



Our Caesar: Danish Receptions of Gaius Julius Caesar

Trine Arlund Hass

In the spring of 2017, it was announced that Danish archaeologists will start excavations on the Forum Julium, in a collaboration between The Danish Academy in Rome, the Centre for Urban Network Evolutions at Aarhus University and the Sovrintendenza Capitolina in Rome. The Danish part of the excavations are funded by The Carlsberg Foundation. The project has received a lot of media attention; it is clearly very prestigious, and not only because it takes place in what was the very centre of ancient Rome, but because the Forum Julium was planned by none other than Julius Caesar.

The project *Our Caesar: Danish Receptions of Gaius Julius Caesar* works from the hypothesis that Caesar has a particular status. Even if you are not particularly knowledgeable about ancient Rome or find Classical Antiquity particularly interesting, you probably know something about Julius Caesar, for instance that he was a great general and politician. Probably his name has positive connotations. But why did Caesar obtain this special status in the public conception of Rome and the Romans? - Why not e.g. Augustus, who brought peace to the empire? These fundamental questions motivate my study.

The project is a diachronic study of Caesar's reception in Danish culture. It aims at exploring how Denmark has seen and established relationships with Caesar through time. Danish biographies of Caesar exist, but this will be the first, systematic, diachronic study of his reception in Danish culture. The results are further expected to provide insight into Denmark's relationship with Classical Rome through time.

Material and Approach

The primary material for this study is written Danish sources in which Caesar is treated, featured or referred to and will, among other genres, include historiography (e.g. Saxo, *Gesta Danorum* (1208), Holberg, *Dannemarks og Norges Beskrivelser* (1729 & 1749) and *Dannemarks Riges Historie* (1732-35), Grundtvig, *Verdens Krønike* (1812)), biographies (e.g. Lætus, *Romanorum Cæsares Italici* (1574), Holberg, *Heltehistorier* (1739)), literary works, such as poetry and novels (fx Lætus, *Bucolica* (1560), poems by Holger Drachmann (1846-1908), Sofus Michaëlis (1865-1932) and Sofus Claussen (1865-1931) and the novel *Michaël* by Herman Bang (1904)), works of popular science (e.g. Hartvig Frisch, *Cicero og Cæsar* (1946) and Ørsted, *Gaius Julius Cæsar. Politik og moral i det romerske imperium* (1994)). Translations of Caesar's works and (school) editions will also be studied, especially with regard to paratexts and segmentation, as will works belonging to the sphere of pop culture such as *Asterix* and movies (this

category will mostly consist of foreign material distributed in Denmark). The Danish media coverage of the excavations on Caesar's forum will also be an important case study. Identification of further case material is an important part of the project's initial phase.

The necessary background for the exploration of the Danish reception will be a close examination of Caesar's own self-fashioning, of the reception of both the historic figure and his works in Antiquity (including his own time), of the later Western reception in both art and literature, and of the treatments of Caesar in the scientific tradition.

For the identified Danish works I will examine Caesar's role by asking: how is Caesar adapted to the new context? Which aspects of his character, deeds or works are highlighted or toned down? Which previous representations can be traced? Which role does Caesar's own self-fashioning play in his reception?—Do the receptions value the same aspects as Caesar did and to what extent? What effects are used to tone the individual representations in its particular direction? How is Caesar related to the Danish context?—Is he directly related to Danish problems in the work? What role does the genre play in connecting Caesar to Denmark? What is the role of the author/sender and his/her background and engagement in e.g. politics?

The study is rooted in reception theory (esp. Jauss's concept of literary development) and cultural memory studies (esp. A. Assmann's concepts of storage and functional memory). Cases will be approached narratologically with regard to work internal functions and effects of Caesar and intertextually with regard to the relationship between representations. Quantitative analyses and digital methods will also be applied.

Our Caesar: Danish Receptions of Gaius Julius Caesar collaborates with the excavations at Caesar's Forum and is affiliated with Centre for Urban Network Evolutions and The Danish Academy in Rome. It is housed at Aarhus University. The project is funded by The Carlsberg Foundation.