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# Fortune and Family in the Presentation of Octavian in Nicolaus of Damascus' *Bíos* *Kaίσαρος*

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*A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
award of the degree of Master of Arts in Classical Studies*

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## **Compulsory Declaration**

This work has not been submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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## Abstract

Nicolaus of Damascus (c. 64 BC - c. 4 BC) was a prolific writer whose importance in the ancient world is today belied by the fact that most of his works have survived in fragmentary form. While serving as ambassador and political adviser to Herod the Great, he met Augustus, for whom he wrote the *Bíos Kaiíraoos*. The text of the *Bíos Kaiíraoos* was excerpted during the tenth century and is considerably truncated, providing a narrative of the young Octavian's life up until the end of 44 BC. Much of the first half of the text is taken up with a description of Octavian's virtuous behaviour, his education by his mother Atia, and his close relationship with Julius Caesar. The second half of the text is dominated by a long excursus on Caesar's assassination. A brief historiographical overview of the surviving text investigates the problem of determining a firm date of composition for the *Bíos Kaiíraoos*, as well as evaluating evidence for whether the text can best be described as a partial life (*Άγωγη*) or a full-length biography in the Hellenistic tradition. This latter question necessitates a survey of the development of Greek biography through the Hellenistic era. Biography as a literary genre was characterised by a broad range of traits and styles, and was concerned with the character (*ἦθος*) of the protagonist, details of his private life, and his deeds, works or achievements. The belief that an investigation of a man's actions (*πράξεις*) could shed light on his *ἦθος* was a feature of Hellenistic popular thought that had its origins with the Peripatetics. Nicolaus was a self-proclaimed follower of Aristotle's school, and certain motifs or features of Aristotelian thought permeate the *Bíos Kaiíraoos*, particularly with regards to his characterisation of Octavian and Caesar. Nicolaus also uses the theme of *Τύχη* (Fortune), a familiar *topos* of Hellenistic literature, at key moments during the text of the Caesar

Extract, to highlight his presentation of Octavian and Caesar. The characterisation of Octavian and his relationship with his mother and Caesar forms the final focus of this dissertation, illustrating pertinent aspects of Nicolaus' technique in his presentation of Octavian as uniquely fitted to succeed to Caesar's political hegemony at Rome.

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### *Note on Ancient Texts and Translations:*

The fragments of the *Bíos Kairaios* are cited according to their sequence and numbering in *FGrH* (Jacoby), but I have used the text of Malitz' more accessible 2003 edition, and have supplied my own translations of passages discussed; any remaining errors are my own. Jane Bellemore's commentary proved immensely useful, although I did not have access to her translation. All other ancient authors are left untranslated according to the Loeb edition of the text.

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## Introduction

Nicolaus of Damascus' fragmentary biography of Octavian,<sup>1</sup> known as the *Βίος Καίσαρος*,<sup>2</sup> has often been overlooked as a source for Octavian's early years, both because of its incomplete nature, and because Nicolaus' eulogistic treatment of his subject has often led scholars to dismiss the work as a panegyric of little historical worth. Furthermore, the existing text is a tenth century excerption, and is probably substantially incomplete.<sup>3</sup> However, the partial nature of the *Βίος Καίσαρος* should not preclude a fuller analysis of the text, in order to shed more light on this relatively poorly documented yet critical part of Octavian's life.

A brief historiographical overview of the nature of the extant text and its associated problems will serve as a necessary preliminary to a fuller investigation of Nicolaus' approach to his subject, Octavian. The abbreviated version of the text has led to some scholarly speculation that what Nicolaus wrote was not a full length biography, but merely an account of his education and youth - an *Ἀγωγή*. A survey of the development of the genre of Greek biography, from Classical times down to the Hellenistic period, will contextualize the *Βίος Καίσαρος* by looking at possible influences and precedents for Nicolaus' work in the biographical tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to him thus is admittedly a modern convenience, as technically speaking this name would not have applied until his adoption; given, however, the number of times his technical nomenclature changed over the course of his career, Octavian has been preferred in the interest of clarity.

<sup>2</sup> No definitive title accompanies either of the two extant manuscripts, as the abrupt beginning of the panegyric prooemium (with *ὅτι*) indicates that some of the opening text was lost, and so modern scholars have had to reconstruct one based on probability. In the Suda under the rubric *Νικόλαος Δαμασκηνός* the work is described as *τοῦ βίου Καίσαρος ἀγωγήν*. Jacoby described it as *τοῦ αὐτοῦ περὶ πρώτης Καίσαρος ἀγωγῆς* from FGrH F 125 Exc. *de Virtutibus et Vitiis* 1.353.13. I have followed Toher in referring to it as the *Βίος Καίσαρος*, rather than Bellemore's preferred title from the Suda, *Ἀγωγή τοῦ βίου Καίσαρος*, as I do not accept the structural implications that necessarily follow from thinking of the work purely as an *Ἀγωγή*.

<sup>3</sup> The manuscript of *de Virtut.* concludes with a remark by the Byzantine excerptor, after § XV.36: *τέλος τῆς ἱστορίας Νικολάου Δαμασκηνοῦ καὶ τοῦ βίου Καίσαρος τοῦ νέου*, and another at the end of the surviving extracts § XXXI (139) *Τέλος τοῦ βίου Καίσαρος καὶ τῆς Νικολάου Δαμασκηνοῦ συγγραφῆς*. Whether this indicates that the text was already significantly incomplete by the 10<sup>th</sup> C. is uncertain, as the use of *τέλος* could imply 'end of Nicolaus' text in this current work', rather than 'end of Nicolaus.'

The role of Fortune (*Τύχη*) in history and the lives of great men is a well-known *topos* of the Greek literary tradition. A review of the evolution of the notion, and the related concepts *ὁ δαίμων* and *μοῖρα*, down to Nicolaus' day will serve as a prelude to his treatment of these 'fatal elements' as they relate to Octavian and Julius Caesar.

Nicolaus' presentation of Octavian's relationship with his mother Atia and Julius Caesar will form the focus of the latter half of this study. A question to be considered is the extent to which Nicolaus' status as a self-proclaimed follower of Peripatetic philosophy influenced his writing of the *Βίος Καίσαρος*, and in particular his characterisation of Octavian and his virtues. Atia's favourable treatment is compared to the Roman literary tradition of the exemplary mother of a great leader, and Caesar's presentation is examined to see how the figure of the Dictator was treated by a source close to Augustus in the generation after his death. Ultimately, both figures serve to magnify Nicolaus' encomiastic presentation of Octavian, as a gloriously virtuous youth preeminently fitted to succeed to the highest position in Rome and the Empire.

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## Nicolaus' Life and Career

Much of what is known of Nicolaus' life comes from his own autobiography, of which a number of fragments have survived (*FGrH* 90 F 131-139), and the work of Josephus. Nicolaus was a prolific writer, born of a distinguished Damascene family around 64 BC.<sup>4</sup> During the course of a long life, he encountered many prominent statesmen and frequented the inner circles of the great and powerful. He served as tutor to the children of M. Antonius and Cleopatra VII, probably in the late 30's BC,<sup>5</sup> before they were entrusted to Octavia's care.<sup>6</sup> Bellemore<sup>7</sup> believes Nicolaus was the children's tutor at Rome in the 20's, but much of her interpretation rests on her argument for an early composition of the *Bíos Kaióragos*, and also, that Nicolaus had to have met the *Princeps* to have a compositional motive for the *Bíos Kaióragos*. The paucity of hard evidence on Nicolaus' whereabouts during the 30's and 20's leads me to conclude that he was not the children's tutor at Rome post-Actium, but in Alexandria during the Triumviral period, since nothing in Nicolaus' own writings indicates that he had spent an extended period in Rome during the 20's.

Our next chronological evidence for him is found in Strabo,<sup>8</sup> who records that Nicolaus was at Antioch in 20 BC and wrote an account of Augustus' reception of the Indian ambassadors; another account of the same event, without any mention of Nicolaus, is also found in Dio.<sup>9</sup> Why Nicolaus was there is unknown; it is highly unlikely that he was directly connected with the

<sup>4</sup> Nicolaus tells us (*FGrH* 90 F 136.8) that he was about 60 years old when he travelled to Rome in 4 BC with Archelaus.

<sup>5</sup> So Jacoby thought, (*FGrH* 90 T 2). All further citation of fragments, unless specifically qualified, refers to Nicolaus' collected fragments in Jacoby; passages from the *Bíos Kaióragos* itself will be cited by chapters as given in Jacoby.

<sup>6</sup> Toher 1985: 11. Cf. Bellemore 1984: xv.

<sup>7</sup> 1984: xv.

<sup>8</sup> Strabo 15.1.73.

<sup>9</sup> Dio 54.9.9-10. J Rich (1990: 185) suggests that Nicolaus may be the ultimate source of Dio's account.

*Princeps* at this early stage. He may have been there with Herod the Great, who probably accompanied Augustus into Syria, as at some point around this time Nicolaus became attached to the monarch's court.

By 14 BC, Nicolaus had become Herod's close friend and advisor, at whose behest he wrote his monumental *Universal History*,<sup>10</sup> and for whom he served as both diplomatic envoy and *παιδείτης* to his sons. In that year, the people of Ilion, who had angered M. Agrippa, approached him to intercede with Herod on their behalf, since the monarch was Agrippa's travelling companion on his travels.<sup>11</sup> Later that same year Nicolaus gave a speech, mentioned by Josephus,<sup>12</sup> before Agrippa on behalf of the Ionian Jews. In 12 BC, he travelled with Herod to Rome to have the conspiracy of Herod's sons by Mariamne adjudicated by the *Princeps*; and when Augustus broke off *amicitia* with Herod over his Arabian incursions in 8/7 BC, it was Nicolaus who successfully pleaded the king's case before the emperor in Rome.

According to Josephus, Nicolaus, whom he describes as *φίλος τε ὤν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τὰ πάντα συνδιαγνώμενος ἐκείνῳ*, denounced Herod's son Antipater for conspiracy in 5/4 BC in a lengthy speech, which probably came directly from Nicolaus' own writings.<sup>13</sup> He was also instrumental in negotiating with Augustus for Archelaus' accession after Herod's death in 4 BC, being personally honoured by the *Princeps* for this valuable service: *καὶ Νικόλαον μὲν ἐτίμησεν ὁ Καῖσαρ*.<sup>14</sup> It is likely that he stayed on at Rome after this episode for an extended period, to judge from the evidence of F 138, where Nicolaus says he was criticised for spending too much time on his

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<sup>10</sup> F 135.

<sup>11</sup> F 134; and see Josephus *AJ* 16.16 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *AJ* 16.31 ff.

<sup>13</sup> *AJ* 17.99.4.

<sup>14</sup> F 136.11.

philosophical discourses and neglecting the worthies of Roman society.<sup>15</sup> This is probably when he developed his friendship with Augustus, who is attested in a number of sources as naming a type of date after the Damascene.<sup>16</sup>

We have no secure date for Nicolaus' death, but, as Bellemore points out,<sup>17</sup> Archelaus did not use Nicolaus as his agent in AD 6 when his throne was imperilled – which may imply either that Nicolaus was dead, or else retired completely from public life. More prosaically, Nicolaus' absence in the sources may be explained by the fact that his *Universal History* ended with Herod's death in 4 BC, and thus was of no use to later historians like Josephus as a source for events after that year. But, as with much else regarding the man and his works, the evidence is frustratingly inconclusive.

Of his other works beside the *Bίος Καίσαρος*, his *Universal History* was the longest known historical work in antiquity and spanned some 144 books; although it was largely completed in 12 BC, he may have continued to work on it down to Herod's death in 4 BC.<sup>18</sup> He also wrote his autobiography, an ethnographical study for Herod, and a number of tragedies and comedies (now lost).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> ὅτι ἡτιῶντό τινες τὸν Νικόλαον πλεῖστα χρέματα παρὰ φίλων λαβόντα οὐ σῶξεν αὐτὰ, καὶ ὅτι τὰς πλείους διατριβὰς ἐποιεῖτο μετὰ τῶν δημοτικῶν, ἐκκλίνων τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ ὑπερπλούτους τῶν ἐν Ῥώμῃ,\*\*\* οὐδαμῶς ἦν, πολλῶν καὶ ἐνδόξων αὐτὸν βιαζομένων, ἀλλὰ δι' ὅλης ἡμέρας ἐν ταῖς φιλοσόφοις θεωρίας ἦν.

<sup>16</sup> Plutarch (*Mor.* 723 D); Athenaeus (652 A), and the Suda (s.v. *Νικόλαος Δαμασκηνός*), which refers to a cake rather than a date-palm.

<sup>17</sup> Bellemore 1984: xvi.

<sup>18</sup> Toher 1987: 136.

<sup>19</sup> Dramatic works – *OCD*<sup>3</sup> s.v. Nicolaus. The Greek fragments of Nicolaus' major works are collected in Jacoby *FGrH*. F 1-102 comprise all that remains of his *Ἱστορία Καθολική* (*Universal History*); most of the long fragments are from only the first 7 books; after F 70 the fragments tend to be much shorter and are found in authors such as Josephus and Athenaeus (Toher 1989: 162). F 103-124 are from the ethnographical treatise *Παραδόξων Ἐθνῶν Συναγωγή*; 125-130 the *Bίος Καίσαρος*; and F 131 – 139 Nicolaus' autobiography, *Περὶ τοῦ ἰδίου βίου καὶ ἐαυτοῦ ἀγωγῆς*. His Aristotelian commentaries survive only in Syriac translation, and are collected in Drossart Lulofs (1969).

Nicolaus also had an abiding interest in Aristotelian philosophy, and he wrote a number of commentaries *Περὶ τῆς Ἀριστοτέλους φιλοσοφίας*, mainly on the subjects of metaphysics and natural philosophy. These unfortunately survive only in odd fragments quoted by later commentators such as Simplicius, and in a single manuscript in Syriac translation, which has also suffered much from the attentions of an abbreviator.<sup>20</sup> From what survives, however, it is clear that Nicolaus was himself no mere epitomator. In the only modern scholarly monograph devoted to the Syriac texts, the verdict was favourable:

‘Nicolaus, far from being a somewhat muddle-headed compiler, had an astonishing knowledge of Aristotle’s writings, and often succeeded in presenting the dominant trends of his philosophy ... He appears to have been an intelligent and observant interpreter of notoriously difficult texts.’<sup>21</sup>

Philosophy, according to Nicolaus himself, was a guiding influence on his education and later life. In the *Suda*, he was described as *Περιπατητικός ἢ Πλατωνικός*,<sup>22</sup> and in his own words, *ζηλωτῆς Ἀριστοτέλους* in F 132.2. The latter description very likely comes from his autobiography, although this is not explicitly attested; it gives us an important insight into Nicolaus’ philosophical approach. It is a fairly lengthy fragment, and in it Nicolaus describes his education and the practical advantages of philosophical training; his father Antipater had achieved his wealth and good reputation in Damascene society through such training, and furthermore it was *πρὸς πᾶσαν βίου χρῆσιν οἰκεῖον*. As Toher points out, Nicolaus’ attitude

‘... is similar to sentiments one finds in the philosophical and rhetorical works of Cicero. Both men ... admired philosophy aesthetically, but each could only engage its contents on a pragmatic, utilitarian level.’<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Drossart Lulofs 1969: vii-ix.

<sup>21</sup> Drossart Lulofs 1969: viii.

<sup>22</sup> s.v. Nik. Dam. 3. 467 [Adler] *FGrH* F 131: *Νικόλαος Δαμασκηνός· γνώριμος Ἡράδου τοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων βασιλέως καὶ Αἰγυψίου Καίσαρος· φιλόσοφος Περιπατητικός ἢ Πλατωνικός*. Drossart Lulofs (1969: 5) points out that his designation as a Platonist may be an error of the *Suda*, since he is not described as such elsewhere.

<sup>23</sup> Toher 1985: 10.

However, despite his diverse and extensive corpus, Nicolaus' work has generally not received a positive reception. Even in antiquity he was condemned for the panegyric tone of his account of Herod's reign in his *Universal History*,<sup>24</sup> and scholars mostly show interest in him only for the light his historical fragments shed on the lost works of authors such as Ctesias and Ephorus, and on Augustus' lost autobiography. Nevertheless, the *Bíos Kaisaros* is of tremendous value to both historian and historiographer, since it is the only contemporary source apart from Cicero to give a detailed account of Octavian's early years and emergence onto the public stage. Furthermore, the long digression on the assassination of Julius Caesar, the Caesar Extract, is the earliest contemporary account of that momentous murder; and the *Bíos Kaisaros* is the earliest and most extensive political biography written in Greek still extant.<sup>25</sup> Nicolaus' philosophical approach may have an important bearing on his writing; certainly the *Παραδόξων ἐδῶν συναγωγή* he wrote for Herod was on a subject popular with the Peripatetic School, and elements of Peripatetic biography may be detected in the *Bíos Kaisaros*.<sup>26</sup> For these reasons and others, his work deserves a closer look.

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<sup>24</sup> Josephus was rather self-righteously critical of Nicolaus' pro-Herodian bias, in comparison with what he describes as his own higher standards for truth-telling: *AJ* 14.9 and 16.183-187. His objections evidently did not prevent him from extensively using Nicolaus as a source. Toher (2003b: 434-5) argues that 'Scholars have been overly impressed by Josephus' criticism ... This sequence of criticism of a predecessor and a claim of accuracy for the present account is part of a pattern found in many ancient historians, and so there is a risk of granting to Josephus' characterization of Nicolaus credibility it does not deserve.'

<sup>25</sup> Toher 1985: 2.

<sup>26</sup> 'Nicolaus employs the method of a Peripatetic in presenting the order of events in the life of an individual' (Leo 1901: 190. In Hall 1923: 76 n.2.1).

## Textual problems within the *Bíos Kaisáragos*

The extant text comes from two manuscripts in a tenth century AD Byzantine collection of digests dating from the reign of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, which were organised thematically and compiled sometime between AD 945 and 959. Of the original collection of fifty-three digests, only four have survived to the present day, with the extracts from Nicolaus' works surviving in the volumes *Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας* (*De Virtutibus et Vitiis*), the Codex Turensis, and *Περὶ ἐπιβουλῶν κατὰ βασιλέων γεγονυιῶν* (*de Insidiis*), the Codex Escorialensis; these two manuscripts contain all that has survived of Nicolaus' *Universal History* and the *Bíos Kaisáragos*.<sup>1</sup> Five extracts from the *Bíos Kaisáragos*, forming §§ I-XV, came from the *de Virtutibus*, and one, §§ XVI-XXXI which includes the noted 'Caesar Extract', from the *de Insidiis*.

Unfortunately for the modern scholar interested in the *Bíos Kaisáragos*, not only did the original work suffer the editorial bias and excisions of an excerptor collecting material deemed morally instructive, which would inevitably influence the type of material selected for inclusion, but the manuscripts themselves were damaged and corrupted. The text of Nicolaus' works in the manuscript *De Virtutibus* was damaged between the tenth and early seventeenth century; similarly, the manuscript of *De Insidiis*, which is a sixteenth century copy of a now-lost original, contains numerous corruptions.<sup>2</sup> All of this serves to make the work of the historian fraught with uncertainty, since it is impossible to reconstruct definitively what the original *Bíos Kaisáragos* covered. There is even some argument amongst modern scholars over whether all of what is now referred to as the *Bíos Kaisáragos* was originally part of the biography of Augustus, or whether certain sections (such as the Caesar Extract, or, in Bellemore's view, the whole of the

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<sup>1</sup> Bellemore 1984: xvii/i.

<sup>2</sup> Bellemore 1984: xviii.

work from § XVI onwards) may in fact have come from Nicolaus' *Universal History*. A discussion of the major arguments relating to the textual problems with the *Bíos Kaióragos* will hopefully clarify this somewhat.

The fragmentary nature of the *Bíos Kaióragos* has led to it being somewhat neglected by modern scholars: in the last 150-odd years, since the collected fragments were first published by Müller in 1849, there have been only a couple of dozen studies on the *Bíos Kaióragos*, most of these have tended to focus on the Caesar Extract and the question of whether or not Nicolaus used Augustus' *De vita sua* as his major source.<sup>3</sup> Only two English translations have so far been made of the text – Hall's 1926 version, accompanied by a basic commentary that only attempts to reconcile the text with the known events in Octavian's life from 47-44, with little historiographical analysis of the text itself; and Bellemore's 1984 version with a more detailed commentary. Bellemore accepts Jacoby's influential thesis on the date of composition and the text's strict relationship to Augustus' autobiography. Malitz' recent (2003) German translation and commentary also largely follows Jacoby' position on the date of composition during the late '20s, and the text's relationship to the *De vita sua*. Historiographical analysis of the *Bíos Kaióragos* over the last twenty years has otherwise been virtually monopolised by Toher, who has moved the focus onto the text itself and posed new questions about many of the problems within it.

### *I. Date of Composition*

Much modern scholarship on the *Bíos Kaióragos* has undoubtedly been influenced by Jacoby's persuasive and imposing study, particularly with regards to Nicolaus' sources and the date of composition. Jacoby asserted that the major source for the life was Augustus' autobiography,

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<sup>3</sup> Toher 1985a: 18. Nicolaus must have used the *De vita sua*, as can be seen from the correlation between the *Bíos Kaióragos* and Suet. *DA* 8; however, this does not mean that he had to have used the autobiography when it was newly published.

which concluded with the Cantabrian War and was finished sometime after 25 BC, and that Nicolaus published his Greek 'free paraphrase'<sup>4</sup> of the Latin autobiography later in the same decade, before he began work on his massive history. As evidence, Jacoby held that the campaigns against the Pannonians and Illyrians, and the subjugation of peoples inhabiting the region up to the Rhine referred to in the prooemium<sup>5</sup> were those campaigns conducted by Octavian himself.<sup>6</sup> He dismissed the likelihood that the description included the various campaigns between 20 BC and 12 BC, and excluded the period from 12 BC to AD 10, when Roman activity across the Rhine was more limited. Secondly, from the prominence given the title in the extant opening lines of the prooemium, and because the celebration of the occasion gave Nicolaus the incentive to write his own eulogy of the *Princeps*, Jacoby argued that the assumption of the title Augustus in January 27 BC formed the terminal date of the material covered in the *Bίος Καίσαρος*.<sup>7</sup>

Plausible though these arguments are, there is some evidence against such a very early date. For one, right from the beginning of his Principate, Augustus habitually claimed personal credit for victory in campaigns conducted by lieutenants on his behalf, as he does in *RG* 4.2:

*Ob res a me aut per legatos meos auspiciis meis terra marique prospere gestas quinquagens et quinquens decrevit senatus supplicandum esse dis immortalibus.*<sup>8</sup>

And another example at *RG* 26.1:

*Omnium provinciarum populi Romani quibus finitimae fuerunt gentes quae non parerent imperio nostro fines auxi.*

He also jealously guarded the sum total of public glory to be magnanimously apportioned to persons besides himself – very early on, it seems, Octavian assumed the title *imperator* as

<sup>4</sup> Gabba: 1984: 62.

<sup>5</sup> § I.1: ἡμερωσάμενος ὁπόσοι ἐντὸς Ῥήνου ποταμοῦ κατοικοῦσιν ὑπὲρ τε τὸν Ἰόνιον πόντον καὶ τὰ Ἰλλυριῶν γένη – [an aside from the Constantinian excerptor follows] Παννονίους αὐτοὺς καὶ Δᾶκας καλοῦσιν \*\*\*.

<sup>6</sup> His campaigns against the Pannonians and Illyrians in 35 BC.

<sup>7</sup> Toher 1985b: 201.

<sup>8</sup> Compare this to the beginning of Suet. *DA* 21: *domuit autem partim ductu partim auspiciis suis ...*

*praenomen*; <sup>9</sup> over time, as the middle-aged Augustus' dynastic designs became more focused, only members of the imperial family could be hailed *imperator* and hold full triumphal honours. Crassus was famously refused the *spolia opima*, although he was allowed a triumph, in 27 BC,<sup>10</sup> and even the favoured Agrippa prudently declined a triumph in 19 BC for his Cantabrian campaign in order not to overshadow the *Princeps*.<sup>11</sup> Augustus also claimed the return in 20 BC of the lost Parthian standards as a military success, his glorious coup trumpeted on the coinage and celebrated by the poets, though it was in actual fact the result of diplomatic negotiations.<sup>12</sup>

It does not, then, follow that a panegyric would mention only those campaigns conducted by Augustus himself, when by following the *Princeps*' lead more examples could be employed to lionize the subject. Furthermore, Nicolaus' position at Herod's court would likely have offered him scant opportunity to meet Augustus before 20 BC; and later, it can only have been after the death of Herod in 4 BC that he would have spent any extended period at Rome. His Herculean toils on the *Universal History* would also have taken up the intervening period, leaving him little spare time for other compositions.<sup>13</sup> A later compositional date for the *Bíos Kaiράτος*, after he had

<sup>9</sup> Syme (1979: 366) argues it was a response in 38 BC to Sextus Pompeius' use of Magnus, and Octavian's need for a name advertising his martial prowess. Simpson (1998: 424) argues, perhaps more plausibly, that after Octavian's second imperatorial acclamation after the Perusine War – attested in Appian *B.Civ.* 5.46 – he was regarded as having proved his military prowess and thus his suitability as Caesar's heir in the eyes of the Dictator's former troops; Simpson believes Octavian finally assumed the *praenomen* once Antonius left Italy after the conference of Brundisium in 39 BC. At any rate, both of these arguments show that he assumed it at a young age.

<sup>10</sup> Livy 4.20.5, who also thought (32.4) Augustus' reasoning was spurious.

<sup>11</sup> Wardle (1994: 63), who further argues that Agrippa's refusal served an additional function in the context of the electoral and civil disturbances of 19. It reminded the Senate that Augustus, who had requested the triumph on Agrippa's behalf, held supreme military power, but Agrippa's subsequent tactful refusal demonstrated that the Augustan regime and its *principes* were nonetheless still willing to co-operate with the Senate. Augustus' sensitivity to his inadequate military record should not, however, be underestimated.

<sup>12</sup> Dio 54.8.2-3; Virgil *Aen.* 6.853; Propertius 4.6.83; and Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*. A similar tone is conveyed on the breastplate of the Prima Porta statue. Coins celebrating the return of the lost Parthian standards in 20 BC were minted in 18 BC, showing a kneeling Parthian holding a standard and with the legend PARTHIA RECEPTA (*BMCRE* no.10 pl. 1.7; no 40 pl. 2.2).

<sup>13</sup> Toher 1987: 136. It is likely that the *Universal History* was not published before 12 BC; indeed, the reference to the conspiracy against Herod of his sons by Mariamne (F 102) indicates that he was still working on it after 7 BC, and likely down to Herod's death in 4 BC.

formed a relationship with the *Princeps*, allows Nicolaus the time and the motive to compose an encomium.<sup>14</sup>

As to the assumption that the *Bíos Kaióragos* was published during Augustus' lifetime, there is no indisputable ancient precedent for the publication of a biography while the subject was alive. The conventions of Graeco-Roman biography, as well as the potential of causing dangerous offence to a living protagonist, would both have militated against such an approach.<sup>15</sup>

However, it is impossible to argue that the *Bíos Kaióragos* was definitely published after Augustus' death, as it is not debatable beyond a reasonable doubt. Furthermore, although this is not conclusive, Nicolaus himself would have been elderly in AD 14; and, although we know that he did spend a prolonged period in Rome,<sup>16</sup> no concrete evidence of his activities during this interlude exists.

Laqueur<sup>17</sup> came to a radically different conclusion about both the date and the original form of the *Bíos Kaióragos*. His interpretation of *προσεῖπον* in the prologue was that it was not describing the occasion on which the title Augustus was conferred, but rather a looser sense of 'address'; in Laqueur's view, Nicolaus had a more general focus than the events of 27 BC in mind. Laqueur also felt that the description of widespread temples and sacrifices throughout the empire meant that the prologue at least was definitely written after Augustus' death and deification in AD

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<sup>14</sup> Toher 1987: 137.

<sup>15</sup> Toher (2002) discusses thoroughly the seemingly anomalous example of Cornelius Nepos' *Life of Atticus*, the only text held by scholars to have been published during the subject's lifetime, an opinion about which Toher expresses some doubt. The argument that Nepos published two versions of the *Life* (one before Atticus' death in 32 and the second sometime before 27), revolves around his use of the perfect tenses, which Horsfall (1989) explains as Nepos' means of dealing with the problem of writing about a living contemporary; and a certain amount of repetition between ch. 12.1-2 and 19-20. This is a somewhat tenuous argument, although it has long been accepted. My own opinion is that there is not enough unequivocal evidence either way to solve the debate.

<sup>16</sup> Likely from the time after he negotiated Archelaus' accession in 4 BC – see ch. 1 pg. 4 above.

<sup>17</sup> Laqueur *RE* XVII col. 362-423.

14.<sup>18</sup> However, one immediate difficulty with this approach is that it would have been appropriate to 'address' the *Princeps* as Augustus any time from 27 onwards, and is not therefore very useful in assigning the *Bíos Kaίραος* a more dependable date.

The well-known statement in Dio<sup>19</sup> has long been taken as evidence that there was one rule concerning cult practice for Greeks, another for expatriate Romans in the Eastern provinces, and that no emperors were worshipped in Rome and Italy during their lifetime; any cult practice seeming to be dedicated to the emperor was, in fact, directed at his *Genius*.<sup>20</sup> In recent years, however, this view has been challenged. Death was not necessarily a pre-requisite of being accorded divine status and honours; Caesar was accorded all the trappings of cult by the Senate in the last months of his life, though these were not fully implemented until after his death.<sup>21</sup> Augustus received worship and divine cult not only in many Eastern cities, but even in Italian *municipia* during his lifetime, with temples and *flamines*. In fact, the evidence from outside Rome suggests that living emperors were consistently the focus of such cults, while over time less attention was paid to deceased emperors who became *Divi* than the incumbent ruler.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the long-held view that pragmatic Italians, scions of countless generations of sensible peasants, (as opposed to the perceived institutionalised political sycophancy of the Greeks), proudly eschewed ruler cult, is more a reflection of modern scholarly opinion than of the actual situation in the Augustan period. At any rate, Laqueur's insistence that the reference to temples must necessarily imply a date after AD 14, is not convincing.

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<sup>18</sup> Laqueur col. 404-406.

<sup>19</sup> Dio 51.20.6-8; cf. also Suet. *DA*. 52.

<sup>20</sup> L. Ross Taylor was for long the leading exponent of this view, presented in *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (1931).

<sup>21</sup> Gradel 2002: 54-58.

<sup>22</sup> Gradel 2002: 73-103.

Gradel's argument illustrates how complex the issue of emperor worship in Italy actually was, so far from being the simplistic situation presented in Dio, and for long accepted by scholars. Unfortunately, it also means that the reference to temples in the prologue should not be taken to indicate a precise date, and consequently is of no use in dating the work conclusively. Although Octavian's assumption of the title 'Augustus' marks an epochal boundary (before and after, so to speak), one which both ancient authors and modern textbook writers have found particularly convenient, the transition would not have appeared as abrupt to his contemporaries. In the same manner, the evolution of cult was similarly dynamic in the aftermath of Actium; cult offerings at the level of individual Eastern *πόλεις* likely predated the type of official provincial-level cult we see recorded in Dio.

Perhaps the most interesting and yet frustrating clues to the date of composition can be found in §§ XVI and XVII, where Octavian, who is in Apollonia to further his education, is brought word of Caesar's assassination. Nicolaus devotes an ostensibly surprising amount of space to an exposition of Octavian's dealings with the emotional citizenry in the aftermath of Caesar's murder, although this should probably be seen as an exercise on Nicolaus' part in demonstrating Octavian's youthful ability to command the loyalty and respect of foreign subject nations, as spelled out in the prooemium.

Hall took the use of *ἐνταυδοῖ* in the first sentence of § XVI as evidence that Nicolaus lived and wrote the biography in Apollonia after Herod's death in 4 BC.<sup>23</sup> This is a very slim basis for an argument; Malitz considers Hall's reasoning improbable,<sup>24</sup> and on its own, *ἐνταυδοῖ* is hardly evidence that Nicolaus wrote the *Βίος Καίσαρος* in residence there. The sketchy evidence we have for Nicolaus' life from F 138 indicates that he probably lived at Rome after Herod's death,

<sup>23</sup> Hall 1926: iii.

<sup>24</sup> Malitz 2003: 127-8: 'unwahrscheinlich'.

although admittedly the little that is known about Nicolaus' movements after he left the Judaeen court cannot rule out that he went to Apollonia at some stage.

As with so much about the *Bíos Kaiíraos*, there can be little certainty about its compositional date. Since Nicolaus spent much of the last twenty years of the millennium (possibly editing the work until as late as 4 BC) working on his colossal *Universal History*,<sup>25</sup> a later terminal date, once Nicolaus had settled in Rome, is possible; however, there is nothing in the text that could be used to conclusively ascribe a date to after Augustus' death, as the difficulty with using Dio's assertions about cultic practices shows. Jacoby's arguments are plausible and persuasive, and his views have tended to hold sway as a result; however, again, there is very little in the way of concrete evidence to indicate that Nicolaus definitely wrote the *Bíos Kaiíraos* during the '20's BC.

## II. Structural and Stylistic Problems

As mentioned above, many of the problems inherent in the *Bíos Kaiíraos* stem from the imperfect state in which it has reached us, and perhaps as much debate has been raised about its original form as about its *terminus ante quem*. Jacoby argued that the *Bíos Kaiíraos* was only a partial biography, heavily indebted to Augustus' autobiography as its major source and terminating with the assumption of the title 'Augustus' in January 27.<sup>26</sup> Bellemore accepted this position, and consequently argued that the text of the *Bíos Kaiíraos* as we have it is in fact an amalgamation of extracts compiled by the Byzantine excerptor on the basis that they were in some manner related to Octavian, and that only §§ I – XV came from the biography of Augustus, while the rest of the work came from Nicolaus' *Universal History*.<sup>27</sup> Bellemore argues

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<sup>25</sup> Toher 1987: 136, and cf. n. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Jacoby 1926: 263-265.

<sup>27</sup> Bellemore 1984: xi.

that the first part of the work would best be described as an *ἄγωγή*, although she does not discuss what precedents might exist for such an abbreviated work.

Laqueur concluded very differently; he felt that the extant work as we have it is substantially complete and ended with Octavian raising Caesar's troops in Campania.<sup>28</sup> Laqueur's decidedly unorthodox views have not, however, been widely accepted, as there is ample evidence in both the text and Nicolaus' authorial statements to indicate that much of the text has been lost. Toher has argued cogently that the *Bίος Καίσαρος* is a full biography in the Graeco-Roman tradition extending up to the end of Augustus' life. The first part (§§ I- XV) has similar traits to Greek encomiastic biographies and may be loosely termed an *ἄγωγή*, but Toher argues that this term does not characterise the work as a whole.<sup>29</sup> A brief examination of what remains of the text follows, while refraining as far as possible from fruitless speculation about what has been irreplaceably lost.

The extant text covers events in Octavian's youth up to October/November 44 BC, breaking off as he begins raising a private army from Caesar's veterans settled in Campania, whilst also interfering with and inciting desertion amongst M. Antonius' legions in Brundisium. However, it is really the heterogeneous nature of the extant text – the fact that what remains is no longer stylistically or structurally cohesive – rather than simply its truncated nature, which has led to controversy over its original form, and what genre the *Bίος Καίσαρος* should be classified as. The fragments come from two works that are stylistically very distinct from each other. While this may have something to do with the excerpting habits of the two Byzantine scribes, it may also reflect dissimilarities in the collected fragments.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Laqueur *RE* col. 422-423.

<sup>29</sup> Toher 1985: 65.

<sup>30</sup> Bellemore 1984: xx.

The text can first be broadly divided into two sections that roughly correspond to the source manuscripts. §§ I – XV come from the *de Virtutibus et Vitiis*; this first section has often been likened to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, since it deals primarily, in encomiastic fashion, with Octavian's youth, education and moral virtues – obviously making it an attractive selection for the Byzantine excerptor. §§ XVI – XXXI are from the *de Insidiis*, and differ substantially from the earlier fragments in style and treatment of the material; the style is more like that of a conventional history, although a strong bias towards Octavian and an emphasis on his virtuous character remains. The fragmentary and truncated nature of the extant text of the *Bίος Καίσαρος* gives the false impression that the Caesar Extract formed a major part of the work, since it makes up almost a third of what has survived – §§ XIX.58 – XXVIII.106. This reflects the manuscript tradition, since the theme of the Constantinian tome was conspiracies against rulers, and so the passages dealing with Caesar's assassination (and, to a lesser extent, Antonius' 'plotting' against Octavian up to the end of 44)<sup>31</sup> would have been an ideal selection from the *Bίος Καίσαρος* for the *de Insidiis*.

Nicolaus' privileged position, as an Eastern provincial privy to the upper echelons of the imperial court, gives the prooemium of the *Bίος Καίσαρος* a value that has often been overlooked. His Eastern links make him an important source for early imperial cult in that region, and as such the prologue is the earliest literary document to describe the offering of cult to the new ruler of the Mediterranean world. Panegyric embellishments notwithstanding, the extant opening sentence details this in interesting fashion:

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<sup>31</sup> This is very probably why the extant text ends after Octavian's realization that Antonius was plotting to discredit or harm him; Nicolaus boldly states at § XXXI.130 that Antonius was planning a *μεγάλη ἐπιβουλή* against Octavian. This may have prompted the excerptor to include §§ XXVII-XXXI in the epitome, rather than simply ending it after the account of Caesar's death.

ὅτι εἰς τιμῆς ἀξίωσιν τοῦτον οὕτω προσεῖπον οἱ ἄνθρωποι ναοῖς τε καὶ θυσίαις γεραίρουσιν, ἀνά τε νήσους καὶ ἠπείρους διηρημένοι καὶ κατὰ πόλεις καὶ ἔθνη, τό τε μέγεθος αὐτοῦ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τὴν εἰς σφᾶς εὐεργεσίαν ἀμειβόμενοι.

*Because mankind addresses him thus [Σεβαστός] in accordance with their estimation of his honour, they revere him with temples and sacrifices, over islands and continents, organised by cities and provinces, matching the greatness of his virtue and his benefactions towards them.*

It is the universal nature of this reverence for Augustus that Nicolaus highlights here, a convention of panegyric. The language consciously recalls the reciprocity central to ruler cult, as the sacrifices, temples and honours paid to Augustus are understood to be a requital (*ἀμειβόμενοι*) for his many benefactions to them. It is implicitly understood that his *εὐεργεσίαι* are conditional upon their obedience – peace is achieved as a consequence of pacification by the sword, and once this has occurred, Augustus' demonstrable benevolence is enough to ensure loyalty. Nicolaus' view emphasises the essential benefits of empire to all encompassed within its boundaries, and the peace and security that follow as a consequence of the emperor's great virtue, power and wisdom. The missing subject (*Σεβαστός*) would have served to highlight this, as the word denotes an even stronger sense of religious reverence than does its Latin counterpart, Augustus. As such, Augustus' new title would have conveyed a sense of familiarity in the East, accustomed for nearly three centuries to the religious titles of Hellenistic rulers – Soter, Euergetes, Epiphanes, and so forth.

The panegyric prooemium of the *Βίος Καίσαρος* is a short fragment<sup>32</sup> and serves as an introduction to the character of the man concerned, giving an overview of Augustus the world ruler, his achievements, and why he deserves laudation. It is similar in a number of respects to the prooemium of the *Cyropaedia*, but should not be taken as merely an imitation of that earlier

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<sup>32</sup> F 125.

work. Toher<sup>33</sup> has discussed the relationship of the *Bíos Kaisarōs* to the genre of panegyric *ἀγωγαί* that began with Xenophon's work, and he concluded that, although the *Bíos Kaisarōs* has certain motifs or *topoi* in common with the *Cyropaedia*, there exists a fundamental difference in purpose between the two:

"Xenophon wrote the *Cyropaedia* to present moral principles and conduct, and he used a fictional Cyrus to achieve his end. Nicolaus wrote to praise the life and achievements of Augustus, but his portrait is truthful, if biased."<sup>34</sup>

Any similarities between the two works are not functional, but rather stylistic. A motif that the *Bíos Kaisarōs* shares with the *Cyropaedia* is the Great Ruler's ability to persuade conquered peoples to willingly accept the benefits of his rule; the Great Ruler is also distinguished by the myriad of new peoples he has conquered, a fact made more exceptional by their inaccessibility.<sup>35</sup> Toher feels that the *Bíos Kaisarōs* may have more in common with the Hellenistic *encomia* of Alexander the Great, and with works such as Isocrates' *Euagoras*, but admits that so little is known about *ἀγωγαί* that the evidence is not easily evaluated.<sup>36</sup> As such, while Nicolaus may have been consciously echoing and imitating the conventions of a familiar genre, the work in its entirety varies as to how far this is applied.

The second and third sentences of the *Bíos Kaisarōs* are interesting for the style of allusive language therein:

<sup>33</sup> He discusses the two texts and their relationship to the little-known corpus of *ἀγωγαί* in ch. 3 of his 1985 thesis.

<sup>34</sup> Toher 1985: 73-4.

<sup>35</sup> Similarities with the prooemium of the *Bíos Kaisarōs* can be seen in Xen. Cyr. 1.3 and 1.5: ὅτι Κύρος ἐγένετο Πέρσης, ὃς παμπάλλους μὲν ἀνδράποδος ἐκτήσατο παιδομένους ἑαυτῷ, παμπόλλους δὲ πόλεις, πάμπალλα δὲ ἔθνη... Κύρω γοῦν ἴσμεν ἐδελήσαντας πείθεσθαι τοὺς μὲν ἀπέχοντας παμπόλλων ἡμερῶν ὁδόν, τοὺς δὲ καὶ μηνῶν ... καὶ ὁμῶς ἤδελον ὑπακούειν. (1.5.) Καὶ τοῖνυν τούτων τῶν ἐθνῶν ἤρξεν ... ἐδυνάσθη δὲ ἐπιδυμίαν ἐμβαλεῖν τοσαύτην τοῦ αὐτῷ χαρίζεσθαι ὥστε ἀεὶ τῇ αὐτοῦ γνώμῃ ἀξιοῦν κυβερνᾶσθαι, ἀνητήσατο δὲ τοσαῦτα φύλα ὅσα καὶ διελεθεῖν ἔργον ἐστίν ...

<sup>36</sup> Toher 1985: 65-72. The sketchy evidence for *ἀγωγαί* after Xenophon, and the numerous problems with the three known authors – Onesicritus, Marsyas of Pella and Lysimachus – usually cited as evidence that Nicolaus was writing in this tradition, means that it is difficult to make a useful comparison. That the evidence is so scanty and that so little is known about *ἀγωγαί*, effectively making most of Toher's assertions unprovable, is the major difficulty with this sort of argument.

δυνάμειος γὰρ καὶ φρονήσεως εἰς τὰ πρῶτα ἀνελθὼν οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ πλείστων μὲν ἦρξεν ἀνθρώπων τῶν διὰ μνήμης μακροτάτους τε ὅρους ἐποίησατο τῆς Ῥωμαίων δυναστείας εἰς τε τὸ βεβαϊότατον οὐ τὰ φύλα μόνον καὶ Ἑλλήνων καὶ βαρβάρων, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὰς τὰς διανοίας κατεστήσατο τὸ μὲν πρῶτον σὺν ὅπλοις, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ ἄνευ ὅπλων ἐδελουσίους τε προσαγόμενος διὰ τὸ μᾶλλον τι ἔνδηλος γίνεσθαι τῆι φιλανθρωπίαι ἔπεισεν ἑαυτοῦ ἀκροᾶσθαι. ὣν δὲ πρότερον οὐδὲ ὀνόματα ἠπίσταντο οἱ ἄνθρωποι οὐδὲ τινος ὑπήκοοι ἐγένοντο διὰ μνήμης ...

*For this man, having ascended to the highest pinnacle of authority and wisdom ruled over the greatest number of people in human memory and established the furthest frontiers of the Roman Empire. He established most securely not only the communities of both Greeks and barbarians, but even settled their minds: first through warfare, but afterwards even without force of arms he brought them over to his side willingly; through his manifest benevolence he persuaded them to obey him. Men had previously not even known their names, nor had they been subject to anyone in living memory ...*

The use of *διὰ μνήμης* is fascinating, as it immediately evokes a comparison with, and even superiority over, Alexander the Great.<sup>37</sup> The Macedonian world-conqueror was the exemplar of what Bosworth refers to as ‘the Hellenistic doctrine of apotheosis through conquest and benefaction.’<sup>38</sup> Nicolaus explicitly invokes this notion, for not conquest alone, but the adoration of the conquered for their conqueror-benefactor, is the mark of a truly great leader. The exuberantly encomiastic style also recollects that of the *Koinon* of Asia on the new calendar of 9 BC.<sup>39</sup> Nicolaus is here working within a well-established Hellenistic tradition requiring the beneficent ruler with divine honours; both great deeds of conquest and magnanimous euergetism made one worthy of deification.

Chapter II of the *Bίος Καίσαρος* (F 126) is Nicolaus’ programmatic statement and a summary of Octavian’s ancestry, sadly much mutilated by the excerptor. The first part also shows some similarities of style with *Cyropaedia* 1.6:

<sup>37</sup> Suetonius records Augustus’ fascination with Alexander – DA 18.1.

<sup>38</sup> Bosworth 1999:1.

<sup>39</sup> OGIS 458 / SEG IV 490; Ehrenberg & Jones 1967: doc. 98 (a).

(§ II.2) καίτός δ' ἀφηγήσομαι τὰ πεπραγμένα, ἐξ ὧν οἶόν τε γινῶναι σύμπασι τὴν ἀλήθειαν. πρότερον δ' αὐτοῦ τό τε γένος διέξειμι καὶ τὴν φύσιν τοῦς τε γεννητάς, ἀφ' ὧν ἦν, τὴν <τ'> ἐκ νηπίου τροφήν τε καὶ παιδείαν, ἣν χρησάμενος τοσούτῳ ἐγένετο.

(§ II.2) *I myself will relate his achievements, so that everyone will know the truth. First, I will discuss his family and character, and his family ancestry, as well as his upbringing and education from early childhood, by means of which he became such a man.*

(Cyr. 1.1.6) Ἡμεῖς μὲν δὴ ὡς ἄξιον ὄντα θαυμάζεσθαι τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα ἐσκεψάμεθα τίς ποτ' ὧν γενεὰν καὶ ποίαν τινὰ φύσιν ἔχων καὶ ποῖα τινὶ παιδείᾳ παιδευθεὶς τοσοῦτον διήνεγκεν εἰς τὸ ἄρχειν ἀνθρώπων. ὅσα οὖν καὶ ἐπυθόμεθα καὶ ἠσθῆσθαι δοκοῦμεν περὶ αὐτοῦ, ταῦτα πειρασόμεθα διηγήσασθαι.

Unfortunately, the vagaries of time and Byzantine editorial excisions have given Nicolaus' statement the lie. What may perhaps be termed the *Ἀγωγή* proper begins rather abruptly with F 127, § III.4, when Octavian is nine. The promised discussion of *τό τε γένος ... καὶ τὴν φύσιν, τοῦς τε γεννητάς, ἀφ' ὧν ἦν* is restricted to a bare three sentences, baldly describing his father Gaius Octavius as a senator, and the fact that the guardians of the orphaned Octavian squandered his inheritance. The brevity is conspicuous, and since it appears contrary to what Nicolaus proposed to relate, it is probable that an unknown amount of text was either lost or omitted here by the Constantinian excerptor. Further evidence based on probability for this is that there is no discussion of his mother, Atia, but, since she is a prominent figure in the *Βίος Καίσαρος*, one would surely expect a discussion of her ancestry, given her Caesarian blood, to be included as a matter of course.

One can potentially find clues to the sort of information likely to have been included in this section of the *Βίος Καίσαρος* by comparison with what Suetonius covers in the opening chapters of his *Augustus*. He describes the origins of the *gens Octavia* at Velitrae and mentions both Augustus' paternal and maternal ancestry, including also some of the aspersions M. Antonius

cast upon Octavian's family. Suetonius seems to indicate that there was not much information available on Octavian's paternal family: *Nec quicquam ultra de paternis Augusti maioribus repperi*.<sup>40</sup> By way of contrast, Suetonius is able to give precise information on the offices held by the prestigious Claudii at the beginning of the *Tiberius*.<sup>41</sup> Yet, though Suetonius is able to include more factual information in this respect for the Claudii, the scope, length and quality of the anecdotes in the introduction to both the *Augustus* and the *Tiberius* is in fact similar, both having somewhat gossipy overtones – the major difference being that Suetonius takes noticeably more trouble to rebut M. Antonius' slurs than he does the scandalous anecdotes of the Claudii. This paucity of recorded offices may have something to do with the fact that Augustus' branch of the Octavii were plebeian and not terribly distinguished, but it may also be related to what Augustus himself recorded about his family, and hence what material was available for later biographers.

The impression one receives of the material in *De vita sua* is that it was not extensive; Augustus does not seem, from what Suetonius describes, to have elaborated in his own writing very much on his ancestry.<sup>42</sup> But Augustus may have felt it unnecessary to give a detailed account of his ancestry in his autobiography, as the work was in all probability an apologetic defence of his conduct in the Triumviral era, before his acquisition of sole power. As biographers, Nicolaus and Suetonius may have had a greater interest in describing Augustus' ancestry and upbringing than the *Princeps* did, since his purpose was different to theirs. In fact, the conventions of autobiography demanded only a cursory description of one's ancestry as a

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<sup>40</sup> Suet. *DA* 2.3.

<sup>41</sup> Suet. *Tib.* 1-2. This includes 28 consulships, 5 dictatorships, 7 censorships, 6 triumphs and 2 ovations; 10 specific individuals, both male and female, are named or referred to indirectly; the family had many distinguished (and otherwise) deeds actually on record, and were notorious (*notatissimum*) for their aristocratic snobbery.

<sup>42</sup> Suet. *DA* 2.3: *ipse Augustus nihil amplius quam equestri familia ortum se scribit vetere ac locuplete, et in qua primus senator pater suus fuerit.*

means of establishing one's credentials, and a concentration on one's deeds and the great events in which one had a role.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the apparent poverty of his sources and the deficiencies of the *gens Octavia*, Suetonius does attempt to portray it in a good light, because his attitude towards Augustus was mostly positive.<sup>44</sup> Nicolaus, being entirely positive, may have gone to greater lengths to enhance Augustus' ancestry. Since, as discussed previously, Nicolaus likely wrote during the last years of Augustus' reign, he was not entirely dependent upon the autobiography as his sole source, and there may have been a greater range of material in his introductory discussion of his friend's relations and parents – although this is, of course, pure speculation.

This is also not to say that the description of Octavian's ancestry in the *Bίος Καίρατος* was necessarily a long one. In ancient biography its function was introductory, and therefore always subordinate to the main character; it showed the stock from which he sprang and could prefigure the sort of nature he was endowed with; it also established his social position and wealth, both of which were concerns of ancient readers.<sup>45</sup> What is clear, is that what remains of Nicolaus' discussion is severely curtailed, and should not be taken as a reflection of the original work.

Perhaps the most striking absence are the numerous supernatural portents said to have accompanied Octavian's birth, and which other ancient authors recorded.<sup>46</sup> It is highly unlikely that Nicolaus would have neglected to include them, as he does not neglect the role of the supernatural in other parts of the work. In the Caesar Extract, which is both the longest and the

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<sup>43</sup> Toher 1985: 135-7.

<sup>44</sup> For example, because he can find nothing of import to say about Augustus paternal grandfather, he describes him as *municipalibus magistrariis contentus abundante patrimonio tranquillissime senuit*.

<sup>45</sup> Toher 1985: 136-7.

<sup>46</sup> Suet. *DA* 94; Dio 45.1.2-5; 45.2.

least corrupt of the fragments, and so is likely the most accurate indication of Nicolaus' writing style, *Τύχη* or *ὁ δαίμων* and *μοῖρα* are the deciding factors in Caesar's assassination.<sup>47</sup> Nicolaus takes pains to stress this point, as the theme of the inability of men, even a Great Man like Caesar, to avoid the hand of Fortune in their fate, would have appealed to his Peripatetic and dramatic sensibilities<sup>48</sup> - especially since he presents Octavian as uniquely able to do so because of his *ἀρετή*. That the birth portents providing further indications of his protagonist's superior qualities are absent is more an indication that they were lost than that Nicolaus neglected to include them.

Chapters III - XV chart the young Octavian's early years, and the two most important relationships in his life, those with his mother and Julius Caesar. Nicolaus, in describing Octavian's early years, stresses the boy's early manifestation of his superior nature; and, as Toher points out,<sup>49</sup> very often it is these primary relationships, particularly that with Caesar, which serve to illustrate and underscore his innate excellence.

Although there are several lacunae in the *Bίος Καίσαρος*, one particular example presents some interesting problems for our reading of the text. In fact the present reconstruction of the text as a result of the lacuna may need to be rethought. The lacuna in question occurs in mid-sentence at the end of § XII.27, after Octavian has successfully petitioned Caesar on behalf of the Saguntines at Carthago Nova; he then goes on to use his precocious *προστασία*, which he owes to Caesar, for the benefit of many people, attracting admiration from all and sundry, including Caesar. Yet, rather confusingly, when the text picks up again after a lacuna of two folio pages<sup>50</sup> in § XIII, the scene has radically changed, opening with a discussion of Octavian's modest *δίαιτα*. He is

<sup>47</sup> In §§ XXIII.82-83, XXIV.86, and XXVI.97.

<sup>48</sup> In his youth he wrote several dramas, tragedies and comedies. Aristotle would have approved.

<sup>49</sup> Toher 2003a: 140; discussed at greater length in ch. 5 below.

<sup>50</sup> Hall 1923: 80 n.12.1.

δὲ μὴ ἐλπίδι τοσαύτης τύχης ἐπαρθεῖς, ὃ φιλεῖ τοῖς εὐδαιμόνως τρεφομένοις ἔπεσθαι, ἐκλάθοιτο ἀρετῆς καὶ ἐκδιαιτηθείη, συνέκρυψε τὴν γνώμην, ἐν δὲ ταῖς διαθήκαις αὐτὸν υἱοῦται, ἅπαις ὦν ἀρρένων παίδων, καὶ κληρονόμον ἀποδείκνυσι τῆς τύχης πάσης· τετάρτην δὲ μοῖραν τῶν χρημάτων τοῖς ἄλλοις διένειμε φίλοις τε καὶ ἀστοῖς, ὅπερ ὕστερον ἐγένετο δῆλον.

(XIII.30) *And it was because of this especially that Caesar made much of him, and not only, as some feel, because of their family relationship. For he had even earlier decided to adopt him, but, fearing that Octavian, excited at the hope of such good fortune (as often befalls those raised in wealth) might forsake virtue and abandon his lifestyle, he concealed his intention and adopted him in his will, since he was childless, and left him his entire fortune; a quarter of the money he allotted to his friends and the citizens, as it was later shown.*

Our first reference to the adoption is on the occasion of Caesar's quadruple triumph:

(§ VIII.17) τὸν νέον Καίσαρα, υἱὸν ἤδη πεπονημένον, ὄντα δὲ τρόπον τινὰ καὶ φύσει διὰ τὸ ἀγχοτάτω τοῦ γένους εἶναι...

(§ VIII.17) ... *the young Caesar, whom he had already adopted, and who was in his nature like a son to him because of their extremely close relationship ...*

Now, Caesar triumphed during the month between the *Ludi Apollinares* in July and the *Ludi Romani* in September 46 BC.<sup>53</sup> If we assume that Nicolaus intended his rather unexpected reference to the adoption to be taken at face value, it would be a whole year earlier than the almost universally accepted date on which Caesar made his last will, at his villa near Labici on the Ides of September, 45 BC, shortly before he entered Rome for the last months of his life.<sup>54</sup> Yet when Nicolaus writes of Octavian's arrival in Calpia, he describes Caesar embracing him *ὡς τέκνον* 'like a son' (§ XI.23), implying that although their relationship was extremely close, the adoption had not yet taken place. Bellemore feels that the whole of § XIII makes more sense if

<sup>53</sup> *CIL* 1<sup>2</sup>: 328; Suet. *DJ* 37.

<sup>54</sup> Suet. *DJ* 83.1.

placed between §§ VII.16 and VIII.17, as then the statement *υἰὸν ἤδη πεπονημένος* is more understandable, coming as it does after the decision to adopt.<sup>55</sup>

Stylistically § XIII also agrees more with the earlier passages, where Octavian's youthful modesty and virtuous nature is highlighted, whereas his intelligence and sagacity, more suited to an emergent statesman, come to the fore once he joins Caesar in § XI. Chapter XIII also begins with what might be called private concerns – Octavian shuns dissolute youths and unseemly carousing, and dines only with respectable senior members of his own family. The close personal nature of Caesar and Octavian's relationship is also a factor here, rather than the 'mentor-protégé' aspect that is brought to the fore later on. This domestic tone is not compatible with the scenes in §§ XI, XII and XIV, where it is the more 'public' side of Octavian's persona – those that matter for a great public career – that are admired: his wit, intelligence and laconic sagacity (XI.24); his care for his emerging reputation at Rome (XI.25); in XII his successful exercise of patronage on behalf of the Saguntines and others; and his prudent crowd-management during the episode with the pseudo-Marius in XIV.33.

So, with regards to § XIII and Nicolaus' apparent misdating of the adoption, it appears that Nicolaus made an anachronistic reference forward to the adoption, which was misunderstood by the excerptor and placed where it ought to have occurred chronologically in the account. Nicolaus, perhaps assuming that his readers would be familiar with the story of Octavian's testamentary adoption, is here more interested in Caesars' motives, and what they reveal of his relationship with his great-nephew, than strict chronological accuracy. It made stylistic sense to describe Caesar taking the decision to protect Octavian's humble lifestyle by adopting him only

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<sup>55</sup> Bellemore 1984: 81 believes it may even be a reflection of poor condensing on the part of the excerptor.

posthumously, in the context of the 'private' aspect of their relationship, rather than in the 'public' aftermath of his Spanish campaign.

Importantly, Nicolaus is at pains to stress that the *decision* to adopt him at all was a long-standing one – ἔγνω μὲν οὖν καὶ πρότερον παῖδα ἀποδείξει. This accords with Nicolaus' view of Octavian as Caesar's true successor, both in terms of his close relationship with the statesman and, more importantly, his own natural talents in that direction. Malitz theorizes that Nicolaus' intention is to downplay any suggestion that Caesar's ultimate decision to adopt Octavian was poorly motivated or merely a spontaneous afterthought, since it was appended to the will, as Suetonius notes, *in ima cera*.<sup>56</sup> Nicolaus' presentation of Octavian as innately fitted to succeed Caesar depended on Caesar having identified his future heir's potential at a young age; thus, Nicolaus places it in his account anachronistically.

Certainly, as one of the very few young male relatives Caesar had, Octavian would have been in the picture for some time prior to Caesar's death. He may even have featured in an earlier version of the will simply as a beneficiary. In *DJ* 83, Suetonius records that from Caesar's first consulship (59 BC) and down to the civil wars, his son-in-law, Pompey, was his heir; it is likely that Pompey moved to the foreground after Julia's death in 54 BC, as one assumes that any children of that marriage would have been co-beneficiaries along with Pompey. After his daughter's death ruined any prospect for grandchildren, and after his split with Pompey became irreconcilable, the focus moved to his great-nephew, Octavian, as the major beneficiary.<sup>57</sup> Suetonius states that Octavian's adoption was in a codicil appended to the last version of the will made on the Ides of September preceding the assassination, by which stage

<sup>56</sup> *DJ* 83.2; Malitz 2003: 114 and 133.

<sup>57</sup> Caesar's nephew, Q. Pedius and great-nephew L. Pinarius, were lesser legatees. Pedius had been one of Caesar's *legati* between 58 and 56; the absence of much information on Pinarius seems to indicate that he was young (Keaveney & Madden 1988: 356-7). Exactly why Caesar preferred Octavian to the experienced Pedius will remain the unresolved subject of fanciful conjecture.

the 55-year old Caesar must have felt under some pressure to nominate an heir, since his only child and son-in-law were both dead. However, he never entirely gave up hope that his marriage to Calpurnia would produce issue, as he famously (and ironically) named certain of his assassins as guardians for his son, *si qui sibi nasceretur*.<sup>58</sup>

The extracts from *De Virtutibus* end after § XV with the statement *Τέλος τῆς Ἱστορίας Νικολάου Δαμασκηνοῦ καὶ τοῦ βίου Καίσαρος τοῦ νέου. Περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας* from the excerptor, and hereafter the style changes abruptly as Octavian's story is picked up again in Apollonia immediately after the Ides of March 44. This marks his exit from childhood into the adult world of politics as an historical player. However, although §§ XVI – XVIII achieve the important goal of moving Octavian towards the centre of the action, not much actually happens: he leaves Apollonia and makes for Lupiae,<sup>59</sup> corresponds with his mother and Philippus, and hears of his adoption and the circumstances of Caesar's death,<sup>60</sup> after deciding to accept the adoption and his inheritance, he departs for Rome. Once the Caesar Extract begins (§§ XIX-XXVIII), the account becomes denser and more complex, as events leading up to and immediately after the assassination are discussed.

In the bridging passage at the start of § XIX, Nicolaus states that he will examine the motives of the assassins and describe how the conspiracy against Caesar came to be formed. As a programmatic statement it has much more in common with a work of history than a eulogistic biography, and this is true of the Caesar Extract. Most scholars since Leo have tended to agree that the *excursus* dealing with Caesar's murder may have originally come from Nicolaus'

<sup>58</sup> *DJ* 83.2.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Appian *B.Civ* 3.10, the only other author to mention his stopping here before moving on to Brundisium.

<sup>60</sup> Octavian's surprise at the adoption was proverbial: §§ XIII.30, XVII.48 and XVIII.52, *Vell.* 2.59.1; Appian *B.Civ* 2.143; Dio 44.35.2. M. Antonius used Octavian's absence from Rome in the early days after the Ides to pass himself off as Caesar's heir – he seems to have entertained hopes, bitterly disappointed in the event, that he would be named Caesar's heir: §§ XXI.74; Cic. *Phil.* 2.71; Dio 44.36.2 and 53.5.

history, although there is still some argument about how came to be part of the *Bíos Kaióragos*. Bellemore argued strongly that the absence of any reference to Octavian meant that the extract was not originally written with him in mind; in her view, it came from the *Universal History*, and owed its position in *de Insidiis* to the excerptor.<sup>61</sup>

However, the question then arises of how Nicolaus would have addressed Octavian's emergence into political life without some discussion of the assassination, as no biography of the man would be complete without a discussion of exactly how and why he was able to seize power. Furthermore, if Nicolaus included an account of Caesar's assassination in the *Bíos Kaióragos*, it would not be necessary for the excerptor to substitute it for one from the *Universal History*.

Toher also holds that the extract may originally have come from the *Universal History*, but that it was 'lifted' by Nicolaus and adapted to the new work by the somewhat awkward bridging passage; the use of the first person in *διέξομι* indicates that it was not likely to have been written by the excerptor.<sup>62</sup> Apart from a lacuna close to the beginning of § XXVIII,<sup>63</sup> the extract from the *de Insidiis* is a continuous and unbroken narrative. Moreover, the comparative lack of textual corruptions from the beginning of § XIX gives this extract a greater internal coherence, which suggests that, even if the Caesar extract originally came from the *Universal History*, it was edited and reworked by someone with a coherent purpose in mind – very likely, the author himself.

Furthermore, the larger scale of the Caesar Extract, when compared to the preceding chapters on Octavian's youth, corresponds to the scale of §§ XXVIII-XXXI. This further supports the

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<sup>61</sup> Bellemore 1984: xviii – xix.

<sup>62</sup> Toher 1985: 91.

<sup>63</sup> Evidently a fairly long break, as when we left Octavian in XVIII he was setting off for Rome in April, whereas the text picks up again only in June/July.

argument that Nicolaus was writing a full-scale biography of Augustus, and that the *Ἀγωγή* of the first chapters was not the focus of the work. The level of detail one finds in the Caesar Extract, particularly when Nicolaus is describing the psychological processes of the conspirators, is furthermore comparable to that in § XXVIII.110, describing the attempts of the 'middle-ground' agitators – Cicero, Vibius Pansa, P. Servilius Vatia and L. Caesar – to foment enmity between Octavian and the two consuls of 44.<sup>64</sup> That the 'Caesar Extract' may have been 'cut and pasted' from Nicolaus' earlier work does not mean that it is inconsistent with either the style or scale of the *Βίος Καίσαρος*.

Where the text breaks off at the end of F 130, Octavian had embarked on his subversive efforts in Campania to raise an illegal army of Caesar's veterans of the Seventh and Eighth legions. The text ends with a rider from the excerptor, *Τέλος τοῦ βίου Καίσαρος καὶ τῆς Νικολάου Δαμασκηνοῦ συγγραφῆς*, indicating that the original content might have been lost even before it came to be excerpted in the tenth century. That there must have been more to the original document can be inferred from Nicolaus' own statements in § II, and at the beginning of § XIX, where he explicitly states:

(XIX.58) *ἔπειτα δὲ περὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου Καίσαρος, οὗ ἕνεκα ὅδε ὁ λόγος ὤρμηται, ὅπως τε παρῆλθεν εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἀντ' ἐκείνου κατέστη, ὅπως ἔργα πολέμου καὶ εἰρήνης ἀπεδείξατο.*

(XIX.58) *Next I shall deal with Augustus, for whom I undertook to write this account – how he came to power and how, after he had succeeded Caesar, he occupied himself with deeds of war and peace.*

From this we can conjecture that at the very least he intended to describe Octavian's struggle with M. Antonius. Despite this, Laqueur believed that the editorial statement at the end of F 130 was correct, and that it marked the original and complete ending of the work as Nicolaus wrote

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<sup>64</sup> Hall 1926: 93, n. on 28.9.

it.<sup>65</sup> This would imply that the whole *Bíos Kaiράρος* was little more than an *Ἀγωγή*, rather than, as seems more probable, a full biography in the Hellenistic tradition.

The *Bíos Kaiράρος* should be seen as more than simply the sum of its collated parts, for, despite its sadly abbreviated nature, the work itself is a valuable source for Octavian's early years. Assigning a dependable date to it is difficult, if not impossible. Although Nicolaus used Augustus' autobiography as a source,<sup>66</sup> there is not enough evidence as to his whereabouts during the 20's, which might point to the motive for writing a long, encomiastic biography. His earliest opportunity to meet the *Princeps* would have been during Augustus' extended tour of the eastern provinces from 22-20, as he was certainly at Antioch in 20.<sup>67</sup> This period would have presented a good opportunity for literary adulation – if, that is, he was in fact closely connected to Herod by this stage, which is by no means certain.

But if one holds to an earlier compositional date for the text, as do Jacoby, Bellemore and Malitz, it was surely Augustus' presence in the East at this time that prompted it. Nicolaus in all probability had neither opportunity nor motive to write the *Bíos Kaiράρος* while serving at the court of Herod and working on his *Universal History*, for the better part of the next decade; it is possible that he may have written it after leaving the Judaeian court. However, the complete silence in our sources on Nicolaus' whereabouts after he mediated Archelaus' succession, means that I would hesitate to go as far as Toher in arguing for a date around c. AD 14. Certainly, the Damascene would have been afforded more of an opportunity and motivation to compose the work post-4 BC, when he probably spent an extended period in Rome, although the dearth of evidence for his life and, especially, his death, cannot pin this down for us.

<sup>65</sup> Laqueur *RE* XVII col. 422.

<sup>66</sup> That this is likely is shown by the close correlation between Suet. *DA* 8 and §§ I-XVIII of the *Bíos Kaiράρος*.

<sup>67</sup> See ch 1, n.8 and 9.

The radical stylistic differences between sections I – XV and XVI – XXXI may be a result of the manuscript tradition, but it may also reflect how, as Octavian grows in age and stature, the format changes in order to accommodate both the increase in detail and the need to adopt a register suitable for the subject. The fact that the Caesar Extract may originally have been written as part of Nicolaus' *Universal History* does not detract from the coherence of the work as a whole, and in fact, as will be seen below, it contributes measurably to the literary picture of Octavian's relationship with the Dictator. Nicolaus' own statements show that he intended the work to be a full-scale biography, whatever date is taken to be the terminal point of the work; but the textual difficulties of the work have led to its often being dismissed as a mere partial Life. The first extant section is reminiscent of *Ἀγωγή*-type eulogistic biographies, with their emphasis on the superior moral qualities and prodigious talent of the young hero. However, although Nicolaus seems to be consciously echoing literary convention, and does not disdain the language and tone of *encomia*, the *Βίος Καίσαρος* itself is an original work that aims to move beyond the confining limits of *ἀγωγαί* proper, restricted to a subject's childhood and education as they tend to be.

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## Nicolaus and the Hellenistic Biographical Tradition

When examining as incomplete a work as the *Bíos Kaisáaros*, ascertaining to which literary tradition or genre the text belongs may help to fill in certain blanks. Nicolaus' Eastern background immediately suggests that he should be influenced by the late Hellenistic tradition. He demonstrated wide-ranging interests in his literary output, which covers drama, history, ethnography, biographical works, (including his autobiography), and commentaries on Aristotle. In fact, when examining the *Bíos Kaisáaros*, one should consider how far Nicolaus' Peripatetic inclinations may - or may not - have influenced his writing, and in particular his writing of biography.<sup>1</sup>

That Nicolaus intended the *Bíos Kaisáaros* to be more than a mere *Áγωγή* is clear, although the 'why' and 'how' may need some explanation; it begins to make sense if one recognizes that he was writing within a theoretical framework. A brief survey of the origins and characteristics of biography as a genre of Greek literature should also help to contextualize this Greek biography of a Roman leader.

### *I. The History of Biography*

One of the problems with ancient biography is the paucity of evidence. While history has been relatively well served by the accidents of preservation, with Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon surviving (although much else has been lost), virtually all of the ancient Greek biographical tradition survives only in miscellaneous fragments. In fact, Nicolaus' importance as an author is enhanced by the fact that his autobiography and the *Bíos Kaisáaros* are the earliest

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<sup>1</sup> F 132.2, from his autobiography - *ζηλωτής Άριστοτέλους*.

examples of Hellenistic biography to have been directly transmitted in sizeable and coherent fragments.<sup>2</sup>

The complex roots of Greek biography may be found as far back as the fifth century, although there was a prolonged period of experimentation in various techniques and subjects before *βίοι* acquired the typical forms that characterise the genre, and which are most recognizable from the Hellenistic era onwards. The fifth century was a time of great literary innovation, for, aside from history, (which has acquired a particular importance because we are fortunate to possess the masterpieces of both Herodotus and Thucydides), geographies, travel accounts, genealogical works and natural philosophy were also being written. Biography was thus only one of several new literary genres explored at that time.

The origins of biography, however, are still somewhat obscure, but, according to Momigliano,<sup>3</sup> may stem from the Greeks' interest in the lives of the great poets, Homer and Hesiod, and their mythic heroes, as well as the sayings and lives of the Seven Wise Men. This is not to say that fully-fledged biographies were in existence as far back as the fifth century. Rather, it appears that early prose works contained what might be termed biographical elements; the excursus on Pausanias (1.128-135) and obituary of Pericles (11.65) in Thucydides' history demonstrates that he was interested in biographical detail.<sup>4</sup>

The sketchy nature of the early evidence means that there is not much one can conclusively say about the genre's beginnings. Scylax of Caryanda's autobiographical account of his sea-voyages for Darius I in the early fifth century may be the earliest attested example of a prose work with

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<sup>2</sup> Before Nicolaus, we have only a small fragment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC writer Satyrus' *Life of Euripides*, from the sixth book of his *βίων ἀναγραφή*.

<sup>3</sup> Momigliano 1993: 25-27.

<sup>4</sup> Hornblower 1991: 212.

biographical features.<sup>5</sup> But, aside from the brief mention he receives in Herodotus, and a problematic entry in the *Suda*, there is little known for certain about Scylax and his writings except that he wrote a work concerned with one individual man, the tyrant Heraclides, around the 480's.<sup>6</sup> Stesimbrotus of Thasus wrote a work *Περὶ Θεμιστοκλέους καὶ Θουκυδίδου καὶ Περικλέους* (FGrH 107 F 1-11) It is not known what the scope of the work was, but it may bear some similarity to Xenophon's later works; the extant fragments give details of their political policies and education, but also describe their character, childhood and education (FGrH 107 F 1, 4 and 6), as well as their private lives (FGrH 107 F 3, 5, 10-11), which were not generally treated in historical or political works in the fifth century.<sup>7</sup> These examples are somewhat tenuous in nature, but they indicate that biographical works were known, if not common, in the fifth century.

Changes in the social and political milieu of the Greek states in the fourth century led to a new phase in the development of biography at the opening of the Hellenistic era. The Greek world of the fifth century was epitomized by the *πάλις*; their great and famous sons – Lycurgus, Solon, Themistocles, Leonidas and Pericles, to name only a handful – may have been powerful individuals, yet their sphere of influence was largely restricted to the political arena of their native city. The fourth century saw a shift, however, as some states placed a greater reliance on individual leaders for their political guidance, culminating ultimately in the conquests of Philip and Alexander of Macedon and the eventual establishment of the kingdoms of the Diadochoi. The effects of these far-reaching changes also spread to the realm of literature. While mini-biographical vignettes do appear in the fifth century histories, such as Herodotus' portraits of Cyrus and Croesus, and Thucydides' sketches of Pausanias and Pericles, writers of the fourth

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<sup>5</sup> Herodotus 4.44.

<sup>6</sup> Momigliano 1993: 29.

<sup>7</sup> Gera 1993: 4.

century needed a newer, more flexible genre to reflect the new position public figures and kings occupied in relation to the state. The example *par excellence* of such a figure is naturally Alexander the Great, whose larger-than-life deeds and personality were the subject of a spate of biographical works over the following centuries.

Isocrates claimed<sup>8</sup> that he was the first to write a prose *encomium* for a contemporary in his *Euagoras*, written c. 370, and, although it was the first in what was to prove a popular literary form, it was certainly not a *βίος*-proper. As Momigliano describes it, 'Isocrates combines rather ineffectually a static description of Euagoras' character with a chronological account of what other people did to Euagoras.'<sup>9</sup> However, the work proved influential, as Xenophon later (c. 360) modeled his *Agesilaus* on it. Xenophon's *Agesilaus* proves an interesting case, as although the Spartan king also features in the *Hellenica*, his portrayal differs, indicating the emergence of a conception of *βίος* as distinct from the genre of history. The *Agesilaus*' encomiastic tone also marked Xenophon as a debtor, like Isocrates, to poetic eulogies.

Unlike Isocrates, Xenophon's experience as a soldier gave him a greater personal interest in his protagonist's actual achievements, and thus introduced a new element – that of the character's 'great deeds' – to biographical works.<sup>10</sup> Xenophon's experimentation in the genre was not limited to this work. The autobiographical *Anabasis* also contains biographical vignettes on the dead Greek generals, and the *Apomnemonemata*, or *Memorabilia*, were an apologetic defence of Socrates. Xenophon's greatest contribution to the development of biography, the *Cyropaedia*, relates Cyrus' life from birth to death, including his education and with a strong emphasis on his superior moral qualities. The work is eclectic, bearing the characteristics of history,

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<sup>8</sup> *Euag.* 8.

<sup>9</sup> Momigliano 1993: 50.

<sup>10</sup> Momigliano 1993: 50.

encomium, Socratic dialogues and technical treatise writing. However, Xenophon does not profess to be writing a narrative history; his purpose is didactic, in fact, and he uses a version of Cyrus' life to present his own theories on leadership.<sup>11</sup>

It is when we come to the Peripatetic school that many of the problems associated with investigating a literary genre that has not been well served by the passage of time become apparent. The association of biography with the Peripatetic school has been a tenacious idea, yet one surrounded by many difficulties. Plato's *Apologia* and *Dialogues*, and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, function as apologetic character-defenses of Socrates, and as such were a new approach to writing about individuals, whose lives could not, as with generals and politicians, be treated in the course of conventional historiography.<sup>12</sup> However, neither of these works are biographies, nor is there evidence to suggest that any of Socrates' pupils ever wrote a *βίος* of the man.

On the basis of the evidence for generic innovation in the preceding century, most scholars agree that Aristotle didn't 'invent' biography. Aristotle's objection to conventional, contemporary historiography is well known, based on his statement in *Poetics* 9: *ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθ' ἄλλου, ἢ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει*. But Aristotle was not being critical of history to no end – he was searching for a better solution, one that reflected his empiricist approach to philosophy; seeking to answer various questions related to the fields of poetics, morals and politics via the organized collection of facts and analysis. As such, he fully recognized the

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<sup>11</sup> Gera 1993: 2-3; C. Tuplin, 'Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*: Education and Fiction', in A.H. Sommerstein & C. Atherton (edd.) *Education in Greek Fiction* (Nottingham, 1996), 65-162, at 92.

<sup>12</sup> Burridge 1992: 57.

usefulness of careful historical research,<sup>13</sup> often undertaken by his students. Aristotle himself wrote no actual biographies, but his interest in systematic research led to the collection of biographical material – apophthegms, sayings of famous individuals, and *exempla*.<sup>14</sup>

This interest in the elements of biography, however, did not translate into a rash of full-blown biographies. As the vast majority of the early Peripatetic texts related to biography have been lost, leaving only tantalizing titles and fragments, it is often very difficult to identify whether a particular incident or saying from one these texts quoted by a later author indicate that it was taken from a biography, or whether it was in actuality simply an isolated incident or *exemplum*.<sup>15</sup> Yet, if one man can be said to be the ‘father’ of biography, a likely candidate is Aristoxenus of Tarentum. Originally a Pythagorean, he came somewhat late in life to the Peripatos but never lost his Pythagorean sympathies. When, after Aristotle’s death in 322, Theophrastus was preferred to him as the new head of the school, he wrote (allegedly in a fit of pique) biographies of Socrates and Plato, in which they were unfavourably compared to Pythagoras and Archytas. He may be credited with the introduction of certain traits that came to be characteristic of the genre: a predilection for learning and philosophical ideas combined with a gossipy relish for anecdotes. The use of *βίοι* as a medium of debate, as polemical or encomiastic retorts between rival philosophical schools, likely originated with Aristoxenus.<sup>16</sup>

The Peripatetics were the only philosophical school actively engaged in historical research for biographical purposes; this stemmed from their interest in classification and types, and manifested itself in lives that were grouped by similar traits or professions – kings, tyrants,

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<sup>13</sup> *Rhet.* 1.4.1360 A, where it is history’s use to the orator that concerns him chiefly, primarily because it is one of several means to the end of becoming skilled in the political arts. There are also the vast number of Greek political constitutions that he and his students collected, of which the *Ath. Pol.* is all that remains.

<sup>14</sup> Momigliano 1993: 66-68.

<sup>15</sup> Momigliano 1993: 69.

<sup>16</sup> Momigliano 1993: 74 -76.

philosophers and poets were of especial interest. Aristotle's value system, as for example exemplified in his *Ethics*, because it approximated to the moral sensibilities of most contemporary, educated Greeks, was a useful framework for evaluating biographical subjects. Apart from Aristoxenus, however, biographies do not immediately seem to have been widely written by adherents of the Peripatos. In fact, most of the works referred to as 'Peripatetic' are from the later third century, the second or third generation after Aristotle and Aristoxenus, and there is some doubt as to whether all of these early writers of biography were connected to the school, or even whether what they wrote were in fact full-length biographies and not simply collections of incidents and *exempla* around a particular theme.

In the late fourth and early third century, the larger-than-life personalities of Philip and Alexander proved inviting subjects for Hellenistic writers living in the aftermath of the social and political changes brought about by their conquests. Theopompus' *Philippica* concentrated on how Philip's greatness was blighted by his numerous personal vices – a theme also taken up by later writers on his son, Alexander, right down to the Second Sophistic and Arrian's work on the Macedonian conqueror. *Encomia* proliferated, and biography flourished under the Alexandrian scholars, who collected anecdotes about the authors of works in the great Library in order to illuminate texts that were even then ancient; very often these were published as *mini-biōi*. A predilection for sensational information and drama can be deduced from some of the surviving fragments of this period; alas, most are lost.<sup>17</sup>

Many of these works reflected the curiosity of Hellenistic authors, their pleasure and interest in the character of the person described as revealed through anecdote and story. Various *topoi* common to them included birth and parentage, youth and education, death and burial, and

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<sup>17</sup> Hermippus' fragments, for example, are summarised in Heraclides Lembus, (*P.Ox.* 11. 1367) and quoted by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*de Isaeo.* 1.1).

their accomplishments, as well as their particular moral virtues. Few of these works were neutral in tone and usually they actively sought to apportion praise or blame to the subject. In fact, the boundary between biography and polemic or *encomium* was frequently crossed, and there was still a tremendous amount of variability in what was produced. Satyrus' *Life of Euripides*, written in dialogue form and imbued with a dramatic tone, is the only other Hellenistic biography to have substantially survived (albeit in fragmentary form) before the *Bíos Kaíraos*. It probably dates from the first half of the second century, as it was epitomized during the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor. Like the Peripatetics before him, Satyrus often derived much of his information about the poet's life through inference from his plays; thus, for example, the assumption that much of Euripides' concern with adulterous women in his plays indicates that he himself was a cuckold. The preponderance of unflattering material on Euripides that appears in the *Life* is also a reflection of the influence that Satyrus' drawing of biographical inferences from Aristophanes' comedies, such as the *Thesmophoriazousae*, had on Euripides' portrayal. Despite the fragmentary nature of what remains, enough has survived to show that Satyrus' general concern for truthful historicity was somewhat low, when compared to his enjoyment of the amusing or salacious anecdote.<sup>18</sup> In this, one can see how the emphasis of biography shifted from the early Peripatetic concern with types of people and moral qualities, to a preference for learned detail and a lighter, less serious tone.

The *Life of Euripides* and the *Bíos Kaíraos* illustrate the tremendous variation in biographical works within the Hellenistic tradition, yet the difference between Nicolaus and Satyrus' works is not simply limited to their obvious chronological separation. Nicolaus' work is far more self-consciously serious in its aims and tone. Furthermore, the Mediterranean of the late first century, dominated as it was in nearly every facet by the presence of Rome, was a profoundly

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<sup>18</sup> Lefkowitz 1981: 89-90.

different environment as compared to Satyrus' day. Nicolaus may have been thoroughly Greek in his outlook, yet he is unswerving in his acceptance of the reality of Roman hegemony. In this regard, the *Bíos Kaisaragos*, written as it was at the end of the Hellenistic era, has less in common with a work like Satyrus' than it does with later Roman and Greek biographies of the Imperial age.

At first sight, Nicolaus seems to be an ideal latter-day Peripatetic – he states in his autobiography that he was educated in an Aristotelian fashion,<sup>19</sup> and he describes both his own and Augustus' qualities in Aristotelian ethical terms. Momigliano, however, denies that Nicolaus wrote the *Bíos Kaisaragos* as a specifically Aristotelian biography:

'His Aristotelianism is superficial. He is bent on writing a panegyric both of himself and of Augustus ... What is not encomiastic in his works is a straightforward account of political and social events in which I do not see anything specifically Aristotelian. His *Life of Augustus* is the best-preserved example of a biography of a king in the Hellenistic tradition. Clearly, it depends to a large extent on Augustus' own autobiography, but Nicolaus interprets the data according to his own taste.'<sup>20</sup>

Momigliano argued that the Caesar Extract in the *Bíos Kaisaragos* was 'disproportionately' long, and was included only because of the immensity of its impact on Octavian's life.<sup>21</sup> However, the question of proportion is somewhat tricky, given that we do not possess the work in its entirety, and hence cannot judge accurately what proportion of the original work the excursus occupied.

Momigliano argues further that, although the *Bíos Kaisaragos* does show signs of a classification of virtues according to the Peripatetic system, Nicolaus merely superimposed his version onto Augustus' *De vita sua*, and that, although there is a detectable Peripatetic influence, it does not

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<sup>19</sup> See ch. 1, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Momigliano 1993: 86.

<sup>21</sup> Momigliano 1993b: 118.

inform the work as a whole.<sup>22</sup> However, while the panegyric aspects of the *Bios Kairos* is undeniable, Momigliano's dismissal of Nicolaus' Peripatetic sympathies does not take into account how Nicolaus uses his philosophical classification of virtues to guide and inform his astute analysis of the assassination plot against Caesar.

Although the development of biography has long been associated with the Peripatos,<sup>23</sup> the evidence suggests that biography developed in parallel with other Greek literary genres during the fifth century, and was therefore not a specifically Peripatetic product. In fact, biography had a particularly protracted genesis, with experimentation in the forms and elements of biography by several authors long before Aristotle or Aristoxenus wrote. One might well ask whether the idea of Peripatetic biography is something of a scholarly 'red herring'.

In so far as the Peripatetics gave the emerging genre an analytical vocabulary or framework for studying character, their influence should be acknowledged. Since, however, many of the precepts of Aristotelian ethics were also common to general Greek morality of the Hellenistic epoch, it is not surprising that they should feature in biographies of the same era. Since the biographical genre reached its full development during the Hellenistic period, it might be more appropriate to speak of biographical works as having Hellenistic, rather than strictly Peripatetic, traits. A closer look at what the characteristic traits of biography were will illustrate this.

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<sup>22</sup> Momigliano 1993b: 118. Gabba (1984: 62) expressed a similar view of the work.

<sup>23</sup> Leo (1901) was a forceful proponent of this idea, related to his masterful (and still influential) analysis of the Suetonian/Plutarchan forms of biography. He argued that an unspecified student of Aristotle (probably Aristoxenus) was responsible for the development of what he termed the Plutarchan form. Momigliano (1993: 112) noted that this was unlikely, since the Plutarchan genre is essentially for 'men of action', and Aristoxenus only wrote lives of philosophers.

## II. *The Characteristics of Hellenistic βίοι*

As Leo argued more than a century ago, ancient biography can be divided very broadly into two specific and distinct types, each exemplified by an eponymous author. The Suetonian-type was a combination of the chronological tale of the subject's life and the systematic characterisation of the subject's virtues, vices and achievements.<sup>24</sup> The Plutarchan-type was largely, although not always, chronological in structure, and bore a greater resemblance to political historiography than the former type.<sup>25</sup> Leo was of the opinion that the Plutarchan-type of biography had its origins in the Peripatetic school, and that, while such βίοι might follow a chronological structure, beyond mere chronology the Aristotelian view that a man's character, his ἦθος, was illustrated through his πράξεις, informed the whole. For these πράξεις were not to be presented for their own sake, but so that one might form a judgment of the subject's character, and also that one might have moral *exempla* to emulate (and, through examples of κακία, the sort of behaviour to avoid) in one's own life. In essence, this form of biography has a strong morally didactic purpose. However, whilst the didactic element in biography was undeniably strong, there was also a similarly strong emphasis on enjoyment, that moral instruction must be simultaneously entertaining, rather than purely factual.<sup>26</sup> As a consequence of this need to simultaneously instruct and entertain, biographers were allowed a greater degree of license than historians in selecting or embroidering their material.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Lewis (1991) has more recently shown that the Suetonian-type likely had close links with the techniques of political and forensic oratory, which had influenced Roman autobiography and biography from the start of the last century BC; it was thus and essentially a native Roman literary form, rather than the product of Greek literary theory.

<sup>25</sup> Momigliano 1993: 18-20.

<sup>26</sup> Jones 1971: 72.

<sup>27</sup> Polb. 10.21.8; Cicer *Fam.* 5.12.2-7; Nepos *Pelop.* 16.1.1 offer apologetic statements to this effect

There has been criticism of Leo's thesis,<sup>28</sup> yet the fundamental basis of his work is still partially accepted. Certainly, it was the most influential work on Graeco-Roman biography for a large part of the last century, before Momigliano's treatment of the subject. Momigliano cogently summed up not only much of the evidence for Greek biography from the archaic period onwards, but he also showed just how much remains problematic about this genre. One of the problems with the study of early *βίοι* (apart from the lamentable loss of evidence) is that the genre was never as well defined as other branches of literature. This led to a degree of indistinctness with regards to the boundaries between biography and other prose genres.<sup>29</sup> With the evidence as meagre as it is, it is often difficult to determine whether an extant biographical fragment was part of a full-length biography, or was simply a biographical anecdote included in a work of an altogether different nature.

It is important to bear in mind that the ancients would not necessarily have considered the distinction to be of importance. The question of what exactly ancient biography consisted of is a vexed one. The term *βιογραφία* does not appear until the fifth century AD, in Damascius' *Life of Isidorus*; before that, the preferred term was *βίος*, 'life'.<sup>30</sup> This term is an inclusive one, and consequently the texts included in the genre are far from uniform.

Genre-overlap was common in ancient prose writing, but particularly so with biography. Burridge<sup>31</sup> holds that the ancient genre of biography was connected in a number of ways to other related genres, certain traits of which biographers could borrow from or dip into as they chose. A *βίος* might occupy a place on a spectrum between history and encomium, and individual *βίοι* might be closer in content, attitude and style to one or the other; but they could

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<sup>28</sup> Starting with Stuart (1928).

<sup>29</sup> Burridge 1992: 60.

<sup>30</sup> Burridge 1992: 61.

<sup>31</sup> Burridge 1992: 63-67.

also overlap a number of other sub-genres, ranging from oratory and rhetoric, political polemic, and moral philosophy; the centrality of the concept of *ἦθος* was drawn from the latter field.

An example of the difficulty experienced even by ancient authors can be seen in Plutarch's famous statement in the introduction to his *Alexander*, in which he professes that he is writing 'not history but lives'.<sup>32</sup> Plutarch qualifies his statement by explaining that the sheer number of Caesar and Alexander's great deeds warrant a reminder to the reader that writing history was not his intent; and despite the relative brevity of his accounts of the various battles, sieges and campaigns of conquest, the two *Lives* are among the longest of the extant corpus.<sup>33</sup>

In effect, the statement is apologetic, as well as programmatic – the lives of statesmen or great leaders, more so than literary or philosophical ones, ran the risk of slipping too much into the territory of *ιστορίαι* by the inclusion of historical content; and certainly much of the content of Plutarch's lives is historical. Then again, it would hardly have been possible for him not to treat the momentous political events of these two subjects' lives, so here he notes that there must be selection when dealing with the vast amount of material there was on Caesar and Alexander, and therefore the careful reader familiar with their stories should not be surprised at these omissions.<sup>34</sup>

However, this example also shows the care needed when looking at prefatory statements in works, as they did not necessarily express an author's universal statement of intent for all his works. Plutarch's statement should also not be taken as a broadly accepted ancient definition of

<sup>32</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 1.2: οὔτε γὰρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους, οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντας ἔνεστι δῆλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πράγματα βραχὺ πολλάκις καὶ ἔθιμα καὶ παιδιὰ τις ἔμφρασιν ἤθους ἐποίησε μᾶλλον ἢ μάχαι μυριόνηκροι καὶ παρατάξεις αἱ μέγισται καὶ πολιορκίαι πόλεων.

<sup>33</sup> Wardman 1971: 256.

<sup>34</sup> He makes a similar apology for omissions at *Pomp.* 8.6.

the distinction between history and biography.<sup>35</sup> The boundaries between history, political biography and *encomium* were not distinct, and it was left to individual authors to draw their own set of boundaries.<sup>36</sup> There may also be an element of *recusatio* in Plutarch's statement; a staged refusal of what his work was *not*, perhaps reflecting anticipation of criticism, or else a means of distinguishing his work from those of rivals.<sup>37</sup> Nicolaus' programmatic statement in § II.2 may have similar overtones.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the flexibility of the genre of Hellenistic biography is its most defining characteristic, but a consideration of other salient aspects might prove useful. *Bíoi* tended generally to be written in prose narrative, but this was not a hard-and-fast rule, as is shown by the example of Satyrus' *Euripides*. Initially known only through isolated fragments, the discovery in 1911 of P. Ox. 1176, showed the extent to which ancient biography varied. The extant fragments of the *Life* are in dialogue form interspersed with verse, and at least one of the speakers is, somewhat unusually for this genre, a woman.<sup>39</sup>

*Bíoi* could also be generally chronological in structure, although strict chronology was not always followed. Literary subjects, such as philosophers or poets, were more difficult to describe in chronological fashion than kings and other rulers, as their lives were not structures around momentous historical events; their lives could often be treated via an analysis of personal qualities and of their particular corpus of works. Suetonius later embraced this format for his literary and imperial lives. However, even in a chronological account, topical inserts, designed to demonstrate aspects of the subject's moral character or reveal authorial attitude,

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<sup>35</sup> Duff 1999: 17.

<sup>36</sup> Duff 1999: 17-18.

<sup>37</sup> Duff 1999: 21.

<sup>38</sup> See below, pg. 50-51.

<sup>39</sup> Momigliano 1993: 9-14.

could interrupt the basic structure. Not all literary lives were necessarily related in a non-chronological fashion, nor did all political lives strictly follow the chronology of major events. The Peripatetics collected anecdotes illustrating particular virtues and vices, usually in monographs devoted to that particular quality; Heraclides Ponticus wrote monographs on piety and justice that were illustrated with biographical stories.<sup>40</sup> Not all episodes were accorded the same treatment, even in chronological accounts, in that episodes deemed to be of greater historical import, greater interest to the reader, or which showed off the subject as the author best saw fit, were dwelt on at greater length.<sup>41</sup>

The scale of biographies was also necessarily much smaller than that of political history, which might create certain difficulties for the author when the subject's life could just as easily be covered by a conventional history. The difference in emphasis, as Plutarch felt the need to stress at the beginning of the *Alexander*, meant that major events were often swiftly dealt with. For example, Cornelius Nepos' *Atticus*, which covers the period of the end of the Republic, touches on the Civil War of 49 and Caesar in chapter seven only. To a similar extent, the early chapters of the *Bíos Kaióragos* touch on those historical incidents which involved or were of significance to Octavian: Munda and Thapsus are not mentioned directly, but are implied and subsumed into the development of Caesar and Octavian's relationship; L. Domitius died at Pharsalus, which led to Octavian's election to the pontifical college, yet the battle itself is not mentioned.

The distinction between *istoria* and *bíos* often appears narrow and ill defined to modern scholars, although less so when a particular *bíos* moved into the arena of *encomium*. *Encomia* written in the Isocratean mould continued to be popular well into the Hellenistic era. Even Polybius, Hellenistic historian *par excellence*, wrote an *encomium* of Philopoemen and included a

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<sup>40</sup> Momigliano 1993: 69.

<sup>41</sup> Burridge 1992: 138-141.

statement in his history on how such works should be written, and, importantly, how they differ from history:

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος ὁ τόπος, ὑπάρχων ἐγκωμιστικός, ἀπήγει τὸν κεφαλαιώδη καὶ μετ' ἀυξήσεως τῶν πράξεων ἀπολογισμὸν, οὕτως ὁ τῆς ἱστορίας, κοινὸς ὢν ἐπαίνου καὶ ψόγου, ζητεῖ τὸν ἀληθῆ καὶ τὸν μετ' ἀποδείξεως καὶ τῶν ἐκάστοις παρεπομένων συλλογισμῶν.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, the material proper to an *encomium* is by its very nature not suitable for history, a very much more serious genre with higher standards to uphold, as Polybius sees it. The wider scale of a history, concerned with great events in the military and political theatre, would not encompass the details of family and upbringing of a general or king, unless perhaps it served to further an authorial judgment on the figure. It may be that writers like Plutarch and Polybius, both of them concerned with the reception of their 'serious' works, needed to stress the separation as a disavowal that they were straying into a genre less favourably regarded by their peers.

Ultimately, Hellenistic biography as it had evolved down to Nicolaus' day, was characterized by a love of

"Erudition, scholarly zeal, realism of details and elegant gossip ... a detached, slightly humorous account of events and opinions characterizing an individual; if the individual in question was a king or a politician, biography remained close to political history."<sup>43</sup>

The genre may have been lent a new *gravitas* through the increased contact Greek authors had with elite Romans under the late Republic and early Empire. This more self-consciously serious tone may be detected in the *Bίος Καίσαρος*.

<sup>42</sup> 10.21.8 = FGtH 173

<sup>43</sup> Momigliano 1993: 103.

### III. Aristotelian Elements in the *Bíos Kaisáragos*

The *Bíos Kaisáragos* is in many respects a difficult work to categorize, because the surviving text seems to show a more pronounced stylistic schism between the encomiastic and ‘historical’ content in the two manuscript sections than would appear to be usual. Admittedly, ‘normal’ is a term that should be used cautiously when applied to *βίοι*, for all of the reasons enumerated above. In this case, there also remains the question of whether this difference is an actual one, related to Nicolaus’ presentation of his subject matter and his own structuring of the *Bíos Kaisáragos*, or whether it is related to manuscript transmission and the preferences of the two excerptors. The *ἀγωγή*-section (§§ I-XV) seems straightforwardly encomiastic, and therefore typical of that genre, while the chapters from *de Insidiis* featuring Octavian (§§ XVI-XVIII; XXIX-XXXI) and the Caesar Extract (§§ XIX-XXVIII), though often panegyric in tone, resemble history more than anything. Investigating Nicolaus’ purpose in writing the *Bíos Kaisáragos*, and how the text fits into the *βίος*-genre may solve this difficulty.

In § II.2, Nicolaus states that, after a discussion of Octavian’s ancestry and birth,<sup>44</sup> he would describe Octavian’s achievements, his actions as a statesmen and in both civil and foreign wars, in order to show his intelligence and virtue:

(II.2) *Περὶ δὴ τούτου τοῦ ἀνδρὸς φρονήσεώς τε καὶ ἀρετῆς ἰσχὺν δεῖξαι ὅποσον δύναται, τὰ μὲν ἐκ τῆς πολιτείας ἦντινα ἐν τῇ πατρίδι ἐπολιτεύσατο, τὰ <δὲ> κατὰ στρατηγίας μεγάλων πολέμων ἐγχωρίων τε καὶ ἀλλοεθνῶν, ἀγώνισμα μὲν ἀνθρώποις πράκεται λέγειν καὶ γράφειν, ὡς ἂν εὐδοκμοῖεν ἐν καλοῖς ἔργοις. καὶ τὸς δ’ ἀφηγήσομαι τὰ πεπραγμένα, ἐξ ὧν οἶόν τε γινῶναι σύμψασι τὴν ἀλήθειαν.*

(II.2) *Indeed, to describe the full magnitude of this man’s wisdom and virtue, in both his administration of the government at Rome and the prosecution of great wars, both internal*

<sup>44</sup> Now lost, as noted above, ch. 2 p. 21.

*and foreign, is suited to a contest in oratory and writing, so that men might win fame by their excellent deeds. I myself will relate his achievements, so that everyone will know the truth.*

These *πεπραγμένα*, which would have been so important for our understanding of the *Βίος Καιράτος*, are now lost, since Octavian's actions in what remains of the text can hardly be construed as deeds of war or administration – in fact, he takes no decisive action in the surviving text until his decision to raise Caesar's veterans in Campania; this in itself, although revolutionary, hardly counts amongst the future emperor's greatest achievements.<sup>45</sup>

Herein lies the crux of our understanding of the *Βίος Καιράτος*. Although Nicolaus means to describe Octavian's birth and upbringing, the standard material of a typical *Ἀγωγή*, this will be merely a prelude to his further exposition of Augustus' character – which he intends to relate through a discussion of his great achievements.

Nicolaus' didactic intentions can also be seen in his statement that he is writing his account 'that everyone may know the truth'. He had undertaken his *Universal History* with a similarly instructive purpose, as he states in his autobiography (F 135.4) that he wrote the work in part for Herod's edification.<sup>46</sup> Didactic value was often claimed for works of history, which was long seen as a useful genre of literature; Polybius wrote in his programmatic statement (1.1.2) that a firm study of history formed an ideal introduction for an active political life. Along with this claim to usefulness in writing history frequently came a disavowal that they wrote *ἀγώνισμα*.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> *πεπραγμένα*: Leo 1901: 188-190; Toher 1985: 36.

<sup>46</sup> Nicolaus may be stretching the bounds of credibility here, as a 144-book history was an extremely lengthy task to have undertaken simply to gratify his patron.

<sup>47</sup> According to Toher (1985): 34: 'Disavowal of writing *ἀγώνισμα* became something of a topos in Graeco-Roman historical writing'. Thucydides, Polybius (3.31.13) and the younger Pliny (*Ep.* 5.8.11) all made statements implying that agonistic writing was of less import than history.

Thucydides' famous statement<sup>48</sup> is often quoted for this attitude, and he explicitly (1.22.1) states that ascertaining the 'truth' in events was extremely difficult for him as an historian.

Nicolaus, however, does not claim to be writing history, and certainly his pronounced partiality for his friend the *Princeps* implies that his conception of ἡ ἀλήθεια may have deviated from the strict Thucydidean definition when it did not suit his eulogistic purpose. Yet, Nicolaus also makes a distinction between ἀγώνισμα and what he will be writing; for while Augustus' achievements might well be ideal material for an agonistic work, he will also include an account of his upbringing, an ἀγωγή, which would not normally be considered a necessary part of an ἀγώνισμα. Augustus had serious difficulties with the legacy of his younger self-image; the highly contentious figure of Octavian had to be dealt with carefully, and it is this that makes the *Bíos Kaisaros* somewhat difficult to categorise, for within the genre of biography it is neither exclusively an ἀγωγή nor an ἀγώνισμα, but has elements common to both.

While the *Bíos Kaisaros* may not possess enough characteristics to be termed a specifically Aristotelian work, Nicolaus' own interest in Aristotelianism lends certain motifs or traits of Peripatetic thought to the work. One such idea derived from Platonic and Aristotelian notions, which permeated Hellenistic political thought, held that good governance was a skill (τέχνη) that must be learnt, and that the guiding force of this τέχνη was intelligence (νοῦς). For Aristotle, practical intelligence was an essential feature of excellence (ἀρετή).<sup>49</sup> If a man of good natural disposition demonstrates φρόνησις, in the sense of practical wisdom or prudence, then he excels in conduct, and his good natural disposition, which previously only resembled excellence, becomes it truly.<sup>50</sup> This is an idea that Nicolaus develops in the *Bíos Kaisaros*.

<sup>48</sup> πτῆμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν εὔχεται (1.22.4).

<sup>49</sup> EN 1144b1-5.

<sup>50</sup> EN 1142a1-3.

Sections XI, XII and XIV from the *De Virtutibus* manuscript prefigure Octavian's statesman-like qualities, particularly underlining his oratorical skill, with each section bringing a specific facet of this talent to the fore. § XI.24 highlights his intelligence, with emphasis on his shrewd and concise mode of expression. Caesar is delighted when Octavian, who had been seriously ill, meets up with him near Calpia in Spain, having made a dangerous journey in especially quick time. Impressed with this demonstration of zeal and application, the elder statesmen then proceeds to test Octavian's intelligence:

(XI.24) ἐπιμελὲς δ' ἐποιεῖτο πρὸς αὐτὸν διαλεγόμενον ὑπὲρ πολλῶν ἀνακρίνειν, ἀποπειρώμενος αὐτοῦ τῆς διανοίας. ὁρῶν δὲ εὖστοχον καὶ εὐσύνετον καὶ βραχυλόγον, αὐτὰ τε ἀποκρινόμενον τὰ καιριώτατα, ἔστεργε καὶ ὑπερῆσπάζετο.

(XI.24) *He made a point of examining him about many things during their conversations, testing his intelligence. And seeing that he was quick-witted, astute, and expressed himself concisely, he love and estimation of him increased.*

Octavian's mental acuity is highlighted here – his wit, intelligence and economy of expression – and in a society as admiring of excellence in thought and oratorical expression as Rome, superiority in these attributes helped a young man intent on a political career to rise above his peers. Augustus was noted for his elegant mode of expression, as Suetonius observed:

*Genus eloquendi secutus est elegans et temperatum vitatis sententiarum, ineptiis atque concinnitate et 'reconditorum verborum,' ut ipse dicit, 'fectoribus'; praecipuamque curam duxit sensum animi quam apertissime exprimere.*<sup>51</sup>

This astute ability to say only what was appropriate and never speak up at inopportune moments is also highlighted by Nicolaus in § VIII:

<sup>51</sup> DA 86.1. He usually addressed crowds, the Senate, soldiers, and even Livia, in prepared addresses, *quamvis non deficeretur ad subita extemporali facultate* (DA.84.1-2).

(VIII.18) πολλῶν αὐτοῦ δεομένων καὶ φίλων καὶ πολιτῶν αἰτεῖσθαι σφίσι παρὰ Καίσαρος ὧν ἕκαστοι ἐν χρεῖαι ἦσαν, ἐπιτηρῶν εὐκαιρίας μετὰ πάσης αἰδοῦς ἠίτετό τε καὶ κατώρθου πλείστου τε ἄξιος πολλοῖς τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐγένετο, φυλαττόμενος τὸ μήτε ἀκαίρως παρακαλεῖν μήτ' ἐκεῖναι προσάντως. καὶ ὁ μὲν οὐκ ὀλίγα ζώπυρα καὶ φιλανθρωπίας ἅμα καὶ φρονήσεως φυσικῆς ἀπεδείκνυτο.

(VIII.18) *Many friends and citizens asked him to approach Caesar on their behalf, waiting for the ideal moment, he asked with great respect and was successful. In this way he became of great value to many people, for he was careful to never petition Caesar at an inconvenient time or when it was irksome to him. And at the same time he demonstrated several sparks of kindness and innate intelligence.*

A key term to consider here is *φρόνησις*. It also occurs as part of the panegyric prooemium in § II, where it is strongly linked with virtue (... τοῦ ἀνδρὸς φρονήσεώς τε καὶ ἀρετῆς), and in § XII, in the context of his 'patronage' of the Saguntines before Caesar at New Carthage. The overtly eulogistic purpose of the episode is encapsulated in the religious connotations of *σωτήρ*, which explicitly recalls the panegyric tone of the prooemium.

(XII.27) προσφεύγουσι <τε> τῷ Καίσαρι καὶ Ζακύνθιοι μεγάλα ἐγκλήματα ἔχοντες καὶ δεόμενοι βοηθείας. ὁ δὲ τούτων προύστη τε καὶ διαλεχθεὶς ἄριστα πρὸς Καίσαρα ἐν φανερωῖ τῶν τε αἰτιῶν αὐτοὺς ἀπήλλαξε καὶ προύπεμψεν ἐπ' οἴκου ἡδομένους τε καὶ πρὸς πάντας αὐτὸν ὑμνοῦντας σωτήρα τ' ὀνομάζοντες. ... πάντες τε ἀνὰ στόμα εἶχον τὴν τε ἡμερότητα καὶ φιλανθρωπίαν καὶ τὴν ἐν ταῖς ἐντεύξεσι φρόνησιν.

(XII.27) *The Saguntines, who had a number of serious charges against them, came and sought aid from Octavian. He acted as their patron, and, arguing most skillfully before Caesar, secured their acquittal from the accusations and sent them home overjoyed, singing his praises to all and naming him as their saviour. ... Everybody was talking about his kindness, humanity, and the good sense he showed in presenting these petitions.*

Here *φρόνησις* is the quality highlighted most prominently, as its position at the end of the sentence indicates.

The final occurrence of the term in the extracts from *De Virtutibus* appears at § XIV.31-33, where he is able to deal with the awkward situation posed by the Pseudo-Marius,<sup>52</sup> by deferring any pronouncement on their kinship to Caesar's judgment. The episode serves as the counterpoint to the Saguntine episode, as Octavian is again publicly petitioned (actually, importuned) for a favour due to his close relationship with Caesar. Nicolaus notes that the situation was an especially delicate one, since there was a very large crowd in attendance, but Octavian was nonetheless able to defuse the tension by answering so prudently that everyone present commended him – (XIV.33) ταῦτα ἐμφρόνως ἀποκρινόμενον καὶ οἱ συμπαρόντες ἐπήνουν.

It appears that Nicolaus' use of the term *φρόνησις* had a specifically Aristotelian colouring, as a means of highlighting the fitness of his young protagonist to govern, through both his innate excellence, and his acquired prudence. By contrast, Caesar is characterised as politically inexperienced and guileless, due to his long absence from the city whilst waging wars:

(XX.67) ὁ δὲ ἄτε ἀπλοῦς ὢν τὸ ἦθος καὶ ἄπειρος πολιτικῆς τέχνης διὰ τὰς ἐκδήμους στρατείας, ἠλίσκετο ῥαϊδίως τούτοις.<sup>53</sup>

(XX.67) For Caesar had a straightforward character and was unskilled in the political arts because of his long absence on campaigns, and so he was easily duped by them [the conspirators].

This seems somewhat incredible given the evidence of Dio, who indicates that Caesar was well aware of his unpopularity with the Roman political elite.<sup>54</sup> While Nicolaus' overall portrayal of

<sup>52</sup> This individual, probably named Amatius or Herophilus, was executed by Antony in early April 44 (Appian *B.Civ.* 3.16 and 3.36; Cicero *Att.* 14.8.1); he had been a worrying nuisance to the Senate because of his hostility to the assassins, resulting in civic disturbances (Appian *B.Civ.* 3.2 and 3; Cicero *Att.* 14.7.1; Livy *Epit.* 116; Val. Max. 9.15.1). Caesar had previously expelled him from Italy for claiming to be related to the famous C. Marius (who had been married to Caesar's aunt, thus allowing the Pseudo-Marius to claim kinship with Caesar). He was believed to be of servile status (Cicero *Phil.* 1.5). It is interesting that Nicolaus a) does not specify *which* C. Marius he was claiming to be the son of, and b) that he refers to him as *νεανίσκος*, although as Pappano (1935: 59) points out, even if he were the grandson of the great Marius, he would have been between 36 and 46 years of age (since the younger Marius died in 82). Nicolaus is thus able to draw a telling comparison between the grandstanding imposter and the quietly dignified Octavian – who is of course truly *νέος*.

<sup>53</sup> Further discussion of this statement as it relates to Caesar follows below, ch. 5.

Caesar is sympathetic throughout the *Bίος Καίσαρος*, this statement serves to further his agenda, which is to glorify his friend, the *Princeps*, who famously succeeded where his divine father had failed.

According to the Aristotelian definition, *φρόνησις* in political science is achieved through active experience, *ἐμπειρία*, and hence a true *φρόνιμος* could never be a young man.<sup>55</sup> Experience leads to *γνώσις τῶν καθόλου* (*Meta.* A. 981 a 12-30), which allows one to develop the perception (*αἴσθησις*) required to recognise the good in future situations. The true *φρόνιμος* will be able to determine the good for both himself and his country because he is able to combine and apply his reasoned thinking to the pragmatic needs of a specific situation; neither experience nor deliberation alone will produce the necessary insight.<sup>56</sup> It was this lack of experience due to his years spent on campaign, according to Nicolaus, that denied Caesar true political perception, and hence led to the formation of the conspiracy against him.

Octavian is also initially *ἄπειρος*, yet, unlike Caesar, he is gradually able to become *ἐμπειρος* through the course of events, whilst still recognizing the limits his youth set to his actions. That Nicolaus may be using the term in a specifically Aristotelian sense is indicated by the frequency with which it occurs. In § VI.14, Octavian wishes to accompany Caesar on his upcoming Libyan campaign, *ὡς καὶ πολεμίων ἔργων ἐμπειρος εἶη*; in § IX.19, Caesar has Octavian administer the games in the Greek theatre, so that he might be *καὶ ἐμπειρον τοῦ ἀγωνοθετεῖν ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις χορηγίαις*. And it was his recognition of his own lack of experience that led Octavian to reject the idea of raising the Macedonian troops in the aftermath of the assassination:

<sup>54</sup> Dio 43.15.1.

<sup>55</sup> Aristotle *Eth.Nic.* 1095a3-5: διὸ τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκείος ἀκρατής ὁ νέος· ἄπειρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων, οἱ λόγοι δ' ἐκ τούτων καὶ περὶ τούτων.

<sup>56</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1140b6-11.

(XVI.42) ἀλλὰ ταῦτα δυσχερῆ ὑπεφαίνετο ἀνδρὶ κομιδῆ νέωι καὶ μείζω ἢ κατὰ τὴν παρούσαν ἡλικίαν τε καὶ ἀπειρίαν.

(XVI.42) *But this seemed a course fraught with difficulty for such a young man, and more than his present state of youth and inexperience could handle.*

In the last section of the *Bίος Καίσαρος*, Nicolaus shows how Octavian, although at first lacking in *ἐμπειρία* is able to develop this crucial aspects of his political armoury.<sup>57</sup>

Chapter XIII is another crucial passage for understanding the characterisation of Octavian, for, according to Nicolaus, it was Octavian's modesty that ultimately influenced Caesar in his decision to adopt him, and furthermore to do it secretly. At § XIII.29-30, the young man's modesty is somewhat surprisingly described as a virtue that, already present in him, appeared before all others and would last his whole life:

(XIII.29) αἰδῶ δ', ἣν πρέπει<ν> ἂν τις τῆι τοιαύτῃ ἡλικίᾳ ὑπολάβοι διὰ τὸ ταῖς ἄλλαις ἀρεταῖς ἐν τῆι μετὰ ταῦτα τὴν χώραν ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ἀποδεδοσθαι, διαφανέστατα καὶ ἐν ἔργοις ἐδήλου ἐν τῷ βίῳ παντί. (30) διὰ τοῦτο καὶ μάλιστα Καῖσαρ αὐτὸν περὶ πολλοῦ ἐποίησατο καὶ οὐχ, ὥσπερ οἴονται τινες, διὰ τὸ γένος μόνον. ἔγνω μὲν οὖν καὶ πρότερον παιδα ἀποδείξαι, δεδιώς δέ, μὴ ἐλπίδι τοσαύτης τύχης ἐπαρθεῖς, ὃ φιλεῖ τοῖς εὐδαιμόνως τρεφομένοις ἔπεισθαι, ἐκλάδοιτο ἀρετῆς καὶ ἐκδιατηθεῖν, συνέκρυψε τὴν γνώμην, ἐν δὲ ταῖς διαθήκαις αὐτὸν υἱοῦται.

(XIII.29) *Modesty, which one might think fitting in one of such an age (since it has been allocated its place in nature earlier than the other virtues), was conspicuous in his actions and apparent his whole life. (30) And it was because of this above all that Caesar made much of him, and not only, as some think, because of their family relationship. For he had earlier decided to adopt him, but, fearing that Octavian, excited at the expectation of such great good fortune (as often befalls those raised in wealth) might forsake virtue and abandon his lifestyle, he concealed his intention and adopted him in his will.*

<sup>57</sup> The subtle manner in which Nicolaus contrasts and interlinks the characterisation of Caesar and Octavian is discussed further below.

*Aidōs* is a notoriously difficult concept to render into English, since a number of related yet distinct senses are conveyed by the noun and its various cognate forms. Cairns provides a general definition of the two broad senses the concept conveys:

“...the verb *aideomai* ... is used in two more or less distinct ways, either to convey inhibition before a generalized group of other people in whose eyes one feels one’s self-image to be vulnerable, or to express positive recognition of the status of a significant other person; the two stock English translations, ‘I feel shame before’ and ‘I respect’, thus succeed in isolating distinct senses of the Greek term. ...*aidōs* [is] an inhibitory emotion based in sensitivity to and protectiveness of one’s self-image.”<sup>58</sup>

Although ‘shame’ is commonly regarded as a negative emotion, *aidōs* has a more positive connotation since it concerns one’s sense of status and honour *vis-à-vis* others, and governs what may be considered to be appropriate behaviour in negotiating the delicate balance of regard for self, and regard for others. Thus, *aidōs* in Greek thought is often considered a virtue, and hence can also be translated as ‘respect’ and ‘modesty’.<sup>59</sup> It is this latter sense that has been preferred for this passage of the *Bíos Kairaios*, primarily because Caesar’s reaction to its presence in Octavian is explicitly approving, and also because it appears that Nicolaus may be using the term in a fashion that reflects his peculiarly Aristotelian understanding.

Although *aidōs* was a feature of Greek literature as far back as Homer, and long retained the elevated connotations it derived from its poetic roots,<sup>60</sup> the idea underwent considerable refinement over the centuries down to Aristotle’s day. Aristotle defined *aidōs* as a *páθος*,<sup>61</sup> an affect; it is also one of the non-virtuous means that are innate (*φυσικός*) and that contribute to natural, as opposed to full, excellences; *aidōs* contributes specifically to the natural excellence of

<sup>58</sup> Cairns 1993: 2.

<sup>59</sup> Cairns 1993: 14 n. 29.

<sup>60</sup> Cairns 1993: 415.

<sup>61</sup> *Eth. Eu.* 1234 a 27.

σωφροσύνη.<sup>62</sup> Aristotle evidently had some difficulty in accommodating *αἰδώς* within his scheme, for, although it is regarded as praiseworthy in a limited sense, he explicitly denies that it was a virtue:

Περὶ δὲ αἰδοῦς ὡς τινος ἀρετῆς οὐ προσήκει λέγειν· πάθει γὰρ μᾶλλον ἔοικεν ἢ ἔξει. ὀρίζεται γοῦν φόβος τις ἀδοξίας ... οὐ πάση δ' ἡλικίᾳ τὸ πάθος ἀρμόζει, ἀλλὰ τῇ νέᾳ· οἴομεθα γὰρ δεῖν τοὺς τηλικούτους αἰδήμονας εἶναι διὰ τὸ πάθει ζῶντας πολλὰ ἀμαρτάνειν, ὑπὸ τῆς αἰδοῦς δὲ κωλύεσθαι· καὶ ἐπαινοῦμεν τῶν μὲν νέων τοὺς αἰδήμονας, πρεσβύτερον δ' οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐπαινέσειεν ὅτι αἰσχυντηλός· οὐδὲν γὰρ οἴομεθα δεῖν αὐτὸ πράττειν ἐφ' οἷς ἐστὶν αἰσχύνη.<sup>63</sup>

He goes on to state (*Eth. Nic.* 1128 b 25-35) that the truly virtuous man would never feel a sense of shame, since it implies both the internalized conception of *τὸ αἰσχρόν* and the disposition to experience shame at actual wrongdoing. Furthermore, the notion of fear of external sanctions does not accord with his definition of virtue, since the good man chooses *τὸ καλόν* rationally because it is both the right course and what he wants to do, not because he fears the consequences of being *perceived* to act disgracefully.

In another passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,<sup>64</sup> however, Aristotle admits some value for *αἰδώς*, in that it indicates a character that does truly appreciate *τὸ καλόν* intrinsically, but has not yet acquired *φρόνησις*, which would mark that individual out as truly virtuous. On this evidence, a person possessing *αἰδώς* need not be precluded from ultimately becoming truly virtuous, since they demonstrate the potential to move beyond simply appreciating, as Cairns describes it,<sup>65</sup> 'the that' of intrinsic virtue, to grasping 'the because' as the true *φρόνιμος*.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that *αἰδώς* is characterised as a trait of youth, in whom it is excusable, and even expected. In this respect, Nicolaus' depiction of *αἰδώς* is in accord with

<sup>62</sup> *Eth. Eu.* 1234 a 32. Nicolaus' use of *φύσις* in 29 is thus intentional.

<sup>63</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1128 b 10-20.

<sup>64</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1178 b 4-20.

<sup>65</sup> 1993: 427.

Aristotelian thought, since he aims to demonstrate how Octavian becomes the true man of virtue through the acquisition of *φρόνησις*. The phrase remains problematic though, as Nicolaus' reference to *αἰδώς* as an *ἀρετή* may reflect some of the difficulty even Aristotle had in grappling with a complex concept that, outside of his own more narrow definition of what constituted virtue, was familiar to his lay contemporaries as an admirable trait. Nicolaus' somewhat odd statement that '*it has been allocated its place in nature earlier than the other virtues*', may be an attempt to circumvent this problem by describing it as especially appropriate to youth, but not necessarily exclusively so.

The emphasis on Octavian's *αἰδώς* and restraint is reiterated in XIV, where he is concerned about publicly rejecting the Pseudo-Marius' appeal because *ἄλλως τε καὶ αἰδοῦς ὄντι μεστῶν*. However, the notion of sexual restraint is also linked to his acquisition of *σωφροσύνη*. A model of modesty and self-control, the chaste young Caesar is forced to fend off lustful women in § V.12, literally crazed (*ἐκμήνας*) by his *εὐπρεπείαι καὶ λαμπρότητι γένους*. He is able to avoid their schemes, however, not only because his mother chaperoned him, but also because *τὰ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἤδη ἔννοος ὤν, ἄτε εἰς τοῦμπροσθεν τῆς ἡλικίας προίων*. This, along with his marvellous decision in § XV.36 to remain celibate *ἐν τοιαύτῃ ἡλικίᾳ, ἐν ἣι μάλιστα σφριγῶσιν οἱ νέοι ... ἀφροδισίων ἀπέχετο*, seems designed specifically to counteract the sort of charges that Suetonius records were levelled at him.<sup>66</sup> They also explicitly demonstrate his acquisition of *σωφροσύνη*, and thus underscore the fact that Nicolaus characterizes Octavian according to a specific ethical framework, though the notion of a protagonist's successful resistance of erotic temptation during his youth was also a favourite theme of Greek encomia.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> DA 69.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. Isocrates *Emag.* 45.

However, Nicolaus' seemingly odd explanation that Octavian had decided to abstain from sexual relations in order to conserve his strength and voice – ἀφροδισίων ἀπέχετο, φωνῆς ἅμα καὶ ἰσχύος προνοῶν – may have a sensibly Aristotelian explanation. The tendency for an adolescent youth's breaking voice to be hoarse, irregular and wavering, was thought to be mitigated by sexual abstinence; since the breaking of the voice was also connected also with the appearance of the youth's first beard, it heralded his developing maturity and eventual entry into the life of the political, adult man.<sup>68</sup> Aside from deflecting criticism of Octavian's sexual conduct, the implication here is that, by conserving his voice, Octavian is dedicated to his budding career as an orator – thus, in all aspects of his life, his concern is first and foremost for his reputation.

While Nicolaus' purpose in the *Bíos Kairos* is not rigorously philosophical, it is clear that there are definite Peripatetic elements to his account. His characterisation of Octavian's virtues, and Caesar's essential weakness, is drawn according to Aristotelian lights, yet nonetheless does not impede the fulsomeness of his *encomium*. By portraying Caesar as a man of essentially good natural disposition who lacked only the astuteness and perception of his adopted son, Nicolaus is able to favourably contrast Octavian as the quintessential Man of Virtue, according to Aristotelian terminology.

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<sup>68</sup> Arist. *An. Hist.* 8.581 a 17ff. Eyben 1972: 688-91.

## Τύχη and the Βίος Καίσαρος

One of the intriguing aspects of Nicolaus' technique in the *Βίος Καίσαρος* is his introduction of *τύχη* and related concepts (*μοῖρα*, *δαίμων*) into the narrative. During the Hellenistic era, the literary *topos* of Fate became a familiar, perhaps even somewhat hackneyed theme, so Nicolaus' recourse to a concept easily comprehended by his contemporary audience is unsurprising. Yet Nicolaus is not simply reaching for a familiar cliché to apply in a 'paint-by-numbers' fashion, as his sophisticated analysis of the events leading up to the Ides of March shows him to be possessed of greater subtlety and insight than the encomiastic tone of the *Βίος Καίσαρος* would suggest. His experience at the court of Herod the Great would have given him first hand knowledge of the dangerous vicissitudes of political intriguing, which may have influenced his view of the role Fortune had to play in the affairs of men.

To better see how Nicolaus conveys this view in the *Βίος Καίσαρος*, it is necessary to first chart the ideological framework developed for *τύχη* and related concepts down to the Hellenistic era. Thereafter, a closer examination of the textual instances of *τύχη* and the related concepts *μοῖρα* and *δαίμων*, will show how Nicolaus puts his own stamp on this well-worn theme.

### *I. Fortune and Fate: The Origins of Τύχη and Μοῖρα in Greek Thought and Literature*

The etymological connection of *τύχη* with the verb *τυγχάνω* is an obvious starting point for an investigation into the origins of the concept in Greek thought, and may also offer an explanation of the apparently contradictory aspects of *τύχη* that appear in later Hellenistic literature. For, just as the verb *τυγχάνω* could be used in both a passive sense (as of a result coming to pass, an

outcome, or simple happenstance) and an active one (as an action, to obtain or meet with an object), so, too, *τύχη* can convey the idea of both an inexplicable event and an active agency beyond human control. This latter concept later evolved into the idea of Divine Providence.<sup>1</sup>

*Τύχη* never developed an attendant myth as the personified form of the concept emerged. From Pausanias,<sup>2</sup> *Τύχη* was first mentioned in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (line 420) as one of the Oceanids, companions to Persephone. The list as it appears in the hymn originated with Hesiod,<sup>3</sup> where she is a nymph, the daughter of Tethys and Oceanus, sister of Peitho and Eudore. She initially appears to have favourable connotations; in Pindar (fr. 39) she is 'Fortune who upholds a city', *Τύχα φερέπολις*; and *Σώττειρα Τύχα*, the daughter of Zeus Eleutherios, (Ol. 12.1 f) the mightiest of the *Moirai* in his *Hymn to Tyche*.<sup>4</sup> This notion of *Τύχη* as a saviour-guardian found expression in the belief that individual people and even cities had a personal accompanying *τύχη*, and was strongly tied to the notion that one's future fate, *μοῖρα*, was allotted at birth. Over time, this concept evolved into that of the tutelary *δαίμων*, in terms of man's companion throughout life,<sup>5</sup> but from the fourth century, the idea of a protective *Τύχη* attached to a city developed into cult onwards, similar to the established *polias*-cults seen, for example, at Athens.<sup>6</sup>

In Athenian dramatists of the fifth century, *Τύχη* is mostly benevolent, though some ambivalence towards her begins to emerge. Aeschylus refers to her as the saviour guiding the Achaean ships;<sup>7</sup> Sophocles' Oedipus proclaims he will not be dishonoured because he is the child of *Τύχη*, the giver of good gifts; Jocasta, however, states the futility in a man's fearing the

<sup>1</sup> *OCD*<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> 4.30.4.

<sup>3</sup> *Theogony* 360.

<sup>4</sup> Pausanias 7.26.2.

<sup>5</sup> Plato *Phaedo* 107D.

<sup>6</sup> *OCD*<sup>3</sup> s.v. *Tyche*.

<sup>7</sup> *Agam.* 664: *τύχη δὲ σωτήρ νηυστολοῦσ' ἐφέζετο.*

future, since everything is ultimately in *Τύχης*' power.<sup>8</sup> There is also uncertainty as to the goddess' nature in Euripides, who frequently refers to *Τύχη* in his works, in both a positive and more ambivalent fashion – *Τύχη* brings good luck, but is unpredictable;<sup>9</sup> there is also an early association with the idea of *Τύχη* as a powerful *δαίμων*.<sup>10</sup> The general idea expressed is one of unexpected change sent by the gods.

This sentiment, of *Τύχη* as an unaccountable and even erratic divinity or power, was popularized during the fourth century, as seen in the oratory of Demosthenes and Aeschines, for whom *Τύχη* provided a useful scapegoat in case of political blunders.<sup>11</sup> The plays of New Comedy, and Menander in particular, promoted an increasingly popular view of *Τύχη* as equivalent to Chance, a fickle, incalculable and often malignly capricious divinity.<sup>12</sup> Another characteristic often attributed to *Τύχη* was envy. This was not to say that the divinity begrudged a person something – be it happiness, talent, youth or any other positive trait – that it desired to possess for itself; envy was more akin to malice, often striking down the young and promising, or the successful and gifted. A term closely associated with this sense is *φθόνος*. Perhaps somewhat strangely, there is seldom the associated idea that the deity strikes one down as punishment for some moral transgression or act of *ὑβρις*.<sup>13</sup> It is precisely that the deserving, the young and brilliant often appeared to be the victims of random misfortune that made the divinity so feared.

<sup>8</sup> OT 1040: ἐγὼ δ' ἐμαυτὸν παῖδα τῆς Τύχης νέμων / τῆς εὐ διδοῦσης οὐκ ἀτιμασθήσομαι ; OT 977: τί δ' ἂν φοβοῖτ' ἄνθρωπος ἢ τὰ τῆς τύχης / κρατεῖ, πρόνοια δ' ἐστὶν οὐδενὸς σαφής.

<sup>9</sup> Good luck-bearer, *Electra* 648: καὶ μὴν ἐκεῖνά γ' ἡ τύχη δῆσει καλῶς. Unpredictable, *Alcestis* 785ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Cyclops* 606-7: ἡ τὴν τύχην μὲν δαίμων ἠγγεῖσθαι χρεῶν, / τὰ δαιμόνων δὲ τῆς τύχης ἐλάσσονα.

<sup>11</sup> As Demosthenes argues (*Cor.* 300), *Τύχη* brought about the defeat of the allied forces, not Philip's superior armaments and planning. Occasionally, however, *Τύχη* could be beneficent, setting affairs to rights (proem 36.1).

<sup>12</sup> Kajanto 1987: 527-8.

<sup>13</sup> Aalders 1979: 5.

The philosophers questioned and attempted to rationalize this view of *Τύχη*. Plato listed *τύχη* with *θεός*, *καῖρος* and *τεχνή*, as the four factors primarily governing human affairs.<sup>14</sup> *Τύχη* became synonymous with a general *αὐτόματον* in the sense of accidental or unexpected happenings, although Aristotle distinguished between a comprehensive *αὐτόματον* and the *τύχη* that applied only to human affairs.<sup>15</sup> In his *Physica*,<sup>16</sup> he argued that the unknown element often referred to as *τύχη* was no more than the confluence of unrelated causes (*αἰτίαι*). In effect, *τύχη* was no more than another legitimate cause, only one that was largely inexplicable at the time – coincidence, in fact. The Stoics rejected the idea of Chance, preferring destiny – *εἰμασμένη* ‘that which is allotted’ – a concept etymologically connected to *μοῖρα* (*μείρομαι*).<sup>17</sup>

The increasing prominence of *τύχη* as an idea in Greek literature can also be seen in the two historians who exemplify their respective eras. In the Classical epoch, Thucydides characterized *τύχη* as the inscrutable element that may disrupt the best-laid plans;<sup>18</sup> in effect, there is no conception here of deliberate intent or a personified force, and the neutral term simply describes ‘the unexpected outcome’, or any event that did not have a readily explicable cause.

Polybius, by contrast, lived at a time when the declining powers of Greece and the kingdoms of the Diadochoi were being supplanted by the rising force of Rome. The Eastern Mediterranean had seen numerous political upheavals and shifts in the balance of regional power since the days of Philip II. Consequently, it was during the Hellenistic period that the belief in *Τύχη* as ‘Fickle Fortune’ fully comes into its own, and it is therefore not surprising that the idea has currency in Polybius’ history. *Τύχη* is painted as unpredictable;<sup>19</sup> jealous of human success and

<sup>14</sup> *Leg.* 4.709a-b. Cf. the Pythagorean Diotogenes’ quartet of *τύχη*, *φύσις*, *νόμος* and *τεχνή* (Stob. 1.7.10).

<sup>15</sup> Stob. 1.6.17a.

<sup>16</sup> *Physics* 195b 31ff.

<sup>17</sup> *OCD*<sup>3</sup> s.v. Tyche.

<sup>18</sup> 1.140.1.

<sup>19</sup> 2.37.6; 30.10.1.

happiness;<sup>20</sup> and great reversals of fortune from happiness to misery are a reminder of her fickle nature.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the historian contrasts this popular image of all-powerful Chance with what he felt to be reasonable (*εἰκότως*) historical development, as with Rome's meteoric rise to power.<sup>22</sup>

Polybius firmly believed in history's usefulness, because, besides providing an education in the political arts, it also, through pertinent illustrations, equipped the reader to bear nobly the vicissitudes of Fortune – *τὰς τῆς τύχης μεταβολὰς γενναίως ὑποφέρειν*.<sup>23</sup> He explains Rome's rapid ascent to world domination as due to number of factors: superior military skill, a mixed constitution, foresight and ambition, and, especially, the role of *Τύχη*. The preoccupation with this abstract deity that appeared to have such a powerful influence over the course of great events and the fate of individuals was a concern of contemporary Greek writers, but the all-encompassing nature of the term *Τύχη* can obscure the fact that Polybius uses the word to describe a number of somewhat different, and at times even contradictory, concepts.

Sometimes *Τύχη* is loosely responsible for events, but often the concept, so far from being a nebulous abstraction, becomes a guiding force actively influencing events for the purpose of bringing about Rome's elevation as a world power. In this respect, *Τύχη* is less like Luck than Divine Providence. This somewhat loose concept of what constituted Fortune sometimes leads Polybius into illogicality. *Τύχη* is used to explain inexplicable events such as natural disasters, and Polybius was dismissive of those who would use Fortune as a device to explain, for example, Scipio Africanus' military success<sup>24</sup> and Roman superiority in battle.<sup>25</sup> Yet despite this,

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<sup>20</sup> 39.8.2.

<sup>21</sup> 38.21.3.

<sup>22</sup> 1.63.9.

<sup>23</sup> 1.1.2.

<sup>24</sup> 10.5.8.

<sup>25</sup> 18.28.5. Walbank 1966: 56-58.

he himself often characterizes *Τύχη* much as the fickle, malignant deity common in New Comedy. Often, Polybius' writing merely reflects the contemporary literary *topos* on Chance, whereby the inexplicable is turned into the readily explicable workings of an active agent, a malicious divinity.

*Μοῖρα* was a concept in some ways similar to *τύχη*, in the sense of man being subject to a divinely ordered force beyond his ken or control, but *μοῖρα* conveyed a sense of undeniable absoluteness quite different from the changeability of *τύχη*; the ultimate end versus the present condition. Etymologically, *μοῖρα* – 'fate' – was derived from words meaning 'share' or 'portion' – *μέρος*, *μέρισμος*. Naturally, the most basic fate shared by all mankind was death, and even the gods were powerless to save a man from this end. In the *Iliad*, Zeus contemplates saving Hector from death at Achilles' hands, but Athena and Hera persuade him that he must allow the natural order to prevail.<sup>26</sup>

Now, while the term *μοῖρα* might describe one's lot, it did not include agency, or the means by which fate was visited upon one. This was the function of *ὁ δαίμων*, "an often-malign god of impulse who could be blamed for sudden unexpected happenings."<sup>27</sup> The connection here with *τύχη* is simple, since, while one's lot may have been set in stone from the time of one's birth, from the perspective of the present it could – especially if one's particular fate involved a sudden death – seem rather unexpected. Etymologically, *δαίμων* means 'giver of share', but, as with early representations of *Τύχη*, it could scarcely be spoken of as 'personified', having no

<sup>26</sup> *Il.* 22.174-6.

<sup>27</sup> *OCD*<sup>3</sup> 1992: s.v. Fate. Although the indefinite nature of the *δαίμων* should be borne in mind, it could also function, depending on the context, as fate personified, albeit in a particularly abstract fashion remote from the earlier, anthropomorphised gods. (Aalders 1979: 3).

attached myth and remaining essentially an abstraction; very often the pluralized form (*δαίμονες*) was employed, equivalent to those *ἑοί* who were the givers of both good and bad fortune.<sup>28</sup>

The abstract nature of the Moirai, their connection with death and the underworld, as well as the fact that they appeared to stand outside of the traditional Olympian Pantheon, caused them to be viewed, much as the *Erinyes* and possibly the goddess *Nemesis*, as chthonic deities. The idea that one possessed a personal *μοῖρα* is Homeric in origin. For Homer, the deity functions as an agent leading a man to his death, although there is an element of struggle implicit in the idea of the victim needing to be overcome.<sup>29</sup> As shall be seen, there is an element of this in Nicolaus' depiction of Caesar's assassination.

## II. The Roman Idea of Fortuna

The Roman origins of *Fortuna* show a considerable disparity between the introduction of cult and the literary development of the idea. The earliest manifestation of the concept at Rome seems to have been as a goddess of good luck, *Fors Fortuna*, which then over time came to have the association with Chance.<sup>30</sup> *Fortuna* was never an absolute mistress, however, as was *Τύχη*; contrary to the Greeks' blanket pessimism, the Romans maintained that *Fortuna* did favour the brave.<sup>31</sup> The cult of *Fortuna* predated any potential Greek influence on Roman religion, and was initially conceptually different to *τύχη*, although later the two ideas merged in Latin literature. It is possible that there may have been Etruscan influence on the concept as it developed, although the Latin name *Fortuna* indicates that the cult was not likely to have been imported wholesale. Unlike the Greek belief, *fortuna* was not a homogenous conception; the

<sup>28</sup> *OCD*<sup>3</sup> 1992 s.v. Fate.

<sup>29</sup> *Il.* 13.602; *Il.* 18.119; *Od.* 11.292.

<sup>30</sup> Kajanto 1987: 505.

<sup>31</sup> Plautus *Poen.* 132: "e virtute vobis fortuna optigit"; Ennius *Annales* 257.: "fortibus est fortuna viris data."

quintessentially Roman aspect of the goddess *Fortuna* shows that she was essentially thought of as a protective *numen* with multiple manifestations – guardian of a single person, a specific location, or even of a whole people or city.<sup>32</sup>

The earliest evidence for the cult of *Fortuna* at Rome is in Livy, who notes that Spurius Carvilius built an *aedes* of *Fors Fortuna* in 293 close to the earlier *aedes* dedicated to the goddess by Servius Tullius.<sup>33</sup> A sanctuary in the Forum Boarium may date back to the very earliest days of Rome's life as a city.<sup>34</sup> The best known of *Fortuna's* manifestations was that of *Fortuna Primigenia* or *Praenestina*, introduced as an official state cult by P. Sempronius Tuditanus after the battle of Croton in 204.<sup>35</sup> The stress provoked by the Hannibalic War was a great stimulus to Roman religious innovation, and cults of all sort, particularly those of deified abstractions – such as *Honos*, *Mens*, *Concordia* and *Virtus* – proliferated at this time, many the result of specific *vota* sworn during military operations.<sup>36</sup> The vast range of epithets relating to the goddess *Fortuna* show the wide basis of the cult at Rome, and that it functioned at the level of private as well as public cult. This would suggest a long history of Romans appealing to the goddess in their personal capacity.

As with the Greek world, however, the literary evidence presents a different picture from that of cult, and by no means always a simple one. The influence of Greek ideas on Latin literature is well documented, and in the case of the representation of *fortuna* in Latin writers there was a certain degree of assimilation to the concept of *τύχη*.<sup>37</sup> Malicious *fortuna* appears early in Plautus,

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<sup>32</sup> Kajanto 1987: 504 – 9.

<sup>33</sup> Livy 10.46.14.

<sup>34</sup> Kajanto 1987: 505.

<sup>35</sup> Livy 29.36.8; 34.53.5.

<sup>36</sup> Fears 1989: 834. Fears prefers the term *Virtues* to describe those deities often referred to by scholars as abstractions or personifications; however, he is dealing with the thorny issue of ancient religious feeling or belief, which is outside the scope of this study, and hence I have preferred the more widely used term.

<sup>37</sup> Kajanto 1987: 520.

for example, which is unsurprising given the influence from Greek New Comedy.<sup>38</sup> However, not all the literary characteristics of *fortuna* could be ascribed to a broad assimilation to *τύχη*, for there were uniquely Roman aspects that did not fit the almost wholly negative attitude in later Greek literature. For one, *fortuna* came to denote the neutral element of 'chance', often synonymously with *casus* and *fors*, particularly in texts concerned with military affairs; here it was the outcome, rather than the very presence of *fortuna*, that was described either positively or negatively. *Fortuna* could also denote quite simply, 'good luck' without an agent or apparent cause; in this function it was equated with *felicitas*. This became less frequent over time, however, through the increased assimilation to *Fortuna*/*τύχη*.<sup>39</sup>

The numinous aspect of the goddess, together with her broader function as a protective deity, led to several successive military leaders encouraging the belief that they had a close relationship with the goddess. Contemporaries of Marius regarded him as a favourite of the goddess, although he himself proclaimed shortly before his death that a man of sense could not have faith in Fortune.<sup>40</sup> One of the peculiarly Roman traits of *fortuna* when it was regarded as equivalent to good luck was the fact that, amongst other qualities or virtues, it was regarded as a necessary trait in a successful general, and was closely linked to his *virtus*.<sup>41</sup> Cicero states explicitly in his *De imp. Cn. Pomp.* 28 that a perfect general should possess '*scientia rei militaris, virtus, auctoritas, felicitas*'; the good fortune of the Roman People saw to it that Pompey was sent to safeguard the province of Asia at a critical juncture in the war against Mithradates; and his *felicitas* was responsible for a host of benefits, from popular support to favourable winds.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Fortuna* characterised like *τύχη* in Plautus: *mala* (*Rud.* 501); *incerta* (*Capt.* 245); and *centum doctum hominum consilia sola haec devincit dea*, /*Fortuna* (*Pseud.* 678-9).

<sup>39</sup> Kajanto 1987: 522.

<sup>40</sup> Plutarch *Marius* 45.9 - *ὡς οὐκ ἔστι νοῦν ἔχοντος ἀνδρὸς ἔτι τῇ τύχῃ πιστεύειν ἑαυτόν*. Cf. Val. Max. 1.2.

<sup>41</sup> Kajanto 1987: 523.

<sup>42</sup> Cicero *de imp.* 45 - ... *amisissetis Asiam, Quirites, nisi ad ipsum discrimen eius temporis divinitus Cn. Pompeium ad eas regiones fortuna populi Romani attulisset*. - and 48 - *Itaque non sum praedicaturus, quantas ille res domi*

However, luck on its own was not enough; a great general was also possessed of intelligence and rational calculation. Livy, relying largely on Fabius Pictor, describes how Q. Fabius Maximus embodies the intelligence needed by the good commander: *bono imperatori haud magni fortunam momenti esse, mentam rationemque dominari*.<sup>43</sup>

L. Cornelius Sulla Felix was the first to appropriate a *cognomen* signifying a special relationship with a deity who conveyed good fortune or luck; the Hellenized version of his *cognomen*, Epaphroditos, explicitly linked him to Venus, his patron deity. In his autobiography, Sulla openly proclaimed that his successes, as well as the defeats suffered by his enemies, were due to *felicitas*.<sup>44</sup> However, this connection to *fortuna/felicitas* in the neutral sense of 'luck' came via Venus, his special goddess, not through *Fortuna* herself in the guise of a personal *genius*; there is little evidence to indicate that Sulla was a devotee of *Fortuna*, still less the Greek *Τύχη*.<sup>45</sup>

Although the concept of a personal *τύχη*, (later evolving into the *δαίμων*),<sup>46</sup> was a feature of Hellenistic writing, it was a rare feature in Latin writers, and in fact can hardly be traced at all. It appears in the Peripatetic writers hostile towards Alexander the Great, who, believing him to have turned away from the teachings of Aristotle, attributed his successes to *τύχη* instead of his own *ἀρετή*, as a means of denigrating his achievements. The notion appears in Curtius Rufus, although it can be argued that he follows earlier Greek models for his life of Alexander, and therefore this is not a specifically Latin feature.<sup>47</sup>

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*militiae, terra marique, quantaque felicitate gesserit, ut eius semper voluntatibus non modo cives adsenserint, socii obtemperarint, hostes oboedierint, sed etiam venti tempestatesque obsecundarint...*

<sup>43</sup> Livy 22.25.14.

<sup>44</sup> Plutarch *Sulla* 6.8-9; 19.8-10.

<sup>45</sup> Weinstock 1971: 114.

<sup>46</sup> Plutarch *Alex* 50.1: Alexander's misfortune provided the opportunity for Cleitus' evil *δαίμων* to destroy him.

<sup>47</sup> Kajanto 1987: 549.

By Julius Caesar's heyday, generals and politicians were accustomed to the notion of *Fortuna* aiding them in their enterprises, with such aid manifesting as their personal *felicitas*. Caesar himself, a well-known rationalist, acknowledged in his own writing the hand of Fortune in all matters, particularly warfare.<sup>48</sup> Claiming the exclusive favours of *Fortuna* formed an important part of Civil War propaganda, since both protagonists had been recognised as the goddess' favourite during their career. Although prodigies concerning Caesar and *Fortuna* jointly were recorded during the Civil War, and Caesar's writing indicates that *Fortuna* was a goddess closely allied to his cause, some of the later literary accounts of the so-called *Fortuna Caesaris* are more dubious in their authenticity.<sup>49</sup>

The episode of 'Fortune in the fishing boat' is recorded by Plutarch, who recounts Caesar's attempt to cross the Adriatic in a small boat, where he is said to have urged the pilot, 'Do not be afraid, for you carry Caesar and Caesar's Fortune';<sup>50</sup> the nearly identical phrase, *Καίσαρα φέρεις καὶ τὴν Καίσαρος τύχην*, appears in Appian.<sup>51</sup> The story is very likely legendary, but Caesar may have encouraged its transmission to counter Pompeian *fortuna*-propaganda. That this attempt to cross the sea was unsuccessful suggests that the story may initially have been transposed from a hostile source.<sup>52</sup> The kernel of the story was evidently circulated in contemporary accounts, for Caesar had previously crossed from Brundisium to Greece in January 48 by invoking Fortune's aid against the winter weather; the phrase used – *τῷ μὲν χειμῶνι τύχην ἀγαθὴν ἀντιθέμενος* – is identical to one Nicolaus employs at §§ XVIII.55 and XXXI.132.

<sup>48</sup> Caesar *BG* 6.30.2; 6.35.2; and *BC* 3.68.1.

<sup>49</sup> Caesar claimed to be her favourite in a letter to Cicero (*Att.* 10.8b.1), since everything was going well for him and badly for his opponents: *si non Fortunae obsecutus videberis – omnia enim secundissima nobis, adversissima illis accidisse videntur*. Prodigies – the temple of *Fortuna Publica* and Caesar's gardens were struck by lightning; the temple of *Fortuna* opened of its own accord, and blood flowed from a bakeshop to the temple of *Fortuna Respiciens* (Dio 42.26.3).

<sup>50</sup> *Caes.* 38.3 – *Ἴδι ... γενναῖε, τόλμα καὶ δέδιδι μηδὲν· Καίσαρα φέρεις καὶ τὴν Καίσαρος τύχην συμπλέουσιν.*

<sup>51</sup> *B.Civ* 2.57.

<sup>52</sup> Weinstock 1971: 121.

As Weinstock argues, *Fortuna/Tύχη* was not traditionally a goddess invoked by Graeco-Roman sailors, who tended to call on Zeus, Poseidon, or the gods of the winds; the few early poetic references to her steering the helm of ships to safety<sup>53</sup> were likely the inspiration for Caesar's episode, rather than any actual utterance of his. Her association with the rudder, not one of her early attributes, first appears under Caesar. A *quinarius* issued by P. Sepullius Macer before Caesar's intended Parthian campaign, with *Victoria* on the obverse and *Fortuna* with rudder and cornucopia on the reverse, was the first representation of the goddess in this guise. Triumviral-*aurei* issued by Antony and Octavian continued the new representation. The theme of Fortune ensuring the safe return of a devotee found its fullest expression in the cult of *Fortuna Redux*, which the Senate voted for Augustus in 19 BC. Although related to the *Fortuna* of Antium, the subject of Horace's *Ode*<sup>54</sup> (also a goddess of seafarers) was in effect the Caesarian *Fortuna*, granted a new vitality under his successor.<sup>55</sup> It is upon this foundation that the near-legendary association of Caesar with *Fortuna*, seen in later writers such as Appian and Plutarch, developed. The prevalence of the concept of Fortune in the latter half of Nicolaus' work shows that he was working not only with the old Greek literary *topos* of *τύχη*, but also in the early Augustan tradition in which the stories about Caesar's Fortune crystallised around the contemporary prominence of the goddess and her new cult.

### III. Nicolaus' Presentation of *Tύχη* in the *Bίος Καίσαρος*

One of the aspects of the *Bίος Καίσαρος* that bears further investigation is Nicolaus' presentation of 'fatal elements' (*τύχη*, *μοῖρα* and *ὁ δαίμων*), both in Caesar's assassination, and in Octavian's subsequent adventures. Aspects of this literary theme that need clarification include whether

<sup>53</sup> E.g. Aesch. *Agam.* 664.

<sup>54</sup> Horace *Carmina.* 1.35.

<sup>55</sup> Weinstock 1971: 124-127.

they play a significant role; whether Nicolaus' presentation of these concepts accords with the Hellenistic notion of *τύχη*; whether his usage is consistent; and his own attitude to fortune and fate.

All of the instances of 'fatal elements' in the *Bíos Kaisaros* occur at significant moments in sections XVI - XXXI of the extant text; there is no mention of any of the three terms in the *Άγωγή*-section. This may be a consequence of the manuscript tradition, rather than a reflection of the original form of the text. The editor of *De Virtutibus et Vitiis* was primarily interested in how the *Bíos Kaisaros* presents Octavian as an exemplar of virtuous conduct. *Τύχη* was an external force with the potential to influence human behaviour, and therefore would remove the element of individual responsibility for one's actions that the editor would be keen to showcase. A pagan abstraction was not likely to make its way into an overtly morally didactic work. The second manuscript, *de Insidiis*, has no such explicit purpose, since it is concerned with the accounts of conspiracies against kings.<sup>56</sup> The greater textual integrity and coherence of the second half of the text might explain the preponderance of *τύχη*, *μοῖρα* and *ὁ δαίμων* in the Caesar extract, and be indicative of a lower level of editorial interference.

The first instance of *τύχη* occurs at § XVI.38, in Atia's letter to Octavian at Apollonia:

*δεῖν δὲ ἤδη ἄνδρα γίγνεσθαι καὶ γνώμη τε ἅ κρη φρονεῖν καὶ ἔργω πράττειν ἐπόμενον τῇ τύχῃ τε καὶ τοῖς καιροῖς.*

*Now he must become a man; consider what is necessary and execute his design, following fortune and opportunity.<sup>57</sup>*

<sup>56</sup> Although the Christian context of the Byzantine empire would have undeniably influenced all texts of the time to a greater or lesser extent.

<sup>57</sup> That this is a key signpost for Nicolaus' development of Octavian's character is demonstrated by the care with which the sentence is structured, particularly the conscious balance and duplication of the second half, with the use of (i) *τε ... καί*, (ii) the stereotypical antithesis between *γνώμη* and *ἔργον*, and (iii) the balancing of *τύχη* and *καιρός*, again by *τε ... καί*. However, although Nicolaus obviously constructed this sentence with considerable thought, the effect is somewhat over-wrought, since it loses in clarity what it gains in aesthetics.

*Τύχη* is here used in the sense of ‘the incalculable element’, closely allied to *καιρός*. An ambitious young Roman, eager to get ahead in the cut-throat arena of Republican politics, needed to grasp every ‘fortunate opportunity’ in order to show his quality. Here the term *τύχη* carries neither overtly positive nor negative overtones, although the emphasis on decisive action preceded by deliberative forethought may tip the balance in favour of the positive – the man who considers his course of action thoroughly, would be better equipped to seize the opportune moments as they arise, and potentially deal more successfully with the inevitable negative blows of fortune as they were encountered.

This brief sentence contains a number of key terms, most notably *φρονέω*, *γνώμη* and *ἔργω*. Although Atia advises her son to take action, the emphasis is very much on deliberation and cautious determination; so far from advocating risk-taking, she urges circumspection. Her directive to him, ‘*he must now become a man*’, also serves as a marker for the reader: from this point on, Octavian will encounter situations through which he will become *ἐμπειρος*, and thus a true *πολιτικός*. Since the political arena he was entering was treacherous and highly volatile, her advice to heed the element of fortune serves to underline the need for forethought in all his actions. In this regard, the ever-present hand of *τύχη* in great events is the stimulus to be watchful for the opportune moment.

The next example is at § XVI.41:

*τιμωροί τε ἔσεσθαι Καίσαρι προσεδάκων [τε] οἱ καὶ ζῶντος ἀπήλαυον τῆς τύχης, εἰς τε ἀρχὰς καὶ πλοῦτον ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ προηγημένοι δωρεάς τε μεγάλας ἔχοντες καὶ οἷας οὐδ’ ὄναρ ἤλπισαν.*

*Avengers of Caesar were also expected from among those who had benefited from his good fortune during his lifetime, being raised by him to offices, wealth, and receiving great gifts, such as they had not hoped for even in dreams.*

Here *τύχη* seems to be equated with 'good luck', in the sense of material rewards, rather than any conception of divine agency. Crucially, these putative avengers derive their good fortune from their contact with Caesar. This underscores the notion that an individual's sphere of influence extended to their friends and clients, yet here Caesar's fortune is the key quality leading to wealth and political power. Naturally, Caesar's luck was entirely conditional on his remaining alive. Nicolaus seems to be pointing out, somewhat cynically, that it was not the fact of Caesar having been murdered that needed to be avenged, but rather the loss to his favourites of those material benefits that stemmed from the luck that surrounded him.

That Nicolaus introduces this notion here, at the point where Octavian is considering what course of action to take immediately after hearing of the murder, serves to highlight the difference between Caesar's many potential avengers, and his one actual avenger – his young, vulnerable, and inexperienced great-nephew. Furthermore, the favoured position Caesar's friends and associates had enjoyed under the sheltering penumbra of his luck, meant that they were also possessed of the means to challenge his assassins, in complete contrast to Octavian's position – potentially in danger from the assassins, he lacked the skills, the experience and at this point the wealth needed to avenge Caesar.

At § XVIII.54-55, we encounter the first truly significant decision Octavian makes, coming after a long description of the cares and fears of his mother:

(XVIII.54) Ἀτία δὲ ἡ μήτηρ τὸ μὲν εὐκλεές τῆς τύχης καὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς δυναστείας ἔχαιρεν ὀρώσα περιεληλυθὸς τῶν ἑαυτῆς παιδῶν, εἰδυῖα δὲ μεστὸν τὸ πρᾶγμα φόβων τε καὶ κινδύνων, καὶ ἅμα ἑωρακυῖα Καίσαρα τὸν ἑαυτῆς δεῖον οἶα πάθοι, οὐ πάνυ προσίετο πάλιν' ... διὸ ἀποτρέπειν μὲν τὸν παῖδα οὐκ ἐτόλμα μεγάλοις ἐγχειροῦντα καὶ ἐπὶ δικαίαν ἄμυναν ἀρμημένον, οὐ μὴν δὴ οὐδὲ συμπαρομοῦν διὰ τὸ ἄθλον τοῦ δαίμονος ... (55) πάντων δὲ τῶν φίλων καὶ περὶ τοῦδε ὁ Καῖσαρ πυδόμενος ἅ ἐφρόνου, οὐδὲν μελλήσας τύχη ἀγαθῆν καὶ ἐπ' εὐφύμῳ κληθῶνι δέχεται τοῦνομα τε

καὶ τὴν υἰοθεσίαν, ἣ καὶ αὐτῷ καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνδράποισ ἀρχὴ ἀγαθῶν ἦν, πολὺ δὲ μάλιστα τῆι πατρίδι καὶ σύμπαντι τῷ Ῥωμαίων γένει.

(XVIII.54) *His mother Atia rejoiced when she saw the excellent repute of good fortune and the magnitude of the power that had come to her son; but, knowing that the undertaking was fraught with fears and dangers, and at the same time, having seen what had befallen her uncle Caesar, she did not altogether approve again ... Because of this she did not dare to dissuade her son who was attempting great undertakings, and was eager for just retribution, but nor did she join in urging him on because of the inscrutability of the divine. ... (55) Caesar [Octavian], having enquired as to what all of his friends thought about this, did not delay, and with good fortune and as a favourable omen accepted both the name and the adoption. This was the beginning of good not only for himself and all mankind, but also especially for his country and the entire Roman people.*

Here we have the first instance of fortune as a powerful external factor, and one drawn along lines familiar to Hellenistic readers. Although Atia recognises the potential benefits that may accrue from being favoured by fortune, she feared the obscurity of the *δαίμων*. The term is somewhat ambiguous – it may here be used synonymously with *τύχη*, but there is also the connection with *μοῖρα*, as the active agent or divinity through which fate could be delivered. In this latter sense, the reading tends to be overwhelmingly negative, as *μοῖρα* in Greek literature all the way back to Homer had an undeniable connection with death and the underworld. What Atia fears, and to a Greek of the time, perhaps reasonably so, is Fate in its incarnation as Death – that her son might die during his great endeavour.<sup>58</sup>

Nicolaus, however, elaborately and deliberately makes plain to the reader that her fear is ultimately unfounded; her son's venture was favoured by fortune and destined to succeed.

<sup>58</sup> *Μοῖρα* is used as a synonym for death, (rather than the concept of an immutable destiny), at XXVI.97: *ἔξεπετηθήκει γὰρ ἡ γυνὴ μετὰ πολλοῦ ὄχλου γυναικῶν τε καὶ οἰκετῶν, ἀνακαλαμένη τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ ἑαυτὴν ὀδυρομένη, ὅτι μάτην προύλεγε μὴ ἐξίεναι τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην. τῶν δ' ἤδη μοῖρα ἐρείσθηκε πολὺ κρείττων ἢ κατὰ τὴν αὐτῆς ἐλπίδα.*

Although Atia is both anxious and elated at the thought of Octavian's undertaking, it is fear that holds the upper hand. In section 54, where Atia's thoughts are described in some detail, her fretful analysis of the dangers her son could encounter causes her to see *τύχη* as a principally negative force, one that casts a shadow over his path, obscuring potential pitfalls – *οὐ μὴν δὴ οὐδὲ συμπαρομοῶν διὰ τὸ ἄδηλον τοῦ δαίμονος*. The envious, malicious aspect of the deity is implicit here, as the very possibility of his attaining greatness might make him a target.

This litany of cares is immediately followed by Octavian's decision to accept the adoption, the significance of which Nicolaus spells out in superlative eulogy. The sentence *πάντων δὲ τῶν φίλων ... τύχη ἀγαθῆ καὶ ἐπ' εὐφύμῳ κληδόνι* is strongly echoed by a later passage, when, in late October of 44, Octavian decides to raise an army of Caesar's veterans in Campania:

(XXXI.132) ταῦτα βουλευσάμενος μετὰ τῶν φίλων, καὶ θεοῖς θύσας τύχη ἀγαθῆ συλλήπτρας αὐτῶν γενέσθαι δικαίας καὶ εὐκλεοῦς ἐλπίδος, ὤρησεν...

(XXXI.132) After consulting about this with his friends, and after sacrificing with good fortune to the gods, that they might be his assistants in his just and glorious plan, he set out...

The description *τύχη ἀγαθῆ* may be merely a stock-phrase used to indicate general good luck, although here (and at 55) it seems to have a more specific cast, indicating the receipt of favourable 'auspices' prior to making a significant decision or embarking on a venture.<sup>59</sup> The circumstances of XVIII.55 and XXXI.132 are similar, for in both instances, Octavian is faced with a critical decision, consults with his friends and decides to embark upon a particular course of action, which is later revealed to be the correct one through his ultimate success.<sup>60</sup> Bellemore suggests that this expression was merely a formulaic nod by Nicolaus to the Roman belief in

<sup>59</sup> In the specific context of sacrifice, by achieving *litatio*, the formal acceptance of the sacrifice by the gods.

<sup>60</sup> Octavian's meticulously correct observance of the niceties of Roman religion was important on religious and political grounds, since the youth was, after all, a *pontifex*. But he took traditional religious observance seriously his whole life; cf. Suet. *DA* 31, and see Malitz 2003: 191 n.435.

*Fortuna*, and that Octavian himself paid less mind to its role in his career than did other Roman politicians and revolutionaries, including Sulla and Caesar.<sup>61</sup> However, whether or not Octavian 'believed' in the idea of *Fortuna/τύχη* is not critical to its use by Nicolaus in his biography, which, after all, is a work of panegyric. The use of this phrase at XVIII.54 marks the significance of that decision in his young protagonist's life, coming as it does hard on the heels of the description of Atia's anxieties, and spells out in no uncertain terms that her fears were groundless.

The inclusion of *τύχη*, *μοῖρα* and *κληδών* all add to the religiosity of the episode and underscore that, by behaving in good, traditional fashion, Octavian is embarking on a divinely sanctioned course of action. Furthermore, to truly send home the point that the gods were Octavian's partners in his '*just and glorious plan*', Nicolaus triumphantly notes that '*This was the beginning of good not only for himself and all mankind, but especially for the state and the entire Roman people.*' The use of *ἀρετή ἀγαθῶν* is a deliberate reversal of the Homeric and Herodotean motive *ἀρετή κακῶν*, and indicates that Nicolaus is consciously alluding to the long tradition of epic and Classical Greek literature.

The crowning of Caesar's statue and the subsequent deposition of the tribunes Caesetius and Marullus, is one of the three incidents described in other authors (Suetonius, Appian, Dio and the like) as leading to Caesar's assassination. That all three feature in the *Bίος Καίσαρος* demonstrates how quickly the tradition became settled. The incident leading up to the deposition of the tribunes is related first of the three at XX.70, although in Appian, Dio and Suetonius it follows the description of Caesar's insult to the Senate and precedes the Lupercalian crowning. Although the other three accounts vary in the details they present for

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<sup>61</sup> Bellemore 1984: 96.

each incident, each contains Caesar's well-known response to the crowd hailing him as king, 'I am Caesar, not King'. Nicolaus' version of the exchange differs significantly from the other accounts; whereas in Appian and Dio, the exchange occurs before Caesetius and Marullus were removed from office, in the *Bίος Καίσαρος* it serves as the incident's conclusion.

(XX.70) ὁ δὲ δῆμος ἐβόα βασιλέα τε αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ ἀναδεῖσθαι μηδὲν ἔτι μέλλοντα, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἡ Τύχη αὐτὸν ἀναδέδεκεν. ὁ δὲ πᾶν ἂν ἔφη χαρισάμενος τῷ δήμῳ διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν εὖνοιαν τοῦτο οὔποτε δώσειν, καὶ συγγνώμην ἤτεῖτο εἰ ἀντιλέγει σώζων τὰ πάτρια· βούλεσθαι γὰρ τὴν ὑπατον ἀρχὴν ἔχειν νομίμως ἢ βασιλείαν παρανόμως.

(XX.70) *Then the people shouted that he was king, and that he should no longer delay in being crowned, since Fortune had already crowned him. But Caesar said that, while he would indulge the people in everything because of their love for him, he would never permit this; and he asked for their pardon in contradicting them by upholding the ancestral institutions of the country, for he would rather hold the office of consul lawfully than that of a king contrary to the law.*

The emphasis here is profoundly different from that of the pithy riposte found in the later writers, and this blatant attempt to exculpate Caesar from his monarchical aspirations should be seen as a foreshadowing of Augustus' own policy. In Nicolaus' version, Caesar stresses the importance of his holding the consulship constitutionally – yet he fails to mention the life-dictatorship, which, although it may have been legally conferred, had only the dubious model of Sulla as a precedent.<sup>62</sup>

The attitude of the people towards Caesar's increasingly autocratic or monarchical behaviour also differs to that presented in the later sources. Far from the simmering unease and even outright dislike shown him,<sup>63</sup> here the people openly call on him to assume the odious title of

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Dio 41.36.4, showing Caesar's attitude to his first dictatorship as a useful expedient, but one he preferred not to draw attention to: ποιήσας δὲ ταῦτα καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς δικτατορίας ἀπέπεσε· τὴν γὰρ δὴ δύναμιν τό τε ἔργον αὐτῆς καὶ πάνυ ἀεὶ δια χειρὸς ἔσχε.

<sup>63</sup> Despite Caesar's long-standing popularity with the ordinary citizens of Rome, his new approach was not viewed favourably by the plebs: Appian *BCiv.* 2.16.108: ἑτέρων δ' αὐτὸν ἀμφὶ τὰς πύλας ἴοντα ποδὲν βασιλέα προσσιπόντων καὶ τοῦ δήμου στενάξαντος, εὐμηχάνως εἶπε τοῖς ἀσπασαμένοις "οὐκ εἰμὶ Βασιλεῖς, ἀλλὰ Καῖσαρ". Suet. *DJ* 80.1 ...ne populo

king; and in fact, this was to be a mere formality, as Fortune had already crowned him. There is a wonderfully tragic irony to this notion, for it was true that by January of 44, Caesar's greatest achievements were now behind him; he had reached the pinnacle, as it were, of his fortune, and was already unknowingly approaching the hour of his death.

In section XXIII. 82-83, we come to the day of the assassination itself, a day filled with omens, portents and dramatic irony; a critical event not only for the course of Roman history, but also for the hero of Nicolaus' panegyric, since Caesar's murder serves as both catalyst and counterpoint to Octavian's divinely aided rise to power.

(XXIII. 82) συνέλαβε δὲ καὶ τύχη τις εἰς τοῦτο ποιήσασα ἡμέραν ἐπιτήν αὐτὸν ὀρίσαι εἰς ἣν συνίασιν οἱ ἐκ τοῦ συνεδρίου βουλευσόμενοι περὶ ὧν αὐτὸς ἔμελλεν εἰσοίσειν. ... ἐγένετο δὲ αὐτοῖς ἡ σύνοδος εἰς τὴν Πομπηίου στοάν, ἔνθα ἐκάστοτε συνελέγοντο. (83) τῶι δ' ἄρα ὁ δαίμων διεδείκνυε τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ὅποια εἶη, ὡς πάντα ἀστάδμητα καὶ τῆς τύχης ἥττω εἰς τὸ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ αὐτὸν ὑπάγων χωρίον, ἐν ᾧ ἔμελλε πρὸ τοῦ ἐκείνου ἀνδριάντος νεκρὸς κείσασθαι, καὶ οὐ ζώντος περιεγένετο, τούτου τεθνεῶτος πρὸς τῶι εἰδώλῳ ἀποσφάττεσθαι. ἰσχυρότερον δὲ τι καὶ ἡ μοῖρα, εἰ δὴ τις ἐπέστη ταύτοις.

(XXIII. 82-83) Fortune also had a part in this by causing Caesar himself to set a certain day on which the members of the senate were to assemble to consider motions he wished to introduce. ... They met in the Portico of Pompey's Theatre, where they occasionally<sup>64</sup> gathered. (83) Thus the divinity revealed the nature of the human condition – that everything is uncertain, and subject to fortune – by bringing Caesar to the house of his enemy, in which he was to be murdered at the foot of the image of the dead man over whom he had prevailed when he was alive. And fate is an even stronger force – if indeed one acknowledges her part in these things.

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*quidem iam praesenti statu laeto, sed clam palamque detrectante dominationem atque assertores flagitante.* Cicero (*Att.* 14.1.2) records one occasion where Caesar acknowledged that he was disliked: 'Ego dubitem quin summo in odio sim, quom M. Cicero sedeat nec suo commodo me convenire possit? Atqui si quisquam est facilis, hic est, tamen non dubito quin me male oderit.'

<sup>64</sup> ἐκάστοτε translated thus for consistency, rather than as 'each time' as Nicolaus uses it in the former sense later in § XXIII.83 in reference to Caesar's epilepsy. It seems that Nicolaus has misunderstood Roman practice with regards to the various meeting places of the Senate.

The familiar *topos* of unstable fortune emerges here, reflected in a decidedly Polybian turn of phrase.<sup>65</sup> In this respect, Nicolaus' version parallels the later accounts, all of which stress the seeming inevitability of Caesar's death; a large part of this has to do with the location of the murder, taking place in Pompey's theatre, with Caesar finally breathing his last before the statue of his great enemy. Nicolaus does not disappoint in this regard, emphasising that the hand of fortune could be discerned in Caesar's murder simply because of the irony of its setting, and fortune was also responsible for causing Caesar to select the day of his own death. This prosaic reality of the situation – that Caesar's dictatorial powers gave him the authority to call the Senate, and his imminent Parthian campaign, and the prospect of his absence for three years forced the conspirators to act when they did, are not mentioned as precipitating factors. Nicolaus here is stretching the *topos* of Fate in order to make a rhetorical flourish.

As Nicolaus paints it, *μοῖρα* may have been an even bigger factor in Caesar's death. This statement is followed by the various attempts to dissuade Caesar from going to the Senate that day; objections are raised first by his friends, disturbed by the unfavourable auspices; then his doctors express concern based on his ill-health – vertigo, on this occasion; and lastly, Calpurnia is terrified by a nightmare, although the specifics, as given in Suetonius, Plutarch and Appian, are missing.<sup>66</sup> Caesar wavers, yet Decimus Brutus is eventually able to persuade him (§ 87) by asking him to 'consider his own virtue a favourable omen' – *αἴσιον οἰωνόν τῆν σεαυτοῦ ἀρετὴν ποιούμενος*. However, as the outcome proved, Caesar's virtue is irrelevant to both *μοῖρα* and *τύχη*; the classic Hellenistic *τύχη* never took into account whether or not a victim was deserving of their misfortune, since in fact it was traditionally those who were most *undeserving* of unhappiness

<sup>65</sup> τῆς τύχης ἤττων - this phrase, reflecting the notion of a great man brought down by the whim of fortune, is found at Polyb. 15.20.5-8, 9.8.13, and 23.12.3.

<sup>66</sup> The auspices taken prior to the meeting itself were also unfavourable, but this did necessarily always lead to postponement (Cicero *Fam.* 10.12.3). Though he was not a religious man, he was sufficiently shaken up to need Decimus Brutus' urgings to attend in the final event – so near did the conspirator's plans come to failure.

who seemed to be on its receiving end, and who were most loudly lamented.<sup>67</sup> If one is to admit the role of fate, as Nicolaus implies, its function in Caesar's assassination was as an irresistible force, against which all objections would pale. Fate, with this emphasis on the locale of the murder, plays a significant role in the other literary accounts of the assassination, but more than that there is the implication of *ἀνάγκη*, necessity, in Caesar's death – Dio states that it was necessary (*ἔδει*) that Caesar die,<sup>68</sup> while Appian notes *χρῆν γὰρ ἃ ἐχρῆν Καίσαρα γενέσθαι*.<sup>69</sup> Plutarch explicitly connects the venue of Pompey's Theatre with the divinely ordered inevitability of the assassination – *ὥστε καὶ δαίμων τις ἐδόκει τὸν ἄνδρα τῇ Πομπηίου δίκῃ προσάξειν*.<sup>70</sup> Yet, in the *Βίος Καίσαρος*, it is Caesar's own nature, coupled with the effect of fortune, which led to his death.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately a man's character was more likely to influence his fate, than Fate was to influence his actions. It is this moralistic theme that runs through the core of his characterizations of both Octavian and Caesar.

One might ask how, if *τύχη* is still to be regarded as a willful and unpredictable force, Octavian is able to escape the negative impact of fortune. The opposition of human excellence (*ἀρετή*) and external chance (*τύχη*) was a feature of biographies from the fourth century onwards; attributing a man's success only to luck was a characteristic of invective, as with the attempts to denigrate the achievements of Alexander by attributing his success only to *Τύχη*, after he was perceived as having turned away from the teachings of Aristotle. The crucial difference between Caesar and Octavian, and the abiding reason why Octavian will surpass his adoptive father and rise to even greater heights, succeeding where the elder statesman failed, is that fortune's potentially negative influence on Octavian is complemented by his formidable *ἀρετή*, as Nicolaus was at

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<sup>67</sup> Aalders 1979: 5.

<sup>68</sup> Dio 44.18.3.

<sup>69</sup> Appian *B.Civ* 2.116.

<sup>70</sup> Plut. *Brut.* 14.2.

<sup>71</sup> Toher 2003a: 145. See Ch. 5 below, pgs 131 and 134-135.

such pains to demonstrate in the *Ἀγωγή*-section. His virtue, coupled with the favour of the gods, will ensure his success with fortune's aid.

An example of how Nicolaus expresses this notion is to be found in the final passage employing fatal elements, found at § XXVIII.113, when Octavian is beset on all sides by hostile forces, particularly M. Antonius:

*ἄπερ ὕστερον ἐπρυτάνευσεν ὀρθῶς τὸ δαμόνιον καὶ ἡ τύχη.*

*These things Divine Power and Fortune later set to rights.*

This statement that Octavian's successes were related to action by an unspecified fortunate deity, demonstrates that Nicolaus' approach to the causation of events in Octavian's life is philosophically guided, rather than conventionally religious. A fascinating subtlety of this phrase is that this particular divinity would appear to function in Octavian's case as a quasi-Nemesis, which would imply a moralistic overtone not often attributed to the classic notion of *Τύχη*, given its predominantly negative overtones.

Nicolaus' approach to the fatal elements seen in the passages from the Caesar Extract may be a reflection on the text's close relation to the account in his *Universal History*, whereas those passages that deal exclusively with Octavian (such as the more obviously panegyric aspects of statements like that at XXVIII.113) may have seemed more inviting of eulogy - given that Octavian, and not Caesar, is the subject of the *Βίος Καιράτος*.

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*Father, Mother and Divi Filius: Characterisation in the Βίος  
Καίσαρος*

The brevity of the surviving text of the *Βίος Καίσαρος* is frustratingly intriguing. On the one hand, we have been given a glimpse of all that we might have known about the elusive character of the first *Princeps*; yet, on the other hand, we have an unrivalled view of his early years and the most influential figures of his youth. Furthermore, Nicolaus' presentation of his mother, Atia, and Julius Caesar (in the role of quasi-father and political mentor) as ideal parents for the *Princeps*-in-waiting is unique in its detail, and worth examining for its insights into his characterisation of the two according to the tenets of Hellenistic and Roman literature.

The portrait of Atia conforms largely to those in other accounts and is evidently coloured by a favourable Augustan tradition, which employed the contemporary conventional ideals of parental probity. I shall first outline the approved role of Roman mothers in the education and youth of future statesmen in order to provide a context for discussion of Atia specifically. Then I shall briefly examine L. Marcius Philippus' role, in order to shed some light on the difficult position occupied by step-fathers of adolescent young men.

The character of Julius Caesar is surprisingly different in certain respects to the figure familiar to us from his own writings and the works of Cicero, Plutarch, Suetonius, Dio and Appian. Perhaps one of the most valuable aspects of the *Βίος Καίσαρος* is thus what it reveals about the treatment of Caesar by an Augustan source. Nicolaus' presentation of Caesar cannot, however, be divorced from Octavian's, since his depiction of the Dictator is used to shed light on and enhance his encomiastic portrait of his friend, the *Princeps*.

### *I. His Mother and Her Husband: Atia and L. Marcius Philippus*

Octavian's mother, Atia and his step-father, L. Marcius Philippus, feature in all the literary accounts of Octavian's early movements on the political scene in 44, and, although mentioned only briefly, their characters are consistent in all the ancient texts: both of them are shown to be well-meaning, cautious, and eminently respectable. The portrait of Atia in the *Bíos Kaisaragos* is the most detailed characterization of Octavian's mother we possess from the ancient sources. In most respects, she conforms to the traditional literary ideal of the Roman mother, and her portrayal serves, as does Caesar's, to complement the presentation of the young Octavian and present the parental relationship with the *Princeps*-in-training in the best possible light – for Octavian, at least.<sup>1</sup> This is unsurprising, given that Nicolaus must have used Augustus' *De vita sua* as a major source for the *Bíos Kaisaragos*.<sup>2</sup> Later Roman authors celebrated Atia as a paragon of traditional motherhood,<sup>3</sup> and a basic overview of the model mother will show in what respects the Atia of the *Bíos Kaisaragos* corresponds to this ideal.

However, in certain regards Nicolaus also presents her maternal control as another obstacle (albeit well-intentioned) for her son to deal with on his path to greatness. The character of Philippus is an interesting case, both for why Nicolaus chooses to portray him as he does, and for the light his brief appearance in the *Bíos Kaisaragos* sheds on the social position of stepfathers in the late Republic.

It is notoriously difficult to attempt to reconstruct the lives of those members of Roman society who are largely invisible in the literary sources. Women, along with children, slaves, and

<sup>1</sup> Toher 1985: 89: 'Like the concentration on the relationship with Julius Caesar, the presentation of Octavian's respect for his mother in the *Bíos Kaisaragos* demonstrates the excellence of both his character and that of his mother according to the standards of Roman culture.'

<sup>2</sup> Hall 1923: iii; Bellemore 1984; Toher 1985: 101-103.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Tacitus, most notably at *Dial.* 28; but she generally receives favourable, albeit brief, treatment in Appian, Dio and Velleius.

members of the lower classes, usually feature only when they sparked the writer's interest.<sup>4</sup> This also means that, when they do appear in history, oratory, biography, letters, satire, coin issues, and art, their presentation is coloured by layers of invective or idealization, and they are held up as exemplars of behaviour either virtuous or diabolical.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the sources tend to tell us more about the author's perceptions of the subject, rather than providing us with an accurate portrait of the subject itself. The modern scholar can nevertheless extract much that is useful from the evidence, as long as the above caveat is borne in mind.<sup>6</sup>

The Roman mother was a figure treated largely with a lack of sentimentality. Those who elicited the greatest degree of approbation from moralists and biographers were stern disciplinarians, who inculcated traditional moral behaviour in their children and rigorously supervised their education; Atia falls under this tradition of respectful idealism. Dixon<sup>7</sup> succinctly describes this ideal parent as *severa mater*. The famous passage in Tacitus' *Dialogus* 28.5-6 singles out three women who were celebrated for their reputations as exemplary Republican mother-figures – Cornelia, mother of the two Gracchi, Aurelia, mother of Caesar the Dictator, and Atia, mother of the *Princeps* Augustus. Tacitus' lament (through Vipstanus Messala) for 'the good old days' reveals the type of parental approach lauded by traditionalists and attributed to these three noble ladies.

*Ac non studia modo curasque, sed remissiones etiam lususque puerorum sanctitate quadam ac verecundia temperabat. Sic Corneliam Gracchorum, sic Aureliam Caesaris, sic Atiam Augusti matrem praefuisse educationibus ac produxisse principes liberos accepimus. (6) Quae disciplina ac severitas eo pertinebat ut sincera et integra et nullis pravitatibus detorta*

<sup>4</sup> Dixon 1992: 34: 'Roman historiography was concerned with wars and public political life, not with the everyday business of family and parenthood, which impinge on the accounts of Tacitus, Livy and Sallust only when they inform the political and military account.' In this respect, the details of ordinary life that can be gleaned from (to take only one well-known example) the letters of Cicero are invaluable.

<sup>5</sup> As Dixon (1988: 7) notes, 'We do not hear the mother's point of view or many details of her daily experience: we hear rather what adult male statesmen, philosophers and doctors thought she ought to be.'

<sup>6</sup> Hallett (1984), Dixon (1988; 1992) and Rawson (most recently 2003) have made valuable contributions to studies on the Roman *familia*.

<sup>7</sup> 1988: 1.

*unius cuiusque natura toto statim pectore arriperet artes honestas, et sive ad rem militarem sive ad iuris scientiam sive ad eloquentiae studium inclinasset, id solum ageret, id universum hauriret.*

The credit for these youths' single-minded approach to their political careers was attributed to the exacting supervision shown by their mothers, in contrast with the spoiled, frivolous youths and apathetic parents of Messala's own day.

The tradition that links these three women explicitly seems to have developed during Augustus' *Principate*. Lewis<sup>8</sup> points out that, as part of his policy of 'moral regeneration', Augustus was keen to enhance the position of mothers and *matronae*. This included continued promotion of the Julian goddess, Venus Genetrix; celebration of the Imperial women (Livia, Octavia and Julia); and the promotion of famous Republican role models, such as Cornelia. Augustus restored a famous seated statue<sup>9</sup> of Cornelia, which was initially displayed in the *Porticus Metelli* before that was demolished and replaced by the *Porticus Octaviae*. The context of the statue is telling: placed in a portico honouring his sister, it linked the imperial dynasty with traditional moral conservatism, besides showcasing Augustus' vaunted restoration of Republican monuments.<sup>10</sup>

At some point between the death of Caesar and the end of Augustus' reign, a tradition developed linking the mothers of Julius Caesar and Augustus with a famous paragon of traditional Republican motherhood. Cornelia's sons were behind the program of attempted reforms that ushered in nearly a century of urban violence and civil war; yet Cornelia herself

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<sup>8</sup> 1988: 198.

<sup>9</sup> Described by Pliny *HN* 24.31, and Plutarch *Gaius Gracchus* 4.3; the latter reference is somewhat obscure. The statue itself is lost, although the Augustan base has survived. The original statue was probably erected after 123 BC (Lewis 1988: 199).

<sup>10</sup> *RG* 20; Suet. *DA* 28.3-31.5.

never attracted the moralizing condemnation that often fell upon the Gracchi. She was held to be completely blameless for their adult behaviour, yet the tradition persisted that her influence had been exemplary.<sup>11</sup> Part of this may have been her opposition to her sons', particularly Gaius', political policies, as the letter attributed to her by Cornelius Nepos records.<sup>12</sup> Her position was thus essentially conservative, since she advocated support of the traditional *res publica*. The letter itself as recorded by Nepos may not be genuine; but it is likely, as Bauman argues, that his version may simply have adapted the essential core of her thoughts.<sup>13</sup> Her position as an indomitable archetype of the conventional Roman matron was therefore a valuable part of Augustan moral policy.

The Roman mother exemplified by women such as Cornelia, Aurelia and Atia, was a formidable parent – an

‘unbending moral mentor, guardian of traditional virtue and object of a lifelong respect comparable with, though not equal to, that of a *paterfamilias*.’<sup>14</sup>

As Dixon has shown,<sup>15</sup> elite mothers were not expected to spend great amounts of time tending to the physical needs of their children and cosseting them endlessly; *indulgentia* was a quality attributed, unfavourably, to servants.<sup>16</sup> Rather, their maternal duty was exercised in a supervisory capacity over the numerous servile and freed attendants who made up a child's *nutrices* and *educatores*. Dixon suspects that the extravagant praise given to Cornelia, Aurelia

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<sup>11</sup> Dixon 1988: 110; Bauman 1992: 42.

<sup>12</sup> 1.1.2.

<sup>13</sup> Bauman 1992: 43.

<sup>14</sup> Dixon 1988: 7. *Contra* Veyne 1987: 16, who argues that ‘Severity was part of the father’s role; the mother pleaded for leniency.’ Dixon (1988: 131) feels that this presentation is only found in early Latin comedies, which she feels are too heavily indebted to Greek originals to provide an accurate gauge of Roman social practice.

<sup>15</sup> Dixon 1988: 109–111.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Tac. *Dial.* 29, where it is the laxity of the carers looking after contemporary children that Messala criticises, rather than the fact that servants were employed to look after the child at all. A dutiful mother would ensure that trustworthy, upstanding servants undertook childcare, not actually conduct their duties for them.

and Atia, indicates that even in the senatorial class, women did not spend as much time with their children as male moralists advocated.<sup>17</sup>

Roman children would thus have been accustomed to seeing less of their mothers than might seem usual to modern eyes; the frequency of divorce and remarriage in the late Republic, as well as the possibility of maternal death in childbirth, would have added to this situation.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, this did not lessen the intrinsic importance of the maternal relationship to contemporary eyes, despite the fact that many children must have grown up in the care of a senior female relation, an aunt or grandmother. After Atia's marriage to Philippus,<sup>19</sup> Julia, his maternal grandmother, reared Octavian<sup>20</sup> until her death in 51, at which point he rejoined his mother and her second husband. Veyne<sup>21</sup> argues that there was a distinction in the attitude expected of grandparents from the two sides of the family, in that greater leniency was allowed to the mother's relations. This does not accord with the view that *indulgentia* (a servile trait) was likely to spoil a child and therefore disapproved of; it is hardly likely that Atia's mother would have been less inclined to parental probity than her daughter.

In Rome, widowhood enhanced a mother's status as the sole parent responsible for childrearing, particularly if she did not remarry. Yet, the time-hallowed image of the *univira* was at odds with the late Republican reality, in which remarriage after divorce or the death of a

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<sup>17</sup> Dixon 1988: 111.

<sup>18</sup> Dixon 1988: 133; Rawson 2003: 226-7. The reasons for this are too thoroughly described by other scholars to go into detail here – suffice it to say that the tendency for a significant age differential between spouses at marriage, coupled with the risk to young wives posed by childbirth, meant that there was a significant chance that a child might lose one or both parents before reaching puberty. Saller (1984), Shaw (1987) and Rawson (1991) are authoritative works on this issue. The paradox is that Romans continued to idealize the lifelong marriage ended only by the death of one spouse, as exemplified by the so-called *Laudatio Turiae*. That such cases were probably uncommon by the late Republic is pointed out by Corbier (1991: 49), who wryly notes '... the exceptionally long union of Augustus and Livia (fifty-two years), which was able to provide Rome with the first pervasive ideal of an imperial couple, only came about as a result of a preceding double divorce.'

<sup>19</sup> c. 57 BC (Gray-Fow 1988: 186).

<sup>20</sup> *Bíos Kaiράτος* § III.5.

<sup>21</sup> Veyne 1987: 15-16: 'A paternal grandmother's duty was to be strict, whereas the role of the maternal grandmother was one of complete indulgence.'

husband was common.<sup>22</sup> Atia's reputation as an ideal mother was not negatively affected by her remarriage because Philippus was held to be a model stepfather to Octavian, as Nicolaus takes pains to stress (*Bíos Kaisaros* §§ III.5-6 and IV.7).<sup>23</sup> The respected status of the widowed mother meant that her wishes carried greater weight than did those of her later spouse, (who had no legal authority over her children), or even her male agnatic relations.<sup>24</sup> An illustration of this relevant to the *Bíos Kaisaros* is the fact that even Caesar did not attempt to change his niece's opinion, when she scotched Octavian's desire to accompany him on his Libyan campaign in 46 (§ VI.14).

Both law and time-honoured custom worked to enshrine the unassailable authority of the Roman father, and guarantee deferential obedience into adulthood; such *pietas* was a life-long duty. A mother's position was more tenuous; her authority stemmed ultimately from the respect her children owed her, rather than from a legal sanction like that provided by *patria potestas*.<sup>25</sup> However, the weight of custom was not to be underestimated. Disregarding a mother's wishes could incur general censure,<sup>26</sup> but it was possible to rebel against her authority and for the relationship to remain largely unaffected, as is shown by the example of Octavian and Atia.<sup>27</sup>

Mothers continued to exert their influence over their adult sons through a combination of force of personality, a certain amount of bullying and occasional pleading; they dispensed advice and

<sup>22</sup> Dixon 1992: 32-33: 'Roman republican society, in which widows and divorcées normally remarried, continued to idealize the woman who married only once.'

<sup>23</sup> III.5: *παρὰ δὴ τῷ Φιλίππῳ ὁ Καῖσαρ ὡς παρὰ πατρὶ τρεφόμενος*. III.6: *ἐφειστήκει δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ καὶ ὁ ταύτης ἀνὴρ Φίλιππος*.

<sup>24</sup> Dixon 1988: 173; Gray-Fow 1988: 185-6: a stepfather's position highlighted 'the distinction between authority and influence.'

<sup>25</sup> Dixon 1988: 172.

<sup>26</sup> Tiberius' neglect of Livia in her old age was strongly disapproved of. (cf. Suet. *Tib.* 50.2-51).

<sup>27</sup> Discussed in detail below. There is lamentably very little evidence for their relationship after Octavian raised Caesar's veterans in Campania, since the *Bíos Kaisaros* breaks off immediately thereafter; however, there is the view of Suetonius, who noted (*DA* 61.2): *Utrique [Atia and Octavia] cum praecipua officia vivae praestitisset, etiam defunctae honores maximos tribuit*.

demanded respect in return.<sup>28</sup> Their respected status in Roman society was based on a number of factors – their ancestral lineage, personal wealth, their partnership with the son’s father as educator and moral censor, or, conversely, their widowed status.<sup>29</sup> What appears somewhat astonishing to modern eyes, is that most Roman sons appeared to accept their mother’s right to dictate to them a certain amount, even when they did not wish it.<sup>30</sup> Senatorial sons expected their mothers to be supportive of their ambitions, yet not to overstep the bounds of what was regarded as acceptable womanly interference, lest it lead to conflict and a fall from grace.<sup>31</sup> Such rejection could reveal the inherent weakness of her position, and careful mothers – like Atia – knew how to walk the fine line between active support and interference.

Although mothers were occasionally characterised as worrying about their adult sons (the *anxia mater*), particularly those absent on military service,<sup>32</sup> the general picture that emerges of the Roman mother is of a redoubtable, respected figure who was expected to take an active interest in the upbringing and education of her young son, and aid, through her influence, advice and reputation, the career of her adult son. In return, the son was expected to defer to her wishes and treat her with due *pietas*.

As one might expect, the extracts dealing with Atia fall mainly in the *Ἀγωγή*-section of the *Βίος Καιράτος* from the *De Virtutibus* manuscript, from the period when Octavian is younger and still subject to his mother’s control. Once Caesar is introduced into the text, her parental influence,

<sup>28</sup> That women could even dispense advice and lend support in political situations is shown by the example of Servilia, who presided over the family *consilium* at Antium on 8<sup>th</sup> June 44 (Cic. *Att.* 15.11).

<sup>29</sup> Dixon 1988: 188; Rawson 2003: 234.

<sup>30</sup> A notable example is M. Antonius’ giving in to his mother Julia’s demand that he spare her brother, Lucius Caesar, during the proscriptions (Plut. *Ant.* 19.3; Appian *B.Civ.* 4.12.37).

<sup>31</sup> Livia and the younger Agrippina are classic examples of austere, ambitious mothers devoted to the advancement of their sons. The main difference between them is that Livia was more adept at observing propriety, whereas Agrippina’s arrogance went too far. Nero’s assertion of his independence from his mother was approved of; however, his lack of respect towards her and the eventual matricide was, obviously, not (Dixon 1988: 180).

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Horace *Carm.* 4.5.9, 13-14, Ovid *Rem. Am.* 547-8 and Seneca *Marc.* 24.2.

whilst still acknowledged as important, is portrayed as secondary to the mentoring role provided by Octavian's 'true' father. Little insight is given into her character beyond the stern, two-dimensional ideal-archetype outlined above. By contrast, when dealing with later events in Octavian's life (in the *de Insidiis* manuscript), Nicolaus presents a somewhat softer picture of a concerned parent. Her presentation is not as uniform as in the earlier sections, and allows for some depth of characterization as Nicolaus charts the shift in the relationship between Atia and her increasingly assertive son.

Our first view of Atia shows her working in partnership with Philippus to oversee Octavian's early education and daily activities:

(III.5) ἀποθανούσης δ' αὐτῶι τῆς τηδῆς, παρὰ τῆι μητρὶ ἐτρέφετο Ἀτία καὶ τῶι ταύτης ἀνδρὶ Φιλίππῳ Λευκίῳ, ὃς ἦν ἀπόγονος τῶν τὸν Μακεδόνα Φίλιππον κεχειρωμένων.<sup>33</sup> παρὰ δὲ τῶι Φιλίππῳ ὁ Καῖσαρ ὡς παρὰ πατρὶ τρεφόμενος ... (6) ἐφειστήκει δὲ αὐτῶι καὶ ἡ μήτηρ καὶ ὁ ταύτης ἀνὴρ Φίλιππος ἀνὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν πυνθανόμενοι παρὰ τῶν διδασκάλων τε καὶ ἐπιμελητῶν, οὓς παρακατέστησαν τῶι παιδί, ὃ τι πράξειεν ἢ ὅποι πορευεῖν ἢ ὅπως διημερεύσειεν τὰς τε διατριβὰς μεθ' ὧν ποιήσαιτο.

(IV.7) ἐν δὲ τῶι κατασχόντι ταραχῶι τὴν πόλιν ὑπεκπέμπει ἢ τε μήτηρ Ἀτία καὶ Φίλιππος Καίσαρα εἰς τι τῶν πατρῶϊων χωρίων.

(III.5) *After the death of his grandmother, Octavian was brought up by his mother, Atia, and her husband, Lucius Philippus, who was a descendent of those who had defeated Philip of Macedon. Octavian was reared at Philippus' house as if at his father's .... (6) Both his mother and her husband Philippus looked after him. Each day they enquired from the teachers and attendants they had appointed for the boy, what he had done, where he had been, and how and with whom he had spent the whole day.*

(IV.7) *When the city was engulfed by disorder [the Civil War], his mother Atia and Philippus sent Octavian away to one of his father's estates.*

<sup>33</sup> Nicolaus errs here – it was not Philip V, but his son Perseus, who was defeated by Q. Marcius Philippus. This may be a textual error, or it could be that Nicolaus was misinformed; he may have assumed the *cognomen* Philippus implied victory over an eponymous Macedonian, and Livy (39.48; 40-2-3) indicates that Quintus Philippus was actually in Macedonia while Philip V was alive (Hall 1923: 77 n. 3.3).

In each instance where Atia is directly mentioned, Philippus is also referred to.<sup>34</sup> Nicolaus stresses Philippus' partnership with his wife in supervising her son's education, but it is surprising that he takes such pains to show that Philippus was an attentive, even paternal, stepfather to the young boy.<sup>35</sup> In this way, Nicolaus assures the reader that Octavian had not been unduly handicapped by the loss of his natural father at such a young age: *παρὰ δὴ τῷ Φιλίππῳ ὁ Καῖσαρ ὡς πατὴρ τρεφόμενος*; and it is to his paternal estate that his parents send him upon the outbreak of the Civil War. Naturally, this was now his own estate; Philippus, by contrast with the invidious guardians who had squandered his inheritance in § II.3, has not attempted to separate his young step-son from his landed inheritance.

Yet, despite the care taken with his upbringing and schooling, Nicolaus makes clear that Philippus is *not* his father. Caesar is introduced at § VI.14 to fill that role, and from that point Octavian abandons private schooling and begins his *tirocinium*, as the necessary preparation for a public career. Philippus may have supported his wife in ensuring that Octavian was reared in a firmly traditional fashion, but, as Nicolaus describes it, it was Caesar who truly fostered his development into the ruler he would become.<sup>36</sup>

Part of Philippus' presentation may be explained by the Roman ambivalence towards step-parents. The relatively high incidence of remarriage in the Late Republic and early empire means that 'blended' families were common.<sup>37</sup> Stepmothers were particularly vilified,<sup>38</sup> almost

<sup>34</sup> One might compare their diligent supervision with Augustus' own recorded interest in his grandsons' education – Suet. *DA* 64.2-3. Compare also Sen. *Marc.* 24.2: *Numquam e conspectus tuo recessit; sub oculis tuis studia formavit...*

<sup>35</sup> Gray-Fow (1988: 187): 'As far as we can tell, relations between the boy Octavius and his stepfather were uniformly good ... Although there may be dispute about what advice, exactly, Philippus gave to Octavian immediately after Caesar's murder, what is clear is that Octavius was willing to listen to his stepfather's advice, which suggests that he was used to doing this, and had found it useful before.'

<sup>36</sup> Note, however, Nicolaus' silence at this point on Caesar's role in Octavian's appointment to both his pontificate and his temporary position as *praefectus urbi* during the Latin Festival; discussed further below.

<sup>37</sup> Bradley 1991: 83.

as a *topos*, but stepfathers seem, at worst, to have attracted unease, rather than the same level of extreme antipathy.<sup>39</sup> Part of this attitude may be due to the position stepfathers occupied with regard to their wife's children. In marked contrast to the blanket powers afforded by *patria potestas*, a stepfather had no legal rights over his wife's children at all. His influence with them was purely through his personal status as husband of their mother; a *vitricus* might advise, but he could never compel, as a *pater* would.<sup>40</sup> Adolescent young men who were *sui iuris* must have been tempted to test their independent status by rebelling from a step-father's influence; the evidence of Ciceronian invective would seem to indicate that this may even have been encouraged. Cicero attacked Antony in his *Philippics* for not taking his *avunculus*, L. Julius Caesar, as his role model, instead of his disgraced stepfather, P. Cornelius Lentulus Sura.<sup>41</sup> In situations where a deceased father left an under-age heir, a male blood relation of the mother was considered a preferable role model to that of a stepfather.<sup>42</sup>

Notwithstanding Atia's marriage to the eminently respectable Philippus, Caesar was to be preferred to Octavian's stepfather as the role model who would introduce Octavian into the adult world of politics and warfare. Velleius later felt the need to stress Caesar's paternal love for his young relative as explaining why Philippus had taken a lesser role in his upbringing:

*Quem C. Caesar, maior eius avunculus, educatum apud Philippum vitricum dilexit ut suum...*<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The 'wicked stepmother' was a stock figure of oratory and satire: Cicero alleged that Sasia inveigled Oppianicus to murder his children (*Clu.* 26-7), and Juvenal (6.626-7) asserted that stepmothers frequently attempted to poison their stepchildren. Other examples abound: Livia's hatred of Agrippa Postumus is explained as *novercalia odia* (*Tac. Ann.* 1.6). Suffice it here to say that it was a pervasive literary stereotype. P. Watson, *Ancient Stepmothers: Myth Misogyny and Reality* (Leiden, 1995).

<sup>39</sup> According to Rawson (2003: 238), 'Stepfathers did not share this bad reputation'; *contra* Dixon (1988: 156), 'Stepfathers also had a dubious reputation.'

<sup>40</sup> Hallett 1984: 255; Dixon 1988: 180.

<sup>41</sup> Cicero *Phil.* 2.6.14: *Hunc tu cum auctorem et praeceptorem omnium consiliorum totiusque vitae debuisses habere, vitrici te similem quam avunculi maluisti.* Although the context of this statement and his well-known attitude towards the subject should be borne in mind, it is still likely that Cicero was exploiting an established social prejudice for his rhetorical purpose.

<sup>42</sup> Rawson 2003: 229-30. Cf. Vell. 2.60.2: *maluitque avunculo et Caesari de se quam vitrico credere ...*

<sup>43</sup> Vell. 2.59.3.

*Avunculi* generally appear to have been looked to as role models and protectors of their sister's orphaned children, although this was more a socially approved as opposed to legally recognized position; the connotations of the term were overwhelmingly positive.<sup>44</sup>

In fact, once Caesar is introduced into the narrative, Philippus ceases to have an active role in Octavian's life. In the corrupted chapter XIII, he is listed as one of three hosts considered suitable for Octavian to dine with earlier than usual; yet here Philippus is outshone by Marcellus, Octavian's brother-in-law, who comes in for sudden praise:

(XIII.28) οὐδὲ μέντοι δειπνεῖν πρὸ δεκάτης ὥρας ἔξω Καίσαρος ἢ Φιλίππου ἢ τοῦ γήμαντος αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀδελφὴν Μαρκέλλου, ἀνδρὸς σωφρονεστάτου καὶ κατ' εὐγένειαν ἀρίστου Ῥωμαίων.

(XIII.28) ... nor to dine before the tenth hour, except with Caesar, Philippus, or Marcellus, his sister's husband, a man pre-eminent amongst the Romans for his temperance and noble ancestry.

While Philippus' inclusion indicates Nicolaus' indirect acclaim, Marcellus is singled out for acclaim due to his position as husband of the adored Octavia.<sup>45</sup> Aside from a brief mention at § XV.34, where Octavian *κατάγει πλησίον τῆς Φιλίππου οἰκίας καὶ τῆς μητρὸς*, Philippus' only further role in the text is to have his advice rejected twice (§§ XVIII.53 and XXX.126), signifying Octavian's final renunciation of childhood. On the whole, Philippus is overshadowed in the text by Atia.

<sup>44</sup> Rawson: 2003: 241-2; Hallett 1984: 154-155 and 308-309.

<sup>45</sup> It is not a coincidence that Nicolaus chooses to describe the elder Marcellus as *σωφρονεστάτος* – it can be assumed that the term has Peripatetic overtones. Nicolaus' eulogy here of Marcellus senior might possibly serve as a prelude to later panegyric of the as-yet unborn nephew and son-in-law, although any mention of him at this early point in Octavian's life would not be apposite. Naturally, it is tempting to conjecture that Nicolaus dealt with the events of 23, (assuming that the *Bíos Kaísaros* was a full-length biography), as both the near-fatal illness suffered by his protagonist and the death of his successor would provide ample material for the sort of pathetic, dramatic scenes he evidently relished. However, this remains speculation, and, as with so much about the *Bíos Kaísaros*, we can only lament what may have been.

In § IV.10 she continues to enforce her authority over Octavian despite his newly adult status, which was signified by his taking of the *toga virilis* and admission to the pontificate:

(IV.10) *καίπερ δὲ κατὰ νόμον εἰς ἄνδρας ἐγγεγραμμένον διεκώλυεν ἡ μήτηρ ἔξω τῆς αὐλείου θύρας χωρεῖν, πλὴν ὅπῃ καὶ πρότερον, ὅτε παῖς ἦν, ἐφοίτα, δίαίτῃν τε τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχειν ἐπηνάγκαζε κοιτάζεσθαι τε ἔνθα καὶ πρότερον ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ δωματίῳ. νόμῳ τε μόνον ἀνὴρ ἦν, τὰ δ' ἄλλα παιδικῶς ἐπεστατεῖτο.*

(IV.10) *Although he was registered as a man by law, his mother prevented him from leaving the house except when he had previously, when he was a child, and she compelled him to retain the same lifestyle and to sleep in the same room as before. He was an adult only by law; in all other respects, he was looked after like a child.*

Nicolaus uses words with a noticeably forceful sense (*διεκώλυεν*, *ἐπηνάγκαζε*) to further the impression of Atia as a formidable parent. The astonishing respect Octavian has for his mother is highlighted by his continued compliance, even to the point of disregarding his right to insist on treatment commensurate with his new status – Nicolaus twice uses *νόμος* to emphasize the difference between his legal status and the constrained reality of his life. That Nicolaus approves of her draconian approach is evident:

(V.12) *ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ἡ μήτηρ ἀπήρκεν αὐτοῦ φυλάττουσα καὶ οὐδαμῶσε μεδιῖσα, τὰ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ἤδη ἔννους ὢν, ἅτε εἰς τοῦμπροσθεν τῆς ἡλικίας προῖων.*

(V.12) *Not only did his mother restrain him, by chaperoning him and letting him go nowhere, but also he himself was already becoming shrewd, since he was older than before.*

Her watchfulness (*φυλάττουσα*) had ultimately protected her son from sexual misadventure, guarding him from the crazed (*ἐκμήνας*) women who were actively intriguing to have him – *ἐπιβουλεύομενος δὲ παρ' αὐτῶν*. Her constant vigilance is gradually rewarded and mirrored by Octavian's developing sense of self-discipline as he matures.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> There are similarities between the depiction of Octavian's early life in these chapters and that of the young Metilius in Seneca's *Marc.* 24.1, particularly the emphasis on the son's ready obedience to his mother, and his

Octavian again does not gainsay her at § VI.14, where he allows her to scupper his first opportunity to accompany Caesar on campaign to Libya in 47. There is a fascinating contrast between Atia's absolute (and unexplained) opposition to the idea, and the more sympathetic picture of Caesar, who accepts Atia's position because of the affection (ὑπ' εὐνοίας) he feels for his great-nephew, and from his concern for the delicate youth's health.<sup>47</sup>

(VI.14) ἐπεὶ ἤσθητο ἐναντιομένην Ἀτίαν τὴν μητέρα, οὐδὲν ἀντειπὼν ἠρέμα εἶχε. (15) δῆλος δ' ἦν καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Καῖσαρ ὑπ' εὐνοίας οὐδέπω βουλόμενος αὐτὸν στρατεύεσθαι...

(VI.14) When he understood that Atia, his mother, was opposed to it, he said nothing in response and remained quiet. (15) It was clear that Caesar, out of fondness for him, did not yet wish him to go to war...

Two further instances contribute to the impression of her as a dauntless and respected guardian; the first (Octavian's preparations to join Caesar on campaign) testifies to her courage, the second (the incident with the Pseudo-Marius) to her unswerving integrity. When Octavian set off to meet Caesar in Spain, he rejected many offers from people wishing to accompany him on the long, dangerous journey – Atia amongst them:

(X.22) πολλῶν δ' αὐτῷ συνεκδημεῖν σπουδαζόντων διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ ἐλπίδος, πάντα παρῳσάμενος καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτήν ...

(X.22) Many eagerly wished to accompany him, due to the great expectations there were of him, but he rejected all of them, including his mother herself ...

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tendency to spend all his available time with her: *Pupillus relictus sub tutorum cura usque ad quartum decimum annum fuit, sub matris tutela semper. Cum haberet suos penates, relinquere tuos noluit et in materno contubernio, cum vix paternum liberi ferant, perserveravit.* Cf. *Bίος Καίσαρος* § XV.34, where, even after Octavian has moved into his own apartment, he continues to spend time with his mother and Philippus: ὡς δ' ἤκεν εἰς Ῥώμην, κατάγει πλησίον τῆς Φιλίππου οἰκίας καὶ τῆς μητρὸς καὶ τὴν διαίταν εἶχε σὺν ἐκείνοις, καὶ οὐκ ἄνευ τούτων διήγεν.

<sup>47</sup> See below on Caesar. Cf. *Sen. Marc.* 24.2, where it is the son who willingly forgoes military service in order to stay with his mother: *Adulescens statura, pulchritudine, certo corporis robore castris natus militiam recusavit, ne a te discederet.* Octavian did, however, after his hopes were disappointed at this time, cut short his time with Caesar in Spain (§ XIV.31) so that he might return to his mother.

It is notable, and impressive, that she was willing to undertake a hazardous journey to rendezvous with an army in an active theatre of war.<sup>48</sup> Although it seems as though Octavian here begins to assert his independence from her, his rejection of her offer is described as merely one of many he had received, and was turned down solely in order that he might travel with the utmost celerity. His dutiful attitude towards her in fact continued, for, after having covered himself with glory as part of Caesar's entourage at Carthago Nova (§ XII.26-27), he asked Caesar for leave to return home and visit his mother (§ XIV.31). Apparently, this was considered a valid enough reason for him to interrupt his military education, as permission was granted.

The value placed on her judgment is revealed during the episode with the Pseudo-Marius (§ XIV.32-33), as her attitude was instrumental in her son's handling of the incident. Nicolaus repeatedly uses quasi-legalistic terminology – such as *ἐγγραφή*, *συμμαρτυρέω* – to give the incident the overtones of a formal *supplicatio*, but Nicolaus in effect subverts this characterisation in order to demonstrate the falseness of the Pseudo-Marius' claim.<sup>49</sup> The fact that she could not be persuaded to vouch for the Pseudo-Marius was a key factor in Octavian's dilemma, since her opinion was obviously seen by him as being of greater worth than those of the unnamed *τινας γυναῖκας ... τῶν Καίσαρος, αἱ ἑμαρτύρουν αὐτῷ τὴν εὐγένειαν*.

<sup>48</sup> Some of the dangers Octavian encountered are described by Nicolaus at § XI.24, once he was reunited with Caesar at Calpia: ... *ἐκ πολλῶν πολεμίων καὶ λησθηγίων περισσεωσμένον ὄρῳ ἀδοκίμως*. The reference to pirates may be intended to recall Caesar's famous brush with them (Suet. *DJ* 4.2). Suetonius' version of the journey, also favourable, is at *DA* 8.1.

<sup>49</sup> Meijer (1986: 115) argues that Caesar's 'reserve' towards the Pseudo-Marius (by expelling him from Italy, rather than executing him) indicates that there might have been some merit in the claim to kinship with the great Marius. This does not take into account the fact that summarily executing him would have alienated the *plebs*, which Caesar was always careful to avoid doing. Meijer further argues (117) that Caesar never gave an actual opinion as to the validity of the Pseudo-Marius' claim, and interprets Nicolaus' statement at § XIV.32 as that the *Atiae* 'refused to give any opinion whatsoever'. This is not, in my opinion, an adequate interpretation of *καταψεύσασθαι* – to perjure, or make a false statement – and thus has a stronger implication than simply refraining from speaking. In the event, both Caesar's and Antony's actions indicate that the fellow was regarded as at best, a nuisance, and at worst, a danger to public order; the ancient sources concur that he was generally regarded as a fraud. Cf. ch. 3 p. 55 n. 52.

(XIV.32) οὔτε μὴν Ἀτίαν ἔπεισεν οὔτε τὴν ταύτης ἀδελφὴν καταψεύσασθαι τοῦ σφετέρου οἴκου ...

(33) Καῖσαρ δ' ἐν ἀπορίᾳ δεινῇ γενόμενος ἐσκόπει τί χρὴ ποιεῖν· τό τε γὰρ ἀσπάζεσθαι ὡς συγγενῆ, ὃν οὐκ ᾔδει ὅπόθεν εἶη οὐδ' ἡ μήτηρ αὐτῷ συνεμαρτύρει, χαλεπὸν ἦν.

(XIV.32) Neither Atia nor her sister could be persuaded to fabricate lies about their family

... (33) Octavian was in an awful predicament, and he began to contemplate what he must do; for, to greet as a relation one whose origin he did not know, and for whom his mother would not testify, was a difficult matter.

Thus far, Nicolaus has presented Atia as a paragon of Roman maternal virtue.<sup>50</sup> She educated and reared her son to prepare him for his tutelage under Caesar, and in all respects she is shown to be a worthy parent of the future *Princeps*. Philippus is also favourably drawn, since it suited Nicolaus' encomiastic purpose to present Octavian's early years in the best possible light. Philippus' position as stepfather, however, meant that his paternal role was vulnerable to usurpation by Caesar, a blood relation. Nothing in his parents' approach to raising him has been remotely objectionable, and therefore Octavian has had no reason to rebel against their stringent control.

The final chapter of the *Ἀγωγή*, (§ XV), provides further evidence for Octavian's sober, obedient nature. Although he now lives on his own, he is described as living near (*πλησίον*) to his mother and Philippus, and spending the majority of his time with them. By the late Republic it appears to have been fairly usual for young men to live in their own apartments after coming of age.<sup>51</sup> The fact that Nicolaus tells us that Octavian continued to live with his mother and Philippus for some time after assuming the *toga virilis* (§ IV.10) – something in the region of three years, judging from the approximate date of his admission to the patriciate<sup>52</sup> – gives the impression

<sup>50</sup> Toher 2003a: 148.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Cicero *Cael.* 18.

<sup>52</sup> Octavian was admitted to the patriciate in § XV, by means of the tribunician *lex Cassia de plebeis in patricios adlegendis* (Cic. *Phil.* 3.23). Also mentioned by Suet. *DA* 2; Dio 43.47.3 and 45.2.7

that this was commendable but unusual. It may have been usual for young men to live apart from their parents, but it was evidently seen as more desirable for them to live at home. If they were still subject to paternal *potestas*, their lives would have been subject to a measure of dependence. For the young teenage man who was, like Octavian, both legally adult and independent, the opportunity for dissolute living and unrestrained spending of their patrimony must have been enormously tempting. That Octavian was so markedly restrained must have occasioned pleasant surprise and extravagant approval from worried elders.

Once Octavian receives news from his mother of Caesar's assassination at § XVI.38, there is a shift in how the 'young Caesar' relates to his parents. Since he takes upon himself the mantle of Caesar's son and successor, his duty to avenge his 'father' will come into conflict with what his mother and her husband advise him to do. Although they are initially presented as counselors and advisors, Nicolaus shows that Octavian has grown beyond the need for their approval, and in the end he must respectfully distance himself from them in order to show the deepest possible filial loyalty to Julius Caesar.<sup>53</sup>

Atia informs her son of Caesar's murder in a brief, yet dramatic, letter:

(XVI.38) ... ἦκεν ἐκ τῆς πατρίδος πεμφθεὶς ὑπὸ τῆς μητρὸς ὡς αὐτὸν ἀπελεύθερος τεταραγμένος καὶ πολλῆς ἀθυμίας μεστός, ἐπιστολὴν κομίζων, ἐν ἣι ἐγεγραπτο ὡς Καῖσαρ μὲν ἐν τῇ συγκλήτῳ ἀποθάνοι ὑπὸ τῶν περὶ Κάσσιον καὶ Βροῦτον. ἠξίου δὲ τὸν παῖδα ἐπανελθεῖν ὡς αὐτήν· ἀγνοεῖν γὰρ ἔφη καὐτὴ τὰ πρὸ τοῦδε ἐσόμενα· δεῖν δὲ ἤδη ἄνδρα γίνεσθαι καὶ γνώμη τε ἅ χρῆ φρονεῖν καὶ ἔργῳ πράττειν ἐπόμενον τῇ τύχῃ τε καὶ τοῖς καιροῖς. τοιαῦτα ἐδήλου τὰ παρὰ τῆς μητρὸς γράμματα.

(XVI.38) *A freedman sent by his mother arrived from home filled with tremendous agitation and fear, bearing a letter in which it was written that Caesar had been slain in the Senate-*

<sup>53</sup> As Toher argues (2003a: 148-9), Nicolaus initially presents Atia according to the well-known Roman literary *topos*; from the point where Octavian begins to assert his independence of his parents, he in effect 'reverses the Roman motif, and his account of Octavian's development is infused with very old themes from the Greek biographical and larger literary tradition.'

*House by Brutus and Cassius, and their accomplices. She thought it right that her son come home to her; for she could not see what the results of this event would be. Now he must become a man; consider what is necessary and execute his design, following fortune and opportunity. These things his mother's letter made plain.*

The dramatic introduction of the letter is signalled by the distressed behaviour of the freedman; his impression (§ XVI.39) of the situation in Rome immediately after the Ides was one of utter terror and confusion, and he describes the great danger facing the relatives of the deceased man from the conspirators – μέγα<ν> δ' εἶναι τὸν κίνδυνον τοῖς τοῦ ἀνηρημένου συγγενέσι ... οἱ τοὺς Καίσαρος ἐλαύνουσί τε καὶ ἀναιροῦσι. He further advises that they evaluate how they might best escape danger (διαφεύξεται). The freedman's entire focus is on the personal, physical danger to the members of the *domus Iulia*; his thoughts are only of reaction to the situation, and his inferior position as *libertus* means that he is not equipped to provide Octavian with information on how to actually avoid danger – he can merely state the obvious.

Atia's nervous disposition is revealed in the letter, although her fears are nowhere near the level of hysterical agitation presented by the freedman, and in fact are caused more by the uncertainty of the situation (ἀγνοεῖν γὰρ ἔφη καὶ τὴ τὰ πὸ τοῦδε ἐσόμενα) than any real apprehension of danger at this point, as his are. Caution and circumspection are her watchwords; although she advises him to be decisive, he should not act precipitously, without having first ascertained the potential pitfalls. Her advice is, like the freedman's, lacking in specifics, aside from the plea to return to her; for the first time she does not advocate a particular course of action, but instead gives him her implicit permission to consider the alternatives on his own.

Here we begin to see her quite differently from the stern figure presented thus far; she is anxious for her son's safety, but equally concerned that he should be able to take some advantage from the situation. In this respect she embodies the proud mother of a Roman *nobilis*.

Her exhortation to him to become the man he had, in fact, legally been for some time, is her admission that he must at last move beyond the limited world to which she had restricted him, and enter the domain of the elite male citizen. It is also an acknowledgement that the death of his mentor has accelerated his entry into true adulthood, and that only by acting as a man will he be able to ensure his own safety. Nicolaus is, in fact, preparing the reader for the point where her son will completely break away from all maternal influence. Nevertheless, her advice here is sound,<sup>54</sup> and was no doubt welcomed by her son; he would have appreciated the urgency of her call to return to the centre of the action.

The key passage for understanding Nicolaus' approach to his presentation of Atia and Philippus at this stage of Octavian's career is at § XVIII.52-54, which contains a lengthy discussion of Octavian's reaction to news of events leading up to Caesar's funeral and of his inheritance, as well more advice from his mother and Philippus. In this section the contrast between the *severa mater* of the *Ἀγωγή* and the *anxia mater* of the 'Caesar Extract' is most pronounced; this chapter is also one of two sections (the other being § XXXI.130-132) that have a close bearing on the depiction of Octavian and the development of his character.

(XVIII.52) ἦκε δ' αὐτῷ καὶ παρὰ τῆς μητρὸς ἐπιστολή. ἐν ἣι ἐγγέγραπτο δέησις ἰσχυρὰ ὡς τάχιστα ἀφικέσθαι καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἐκεῖνη τε ἀποδοῦναι καὶ τῷ σύμπαντι οἴκῳ, ὡς μήτις ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἔξωθεν ἐπιβουλὴ συσταίη παιῖδα Καίσαρος ἀναδεδειγμένον. ἐδήλου δ' ὅμοια τοῖς πρότερον ἠγγελημένοις, καὶ ὡς ἐπὶ τοὺς περὶ Βροῦτον καὶ Κάσσιον ἐγγήγερται ὁ πᾶς δῆμος δυσανασχετῶν ἃ δράσειαν.

(53) ἐπέστειλε δ' αὐτῷ καὶ ὁ πατριωὸς Φίλιππος δεόμενος μὴ προσελθεῖν τῆι Καίσαρος κληρονομίᾳ, φυλάσασθαι δὲ καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦνομα, δι' ἃ πάθοι κείνος, ζῆν δ' ἀπραγμόνως καὶ ἀσφαλῶς. ὁ δὲ Καῖσαρ ἦιδε μὲν ὑπ' εὐνοίας ταῦτα παραινοῦντα, ἐγίνωσκε δὲ τάναντία. ὁ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα ἐφρόνει τε καὶ τὸν Φίλιππον γράφων ἀνεδίδασκεν οὐ μάλα πειθόμενον.

(54) Ἀτία δὲ ἡ μήτηρ τὸ μὲν εὐκλεές τῆς τύχης καὶ τὸ μέγεθος τῆς δυναστείας ἔχαιρεν ὀρῶσα περιεληλυθὸς τῷ ἑαυτῆς παιδί, εἰδυῖα δὲ μεστὸν τὸ πρᾶγμα φόβων τε καὶ κινδύνων, καὶ ἅμα ἑωρακυῖα Καίσαρα τὸν ἑαυτῆς δεῖον οἶα πάθοι, οὐ πάνυ προσίετο πάλιν· ἐώικει δὲ μεταξὺ ἀμφοτέρων εἶναι τῶν γνωμῶν, τῆς δὲ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς Φιλίππου καὶ τοῦ υἱέος. καὶ ἡ μὲν διὰ τοῦτο ἐν φροντίσι μυριάς

<sup>54</sup> Dixon 1988: 180: 'Nicolaus represented her earlier cautions as the thoughtful counsel of an elder.'

ἦν, τότε μὲν ἀνιωμένη, ἐπειδὴν τοὺς ἡρτημένους ἀριθμῆται κινδύνους τῶν συμπάντων ἄρχειν ἀξιοῦντι, το<τέ> δ' ἐπαιρομένη, ἐπειδὴν τὸ μέγεθος τῆς ἐξουσίας τε καὶ τιμῆς λογίζηται. διὸ ἀποτρέπειν μὲν τὸν παῖδα οὐκ ἐτόλμα μεγάλοις ἐγχειροῦντα καὶ ἐπὶ δικαίαν ἄμυναν ὠρμημένον, οὐ μὴν δὴ οὐδὲ συμπαρομοῦν διὰ τὸ ἄδηλον τοῦ δαίμονος· συνεχώρει δ' ὅμως τοῦνομα ἔχειν τὸ Καίσαρος, καὶ αὐτὴ πρώτη συνέπαινος ἦν.

(XVIII.52) *A letter came from his mother, in which was written a powerful entreaty to return as quickly as possible, and to restore himself both to her and the entire family, in order that no outsiders could contrive a plot against him, since he had been declared Caesar's son. She made clear similar things to those reported previously, and also said that the whole people were aroused against the faction of Brutus and Cassius, and could not bear what they had done.*

(53) *His stepfather, Philippus, also sent him a letter, asking him not to take up Caesar's legacy, but to keep his own name, and, because of what had befallen that man, to live safely, free from state affairs. Octavian knew that he was urging this out of kindness, but he thought the opposite. ... This is what he thought, writing as such to Philippus, though he did not convince him.*

(54) *His mother Atia rejoiced when she saw the excellent repute of good fortune and the magnitude of the power that had come to her son; but, knowing that the undertaking was fraught with fears and dangers, and at the same time, having seen what had befallen her uncle Caesar, she did not altogether approve again. Her opinion appeared to be between those of her husband Philippus and her son. And because of this she had a myriad of worries; at one moment distressed, when she calculated the attendant dangers awaiting one aiming for supreme power; at another exultant, when she reckoned the extent of those powers and honours. Because of this she did not dare to dissuade her son who was attempting great undertakings, and was eager for just retribution, but nor did she join in urging him on, because of the inscrutability of the divine. Nevertheless, she agreed to his assuming the name of Caesar, and she herself was the first to approve it.*

The intimacy of this portrait of Octavian's mother suggests that Nicolaus was working from the *Princeps'* own memoirs. Although Atia's fear for her son is strongly evident here, which fits the stereotypical image of the *anxia mater* who worries over her adult son, it is striking that she is, nonetheless, still a source of political advice. Her location in Rome during these events was

immensely useful to her son, as her on-the-spot appraisal of the popular mood in Rome, the negative reaction of the mob to the Liberators, and the urgency of her letter, were of critical importance to Octavian's decision to return to the city post-haste. Although at Lupiae (§ XVII.48-50) he encountered eyewitnesses who were able to present a more detailed version of events in the capital, they were only able to give him information about events leading up to about the 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, and his mother's next letter was therefore more recent.<sup>55</sup> It is significant that, despite access to more informants once he arrived in Italy, he still waited for corroborating information from his mother before making a move to Brundisium (§ XVIII.51). That she was in Rome is evident from Appian<sup>56</sup> and is supported by Nicolaus, since at § XVII.48 she was directed by provisions in Caesar's will to supervise the preparations for his funeral.<sup>57</sup>

It is noteworthy that, despite her fears for her son's life, she enjoins him to return to her and the family *in Rome*, so that he would be safe from plotters and (presumably) assassins. Despite the dangerously agitated atmosphere in the city after the Ides, she still considered the safest place for Caesar's heir to be was with his mother and family. That she advocated his return to the centre stage of events, rather than, for example, lying low on a country estate, as when he was a boy during the Civil War (§ IV.7), shows her regard for the political implications of his new position. In fact, Nicolaus' choice of words to describe her thought processes - ἀριθμηται; λογίζηται - highlight her ability to appraise the situation despite her disordered state of mind; her fretting is the result of calculation of the odds *despite* her distress. As noted above,<sup>58</sup> it is fear of the incalculable, the unpredictable element, that initially has the upper hand in her thoughts.

<sup>55</sup> Toher 2004: 197-9.

<sup>56</sup> *B.Civ.* 3.10.34

<sup>57</sup> ἐπισκήψει δὲ καὶ Αἰτία τῇ μητρὶ τοῦ παιδὸς τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ταφῆς ἐπιμεληθῆναι. Interestingly, it is her position as Octavian's mother, rather than as Caesar's niece, which is highlighted in the will.

<sup>58</sup> Ch. 4, 96-97.

That her fears are somewhat balanced by thoughts of potential glory and greatness does not remove the element of doubt from her mind, despite her acquiescence.<sup>59</sup>

Let us not, however, credit either Nicolaus, or even through him, Atia's son, with being overly sensitive to the feelings of a woman. There is psychological interest for modern readers in the poignant detail of Atia's feeling caught between the strong personalities of her husband and son – *έώκει δέ μεταξύ άμφοτέρων είναι τών γνιωμών, τής δέ του άνδρός Φιλίππου και του υίεος*. A Roman contemporary, however, would have recognized the stock device of using the tribulations of a sympathetic female character to heighten the sense of danger facing the youthful protagonist. Her opinion is one that Nicolaus has carefully led the reader to regard as authoritative, and so one might expect her analysis of the dangers to be treated seriously. However, Nicolaus quickly proceeds to dispel any doubts about the outcome of Octavian's great undertaking; his language at § XVIII.55 drives home the point that Octavian's task is divinely sanctioned and could have no possible outcome other than a successful one.<sup>60</sup> This simultaneously marks the point at which Atia's importance in her son's decision-making process begins to decline.

Despite the hyperbole of Nicolaus' panegyric – his description of *τό μόν εύκλεές τής τύχης και τό μέγεδος τής δυναστείας* and *έξουσίαις τε και τιμής* is anachronistic, at best a hope when considered in the context of 44, (although not to someone writing later in Augustus' lifetime) – we see Atia evolving here from Octavian's stern guardian into an initially fearful yet loyal supporter of her son. That her relationship with her son has been fundamentally altered by his rapid entry into adulthood is shown by *her* new deference to *him*, in her not daring to speak out against his intended course of action, and in agreeing to his newly assumed name.<sup>61</sup> It is a mark of how

<sup>59</sup> Note the qualifying *όμως*.

<sup>60</sup> ...ούδέν μελλήσας τύχη άγαθή και έπ' εύφώμωι κληδόνι δέχεται τοῦνομα τε και την υίοδεσίαν, ή και αύτωι και πάσιν άνθρώποις άρχή άγαθών ήν, πολύ δέ μάλιστα τήι πατριδι και σύμπαντι τώι Ρωμαίων γένει.

<sup>61</sup> *αύτη πρώτη συνέπαινος ήν* – a small but telling detail that must come from Augustus himself.

much their relationship had altered, that Atia chose to defer to her son and not her husband in accepting his newly assumed name. Effectively, their roles have been reversed, and Octavian now assumes the dominant role in their relationship. This contrasts with his previously submissive behaviour towards her, and is an indicator of the increasingly self-assured direction Nicolaus will develop his hero for the rest of the account.

Philippus' portrayal at this juncture foreshadows Atia's later treatment. The ancient sources agree that Philippus counselled against accepting the inheritance, but that Octavian's precociously prudent (and, in Velleius, divinely guided) judgment led him to tactfully dismiss his step-father's objections.<sup>62</sup> It is perhaps significant that Suetonius describes Philippus here as '*consularis*', as his status gave his opinions some weight; he would naturally have expressed not only his concern at the potential dangers of the adventure, but also his reservations about the legality of Octavian's conduct. In a hostile account, Octavian's rejection of what was essentially sound advice given by a sympathetic family member with eminent status could potentially be portrayed as rash and precocious.

The 'true' or historical nature of the relationship between Octavian and Philippus is unknowable, distorted by the Augustan tradition – and in Nicolaus we have one of the earliest

<sup>62</sup> Appian's version is of interest because it accords closely with the tenor of Nicolaus' version; Octavian initially accedes to their request to return home because of a lack of information only, but rejects suggestions to turn down the inheritance as shameful: Appian *B.Civ.* 3.10: ἡ δὲ μήτηρ καὶ Φίλιππος, ὅς εἶχεν αὐτήν, ἀπὸ Ῥώμης ἔγραφον μήτε ἐπαίρεσθαι μήτε θαρσεῖν ... τὰ δὲ ἰδιωτικώτερα ὡς ἐν τοῖς παροῦσιν ἀκινδυνότερα αἰρεῖσθαι μᾶλλον καὶ πρὸς σφῶς ἐς Ῥώμην ἐπιείρεσθαι φυλασσόμενον. οἷς Ὀκτάουιος ἐνδοῦς διὰ τὴν ἔτι ἄγνοιαν τῶν ἐπὶ τῷ θανάτῳ γενομένων. and 3.11: οἱ μὲν ἔτι μᾶλλον αὐτὸν ἠξίουσαν τοὺς ἐχθροὺς Καίσαρος δεδιέναι, υἱὸν τε αὐτοῦ καὶ κληρονόμον ὄντα, καὶ παρήκουσαν ἅμα τῷ κλήρῳ τὴν θέσιν ἀπέπασθαι· ὁ δὲ καὶ ταῦτά οἱ καὶ τὸ μὴ τιμωρεῖν αὐτὸν Καίσαρι αἰσχρὸν ἠγοούμενος Suet. *DA* 8.2: *ceterum urbe repetita hereditatem adiit, dubitante matre, vitrico vero Marcio Philippo consulari multum dissuadente.* Cicero *Att.* 14.12.2: *quem quidem sui Caesarem salutabant, Philippus non...* 15.12.2: *vitricus quidem nihil censebat.* Vell. 2.60.1: *non placebat Atiae matri Philippoque vitrico adiri nomen invidiosae fortunae Caesaris, sed adserebant salutaria rei publicae terrarumque orbis fata conditorem conservatoremque Romani nominis. Sprevit itaque caelestis animus humana consilia et cum periculo potius summa quam tuto humilia proposuit sequi maluitque avunculo et Caesari de se quam vitrico credere, dictitans nefas esse, quo nomine Caesari dignus esset visus, semet ipsum sibi videri indignum.*

The attitude of the ancients has excited the comment of modern scholars – e.g. Rawson 2003: 179: 'the relationship between Octavian and his stepfather seems not to have been close, although Philippus sought a paternal role in trying to dissuade Octavian from becoming Julius Caesar's heir.'

surviving examples of this process. The *Princeps'* desire to present himself, as Toher puts it, "as an innocent youth surrounded by powerful enemies",<sup>63</sup> is a prime factor to be considered in Philippus' colouring in the later sources. As part of his pointed rejection of the last vestiges of childhood, Philippus himself must be discarded, yet in a fashion that shows Octavian in the best possible light – the mature, post-Actium leader of the Roman world would not want his earlier self to seem petulant, rash or disrespectful. His stepfather had, after all, had an irreproachable (if unspectacular) career, and was regarded by his peers as a respected neutral.<sup>64</sup> Although Philippus may have been, as Gray-Fow notes, "hedging his bets" in his enigmatic remarks to Cicero on the topic of his stepson,<sup>65</sup> he had good reason to be concerned about the Caesarian cause after the assassination, apart from his close ties to the Dictator through Atia. His reputation, achieved after an exemplary career; his own son's political career; and Antonius' apparent *rapprochement* with the assassins, were delicate factors to consider in a volatile situation. Octavian's intentions had the potential to cause trouble for the Marcii Philippi.

Following on from remarks made by Syme,<sup>66</sup> Gray-Fow argues that Philippus' influence on Octavian's youth, and in his plotting the way forward in the immediate aftermath of the Ides of March, has been greatly underestimated by scholars. Gray-Fow further argues that even certain of the future emperor's personality traits, notably his capacity for caution, dissimulation and hypocrisy, were possibly learned by example from Philippus.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, much of Gray-

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<sup>63</sup> Toher 2004: 184.

<sup>64</sup> Gray-Fow 1988: 186-189. Philippus was applauded by both sides (Caes. *BC* 1.6; Cicero *Att.* 10.4) for his diplomatic conduct in withdrawing to Naples at the outbreak of the Civil War, given that he had strong ties to both parties, married to the Dictator's niece, and his son wedded to his wife's younger sister, Atia Minor; his daughter Marcia was the wife of Cato, vociferous martyr to the Republican cause. Cicero also held Philippus in high regard. However, on his vaunted neutrality, see Gray-Fow 1988: 190: 'the most telling indictment of Philippus' supposed aloofness from Caesar's subversion of the traditional constitution was his necessary approval of his son's appointment as praetor for 44 BC.'

<sup>65</sup> Gray-Fow 1988: 193. Cicero *Att.* 14.12; 15.12.

<sup>66</sup> Syme 1939: 128: 'Though Philippus' caution was congenital, his lack of open enthusiasm about Octavianus' prospects was perhaps only a mask. The young man was much in the company of his step-father: the profit in political counsel which he derived was never recorded.'

<sup>67</sup> Gray-Fow 1988.

Fow's argument is deductive and speculative in nature; he appears to retroject Augustan personality traits onto Philippus, and then circularly credits Philippus with having a formative effect on the future *Princeps'* entire approach to politics.<sup>68</sup> However, part of his argument has merit, in that Philippus' reputation, and especially his acquaintance with important senators such as Cicero, would have been invaluable to Octavian in the first months after the assassination. There is obvious merit in his suggestion that the teenaged political ingenu would have benefited greatly from Philippus' long familiarity with Cicero's nature, including how best to court his favour and manipulate his vanity.<sup>69</sup> Octavian's astute flattery of the elder statesman in the months after the assassination may owe more to Philippus' coaching than to any inherent, precocious feel for diplomacy.

As Toher suggests,<sup>70</sup> the ancient evidence indicates that, so far from the confident, calculating figure who coolly assessed how best to achieve his desired goal, Octavian may have almost immediately blundered upon first arriving in Rome by coming into conflict with the consul, Antonius and the aedile, Critonius, and then having to retreat to Philippus' villa at Puteoli. This Octavian is a figure who would surely have needed and benefited from his step-father's experience of the disordered and dangerous state of Roman politics in the last years of the Republic.

This same youth, however impetuous and bold he may have initially been, in later years remade the image of himself as *Princeps* and *Pater Patriae*; aspects of his early career that were incompatible with his later image were suppressed as far as possible. To this end, he needed to stress his early maturity and independence. For Augustus, at any rate, Philippus' known

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<sup>68</sup> Gray-Fow 1988: 196.

<sup>69</sup> Gray-Fow 1988: 193.

<sup>70</sup> 2004: 183.

denigrating Caesar's achievements in literary works by sympathetic authors,<sup>79</sup> including *Res Gestae*;<sup>80</sup> emphasising Caesar's deification to enhance his remoteness from everyday Roman life; and an actively anti-Caesarian approach in his building program. As an example, Ramage contends that a coin issue<sup>81</sup> showing a bareheaded Octavian (obv.) C. CAESAR COS. PONT. AUG., and Caesar crowned (rev.) C. CAESAR DICT. PERP. PONT. MAX., is an example of 'dissociation by differentiation'. Although the coin was superficially celebrating Caesar's adoption of Octavian, subliminally it highlighted the differences between them:

'Here advertised side-by-side are the destroyer and the restorer of the Republic: the one C. CAESAR ... the tyrannical, unconstitutional perpetual dictator, and the other C. CAESAR ... the duly elected Republican consul.'<sup>82</sup>

An obvious criticism of this hypothesis is that Octavian's own position at this point in time was hardly more soundly based than his late father's had been: both the fact and the manner of his election to the consulship at his age were no less irregular than Caesar's unconstitutional perpetual dictatorship, which, although much resented, had also been duly voted to him. It is also difficult to see how the average Roman citizen was meant to view the fact that having the son on the same coin as the father was *not* meant to be interpreted as a sign of respect and positive association on Octavian's part. If this is what Octavian intended, it seems an almost obscurely subtle approach.

This attractive and long-accepted theory has been vigorously challenged by White,<sup>83</sup> who argued that, so far from being sidelined, the image of Caesar was vitally important to Octavian

<sup>79</sup> E.g., Ramage (1985 231-33) negatively interprets Virgil *Aen.* 6.826-835, where Anchises describes how Caesar and Pompey will unleash civil war, and exhorts the former to disarm first; Ovid *Met.* 15.745-870, where Caesar's distance from Augustus ruling on earth is stressed, and at 750-51, his single greatest act was to father Augustus.

<sup>80</sup> Ramage (1985: 230) contends that Augustus actively downplayed Caesar's presence in *Res Gestae*, referring to him only obliquely in connection with an action of Augustus', or else in his deified incarnation. Caesar appears in *RG* 2: *parentum meum*; 10: *pater meu[s]*; 15: *patris/ mei*; 19: *aedem divi Iuli*; 20: *a patre meo*; 21: *in aede divi Iu[li]*. See below for more on this point.

<sup>81</sup> Crawford *RRC* 490.2; Crawford dates the type to sometime between early summer and autumn of 43.

<sup>82</sup> Ramage 1985: 224.

during his long struggle to cement his place within the Roman state, and that even during the Principate, Caesar did not fade away as part of an active Augustan campaign. The prominence of the temple of *Divus Iulius* in the Forum Romanum, and of the statue of the *Divus* himself,<sup>84</sup> demonstrates that the figure of the first Caesar was very much a presence in both Roman public life and the expression of his family's greatness, serving as a constant visual reminder of the *Princeps'* divine descent.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, whilst the memory of a *divus* could hardly compete with the living presence of the incumbent ruler, Caesar's memory and image were celebrated throughout the year on numerous public holidays, and monuments and statues bearing his name were in evidence throughout the city.<sup>86</sup> Caesar therefore continued to maintain a visible, pervasive presence in Rome under Augustus.

With regard to Augustus' treatment of Caesar in *Res Gestae*, it is hardly to be expected that Caesar would be prominent in a text that was, after all, written as unashamed *self*-promotion for posterity. Other individuals, such as Agrippa, Tiberius, and Augustus' grandsons, are similarly referred to by their degree of relationship to the emperor, and only feature insofar as they intrude on Augustus' record of his own deeds – yet there is no question of their memory being

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<sup>83</sup> White 1988: 334-356.

<sup>84</sup> Ovid *Met.* 15.841-842: *semper Capitolia nostra forumque / Divus ab excelsa prospectet Iulius aede; Staius Silvae* 1.1.22-24: *hinc obvia limina pandit / qui fessus bellis adscitae munere prolis / primus iter nostris ostendit in aethera divis.*

<sup>85</sup> White 1988: 337-338, has a pointed riposte to Ramage's (1985: 339 and n.41) contention that Caesar's *imago*, as one of the gods, could not appear in the procession during the funerals of family members, which apparently indicated further suppression of his memory: '[T]he temple of Caesar ultimately became the seat of a family cult which was at the same time fully integrated into the state religion ... the presence or absence of Caesar's mask at Augustus' funeral must be interpreted in relation to the order of ceremonies overall ... Augustus' successor, the new emperor, spoke from the porch of Caesar's temple, under the gaze of Caesar's statue, which was visible to all the mourners (Dio 56.34). Surely the planners judged correctly that a mummer with Caesar's mask could have added nothing to the impact of this spectacle.'

<sup>86</sup> Holidays celebrating his victories: March 17 (Munda); March 27 (Alexandria); April 6 (Juba, N. Africa); August 2 (Ilerda and Zela); August 9 (Pharsalus). Caesar's birthday was celebrated on July 12<sup>th</sup>, and the *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris* for 11 days at the end of the month. Caesar's prominence in Roman civic festivities and games lasted for years after his death, as it was only in 19 BC that the number of celebrations in honour of Augustus overtook those to his divine father. White 1988: 348: 'That the living ruler should be more celebrated than a dead one is rather the norm than the exception, and it certainly cannot be equated with a conclusion that the predecessor's memory is under siege.' Cf. also ch.2 pg. 13, on cult.

suppressed.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the very first sentence of the *Res Gestae* (and therefore that which would have had the most impact) proclaims that his first public action was to raise an army and avenge his father. Aside from advertising his own redoubtable *pietas*, it makes the point that Octavian's entry into the political arena owed everything to his relationship to Caesar.

Most scholars tend to refer to Augustus prior to January 27 BC as Octavian, yet this is a strictly modern convenience, and tends to obscure how important his identity as Caesar's son and successor was to his early career. His use of the golden talisman of his adoptive father's name was his only claim to anything approaching constitutional legitimacy, and hence he made use of it from the earliest opportunity – although this did not have quite the desired effect in his first interactions with Cicero.<sup>88</sup>

Velleius, Appian, and Dio introduce him in their respective accounts as Octavius, prior to his acceptance of the inheritance; thereafter he is referred to as Caesar.<sup>89</sup> Suetonius refers consistently to him as Augustus, as to the biographer, writing long after Augustus' death, the first *Princeps* was a figure possessed of dignity and honour, and thus his 'august' surname was the more pertinent. His previous names were mere facts, part of his life yet not, as Suetonius

<sup>87</sup> Tiberius – *filius* (8.4); *privignus* (27.2; 30.1); Marcellus (*gener*, 21.1); C. and L. Caesar – *fili* (14.1; 20.3; 27.2). As White (1988: 341, n.25) points out, whilst Tiberius, Marcellus, Gaius and Lucius need to be identified by name as well as relationship to Augustus for reasons of clarity, *pater* could only ever refer to Caesar, and as such is distinctive.

<sup>88</sup> Cicero pointedly refused to even recognise the adoption initially, referring to him as Octavius (*Att.* 14.12). From roughly June of 44, (*Att.* 15.12) he acknowledges the adoption and calls him Octavianus, but never Caesar, precisely because he wished to negate as far as possible the young man's Caesarian connection; he continued in this vein until he and Octavian had formed a mutual alliance in December 44. Octavian had the good sense to dissemble his true feelings at his stepfather and Cicero referring to him by his birth name, since to do so could damage the relationship he was hoping to cultivate with the senior statesman. Yet, although he does not outright encourage his friends and peers to address him by his new name, neither does he discourage the practice (§ XVIII.54).

<sup>89</sup> Vell. 2.59: *Caesaris deinde testamentum apertum, quo C. Octavianum, nepotem sororis suae Iuliae, adoptabat.* After Octavian hears of the adoption: II.60.5 *eoque C. Caesar iuvenis...*

Dio 44.35.2: *μαδῶν ὁ δῆμος ὅτι τὸν τε Ὀκτάουιον υἱὸν πεπότηται.*

Appian *B.Civ.* 3.2.9: *Ὀκτάουιος δὲ ὁ τῆς ἀδελφῆς τοῦ Καίσαρος θυγατρειδοῦς.*

saw it, defining factors in it.<sup>90</sup> However, for Nicolaus, writing much closer to the time when memory of Caesar would have persisted amongst his contemporaries, it is Octavian's relationship to Caesar that must be emphasized: he was Caesar's heir in more than simply a legal sense, for from the beginning of Nicolaus' account, his manifest brilliance from a young age signifies his fitness to inherit Caesar's political legacy.

Until he could contrive a way to make his position unassailable, Octavian needed Caesar. Augustus, on the other hand, might not have, but it does not follow that he would have waged a subtle war of attrition against his divine father's memory. Perhaps the canny *Princeps* perceived that he did not need to: the passage of time would achieve the same result, even without his intervention. The living ruler was in his own lifetime a more potent symbol than Caesar's shade.

Part of the weakness with the argument that Caesar suffered a 'gentle *damnatio memoriae*'<sup>91</sup> under Augustus is its reliance on a subjective interpretation of the poets' treatment of him. That Caesar is not primarily treated as we see him today – a military *dux*, celebrated for his warlike *res gestae* – is neither here nor there, since, although frequent reference is made to Augustus' martial enterprises, they also tend not to be treated at length. Reference to Augustus' campaigns was both frequent and conventionalized as a *topos*; however, the details were of lesser interest to the poets than the general theme of Augustus as great ruler.<sup>92</sup> Both Syme and Ramage interpret Caesar's appearance in the pageant of Roman heroes at *Aeneid* 6.826-835 as having negative force, though White disagrees; he argues that Virgil's carefully over-stylized structuring of the

<sup>90</sup> The name Augustus appears 19 times in the *Life*; C. Caesar is mentioned once in ch.7, but nowhere in the *Life* is he referred to as Octavius. That Augustus was the name of primary importance to Suetonius is shown by the discussion of it at *DA* 7.

<sup>91</sup> Toher 2003a: 133.

<sup>92</sup> As with the tendency to evoke campaigns against Britain, a foreign policy red herring that nevertheless excited endless attention from writers, especially Horace: Horace *Od.* 1.21.15; 1.35.30; 3.4.33; 3.5.3; 4.14.48; *Ep.* 7.7; Virgil *Ge.* 1.30; Prop. 2.27.5; and Dio 49.38.2; 53.22.5.

scene and his pairing of the two is meant to be read as a symbolic commentary on the wider theme of civil unrest and fratricidal divisions that had afflicted all of Roman society for several generations. Furthermore, the clash between East and West that is implied, and the emphasis on the kinship of the two adversaries, could even be interpreted as alluding to Octavian and Antonius' deadly conflict.<sup>93</sup>

The salient point to take from this brief survey is simply that any interpretation of the poetic evidence is necessarily highly subjective. Syme, and those who follow his line of argument, cannot deny that Caesar figures in Augustan poetry, as though he were completely absent. Where the premise breaks down is in trying to *qualify* the degree of Caesarian literary slighting; thus, the assertion that his portrayal is not what one might 'expect'.<sup>94</sup> However, given that there was no precedent for how to treat the career of a man like Caesar, there was no definition of how the man *should* have been treated; and so what we have today is the record of how he *was* presented.<sup>95</sup>

It is precisely the malleability of Caesar's image that should be borne in mind, for the man that we view as the 'historical' Caesar was in large part moulded by the literary tradition.<sup>96</sup> The portrait of Caesar in Suetonius and Plutarch as the brilliant and ambitious conqueror-statesman has undoubtedly proved influential – both Appian and Dio, writing much later, draw him in a similar light in their histories. Yet, they were writing with the perspective of two centuries. In the interim, the immediacy (although not the magnitude) of his impact on Rome had been lost, and his image became as much the product of literature as history. Nicolaus' account has often

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<sup>93</sup> White (1988: 349); although allowances should be made for poetic license on Virgil's part, the marital tie between Caesar and Pompey had been severed for 4 years before the Civil War, whereas Antonius' divorce from Octavia was more recent.

<sup>94</sup> White 1988: 348; Toher 2003a: 133.

<sup>95</sup> Toher 2003a: 133: 'Only the premise of a preconceived idea of how Caesar ought to have been treated by Augustus can make the argument effective, and the evidence for such a premise does not exist.'

<sup>96</sup> Toher 2003a: 132.

been dismissed as of no value to our understanding of Caesar because it is openly panegyric, and also because his presentation differs so from the later literary tradition of the man; the assumption has often been that Nicolaus' must be the anomalous version. However, given that there is much that remains contentious about the development of the tradition representing Caesar under Augustus, the *Bíos Kaisaros* should be treated with greater respect precisely because it is a part of that developing tradition.

Yet, dismissing his work as encomiastic or 'mere' panegyric does not acknowledge the skill with which Nicolaus is able to construct his account so that it shows both Caesar and his heir to advantage – although naturally, Octavian shines brighter, with a higher degree of rhetorical polishing. That an Augustan writer was able to present Caesar in a sympathetic light argues against the notion that he remained too problematic a figure to deal with, and therefore must necessarily have been treated negatively. Furthermore, Nicolaus' background as a Greek at the court of Hellenistic monarchs<sup>97</sup> meant that he may not have picked up all of the subtleties of Latin imperial propaganda on Caesar.

One final point to consider when assessing if Augustus needed to handle his father's image cautiously, is whether in fact his own more recent behaviour as Triumvir was not in more pressing need of rehabilitation. Caesar's heir was faced with the problem of having to disavow his role in continuing Sulla's legacy: he was never entirely able to erase the stain of the proscriptions.<sup>98</sup> That Augustus has nonetheless received his share of acclamation over the

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<sup>97</sup> Cleopatra and Herod – cf. ch 1 pg. 3-4.

<sup>98</sup> White (1988: 345): '[I]f the sources point to any image problem which Augustus needed to counteract, it concerned his own conduct during the triumviral period rather than anything Caesar had done. The proscriptions were what everyone remembered about the war.' The evil memory of the Sullan regime can only have compounded the horror of the period, explaining why later authors often alighted on them as a rhetorical theme. The Elder Seneca's writings contain several references to proscriptions during civil war (*Cont* 4.8; 6.4; 7.2; *Suas.* 6-7). Suet. (*DA* 13.1-2 and 27.1-5) show how stories of Octavian's atrocities persisted, even in writers largely favourable to him.

almost two millennia since his death is a measure of how successful he was at putting a positive spin on the negative aspects of his persona. This is despite the recollections his contemporaries would have had of the decade and a half of turbulent, often violent state of affairs between Caesar's death and his own consolidation of power. Both father and son, it would seem, were difficult characters for the new era to accommodate.

Octavian's presentation in the *Bíos Kaίσαρας* is shaped to demonstrate Nicolaus' conception of him as predestined for greatness by virtue of his superior nature. Yet aside from his own intrinsic virtues, he was aided in his progression, firstly by the exemplary education and moral supervision he received from his mother and Philippus, and secondly by Caesar's recognition of Octavian's innate excellence; this especially was a necessary part of Octavian's progress to greatness.

Octavian's first notable action in the text (§ III.4) was the oration he gave at his grandmother Julia's funeral. Nicolaus states that he was *περὶ ἑννέα ἔτη μάλιστα γεγονώς*. This is contrary to Suetonius, who asserts that he was *'duodecimum annum agens'* (i.e. aged eleven).<sup>99</sup> Nicolaus' error (if it is not simply a copyist's numerical error in the manuscript)<sup>100</sup> is inexplicable, unless he is deliberately minimising Octavian's age to underscore the fact that he already *φύσεως ἀκρότητα*

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Dio's favourable conception of Augustus does not allow him to impute any negative behaviour to Octavian, despite his detestation of the triumvirate itself; he tends to shift most of the blame onto Antonius, and actively attempts to exculpate Octavian (e.g. 47.7.1-3). Appian is not bound by such a pro-Augustan agenda, and his interests were chiefly in the suffering of the proscribed, rather than the proscribers themselves. Other versions of the period similarly suggest, as does Dio, that Antonius was largely to blame and Octavian was compelled to go along with the wishes of his older colleagues: thus Tac. *Ann.* 1.9.3-4; Vell. 2.66.1-2; Pliny *HN.* 7.147. That this version became the accepted one is due to the strenuous efforts of Augustan propaganda, yet the disquiet attached to that entire period of history, and thus Octavian's involvement, remained: Juvenal (2.28) sardonically hailed the Triumvirs as Sulla's *tres discipuli*. (Gowing 1992: 254-257).

<sup>99</sup> Suet. *DA* 8.1. Octavian was indubitably born in the consulship of Cicero and C. Antonius (Suet. *DA* 5 & 94.5). Appian, Dio and Velleius do not mention the story.

<sup>100</sup> Bellemore 1984: 73 recommends a substitution of *ἑνδεκα* for *ἑννέα*; however, it is difficult to ascribe this reading to a palaeographical error if common abbreviations were used (*ϑ'* and *ιά*); it may be an error of Nicolaus', or a translation error in misreading Latin XI for IX. The problem seems easily explicable if it is chalked up to a deliberate act on Nicolaus' part, to enhance Octavian's precocity.

*δηλώσας ἐν τοιαῖδε ἡλικίαι*, thus turning the event into an ‘omen of greatness’.<sup>101</sup> Yet, despite his tender years, Octavian was not an inexplicable choice as Julia’s eulogist – her brother, Caesar, was absent from Rome, and the boy was therefore her nearest male Julian relation. Natural affection probably played its part, too, given that he had spent some six years living with her. Nevertheless, his first public action would surely have impressed on the adolescent the vital importance of his Julian blood; Caesar had similarly used his aunt Julia’s funeral oration in 69 as the occasion for some useful familial and self-promotion.

The description of an individual’s education (*παιδεία*) usually featured in Greek writing after a discussion of their ancestry and birth – the latter has, however, been lost in the *Βίος Καισάρως*, very likely during the excerption process. The emphasis on *παιδεία* reinforced its importance to character formation and is often linked to the protagonist’s developing *ἀρεταί*, especially when he is consequently able to demonstrate his acquired *σωφροσύνη* in the face of youthful temptations.<sup>102</sup> However, the fact that *παιδεία* was conventionalized as a *topos* means that it was often covered in a general and vague fashion, with little specific reference to the character’s life.<sup>103</sup> In his autobiography (F 132.2), Nicolaus himself vaunted the benefits of a traditional education, with an emphasis on ethics, and this outlook evidently influenced his depiction of Octavian’s early youth, although the text also reflects the broader conventions of Hellenistic biography. Nicolaus notes that Octavian’s education encompassed both mental and physical aspects; he stresses that Octavian’s reputation for brilliance was publicly recognised from an early age, and he so excelled even his teachers that his reputation redounded throughout the city. Furthermore, it is especially because he is reckoned worthy of honour or respect (*ἀξίσιμος*)

<sup>101</sup> Wardle (n.d Augustus Commentary) s.v. 8.8.

<sup>102</sup> Very often erotic, as with § V.12 above, ch. 3 pg. 60.

<sup>103</sup> Lewis 1991: 3654-55.

by his peers, all noble boys (τοῖς εὐγενεστάτοις παισὶ) like himself, that people flocked in crowds to see him and to be associated with him:

(III.5) παρὰ δὴ τῶν Φιλίππου ὁ Καῖσαρ ὡς παρὰ πατρὶ τρεφόμενος πολλὴν ὑπέφαιεν ἐλπίδα ἤδη <τ> ἀξιότιμος καὶ τοῖς ἤλιξιν ἐφαίνετο τοῖς εὐγενεστάτοις παισὶ. ... προύπεμπον δὲ αὐτὸν πάμπαν οὐ μόνον ἀσπασίαι καὶ μισθοφόροι καὶ ἄνδρες καὶ ἡλικίαι παῖδες, εἴτε ἐφ' ἵππασίαν ἔξω τοῦ ἄστεως προήμιε εἴτε παρὰ συγγενεῖς ἢ ἄλλους τίνας. (6) ἤσκει γὰρ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τοῖς καλλίστοις ἐπιτηδεύμασι καὶ τὸ σῶμα ταῖς γενναίαις καὶ πολεμικαῖς μελέταις καὶ τῶν διδασκόντων θάττον αὐτὸς τὴν μάθησιν ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων ἀπεδείκνυτο, ὥστε ἀπὸ τοῦδε καὶ ἐν τῇ πατρίδι πολὺν ζῆλον ἐνέγκασθαι.

(III.5) Octavian was reared at Philippus' house as if at his father's, and he showed great promise, and already he seemed to his comrades, the most well-born of boys, even worthy of estimation... Every day numerous youths and men and boys his own age accompanied him, whether he went outside the city to perform equestrian exercises or called on relatives or other people. (6) For he was training his mind with the noblest pursuits and his body with both noble and military exercises; and he himself applied his learning to the tasks quicker than even his teachers, so henceforth he was the subject of much admiration in the city.

This recognition of a boy's natural superiority by his peers is a literary *topos* that can be traced back as far as Herodotus' tale of the young Cyrus, and is also found in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.<sup>104</sup> One might cynically feel that the most significant aspect of his 'noble birth' that would have been of interest to contemporary Romans would be his Julian connection; those hoping to curry favour with the Dictator might view his youthful relation as an easy means of gaining access to Caesar.

Two further incidents in the *Ἀγωγή*-section are shaped to press home Nicolaus' image of Octavian's innate superiority. In § IV Nicolaus describes the occasion when Octavian assumed the *toga virilis* at the age of thirteen; in and § V, he served as *Praefectus Urbi* for the duration of

<sup>104</sup> Herodotus *Hist.* 1.114: the game of 'kings', whereby Cyrus is revealed to be Astyages' grandson (Cf. Xen. *Cyr.* 1.3.1; 15.4.5).

the *Feriae Latinae*. Nicolaus' dating of the former event is probably incorrect, as it not only requires an unusually young age for the ceremony,<sup>105</sup> but also contradicts other, perhaps more reliable, sources. The *fasti* indicate that Octavian came of age on either the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> of October of an unspecified year.<sup>106</sup> Suetonius relates the occasion occurring four years after Octavian gave the funeral oration for his grandmother, and thus in 48, during his sixteenth year.<sup>107</sup> Nicolaus marks the occasion with the new man being enrolled in splendour in the priestly college in the place of the deceased L. Domitius Ahenobarbus; he ingenuously refers to Domitius as 'having died', which glosses over his death on the losing side at Pharsalus.<sup>108</sup>

(IV.9) περιβλεπόμενος δ' ὑπὸ παντὸς τοῦ δήμου διὰ τε εὐπρέπειαν καὶ λαμπρότητα εὐγενείας ἔδνε τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ἐνεγράφη εἰς τὴν ἱερωσύνην εἰς τὸν Λευκίου Δομιτίου τόπον τετελευτηκότος. καὶ ὁ δῆμος μάλα προθύμως ἐχειροτόνησε. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἅμα τῇ μεταλλαγῇ τῆς ἐσθῆτος καὶ τῇ καλλίστηι τιμῇ κοσμηθεὶς ἔδνευ <τοῖς θεοῖς>.

(IV.9) *Admired by all the people because of his beauty and radiantly noble birth, he sacrificed to the gods and was enrolled in the priestly college in the place of Lucius Domitius, who had died. And the people had indeed voted for him enthusiastically. And after his change of garment and 'decorated' with the finest position of honour, he sacrificed to the gods.*

(V.13) ἐνστάσης δὲ τινος ἑορτῆς Λατίνης ... καθίζει ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα Καῖσαρ ἐν μέσση ἀγορᾷ. προσήρισαν δ' ἅπλετοι ἄνθρωποι δικαιοδοσίας χάριν, πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ μηδενὸς πράγματος χάριν, θεωρίας ἔνεκα τοῦ παιδος· ἀξιοθέατος γὰρ πᾶσιν ἦν, καὶ μάλιστα ἐν τῷ τότε σεμνότητα καὶ ἀξίωμα προσειληφώς.

<sup>105</sup> Although it varied somewhat, boys tended to come of age by assuming the *toga virilis* sometime between ages 14 and 16 in the Late Republic, and very often on the *Liberalia* (March 17). It was a young man's first important public ceremony as it marked his entrance into the public life of adult citizens. (Balsdon 1969: 120).

<sup>106</sup> *Feriae Cumanae and Antiatinae* (Ehrenberg & Jones 1967: 53).

<sup>107</sup> Suet. *DA* 8.1. Vell. 2.59 records Octavian's appointment to the pontificate at age 18, whilst accompanying Caesar on his Spanish campaign. Dio and Appian do not mention either the pontificate or the triumph in connection with his coming of age.

<sup>108</sup> Pharsalus: 9<sup>th</sup> August 48. Domitius: Caesar *BC* 3.99; Cicero *Phil.* 2.71; Suet. *Nero* 2.

(V.13) *On the occasion of the Latin Festival ... Octavian sat on the tribunal in the middle of the Forum. A great multitude of people came there on legal business, and many even on no business at all, but simply in order to see the boy. For he was worth seeing for everyone, and especially at that moment, once he had assumed dignity and status*

Along with § III.5-6, these scenes stress the fact that Octavian's brilliance and nobility were readily apparent to both his social peers and the common people;<sup>109</sup> yet, what is perhaps more striking, is that Caesar's role in Octavian's early advancement is obscured. Nicolaus simply records his election to the pontificate<sup>110</sup> and not any dictatorial string-pulling behind the scenes; as *Pontifex Maximus*, Caesar would have presided over the co-optation process. The appointment was a signal mark of favour to his young relative, although Caesar might also have decided that the occasion of Octavian's coming-of-age was a suitable one for his elevation to the pontificate. Since new members were usually chosen from the family of the deceased, it may also have afforded him a sense of ironic satisfaction that a member of his own family, and not a relative of his implacable enemy, should fill the vacant priesthood.

Nicolaus is participating in an obvious form of literary misdirection – the illustrious ancestry he is praising is not Octavian's own *gens*, but Caesar's; Suetonius takes a similar approach in *DA* 1-4, where he tries manfully to enhance the reputation of the Octavii. Despite his best efforts, however, it is difficult to escape from the conclusion that the branch of the family from which Augustus was descended was simply not distinguished. Antonius' pointed slurs on Octavian's ancestry, recorded by Suetonius at *DA* 2.3 and 4.2, sprang from his own security in the knowledge that, despite Octavian's vaunted claim to be *divi filius*, he came from a natal *gens*

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Seneca *Marc.* 24.3, where it is Metilius' obvious purity of character that leads to his priesthood: *Adulescens rarissimae formae in tam magna feminarum turba viros corruptentium nullius se spei praebuit, et cum quarumdam usque ad temptandum pervenisset improbitas, erubuit quasi peccasset, quod placuerat. Hac sanctitate morum effecit, ut puer admodum dignus sacerdotio videretur.*

<sup>110</sup> According to the *lex Labiena* of 63 (a re-encatment of the *lex Domitia*), by which the pontifical colleges could no longer co-opt new members and the elections were returned to comitia of 17 tribes.

much inferior to the Antonii. As Antonius put it,<sup>111</sup> *'et te, o puer, qui omnia nomini debes'* was an inescapable truth, for the name C. Julius Caesar bequeathed to his great-nephew was certainly of more use than his natural father's.

In a society as heavily patrilineal as Rome, where the necessity of ensuring that a *gens* did not become extinct encouraged adoption, it is the importance of Octavian's matrilineal blood connection to Caesar that is focused on; yet another reason, perhaps, why Atia features so favourably in the account is because her patrician blood through Caesar's sister, Julia, was of the 'right' sort.<sup>112</sup> Bereft of his blood father and *paterfamilias* at a young age, Octavian was an orphan; yet this does not hamper him in the least, for his education in politics, the military, and the adult world of the forum is taken over by his 'true' father, Caesar. Thus, Nicolaus stresses that Octavian was born to be Caesar's heir, and underscores the most important relationship the 'young Caesar' was to have in his early career.

Nicolaus carefully established the theme of Octavian's radiant *εὐγένεια* in §§ III, IV and V, in order to make it clear that his rise to supremacy was not owed purely to Caesar's influence. Nicolaus in effect prepares the reader for Caesar's entry into the text by providing proof of his protagonist's independently precocious excellence. Octavian needed to have demonstrated sufficient civilian and moral virtue before beginning his *tirocinium* under his great-uncle's tutelage.

Atia and Philippus had ensured that Octavian was reared with a firmly traditional moral grounding to possess virtues such as self-discipline, modesty, philanthropy and prudence; and,

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<sup>111</sup> Gleefully recorded by his redoubtable adversary in *Phil.* 13.24.

<sup>112</sup> Interestingly, this was an approach that characterised the succession strategies of Augustus and the Julio-Claudians; the plethora of women and paucity of male heirs meant legitimacy passed through the female line, in imperial daughters and nieces from Julia and Antonia through to the younger Agrippina. (Corbier 1995: 182-186).

despite his exceptional nature, largely due to his mother's insistence he continues in § V to maintain the same lifestyle as before even after having laid aside the *toga praetexta*. He may have been νόμῳ τε μόνον ἀνήρ ἦν, τὰ δ' ἄλλα παιδικῶς ἐπεστατεῖτο, but, as a well-brought up young Roman he was obedient to her authority. It is at this point, with Octavian living a respectably austere life but still very much under maternal influence, that Caesar enters Octavian's life; §§ VI-XIII detail the development of their relationship.

In the sections of the *Bίος Καίσαρος* where Caesar and Octavian interact with each other, it is notable that each episode is constructed around an action of Octavian's. Although the historical background of the early narrative covering Octavian's youth is inescapably tied to the last years of Caesar's life, the individual incidents of the text are shaped to foreground particular exemplary qualities of the νέος Καῖσαρ.<sup>113</sup> Caesar is consequently often reduced to being an accessory of his great-nephew's developing political consciousness and skill.

Nicolaus' purpose behind his depiction of Caesar in the *Bίος Καίσαρος* is broadly twofold: Caesar serves firstly in the Ἀγωγή-section as both a father-figure and political mentor, guiding Octavian's entry into the adult, political world through his connections and προστασία; he features largely as a kindly, paternal figure. This Caesar is often shown as touchingly concerned for his young protégé. Secondly, in the Caesar extract he is drawn as a tragically flawed leader, one who must serve as a cautionary example for his inexperienced heir. In this aspect of his characterisation we have the benefit of Nicolaus' own experience of courtly politics under Herod the Great, as well as his political theory as influenced by his Peripatetic leanings.<sup>114</sup> It is

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<sup>113</sup> Toher 2003a: 140: 'As might be expected in an encomiastic biography, the presentation of Caesar ... serves to complement that of Octavian.'

<sup>114</sup> Cf. ch 1: 3-5, ch. 3: 50-61. Toher 2003b: 440-442.

the combination of these motifs that lends Nicolaus' depiction of this famous individual its singular nature.

Nicolaus shows Octavian beginning tentatively to test his influence with Caesar – he is asked by various people, including his good friend Agrippa, to petition Caesar for favours, and in so doing he starts to accumulate a small following of clients (§ VII.16 – VIII.18); by § XII.27, Octavian will be confident and experienced enough to petition Caesar on behalf of the Saguntines. Nicolaus uses these incidents to show not only the close nature of their relationship, but also Caesar's grooming of the young man for his future career. Throughout it all, Nicolaus presents Octavian as the brilliant protégé learning at the feet of the old master, whom he will eventually eclipse.

Caesar is introduced at § VI.14 on the point of leaving for the African expedition, with the briefest of summaries of the various campaigns of the Civil War. 'Caesar as world conqueror' enters the account at this stage purely because Octavian *βουλόμενος συστρατεύειν αὐτῷ ... ὡς καὶ πολεμικῶν ἔργων ἔμπειρος εἴη*. This brief summary of his successful world-wide campaigns serves as a means of establishing Caesar's military credentials and thus his fitness to manage Octavian's *contubernium*. This does not yet occur, however, as Atia opposes the venture and Octavian remains behind. To this statement, Nicolaus adds:

(VI.15) *δῆλος δ' ἦν καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτερος Καῖσαρ ὑπ' εἰνοίας οὐδέπω βουλόμενος αὐτὸν στρατεύεσθαι, ὡς μὴ τὴν διαίταν ἐν ἀσθενεῖ σώματι μεταβαλὼν καὶ <τὴν> ὅλην ἕξιν φαύλως διατεδείη. διὰ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα τῆς στρατείας παρελύετο.*

(VI.15) *It was clear that Caesar, out of fondness for him, did not yet wish him to go to war, so that changing the lifestyle of a weak constitution would not permanently worsen his state of health. This was why he was excused from the expedition.*

Nicolaus did not strictly need to add this, as it brought up the issue of Octavian's notoriously poor health;<sup>115</sup> it would surely have been sufficient to say that his mother was opposed to his going. However, this deftly turns the focus from the fact of Octavian's delicate health, to Caesar's concern and solicitude for the boy. This builds the foundation of their close relationship from Caesar's first appearance in the *Bίος Καίσαρος*, and Nicolaus' comments on Octavian's *ἀσθενές σῶμα* prepares the reader for his subsequent serious illness at § IX.20. Furthermore, this touch explicitly lays the responsibility for Octavian's remaining in Rome at Caesar's feet, thereby countering any potential accusations that he had been avoiding his military obligations. Nicolaus stresses that Octavian's desire to fulfill his duty was thwarted by parental solicitude.

Although Caesar acceded to Atia's wishes in not allowing the youth to accompany him on his Libyan campaign, he made a point of honouring the boy during his triple triumph, giving him the place next to himself at the religious occasions:

(VIII.17) ἐκ τούτου τὰς θριαμβικὰς ἤγε πομπὰς Καῖσαρ τοῦ κατὰ Λιβύην πολέμου τῶν τε ἄλλων, οὓς ἐπολέμησε. καὶ τὸν νέον Καῖσαρα υἱὸν ἤδη πεπονημένος, ὄντα δὲ τρόπον τινὰ καὶ φύσει διὰ τὸ ἀγχοτάτω τοῦ γένους εἶναι, ἐκέλευσε τῷ ἑαυτοῦ ἄρματι ἔπεσθαι, κόσμοις αὐτὸν στρατηγικοῖς ἀσκήσας, ὡς ἂν ταῖς θυσίαις καὶ ἐν ταῖς πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς προσόδοις ἐγγύτατα ἴσθη τοὺς τε ἄλλους εἶκειν προσέταπτεν αὐτῷ (18) καὶ ὁ μὲν ἤδη τὰς αὐτοκρατορικὰς ἐφέρετο τιμὰς, αἱ δὲ μάλιστα κατὰ τὸν Ῥωμαίων νόμον ἦσαν, καὶ ζηλωτὸς ἐν τῇ πατρίδι ἦν.

(VIII.17) *After this Caesar celebrated triumphal processions for the Libyan war, as well as the others which he had fought. And he gave orders for the young Caesar (whom he had already adopted as his son, which he was in a way, and by nature too, because he was his closest relative), to follow in his own chariot, having decorated him with military*

<sup>115</sup> Suetonius describes his health problems in *DA* 81-82; his sensitivity to sunstroke appears at *DA* 82.1 *Solis vero ne hiberni quidem patiens, domi quoque non nisi petasatus sub divo spatiabatur.*

*decorations*<sup>116</sup> so that he stood closest to him in the sacrificial processions to the gods; and he ordered the others were to yield precedence to him. (18) Caesar already possessed the authority and powers of the Dictator, the highest according to Roman law, and he was highly esteemed in his country.

This scene has interesting implications for our view of Caesar's intended purpose for Octavian. Suetonius and Velleius also record the fact that Octavian was awarded military decorations on the occasion of Caesar's African triumph.<sup>117</sup> Octavian's prominence on this occasion was not in itself unduly remarkable, although interested parties may have noted Caesar's interest in him. Yet notwithstanding growing discontent about Caesar's supposed monarchical aspirations, the fifteen year old youth would not have excited much attention at this stage. The dictator himself, and his hold on power, was far more worrying to his detractors than the unthinkable possibility that he might attempt to bequeath his powers to anyone – least of all a sickly great-nephew. Nicolaus paints the situation differently, however, mentioning the adoption<sup>118</sup> as a reflection of Caesar's deep paternal affection, and presenting Caesar as publicly grooming Octavian to be his successor in the military and religious spheres of his office; even at such a young age, Caesar had already identified his young relative's fitness to rule.

Perhaps most fascinating of all, however, is Nicolaus' reference to τὰς αὐτοκρατορικὰς ... τιμὰς. Hall took the term as a reference to the *cognomen imperatoris*;<sup>119</sup> however, it is perhaps more likely

<sup>116</sup> As Malitz notes (2003 n.63), the natural translation of the Greek would be *ornamenta praetoria*; however, this cannot be what Octavian was awarded.

<sup>117</sup> Vell. 2.59.3; Suet. *DA* 8.1: *Quadriennio post virili toga sumpta militaribus triumpho Caesaris Africano donatus est, quanquam expers belli propter aetatum*. Bellemore (1984: 81) notes that the sons of triumphing generals were frequently also honoured in this way; cf. Appian *Lib.* 66; Livy 45.40.8; Val. Max. 5.10.2; and Tac. *Ann.* 2.41. That Marcellus and Tiberius were later similarly celebrated during Octavian's Actian triumph, (although not to the extent of being awarded military decorations – Suet. *Tib.* 6.4), shows that those in a quasi-filial relationship to the *triumphator*, and not strictly biological/ adopted sons only, were honoured in this way.

<sup>118</sup> Anachronistically, as noted in ch. 2.

<sup>119</sup> 1923: 79 n. 8.3.

that Nicolaus is here referring to the dictatorship.<sup>120</sup> Whilst being hailed *Imperator* was unquestionably a high point of a military career, Nicolaus is here introducing the 'greatest' office that Caesar held at that point (since it effectively overshadowed his third consulship), in order to draw together in § VIII all the facets that comprised Caesar's dominant position in the State.

Thus, in short order we are shown the result of Caesar's overwhelming military genius as he celebrates his triple triumph; his preeminence in State religion is alluded to by the reference to sacrifices, over which he would have presided as *Pontifex Maximus*, and which gave him the authority to order Octavian's own prominent position during proceedings; lastly, he possessed both the highest office according to Roman custom, and was greatly admired by his people. Thus, Caesar is shown to possess four traits – military prowess, religious dignity, civilian authority and popular acclaim – which would arguably make him a great leader. Yet, Nicolaus spends much of the extant text subtly and sometimes explicitly demonstrating to the contrary that Caesar's admirable character nonetheless did not make him a true *πολιτικός*.

Nicolaus is careful, however, to stress the honour of the office of dictator and how greatly admired Caesar was, rather than dwelling on the odium attached to his anomalous position. Though not yet *dictator perpetuus*, the ten-year dictatorship was an ominous harbinger of his refusal to relinquish power, and thus was not truly popular, despite Nicolaus' statements to the contrary. The office of dictator was abolished by a *lex Antonia* after his assassination,<sup>121</sup> and

<sup>120</sup> Bellemore (1984: 81) points out that, while Nicolaus' description cannot be conclusively tied to any of Caesar's imperial acclamations, he was appointed to the 10-year dictatorship in 46. Malitz (2003: 33) translates as: 'Caesar hatte damals schon das Amt eines Dictators inne, das höchste, das es nach römischer Herkunft gab...'

<sup>121</sup> Cicero *Phil.* 1.3 & 32, 2.91 & 115; Livy *Epit.* 116; Appian *B.Civ.* 3.25, 4.2; Dio 44.51.

Augustus famously (and with deliberate ostentation) refused the offer of a dictatorship when offered one during the disordered events of 22.<sup>122</sup> Yet, while the *Princeps* might shrink from the term, his father could not posthumously be divorced from the office with which he was so closely associated. Nicolaus, however, is able to avoid the negative associations it had acquired by Augustus' day, showcasing only the relevant aspect for him – that it denoted Caesar's prestige and honour by virtue of its absolute authority.

It must be asked how a contemporary reader would have interpreted such a statement, given the enduring unpopularity of the dictatorship amongst the political elite at Rome. If the *Bίος Καίσαρος* was meant for a Hellenistic readership, then the peculiarly Roman anathema towards the dictatorship – in effect, a transferal of the ancient Republican abhorrence for *regnum* – might have been overlooked by Greek provincials, who were more attuned to whether an absolute ruler *behaved* as a *τύραννος* than to the legal niceties of his title.

Nicolaus' chief concern is to show Caesar to his best advantage, highlighting his position as leader rather than autocrat, and emphasising the positive aspects of his rule. To this end, as another instance shows, he does not even mention the dictatorship, dwelling rather on his consulship:

(XX.70) ὁ δὲ δῆμος ἐβόα βασιλέα τε αὐτὸν εἶναι ... ὁ δὲ πᾶν ἂν ἔφη χαρισάμενος τῷ δήμῳ διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν εὐνοίαν τοῦτο οὔποτε δώσειν, καὶ συγγνώμην ἠιτεῖτο εἰ ἀντιλέγει σώζων τὰ πάτρια· βούλεσθαι γὰρ τὴν ὑπατον ἀρχὴν ἔχειν νομίμως ἢ βασιλείαν παρανόμως.

(XX.70) *Then the people shouted that he was king ... But Caesar said that, while he would indulge the people everything because of their love for him, he would never permit this; and he*

<sup>122</sup> Dio 54.1.3-5; RG 5.1; Suet. DA 52; Vell. 2.89.5.

*asked for their pardon in contradicting them by upholding the old institutions of the country, for he would rather hold the office of consul lawfully than that of a king contrary to the law.*

Nicolaus is here aiming for a different effect to that in § VIII, where he constructs an image of Caesar's surpassing success and authority to magnify the honour done to Octavian on that particular occasion: in this instance, he is presented as the lawful, magnanimous magistrate. Precisely because of the unfavourable connotations of the dictatorship, and because in this context (the aftermath of the deposition of the tribunes) Nicolaus wishes to specifically downplay the suspicion of monarchical ambitions, in addressing the crowd Caesar refers only to his consulship. Caesar's attitude is benevolent and paternal; he denies the people their wish for him to be crowned; he is far from autocratic, appearing rather to curb the unrealistic wishes of an exuberant child. We thus also have presented here the familiar view of Caesar as the darling of the masses, a theme Nicolaus reiterates later in the aftermath of his assassination.

Perhaps the most striking instance of Caesar's deep affection for Octavian comes at § IX.20, where the young man has fallen ill as a result of his excessive sense of duty in attending the games Caesar had delegated to him:

(IX.20) *χαλεπῶς δὲ διακειμένου πάντες μὲν ἐν φόβῳ ἦσαν, ἀγωνιῶντες εἴ τι πείσεται τοιαύτη φύσις, μάλιστα δὲ πάντων Καῖσαρ. διὸ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν ἢ αὐτὸς παρὼν αὐτῷ εὐθυμίαν παρεῖχεν ἢ φίλους πέμπων ἰατροὺς τε ἀποστατεῖν οὐκ ἔων. καὶ ποτε δειπνοῦντι ἤγγειλέ τις, ὡς ἐκλυτος εἶη καὶ χαλεπῶς ἔχοι· ὁ δ' ἐκπηθήσας ἀνυπόδητος ἦκεν, ἔνθα ἐνοσηλεύετο, καὶ τῶν ἰατρῶν ἐδεῖτο ἐμπαθέστατα μεστὸς ὦν ἀγωνίας καὶ αὐτὸς παρεκάθητο· ἀνακτησάμενος δ' αὐτὸν εὐθυμος ἐγένετο.*

(IX.20) *Everyone was afraid because he was so ill, suffering great anguish lest something befall such a constitution, and Caesar most of all. Consequently, every day he either came himself to cheer him up, or he sent friends; and he would not permit the doctors to leave him. Once, while he was dining, someone brought news that Octavian was slipping away and was in a bad way; he leaped up and arrived barefoot where Octavian was being nursed, and he questioned the doctors, in a state of very high emotion, because he was full of*

concern, and himself sat down beside him. When Octavian had recovered again, he was overjoyed.

This concerned parent is a wholly different individual to the proud man infamous for the somewhat over-nice care of his personal appearance. The contrast could not be more noticeable between the haughty, imperious statesman, who relished his right to wear triumphal garb, a laurel wreath, and the red boots signifying his regal Alban descent, and this distraught man, anxiously conducting a bedside vigil.<sup>123</sup> As Toher has noted, leaping up and rushing off barefoot was a hallmark of excitable or distressed women in Greek poetry,<sup>124</sup> and its application here to the man who, only three paragraphs preceding, was held up as a paragon of military, religious and magisterial authority, is pointed. Even Caesar's concern for his much-prized *dignitas* is subordinated to the attention given his ill heir.<sup>125</sup>

One of the themes which Nicolaus uses to link and contrast the characterisation of Caesar and Octavian, is how vulnerable the virtuous and unsuspecting are to harm:

(XX.67) τότε δὲ <ἄλλαις> ἐπ' ἄλλαις τιμαῖς αὐτῷ ψηφίζομέναις τῶν μὲν χαρίζεσθαι βουλομένων, ἐνίων δὲ μετὰ ἐνέδρας δεχομένων τὰς ὑπερβεβλημένας καὶ εἰς ἅπαντας ἐκφερόντων, ὡς ἂν φθόνος ὁμοῦ <καὶ> ὑποψία ἐγγένοιτο ἐπαχθῆς, ὃ δὲ ἄτε ἀπλοῦς ὢν τὸ ἦθος καὶ ἄπειρος πολιτικῆς τέχνης διὰ τὰς ἐκδήμους στρατείας, ἠλίσκετο ῥαιδίως τούτοις, ἐκ τοῦ εἰκότος οἴομενος γίνεσθαι τοὺς ἐπαίνους θανμαζόντων αὐτὸν μᾶλλον περ ἢ ἐπιβουλευόντων.

(XX.67) Then some of them wanted to curry favour by voting him honours to him; while others perfidiously approved of the excessive honours, and publicised them to all, so that he would be the subject of jealousy and grievous suspicion. Caesar had a straightforward character and was unskilled in the political arts because of his long absence on campaigns, and so he was easily duped by them, presuming (as might seem reasonable) that the praise came from those who admired him, rather than those conspiring against him.

<sup>123</sup> Caesar's fastidiousness or vanity: Dio 43.43 (Alban boots specifically 43.43.2); Suet. *DJ* 45.2-3.

<sup>124</sup> Toher 2003a: 140, n.20; Malitz 2003 n. 24; Cf. Plut. *Cato Minor* 6.3, 44.1.

<sup>125</sup> Note that Atia is absent, and therefore Caesar has wholly taken on the parental mantle in this episode. Perhaps it is not too much of stretch to remark on a parallel between the *topos* of the *anxia mater* and Caesar's presentation here.

This seems somewhat incredible, given the evidence of Dio,<sup>126</sup> who indicates that Caesar was well aware of the odium he was attracting. In Nicolaus' version, however, his long absence on campaign had left him out of touch with the political realities of the capital; in fact, he is so lacking in *αἰσθήσις* that he is unable to perceive where the true danger to him lies, and is unaware of the magnitude of the conspiracy against him.<sup>127</sup> Ironically, this serves to contribute to his own downfall, underlining the fact that he did not have it in his nature to be a true *πολιτικός*. Nicolaus' philosophical leanings, as well as his practical political experience of the turbulent environment of Herods' court, had impressed upon him the fatal consequences when trusting characters were manipulated by devious and aggressive characters.<sup>128</sup>

Yet Nicolaus also shows consistently how well-loved Caesar was. The scenes of the immediate aftermath of the assassination convey the strongest sense of drama and pathos in the *Βίος Καισάρως*, and it is here that Nicolaus' dramatic tendencies are brought to the fore. The vivid descriptions of disorder and panic amongst the citizens of Rome are arguably his finest writing.

(XXVI.97) οἰκέται δὲ δὴ τρεῖς, οἵπερ ἦσαν πλησίον, ὀλίγον ὕστερον ἐνδέμενοι τὸν νεκρὸν εἰς φορεῖον οἴκαδε ἐκόμισον διὰ τῆς ἀγορᾶς. ὁρᾶν δ' ἐνῆν ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν ἀνεσταλμένων τῶν παρακαλυμμάτων, αἰωρουμένας τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὰς ἐπὶ τοῦ προσώπου πληγὰς. ἔνθα οὐδεὶς ἄδακρυς ἦν ὁρῶν τὸν πάλαι ἴσα καὶ θεὸν τιμώμενον· οἰμωγῆι τε πολλῇ καὶ στόνωι συμπαρέπεμπετο ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν ὀλοφρομένων ἀπὸ τε τῶν τεγῶν καθ' οὓς ἂν γένοιτο καὶ ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς καὶ προθύροις. καὶ ἐπειδὴ πλησίον τῆς οἰκίας ἐγένετο, πολὺ δὴ μείζων ὑπήντα κωκυτός· ἐξ(επ)επηθήκει γὰρ ἡ γυνὴ μετὰ πολλοῦ ὄχλου γυναικῶν τε καὶ οἰκετῶν, ἀνακαλουμένη τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ ἑαυτὴν ὀδυρομένη, ὅτι μάτην προύλεγε μὴ ἐξιέναι τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην. τῶι δ' ἤδη μοῖρα ἐφειστήκει πολὺ κρείττων ἢ κατὰ τὴν αὐτῆς ἐλπίδα.

(XXVI.97) Three slaves, who were nearby, a little while later placed the body on a litter and bore it homewards through the Forum. It was possible to see, on both sides where the

<sup>126</sup> 43.15.1.

<sup>127</sup> Toher 2003a:151.

<sup>128</sup> Toher 2003b: 441-442.

*covering was lifted up, the hands hanging down and the wounds on his face. Then no-one held back the tears, seeing one who had latterly been honoured as the equal of a god; much piteous keening and weeping surrounded them on all sides from those mourning on the rooftops and in the streets and entrance halls. And when they drew near his house, an even greater wailing greeted them; for his wife rushed out with a great throng of women and slaves, calling out to her husband and lamenting her lot, since she had warned him in vain not to go out that day. But he had come upon a much worse fate than even she had feared.*

This passage sets out most clearly the image of Caesar as the darling of the masses, and stands in stark contrast to the image of his corpse abandoned before Pompey's statue in § XXVI.95. Yet this is more than simply a political murder, for he was *parens patriae*, and his death has orphaned the entire city. The image of the lamenting crowd standing to watch the progression of his bier, carried so ignobly by three loyal slaves, is especially poignant when considered against his utter abandonment by friends of his own class. The tragic, dramatic overtones of the scene are heightened as the lamenting Calpurnia rushes out, accompanied by a veritable chorus of women.

Octavian is also initially *ἀπλοῦς ὦν τὸ ἦθος καὶ ἄπειρος* in his first dealings with Antonius; he treats him with the respect due to his age and position as consul, not knowing that Antonius is wholly unworthy of his regard. However, it is proof of Octavian's superior ability, that he is able to learn in time of Antonius' malintent towards him (§ XXXI.130-132); he must act, therefore, if he is to avoid his father's fate, and thus he decides to embark upon his revolutionary actions by raising an illegal army of Caesar's veterans. However, as Nicolaus presents it, his action is completely justified; it is the only means he has of keeping himself safe and avoiding becoming a victim. That his actions are ultimately divinely favoured is shown by the omens he receives before setting out on his great venture (§ XXXI.132) *καὶ θεοῖς δύσας τύχῃ ἀγαθῇ συλλήπτορας αὐτῶι γενέσθαι δικαίας καὶ εὐκλεοῦς ἐλπίδος*, echoing the divine approval of his decision to accept the

inheritance at § XVI.55. Caesar's loss was a vacuum into which Octavian must step, since Nicolaus has carefully shown how he is factually intellectually equipped to be a great leader. Ultimately, as Nicolaus saw it, it was Caesar's destiny to be superseded by the youth he had groomed to be his heir; his whole presentation in the text is coloured by Nicolaus' conception that Octavian was blessed by greater natural endowments and divine approval than his father.

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## Conclusion

The *Bíos Kaisaragos* is a work that has been poorly served by the passage of time. Moreover, it has had to contend with the prejudices of scholars and commentators, who have tended to see only its eulogistic style, and have consequently often dismissed its substance as being of no worth. The purpose of this dissertation has been to show that Nicolaus' work does in fact have merit for the ancient historian interested in literary portraits of Augustus' life.

The text is substantially incomplete, ending abruptly in October of 44 with Octavian's subversive activities in Campania amongst Caesar's veterans and Antonius' Macedonian legions. Although Laqueur argued that Nicolaus intentionally ended the account here, Nicolaus' own words (XIX.58) indicate that he intended to deal with Augustus' achievements in war and peace, and therefore must have at the very least taken the tale down to the assumption of the *cognomen* Augustus in 27, as is implied in the panegyric prooemium. Most modern scholars, with the exception of Toher, have tended to follow Jacoby in asserting that the *Bíos Kaisaragos* would have concluded with that celebrated occasion, or else continued to cover Augustus' Cantabrian War of the 26-4; Jacoby's views were founded on the assumption that Nicolaus closely followed Augustus' autobiography, the *De vita sua*, in content and structure.

By contrast, Toher has argued that there were two factors in favour of a later compositional date: Nicolaus' prolonged labour on his *Universal History* whilst at the court of Herod the Great down to 4 BC, as well as the more general conventions of Hellenistic biography, which precluded publishing a biography during its subject's lifetime. The major problem with Toher's line of argument is the dearth of hard evidence for Nicolaus' activities after 4 BC: although we know that he spent a protracted period in Rome - long enough to both develop a friendship with the *Princeps* and to be criticized for neglecting his social obligations - and we can

reasonably conjecture that this must have been after he left the Judaeian court, there is nothing to suggest that this episode lasted in the region of eighteen years.

The text's date of composition remains, regrettably, inconclusive; plausible arguments can be made in favour of both an early and a later date, but, short of the fortuitous discovery of new parts of the *Bíos Kaióragos*, the controversy is unlikely to be resolved.

A general survey of the development of Greek biography showed that the *Bíos Kaióragos* is very much a part of the long tradition of encomiastic biography that emerged during the Classical period and continued to develop during the Hellenistic period. Most examples of *βίοι* from the Hellenistic period survive only in fragmentary form or attestations of titles; aside from the fragments of Satyrus' *Life of Euripides*, the *Bíos Kaióragos* is the earliest and most substantially complete Greek biography we possess before Plutarch's *Lives*. Despite the loss of evidence, what emerges is how immensely flexible *βίοι* often were as a genre. In style, content and tone they could adopt the traits of political polemic, history, oratory or *encomium*; they could treat their subject's life chronologically, detailing the major events, or thematically, with a concentration on his character and achievements.

This concern of Hellenistic biographers with *ἦθος* may have its origins with the Peripatetic school, although Momigliano doubted whether this aspect of the development of biography *per se* could be ascribed wholly to their influence. Certainly, the belief that investigating a man's *ποιήσεις* could provide one with insight into his character was also a feature of popular Greek thought of this period; the belief that *exempla* of virtuous deeds would inspire emulation by the reader was a motivating factor behind the writing of such works.

Aristotelian philosophy is of import to the *Bíos Kaisaros* because Nicolaus informs us in his autobiography (F 132.2) that he regarded its role in his own education and upbringing as formative; and, while the *Bíos Kaisaros* contains the self-consciously serious tone and familiar *topoi* common to *encomia*, it is also clear that Nicolaus uses elements of Aristotelian philosophy as motifs throughout the work. This is especially clear in his characterisation of Octavian and Caesar. According to the Aristotelian argument, the truly judicious man (*φρόνιμος*) acquires virtue or excellence (*ἀρετή*) by actively learning the skill of good governance through repeated experience (*ἐμπειρία*), which allows him the perception (*αἴσθησις*) to be able to apply his superior understanding to future situations. It is a hallmark of Nicolaus' colouring of Caesar that he specifically denies the great man the *ἐμπειρία* that would have marked him out as a true (*πολιτικός*). By contrast, although Octavian is also initially *ἄπειρος*, particularly in his dealings with M. Antonius, Nicolaus characterizes him as steadily acquiring *ἐμπειρία*, and thus becoming uniquely fitted to rule.

The notion of *τύχη* and associated concepts such as that of *μοῖρα* and *ὁ δαίμων* had a long heritage in Greek literature and thought, and writers often invoked the notion of 'unstable fortune' as a *topos*. Although Nicolaus' overarching design is to demonstrate Octavian's unique and superlative nature, he also admits the role that fate and fortune had to play in his ascent to greatness; but these 'fatal elements' are of even greater import in Caesar's downfall. Crucially, as Nicolaus portrays it, it is Caesar's own nature that makes him vulnerable to his fate; his unsuspecting, politically naïve nature allowed him to be duped by the assassins. By contrast, Octavian's developing *ἀρετή* and *φρόνησις* allow him to avoid the negative consequences of capricious fortune, and the favourable omens he receives from the gods assure the reader that he will not fall prey to his divine father's fate.

Despite the truncated nature of the *Bíos Kaiράρος*, we have been afforded a view of Octavian's youth unrivalled in the ancient sources. Nicolaus' portrayal of the relationship his young protagonist has with his mother Atia and Caesar provides us with a fascinating insight into the development of the tradition about the first *Princeps*' youth. Atia's favourable portrayal is strong evidence of Nicolaus' influence by an Augustan source, very likely Augustus' *De Vita Sua*; certainly, we have here an early expression of her presentation as paragon of maternal virtue. This view led to her being extolled as an exemplary Roman mother by such later writers as Tacitus. However, her presentation also shows aspects of strongly traditional Roman notions of what constituted the ideal or 'model' upbringing for a future statesman. Yet, in his characterisation of Atia, Nicolaus also represents her as another obstacle, albeit well-meaning, that her son must circumvent if he is to make the transition to full adulthood, and especially so that he might fulfil his obligation to avenge Caesar. Her later appearances in the *Bíos Kaiράρος* show her as exemplifying the *topos* of the *anxia mater*.

The presentation of both Atia and Caesar is ultimately shaped to show Octavian in the best possible light. Caesar's portrayal is, in many respects, different to that familiar from later accounts, such as those of Suetonius, Plutarch, Appian and Dio; his paternal concern and affection for his great-nephew and his 'simple', unsuspecting nature is distinct from the more common image of him as the proud, ambitious conqueror-general. Much of this image is due to Nicolaus' desire to enhance the relationship between Caesar and his great-nephew, and thus to glorify Augustus. However, it also demonstrates that, in the generation after Caesar's death, there was no blatant attempt from sources close to the imperial circle to denigrate Caesar's achievements and memory, as Syme and others have argued. Nicolaus is, however, able to his account of Caesar's downfall in such a manner as to accentuate how Octavian will escape a similar fate: his superior, virtuous nature, as well as his precociously excellent *φρόνησις*, have

fitted him to inherit Caesar's pre-eminent position in the State; Nicolaus' ultimate intention was, after all, an *encomium* of Augustus.

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