

Bread and Games: Is this the main way in which the Emperors maintained relations
with plebeians in Rome



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Abstract

Juvenal states within his *Satura* that all the people of Rome need to be happy is to be kept fed and entertained using the term “bread and games.” Throughout the investigation this notion will be examined and compared with the effects public building works had on the relationship between the emperors and the masses of Rome. Using Suetonius alongside other ancient scholars to examine how much of an impact that these had on the masses of Rome. Using examples from the ancient scholars, many modern scholars have had their opinion on such events. This investigation will use both modern and ancient scholars to determine if Juvenal was correct in stating that the people of Rome only need “bread and games,” or if the people of Rome needed more than just this in order to be happy in the city.

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Introduction

Ever since Juvenal wrote his *Satura*¹ the notion that Bread and Games were the main way in which emperors were able to maintain a positive relationship with the masses of Rome has been widely discussed.² Within this study, the aim is to determine whether these were the main ways in which the emperors tried to maintain their relations with the plebeians, or whether there were some additional factors which contributed to this relationship. Taking the word of Juvenal and analysing it, he mentions that all the people of Rome need is “Bread and Games,” in order to be happy.³ This comes from a larger statement from within the tenth Satire in the collection:

"What does the mob of Remus say? It follows fortune, as it always does, and rails against the condemned. That same rabble, if Nortia had smiled upon the Etruscan, if the aged Emperor had been struck down unawares, would in that very hour have conferred upon Sejanus the title of Augustus. Now that no one buys our votes, the public has long since cast off its cares; the people that once bestowed commands, consulships, legions and all else, now meddles no more and longs eagerly for just two things; Bread and Games!"⁴

While Juvenal presents a rather simplistic view it is interesting to investigate how far his assertion can be taken as true. Juvenal's comment raises a fascinating question about what exactly the ordinary Plebeians of Rome wanted and needed from their emperor. Were bread and games really all they wanted or were there other additional factors that could make or break the popularity of an Emperor? The choice of the

¹ Juv. Sat. X. Lines 77 - 81

² Liversidge, J. 1999, Potter D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999.

³ Juv. Sat. X. Lines 77 - 81

⁴ Juv. Sat. X

term 'games' rather than the alternative translation 'circuses' was made as using the word 'circuses' only makes reference to the circuses built and used and not the other forms of entertainment available to the people of Rome. Other avenues of investigation need to be explored as these alone surely could not please everyone in Rome and there must be additional factors. When talking about the people of Rome or the masses, the plebeians are the focus. The plebeians being the common folk, or the lower class of the city. The idea that only two necessities would please the entire lower class of the city of Rome is rather absurd, throughout this investigation one other element which had large impact on the relationship between the emperor and masses will be discussed. This is the provision of municipal buildings for the use of the plebeians. Although the main way in which the emperors maintained relations with the masses of Rome may well have been through ensuring reliable access to good food and a regular program of public entertainments, with the construction of public buildings the masses of Rome would have been swayed greatly in favour of a specific emperor at the time. Juvenal could be seen to be exaggerating the views of the people as he himself was not a plebeian, but he bemoans the fact that the people of Rome seem to have given up on the traditions and political birth rights that made Rome great.

Juvenal's views are discussed in greater detail later. To start the investigation the political system of Rome needs to be examined to determine how to define a 'plebeian' and explain the critical relationship between the emperor and the plebeians. Alongside this the term 'Bread and Games' needs to be explained and the notions it entails. After these have been explained in full, the idea that public building works had an impact will be discussed before coming to a conclusion on

how much all the aspects impacted on the relationship between the emperor and the plebeians.

The term 'Bread and Games' was first introduced by Juvenal.⁵ Juvenal is an author of a group of satirical poems called the Satires.⁶ There is much debate on the year Juvenal was born as there is only vague mentions given in the biographies of him we have.⁷ Juvenal himself was banished from Rome for part of his life due to possibly insulting an actor who happened to have high influence in the courts, leading to the emperor exiling him.⁸ It is not certain where the author died due to multiple sources saying that he died whilst in exile from the empire, but some believe he was invited back to Rome under the reign of Nerva.⁹ Juvenal is writing to say that the people of Rome no longer care about the political involvement or their historical birth right.¹⁰ The people of Rome were respected and were perceived by foreigners as their superiors, although the plebeians of Rome have given up on that and want nothing more than food and entertainment. The word 'bread' within the saying refers to feeding the masses of Rome. This means that as long as the plebeians of Rome are given food by those in power, they will be content.¹¹ Games, refers to the entertainment of the people. Giving them games such as gladiatorial combat, theatrical performances and animal shows to keep them amused.¹² When talking about the plebeians or plebs in Rome, first, the characteristics of what makes up a plebeian must be determined as well as looking at the structure of the political system itself.

⁵ Juv. Sat. X. Lines 77 - 81

⁶ Uden, J. 2015

⁷ Uden, J. 2015

⁸ Green, P. 1998. Pages 23 - 24

⁹ Green, P. 1998. Pages 23 - 24

¹⁰ Grant, M. 1978. Page 11

¹¹ Yavetz, Z. 1969. Page 3

¹² Gunderson, E. 1996. Page

On the other hand, the term bread and games has been described as some scholars as just a distraction technique used by those in power to keep the people distracted from what is really going on in the city.¹³

The plebs within Rome are the lower-class people within the city.¹⁴ The lower-class in Rome are the people who are not a patrician¹⁵, which according to Livy are the descendants of the first hundred people that Romulus had appointed as the senators.¹⁶ The masses in Rome can be seen from two perspectives, the first is that they held immense power in the city as they control the decisions on the declarations of war, who comes into power in public office and were continuously consulted by the leaders through the means of a public meeting.¹⁷ The second perspective is that they are not actually that powerful, and that the aristocracy ran the public offices and amassed enormous economic resources.¹⁸ The senate's influence over what happened within Rome was powerful.¹⁹ The Senate had the political experience and authority when it came to religion. Thus the conquest of Italy being a success gave them a boost to their intrigue.²⁰ Looking at the structure of the political system in this period, it can be seen that there was the emperor who was the ultimate authority when it came to such things as decision making.²¹ Although the emperor had the final decision, he used the senate to help him make these decisions. Certain offices were valued more than others, especially the *Tribunus plebis*, tribune of the plebeians.²² This was a unique position as it was held by a member of the plebeian

¹³ Yavetz, Z. 1969. Page 3

¹⁴ Mouritsen, H. 2001. Page 2

¹⁵ Mouritsen, H. 2001. Page 3

¹⁶ Liv. Auc. 1.8

¹⁷ Mouritsen, H. 2001. Page 1

¹⁸ Mouritsen, H. 2001. Page 1

¹⁹ Mouritsen, H. 2001. Page 1

²⁰ Mouritsen, H. 2001. Page 1

²¹ Miller, F. 2004. Pages 4 - 22

²² Abbott, F. 1901. Page 354

class and not someone of the patrician class.²³ Within the roles of this position, whomever is selected for the position represents the people of Rome at assemblies and therefore to be eligible for such position you could not be from the senatorial class.²⁴ The importance of such a position for this investigation is that the person who holds this office has to speak to the senate on behalf of the people, therefore they would discuss possible food shortages, buildings they may require and the need for a games.²⁵ This means that the tribune has the power to tell the senate at the time people are unhappy and what it would take to improve the relation between the masses and the upper-class. With the structure of the political system and the term plebeians now determined, all other aspects of how the emperors could have maintained a good relationship with the plebeians need to be introduced.

As well as keeping the people of Rome entertained and keeping them from going hungry, the people needed civic buildings within the city.²⁶ The public buildings that the plebeians wanted to be constructed were aqueducts, bath houses and other buildings that would enhance their lives and give them a chance to relax and forget about their troubles.²⁷ As well as public buildings, the plebeians in Rome would have enjoyed the prospect of a working sewer system as this would have helped maintain the streets of Rome and limit the disgusting odour of raw sewage in the streets.²⁸ The masses in Rome would have needed a mixture of all things to keep them happy throughout the years and throughout this investigation emperors who omit certain aspects may be seen to cause an issue with the people in Rome.

²³ Liv. Auc. 2.32

²⁴ Liv. Auc. 2.33

²⁵ Abbott, F. 1901. Page 196

²⁶ Carter, J. 1989. Page 31

²⁷ Carter, J. 1989. Page 37

²⁸ Carter, J. 1989. Page 37

Using examples related to the notions of “bread and games,” such as rioting due to lack of food and celebrations due to a good series of games, this dissertation will investigate how correct Juvenal’s assumption is that it is all the people of Rome required and consider whether the construction of public buildings also had a significant impact on the relationship between the emperors and the plebeians in the city of Rome.

Throughout the investigation a range of sources will be used. Such works will be a mixture of modern sources, as well as using ancient sources where possible. The main ancient source that will be used as evidence throughout is the works of Suetonius, a biographer of the first twelve emperors of Rome. The ancient sources in discussion do not all cover the same time period, therefore the relationship between the masses and the emperor can be depicted across a larger timeline. Their personal social status can add doubt to their points as they were not part of the lower-class mob of Rome. They were all of some stature. Such as Frontinus being the head of water works within the city of Rome, Suetonius was the biographer of the emperors therefore both would not have been writing in the interest of pleasing the plebeians, but pleasing the emperor at the time. The work of Juvenal is important as it is the scholarship which contains the notion of bread and games, although as the work is satirical not all his ideas can be taken at face value. As he was a satirist his commentary is important in understanding the social and political climate of the times. Using the ancient scholars in conjunction with the modern works is beneficial as the modern works will a useful analysis of the ancient scholar’s ideas. Using the works of Suetonius mainly, but also using the other ancient scholars, the modern scholars have been able to further their works. For example, Cornell and Carcopino both use the writings of Suetonius within their work to reinforce their discussion

around theatrical entertainment within the city. The oldest piece of scholarship to be used will be that of Carcopino published in 1941. However, he is included as more modern scholars such as Grant have referred to his work in discussions on aspects of entertainment in the Roman Empire. With regards to modern scholarship on the notion of keeping the masses of Rome happy using food, many articles and books will be used to explain how successful of a method this was. These books include the early work by Abbott and Liversidge whilst also using more modern articles by that of Michael Charles and Neal Ryan who write on the importation of grain into the city of Rome. Together these works help build a clearer picture of how the masses felt towards their emperors and how these feelings were manipulated or inspired by the specific works and actions of the emperors. Whilst most authors are qualified in the subject area the work of Michael Charles and Neal Ryan is based mainly in the subject area of economics. The economics behind their work is sound although the history aspect may not be as useful as someone like Liversidge who is qualified in the subject of Ancient History.

Bread (Food)

The first part of the investigation is to look at the ‘bread’ within the notion of bread and games. Food was of vital importance to the plebeians in Rome. Any sort of food shortage or a change in the price of the basic foods would cause a public uproar.²⁹

With so many of the lower class living within the confines of the city, there would have been many mouths to feed. The elite of Rome only amounted to one percent of the population therefore the number of people who could afford all food and have some luxury is very small in comparison to those who could not.³⁰ With the lower-class people finding it hard to afford food the city would have been a powder keg ready to blow as the people grew hungrier.

The Roman Empire at times was an empire with an abundance of food, although at times due to unforeseen circumstances the empire would end up in some sort of food shortage whether they be due to problems in foreign nations or domestic problems.³¹ Food shortages would affect the empire negatively as the plebeians within the city would not react well to a food shortage.³² When the people of the Roman Empire were experiencing a food shortage it is noted that the plebeians of the city would keep close eye on the price and supply of grain being more preoccupied with this than anything else.

“The fact was that the wheat-ships were detained by the severity of the weather, and the lower orders, who were accustomed to buy their provisions from

²⁹ Garnsey, P. 1988. Page 206

³⁰ Toner, J. 2002. Page 50

³¹ Aldrete, G. 2007. Page 132

³² Cornell, T.J. 2005. Page 266

day to day, and to whom cheap corn was the sole subject of public interest, feared and believed that the ports had been closed and the supplies stopped.”³³

The importation of food was always a big contributor to the amount of food that the city of Rome had for its people.³⁴ The importation of the food was handed off to the responsibility of private shipping companies which aided the empire as it ensured that “seafaring professionals,” were in control of the ships therefore higher likelihood of success, but also eliminated the costs of maintenance and staffing from the emperor’s coffers.³⁵ The main edible item to be traded around the empire was that of grain.³⁶ Although grain was the main item of food which was traded, items such as amphorae of olive oil and *garum* (fish sauce,) would have also been traded but not in the quantity that grain was.³⁷ Rome attained its resources from many places around the Mediterranean.³⁸ The places in which food can be seen to be supplied from are Sicily, Africa, Gaul, Thrace, Syria, Egypt and Boeotia.³⁹ With food coming in from all parts of the known world, there was bound to be a problem from time to time. These problems included that of food shortages, as well as famine and other natural disasters that would affect food growth or transport.⁴⁰ The way in which these problems were dealt with by the emperors was the way which effected their subjects within Rome.⁴¹ The city of Rome is known for importing the food that fed the city, although the Romans never imported too much food from the place of origin to cripple the country in question.⁴² The extract from Pliny shows that the Romans

³³ Tac. Hist. 4.38

³⁴ Garnsey, P. 1988. Page 245

³⁵ Charles, M and Ryan, N. 2009. Page 17

³⁶ Boardman, J. 2000 Page 710

³⁷ Boardman, J. 2000 Page 717 - 729

³⁸ West, L. 1932. Page 98

³⁹ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 134

⁴⁰ Potter, D.S. and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 174

⁴¹ Sue. Aug. 41

⁴² Ply. Pan. 29.3 - 5

always left their trade partners with enough food for the next year's harvest to be planted, as well as feed the people of the country.⁴³

“It is plain to see that every year can abundantly supply our needs – and without harm to anyone. Harvests are not snatched as if from enemy soil to perish in our granaries, carried off from allies who lament in vain; instead, these bring of their own accord the produce of the soil, the year's harvest nurtured by their climate; unburdened by fresh impositions (indictiones) they can meet long-standing obligations, and the imperial treasury (fiscus) pays openly for its purchases. Hence these provisions and the grain-supply, with prices.”⁴⁴

Suetonius writes on the emperor Augustus with the intention on depicting him as a good emperor and Suetonius depicts his family in the form of the perfect Roman family: “the Octavian family was in days of old a distinguished one.”⁴⁵ The emperor Augustus is deemed to be an emperor who cared for his people, although he was not particularly successful in making public appearances.⁴⁶ Suetonius writes: “he was a prince who desired the public welfare rather than popularity.”⁴⁷ Augustus' reign however can be linked with at least ten food shortages that impacted the empire and Augustus' effective handling of these food shortages affected the way in which he was revered by the plebeians of Rome.⁴⁸ Although the food shortage which Suetonius makes reference to cannot be derived from his texts, it is clear to see that the people took well to the changes implemented by the Emperor Augustus.⁴⁹ One emperor who came away quite lucky from a meeting with the masses was the

⁴³ Charles, M and Ryan, N. 2009. Page 5

⁴⁴ Plin. Pan. 29.3 - 5

⁴⁵ Suet. Aug. 1

⁴⁶ Mommsen, T. 1992. Page 75

⁴⁷ Suet. Aug. 42

⁴⁸ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 174

⁴⁹ Suet. Aug. 40

Emperor Claudius. Suetonius tells the tale of Claudius walking through the forum when he was confronted by the plebeians, at which point they started throwing their rotten bread at the emperor until he could retire to his palace through one of his back gates.⁵⁰ This incident proves that not all emperors were ‘let off easy’ by the masses in Rome. With the sheer number of plebeians in the city they had the potential to cause riots and cause harm to the men in power. There is one instance in which Suetonius records the plebeians in Rome at an uproar with one the emperors during a food shortage. That emperor was no other than Nero⁵¹ The people of Rome were not the strongest fan of Nero as Suetonius describes him as using the lack of grain to his benefit.⁵² Suetonius writes:

“The bitter feeling against him was increased because he also turned the high cost of grain to his profit; for indeed, it so fell out that while the people were suffering from hunger it was reported that a ship had arrived from Alexandria, bringing sand for the court wrestlers.”⁵³

Taking the soldiers of Rome into account for food shortages lost the emperor Galba much respect among the people of Rome.⁵⁴ Galba is stated to have said that if a man of Rome was to run out of food due to the shortage, let him starve and die of hunger.⁵⁵ This would definitely not have sat well with the people of Rome and was possibly a factor leading to his assassination.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Sue. Cla. 18

⁵¹ Sue. Nero. 45

⁵² Sue. Nero. 46

⁵³ Sue. Nero. 46

⁵⁴ Sue. Gal. 7

⁵⁵ Sue. Gal. 7

⁵⁶ Sue. Gal. 23

The people of Rome responded well to the people who made progress in helping them attain food in times of need or emperors who gave them food as a gift during their reigns.⁵⁷

The introduction of the grain dole had a major impact of the relationship between the plebeians and emperor at the time Augustus.⁵⁸ The grain dole was a portion of grain given to citizens at a subsidised cost or even sometime given to them at no cost at all.⁵⁹

Although Augustus seemed to have limited his distribution to a specific group of men within Rome, excluding recently manumitted slaves.⁶⁰ His relationship with the plebeians and the rest of Rome seemed to grow enough to the point that at the time of his death the people of Rome decided to ae part of the year after him.⁶¹

The emperor Claudius is heralded as a good emperor by the plebeians due to his commission of the port in Ostia.⁶² In building this port at Ostia it allowed the grain of the Roman empire a safe place to harbour wen sending their goods up the Tiber towards the city of Rome itself.⁶³ Although in the year 62Ad the fleet at Ostia suffered much loss as a storm sank many ships. This would have caused an uproar with the masses in Rome as that effected their access to food from the grain dole and from salesman in Rome.⁶⁴

To draw this section to a close, it has to be noted that the emperor who brought food into the city and gave it to the plebs was an emperor who would attain praise from

⁵⁷ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 177

⁵⁸ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 177

⁵⁹ Chisholm, H. 1911. Page 75

⁶⁰ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 178

⁶¹ Sue. Aug. 100

⁶² Potter, D.S ad Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 179

⁶³ Potter, D.S ad Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 179

⁶⁴ Tac. Ann. 15.18.2

the plebeians. Although any disruption to the schedule in which the masses would receive their food, such shortages or loss of ships, would cause the people to riot as they would not be getting one of their basic needs. These riots would be similar to that described by Appian when he talks of the people in the streets carrying weapons and assaulting tribunes.⁶⁵

“The new citizens had started a riot, drawn their daggers on the street, and assaulted the opposing tribunes on the rostra.”⁶⁶

As far as the works of Juvenal can be used, he is the most part correct so far in saying that the people anxiously waited for food, but whether or not it is the main way in which an emperor maintained relations with plebeians needs to be investigated further before a conclusion can be brought about.

⁶⁵ App. BC. 1.8

⁶⁶ App. BC. 1.8

Games (Entertainment)

The second section of this investigation is based around the idea that the plebeians within Rome were kept happy with the use of entertainment. The use of entertainment to keep the masses of Rome happy was a common theme throughout the principate.⁶⁷ The two main ways in which emperors could keep the people of Rome entertained were the use of games, or putting on theatrical shows in the amphitheatres for all to watch.⁶⁸ Some modern scholars have stated that the availability of entertainment is the one thing that kept the masses happy from the early days of Rome to the end of the empire.⁶⁹

The first aspect of entertainment to be explored is that of the games. The games of Rome can be classified into different events dependant on the time of year and resources available.⁷⁰ It can be said that the emperors, starting with Augustus, set a trend and a high standard for the games and they maintained this for over a hundred years.⁷¹ The games originated initially from a religious aspect but quite quickly became a tool for the emperors to use politically to keep the masses happy within the empire.⁷² The types of games used for the original religious purposes could be split into two different sections.: *ludi circenes* and *venationes*. The latin *ludi circenes* translates into meaning chariot racing, whereas the term *venationes* refers to the games that involved the use of animals at some point.⁷³ Separate to both of these is the gladiatorial combat which did not originate from a religious point of view.⁷⁴

Within the calendar of the people of Rome there were days of the year put aside for

⁶⁷ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 205

⁶⁸ Carcopino, J. 1941. Page 223

⁶⁹ Carcopino, J. 1941. Page 224

⁷⁰ Carcopino, J. 1941. Page 223

⁷¹ Fox, R. 2006. Page 460

⁷² Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 206

⁷³ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 206

⁷⁴ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 206

public games and entertainments as a sort of bank holiday for them, raising their spirits at specific times of year every year.⁷⁵

Chariot racing was commonly performed with four horses (*quadrigae*) or sometimes with two horses (*bigae*) within the confines of the circus.⁷⁶ The Romans took the idea from the Etruscans who developed the idea from the Greeks in the first place.⁷⁷ It is believed in Roman legend that Romulus used chariot racing in order to distract the Sabine males in order for his men to abduct the women in order to make them the wives of Rome.⁷⁸ Chariot racing in the Roman era was one of the most dangerous sporting events that a person could participate in.⁷⁹ It is commonly stated among scholars that the most famous circus of them all is the Circus Maximus which is located in between the Palatine Hill and the Aventine.⁸⁰ The Circus Maximus was the largest of all the circuses in The Roman empire measuring over six hundred metres in length and over one hundred metres wide. It was able to seat around one hundred and fifty thousand people.⁸¹

The masses of Rome enjoyed the atmosphere around a fully filled Circus on race day as it is said that the people of Rome would “pile on top of each other,” in the stands before a race.⁸² It is said that not only would chariot racing occur at these circuses, but other events would as well.⁸³ One example of another event taking place in these circuses is boxing, or some form of hand to hand combat.⁸⁴ It is also stated that the

⁷⁵ Fox, R. 2006. Page 461

⁷⁶ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 236

⁷⁷ Golden, M. 2004. Page 35

⁷⁸ Boatwright, Gargola and Talbert. 2004. Page 338

⁷⁹ Meijer, Fik and Waters, Liz. 2010

⁸⁰ Humphrey, J. 1986. Page 10

⁸¹ Humphrey, J. 1986. Page 126

⁸² Carcopino, J. 1941. Page 239

⁸³ Humphrey, J. 1986. Page 37.

⁸⁴ Liv. Auc. 1.35.8

people enjoyed these events as well as the races, possibly meaning that no matter what event was put on in the circus, the people would enjoy it.⁸⁵

The second group of events that originated from religion is that of the *venationes*.⁸⁶

It is said before the introduction of gladiatorial combat that the most common event of such games would have been that of a contest between different wild beast.⁸⁷ As well as these types of performances including animals there would have been a hunt.

A hunt would have included a group of men attempting to kill or capture some wild animals let loose around the circus before the animals could harm the men.⁸⁸ Although entertaining, these events were never held as the main part of a public games as the chariot races would always have taken precedence as they were much more entertaining and had a longer standing in history when it came to the games.⁸⁹

The main entertainment of all the public games throughout the republic and the empire was that of the theatrical performances held in the amphitheatres. The origins of having an amphitheatre with a theatrical performance came from Greece.⁹⁰ The Romans took the idea from the Greek people who colonised southern Italy.⁹¹ The plays performed in Republican Rome were very similar to that of Greek productions, again due to the contact the Romans had with their Greek neighbours.⁹² Some scholars argue that there were more theatrical performances than races at the time of public festivals and games.⁹³ Although it is hard to come to a conclusion on the matter as no ancient historian makes the statement. A theatre was constructed

⁸⁵ Carcopino, J. 1941. Page 240

⁸⁶ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 206

⁸⁷ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 91 - 92

⁸⁸ Fox, R. 2006. Page 464

⁸⁹ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 91

⁹⁰ Fox, R. 2006. Page 470

⁹¹ Fox, R. 2006. Page 470

⁹² Manuwald, G. 2011. Page 15

⁹³ Carcopino, J. 1941. Page 243

attached to the Circus Maximus is that of the theatre dedicated to Pompey.⁹⁴ It is estimated that it could hold up to twenty-seven thousand people which, if we assume the figure is correct, in itself shows how popular theatrical performances must have been among all classes of the population of Rome.⁹⁵

The most common spectacle for the people in later years was that of the gladiatorial contests. These contests did not originate as part of the religious festivals but that of aristocratic funeral games.⁹⁶ Over time as the desire to watch gladiatorial contests grew, they were no longer put on solely at times of funeral games, but as part of festivals to honour specific deities.⁹⁷ Gladiators themselves were commonly slaves, captured criminals or prisoners of war.⁹⁸ One other type of person who became a gladiator was the money troubled plebeian.⁹⁹ Anyone could contract themselves to a school of gladiators and then they would take a cut of the winnings if they won their fights.¹⁰⁰ Once enrolled at a school, the gladiators would have been split up into different groups dependant on their armour and weapons used.¹⁰¹ Heavily armed gladiators were called the 'mirmillones' and they wore helmets decorated with a fish.¹⁰² The second group were named 'Thracians' and they carried a small shield and blade with a curved edge and then finally the 'Retiarii' who carried no more than a net to entice their opponent, a long trident and a small but effective dagger.¹⁰³ It is believed that if you were a free man who joined the company of gladiators out of your own volition there was a chance to make very good money and become famous

⁹⁴ Carcopino, J. 1941. Page 244

⁹⁵ Carcopino, J. 1941. Page 244

⁹⁶ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 224

⁹⁷ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 225

⁹⁸ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 96

⁹⁹ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 96

¹⁰⁰ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 96

¹⁰¹ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 96

¹⁰² Liversidge, J. 1976. Page

¹⁰³ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 96

around the empire.¹⁰⁴ Whereas for the slaves or criminals, the prospect of freedom was the ultimate prize they were fighting for.¹⁰⁵ For some gladiators all that they dreamed of was another victory and there are records of some gladiators winning over thirty fights.¹⁰⁶ The end of a gladiator's career came when he either met his death, which was the most common way in which their careers ended, or in fact they attained the notorious wooden sword which signified their freedom.¹⁰⁷ Although free, some stayed on at the gladiator schools as instructors and as inspiration to the current gladiators that winning your freedom is possible.¹⁰⁸ The plebs of Rome had seats reserved for them by the emperor although these would have possibly been allocated by lottery.¹⁰⁹ Whereas others would purchase tickets from ticket scalpers outside the arena for extremely inflated prices.¹¹⁰ The plebeians within Rome and the wider empire commonly followed a specific faction of fighters and would often get very competitive and could possibly end up rioting among themselves if the games were not going the way of their favoured faction.¹¹¹

The final way in which an emperor could entertain the masses was that of a mock sea battle. The first documented mock sea battle came under the dictatorship of Julius Caesar.¹¹² This occurred as part of a set of triumphal games Julius Caesar held in the honour of his own victory over Pompey.¹¹³ The mock sea battles were performed under the name of *naumachia* which was the name of the battle itself, as well as the

¹⁰⁴ Fox, R. 2006. Page 468

¹⁰⁵ Fox, R. 2006. Page 468.

¹⁰⁶ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 97

¹⁰⁷ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 97

¹⁰⁸ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 97

¹⁰⁹ Mouritsen, H. 2001. Page 82

¹¹⁰ Futrell, A. 2006. Page 136

¹¹¹ Futrell, A. 2006. Pages 107 - 108

¹¹² Fuller, J.F.C. 1965. Chapter 13.

¹¹³ Fuller, J.F.C. 1965. Chapter 13.

basin which was built in which the battle would have been performed in.¹¹⁴ The types of battles were not as common as the rest due to the immense effort and expense that had to be put in to create the battlefield for such events.¹¹⁵ The only exception for the effort in building the arena for such battles is that the Emperor Claudius used the natural body of water, Lake Fulcine.¹¹⁶

The emperors of Rome put on an abundance of games and theatrical displays throughout the years. Some focused on specific forms of entertainment over others.¹¹⁷ For example it is commonly known that the emperor Nero was a lover of the theatre and acted in some plays himself therefore it can be derived that he focused more on the theatre than the games.¹¹⁸

It is noted in the works of Suetonius that the emperor Augustus put on many public games throughout his reign and that they were very entertaining for the people to watch.¹¹⁹ Despite putting games on frequently, Augustus is heralded for the variety in the types of games he put on.¹²⁰ The plebeians in the city would have been pleased with Augustus as he is noted as giving the people what they want, this included giving them better seating at the amphitheatres and the circus.¹²¹ Alongside building the seats for the people, Augustus also spent quite some time either building amphitheatres, or repairing them.¹²²

The emperors who succeeded Augustus did not host games as often as he did which could be a factor in why upon notification of Augustus' death, some plebeians were

¹¹⁴ Coleman, K.M. 1993. Page 50

¹¹⁵ Coleman, K.M. 1993. Page 50

¹¹⁶ Coleman, K.M. 2011. Page 56

¹¹⁷ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 258

¹¹⁸ Malitz, J. 2005. Chapter 3

¹¹⁹ Sue. Aug. 43

¹²⁰ Sue. Aug. 43

¹²¹ Sue. Aug. 43

¹²² Sue. Aug. 29

heard shouting that he should be thrown into the Tiber.¹²³ Caligula is believed to have displayed some gladiatorial contests and many games within the circus.¹²⁴ Alongside this, Caligula is also believed to have put games on across the empire, not just within the city of Rome.¹²⁵ This would have kept the masses of Rome happy, as well as keeping the people in the provinces of Rome happy.

Claudius is deemed to have declared enough games to keep the people of the city happy, although he did not over-indulge the city with games.¹²⁶ Although he did not have too many games, it is believed by some modern scholars that Claudius particularly enjoyed games that ended with a lot of blood.¹²⁷ This could have swayed the people in his favour due to their love of violence and the extreme when it came to the games.¹²⁸

Nero is heralded as throwing many games and of different varieties. He added a twist to what was such a common event such as the chariot racing, when he replaced the horses with camels.¹²⁹ As much as Nero put games on, he is also renowned for putting shows on and then at the end letting the actors take home props from the set.¹³⁰ This, alongside the fact that at all the games he gave out free necessities such as food, gold, jewels. These gifts gained the admiration of the masses in Rome as they believed he would always provide for them at the games in which he put on.¹³¹ He is also seen to have performed in theatrical competitions in which he won first

¹²³ Sue. Tib. 75

¹²⁴ Sue. Cal. 18

¹²⁵ Sue. Cal. 20

¹²⁶ Sue.Cla.21

¹²⁷ Fox, R. 2006. Page 468

¹²⁸ Futrell. A. 2006. Page 101

¹²⁹ Sue. Ner. 11

¹³⁰ Sue. Ner. 11

¹³¹ Sue. Ner. 11

place, but as he made mistakes throughout the performance, the people of Rome only voted for him to stop an outburst from him should he have lost.¹³²

Public access to entertainment for the masses of Rome clearly had a significant impact on the popularity of the emperor who provided the entertainment. Due to fact that food is important in sustaining life it can be argued that the masses of Rome would have sustained a better relationship with an emperor who gave them food on a regular basis, rather than one who hosted games all the time.¹³³ The plebeian's relationship with the emperor Nero was sustained by having games but at the same time he ordered that food be given out to the people.¹³⁴ As Juvenal stated in his Satires, the notions of bread and games go hand in hand.¹³⁵ It would be hard to separate the two as the masses in Rome wanted to be fed as well as being entertained.¹³⁶ Although emperors would choose specific aspects to focus on whilst doing enough to cover the other bases.¹³⁷ All the emperors of Rome needed to find a balance that suited them and the plebeians at the time.¹³⁸

After reviewing both aspects of the phrase "bread and games," it is clear to see that the masses in Rome responded very well to the emperors that gave them food and kept them entertained. The senate of Rome needed the plebeians of Rome to be stimulated by 'bread and games' in order for the masses to be distracted enough so that the senate could do what they wanted with little chance of the people causing an uproar and rioting. The next section of the investigation is focused on the

¹³² Sue. Ner. 24

¹³³ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 225

¹³⁴ Sue.Ner.11

¹³⁵ Juv. Sat. X. Lines 77 - 81

¹³⁶ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 227

¹³⁷ Grant, M. 1978. Chapter 6

¹³⁸ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 96

construction and use of municipal buildings throughout the city and how the plebeians of the city reacted to such improvements to their infrastructure.

Public Building Works.

Some modern scholars believe that the use of the phrase bread and games in Juvenal's Satires was merely an over exaggeration or joke. Such scholars believe that the masses within the city of Rome needed more than just food and entertainment in order to have a good relationship with the emperor in power at the time, this goes against the idea given by Juvenal in his *Satura*.¹³⁹ Emperors would have need to implement other public services into the daily life of the plebeians in order to maintain a positive relationship with them throughout their reign.¹⁴⁰ Such public services included the construction of buildings that would have increased the quality of life for the plebeians. These buildings would include bath houses, sewers, aqueducts and temples in which the people of Rome could go and pay their respects to the gods. On top of constructing the buildings required. The use of public services to maintain relations was not unheard of, for example the *Vigiles* formed under the reign of the emperor Augustus.¹⁴¹ The *Vigiles* being a public service much like firefighters or policemen.¹⁴² Within this section the work of many ancient scholars will be analysed such as Frontinus' work on aqueducts, as well as the work of Suetonius and Tacitus. Alongside these ancient academics, the work of modern scholars will be used to reinforce the ideas given by the ancient scholars, as well as making their own assumptions on how the use of such things maintained a positive relationship with those in power.

The use of bath houses to maintain public order was not an uncommon practise as many of the emperors throughout their reign would build bath houses in an attempt

¹³⁹ Schroeder, A. 2011

¹⁴⁰ Barton, I. 1989.

¹⁴¹ Tac. Ann. 11. 35

¹⁴² Tac. Ann. 11. 35

to please the masses of Rome.¹⁴³ The emperor Augustus is known for the construction and restoration of such bath houses, commonly referred to in the texts as *thermae*.¹⁴⁴ In building these bath houses the emperor would gain renown with the plebeians in Rome as it would give the masses a place to go and socialise throughout the afternoon.¹⁴⁵ The bath houses contained many rooms. The *Apodyterium* was the place in which people would change, the *palaestrae* was the exercise room, the *tepidarium* and *frigidarium* were the rooms containing the hot and cold pools and finally there was the *laconia* and *sudatoria* which were the heated, dry and sweating rooms.¹⁴⁶ Some bath houses were considered more spectacular than others depending on how big they were or who built them and where they were built. The baths commissioned by the emperor Trajan were loved by the people and visited daily by men and women alike.¹⁴⁷ Bath houses were built by all the emperors in order to increase their relations with the plebeians.¹⁴⁸ The Baths of Carracalla could accommodate a total of up to eight thousand people every day and it took much effort to keep the water heated as the waters were heated by fifty furnaces.¹⁴⁹ Attending the bath house was considered of such importance that by the year 354 AD there were around nine hundred and fifty two in the city of Rome alone, not including all other cities within the empire.¹⁵⁰

There were some people however, who were not as impressed with the bath houses as the rest of the people of Rome appeared to be. Some of the people of Rome

¹⁴³ Barton, I. 1938. Page 31.

¹⁴⁴ Barton, I. 1938. Page 48

¹⁴⁵ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 124

¹⁴⁶ Cartwright, M. 2013

¹⁴⁷ Platner, S.B. 1911

¹⁴⁸ Barton, I. 1938

¹⁴⁹ Cartwright, M. 2013

¹⁵⁰ Boetius, A and Ward-Perkins, J.B. 1970

deemed the baths as a disgusting place full of bacteria and filth.¹⁵¹ There are reports that even the emperor Marcus Aurelius deemed that the bath houses of Rome were lined with filth.¹⁵²

Bath houses were not the only thing to be constructed by the emperors of Rome which influenced the morale of the plebeians within the city of Rome. The construction of the city's aqueducts which consequently led to the development of the sewage system which ran throughout the city of Rome which was important in improving the quality of life for everyday Romans.¹⁵³ The need for aqueducts within the city of Rome was clear. The city had very few natural springs and the people of Rome could not drink from the Tiber due to pollution and the amount of waterborne diseases that the water contained.¹⁵⁴ During the republic the demand for aqueducts grew.¹⁵⁵ By the time of the emperors, Rome had many aqueducts but the people still demanded more. Caligula began working on two new aqueducts during his reign, but could not finish them and his successor Claudius had to do it for him.¹⁵⁶

The main source material for the construction and regulation of the aqueducts of Rome is written by Frontinus, who was appointed by the emperor Nerva as *curator aquarum* (supervisor of the aqueducts).¹⁵⁷ The position of supervising the aqueducts in Rome was created by the emperor Augustus to enable more men to enter the administration of the city.¹⁵⁸ Within his position as supervisor of the aqueducts, Frontinus wrote his works *De Aquaeductu*, which focuses on the aqueducts of Rome. At the start of the report, Frontinus writes that for many years the people of Rome

¹⁵¹ Knapp, R. 2011. Chapter 1

¹⁵² Knapp, R. 2011. Chapter 1

¹⁵³ Casson, L. 1998

¹⁵⁴ Hodge, A.T. 2001

¹⁵⁵ Hodge, A.T. 2001

¹⁵⁶ Sue. Cal. 21

¹⁵⁷ Barton, I. 1938. Page 128

¹⁵⁸ Sue. Aug. 37

were content with the water supply going into Rome although they eventually wanted more than what was being supplied.

“For four hundred and forty-one years from the foundation of the City, the Romans were satisfied with the use of such waters as they drew from the Tiber, from wells, or from springs. Esteem for springs still continues, and is observed with veneration. They are believed to bring healing to the sick, as, for example, the springs of the Camenae, of Apollo, and of Juturna. But there now run into the City: the Appian aqueduct, Old Anio, Marcia, Tepula, Julia, Virgo, Alsietina, which is also called Augusta, Claudia, New Anio.”¹⁵⁹

Frontinus writing this in his work reflects the views that the plebeians in Rome wanted more water being supplied into the city, which means that the construction of these aqueducts influenced the morale of the masses in the city. The construction of such aqueducts are seen as incredible feats of engineering at the time as Frontinus makes reference to the aqueducts within the city.¹⁶⁰

“With such an array of indispensable structures carrying so many waters, compare, if you will, the idle Pyramids or the useless, though famous, works of the Greeks!”¹⁶¹

Within the works of Suetonius the notion that Augustus was a well-liked emperor is given as he is noted as constructing aqueducts when the people of Rome were lacking high quality wine.¹⁶² This improved his relations with the masses in Rome as he managed to arrange a compromise stating that instead of high quality wine, he would make way to provide them with adequate water supply.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Frt. Aqua. 4

¹⁶⁰ Frt. Aqu. 16

¹⁶¹ Frt. Aqu. 16

¹⁶² Sue. Aug. 42

¹⁶³ Sue. Aug. 42

The emperor Claudius was renowned for his aqueducts throughout his reign as emperor. The masses in Rome felt positively about his finishing the aqueduct which had been started by his predecessor Caligula, but also in building his very own Claudian aqueduct.¹⁶⁴ The plebeians of Rome held Claudius in high regard when it came to his aqueducts not least because it created many jobs for them throughout the period of its construction.¹⁶⁵

“He finished the outlet, which was •three miles in length, partly by levelling and partly by tunnelling a mountain, a work of great difficulty and requiring eleven years, although he had thirty thousand men at work all the time without interruption.”¹⁶⁶

In creating these jobs, the masses within the city of Rome will have had the chance to attain the work which means they could feed their families when in some circumstances they could not if these jobs were not available.

Latrines were also put in place around the bath houses and apartment buildings and these were popular and effective in improving the quality of life for ordinary Romans. Although it is believed that even though the people wanted such latrines, they were a breeding ground for diseases which would cause many to fall ill.¹⁶⁷

Alongside buildings such as aqueducts and bath houses, the plebeians of Rome had their opinion on the emperors swayed by the construction of temples in within the city. Temples were places of religious worship which the plebeians would attend in order to show their praise to the deity to which the temple was dedicated.¹⁶⁸ The

¹⁶⁴ Sue. Cla. 20

¹⁶⁵ Sue. Cla. 20

¹⁶⁶ Sue. Cla. 20

¹⁶⁷ Casson, L. 1998.

¹⁶⁸ Anderson, J. 1997

main room within these temples (*cella*,) would have housed images of the specific deity to which the temple was dedicated to.¹⁶⁹ To most plebeians Rome, everything from a little stream to a large forest had a divine force of some sort, whether it was the home to a god or some sort of mythical creatures.¹⁷⁰ Mattingly and Potter make the connection that everything in the Roman world revolved around the gods by stating that: “Religion defined time, space and relationships.”¹⁷¹ The gods of the Roman world have an overlap with that of the Greek world.¹⁷² For example the king of the gods in Roman terms is Jupiter, whereas the god of the same status and power in the Greek world is Zeus.¹⁷³ In the Roman world it was believed that a new god could be born at anytime, leaving room for emperors to adopt a new deity in order to appease certain provinces within the empire.¹⁷⁴ Once the province of Egypt came under Roman control, the goddess Isis was adopted into the Roman pantheon of gods and was particularly favoured by some groups around the empire, especially the women of Spain.¹⁷⁵ As with other religions, it was essential for the people of Rome to establish some sort of connection with the gods, the temples they built to worship in are an example of how they created spaces in which to interact with the gods.¹⁷⁶ Emperors could enhance their popularity and reputation among the plebeians through the building of temples. Augustus built and restored many temples when he was building his forum within the city of Rome.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁹ Anderson, J. 1997

¹⁷⁰ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 182.

¹⁷¹ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 113

¹⁷² Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 182.

¹⁷³ Liversidge, j. 1976. Page 182.

¹⁷⁴ Potter, D.S and Mattingly, D.J. 1999. Page 114

¹⁷⁵ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 208

¹⁷⁶ Liversidge, J. 1976. Page 182.

¹⁷⁷ Sue. Aug. 29

“ He built many public works, in particular the following: his forum with the temple of Mars the Avenger, the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, and the fane of Jupiter the Thunderer on the Capitol.”¹⁷⁸

Not only was the emperor Augustus adored by the plebeians for building new temples, he was very generous with gifts once temples were constructed, he is known to bestow gold and jewels upon such temples which definitely increased his stature with the plebeians in Rome.¹⁷⁹

“He restored sacred edifices which had gone to ruin through lapse of time or had been destroyed by fire, and adorned both these and the other temples with most lavish gifts, depositing in the shrine of Jupiter Capitolinus as a single offering sixteen thousand pounds of gold, besides pearls and other precious stones to the value of fifty million sesterces.”¹⁸⁰

Augustus is not the only emperor to get praise from the plebeians for his construction and upkeep of temples within the city. The emperor Titus restored the temples of Rome after a fire using his own personal ornaments from his household.¹⁸¹

“he set aside all the ornaments of his villas for the public buildings and temples.”¹⁸²

The emperor Domitian also built temples during his reign which would have looked favorable in the eyes of the plebeians. There were a number of temples that he

¹⁷⁸ Sue. Aug. 29. 1

¹⁷⁹ Sue. Aug. 30

¹⁸⁰ Sue. Aug. 30. 2

¹⁸¹ Sue. Tit. 8

¹⁸² Sue. Tit. 8

ordered built in his reign such as the temple to Jupiter Custos.¹⁸³ Not only did the emperor Domitian build a temple to the deity Jupiter Custos. He built a temple to the Flavian family.¹⁸⁴ The Flavian family included himself and the emperors Vespasian and Titus, Domitian's predecessors.¹⁸⁵ Both these emperors were held in very high regard by the plebeians in Rome.¹⁸⁶ This was due to the plebeians within Rome declaring that Vitellius chose the anniversary of many bad omens to take the office of Pontifex Maximus.¹⁸⁷ As well as the plebeians and the people in the Eastern Provinces declaring that Vespasian was the emperor at the same time that the senate declared Vitellius as emperor.¹⁸⁸ This also shows how much the plebeians in Rome favored the emperor Vespasian as they pushed for him to be emperor over Vitellius.

The plebeians of Rome respected an emperor more so if he gave the people buildings of use. The masses enjoyed having bath houses built as a place in which they can socialise and bathe, as well as having access to drinking water through the method of using aqueducts. Temples also had an impact as religion was very close to all of Rome's people and therefore having a place to communicate with the gods was a big help.

¹⁸³ Sue. Dom. 5

¹⁸⁴ Sue. Dom. 5

¹⁸⁵ Sullivan, P. 1953. Page 67

¹⁸⁶ Sullivan, P. 1953. Page 68

¹⁸⁷ Courtney, H. 1999

¹⁸⁸ Courtney, H. 1999

Conclusion

This dissertation has investigated the ways in which the emperors of Rome managed to maintain relations with the plebeian class throughout their reign as Emperor. The purpose of the current study was to examine the main ways in which the emperors maintained these relationships and to compare the conclusions to the notions portrayed by Juvenal in his Satires. The aspect of food in the city of Rome was a very important one, if there was a food shortage, or the emperors were not seen as doing enough to gather the food and bring it to the city the plebeians would either riot or as a minimum cause some disturbance within the city itself. Whereas an emperor seen to do all he can to bring in the supplies, and give food to the people at a discount price or for free were seen in a very high regard by the masses. With regards to the notion of entertainment within the city, the people again were very fond of an emperor who would put on a variety of games for the people to enjoy, or an emperor who was to build or expand an arena. As with the aspect of food, if an emperor was to ignore the games and not present any decent spectacles for the people they would not see this emperor with such high regard as others. Many of the public buildings such as the bath houses and the entertainment events allowed Romans to gather together in large crowds. This communal aspect of Roman leisure may well have been highly significant in creating a shared feeling of community and wellbeing that was clearly connected to the generosity of the emperor. They were grand statements of power but also demonstrated the caring, fatherly role that emperors needed to promote and that was first seen with Augustus

The assignment has determined that all three of the methods mentioned, the use of food, entertainment and public buildings, had a major impact on how the emperors

were viewed by the masses within the city of Rome. The most obvious finding from this study is that in general, giving the people of Rome access to food was the method that had the most impact on the plebeians. This was due to the need to survive. The second major finding was that if the people were to feel like they were being given too little food, too little entertainment, or that not enough public buildings were being constructed, they were more than happy to let the emperors know about it. Whether it was through rioting, physically assaulting the emperors whilst out in the city or asking the senate. No matter how much attention an emperor paid to one aspect, if he was to ignore a single aspect the masses would make him recognize his mistake. These findings will serve as a base for further research into the relations between the classes in Rome and how the lower classes within the empire can be kept happy and by what means. The most important limitation lies in the fact that some of the works scholarly material used can be seen as quite out of date at the time of this investigation. Meaning that if there were more research done into the subject matter in the recent years, there may have been a difference in some of the information given. This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. Further work needs to be done to establish whether the relationship between the emperors of Rome and the plebeians of Rome was affected by any other aspects of life in the ancient world.

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