Caesar's Past and Posterity's Caesar

29–30 April 2019

The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters,
Copenhagen, Denmark

Organisers:

Trine Arlund Hass
Jan Kindberg Jacobsen
Rubina Raja
Sine Grove Saxkjær

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Gaius Iulius Caesar, Tusculum portrait (Copyright: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en. Photo: Gautier Poupeau).

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Outline

In 2018 Danish archaeologists in collaboration with the *Sovrintendenza Capitolina* begin exploring the until now unexcavated parts of the Forum of Julius Caesar in central Rome. The excavations will uncover all layers of the site's past from the remains of the Via dei Fori Imperiali laid out under Mussolini, over the 16th-century Alessandrino neighbourhood and back to the Recent Bronze Age. The excavations will uncover a timeline of Rome's history, which potentially covers more than 3000 years. It will transect through the history and memory of Rome. However, undeniably this space in Rome has until now mostly been known for being the space where Julius Caesar decided to lay out his public space, his forum, in central Rome. In order to contextualize this unique opportunity to examine the story and the importance of a site in a diachronic perspective, this conference aims at exploring the eponymous person of this site and his role in Western culture in a broader perspective.

Julius Caesar was the first to design a forum in his family's name and that in a time when putting focus on the powerful individual was a bold move. Making an expansion of the Roman Forum into a promotion of his own person shows how Caesar placed his own person at the centre of his political project – a dangerous undertaking – with a fatal end – but which created history. Featuring a temple to Venus Genetrix and an equestrian statue of himself as primary focal points, the forum demonstrated Caesar's attention to identity construction. The narrative was one of a strong, rich and enterprising leader, whose rather controversial position as sole ruler was legitimised by his divine lineage that linked him directly to the mythical founder of the city and the gods. This awareness of his image is also found in Caesar's own writings. Although his poetry and speeches are largely lost, his *Commentarii* show his desire to shape his own narratives. In a Latin style so concise and clear that it has become a staple in the Latin classroom since the 18th century, he accounts for his moves.

Caesar and his political visions divided people in his own time as well as in his afterlife. Pompey changed his mind, Cicero largely favoured Pompey and Brutus staggered before deciding to head the conspiracy that put an end to Caesar's life. While Virgil mourned Caesar's death and celebrated his apotheosis in Eclogue 5, Lucan portrays Caesar's blood thirst and cruelty in the *Pharsalia*. Later, Dante places Brutus and Cassius in the innermost circle of Hell together with none other than Judas Iscariot, while Shakespeare's *Tragedy of Julius Caesar* continues to raise discussion about whether Caesar is a hero or a villain and whether his murder

is justifiable or not. Caesar has been a role model for generals and rulers, popes as well as kings, just as other political groups have hailed his opponents: Brutus was celebrated by the revolutionaries in France as well as by Lenin.

Although it is commonly said that Cicero is the person from Antiquity that we know best, the outreach and ability of Caesar to fascinate not only classicists but people in general is remarkable. Caesar has been and continues to be translated into popular media as movies, TV-series, cartoons and literary fiction. He is thus continuously actualized as a relevant mirror or spokesperson of Antiquity and generally applicable dilemmas and conflicts. Even Denmark that was never a part of the Roman Empire claims a special connection to Julius Caesar. He appears through all stages of our literature from Saxo, over Holberg to Hans Christian Andersen.

In this attempt to explore Julius Caesar's use of the past and posterity's use of Julius Caesar, we ask two central questions to be addressed in this conference:

1. How did Caesar use the ancient/Roman past to construct himself and launch himself for a position as head of the Roman state and empire? What traces can we see in material and literary sources of how Caesar constructed this new role for himself? How did he select from the 'archives' of the mythical and historical past when designing his way to power and his narrative about himself? How do we see the influence of this style within self-narration and self-representation as well as its impact on the use and creation of urban spaces among the later emperors?

2. How has posterity seen Caesar and how has Caesar been used in posterity in Italy and beyond? Which discourses has he been embedded into – cultural, political, religious, educational, historical? With which 'colouring' and purposes? Are the receptions affected by Caesar's own self-staging? How do receptions treat Caesar's relationship to Rome and the city's mythical past? How do different receptions relate and affect each other? How is Caesar linked to regions beyond Italy? – How is his role as suppressor treated or if he has never been in the region, how is he then connected to it and its culture?

Programme

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12:30–13:15	**Caesar and the pomerium of Rome** Paolo Liverani	
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Julius Caesar, denarius (Copyright: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0).

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11:45–12:30	**Founding national histories, Europe and the heritage of Caesar** Alain Schnapp	
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13:30–14:15	**Nineteenth-century Caesars: Caesar in a time of Danish national awakening** Trine Arlund Hass	Chair: Rubina Raja
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Nicolas Coustou, Julius Caesar, From the Gardens of the Tuileries, 1872 (Copyright: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0).

Abstracts

Caesar the orator in retrospect

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Caesar was a brilliant orator in his time but the early reception of his oratory is not well understood, even if it was crucial for the preservation of knowledge about his oratory. A few fragments and many testimonies bear witness to his extraordinary oratorical skills – said to have potentially rivalled even Cicero's if Caesar had devoted enough time to it – and scholars have discussed the quality of Caesar's oratory. However, how and why these fragments and testimonies survived have never been seriously studied, even if the selection and preservation of this information have significant implications for our understanding of Roman public speaking in Caesar's lifetime and under the emperors, of authorial agendas behind the inclusion of Caesarian oratory in historical, biographical and miscellaneous works of the Roman imperial period, and of Caesar's legacy in Western culture.

This paper cannot deal with the reception of the entirety of Caesar's speeches in the (early) imperial period. Instead, the paper shall present two case studies which highlight aspects of Caesar's legacy as an orator in the first few centuries AD: the first case study shall follow one speech of Caesar through time by analysing the presentation and function of the speech across extant imperial sources, and discussing the development of Caesar's legacy as an orator over time as exemplified by this representative speech. The second case study shall follow the presentation of Caesar the Orator in one imperial-period text and discuss the implications of this presentation for our understanding of the author's agendas and selection criteria, thereby indicating the significance of imperial authorship for the memory of Caesar as orator.

The invention of civil war writing: The (curious) case of Caesar

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With the crossing of the Rubicon, Gruen (1974; cf. Flower 2010) would have us believe that the *res publica* had fallen. This is naturally open to debate, but however we approach the civil war(s) of the Late Republic, we should not ignore the continued and telling importance of legitimacy. How to write about civil war and account for one's activities within it? Caesar and his heir Augustus had one all-embracing concern in common: the need to legitimise their role in full-blown civil war. What is most fascinating in any discussion about the ideology of the *Civil War* and the *Res Gestae* respectively is perhaps that the concept of *bellum civile* is mentioned at all in the commentarii and the inscription. Adding to that, how did societies come back together as one in the aftermath of civil war? It would hardly have been feasible to ignore civil war and its huge impact, but it was always possible to claim that others had ignited that flame, only for the merciful victors to extinguish it (e.g. RG 34) – a particular line concerned with lasting peace (= the ending of civil war). In focusing on these issues, this paper will explore how Caesar used the past and how then Augustus used Caesar, focusing mainly on the *Civil War* and the *Res Gestae* and the development of civil war historiography.

Creating a memory of Urban Rome: The case of the Forum Iulium

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When Julius Caesar bought the land to construct his forum centrally in Rome, he unknowingly begun a trend, which became a century long tradition and for which Rome even today is known: namely the monumental imperial fora in the heart of the city. The Forum Iulium was carved out of an already densely populated urban area. Whereas the construction of the Marcellus theatre was remembered for the destructions necessary in order to pursue such a project, the Forum Iulium is famous for the exorbitant sums of money paid to the owners of the land, which needed to be bought up in order to construct the forum. This invites an important conclusion: Certainly used for many day-to-day activities typical of a forum of a Roman town, the Forum Iulium was also designed as a site of memory in the many dimensions demanded for such a central urban project. Our paper will follow different lines to explore the functions (and perhaps intentions) of the Forum Iulium as a site of urban memory, through literary reflections, in subsequent sources, up to Cassius Dio's Roman History as well as through the material evidence from the Forum Iulium and the later Forum of Augustus. We hypothesize that the combination of ordinary forum business, spectacular foci (above all the temple of Venus Genetrix) and periodically repetitions of rituals (games) were crucial to attach particular memories to permanent visible space and architecture.

Caesar and the pomerium of Rome

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Several literary and epigraphic sources inform us about the pomerial extensions of the city of Rome. Three of them are sure (Sulla, Claudius and Vespasian), but a problem arises in Caesar's, which is attested by Tacitus, Gellius and Dio Cassius but – implicitly – denied by Seneca. In order to understand this point and justify the contradiction between the sources, Caesar's project needs to be framed in the historical period, connecting it to the proposal of the *Lex de Urbe augenda*, known through Cicero's letters of the year 45. The law prescribed the deviation of the Tiber along the Vatican hills to add space to the Campus Martius. A detailed topographical analysis of Cicero's information allows us to propose a reconstruction of the reasons for and extensions of this project. Caesar's plans for the urban evolution of Rome are impressive: even if they were not carried out by the dictator due to his death, they foreshadowed the work of the emperors of the first two centuries AD. Only the deviation of the Tiber required by the law of Caesar was abandoned because its dimensions were too pharaonic. Consequently also the extensions of the pomerium in the Campus Martius by Claudius and Vespasian followed different criteria from those foreseen by Caesar.

Shaping Caesar's Past for Posterity: Caesar d. f. Augustus

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When the young Octavian decided to accept his posthumous adoption by Caesar and his will he and his contemporaries realized that more was involved than inheriting Caesar's private estate. Being Caesar's heir meant dealing with his political legacy and that aspect has been well discussed. But it also meant dealing with his cultural legacy, such as buildings and cults, and thereby constructing Caesar's memory and his own – Augustus was the first major shaper of Caesar's reception.

That will be the focus of my paper, re-examining some inherited views and introducing some further perspectives. The old view of Augustus' dissociation from Caesar in all things has been largely abandoned – all one has to do is look at the connective collocation of their two fora. Even Syme's influential schema of Caesar the dictator being replaced by divus Iulius requires more nuance in light, e.g., of Penelope Davies' demonstration that the senate a made him "assassinatable" by the deliberate excess of honors, including architectural ones, and of Augustus' carrying forward much of Caesar's building program; a particularly instructive example is the demise of the Temple of Pietas and its replacement, for all practical purposes, by the Forum Augustum where the theme of *pietas* is pervasive and connected with Caesar. There is more especially in the Augustan poets; as for Caesar's cult, it became a "maquette" (P. White) that Augustus could shape in connection with his long-held goal of apotheosis. We can view Augustus as the beta version of Caesar; in the process he (re)constructed Caesar's memory.

Caesar's place in the course of Tiberian historiography

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This paper uses the *Historia* of Velleius Paterculus to explore Caesar's literary reception during the reign of Tiberius, and it examines how Caesar's textual representation relates to the many other ways in which he was being remembered. The only contemporary historian of Tiberius whose work survives, Velleius offers a unique glimpse into how Caesar could be shown to fit into the arc of Roman history under Tiberius. There is a host of material evidence available that illustrates the advantages and dangers of remembering Caesar at this crucial juncture in Roman history – evidence which provides a framework for a better understanding of Velleius' literary representation of Caesar.

Velleius' opus is, of course, more than just a cultural product of its time. Questions are now being asked about the literary critical issues of intertextuality and narrative structure, for example. Caesar is often central to such matters. Recent scholarship has explored why the narrative form is overtly adapted for Caesar when this is not the case for Pompey or Augustus, for instance. This investigation (regularly zoning in on the minutiae of Velleius' language and exploring allusions to other literary texts) works to continue and complement this trend. Given Caesar's Janus-like position at the end of the Republic and the start of the Principate, how does Velleius view Caesar's role within the continuum (or the reversal) of Roman history? And to what extent does Velleius' treatment influence the ways in which later authors would write Caesar into their narratives?

Memory and monarchy

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In 44 BC, Julius Caesar was appointed *dictator perpetuo*, which added to the fear of some that he would re-establish the monarchy and ultimately led to his assassination on the Ides of March the same year. We know from Plutarch that Caesar refused the crown offered to him by Marcus Antonius at the Lupercalia, although the Greek biographer also seems to indicate that Caesar was hoping that the crowd would have wanted him to take it. Regardless of whether Caesar himself desired the royal title or not, he is quoted for having said earlier, in his eulogy for his aunt Julia in 69 BC, that his family possesses "[…] *the sanctity of kings, whose power is supreme among mortal men, and the claim to reverence which attaches to the Gods, who hold sway over kings themselves*", thus portraying the Roman kings as holding supremacy, but also sacredness. Through time, the attitude towards the monarchy and the Roman kings changed back and forth as is reflected in the written sources. But while it is a recurrent topic in ancient literature, the archaeological evidence of the monarchy is scarce and the seven kings themselves were at least partly mythical. The present paper focuses on this semi-legendary monarchical past and its role in the construction and continuous manipulation of a collective cultural memory of the Roman Kingdom and its leaders – a memory in which Caesar was embedded.

Julius Caesar in western Late Antiquity

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This paper aims to investigate the Western tradition on Caesar in late antiquity.
First question: was Caesar the first emperor? Both the pagan and the Christian tradition were uncertain: according to Eutropius and Jerome he was, according to the Anonymous *De viris inlustribus* and Orosius he was not; it is noteworthy that Orosius denied Caesar was the first emperor because this primacy did not agree with his *Augustustheologie*.

Second: was Caesar arrogant or lenient? The republican and senatorial tradition is represented by Eutropius, who considers the civil war as a clash between Caesar and the whole senate, the whole *nobilitas* of Rome, and accuses the dictator of insolent behaving against the Roman freedom, while the anonymous biographer *De viris inlustribus* and Christian authors like Orosius and Augustine stress his clemency and his mercy.

Third: was Caesar a great conqueror? Of course yes, but many nuances can be found: according to the *Historia Augusta* Caesar conquered Britain as a senator, not yet as a dictator, according to Orosius Caesar conquered Gaul, but its decline started from his conquest.

The literary tradition on Caesar is meagre and ambiguous; in Gaul only we find a vivid memory of his glorious exploits, as Sidonius' vast work proves. But in the West beside the literary tradition an oral memory survived, connected with Caesar's lost sword, the so-called 'Saffron Death', then becoming a symbol of royal legitimacy in the early centuries of the Middle Ages, as we can read in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*.

Should they rot in Hell? Fifteenth-century discussions of Brutus and Cassius

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In the *Commedia*, Dante had condemned Brutus and Cassius to the lowest depths of Hell. Like most medieval political thinkers he was convinced that Caesar had been raised to power by the gratitude of his fellow citizens and then treacherously and unjustly murdered. By the early fifteenth century this viewpoint was no longer generally accepted. Eager to describe their city as heir to the Roman republic, leading Florentine humanists began a re-evaluation of the historical role of Caesar. After all, he was responsible for the fall of the Republic and he was criticized for this by Florentine writers. Accordingly, Brutus and Cassius came to be seen as heroes who had staked everything in their fight for the freedom. This did not go unanswered; for decades writers all over Italy entered the argument, some defending Caesar and thereby implicitly agreeing with Dante, others exalting the deed of Brutus and Cassius or comparing Caesar, unfavorably, to great republican heroes such as Scipio. This, of course, was not all about history. Both sides used the past to discuss the present, for instance the relative merits of monarchical and republican government and the influence of specific constitutions on intellectual life.

In my paper I shall examine a number of texts related to the so-called Caesar-Scipio Controversy that began in the 1430s. I shall briefly present the core texts of the Controversy and then give examples of how the differing viewpoints are reflected in reading habits, translation strategies, manuscript illuminations, and portraits of famous men.

Lurking in the Jacobean shadows – historicity and topicality of the character of Julius Caesar in Ben Jonson's play Catiline: His Conspiracy

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Catiline premiered in 1611 to what appears to have been a lukewarm acclaim at best. However, the play has remained in posterity as a notable dramatic work demonstrating Jonson's steadfast adherence to the classics and his prominence as a translator. Lengthy speeches, borrowed from Sallust's account of the Catilinarian conspiracy and Cicero's orations might have rendered it too wordy to suit the taste of the theatregoers but shaped the work as a significant text with subject matter – a failed conspiracy – that could (and likely did) reflect concerns about uncomfortable republican sentiments and Jacobean absolutist aspirations. Moreover, the fact that Jonson took the liberty to grant Caesar a more prominent role as a *realpolitik* guru and clandestine supporter of Catiline says a lot about the magnitude and the controversial image of the Roman general in Jacobean England. I will explore Jonson's remarkable portrayal of Caesar focusing on the following aspects: the fact that Catiline is the only play written during the period which features Caesar but does not present his exploits; the dramatic irony defining the perception of his character as Caesar is seen at an earlier stage of his career but is inevitably assessed by the audience in the light of his later victories and demise. Finally, I will relate Jonson's dramaturgical decision to embellish the connection between Catiline and Caesar to a possible criticism of James I's royal power a continuation of the monarchical tradition of the 'Caesars'.

Caesar in Berlin: Frederick the Great, Voltaire, and the Enlightenment debate about historical greatness

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Caesar was a central point of reference for King Frederick II "the Great" (1712–86), who made Prussia a great power, and shaped what Immanuel Kant called the "age of Frederick". This paper argues that this happened not although but *because* Caesar never set foot in those German regions that formed the core territories of Prussia.

Frederick was not only the most successful *roi-connétable* of the 18th century, but also the only one who also, like Caesar, wrote the history of his campaigns himself. Both in his own writings as well as in the assessments of contemporaries, comparisons with Caesar abounded, and this paper will examine both contemporary authors and the important function of Caesar for the self-image of the king. This will also shed light on Enlightenment debates on Caesar as dictator, general, and author, which were all bound up with notions of political legitimacy, historical greatness, and cultural achievements, and closely linked to the emerging conflict between cosmopolitan and nationalism.

Like many French authors, the king considered Caesar's conquest of Gaul as a crucial civilising mission that laid the foundations for the French culture which he regarded as the highest stage of human civilisation. By aspiring to raise the cultural standards of his own agrarian state through the systematic import of French culture, Frederick set himself in analogy to Caesar as the conqueror of Gaul, mirroring his deeds in conquest and literature as well as his function as an agent of cultural transfer. In Voltaire's categorisation of historical greatness, both Caesar and Frederick thus qualified as "great men", whereas others, such as Alexander the Great or Charles XII of Sweden, received the lesser rank of "hero". Here, a new concept of historial relevance was being articulated that also led to a comprehensive re-assessment of Julius Caesar.

Founding national histories, Europe and the heritage of Caesar

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Caesar is the hero of Roman history and the major character illustrating the concept of imperial power. In tracing his fortune from the beginning of antiquarianism to the Enlightenment I intend to describe the birth of national history in Europe from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century.

Nineteenth-century Caesars: Caesar in a time of Danish national awakening

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The 19th century was a time of political change. Denmark transitioned peacefully from absolute monarchy to democracy; it also suffered severe military defeats in the Napoleonic and Schleswig Wars that led to substantial losses of territory. The country's reaction is summed up by the contemporary adage 'What is lost outwardly must be gained inwardly.' Danish self-conception and cultural values were redefined as this became a period of cultural national awakening where many of the works and persons still considered defining for Danish culture were produced and blossomed. Examples of influential figures are Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875, writer, poet), N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872, clergyman, politician, public educator, poet) and Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855, philosopher).

Cultural focus was influenced by the ideas of Romanticism. It was often locally oriented and concerned with Denmark's past, Norse mythology, Danish landscapes and the lives and fates of those inhabiting them. The proclaimed local orientation effectively constructed the idea, still valid today, that *this* was Denmark's Golden Age when the country's cultural potential was unfolded in its own right. Even so, Classical culture never disappeared, neither as model nor as referential framework. But what part was there to play for a great Roman general in the culture of this, now, small state? I shall explore the tensions inherent in the use of an ancient transnational symbol of power in a context of romantic nationalism by studying the role of Caesar in selected examples of Danish 19th century writings.

Lessons for leadership: Bernard Shaw's Caesar on stage and screen

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First performed in 1899, Shaw's play *Caesar and Cleopatra* offers lessons in leadership. A weary elder statesman, this Julius Caesar promotes the honourable exercise of power. His troublesome young pupil Cleopatra, however, sees through his self-construction as a quasi-mystical authority and yearns for love. This paper explores how Shaw's Caesar engages with contemporary concerns about British imperial identity and how his lessons take on new meaning when re-performed on the screen at the end of the Second World War.

Shaw's Caesar is grounded in nineteenth-century re-evaluations of the Roman dictator as a great reformer, especially that set out by Mommsen in his *History of Rome* (1854) and taken up by Caesarian biographies in English. Shaw's Caesar thus seeks to bring down an abusive, oligarchic government for the benefit of Rome's people and the empire's subject nations. This representation speaks to its British context in a number of ways. (1) It challenges the primacy of the Shakespearean tradition by denying its audiences the satisfaction of romance. (2) It takes on an explicitly British colouring through the character of Britannus. Throughout he speaks like an official of the British empire (in his pompous claims to duty and respectability), yet his situation in the historical plotline justifies his ridicule by others as a servile islander from the edge of the world. (3) Finally, the prologue added to the play in 1912 also characterizes the audience as 'quaint little islanders' further subjecting British imperial identity to ironic scrutiny.

A Technicolor film version of the play was released in 1945 directed by Gabriel Pascal. Caesar utters largely the same words on screen as on stage, but medium, mise-en-scene, casting, acting, music, and context of consumption have all radically changed. How might spectators in 1945 now understand Caesar's lessons in leadership?

Peter Paul Rubens & Erasmus Quellinus II, Caesar's Triumph (Copyright: Wikimedia Commons, PD-1923, PD-US).

Venues


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Note: We will take photographs during the conference, which we store and use for e.g. reporting purposes. If you do not want us to use photos in which you are depicted, please contact Christina Levisen: levisen@cas.au.dk.

Book of Abstracts

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