

Reading #1: "The Last Century of the Roman Republic," pp. 7-8

CAESAR IN GAUL AND HIS RETURN TO ROME

Caesar's command in Gaul was incredibly successful. There he wrote *Dē bellō Gallicō*, where he reported on the wars he fought, as well as the customs and religion of the Gallic tribes, in elegant, concise language. With his victory at Alesia in 52 BCE, Transalpine Gaul was made peaceful and Roman influence there grew steadily from the 50s onward. The wars made Caesar tremendously wealthy and even more popular with the Roman people. However, his political opponents grew still more hostile.

Caesar's political survival depended on being able to move directly from his governorship to an elected magistracy. Otherwise, he would be open to prosecution by his political enemies. But special legislative action would be required for this to happen—contenders for political office had to declare their candidacies in person at Rome. This would require Caesar to lay down his *imperium*, the power of command. As the end to Caesar's governorship drew closer, debate over his candidacy grew more heated. Caesar was ordered by the Senate to surrender his legions while Pompey was allowed to retain his. When Caesar refused to obey, the Senate declared him a public enemy. In 49 BCE he led his army into Italy, crossing the Rubicon River, the formal boundary between Cisalpine Gaul and Roman territory. Civil war had begun again.

THE DEATH OF POMPEY AND THE ASSASSINATION OF JULIUS CAESAR

As Caesar marched on Rome, Pompey and his supporters withdrew to the Eastern provinces. Caesar soon won a decisive victory over Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 BCE. Pompey fled to Egypt, where he was murdered by men hoping to win Caesar's favor. Caesar's victory over his opponents was final by 46.

Rome would not be at peace for long. Although Caesar elected not to follow the example of Sulla by proscribing and executing his enemies, the extending of *clēmētia* ("mercy") to his opponents and allowing them to live, made these individuals resentful, for they now felt obligated to him. In addition, little could be done politically without his approval. Finally, in February 44 BCE, he declared himself *dictātor perpetuō*, "dictator for life." In addition, he was voted his own priest as if he were a god. One month later, on the Ides of March, Caesar was assassinated by a well-coordinated conspiracy made up of Caesar's old enemies as well as his supporters.

Caesar's assassins hoped that the Republic would be restored after Caesar's death. But this was naïve. The recent past had shown that controlling Rome depended on controlling the urban population and army. The next generation would consist of civil wars. The eventual victor, Caesar's heir Octavian, would claim that he restored the Republic, while in reality, he ruled alone.

Reading #2: "Augustus and the Principate," pp. 220-228

The first century BCE was a tumultuous and transformational period in Roman history, as the historical overview of the Republic made clear. During this period the foundations and traditions of the Roman Republic started to crumble, to be replaced by what was essentially single-man rule. For the Romans, autocracy went against the very definition of *rēs pūblica*, which was based on the principle of rule by assemblies. That Augustus was able to establish himself as a single ruler and to retain such power was quite remarkable, especially since his adoptive father Julius Caesar was assassinated shortly after he was declared "dictator for life."

THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT BY AUGUSTUS

A clear understanding of the ways in which Augustus restructured Roman government is essential to understanding how he was able to stay in power. He reshaped traditional Roman government to give the impression that nothing had changed—annual elections of magistrates continued, popular assemblies continued to be held—but he altered their substance and included special privileges for himself so that he held unparalleled power while preventing anyone else from following his example. It is important to note that at no time was Augustus ever referred to as “emperor” in the way that the word is defined today, and he was certainly never called “king” or “dictator.”

Instead, his power was drawn from a number of traditional institutions and altered for his benefit. Augustus was granted command of the Roman military, which traditionally was assigned to the supreme Republican magistrates, the consuls; in addition, he assumed the powers granted to the *tribūnus plēbis*, particularly the right to veto any government action, as well as their sacrosanctity, that is, special protection from any sort of harm. He did receive the title *imperātor*, “victorious general,” from which the word “emperor” is derived, but the title referred to his command of the Roman army. Later in his reign, Augustus also became *Pontifex Maximus*, the most important figure in Roman state religion.

No man before Augustus had held all these powers simultaneously. Yet Augustus managed to persuade the Roman people that he had earned this unprecedented influence. It was his hard work that allowed the Republic to be restored, after all. Augustus was *princeps*, that is, “first among equals,” the most influential and well-regarded Roman citizen, and no more. Understanding why Augustus chose to structure power in this way requires context: the fundamental values of Roman Republican government and how these were weakened in the century or so prior to 27 BCE, the year in which Augustus claimed to have restored the *rēs pūblica*.

THE RISE OF AUGUSTUS

The eighteen-year-old Octavian (Gaius Octavius Thurinus) was Caesar’s grandnephew. After Julius Caesar’s assassination in 44 BCE, it was revealed in his will that he had adopted Octavian and made him his heir. The young man’s name then became Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus. He is generally referred to as Octavian by modern scholars until 27 BCE, when he received the title Augustus. The news that Octavian was Caesar’s heir was certainly unexpected, and only added to the already unstable political situation after Caesar’s assassination, since there was already substantial mistrust between Marc Antony, Caesar’s consular colleague for 44 BCE, and the Senate. The members of the conspiracy against Caesar miscalculated how unpopular Caesar’s assassination would be and were far more vulnerable than they had anticipated. Although Antony had the support of the people and of Caesar’s legions, he knew that he would likely share Caesar’s fate if he attempted to take power for himself. Neither Antony nor the Senate could predict how Octavian would change the political landscape once he came to Rome.

It was easy to underestimate Octavian. He was only eighteen years of age, and he lacked experience and a connection to the Roman nobility. Octavian’s opponents also miscalculated how popular he would be with his adoptive father’s armies as well as with the Roman people. Octavian soon showed, however, that he was nobody’s fool and that he would not allow himself to be manipulated. Initially, Cicero and the Senate enlisted him and his army against Antony, who had been declared a public enemy and was being besieged in Mutina. There Octavian would join forces with the armies of the consuls Aulus Hirtius and Vibius Pansa elected for 43. Cicero’s strategy seemed wise: Octavian would not only draw from Antony’s potential supporters, he would also give the Senate some degree of support from the Roman people. In return, Octavian was made a senator, was given the rank of praetor, and received the right to stand for consul at a much younger age than was previously permitted. Cicero wrongly anticipated that Octavian would be satisfied with these many privileges and would be easy to control.

The siege at Mutina did not turn out well for the Senate. Antony escaped to Gaul, and both consuls opposing Antony died in battle. Still, Brutus and Cassius, leaders of the conspiracy against Caesar, had organized armies in the East, where each governed a province, and the Senate still had loyal and powerful men in the West. Octavian, however, first revealed his ambitions and abilities when given what he felt to be inadequate rewards for his service at Mutina: he marched his armies against Rome. His opponents either surrendered or fled. Octavian then had himself elected consul and gave his soldiers large cash rewards.

THE SECOND TRIUMVIRATE

His new name of Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus continued to give Octavian an edge when negotiating with other Roman commanders. Though Antony and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, the new *Pontifex Maximus* and the man to whom Antony had eventually fled, commanded more soldiers, they decided to ally themselves with Caesar's heir rather than risk losing their armies to him. The three men then agreed to create a triumvirate that gave them supreme power over the state. This time the triumvirate was a formal arrangement, in contrast to the informal agreement that Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus had made. Octavian, Lepidus, and Antony divided up Roman territory among themselves and drew up a proscription list to get rid of political enemies and to raise money to pay soldiers. Among the first victims of the proscriptions was Cicero, who had made Antony a lasting enemy when he delivered a series of vitriolic speeches called the *Philippics*. These denunciations of Antony were filled with personal insults, as was common in Roman political speeches, and intended to prevent him from becoming too powerful. Not only did they influence greatly the Senate's decision to declare Antony a public enemy, but the humiliating and doubtlessly exaggerated content also made Antony eager for revenge. Before he could escape from Italy, Cicero was captured and executed, and Antony had Cicero's head and hands displayed up over the rostra in the forum for all to see.

After Octavian and Antony secured sufficient funds for their armies, they headed east in pursuit of the leaders of the conspiracy to assassinate Caesar. In 42 BCE they defeated Brutus's and Cassius's armies in the battle of Philippi in

Greece, and Brutus and Cassius each committed suicide. Antony remained in the East and allowed Octavian to return to the much more turbulent situation in Italy. Against the odds, Octavian's influence continued to grow.

In 40 BCE the triumvirate met in Brundisium to reaffirm their agreement. At this time Octavian gave his sister Octavia in marriage to Antony to strengthen their alliance, and Lepidus, who was suspected of negotiating with the triumvirate's enemies, was reassigned less important provinces. Around this time, too, Octavian met and married the great love of his life, Livia Drusilla, who was equally devoted to him. Livia was well connected to the traditional Roman aristocracy and proved to be an astute political advisor to Octavian. She had two sons by a previous marriage, Tiberius and Drusus; Tiberius would eventually be chosen by Augustus to be his successor.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE SECOND TRIUMVIRATE

After the treaty in Brundisium, Antony and Octavia stayed in Athens, for Antony was now in charge of the eastern part of the empire while Octavian was in charge of the western part. By 37 BCE Antony and Octavia's marriage started to become strained by Antony's resuming a romantic relationship that he had had with Cleopatra in 41 and that had resulted in his fathering twins. This new development provided Octavian with material to begin a propaganda war against Antony. Octavian was able to suggest more and more successfully that by Antony's remaining in the East and by his attachment to Cleopatra, he was letting himself become ruined by the corruption many Romans associated with the East.

In 32 BCE Octavian declared war against Antony after he formally divorced Octavia. With his childhood friend, the *equus* Agrippa, commanding his army and navy, he won a significant battle at Actium on September 31st. Cleopatra abandoned her forces when defeat was clear, and Antony chose to follow her back to Egypt rather than remain with his army, further evidence, according to Octavian, that Antony was no true Roman. The war, essentially over at Actium, was concluded in April of the following year. Antony committed suicide when he received the false report that Cleopatra was dead, and Cleopatra herself committed suicide soon afterwards. The opposition was gone, and Rome now belonged to one man. Octavian's challenge would be finding a way to retain his power.

OCTAVIAN'S RETURN TO ROME

Octavian returned to Rome in 30. He held the consulship that year as well as the next, and shared the consulship and the censorship with his close companion Agrippa in 28. This was the first time Roman censors had been appointed in almost 40 years. During their term as censors, the roll of the Senate was drastically reduced, eventually reaching the traditional number of 600, and many public works were authorized. In addition, Octavian created new requirements for many magistracies and set a minimum property level for *equites* and senators. At the start of 27 BCE, he announced before the Senate that he was resigning all his offices, and declared the Republic restored.

OCTAVIAN GRANTED THE TITLE AUGUSTUS

In thanksgiving, the Senate granted Octavian the title of Augustus, "revered," an exceptional honor of great religious significance. From this point on, Octavian will be referred to by this title. In addition, he was given one of the foundations of his rule, a ten-year command over the provinces Gaul, Spain, Syria, and the newly annexed province of Egypt. This extensive command granted him control over almost all of the Roman legions in service at that point, and essentially made his power uncontestable. The remaining provinces were governed by senators. At Rome, Octavian was the *princeps*, the "leading citizen," a man of great influence but one who also respected the traditional role of the Senate to guide the state, for example, in overseeing state finances. He also increased the Senate's powers by granting it the right to make law. In this way its authority could never be overstepped by the popular assemblies or ambitious tribunes.

More generally Augustus ensured that the state was returned to its traditional routines. For example, regular elections were held, and many long ignored priesthoods were restored. The Romans did not separate government from religion. The prosperity of the state was dependent on the *pax deorum*, "harmony with the gods." By restoring traditional religious practices, Augustus hoped to bring Rome back into the favor of the gods who had helped it succeed earlier.

GOVERNMENTAL REFORMS

For several years after 27 BCE, the new state appeared to run smoothly. But in 23 Augustus resigned the consulship after holding it for eleven consecutive terms. At this time he was granted *tribunicia potestās*, that is, all the powers granted to the tribune of the people, including the right to propose and veto legislation, as well as sacrosanctity, making it a religious offense to harm him. In addition, his *imperium* was formally made greater, *māius*, than that of his senatorial colleagues. Though Augustus must have intended not to stand for the consulship again, he was forced to assume the appearance of greater authority after riots in 22 and after a serious political threat arose in 19. At this time the senator Egnatius Rufus attempted to run for the consulship immediately after holding the praetorship, in direct violation of Augustus's rules. The major addition to Augustus's powers by this point was consular power. For example, he was given the privilege of sitting in a third curule chair between the two regularly elected consuls. This compromise satisfied both the people and the Senate, and what reforms appear afterwards have more to do with government organization.

Though Augustus preserved the appearance of senatorial prestige, he was careful to balance it by also showing favor to long-ignored constituencies: the *equitēs*, the Italians, and, to a lesser extent, freed slaves (*libertīni*). Augustus's close advisors Agrippa and Maecenas represented the

prominence of the *equitēs* and the Italians. Maecenas was especially important in encouraging Vergil and Horace to support Augustus and his programs through their poetry, thus ensuring Augustus's prestige among the nobility. *Equitēs* often served as army officers, procurators of certain provinces such as Egypt, or in positions essential to public order, such as having responsibility for the oversight of the grain dole. Freed slaves, also known as freedmen, might assume lower positions of authority within imperial administration. Unlike the aristocracy, men from these groups owed their primary loyalty to Augustus. Additionally, he limited how influential individual senators could become simply by ensuring that their periods as governor were short. If they commanded troops, it was usually as his subordinates.

Augustus maintained his popularity with the urban population by funding numerous festivals and entertainments. His *naumachia*, or mock naval battle, is an extreme example of his generosity. Augustus had a large basin custom built for the event, in which thousands of combatants and hundreds of full-size ships would participate. He even had an aqueduct, an expensive and highly engineered project in its own right, built to supply water for it. No other Roman would be capable of financing such a project, and therefore no other Roman could create so memorable an occasion. Augustus also paid for the grain dole, which distributed close to 1.5 bushels of wheat each to 150,000–200,000 citizen residents of Rome monthly.

Augustus also passed laws to strengthen the hierarchy that had always existed in Roman society. He separated senators from *equitēs* and the people from these classes at Roman spectacles, with men and women often placed separately in their own sections as well. In addition, he attempted to strengthen traditional family structures and encourage population growth. He made it mandatory, for example, for men to divorce adulterous wives. He promoted childbearing by penalizing aristocratic men for remaining bachelors. He also granted legal rights to women of any class who gave birth to at least three children. Other laws followed similar principles. Though it is debatable how effective these laws were, it is clear that Augustus's vision for restoring the Republic included returning to old Roman ways in private as well as public life.

REFORMS IN THE ARMY

When Augustus returned to Rome after Actium, he had demobilized about one half of the legions, leaving approximately 160,000 men in service. By 13 BCE, he established an army that was truly professional. Soldiers who enlisted would serve continuously for up to 25 years. Prior to this, the Roman army was organized as a militia, similar to today's US National Guard or Reserves—soldiers who served only in times of state need. Though Roman soldiers were paid a small sum for their service, previously they were never guaranteed retirement or additional benefits. Now Augustus provided his soldiers pay and retirement benefits. He made himself the supreme commander of almost the entire army so that the troops would be loyal to him.

THE INCREASE IN ROMAN TERRITORY

Roman territory grew under the first half of Augustus's reign. He, Agrippa, and then the younger generations of the Julio-Claudian family campaigned frequently. For the most part, these campaigns were successful: Spain and Gaul grew more settled and several provinces were annexed in the Alps. German territory proved more difficult. Roman armies conquered the Rhine region and then advanced eastward. But Augustus miscalculated how secure Roman control past the Rhine was. In 9 CE three Roman legions led by Quintilius Varus were ambushed and destroyed at the Teutoberg Forest near modern Hamburg. The obliteration of these legions profoundly affected Augustus, who mourned their loss for several months. As a result of their defeat, Roman control of this area moved back to the Rhine, which, together with the Danube, would remain the frontier of Roman territory for most of the Principate.

The Roman east was governed directly by Roman provincial governors or procurators, or indirectly, by client kings. Client kings had long been part of Roman rule, but the territory they governed came to be annexed as provinces in a piecemeal fashion. Still, for much of Augustus's reign, the rulers of kingdoms such as Emesa (now central Syria) provided a useful buffer between Rome, inhabitants of the Arabian desert, and further east, Parthia. The client kingdoms of this region were annexed on the deaths of their rulers.

THE END OF AUGUSTUS'S RULE

One of the major questions during Augustus's rule was who would succeed him. Certainly it would have become obvious through time that he did not intend to return the state to true Republican government. He appears to have decided about 23 BCE that power should be handed over to a relative, or at a minimum to a trusted friend. Augustus's first candidate was his nephew Marcellus, whom he married to his daughter Julia, and who was mentioned as the eventual ruler of Rome in book six of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Marcellus, however, died unexpectedly later that year. Soon Augustus married Julia to Agrippa, who had divorced his own wife at Augustus's request. Their first two sons, Gaius and Lucius, were adopted by Augustus, marking them as his intended successors. Unfortunately, both Gaius and Lucius died near the start of the new millennium. Augustus formally adopted Tiberius and the youngest son of Agrippa and Julia, Agrippa Postumus, who proved unsuitable for rule. As Augustus grew older, Tiberius took on more responsibilities, and by 13 CE held *imperium* and *tribunicia potestas* with Augustus. When Augustus died in 14 CE, Tiberius was granted these powers without hesitation by the Senate.

The smooth transition of power from Augustus to Tiberius, as well as Augustus's long and peaceful reign, demonstrates how fundamentally and how successfully he transformed the Roman state. He matured in a period when politicians tore the state apart in pursuit of influence and honor and his own rise to power was marked by a certain ruthlessness. Yet when he defeated his last rival, he was able to use his exceptional political and organizational skills to construct a new system of government that permitted him to control the state stably while satisfying the ambitions of the traditional Roman elite. Like a true Roman, he created a government that maintained a sense of continuity with tradition but was modified with the necessary pragmatism characteristic of Roman ways. His system was the model for Roman imperial rule over the next two centuries.

Reading #3: "Introduction to Vergil, pp. 230-233"

VERGIL'S LIFE

Vergil (Publius Vergilius Maro) was born on October 15, 70 BCE near the Italian town of Mantua in northern Italy. Mantua is located not very far from Catullus's hometown of Verona. Many of the details of the poet's life are uncertain. The ancient biographical tradition suggests that his father was rich enough to give his son an excellent education, first in Cremona and Milan and then in Rome. In the capital Vergil probably studied rhetoric and early Roman literature, including the works of the early second-century BCE Latin poet Ennius, who introduced the Greek hexameter to Latin poetry. Hexameter is the meter that Vergil used for all of his poetry.

The tumultuous years following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE were difficult ones for all Romans, and Vergil was no exception. His father probably lost his property in the land confiscated for war veterans in 41 BCE. (The tradition that this property was later restored to the poet is unlikely.) Vergil himself refers to the loss of this farm in the *Eclogues*, his first collection of poems on pastoral themes, published in 37 BCE. During this period Vergil gained the attention of the wealthy Maecenas who became the poet's patron and who introduced him to his powerful friend Octavian, later the emperor Augustus. The *Eclogues* were followed by the *Georgics*, usually described as a didactic poem on farming, published in 30 BCE. However, there is little practical advice in the *Georgics*, which celebrate the joys of rural life. In this poem, dedicated to Maecenas, Vergil tells the sad story of Orpheus and Eurydice.

After completing the *Georgics*, Vergil spent the next ten years working on his masterpiece, the *Aeneid*. In 19 BCE Vergil began a tour of Greece and Asia, but while in Athens the poet was persuaded by the emperor Augustus to return to Italy with him. Vergil fell ill on the return voyage and died on September 20, 19 BCE, in the Italian city of Brundisium. He was buried in Naples in a tomb with the following inscription, which he himself is said to have composed on his deathbed:

*Mantua mē genuit, Calabri rapuēre, tenet nunc
Parthenopē; cecini pascua rūra ducēs.*

"Mantua bore me, the Calabrians (i.e., Brundisium) seized me, and now
Naples holds me; I sang of pastures, fields, leaders."

Vergil left instructions that if the *Aeneid* remained unfinished at his death, the epic should be burned. Augustus did not allow the poet's wishes to be carried out. The unfinished state of the manuscript is reflected in partially complete hexameter lines, which appear here and there throughout the poem.

THE AENEID

The *Aeneid* is an epic, a long narrative poem centered on a hero. In the opening words of the poem, *arma virumque canō* ("Of the arms and man I sing"), Vergil indicates that his inspiration and model for his poetic work are the two epics of Homer. The first half of the *Aeneid*, which deals with the wanderings of Aeneas from the time he leaves Troy until he arrives in Italy, resembles Homer's *Odyssey* with its focus on the wanderings of Odysseus after the Trojan War. The second half of the

Aeneid, with its narratives of the many battles fought by Aeneas and his men to found a home in Latium, resembles the *Iliad*. Although the *Aeneid* uses Homer's poems as a model, the epic is thoroughly Roman in thought, mood, and message. Such imitation of earlier Greek authors was common in Latin literature. For example, Catullus Poem 51 is modeled on Sappho's *phainetai moi* (frag. 31 L.P.).

Other Greek and Latin literary works also influenced Vergil. The depiction of Medea in Apollonius of Rhodes's third-century BCE epic *Argonautica* is probably a source for Vergil's portrayal of Dido. The influence of Greek tragedy, especially dramas like Euripides's *Medea*, can also be seen in the *Aeneid*. Tragedies and epics (now lost) of the Latin poet Ennius probably played an important role in Vergil's development as a poet.

Although the events described in the *Aeneid* take place in the distant, mythic times of the Trojan War and its aftermath, Vergil expected his audience to interpret these events through Roman eyes and through contemporary events. The hero of Vergil's epic, the Trojan Aeneas, is destined to found a city in Italy from which the Roman people will descend. The success of Aeneas means the success of Rome. Aeneas's son Ascanius, also known as Ilus or Iulus, was believed to be the founder of the famous Julius *gens* ("clan"), which includes Julius Caesar and his adopted son, the emperor Augustus. Thus the Julians could claim descent from the goddess Venus, Aeneas's mother.

The events described in the *Aeneid*, then, look ahead to later events in the history of Rome. These events include the founding of the city by Romulus, the city's prolonged rivalry with Dido's city of Carthage in the Punic Wars (264–146 BCE), and events during the Civil Wars that followed the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE, including the naval battle of Actium (31 BCE), in which the forces of Octavian defeated those of Antony and Cleopatra. The Dido depicted in the *Aeneid* is, in fact, not only the queen of Carthage, Rome's later archenemy, but is intended to call to mind the dangerous Egyptian queen Cleopatra, whom Vergil and his contemporaries feared.

EPIC

Vergil includes in his epic many of the following characteristics found in earlier classical epics, especially the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*:

- *In mediās rēs*, or, beginning in the middle of the story. Vergil begins the *Aeneid* not at the beginning of the story, that is, in the Trojan War, but with a storm that drives Aeneas's fleet onto the coast of Africa, near Carthage.
- Flashback. If the story begins *in mediās rēs*, then the poet must, at some point, tell the story up to that point. Vergil does this in *Aeneid* 2–3, in which Aeneas tells Dido and her court everything that happened to him from the fall of Troy until his arrival in Carthage.
- Invocation. A prayer to the Muse, the goddess of inspiration. When the poet prays for poetic inspiration, he usually summarizes the plot of the epic. Invocations can also appear at important points in the narrative, such as the start of the second half of the epic (Book 7, lines 37 ff.).
- Catalogues or lists, such as the list of heroes and historical figures Aeneas meets in *Aeneid* 6.
- Divine machinery or the involvement of the gods in the plot. The roles of the goddesses Venus and Juno are particularly important in the *Aeneid*.
- Epithets or descriptive phrases used with the name of a hero, place, and the like; for example, *pius Aenēās* ("loyal Aeneas") and *miserrima Dīdō* ("very unhappy Dido").
- Similes or comparisons. Some of these are brief while others are longer and take on a life of their own.
- Descent into the Underworld. In *Aeneid* 6 Aeneas descends into the Underworld to see the ghost of his dead father Anchises. His father will show Aeneas the future city of Rome and reveal a moral code sanctioned by the gods.
- Dactylic Hexameter. This meter used by Homer and other Greek poets was introduced to Latin by the poet Ennius and became the standard meter for Roman epic poets. The meter is based on six feet (hexameter) consisting of dactyls (– ∪ ∪) or spondees (– –).