public rejection of the honour was a public demonstration that he could have taken it had he so chosen. Similarly, Maecenas' decision to remain a mere knight, declining the broad stripe and status of a senator, is one of those exceptions that confirm the rule. His palazzo on the Esquiline Hill, the famous tower at its summit, the highest point in central Rome, commanding a view across the Forum to Augustus' Palatine in one direction, across the Campagna to the Apennines in the other, said all that was required. What need did he have to display his eminence on his person in the streets of the city when he could stamp it on the configuration of the city itself? That demonstration was magnificently inexplicit; but there were more straightforward ways in which the physical fabric of Rome set forth the glory of its leading men. The very grandest might hope to leave behind temples or other buildings bearing their names; and houses wore their owner's achievements on their gables like medals on the chest.[113] Augustus affected in certain ways to be unassuming, and he could afford to, for yet more than Maecenas he had made the stone and marble of the city a monument to his greatness; but even he records the gongs on the house-front: 'For this service of mine [the restoration of the republic] I was named Augustus by decree of the Senate and the doorposts of my house were publicly wreathed with bays and a civic crown was fixed above my door and a golden shield was placed in the Curia Julia'.[114] It is striking how immediately he moves from the abstract altitude of his title to those tokens publicly manifest in the body of the city.

Even a philosopher could approve, provided that the right achievements were being honoured. 'No decoration is finer or more worthy of a great man's eminence (fastigium)', Seneca wrote, 'than the crown awarded for saving one's fellow countrymen.'[115] 'Fastigium' can mean a gable or an ornament on the top of a gable or in a transferred sense 'eminence', 'dignity'. The third of these meanings is primary here, but it seems scarcely possibly in this case to separate it from the first, so intimately is the idea of personal distinction bound in with its physical realization. Despite the charade at the Lupercalia, Suetonius tells us that Julius Caesar allowed the Senate to decree for him a golden throne, temples, altars, a special priest, and the placing of his statue beside those of the gods. These things,

[111] Matt. 20: 21, 24–6; Luke 14: 8–11; Prov. 25: 8. [112] Cf. Rawson (1987).
[113] On the public image of the aristocratic town house: Wiseman (1987).
[114] Aug. *RG* 34. [115] Sen. *Clem.* 1. 26. 5.

says the historian, were 'ampliora etiam humano *fastigio*', grander than was proper for a mortal man.[116] The word is interesting here, for the Senate did indeed vote a *fastigium* for the dictator's house; the acme—*fastigium*—of achievement is embodied literally at the tip of the gable. Cicero indignantly lists this ornament among the other quasi-divine honours that Julius received; the city's profile expresses both the ups and downs of the political rat race and a kind of continuum extending from gods to men.[117] As a *fastigium* crowns the pediment of a temple, so it adorns a dynast's home. Calpurnia, Julius Caesar's wife, was said to have dreamt before his murder that the *fastigium* on his house toppled down.[118] This is a symbolism close to reality. After Cicero had been driven into exile, his enemies had torn down his town house. The political battle was so strongly expressed in the urban fabric that shifts of power are marked in its physical being.

The story of another town house explores a variety of kinds or directions of looking: Velleius Paterculus relates that Livius Drusus planned a dwelling on the Palatine, in fact on the site where Cicero's house would later stand. The architect offered so to design it that he would be free from public view (liber a conspectu), where no one would be able to assess him, nor anyone look down (despicere) upon the building. Drusus told him to use his skill to construct it in such a way that whatever he himself did 'ab omnibus *perspici* possit (could be seen through (*or* seen thoroughly) by everybody)'.[119] This anecdote plays with three prefixes attached to the root *spic-* or *spect-* in succession: *con-*, *de-*, *per-*. The eye travels around the building, probing it in different ways. Built into the story is the topographical sense that Rome is or can be observed from above: an important person might live grandly on the Palatine, but there was always someone higher up, unless (in Velleius' time) one were the emperor himself. Physical and social position come to seem almost the same thing, and the two meanings of 'despicere', to look down (literally) and to despise, are hardly to be separated here. At the same time, Velleius' account binds the topography to political as well as social verity: 'despectus' follows on from conspectus, the people's eye that is at the heart of the political process and the life of the public man. But Livius Drusus' virtue takes him a stage further: he dares not only to be seen but to be transparent, not merely to be looked at but looked into.

This tale requires 'perspicere' to bear the sense of visual penetration: Livius Drusus' point is that whatever he does, even within his own house, should be open to public view. But usually the prefix of this word indicates thoroughness: looking intently rather than looking through. Discussing glory, Cicero observed that people look up (suspiciunt) at those men in whom they believe they have fully seen (perspicere) exceptional qualities, and look down (despiciunt) those in whom they think there is no courage or spirit.[120] This statement has its own play with prefixes (sub-, per-, de-), but 'perspicere' now denotes 'recognize', 'make out', the *per-* prefix signifying looking at rather than looking into: it implies not X-ray vision but a proper and accurate assessment of the case. Less clear-cut is Cicero's observation, in a letter, that his life irritates those who look upon (intuentur) the

[116] Suet. *Jul.* 76. 1. [117] Cic. *Phil.* 2. 110.
[118] Plut. *Caes.* 63. 5; Suet. *Jul.* 81. 3. [119] Vell. 2. 14.
[120] Cic. *Off.* 2. 36 ('perspiciunt' has occurred already in the previous sentence, with the same sense 'recognize', 'make out').

glitter of its outward show (splendorem et speciem) but do not make out (perspicere) its anxiety and toil.[121] Here 'perspicere' seems to denote not only a closer inspection but a gaze that penetrates past the surface to the depth beyond.

On the other hand, thoroughness or completeness of gaze is the prevailing idea when Ammianus Marcellinus describes the Emperor Constantius' visit to Rome in the fourth century. Architecturally the wonders of the city were now the great monuments of the second century, but even so the emperor is stunned by the 'perspectissimum priscae potentiae forum', 'that best perceived site of ancient power', where he addressed the people, with marvels close about him on every side, says the historian, 'wherever his eyes travelled'.[122] The word 'perspectus' can simply mean 'well known', 'renowned'; or more carefully used, 'known by observation or experience, tried, proved'.[123] But in Ammianus' language the metaphor is fully alive: the main theme of his great set piece is Constantius' reaction to what his eyes behold. Although the Roman Forum, that central site of the old republic's politics and history, does not awe the spectator with its magnificence as do Trajan's Forum and the Pantheon, it earns its own superlative because it has been gazed upon so intently and for so very long. But now, after several centuries of autocracy, there is another twist, a touch of melancholy contained in the word 'priscus', which conveys along with the idea of antiquity a sense of loss: Ammianus' point, after all, is that the lord of the world looks upon the city of Rome admiringly, but with unfamiliar eyes; real power is now elsewhere.

Much earlier, but still at a time when power had passed from the Forum to the emperor in his palace, Seneca had argued that the business of man is not only to look but to look hard, but had transferred the idea from the political to the philosophical realm: 'Ut scias illam [*sc.* naturam] *spectari* voluisse, non tantum *aspici*, vide quem nobis locum dederit' (That you may know that nature has wished to be gazed at, and not merely to be looked upon, see the place that she has given us).[124] Nature herself has become like the statesman or ruler, a proper object of concentrated visual attention. Seneca employs two verbs, '-spicio' (with a prefix) and the intensified form 'specto', to draw a contrast between two kinds of looking; but he has evidently not noticed that he is also using a third word of seeing, 'video'. This is of course the most basic of these verbs, corresponding to English 'see', and like its English equivalent it is used in places where literal vision is hardly or not at all at issue, to mean 'meet', 'notice', 'understand', and so on. 'See you next week', a blind person may say, quite unselfconsciously. In Latin there is the further fact that 'video' in the passive voice most often means 'seem'; there is a standard contrast between 'esse' and 'videri', being and appearance.

The concern with the gaze is a concern with reality, not illusion, and so '-spicio', '-specto', '-tueor' are the words that authors typically use when visuality is their theme. Indeed, where 'video' appears, it may even be a sign that the speaker does not have literal vision in mind. Cicero exulted over his triumphant return from exile, 'when I saw (vidi) the Senate and the entire population come forth from the city, when Rome itself seemed (visa est) to be torn from its place and to be advancing to embrace its preserver; it so greeted me that . . . even the walls

[121] Cic. *Fam.* 1. 9. 17 (20 SB). [122] Amm. Marc. 16. 13.
[123] The latter definitions are quoted from *OLD*. [124] Sen. *Ot.* 5. 4.

themselves and the city's houses and temples seemed (viderentur) to show their joy'.[125] In the orator's language there is an easy slippage from seeing in the active voice to a passive which could be translated either 'seemed' or 'was seen almost', followed by a second passive, where 'seemed' is the only possible meaning. His point is that the Senate and people came, not that his eyes beheld their coming; if he had wanted the latter emphasis, he would have chosen another word.[126] By contrast, when Cicero wanted to stress the importance of the public gaze, in the speech that he wrote in defence of Milo, he rang the changes on words of looking, with even the visuality buried in the origins of the idea of expectation coming to life again:[127]

Neque eorum quisquam, quos undique intuentis, unde aliqua fori pars aspici potest, et huius exitum iudicii exspectantis videtis, non . . . de se, de liberis suis, de patria, de fortunis hodierno die decertari putat.

[Nor does any one of those whom you see watching from all sides, from any place where any part of the Forum can be viewed, and looking to the outcome of this trial not . . . think that a battle is being fought today over himself, his children, his country, and his fortunes.]

The irony in this case is that Cicero had actually given way to intimidation, broken down, and failed to deliver his speech. The watchfulness which had actually mattered was that of Pompey's soldiers, ringing the place of trial. The people's gaze was no longer a determinant, and that was a sign that republican liberty was coming to an end.

In our modern world the idea that public men should be constantly visible is comparatively recent; it is a direct consequence of television. But in a curious way it has restored, in a different form, a characteristic of ancient government and politics. Cicero told his brother Quintus that his tour of duty in Asia was taking him to a place where 'such a multitude of citizens and of allies, so many cities, so many states look upon the nod (nutum intuentur) of a single man'.[128] In the context of provincial government that subservient gaze was part metaphor, part reality; in Rome a statesman's visibility was literal and essential. Quintus had in turn told Marcus, when he was standing for the consulship, 'See that the approaches to you lie open day and night, not only at the doors of your house but also in your face and countenance, which is the door of the soul.'[129] This language interweaves not only the literal and the metaphorical but politics and ethics. Doors and walls also figure in Seneca's idea of the virtuous life: he tells Lucilius, at a time when like Quintus Cicero he was engaged in provincial government,

Reckon yourself to be happy only when you can live in public, when your walls enclose but do not hide you—those walls by which we commonly suppose ourselves to be surrounded not so that we may live more safely but that we may sin more secretly . . . You will scarcely

[125] Cic. *Pis.* 52.

[126] So Ash (2007b), 212, should not say that Cicero 'engages our interest by accentuating the visual mode, triggering *enargeia* by concentrating on his own mediating gaze of the scene'. To visualize walls, houses, and temples rejoicing (a phrase which Ash underlines) and moving from their sites would be difficult.

[127] Cic. *Mil.* 3. [128] Cic. *Q. fr.* 1. 1. 22. [129] *Comm. Pet.* 44.

find anyone who can live with his door open . . . We live in such a way that to be suddenly observed (adspici) is to be caught in the act . . . A good conscience calls for a crowd.[130]

In another letter Seneca recalls a plutocrat who had withdrawn to a life of ease in his secluded villa. 'O Vatia, you alone know how to live', people said, and the philosopher retorts, 'No, he knew how to hide, not how to live.'[131] Here we find the ideology of conspectus coming up against another pleasure that was increasingly valued from the later republic onwards: the cultivation of privacy. It was a pleasure that the rulers of the world were commanded to abjure: Seneca told Nero that the state 'looks upon its governor in no different spirit from that in which, if the immortal gods were to give us the power of seeing them, we should look upon them, with worship and adoration'.[132] Nero himself observed, according to Tacitus, that the people were comforted in adversity 'aspectu principis', 'by the sight of the emperor'. This means their looking upon him; but perhaps in Tacitus' pregnant language there is a hint also of his looking upon them. For was he not a 'praesens divus', a divinity upon earth? A generation later the Younger Pliny was to make much of the reciprocal gaze in his flattery of Trajan, his prose choked with the multitude of words for looking. The emperor has restored the Circus Maximus, a work as worth viewing as the spectacles to be seen in it; he will watch them amidst the people, sharing their seating as much as what they are seeing. 'And thus your citizens will be allowed to look upon you in turn; it will be granted them to behold not only the emperor's box but the emperor himself in public'.[133]

There were indeed other watchers in the city: the gods. Temples were places where the gods resided. Many smaller temples were seldom if ever open. That was not important, it seems; what mattered was that the god dwelt there. The basic Latin word for these buildings was 'aedes', 'house'; it is the term that Vitruvius uses throughout the book in which he discusses temple construction. When Christians came, in their turn, to speak of the house of God, their meaning would be quite different, for the Christian conception of a church is as a place where God is realized or God acts—acting, that is, in response to human action. There would be no point in a church that no one could enter. The Christian house of God is intended certainly as a place for worship, perhaps also to glorify God, but neither of these purposes seems to have been the Romans' first concern. In their conception the images stand in the temples not primarily so that we may look at the gods, but so that the gods may look at us.

Early in his treatise Vitruvius declares that the temples of those gods under whose protection (tutela) the state appears especially to be—Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva—should be sited 'in a very high place, from which the greatest part of the walls can be seen'.[134] (He has named the three gods of the Capitol, and so evidently he has Rome particularly in mind.) The lofty position is not to impress the visitor or raise the people's eyes upwards; instead, Vitruvius is taking the gods' point of view; their situation enables them to look out, observe the city's defences,

[130] Sen. *Ep.* 43. 3–5. [131] Sen. *Ep.* 55. 3. [132] Sen. *Clem.* 1. 19. 8.

[133] Plin. *Pan.* 51. 4–5: words of looking: 'visenda . . . spectabuntur, visenda . . . spectanti . . . spectet . . . contueri . . . cernere'. We might note especially 'invicem contueri', 'to look in turn', stressing the reciprocal gaze.

[134] Vitr. 1. 7. 1.

and exercise their function of guardianship. His word for protection, significantly, is 'tutela', from the *tue-* root: a watching over. Not all gods are to be housed high: Mercury should be in the forum, Isis and Serapis in the commercial district, Apollo and Bacchus by the theatre. But these positions too seem to be chosen not so that the worshipper may be about his business, but so that the gods may be about theirs.

In a later book Vitruvius turns to the orientation of temples, and again he takes the god's viewpoint first: the building should be planned so that the statue to be placed in the cella will look westward.[135] He does then consider the human viewpoint, noting that the worshippers will be looking east and toward the image. But they are doing this because they are encountering the statue, which is looking at them: they are meeting the god in his home, as it were. And indeed Vitruvius immediately moves back to the deity's aspect, bringing to his practical treatise its most numinous moment: the arrangement should be such, he says, that 'the statues themselves should seem to be rising up and looking upon (contueri) those supplicating and sacrificing'. 'Altars should look east', he continues, which is a way of saying that the worshipper should face east before an altar; but having said this, he returns once more to the divine view, outward, repeating that it is important for as much of the walls as possible to be visible from the gods' temples. He includes the worshipper's view in his discussion, but essentially because the worshipper is meeting a deity who is looking in the other direction. Conspectus is still important, but it is the gaze of the divine upon the human. The Christians will inherit the idea that the altar should be at the east end, but again with a radically different significance: the Christian worshipper looks to the altar to contemplate God, but no Christian supposes that he is turned eastward so that God may get a better look at him.

We can add some thoughts that Vitruvius does not offer. The Capitoline Temple, unlike the major temples of Greece, was a building that visibly faced one way. Its back presented to the Velabrum and the river merely an enormous blank wall; its functionality, as a set of three rooms in which the three deities could live and whence they could keep watch upon the Forum, prevailed over aesthetic appeal. These cellae must have been dark inside, with light entering only from the doorway (or in the case of the central cella, the shrine of Jupiter, from a small hole in the roof, apparently an unusual feature).[136] Going into the Pantheon today, we find ourselves in a vast space of muted light; but there is one patch of brilliance. Turning toward the doors we face the dazzle of Rome beyond: the sunwashed piazza, the Mediterranean blue of the sky. The eye is naturally drawn to look from within outwards; to look, in other words, as the god looks. Now the Pantheon is lighter than most temples must have been, because of the oculus, open to the sky, at the apex of the dome. Leaving the sombre shrines of Juno or Minerva, and moving towards the rectangle of brightness ahead of him, the visitor would have had a compelling sense of seeing as the goddess saw.[137]

[135] Vitr. 4. 5. [136] See further, Ch. 9.

[137] Lucretius (3. 359–69) studies the dazzle of the open door (as part of an argument to show that eyes are not like doors through which the mind looks out). In general, Roman interiors are likely to have been darker than ours, and the patches of sunlight more intense than an English eye is accustomed to.

Florus records that in 88 BC Jupiter's own priest, the *flamen Dialis*, killed himself on the Capitol to give efficacy to his curse on an oath-breaker, and his gore spattered the eyes of the god—the eyes, notice, although the whole of the god's image must have been equally defiled.[138] Now Florus was a summarizer of other men's work, and one would dearly like to know what was in the fuller account that he epitomizes, but the significance of those eyes can hardly be doubted: Jupiter Best and Greatest surveys his city through blood-tinted lenses. According to Plutarch, Cicero dreamt that the sons of senators were called to the Capitol, because Jupiter was intending to make one of them ruler of Rome. The doors were opened and the young men, one by one, walked in a circle past the god, who looked (*episkopein*) at each of them and sent them away sorrowing.[139] That story may not be authentic (though it is still significant as an anecdote), but Cicero himself tells of an episode in 65 BC in which the god's looking acquired religious importance. The soothsayers ordered that the statue of Jupiter on the Capitol should be made larger, placed on a height (in excelso), and turned to the east, the opposite direction to that in which it had faced before. Their hope was that 'if the statue which you see (videtis) were to look upon (conspiceret) the rising of the sun and the Forum and senate house', then Catiline's secret conspiracy would be brought to light (inlustrarentur), so that it could be beheld (perspici) by the Senate and people of Rome.[140] This is a strikingly simple piece of anthropomorphism.

Elsewhere Cicero refers approvingly to the Megalesia, the games 'which our ancestors wished to be held and celebrated in front of her temple in the sight of the Great Mother herself (in ipso Magnae Matris conspectu)'.[141] In principle 'in the sight of the Great Mother' might be ambiguous; in context it is clear that the goddess herself is doing the looking. In a philosophical setting the idea of divine looking may be more attenuated: when a speaker in Cicero's *Laws* remarks that the task is to persuade citizens that the gods rule the world and observe ('intueor' is the verb used) the acts and emotions of men, we may feel that, as with English 'oversight', there is little sense of visuality in the language; and yet so persistent is the notion of the divine gaze in the Roman imagination that even here something of the metaphor remains.[142] When the orator invokes the immortal gods 'who guard (tuentur) this city and this empire', it is hard to say whether any idea of seeing survives;[143] and in yet another place he seems to slide between two kinds of divine looking: 'I call to witness all the gods, and those especially who keep guard over (praesident) this consecrated place, who especially look into (perspiciunt) the minds of all those who enter into public affairs.'[144] The picture of the gods sitting as guardians (the literal meaning of 'praesident') suggests the more primitive notion of gods being present in a particular place, but Cicero then slips to the broader and more abstract idea that the gods see into the hearts of men.

Julius Caesar usually kept the gods out of his writings, but even he passed on the tale that after he had won a battle the image of Victory in the Temple of Minerva at Elis, which had previously faced the statue of the goddess, turned round to look at the doors of the building—that is, out towards Caesar himself.[145] Years later, after

[138] Flor. 2. 8. 16. [139] Plut. *Cic.* 44. [140] Cic. *Cat.* 3. 20.
[141] Cic. *Har. Resp.* 24. [142] Cic. *Leg.* 2. 15.
[143] Cic. *Dom.* 143. [144] Cic. *Leg. Man.* 70.
[145] Caes. *Bell. Civ.* 3. 105; see further, Ch. 7.

he had been made into a god, as Divus Iulius, Augustus had his temple built in a conspicuous place, closing the eastern end of the Forum. Ovid would later imagine Jupiter telling Venus to make the dead man into a star, 'so that Divus Iulius may look out (prospectet) at our Capitol and the Forum from his lofty house (ab excelsa . . . aede)'.[146] He does not need to say that Jupiter himself is looking in the opposite direction, from the Capitol down to the Forum and across to the new temple, because he knows that his readership will understand this. There is a grandeur in this conception, but also something quite modest and companionable. In a later poem, Ovid uses very similar language, referring to Castor and Pollux as 'the brothers whom Divus Iulius sees (videt) from his lofty house (ab excelsa . . . aede) occupying the next temple'.[147] There is a mixture in this of high dignity, indicated by Caesar's lofty abode, (a somewhat forced dignity, in fact, as the temple was in a low position) with the simple fact of proximity: Caesar sees the brothers because they are next door to him, just as two noblemen on the Palatine Hill above may see each other as neighbours across the street.

The divinized Julius was now more than simply a man, but the novelty of apotheosis adjusted a way of feeling that already existed: a sense of the community of gods and men, made present to the imagination by a shared conspectus, and of a spectrum of reverence that moves across both sacred and secular. Cicero had asked his hearers to picture how Sestius might very well have perished in the Temple of Castor, 'slain openly in the light of day by those foul villains in the sight (conspectu) of gods and men, in a most sacred temple, in a most sacred cause, in the occupation of a most sacred office' (sanctissimo in templo, sanctissima in causa, sanctissimo in magistratu).[148] The gods would have seen this outrage not because they see everything, but because of the particular time and place where it would have happened, in the Forum, in broad daylight, where gods and men alike cluster. The adjective 'sanctus', spreading from the divine realm to moral principle and then to political office (at which point the translation 'sacred' becomes odd in English), also serves to bring the experiences of gods and men together.

Ovid plays a curious variation on the theme of gods looking when he imagines the Temple of Mars the Avenger, recently completed by Augustus, being inspected by its god. The passage is saturated in words of seeing: the temple is 'conspicienda', well deserving to be seen; Mars views one thing after another ('prospicit . . . prospicit . . . videt . . . videt . . . spectat . . . visum . . . ').[149] The poet's game is humorous. 'The Avenger descends from heaven'—this is grandiloquent and we think that he is about to occupy his abode as a numinous presence. But he turns out to be merely one more rubbernecker: he enters as any visitor might, studies the statues in the new forum, and reads with respectful admiration the name of Augustus inscribed on the temple actually dedicated to himself. He looks up at the pediment, instead of looking down and out from his place in the cella, as a god should. The comedy lies in cheating our expectations of divine vision: Mars does his gazing in the manner of a man, not of a deity. Without a shared sense that the gods look from their temples on the city, this passage would lose much of its effect.

The gods do much looking, of course, in epic poetry, but for the most part this is a case in which the 'religion of the poets' is its own realm and therefore tells us

[146] Ov. *Met.* 15. 840–2. [147] Ov. *Pont.* 2. 2. 83–4.
[148] Cic. *Sest.* 83. [149] Ov. *Fast.* 5. 549–68.