

**TO SERVE THE EMPIRE: ROMAN EAGLE AS A DIVINE MESSENGER
AND GUARDIAN OF MAJESTY OF THE FIRST ROMAN EMPEROR,
OCTAVIANUS AUGUSTUS (63BC-14AD). POLITICS – CULTURE – BELIEF**

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STRESZCZENIE

Głównym celem niniejszej pracy stała się prezentacja symboliki rzymskiego orła na przykładzie okresu rządów princepsa Oktawiana Augusta (44/31 przed Chr. - 14 n.e.), poprzez zglębienie genezy, zastosowania oraz roli ideowej jego wizerunku w sztuce i kulturze Imperium Romanum. Analizie poddane zostają zarówno świadectwa pisane autorów starożytnych, jak i liczne zabytki kultury materialnej (numizmaty, gemmy). Rozważania uzupełniają uwagi odnośnie początków wizerunku orła jako rozpoznawalnego atrybutu cesarskiego (władzy cesarskiej).

Słowa kluczowe: Rzym, starożytność, orzeł, symbolika, kultura, sztuka, Oktawian August, I w. przed Chr., I w. n.e.

ABSTRACT

The presented paper focuses on comprehending the symbolism, variety and scale of the eagle's image implementation in art and broadly named culture of ancient Rome of the Augustan age (ca. 27 B.C.-14 A.D.). Both literary, numismatical, as well as gemmological evidence are examined, in our attempt to better understand the ideological notion of the fawn bird's image in the ancient times.

Key words: antiquity, Rome, Augustus, eagle, culture, art, symbolism, Ist c. B.C., Ist c. A.D.

Ever since the ancient times, the eagle has come to be known as one of the most recognisable and widely implemented symbols in both the iconographical as well as the literary legacy of mankind. Despite cultural diversity, across the globe: from the wilderness of the Americas, through the coasts of the Mediterranean, towards the deserts of Orient and the borders of the Far East, the predatory bird's representations were to invariably hold a respected place among the members of numerous distinct societies, and thus remain an integral — all the while momentous — part of each civilisation's own artistic landscape. Along with other symbols of similar rank, the eagle was to therefore play an important role in co-shaping (or affirming) the dominant worldviews of a certain epoch. By analysing various known works of art with such a symbol, created at a specific time in history, one might realise the purposes and the scale of the motif's implementation, attempt to comprehend its multitude of forms and the richness of its contextual meanings, yet he may also discover the symbol itself in terms of a unique proof for mutual penetration of three life-spheres, included in the title of our study: politics, culture, and belief. Regarding each of those terms, the eagle's representation was to serve its own substantial purpose, becoming a much praised and often used link in the propaganda of certain political, moral and social values.

In all of human history, one of the most famous examples of a civilisation, in which the eagle had appeared as a creature (and symbol) held in especially high regard, appears to be ancient Rome. This article is an attempt of highlighting the eagle's symbolism in the culture and ideology of the Imperium Romanum, all the while an endeavor to better exemplify the statements expressed above.

The following work has been divided into two main parts, preceded by an introduction. The first part ("*King of firmament - messenger of gods*") is dedicated to the analysis of mythical origins of the eagle's symbol in ancient Roman worldviews, and to the study of historiographical accounts regarding oracular events from Octavian's lifetime, in which the eagle sign ominously appears. The second part ("*Guardian of a new order*") follows the implementation of the fawn bird's symbol in the masterpieces of art from the Augustan age, underlines the iconic purpose of the process, as well as focuses on comprehending the underpinnings of the eagle's image as an imperial ensign of power and authority. The order of summoning various ancient sources has been devised in accordance with the chronological timeline of Octavian's life and rule.

At one point during long lifetime, while recollecting upon some of his most memorable career-deeds made, Augustus¹ was to remark: *marmoream se relinquere, quam latericium accepisset*². The famous quote, although terse, in fact involves a great deal of depth, conceiving a multitude of references to both political, as well as cultural accomplishments of the first Roman emperor³. The latter of the mentioned areas: the art, culture and ideology of the Augustan age, remained as far as until the beginning of the 20th c. a topic somewhat less explored by historians, than for example politics, that had marked Augustus' reign. As a result, Roman art (sculpture, architecture, painting, etc.) from the turn of the 1st c. B.C. and the 1st c. A.D. (as well as the multitude of symbolic forms contained within) had for long been neglected, whilst considered a mere — more or less inspiring — imitation of Greek works⁴. In contemporary studies, however, the cultural monuments of the Augustan era received a much needed attention⁵. Mainly, the reason for the sudden shift of attitudes among scholars came to be the findings of individual value in Roman art in general, whereas concerning the Augustan era: the appreciation of variety, complexity, flexibility and symbolism, expressed by skilled artisans and craftsmen of that time⁶. The uniqueness of works of art from the mentioned period lies within an impressive mixture of both classical, as well as hellenistic style, that altogether resulted in highly balanced shapes of artistic compositions⁷. A magnificent eclecticism of forms is thus achieved, one resembling the “constant blending” of Greek and Roman traditions, as Karl Galinsky once noted⁸.

The aftermath of the death of Julius Caesar (44 B.C.), the consequences of the epochal battle of Actium (31 B.C.), as well as the apparent transmission of Octavian's power to the senate (27 B.C.), marked the definite end of republican Rome as it was once known⁹. However, they were also meant to signify a major improvement in both ethical and aesthetic tendencies (to name just a few) that from now on influenced the minds of *populus romanus*¹⁰. The age of Augustus is a time of impressive political, as well as cultural expansion of the Roman state, all the while a period of inner peace (Pax Augusta), which was — after all — anxiously awaited by the generation, onto which the outcomes of the civil wars had surely taken a destructive toll¹¹. To reassure his position as a first and foremost individual, capable of leading the Romans towards a better future (i.e. the Golden Age), the victor from Actium thus implemented a peculiar palette of new, symbolic forms of artistic expression — subtle, but at the same time very suggestive — that were to reshape the image of Rome, whilst blurring the memories of

1 Regarding the period of years between 44-27 B.C., it remains a common practice among modern scholars to use the name Octavian(us), while referring to the nephew of Julius Caesar — despite the fact, that the young heir seems to have disliked the usage of this adjectival form of his real *nomen* (probably because of political pragmatism); e.g. L. Piotrowicz, *Dzieje rzymskie*, [in:] J. Dąbrowski et al. (ed.), *Wielka Historia Powszechna*, Vol. III, [reprint] Poznań 1997, p. 151; T. Zieliński, *Cesarstwo Rzymskie*, G. Żurek (pub.), Warszawa 1995, pp. 14-15. In 27 B.C., Octavian had assumed and from now on used the name, and title, of Augustus, thus achieving a more „metaphysical” resonance of his lineage (as Eduard Gibbon once defined it) - E. Gibbon, *Zmierzch Cesarstwa rzymskiego [The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire]*, Vol. 1, Warszawa 1975, p. 65. For the purpose of this study, we shall refer to the mentioned ruler as either „Octavian/Octavianus” or „Augustus”, while in the case of his titles, as: princeps, ruler, or emperor (though the last term is not entirely adequate, it remains nevertheless popular in common knowledge, and acceptable as such).

2 Caius Suetonius Tranquillus, *Vitae Caesaris*, J. C. Rolfe (ed.), London 1979 (further as: Suet.); *Divus Augustus* (further as: *Aug.*), 28, 3 [„he had found it built of brick and left it in marble”]. Cf. Cassius Dio Cocceianus, *Historia Romana*, E. Cary (ed.), Cambridge-London-New York 1914-1925/55 (further as: Dio), LVI, 30, 3.

3 The key to understanding the enigmatic sentence seem to be the properties of marble. Marble is known as a material much more durable than brick (for centuries extensively used by Roman builders), thus — from a political perspective — we may interpret the quote as an accentuation of a highly coherent and stable image of the Empire's territorial borders, that Augustus had left for his successors to uphold. Furthermore, from a cultural point of view, the phrase might seem an allusion to the idea of beauty and aesthetics. Many of the architectural undertakings in 1st-c. Rome, overseen by Augustus and his advisors, had been marked by the use of marble as a basic construction material — therefore, the princeps could have had referred to the new, much more opulent image of the Eternal City itself. Lastly, the famous sentence might as well suggest the general increase of — individual, as well as public — wealth in the Empire, during Octavian's rule. Concerning the usage of brick and marble in Roman house- and temple constructions, e.g. A. Sadurska, *Archeologia starożytnego Rzymu*, Vol. II: *Okres Cesarstwa*, Warszawa 1980, pp. 11-19 ff., 23.

4 Cf. J. Elsner, *Classicism in Roman Art*, [in:] *Classical Pasts. The Classical Traditions of Greece and Rome*, J. I. Porter (ed.), Princeton 2006, p. 270-271; A. Strong, *Roman Sculpture. From Augustus to Constantine*, London-New York 1907, pp. 1-24.

5 See the remarks of: K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture. An Interpretive Introduction*, Princeton 1996, [preface] IX-X ff.

6 Cf. P. Zanker, *Klassizismus und Archaismus. Zur Formensprache der neuen Kultur*, [in:] *Kaiser Augustus und die verlorene Republik. Eine Ausstellung im Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin 7. Juni - 14. Aug. 1988*, Antikemuseum - Berlin (ed.), Berlin 1988, pp. 622-634; *ibidem*, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, Ann Arbor 1988, *passim*.

7 See M. Jaczynowska, *Dzieje Imperium Romanum*, Warszawa 1995, p. 227, ff.; D. Shotter, *Augustus Caesar*, London 2005, pp. 76-77.

8 J. Elsner, *Classicism in Roman Art...*, pp. 273-276 ff.; K. Galinsky, *Augustan Classicism. Greco-Roman Synthesis*, [in:] *The Eye Expanded: life and the arts in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, F. B. Titchener, R. F. Moorton (ed.), London 1999, p. 186.

9 E.g. A. Murawski, *Akcjum 31 p.n.e.*, Warszawa 1986, p. 5, 117.

10 P. Zanker, *The Power of Images...*, pp. 2-3 ff., 15-31 (trends in Roman art at the end of the Republic), 89-100 ff.

11 Cf. remarks: B. Campbell, *War and Society in Imperial Rome 31 BC - AD 284*, London 2004, pp. 79-80, 91-96; T. Łoposzko, *Problemy społeczne schyłkowej Republiki*, [in:] *Starożytny Rzym we współczesnych badaniach. Państwo-Spoleczeństwo-Gospodarka. Liber in memoriam Ludovici Piotrowicz*, J. Wolski, T. Kotula, A. Kunisz (ed.), Kraków 1994, pp. 270-272 ff.; R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford 1939, p. 2, 9.

recent conflicts as well¹². Exotic practices from the East, influencing Italy roughly from the end of the 3rd Punic war (149-146 B.C.)¹³, but in time equaled with moral decay, egotism and lust for private luxury¹⁴, had now given ground to the official cult of traditional Roman virtues and classical trends in art, as well as customs promoted by the princes¹⁵. Though the new style was not entirely independent from the artistical tendencies of the previous decades, it had now been provided with an elaborate palette of new concepts and references¹⁶. In Augustan age, ideology therefore finds its solid background in profound concepts of piety (ritual), modesty, and triumph, deriving from centuries-old myths, legends, and antique folklore, yet now employed in politics in a remarkable fashion, on a momentous scale¹⁷. What thenceforward matter, are the paths of the ancients¹⁸.

The eagle: a traditional Roman icon, has also earned a respectable place in the propaganda, created by the princes, or else supported by tales promulgated by Roman citizens themselves. The preserved monuments of the Augustan era: literary, sculptural, numismatical, and even gemmological, provide us with a much needed opportunity to learn more about the symbolic functions attributed with the Roman eagle, as well as the role the fawn bird might had played in the world of Roman beliefs. As we shall see, moreover, the eagle appears in many oracular situations (*omina*) that were to occur during Octavian's lifetime, from its humble beginnings — to a solemn end¹⁹.

KING OF FIRMAMENT - MESSENGER OF GODS

Divine power does not normally manifest itself in confrontations between gods and other gods, but in interactions between gods and mortals. The gods demonstrate their supernatural power through epiphany, dreams, visions and miracles, through rewards and punishments, through interference with the natural order and through other forms of divine interventions in human affairs. Each of these manifestations of divine power in action is abundantly attested in literary texts as well as inscriptions from the archaic period to late antiquity.

Albert Heinrichs²⁰

The first from a set of enigmatic events from the period, which involve the presence of an eagle, concerns the very beginnings of the future emperor. While describing Octavian's childhood, Suetonius mentions a rather unique episode in the boy's life. Apparently, "as he [Octavianus] was lunching in a grove at the fourth milestone on the Campanian road, an eagle surprised him by snatching his bread from his hand, and after flying to a great height, equally to his surprise dropped gently down again and gave it back to him"²¹. One of the later Roman writers, Cassius Dio, also included the story in his own *Historia Romana*²². According to ancient biographies, the rather peculiar occurrence is featured as just one of many omens that were to supposedly surround Augustus during lifetime (thus creating a specific aura around his person). However supported by the general concept of mystic ambience — often being part of a certain literary convention — the analysed event nonetheless also carries a unique notion as well as a symbolical purpose of its own.

Our first point of reference shall be a naturalistic perspective, immortalised in Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* — a 1st c. work, summarising *inter alia* biological knowledge, acquired by the ancient Romans about their surrounding world. Concer-

12 E.g. the „Actian“ art policy - T. Hölscher, *Denkmäler der Schlacht von Actium. Propaganda und Resonanz*, „Klio. Beiträge zur alten Geschichte“ 1985, Vol. LXVII, pp. 81-102.

13 H. Kowalski, *Państwo i religia rzymska wobec „obcych“ kultów i rytuałów w okresie republiki*, [in:] *Grecy. Rzymianie i ich sąsiedzi*, „Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Antiquitas”, vol. 29, K. Nawotka, M. Pawlak (ed.), Wrocław 2007, pp. 465-480; J. A. Ostrowski, *Malowidła greckie elementem rzymskiej propagandy politycznej*, „Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej” 1998, Vol. XLVI, no. 1-2, p. 153.

14 Cf. K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture...*, pp. 332-338 ff.; P. Zanker, *The Power of Images...*, p. 6, 9, 15, 25, 28.

15 C. Wells, *Cesarstwo rzymskie*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 73-75, 103 ff.; Cf. R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution...*, pp. 153-155, 448-468. It shall be noted, however, that Greek artisans and thinkers remained an intellectual group no less valued or praised in Octavian's times, than they were in the previous periods. Furthermore, they came to be widely known as an actual elite of the Empire's society — many of them served as personal advisors, as well as tutors of numerous prominent Romans from the époque (including the emperor himself). See G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, Oxford 1965, pp. 30-41.

16 E.g. K. Galinsky, *Augustan Classicism...*, p. 181, 186.

17 See: W. Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, Oxford 2007, pp. 100-113 ff.; K. Kumaniecki, *Historia kultury materialnej starożytnego Grecji i Rzymu*, Warszawa 1975, pp. 431-450; P. Zanker, *Forum Augustum: das Bildprogramm*, „Monumenta artis antiquae” 1968, Vol. 2, pp. 14-20 ff.

18 K. Balbuza, *Die Siegesideologie von Octavian Augustus*, „Eos: Commentarii Societatis Philologiae Polonorum” 1999, vol. 86, fasc. 2; S. Dworacki, D. Axer, L. Mrozewicz (ed.), p. 270; J. Bleicken, *Augustus. Eine Biographie*, Berlin 2000, pp. 371-383 ff.

19 The following assignment of the eagle's symbolical traits to specific categories of origin (religious, military, zoologic, eschatological) remains optional at best, since many of the allegorical situations analysed may well match more than one group on basis of merit. It does not, however, affect the general outcome and the key aspects of bird symbolism, which have been outlined below.

20 A. Heinrichs, *What is a Greek god?*, [in:] *The Gods of Ancient Greece. Identities and Transformations*, „Edinburgh Leventis Studies” 2010, Vol. 5, J. N. Bremmer, A. Erskine (ed.), p. 36.

21 Suet., *Aug.* 94, 7 (all passages from *The Life of Caesars* by Suetonius in translation of J. C. Rolfe).

22 See Dio, XLV, 2.

ning the eagle, among many traits observed and anomalies underlined, Pliny describes the bird as a truly exceptional hunter: fast, precise and deadly, one capable of making the ultimate sacrifice during his impetuous hunt — for by paying with his own life²³. The eagle also possesses an excellent vision, that allows him to better perceive his surroundings, as well as to trace his prey more easily²⁴. The bird's impressive attributes: imposing size, unmatched strength, as well as splendid agility, became likewise a subject of praise of another Roman scholar — though much younger than Pliny — called Aelian (2nd/3rd c. A.D.)²⁵. In both of the ancient studies, the fawn bird is equally regarded as a creature by far noble and worthy of description.

In case of Octavian's omen, considering the eagle's numerous abilities, the winged predator undoubtedly acquires a symbolism of natural (earthly) superiority. After all, the boy is visited by a lord of the skies, that could easily end the child's life. And yet, the enormous creature merely contents itself with grasping Octavian's bread, only to return (!) the catch a moment later. Surviving an encounter with an eagle thus portrays the boy as a person blessed with fortune, a man destined to do many great deeds, moreover — a mortal favoured by the gods.

Plate 1. Rare Roman gold coin issue of 60-as (ca. 211-208 B.C.); e.g. BMCRR 1, no. 185; RCV 1, no. 3²⁶.

Obv. / bust of bearded Mars in a helmet, turned right, behind a mark of value X (60 sestertii).

Rev. / image of an eagle clutching thunderbolts right, his wings spread. Below the legend: ROMA.



Source: <http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/sear5/s0003.html>, 16.10.2013.

In his *History of Rome*, Livy mentions a surprisingly similar incident regarding the childhood of another great personality, Tarquinius Priscus — the fifth king of Rome. A minor difference remains, that the bread has been therein replaced by the boy's cap; the most important in the narration proves to be Livy's own commentary, in which he describes the eagle as: "velut ministerio divinitus missa" [as though commissioned by heaven]²⁷. The augury was to be therefore „joyfully accepted" by the boy's mother, Tanaquil, who perceived it as a great blessing — the omen was to foretell great power and fortune, to become part of Tarquinius' lifetime. The expression of Octavian's portent appears much alike. "Le comportement de l'aigle, étrangement favorable au tout jeune Octave, indique sans ambiguïté la faveur jovienne: en lui rendant son pain, l'aigle émissaire de Jupiter annonce à l'enfant un pouvoir royal"²⁸.

In the Roman world of mythology, the eagle had been commonly identified as a respected attribute of Iuppiter (Iovis), the Proto-Indo-European chief god of thunder, lightning, and skies in general — to name just one sphere of the deity's

²³ Caius Plinius Secundus Maior, *Naturalis historia*, K. F. T. Mayhoff (ed.), Lipsiae 1906 (further as: Plin., *Nat.*), X (*Volucrum naturae*), 3: „Saepe et aquilae ipsae, non tolerantes pondus adprehensum, una merguntur”.

²⁴ Plin., *Nat.* X, 88.

²⁵ See: Caius Aelianus Praenestinus, *De vi et natura animalium*, E. G. Geijer, A. A. Afzelius (ed.), Lugdunum 1533 (further as: Aelian), XIV, 1 ff.

²⁶ H.A. Grueber, *Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum* (BMCRR), Vol. 1: *Aes Rude, Aes Signatum, Aes Grave, and coinage of Rome from B.C. 268, London 1910* (cf. nos. 185-190); D. R. Sears, *Roman Coins and their Values. The Millennium Edition* (RCV), Vol. 1: *The Republic and the Twelve Caesars 280 BC—AD 96, London 2000* (cf. nos. 3-5).

²⁷ Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* (further as: Liv.), R. S. Conway, C. F. Walters, A. H. McDonald (ed.), Oxford 1919-1965, I, 34, 8, trans. C. Roberts, New York 1912.

²⁸ E. Bertrand-Ecanvil, *Présages et propagande idéologique: à propos d'une liste concernant Octavien Auguste*, „Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Antiquité”, 1994, Vol. 106, No. 2, p. 494.

activity²⁹. Even from a pragmatical point of view, such unique connection between Iuppiter and the eagle appears rather understandable, considering the latter's natural predispositions in terms of vitality, efficiency, as well as supreme strength, that elevate him above other birds. Furthermore, as Ovid tells us, the eagle is supposedly the only animal not being afraid of the storm, therefore granted the honour to carry the bolts of Iovis³⁰. As such, the mighty hunter becomes a creature deemed worthy of being a divine messenger (e.g. Plate 1)³¹.

The *topos* of an eagle as a distinctive symbol of Iuppiter is justified not only by the winged predator's natural traits, neither it is substantiated solely by the bird's remarkable lifestyle. It also seems to be crucially related with spectacular examples of the so called "divine metamorphosis", richly preserved in Greek mythology, whereas being — as in the case of Iuppiter (or Zeus, in Hellenic pantheon) — widely implemented into Roman beliefs. Apart from anthropomorphic epiphany³², the residents of Olympus also changed their silhouettes into other — mainly animal — forms, in pursuit of their private goals (usually concerning love affairs)³³.

One of the most famous myths of such kind, featuring the eagle as a creature of godly provenance, is the tale of the Trojan prince, Ganymede; at a time, a young boy, gifted with beauty, was to gain the affect of Zeus/Iuppiter. According to Ovid, the deity had therefore assumed the form of — or simply dispatched — an eagle, which was to soon fly over to Ganymede's homeland (Troy) and kidnap the young prince while he was distracted. Henceforth, Ganymede had been entrusted with the function of a cupbearer of the gods, as well as being granted immortality and eternal youth. The myth, although extant in several variations of storyline, became an integral part of refined analogies in ancient literature, from Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odes* of Pindar, to the inspirations found in works of Ovid, Vergil, among other authors³⁴. What remains of upmost importance from our perspective, is that the eagle — whether mainly an emissary, or an incarnation of Iuppiter himself — is portrayed as a creature appurtenant to the world of myth³⁵.

In augural beliefs, depending on the context, the eagle in a divination³⁶ might have had been perceived as an indirect sign of Iuppiter's activity, but he might have had also been featured as a personal image of the chief deity itself³⁷. In either case, the purpose of the appreciation of "the tawny bird, dear to Jupiter"³⁸ among the Romans, most likely lied within their desire to appease the powerful god of thunder, i.e. "a supreme guardian deity of his people", as William Warde-Fowler once called him³⁹. It could have been motivated by a "vertical" manner of landscape perception as well, present in antique (and why often also contemporary) worldviews. In a broad description, such perspective generally involves the polarity of the world into several spheres; all of the creations, present above the ground level, are accordingly governed by the mainly "positive" forces of the heavens⁴⁰, whereas — all beings related to the unknown abyss below ground, are linked with the dark and dreadful powers of the underworld (i.e. those being fairly negative)⁴¹. From that point of view, the eagle thus becomes a celestial symbol of life, summoning all the positive incentives, while having its connotations in the inspiring image of the brightful firmament that by far expands above the earthly horizon, and is known to belong to Iuppiter⁴². As

29 Cf. W. Markowska, *Mity Greków i Rzymian*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 359-364, 417-419. Note the remarks: A. Krawczuk, *Mitologia starożytnej Italii*, Warszawa 1983, p. 82.

30 See Publius Ovidius Naso (further as: Ovid), *Metamorphoseon [Metamorphoses]*, H. Magnus (ed.), Gotha 1892 (further as: *Met.*), X, 155-160.

31 M. Pietrzykowski, *Mitologia starożytnej Grecji*, Warszawa 1983, pp. 34-39. Cf. Ovid, *Met.* IV, 714 ff.

32 On the definition, traits, as well as variety of such manifestation: A. Heinrichs, *What is a Greek god...*, pp. 33-35.

33 Cf. R. Buxton, *Metamorphoses of Gods into Animals and Humans*, [in:] *The Gods of Ancient Greece...*, pp. 81-91. Concerning the abilities of Iuppiter: Ovid, *Met.* VI, 87 ff.

34 Homer, *Iliad*, T. Sinko (ed.), trans. F. K. Dmochowski, Wrocław 2004, V, 180-190, as well as: II, 300-325; XII, 60-68; XXIV, 100 ff., 120-130; Ovid, *Met.* X, 143-161; Pindarus, *The Odes*, J. Sandys (ed.), London 1937, 1-1st Olympian, 40-45; Publius Vergilius Maro (further as: Vergil), *Aeneis*, S. Stabryła (ed.), Wrocław 2004 (further as: *En.*), I, 25-30 ff. Cf. L. Barkan, *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the erotics of Humanism*, Stanford 1991, pp. 10-27 ff.; R. Graves, *Mity greckie*, trans. H. Krzeczowski, Warszawa 1992, pp. 112-113. See also the comprehensive study of: E. Veckenstedt, *Ganymedes*, Libau 1882.

35 W. Drexler, *Ganymēdes*, [in:] *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (further as: ALM), Vol. I, 2nd Issue (*Euixstratos—Hysiris*), Leipzig 1886-1890, pp. 1595-1603.

36 Definition: M. A. Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2008, pp. 74-80 ff.

37 Compare with general remarks in latest studies: F. Santangelo, *Divination, Prediction and the End of the Roman Republic*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 10-32 ff., 47.

38 Ovid, *Fasti*, J. G. Frazer (ed. and trans.), London 1959, V, 730 ff.

39 W. Warde-Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People. From the earliest times to the Age of Augustus*, London 1911, p. 129.

40 Cf. the traditional rite of *devotio*, dedicated *inter alia* to Iuppiter: ibidem, p. 121 ff.

41 Cf. the account of Aeneas's journey through the depths of the underworld, poetically depicted by Vergil: *En.* VI, 274-279.

42 About the general concept and its multi-dimensional expression, e.g. A. B. Cook, *Zeus. A Study in ancient religion*, Vol. II, pt. 1, Cambridge 1925, *passim*; Vol. III, pt. 1, Cambridge 1940, pp. 30-103, and further literature contained therein. Another perspective is that referring to the plans of Roman temple building, where godly relations were to be somehow resembled in the architectural concepts of a cultic area; M. Lipka, *Roman Gods. A Conceptual Approach*, „Religions in the Graeco-Roman World” 2009, Vol. 167, pp. 11-30.

Michael A. Flower indicates, "the god-sent sign is the instrument of mediation between the knowledge of the gods and the more limited knowledge of humans"⁴³. Overall, the sky hemisphere appears as one of few locations, with which the afterlife had possibly been associated in ancient Roman thanatology, and the eagle symbol was to play an important role in shaping the ideological notion of such belief⁴⁴. To the Romans: by nature, tradition, and myth, the winged predator might have had therefore well possessed divine origin and significance.

The memorable omen, which had supposedly been experienced by Octavian during childhood, shall thus be considered a proof of mutual penetration of two diverse worlds: the world of mortals, and the world of gods combined. The future princeps is linked with the paranormal, whereas the whole portent can be interpreted as one of several mantic indicators of Iuppiter's paternal interest towards Octavian. As in the case of Tarquinius, the main purpose of the omen — as Livy suggests — was to foretell "[...] transcendent greatness: such was the meaning of that bird, appearing from that quarter of the sky, and bringing tidings from that god [Iuppiter - H.L.K.]; the highest part of the man had been concerned in the omen; the eagle had removed the adornment placed upon a mortal's head that it might restore it with the divine approbation"⁴⁵. Indeed, the connection with the divine (apart from Iuppiter: with Apollo, Roma, and even Julius Caesar himself - *divus Iulius*) was to play an important part in Augustus' religious policy, as well as in the creation of the princeps' public image in general. In ideology, the patronage of gods ultimately affirmed a complex cultural program, that was to receive the name of *res publica restituta*⁴⁶.

An important and famous historical event, which was to weigh heavily on the fate of 1st c. Rome and its citizens, and which came to be known as the Bononia (now: Bologna) treaty (November 43 B.C.), also appeared as „enshrined“ with mystical atmosphere, as one might say. While Marcus Lepidus was to be frightened by a wolf that had suddenly leaped into his tent, and knocked over the near-standing table, and whilst another attendee of the meeting — Mark Antony — was supposedly haunted by disturbing lamentations, a scarce scene was to take place on top of the tent that belonged to Caesar's heir. For after the pact had been signed (*lex Titia*), an eagle presumably landed on top of the mentioned structure and soon thereafter emerged victorious from a challenging encounter, fought against two large ravens that attempted to damage his wings⁴⁷.

The paramount notion of the omen, that immediately becomes apparent, is contrast. Both the portent of Lepidus, as well as the experience of Antony, seem ominous, and deny any propitious outcome of political rivalry for the two as such. In case of Octavian, however, the image appears quite evocative: the eagle fends off two onerous birds that harass him, and these are likely to symbolically reflect the personalities of other triumvirs. Ergo, the analysed situation becomes chronologically the first of prophetic events from the analysed period, in which the eagle assumes the role of a refined personification of Octavianus himself. The fact that the ravens attempt to tear off the fawn bird's wings shall also be considered allegorical; whereas the wings allow birds to reach topographical summits, they why likewise — in a proverbial way — enable men to reach their ambitious heights. Also, the circumstance of the eagle's adversaries being birds of deep black colour, i.e. ravens, is possibly not a coincidence as well. Since centuries, black has been considered a colour highly pessimistic and thus perceived as a common expression of sadness, despair and grief — in such symbolism, the ancient Romans were no exception⁴⁸. Finally, the eagle is once more shown as a bird by far noble and combative, in this case successfully repelling his envious assailants, that certainly do not wish him well. Considering the events that followed the Bononia treaty, and knowing of the soon revealed animosities between the triumvirs, a political genesis of the omen hence seems especially evident.

43 M. A. Flower, *The Seer...*, p. 72.

44 J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, London 1971, p. 38.

45 Liv. I, 34, 9, B.O. Foster (trans. and ed.) London 1919.

46 The other known omens, that involve a mystic connection between Augustus and Iovis, took a rather different form, for they were to supposedly manifest themselves through dreams, specifically — as visions experienced by senator Q. Catulus, by Cicero, and even by Octavian's biological father, i.e. C. Octavius. Cf. Dio, XLV, 2-3; Suet., *Aug.* 94, 5 ff. Concerning the possible child symbolism, expressed in such prophetic dreams, see: K. Bradley, *Children and Dreams*, [in:] *Childhood, class and kin in the Roman World*, S. Dixon (ed.), London-New York 2005, pp. 43-51. Also collate with: F. Santangelo, *Divination...*, p. 70 ff.

47 Dio, XLVII, 1; Suet., *Aug.* 96.

48 Perhaps one of the more popular examples of cultural implementation of sombre palette of colours (i.e. also black) in the customs practiced in ancient Rome, was the development of the so called *toga pulla*, worn by the Romans during a time of private- and national mourning, but also as a sign of organised protest against undesired political decisions; S. Stone, *The Toga: From National to Ceremonial Costume*, [in:] *The World of Roman Costume*, J. L. Sebesta, L. Bonfante (ed.), London 2001, p. 15. Also see the remarks of: J. Edmonson, *Public Dress and Social Control in Late Republican and Early Imperial Rome*, [in:] *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, J. Edmonson, A. Keith (ed.), Toronto-Buffalo-London 2008, p. 27 ff.; M. George, *The 'Dark Side' of the Toga*, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 94-112.

The above concept has possibly been significantly expanded in the event of the battle of Philippi⁴⁹. In autumn of 42 B.C., Macedonian steppes between Pangeum and Symbolon⁵⁰ witnessed a great tragedy, nota bene preceded by numerous and highly disturbing portents⁵¹. By dawn of one fateful day in October, legionaires formed lines in their designated positions, speeches of both parties' leaders took place, and soon thereafter — the two armies clashed in a desperate struggle for victory. The fighting had lasted as long as the dusk, and resulted in many casualties on both sides (C. Cassius's death among them). Yet — as Dio puts it — there were no victors, nor there were conquered⁵². Approximately twenty days after the initial encounter, a second confrontation took place, and this one interests us the most⁵³. While the opposing armies had been preparing for the final showdown (though both forces somehow unwilling to engage in combat), two eagles had suddenly appeared above the battlefield and thereafter fought a fierce duel, of which the eagle on the side of Brutus eventually fled in defeat. The outcome greatly inspired the caesarians, who — along with troops under the command of the conscriptors — had until that moment watched the course of the fight in great awe, surrounded by absolute silence⁵⁴. Now, however, the forces of Octavian and M. Antony "raised a great shout and battle was joined. The onset was superb and terrible. [...] coming to close combat with naked swords, they slew and were slain, seeking to break each other's ranks. On the one side it was a fight for self-preservation rather than victory: on the other for victory and for the satisfaction of the general who had been forced to fight against his will"⁵⁵. In the end, despite heavy resistance, Brutus's forces gave ground to the veterans committed to M. Antony, while Marcus Brutus himself — after a failed attempt to break through towards the rest of his troops — finally committed suicide, as in seeking the ultimate refuge from the ghosts that had haunted him for so long⁵⁶.

According to Plutarch, news of the omen's occurrence were to be initially passed down by a friend of M. Brutus, a philosopher called Publius Volumnius (possibly present on the battlefield when the strange event had taken place)⁵⁷. As such, the augury from the planes of Philippi in many aspects serves as an extension of the previously mentioned omens, yet it also includes a rather new, symbolical background.

First of all, the analysed portent may once again signify a divine — direct, or indirect — presence of Iuppiter (although the fact that more than one eagle is therein featured makes it somehow less pivotal to our general interpretation). Also, similarly to the Bononia case, the Macedonian omen may possibly refer to the individuality of historiographical characters as such; the eagle on side of Octavian's forces — is thus Octavianus himself, while the other fawn bird becomes a personification of M. Brutus accordingly. The outstanding aspect, however (rather less noticeable in previous divinations), is the possible implementation of ideology.

Not only the two predators are likely to resemble the leaders of both armies gathered on the field, but the eagles may very well be interpreted as a sublime reflection of different ideals and beliefs, that the opposite parties are avowed to. Each of the two birds might thus in a literary way symbolise Rome itself; they refer to separate visions of the Roman state, amidst of which why lies the complex image of its beating heart — the Eternal City. The eagle on Brutus's side is hence a remainder of the "old", republican idea of Rome, that suffers severe defeat at the hands of a new, imperial Roma. And yet, the fact that the weaker bird had merely escaped, and not lost his life, could be a comfort of sorts: for in a poetical way, there is a chance that he will someday return, along with the virtues he represents, and shall perhaps then fight a winning battle with his long adversary. Lastly, the behaviour of the human "spectators" (i.e. remaining in absolute silence) shall also be given a thought — it may be a certain reminiscence of a possible attitude of the Romans (or at least some part of them) towards auguries, and portents in general.

49 A detailed account of the battle and the surrounding events has been passed down to us in several ancient writings, of which the most known are: the description of Appian of Alexandria, and the narration of Cassius Dio. Some unique details can also be found in the adequate passages of Plutarch, as well as in the treaty of Valerius Maximus. See: Appianus Alexandrinus, *Historia Romana*, H. White (ed. and trans.), Cambridge-London 1912-1972 (further as: App.), XVI: *De Bellum civile* (further as: *Bell. civ.*), IV, 88-131; Dio, XLVII, 35-49; Plutarch, *Vitae Parallelae*, B. Perrin (ed.), Cambridge-London 1918 (further as: Plut.): *Brutus* (further as: *Brut.*), 38-53; ibidem, *Antonius*, 22; Valerius Maximus, *Factorum Et Dictorum Memorabilium*, C. Kempf (ed.), Lipsiae 1888, I, 5, 7.

50 Cf. App., *Bell. civ.* IV, 105-106; Dio, XLVII, 35, 3; Plut., *Brut.* 38, 1-4.

51 E.g. Dio, XLVII, 40-41. Also see: F. Santangelo, *Divination...*, pp. 240-242 ff. (further literature therein).

52 Dio, XLVII, 46.

53 S. Dando-Collins, *Caesar's legion. The epic saga of Julius Caesar's elite tenth legion and the armies of Rome*, New York 2002, pp. 183-188; ibidem, *The Ides. Caesar's Murder and the war for Rome*, New Jersey 2010, pp. 222-225. Cf. with other findings: J. Bleicken, *Augustus...*, pp. 159 ff.; M. Milczanowski, *Filippi 23 X 42 p.n.e., Zabrze 2006, passim*.

54 App., *Bell. civ.* IV, p.128; Plut., *Brut.*, p. 48, 4.

55 App., *Bell. civ.* IV, p. 128.

56 See App., *Bell. civ.* IV, p. 134; Dio, XLVII, 49; Plut., *Brut.*, p. 51 ff.

57 Plut., *Brut.*, p. 48, 2-4.

Philippi came to be the turning point of the civil war, though the trial of strength seemed far from over. As for Octavianus, a new, no less challenging foe took place of the conscriptors — Cn. Pompeius. In a time of great political tension, filled with violence, death, and common uncertainty of tomorrow, the omens seemed to have had only multiplied. Among them, a rather peculiar incident was to happen to Livia, Octavian's third wife. Apparently, one day in the year 37 B.C., an eagle suddenly dropped "a white bird carrying a sprig of laurel with berries on it"⁵⁸ into the future empress' lap. The confused woman took care of both gifts, and the sprig was to soon grow strong, thus becoming a source of laurel for all Roman conquerors, that were from that time onward ever to receive a triumph⁵⁹.

Surprisingly, the portent seems to be the first augury from the period, in which the eagle is introduced as a sign somehow ambiguous, since the whole event was to become a warning against Livia's destructive influence, that she was supposed to have had possessed upon her husband throughout the course of his reign⁶⁰. Apart from that, the volatile predator — *nota bene* once again presenting his splendid abilities in matters of hunt — is not a direct subject of augury. Instead, the eagle is portrayed as a majestic intermediary, taking part in the mystical process of communication between gods — and mortals. Thus, though the fawn bird does not play the main role, he nevertheless fulfills his function of a divine messenger superbly⁶¹. The omen could also serve as an apparent, historiographical example of creating a mystic aura — by now, not only around the princes, but also around the members of the soon imperial family themselves (in this case — Livia).

The event concerning Augustus' wife is also noteworthy because of the laurel wreath. The laurel is brought presumably to sign great conquests, that are due to become part of Octavian's lifetime achievements. To the Romans, the laurel remained an attribute of tradition; a reward of upmost importance, crowning the head of a victorious commander during his triumphal ceremony⁶². Interestingly, if we consider (as it is sometimes done) the awarded *dux* as being a symbolical resemblance of Iuppiter himself — in terms of dress, facial make up, but also the carried insignia of power — then the laurel wreath which he wears similarly acquires a whole new, religious dimension of meaning and ownership⁶³. The eagle therefore bestows upon Livia a promise of power, of hope, and of peace, which is also a possible reference to the sound mottoes of Augustan art. The imperial family is presented with a great gift of fortune and divine favour, that ultimately endows all of her members (both present, and future) with charismatic authority: an ancient trait invaluable to stable and noble rule, that links one's personality — with its magical underpinnings⁶⁴.

Concerning the time of the civil war, the years of Octavian's confrontation with M. Antony, as well as the actual period of Augustus' reign, examples can also be found of the eagle — *aquila* — being portrayed (in literary sources, numismatics, and sculpture) as a highly recognisable and esteemed part of the so called army religion, therefore an element extensively associated with military symbolism in general⁶⁵. The fawn bird's figurine, attached to the top of a long, decorative staff, and carried by a specially designated individual — the *aquilifer* — remained a primary source of the legionaires' orientation during a battle (one eagle for one legion), but no less was it a great source of religious (emotional) inspiration, and a refined standard of Roman state ideology: republican, or imperial⁶⁶. Octavianus, as well as other political leaders of that time, knew well the symbol's significance among the troops under their command, and as such — attempted to possibly make the best use of it in their policies.

We may encounter the *aquila* depicted on reverses of numerous mints from the period, but also come across literary examples of Octavian's personal devotion towards the *insignia*⁶⁷. Furthermore, the military ideals of duty, piety and conquest, were to be later resembled in funerary art as well; a splendid example of such kind is the so called *Apotheosis of Claudius* — a stunning monument of white marble, originally placed most likely on top of a pedestal containing a cinerary urn,

58 Dio, XLVIII, p. 52, 3.

59 Dio, XLVIII, p. 52, 3-4.

60 Ibidem.

61 Ovid, *Met.* VI, p. 511-518.

62 E.g. B. Bergmann, *Der Kranz des Kaisers. Genese und Bedeutung einer römischen Insignie*, Berlin-New York 2010, pp. 51-58 ff.

63 Cf. ibidem, p. 68 ff.; R. Payne, *The Roman triumph*, London-New York-Toronto 1962, pp. 25-38 ff.; H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus. An inquiry into the origin, development and meaning of the Roman triumph*, Leiden 1970, p. 56-65 ff.; W. Warde-Fowler, *Jupiter and the triumphator*, „The Classical Review” 1916, Vol. XXX, pp. 153-157.

64 See the notes of: L. Morawiecki, *Władza charyzmatyczna w Rzymie u schyłku Republiki (lata 44-27 p.n.e.)*, Rzeszów 1989, p. 15.

65 E.g. the study of O. Stoll, *Excubatio ad signa. Die Wache bei den Fahnen in der römischen Armee und andere Beiträge zur kulturgeschichtlichen und historischen Bedeutung eines militärischen Symbols*, St. Katharinen 1995.

66 J. Helgeland, *Roman Army Religion*, [in:] *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (further as: ANRW), Pt. II: *Principat*, H. Temporini, W. Haase (ed.), Vol. XVI, 2nd Issue, Berlin-New York 1978, pp. 1473-1478.

67 See: Dio XLIX, p. 12; Suet., *Aug.* p. 10, 4; Velleius Paterculus, *Historia Romana*, F. W. Shipley (ed.), London 1961, II, p. 80, 3-4.

in which the remains of the commander M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus (died ca. 8 B.C.), were presumably conceived⁶⁸. Finally, a summary in terms of the Romans' emotional attachment towards the legionary eagle, proved to be the recovery of the army standards from the Parthians, which had taken place in the year 20 B.C. and which soon became a subject of common praise in many spheres of Augustan propaganda⁶⁹. *Inter alia*, the symbolic scene of the ensigns recovery had been beautifully encarded on the armour of the marble statue of Augustus of Prima Porta⁷⁰. It had been immortalised in poethics of the Augustan age, in numismatics, and it even received a humble mention in the famous *Res Gestae*, thus becoming one of the princeps' most impressive, long-lasting achievements⁷¹. However, because the above monuments in many aspects concern a rather different sphere of the eagle's symbolism (though no less important, nor inspiring), and as such — their analysis would by far surpass the short frames of this article, we shall at this point focus our attention on those of the fawn bird's images, in which the army symbolism appears a rather „secondary“ expression.

GUARDIAN OF A NEW ORDER

Vague supernatural nimbus, which might temporarily lead to divine worship, had always surrounded the most powerful in the state.

Michael Lipka⁷²

At one point in his autobiography, Augustus states: “in my sixth and seventh consulships, when I had extinguished the flames of civil war, after receiving by universal consent the absolute control of affairs, I transferred the republic from my own control to the will of the senate and the Roman people. For this service on my part I was given the title of Augustus by decree of the senate, and the doorposts of my house were covered with laurels by public act, and a civic crown was fixed above my door, and a golden shield was placed in the Curia Julia whose inscription testified that the senate and the Roman people gave me this in recognition of my valour, my clemency, my justice, and my piety. After that time I took precedence of all in rank, but of power I possessed no more than those who were my colleagues in any magistracy”⁷³.

The solemn ceremony of presenting Octavian with the mentioned ensigns of merit became a subject of wide implementation in Augustan art⁷⁴. It has been *inter alia* immortalised in iconography of many coin issues, dated presumably on the year 27 B.C. (or near that date)⁷⁵. One of such mints: an aureus, perhaps struck in the Eternal City itself (alternatively: in Ephesus), contains on its reverse an imposing image of the Roman eagle (plate 2)⁷⁶. The volatile hunter clutches an oak wreath (*corona civica*) in his fawns, and his wings are majestically spread — as in to sign a forthcoming ascension into the skies. Despite that the background is enriched with two laurel branches (or trees), it is the eagle that seems to dominate the scene, as well as possess the greatest emotional resonance towards the viewer.

If to recall the historical context of the event the coin commemorates, i.e. a certain change of Octavian's up until then employed policies — especially in terms of self-presentation in public art — the eagle symbol undoubtedly becomes a perfect choice for one who decided to praise Roman tradition (and religion) in a distinctive, subtle, yet highly suggestive fashion⁷⁷. Along with the rest of the details engraved, the image of the fawn bird symbolically focuses within all the traits

68 Concerning the sculpture and its fate over the course of centuries, see the study: *La apoteosis de Claudio: un monumento funerario de la época de Augusto y su fortuna moderna*, S. F. Schröder (ed.), Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid 2002.

69 E.g. P. Zanker, *The Power of Images...*, pp. 186-192.

70 Cf. the notes of: E. Simon, *Augustus. Kunst und Leben in Rom um die Zeitenwende*, München 1986, pp. 53-57.

71 Among others: J. P. A. van der Vin, *The Return of the Roman Ensigns from Parthia*, „Bulletin van der vereeniging tot bevordering der Kennis von de antieke beschaving (Annual Papers on Classical Archaeology; further as: Babesch)“ 1981, Vol. LVI, pp. 117-139.

72 M. Lipka, *Roman Gods...*, p. 129.

73 “*In consulatū sexto et septimo, postquam bella civilia extinxeram, per consensum univērsōrum potitus rerum omnium, rem publicam ex meā potestate in senātus populique Romani arbitrae transtuli. Quō pro merito meō senatus consulto Augustus appellatus sum, et laureis postēs aedium meārum vestiti publice, coronaque civica super iāmum meam fixa est et clipeus aureus in curia Iuliā positus quem mihi senatum populūque Romanum dare virtutis clementiaeque iustitiae et pietatis causā testatum est per eius clipeus inscriptionem. Post id tempus auctoritate omnibus praestiti, potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt*” - *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, J. Gagé (ed.), Paris 1935 (further as: *Res Gestae*), VI, 34 [*Monumentum Ancyranum* (further as: *Mon. Anc.*) — XVIII, 34]. English translation: F. W. Shipley, *Velleius Paterculus and Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, London 1961 (pp. 399-400).

74 P. Zanker, *The Power of Images...*, pp. 92-97.

75 E.g. H. A. Seaby, *Roman Silver Coins*, Vol. I: *The Republic to Augustus*, London 1978, Augustus, nos. 51-53c.

76 H. Cohen, *Description Historique des Monnaies Frappées sous L'Empire Romain communément appelées Médailles impériales* (Cohen), Vol. I, Paris 1880, no. 30; C. H. V. Sutherland, *The Roman Imperial Coinage (RIC), Vol. I: from 31 BC to AD 69*, London 1984, Augustus, no. 277 and comments therein (p. 61). Cf. P. Zanker, *The Power of Images...*, pl. 76 b.

77 We also know of another coin issue from the period (possibly similar in its struck date), which bears the eagle symbol; whereas its obverse depicts Augustus' bust (left) in a laurel wreath, the rear side of the mint consists solely of the fawn bird's depiction (though in a slightly different variant, for the eagle has his wings lowered). Cf. Cohen I, no. 29. Nevertheless, in both of the examples, the overall expression of iconography remains strikingly similar.

that Augustus had been rewarded for by the senate, that is: *virtutis clementiaeque iustitiae et pietatis*⁷⁸. As such, it signifies a civic victory⁷⁹.

Plate 2. Aureus, Rome (?), ca. 27 B.C.; Cohen 1, Oct.-Aug. no. 30; RIC 1, Aug. no. 277.

Obv. / Bust of Augustus left, around the legend: CAESAR CO(n)S(ul) VII CIVIBVS SER[...(vateis)].

Rev. / an eagle with an oak wreath, wings spread, head right. Two laurel branches noticeable behind. The letters S—C surround the wreath adequately from both sides. Above the eagle an inscription reads: AUGUSTUS.



Source: http://www.ancientcoins.ca/RIC/RIC1/RIC1_Augustus_201-400.htm, 16.08.2011.

Furthermore, compared with monumentalism and splendour of artistic forms from the years 44-31 B.C., the mint's iconography resembles a surprisingly modest compilation of honorary symbols, therefore becoming a rather indirect mode of the princeps' official representation. Thus, it explicitly suggests an ongoing major turn in Octavian's cultural policy, and at the same time — confirms that two seemingly separate spheres: art (in this case - numismatics), and politics, are seriously linked⁸⁰.

Having recollected upon the ideology of the Augustan age, the fawn bird could be interpreted as a "protector" of both public order and the restitution of the old Roman customs. His pose shall not go unnoticed — the outstretched wings why point us to the already mentioned spiritual way of vertical perception of the world by the ancient Romans. The whole scene may thus be considered a refined allusion to by far noble ideals: the eagle shall lift the *populus Romanus*, represented by Augustus' *corona civica*, to previously unknown heights of dignity, glory, and prosperity⁸¹. Especially in the past generations, coinage remained one of the major medias shaping the public opinion, providing a good opportunity to promote certain themes, virtues and beliefs among the society. An ancient mint could have had therefore indicated an individual's military talents, political aspirations, but moreover — it could have had implied one's divinity, and relationship with the gods⁸².

Apart from coinage, the symbol of the eagle carrying an oak wreath can also be found in the artistical composition of a by far magnificent, unique, and highly expensive work of art from the period — the Eagle Cameo from Vienna, remarkably well preserved (plate 3)⁸³. The exact year of the oval gemstone's manufacture is uncertain; whereas some scholars suggest the date of 27 B.C. (thus the time of Octavian's „renunciation" of power), others postpone it as late as the year 20 B.C (when the Roman ensignes were returned from Parthia), or even suspect that it was created in an different period entirely⁸⁴. If yet to assume the Augustan era, then the time distance between either of the estimated dates (27 B.C. or 20 B.C.) does not appear as particularly large, thus the masterpiece's creation must have had regardlessly been influenced by similar tendencies in Augustan art of one and the same decade. As such, the symbolism of the cameo fits perfectly for

⁷⁸ *Res Gestae*, VI, p. 34, 2 (*Mon. Anc.* XVIII, 34, 2).

⁷⁹ Regarding such notion in other mints, commemorating the event: J. Gagé, *Un thème de l'art impérial romain: la Victoire d'Auguste*, „Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École Française de Rome" (further as: MEFRA) 1932, Vol. XLIX, pp. 63-67.

⁸⁰ Concerning a numismatical perspective: M. H. Crawford, *Roman imperial coin types and the formation of public opinion*, [in:] *Studies in numismatic method. Presented to Philip Grierson*, C. N. L. Brooke et al. (ed.), Cambridge 1983, pp. 50-64.

⁸¹ Cf. with the general propaganda notion of *corona civica*: B. Bergmann, *Der Kranz des Kaisers...*, pp. 187-195 ff., 202.

⁸² J. Pollini, *From Republic to Empire. Rhetoric, Religion and Power in the Visual Culture of Ancient Rome*, „Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture" 2012, Vol. 48, pp. 70-71 ff.

⁸³ F. Eichler, J. Bankó, *Der Adler Cameo in Wien. Ein Porträtkopf der heiligen Helena*, Wien 1926, *passim*.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 2-4; W.-R. Megow, *Kameen von Augustus bis Alexander Severus*, Berlin 1987, pp. 65-68 ff.; E. Simon, *Augustus. Kunst und Leben...*, p. 146 ff.

the commemoration of either of the two events. It may be, that it was actually made soon after Octavian had assumed his new title and name.

On the front side, a detailed silhouette of a standing eagle has been depicted. The bird's claws are fastened around a palm twig, whereas a small oak wreath is being held in the predator's raised left talon. The disproportion of size between each of the elements appears as somehow symptomatic; the enormous depiction of an eagle by far surpasses that of the items'. On the round edge of the cameo, a sublime foliage, that ultimately forms a laurel wreath, has been carved. Furthermore, four miniature busts, embedded in the rim, surround the eagle perpendicularly from four sides. To the right, Augustus can be seen, wearing a laurel wreath and possibly a headband (*nota bene*, this is the side, towards which the eagle's head is turned). On the opposite end, a man's head — also wearing a laurel wreath — is identifiable. A star symbol can be distinguished above it (*sidera Augusta*), thus the person depicted is most likely Octavian's adoptive father, Julius Caesar (*divus Iulius*)⁸⁵. Proceeding to the bottom of the rim, we notice a facial portrait of a helmeted, long-haired, and possibly bearded person — it may well be the famous conqueror, Alexander the Great, but it may also be Mars, the Roman god of war⁸⁶. If the latter is true, then the bust located far above the eagle's head is most likely to be identified as a depiction of Iuppiter. What becomes immediately noticeable to an observant viewer, is the arrangement of each of the busts, which is rather not coincidental, but instead a part of a larger, symbolical composition. The key to its comprehension prove to be once again the two main spheres of the world, possibly distinguished by the ancient Romans. Both the image of Octavianus, as well as that of his tragically deceased predecessor, remain parallel to each other and placed on a horizontal plane that outlines the mortal sphere of life and activity. Such assumption is not detracted by the later deification of nor Caesar, nor Augustus himself — even in a literary perspective, both of these persons were regardlessly born mortal and as mortals they departed the known world. However, the portraits on the vertical plane of the cameo's diameter, are a different matter entirely.

Plate 3. Obverse of the Eagle Cameo (Rome, 27/20 B.C.?), Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna). Ph. G. Dagli-Orti.



Source: <http://ancientrome.ru/art/artwork/glyptics/cameos/c0113.jpg>, 25.10.2013.

⁸⁵ On this topic, see the recent study of C. J. A. Carswell, *Sidera Augusta: the Role of the Stars in Augustus' Quest for supreme Auctoritas*, Kingston 2009, p. 8 ff.; P. Zanker, *The Power of Images...*, pp. 34-37 ff.

⁸⁶ Cf. the bust on the coin obverse from plate 1, as well as the remarks concerning Mars' depiction in numismatics: Z. H. Klawans, *Reading and Dating Roman Imperial Coins*, Racine 1959, p. 40 (and adequate plates therein).

Mars might had been a powerful deity to the Romans, but due to his war-like nature and profession — which mostly resulted in bloodshed and death, regardless of the cause — his activity was in many aspects bound to remain equated with the rather uncertain sphere of the underworld. Iuppiter, however, was not only a deity in many ways superior to Mars, but he generally also represented all the positive attributes linked with the heavenly sphere of life. Furthermore, according to Roman beliefs, the relations between the two gods seems to have had been shaped by an antagonism of sorts⁸⁷. Hence — the symbolical location of both depictions.

The reverse side of the gemstone also contains an iconographical element. In its center, a bust of a man (presumably Augustus himself) has been engraved amidst the cameo's main circular axle. Unlike the image on the gemstone's obverse, the rear portrait appears rather modest in its size — whether it being a manufactural necessity, a coincidence, or an intentional ideological disproportion, remains unknown.

The eagle on the described cameo is certainly presented in a proud and imposing posture, and appears as a well recognizable Roman icon. He nonetheless remains the messenger of Iuppiter: in this example, clues to such assumption are provided not only by the divine symbolism and mythological context the bird himself possesses, but also by the very attributes the volatile hunter is depicted with, i.e. the *corona civica* and a palm twig. The first was commonly made of oak leaves⁸⁸, and the oak itself had presumably been known as a sacred tree of Iuppiter⁸⁹. The second symbol remained just as close to the deity's patronage, for it most likely symbolised peace and fortold many blessings, though achieved only when the Roman gods — and Iovis at the head of them — had been appeased⁹⁰. It may well be, that the purpose of the whole gemstone's composition, apart from decorative value, was to achieve a propaganda effect in which the actions of princeps Octavianus are being approved (if not even governed) by one of Rome's chief deities that the fawn bird represents. The Eagle Cameo hence becomes an elaborate example of *auctoritas*, which was to first and foremost constitute the princeps' political status among the Roman elite.

Another splendid work of art of gemmogyptical kind from the period, which includes the eagle symbol, is the priceless Augustus cameo from the so called Cross of Lothair — a 10th-c. masterpiece of medieval goldsmithing (plate 4)⁹¹. A genuine sardonyx gemstone has been embedded into the cross's center-front side.

Plate 4. The Augustus Cameo (1st c. B.C.) from the Lothair Cross (ca. 1000 A.D.), Domschatzkammer (Aachener Dom, Aachen).

Source: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/333829391100138108/>, 24.10.2013.



⁸⁷ See e.g. C. J. Simpson, *A Shrine of Mars Ultor re-visited*, „Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire. Antiquité” 1993, Vol. 71, 1st Issue, pp. 119-121 and references therein.

⁸⁸ V. A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army*, London 1981, pp. 70-74 ff.

⁸⁹ A tree, which had „felt” Iovis's power (i.e. lightning), was hence known to be sacred — considering Roman tradition, perhaps the first tree, that was noted to had become marked by Iuppiter, had truly been an oak? W. Markowska, *Mity Greków...*, p. 361; L. A. Springer, *The Cult and Temple of Iuppiter Feretrius*, „The Classical Journal” 1954, Vol. L, No. 1, p. 28, 30; W. Warde-Fowler, *The Religious Experience...*, pp. 129-130.

⁹⁰ „When a palm tree sprang up between the crevices of the pavement before his house, he transplanted it to the inner court beside his household gods and took great pains to make it grow. He was so pleased that the branches of an old oak, which had already drooped to the ground and were withering, became vigorous again on his arrival in the island of Capreae, that he arranged with the city of Naples to give him the island in exchange for Aenaria” (Suet., *Aug.* p. 92, 1-2).

⁹¹ Cf. N. Wibiral, *Augustus patrem figurat. Zu den Betrachtungsweisen des Zentralsteines am Lotharkreuz im Domschatz zu Aachen*, „Aachener Kunstblätter” 1994, Bd. 60, pp. 105-130; E. Saxon, *Carolingian, Ottonian and Romanesque Art and the Eucharist*, [in:] *A companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages*, I. C. Levy, G. Macy, K. V. Ausdall (ed.), Leiden 2012, p. 276.

The surface of the gemstone resembles a depiction of Augustus in full splendour of triumphal vestment. The head of the emperor is crowned with the traditional symbol of victory, i.e. the laurel wreath, whereas in his right hand the princeps holds a long staff, on top of which sits an ivory eagle figurine — the ensign of Iuppiter. Some elements of imperial garment: a headband's tail, as well as the upper part of a triumphator's robe, are also noticeable. Considering the historical context, it is likely, that the cameo commemorates Octavian's grand, three-days triumph of the year 29 B.C., and thus it was perhaps made soon after the prestigious event had taken place⁹².

As outlined previously, the entire ceremony of Roman triumph might have had included sublime allegories of the victor's "elevation" to godly spheres, considering the possible notion of the victorious commander being a vivid embodiment of the god Iuppiter⁹³. Despite the words of wisdom and restraint, whispered by the humble slave who was to stand right behind the *dux* in his triumphal chariot, the general aura of the event remained rather far from the idea of *memento mori* as such, having its emotional accents more like being reflected by the equivocal essence of the soldiers' cheers: *io triumphe*⁹⁴! The grandiose spectacle was indeed dedicated to Iovis, under auspices of whom the victory had taken place; it praised the sky god, as well as the human individual to whom Iovis had granted fortune and fame due to a successful military conquest. The staff with the eagle statuette, carried by the triumphator, thus appears as an elaborate symbol of Roman identity, whilst being one of many thanksgiving attributes, offered by the mortals to the divine⁹⁵.

Referring to the ideology of the Augustan age, the image of the princeps on the gemstone is a silhouette of a victor who won because of his noble defense of the Roman state (its virtues and ideals) in a struggle against luxury, vanity, or broadly named despotism of Mark Antony's East. He succeeded, for he was to gain the favour of the deities: of Apollo, Diana, of his divinized father (Julius Caesar), and even of the chief god of Olympus, Iuppiter. In a symbolical way, Octavian's victory therefore becomes a triumph of the Roman civilisation, against the broadly named *barbaricum*⁹⁶. Moreover, in artistical expression, as well as in the general, inner political reality of Rome from the period, Augustus' image may well be eventually characterised as of that of an "eternal triumphator"⁹⁷.

In the tradition of the Roman army, the *aquila* resembled dedication, honour, and valour — all the ideals of the legionaries that followed their triumphant commander in few long rows of the triumph's orderly procession. By wielding the staff with the fawn bird's symbol, one therefore paid a modest tribute to the soldiers themselves, those that survived — and those that had fallen. Perhaps a meaningful aspect remains to be the destination of the ceremony's participants as well — it is the temple of none other, but Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, at whose sanctuary all the triumphal „requisites“ (along with the ornamental staff), were being piously placed in the end.

Apart from the Eagle Cameo and the gemstone enriching the decorational pa-



Plate 5. The *Gemma Augustea* (ca.10-20 A.D.), Kunsthistorisches Museum (Vienna).

Source: <http://ancientrome.ru/art/artwork/glyptics/cameos/c0246.jpg>, 25.10.2013.

⁹² Confer with the triumph's interpretation of K. Balbuza, *Die Siegesideologie...*, pp. 273-277 (especially: pp. 276-277).

⁹³ See above (n. 63).

⁹⁴ H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus...*, pp. 66-71 ff.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 65.

⁹⁶ Cf. the remarks of: R. Payne, *The Roman triumph...*, pp. 120-145.

⁹⁷ K. Balbuza, *Die Siegesideologie...*, p. 288.

lette of the Lothair Cross, the fawn bird had become an important part of iconography immortalised on the surface of the priceless *Gemma Augustea* (plate 5). As in the previous examples, the precise manufacture date of the cameo remains speculative. It seems almost certain, though, that the artifact had been made already in the new millenium — in the last years of Augustus' principate, or soon after the first emperor's death⁹⁸.

In the upper part of the composition, at the centre, a throning Augustus has been depicted, resting on an augural staff (the *lituus*) and surrounded by divine personifications, as well as his own zodiac sign (the Capricorn). One of the persons situated behind the throne holds a laurel wreath above the princeps' head.

The woman sitting beside Augustus is most likely the ancient goddess Roma. But there is also another companion visible — an eagle has been depicted sitting under the throne. The implementation of Iuppiter's symbol into the cameo's iconographical arrangement certainly serves its own, substantial purpose. The image of the divine messenger, i.e. an attribute appropriate to the sphere of *sacrum*, located in the nearest vicinity of Augustus, undoubtedly — along with the rest of the symbols that surround the princeps (the laurel wreath, the godly silhouettes, the staff) — creates a supernatural aura around the emperor, introducing him as a person belonging to divine spheres, thus: a mortal acting freely in the gods' presence⁹⁹. It is worthy of notice, that both the eagle, as well as the other characters presented in the upper part of the cameo, all have their heads turned towards the princeps; he is their ultimate source of inspiration and reference, and his will is highly respected. Considering the fawn bird's presence beside Augustus, there is high probability, that the whole carving bears a considerable implication of the emperor being a resemblance of Iuppiter himself (or at least his by far noble, mortal representative on earth)¹⁰⁰. The eagle depiction also seems to be linked with the scene presented below. There, in the left corner, Roman soldiers can be seen, jointly raising up a *tropaeum* — an imposing symbol of military conquest. It may thus be read, that the legionaires' triumph was possible due to Iuppiter's divine patronage (through the ever watchful eyes of the eagle), but also thanks to the princeps, whose decisions and policies are inspired by the chief god himself. Therefore, as long as the deities are being appeased, and ritual oaths are being fulfilled, the Romans may well expect glorious victories, if not — world domination¹⁰¹.

On all of the three cameos described above¹⁰², the eagle's image plays an invaluable role. He appears as a source of a possible religious stimuli and remains an integral part of military beliefs. Overall, his symbol once again also stands for the unquestioned nature of Roman leadership: *auctoritas*. As K. Galinsky notes, "»Auctoritas« (as well as other such terms), has multiple meanings, connotations and associations. It is precise without being limiting and it is elastic without being vague. Its power is suggestive and asks participation, interpretation, and response. These are the very qualities of much of Augustan poetry and art"¹⁰³.

We suggested a possibility of the eagle image being introduced as a personification of Octavianus himself. It has also been mentioned, that the same role could have befallen the fawn bird in case of Bononia, as well as Philippi. Historiography knows one more occasion, on which the eagle may be interpreted in such category and which overall suggests that he was slowly becoming a theme associated primarily with the imperial court.

In the year 6 B.C., Tiberius retired to Rhodes. The final days of his stay on the island (2 B.C.), were to include an eagle-portent. As Suetonius tells us: *ante paucos vero quam revocaretur dies aquila numquam antea Rhodi conspecta in culmine domus eius assedit*¹⁰⁴. As we may infer in accordance with the historiographer, the event was to become a natural anomaly of sorts. From a literary point of view, the omen was presumably intended to sign turbulent events that were to await Tiberius in his upcoming campaigns (the struggle with Maroboduus the king of the Marcomanni, as well as the rebellion in Pannonia and Dalmatia). However, concerning who ordered Tiberius' return to the Eternal City, the eagle may well once again be perceived as a messenger not only of Iuppiter, but of princeps Octavianus himself. It is unlikely, that the fawn bird's landing place was a mere coincidence; instead, it seems as if the precise spot of the eagle's descension, i.e. the rooftop of

98 W. R. Megow, *Kameen von Augustus*..., p. 8 ff.; J. Pollini, *Studies in Augustan „historical“ reliefs*, Berkeley 1978, pp. 175-178 ff.; A. Strong, *Roman Sculpture*..., pp. 88-89; A. Zadoks-Jitta, *Imperial Messages in Agate*, Babesch, Vol. XXXIX, 1964, p. 160; P. Zanker, *The Power of Images*..., p. 230.

99 Cf. the remarks of: A. Alföldi, *Die Geburt des Kaiserlichen Bildsymbolik: kleine Beiträge zu ihrer Entstehungsgeschichte*, „Museum Helveticum: schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft“, Vol. XI, 1954, 3rd Issue, pp. 144-145.

100 P. Zanker, *The Power of Images*..., pp. 230-231.

101 T. Hölscher, *Historische Reliefs*, [in:] *Kaiser Augustus*..., pp. 371-373 ff. For a detailed description of the gemstone's iconography, see above (n. 98) as well as: P. Scherrer, *Saeculum Augustum - Concordia Fratrum. Gedanken zum Programm der Gemma Augustea*, „Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien“ 1988, Vol. LVIII, pp. 115-128.

102 Cf. the masterpieces' summary: C. Maderma-Lauter, *Glyptik*, [in:] *Kaiser Augustus*..., pp. 441-473.

103 K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*..., p. 12.

104 Suet., *Tiberius*, p. 14, 4 [„A few days before his recall an eagle, a bird never before seen in Rhodes, perched upon the roof of his house“].

Tiberius' house, was to signify the imperial foundation of the omen. The augury could have had therefore been meant only for specific persons, related to Augustus.

In light of historiographical accounts, the eagle prophetically followed the princeps until his very end. Shortly before Augustus' death (14 B.C.), during a *lustrum* which the emperor had been conducting on the Campus Martius, a disturbing portent was to take place, including an eagle, and — soon thereafter — a lightning strike. Apparently, the volatile predator suddenly appeared above the heads of the crowd and sat on top of one of the nearby temples, precisely above the letter "A" of the name "Agrippa". The lightning was to some time after fall upon one of Augustus' statues and erase the capital letter from the engraved name "Caesar". In the first case, upon the omen's appearance, the princeps himself supposedly ceased reciting the vows during the ceremony, as though somehow expecting the forthcoming end. The second portent also brought sadness of sorts, for it had been interpreted as if Augustus' earthly time was elapsing rapidly: he would soon take place among the gods themselves¹⁰⁵.

"Thus on the nineteenth day of August, the day on which he had first become consul, he passed away, having lived seventy-five years, ten months, and twenty-six days (he had been born on the twenty-third of September), and having been sole ruler, from the time of his victory at Actium, forty four years lacking thirteen days"¹⁰⁶. The divination found its nostalgic climax in the actual funeral ceremony of the princeps. According to Cassius Dio, soon after the *pompa funebris* had reached Campus Martius¹⁰⁷, and the mortuary pyre had been set up and lit, an eagle was to be witnessed raising from top of the burning construction and ascending into the skies — as if being a remainder of all the Roman virtues and ideals, that the gathered army (as well as the civil community) believed in¹⁰⁸.

Some scholars suggest that Dio's report on the event (LVI, 42, 3) might be an interpolation of sorts, thus a reference to later funerary tradition¹⁰⁹. "Le silence de Suétone sur le même sujet devrait, à lui seul, inciter au doute; comment cet amateur de »prodiges« aurait-il omis de relater un rite aussi insolite?"¹¹⁰ And yet, the case does not seem to be totally dismissed, especially if we consider the previously analysed examples of Augustan art with the eagle motif. The lack of a historiographer's exact mention why merely lessens, but never entirely denies the possibility of a certain occurrence actually taking place.

In literary sources, we are able to find suggestions of the event (or at least some part of it) being in fact orchestrated by Livia and an ex-praetor — as well as a senator — named Numerius Atticus, whose "testimony"¹¹¹ was to be well paid off by the empress. Atticus was to maintain, that "he had seen the form of the Emperor, after he had been reduced to ashes, on its way to heaven"¹¹². Perhaps it is in this sentence that Suetonius (somewhat subconsciously) includes the eagle motif as well? In either case, Livia's deceased husband could henceforth be more quickly deemed *divus* by the senate — a necessary lawful step to be made if ever to proclaim a new deity in Rome¹¹³. In due time, the empress herself would considerably improve her political and social status, by becoming the high-priestess of Augustus' cult. However, despite the "mundane" background of the eagle omen, the augural concept alone remains a cliché nevertheless noteworthy.

Conferring it with the previous divinations analysed, the poetical and somewhat theatrical motif of an eagle rising from the flames (possibly inspired by the phoenix myth), may appear as the ultimate stadium of the fawn bird's symbol development — in literature, as well as in art — in the course of Augustus' reign. The eagle is an ancient, divine emissary, who arrives: firstly to foretell (the *lustrum*), and then to actually announce (the funeral) the princeps' departure from ear-

105 See Suet., *Aug.*, p. 97, 1-2. Cf. Dio, XLVI, p. 29.

106 Dio XLVI, p. 30, 5 (trans. E. Cary). See also: Suet., *Aug.*, p. 100.

107 Concerning the hypothetical reconstructions of Roman funerary processions, see D. Favro, C. Johanson, *Death in Motion. Funeral Processions in the Roman Forum*, „Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians”, 2010, Vol. 69, No. 1, pp. 12-37; S. Price, *From noble funerals to divine cult: the consecration of Roman Emperors*, [in:] *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, D. Cannadine, S. Price (ed.), Cambridge 1992, pp. 59-64 ff.; P. Zanker, *Die Apotheose der römischen Kaiser. Ritual und städtische Bühne*, München 2004, *passim*.

108 Dio LVI, p. 42, 3. Cf. J.-C. Richard, *Les aspects militaires des funérailles impériales*, MEFRA, Vol. 78, 1966, pp. 314-315 ff., 325; P. Zanker, *Apotheosis cesarzy rzymskich. Rytm i przestrzeń miejska*, Poznań 2005, pp. 38-39.

109 Cf. S. Price, *From noble funerals...*, pp. 58, 94-95; J.C. Richard, *Recherches sur certains aspects du culte impérial: Les funérailles des empereurs Romains aux deux premiers siècles de notre ère*, [in:] ANRW, II, 16, 2, pp. 1128-1129 and annot. 36 therein.

110 P. Gros, *Rites funéraires et rites d'immortalité dans la liturgie de l'apothéose impériale*, „École pratique des hautes études. 4^e section: Sciences historiques et philologiques” [année] 1965-1966, p. 483.

111 In republican times, all bizarre incidents referring to divine presence were to be reported to the highest state and religious authority of Rome, i.e. the senate house. The procedure of testifying one's apotheosis also became implemented in the principate, though only as late as until the 2nd c.: P. Gros, *Rites funéraires...*, p. 482; S. Price, *From noble funerals...*, p. 73, 91; J.-C. Richard, *Recherches sur certains aspects du culte...*, p. 1128.

112 See Dio, LVI, p. 46; Suet., *Aug.*, p. 100, 4 (quoted: „Nec defuit vir praetorius, qui se effigiem cremati euntem in caelum vidisse iuraret”).

113 P. Gros, *Rites funéraires...*, p. 478.

thly spheres. From an ideological, as well as religious perspective, he therefore becomes an important and final element of imperial apotheosis¹¹⁴. The overall expression of the funeral makes the eagle a majestic and by far noble being, which accompanies Augustus in his final journey towards eternity¹¹⁵. It ought to be noted, that in contrast with the previous portents, where the eagle's presence remained attributed to all the ideals and goals of one's lifetime, the fawn bird now resembles a different sphere entirely — he appears as a messenger of death.

Among many ancient civilisations and societies (from the Mediterranean circle of culture, and beyond) the eagle was perceived as the only creature that had been allowed to boldly gaze upon the sun, thus — apart from being an individualised religious attribute — becoming a solar symbol as well¹¹⁶. The at least partial inspirations of the why also solar theme of the phoenix, in case of Augustus' apotheosis, bear some probability. The phoenix, an ancient volatile creature born in flames, remained a common attribute of immortality and eternity, with its rich cult (as well as the possible origins) allocated mostly to Egypt¹¹⁷. The concept of a fantastic beast reviving from the ashes became a subject of interest of many ancient authors: Herodotus¹¹⁸, Pliny the Elder¹¹⁹, Pomponius Mela¹²⁰, Tacitus¹²¹, and Flavius Philostratus, to name just a few¹²². And it was the eagle, to whom the fiery bird was to bear the highest resemblance to¹²³. In Rome, the phoenix eventually came to be identified with the goddess Aeternitas¹²⁴. In the course of centuries, he has also been more and more often perceived as a symbol of perseverance of the human spirit, capable of overcoming all worldly obstacles — and in this last form, it was to ultimately find its way into the symbolic palette of christianity¹²⁵.

If to therefore compare the eagle from Augustus' funeral with the main symbolical message of the phoenix myth, i.e. a magnificent vision of an individual's triumph over death, and yet if to recall the general notion of the funeral procession being based on the one characteristic to triumphal ceremonies, then the concept of imperial apotheosis acquires a whole new, thanatological meaning¹²⁶: "Both literature (to some extent) and funerary art (to a high degree) do in fact reveal, that there was a deepening conviction in the Augustan age that the terror and power of death could be somehow overcome, and that a richer, happier, all the while more god-like life was — under certain conditions — attainable hereafter by the soul of the departed"¹²⁷.

It is not entirely improbable, that this proved to be one of the reasons, why the eagle's image also became an important part of funerary art in the Empire: a symbol often used as a refined element of tombstone-, as well as relief decorations, found on the resting places of many prominent Romans from Augustan times, as well as of those from the later periods¹²⁸. And if the eagle's eschatological symbolism could have well had manifested itself already in the art of the 1st c. B.C., perhaps the procedure of the eagle's heavenly ascension was indeed invented as early as Augustus' funeral (see above)? Least to say, the majestic bird might have had been thus implemented as a distant echo of the motif of Ganymede's heavenly ascension, yet he may have well also been used as a reflection of imperial catastrophism, associated with the Roman empe-

114 P. Zanker, *Apoteoza cesarzy...*, p. 36, 41.

115 „When [...] rites have been completed, the emperor's successor puts a torch to the structure, after which the people set it on fire on all sides. The flames easily and quickly consume the enormous pile of fire-wood and fragrant stuffs. From the topmost and smallest story, as if from a battlement, an eagle flies forth, soaring with the flames into the sky; the Romans believe that this eagle carries the soul of the emperor from the earth up to heaven. Thereafter the emperor is worshiped with the rest of the gods"; Herodian, (*Historiae Romani*) *Ab excessu divi Marci libri octo*, E. C. Echols (ed.), Berkeley-Los Angeles 1961 (further as: Herodian), IV, p. 2, 10-11.

116 R. Wittkower, *Eagle and Serpent. A Study in the Migration of Symbols*, „Journal of the Warburg Institute”, 1939, Vol. II, 4th Issue, p. 307.

117 H. Schaffer, *Das Phönix Sinnbild als Baum und Vogel. Festschrift zum 15. Oktober 1890: Archäologische Studie*, Ratibor 1890, pp. 6-7; R. H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, London 2003, p. 212.

118 Herodotus, *Historiae*, A. D. Godley (ed.), Oxford 1920-1975 (further as: Herodotus), II, p. 73.

119 See Plin., *Nat. X*, 2.

120 Titus Pomponius Mela, *De Situ Orbis/De chorographia*, trans. M. L. Baudet, Paris 1843, III, p. 8.

121 Lucius Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales ab excessu divi Augusti*, C. D. Fisher (ed.), Oxford 1906, VI, p. 28.

122 Lucius Flavius Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii*, F. C. Conybeare (ed.), London 1912, III, p. 49.

123 E.g. Herodotus, II, p. 73, 2: „φοιτῶν δὲ τότε φασὶ ἐπεὶ οἱ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ πατήρ, ἔστι δέ, εἰ τῇ γοαφῇ παρόμοιος, τοσόσδε καὶ τοίοσδε: τὰ μὲν αὐτοῦ χρυσοκόμια τῶν πετρῶν τὰ δὲ ἐρυθρὰ ἐς τὰ μάλιστα: αἰετῶ περιήγησιν ὁμοιότατος καὶ τὸ μέγαθος...”.

124 M. Christol, *L'image du phénix sur les revers monétaires au milieu du IIIe siècle: une référence à la crise de l'Empire?*, „Revue Numismatique” 1976, Vol. 18, pp. 85-87 ff.; F. Lecocq, *L'iconographie du phénix à Rome*, „Revue Schedae” 2009, Vol. 6, fasc. 1, pp. 88-90; H. Roscher, *Aeternitas*, [in:] ALM, I, 1, p. 88.

125 See M. F. McDonald, *Phoenix redivivus*, „Phoenix. Journal of the Classical Association of Canada” 1960, Vol. XIV, No. 4, pp. 187-206. Cf. H. Schaffer, *Das Phönix Sinnbild...*, p. 9 ff.

126 P. Zanker, *Apoteoza cesarzy...*, pp. 31-32.

127 J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial...*, p. 38.

128 A. Strong, *Roman Sculpture...*, pp. 68-79. One of the more representative examples of such kind, which includes the eagle symbol, is the funerary altar of Amemptus (ca. 50 B.C.), a freedman of Livia - see e.g. ibidem, plate XXV; J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial...*, pl. 82.

rors¹²⁹. A rather peculiar contradiction remains, however, that the eagle's tanathological symbolism — though employed in the service of Augustan ideology — was of Hellenistic origin¹³⁰.

Following Augustus' apotheosis, the posthumous deification of the later rulers of Rome became institutionalised as such¹³¹. Nevertheless, the emperor's spiritual ascension under the eagle's wing remained an essential and highly exposed element in the whole process, even though in the later periods the celestial "guide" sometimes assumed other, more anthropomorphic forms¹³². The concept of the ruler's apotheosis henceforth influenced public art, and it eventually also found its way into private beliefs of Roman citizens. As a consequence, the eagle's depiction became a sublime promise of peaceful afterlife¹³³.

As Zahra Newby remarks, "the beauty of myth was its flexibility: it offered models of heroism in life as well as hopes of rebirth, depending on the beliefs and needs"¹³⁴. As we have seen, the religious notion of an eagle being an impressive attribute of a powerful and ancient Roman deity — Iuppiter — found its special place in the cultural legacy of the Augustan era. The eagle has earned the favour of several historiographers of the Empire, who included it in many of the described portents and auguries, which were to happen in relation with the most important figures and events from the studied epoqe. The *aquila* also maintained its rank of a highly praised legionary ensign, the possession of which was believed to determine the outcome of a battle, campaign, even war. The majestic bird was a symbol of Roman virtues, an idea of modesty, piety, and triumph.

In literary narrative, as well as in art from the period, the fawn bird's image has gradually evolved, from being a traditional icon of the Republic, to an emblem associated with the princeps and the new order that he had established (e.g. the Gemma Augustea). As a result, the eagle's depiction quickly transformed into an elaborate symbol of Augustus' *auctoritas*. By creating a divine connection between the princeps and the renowned symbol of Iuppiter, the Augustan propaganda acquired new elements of emotional meaning, while the overall palette of artistical motifs used has been improved considerably. The eagle had henceforth become an important element of imperial ideology, signifying strength, authority, as well as the political order of the principate. Eventually, the very culmination of the bird's mythological background came to be the solemn ceremony of the emperor's funeral (whether it being let alone Augustus' successors, or perhaps even the founder of the principate himself). As such, the eagle symbol, preserved in ancient art and extant literary sources, until this day proves to be one of the most suggestive and inspiring cultural remnants of the Roman state, and it appears as a truly genuine icon of *Roma Aeterna* — one resembling both the ideals of its people, and the majesty of its leaders.

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131 See the historiographical account of Herodian, IV, 2. Also: A. Chalupa, *How Did Roman Emperors Become Gods? Various Concepts of Imperial Apotheosis*, [in:] *Anodos. Studies of the Ancient World*, Vol. 6-7 (2006-2007): *Proceedings of the International Symposium Cult and Sanctuary through the Ages. From the Bronze Age to the Late Antiquity*, Častá-Papiernička, 16-19 November 2007, M. Novotná et al. (ed.), Tmava 2008, pp. 201-207.

132 Cf. P. Zanker, *Apotheosis cesarzy...*, pp. 44-50 and plates 26-29.

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