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The Propaganda of Augustus Caesar

How Peace, Power, and Stability was Achieved
During the Age of Augustus



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Professor Lowe
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“In any large empire, embracing many languages, nations, and cultures, the ruler must somehow persuade his subjects (i) that he is fit to rule them, and (ii) that they are being ruled for their own good. He must, in fact, use propaganda.”¹ (M.P. Charlesworth, 1937)

Though propaganda has been used throughout time, few people have used it as effectively as the first emperor of Rome, Augustus Caesar. To understand the propaganda of Augustus Caesar is to understand the man himself. It would be interesting to read a copy of the Autobiography of Augustus today, but such a document has not survived. Suetonius wrote that Augustus did in fact write an autobiography,² but all that remains today of the work of Augustus are artifacts and remains of his propaganda program. The autobiography may not have survived, but when the propaganda is understood, the life of Augustus will also be understood. To analyze the propaganda of Augustus Caesar is not an easy task. His program does however contain repetitive images which act as the foundation to the propaganda of Augustus, thus aiding in the understanding of the propaganda.

The propaganda of Augustus represents the ambitions of the man, as well as the nation of Rome. There are two main themes to Augustan propaganda; first, to establish power, and second to, establish peace and stability. Mythical images also accompany each theme. Apollo and Venus were used as well as the Deified Julius Caesar, to build Augustus power, while Mars and Venus were used to establish peace and stability. Mythical figures were the foundation to Augustan propaganda. Throughout the life of Augustus, he attempted to link himself to divinity. His proclaimed divine lineage is mentioned throughout his propaganda program and acts as the glue holding all his work

¹ M.P Charlesworth, “The Virtues of a Roman Emperor: Propaganda and the Creation of Belief.” *Proceedings of the British Academy* (March 1937), 108

² Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. Trans. Robert Graves (London: Penguin Group, 1997), 94.

together. This paper will illustrate how Augustus, using mythical divine figures, achieved power, peace, and stability in Rome.

Every part of Augustus's propaganda is deliberate and intertwined with already existing ideas, and constantly repeating themes. Repetition made Augustus's program strong. The first forms of Augustan propaganda are found on coins. Though small and subtle, coins were able to provide the medium for beginning a campaign that would build Augustus's power and influence in Rome.

The images on the coins during the Age of Augustus had no direct reflection on the market value, but the images depicted thereon were important in the hands of citizens. A coin depicting a naval victory for example is an ideal way to pay ones crew of sailors. The coins would be used to by food, land and clothing. The images on the coins became a reminder of the loyal service and strength of their leader; in this case it was Augustus.

After the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BC Augustus, then known as Octavian, desired to take the place of his fallen uncle, and adoptive father. Octavian did all he could early in his career to link himself with Julius Caesar: "From the beginning he called himself C. Caesar, omitting the customary cognomen Octavian, although by modern convention we call him Octavian in spite of this. The 'youth who owed everything to his name,' as Marc Antony called him, left no doubt as to his goal from the very start."³ Marc Antony was right; Octavian owed the world to his name being Caesar. There are evidences of this in the coinage of the deified Caesar. After 44 BC Octavian began minting coins with the words CAESAR DIVI F(ilius) meaning the son of the deified

³ Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 33

Caesar. A sestertius⁴ of 37 B.C. illustrates the propaganda capacity of the Roman coinage. It was used by Octavian to advertise his adoption as Caesar's son, and thus attests to the validity of his claim to power. The obverse of the coin follows the tradition of Julius Caesar by its inclusion of the portrait of a living man, in this case Octavian. The reverse bears a portrait of Caesar that is accompanied by the legend DIVUS JULIUS that is, the deified Julius Caesar, the obverse portrait of Octavian depicts him with a beard of mourning and is labeled with the designation DIVI FILIUS, or the son of a god.⁵ A large majority of the people using the coins were uneducated and unable to read and comprehend the writing on the coins; that said the art work thereon would give the same message. A coin with Julius and Octavian on the same coin establishes a sense of relations due to immediate proximity. Octavian was sending a message to all that he was the son of the Divine Julius Caesar, and therefore an heir to that divine man, or a god himself.

It was not Augustus who made this first link to the past. In 46 BC Julius Caesar himself made a denari which depicted Aeneas fleeing Troy, with his father Anchises in his arms. The words CAESAR are down the right side of the image. Here Caesar is directly relating himself to Aeneas. Most of the images promoted by Octavian's supporters in the first few years are associated, directly or indirectly, with Caesar. For example, gold coins with sella, wreath, and the legend CAESAR DICTATOR recall Octavian's attempt publicly to display Caesars' golden throne and jewel-studded wreath in order to arouse emotions. Caesar had already put Venus and Aeneas on the coins as a sign of the Julian divine ancestry. The younger Caesar, in borrowing this image, now also

⁴ Sestertius and denari are Roman coins.

⁵ Diana E.E. Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture* (Yale University Press, 1992), 61.

laid claim to the divine and heroic ancestors of the Julian house.⁶ Augustus knew how powerful and influential the propaganda of Julius was and followed his example.

Octavian first achieved recognition as the son of the divine Julius Caesar; next he proceeded to work to establish himself as a strong leader. His most urgent concern was public acknowledgement of his services to the state and of his abilities as a commander of the army. Octavian believed this would best be made manifest in honorific statues put up under official auspices.⁷ His divine ancestry made him an icon for the people of Rome. He became a person that not only unified Rome by fighting its enemies, but also had the blood line to the gods and to the very founders of Rome. Octavian, at the age of 19, was voted by the Senate to stand for office many years prior to the minimum age. They gave him a statue and allowed this statue to be placed near the speaker's podium in the Senate house. It is clear by this, that the Senate recognized the power and position of this young man. To celebrate this achievement, Octavian minted coins with an image of this same statue. It is an equestrian monumental coin. Octavian is riding a horse with only a toga around his loins signifying divinity (See Figure 1). The word CAESAR DIVI F again signifies that Octavian is the divine son of the divine Julius. In 80 BC Sulla made a similar coin, only his was much more subtle. His horse is on all fours and he sits on the horse in a full toga. Octavian was using the same idea of Sulla, but aggrandizing it for the emotional impact. It worked.⁸ Octavian used the equestrian coin to build his support by showing that he was recognized by the Senate as worthy, though much younger than the minimum age, to hold political office. As Octavian's political powers grew so did his

⁶Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 36

⁷ *Ibid.*, 38

⁸ *Ibid.*

military prowess. Octavian was chosen to fight, and destroy Sextus Pompey's army because of its threat to Rome. Octavian was successful. A coin was then minted to show Octavian as a military leader, giving the signal of charge. This coin created a strong base of support and power among the military.⁹ The coinage of Octavian was a successful first step in establishing himself as a man of power and position. This part of his propaganda program was successful. Evidence of this is seen in the years leading up to the Battle of Actium in 31 BC.

Thirteen years after the death of the divine Julius Caesar, Augustus still had not achieved the level of power that he hoped for. One man was standing in the way, that man was Marc Antony. While Octavian continued minting coins depicting divine images and political subtleties, he also began a campaign that would help eliminate Marc Antony. Mark Antony knew that Octavian would have the support of the Senate because Octavian was the adopted son of Julius Caesar. Antony therefore fled to Greece and then Egypt. It was in Egypt that Antony took on the mythical identity of Dionysus-Osiris (this name represent the two gods that were associated with Antony Dionysus in Greece and Osiris in Egypt). Kenneth Scott wrote that Antony was greeted in Athens as Dionysus and as Osiris in Egypt. Scott writes that Antony was simply trying to link himself to these gods because they have the same legendary history of conquering the east. By doing so Antony was about to win the hearts of the Greeks as well as the Egyptians. As Dionysus-Osiris, Antony was more than a man; he in effect became a god.¹⁰ Octavian likewise depicted himself as the god Apollo. Prior to the battle of Actium, where Antony's

⁹ Ibid., 55

¹⁰ Kenneth Scott, "Octavian's Propaganda and Antony's De Sua Ebrietate," *Classical Philology* 24, no. 2 (Apr. 1929): 133

military is destroyed, Octavian prayed to Apollo for victory. It could be said that Octavian was not a man when fighting Antony and Cleopatra, but the god Apollo.

There is a story told by Plutarch which tells of the night before the fateful battle between Apollo (Octavian) and Dionysus (Antony). It is said that the army of Dionysus (Antony) heard what sounded like a musical procession. It went through the city and out the gate and dispersed into the darkness. Plutarch explains that the music was that of Dionysus leaving Mark Antony.¹¹ Scott acknowledges the opinion of H.J. Rose who believed the story of the departure of Dionysus to be the work of Augustus. Scott says that Rose's belief that Augustus feared Mark Antony as a threat to his gain of power in Rome. Scott says, "The story of the departure of Dionysus, however, does not even seem to be propaganda, for I cannot agree with Rose that Octavian had anything to fear from Antony-Dionysus once Antony was dead." Scott wrote that Octavian did not need to create this story because Egypt, as well as Greece became loyal to Rome's influence after the death of Antony. It would seem that Octavian had nothing to fear from a dead man! At first glance that may be true, but it what Scott may be overlooking is the fact that the cult of Antony would live on if the Greeks and the Egyptians had any reason to believe that Antony was Dionysus-Osiris.

The above story clearly shows how Octavian was attempting to belittle Antony. Scott wrote that there would be no need for this treatment, because Greece and Egypt followed Rome. Scott does not however recognize that this story could be the reason why Greece and Egypt realigned with Rome. Scott down plays this story as simply folklore.¹² However, Rose recognized that "merely to kill a divine king or other

¹¹ Ibid., 134.

¹² Ibid., 135.

theanthropic figure would by no means put an end to his influence.”¹³ Rose clearly believes that Octavian had everything to fear from a dead Marc Antony; Rose explains that it was common for Hellenistic people to believe that their kings could emerge from the dead “unharmd and even quickened to new vigor from bodily death.” She continues to explain that it was common practice to continue worshipping a divine king after his death, side by side with the worship of his living and equally divine successor. Rose adds, “Indeed, the living king was if anything the less divine.”¹⁴ Clearly Rose disagrees with Scott on the matter of Augustus not fearing Marc Antony. According to Rose, Augustus had everything to fear from a divine Marc Antony.

Lily R. Taylor wrote about the story of the departure of Dionysus in her book *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*. She clearly disagrees with Scott in regards to Octavian not caring whether Antony was Dionysus. Taylor tells the same story from Plutarch and recognizes that Apollo defeats Antony; in other words, Octavian defeated Antony. Taylor mentions both Scott and Rose in her footnotes for this story, but it seems that Taylor would agree with Rose that the story is an evidence of Augustan propaganda against the cult of Antony.¹⁵ Taylor seems to make the case that Octavian not only desired that Antony died as a man, and not as a god, but that he, Octavian, was able to drive out Dionysus from the company of Antony because he himself was the god Apollo. It is this subtlety that makes Augustan propaganda so difficult to spot at times. This is also precisely the reason why Octavian was as successful as he was. Early on in his career

¹³ Ibid., 136.

¹⁴ H.J Rose, “The Departure of Dionysus” *Annals of Archaeology and anthropology* 11 (1924): 27

¹⁵ Lily R Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Connecticut: American Philological Association, 1929), 140

Augustus was known for his subtlety, and subtlety was a powerful characteristic of his propaganda campaign.

The above mentioned historians sought to find truth, and meaning from the different forms of propaganda. In that respect, they all share some characteristics. Like the Greece historian Thucydides, these historians were finding truth in the mythical tales of Augustus. For one to understand the literature forms of Augustan propaganda, one must look beyond the colorful mythology and find the desired outcome. All the above historians interpreted the myths and literature of Augustus differently, but all would agree that Augustus desired to gain power in Rome.

Following Actium, Octavian had to show the people of Rome, especially the Senate, that he was loyal to Rome and cared about their best interest. While Actium was a decisive battle, and one that eliminated the largest threat to Octavian and to the Roman State, Marc Antony was still a popular Roman. Besides the countless rumors that were being spread by Octavian and his followers, Octavian built monuments that painted the victory at Actium in a positive hue. The Temple of Apollo on the Palatine was one such monument. As a celebration, and to give thanks to the god Apollo for aiding in the victory at Actium, Octavian had a temple built in honor of Apollo and by 26 B.C; the temple of Apollo was complete. The building itself has received little attention due to the overshadowing choice of its location. Augustus built the temple of Apollo within the walls of his estate in Rome.

The fish live in the water, the birds in the sky and the gods live with Augustus. This statement emphasizes the idea that Augustus was trying to portray by building the temple were he did. With the temple only a few steps from his home, Augustus would

appear to the common Roman as one with the gods. By this time Augustus had already planted the seeds of this idea in coin and statues.

Divine lineage was just one part of the story behind the temple of Apollo. Augustus also has used this monument to address a controversial part of his political career, that being the death of Marc Antony after the battle of Actium. Antony was a Roman, and to avoid seeming anti-Roman, Augustus designed a propaganda campaign which would alienate Antony. To do this Augustus commissioned a terracotta frieze that showed the epic battle of Hercules and Apollo. Marc Antony thought of him self as Hercules. Marc Antony's family traced its origin to an otherwise unknown son of Hercules named Anton. Antony himself had coins minted with an image of this ancestor and made a rather infelicitous comparison with the great figure of Aeneas, the son of Venus. Antony was pleased and flattered to be compared with Hercules: 'The finely formed beard, broad brow, and aquiline nose lent him a powerful, masculine look which reminded people of paintings and statues of Hercules, whom he was thought to resemble.'¹⁶ Augustus used this propaganda of Marc Antony and turned it against him. The piece of art that really alienates Marc Antony is the freeze of Medusa, which represents Cleopatra of Egypt, the very woman who stole Marc Antony's Roman heart and turned into an Egyptian. By putting Medusa, (Cleopatra), in to this scene, where methodically she does not belong, it illustrates the point that Augustus clearly desired to dishonor Marc Antony and remove himself from the responsibility of his death as a Roman. For there to be stability in Rome, there had to be no question as to whom the leader was. There could be no doubt whether Actium (the defining moment of Augustus

¹⁶ Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1988),45

acquiring controls of Rome) was justifiable; therefore, the Temple of Apollo was built to justify the death of Marc Antony as well as the Roman soldiers that fought along side him. Augustus was establishing a means of understanding that lead to a peaceful Rome and strengthened his power as emperor.

From 44 BC until the Temple of Apollo was finished in 26 BC, Octavian was a warrior, and was using every means possible, be it coins, statues, temples, or even battles to build his reputation and popularity in Rome. As Octavian he was a power hungry, up and coming politician. By 28 BC the power struggle was over. Octavian had established himself as a successful military leader, as well as the son of a god, the Divine Julius Caesar. In 27 BC Octavian made a dramatic change in his propaganda. He no longer desired to be known as a warrior or a fighter. It was during the first constitutional settlement that Octavian was given the name, Augustus. As his name changed so did his message. Augustus now focused his mythology around Mars and Venus. Where Apollo was used for an image of power and ability, Mars was used to portray the divine lineage of Augustus. Augustus had power and position and now needed to insure that his power was retained. He also had to create a pride in the Julian family in order to provide Rome with future leaders that would not be easily opposed, thus creating longevity to the peace that he fought to create.

A perfect example of the new propaganda of Augustus Caesar is the statue of Augustus known as the Prima Porta (Figure 2), named after the place of origin, the villa of Augustus's wife Livia. This is a victory monumental statue, celebrating Augustus's victory over the Parthians. In this statue, Augustus is standing barefooted wearing a breastplate, his right hand raised upward, and a spire in his left. Also, there is a small

child at his right leg. The right hand risen upwards towards heaven represents his piety as well, showing respect to the gods who aided in his victory. The breastplate is decorated with heavenly beings as well as the Parthian king. In the center, the Parthian king extends the legionary eagle, attached to a battle standard, to a cuirassed figure in military pose, either a representative of the Roman legions [Augustus] or perhaps the embodiment of Mars Ultor himself.¹⁷ (It is likely that Augustus wanted there to be debate whether this figure is Mars or Augustus. Not being able to clearly separate the two would only fuel the idea that Augustus is a god which would be consistent with all other parts of this statue as well as other pieces of Augustan art.) Exactly what the other figures on the breastplate represent is unclear. There is a belief that they are there to further link the victory over the Parthian army with the god. Though the exact identification of every figure on the breastplate may not be known, we do recognize Apollo, Mother Earth, Diana, Luna, Dawn and Caelus spreading out the canopy of the heavens.¹⁸

The breastplate is not the only place that has divine figures. The child at the foot of Augustus is thought to be the son of Venus, Cupid.¹⁹ The last point to notice on this statue that refers to the divinity of Augustus is that he is not wearing anything on his feet. Surely he would not go into battle without any boots or sandals on, but here, Augustus is plainly relating himself to the divine; a sentiment that would be easily picked up in the east.

¹⁷ Ibid., 188

¹⁸ Ibid., 191

¹⁹ The relief on the Temple of Mars depicts Venus Genetrix, Mars Ultor, and an Augustan prince, or perhaps Julius Caesar. Note the child at the foot of Venus. The actions and body shape are so similar it would seem logical for them to be the same being. It would be appropriate for it be Cupid at the foot of Augustus in the Prima Porta because it would again link Augustus to his ancestor, Venus.

The Prima Porta shows us a grand example of the new propaganda of Augustus. Any Roman looking at the Prima Porta could not avoid noticing the majesty and grandeur of their leader shown in this statue. The theme of piety and divine ancestry was continued from this point in Augustus's life, (20 BC,) until his death in AD 14.

The propaganda program of Augustus also included literature that was used to promote his proclaimed divine lineage. Statues could only portray an idea or myth, poems could tell the story. Poets Ovid, Vergil²⁰, Tibullus, Propertius, and Horace all wrote for Augustus. Each poet had their own way of contributing to the history of Rome and helped to draw the line from the gods to Augustus.²¹ The common tale that is constantly repeated in the propaganda of Augustus Caesar is the story of the founding of Rome. The story goes back further than Ramous and Romulus, even back to Troy. Augustus uses his poets to tell the story of Aeneas, son of Venus. They tell of how he came to Italy and how his descendents were the sons of Mars, Ramous, and Romulus. The writings of these poets were clearly propaganda and highly influential. According to Suetonius, although Augustus had great respect for the work of the Greek poets, the emperor was not willing to have his family and friends belittled by poets. Suetonius tells of Augustus's tendency to act as a censor by collecting copies of such contraband and having them destroyed.²²

Augustus recognized the power of the written word, and how poems and the theater could have a positive or negative effect on a public figures success. Augustus therefore became highly evolved in the production of poems that would promote his

²⁰ The Roman Poet named Vergil, is often spelt "Virgil." Both Vergil with an 'e' and 'i' are used to refer to the same man.

²¹ Katharine Allen, "The Fasti of Ovid and the Augustan Propaganda." *The American Journal of Philology* 43, no. 3 (1922): 250

²² Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. Trans. Robert Graves (London: Penguin Group, 1997), 63, 97.

propagandistic ideology. Vergil's first plan of the *Aeneid* was to make it a heroic epic with Augustus as its central figure. By the time he wrote the poem, circumstances had changed. The military deeds of Augustus were overshadowed by his achievement of peace and his achievements in peace.²³ It is important to note that Vergil died prior to finishing his work. Vergil ordered that his work be destroyed, but Augustus having commissioned the work, was in the position to confiscate the text and have it finished, despite the wishes of the original author.²⁴ When one reads the *Aeneid*, it becomes clear why Augustus desired for it to be made public.

“Now turn your two eyes here, to look upon your Romans, your own people. Here is Caesar and the line of Iulus that will come beneath the mighty curve of heaven. This is the man you heard so often promised—Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will renew a golden age in Latium.” [Aeneid VI, 1044-1050]

Vergil gives the mythical foundation of Rome and describes why Venus and Mars are such iconic figures of Augustus's new propaganda program. Augustus constantly returned to the same line of history to tie himself to the Divine Julius Caesar and to tie Julius Caesar to the gods. Aeneas, (the son of the Goddess Venus) was from Troy. He had a son named Ascanius, who when he reached the age of manhood went and founded the City Alba Longa, and his seed became the line of kings until Numitor. Numitor was driven from his throne by his brother Amulius. Amulius ordered his niece, the daughter of Numitor to be a Virgin Vestal; this preserved her life, but hindered her abilities to have children. Miraculously she became pregnant and gave birth to two sons, named Remus,

²³ Katharine Allen, “The Fasti of Ovid and the Augustan Propaganda.” *The American Journal of Philology* 43, no. 3 (1922): 257.

²⁴ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Dell, 2004), i

and Romulus. The father, as mythical legend tells it, is none other than the God Mars.²⁵
Remus and Romulus would become the founders of the City of Rome.(Vergil p11)

Clearly the poets of the Augustan court were no more than puppets. These poets had influence throughout Rome and one can see evidence of their influence in other forms of Augustan propaganda. The poets were biased and should not be construed accurately telling the history of Rome, but clearly they are telling the history of Rome the way Augustus Caesar wanted it to be told. The words of the poets are the words of Augustus. Augustus's influence was so strong that it is foolish to assume that the poets were all writing the same story because they believed it. Clearly, the constancy of the mythical stories is due to the facts that Augustus had orchestrated the work. Like the ancient Greek historians, they set up a history based on legends and myth. At the time of Augustus, these myths were as good as fact in the hearts and minds of the people of Rome. Regardless of the truthfulness of the story, it is clear that Augustus was establishing a mythology that would be respected and generally well received through Rome. Knowing this about the poets, the question then is why would Augustus need these stories to be told? These stories bring the art of Augustus to life. The Prima Porta now has significance, in terms of Augustus divine lineage. These stories also aided in the reception of the forms of propaganda that followed them.

The *Aeneid* was finished around 19 BC, ten years later Augustus commissioned a monument that benefited greatly from the work of Vergil. The four sides of the Ara Pacis contain images of historical and mythical events that Augustus tried to create as his genealogy. These figures include Mars, Romulus and Remus, Aeneas, Agrippa, Tellus, Roma, and Augustus himself. Along with these mythological allegories that are located

²⁵ Lewis N. and Reinholds M. *Roman Civilization Volume I* pg57

on the east and west sides of the Ara Pacis, are two processions of Romans. On the south side of the Ara Pacis are a procession that included members of the family of Augustus, including Agrippa who was the husband of Augustus daughter Julia, and with them their son, and Augustus's heir to the throne, Gaius. On the North side is a procession of Roman Senators.

The Ara Pacis was built in order to commemorate the peace that Augustus established during his life. However, the peace that Augustus established would only last if there was someone to take his place. There must be an undisputed leader, just as Augustus was as he returned from Actium in 31BC. The Ara Pacis was a way for Augustus to show a line from Mars to himself. If Augustus was a descendent of Mars then that would make him a god as well. Augustus knew that in order for peace to be sustained in Rome there must be an heir. The heir to the throne had to be related to Augustus in order to maintain the line of divine secession that is mentioned in Vergil's *Aeneid*.

There are signs of Augustus's ideology throughout the monument. All the major parts of Augustus's family were depicted in these panels as well as politicians and divinities. The presence of the senators, and the grandson of Augustus, young Gaius Caesar expresses the Senate recognition of the Julian line of secession. On the west side of the monument is a depiction of Mars looking upon the she wolf who is giving suck to his two twins, Remus and Romulus. The west side also depicts a panel of Aeneas sacrificing the sow. The fundamental relationship between the imperial procession and the scene of Aeneas sacrificing the sow is expected, because Augustus is a direct

descendent of Aeneas; the same set of household deities guards each of them.²⁶ The north wall depicts the Senators as well as Gaius Caesar. On the East side is a panel depicting Venus, the divine mother of Rome; a Goddess with twins on her lap with two other personages on mythical creatures. The southern persecution shows Augustus's daughter Julia as well as her son Gaius Caesar, with his father Agrippa, then we see Augustus Caesar.

The images are only a small part of the Ara Pacis, the beautiful floral fauna, which are often under appreciated by many histories, dominate the Ara Pacis as a whole. This section of the Ara Pacis houses the majority of the animals that are in the Ara Pacis. For example, the swan that repeats itself over and over is considered to be the Swan of Apollo. Swans are a metaphor of the dual nature of Apollo. Peace-loving and monogamous, they cherished their offspring, yet could also be belligerent when necessary. The swans serve as the perfect mediators between the reliefs with human figures and the acanthus friezes.²⁷ We can see this point as we look at the bottom border which the human figures are standing on. It appears that the swan is holding up the humans. The subtle strength and beauty of the swan represent Augustus in many ways, as well as Apollo. The battle hardened Octavian left behind his fighting spirit to take on a new role as a peace providing civic leader, a dual natured creature. It is Roman belief that Apollo could command the animals. Augustus was ones credited with the same ability.

“Ultimately in control of all animals quickened by the sun, Apollo was also the god to whom to appeal in order to aver myriad numbers of scorpions or grasshoppers swarming as locust. Even frogs in large numbers could be obnoxious, as anyone who has traveled through the Pontine marshes with Horace knows, and more than one Augustan Roman

²⁶ P.J. Holliday, “Time, history, and ritual on the Ara Pacis Augustae.” *The Art Bulletin*, 72 (1977): 551

²⁷ B. A Kellum, “What we see and what we don't see. Narrative structure and the Ara Pacis Augustae”. *Association of Art Historians* (1994): 34

may well have looked at a sculpted frog on the Ara Pacis Augustae and remembered a tale told of the emperor's early childhood: 'As soon as [little Octavian] began to talk, it chanced that the frogs were making a great noise at his grandfather's country place; he bade them be silent, and they say that since then no frog has ever croaked there.' Like father, like son."²⁸

What separates the Ara Pacis apart from the other forms of Augustan propaganda is that this monument is a compilation of every idea and mythical theme that Augustus has been pushing since 44 BC. This monument had to be grand, and it had to have an emotional impact on those who were able to witness it first hand. The Ara Pacis was finished near the end of Augustus's long reign; Rome needed a strong man to take the place of Augustus when he would die. Augustus must have known that instability would result from his death. The Ara Pacis was built to provide Augustus's heir with divine justification, insuring that Rome would remain in peace.

Like the Ara Pacis, the forum of Augustus was built to promote peace and stability in Rome. Built in 2 BC, the forum of Augustus repeats the same ideas that are shared by Vergil's Aeneid, as well as the Ara Pacis. The divine ancestors of Augustus are present along the colonnade of the forum which leads to the Temple of Mars Ultor. In Suetonius's history of Augustus he quotes Augustus as follows, "This has been done to make my fellow-citizens insist that both I (while I live), and my successors, shall not fall below the standard set by those great men of old."²⁹ With this insight it becomes clear that Augustus desired that this forum would become an icon of his reign and from here those that would follow him as ruler of Rome would be empowered by the mythical prowess of the ancestors of Augustus Caesar.

²⁸ Ibid., 35

²⁹ Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. Trans. Robert Graves (London: Penguin Group, 1997), 63

The forum itself is a courtyard of sorts that lays at the entrance of the Temple of Mars Ultor. The forum is lined with two rows of columns that act as an enclosing wall to the forum leading up to the temple. On the north side of the forum were statues of the fourteen Kings of Alba Longa, Aeneas, as well as a statue of Julius Caesar's father and grandfather. On the opposite side of the forum were statues of the gods mentioned in Vergil's *Aeneid* as well as Romulus, the first king of Rome. All of these figures were lining the way towards the Temple of Mars. It is important to remember that Mars is the figure that is associated with Augustus. Mars is also the father of Remus and Romulus, whom Augustus descends from. It makes perfect sense that Mars would be used at this point in the propaganda program of Augustus. Clearly Augustus was using this temple as a way to assimilate himself and the Julian family with divinity. Evidence of this is found on the relief of the Temple of Mars Ultor. On this relief are three figures. Mars is positioned at the center, and to the left is Venus, with Cupid at her feet; at the right is an Augustan prince or perhaps the Divine Julius Caesar.³⁰ Note the image of Mars. It is almost exactly the same as the image of Augustus in the Prima Porta statue. Also at the foot of Venus is Cupid, the same child is found on the Prima Porta (figure 3).

Augustus made many justifications for building this forum and temple, but his hidden motive is clearly seen in the images that are found there on. This was a dramatic form of propaganda, but to insure stability in Rome there had to be an undisputed leader to follow Augustus. The forum of Augustus and the Temple of Mars Ultor was built to achieve that end. The sons of the Divine Julius Caesar are divinely chosen to rule Rome.

³⁰ Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 197

Suetonius states that Augustus wrote an autobiography. This document may have mentioned the reasons for the directions that Augustus took in his propaganda program; unfortunately, all thirteen books have been lost.³¹ That said, it is reasonable to assume that Augustus would have only written the things which would have made him look worthy of his position. This would be consistent with all other parts of his propaganda throughout his life. The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (The Accomplishments of the Divine Augustus) is a perfect example of that.

In the *Res Gestae*, Augustus is very careful about what he does and does not say. Augustus wanted the people of Rome, both the city and the nation, to remember him in a positive manner. The *Res Gestae* is directed to that point. One can read the document and learn about the life of Augustus and how he served the people of Rome, but there is much to be learned about where the *Res Gestae* was displayed. Like the Temple of Apollo, the location is significant to the message.

In her article, "Displaying the *Res Gestae* of Augustus: A Monument of Imperial Image for All," Suna Guven looked beyond the writing, and looked at the location of the *Res Gestae*. Guven believes there is relevance in where the work is located. One can look at any coin of Augustus and see a theme or desired idea, but by looking at where the coin was used, one knows specifically who Augustus was trying to influence.

Guven's argument is said best in the introduction to her article, "The narrative of what we call 'history' depends, therefore, not only on who first writes it, but also on the reader."³² Guven recognizes the importance of what was written, and looks further at the intended audience. Guven writes that the *Res Gestae* has become "a textual monument in

³¹ Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*. Trans. Robert Graves (London: Penguin Group, 1997), 94.

³² Suna Guven, "Displaying the *Res Gestae* of Augustus: A Monument of Imperial Image for All," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57, no. 1 (Mar. 1998): 30

the service of imperial ideology,” and “Closer” examination of the Res Gestae inscription reveals an appeal to the hearts and minds of the Roman people.”³³

Augustus intended that the Res Gestae would be located on the outer wall of his mausoleum. However, archeologists have not found a copy of it there, but rather in Galatia in Asia Minor as well as in Antioch in Pisidia. It is clear that by looking at the locations where the document was found, that Augustus had more in mind than just glorifying himself. After the defeat of Antony at Actium in 31 B.C., the Greek world began to acknowledge the supremacy of Roman rule. Augustus recognized the need for an economically and politically stable Asia Minor.³⁴ The spread of the Res Gestae was not only to glorify Augustus, but to glorify Rome. Implanting idealistic histories is not uncommon in the Hellenistic world. The location of stories is used to unify people, even in Rome. Augustan poets would write myths to build a pride for Rome and the Julian family. Guven wrote, “It is well known how the earliest Latin authors sought to reconcile the myth of Troy and the foundation myth of Rome by creating a legitimate lineage for Romulus, the eponymous founder of Rome, and Aeneas, the Greek hero who had escaped from Troy.” Guven continues, “It should also be pointed out that both Caesar and Augustus appropriated the pedigree to propagate the divine ancestry of the Julian family.”³⁵ The Res Gestae is no different than other forms of Augustan propaganda. It was designed to be like the forum of Augustus, insuring the successors of Augustus, did not fall below the standard set by the great men of old.

In conclusion, Augustus Caesar gained power, promoted peace, and created stability in Rome by using propaganda. The propaganda of Augustus Caesar was very

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 32.

³⁵ Ibid., 37.

thought out and deliberate. His program was so successful that it was able to insure that the next ten Caesars would be from the house of Julius Caesar. This long line of Julian Emperors could not have been possible had it not been for the successful propaganda of Augustus Caesar. Likewise, the peace that was enjoyed by the people of Rome under Augustus enabled Rome to grow larger and stronger than any other neighboring nation. Had there not been a clear line of secession and civic pride in the Julian family, Rome would not have survived; rather, it would have continued to suffer from civil wars that Augustus fought to end. Power to the Julian line, as well as peace and stability were all results of the propaganda of the son of the Divine Caesar, Augustus Caesar.

Glossary



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

*** All images are from Paul Zanker's book, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. University of Michigan Press, 1988.

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