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The complexity of Roman suicide

Carmine Anthony Ruff

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THE COMPLEXITY OF ROMAN SUICIDE

BY

CARMINE ANTHONY RUFFA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Several factors have influenced research on the topic of ancient suicide. In the last ten years suicide has reached almost epidemic proportions in the U.S.A. In 1967 there were 21,325 reported suicides, or almost eleven suicides for every 100,000 people in the United States.¹ In 1974 there will be over 25,000 people who take their lives; the actual total probably is at least twice or maybe triple this number, since many suicides are labeled accidental.² For every recorded suicide there are at least eight attempts.³ The problem of suicide is fast becoming a symptom of modern living, especially in the United States. The constant reports of well-known national and prominent local people who commit suicide are commonplace.

In addition to the concern for modern suicide, another factor is the lack of modern research on ancient suicide. The English language seems to be devoid of any work dealing with ancient suicide per se. This implies an indifference to a modern problem which possibly can be better understood by delving into the ancient sources.

One cannot help but wonder about the number of

notable Roman suicides. The implications of Juvenal and Martial are that suicide was a matter of course for some distressed Romans.⁴ This is further hinted at in the suicides of Brutus and Cassius, immortalized by Shakespeare in the Julius Caesar. However, these suicides and the glorification of suicide by the Stoics (e.g. Cato the Younger's death) and the modern popularity of Dido's suicide in Vergil's Aeneid seem to be inconsistent with the Roman ideal of gravitas and pietas. It is from these questions and observations that one forms a curiosity concerning suicide.

By its very nature, suicide is an elusive term. Was Socrates' death a true suicide or simply a self-execution? Was Decius Mus' death a suicide or simply an heroic sacrifice in the heat of battle? Can one honestly state that Marilyn Monroe or Janis Joplin intended to kill themselves or were these accidents? Such questions are difficult to answer because suicide has become an ethical and legal problem and few realize the semantical problems involved.

The lack of statistical information in ancient Rome hinders any work of this nature. References to suicide in the ancient sources support some observations. However, these sources were preoccupied mainly with the aristocracy, not with the hoi polloi. Unfortunately, the frequency of suicide among the plebians or slaves must remain a mystery. Furthermore, there are few facts to substantiate a modern thesis that the poor commit suicide to escape their miserable plight.

A number of primary and secondary sources have been investigated, in the hope of gaining a better understanding of the similarities and differences between ancient Rome and the modern civilization of the United States. Some of these observations were startling while others were disappointing because no certain conclusions could be deduced.

FOOTNOTES

1. U.S. Department of Commerce, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1970. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), p. 58.
2. _____ "Better Health America," Newsweek, March 18, 1974, p. 105.
3. Ibid.
4. Juvenal VI. 30-32. Martial II. 80.

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT SUICIDE: A PROBLEM OF SEMANTICS

Ancient man never considered the act of suicide as criminal or dishonorable. In fact, for the Roman of the late Republic or the early empire no such standard term existed. Suicide was indeed prevalent during that era as it is in the late twentieth century; however, the stigma did not exist in ancient Rome and only recently has suicide, like alcoholism, been viewed as a medical problem.

The term, suicide, with its connotations of despair, futility, and failure, simply was non-existent in antiquity. Condemnation of suicide per se was impossible without a standard usage. The philosophers, particularly the Stoics and Epicureans, had no carte blanche condemnation of it and even St. Augustine in his denunciation of self-murder felt no compulsion to coin a term for it.

Neither Ancient, Mediaeval, nor Renaissance authors were shackled with a legal noun for suicide.¹ In over one hundred twenty references to suicide there is no single idiom that is used with frequency by the ancient authors. The use of ipse occurs in many phrases, especially in describing the

pre-Catonian suicide.² Cicero in thirteen references to suicide uses it three times--mortem sibi ipse conscisset (Clu. 169-170), sese ipsa morte multavisset (Rep. II.25), and Magium se ipsum interfecisse (Fam. IV.12). Tacitus in twenty-five references to suicide uses it only twice, when describing the suicides of a certain Mnester and one of Pompey's soldiers-- Se ipse ferre transegit (Ann. XIV.9) and se ipsum interfecit (Ann. III.51). In five references to the actual act of self-immolation, Seneca omits the intensive--finem vitae suae manu sua imposuit (death of Diodorus, Ben. XLX.1), currere ad mortem effeceris (comment by Epicurus, Ep. XXIV.22) adpetere mortem (Ep. XIV. 23), se devovit (death of Decius, Ep. LXVII.8), and illa ad nos veniat an ad illam nos (Ep. LXIX.6). Augustine in his chapters denouncing the suicide of Lucretia (De Civ. Dei XIX) uses ipse in three of eight citations--se ipsam occidit, se ipsis homicidia committerent, and ipsis necem inferamus.

Although there is not enough evidence to support the thesis that suicide before the time of Cato was rare, it is nevertheless curious that ipse is used with the reflexive to reinforce the notion of suicide in some authors.

The verb consciscere never became the standard verb for the act of suicide, but it was used commonly in this context. In one-hundred and five references to suicide by twenty-four authors, consciscere is used seventeen times. On the other hand, Seneca in five references to the act itself

fails to use consciscere but Gellius uses it to refer to blinding oneself--caecitatem conscivit (N.A. X.17.2). Caesar uses sibi mortem consciscere in alluding to a battle with the Aquitani and the reported death of Orgetorix (B.G. III.22.2 and I.9.4).

Pliny the Elder uses the term almost without fail in his Historia Naturalis. In describing a plant that causes suicide he reveals mortem sibi eo metu consciscant (H.N. XXIV. 102.163); in describing a disease that causes suicide he states non obalios fere morte conscita (H.N. XXIV.7.24). One of the victims, Gaius Proculeius, takes the ultimate remedy--conscivisse sibi mortem (H.N. XXXVI.59.183) and Pliny delights in the fact that suicide is a relief for men--Sibi potest mortem consciscere (H.N. II.5) and may be caused by some herbs mortes repentinae (H.N. II.63). Justinian also makes it his technical term--de bonis eorum qui ante sententiam vel mortem sibi consciverunt (Inst. Iust. XLVIII.21).

A common rendering, though not as popular as mortem sibi consciscere, was mors voluntaria or mors sponte. Tacitus found a special use for this term in categorizing the forced suicides of the empire. He uses it in describing the suicide of Vocula--mortem sponte praevenire (Hist. IV.59) and the false report on the death of Cotys--mortemque sponte sumptam ementitur (Ann. II.66). Nero tactfully queries an Seneca voluntaria mortem pararet (Ann. XV.61), and in contriving a false report of his mother's suicide he compels Agermus to

report sponte mortem sumpsisse configeret (Ann. XIV.7). Cicero favors this phrase in describing the deaths of the Decii--ad voluntariam mortem (Sen. XX.74-75) and in giving an alternative to the defeat of Pompey consciscenda mors voluntaria (Fam. VII. 3.3).

Cicero favored at times a euphemistic rendering and took advantage of the lack of a technical term--Cato abiit e vita (T.D.I. 30.74), se offerret ad mortem (Tusc. I.15.33), morte luit (Sen.XX.74-75), aequo animo e vita exeamus (Fin. XV.49), feramus e vita (Fin. 1.15), but rarely does he revert to mittar ad mortem (Tusc.I.41.97) or laqueos aut alia exitia quaerant (Fin.V110.28-29).

Consequently the euphemistic often leads to the ambiguous as in the phrases concessitque vita (Ann. XIV.51) and tenuem iam spiritum expressit (Ann.XV.57) and mors opportuna (Ann.IV.21). Vergil, in describing the region of the underworld reserved for suicides, uses a unique phrase--qui sibi letum insontes peperere manu (Aen.VI.434), and Servius opts for inferre in describing the scene--qui sibi inferunt mortem (ad. Aen.VI.434).

Without a true idiom for suicide one can surmise that a pejorative connotation would be difficult to develop. It seems the writers had no desire to criticize the act. Furthermore, there was no urgency or desire to coin a word for self-immolation. There is some speculation that the term first appeared in 1671 in England, but Dr. Samuel Johnson deleted

it from his dictionary.³ The Chronological English Dictionary says it appeared in 1651.⁴ Skeat added that the word

seems to have been suggested by the queer words suicist, a selfish man, and suicism, selfishness, which had been coined at an earlier date, and were used by Whitlock in an essay entitled "The Grand Schismatic," or "Suist Anatomical" in his Zootamia.⁵

The French, not to be overshadowed by the British, lay claim to the term, but surely it was analogous to matricide, homicide, regicide, etc.⁶ So it appears that Shakespeare's vocabulary was devoid of the term to describe the deaths of Romeo, Othello, and Lady MacBeth.

Without an inherited term for self-killing the Romans were able to create a concept giving it their own connotation. Livy is able to endorse the self-sacrifice of Decius with words of praise--sese devovere volet (VIII.X.9) or more emphatically in describing the death of an Oppius--finem vitae dedit (III.4-9). As self-sacrifice turned to self-execution the terms of Tacitus became vivid--per abruptas venas sanguinem effudit (Ann.VII.29), ferro abscindunt venas (Ann. XVI.12), and et deformis moras sectis novacula faucibus infamem vitam foedavit (Hist.I.73).

The adage "a rose by any other name..." will not fit in this context. Our term suicide makes no distinction between self-sacrifice (e.g. the immolation of a buddist monk), expedient suicide (e.g. the self-euthanasia of one with a terminal illness), and forced suicide (e.g. the death of Hitler).

FOOTNOTES

1. Thomas Finkenstaedt, A Chronological English Dictionary (Heidelberg: Carl Winter and Co., 1970) p.816. This is also verified in William Skeat, An Etymological Dictionary of the English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882) p. 609.
2. Robert Tyrell and Louis Purser. The Correspondence of M. Tullius Cicero, V (Hildesheim: George Olma Verlag, 1969) p. 106.
3. Glanville Williams. The Sanctity of Life and The Criminal Law (New York: Albert Knopf, 1966) p. 252.
4. Finkenstaedt, Chronological Dictionary, p. 816.
5. Skeat, Etymological Dictionary, p. 609.
6. Ibid.

CHAPTER III

Philosophic Suicide

As stated before, ancient man almost never considered suicide dishonorable. Rarely was it considered a crime. There is considerable debate as to this legal question. A condemned man during Cicero's time could die before judgement was passed and thus save his inheritance for his family. Valerius Maximus (IX,12,7) describes such an episode during Cicero's consulship.¹ It was believed that if one wanted to save property he could act quickly and die before sentence was passed.² Tacitus called this advantage pretium festinandi and asserted that the victim claimed the rites of burial and that his dispositions remained valid.³ However, Glanville Williams claims that, although there was no general prohibition of suicide, those who killed themselves in order to avoid forfeiture of property did not avoid it.⁴ There is an example of the confiscation of a certain Macro's property during Caligula's reign. It seems that Macro, the praetorian prefect, committed suicide and lost his property rights.⁵ Probably the treason trials of Tiberius changed this immunity.⁶ Domitian himself forbade this immunity and a suicide was an admission of certain guilt with the property being confiscated.⁷ Ulpian in his Digest (XXVIII,3,6-7) says this came about after Cicero's era. In the Military Laws of Rufus

sixty-five offenses are listed as criminal--fraudulent enlisting, absence without leave, desertion, self-injury, suicide, etc.⁸ Hadrian equated suicide with desertion.⁹ Alfred Alvarez claims that the law against suicide was strictly economic and was never considered a sin against religion or morality.¹⁰ According to the Digests of Justinian, suicide was punishable only because it was irrational, not because it was a crime.¹¹ The evidence supports the claim that suicide was more of a philosophic question for the aristocracy than a legal one. Even today the suicide of an individual poses confused legal problems (e.g. the payment of life insurance policy to a benefactor). One is safe in stating that in antiquity it was endorsed as much as it was condemned. According to the ancient writers there was never mention of suicide as being a hereditary disease although Pliny the Younger says that some families had suicidal tendencies.¹² This was probably a result of imitation rather than genetics. The fact that the Romans lacked a standard noun or phrase for suicide precluded giving this type of death a cursory label. The ancient never was hampered by the verbal stigma with which the modern contends.

Because of the lack of accurate statistical records, especially concerning the poor of ancient Rome, one can only deduce from writers such as Seneca, Tacitus, Suetonius and both Plinys that suicide was quite common. The only hint of suicide being a sociological problem was Vergil's reference in Book VI of the Aeneid.¹³ This trend wasn't broken until the Dei Civitas of St. Augustine.¹⁴

The Romans were great imitators and in their philosophy toward suicide foreign influence, especially that of the Greeks, was profound. The story of Laodamia who killed herself because of the death of her husband at Troy (IL,2,695) was a favorite to Roman authors (Cat. 68.73ff, Ovid Her.13, Hyg,Fab.103 and 114). Jocasta's hanging was known to the Roman literati, as was the death of Phaedra and Ajax by self-inflicted deaths. The myths were not exclusively Greek and the little-known Babylonian story of Pyramus and Thisbe (OVID. Met.4.55) was preserved by Ovid and later immortalized in Shakespeare's adaptation, Romeo and Juliet. The double-suicide for love seems to be a favorite literary plot.

History also had preserved a plethora of suicides that were known to some Romans. The Old Testament recorded the suicides of Saul, Abimelech, Samson, and Ahitophel.¹⁵ The deaths of Sappho at Neritos, Hero in the Hellespont, and Peregrinus on the perfumed pyre at the Olympic games surely enhanced the image of suicide in Rome. Caesar had noted with no disparity the suicides of Orgetorix (Orgetorix Mortuus est; neque abest suspicio, ut Helvetii arbitrantur, quin ipse sibi mortem consciverit-B. Gall. 1.4.4) and a devoted group of followers under Adiatunnus (si quid eis per vim accidat, aut eundem casum una ferant aut sibi mortem consciscant-B. Gall. 3,22,2). Dublin and Bunzel ascertain the fact that suicide was extremely popular with Roman neighbors: "In ancient times certain warlike peoples, such as the Germans, Scandinavians, and ancient Gauls, regarded suicide as highly courageous and

noble."¹⁶ No direct philosophy of suicide was stated until the eras of Cicero and Seneca. The Romans seem to have shared the Greek view that because the gods did not grant life they were not offended when a life was taken.¹⁷ During the early Republic self-killing seems to have been extremely rare and the heroic self-immolation of Decius Mus, Appius Claudius and Lucretia seem to have been remote from the mania which characterized the early empire. As the fabric of Roman life—its religion, its family structure, its mores, and its confidence—dissipated, the reluctance to suicide faded also, if indeed a reluctance ever existed.

The Romans were ripe for a philosophy that above all was consistent with their own early history. Stoicism gave them this. Martin Clark asserts that gravitas, constantia, and magnitudo animi were peculiarly Roman and that the Romans had been Stoics long before they ever heard of the phrase.¹⁸

Without a doubt suicide was the prime ethical problem associated with the late Stoa. The Roman Stoics in departing from the lofty idealism of the Greek Stoics tried to adopt a guide for the individual. The ambivalence of the logos which hindered the Early Stoa was clarified by Seneca.¹⁹ "The Stoicism of Seneca marks a break with the intellectualism of earlier Greek thought; it was not assumed that to know what was right meant to do what was right. The wise man and the good man were still identified, but there was a shift of emphasis from wisdom to goodness, from knowledge to the will."²⁰

In the period of the Old Stoa suicide was permitted, but the later Stoics feared suicide, if it sprang from "rashness, obstinancy, vanity, love of glory, and ignorance of social duties."²¹ Stoicism seemed to coagulate the Roman virtue of gravitas. The two fused and were immediately popular.²²

Although Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, committed suicide, the Roman Stoics did not hold his views to be divine and to be valid for all time.²³ "It only remained for later Stoics like Panaetius (c.140 BC) and Posidonius (c.130-140) to interpret it in the sense not of an external compulsion, but of an inner overmastering impulse. By this interpretation the whole philosophic anti-suicide position was undermined. It was no longer felt to be a disgraceful thing to commit suicide. The only thing worth considering was how to commit suicide with such bravery or bravado, such fortitude, as would appeal to majesticism."²⁴ After Vergil's era Stoicism took on a different aura. It was no longer merely a doctrine but the most important school of thought at Rome.²⁵ A prelude to the popularity of Stoicism and its predilection for suicide during the Empire was found in Cato's suicide. When Caesar returned victorious in 46 BC, he circulated cartoons of Lucius Scipio, Petreius, and Cato committing suicide. The depiction of Cato was that of a wild beast who had torn himself open.²⁶ The prejudice Caesar hoped for turned against him. Cato's death was the epitome of the wise sage gracefully leaving life. Cato's life and death itself had been consistent with Stoicism.

Cato had displayed the Stoic traits--a principal of aspiration, a character full of moral energy, a life above ordinary pleasures and interests noted for its reason and virtue. "In... imperial Rome, the right to voluntary death was raised to the level of dogma by an opposition that was Stoic in questions of ideology and republican in politics."²⁷ Cato's death ironically provided a grandiose model for the following imperialistic regimes. "Cato did not die in vain and the idea of the Republic was kept alive by his martyrdom. Vastly superior as Caesar was to Cato in intellectual power and breadth of vision, he saw in him a man before whom his genius was rebuked, as was MacBeth's by Banquo; and knowing that Cato was more dangerous dead than living he pursued him, alone of his opponents, with rancour and calumny..."²⁸

Cato was immortalized just as Socrates. Together they had "sanctified" suicide. The suicide of Cato was immortalized by poems and school boys recited them by heart.²⁹ Undoubtedly, Cato's influence was profound. There are several examples of Romans emulating his feat. Under the emperor Caligula, Julius Canus, like Cato a Stoic, gathered his friends together and discussed the immortality of the soul with them. He awaited arrest and subsequent execution; however, he told his friends that he would reappear and relate what had happened at death.³⁰ Under the empire of Hadrian, the very popular Stoic philosopher Euphrates gained permission to drink hemlock as Socrates had done. Hadrian granted permission on the basis that Euphrates had been suffering from age and disease.³¹

In the empire the new Stoicism emphasized the teacher as opposed to the teaching.³² For example, Seneca and Diogenes Laertius give the circumstances under which a wise man may commit suicide. There is no passage from the Old Stoa that gives reference to the suicide of an average person.³³ Laertius gave four reasons why the wise man could take his life--for country, friends, pain, and disease.³⁴

It is difficult to ascertain whether the Stoics influenced the empire or the empire the Stoics. Sumner deduced the latter: "In the empire there was no improvement in the art of war, in literature, or the fine arts. Philosophy consisted in interpreting old texts. Both Greek and Romans exterminated the elite of their societies and pursued a policy which was a selection of the less worthy."³⁵

Stoicism, while it did not provide the comfort of a life hereafter, gave one a feeling of power, since nothing should be feared. The bitterness of the late Republic and the early empire was able to be ameliorated with the Stoic refuge from the "storms of pain" and the delivery from "dotage and suffering."³⁶ Ramsay MacMullen reminds us that not all suicides were admired during the Empire: "It was a last step to be taken by deliberation with one's self and friends, not an act of hasty, animal courage, nor a short road to fame. Yet it brought on the model of Cato. It was the way out chosen by a large number of Romans sanctioned by philosophies before them: Cleanthes, the Stoic, Menedemus the Academic, and, after a fashion, Socrates himself."³⁷

Philosophy during the late Republic was characterized by two aspects. It gave an explanation of life and at the same time was a guide to life.³⁸ Every nation which can be considered civilized has two types of philosophies--an unwritten inspiration from ancestral tradition, racial characteristics, and generally accepted religious beliefs, and the literature of the intellectual aristocrats.³⁹ Both of these enhanced the acceptance of suicide. The tradition of suicide was kept alive by such citations as Livy's accounts. His depiction of the death of Arrius Claudius seems stoical in its treatment of an indifference to death--Itaque spe incisa, priusquam producta dies adesset, Appius mortem sibi conscivit (III.58.6) Livy's account of a certain Oppius who was led off to prison is interesting--Oppius quoque ductus in vincula est, et ante iudicii diem finem ibi vitae fecit (III.58.4.9.). As stated, the Romans seemed to be Stoics before Stoicism. This is seen in their writings, especially of the earlier authors. Plautus gives an example of a possible suicide in the Miles Glorious (1239-42)--si pol me nolet ducere uxorem, genua amplectar atque obsecrabo, alio modo, si non quibo impetrare, consciscram letum: vivere sine illo scio me non posse, Pliny the Elder's philosophy toward death (and suicide) is more presumptuous when he states that man is superior to God in the fact that man has the power to decide when his life should end--Imperfectae vero in homine naturae praecipua solitia, ne Deum quidem posse omnia, namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere si velit, quod homini dedit optimun in tantis vitae poenis (H.N.II.5). Undoubtedly, there were many who took their lives rather than

endure a prolonged illness. One of the most famous of these was Cicero's friend Atticus. Pliny gives examples of men who killed themselves because of kidney stones, diseases of the stomach, and severe headaches.⁴⁰ He states that these are the only types that cause men to take their lives--non ob alios fere morte conscita (HN XXV,7,24). In giving an example of suicide as a remedy Pliny states that a certain Roman swallowed gypsum to ease the pain--exemplum inlustre C. Proculeium, Augusti Caesaris familiaritate subnixum in stomachi dolore gypso poto conscivisse sibi mortem-(HN. XXXVI.59.183) This type of death would have been acceptable to the Stoics if done with deliberation. However, a rash decision would be anathema. In citing rational suicide Pliny cites an example of a plant that grows in Elephantine that causes Ethiopians to have hallucinations and, because of fear, commit suicide.⁴¹ In contrast the younger Pliny is not impressed by some rational suicides. He is distressed by the death of a Corellius Rufus--Decessit Corellius Rufus et quidem sponte, quod dolorem meum exulcerat. Est enim luctuosissimum genus mortis, quae non ex natura nec fatalis videtur(Ep.I.12.1-2). However, Pliny the younger seems to be an admirer of suicide in two references. On seeing a woman's husband suffering painfully from an ulcer of the "private parts", he writes a moving account of the woman on Lake Como who insists that her husband commit suicide--vidit, desperavit hortata est ut moreretur, comesque ipsa mortis dux immo et exemplum et necessitas fuit; nam se cum marito ligavit abiecitque in lacum (Ep.VI.24.4). In writing to Catilius Severus,

the younger Pliny contradicts his basic premise that suicide is to be mourned. He commends Titius Aristo on his suicide--
Nuper me paucosque mecum, quos maxime diligit, advocavit, rogavitque, ut medicos consuleremus de summa valetudinis, ut, si esset insuperabilis, sponte exiret e vita, si tantum difficilis et longa, resisteret maneretque, dandum enim precibus uxoris, dandum filiae lacrimis, dandum etiam nobis amicis, ne spes nostras, si modo non essent inanes, voluntaria morte desereret (Ep. I. 22.8-9).

Although most of the writers of the late Republic and early empire cannot be labeled as true Stoic philosophers, their view on suicide seems obviously Stoic. There are numerous isolated examples of suicide in such writers as Julius Caesar, the Plinys, Livy, and Vergil, but the two writers who treated suicide with some degree of depth were Cicero and Seneca. Cicero, like Seneca, was preoccupied in many of his essays and philosophies with the concept of death. Unless one has a definition of death one cannot truly understand life. Cicero tried to explain the difference between the two. In his Tusculan Disputations he gives some credence that life was nothing more than the ability to breathe--nam et agere animam et efflare dicimus, et animosam et bene animatos et efflare dicimus, et animosam et bene animatos et ex animi sententia; ipse autem animus ab anima dictus est (Tusc.I.ix.19). In considering death, Cicero is more apt to give examples than definitions and more prone to dabble in semantics than to formulate premises (Cf. Tusc.I.9.18).

Cicero implies that death is a positive good, something which should not be feared--qua re si, ut ista non disserantur, liberari mortis metu possumus, id agamus. Efficiet enim ratio ut, quaecumque vera sit earum sententiarum, quas exposui, mors aut malum non sit aut sit bonum potius (Tusc. I.11.23). Cicero speaks of the absurdity of judging life in terms of length. He lays importance on the quality, and seems to be dissolving the notion of a predetermined fate--Quae vero aetas longa est aut quid omnino homini longum?...Sed quia ultra nihil habemus, hoc longum dicimus (Tusc.I.39.94). Cicero explains further that a wretched death is worse than a wretched life because the death is eternal. Thus, he implores man to regard death as a refuge and a home prepared for us--Nam vitae miserae mors finis esse videtur; mors si est misera, finis esse nullus potest (Tusc.I.42.100) and Portum potius paratum nobis et perfugium putemus (Tusc.I.49.119)

The expectation of death, the learning to die, and the dissociation of the soul from the body are all admonitions--secernere autem a corpore animum ecquid aliud est quam mori discere? Qua re hoc commentemur, mihi crede, disiungamusque nos a corporibus, id est, consuescamus mori (Tusc.I.31.75). Hegesias discussed some of the aspects that Cicero held. Death is a refuge from evil, not an object of evil. Apparently, Hegesias was so successful that King Ptolemy forbade him from lecturing on the grounds that too many of his followers were committing suicide--A malis igitur mors abducit, non a bonis, verum si quaerimus. Et quidem hoc a Cyrenaico Hegesia sic

copiose disputatur, ut is a rege Ptolemaeo prohibitus esse dicatur illa in scholis dicere, quod multi iis auditis mortem sibi ipsi consciscerent (Tusc.I.31.75).

Cicero gives some observations about the wise man's death. Political interests and family obligations are to be considered, not the possibility of death. Because the soul is mortal, man should attempt deeds which will become immortal. Itaque non deterret sapientem mors quae propter incertos casus cotidie imminet, propter brevitatem vitae numquam potest longe abesse, quo minus in omne tempus rei publicae suisque consulat, ut posteritatem ipsam, cuius sensum habiturus non sit, ad se putet pertinere. Qua re licet etiam mortalem esse animum iudicantem aeterna moliri, non gloriae cupiditate, quam sensurus non sit, sed virtutis, quam necessario gloria, etiam si tu id non agas, consequatur (Tusc. I.38.91).

The denial of a hereafter is explained in talking about the laws of nature--Natura vero (si) se sic habet, ut, quo modo initium nobis rerum omnium ortus noster adferat, sic exitium mors... (Tusc.I.37.91)

In his essay, De Finibus, Cicero gives two examples of when men take the ultimate way out.

Neque enim, si nonnulli reperiuntur qui aut laqueos aut alia exitia quaerant, aut ille apud Terentium, qui 'decrevit tantisper se minus iniuriae suo, nato facere (ut ait ipse) dum fiat miser,' inimicus ipse sibi putandus est. Sed alii dolore moventur, alii cupiditate; iracundia etiam multi efferuntur et, cum in mala scientes irruunt, tum se optime sibi consulere

orbitrantur (Fin. V.10.28-29)

Ut enim mortis metu omnis quietae vitae status perturbatur, et ut succumbere doloribus eosque humili animo inbecilloque ferre miserum est, ob eamque debilitatem animi multi parentes multi amicos nonnulli patriam, plerique autem se ipsos penitus perdiderunt, sic robustus animus et excelsus omni est liber cura et angore, cum et mortem contemnit, qua qui affecti sunt in eadem causa sunt qua antequam nati, et ad dolores ita paratus est ut meminerit maximos morte finire, parvos multa habere intervalla requietis, mediocrium nos esse dominos, ut si tolerabiles sint feramus, si minus, animo aequo e vita, cum ea non placeat, tamquam e theatro exeamus. (Fin.I.15)

Cicero has more than endorsed the ideal suicide. He gives the conditions. The Roman who does not fear death and is hampered by political or philosophic dilemmas is free to die. In a letter to Habitus Cluentius he idealized the former Romans who were threatened. He exhorts others to follow their examples--Qui si quid animi et virtutis habuisset, ut multi saepe fortes viri in eius modi dolore, mortem sibi ipse conscisset (Clu.169-171). In a letter to Marcus Marius he states his preference for suicide over exile--Discessi ab eo bello, in quo aut in acie deveniendum in victoris manus, aut ad Iubam confugiendum, aut capiendus tamquam exilio locus aut consciscenda mors voluntaria (Fam.VII,3,). The dangers of the state place the participants in the midst of death. They should be ready to commit themselves to death. Periculosae autem rerum actiones partim iis sunt, qui eas suscipiunt, partim rei publicae.

Itemque alii de vita, alii de gloria et benivolentia civium in discrimen vocantur. Promptiores igitur debemus esse ad nostra pericula quam ad communia dimicareque paratius de honore et gloria quam de ceteris commodis (Off.I.34.83).

Once, when in a heated trial, Cicero was threatened by the followers of Clodius. He exalts in the fact that the jury was willing to die for him. Me vero teste producto credo te ex acclamatione Clodi advocatorum audisse quae consurrectio iudicum facta sit, ut me circumsteterint, ut aperte ingula sua pro meo capite P. Clodio ostentarent (Att.I.16).

In De Senectute Cicero catalogues the great Romans who have sacrificed their lives for the good of the state. He extols others to follow their examples and to dispel all fear of death (Sen. 74-75).

In his Disputations, he, through the guise of Socrates, gives two reasons for wanting death: death either brings eternal peace, or it is a transition to a better region (Tusc.I.41.97)

Although the Epicureans did not frown upon suicide, Cicero asserts that the Stoic recommendation of suicide found no favor with the Epicureans. This was a curious assumption, since both Epicurus and Lucretius died by their own hands--
Si tolerabiles sint (dolores) feramus, sin minus, aequo animo e vita, cum ea non placeat, tanquam e theatro exeamus (Fin..15, 49)

It is ironic also that Cicero, extolling the virtues of suicide under certain conditions, did not kill himself. Surely he had the opportunity before exile and before his

decapitation. Perhaps Cicero was thinking of Cato's suicide and remembering the Greek sentiment attached to it which said that killing was an act of cowardice and desertion; or he may have reflected his own sentiment as found in his Tusculan Disputations.⁴² Cicero taught that one departs from life only when he has received a message from God.⁴³ According to Aristotle's judgment Cicero would have been guilty of a crime against the state if he had killed himself in a rage.⁴⁴ Closely aligned with Aristotle's philosophy was that of Plato who tried to make suicide a matter for legislation. Assuming that the state was a natural phenomenon and that the gods were associated with it, crimes against the state were crimes against nature (viz.the gods).⁴⁵ Apuleius seconded Plato's sentiments and taught that the wise man "never throws off his body except by the will of god."⁴⁶ Since Cicero was an opportunist and never was strongly an exponent of any philosophy, he followed the advice of Pythagoras and censured suicide in his De Senectute; In contrast, he warmly accepts it in his Tusculan Disputations. He may have smiled at other schools of Greek and Roman philosophy that condoned it.

Of all the Roman writers and philosophers, no one was so obsessed with death as Seneca. The entrance to death and the proper exit of life were his most dominant themes. Obviously, the dark days of Neronian Rome colored his philosophy. Murder, infidelity, suicide, and self-imposed death characterized post-Augustan Rome according to the historians.

Seneca went beyond his Stoic predecessors in his

treatment of death. He was the Stoic who Romanized the philosophy. His was a new emphasis on suicide as a free act, and it lacked the former requirement of divine inspiration.⁴⁷ His life and his interpretation of Greek philosophers resulted in a unique philosophy which basically advocated a contempt for life. This emphasis is basically a negative concept which the other Stoic philosophers did not have. It lacked the former requirement of a divine inspiration and opted for suicide on a voluntary basis.⁴⁸ Life was basically a burden and to be among the living was no blessing. Man's basic needs preclude a happy existence--Quid enim erat cur in numero viventium me positum esse gauderem? An ut cibus et petitiones percolarem?

(Qnat.1.4)

The inevitability of old age only burdens the psyche of the living. Emotion can play no part since life is fundamentally a curse--ut hoc corpus caesarium ac fluidum, periturumque nisi subinde impletur, farcirem et viverem aegri minister? Detrahe hoc inaestimabile bonum, non est vita tanti ut sudem, ut aestuem (Qnat.1,4). Seneca does not vacillate, as Cicero did, in his view of death and suicide. If anything, he grossly redundant. His letters seem to be written from a set script, a philosophic editorial--Numquid ultra quicquam ulli timendum est quam ut uratur, quam ut pereat? (Ep.XXIV.3). Mihi crede, Lucili, adeo mors timenda non est, ut beneficio eius nihil timendum sit (Ep.XXIV.12) Mors inter illa est quae mala quidem non sunt, tamen habent mali speciem (Ep.LXXXII.15). It is difficult to accept, as Sumner hypothesized, that

the advocacy of suicide was simply a literary pose.⁴⁹ Cicero may have been guilty of this but certainly not Seneca. There is the problem of the dichotomy of Seneca's professional life and that of his philosophic attitude. Seneca tutored a tyrant and yet he preached against tyranny; he ridiculed the group of palace "hangers-on", but he himself was never far from the palace; he was always condemning flattery, but was not adverse to favoring Messalina and Claudius' freedmen.⁵⁰ He tolerated fratricide, regicide, complacency; this was an example, some scholars say, of his insincerity and "rheumatic morality."⁵¹ Possibly and probably this was more a result of the atmosphere in which he lived than his own inclination. There was a distinct misery of existence leading to a boredom and purposelessness of life, a taedium vitae.⁵² Perhaps this explains Seneca's aspiration, moral energy, and a feeling for a life above ordinary pleasures and interests. Reason was something that was lacking in the early Empire. The emphasis on reason, although pessimistic by modern standards, pervaded his philosophies and letters.⁵³

Seneca was suicidal and was never quite far from its brink. Italo Lana verifies this--"In certi casi dal suicidio bisogna assolutamente astenersi, essendo nostro dovere vivere." Lana further explains that Seneca had already contemplated suicide twice in his youth--"così aveva fatto Seneca stesso nell'adolescenza, per riguardo ai suoi famigliari". In another reference he states the two moments of doubt-

Due volte, in due momenti egualmente gravi e dolorosi della sua vita, egli dichiaro di sentirsi come chi e inchiodato sulla croce: quando l'esilio di Corsica gli pareva non dovesse avere piu fine, e quando la voce pubblico lo accusava di complicita nel matricidio di Nerone.⁵⁴

In a passage from his autobiography Seneca tells of his impulse to cut the threads of his life--Saepe impetum cepi abrumpendae vitae(Ep.LXXVIII.1) Seneca had already lived through the suicide of his brother who had died by his own hand in 66 A.D.⁵⁵ Old age was a curse. He dreaded its inception. (Ep.IV.4,XII.6)

It is ironic that some Christians hastened death because of a paradise reserved for them in the hereafter; the Stoics had no such place and yet they committed suicide with no less frequency. Augustine had a true challenge in refuting suicide on these grounds. Seneca's hereafter was a void, neither good nor bad, simply nothing.

Cogita nullis defunctum malis adfici, illa, quae nobis inferos faciunt terribiles, fabulas esse, nullas imminere mortuus tenebras nec carcerem nec flumina igne flagrantia nec Oblivionem amnem nec tribunalia et reos et in illa libertate tam laxa ullos iterum tyrannos: luserunt ista poetae et vanis nos agitavere terribus. Mors dolorum omnium exsolutio est et finis, ultra quem mala nostra non exeunt, quae nos in illam tranquillitatem, in qua antequam nosceremur iacuimus, repoint. Si mortuorum aliquis miseretur, et non natorum misereatur. Mors nec bonum nec malum est... (de Con.adMarc.XIX.4).

If by chance there is a hereafter, why worry about it? It has to be a better place.

Seneca LXXI.16

Magnus animus deo poreat et quicquid lex universi iubet, sine cunctatione patiatur; aut in meliorem emittitur vitam licidius tranquillusque inter divina mansurus aut certe sine ullo futuris incommodo sui naturae remiscebatur et revertetur in totum (Ep. LXXI.16).

Seneca exhorts men to die with courage. It is not death, but the manner in which death is faced that is essential. If their courage to die is lacking, then men become slaves-- Infelix, servis hominibus, servis rebus, servis vitae. Nam vita, si moriendi virtus abest, servitus est (Ep LXXVII.15). Without a doubt Seneca could have exonerated Lucretia for her self-immolation. However, Dido's act would probably have been condemned rather than condoned since it was more of a rash act than a simple matter of course, but the very scent of death makes most people bold and gives them strength and an added impetus-- Dicam enim quid sentiam: puto fortiorem esse eum, qui in ipsa morte est quam qui circa mortem. Mors enim admota etiam inperitis animum dedit non vitandi inevitabilia (Ep. XXX.7), To make his point emphatic Seneca gives remote anecdotes of diverse personalities who have taken the final step. Some of these are interesting and valuable, although almost nothing is recorded about suicides of the hoi polloi.

Seneca is vivid in his depiction of a German who was determined to have, at least, the honor of taking his own life rather than giving the patrons of the gladiatorial bouts that privilege. Seneca applauds this.

Nuper in ludo bestiariorum unus e Germanis, cum ad matutina spectacula pararetur, secessit ad exonerandum corpus nullum aliud illi dabatur sine custode secretum; ibi lignum id quod ad emundanda obscena adhaerente spongia positum est totum in gulam farsit et interclusis faucibus spiritum elisit (Ep. LXX.20).

Seneca further cites the death of a barbarian. He is deeply moved by the death soliloquy even though Seneca himself probably fabricated it.

Secundo naumachiae spectaculo unus e barbaris lanceam quam in adversarios acceperat totam in gulo suo mersit. 'Quare, quare' inquit 'non omne tormentum, omne ludibrium iam dudum effugio? quare ego mortem armatus expecto?' (Ep. LXX.26).

In another example Seneca remarks on a quick deception of a determined gladiator who accepted Seneca's carpe diem concept of suicides.

Cum adveheretur nuper inter custodias quidam ad matutinum spectaculum missus, tamquam somno premante nutaret, caput usque eo demisit donec radiis insereret, et tamdiu se in sedili suo tenuit donec cervicem circumactu rotae frangeret; eodem Vehiculo quo ad poenam ferebatur effugit (Ep. LXX.23).

Seneca, before giving these examples, notes that the gladiator accepts death but the wise man is more courageous since he always is prepared for the inevitable--at illa, quae in propinquo est utique ventura, desiderat lentam animi firmitatem, quae est rarior nec potest nisi a sapiente praestari (Ep. XXX.8).

He explains that the only thing that is to be feared is the anxiety of death's coming--maximum malum iudicabis

mortem, cum in illa nihil sit mali, nisi quod ante ipsam est, timeri (Ep.CIV.10). It is a mistake to fear the last. Weariness is a key word in the approach of death. Since the early empire was characterized by this taedium vitae, Seneca felt in himself and in others the blessings of death (Ep. CXX.18).

So one must live life as if he were about to leave it--tamquam migraturus habita (Ep.LXX.17). The preparations of death should be made early since it takes an entire lifetime to learn how to die--vivere tota vita discendum est et, quod magis fortasse miraberis, tota vita discendum est mori (De Brevi Vita VII.3). Seneca reminds his reader that there is no one appointed time to die. Each man dies his own death. (Ep. LXIX.6).

The great common denominator of life is death. No matter what iniquities life makes, it is democratic in its demanding of death--Mors nos aut consumit aut exiit (Ep.XXIV. 18). Seneca's Stoicism refuses to acknowledge the presence of fortune and he attacks fortuna in arguing the predestination of life (Ep.LXX). In his letter to Marcia on the death of her son, he consoles her with the thoughts of a predestined life and death. Her son was destined to die the moment he was born (De Con. Ad Marc.X.5).

In this letter he summarizes most of the basic tenets that he had advocated before: the absence of a hell, the comfort of death as a solace, and the absence of good and evil in death (Ep. XI.2.) The effect of the letter on Marcia was

unknown but it smacks of fatalism. The dissolving of family ties, or at least placing little importance on them, is more Epicurean than Stoic. Seneca's implication in the letter is that the best type of relationship would be impersonal; in this way death would be more easy to endure for the loved ones of the deceased.

Another observation that Seneca includes in the letter is his definition of the oracle's admonition, "Know Thyself". This to Seneca is simply defined as every man who lives must die. This is the meaning of life.

XI. 2

Decessit filius tuus; id est, decucurrit ad hunc finem, ad quem quae feliciora partu tuo putas properant. Hoc omnis ista quae in fore litigat, spectat in theatris, in templis precatur turba dispari gradu vadit; et quae diligis, veneraris et quae despicias unus exaequabit cinis. Hoc videlicet dicit illa Pythiæ oraculis adscripta vex: Nosce Te. (XI.2)

Predestination and suicide seem at first glance to be incompatible. Seneca has reduced predestination to its simplest conclusion--life means death. Everything that lives must die. Suicide is simply determining the time to go. This is the trait of the wise man, the ability to discern life's termination point--Ille vir magnus est qui mortem sibi non tantum imperavit, sed invenit (Ep. LXX.25). Since the body is ministered to in order to help the person in distress, to cut a vein or to prick the body in order to drain out the agony and pain of life, is no disgrace (Ep. LXX.15-16).

Seneca's own death was as morbid as his philosophy and epistles. Tacitus, in describing the death of Seneca, relates the last hours of Seneca's life in minute detail. He was refused from making changes in his will. After calling together some friends, he apologized that he was not able to reward them for their services but that he had given them his best possession, his philosophies on life and death. He rebukes his followers for their lachrymose sentiments and reminds them of his teachings. It was fitting that Nero should kill his tutor since he had not hesitated in killing his brother and mother. Not showing the restraint of a true Stoic. Paulina grieved at the plight of her husband. To Seneca's pleasure Paulina announced her intention to die with her husband. His words to her are very moving--"Vitae", inquit "delenimenta monstraveram tibi, tu mortis decus maxis: non invidebo exemplo. Sit huius tam fortis exitus constantia penes utrosque par, claritudinis plus in tuo fine." (Tac.XV.63). However, Nero did not want to compound his cruelty and had Paulina rescued (Tac.Ann.LXX).

Thus, Seneca died according to his teachings and it is difficult to label his writing as pure "literary pose." He lived a long life even though he preached on the quality of life and rebuked those who wanted a long life--"Non ut diu vivamus curandum est, sed ut satis; nam ut diu vivas, fate opus est, ut satis, animo, Longa est vita si plena est; impletur autem, cum animus sibi bonum suum reddidit et ad se potestatem sui transtulit (Ep.XCIII.2.). Seneca had been given the order

to die by Nero's volition but it was Seneca who had found the means. Some would argue that Seneca was nothing more than his own self-appointed executioner as Socrates was. This may have been true, but once the verdict was given he wasted no time in its dispatch--Ille vir magnus est qui mortem sibi non tantum imperavit, sed invenit (Ep. LXX.25).

Contemporary with Seneca was another Stoic philosopher, Epictetus. Epictetus differed with Seneca and opted for a return to the older views of Stoicism.⁵⁶ Epictetus was not as indifferent to death as was Seneca; whether one died by suicide or not was immaterial.⁵⁷ However, while Seneca urged men to take their own lives without flinching. Epictetus urged caution, and admitted that it was foolish to contemplate suicide with every adversity in life. Adversities formed a part of each one's life. If no moral ground can be found for quitting it, abandon all thoughts of death. Life to Epictetus was simply a game where moral principles are the rules.⁵⁹ However, if one enters the game and continues to play it out, even when losing, no complaints should be uttered.⁶⁰

Epictetus shared the belief of the early Stoics and wanted to make man free and independent of fortune. In contrast to Seneca's denial of Divine Providence, Epictetus states that everything happens through a head of the universe. Once, he persuaded his followers to abandon ideas of suicide, even though they might have thought themselves sons of God (Arrian Dis. I.IX.12). He did agree with Seneca in the idea of dissolving all family ties when it came to death.⁶¹

The works of Epictetus were very influential in molding the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius. Schneidman's book, Essays In Self-Destruction, states that "philosophy for Marcus Aurelius as well as for the other Stoics of that period, especially Epictetus (AD 60-120) was not only a doctrine but a mental discipline, the goal of which was the attainment of apatheia, the supreme indifference to pain and, of course, to death."⁶² Marcus Aurelius held the same view that man should be the master of his fate. Suicide was not condemned.⁶³ Aurelius was tortured by the ephemeral nature of life; the taedium vitae was to be feared much more than death itself.⁶⁴

So, the three great Stoic philosophers condoned suicide in varying degrees and confirmed the belief that the popularity of suicide during the Empire was based on two important facts--(1) the decay of a religious belief; and (2) the great popularity of a school of philosophy which was favorable to suicide.⁶⁵ It seems contradictory that religion and philosophy could be thought of as two different entities. The first reason, the decay of religion, could mean the absence of a fundamental religious fabric. In short, there were simply too many philosophic strings being played to strike a harmonious tune. For example, Apuleius, agreeing with Plato, argued against suicide on the grounds that the wise man never "throws off his body except by the will of god." Porphyry and Plotinus agreed and strongly condemned suicide.⁶⁶

Some Romans favored the teachings of the Neo-Platonists who condemned suicide on the grounds that suicide springs

from perturbation and consequently should be condemned.⁶⁷

In addition to the Neo-Platonist denunciation, many other Romans were enlisted into the thinking of Pythagoras and Plato who stated that man is a soldier of God and to desert his post was a crime against God. Aristotle argued that a life belongs to the state and to abandon the state is to commit treason. A similar argument was advocated by Plutarch who stated that true courage is shown in endurance. It was against the dignity of man to commit suicide which was in effect an act of cowardice.⁶⁸

To offset these schools of thoughts were two others that strongly endorsed suicide, Epicureanism and Cynicism. The Roman found Epicureanism the least palatable of the philosophies. "Epicureanism presented the sharper challenge to traditional Roman ideas. Its utilitarian ethics undermined the accepted ideal of Roman virtue, and its picture of the gods as remote powerless beings existing in the perfect peace of inactivity in the regions between the worlds was inconsistent with the traditional religion of Rome."⁶⁹ True, Epicureanism never flourished at Rome, but it suffered a remarkable decline after the Republic. The teachings of Epicurus were anathema to the moral and religious revival of Augustus.⁷⁰ The Epicurean was more emphatic in his denial of family ties. Since the institutions of marriage, parenthood, and politics were anathema to the Epicureans, they were personae non gratae during the Empire. However, one Roman author loomed quite influential during the Golden Age and he was the leading pro-

ponent of Epicureanism in Rome. Lucretius revealed that Epicurus was the deliverer of mankind from the fear of death and divine intervention. Religion crushed mankind and caused him to fear death.⁷¹ Since Epicurus and Lucretius died by their own hands, it would seem absurd to contrast the feelings of suicide between Stoicism and Epicureanism, but Epicurus stated that suicide was only permissible in extreme cases. During the era of Nero, Diodorus, and Epicurean, committed suicide, but his fellow scholars denied that suicide was permitted by Epicurus.⁷² This was in contradiction to his teachings since Epicurus argued that man was in control of his own destiny.⁷³ The Stoics and Epicureans differed little in this respect. Lucretius, like Seneca, warned that the fear of death was the only thing to be feared--et saepe usque adeo, mortis formidine, vitae percipit humanos odium lucisque videndae, ut sibi consciscant maerenti pectore letum obliti fontem curarum hunc esse timorem (Luc. De Rerum Natura. III, 79-82).

Although the Cynics and Cyrenaics influenced the empire only minutely as compared to Stoicism and Epicureanism, nevertheless they did have some thoughts concerning suicide. The Cyrenaics disapproved of suicide but one of their followers, Hegesias, has been called the "orator of death."⁷⁴ Diogenes, the Cynic, cried "either reason or the rope"; and his fellow Cynic philosopher, Crates, remarked that "if Eros cannot be checked by hunger or the passing of time, the noose will certainly do the trick."⁷⁵ The Cynics practiced suicide for a

variety of reasons but they did not advocate it with any enthusiasm.⁷⁶ Diogenes once remarked that a "wise man will quit life when oppressed with severe pain, or deprived of any of his senses, or when laboring under desperate diseases."⁷⁷ This is similar to Seneca's and Lucretius' encouragement. Rist explains

if a man cannot live a fully rational life, says the Cynic, then suicide is the best thing for him. But the problem here is obvious: if a man cannot live a rational life, how will he recognize that suicide is his best policy? Would it not seem to follow that suicide could only be reasonably undertaken by the wise man or by the fool who is willing to take wise advice? And since there are very few wise men, there would be very few justified suicides. ⁷⁸

The Cynics, Cyrenaics, and Epicureans flavored the Empire, but Stoicism was the accepted philosophy and with it came a plethora of suicides of which Cato had been the prototype. The records of Tacitus and Suetonius are dotted with suicides and undoubtedly philosophic suicide was a matter of course.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Valerius Maximus quoted in John Crook, Law and Life of Rome (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967) p. 276.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Tacitus quoted in Emile Durkheim, A Study In Suicide (Boston: The Fress Press, 1971) p. 32.
- 4 Glanville Williams, The Sanctity of Life and The Criminal Law (New York: Albert Knopf, 1966) p. 254.
- 5 Crook, Law and Life of Rome, p. 276.
- 6 A. W. Meir, "Roman Suicide" in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. XII, edited by James Hasting (New York: Scribner's and Sons, 1924) p. 32.
- 7 William E. Lecky, History of European Morals (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883), I, p. 219.
- 8 Clarence E. Brand, Roman Military Law (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968) p. 144.
- 9 Lecky, History of European Morals, p. 219.
- 10 Alfred Alvarez, The Savage God: A Study In Suicide (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson Publishers, 1971) pp. 22-23.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Tacitus Ann. XVI.22.
- 13 Vergil Aen. VI. 434-37.
- 14 Augustine de Civ.Dei I.19.
- 15 Williams, The Sanctity of Life, p. 249.

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- ¹ Valerius Maximus quoted in John Crook, Law and Life of Rome (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967) p. 276.
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- ⁹ Lecky, History of European Morals, p. 219.
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- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Tacitus Ann. XVI.22.
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- ¹⁵ Williams, The Sanctity of Life, p. 249.

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- 40 Plinius H.N. XXV.12.24.
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- 47 Rist, Stoic Philosophy, p. 248.
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49 Sumner, Folkways, p. 175.

50 John Ferguson, "Seneca The Man" in Neronians and Flavians, ed. by D. R. Dudley (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972) p. 1-21.

51 Alfred C. Andrews, "Did Seneca Practice The Ethics of His Epistles," The Classical Journal (May 1930) pp. 612-613.

52 Jacques Charon, Suicide (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972) p. 21.

53 Dublin and Bunzel, To Be or Not To Be, p. 189.

54 Italo Lana, Lucio Anneo Seneca (Torino: Loescher, 1955) pp. 51-52.

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56 Rist, Stoic Philosophy, p. 250.

57 Ibid. p. 251.

58 Robert D. Hicks, Stoic and Epicurean (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962) p. 101.

59 Rist, Stoicism, p. 251.

60 Glanville Williams, The Sanctity of Life and The Criminal Law (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1966) p. 253.

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CHAPTER IV

THE SUICIDE OF LUCRETIA

Section I: Livy's Lucretia

One of the most romantic and popular suicides of the early Roman period was that of Lucretia. Her magnanimous death was so spectacular to posterity that it was referred to by no less than five Latin authors: Livy, Cicero, Ovid, Juvenal, St. Augustine.¹ The suicide of Lucretia was a cause celebre to the Renaissance European painters. Many drawings and paintings depict her death scene.² Livy's anecdote relating her suicide as the cause of the downfall of the House of Tarquin had such an impact on the Augustan and post-Augustan age that St. Augustine singled out Lucretia's suicide as his focal point for denouncing suicide. Without a doubt her suicide was the most prominent in Latin literature, overshadowing even Cato's.

Livy found in the suicide of Lucretia an occasion to give a cause for the downfall of the kingship. He distorted historical truth in order to create a didactic lesson in morality. Arnoldi states, "In the Annals [Annales Maximi] the violation of Lucretia causes the downfall of the Tarquins and the end of the kingship. A connoisseur of the sources still

assumed that this tale contained a kernel of truth; the last king was not overthrown by a civilian rising, but was chased away by a foreign power. Every attempt to save Lucretia for history is, therefore, a priori condemned to failure."³

Livy's story of Lucretia's death is woven from one of historical fact, the seige of Ardea, recorded by Fabius Pictor. Livy depends on simple narrative blended with dialogue. The story can be condensed into a few brief lines: Sextus Tarquinius comes to the home of Collatinus. Sextus, knowing that Collatinus is absent, appears at Lucretia's bed and threatens her with scandal if she doesn't submit. She, fearing scandal, has no other recourse. The next day she summons her husband and father. She urges revenge and slays herself. Civil war ensues and the monarchy is overthrown.

In the Lucretia episode Livy has found an occasion to show himself a master story teller, a proponent of the Augustan social movement, and a moralistic interpreter of history. His message is clear--the violation of chastity undoes the rule of the tyrannical family of Tarquin. Lucretia is the heroine par excellence and Sextus Tarquin is the villain, a simple story of good versus bad. However, a careful reading of I. 57-59 shows that Lucretia's husband, Collatinus, unwittingly and boastfully has seeded the infamous occasion. Encamped at the field of Ardea, the soldiers boast of their wives. It is from this point that Livy departs from a strategical and political history into an elaborate interpretation.⁴ Collatinus suggests that the only sure way to settle

the argument is to visit their wives at night unexpectedly. Fortuna leads to Fatum-Forte potantibus his apud Sex. Tarquinium, ubi et Collatinus cenabat Tarquinius, Egeri filius, incidit de uxoribus mentio. (57,6)

After creating a situation forte, Livy then introduces the human qualities of Collatinus: a proud husband, a braggart, and a soldier inebriated. His challenge to visit the wives that night is not only Lucretia's undoing, but also that of Sextus--'Quin, si vigor iuventae inest, conscendimus equos invisimusque praesentes nostrarum ingenia? id cuique spectatissimum sit quod necopinato viri adventu occurrerit oculis.' (57.7)

Livy justifies Collatinus' actions--incaluerant vino (57.8). His behavior contrasts with the behavior of his wife who is knitting with her attendants. The promiscuous behavior (in convivio luxuque (57.9) of the other wives) serves to heighten the character of Lucretia. She is not only the epitome of fidelity but the supreme hostess--adveniens vir Tarquinique excepti benigne (57.10).

Livy is quick to emphasize that Sextus is not only captured by Lucretia's beauty but also by her castitas--cum forma tum spectata castitas incitat (57.10). Forma is essential; without it castitas is less meaningful. The physical interwoven with the abstract renders Lucretia too much for Sextus. Livy omits all details afterwards except the men's return. His subsequent chapter begins Paucis interiectis diebus (58.1).

The description of Sextus amore ardens (58.2) indicates that lust had gripped him from the first. Livy is meticulous with detail: sinistraqe manu (58.2), cum comite uno (58.2), post cenam (58.2), stricto gladio (58.2). The dialogue is actually a monologue. Lucretia is never quoted until after the rape. The action is centered on Sextus: Tace, Lucretia, inquit, Sex. Tarquinius sum; ferrum in manu est; moriere, si emiseris vocem (58.2). Livy takes pain to reemphasize the names of the participants. Nine times the names of Lucretia and Sextus are mentioned.

Livy contrasts the frantic behavior of Sextus with the adamant and obviously Stoical reception of Lucretia. Walsh explains, "In Livy the great Romans embody these artes (pietas, fides, concordia, disciplina, clementia, prudentia, virtus, pudicitia, dignitas, frugalitas, et cet.), and the villains are symbols of their opposites: each class is set forth as a stimulus and a warning."⁵ The contrast is glaring--tum Tarquinius fateri amorem, orare, miscere precibus minas, versare in omnes partes muliebrem animum. Ubi obstinatum videbat et ne mortis quidem metu inclinari, addit ad metum dedecus (58.3-4).

Lucretia's fear is not one of her loss of life, but rather a loss of her castitas. She relents, thus making libido the vintrex not pudicitiam--cum mortua iugulatum servum nudum positurum ait, ut in sordido adulterio necata dicatur (58.4).

The threat by Sextus is as curious as it is implausible. Livy depends on some convincing dialogue and fast-moving narrative to erase some of the inevitable questions of Sextus' crime. Lucretia is not raped by force; she eventually relents. The threat is essential to one of Livy's purposes--Lucretia's rape is caused by an imminent threat to her reputation. She must not be judged guilty of a crime she not only did not commit but violently abhorred. Dicatur implies a certain threat of inevitable rumor which would accompany her death. However, Sextus could have easily raped Lucretia by force. Certainly, the rape of one helpless woman caught unaware by one virile soldier was easy enough. The Sabine women with their brothers and fathers present would have been a much more difficult feat. Sextus easily could have killed both a slave and Lucretia; this would have averted suspicion of himself. Livy had already stated Sextus had one attendant present. What was his function? Nothing is mentioned. It's most likely that a man burning with love as Sextus would have killed Lucretia pro forma. After all he was the king's son and had been denied.

Sextus had at least two days to formulate a plan. A rational Sextus could conveniently arrange a disposal of Collatinus such as David did to Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. However, Livy's depiction of Sextus is one of a voracious animal. Once satiated, he leaves the scene. Nothing is mentioned of Collatinus' household on that night. One can only

wonder if Lucretia spent the night in silence or in bereavement with her household; or did she send the messenger in the middle of the night? Nothing is stated except that Sextus departed contented--profectusque inde Tarquinius ferox expugnato decore muliebri esset...(58.5). Nothing afterwards is stated about the actions of Sextus. The action switches to Lucretia but nothing is said concerning her condition except that she is downcast--Lucretiam sedentem maestam in cubiculo inveniunt (58.7).

After the defamation, Lucretia summons her father and husband and requests them to bring a trusted friend. This is an opportunity to introduce Junius Brutus, the future consul. Lucretia tells them her story. Her story is strangely contradictory. She is both guilty and innocent; her mind is free of guilt but not her body: ceterum corpus est tantum violatum, animus insons (58.7). The conversation gives a hint of Lucretia's ambivalent philosophy. She ipso facto is guilty--quid enim salvi est mulieri amissa pudicitia? (58.7)--but must confess her guiltless spirit.

After her revelation she implores the others present to take an oath of allegiance to destroy the house of Sextus Tarquin. They agree. This is in contradiction with Arnoldi's statement of a foreign power destroying the kingdom. After her challenge, she further recants her innocence--vos inquit videritis quid illi debeatur; ego me etsi peccato absolvo, supplicio non libero; nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet (58.10).

Undoubtedly her dying words were Livy's boldest at propaganda. It's Lucretia's life that would be a prototype for all other chaste women who had the same affliction. He is formulating policy. The Roman women would have a precedent. Walsh further adds that Livy was constructing public policy rather than sedulously praising the action of Lucretia.⁶ Walsh also adds that Lucretia's death serves to illustrate "that high ideals of chastity are essential for the well-being of society. It is the lust of Sextus Tarquinius, directed against the tenacious chastity of Lucretia, which leads to the expulsion of the kings."⁷

Section II: Augustine's Denunciation of Lucretia

Augustine's denunciation of Lucretia (de Civ. Dei I.15) matched Livy's praise. The bitter refutation by Augustine is the focal point of his apology against suicide. To take an adamant stand against suicide per se was difficult enough. However, to further burden the labor by attacking the most prominent of Roman matrons was to attack the foundations of Roman philosophy. In suicide, the schism between pagan Rome and Christian Rome became irrefutable. Augustine had negated a modus vivendi and had set himself as judge and executor of the character of two of the most famous Romans--Cato the Younger and Lucretia.

The latter demanded priority. While one could have ambivalent feelings concerning Cato's expedient suicide, Livy's cogent portrayal of Lucretia had endeared her to posterity and she was an accessible prototype for every Christian woman who had been violated by the infidels who had sacked Rome.⁸ She had been the model of castitas animi and with the rape of the Christian matrons, the similarity of circumstances magnified her fame. Heretofore, the Church had taken no stand regarding suicide and Roman Law considered suicide a crime only when property rights were violated in the case of a slave or a soldier killing themselves.⁹

Augustine's reason for controverting Lucretia's fame were more practical than philosophic. The times dictated a policy of restraint. It was Augustine's reaction to these

that gave him the title of the "chief architect of the Christian church."¹⁰

Augustine was concerned about sects like the Circumcelliones who not only welcomed suicide but tried to expedite it by violating the pagan temples. When this failed, they threw themselves from cliffs "till the rocks below were reddened with their blood"¹¹ The Albigenses had a practice known by the name Endura, which was the acceleration of death by bleeding and fasting.¹² Besides the heresies (to which Augustine had spent nine years of his life), he too had to contend with the famous suicides of St. Pelagia (Ambrose De Virg. III.7), Domnina and her daughters (Euseb. Eccl.Hist. VIII.12), and the wife of the prefect of Rome who was loved by Maxentius (Euseb. Eccl.Hist. VIII). Also, the impact of Stoicism with its endorsement of suicide had been the most influential philosophy of Rome and previously had been nearly reconcilable with Christianity.

Augustine had little with which to attack suicide. There were only four suicides recorded in the Old Testament.¹³ His refutation depended almost exclusively on his own interpretation of the Sixth Commandment. Augustine read "Thou shalt not kill thyself or kill another." So armed with the Sixth Commandment, Judas' suicide non solum Christi, verum etiam suae mortis reus finivit hanc vitam (de Civ.Dei I.17), and Plato's argument that suicide should be forbidden--
nequaquam faciendum, quin etiam prohibendum esse iudicasset

(I.22), he allies himself with the power of reasoning and battles precedent and tradition--sana quippe ratio etiam exemplis anteponenda est (I.22).

Livy's account of Lucretia was powerfully convincing to those noble and virtuous women who lived after Lucretia. It was a convincing story. Cicero was convinced. Cicero calls her a noble and virtuous woman--mulierque pudens et nobilis (Rep.II.20.5). Augustine raised some inevitable questions about her character and motives. Augustine hints she may have been guilty of lust and used the suicide as a show of guilt--an forte ideo ibi non est quia non insontem, sed male sibi consciam, se peremit? (I.19). He astutely queries that only she herself knew what was in her mind--Quid si enim (quod ipsa tantummodo nosse poterat) quamvis iuveni violenter inruenti etiam sua libidine inlecta consentit idque in se puniens ita doluit ut morte putaret expiandum? (I.19).

Augustine demonstrates that the fear of shame, not the disappointment over her loss of chastity, forced her to die: Quod ergo se ipsam, quoniam adulterum pertulit etiam non adultera occidit, non est pudicitiae caritas, sed pudoris infirmitas (I.19). Augustine calls attention to the fact that suicide was inevitable since Lucretia was too greedy for praise, and naturally, her self-image was forever destroyed--laudis avida nimium (I.19). In death she would be praised forever by future Romans. In a sense she was using suicide

as a means of escape--a selfish one: verita est ne putaretur, quod violenter est passa cum viveret, libenter passa si viveret. Unde ad oculos hominum testem mentis suae illam poenam adhibendam putavit, quibus conscientiam demonstrare non potuit. Sociam quippe facti se credi erubuit si, quod alius in ea fecerat turpiter, ferret ipsa patienter (I.19).

Augustine's most cogent reasoning as to her guilt lies in the fact that if Lucretia were innocent of wrong doing she was indeed innocent. By killing herself, she killed an innocent woman. Augustine set up this dilemma in such a way that one must decide which was worse--the self-murder or the adultery: Si extenuatur homicidium, adulterium confirmetur; si purgatur adulterium, homicidium cumuletur; nec omnino invenitur exitus, ubi dicitur; "Si adulterata, cur laudata, si pudica, cur occisa?" (I.19).

Augustine calls on the reader to pronounce sentence. He appeals to the laws of Rome and to the fact that no one who was judged innocent should be executed, nor should anyone be executed before trial. Lucretia had performed both. She had put herself above the law. Why so? Again he hints vanity or guilt.

Vos appello, leges iudicesque Romani. Nempe post perpetrata facinora nec quemquam scelestum indemnatum impune voluisti occidi. Si ergo ad vestrum iudicium quisquam deferret hoc crimen vobisque probaretur non solum indemnata, interfecta esse mulierem, nonne eum, qui id fecisset, severitate congrua plecteretur? (I.19).

Augustine points out that Lucretia should have saved herself. If innocent, it was possible to remain in favor

with her gods. The implication is clear. She was prepos-
 sessed with what other mortals thought of her. Since she
 killed herself, she is placed in the underworld with those
 "who guiltless laid fatal hands upon themselves and, loathing
 the light of day, dispatched their souls." ¹⁴ No hope is
 given for Lucretia--"Fate bars the way, the dismal swamp's
 unfriendly pools imprison them."¹⁵ Augustine praised the
 Christian women who bore the disgrace and failed to add one
 crime to another--nec in se ultae sunt crimen alienum, ne
 aliorum sceleribus adderent sua, si, quoniam hostes in eis
 concupiscendo stupra commiserant, illae in se ipsis homicidia
 erubescendo committerent (I.19).

There are two weaknesses to Augustine's argument.
 There seems to have been no nefas in suicide to the ancient
 Romans. Suicide was exonerated by most of the philosophers.
 Augustine surely knew this. Certainly he had read that
 Cicero favored suicide over exile in his letter to Marcus
 Marius--aut capiendus tamquam exilio locus aut consciscenda
 mors voluntaria (Cic. Ad Fam.VII.3.3), and that he praised
 the suicides of the past generations--qui si quid animi et
 virtutis habuissent, ut multi saepe fortes viri in eius modi
 dolore, mortem sibi ipse conscisset (Pro Clu. 169-171).
 Pliny the Elder had explained man's advantage over the gods;
 he was able to determine the time of his death--imperfectae
 vero in homine naturae praecipua solatia, ne Deum quidem
 posse omnia, namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere si

velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitae poenis
 (Hist. Nat. II.5). The feelings of Seneca were emphatic--
vivere noluit, qui mori non vult (Ep. XXX.10); maximum
malum iudicabis morte, cum in illa nihil sit mali, nisi quod
ante ipsam est, timeri (Ep. 10); interest nihil, illa ad nos
veniat an ad illam nos (Ep. LXIX.6); ille vir magnus est,
qui mortem sibi non tantum imperavit, sed invenit (Ep. LXX.25).
 Pliny the Younger extolled suicide--vitae mortisque consilium
vel suscipere vel ponere ingentis est animi (Ep. I.22).

Augustine had forced Lucretia to be judged as a Christian, but she had committed no crime against the gods. A fact Livy had no need to mention.

However, earlier in his preface to his refutation to suicide, he had already asked pardon for certain women--ac
per hoc et quae se occiderunt he quicquam huius modi pateren-
tur, quis humanus affectus eis nolit ignosci? (I.17). The
 plight of Lucretia was similar to that of the virgins. August-
 tine vacillates--he treats Lucretia as a pagan in a sense,
 but judges her as a Christian.

Augustine's feelings toward the Sextus-Lucretia episode may have been filtered through his own youth. August-
 tine's father was a pagan who knew nothing of fidelity. In
 his Confessions Augustine makes constant reference to his
 mother's virtue and fidelity. She warned him about fornica-
 tion and adultery, but Augustine was too influenced by his
 father's decorum.¹⁶ He also was encouraged by his father

sho was ever anxious for grandchildren.¹⁷ Augustine obliged and left an illegitimate son.¹⁸ The lust of husband and son was a sense of shame to the mother. Augustine throughout his early youth (before his conversion) kept a mistress and shortly after his conversion could not part with his carnal ways and a concubine was a constant companion.¹⁹ Since marriage was convenient, he dismissed his mistress; however, a delay of two years caused Augustine to acquire another concubine.²⁰ "Chastity seemed impossible for him, and a plan contrived with some of his friends, including Romanianus, his fellow-citizen and patron, Alypius, another citizen of Thagaste and a former pupil, and Nebridius, his friend and admirer from Carthage, for a philosophical community run on collegiate lines, came to nothing, because of the disagreement among those concerned as to whether wives could be tolerated."²¹

So Augustine who was not only a man of lust, but also a self-proclaimed thief, was not the image of virtue.²² When denouncing Lucretia, he undoubtedly thought of his mother, who had elected to endure the infidelity of her husband. His love of his mother was enhanced later when his own lusts subsided. Lucretia took the easy route, Monica the difficult one. The lust of Sextus may well have been consistent with that of Patricius, his father. He was a violent person--
erat vero ille praeterea sicut benivolentia praecipuus, ita ira fervidus.²³

Augustine's early youth was influential on his later dislike for suicide. His predilection for Neo-Platonism, with its emphasis on the premise that "things remain good even when corrupted, for unless they were good, they could not be corrupted", further impeded his tolerance for suicide.²⁴ Her suicide was doomed from the beginning.

The historical Lucretia will probably never be known. Livy has distorted her biography for his own ends. Augustine has distorted a distortion, using a contrived character to be his philosophic scapegoat. However, Livy's Lucretia glamorized once more the heroic act that was so popular to the late Republic and early Empire. Pagan Rome looked to the self-sacrifice of Lucretia, Decius Mus, Cata, et alii with pride and thought of them as models. Augustine was assured that he could not allude to the pagan Roman authors as opponents of suicide. Suicide was distinctly Roman, almost a mania. The Bible was non-committal. The Roman writers were favorable beyond a doubt. Augustine had to refute a modus vivendi. The breach between paganism and Christianity was most evident in this view of suicide.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Cic. Rep. 2,25, 46; Fin. 2,20,66; Liv. I, 58; Ovid F. 2,685; Juv. 10,293; Mart. 11,104,21.

² Andras Alföldi, Early Rome and The Latins (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971) p. 153.

³ Alexander H. McDonald, "The Style of Livy," The Journal of Roman Studies, XLVII (1957), 163.

⁴ Patrick G. Walsh, "Livy's Preface and The Distortion of History," The American Journal of Philology, LXXVI (October 1955), 370.

⁵ Patrick G. Walsh, Livy: His Historical Aims and Methods (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961) p. 13.

⁶ Ibid. 76

⁷ In referring to the Christian women who died voluntarily, Augustine states ac per hoc et quae se occiderunt ne quicquam huius modi paterentur, quis humanus affectus eis nolit ignosci? (1.17)

⁸ Williams, The Sanctity of Life, p. 21 and Choron, Suicide, p. 257.

⁹ Choron, Suicide, p. 255.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Verg. Aen. VI. 434-36.

¹⁴ Ibid. 438.

¹⁵ Gerald Bonner, St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 53.

16
Ibid. 53

17
Ibid. 93

18
Ibid. p. 79.

19
St. Augustine Confessions VI.6.9-10.

20
Ibid. VI.14.24.

21
Bonner, St. Augustine, p. 53.

22
Augustine Confessions IX.9.9.

23
Bonner, St. Augustine, p. 82.

24
Ibid.

CHAPTER V

Suicide in the Aeneid

Only two suicides occur in the Aeneid.¹ However, these suicides, the death of Dido and Amata, are essential for the poem's dramatic development. The entirety of Book IV deals with the rise and fall of Dido's personality. Also in the Aeneid Vergil in describing the stratum of the underworld assigned for suicides gives it a rare pejorative label when he labels the suicides as the "lost souls". This is one of the few commentaries on suicide found in Latin Literature. Therefore, parts of the Aeneid with its vivid depiction of human strength and frailty is useful in studying ancient suicide.

Book IV easily overshadows the other eleven books in personal appeal and universal popularity.² The character of Dido is so minutely dissected by dialogue and imagery that Vergil had made her a rival to Aeneas. At first glance it seems that Vergil's Dido and Livy's Lucretia have nothing in common save their suicides. Lucretia was a Roman; Dido a Carthaginian. The latter was a widowed queen; the former a happily married housewife. Little commentary is devoted to Lucretia by Livy. Her story involves only a few sparse lines (80). An entire book is devoted to Dido and she is ubiquitous in the first six books.. Her presence is felt in all of the

first six books and Book IV is all her own. Little comparison seems justified. However, Dido, even though a Carthaginian, is a universal figure not strictly a Carthaginian. Vergil like Livy has distorted a legendary event. According to legend, Dido indeed committed suicide but there was no Aeneas involved. Her suicide was the result of pressure from neighboring suitors.³ Vergil has created an antithesis of his hero and one has some difficulty keeping in mind that Dido is African not Roman (Trojan). At least there is no language barrier between the two, a fact which, in itself, is necessary to the foundation of the epic.

The lives of Lucretia and Dido are ruined because of the intervention of one man. It is not the Tarquin family that destroys Lucretia, it is Sextus alone. The Trojans are not Dido's foe, it is Aeneas. Aeneas' followers, like Sextus' family, will pay for the suicide of a woman. Both women have broken their oath of fidelity to their husbands. Collatinus, while living, had almost as little control over the situation as did the murdered Sychaeus. Neither woman had control over her dignitas. It was Venus, through Cupid, who broke the constitution of Dido; however, it is the fact that neither can reconcile her self-image that destroys both. In retrospect Livy would have hindered his continuity to give Lucretia's plight more development. He needed a concise resume; anything more and his Book I would have been the "Lucretia story". Critics have condemned Vergil for overemphasizing the Dido episode, and with some justification.⁴ Even if this be true,

he has magnified and analyzed a suicidal mind. Dido and Lucretia are very similar, although Vergil's character is so vivid and her actions so plausible that she indeed is the suicide par excellence.

Dido is first mentioned in I.340: Dido Tyria Regit: An. I. 496. She first appears as regina. This was a pejorative word to the Roman of 30 B.C.⁵ It was more nocuous than rex. Horace (Car. I.37) never uses Cleopatra's name but refers to her simply as regina and later fatale monstrum. Perhaps Vergil is alluding to "that" queen, but he is introducing a figure of royalty, a woman of authority, a person of purpose. Dido's downfall is due in part to her being a queen. In the same line she is characterized by forma pulcherrima (496). Regina and forma are Dido's undoing whereas castitas and forma were Lucretia's. Aeneas is enamoured with Dido's combination of regina and forma just as Sextus Tarquinius was with Lucretia's castitas and forma. The reciprocity of Dido saves Aeneas from being considered a lecher. Sextus is condemned forever because of his rapacious behavior.

The simile between Dido and Diana in the next few lines (498-503) is a curious one. Dido is compared to a goddess who is a huntress and a virgin, a discrepancy between appearance and reality.⁶ Furthermore, she "was a creature of deceptive appearance, a reflection of light rather than a source of light".⁷ To Dido, Aeneas was ferus (IV. 465-473); she thought herself to be hunted by a wild beast who drove her mad.⁸

In the first scene Vergil has called to the readers' attention the fact that Dido is a young, beautiful queen who is actively searching. She is a woman of action not reflection and Prescott asserts she has no dominant characteristic.⁹

Dido's disposition is further described (503-508):

talis erat Dido, talem se laeta
ferebat per medios instans operi
regnisque futuris. tum foribus
divae, media testudine templi,
saepa armis solioque alte sub-
nixa resedit. iura dabat leges-
que laborem partibus aequabat
iustis aut sorte trahebat.

Dido is preoccupied with being queen. She is happy and indefatigable. Vergil has lucidly created a woman who was the epitome of contentment. By creating a happy image, the reader is acutely aware of the disintegration of Dido's character. Also, Vergil has called attention to the fact that Carthage is highly civilized (507-508). Dido is a rational and sophisticated queen in Book I. In Book IV she has disintegrated into irrationality and superstition.

Another foreshadowing of the magnetism between Aeneas and Dido is found in I.628--me quoque per multos similis fortuna labores iactatam hac demum voluit consistere terra. non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.

Dido and Aeneas are in the same dilemma. They have the onerous task of building a city. However, Dido does not realize that her city will become a Troy destroyed by a foreign invader. Vergil has taken pains to purge Dido of all foreign attributes.¹⁰ Already Dido has become completely human and

thoroughly feminine. Even as early as Book I she seems too susceptible to alliance. Anderson explains that "she is a childless young widow, who barely knew what marriage was like before the murder of her husband." This explains why she is vulnerable to handsome Aeneas and the boyish appeal of Ascanius.

Venus implores Cupid to incite the mind of Dido.

Dido must be set aflame: quocirca capere ante dolis et cingere flamma reginam meditor, ne quo se numine mutet, sed magno Aeneae mecum teneatur amore (IV.673-5). In these three lines Dido will be ignited with the three facets of fire: passion, rage, and death.¹² Thus Dido's reason, discipline, and order will become blind and undisciplined passion.¹³

The banquet scene (I.700-755) gives us an ominous setting for the ensuing tragedy. Moreover, it gives us a clue to the type of character Dido originally was. Undoubtedly she was somewhat Epicurean in her philosophy. Dido is pleasure-loving and self-expressive.¹⁴ In her court, she is preoccupied with origin and scientific explanation (e.g. whence came the human race, wanderings of the stars and sun, etc.). It is interesting to note that Dido does not use the term fatum and speaks of casus, fortuna, non licuit, and necesse est. Even if one cannot label Dido a true Epicurean, it is safe to state that her philosophy of self-expression must collide with Aeneas' Stoic belief of divine subordination.¹⁵ Dido is doomed in Book I and the epithets inscia (718) and infelix (749) are a prelude to Book IV and her subsequent suicide. Dido's pliable personality is molded by divine hands.

Book IV is without a doubt Vergil's masterpiece.¹⁶ It seems to be ostensibly a non sequitur in relationship to the work as a whole. Dido becomes a much more human and sympathetic character than the protagonist of the work. An entire book is devoted to a character who plays little in Vergil's evolution of the Roman race. Vergil has succumbed to the desire to be a master story teller. "It was Vergil who was the first to bring Dido and Aeneas together in a love affair."¹⁷ Some scholars hint that Dido's volatile personality was consistent with others (e.g., Cleopatra) from her Libyan temperate zone.¹⁸ Thus some excuse Dido because she is distinctly Libyan. However, Ogle explains that a more plausible answer is that "the one important reference to Dido which we have from the historical records of Vergil's time shows that tradition had made her a woman after a Roman's heart--a Lucretia rather than a Cleopatra."¹⁹ Dido's character is universal and timeless. She is involved in an insoluble situation of love. She is a queen whose desires are too common. Her suicide is both sociological and personal.²⁰

In the first fourteen lines of Book IV Vergil has shown the four ingredients of Dido's vulnerability: virtus, honor, vultus, and verba. Dido is a queen and so far has been an ideal one. She and Aeneas have something in common but Aeneas is quam forti pectore et armis (IV.11). He is a true man. Quinn puts it better, "The rhythm of line 3 (multa viri vultus animo, multusque recursat) emphasizes the repetition multa-multus and imposes a slight hesitation between viri and

virtus--as though Dido in her thoughts looks for another word to describe Aeneas but cannot find one: this is a real "man."²¹ Since only a vir possesses virtus, Aeneas has a trait which Dido does not. His honos is the honos of his clan. Servius says it is the honos Dardani a numinibus, aut veneris. Dido restates this in line 12--credo, genus esse deorum. There is a special aura affiliated with this man. He is no ordinary Iarbas. Servius is explicit that quem sese ore ferens (11) refers to the handsome quality of Aeneas.²² She is stunned by his good looks. Any of these two would normally be enough for an amorous beginning, but Aeneas is also a great orator--quae bella exhausta canebat (14). She had already known the story of the Trojan War. It was in the telling that she was struck. Divine intervention is actually nothing more than an artistic escape for Vergil. "Without his divine machinery Vergil would have been obliged to tell us how Dido fell in love with Aeneas. To do otherwise would have slowed up the narrative. It may have suggested that Vergil made up the story as he went along."²³ Vergil had handled love realistically; no divine help was needed to distract from the psychology of Dido.

In lines 15-16 Vergil gives the key lines of the drama--si mihi non animo fixum immotumque sederet ne cui me vinclo vellem sociare iugali. Dido has sworn eternal chastity to Sychaeus. This was rare in ancient times (e.g. the marriage of Jocasta to Oedipus).²⁴ Of course, Vergil's story is a contradiction of legend. As stated before, the disgrace to Sychaeus is the pivotal point of Vergil's dilemma; her chastity

was unshaken.

Pease conjectures that Dido's unwillingness to marry may have been a result of Vergil's own distaste for a second marriage. He states that this was "not unique among Roman writers and increasingly vehement in early Christianity."²⁵ Thus, in the first sixteen lines a love triangle is formed.²⁶ Dido must decide between Aeneas and Sychaeus. She is torn between conviction (to keep her vow to Sychaeus) or her inclination (to marry Aeneas).

At the beginning of Book IV (1-16) one sees the foreshadowing of an inner conflict. Dido's predicament already has the ingredients of a suicidal complex. Her address to Anna-fatebor enim (20)-begins her "cry for help." This in itself is a clue to suicide.²⁷ She also begins to show the feelings of anxiety and guilt which are patterns of suicide.²⁸ In line 19-huic uni forsan potui succumbere culpae-she mentally has confessed the new sin which has taken possession of her life.²⁹

Her cry for help becomes evident in her invocation to the gods (25-28). She would rather die than resolve her oath of chastity. It is Anna who compounds her problem and reinforces her conflict. Anna is the epitome of pragmatism. She seems oblivious to the inner struggle of Dido. She naively assumes that Aeneas is Dido's for the asking, an assumption which hastens Dido death--his dictis incensum animum inflammavit amore (1.54). Dido now becomes blind to reality. She consults the auspices but is blind to their message--heu vaturn ignarae

mentes!(66). One can only speculate as to the time element and her transformation is depicted as sudden not gradual. Not only has Dido become infelix but is furens. Her rational emotion has given way to a morbid and vicious behavior.³⁰ The beginning of the affair neatly consumes one-third of the book. Assuming the role of a hunter in I, Dido is in IV the hunted. She is reduced to an animal. The passion of Dido in the first part of IV (2,54,66) will become rage in the second part (300-1,362-4). This consequently will be consummated in the funeral pyre of the third part (661-2).

Dido is labeled infelix in eight places.³¹ However, the coup de grace is the cave scene. Here Dido reinforces her fantasy. Their relationship to Dido, has the appearance of legal wedlock--coniugium vocat (172). The total commitment of Dido is little more than an escapade for Aeneas. She now becomes deceived by Aeneas while she simultaneously deceives Sychaeus. It is at this point that Vergil shoves Dido across the point of no return. She has a "passionate and fatal pre-occupation with a single goal or object, accompanied by a consequent blindness to other important considerations."³² Dido neglects all else and is queen in name only.

Quis fallere possit amantem?(296)-Vergil once again calls attention to deception and trickery. Dido, furthermore, shows two other characteristics of a suicide.³³ She has become a dependent person; no longer can she endure being without Aeneas. In addition she begins to show aggression and hostility. Her aggression is coercive but will later be both retali-

iatory and expiatory. The pattern of her behavior now shifts to an inward feeling of frustration. In line 308 another cry for help is made when she labels herself moritura Dido. She wants to live and die at the same time, a common fixation of suicides. In 323 she describes herself as moribundam.

Dido is lost after Anna's failure to dissuade Aeneas. In 451 she introduces the inevitable mortem orat. After only a little more than half the book, she is ready to die and displays all the traits of a suicidal: ambivalence (life and death both), crisis (her love of Aeneas and her violation of fidelity to Sychaeus), feelings of futility (she is a queen who has no power over Aeneas), exhaustion (routine tasks are hard to cope with), communication (she has told of her wish to die on more than one occasion), unresolved feelings (depression, guilt, anxiety, hostility), disruption in life (chaos and disorganization), mood swings, cognitive constriction (die or live a life of Hell), interest loss, and physical distress with psychosomatic symptoms (she is irrational).³⁴

In Dido's case four factors necessitate suicide: loyalty to Sychaeus, mortification ('pro Iuppiter! ibit hic, ait, 'et nostris inluserit advena regnis?'-IV.590-1), the loss of her name (te propter eundem extinctus pudor et, que sola sidera adibam, fama prior-321-3) and her fear of being abandoned (te propter Libycae gentes Nomadumque tyranni odere, infensi Tyrii, 320-321).³⁵ Poschl states that "Death is the only answer as nothing else can save her own ego, her self-respect, and her glory. Death is not only escape from the

exterior emergency and a deliverance from unbearable pain, but also a self-imposed atonement (IV.577) and the restoration of the great image which she wants to leave to posterity. "36

Pretzel states in his book, Understanding and Counseling The Suicidal Person, that there are four types of suicides which society endorses: suicide for a good cause (martyrdom, military heroism) suicide of a hopeless situation (terminal illness), suicide not of desperation but of a lack of pleasure in life (Hemingway's-if I can't exist on my own terms then existence is impossible), and the love compact (expression of love). Dido's suicide is the Hemingway type. She cannot exist unless by her own terms.³⁷ She must reduce her conflict, satiate her ideal ego, restore her important relationship with Sychaeus, and must consummate her wish.³⁸

A curious hypothesis was stated by Harvey who believed Dido was not feminine enough: "Had she been so she would never have let Aeneas escape. She had to commit suicide as an admission of her failure in life. Where the woman wins in such a contest, Harvey maintains, marriage follows; where the man wins (escape) there is tragedy."³⁹

Dido's suicide must be elaborate. She must depart a queen, not in the manner of Amata's plebian death. For strategic reasons she must assume that she is preparing a religious ceremony to cast out Aeneas' curse. The suicide itself cannot be labeled Stoic or Epicurean.⁴⁰ Vergil was too much a poet to lock his tragic queen in a philosophic catalogue.⁴¹ Hornsby reveals that she became an emasculating witch who put the effigy

of Aeneas on the pyre and put his own sword in her side.⁴²

To the Romans the favorite type of death was the dagger. Panthea, Deianira, Antigone, Laodamia, Lucretia were literary predecessors. Evadne, Semiramis et aliae had died on the pyre.⁴³ Pease hints that Vergil may have been influenced as to his choice of death because of the suicide of a close friend.⁴⁴ Hanging would be acceptable to Amata's treatment but it was essential for Dido to die a Roman death.

Prescott states that the women in the Aeneid have one certain common characteristic: excitability which in turn becomes frenzy and passion. He further states that this passion destroys their equilibrium. This frenzy is contagious and soon ignites other women.⁴⁵ While Dido's character was adroitly dramatized, Vergil is economic in the treatment of Amata (VII, 341-405, XII, 554-613).

Little description is given Amata, even though her role is as important as Dido's. She, like Dido, is an obstacle to Aeneas' manifest destiny. She is inflamed at the arrival of the Trojans--quam super adventu Teucrum Turnique hymenaeis feminaea ardentem curaque iraque coquebant (XII.344-5), Allecto performs the duty that was delegated to Cupid in Book IV. Allecto is the catalyst of Amata's fall. The ingredients of tragedy (e.g. conflict, frustration) were already present and flammable. The words of deception and passion are strongly similar--fallitque furentem (350), animus toto percepit pectore flammam (356).

Allecto's purpose is to drive Amata from a rational discontent to an insane rebel. Amata wreaks havoc in the city

and causes other women to give up their homes and follow her. Unlike Dido who was caught in a philosophical dilemma (Syphaeus vs. Aeneas), Amata becomes pathological. She is completely aflame primos furores (VII,406) when she takes to the hills.

There is no mention of Amata until four books later. One can only speculate as to her predicament. Vergil conveniently removes her from the mainstream of action. When she reappears in Book VII nothing is said concerning her temperament or her return from self-exile. However, in her final words she appears to be curiously sane. She wails that she is the cause of Turnus' death. This in itself is a fallacy since Turnus is still alive. One recalls the deception theme of IV and its crisis of appearance versus reality. Appearance dooms Amata. She, like Dido, is infelix (598), demens (XII.601), and moritura (XII.602). Amata's suicide is by hanging--nodum informis leti trabe nectit ab alta (XII.603). Servius considered this a heinous method of suicide. He justifies this by Vergil's use of informis (Serv. Ad Aen.XII.603).

Augustus' praise for the hanging of Julia's nurse is strange if Servius' implication is correct.⁴⁶ Vergil perhaps wanted to emphasize the futility and expediency of her death. In hanging there can be no intermediate step. Dido's life oozed away; Amata's was swept away. Amata's suicide was a type that society could not condone.⁴⁷ It was useless and selfish but expedient to Vergil's narrative. Dido and Amata were both queens. They are tragic. Quinn states that this type of tragedy does not occur in common people because they are held intact

by one common trait-common sense.⁴⁸ Amata's blame for the apparent death of Turnus is a non sequitur unless Vergil implies she should have endorsed Aeneas' marriage to Lavinia and should have favored the coming of the Trojans. Anderson says she already had "destructive intentions" even before the infliction of Allecto's venom.⁴⁹ Translated into modern terms she was a suicidal. However, this is unknown to the reader. Pease places another stigma on Amata's and Dido's death. Their deaths were both selfish. Their loss brings grief to their family.⁵⁰ Dido's motives are more easily understood and her passion is not quite as blind as Amata's. Amata's and Dido's suicide would have been condemned by the Stoics. There was simply no reflection, but a compulsiveness.

Without the reference in Book VI to the suicides inhabiting the underworld, Vergil's antipathy for suicide may have been held in question. He holds suicides in contempt:

proxima deinde tenent maesti loca,
 qui sibi letum insontes peperere
 manu, lucemque perosi proiecere
 animas. quam vellent aethere in
 alto nunc et pauperiem et duros
 perferre labores! (VI.434-437)

Vergil does not share Horace's view on suicide--nobile letum (Carm, 1.12), although he shys away from naming any of the residents. Almost assuredly he would have omitted Lucretia and Cato. The use of insontes is curious. Vergil calls them innocent. Perchance he means innocent of wrong doing until the act itself. This was very convenient for Augustine's later dogma of suicide. They are not judged in the underworld by

Minos because they have passed judgement on themselves. Therefore they cannot enter Elysium but they are not condemned to Tartarus. Omission of these four lines may have spared much controversy, since Vergil (VI.450) introduces Dido once more. She is not placed among the suicides but rather among those who died for love and are still tortured: curae non ipsa in morte relinquunt (444). Quinn questions the entire catalogue stating that the following are out of place: Sychaeus, who was murdered unjustly, is with Dido in the broken hearts' club; Phaedra who committed suicide is with the broken hearts, likewise Laodamia. There are several other misfits. Quinn infers that the His locis (444) refers to the lugentes campi in general. No strata should be made.⁵¹

One might infer from 443-476 that Vergil scorned suicide, but that the causes justified the act (e.g. Dido, Phaedra). Hence, one hates the suicide but loves the suicidal person. Suicide was in Vergil's hand a literary tool--a realistic alternative to the deus ex machina. By it he removes Amata and Dido from the epic without adding the burden of a homicide by an outsider. Dido and Amata must die if the epic story is to be manifest. When the queens removed themselves Aeneas was no longer held in check.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Viktor Poschl, The Art of Vergil, trans. by Gerda Seligson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962) p. 16. Poschl states that Mezentius is actually a suicide since his death is a suicide of love for his slain son Lausus.

² This statement is verified by Ovid Trist. 2.533 and Macrobius Sat. V.17.5-6.

³ Macrobius Sat. VI.2.31 states that everyone knew Vergil's tale was false even though everyone preferred it. He further adds that it came from Naevius' first book of the Punic War. The legend of Dido's chastity is also found in some African writers: Tertulian Ad Nat. I.18; II, 9; Hieronymus Adv. Iovinian.; Augustine Confessions I, 13,22; Dionysius Halicarnassensis Ant. Rom. I. 74.187.

⁴ William S. Anderson, The Art of The Aeneid (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Incorporated, 1969), p. 13. Anderson states that many readers have left Aeneas a priggish character at Carthage.

⁵ Janice M. Benario, "Dido and Cleopatra", Vergilius, XVI (1970), 2.

⁶ Roger Hornsby, "The Vergilian Simile As A Means of Judgement," The Classical Journal, LX (May 1965), 339.

⁷ Ibid. 343.

⁸ Ibid. 342.

⁹ Henry W. Prescott, The Development of Vergil's Art (New York: Russell and Russell Publishers, 1963), p. 291.

¹⁰ Edward Phinney, Jr. "Dido and Sychaeus", The Classical Journal, LX (May 1965), 356. Dido is aspiring to the Roman ideal of univera (Propertius IV. 11.36, Livy X. 23., Valerius Maximus II.1.3).

¹¹ Bernard Fenick, "Parallelism of Theme and Imagery in Aeneid II and IV," The American Journal of Philology, LXXX (January 1959), 13-14.

12
Ibid. 9

13
Arthur S. Pease, "Some Aspects of The Character of Dido," The Classical Journal, XXII (January 1927), 247.

14
Arthur S. Pease, ed., Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos: Liber Quartus (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935) p. 8.

15
Ibid. 36. Neither Dido nor Anna is consistently Epicurean, but each is so at times.

16
Kenneth Quinn, Virgil's Aeneid: A Critical Description (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968), p. 135. Cf. Ovid Tristia II. 535--legitur pars ulla magis de corpore toto.

17
Thelma B. DeGraff, "Dido-Tota Vergiliana", The Classical World, XLIII (February 6, 1950), 147-48. Dionysius of Halicarnassus Ant. Rom. I.74.187 states that Sicilian Timaeus was the first to connect Rome and Carthage by stating that they were founded in the same year 814 B.C. More interesting says Glover, Virgil, p. 173 is the fact that Anna, according to Varro, fell in love with Aeneas.

18
Pease, Virgil, p. 35, states that The Bible of Amiens infers this.

19
Marybury B. Ogle, "Vergil's Conception of Dido's Character", The Classical Journal (Feb. 1925), 264.

20
James Hillman: Suicide and The Soul (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), p. 26. Suicide is a sociological problem that tells us something about the condition of a society. Andrew Henry and James Short, Jr., Suicide and Homicide (London: Collier and MacMillan Ltd., 1954), p. 72, tell us that suicide rates happen in high status categories more often because of the fewer external restraints placed on them. Sumner, Folkways, p. 104 states that the best always commit suicide first.

21
Quinn, Virgil's Aeneid, p. 137.

22
Serv.adAenIV.11. cum eum ob virtutem laudet, addendo tamen os nec pulchritudinem denegaverit.

23 Quinn, Vergil's Aeneid, p. 109.

24 Pease, Virgil, p. 385. Guillemin (L'Originalite de Virgile (1931) 72-73) thinks Dido's suicide, of for love, would be contrary to classical tradition, in which the women pine away, not die violent deaths. Prescott, The Development of Vergil's Art says that Dido in no way corresponds to the great heroines of Greek tragedy. DeWitt, Vergil and The Tragic Drama, says Dido conforms to all the essential requirements of classical tragedy. The action is rapid, consecutive, and continuous; it is enacted in a palace. The heroine is a queen and a queenly queen. A complete and balanced sequence of tragic emotions runs its course: overmastering affection, reckless enjoyment, anguish of desolation, despair, and revenge. There is high dispute and pathetic soliloquy.

25 Pease, "Some Aspects of The Character of Dido", The Classical Journal, 248.

26 Phinney, "Dido and Sychaeus", The Classical Journal, 357. Phinney states that Vergil does this to keep Dido from seeming to be neurotic.

27 Howard W. Stone, Suicide and Grief (Philadelphia: The Fortress Press, 1972), p. 12.

28 Ibid. p. 33.

29 Ibid. p. 262.

30 Robert D. Hicks, Stoic and Epicurean (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1962), p. 102.

31 Aen. I. 712, 749; IV. 68,450,529; V.3; VI.456.

32 Bernard Fenick, "Parallelism of Theme and Imagery in Aeneid II and IV", CJ, 9.

33 Stone, Suicide and Grief, 9.

34 Ibid. 12.

35 Pease, Vergil, p. 385.

³⁶ Poschl, The Art of Vergil, p. 85.

³⁷ Paul W. Pretzel, Understanding and Counseling The Suicidal Person (New York: Abington Press, 1972), p.202-3.

³⁸ Edwin S. Schneidman, ed., On The Nature of Suicide (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1969) p. 12.

³⁹ Pease, Virgil, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Pease, Virgil, p. 386. Pease cites Glover, Virgil, p. 264 as labeling her death Pythagorean and Neoplatonic. Anderson, The Art of The Aeneid, p. 36 says her death is not Stoic. Pease makes her death more Stoic in the last portion of IV, Virgil, p. 36. Pease disagrees with Ranzoli who states that she cannot be classified a Stoic because her death resulted from passion, not calm reason.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 37.

⁴² Hornsby, "The Vergilian Simile As A Means of Judgement." The Classical Journal, 339.

⁴³ Pease, Virgil, p. 386.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 513. This was probably Vergil's friend Cornelius Galluis-stricto incubuit ferro (Amm. Marc. 17,4,5).

⁴⁵ Prescott, The Development of Vergil's Art, p. 291.

⁴⁶ Suetonius Aug. LXV.2.

⁴⁷ Pretzel, Understanding and Counseling The Suicidal Person, pp. 202-3.

⁴⁸ Quinn, Vergil's Aeneid, p. 5

⁴⁹ Anderson, The Art of The Aeneid, p. 67.

⁵⁰ Pease, Virgil, p. 520

⁵¹ Quinn, Vergil's Aeneid, p. 170.

CONCLUSION

The number of Roman suicides is copious. This suggests that there were few religious, ethical, or sociological barriers. The disparity of the number of suicides in certain countries implies that there are factors which impede suicide.¹ These factors were few in Rome. The Romans had a large number of writers who committed suicide: Lucretius, Lucan, Terence, Petronius, Statius, Silius Italicus, and Seneca. The suicides of military figures were just as numerous and notable: Brutus, Cassius, Labienus, Mark Antony, Decius Mus, and Regulus. Two early emperors, Nero and Otho, committed suicide and probably the assassinations of others, such as Caligula and Vitellius, prevented the number from being greater. Suicides of other distinguished Roman men were recorded: Marcus Cocceius Nerva (the father of the emperor), Vulteius (a tribune who supported Caesar), Atticus Vestinus (a friend of Seneca), Titius Aristo, Cornelius Gallus, Annaeus Novatus (the brother of Seneca), and Cato the Younger. Nor did Roman men overshadow the women in their zealousness for suicide. The suicides of Lucretia, Porcia, and the attempted suicide of Seneca's wife, Paulina, were condoned, not condemned, by their families. The Arriae

women had three generations of suicides. Cleopatra's suicide, even though that of a foreigner, was in keeping with the nobility of a Roman suicide and undoubtedly was influenced by Mark Antony's death.²

Although by no means a complete list, these suicides support the thesis that Roman suicide was frequent in the late Republic and early Empire. Even in Livy's early history, there are hints that there was no prohibition even in the late period of the Kings. We may conclude therefore, that death by one's own hand, suicide, was not only not dishonorable, but was often praiseworthy.

FOOTNOTES

1. Dan Golenpaul, ed., Information Please Almanac (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 729.
2. M.Cary et al., The Oxford Classical Journal (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), sub nomine.

APPENDIX I

REFERENCES TO SUICIDE USING CONSCISCERE

The following is a reference to phrases used to convey the idea of suicide. The author has given the number of times the particular phrase is used. In parenthesis is the total number of references to suicide.

Livy-two (four references)

III,58,6- mortem sibi conscivit (death of Appius Claudius)

IX,26,7- mors ab ipsis conscita (death of Colavii, Ovius, and Novius)

Pliny the Elder-four (five references)

HN II,5- Sibi potest mortem consciscere (fortunate suicide)

XXIV,102,163-165- mortem sibi eo metu consciscant
(Plant that causes suicide)

XXV,7,24- non obalios fere morte conscita (disease responsible for suicide)

XXXVI,59,183- conscivisse sibi mortem (death of C. Proculeius)

Pliny the Younger-None (two references)

Cicero-three (thirteen references)

Tusc. XXX.3.83-mortem sibi ipsi consciscerent (death of number of followers of Hegesias the Cyrenai)

Clu. 169-171- mortem sibi ipse conscisset (defense of Cluentius)

Fam. VII.3,3- consciscenda mors voluntaria (defeat of Pompey)

Lucan-none (one reference)

Aulus Gellius-two (four references)

NA.VI, 18,11-necemque sibi consciverit

X, 17,2- caecitatem conscivit

Seneca-none (six references)

Tacitus-none (twenty-six references)

Suetonius-none (nineteen references)

Servius-one (four references)

AD AEN.XI, 595- mortem sibi consciscere

Justinian-one (one reference)

INST.IUST.XLVIII, 21-mortem sibi consciverunt (laws related to sui.)

Catullus-none (two references)

Tibullus-none (three references)

Apuleius-one (one references)

MET.X.29-saepius quidem mortem mihi met volens consciscere (unable to commit suicide because of nature of being an ass)

Florus-none (one reference)

Lucretius-one (one reference)

DE NAT.RE.3, 81-ut sibi consciscant maerenti pectore letum (mortals who commit suicide)

Plautus-one (one reference)

MIL.GL.1241- consciscam letum (unrequited love)

Tertullian-none (one reference)

Julius Caesar-twice (two references)

B.G. I,4,4-sibi mortem consciverit (death of Orgetorix)

III,22,2-sibi mortem consciscant (battle with the
Aquitani)

Martial-none (two references)

Juvenal-none (three references)

Valerius Maximus-none (one reference)

APPENDIX II

OTHER PHRASES USED FOR SUICIDE

Livy

VIII.10.9-sese devovere volet (death of Decius)
III.4.9-finem vitae dedit (death of Oppius)

Pliny the Elder

HN II.63-mortes repentinae (herbs that cause death)

Pliny the Younger

Ep.I.22-sponte exiret e vita (letter to Catilius Severus about ill health of Titius Aristo)
III.9-voluisse exire de vita (Caelius Classicus' suicide)

Cicero

Tusc.I.41-97-mittar ad mortem (Socrates' speech from Plato Apol.)

I.15.33-se offerret ad mortem

I.30.74-Cato abiit e vita

Sen.20.74-75-morte luit, ad voluntariam morte

Fin.15.49-aequo animo e vita exeamus (Epicurean view of death)

I.15-feramus e vita (fear of death)

V.X.28-29- laqueos aut alia exitia quaerent
(fear of death)

Fam. I.12-Magius se ipsum interfecisse

Rep.II.25-sese ipsa morte multavisset (Lucretia's suicide)

Lucan

Phar. IV.280-Perdant velle mori

Aulus Gellius

N.A. XIII.20.7-14-se occidit, se interemit

Seneca

De Vita Beata XIX.1-finem vitae suae manu sua imposuit (death of Diodorus the Epicurean)

Ep. 24.22-currere ad mortem taedio vitae currendum esset ad mortem effeceris

67.8-9-Decius se devorit (Decius' suicide)

24.23-adpetere mortem

69.6-illa ad nos veniat an ad illam nos (death's approach)

Tacitus

Ann. XV.35-mori adigitur, venas interscidit (forced death of Torquatus Silanus)

XVI.19-vitam expulit

II.66-mortemque sponte sumptam ementitur (false report of death of Cotys)

III.7-sumpti exitii (Martina suicide?)

III.16-illum sponte extinctum (death of Piso not self-inflicted)

III.46-sua manu occidere (death of Sacrovir)

XVI.12-ferro abscindunt venas (death of Lucius Vetus et alii)

XV.71-sua manu cecidit (death of tribune Gavius Silvanus)

XV.63-sibi mortem adseverat (death speech of Paulina to Seneca)

XV.61-an Seneca voluntariam mortem pararet (Nero asking if Seneca was preparing death)

XV.57-tenuem iam spiritum expressit (torture and sudden suicide of Epicharis)

XIV.9-se ipse ferro transegit (Mnester on hearing of Agrip. on pyre)

XIV.7-sponte mortem sumpsisse confingeret (Agermus comes to Nero concerning false report of Agrip)

XIII.25-mori adactus est (forced death of Julius Montanus)

XIII.50-extrema ad mortem agitur (forced death of Narcissus by Nero)

VII.29-per abruptas venas sanguinem effudit (death of Pomponius Labeo)

XVI.14-venis mortem adproperavit (Anteiuss' death)

XVI.15-venae interruptae parum sanguinis effundebant

XVI.34-cruorem effudit (death of Thrasea)

Hist. I.72-et deformis moras sectis novacula faucibus infamen vitam foedavit (death of Tigellinus with razor)

III.51-se ipsum interfecit (death of one of Pompey's soldiers)

III.10-militum se manibus aut suis moriturum obtestans (death threat of a certain Antonius)

II.48-in ferrum pectore incubit (death of Otho)

IV.59-digressum de supremis agitantem, mortem sponte praevire (death of Vocula)

Suet.

Poet. Lucani-Brachia ad secandas venas praebuit medico (death of Lucan)

Poet. Aul.Pers.Flac.-Se occiderat (death of Arria the older)

Rhet. VI-mori destinasset, abstinuit cibo (death of Gaius Silus)

Dom. XIV.4-in adipiscenda morte manu eius (Epaphroditus accused of aiding Nero in suicide)

Vit. X.3-quo is se occiderat (Otho's death by dagger)

Otho XI.2-se traiecit ictu (death of Otho by stabbing)

Galba XI.1-non multum afruit quin vitae renuntiaret
(Galba almost com. suicide)

III.4-voluntaria morte obiit (death of Gaius
of Achaica)

Ner. XLIX.3-ad mortem capessendam=(Nero beseeches
someone to show him)

XXXV.5-ad necem compulit (death of Seneca)

XXXIV.3-voluntaria morte (Agrip. falsely acc.
of suicide)

Claud. XXX.1-de consciscenda morte cogitasse (Claud.
almost com. sui. because of stomach
pains)

XXIX.2-morique coactus (L. Silanus forced to
take life)

Calig. XVI.1-sponte se periturum (Cal. threatened to
take own life)

XXXVIII.4-venas sibi inciderent (sui. of
citizens who were forced to buy property
at exorbitant prices)

XXVII.2-se periturum ea de causa (boast of
glad. who com. sui.)

XXIII.3-ad necem secandasque novacula fauces
compulit (Silanus)

Tib. LXI.5-mori volentibus (Tib. angry at so many
sui.)

Aug. LXV.2-Phoebe suspendio vitam finisset (Aug.
wishes death of daughter like Phoebe)

Jul. LXXXIX-nonnulli semet eodem illo pugnione, quo
Caesarem violaverant, interemerunt

Servius

Ad Aen. VI.434-qui sibi inferunt mortem

XII.603-qui laqueo vitam finisset

XII.595-vitam finisset, se suspendio necarent
(death of Amata)

Vergil

Aen. VI.434-qui sibi letum insontes peperere manu

Catullus LIII.1-Quid moraris emori? (suic. of Cat.?)

LXIV.244-sese scoputorum e vertice iecit (death of father of Theseus)

Tibullus I.3.50-nunc mare, nunc leti mille repente viae

II.19-iam mala finissem leto

III.7.196-vel parvum Aetnaeae corpus committere flammae

Florus I.38.18-crinibus pependerit (Cimbri killing themselves before death of infants)

Tertullian Apol. L.5-Empedocles totum sese incendiis donavit (death of Empedocles)

Martial I.33-gravi vulnere vitam perdidit (death of Arria)

II.80-se Fannius ipse peremit (death of Fannius)

Juvenal VI.30-33-ferre potes dominam salvis tot restibus ullam, cum pateant altae caligantesque fenestrae, cum tibi vicinum se praebeat Aemilius pons

Valerius Maximus IX.12.7-se perisse (death of C. Licinius Macer)

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VITA

Carmine Anthony Ruffa was born in Riverside, California on October 17, 1944. He attended the Petersburg public schools for twelve years. After graduating from Petersburg High School, Mr. Ruffa attended the University of Richmond. There he studied foreign languages, majoring in Spanish and minoring in Latin. In addition to his studies, Mr. Ruffa was initiated into Eta Sigma Phi Classical fraternity. He also was elected President of Phi Kappa Sigma social fraternity. His junior year he received the Phi Kappa Sigma Academic scholarship. In August 1967 Mr. Ruffa graduated from the University of Richmond with a B.A. degree.

For the next two years Mr. Ruffa taught at Petersburg High School. After his first year of teaching, he married Jane Ellen Carden, also of Petersburg. They spent the summer of 1968 studying at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome. This was a special year for Mr. Ruffa, not only because of his marriage and studies abroad, but also because of the opportunity to visit some relatives in southern Italy and learn about his paternal heritage.

After leaving Petersburg in 1969, Mr. Ruffa acquired a position teaching Latin at The Collegiate Schools in

Richmond. While teaching there he also pursued graduate work at the University of Richmond as a part-time student. In addition to these Mr. Ruffa was given a position at Virginia Commonwealth University teaching Latin in the Evening School Division. In 1972 Mr. Ruffa accepted a full-time teaching position at the newly formed Trinity Episcopal High School where he has taught Latin and Spanish the last two years.

Although teaching has consumed most of his professional life, Mr. Ruffa also has served as Vice-President of the Mediterranean Society of America and has been a member of Big Brothers of America.