**Ten Really Bad Emperors**

**Source Analysis Paper**

**Due October 21 by 5pm**

Now that we have seen how Suetonius depicts and characterizes his bad emperors you will turn the table and apply his techniques to one of the good emperors we read at the start of the semester. Specifically, I want you to rework chapters 8.1 through 19.2 of the *Life of Vespasian* and turn Vespasian into a bad emperor in the manner of Suetonius. I’ve attached the text of your translation below, so you don’t have to retype the whole thing.

You must not change the specific facts that Suetonius reports. Rather, rework the presentation of those facts - the “spin” as it were - to cast Vespasian’s actions in a negative light. Use the other lives we read as models for how to do this. Not every change you make needs to be outright evil - remember the power of innuendo and suggestion as a means of undermining Vespasian’s actions. For each change you make, add a footnote with a citation of the passage of Suetonius you are basing it on or inspired by, e.g. 1 *Tiberius* 10.2.

Papers are due on October 21 by 5pm. Submit your paper as a .doc, .docx, or .pdf file to cmuntz@uark.edu. Late papers will not be accepted without prior approval except in cases of documented emergencies.

[8.1] Vespasian returned to Rome with celebrity and as if touched by divinity. He celebrated a triumph over the Jews and added eight consulships to the one he had served earlier, and he assumed the censorship as well. During the entirety of his reign he thought nothing more important than, first and foremost, setting a steady course for the state, which had been close to ruin and on the verge of collapse, and after that, making it beautiful.

[8.2] The soldiers, some of them confident because of victory and others wretched because they had suffered humiliating defeat, had turned to every kind of unrestrained violent conduct. The provinces and free states and even some of the client kingdoms were suffering internal disorder. He responded by discharging many of Vitellius’ troops without honor and punishing them. And he avoided granting anything beyond the ordinary to those who had helped him win victory to the point that he was late with even the usual bonus.

[8.3] Vespasian seized every opportunity to restore discipline. After he had used a dismissive nod to register his disgust for a young man who reeked of perfume when he was thanking him for the military command he had requested, he rebuked him in all seriousness, saying, “I would have preferred that you smelled of garlic.” And he rescinded the man's commission. As for the marines who traveled back and forth from Ostia and Puteoli on foot, when they asked that a “shoe-money” account be set up for them, he ordered them to run barefoot in the future (he thought it unsatisfactory to send them away without a response), and they have run like that ever since.

[8.4] He made Achaia, Lycia, Rhodes, Byzantium, and Samos into provinces, taking away their status as free states, and also Trachian Cilicia and Commagene, ruled by kings up to that time. He assigned legions to Cappadocia because of the frequent incursions of barbarians there and gave it to a governor of consular rank rather than to an equestrian.

[8.5] Past fires and collapse had made Rome an ugly sight. Vespasian allowed anyone who wished to take possession of vacant areas and build on them if they had been abandoned by their owners. When he began the reconstruction of the Capitol, he was the first to put his hand to removing rubble, and he carried some of it off on his own back. He assumed responsibility for restoring three thousand bronze tablets that had burned in the same fire and hunted down copies of them in all quarters. These tablets constituted an ancient and deeply revered record of Rome's power inasmuch as they contained the decrees of the senate almost from the time when the city was founded, resolutions of the populace concerning alliances and treaties, and the special privileges granted individuals.

[9.1] He constructed new public buildings as well, the Temple of Peace near the Forum and the temple for the Divine Claudius on the Caelian Hill, which Agrippina, it is true, had begun but Nero had torn down, almost to its foundations. He also built an amphitheater in the center of the city when he learned that Augustus had had plans for one.

[9.2] He purged and then replenished the illustrious orders that had been depleted by murders that had occurred at one time or another and were debased by long neglect. He reviewed the senate and the equestrian orders, expelled the least deserving members, and introduced the worthiest of the Italians and provincials. And since it was recognized that the two orders differed not so much in privileges as in the respect accorded them, he ruled like this in a dispute between a senator and a Roman knight: “It is not permissible for senators to be insulted, but it is right and proper for the insult to he returned”

[10] The number of lawsuits waiting to be resolved had increased greatly everywhere. Some cases of long standing remained because judicial proceedings had been interrupted, and the unsettled

times had added new ones. Vespasian chose by lot people to restore property that had been seized in the war and to hear cases out of turn and thus reduce to a very small number those pending before the centumviral court. The lifetime of the litigants seemed scarcely sufficient to resolve all of them if they came up in their normal order.

[11] Sexual license and extravagant living had flourished with no one to rein them in. Vespasian brought to the senate a bill that provided that any woman who consorted with a slave belonging to someone else be considered a slave herself, and a second bill that made it never lawful for moneylenders to force repayment of a loan made to dependent sons, that is to say, even after the death of their fathers.

[12] In other matters Vespasian was unassuming and merciful from the beginning of his principate until the very end. He never pretended that his means had been anything other than modest earlier in his life, and he often even bragged of the fact. He broke into laughter at some who tried to assign the origin of the Flavian family to the founders of Reate and to a companion of Hercules whose tomb stands on the Salarian road. On the day of his triumph, weary because the parade was slow and tedious, he had so little interest in the decorations that others tendered him that he did not suffer in silence but said, “I deserve to be punished, an old man who stupidly wanted a triumph so very much—as if it were something owed my ancestors or I had sought out for myself!” He did not take the tribunician power immediately nor the title of Father of His Country until late in his reign. He ignored the customary practice of searching people who came to greet him, even when the civil war was still going on.

[13] He patiently endured the candor of his friends, the innuendos of lawyers, and the defiance of philosophers. Although Licinius Mucianus had a reputation for unacceptable sexual behavior and showed Vespasian little respect, relying on the favor that he enjoyed with him because of the services he had rendered, Vespasian could never bring himself to criticize him except once in private when he was complaining to a common acquaintance and added, “I, on the other hand, am a man.” When Salvius Liberalis had the impudence to say while defending a rich client, "What does Caesar care if Hipparchus has a hundred million sesterces?" Vespasian applauded him. When the banished Cynic philosopher Demetrius encountered the emperor on a journey, he did not bother to rise or greet him and even snarled something or other. Vespasian thought it sufficient to call him Dog.

[14] He gave little thought to injuries done him and hostility shown him, nor did he seek to retaliate. He arranged an excellent match for the daughter of his enemy Vitellius and even provided her with a dowry and everything that she needed. When Nero’s court became off limits to him, and he was frightened and kept asking what he should do or where he should go, one of the imperial doorkeepers threw him out and ordered him, "Go to Morbovia.” This man later begged forgiveness, and Vespasian became enraged at him, but his anger was restricted to words—of more or less the same number and content. Such restraint is not surprising, for the suspicion or fear that would make him harm someone was so alien to his character that when his friends warned him to beware of Mettius Pompusianus because it was widely believed that the man had the horoscope of an emperor, he not only ignored the warning but made him consul, assuring that Pompusianus would one day remember the favor.

[15] Scarcely will there be found an innocent man who received punishment during his reign--unless Vespasian was away at the time and unaware that it was taking place or, at the very least, agreed to it reluctantly and was misled. Helvidius Priscus was the only one to address him by his private name Vespasian, when he came back from Syria, and as praetor he issued edicts that did not have the imperial titles or even the emperor's name. Vespasian did not grow angry until Helvidius’ abusive insults came close to stripping him down to the level of private citizen. And although he first banished Helvidius and later ordered him killed, he thought it important to find some way to save his adversary's life, and he sent agents to recall the assassins. And he would have saved him if it had not been reported incorrectly that he was already dead. But he never rejoiced at anyone’s death and even wept and grieved over the just punishments that he meted out.

[16.1] The only fault of which Vespasian is rightly found guilty is greed. It was not enough that he reinstated the taxes that Galba had abolished, added heavy new ones, and increased the tribute paid by the provinces, even doubling it in some cases. He openly carried on business dealings that would be shameful even for a private citizen to engage in, buying things only to dispose of them piecemeal at a profit later.4 [16.2] He did not hesitate to sell offices to candidates or pardons to defendants, both innocent and guilty. And it is believed that he routinely promoted his most predatory agents to important posts on purpose so that he could find them guilty of extortion at a

later time when they had more money. Indeed, common talk had it that he used them like sponges because he soaked them, in a manner of speaking, when they were dry and squeezed them out when they were wet.

[16.3] Some say that Vespasian's greed came naturally. When an old herdsman had to pay for the freedom that he had humbly petitioned from his master at the time he became emperor, he declared, “The fox changes its fur, not its nature.” But others think that necessity drove him to plunder and theft because he found the state treasury and the imperial purse completely empty. He gave proof of this when he said, at the very beginning of his principate, “Forty billion sesterces are needed if the state is to stand firm.” This explanation for his greed seems plausible since he used well the wealth that was gotten badly.

[17] He was exceedingly generous to people of every class: he made good the property qualification required for senators, supported penniless former consuls with 500,000 sesterces a year, and restored to better condition many cities throughout the world after they had been damaged by earthquake or fire. He showed particular favor to talent and acquired skill.

[18] He was the first to use imperial funds to make an annual grant of 100,000 sesterces for teachers of Latin and Greek rhetoric. He gave large gifts and generous pay to outstanding poets and also to artists, to the sculptor who restored the Venus of Cos and the colossal statue of Nero, for instance. And to an engineer who promised to transport huge columns to the Capitol cheaply he offered a sizable reward for his invention but rejected the device itself, saying, "Let me feed ordinary folk.”42

[19.1] He brought back old-fashioned entertainments at the games celebrating the dedication of the new stage in the theater of Marcellus. To the tragic actor Apelles he gave 400,000 sesterces, 200,000 each to the lyre players Terpnus and Diodorus, to others 100,000, and to those who received the least, 40,000. He also awarded numerous gold crowns, and he gave dinner parties frequently, often consisting of several courses, and served large portions. In this way he provided business to the market vendors. He gave presents to the women on the Kalends of March just as he did to the men at the Saturnalia. Despite this generosity, he retained his reputation as a fundamentally greedy man.

[19.2] The Alexandrians persisted in calling him Cybiosactes, the nickname for one of their kings who was a very foul and nasty character. And at Vespasian's funeral, the lead mime, who was named Favor, wore a mask that looked like him and (as is customary) mimicked the things he did and said when he was alive. He asked the procurators, so that all could hear, how much the funeral and the funeral procession cost. When he heard the answer, “Ten million sesterces,” he shouted, “Give me a hundred thousand and throw me into the Tiber!”