



The Dictator's Mistake: Caesar's Escape from Sulla

Author(s): Ronald T. Ridley

Source: *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 2nd Qtr., 2000, Bd. 49, H. 2 (2nd Qtr., 2000), pp. 211-229

Published by: Franz Steiner Verlag

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4436576>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Franz Steiner Verlag is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*

THE DICTATOR'S MISTAKE: CAESAR'S ESCAPE FROM SULLA

For Ernst Badian

In November 82, the last desperate attempt to block Sulla's victory failed at the Colline Gate, and shortly after, by the extraordinary means of nomination by an interrex,¹ Sulla was appointed to the even more extraordinarily monstrous office which he had created, a dictatorship the duration of which depended on his judgement or whim.

One of the Romans to whom Sulla turned his attention was the young Caesar, whom he ordered to divorce his wife – but he refused. He took refuge in Sabine territory, was actually captured by a Sullan patrol, escaped, and was then pardoned by Sulla. The young man was none other than the son-in-law of Cinna, the nephew of Marius, and the cousin of Marius the Younger. One might have expected every historian of the period, and more so every biographer of Sulla or Caesar, to have felt that here, if ever, was not an event, but a whole series of events that required some explanation, yet so few of them have recognised the problem. Thomas de Quincey indulged in understatement:

“That Caesar should have escaped destruction in this unequal contest....is somewhat surprising.”²

George Long, always intuitive, reflected:

“It is strange that Sulla spared his life, if Caesar was ever in his power, and it appears that he was.”³

The first indispensable part of an explanation of what happened in 82 is the family from which Caesar sprang. His father played a not inconsiderable part in events, and nothing could be clearer than his political affiliations. He had a conventional career, which included the military tribunate, quaestorship and praetorship, followed by the governorship of Asia in the 90s, from which a number of flattering dedications survive. He almost certainly was involved in the Marian colonial allotments in Africa, which would have been in 103 or 102, and thus early in his career, whatever office he was holding. There is no sign of his service in the Italian War, and he did not reach the consulship, but died at

1 App. *BC* 1.98: the senate expected the interrex to hold consular elections!

2 Thos de Quincey, *The Caesars* (London 1832) 37.

3 George Long, *The decline of the Roman Republic* (London 1866) 2.378.

Pisa in 85 “while putting on his shoes” (Pliny *NH* 7.181). He was obviously in the service of Cinna and Carbo.⁴

Caesar had two uncles. The more famous was Marius, who married Caesar’s father’s sister apparently about the time of his praetorship in 115 (Plut. *Mar.* 6). Their son, Marius the Younger, was born in 109, and thus was about nine years older than Caesar. The other uncle was Sextus Caesar, of whom nothing is known before his consulship in the pivotal year 91, which he shared with Philippus, the mortal enemy of Drusus the Younger – but of his attitudes and actions we are told nothing! He served as proconsul the next year in the Italian War, against the Paeligni, but died at the siege of Asculum (App. *BC* 1.48). We can only agree with Lily Ross Taylor: “Caesar’s father and uncle...belonged to the party of Marius”.⁵

The women in Caesar’s family must not be overlooked. His mother Aurelia was probably a Cotta. She reared her son after his father’s death (Tac. *Dial.* 28) and continued to play an important part until her death in 54 (Suet. *Jul.* 28), watching over her daughter-in-law Pompeia and uncovering the Clodius affair (Plut. *Caes.* 9–10). Caesar’s aunt Julia was the wife of Marius and died in 68, when the young Caesar delivered her funeral oration (Suet. *Jul.* 9). She also took part in politics, opposing her son’s consulship in 82 (Sall. *Hist.* 2.30). Of Caesar’s sisters, we shall speak presently.

- 4 Matthias Gelzer, *Caesar, politician and statesman* (Oxford 1968) 19 conjectured with much plausibility that Caesar’s father was one of the legates appointed to raise troops and collect money and food in preparation for Sulla’s return. Compare Gerard Walter, *Caesar* (London 1953) 4f.: he was torn between his Marian (sister) and Sullan (wife) connections, and retired from public life at the age of forty.

Concerning his father’s career, disorder reigns. The evidence is two inscriptions, one found in the sixteenth century near the source of the Aqua Virgo (*Inscriptiones Italiae*, 13.3, *Elogia* [Rome 1937] no. 75), giving his career in ascending order: decemvir, quaestor, praetor, procos. Asia; the other from the Forum of Augustus, found in December 1925 (no.7), giving his career in reverse order: praetor, quaestor, military tribune, founder of colony at Cerceina. In his notes on the second, Attilio Degraffi suggested that the colonies were founded while he was pr. 100.

Robert Broughton devoted more attention than anyone else to Caesar’s father’s career, but unfortunately changed his mind every time. In 1948 (“The elogium of Julius Caesar’s father”, *AJA* 52 [1948] 323–330) he suggested that he was military tribune before 100, then land commissioner, quaestor 99 or 98, pr. 92, procos. 91. In *MRR* 2 (1952) 574 he gave quaestor before 100, Xvir. ag. dand. c. 100, pr. c. 92, procos. c. 91. In the *Additions and corrections* to *MRR* (1960) 29, he pushed back the land commission to 103 or 102, and the military tribunate and quaestorship “perhaps before 103”. In the *Supplement* (=vol. 3, 1986) 104f., he retained this date for the land commission but decided that it “probably” preceded the military tribunate and quaestorship. This is contrary to the order of both *elogia*.

See also Alfredo Passerini, “L’elogio del padre di G. Cesare”, *Athen.* 17 (1939) 54f., who dates the praetorship, decemvirate and governorship of Asia all c. 100–99.

- 5 Lily Ross Taylor, “The rise of Julius Caesar”, *G&R* 4 (1957) 10–18, p. 11.

The second indispensable part of the answer is to be found in Caesar's life before Sulla's dictatorship. One can hardly assess Caesar's importance if one begins the narrative of his life in 82.⁶ He was born in his uncle Marius' sixth consulship, which witnessed his outwitting by his enemies over the affair of Saturninus. Of the tumultuous events of the reaction of the 90s to the Marian dominance, Caesar as a child may have remembered little, but he was surely old enough never to forget the murder of Drusus the Younger in 91 and the resultant Italian War, followed by the consulship of Sulla and the First Civil War, by which time he was almost in his teens.

Marius was elected to his last consulship for 86. He was to die within a fortnight, but the first public notice of the young Caesar was taken by his uncle. He was selected as flamen Dialis (Vell. Pat. 2.41, Suet. *Jul.* 1), when he would have been thirteen years of age. It is extraordinary how little interest this has excited. He was to be the chief in a college of fifteen priests, and was not only surrounded by very ancient taboos, but also responsible for the cult of the chief deity of the state.

Much has been made of the taboos of the office, of which the fullest account is in Gellius (*NA* 10.15). The flamen Dialis had to be patrician, and was married by *confarreatio*. He could not divorce and must abdicate if his wife died. He could wear no knot in his clothing, had always to wear his characteristic spiked hat in the open, and could have his hair cut only by a free man; the cuttings of his hair and nails had to be buried under a fruitful tree. He could not touch (or even mention!) a she-goat, raw flesh, ivy or beans, or pass under vines, and the feet of his bed had to be smeared with clay. He could not take an oath, touch a dead body (although he could attend a funeral), ride a horse, or see an army under arms. A bound person who entered his house had to be freed, and the fetters pulled up through the *impluvium* and deposited in the street.

Caesar's predecessor in office was a tragic figure. L. Cornelius Merula was a Sullan. In 87 he was elected consul in place of Cinna, when the latter was expelled, and with Octavius he fortified the city and levied troops. He committed suicide when Marius and Cinna returned and took Rome, in 87.

6 The table at the back of Gelzer's biography (as in n. 4), p. 335 has nothing between his birth and the year 87. For a more complete chronology, see Hermann Strasburger, *Caesars Eintritt in die Geschichte* (Munich 1938) 7f. He points out that the ancient account of his childhood is lost, because Suetonius begins with his seventeenth and Plutarch with his eighteenth year.

So many standard works show no interest in Caesar's early career. The old *Cambridge Ancient History*, for example (vol. 9, 1932) p. 487 by Max Cary, began with the 70s. The new edition (9.1994, pp. 178, 198) by Robin Seager does not neglect these episodes.

Suetonius' sources for the earliest period of Caesar's life are Sulla's memoirs, the lives of Caesar by Oppius and Balbus (quoted 53, 72, 81), Livy and Aelius Tubero. Plutarch in the first fourteen chapters, down to the consulship, cites no authority.

The date of Caesar's appointment has been a problem. Merula committed suicide in 87, and Marius died in January 86. If, as Velleius states, the initiative was Marius', that would fit, yet most moderns have chosen 84.⁷ What was the significance of the nomination? Many moderns stress the paradox, as they see it, that the office would have ended Caesar's political career: "His career was almost ended by the dominance of the Marians", suggested Taylor ironically, followed by Hinard, who went so far as to suggest that Sulla's rejection of his appointment "saved" him.⁸

A number of matters may be clarified. We know of no protest by Caesar himself. Plutarch, indeed, garbled though he may be at this point, suggests that he agitated to be invested by Sulla (*Caes.* 1). Second, there was now little restriction on political life for the flamen Dialis. As early as 183 Valerius Flaccus had been praetor while holding this priesthood (Livy 39.45.4), and as for his inability to take any oath, when aedile in 199, the tribunes allowed his brother to swear for him (31.50.7f). More striking is the case of Merula who had been consul in 87, in charge of defending the city. Third, had there been any religious niceties to be observed, we may be sure how Caesar would have treated them by observing his behaviour in 63 and 59, and his absence from Rome for *most* of the time when he was pontifex maximus (63–44). As Syme remarked, 'a resolute man could presumably get out of it by contemplating a corpse, eating beans, or perpetrating some other enormity.'⁹ Badian has insightfully linked Caesar's nomination with the various other families who "collaborated" with the Cinnans: the Valerii Flacci, Scipiones, Pisones, Philippi, Perpernae, Bruti, Cethegi, Fimbriae and Ahenobarbi, while Meier stressed that the priesthood was advantageous to both Caesar and Cinna, requiring the marriage to Cornelia.¹⁰

There are, however, fundamental objections, seen only by Strasburger: the priesthood was not within the gift of Marius and Cinna. It is little wonder then that Sulla cancelled it. On the other hand, contra Plutarch's implication, it was not popularly elected. Furthermore, when Sulla insisted that Caesar divorce, that would have cancelled the flamine!¹¹ All of that, however, turns out to be of no importance; for Caesar, although nominated, was never inaugurated, as Taylor proved fifty years ago.

7 Other versions are amusing. Long was not hesitant about assigning it to 87, although Caesar was only thirteen; he offered as comparison Giovanni de' Medici, cardinal at the same age (2.378). According to Ernst Sihler, *Caesar* (New York 1912) 6, Caesar was nominated in 86 for the next vacancy – but Merula was already dead. Walter (as in n. 4) 10 is even worse: "It was the year 83 and suddenly government circles discovered that this state of affairs was intolerable", i.e. that there was no flamen Dialis.

8 Taylor (as in n. 5), 11, followed by Francois Hinard, *Sylla* (Paris 1985) 18.

9 Ronald Syme, review of Gelzer's *Caesar* in *JRS* 34 (1944) 94.

10 Ernst Badian, *Foreign clientelae* (Oxford 1958) 242, Christian Meier, *Caesar* (London 1995) 112.

11 Strasburger (as in n. 6) 81.

There were three stages in the appointment of the flamen Dialis: *nominatio*, when three candidates were nominated by the pontiffs; *captio*, when one was chosen by the pontifex maximus; and *inauguratio*, when he was inaugurated by an augur. Suetonius uses the term *destinatus*, which Linderski equates with *nominatio*, and Velleius uses *creatus*, which the same authority understands to be the *captio* by the pontifex maximus. Caesar was not, then, inaugurated. The pontifex maximus, Q. Mucius Scaevola, killed by Marius the Younger in 82, would, however, according to Taylor, never have agreed. She raised, in addition, what she took to be the vital objection to Caesar's nomination: that his parents were not married by *confarreatio* because his mother was a plebeian. Linderski replied that the flamen Martialis Lentulus Niger (praetor by 61) was married to a plebeian, Publicia, so that there was "no reason to suppose that a plebeian woman was at that time not capable of concluding confarreate marriage with a patrician". What is the evidence that Cornelia was a plebeian? That her father Cinna had been consul with Valerius Flaccus, a patrician, and that the since 366 (in fact 342) one consulship was reserved for a plebeian. In the upheavals of the 80s, this is far from a convincing argument. Moreover, as De Sanctis argued sixty years ago, Suetonius is clear that Caesar put aside Cossutia the plebeian and married Cornelia in order to be flamen.¹² It is, in conclusion, clear at least that there was no flamen Dialis from 87 to 11 BC (Tac. *Ann.* 3.58). Whatever the legalities, furthermore, it is gross romanticism to suggest that Caesar was 'saved' in any sense at this point by Sulla. The dictator had his own political reasons.

- 12 Lily Ross Taylor, "The early career of Caesar", *CP* 36 (1941) 113–132, and *art cit.* (n. 5) 11, but preceded by Napoleon III, *History of Julius Caesar* (London 1865–6) 1.305. W. Drumann-P. Groebe, *Geschichte Roms* (Berlin 1899–1929) 3.127. Followed by Gelzer (as in n. 4) 20; Syme (as in n. 9) 94; Seager, *CAH* 9 (1994) 178. Inaugurated, but Sulla cancelled it: Badian, review of Gelzer, *Gnomon* 33 (1961) 598. See Jerzy Linderski, *Roman questions* (Stuttgart 1995) 554–556.

Perhaps the most exhaustive discussion is by Marcello Leone, "Il problema del flaminato di Cesare", in *Studi di storia antica offerti dagli allievi a Eugenio Manni* (Rome 1976) 192–212 (I thank Jerzy Linderski for this reference). Leone believes that Caesar was appointed (*destinatus*) by the pontifex maximus Scaevola, but not inaugurated. Why the inauguration did not take place in the following years is hard to explain. Furthermore, if he married Cornelia after his *captio*, how he could be ordered by Sulla to divorce her because she was plebeian and therefore inappropriate is also hard to see. Finally, having dismissed Velleius as an unreliable source, Leone then placed great faith in (the much more unreliable at this point) Plutarch over an appeal to the people, which Leone fills out as the result of Caesar's being fined by the new pontifex maximus Metellus, acting for Sulla after the refusal to divorce Cornelia.

For G. De Sanctis: "La data della nascita di Giulio Cesare", *Riv. fil.* 62 (1934) 550–551. Biographers of Marius customarily neglect this matter: Jules van Ooteghem, *Caius Marius* (Brussels 1964) 324, has only an allusion; nothing in A. Passerini, *Studi su Caio Mario* (Milan 1971), Phillip Kildahl, *Caius Marius* (New York 1968), or Richard Evans, *Gaius Marius, a political biography* (Pretoria 1994).

Before his father's death, Caesar had been betrothed to a woman called Cossutia. Suetonius tells us some very interesting things about her: she was equestrian, very rich, and the betrothal dated back to before his fifteenth birthday (before July 85). The bare fact for most moderns is enough. The obvious questions go unraised. Why would such a (first) wife have been chosen for Caesar? Was it simply for money, as Suetonius implies? Was it not possible for one of the Caesars to find a prospective bride from a leading family, one of the nobility?¹³

The astounding fact is that the Cossutii provided not one consul in the history of the Republic. They are known only for a *monetalis* in the late 70s, and another in 44. Perhaps the same family produced the architects and sculptors of the last two centuries who bore the same name. It required the too often overlooked genius of Friedrich Münzer to see the patterns: Caesar's grandfather and father both married plebeians, as did his aunt and his sisters.¹⁴ Three of Caesar's four wives – or intended wives – were plebeians. Syme developed the point on a broader scale. The marriage illustrated the close relations between nobility and equestrians. The Cossutii were, in fact, prominent artists, employed by kings, and presumably they were Marians.¹⁵

Various guesses have been made as to who was responsible for the betrothal. Marius' influence was seen, as in the marriage of Caesar's sisters, by Taylor, while his father was responsible, according to Deutsch. Napoleon III was sure of only one thing: it was against Caesar's own wishes!¹⁶

Deutsch argued with force that Caesar was in fact married to Cossutia. His reasons were essentially two: *dimittere* in Suetonius and other authors does not mean to break a betrothal, but to divorce; and Plutarch counted Pompeia as Caesar's third wife, but his arguments have gained little acceptance.¹⁷

Caesar turned fifteen in July 85. Some time around this period, he assumed the *toga virilis*. The ritual was often, but not necessarily, performed at the Liberalia, 15 March. The most important stimulus for Caesar's assumption of

13 There is no interest in the Cossutia affair by Gelzer (as in n. 4) 20 or Meier (as in n. 10) 111. Caesar "preferred the tangible reality of the large dowry", Walter (as in n. 4) 9.

14 Friedrich Münzer, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* (Stuttgart 1920) 326. Of Caesar's two sisters, one married a Pinarius, of whom nothing is known, but the family were patricians "of prehistoric, not to say fabulous, antiquity" (Syme [as in n. 9]), inhabitants of the Palatine at the time of Herakles (DS 4.21) or descended from Numa (Plut. *Num.* 21). The other was married to an Atius Balbus, pr. c. 60, who died shortly after that date. The family was plebeian, of no importance during the Republic, but Balbus came from Aricia.

15 Syme (as in n. 9) 93.

16 Taylor (as in n. 5) 11; Monroe Deutsch, "The women of Caesar's family", *CJ* 13 (1917–8) 502–514, p. 505; Napoleon III (as in n. 12) 1.305.

17 This was accepted, for example, by Thomas Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic* (Oxford 1928) 1.221.

the toga has not been noticed: his father's death. If that occurred in the second half of 85, a likely date is March 84, when he was fifteen.¹⁸

After his father's death, if not before, Caesar's mother Aurelia certainly played an even greater role in his life. She was ranked with Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi (Tac. *Dial.* 28). And among his teachers was the rhetorician M. Antonius Grypho (Suet. *gramm.* 7).

At some time Caesar broke his engagement to Cossutia to marry Cornelia, none other than the daughter of the most powerful man in Rome before his death in 84. The question why Cinna married his daughter to the young Caesar may need to be rephrased according to the date assigned to the marriage. Some who have offered a date state that it was after Cinna's death, in 84 or 83.¹⁹ We obviously have no way, in truth, of making such vital distinctions. Others date it simply to 84, implying that it took place before Cinna's death.²⁰ In a brilliant note, Last showed that Carcopino and de Sanctis had completely misunderstood Suetonius: it was not that the marriage to Cornelia took place when Cinna was consul for the fourth time (i.e. 84), but that she was the daughter of the man who was consul four times!²¹ In sum, one can hardly date the marriage before Caesar's assumption of the *toga virilis* – if only that date were fixed! – but it was certainly before Sulla's assumption of supreme power in November 82. Münzer stressed that men in the aristocracy, for a variety of reasons, usually married early, "shortly after the assumption of the *toga virilis*".²² In Caesar's case this is supported by the fact that he was betrothed while still a *puer*.

Allowing Cinna to have been still living, why, then, did he marry his daughter to the young Caesar? Gelzer's suggestion that the wife of the flamen Dialis had to be a patrician simply raises the question why it should have been Cinna's daughter and not another patrician's. Meier leaves the whole matter suspended with a series of unanswered questions relating to incipient signs of Caesar's later greatness.²³

Three answers have been given. Sihler stressed that it was a very deliberate political act, and in his view it was Caesar's decision. This is perhaps a little premature, even for Caesar. Walter suggested that it was arranged by Caesar's

18 Dated late 86 – early 85 by Deutsch, "Caesar's first wife", *CP* 12 (1917) 93–96, p. 95; 85 by Meier 111; 84 by Drumann-Groebe (as in n. 12) 3.128 and Gelzer (as in n. 4) 20; March 84 by Walter (as in n. 4) 3.

On the Liberalia, see Joachim Marquardt, *Privatleben* (Leipzig 1886) (as in n. 10) 124 and Peter Schmidt, in *Der Kleine Pauly* (Stuttgart 1969) 5.880.

19 84 or 83 Drumann-Groebe (as in n. 12) 3.128; Long (as in n. 3) 2.376; Deutsch (as in n. 18) 95; Sihler (as in n. 7) 6; 82 inexplicably, according to John Fuller, *Julius Caesar* (London 1965) 56.

20 Gelzer (as in n. 4) 20; Meier (as in n. 10) 111; Seager, *CAH* 9 (1994) 178.

21 Hugh Last, "Cinnae quater consulis", *CR* 58 (1944) 15–17.

22 Münzer, *RA* (as in n. 14) 106.

23 Gelzer (as in n. 4) 20; Meier (as in n. 10) 85.

aunt Julia, after the death of his father. Most convincing is the solution of Grant. Caesar was chosen by Cinna because he was Marius' nephew, and because Cinna desired a link with the famous Aurelii, the cousins of Caesar's mother. These three brothers, "liberal nobles of unusual calibre...could be relied upon to oppose Sulla".²⁴ The only flaw in this argument is that they were Sullans! It is strange that Caesar's mother is not thought to have had any hand in this matter, although she instigated the divorce from Pompeia and the marriage with Calpurnia, her own relative.²⁵

Sulla returned to Italy at the end of 83. Caesar was seventeen and a half. Did he serve in the civil wars? He was technically under age for service, but Pompey had been with his father in the Italian War at the age of sixteen or seventeen. The older view is that he was old enough to bear arms and that his connection with Marius and Cinna ensured that he did so. More recently the pendulum has swung the other way: he took no part.²⁶ Perhaps his relatives, fearful for the fate of the family, attempted to dissuade him. One might think of the family advice to the young Octavian when he wished to take up Caesar's legacy. If Sulla won, however, the Caesars would be very much at risk. One can only speculate on the effect on Caesar of the news of the death of his cousin, Marius the Younger, consul 82, in the siege of Praeneste, at the age of twenty-seven.

Casting our eye back over Caesar's career to this point, certain things are clear. Everything linked him in the most prominent way to the Marian party. His closest male relatives were all dead, but there remained two very strong women in his life, his mother and his aunt. He had already been designated for high religious office and had cast about for a marriage in the family tradition, careless of his patrician status where more material advantages outweighed social standing. The two ambitions, religious and marital, were in contradiction, and another bride had to be found. The *princeps civitatis* offered him his daughter. Caesar was, most obviously, a very important young man, the head of his family, with a very strong sense of his own standing.

After the victory at the Colline Gate, Sulla was named dictator by the interrex Valerius Flaccus, who had been consul with Marius in 100! Some time in the next year, while the proscriptions were raging, the dictator confronted Caesar, who could not have been more than eighteen. He insisted that he divorce Cornelia; Caesar refused. We can only agree with Gelzer that this was "an exceedingly dangerous piece of audacity".²⁷ His punishment was the confiscation of the dowry (Plut. *Caes.* 1). Suetonius adds the confiscation of his own family wealth, and his removal from the priesthood, but that is unlikely at this time.

24 Sihler (as in n. 7) 6; Walter (as in n. 4) 9f; Michael Grant, *Julius Caesar* (London 1969) 23f.

25 Münzer, *RA* (as in n. 14) 326.

26 Long (as in n. 3) 2.378; Taylor (as in n. 5) 12; Gelzer (as in n. 4) 20.

27 Gelzer (as in n. 4) 21.

What were Sulla's motives in the demand and Caesar's in the refusal? These questions have rarely been raised. Gelzer suggested that he was to make an alliance more acceptable to Sulla. It would be perilous to disagree with that insight.

The major clue is the fact that Sulla intervened in other people's marriages, and found more compliant material. Pompey was induced to divorce Antistia and marry Aemilia (Plut. *Pomp.* 9). The Antistii were also plebeian, but had belonged to the nobility since the fourth century. One perished in the proscriptions (Cic. *Rosc.* 90), but Pompey's father-in-law was tribune 88, aedile 86, and was murdered in 82 because of his support for Sulla. Pompey was thereupon remarried to Sulla's own step-daughter Aemilia, although she was pregnant by another husband. The other man whom Sulla forced to divorce was M. Pupius Piso Frugi, who was married to Cinna's widow Annia (Vell. Pat. 2.41.2), perhaps the daughter of the consul of 128. What we do not know is whom Piso then married, if anyone.

While mentioning these cases, we must not forget that Cinna had another daughter, who was married to Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, son of the consul 96, censor 92, and pontifex maximus 103–89. Ahenobarbus was given no second chance. Proscribed, he fled to Africa, raised an army and was killed by Pompey (Plut. *Pomp.* 11–12).

What, then, was Sulla's purpose? Authors of the more popular works have given the best answers. "Sulla tried to draw him into his party", stated Walter. Caesar was "a promising possibility for the new aristocracy", observed Baker. Meier alerts us to a fundamental truth: Sulla may have seen himself as the champion of the nobility, but its members did not support him. The restored "senatorial regime" was derived from a civil war.²⁸ It may be confidently asserted therefore that Sulla was seeking to win over leading and younger members of the nobility to his cause and even to his family. The young Caesar would have been a notable coup for the party, given his patrician birth, his family's legendary origins, and his Marian connections. The burning question which remains tormentingly unanswered is who was to be his intended next wife.

The second question of motivation is even more important, but much more difficult to answer: why did Caesar refuse, or – more to the point – how was he able to refuse? That he stirred up the dictator's anger by his "steadfast refusal" as Groebe noted,²⁹ merely restates the question.

28 Walter (as in n. 4) 12; George Baker, *Sulla the fortunate* (London 1927) 269. James Froude, *Caesar, a sketch* (London 1894) 95, wrote of Sulla's anxiety to win over the "intellectual energy" of the next generation; Strasburger (as in n. 6) 80 noted that the sources offered no explanation; Erich Gruen, *The last generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley-Los Angeles 1974) 15, hints at the situation: Caesar "had rejected his political advances in 81"; Meier (as in n. 10) 122.

29 Paul Groebe, *RE* 10 (1917) 187.

By way of prelude it would be well to remind ourselves of the fate of those who in these times made the wrong choices. Bravado does not seem appropriate at a time when Cinna and Marius exposed the head of Octavius the consul at the rostra, along with those of other senators and consulars, and forbade burial to their bodies, which were left to dogs and birds. When Sulla decapitated Marcus Censorinus and Carrinas, he displayed their heads outside Praeneste, and that of Caesar's own cousin, Marius the Younger, was exposed at the rostra in Rome. This was not simply a period of massacre, but of mutilation and humiliation of even the dead. Even the body of Marius had been torn from the grave. It must be remembered that mere disobedience to Sulla was punishable by execution in the Forum (App. *BC* 1.101).

Many answers have been attempted. De Quincey indulged in romanticism:

"it is due to Sulla, who had a sympathy with everything truly noble (!) to suppose him struck with powerful admiration for the audacity of the young patrician, standing out in such severe solitude among so many examples of timid confession."

Similarly Froude: "Throughout his career Caesar displayed a singular indifference to life" and "he would not put away the wife who was the mother of his child". It is now agreed, however, that Julia, given the date of her betrothal, was not born until the mid 70s. Sihler implied that Caesar's aim was to establish his identity with the anti-Sullan party. Others who had taken that road had paid with their lives. Warde Fowler indulged in fantasy. Although he was one of those who followed Mommsen in pushing back Caesar's birth by two years, making him now twenty, he declared that he was "too young to be a victim"! Baker showed better psychological insight: "Unlike Pompey, Caesar was a genuine, if not a perfect aristocrat. He coldly declined." Buchan returned to Froude's version: "Caesar never throughout his life knew the meaning of fear". Gelzer indulged in a neat contradiction. Although Caesar had put away Cossutia and married Cornelia in order to hold the flaminiate, "we certainly see the authentic Caesar in his brave resistance to Sulla's demands." Grant attempted a list of logical possibilities. Was Caesar in love with Cornelia? It is generally agreed that women did not have any great hold over him, although he had only three wives (or four if we count Cossutia). Another possibility canvassed is that he thought that Sulla would not last long, and that it might be better to be on the other side. Both these suggestions overlook the fatal objection. One might be desperately in love or certain that Sulla would not rule forever, but failure to obey at the moment one was commanded almost always meant death. In the most striking understatement of his biography, Grant admitted that "this was a considerable risk to take with the frighteningly savage dictator". Meier recognised that it was an "enormity" that Caesar disobeyed. He can only suggest that in doing so, he remained true to his background, and acted less perhaps from calculation than feeling, repelled by the way others joined Sulla. Meier

also is tempted to reason from the unstable political situation: the Cinnans had been in control only shortly before.³⁰

To the question why Caesar refused, therefore, we can offer only possibilities: some trait in his character, some awareness of his status which induced him to undertake one of his most audacious gambles. As for Cornelia, we must not forget that he remained married to her until her death in 68, and that she became the mother of his only child. It is less difficult to explain his survival. Sulla *allowed* him momentarily to escape punishment. He could hardly have regarded him as insignificant: the very fact of his boldness is the best evidence against that. In the rivers of blood which were flowing in Rome, moreover, his death would hardly have been noticed, and Caesar would have been a footnote in the history of the late Republic. Precisely how dangerous the defiance had been the sequel was to show.

The best source for that sequel is Suetonius, who records that after refusing to divorce Cornelia, Caesar went into hiding. He was suffering from the quartan ague, but still had to change his place of hiding almost every night. Then disaster struck. He was discovered and arrested by Sulla's *inquisitores*. By what can only be described as a miracle he bribed them to spare his life. He was finally pardoned (*Jul.* 1.2). Further details are added later (74.1). The man who tracked and found him was Cornelius Phagites.

Plutarch adds some details which are important. Caesar took refuge in Sabine territory, and the bribe he paid was 2 talents, the equivalent of 12,000 denarii. This last detail is truly amazing: this was the minimum reward for bringing in the head of a victim (*Plut. Sull.* 31). The ransom Caesar paid to the pirates was 50 talents. It is no wonder that Caesar never harmed his captor when he later encountered him!³¹ That he took refuge among the Sabines is confirmed by Cicero in the only reference made by him to Caesar's relations with Sulla (*Lig.* 32).

30 de Quincey (as in n. 2) 37; Froude (as in n. 28) 95; Sihler (as in n. 7) 32; William Warde Fowler, *Julius Caesar* (London 1925) 29; Baker (as in n. 28) 269; John Buchan, *Julius Caesar* (London 1933) 39; Gelzer (as in n. 4) 84 cf. 21; Grant (as in n. 24) 24f.; Meier (as in n. 10) 122.

31 Gelzer (as in n. 4) 21 shows no interest. Baker (as in n. 28) is outrageous: Caesar spent his time "lounging from one to another of his country properties". When arrested, "he tipped the commanding centurion (sic: in reality a freedman) two talents, a proceeding which fulfilled all the niceties of the situation" (270): just as an English gentleman might tip a porter at Victoria Station.

32 Caesar was proscribed: Drumann-Groebe (as in n. 12) 3.128; Froude (as in n. 28) 96; Arthur Keaveney, *Sulla, the last Republican* (London 1982) 154; Seager *CAH* 9 (1994) 198. Cf. Sulla "contemplated it": Baker (as in n. 28) 270. He was not proscribed, according to Albino Garzetti, ed. Suetonius, *Julius* (Florence 1954) 6; Frank Burr Marsh, *The Roman world 146-30* (London 1935) 160; friends kept his name off. The question is raised by neither Gelzer (as in n. 4) 21, nor Meier (as in n. 10) 21.

The main question arising out of this narrative is obvious: was Caesar proscribed? Many moderns have not even asked it; those who have raised it have answered variously.³² The answer is obvious. Caesar was proscribed. That dates the story, therefore, between the beginning of the proscriptions at the end of 82, and the supposed end of them, in July 81. To understand Caesar's perilous position requires little effort, given the sources. There have been those in our time who have seriously suggested that the proscriptions were a sign of Sulla's consideration in limiting the massacres.³³ As Appian and Plutarch agree, anyone could be killed anywhere, no one dared speak out against the atrocities, and spies sought everywhere for victims. "Hospitality, private friendship, the borrowing or lending of money were alike accounted crimes" (App. *BC* 1.96). 'Wholly uninterested persons fell a sacrifice to private enmity' (Plut. *Sull.* 31). When rewards were offered for murder, what restraint could be expected? One may suggest that the example of Catilina, who went about with vigilante bands of Gauls and who killed his own brother-in-law, Q. Caecilius, "a knight who took no side in politics" (Cic. *pet.cons.* 9) was quite exceptional; that was no consolation to his victims. "There was no safety at all for anyone outside of Sulla's circle" (Dio frag. 109.15); "many were betrayed by their associates (οἱ συνόντες) and those dearest to them (ἐταίρεια)" (19).

The only statement of qualification for inclusion in the lists is given by Appian: any magistrates – or anyone else – who had collaborated with the enemy after the consul Scipio had violated his oath (1.95). This was, however, a time of utter lawlessness, an opportunity for the repaying of old scores, and there was no control over Sulla's agents: many of them were simply murderers. Modern parallels – what happened in many parts of Europe on the fall of the fascist dictatorships and before the establishment of orderly government – offer the most vivid evidence for what occurs in such crises. As Keaveney suggested, "we may suspect that any senators, who, though non-combatant, had given any kind of support to the Cinnans could expect no mercy... The slightest suspicion of association with a prominent Cinnan was enough to damn a man."³⁴ Under these circumstances, Caesar was a prime candidate for the lists as Cinna's son-in-law and as someone who had defied Sulla.

His proscription had another result for Caesar. As Plutarch suggests, in much that he has garbled, Caesar was still flamen designate. He had not, therefore, been deprived of that office shortly before, when he had refused to divorce Cornelia. For someone politically dead, and soon probably to be physically so, the office automatically lapsed.³⁵ The priesthood had, in fact, an interesting connection with Sulla. The first Sulla, c. 250, had been flamen Dialis (Sulla *Memoirs*, frag. 2, Peter).

33 François Hinard, *Sylla* (Paris 1955) 195f.

34 Keaveney (as in n. 32) 150–151.

35 Only Seager, to my knowledge, sees this (*CAH* 9 [1994] 198).

Again, as if by another miracle, Caesar was pardoned by Sulla, and this time the dictator is said explicitly to have been unwilling. For most moderns, sufficient explanation is given by Suetonius, in the list of those who intervened for him: the Vestal Virgins, and two relatives, Mamercus Aemilius and Aurelius Cotta (*Jul.* 1.2). These, however, are only the people who interceded for him. What were their arguments and why did Sulla accept them?

The Vestals are known to have intervened in a number of cases to save people, or in times of political strife, but the cases are mostly personal. A Claudia defended her brother when he celebrated a triumph against the senate's judgement in 143 (Suet. *Tib.* 2.4); Fonteia protected her brother, accused of corruption when governor of Gaul, c. 69 (Cic. *Font.* 46); Vibidia interceded for Messalina with Claudius in AD 48 (Tac. *Ann.* 11.32). Perhaps the whole college joined the senate in suing for peace in 69 (Suet. *Vit.* 16, Tac. *Hist.* 3.81). We know the names, in fact, of only some seven priestesses in the first century BC. The reason for their intercession for Caesar can only be because of his erstwhile religious position as flamen designate; they also depended for nomination on the pontifex maximus.

There is no doubt, on the other hand, about the identity of the two relatives. Mamercus Aemilius Lepidus Livianus was to be consul in 77. Of him we know only that he was a legate in the Italian War in 88, and may also have served Sulla as such in 82 (unless that was Lepidus, consul 78). He was obviously a devoted Sullan, taking part in the crushing of the revolt of his cousin, M. Aemilius Lepidus (cos. 78). His own name reveals that he was a Livius, adopted by the Aemilii. Only the genius of Münzer could elucidate his relationship to Caesar. Caesar's mother was related to the Rutilii, who in turn were related to the Livii.³⁶ The relationship was indeed distant, but nonetheless potent.

Cotta was the cousin of Caesar's mother, one of three brothers, who were consuls in 75, 74 and 65. The one here in question was Gaius, the eldest, an associate of Drusus the Younger, exiled in 92 (Cic. *de orat.* 3.11) and recalled by Sulla (*Brut.* 311). He was to betray the Sullan system, but in that he was not alone. As consul in 75 with L. Octavius, son of the consul 87, he unshackled the tribunate. It was again Münzer who noticed a fascinating connection. Both of these relatives who interceded for Caesar were pontiffs and in 73 they admitted Caesar to their college.³⁷

What explanation then do moderns offer for Caesar's pardon by Sulla, given the intervention of the priestesses and relatives? Froude described Sulla, paradoxically, as acting "in a momentary excess of exasperated generosity". Heitland, usually reliable for insight and sense, fails us badly. He imagines these people pleading for "the gay careless lad engrossed in pleasures and dangerous to nobody". Sulla most of all would have laughed out loud at such

36 See the family tree, Münzer, *RA* (as in n. 14) 313.

37 *Ibid.* 312f., 326f.

fantasy, especially when Heitland himself demolishes his own argument: “a nephew of Marius and a son-in-law of Cinna, he was naturally marked out as an opposition leader”. Baker took a bizarrely relaxed view of the mortal danger in which the young man was placed: Caesar “pulled all the strings himself. At once all the social wheels were at work.” Strasburger tried to avoid the problem altogether. It was not Sulla who persecuted Caesar, but the *Sullani*. They put his name on the list. The matter was thus later “easily set right”! Walter added marvellously to those interceding on Caesar’s behalf Aurelia’s nephew, Sextus Caesar, flamen Quirinalis, who organised the Vestals to intervene; he was joined by the young Pompey! There are those bold enough to assert still that Caesar was “of little consequence politically”, as does Keaveney, as usual contradicted by the admission a little later that Caesar “made no secret of his hostility to the Sullan system”. The sources are absolutely clear about Caesar’s prominence based on his family and political connections.³⁸

A perusal of the mechanism of the proscriptions and the lists of the victims raises some provocative possibilities. Few of the proscribed happened to be patricians: notable are L. Scipio (cos. 83), his son, and a son of Cinna. There were bound to be fewer eminent patricians since the second century, when the plebeians gained the advantage of holding both consulships. Scipio was thus the only patrician consul in two years (83–82). It is interesting that the office was shared once again 81–77, then monopolised by the plebeians 76–73. There was thus one thing – and perhaps only one – at this time which Caesar and Sulla shared: patrician status.³⁹

There were others beside Caesar who escaped death. The best known is Q. Sertorius in Spain. Scipio was allowed to go into exile at Massilia, where he died (Cic. *Sest.* 7). Compare his colleague Norbanus, who escaped to Rhodes and was relentlessly pursued and forced to commit suicide (App. *BC* 1.91). As well, none other than Cinna’s son, Caesar’s brother-in-law, reached Spain, returning to Rome in 73; he finally attained the praetorship in 44. Another senator who escaped was L. Fidustius, how we do not know. He held no recorded office, but was remembered because he was again proscribed in 43 and perished (Pliny *NH* 7.134, Dio 47.11.4).

38 Froude (as in n. 28) 122; William Heitland, *The Roman Republic* (Cambridge 1909) 2.503 cf. 3.6; Baker (as in n. 28) 270; Strasburger (as in n. 6) 81; Walter (as in n. 4) 13; Keaveney (as in n. 32) 154, cf. 208; Jerome Carcopino, *Sylla* (Paris 1931) 210 notes only Caesar’s pardon in 81. There is no comment by either Gelzer (as in n. 4) 21 or Meier (as in n. 10) 122 (his relatives are not even identified).

39 On the patriciate, Syme gives us the essentials: “There were few patricians left in the ranks of the *nobilitas*; only twelve of the patrician gentes are represented in the Consular Fasti after the Hannibalic War; they steadily diminished in numbers and importance, and they had to fight tenaciously for survival, for the *factio optimatum* was based on the dynastic houses of the plebeian nobility.” (Syme [as in n. 9] 44).

There is one last element in the pardon which must be given its due, Sulla's famous remark that he was reluctant to pardon Caesar because "there were many Mariuses" in him. Most historians have had the good sense to reject this as apocryphal. No one gave the reason better than Oman:

"If Sulla had really supposed that the lad was dangerous, he was far too conscientious a party man to have spared him."⁴⁰

There is a variant on the story. Caesar was also known for his foppish dress, the way he girt his toga and the fringed sleeves which he affected. Rather than warning Caesar's friends about his Marian connections, Sulla is said to have warned them against the "ill-wrapped/ill girded boy" (τὸν κακῶς ζωννύμενον) (Dio 43.43.4). This story was known to Suetonius (*Jul.* 45.3: *male praecinctum puerum*) and was repeated by Macrobius in the fourth century (*Sat.* 2.3.9).

Before leaving this episode, which is vital to Caesar's whole life, we must investigate a personal matter to which Suetonius has alerted us. Caesar was a victim of the "quartan ague", that is, malaria. No fewer than two of Cicero's circle suffered from it, Atticus (*Att.* 7.2.2) and his secretary Tiro (*Fam.* 16.11), and earlier cases are attested, such as Fabius, consul 121 (Pliny *NH* 7.166). Pliny gave a long list of palliatives and cures (22.150, 26.115, 31.12). Areas of Latium, such as the Pomptine district, were notoriously unhealthy (Cic. *de orat.* 2.290, Strabo 5.3.5, Livy 6.12), and Rome well into the twentieth century was thought dangerous in low-lying parts, such as near the Colosseum, after sunset. There is thus not the slightest reason to doubt Suetonius' statement.⁴¹ Whereas he alone mentions malaria, Plutarch also mentions the "falling sickness" (*Caes.* 17, 45, 60, cf. Suet. *Jul.* 45). Plutarch is explicit that this first struck him in Spain, where he served first in 69, but also at Corduba, where he was especially in 49 (*BC* 2.19, 21).

What is extraordinary is that none of Caesar's biographers has shown any interest in his malarial condition in these years and its possible effects on him. It is, moreover, extremely difficult to find any discussion in modern medical textbooks of the psychological effects of the disease. There is no doubt of the diagnosis in Caesar's case: "A patient whose fever returns every 48 or 72 hours, whatever else he may have, has malaria."⁴² The attacks are marked in the mild cases by four stages: cold, hot, sweating and fever-free. The cold stage is characterised by uncontrollable shivering, with perhaps nausea for as long as

40 Charles Oman, *Seven Roman statesmen* (London 1902) 294. The story is accepted by Gelzer (as in n. 4) 21, Hinard (as in n. 33) 273; cf. "certainly apocryphal", Guglielmo Ferrero, *The greatness and decline of Rome*, 5 vols. (New York 1909) 1.114; pseudo-prophetic, Walter (as in n. 4) 14; cf. a late invention, but nonetheless true(!), Meier (as in n. 10) 122.

41 See W. North, *Roman fever* (London 1896) 65f. Gelzer (as in n. 4) 21 mentions the malaria, Meier (as in n. 10) 92 says only that "he was sick"!

42 Paul Russell et al., *Practical malariology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1963) 394.

two hours; nothing can make the patient warm. The hot stage makes any clothing intolerable, with nausea and perhaps delirium (lasting one to eight hours). The sweating brings relief.⁴³ Might we not expect anyone suffering from such a chronic but recurrent and incapacitating sickness to show certain mental signs, such as fatalism, recklessness, and hyperactivity in the intervals of freedom from attack? Modern psychological literature, in fact, mostly discusses the psychosis in cases of malaria brought on by the side-effects of the drugs used in its treatment, which obviously is irrelevant in Caesar's case. A recent case has been reported from Nigeria, however, in which a youth aged fifteen suffering from malaria presented the following symptoms: he was "talkative, restless, felt full of energy, happy and claimed to be a very important personality".⁴⁴ This would seem a precise parallel to the situation of the young Caesar.

As for his epilepsy, modern opinion is rather sharply divided on whether Caesar really suffered from this disease.⁴⁵ The existence of a psychology peculiar to the epileptic is equally doubtful. In 1922 it was possible for a psychologist to identify Caesar as an epileptic from his character as much as from the testimony to his fits. That character was described as egotistical, ruthless, vacillating, meticulous about his person, cautious but daring, severe but indulgent, highly sensitive, fearless, restlessly active, over-confident.⁴⁶ Now it is stated that although some patients exhibit such characteristics, they are "unlikely to be due to epilepsy alone".⁴⁷ Some research suggests, however, that epileptics are five times more likely than non-sufferers to die by suicide.⁴⁸ Although Caesar later had every reason to believe his life was in danger in 44, he refused to have a bodyguard.

Following his encounter with Sulla, Caesar went to Asia to serve under Marcus Minucius Thermus. Modern comments reveal the random and unreali-

43 *Ibid.* 380f.

44 O. Sowunmi, J. Ohaeri, and C. Falade, "Falciparum malaria presenting as psychosis", *Tropical and geographical medicine* 47 (1995) 218–219. I thank Dr Michael Duke of Melbourne for finding this reference for me. Best thanks also to Drs Michael Starr and Alan Yung, also of Melbourne for generously discussing this disease with me.

45 Among the sceptics are F. Kanngiesser, "Notes on the pathology of the Julian dynasty", *Glasgow medical journal* 77 (1912) 428–432; A. Donnadieu, "La prétendue épilepsie de Jules César", *Mem. Soc. Nat. Ant. France* 80 (1937) 27–36; T. Cawthorne, "Julius Caesar and the falling sickness", *Proceedings of Royal Society of Medicine* 51 (1957) 27–30, who prefers Meniere's disease; and O. Temkin, *The falling sickness. A history of epilepsy from the Greeks to the beginnings of modern neurology* (Baltimore 1971) 162.

46 L. Clarke, "A psycho-historical study of the epileptic", *Psychanalytic review* 9 (1922) 367–401, at 394f.

47 Anthony Hopkins, Simon Shorvon and Gregory Cascino, *Epilepsy*, 2nd ed. (London 1987) 460. The matter is not of interest to Gelzer (as in n. 4) 213f. or Meier (as in n. 10). I thank Prof. Harold Attwood and Dr Peter Bladin of Melbourne for help with this question.

48 E. Reynolds and M. Trumble, *Epilepsy and psychosis* (Edinburgh 1981) 72f.

stic interpretations that the preceding analysis would lead us to expect. Gelzer is primarily interested in the obscene stories; Meier devotes four lines in all to Caesar's time in the East.⁴⁹ There was nothing for him to do in Rome, according to Drumann; he had "decided to go away from Rome on an extensive journey", suggested Ferrero; he left Rome to perfect his education, according to Marsh.⁵⁰ More insightful are others, like Sihler: Caesar "determined to go abroad and begin to make a name for himself in the field". The only problem was that Thermus was a Sullan, "but this was the only avenue at the time"; he might even gain the favour of leading Sullans.⁵¹ More commonly it has been seen as an escape or an exile: "Caesar would not accept the pardon; neither would he obey; he took refuge in Asia", explained Michelet; or "we cannot conceive Caesar being sent to Asia by Sulla after he was pardoned at Rome, or even being allowed to go abroad", according to Long. One fundamental problem with these two views is, again, that Thermus was a Sullan. The move, in Grant's view, was to get Caesar "out of Sulla's sight".⁵² That makes some sense.

It is essential to be absolutely clear about Caesar's possible moves in 80. There were two directions in which he could go – east or west. To the west lay Spain and Sertorius, where others had taken refuge. To the east lay the provinces governed by the Sullans, but also the province where his father had been a celebrated proconsul. And as Warde Fowler declared, "As Sulla's legatus it is not likely that Minucius Thermus was a congenial companion to the young Marius."⁵³

The truth has rarely been seen: Caesar's departure for the East "began a decade of compromise with the Sullan system", Taylor stated bluntly. His service with Thermus, Servilius, and later Antonius proves that "obviously Caesar did not appear to be an outcast or an enemy of the Sullan oligarchy" is Gruen's summation.⁵⁴ Caesar was not suffering from Wanderlust, or anxious to further his education in 80. It was, indeed, time to begin his military career. He was undoubtedly anxious to leave Rome. How significant it is that he did not join the exiles in the west. He left Rome because Sulla allowed him to do so, and he was sent to take service under someone Sulla could trust.

If only we knew more about M. Minucius Thermus, but details are few.⁵⁵ Nothing is known except his term as governor of Asia, during which time occurred the siege of Mytilene. Perhaps the most interesting matter is that his

49 Gelzer (as in n. 4) 21, Meier (as in n. 10) 132.

50 Drumann-Groebe (as in n. 12) 3.128; Ferrero (as in n. 40) 1.113; Marsh (as in n. 32) 160, following Plutarch's confusions!

51 Sihler (as in n. 7) 34–35.

52 Jules Michelet, *History of Rome* (London 1847) 324; Long (as in n. 3) 2.379; Grant (as in n. 24) 25.

53 Warde Fowler (as in n. 30) 34.

54 Taylor (as in n. 5) 12; Gruen (as in n. 28) 78.

55 *RE* 15 (1966) no. 64; David Magie, *Roman rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950) 2.1124, 1579.

younger brother Quintus was legate in 86, appointed to Asia by the Marians to replace the mutinous legate Fimbria. The Thermi were, therefore, politically divided, but Marcus was the survivor.

More important to Caesar than Thermus was Nikomedes IV Philopater, King of Bithynia 94–74. The standard works show little interest in him.⁵⁶ He succeeded to the throne in 94, but was expelled by his half-brother (Appian *Mith.* 10). He was restored by M. Aquilius in 92, for which he paid heavily. Boosted by Roman support, he attacked Pontos, but was defeated in 88 and fled to C. Cassius, governor of Asia (*ibid.* 18–19). He was thus one of the causes of the First Mithradatic War. He was reestablished by Sulla in 84 (*ibid.* 60) and left his kingdom to Rome (Appian *BC* 1.111).

It was, then, to this interesting figure – unstable and weak, but ruthless – that Caesar was sent by Thermus to request a fleet (Suet. 2). Both Suetonius and Plutarch stress the personal relations which grew up between the king and the young patrician, which for many constitute the only interest of this vital stage in Caesar's career. Nothing could be less insightful. If Sulla had sent him away to the east, Caesar turned the tables. He obviously established far warmer relations with Thermus than was anticipated, and was able to turn the whole episode to his own advantage by creating personal links with a major pawn in the Roman east.

Why was Caesar at the age of about twenty entrusted with this most important mission by Thermus? In terms of social rank, he was probably the most distinguished young aristocrat in Thermus' retinue. As he was to claim a few years later, "our *gens* has at once the sanctity of kings and the reverence of the gods". Not least, his father had been governor of Asia. As if this success were not enough, Caesar distinguished himself, according to Suetonius, in operations against Mytilene, winning a civic crown at the storming of the city.

All of Sulla's calculations had gone awry. Caesar had to be moved to the control of someone who was a pillar of the Sullan establishment. Servilius Vatia, later known as Isauricus, was a grandson of Metellus Macedonicus (cos. 143) by his daughter Metella. His father had reached only the praetorship, some time before 100. Servilius himself was tribune 98, praetor perhaps in 93, and then governor in Sardinia or Africa, where he won the only triumph awarded between 93 and 81.⁵⁷ He stood for the consulship as early as 87, but failed (Plut. *Sull.* 10), and as legate fought for Sulla. He was legate again in 82 on Sulla's return (*ibid.* 28). Like many conservative aristocrats of this time he had a five years' gap in his career. Where was he during Sulla's absence? He came forward to serve Sulla again in 82, as did Metellus Pius, Pompey and Crassus.

56 Michael Rostovtzeff, *Social and economic history of the Hellenistic world*, 3 vols. (Oxford 1941); Erich Gruen, *The Hellenistic world and the coming of Rome* (Berkeley-Los Angeles 1984); Peter Green, *From Alexander to Actium* (Berkeley-Los Angeles 1990).

57 Ernst Badian, "Waiting for Sulla", *JRS* 52 (1962) 47–61, reprinted in his *Studies*, 82f.

None of them had left Italy; nor, probably, had he.⁵⁸ His value was obvious to all by the consulship of 79, on Sulla's "retirement". Now he was proconsul in Cilicia 78–74. Caesar had barely been transferred to him when Sulla died, and the young man returned to Italy.

We may now return to the central question of why and how Caesar escaped Sulla in 81. The intercessions by many people on his behalf are interesting – but endless intercessions on behalf of others were to no avail. The identity of the interceders is also important: the Vestals who pleaded as a college for the young priest who would in time come to have authority over them, and good *Sullani* like the Lepidi and Cottae.

The man in whose power lay the granting of the pardon is the one alone who has the answer. Caesar was the person whom he wanted for his party, not Pompey. This indicates a high regard for the young patrician. The overtures failed, perhaps not uninfluenced by the malaria from which Caesar was suffering as well as an almost fatal obstinacy. Sulla then had two options: to disregard him or to eliminate him. Given Sulla's obviously high estimation of Caesar, disregard would seem out of the question. The only answer is a paradox. Sulla made a mistake of judgement. That is recognised by implication in the invented remark of Sulla about the many young Mariuses. Caesar was to say, admittedly about Sulla's "retirement", that he did not know his political ABC. Who better than Caesar to know about Sulla's mistakes. He himself was perhaps the most obvious beneficiary.

Sulla's misjudgement of Caesar and the danger he posed in 81 was shared by the inner circle of the Sullans, which accepted him as pontiff in 74. It must be stressed nonetheless that his career down to 63 was totally unexceptional.

History holds many ironies in store. Following the death of the woman whom he refused to divorce on Sulla's demand, Caesar married Sulla's granddaughter. When the civil war came and the victor once again had to have a position beyond challenge, Caesar found that the only office which he could devise was precisely the monster invented by Sulla. Sulla had, however, allowed to escape his clutches the one who presented the greatest danger to his new order. No one did more to destroy its very foundations than Caesar, although that was to be almost thirty years after the dictator's death.⁵⁹

University of Melbourne

Ronald T. Ridley

58 Even Badian does not discuss him in this justly famous study. Perhaps the connection formed now explains what happened thirty years later when Isauricus' son, who had always been a noted conservative, imitating his relative Cato, switched to Caesar's side at the beginning of the civil war and was his colleague in the consulship in 48. He was, however, married to Iunia, the daughter of Servilia, Caesar's mistress. I thank my wife for drawing these connections to my attention.

59 As another epoch-making study showed us: Ugo Laffi, "Il mito di Silla", *Athen.* 45 (1967) 177f. A Festschrift recently appeared for Ernst Badian. Very few of his many admirers were given the chance to contribute. I would have offered this contribution had I been asked.