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REFLECTIONS ON THE *RES GESTAE DIVI AUGUSTI*

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Abstract

The words of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (The Deeds of The Divine Augustus) offer testimony to a fundamental moment for those interested in Greco-Roman Antiquity, that is, the transition of political regime between the Republic and the Principate, under the action of Octavius (later acclaimed as Augustus). In order to advance current reflections on this text and its historical importance, we intend to analyze its context of composition, its discursive genre, its authorship, its formulation, and its style, as well as some moments of its reception (both in Antiquity and in other historical contexts). We will revisit the specialized bibliography on the subject to propose a general interpretation that highlights some of the meanings of this document for scholars of Greco-Roman culture nowadays.

Keywords

Octavius; Augustus; *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*; Republic; Principate; Roman Empire.

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Resumo

As palavras das *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* — expressão latina que poderia ser traduzida para o português como *As façanhas realizadas pelo divino Augusto* — oferecem testemunho de um momento fundamental para quem se interessa pela Antiguidade Greco-Romana, qual seja, a transição de regime político entre a República e o Principado, sob a atuação de Otávio (depois aclamado como Augusto). Com o objetivo de avançar reflexões atualizadas sobre esse texto e sua importância histórica, pretendemos analisar seu contexto de composição, seu gênero discursivo, sua autoria, sua formulação e seu estilo, assim como alguns momentos de sua recepção (tanto na Antiguidade quanto em outros contextos históricos). Revisitaremos a bibliografia especializada no assunto a fim de propor uma interpretação geral que destaque alguns dos sentidos desse documento para estudiosos da cultura greco-romana ainda hoje.

Palavras-chave

Otávio; Augusto; *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*; República; Principado; Império Romano.

Nowadays, the text titled *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, that is, *The Deeds of the Divine Augustus*, is a fundamental historical document for the understanding of Rome, especially regarding the period of transition between the Republic and the Principate (sometimes called the Empire). This study proposes to follow a philologically-based hermeneutic model to develop a convincing critical analysis of this material. To that end, some of the most significant aspects of the work were considered, including its historical context, oral tradition, authorship, structure, and style based on textual formulation, and immediate and subsequent reception. All these aspects are of interest for a relevant interpretation of the document and its historical value, and should be integrated into a deep understanding of what happened between the final years of the Republic and the aftermath of Augustus' death.

To understand the writing and publication context of this document, a fundamental source is Suetonius, especially in his writing dedicated to the life of Augustus. As we know, there are practically no surviving historiographical testimonies that deal with Augustus' actions contemporaneously (which is perhaps no coincidence, considering the Princeps' zealousness in building his own public image), and the work of poets from the circle of Maecenas—such as Horace, Virgil, Propertius, and others—needs to be explored with great caution if reliable historical information is to be extracted from it. Suetonius, on the other hand, despite not being a contemporary of the events narrated, had access to imperial documents still preserved nearly a century later (as evidenced by his reference to letters written by Augustus' own hand, *Life of Augustus* 87), as he held positions of trust in the courts of Trajan and Hadrian.

The end of Suetonius' biography of Augustus presents a long paragraph in which, in the immediate aftermath of the funeral ceremonies in his honor (including the cremation of his body, the deposition of his ashes in a mausoleum specially built for him and his family, and the allusion to a former praetor who sees his spirit ascend to heaven), there is a description of the documents bequeathed by him, made public after his funeral.

> He had made a will in the consul-ship of Lucius Plancus and Gaius Silius on the third day before the Nones of April, a year and four months before he died, in two note-books, written in part in his own hand and in part in that of his freedmen Polybius and Hilarion. These the Vestal virgins, with whom they had been deposited, now produced, together with three rolls, which were sealed in the same way. All these were opened and read in the senate. (Suetonius and Rolfe, John Carew. Suetonius / with an English Translation by J.C. Rolfe. London: Heinemann, 1914).

Then, after describing his inheritance to Tiberius, Livia, Drusus, and Germanicus (including the latter's three sons), as well as his liberalities and gifts to the Roman people, Suetonius concludes his narrative with the following information:

> In one of the three rolls he included directions for his funeral; in the second, an account of what he had accomplished, which he desired to have cut upon bronze tablets and set up at the entrance to the Mausoleum; in the third, a summary of the condition of the whole empire; how many soldiers there were in active service in all parts of it, how much money there was in the public treasury and in the privy-purse, and what revenues were in arrears. He added, besides, the names of the freedmen and slaves from whom the details could be demanded. (Suetonius and Rolfe, John Carew. Suetonius / with an English Translation by J.C. Rolfe. London: Heinemann, 1914).

Thus, one of the last wishes expressed by Augustus in his will, as indicated by the public reading of these documents in the Senate, consisted of the construction of a monument in his memory, with a record of his accomplishments on bronze plaques, publicly displayed in his mausoleum. This is extremely significant. Augustus was a ruler who was aware of the role of public opinion in shaping the *auctoritas* necessary for the performance of duties and functions in Roman society, and who, having witnessed in his youth the degree of violence and disorder caused by civil wars in the struggle for power, came to the end of his life concerned with securing the future stability that had been built around him.

In a study devoted to the representation of Augustus based on the notions of "image" and "power," Paulo Martins (2011) notes the following about the *Princeps*' unique solution to the constitutional impasse in which Rome found itself at the end of the Republican period:

> The most appropriate solution was the construction of a type of government based on the leadership of moral powers, according to the *auctoritas* of a personal nature, added to the tribunician power that gave Octavian the *ius auxilii*. In this sense, the new ruler based their power on: a) their own identity, b) their prestige (*dignitas*), c) their wisdom, d) their divine aura, and e) their charisma, constituted both by their glorious past and their present authority. Thus, in favor of this auctoritas, there are the ancient traditions that are not codified in institutions but survive in consciences and, for this very reason, are no less important than the law. (Martins, 2011: 74; our translation).

The exceptionality of the position in which Augustus found himself at the end of his life, in the year 14 CE, perhaps helps to explain the exceptionality of the text that has come down to us under the title *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. Although its drafting may have considered records made at various moments in his troubled life, Augustus surely carefully revised its final

wording himself in the last months of his life, thus the text should be seen as a final declaration of his own actions and their significance for the continuation of Roman public life. In this sense, it might be useless to try to establish which discursive genre Augusto's text belongs to, as they have tried to do, for example: T. Mommsen, considered it a *Rechenschaftsbericht*, that is, a formal justification report; J. Bergmann and R. Bormann, interpreted it as a funeral inscription associated with the mausoleum; J. Gagé, proposed that it was one of the Roman monumental eulogies in the first person; U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and W. Weber, understood it as a biographical inscription in preparation for his own apotheosis. A more convincing approach to understand what is at stake in Augustus' text is one that embraces its intertextuality, valuing parallels and differences with other materials from a biographical (or autobiographical) tradition, while considering the specificities of Augustus' unique position in the history of Roman politics:

> The *Res Gestae* not only glorify the achievements and liberality of the prince who felt death approaching or had just passed away. Even though they never mention the powers and decisive actions of the birth of the Augustan regime, they nevertheless present it as a general constitution of the principate, given in the form of an autobiographical narrative, in which Augustus tries, relying on his supreme authority, to impose on his successors and the Romans a model of a political regime capable of surviving his death without falling back into the political conflicts that had torn Rome apart for a century. The *Res Gestae* are a political assessment with constitutional significance, which A. Heuss even qualifies, regarding the chapters related to the provinces, as a theory of the Roman Empire. (Scheid, 2007: LIII; our translation).

This is the view presented by John Scheid—author of the most recent critical edition of this text, published in 2007 by the collection Les Belles Lettres—in a section especially dedicated to reflecting on the discursive tradition in which it is inserted. The very publication of Augustus' words on bronze plaques, placed in a prominent public position (on a monument specially consecrated to the memory of his achievements and his family), hints at the interplay of this text between the public and private spheres, as it is a visual monument (public) built from a written document with a biographical content (private).[2]

[2] Regarding this question, the following must be considered: There are two types of collective memory at work in Rome, the first linked to the unwritten, images (repraesentationes), and the other linked to the written. While the first is supported by the monument, the second is established in the document. While the first celebrates a memorable event, the second functions as a repository of information. Not to mention the intersection of both, which transforms this society into a 'stone archive,' since epigraphy associates both practices." (Martins, 2011: 153; our translation).

A problem related to that of the discursive genre of the *Res Gestae*, but even more fundamental in terms of the history and establishment of the text, is related to its transmission process. In the introduction to his edition, Scheid clarifies that no manuscript tradition is known on papyrus or parchment of this text and that our knowledge depends exclusively on copies made of the Roman inscriptions originally engraved on bronze plates. Not even the original inscriptions have survived to the present day. Due to the value and practical usefulness of bronze, it is fair to speculate that at some particularly critical moment in Roman history these plaques were melted down and lost (Gordon, 1968: 128). However, a copy of these stone inscriptions was discovered in the 16th century in Ankara, inside the temple of Augustus and Rome, along with a translation of the Latin text into Greek (*monumentum Ancyranum*). At the beginning of the 20th century, fragments of other copies of the same text were found in Antioch of Pisidia (*monumentum Antiocheum*) and Apollonia of Pisidia (*monumentum Apolloniense*). It is curious that all the surviving copies of this document were found in the Roman province of Galatia, in Asia Minor, and the opinions of scholars are divided on the reasons for this: some point to the accident of textual transmission as the reason for the coincidence; others suggest that the remote location of this province may have protected the inscriptions from the political turbulence of the following centuries; some suggest a possible connection between Augustus and this province; and there are those who imagine a possible interest on the part of the governor of Galatia in promoting the cult of the imperial figure (Gordon, 1968: 129-30).

Regardless of how one wants to explain this coincidence, current knowledge of Augustus' text depends on these inscriptions found in the region of Galatia and must consider the fact that a Greek translation accompanied it. There are minimal divergences between the Latin textual testimonies—mainly due to the practice of copying from oral tradition (which opens the possibility of spelling differences)—but the original text of the *Res Gestae* is considered to be entirely known. Therefore, we can proceed with preliminary reflections on its content and interpretation, leaving the specificities of the Greek translation to be considered later. The context in which this translation was prepared and certain details of its formulation allow us to understand aspects of the process of circulation and reception of this material beyond Rome (which certainly constitutes the audience most immediately targeted by Augustus and his writing).

The *Res Gestae* holds a basic tripartite structure, crowned with a final synthesis. In the first 14 chapters, Augustus begins by reporting the

political or military events, before moving on to the expenses [*impensae*], which encompass chapters 15 to 24. The text then returns, from chapters 25 to 33, to military, political, and diplomatic events, that is, to the *Res Gestae* themselves. Then, it ends with two chapters that, once again, refer to the end of the civil wars and the obtaining of certain honors. There is also a supplementary appendix with other works and expenses performed in favor of the provinces (but this excerpt is certainly a subsequent addition to Augustus' text). His style is direct, with short, coordinated sentences, verbs conjugated in the first person (utterances from Augustus' perspective), and few references to the names of Roman citizens (except for the annual consuls, who function as temporal markers). On the other hand, there are many geographical references to different parts of the Empire, the populations of which being subjected to Roman power.

To get an idea of the style adopted in its drafting, we suggest a look at its opening paragraph:[3]

> [1] At the age of nineteen, on my own initiative and at my own expense, I raised an army by means of which I restored liberty to the republic, which had been oppressed by the tyranny of a faction. For which service the Senate, with complimentary resolutions, enrolled me in its order, note in the consulship of Gaius Pansa and Aulus Hirtius, giving me at the same time consular precedence in voting; it also gave me the imperium. As propraetor it ordered me, along with the consuls, "to see that the republic suffered no harm." In the same year, moreover, as both consuls had fallen in war, the people elected me consul and a triumvir for settling the constitution. (Shipley, Frederick William (Ed.). Compendium of Roman history. Harvard University Press, 1992.).

Augustus begins with those events, marking his abrupt entry into Roman public life. Too young to have held public office before, Octavian was forced to act on his own at the age of 19, when Julius Caesar was assassinated, leaving him as his heir, while the Republic was threatened by what he called "a faction." This action, although premature, is legally recognized by the Senate, which grants him the power to ensure order. This recognition is later sanctioned by the people themselves, who choose him as consul and one of the triumvirs.

[3] Before the first words of Augustus, which are written in first person, there is a kind of introductory summary that announces the following: "Below is a copy of the acts of the Divine Augustus by which he placed the whole world under the sovereignty of the Roman people, and of the amounts which he expended upon the state and the Roman people, as engraved upon two bronze columns which have been set up in Rome."—This is undoubtedly a later elucidating addition, as the sentence speaks of Augustus in the third person and refers to him as "Divine Augustus," something he never dared to do himself.

These words are eloquent both for what they make explicit and for what they silence. Regarding his belligerent reaction against the enemies of the Republic, there is an allusion to the courage of the young Octavian, in other words, to the traditional Roman value of *virtus*. Although the circumstances called for unconventional autonomy, Octavian's initiative received the necessary institutional support so that his actions would not incur any kind of inclemency, impiety, or injustice. The following paragraphs precisely explain the traditional values of *clementia*, *pietas*, and *iustitia*. However, before that, it should be noted that Augusto avoided mentioning the names of both the participants in the "faction" and the other triumvirs. This is a recurring strategy throughout the *Res Gestae*, which operate a kind of *damnatio memoriae*: to relegate the names of opponents to oblivion, there is no mention of Brutus or Cassius (conspirators against Julius Caesar), nor of Mark Antony or Lepidus (participants in the Second Triumvirate, who came to dispute power against Octavian in the future).

The following excerpt shows how Augustus chooses to depict his next actions in defense of the Roman social order:

> [2] Those who slew my father I drove into exile, punishing their deed by due process of law, and afterwards when they waged war upon the republic I twice defeated them in battle.
> [3] Wars, both civil and foreign, I undertook throughout the world, and when victorious I spared all citizens who sued for pardon. The foreign nations which could with safety be pardoned I preferred to save rather than to destroy. The number of Roman citizens who bound themselves to me by military oath was about 500,000. Of these I settled in colonies or sent back into their own towns, after their term of service, something more than 300,000, and to all I assigned lands, or gave money as a reward for military service. I captured six hundred ships, over and above those which were smaller than triremes.
> [4] Twice I triumphed with an ovation, thrice I celebrated curule triumphs, and was saluted as imperator twenty-one times. Although the Senate decreed me additional triumphs I set them aside. When I had performed the vows which I had undertaken in each war I deposited upon the Capitol the laurels which adorned my *fasces*. For successful operations on land and sea, conducted either by myself or by my lieutenants under my auspices, the Senate on fifty-five occasions decreed that thanks should be rendered to the immortal gods. The days on which such thanks were rendered by decree of the Senate numbered 890. In my triumphs there were led before my chariot nine kings or children of kings. At the time of writing these words I had been thirteen times consul, and was in the thirty-seventh year of my tribunician power. (Shipley, Frederick William (Ed.). Compendium of Roman history. Harvard University Press, 1992.).

When he pursued the murderers of his own father and punished them, Octavian showed *iustitia*; when he spared his enemies who had been

defeated and reduced to submission, Octavian showed *clementia*; when he sacrificed to the immortal gods and observed a just measure in celebrating his triumphs, he showed *pietas*. It is important to highlight these traditional Roman values since, in line with what is proposed by the interpretation of E. Kornemann (1918: 214), a fundamental axiological framework organizes the arrangement of Octavian's early actions, as reported by Augustus. In a later study, E. Ramage (1987: 74-100) suggested that this axiological structure underlies the entire Res Gestae: the references to his victories in battle, including against foreign peoples from distant regions, would highlight his *virtus*; the allusions to a temperate behavior towards his adversaries would reinforce his *clementia*; the continuous mentions of Senate and popular approval, as well as the performance of public functions, would indicate his *iustitia*; and the various suggestions of benefactions undertaken for religious rites and ancient customs [*mos maiorum*] would constitute his *pietas*. Augustus claims to respect the traditional values of Roman society to such an extent that he seems to justify the title he received in the year 2 BCE of *Pater Patriae* [father of the fatherland] (Scheid, 2007: XL-XLIII).[4]

To corroborate the idea that this axiological structure grounds, at least in part, Augustus' choices in the narrative arrangement of his own achievements, it is worth considering the final two paragraphs of his text:

> [34] In my sixth and seventh consulships, when I had extinguished the flames of civil war, after receiving by universal consent the absolute control of affairs, I transferred the republic from my own control to the will of the Senate and the Roman people. For this service on my part I was given the title of Augustus by decree of the Senate, and the doorposts of my house were covered with laurels by public act, and a civic crown was fixed above my door, and a golden shield was placed in the Curia Julia whose inscription testified that the Senate and the Roman people gave me this in recognition of my valour, my clemency, my justice, and my piety
> [35] While I was administering my thirteenth consulship the Senate and the equestrian order and the entire Roman people gave me the title of Father of my Country, and decreed that this title should be inscribed upon the vestibule of my house and in the senate-house and in the Forum Augustum beneath the quadriga erected in my honour by decree of the Senate. At the time of writing this I was in my seventy-sixth year. (Shipley, Frederick William (Ed.). Compendium of Roman history. Harvard University Press, 1992.).

Even though the events of 27 and 26 B.C.E. are narrated in an extremely vague way, it is possible to understand that—after considering the stability of the Republic to be secure—Octavian abdicated the exceptional powers

[4] For lexical notes on these values, see: Prado, 2011: 16-21.

he had held until then, returning them to the Senate and the Roman people. For his valorous gesture, he would have been honored with the name of Augustus, which suggests not only a power of *augur* (as a competent interpreter of omens), but rather the manifestation of the prodigy itself, that is, as the one who acts under favorable omens (Ernout; Meillet, 1998: 56-7). Some interpreters understand the allegation as a distorted version of the facts, with the aim of political propaganda. Without going into the details of this discussion, it is worth mentioning an article by W. Turpin (1994) in which he defends the possibility that Octavian really did act in this way, maintaining his power in the following years on the basis of his *auctoritas*, accumulating positions and being appointed to other positions in a non-traditional but still legitimate rotation of public offices. For our purposes in this study, the point is that Octavian receives numerous awards of public distinction for his services to the Republic (it does not matter whether they are genuinely offered by the other citizens or not), including the "golden shield" [*clipeus aureus*], placed in a prominent position in the Curia Julia (the building where the Senate meets). A marble replica of this shield was discovered in the mid-twentieth century in the city of Arles and its inscriptions state the following, according to the translation by Paulo Martins (2011; page 177; our translation):

> THE SENATE AND THE ROMAN PEOPLE GAVE AUGUSTUS
> CAESAR, SON OF THE DIVINE, EIGHTH CONSUL, THE SHIELD OF
> VIRTUE, CLEMENCY, JUSTICE, AND PIETY
> WITH RESPECT TO THE GODS AND THE FATHERLAND[5]

The four values explicitly highlighted by the Senate in Augustus' behavior are *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia*, and *pietas*, thus reinforcing suggestions that have been included since the beginning of the text. The construction of his image as a courageous, forgiving, and fair leader, as well as one respectful of tradition, is corroborated by his successes in pacifying internal disputes and consolidating external territorial conquests, constantly demonstrating a caring attitude towards the divine plans in his benefactions for the Roman people. This promotes Augustus as a unique ruler in all of history, highlighting his almost divine exceptionality with indirect allusions to achievements that not even Alexander the Great was able to perform and that could only be compared to those of Hercules or Dionysus. All this prepares the ground for the slightly later discussions about Augustus' apotheosis, along the lines of what Virgil had already foreshadowed in

[5] In the original: "SENATVS POPVLVSQVE ROMANVS IMP * CAESARI * DIVI F * AVGVSTO COS VIII DEDIT CLIPEUM VIRTVTIS CLEMENTIAE IVSTITIAE PIETATIS ERGA DEOS PATRIAMQVE."

three prophetic passages of the *Aeneid* (1.254-296; 6.777-800; 8.671-731) (Martins, 2011: 162-78).[6]

To exemplify the rhetorical strategies used throughout the text of the *Res Gestae*, taking the opportunity to mention a few considerations about its translation into Greek, we would like to take one of its middle chapters and analyze it. For example, paragraph 20, which is part of his catalogue of expenditures undertaken on behalf of the Romans (Shipley, 1992):

> [20] The Capitol and the theater of Pompey, both works involving great expense, I rebuilt without any inscription of my own name. I restored the channels of the aqueducts which in several places were falling into disrepair through age, and doubled the capacity of the aqueduct called the Marcia by turning a new spring into its channel. I completed the Julian Forum and the basilica which was between the temple of Castor and the temple of Saturn, works begun and far advanced by my father, and when the same basilica was destroyed by fire, I began its reconstruction on an enlarged site, to be inscribed with the names of my sons, and ordered that in case I should not live to complete it, it should be completed by my heirs. In my sixth consulship, note in accordance with a decree of the Senate, I rebuilt in the city eighty-two temples of the gods, omitting none which at that time stood in need of repair. As consul for the seventh time, I constructed the Via Flaminia from the city to Ariminum, and all the bridges except the Mulvian and the Minucian.

Here we have the presentation of a magnanimous public man, interested in aggrandizing his own city with important improvements to public buildings (such as the Capitol, the theater of Pompey and the basilica near the Julius Forum), as well as works to improve the lives of his fellow citizens (especially the most vulnerable), repairing aqueducts, roads, and bridges. His devotion to the gods means that after a period of serious neglect of religious traditions (during the civil wars), intense restoration work is undertaken to secure the favor of the gods. Augustus insisted on implying that he had done all this, and yet he avoided putting his name to it (probably so as not to boast). The depiction in this paragraph is in line with that of the most rhetorically charged passages in the opening and closing of the text.

This same passage in the Greek text shows slight deviations, almost insignificant, in referring to the temple of the Dioscurus (and not specifically to that of Cástor, as in the original), in explaining the city of Rome (instead of referring only to *Urbs*), and in suppressing the proper names of the only two bridges that needed repairing. This kind of

[6] On the idea that the Res Gestae deliberately flirt with presenting a deified image of Augustus, according to Hellenistic models, see Bosworth (1999).

deviation has led some scholars to argue that the Greek translation of the *Res Gestae* was written by secretaries of the legate or of the province of Galatia (Scheid, 2007: XXX), as far as these oversights would be incompatible with the rigor of the imperial secretaries. At first, an exhaustive list containing all the textual changes, organized according to their types (omissions, free translations, and misunderstood expressions), might give the impression of corroborating this conclusion.[7]

Still, it is worth considering the proposal advocated by D. B. King, in a 1952 article, in which a detailed analysis of the "deviations" established by the Greek text shows the existence of a pattern: the translator systematically extrapolates the strictly Roman aspects of the text in favor of a vision more open to the provincial reality, even making less specific information concerning Rome exclusively, while trying to explain what would be most relevant to those who inhabit the province. An example of this appears from the opening, in the suppressed sentences of his "introductory synthesis," in which the original text makes a reference to the fact that "Augustus subjected the world to the power of the Roman people" and that his expenditures were made "by the Republic and the Roman people." These suppressions attempt to conceal the violence of provincial submission and the economic privilege enjoyed by Rome to the detriment of all other regions under Augustus. There are many other examples of how the translator's textual manipulation is not due to verbal malpractice, but rather to the purpose of avoiding the most negative aspects of Rome's imperialism over the provinces by exalting and making explicit its positive aspects. These examples include strategies to indicate that the beneficiary of Augustus' extensive achievements was the "fatherland" in general (*patris*) and not just the *res publica* (*Res Gestae* 2); to avoid the idea that foreign peoples suffered different consequences from Augustus' victory (by suppressing the adjective *externas* to refer to the peoples) (*Res Gestae* 3.2); to specify that certain benefactions of Augustus for Rome were only for the Roman people and not for the *populum uniuersum* (*Res Gestae* 5); to refer in a generic and undistinguished way to social groups specifically from Rome (*populus*, 5.1; 14.1; *plebs*, 15.1; 15.4); to correct the claim that certain conflicts with widespread consequences benefited Rome alone (*Res Gestae* 25). At the conclusion of this article, King (1952) concludes with the following:

> Where Augustus was careful to point up the value of his services to the Roman Republic, or where he preserved republican forms and precise distinctions in his

[7] Scheid (2007: XXX-XXXIV) gathers these data in a table based on a list previously drawn up by Mommsen (1883: 195 ff.).

> language, the translator either changed, neglected, or obscured the Augustan emphasis, giving a general and imperial application to what Augustus had given a parochial, Roman, and republican stress. By these changes he produced a new and non-Augustan picture of the emperor and the empire. (King, 1952: 226).

This conclusion is thought-provoking and already points to the aspect with which the present considerations will end, that is, the posterity of this text in the following centuries. The use of Augustus' words in cities of Galatia points to the malleability with which official documents and monuments can be used according to the specificities of the context, and this can serve as a lesson for those who want to fix a single meaning for the *Res Gestae*: in the biography of Augustus written by Suetonius there are very close parallels, indicating the real possibility of direct consultations;[8] it may be that Tacitus also consulted the text to write the beginning of the Annals; other imperial biographical writings seem to have used the *Res Gestae* as a model.

In addition to this posterity in Antiquity itself, it should be noted that the discovery, publication, and study of this text also boasts a fascinating history in Modernity, from its discovery in Ankara in 1555, including the *editio princeps* by Andreas Schott (1579), to its appropriation by scholars interested in the concept of a strong nation-state, based on a model based on the imperial prerogatives of Augustus' Rome: this is discussed in the work of a fundamental scholar in the process of revaluing the *Res Gestae*, such as Mommsen (1887: XVI-XXXIII), the question becomes profoundly problematic in the enthusiastic readings of Weber (1936: 105), in light of the rise of Hitler in the early years of Nazism and the establishment of the Third Reich.[9] After the horrors experienced by Europe and the world throughout the first half of the twentieth century, especially with the massacres committed during World War II, studies dedicated to Augustus and related themes have been a little more cautious in interpreting the representations bequeathed by the Roman Empire. This appears widely in the works that Harvard and Oxford scholars have devoted to reinterpreting Virgil's *Aeneid*, emphasizing the dubiousness of certain scenes, words, and characters to suggest that there would be pessimism and veiled criticism in Virgilian representations of power (Serpa, 1987: 76-88). Other efforts focus on a critical appraisal of the representation of

[8] According to Scheid (2007: LXIII): Suet. *Aug.* 43.1 = *Res Gestae* 22.2; Suet. *Aug.* 21.2 = *Res Gestae* 26.3; Suet. *Aug.* 22.1 = *Res Gestae* 13; Suet. *Aug.* 22 = *Res Gestae* 4.1; Suet. *Aug.* 52 = *Res Gestae* 24.2.
[9] In his interpretation of the text, Weber asserts that he recognizes there the expression of "the impetus of inner forces and the rule of the will" [Auftrieb innerer Kräfte und Herrschaft des Willens]. The vocabulary indicates its affinities with the idea of a "triumph of the will" and the modern representation of the exceptional statesman as a great artist (Scheid, 2007: XLVII).

Octavian Augustus in poetry, history, plastic arts (mainly sculptures and coins), such as the work by Paulo Martins (2011). There are also those who expose the authoritarian appropriations of Roman imperial legacy by pointing to the Augustan period, such as the excellent study on the Vichy France (1940-1944) by Glaydson José da Silva (2007).

None of these interpretations can exhaust the richness contained in a text—between documentary and monumental—as complex as the *Res Gestae*, but all these readings can help us to better understand the intricacies of the long processes of creation, publication, and reception of this work, in different historical contexts, as well as its implications for areas such as Classical Letters and Ancient History.

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