

**THE GOLDEN AGE OF ROME:  
AUGUSTUS' PROGRAM TO BETTER THE ROMAN EMPIRE**

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In the *Aeneid*, Vergil dramatically announces through the character of Anchises that Caesar Augustus is destined to bring the Golden Age to Rome, an era of great peace, security and prosperity. The concept of this “Golden Age” pervades the Augustan period of Roman history, heralded especially by the great poets Vergil and Horace. However, did Augustus truly have a program to bring about this “Age of Gold” for Rome, or was he just a power-hungry dictator, using persuasive propaganda to gain approval? In his *Annals*, Tacitus explains how Augustus appeased the people while distracting them from his accumulation of power, and characterizes his peace as earned with bloodshed. Argument continues among historians to this day whether Augustus should be considered the benefactor that Vergil portrays, who restored virtue and order, or as the tyrant Tacitus describes. This dispute has become known as the “Debate about Augustus.”

Using evidence from a variety of contemporary sources, I intend to show that Augustus did in fact work to bring about the Age of Gold that Vergil promises. Whether through warfare, legislation, political maneuvering, or propaganda, I believe that his actions from the start reflect a clear program to make the Roman Empire the most powerful and most secure state that it could be, and that he was not just working for personal ambition. I have narrowed down the concept of the Golden Age, as portrayed by the poets, to three primary qualities: peace and security, the flourishing of the old Republican virtues, and prosperity under a glorious, divine leader. I will

address each of these aspects in turn, consulting evidence from the period to show how Augustus' regime worked to satisfy them. This evidence will include contemporary literature, historical facts and records, art, architecture, religion, and symbolism. I will also address the major criticisms of each facet by eyewitnesses such as Ovid and Propertius, by Roman historians such as Tacitus and Suetonius, and by various modern scholars of Roman history. Studying the success of Augustus' methods can reap numerous benefits, including a deeper understanding of later dictators and their programs.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the *Aeneid*, Vergil dramatically announces through the character of Anchises, “Here is the man, here he is, more often you hear him promised to you / Caesar Augustus, stock of a god, he will erect once more the golden age / For Latium, through fields where Saturn once ruled.”<sup>1</sup> The concept of the restored “Golden Age” pervades the Augustan period of Roman history, heralded especially by the great poets Vergil and Horace. Their praise raises the question, however: did Augustus truly have a program to bring about this “Age of Gold” for Rome, or was he just a power-hungry dictator, using persuasive propaganda to gain approval?<sup>2</sup> The disillusioned Tacitus would likely support the latter interpretation. He classifies the excessive praise as part of a “swelling tide of sycophancy,” leading to history being “falsified because of fear.”<sup>3</sup> In his *Annals*, Tacitus explains how Augustus appeased the people while distracting them from his accumulation of power, and characterizes his peace as earned with bloodshed. However, Tacitus’ perspective of Augustus was also biased by the severe incompetence of the latter’s immediate successors. Argument continues among historians to this day whether Augustus should be considered the benefactor that Vergil portrays, who ended the Roman civil wars to restore virtue and order, or as the tyrant Tacitus describes. This dispute has become known as the “Debate

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<sup>1</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid* VI, 791-794.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout I use the term “propaganda” to refer to the Augustan regime’s “spin” on events.

<sup>3</sup> Tacitus, *Annales* I, 1.

about Augustus,” with great Roman historians such as Sir Ronald Syme on the Tacitean side, and others such as Theodor Mommsen on the Vergilian and Horatian side.<sup>4</sup>

Using evidence from a variety of contemporary sources, I intend to show that Augustus did in fact work to bring about the Age of Gold that Vergil promises. Whether through warfare, legislation, political maneuvering, or propaganda, I believe that his actions from the start reflect a clear program to make the Roman Empire the most powerful and most secure state that it could be, and that he was not just working for personal ambition. I have narrowed down the concept of the Golden Age, as portrayed by the poets, to three primary qualities: peace and security, the flourishing of the old Republican virtues, and prosperity under a glorious, divine leader. I will address each of these aspects in turn, consulting evidence from the period to show how Augustus’ regime worked to satisfy them. This evidence will include contemporary literature, historical facts and records, art, architecture, religion, and symbolism. I will also address the major criticisms of each facet by eyewitnesses such as Ovid and Propertius, by Roman historians such as Tacitus and Suetonius, and by various modern scholars of Roman history. Studying the success of Augustus’ methods can reap numerous benefits, including a deeper understanding of later dictators and their programs.

It is important to first establish what exactly Vergil meant by an “Age of Gold” before its success or failure can be evaluated. The term “golden age,” used in its modern sense, refers generally to any period of great prosperity, achievement, and moral purity. In the ancient world, however, the term referred to a specific account in Greek mythology, first transcribed from oral tradition by the Greek poet Hesiod in his *Works and Days*. According to Hesiod, the human condition was degrading as time went on, represented by ages of metals that successively

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<sup>4</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub and Mark Toher, eds., *Between Republic and Empire: Interpretations of Augustus and His Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), xi-xiii.

decreased in value. The greatest age was also the earliest, the Golden Age of Cronus (Roman: Saturn), which Hesiod describes in the following manner: “They lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing, they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils... They dwelt in ease and peace.”<sup>5</sup> This vision of the Golden Age by Hesiod definitely presented an ideal world, but unfortunately a world that was long gone. Hesiod proceeds to describe the decline of the human condition through the silver, bronze, and finally iron ages. Hesiod lamented that contemporary humanity lived in the Iron Age, an age of violence, bloodshed, and impiety.<sup>6</sup>

The Romans adopted Hesiod’s story just as they did for most of Greek mythology. The Roman poet Ovid, a contemporary of Vergil, has his own depiction of the Golden Age in his *Metamorphoses*, which fairly accurately echoes his Greek predecessor. Ovid represents the Golden Age as an era of prosperity, peace and trust. Here laws were unnecessary because everyone was naturally righteous. He claims that the fall of man resulted from the metamorphosis of virtues into vices, “They fled modesty, truth and faith, and entered into a place of deceit, contrivance, tricks, violence, and desecrated love of possession.”<sup>7</sup>

Hesiod and Ovid reflected the tendency in the ancient world to view the human condition as being on a downward slope ever since its pinnacle in the distant past. Vergil challenged this notion with his optimism. He claimed that it was not just possible for humanity to redeem itself and for the Golden Age to return, but that this return was, in fact, underway. Hesiod’s vision presented an ideal world that was lost due to circumstances beyond human control (the dethroning of Saturn by Jupiter). Vergil offers an alternate view: That it was human vice that

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<sup>5</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 109 – 120.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 129-131.

caused their downfall, and that human virtue could bring the Golden Age back. In Vergil's account, the Golden Age is confined specifically to Latium (the region of Rome), where Saturn fled *after* being dethroned by Jupiter:

This wild stock, scattered on high mountains, he brought together,  
Gave them laws, and Latium he preferred the land to be called,  
Since he had safely lain hidden within these boundaries.  
The golden age was what they brought forward under that ruler:  
Thus gentle Saturn used to rule the people in peace,  
Until gradually, a lesser and tarnished age came upon them,  
And the madness of war, and the love of possession.<sup>8</sup>

Vergil's paradise is a utilitarian one. Only after Saturn had united the tribes of Latium under law and order, as well as his "gentle" rule, did the people live in peace and prosperity. Like Ovid, Vergil describes the fall as resulting from a loss of important virtues; the *amor habendi*, "love of possession," and the *rabies belli*, "madness of war" tarnished the Age of Gold. The Latins lived in a peaceful and secure society; their happiness was due to adherence to virtue and their unity under their great, divine ruler, Saturn. From this passage, I have interpreted Vergil's three facets of the Golden Age: peace and security, the absence of corruption and adherence to virtue, and prosperity under a divine leader, who lays down the laws of state and ensures the security of the people. If these could be met once more, the Golden Age could return. Horace declares to his friend Iullus in *Carmina* 4.2 that Augustus is the great leader and that the Golden Age is at hand, to be celebrated upon Augustus' return from Gaul:

The fates and good gods have never given,  
Nor will they give, a greater and better gift to the earth  
Than Caesar, however much time should return  
Into the ancient age of gold.  
You will sing harmoniously of the joyful days,  
A city of public play, and a forum devoid of  
Litigations, upon the return of brave Augustus having been achieved.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid* VIII, 321-327.

<sup>9</sup> Horace, *Carmina* IV.ii, 37-44

One could reasonably argue that Vergil and Horace simply fashioned their concept to Augustus' regime in retrospect, considering that the *Aeneid* and the fourth book of *Carmina* were written after much of Augustus' reforms had already taken place. This fact would make the argument of Augustus' achievement of Vergil's Golden Age circular. If Vergil based his concept upon achievements that Augustus had already completed, Augustus could have easily told him to spread the idea as a justification of his completed actions, not as the original ideology behind them. However, Vergil had been prophesying the coming of the Golden Age long before it became clear that Augustus would even take sole power, let alone reform government and society. Surrounded in the pessimistic atmosphere at the heart of the civil wars in 39 BC, Vergil released his *Eclogues*, which contained "Messianic anticipation and radiant hope for a 'Paradise Regained.'"<sup>10</sup> In *Ecloga* 4, Vergil proclaims:

Now too the Virgin returns, the Saturnian kingdom returns,  
Now a new progeny is being sent down from high heaven.  
On the boy being born, by whom the iron will first cease  
And the golden race will arise in the whole world  
Only you, chaste Lucina, show favor: Now your Apollo reigns.<sup>11</sup>

His image of the savior-child coming to save humanity from suffering is later interpreted by Christians as divine revelation for the coming of Christ, but it was in fact in reference to young Octavian or Marcellus' offspring with Octavian's sister. Whether or not Vergil intended the passage for him, Augustus himself consciously took up the mission and showed an obvious effort to achieve it. The evidence for Augustus taking Vergil's message of the Golden Age to

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<sup>10</sup> Meyer Reinhold, *The Golden Age of Augustus* (Toronto: Samuel-Stevens, 1978), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Vergil, *Eclogues* IV, 6-10.

heart lies in the imagery, language and symbolism in which he surrounded himself.<sup>12</sup> For example, Augustus printed a coin, on which he superimposed his public task to restore the Republic upon a tripod, the symbol of Apollo. This both depicted the divine nature of his tasks and recalled the language of the *Ecloga*.<sup>13</sup> Since Augustus took upon himself the task of achieving the Golden Age, I contend that his success in reality truly led to the future that Vergil had envisioned for Rome. Despite the fact that both Vergil and Horace were writing in favor of Augustus, his goals were in line with what traditional Romans would view as a Golden Age for their civilization. In addition, the Vergilian hope for Augustan achievement inspired the concept of progress toward a brighter future for one of the first times in history.

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<sup>12</sup> See W. Eder, "Augustan Principate as Binding Link," 84-85, H. Galsterer, "A Man, A Book and A Method," 16, T.J. Luce, "Livy, Augustus, and the Forum Augustum," 123, and B.A. Kellum, "The City Adorned," 276 all in Raaflaub and Toher.

<sup>13</sup> H.-P. Stahl, "The Death of Turnus: Augustan Vergil and the Political Rival" in Raaflaub and Toher, 175. The inscription read "RPC" (*Rei Publicae Constituendae*).

## 2.0 PEACE AND SECURITY

*“Rem publicam a dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi.”*<sup>14</sup>

The images of peace and return of virtues in Vergil’s *Aeneid* and Horace’s *Carmina* were likely extremely enticing to the Romans living contemporaneously with such writings (roughly from 31 to 21 BC), even to the most hardened Republicans.<sup>15</sup> The year 31 BC had finally seen the end of a string of seemingly endless civil wars that had continued, relatively uninterrupted, since 49. Augustus accomplished this end with the Battle of Actium and the defeat of Marcus Antonius, and thus achieved the first facet of the Golden Age. However, Augustus appeared to end the civil wars due to a brutal and single-minded quest for ultimate power, not for an idealistic goal such as the one mentioned by Vergil. This leads ancient and modern scholars alike to make a break between the “Octavian period” of 44 BC to 31 BC, in which Octavian sought power alone, and the “Augustus period” of 31 BC to 14 AD, when the reborn Augustus chose to restore the Republic to glory.

I will argue, however, that Augustus intended to repair the problems with the Republic from the start. Surely at the age of 18, he had no idea how exactly he was going to do that, but his acceptance of Julius Caesar’s dynastic appointment of him as *Magister Equitum* at such a young and inexperienced age demonstrated two things. First, it showed that his faith in the

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<sup>14</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 1.1.

<sup>15</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub and L.J. Samons II, “Opposition to Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 452.

current Republican government was non-existent. Second, and more importantly, it showed that he believed himself, even at 18, to be the most capable man to lead the Republic out of corruption and violence. He used brutally efficient means to end the civil wars and to gain power for himself, but he proved to only use that power for the purpose of carrying out his ultimate goal: the restoration of the Roman civilization.

The cause of the civil wars was given by contemporaries and historians alike as the corrupting influence of Rome's rapid rise to power.<sup>16</sup> Rome's government had been established to govern a city-state, not an empire. A group of collegial magisterial offices, gained through elections by popular assemblies, shared the executive and legislative power of the city, and the senate was made up of former magistrates. The intention of this system was for competition among the nobility for these offices to encourage each candidate to strive for excellence. As the empire expanded, however, the competition for the offices grew healthier and tended to lead to bribery and circumvention of the constitution. As Sallust put it, men were no longer interested in the "good arts" of their ancestors: "Even men of humble birth, who formerly used to surpass the nobility in merit, rather pursue power and honor by intrigue and dishonesty, than by honorable qualifications."<sup>17</sup>

As the power of the Roman Republic increased, the struggle for leadership positions became more violent, immoral, and illegal, such as the murder of the Gracchi tribunes or Gaius Marius' unprecedented seven consulships. Certain ambitious nobles in the first century resorted to either civil unrest, loopholes in the system, or even military insurrections to get the positions they desired. Sallust claimed that upon entering politics, he found many adversities, "For on

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<sup>16</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum*, 4; Andrew Lintott, *The Romans in the Age of Augustus* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2010), 39.

<sup>17</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum*, 4.18-19.

behalf of modesty, self-restraint, and virtue, unscrupulous conduct, bribery, and greed were thriving.”<sup>18</sup> This attitude in the Roman government led to the deterioration and disregard of the Roman virtues and constitution, which ultimately culminated in the major civil war between the competing strongmen, Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. Upon his success, Caesar became the sole ruler of Rome and was given the title of *dictator perpetuus*. Though he made no attempt to veil his dictatorship, Caesar justified his actions in his *De Bello Civili*, claiming that the senate had unfairly and prematurely stripped him of his rightful command.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of his attempts to justify himself, Caesar had broken the most important virtue in the Roman Republic, which was the one upon which it was founded: *libertas*.<sup>20</sup>

On March 15, 44 BC, a group of senators assassinated Caesar as a tyrant, calling for the restoration of the Republic, but at that point the damage to the government proved to be irreparable. The value of Republican government was observed by the educated nobility only, and Caesar had been very popular with the common Roman people for his many benefactions. After Caesar’s death, his “faction” had the loyalty of many of the Republic’s thirty legions throughout the empire, and the continued support of the people of Rome and Italy, to whom Caesar’s will had continued to show patronage. His successors, primarily his generals Marcus Antonius and Marcus Lepidus, and heir Gaius Octavius, swiftly stepped into his place, and popular opinion supported them against the tyrannicides. Octavian Caesar immediately revealed his intense ambition upon his arrival in Italy: It seemed from the start that his single-minded purpose was to attain and maintain absolute power. He assumed the innumerable former clients of Caesar, many of them military figures, and also a vast portion of the latter’s wealth. After a

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<sup>18</sup> Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Caesar, *Commentarii De Bello Civili* I, 9; Barbara Levick, *Augustus: Image and Substance* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2010), 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> C. Meier, “Formation of the Alternative” in Raaflaub and Toher, 54-59; Lintott, 16, 69.

comet shot across the sky during Caesar's funeral, leading the people to believe that Caesar had been accepted among the gods, Octavian styled himself as *divi filius*, and declared his official goal as *Caesaris ultor*, a title which he later used to justify his actions during this period.<sup>21</sup>

Octavian rapidly showed his willingness to switch sides and change alliances for the sake of achieving his goals. He pursued these goals "methodically and ruthlessly," and "he made friends and afterwards sacrificed them without batting an eyelid; if betrayal served his end, he did not hesitate to betray."<sup>22</sup> After raising an army and joining the consuls Aulus Hirtius and Gaius Vibius Pansa in order to relieve conspirator Decimus Brutus from a siege by Antonius, Octavian returned to Rome following the suspect death of both consuls in battle and demanded that he be given the consulship himself. In 43 BC, Octavian switched sides again to join Antonius and Lepidus as one of the *tresviri rei publicae constituendae*, or "three men for the reconstitution of the Republic." This title stood only as a thinly veiled cover and perhaps as wishful thinking for three new dictators instead of one. Crushing any hope for a restoration of the Republic, the triumvirs remained in power for the next ten years (43 BC - 32 BC). The triumvirs carried out the proscriptions to wipe out all rivals in Rome and also for the benefit of seizing money and property for their cause. They then defeated the last of the Republican resistance at Philippi and divided the empire amongst themselves: Antonius gaining the East; Lepidus, Africa; and Octavian, Italy and the West.<sup>23</sup>

Over the course of the next ten years, Octavian solidified his power in the West and prepared to remove his colleagues. His actions during this period appear to be immoral and without remorse. Cicero, who had originally supported Octavian upon his arrival in Rome, was

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<sup>21</sup> Lintott, 69-71; Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustan Rome* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), 85; Levick, 4-6, 26-29.

<sup>22</sup> Z. Yavetz, "The Personality of Augustus" in Raaflaub and Toher, 32-33.

<sup>23</sup> Lintott, 70-71; Levick, 31. This series of events is depicted much more favorably in Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 1.

killed in the proscriptions which the latter had approved. When Lucius Antonius led a rebellion from Perugia in 41 BC, Octavian brutally crushed the resistance. He eliminated threats such as Sextus Pompey and Lepidus, and began spreading propaganda against Antonius as an oriental despot, who had taken up with the Egyptian queen Cleopatra.<sup>24</sup> In 32 BC, Octavian had all of the inhabitants of Italy swear the Oath of Allegiance, which gave him “universal consent” over affairs, as he boasts in his *Res Gestae*.<sup>25</sup> Octavian likely called for the Oath for two reasons: the first was that he could claim the universal consent for his cause, and the second was to solidify his position of protector of Rome against Antonius and Egypt. Due to his task of settling veterans on Italian territory, and his brutality in dealing with the resulting dissent (Perusia), Octavian was originally less popular than Antonius in Italy. However, the People’s desire for security for their lives and property from further wars and proscriptions allowed Octavian to present himself as the only person capable of realizing this end.<sup>26</sup>

In 31 BC, after Antonius moved his forces to Actium, Octavian sallied forth from Italy at the head of a fleet led by Agrippa and with 700 senators, whom he later claimed joined him voluntarily to save the Republic. The battle itself was very anticlimactic, and after a short struggle, Antonius and Cleopatra retreated to Egypt. Octavian gained the allegiance of the Eastern provinces over the course of the following year, and in 30 BC, invaded Egypt, leading to the suicides of both Antonius and Cleopatra. Peace had been restored to the Roman Empire, as there was no one left to oppose Octavian as sole ruler. To contemporaries, the lines dividing the three civil wars between 49 and 31 were likely blurred, and it seemed as if they would stretch on

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<sup>24</sup> Lintott, 72-75; Levick, 32-40.

<sup>25</sup> Lintott, 75; Levick, 47; Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 34.1.

<sup>26</sup> C. Meier, “Formation of the Alternative” in Raaflaub and Toher, 63-64.

forever.<sup>27</sup> Though it was unspectacular in reality, it was the Battle of Actium that Augustus used as his most prominent symbol for the end of the civil wars.

As there had been short reprieves before, Romans during the 20's BC had no assurance that the wars had actually ended. Both the hope for peace and the belief in Augustus' ability to prevent further civil wars caused the people to place their entire faith upon him. The historian Wallace-Hadrill comments, "Augustus' new order was rooted in a new mythology: in emotionally charged symbols which touched on deep fears and hopes, on values so basic that all Romans shaped their lives around them."<sup>28</sup> For this reason, Augustan propaganda dramatized Actium into a clash between the titans of Roman virtues and Eastern despotism. Antonius, who had taken up with the Egyptian queen Cleopatra, was represented in the propaganda as a Roman corrupted by eastern splendor and excess, who wished to return to rule Rome as a monarch. Antonius's defeat at Actium was at the center of this mythology, and was used as a symbol of salvation, both from internal wars and from destruction at the hands of Rome's enemies.<sup>29</sup> As the centerpiece of Augustan mythology and a symbol of the *Pax Romana*, Actium was immortalized in dramatic passages by the Augustan poets. Vergil included one of the most memorable depictions of the battle in the *Aeneid*, carved into the Shield of Aeneas by the god Vulcan:

On one flank, Caesar Augustus leading Italy into battle, the Senate and People too, the gods of hearth and home and the great gods themselves... And opposing them comes Antonius leading on the riches of the Orient... and trailing in his wake, that outrage, his Egyptian wife... Anubis barks and the queen's chaos of monster gods train their spears on Neptune, Venus, and great Minerva.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Lintott, 75-76; Levick, 48.

<sup>28</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustan Rome*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 1, 5-9; Horace, *Epodes* IX and *Carmina* I.XXXVII; Tonio Holscher, "Monuments of the Battle of Actium" in Jonathan Edmondson, ed., *Augustus* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 310-315.

<sup>30</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid* VIII, 790-820.

This dramatic symbol of Actium provoked vivid imagery of eastern barbarism, and emphasized the civilized and sacred force of Rome against oriental excesses and barking animal gods. In both *Epodes* 9 and *Carmina* 1.37, Horace also propagated this image and suggests what would have happened if Augustus had failed: “The insane queen was preparing the ruin of the Capitol and the fall of our power with her tainted band of deformed men.”<sup>31</sup> Augustus prudently only declared war on the foreign queen, Cleopatra, so that he could avoid the accusation of furthering civil strife. Indeed, Augustus’ war with Antonius did end the internal wars and bring peace to Rome. Augustus publicized his promise of continued peace by instilling it into the people with the Actium propaganda. In this way, he ensured that the Romans felt safe and secure under his rule. This was his way of accomplishing the first task of the Golden Age. But was bringing peace for the sake of the Golden Age his intention, or merely a side-effect of his quest for power?

As the accounts above show, his brutal methods and single-minded ambition might sway one toward the latter interpretation. Such a character would be nothing like the founder of the Golden Age that Vergil depicts. The poet Propertius recounts the brutality of Augustus early in his career in his account of the destruction of Perugia in 41 BC. Augustus had besieged Lucius Antonius, and upon the latter’s surrender, destroyed the city and massacred the dissidents. In *Elegia* 1.22, Propertius laments the Perugian massacre and the death of his uncle in it. “If the Perugian graves of the fatherland are known to you, the massacre of Italians in a harsh time, when Roman discord drove our citizens...”<sup>32</sup> Later in his career, Propertius began writing pro-Augustan poetry, likely by suggestion of his patron Maecenas, who was Augustus’ trusted advisor. Even during this period, his poems remain suggestively critical of Augustus and his

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<sup>31</sup> Horace, *Carmina* I.XXXVII, 6-9.

<sup>32</sup> Propertius, *Elegiae* I.XXII, 3-5.

regime. An example of this would be *Elegiae* 3.4 and 3.5, two poems released together, that both seem to praise Augustus' deeds and greatness. However, closer observation of the first lines of each may reveal Propertius' implicit opinion. *Elegia* 3.4 begins with “*Arma deus Caesar,*” meaning “The god Caesar [ponders] war,” and *Elegia* 3.5 with “*Pacis Amor deus est,*” meaning “The god of peace is Love.”<sup>33</sup> From this, it seems that Propertius is suggesting that Caesar (Augustus) is the bringer of war and only Love can bring peace. Such skepticism about the methods of Augustus' establishment of peace surely was held by other Roman statesmen, considering that his methods during the civil wars were essentially wiping out all who challenged him. However, evidence shows that they were few, and almost none acted upon their feelings.<sup>34</sup>

The so-called “Octavian period” is infamous among scholars even to this day. Augustus himself seems to admit that the period is controversial by almost completely omitting that portion of his life from his *Res Gestae*, and by putting his spin on what he leaves in.<sup>35</sup> In *Augustus: Image and Substance*, Barbara Levick refers to the seeming break between “Octavian” from 44 to 31 BC and “Augustus” from 31 BC to 14 AD as “The Enigma:” “How did the cold-blooded triumvir become the benign father of the country?”<sup>36</sup> Raaflaub and Toher, in their Editors' Preface for *Between Republic and Empire*, claim that in the “Debate about Augustus:” “Almost by necessity those who judge the first *princeps* favorably distinguish between Octavian, the avenger, proscriber... and Augustus, the *princeps* and creator of the *res publica restituta*... bringer of peace, reformer and organizer.”<sup>37</sup> The opposing view, they claim, is the “unitarian”

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, III.IV, 1 and III.V, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub and L.J. Samons II, “Opposition to Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 418-431, 454.

<sup>35</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 1-3; W. Eder, “Augustan Principate as Binding Link” in Raaflaub and Toher, 72.

<sup>36</sup> Levick, 8-9.

<sup>37</sup> Raaflaub and Toher, *Between Republic and Empire*, XII.

view, which depicts Octavian and Augustus as the same man, ruthlessly pursuing power throughout his life.<sup>38</sup>

I would agree that Augustus did not undergo a sudden change of heart: Octavian and Augustus are the same man. However, I believe that it was the reformer and organizer side that existed throughout, not the power-hungry one. In “The Augustan Principate as Binding Link Between Republic and Empire,” W. Eder argues that even though it is now customary to divide the civil war phase from the reform phase, contemporaries had no concept of such a division of policy. To them, Augustus’ reign was one, coherent whole, and only after his death did later scholars consider 31 BC a turning point.<sup>39</sup> Augustus only cut his ties with Octavian in 14 AD, because he did not want to be *remembered* for civil wars, not particularly because he was ashamed of them. Though his methods were immoral and unjustifiable, Augustus intended to place himself at the head of the Roman state because he believed he was the most fitting to repair its problems. The reform and restoration of Rome, or at least the city itself, begins almost immediately after Antonius and Cleopatra’s defeat in Egypt: This shows that Augustus intended this goal for his regime, but first he had to eliminate those who stood in the way. Augustus’ actions during the triumviral period were learned from the turbulent period into which he was born. Would Antonius have been merciful if he had been the victor? Would Cicero? As Eder points out, Augustus’ methods in the civil war were not a particularly unheard of way of handling things in Rome: “Octavian’s role in the proscriptions and the betrayal of Cicero, the cruel slaughter of citizens and senators at Perugia... render him an unsympathetic figure, but not entirely an un-republican one.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Levick, 23: She is a proponent of the view that Augustus’ sole goal was power.

<sup>39</sup> W. Eder, “Augustan Principate as Binding Link” in Raaflaub and Toher, 72.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

Evidence from the Augustan poets supports the conclusion that Augustus intended the restoration and reform of Rome all along, under his supervision of course, and that he was not just out for power in the civil wars. In response to the objections of Augustus' brutality, Vergil and Horace agree that force was necessary to end the Roman civil wars and bring the peace of the Golden Age; both urge not to show pity to those who harm the state. In *Carmina* 1.2, Horace calls for Mercury, in the human form of *Caesaris ultor* (here specifically calling Augustus to mind), to remain on earth until his task is done and for "the Marsian infantry [to show] no pity for his bleeding enemy."<sup>41</sup> In the dramatic conclusion to the *Aeneid*, Aeneas refuses the requests for mercy by Turnus, his arch-enemy, when he is reminded of Turnus' crimes against his friends.<sup>42</sup> In the story of Turnus' war against the Trojans in books 7 through 12 of the *Aeneid*, Vergil, intentionally or not, makes a very compelling argument for Augustus' actions during the civil war. As H.-P. Stahl puts it in his essay "The Death of Turnus:"

Could any reader in the time of Augustus fail to observe the symphonic pitch in epic and present-day political pronouncements, e.g. the declared desire for peace and the unwelcome burden of having had to wage a holy war against sacrilegious rebels who threatened the community?... By identifying the Aeneadae (i.e., the future Julians) with Fate and the will of the highest god, [Vergil] is able to do two things. He can, on one hand, disentangle Augustus from the (often gruesome) incidents of the recent civil war: Octavian did not participate as yet another faction. Rather, he is the latest member of a family whose divine mission the *Aeneid* firmly anchors in the mythical past... Vergil is also able, on the other hand, to define... the political adversary as a criminal opponent of divine authority.<sup>43</sup>

Some scholars argue for the opposite position: That Vergil's story of Turnus was intentionally subversive to Augustus' regime, and it points out his hypocrisies rather than justifying them. In "The Isolation of Turnus," R.F. Thomas responds directly to Stahl's essay with this point of view. According to Thomas, the last six books of the *Aeneid* should be

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<sup>41</sup> Horace, *Carmina* I.II, 37-44.

<sup>42</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid*, XII, 1080-1113.

<sup>43</sup> H.-P. Stahl, "The Death of Turnus: Augustan Vergil and the Political Rival" in Raaflaub and Toher, 176-177.

considered the “tragedy of Turnus;” As Aeneas moves from near death in the first books to victory in the end, Turnus moves in an “opposite and reciprocal” direction, “confront[ing] death, hostile gods, and loss of his betrothed to his enemy.”<sup>44</sup> Thomas points out that Aeneas’ cruelty in battle is comparable to Turnus’, and that Stahl overlooks Aeneas’ own brutal actions, such as killing Lausus, in favor of attacking Turnus. He then spends several pages describing the death of “Homeric Aeneas” in Book 12’s combined *aristeia* of Aeneas and Turnus, which leads to Aeneas becoming the new “Roman Achilles” and Turnus the “Latin Hector.” Thomas’ argument successfully shows the equality of the two heroes, and that Turnus is the “victor in his tragedy” as M.C.J. Putnam puts it.<sup>45</sup>

I do not subscribe to the hypothesis that Vergil was subversive to Augustus’ regime, as Augustus himself clearly did not when he had the *Aeneid* published.<sup>46</sup> Though the genius and complexity of Vergil’s writing allows for various interpretations, I believe the necessity of Turnus’ death in Book 12 and its justifications are clear, and are established forthwith. Before Turnus’ character is even introduced, Vergil tells of Faunus’ prophecy to Latinus that the gods and Fate have decreed that strangers were coming to Latium who will one day rule the world, and that Lavinia must be married to one of them and not a native.<sup>47</sup> While Aeneas sides with Fate throughout the epic, Turnus willfully defies it when Allecto encourages him to fight for Lavinia, thus ignoring the prophecy. When Turnus, crazed, seizes his weapons, it reminds the

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<sup>44</sup> R.F. Thomas, “The Isolation of Turnus,” in *Vergil’s Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd.), 275-276.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 278-283.

<sup>46</sup> H.-P. Stahl, “The Death of Turnus: Augustan Vergil and the Political Rival” in Raaflaub and Toher, 176-177.

<sup>47</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid* VII, 90-112.

reader of the same description of Aeneas in Book 2; the difference is that Aeneas was crazed with his duty to save his home, while Turnus was crazed with jealousy and personal desires.<sup>48</sup>

Not only does Vergil clearly place Turnus and his actions against the expressed will of Fate and Jupiter, but he is also repeatedly condemned for doing so, including by Jupiter himself.<sup>49</sup> Despite this, Latinus makes it clear to Turnus that he is still a friend of Latium, and even offers him his rightful kingdom if only he would allow Aeneas to marry Lavinia. Turnus does not only refuse, but becomes even more irrationally infuriated: Turnus is not cruelly isolated in the *Aeneid*, but chooses to isolate himself due to his own rage.<sup>50</sup> I agree with Thomas that Aeneas' and Turnus' actions on the battlefield are equally brutal, and that Turnus' slaying of Pallas was synonymous with Aeneas' slaying of Lausus. However, Aeneas' actions are justified by the fact that he is piously carrying out the will of gods by fighting for his right to stay in Latium, while Turnus is willfully defying oracles and claiming to be making his own oracles.<sup>51</sup> As per Augustan policy, for the sake of the state, enemies who pose a continuing threat must be extinguished, and only those who can be pardoned safely are given clemency.<sup>52</sup> Not only did Turnus' followers twice break the truce, but Turnus also explicitly declares his nature as the enemy of Jupiter.<sup>53</sup> Despite all of this, Aeneas still considers sparing Turnus, but, always true to his promises, he avenges Pallas for Evander's sake.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, II, 314-317: "*arma amens capio... glomerare manum bello et concurrere in arcem / cum sociis ardent animi*"; VII, 460-462: "*arma amens fremit... saevita morferri et scelerata insania belli, / ira super.*"

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, VII, 688-692; X, 1-20; XI, 260-265.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, XII, 20-70.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, IX, 155-165.

<sup>52</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 3.2.

<sup>53</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid* XII, 894-895. Turnus declares "*di me terrent et Iuppiter hostis*," "The gods terrify me, and Jupiter [my] enemy." Compare Thomas' favorable translation: "The gods terrify me and [having] Jupiter [as my] enemy."

<sup>54</sup> Levick, 266: "Not to take revenge was to lack *virtus* and *pietas*."

In my view, the story of Aeneas and Turnus serves as Augustus' poetic and mythical justification of himself, as Aeneas' dutiful, god-fearing descendant, when he destroyed his own enemies in the civil wars. As evidenced by Octavian's acceptance of the position of *Magister Equitum* at 18 or his demand for the consulship at 19, he believed himself to be the best for the job of leading the Roman state: This makes all of his competition detrimental to the state in his eyes. The poetic spin of this view is Vergil's depiction of Turnus, defying oracles and ignoring the proper course of Fate. Many Romans likely already thought that Augustus' actions were justified even before the *Aeneid*: This would not be the first or the last time that terrible deeds were justified for the preservation of the Roman state. For example, Pompey the Great, who used brutality consistently throughout his career, was hailed as one of the greatest Republicans.<sup>55</sup>

Beyond poetry, there were practical reasons why clemency was an unwise policy in the Roman civil wars. Gaius Marius' "reforms" of the Roman military made it so that any wealthy Roman could raise an army with enough money and influence.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, any enemy granted clemency could eventually turn it against his benefactor. In addition, the Roman nobility viewed clemency with resentment, and considered it to be condescending, as forgiveness came from divinities or royalty, not peers. Julius Caesar had been famous for his clemency, and his rival Cato memorably insisted on killing himself in Utica before Caesar could condescendingly acquit him.<sup>57</sup> Caesar's clemency ultimately ended up contributing to his assassination, as many of the conspirators had been ungrateful recipients.<sup>58</sup>

As it became clear that clemency was a bad strategy, even conservatives such as Cicero condemned it. Cicero had shown throughout his career that he had always been one of the

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<sup>55</sup> Lintott, 60-68.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 52, 67-68, 161.

<sup>57</sup> Caesar, *De Bello Africo*, 88.

<sup>58</sup> Levick, 3-4.

staunchest supporters of Republican virtues, and believed firmly in traditional ways. Broken by years of civil war, he himself admitted that only brutality could end the chaos for good. In his letters to the conspirator Marcus Junius Brutus before the latter's defeat at Philippi in 43 BC, Cicero urged him to give no quarter: "Brutus, I am dissenting from, not conceding to, your clemency, but rather, in the safest manner, severity conquers the useless quality of clemency."<sup>59</sup> In his carefully written *Res Gestae*, Augustus speaks of when he used clemency in 3.2 when he says, "Foreign peoples, which were able to be pardoned safely, I preferred to preserve rather than extinguish."<sup>60</sup> His language here is specific: He pardoned those foreign peoples, *externas gentes*, which could be pardoned safely, *tuto*. The underlying implication of this wording is that for those people he did not pardon, including some Roman *cives* in the civil wars, he could not do so safely. In this way, Augustus shows that he had the quality of *clementia*, but was willing to sacrifice anything for the security of the Republic. As recent history had shown in the case of Julius Caesar, it was not only dangerous for Augustus to show clemency to his foes: it was also dangerous to the peace of the Republic.<sup>61</sup>

As I have argued in this section, though Octavian was brutal and single-minded in the civil wars, he did not necessarily desire only power. His actions could be construed that way, but could also be interpreted as taking up the task of ending the civil turmoil that he was practically born into. As he later showed as Augustus, his desire was to take the security and preservation of the Republic into his own hands by any means possible, and he believed he was the fittest for the job. Though this point of view is admittedly arrogant, it is not the selfish, power-hungry

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<sup>59</sup> Cicero, *Epistularum ad Brutum* I.IIa, 2.

<sup>60</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 3.2

<sup>61</sup> Lintott, 67-68.

Octavian that Tacitus and Syme portray, but one who has a future in mind for Rome.<sup>62</sup> Augustus promoted an atmosphere of security under his rule. He extended the boundaries of the empire to easily defensible borders (the Atlantic Ocean, the Rhine, Danube and Euphrates Rivers, and the Arabian and Sahara Deserts), both through warfare and diplomacy.<sup>63</sup> Though his methods were brutal, his decisive actions ushered in an era of internal peace that would end up lasting for 207 years (27 BC – 180 AD), a period remembered by historians as the *Pax Romana*. In 9 BC, following Augustus' great conquests, the *Ara Pacis* was completed; it was surprisingly devoid of reference to Augustus' triumphs in war. The imagery of Altar instead represented the new era of paradise: The ultimate goal of his regime.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Z. Yavetz, "The Personality of Augustus" in Raaflaub and Toher, 27, 30-33; C. Meier, "Formation of the Alternative" in Raaflaub and Toher, 54-59.

<sup>63</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 26-33; Lintott, 159-160.

<sup>64</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustan Rome*, 70.

### 3.0 THE RESTORATION OF REPUBLICAN VIRTUES

*“Rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli.”*<sup>65</sup>

The peace and security brought by Augustus were undeniable, and were universally recognized, even, albeit grudgingly, by Tacitus. “War at the time was none... All at home was calm.”<sup>66</sup> Therefore, despite concerns about the means by contemporaries like Propertius and later historians, the first facet of the Golden Age was undeniably accomplished. The second facet, restoration of Roman virtues, Augustus worked to enact after he had achieved sole power. Throughout his entire reign, there is much evidence to show that Augustus worked vigorously to achieve this goal: his constitutional reforms, poetry, the *leges Iuliae*, and the *ludi Saeculares*. Since the central virtue of the Romans was a Republican government, Augustus was potentially in an awkward position as an autocrat.

Augustus knew that he must not be the symbol of a tyrant that his adoptive father Caesar had been, for his own safety as well as the comfort of the Roman people. The methods employed by Augustus to justify his rule were deceptive, but their result was the illusion of the restored Republic, which proved to be more than enough to satisfy everyone.<sup>67</sup> Though the deception was likely obvious to some, the fact remains that “through more than forty years of peace [he lived] almost unmolested in the midst of countrymen whom he had allegedly robbed of their

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<sup>65</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 34.1.

<sup>66</sup> Tacitus, *Annales* I, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub and L.J. Samons II, “Opposition to Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 452.

Republican freedom.”<sup>68</sup> Did Augustus propagate the illusion of the restored Republic and Roman virtues to ensure his own security or did he do it as part of a more inclusive program to restore the Republican way, the *mos maiorum*? I will argue for the latter view.

By the end of his ten years of triumviral power in 32 BC, Octavian had already established himself as the *de facto* ruler of Rome, and had demonized his opponent Antonius through his propaganda. As war with Antonius loomed, Octavian received the Oath of Allegiance from the Roman citizens to ensure his continued authority over the Romans after his triumviral powers had expired. Even after the Battle of Actium ended the crisis of civil war, Octavian was elected to the consulship every year from 31 BC to 23 BC, and his colleagues were never his true equals in power. In 29, after celebrating a triple triumph for Illyricum, Actium and Alexandria and being showered with honors from the senate, Octavian surely knew that it was urgent to restore power to the Republic soon, or he would suffer the same fate as Caesar. Accordingly, between 28 and 27, he made his first constitutional settlement with the senate.<sup>69</sup> Octavian later records this moment in his *Res Gestae*, saving it for the second to last chapter of his achievements for emphasis:

In my sixth and seventh consulships [28-27 BC], after I had extinguished the civil wars, when I had power of all affairs through universal consent, I transferred the Republic from my power into the judgment of the Senate and People of Rome... After that time, I exceeded all in influence, however, I held no more official power than others who were my colleagues.”<sup>70</sup>

By handing over *arbitrium* (judgment, discretion) to the senate and people, Octavian said he was essentially giving back the direction of government to the senate, declaring his success in the restoration of the Republic as *vir rei publicae constituendae*. This process took place over

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<sup>68</sup> W. Eder, “Augustan Principate as Binding Link” in Raaflaub and Toher, 85.

<sup>69</sup> Levick, 50-63.

<sup>70</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 34.

two years and culminated in the days January 13<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup>, 27 BC, when Octavian returned the power to the senate of organizing the provinces and military. In appreciation, on the sixteenth of January, the senate awarded him the *cognomen* of *Augustus*, “the revered one,” a name with very divine overtones, and he became *Princeps*, “the first citizen.” In addition, the senate awarded him with the civic crown for saving the state and the army, and the *clypeus aureus*, a golden shield, for his “valor, clemency, justice, and devotion,” which was placed in the senate house.<sup>71</sup> Instead of being an autocrat or ruler, Augustus depicted himself as simply a first among equals, whose power laid in his *auctoritas*, and who only served to watch over and protect the empire. Of course, as Barbara Levick observes, someone who had vigorously gone through so much work to attain power was not simply going to hand it over. Augustus correctly gambled that the senate would not make use of the *arbitrium* he gave back to them, and even if they had, his true power laid in his *auctoritas* over the armies and the people.<sup>72</sup>

In his *Annals*, Tacitus points out the fraud in Augustus’ claims to have returned the Republic to the senate and people. According to him, though it is true that Augustus laid down his official offices, he appeased and distracted both the armies and the people with food and gratuities, while he gathered up in himself “the functions of the senate, the magistracy, and the legislature.”<sup>73</sup> Though the *arbitrium* had been restored in theory, Augustus still pulled the strings of the government, elections and foreign policy when he saw fit. His claim that he held no power greater than his colleagues was thoroughly disingenuous, as his repeated consulships were merely façades over the realities of his power.<sup>74</sup> Tacitus posits that many of the nobility likely knew as he did, but were silenced out of fear. Tacitus depicts Augustus’ reign as one of terror, in

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<sup>71</sup> Levick, 65-74; Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 34: “*dare virtutis clementiaeque et iustitiae et pietatis causa.*”

<sup>72</sup> Levick, 65-74.

<sup>73</sup> Tacitus, *Annales* 1, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Levick, 71.

which dissent was “silenced.” However, Tacitus, supposedly reviewing the past “*sine ira et studio*,” writes very much from the perspective of a man disillusioned with the established monarchy of his day.<sup>75</sup> The tyrannical successors of Augustus, especially Nero, carried out the reigns of terror that Tacitus seems to superimpose upon Augustus as well. Though he was not completely without opposition, Augustus usually dealt with it clemently and fairly.<sup>76</sup>

The infamous *maiestas* trials that led the nobility into fearful submission were indeed first imposed by Augustus, but they only became used consistently in Tiberius’ reign, which Augustus had allegedly explicitly advised Tiberius not to do.<sup>77</sup> Augustus himself only prominently abused his power once between 27 BC and 23 BC to stop the Fannius Caepio and Varro Murena conspiracy. Depending on the chronology used, this did or did not serve as a cause for a second constitutional reform. Whether or not this conspiracy was involved in the resulting second reform, the ill-defined first reform still had numerous problems: one of the primary ones being that Augustus still wielded *imperium* and interfered in the affairs of the government well beyond his officially established power. The illegality of his position was made clear to the senate by 23 BC, and Augustus obviously exceeded the boundaries he had promised in 27. Aside from the vague boundary between what the *Princeps* could or could not do, his yearly re-election as one of the consuls removed one of only two of the most coveted positions by all of the nobility. In addition, he fell ill in 23 and began grooming his nineteen year old nephew, M. Claudius Marcellus, in a way that looked suspiciously like a dynastic arrangement.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Tacitus, *Annales* I, 1-3.

<sup>76</sup> Z. Yavetz, “The Personality of Augustus” and Kurt A. Raaflaub and L.J. Samons, “Opposition to Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 33-35; 432, 444.

<sup>77</sup> Suetonius, *The Life of Augustus*, 51.3: “*Aetati tuae, mi Tiberi, noli in hac re indulgere et nimium indignari quemqua messe, qui de me male loquatur; satis est enim, si hoc habemus ne quis nobis male facere possit.*”

<sup>78</sup> Levick, 80-84.

With these political problems in mind, Augustus performed the second reform in 23. He stepped down from the consulship and instead took *tribunicia potestas*, the power of the tribune without actually holding the office. This power finally made official some of the actions he had been performing already, including veto power, *sacrosanctitas*, and the ability to legislate and summon the senate. The position also connected Augustus closer to the *plebs*, who staunchly supported him as a *patronus* for his and his adoptive father's many benefactions to them. However, since he still had the loyalty of the armies and several provinces under his care, he also received *maius imperium proconsularis*, which gave him greater power than even the consuls to wield over the armies throughout the empire. Both the *tribunicia potestas* and *maius imperium* were outside the constitution and part of Augustus' own structure, which he could not only hold indefinitely but also without colleagues.<sup>79</sup> Since neither were official offices, he could duplicitously claim that he did nothing illegal in *Res Gestae*, "I accepted no magistracy inconsistent with the custom of the ancestors."<sup>80</sup> Despite all these concessions, public unrest arose upon Augustus' return from abroad in 19 BC, when the symbols of power, especially the *fasces*, were no longer carried with him. The people believed that the oligarchy of the senate had deprived him of power. When he refused the consulship, Augustus was awarded with the third settlement: the rights to wield *imperium* in Rome and Italy, sit between the consuls and to have his lictors carry the *fasces*.<sup>81</sup>

Supporting Tacitus' view, Lintott and Levick point out that Augustus' cunning constitutional reforms were disingenuous, and were for the purpose of lulling the people into a

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 84-87.

<sup>80</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 6.1.

<sup>81</sup> Levick, 89-90.

false sense of restored *libertas*, while ensuring the continued monarchy of the *Princeps*.<sup>82</sup> Like Octavian's ruthless actions during the civil war, Augustus' constitutional reforms can be seen as a single-minded quest to gain and maintain power. However, as with the earlier Octavian phase, I see Augustus' actions as part of his overall plan to restore Rome to its former greatness, and to preserve the *mos maiorum*, "the custom of the ancestors," which he is so concerned with appearing to uphold in the *Res Gestae*.<sup>83</sup> I believe, like Werner Eck, that Augustus did not systematically plan out the constitutional reforms for the sake of subverting the Senate and securing his own power. Rather, he reacted to the practical demands of the situations at hand in 27, 23 and 19 BC and created a result that was as Republican as possible in his view. In 27, the problem was that he still held emergency powers long after the civil wars had ended. In 23, the Caepio and Murena conspiracy and Augustus' poor health led to his stepping down from the consulship and receiving unofficial powers. Finally in 19, the people were rioting in the belief that the Senate had robbed Augustus of his power when he appeared without lictors or consular insignia.<sup>84</sup> Sir Ronald Syme, in his famous *Roman Revolution*, calls Augustus' reign as head of state "specious," the revival of Republican institutions "convenient," and the restoration of *libertas* a "necessary and salutary fraud," "but all that made no difference to the source and facts of power."<sup>85</sup> J. Linderski makes a rebuttal by saying, "To the source perhaps, but if it made no difference to the facts of power, why did Augustus promote the myth?"<sup>86</sup> It is absurd to think that the nobility was actually fooled by Augustus' façade, so why did he bother?

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<sup>82</sup> Levick, 63-68. Lintott, 77-79; Tacitus, *Annales* I, 1-3.

<sup>83</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 6.1 and 8.5.

<sup>84</sup> Werner Eck, trans. Claus Nader, "The Administrative Reforms of Augustus" in Edmondson, 248.

<sup>85</sup> Sir Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, 1-3, 516.

<sup>86</sup> J. Linderski, "Mommsen and Syme: Law and Power in the Principate of Augustus" in Raaflaub and Toher, 47.

Most classicists agree that Augustus likely intended the constitutional reforms, whether calculated plans or *ad hoc* reactions, to appease the senate and the nobility and to avoid the fate of Caesar.<sup>87</sup> Though Augustus probably desired this result as well, he proceeded to take steps well beyond convincing the nobility alone: He made it clear that the illusion of the restored Republic was not just aimed at the nobility, but everyone in the empire. In 28 BC, a coin was minted depicting Augustus on the obverse with the inscription “IMP. CAESAR DIVI F. COS. VI,” and on the reverse he was handing over a scroll with the inscription, “LEGES ET IVRA P.R. RESTITVIT,” “He restored the laws and rights of the Roman People.” The unusual emphasis of Augustus on both sides of the coin drives the point home.<sup>88</sup> Coins were minted for the whole empire, and H. Galsterer points out that through them, distant provincials likely received their only glimpse of political affairs at Rome. This was the image that Augustus wanted to give to the vast majority of the empire, despite the fact that he only needed to convince the nobility to retain his power.<sup>89</sup>

In “Formation of the Alternative,” C. Meier argues that throughout the first century BC, the constitution of the Republic was failing under the pressure of competing strongmen but there was no alternative: The nobility believed that the status quo was for the best. However, the harder the oligarchy fought against the rising strongmen, the harder the strongmen fought back until Caesar took his perpetual dictatorship. By the time Augustus came onto the scene, it was clear to the intelligent observer that the old system was broken.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, when Augustus took up the task of restoring the Republic, in which he claimed victory in 28-27 BC, his idea of

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<sup>87</sup> Edmondson, ed., *Augustus*, 197-198; Levick, 63-68; C. Meier, “Formation of the Alternative” in Raaflaub and Toher, 54-59.

<sup>88</sup> Levick, 67-69.

<sup>89</sup> H. Galsterer, “A Man, A Book and A Method” in Raaflaub and Toher, 16.

<sup>90</sup> C. Meier, “Formation of the Alternative” in Raaflaub and Toher, 54-59.

“restoration” was repairing the government in his own way. His alternative was to keep the Republic running exactly the way it was, but with a “first citizen,” not a monarch, at the top to ensure its security and order. If the civil wars from 49-31 BC were not enough to convince the oligarchy that it needed protection, Augustus drove the point home by taking control of the frontier provinces that held the majority of the military. “More and more, [the Republic] *needed* him.”<sup>91</sup> But did Augustus hold to his promise to only be a protector and not a monarch? Was his touch light enough to be overlooked? I believe as W. Eder says,

Must Augustus’ contemporaries have recognized the ‘necessary and salutary fraud’ of the Principate, if fraud it really was? Did not the *princeps* operate rather in such a way that all classes of the populace, without having to charge themselves with blatant self-deception, could come to the conviction that Augustus acted largely within the traditional political system? Perhaps he did not explicitly act as a Republican, but he certainly acted like a Republican.<sup>92</sup>

As *princeps*, Augustus could allow the machinery of the Republic to continue running, appeasing the nobility, while still exerting his authority unmolested. The nobles were content because they could still hold offices and wield their powers, as long as their actions were not against Augustus’ policies. Raaflaub and Samons give several reasons why Augustus met so little opposition from the senators and nobility. The senate, though its powers were limited by the *princeps*, gained more power in legislation and jurisdiction, and more distinction and *maiestas* under the Principate. Also, Augustus fixed numerous problems with the Republic by getting things done and stopping civil war. For the Republicans living at the time of the elder Caesar, this system would not have been enough to convince them to sacrifice their *libertas*,<sup>93</sup> but as Tacitus laments, “How few were left who had seen the Republic?”<sup>94</sup> With so many clients within

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 66-67.

<sup>92</sup> W. Eder, “Augustan Principate as Binding Link” in Raaflaub and Toher, 86.

<sup>93</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub and L.J. Samons, “Opposition to Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 450-454.

<sup>94</sup> Tacitus, *Annales* I, 3.

the Senate and with the Republicans dead or content under his protection, why did Augustus bother to work so hard to spread the image of the restored Republic? My answer to that is that Augustus really wanted his system to be a “repaired Republic,” an alternative to the system broken by years of civil war. As I have argued in the first section of this paper, Augustus’ single-minded and consequent goal throughout his career was the restoration and mending of the Republic under his leadership. Suetonius gives the evidence for his sincerity:

He twice thought of restoring the republic; first immediately after the overthrow of Antony, remembering that his rival had often made the charge that it was his fault that it was not restored; and again in the weariness of a lingering illness, when he went so far as to summon the magistrates and the senate to his house, and submit an account of the general condition of the empire. Reflecting, however, that as he himself would not be free from danger if he should retire, so too it would be hazardous to trust the State to the control of more than one, he continued to keep it in his hands; and it is not easy to say whether his intentions or their results were the better. His good intentions he not only expressed from time to time, but put them on record as well in an edict in the following words: **“May it be my privilege to establish the State in a firm and secure position, and reap from that act the fruit that I desire; but only if I may be called the author of the best possible government, and bear with me the hope when I die that the foundations which I have laid for the State will remain unshaken.”** And he realized his hope by making every effort to prevent any dissatisfaction with the new régime.<sup>95</sup>

Defining the new nature of the Republic in the constitutional reforms was just the first step in restoring the state. Now that Augustus had responded to the fall of the Republic, he had to address the causes of that fall. “A cornerstone of Augustus’ programme of restoration was his determination to reassert traditional values and morality, not least since moral decline and an associated neglect of religion were seen by contemporaries as major causes of the fall of the Republic.”<sup>96</sup> Though the Romans had many important values, there were six major virtues that were emphasized during the Augustan Age. This was evidenced by the “Roman Odes” of Horace, which address each virtue in turn: *Temperantia* (Moderation, Restraint), *Virtus*

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<sup>95</sup> Suetonius. *The Life of Augustus*, 28.1-2. [Emphasis is my own.]

<sup>96</sup> Edmondson, ed., *Augustus*, 2-3. Specific examples: Horace, *Carmina* I.II and III.VI; Propertius, *Elegiae* III.XIII.

(Manliness, Bravery, Valor), *Iustitia* (Justice, Righteousness), *Clementia* (Clemency, Mercy), *Fides* (Faith, Confidence, Loyalty), and *Pietas* (Devotion to Duty, State, Family and Religion).<sup>97</sup>

In these six Odes, Horace calls for all Romans, especially Augustus as their leader, to restore and uphold these virtues because it was their desecration that led to the devastation wrought by civil war and corruption. “This age is prolific in sin / it has polluted first marriage, family and homes: / derived from this source, the calamities flowed into the country and its people.”<sup>98</sup>

According to M.C.J. Putnam, the first three books of *Carmina* not only show Horace’s skepticism of Rome’s restoration, but also “shed light on what one of Rome’s most brilliant minds thought of the Principate itself and its prime mover.”<sup>99</sup> The third book was likely released with the first two in 23 BC: In all three books, Horace shows that the Golden Age was still a fragile and distant idea at that time, and that Vergil’s supposed optimism in his works was not pragmatic. Horace displays throughout the first three books that he is skeptical of Rome’s true safety from civil war, even after Actium, and does not believe that it can be content with its foreign conquests; much work still needed to be done. In addition, he shows skepticism for Augustus himself. In all the poems addressed to Augustus or concerning him, Horace reminds him of his duty and the tenuous nature of Rome’s security. For example, in Ode 1.12, he urges Mercury in the form of *Caesaris ultor* (Augustus) to live up to his father, rescue Rome from civil strife, and conquer the Parthians. In 1.35, Horace immediately follows another call to conquer Parthia with a reminder of the recent civil wars.<sup>100</sup> Putnam focuses his work on Ode 2.9, in which Horace’s blatant imitation of Vergil shows that he believes praise of Augustus is best left

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<sup>97</sup> Horace, *Carmina* III.I-VI. The “Augustan virtues” of *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia* and *pietas* are those inscribed on the *Clypeus Aureus* as described in Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 34.2.

<sup>98</sup> Horace, *Carmina* III.VI, 17-20.

<sup>99</sup> M.C.J. Putnam, “Horace and the Ambiguities of *Encomium*” in Raaflaub and Toher, 213.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 213-214.

to the latter, and “[The] Augustan *encomium* will be based on borrowed words that... will be as lacking in imagination as elegy’s repetitiveness and the bottled emotions it imitates.”<sup>101</sup>

Horace’s skepticism carries into the “Roman Odes” of *Carmina* III. Each one outlines a virtue that not only the people, but Augustus himself must restore. If Augustus is to be praised as a demigod, Horace demands that he must live up to their deeds. In III.3.12, Horace says that Augustus will recline with Pollux and Heracles drinking nectar for his justice, but the verb, *bibet*, is in the future tense, implying that this future is conditional upon Augustus’ performance.<sup>102</sup> Horace’s views of Augustus likely reflected what much of the nobility thought at that time, which makes Augustus’ actions from 23-19 BC all the more meaningful. First, Spain was finally conquered. Second, and more importantly, Augustus and Tiberius placed a puppet king on the throne of Armenia, and regained the lost standards of Crassus and Antonius from the Parthians through diplomacy. Though both of these actions were wildly exaggerated as a “conquest of Armenia and a humiliation of Parthia,” they regained the honor called for by Horace and the nobility.<sup>103</sup> However, Augustus worked to achieve Horace’s more important message, to restore the virtues of the Romans, in a much more realistic way from 19-18 BC.

Augustus passed the *leges Iuliae*, ratified in 18 BC, with the intention of restoring the Roman virtues in one, bundled package.<sup>104</sup> The *leges Iuliae* are the cornerstone of my argument: Their passing demonstrates that Augustus was working for a higher cause than simply maintaining his power.<sup>105</sup> Why would he release social reforms that would predictably be wildly unpopular with the nobility that in no way increased his influence? Was this moral reform not

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 213.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 215; Horace, *Carmina* III.III, 9-12.

<sup>103</sup> Levick, 236-237.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 129-130.

<sup>105</sup> Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, “Family and Inheritance” in Edmondson, 250-253.

precisely what Vergil and Horace had been asking for in their poetry? In my view, Augustus was working to restore a Roman Golden Age by conserving traditional ways of life and virtues. As Z.

Yavetz puts it:

He was traditional and conservative, preferring to see his children dead than see them live in moral disgrace [Compare L. Junius Brutus, founder of the Republic in 509 BC]... Like the old Cato, he believed that the commonwealth of Rome rested on ancient customs and men of virtue. He was a ruler who made efforts to bring ancient dress back to Rome, who revived obsolete priesthoods, and who spared no pains to make family life and the raising of children the focal point of Roman life.<sup>106</sup>

The Julian laws themselves primarily focused on outlawing extra-marital sexuality and encouraging procreation among the nobility. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill examines the purpose of these laws in “Family and Inheritance in the Augustan Marriage Laws.” He comments that the laws were officially for the purpose of stimulating the birthrate and ensuring manpower for the military. However, he points out that both of these goals ring hollow, and it would be insulting to Augustus if we seriously believed these were his true intentions for the laws: They failed to affect the poor, which were the greatest percentage of the child-bearing population, and increasingly the military was being recruited from the provinces. By the nature of the rewards and penalties of the laws, Augustus was clearly targeting the nobility.<sup>107</sup> Wallace-Hadrill explains that reproduction and producing heirs was linked with the transmission of property and status from one generation to the next. By penalizing “adventurers” without family responsibilities who wished to profit financially and politically from will-making, Augustus was eliminating a serious contributing factor to social discord among the nobility and volatility that had flourished in the civil war period. He was setting the nobility into an orderly pattern of

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<sup>106</sup> Z. Yavetz, “The Personality of Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 30.

<sup>107</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, “Family and Inheritance” in Edmondson, 251-253. 253-254 includes an examination of the specific *praemia* and *poenae* involved in the laws that could only seriously affect the landed nobility.

inheritance for wealth and status that promised a stable future. Unity and orderliness in the noble family led directly to unity and orderliness in the state.<sup>108</sup>

This was Augustus' pragmatic way of responding to Horace's demands for the return of virtue and the restoration of stability. According to the old ways of the Romans, which Augustus was claiming to preserve with these laws,<sup>109</sup> moralists and Italian municipals alike considered *orbitas* (childlessness) "a perfectly proper target for legislation." Though, due to faulty demographic evidence, it was unclear whether or not the *leges Iuliae* were actually effective, but regardless, "the laws remained not because they were effective, but because it was felt they ought to be so."<sup>110</sup> If there was any question that Augustus intended these laws for the restoration of virtues in the Roman state, he surrounded them in a "loud ideological fanfare" from his poets. It is likely no coincidence that Augustus rushed the publication of the *Aeneid* upon Vergil's death in 19 BC.<sup>111</sup> Aeneas, the titular hero of Vergil's *Aeneid*, embodies *pietas* as an archetype of devotion to duty, family, state and religion throughout the work. After doing his duty to his family by saving father and son from the destruction of Troy, he did his duty to his country by leading his entire people and their gods through many trials to safety in Italy.<sup>112</sup> Fidelity in marriage and creation of families reflected all of the great Augustan virtues, especially *pietas*, in which loyalty to family and loyalty to the state were wrapped up in one concept.

The ideological fanfare from the poets was not only for the purpose of spreading the ideas of restored virtue and *pietas*, but also for the people to make the connection between them and the intentions of the *leges Iuliae*. Horace says it best in *Carmina* 3.24, "What profit are

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 268.

<sup>109</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 8.5: "*Legibus novis me auctore latis multa exempla maiorum exolescentia iam ex nostro saeculore duxi.*"

<sup>110</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, "Family and Inheritance" in Edmondson, 271.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 270-271.

<sup>112</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid* I, 1-33.

empty laws without character?”<sup>113</sup> Augustus did not expect the true purpose of the marriage laws, which was to ensure familial inheritance in the nobility, to be obvious to his contemporaries. Rather, the image he wanted to spread was the final intended result of this scheme, namely a new age of stability and order. Augustus enacted these ideas in real, emotionally-charged symbols. No small display would do: This was the triumphant unveiling of the Golden Age. In 17 BC, Augustus held the *ludi Saeculares*, which were so named because they were held every *saeculum*, “generation.” Nobody that had been alive for the previous ones could be alive for these because they marked a new beginning for Rome. Therefore, the maximum lifespan of a human being, reckoned to be 100 years, marked out a *saeculum*, but in order to adjust the date to Augustus’ timing, loyal jurist C. Ateius Capito adjusted the figure to 110 years.<sup>114</sup> As Wallace-Hadrill perceptively points out, Augustus held the Secular Games in 17 BC to mark the end of the darkest period of the Age of Iron, the breakdown of family and state alike in disastrous civil wars, and finally usher in the return of the Golden Age: a world where order and purity had been restored to both family and state.<sup>115</sup>

The *ludi Saeculares* lasted from the end of May to mid-June. Though they also included theatrical performances and circus games, they centered around sacrifices to Apollo and Diana, the presiding deities, headed by the *Quindecimviri Sacris Faciundis*, the priestly college in charge of religious ceremonies led by none other than Augustus himself. During these sacrifices, Horace’s *Carmen Saeculare* was sung, which he had prepared for the occasion.<sup>116</sup> As M.C.J. Putnam points out, the *Carmen Saeculare* marks a wave of praise and optimism from Horace,

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<sup>113</sup> Horace, *Carmina* III.XXIV, 35-36.

<sup>114</sup> Levick, 152.

<sup>115</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustan Rome*, 69-70.

<sup>116</sup> Levick, 152.

which was a stunning reversal of Horace's former skepticism in the first three books of *Carmina*. Clearly Augustus had lived up to his expectations.<sup>117</sup>

Now, by land and sea, the Mede fears  
The powerful hands and Alban axes,  
Just now the Scythians and proud Indians  
Seek an audience.  
Now Faith, Peace, Honor, Shame  
And ancient neglected Valor dare  
To return, and happy Abundance appears  
With a full horn.<sup>118</sup>

In this dramatic passage, Horace declares the completion of the acts he had been calling for in his *Carmina*: the humiliation of the Mede, respect of the Scythian and Indian, and the glorious return of the ancient Roman virtues. Augustus had succeeded in his role as a ruler to bring back the Golden Age and restore Rome's relationship with the gods. Horace drives this point home by making reference to the late Vergil's *Aeneid*, paralleling Augustus to his pious ancestor Aeneas, who also saved his people from destruction, giving them more than they had lost.<sup>119</sup> Augustus had lived up to the memory of his mighty ancestors by being "*bellante prior, iacentem / lenis in hostem*," "first in war, [yet] gentle against the fallen enemy," taking Anchises' advice to Aeneas: "*parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*," "spare the vanquished and subdue the proud."<sup>120</sup> Horace's conversion to optimism concerning Augustus' achievements probably influenced the view of many skeptics among the nobility, as he had once been one of them. On the whole, it seems that many were convinced.<sup>121</sup> The message of the *ludi Saeculares* and

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<sup>117</sup> M.C.J. Putnam, "Horace and the Ambiguities of *Encomium*" in Raaflaub and Toher, 237.

<sup>118</sup> Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*, 53-60.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 43-44: "*cui per ardentem sine fraude Troiam / castus Aeneas patriae superstes / liberum munivit iter, daturus / plura relictis*."

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 51-52, and Vergil, *Aeneid* VI, 853.

<sup>121</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, "Family and Inheritance" in Edmondson, 170; M.C.J. Putnam, "Horace and the Ambiguities of *Encomium*" in Raaflaub and Toher, 213, 237.

*Carmen Saeculare* was that Augustus had brought the Golden Age but it was now the responsibility of the people to maintain it by being virtuous and following the Julian laws.<sup>122</sup>

However, not everyone agreed with these reforms. Those opposed to the Julian laws were the same noble bachelors and adventurers whom Augustus had been legislating against. The great poet Ovid stood as a prominent example, publishing such controversial works as the handbook on adultery, the *Ars Amatoria*. In 8 AD, Augustus exiled the poet to the Black Sea, a measure S.G. Nugent notes as “anomalously punitive,” since Augustus had displayed “considerable latitude for dissenting opinions” throughout his reign.<sup>123</sup> Ovid cites the reason for his exile in *Tristia* 2, apparently addressed to Augustus himself as a request for mercy, as “*carmen et error*.”<sup>124</sup> It is not hard to imagine that the *Ars Amatoria* was the *carmen*, but since his exile came long after its publication, it seems the *error* was the deciding factor. S.G. Nugent points out that Ovid’s refusal to speak of the *error*, and his almost blatantly self-destructive defense in *Tristia* 2 indicates the possibility of a less official, personal disagreement between the two.<sup>125</sup>

A compelling argument brought up by Nugent, with which I agree, is that Ovid’s undermining of Augustus’ message was his *error*: At the outset of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells the tale of the Ages of Man, leaving no room for the return of a Golden Age and in fact comparing Augustus with “the capricious rapist” who rules over the brutal Age of Iron. In addition, in light of Ovid’s comparison of Augustus to Jupiter, he seems to be “exposing and exploring the workings of power in a world where nothing is quite what it seems anymore.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustan Rome*, 70.

<sup>123</sup> S.G. Nugent, “Ovid and Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 240-241.

<sup>124</sup> Ovid, *Tristia* II, 207.

<sup>125</sup> S.G. Nugent, “Ovid and Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 240-250.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 256-257.

The Olympians wield ultimate and unquestioned power over fearful mortals, just as Augustus and his court do, and Ovid drives the analogy home by calling their home “The Palatine of Heaven.”<sup>127</sup> Ovid’s cynicism about Augustan ideology and exposure of his regime deconstruct Augustus’ dream of a morally reconstituted Rome and perpetuate the immoral status quo by mocking the Augustan scheme. Augustus’ punitive reaction indicates that his “Golden Age” was more than just a propaganda campaign to him, but a personal ideology strong enough to drive him to remove Ovid from Rome completely, despite the influence his work may or may not have had.<sup>128</sup> As mentioned earlier, the moralists and right-minded largely supported the Julian Laws because they promoted proper values; the invasion of privacy was a necessary evil for the restoration of virtue.<sup>129</sup> It would be reasonable to assume that Ovid’s implications did not have a powerful effect on many, save for apparently Augustus himself.<sup>130</sup>

As Ovid and others like him lamented, the Julian laws were a blatant invasion of the state into private lives and affairs for the sake of ensuring stability. Some historians are skeptical of these “official intentions” for the laws, and have suggested that Augustus had more devious objectives in mind. Tacitus mentions the laws in their updated form, the *Lex Papia Poppaea*, in *Annales* 3.25, citing their purpose as *augendo aerario sanxerat*, “sanctioned for enriching the treasury.”<sup>131</sup> Though inheritance did fall to the treasury when someone had no heirs within the family, this did not happen enough to make fiscal sense in the cost-benefit analysis of passing laws so unpopular for the nobility. Tacitus was concerned with the operation and implementation

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<sup>127</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 88-176: “*haud timeam magni dixisse Palatia caeli.*”

<sup>128</sup> S.G. Nugent, “Ovid and Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 240.

<sup>129</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, “Family and Inheritance” in Edmondson, 270-271.

<sup>130</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub and L.J. Samons II, “Opposition to Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 418-431, 454.

<sup>131</sup> Tacitus, *Annales* III, 25.

of these laws, not the ideology behind them.<sup>132</sup> Barbara Levick also holds a cynical perspective of the laws, claiming “Whatever statesmanlike motives may be ascribed to Augustus in bringing forward this legislation, one is obvious: he was disciplining, if not punishing, the Senate.”<sup>133</sup> This claim seems dubious, as it is not supported or defended in the text, and other scholars do not support this assertion. Wallace-Hadrill even argues against the logistics of passing these laws for punishing the nobility, because the penalties are aimed specifically at a minority of the nobility, namely those unwilling to marry or have children.<sup>134</sup> The consensus appears to be, as I have argued, that the laws were intended for the purpose of stability in society and inheritance, which would, at least theoretically, re-establish the ancient Roman virtues.<sup>135</sup>

Therefore, the *leges Iuliae* were part of Augustus’ larger scheme to bring the Roman Empire into a Golden Age. Though the constitutional reforms were a “necessary and salutary fraud”<sup>136</sup> and the *leges Iuliae* an invasion of private rights and freedoms, Augustus intended both to restore the Republican way and the *mos maiorum*, the “custom of the ancestors.” Though the restored Republic was an illusion, Augustus promoted that illusion and worked within the system for the sake of preserving a way he respected and believed to be right, not because he wanted to trick the people. He released the *leges Iuliae* to restore stability and promote the ancient virtues: The loss of which contemporaries and historians alike have cited as one of the major causes of the civil wars. To publicize the intentions of his actions and fulfill the prophecies of Vergil, he held the *ludi Saeculares* in 17 BC to announce the beginning of the new age. Horace’s conversion from his early skepticism to fervent optimism in the *Carmen Saeculare* shows that the nobility was beginning to believe in Augustus. By working to restore the Roman virtues and the Republican way, Augustus completed the second facet of the Golden Age.

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<sup>132</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, “Family and Inheritance” in Edmondson, 270-271.

<sup>133</sup> Levick, 94.

<sup>134</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, “Family and Inheritance” in Edmondson, 251-256.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 268-269.

<sup>136</sup> Syme, *Roman Revolution*, 516.

#### 4.0 PROSPERITY AND THE DIVINE LEADER

“*Senatus et equester ordo populusque Romanus universus appellavit me patrem patriae.*”<sup>137</sup>

In the first two parts of this paper, I have shown that Augustus established peace and security by ending the civil wars, and promoted the Republican virtues by restoring the Republican way and passing social legislation. Both of these accomplishments and the way the Augustan propaganda portrayed them showed that they were part of a larger, all-encompassing ideology to improve Rome by making it more powerful, more secure, and morally righteous. Vergil’s Golden Age had a third facet: The prosperity and protection brought by the divine leader himself. Like the first two facets of the Golden Age, I believe that Augustus worked vigorously to accomplish this goal throughout his lifetime, and for the sake of the *maiestas* of Rome, not just for self-aggrandizement. He accomplished this task in two important ways. First, he spread his own image as a moral exemplar and a pious protector of virtue, religion, the people and the state; second, he brought prosperity and greatness to Rome in reality through largesses to the *plebs* from his own enormous wealth, monumental construction and architectural restoration projects, festivals, holidays, and a new mythology in art and poetry. The conquests under his banner expanded the empire greatly in size and he brought wealth back to the people of the provinces by

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<sup>137</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 35.1.

ending corrupt provincial government with censuses and new laws. As a sign of prosperity, the population of the city of Rome dramatically increased.<sup>138</sup>

In order to fit the role of the virtuous and pious leader, Augustus himself needed to serve not only as the example of the ideal Roman, but also as the ultimate Roman: the *primus inter pares*. Evidence for his attempts to accomplish this can be found right in his name: Imperator Caesar *divi filius* Augustus. By taking the first name *Imperator*, “generalissimo,” he solidified his ties with the military and implied that he was a brave, trustworthy and victorious commander. He took Julius Caesar’s name upon his adoption, inheriting the *fama*, prestige, and loyalty of Caesar’s innumerable friends, allies and clientele; when the late Caesar was deified, he added the title *divi filius*, as opposed to the usual *C. filius*, which implied both divinity and sacrosanctity. The senate awarded him his final name change in 27 BC, *Augustus* “the revered one,” which further gave his character a superhuman nature.<sup>139</sup>

Augustus showed through his actions that he upheld and believed in the virtues that he promoted through his legislation. He declares in *Res Gestae*, “I drove into exile those men who butchered my father... and afterwards, when they inflicted war on the Republic, I twice conquered them in battle.”<sup>140</sup> By upholding his role as *Caesaris ultor* and by saving the Republic, he not only displayed his *virtus* and military prowess, but also showed his strong *pietas* toward his family and homeland. Once his duty to preserve the Republic was completed, Augustus could afford to display *clementia* safely, mostly because few opposed him. His constitutional reforms, working within the Republican system, and passing of social legislation

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<sup>138</sup> Levick, 202-203; Richard Beacham, “The Emperor as Impresario” in Karl Galinsky, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 151.

<sup>139</sup> H. Galsterer, “A Man, A Book and A Method” in Raaflaub and Toher, 15.

<sup>140</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 2.

to restore virtue all showed his *iustitia*.<sup>141</sup> He displayed his devotion to his own laws with his long-standing marriage to his wife Livia, and by not making an exception to his adultery laws for his own daughter, Julia, when the rumors of her affairs became inescapable.<sup>142</sup> Augustus, traditional and conservative, was an extreme advocate of the *mos maiorum*, the way of the ancestors so stressed by Republicans Cato and Cicero. He stressed traditional dress to the point where nobody would be allowed into the forum without a toga; his strict traditionalism may have annoyed the other nobles, but the fact remained that in Rome, the ancient ways were ultimately “right.”<sup>143</sup>

In addition to being an *exemplum* of virtue and a social reformer, Augustus also took on the role of a religious reformer. As with virtues and the *mos maiorum*, the success of the Roman state also rested on its relationship with the gods. Augustus was particularly fervent in the revival of old obsolete priesthoods, and personally headed all of the important religious colleges in Rome. He oversaw and assured the continuation of ancient festivals and holidays, and personally saw to the veneration of the various Roman gods. For the first time since the end of the First Punic War, the Gates of Janus were closed in 29 BC, indicating a peace time that the people had long awaited and the gods had demanded.<sup>144</sup> Displaying modesty and piety, Augustus melted down eighty silver statues of himself and used the proceeds to place tripods in the temple of his patron, Apollo.<sup>145</sup> Like the demand for the return of the virtues, Horace called for the Romans to restore their relationship with the gods: “You will pay for the sins of your ancestors until you should restore the temples and failing shrines of the gods.” Using the exact same wording,

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<sup>141</sup> Levick, 226-228.

<sup>142</sup> Suetonius, *The Life of Augustus*, 62.2 and 65.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 40.5; Z. Yavetz, “The Personality of Augustus” in Raaflaub and Toher, 30.

<sup>144</sup> Levick, 150-153. Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustan Rome*, 81-85.

<sup>145</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 24.2; Suetonius, *The Life of Augustus*, 52.

Augustus responds directly to this call in his *Res Gestae*, saying “I restored eighty-two temples of the gods in the city.”<sup>146</sup>

In addition to being the head of religion, Augustus was considered by many as divine himself. He never outright denied his divinity or stopped people from worshipping him. In the late Republic, it was not unusual for leaders to claim some sort of special relationship with the gods, or even to imitate their images in artistic depictions, in order to raise their prestige and validate their acts. In all of Augustan art and ideology, such as the *Ara Pacis*, Augustus was depicted as the “godlike” intermediary between the gods and men, but he was always careful not to allow artists to depict him as a god *per se*.<sup>147</sup> Still, a cult formed and shrines all around the Greek world were set up to worship him. Offers of divinity, especially in the east, were signs of “deeply felt gratitude toward the man who had put an end to the ravages of civil war and begun to remedy the worst abuses of provincial maladministration.”<sup>148</sup> Though no educated Roman would believe in his divinity, its effectiveness lied in its powerful symbolism. The common people took Augustus’ majesty (*maiestas*) to heart and it became unspeakable to deface an image of Augustus or break an oath in his name. Such fervent zealotry showed that Augustus had achieved the goal of becoming the symbol that bound the Roman world together.<sup>149</sup>

Levick argues that Augustus’ denial of his divinity was only official, and that he still encouraged Romans to worship him. By propagating the myth of his divinity, Augustus was attempting to increase his power, influence, and already strong hold on the Romans. She also deems him an unacceptable *exemplum*, for though he seemed and acted virtuous, he took the Romans on the “wrong lead:” he led the state toward autocracy, deprived the senate and people

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<sup>146</sup> Horace, *Carmina* III.VI: “*templare feceris... deorum.*” Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 20.4: “*templa deum... refeci.*”

<sup>147</sup> J. Pollini, “Man or God: Divine Assimilation and Imitation” in Raaflaub and Toher, 334-337.

<sup>148</sup> H. Galsterer, “A Man, A Book and A Method” in Raaflaub and Toher, 16.

<sup>149</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustan Rome*, 85-97.

of their powers and liberties, and even ignoring his deeds during the triumvirate, committed illegalities and moved away from Republican practice. His official image as a bastion of Roman virtue was simply to trick the people about the reality of his power. This view matches largely with the Tacitean perspective in the first couple chapters of the *Annals*.<sup>150</sup> As I have argued, the Republican system had already been broken by the time Augustus came onto the scene in 44 BC.<sup>151</sup> Augustus, by spreading his image as *exemplum* and allowing the cults to his *genius* and *numen* prosper, was establishing a new order around himself in order to cope with the destruction of the Republic. The nature of the images he spread denoted them clearly for the purpose of improving a republic, not establishing a monarchy.<sup>152</sup>

As the bringer of the Golden Age, Augustus was not only content with his own image as *exemplum*; he also brought enormous prosperity to Rome firsthand. In *Res Gestae*, Augustus accounts his various philanthropies to the city of Rome from his vast personal wealth, including both monetary and grain donations. “To the Roman plebs... in my own name I gave them 400 sesterces from the spoils of war in [29 BC]... in [24 BC] from my own patrimony...and in [11 BC]... These, my largesses, never reached fewer than 250,000 men.”<sup>153</sup> He continues to describe his various other donations in the following chapters. The amount of money Augustus granted Roman citizens and decommissioned soldiers ended up totaling at 2,400,000,000 sesterces, a figure which did not include his philanthropies to provincials.<sup>154</sup> In chapters 19-21, Augustus describes his beautification of the city of Rome. He built a new Senate House, countless new

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<sup>150</sup> Levick, 288-291, 297-298; Tacitus, *Annales* I, 1-3.

<sup>151</sup> C. Meier, “Formation of the Alternative” in Raaflaub and Toher, 54-59.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 68; W. Eder, “Augustus and the Power of Tradition” in Raaflaub and Toher, 84; J. Scheid, “To Honor the Princes and Venerate the Gods” in Edmondson, 298-299.

<sup>153</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 15.1.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 15-18, Appendix 1.

temples, the Forum Augustum, and restored many older buildings of the city.<sup>155</sup> By the end of his building program, Augustus had made the capital a magnificent monument show: He had found Rome a city of clay, and left it of marble.<sup>156</sup>

By making Rome an architecturally impressive environment, Augustus was raising the city to a level worthy of the hegemon of the world, as emphasized by his poets. He repaired old structures to preserve Roman tradition and antiquity, brought luxury to the population of the city that only the rich had enjoyed, and showed his *pietas* to Rome, contrary to his civil war rivals.<sup>157</sup> However, the primary ideological intention of Rome's new and magnificent architecture was to ingrain the concept of the new age under Augustus into the people's subconscious. By creating impressive monuments to his and his ancestor's achievements, he was emphasizing the *maiestas* of himself over Rome and of Rome over the world.<sup>158</sup> The centerpiece of this new ideology was the Forum Augustum, surrounded in the rich history of the Roman Forum. Inside the *exedrae* of this large structure was a "hall of fame" of the greatest Roman heroes, the *summi viri*, and their deeds, centering on each side around Aeneas and Romulus respectively, Augustus' famed ancestors and founders of Rome. In the center of the Forum was a glorious statue of Augustus himself and in the rear was the Temple of Mars Ultor, vowed on the field of Philippi, containing statues of Augustus' divine ancestors Mars Ultor, Venus, and Divus Julius, as well as the recovered standards of Crassus.<sup>159</sup>

A prominent factor of a people's view of a leader and happiness under a regime is greatness, or at least the illusion of it. The message of the Forum Augustum was two-fold: To

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 19-21.

<sup>156</sup> Suetonius, *The Life of Augustus*, 28.3.

<sup>157</sup> J. Scheid, "To Honor the Princes and Venerate the Gods" in Edmondson, 276-277.

<sup>158</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, *Augustan Rome*, 61-62.

<sup>159</sup> T.J. Luce, "Livy, Augustus, and the Forum Augustum" in Edmondson, 400-403.

strike awe into viewers at the greatness and virtue of Rome and its heroes, and to place Augustus at the culmination of the sweep of Roman history, showing through his achievements that he matched or surpassed all of his predecessors in greatness.<sup>160</sup> Augustus emphasized his greatness through other pervasive mediums as well. The coinage released throughout the empire included such inscriptions as *Aegypto Capta* (the annexation of Egypt), *Asia Recepta* (the recovery of the Asia province), *Signis Receptis* (the recovery of Crassus and Antonius' standards), and the disingenuous *Armenia Capta* (the capture, or rather the placement of a Roman-supported regime, in Armenia). Augustus' many conquests through his generals earned him much praise, and his triumphal parades through the city of Rome were a spectacle that surely raised morale to new heights.<sup>161</sup>

The glory and greatness of Rome and its leader were further emphasized by the new wave of Latin literature urged by Augustus and his advisor Maecenas. In addition to creating the great works of the Latin language, the new literature would glorify Rome, its history, and its achievements, leading ultimately to Augustus. Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* told the story of Rome right from its foundation until the present day. Such a work would remind the readers and listeners of their heroic past. The visual depictions of the great Roman heroes the Forum Augustum, though not matching their description in Livy, would show them this heroic past and the greatness of the *Princeps*.<sup>162</sup> Vergil, as one of the greatest poets of all time, places the ideology of the Augustan regime in the very foundations of Rome in the *Aeneid*, beginning with Aeneas and the fall of Troy. Through Vergil's epic, Augustus' message of the Golden Age is delivered: The ideology of the regime is expounded and advertised. Vergil does not cease to

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 399, 405.

<sup>161</sup> Levick, 205, 208-210.

<sup>162</sup> T.J. Luce, "Livy, Augustus, and the Forum Augustum" in Edmondson, 399-406.

praise Augustus as the founder of the Golden Age: First by Jupiter, then Anchises, and finally by the poet himself in the description of the Shield of Aeneas.<sup>163</sup> Vergil does not portray the founding of the Golden Age as a simple task, and reminds the Romans of Augustus' day that it will take hard work and effort from everyone to achieve.<sup>164</sup>

Vergil was the primary promoter of the Augustan Golden Age ideology. However, like Horace in his first three books of *Carmina*, it was still yet to be achieved in the *Aeneid* and the future was still uncertain. Vergil died in 19 BC before the era of peace and prosperity had been realized, but Horace lived on;<sup>165</sup> in his fourth book of *Carmina*, he announces the success of the Golden Age. Only ten years after the publication of his first skeptical books, Horace could imagine a world that was devoid of civil war, safe from outside incursions and confident in its new morality. "The book itself is a grand exemplification of *revocatio*, with song restoring the emperor to a Rome where peace and moral well-being are considered givens."<sup>166</sup> Precisely this type of literature enlivened the people with the spirit of the times, and was almost a self-fulfilling prophecy, as hearing such positive and joyful words surely inspired the same reaction in others.

While Caesar is guardian of affairs, neither civil madness  
Nor civil violence will drive away our leisure,  
Nor will anger, which hammered out our swords  
And set our miserable cities against each other.<sup>167</sup>

As with the *Carmen Saeculare* and the *ludi Saeculares*, Augustus did not let the fourth book of *Carmina* stand alone. Released in 12 BC, the poems coincided, intentionally as G.W. Bowersock argues, with the completion of Augustus' Campus Martius complex, and Augustus' assumption of the prestigious office of the chief priest of Roman religion, the *Pontifex Maximus*.

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<sup>163</sup> Vergil, *Aeneid* I.286-288, VI.789-795, VIII.671-681.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, I, 33: "*Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem!*"; Levick, 265-267.

<sup>165</sup> Levick, 266-267.

<sup>166</sup> M.C.J. Putnam, "Horace and the Ambiguities of *Encomium*" in Raaflaub and Toher, 237.

<sup>167</sup> Horace, *Carmina* IV.XV, 17-20.

Augustus placed enormous significance on the office, and therefore waited for his old colleague, Lepidus, to die before he took it. The circumstances that surrounded his assumption of the office were saturated in the ideology of his new age: Horace's *Carmina* and the dedication of the *Ara Pacis* being the major elements. The Forum Augustum may have also been dedicated at that time, which would add to the idea that Augustus had planned the events to coincide. The year 12 BC could be viewed as the ultimate culmination of an overall Augustan plan to drive home the point of the restored Golden Age that began at the *ludi Saeculares* in 17 BC. His assumption of the office of *Pontifex Maximus* merited an enormous celebration in the city of Rome.<sup>168</sup> "It is in the majesty of the pontificate that Augustus presented himself as the conqueror that brought peace. The astronomical precision of the buildings and images associated with the assumption of the pontificate reveal, with clarity hitherto unexampled, the reality of Augustan ideology."<sup>169</sup>

Several sources agree that Augustus viewed his life as a single performance.<sup>170</sup> "Since well I've played my part, all clap your hands and from the stage dismiss me with applause."<sup>171</sup> Augustus presented himself on every occasion as the pious protector of religion and virtue. The spectacular and theatrical became embedded in his entire reign through triumphs, parades, performances, games, and the dramatic beautification of the city itself. Surrounded by the symbolism and ideology of the Augustan regime, the people could truly conceive of themselves in a new age, acting in a "great historical pageant: the expansion, perfection and celebration of Roman power and Roman achievement."<sup>172</sup> Augustus reserved his proudest moment for the end of his *Res Gestae*, which was the Roman people's declaration of him as *Pater Patriae*, or "Father

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<sup>168</sup> G.W. Bowersock, "The Pontificate of Augustus" in Raaflaub and Toher, 380-381, 390.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 393.

<sup>170</sup> Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, 52.34; Richard Beacham, "The Emperor As Impresario" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, 151.

<sup>171</sup> Suetonius, *The Life of Augustus*, 99.

<sup>172</sup> Richard Beacham, "The Emperor As Impresario" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, 151.

of the Fatherland.” The title, previously only applied posthumously, implied that its recipient had made such an indelible impact upon the city and its people that their achievements came to define Rome herself.<sup>173</sup> By being the symbol of Roman virtues, religion and the *mos maiorum*, by bringing a golden age of architecture, literature and art, and finally by being declared the *Pontifex Maximus* and *Pater Patriae*, Augustus accomplished the task of becoming the glorious and divine leader who brought prosperity to his people: Vergil’s third facet of the Golden Age.

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<sup>173</sup> Augustus, *Res Gestae*, 35.1.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I believe that from the beginning to the end of his reign, Augustus worked to reinvigorate Rome and make it the best, most powerful, most organized, and most virtuous state in the world. In Vergil and Horace's terms, he wished to restore the poetic Golden Age. In the civil wars, he was ruthless in order to bring peace to the Roman state and to put himself at its head. Once in charge, he worked vigorously to mask his position as an autocrat and restore the image of the Republican system so as to respect the *mos maiorum*. He passed social and religious legislation so that the ancient virtues of the Roman people would be reinvigorated. The temples and ancient buildings of the city of Rome were restored, and new monumental works of architecture beautified the city. Augustus spread the ideas of his regime through powerful symbolism in poetry, art, architecture, and coinage. In addition, he presented himself as an *exemplum* of Roman virtues and as the chief intermediary with the gods, possessing the noble virtues *pietas*, *virtus*, *clementia* and *iustitia*. To declare his success in reestablishing the Golden Age, Augustus held the *ludi Saeculares* in 17 BC, and surrounded the festival in the symbolism of the new age. He further drove the point home in 12 BC, when the dedication of his *Ara Pacis*, Horace's fourth book of *Carmina*, and his assumption of the position of *Pontifex Maximus* all solidified the accomplishment of a new age of peace, virtue and prosperity. Finally in 2 BC, Augustus was proclaimed *Pater Patriae* in culmination of his efforts.

Historians, following Tacitus, such as Syme and Levick held the view that the actions of Augustus throughout his regime were aimed directly toward the goal of gaining and maintaining power. In the civil wars, Augustus' ruthlessness was for the ultimate goal of achieving autocracy. The peace brought by Augustus was a peace earned with bloodshed. His constitutional reforms were disingenuous, and his reforms, largesses, and philanthropies were all intended to lull the onlooker while he swallowed up the functions of government. As I have argued, Augustus' actions were not indicative of a man with these goals. If he were seeking power alone, I find it extremely difficult to believe that he would have resorted to such excessive efforts to meet that end. I see little reason why after his success in the civil wars and constitutional reforms that Augustus would have had to continue to defend himself by making up an entire ideological campaign of restoring the city to its former greatness. I also find it hard to believe that Octavian had a sudden change of heart in 30 BC and decided to be less tyrannical. Rather, since civil turmoil had ravaged Rome from his very birth, it is more reasonable to conclude that the restoration of Rome was a goal that he pursued ruthlessly throughout his entire career.

The happiness and prosperity of the Roman people reflect the Age of Gold of which Vergil sings. The god Saturn had reigned over a world of peace, prosperity, and perfect virtue. Augustus brought this peace to Rome by ending the civil wars, and his conquests and philanthropies brought wealth and prosperity. The Romans took pride in their virtues and their Republican form of government and Augustus gave them both. The nobility were content with the reforms of the government and laws, not because of sycophancy or pacification, but because they retained their respect and most of their liberties. Augustus did not need to resort to a reign of terror because his system kept the people happy by itself. In addition, his reign led to the general improvement of the quality of life in the city and the provinces, and arguably the greatest

period of Roman literature and culture. The poetic and theatrical depictions of Augustus as the fated savior of Rome drove an image of greatness and confidence into the Romans. The people's view of Augustus himself as a divine protector and father figure echoed the image of Saturn presiding over the Latin peoples. Through his deeds and use of emotionally-charged symbolism, Augustus had made Vergil's Golden Age a reality, at least in the eyes of those enjoying it.

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