

**AUGUSTUS BY SUETONIUS:
THE MAN AND THE MAKING OF THE GOD^{*1}**

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Abstract:

*The study focuses on the **Life of Augustus** by Suetonius, the most complete literary source on the emperor and also the longest Suetonian biography. It analyses the way the author organizes the narrative, selects events and addresses his main topics in order to paint a strongly ideological portrait of Augustus.*

Key-words: Augustus; Suetonius; biographical writing.

**AUGUSTO POR SUETÓNIO:
O HOMEM E A CONSTRUÇÃO DO DEUS**

Resumo: *O estudo centra-se na **Vida de Augusto** de Suetónio (a fonte literária mais completa sobre a vida do imperador e também a mais longa biografia suetoniana), analisando a forma como o autor organiza a narrativa, selecciona os eventos e aborda os tópicos sobre os quais centra o relato, de maneira a desenhar um retrato fortemente ideológico de Augusto.*

Palavras-chave: Augusto; Suetónio; escrita biográfica.

When considering how Augustus is portrayed in Suetonius, it is necessary to bear in mind the general characteristics of the genre and the specific

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approach favoured by this biographer. This will help explain the systematic method (i.e. the narrative is organized into topics rather than being merely chronological), the tendency to summarize deeds and wars, the subject of political history, and (in compensation) the emphasis upon character, abundantly illustrated with a catalogue of examples displaying vices and virtues in equal measure. The **Life of Augustus** is the longest of Suetonius' biographies and considered to be the most perfect in formal terms; thus, it offers a good illustration of the author's method, less obvious in the shorter **Lives** (particularly in those from Galba to Domitian). The work is divided into three broad sections, each subdivided into various categories. This study uses that expository structure as a reference to analyse the way in which the biographer deals with the figure of Augustus.

1. *Per tempora vs per species*

In Suetonius, chronological narrative is reserved for the beginning and the end of the **Lives**. This is certainly due to the emphasis given to the analysis of character, which for the ancients was considered innate and immutable. That is also the reason why the **Lives** begin with a description of the ancestors (with the exception of works dealing with Titus and Domitian, whose ascendancy is presented in the **Life** of their father). Thus, the individual is shown as integrated into a family lineage, which means that his conduct could be understood, at least in part, as determined by hereditary factors (BRADLEY, 1991, p. 3714-15). It is significant that the biography begins with a reference to the legend that links the Octavian clan to the cult of Mars, starting with an etiological explanation for a detail of antiquarian taste³ (the presence of Mars is particularly important given this god's role in the legendary origin of Rome and of the *gens Iulia*). With this, Suetonius not only establishes the origin of the Octavian *gens*, but also generates a favourable opinion of Augustus by showing that the future emperor's military deeds, like his respect for traditional religion (**Aug.** 91-93; GASCOU, 1984, p. 692), had their roots in his ancestors (**Aug.** 20-25). This section reads something like an apology, for he argues against the opinion of detractors⁴ that Octavian's paternal family was *praecipua* (**Aug.** 1), while his mother's line contained many senators and magistrates (**Aug.** 4.1).

The initial chronological section includes a brief reference (5-9) to the rise of the young Octavian under Caesar's tutelage. Even in this part, the biographer omits or abridges the details of his training in order to give attention to the various portents that generate a mythical aura around the

future founder of the principate. He emphasises that he was born *paulo ante solis exortum*, an allusion to his connection with the sun, which is taken up again in the final part, in the list of portents that occurred throughout his life⁵. He notes that a sanctuary was built at the site shortly after his death, and that a convicted man asks clemency, appealing to the fact that he is the owner of a site that the *Diuus Augustus* touched at his birth (**Aug. 5**). Similarly the house where he was raised acquires the atmosphere of incubus, which becomes the source of religious scruple (PICÓN GARCÍA, 1984, p. 324-5) for whoever enters, despite the fact that, paradoxically, the site was *permodicus et cellae penuriae instar*: an owner who (*seu forte seu temptandi causa*) dared to spend the night in the house was expelled by a *subita ui et incerta* and was subsequently found half-conscious outside the door, along with his bed (**Aug. 6**)⁶. After analysing the names (**Aug. 7**), he focuses on the public activity since the loss of his father. It seems at first that he is referring to the phase prior to government, but suddenly at the end of this section (**Aug. 8**), after mentioning his return to Rome to reclaim the Caesar's inheritance, he briefly summarizes the statesman's entire life (**Aug. 8.3**): *Atque ab eo tempore exercitibus comparatis primum cum M. Antonio M.que Lepido, deinde tantum cum Antonio per duodecim fere annos, nouissime per quattuor et quadraginta solus rem p. tenuit* ("Then he levied armies and henceforth ruled the State, at first with Marcus Antonius and Marcus Lepidus, then with Antony alone for nearly twelve years, and finally by himself for forty-four")⁷.

It is precisely at this point (**Aug. 9.1**) that the biographer offers the clearest explanation of his method (though there are likely to have been further indications in the lost initial part of the **Life of Caesar**): *Proposita uitae eius uelut summa, partes singillatim neque per tempora, sed per species exsequar, quo distinctius demonstrari cognoscique possint* ("Having given as it were a summary of his life, I shall now take up its various phases one by one, not in chronological order, but by classes, to make the account clearer and more intelligible"). This, then, defines the distinction between *per tempora* and *per species*⁸. Further on (61.1) a new *partitio* will be established, as we shall see.

Therefore, as regards the events, when they are organized in chronological order, they are presented *summatim*, while the various aspects of the life are analysed *singillatim*⁹. This structure conditions the transmission of the historical events (especially in Chapters 9-25, where he deals with

military matters, and 26-60, on civil duties). Despite everything, in these parts, there is a relative chronological order with regard to the way the wars and the exercise of the magistracies are presented.

2. Biographical treatment of matters from political and military history

2.1. Military matters¹⁰

The **Life of Augustus** shows clearly that Suetonius does not want to write political history but rather biography¹¹. In dealing with military deeds by topics, Suetonius neglects the causes and context of the conflicts in order to highlight the personality of Octavian. On the other hand, he manages to preserve many facts that are usually overlooked by political history. From the start, he highlights revenge – and it is curious that he does not refer here to the term *pietas*¹². In fact, he begins this part with the peremptory claim that the initial cause of all the wars was to avenge Caesar's death (**Aug.** 10.1). But this is a generalization: Octavian only pursued Caesar's killers after the formation of the triumvirate. Indeed, the motive for the first conflict, the war of Mutina, was to help Decimus Brutus against Anthony, who was harassing him – though it is true that at the end he refused to collaborate with the killer of Caesar. Instead of describing battles, the biographer lingers on matters of character: his supposed cowardice in the first battle, according to Anthony, and intrepid performance in the second (**Aug.** 10. 2-4), as well as his ambition and opportunism, in accordance with the rumours about his responsibility for the convenient deaths of the consuls Hirtius and Pansa¹³, in order to take over the consular armies (**Aug.** 11).

He reduces the formation of the second triumvirate to a *societas*¹⁴ with Anthony and Lepidus (13.1), thereby placing it on a par with the alliance between Caesar, Pompey and Crassus. And despite the importance of the battles of the Philippi, Suetonius does not describe the manoeuvres but focuses instead on the events that followed it, though in their most tragic version. He says that Octavian sent the head of Brutus to Rome to be thrown at the feet of the statue of Caesar, and outraged prisoners of high stock (**Aug.** 13.1)¹⁵. It should be noted that, according to Plutarch (**Ant.** 22.7 and **Brut.** 53.3; cf. Gascou, 1984, p. 178), Anthony granted proper funeral rites to Brutus, and it does not appear that the two triumvirs acted in such different

ways; and Dio (47.49.2), for his part, mentions that Anthony presided over the funerals and the head of Brutus was sent to Rome, though it never arrived because of a shipwreck, without mentioning Octavian's responsibility (Gascou, 1984, p. 183). Suetonius also notably omits the shipwreck, thereby giving the impression that the revenge was complete.

In this part (Aug. 13-15), the main theme is not the wars of the Philippi and Perusia in themselves, but rather Octavian's cruelty and the grave dangers he escaped (a recurrent topos in Suetonius, revealing the whims of Fortune), ending with a somewhat unbelievable account of cruelty (Aug. 15)¹⁶:

Perusia capta in plurimos animaduertit, orare ueniam uel excusare se conantibus una uoce occurrens 'moriendum esse'. Scribunt quidam trecentos ex dediticiis electos utriusque ordinis ad aram Diuo Iulio extructam Idibus Martiis hostiarum more mactatos.

After the capture of Perusia he took vengeance on many, meeting all attempts to beg for pardon or to make excuses with the one reply, 'You must die.' Some write that three hundred men of both orders were selected from the prisoners of war and sacrificed on the Ides of March like so many victims at the altar raised to the Deified Julius.

Similarly, the description of the war with Sextus Pompey focuses on the subject of military weakness (Aug. 16.2-3) and the dangers he faced at that time¹⁷. As regards his relationship with Mark Anthony, he compresses the various advances and withdrawals that took place between 41 and 33 AD into a short phrase¹⁸, without even mentioning the treaties agreed in Brundisium (in 40) and Tarento (in 37). In fact, he jumps straight the events of 32-31 BC, stressing Octavian's determination but also his tolerance towards his rival's clients. He mentions the victory at Actium (Aug. 17.3), but, as usual, he does not describe the battle, preferring instead to give time to the tragic outcome of the lovers and the protagonist's ambivalent attitudes (Aug. 17.4-5):

Et Antonium quidem seras condiciones pacis temptantem ad mortem adegit uiditque mortuum. Cleopatrae, quam seruatam triumpho magno opere cupiebat, etiam psyllus admouit, qui uenenum ac uirus exugerent, quod perisse morsu aspidis putabatur. Ambo-

bus communem sepulturae honorem tribuit ac tumulum ab ipsis incohatum perfici iussit. Antonium iuuenem, maiorem de duobus Fulvia genitis, simulacro Diui Iuli, ad quod post multas et irritas preces confugerat, abreptum interemit. Item Caesarionem, quem ex Caesare patre Cleopatra concepisse praedicabat, retractum e fuga supplicio adfecit. Reliquos Antoni[i] reginaeque communes liberos non secus ac necessitudine iunctos sibi et conseruauit et mox pro condicione cuiusque sustinuit ac fouit.

Although Antony tried to make terms at the eleventh hour, Augustus forced him to commit suicide, and viewed his corpse. He greatly desired to save Cleopatra alive for his triumph, and even had Psylli brought to her, to suck the poison from her wound, since it was thought that she had died from the bite of an asp. He allowed them both the honour of burial, and in the same tomb, giving orders that the mausoleum which they had begun should be finished. The young Antony, the elder of Fulvia's two sons, he dragged from the image of the Deified Julius, to which he had fled after many vain entreaties, and slew him. Caesarion, too, whom Cleopatra fathered on Caesar, he overtook in his flight, brought back, and put to death. But he spared the rest of the offspring of Antony and Cleopatra, and afterwards maintained and reared them according to their several positions, as carefully as if they were his own kin.

Suetonius also mentions in this section the number of conspiracies that threatened him (**Aug.** 19) and the foreign wars (20-23). He paints a portrait (**Aug.** 21.2) of *uirtus* and *moderatio*, showing Augustus as promoter of diplomatic relations with faraway peoples (Indians and Scythians) and retrieving Crassus' and Anthony's standards from the Parthians (**Aug.** 21.3); as well as the policy of peace, symbolized by the closure of the temple of Janus (**Aug.** 22). He also lists the defeats, with dramatic highlighting of that of Quinctilius Varus in the forest of Teutoburg in 9 AD (**Aug.** 23.2):

Vouit et magnos ludos Ioui Optimo Maximo, si res. p. in meliorem statum uertisset: quod factum Cimbrico Marsicoque bello erat. Adeo denique consternatum ferunt, ut per continuos menses barba capilloque summisso caput interdum foribus illideret uociferans: 'Quintili Vare, legiones redde!' diemque cladis quotannis maestum habuerit ac lugubrem.

He also vowed great games to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, in case the condition of the commonwealth should improve, a thing which had been done in the Cimbric and Marsic wars. In fact, they say that he was so greatly affected that for several months in succession he cut neither his beard nor his hair, and sometimes he would dash his head against a door, crying: 'Quintilius Varus, give me back my legions!' And he observed the day of the disaster each year as one of sorrow and mourning.

As he had done for Caesar, Suetonius also adds a section about Augustus' relationship with the army, discipline and capacity for command (**Aug.** 24-25), illustrated with copied examples.

2.2. Civil responsibilities (26-60)

The handling of the magistracies (26-28)¹⁹ (consulate, triumvirate, autocratic government) requires analepsis, which means a return to the more negative image of Augustus' attitude during the triumvirate and the proscriptions. The biographer now introduces elements that had been omitted in the vague reference to the formation of the triumvirate (13.1). He says that although Augustus had initially opposed the proscriptions, he later applied them more rigorously and was the only one to make the effort to ensure that no one was spared (**Aug.** 27.1)²⁰. This is a darker view than that given by most of the other witnesses, perhaps in order to stress the contrast with his future attitude²¹. Suetonius adds that Octavian even proscribed C. Thoranus, his father's colleague and his own tutor, but says nothing about the most famous of all the proscribed: Cicero²². Perhaps in this case he was reluctant to recall the undignified circumstances surrounding the great orator's end²³. It was not that the morbid descriptions would degrade the biographer; rather, in this case, it was because Octavian (the protagonist of this text) had not been directly responsible for the execution.

The twice-abandoned intention of restoring the Republic inspires Suetonius to a comment which, though a little elliptical, seems to suggest approval: *dubium euentu meliore an uoluntate* (**Aug.** 28.1) «it is not easy to say whether his intentions or their results were the better»²⁴. Although Augustus himself claims in the *Res Gestae* (34) that he transferred the *respublica* from his power to the *arbitrium* of the senate and the Roman

people, Suetonius, a realist, does not follow him, nor does he even evoke here the notion of the principate – this was a regime that was totally new²⁵. The biographer gives the word to Augustus through an edict, in which he presents himself as the “author” (*auctor*) of a “new regime” (*nouus status*) and wishes to be remembered as such at the hour of his death (**Aug.** 28.2)²⁶:

‘Ita mihi saluam 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 uestigio suo fundamenta rei p. quae iecero. Fecitque ipse se compotem uoti nisus omni modo, ne quem noui status paeniteret.

His good intentions he not only expressed from time to time, but put them on record as well in an edict in the following words: ‘May it be my privilege to establish the State in a firm and secure position, and reap from that act the fruit that I desire; but only if I may be called the author of the best possible government, and bear with me the hope when I die that the foundations which I have laid for the State will remain unshaken.’ And he realized his hope by making every effort to prevent any dissatisfaction with the new régime.

Augustus is labelled an *auctor* to underline that this was a new order based on *auctoritas*²⁷, which in this case is congruent with what Augustus claims in that passage of the *Res Gestae* (34), that he is above everyone in authority but not in power.

From here, the biographer describes the internal and external policies of Augustus’ long administration (28.3-60; Baldwin, 1983, p. 241-3): the construction work, governance of the city, religion, security, justice, legislation, senate, elections, supplies, entertainment, provincial administration, distribution of military forces, the postal service, imperial cult, rejection of dictatorship and examples of moderation. All these aspects are, as usual, illustrated with examples and famous sayings by his subject.

The account of Augustus’ activities in government is lengthy (as indeed was the government), but it helps to distract the reader from his cruel acts as an ambitious young man and replace them with a new portrait, formed from his numerous acts of good governance. This suggests a process of maturation, which culminates in accounts of *clementia* (51) and *ciuitas* (52-56) that contrast with the cruel attitudes of his youth. In this biographic

“fiction”, the ambition for power made Octavian into a cruel and calculating man, while the exercise of it made him magnanimous, or revealed his true essence. The biographer does not question the sincerity of the change²⁸; this is a practical lesson in political morality. He implicitly approves of the emperor’s rather suspect theatricality when he falls to his knees and bears his chest, begging the people not to insist on giving him a dictatorship (**Aug.** 52), horrified at the servile title of *dominus*, and censuring by an edict the greeting “*O dominum aequum et bonum*” and the applause that this provoked (**Aug.** 53.1). This greeting had been pronounced during a mime. Later, Augustus admitted that it had represented the mime of his life. For now, Suetonius lets us know that Augustus was rewarded with general esteem and seeks to show that this esteem is sincere (**Aug.** 57.1)²⁹. In the climax of this section, there are manifestations of appreciation, presented gradually as spontaneous acts of various kinds (**Aug.** 57.1)³⁰. The process culminates with the attribution of the honorific title *Pater patriae*, which corresponds, in parallel, to the apex of the consolidation of Augustus’ power (**Aug.** 58.1). From an action that would have been calculated and arranged at the end of a long process³¹, Suetonius creates a spontaneous scene that is almost moving (**Aug.** 58)³²:

Patris Patriae cognomen uniuersi repentino maximoque consensum detulerunt ei: prima plebs legatione Antium missa; dein, quia non recipiebat, ineunti Romae spectacula frequens et laureata; mox in curia senatus, neque decreto neque adclamatione, sed per Valerium Messalam is mandantibus cunctis: ‘Quod bonum’, inquit, ‘faustumque sit tibi domuique tuae, Caesar Auguste! Sic enim nos perpetuam felicitatem rei p. et laeta huic precari existimamus: senatus te consentiens cum populo R. consulat patriae patrem’. Cui lacrimans respondit Augustus his uerbis — ipsa enim, sicut Messalae, posui: ‘Compos factus uotorum meorum, p. c., quid habeo aliud deos immortales precari, quam ut hunc consensum uestrum ad ultimum finem uitae mihi perferre liceat?’.

The whole body of citizens with a sudden unanimous impulse proffered him the title of Father of his Country: first the commons, by a deputation sent to Antium, and then, because he declined it, again at Rome as he entered the theatre, which they attended in throngs, all wearing laurel wreaths: the senate afterwards in the House, not by a decree or by acclamation, but through Valerius Messala. He,

speaking for the whole body, said: 'Good fortune and divine favour attend thee and thy house, Caesar Augustus; for thus we feel that we are praying for lasting prosperity for our country and happiness for our city. The senate in accord with the people of Rome hails thee Father of thy Country.' Then Augustus with tears in his eyes replied as follows (and I have given his exact words, as I did those of Messala): 'Having attained my highest hopes, Fathers of the Senate, what more have I to ask of the immortal gods than that I may retain this same unanimous approval of yours to the very end of my life.'

It is that, with this title, he is fulfilling the wish that he had made earlier to be the *auctor* of the *optimus status*³³. There follow other public manifestations of recognition presented on a gradation/cline/continuum ranging from anonymous ('some heads of families', 'some cities in Italy', 'most of the provinces') culminating in 'friendly kings and allies'³⁴ – amplified by the generalization: to say that each king (*singuli in suo quisque regno*) founded a city with the name of Cesareaia seems to be an exaggeration designed to accentuate Augustus' popularity (**Aug.** 60)³⁵.

3. The handling of his private life

3.1. Descriptive categories

As he had already done for Caesar (**Jul.** 44.4), Suetonius uses a *partitio* or *diuisio*³⁶ to clarify the *per species* organization, summarizing what he has previously presented and introducing what follows (**Aug.** 61.1)³⁷, namely his subject's private life³⁸: family, customs and habits till the end of his life. He concludes that, apart from his love for Livia (**Aug.** 62.2)³⁹, Augustus was a victim of *Fortuna*, which robbed him of happiness and hopes of descendants and of discipline of a household (**Aug.** 65.1)⁴⁰, with the opprobrium of the daughter and granddaughter, the two Juliae, whom he was obliged to exile, and the death of his grandsons. Referring to Julia's demands, Suetonius does not explore the political question of disobeying laws, which Augustus had imposed to great opposition (**Aug.** 34.1)⁴¹; he does not give attention to the actions of the women in themselves; he does not discuss the veracity of the claims, nor condemn their behavior. He remains focused on Augustus' reactions (VIDÉN, 1993, p. 85), leading to a dramatic exploration of a father's suffering, unable to bear his children's dishonour (**Aug.** 65.2):

Aliquando autem patientius mortem quam dedecora suorum tulit. Nam C. Lucique casu non adeo fractus, de filia absens ac libello per quaestorem recitato notum senatui fecit abstinuitque congressu hominum diu prae pudore, etiam de necanda deliberavit. Certe cum sub idem tempus una ex consciis liberta Phoebe suspendio uitam finisset, 'maluisse se' ait 'Phoebes patrem fuisse'.

He bore the death of his kin with far more resignation than their misconduct. For he was not greatly broken by the fate of Gaius and Lucius, but he informed the senate of his daughter's fall through a letter read in his absence by a quaestor, and for very shame would meet no one for a long time, and even thought of putting her to death. At all events, when one of her confidantes, a freedwoman called Phoebe, hanged herself at about that same time, he said: 'I would rather have been Phoebe's father.'

The same thing happens with the obscure *abdicatio* and exile of Agrippa, posthumous son of Agrippa and Julia, who had been adopted by Augustus shortly before, together with Tiberius. Suetonius transmits the official reason without comment: the *ingenium sordidum ac ferox* of Agrippa (**Aug.** 65.1 and 65.4)⁴². Even more obscure is the exile of the granddaughter, prevented even from acknowledging and raising the son that she had borne after she had been sentenced (**Aug.** 65.4)⁴³: this triple tragedy remains a mystery. The fact that Suetonius, as a result of his *per species* organization, deals with the three destinies together contributes to increase the *pathos*. The monarch's suffering is also explored in relation to the betrayals by friends, such as the trial of Cornelius Gallus, the disgraced prefect of Egypt, whose misfortune he bewails (**Aug.** 66.2), '*Quod sibi soli non liceret amicis, quatenus uellet, irasci*' ("because he alone could not set what limits he chose to his anger with his friends"); but also the susceptibility of Agrippa who, because of alleged preference for Marcellus, withdraws to Mytilene, and the indiscretion of Maecenas, who told his wife state secrets (**Aug.** 66.3).

The **Life** becomes burlesque when Augustus himself breaks the laws that he himself had proposed. In fact, this **Life** seems to hover between tragedy and comedy (NÉRAUDAU, 1996, p. 26-8). The *uarius infamia* of Augustus is presented in a lighthearted fashion. The accusation that he was effeminate and prostituted himself to Caesar and Hirtius

is made by Sextus Pompey, Mark Anthony and Lucius Anthony⁴⁴. These seem to have been *topoi* of Roman political invective, taken from the political context and integrated into the character of the biographed subject.

In the same way, Augustus' undeniable adulteries, justified as an efficient form of spying, are exemplified with accusations from Anthony, taken from the context of the polemic⁴⁵, and finishing with the transcription of a letter from Anthony which serves the purpose of informing the reader about Augustus' mistresses and of the humour, which results from the frankness of the language and the use of obscenities (**Aug.** 69.2)⁴⁶. Also the *vox populi* expresses disapproval, with comic verses, a sacrilegious "feast of the twelve gods", in which Augustus dressed up as Apollo, as well as his taste for Corinthian vases and his dice-playing habit (**Aug.** 70.1-2)⁴⁷. The worst governors are libidinous and exert their tyranny also in the field of sexual domination, through the abuse of matrons, incest, (which remind us of the unions of the Egyptian kings), sodomy and sadism. But the inclusion of the category of the emperor's sex life into the biographical structure provides a key to our understanding of the text: in the case of Augustus, as in that of Caesar, the category is included in the description of private life (**Aug.** 61.1, cf. **Jul.** 44.4), as we have seen by the content of the *diuisio* that precedes it, which makes it appear more objective and neutral⁴⁸.

Augustus himself refutes the charge of effeminacy with *castitas*, and that of luxury with scorn. But Suetonius wants to excuse Augustus also of adultery and of a taste for gambling: the abuse of the wife of a consul, in front of her husband (**Aug.** 69.1), is not presented with the same gravity as is attributed to the *monstrum* Caligula (**Cal.** 25.1 and 36.2; cf. BALDWIN, 1983, p. 245). As regards the vices, the change between the order in which they are presented initially (sodomy, adultery, luxury, gambling) and when they are refuted (sodomy, luxury, adultery, gambling) seems designed to excuse those that cannot be refuted – adultery and gambling – by leaving them to the end, as if they were minor (71.1). Suetonius even presents them, somewhat paradoxically, as rumours (*ut ferunt ... aleae rumorem*) which are ultimately confirmed, in an attempt to diminish them; the lust is downplayed with the complacency of Livia, as it was said that she supplied him with virgins to deflower (**Aug.** 71.1)⁴⁹; addiction to gambling, with Augustus' frankness that 'he in no way feared the rumour and he played sincerely and openly in order to distract himself' and confessed in letters to Tiberius and Julia that he was passionate about the game of dice (**Aug.** 71. 2-3.). The

excusing is reinforced immediately by an example (**Aug.** 72.1): *In ceteris partibus uitae continentissimum constat ac sine suspicione ullius uitii* (“In the other details of his life it is generally agreed that he was most temperate and without even the suspicion of any fault”). At this point in the **Life**, the biographer no longer wants to accentuate his subject’s negative features and the long portrait that follows is one of moderation (72-78).

Hints of the divine begin to emerge in the section devoted to his physical appearance, not only because of his *forma eximia*, resistant to time (**Aug.** 79.1)⁵⁰, but particularly because of the serenity of the face that could deter a killer; by the *quiddam diuini uigoris* of his gaze, which causes his interlocutors to lower their eyes, and by the *commoditas et aequitas membrorum* which make him seem bigger than he actually was⁵¹, reminiscent of his tutelary god, Apollo (**Aug.** 79.2-3; cf. GRIMAL, 1986, p. 734)⁵². There seems to be tension between the deification of the image, which was already part of the tradition⁵³, and the biographer’s realism. Suetonius composed first the physical portrait of the god (79) and then the man with his weaknesses (80-82).

After this, Suetonius introduces, in laudatory tone, Augustus’ intellectual activity: the cultivation of eloquence and the liberal arts (84-89), as befits good emperors. This section allows Suetonius to show off his stylistic tendencies, as he suggests reasons for his implicit adherence to Augustus’ *genus eloquendi elegans et temperatum* (**Aug.** 86)⁵⁴, setting himself apart from the two main trends of his time (an archaizing Atticism, and the Asiaticism of the new fashion, cultivated by Seneca and the school of Lucan)⁵⁵.

The section *religio* describes Augustus’ respect for the gods, whose favour he obtains, as well as his own superhuman nature. It seeks to demonstrate that many of his past successes were due to divine protection and to the observance of dreams and portents, such as the battle of Philippi: warned by the dream of a friend leaving the tent where he claimed to be staying, he saves himself as the camp and his tent were subsequently attacked (**Aug.** 91.1-2). In relation to foreign cults, he shows a reverence for religious practices *ueteres ac praeceptae*, and for the Eleusinian mysteries, but despises the rest (the bull-deity Apis, Judaism) (**Aug.** 93).

This portrait of the *religiosus* who respects the Roman tradition serves as a pretext to recount the various prodigies that marked out Augustus’ life as predestined. At this point, the *per species* organization acquires

the appearance of a long (94-97) analepsis, flashing back to important moments from his early life, and even from before he was born (**Aug.** 94.1)⁵⁶, which are analysed from a supernatural perspective, accompanied by the respective signs. From this messianic perspective, Augustus is presented as an awaited king, whose coming was predicted long ago (**Aug.** 94.2-3) and his conception is associated to Apollo (**Aug.** 94.4)⁵⁷:

In Asclepiadis Mendetis Theologumenon libris lego, Atiam, cum sollemne Apollinis sacrum media nocte uenisset, posita in templo lectica, dum ceterae matronae dormirent, obdormisse; draconem repente irrepsisse ad eam pauloque post egressum; illam expergefactam quasi a concubitu mariti purificasse se; et statim in corpore eius extitisse maculam uelut picti draconis nec potuisse umquam exigi, adeo ut mox publicis balineis perpetuo abstinerit; Augustum natum mense decimo et ob hoc Apollinis filium existimatum. Eadem Atia, prius quam pareret, somniauit intestina sua ferri ad sidera explicarique per omnem terrarum et caeli ambitum. Somniauit et pater Octavius utero Atiae iubar solis exortum.

I have read the following story in the books of Asclepias of Mendes entitled Theologumena. When Atia had come in the middle of the night to the solemn service of Apollo, she had her litter set down in the temple and fell asleep, while the rest of the matrons also slept. On a sudden a serpent glided up to her and shortly went away. When she awoke, she purified herself, as if after the embraces of her husband, and at once there appeared on her body a mark in colours like a serpent, and she could never get rid of it; so that presently she ceased ever to go to the public baths. In the tenth month after that Augustus was born and was therefore regarded as the son of Apollo. Atia too, before she gave him birth, dreamed that her vitals were borne up to the stars and spread over the whole extent of land and sea, while Octavius dreamed that the sun rose from Atia's womb.

Divine conception is of course a *topos* used for various heroes, including Alexander the Great (PLUTARCH. **Alex.** 2.6-3.2)⁵⁸. Many other prodigies followed throughout his life, presaging a grand destiny. Belief in this portents gave Augustus an oracular wisdom (96), prior knowledge of the outcome of all wars including the battle of Philippi, when the ghost of Caesar

announced the victory (**Aug.** 96.1)⁵⁹; while in Actium a donkey driver called Euryches (“fortunate”) with a donkey called Nikon (“victorious”) appeared in his path, to which he later dedicated a sculpture (**Aug.** 96.2)⁶⁰. The omens are mystified in the political propaganda, but Suetonius shows no skepticism. This list of signs prepares the ground for Augustus’ apotheosis.

3.2. The death genre: the *mimus vitae*

The account of the death is presaged by omens (**Aug.** 97.1)⁶¹, signs which also indicate to Augustus the date of his own death (97). The good emperors are given dignified deaths in Suetonius. Augustus’s last days are a kind of withdrawal so that he and the family can prepare for the passing. In the context of the trip to Campania (to accompany Tiberius to Beneventum, as he was leaving for Illyria), Suetonius inserts an episode that implies world acknowledgement of Augustus’ power (**Aug.** 98.2):

Forte Puteolanum sinum praeteruehenti uectores nautaeque de nauī Alexandrina, quae tantum quod appulerat, candidati coronatique et tura libantes fausta omina et eximias laudes congesserant: ‘per illum se uiuere, per illum nauigare, libertate atque fortunīs per illum frui’.

As he sailed by the gulf of Puteoli, it happened that from an Alexandrian ship which had just arrived there, the passengers and crew, clad in white, crowned with garlands, and burning incense, lavished upon him good wishes and the highest praise, saying that it was through him that they lived, through him that they sailed the seas, and through him that they enjoyed their liberty and their fortunes.

The rhythm of the invocation and its trappings (vestments, flowers, incense) suggest that this is a liturgical ceremony. Most probably it is the expression of a religious and political creed, which takes up a theme that is recurrent in Augustan propaganda: universal peace and the safety of the seas⁶². His cult extended to the east, where divinization was more easily recognized. In the countryside, where he spent his last days, there is a synthesis between Hellenic and Roman culture, symbolized in the narrative by a symbolic change of clothing and language between Greeks and Latins at the suggestion of the “monarch”, and his attendance of the Greek custom

of games of the ephebes of Capri. On the island, he relaxes in the company of his friends, Livia and Tiberius (who is leaving for Illyria).

The long secret talk that he has with Tiberius (who has been ordered home urgently), his last official activity, creates some mystery in the passage of authority and generates some rumours about Livia's intervention in the transmission of power, which Suetonius omits so as not to mar the perfection of this death⁶³. Tiberius' position as successor seems at this time so secure that perhaps such cares were unjustified (as Carter points out, 1986, p. 204)⁶⁴, but there could always exist the danger of a revolt⁶⁵. We should also remember that the situation was unusual as there were no precedents for this succession. But such reflections do not concern the biographer. The account of Augustus' last day is assimilated to that of a wise man (Aug. 99-100.1):

Supremo die identidem exquirens, an iam de se tumultus foris esset, petito speculo capillum sibi comi ac malas labantes corrigi praecepit et admissos amicos percontatus, 'ecquid iis uideretur mimum uitae commode transegisse', adiecit et clausulam: ἐπεὶ δὲ πάνυ καλῶς πέπαισται, δότε κρότον /καὶ πάντες ἡμᾶς μετὰ χαρᾶς προπέμψατε'. Omnibus deinde dimissis, dum aduenientes ab urbe de Drusi filia aegra interrogat, repente in osculis Liuiiae et in hac uoce defecit: 'Liuiia, nostri coniugii memor uiue ac uale!' Sortitus exitum facilem et qualem semper optauerat. Nam fere quotiens audisset cito ac nullo cruciatu defunctum quempiam, sibi et suis εὐθανασίαν similem – hoc enim et uerbo uti solebat – precabatur. Vnum omnino ante efflatam animam signum alienatae mentis ostendit, quod subito pauefactus a quadraginta se iuuenibus abripi questus est. Id quoque magis praesagium quam mentis deminutio fuit, siquidem totidem milites praetoriani extulerunt eum in publicum. Obiit in cubiculo eodem, quo pater Octauius, duobus Sextis, Pompeio et Ap<p>uleio, cons. XIII. Kal. Septemb. hora diei nona, septuagesimo et sexto aetatis anno, diebus V et XXX minus.

On the last day of his life he asked every now and then whether there was any disturbance without on his account; then calling for a mirror, he had his hair combed and his falling jaws set straight. After that, calling in his friends and asking whether it seemed to them that he had played the comedy of life fitly, he added the tag:

'Since well I've played my part, all clap your hands/ And from the stage dismiss me with applause.'

Then he sent them all off, and while he was asking some newcomers from the city about the daughter of Drusus, who was ill, he suddenly passed away as he was kissing Livia, uttering these last words: «Live mindful of our wedlock, Livia, and farewell,» thus blessed with an easy death and such a one as he had always longed for: For almost always on hearing that anyone had died swiftly and painlessly, he prayed that he and his might have a like euthanasia, for that was the term he was wont to use. He gave but one single sign of wandering before he breathed his last, calling out in sudden terror that forty men were carrying him off. And even this was rather a premonition than a delusion, since it was that very number of soldiers of the pretorian guard that carried him forth to lie in state. He died in the same room as his father Octavius, in the consulship of two Sextuses, Pompeius and p283Appuleius, on the fourteenth day before the Kalends of September at the ninth hour; just thirty-five days before his seventy-sixth birthday.

For the sake of posterity, there remains that clause of comedy or mime with which Suetonius makes Augustus close his own life. Augustus liked comedy (particularly ancient comedy: cf. **Aug.** 89.1), and used a formula which, though the text is very corrupt in the manuscripts⁶⁶, seems to be the end of a mime⁶⁷. It could have been an improvisation by the emperor himself, who found it easy to compose verse in Greek (**Aug.** 98.4; cf. KESSISSOGLU, 1988, p. 385-8). If it was a royal dictum of the emperor, it may not even have been pronounced at the last moment, but only integrated into that context by tradition.

Augustus seems to suggest that this whole life was a performance⁶⁸, so he maintains the *mise-en-scène* until the last minute, as if he had been preparing for this finale for a long time (NÉRAUDAU, 1996, p. 8-9). However, the association of Augustus' life to a mime does not imply (also because it is assumed by the character) disapproval on the part of Suetonius (as would occur in other cases). Rather, he seems to be affirming that the life of this man was a realistic representation, with good and bad aspects, although the good exceeded the bad, and for this deserved applause⁶⁹.

It is significant that, despite Suetonius' predilection for the most scandalous versions, there is no indication of assassination here as there is in

Tacitus and Dio Cassius⁷⁰, either because he did not believe in that possibility or in order not to stain Augustus' death, which had to be immaculate. Moreover, this death is one more element in the construction of a myth.

To sum up, when Suetonius wrote the **Life of Augustus** over a hundred years after his death, the *princeps* already belonged to the realm of legend and had acquired supernatural proportions. Suetonius presents the known facts, reinterpreted in the light of divinity. It is the singularity of re-encountering god, paradoxically in a mortal with all his defects. Octavian, like Julius Caesar, represented himself as predestined from the outset (GRIMAL, 1986, p. 729-38). The remarkable contrast between the cruel young man that he was and the magnanimous *princeps* that he became has a positive effect: for while there are moments in the first part that transmit a very unfavourable image of the young Octavian, the reader gradually forgets these as the chapters unfold, with the accounts of his effective government, clemency and modesty, experiencing admiration for the founder of the new state. After being drawn in, the reader is invited to sympathize with the emperor's numerous misfortunes, also listed by Pliny (**Nat.** 7.46). This is not just a matter of art for art's sake; there is an imperial ideal implicit in the way the biographer organizes the events. Thus, Augustus becomes a model for many emperors. But it is also clear that, in order to properly understand and appreciate the **Lives**, they need to be read continuously as an autonomous genre of history, or else they may come across like a kind of "patchwork quilt" (indeed, Suetonius has often been accused of this by readers that have treated his works as a historical source to be perused in a spasmodic way).

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Notas

¹ We want to express our gratitude to Fábio Lessa, for having invited us to submit this study to **Phoînix**. The research was developed under the project UID/ELT/00196/2013, funded by the Portuguese FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology. This analysis reworks and expands a previous portuguese version of the same subject: BRANDÃO, J. L.; LEÃO, D. Augusto em Suetônio. In: MORAIS, R.; BANDEIRA, M.; SOUSA, M. J. (Eds.). **Celebração do Bimilenário de Augusto Ad Nationes**, Ethnous Kallaikon. Braga, 2016, p. 17-31.

² Much of the material in this study has been inspired by Brandão (2009, *passim*).

³ An existing altar, consecrated by Octavian, serves as the pretext for an account of a mythical fact with etiological value. Before the announcement of an enemy attack, that ancestor of Augustus interrupted the sacrifice to Mars in his urgency to get to battle and removed the half-raw entrails from the fire. He emerged from the battle victorious. Thereafter, by decree, sacrifices to Mars were conducted in the same fashion and the remains offered to the Octavians (**Aug.** 1).

⁴ The conflict with Mark Anthony started with a controversy about the social standing of Augustus' paternal grandfather and great-grandfather (**Aug.** 2.3.) and his

maternal ascendancy, joined by the accusations of Cassius of Parma (**Aug.** 4.2). See Grimal (1986, p. 736) and Gasco (1984, p. 584-7).

⁵ “(...) *reperitus est iacens contra solis exortum*” (**Aug.** 94.6). According to Grimal (1986, p. 737), the union with the sun, as practised by the pharaohs and which announced the emperor’s divine predestination, was applied to Augustus. Hence, this legend could only have appeared after Egypt had been integrated into the Empire.

⁶ The messianic *topos* of a place of origin that is surprisingly modest for such a great destiny is also explored with relation to Vespasian, presented as a saviour of the state after the civil wars of 68-69 AD.

⁷ The English Translations are those by J. C. Rolf (Loeb Classical edition, 1913), which are available online: <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Suetonius/12Caesars/Augustus*.html>.

⁸ This distinction had already been made in the previous **Life** when he claimed: *Ordo et summa rerum, quas deinceps gessit, sic se habent* (**Jul.** 34.1). But, further on, he adopts another form of exposition: *Talia agentem atque meditantem mors praeuenit. De qua prius quam dicam, ea quae ad formam et habitum et cultum et mores, nec minus quae ad ciuilia et bellica eius studia pertineant, non alienum erit summam exponere* (**Jul.** 44.4)

⁹ This position is reiterated again in the biography of Tiberius (**Tib.** 42.1). On the contrary, it is sometimes necessary to avoid the profusion of examples and choose the most representative (**Tib.** 61.2). Cf. also **Cl.** 29.1 and **Cal.** 37.3. See Wallace-Hadrill (1984, p. 10-15); Cizek (1977, p. 49-52); Della Corte (1967, p. 191-193); Townend (1967, p. 84-86); Grimal (1986, p. 730); Lounsbury (1987, p. 79-81); Power (2014, p. 8-9); Hurley (2014, p. 23-27).

¹⁰ This part is divided into: *bella ciuilia quinque gessit* (**Aug.** 9); *externa bella duo omnino per se gessit* (**Aug.** 20); *graues ignominias cladesque duas omnino ... accepit* (**Aug.** 23); *in re militari et comutauit multa et instituit* (**Aug.** 24).

¹¹ Plutarch verbalizes the difficulty of sometimes separating the two at the beginning of the **Life of Galba** (2.5), where he distinguishes between “pragmatic history” and biography. On the characteristics of biography in Suetonius and Plutarch, see Brandão (2012, p. 18 ss).

¹² As Baldwin (1983, p. 248) notes.

¹³ The two consuls die in this war. Pansa is wounded in the battle of *Forum Gallorum*, near Mutina, on the 15th April 43 BC and dies afterwards; Hirtius is killed in the battle of Mutina on the 21st April.

¹⁴ This is the same term as he uses for the alliance between the inappropriately named 1st triumvirate: *ac societatem cum utroque iniit* (**Jul.** 19.2).

¹⁵ On the other hand, he does not mention Cassius’ suicide at the end of the first battle

[cf. Titus Livius (**Per.**) 124.], perhaps because that would decentralize the action.

¹⁶ Cf. Dio (48.14.4). Suetonius is harder on Octavian: he omits the pardon granted to Lucius Anthony and adds the note *moriendum esse* which does not appear in Dio, as Gascou, 1984, 197, has observed. Carter, 1982, 104 notes that the fact is lacking in verisimilitude and that Suetonius himself did not believe in the history.

¹⁷ In the war of Sicily, he vanquished Sextus Pompey at Mylae and Naulochus; but when the battle started, he was soundly asleep. For this, Anthony accused him of lack of courage. This sleep would of course have been rather unbecoming if the account were not so closely calqued upon a similar anecdote that is told about Alexander the Great on the eve of the battle of Gaugamela (PLU. **Al.** 32). In fact, Octavian was not even on board. It was Agrippa that was in command. Suetonius seems to have combined an account from Octavian's propaganda with another piece of counterpropaganda put about by Anthony concerning his rival's alleged fear. See Franco (1989, p. 257-64).

¹⁸ *M. Antonii societatem semper dubiam et incertam reconciliationibusque uariis male fociatam abruptit tandem* (**Aug.** 17.1).

¹⁹ *Magistratus atque honores et ante tempus et quosdam noui generis perpetuosque cepit* (**Aug.** 26.1).

²⁰ *In quo restitit quidem aliquamdiu collegis ne qua fieret proscriptio, sed incepta utroque acerbius exercuit. (...) solus magno opere contendit ne cui parceretur.*

²¹ In fact, Velleius Paterculus (2.66) and Plutarch (**Ant.** 20-21; **Brut.** 27-28; **Cic.** 46-49) censure Anthony and Lepidus for excess in the proscriptions, while Dio Cassius (47.3-13) excuses Octavian, saying that he saved many people.

²² Concerning his responsibility for the proscriptions and the omission of Cicero, see Southern (1998, p. 55-9) and n. 14 (p. 217); McDermott (1972, p. 495-9). Suetonius had already omitted Cicero in 12 by involving him in the generic designation of *alii* to refer to those that called Octavian *puer*. Suetonius knew very well that Cicero had done that: he only had to read the letters (**Att.** 16.8.1; 16.11.6). McDermott (1972, p. 497), observes that Cicero never appears in Suetonius except as a final uncontested authority.

²³ We know that Suetonius admired Cicero, probably through Quintilian. Indeed, one of the lost works, referenced in the Suda, is a defence of Cicero's **De republica** against the attacks of Didymus. On Ciceronianism and Suetonius' second classicism, see Della Corte (1967, p. 29-53), and Cizek (1977, p. 14-25).

²⁴ Augustus' purpose of renouncing the Republic and the effects of the new regime were equally good, according to the interpretation given in the Loeb edition (ROLFE, 1913, p. 164 n.b), followed by Gascou (1984, p. 719). Langlands (2014, p. 113), stresses the ambiguity of the sentence.

²⁵ In fact, in *Cal.* 22.1, Suetonius speaks of a *species principatus*, showing his awareness that the name *princeps*, and, by extension, *principatus*, is a clever way to deceive the legalists, although in this part it also seems to be a way of negatively characterizing the most positive phase of Caligula's principate. See Gascoü (1984, p. 783-5).

²⁶ The edict appears to be more from the context of 17-16 BC, when a new era was inaugurated with the *Ludi Saeculares*, through the echoes of the vocabulary of minting. See Carter (1982, p. 128).

²⁷ Rowe (2013, p. 1-15), considers *auctoritas* as a metonymy for *princeps senatus*, a rank that Augustus achieved in 28 BC.

²⁸ Unlike Seneca (*Cl.* 1.9-11), who does not believe in this clemency. See Néraudau (1996, p. 17).

²⁹ *Pro quibus meritis quanto opere dilectus sit, facile est aestimare. Omitto senatus consulta, quia possunt uideri uel necessitate expressa uel uerecundia.*

³⁰ To obtain this effect, Suetonius has no qualms about simplifying (for example, he does not distinguish between the subscriptions made to raise statues to Augustus and which he uses to raise statues to the gods, and the donations/gifts/offers made in the place of subscriptions; or between the *aureus* that August accepts from each community and the denarius that he accepts from each person) or generalizing (he generalizes the acclamations from a single occurrence), as Gascoü (1984, p. 206-41) has shown.

³¹ See Baldwin (1983, p. 128); Gascoü (1984, p. 217); Southern (1998, p. 179-80).

³² Timonen (1993, p. 135-6), notes that "Suetonius succeeds in reconstructing a 'glory effect' by the use of direct oration and by emphasis on *consensus*". According to Gascoü (1984, p. 215-20), Suetonius would probably have drawn upon the autobiography of Messalla Corvinus, whose sentimental lyrical tone was more in accordance with his intentions to stress the spontaneity of the general esteem for Augustus.

³³ This continuum suggested by Suetonius seems to confirm the opinion of Salmon (1956, p. 456-78). According to that author, the title of *Pater Patriae*, attributed in 2 AD, normally seen as purely honorific, was actually the culmination of the evolution of Augustus' principate (more than in 19 BC, with the attribution of what Dio Cassius 54.10.5, calls 'power of the consuls'), as Augustus himself ended the *Res gestae* with his quotation as Father of the Country, giving the impression that this for him was the high point of his career.

³⁴ *... nonnulli patrum familiarum... quaedam Italiae ciuitates... prouinciarum ple-raeque (Aug. 59-60).*

³⁵ In addition, when Suetonius says that the kings came before Augustus wearing togae (a privilege reserved exclusively for those that had been granted Roman citi-

zenship) and without royal insignia, he seems to be amalgamating two different situations, in order to give the impression *quanto opere dilectus sit*, as Gascou (1984, p. 232-8; 240-1) says.

³⁶ A rhetorical resource introduced by Hortensius into Roman oratory, according to Cicero (**Brut.** 302; cf. **Div. Caec.** 45; **Inv.** 1.31). It was used by various Latin writers, including Cicero, and was already present in early biography in the **Epa-minondas** (**Ep.** 1.4) of Cornelius Nepos, and also in the **Ciropedia** (1.1.6) of Xenophon and the **Evagoras** (22) of Isocrates. According to Townend (1967, p. 84-7), this is the method of a grammarian turned biographer. See Wallace-Hadrill (1984, p. 44-9); Lewis (1991, p. 3663-4); Warmington (1999, p. IX).

³⁷ *Quoniam qualis in imperis ac magistratibus regendaque per terrarum orbem pace belloque re p. fuerit, exposui, referam nunc interiorem ac familiarem eius uitam quibusque moribus atque fortuna domi et inter suos egerit a iuuenta usque ad supremum uitae diem.*

³⁸ *Quoniam qualis in imperis ac magistratibus regendaque per terrarum orbem pace belloque re p. fuerit, exposui, referam nunc interiorem ac familiarem eius uitam quibusque moribus atque fortuna domi et inter suos egerit a iuuenta usque ad supremum uitae diem.* From **Jul.** 44.4 and **Aug.** 61.1, the distinction between public and private life is established. But this separation is far from being absolute and is diluted in the opposition between virtues and vices, as Cizek (1977, p. 62-4) suggests. See the introduction to Wardle's commentary (1994, p. 27).

³⁹ *... dilexitque et probauit unice ac preserueranter.*

⁴⁰ *Sed laetum eum atque fidentem et subole et diciplina domus Fortuna destituit;* the same idea appears in Tacitus (**Ann.** 3.24.2).

⁴¹ As for a possible conspiracy theory, Southern (1998, p. 179), does not believe that Julia was punished for being involved, along with his mistresses, in a plot against Augustus, but rather for the moral issue. It was not simply the question of infidelity to Tiberius, but the possibility that her sons, Gaius and Lucius, whom Augustus had adopted, would be children of an unknown father, if she had been unfaithful to Agrippa (cf. p. 149). Néraudau (1996, p. 227-31), is of a different opinion, arguing that Julia had about her a group of potential agitators: Julius Anthony, surviving son of Anthony and Fulvia, later condemned to death; Sempronius Gracchus and Scipio, nephew of Scribonia.

⁴² But it is not clear why Suetonius says that Agrippa, in exile, was handed over to a guard of soldiers, and Augustus prolonged his exile on the island by means of a senate decree. His excessive certainty makes the reader suspect that there may have been other reasons, perhaps connected to dynastic succession. If there was a conspiracy, it has not been proved. But Lucius Audasius and Asinius Epicadus had a plan to help Agrippa and Julia escape and to present them to the armies (**Aug.**

19.2): they were probably the executors of a plot in which perhaps Scribonia, who had accompanied his daughter Julia into exile, was accomplice, as Néraudau (1996, p. 250) holds. See also Levick (1972, p. 674-97); Southern (1998, p. 186 and n. 7 – p. 253-4).

⁴³ The charges must have been serious to justify the twenty years of exile that Tacitus refers to, **Ann.** 4.71.4. Her husband, Lucius Emilius Paulus, was accused of conspiracy (**Aug.** 19.1), but we do not know what happened to him; her daughter, Emilia Lepida, married to Claudius, was rejected while still a virgin, *quod parentes eius Augustum offenderant* (**Cl.** 26. 1).

⁴⁴ The people understand that the line spoken on stage about a priest of Cybele that played the Phrygian drum referred to Augustus: *'Videsne, ut cinaedus orbem digito temperat?'* (**Aug.** 68). The joke results from the double meaning of *orbe*, understood as “circle of the drum” and “globe of the earth”. The reference to the *Galli* (castrated priests of Cybele) as *cinaedi* is a *topos* of comedy and epigrammatic poetry.

⁴⁵ The motivation for these accusations is not in question – this was a counter-attack by Anthony before the accusation of immorality due to his connection with Cleopatra and repudiation of Octavia (cf. Southern, 1998, p. 92-3) –, but the contribution that they bring to our knowledge of Augustus' sex life.

⁴⁶ *Scribit etiam ad ipsum haec familiariter adhuc necdum plane inimicus aut hostis: 'quid te mutauit? quod reginam in eo? uxor mea est? nunc coepi an abhinc annos nouem? Tu deinde solam Drusillam inis? ita ualeas, uti tu, hanc epistulam cum leges, non inieris Tertullam aut Terentillam aut Rufillam aut Saluiam Titiseniam aut omnes. An refert, ubi et in qua arrigas?'*

⁴⁷ Gambling was prohibited in Rome except during the Saturnalia. Cf. Néraudau (1996, p. 113-14).

⁴⁸ With Vespasian, it is disguised in the description of daily life (**Ves.** 21), while for Tiberius, the category of sexual behaviour is placed between *cuncta simul uitia male diu dissimulata* (**Tib.** 42 onwards); for Caligula, it is placed in the description of the *monstrum* (**Cal.** 22 onwards); for Nero, between the *probra ac scelera* (**Nero** 19.3 onwards) – a subjective presentation, which presupposes an unfavourable moral judgment from the outset.

⁴⁹ Dio Cassius (58.2.5), says that Livia knew how to keep her husband, because she had the intelligence to tolerate his extravagances.

⁵⁰ *Forma fuit eximia et per omnes aetatis gradus uenustissima, quamquam et omnis lenocinii negligens.*

⁵¹ Suetonius (**Aug.** 79.2) notes, with a *tamen*, the contradiction between *statura breuis*, and the five feet and three quarters (1.70m) indicated by Julius Maratus, biographer of Augustus.

⁵² For Martin (1991, p. 53), body signs in the form of the Bear (**Aug.** 80), along with the signs of his mother Atia, presented later, contributed to the formation of the myth.

⁵³ See Martin (1991, p. 56) and Néraudau (1996, p. 23).

⁵⁴ Augustus avoids the *sententiarum ineptiae*, the *concinntitas* and *recondita uerba*; he accuses both the *cacozeli* and the *antiquarii* of falling into vices which contradict each other; he censures Maecenas for his so-called *myrobrechis cincinni*; he criticises Tiberius in search of *exoletae et reconditae uoces*; he attacks Anthony for writing *quae mirent potius homines quam intellegant*. As D'Anna observes (1954, p. 94-5), no other emperor gets from Suetonius such a precise and extensive analysis of his style.

⁵⁵ He censures the style of Tiberius, which was obscured by the *adfectatio et morositas nimia* (*Tib.* 70.1). Suetonius places himself between the two tendencies: the style that Asinius Pollio and Augustus recommended and which Cicero attributed to Caesar (**Jul.** 55): ... *aitque [Cicero ad Brutum] eum [scil. Caesarem] elegantem, splendidam quoque atque etiam magnificam et generosam quodam modo rationem dicendi tenere*. Despite his admiration for Cicero, Suetonius does not follow the Arpinate in form: he prefers a simple, clear and efficient style. See D'Anna (1954, p. 94-111); Della Corte (1967, p. 36-9); Cizek (1977, p. 14-20).

⁵⁶ *Et quoniam haec uentum est, non ab re fuerit subtexere, quae ei prius quam nasceretur et ipso natali die ac deinceps euenerint, quibus futura magnitudo eius et perpetua felicitas sperari animaduertique posset.*

⁵⁷ Cf. Dio Cassius (45.1). Apollo is opposed to Dionysus with whom Anthony is associated, cf. Néraudau (1996, 121).

⁵⁸ See Lorsch, (1997, p. 790-9); Martin (1991, p. 329-30). The same *topos* was used for other heroes: on the Greek side, Aristomenes and Arato (PAUSANIAS. 4.14.4-7); on the Roman side, Scipio the African (TITUS LIVIUS. 29.19.6; SILIUS ITALICUS. 13.634-644; AULUS GELLIUS. 6.1-5).

⁵⁹ In Dio Cassius (47.41.2), the ghost does not announce victory but that the battle will occur the next day. It seems that Suetonius transformed the Thessalian's vision into a presage of victory in order to prove his thesis of 96.1: *Quin et bellorum omnium euentus ante praesensit*. See Gascou (1984, p. 181-2).

⁶⁰ See Néraudau (1996, p. 138); Manfredini (1986, p. 481-3).

⁶¹ *Mors quoque eius, de qua dehinc dicam, diuinitasque post mortem euidentissimis ostentis praecognita est.*

⁶² Implying the princeps' assimilation to Jupiter, as the ultimate cause, as suggested by Rocca-Serra (1974, p. 671-80).

⁶³ Tacitus (**Ann.** 1.5.3-4) claims that Tiberius had already arrived at Illyria and was called back by an urgent letter from Livia. Moreover, there is the suspicion than

when he arrived back in Nola, Augustus had already died some days before, and that Livia had kept his death a secret in order to ensure her son's succession.

⁶⁴ Suetonius may actually have been deliberately correcting Tacitus' claim, whose work had been published just a few years before.

⁶⁵ There was Agrippa Postumus, the grandchild that Augustus had ordered into exile on the pretext that he had an incorrigible character and who was eliminated in a suspicious way at the same time (cf. **Tib.** 22).

⁶⁶ According to Monaco (1970, p. 255-73), the formula is taken from the *nea* comedy (it did not exist in the old comedy) and was imitated by the Latin authors of the *palliata*.

⁶⁷ Fornaro (1988, p. 162), considers it more likely that it is a *clausula mimi*, improvised by Augustus himself, as an ironic complement to the association of his life to a mime. On Augustus' sense of humour, see Southern (1998, p. 136).

⁶⁸ According to Néraudau (1996, p. 41-2), the mime argument is the mythification that Augustus assumed through all those prodigious stories that circulated about him since his conception.

⁶⁹ Fornaro (1988, p. 155-67), argues that the theatre clause is an ethical metaphor that expresses the awareness of duty fulfilled and does not have, in Suetonius, the pejorative sense of a hypocritical "farse of life" that has been given to it by his interpreters (and by Dio Cassius – 56.30.4), but is equivalent to a performance without a mask. See also Brandão (2019, p. 323-325) and Power (2014, p. 68-69).

⁷⁰ In fact, Tacitus (**Ann.** 1.5.4) mentions the rumour that Livia was responsible for Augustus' death. Dio Cassius (56.30.2) suggests that Livia had given him poisoned figs which, *mutatis mutandis*, seems to be a calque of the account of Claudius' death. See Martin (1955, p. 123-28); Questa (1959, p. 41-55); Martin (1991, p. 350-52).