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Greece & Rome, 2nd Ser., Vol. 35, No. 1. (Apr., 1988), pp. 40-55.

Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0017-3835%28198804%292%3A35%3A1%3C40%3ACN%27ATR%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5

Greece & Rome is currently published by The Classical Association.

Greece & Rome, Vol. xxxv, No. 1, April 1988

CORNELIUS NEPOS, 'ATTICUS' AND THE ROMAN REVOLUTION*

By FERGUS MILLAR

The biography of Atticus by Cornelius Nepos, covering the last eight decades of the Republic and written at the precise moment of the establishment of monarchy by Octavian, ought always to have been treated both as one of the best introductions to the period, and as an exposition, from a unique angle, of some of the values expressed in Roman society. But now, more than ever, there may be a place for a brief essay which attempts to bring out both some values exhibited in this particular text and the way in which these were taken up, distorted, and deployed in the propaganda of the Augustan regime. For, first, the larger background of late-Republican scholarship, antiquarianism, historiography, and biography has been fully explored by Elizabeth Rawson;[1] second, Joseph Geiger has argued for the originality of Nepos as a writer of political biography;[2] third, we have a major study of the ethical models which it is the purpose of the biography to hold up for emulation.[3] Finally, John North, in an important review-article on recent works on Roman religion,[4] has identified three significant characteristics of late-Republican religiosity: a scholarly or antiquarian perception of religious change, often seen as decline; the identification of religion as the subject of a particular form of discourse; and a shift in focus within the sphere of religion, from the community as a whole to great men within it. All three come together, as we will see below, in the passage of Nepos' biography in which he records how, some time in the 30s B.C., Atticus suggested to Octavian that the now roofless temple of Juppiter Feretrius on the Capitol should be repaired.

But first the main characteristics of Nepos' representation of Atticus need to be outlined. It should be stressed that the subject of what follows is not the 'real' Atticus, even supposing that any valid conception of that entity were attainable, but the 'Atticus' whom Nepos delineates for us. Before that it will be useful to recall who Cornelius Nepos was, what he wrote, and why.[5] Like Catullus, whose first poem is addressed to him, and like Vergil, he came from the Po valley, perhaps from Mediolanum. If this is correct, his home town gained Latin rights in 89 B.C. and the citizenship not until 49; and the area ceased to be a *provincia* only in 42.[6] Yet, like others from that region, he not only seems to have spent his time in Rome, but wrote as a Roman, composing short biographies which contrasted distinguished

foreigners with distinguished Romans, in various categories: of these biographies, the lives of non-Roman generals survive, as do, of Roman *historici*, the *Cato* and the *Atticus*. Earlier, he had written the *Chronica* which set out in chronological parallel events and persons in the Roman and Greek past. Nepos had already written this work in three books when Catullus addressed poem 1 to him in the 50s.[7] He was also a personal friend of Atticus, and had written most of his biography of Atticus before the latter died at the end of March 32 B.C. He then added ch. 19–22. For reasons which we will see, it is particularly unfortunate that we cannot tell which, if any, of the events of the following years had already happened before he wrote these concluding chapters. At any rate Nepos himself can hardly have been born later than the 80s B.C., and perhaps considerably earlier. His statement (*Att.* 19.1) that *fortuna* willed that he should survive Atticus, may suggest that his birth fell before the beginning of the first century.

Nepos is thus someone who in his modest way reflects many of the major tendencies of Roman society and culture in the first century B.C. The fact that he can be seen as representatively 'Roman' is however itself a reflection of that well-known process by which the greatest age of Roman literature, and with it our conceptions of 'Rome', were the product of people of non-Roman origin.

Atticus himself, however, was different, for he came from a long line of native Romans – 'ab origine ultima stirpis Romanae generatus' as Nepos says (1.1). It may be that in stressing this Nepos was indeed speaking from the standpoint of a 'new Roman'. More important however for the significance of the model which the *Life* set out to present is the fact that Atticus was an *eques*. The significance of that lies firstly in the terminology which Nepos uses to describe Atticus' rank: 'perpetuo a maioribus acceptam equestrem obtinuit dignitatem' (1.1). It is striking that *dignitas* can be used of a personal status not associated with any public office,[8] or still less (see below) with any positive achievement. In fact, although Nepos cannot have meant to say that Atticus formally inherited equestrian rank from his ancestors, he certainly does represent this *dignitas* as having been in a real sense derived from them. The bias of our evidence means that we normally see social status in Rome from above. Nepos here affords us a rare glimpse of the status of a long-standing equestrian family, as seen from below, or from outside.

The *Life* is thus a literary presentation of the biography of an *eques* – the only one in the whole of Roman literature. As such, the closest parallel to it is not a work of literature in the normal sense, but something which, though preserved on an inscription, should be seen

as a literary work, namely the so-called *Laudatio Turiae*, for which Nicholas Horsfall's recent study is now essential.[9] In its vivid reflection of the troubled fortunes of a wealthy Roman family which eventually survived the Triumvirate and the proscriptions, to achieve peace under Augustus, this funerary *oratio* is very close in content, and location on the social hierarchy, though not in all of its presuppositions, to Nepos' *Life*. As an *oratio*, it is also one of the most substantial surviving specimens of Augustan prose, and the only one emanating from a private person which survives (in part) as inscribed at the time.

At least two features however serve to give a much greater importance to Nepos' biography. Firstly the life of his subject can be portrayed over an exceptionally long and eventful period, from Atticus' birth in 110/9 B.C. to his death on 31 March, 32. Born in the early stages of the Jugurthine War, he survived, as Nepos records (19.4), to see his one-year-old granddaughter, Vipsania, the child of his daughter Pomponia and of Agrippa, betrothed to Tiberius Claudius Nero, the future Emperor Tiberius.

The biography thus presents the most troubled period of Roman history from the angle of a man who was at the heart of Roman society, but was not a political actor in the events of the day; it is the biography of one who endured and survived, not who acted. But this is no mere negative point, or mere reflection of facts. For the model which the biography holds up is that in which the virtues of the hero and the appropriateness of his responses to circumstances must be demonstrated by the options which he might have taken up but did not; in short it is a representation of what its hero did not do, of the temptations presented by public life, and changes of political fortune, to which he did not succumb. By contrast, the positive virtues and activities which are exhibited are those of private life, of scholarship, antiquarianism, and concern for the traditions and antiquities of Rome. It is incontestable, as we will see, that Nepos himself was at the least reserved and neutral, and very likely hostile, in the face of Octavian's rise to power. The irony of it all is that it was precisely the type of irreproachable private scholarship to which Nepos' 'Atticus' is shown devoting himself that was to be taken up and deployed in the propaganda of the new regime.

But before that it is worth looking at some examples of what, as portrayed by Nepos, Atticus did not do. For example, in the 80s, when the state was divided between the *Sullani* and the *Cinnani*, he saw no chance of living *pro dignitate*, for fear of offending one or other party – so he withdrew to Athens and took no part (2.1–2). Then, when Sulla came to Athens on his way back from the East in

84–3, he wanted Atticus to accompany him on the invasion of Italy. But Atticus again enunciated his standing principle of neutrality: 'I would not wish you to lead me against those with whom I would not bear arms against you, leaving Italy to avoid this.' Sulla praised his sense of *officium*, and departed (4.1–2). What we see here is a striking reversal of the principle allegedly laid down by Solon: that the citizen has a duty to take sides in a civil dispute. The overriding duty here is private; civil war is, potentially or actually, a disturbance of a network of mutual private obligations.

Public life and public office were not for Atticus. What Nepos says in this connection is perhaps worth quoting in full (6.1):

> As regards public life he conducted himself in such a way that he both was (in fact), and had the reputation of being, of the *optimae partes*; but he would not commit himself to the billows of civil strife; for he considered that those who did so were no more in control of their own destiny than those who trusted themselves to the billows of the sea.

This passage continues with a whole series of negatives. He *could* have sought public office, having the necessary *gratia* and *dignitas* – but did not because office could no longer be gained or held without corruption. He did *not* purchase any properties of condemned persons, when sold off by the state. He did *not* engage in accusation, or private litigation. When many consuls and praetors conferred *praefecturae* on him, he accepted these only on condition of *not* going to the province in question – he was content with the *honor* (i.e. the mere title), ignoring the *rei familiaris fructus*. This is quite an important passage for the way in which the Roman state worked in the late Republic. For it is a reflection of the right which senatorial provincial governors exercised, of conferring the position of *praefectus* by patronage on *equites* – and thereby, as we see with Cicero's experience in Cilicia, giving them on occasion an actual military command, with the possibility of using force.[10] The state thus devolved some of its functions, leaving them to be exercised by private patronage. There is also an unmistakable implication in what Nepos says, that such a position, when occupied, could be expected to lead to an increase in personal wealth at the expense of the provincials. Perhaps more important, these military *praefecturae*, conferred by consuls and praetors as provincial governors, were in fact the origin of the public roles of *Equites* as they evolved under Augustus and later Emperors.[11]

Atticus would also not go with Quintus Cicero as proconsul of Asia (in 61), when offered the rank of *legatus*: since he could have been a praetor himself, Nepos says, he would not be a hanger-on (*assecla*) of a praetor: he thus preserved both his *dignitas* and his *tranquillitas*,

avoiding suspicions of *crimina*. His *observantia* was all the more valued, because people saw that it must be attributed to *officium* rather than *timor* or *spes* (6.4–5).

With the office of *legatus* we again see, of course, the origins of a key element in the Augustan system. A *legatus*, as is clear in this context, *might* still, in the late Republic, be an *eques*, rather than, as was normal (and as was to be a firm rule under the Empire), a senator.[12] More significant for the late Republic is, once again, what Atticus is described as avoiding. He is refusing, that is, to blur the domains of private *officium* and public rank, and public profit. The normal rule, as is clearly implied, was that everybody did just that. Public functions, private social relations and obligations, and personal profiteering, were closely interrelated.

The civil war broke out in 49, when Atticus was about 60. When Pompey left Italy, Atticus stayed in Rome, profiting from the *vacatio* conferred by age; but he caused no offence by doing so, or at any rate not to his personal friend Pompey (*ipsum Pompeium coniunctum*). By contrast, those who had earlier accepted wealth or *honores* from Pompey now had the choice of joining him reluctantly in his camp or of mortally offending him by staying at home (7.1–2). Atticus' *quies* indeed so pleased Caesar that, when he obliged others, *per epistulas*, to make contributions of money, he exempted Atticus. Thus, as Nepos says, by keeping to his old rule of conduct (*vetere instituto vitae*) he escaped these *nova pericula* (7.3).

Then, after the Ides of March, some persons conceived the idea of setting up a fund into which the *equites Romani* would make contributions to assist the assassins of Caesar. A *familiaris* of Brutus (himself a friend of Atticus) called upon Atticus to take the lead – or to be in charge – 'ut eius rei princeps esse vellet' (8.3). Again, what follows is worth quoting:

> But, he (Atticus), on the grounds that he was someone who thought that *officia* should be offered to friends *sine factione*, and who had always kept himself clear of such schemes, replied as follows. If Brutus wished to make any use of his resources, he should do so, to the extent that they were available; but he himself would enter into no joint discussions, or plans, on this matter with anyone.

Once again private *officia* had to be observed, but public action avoided. The principle is presented, as it is consistently throughout the biography, as something praiseworthy. But of course the price paid for it was rather high. Brutus and Cassius were the last to fight in the name of *libertas*.

The following paragraphs (8–12) give a devastating impression of the swings of fortune which confronted Roman society in the later 40s,

and the 30s B.C. In the first part of 43 B.C. there was the campaign of Mutina; Antonius was declared a *hostis*, so everyone attacked his wife, Fulvia, his children, and his friends. Atticus, however, gave Fulvia financial support at crucial moments (9). Then came the reversal of 43 ('conversa subito fortuna est', 10.1), the arrival in Rome of the *imperatores* (Antonius, Lepidus, and Octavian), the Triumvirate, and the proscriptions. Atticus went into hiding. But Antonius remembered Atticus' *officium* (i.e. his conduct to Fulvia), and wrote a letter with his own hand to offer him protection (10.4). Now in favour, Atticus could have used the occasion of the proscriptions to increase his own property. But instead he used his influence solely to seek relief for friends facing danger or loss – 'in deprecandis amicorum aut periculis aut incommodis' (12.2). But here too of course we can see a foreshadowing of the Empire. As in Cicero's *Pro Marcello*, or in the petitions addressed to Lepidus and Octavian by the brave wife praised in the *Laudatio Turiae*, power was now held by non-responsible rulers to whom the appropriate form of address was a *deprecatio*, a 'begging-off' as a matter of favour, or clemency, on behalf of those in danger or disfavour.

With that we have already crossed the border between what Atticus abstained from doing and what he did in fact do, in the public, or semi-public arena. Obviously enough, this boundary, for someone of Atticus' wealth and social position, could never be securely maintained. Thus, if we go back over Nepos' biography of him, though he would never join any *factio* or *coitio*, he did in fact deploy his wealth repeatedly to assist individuals in public life who needed it: he gave money to help the younger Marius, in flight in 88/7 (2.2), and also gave 250,000 HS to Cicero, in exile in 58/7 (4.4). In 49, though he stayed in Rome himself, he gave money to others setting off to join Pompey (6.7); and in 44, though he would not join an organization to help Brutus and Cassius, he nonetheless sent Brutus successive gifts of 100,000 and then 300,000 sesterces (8.2–3) – just as he soon afterwards helped the family and friends of Antonius (8.3), and then (by contrast) those of the opposite party, in flight from the proscriptions and from Philippi (11). Nepos presents this even-handed generosity as having a moral basis, that is the maintenance of private *officium* regardless of circumstances. But it also had another purpose, of course – that of personal survival through drastic swings of fortune: why, Nepos says, should one not regard as remarkable the *prudentia* of a man who amid so many and so terrible civil storms wins through to safety? (10.6).

A prominent *eques* in this period could not in fact help being part of the political scene, even if he did not accept *praefecturae* or take up

public contracts (6.3, 'nullius rei neque praes neque manceps factus est', may refer to this). As Nepos' biography shows, along with a mass of other evidence, there was no social barrier between equestrian families and senatorial ones; indeed, even to put it like that is misleading, since what we are concerned with is a single social class, people of sufficient landed wealth to live off their income. Within that class some families had a continuous, or relatively continuous, tradition of holding public office, and thus entering the Senate. Other families might come into, or drop out of, the Senate. Since Syme's *The Roman Revolution* attention has always tended to concentrate on upward mobility, i.e. the entry of 'new men' from the Italian municipalities into the Senate.[13] But often these 'new men' were in one sense not new at all; they had already enjoyed from youth onwards personal connections and friendships with prominent senators. This is particularly well-attested in the case of Cicero.[14] Such people were new to the electoral process in Rome, or at least to the apex of it, election as consul. But they were very often not new to senatorial society, even the most aristocratic elements of it.

If this was true of a man from a *municipium* like Cicero, it was of course even more true of a rich *eques* from an old Roman family, like Atticus. The wealth which he inherited from his father was already considerable, two million sesterces according to Nepos (14.2); but we also know from Nepos (5.1–2) that his uncle, Q. Caecilius, who died in 58, adopted him by will and left him a further ten million sesterces – i.e. ten times the level that Augustus was later to establish as the minimum senatorial census. Nepos, however, tactfully leaves out the information which Valerius Maximus supplies (7.8.5), that Caecilius had previously implied that he would leave all this to Lucullus; public indignation at this breach of trust was such that the mob dragged Caecilius' body through the streets of Rome.

That connection with Lucullus is just one indication of the absence of any social barrier between *equites* and senators; and Atticus himself was brought up, as Nepos records (1.3), 'nobilis inter aequales'; his outstanding skill in rhetoric was not easy to bear for his *generosi condiscipuli*, his aristocratic fellow-students. It is very apposite that Nepos names as Atticus' friends and fellow students in youth the following three persons, who between them illustrate the variety of social levels within the Senate: firstly, L. Torquatus, i.e. L. Manlius Torquatus, a patrician and later consul of 65 B.C.; then the younger Marius, i.e. a second-generation senator; and finally Cicero, not yet a senator (1.4).

Another sign which indicates how senators and *equites* should be seen as a single class is marriage connections. Of course no one has

ever suggested that senators formed a legally, or conventionally, closed group, who married only among themselves. But we still tend to use terms like 'senatorial aristocracy' or 'senatorial oligarchy' which are in many ways misleading. Among senators there were certainly families with outstanding office-holding traditions (indeed we shall see that the lifetime of Atticus was just the period when, more than ever before, people took to emphasizing genealogy, genuine or otherwise). But to enter the Senate, of some 300 and then after Sulla, some 600, members, was a *choice*, a choice of role and life-style, made by members of a wider social class.

The marriage-connections of Atticus' family may serve to illustrate this. Atticus' cousin, Anicia, for instance, was married to the brother of Sulpicius Rufus, the tribune of 88;[15] this fact was one reason for Atticus' prudent withdrawal to Athens in the mid-80s (2.1–2). His sister was married to Quintus Cicero (5.3), who was also of course embarked on a senatorial career. Later, as we saw, Atticus' daughter Pomponia was married to Agrippa. In this case Nepos does emphasize that such a choice on Agrippa's part was something worthy of note: Agrippa, Nepos says, on account of his *gratia* and the *potentia* of Caesar (i.e. Octavian), could have made any match he pleased; but he preferred an alliance with Atticus, and chose the daughter of a Roman *eques* rather than *generosarum nuptiae* (12.1).

Nepos' use of the word *generosus* is of some interest. As noted above, it is quite clear that within the Senate some families stood out as having a particularly distinguished history. We do, however, now have to avoid using the word 'noble' here, or rather to be extremely careful about how we use it. For P. A. Brunt has conclusively shown that Gelzer in his *Roman Nobility* was wrong. *Nobilis*, as used in the late Republic, was not in any case a constitutional term; and as a *social* term it does not refer to a small in-group of the descendants of consuls and their equivalents, but to anyone who could boast of any ancestor who had held public office. And this still applied even after a long gap, during which no members of a family had held office.[16]

Perhaps then we ought to start using instead the word *generosi*, for those Romans whose ancestry really was, in a loose sense, 'aristocratic' – or was thought to be. For, if one thing is certain about the self-consciousness of the Roman upper class in the late Republic, it is, firstly, that there was an outburst of interest in family histories – and, secondly, that not all these histories wholly corresponded to historical reality. It is hardly necessary to recall Julius Caesar, as quaestor in 69, addressing the Roman populace from the rostra on the occasion of his aunt's funeral. Among other things he gave them the following historical information (Suetonius, *Div. Jul.* 6):

The maternal descent of my aunt Julia sprang from the kings and her paternal descent was linked with the gods. For Ancus Marcius was the ancestor of the Marcii Reges, from which family her mother came. From Venus there descended the Julii, a *gens* of which our *familia* is a branch.

This information would probably have occasioned some surprise if it had been contained in a speech delivered not in 69 but in 269 B.C. (five years before the custom began of marking prominent funerals with a gladiatorial show). For the first Julius Caesar known to have held office in Rome did not appear until 208, and the first Marcius Rex not until the middle of the second century.[17] The claim is in fact typical of the genealogies linking often quite new families to mythical ancestors which were widely evolved in the last two centuries of the Republic.[18] The essential warning about bogus genealogies is provided by Cicero in the *Brutus*. We all quote this paragraph (62), but by and large we then contrive to ignore. it. I think it is worth quoting once again:

The various *familiae* used to preserve them (*mortuorum laudationes*), as their adornments and monuments so to speak, and also for use, if anyone of that *genus* died; also as a memorial of the honours of the house, and to adorn their *nobilitas*. However, the effect of these *laudationes* has been to falsify our history. Many events are recorded in them which never took place, bogus triumphs, multiple consulates, false genealogies, and transitions to the plebs, so that men of lower birth were insinuated into another *genus* of the same name; as if I (i.e. M. Tullius Cicero) were to claim descent from Manius Tullius, who as a patrician was consul with Servius Sulpicius in the tenth year after the expulsion of the Kings.

In fact we can see a perfect example of such an alleged *transitio* of a family (from patrician to plebeian status) embedded in the first paragraph of Suetonius' *Life* of Augustus:

That *gens* (the *Octavii*) was adlected into the senate by King Tarquinius Priscus among the *minores gentes*, then transferred by Servius Tullius to the patrician *gentes*; later it crossed over *ad plebem*; and then, after a long interval, returned to the patriciate by the agency of Divus Julius.

The relevance of this growth of interest in family histories is Atticus' own role in the matter, as Nepos describes it. This was again an aspect of his central role in Roman society, this time as an antiquarian and scholar in close contact with senators sharing these interests. Such concerns partly represented a genuinely scholarly activity, at least in intention; but partly they were studies pursued in the interests of particular *familiae*. Nepos describes this function of Atticus' as follows (18.1):

He was also an extreme devotee of *mos maiorum*, and lover of *antiquitas*, of which he had so close a knowledge that he set it all out in that volume in which he arranged the magistracies in order. For there was no law nor peace-treaty nor war nor famous

deed of the *populus Romanus*, which was not recorded at its correct point in time; moreover, he added, as was particularly difficult, the origins of the various *familiae*, in such a way that from it we might be able to identify the descendants of famous men.

This last motive is very striking, and will need further disscusion. For the moment it is worth stressing that this task needed to be performed: without scholarly research, if that is the word, people did not necessarily have a clear idea of from whom, in the Roman past, their contemporaries descended. But there is another aspect to this. Like so many elements of Atticus' life and activity, as Nepos presents them, this one looks forward to the values which were to be institutionalized in the reign of Augustus. In the period of Caesar and Augustus the old Forum, a large open space for public use, began its transformation into a crowded site for dynastic monuments, whose highly confusing remains confront us today. The central element in it was now the temple of the Deified Julius, dedicated in 29 B.C. Between it and the ancient temple of Castor and Pollux stood a new arch of Augustus, constructed to celebrate the victory of Actium. On the other side of the temple, between it and the Basilica Aemilia, there was subsequently constructed another triple arch, built to celebrate the recovery of the standards from Parthia, and completed in 18–17 B.C. It was on the sides of the central span of this arch, as Coarelli has demonstrated, that there were placed the great marble slabs whose remains we can now see in the Capitoline Museum, and which contained the inscriptions of the *Fasti Triumphales* and *Fasti Consulares*.[19] The lists of *triumphatores* and of consuls were thus perpetuated on stone and put up on an Imperial monument at the very centre of Rome, for the instruction and edification of the public. The history of Republican Rome was thus formally re-emphasized just at the moment when it was becoming, in a certain sense, irrelevant.

The list of *triumphatores*, as inscribed, concludes with L. Cornelius Balbus, proconsul of Africa, whose triumph was celebrated in 19 B.C. But after 19 B.C., as it turned out, no one would ever again celebrate a triumph, except members of the Imperial family;[20] and the consulate would rapidly become something which was given out, by patronage, by the Emperor. At all events the process of establishing fixed lists of *triumphatores* and consuls, and of freezing the official version on stone, was one which derived directly from the antiquarian obsessions of the late Republic, and from the scholarly activities of which Atticus' work was one example.

But Atticus had also had a second purpose, to enable contemporaries to know from which famous men in the past individuals in their own time descended. Not unnaturally, his senatorial friends found

this gratifying. As a consequence, therefore, he found himself composing a whole series of separate family histories, beginning with a history of the *Iunia familia*, which he wrote at the request of Brutus. In this he listed the members of the *familia*, from its origin to the present day, recording who was whose son, and what *honores* they had gained at what dates (18.2–3). In the same way, Nepos says, Claudius Marcellus asked him for a history of the Marcelli, and Cornelius Scipio and Fabius Maximus for one of the Aemilii and the Fabii (18.3). Perhaps it is not an accident that this genealogical element in the history of Rome came so definitely into fashion just as the moment when power was passing out of the grasp of a network of prominent families, and into the hands of a succession of individual rulers.

There were however other reasons for taking an interest in the deeds of famous men in the past. One was simply the pleasure of recalling them. As Nepos puts it, 'nothing can be more pleasurable (*dulcius*) than these books – i.e. Atticus' books – for those who have any longing (*cupiditas*) for knowledge of famous men' (18.4). It seems to have been in a separate volume that Atticus further satisfied this *cupiditas* by presenting, firstly, portraits of men who had excelled other Romans in *honor* and in the *amplitudo* of their deeds; and secondly by accompanying each of these portraits (*imagines*) by four or five lines of verse in which the essentials of their achievements were summed up (18.5–6). Here too he was following a fashion of the time. For his famous contemporary Varro, among his many other historical and antiquarian works, published one which contained no less than 700 *imagines* of famous men, both Greek and Roman (Pliny, *N.H.* 35.11). These too seem each to have been accompanied by both a prose text and an epigram in verse; the evidence of Aulus Gellius seems to show that the work was produced in 39 B.C., under the Triumvirate (*N.A.* 3.10).[21]

Once again a literary and antiquarian fashion of the late Republic was taken up by Augustus, immortalized in stone, and (in this case) put to an explicitly propagandist purpose. For the great temple of Mars Ultor, dedicated in 2 B.C., formed the centre-piece of Augustus' new Forum, the Forum Augustum.[22] In front of the temple stood a *quadriga* dedicated to Augustus himself. Along the two sides of the Forum, both opening into wide, semi-circular apses, stood a line of statues of famous figures from the history of Rome: on the one side Aeneas, the Kings of Alba Longa, and members of the Julian house; on the other Romulus, and a line of legendary or historical heroes of the Republic. Here too each statue was equipped with an inscribed text, giving the offices which each man had held, and a brief account

of their achievements. Augustus, as we know from Suetonius, intended something more by all this than just the pleasure of contemplating the great deeds of the past. He explained in an edict, couched in his usual somewhat tedious and moralizing style, that he had intended these statues to serve as an *exemplar*, in terms of which the appropriate conduct could be demanded, by his fellow-citizens, both of himself while he lived and of the *principes* of succeeding periods (Suetonius, *Augustus* 31). With these propagandist overtones added, the programme of the Forum of Augustus thus exactly matched, and followed from, that of the antiquarian works composed by innocent scholars in the last years of the Republic.

Moreover, as Nepos' biography of Atticus shows, there was still another area in which the antiquarian interests of the late Republic were to be put to propagandist and programmatic use by the new regime. In the last decade of Atticus' life, that is in the later forties and the thirties, Atticus became a friend of 'Imperator Divi filius', as Nepos says in the concluding section which he wrote after Atticus' death. Caesar used to correspond frequently with him, whether he was in Rome or away: in his letters he would ask Atticus to resolve some point *de antiquitate*, or would put to him some literary puzzle – *aliquam quaestionem poeticam* (19.1–20.2). At this time, Nepos records, the temple of Iuppiter Feretrius on the Capitol, which had been established by Romulus, was lying in ruins, and was roofless through age and neglect. It was at the prompting (*admonitus*) of Atticus that Octavian undertook the task of restoring it (20.3).

This step therefore appears here as an isolated measure of the thirties B.C., which was taken before there was any general programme for the restoration of temples; and it owed its origin to the initiative not of Octavian, but of Atticus. But of course this picture was soon to change. Livy, writing Book 4 in the 20s, refers to Augustus as 'the founder or restorer of all the temples', and makes a specific mention of the temple of Iuppiter Feretrius, 'quam vetustate dilapsam refecit'. He also refers to Augustus' claim that he had personally discovered there evidence that Cornelius Cossus had been consul, rather than *tribunus militum*, when he won the *spolia opima* and deposited them there;[23] hence there was no exception to the alleged rule that only those fighting under their own auspices could gain these *spolia*. It is by no means clear that Livy in fact believed the testimony of Augustus, which he felt obliged to record, in an excursus, with very marked reservations – and without altering his introduction of Cossus as a *tribunus militum* (4.19.1). Augustus was later of course to include this ancient temple of Iuppiter Feretrius in the list of restored temples which he duly recorded for posterity in his *Res Gestae* (19). He did

not, however, feel obliged to recall that this restoration had not, in the first instance, been his own idea, but someone else's. This passage, as noted above (p. 40), thus represents a significant conjunction between late-Republican scholarship and concern about religion as a distinct area, on the one hand, and the growing dependence of politics on great individuals on the other.

This correspondence between Atticus and Octavian, along with the marriage of Pomponia to Agrippa, and the betrothal of the one-year-old Vipsania to Tiberius, might well make one think that Atticus, towards the end of his long life, will have been represented by Nepos as a committed supporter of Octavian. For, even if he had not in fact been, one might have expected that Nepos would have made the most of any connections which he had had with Octavian, and any commitment which he had felt to him. It is all the more surprising, therefore, to see that Nepos in fact does just the opposite, that he manifests no enthusiasm for the rise of Octavian to sole power, and, if anything, emphasizes (once again) Atticus' neutrality.

In the section of the biography which had been written and made public ('edita', 19.1) before Atticus' death in March 32 B.C., Octavian appears simply as 'the young Caesar', *adulescens Caesar*, to whose friendship and *potentia* Agrippa had owed the fact that he could have married anyone he chose; however, Nepos specifically notes – 'non est enim celandum' – that the *conciliator* of the marriage had in fact been M. Antonius (12.1–2).

In the final section, written after Atticus' death, Octavian has become 'Imperator Divi filius'; his full official name, from about 38 B.C. onwards, had of course been 'Imperator Caesar Divi filius'.[24] It seems clear that Nepos wrote this concluding section before the name 'Augustus' was conferred in January 27. But was he writing before or after the battle of Actium in 31, or the death of Antonius in the following year? This seems wholly uncertain. What is clear is, firstly, that Nepos says that Atticus owed his *familiaritas* with Octavian to the same *elegantia vitae* which had attracted other *principes civitatis*, of equal *dignitas* but lesser good fortune (*dignitate pari, fortuna humiliores*). The second point is that this – good fortune – is the wholly neutral light in which he places Octavian's rise to power. 'For such *prosperitas* accrued to Caesar that *fortuna* denied him nothing which she had ever granted to anyone else, and won for him what up to that point no Roman citizen had been able to acquire' (19.2–3).

The marriage relationship (*affinitas*) served, Nepos says, to strengthen their personal friendship. It is at this point (20.1–3) that he describes the frequent correspondence between Atticus and Octavian on antiquarian and literary questions, and Atticus' advice about restoring

the temple of Iuppiter Feretrius. But then, in a very striking way, Nepos goes on to say that even now Atticus preserved his political neutrality, and kept up a similar relationship with Marcus Antonius. The paragraph which he devotes to this relationship, and to the lessons which were to be drawn from it, is the last in his biography before he comes to Atticus' final illness and death, at the end of March 32 B.C. It cannot, obviously enough, have been written earlier than 32, when according to the *Res Gestae* (25) all of Italy was spontaneously swearing loyalty to Octavian, and asking for him as *dux* in the war which was to be decided at Actium. This is what Nepos writes (20.5):

> His friendship was no less cultivated from a distance, by letter, by Marcus Antonius, to the extent that he kept Atticus informed in detail, from the ends of the earth, as to what he was doing and what his concerns were. The significance of this can be weighed by anyone who is capable of judging what a sign of *sapientia* it is, to retain the friendship and goodwill of men between whom there was not only rivalry for supreme power, but that degree of personal hostility (*obtrectatio*) which was inevitable as between Caesar and Antonius, given that each sought to be *princeps* not only of the *urbs Roma*, but of the *orbis terrarum*.

We have no reason to disbelieve the statement made by Nepos, that Atticus continued through the thirties to correspond with Antonius. What attitude Atticus himself had had to the rivalry of Octavian and Antonius we cannot know. But there is nothing to show that it was very different from that of Nepos; and Nepos at any rate saw it as a naked competition for power, in the face of which one showed one's *sapientia* by maintaining good relations with both sides.

This attitude of neutrality and non-partisanship cannot of itself explain why things turned out as they did. For of course there were others who did not act on this principle. Not only Roman senators, but – what is more puzzling – whole armies had earlier fought in the name of *libertas*. Equally, not only members of the Roman upper class, but large armies of ordinary men, both Romans and non-Romans, fought under Antonius and Octavian. Why and how they came to do so, still seems remarkably difficult to explain. But part of the total picture is surely that many others remained throughout passive, uncommitted, and neutral, preferring private *officia* and the glories of the past to the urgent issues of the present. As Nepos himself wrote elsewhere, the *res publica* was now governed not by *ius* but by *potentia* (*Cato* 2.2); and elsewhere again he complains that the state was endangered by the fact that army veterans claimed the right to give orders themselves, rather than receive them (*Eum.* 8.2). But no one offered a serious alternative to *potentia*, or presented a programme to solve the problems of the veterans. And the philosophic quietism

and neutrality, which Atticus observed and Nepos praised, only served to smooth the path to monarchy. Under that new monarchy political neutrality was to be the enforced fate of everybody; and an antiquarian interest in the Roman past could be put to use in the propaganda of the newly-established dynasty, and immortalized in stone in the monuments which it put up in the centre of Rome.

NOTES

* This paper represents a lightly edited version of a lecture given in 1983 to the London Branch of the Classical Association. It seemed on reflection worthwhile to publish it, as an essay suggesting various lessons which might be drawn from this extremely interesting and informative text. I am very grateful for comments to Nicholas Horsfall, whose translation of the *Life*, with extensive commentary, will be published shortly by O.U.P., and to Elizabeth Rawson, who has saved me from many errors.

1. E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London, 1985), ch. 15–16 on historiography and antiquarianism. This paper, as will be evident, makes no attempt to explore the wider deployment of antiquarian studies in the Augustan period.

2. J. Geiger, *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography* (*Historia* Einzelschriften 47, Stuttgart, 1985).

3. M. Labate and E. Narducci, 'Mobilità dei modelli etici e relativismo dei valori: il 'personaggio' di Attico', in A. Giardina, A. Schiavone, *Società romana e produzione schiavistica* iii: *modelli etici, diritto e trasformazioni soziali* (Rome and Bari, 1981), p. 127.

4. J. North, 'Religion and Politics, from Republic to Principate', *JRS* 76 (1986), 251.

5. The sparse biographical data are collected in M. Schanz, C. Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur*[4] i (Munich, 1927), pp. 351–2.

6. See U. Ewins, 'The Enfranchisement of Cisalpine Gaul', *Pap. Brit. Sch. Rome* 23 (1955), 73; C. Peyre, *La Cisalpine Gauloise du III*[e] *au I*[er] *siècle avant J-C* (Paris, 1979). Nepos himself might therefore have gained the Roman citizenship *per magistratum*, or, as any well-placed *peregrinus* might, through a viritane grant. He would remain none the less an example of the 'outsiders' from this region to whom we owe so much of our conception of Rome.

7. Fragments in P. K. Marshall, *Cornelii Nepotis Vitae cum fragmentis* (Teubner, 1977), pp. 101–2. Catullus 1, ll.5–7: 'cum ausus es unus Italorum/omne aevum tribus explicare chartis,/doctis, Iuppiter, et laboriosis.'

8. Compare the discussion by J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la République*[2] (Paris, 1972), esp. pp. 397–411.

9. N. Horsfall, 'Some Problems in the "Laudatio Turiae"', *Bull. Inst. Cl. Stud.* 30 (1983), 85.

10. See e.g. C. Nicolet, *L'Ordre équestre à l'époque républicaine* i (Paris, 1966), pp. 434f.

11. For the functions of *equites* under Augustus, and their predominantly military character, see esp. C. Nicolet, 'Augustus, Government and the Propertied Classes' in F. Millar and E. Segal (edd.), *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects* (Oxford, 1984), p. 89.

12. This passage is not taken into account in *RE* s.v. 'Legatus', xii (1925), cols. 1141–3. Note however B. Schleussner, *Die Legaten der römischen Republik* (Munich, 1978), p. 154, noting the parallel provided by Diodorus, 37.8.1.

13. See esp. T. P. Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate, 139 BC–AD 14* (Oxford, 1971).

14. For a good account of this, T. Mitchell, *Cicero: the Ascending Years* (New Haven, 1979).

15. Most editors read '(M.) Servio, fratri Sulpicii'. But see H. Mattingly, *Athenaeum* 53 (1975), 265 and n.14 in favour of retaining the reading of the Leiden MS: 'M. Servilio fratri Sulpicii.'

16. P. A. Brunt, 'Nobilitas and *Novitas*', *JRS* 72 (1982), 1.

17. Broughton, *MRR* i 290 (Sex. Iulius Caesar, praetor in 208); 418 (P. Marcius Rex, *legatus* in 171); 471 (Q. Marcius Rex, praetor in 144).

18. See esp. T. P. Wiseman, 'Legendary Genealogies in Late-Republican Rome', *G&R* 21 (1974), 153, now reprinted in his *Roman Studies, Literary and Historical* (Liverpool, 1987), p. 207.

19. On the transformation of the Forum see P. Zanker, *Forum Romanum: die Neugestaltung durch Augustus* (Tübingen, 1972), and now of course the major re-examination by F. Coarelli, *Il Foro Romano* ii: *periodo repubblicano e augusteo* (Rome, 1985), esp. pp. 258f.; his reconstruction of the placing of the *Fasti* is followed here.

20. On the progressive monopolization of public honour by the Imperial family see esp. W. Eck, 'Senatorial Self-Representation: Developments in the Augustan Period', in Millar and Segal, op. cit. (n.11), p. 129.

21. For the details see *RE* Supp. vi (1935), cols. 1227–9; Rawson, op. cit. (n.1), pp. 198–9; 230–1. If we knew what Varro's *περιλογραφία* was (Cicero, *Att.* 16.11.3), we might have to conclude that some version of the *Hebdomades* or *De imaginibus* was in circulation in 44 B.C.

22. On this P. Zanker, *Forum Augustum: das Bildprogramm* (Tübingen, 1968); J. C. Anderson, *The Historical Topography of the Imperial Fora* (*Collection Latomus* 182, Brussels, 1984), ch. 2. For the *elogia*, the standard edition by A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae* xii.3: *Elogia* (1937), with S. R. Tufi, 'Frammenti delle statue dei summi viri nel Foro di Augusto', *Dial. di Arch.* 3 (1981), 69.

23. Livy, 4. 19–20, with the invaluable comments of R. M. Ogilvie, *Commentary on Livy Books 1–5* (Oxford, 1965), ad loc.

24. R. Syme, 'Imperator Caesar: a Study in Nomenclature', *Historia* 7 (1958), 172 = *Roman Papers* i (Oxford, 1979), p. 361.