

THE PUBLIC IMAGE

A STUDY OF CAESAR'S DE BELLO GALLICO,
DE BELLO CIVILI AND AUGUSTUS' RES GESTAE

by

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CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	i
ABBREVIATIONS	iv
1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF <i>COMMENTARII</i> AND MEMOIRS IN ROME	1
2. CAESAR'S <i>DE BELLO GALLICO</i> AND <i>DE BELLO CIVILI</i>	31
Introduction	31
<i>Dignitas</i>	33
<i>Existimatio</i>	35
<i>Clementia</i>	36
The <i>Comentarii</i>	40
The <i>de Bello Gallico</i>	43
The <i>de Bello Civili</i>	60
3. AUGUSTUS' <i>RES GESTAE</i>	81
Introduction	81
Direction and Purpose	83
Organisation of the <i>Res Gestae</i>	88
Emphasis and Use of the First Person	93
Legality and Republican Tradition	102
The Restoration of the <i>Res Publica</i>	108
<i>Auctoritas, potestas</i> and <i>imperium</i>	111
<i>Virtus, clementia, iustitia</i> and <i>pietas</i>	117
4. CAESAR'S <i>COMMENTARII</i> AND AUGUSTUS' <i>RES GESTAE</i> : SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES	125
Nature and Purpose	125
Political Situation and Leadership Qualities	131
<i>Dignitas</i>	140
<i>Auctoritas</i> and <i>potestas</i>	141
<i>Virtus, clementia, iustitia</i> and <i>pietas</i>	143
5. SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THE IMAGE-BUILDING	150
Caesar	
The Question of Monarchy	150
The Civil War	151
Contemporary Opinion	154
The Augustan Age	156
Second Century Opinion	160
Augustus' Opinion of Caesar	161
Augustus	
Contemporary Opinion	165
Later Opinion	173

Minor Poets and Historians	180
Restoration of the <i>Res Publica</i>	182
CONCLUSION	186
BIBLIOGRAPHY	193

PREFACE

In this thesis I set out to examine the purpose and effect of the autobiographical works of Caesar and Augustus, specifically Caesar's *de Bello Gallico* and *de Bello Civili*, and Augustus' *Res Gestae*. The focus is directed upon the significance of the self-image portrayed in their works and the importance of public opinion, which influenced both what they wrote and the way in which they wrote.

The origins of the abovementioned works can be traced back to the late second century BC, when written orations clearly became a common practice in Rome. It is these early memoirs, such as the *elogia* of famous men, their epitaphs and records of their deeds that produced the first elements of political autobiography and allowed for the development of *commentarii* and *res gestae*. Public image evidently became a matter of some concern for republican politicians, as increasingly they wished to be remembered in some way.

During the last century of the republic politicians became ever more ambitious, and struggled for individual recognition; consequently their dignity and reputation came to be regarded as equally important in life and after death. Caesar's *Commentarii* and Augustus' *Res Gestae* intended that both their *dignitas* and their *existimatio* would be preserved for posterity; a written memorial of their services to the state was the form of immortality valued most highly by the Roman aristocracy.

Although a number of literary genres will be examined with regard to the writings of Caesar and Augustus, it must be borne in mind that they all appear to have the same purpose in mind: self-glorification. This is the factor that links the *Commentarii* inextricably with the *Res Gestae*. However, the thesis contends that neither Caesar nor Augustus wrote within the limitations of one particular literary genre; they adopted and adapted certain elements of various genres in so far as the elements suited their purpose of self-promotion.

The *Commentarii* of Caesar were not his only compositions; he also wrote orations and a number of letters to Cicero. But I have

chosen to examine the *de Bello Gallico* and the *de Bello Civili* in particular because it is in their analysis that the following realisation emerges: Caesar was more concerned with his public image than with a description of well-known events. The propaganda factor is clearly evident in his works, but it does not detract from what is also a masterful description of warfare.

The *Res Gestae* of Augustus is a highly selective account of the first *princeps'* achievements and an ideal example of later political autobiography. The fact that Augustus was concerned only with his public image is more obviously detectable than in the works of Caesar, partly because of the nature of the work as a more direct development out of the early *elogium*. My analysis of the *Res Gestae* will show that one can only admire the skill of Augustus the autobiographer, who has created such a unique document as a testimonial to his own greatness.

A comparative study of the *Commentarii* and the *Res Gestae* is a necessary part of the overall analysis, and one which brings out the contrast in character and method of the two writers as well as their usage of different literary genres. The manner in which Caesar and Augustus portray their respective images is obviously dissimilar, but there are certain elements which are crucial to their self-representation and therefore found in both the *Commentarii* and the *Res Gestae*. These elements presuppose a common aim in the works of both Caesar and Augustus.

Lastly, in order to discover the extent to which Caesar and Augustus were successful in their image-building, it is essential to examine how they were perceived by their contemporaries and later generations. Ancient writers, as well as the coinage and epigraphic evidence, provide sufficient material for constructive argument in this respect. Factors that will be taken into account are whether the author knew Caesar or Augustus personally or whether, for the later writers, they were aware of, or actually made use of, the *Commentarii* or the *Res Gestae*. From an analysis of these facts, and particularly by a careful consideration of conflicting opinion, conclusions will be made as to how successfully Caesar and Augustus managed to establish

their public images.

In submitting this thesis, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Richard Evans for his guidance, encouragement, patience and assistance throughout, not only with the topic itself but also with his help in sending relevant articles and literature that were otherwise unobtainable. I would also like to thank him for being available at all times to discuss problems and queries.

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L A Dickson

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ABBREVIATIONS

In addition to the standard abbreviations, the following will be used:

- Grant, Ancient Historians: Grant, M., The Ancient Historians, London 1970
- Grant, Julius Caesar: Grant, M., Julius Caesar, London 1974
- Grant, Roman Literature: Grant, M., Roman Literature and Society, Cambridge 1954
- Ogilvie, "Caesar": Ogilvie, R.M., "Caesar", in Kenney, E.J. & Clausen, W.V. (eds), The Cambridge History of Classical Literature: (II) Latin Literature, Cambridge 1982
- Ogilvie, Roman Literature: Ogilvie, R.M., Roman Literature and Society, Brighton 1980
- Syme, Roman Papers: Syme, R., Roman Papers, Vol I, Oxford 1979
- Syme, RR: Syme, R., The Roman Revolution, Oxford 1939
- Syme, Tacitus: Syme, R., Tacitus, Oxford 1958
- Yavetz, Julius Caesar: Yavetz, Z., Julius Caesar and his Public Image, London 1983
- Yavetz, Res Gestae: Yavetz, Z., "The Res Gestae and Augustus's Public Image", in Millar, F. and Segal, E. (eds), Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects, Oxford 1984

CHAPTER 1

The Development of *Commentarii* and Memoirs in Rome

Roman historiography arose during or as a direct outcome of involvement in the Second Punic War (218-201BC), a period which provided a suitable subject for coverage and prompted the Greeks and later the Romans themselves to write about Rome. The Romans did not take easily to the writing of history; unlike the Greeks they had no epic tradition and it is the Greeks who, with their epic past, gave Rome a sense of history and of the continuity of history.

Fabius Pictor wrote the first Roman history in Greek, since Latin was not yet employed for literary prose. Educated Romans could read Greek, and Fabius was thus afforded the opportunity to appeal to them and at the same time explain Roman institutions and policies to the Greek world. His aims in writing history were therefore didactic and political. Although the raw materials for history existed long before in the shape of treaties and laws in the archives, family records and in particular the pontifical *annales* which recorded the names of consuls, triumphs and events portended by omens, these materials did not inspire historiography until much later. Fabius's history was not technically *annales*, although Cicero (*De Orat.* 2.51-53) refers to them as such. He named the consuls of each year, but basically used the Greek method of Olympiad dating. Fabius dealt with the very earliest period of Rome based on Greek sources and only briefly with the following period, expanding his scope as he approached his own time until his work became a detailed account of the First Punic War. Although his history does not survive, it established the traditions most typical of Roman historiography and was the primary source for all later Roman historians.¹

¹ The recent discovery of a second century BC library catalogue from Tauromenium in Sicily, which includes Fabius and a short summary of the contents of his work, proves that his *Annals* were widely disseminated.

It is in the *Origines* of Marcus Porcius Cato (234 - 149BC), the first historian of importance after Fabius, that it is possible to find traces of the emerging tradition of political autobiography. Since most of the work is lost,² one can only speculate as to the extent to which the autobiographical element was evident. Cato himself is described variously as "a landmark in prose, whether we consider history, oratory or the special sciences"³, and "the greatest name in Roman history before the last years of the Republic".⁴ The *Origines* was the first major historical work to be composed in Latin, although clearly in the Greek tradition.⁵ Wight Duff describes it as "a prose epic with some of the matter but none of the poetry of Ennius' *Annales*".⁶ Cato used these *annales* as the basis of his chronology, but arranged his material by subject matter and referred with disdain to the pontifical annals. The *Origines* was written in seven books over a period of years. The first three books dealt with the foundation and early history of Rome, books four and five dealt with the Punic Wars and brought the narrative down to 167, while the last two books treated events up to within a few months of Cato's own death. Cato's aims seem to have been similar to those of Fabius in that he saw history as didactic and political; he appears to have been much interested in political theory. Like Fabius, Cato concentrated on early times and on contemporary history. Contrary to his predecessors, his originality led him to depart from the annalistic tradition by introducing speeches into his record. However, it is in the concluding books of the *Origines* that our interest lies. This later portion was much longer than the rest and here Cato was concerned with strictly

² Only 143 excerpts survive, but they allow us to obtain some appreciation of the character of the work.

³ Wight Duff, J., A Literary History of Rome from the Origins to the Close of the Golden Age, London 1960, 183.

⁴ Grant, M., Roman Literature, Cambridge 1954, 91.

⁵ Plutarch (*Cat. Mai.* 2.4) says that his writings were embellished with Greek sentiments and stories, and that many direct translations from the Greek were found in his maxims and proverbs.

⁶ Wight Duff, 1960: 183.

contemporary history, where the author himself had helped to direct the course of events. Included in this section were lengthy quotations of his own speeches by means of which he advertised his statesmanship. Moreover, he did not need to follow the convention of Greek historiography by which speeches might be invented to summarise issues or illustrate appropriate occasions. Thus it is evident at this early stage of historiography that the public image of a republican politician was of some concern to Cato. Undoubtedly his speeches had some of the character of political autobiography and it is to this point that we can trace the beginnings of autobiography as a genre in Roman history. His careful research and critical sense have left us with the first example of *ex parte* contemporary history and with characteristics of the memoirs and autobiographies which were an important feature of political life in the next generation. So much of the discussion of Latin historical writings goes back to Cato rather than to others. As Ogilvie concludes in his broad summary of early republican literature:

Cato's example was to set the pattern for the whole subsequent history of Latin literature.⁷

It had long been the custom in the Greek world for authors, particularly those of inferior social standing, to address their poetry, historical or other prose works to a friend or patron, in order to give the work the appearance of a private letter. The letter-form or dedication was a literary device often used when the author had a wider audience in mind to which he wished to make a point that was didactic or political in character. In the later second century BC this type of literary convention appears in Latin literature, and the increasing tendency also to take up the writing of contemporary history led to the production of a variety of political letters, memoirs and autobiographical works. The political *Letters* of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, are a good example.

⁷ Ogilvie, R.M., Roman Literature and Society, Brighton 1980, 39.

Cornelia was the second daughter of Scipio Africanus and the wife of Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus. Two fragments of her letters survive in Nepos' *de Viris Illustribus*. Their authenticity, however, has been much disputed, although some authors have regarded them as genuine. Cicero was certainly aware of a collection of her letters,⁸ a fact which Gratwick uses to postulate that there should be no doubt about the authenticity of the surviving fragments.⁹ On the other hand, Rawson is of the opinion that the letters are too rhetorical to be genuine.¹⁰ Whether the existing fragments are genuine or not, the letters of Cornelia are illustrative of a trend in Roman historiography. Excerpts survive of one letter written to her son Gaius Gracchus dissuading him from his plan to stand for the tribunate in 123. The missive has the appearance of a private letter intended to appeal to Gaius' guilty conscience, but Cornelia addresses Gaius as if he were a public meeting and remarkably, considering no Roman woman had the occasion to practice oratory, appears to have used the same kind of language as her son.¹¹ The language is forceful, the style virile, and there is a plethora of rhetorical questions. These features indicate that the letter is not a carefully revised composition but an instinctive and immediate outburst. Its forcefulness and forensic argument have led to the plausible suggestion that Cornelia may have intended to circulate copies at Rome in order to embarrass Gaius.¹² If this is so, then an ostensibly private letter would have the purpose of a political bulletin denigrating Gaius' public image. Gaius Gracchus himself wrote a memoir to M. Pomponius which contained

⁸ Cic. *Brut.* 211.

⁹ Gratwick, A.S., "The Pen in Politics", in Kenney, E.J. and Clausen, W.V. (eds), The Cambridge History of Classical Literature, Vol. II, Cambridge 1982, 145-146.

¹⁰ Rawson, E., Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic, London 1985, 230-231.

¹¹ Cicero (*Brut.* 211) recognised in her letters the same pure Latin as he admired in the speeches of Gaius: "legimus epistulas Corneliae matris Gracchorum: apparet filios non tam in gremio educatos quam in sermone matris."

¹² Gratwick, 1982: 147.

details of his own and his brother Tiberius's experiences.¹³ Like the letters of his mother this, too, was obviously written as an open letter with a wider audience in mind. Perhaps it was meant to be an *apologia* of his life expressed in the form of an account of his exploits or *res gestae*.

Although the Greeks did write autobiography,¹⁴ it was quickly transplanted to Rome and flourished there. There is little in Greek, however, to rival the outburst of memoir-writing and autobiography that occurred in Rome during the last century of the republic. The Romans had a much greater interest in biography than the Greeks,¹⁵ as can be inferred from their funeral masks and inscriptions, portraiture and the popularity of books dealing with *exempla* of good and bad conduct. We have already seen, in respect of Cato, that contemporary history written by prominent politicians merged into political autobiography, although his was incorporated into a work of wider scope.

The ambitious Roman politicians of the last century of the republic came to regard their *dignitas* in life and death as equally important. They could ensure that their *dignitas* was preserved after death by claiming the form of immortality which Roman aristocrats valued most, namely the memory of their services to the state. Hence autobiographies appeared that had their origins in the letters and memoirs of the Gracchan period. Their origin may also be found in the journals known in Greek as *hypomnemata* or in Latin as *commentarii*, kept by or in the name of kings or generals and found as far back as the times of Alexander the Great and his successors as an inheritance from the

¹³ See Cic. *de Div.* 1.36.

¹⁴ Perhaps the most famous example of Greek autobiography was Xenophon's *Anabasis*, an account of the expedition of Greek mercenaries under Cyrus, in which Xenophon himself participated. Book 5 contains an autobiographical digression, although in general Xenophon does not figure prominently and the monograph is in the third person.

¹⁵ This is due to the appearance of immensely ambitious and competitive Roman politicians, who wished to claim immortality by writing their memoirs.

practice of Oriental monarchies.¹⁶ These *hypomnemata* were often merely notes, a sort of *aide-mémoire* written in a bare factual style similar to the *annales* and intended for others to write up as finished history. Roman statesmen developed the *commentarii* into a factual account of their achievements, to be published often for their own self-justification or self-glorification in respect of their political or military actions, and ostensibly for the benefit of their descendants. Military affairs play a major part in these *commentarii* because of the character of the men who recorded them. The significant fact about the later type of *commentarii* is that they were autobiographical, or at least descriptive of events in which some distinguished man had played a role. As Adcock notes:

Like the ecclesiastic who set up his epitaph in anticipation of his demise, they thought it well to be their own chroniclers.¹⁷

Such works written in the generation before Caesar were those of M. Aemilius Scaurus, P. Rutilius Rufus, Q. Lutatius Catulus and L. Cornelius Sulla.

It was M. Aemilius Scaurus who produced the first real example of autobiographical memoirs written by an ambitious and competitive politician. Badian notes:

It took a ruthlessly ambitious and socially impregnable man to write openly *de vita sua*.¹⁸

Scaurus was consul in 115, *princeps senatus* for twenty-five years and probably the most powerful man of his generation. He wrote a three-volume work probably in the late nineties, using the literary convention of addressing the work to his friend L. Fufidius. Its solemn and archaic language seems to indicate that

¹⁶ Cary, M. and Scullard, H.H. (eds), Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2nd edition 1970, 317-8.

¹⁷ Adcock, F.E., Caesar as Man of Letters, Cambridge 1956, 17.

¹⁸ Badian, E., "The Early Historians", in Dorey, T.A. (ed.), Latin Historians, London 1966, 26 n. 17.

Scaurus intended his memoirs to be a work of serious historiography which would take its place in the tradition of historical writing. The Oxford Classical Dictionary informs us that the autobiography was soon forgotten,¹⁹ but its author was admired by Cicero who tells us (*Brut.* 112) that although the work was little read, it was very useful because it reflected Roman conditions. If Adcock is right, Scaurus enjoyed more good fortune than good repute,²⁰ and it is therefore quite likely that his work was as much an *apologia* as a straightforward account *de vita sua*. The memoirs of Scaurus are useful to us because, in the tradition of autobiographical writing, they are an expression of the author's personality and ultimately of the image of himself that he wished to represent to the public.

P. Rutilius Rufus, consul in 105, was a contemporary of Scaurus. He was an embittered man who had been unjustly exiled and could not forgive. While in Asia he wrote an autobiography of his career in five books, denouncing his political enemies who included Scaurus and Marius. It would have been interesting to compare his memoirs with those of Scaurus, in order to correlate the two views of one individual and his achievements. Unfortunately, the opinions of Rutilius only survive in subsequent historians, such as the admiring portrait of Metellus and the hatred of Pompey in Sallust's *Histories*. Plutarch's unfavourable portrait of Marius also derives from the autobiography of Rutilius.

A third proponent of the autobiographical memoir during this period was Q. Lutatius Catulus, consul in 102. He wrote one book *De consulatu et de rebus gestis suis*, dedicating it to the poet Furius. Although Catulus had literary aspirations, his work could have been intended as material for Furius to turn into an epic on the Cimbrian War, in which Catulus' virtues and memory

¹⁹ Oxford Classical Dictionary, 1970: 958.

²⁰ Adcock, 1956: 17. Grant, The Ancient Historians, London 1970, 174, says that Scaurus had a political axe to grind, and Sallust (15.4; 18.4 - 19.2; 30.3; 32.1; 40.4) appears to write about Scaurus with extreme severity.

would be immortalised.²¹ The fact that Catulus felt his share in defeating the barbarians had been underestimated indicates that he wished to produce a work of self-justification in order to augment his public image.

L. Cornelius Sulla wrote memoirs, a *Commentarii rerum gestarum* in twenty-two books, dedicated to Lucullus (c.118-56) and possibly intended as raw material for history, not as history proper: he proclaimed that he was only writing what a more polished author might elaborate.²² Sulla's work is crucial for the development of literary tradition during the period 90-80BC, and as political autobiography it provides a model for the *commentarii* of Caesar. Caesar also called his work *commentarii*, and both authors dealt with their respective military campaigns. However, one should not regard Sulla as being too close a model for Caesar. Sulla's memoirs were full of dreams and portents while Caesar's were strictly rational. ./#

It is clear from Plutarch's *Lives* of Sulla and Marius, which contain references to Sulla's memoirs, that Sulla did not write objectively; moreover he wrote about himself in a wholly favourable light. Such subjectivity is to be expected not only in the case of Sulla but with regard to all who wrote any form of autobiographical memoir. One would not expect the authors discussed above to have had an objective or impartial desire to tell the truth about people and events in which they were personally involved, or that they would not give themselves the benefit of the doubt in any situation. These factors should be remembered when dealing with the composite literary character of both Caesar's and Augustus' writings. 5/

Aulus Licinius Archias was a Greek poet from Antioch who arrived in Rome before 100 and acquired Roman citizenship. He wrote an epic poem in Greek in honour of the Cimbric victory of Gaius Marius in 102. This, of course, promoted the public image of

²¹ See Rawson, 1985: 228 and Adcock, 1956: 17.

²² Peter, H. (ed.), *Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae*, Vol. I, Stuttgart 1967, Sulla, frag. 1.

Archias himself since he had caught the attention of Marius, who was, according to Cicero, somewhat resistant to literary pursuits.²³ However, if one takes account of the tradition whereby memoirs were dedicated to a friend or patron, often a poet, and the fact that *commentarii* were often merely notes intended for others to write up as finished history, it is possible that Marius himself wrote some sort of autobiographical journal or *commentarii*. Support is given to this argument by the fact that Plutarch in his *Lives* quotes Marius directly.²⁴ On the basis of this remark it is plausible to believe that Marius had written some form of notes which Archias offered to write up. Archias had certainly made it one of his first poetic endeavours after reaching Rome to make himself acceptable to Marius. And as Cicero (*Pro Arch.* 20) says of Marius:

Neque enim quisquam est tam aversus a Musis, qui non mandari versibus aeternum suorum laborum facile praeconium patiatur.

But in fact no one is so averse to the Muses that he cannot easily allow an eternal proclamation of his achievements to be committed to verse.

Like other great politicians and statesmen, Marius wished to have his deeds glorified for posterity. If he had not been well inclined toward literary pursuits, he could well have provided Archias with the most basic of notes which would be transformed by poetic talent into an encomium.²⁵

It is clear that all writers of autobiographical memoirs wished to be remembered in some way and to this end they wrote subjectively, focusing on themselves and glorifying themselves for posterity. If any single factor may be responsible for the type of work that Caesar and Augustus eventually published, it is most likely this desire for self-justification and self-glorification that has its origin in memoir-writing.

²³ See *Pro Arch.* 19.

²⁴ *Mar.* 33.

²⁵ There must also have been a *laudatio funebris* which could have been used as a source by later writers.

Another genre of literature which probably influenced autobiographical memoirs was the *elogium*. At funerals of great men in Rome it was customary for a member of the family to deliver an oration or *laudatio* commemorating the virtues and achievements of the deceased. According to Cicero, this highly traditional genre seems to have been simple and unrheterical even in the first century BC,²⁶ and Rawson is of the opinion that writers about distinguished men drew rather on the Greek *encomium*, a literary form for which a complicated outline had developed and which flourished under the inspiration of dynastic struggles.²⁷ However, the *elogium* also developed a general schema, and its outline provided a basis on which future orators or writers could elaborate. More permanent memorials existed in the form of the written kind of *elogia*, left in the form of inscriptions recording the individual's career and deeds. The earliest of these inscriptions or *elogia* belongs to a consul of 298. The *elogium* cited first the name of the person being commemorated, then the offices and any priesthoods that he had held, his military feats along with any triumphs he had celebrated, important civil offices and finally any important buildings with which he was associated.²⁸ This outline could provide a general working model for those who wished to write an autobiography or *res gestae*.

As in the case of memoirs, the author of the *elogium* would represent for posterity in the best possible light the deeds and accomplishments of his subject. The account of achievements would in this case be highly selective in order for the author to elevate the public image of the man in question. An example of an early *elogium* illustrates this point. A Scipionic sarcophagus with an epitaph from Rome, probably third century BC, has the following text:

²⁶ See de Orat. 2.341.

²⁷ Rawson, 1985: 229.

²⁸ See Sage, M.M., "The Elogia of the Augustan Forum and the *de viris illustribus*", *Historia* 28 (1979) 192-210.

Cornelius Lucius Scipio Barbatus, [-] Gnaivod patre / prognatus, fortis vir sapiensque, - quoius forma virtutei parisuma / fuit, - consol, censor, aedilis quei fuit apud vos; - Taurasia,<m>, Cisauna<m> / Samnio capit, - subigit omne<m> Loucanam (terram?) opsidesque abducit.

Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, son of Gnaeus, a brave man and prudent, whose looks were fully equal to his valour; he was aedile, consul, (and) censor among you; he took Taurasia (and) Cisauna in (or, from) Samnium; he subdues all Lucania and takes away hostages.²⁹

The author of the inscription is unknown, although there has been much conjecture,³⁰ but it is clear that the purpose was to glorify Scipio and his deeds for posterity. The *elogia* would hardly contain any directly incorrect claims, since there would obviously have been too many people who could disprove them, but elaborations such as "whose looks were fully equal to his valour" must be regarded with reserve as being wholly subjective. The statement is also indicative of an emergent need for the Romans to display *exempla virtutum* as a model for others to emulate. One of the major themes of early Roman historical writing was the attempt to use history as an educative aid to moral instruction, and the *exemplum* came to form a basic principle of Roman historiography. It will be seen that in his *Res Gestae* Augustus consistently parades his own virtues as *exempla imitandi*, and indicates himself the importance and significance of *exempla* for future generations (RG 8.5). um L

Another type of *elogium* is a milestone with an acephalous *elogium* from Polla, circa 143. This inscription is unique in that it combines a kind of milestone with an *elogium*-type of self-glorification of the road-maker, all in the first person:

[(?)Ap(pius) Claudius Pulcher, G(ai) f(ilius), co(n)s(ul).(?)] / Viam feci ab Regio ad Capuam et / in ea via ponteis omneis, miliarios / tabelariosque poseivei... Et eidem praetor in / Sicilia fugiteivos Italicorum / conquaeisivei redideique, / homines DCCCCXVII eidemque / primus feci ut de agro poplico / aratoribus cederent pastores. / Forum aedisque poplicas heic fece[i].

²⁹ Gordon, A.E., Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy, Berkeley 1983, 80-81.

³⁰ See Gordon, 1983: 81.

[(?) Appius Claudius Pulcher, son of Gaius, consul (143BC) (?)]

I (have) built a road from Rhegium to Capua, and on this road I (have) placed the bridges - all (of them) -, the milestones, and the stade-markers [?] ... And likewise, praetor in Sicily, I rounded up the runaway slaves of the Italici and handed back (to their owners) 917 persons; and likewise I was the first one to make shepherders withdraw from public land in favour of plowmen. A market and public buildings I (have) built here.³¹

This type of *elogium* certainly gives credence to the argument that autobiographical memoirs, particularly *res gestae* such as those of Augustus, are a development out of the *elogia*.³² Notable is the stress on "I" which runs throughout both the *elogium* and the *Res Gestae*. The insistence of the author of the *elogium* that he was the first one to accomplish a particular deed finds echoes in RG 16:

Id primus et solus omnium qui deduxerunt colonias militum in Italia aut in provinciis ad memoriam aetatis meae feci.

Of all those who founded military colonies in Italy or the provinces I was the first and only one to have done this in the recollection of my contemporaries.

However, there are a number of genres which had an effect on the composition of the *de Bello Gallico* and *de Bello Civili* of Caesar and the *Res Gestae* of Augustus. Further, it will be seen that when Caesar and Augustus wrote about their own achievements they were not attempting to keep strictly within the constraints of any particular literary genre; they were influenced by various genres, but only those which suited their purpose in writing. Both leaders must have had the same aim in mind as their predecessors in autobiographical memoirs, namely to be remembered with honour and admiration. To this end they intended to portray

³¹ Gordon, 1983: 88. The first part of the inscription is no doubt on a separate stone, now lost. The road-maker is probably the father-in-law of Tiberius Gracchus, consul in 143.

³² See Brunt, P.A. and Moore, J.M. (eds), Res Gestae Divi Augusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus, Oxford 1967, 3.

themselves and their achievements in a favourable light whilst keeping their self-glorification within ostensibly reasonable limits. Therefore, although external constraints such as time of composition and literary genre had some bearing on their works, it was in each case the personality of the man himself and his purpose in portraying his public image in the correct light that guided the content of what he wrote. As Adcock says of Caesar's works:

They reveal at first hand the mind of the man whose exploits they describe, and it must have been at once plain that no one else can have written them.³³

As already stated, the *commentarius* as a literary form had a long history going back to Alexander the Great and his successors.³⁴ The origin of these writings was both official and private. In the military sphere, *hypomnemata* could be the war-diaries of generals, dispatches or reports such as the one found on a papyrus of the time of Ptolemy VIII. In civil administration they might be memoranda or bureaucratic records, such as court journals, but they were not at this stage intended for publication. In private life they might be either written material for a speech, or private papers or memoranda. An example is the memorandum or *commentarius rerum urbanarum*, containing a catalogue of events at Rome, which Caelius sent to Cicero when he was governing Cilicia.³⁵ Again, this list was obviously not intended for publication since Caelius tells Cicero to select only what deserves his attention: "ex quo tu, quae digna sunt, selige."

It may be concluded so far that *hypomnemata* or *commentarii* were usually statements of fact for their own sake in the form of notes or memoranda. They were not concerned with literary merit and to this end had to be clear and explicit. However, even in *commentarii*, the facts stated would naturally be perceived from

³³ Adcock, 1956: 7.

³⁴ See above pp. 5-6.

³⁵ See Cicero, ad Fam. 8.11.4.

the standpoint of the author and therefore would have an element of subjectivity. It is this element which is clearly developed in Caesar's *Commentarii* and Augustus's *Res Gestae*. It will be shown that the special political and social circumstances of the late republic, and in particular the need of Caesar to maintain and augment his position, led him to elevate the *commentarius* into a literary form in its own right.

It is necessary at this stage to distinguish the *commentarius* from *historia*, a genre which can be traced back to the history of the political orator C. Fannius and contrasted with *Annales* proper.³⁶ Although Fannius began his history with the origins of Rome he probably did so very cursorily and the emphasis of his work fell on his own times. Like Cato he included contemporary speeches and carried his political activity into his work. In his history Fannius was introducing *historia* as a genre, in the later sense of contemporary rationalistic history and as distinct from formal *Annales* which catalogued facts in chronological sequence without dealing with causes or connections.³⁷

Unlike the *commentarius*, *historia* was an achievement of literary art. The author of a *historia* had as his purpose the pursuit of fine style and literary excellence rather than the discovery of truth. Opinion seems to be divided here in the case of Fannius. Rawson says that he was a writer noted for his truthfulness,³⁸ whilst Gratwick, on the basis of Cicero (*Brut.* 81) mentions that he included numerous fictitious speeches in his history.³⁹ However, this does not mean that the author of a *historia* is not sincere or credible. Sallust, for example, realised that history should do more than narrate; it should observe tendencies and interpret and explain actions and events. Sallust appears sincere in his assignment of motives, even if they are not always correctly ascertained, and can be fair to both sides, perhaps

³⁶ On the qualities of Fannius see Cicero *Brut.* 81-2, 99, 100-101, 118, 299.

³⁷ See Badian, 1966: 14 and n. 62.

³⁸ Rawson, 1985: 96.

³⁹ Gratwick, 1982: 151.

justifying his own claim to notable impartiality and lack of political partisanship.⁴⁰ However, in the true tradition of *historia* Sallust ultimately aimed for a higher literary effect in his work, a fact which explains his occasional inclusion of rhetoric. Considering Cicero's views of the inferiority of Roman historical works,⁴¹ Sallust indeed appeared to have raised the literary level of history.

With these characteristics of *commentarii* and *historia* in mind, it may be noted that between the original type of *commentarii* and *historia* a form of literature developed which was not quite one or the other. This was a development of the *commentarius* which finds expression in Caesar's works; it had something more in content than the *commentarius* and something less in style and literary achievement than *historia*. Such a stage had actually been reached before the time of Caesar, and was a natural process whereby the *commentarius* was intended to be the material for *historia*: the writer of *historia* would take the contents of the commentary and convert it into a comprehensive view of events, thus bringing it nearer to an accomplished literary work with artistic merit as its chief concern.

An example of the development of the *commentarius* in the direction of *historia* may be illustrated by Cicero's *Commentarius consulatus sui*, written in Greek in 60. Cicero sent the commentary to Posidonius, the leading Greek man of letters in his day, and asked him to deal with the events described *ornatus*. Obviously Cicero wanted an elegant work produced on what appeared to him as an important subject, his own consulship, and did not deny himself free rein merely because of limitations imposed by

⁴⁰ Sall. Cat. 4.2: "eo magis, quod mihi a spe, metu, partibus rei publicae animus liber erat." Of course, such claims were *topoi* used frequently by ancient historians.

⁴¹ Cic. de Orat. 2.13.51: "Hanc similitudinem scribendi multi secuti sunt, qui sine ullis ornamentis monumenta solum temporum, hominum, locorum gestarumque rerum reliquerunt ... talis noster Cato, et Pictor, et Piso, qui neque tenent, quibus rebus ornetur oratio ... et, dum intellegatur, quid dicant, unam dicendi laudem putant esse brevitatem."

the traditional *commentarius*. Posidonius, however, was clearly frightened away by the daunting prospect of transforming Cicero's *commentarius* into a work of literary merit, and the proposed *historia* did not materialise.⁴²

In 56 Cicero again sent out *commentarii*, this time to L. Lucceius who, he hoped, would write a *historia* which would include the Catilinarian conspiracy and Cicero's part in the events of 63. Lucceius apparently agreed to this,⁴³ but once again no *historia* was written on the subject.⁴⁴

With regard to original *commentarii* it should be remembered that no matter how compact and matter-of-fact they might have seemed, the author of such notes was nevertheless describing events from his own viewpoint, and the account would contain the facts as discerned by him. This enabled Roman statesmen such as Caesar to develop the *commentarius*, or certain aspects of it, into a supposedly factual account of their achievements which would be published for their own self-justification and self-glorification. What appeared to be a narrative statement of facts for record purposes could be in reality a cleverly worked and carefully orchestrated piece of propaganda.

The above survey provides some indication of the literary genres and epigraphic tradition which might have influenced, to a greater or lesser degree, both Caesar's *Commentaries* and Augustus' *Res Gestae*. However, literary genres were by no means

⁴² See Cic. *ad Att.* 2.1.1-2: "quamquam ad me rescripsit iam Rhodo Posidonius se, nostrum illud *ὑπομνήμα* <cum> legeret, quod ego ad eum ut ornatius de isdem rebus scriberet miseram, non modo non excitatum esse ad scribendum sed etiam plane deterritum."

⁴³ Cic. *ad Att.*, 4.6.4: "Epistulam Lucceio quam misi, qua meas res ut scribat rogo, fac ut ab eo sumas (valde bella est) eumque ut adproperet adhorteris, et quod mihi se ita facturum rescripsit agas gratias, ..."

⁴⁴ Lucceius seems to have written a history, but possibly not down to 63.

the decisive influence exerted over these works.⁴⁵ Date and time of composition must also have had some control over content, since any literary work is necessarily limited by its own time constraints, but overriding all these external persuasions the greatest influence came in the form of the character of the great men themselves and their overall purpose in writing about their achievements.

Caesar wrote seven books on the Gallic Wars, the *de Bello Gallico*, which covered the years 58 to 52BC, during which Caesar systematically subjugated the whole of Gaul. The account is Caesar's own narrative of his governorship of Gaul from 58 to 51. The eighth book was written by his colleague, A. Hirtius, who died at Mutina in 43. Book 1 deals with the defeat of the Helvetii and of the German Ariovistus in 58; Book 2 with the revolt of the Gallic tribes and of Caesar's confrontation with the Nervii; Book 3 with the suppression of the Veneti; Book 4 with invasions across the Rhine and a reconnaissance into Britain; Book 5 with a second expedition to Britain which secured the north-west of Gaul against interference from overseas, and with campaigns against the rebel Gallic leaders Indutiomarus and Ambiorix; Book 6 with continued campaigns against Ambiorix, and Book 7 with the revolt of Vercingetorix which concluded with his siege and surrender at Alesia in 52. The work was published some time the following year and, as will be discussed later, this fact is important in understanding its nature and purpose. It is disputed whether the *BG* had actually been written year by year or composed in one year and put into final form for publication in 51. There are arguments put forward to indicate that Caesar wrote all his commentaries on the Gallic War at the same time. These arguments compare select passages in an attempt to prove that Caesar, when he wrote the earlier books, was aware of certain events which were to occur in the later books. Other passages are used in the same way to support the view that the earlier books were written at a late stage together with the remaining books. Even Hirtius' words in his preface to Book 8,

⁴⁵ It should also be noted that genre study is more the creation of modern philologists than of the ancient writers.

noting how easily and rapidly Caesar completed his work, are taken to mean that Caesar's commentaries on the Gallic War were the result of a continuous effort. I would argue that Caesar wrote at yearly intervals in view of the very nature of *commentarii*, which found expression in the form of war-diaries that would be written up as each operation occurred. Caesar may have written "easily and rapidly", but Hirtius's statement could just as well describe the apparent effortless speed with which he completed each book during the comparative leisure of the winter following each campaign. There are also significant differences in style between Book 1 and Book 7, which suggests that the work was composed over several years. For example, Caesar's apparent simplicity of style, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, finds expression in his repeated use of set phrases or set words. In Book 7, however, word changes occur such as the use of *ab infino* instead of *ab imo* for "from the bottom".⁴⁶ The syntax generally becomes less formal and conventional and direct speech is introduced as well as the standard reported speech.⁴⁷

Caesar's *de Bello Civili* on the Civil War consists of three books. Books 1 and 2 deal with the events of 49BC while Book 3 is incomplete since it does not deal with all the events of 48 and the narrative breaks off late in that year. Book 1 describes the opening phase of the war; Book 2 continues the campaigns against Massilia resulting in its surrender; Book 3 outlines the Pompeian strategy which culminated in Pharsalus. The time of composition is uncertain and, according to Ogilvie, the work as a whole is more sketchy and less accurate than the *de Bello Gallico*.⁴⁸ Asinius Pollio is quoted as having criticised Caesar's memoirs for such inadequacies:

⁴⁶ BG 7.19, 73.

⁴⁷ BG 7.20, 38, 50, 77.

⁴⁸ Ogilvie, R.M., "Caesar", in Kenney, E.J. & Clausen, W.V. (eds), The Cambridge History of Classical Literature: (II) Latin Literature, Cambridge 1982, 285.

Pollio Asinius parum diligenter parumque integra veritate compositos putat, cum Caesar pleraque et quae per alios erant gesta temere crediderit et quae per se, vel consulto vel etiam memoria lapsus perperam ediderit; existimatque rescripturum et correcturum fuisse.

Asinius Pollio thinks that they were put together somewhat carelessly and with too little regard for truth; since in many cases Caesar rashly believed the accounts which others gave of their actions, and gave a false account of his own, either purposely or perhaps from forgetfulness; and he thinks that he intended to rewrite and revise them.⁴⁹

However, this appears to be Asinius Pollio's opinion of Caesar's memoirs as a whole, and there is no indication that he is referring solely to the *de Bello Civili*. On the basis of this opinion, however, Ogilvie states that the *BC* was compiled in a hurry, "perhaps in 47 B.C. at a time when Caesar thought that the Civil War was over."⁵⁰ If the *BC* was compiled in a hurry it is not really surprising, since Caesar would not have had as much time after 49 for writing *commentarii* compared to his time in Gaul. Hirtius, though, naturally felt that Caesar's memoirs could not be improved upon:

De isdem commentariis Hirtius ita praedicat: "Adeo probantur omnium iudicio, ut praerepta, non praebita facultas scriptoribus videatur. Cuius tamen rei maior nostra quam reliquorum est admiratio; ceteri enim, quam bene atque emendate, nos etiam, quam facile atque celeriter eos perscripserit, scimus."

About these same memoirs Hirtius proclaims as follows: "They are so highly rated by the judgment of all men, that it seems the opportunity has been taken away from writers, not offered to them. Yet our admiration for this accomplishment is greater than that of others; for they know how well and faultlessly he wrote, while we know also how easily and rapidly he completed the task."⁵¹

Hirtius, it seems, believed that Caesar's work was of such superiority that it prevented others from doing better what Caesar had done so well. Yet Caesar called all the books that

⁴⁹ Suet. *Iul.* 56.

⁵⁰ Ogilvie, "Caesar", 285. See also Chapter 4 n. 9.

⁵¹ Suet. *Iul.* 56.

he completed *Commentarii*, indicating that they were the raw material of history, the bare facts as opposed to the final *historia* which would include all the reflections, speeches, digressions, character illustrations and rhetoric that were appropriate to a literary masterpiece. Cicero's remarks on Caesar, written in 46 when he would have read those of Caesar's *Commentaries* that dealt with his campaigns in Gaul, support Caesar's description of his work. Cicero (*Brut.* 262) says that the *Commentarii* were written so that those who wished to write history might select from them. This would place them in the category of *commentarii* waiting to be changed into *historia*, of materials for the historian rather than history proper. Thus the *BG*, and hence also the *BC*, would appear to represent a more advanced edition of the despatches sent by Caesar to the Senate at the end of each year of operations. It is possible that Caesar used the reports and despatches received from his officers as material for his own despatches and incorporated passages from them *verbatim* in his *Commentaries*. Suetonius (*Iul.* 56) says that these despatches to the Senate were preserved, and that Caesar was the first to convert such documents into book form.

When Caesar first set out for Gaul he was an acknowledged orator of some distinction at a time when skill in oratory was a distinctive feature of political life. His mentor in oratory had been Apollonius Molon of Rhodes, who opposed the elaborate style of the Asianic school in favour of the plainer style of the Atticists. Molon's teaching may well have been in Caesar's mind when he wrote his *Commentaries*, and Cicero (*Brut.* 262) praises their simplicity:

nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta ... nihil enim in historia pura et inlustri brevitae dulcius.

for they are bare, straightforward and charming, free of all oratorical adornment as though removed of clothing ... for there is nothing in history more agreeable than a pure and clear brevity.

Another of Caesar's teachers was the grammarian Antonius Gniphos who was a proponent of purism in language, as inaugurated by the Stoics. This school of oratory adhered to the "analogistic

theory" which dictated the forms of words according to a conventional or recognised orthography. To what extent Caesar adhered to this school is not certain, but it provides some explanation as to why he often seems to have decided that a particular object should consistently be described by the same word. The economy of his style in this respect is in the tradition of a new Latin that had been becoming more systematic in structure and less luxuriant in vocabulary.⁵² On the other hand, Caesar's oratory, particularly in his earlier days, was not lacking in passion and elegance:

tanta in eo vis est, id acumen, ea concitatio, ut illum eodem animo dixisse quo bellavit appareat; exornat tamen haec omnia mira sermonis, cuius proprie studiosus fuit, elegantia.

So great is his force, his penetration, his energy, that it appears he spoke with the same passion with which he fought; however, he adorns all this with a marvellous elegance of language, of which he was an exceptionally zealous student.⁵³

The style of *commentarii*, however, obviously offered little opportunity for force and passion.⁵⁴ Yet the simple brevity and plainness which is apparent in the *BG* and *BC* and in *commentarii* in general did not preclude Caesar's making use of "mira sermonis elegantia"⁵⁵, and as a result producing a work that had some of the qualities of a *historia*. Thus his *Commentaries*, while they remain commentaries, find themselves somewhere between a notebook

⁵² With regard to economy of style, it is possible that mere lack of time may also have been a contributing factor.

⁵³ Quint. *Inst. Orat.* 10.1.114.

⁵⁴ Rawson, 1985: 228, says that Caesar's simplicity and rigour of style was clearly a result of choice, since he was a fine orator and needed to feel no hesitation about writing history proper. There is some merit in this argument, particularly if Caesar was not concerned with adhering strictly to a specific literary genre.

⁵⁵ For example *BG* 6.36-41, where the narrative is animated with energy and excitement as he describes the impending danger of Sabinus and the narrow escape of Cicero at Aduatuca.

and finished history and therefore have a literary distinction of their own.

Caesar's *Commentaries* not only show qualities of *historia* but also reveal elements of the later type of autobiographical *commentarii*, such as those of M. Aemilius Scaurus, P. Rutilius Rufus, Q. Lutatius Catulus and L. Cornelius Sulla. Although written in the third person in a seemingly self-effacing fashion, the composite nature of the *Commentaries* clearly exhibits the *res gestae* element. No one who read the *Commentaries* would expect that Caesar had a desire to tell the whole objective and unvarnished truth about his achievements. The very nature of *res gestae* enabled great men to write about themselves in such a way that would direct present and future public opinion into regarding them with complete approval. In the justification of his acts Caesar gave himself the benefit of the doubt in the interest of self-glorification. Any method that promoted his own interests would not be ignored. For example, he has little to say about Roman politics except in self-justification at the outbreak of the Civil War.⁵⁶ This method of selective writing is appropriately termed by Adcock: "the art that conceals art."⁵⁷

Caesar's *Commentaries* were bound to be subjective in the sense that they describe events as he himself saw them, and this is something that adherence to literary genre and the tradition of the *commentarii* could not prevent. Whatever literary form Caesar employed and however well he adhered to its traditions and conventions, it was inevitable that, in promoting his public image, his personality would at times be discernible.

The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* is a catalogue of the achievements of the emperor Augustus, which he ordered to be inscribed on bronze tablets and set up after his death in front of his mausoleum at Rome.⁵⁸ The document has been described as "the most

⁵⁶ Although perhaps his work on the Gallic War precluded detailed political discussion.

⁵⁷ Adcock, 1956: 19.

⁵⁸ See Suet. Aug. 101; Dio 56.33.1.

interesting and important inscription that has ever come to light"⁵⁹ and "the single most important historical document of the Augustan period."⁶⁰ Composed by Augustus himself, the *Res Gestae* is regarded as the "official" version of events of the Augustan principate, or as Syme puts it, "the hall-mark of official truth".⁶¹ Since it is an inscription, and not a very long one at that, it is often not included in an outline of Roman historical writings. Its apparent simplicity belies the fact that the document is a complex work in which Augustus draws on a variety of Roman conventions to achieve his purpose. Sandys sums up the nature of the document as follows:

On the whole it may be fairly regarded as a posthumous political manifesto in the retrospective form of a dignified narrative of the emperor's public career.⁶²

The document throws light on certain of the Roman traditions that affected biographical and autobiographical composition. To some extent it is modelled on the autobiographies or *res gestae* of earlier statesmen, but at the same time it possesses some of the conciseness which had been associated so long with the inscrip-tional eulogies of great men. As is the case with Caesar's *BG* and *BC*, Augustus' *Res Gestae* is of a composite literary nature.

The document has a clear internal unity. It is divided into 35 sections and written in 6 columns. The contents fall into four parts. Part 1 (chapters 1-14) demonstrates Augustus's exceptional position in the *res publica* and his fundamental respect for Roman *libertas*, and states the honores received or held by him. Parts 2 (chapters 15-24) and 3 (chapters 25-33) are a justification of this exceptional position, as Augustus sets forth what he achieved with his private money and under his own military command. Part 2 contains a statement of the *impensae*

⁵⁹ Hardy, E.G. (ed), The Monumentum Ancyranum, Oxford 1923, 7.

⁶⁰ Ramage, E.S., The Nature and Purpose of Augustus's Res Gestae, Stuttgart 1987, 11.

⁶¹ Syme, R., The Roman Revolution, Oxford 1939, 522.

⁶² Sandys, J.E., Latin Epigraphy, London 1927, 259.

or monies spent by Augustus on behalf of the *res publica* and the Roman people, while Part 3 contains the *res gestae* proper, that is the military operations and diplomatic successes by which he extended the sway of the Roman people over the whole inhabited world. Part 4 (chapters 34-35) contains a concluding statement about Augustus' position in the state and reiterates the claim that he restored the republic and consequently obtained superior authority and the title of *pater patriae*.

From this outline it is clear that, in line with the nature of autobiographical memoirs in general, the content of the *RG* gives us a profound insight into the way in which Augustus wished to be appreciated. Naturally one would not expect a great degree of impartiality. As is evident from the examples of autobiographical memoirs written in the late republic, it is difficult for anyone at any time to be objective about himself.

The *RG* is also seen as a development out of the literary genre of *elogia*, particularly by authors such as Brunt and Moore.⁶³ Bormann, Schmidt and Nissen have all argued that the document is an epitaph,⁶⁴ and Fairley concludes that it is certainly "an epitaph of unique character."⁶⁵ Brunt and Moore regard the document as a permanently inscribed and more elaborate form of *elogium*, since Augustus' achievements were more grandiose.⁶⁶ Unlike traditional *elogia*, the *RG* does not contain dates of Augustus' birth or death, the document is in the first person and it does not adhere to the general schema of early *elogia*.⁶⁷ Yet this did not preclude Augustus from making use of such characteristics of the genre that suited his purpose. The fact that an *elogium* was designed to commemorate the virtues and achievements of a great man enabled the *princeps* to write a

⁶³ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 3.

⁶⁴ Cited by Fairley, W. (ed.), Monumentum Ancyranum: The Deeds of Augustus, Philadelphia 1988, 8.

⁶⁵ Fairley, 1988: 8.

⁶⁶ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 3.

⁶⁷ For example, the *elogium* of Scipio Barbatus discussed above.

highly selective account of his own strengths and achievements in order to represent himself in the best possible light for posterity. In every society and at any point in time, a funeral oration would concentrate on the strengths of a person's character and his or her successes, and weaknesses or failures would be largely or altogether ignored. It is quite clear from the contents of the *RG* that Augustus aimed to represent himself most favourably, and while his account would not contain any direct untruths, it would certainly be "slanted" in such a way that certain facts would be omitted in order to reveal a sufficiently glorified portrait of the author.

Champlin puts forward the unorthodox view that the *RG* was actually a part of Augustus' last will and testament.⁶⁸ He argues that the will of Augustus conforms in appearance and order of content to that of a standard Roman will, although its contents are unique. In his opinion, the *volumina* to which Suetonius (Aug. 101) refers at the end of the chapter on Augustus's provisions for his funeral are not independent documents but codicils added to Augustus' will. From this Champlin deduces that the *RG* must be one of these codicils, especially in view of the fact that it was precisely an inscription designed to be attached to the already constructed mausoleum. If we also consider that for the Romans, a man's will was not only a testimony to his character but literally his last judgment on the world around him, this would explain Augustus' obsession with how he wished to reveal himself to posterity. To strengthen his claim that the *RG* is a codicil of Augustus' will, Champlin notes similarities between the will and the document:

His will ... is most reminiscent of his *Res Gestae*, in that it combines pride in his stunning accomplishments with reassurance that they continue the best of Roman traditions.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Champlin, E., "The Testament of Augustus", *ZPE* 62 (1986) 247-255.

⁶⁹ Champlin, 1986: 247.

Champlin's theory appears to depend ultimately on his interpretation of Suetonius' final chapter on Augustus. He believes that Suetonius is not actually describing the contents of the *volumina*, but merely continuing his report of Augustus' will. It seems clear, however, that when Suetonius refers to the various *volumina* he makes a clear distinction between Augustus' will and three additional, independent documents. Although the *RG* conforms in appearance and order of content to the standard Roman will, these seem to be the only characteristics of the genre that Augustus adopted for the purpose of his work.

The *RG* does not appear to fit neatly into any particular literary genre. The document reveals characteristics of *elogia*, memoir-writing and epitaph as well as the standard Roman will. Mommsen refrains from assigning it to any category of composition, whether it be an epitaph or political statement.⁷⁰ Syme, too, concludes that it is unique and its contents cannot be explained in terms of one particular literary genre:

If explained they must be, it is not with reference to the religions and kings of the Hellenistic East but from Rome and Roman practice, as a combination between the *elogium* of a Roman general and the statement of accounts of a Roman magistrate.⁷¹

It would therefore be prudent to adopt the conclusion of Yavetz:

It is not pertinent to try once more to classify the *Res Gestae* in terms of its literary genre.⁷²

Ramage, carrying this conclusion further, correctly infers that:

⁷⁰ Mommsen, T., Res Gestae Divi Augusti ex Monumentis Ancyrano et Apolloniensi, Berlin 1883, 223.

⁷¹ Syme, RR, 524.

⁷² Yavetz, Z., "The *Res Gestae* and Augustus's Public Image", in Millar, F. and Segal, E. (eds), Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects, Oxford 1984, 31 n. 100.

The fact that no one theory has prevailed suggests that the *RG* should be viewed as a unique creation, designed by Augustus for his own special purposes.⁷³

Both Caesar's *Commentaries* and Augustus *Res Gestae* are of a composite literary nature, and both statesmen made use of certain characteristics of the various genres that would benefit their purpose. However, it should also be kept in mind that literary genre is a relatively modern concept and was not as well established then as it is today. It would not in this case be wise to labour the point as to whether or not the *RG* or the *Commentaries* belonged to one genre or the other.

A study of the nature and content of each author's work will reveal his purpose in writing, and from this analysis the writer's character will emerge. The apparent clarity, precision and simplicity of style of Caesar's *Commentaries*, together with his use of the third person to describe himself, cleverly masks with seeming objectivity a work that is at once apologetic, personal and autobiographical. Likewise Augustus achieved his effect by a subtle and skilful use of official phraseology and traditional, ostensibly simple, Roman terms. At first glance the *RG* appears direct and uncomplicated. But the more one studies the document, the more obvious it becomes that Augustus' highly selective account of events during his reign, together with his use of traditional terminology, has produced a more complicated autobiographical work that not merely glorifies his achievements but attempts to demonstrate and justify the unique position of pre-eminence that he had come to hold.

Caesar and Augustus appear to have had a similar purpose in mind when they wrote. They lived in a time which had begun with violent events arousing the strongest partisan feeling, and at some stage in their political careers their public image had become a cause for concern to themselves. In the face of political innuendo and slander, the only defence a politician had was to give as wide a circulation as possible to his own version of the facts. The publication of their works was therefore timed

⁷³ Ramage, 1987: 15.

to justify and glorify themselves, their political motives and their deeds, and to promote a favourable public image to the world. Although Caesar and Augustus appear to have confined themselves to the limitations of certain literary genres, no doubt like many other writers they used such constraints to suit their purpose rather than let their purpose be restricted by constraints.

Public image was therefore of paramount importance to Roman statesmen who wished to be remembered, and for Caesar and Augustus the promotion of public image prevailed over literary conventions. The appropriate image was possibly of even greater political importance than their true characters, and the publication of an autobiographical work, however deceptively simple and straightforward it might seem, was the vehicle by means of which an image could be revised, corrected or enhanced.

Public opinion therefore played an essential role in influencing what both Caesar and Augustus wrote in their respective works. As Childs notes, public opinion is courted by politicians, appealed to by statesmen and feared by military leaders,⁷⁴ and the *Commentarii* and *RG* reveal how important it was for their authors to pander to public sentiment. This sentiment is well expressed by Dicey:

There exists at any given time a body of beliefs, convictions, sentiments, accepted principles, or firmly rooted prejudices, which taken together make up the public opinion of a particular era or what we may call the reigning or predominating current opinion.⁷⁵

It is rather puzzling as to why Yavetz complains that the notions of "image" and "public opinion" have perhaps been too frequently

⁷⁴ See Childs, H.L., Public Opinion: Nature, Formation and Role, New Jersey 1965, 1.

⁷⁵ Dicey, A.V., Law and Public Opinion in England, London 1920, 19.

used, if not abused,⁷⁶ since he does not elaborate on this view. Whatever the opinions on the terminology, it is certainly conclusive that both Caesar and Augustus composed the accounts of their *res gestae* in order to justify themselves and their actions and display their virtues with due regard to the general sentiment prevailing at the time of writing. The element of propaganda contained in their accounts is therefore linked directly to public opinion, and shaped the self-image which they presented to the world as a result.

Thus the *existimatio* of Caesar or Augustus would be perceived as meritorious if he behaved and acted according to or above the expectations of his peer group. What counted was not so much the personality of the author *per se*, but how he was thought of and how his actions were viewed by others. The *Commentarii* and the *RG* are testaments to the mastery and skill used in producing a successful piece of written propaganda directed to manipulate public opinion. As Yavetz rightly says, "One had to work hard to become the subject of good news."⁷⁷ Conversely, the *dignitas* of a statesman could be irreparably damaged if his *existimatio* were for some reason publicly destroyed, and such a man was conscious of how easily his reputation could be injured.⁷⁸

Caesar and Augustus expended considerable effort in their accounts in order to have people speak and think favourably of them. However, when the term "public opinion" is used, it is always necessary to consider what public or collection of individuals is being referred to. This of course leads to the question of the intended audience of the *Commentarii* and of the *RG*, problems which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Whether the works were aimed at a specific group or at the world in general, the purpose of the author was the same: to portray

⁷⁶ Yavetz, Z., Julius Caesar and his Public Image, London 1983, 214.

⁷⁷ Yavetz, Julius Caesar, 222.

⁷⁸ See Suet. *Iul.* 75; *Tib.* 58.

himself as ideal, beyond reproach and always right. Yavetz stresses the importance of public opinion in respect of Caesar:

Caesar's contemporaries did not understand his psyche either, and judged him by his image, as reflected by public opinion.⁷⁹

The written word evidently played a significant part in shaping this image. As Syme says, "propaganda outweighed arms in the contests of the Triumviral period."⁸⁰ The manner in which Caesar and Augustus portrayed themselves as models of exemplary behaviour and the extent to which they were successful will be revealed in the following chapters.

⁷⁹ Yavetz, Julius Caesar, 203.

⁸⁰ Syme, RR, 460.

CHAPTER 2

Caesar's de Bello Gallico and de Bello Civili

Introduction

The concept of "image" in public opinion is not a modern invention. The Romans called it *fama* or *existimatio* and to them it was of great significance. In the political arena, particularly in the city, a man's reputation and hence his political standing as reflected by public opinion was of paramount importance.

Caesar's aims in writing his *Commentarii* were political or at least at that stage concerned with enhancing his own reputation. It is natural that in an era in which propaganda was an important part of policy and ambition, he would use any means that helped promote his own interests. His motives, therefore, can be revealed through a careful study of the works themselves. Both commentaries show Caesar as a modest and efficient patriot, but the propaganda element,¹ although clearly discernible, never interferes with his accomplished description of warfare.

Public opinion was for the most part influenced by what senators said in the Senate at *contiones* or in private or what they wrote. Caesar took care to conduct a correspondence with men such as Cicero, who could in turn influence this public opinion. In the same way he strove to ensure that, for the sake of self-interest and his future reputation, his *Commentarii* would have to influence men of his own class, primarily the aristocracy of Rome, which rated military skill and success more highly than anything else. On the other hand, the soldiers in Caesar's army did not need to await the publication of *commentarii* to know about the character of their commander-in-chief; their opinions were linked directly to military success and the influence Caesar exerted on them by means of his officers.²

¹ See for example *BC* 1.1-11; 3.31-3, 82-3.

² Yavetz, *Julius Caesar*, 163, aptly summarises the effect of Caesar's behaviour and personality on his soldiers: "Caesar knew how to command by personal

Quite apart from Caesar's purpose in writing his *Commentarii*, the literary form, content, arrangement and tradition of *commentarii* presuppose a certain amount of subjectivity. It is not possible for a writer, however impartial he may profess to be, to describe events in which he played a major role with complete impartiality.

The effect which Caesar claimed his *Commentarii* to have on posterity was that of providing historiographical information,³ but in the first instance both the *de Bello Gallico* and the *de Bello Civili* are masterpieces of political journalism directed at his contemporaries. One can compare the *Commentarii* to the *narratio* of the speeches that were delivered before the Senate, the people and the law courts at that time, and impartial truth was certainly not expected in these. Caesar often deliberately distorts, but not actually falsifies, historical fact. Although there is no reason for us not to test for credibility, Caesar would not have got away with deliberate falsification since his contemporaries also had sources of information about events in Gaul and Rome. We know from Cicero (*Pis.* 83-93) that although Piso sent no reports to the Senate, Cicero himself was in a position to give a full account of Caesar's violations and failures.

example. Before each battle he instructed his soldiers personally, and impressed his recruits by behaving like a master with his young gladiators. At difficult times he could spur his troops on by his self-confidence, energy and humour (which cannot be valued too highly), and in the first charge of a battle he did not hesitate to be at the head of his troops. Caesar's soldiers loved and respected him, but he never abandoned his principles of rigid discipline."

³ This, of course, is not considered true. Syme, 1939: 459-50 says that Caesar was his own historian in the narratives of the Gallic and Civil Wars, and his own apologist. Peskett, A.G. (trans.), *The Civil Wars*, Loeb edition, London, 1966 ix notes that although the narrative of the Civil Wars may be in the main trustworthy, Caesar sometimes misstates the political situation or understates a military reverse in order to justify his political action.

Adcock claims that one of Caesar's aims in describing events as he saw them was partly to satisfy a kind of intellectual appreciation of his own doings and that of others, and partly to satisfy an interest in military technique.⁴ This is rather a simplistic view; although the *BG* was certainly a statement of Caesar's achievements, neither of his works can be described as an appreciation of the achievements of others. This is not to say that Caesar is unwilling to give credit to others. He honours the signal bravery of L. Arunculeius Cotta and P. Sextius Baculus in the Gallic War, (*BG* 5.33 and 36; 6.38) and that of the centurion Scaeva in the Civil War. (*BG* 3.53).⁵ As Ogilvie states, the *BG* is also fair-minded in the treatment of opponents such as Pompey, Labienus and Domitius Ahenobarbus.⁶ At the same time Caesar does not hesitate to take the credit for an entire campaign himself, referring to Pharsalus as "Caesar's victory," (*BC* 3.101) and refusing to take the blame for failure in battle, (*BG* 3.73), while the achievements of others, such as those of Publius Crassus over the maritime states during the Gallic War, are often reduced to a single paragraph (*BG* 2.34).

Dignitas

Certainly one of Caesar's aims was to promote his own *dignitas*, the Roman quality of achievement which deserves recognition by high office. This view is supported by Adcock,⁷ and by Ogilvie who states that the publication of the *BG* was timed to display Caesar's *dignitas*.⁸ If publication of the *BG* took place in 51BC, it coincides with the point at which Caesar, in his anxiety to secure the consulship of 49, proposed to the Senate that his

⁴ Adcock, 1956: 22.

⁵ Perhaps an explanation for occasionally giving credit to others is the fact that *commentarii* originated simply as war-diaries, and these would naturally have mentioned others' achievements.

⁶ Ogilvie, "Caesar", 285.

⁷ Adcock, 1956: 23.

⁸ Ogilvie, "Caesar", 282.

proconsulship be extended to cover the period between the laying down of his command as proconsul and his standing for office. In publishing the *BG*, Caesar could maintain his demand for the gratitude of his fellow-countrymen and demonstrate his *dignitas*. He repeatedly stresses the importance of *dignitas*; in fact he frankly admits that it was dearer to him than life itself (*BC* 1.9).

Caesar recognised the importance of maintaining his own *dignitas* and that of others. He gives the following reason for constructing a bridge over the Rhine:

sed navibus transire neque satis tutum esse arbitrabatur, neque suae neque populi Romani dignitatis esse statuebat.

but he deemed it scarcely safe, and considered that it was unworthy of his own and the Romans' dignity, to cross in boats. (*BG* 4.17)

He also emphasises the importance of maintaining his *dignitas* at the very outset of the Civil War. He encourages his troops as follows:

Hortatur, cuius imperatoris ductu VIII annis rem publicam felicissime gesserint plurimaeque proelia secunda fecerint, omnem Galliam Germaniamque pacaverunt, ut eius existimationem dignitatemque ab inimicis defendant.

He exhorts them to defend from his enemies the reputation and dignity of the commander under whose leadership they have administered the state with very favourable fortune for nine years, fought many successful battles, and pacified the whole of Gaul and Germany. (*BC* 1.7)

Caesar's pronouncement on his own *dignitas* is put into the words of Gaius Crastinus before Pharsalus:

"Sequimini me", inquit, "manipulares mei qui fuistis, et vestro imperatori quam constituistis operam date. Unum hoc proelium superest; quo confecto et ille suam dignitatem et nos nostram libertatem recuperabimus."

"Follow me", he said, "you who have been my comrades, and give your commander the service you have determined. This one battle remains; when it is over he will recover his dignity and we our liberty." (*BC* 3.91)

Taking into account the importance of *dignitas* to a man of Caesar's stature, it becomes apparent that the *BG* and the *BC* are more than just a public record of events; they also constitute the personal defence of a statesman whose honour and prestige had to be continually maintained, in fact considerably more so than that of most political figures.

Existimatio

Closely allied to *dignitas*, and equally at stake, is *existimatio*, the reputation which is dependent upon public image and shaped by public opinion or *existimatio vulgi*. In the case of a public figure such as Caesar his statements, speeches and deeds would be submitted to the judgement of the public. A man must have reached a certain status or rank to be worthy of *existimatio* and thus it is best translated as one's standing in society. What counted was not so much the personality of Caesar *per se*; it was how he was thought of by others. It was not enough to be an expert general, or to possess outstanding qualities as a leader. It was, however, essential to appear to have these attributes, since *existimatio* was based not only and not always upon actual merit. Caesar's *existimatio* depended mainly upon people's reactions to his activities.

Together with his *dignitas* Caesar, as a Roman magistrate (58-49), considered his *existimatio* to be more important than other qualities. Although there were always poets and writers who were able to strengthen the reputation of their patron, others such as Caesar kept their own journals. However, since common people hardly read history books or pamphlets, the influence of these writings was indirect. Their content was obviously spread by literate people and for this reason the value of written propaganda has been recognised by modern scholars. The hostile writings of Tanusius Geminus,⁹ M. Actorius Naso¹⁰ and Titus Ampius¹¹ are evidence of attempts that were made to damage the

⁹ Plut. Caes. 22; Suet. Iul. 9.2.

¹⁰ Suet. Iul. 9.3; 52.1.

¹¹ Suet. Iul. 77.

public image of Caesar. In his writing, therefore, Caesar had to expend a great deal of effort in order to make people speak favourably of him. He had to work hard in order to become the subject of good news, and to become popular he had to prove himself not only in words but also in deeds. A record of these deeds in the shape of *Commentarii* would be a way of maintaining Caesar's *dignitas* and his *existimatio*.

No political leader could underestimate the importance and power of his own *existimatio* and the public opinion which shaped it. In the *BG* Caesar reveals the importance of *existimatio* in Diviacus' ambivalent feelings towards his brother Dumnorix:

quibus opibus ac nervis non solum ad minuendam gratiam, sed paene ad perniciem suam uteretur. Sese tamen et amore fraterno et existimatione vulgi commoveri.

he (Dumnorix) was using these resources and his strength not only to diminish his favour, but almost to his destruction. For all that he was affected by brotherly love and public opinion. (*BG* 1.20)

Caesar again illustrates the importance of maintaining one's reputation with a battle scene in which two gallant Roman centurions, Titus Pullo and Lucius Vorenus, each competing for promotion, were hesitant to move in the face of an attack by the enemy. Eventually Pullo made the first move and hurled himself into the enemy's ranks. Vorenus followed immediately, chiefly because he feared what all men would think: "*sed omnium veritus existimationem subsequitur*" (*BG* 5.44). People holding positions of power and respect had to live up to certain expectations and a political figure such as Caesar was never free of concern for his reputation.

Clementia

In Rome no man wished to put a citizen to death. He preferred to be remembered as having spared when he could have destroyed, and Caesar was no exception. Cicero (*Quinct.* 16.51) tells us that this was done for the sake of public opinion as well as humaneness:

Haec in homines alienissimos, denique inimicissimos viri boni faciunt et hominum existimationis et communis humanitas causa, ...

Honourable men treat the greatest strangers, indeed, even their greatest enemies in this manner, for the sake of public opinion and the common feeling of humanity.

Thus Caesar took care at all times to stress his *clementia* in his writings, often sacrificing personal revenge to higher political objectives. He would always show clemency where he could safely do so, and avoid bloodshed if he could attain his objectives without it. Sallust (Cat. 54.2) says that Caesar was considered an exceptional man because of his kindness, compassion and generosity.

In the *BG* Caesar excuses the injury which Dumnorix had done to himself and to Rome out of consideration for his brother Diviachus (*BG* 1.20). And in dealings with the Aduatuci he emphasises the customary *clementia* for which he wished to be recognised:

Unum petere ac deprecari: si forte pro sua clementia ac mansuetudine, quam ipsi ab aliis audirent, ...

Ad haec Caesar respondit: Se magis consuetudine sua quam merito eorum civitatem conservaturum, ...

One thing they sought and prayed for: if perhaps according to his mercy and gentleness, which they themselves heard from others, ...

To this Caesar replied that he would save their state alive rather through his custom than by their desert, ... (*BG* 2.31-32)

This demonstrates that Caesar's *existimatio*, here in respect of *clementia* and *mansuetudo*, depended on what people were saying about him and also on what he wrote about himself. And here, as elsewhere, Caesar astutely ascribes to the mouths of others certain compliments, whether strictly accurate or not, that enhanced his own reputation.

Throughout the *BG* Caesar continues to display his *clementia*. He takes care to show the extent of his mercy by his lenient attitude towards the Germans at the end of the German campaign

in 55, sparing all those who had been detained in their camp (BG 4.15). In 53 the Senones, who had been suspected of plotting armed rebellion against Caesar, were willingly granted pardon immediately upon asking him for mercy (BG 6.4). The following year Litaviccus caused the Aedui, who had long been on friendly terms with Rome, to join with the Arverni against Caesar, but Caesar checked the advance of the Aedui and forbade his soldiers to put any of them to the sword (BG 7.40). Here Caesar emphasises the magnitude of his display of *clementia* in messages to the state of the Aedui which reported that the men, whom by right of war he could have put to death, had been saved by his own kindness (BG 7.41).

Throughout the BC Caesar ingeniously attempts to make it appear that the war-guilt rested entirely with the other side,¹² and for this reason his own public image had to remain untarnished, particularly at the outset of the war. The work contains numerous passages of self-justification, with Caesar making frequent references to his good qualities. His displays of *clementia* are referred to more often than any of his other attributes, particularly in Book 1. For instance, he reports that when Lucius Pupius, one of the followers of S. Quintilius Varus, was brought before him for punishment he sent him away (BC 1.14). He did likewise with Gaius Attius, who had attempted to prevent the inhabitants of Sulmo from siding with Caesar (BC 1.18). After the Corfinium campaign in February 49, Caesar says that he ordered all the senators, tribunes and equites of the town to be brought before him and, protecting them from the justifiable anger of his own troops, dismissed them all unharmed (BC 1.23). Amongst these prisoners was his deadly enemy, L. Domitius Ahenobarbus. Although Caesar knew very well what would have been his own fate if the roles had been reversed, he relinquished personal revenge to political objective in granting the prisoners their freedom. He believed that he could advance his own ends without destroying them, for while he makes much of his act of *clementia* and the fact that these men had shown no gratitude for the favours he had done to them, he gained the

¹² It was also a successful attempt, since most scholars have justified his actions.

advantage in that henceforth they were indebted to him. His kindness even went so far as to restore to Domitius the money which Domitius had taken to Corfinium, even though this money belonged to the state. It was clearly public opinion that dictated this move. Caesar says that he gave the money to Domitius

ne continentior in vita hominum quam in pecunia fuisse videatur.

in order that he might not appear more self-controlled in dealing with the lives of men than with money. (BC 1.23)

Clearly Caesar wished his *clementia* to be regarded as one of his inherent characteristics, which to an extent it was. He refers to it as "pristina lenitas" (BC 1.74), as though his name was synonymous with a traditional compassion for both conquered subjects and humanity in general. Associated with this attitude was Caesar's desire not to be seen to capitalise on the misfortune of others. As he says to Lucius Afranius and his subdued army:

Neque nunc se illorum humilitate neque aliqua temporis opportunitate postulare, quibus rebus opes augeantur suae;
...

Nor did he now demand that his resources be increased by their humiliation or by some temporal opportunity; ... (BC 1.85).

In Book 3 of the BC Caesar continues to portray himself as one who saved when he could have destroyed. At Oricum L. Manlius Torquatus, finding himself in desperate circumstances, surrendered himself and the town to Caesar, but Caesar informs us that he kept Torquatus safe and unharmed (BC 3.11). His treatment of the survivors of the Rhodian sea attack is similar: he spared them all and sent them back home (BC 3.27).¹³

¹³ Note Caesar's repeated use of "sparing" words such as "conservatus est" (BC 3.11) and "omnes conservatos" (BC 3.27). In his *Commentarii* Caesar's style in respect of syntax is clear-cut and formal and dispenses with synonyms, with the result that he chooses one word for something and adheres to it throughout. Although his motive is principally

Caesar's image as someone who spared the conquered appears again at the end of the Civil War. At Pharsalus in August 48 he gained possession of the enemy camp and isolated the remaining Pompeians on a hillside. Here he informs us of his final and greatest act of *clementia*. Having been ordered by Caesar to come down from the high ground and throw down their arms, the enemy willingly obeyed and begged Caesar for their safety. Caesar claims that:

consolatus consurgere iussit et pauca apud eos de lenitate sua locutus, quo minore essent timore, omnes conservavit militibusque suis commendavit, ne qui eorum violaretur, ne quid sui desideraret.

he consoled them and ordered them to rise and, speaking a few words about his own leniency in order to lessen their fear, he kept them all safe and commended to his soldiers that none of them should be injured, nor should their property be missing. (BC 3.98)

The Commentarii

Throughout his *Commentarii* Caesar refers to himself in the third person, as if to distance himself from events for the appearance of subjectivity. Grant says that Caesar writes of himself in a self-effacing fashion and that such displays of simplicity effectively conceal a propagandist intention.¹⁴ Ogilvie notes that the use of the third person is a convention that gives an air of objectivity to what is a personal autobiographical account.¹⁵ Wight Duff maintains that the impersonal tone of the *Commentarii* and its bare style harbour a skilful design, where artless explanations and suppression of fact make Caesar's

simplicity and a concern for clarity of diction which allowed him to present a general impression of straightforwardness and truthfulness, the repeated use of a verb such as *conservatus* in respect of those whom he has conquered also facilitates his ability to impress his *clementia* upon his readers as one of his most important attributes.

¹⁴ Grant, Roman Literature, 95.

¹⁵ Ogilvie, "Caesar", 283.

apparently plain story tell consistently in his favour.¹⁶ These comments are all valid, but there are also instances where Caesar has quite openly emphasised his own qualities, as has been shown in the case of *clementia*. In some instances he is also openly subjective in demonstrating his own popularity. His *existimatio* was constantly at stake, particularly during the Civil War, and the need to enhance his reputation explains such displays of virtue. What is most noteworthy about Caesar's use of the third person is that its effect of distance and therefore objectivity actually enhances his stature and strengthens his reputation in the eyes of the public.

The *BG* appears to be essentially a statement of Caesar's military achievements, although it will be seen from further analysis that the work is also a justification of his activities in Gaul. The *BC*, however, reveals that Caesar is more at pains to justify his personal position and his political actions, and for this reason there are more frequent and direct references to his popularity. At the beginning of the Civil War, Caesar tells us that as he traversed the whole of Picenum,

Cunctae earum regionum praefecturae libentissimis animis eum recipiunt exercitumque eius omnibus rebus iuvant. Etiam Cingulo, quod oppidum Labienus constituerat suaque pecunia exaedificaverat, ad eum legati veniunt quaeque imperaverit se cupidissime facturos pollicentur. Milites imperat; mittunt.

All the prefectures of those regions receive him with the utmost willingness and assist his army with all kinds of supplies. Even from Cingulum, a town which Labienus had founded and built at his own expense, envoys come to him and promise to do what he tells them with the greatest eagerness. He requisitions soldiers; they send them. (*BC* 1.15).

The image Caesar wishes to promote is that of universal popularity, even in towns which could easily have supported the side of Pompey. The speed and willingness with which he and his army are assisted serve to emphasise their unquestioning approval of him. The idea of universal, or at least regional popularity, is reiterated in Book 2. M. Terentius Varro, in spite of

¹⁶ Wight Duff, 1960: 298.

delivering incriminating speeches against Caesar and asserting that a great number of soldiers had deserted him for Lucius Afranius, is said to have found out that the whole of his Spanish province favoured the side of Caesar (BC 2.18). Such popularity is further accentuated in Varro's fear of being cut off from his route to Gades, for Caesar asserts:

tanta ac tam secunda in Caesarem voluntas provinciae reperiēbatur.

so great and so favourable was found to be the affection of the province for Caesar. (BC 2.20)

In all this Caesar implies that, in spite of attempts to persuade them to the contrary, most people knew where the war-guilt really lay, and that he himself was an excellent and popular general with an untarnished reputation.

In Book 3 of the BC Caesar tells us in some detail of the defection from his army of the Allobrogian brothers, Raucillus and Egus. However, this is displayed as an example of the exception to the rule, since Caesar states categorically:

Nam ante id tempus nemo aut miles aut eques a Caesare ad Pompeium transierat, cum paene cotidie a Pompeio ad Caesarem perfugerent, vulgo vero universi in Epiro atque Aetolia conscripti milites earumque regionum omnium, quae a Caesare tenebantur.

For before that time no one, either foot or horse, had changed sides from Caesar to Pompeius, although almost daily men were deserting from Pompeius to Caesar, indeed everywhere all the troops conscripted in Epirus and Aetolia and from all the regions which were being held by Caesar. (BC 3.61)

Here is an illustration of Grant's valid statement that Caesar is "a master of rearrangement, emphasis, omission, skilfully directed to his own political aim".¹⁷ Although facts are not actually falsified, they are often exaggerated, since it is highly unlikely that there were so few deserters. Caesar sets the example of the two Allobrogians against the emphatic

¹⁷ Grant, Roman Literature, 95.

statement that no one before that time had deserted his army. As a result, his own popularity is set in stark contrast to that of Pompey, and naturally it comes out more favourably. Caesar consequently appears as the innocent and victimised party in the Civil War. His use of the third person to describe himself is particularly effective in statements like these, because it enabled him to display his outstanding qualities in a modest fashion. As a result his *clementia*, his *mansuetudo* and his popularity are made to appear as undisputable facts, and Caesar genuinely believed they were. As Adcock says,

Caesar had no doubt of his own greatness, and of his inborn right to it.¹⁸

To conclude, then, the *BG* and *BC* are primarily works of self-justification and a defence against Caesar's political enemies both alive and dead, and in each case his *existimatio* was at stake. The *commentarius* form and Caesar's use of the third person enabled him to produce what was ostensibly an objective narrative of his *res gestae* and related events. The traditional *commentarius* suited Caesar's style because it was concerned with the recording of separate events, each for its own sake. He could use the model in this way in order to economise on the truth without actually falsifying the facts, thereby enhancing his reputation and directing public opinion. In analysing the *Commentarii*, it should be considered exactly what Caesar is trying to justify, and how this justification is designed to impress his Roman audience.

The de Bello Gallico

By obtaining the command in Gaul from 58 Caesar had won his first political objective, that is control of an army. Plutarch (*Caes.* 15) correctly believed that Caesar's Gallic command opened up a whole new opportunity for him within the career structure. I also believe that Caesar's main purpose was to further his reputation and to train a devoted army; only of secondary importance were such considerations as the Romanisation of Gaul

¹⁸ Adcock, 1956: 24.

and the finding of new outlets for Roman commerce. Caesar intended to use the army to enhance his own prestige and therefore he had to find some sphere for military action. Gaul soon provided him with the necessary pretext, since there was at this time constant pressure by the Germanic tribes on the Gauls and in addition the Helvetii of Switzerland had migrated from the east into Gaul.

The attack Caesar made on Gaul was one of the most unjustifiable acts of aggression Rome ever undertook. His enemies certainly blamed him for unjustified hostility in an attempt to gain political advantage and personal glory. Some, especially the younger Cato, blamed him for cruelty towards the Gauls. Dio (38.31.1) believed that Caesar's greatest wish in Gaul was to wage war and win success for the entire period of his proconsulship.

In spite of this, Caesar does not refute his enemies directly in the *BG*; instead he justifies his actions by a bare, seemingly factual and objective account of his and his army's impressive achievements in Gaul: The Gallic campaigns won for him military *fama* and *gloria* and sustained his unquestionable *dignitas*. In the *BC* Caesar compliments himself in this respect by putting the following words into the mouths of the decurions at Auximum:

neque se neque reliquos municipes pati posse C. Caesarem imperatorem, bene de re publica meritum, tantis rebus gestis oppido moenibusque prohiberi; ...

that neither they nor the rest of their fellow-citizens can endure that *Q.* Caesar, holding imperial command, having deserved well of the state and having performed such great exploits, should be prevented from the town and its fortifications; ... (*BC* 1.13)

Caesar (Book 1) describes his successful operation in 58 against the Helvetii and then against the German Ariovistus. The Helvetii had planned to settle beyond the Jura mountains and the Rhone, and the most convenient route ran through the territory of the Allobroges, who had just been in revolt against Rome. Caesar tells us that the emigration plan had been strongly supported in 61 by Orgetorix, the most powerful man of the

Helvetii (BG 1.3-4). When Orgetorix died it was generally believed that the danger from the Helvetii was over, but they nevertheless carried out their plan. As Caesar says, the alliance which Orgetorix had formed with the Aeduan Dumnorix still existed in 59 (BG 1.9). This would confirm that the danger from the Helvetii was far from over. Caesar provides this information in order to correct the false general opinion about conditions in Gaul. He was clearly writing for Roman senators and against talk spread by his enemies that his campaigns in Gaul were unjustified. Caesar knew that his opponents in Rome were watching his every move with suspicion and that any arbitrary actions on his part would supply them with information for an indictment.

Caesar also justifies his campaign against the Helvetii by stating that they intended to march through the territory of the Sequani and the Aedui and he foresaw that this would endanger the Tolosates in the western part of the Roman province (BG 1.10). He was therefore obliged, in the long-standing tradition of Rome, to anticipate any danger to the Roman state. Further, he informs us that the Helvetii were old enemies who had defeated the Roman consul Lucius Cassius Longinus, routed his army and sent it under the yoke (BG 1.7).¹⁹ Dio (38.32.3) actually supports this reason, indicating that if Caesar had not carried out the campaign the Aedui and Sequani would have allied themselves with the Helvetii.

Therefore, when Caesar published his *Commentarii*, he took particular care to ensure that the campaign against the Helvetii, from which all the other Gallic campaigns followed, was fully compatible with the established principles of Roman policy. It will be seen that throughout the *BG* and *BC* Caesar always claims to act in the interests of the state. Of course he omits to tell us that he had an altogether personal reason for revenge against the Helvetii, since his wife's great-grandfather had been killed in the battle of 107. This shows how clever publicity on Caesar's part could twist the facts without actually falsifying them, and

¹⁹ 107BC.

how important it was for him to omit certain information in order to project the appropriate public image.

In the case of the Tigurini, however, Caesar does admit that he avenged private as well as national outrages. He concedes this fact because the Tigurini had killed his father-in-law's grandfather, L. Calpurnius Piso (BG 1.12).²⁰ Such an atrocity would naturally be seen by the government at Rome as an offence against the state. Caesar takes full credit for this act of revenge, although Plutarch (Caes. 18) and Appian (B.C. 4.1.3) mention that the defeat of the Tigurini was the achievement of the legate Caius Labienus, not of Caesar. It appears that, while Caesar is willing to give credit to others where they are acting as independent commanders, he is unwilling to detract from the glory of his own campaigns.

Caesar reports that the Helvetii had caused great damage in the areas through which they had passed, and as a result the Aedui, the Aedui Ambarri and the Allobroges asked for his protection (BG 1.11). Caesar could now claim that concern for the welfare of Rome's allies drove him to the decision that he should make an immediate attack on the Helvetii. In this respect he would be seen to be acting in the interests of the state. Caesar emphasises the point by reminding the Aeduan chiefs that he had undertaken war against the Helvetii largely in response to their entreaties (BG 1.16).

There is no doubt that with regard to the Helvetii Caesar took substantial risks and that he could have protected the Roman province without attacking them, but in getting his actions sanctioned by the government at Rome, he obtained respect for his *dignitas* and strengthened his reputation.

After Caesar defeated the Helvetii the communities of Gaul were impressed by his victory, and Caesar does not hesitate to tell us so:

²⁰ Roman general and consul in 112BC.

Bello Helvetiorum confecto totius fere Galliae legati principes civitatum ad Caesarem gratulatum convenerunt.

After the campaign against the Helvetii had been concluded, legates of almost the whole of Gaul, the chief men of the states, assembled to congratulate Caesar. (BG 1.30)

At the same time he takes the opportunity of putting into the mouths of the Gauls themselves a statement that is both a compliment to his abilities as a general and further justification for his campaign:

Intellegere sese, ... tamen eam rem non minus ex usu terrae Galliae quam populi Romani accidisse.

They perceived that ... nevertheless the result had been as profitable for the land of Gaul as for the Roman people. (BG 1.30)

The campaign against the Helvetii was soon followed by the war against Ariovistus. The immediate interests of Rome did not require Caesar to take so strong a line with Ariovistus; the latter had only recently acquired the status of king in alliance with the Roman people²¹ and it was on Caesar's motivation that he had been proclaimed king and ally. Caesar therefore takes particular care to show why he had to take action against Ariovistus.

If Caesar's aim had been limited to preserving existing Roman interests there are various policies which he might have adopted in regard to both Ariovistus and the Helvetii. But a request for assistance against Ariovistus from an assembly of Gallic chiefs provided him with the excuse he needed for further military operations. Caesar either did not realise or chose to ignore the fact that by intervening against Ariovistus he would now be acting as protector of the Aedui and therefore contradicting his former policy. However, the reasons he gives for the campaign are fully in accordance with traditional Roman political procedure, and to give more credibility to his intentions he formulates his argument in the words of the pro-Roman Aeduan leader Diviacus:

²¹ 59BC.

Caesarem vel auctoritate sua atque exercitus vel recenti victoria vel nomine populi Romani deterrere posse, ne maior multitudo Germanorum Rhenum traducatur, Galliamque omnem ab Ariovisti iniuria posse defendere.

Caesar, either by his own and his army's recent victory or by the name of the Roman people, could prevent a larger crowd of Germans from crossing the Rhine, and defend the whole of Gaul from the outrage of Ariovistus. (BG 1.31)

According to traditional Roman policy the Germans would be seen as a threat to the frontiers of the Roman Empire and would have to be kept as far away as possible. Caesar puts forward a series of considerations that, he claims, induced him to think that he should take thought and action in the matter (BG 1.33). Of course, such considerations were designed to appeal to Roman interests, pride and fears. The Senate had often described the Aedui as blood brothers and, as Caesar states, their subjection to the Germans constituted an utter disgrace to himself and to the state. The honour and prestige of Rome would demand their liberation. Moreover, the Germans had to be prevented from eventually entering Italy, as the Cimbri and Teutones had done. Caesar concludes by promoting the belief that the issue could only be decided by war, thus giving his actions full justification:

Ipse autem Ariovistus tantos sibi spiritus, tantam arrogantiam sumpserat, ut ferendus non videretur.

Besides Ariovistus himself had assumed such airs, such arrogance, that he seemed unbearable." (BG 1.33)

In his account of negotiations with Ariovistus Caesar again justifies his motives for taking action against him:

Neque suam neque populi Romani consuetudinem pati uti optime merentes socios desereret, neque se iudicare Galliam potius esse Ariovisti quam populi Romani.

Neither his own practice nor that of the Roman people allowed the abandonment of allies who deserved so well of them, nor did he consider that Gaul belonged to Ariovistus rather than to the Roman people. (BG 1.45)

Caesar wants the reader to understand that Ariovistus was trespassing on Rome's sphere of influence and it was therefore

his duty as a Roman provincial commander to react to such provocation. The statement is also designed to defend all the campaigns which followed in Gaul, since they were to be seen as a natural consequence of these circumstances. It is not certain how greatly the Senate was concerned about the danger from the Germans, but its elimination meant that in two short campaigns Caesar had overcome two opponents who had long been regarded with anxiety in Rome. Caesar could now conclude the first book of his Gallic War with the proud proclamation:

Caesar una aestate duobus maximis bellis confectis, ...

Caesar had completed two major campaigns in a single summer, ... (BG 1.54)

Of course, the mention of Caesar's name gives the impression that he was solely responsible for victory in the campaigns.

During the campaign against Ariovistus Caesar had to contend with a serious panic amongst his legions and their threatened refusal to advance any further, yet he astutely manages to turn the episode into an exercise in self-promotion. Dio (38.35.2) states that the soldiers began to complain that they did not wish to take part in a war that was neither fair nor sanctioned by the Senate or People of Rome, but only served Caesar's personal ambition. Caesar, however, blames the Gauls and traders for starting the panic (BG 1.39). It is not certain whether there is any truth in Dio's remarks,²² but Caesar's claim always to act in the interests of the state would not allow his admission of such statements, nor would the care he took to maintain his reputation allow him to make public his personal or political ambitions.

Although there is no reason to doubt the essential truth of the speech which Caesar delivers in reply to his soldiers, he certainly used the opportunity of encouraging his troops to enhance his own *existimatio*. He describes the success of his own

²² The variants of Dio unfavourable to Caesar can be traced back to Livy. These can only be regarded as genuine if Livy was following an earlier source.

speech as remarkable (BG 1.40), indicating the powerful effect he had on his soldiers and his extraordinary capabilities as a general. Moreover, the speech could be seen as a tacit refutation of the concern of senators at Rome that he was acting contrary to the wishes of the Senate and people.

Caesar describes the revolt of the Gallic tribes and his campaign against the Nervii (Book 2). The battle against the Nervii was one of the most difficult of his career and victory was eventually achieved largely because of the astute action of his subordinate commanders. However, apart from mentioning the bravery of P. Sextius Baculus (BG 2.25), Caesar plays down the role of his legates and claims that the tide of battle was only turned when he himself entered the first rank, encouraging individual centurions by name:

*Cuius adventu spe illata militibus ac redintegrato animo
... paulum hostium impetus tardatus est.*

Upon his arrival hope was brought to the soldiers and their spirit was renewed ... the onslaught of the enemy was checked a little.

Upon the surrender of the Nervii, Caesar makes a characteristic display of *clementia* towards them, allowing the state to continue its existence. Of course this, like the other displays of *clementia* mentioned above, is a calculated political leniency designed to impress his detractors with the image of his unwavering benevolence towards conquered peoples.

Caesar also appears to have exaggerated the number of survivors amongst the Nervii. He states that only 3 out of 600 senators and 500 out of 60 000 soldiers survived (BG 2.28), but Ambiorix is later quoted as saying that 2 legates had been killed and the great part of the army destroyed (BG 5.38). This does not necessarily call into question the credibility of Caesar's account of military events, but like most generals his *existimatio* was at stake and either consciously or unconsciously he would be inclined to exaggerate the numbers of the enemy and

their losses.²³

When Caesar left for Italy and Illyricum after his victory over the Aduatuci he states that he believed Gaul had been pacified (BG 2.35). At this stage he sent a report to the Senate detailing his unprecedented achievements in this previously unknown and dangerous arena of war. His account obviously had the desired effect of converting his military successes in Gaul into a significant political achievement at Rome. The Senate was suitably impressed and, as Caesar proudly announces (BG 2.35), granted him the unprecedented honour of fifteen days' thanksgiving.²⁴ The Senate's granting of this extraordinary honour was indeed a blow to those senators who asserted that Caesar had held the proconsulship of Gaul illegally since 58. So far Caesar's attempts at pandering to public opinion and maintaining his reputation through his *Commentarii* had proved successful.

Caesar then deals with the suppression of the Veneti (Book 3). He states that after the defensive campaign of Servius Sulpicius Galba in the Alps in 57, he again believed that Gaul had been pacified (BG 3.7). This was a reasonable supposition, but only true in the sense that Gaul contained no people at the time who were in arms against Rome. Adcock states that it is difficult to say how far Caesar deceived himself about the position in Gaul,²⁵ but Cicero (*Prov. Cos.* 13.33) believed Caesar's intentions were clear: he planned not merely to fight against those whom he saw already in arms against the Roman People, but to bring the whole of Gaul under the control of Rome.

When peace was broken by the Veneti on the west coast of Gaul,

²³ The exaggeration of numbers was also a *topos* for ancient historians.

²⁴ Caesar had broken with the optimate majority in the Senate since January 58, and therefore his opponents would certainly have attempted to belittle his successes, but the fact that he was honoured in this way clearly proves that he obviously deserved it. His own supporters and allies carried the day.

²⁵ Adcock, 1956: 35.

the tribe was eventually forced to surrender chiefly because Decimus Iunius Brutus succeeded in destroying their entire fleet. Caesar, however, plays down the part played by Brutus and instead emphasises the courage of his soldiers and the inspiration provided by their general:

Reliquum erat certamen positum in virtute, qua nostri milites facile superabant, atque eo magis, quod in conspectu Caesaris atque omnis exercitus res gerebatur, ...

The rest of the conflict rested on courage, whereby our troops easily had the advantage, and all the more because the engagement was taking place in the sight of Caesar and the whole army, ... (BG 3.14)

After the Veneti had submitted Caesar showed an unusual ruthlessness: he put the whole of their Senate to the sword, and sold the rest of the men as slaves. He justifies this single act of brutality by using it as a standard warning to barbarians on the treatment of ambassadors:

quo diligentius in reliquum tempus a barbaris ius legatorum conservaretur.

so that the right of ambassadors might be preserved more carefully in future. (BG 3.16)

Caesar's success against the Veneti no doubt appeared in his annual report to the Senate, but since his actions only consolidated his earlier claim that Gaul had been pacified, there is no mention at the end of Book 3 either of his report to the Senate or of a thanksgiving.²⁶

It is possible that Caesar was now beginning to think of extending operations beyond Gaul. During 56 he had secured his political position at a conference with Pompey and Crassus at Luca, and his Gallic command was prolonged for five years until

²⁶ The energetic consul of 56, Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Marcellinus, supported the optimate position against Clodius and the so-called First Triumvirate. It is therefore likely that he was not particularly well-disposed towards Caesar and would not have been keen to acknowledge his achievements.

the end of February 49.²⁷ The proceedings at Luca were so secretive that, apart from Plutarch and Suetonius,²⁸ many of our principal sources do not mention the conference at all. Caesar passes over Luca in silence and it is only from circumstantial evidence that his intentions in calling the meeting can be reconstructed. Obviously he could not admit the problem which confronted him: he had completed the pacification of Gaul and yet half of his five-year allocation as proconsul still remained. Whether he returned to Rome immediately or looked for new areas to conquer, he could not afford to discard his partners. From the existing evidence there appear to be three different versions of the negotiations which led to the settlement. Appian and Plutarch indicate that Caesar acted entirely on his own initiative, Suetonius believed that he was reacting to pressure from the *optimates*, and Dio, who does not actually mention Caesar at all in the negotiations, suggests that his hand was forced by Pompey and Crassus.²⁹

Whatever Caesar's intentions, the outcome of Luca was that the extension of his command meant he could once again regard his position as safe. He could now formulate extensive plans for himself as proconsul; not only was he allowed to remain in Gaul but he could also bring Germany and Britain into his sphere of operation. Naturally Caesar does not disclose these plans in his *Commentarii*; they are only revealed as the situation develops.

Caesar begins Book 4 of the *de Bello Gallico* with an account of his campaign against the Germans. During the winter of 56/55 he became aware that the dangerous power of the Suebi was instigating a new invasion of Gaul. However, the Senate had decided to appoint a delegation to investigate charges against the way in which Caesar was constantly involving the state in new

²⁷ Suet. *Iul.* 24; App. *B.C.* 2.17; Plut. *Pomp.* 51, *Caes.* 21.

²⁸ See above footnote.

²⁹ See references n. 27.

wars without regard for legal principles.³⁰ It is not certain whether a senatorial commission was ever sent out, since the sources are silent on this. However, Caesar certainly had to justify his decision to strike at the Germans. Throughout his account of the campaign he shows that he was forced to do so by their own malicious breach of the truce and the treacherous surprise attack of the German cavalry.³¹ He also states that the enemy had numbered 43 000 while the Romans had lost not a single life (*BG* 4.15). With such unadorned and factual explanations Caesar not only defended his behaviour but ultimately hoped to achieve two objectives. Firstly, he indicated the enormity of the danger he had averted from what was now Roman Gaul, and secondly he disproved his critics with a demonstration of how excellently he was fulfilling his proconsular obligations.

Caesar then decided to cross the Rhine and enter Germany. Again, he states his motives in order to justify this decision (*BG* 4.16). Chiefly, he wanted to prevent further German aggression by showing that the Roman army was willing and able to cross the river, and to impress this upon the Sugambri who were on the right bank. He also wished to persuade the Ubii, who had sought the protection of Rome, to realise that they could hold out against the Suebi with Rome's assistance. Caesar gives the impression that he was concerned here only with the military security of the Rhine frontier.³² A more likely reason for his

³⁰ This appears to have been arranged on the instigation of a small group of *optimates* who refused to have anything to do with Caesar. According to Tanusius Geminus, Cato, the praetor designate, made the proposal that Caesar should be handed over to the Germans to make amends for his breach of the truce (*Plut. Caes.* 22.2).

³¹ It may be presumed that in his despatch to the Senate on this matter Caesar strengthened his references to the breach of faith by the Germans in view of the similar charges made against him. See in particular his clear reasoning in *BG* 4.13.

³² Dio 39,48.3-4 and Plutarch (*Caes.* 22.4) preserve a more hostile account of events. Both believed that Caesar coveted the reputation of being the first man to cross the Rhine with an army. Dio states that Caesar demanded the surrender of the Sugambri merely as an excuse to cross the river, and that he also

crossing of the Rhine was that he intended to counter the unpopularity of his actions against the Germans. After the crossing, Caesar received various peaceful deputations, ravaged the territory of the Sugambri and promised to help the Ubii. Although he did not engage battle with the Suebi, he attempts to convince the reader of his success by stating that he had accomplished all the objectives for which he had decided to lead his army across the Rhine (BG 4.19).

In contrast, Caesar probably intended the brief invasion of Britain which followed to be a preliminary investigation for the permanent annexation of the island. He started the expedition dangerously late in the year, in the autumn of 55, but does not explain why. He merely justifies the reconnaissance by stating that the British had sent assistance to his enemies in almost all the Gallic campaigns (BG 4.20). This is not a very convincing reason, since his control of the Channel had made serious support unlikely. Caesar also states that it would be advantageous for him to observe the character of the natives and obtain knowledge of the localities, harbours and landing-places. It was true that an unknown country offered an irresistible attraction, but there was also, as Caesar obviously omits to mention, the hope of obtaining booty.³³ Caesar probably also took advantage of the speech Cicero made on the consular provinces in 56 (*Prov. Cos.* 13.33-4), in which he declared not only the conquest of the old enemies of Rome but also the opening up of new regions. He could therefore use Cicero's policy recommendation to further justify his expedition and at the same time make a significant impression in Rome. The campaign, however, did not denote any significant extension of Roman power and in fact failed to achieve anything

hoped to keep the Germans away from Gaul by invading their territory himself.

³³ Cicero (*ad. Fam.* 7.7) clearly suspected that this was one of Caesar's motives when he wrote to his friend Trebatius Testa shortly before Caesar's second expedition to Britain: "In Britannia nihil esse audio neque auri, neque argenti. Id si ita est essedum aliquod suadeo capias, et ad nos quam primum recurras." Dio (40.1.2) stresses that Caesar wanted to subdue Britain at any price.

positive.³⁴ Yet it had the desired effect in the Senate and Caesar ends Book 4 with a crescendo: upon receipt of the report detailing his achievements for the season he was decreed a public thanksgiving of twenty days. (BG 4.38).³⁵

Caesar (Book V) describes the second expedition to Britain which secured north-west Gaul against interference from overseas. However, the expedition did not in any way live up to its great expectations. Caesar mentions that some of the states subject to the British leader Cassivellaunus surrendered to him (BG 5.20-21), but omits to say that this was due more to good fortune than to careful military strategy on his part.³⁶

What Caesar describes as a campaign against Britain can really be termed little more than an escapade. He decided against a permanent occupation of the island, satisfying himself with hostages and a yearly tribute from Cassivellaunus, but since no garrison was left there his agreement with Cassivellaunus must have proved worthless. Although he had gained the reputation he apparently craved for being the first Roman general to set foot in Britain, the island was, in reality, of almost no political, strategical or economical value to Rome.

³⁴ Caesar himself attests to the fact that the campaign was of little value by stating that when he stationed his winter quarters in Belgic territory no more than two of the British states sent hostages (BG 4.38).

³⁵ Significantly, Pompey and Crassus were consuls in 55. Hence Caesar would have expected his partners in the Triumvirate to propose that his achievements be honoured and they would willingly have obliged him. Another point worth considering is that the current state of knowledge about Britain was very limited. Because of this, Caesar's actions in endeavouring to extend Roman influence into an unknown and potentially dangerous territory would have appeared courageous and worthy of recognition (see Plut. Caes. 23; Dio 39.53.2).

³⁶ Some time previously, the young prince Mandubracius of the strongest British state had sought Caesar's protection on the mainland of Gaul (BG 5.20). Moreover, Gelzer, M., Caesar: Politician and Statesman, Oxford 1968, 142 says that Cassivellaunus showed himself a master of guerilla warfare.

Caesar continues to deal with campaigns against Ambiorix (Book 6). His absence from Rome had allowed the smouldering discontent in Gaul to escalate. However, he felt no need to justify the British operations or those which he had waged against Indutiomarus and Ambiorix upon his return. Firstly, the justifications which he sets out in Book 1 of his campaigns against the Helvetii and Ariovistus were designed to defend all the campaigns which followed in Gaul as being natural consequences of his position at that time. Secondly, Caesar could quite feasibly claim that he was re-establishing the peace which he believed had been established after his victory over the Aduatuci.³⁷

A surprise attack on Q. Tullius Cicero's camp by the Sugambri (*BG* 6.35ff), who had accepted Caesar's invitation for assistance, almost precipitated a disaster because the soldiers had become panic-stricken and Cicero himself had become careless. It was narrowly averted by the bravery of the centurions and some of the veterans. Although Caesar does mention this, he nevertheless emphasises that the terror that had seized Cicero's camp was only removed by the arrival of Caesar himself (*BG* 6.41). Caesar subsequently set about systematically devastating the country of Ambiorix in an attempt to secure an isolation that he could call peace. Although all efforts to capture Ambiorix were unsuccessful, Caesar gives the impression that it was only through sheer misfortune that the chieftain escaped (*BG* 6.43). Surely an experienced commander such as Caesar would have foreseen the dangers and was, in fact, taking a calculated risk with Ambiorix? Moreover, he concludes the chapter by indicating that he had in any case achieved his objectives since he could set out for Italy to convene the judicial courts, as he had already determined (*BG* 6.44).³⁸

³⁷ See above p 21.

³⁸ Dio (40.32.5) says that the real reason Caesar left for Italy was to enable him to keep in close touch with what was happening in Rome. The fact that Caesar was detained in Gaul gave Pompey the advantage in Roman politics, and the gradual estrangement between the two Triumvirs originated from this change in the balance of power. The years 52 and 51 gave Pompey a

For additional justification of his movements, Caesar begins Book 7 by repeating the statement with which he ended the previous book. The words "quieta Gallia" are also intended to justify his absence south of the Alps, a justification which is unfortunately overshadowed by the chronicle of dangers which comprises Caesar's final book on the Gallic War.

The Gauls at that time were attempting to regain their liberty after years of despotic rule had aroused in them a hatred of their oppression. A revolt broke out, during which Vercingetorix emerged as leader of a united Gaul. Caesar, however, makes the rather weak excuse that the decisive stimulus to revolt was a circumstance of their own invention ("rumoribus Galli"), that he was too busy with serious discords at Rome to come to the army (BG 7.1). The so-called rumours of course were not unfounded; it was precisely events in Rome that had forced him to leave Vercingetorix alone for a few weeks while he negotiated with Pompey from Ravenna. By the time Caesar hurried back to Transalpine Gaul he found that everything he had so far achieved there was called into question. Naturally he does not state this unequivocally. To do so would negate his previous achievements in Gaul, weaken considerably his claims of "Gallia quieta" and thus adversely affect the reputation he had so carefully built up. In short, it would be a blow to his *existimatio* and his *dignitas*, and so he carefully plays down the situation.

Although Caesar does eventually acknowledge the strength of the Gauls' desire to maintain their liberty and recover their former renown in war (BG 7.76), at this stage he subtly manages to shift the blame for the revolt onto the enemy by expressing disappointment at their ungrateful behaviour. He complains that

chance of breaking away from Caesar altogether and the call for him to be appointed dictator intensified as the year 52 began with no magistrates to control the unprecedented violence which had broken out in the streets. Of the many events which occurred in Rome on his return from Gaul, Caesar mentions only the murder of Clodius in 52 and the Senate's decree regarding the levy of troops in Italy, in order to justify the fact that he immediately started recruiting in Cisalpine Gaul.

all the Gallic tribes had ignored the friendship and benefits that he had bestowed upon them in the past (BG 7.76). While it was traditional Roman policy to promote friends of Rome and entrust power to client princes, it is clear that Caesar lost no opportunity to remind his readers of his customary kindness.

Caesar again manages to shift the blame away from himself in respect of the siege of Gergovia (BG 7.34ff), which ended in disaster for the Romans. He attempted to save face by blaming his troops for completely overriding his judgment and disregarding his authority (BG 7.52). Even if this was true, he had considerably underestimated the difficulty of an assault on such an extensive and naturally strong position, since it was held by Vercingetorix with superior forces. Caesar therefore draws attention away from any miscalculations on his part, just as he did with the British "campaign".

Caesar completes Book 7 with the siege and surrender of Vercingetorix at Alesia in 52. He prepares the scene of battle for a climactic scene into which he himself enters. With a rare show of dramatic flourish he states that he hurried to take part in battle: "*Accelerat Caesar, ut proelio intersit*" (BG 7.87). The statement gives the reader the impression that he is one of the active participants in the final battle, doing his duty along with the rest of his troops and thereby influencing its outcome. In the very next sentence, however, he displays the image of the distinguished general, the revered commander-in-chief whose arrival is instantly recognised:

Eius adventu ex colore vestitus cognito, quo insigni in proeliis uti consuevit,...

His coming was recognised from the colour of his cloak, which he would wear in action as a distinguishing mark, ... (BG 7.88).

The description is a symbolic reminder of Caesar's *existimatio* and *dignitas*, immediately elevating him to his position of pre-eminence and suggesting that his very presence was sufficient to inspire his soldiers to victory.

Caesar concludes Book 7 similarly to Book 4: when his report of the campaign reached Rome he was granted a thanksgiving of twenty days. What he omits to mention, of course, is that his opponents probably voted for this honour in order to have a reason for recalling him. Suetonius (*Iul.* 28.2) says that in April 51 the strongly anti-Caesarian consul M. Claudius Marcellus reported to the Senate:

ut ei succederetur ante tempus, quoniam bello confecto pax esset ac dimitti deberet victor exercitus; ...

that a successor be appointed to Caesar before the end of his term, on the ground that there was peace and that the victorious army should be disbanded; ...

If he had included any reference to these events Caesar would have assisted in damaging his own *existimatio*. In any case, his subject was the Gallic Wars and there is naturally little reference to events at Rome.

Throughout the *BG* Caesar took the utmost care to justify his campaigns and actions by claiming that it was necessary to counter dangerous plans of enemy aggression and conquest. He ingeniously gives the impression that his victories in Gaul and the strengthening of Roman power over those he had subdued represented the fulfilment of his duty as a Roman proconsul, and that therefore his actions were the only correct and proper ones. However, in reality the conquest of Gaul did not signify the attainment of a purpose after which Caesar could rest. Although his achievements had won him considerable *dignitas* in Roman politics, his actual political position was notably weaker and, as the *BC* was to show, the most serious battle was yet to be fought.

The de Bello Civili

At the beginning of 51 Caesar proposed to the Senate that his proconsulship be renewed in the same way as Pompey's in

recognition of his prospective consulship for 48.³⁹ Under no circumstances was he prepared to be subordinate to Pompey; this would constitute an insult in the face of the *dignitas* he had won by his successes in Gaul. Caesar desired the same pre-eminence as Pompey, complaining in turn that Pompey wanted no one to be on the same level of authority with himself: "neminem dignitate secum exaequari volebat" (BG 1.4). It is likely that at this stage he published the seven books of the BG in support of his application for the extension of his command. Romans would read the *Commentarii* and marvel at how Caesar's sense of duty as a proconsul had empowered him to overcome immense difficulties for Rome, and at the heroic deeds he and his army had performed against dangerous and numerically superior enemies. The objective tone of the work would also induce the unprejudiced reader to see events from Caesar's point of view.

It is clear from the BC that Caesar believed he had not received the treatment which his exploits and his *dignitas* deserved. He therefore sets out a defence of his own position, presenting his case in respect of the political and constitutional aspects of the outbreak of the war. The three books cover the events of the years 49-48, during which Caesar took great pains to justify himself and show that at all stages he attempted to seek an end to the civil disturbances and avoid war. Consequently the BC is not merely a plain account of the Civil War between Caesar and Pompey; it is a brilliant attempt to show that the causes of the Civil War rested with the other side. Most modern authors agree on this, and it is therefore difficult to see why Ogilvie claims that the purpose of the BC is uncertain.⁴⁰

³⁹ To further reinforce his position Pompey had his Spanish command extended for another five years from 52 (Plut. Caes. 28; Pomp. 55 (four years); Dio 40.56.2; App. B.C. 2.24).

⁴⁰ Ogilvie, "Caesar", 284. The only explanation he gives for his statement is that the work is more sketchy and less accurate than the BG, indicating that it was compiled in a hurry, perhaps in 47 when Caesar thought the Civil War was over and that his side of the case needed to be heard if a stable society was to be restored. However, it was in Caesar's interest that his side of the issue be known as quickly as possible, and it seems unlikely that he would wait until the war

Caesar begins the *BC* by referring to the ultimatum which he delivered to the Senate on 1 January 49 (*BC* 1.1). The beginning of the *BC* as preserved in our manuscripts is defective and the contents of the ultimatum are not stated. In it Caesar declared that either he should keep his provincial command, as it had been granted to him by the people, at least until the consular elections for 48 were over,⁴¹ or that he would disband his army if Pompey would do the same with his forces in Spain.⁴² The Pompeian party in the Senate strongly resisted this proposal and a vote was passed that Caesar should disband his army by a fixed date. The consuls for 49, C. Claudius Marcellus and L. Cornelius Lentulus, had been elected as anti-Caesarian,⁴³ and made it clear that if Caesar failed to comply, he would be considered to be acting treasonably against the republic (*BC* 1.2). *re publica* /

Caesar's narrative of his quarrel with the Senate naturally shows remarkable restraint, and he uses the technique of plain statements without comment in order to make it clear to the reader where the blame for the war rested. Moreover, he had to regain and continuously preserve his own reputation and *dignitas*, and therefore omits to mention anything that would detract from the belief that his opponents forced this war on him. He elicits our sympathies by a simple account of his frequent attempts to effect a peaceful settlement (*BC* 1.26; 1.32; 3.90), which promote the image of Caesar the negotiator as opposed to Caesar the aggressor. At the same time he emphasises the cruelty, treachery

was won before compiling the weapon which might help him win it.

⁴¹ Caesar refused to lay down his provincial command until his election as consul had been assured. He could claim that he was protected by the Law of the Ten Tribunes passed in 52, which enabled him to compete for the office in *absentia* (*BC* 1.32; Dio 40.51.1-2, 56.2; Cic. Att. 8.3.3; Suet. Iul. 28). The *optimates* were determined to recall him, while the Caesarian tribunes vetoed every attempt.

⁴² The demand on Pompey was without legal foundation, since his proconsular command had been extended for five years (see n. 39).

⁴³ *BG* 8.50; Suet, Iul. 29; App. B.C. 2.26.

and quarrelling of the Pompeians. There is no reason to doubt that Caesar genuinely desired the pacification of the Roman world; he gave every appearance of preferring a diplomatic settlement and his numerous references to his efforts at securing peace make it clear that one of his main themes was to show "quanto studio pacem petisset" (BC 3.90).

Caesar's account of the Civil War is carefully devised so as to consist only partly of what he said and did and of what his opponents said and did, in order to justify and achieve approval for his own behaviour.⁴⁴ One cannot accuse him of a deliberate misrepresentation of events, but the feeling that he had been unjustly treated by his enemies naturally led him to believe that his own interpretation of the situation was the correct one. In order to discredit his opponents in the eyes of public opinion, Caesar's propaganda consistently emphasises that the state was being enslaved by a small group of senators united in their hatred for him,⁴⁵ while he himself stood for the free expression of the Senate and the Roman people, as well as his own *libertas* (BC 1.9, 22). With the following words he interrupts the speech of Lentulus Spinther in order to justify his part in the Civil War:

se non maleficii causa ex provincia egressum, sed uti se a contumeliis inimicorum defenderet, ut tribunos plebis in ea re ex civitate expulsos in suam dignitatem restitueret, ut se et populum Romanum factione paucorum oppressum in libertatem vindicaret.

He had not left his province for the sake of causing harm, but to defend himself from the insults of his enemies, to restore to their position the tribunes of the people who in that event had been expelled from the state, to rescue the freedom of himself and the Roman people who had been

⁴⁴ As Peskett, 1966: x aptly puts it: "Like all ancient historians, Caesar omits much that we should be glad to know."

⁴⁵ This would have consisted chiefly of Pompey, the two consuls of 49, Caesar's well-known political opponent M. Porcius Cato and his adherents, Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio, consul in 52 and Pompey's father-in-law, and P. Cornelius Lentulus Spinther, consul in 57.

oppressed by a small faction. (BC 1.22)

The violation of the tribunician right of veto by his enemies gave Caesar a plausible constitutional pretext for war.⁴⁶ However, the freedom that he asserts is due to himself and the Roman people in effect meant that his opponents were trying to prevent him from achieving the full potential due to his *dignitas*. While Caesar is correct in describing his enemies as a small faction trying to impose their wishes on the others, he gives his own interpretation as to the means by which the majority of senators were forced to issue an ultimatum:

Sic vocibus consulis, terrore praesentis exercitus, minis amicorum Pompei plerique compulsi invitati et coacti Scipionis sententiam sequuntur; ...

Thus the majority, compelled by the language of the consul, terrified by the presence of the army and the threats of the friends of Pompeius, reluctantly and under force adopt the proposal of Scipio; ... (BC 1.2)

The accusation of force and intimidation is levelled again, this time in respect of members of the *comitium*:

quorum vocibus et concursu terrentur infirmiores, dubii confirmantur, plerisque vero libere decernendi potestas eripitur.

By their clamours and thronging the weaker are terrified, the doubtful are confirmed, indeed the majority are robbed of the power of free decision. (BC 1.3)

Caesar immediately elicits the reader's compassion at the injustice of the situation and the supposed infringement of the *libertas* of the Roman people. His bitter tones continue to pervade the introductory chapters as he compares the various ulterior motives of his opponents with his own apparently

⁴⁶ The pro-Caesarian tribunes who interposed their veto against the proposal that Caesar disband his army by a fixed date were Marcus Antonius and Quintus Cassius Longinus. Both supported his interests until the Senate passed the final decree against Caesar, which in effect protected the interests of the state against the tribunician veto. They then fled to Caesar at Ariminum (BC 1.8).

reasonable demands (BC 3-4). He accuses soldiers from Pompey's veteran armies of being called out to serve by the prospect of prizes and promotion. The younger Cato is apparently incited by his old quarrels with Caesar and vexation at his defeat at the consular elections in 51, while Pompey is provoked by Caesar's enemies and because he did not wish anyone to rival his own position.

In contrast, Caesar presents his own motives as open and honourable, and as always concerned with the interests of the state:

Sibi semper primam rei publicae fuisse dignitatem vitaeque potiore...
Tamen hanc iacturam honoris sui rei publicae causa animo tulisse: ...
Sed tamen ad omnia se descendere paratum atque omnia pati rei publicae causa.

For himself, the dignity of the republic was of primary importance and preferable to life ...
 Nevertheless, for the sake of the state he had born with equanimity this infringement of his prerogative.
 But still he was prepared to stoop to anything and suffer anything, for the sake of the state. (BC 1.9)

However, in spite of this outward show of concern for the *res publica*, Caesar was naturally more concerned with his own *dignitas* and his *existimatio*, both of which were very much at stake and suffering due to the alleged injustices of his enemies. Thus in the same chapter he claims that his rights were being violated on the grounds that his opponents were robbing him of six months' command. It is true that if he were recalled to Rome in July 49 to stand for the consulship of 48, he would lose the last six months of his proconsular command in Gaul. This is exactly what his optimate opponents wanted, so that they could expose him as a private citizen to prosecution, and Caesar wished to avoid it at all costs. Consequently not only were his *dignitas* and *existimatio* at issue but also his entire political career and ultimately his life.

In order to absolve himself of any blame Caesar portrays his own demands as exceptionally lenient:

Is eo tempore erat Ravennae exspectabatque suis lenissimis postulatis responsa, si qua hominum aequitate res ad otium deduci posset.

He was at that time at Ravenna and was waiting for a reply to his very lenient demands, to see if by some sense of human justice a peaceful conclusion might be reached. (BC 1.5)

These are contrasted with the demands of his enemies, which are seen as being completely untenable. Pompey's conditions that Caesar should return to Gaul, quit Ariminum and disband his forces are contrasted directly with his own in such a way that Pompey's requests are seen as constituting an unfair bargain (BC 1.11).

Caesar does not actually mention the Rubicon. If he realised the decisive significance of its crossing he chose to ignore it. Other authors certainly did not, and the episode captured the imagination of many ancient writers.⁴⁷ However, a dramatic narrative complete with omens and soul-searching would be out of place in this *commentarius* with its simple style and plain statement of fact, and such an omission is typical of Caesar.

In order to apportion the war-guilt to the side of his opponents, Caesar takes every opportunity to relate all the wrongs his enemies had ever done him. He does this in an address to his troops before the start of the war:

Quibus rebus cognitis Caesar apud milites contoniat. Omnium temporum iniurias inimicorum in se commemorat; ...

When this was known, Caesar addresses his troops. He recounts all the injustices his enemies had done to him ... (BC 1.7)

and later to the Senate on his visit to Rome:

Coactu senatu iniurias inimicorum commemorat.

Having called the Senate together, he recounts the injustices of his enemies. (BC 1.32)

⁴⁷ Suet. *Iul.* 31-33; Plut. *Caes.* 32; Vell. Pat. 2.49.4; App. *B.C.* 2.34.

On the first occasion Caesar was concerned to give the impression that he was marching to Ariminum with the soldiers' consent. In his speech he only mentions the forceful action against the tribunes and not his own particular grievances, in order to present his soldiers with a constitutional reason for undertaking the war. His factual explanation as to why the magistrates had no constitutional justification in this case for taking measures to prevent the state from suffering harm indicates that Caesar meant to make it clear that he had to appeal to his soldiers against the unfair treatment he had endured.

On the second occasion Caesar portrays himself as a victim of injustice in the years leading up to the war. The speech is a justification of his constitutional position, based on the proposal of the Ten Tribunes that he be allowed to compete for the consulship in his absence,⁴⁸ and it enabled him to level allegations of unfair procedure against Pompey and enumerate the proofs of his desire for peace. His open invitation to the Senate to share with him the administration of the state and undertake official peace negotiations with Pompey gives the reader the impression that he is not after personal gain and only concerned with the future welfare of the state. He reinforces this image in his concluding statement:

Se vero, ut operibus anteire studuerit, sic iustitia et aequitate velle superare.

Indeed, as he wished to set an example by his deeds, so he wanted to lead the way in justice and equality.

Caesar says the Senate approved his proposal that envoys be sent to Pompey in order to effect a settlement (BC 1.33), although in truth it did not have much choice. However, no one could be found to undertake the task and for three days negotiations were at a standstill. Caesar eventually left the city and went into Further Gaul. His visit to Rome had proved pointless, and behind the glorification of himself and his deeds as he described the events of the Civil War there lay concealed a deep dissatisfaction at not having obtained any kind of officially recognised

⁴⁸ See n. 41.

legal basis for his position.

At the beginning of February 49 Caesar gained control of the territory of Picenum. This success was astounding considering that the area was in support of Pompey.⁴⁹ Caesar makes much of it in order to give the impression that he had widespread support (BC 1.15), and the subtle message to his readers is that even the clients of Pompey knew that his own cause was a valid one. Of course, Caesar omits to mention the desertion of Labienus, although his remark (BC 1.15) that envoys were coming to him from Cingulum, a town which Labienus had founded and built, indicates that Labienus was now in the enemy camp.

At Corfinium Caesar did not allow an immediate occupation of the town but instead enclosed it completely. He comments that his whole army waited with interest to see how he would deal with the besieged (BC 1.21). This builds up an atmosphere of anticipation which was probably all the more effective in view of the fact that there were probably many still alive who remembered Sulla's behaviour in 82 after the surrender of Praeneste.⁵⁰ From Cicero's letters we know how the recollection of the atrocities of the first civil war affected the older generation. The great clemency of Corfinium⁵¹ succeeded in creating precisely the impression that Caesar wanted, of directing public opinion in his favour. Cicero, who was at the time staying on his estate at Formiae and had many opportunities for conversation with the people of the country towns and the farmers, states:

Si mehercule neminem occiderit nec cuiquam quicquam ademerit, ab iis, qui eum maxime timuerant, maxime diligetur...

Et vide, quam conversa res sit; illum, quo antea confidebant, metuunt, hunc amant, quem timebant.

If by Hercules he kills no one and confiscates no one's property, he will be greatly loved by those who feared him the most...

⁴⁹ Picenum was the birthplace of Pompey and the family had extensive lands, estates and clients there.

⁵⁰ Plut. Sull. 32.

⁵¹ See above p. 9.

And see how public opinion has changed. They fear the man they once trusted and adore the man they once dreaded.
(Att. 7.13)

In Further Spain, Caesar had become one of the best-known patrons of the country through his quaestorship and praetorship and there was a strong feeling in his favour. This was of great importance for his Spanish campaign. However, the province did not come out in open support; it felt no confidence in his chances of success, especially in view of his precarious position at Massilia.⁵² Naturally he omits to tell us all this because it would have detracted greatly from his image of popularity. He also does not mention that Hither Spain strongly favoured Pompey, who had been their patron since the war against Sertorius. It is only much later that he notes the attitude of the Spanish provinces, when he can proudly boast of his discovery that the whole of Hither Spain favoured the side of Caesar (BC 2.18).

At the beginning of the Spanish campaign Caesar was at least in a position to stress his generosity. He states that he borrowed money from the military tribunes and centurions and distributed it to his soldiers, thereby achieving two objectives: he bound the centurions and tribunes to him as his creditors and secured the loyalty of the soldiers by his kindness (BC 1.39).

A period of indecisive warfare followed against Afranius and Petreius. In describing this action Caesar nonetheless takes the opportunity to present himself as the victor in battle. Describing events at Ilerda, he finds his soldiers at one point unusually panic-stricken and states:

cohortatus suos legionem nonam subsidio ducit; hostem insolenter atque acriter nostros insequentem supprimit rursusque terga vertere seque ad oppidum Ilerdam recipere sub muro consistere cogit.

⁵² Although Massilia had long since been an ally, it also had no faith in Caesar and a delegation from the city had already been received by Pompey (BC 1.34). Massilia therefore declared its intention to remain neutral (BC 1.35), but Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus, the proconsul of Transalpine Gaul, was immediately put in command of the city against attack (BC 1.36).

Having encouraged his men he leads the Ninth Legion to their support; he restrains the enemy who are fiercely pursuing our men and compels them again to turn and retreat to the town of Ilerda and halt beneath the wall. (BC 1.45)

Amidst the uncertainty of the conflict, which Caesar admits was waged with varying fortune (BC 1.46), he still manages to give the impression that he promptly allayed the fears of his troops and single-handedly averted an immediate disaster. He blames the recklessness of the men of the Ninth Legion for the reverses which followed. The style of writing is always a direct reflection of Caesar's aim: the brevity and clarity of statement and apparent simplicity of style lend a certain modesty to the account and detract from any appearance of subjectivity.⁵³

It is important to remember that Caesar was not fighting a civil war in order to annihilate his enemies, but to reconcile the differences between the two sides and obtain personal recognition with as little bloodshed as possible. He also wanted his opponents to acknowledge the merit of this policy. Therefore, when he realised that he had cornered Afranius (BC 1.71), Caesar tried to elicit approval by using his political clemency to full effect. As the reason for not attacking Afranius, he cites compassion both for his own soldiers and for his fellow men.⁵⁴

⁵³ Grant, Roman Literature, 94, notes appropriately that "Caesar was a supreme exponent of the typically classic maxim 'true art lies in the concealment of art'."

⁵⁴ BC 1.72: "*Caesar in eam spem venerat, se sine pugna et sine vulnere suorum rem conficere posse, quod re frumentaria adversarios interclusisset. Cur etiam secundo proelio aliquos ex suis amitteret? cur vulnerari pateretur optime de se meritos milites? cur denique fortunam periclitaretur? praesertim cum non minus esset imperatoris consilio superare quam gladio. Movebatur etiam misericordia civium, quos interficiendos videbat; quibus salvis atque incolumibus rem obtinere malebat.*" ("Caesar had entertained the hope that he could finish the business without fighting and without wounding his men, because he had cut off his enemies from their food supply. Why should he lose any of his men even in a successful battle? Why should he allow the soldiers who had deserved so well of him, to be wounded? Why, in short, should he make a trial of fortune? Especially since it was no less the duty of a commander to

The fact that his words did not find favour with the majority of his soldiers, who did not want to let slip an opportunity for victory, is not the issue here. In any case, the disagreement was forgotten as events proceeded. The significance of the speech is that it promoted Caesar's public image with a magnificent show of *humanitas*, and allowed him to state his political objectives. In stating his preference to negotiate he reveals his desire for recognition that he was doing everything he could to fulfil his duty as a Roman proconsul and commander, thereby adhering to correct political procedure and acting in the interests of the state. The hint is obviously directed at the likes of Pompey and his enemies at Rome, who evidently preferred to act by the sword rather than negotiate.⁵⁵

Caesar does not hesitate to justify the success of his policy after the temporary departure of Petreius and Afranius from their station (*BC* 1.73). The soldiers from the two opposing camps began to visit each other and a spirit of general harmony and rejoicing eventually prevailed. Caesar could therefore proudly announce that his policy of traditional leniency had met with the approval of all (*BC* 1.74). Even when Petreius put a bloody end to this scene of fraternisation and slaughtered any Caesarians he found in his camp, it did not induce Caesar to do likewise. He states that not only did he release unharmed those of the enemy that he found, but boasts that some stayed with him and were enrolled in his army on honourable terms (*BC* 1.77).

When the two enemy leaders were forced to appeal for negotiations after their retreat to Ilerda, Caesar agreed only on condition that the talks were held publicly in the presence of both armies. This of course gave him the opportunity of stating his case at length before a much larger audience. His lengthy speech (*BC*

conquer by negotiation than by the sword. He was moved also by compassion for his fellow-citizens, whose slaughter he saw would be inevitable; he preferred to gain his object with them safe and unharmed.")

⁵⁵ See *BC* 1.32, 72.

1.85) echoes that given to the Senate on his visit to Rome,⁵⁶ but gives a more comprehensive portrayal of Caesar as the victim of injustice. It also constitutes a particularly clear and comprehensive expression of his political objectives. Caesar firstly stresses his unwillingness to prejudice the chances of peace, blaming the leaders of the opposition for lacking the very quality that he is always keen to emphasise in himself: compassion. His purpose now, he says, is not to capitalise on their misfortune but merely to secure the disbanding of the armies in Spain. He then enumerates the political injustices meted out to him before the war and the unconstitutional behaviour of Pompey, stressing the patience with which he had borne and would continue to bear, such wrongs. After citing all this inequity and injustice he concludes with a single request: the evacuation of the provinces and the removal of the armies. The report of the speech is arranged in such a way as to persuade the reader that no one could argue with Caesar's reasonable demands. Yet his purpose was not only to win over the Romans; Caesar also genuinely believed in himself as a statesman.

Caesar concludes Book 1 with details of the provisions which followed as a result of his speech (*BC* 1.86-7). His leniency is portrayed by the fact that no one in the opposing camp would be forced to take an oath of allegiance against his will; his generosity is emphasised in the restoration of property; his skills as arbitrator are displayed in his settlement of various disputes amongst the soldiers. The final sentence of Book 1 provides a fitting conclusion: Caesar had successfully secured his aim and the remainder of the army in Spain was disbanded.

In Book 2 Caesar again uses the occasion of a public speech to promote his own qualities. After he had dealt successfully with the fickle Varro, he held a public meeting at Corduba in which he thanked various sections of the community (*BC* 2.21). On this occasion he speaks of his acts of generosity in remitting sums of money, restoring property and bestowing public and private awards on certain communities. Admittedly, Caesar always made

⁵⁶ See above p. 37.

a point of rewarding and honouring those who had made sacrifices for his cause, but at Corduba he also asked for large sums of money to be paid to himself, a fact which he conveniently omits to mention. Dio (41.24.1) says that when Caesar advanced as far as Gades, he did no harm except as far as the exacting of money was concerned. In the following chapter (BC 1.22) Caesar describes the siege of Massilia. Massilia was an old and respected Greek community and Caesar states that on account of its name and antiquity he had refrained from its complete destruction. In truth, however, its annihilation would have created too unfavourable an impression, particularly since he had recently ascertained that he had been nominated dictator by Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. Caesar informs the reader of this in a short factual statement which is inserted into the narrative as a sudden digression without an accompanying explanation (BC 2.21). In this way the announcement gains maximum impact and the reader is impressed by the supposedly unanticipated bestowal of such a distinction.

Having just demonstrated his success as politician and commander Caesar obviously omits to mention the mutiny which broke out near Placentia as his army was returning, and which resulted in his discharging the entire Ninth Legion in disgrace.⁵⁷ The soldiers were disgruntled because Caesar would not allow them to plunder the country around Placentia,⁵⁸ and claimed that he was deliberately prolonging the war in order to avoid paying them the reward he had promised.⁵⁹ If Caesar had referred to any of this it would have diminished the reputation he was trying to build as a general who always sought peace rather than war, and reduced the effect of his acts of generosity at Corduba. Instead, the remainder of Book 2 is taken up with an account of Curio's campaign in Africa.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Suet. Caes. 69.

⁵⁸ Dio 41.26.1.

⁵⁹ App. B.C. 2.47.

⁶⁰ BC 23-44.

Caesar begins Book 3 with the statement that as dictator he presided over the elections and was duly elected for the consulship of 48 (BC 3.1). Until this time he had been fighting to justify his political stance and his actions as a rebellious proconsul. Now he emphasises the legality of his position, particularly the fact that he was elected consul "per leges", and therefore chosen by the Roman people. On the completion of these proceedings Caesar organised a program of debt relief and the recovery of property,⁶¹ and proudly announces the restoration of civil rights to those accused of bribery under Pompeian law.⁶² In his eagerness to show that he was dealing with matters by means of proper constitutional procedure Caesar actually reveals his desire to project the correct image:

Statuerat enim prius hos iudicio populi debere restitui, quam suo beneficio videri receptos, ne aut ingratus in referenda gratia aut arrogans in praeripiendo populi beneficio videretur.

For he had decided that they ought to be restored by a decision of the people rather than be seen to be reinstated by his own kindness, so that he would not appear to be either ungrateful in returning a benefit or arrogant in robbing the people of its right to confer a favour. (BC 3.1)

Caesar takes great care to emphasise that he assumed the dictatorship solely for the purpose of carrying out such measures and holding the elections, then resigned the office after eleven days,⁶³ left the city and went to Brundisium (BC 3.2). What he does not mention is that his father-in-law, L. Calpurnius Piso, had urged him to send a deputation to Pompey with proposals for a settlement and that he had rejected the suggestion by getting his fellow consular designate P. Servilius Isauricus to vote

⁶¹ Dio 41.37-38; App. B.C. 2.48.

⁶² See also Suet. Iul. 41. Reference is to the victims of the trials that took place during the consulship of Pompey in 52. At that stage many of those accused of bribery at the elections were sentenced and banished from Rome. Caesar granted a return to the exiles (App. B.C. 2.48; Dio 41.36.2, 42.24.2).

⁶³ See Broughton, T.R.S., The Magistrates of the Roman Republic, Vol. II, New York 1952, 257.

against it.⁶⁴ Appian (B.C. 2.48) says that the people followed Caesar to the city gates as he left for Brundisium, urging him to come to an agreement with Pompey, but Caesar obviously now hoped to assume the offensive under favourable conditions.

However, at Brundisium he found that his troops were exhausted and there were only sufficient ships to transport twenty thousand men across to the coast of Epirus. As Caesar states (BC 3.2), this alone prevented a speedy conclusion to the war. As soon as he found himself in a temporarily superior position, particularly after the failure of Octavius to besiege Salona, Caesar sent L. Vibullius Rufus to Pompey with a new offer of peace. Now he could openly claim that he did not want a protracted war and propose that both sides should disarm (BC 3.10). It was a cleverly planned move; nothing could reinforce his political position more than the impression that he wished to secure peace in the state, and his recent stay in Rome had demonstrated the extent to which Italy longed for peace. Moreover, as consul at Rome he would be in control of the city and its magistracies, and he had already eliminated the armies in Spain. The laying down of arms would signify a political victory for Caesar. However, in setting out his reasons for doing so, Caesar claims to be considering primarily the interests of the state:

*Proinde sibi ac rei publicae parcerent ...
Interea et rei publicae et ipsis placere oportere, si
uterque in contione statim iuravisset se triduo proximo
exercitum dimissurum.*

So let them spare themselves and the state ...
Meanwhile it ought to satisfy the state and themselves, if
each swore at once in a public assembly that he would
dismiss his army within the next three days. (BC 3.10)

Put in this way, Pompey would be seen to be acting against the interests of the state if he refused Caesar's terms and would have to shoulder the blame for prolonging the war. Pompey, however, replied that life and citizenship were of no use to him if attained through the favour of Caesar (BC 3.18), indicating that he had guessed at the real intentions behind Caesar's

⁶⁴ Plut. Caes. 37.

proposals. The war was therefore to continue. Despite this, Caesar still insists that he endeavoured to obtain peace in other ways, although, as the commentary itself reveals, he was in a precarious position.⁶⁵

The situation in Epirus deteriorated to such an extent that Caesar needed to obtain reinforcements from Italy. He tells us that he wrote to his partisans at Brundisium, ordering them to sail at the first opportunity (BC 3.25). Of course, Caesar does not mention his own failed attempt to reach Brundisium. Plutarch (Caes. 38) says that he disguised himself as a slave and tried to cross to Italy in a small boat, but was unsuccessful because of violent storms.

After Caesar and Antony joined forces (BC 3.30), Caesar proudly relates how he compelled Pompey to move his camp to the rocky plateau of Petra, and surrounded it completely by field fortifications (BC 3.41-3). While he aimed to weaken the enemy and at the same time prevent the disruption of his own food supply, he also wanted to diminish the reputation of Pompey by the extraordinary sight of a weaker side surrounding an enemy that was twice as strong and too scared to fight a pitched battle. Of course, Caesar's reputation would in turn be immeasurably strengthened, and his concern here is for the entire Roman world to be impressed by his excellence as a general.

Caesar capitalised on the worsening situation in Pompey's camp to make peace overtures yet again, this time by sending an offer to Metellus Scipio through the agency of Aulus Clodius. Caesar hoped that Scipio would coerce Pompey into seeking peace, and at first the words of his proposal seem uncharacteristic:

Quod si fecisset, quietem Italiae, pacem provinciarum, salutem imperii uni omnes acceptam relaturos.

If he did this, everyone would record to his credit alone the tranquillity of Italy, the peace of the provinces, the safety of the empire. (BC 2.57)

⁶⁵ Half of his army was in Epirus, the other half still at Brundisium, and M. Calpurnius Bibulus was in between at Corcyra.

Surely it was Caesar who wished to be credited with having made every possible effort at every conceivable opportunity to secure a negotiated peace? Yet the promise simply reveals a statesman who is carrying this theme to the utmost: he is showing the extraordinary lengths to which he has gone in his attempt to obtain a conclusion by peaceful rather than warlike means. In any case, since everyone knew Caesar was attempting to secure peaceful negotiation, he knew the credit would ultimately be his.

Caesar's failed attempt to take Dyrrachium caused the Caesarians to flee with heavy losses, and to all appearances they were a defeated army (BC 66-70). Plutarch (*Caes.* 39) says that Caesar himself narrowly escaped being killed by one of his fugitive soldiers, but was saved by his shield-bearer. Naturally he does not mention this case of ~~mutiny~~, which would have injured his reputation in the circumstances. Instead he reports the entreaties of the wounded eagle-bearer:

Nolite, obsecro, committere, quod ante in exercitu Caesaris non accidit, ut rei militaris dedecus admittatur.

Do not, I beg you, allow a military disgrace to take place, which has never before happened in Caesar's army. (BC 3.64)

Caesar intended these words to serve as an example of the loyalty of all his soldiers, and to preserve the reputation of his army even during defeat. He attributes the setback to a number of causes: the small number of his troops, the unfavourable conditions of the site and the narrow space, the panic of the soldiers, the separation of the army into two parts (BC 3.72). Naturally he does not allude either to the courage or to the generalship of Pompey himself and the victory is made to appear as no more than a fortunate break for the enemy. Moreover, he later accuses Pompey of exaggerating the reports of his success (BC 3.79).

After the reverse, which Pompey failed to follow up rapidly, Caesar delivered an address to his soldiers in order to raise their spirits (BC 3.73). The significance of this speech goes beyond the immediate situation that gave rise to it and is designed to be displayed as an example of Caesar's heroic conduct

in a crisis. Caesar states categorically that the loss that had been sustained should be attributed to anyone rather than himself, and suggests to his soldiers that it could have been due to confusion or error on their part. But in particular he refers to the mysterious workings of *fortuna*, which is the most important element in any event. A short while previously Caesar had proclaimed:

Sed fortuna, quae plurimum potest cum in reliquis rebus tum praecipue in bello, ...

But fortune, which has the greatest influence not only in other affairs but especially in war, ... (BC 3.68)

Thus in his address to the soldiers Caesar attributes their success in previous campaigns to the helping hand of fortune. But *fortuna* does not appear to have assisted his own achievements, which Caesar presents as having himself accomplished alone:

Locum se aequum ad dimicandum dedisse, potitum esse hostium castris, expulisse ac superasse pugnantes.

He had given them a favourable situation for fighting, he had gained possession of the enemy's camp, he had expelled and overcome them in fight. (BC 3.73)

The purpose of the speech is to reveal how Caesar alleviated his army's anxiety. After delivering it he declares that he publicly disgraced and degraded some of the standard-bearers, thereby immediately restoring discipline and filling the troops with such remorse that they were once again inflamed by the desire for fighting (BC 3.74). Plutarch, however, does not mention any of this; he simply says (Caes. 39) that Caesar spent an uncomfortable night reflecting on the quality of his generalship.

Before the decisive Battle of Pharsalus took place, Caesar again made the customary speech to his army (BC 4.90). In this relatively short and final exhortation, he promotes several aspects of his image at once: he stresses his unbroken record of kindness towards his troops and asks them to witness the enthusiasm with which he had sought peace and attempted

negotiations, he displays his *clementia* in declaring that he had not wished to use the blood of his soldiers for the wrong ends, and indicates his concern for the state by claiming that he had not wished to deprive the state of either of its armies. The speech serves as a final justification of Caesar's part in the war, to the extent that after the battle he could sadly survey the corpses on the battlefield and declare of his enemies: "hoc voluerunt."⁶⁶

As Caesar advanced into the final battle he put his own view of the war into the mouth of Gaius Crastinus, who stated that it was being fought to recover the dignity of their commander and their own liberty (BC 3.91). Caesar wanted his readers to understand that he had undertaken the war because his achievements warranted the recognition and upholding of his *dignitas*, and that his soldiers were Roman citizens fighting for a fair system of government.

However, Caesar did not hesitate to refer to the victory of Pharsalus as "Caesar's victory" (BC 3.101). The tone of his narrative returns to one of triumphant self-confidence after the uncertainties of the past year. When he travelled to Asia after the flight of Pompey in order to deal with problems in the province, he records the miracles that supposedly occurred in various places on the day of his conquest (BC 3.105). Naturally he is capitalising on the assumption that his divine descent was closely connected with his victory and his resultant leadership of the Empire. The celestial happenings made a favourable impression on the Greeks of Asia Minor and, as Caesar intended, indicated divine approval for his actions and therefore divine justification of his part in the war. A new conception of government was beginning to take shape, and perhaps because he was aware of this Caesar makes comparatively little of his stay in Asia, noting that he remained there only a few days (BC 3.106).

As soon as Caesar heard that Pompey was on his way to Egypt he

⁶⁶ Suet. *Caes.* 30.

left Asia for Alexandria, and on arrival was informed that Pompey had been murdered. In order to justify his own movements, Caesar claims that Pompey had turned to Egypt in order to make use of the opportunities the place offered him for continuing his campaign:

coniectans eum in Aegyptum iter habere propter necessitudines regni reliquasque eius loci opportunitates
...

conjecturing that he was on his way to Egypt on account of his ties of friendship with the kingdom and the remaining advantages of the place. (BC 3.106)

For this reason he makes the friends of the Egyptian king justify Pompey's murder on the grounds that it would prevent him from occupying Alexandria and Egypt (BC 3.104). Again Caesar portrays himself as the skilful negotiator, this time in Egypt, claiming to be the common friend and arbitrator who settles the disputes of the kingdom's rulers (BC 3.109). By settling these disputes, Caesar would be able to place the country in his debt. However, the Egyptians had fought against him in the Civil War and this gave him an excuse for levying contributions in the kingdom.⁶⁷ Of course he omits to mention this, claiming that the reason why he landed at Alexandria with so few troops was because he trusted the report of his achievements and judged that every place would be equally safe for him (BC 3.106). The fact that he ordered other legions, which he had composed out of the Pompeian troops, to be brought to him from Asia, shows his real intentions. He proposed to hold Egypt by force.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Dio 42.9.1.

⁶⁸ *b. Alex.* 3.4. Unfortunately Book 3 of the *BC* does not contain a full account of the operations of 48 and remains, for whatever reason, formally incomplete. Some scholars have suggested that Caesar left it incomplete because the Ides of March terminated his activities. However, there is no proof that the composition of Books 1 and 2 and Book 3 were separated by any great interval of time. It is therefore not possible to guess what fitting conclusion Caesar had in mind to his achievements of that year.

CHAPTER 3

Augustus' Res Gestae

Introduction

Until the Cantabrian War in 26BC Augustus had worked on his Autobiography, but after the war he discontinued it,¹ and turned his attention to the *Res Gestae*. The knowledge we have concerning the contents of the Autobiography can be gleaned from the surviving fragments, as well as from certain passages in Suetonius, Plutarch, Appian, Tertullian and Nicolaus of Damascus. Yavetz refers to both Suetonius (Aug. 13) and Tacitus (Ann. 1.10) to show that Augustus had "acquired a reputation as a cruel, vengeful, selfish, and treacherous youth."² As the surviving fragments reveal, the Autobiography was a defence and justification of Augustus' earlier deeds, an apology for his irregular acts and an explanation for his behaviour. His enemies had vilified his performance in war, depicting him as cruel and savage and acting in defiance of legal procedures, and as behaving in a treacherous manner towards former friends, benefactors and members of his own family. Obviously the Autobiography represented an effort to project a different public image from that which prevailed in the propaganda of his enemies, and so Augustus presented himself as a man of *virtus*, *clementia* and *iustitia*. One wonders why Augustus discontinued his defensive and apologetic Autobiography, but Yavetz's explanation seems plausible:

After 23BC Augustus reached the conclusion that further justification of his career was unnecessary, and might even be counter-productive... Augustus might have thought that it would be superfluous to go on justifying his deeds, apologising for irregularities, and trying to whitewash his character ...³

¹ Suet. Aug. 85.

² Yavetz, Z., "The *Res Gestae* and Augustus's Public Image", in Millar, F. and Segal, E. (eds), Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects, Oxford 1984, 2.

³ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 4.

Obviously Augustus did not want to draw further attention to past aspects of his character by continuing to defend and apologise for them. If he were instead to publish a statement of his achievements, people's thoughts would be directed away from any previous accusations that may have been levelled against him.

The production of defensive counter-publication might well have proved unnecessary for Augustus since he had other means at his disposal to deal with the written censure of his enemies. Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.72) informs us that Augustus was the first to take cognisance of written libel under the *lex maiestatis* and mentions the case of Cassius Severus whose works were burnt in public. Historical source material that could be used as evidence against him was apparently dealt with in the same way, making it difficult for his opponents to write against him. According to Appian (*B.C.* 5.132) Augustus burned the writings which contained evidence concerning the civil strife, and Dio (52.42.8) says that he confiscated all the letters that had been found in Antony's possession. Suetonius (*Aug.* 31) mentions that after Augustus assumed the office of *pontifex maximus* he burned more than two thousand prophetic writings of dubious authorship.

It would certainly have been more positive for Augustus' public image if he now focussed attention on his *res gestae* and the principate that he had developed. As Ramage points out, since Augustus' rule covered approximately half a century during which there had evolved a new and essentially different system of government, it is not surprising that the *princeps* wanted to leave behind some account of what he had created.⁴ Also relevant here is the comment of Brunt and Moore that Augustus nearly died in 23 and was unlikely to have had an *elogium* ready at this stage.⁵ Like many other Romans he must have started to think about posterity and it is understandable, therefore, that the first draft of the *Res Gestae* materialised shortly after this date. Augustus' own statement that he wanted his actions to be regarded as *exempla* for posterity (*RG* 8.5) reveals that the image

⁴ Ramage, 1987: 111.

⁵ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 5.

he wished to leave for future generations could not be achieved by means of an autobiography. Hence from 23 the emphasis was laid on the writing and rewriting of the *Res Gestae*.

Direction and Purpose

Much has been said in connection with Augustus' purpose in writing the *RG* and the intended audience of the document. Fairley points out that two purposes are manifest throughout the *RG*: that Augustus is to appear as the saviour of the state and not as a seeker of personal aggrandisement, and that his whole authority is to be represented as having been exercised under constitutional forms.⁶ This is an acceptable view; moreover it is backed up by the very first sentence of the document in which Augustus establishes his new and positive image:

*exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi,
per quem rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in
libertatem vindicavi.*

I raised an army, by means of which I championed the liberty of the state when it was oppressed by the tyranny of a faction. (*RG* 1.1)

Augustus is no longer defending his actions as an usurper; instead he is promoting himself as the deliverer and protector of the state.

Brunt and Moore are of the opinion that in the *RG* the *princeps* is not offering a comprehensive survey and justification of his policy and position as a whole, but is attempting to demonstrate and justify the unique position of pre-eminence which he had come to hold.⁷ This is an accurate observation, but it may also be taken a step further. I believe that Augustus not only intended to present a positive image of his achievements and justify his unique situation, but also aimed to depict himself and his activities in a superior and unassailable position. This he

⁶ Fairley, W. (ed.), Monumentum Ancyranum: The Deeds of Augustus, Philadelphia 1898, 8.

⁷ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 5.

achieved by producing a catalogue of accomplishments and honours and combining them with careful emphasis and omission, so that he is represented not only as successful but virtually perfect. He is therefore the ideal Roman leader. An analysis of the *RG* will reveal just how successfully this combination of content and careful internal organisation project the desired image.

Ramage, however, is of the opinion that Augustus' primary purpose in writing the *RG* was explication; his intention was to describe clearly the new form of government which he had established at Rome.⁸ Citing in support of this view the instances where the *princeps* makes a number of subtle references to the fact that Rome had entered a new age, Ramage sees the document as a description of the era and of the form of government that had made it possible. He believes that if the document is seen as providing a theory of the principate, "most of the problems that scholars have found with its organisation and content simply disappear."⁹ If one were to adopt Ramage's viewpoint it would be necessary to conclude, as he does, that the *RG* was part of a program of instruction addressed by Augustus to his successor Tiberius, who was expected to continue the stable form of government he had established. The document's supposed explanation of the new form of government would assist Tiberius and his successors, and the Roman people generally, to understand more fully the principate and the philosophy behind it. However, it seems inconceivable that Augustus has provided the reader with what Ramage calls "an account of his philosophy of government ... the theory of principate." The *RG* is hardly a theoretical treatise. A politico-philosophical treatise would have to be a significantly less subjective document and would certainly not involve self-glorification to the extent that it is found in the *RG*, if indeed it ought to be found at all. The concept of promoting the appropriate image, which is so clearly evident in this document, would also have little or no relevance in such a treatise. And although it appears that Augustus was genuinely interested in establishing a stable form of government, he omits

⁸ Ramage, 1987: 111.

⁹ Ramage, 1987: 113.

to mention in the document what powers formed the basis of his rule. This hardly indicates that he was explaining constitutional theory.

Ramage's work also details the various methods Augustus used to create the ideal image of himself, his actions and his new system of government. This makes it all the more difficult to understand how he reached such conclusions regarding the purpose of the document. There is nothing to indicate that the *RG* was written solely as some kind of instruction manual for Tiberius. If Augustus had intended the document to be addressed specifically to his successor, he would most likely have included instructions to this effect when he entrusted the four documents to the Vestal Virgins for safekeeping.¹⁰ Instead, he asked for the catalogue of his achievements to be set up in front of his mausoleum, a fact which suggests that he was writing for a much wider audience.

This leads to the next question: whom did Augustus intend to impress when he wrote the *RG*? Many scholars, including Mommsen,¹¹ Dessau,¹² Gagé¹³ and Brunt and Moore,¹⁴ state categorically that Augustus addressed himself to the people of Rome. They maintain that no one in Ancyra, Apollonia or Antioch¹⁵ could possibly have been interested in the tedious account of disbursements or games performed in Rome.¹⁶ Syme,

¹⁰ See Suet. Aug. 101.

¹¹ Mommsen, T., Res Gestae Divi Augusti ex Monumentis Ancyrano et Apolloniensi, Berlin 1883, v-vi.

¹² Dessau, H., "Mommsen und das Monumentum Ankyranum", Klio 22 (1929), 287.

¹³ Gagé, J., Res Gestae Divi Augusti, Paris 1935, 23ff.

¹⁴ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 3ff.

¹⁵ The three known copies of the *RG* were all found in the province of Galatia. Why this should have been so is something of a puzzle.

¹⁶ Their assumptions are misguided. The temple at Ancyra on whose walls the main inscription was discovered was one dedicated to Augustus and Rome, suggesting the

however, states that Dessau's insistence that the inscription was primarily designed to be read by the plebs in Rome has not always been sufficiently regarded.¹⁷ Yavetz, too, disagrees with Mommsen et al.¹⁸ He points out that the people of Rome could not have been the potential readers of the RG because written propaganda addressed to the masses would have to be short and concise in order to appeal to the little-educated average Roman citizen.¹⁹ This is a valid point: it is certainly unlikely that Augustus would have proudly informed the masses that he refused both the consulship and the dictatorship when they were offered to him by the people for the rest of his life (RG 5.1, 5.3; Suet. Aug. 52). He would therefore have to appeal to the more educated citizens, in order to secure his place in history.

Yavetz follows up the conclusion of Rostovtzeff, that in order to enforce his policies, Augustus relied heavily on the *equites*,

existence of a cult of the *genius* of Augustus in that area. Such a cult was not unusual, since ruler-worship had long been customary in Greek-speaking lands. It is true that Augustus only mentions the provinces where he is recording their recovery or conquest for the Roman people, and that virtually all the *impensae* mentioned refer to Rome (Brunt and Moore, 1967: 4). Moreover, the RG was designed to be inscribed at Rome. However, ruler-worship of Augustus in Galatia would naturally include an interest in the achievements of their deity, irrespective of where such achievements occurred.

¹⁷ Syme, 1939: 524 n. 4.

¹⁸ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 8ff. Yavetz refutes Dessau's contention that Augustus had to conceal his *imperium proconsulare maius* because it could not have been popular with the city masses, arguing that *imperium* had never been unpopular with the people of Rome and that Augustus had no reason to conceal it. This is true, although when considering the point one must distinguish between the different kinds of *imperium* awarded to Augustus, something which Yavetz does not appear to do. It will be shown later that Augustus had other reasons for omitting to mention his *imperium proconsulare maius*; the exclusion is a result of his desire to project a consistent image of legality rather than of his choice of audience.

¹⁹ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 12.

and took great interest in the organisation of the youth.²⁰ Yavetz is convinced that this new generation, wealthy and non-political in nature, would more readily acquiesce in Augustus' new regime than would the old, conservative *nobiles*, and that the youth would have been more attracted to and more accepting of his new image as a great man and great leader.²¹ The youth were Rome's future leadership, and they would be taught that the *mos maiorum* was an integral part of their education; in other words, that Augustus' policy was to combine his new regime with the best of Roman tradition. This view certainly finds substantiation in Augustus' statement that he would not accept any office inconsistent with *mos maiorum* (RG 6.1). Yavetz maintains that the mental improvement and advancement of the young, educating them by using *exempla* of noble deeds, was of prime importance to Augustus,²² and concludes:

it is not absurd to suggest that he had the educated *iuventus* in mind when he wrote his *Res Gestae*.²³

This conclusion might have applied in 23 when Augustus probably began to compose the RG, but surely not in AD13, when he deposited the document with the Vestal Virgins. By that time the *iuventus* referred to by Yavetz would already have moved into the senior ranks of the new regime.

It is therefore difficult to make definite conclusions as to the conceivable audience of the document. Caesar was obviously writing for Roman senators and against talk spread by his enemies, knowing full well that his opponents in Rome were watching his every move with suspicion and that any arbitrary actions on his part would supply them with information for an indictment. But in the case of Augustus, there was no one left to oppose him:

²⁰ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 15f, citing Rostovtzeff, M., Römische Bleitesserae, 1905, 31 n. 108.

²¹ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 17-18.

²² See RG 8.5.

²³ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 19.

The great protagonists of Philippi, Naulochus, and Actium were dead. Salvidienus had been conveniently disposed of, Agrippa was a faithful deputy, his other aides each carefully picked, were loyal and efficient.²⁴

I would therefore prefer to adopt the view of Starr, who broadly defines the RG as being a document addressed to the world.²⁵ From this it is clear that the overall impression of the document is its resemblance to an *elogium*. The RG would thus be Augustus' final word on himself and his achievements, and naturally every statement it contained would be carefully chosen and arranged in order to leave behind an image of perfection. Its justification is perhaps best described in the edict of Augustus quoted by Suetonius (Aug. 28):

Ita mihi salvam ac sospitem rem p. sistere in sua sede liceat atque eius rei fructum percipere, quem peto, ut optimi status auctor dicar et moriens ut feram mecum spem, mansura in vestigio suo fundamenta rei p. quae iecero.

So may I be allowed to establish the State in a firm and secure position, and reap from that act the fruit that I desire; that I may be called the author of the best possible government, and that I may bear with me the hope that when I die the foundations which I have laid for the State will remain unshaken.

Organisation of the Res Gestae

The manner in which Augustus organised the contents of the RG has a significant bearing on the image of himself that he ultimately produced. Authors seem to agree on the fact that he had a fairly clear plan in mind when he wrote his account, and this is borne out by the careful arrangement of the chapters. Most authors appear to notice a neat division into three or four distinct parts. The heading of the Latin inscription divides the subject matter into two categories, broadly speaking the *res gestae quibus orbem terrarum imperio populi Romani subiecit* and the *impensae quas in rem publicam fecit*. Mommsen substituted for

²⁴ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 8.

²⁵ Starr, C.G., Civilisation and the Caesars, New York 1954, 250.

this a tripartite classification in his edition of the *RG*.²⁶ Fairley²⁷ and Gag  ²⁸ set out this tripartite plan in the introduction to their editions: chapters 1 - 14 give the various offices and honours that Augustus either accepted or refused (*honores*); chapters 15 - 24 recount his expenditures on behalf of the people and the state (*impensae*); chapters 25 - 35 embrace his historical achievements in war as conqueror and peacemaker (*res gestae*). The end of the third section, chapters 34 - 35, returns to the subject of the first. Hardy follows this general scheme but divides the first section into two parts: chapters 1 - 3 as summarising briefly the domestic and military *res gestae*, and chapters 4 - 14 as encompassing civil and religious offices and honours.²⁹

While I agree with this broader framework I believe that there is also a more polished organisation in the *RG*, whereby a natural progression often links one chapter sequentially to the next. There are also certain concepts and themes which connect various chapters throughout the document. It is necessary first to look at the way in which the chapters are organised and then to analyse Augustus' use of various terms and concepts within that organisation, in order to see how he built up an image of himself as the ideal leader.

The first two chapters appear to serve as an introduction, summarising the account of Octavian's rise to power until 42. Chapters 3.1 - 4.3 move on to a more general summary of Augustus' military activities and honours. Ramage maintains that for this reason the second two chapters contrast with the first two and introduce a new subject.³⁰ However, chapter 3 follows as a natural progression from the first two chapters and extends the general category of domestic and military *res gestae* to 28.

²⁶ Mommsen, 1883: v.

²⁷ Fairley, 1898: 8-9.

²⁸ Gag  , 1950: 13-16.

²⁹ Hardy, 1923: 14-18.

³⁰ Ramage, 1987: 17.

Chapter 4.1 - 4.3 shows what Augustus achieved as a result of the accomplishments listed in the previous three chapters: military honours in the form of triumphs and salutations as *imperator* (4.1, 4.3), and *supplicationes* (4.2). The mention of his consulships and tribunician power in 4.4 links up with the subject of paragraphs 5.1 - 8, namely the civil offices which he either held or refused, and his civil activities. The only disturbance in this progression is in 7.3, where Augustus lists his religious offices. However, this links up with chapters 9 - 13, which contain an account of his religious activities and the religious honours bestowed on him.

Chapters 1 - 13 therefore embrace the civil, military and religious activities and honours of Augustus. Chapters 15 - 24, while apparently constituting an independent section as *impensae*, nevertheless link up with the previous chapters in that they show the benefactions and the expenditure of Augustus in his capacity as a civil (RG 15, 20.1-2, 20. 5, 22, 23), military (RG 16, 17.2) and religious (RG 19.2, 20.4, 21.2, 22.2, 24) leader.

Brunt and Moore note that Augustus gives only a selection of his benefactions in these chapters and neglects many other examples of his liberality, especially in the provinces.³¹ No author seems to give much explanation for this omission, other than that Augustus was not too concerned with provincial readers.³² Yet provision was made for having the document translated into Greek, for distribution in the East. I would suggest that Augustus mentioned specific benefactions because they had a certain political significance, and for this reason they would naturally concern Rome, as the centre of political life, and its inhabitants. Brunt and Moore realise that Augustus' largesses seem usually to have a particular political explanation,³³ but fail to connect this fact with Augustus' supposed lack of concern with provincial readers. As Ramage quite rightly points out, the aim of the *impensae* is to show how the *princeps* exhibited a

³¹ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 57.

³² Brunt and Moore, 1967: 81.

³³ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 58.

liberalitas in virtually all areas of Roman life.³⁴ Augustus overwhelms his readers with impressively large figures in order to achieve the impression of outstanding generosity on his part. The list of grants of grain and money (RG 15) and the lengthy catalogue of buildings either created or repaired (RG 19, 20) contribute to the cumulative effect.

Chapters 25 - 33, which scholars have always referred to as the *res gestae* proper, link up with the introductory chapters in that they describe in detail the military activities summarised in 3.1.³⁵ Chapters 25-29 deal with the pacification and extension of the *imperium Romanum*, the recovery of provinces lost in the civil wars and military standards. Chapters 30-33 contain the most outstanding military and diplomatic successes of Augustus, those he regarded as being amongst his most memorable achievements and which were in his opinion important for winning over public opinion to the new regime.

Chapters 34-35, which comprise the concluding statement about Augustus' position in the state, form a fitting climax to the RG. This section, far from standing on its own, links up with the introductory chapters. For example, in the first sentence of the RG Augustus emphasises his youth:

Annos undeviginti natus exercitum privato consilio et privata impensa comparavi, ...

At the age of nineteen on my own responsibility and at my own expense I raised an army, ... (RG 1.1)

The final chapter describes the conferment of the title of *pater patriae* by the Senate, the equestrian order and the whole people of Rome, and again concludes with a statement of his age:

Cum scripsi haec annum agebam septuagensimum sextum.

³⁴ Ramage, 1987: 18.

³⁵ The temporal continuity between events described in chapters 2 and 25 is noted by Ramage, 1987: 19: "Gagé's problem with the civil wars appearing in two places (3.1, 25) is not really a problem at all."

When I wrote this I was in my seventy-sixth year. (RG 35.2)

The connection is clear: Augustus wants to show that he began his political and military life at a very young age, acting on his own and as a private person.³⁶ At the end of his life and his career he has become universally loved and accepted by all sections of the population, as the bestowal of the title *pater patriae* shows.³⁷ Thus an important aim of the RG becomes apparent: Augustus wished to emphasise the enormity of his progress and achievement, from the time of the youthful Octavian to that of the mature Augustus. Dio (53.18.3) says that the term *pater patriae* indicates the type of authority which a father has over his children and a mutual love and respect between the *princeps* and his subjects. By the final chapter, then, Augustus has become the father of the largest family on earth.

Another interesting link may be seen between RG 34 and the introductory chapters, a link that only Ramage amongst modern authors seems to have noticed.³⁸ At the beginning of the RG Octavian is presented as acting on behalf of the *res publica* as *propraetor*, as *consul* and as *triumvir rei publicae constituendae*,³⁹ possessing *imperium* and thus acquiring magisterial power or *potestas*. In chapter 34.3, however, Augustus states categorically that "post id tempus" (27BC) he excelled all in *auctoritas*, although he possessed no more *potestas* than the others who were his colleagues in each magistracy. The merits of this statement and an examination of

³⁶ This mirrors the early career of Pompey.

³⁷ Suetonius (Aug. 58) tells us that Augustus had frequently been acclaimed *pater patriae* even before 2BC. Of course, if Augustus had mentioned this in an earlier connection it would have detracted from the due ceremony with which he records this magnificent gesture.

³⁸ Ramage, 1987: 20.

³⁹ Octavian's position was legalised by decrees of the Senate on 1 January 43, which granted him the powers and honours mentioned in 1.2 and 1.3. He was created *triumvir* for five years by the *Lex Titia* on 27 November 43.

Augustus' actual *potestas* at that stage will be discussed later. What is significant here is that Augustus is demonstrating that by virtue of his achievements, and their corresponding honours and awards, he had sufficient *auctoritas* after 27 and no longer needed to depend on his *potestas*. Thus another important aim of the *RG* becomes apparent: Augustus wished to show that throughout his career the basis of his constitutional position gradually evolved from *potestas* to *auctoritas*.

It is therefore clear that the way in which Augustus has organised the various chapters of the *RG* has a significant and direct bearing on the image he wished to present to his readers, and that what appears to be a relatively straightforward account of his achievements is actually a skilfully contrived piece of self-propaganda.

Emphasis and Use of the First Person

The *RG* represents Augustus' own personal, but also the official version, of events, and he records only his achievements and those carried out under his auspices; the achievements of others are naturally ignored.⁴⁰ Since Augustus is the author, the emphasis is constantly on himself as the focus of action and the treatment of his contemporaries is essentially anonymous. No one else is given credit for any accomplishment. These elements combine with a careful use of the first person to ensure that Augustus emerges as supreme in Rome, although as Ramage points out, the omission of other people from the *RG* has serious implications for matters of reliability.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Syme, *RR*, 522-3, notes the connection between these omissions and Augustus' public image: "This precious document ... reveals the way in which Augustus wished posterity to interpret the incidents of his career, the achievements and character of his rule. The record is no less instructive for what it omits than what it says."

⁴¹ Ramage, 1987: 35.

There is naturally no mention of domestic affairs in the *Res Gestae*.⁴² In view of both the nature of the document and Augustus' aims in writing it, it must surely be obvious that an exposition or explanation of domestic affairs is hardly relevant to his purpose. In keeping with the focus of the *RG*, members of Augustus' family are mentioned only where they relate to his own political, military and religious activities.

In fact, all other characters are "diluted" by their subordination to the personality and achievements of Augustus. Certain personalities, particularly Augustus' opponents, are not mentioned by name but merely alluded to.⁴³ The name of Agrippa occurs twice (*RG* 8.2, 22.2),⁴⁴ but according to Syme, Agrippa appears "much more as a date than an agent",⁴⁵ and Ramage notes that in both cases he is revealed as "a colourless colleague of the emperor in a magistracy."⁴⁶ Tiberius is mentioned four times (*RG* 8.4, 16.2, 27.2, 30.1), but the mention is brief and always coupled with that of Augustus, either for dating purposes (*RG* 8.4, 16.2) or as an agent of the emperor (*RG* 27.2, 30.1). He therefore appears as a mere adjunct to the actions and achievements of Augustus. Marcellus rates a single mention (*RG* 21.1), but again the emphasis is on Augustus' building of the theatre in his name.

Finally, although Augustus devotes a whole chapter (*RG* 14) to a discussion of the honours awarded to his grandsons Gaius and Lucius, he does not declare that this was done for their own sakes. Instead, Augustus himself is the main reason for their

⁴² For some reason Fairley, 1898: 8 seems surprised at this omission.

⁴³ As Syme, *RR*, 523, aptly puts it: "The adversaries of the Princeps in war and the victims of his public or private treacheries are not mentioned by name but are consigned to contemptuous oblivion."

⁴⁴ Fairley's statement (8) that Agrippa is not mentioned in the *RG* is therefore inaccurate.

⁴⁵ Syme, *RR*, 523.

⁴⁶ Ramage, 1987: 27.

being honoured: "honoris mea caussa" (RG 14.1). Besides, as *principes iuvenutis* (RG 14.2) Gaius and Lucius become mere extensions of Augustus as *princeps*. In chapter 27.2 Gaius once again appears briefly, but only as an instrument of Augustus: "per Gaium filium." Augustus elicits the reader's sympathies towards himself by alluding to the untimely deaths of his grandsons:

quos iuvenes mihi eripuit fortuna ...

whom fortune snatched away from me in their youth ... (RG 14.1.)

The attention is once again focussed on the author.

In chapter 1.1 Augustus refers to the fact that he raised the nucleus of an army at the beginning of November 44,⁴⁷ while he was nineteen years old and a private citizen. In addition, he seduced two of Antony's legions,⁴⁸ an act which was entirely illegal and brought him into direct rivalry with Antony. Antony is not named; instead he is indirectly referred to as "the leader of a faction." Later he is referred to as "he with whom I had waged war" (RG 24.1). The conscious avoidance of mentioning Antony's name is part of Augustus's scheme to make his opponents appear as public enemies, so that any action taken against them could be justified as being for the good of the state. Indeed, Cicero was prepared to claim that the safety of the state overrode ordinary legal principles.⁴⁹ Thus the public image of Octavian as saviour of the state is established from the first sentence and presented in a grandiloquent way: as an individual he defeated a whole faction in order to save the entire state. Clearly Augustus wished to pose as a restorer of the old order and as champion of the liberty of the *res publica*. The claim sets the tone for the whole work and, as will be seen later, is the first of many references to traditional practices.

⁴⁷ App. B.C. 3.40. On the military preparations of Octavian in October 44 see also Cicero, Att. 16.8.1.

⁴⁸ App. B.C. 3.45. Naturally, Augustus omits to mention this.

⁴⁹ Phil. 11.28.

For similar reasons, Augustus consciously avoids mentioning the name of Lepidus, who is scornfully referred to as "the man who, inspired by the opportunity of civil disturbance, had seized [the office of *pontifex maximus*]" (RG 10.2). In chapter 2, Augustus alludes to two victories over the assassins of his father, namely the two battles of Philippi which took place in 42.⁵⁰ Brutus and Cassius are dismissed with the statement "those who murdered my parent". Even Caesar is referred to as "my parent" or "my father", and is only mentioned by name when he becomes the divine Julius inhabiting a temple which Augustus has built. Chapter 2 provides a good example of the way in which Augustus lays emphasis on his own deeds and achievements whilst glossing over those of others. Here is the only instance in the RG where there is a palpable distortion of fact.⁵¹ By neglecting to mention the battles of Philippi by name Augustus draws the attention of his readers away from the reality that the victories were not his alone. The first battle was indecisive: Antony was the real victor on that occasion and Augustus ignores the part played by Antony in retrieving the first battle and winning the second. He also obscures the fact that for himself the first battle was unsuccessful. According to Suetonius (Aug. 13), Octavian only narrowly escaped from his camp to the wing of Antony's army.⁵²

The reason Augustus obscures these facts is that they would tarnish his image as restorer and protector of the state and its traditional institutions. The image is also enhanced by the fact that in the first two chapters he mentions the word *res publica* no fewer than four times in five sentences, thus emphasising its restitution even at the beginning of his career.

With reference to other military operations Augustus maintains the focus on himself by neglecting to mention those who did the

⁵⁰ For the double defeat of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, see Suet. Aug. 13.

⁵¹ See also Fairley, 1898: 15.

⁵² As Syme, *RR*, 523, says: "Philippi is transformed into the victory of Caesar's heir and avenger alone."

actual fighting for him. For example, in chapters 4.2, 26.5 and 30.2 he refers to his successes as having been obtained by himself or under his auspices. In chapters 26.4 and 30.2 he merely refers to "my fleet" and "the army" respectively as having performed the action. This ensures that Augustus alone takes credit not only for his own victories but also for those won by his legates, who would have acted with a praetorian *imperium* subordinate to his own. What he omits to mention, as Suetonius (Aug. 13) tells us, is that he commanded armies in only two foreign wars, whilst the remainder were actually conducted by his lieutenants. Here the limitations imposed by the genre worked in Augustus' favour; an *elogium* was intended to commemorate the achievements of one man, and naturally other characters would be omitted from the account. If Augustus were writing full length memoirs he might have been more generous in mentioning those who assisted him in his accomplishments.

Another striking feature of the *RG* is Augustus' constant but careful use of the first person, an element which is crucial to the formation of his public image. Many authors have failed to note the fundamental significance of his design in this respect. Some do not mention the subject at all, while Brunt and Moore only touch on the topic.⁵³ Ramage, however, gives due attention to the theme and makes the interesting observation that there are more than 100 instances of verbs in the first person, while the first personal adjective appears more than 50 times and the pronoun 27 times.⁵⁴ Again, in view of the fact that the *RG* exhibits so many characteristics of an *elogium*, it seems that the genre has naturally imposed this form of expression on the document.

From the very first sentence of the *RG*, Augustus draws attention to himself as the sole focus of all the action with the verbs *comparavi* and *vindicavi*. Whenever he portrays himself as the man of action, the verb appears in the first person. It has been

⁵³ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 4, 7.

⁵⁴ Ramage, 1987: 21. See also Volkmann, H., Res Gestae Divi Augusti. Das Monumentum Ancyranum, Berlin 1969, 83.

noted above⁵⁵ that Caesar, throughout his *Commentarii*, refers to himself in the third person, as if to distance himself from events for the appearance of objectivity. Augustus, however, only uses the third person when others either give him or do him honour. This element appears early on, in the second sentence of the first chapter, with *adlegit* (1.2), *iussit* (1.3) and *creavit* (1.4). Throughout the *RG* there is a balance between verbs in the first person describing Augustus as the man of action in war and success, and verbs in the third person as he is honoured and glorified for these actions. The use of the third person provides relief from the consistent use of the first person, seemingly diluting it with what appear at first sight to be objective and modest statements. Yet even these instances contain first personal adjectives and pronouns which keep the spotlight on Augustus. Moreover, Augustus' avoidance of the word "ego" has a moderating effect on the first person verbs. In chapters 31 - 33, where there is no occurrence of either the verb or the adjective, the attention is still focussed on Augustus by means of the pronoun. The words "ad me" in 31.1, 32.1 and 32.2, and "a me" in 33 act as a kind of chorus, and the fact that they occur at the beginning of a chapter or section intensifies their effect. Even though Augustus is no longer the man of action he is still the centre of attention, this time from foreign peoples. In a sense he has moved from the role of general to that of the highly esteemed diplomat.

In the final two chapters of the *RG* Augustus' careful use of the first person reaches a climax. In chapter 34.1 he accomplishes superb acts in the first person, having extinguished civil wars ("exstinxeram"), and transferred the *res publica* ("transtuli") to the Senate and people of Rome. For these outstanding achievements the rewards are even greater than before. It is interesting to note here that Augustus now appears to distance himself even more from the honours bestowed on him, in proportion to their increased importance. He achieves this effect by using passives in 34.2, initially in the first person ("appellatus sum") and thereafter in the third person ("vestiti ... fixa est

⁵⁵ Chapter 2.

... positus ... testatum est"). This, together with the customary announcement that it was the Romans who dedicated the shield to him ("dare"), places a veneer of impersonality over the entire section. In chapter 35 this element is carried further: it was not only the Senate but also the equestrian order and the entire people of Rome that gave him the title of *pater patriae* ("appellavit") and resolved to set up the inscription ("censuit"). The ultimate effect of these two chapters is one of humility and restraint, with all trace of self-praise ingeniously removed. As Ramage says, Augustus has put himself firmly in the position of observer.⁵⁶ The fact that the author of his own *res gestae* has managed to make apparently objective statements about himself is a clear indication of the genius of Augustus.

Another element which contributes significantly to the moulding of Augustus' image is the way in which the reader is inundated with large numbers and impressive lists. The importance of this is often overlooked or underestimated by authors, whose discussion is usually focussed on the reliability of the figures involved rather than their rhetorical validity.⁵⁷ Augustus attempts to overwhelm his readers with a profusion of figures. In chapter 3.3 he states that 500 000 people took the oath of obedience, of which he settled approximately 300 000 in colonies. In 8.2 he performed various *lustra* at which 4 063 000, 4 233 000 and 4 937 000 citizens respectively were registered. In chapters 15 and 18 he boasts that on separate occasions 250 000, 320 000, 120 000, 200 000 and 100 000 people were made recipients of donations of cash and grain, while in chapters 16 and 17 he details items of personal expenditure, amounting to 600 000 000, 260 000 000, 400 000 000, 150 000 000 and 170 000 000 sesterces respectively. He also catalogues the buildings which he built or repaired (RG 19-21) and lists the countries in which he

⁵⁶ Ramage, 1987: 26.

⁵⁷ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 26, appear to have missed the point altogether with their assertion that "Augustus has left us with a cool record of fact which is on occasion dry to the point of tedium, as in his list of expenditure."

founded colonies (RG 28).

The various figures and lists are probably fairly reliable. Many of Augustus' statements regarding his benefactions are substantiated by ancient authors.⁵⁸ However, the subtle cumulation of impressive statistics achieves the desired effect: Augustus appears as a man of ultimate generosity because of his benefactions, as the supreme general and administrator because of his actions and offices, and as the most deserving of reward and honour because of his achievements. In other words, he has placed himself in a class of his own.

The careful way in which Augustus moulds public opinion in this respect is even more noticeable when one considers what he omits from his account. For example, in chapter 16 he refers to the fact that he bought lands for the settlement of veterans, namely the soldiers of Antony, Lepidus and himself. Although he says that he bought lands for them in 30 and 14BC he does not mention the settlement of his own and Antony's veterans in 41/0 and 36. The most obvious explanation for this is the one given by Brunt and Moore, that the earlier settlements involved widespread confiscations of land.⁵⁹ As Jones states, since there was no money to buy land and the estates of the proscribed had been sold for cash, the only way of obtaining land at that time was by confiscation.⁶⁰ Moreover, in describing the assignment of lands in 30 Augustus omits to mention the demands that forced him to return to Brundisium in August 40 to execute the task.⁶¹ As is the case with all his benefactions, he obviously wished to be seen as the instigator of this munificence. Further, since he is concerned only with his own generosity and with mentioning only those amounts expended from his own private means, he naturally omits the fact that some veterans would have been

⁵⁸ See App. B.C. 2.143; Dio 51.3, 4; 53.2, 28; 54.25, 29, 30; 55.10, 25; Plut. Ant. 16, Brut. 20; Suet. Iul. 83, Aug. 17.

⁵⁹ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 42.

⁶⁰ Jones, A.H.M., Augustus, London 1970, 26.

⁶¹ See Suet. Aug. 17.

settled on lands seized from conquered peoples.⁶² Fairley says that those who had supported Antony were simply dispossessed.⁶³ Dio (51.3.4) appears to support this statement.

With respect to the catalogue of buildings which he repaired or restored (RG 19-21), Augustus omits to mention structures which he erected in the name of others, such as the porticoes of Octavia and Livia.⁶⁴ He also neglects to mention all the constructions erected and financed by other *viri triumphales*, an omission all the more significant in view of the fact that many appeared to be acting under the instructions of Augustus himself.⁶⁵ Since it was his aim to direct attention to his achievements alone, no one else is given credit for any building or restoration in Rome and Italy. Such omissions of personality or fact convey the impression that Augustus is the only performer and sole achiever in the RG, and naturally one questions the reliability of the document. As Ramage says:

If this were the only information available, it would be perfectly natural to assume that the emperor rebuilt Rome all by himself.⁶⁶

The combination of emphasis and omission, combined with his careful use of the first person, focusses the spotlight exclusively on Augustus throughout his account. His superior position is consistently set before the reader at all times. As the title of the document - *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* - serves to remind us, Augustus was obviously not concerned with the *res gestae* nor the public image of anyone else. In any case, if he

⁶² Hardy, 1923: 84 makes the point that we have in fact no confirmation that the land in 30 and 14BC was actually paid for. However, it makes no sense to assume confiscation after 31.

⁶³ Fairley, 1898: 43.

⁶⁴ See Dio 69.43; 54.23. Perhaps in this case the limited space allotted to the RG, which in turn restricted information, could explain these omissions.

⁶⁵ See Dio 53.2.4, 22.1, 23.1-2; Suet. Aug. 29ff.; Vell. Pat. 2.89.4.

⁶⁶ Ramage, 1987: 36.

were to mention the names or achievements of others the work would no longer be his *res gestae*. While the limitations imposed by an *elogium* precluded mentioning others, I believe Augustus consciously chose to make use of such characteristics of the genre that suited his purpose.

Legality and Republican Tradition

One of the most significant ideas which Augustus aims to emphasise in the *RG* is the fact that everything he did, every office he held and every honour he received was necessary, legal and consistent with republican tradition. In the first sentence he claims:

rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi.

I delivered the state which had been oppressed by the tyranny of a faction. (*RG* 1.1)

As has been mentioned above,⁶⁷ Augustus wished to pose as restorer of the previous order and champion of the liberty of the Roman state,⁶⁸ this claim being the first of many references to traditional practices. It provides a keynote and an important theme for the whole work. The word *libertas* was the battle-cry of the aristocracy of the 1st century BC, and therefore immediately stands out in the first sentence as having strong connotations.⁶⁹ Moreover, it is used at this stage of the *RG* in a wholly traditional context. By omitting Antony's name and indicating that he was an enemy of the state, Augustus could assert that his opposition to Antony was in defence of Rome. If this were seen to be the case, the safety of the state would require Octavian to raise an army and legal principles could then

⁶⁷ See pp. 95-96.

⁶⁸ It is erroneous to use the term "republic", as so many authors do, to translate the term *res publica*, since the Romans did not see their city-state as a republic. n
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⁶⁹ On *libertas* in the first century BC and early empire see Wirszubski, C., *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome during the Late Republic and Early Empire*, Cambridge 1950.

be overridden. Syme discusses the various purposes of propaganda, one of which is to win an appearance of legality for measures of violence.⁷⁰ There is little doubt that by "masking and traducing" Antony as the leader of a faction,⁷¹ Augustus is ultimately claiming legality for his deeds.

The motifs of the restoration of the *res publica* and the championship of liberty recur also in inscriptions and the legend of coins. The acclamation of the *princeps* as *vindex libertatis* is emphasised on a coin of 28BC which contains the obverse legend *imp(erator) Caesar divi f(ilius) co(n)s(ul) VI libertatis p(opuli) R(omani) vindex*, and on the reverse a personification of *pax*.⁷² His recognition as restorer of stability and order is emphasised by an official dedication to Augustus in 29 by the Senate and people of Rome which gives the reason for the dedication: *re publica conservata*.⁷³ Moreover, it makes sense to follow the reasoning of Yavetz who claims that as soon as Augustus was securely holding the reins of government, he undertook to change his public image from that of *dux partium* to *princeps civium*.⁷⁴ It is logical to deduce from this that by referring to Antony as the leader of a faction from which he successfully liberated the state, Augustus has changed his own image from that of leader of a faction to leader of the citizens.

The first sentence of the *RG* achieves the impact which Augustus intended. It enables him to continue the opening chapter with the impression that as a result of his outstanding accomplishment ("eo nomine") he was able to ascend steadily and legitimately through the conventional *cursus honorum*. From his initial enrolment in the order "senatus decretis honorificis" (*RG* 1.2) through to his appointment as triumvir "rei publicae constitu-

⁷⁰ Syme, *RR*, 154.

⁷¹ Syme, *RR*, 523.

⁷² See Sutherland, C.H.V., Coinage in Roman Imperial Policy, London 1951, pl. 1,16.

⁷³ Millar, F., "Triumvirate and Principate", *JRS* 43, 1973, 63 and n. 95.

⁷⁴ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 6 citing Syme, *RR*, 288.

endae" (RG 1.4), everything is legal, constitutionally respectable and consistent with traditional practice.⁷⁵ This sets the tone for the whole document; henceforth all honours and rewards bestowed upon him are seen as a natural consequence of his remarkable achievements.

However, the reality of the situation in 43 was somewhat different. On January 1 of that year, when Hirtius and Pansa entered upon the consulship, Octavian's position was legalised by a motion of Cicero. Hardy comments that the measure was "wholly inconsistent with the republican constitution",⁷⁶ although Cicero's statement (*Phil.* 5.17.46) substantiates the claim of a decree of the ~~Senate~~ Senate. The decree gave powers and honours to Octavian without his holding the necessary legal qualifications; he was both admitted to the Senate and given *consularia ornamenta*. On 7 January 43 he also had praetorian *imperium* conferred on him, as is indicated by the *Lex Arae Narbonensis*.⁷⁷ Augustus obviously omits to mention that he did not fulfil the legal prerequisites for holding these positions. He did not need to, since many others before him had not been suitably qualified for office.⁷⁸ Still, careful adaptation of

⁷⁵ The significant difference between the first and second triumvirates was that the second was recognised by law (see n. 39). The fact that it was given a special task, namely *reipublicae constituendae*, was a skilful political manoeuvre since it was therefore tied to the preservation of the existing constitution.

⁷⁶ Hardy, 1923: 28. However, one can compare Octavian's position with that of Pompey in the 70s: Pompey was not qualified for the consulship under Sulla's *lex annalis*, as he was only 36 and had not held any of the required magistracies of the *cursus honorum*. Hardy does not appear to understand the fact that various innovations occurred under the "republic".

⁷⁷ CIL xii.4333: "VII quoque Idus Ianuar, qua die primum imperium orbis terrarum auspicatus est." See also CIL x.8375: "VII Idus Ianuar. Eo die Caesar primum fasces sumpsit."

⁷⁸ For example Pompey (see n. 76), Caesar, who was given the governorship of Cisalpine Gaul and Illyricum for five years from 59, while he was still consul in Rome, and C. Caninius Rebilus who was appointed *consul suffectus* for a half a day on 31 December 45.

the truth shows that he avoided mentioning any facts which might conflict with his image of legality and adherence to precedent. He chose his words carefully in order to retain continuity with concepts expressed during the last years of the *res publica*.

Although Augustus promotes himself as the champion of *libertas* and restorer of the state, he barely conceals the fact that the senatorial government had irrevocably altered. In this respect I would endorse Ramage's dramatic but apt summary of the RG:

In the first place, the RG is in essence the final proof of the end of *libertas* as the republic conceived of it; it is the description of the rule of the strong man who ended freedom forever.⁷⁹

In keeping with his outward respect for tradition, Augustus wanted his readers to believe that he would not in any way act contrary to established law or custom. People would remember only too well that the dictatorship of Caesar had signified the end of *libertas*, and that interference with the consulship or other magistracies would mean the demise of *libertas*.⁸⁰ So Augustus declares that he refused to accept the offices of dictator (RG 5.1), consul for life (RG 5.3) and *pontifex maximus* while his colleague was still alive (RG 10.2), and insists that he would not accept any office that was inconsistent with *mos maiorum* (RG 6.1). Having already restored the state by defeating Antony he now becomes the protector of *libertas* by preserving the existing institutions and observing traditions. Brunt and Moore view these statements as clever propaganda,⁸¹ and I agree that while Augustus accepted no new and extraordinary office or position for which there was no precedent, he obscures the fact that no precedent existed for one man to hold so many different positions and powers at the same time. Moreover, as will be discussed later, he omits to explain the extraordinary nature

⁷⁹ Ramage, 1987: 34.

⁸⁰ The consulship was seen as the citadel of liberty. cf. Livy 6.37.10: "consulatum superesse plebeis; eam esse arcem libertatis, id columen."

⁸¹ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 5.

both of his *tribunicia potestas* and of the repeated grants of *imperium proconsulare* awarded to him. His reticence in this regard is therefore explained by his desire to be seen to be keeping wholly within the bounds of past tradition.⁸² Augustus' respect for *mos maiorum* appears again in chapter 8.5 in which he alludes to his legal reforms and his new laws designed to bring back into use the many *exempla* of ancestral tradition, and in 27.1 he states that he preferred to follow the model set by ancestral custom. By appearing to base any innovation securely on existing practices, his changes and additions are seen as natural extensions of established tradition.

Throughout the document Augustus celebrates the fact that he has initiated a new era based on precedent. The sacrifices at the Augustalia (RG 11) and the new *ara Pacis Augustae* (RG 12.2) are performed by the traditional magistrates, *pontifices* and Vestal virgins. The *ludi Martiales* (RG 22.2), an innovation of Augustus obviously designed to win the approval of the Roman people, are produced in succeeding years by the consuls with due respect to legality, namely in accordance with a decree of the Senate.

The two concepts of legality of action and legitimacy of position are neatly interwoven in the RG. Whenever he describes a particular activity he has undertaken or honour he has received, Augustus states his legal position.⁸³ Contributing to this image of legality are his statements that he had colleagues in the various magistracies that he held (RG 6.2, 8.2, 8.4, 10.2, 22.2, 34.3). Moreover, it is always in accordance with a decree or enactment of the Senate or Senate and people that he receives his powers, honours and offices (RG 1.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.1, 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1, 12.2, 14.1, 34.2, 35.1). It is the Senate that orders him to safeguard the *res publica* (RG 3.1, 8.1) and the people who elect him for the purpose of reorganising it (RG 1.4).

⁸² Augustus was in any case far more cautious than predecessors such as Marius, Sulla, Pompey and Caesar.

⁸³ Consul: RG 4.4, 8.1, 8.2, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, 16.1, 20.4, 20.5, 21.3, 22.2, 34.1, 35.1; holding consular *imperium*: 8.3, 8.4; holding *tribunicia potestas*: 4.4, 6.2, 10.1, 15.1, 15.2; *imperator*: 21.3. Also the list of religious offices in 7.3.

When he avenges his father's death, his action is sanctioned by legal tribunals (RG 2.1). In fact, after Octavian has liberated the state all by himself (RG 1.1), everything appears to have been given to him by others.

It is significant that in the section on *impensae* the reverse is true and Senate and people are missing as authorisers of Augustus' actions. In these chapters it is his apparently overwhelming generosity that is the focus of attention; here Augustus is the giver, the bestower and the sole mover. The only exception is RG 22.2, where he introduces an innovation, and he is careful to point out the legal validity and hence approval given to it by the Senate. Again, chapters 25-33, the so-called *res gestae proper*, detail Augustus' military operations and diplomatic successes abroad, and hence the spotlight is on his abilities as a general and diplomat. The Senate and people as agents of ratification have no place here. However, when Augustus returns to chapter 34 and his position in the state, he once again stresses the legitimacy of his unusual position. In the final climactic chapter, the honour of *pater patriae* is bestowed on Augustus by the Senate, people and the equestrian order. The title is important to the RG and its Augustan ideology by the fact that it is singled out for reference in the last paragraph.⁸⁴ It was important to Augustus' image of legality for the title to be seen to be granted by all sectors of the Roman population, and thus receive universal approval. It was also carefully chosen for the traditional associations that it would establish in the minds of the Romans, since in earlier times it was an honour bestowed upon those who had saved the state, as Augustus wished his readers to believe he had done.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ See Brunt and Moore, 1967: 80: "The unanimity with which this new transcendent honour was granted to Augustus makes it a fitting climax to his memorial, recorded with due ceremony."

⁸⁵ Aurelius Victor *Caes.* 1.6 says that Augustus was called *pater patriae ob clementiam*.

The fact that the final honorary decree mentioned in the *RG* was inscribed in the Forum Augusti is of great significance; it has direct links with Augustus' image of always acting in accordance with tradition and respecting *mos maiorum*. According to Suetonius (Aug. 31) Augustus had this Forum adorned with the statues and inscriptions of great men who had raised the power of the Roman people from small beginnings to greatness, declaring in an edict that

commentum id se, ut illorum velut ad exemplar et ipse, dum viveret, et insequentium aetatum principes exigerentur a civibus.

he had contrived this so that both he himself, while he lived, and the rulers of later times would be required by the citizens to attain the standard set by those men.

Augustus thus concludes the *RG* by leaving the reader with the impression that all the achievements and successes he has recorded are not only as magnificent as those of past great achievers, but will remain as *exempla* to be imitated by future generations.

The Restoration of the Res Publica

Chapter 34 is seen as the climax of the *RG* since it sets out the view of his constitutional position that Augustus wanted the world to have. It also represents the culmination of his pains to emphasise his legality, in that he had returned legitimate power to the Senate and Roman people. Fairley appropriately calls the chapter "the most weighty in the whole inscription."⁸⁶ Ramage, incredibly, states that it contains a "rare show of self-eulogy" in that Augustus describes his act as meritorious.⁸⁷ On the contrary, the entire *RG*, with its careful selection of statements, slanting of the truth and omissions, is a show of self-praise. Augustus shows no reticence either about his seemingly remarkable achievements or the extraordinary honours

⁸⁶ Fairley, 1923: 77.

⁸⁷ Ramage, 1987: 87.

he received,⁸⁸ and he clearly felt he deserved his powers, honours and offices.

Augustus states that he transferred the *res publica* from his power to the dominion of the Senate and people of Rome. The extent to which he restored the former system of government has been discussed at length by many scholars, although it is clear that he did not actually do so. However, in respect of the image which Augustus intends to project here, it is relevant to note instead the care that he has taken to suppress all outward shows of autocracy in order to represent his position as legitimate, conservative and at all times contained within legal limits. The chapter is not a treatise on constitutional law, but a summary justification of the unique position he had by this stage come to hold. Naturally omissions of certain facts and details are to be expected, especially when the chapter is viewed as dealing in simple terms with the equation that "great achievements merit great honours".⁸⁹

Augustus claims that until 28/27BC he held supreme power in the state. Even at this stage he stresses the legitimacy of this unusual position by stating that he had attained it by universal consent. He also uses the word *potestas* to describe his authority since *potestas* was the term used for the power attached to a constitutional magistracy. According to Augustus, then, his supreme control in the state was both traditional and legal. In reality, the power he held between 32 and 28 was not wholly constitutional. Firstly, there was the *coniuratio Italiae* of 32 which had no constitutional significance, although it gave him wide support. Jones and Milns make the valid point that Augustus implies that the oath gave him a legal right to the supreme power which he exercised for years afterwards.⁹⁰ From 31 he also held

⁸⁸ Except, of course, in respect of the powers he did not want to emphasise: the *tribunicia potestas* and the repeated grants of *imperium proconsulare*.

⁸⁹ See Brunt and Moore, 1967: 5.

⁹⁰ Jones, A.H.M. and Milns, R.D., The Use of Documentary Evidence in the Study of Roman Imperial History, Sydney 1984, 25.

the consulship, and it seems likely, although he nowhere tells us, that he continued to hold triumviral power from 32 until this time.⁹¹ Thus after defeating Antony he was *de facto* in absolute control of affairs, ostensibly with all men's approval. The *consensus universorum* is not elaborated upon by Augustus; it is merely stated as a simple fact for maximum impact upon the reader. After Actium the *consensus* or will of the people manifested itself through countless honours bestowed on and oaths of allegiance to Octavian.⁹²

The truth of Augustus' claim that he transferred the *res publica* from his own power to the authority of the Senate and Roman people depends largely on its definition in this context. Does it refer to the Roman state in the traditional sense of the term or does it mean merely the "former system of government"?⁹³ It is in keeping with Augustus' image of acting within the bounds of the previously established structures of government that, when he returns to the subject at the end of the document, the term *res publica* is intended to have the same traditional connotations. Hence the natural conclusion is that he intended his readers to understand that he had restored the traditional forms and institutions of the Roman government.

⁹¹ Dio 53.1-2 says that in 28 Augustus abolished illegal and unjust regulations of the triumvirate, the end of the year being set as the time for their expiration. This has often been explained as indicating that until 31 December 28 rulings of the triumvirate could be challenged; alternatively they would remain in force.

⁹² See Dio 51.19ff, and the conclusion of Syme, *RR*, 307: "It has often been believed that the words allude to the *coniuratio* of 32BC ... The reference is probably wider, not merely to the oath of allegiance but to the crowning victory of Actium and the reconquest of all the eastern lands for Rome."

⁹³ Ramage, 1987: 39 and n. 69, asserts that Augustus' frequent mention of *res publica* at the beginning of the *RG* can only refer to the republic since it still existed in 43, and the constitutional government was in any case a republic. However, since the Romans did not see their city-state as a republic (see n. 68) and did not even have a constitution, it is impossible to debate the issue using these terms.

One cannot argue with Millar's statement that Augustus' words in Chapter 34 are carefully chosen.⁹⁴ With his skilful use of the term *res publica* he has cleverly established parallels between the beginning and the end of the *RG*, and thus between the legitimacy of his position at the start of his career and after the settlement of 28/27. His image as restorer of the former order and champion of *libertas* is reinforced and re-emphasised in the climactic chapter. Augustus deliberately omits to clarify the meaning of *res publica* at this stage, so that the effect of his references to the date of the settlement ("in consulatu sexto et septimo") and to civil wars ("postquam bella civilia exstinxeram") is subtly to connect the settlement with the former system of government.

The impression that Augustus' claim to have restored the state made on his contemporaries and on later generations will be discussed in a later chapter. It is significant here to note that after the settlement he still retained an extraordinary and unprecedented accumulation of powers. His failure to mention this is crucial to his projection of the correct image, and is therefore perhaps the most significant omission in the document.

Auctoritas, potestas and imperium

In Chapter 34.3 Augustus proudly claims that after 28/7 he excelled everyone in influence (*auctoritas*), but he possessed no more official power (*potestas*) than the others who were his colleagues in the various magistracies. His powers are thus defined as magisterial. This apparently straightforward statement is possibly the most misleading in the whole document. It omits any reference to the subsequent settlements of 23 and 19, as well as any information concerning Augustus' extraordinary accumulation of powers after the settlement of 28/7. The key words here are *potestas* and *auctoritas*, two apparently contrasting concepts.⁹⁵ *Potestas* clearly means magisterial

⁹⁴ Millar, 1973: 65.

⁹⁵ See Tacitus *Germ.* 11: *auctoritas suadendi ... potestas iubendi.*

power, while *auctoritas* is more complicated and more difficult to explain.⁹⁶

Auctoritas played a vitally important role in the political, military and religious world of the Romans and personal *auctoritas*, such as Augustus received, would accrue to those who had achieved success, obviously on behalf of the state. *Auctoritas* therefore provides a connection to the associations with traditional practice that Augustus consistently needed to display, and is essential to his image of possessing a natural position of superiority in the state. His pre-eminence is consistently set before the reader throughout the *RG* and is reinforced by a constant use of the first person. He is *princeps* or leading citizen (*RG* 13, 30.1, 32.3); he is named Augustus and revered above all men (*RG* 34.2) for his magnificent achievement in handing back the *res publica* to the Senate and people of Rome, and he is *pater patriae* (*RG* 35.1), the supreme father of the Roman state, which is portrayed in the *RG* as a harmonious family. These actions and honours of Augustus have assisted in producing an *auctoritas* that far exceeds any other. Therefore, when he claims that he surpassed all in *auctoritas*, he is essentially summarising the effects of all his achievements and all the awards he has described so far.

It is interesting to note how the theme of Augustus' *auctoritas* develops throughout the document as he describes his *res gestae* and concomitant *honores*. In the first sentence, Octavian shows that as *privatus* he is virtually without *auctoritas* ("privato consilio et privata impensa"). Immediately, however, he begins acquiring *auctoritas* with his achievements in the Civil War and

⁹⁶ Syme, *Tacitus*, Oxford 1958, 413, correctly sums up *auctoritas* as follows: "The word, on the shortest definition, means power and influence, but not such as derives from the tenure of magistracy or can be defined by legal enactment. Of this nature was the authority belonging to the Senate of the Republic as a body, or to the senator individually, if he had station, age and reputation." The *auctoritas* which Augustus accords himself falls into Syme's latter category of personal authority. See also Syme, *RR*, 322.

the honours he received, such as magistracies, as a result. In the section on *impensae* (chapters 15-24), in which Augustus describes at length his outstanding *liberalitas*, he represents himself as the supreme *patronus* who benefits every Roman citizen. His donations, together with his buildings and restorations, encompass every sphere of activity, and here the *auctoritas patroni* is clearly in evidence. For such generosity the clients of the *patronus* would naturally show their appreciation. This gratitude is seen in the many formal honours bestowed on Augustus throughout the *RG*, and as a result his *auctoritas* is again increased. The image of the great *patronus* appears again in the diplomatic section (chapters 31 - 33) where embassies are sent to him, friendships are sought and petitions made with him (*RG* 31.1, 31.2, 32.2, 32.3, 33). By this stage the actions and honours of Augustus have produced an *auctoritas* that extends over the entire Roman world.

Augustus' statement that he possessed no more *potestas* than his colleagues in the various magistracies (*RG* 34.3) can only refer to the consulship, since after 27 he held no other magistracy. However, instead of mentioning only the consulship he alludes to all the magistracies for greater impact on the reader. Brunt and Moore complain that Augustus should have said that he held no more power as consul than those who were his colleagues in each of the consulships he held from 27 onwards.⁹⁷ Yet even this statement would have constituted a stretching of the truth: his colleagues in the consulship, which he held six times in succession from 28, were not, as he was, invested with additional powers at the same time. Hence the republican principles of *potestas ad annum* (annuality) and *par potestas* (collegiality) were not strictly adhered to.⁹⁸

Significantly, Augustus omits to say what action the Senate and people took after he had ostensibly transferred his powers to

⁹⁷ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 79.

⁹⁸ Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.1) indicates that the division of power between equal colleagues was an important principle of Roman tradition: *libertatem et consulatum ...*

them, and what powers they then accorded him. Dio, upon whom we are dependent for evidence regarding Augustus' constitutional position in 27 and 23, states (53.12ff) that he was voted a number of provinces for ten years, namely Syria, Cilicia, Cyprus, Gaul and Spain, and that these included the most powerful military territories of the empire and the majority of the legions. Dio also mentions (54.12.4) that in 27 he had a praetorian guard of 9 000 to provide for his security. The fact that Augustus is silent on these issues makes it clear he did not wish to admit that he had the means of repressing all overt opposition by military force. This would not have concurred well with the idea of lasting *pax* which he claimed to have established in the Roman state.⁹⁹

Augustus does not mention either that he held *proconsular imperium* or that it was renewed several times.¹⁰⁰ Brunt and Moore state that it is sometimes said that Augustus conceals the true nature of his legal power in the *RG*, but that to conceal it would be pointless since everyone knew the facts.¹⁰¹ In any case, they argue, there is no concealment since he shows clearly that he got *imperium* in 43, and his continuous tenure of the power is implied throughout the *RG*. However, the authors fail to differentiate between the various grants of *imperium* which Augustus received at different times, and which differed in the powers they gave him. Augustus mentions his *imperium* only in cases where it does not detract from his image of always acting in accordance with established practice. Thus he admits that he was granted *imperium* in 43 (*RG* 1.2) because it was that of a praetor and, although unusual, it was not without precedent and did not involve a grant of extraordinary powers. He also mentions his consular *imperium* by virtue of which he took the

⁹⁹ See *RG* 13.

¹⁰⁰ See Dio 54.12.4, 12.5; 55.6.1, 12.3; 56.28.1. It cannot be ascertained from Dio whether Augustus governed his provinces after 27 with *proconsular* or *consular imperium*. When and if he ceased to be consul he could retain *proconsular imperium* over his provinces for the rest of his term; this is what occurred in 23.

¹⁰¹ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 40.

census in 28BC (RG 8.2), 8BC (RG 8.3) and 14AD (RG 8.4), since the conferral of both praetorian and consular *imperium* was a regular practice. On the other hand, the grant of proconsular *imperium* which Augustus received in virtue of the settlement of 28/27, as well as its repeated renewals, was extraordinary.¹⁰²

If it appears unusual that Augustus omits reference to his proconsular *imperium*, it should also be remembered that throughout the RG he has gradually built up and maintained an image of legitimacy of position and adherence to tradition. With due respect to his theme, and the fact that he was more conventional than his predecessors, it would hardly be appropriate if he were suddenly to admit in the closing chapters that he had obtained repeated grants of extraordinary powers.

Likewise, Augustus also omits all mention of the so-called second settlement of 23, when he resigned the consulship, since at the same time he received additional extraordinary powers. Dio (53.32.5ff) tells us that in 23 Augustus' *imperium proconsulare* was made *maius*: not only could he retain it whenever he entered Rome, but it would be extended in scope so that it was superior to that of all provincial governors. At the same time he was granted the *tribunicia potestas*, largely to compensate for losing many of the powers of a consul, as well as the *ius primae relationis* and the *ius convocandi senatus*.

It is significant that Augustus omits to mention the *tribunicia potestas* in chapter 34; by alluding to it earlier together with his grant of tribunician inviolability (RG 10.1) he considerably waters down the significance of the powers it later gave him. He also refers to the *tribunicia potestas* either for dating purposes (RG 4.4) or as a means of passing legislation (RG 6.2) but nowhere does he betray what Syme calls "its formidable nature and cardinal role in the imperial system".¹⁰³ There is no reference to the fact that, together with the *maius imperium*

¹⁰² It was not without precedent, however, since Pompey, Crassus and Caesar were granted proconsular *imperium* for extended periods in the 50s.

¹⁰³ Syme, *RR*, 523.

proconsulare, which gave him virtual control of all the provinces and all the armies, it formed one of the twin pillars of his rule. Again, Augustus omits any reference to 19 when he was given the authority of consul for life,¹⁰⁴ and consequently the right to the *fascēs* and to sit between the consuls.

It is thus evident that, in spite of his claim to the contrary, Augustus accumulated extraordinary *potestas*. However, the nature of the *RG* allowed him to exclude any detailed discussion of his powers, and the more concise version as we find it in chapter 34 admirably suited his image of keeping within the boundaries of traditional practices. By all appearances Augustus saved the *res publica* from the hands of the enemy and handed it back to its rightful owners - the Senate and people of Rome. He therefore fulfilled the task he was elected for in 43 as *triumvir reipublicae constituendae*.¹⁰⁵ His emphasis on the point that after that time he excelled all in *auctoritas* draws attention away from the fact that, although his influence was important, he retained extensive legal powers by which he could justify and execute his actions. With his careful choice of words and omission of certain facts, Augustus cleverly conceals that his position after 28/27 was in reality a totally new creation, while he continues to represent himself as a faithful adherent to the former system. Although the document was set up for the benefit of future generations, even his contemporaries could not help but be impressed.

Virtus, clementia, iustitia and pietas

Just as chapter 34.1 represents the climax of Augustus' *res gestae*, so 34.2 serves as a climactic bestowal of honours upon him. The link is provided by the words "quo pro merito meo", which indicate that supreme achievement, namely the restoration of the *res publica*, merits supreme distinction. In describing the honours, Augustus employs a string of impersonal passives instead of using one of the more usual forms of the first person

¹⁰⁴ See Dio 54.10.5.

¹⁰⁵ *RG* 1.4.

which would centre the attention directly on himself. His purpose is to direct the focus of the action on to the Senate and people as instigators of the action and so distance himself from any part whatsoever in the bestowal of such outstanding honours. In this way, he comes across as a man of modesty and restraint.

On 16 January 27 Octavian received the *cognomen* Augustus. Since it conferred no additional power, and had its origins in the language of religion, it had the required traditional connections.¹⁰⁶ It was significant from several points of view. Firstly, it was used to describe something that was precious or sacred, and thus worthy of reverence.¹⁰⁷ Dio (53.18.2) also says that the name suggested the splendour of the ruler's influence, although it is incorrect to assume that this gave official sanction to the manifestations of Augustus' *auctoritas*. Thirdly, the word *augustus* can be connected to the *augurium* with which Romulus founded Rome. According to legend, the omen of the twelve vultures which had been seen by Romulus also appeared before Augustus.¹⁰⁸ Dio (53.16.7) alleges that Augustus himself was eager to be called Romulus, but in the event declined to accept the offer on account of its monarchical tones.¹⁰⁹ Thus "Augustus" suited him on all counts. Firstly, it portrayed him as a quasi-divine being, although he was not officially deified in his lifetime. Secondly, it confirmed the supreme *auctoritas* which he enjoyed, and thirdly it connected him with Romulus, not as king, but as the founder of Rome. I would suggest it conveyed the idea that he had "refounded" Rome.

The significance of the wreath of bay leaves above the doorposts of Augustus' house can be found in Ovid (*trist.* 3.1.39ff). It symbolises unending victory, indicating in particular the Battle of Actium and thus linking up with RG 25.2. It also links

¹⁰⁶ It also had a precedent in the cognomen "Magnus" which Pompey acquired after 81.

¹⁰⁷ See eg Dio 53.16.7-8; Ovid *fasti* 1.609ff; Suet. Aug. 72.

¹⁰⁸ See Suet. Aug. 95.

¹⁰⁹ See also Syme, *RR*, 313-4 and n. 3.

Augustus with Apollo, whom he honoured above all other gods and near whose Leucadian temple his victory at Actium occurred. Finally it signifies lasting joy and peace, while the evergreen nature of laurel indicates everlasting glory. This ideal situation is exactly how Augustus himself and, he envisaged, other citizens would picture Rome after he had successfully restored the *res publica* to its former existence.

The *corona civica* was a civic crown of oak leaves which had customarily been awarded for saving the lives of citizens in war.¹¹⁰ The motif *ob cives servatos* is a recurring phrase, particularly on coins together with the representation of crown and oak leaves.¹¹¹ Mention of the civic crown in the *RG* therefore links up with Augustus' desire to display his *clementia*, a quality that, like Caesar, he intended to have recognised as one of his cardinal virtues (see discussion of the *clupeus aureus* below). He alludes to his *clementia* in *RG* 3.2-3:

Bella terra et mari civilia externaque toto in orbe terrarum saepe gessi, victorque omnibus veniam petentibus civibus peperci. Externas gentes, quibus tuto ignosci potuit, conservare quam excidere malui.

I waged many civil and foreign wars by land and sea, and as victor I spared all citizens who asked for mercy. When I could safely pardon foreign peoples, I preferred to preserve rather than exterminate them.

In describing his clemency towards citizens, Augustus is referring to the victories at Philippi and Actium, particularly the latter. In speaking of wars with *externae gentes*, he is probably referring to the campaigns in Dalmatia between 36 and 33, the wars against various tribes in North Italy, and to the continual wars against the Cantabri in north-western Spain. However, Augustus did not spare all surviving citizens after either Philippi or Actium. Dio (51.2) states that after Actium, he fined some of the leading men who had assisted Antony, killed many and spared some. In regard to Philippi, Suetonius (Aug. 13) says that Octavian held out against a proscription for some time,

¹¹⁰ See Ovid *trist.* 3.1.47ff; Dio 53.16.4.

¹¹¹ For example, *BMC Emp.* 1.29.

but then pursued it more ruthlessly than either of his colleagues and showed no clemency to his enemies. In regard to foreign wars, Dio (53.25) and Suetonius (Aug.21) show that there were many exceptions to Augustus' treatment of those who begged to be spared. Naturally Augustus says nothing of these exceptions. I agree with Hardy that the clemency was more relative than positive.¹¹² Of course, *clementia* was a political catchword just as it was in the time of Caesar, and like Caesar and all leading men, Augustus wanted his name to appear synonymous with the traditional compassion for conquered subjects. Obviously he wished to emphasise his compassion because of the implied connection with his adoptive father and the *clementia Caesaris*. *Clementia* was therefore to be regarded as one of his inherent characteristics and posterity would remember him as having spared instead of having destroyed.

The golden shield which was set up in the *curia Julia* and celebrated Augustus' four principal virtues of *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia* and *pietas*, was a significant symbol of his propaganda. Its mention in 34.2 as the final of several supreme honours bestowed upon him enhances the climactic effect. Moreover, the fact that Augustus places the shield immediately before his comment on *auctoritas* leads the reader to conclude that these are the virtues that generated both *res gestae* and *honores* and in turn produced the highest *auctoritas*.

Augustus chose the four virtues very carefully, since they cover all the accomplishments he has mentioned so far, as well as all three spheres of activity, namely civil, military and religious. They are therefore important constituents of the Augustan ideology. *Virtus* and *clementia* are qualities displayed on the battlefield, *iustitia* characterises the fairness of the civil administrator, and *pietas* relates to religious and family matters. In mentioning the shield Augustus is summarising all the outstanding qualities he has attributed to himself throughout the *RG*: he is a courageous and merciful general, a fair and impartial governor and a dutiful and respectful leader in *religio*

¹¹² Hardy, 1923: 32.

and *familia*.

Clementia has already been discussed with respect to its representation in the *corona civica*. However, apart from its mention in connection with the shield Augustus refers to it on only the one occasion earlier in the document (RG 3.1-2). The fact that he calls attention to it so soon indicates that he is making a policy statement. He expects the reader to understand that his *clementia* is an integral part of all the successful campaigns he mentions, and indeed that his diplomatic successes (RG 31-33) would not have been possible without its implementation. *Clementia*, then, is alluded to initially and then subtly pervades the RG until it returns to prominence at the climax of the document.

Virtus, on the other hand, is mentioned nowhere else in the RG. However, direct reference is not necessary since Augustus provides abundant evidence of his own *virtus* at work. The reader would make the obvious connection that *virtus* leads to victory in battle, and this in turn leads to lasting peace (RG 13) and glory, those facets of the Augustan image that are implied in the granting of the laurel wreath. Examples of Augustus' *virtus* abound; the numerous successful campaigns that he mentions, both civil and foreign, illustrate its truly wide range.

Apart from *victoria* and *pax*, *virtus* also brought personal rewards for Augustus in the form of *honores*. Cicero observes that *honor* was the natural and only reward for *virtus*,¹¹³ and Horace (*Odes* 4.14.1-5) speaks of the *virtutes* of Augustus and the *honores* due to them. *Honor* is therefore also an important constituent of the Augustan ideology and hence of his image, the word itself occurring four times in the document (RG 11, 12.1, 14.1, 24.2). In addition, mention is made of various kinds of honours accruing to Augustus in 15 of the 35 chapters and, as stated above, those listed in the last two chapters form the climactic bestowal. The

¹¹³ *Rep.* 3.40: "nec est virtutis ulla alia merces;" *Brut.* 281: "Cum honor sit praemium virtutis;" *Fam.* 10.10.2: "Is autem, qui vere appellari potest honor ... perpetuae virtutis est praemium."

honores cover all three areas of activity: military, civil and religious, thereby linking *virtus* indirectly with the civil and religious spheres as well as the military. Hence Augustus' exhibition of *virtus* has brought not only *victoria* and *pax* to Rome, but also *honores* of the highest degree to himself.

Iustitia as a component of Augustus' ideology finds expression in Augustus' image of legitimacy of position and legality of action, an element that has been discussed at length above. It runs as a thematic thread throughout the *RG* in the same way as *clementia* and *virtus*, and like these qualities it returns to prominence at the climax of the document. Just as *clementia* is reflected in the civic crown and *virtus* is symbolised in the laurel wreath, so Augustus in this section indicates the ultimate act of his *iustitia*: the restoration of the *res publica* and the return of legitimate power to the Senate and people of Rome.

References to other aspects of *iustitia* can be found at various points in the *RG*. One of these is the concept of *bellum iustum*. In describing his military actions, Augustus skilfully adds the *topos* that he never waged an unjust war on anyone (*RG* 26.3). This is a significant statement, adding to the impression that an honest and just activity pervades the *RG*. Moreover, it was essential for the Romans from earliest times that the wars they waged were fair and justified.¹¹⁴ However, Augustus' motives for many of the expeditions he undertook were highly questionable. His statement in 26.3 is cleverly positioned: it is acceptable if it refers to the pacification of the Alps mentioned in the same section, but instead he allows the idea of *bellum iustum* to permeate the entire record of his military successes.

The clearest and most direct identification of Augustus with *iustitia* occurs in chapter 8.5, where he alludes to his moral legislation designed to bring back into use the many *exempla* of

¹¹⁴ Livy in particular frequently makes this point in describing Rome's rise to power. See for example 3.25.3; 7.30.17; 9.1.10, 8.6, 11.11; 21.18.1; 30.16.9; 33.29.8; 39.36.12; 42.23.6, 41.12; 45.22.5.

ancestral tradition, and to his transmission of exemplary practices to posterity for imitation. Here he is offering personal example through his laws, and acting as an intermediary for the continuance of *iustitia*. Augustus therefore represents justice, and he and the laws are to be seen as one. By means of a close identification with *iustitia* he has based his position firmly on legitimacy and traditional practice.

Pietas is placed last on the shield. In a sense it encompasses the other three virtues since *pietas* towards one's country, reflected in the title of *pater patriae*, would naturally manifest itself in *virtus*, *clementia* and *iustitia*. Indeed, Cicero (*ND* 2.153; *Fin.* 5.65; *Leg.* 1.43.) relates *pietas* to *clementia* and *iustitia*, believing that *pietas* is *iustitia erga parentes* or *ad deos* (*ND* 1.116). *Pietas* on any interpretation involves respect for and devotion to family, country and gods, and Augustus displays examples of all three aspects in the *RG*. Since he is the focus of attention throughout the document there is, as has been noted above, very little mention of his family, except where they relate to his own political, military and religious activities. In spite of this there are several examples of Augustus' *pietas erga familiam*. It appears firstly in chapter 1.2, where he avenges the death of his father. Lasting proof of this *pietas* is his building of the Temple of Mars Ultor (*RG* 21.1, 21.2), and the Temple of the Divine Julius (*RG* 19.1) which with their religious connotations link up with *pietas ad deos*. Augustus also shows respect for his father in the faithful execution of his will (*RG* 15.1) and the completion of buildings begun by him (*RG* 20.3). Respect for other members of his family is shown in the rebuilding and dedication of the Basilica Julia in the name of his grandsons (*RG* 20.3) and the building of the theatre in the name of his son-in-law Marcellus (*RG* 21.1). He also staged gladiatorial games, an athletic contest and beast-hunts in the name of his sons or grandsons (*RG* 22.1, 22.3). All these instances indicate Augustus' desire to portray himself as the ideal ruler dutifully showing the appropriate respect to his family.

With regard to *pietas erga patriam* I would endorse Ramage's

comment that this is in a sense a description of the entire *Res Gestae*,¹¹⁵ particularly in view of the fact that all the achievements of Augustus have been represented as being in some way beneficial to the state. The reward for his remarkable show of patriotic duty is the bestowal of the title *pater patriae*, which gave him the honour of being hailed as the father of Rome and hence of the largest and greatest family in the then known world.

Augustus' *pietas erga deos* manifests itself on several occasions in the *RG*. It is evident in chapter 7.3 where he lists the religious positions he held, and in respect of which he would perform many public religious functions, making offerings and carrying out vows. It is also apparent in the temples that he rebuilt or restored (*RG* 19-21). Augustus also suggests his own close relationship to the gods with his announcement of the sacrifices and prayers that were made on his behalf (*RG* 9.1, 9.2, 10.1,) and the altars that were consecrated to him (*RG* 11.1, 12.2).

It is crucial to the image of Augustus that in all these instances he takes care not to represent himself as a god,¹¹⁶ but as having a close relationship with the gods. *Pietas*, like *clementia*, *virtus* and *iustitia*, also returns to prominence at the end of the document, with the granting of the name Augustus and its appropriate religious and sacred connotations. The *cognomen* was therefore perfectly suited to enhance and emphasise Augustus' image of *pius princeps*.

Augustus' image as the ideal ruler has therefore been carefully and skilfully built up in the *RG*. The essential qualities and components of the Augustan ideology summarised at the climax of the document run throughout it as themes and find expression of some kind in the other chapters. By the end of the *RG* the impression is conveyed that Augustus is perfect, and since all

¹¹⁵ Ramage, 1987: 93.

¹¹⁶ In *RG* 24.2 he says that he removed the silver statues of himself.

references to the contrary have been skilfully glossed over or omitted, he appears as the epitome of courage, clemency, justice and piety.

From the above analysis two themes appear to be particularly dominant in the *RG*. Firstly, through his achievements and concomitant *honores* Augustus wished to portray himself as the perfect ruler. He had all the necessary virtues and his position is represented as legal and in accordance with precedent and established tradition. Secondly, through listing his accomplishments, Augustus assures the reader that he fulfilled the responsibility he had been given in 43 as *triumvir reipublicae constituendae* (*RG* 1.4). The question of whether or not he restored the *res publica* has been discussed here and will no doubt be continued by scholars in the future, but the fact remains that, whatever powers he accumulated in the process, he reorganised the state on a secure and stable basis. This will be discussed further in the final chapter, where one can see how Augustus was perceived by his contemporaries and later generations.

CHAPTER 4

Caesar's *Commentarii* and Augustus' *Res Gestae*: Similarities and Differences

Nature and Purpose

In the light of the previous discussion on the nature of Caesar's *Commentarii* and Augustus' *Res Gestae*, two conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, it is difficult to classify either work in respect of a specific literary genre or genres, and secondly it is evident that a number of categories of writing had an effect on their composition. In any case, neither Caesar nor Augustus could have thought specifically in terms of different or applicable genres; it is more likely that they made use of certain examples and adapted or developed these to suit their needs. As Adcock says, Caesar was not deprived of free will by the convention of a literary form.¹ It was his and Augustus' purpose in writing that shaped the nature of their work, rather than their desire to keep within the confines of any particular genre. Moreover, this purpose was dictated by their individual social and political circumstances at the time of writing.

The background and development of historical writings and autobiographical memoirs has already been discussed in detail.² From this it appears that if any single factor influenced the kind of work that both Caesar and Augustus produced, it was the desire for self-justification and self-glorification that had its origin in memoir-writing. Like all writers of autobiographical texts they wished to be remembered in some way and glorify themselves for posterity. Their work is therefore subjective, the focus is somehow always on the writer and a favourable image is produced by careful selection or omission of content. Where necessary, facts are skilfully suppressed without actually being falsified, so that mention of anything detrimental to their public image is carefully avoided.

¹ Adcock, 1956: 12.

² Chapter 1.

Thus, broadly speaking, Caesar's and Augustus' aims in writing were essentially the same. However, within this broad framework, there are certain similarities and differences between the nature and purpose of the *Commentarii* and the *RG*.

An important similarity is that the main theme of Caesar's and Augustus' writing is the *res gestae* of the author; both writers produced a catalogue of their achievements. In the case of Augustus, this is clear from the title of the document, the constant use of the first person and the obvious focus on himself, his achievements and the honours he was awarded as a result. Augustus covers all three spheres of activity in his work, namely civil, military and religious. The tone of self-eulogy that pervades every chapter shows the influences of the traditional *elogium* on Augustus, or rather the fact that Augustus made appropriate use of certain characteristics of this genre.

Caesar's *Commentarii* also describe his *res gestae*, although the area covered is chiefly military: the *de Bello Gallico* describes his war against the Gauls, Germans and Britons, and the *de Bello Civili* recounts the war against the armies of Caesar's political opponents. There is no prominent self-eulogy pervading either of these works. The tone is matter-of-fact, the style is one of simple brevity and plainness and Caesar consistently refers to himself in the third person in an apparently self-effacing fashion. By adopting these aspects of the conventional *commentarius* form, he developed his narrative into a subjective account of his achievements under the guise of an objective report. Thus the self-justification and self-glorification of Caesar, while not obviously displayed, are still easily discernible. Ogilvie sums up Caesar's mastery:

Although, in line with convention, the *Commentaries* are no document of self-awareness and tell us little of Caesar's personal life but much of diplomacy and warfare, they reveal at every turn the masterful character of their author, his sharp decision, his courage in the face of daunting perplexities and disloyalties and his brilliant tactical sense.³

³ Ogilvie, "Caesar", 284.

Adcock claims that the topic of Caesar's *Commentarii* does not fire the imagination.⁴ I tend to agree with this, but to make such a statement without qualification as Adcock does is perhaps to misinterpret the simplicity of the narrative and to ignore the brilliance with which Caesar deals with his account. Again, the words of Ogilvie sum up the *Commentarii* more fittingly:

The pace of the narrative is never monotonous, always exciting. His battle-scenes are models of clear, fast-moving description with critical moments dramatically emphasised and the climax often told in breathless, clipped, staccato phrases.⁵

Another element common to Caesar and Augustus is the fact that both authors attempt to disguise the elements of self-justification and self-glorification in their works by appearing to provide their readers with objective historiographical information. This is perhaps more obvious in Caesar's than Augustus' writing because of the eulogistic nature of the *RG*, although Brunt and Moore view the document as "a cool record of fact which is on occasion dry to the point of tedium."⁶ The fact that Augustus also instructed his catalogue of achievements to be inscribed on bronze tablets and set up after his death in front of his mausoleum at Rome⁷ shows that the *RG* was intended to provide information for future generations. The inscription, with its careful selection of historical content, would furnish them with the *exempla maiorum* referred to in chapter 8.5, and the events of Augustus' career would thus be interpreted in a positive light as the appropriate examples for imitation.

Caesar's account of the Gallic and Civil wars give the unwary reader the immediate impression of being a plain, soldierly account of military operations. The *commentarius* form suited him admirably, for he could promote himself and his achievements by

⁴ Adcock, 1956: 50.

⁵ Ogilvie, "Caesar", 284.

⁶ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 7.

⁷ See Suet. Aug. 101.

claiming to have provided a narration of military events, as a general of his standing would do. As Plutarch (*Caes.* 3.4) informs us, Caesar described himself as a "military man", although he must have been aware of his reputation as an orator. Unlike Augustus, Caesar gave no instructions for the publication of his *Commentarii* after his death, or at least none of which we are aware. He did not foresee his untimely end and therefore had no time to make appropriate preparations. In any case, the *commentarius* was not an *elogium*, although in respect of autobiographical composition Grant sees a connection between the style of the *RG* and that of Caesar's *Commentaries*.⁸ Caesar naturally would have had in mind the effect his *Commentarii* would have on future generations, but they were essentially a defence against his political opponents and therefore primarily directed at his contemporaries.⁹

It has been established that while both Caesar and Augustus often deliberately distorted or omitted facts, there was no blatant falsification. Scholars usually make the remark that this is because their contemporaries were aware of the facts and there were too many people who could prove any untrue claims. Yet there was no need for Caesar or Augustus to make false claims;¹⁰ both had achieved remarkable success politically and on the battlefield and had sufficient positive material to include in their respective accounts. Moreover, both wished to present

⁸ Grant, *Roman Literature*, 102. This would provide a strong link between the *Commentarii* and the *Res Gestae*.

⁹ Although it is likely that at least Books 1 and 2 of the *BC* were published in or after 48, when many of Caesar's enemies were dead, it is reasonable to suppose that he wrote them as soon after each event as he could. Since he was actively engaged in battle for the first half of 49, and travelled about for most of the remainder of it, he could easily have written as he travelled.

¹⁰ However, scholars have noted slips in the *Commentarii*, but these are explained by the fact that they were composed partly on the basis of notes and despatches, and partly on memory. See also Suet. *Iul.* 56, where he quotes Pollio as to Caesar's mistakes. Hirtius (*BG* 8) also refers to the rapidity of Caesar's composition.

their actions in the best possible light for posterity and all they had to do was select carefully the information they wished to be published, place upon it their own interpretation and omit to mention anything that they did not want to be remembered. As Gagé remarks, the RG is designed to perpetuate an ideal image of Augustus and his work, and it would therefore be naïve to expect that it contained any record of events that disturbed Augustus, and which he wished to be forgotten.¹¹

Thus Caesar and Augustus aimed to produce accounts which showed that they were always right; the ability of both authors to portray their actions as the only right ones is an important aspect of their individual genius. It is in any case naturally difficult for someone to write impartially about himself or herself, and clearly neither Caesar nor Augustus intended to be impartial. Grant's remark that "Caesar is a master of rearrangement, emphasis, omission, skilfully directed to his own political aim",¹² applies equally to Augustus.

Both the *Commentarii* and the RG are pieces of clever propaganda writing. In the case of Caesar, the propaganda element is effectively concealed by the plainness, simplicity and brevity of the text itself. Adcock, criticising Page's comment that the BG is a subtle political pamphlet, states:

There is in Caesar's writings an element of propaganda, but it is not predominant, and it is not what matters most.¹³

However, Adcock does not manage to convince his readers of the unimportance of the propaganda element; indeed, his remark that one of Caesar's main aims in writing was the promotion of his own

¹¹ Gagé, 1950: 34. Fuller, J.F.C., Julius Caesar: Man, Soldier and Tyrant, London 1965, 55, writes similarly of Caesar: "He soft-pedalled his failures, exaggerated the numbers of his enemies, and omitted incidents which might have reflected adversely on himself."

¹² Grant, Roman Literature, 95.

¹³ Adcock, 1956: 19.

*dignitas*¹⁴ contradicts this statement. Moreover, considering that both the *BG* and the *BC* constitute the personal defence of a statesman and general whose *honor* and *existimatio* had to be continually emphasised, the propaganda element would be a natural component of such a defence. It makes more sense to adopt the view of Taylor, who writes that the *BG* is "Caesar's contribution to the propaganda of this period."¹⁵ Such a remark is equally applicable to the *BC*. If the propaganda factor is less obvious in Caesar than in Augustus, then credit is due to his skill as a writer in disguising a personal justification as a public record.

In the *RG* too, propaganda is to a certain extent concealed by the style of the document, although the self-eulogistic tone and constant use of the first person presuppose a more obvious display of the flawlessness of Augustus and his achievements than is apparent in Caesar. Augustus' ability to conceal the propaganda element in the *RG* is appropriately described by Grant:

Augustus achieves his effect by subtle and skilful use of official phraseology and especially of the good old traditional, ostensibly simple, Republican terms. This cleverly used traditional language was the velvet glove in which the iron hand was effectively concealed.¹⁶

By using the appropriate language and style Augustus emphasised that everything he did, every office he held and every honour he received was necessary, legal and consistent with ~~republican~~ precedent.¹⁷ Hence he conceals, but only just, the fact that the document is a carefully orchestrated piece of propaganda.

¹⁴ Adcock, 1956: 23. See also discussion in Chapter 2.

¹⁵ Taylor, L.R. Party Politics in the Age of Caesar, California 1964, 157.

¹⁶ Grant, Roman Literature, 103.

¹⁷ As Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 26 notes: "All he wanted to convey in the *Res Gestae* was the fact that his rule was not arbitrary, but founded on law."

Augustus also omitted a vast amount of information about anything that was less than honourable in his career,¹⁸ thereby misleading his readers. The result of this, of course, is that the closer one studies the *RG*, the more difficult it is to discern the details of events in Augustus' reign, and modern scholars have no difficulty in observing the degree of propaganda contained in the document. In this respect, Yavetz's comment with regard to Caesar is just as applicable to Augustus:

Even when the scope and limits of the subject of an historical monograph are precisely sketched out, and the reader warned not to look for what the author initially decided to omit, the danger still exists that a distorted picture may emerge.¹⁹

In respect of distortion, omissions and propaganda it should be noted that both Caesar and Augustus aimed to produce summaries rather than detailed accounts of their achievements. Caesar used the *commentarius* form to his advantage by presenting an apparently plain, simple and concise account. Its brevity could allow the content to be carefully chosen so that it would reflect positively on himself. In the same way Augustus made use of the *elogium* form, since it comprised a commemoration only of virtues and achievements. It did not require mention of failure of any kind or detailed explanation or interpretation of a man's actions. Plain statements of fact could summarise adequately the achievements of Augustus, and this method suited his purpose admirably.

Political Situation and Leadership Qualities

Much of the writing during the late first century BC was inspired by the distinctive social and political circumstances of the time, and particularly by the necessity for leading politicians to maintain and enhance their position. It therefore remains, in light of the particular circumstances under which Caesar and Augustus wrote, to compare the way in which they represented and

¹⁸ Such as the proscriptions. See Chapter 3.

¹⁹ Yavetz, Julius Caesar, 161.

justified themselves with respect to their abilities and successes as military leaders and to their public and private virtues.

By 60BC Caesar had achieved prominence as a statesman. At the age of forty he had passed through the *cursus honorum* and was made consul elect for 59. In March 59 he was made proconsul of Gallia Cisalpina, Gallia Narbonensis and Illyricum for a period of five years, a command that was extended in 54. He had to some extent proved himself as a general during his governorship of Spain in 61, and realised that the only path to continued personal power lay in conquests that would enlarge the sphere of Roman supremacy. Since Pompey had gone eastward, Caesar sought military glory in the west. He had also shown himself to be a strong supporter of the people, and hence incurred considerable opposition from the Senate. It is in light of this opposition that one should view the composition of the *BG*, and later the *BC*.

With regard to the *BG*, what appears at first to be a plain statement of Caesar's military achievements is in fact a masterpiece of self-justification directed at those senators who opposed his campaigns in Gaul on the grounds that they were useless escapades.²⁰ As Taylor concludes, the whole work forms "an apology for the Gallic proconsulship".²¹ In the *BC*, the narrative of Caesar's quarrel with the Senate and the ensuing military operations against Pompey is in reality a skilful defence of Caesar's official position in answer to damning accusations from his senatorial opponents. He presents his case with reference to the political and constitutional aspects of the outbreak of the Civil War, and throughout his account attempts to convince the reader that the causes of the war rested with the opposition.

²⁰ Dio 38.31.1 says that at the beginning of Caesar's command there was no hostility in Gaul, and that when the state of peace ceased to continue and wars broke out, he was able to realise his greatest wish of waging war and winning success.

²¹ Taylor, 1964: 157.

When Caesar went to Gaul he had comparatively little experience as a general, although he had served in the army in various capacities for several years. As Fuller notes, he "was an amateur soldier of genius, ... neither trained nor educated for war,"²² yet the aristocracy of Rome rated military skill and success more highly than anything else. Consequently Caesar must have realised that there might have been some valid ground for opposition to his proposed campaigns, and therefore how vital it was for him to project a positive image of his generalship. Gelzer aptly sums up the way in which Caesar successfully disguises the element of *apologia* in the *BG*:

He here takes no notice of all the accusations against him, contenting himself with a bare statement of his exemplary devotion to duty as a Roman provincial governor and continuing in factual and objective tones with a particularly impressive record of his own great achievements and those of his army - as he put it himself, the *tantae res gestae* which had won him an unassailable *dignitas*.²³

In view of the political circumstances in which Caesar found himself, a significant aspect of his projected image with regard to the justification of his activities in Gaul would therefore be to impress his opponents with his abilities and attributes as a general. Not only does he consistently defend his actions throughout the *BG* and *BC*, but he also demonstrates his leadership qualities, his devotion to his troops and their devotion to their leader. The display of these virtues in his *Commentaries* in turn enhances the *dignitas* which was so dear to him.

One of the representations of Caesar's abilities as a military leader is the speed and swiftness which characterises his every movement and decision. This is particularly noticeable in the *BG*.²⁴ In his preface Edwards refers to *celeritas* as

²² Fuller, 1965: 315.

²³ Gelzer, 1968: 105.

²⁴ See for example *BG* 1.7: "Caesari cum id nuntiatum esset, eos per provinciam nostram iter facere conari, maturat ab urbe proficisci, et quam maximis potest itineribus in Galliam ulteriorem contendit et at

the keynote of Caesar's generalship... He was swift to calculate and decide, swift to move - and by movement to keep the initiative, to surprise the enemy and divide his strength; swift, in the hour of battle, to seize the tactical opportunity, to remedy the tactical mistake; swift always in pursuit, ... ²⁵

Another aspect of Caesar's generalship is the way in which he made advance plans and proceeded with caution, but at the same time boldly took advantage of any opportunity that arose.²⁶ This augurs well for a positive image: on the one hand he always explains and justifies his actions, and on the other he is displaying *celeritas* in respect of his judgment. As Hirtius says (pref. *BG* 8):

Erat autem in Caesare eum facultas atque elegantia summa scribendi, tum verissima scientia suorum consiliorum explicandorum.

Caesar not only wrote with supreme fluency and elegance, but he also knew superlatively well how to describe his plans and policies.

Naturally, Caesar does not hesitate to inform the reader, whether directly or indirectly, that these plans and policies were the correct ones. For example, after the conclusion of the Helvetian campaign (*BG* 1.30), deputies from almost the whole of Gaul came to congratulate him and spoke of the way in which his actions had benefited both Rome and Gaul. This is at once a compliment to Caesar's abilities as a general and a justification of his decision to undertake operations in Gaul. Likewise, during the Civil War (*BC* 2.32) he makes Curio compliment him on his military successes.

Caesar therefore shows that every decision he has taken is a wise one and the only correct one. He alone is the *imperator*, the *dux*, and his generals are merely his *legati* or lieutenants.

Genevam pervenit;" 2.3: "Eo cum de improvise celeriusque omni opinione venisset, ..."

²⁵ Edwards, H.J. (trans.), Caesar: The Gallic War, Loeb edition, London 1996, xii.

²⁶ See Suet. *Iul.* 58.

Naturally the *res gestae* of these *legati* are regarded by Caesar as part of and thus subordinate to his own *res gestae*. Contributing to this image is the fact that his troops are called on to fight as though their leader were present.²⁷ Although Caesar does not hesitate to give credit to his *legati* where they assist in the execution of his own plans,²⁸ he deliberately understates their actions when they show initiative.²⁹ On the other hand, he does not underrate the military abilities of his enemies.³⁰ A possible explanation of this apparent anomaly is that by successfully conquering his opponents his own skills are seen as superior.

Caesar was more than merely a courageous general and an astute tactician; he cultivated carefully the commitment of his troops by mutual understanding and self-respect, and secured their loyalty in return. Since they were, as Adcock says "the instruments of his purposes",³¹ it was vital for him to win and keep the affection of his officers and the esteemed admiration of the legions.³² Caesar's attitude towards his troops has much to do with the general image of popularity which he was keen to display and his self-justification in the face of senatorial opposition at Rome. He is not hesitant to stress at every opportunity the strength, inspiration and will to victory he instilled in his soldiers,³³ as well as the care and patience he

²⁷ See *BG* 6.8; 7.62.

²⁸ See *BG* 5.33; 6.38, *BC* 3.53 and discussion Chapter 2.

²⁹ Notably Publius Crassus in the battle with Ariovistus (*BG* 1.52), and Labienus against the Nervii (*BG* 2.26).

³⁰ For example his description of the cunning of Afranius (*BC* 1.40), the vitality of Petreius (*BC* 1.75) and the experienced judgement and tactical skills of Pompey (*BC* 3.87).

³¹ Adcock, 1956: 57.

³² Caesar had less success with officers such as Labienus, who were from his own class, and who therefore came to fear his dominance.

³³ *BG* 1.40-41; 2.25; 3.14; 7.7, *BC* 3.6.

exercised for their welfare.³⁴ On one occasion (*BC* 1.39) he manages to display at the same time both his generosity and his claim to the loyalty of his troops. Moreover, he is quick to praise his soldiers' exploits of courage and determination, since this appealed to men's pride in the victory of Roman arms and the expansion of Roman power, and would hopefully win approval for his operations in Gaul. In respect of the Civil War, he expected to engender support for his side and even win over adherents from the opposition.

The circumstances in which Augustus wrote the *RG* are somewhat different from those of Caesar, but there remain striking similarities. As in the *BG*, there is self-justification of the author as a military leader, while the defence and justification of his constitutional position compares with that of Caesar in the *BC*.

Perhaps when Augustus wrote his Autobiography, his political and social situation could be seen as more comparable to that of Caesar. Yavetz tells us that in his Autobiography

conscious efforts ... were made by Augustus to project a public image different from that which prevailed in his enemies' propaganda.³⁵

The surviving fragments reveal that the Autobiography was a defence and justification of Augustus' earlier military exploits, an explanation of his behaviour and an apology for his irregular acts, representing an attempt to counteract the reputation he had acquired at the time of being cruel, vengeful, selfish and treacherous.³⁶ In this respect it would mirror the element of defensive counter-attack and argument that is found in Caesar's *Commentaries*, particularly the *BC*; both authors were reacting to the slander and accusations levelled against them by their contemporaries.

³⁴ *BG* 1.47; 6.34; 7.19 and in particular *BC* 1.72.

³⁵ Yavetz, *Res Gestae*, 1.

³⁶ See more detailed discussion in Chapter 3.

However, by 23BC Augustus had securely established himself as the leader of a new form of government. Unlike Caesar, who was still attempting to establish political and military control when he wrote his *Commentaries*, Augustus already possessed an unprecedented accumulation of powers when he began to write the *RG*. It is therefore quite understandable that he discontinued his Autobiography after the Cantabrian War. There was no need for an *apologia* when he had an accumulation of positive achievements to begin writing about. However, what did need justification after 23 was Augustus' extraordinary constitutional position. In this respect the *RG* as a catalogue of achievements and honours contributed to his image as the ideal and perfect leader who was therefore worthy of such unprecedented powers and privileges.

Like Caesar, Augustus eagerly displays his qualities as a military leader. He also makes it clear right from the beginning of the *RG* that he is no longer merely the leader of a military faction or *dux partium*; this appellation is now reserved for Antony (*RG* 1.1) who is made to appear as the enemy of the state. Augustus on the other hand becomes the champion of *libertas* and saviour of the *res publica*. The negative aspects of his career are therefore ignored and he focusses only on the positive.

Unlike Caesar, who provides an explanation for his plans and policies, Augustus sets out his military achievements as bare statements of carefully chosen fact, which are intended to speak for themselves in respect of his outstanding abilities as a military leader. He begins with reference to his domestic victories over Antony in 44 (*RG* 1.1) and over Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42 (*RG* 2.2), and makes a summary statement of his military operations at home and abroad (*RG* 3.1). The various honours and privileges listed in the first fourteen chapters of his account are intended to justify his actions in war and also project the image of an outstanding and exceptionally capable general whose magnificent achievements won for him two ovations, numerous triumphs and twenty-one salutations as *imperator* (*RG* 4.1).

In chapters 25-33 Augustus sets out the military operations and diplomatic successes by means of which he pacified the Roman world and extended the *imperium Romanum*. Therefore, according to the *RG*, he began his military career by restoring the *libertas* of the republic and protecting it and then expanded the horizons of Rome until she asserted her supremacy over the whole world. Generals always prided themselves on making the *imperium populi Romani* cover the whole known world, as Augustus does here, and under the republic there was a clear notion of empire and the glory of imperial expansion.³⁷ Nevertheless, Augustus leads the reader to believe that he single-handedly accomplished this expansion and that all military successes were due only to himself. When he states that he made the sea peaceful and freed it of pirates (*RG* 25.1), he does not mention that the victories off Mylae and Naulochus were actually gained by Agrippa. Again, he claims that he recovered standards in Spain, Gaul and Dalmatia (*RG* 29.1), but omits to state that the victories must have been gained by generals acting under his auspices. It is Augustus, the perfect military leader, who is the sole focus of achievement as *imperator* (*RG* 4.1, 21.3), *dux* (25.2, 31.1) and *princeps* (13, 30.1, 32.3). In fact his reference to the leaders of the Parthians and Medes as *principes* eager to establish diplomatic relations with Rome (*RG* 33) makes him even *princeps principum*. Such diplomatic successes were most significant for Augustus' image as a tactful and judicious leader and important for winning over public opinion to his new regime.

Like Caesar, Augustus carefully cultivated the commitment of his troops and this attitude links up with his projected image as a popular and generous commander. His popularity amongst soldiers and civilians alike is demonstrated by reference to the oath of allegiance in 32 and the demand that he should be "leader" (*RG* 25.2). Neither of these events conferred any legal power on Octavian, but they did have a great moral impact, and Augustus takes the opportunity to reveal them as expressions of the utmost confidence in his military and leadership capabilities. Moreover, as Brunt and Moore point out, the statement helps to

³⁷ Cicero (*Rep.* 3.24) puts forward an argument for the justice of imperialism.

explain Augustus' claim in chapter 34 that he enjoyed universal consent.³⁸

Augustus makes an early reference to the loyalty of his soldiers in stating that 500 000 took the soldier's oath of obedience to him (RG 3.3). The large number is designed to impress the reader, and probably includes not only the soldiers he himself raised in 44-31 but also those who had transferred from Lepidus or from Antony after Actium.³⁹ In the same section Augustus exhibits both his concern for the welfare of his troops and his generosity:

Ex quibus deduxi in colonias aut remisi in municipia sua stipendis emeritis millia aliquanto plura quam trecenta, et iis omnibus agros adsignavi aut pecuniam pro praemiis militiae dedi.

Of these I settled considerably more than 300 000 in colonies or sent them back to their home towns after their period of service; and to all these I assigned lands or gave money as rewards for their military service.

He gives further details of the settlement of veterans in chapter 16 as part of the section on *impensae*, where he maintains an image of unflinching kindness and liberality, distributing large sums of money to soldiers and civilians alike. As Yavetz notes, the *humanitas* of Augustus is significantly underscored in his self-representation.⁴⁰

³⁸ Brunt and Moore, 1967: 68.

³⁹ See Brunt and Moore, 1967: 41. Hardy, (1923: 34) however, supports Mommsen's exclusion of these legions in the 500 000.

⁴⁰ Yavetz, Z., "The Personality of Augustus: Reflections on Syme's *Roman Revolution*", in Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate, Raaflaub, K.A. and Toher, M., (eds), California 1990, 39. However, I would disagree with his indication that *humanitas* or *liberalitas* is the main virtue displayed in the RG, particularly in view of the prominence given to *virtus*, *iustitia*, *clementia* and *pietas* as components of the Augustan ideology. *Humanitas* could be seen as subsumed by *clementia* and also linked to *iustitia*.

Augustus assails the reader with a profusion of large figures in order to emphasise the size and extent of his acts of beneficence, but at the same time he omits to mention anything that would detract from his *humanitas* or generosity, such as the confiscations of land for the settlement of veterans.⁴¹ Furthermore, Augustus' assertion that he was the first and only man to pay compensation for land assigned to veterans is misleading. Under a law passed by Caesar, which carried the Rullan proposal's principle of land purchase into practice, compensation had come from public revenues. Hence Augustus was not the first to have paid compensation for lands assigned to veterans, only the first to have done so out of his own pocket.

Augustus therefore skilfully lays the emphasis on his overwhelming liberality and concern for his troops, while omitting any questionable facts. This contributes significantly to his image as a considerate general and ideal leader, and consequently must have had an immeasurable effect in justifying his claim to "universal consent" in the climactic chapter of the RG.

Dignitas

With respect to *dignitas* there is a significant difference between Caesar and Augustus. Caesar makes direct reference to his *dignitas* in his *Commentarii*,⁴² the promotion of his *dignitas* being one of the main themes in his writing. Augustus, however, conveys a list of his achievements only and not his feelings. This is not to say that his *dignitas* was any less valuable to him, but rather that, as Yavetz says, "Augustus did not wish to have his soul searched and his motives scrutinised."⁴³ Caesar often explains the motives for his actions in self-justification, and even congratulates himself later for his correct judgement.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Augustus merely sets out an

⁴¹ See Chapter 3.

⁴² See discussion Chapter 2.

⁴³ Yavetz, Res Gestae, 26.

⁴⁴ See for example BC 3.94, 101.

account of his achievements and honours in such a way that both his actions and the position he attained seem wholly justified. The aim is the same, but the effect is achieved by different means.

Auctoritas and potestas

The question of the *auctoritas* and *potestas* of Augustus has already been discussed in detail in the previous chapter. It is sufficient to note here that his *auctoritas* and its development constitute a major theme in the *RG*, since *auctoritas* was indispensable to his image of possessing superiority in the state. Moreover, Augustus tries to show that his extraordinary position rested only on his *auctoritas* and not on *potestas* or magisterial power. Ramage refers to Hellegouarc'h's study of *auctoritas* as it appeared in the thinking of the late republic, and concludes that there was little change in the concept of *auctoritas* between republic and empire.⁴⁵ It would be appropriate, then, to apply the same definition of the term in respect of Caesar and to see what significance he gives to *auctoritas* and to *potestas* in the moulding of his public image.

Unlike the *RG*, Caesar's *Commentaries* are concerned with the deeds accomplished by virtue of his *potestas* rather than his *auctoritas*. This is understandable particularly in respect of the *BG*, since at the time of its composition he was still attempting to establishing his political power base.⁴⁶ For this reason he could hardly lay claim to any natural superiority or overriding *auctoritas* in Rome itself. Yavetz, in discussing the election of magistrates during Caesar's period, questions whether

⁴⁵ Ramage, 1988: 41. Cicero (*Leg. Man.* 28) clearly illustrates the importance of *auctoritas* in an individual. In discussing Pompey's qualifications for his command in the east he includes it amongst the four essential characteristics a man must have, along with *scientia rei militaris*, *virtus* and *felicitas*. Cicero's mention of *auctoritas* in other speeches (*Balb.* 10; *Flacc.* 14) confirms that it meant influence and prestige, as it did during the time of Augustus.

⁴⁶ See Chapter 1 p. 17 for dates of composition and publication of the *BG*.

Caesar imposed his will through his *auctoritas* or with the help of his army, stating that while some scholars suppose his influence derived solely from his *auctoritas*, others believe that he received overriding authority in the popular assembly only after the battle of Munda or even later.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Caesar does mention his *auctoritas* in relation to foreign opponents: in the *BG* (1.33) he expresses the hope that by his kindness and his influence he can induce Ariovistus to put a stop to his outrages.

Caesar does not actually use the word *potestas* in connection with his legal authority, but the notion of magisterial power is contained in the term *honor*, with which he refers to political office. Both *Commentarii* involve attempts to justify his *potestas*. The *BG* is a subtle and skilful *apologia* for the Gallic proconsulship, and shows how Caesar was countering the accusations of his opponents.⁴⁸ In particular the earlier part of his account, which describes his campaigns against the Helvetii and Ariovistus in 58, attempts to invalidate in advance the points of indictment for high treason that his enemies were preparing against him. Hence a display of *auctoritas* in his argument would have little effect and would certainly be counter-productive. It is through a demonstration of military skill and achievement that he sought to make it impossible for others to deny his greatness, underestimate it or let it go unrewarded. More important than *auctoritas* in this event was his *dignitas*, the recognition of which would indicate acceptance of his claim to the proconsulship and his activities in Gaul.

Similarly, the *BC* justifies Caesar's position in view of the dispute surrounding the extension of his proconsulship and his second consulship. It therefore concerns a political struggle which centres around his *potestas* and his attempts to demonstrate

⁴⁷ Yavetz, Julius Caesar, 127-8.

⁴⁸ Caesar only makes one direct reference (*BG* 1.44) to the odious intrigues at Rome when the arrogant Ariovistus dares to object to Rome's long-standing claim to Gaul and claims scornfully that if he killed Caesar he would gratify many nobles and leaders of the Roman people.

how, through their illegal actions and unjustified violation of his *potestas* and his *dignitas*, his enemies forced the war upon him. For two years he had struggled to obtain, without resorting to force, what he regarded as his legal and constitutional rights and hence throughout the *BC* does everything possible to put his opponents in the wrong in the face of public opinion. His fury is evident as he describes his frustrated attempts to gain any kind of officially recognised legal basis for his position and again, a show of *auctoritas* would be of little relevance here. In 1.6 he sums up the abuse of his *potestas* by the so-called guardians of the constitution:

omnia divina humanaque iura permiscentur.

all divine and human rights are thrown into confusion.

Hence the *BC* reflects the struggle of a man fighting for his career and ultimately for his life. Caesar was a military leader striving to maintain a hold on his *potestas* and obtain due acknowledgement of his *dignitas*. On the other hand, Augustus' struggle for supremacy was over and his *potestas* was so firmly established that he could now play it down and instead claim to be merely *princeps* with an overriding *auctoritas*.

Virtus, clementia, iustitia and pietas

In the accounts of both Caesar and Augustus there is ample evidence of their *virtus* at work. Augustus mentions *virtus* directly in the climactic section of the *RG* as one of his cardinal qualities, and as discussed in the previous chapter his numerous successful military campaigns provide examples of his *virtus* at work. Caesar, on the other hand, does not discuss his own *virtus*, but his *Commentarii* consistently show how his *virtus* in military operations gained him success in war. As Fuller notes, Caesar based his campaigns "not on superiority of numbers and meticulous preparations but on celerity and audacity."⁴⁹ *Virtus* was essential in battle, and the importance of bravery and courage led Caesar on occasion to praise or encourage the *virtus*

⁴⁹ Fuller, 1965: 321.

of others⁵⁰ or frequently berate his own soldiers for cowardice as being one of the real sins of a soldier.⁵¹

Virtus, of course, brings *victoria*, and also personal rewards in the form of *honores*. Like Augustus, Caesar justifies his military activities by showing that he was honoured for his achievements. Hence Book 2 of the *BG* concludes that he was awarded the unprecedented honour of 15 days' thanksgiving, and Books 3 and 7 end in a similar manner. The *BC*, on the other hand, tends to reflect the anxieties that Caesar suffered and the courage that he and his troops needed until the victory at Pharsalus. The triumphant note of self-confidence when *virtus* finally brings *victoria* is evident in the confidence Caesar places in his achievements:

Sed Caesar, confisus fama rerum gestarum ... aequae omnem sibi locum tutum fore existimans.

But Caesar, trusting in the report of his exploits, ... thinking that every place would be equally safe for him. (*BC* 3.106)

Both Caesar and Augustus took care to stress their *clementia* in their writings. By declaring *clementia* as one of his cardinal virtues, Augustus links himself with Caesar, who pardoned almost all his opponents.⁵² However, as has been noted, Augustus did not spare all surviving citizens either after Philippi or after Actium.⁵³ He must have been aware that men whom Caesar had spared had eventually conspired against him. *Clementia* was a political slogan and Caesar pardoned some of his enemies for obvious political reasons. The policy possibly originated as a reaction against the terrible cruelty in civil war perpetrated in the days of Marius and Sulla, but Caesar gave it great

⁵⁰ *BG* 5.52; 6.8; 7.59.

⁵¹ *BG* 1.40; 2.21; 7.52, *BC* 3.73.

⁵² Although none of the leaders of the Senate, such as Pompey and Lentulus Crus, survived the Civil War.

⁵³ See Chapter 3 p. 119.

publicity in order to gain adherents. As he wrote to Oppius and Cornelius Balbus:

Haec nova sit ratio vincendi, ut misericordia et liberalitate nos muniamus.

Let this be the new way of conquering, that we strengthen our position by kindness and generosity. (Att. 9.7c)

And later to Cicero:

Neque illud me movet, quod ii, qui a me dimissi sunt, discessisse dicuntur, ut mihi rursus bellum inferrent. Nihil enim malo quam et me mei similem esse et illos sui.

Nor does it move me that those whom I have let go are said to have gone away to make war on me again. For I like nothing better than to be true to myself and they to themselves. (Att. 9.16)

This was clever propaganda on Caesar's part, since he could claim to have conferred a favour on those he had set free and then accuse them of ungratefulness.

Curio seems to have suspected Caesar's motives for his mild measures, stating that if he lost popular favour, his naturally cruel nature would emerge.⁵⁴ Cicero, too, refers to Caesar's "insidiosa clementia" (Att. 8.16) and "simulatio mansuetudinis" (Att. 10.8). Occasionally Caesar exercised leniency simply for humanitarian reasons and because he was good natured.⁵⁵ But both Caesar and Augustus realised that a show of *clementia* was the best course of action if they wished to cultivate the political image of one who spared when he could have destroyed. By setting aside political rivalries for a pretence of benevolence and pardoning their enemies they would be able to win friends and popularity at no cost.

As has been noted, *iustitia* as a component of the Augustan ideology in the *RG* finds expression primarily in Augustus' image of legitimacy of position and legality of action, as well as the

⁵⁴ Cic. Att. 10.4.

⁵⁵ See Sallust *Bell. Cat.* 54.

concept of *bellum iustum* and his moral legislation. In a similar manner, *iustitia* features in the *Commentarii*, particularly the *BG*, where Caesar consistently compares the legality of his own position and the fairness of his demands with the illegal actions of his opponents and their unjust treatment of him. His desire always to be seen as the promulgator of peace (*BC* 3.10, 3.18, 3.57) and his appeal to the *aequitas* of Pompey with regard to his own "*lenissimis postulatis*" (*BC* 1.5) promotes Caesar as an equitable statesman fighting against injustice. Of course, Caesar was genuinely prepared to meet his enemies at least part of the way, but only as far as his career was not adversely affected, and by claiming to be acting in the interests of the state (*BC* 1.9, 1.24) he could gain credence for the legality and fairness of his actions.

In his address to the Senate (*BC* 1.32)⁵⁶ Caesar argues for the legitimacy of his position and summarises the injustices perpetrated against him leading up to the war. Like Augustus' claim that he sought no office inconsistent with republican tradition (*RG* 6.1), Caesar claims that he sought no extraordinary office but, waiting for the legitimate time of his consulship (48), had been content with privileges open to all the citizens. However, the law of the ten tribunes passed in 52, which freed him from the need to canvass in person for his future consulship and on which his legal position rested, was devised by Caesar himself to safeguard his own interests. Since the decree was proposed with Pompey's strong support by all ten tribunes it appeared to represent the united will of the people. Caesar was therefore well able to obtain the extraordinary privileges that he claims not to have sought.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ 1 April 49.

⁵⁷ See Syme, *RR*, 48: "Caesar and his associates in power had thwarted or suspended the constitution for their own ends many times in the past ... and Caesar asserted both legal and moral right to preferential treatment."

Caesar's concluding assertion in *BC* 1.32 that he wished to surpass his opponents in justice and equity as he had done in action is hence a clever piece of propaganda designed to elicit sympathy and support for his cause. As Augustus connects his military actions with *iustitia* through the concept of *bellum iustum* so Caesar, by highlighting the injustices committed against him by his enemies and his own supreme fairness of conduct shows that he also undertook a *bellum iustum*. The concept can also be applied to the *BG*. Caesar's description of events in Gaul and the detailed explanation of his motives for action argue for the case of a *bellum iustum* against his opponents, particularly since the conquest of Gaul appealed to the pride men felt in the glory of Roman conquest and expansion.

Finally *pietas*, which reveals itself in *virtus*, *clementia* and *iustitia*,⁵⁸ involves respect for and devotion to family, country and gods. Since the Roman family was older than the state, and the family formed the nucleus of a political faction, loyalty to the bonds of kinship in politics was an ultimate obligation. This explains the importance of *pietas* in the revolutionary wars of the late republic; Appian (*B.C.* 2.104) says that *pietas* was the battle-cry of ~~Q.~~ Pompeius at the Battle of Munda. *Pietas*,^{c/} as the fourth and last of Augustus' cardinal virtues, finds expression throughout the *RG* in the form of *pietas erga familiam*, *erga patriam* and *erga deos*. However, Caesar does not give a prominent place to the concept, although certain allusions to *pietas* can be found in the *Commentarii*. Unlike Augustus, he does not appear to have concerned himself in his writings with promoting himself as a man who continuously observed his religious duty. But such attention to the topic would not have been appropriate, given the theme of the *Commentarii*. Suetonius (*Iul.* 59, 81) notes that Caesar did not allow himself to be deterred from any undertaking by a regard for religious scruples, although he was well aware of how the people could be manipulated with the aid of religion.⁵⁹ However, an analogy with Augustus

⁵⁸ See discussion Chapter 3.

⁵⁹ In *BC* 3.105 Caesar describes various miraculous occurrences in order to demonstrate that he received divine approval for his actions in war.

can be found in Caesar's suggestions of *pietas erga patriam*. Augustus represents all his achievements as being beneficial to the state; similarly Caesar makes frequent claims that he is acting in the best interests of the state.⁶⁰ These demonstrations of altruism were instrumental in maintaining the image that his military operations were not undertaken for the purpose of personal glory and promotion, but for the benefit of Rome.

It is evident that Augustus refers more directly to his virtues, while Caesar projects his public image through demonstrations of virtue. This is due partly to the fact that Augustus' virtues, particularly his *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia* and *pietas*, were beyond doubt and had already been acknowledged as such by the Senate,⁶¹ while Caesar was still struggling for recognition of his virtues and his *dignitas*. It is also explained by the fact that the *RG* and the *Commentarii* exhibit characteristics from different literary genres. This applies throughout, and should be constantly borne in mind.

The eulogistic nature of the *RG* allows for use of the first person and the emphasis on Augustus as the sole focus of attention. He is able to exhibit himself as the supreme ruler at Rome, accomplishing all his activities in the military, civil and religious spheres with unsurpassed success, while the *honores* he received show the rewards that are to be expected for such exemplary behaviour. As a result, Augustus becomes a model of the perfect, ideal ruler, and shows the qualities and attributes that should be inherent in a *princeps* by promoting his virtues as components of the Augustan ideology. Moreover, it is through these virtues that he has achieved such pre-eminence. In this sense the *RG* comprises the *exempla imitandi* (*RG* 8.5) to be followed by future leaders, with Augustus himself as the source and provider of the *exempla*.⁶²

⁶⁰ See for example *BC* 1.9, 24; 3.10.

⁶¹ *RG* 34.

⁶² Strabo (6.4.2), among others, states explicitly that Tiberius made Augustus his model.

Caesar's *Commentarii*, on the other hand, are essentially military narratives and it is primarily the qualities of the soldier and the military leader that he displays. The fact that the *Commentarii* are written in the third person allows him to promote, justify or defend himself whilst giving the outward appearance of an objective account, although in reality he is no less the focus of attention than is Augustus in his account. Unlike Augustus, however, Caesar does not present his virtues as themes in the narrative; the clear and precise nature of the *Commentarii* precludes such rhetoric. Instead his qualities emerge implicitly as he describes events, explains his plans and policies or quotes speeches. His virtues are displayed in the political arena or on the battlefield; those of Augustus are set out as a memorial to his own greatness. Yet one element is common to both Caesar and Augustus in their writings: they both believed in their own excellence.

CHAPTER 5

Success or Failure of the Image-Building

How successful were Caesar and Augustus in their attempts to perpetuate their respective images? Were they prototypes worthy of imitation? These questions may to some extent be answered by examining how they were perceived by their contemporaries and by later generations. From this it will be possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the image-building process of both writers as represented in their works.

Caesar

The Question of Monarchy

At the beginning of his career, Caesar was merely a Roman senator and it is doubtful whether he was at that time planning to assume a monarchical position. It is difficult to believe the contention of Suetonius (*Iul.* 9), who puts into the mouth of Cicero the suggestion that Caesar in his consulship established the despotism which he had already contemplated when he was aedile. Plutarch (*Iul.* 60) substantiates this implication by citing Caesar's passion for the royal power as the reason for the hatred he engendered. Most modern historians appear to reject these assumptions: Syme says that the view of historians that Caesar began with the design to achieve monarchy by armed force is too simple to be historical,¹ while Gelzer warns against ascribing to him "actions, plans and motives for which there is no authority."² Meyer also rejects the theory that Caesar occupied himself with plans for monarchy from the beginning of his career. In addition, contemporary literary evidence sometimes casts doubt on accounts that are found in the secondary sources, which serves as a warning to be sceptical of late embellishments to the biography of Caesar. For example, the evidence of Cicero (*Div.* 2.110ff) dismisses the story found in Dio, Suetonius and Plutarch that according to a Sybilline oracle

¹ Syme, *RR*: 47.

² Gelzer, 1968: 329.

Parthia could not be conquered except by a Roman rex. Fresh rumours about Caesar's ambitions for the throne were always in circulation, although we do know that he was never officially crowned, and never assumed the title of king. Perhaps the most accurate answer, and one that can explain the attitude of later sources, can be found in Suetonius (*Iul.* 79) when he reported that although Caesar refused to be called king, he could not get rid of the infamy of having aspired to the title of monarch.

Suetonius (*Iul.* 76) also believed that Caesar was driven by the desire for divine honours. However, the contemporary numismatic evidence does not corroborate the theory of a divine monarchy. Caesar was proclaimed *divus* in 42³, but coins do not show the title *divi filius* being used before 38 by Octavian.⁴ This surely indicates that Octavian had to be cautious and that reports of Caesar's desire for deification were more rumour than reality. Further, in 46 Caesar had the legend "divus est" erased from his statue base and although his statue appeared in the temple of Quirinus, he did nothing to affirm such a cult.⁵

The Civil War

Caesar himself declared that his purpose in waging war in 49 was:

quietem Italia, pacem provinciarum, salutem imperii ...

the tranquility of Italy, the peace of the provinces, the safety of the empire ... (*BC* 3.57)

and that

se non maleficii causa ex provincia egressum, sed uti se a contumeliis inimicorum defenderet, ut tribunos plebis in ea re ex civitate expulsos in suam dignitatem restitueret, ut se et populum Romanum factione paucorum oppressum in libertatem vindicaret.

³ Dio 47.18.3.

⁴ Crawford, M., Roman Republican Coinage, Vol. I, Cambridge 1974, No. 535.

⁵ See Cic. *Att.* 12.45.3; 13.28.3.

he had not left his province for the sake of doing injury, but to defend himself from the insults of his enemies, to restore to their position the tribunes of the people who in those circumstances had been expelled from the state, to champion the freedom of himself and the Roman people who had been oppressed by a small faction. (BC 1.22)⁶

I believe that, considering the circumstances in which he was placed, Caesar knew he could not contemplate a surrender of power at this stage without becoming party to his own destruction and without benefitting the state. Yet he offered to share its administration with the Senate (BC 1.32). Besides, most sources appear to agree with Caesar's line of argument: Plutarch (Ant. 5) states that his demands seemed to be reasonable, and Velleius Paterculus (2.49.3) asserts that Caesar tried everything he could to keep the peace and finally concluded that war was inevitable (2.49.4). Cicero (Att. 9.11a) wrote informing that Caesar was the injured party in the war, since the latter's enemies were maliciously depriving him of an honour conferred by the Roman people.⁷ However, one wonders how sincere Cicero was here, considering that two months previously he had informed Tiro (Fam. 16.11) that Caesar had sent a threatening and bad-tempered letter to the Senate and was shamelessly and in defiance of the Senate attempting to hold on to his army and province. Cicero's attitude towards both Caesar and Pompey is ambivalent; in October 50 he had reluctantly decided to back Pompey in the event of war⁸ but, like so many others, he favoured a compromise solution, even if that involved making concessions to Caesar. Even in his analysis of the situation at the end of 50 (Att. 7.9), he still does not make it clear who he believed carried the major responsibility for a state of affairs which was seemingly inevitable.

⁶ The declared intention to champion the freedom of the Roman people or the state as a purpose for waging war is a *topos* which has echoes in the RG (1.1) and elsewhere, such as the *elogia* in the Forum of Augustus.

⁷ Presumably the right to stand for the consulship *in absentia*, granted in 52.

⁸ See Att. 7.1.4.

As far as the Civil War is concerned, there are merits for both sides of the argument, and no obvious way of establishing the constitutional rights and wrongs. As Lucan indicates, it was rational to suspend judgment about the war:

... *Quis iustius induit arma,
Scire nefas; magno se iudice quisque tuetur;
Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*

It is not right to know who had the fairer pretext for taking up arms; each is defended by high authority; the victor had the gods on his side, but the conquered had Cato. (*Phars.* 1.126-8)

Yet it is Pompey who seems to have come out worse in the contemporary historical accounts which survive.⁹ Perhaps this is because he did not live to qualify for the *apologia* and eulogies which the triumphant Caesar accumulated. On the other hand, Pompey did not write *commentarii* through which he could attempt to justify his actions and mould public opinion.¹⁰

In spite of Caesar's justifications for his decision to fight, I would suggest nevertheless that he was always conscious of possessing the abilities and power to become ruler of the empire, and that this realisation was ultimately the driving force for his ambition.¹¹ One of the grounds that he adopted to justify his resort to arms was the expulsion of the tribunes who fled to him at Ariminum (*BC* 1.22). However, the contemporary evidence of Cicero (*Fam.* 16.11), which states that the tribunes were not forcibly expelled, makes it quite clear that they fled of their

⁹ Sallust (*ad Caes.* 3) makes it quite clear that Pompey's behaviour was illegal and ought to be suppressed by force, and although Cicero had committed himself to supporting Pompey, he notes (*Att.* 7.8) that Pompey did not appear to want a peaceful settlement.

¹⁰ He did, however, possess a domestic chronicler, Theophanes of Mytilene. See Plut. *Pomp.* 37.

¹¹ As Wight Duff, 1960: 294 says, it was circumstances that greatly shaped Caesar's aim. He had undoubtedly always harboured ambitions, and these ambitions only needed direction to be serviceable.

own accord.¹² In the final analysis, the tribunes did not have much choice; Caesar invaded Italy as soon as he heard of their expulsion, and indeed would most likely have done so anyway.

Contemporary Opinion

The dichotomy of opinion concerning the Civil War is mirrored in the mixed reaction that Caesar provoked amongst his contemporaries and even first century writers. Cicero seemed to understand Caesar's multi-faceted character, and was consistently perturbed by the conflict between his greatness and his arbitrary behaviour. His concerns are reflected in his prediction concerning the effect of Caesar's actions on posterity:

Erit inter eos etiam, qui nascentur, sicut inter nos fuit, magna dissensio, cum alii laudibus ad caelum res tuas gestas efferent, alii fortasse aliquid requirent, ...

There will be among those not yet born, just as there was amongst us, a great disagreement, since some shall lift up your achievements to the skies with praises, others perhaps will find them lacking ... (Marc. 29)

Much later Tacitus recognised the problem when he declared:

occisus dictator Caesar aliis pessimum aliis pulcherrimum facinus videretur ...

the killing of the dictator Caesar seemed to some the worst, to others the most glorious of deeds ... (Ann. 1.8.6)

Pliny the Elder also praised and criticised Caesar at the same time (NH 7.91-2). He commends Caesar on his exceptional intellect and character but also censures him for killing 1 192 000 human beings in his wars, even if it was unavoidable. Pliny points out that Caesar was aware he had inflicted a great wrong on the human race and this prevented him from mentioning the casualty figures in his *Commentarii*. Such an admission would certainly have negated his displays of *clementia*.

¹² Although Plutarch (Ant. 5.4) states that the consul Lentulus ousted Antony from the Senate.

Sallust, however, appeared to admire Caesar. As a contemporary he supported Caesar in the Civil War, and this brought him a quaestorship and a command in Illyricum. His favourable position is reflected in his *Bellum Catilinae*, which is undeniably sycophantic in respect of Caesar.¹³ However, as Wight Duff points out, Sallust cleverly re-wrote events and screened Caesar's fame from too close association with Catiline.¹⁴ As a result his hero-worship, combined with a gift of rhetoric, led to his sacrificing historical accuracy.

The contemporary poet Catullus, on the other hand, had strong political feelings as well as intense personal likes and dislikes. Such excesses of sentiment led him towards the end of his life in 47 to produce scathing attacks on Caesar. It is therefore not possible to gain any sense of objectivity from either Catullus or Sallust, and interesting to note that Catullus eventually apologised to Caesar for his assaults and was apparently forgiven.¹⁵

The attitude of contemporary writers after Caesar's murder on the Ides of March 44 is reflected in the coinage. At first coins portrayed him as *parens patriae*,¹⁶ a purely honorific but politically significant title which he accepted after the Battle of Munda in 45, and a column was set up in the Forum with the inscription "parenti patriae".¹⁷ The projected temple of *Clementia Caesaris* also appears as a dedication to Caesar's leniency;¹⁸ significantly it was not represented on coins before 15th March 44. However, moneymen stopped striking altogether before the half year was over. In 43, both Antony and Octavian

¹³ Although he is equally full of praise for Cato.

¹⁴ Wight Duff, 1960: 304.

¹⁵ Suet. *Iul.* 73: "Catullum ... satis facientem eadem die adhibuit hospitioque patris eius, sicut consuerat, uti perseveravit."

¹⁶ For the title of *parens patriae* see Dio 44.4.4; Appian *B.C.* 2.144.

¹⁷ Suet. *Iul.* 85.

¹⁸ Dio 44.6 4; Plut. *Caes.* 57.

began to strike their own coinage, and both sought to link themselves with Caesar. The first issue of Antony bore his own portrait on one side, and that of Caesar on the other,¹⁹ while one of Octavian's first issues bore his own portrait on one side and Caesar on the other, with a legend expressly describing him as *Dictator*.²⁰

The Augustan Age

The tone of literature during the Augustan age certainly favoured Pompey rather than Caesar, most likely because the declared ideals of that era were opposed to absolutism. The elder Seneca quotes Livy, whose narrative of Caesar's career took up the bulk of fourteen books, on contemporary public opinion:

Nunc, quod de Caesare maiore²¹ vulgo dictatum est et a Tito Livio positum in incerto esse utrum illum magis nasci an non nasci rei publicae profuerit, ...

Now, as was commonly said about the elder Caesar and asserted by Titus Livius, that it was uncertain whether it would have been better for the state if Caesar had been born or not, ... (*Nat. Quaest.* 5.18.4).

Syme, on the basis of this quotation, concludes that Livy was moved to great doubts about Caesar.²² Admittedly, when Livy wrote about the Civil Wars, his pro-senatorial leanings and sentimental affection for the "old republic" led him to treat Caesar's opponents sympathetically. However, as White notes, the extant portions of the books on Caesar virtually exclude interpretative comment, and it is therefore not possible to

¹⁹ See Crawford, 1974: Vol. I, No. 488.

²⁰ Crawford, 1974: Vol I, No. 490.

²¹ One MS gives *de C. maior*, which suggests changing Caesar to Marius. However, the weight of MSS evidence is against making such a change.

²² Syme, RR: 317.

confirm Livy's bias.²³ It seems most likely that Livy was merely lukewarm towards Caesar.

Syme also makes the not entirely correct observation that there is only one reference to Caesar in epic poetry, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, and that even this is a veiled allusion.²⁴ However, it is worth quoting Syme's example because it indicates certain anti-Caesarian sentiment at the time. Virgil in his *Aeneid* reprimands Caesar's behaviour when he makes Aeneas's guide encourage him to lay down his arms before Pompeius at the start of the Civil War:

*tuque prior, tu parce, genus qui ducis Olympo;
proice tela manu, sanguis meus!*

and first spare, you who draw your race from heaven;
cast from your hand your weapons, my blood! (6.834-5)

Syme makes his opinion clear that the treatment of Caesar in Augustan poetry can be seen as part of a substantial organisation of public opinion by the Augustan government:

One of the essential Augustan ambiguities is the attitude of Caesar's heir toward Caesar. Though "Divi filius", he seeks his legitimation in and from the Republic: like the Triumvir, the Dictator was better forgotten. The writers who most faithfully reflect governmental opinion, namely Virgil, Horace and Livy agree in what they say (or do not say) about Caesar the Dictator.²⁵

Admittedly, Horace mentions Caesar only twice in his *Odes*,²⁶ firstly when he addresses Mercury as Caesar's potential avenger

²³ White, P., "Julius Caesar in Augustan Rome", *Phoenix* 42, 1988, 333-4.

²⁴ Syme, *RR*: 317. Caesar is mentioned elsewhere in Virgil: see *Ecl.* 9.46-50; *Aen.* 6.792 and 8.681 where he refers to the *Iulium sidus* and Caesar's deification, and *G.* 1.466-468 where he describes the atmospheric conditions of the year of Caesar's assassination.

²⁵ Syme, *Tacitus*, Vol. I, Oxford 1958, 432-3.

²⁶ Although he does refer to Caesar in other works. See, for example, *Serm.* 1.3.5, 9.18.

(1.2.44) and again when he refers to the *Iulium sidus* (1.12.47) and the soul of Caesar. Horace fought under Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42, so his sentiment at the time was obviously anti-Caesarian. However, neither reference in the *Odes* is anti-Caesarian, the latter merely forming part of an allusion to Augustus as a descendant of the Julian house and to the glorification of the emperor's new regime. Horace obviously possessed sufficient patriotism and good sense to realise that the system inaugurated by Augustus promised stability and good government. He thus had to make his peace with Caesar's supporters and although his verse shows no real enthusiasm for Caesar, the anti-Caesarian sentiment is overshadowed by his efforts to glorify and promote the new order.

Syme concludes his remarks on Caesar with the rather forceful comment that it is better to say nothing of him during this period, save as a criminal type.²⁷ Further, he explains that the power and domination of Augustus was in reality far too similar to that of Caesar to stand comparison or even reminder. This point is debatable. It is certainly not because Augustus' power or domination was similar to that of Caesar if the poets tend to neglect the latter; Syme himself admits that Caesar destroyed the "Republic," while Augustus saved it.²⁸ Of greater significance is the fact that Virgil, Horace and Livy were all on terms of personal friendship with the *princeps* and naturally praised in their writings the glories of the principate. L

White convincingly challenges Syme's view that Livy, the Augustan poets and Augustus himself all dissociated themselves from Caesar,²⁹ and shows that among some of the notables in Augustan verse, Caesar is mentioned more often than the others, and consistently comes up in poetry right down to the end of Augustus' reign. Of course, this does not mean that Caesar was a major concern of the Augustan poets; on the contrary the references to him are often brief and cursory. But neither was

²⁷ Syme, RR: 318.

²⁸ Syme, R., Roman Papers, Vol I, Oxford 1979, 214.

²⁹ White, 1988: 334-356.

he deliberately ignored as a result of carefully orchestrated Augustan propaganda. As White correctly notes, it is to be expected that Augustus as the living ruler should be more celebrated than a dead one, and that if a comparison is to be made as to what the poets say about Caesar and what they say about Augustus, one should rather set the treatment of Caesar in Augustan poetry against the treatment of Augustus in post-Augustan poetry.³⁰

Syme remarks that there is little mention of Caesar the Dictator in poetry,³¹ but it appears that the poets are not concerned with commemorating Caesar as an army leader or debating his political policies. The same applies to their treatment of Augustus: they are less interested in the details of his military enterprises than in celebrating the success of the *princeps* as leader of the nation. Thus Caesar appears more significantly in poetry in allusions to his role as the progenitor of Augustus and in the form of the *Iulium sidus*, Caesar's deified soul, which indicates divine authority for the *princeps*' rule.³² It is also worth noting that there was an integral connection in Roman thought between deification and the greatness of a man's actions in public life; hence the *Iulium sidus* could also be seen as representing Caesar's career. The assumption is strengthened by the fact that other writers make the association between the deeds of Caesar and his divinity, and this gives us some idea of the extent to which Caesar was successful in his attempts to promote a favourable public image. Diodorus Siculus, a contemporary whose history is admittedly uncritical, says (4.19.2) that Caesar was pronounced a god because of the greatness of his deeds. Ovid, too, enumerates the accomplishments of Caesar and relates them to his deification (*Met.* 15.746-758) although, as one would expect, he concludes that Caesar's

³⁰ White, 1988: 348 and n. 43.

³¹ Syme, *RR*: 318.

³² Virgil's *Eclogue*, for example, contains the preamble of an anthem at the rising of the *Iulium sidus*: under its aura nature thrives and develops.

greatest achievement was that of having been the father of Augustus.

Second Century Opinion

Suetonius (*Iul.* 30) makes a balanced and thus more valuable retrospective judgment on Caesar, weighing up the alleged statements of the man's contemporaries and giving us some insight into the loss of favour which he suffered during the first century AD. He quotes Pompey as saying that Caesar desired a state of war because his own means were inadequate to complete the works which he had planned, and claims that others thought Caesar was frightened at having to account for all he had done during his first consulship. Suetonius himself seems to favour the common view that if Caesar returned to Rome as a private person he would be obliged to defend himself in court. In support of this he quotes Asinius Pollio's report of Caesar's words at Pharsalus:

Hoc voluerunt; tantis rebus gestis Gaius Caesar condemnatus essem, nisi ab exercitu auxilium petissem.

They wanted this; I, Gaius Caesar, after such great achievements would have been condemned, if I had not sought help from my army.

However, Suetonius continues to quote criticism of Caesar, claiming that certain people thought his habit of gaining powers had become an obsession. Suetonius is convinced that Cicero was among these detractors, quoting lines of Euripides from the latter's *de Officiis* to indicate Caesar's supposed belief that if right should be violated, it should be violated for the sake of becoming king. Suetonius was obviously well read in the propaganda against Caesar. His own opinion seems to be that while Caesar might have been ruthless and unscrupulous in gaining power, he could be fair and considerate once that power had been attained, exercising supreme power with great moderation. As he says,

Simultates contra nullas tam graves excepit unquam, ut non occasione oblata libens deponeret.

On the other hand, he never formed such serious enmities against anyone that he could not willingly set it aside when opportunity offered. (*Iul.* 73)

Suetonius' comments therefore give us some indication that the literature of the second century AD treated Caesar more favourably and perhaps more objectively than did many of his contemporaries.

Plutarch, who wrote his biography of Caesar in the early second century, was also fair in his treatment of the man. In both Suetonius and Plutarch there are numerous incidents which suggest the view that Caesar always aimed at supreme power, and they interpret the events of his early career with the later successes in mind. However, Plutarch is generally sympathetic towards Caesar, and more so than Suetonius.³³ He believes (*Caes.* 28.3) that Caesar's long-term purpose was to overthrow the senatorial government and rule on his own. Yet for Plutarch such absolutism is modified by the clemency of the ruler, and the biographer also takes into account the needs of the Roman people, whose troubles required rule by one man.³⁴ While at other times Caesar's aims might have met with Plutarch's disapproval, he seems to regard them as justified since the condition of the age demanded an absolutist form, which proved to be less intolerable because of the gentle character of Caesar.

Augustus' Opinion of Caesar

It is worth noting at this stage the attitude of Augustus towards Caesar. Syme states that it was expedient for the *princeps* to

³³ Possibly because he was a provincial rather than a Roman: he was born in Chaeronea in Boeotia. Provincial attitudes would have been less critical of Caesar. Also, Suetonius either did not read the *BG* and *BC*, or chose to ignore them because he was more interested in character and personal life than in warfare. However, the *Lives* dealt with men whose activities, used by Plutarch as a clue to their character, had a decisive effect on historical events, and he certainly read both the *BG* and *BC*. (See in particular *Caes.* 16-24, 35-47).

³⁴ See *Caes.* 57.

dissociate himself from Caesar.³⁵ Yet during the triumviral period and later Caesar was honoured by a succession of official actions. In 42 the triumvirs demanded that a temple of *Divus Iulius* be erected to Caesar; it was eventually dedicated to him in 29. Moreover, Caesar's statue was placed in a conspicuous position within the temple chamber.³⁶ A coin produced in the year 36 and bearing the head of Octavian on the obverse appears to refer to work in progress on the temple.³⁷ Augustus decorated the temple with treasures brought from Egypt and on the occasion of the dedication instituted games lasting several days.³⁸ In 2BC Augustus dedicated a temple to Mars the Avenger in order to celebrate the retribution he had claimed from Caesar's assassins. Again, completion of the temple was celebrated with games.

Syme also stresses the point that at Augustus' funeral, the image of Caesar was omitted from the procession of his ancestors, concluding from this that

the artifice of Augustus is patent. He exploited the divinity of his parent and paraded the titulature of *Divi filius*. For all else, Caesar the proconsul and Dictator was better forgotten.³⁹

However, according to Dio (56.34.2), Caesar could not be represented at funeral processions because he was numbered among the demigods, and therefore destined to exist at a higher level. Dio further says (56.46.4) that after the deification of Augustus, the same policy applied to his image.

Shortly after 20 Augustus authorised a new series of coin-types advertising the deification of Caesar. There were three

³⁵ Syme, Roman Papers: 214.

³⁶ Ovid *Met.* 841-842 points to the prominence of Caesar's statue: "ut semper Capitolia nostra forumque/divus ab excelsa prospectet Iulius aede!"

³⁷ Crawford, 1974: No. 540.

³⁸ See Dio 51.22.

³⁹ Syme, Roman Papers: 214.

variations: an image of the *Iulium sidus* and the legend *Divus Iulius*, the head of Caesar with his comet above it, and most significantly a type showing Augustus placing a star over the head of his deified father.⁴⁰ Admittedly, as Zanker points out, the denarius of Sanquinius which refers to the Secular Games of 17 also advertises the first public appearance of Octavian twenty-seven years earlier.⁴¹ At the same time, the coin types argue against the view of an official silence surrounding Caesar's memory, and his newly created divinity retained a significant place in the religious order of Augustus' new regime.

White points out that not only did Augustus propagate the cult of Caesar, but he also commemorated Caesar's terrestrial accomplishments.⁴² The fact that the decisive battles of the Civil War were officially remembered indicates that although the poets were relatively silent about Caesar the Dictator, the inhabitants of Rome were not made to ignore Caesar's generalship. This would indicate a certain degree of success with respect to Caesar's account of the Civil War and the image he projected of his leadership capabilities.

Insofar as it suited his purpose, Augustus therefore appears to have had a genuine desire to commemorate the various facets of Caesar. This casts doubt on Syme's assumption that Caesar was exploited by the *princeps*, and only called up from time to time to enhance the contrast between the unscrupulous adventurer who destroyed the *res publica* and the modest magistrate who restored the state.⁴³ In saying this, Syme even contradicts his own remark that the power and domination of Augustus was far too similar to that of Caesar to stand comparison.⁴⁴ Of course, the honours which were granted to Caesar were surpassed by those

⁴⁰ See Sutherland, 1951: 44 Nos. 37-38; 48 No. 102; 66 Nos. 337-340 and 74 No. 415.

⁴¹ Zanker, P., The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus, Michigan 1992, 168.

⁴² White, 1988: 339-340 and n. 19.

⁴³ Syme, RR: 53.

⁴⁴ Syme, RR: 318 and my discussion p. 158.

given to Augustus; the latter lived long enough to institute a new system of government that provided a workable solution to the many existing problems. This does not mean that Caesar passed into the sphere of dissociation in the Augustan era. If Augustus had wanted to distance himself from Caesar he would not have forged such strenuous connections with Caesar's divinity, and thereby enhanced his own position. And the fact that Caesar appears in the *RG* only as an impersonal character without name has already been explained in terms of Augustus' projection of his own image; he used the literary strategy of downplaying all other characters in order to focus attention solely on himself and his achievements. This is hardly indicative of an anti-Caesarian attitude. Moreover, the first book of Augustus' biography covered his years down to 44, and although we do not know how Caesar was treated in this section there is reason to believe Augustus' portrayal of him was positive.⁴⁵

It is therefore difficult to imagine an orchestrated plan of dissociation from Caesar by the Augustan government. Conversely, the lack of fuss made by Augustan writers over Caesar is understandable in view of their close relationship with the *princeps* and their preoccupation with the greatness of the newly-founded system.

With regard to the people of Rome, there is no doubt how Caesar wanted to appear in their eyes: he saw himself as the popular father-figure freed from the restraints of the Senate. However, the common man wrote no literary works and it is difficult to gauge accurately the thoughts of the masses. Contemporary writers were usually influenced by their own political situation and personal sentiments towards Caesar rather than by his *Commentarii*, and attitudes were often still ambivalent in the first century AD. It is only from the second century, when writers were well read in the propaganda against Caesar, that the *Commentarii* could have been significantly effective in producing

⁴⁵ See Dio 44.35.3 and Pliny *NH* 2.93-4. It is also widely believed that Nicolaus of Damascus used Augustus' Autobiography as a source, and that this accounts for his favourable portrayal of Caesar.

a more favourable and somewhat more balanced view. This is particularly evident in the accounts of Plutarch, Appian and Dio.⁴⁶

Augustus

Contemporary Opinion

Augustus appears to have been somewhat more popular amongst his contemporaries than Caesar. Syme attributes this to the idea that Augustus was the first leader to engineer a systematic exploitation of literature on a grand scale.⁴⁷ This statement contains an element of truth: White Duff speaks of the "muzzling of history" and the imperial embargo on the publication of proceedings in the Senate which limited the material for contemporary records.⁴⁸ Notably scarce are accounts written of events after Actium. Velleius Paterculus implies a recognition of the lack of Roman histories under Augustus when he states (1.17.2) that amongst recent historians only Livy is worth mentioning. It is not until the *Res Romanae* of the elder Seneca, who probably wrote during the reign of Tiberius, that Roman historians other than Livy began to write accounts of events immediately after 31. It is unlikely that historians were silent due to dislike or fear, since there is no evidence to support this; in fact, senators at this stage no longer could write history. Perhaps also the unusual circumstances of the time proved difficult for those who wrote in the republican historical tradition, and by Tiberius's reign men had adjusted to the direction history had taken under Augustus.

⁴⁶ Dio knew little of pre-imperial institutions and relied heavily upon Livy. Although he is often the only source of our information, his judgment is based on an imperial viewpoint. The same can be said of Appian, who wrote on the Celtic wars and the Civil Wars of Rome.

⁴⁷ Syme, *RR*: 460.

⁴⁸ Wight Duff, 1960: 462.

Wight Duff also makes the significant observation that autobiography was safest when indulged in by Augustus himself.⁴⁹ This practice ensured that the *RG* placed the *princeps* in the spotlight, projected the desired favourable image amongst his contemporaries and provided *exempla* of the perfect ruler for the benefit of future generations. It remains to see to what extent Augustus left his mark on contemporary and subsequent literature and how far the Augustan writers helped to create and propagate his image.

The political changes which distinguished the Augustan period from that of Caesar were immediately reflected in the literature. The *princeps* and the glories of his new government were celebrated by the Augustan poets in terms not previously applied to any ruler. Suetonius tells us that Augustus wished to be celebrated only by the best authors:

Componi tamen aliquid de se nisi serio et a praestantissimis offendebar, ...

Nevertheless he would be offended by anything composed about himself unless it was done seriously and by the most outstanding writers, ... (Aug. 89)

Significantly, his choice of writers appears to have been precisely those with whom he had, or then established, close ties of patronage: Virgil, Horace and Livy. The lives of Virgil and Horace in particular were inextricably bound up with major contemporary political events. Virgil was in danger of losing estates during the proscriptions of the Second Triumvirate and was subsequently compensated by Augustus. Horace served the under Brutus at Philippi, but subsequently became reconciled with Octavian and occupied an exalted position, particularly after Virgil's death in 19. Virgil and Horace therefore had private reasons for gratitude to Augustus.

⁴⁹ Wight Duff, 1960: 462.

It appears that Livy, too, was on a friendly footing with Augustus,⁵⁰ a friendship which was apparently preserved until the end of Augustus' life.⁵¹ Although Livy gloried in the history of early Rome, he naturally accepted the new system of government.⁵² Like Augustus (RG 8.5), he believed that history was the storehouse of *exempla maiorum* on which a man's behaviour should be modelled, and the personal claims in the RG must have impressed the historian. Moreover, Livy's remarks in his preface (10) coincide with the *princeps*' belief in the power of *exempla* in Roman life. It is therefore likely that Livy utilised or was at least influenced by certain of Augustus' writings, including possibly his Autobiography, if it was circulated.⁵³

Livy, like Horace and Virgil, seems to have been a "Pompeian" and therefore anti-Caesarian. However, his comment as to whether the birth of Caesar had been a blessing or curse⁵⁴ did not seem

⁵⁰ See Liv. 4.20.7. However, Luce, T.J., "Livy, Augustus and the Forum Augustum", in Raaflaub and Toher, 1990: 122, argues rather weakly that the friendship between Augustus and Livy may not have been as close or congenial as some have supposed. Grant, 1970: 231 also claims that Livy was not one of the emperor's most wholehearted supporters, but this surmise is based merely on the fact that his work contains no explicit approval of Augustus' widespread reforms around 28BC.

⁵¹ Suet. Claud. 61, relates that Livy advised Claudius to take up the writing of history. This cannot have occurred much before 14AD.

⁵² For Livy, political necessity dictated that his sentimental affection for the old senatorial government transfer itself into loyalty to the new constitution. He need not, therefore, have felt uncomfortable.

⁵³ In this regard the conclusion of Rehorn (quoted in Ramage, 1987: 145) is worth noting: "Livy comes close to the RG in showing what might be done with the personal testimony... of Augustus and how this can be adapted to historical purposes."

⁵⁴ See Tac. Ann. 4.34: "Titus Livius, eloquentiae ac fidei praeclarus in primis, Cn. Pompeium tantis laudibus tulit ut Pompeianum eum Augustus appellaret; neque id amicitiae eorum offecit."

to have alienated Augustus. Although only about one quarter of Livy's work has survived, much of it, as can be determined from the summaries that have come down to us, must have secured Augustus' favour. Yet the sections of his work on the Augustan age are not mere idolisation; he would certainly have been influenced by phrases relating to the concept of ideal leadership which were current in descriptions of Augustus, and particularly in the *RG*. Like the poets, Livy looks back in shame at the two decades before Augustus, and patriotically pronounces the prevalent love, peace and harmony characteristic of contemporary Rome:

Mille acies graviores quam Macedonum atque Alexandri avertit avertetque, modo sit perpetuus huius qua vivimus pacis amor et civilis cura concordiae.

A thousand lines of battle more formidable than those of Macedonia and Alexandria has (Rome) beaten off and will do so, if only our love of this peace in which we live and our concern for civil harmony can endure for ever. (9.19.17).

Grant, however, seems surprised that the official Augustan propaganda, as portrayed for example on the *princeps*' coins, announcing a new era returning to the Golden Age,⁵⁵ affected Livy less than it influenced Virgil, Horace and other more adulatory writers who wholeheartedly supported the conception.⁵⁶ True, it is doubtful that Livy, unlike Virgil, believed Augustus was the last and greatest in a long line of eminent leaders and that Rome had been given an empire to last for ever. Yet Livy was writing full-scale annalistic history, not eulogistic poetry, and although he glorified the *mos maiorum* his references to Augustus, obviously written during the 20s, are noticeably complimentary.⁵⁷

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⁵⁵ Coins advertised a new "Saturnian" age of happiness, a long awaited *saeculum* heralded by the holding of the Secular Games in 17. See for example Zanker, 1992: 168 Fig. 132.

⁵⁶ Grant, 1970: 231-2.

⁵⁷ See for example 1.19.3; 4.20.7; 28.12.12. He began writing in 27 and had completed Book 9 before 20.

Virgil was certainly extravagant in his praise of Augustus. The kindness of Octavian obviously accounts for the tone of the *Eclogues*, particularly the first published in 37. The *Georgics* were undertaken at the request of Maecenas, Virgil's patron from 40. Augustus himself personally proposed the idea of the *Aeneid*, and ordered its publication after Virgil's death in 19.⁵⁸

In the first *Eclogue* (1.7) Virgil refers to Octavian as a god, although there was as yet no question of divine honours, and peace and prosperity are seen as the personal gift of Octavian. It is clear that, instead of associating Octavian with the horror of the proscriptions, Virgil felt a strong personal attachment to him. The fourth *Eclogue*, addressed to Pollio, is concerned mainly with the dawning of a new era and the banishment of past miseries. Certain images contribute to the vision of a future allegedly anticipated by Roman prophecy. Virgil speaks of a "golden age", "a golden race" sprung from "a race of iron", justice, and identifies the age with the god Apollo (1.6-10). He also extols acts of virtue which have brought peace (1.17). Virgil thus not only supported Augustus at a very early stage in his career, but also introduced ideas that were to become recurrent themes in the public image of the new regime. In the *Georgics*, which were finished around 30 and recited to Octavian in 29, these themes are often present with more force and greater elaboration.⁵⁹ In the *Aeneid*, Virgil draws on the characteristic Roman reverence for the past and ancestral tradition in order to encourage national pride in Rome's origins. Book 6 illustrates an elaborate working out of this idea: the history of Roman heroes is presented at the same time as a series of future events. Thus it was possible for Virgil to give his historically remote theme contemporary relevance and pay Augustus the ultimate compliment of presenting his rule as the predestined culmination of Roman history. Augustus could be seen as the end

⁵⁸ There has been much debate over why Virgil would have wished to suppress the *Aeneid*. Perhaps, being a perfectionist, he could not bear the fact that it was unfinished. He must have realised that in the *Aeneid* he was attempting the culmination of his life's work, and a masterpiece.

⁵⁹ See particularly 1.489-514.

of a direct line of descent from Aeneas and thus from the goddess Venus herself.

Horace was in full sympathy with Octavian before 31. Not only was he weary of conflict and longing for peace, but he was favourably impressed with Octavian's administration of the city. Although he had fought under Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, he was prudent enough to recognise the glorious prospect of stability and good government proposed by the new regime. His verse, particularly the *Odes*, reflects not only acceptance of the new order, but also its glorification and a sincere and loyal devotion to the *princeps*. He even enters into the extravagance of enlisting Augustus among the gods:

*quos inter Augustus recumbens
purpureo bibet ore nectar.*

amongst whom Augustus reclining
shall drink nectar with crimson lips. (*Od.* 3.3.11-12)

Wight Duff claims that some opportunism accompanied Horace's acceptance of ruler-worship,⁶⁰ but although the poet's praises are occasionally elevated to such a lofty level, there is hardly any doubting the sincerity of his devotion to Augustus. Horace was therefore the natural choice in 17 for the composition of the *Carmen Saeculare* on the occasion of the Secular Games, and the fourth book of *Odes*, published around 13, although obviously the work of a court poet, comprises genuine panegyrics on Augustus. Echoes of Augustus' self-eulogy in the *RG* are detectable throughout Book 4 in the celebration of the *princeps*' virtues and military successes, and of his restoration of morals and peace. There are also echoes of the *Aeneid* (*Od.* 4.15.29-32) as Horace, in topical fashion, connects Augustus with Venus and the legendary past.

Williams makes the valid assumption that Augustus himself must have played an indirect role in the production of contemporary

⁶⁰ Wight Duff, 1960: 385.

poetry because of the feigned modesty of the poets.⁶¹ Horace acknowledges this modesty at the opening of *Odes* 4.15:

*Phoebus volentem proelia me loqui
victas et urbes increpuit lyra,
ne parva Tyrrhenum per aequor
vela darem.*

When I wished to speak of battles and conquered cities,
Apollo rebuked me with his lyre, so that I would not spread
small sails across the Tuscan Sea.

Since a conventional poetic refusal was inappropriate to a ruler such as Augustus, and since his every request was a command, one can see that, despite genuine devotion on the part of Horace, there is evidence of what Syme calls "the organisation of opinion"⁶² in Augustan poetry. Thus the laudatory nature of Horace's *Odes* and Augustan poetry in general could have been determined in part by Augustus' desire to project the appropriate image. In any case, the two elements are so closely intertwined that it is almost impossible to determine the boundary between propaganda and the poets' genuine feelings. Hence Livy and the Augustan poets provide valuable evidence of contemporary thought, but it is difficult to determine how far their opinions were representative.

Ovid's situation was different from that of Virgil and Horace. He was born in 43 when Octavian was just beginning his career. By the time he reached adulthood, Augustus' rule was permanently established and Ovid had not personally experienced the events which preceded this reign. This fact is reflected in his poetry.

⁶¹ Williams, G., in Raaflaub and Toher, 1990: 270. He notes that "Augustan poets ... had cleverly reshaped Callimachus's refusal to write large-scale epic into a type of poem in which the poet could modestly assert that his talent was unfortunately too minor to give adequate treatment to political themes such as the great achievements of Augustus, while, in fact, doing exactly that in an indirect way." A notable example of this is *Od.* 4.2, where it is made to appear that the Ode was suggested by Iullus Antonius.

⁶² Syme, *RR*: 459 ff.

On the question of whether Ovid was pro- or anti-Augustan, it appears that scholars have taken every possible viewpoint.⁶³ He only refers briefly to contemporary history in his writings, but he certainly praises the imperial house (*Met.* 15.750-2) and compliments Augustus by having the deified Caesar confess that the deeds of the *princeps* are greater than his own (*Met.* 15.850-1). Moreover, Ovid writes in eulogistic tones of Augustus' eventual deification:

*tarda sit illa dies et nostro senior aevo,
qua caput Augustum, quem temperat, orbe relicto
accedat caelo faveatque precantibus absens!*

may that day be delayed and later than our own time,
when Augustus, leaving the world he governs, shall accede
to heaven and in his absence listen to our prayers! (*Met.*
15.868-70).

Nugent, however, uses *Tristia* 2, a direct letter from Ovid to Augustus ostensibly offering a defence of the poet's practice and requesting a mitigation of his punishment in exile, to demonstrate that Ovid's abject sycophancy and his portrayal of Augustus as a god on earth and as a most merciful individual are

⁶³ Ovid's background probably explains why there is evidence of both attitudes in his work. In 8AD the poet was banished by imperial decree to Tomi on the shores of the Black Sea. He only hints at the cause of this decree, although he was possibly caught up in a plot against Augustus. In *Tristia* 2.207 he states: *duo crimina, carmen et error*. The *carmen* refers to the *Ars Amatoria*, but Ovid is very discreet about the exact nature of the "error", although he gives us to understand that it was an error of judgment, not of his heart. Augustus gave as his reasons for the banishment the immorality of Ovid's love poems, but this is generally supposed to be a veil for a more personal and private reason. On this see, for example, Syme's explanation (1939: 467-8), concerning the banishment of Augustus' granddaughter Julia. Williams, G., Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire, Berkeley 1978, 70-83, also puts forward the attractive hypothesis that Ovid lacked a reformatory zeal which marked him as dissident from the Augustan vision of a morally reconstructed Rome.

hardly credible.⁵⁴ Nugent finds it difficult to reconcile Ovid's flattery with his insinuations that the *princeps*, in censuring his work, has been naïve and unjust, and with what he sees as the poet's thinly veiled hostility against alleged Augustan hypocrisies, weaknesses and indiscretions. Perhaps Ovid was unable to hide his bitterness towards Augustus. Yet his primary concern was often to convey wit and paradox. These observations would explain on the one hand his complimentary use of political catchwords found in the *RG* such as *clementia* and *virtus*, and his references to Augustus' proposed divinity, and on the other hand, at a later stage, his barely disguised expressions of criticism and resentment against the *princeps*.

Later Opinion

As far as later historians are concerned, it is interesting to discover the extent, if any, to which they were influenced by the *RG*, and to see how this shaped their opinions of Augustus and his regime. Ramage asks why, considering the importance of the document for the principate and the fact that it was prominently displayed in Rome, is its influence on writers working in the city so difficult to trace.⁵⁵ Yet the *RG* does not appear to have been entirely ignored by such writers, as Ramage insists. Certainly, it is possible that the Romans were not as interested in inscriptions as the Greeks, and that there were many other sources available to writers during this period.⁵⁶ However, as with Livy, the eulogistic nature of the *RG* would not have suited historians such as Velleius, Tacitus, or Dio, or even a biographer such as Suetonius. In spite of this, important connections can be found between their works and the *RG*, and

⁵⁴ Nugent, S.G., in Raaflaub and Toher, 1990: 243. Ovid could be referring to the *clementia* of Augustus as a subtle reminder of the *princeps*' own extravagant claims to *clementia* in the *RG*.

⁵⁵ Ramage, 1987: 150.

⁵⁶ Also, the fact that the *RG* was displayed so high up on the Mausoleum of Augustus must have affected its accessibility.

these links give us a constructive insight into later opinion on Augustus.

Velleius wrote during the reign of Tiberius, and is adulatory of Augustus, although still more of Tiberius.⁶⁷ His *Historiae Romanae* shows little evidence of deliberate falsification of the facts, and this makes him an important source for the reign of Augustus. In his historical judgements Velleius reflects the attitude towards the principate of the "new class" of army officers, and advocates the ideals of peace, orderliness and security.⁶⁸

Although Velleius does not actually quote the *RG*, he appears to have it in mind in several places. He does not mention any of his sources, but the text of the *Historiae Romanae* appears to confirm the assumption that he knew the document.⁶⁹ Shipley says that Velleius probably made use of Augustus' Autobiography,⁷⁰ but definite conclusions cannot be drawn in this respect since so few fragments of the Autobiography have survived. Unfortunately, Velleius limits his account of the events after Actium to five chapters (2.89-93), but the section echoes *RG* 25-33 in its glorification of Augustus' military achievements and his virtues, and its similar use of words. There also appear to be striking similarities between Velleius 2.61.1-3 and *RG* 1.1 and 1.3. Augustus speaks of "rem publicam

⁶⁷ Syme, *RR*: 488 states rather unfairly that Velleius' "whole account of the reign of Augustus is artfully coloured by devotion to Tiberius."

⁶⁸ See for example 2.126.2; 2.131.1ff. Velleius was an equestrian who became praetor and hence a "new man" in the Senate. His family became consular under Nero.

⁶⁹ Ramage, 1987: 148 argues rather unconvincingly against any connection between Velleius and the *RG* on the grounds that Velleius was employing terms of Augustan propaganda that were used generally. However, as a historian with a biographical interest in history, it is highly probable that Velleius would have used the *RG* as a source. I doubt if he would have read the original inscription, but there must have been written copies available.

⁷⁰ See Shipley, F.W. (trans.), Velleius Paterculus: Roman History, Loeb edition, London 1961, ixv n. 1.

a dominatione factionis oppressam" (RG 1.1), whereas Velleius says "oppressa dominatione Antonii civitas" (2.61.1).⁷¹ Augustus also took particular care with terminology such as "res publica," but for Velleius the more general term "civitas" was sufficient. In RG 1.3 Augustus says that he was ordered by the Senate as propraetor to ensure that, with the help of the consuls, the state should come to no harm. Velleius, however, explains the situation more fully: the consuls and Octavian had been authorised to carry on the war against Antony when hostilities broke out between him and Decimus Brutus. Such comparisons between Augustus and Velleius serve to highlight some of the omissions in the RG which Augustus made for the sake of enticing favourable public opinion for his achievements. Velleius does not seem to have expanded on Augustus' statements with any adverse motive in mind; indeed, his approach to writing history is rather naively enthusiastic and uncritical and he does not weigh evidence in an analytical manner. He is also, as mentioned, lavish in his praise of Augustus. Therefore Velleius' lengthier explanation of circumstances may have quite inadvertently detracted from the dramatic impact Augustus wished his inscription to make.

Suetonius aimed in his biographies at illustrating his subjects' characters and personal achievements rather than analysing their policies or narrating historical events. It is a matter of dispute as to what extent the *Lives*, published after 120, give a fair estimate of the *principes*, but he had access to first-hand information and the influence of the RG on Suetonius cannot be doubted. He not only mentions the document (Aug. 101) but also quotes from it (Aug. 43). Gagé has put forward the valid proposal that certain passages of Suetonius imply a formal dependence on the RG as a source,⁷² while other passages show a

⁷¹ As previously discussed, Augustus omits to mention Antony by name in order to reduce him to oblivion and thereby elevate his own public image, but Velleius had no reason not to mention Antony. Moreover, Tiberius' heir Germanicus was Antony's grandson.

⁷² Gagé, 1950: 210; Suet. Aug. 22 and RG 4.1 on triumphs, Aug. 22 and RG 13 on the closing of the gate of Janus Quirinus, Aug. 43 and RG 22.2 on games, Aug.

significant connection with the document.⁷³ This has obviously affected Suetonius' assessment of Augustus; throughout his biography he emphasises the "official" view of the *princeps*' clemency and tolerance.⁷⁴ Of course, Suetonius was comparing Augustus with his less merciful successors, but nevertheless he presents a consistent representation of the *princeps* as one who was accustomed to pardoning rather than punishing. Suetonius also sheds light on Augustus' relationship with the poets and on the so-called organisation of opinion in Augustan poetry; he indicates that every request was a command by using the verbs *cogere*, *iniungere* and *exprimere* of such requests. Suetonius obviously recognised the reality of the power of literary patronage.

There are only scattered allusions to Augustus' life and reign in other writers. Tacitus' *Annales*, which seem to have been completed around 116, begin with a summary of the achievements of Augustus and of the various judgments passed on them by others. It is obvious that Tacitus was aware of the existence of the RG. However, his opinion of Augustus and the principate is coloured by his experiences under the last three years of the reign of Domitian, and his attitude towards Augustus is clearly hostile.⁷⁵ His writings provide indications of distrustfulness

21 and RG 26.3 on *bellum iustum*.

⁷³ Suet. Aug. 27 and RG 6.2 on the *tribunicia potestas*, Aug. 27 and RG 7.1 on the *triumvirate*, Aug. 35 and RG 8.2 on the *lectio* of the Senate, Aug. 31 and RG 10.2 on *pontifex maximus*, Aug. 41 and RG 15 on distributions to the *plebs*, Aug. 30 and RG 20.4-5 on the repair of temples and the *via Flaminia*, Aug. 43 and RG 22.3 on *venationes*, Aug. 43 and RG 23 on *naumachiae*, Aug. 52 and RG 24.2 on the use of statues, Aug. 46 and RG 28.2 on colonies in Italy, Aug. 21 and RG 29.2 on the Parthian hostages, Aug. 21 and RG 31.1-2 on embassies from remote peoples and Aug. 21 and RG 33 on the instalment of a Parthian king.

⁷⁴ See for example, Aug. 51: "*Clementiae civilitatisque eius multa et magna documenta sunt*" and Aug. 54: "*Nec ideo libertas aut contumacia fraudi cuiquam fuit.*"

⁷⁵ Syme, *Tacitus*: 540 says that "revenge compelled him to write about the Caesars. Despotism was the subject. The author's contribution to the struggle for liberty and honour came late, it was equivocal, it was

and pessimism, and he makes clear his belief that the autocracy of the *princeps* and the political liberty of the Senate are incompatible. As in the *RG*, *libertas* forms a prominent theme in the *Annales* as a political catchword of the republic. Tacitus often addresses himself to the problem of the relationship between *principatus* and *libertas*, indicating the adverse affect that the loss of political liberty had on historical writing:

*temporibus Augusti dicendis non defuere decora ingenia,
donec gliscente adulatione deterrerentur.*

Distinguished intellects were not lacking in telling about the times of Augustus, until they were deterred by a growing sycophancy. (*Ann.* 1.1)

Chapter 2 of the *Annales* is revealing for Tacitus' attitude towards the principate. In the *RG*, which is Augustus' account of himself and therefore the so-called "official version", both consulate and tribunician power, respectable terms, are duly mentioned.⁷⁶ What is omitted is his *maius imperium*, the real basis of his power which would naturally offend republican sensibilities. Tacitus, however, probes beneath this veneer and by his words suggests that it is a sham: "se ferens" (*Ann.* 1.2), and that despite Augustus' seemingly modest claims there reigns a pure autocrat. Tacitus eschews constitutional terminology almost as entirely as the *RG* adopts it and reveals the historical process as the historian must see it: the consolidation of power and functions of the Senate, magistrates and laws in one man, whatever the names and forms Augustus used to disguise it.

Other comparisons may be made between the Augustan and Tacitean version of events. Augustus mentions his largesses to the soldiers (*RG* 3.3), his successful administration of the corn supply (*RG* 5.2) and his re-establishment of peace (*RG* 13). However, what is self-laudation in the *RG* becomes treacherous criticism in the *Annales*:

conveyed in words only. The writing mirrored the discord in his own soul."

⁷⁶ See *RG* 4.4.

Ubi militem donis, populum annona, cunctos dulcedine otii pellexit, ...

When he had enticed the army by gifts, the people by corn, everyone by the sweetness of peace, ... (Ann. 2)

Tacitus implies that Augustus had ulterior motives, insinuating that he was a cunning politician who bought off both the soldiers and the people. This suggestion is, of course, not entirely untrue.

Many scholars have also felt that a passage near the beginning of the *Annales*, namely 1.9 and 1.10, form a kind of opposition to the *RG*. Clearly Augustus and Tacitus are dealing with the same subjects, although Tacitus does not actually mention the *RG*. The historian appears to be presenting a parody of certain opening statements in the document: his chapters give two opposing views of the Augustan principate, one seemingly positive (1.9) and the other negative (1.10). The so-called defence of Augustus begins with the words "*Hi pietate erga parentem ...*", which has echoes in *RG* 2.2 and Augustus' implication that he fulfilled his *pietas* towards his father by driving his murderers into exile. Yet Tacitus implies at the same time that Augustus did not exercise true *pietas* by indicating that it entailed unlawful ("*nullus tunc legibus locis*") and dishonourable practices ("*ad arma civilia actum, quae nullus tunc parari possent neque haberi per bonas artis*"). This is in opposition to Augustus' carefully orchestrated show of legality and honour. Therefore beneath Tacitus' ostensible praise of Augustus lies an undercurrent of criticism. Again, in the *RG* Augustus took great care to demonstrate that he was not a *rex*, but was continuing the senatorial tradition. Tacitus, however, by using the word *regeretur* to describe the new government of Rome by one man, clearly implies a monarchical type of rule. For a chapter that is supposed to voice the opinions of Augustus' supporters, *Annales* 1.9 is therefore tacitly critical, and highlights the supposed brutality and autocracy that Augustus took care to minimise and obscure by a façade.

Chapter 10 gives the anti-Augustan viewpoint, and is noticeably much longer than chapter 9. It is a hostile reinterpretation of

events described in the previous chapter and most probably reflects Tacitus' own opinion. It is negative and critical, the main emphasis falling on Augustus' supposed hypocrisy and treachery. While Augustus repeatedly stresses the legality of his actions in the RG, Tacitus uses phrases such as "corruptas consulis legiones" and "decrecto patrum fascis et ius praetoris invaserit" to imply illegality. Throughout the RG, the Senate willingly bestows offices and honours on Augustus, but according to Tacitus it had to be forced to offer him the consulship.⁷⁷ With words such as *imagine*, *specie* and *deceptos*, Tacitus cleverly probes behind what he perceives as the Augustan mirage. Particularly damning is his insinuation that the settlement of private animosities and not considerations of state were Augustus's chief motives for action:

quamquam fas sit privata odia publicis utilitatibus remittere: ...

although it was right to give up private hatreds for public advantage.

Augustus' respectful attitude towards the state religion⁷⁸ is also ridiculed by Tacitus in his insinuation that the *princeps* arrogantly usurped the reverence usually paid to the gods:

Nihil deorum honoribus relictum, cum se templis et effigie numinum per flamines et sacerdotes coli vellet.

Nothing was left for the worship of the gods, since he wanted to be adored in temples and in the image of the spirits through flamens and priests.

It is therefore clear that Tacitus has not remained as unprejudiced or as objective in his statements as he claims at

⁷⁷ Tacitus is actually correct here. See Broughton, 1952: 336: "The development of the situation after the death of the two Consuls [43] led Octavian to send a deputation of soldiers to demand election to the consulship for him and later to march on Rome at the head of his army. On August 19 he was elected to the consulship with Q. Pedius as his colleague through two persons who were themselves elected to act instead of Consuls."

⁷⁸ See RG 7.3, 10, 20.4, 21.1.

the beginning of the *Annales*.⁷⁹ His remarks offer a striking contrast to the mainly pro-Augustan writers, and indeed to the *RG* itself. Although his anti-Augustan sentiments were clearly intensified by his experiences under the principate of Domitian, they nonetheless reveal some of the harsh realities behind events depicted so glowingly in the *RG* and give us an insight into the way Augustus managed to disguise certain facts that would detract from the image of himself as the ideal ruler.

Minor Poets and Historians

Augustus had other detractors among the poets and historians of Rome. Asinius Pollio, consul in 40 and a contemporary of the *princeps*, was a personal friend of Caesar and a loyal supporter of Antony. He withdrew from political life soon after 40. Syme portrays him as an enemy of Octavian,⁸⁰ but this is probably due to the fact that scholars tend to categorise writers either as "~~senatorial~~" or "Augustan". Pollio certainly fostered independent sentiments, but while he disagreed with the *princeps* on certain issues and often spoke his mind, he was not continually at odds with Augustus. It is regrettable that Pollio did not carry his *History of the Civil Wars* through the triumviral period to Actium and the principate of Augustus,⁸¹ and that his comments on the writings of Augustus have not been preserved.

Titus Labienus was an orator and historian also well known for speaking his mind.⁸² His works were burned by decree of the Senate, which has led scholars to assume that he was intensely critical of Augustus or his regime. The actual date of the

⁷⁹ Ann. 1.1: "sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo."

⁸⁰ Syme, *RR*: 6.

⁸¹ The work appears to have ended at Philippi. It has perished, except for inconsiderable fragments.

⁸² See Sen. *Controv.* 10 praef. 4-5, 8.

proscription is uncertain.⁸³ There is no evidence to suggest that Augustus himself took action against Labienus for his radical writings, although Syme sees the destruction of his works as pure revenge on Augustus' part.⁸⁴ Although it is unlikely that the *princeps* disapproved of the Senate's actions, Seneca explicitly reports (*Controv.* 10 *praef.*) that it was Labienus' style that made him many enemies and that the Senate acted against him of its own accord.

Another author whose works were burnt was Cassius Severus. The proscription of his writings has often been linked to that of Labienus by apparently similar circumstances and date. However, in the case of Severus we have the testimony of Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.72) who says that Augustus himself was provoked by the *libido* of Severus, because he had defamed illustrious men and women with his scandalous writings. Although Severus was banished to Crete, obviously on the initiative of Augustus, there is no proof that his libellous statements were directed explicitly at Augustus or his regime.

Cremutius Cordus survived the Augustan principate but was prosecuted for treason under Tiberius for writing a history that praised Brutus and called Cassius the last of the Romans.⁸⁵ However, according to Suetonius (*Tib.* 71.3) Cordus' history, which was composed during the reign of Augustus, was read with approval in the presence of the *princeps* himself. If Cordus was involved in any direct attacks against Augustus, there is no historical evidence. It is therefore likely that Cordus also was not explicitly anti-Augustan.⁸⁶

⁸³ Those who wish to make this event an example of Augustus' increasing censorship in the latter part of his reign place the destruction of Labienus' books between 8AD and 12AD, following a series of crises and disturbances in Rome and the empire.

⁸⁴ Syme, *RR*: 486.

⁸⁵ See Tac. *Ann.* 4.34.

⁸⁶ It is doubtful that any ^rwriter could have published "anti-Augustan" material. Tacitus' words are notably subtle; perhaps it was his way of reducing the image of Augustus to the benefit of Trajan. L

Restoration of the Res Publica

Finally, it is worth noting the opinions of other writers regarding Augustus' statement in RG 34 that he restored the *res publica*, since the chapter forms the climax of the document and the princeps was particularly conscious at this point of seducing public opinion to his advantage with the appropriate terminology.

Syme defines the *res publica* as "primarily and precisely the institutions of the Roman State, '*senatus magistratus leges.*'"⁸⁷ Thus to "reconstitute the state" would mean free competition for the consulate, government of every province by proconsuls and the Senate's control of finance, the army and imperial policy. According to Syme, Augustus abolished all this.⁸⁸ For Tacitus the *res publica*, which had so pretentiously been restored in 27 was only an *imago reipublicae* (Ann. 13.28), precisely because Augustus had

munia senatus, magistratum, legum in se trahere, ...

drawn the functions of the Senate, the magistrates and the laws upon himself... (Ann. 1.2).⁸⁹

Dio (52.1.1, 53.11.4) also dates the autocracy of Augustus from this moment.⁹⁰ He says it was made to appear that Augustus was forced to assume autocratic power, insinuating that the offices and honours were not willingly bestowed on him. However, while Tacitus and Dio imply that Augustus' claim to have restored the *res publica* was false, Velleius gives a different version. His account is obviously plain propaganda inspired by and in favour of Augustus. Velleius states:

⁸⁷ Syme, Tacitus: 130.

⁸⁸ Syme, Tacitus: 548.

⁸⁹ Syme categorically supports Tacitus; see for example Tacitus 400: "The account of Tacitus will stand."

⁹⁰ Dio's Roman History comprises a clear tripartite scheme: the republican phase of *demokratia* up to Philippi (Books 3-47); the *dynasteia* up to 29BC (Books 48-50), and finally the *monarchia* (Books 51-80).

Finita vicesimo anno bella civilia, sepulta externa, revocata pax, sopitus ubique armorum furor, restituta vis legibus, iudiciis auctoritas, senatui maietas, imperium magistratuum ad pristinum modum... Prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata.

The civil wars ended after twenty years, foreign wars were suppressed, peace restored, everywhere the madness of arms laid to rest, validity was restored to the laws, authority to the courts, dignity to the senate and the power of the magistrates reduced to its former limits... That old traditional form of the state was restored. (2.89.3).

Contrary to Tacitus, Velleius emphasises the fact that *senatus magistratus leges*, precisely those institutions which constituted the *res publica*, continued to exist in the traditional form. The question which must be raised at this point is whether Velleius is conveying constitutional realities or reflecting the constitutional formula as devised by Augustus in the *RG*. Velleius is certainly referring specifically to the fact that after the end of the civil wars in 28, the arbitrary rule which had prevailed during the triumvirate and the dictatorship of Caesar was formally abolished. More specifically, he may be alluding to the following events: the cancelling by edict of the acts of the triumvirate, the renunciation of extraordinary *quaestiones* or *iudicia*, as instituted under the *Lex Pedia*, to pass judgment on the liberators,⁹¹ and the abolition of triumviral powers by which the Senate had been deprived of its traditional rights.

The statement of Augustus in *RG* 34 can at best be described as a careful reworking of the truth. To strengthen his claims the motif of *res publica conservata* and *res publica constitua* keeps on recurring in inscriptions and the legends of coins.⁹²

⁹¹ See *RG* 3.1.

⁹² See for example the *Fasti Praenesti* (Gagé, 1950: 164) on 13 January 27: "corona querna uti super ianuam domus imp(eratoris) Caesaris Augusti poneretur senatus decrevit, quod rem publicam p(opulo) R(omano) restituit;" the so-called *Laudatio Turiae*: "pacato orbe terrarum, restitua re republica;" *BMC Emp.* 1.112.691ff (cf Sutherland: 1951, pl 1.16) Tetradrachm of 28BC: Obv. "imp(erator) Caesar divi f(ilius) con(sul) VI libertatis p(opuli) R(omani) vindex."

Velleius renders an obedient echo of the *princeps*' declarations and also enthuses over the *pax Augusta* which spread to all corners of the world. Even Tacitus had to concur that the new regime existed under *pax et principe* (Ann. 3.28). Suetonius (Aug. 28) states that Augustus twice thought of relinquishing his powers, although he did not do so, and considering the uniqueness of his constitutional position after 23, the biographer's remark that Augustus created a *novus status* is perhaps the most accurate assumption of all.

One important point to note in respect of the term *res publica* is that even Caesar had remarked that it was nothing but a name without body and form,⁹³ and that the recurring commission to various leaders for setting the state in order (*rei publicae constituendae*) was merely synonymous with the establishment of the state on an orderly and stable basis with due respect to *mos maiorum*. Hence Augustus asserted that his new order was not contrary to *mos maiorum* (RG 6.1), that he had shown due respect to the authority of the Senate and people (RG 8) and had therefore fulfilled his share of the task entrusted to him as *triumvir rei publicae constituendae* (RG 7.1). He had certainly restored the state to a peaceful and stable condition, but he had not restored its government to the Senate alone.

There exists a dichotomy between the official Augustan view of events, namely that the *princeps* is to be acclaimed as *vindex libertatis populi Romani* and *restitutor rei publicae*, and the view held by the opposition, as found mainly in senatorial historiography, that he is to be regarded as *potitus solus rerum omnium*. It has been shown that the RG itself was in certain cases instrumental in influencing one view or the other. Considering the remarkable lack of consolidated opposition to Augustus and his regime compared with the favourable accounts, perhaps one could say that Augustus was in some measure successful in attempting to perpetuate his image. Whatever the case may be, the document is a remarkable piece of propaganda; it contains no direct untruths but neither does it tell the whole

⁹³ See Suet. Iul. 77.

truth. The same can be said of Caesar's *Commentarii*. In fact Adcock's words, relating specifically to RG 34, could apply to the whole of the RG as well as to Caesar's *BG* and *BC*:

It was neither wholly true, nor wholly false, but it was true enough to be going on with, and it was true enough to be believed by those who had no wish to challenge it.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Adcock, 1952: 12.

CONCLUSION

As stated in the Preface, the purpose of this thesis was an examination of the aims of Caesar's *de Bello Gallico* and *de Bello Civili* and Augustus' *Res Gestae*, and an investigation of the effectiveness of their public image as portrayed in these works.

It has been established that both Caesar and Augustus wrote in an era in which propaganda had become an essential component of policy and ambition, although the concern of the public image of a politician has been traced as far back as the elder Cato. Roman interest in biography has been attributed to the appearance of intensely ambitious and competitive Roman politicians, who wished to claim immortality by writing their memoirs. What counted was not so much the personality of the author *per se*, but how he was thought of and how his actions were viewed by others. Hence Caesar's *Commentarii* and Augustus' *Res Gestae*, although seemingly factual accounts of their authors' achievements, were written and published for the purpose of their own self-glorification or self-justification in respect of their political or military actions and, more ostensibly in the case of Augustus, for the benefit of their descendants. Moreover, the works are an expression of the authors' personality and ultimately of the self-image that they wished to represent to the public, and to this end Caesar and Augustus portrayed themselves as models of exemplary behaviour. The *BG*, the *BC* and the *RG* are all testaments to the mastery and skill used in producing a successful piece of written propaganda directed to maintain public opinion.

A clearly developed subjectivity, then, has been observed in all forms of autobiographical memoir. Despite the composite literary character of both Caesar's and Augustus' writings, neither had an impartial desire to tell the truth about events in which they were personally involved and both gave themselves the benefit of the doubt in any given situation. In keeping with autobiographical memoirs in general, the content of the *BG*, the *BC* and the *RG* are highly selective and the narrative is biased, in order to parade the virtues of the authors and thus represent their deeds and accomplishments in the best possible light for

posterity. This in turn gives us a profound insight into the way in which they wished to be appreciated.

Public image was therefore of utmost importance to Roman statesmen who wished to be remembered, and for Caesar and Augustus self-promotion prevailed over literary conventions. The appropriate image was of even greater political importance than their true characters, and the publication of their works, however deceptively simple they might have seemed, was the vehicle by means of which their image was revised, corrected or enhanced.

Caesar's *Commentarii* clearly exhibit the *res gestae* element that enabled great men to write about themselves in such a way that contemporary and future public opinion would be directed into regarding them with complete approval. The *commentarius* form and Caesar's use of the third person allowed him to produce what was ostensibly an objective narrative of his *res gestae* and related events. Further, use of the third person has the effect of distance and therefore objectivity and hence actually magnified Caesar's stature and strengthened his *existimatio* in the eyes of the public. The traditional *commentarius* suited Caesar's style because it was concerned with the recording of separate events, each for its own sake. He could use the model in this way in order to economise on the truth without actually falsifying the facts, thereby enhancing his reputation and directing public opinion.

With respect to the aims of the *Commentarii*, I conclude that these were political or at least at that stage concerned with enhancing Caesar's own reputation, and therefore directed at men of his own class, primarily the elite of Rome. The *BG* and *BC* are both masterpieces of political journalism directed at contemporaries. They are primarily works of self-justification and a defence against Caesar's political enemies both alive and dead.

In the *BG* Caesar took the utmost care to justify his campaigns and actions by claiming that it was necessary to counter

dangerous plans of enemy aggression and conquest. In the *BC* he ingeniously attempts, and succeeds, to make it appear that the war-guilt rested entirely with the opposition, and for this reason his own public image had to remain untarnished, particularly at the outset of the war. At the same time in both works he displays the importance of his *dignitas* and of maintaining his *existimatio*. There is deliberate distortion and exaggeration, but no actual falsification of historical fact. However, Caesar's virtues are made to appear as undisputable facts; indeed, he genuinely believed they were.

The image Augustus wished to leave for future generations could not be achieved by means of writing an autobiography, which simply amounted to an *apologia*, and instead he directed his efforts to writing an account of his achievements, a *res gestae* which exhibits elements of the traditional *elogium*. In this way he succeeded in directing people's thoughts away from any previous accusations that may have been levelled against him. The *elogium* form allowed him to make use of the first person in his account, without the element of ostentatiousness becoming too obvious. I conclude that Augustus not only intended to present a positive image of his achievements and justify his unique political position, but also aimed at depicting himself as being in a superior and unassailable position, specifically as the champion of *libertas*. As the saviour of the state he could ostensibly hand it back in its traditional form to its rightful owners. His catalogue of accomplishments and honours, combined with careful emphasis and omission, ensured that he is represented not only as successful but virtually perfect and as the ideal Roman leader. Augustus also wished to emphasise the enormity of his progress and achievement, from the time of the youthful Octavian to that of the mature Augustus. Thus another important aim of the *RG* is that Augustus wished to show how, throughout his career, the basis of his constitutional position gradually evolved from *potestas* to overwhelming *auctoritas*. In reality, however, he held an overwhelming *potestas*.

It is difficult to make definite conclusions as to the conceivable audience of the *RG*. Caesar was obviously writing for

Roman senators and equites, and against talk spread by his enemies, knowing full well that his opponents in Rome were watching his every move with suspicion and that, particularly with respect to the *BC*, any arbitrary actions on his part would supply them with information for an indictment. But in the case of Augustus, there was no one left to oppose him, and the conclusion that the *RG* is a document addressed to the world is the most appropriate. The *RG* is Augustus' final word on himself and his achievements, and naturally every statement it contains was carefully chosen and arranged in order to leave behind an image of perfection. Internal organisation, themes, terms and concepts are carefully woven together to mould and strengthen this image.

This thesis has established that, although different literary genres influenced the works of Caesar and Augustus, a number of elements are common to the *Commentarii* and the *RG*. Both works were shaped by their authors' purpose in writing, namely self-glorification and self-justification in some form, rather than a desire to keep within the limits of any particular literary genre. Further, this purpose was dictated by Caesar's and Augustus' individual social and political circumstances at the time of writing.

Caesar and Augustus both produced catalogues of their achievements, although each differed in length and form, and while Augustus covers all three spheres of activity, namely civil, military and religious, Caesar's *Commentarii* are chiefly military. Both managed to disguise the propaganda element by appearing to provide their readers with objective historiographical information, although Caesar is naturally more successful here in view of the eulogistic nature of the *RG*. Of course, their accounts showed that they were always right and that their actions were the only correct ones. Yet both authors were to some extent justified in their self-glorification, since they had achieved remarkable success politically and on the battlefield and had sufficient positive material to include in their accounts.

It is important to remember that with regard to propaganda as an element in Caesar and Augustus, both authors intended to produce summaries of their achievements rather than detailed accounts, and this would naturally allow for omission and even distortion of fact. In this respect Augustus used the *elogium* form and Caesar the *commentarius* as a means of producing apparently plain, simple and concise accounts which would, particularly in the case of Augustus, commemorate only virtues and achievements. Both authors, of course, do not hesitate to state that they were honoured for their achievements, and such a display of outstanding qualities in turn enhanced the *dignitas* and *existimatio* of its author.

This thesis has also established an important difference between the situation of Caesar and Augustus at the time of writing. By 23BC Augustus had securely established himself as the leader of a new form of government, and there was no need for an *apologia* when he had an accumulation of positive achievements to begin writing about. Caesar, however, was still attempting to establish political and military control when he wrote his *Commentaries*. Thus the *BG* and *BC* contain more of the elements of an *apologia* since Caesar had to justify his actions and motives throughout his operations. The *BC* in particular reflects the struggle of a man fighting for his career and ultimately for his life, striving to maintain a hold on his *potestas* and obtain due acknowledgement of his *dignitas*. On the other hand, Augustus' struggle for supremacy was over and his *potestas* was so firmly established that he could now play it down and instead claim to be merely *princeps* with an overriding *auctoritas*. All he needed to do was to justify his extraordinary constitutional position.

Another difference between Caesar and Augustus is that Augustus refers more directly to his virtues, while Caesar projects his public image through demonstrations of virtue. Augustus' virtues, particularly his *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia* and *pietas*, were ostensibly beyond doubt and had already been acknowledged as such by the Senate, while Caesar was still struggling for recognition of his qualities. Yet, while Caesar writes in the

third person, and Augustus in the first, both are equally the focus of attention in their accounts.

The discussion of how Caesar and Augustus were perceived by contemporary and later writers, as well as of the coinage and epigraphic evidence, has shown the extent to which they were successful in perpetuating their various images, since the political changes which distinguished the Augustan period from that of Caesar were immediately reflected in the literature. Augustus at first was much more popular, but Caesar by the second century seems to have been back in favour. This indicates that both authors achieved their aim of favourably promoting themselves and their achievements, although Caesar's precarious political situation and supposed questionable aspirations at the time he wrote his *Commentarii* explains much of the hostile and ambivalent attitude of some of his contemporaries. As a result, attitudes were often still uncertain in the first century AD. Contemporary writers were also influenced by their own political situation and personal sentiments towards Caesar and Augustus, rather than by the *Commentarii* themselves or by the *RG*. However, by the second century writers had gained more of a sense of objectivity with regard to past events, and could evaluate Caesar's activities with a greater degree of impartiality.

The views of other ancient writers on the works of Caesar and Augustus have also served to highlight some of the distortions and omissions which they made for the sake of enticing favourable public opinion for their achievements. Valuable information in this respect can be gained from the more neutral later accounts which are not particularly hostile or sycophantic.

In conclusion, this thesis has shown that Caesar and Augustus had the same purpose in mind when they wrote, but the effect was in many respects achieved by different means. Both believed in their own greatness and displayed their qualities and virtues for the benefit of posterity, seducing public opinion to their advantage with the appropriate terminology. The result in each case is often an "official" view of events as portrayed by Caesar and Augustus, and a view held by the opposition. Hence the

subject of the public image in ancient authors remains a fascinating subject for speculation and study.

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