

Pimentel / Lóio / Rodrigues / Furtado (Eds.)

Augustan Papers

184.2

SPUDASMATA

BAND 184.2

The present volume marks the bimillennium of the death of the *princeps* with a selection of essays that offer new approaches to the Emperor Augustus and his reign. The essays cover a variety of subjects related to Augustan scholarship from a twenty-first century perspective. The studies brought together in this volume are based on papers delivered and discussed by archaeologists, philologists, and historians of ancient Rome at the conference on 'XIV A.D. SAECVLVM AVGVSTVM. The Age of Augustus' held in Lisbon (the Roman *Olisipo*) in September 2014. The title, *Augustan Papers*, is intended to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the publication of Ronald Syme's *Roman Papers* (1939).

Der vorliegende Band markiert den zweitausendsten Todestag des *princeps* mit einer Reihe von Studien, die neue Zugänge zum römischen Herrscher Augustus und seiner Regentschaft bieten. Die thematisch weit gefächerten Beiträge fokussieren zentrale Themen der Augustusforschung aus der Sicht des 21. Jahrhunderts. Der Band bietet Studien aus archäologischer, philologischer und althistorischer Perspektive, die auf der Tagung 'XIV A.D. SAECVLVM AVGVSTVM. The Age of Augustus' im September 2014 in Lissabon präsentiert und diskutiert wurden. Mit dem Titel, *Augustan Papers*, wird an das 80. Jubiläum der Publikation *Roman Papers* (1939) von Ronald Syme erinnert.

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Augustan Papers

Maria Cristina Pimentel, Ana Maria Lóio,
Nuno Simões Rodrigues, Rodrigo Furtado (Eds.)

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New Approaches to the Age of Augustus
on the Bimillennium of his Death

Volume 2

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Studien zur Klassischen Philologie und ihren Grenzgebieten
Begründet von Hildebrecht Hommel und Ernst Zinn

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BIMILLENNIUM OF HIS DEATH

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GEORG OLMS VERLAG HILDESHEIM · ZÜRICH · NEW YORK

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III.
VT IVRE SIT GLORIATVS MARMOREAM
SE RELINQVERE
(Suet. Aug. 28.3)



Le Prince et l'architecte

LOUIS CALLEBAT

Université de Caen-Normandie

La préface du I^{er} livre du *De Architectura* de Vitruve, préface vraisemblablement rédigée dans les années 27, après l'achèvement de l'ensemble du traité, s'ouvre sur une dédicace à l'*Imperator Caesar*, Octave. L'auteur y situe son propos dans une double perspective: celle, d'abord, d'un hommage rendu à celui qui, écrit-il, 'ayant soumis le monde entier, a libéré de la peur le sénat et le peuple romain et les guide par une pensée et une sagesse sublimes'; celle, d'autre part, spécifique, d'une contribution personnelle aux projets et réalisations architecturaux d'Octave: 'Comme j'ai constaté, écrit Vitruve, que tu ne prends pas seulement en charge la vie de la communauté des citoyens et la constitution de l'État, mais une politique aussi de l'architecture publique permettant que, grâce à toi, non seulement l'État ait été agrandi de provinces nouvelles, mais qu'à la majesté de la puissance romaine réponde la dignité éminente des édifices publics, j'ai pensé qu'il ne fallait plus tarder, mais publier dès que possible, en te le dédiant, ce que j'avais écrit sur ce sujet.'

Ce texte dédicatoire n'a pas été élaboré dans le creuset intellectuel d'un des cercles littéraires contemporains. Il n'est pas l'œuvre, non plus, d'un écrivain célèbre, poète, philosophe, historien, comptant parmi les familiers du Chef de l'État. Une imagerie vitruvienne a, sans doute, été tôt créée, qui tendait à établir une relation vivante étroite entre Octave et l'auteur du *De Architectura*: déjà dans une illustration d'un manuscrit du XIV^e siècle (Bibliothèque *Medicea Laurentiana*) qui figure la présentation par Vitruve de son livre à l'*Imperator*; dans le frontispice, plus tard, en 1649, de Juan de Laet, recréant une scène analogue: celle de Vitruve examinant avec Octave un projet ou dessin architectural; celle de Vitruve, face à Octave, dans l'édition de Ch. Perrault en date de 1684; beaucoup plus récemment encore dans l'hypothèse, intelligemment présentée, mais insuffisamment étayée, d'Antoinette Novara, qui envisage une *recitatio* par Vitruve d'une partie au moins de son œuvre

à l'intention d'un auditeur privilégié: Octave. Les seules informations en réalité connues sur la nature des relations ayant pu lier Vitruve et Octave sont celles fournies par l'auteur même du *De Architectura*: prébende accordée par Octave sur la recommandation de la sœur aînée du Prince, auprès duquel Vitruve, qui avait été au service de César, poursuivit son activité professionnelle d'*architectus*, architecte/ingénieur, dans le secteur de l'architecture publique et dans ceux de la mécanique civile et de la mécanique militaire, artillerie et hydraulique notamment.

La relation ainsi établie entre un écrivain technique, homme de l'art, et un Chef d'État est apparue originale, constituant tout au moins un premier exemple romain connu. Des dédicaces à un empereur, postérieures à celle de Vitruve, telles que celle des *Phénomènes d'Aratos*, adressée par Germanicus à Tibère (ou à Auguste divinisé?), de la *Naturalis Historia* de Pline à Vespasien, du *De aquae ductu Urbis Romae* de Frontin à Trajan, participent également sans doute d'un projet didactique, mais s'inscrivent essentiellement dans la tradition d'un topos rhétorique et sont l'œuvre, par ailleurs, soit d'hommes proches de l'Empereur (Germanicus, neveu de Tibère), soit de savants engagés dans la vie publique (Pline l'Ancien), soit de hauts fonctionnaires chargés d'établir un rapport (cas de Frontin). Seules peuvent être plus précisément rapprochées de la démarche vitruvienne, à une époque plus tardive (IV^e siècle), les dédicaces du *De rebus bellicis*, vraisemblablement composé sous le principat de Constantin II et de l'*Epitoma rei militaris*, surtout, de Végèce,¹ ce dernier faisant, au demeurant, référence à Vitruve, dans sa dédicace à l'empereur régnant (Valentinien, ou Théodose?): 'C'était autrefois l'usage, écrit Végèce, quand on avait étudié un art honorable, d'en faire le sujet d'un livre que l'on offrait aux Chefs d'État. On ne doit en effet rien entreprendre sans avoir mérité, après la faveur de Dieu, celle de l'empereur; et c'est surtout à un prince dont le savoir peut être utile à tous les sujets qu'il convient d'avoir le plus de connaissances et les meilleures. Tel était le sentiment d'Octave Auguste et des bons princes qui vinrent après lui.'²

La généralisation établie par Végèce est sans doute simplificatrice et historiquement abusive. Elle laisse discerner cependant, dans le type

¹ Formisano (2003) 154-164.

² Fleury (1990) lxxxi-lxxxii.

de dédicace évoqué, une fonction fondamentale qui pourrait être définie comme fonction d'« appropriation ». La relation établie entre l'auteur technique et le Prince procède, dans sa structure conceptuelle, d'un réseau complexe d'échange entre le dédicant, le livre offert, porteur d'informations, le Chef d'État, son prestige, ses réalisations, sa caution et l'incitation que donne, au moins implicitement, l'auteur à des actions nouvelles.³ La récurrence, chez Vitruve, comme chez Végèce, de l'adresse à l'Empereur à l'initiale des différents livres⁴ accentue l'effet marqué d'une relation auteur/ destinataire qui n'est pas seulement littéraire, mais aussi et surtout réciproquement active.

La dédicace du *De Architectura* actualise cette structure d'échange par une projection d'abord de l'image de l'*Imperator* que marque l'interconnexion de deux plans: celui de l'action historique du Chef de l'État et celui des valeurs sublimées – morales, sociales, politiques – que portent en elles les réalisations évoquées. Plusieurs motifs caractéristiques à la fois de l'action et de l'idéologie augustéennes ont pu être identifiés dans ces lignes: motif des victoires remportées, de l'extension de l'Empire, de la paix civile et politique (avec une référence possible à la *respublica restituta* et aux événements de janvier 27);⁵ la définition aussi d'un statut du Prince élevé au-dessus de l'humain: *diuina tua mens et numen*, écrit Vitruve, comme l'écrira aussi Horace dans le *carmen* 3.5.2: *diuus habebitur/ Augustus*, statut encore virtuel, pouvant préfigurer la divinisation du culte impérial.⁶

Ces différents motifs dédicatoires ont été rapprochés du texte de la dédicace qu'adresse Horace à Auguste dans le livre 2 des *Épîtres*: « Alors que tu portes seul, dit Horace, le poids de si nombreuses et si grandes affaires, que tu protèges la puissance italienne par les armes, que tu lui donnes la force morale et la ligne directrice des lois, je pêcherais contre l'intérêt public si je prenais sur ton temps par de trop longs propos. »⁷

³ Formisano (2003) 155-164, Callebaut (2011) 476.

⁴ L'adresse à l'*Imperator* manque dans le seul livre 8, l'hypothèse la plus vraisemblable étant une lacune de la tradition manuscrite. Cf. Callebaut (1973) viii.

⁵ Cf. *Mon. Anc.* 34.1.

⁶ Romano (1987) 16, 24, Romano (1997) 58.

⁷ *Cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia solus/ res Italas armis tuteris, moribus ornes/ legibus emendes, in publica commoda peccem/ si longo sermone morer tua tempora, Caesar.*

Sans doute Vitruve exprime-t-il, comme Horace, sa crainte d'être importun: 'Je craignais, écrit-il, de te présenter mes écrits et de m'exposer à ton mécontentement en un moment où tes occupations étaient si importantes.' Dans un constat implicite cependant à une situation maîtrisée de la politique intérieure et extérieure de Rome, l'auteur du *De Architectura* ne prétend pas, comme le fait Horace, ne demander qu'un bref moment d'attention au *Princeps*. Il affirme fortement l'utilité que représenterait son traité pour l'activité édilitaire d'Octave: 'Constatant, écrit-il, que tu avais construit et que tu construais aussi aujourd'hui de nombreux édifices, que, dans le futur, tu aurais à t'occuper encore de constructions qui seraient à l'échelle de tes hauts-faits et appelées à rester dans l'histoire, j'ai consigné par écrit des règles précises de manière qu'y étant attentif tu puisses apprécier par toi-même la qualité des ouvrages déjà exécutés et de ceux qui sont à faire.'⁸

Au moment où Vitruve écrit ces lignes, dans les années 27, les travaux d'architecture publique et d'urbanisme constituent désormais un programme de gouvernement. C'est sans plan directeur qu'avaient été effectuées les reconstructions de la ville de Rome après le raid gaulois du IV^e siècle av. J.-C. Des rues étroites, sinueuses, que rendait souvent obscures la hauteur des immeubles collectifs où s'entassait la population, de nombreux monuments encore construits en bois, avec des revêtements de terre cuite, suivant la vieille tradition toscane, faisaient que 'l'aspect de la ville, par ailleurs exposée aux inondations et aux incendies,' ne répondait pas, comme l'écrit Suétone,⁹ 'à la majesté de l'empire'. Aucune comparaison n'était possible avec les cités des royaumes helléniques, telles qu'Alexandrie ou Pergame.

À partir de la seconde moitié du III^e siècle, de nouvelles constructions associées aux victoires romaines et aux triomphes des *imperatores*, avaient marqué une étape initiale vers une architecture publique de prestige: constructions notamment du temple de Jupiter Stator, premier édifice en marbre, élevé dans la *Porticus Metelli*. De plus grande envergure avait été, dès 55 av. J.-C., le programme pompéien notamment marqué par l'édification d'un immense théâtre – premier théâtre permanent – et de la *Porticus Pompeiana*. Mais le seul véri-

⁸ *Arch.* 1, pr. 3.

⁹ *Diuis Augustus* 28.5.

table projet d'une Rome urbanistique nouvelle avait été, avant Auguste, celui de César, créateur de son propre forum, dominé par un temple de Vénus, mais concepteur surtout d'un ensemble de travaux pharaoniques, que son assassinat ne permit pas de mener à terme: édification d'un temple de Mars 'le plus vaste du monde', d'une *cauea* immense adossée à la roche tarpéienne, projet qui, s'il avait été réalisé, aurait assuré une continuité monumentale depuis le Capitole jusqu'aux grands temples de son sommet,¹⁰ mais assèchement aussi des Marais Pontins, ouverture d'un débouché au lac Fucin¹¹... 'Qu'il s'agisse de l'embellissement de Rome ou de la protection et de l'extension de l'empire, écrit Suétone à propos de César, il ne cessait pas de former des projets de plus en plus nombreux et de plus en plus grands.'¹²

La démarche urbanistique d'Auguste, certainement aussi ambitieuse dès l'origine dans sa conception, mais relevant d'une vision politique plus complexe, fut conduite aussi de manière plus rationnelle et pragmatique: elle se traduisit d'abord par une action de protection matérielle de la ville et de ses habitants, action prolongée tout au long de son exercice du pouvoir:¹³ mesures de protection et de prévention notamment prises contre les inondations et les incendies; réfection des aqueducs, augmentation de leur débit (cas de l'*Aqua Marcia*)... Dans le domaine architectural, et en connexion avec une tentative de revalorisation religieuse de l'espace urbain, priorité fut accordée à la rénovation et à la reconstruction des vieux temples: 'Durant mon sixième mandat, écrit-il dans ses *Res gestae*,¹⁴ j'ai reconstruit (*refeci*) quarante-deux temples.' Dans le même passage, Auguste avait également utilisé le verbe *reficere* à propos du Capitole et du théâtre de Pompée. Rapportée par Suétone,¹⁵ la phrase par laquelle Auguste se serait félicité 'd'avoir laissé en marbre une ville reçue en briques' n'est pas seulement chargée d'une force impressive imposant une image de luxueuse beauté. Elle transcrit surtout, dans le symbole du marbre, la métamor-

¹⁰ Cf. Gros (1987) 319-346.

¹¹ Cf. Suétone *Divus Iulius* 44.5.

¹² *Divus Iulius* 44.1.

¹³ Cf. Suet. *Divus Augustus* 28.6: *Tutam uero quantum prouideri humana ratione potuit etiam in posterum praestitit*: 'Quant à la sécurité, il la lui garantit même pour l'avenir, autant que la prudence humaine peut y pourvoir.'

¹⁴ *Mon. Anc.* 4.20.

¹⁵ *Divus Augustus* 28.5.

phose d'un passé à la fois assumé et sublimé. Par cette métamorphose, par ses reconstructions, mais aussi ses constructions nouvelles, parfois somptueuses (telles que le nouveau temple d'Apollon), l'espace urbain matérialise l'idée de grandeur de l'empire et du pouvoir.

Dans ce contexte contemporain d'immenses travaux de rénovation, de remaniement, de mise en sécurité aussi du paysage urbain, travaux conduits par des responsables et des équipes techniques de haute compétence, il peut sembler paradoxal qu'un *architectus* de 'faible notoriété',¹⁶ ainsi se définit-il lui-même, affirme dans une dédicace au *Princeps*, grand maître-d'œuvre de ces réalisations urbaines, l'utilité fondamentale de son ouvrage et la nécessité de sa lecture. Ce paradoxe appelle une première question: Quel type d'ouvrage Vitruve propose-t-il à Octave?

Envisageant, au-delà du *Princeps*, destinataire de l'œuvre, une strate déterminée de lecteurs potentiels, Vitruve ignore la fiction, déjà et par la suite, communément entretenue par les écrivains scientifiques et techniques latins – de Varron à Palladius, en passant par Plin l'Ancien, Columelle, Cetus Faventinus: fiction d'une publication spécialisée accessible à tous. Les lecteurs explicitement visés par Vitruve sont, d'une part, des hommes engagés dans la vie économique et politique de Rome, des magistrats chargés de travaux publics, tels que celui de la préparation des dispositifs mécaniques pour les Jeux,¹⁷ d'autre part des hommes de culture et de science. Aux premiers, 'absorbés, écrit Vitruve, par leurs occupations privées ou publiques' est proposée l'acquisition, 'sans perte de temps' d'une vision compétente des questions afférentes aux réalisations architecturales et mécaniques dont ils sont commanditaires ou doivent superviser la mise en œuvre.¹⁸ Aux hommes de culture et de science se trouvait offerte à la fois une meilleure connaissance des questions *de architectura* et une analyse conceptuelle des arts.

C'est en fait un traité technique complexe, par son contenu et ses orientations que, dans cette double perspective, Vitruve présentait au *Princeps*, traité singularisé par l'imbrication de trois caractères spécifiques: celui de description technique posant une information de type

¹⁶ Notion à interpréter par rapport à un statut social plus qu'à une compétence professionnelle.

¹⁷ Cf. *Arch.* 10, pr. 4.

¹⁸ Cf. *Arch.* 1, pr. 1; 1.1.18; 5, pr. 3; 10, pr. 4.

professionnel (sur l'architecture, l'hydraulique, la gnomonique, la mécanique civile et militaire); celui de discours scientifique, d'ambition encyclopédique, mettant en relation les informations données avec un vaste réseau de principes explicatifs et de bases historiques significatives; celui enfin d'exposé normatif tendant à fixer un système de relations simples, d'unités modulaires, à dégager, au-delà d'une forme matérielle déterminée, une fonction essentielle constante, exemplaire.

Cette richesse thématique et documentaire, la complexité aussi des analyses et de la structuration conceptuelle de l'œuvre impliquent qu'est intervenu un long temps d'élaboration. La rédaction du *De Architectura* s'est effectivement étendue sur une période d'au moins dix ans (entre 40/35 et 25/20?). La présentation par Vitruve de son projet d'auteur comme spécifiquement inspiré par la politique édilitaire d'Octave laisse donc mal discerner l'influence qu'a pu exercer sur ce projet la situation originelle de l'ouvrage. C'est, en effet, dans un contexte de civilisation et un climat intellectuel qui furent ceux de l'époque tardo-républicaine que fut initiée la rédaction du *De Architectura*.

Significatif, à cet égard, est le type d'ouvrage choisi par Vitruve: celui, non des simples monographies et des traditionnels croquis, schémas et maquettes, mais celui d'un traité qui rassemble dans un corpus cohérent l'ensemble des connaissances *de architectura* héritées et acquises: 'Ayant remarqué, Imperator, écrit Vitruve, que bien des auteurs n'avaient laissé, en fait d'enseignement et de volumes sur l'architecture, que des monographies sans organisation d'ensemble et à l'état d'ébauche, tels des fragments épars, j'ai estimé que l'œuvre qui méritait d'être entreprise et qui serait la plus utile consistait à élever au niveau d'un système accompli ce vaste ensemble de connaissances.'¹⁹ Cette orientation fondamentale du projet vitruvien s'inscrit dans le contexte d'une Rome déchirée par près d'un siècle de crise sociale et politique, temps de questionnements, de remise en cause des valeurs traditionnelles, mais, en réaction aussi, d'une volonté inquiète de sauvegarde d'un héritage culturel séculaire jugé menacé.²⁰ Cette volonté de sauvegarde, ce devoir de mémoire manifesté dans l'élaboration d'un traité d'ambition encyclopédique peuvent être déjà appréhendés pour

¹⁹ *Arch.* 4, pr. 1.

²⁰ Cf. Moatti (1997) 109 ss.

chacune des composantes du *De Architectura*, à travers l'actualisation par l'auteur du terme *commentarium*. Appliqué aux différents livres du *De Architectura*, *commentarium* y définit la réalisation d'un double objectif: fixer un état des connaissances disponibles sur un sujet déterminé (hydraulique, architecture civile, architecture publique, mécanique...) et accomplir un travail de mémoire ouvert sur la perspective d'une amélioration du savoir.²¹

Restée cependant en marge du courant de rationalité critique qui a marqué le climat socio-culturel de l'époque tardo-républicaine, la démarche vitruvienne s'inscrit, pour une large part, dans une lignée de vieille tradition non seulement littéraire et scientifique, mais esthétique aussi, philosophique et morale. C'est dans la perspective d'un conservatisme lié au *mos maiorum* que peut être ainsi situé le traitement par Vitruve de nombreuses questions touchant l'*architectura*: préférence accordée à des techniques anciennes, telles que le système d'adduction d'eau par des tuyaux de poterie (en fonction de critères d'hygiène et d'économie, également invoqués pour la boisson);²² condamnation des audaces de la peinture moderne ('appagineculi', ou frontons en accolades, grotesques, architectures irréalistes, sujets peints qui ornaient pourtant la demeure même d'Octave, mais qui tendront à s'effacer dans les années 20-15);²³ choix, comme modèles-types d'habitat, de partis architecturaux inscrits dans une tradition ancienne, s'agissant tant de la *domus* à atrium que de la maison grecque à *megaron*;²⁴ caution cherchée chez les *maiores* dans les observations présentées sur la formation des architectes et la définition de leur profil moral;²⁵ analyse comme perversion des valeurs traditionnelles (*fides*, *grauitas*, *dignitas*...) de la crise identifiée à son époque de la profession d'architecte.²⁶

La démarche intellectuelle et les analyses vitruviennes mettent ainsi en évidence, en même temps qu'une vision critique des problèmes techniques, culturels et sociétaux de l'époque tardo-républicaine, leur mise en situation dans la visée d'une ligne directrice, à la fois matérielle

²¹ Cf. Formisano (2001) 141-153.

²² *Arch.* 8.6.8, 8.6.10, 8.6.11.

²³ *Arch.* 7.5.3. Voir Sauron (1990) 35-45, Liou, Zuinghedau, Cam (1995) xxxvi-xxxviii, 139 ss.

²⁴ *Arch.* 6.3 ss.

²⁵ *Arch.* 6, pr. 6.

²⁶ Romano (1987) 143 ss., Callebat (2003) 117-118.

et idéologique: celle d'un *mos maiorum*, de valeurs traditionnelles légitimées et valorisantes, dont le Princeps se voudra 'restitutor' ('refeci'), mais qui constituent d'abord chez Vitruve une *continuité*.

Cette continuité s'inscrit dans une perspective, sinon nouvelle, car déjà ouverte par les projets ambitieux de César, du moins sublimée par un contexte historique où, après surtout Actium, tend à s'affirmer avec une force particulière le concept de la grandeur et de la puissance de Rome, grandeur et puissance dont la préface du livre 1 se fait l'écho. Il est significatif qu'évoquant les constructions en hauteur de la ville de Rome, Vitruve envisage ce problème dans une perspective sans doute d'abord technique (impossibilité d'utiliser la brique en raison de sa résistance insuffisante à la charge de plusieurs étages), mais souligne surtout avec insistance 'le nombre incalculable de logements' qu'impose désormais la *maiestas* de Rome et 'l'extraordinaire accroissement de sa population.'²⁷ Plus encore significatif est, dans le développement du livre 6, développement à la fois géographique, ethnographique et idéologique, consacré à l'influence du climat sur les populations, la situation au centre du monde que Vitruve attribue, non plus à la Grèce, mais à Rome: 'Le territoire idéal, écrit Vitruve, sur le territoire de la terre entière et de ses régions est celui qu'occupe au centre du monde le peuple romain (...) L'intelligence divine a établi l'État romain dans une région tempérée exceptionnelle de manière qu'il assure sa domination sur toute l'étendue du monde.'²⁸

C'est dans une démarche parfaitement accordée à la mise en œuvre de l'idéologie du principat et dépassant par une vision plus complexe (à la fois artistique, politique, morale) l'exaltation créatrice de César que Vitruve établit ainsi le statut privilégié de l'architecture publique comme expression, matérielle et symbolique, fondamentale de la grandeur, de l'équilibre et de la puissance romains. L'architecture privée elle-même s'ouvre, dans cette démarche, sur de nouvelles perspectives. Si Vitruve condamne l'extravagance luxueuse et les dépenses somptuaires d'un habitat fonctionnant comme signe seulement de richesse

²⁷ *Arch.* 2.8.16-17.

²⁸ *Arch.* 6.10.11. Cf. Nicolet (1988) 208-210, Romano (1987) 26-30, Callebat (2004) 85 n. 1.

²⁹ *De Officiis* 1.150 ss.

³⁰ Gros (2004) 311-328.

et marqueur social, il affirme en revanche la légitimité d'un habitat prestigieux pour ceux dans la fonction desquels peut être reconnue la *maiestas* romaine. Dans un classement des différents types d'habitat fondé, non sur la fortune des occupants, ni non plus, comme chez Cicéron,²⁹ sur l'*honestum*, mais sur leurs activités professionnelles et leur fonction de représentation publique, Vitruve écrit: 'Quant aux dignitaires que l'exercice des plus hautes magistratures astreint à des obligations envers leurs concitoyens, il leur faut des vestibules de style royal, des atriums élevés et des péristyles immenses, de vastes parcs et promenades d'une beauté majestueuse; il leur faut aussi des bibliothèques, des galeries de tableaux, des basiliques³⁰ dont la magnificence de réalisation ne le cède en rien à celle des bâtiments publics: c'est fréquemment en effet dans leurs demeures qu'interviennent des délibérations publiques ainsi que les jugements et les arbitrages privés.'³¹

Dans cette perspective de la fonction spirituelle et de représentation dont est chargée l'architecture, la thématique récurrente de l'*auctoritas* constitue un concept fondamental du *De Architectura*. L'intégration au vocabulaire de l'architecture de ce terme valorisé implique, comme l'a pertinemment analysé P. Gros, une relation sémantique originale entre la charge abstraite du terme et la matérialité de l'objet: L'*auctoritas* n'est plus attachée à une personne, à un statut, à une institution: elle est inhérente à la construction évoquée. Ainsi appliquée au domaine de l'architecture publique, la notion d'*auctoritas* ouvrait un champ de représentation qui n'était plus seulement esthétique et technique, mais social et politique: celui d'un paysage urbain dont les différentes composantes convergeaient vers une unité de signification et les divers messages vers l'affirmation d'une *auctoritas* fondée sur la *maiestas* de la puissance romaine et du princeps qui l'incarne.³²

Lié aux grandes réalisations de l'architecture publique, le terme d'*auctoritas* est également valorisé par Vitruve dans une actualisation non moins fondamentale: celle de l'autorité de l'écrit défini comme expression nécessaire et sublimante: 'Ceux, écrit Vitruve, qui ont exposé, dans de vastes ouvrages leurs idées et leurs théories leur ont donné, par leurs écrits, une autorité immense': *maximas et egregias*

³¹ Sur ce texte, Callebat (2004) 180 ss.

³² Sur cette question, Gros (1989) 126-133.

auctoritates.³³ C'est par rapport à cette actualisation que paraît devoir être retrouvée une motivation essentielle de la conviction affirmée par Vitruve de l'utilité de son ouvrage. Cette conviction n'est pas seulement affirmée dans la préface à Octave. C'est en réalité tout au long de son œuvre que Vitruve souligne, avec l'accent mis sur l'utilité des questions traitées, son ambition personnelle de faire œuvre utile.³⁴

Utile à ses différents destinataires, le *De Architectura* pouvait incontestablement l'être par la richesse d'une documentation qui touchait les constructions privées aussi bien que publiques, la mécanique civile que la mécanique militaire; il pouvait l'être encore par les diverses analyses dépassant et éclairant le simple constat technique: dans le traitement, par exemple, des questions intéressant l'hydraulique précisément situées dans leur environnement hydrologique et leur relation avec la nature des formations géologiques;³⁵ utile, il l'était, et plus encore, par l'intégration de descriptions et d'analyse techniques dans un discours scientifique, historique et philosophique susceptible de conduire à une compréhension et une interprétation plus affinées et complexes de l'art architectural, de ses constantes, de ses règles.

C'est sur cet aspect de son œuvre, dans laquelle le concept d'*utilitas* ne se trouve pas seulement appliqué à une information immédiatement utile, mais perçu comme instrument-relais de transmission des savoirs, que Vitruve insiste dans son adresse liminaire à Octave. Une relation d'apports réciproques associe la rénovation urbaine en cours, révélatrice pour l'auteur de la fonction politique de l'architecture et de sa contribution à la grandeur de Rome, au statut sublimé donné, dans le traité, à une architecture à la fois liée à des valeurs culturelles et morales de vieille tradition et située, dans la pérennité, au premier rang des plus hautes disciplines.

À ce prestige, à ces valeurs et au *Princeps* qui les incarnait, l'*auctoritas* de l'écrit donnait la caution d'une longue mémoire, relais historique, artistique et technique, participant d'une procédure de transmission (transmission des savoirs, des créations, des découvertes...) qui fonde et assure le cours vital de l'humanité 'Bien des gens, écrit Vitruve, qui viendront au monde après nous, croiront s'entretenir de la

³³ *Arch.* 5, pr. 1, cf. *Arch.* 9, pr. 17.

³⁴ Novara (1994) 47-61.

³⁵ Leveau (2008) 138.

nature avec Lucrèce, de l'art oratoire avec Cicéron, comme s'ils étaient devant eux; un grand nombre de nos descendants tiendront avec Varron des conversations sur la langue latine; bien plus nombreux encore les érudits qui, agitant maintes questions avec les philosophes grecs, croiront avoir avec eux des entretiens personnels.³⁶

C'est cette force vivante de l'écrit qui tend à placer, s'agissant de Vitruve et d'Octave, le rapport: architecte/ Prince dans une perspective où interfèrent abstrait et concret, réalité et symboles. En regard de la figure historique et sublimée du Prince que projette le texte vitruvien, c'est l'image, essentiellement, d'un livre, le livre *De Architectura* qui s'y superpose à celle de l'*architectus*, un livre dont la complexité et la richesse légitimaient sa présentation comme apport fondateur *nécessaire* à la grande œuvre du Chef de l'État.

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³⁶ *Arch.* 9, pr. 17. Trad. J. Soubiran.

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Image Matters: Augustan Renovation Before Actium

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It is fitting that the bi-millennial anniversary of Rome's first emperor, Augustus, master in matters of image making, should come to pass in this Golden Age of social media, when politicians are constantly refining their images on a public stage.¹ Much has been written about the great Augustan monuments, such as the Forum of Augustus and the Ara Pacis, which are all examples of the mature manifestations of Augustus' visual language. Arguably, the Temple of Apollo and the associated structures on the Palatine Hill can be viewed as the earliest of Augustus' major artistic and rhetorical accomplishments. Until recently, scholars were limited to literary citations and descriptions of the rich decoration of the temple.² Gianfilippo Carettoni's discovery of a series of terracotta relief tiles (Figs. 1-4) on the southeastern brow of the Palatine Hill in Rome in the late 1960s has given substance to these claims and marks the start of scholarly knowledge about the young Octavian's re-visioning of the city, of his Palatine properties, and, most prominently, of the construction of the temple itself.³

Scholars have long agreed that the iconographies of these tiles referred to complex allegorical and historical narratives that allude to the young emperor's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC, to Augustus' subsequent ideology of peace and prosperity, and even to his appropriated divine origins through his association with Venus.⁴ Recent archaeological investigations, the publication of Carettoni's excavation notes, and revisionist historical perspectives, however, provide an opportunity to re-evaluate the established conclusions and to present alternatives. In this paper, I argue that the visual language of the terracotta tiles from the Temple of Apollo Complex on the Palatine

¹ See, for example, Lamp (2013).

² Rutledge (2012) 237-244, with references to the ancient sources in the footnotes.

³ Carettoni (1971-1972), Carettoni (1973), Tomei (2014), with additional bibliography.

⁴ Zanker (1988) 335-339, Strazzulla (1990^b) 111-26, Kleiner (1992) 82-84.

relate most closely to the cultural and political climate *before* Actium and offers one of the earliest opportunities to see Augustus' developing visual rhetoric in action.

The Terracotta Tiles

The terracotta tiles recovered from the Palatine Complex belong to a class of low-relief, mold-made, architectural tiles known as Campana plaques, a category of object named after the collection amassed in the nineteenth century by Giovanni Pietro Campana.⁵ Although this class of tiles was produced from the first century BC to no later than the mid-second century AD, and, although they served to bridge traditional Etrusco-Italic decoration with later Hellenistic forms, their peak of production and artistic achievement was during the Augustan period.⁶ The forms of these tiles varies greatly, but can broadly be grouped into two classes of architectural decorations: revetment plaques and simas.⁷ Both types of plaques could be used to protect and to decorate the upper walls (*hyperthyrum*) and vertical rooflines of a variety of religious and secular structures. Because of their vulnerable position on buildings and their removable nature, discerning their original arrangement can often be problematic. This problem is further exacerbated because many have entered museum collections without provenience and remain unpublished.

Stylistically, this class of tiles adheres to the broader Neo-Attic revival seen in a variety of media and which later flourished under Augustus, part of whose political agenda was to create links between the perceived glorious past of Greece and the 'rebirth' of an equally glorious Rome.⁸ Although the subject matter of this class of tiles varied considerably, certain mythological themes seem to have offered Augustus the best opportunity to express his new message of Victory, Peace, and Prosperity.⁹ Because Augustan iconographic messages are

⁵ Campana (1851). On Campana plaques, see: Borbein (1968), Rizzo (1976-1977), Tortorella (2007), Von Rohden, Winnefeld (1911).

⁶ Kleiner (1992) 82-84, Tortorella (2007) 14.

⁷ Strazzulla (1990^a) 302, Tortorella (2007) 14.

⁸ Zanker (1988) ch. 6, Rutledge (2012) 91 and 261.

⁹ Cf. Strazzulla (1990^b).

not easily read and are often veiled or open to multivalent readings, Campana tiles serve almost like expedient sound bites. Indeed, many scholars have acknowledged that the great genius of the visual language of Augustus lies precisely in its ability to allow diverse viewers multiple readings in a variety of contexts.¹⁰ While advantageous to the ancient viewer, diverse interpretations pose problems for the modern scholar looking to make sense of fragmentary evidence like the Campana tiles from the Palatine Hill. It is therefore necessary first to describe and to summarize, at least briefly, the traditional iconographies of the tiles from the Palatine Complex in order to show how these images might have mattered to the young Octavian.

The tiles with figural scenes consist of six different revetment plaques and three *sima* plaques.¹¹ Most likely these plaques would have decorated the entablature of a colonnaded space.¹² The first revetment tile (Fig. 2), which is by far the most popular, occurring on a structure on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, on the Capitolium at Cosa, and in the Sanctuary of Sol Indiges at Lavinium,¹³ depicts Apollo struggling with Hercules for the Delphic tripod.¹⁴ According to the myth, Hercules traveled to Delphi and asked the oracle to absolve him for the murder of Iphitus. When the oracle refused, Hercules, enraged, seized Apollo's tripod in order to establish his own, more favorable oracle.¹⁵ In some representations of the struggle,¹⁶ the fleeing Hercules, clutching the tripod, is seized by Apollo. In contrast, the relief from the Palatine shows a stylized and symmetrical composition, in which both Apollo and Hercules calmly, but firmly, share equal claim to the tripod. Here there is no overt indication either of a crime or of a pursuit, implying that another message is intended – perhaps one of harmonious partnership or one less directly connected to the narrative.

¹⁰ Galinsky (1996) 149-50, 229-234.

¹¹ Additional tiles include decorative *simas* and *antefixes*, for which see, Carettoni (1973) and Strazzulla (1990^b). Tomei (2014) 113 n. 87 notes that materials from Carettoni's excavations are currently being studied, which could yield additional materials or clarify certain iconographic points.

¹² Pensabene (2002) 437-439, Carandini, Bruno (2008) 155.

¹³ Capitoline Hill: Rossini (2007); Cosa: Rizzo (1976-1977); Lavinium: Fenelli, Guaitoli (1990) 190-191.

¹⁴ Strazzulla (1990^b) 17-22.

¹⁵ Apol. 2.6.2.

¹⁶ Cf. Cain (1985) 154-155 n. 19 (Dresden, Skulpturensammlung Albertinum, n. 27), pl. 21 n. 2-4.

The second revetment plaque also includes a symmetrical composition with a central baetyl, an aniconic symbol of Apollo, flanked by an archaizing male youth on the left and a maiden on the right (Fig. 3).¹⁷ The simplicity of this cult object belies its venerable history as an apotropaic symbol of Apollo in his role as protector of gates and crossroads.¹⁸ On the Campana tile, both figures adorn the baetyl with a ribbon, while at the base of the shaft a lyre and bow and quiver rest against the baetyl. This tile type is unique to the Palatine Complex, but representations of baetyls do occur in wall painting, such as in the frescos from the 'Room of the Masks' in the House of Augustus in Rome and the south wall of the *frigidarium* in the House of the Cryptoporticus in Pompeii.¹⁹

The third revetment plaque depicts a central *gorgoneion* with flowing hair and only a pair of snakes tied below its chin, while to the left a youthful Perseus presents the *gorgoneion* to Athena who stands opposite and holds her shield ready to receive the new gruesome central boss (Fig. 1a).²⁰ Unlike the previous revetment plaques, the lower termination of this tile is different (depicts alternating *bucrania* and *paterae*) and occurs elsewhere in different variants (e.g., a clean-shaven v. a bearded Hercules). These variants can be found at the Meta Sudans Excavation in Rome, the religious or funerary site at loc. Pietra Papa near the river port of S. Paulo, on the Capitolium in Cosa, in the Sanctuary of Sol Indiges at Lavinium, and at Santa Maria Capua Vetere, perhaps from the Capitolium.²¹

The fourth revetment type depicts a continuous frieze with scenes of the Eleusinian mysteries:²² in one tile a seated Demeter receives sacrifice from a standing Hercules to the right, while a second tile depicts a male figure with his head veiled (perhaps Hercules as initiate) seated on a rock covered with a lion skin. Tiles of this type were also

¹⁷ Strazzulla (1990^b) 22-29, who identifies both figure as maidens.

¹⁸ Di Filippo Balestrazzi (1984) 327, Heckster, Rich (2006) 167, Longfellow (2001) 24, Pardini (2013) 67.

¹⁹ Caretoni (1971-1972) 129, Di Filippo Balestrazzi (1984) 329 n. 13 (Rome: Augustan) and n. 14 (Pompeii: ca. 50-25 BC).

²⁰ Strazzulla (1990^b) 34-50.

²¹ Rome, Meta Sudans: Caravale (1996); Pietra Papa and Cosa: Rizzo (1976-1977) respectively 36-49 and 51-52; Lavinium: Fenelli, Guaitoli (1990) 190-191; and Capua: Pellino (2006) 29.

²² Strazzulla (1990^b) 54-74, and La Rocca (2013) 227-228.

uncovered during excavations in the House of Livia.²³ The scale of these tiles is smaller than the other metope-like tiles, suggesting that either they were intended for a second location or that they belong to an alteration, repair, or separate phase of decoration.²⁴

The remaining two revetment plaques depict very similar symmetrical compositions: one tile depicts a *thymiaterion* flanked by maidens who hold baskets on their heads with their right hands and who grasp at their garments with their left (Fig. 1b), while the final revetment depicts a pair of maidens who pull at their garments with their right hands, but who decorate a central candelabrum with their left hands.²⁵ The latter also occurs in Rome at the Meta Sudans and the Palatine East Excavations as well as the Villa di Voconio Pollione at Marino, and at Nemi.²⁶ Unlike the other revetments, this last tile type is crowned with a row of alternating *gorgoneia* and hanging palmettes (rather than a molding of egg-and-darts), while below the termination consists of hanging palmettes inscribed in horseshoe-shaped volutes.

In contrast to the metope-like revetments, the two figural simas depict continuous or repetitive friezes and are in smaller scale.²⁷ On one sima type, a central bust of Isis holding a *sistrum* and *patera* laden with food springs from a bifurcated plant. Crouching, male and female sphinxes that flank Isis complete the tile (Fig. 4a).²⁸ Related simas occur in the Meta Sudans, with the Egyptian god Bes rather than Isis at the center.²⁹

The second sima tile type depicts a large central kantharos into which empties a fountain with a lion-headed spout pouring from above. In this example, standing griffins both with a raised paw rake at the central kantharos (Fig. 4b).³⁰ Similar examples, although less detailed,

²³ Monaco (1990).

²⁴ Carandini, Bruno (2008) 157, who see these tiles at a scale appropriate for a second story that is in keeping with Vitruvian proportions for porticoed space.

²⁵ Strazzulla (1990^b) 29-34, 50-54.

²⁶ Rome, Meta Sudans: Caravale (1996); Rome, Palatine East Excavations: Martínez (2014); Marino: Rizzo (1976-1977); and Nemi: Rizzo (1976-1977) 59.

²⁷ Omitted from discussion is a decorative sima depicting large boxed rosettes.

²⁸ Strazzulla (1990^b) 81-85.

²⁹ Caravale (1996) 140. Additional examples also in the Archaeological Museum in Naples, see Pellino (2006).

³⁰ Strazzulla (1990^b) 77-81. This tile type is quite popular and persists into the second century CE, although in cruder variants (see Strazzulla [1995]).

also appear in the so-called *area apollonis* at Cumae,³¹ but are otherwise unattested in Rome.

Traditional Interpretations and Challenges

Given the diversity of the tile iconographies, few scholars have attempted to assign a unified meaning, although generally most scholars do believe that the tiles signal a post-Actian rhetoric of victory.³² Given the breadth of iconographies and the differing tile shapes, it is likely the full collection of tiles do not belong to a single iconographic or architectural program. In looking for any sort of unified iconographic theme among the eight tiles with figural decoration, we should likely set aside the revetments with the *gorgoneion* or the central candelabrum, as neither tile has the same lower termination as the others. These may belong to a later repair or a second space (a second portico?). Further, the tile with the central candelabrum, which is very fragmentary, is the only specimen of that tile type recovered from the Palatine Complex and will also be excluded.³³ Thus, only the three revetments with the same lower termination should be seen as likely candidates for a unified program – one that is traditionally tied to the victory at Actium.

Because Carettoni's excavations of the Palatine Complex had never been fully published, Irene Iacopi and Giovanna Tedone³⁴ revisited Carrettoni's excavation notebooks and conducted limited fieldwork to clarify several stratigraphic points and architectural features, mostly associated with the Augustan library and its related colonnade. With respect to the terracotta tiles associated with the Temple of Apollo Complex, what is most relevant among Iacopi's and Tedone's conclusions is that these materials were found within the construction debris below the Temple of Apollo. Iacopi and Tedone's words are clear enough.

Anche il complesso delle terrecotte di rivestimento e di coronamento reimpiagate come materiale da costruzione al momento dell'abbandono

³¹ Pellino (2006) 18.

³² Kellum (1982), Lefevrè (1989), Strazzulla (1990^b).

³³ Carettoni (1973) 77. Cf. Taylor (2002).

³⁴ Iacopi, Tedone (2006).

del terrazzo inferiore, le quali potrebbero associarsi ai tetti dei locali che si trovavano ai lati dei due peristili in travertino, deve datarsi in una fase temporale precedente Azio, connessa colle opera di ampliamento avviate a partire dall'anno 36 a.C.³⁵

Iacopi and Tedone, therefore, assigned the tiles to a phase of decoration just after Actium, or 31 BC, but which was almost immediately destroyed to make way for a marble temple. The date, thus, allows the post-Actian rhetoric to be maintained, but introduces a third phase of decoration preceding the construction of the temple, but subsequent to the renovation of the houses that Octavian bought after the proscriptions.³⁶

Appropriately, Iacopi and Tedone's publication has spurred recent research into the construction and decoration history of the Augustan properties. Andrea Carandini and Daniella Bruno suggest the tiles belong to a second phase of construction after 36 BC, when the initial remodeling of the properties Octavian acquired after the proscriptions of 43 BC had been abandoned.³⁷ In a brief article, Erika Simon has proposed that the tiles may make early reference to Augustus' desire to move the sibylline oracles to the Palatine Hill, thereby displacing the oracular function of the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill.³⁸ Based on Iacopi's and Tedone's conclusions, Simon proposed dating the tiles to between 42-36 BC, which not only raises some issues regarding the number of phases of decoration,³⁹ but also proscribes an early plan for the hill to the yet-unproven Octavian. Although Timothy Wiseman rejects the notion that the structures uncovered by Carettoni are indeed those of Augustus (or even Octavian's, if dated earlier), we can be certain that the terracotta tiles do belong, if not to Octavian, then to someone close to the young *triumvir*.⁴⁰ Whether belonging to a single grandiose house or a compound comprised of a series of houses, it is not a stretch to posit that the young Octavian would want to place his imprint on the visual form of the spaces.

³⁵ Iacopi, Tedone (2006) 374.

³⁶ Coarelli (2012) 365-367.

³⁷ Carandini, Bruno (2008) 155-158.

³⁸ Simon (2009); La Rocca (2013) 227-228, accepts this early dating.

³⁹ Cf. Coarelli (2012) 367.

⁴⁰ Wiseman (2012) 668, Wiseman (2013) 255-258.

Tomei, who undertook the laudable task of publishing Carettoni's excavation notebooks, however, views Iacopi and Tedone's observations as erroneous interpretations of Carettoni's conclusions.⁴¹ While the tiles were indeed buried during a phase of refurbishment in the area, it was not until the Domitianic period that these interventions occurred.⁴² Archer Martin's analysis of the pottery from the House of Augustus seems also to corroborate this chronology, concluding that the pottery points to a date no earlier than the late Augustan period.⁴³ This new evidence would seem to resuscitate the traditional phasing and post-Actian rhetoric, but there are political and historical reasons for preferring an earlier date. If the tiles are not post-Actian and problematic if dated before 36 BC because of the additional phase of construction (*pace* Simon), then is there an alternative historical or political context with which one can associate them?

Alternative Interpretations

In post-Actian interpretations, the terracotta relief depicting a muted contest between Apollo and Hercules for the Delphic tripod referred to Octavian's struggle with Antony, a man who prided himself as a descendent of Hercules, and reminded the viewer of Hercules' reconciliation with the youthful Apollo, with whom Octavian aligned himself.⁴⁴ Chronological concerns aside, there are numerous problems with this interpretation. While supporters of Antony could have recognized the connection between Hercules and Antony, this was a visual association that Antony had shed in favor of an alignment with Dionysos, especially as he conducted political and military campaigns in the east.⁴⁵ The idea of *concordia* seems incongruous in a post-Actian rhetoric, when the idea of forgetting the civil war would be more important. After Actium, Augustus ordered the destruction of statues representing Antony, annulled his adversary's honors, his birth date was made a black date, and Augustus also barred the use of the praenomen

⁴¹ Tomei (2013) 532-533.

⁴² Tomei (2014) 324.

⁴³ Martin (2014) 330.

⁴⁴ Kleiner (1992) 83, Galinsky (1996) 222-224.

⁴⁵ Gurval (1995) 92, Heckster (2004) 159.

Marcus by the *Antonii*.⁴⁶ With all this evidence, either the *concordia* must refer to another event or the connection to Antony is incorrect.

In light of the historical circumstances, it may be useful to consider the tiles from an alternative context. In 36 BC, after his war against Sextus Pompey, Octavian, as top-dog, had the task of signaling that the civil wars were concluded and of presenting a more hope-filled rhetoric, in other words, to convey the message ‘mission accomplished,’ as Kathryn Welch puts it.⁴⁷ For Octavian, war was not only over, but the normal pattern of government could be restored. Peace had been achieved. The victory of Sextus Pompey was celebrated with an *ovatio* by Octavian who entered the city on horseback on November 13th, 36 BC.⁴⁸ According to the traditional interpretation, Octavian had not only vowed to build a Temple to Apollo in 36 BC, but also announced his plan to redevelop his Palatine property or properties.⁴⁹ During these intervening years, Octavian surely must have begun planning not only for the temple, but also for the area surrounding the Temple of Apollo and planning must have begun early with speed being a logical consideration.⁵⁰ Although the Temple of Apollo would be marble, the use of terracotta, which could be fashioned quickly, allowed any new message to be disseminated in an efficient way.

If the tile depicting Hercules and Apollo comes on the heels of events at Naulochus, how might it refer to Antony and Octavian? As late as 37 BC, Antony was the strongest of the triumvirs, his military reputation was unsullied, and he had done nothing to incense the people against him.⁵¹ Meanwhile, Octavian had descended on Italy to put himself at the head of the state, and forcefully evicted Italian landowners and tenants in order to settle his veterans. The image of Hercules and Apollo sharing a tripod would certainly remind the viewer of the recent victories in Sicily, but could also provide opportunities for reformulating visual meaning. While the tripod at once signaled the resolved conflict between Hercules and Apollo, the tripod was

⁴⁶ Welch (2012) 300, who cites Plut. *Vit. Cic.* 49.6; Cass. Dio 41.19.3.

⁴⁷ Welch (2012) 291. Cf. App. *B Civ.* 5.130.

⁴⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 22, *Mon Anc.* 4.1, Heckster, Rich (2006) 150-151, Richardson (2012) 58.

⁴⁹ Vel. Pat. 2.81.3, Cass. Dio 49.15.5, Suet. *Vit. Aug.* 29.3.

⁵⁰ Gurval (1995) 126-127, Heckster, Rich (2006) 164.

⁵¹ Southern (1998^b) 114.

also a common iconographical element used to signal success during this period of civil wars.⁵² Late Republican coins frequently depicted a tripod on one side to show victory. The tripod, which figures on Octavian's coinage of 37 BC, advertises not only a connection with Apollo, but more generally victory.⁵³

Indeed, we might see Octavian co-opting the image of Hercules – a young, beardless, but heroic, Hercules – whose labors worked in the service of establishing (or returning) order across the cosmos of the supreme god, Jupiter.⁵⁴ Hercules had a long tradition in Greece and on Italic soil as a force for establishing order and bringing civilization. In pre-Roman Italy, Hercules figured prominently as a god at the sanctuary of Sant'Omobono, on the Portonaccio Temple at Veii, on Temple B at Pyrgi, and on the Temple in the Sanctuary of Mater Matuta at Satricum.⁵⁵ Recall that Hercules was also the hero – not the adversary – who rid Rome of the monster Cacus during the time of the mythical king Evander and it is Hercules' salvation of the Roman people that, in Virgil's *Aeneid* (8.190-279), prefigures Octavian's salvation of the Republic from Antony. By stressing the positive roles of Hercules in these tiles, Augustus may have sought virtually to restore order in Rome. If only Octavian had such a warrior at his service who never yielded to his task! Might Hercules, here, allude to the military and civic deeds of Marcus Agrippa who worked in the service of Octavian and without whose efforts Octavian would not have achieved world domination?⁵⁶ Antony's connection to Hercules had been crafted and grafted onto his ancestry.⁵⁷ To coopt such a connection between Marcus Agrippa and Hercules would not be a stretch given the roles Agrippa played for Octavian.

For Augustus, as *triumvir* overseeing Italy and with his presence in the city of Rome, the publicity generated by hungry masses still reeling from war, proscriptions, and the breakdown of civil institutions

⁵² Heckster, Rich (2006) 182.

⁵³ Zanker (1988) 49.

⁵⁴ Rutledge (2012) 249.

⁵⁵ Cf. Martínez (2009).

⁵⁶ Powell (2015).

⁵⁷ Traina (2003) 36: 'Una tradizione evidentemente fabbricata a bella posta, che doveva far parte di un ambizioso programma propagandistico.'

was a public relations nightmare.⁵⁸ The pomp and parade of the *ovatio* would not be enough to quell the dissenting voices and these criticisms certainly could not be addressed overnight. Octavian's position was still tenuous alongside his more seasoned colleague, Antony, requiring an almost subversive message that could be seen as praising Antony, on the one hand, but that may have alluded to an alternative message, on the other hand – perhaps even the role played by Agrippa in supporting Octavian's endeavors. Octavian only attacked Antony openly after 33/32 (as until then Octavian had been concentrating on Illyricum), so a more veiled message was required.⁵⁹ The conflict with Sextus Pompey had been a hard fought war and one that had negative consequences for the young Octavian. Among the effects of Sextus Pompey's piracy was the blockade of grain shipments to Rome.⁶⁰ The situation was so bad that the office of aedile was frequently vacant, leaving procurements and infrastructure in the hands of other offices. If this logistical and public relations nightmare could be managed effectively, then Octavian could win the hearts (and approval) of the masses.⁶¹

The solution was to put Octavian's best man on the problem: in 33 BC Agrippa took the junior office of *aedile* – an odd decision for someone who had already served as consul.⁶² Agrippa's deeds as aedile were part of a broader campaign within Octavian's life-long endeavor to restore Rome and her old buildings or to erect new ones, primarily temples or public amenities that benefited the populace. Among the achievements of Agrippa was the repair of all public buildings and streets, the cleaning of the sewers, and the construction of public water works: 700 public basins (*lacus*), 500 ornamental fountains (*salientes*), and 300 *castella* for the aqueducts. On these he placed 300 statues of marble or bronze and 400 marble columns.⁶³ It could truly be said that Agrippa's water works alone could justify comparing him to Hercules, who likewise moved water – one need not think only of the Augian stables, but also the hero's aquatic roles in central Italic sanctuaries such

⁵⁸ Lott (2004) 66.

⁵⁹ Southern (1988^a) 93.

⁶⁰ Lott (2004) 66.

⁶¹ Lott (2004) 70.

⁶² Shipley (1933) 83, Rodaz (1984) 147, Lott (2004) 66, Richardson (2012) 65.

⁶³ Lott (2004) 70.

as at Caere or Pyrgi and, of course, his role in the Forum Boarium.⁶⁴ Such an achievement should not be underestimated: ‘the new fountains and basins were distributed points of contact between Octavian and the *infima plebs* that changed Rome’s cityscape in a consistent way that no single triumph could.’⁶⁵ Rather than an extravagant gesture of munificence, these projects were meant to appeal to basic needs – the people’s welfare.

Agrippa’s tenure as *aedile* was not the first time that he undertook seemingly unsurmountable tasks in stride. Among Agrippa’s other Herculean achievements can certainly be cited the preparations for the battle against Sextus Pompey. Although not experienced as a naval officer, Agrippa set about the task of building a fleet and training his soldiers how to fight at sea. To do so in safety, he built an artificial harbor called Portus Julius that joined Lake Lucrinus to Lake Avernus, about 1 km away.⁶⁶ The achievement was so spectacular that Vergil makes reference to this deed in his *Georgics* (2.161-164) and Pliny (*HN* 36.125) lists it among the man-made wonders of Italy. Within this revised cultural context, it is not surprising, then, to find the labors of Hercules represented on other Campana tiles of this period, often in conjunction with the iconographic types seen in the Palatine Complex (e.g., at Lavinium).

Of all the waterworks implemented by Agrippa, there is mention of only one, the *Lacus Seruilius*.⁶⁷ The material record has been nearly as unyielding in its evidence of early monumental fountains, save for a recent find by Clementina Panella and her team from the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’ who, in the area near the Flavian Meta Sudans Fountain, have unearthed an earlier construction phase of the fountain that they assign to an Augustan date.⁶⁸ While only small fragments of the marble decoration survive, they include a section of the parapet with an apotropaic eye from the depiction of a ship. The presence of a prow might indicate a reference to Actium, but it need not: as Welch has observed, ‘a naval prow was only sometimes

⁶⁴ Martínez (2009).

⁶⁵ Lott (2004) 71.

⁶⁶ Powell (2015) 51.

⁶⁷ Shipley (1933) 83.

⁶⁸ Cante (2013) and Pardini (2013), with bibliography.

(and perhaps not very often) an Actian prow...⁶⁹ The form of the fountain has been reconstructed as similar to its later successor, that is as a circular fountain with a tall conical central focus – probably meant to represent a baetyl. Normally this fountain has been associated with Augustus' redistricting of the city in 7 BC, especially since the limits of at least four Augustan regions meet in the area of the Meta Sudans.⁷⁰ But, must the fountain come after the redistricting? Could not the redistricting take advantage of a pre-existing feature, a Meta Sudans built by Agrippa for Octavian in 33 BC?

Although numerous scholars have turned to the Palatine tile displaying two maidens decorating a central Baetyl as a visual link with the Meta Sudans fountain, they have done so within a post-Actian rhetoric.⁷¹ As discussed above, while the historical connection to Actium should be discounted, the visual association can be retained. This simple non-figural cult symbol had a long history in parts of the East. Octavian had made the connection between Apollo, the baetyl, and himself before Actium: coin types he issued at Lugdunum, perhaps minted in 38 BC, depicted a baetyl above a ship's prow.⁷² The baetyl also appears on wall-paintings in the 'Room of the Masks' in the 'House of Augustus', for example. Similarly, the tile with the baetyl could have commemorated the lightning strike on his Palatine properties in 34/35 BC.⁷³ Suetonius reminds us of the superstitious nature of Augustus, who feared thunder and lightning and placed importance on any omen or prophecy.⁷⁴ The proximity of an early fountain shaped like an apotropaic symbol would be a welcome addition next to Augustus' natal house, which was located in the northeast corner of the Palatine.⁷⁵

If indeed the tile does refer to the lightning strike, then the connection to the temple of Apollo need not be a lynch pin. As Olivier Hekster and John Rich have pointed out no source mentions a vow at, or immediately after, the battle of Naulochus.⁷⁶ Apollo does not play a

⁶⁹ Welch (2012) 291.

⁷⁰ Longfellow (2011) 23, Pardini (2013) 61.

⁷¹ Iacopi, Tedone (2006) 375, Longfellow (2011) 24, Pardini (2013) 69.

⁷² Longfellow (2011) 24-25.

⁷³ Heckster, Rich (2006) 222.

⁷⁴ Suet. *Aug.* 90-92.

⁷⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 5, Panella (1996).

⁷⁶ Heckster, Rich (2006) 154.

role in the victory at Naulochus; it is instead his sister Diana.⁷⁷ If this is the case, then the tile depicting a baetyl at the center may also depict Apollo and Diana flanking the aniconic symbol, which here would connect more directly with the lightning strike.⁷⁸ The figures on the tile are each dressed differently, the one on the right (Diana?) with her hair tied in a bun behind her head, while the figure on the left (Apollo?) wears a long garment and has snail curls along his forehead and longer hair in back, not unlike some late archaic or early classical *kouroi*. The lyre at the base of the baetyl also rests on the side of Apollo and a bow and quiver lie on the right, facing his huntress sister. Such a reading would complement the later Temple of Apollo, which Wiseman sees as a *diastylos* temple dedicated to the sibling divinities; so, rather a Temple of Apollo and Diana.⁷⁹ This would be in keeping with the decoration of the temple, which held statues of Apollo, Artemis, and Latona.⁸⁰

Despite celebrating an *ouatio* in 36 BC and achieving a perceived return to peace, Octavian still had to manage an uneasy alliance with Antony. Octavian's sister, Octavia, whose marriage to Antony in 39 BC had been arranged, was key for her role as peacemaker between Antony and Octavian. She appears, for example, on a coin of 38 BC with Antony's and Octavian's heads conjoined and facing her profile on the obverse, while the reverse shows an image of three ships with their sails full of wind.⁸¹

In 35 BC, Cassius Dio (49.38.1) also tells us, that Octavian put forth a proposal by which Livia and Octavia were to receive tribunal sacrosanctity.⁸² This legal protection had previously been reserved for elected officials, unprecedented for a woman, but calculated enough to elevate them to *exempla* for future female generations. Not only was this an honor for Octavia and Livia, but it also positioned them (and Octavian) legally to declare any offenses against them as offenses against the state.⁸³ Echoes of Octavian's esteem and a reflection of the piety for Octavia and Livia might be seen in the tiles depicting

⁷⁷ Zanker (1988) 56, Gurval (1995) 89, Heckster, Rich (2006) 154.

⁷⁸ Strazzulla (1990^b) 27-28.

⁷⁹ Wiseman (2014).

⁸⁰ Pliny *NH* 36.24-25. Cf. Rutledge (2012) 241-249.

⁸¹ Freisenbruch (2010) 33.

⁸² Dennison (2010) 108.

⁸³ Dennison (2010) 110.

maidens flanking a *thymiaterion* or in those representing Eleusinian mysteries. While not literal representations or even one-to-one stand-ins for Livia and Octavia, the tiles were conceptually aligned and visual complements to the messages on the other tiles in the Palatine series. Scenes of the Eleusinian mysteries may have served to remind the viewer of the piety of both Livia and Octavia, who contrasted greatly with Antony's new love, Cleopatra.

Although less forceful in their visual message, the *sima* plaques complement the broader visual meaning of the palatine tiles. After Naulochus, Octavian needed to set about the task of bringing the city to order, not only to curry favor among the masses but also to begin grooming himself as the foil to Antony in the East. Foremost, the grain supply would need to be normalized. Sextus Pompey's blockades had caused major disruptions to the grain trade, so much so that no one seems to have wanted to take the office of *aedile*, until Agrippa.⁸⁴ The *sima* depicting life-giving Isis reminded the viewer that the seas were now safe and that Egypt was firmly under Roman control, or so it seemed. The tile need not refer specifically to Cleopatra as the conquered queen of Egypt or even Antony's association with her. Egyptianizing themes had already found their way into early Roman society after Cleopatra's visit to Rome in the autumn of 46 BC.⁸⁵ In 43 BC, the Second Triumvirate had voted to build a temple to Isis and Serapis in Rome, perhaps merely a symbolic gesture toward their deceased colleague, Julius Caesar.⁸⁶ While Cleopatra's visit to Rome may have seemed like part of Julius Caesar's all-consuming love affair with the Egyptian queen, it was in keeping with proper diplomatic tactics between a dependent state (Egypt) and Rome.⁸⁷ Not only could Cleopatra bolster her position in Egypt, but Rome could maintain its hold on a resource-rich Egypt. Even the style of these tiles, which drew inspiration from archaic and classical Greek sculpture served to filter any direct link to Egypt or Egyptian culture.⁸⁸ In this case the message of the tile does not deviate much from post-Actian interpretations, but it also is not dependent on it.

⁸⁴ Lott (2004) 66.

⁸⁵ Carandini, Bruno (2008) 158.

⁸⁶ Takács (1995) 69-70.

⁸⁷ Gruen (2011) 46.

⁸⁸ Cf. Takács (2011) esp. 90.

Likewise, the second *sima* depicts a gushing fountain at the center of the tile – an allusion perhaps to Agrippa’s role in improving the infrastructure of Rome and bringing fresh water to the city during his tenure as *aedile* – reminding viewers that water was now flowing into the city unabated.

Conclusion

The polished message of all the well-known Augustan monuments did not come together instantaneously, but rather was the result of a slowly-crafted campaign that owed much to the competitive period before Actium. Indeed, terracotta tiles were redolent of tradition and conservative values, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, being flexible and readily-accessible public and visual ‘sound bites.’ This facility lent them to projects of renewal of the aesthetic appearance of many public and private and/or secular and sacred spaces in Rome. The politically-chaotic and socially-unstable period in the late first century BC made it a ripe time period for someone like Octavian, or his surrogates (especially Marcus Agrippa), to take the opportunity to present a unified and more uplifting message to the people of Rome.

Thus, we might assign the tiles to a phase of decoration around 33/32 BC when Octavian was still maintaining a public, but delicate, alliance with Antony and when he was renovating his new properties on the Palatine Hill as well as the city itself. As we have seen, the roles that Agrippa assumed were critical in establishing order in Rome, on the battlefield, and across the Roman world. In many ways Agrippa was the new Hercules, heroic and at the service of the gods; worthy of praise and emulation, but always knowing his place. The tile depicting Hercules and Apollo sharing control of a tripod may be a reference to Agrippa and Octavian’s ‘shared’ victory over Pompey and reestablishment of a new order. Other tiles depicting Hercules may further have extolled the achievements of Agrippa, just as the tile with the *baetyl* also reminds the viewer of Agrippa’s water works in the city of Rome. The *sima* plaques make reference to the flow of fresh waters and abundant lands, both alluding to Octavian’s restoration of provisions to the city. These alternative readings of the iconographies form a more unified message and one that reasserts the importance of Octavian’s pre-Actian image-making campaign.

All photos were made by the author.



a



b

Fig. 1: Terracotta revetment plaque with (a) Perseus and Athena flanking gorgoneion; and (b) Maidens flanking a thymiaterion.



Fig. 2: Terracotta revetment plaque with Apollo and Hercules holding the Delphic tripod.



Fig. 3: Terracotta revetment plaque with two figures flanking a central Baetyl.



a



b

Fig. 4: Terracotta sima plaques with Isis flanked by sphinxes (a) and kantharos flanked by griffins (b).

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Identifying Augustus' Deceased Nephew and Heir Marcellus on the *Ara Pacis Augustae*

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An article by Gail E. Armstrong entitled ‘Sacrificial Iconography: Creating History, Making Myth, and Negotiating Ideology on the *Ara Pacis Augustae*,’¹ provides a proper forum for additional pertinent observations about the *Ara Pacis*. In a related but more focused inquiry which would further glorify the family of Augustus, as well as enhance views about the contemporary spiritual nature of the Altar, an apparently heretofore unidentified figure in the famous procession on the south side of the monument can with confidence, I believe, be identified as Marcellus. Marcellus was Augustus’ nephew and would-be heir, the deceased son of his sister, Octavia, and husband of his daughter, Julia. The observation is the result of a visit to the renovated Museum of the *Ara Pacis* to renew my acquaintance with the monument and digitally photograph its key panels, two of which photographs have already been incorporated into the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome* (2010).

Previously, the *Ara Pacis* had not been of major interest to me other than for its symbolic history for the Age of Augustus, its mythological representations, and especially its portraits, many still full-length, of members of the royal family. I think that is probably true for most historians of Ancient Rome, whose interests are not primarily religion and iconography – but, in this instance, the lack of such specific interests left me with no preconceived notions about the figures on the Altar and more open to what I saw parading before me.

It is important to reaffirm that the sculptured processions on both sides of the *Ara Pacis* most certainly reflect an actual historical event. What that event was has been a matter of discussion; however, there

¹ Armstrong (2008).

is no reason that it should not be associated with the *Ara Pacis* itself, probably a formal public rejoicing (*supplicatio*) at the site in the Campus Martius – the *inauguratio* consecrating the place where the Altar was to be located after it was voted by the Senate in 13 BC. Nothing was more symbolic of the *Pax Romana*, the ‘Roman Peace’ that had become a keystone of Augustus’ newly formed Principate. The long years of foreign and domestic wars were finally over. Many had died, and many had been eliminated at the direction of the new emperor himself to secure his reign. The *Ara Pacis* represented the end of that era and the beginning of a new one, a visual, artistic and religious reminder of what was to be and not what had been. ‘Troy’ was begun anew, and Virgil’s *Aeneid* was written reinforcement of that idea, as well as Augustus’ ties to Aeneas and Venus, herself. In short, the formal decree for a symbol of the Roman Peace was reason enough for the gathering represented on the Altar to celebrate.

The Altar’s placement along the Via Flaminia on the edge of the Campus Martius where so many Roman legions had previously gathered and marched off to wars now over was also significant in representing the unity of Augustus’ new order. To the north was the newly constructed Mausoleum of Augustus, where he and other members of the royal family would be interred; to the south was the Pantheon, the temple for all the gods built by the architect of the emperor’s victories, Agrippa, his son-in-law and appointed successor; and now the *Ara Pacis* was to be situated on the Via Flaminia about halfway between them. Everything was further united by time immemorial as the Altar was integrated with the *Solarium Augusti*, a giant obelisk from Heliopolis that daily marked the sun’s movement, particularly its meridian, on the marble pavement below as it rose and set on Rome and its now peaceful and mighty empire. The *Solarium*, dedicated to the Sun in 10 BC, was also designed so that the shadow cast by the obelisk (also a monument to his subjugation of Egypt) would cross the Altar’s center on Augustus’ birthday. When Augustus died, he was cremated in a small grove of trees in the Campus Martius just behind the Solarium and Altar and about midway between the Pantheon and Mausoleum. The symbolism and unity of a temple for all the gods, the mausoleum for the royal family, and the *Ara Pacis* and the *Solarium* only a short distance from one another² at this hallowed place formed an eternal triangle – and

Augustus would be cremated at the center of that triangle's base. The Roman Peace, of which the Altar was most emblematic, and Rome itself would be just as eternal. That notion was further reinforced in the coming centuries by the fact that the Columns of both Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius would be raised within the same precinct about half way between the Altar and the Pantheon.

My greatest interest on this visit to the Altar was that part of the procession on the south side on the *Ara Pacis* about two-thirds down (as it now stands) dominated by the hooded figure of Agrippa, whose identity is almost universally accepted. As the acknowledged heir of Augustus at the time the Altar was begun, his prominence is not only understandable but also expected. One wonders who kept track of where he actually was in the procession, and, for that matter, who was positioned with whom among the throng. Did Augustus already know that the significant occasion was to be 'recorded' for posterity on the sides of the planned Altar and employ artists to sketch and identify participants and their places in the procession? Was everyone represented in the final sculptured relief actually present – or were some liberties taken? Artistic license is always permissible when convenient for those who commission a work – and, ultimately, Augustus had the final say. Perhaps the groupings of individuals were not exact but where the emperor thought they should be. Just as Livy once followed Augustus' advice about a small point in his history that contradicted what he knew to be correct, there were certainly others who wisely bowed to the emperor's recollection about 'facts'. Consequently, there probably was some convenient rearranging of the actual groupings of individuals. There may also have been a few figures who could not be present at the celebration, as well as others who had fallen out of favor or been eliminated by the time the final sculpting was done. For the most part, however, we can probably accept that we are mostly seeing the historical procession with members of the imperial family, religious figures, and necessary others correctly represented.

Another thing that is probably dependable is the representation of the facial features of at least the major figures depicted on the Altar. These people would see themselves (and be seen by countless others

² See Figure 1.

passing on the Via Flaminia and/ or visiting the shrine who knew what they looked like) on this important monument for the rest of their lives. An artist who did not represent members of the royal family and priesthood faithfully would likely suffer if they were displeased. No one likes a bad ‘photograph’ – especially one on permanent display. A little ‘air-brushing’ was to be expected, but the suggestion by some that there was wholesale idealizing of the portraits is not justified when prominent figures, at least, are compared to other sculptures of their likenesses. For those like Agrippa and Octavia, who would unexpectedly be dead and interred in the Royal Mausoleum by the time the *Ara Pacis* was dedicated on January 30th, 9 BC, the birthday of the Empress Livia,³ their likenesses probably would have been among the most accurate produced. Augustus, himself a sentimentalist, would have seen to that. Consequently, we can be assured that the features on the most important faces we see were sculpted accurately, at least from the perspective in which they are shown – full face, three-quarter, or in profile.

Many identifications of those on the Altar have, however, not been made easily. A quick look on the Internet under the subject provides a sampling of the various modern interpretations, most contrary to one another, about who someone is, the meaning of a style of dress and/ or hairstyle, and what certain other things might imply. For example, in what we shall call the ‘Agrippa grouping’⁴ in the ‘south procession’ on the monument, which includes the previously mentioned figure of Agrippa, there is also a female figure to his left with a young boy standing between them.⁵ A mysterious individual in the background, about whom we shall have more to say later, is positioned directly above the child, peering downward and with his right hand placed upon the boy’s head. Aside from two broken noses, other expected wear and deterioration, and undoubtedly minor ‘meddling’ over the centuries, the group appears to have remained close, *sans* color, to how it originally appeared. Apart from Agrippa, however, the identity of the other figures remains unsettled.

³ For determining the date, see Barrett (2002) 42 and Appendix 5.

⁴ Previous studies have already suggested that the *Ara Pacis* processional sculpture is arranged in family groups.

⁵ See Figure 2.

To Agrippa's left in the grouping is the small male child whose left arm extends across his body with his hand clinging to the lower part of Agrippa's toga. The same child is looking upward in the opposite direction toward the adult female figure immediately to his left. Close behind the child in the background and between the shoulders of Agrippa and the woman is the figure who is the main focus of this study. He is shown from about the waist up (his lower body obscured by the boy), looking down upon the youth. He is certainly not a female nurse or other such figure as some assert – but male both in dress and appearance, and he wears a garland like the other men. His head and the left side of his face are turned in three quarter view (much like Agrippa's and his female companion's), and he has what may be described as a melancholy expression. His hands and their positioning are not an unmoving study in themselves. The figure's right hand is placed upon the boy's head in a familiar and affectionate manner and, immediately above, his left hand is resting against his breast at or near his heart, with thumb raised and first two fingers extended further across the folds of his toga. It is exactly where one would reactively place one's hand in a moment of grief. In fact, there would be no reason to depict the upper hand on a secondary figure like this one if it were not meant to evoke some emotional response from the viewer to go with the pathos on his face.

The female figure in the 'Agrippa grouping' has most frequently been identified as Livia, Augustus' wife and empress – mainly, it appears, because she is the first female figure in the procession lead by Augustus and cannot be positively identified elsewhere on the relief. She also stands directly in front of Tiberius, her son, whose features have been favorably compared to remaining statuary of him. However, there is no good reason to view her as Livia in the 'Agrippa grouping,' simply because she has no meaningful connection to Agrippa. In fact, he was always a competitor to her sons, Tiberius and Drusus, who are usually identified as following Agrippa in the procession with their families. At this juncture, Agrippa had won the 'battle' for succession by his marriage to Julia, who had produced with him two successors for Augustus, Gaius and Lucius. If this were Livia, her position in the procession would place her in a 'secondary' role, and she, herself, would probably have refused to be so near Agrippa. There are fifteen male

figures between her and Augustus (including heads in the background) with Agrippa, whom she tolerated at best, and a young boy immediately in front of her, a position that would have been unacceptable for the first lady of Rome.

The female figure in question also has a much younger looking face than Livia, who was probably turning 50 years old when the Altar was dedicated on her birthday in 9 BC.⁶ Agrippa's face, on the other hand, has all the characteristics of a man who was about the same age as Livia – furrows mark his forehead with deep lines at the eye and around his mouth, and he has a sagging jaw line and loosening flesh characterizes his neck.⁷ This is a realistic portrait of a fifty-year-old man. It might be argued that Livia's face would have been idealized, but such vanity would have attracted derision more than the admiration both she and Augustus wanted. There are portraits of her at this age and older, even as priestess – and they do show her maturing face. Depicting her as a young woman on the Altar, then, would make little sense.

For Julia, however, the positioning would be expected. Agrippa would die in 12 BC soon after the Altar was begun. Julia would quickly remarry to Tiberius in 11 BC and soon be pregnant with his child. Even at the time of the actual procession, Tiberius was second in line for the succession should Agrippa die before Gaius had matured – which is what ultimately did occur. Consequently, it would make more sense to identify this female figure as Julia standing between Agrippa, her husband until 12 BC, and her subsequent husband, Tiberius, just behind her, than to argue that Livia was placed next to Tiberius solely because he was her son. Tiberius and Livia did not particularly like each another, either – and portraying the boy hanging on to Agrippa and looking up at Livia instead of Julia would also appear odd to viewers.

The female figure with Agrippa is also young and close in age to Julia, who was born in 39. She would have been 26 in 13 BC. Her facial features resemble portraits of Julia. Livia had a pointed chin, which became more pronounced as she aged, and in all portraits of her, her eye sockets are shallow,⁸ not deep set as are those of Julia and the female on the Altar – and her lips are thin and straight. Julia's fuller

⁶ Barrett (2002).

⁷ See Figure 3.

⁸ See Figures 4a, b, c.

lips, chin and neck, ear shape, thinner face, and defined lower facial planes are closer to those of the woman on the *Ara Pacis*. Based on her age, facial features, and inclusion on the Altar with Agrippa and their son, Gaius, Julia is the correct identification for the figure.

As for the young boy, identifying the female in the grouping as Julia would logically make him Gaius, the future emperor. He would have been seven in 13 BC and eleven in 9 BC, the correct age of the child shown in the relief. Some have suggested from his appearance, however, that the boy is actually a non-Roman hostage – even an eastern barbarian prince. That assertion might make the identification for those who wish to make Livia the female figure accompanying him more plausible, but it also would make him entirely unrelated by family to either Agrippa or Livia. There is no compelling reason to accept such an explanation. The obvious conclusion is that the boy *is* the royal prince who is included with Julia and Agrippa, his mother and father, in a ‘portrait’ displaying the kind of family unity Augustus wished now to emphasize as a hallmark of his regime. The omission of such an important group portrait on the *Ara Pacis* would be incomprehensible since the three were the future of Rome. This was probably the first public declaration in art of their importance, as well as that of all the members of the imperial family.⁹ Therefore, the best explanation is that it is the generation(s) succeeding Augustus and Livia who, beginning with the ‘Agrippa grouping,’ has been gathered together on this part of the Altar procession. Livia did not belong in it.

It is not the purpose of this examination to determine where Livia might have appeared elsewhere on the *Ara Pacis*. Nonetheless, an Appendix follows the text, offering the strong probability that she is one of the figures on the Louvre Slab of the Altar; is represented as the central goddess on the upper left panel of the eastern façade; and was possibly also included in the almost entirely lost reliefs on the upper right panel of the same façade or in the missing third of the monument’s southern procession preceding Augustus. The analysis in that Appendix should further demonstrate why Livia is not the female in the ‘Agrippa grouping.’ At present, however, the figure of most interest to this discussion is the garlanded young man with the rather melancholy but

⁹ Barrett (2002) 126.

spiritual look positioned between Agrippa and Julia and directly above Gaius who is clearly meant to be a part of the grouping.

The individual in question peers in from the background between Agrippa and Julia. His head is tilted right with his face having all the appearance of looking down upon little Gaius, who is directly below him. In fact, the child stands in front of this mysterious young man, obscuring his lower body so that the figure is seen only from the waist up. His head, garmented shoulders, and hands extend out from the otherwise flat background, which has representations of two other garlanded figures on either side of him, their profiles looking in opposite directions.¹⁰ It is as if he has taken a moment to step out from among them to place his hand atop the boy's head in what can only be described as a gesture of familiarity and affection. It unmistakably connects the two, and when I first noticed it, I thought the resultant symbolism was obvious: The couple in the foreground was Agrippa and his wife, Augustus' daughter Julia, and the unidentified young man between them in the background could only be the deceased Marcellus, hovering affectionately over the son who symbolically, at least, should have been his own and Julia's. It was nothing less than a spiritual scene – one that connected the past with the present and honored the memory of Marcellus, who, because of his premature death, had by necessity been replaced by Agrippa in Julia's bed. Therefore, this was something that the family-oriented and politically conscious Augustus would have wanted to portray on this monument of peace. Marcellus had been the one who was first designated to continue that peace and the Roman Empire.

At this point in my viewing of the figures, I had not yet looked at the Museum chart identifying the figures in the southern procession. It was because of my 'educated ignorance' that I had identified the figures as Agrippa and Julia with their young son, Gaius Caesar – *and*, most importantly, the image of the deceased Marcellus vouchsafing his approval and affection from the spiritual world for the situation that might have been his. I had no doubt from the poignant expression on the face and his otherwise inexplicable familiarity with Gaius that this was Marcellus – and thought the fact that he was positioned within the more fully sculpted living family group of Agrippa, Julia, and Gaius justified

¹⁰ See Figures 2 and 5.

my initial impression. Having reached my 'obvious' conclusion about the 'Agrippa grouping,' one might imagine my surprise when I viewed the Museum's identification chart and found that, while it concurred with my thoughts about Agrippa and Gaius, the female figure I had automatically thought was Julia was primarily identified as 'Livia,' and the young garlanded man in the background hovering over Gaius was identified only as number 29.¹¹ I was so surprised because my identification of the four figures seemed so logical in the context of the sadness mixed with the joy within the royal family during these years at Rome – *and*, the face on the figure who seemed so hauntingly familiar to me and whom I knew was Marcellus was listed as unknown.

I could have concluded that my own inexperience with the monument was at fault – but the unidentified face on the *Ara Pacis* continued to peer out at me. It reminded me of a sculpture I had seen before. Finally, I remembered that it resembled another melancholy face, exact enough that I had involuntarily recalled it when I had seen the face I thought was that of Marcellus on the *Ara Pacis*. It belonged to the full length Hermes Ludovisi – style statue of Marcellus sculpted following his death that I had seen many times before at the Louvre in Paris.¹² Subsequently, I took out photographs of that statue I had previously taken and compared them to the face I had unconsciously identified as Marcellus on the *Ara Pacis*. I became further convinced that the face on the Louvre statue and the face of the figure on the *Ara Pacis* were the same. I compared the faces again in May, 2014, in Paris, where the same statue was on display in the wonderful exhibit for Augustus' 2000th Anniversary at the Grand Palais. The statue and the face on the *Ara Pacis* both have the same tilted head looking downward with a mournful, longing expression – sculpted versions, it might be argued, of the empathy captured by Virgil when he described in the *Aeneid* what 'could have been' for Marcellus. In the Underworld in Book 6, Anchises details for Aeneas the unfulfilled hopes Rome (and, of course, Augustus) had pinned on the youth for the future. Both portraits, especially the one on the *Ara Pacis*, are, I believe, counterparts in stone of the heart-wrenching poetic version of Virgil's

¹¹ See Figure 6.

¹² See Figures 7, 8 and 11.

final summation, ‘You shall be Marcellus’ – a maturing *Übermensch* (never really justified by the actual Marcellus), elevated by the poet to appease the disappointed Augustus, who was devastated by the loss of his nephew and heir. Virgil’s poignant lines, which traditionally, at least, brought the emperor and Marcellus’ mother Octavia to tears (before she fainted), were not even a decade old and still fresh in the mind of Rome when the *Ara Pacis* was voted in 13 BC. As the *Aeneid* had predicted, Augustus was beginning a new era for Rome, and there was no more prominent symbol for the ‘Age of Augustus’ than the *Ara Pacis*, proudly noted in his *Res gestae*. Before his premature demise, Marcellus had been a crucial player in the emperor’s plan for his New Troy.

It can be argued, as in the case of Livia and Julia, that facial identifications made from different sculptures is open to anyone’s interpretation; but in my case, at least, I had no preconceived reason to make the Marcellus identification on the *Ara Pacis*. That in itself is notable, I think, because I have seen hundreds of ancient sculpted Roman faces. Nonetheless, when I first saw the face on the Altar in the context in which I thought I was viewing it, I thought of Marcellus – just as one may recognize someone they might have seen previously but do not know, i.e. ‘I have seen that actor in some other role, etc.’ This, of course, is also how experts in such matters are able to determine who the busts (Roman in this case) of previously unidentified individuals are – by recalling features from known portraits. When one has seen many busts of Augustus, for example, it is not difficult to recognize another, even if it is not labeled.

There is, however, one feature besides the mournful, spiritual look and downward tilted head that both the *Ara Pacis* and Louvre sculptures share – and that is the character and shape of Marcellus’ mouth, the lips of which meet in a rather distinctive manner. They are unique enough that they have become a feature in recognizing busts of Marcellus, which was even noted at the display of two of his busts featured at the Marcellus Exhibition by Francesca Storaro at the Palazzo Massimo I viewed in Rome in May, 2009. The mouth is not at all straight but has a very distinct character with the upper lip protruding slightly over the full lower lip, which also noticeably juts out above a hollow in his chin. In fact, Marcellus’ entire chin and mouth area is quite unique, a physical

trait shared by all the sculptures of Marcellus included here.¹³ The face on the *Ara Pacis* is, of course, not in the round and more schematic, but its features are *not* generic and the unusual chin and mouth area corresponds closely with the known busts of Marcellus – as does the shape of the figure's brow, nose, and deep set eyes. His left ear, even with a partially deteriorated lobe, also appears to correspond nicely with the shape of the same ear on the sculptures, particularly the Sorgente Group head in Image 8, which also appears to have a damaged earlobe. How far this comparison may be taken is debatable, but forensic studies have shown that ear anatomy is unique and can even be used to identify victims of crimes and catastrophes. For example, the two background figures in profile on either side of Marcellus on the *Ara Pacis* both appear to have ear shapes and lobes like his,¹⁴ with garlands placed just above them. This might lead one to conclude that the sculptors sometimes placed generic shaped ears on the background individuals, considering it a small detail of little consequence. Nonetheless, the facial features of the two individual's profiles are certainly otherwise distinct, and it also appears clear from looking at the ears of various others on the Altar that most individuals, male and female, do have mostly distinct ear shapes. Consequently, it could indicate that it is a family trait and that those individuals are related to Marcellus. In fact, their lobes are such that if they also had deteriorated, they would form something akin to the 'ear-ring' like shape that some have erroneously attributed to what is actually Marcellus' fragmented lower ear.

Finally, the Marcellus figure in the 'Agrippa group' on the Altar has a fillet across his forehead – passing under his garland – that is quite distinct. Interestingly, the Louvre sculpture of Marcellus reveals very clearly a thin line cut into the stone across the front of his hairline,¹⁵ where, it would appear, only a fillet or garland, now lost, could have been placed. His right hand, raised high and just about parallel to the line, seems positioned in the final act of 'tying' the object on his head, reminiscent of some sculptures of victorious athletes. Of course, it cannot be known exactly how whatever was originally placed atop the Louvre statue's head might have looked, but it may have corresponded

¹³ See Figures 7, 8 and 11.

¹⁴ See Figure 5, bottom photo.

¹⁵ See Figures 7, 8d and 11.

nicely with the later representation on the *Ara Pacis* – in both cases indicating the once elevated status of Marcellus. In fact, it is even possible that the *Ara Pacis* artist closely modeled his head on the earlier Louvre statue since Marcellus had been dead for ten years and an example of what he looked like may have been needed. The Louvre statue was certainly one of his best representations – if not *the* best.

The fact that the young man in question is also about the same age as Marcellus, who, born in 42 BC, was in his nineteenth year when he died in 23 BC, and that he is positioned between Agrippa and Julia while laying one hand on Gaius' head in an affectionate, caring manner would appear to make the identification complete. The alternative is unacceptable: an unidentified young man, breaking in between the royal couple and laying hand on their son, the future emperor of Rome. Such familiarity in a public procession of the royal family and other important potentates would certainly be a most outrageous display. It would have been an extremely dangerous depiction of unwanted familiarity on a public monument in a society still reeling from the deaths of so many in the civil wars that the monument was largely designed to assert were over. Instead, the scene is a purposeful one, representing a spiritual link between Gaius and Marcellus, the man who could have been his father.

Together the four figures in the 'Agrippa grouping' constitute a unit of figures that is so balanced (the left hand of both Agrippa and the Julia are also positioned almost exactly alike and at the same height) they could stand alone as a separate portrait if they had not been designed to be part of the Altar's procession. It is the child, however, who links everyone together. He grasps Agrippa with his left hand and arm while looking opposite and upward at his mother beside him, as if he is in a continuous state of motion. His head and shoulder are almost, if not actually touching the right arm of Julia just at her covered elbow, while his left shoulder, arm and hand actually join the two adult figures together. The deceased Marcellus gently resting his hand upon the boy's head completes his own unity with all three of the living figures.¹⁶

Finally, a few words need to be said about the 'foreign' appearance of Gaius. Ideas that he is a non-Roman, eastern hostage prince, dressed like a barbarian boy, with long hair, neckpiece, and no *bullae* are all

¹⁶ See Figures 2, 5, 6 and 9.

trumped by the fact that this was the future ruler of Rome, who would certainly not have been depicted on a monument such as the *Ara Pacis* as a typical seven-year old Roman 'boy.' Consequently, the question should not be about who the boy is because he does not appear like other Roman boys, but about why a boy who in every other aspect is Gaius, the prince and future leader of Augustus' New Troy, is not dressed like a typical Roman youth. The answer should be obvious on a monument that no one disputes is full of symbolism, tradition, and divinities. Such a youth would be groomed from birth to appear different from others because of his special, elevated station. Symbolism was important, and future generations would look back, as Virgil did in the *Aeneid*, to the undisputed origin of Augustus' family with Venus, Aeneas, and, of course, Ascanius, who would become Iulus – ultimately patronymic of the Julian clan.

A number of allusions to Troy on the Altar have already been proposed by modern scholars, especially in connection with the iconography of the right panel on the western façade. It has been suggested that the main remaining figure represented there is Aeneas, assisted by two attendants in making an offering, with the incomplete figure of his son, Ascanius, behind him. In the upper left of the relief is a temple to be associated with the Penates, saved by Aeneas from Troy, and also Augustus who was now, among his many roles, Pontifex Maximus. What is most interesting about this panel, however, is the dress of the two 'attendants'.¹⁷ When compared to what the boy Gaius is wearing in the southern procession, their costumes are very similar, if not exact. Thus, there appears to be a direct connection between Gaius and the two older boys. It has previously been suggested that the 'boy' depicted with Agrippa and Julia is wearing a costume that may be identified with the 'Troy Games'. The assertion, as usual, has both its proponents and opponents. However, the similarity in dress of all three boys would suggest that Gaius' attire is not to be connected with any kind of eastern inspired 'Games' – but with Rome's Trojan tradition. The two older boys are also wearing garlands, which might call into question that they are attendants of any sort. If they were, it would certainly degrade the meaning of the garlands worn by every other important male individual

¹⁷ See Figure 10.

visible in the main procession. Also, it would be remarkable if space were wasted on such a significant monument to portray ‘attendants’. They must be more meaningful individuals – perhaps Romulus and Remus. Whoever they are, because of how they are all dressed, they tie the earliest traditions of Rome directly to young Gaius.

The garlands worn by the two boys on the eastern panel also appear to be another connection with Gaius. On the latter’s head, there are a variety of tiny holes along his hairline, which look to be original and not the result of later conservation or preservative measures, drilled and positioned to support something affixed to his head. Drilling such holes solely for the purpose of emphasizing the boy’s curls was far less practical than just carving them, as was done for the detail of others’ hair on the Altar. Instead, the holes appear to have no other purpose but to hold in place a separately crafted garland, probably of gold, because this type of drilling is otherwise very risky. It may be responsible for the interior fracturing of the noses of others in the ‘Agrippa group’.

A close photographic examination of Gaius’ hairline¹⁸ also reveals traces of a ‘band’ sculpted across the top and slightly above the holes where such a garland could originally have been affixed. If so, there is no doubt that this is the young prince and future emperor, Gaius, because there would be no other reason for a boy of this age to be adorned with such a garland. Even Augustus’ garland was carved, although it was certainly gilded. Also, with this garland in place, most of the boy’s hair would not have been visible to the viewer and what has been described as the exaggerated hairstyle of a foreign youth was actually dictated for the sculptor by the logistics of the garland’s placement. In fact, the hairstyles of the other two garlanded youths on the east panel appear to be older boy versions of what Gaius’ hair would have looked like wearing a garland.

The only other holes akin to those on Gaius’ hairline appear on the exposed ear lobe of Julia; along the sculpted garland on the head of the figure next to her who can only be Tiberius, her husband when the *Ara Pacis* was finished; and, less distinctly, on the garland of the unidentified head in the background between Julia and Tiberius.¹⁹

¹⁸ See Figure 11.

¹⁹ See Figure 12.

Again, the most logical explanation for holes in these places is that, in the case of Julia, one secured an earring, and, as for the others, they helped hold additional affixed metal garlands in place.

Interestingly, these drilled holes are present only on the heads of young Gaius; his mother, Julia; her husband, Tiberius; and the unidentified individual represented between them. If the holes were indeed made to anchor special adornments – and there appears to be no counterpart elsewhere on the extant monument – it would suggest that all these individuals were marked for special attention and visually meant to be linked together by the viewer. By 9 BC when the Altar was completed, the relationship between three of the four was universally known: Julia was married to Tiberius, immediate successor should something happen to Augustus, and he was guardian of the future emperor, Gaius, now his stepson. At that time, the identity of the fourth individual in the background was probably also well known and, unlike today, could be tied immediately to the other three. A case might legitimately be made, then, that the unidentified head, who shares the same earlobe shape with Marcellus, is the father of Augustus (and Octavia), C. Octavius (understandably depicted as a younger man on the Altar). Given the argument we have been developing in this paper that figures on the *Ara Pacis*, particularly those in the background, include deceased participants (also indicated, perhaps, by this particular figure's profile looking backward) in the Roman Peace, then such an identification is not so unlikely. The four figures could very well represent the past and future of the emperor's family: his father (Octavius), his daughter (Julia), his grandchild (Gaius) – and his stepson, son-in-law, and designated adult successor, Tiberius. It would make a fitting statement on a symbolic monument like the *Ara Pacis*.

As for the neckpiece young Gaius wears, which has also caused much controversy, I am not prepared to say anything other than whatever it represented, it is an ancillary matter and need be viewed only within the context of the boy's 'role' as the future ruler of the 'New Troy.' It would be incredible considering the centuries old tradition that the Romans were descended from the Trojans if there were not some remaining 'relics,' religious icons as it were, thought to be from Aeneas' Troy. If so, such objects would continue to be venerated and safety guarded, perhaps in the Temple of Venus, Aeneas mother. Augustus, himself,

may even have brought back some such relics when he visited Troy in 20 BC, convinced they were from the time of the Trojan War and Aeneas' flight to Italy. Might not the piece adorning Gaius' neck be such a relic (or at least a copy), brought out for display on the future leader of the 'New Troy' on such an august affair as the *inauguratio* of the *Ara Pacis*? Because of his 'Trojan-like' appearance, it probably makes most sense to suggest that Gaius, Augustus' grandson and future heir, was meant symbolically to represent Ascanius on the Altar – or perhaps even Romulus.

* * *

All things considered, the evidence firmly indicates that Marcellus, the primary focus of this inquiry, is included in a 'spiritual role' among a very personal royal grouping of individuals on the *Ara Pacis*. Augustus ultimately was the one whom the fashioners of the monument needed to please. It would have been unthinkable within the dynamic atmosphere of the times that Marcellus would have been entirely forgotten and omitted from a monument that Augustus wanted to embody the spirit and individuals who had brought about the *Pax Roma*. It was also a fitting visual counterpart to the Theater of Marcellus dedicated at this very time and located just down the same Via Flaminia from the Campus Martius. Marcellus, the young man who had been chosen by Augustus to continue his work sadly was the first member of the new ruling family to be interred in the not yet completed Royal Mausoleum, bordering on the field of Mars.

When the sculptural design on the *Ara Pacis* was first conceived, the memory of Marcellus was still fresh and venerated by Augustus. Feelings were certainly more intense than they would be as the decades passed and history unfolded in many ways that would make Marcellus less and less relevant. However, placing a spiritual representation of Marcellus within the Agrippa family grouping on the Altar in 13 BC, ten years after his death, was not only an appropriate memorial, but it also showed what might have been. Had he not died, Marcellus, Augustus' flesh and blood, not Agrippa, would (conceivably) have fathered the future leader of Rome with Julia. Marcellus was celebrated as the 'symbolic father' of Gaius, the future emperor of Rome – Troy begun again.

The signature 'Agrippa grouping' on the south side of the *Ara Pacis* was conceived to display the future royal family of Rome – Agrippa, Julia, and young Gaius – and to provide a fitting memorial for Marcellus. This explanation is supported by the accepted identification of Agrippa as the lead figure in the group, and the following evidence: (1) The female figure to Agrippa's left is closer in age to that of his wife and Augustus' daughter, Julia, than to Livia, with whom the sculpture has most often been identified – and comparisons between busts of Julia and Livia display more the facial characteristics of the former than the latter; (2) the child in the scene is close to, if not the actual age of Gaius, who would have been in his seventh year when the *Ara Pacis* was voted, and no argument can successfully overcome the obvious familiarity represented here of the young 'Trojan' prince huddling close to his parents, Agrippa and Julia, during such a formidable occasion; (3) and most revealing, extant sculptures of Marcellus, at or about the age he died, display an unmistakable resemblance to the melancholy facial features, posture, and expression of the figure on the *Ara Pacis* who is positioned in the background between Agrippa and Julia with his hand gently resting upon the head of young Gaius. All other 'peculiarities' raised about the figure in previous studies are subordinate to these conclusions. The individual *is* Marcellus.

Because the evidence for Marcellus' inclusion is so compelling, the *Ara Pacis* must be assigned a more spiritual role than previously believed, intensifying its meaning beyond the obvious implications for Augustus and the *Pax Romana*. Future interpreters of the sculptures would do well to consider that deceased members of the royal family and other important contributors to the *Pax Romana* were also included among the living – at least as peripheral members of the procession. It is generally agreed that spiritualism was always implied in the Altar and its sculptures, but from what has been shown here, that quality extends far beyond the monument's more apparent immediate symbolism. This is especially true since both Agrippa and Octavia were also deceased by the time the *Ara Pacis* was dedicated – making the presence of Marcellus, the 'once and future king', among these figures that much more important.

Appendix: Livia On The *Ara Pacis*

As Augustus' wife, one would think that Livia would have insisted on a special place for herself on the monument close to her husband – or in a separate but just as important individual role. She certainly would not have wanted to be included with Agrippa and an unidentified young boy as another 'face in the crowd'. Augustus would not have wished that either, because he could utilize her more powerfully, both as his wife and political partner and in more symbolic terms. Many²⁰ suggest that the Roman public was still not used to a woman being represented too strongly – but the lengthy wars and tremendous loss of life had changed public ideas. Augustus was a master of propaganda and symbolism, exemplified best (for purposes here at least) by his elevation of Caesar to divine status, so he would not have to deal with the multitude of political problems associated with the earthly Caesar. Using similar tactics, he could have been elevating Livia's role on the *Ara Pacis* – foreshadowing Ovid's later evocation of her as 'wife and priestess'. Antony's wife Fulvia's image as 'wife and politician' had previously been elevated some two decades earlier with a coin featuring her not as herself, which would have been too provocative, but as the goddess Victory.

Since the *Ara Pacis* appears to have been dedicated on Livia's birthday, which Anthony Barrett²¹ calls a 'profound' honor, it would seem a hollow 'gift' if she were not represented in more than a passing way. There was, for example, plenty of room on the south side of the Altar for Livia to have been included in the first third of the procession before Augustus, most of which is now missing, perhaps not as his wife but in some 'mythological' role or function. This would also foreshadow her later role as first priestess of the imperial cult, as well as her depiction as Ceres in a full-length statue now in the Louvre. Livia was always 'pushing the envelope', and any such depiction on the Altar would have inevitably been signaling a more formal public role for her.

²⁰ Including Barrett (2002) 159ff.

²¹ Barrett (2002) 42.

Perhaps we should look more closely among the surviving sculptures for her representation in a prominent religious role. Venus, for instance, is remarkably absent from most discussions of the Altar. As the mother of Aeneas, her omission would be unforgivable. The upper right panel on the east end of the *Ara Pacis* is virtually a blank wall today, with only the lap of what must have been an important female figure remaining. Representations of a seated Roma on coins from the period have convinced many that it is her 'lap', and a full scale 'drawing' of how she would have appeared on the Altar has even been executed on the panel.²² The idea is persuasive and even if correct, there remains plenty of empty space that would have been filled with other figures, including Venus. This would be the most likely place for her – at the opposite end of the upper panel of the western façade, on which many identify the head and part of a cuirass as belonging to Mars. Hence, we would have the two deities most responsible for spawning Rome at opposite ends of the Altar on the same side.

Positing that Venus was situated beside Roma on this panel is certainly a credible suggestion. There was, after all, a later magnificent double temple to Roma and Venus, built in the Forum by Hadrian, and there is no reason to believe that the two goddesses were not also shown together in a scene appropriate for the *Ara Pacis*. In fact, there is room for even more figures on this panel, perhaps all female. The western façade appears from the remains to be filled with male figures and symbolism from Rome's traditional past; the eastern façade from what can be viewed seems designed, at least in part, to symbolize the protecting and nurturing spirit of female deities. Perhaps also placed boldly among them on the now mostly blank panel was a symbolic representation of Livia in some respectful pose – maybe even that of first lady of Rome, a representative of all Roman women at the beginning of Augustus' 'new order'.

What this relief actually showed, however, can only be guessed at, and there is little room for meaningful discussion. However, the opposite panel of the eastern façade is an entirely different matter – and it is very likely that Livia is represented symbolically on this richly decorated relief. Commonly called the Tellus panel because the central

²² See Figure 13.

female figure has frequently been identified as Mother Earth, she has two youths (Romulus and Remus/ Gaius and Lucius?) with her – one balanced on her knee with her hand on his backside, the other at her side clinging to her with her arm surrounding him. The idea that the goddess has Livia's facial features is not a new one, and a recent image I took of a statue of Livia from the Louvre²³ shows her to be about the right age, wearing the exact hairstyle as the 'goddess' on the Altar. The goddess also has a similar nose and chin shape. On another statue (probably showing her as first priestess of the imperial cult) that was displayed in the Paris exhibit commemorating – as did the Lisbon Conference in September, 2014 – the 2000th Anniversary of Augustus' rule (Grand Palais, March 19th – July 13th), Livia wears a mantle much like the one on the head of the sacred figure on the *Ara Pacis*. Her profile, especially the nose, also seems almost exact.²⁴ The similarities between these images of Livia and the goddess on the Tellus panel²⁵ are striking enough to identify her with the figure on the Altar. In fact, no scene could have celebrated Livia more than this one when the *Ara Pacis* was dedicated on her birthday.

The same Paris exhibit also featured a fragment of the *Ara Pacis*, usually displayed at the Louvre, of a portion of the procession on the north side of the Altar.²⁶ Only one of the group of adult figures still has its face, and it is clear to anyone who has seen numerous portraits of him, especially his profile, that it is Augustus. Immediately behind him is a boldly sculpted and unmistakably female figure holding a laurel that overlaps and perhaps even touches Augustus. The laurel is also directly above the head of a youth who clings to the Emperor's toga. The female figure is situated between the youth and a much younger female child directly behind her, tended by a toga-clad male who appears to be guiding her along with his full hand on the girl's head. The Paris exhibit presented a color restoration of the figures. It would be incredible if this were not the imperial couple with grandchildren at their sides. The *Ara Pacis* Museum graphic at Rome has identified the little girl as Julia the Younger, which seems likely, but a young man the

²³ See Figure 4b.2.

²⁴ See Figure 4b.3.

²⁵ See Figure 14.

²⁶ See Figure 15.

age of the one shown between the two adults is a more difficult subject. He bears a strong resemblance to busts of an older Gaius, indicating, perhaps, liberties may have been taken on this side of the Altar – showing Gaius with the imperial couple at the age he was when the monument was completed. He had to be depicted on the opposite side with his parents at the correct age at the time of the procession. He did not need to be shown at the same age on the other side of the monument with Augustus and Livia. In fact, it would be better if he were shown as he looked four years later, as the maturing heir to the throne. Livia, however, not he, is the main topic of discussion here, and it may be that the person(s) who later separated this particular grouping from the rest of the ruins of the *Ara Pacis* did so because he, too, was convinced that this was the Emperor and Empress with two of their grandchildren. Perhaps at that time, also, Livia's face was still recognizable. Whatever the case, Livia remains a strong candidate for the adult female figure on the Louvre Slab.

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²⁷ There is a wide range of scholarship on the various issues involving the *Ara Pacis*, and a great deal of controversy. It is not the purpose of this study to discuss the fine points of them all – only to refer to the major arguments as they apply here as general departure points for the mostly digital photographic comparisons that form the basis of this survey. The bibliography provided, however, is representative of the major relevant works. An extensive *Ara Pacis* bibliography is also provided on-line by Reed College at cdm.reed.edu/ara-pacis/bibliography.php.

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PHOTO SECTION

All photos were made by the author.

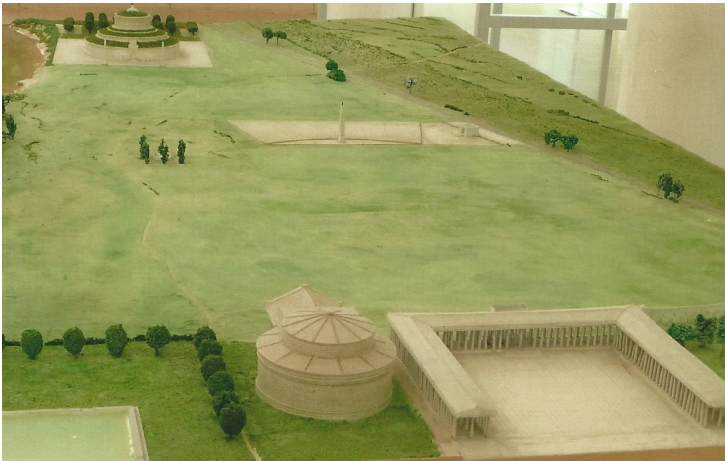


Fig. 1. Model of the Campus Martius showing from opposite perspectives how the Mausoleum of Augustus, *Ara Pacis*, *Solarium Augusti*, grove where Augustus was cremated (center), and the Pantheon may have once appeared along the *Via Flaminia* (*Ara Pacis* Museum, Rome. In the top image, the *Ara Pacis* is the small white building in the middle along the *Via Flaminia* on the left; in the bottom image, it is in the middle on the right hand side.)



Fig. 2. Portion of the 'South Procession' on the *Ara Pacis* and the 'Agrippa Grouping'.



Fig. 3. Close-ups of the faces of Agrippa and the female figure in the 'Agrippa Grouping'. While Agrippa's face displays all the markings of a man around fifty years old, the female face is fresh and correct for a woman the age of Julia – *not* Livia, who was fifty when the monument was finished.



1

2



3

Fig. 4a. 1) Julia (musée Saint-Raymond, Toulouse, France); 2) the ‘Agrippa Grouping’ female; and 3) Livia (musée du Louvre, Paris, France). The Julia portrait conforms more with the age of the female in the ‘Agrippa Grouping’ – her chin and neck, full lips, deep-set eyes, ear shape, thinner face, and defined lower facial planes – than does the portrait of Livia on this and the additional images (some thought to be posthumous) of her that follow. Livia is shown in all of them as a mature woman on either side of 50, whose age is not justified by the ‘Agrippa Grouping’ female’s appearance. Livia also has a straight mouth with thin lips, a pronounced chin that became more exaggerated as she aged, shallow eye sockets, a long thin nose, different ear shape, and a much wider face. None of this supports identifying the Altar figure as Livia instead of Julia. (Note: the author is aware that some restoration may have taken place but is most interested in the cumulative effect of all the portraits of Livia included here.)



Fig. 4b. 1) Livia, profile (reference on previous page); 2) Livia (musée du Louvre, Paris, France); and 3) Livia as priestess or worshipper (Musei Vaticani, Vatican City).



Fig. 4c. 1) Livia (National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece); 2) Livia (Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, National Roman Museum, Rome, Italy).

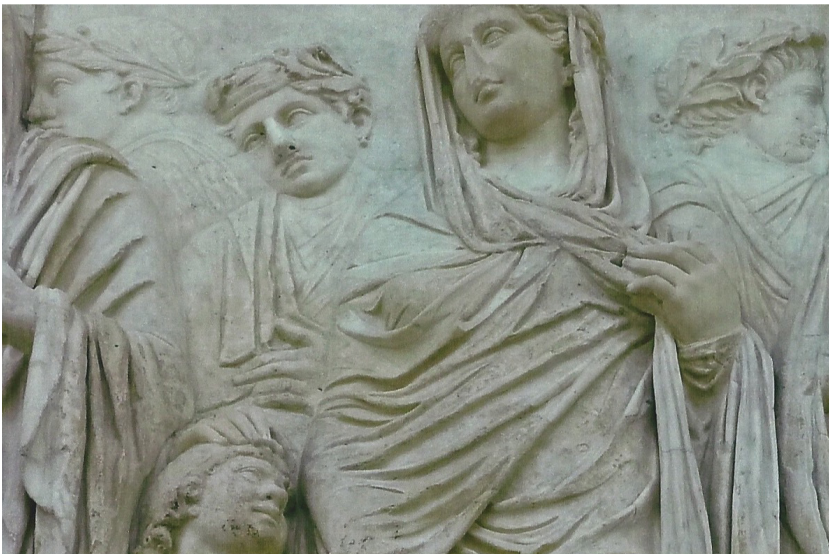
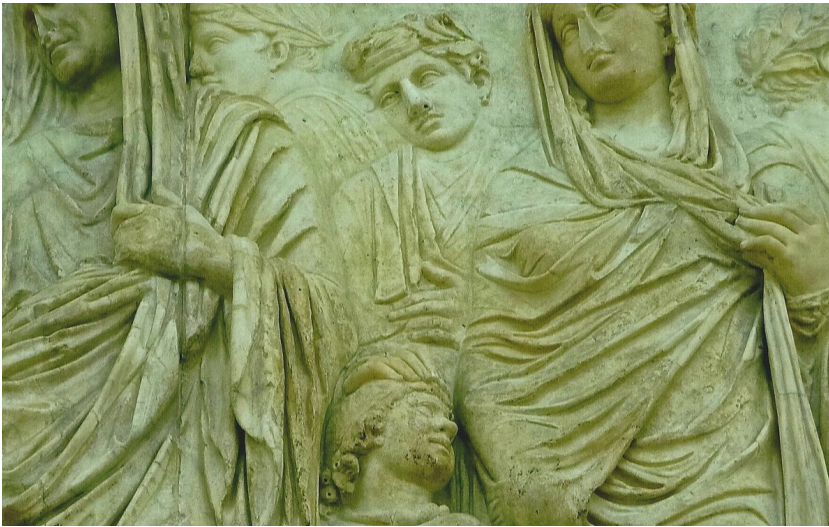


Fig. 5. Two views of the mysterious figure staring out from between Agrippa and the female figure we identify as Julia, with garlanded male background figures in profile on either side.

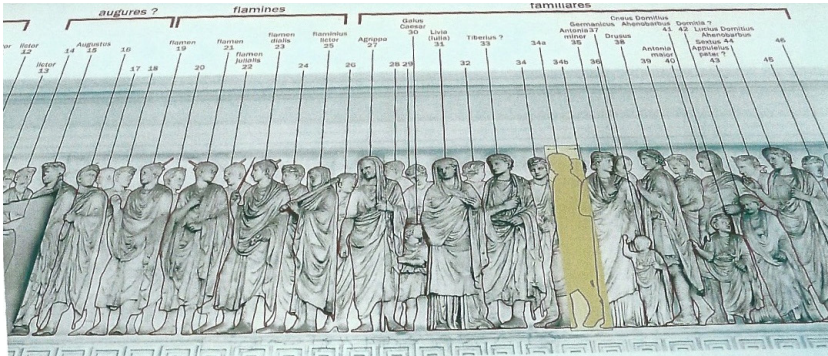


Fig. 6. The Ara Pacis Museum Chart identifying figures in the south procession. On the Chart, the figure in question (see second photo) is assigned only the number 29.

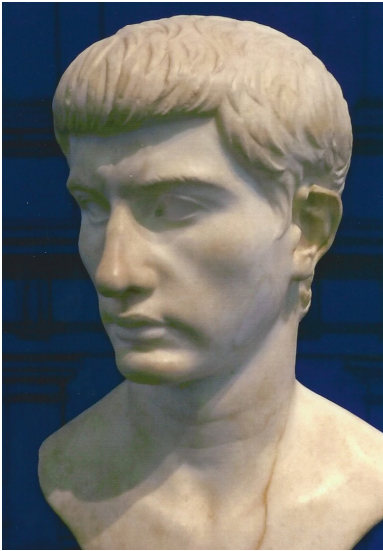




Fig. 7. The unidentified face on the *Ara Pacis* and the Marcellus portrait in the Louvre. In both, the head is tilted downward with what one might describe as a mournful, longing expression.



1

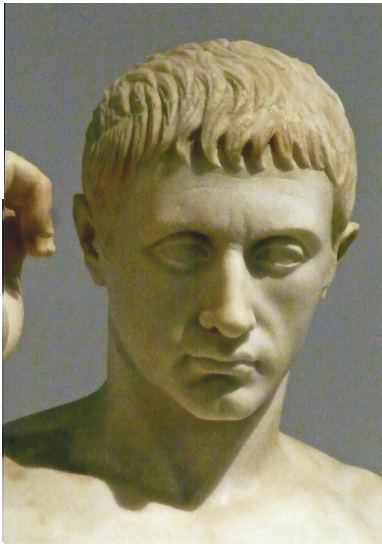


2

Fig. 8. (Above and below) Comparing the striking lip and chin configuration similarities of the 1) figure on the *Ara Pacis* with portraits of Marcellus; 2) Rome, Musei Capitolini; 3) Rome, collection de la foundation Sorgente Group; and 4) the previously shown Louvre Marcellus.



3



4

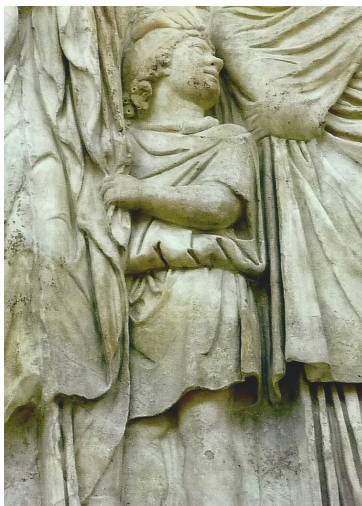


Fig. 9. Boy in the 'Agrippa Grouping', identified (#30) both on the *Ara Pacis* Museum Chart (Figure 6) and in this study as young Gaius Caesar.



Fig. 10a. 'Attendants' on the right panel of the western façade who are clothed similarly, if not exactly, to the way young Gaius is dressed in Figure 9.

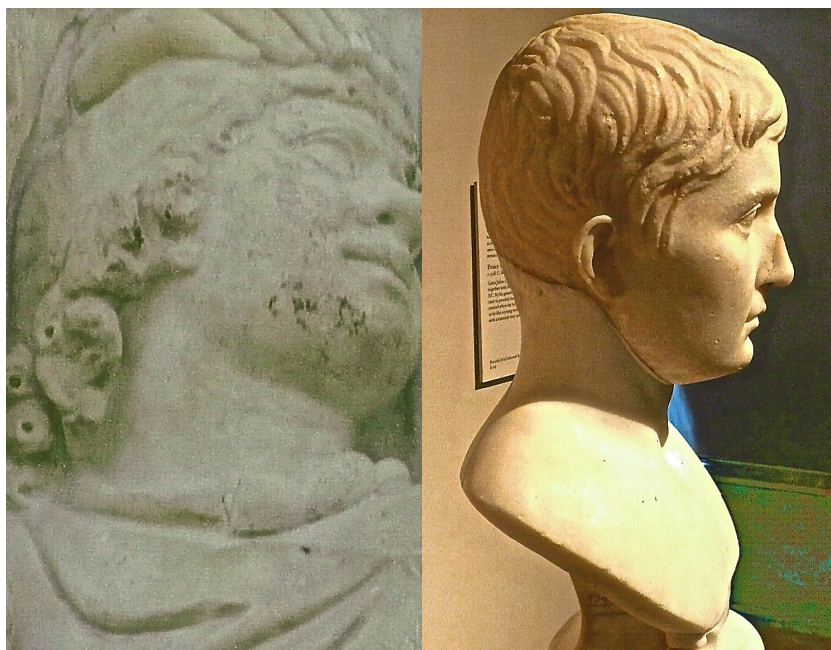


Fig. 10b., c. While the *Ara Pacis* Gaius is weather worn, when compared to a known portrait of Gaius at about the same age from the Prado in Madrid, it still appears to show similar key facial reference points – including the definitive indented nose bridge; shallow eye sockets; the cleft under the lower lip; the ample fleshy under chin; and the lower part of the ear. The hairstyles are different, but the actual hairlines (if reproduced correctly on the statues) seem similar. Unfortunately, the lower part of the Prado statue's nose is repaired, so the nostril area cannot be compared, and the head sits on a repaired neck pedestal. Photo by author with permission of the Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain.



Fig. 11. Close view of holes drilled in Gaius' hairline which appear to have no other reason for being there except to have once secured a metal garland affixed to his head, similar to the ones carved on the heads of both youths in Figure 10a; and the Marcellus Louvre portrait that shows unmistakable traces of a line carved across his hairline where a similar garland must also once have been attached.



Fig. 12. The two-dimensional background head (between Julia and Tiberius) in profile, looking in the opposite direction. It wears a garland with two unnecessarily well-defined holes at the back of the garland, which also shows signs of 'scoring' in at least two other places along its length – all consistent with where a metal garland might once have been attached to the flat sculptured surface. Significant, also, is the fact that the background figure's 'twin' on the opposite side of Julia and the figure we identify as Marcellus (see Figure 5) has no holes at the back of his garland. Also note the drilled holes along Tiberius' 'hairline' above, and the hole through Julia's ear.



Fig. 13. The eastern panel, upper right side, of the *Ara Pacis* with a reconstruction of the goddess Roma. There is ample room for a number of other figures, perhaps even Livia in some mythological or symbolic role.



Fig. 14. The Tellus panel. The hairstyle and profile of the central female figure bear close resemblance to portraits of Livia, shown in Figure 4 – especially the mature Livia (red background) with the ‘coiffure de jeunesse’ in Figure 4b2, and 4b3 below it (dark background) with similar nose and head covering.



Fig. 15. The Louvre Slab. The now headless female figure following the individual, who, judging from his facial features, must be Augustus, is most probably Livia. A color restoration of the Slab from the 2014 Grand Palais Exhibition at Paris honoring Augustus' 2000th Anniversary is also reproduced here.



The Augustan Architectural Decoration in Western *Lusitania*: between Archaism and the *Consuetudo Italica*

LÍDIA FERNANDES

Museum of Lisbon – Roman Theatre

Introduction

This paper presents some reflections based on my recent studies of the architectural decoration of Roman *Olisipo* (present-day Lisbon). These are possible, firstly, because a significant number of elements discovered in the city belong to the Roman theatre – a remarkable work of engineering which stood out on the city's horizon and was an urban landmark of the new political power. And, secondly, because the theatre employed the same architectural order, recurrently applied in its decoration, throughout the entire Roman period.

A study of the morphology and style of the capitals from the city of *Olisipo* provides a new insight into this material, revealing the continuity of the architectural choices made during the time of Augustus, which were adopted by the workshops operating in the city and its surroundings until the late Roman period. At the same time, certain elements attest to the arrival in the city of new stylistic trends, indicating that its *finisterra* location was not what was responsible for the absence of the models in vogue later.

This is precisely the aspect addressed in this paper, namely, the reasons why many of the typical decorative choices of the time of Augustus were maintained in an apparently anachronistic manner, which may initially seem incongruous in a cosmopolitan city like *Olisipo*.

In order to assess whether the case of *Olisipo* is unique within this panorama of architectural ornamentation or if, to the contrary, other examples exist, some geographically distant cases have been analysed that are remote from this urban setting. Parallels have therefore been

established with other similar architectural elements from several cities in the northern province of *Lusitania*, from seemingly different economic and social backgrounds.

The result of this study suggests that the stamp of Augustus' recently established power – the new imperial authority and administration introduced by him – was reflected in wisely chosen symbols selected in a very pragmatic manner. Their adoption through imperial patronage sought to establish a cultural bond that would strengthen ties amongst different peoples that were dispersed and distant from each other due to sociocultural differences and as a consequence of geographical isolation.

1. The architectural decoration of the city of *Olisipo*

The paper entitled 'A decoração arquitectónica de *Felicitas Iulia Olisipo*'¹ outlined a panorama similar to the views expressed in the present paper on this same topic. In fact, although several excavations have been conducted over the years, few elements have been recovered since then, so existing data are scarce.

In the present article we endeavour to establish the characteristics of the decorative elements used in *Olisipo* by examining the various types of surviving elements – mosaics, frescoes, altars, bases, capitals, cornices and other scattered elements. Although *Olisipo* was neither a capital of a province nor of a *conuentus*, it would have played a decisive role in the economic development of this region of the Roman Empire, essentially due to its privileged geographical location and its thriving economic status.

The elements recovered span a chronological period from the beginning of the 1st century AD to the 4th century AD, although there is no clear cut-off date either in the archaeological record nor in terms of the architectural elements.

A far larger number of architectural elements dating to later periods was recovered, indicating a peak dated to between the end of the 3rd century AD and the entire 4th century AD.² This means that rather than

¹ 'The architectural decoration of *Felicitas Iulia Olisipo*': Fernandes (2011) 263-311.

² Fernandes (2011) 305.

a decrease in the size of the *urbs* and in the number of building projects in later periods, precisely the opposite seems to have happened, as is shown in the case of the *Thermae Cassiorum*.

This study, which essentially involved the examination of architectural elements, which occur in greater number, but also the study of other materials, such as frescoes and mosaics, among others, has allowed an overview of some of the decorative influences traceable in this city, which was considered to be a *caput uiarum* and a true coastal centre of the Roman province of *Lusitania*.

1.1 The decoration of *Olisipo* during the two first centuries AD

The oldest stone elements known from *Felicitas Iulia Olisipo* belong to the city's Roman theatre (fig. 1). Despite their poor state of preservation, they reveal crucial information about the sculptural decorative repertoire from the time of the foundation of this monument. Later in this paper we will return to these elements, which date to the first period of monumental building in this city.

Although the archaeological record in both the theatre building itself and throughout the rest of the city is extremely poor, other elements dating to the mid-1st century AD and the following century have been recovered. In ceramic finds, pottery from the Iron Age and the Roman republican era is abundant, documenting the intense and extensive occupation of the whole area where *Olisipo* would be established, whereas architectural elements are sparse.³

New perspectives on the use of the ionic order in this monument have arisen following the discovery of a fragment of a capital, which was recovered in 2006 from one of the later-period walls that partitioned the interior of one of the theatre's *uomitoria* (fig. 2). This fragment still has about half of the *puluinus*, *balteus* and the front part that corresponds to the volute. It may be assigned to the second half of the 1st or 2nd century AD, based on the naturalistic effects employed, even though it is characterized by low plasticity.

³ This diachronic sequence is attested at the site where the Roman theatre was built, and surviving evidence points to its occupation since the Iron Age (Fernandes, Pinto [2009] 169-188, Calado, Pimenta, Fernandes, Filipe [2013] 641-649, Fernandes, Pimenta, Calado, Filipe [2013] 165-183).

Another sixteen fragments were recovered between 1965 and 1967, all of the ionic order. Given their small size, it is difficult to identify the part of the capital to which they belonged. They were carved in homogeneous light pink limestone, totally distinct from the fossiliferous calcarenite which was employed in the elements from the earliest period of construction of the theatre. These pieces can be dated to the middle or second half of the 1st century AD.

These elements belong to a new type of ionic capital. They were made from raw materials of greater quality, following different decorative principles, carved directly from the block of stone and not from stucco. Good quality, smooth white limestone from the region of Sintra began to be used. The various decorative details are directly carved into the capital's stone block. Although the architectural order was maintained, the technique employed reflects developments that were taking place throughout the empire. These fragments thus point to a new decorative programme for the theatre, which respected the initial architectural order employed but updated, enriched and beautified it.

Two corinthian elements that were found near the theatre have been dated to the 2nd century AD.⁴ Although the decoration on both these pieces differs, they may have been destined for different parts of the same building and they appear to have been produced in a good quality workshop (fig. 3). They display good contrast of light and shadow, and the lobes of the leaves are well defined, with the lower lobes overlapping, a characteristic that appears from Julio-Claudian times onwards. The proportion between the first wreath of leaves and the upper part of the capital deviates from the canonical proportion of the 1st century and is more frequently found from the 2nd century onwards. This evidence, as well as other details, prompts us to suggest a date in the first half of the 2nd century AD.

One example from Casa dos Bicos, discovered in 1982, can be classified as a corinthianizing engaged capital.⁵ The decorative character-

⁴ Fernandes (1997) n. 78-79, Fernandes (2002) 237-256. Although they were found in Lisbon, they are currently kept in Palmela, at the house of the late Professor José Hermano Saraiva, who stated that these pieces were discovered in Rua das Padarias, during public street works undertaken in the 1950s.

⁵ Fernandes (1997) n. 101, Fernandes (1999) 113-135, Fernandes (2004) 21-36, Fernandes (2007^a) 291-336.

istics of this element, a palmette with circular foliate endings, seems to have parallels in pieces from Alcácer do Sal, Cadafais (Abrantes), an example from the villa of Freiria⁶ and another from *Italica* (fig. 4).⁷ This element, found by the riverside in *Olisipo*, fits in with the new decorative language that came into use in the Flavian period. Chronologically this piece is dated to the 2nd century, perhaps the middle of the century, and the decorative motifs employed resemble those of capitals from elsewhere in Hispania and the centre of the empire.

Other architectural elements assigned to the first two centuries AD include entablatures and cornices. The theatre of *Olisipo* provides most of the data in this regard, namely a few cornices made of black limestone which is not very homogeneous, decorated with egg-and-dart pattern. The egg forms are complete, the mouldings are wide but elegant and they are separated by thin darts with triangular ends (fig. 5 and 6). The oblique carving of the mouldings, for example, offers a contrasting effect, of careful depth. These would then have been coated with stucco, although they were made from a more fine-grained limestone than the one used for larger architectural elements, such as capitals and bases. These elements are associated with the initial period of construction of the theatre, and the same chronology is attributed to the other stucco-coated elements.

Part of an architrave was found at the location where the *Thermae Cassiorum* were identified. It is carved in pink lioz limestone, measuring about 1m long and retaining only the base of four denticles. There are few parallels for this piece due to its simplicity. Its chronology has therefore been assigned based on the type of raw material employed, which is similar to the stone used in the theatre's *proscenium*, which is dated to 57 AD, and the fact that it was found in close proximity to this part of the theatre.

Another decorated element was found at St. George's Castle (near the Interpretation Centre). This is a fragment of an entablature made of lioz limestone, with three square-section denticles, the gap between them being decorated with flowers with four petals. One of these is a

⁶ Cardoso (1991) 76, Fernandes (1997) n. 102.

⁷ Gutiérrez Behemerid (1992) piece n. 835.

‘girandole-type flower’, which finds parallels in cornices from *Colonia Patricia Iulia*, dating to late Augustan times or later.⁸

Another cornice, which would have been part of a building’s entablature, was discovered during the excavations conducted at Praça da Figueira in 2000/2001.⁹ It displays a simple composition, with a set of five denticles, of square section. The carving demonstrates good technical accomplishment, with parallels in pieces from Cordoba,¹⁰ Segobriga¹¹ and Clunia.¹² It is an example of sober Julio-Claudian architectural decoration, possibly dating to the later years of this period.

One other reused element can still be traced in the southwest corner of a wall of Lisbon Cathedral.¹³ This is a large limestone block which may correspond to a soffit, namely the lower part of a building’s entablature (the lower part of the architrave). Its moulding is similar to the profile of the *cyma*.¹⁴ On the smaller sides, this same moulding forms a semi-circle, showing that the architrave was interrupted due to the placing of a vertical monolith, namely the column. The quality of the building work undertaken and the huge dimensions of the surviving elements point to the importance of what was clearly a public building¹⁵. This piece is tentatively dated to the 1st century AD or later.

1.2 The decoration of *Olisipo* from the 2nd century AD onwards

In later times, capitals remain the most abundant architectural elements. Although several other elements besides those presented in this paper have been recovered, these are mostly fragments, so it is difficult to provide a clear interpretation.

⁸ Márquez (1988) n. 2 and 70.

⁹ Fernandes (2007) 291-336.

¹⁰ Márquez (1998) n. 900, 161.

¹¹ Cebrián Fernández et al. (2004) 219-244, figs. 14, 17, 18 and 22, 234 and 235.

¹² Gutiérrez Behemerid (2004) 276.

¹³ Salvado, Ferreira (1984) 3-26.

¹⁴ Bonneville (1980) 97 n. 32.

¹⁵ Current dimensions: length 1.96m; height 0.43m; depth 0.57m.

1.2.1 Capitals

The capital found in the *Thermae Cassiorum* bears witness to the urban renovation that took place from the 2nd century AD onwards, especially in the later periods (fig. 7). An inscription found at this site, referenced by another inscription found in the 18th century at the *thermae* by Tomás Caetano de Bem,¹⁶ indicates that the building was ‘renewed from the ground’, or ‘completely rebuilt’, THERM[AE] CASSIORVM/RENOVAT[A]E A SOLO,¹⁷ in AD 336¹⁸. Older decorative elements were reused in the construction of the new building, and the new capitals that were specifically ordered for this renovation lacked grandeur in their size and decoration.

This aspect is reinforced by the fact that the decoration of the capitals found in the peristyle of the *pars urbana* of the Roman villa of Frielas, located about 15km from Lisbon, is identical to that of those found in the *thermae* of *Olisipo*. This similarity indicates that they originated from the same workshop¹⁹ and that they, therefore, share the same chronology, namely the first half of the 4th century AD.

Decorative, formal and structural changes in ionic capitals occurred in later periods, so they become completely different: the abacus disappears, the pieces become smaller and their decoration becomes more stylized, as most cases no longer display the decorative detail found in elements dating to the first two centuries.

This is confirmed by another two small ionic capitals²⁰ found at Praça da Figueira in 2000/2001,²¹ in which the abacus was replaced by a tall *scanillus*. The decoration of the *cyma* consists of three stylized half-eggs. The central egg has an almost circular contour. Its spacer mouldings are placed high up, and there are thick and schematic tongues in between them. Since these elements originate from a necropolis, they may be associated with the funerary function of the site and they may have been used as ornamentation for private *mausolea*.

¹⁶ Silva (1944) n. 22.

¹⁷ Fernandes (2009) 191-207.

¹⁸ It is thought that rather than indicating literally a complete renovation from its foundations, the inscription employed an expression to emphasize the magnitude of the work undertaken.

¹⁹ Fernandes (2004) 21-36.

²⁰ Both of these are slightly over 18 cm in height.

²¹ Fernandes (2007^a) 291-336.

Another element found in the riverside area, in Rua das Canastras, of identical chronology, is also an example of this same new elaboration of the ionic capital.²² A fragment of an ionic capital²³ found during excavations conducted in the Lisbon Cathedral cloisters, near the Roman theatre, may date to a slightly later period. It has a clearly geometric and schematic decoration which has parallels in Mérida and Cordoba,²⁴ as well as various examples from northern Africa.²⁵

A corinthian capital discovered in the historical neighbourhood of Alfama,²⁶ decorated with lily-shaped and schematic plant motifs, does not have a very organic layout for the several *ornamenta*, suggesting that it was produced in a local workshop at a late date, probably the 4th century AD.

Another corinthian element, to which the same chronology is attributed, was found in the castle area.²⁷ The fact that several of the decorative elements are out of proportion suggests that this piece is related to Tunisian examples, specifically from Utica,²⁸ as well as to examples from the centre of the empire, such as Ostia,²⁹ dating to the 4th century AD³⁰.

1.2.2 Other architectural elements

Dating to later times, probably to the 4th century AD, a cornice was found in Beco do Forno (Alfama) whose decoration is not very organic, yet makes use of a good contrast between light and dark, resulting from the volume of the several decorative elements.³¹ Besides the capitals,

²² Silva (1944) 119, Moita (1994) 66 n. 84, Fernandes (1997) n. 53, Fernandes (1998) 221-284, n. 5.

This piece is preserved, among the finds not on display, in the National Museum of Archaeology.

²³ Fernandes (1997) n. 56.

²⁴ Respectively, Cruz Villalón (1985) 252, Márquez (1993) 31-32.

²⁵ Pensabene (1986) 410-425 figs. 51 b, 55 e/f, 56 d, 58 e, 56 f.

²⁶ This piece is private property and of unknown provenance.

²⁷ Fernandes (1997) n. 84.

²⁸ Pensabene (1986) 368 fig. 29 a.

²⁹ Pensabene (1973) 78 n. 318 and 320.

³⁰ Another piece which is currently stored amongst the finds housed in the Carmo Archaeological Museum, dating from the late 3rd or 4th century AD (Fernandes (1997) n. 83), was found in Lisbon, though its exact provenance is unknown.

³¹ I would like to thank my colleagues Nuno Mota and Pedro Miranda (Lisbon City Council) for allowing me to study this piece.

this is one of the few elements that provide a glimpse of the late architectural ornamentation of *Olisipo*.

Finally, a base recovered from the Baixa Pombalina, in 1996, has been assigned to the 2nd century AD.³² This base is made from limestone, with two overlapping narrow *tori* separated by concave mouldings, with a square plinth. This is an evolved Attic base, in which several mouldings separated the elements. It may be compared to the bases of the *post scaenium* from the theatre of *Saguntum*.³³

2. The Theatre of *Olisipo*

The construction of the theatre and the engineering works conducted in the surrounding area destroyed traces of a previous occupation dating back to the 8th century BC, as the terrain was levelled to enable the construction of the new building (fig. 8).

The theatre building overlaid older structures which were almost completely destroyed when it was built. Although we do not know the exact date of the theatre's construction, the archaeological data and the information inferred from the architectural decoration point to an early date, possibly the time of Augustus.

The building techniques employed made use of a natural outcrop for the bottom part of the stage building, namely the *hyposcaenium* (lower part of the stage), *orchestra* (semi-circular area in front of the stage, for the city's élite) and *ima cauea* (lower seating area) – thereby making intense use of the natural topography and, in this way, facilitating construction and enabling engineering works to proceed at a faster pace (fig. 9). The intense use of *opus caementicium* similarly allowed the economical use of means and resources, reducing the burden of transportation of raw materials and allowing the use of non-specialized labour.

At the same time, local stone was used for several architectural elements, which were carved on site. The coating with stucco of the shafts, bases and capitals, still displayed on some of the elements, is part of a decorative building-scheme of republican tradition which was

³² Marques, Santos (1996) 201.

³³ Martorell (1990) 25 n. B.8.

used in Rome and across the empire, and spread as more provinces were conquered.

At the end of the 1st century BC, when the status of *Olisipo* was raised and it received the designation *Felicitas Iulia Olisipo* – between 31 and 27 BC³⁴ – a building programme that would reflect its new status would surely have been in place. Regardless of the actual date of the theatre's construction, this monument must have been erected during the first phase of monumentalization of the city.

The careful choice of this location, facing the river, offering extensive visibility to those arriving by sea or sailing at the waterfront area, was the main reason for establishing this building at this location as a symbol of the new Roman power. 'The scenery effect of the set has certainly marked the city, as an architectural solution which derived from the examples of Rome's *Campus Martius*, which was repeated and diversified in theatres [and in other buildings and architectural settings] built in the provinces.'³⁵

Fortunately, we have a well calibrated date for the arrival of the empire's trends towards the use of marble in *Olisipo*. The renovation of the central part of the theatre in 57 AD, which covered essentially the *orchestra* and the wall of the *proscenium*, is proved by the inscription that covers the central part of this large structure, measuring about 29 m long³⁶ (fig. 10). Although it was initially thought that these building works undergone by the theatre would essentially have involved small decorative changes, present evidence suggests that this renovation was a lot more extensive, even if it clearly served propagandistic goals.

In fact, it is known that the *aditi maximi* were renovated and the surroundings of the stage building would probably also have undergone architectural and urbanistic changes.³⁷ Two pink limestone lintels were found, one of these with part of an inscription which states 'C. HEIVS PRIMVS.DEDIT', confirming that this person was responsible for the likely placement of capping over the original lintels on the two monumental theatre entrances, as well as for ordering the building works of the *proscenium*, where his name is also mentioned.

³⁴ Faria (2001) 353-355.

³⁵ Fernandes (2013) 768.

³⁶ Fernandes, Caessa (2004-2005) 83-102.

³⁷ Fernandes et al. (2015) 132-145.

Despite these alterations, existing evidence suggests that the stage façade did not change. All the surviving architectural elements were made from very irregular local limestone, in which the required shape was carved. The shafts have longitudinal cannelures, or stretch marks, which facilitated the stuccoing work. The shape of the capitals is outlined in a simple manner and the *cyma* is smooth. On the bases, the *tori* are outlined, with no listels or mouldings.

Naturally, all the careful and detailed ornamentation would be made in stucco, probably with recourse to the pre-defined models from the centre of the empire, designated ‘Skizzen’, ‘Musterbucher’, or ‘pattern-books’,³⁸ so the detailed ornamentation would have been faithfully copied.

2.1 The ornamentation of *Olisipo*’s theatre and the model of Mérida

The surviving architectural elements of the theatre, amongst which the ionic capitals stand out, as well as the fluted shafts and the bases, are a few of the most interesting elements, as they reflect a decorative sculpture of marked late republican tradition, which made exclusive use of local stone that would then be coated in stucco plaster.

Naturally, the model adopted was the one employed in the provincial capital, *Augusta Emerita*, both in terms of the decoration of the theatre there (built in 15-16 BC by Agrippa, son-in-law and advisor to Augustus), and in relation to the building techniques that closely followed the first phase of urbanization of the cities of *Hispania*.

There are several references concerning the renovations that the theatre of Mérida underwent over time, and some parallels can be found with the theatre of Lisbon.³⁹

The first building-phase of the theatre of Mérida corresponds to the construction of the *orchestra*, main façades, *parodoi* and the angles of the building, until the area of the crypt and its respective entrances were reached.⁴⁰ Some authors consider a date in the Augustan era for the *post scaenium* porch, that is, the existing enclosure behind the stage façade,

³⁸ Gros (1976) 63, Sauron (1979) 204, Pensabene (1973) 189.

³⁹ Cf. among others Mateos Cruz, Pizzo (2011) 173-192, Durán Cabello (2004).

⁴⁰ Mateos Cruz, Pizzo (2011) 176-177.

though the façade that has survived to the present-day dates from the time of Claudius and belongs to a second construction phase.⁴¹

Recent interpretations indicate that the architectural elements currently found in the peristyle may have belonged to the original stage façade. The view currently accepted among specialists is that the ionic order, which was used on the stage façade in 16 BC, was later replaced by new corinthian capitals and entablature during the time of Claudius, reflecting a new phase of the use of marble across the empire. The old capitals would then have been placed in the *post scaenium*, in the peristyle area that surrounds the garden.⁴²

It is interesting to note that these ionic capitals are the oldest examples, and that they made use of the late republican technique of local stone coated in stucco plaster.

There is plenty of evidence for this ‘granite phase’ at Mérida, in which, based on this record, the stucco coating would be ‘stucco applied with great virtuosity.’⁴³ Although the stucco from both Mérida and Lisbon has barely survived, the capitals from the theatre of *Metellinum* (present day Medellín, around 30 km from Mérida), also from Augustan times,⁴⁴ are in a good state of preservation. These capitals are probably the closest parallel that can be established with the elements from the theatre of Lisbon, as they are similar in style and technique, resulting in beautiful examples of white stucco coating, some of them still displaying their original colour.

Another parallel can be found in the theatre of *Italica*, which underwent extensive renovation during the Severan period, when the stage façade was renovated – the corinthian order was adopted – and the area of the *post scaenium* remained decorated with tuscan capitals from the original construction of the theatre, namely from the time of Augustus. The multiple stucco layers applied on the capitals and bases indicate that this material would have been used extensively throughout the theatre.⁴⁵

As is the case in the provincial capital, it is argued that when the theatres of *Olisipo* and *Metellinum* were built they would have copied

⁴¹ Mateos Cruz, Pizzo (2011).

⁴² Röring (2010) 163-172.

⁴³ Nogales Basarrate, Álvarez Martínez (2014) 236.

⁴⁴ Mateos Cruz, Picado Pérez (2011) 373-410.

⁴⁵ Rodríguez Gutiérrez (2000) 307-317.

the technical and decorative models in vogue at the time. It has yet to be established why their ornamental repertoires were not updated, and the same applies to their stage façades. This is difficult to understand, as few renovations were undertaken at either of these theatres.

In fact, as stated above, the wall of the *proscenium* of the Lisbon theatre was renovated in 57 AD, and nothing is known about the previous structure.⁴⁶ Another parallel can be drawn for decoration using sculptures. Two statues of *sileni* found in *Metellinum* in 2008 resemble the two *sileni* statues housed in the theatre of *Olisipo*, which were recovered in 1798 when the theatre was initially identified (fig. 11). Both of these are of identical workmanship and chronology, dating to the second half of the 1st century AD.⁴⁷

It seems likely that in both these provincial Lusitanian theatres there was a clear intention to keep the original stage façade. The architectural order employed in both cases was ionic and the decorative technique employed was the late republican tradition of using local stone coated with stucco.

As previously indicated, this was the standard for the theatre of Mérida and for the first phase of the city's monumentalization. As has been suggested by Nicole Röring, it seems that several architectural elements were reused when the façade was renovated. They were placed in the *post scaenium*, thereby preserving the memory of the original construction, in memory of the time of the first emperor, the mark of Augustus (fig. 12).

This was all the more evident when the corinthian order was chosen as the architectural order par excellence, first by Rome, then across the rest of the empire, including the capital of *Lusitania*. As we assess the number of corinthian capitals that decorated the city, and, a little later, corinthianizing capitals, the huge disproportion between this order and other orders is obvious.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ The existence of a small area in *opus signinum*, currently underlying the surviving foundation (which belongs to the structure renovated in 57 BC), suggests that this was the original coating, which has parallels in the *proscenium* of *Metellinum*; in the latter, the original painted stucco can still be seen on its walls.

⁴⁷ Cf. http://www.medellinhistoria.com/medellin/reflejos_roma.htm (accessed 21st April 2015).

⁴⁸ Considering the inventory of Roman capitals presented in 1992 by M^a Angeles Gutiérrez Behemerid, even if much more information is available at present, the disproportion between the corinthian order and other orders is clear: in a total of 930 examples, 539 are corinthian capitals.

2.2 Column capitals, bases and shafts from the theatre of *Olisipo*

These elements have been examined on a number of occasions.⁴⁹ As previously stated, local stone was used as a raw material. It was not very homogeneous, so it possessed a good surface for applying stucco work (fig. 13). In 1990 T. Hauschild drew attention to this detail of the coating, pertinently establishing parallels with the capitals from the theatre of Mérida.⁵⁰

Referring to the corinthian capitals of the second half of the 1st century BC, Gutierrez Behemerid states that local stone was almost always coated with stucco plaster, following the techniques used in the late republican period.

The stylistic renovation that took place in Rome by the middle Augustan period, as clearly reflected in the capitals of the Temple of Mars Ultor, seems to find echoes in the Iberian peninsula only at the beginning of the Julio-Claudian period.⁵¹

Other architectural details are also noteworthy, particularly those relating to the morphology of the elements. In fact, the capitals as well as some bases form part of the column shaft, a characteristic that is also present in older chronologies and traditions. The inclusion of the *summus scapus* in the capital is frequently observed in tuscan examples found in Portugal⁵² and, particularly, in older ionic capitals.⁵³

The same pattern occurs on the bases, as the *imus scapus* is included in the stone blocks on which the base is carved.⁵⁴ This is a republican tradition that has several parallels, as in the elements from Cartagena carved in red travertine, a local stone widely used in the Augustan era and during the first half of the 1st century AD.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ See, among others: Fernandes (1997), Fernandes (2001^a) 29-51, Fernandes (2007^b) 27-39.

⁵⁰ Hauschild (1990) 378-379.

⁵¹ Gutiérrez Behemerid (1992) 229.

⁵² Fernandes (2001^b) 95-158, Fernandes (2008) 231-270, Fernandes (2010) 25-50.

⁵³ Fernandes (1997), Fernandes (2001^a) 29-51.

⁵⁴ Cf., among others, Fernandes, Caessa (2004-5) 83-94.

⁵⁵ Ramallo Asencio (2004) 153-218.

3. The architectural decoration of northern Lusitania

In the provincial capital of *Augusta Emerita*, as in the case of other cities of *Hispania*, the beginning of the Roman occupation was reflected, in architectural terms, in a strong republican tradition. Shape and content were entirely Roman but traditional formulae taken from the Italic world were enriched, over the years, by two particularly important influences, the Greek and Hellenistic world and Etruscan culture.

Numerous examples may illustrate this first phase of implementation of Roman dominion in *Lusitania*. The theatres of Lisbon, Mérida and Medellin, as well as that of *Italica*, among others, reveal how ancient traditions were employed during this initial phase, as reflected in the morphology of some architectural elements, such as bases and capitals, but also in the type of material employed, the local stone, and its finishing with stucco as final decoration.

Recent studies that have re-examined older chronologies established for some of the most emblematic buildings of *Augusta Emerita*, such as the so-called Trajan's Arch, among others, tend to reinforce the importance of this first phase of monumentalization, setting back the chronology of some of the buildings to this period.⁵⁶

Since this occurred in the provincial capital, it is not surprising that such a civilizing impact would have left even deeper marks in more remote areas, where the concept of unification, central government or civilization would have been tenuous or non-existent until then.

Thus the initial architectural formulation that was first employed in *Emerita* had an even greater impact in the regions that lay to the northwest of the capital. Surviving evidence highlights three locations in Portuguese territory, although there are several scattered examples that may point to the generalized use of this model. These places are the *ciuitates* of Idanha-a-Velha, Bobadela and S. Salvador de Aramenha (*Ammaia*).

These locations seem to have adopted the general use of the techniques and formulae discussed above: the particular morphology of some pieces; the use of local raw materials (in this case, granite); the

⁵⁶ Mateos Cruz, Pizzo (2011) 173-192, Pizzo (2010), Nogales Basarrate, Álvarez Martínez (2014) 209-247.

finishing with stucco work. Although these characteristics of the older models are most obvious in relation to bases and capitals, they were also employed in other elements, such as funerary monuments.

Several authors have drawn attention to funerary *stelae*, for example, that correspond to a clearly Roman typology recorded at the beginning of the conquest, but which were quickly replaced by more appealing and striking models.⁵⁷ Yet, it is possible to discern that this type of funerary monument, given its simplicity and ease of construction, was widely dispersed across the province. Records of similar monuments that allude to this first phase of colonization can be found in northern *Lusitania* and also in the area south of *Olisipo*.

This funerary typology has parallels in several examples currently on display in the Museo Nazionale Romano of the Baths of Diocletian, which are originals from the necropoleis of Rome and are dated to between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC and the beginning of the 1st century AD.

Regarding sculpture, which includes various funerary typologies or, symptomatically, those without sculpture, local raw materials were used, which would then have been coated with stucco and polychrome painting. The first examples of imported sculpted decoration seem to have been made from terracotta, and the sculptures made of stone from the Iberian peninsula were carved in local raw materials. There is no record of any elements made from imported marble during the 2nd/1st centuries BC.⁵⁸

This period of transition, until marble began to be used, is not characterized by an absence or monotony of products or by their poor quality. In fact, sculptures produced in Spanish territory during this period, recently called the 'Ibero-Roman' or 'Roman republican' period, which lies between 218 BC and the 1st century BC,⁵⁹ have distinctive features and show an intelligent and pragmatic adaptation of the new Roman influences.

It is therefore not surprising that the architectural decoration mirrors the same characteristics as sculptures or other monuments. The *puluini*, for example, provide a good parallel for this.

⁵⁷ Edmondson (2006), Nogales Basarrate, Márquez Pérez (2002).

⁵⁸ Nogales Basarrate, Rodà de Llanza (2014) 79.

⁵⁹ Nogales Basarrate, Rodà de Llanza (2014) 76.

The *puluini* correspond to a distinctive type of funerary or votive monument, traditionally consisting of a roughly square or quadrangular *cippus*, surmounted by a set of elements that resemble the composition of the canonical ionic capital.⁶⁰

This type of monument makes use of the sides of the ionic capital, characterized by two adjoining *puluini*, placed horizontally. Frontally, the ending of the *cippus* does not have volutes, as in the capitals, but rather large rosettes. Similar monuments can be found across the empire. This model, even if with slight differences, can be found in Italy in the 2nd century BC, although other monuments, with a monolithic altar, may correspond to more recent models.⁶¹ This typology was so widespread that it remained in use for centuries. The model was adopted by Augustus in the *Ara Pacis* as a celebration of his victories and the pacification of peoples, functioning as a clear symbol or emblem of the new political order but also of a new mentality serving the goals of his propaganda.

In regard to the *puluini* from Idanha-a-Velha, for example, the large number of these found *in situ*, although devoid of archaeological context, point to the existence of several workshops in the surrounding area (fig. 14 and 15). These *puluini* were widely dispersed – at Nave (Sabugal); Quinta da Caneca, Torre dos Namorados, Capinha (Fundão); Aldeia dos Gagos (Guarda); Meimoa (Penamacor); and Quinta da Fórnea, Caria (Belmonte) – pointing towards an intense and generalized production of this kind of monument and, consequently, the existence of a customer-base that both demanded and appreciated them.

More than 30 of these have been found to date at Idanha-a-Velha, although it is estimated that there would have been around 50 *puluini*. If we compare this information with known examples from Spanish territory published by Beltrán Fortes,⁶² it seems reasonable to contend that this type of monument was widespread across all of Hispania. According to this publication, most of these were found in the southern and northeastern part of present-day Spain. The *puluini*

⁶⁰ Which has two pairs of matching faces (opposite sides being equal), in contrast to the ionic capital which has all the faces equal.

⁶¹ Beltrán Fortes (2004) 101.

⁶² Beltrán Fortes (2004) fig. 3.

mentioned above, and the fact that a large number of these were found in Portugal, seem to warrant closer attention.

As indicated by Nogales Basarrate ‘...the first settlers were military contingents of Italian origin and they were well versed in construction and the functional *praxis* of pavements and urban infrastructure building works, but unprepared for the use of marble, which was in widespread use in Rome itself during proto-Augustan times, so it was not surprising that the first official programmes, which were primarily architectural, essentially involved using local raw materials.’⁶³

In the case of the region northwest of Mérida, which today lies in Portuguese territory, it is worth noting the important role of military camps, consisting mostly of military personnel of Italian origin, established during the initial stages of the conquest or pacification of Lusitania.⁶⁴

Curiously, this is where we find the largest number of tuscan capitals (fig. 16) and the first examples of the ionic order. This tuscan morphology, which was soon replaced by other, more appealing architectural orders, had very sober and simple features. These still bore echoes of Etruscan architecture, which was long regarded as one of the primary cultures underlying the birth of the empire.⁶⁵

The tuscan order attracted the attention of a vast population in *Hispania* (fig. 17) as well as in *Italia*. This order won a wide reputation, to the extent that Vitruvius defined it as an order of clearly Italian origin. As mentioned by Boëthius, this may be associated with the emphasis on the rehabilitation and maintenance of architectural styles already employed in Italy.⁶⁶

In fact, this first morphology of tuscan and ionic capitals, which are intrinsically interrelated, has justified the nomenclature assigned to the latter in 1997 – ‘plain ionic of tuscan influence’.⁶⁷

This type of capital, which may be characterized by the use of local raw material which was then covered in stucco – also seen in the *puluini* and in the funerary *stelae*, as previously mentioned –, played

⁶³ Nogales Basarrate (2011) 414. Translated from the original in Spanish.

⁶⁴ Alarcão (2002-2003) 160, Fernandes (2008) 231-270.

⁶⁵ Cf. Rosada (1970-1971) 66 and following.

⁶⁶ Boëthius (1962) 254.

⁶⁷ Fernandes (1997) vols. 1-2, Fernandes (1998) 221-284.

such a preponderant role in architectural decoration that these two orders are the only orders used in several places, not only in the initial stages of urban development, but, interestingly and symptomatically, also throughout the entire Roman period.

This seems to be even more significant when it is considered that the corinthian order attracted the population's attention from early on, as it was the most commonly used and most widespread architectural order throughout the empire. The ionic capitals mentioned above are formally close to tuscan capitals, as they have precisely the same profile, although they have two straight lateral *puluini*, sometimes ornamented with a simple *balteus*.

For a long time, a late chronology was offered for these elements, namely a date in the 3rd or 4th century AD, and they were interpreted as plain pieces (fig. 18). Although this chronology has been moved back in the case of the Spanish territory by authors who have studied these pieces,⁶⁸ this type of element is still considered a late local production. Its profusion and true importance have yet to be acknowledged, as in the most recent publication of Domingo Magaña⁶⁹ who, incomprehensibly, provides an interpretation that is still simply based on an out-of-date bibliography.

The lack of other elements, in particular of the corinthian order, in the regions where these pieces occur implies that this type of capital is a true architectural representative of the first phase of monumentalization in these regions of the empire.

Plain ionic capitals of tuscan influence found in *Ammaia*, in Idanha-a-Velha or in Bobadela (fig. 19), are mostly the product of a precise moment of construction. Naturally, the workshops would not be the same but the same linear model was used: with identical morphology, the same proportions, the same technique and identical raw materials. These pieces, which were apparently simple and naive, comprise a sublimation of the concept of Latin civilization. They are a major illustration of economic contentment and their austere character proudly represents the essence of the new Roman values.

⁶⁸ See for example Gutiérrez Behemerid (1992) 47.

⁶⁹ Domingo Magaña (2011) 178-179.

Conclusion

The architecture introduced under the new power of Augustus was adopted by the provincial capitals, as in the case of *Augusta Emerita*, and was applied in the same way in *Olisipo* and in the most remote and sparsely populated areas. The new sculptural decoration served far more than a mere ornamental function, as it was the mark of a civilization uniting people across a geographical area, which was now brought together by a common bond: the image of the emperor who, after his death, remained present as the identity of a territory.

The architecture of the early empire, as shown in the ionic capitals from the theatre of Lisbon, or the ionic capitals of the first stage façade of the theatre of Mérida (moved to the *post scaenium* when the theatre was remodelled during the time of Emperor Claudius) or the capitals used in various *ciuitates* of the *territorium* of Mérida, is apparently rustic and thus deceptively anachronistic.

Only the stone blocks of these elements remain, since the stucco coating has not survived. Since the detailed and careful decoration has been lost, these elements may easily be mistaken for pieces that have become degenerated or that present a simple rough model of the traditional ionic capital. In fact, the only remaining parts of these elements are very different from the original product, which would have been attractive, with stucco and polychrome decoration, as seen in some of the examples from the theatre of Mérida that still retain parts of the decoration. Form and content would thus have come together in this way, conveying a vision of monumentality that was consistent with the functions of new public buildings. What is surprising is not that this decorative type, which is a late republican tradition widespread in Italy was adopted, but rather that it was maintained throughout the Roman era.

In fact, there are deep-seated reasons for this. There would most probably have been official intervention during the initial stages of building in Lusitania, as occurred at the theatre of Mérida and probably also in the theatre of Lisbon. The importance of these buildings, which was primarily symbolic, would probably have increased significantly. The intrinsic significance of the buildings is understandable, considering that they were emblematic of the administrative and cultural functions

they served, as were the temples or the *fora*, as in the cases of Bobadela, *Ammaia* or Idanha-a-Velha, where this type of capital was used.

The apparent strength and austerity of the sculptural decoration may be explained by the *consuetudo italica*, already discussed by Vasco Mantas,⁷⁰ or by the so-called *Soldatenkunst*. Such aspects were so important for the implementation of the new power that they were intentionally never suppressed, reflecting a *tradio*, a constancy in the ways of life that characterized the population of this region both in the present and the past.⁷¹

The case of the theatre of *Olisipo* is paradigmatic, since this was an official building whose architectural decoration was not updated, so that the memory of Augustus could be preserved. Even when the building underwent renovations, as in the case of the structure of the *proscenium* and, as is supposed, in its ornamentation, as evidenced by some ionic capital fragments carved in a more homogeneous limestone, it is contended here that the stage façade was intentionally maintained throughout the eras.

In the end, the ‘moralizing function of the classical shape’ would not have been an anachronism throughout the Roman period, but rather a recurring option, inaugurated by Augustus when he created a programme of cultural renovation and reinvented his own iconographic programmes, using Greek, Hellenistic and Etruscan influences. It is therefore not surprising that, in the same way, the first buildings erected in Lusitania (fig. 20) became symbols that clearly showed the importance of cities and places that would later gradually come to lose their grandeur.

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⁷⁰ Mantas (2010) 173.

⁷¹ Carvalho (2010) 126.

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Fig. 1: Perspective from north to south of the Roman theatre: lower area of benches (*cauea*); central part that corresponds to the *orchestra* (semi-circular space for the city elite) and an area than the stage, at the back, with its supporting pillars. (Photo by José Avelar – Museu de Lisboa / EGEAC.)



Fig. 2: Part of the baluster (*puluinus*), with vegetal decoration, belonging to an ionic capital of the Roman theatre of Lisbon. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 3: Corinthian capital from the Rua das Padarias, Lisbon. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 4: Corinthianizing capital from the Casa dos Bicos, Lisbon. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 5: Cornice, decorated with egg-and-dart pattern, from the Roman Theater of Lisbon. All that is conserved is its stone core, without the original stucco coating. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano/ EFEAC.)

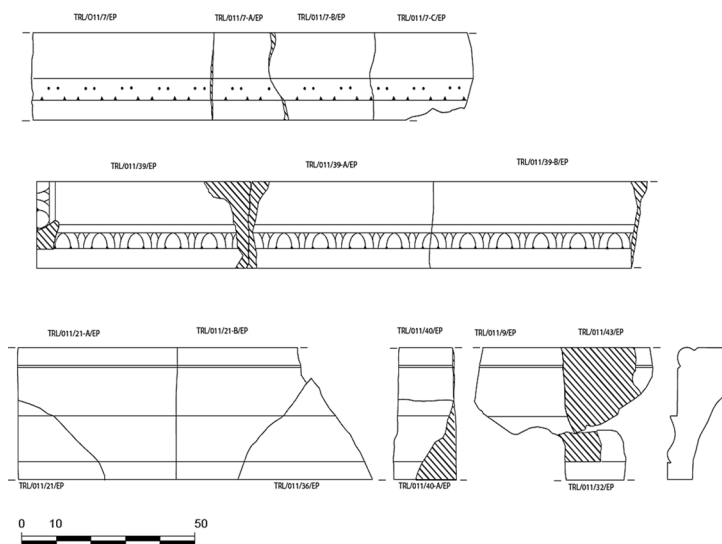


Fig. 6: Graphic representations of some of the cornices and architraves recovered in archaeological excavations at the Roman Theater of Lisbon. (Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 7: Ionic capital, of small size, from the Termas dos Cássios (Lisbon). (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)

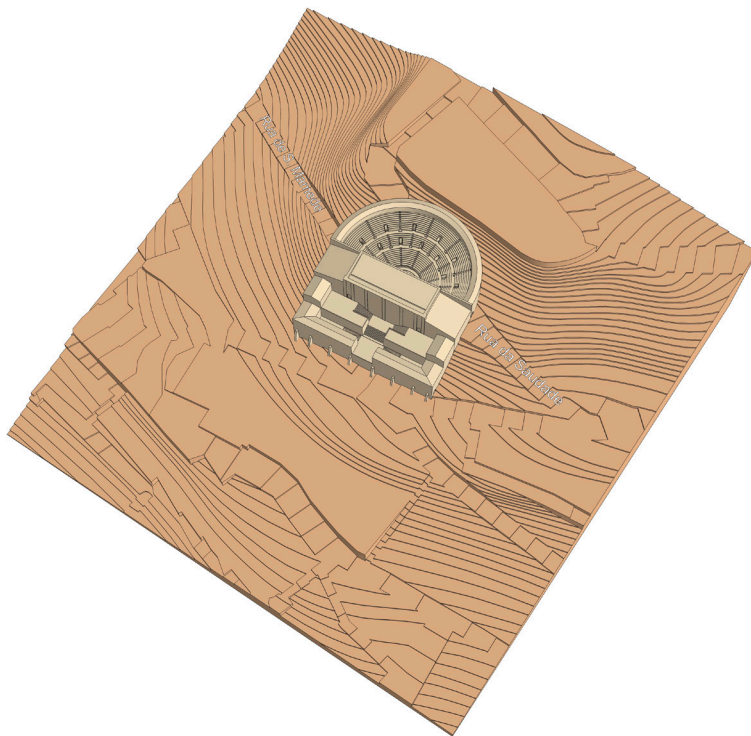


Fig. 8: Position of the theater in the Roman-era palaeosol. Reconstruction. (Model by Carlos Loureiro – Museu de Lisboa / EGEAC.)



Fig. 9: Perspective from southwest to northeast of the theatre of Lisbon. First, the foundation wall of the *proscaenium*, which would separate the actors from the spectators. Secondly, the *orchestra*, a semi-circular area paved with marble slabs. At the back, the lower part of the seating area. (Photo by José Avelar – Museu de Lisboa / EGEAC.)

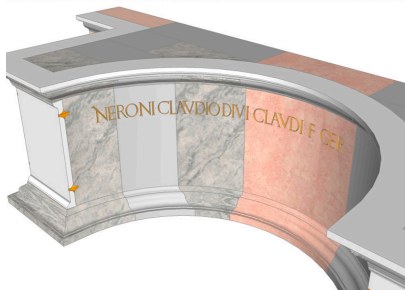


Fig. 10: Top, stones of the *proscaenium*, on display at the Roman Theatre Museum. Below, the reconstruction of one of the niches where the inscribed stones would have stood. (Model by Carlos Loureiro – Museu de Lisboa / EGEAC.)



Fig. 11: Marble Silenus statue from the mid-1st century BC. This statue, along with others, would have adorned the upper part of the *proscenium* wall. (Photo by António Rafael.)



Fig. 12: *Post scaenium* of the theatre of Mérida, to the north of the stage façade. The current arrangement of this area is due to the restoration carried out on the monument in the 1940s. Many of the ionic capitals that can be found there were reproduced at that time for the reassembly of the peristyle structure. However, some capitals are originals. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 13: Some of the ionic capitals of the theatre of *Olisipo*, which would have decorated the stage façade. Only the stone core is conserved, without the final stucco finishing. (Photo by José Avelar – Museu de Lisboa / EGEAC.)



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

Fig. 14 and 15: *Puluini* of the ancient Roman city of Idanha-a-Velha, from two different funerary monuments. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 16: Tuscan capital, possibly from the theatre of Mérida. Only the stone core is conserved, without the original stucco finish. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 17: Tuscan capital of Idanha-a-Velha. Only the stone core is conserved, without the original stucco finish. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 18: 'Flat ionic of Tuscan influence' capital, from the ancient Roman city of Bobadela. Its final stucco finishing is not preserved. Notable, however, is the technical quality of the carving. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)



Fig. 19: ‘Flat ionic of tuscan influence’ capital, from Mérida, perhaps belonging to the theatre. Some of the stucco finish is preserved, in the inferior part (belonging to the shaft: *summus scapus*). The cannelures of the shaft were represented by incisions. (Photo by Lídia Fernandes – Museu de Lisboa – Teatro Romano / EGEAC.)

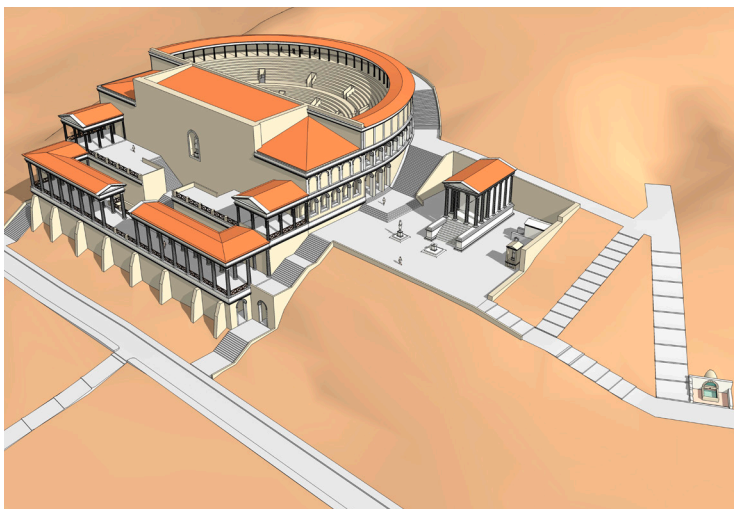


Fig. 20: Image of the reconstruction of the Roman Theatre of Lisbon. Perspective from southeast to northwest. (Reconstruction by Carlos Loureiro, Museum of Lisbon / EGEAC.)

The High Imperial Mosaics of the Oldest Roman House of *Bracara Augusta*

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1. Archaeological excavations in the second half of the 20th century and the mosaic finds

The dozens of archaeological interventions carried out in Braga over the past thirty-five years have revolutionized our entire knowledge of this important city in the peninsular northwest in the Roman period. Despite its importance, few references are made to Braga in the ancient sources. It is urban excavations that have allowed the documentation of its orthogonal layout, the survey of its public and private facilities, the measurement of its area of occupation, the identification of its necropoleis and their phases of use, and the characterization of the different aspects of its society and economy. One of the most important contributions of archaeology is the recognition of the city's early planning, dated from the principate of Augustus, which most likely occurred simultaneously with the deployment of the rural cadastre and the opening of the main routes that linked the city to the world outside.¹

Work at the archaeological sites has been carried out since the 1970s, when the Braga archaeological field authority was created, with the task of carrying out emergency excavations in the urban area and checking the extent of the Roman city. Between 1976 and the present day, dozens of archaeological interventions have been carried out within the urban perimeter of Braga, in order to chart and collect remains and to evaluate the type of buildings that are distributed throughout the city. The interventions have included the precautionary step of registration and evaluation of remains prior to modern constructions; this group includes most of the excavations performed by the Archaeology Unit of

¹ Martins, Ribeiro, Magalhães, Braga (2012) 27.

Minho University, under the direction of Professor Manuela Martins.²

Excluding emergency archaeological interventions, it has been the practice of the different teams working in Braga to preserve *in situ* the structures and mosaics discovered during the excavations.

The mosaics in the region of Braga are mostly decorated with geometric motifs, except for a nucleus of 13 fragments decorated with marine fauna. In Braga there are currently four Roman archaeological sites known for mosaics decorated with the latter theme:

1) In the Campo das Carvalheiras, Leite de Vasconcelos presented a mosaic found in 1883 during the excavations for the foundations of the new Orphans' Seminar;³

2) In the cloister of the Santiago Seminar there is a mosaic, found in 1965, decorated with marine fauna (fish and octopuses). This mosaic was raised, treated and placed on a new support, and is now exhibited in the Pio XII Museum;

3) From the Largo de S. João do Souto, between numbers 33-124, Santiago Seminar, Cerca, a small fragment of a mosaic was discovered in 1996. The D. Diogo de Sousa Museum holds in its collection this small fragment (Inv. No. 2003.0518) decorated with a marine motif: parallel lines topped by a V-motif meant to represent water;

4) A tank with a mosaic decorated with fish was discovered in the yard of the textiles factory Cardoso da Saudade (former backyard of Fernando Castiço). Nine pieces in the collection of the Martins Sarmiento Society Museum⁴ are also from this site. Currently most of these mosaics, which were raised, are part of the collection of the D. Diogo de Sousa Museum.

² In order to develop this study of these mosaics, we have called upon the help of all the staff of the D. Diogo de Sousa Museum, and are particularly grateful to Isabel Silva, Director of the museum, and Maria José Sousa, who facilitated access to the store-rooms, the archives and all kinds of information on conservation and restoration. A very special thank you to all the members of *Project Rescue Bracara Augusta*, from the University of Minho, who introduced us to the Roman city.

³ Vasconcelos (1924) 165, fig. 1.

⁴ Abraços (2015) 481-484.

2. The mosaics of the *domus* in the D. Diogo de Sousa Museum crypt. Description and dating

The remains of a rich *domus*, dated to the period of Augustus,⁵ are preserved *in situ* in the basement of the service area of the D. Diogo de Sousa Museum. They belong to the oldest Roman housing currently known in Braga. The excavated part of the house reveals the high technical quality of the mosaics. They cover the floor of a long hallway that opened into several annexed compartments located to the south. The mosaics' dating is supported by the plumbing running beneath this hallway.



Fig. 1: D. Diogo de Sousa Museum, Braga (Google Earth).
The structures with the mosaic panels are found in the interior of Block A.

The Regional Archaeological Museum D. Diogo de Sousa was built on Alto da Cividade. The planned area of the new building was excavated in 1990/ 1991. The structures of a house with mosaic floors

⁵ Martins (2012) 11.

were discovered and it was decided to integrate them into the crypt-space of the museum (Block A). This type of mosaic is rare in a region whose soil acidity does not lend itself to the preservation of remains. The size of the mosaic and its materials (limestone and granite) prevented it from being removed. Accordingly, it was protected with sand so that it could later be subject to meticulous restoration work in order to integrate it into the exhibition programme of the museum.



Fig. 2: Excavation before the construction of Block A of the Museum. (D. Diogo de Sousa Museum Archive, Braga)



Fig. 3: Earth removal prior to beginning the musealization of the interior space of Block A. (D. Diogo de Sousa Museum Archive, Braga)

One of the mosaic panels consists of a chessboard pattern (Panel 1: scheme variant Décor 1, EST. 115a),⁶ in which the squares feature a crosslet in the centre with the colours counterchanged. Here the squares with *tesserae* of a dark-coloured material alternate with squares that appear to be made of compacted clay and which present in the centre of each square a crosslet of four *tesserae* in granite. The other squares also feature a crosslet in the centre of each square. Here the crosslets would have been filled by limestone *tesserae*, which are missing. In their place there is a pasty mixture of yellowish colour which, observed with a binocular magnifier, proved to be granite sand. The moist environment in which the *tesserae* were found and also their contact with granite will have altered their consistency. The other panel (Panel 2: variant of Décor scheme 1, EST. 138e)⁷ is decorated with a grid of hourglasses. Positive hourglasses, with granite *tesserae*,

⁶ Balmelle (1985).

⁷ Balmelle (1985).

alternate with negative hourglasses, which would have been filled with limestone *tesserae*. The around thirty limestone *tesserae* that are still *in situ* are very fragile. We removed a *tessera* from the dark-coloured material and examined it with a binocular microscope. The microscope examination of the *tessera* left no doubt as to its substance. It is thin-grained pink granite of local origin, perhaps from Conde, Braga.⁸

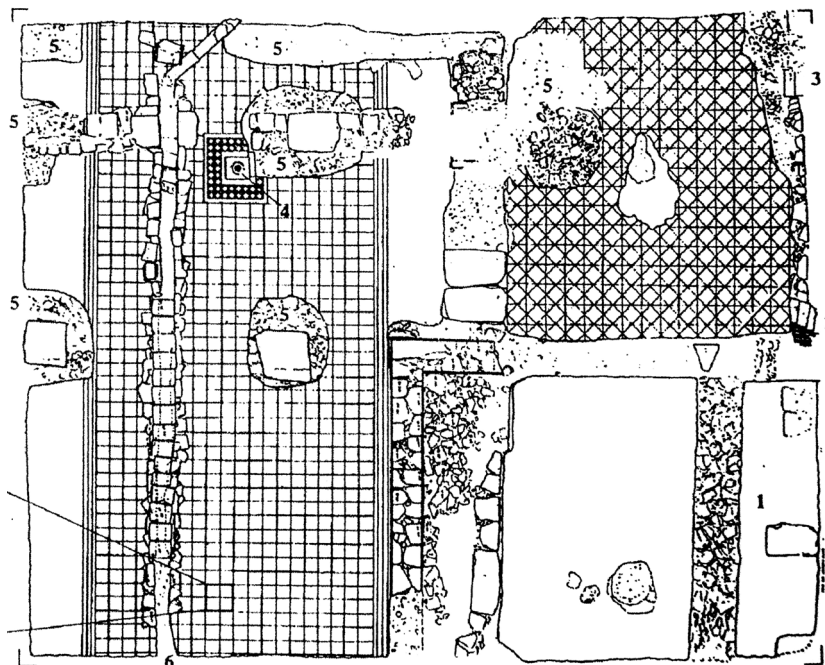


Fig. 4: Architectural integration of the *in situ* mosaics.

1. Foundations of a missing structure; 2/3. Foundations and start of a dome structure; 4. Water drain with mosaic frame; 5. Foundations of a large construction from the last phase of occupation; 6. Plumbing associated with the foundation.

(Reconstruction carried out in 1992, D. Diogo de Sousa Museum Archive, Braga)

⁸ We had difficulty identifying the materials and supports of these floors, so we decided to remove samples from different points of the floors and some *tesserae* for a mineralogical analysis. This mineralogical analysis was done by infrared absorption spectroscopy with Fourier transform in August 2004 under the direction of Eng. Maria João Basto in the Mineralogy and Petrology Laboratory of the Department of Mines and Geo-Resources at the Instituto Superior Técnico in Lisbon. *Abraços* (2008) 72-73.

Panel 1 features a *tessellatum* that was preserved in an area with a maximum width of about 4.5m and a length of 7.8m. The northeast corner features a drain (10cm diameter) with a frame in mosaic (35cm wide) with identical design to Panel 2, but of smaller dimensions (the size of each square ranges between 8 and 9cm on each side). Here too the limestone *tesserae* are gone, and only the granite *tesserae* are *in situ*. This small mosaic, which surrounds the drain (fig. 5 and 6), is integrated into a chessboard of squares with the colours counterchanged, the squares measuring 20 to 22cm on each side.

Panel 2 features a *tessellatum* that was preserved in an area with a maximum width of 2.23m and a maximum length of 3.22m. This board features squares, the sides of which range in length from 20 to 21cm.



Fig. 5: Mosaic of the drain frame from Panel 1. The *tesserae* density is, on average, 116/dm² and the length of the sides of the squares that form the mosaic pattern ranges between 20 and 22 cm. (D. Diogo de Sousa Museum Archive, Braga)



Fig. 6: Mosaic of the drain frame from Panel 1 (detail). The mosaic's *tessellatum*, which surrounds the drain, has a density of 128/dm². The length of the sides of the square varies from 8.5 to 9.5 cm. The width of the *tesserae* fluctuates between 0.5 and 1.2 cm. (D. Diogo de Sousa Museum Archive, Braga)

2.1 The decorative motif on Panel 1

The chessboard pattern – squares with the colours counterchanged and with or without crosslets in the centre – is a motif often used in Roman mosaic, perhaps because it is a composition that is simple to execute. It appeared in the eastern Mediterranean during the 8th century BC, on shingle floors. In the 2nd century BC it began to spread to *opus tessellatum*, not only in the west but also in Greece. The 2nd century examples show an Italian influence, particularly those found in the regions corresponding to Germany and Switzerland, where the motif remained current through late antiquity. In Britain the earliest documented examples are also from the 2nd century, although, in that province, most of the mosaics decorated with the chessboard motif date to the 4th century. In Ostia it is known at least since 130 BC. In Hispania the dissemination of the style began in the 1st century at the Mediterranean coast and, from there, gradually moved inland to places such as Mérida, where an example is known from the second century. This motif is rare in North Africa, but it was used in a 4th century pavement at Utica. Moreover, in the Winter *Thermae* at Thuburbo Maius, two floors dated to the first half of the 5th century contain the chessboard motif: in vestibule XXVIII and in compartment XXXI. The floor of vestibule XXVIII comes close to that of Rio Maior, dated by Cristina Oliveira to the second half of the 4th century.⁹

The Machado de Castro Museum preserves a fragment of a mosaic with this decoration from *Conimbriga* (fig. 7).

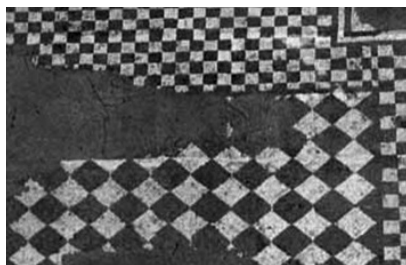


Fig. 7: *Conimbriga*. Machado de Castro Museum. (Photos by the author)



Fig. 8: *Conimbriga*. Casa dos Repuxos (House of the Fountains). (Oleiro [1992] 137)

⁹ Oliveira (2003) 77-79.

Again in this city (*Conimbriga*) the Casa dos Repuxos (House of the Fountains) also contains this motif in the pavement of the northeast *cubiculum*, dating from the third quarter of the 2nd century to the first quarter of the 3rd century (fig. 8).

In the Martins Sarmiento Society Museum in Guimarães, an undated mosaic fragment from the backyard of Fernando Castiço, located next to the Santiago Seminar in Braga, also contains a chessboard of squares with the colours counterchanged (fig. 9).



Fig. 9: Small fragment from Braga (21.5 x 15 cm). The Martins Sarmiento Society Museum collection. (Photo by the author)

The motif also decorates a large mosaic frame in Pedrógão, Póvoa de Cós (Alcobaça; fig. 10). Irisalva Moita dates it from the end of the 1st century to the beginning of the 2nd century AD.¹⁰ The motif is also represented in a mosaic from the Torre de Cabedal, Vila Viçosa, which is preserved in the collection of the Municipal Museum of Elvas.¹¹

¹⁰ Moita (1951) 149.

¹¹ Abraços (2005) 343-344.

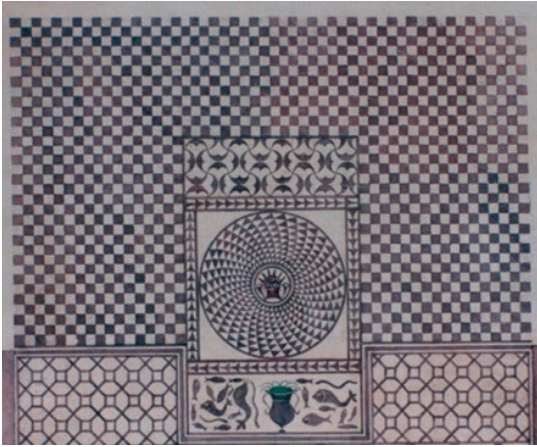


Fig. 10: Partial view of the mosaic of Pedrógão, Póvoa de Cós (Alcobaça).
Drawing by G. Gameiro. AMNA

2.2 The decorative motif on Panel 2 and the drain; probable dating

The grid of rows of hourglasses decorating Panel 2 and the drain of Panel 1 figure among the oldest Roman mosaic motifs. It was most common during the 1st and 2nd centuries, but it endured until the 5th century, as already described in detail in previous publications.¹² The composition of Panel 2 with two different materials (granite and limestone) appears to be a local adaptation of imported classical compositions. As for the dating of these panels, as we saw above, the decorative motifs of these mosaics were used for several centuries. Under the floors no type of ceramic material was found. The mosaics can be dated, however, to the fairly early period of the High Empire, on account of four factors: the analysis of the materials of the house structures to which these floors belong; the size and density of the *tesserae*; the precision of the execution of the mosaic motif (mainly along the drain hole); and the perfection of the granite-carved plumbing that passes underneath Panel 1.¹³

¹² Abraços (2011) 830, Abraços (2015) 483.

¹³ Abraços (2011) 827-831.



Fig. 11: Section of the granite plumbing.
(D. Diogo de Sousa Museum Archive, Braga)

This dating can also be backed up by the foundation on which the mosaic lies. It is well preserved because its builders closely followed the model for mosaic construction described by Vitruvius and built a foundation in layers in order to make the work last, as can be seen in figures 12, 13 and 14¹⁴.



Fig. 12 and 13: *Nucleus*: *tesserae* settlement layer of about 1.5cm; consisting of a thinner mortar with ceramic or tile fragments. *Rudus*: layer consisting of ¼ sand or gravel and small pebbles and ¼ lime in a 22 cm layer. (D. Diogo de Sousa Museum Archive, Braga)

¹⁴ According to Vitruvius, the process for preparing the soil and foundation of a floor had three stages: the preparation of the *statumen*, the *rudus* and the *nucleus*, on which the *tesserae* were placed. If the floor is to sit on the ground, a layer of gravel should be spread in order to level the ground, which is then covered with hay or straw. Over this is placed a handbreadth-high layer of stones (*statumen*); it is then settled with a mixture of gravel and lime (*rudus*). Over this, wood chips are laid and covered with a layer of ceramic powder mixed with lime (*nucleus*). It is on top of this that the marble elements (*opus sectile*) or *tesserae* are laid. The polishing is done and the interstices are filled with marble powder and a final coverage of lime and sand. Cf. Vitruvius 7.1, Perrault (1996); see also: Maciel (2006) 263-264.



Fig. 14: Panel 1, stratigraphic section. *Statumen*: shingle layer (approx. 12cm), pebbles and stones placed on an unmortared ground. (D. Diogo de Sousa Museum Archive, Braga)

The longevity of the pavement depends on the correct preparation of the foundations. Vitruvius believed that the construction of a mosaic should be under the responsibility of an architect, because it was necessary to do a preliminary study of the foundation and to ensure that the builders followed the various stages of the construction process in order to make the work last, as it has in fact done even up to our own times.

As a way of concluding, we recall here the words Justino Maciel left us in the introduction to his translation of Vitruvius' treatise on architecture: 'The Vitruvian work is fundamental for us in our reflection on urbanism, architecture and the decoration of buildings in the Roman period. This is not to assume that their modules were applied as a general rule, but, rather, to deepen our understanding of the underlying *technologia* of Roman architectural art and of how its rules are not necessarily an instructional treatise, but they may be a guideline, a set of knowledge that allies itself with Roman pragmatism and, by giving freedom to architectural achievements, they turn out to be present in the economy, as a final unit and accomplished functionality of Roman conservation work, surprising us sometimes with the evidence of its presence even in achievements far from the centre of the empire, as we can see in Conimbriga.'¹⁵ We add that this evidence is also visible in the implementation of the floor of the *domus* in Braga whose mosaics we have analysed.

¹⁵ Maciel (2006) 13.

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Analysis of a Mosaic Found in the ‘Casa da Roda’ in Braga

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The fragment of the mosaic that we will examine was first mentioned by Fátima Abraços in her thesis.¹ She presents partial drawings of the motifs made from the decal of several photographs belonging to the photographic archive of the Regional Archaeological Museum D. Diogo de Sousa in Braga. Abraços indicates that this mosaic was found in 1990 in the so-called Casa da Roda (House of the Wheel), located at Rua de S. João (Saint John’s Street) in Braga.

When discovered, the original support of the *tessellatum* was fragmented. The mosaic was cleaned, consolidated and left *in situ*. The Regional Archaeological Museum D. Diogo de Sousa registered it with the inventory number 2003.0515.

Since Abraços has called our attention to the interesting features of this fragment, it is appropriate to further analyse it in the scope of the present conference.²

It is a mosaic that we consider of a late phase of the *domus*’ mosaics integrated into the crypt of the Regional Archaeological Museum D. Diogo de Sousa of Braga,³ which demonstrates the vitality of the art form in the capital of *Galaecia* during late Antiquity.

¹ Abraços (2005) 218-219, annex 1, 339-340.

² We had the chance to appreciate this mosaic for the first time, amongst other Portuguese mosaics, in the context of the ‘1st International Olympos (Uludağ) Studies Workshop’, 8-11th May 2014, in Orhaneli and Büyükorhan (Bursa), promoted by the University of Uludağ, in Bursa, Turkey. The paper presented was published: Wrench (2014).

³ These mosaics are studied by Fátima Abraços and the subject of a paper given at the present conference in a panel formed by Fátima Abraços, Ana Fragata and myself.

Description of the Mosaic



Fig. 1: General view of the mosaic found in ‘Casa da Roda’.
© Photographic Archive of D. Diogo de Sousa Museum of Braga

We have been able to study the mosaic through photographs kindly placed at our disposal by the D. Diogo de Sousa Museum.⁴ From the photographs, we can highlight from the outside to the inside:

1. A band of white *tesserae* that connects to the wall, demarcated by a double file of black *tesserae*, which is decorated by a ‘row of spaced saltires of tassels’ of black *tesserae*.⁵

2. An ‘undulating row of alternately inverted *peltae*. Outlined here are the *peltae* with a heart on the central point.’⁶ Both the *peltae* and the *hederae* are delineated by a double file of black *tesserae*, the *peltae* are filled with red, pink and white *tesserae* and the *hederae* are filled with red and black or white *tesserae*. It should be noted that the red fill was reserved only for the lobes of the heart shaped leaves. This

⁴ I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to the Director of the D. Diogo de Sousa Museum, Isabel Silva, and to her work team for providing me with the photographic material concerning this mosaic and the possibility of its publication. Of all the 60 photographs, including those carried out with scale, we have selected those presented here.

⁵ Balmelle et al. (1985) 4 j; Viegas, Abraços, Macedo (1993) 55.

⁶ Balmelle et al. (1985) 58 a, e; Viegas, Abraços, Macedo (1993) 74.

band is demarcated by two narrow strips of five rows of white *tesserae* between two double filets of black *tesserae*, strips that mark out the subsequent interior bands.

3. The frame with alternately inverted *peltae* is followed by another decorated by a 'row of tangentially juxtaposed bells, forming tangentially inverted bells and an undulating line, with each bell horizontally shaded'⁷ over a background of black *tesserae*. The bell colours are: dark red, pink, yellow and white. The exterior dentilled filet of red and yellow *tesserae* is clearly visible. The undulating line is drawn by a filet of black *tesserae*.

4. This band is followed by another larger strip, with a black background, where a few tangential solids (four?) are visible, in perspective and facing the corner of the mosaic. These solids are part of a band decoration: 'row of tangential cuboids with serrated sides'.⁸ The solids, whose colours are difficult to determine, feature the larger sides in white *tesserae* and well highlighted in the black background, with squared tops of white *tesserae*, and a black *tessera* in the centre.

Comparative analysis of the geometric motifs and themes occurring in this mosaic

1. Wall connecting strip with a 'row of spaced saltires of tassels' (fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Strip with a row of spaced saltires of tassels.

© Photographic Archive of D. Diogo de Sousa Museum of Braga

⁷ Balmelle et al. (1985) 60 e, variant; Viegas, Abraços, Macedo (1993) 74.

⁸ Balmelle (1985) 99 e, f; Viegas, Abraços, Macedo (1993) 96.

For the analysis of the different motifs present in this mosaic in comparison to other mosaics in Portugal and elsewhere, we begin by highlighting the strip that we assume served as a connection to the wall. It is decorated with a ‘row of spaced saltires of tassels’ demarcated by a double file of black *tesserae* belonging to another narrow strip of white *tesserae* where the remaining wall ends. This decoration, despite being quite simple and common, reveals care in the decorative presentation of the mosaic ensemble. We compare it by way of example to a strip belonging to one of the floors of the Casa da Cruz Suástica (House of the Swastika) in *Conimbriga*, dating from the second half of the third century.⁹

2. ‘Undulating row of alternately inverted *peltae*. Here the *peltae* with a heart on the central point’ (fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Undulating row of alternately inverted *peltae*, the *peltae* with a heart on the central point

© Photographic Archive of D. Diogo de Sousa Museum of Braga

The band decorated with *peltae* and *hederae* in the *apices* is likely to be the exterior frame of the mosaic. These two elements (*pelta* and *hedera*) presented together seem to reinforce the prophylactic symbolism of each of them and, consequently, are well suited to their location in the first frame.

⁹ Cf. Oliveira (2005) 40 n. 24, for the House of the Swastika, compartment of undetermined function, the photograph of the entire pavement, the concise description of the mosaic and the dating (for the date, Oliveira quotes Correia [2003] 25).

The *pelta* motif is one of the most widespread motifs in Roman mosaic art. Its origin could be in a small type of crescent-shaped shield (*πέλτη*) used by people from Asia and by the Thracians, through whom it reached the Greeks. It, in turn, is linked to the characteristic shield of the Amazons as they appear in Greek Art. Because of this, the *pelta* is also called the ‘shield of the Amazons’.¹⁰ So we see it, for example, in Roman mosaics. Examples are the one in a house at Sousse (Maison des Autruches), which is dated from the middle of the third century, and one at Apameia, in Syria, which is dated the second half of the fifth century.¹¹ The *peltae* used in exterior frames of the mosaics that cover the floors, as featured in Casa da Roda mosaic, seem to keep the distant memory of their function as a protective shield. It is as if they are serving as defenders of the room.

The *pelta* first appears as a decorative motif in mosaic art in the first century BC¹² It did not become widespread, however, until the first century AD, when it appeared filling the compartments of the patterns, in frames or in larger compositions. An example of the last possibility comes from a mosaic in Aquileia (fig. 4) dated to the Augustan period. It contains four large *peltae*, with the vertices turned to the four sides of a square. They define four semicircles of a centralized pattern that will have great diffusion in subsequent centuries.¹³



Fig. 4: Mosaic from Aquileia in the National Archaeological Museum of Aquileia. Photo Licinia Wrench (2012)

¹⁰ Cf. Daremberg-Saglio (1969) 1257, 5, ‘La pelta’.

¹¹ Dunbabin (1978) 271, pl. 26, fig. 63 and Saïdah (1976) 97-98.

¹² Ovadiah (1980) 145 Pelta; 44, 114.

¹³ Composition named ‘compass drawing schema’ by Fernández-Galiano (1980).

It is in the period from the middle of the first century BC through the first century AD that the mosaic is confirmed as a specifically Roman art form. A series of motifs and patterns are introduced that extend to the entire pavement in *tessellatum* mainly using only two colours of *tesserae*: black and white.¹⁴ This dichromatic sobriety and stylistic severity presented by the majority of the mosaics of this period from the Italian peninsula opposes the polychrome and the ornamental richness of the figurative mosaics from Greek and Hellenistic pavements, which were treated as paintings.¹⁵

Among the several examples of mosaics in modern-day Portugal that relate to the severe style of the high-imperial Roman mosaic, we highlight a frame decorated with a ‘row of quasi-tangentially juxtaposed *peltae*’¹⁶ of a mosaic from the Monte da Moura, Pardais, Vila Viçosa. It is displayed and integrated into the floor of the Museum of the Library of the House of Bragança, in Vila Viçosa.¹⁷

Going back to the *pelta* motif, as it appears in the mosaic of Braga with a *hedera* attached to the central vertex (fig. 5), we take note that one of the first known examples of this combination comes from a dichromatic Italian mosaic at Cividale Del Friuli.¹⁸



Fig. 5: Detail of a *pelta* with a *hedera* in the apex
© Photographic Archive of D. Diogo de Sousa Museum of Braga.

¹⁴ Darmon (1976) 31-33.

¹⁵ Plin. *NH* 36.184: *Paumenta originem apud Graecos habent elaborata arte picturae ratione.*

¹⁶ Balmelle et al. (1985) 57c, variant.

¹⁷ Abraços (2005) 339-340, annex I.

¹⁸ The example is cited by Oleiro (1973) 106 n. 138, referring to Blake (1930) 115, pl. 38, 1. The author wonders if this mosaic should be dated to the second century and not to the first century, the chronology proposed by Blake.

In fact, over the time in which the *pelta* was used in mosaic art, it lost the rigidity with which it was handled in black-and-white mosaics. Thus, in different regions of the Empire, there are found *peltae* with volutes, *peltae* with stylized vegetal extensions or *peltae* with small ornaments in the *apices*: heart shaped leaves, tassels, lilies, lotus, calices, etc. Quite interesting is the use of a small shaped *pelta* leaf placed at the edge of a volute that appears in a mosaic from *Lugdunum*, displayed in the Gallo-Roman Museum of Lyon and dated to the first half of the third century.¹⁹ It alternates with a heart shaped leaf, a pattern which makes it appear that the two motifs (*pelta* and *hedera*) are equivalent in the same exterior foliage frame (fig. 6).



Fig. 6: A shaped *pelta* leaf in a mosaic from *Lugdunum* in the Gallo-Roman Civilization Museum of Lyon. Photo Licinia Wrench (2012).

Parallels of the alternately reversed *peltae* frame of the mosaic of Braga are found in the western Roman provinces, North Africa

¹⁹ Cf. Stern (1967) 24, 1.1, pl. 5. The author (p. 24) points to another pavement of Sainte-Colombe (Inv. Mos. 1, n. 198) with similar styling of the *rinceau*, with a leaf in the shape of a *pelta*.

(Tunisia) and the eastern Mediterranean.²⁰ One example comes from a third century A.D. mosaic in *Apollonia* (modern-day Albania),²¹ in which the shapes of small *peltae* and the large ivy leaves resemble those of the mosaic in Braga.²²

In other mosaics found in Portugal we can see undulating rows of alternately reversed *peltae* in the frames of several floors of the villa of Milreu, Estói, Faro, in mosaics from the villa of Cerro da Vila (Vila Moura), Albufeira, Faro,²³ in a mosaic that paves one of the rooms of the *balnea* from the villa of Boca do Rio, Budens, Vila do Bispo. The last example is displayed in the Regional Museum of Lagos. Its composition is centered on a cross/ X shape (Saint Andrew's cross design), which seems to reflect an edged dome cover.²⁴ However, in all these examples, dating from the first half of the third century to the fourth century, other motifs attached to the central vertices of the *peltae*, mostly half tassels, are used (fig. 7).

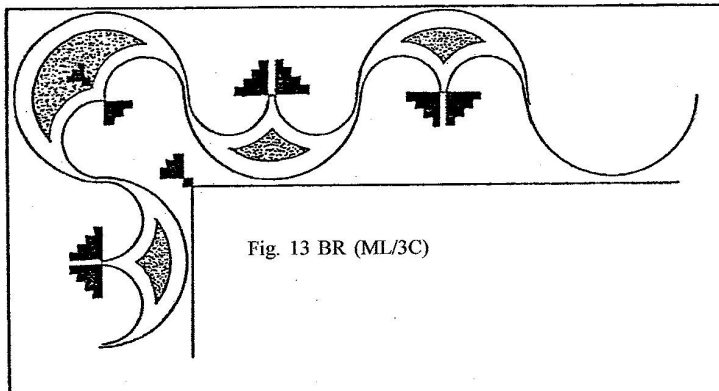


Fig. 13 BR (ML/3C)

Fig. 7: Drawing of the frame's decoration of the mosaic from the Villa of Boca do Rio, Budens, Vila do Bispo. In Correia [Wrench] (2005) est. 17, fig. 13, apud Veiga (1910) pavement design 3-C.

²⁰ Balmelle et al. (1985) 58.

²¹ Balmelle et al. (1985) 58 e.

²² Anamali, Adhami (1974) 41-42. It is a polychrome mosaic belonging to the vestibule of a *balnea*. The frame in question circumvents one of quadrangular panels of the mosaic field.

²³ Cf. Oliveira (2010) 370-371. See also Oliveira's study of these mosaics in Lancha, Oliveira (2013).

²⁴ Veiga (1910) [2006] AP 15; Correia [Wrench] (2005) 57, est. 17, fig 13, drawing of the frame's decoration according with the pavement design 3-C, in Veiga (1910); Abraços (2005) annex 1, 367-368.

The example of the frame that most closely resembles the mosaic of Braga comes from the villa of Martim Gil, Leiria, *Conuentus Scallabitanus*. It is known only through drawings from when Marques da Costa²⁵ integrated it into his announcement about the discovery of two mosaics in the vicinity of Leiria²⁶ (fig. 8). According to the drawings, the small *peltae* made with yellow and grey materials and the *hederae* were made with red *tesserae*. According to the author, in the mortar that supported the *tesserae*, two coins were found, one from the third century and the other from the fourth century.

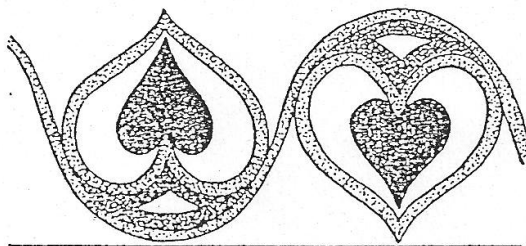


Fig.19 MG

Fig. 8: Drawing of the frame's decoration of the mosaic from the Villa of Martim Gil, Leiria. In Correia [Wrench] (2005) est. 23, fig. 19, apud Costa (1905) fig. 2.

Peltae with heart shaped leaves attached to the apex appear in other Roman mosaics from Portugal. Examples are the late (and heavily restored) mosaic at the villa of Pisões, Beja (*Conuentus Pacensis*)²⁷ and the mosaics in the villa of Santiago da Guarda, Ansião, Leiria, *Conuentus Scallabitanus*, which *in genere*, date to the fourth-fifth century.²⁸ It is important to note that, in the example of the mosaic of

²⁵ Costa (1905).

²⁶ Costa (1905) 49-50, fig. 2. Drawing apud Costa (1905) fig. 2, in Correia [Wrench] (2005) est. 23, fig. 19.

²⁷ Cf. Oliveira (2003) 116, who proposes the 3rd century AD as the date of the mosaic. It should be noted that two other mosaics of the Pisões villa, contain *peltae* with heart shaped leaves. An isolated *pelta* with a heart shaped leaf attached to a central vertex decorates a circle segment of the compositional scheme centred by circles embedded in squares, and a quadrilobe of *peltae*, with four heart shaped leaves filling a concave square of a mosaic with a compass drawing schema. Cf. Correia [Wrench] (2005) est. 23, figs. 17, 18, 20.

²⁸ Pereira (2008) 175.

Santiago da Guarda, the composition of *peltae* with *hederae* in the central vertices is framed by an undulating row of horizontally shaded bells, like one of the interior bands of the mosaic of Braga. It is also important to note that undulating rows of alternately inverted *peltae* and *peltae* compositions, with or without ornamentation in the *apices*, are fairly frequent in late Roman mosaics. This is especially true of *peltae* compositions with heart shaped leaves in the central vertices. A good example is a late antique mosaic in the *thermae* of Djebel-Oust (Tunisia). *Peltae* treated this way correspond to the last phase of this motif's evolution, in the context of the mosaics of these *thermae*.²⁹

3. 'Row of tangentially juxtaposed bells, forming tangentially inverted bells and an undulating line, with each bell horizontally shaded' (fig. 9)



Fig. 9: Row of tangentially juxtaposed bells, forming tangentially inverted bells and an undulating line, with each bell horizontally shaded.

© Photographic Archive of D. Diogo de Sousa Museum of Braga.

This type of band, in which a wavy line is drawn over a background with *tesserae* of different colours that are bound together by dentilled filets, is very common in mosaics of the eastern Mediterranean and

²⁹ Fendri (1963) 168, fig. 16, 4, mosaic belonging to room 16.

North Africa.³⁰ It is also found in late western mosaics,³¹ especially those from the Iberian peninsula, possibly on account of North African and eastern influences.

In mosaics originating from modern-day Portugal, this type of frame decoration is observed in the *Conuentus Scallabitanus* mosaics, such as those coming from the late period villae. In the villa of Santiago da Guarda, Ansião, Leiria one can see several mosaics framed with this decoration. Take, for example, the corridor pavement of the northern area of the *pars urbana*³² (fig. 10).³³ Another example comes from the



Fig. 10: Mosaic *in situ* of a corridor in the northern area of the Villa of Santiago da Guarda, Ansião, Leiria.

Photo Licínia Wrench (2013), authorized by the Town Council of Ansião.

³⁰ Fendri (1963) 169, fig. 17, 3-4. The most careful decoration of this type comes from a mosaic of the third century, dated by the author. Oliveira (2003) 98-99 points out that one of the first African examples comes from Thysdrus during the Principate of Hadrian (quoting Poinssot [1965] 228, fig. 24). Oliveira adds that it is also found at Carthage in second to third century pavements (quoting Ben Osman [1980] 421-422, n. 184). Oliveira furthermore observes that from the first half of the third century, the number of African examples increases and that, by the end of the fourth century in Bulla Regia and Carthage, one can find the closest parallels of the mosaic in the villa of Rio Maior (panel F, est. 7).

³¹ Oliveira (2003) 100. Oliveira notes that the variant of dentilled filets of the polychrome bells present in the aforementioned mosaic of Rio Maior is most common in the western provinces from the fourth century onward. One example is known from Aquitania, a few more to the north and none in Brittany.

³² Pereira (2008) 174, fig. 8.

³³ I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the Town Council of Ansião, represented in the person of its Vice-President, Mrs. Célia Freire, for authorizing the publication of this photograph of the mosaic *in situ* at the villa of Santiago da Guarda.

villa of Rabaçal, Penela, Coimbra, whose mosaics are dated from the second half of the fourth century.³⁴ This type of decoration, present in some of the mosaics, is achieved by an ‘undulating row of alternately inverted semicircles’.³⁵

In some of the mosaics of the Rio Maior villa,³⁶ the same motif of shaded bells decorates a band or draws the intertwined spindles in a surface composition. Cristina Oliveira³⁷ refers to a mosaic with this decorative theme from the S. Pedro de Caldelas villa, Tomar (*Conuentus Scallabitanus*).³⁸

Also from the *Conuentus Scallabitanus*, the third or fourth century mosaic floor of one of the rooms of the Casa dos Esqueletos (House of the Skeletons) in *Conimbriga* features undulating lines, with bells horizontally shaded, that circumvent two of the rectangles of the compositional design.³⁹ The decoration of this quite overloaded mosaic clearly points to relationships with eastern and North African mosaics: chromatic or perspective effects and the motifs of the pattern, such as the rainbow motif and the opposed heart shaped leaves.

In modern-day Portugal, we find examples of this theme in mosaics of the late period villae in Prado Galego (Pinhel), Alter do Chão (Portalegre), Quinta das Longas (Elvas), Monte do Meio, Beja and Milreu (Estói, Faro). In this last example the polychrome bells serve as the interior decoration of a rectangular panel of a mosaic located at the entrance of the *domus* and dated to the beginning of the fourth century.⁴⁰

The simplified version of the polychrome bells as an ‘undulating row of alternately inverted semicircles’ was employed, as previously

³⁴ Pessoa (1998) 58.

³⁵ Balmelle et al. (1985) 60 b, variant.

³⁶ Oliveira (2003) 179, est. 5, mosaic n. 7 B; 181; est. 7, mosaic n. 7 F. These mosaics are dated to the 4th century AD.

³⁷ Oliveira (2003).

³⁸ Oliveira (2003) 100. The author relies on the following bibliographic reference: Batata (1997) 178.

³⁹ Oliveira (2005) 46. Compartment identified as *cubiculum*; photography of the entire floor, its concise description and timing. See also Oleiro (1986) 127; an excellent and pioneering article on the ensemble of Roman mosaics in Portugal.

⁴⁰ Oliveira (2003) 100. For the example of the Monte do Meio villa, the author relies on Viana (1954) 15-6, est. 4, 35. For the example of Milreu see Oliveira (2010) 372-373 and Lancha, Oliveira (2013) 224-229, mosaic 28, panel C. For the example of Quinta das Longas see Oliveira et al. (2011) 908.

noted, in mosaics at the Rabaçal's villa. It is also found in the wreaths of the mosaic field in a southern room in Pisões' villa, Beja, which is dated from the end of the second century to the beginning of the third century AD.⁴¹

It is interesting to verify that in the mural painting of the late antique Christian Basilica of Tróia, Setúbal, possibly painted between the end of the fourth century and the early fifth century,⁴² this type of decoration is also used in the alternately inverted semicircles version (fig. 11).

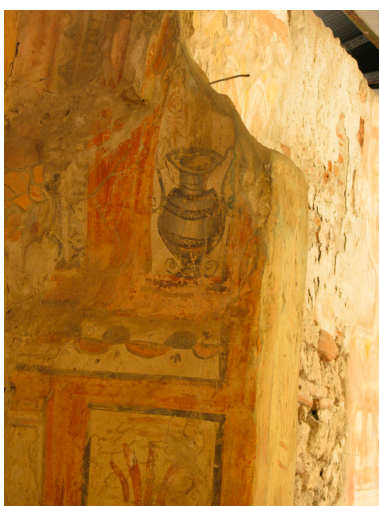


Fig. 11: Detail of a mural painting in the late antique Christian basilica of Tróia, Setúbal. Photo Licínia Wrench (2009)

4. 'Row of tangential cuboids with serrated sides' (fig. 12).

Turning to the comparative analysis of the inside band still visible in the mosaic fragment of the Casa da Roda (House of Wheel) in Braga, we begin by distinguishing the decoration designated as 'row of tangential cuboids'⁴³ from the one described as '*consoles* in lateral perspective'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Costa (1983-1985) 121. We suggest that the mosaic has a later date, perhaps the advanced 3rd century, based overall on the braid pattern design, the octagons' various interior frames and the wreaths of the undulating band.

⁴² Maciel (1996) 221.

⁴³ Balmelle et al. (1985) 99 e, f, g.

⁴⁴ Balmelle et al. (1985) 99 i, j, k, l.



Fig. 12: Row of tangential cuboids with serrated sides.
 © Photographic Archive of D. Diogo de Sousa Museum of Braga.

In the description of this type of decoration, we can observe, occasionally, a lack of precision because it encompasses mosaic features visually quite similar. In fact, for the *consoles* treated in perspective, representing a Doric cornice, the term *mutule* would be more appropriate than *console*.⁴⁵ The basis of the cornice is visible and the solids are relatively spaced. In the ‘row of cuboids’ these rectangular parallelepipeds in perspective stand out evenly and fairly together from the band’s background in which they are represented.

Both decorations with three-dimensional effects in the Greek and Hellenistic mosaic tradition have as reference the architectural structures themselves or the painted representations of architecture.

Doro Levi⁴⁶ notes that in a Dura mural of the second century BC the denticles of the architectural decoration are represented by shaded parallelepipeds. From Pompeii, the oldest example of this decoration is integrated into the painting of Style I.⁴⁷ The survival of this theme also in mural painting can be seen in the late antique Christian Basilica of Tróia, Setúbal, Portugal (fig. 13).

⁴⁵ Alves (2002) 45.

⁴⁶ Levi (1947) 376, n. 41.

⁴⁷ Barbet (1985) 29-30, fig. 17, Pompeii, House 6, 16, 26.



Fig. 13: Detail of a mural painting in the late antique Christian basilica of Tróia, Setúbal. Photo Licínia Wrench (2009).

According to Ovadiah,⁴⁸ this architectural theme on mosaic pavements is found in Delos, Pergamon and Pompeii: ‘It appears as a central (field) pattern in mosaic pavements from the 2nd century BC onwards.’⁴⁹

In his discussion of the evolution of the geometric motifs featured in the mosaics of the Djebel Oust *thermae*, Fendri⁵⁰ considers that, in the case of Tunisia ‘the transposition to the mosaic of the architectural cornice remains true until the end of the Severan period’ and the representations of solids in perspective, in contrast to later mosaics, cannot be considered to be ‘the mosaic reproduction of an authentic architectural element.’⁵¹

In reality, the theme of tangential cuboids in frames is widely used both in North African mosaics and in eastern Mediterranean mosaics,

⁴⁸ Ovadiah (1980).

⁴⁹ Ovadiah (1980) 160, Plastic Cubes (three-dimensional); 55, K3.

⁵⁰ Fendri (1963).

⁵¹ Fendri (1963) 161, 169 ‘De la corniche en relief aux solides en perspective’, fig. 18, n. 1-5. In the context of the mosaics of the *thermae*, the theme of consoles is represented in a mosaic of the second-third century and the tangential cuboids in a mosaic that the author places in the Byzantine period.

particularly those in Antioch and Zeugma of which the earliest date to the second or third century.⁵²

This version of ‘perspective solids in rows’ is also found in various mosaics of late villae in modern-day Spain. The ‘Bellerophon and the Chimera’ mosaic from the mid-third century in Bell-Llock, Gerona, provides one such example. Other examples are contained in fourth century mosaics from Los Quintanares of Soria, from *Comunión* (Álava), from La Malena (Zaragoza), from Carranque (Toledo) and from Buñel (Jaén). The mosaic of Villa Cardeñajimeno (Burgos), dated to the end of the fourth century, provides a hollow cuboids version.⁵³

After this brief digression on the use, chronology and geographical dispersion of this type of decoration, we return to the mosaic of the Casa da Roda (House of Wheel) and the parallels found in other mosaics from Portugal. As far as we know, these are concentrated in *Conuentus Scallabitanus*.

Two examples of the ‘*consoles* in lateral perspective’ have been found in mosaic pavements from *Conimbriga* and have been dated to the second century: one from the Casa de Cantaber (House of Cantaber) and the other of unknown origin. Both are displayed at the entrance of the ruins.⁵⁴ Note that the sides of the consoles are marked by a simple dotted file with white *tesserae*. These are comparable to the prisms of the Braga mosaic, which show the long sides serrated by white *tesserae*.

Examples of frames decorated by tangential cuboids come from the fourth and fifth century villae in Rabaçal, Penela,⁵⁵ and Santiago da Guarda, Ansião,⁵⁶ both of which are within the district of the *ciuitas* of *Conimbriga*.

⁵² Kondoleon (2000) 79, 81, 83, 92, among other examples.

⁵³ López Monteagudo, Navarro Sáez, Palol Salellas (1998) 21-28, mosaic n. 9, fig. 5. láms. 7-12, 35-42. The examples presented above were selected by the authors of this study, p. 27.

⁵⁴ Oleiro (1973) 76-110, mosaic n. 1, fig. 4, dated to the middle or third quarter of the second century; mosaic n. 2, fig. 5, dated to the late Antonine period. Oleiro observes that the theme of consoles does not seem to have been widely used in western Roman mosaics (Oleiro quotes Stern (1963) n. 314 A, pl. 29, mosaic dated from the end of second century or beginning of third).

⁵⁵ Pessoa (2011). In an interesting and comprehensive analysis concerning the mosaics of Rabaçal’s villa, Pessoa features a number of parallels to this type of decoration from North Africa but especially from the eastern Mediterranean, dating from the second century to late antiquity.

⁵⁶ Pereira (2008) 175.

This decoration in the Braga mosaic proves to be of great interest, because not only does it extend the known area of occurrence of this theme within Portuguese territory (from the *Conuentus Scallabitanus* to the *Conuentus Bracaraugustanus*) but also because it may be situated chronologically in an intermediate phase in relation to the works of *Conimbriga* (second century) and to those of the noted fourth and fifth century villae.

Conclusion and dating proposal for the mosaic of the Casa da Roda (House of the Wheel)

Based on the stylistic and comparative analysis of the occurring themes in this mosaic and since we have no other relevant archaeological data, we suggest that this mosaic dates to the end of the third century or to the fourth century. To help us with the attribution of this chronology, we also consider the archaeological data from *Bracara Augusta* to be of great importance.⁵⁷ At a late date this city underwent a significant developmental phase as the capital of the province *Gallaecia*.

Furthermore, there are the possible western, eastern and North African influences. The eastern and North African influences are detected mainly in the themes of the row of tangential inverted bells horizontally shaded and of the row of tangential cuboids.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the Atlantic route was vital to the relationship between the people in the northwest of the Peninsula and the people along the Mediterranean.⁵⁸ It should also be remembered that the mosaic art form in late antiquity was the expression of an iconic ‘language’ common to the romanized world, resulting from an interweaving of influences along the travelled paths.

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⁵⁷ Martins et al. (2012) 57-61.

⁵⁸ Martins et al. (2012) 33.

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IV.
IMPERIVM SINE FINE DEDI
(Verg. *Aen.* 1.279)





I tormenti d'amore di una regina, da Virgilio all'opera musicale barocca

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La vicenda di Didone, che sin dalla sua comparsa nella letteratura è stata declinata in modo così diverso, da rendere ardua l'individuazione di un nucleo narrativo originario, soprattutto nella versione virgiliana ha costituito sino ai tempi più recenti il testo generatore di innumerevoli riedizioni nelle diverse forme dell'arte; nell'opera musicale, in particolare, la ripresa della storia della regina di Cartagine rappresenta un caso singolare, anche per la combinazione dei due diversi canali espressivi (testo e musica), che cooperano nella resa drammatica.

Personaggio dalla spiccata vocazione tragica, la Didone virgiliana risente della confusione programmatica tra mito e storia, che del poema epico opacizza i contorni di encomio letterario e attenua i toni trionfalistici;¹ certo, per Virgilio la grande storia di Roma, che ha i confini dell'*aetas* augustea, è frutto di una 'fatale' identificazione della vicenda di Enea con quella della creazione dell'impero; tuttavia dell'*Eneide*, più che gli aspetti celebrativi e il racconto delle gloriose gesta degli antenati troiani di Augusto, rimangono impresse quelle pagine, in cui i personaggi sono ritratti nei momenti di maggiore sofferenza: lo stesso protagonista è un eroe a metà, costretto com'è a subire perdite desolanti, dalla moglie Creusa al padre Anchise fino all'abbandono, straziante ma necessario, di Didone.

Nella vicenda dei due nobili amanti, in cui confluiscono e si fondono armonicamente schegge e frammenti di altre storie, i protagonisti sono accomunati da un destino identico: come Enea, Didone è una profuga, ha dovuto difendersi nella sua patria dalla violenza perpetrata con l'inganno, ha perduto la persona più amata, è stata costretta ad affrontare le traversie di un viaggio per mare e si è accollata una serie

¹ Sull'idea della guerra nel poema virgiliano si rinvia a Lyne (1990) 316-338.

di responsabilità. Profondamente diversa dai tradizionali modelli femminili romani (figlia, sposa o madre), chiusi nel cerchio delle relazioni e dei compiti familiari, Didone è una donna condottiera e ‘fondatrice’,² autonoma e potente, *dux femina facti* (*Aen.* 1.364), ma, come Enea, anche intimamente segnata dalla *pietas* e dal senso del dovere. Il rapporto d’amore tra Didone ed Enea, dunque, è fondato non sulla compensazione delle differenze, ma sulla semplice ‘sommatoria’ – virtualmente concorrenziale – di due individui identici e dotati di pari dignità. Non è difficile prevedere fin dall’inizio, allora, a quali esiti condurrà la relazione amorosa, che, tuttavia, non pregiudica l’evolversi delle imprese di Enea; Virgilio, infatti, sceglie di ‘innestare’ la vicenda della principessa fenicia – che, almeno negli intenti dell’autore, costituisce solo una fase della grande epopea encomiastica – nella macrostoria che racconta il mito della fondazione di Roma; il poeta, però, ‘si fa prendere la mano’ fino ad accordare grande rilievo alla sfortunata storia d’amore, che nell’economia del poema costituisce uno snodo cruciale nel racconto delle gesta di Enea; sarà proprio l’esito tragico dell’amore di Didone per l’ospite troiano, infatti, a garantire l’esistenza della futura Roma.

Inserita in una prospettiva più ampia, che dall’ambito letterario sconfinava in quello storico-politico, la storia d’amore tra Enea e Didone ha i contorni del confronto inconciliabile di due culture eterogenee e ideologicamente ‘nemiche’ (Oriente e Occidente), che degenera nello scontro tra due opposte visioni del mondo: la rivalità tra Roma e Cartagine, come quella tra Roma e l’Egitto, infatti, prefigura il contrasto irriducibile tra ‘la civiltà occidentale contro la minaccia di corruzione che l’Oriente incarna’;³ la scelta dolorosa di abbandonare Didone conferma il non comune senso del dovere di Enea verso gli dèi e verso

² Sono queste le caratteristiche della regina che emergono dal discorso di Venere in *Aen.* 1.335-370.

³ La citazione è tratta da Bono, Tessitore (1998) 28; sulla base della ‘barbara’ pertinenza di Didone e di Cleopatra con l’invisibile Oriente, le studiose scorgono e documentano con rinvii ai libri IV e VIII dell’*Eneide* l’analogia tra i due personaggi femminili: ‘nell’immagine di Cleopatra *pallentem morte futura* (8.709), tra le stragi del combattimento, ritorna Didone *pallida morte futura* (4.644), illividita già nella decisione del suicidio; le due regine sono dalla stessa parte nello scontro tra due mondi e due ordini di valori messo in scena esplicitamente in questo passaggio’ (Bono, Tessitore [1998] 30); l’inconciliabilità ‘in nuce’ tra le due culture, che affonda le radici sin dall’atto di fondazione delle due città e nella diversa, opposta ‘tutela’ divina, emerge dalle considerazioni di Schiesaro (2005) 86-87, riproposte in Schiesaro (2008) 209-210.

la sua discendenza e, nell'ottica dell'ideologia augustea, comprova il trionfo dell'etica romana su quella della 'barbara seduttrice' Didone.

A ben guardare, però, la 'ragion di stato' che sacrifica le ragioni degli individui sembra avere ben poco spazio nei versi di Virgilio: sono proprio le vittime del fato o, in una diversa prospettiva, quelle della storia i personaggi ai quali il poeta riserva pagine di straordinaria bellezza, come quelle del suicidio di Didone, nella conclusione del IV libro dell'*Eneide*.

At trepida et coeptis immanibus effera Dido
 sanguineam volvens aciem, maculisque trementis
 interfusa genas et pallida morte futura,
 interiora domus inrumpit limina et altos 645
 conscendit furibunda rogos ensemque recludit
 Dardanium, non hos quaesitum munus in usus.
 Hic, postquam Iliacas vestis notumque cubile
 conspexit, paulum lacrimis et mente morata
 incubuitque toro dixitque novissima verba

642-650⁴

I propositi di Didone non sono certo quelli espressi alla fedele Barce: lo si intuisce da *at*, che all'inizio del v. 642 segnala l'uscita di scena della serva e introduce la descrizione dello stato d'animo della regina;⁵ gli appellativi che inquadrano la causa del suo intimo tormento esprimono una profonda inquietudine (*trepida*) e il comportamento istintivo tipico di una *fera* (*effera*), mentre il volto mostra le tracce evidenti della pazzia, come l'exasperato movimento degli occhi iniettati di sangue (v. 643 *sanguineam volvens aciem*) e le guance tremanti e interamente ricoperte di macchie: vv. 643-644 *maculis ...tremenis/ ...interfusa genas*; in *interfundere* – qui per la prima volta in Virgilio – il proverbio rafforza l'idea di una 'completa' e 'diffusa' alterazione del colorito normale del volto e sottolinea l'exasperazione del momento.

Sconvolta essa stessa dall'atrocità del suo proposito, Didone irrompe *furibunda* negli *interiora domus limina* e con impeto travolgente (*conscendit*) sale i gradini della pira, sulla cui sommità sfodera una spada:

⁴ Il testo latino è quello dell'edizione teubneriana di Conte (2009).

⁵ L'analisi di questo e dei successivi contesti virgiliani, oltre che al commento di Pease (1935), molto deve a Fedeli (2008) 73-81.

l'aggettivo (*Dardanium*), che connota il dono dell'*hospes* troiano, fa capire che si tratta proprio di quella appartenuta a Enea; la metamorfosi funzionale dell'arma, che da omaggio si trasforma in strumento letale, è segnalata anche dall'ostinata ripetizione del suono *u* che nel v. 647 crea un'atmosfera cupa e opprimente, indizio dell'esito luttuoso.

Dall'alto della sua posizione Didone riesce ad avere una visione complessiva, come suggerisce il prefisso di *conspexit* (v. 649): lo sguardo si sofferma sulle vesti di Enea (*Iliacas vestes*) e sul letto, testimone silenzioso dei momenti lieti del loro amore, secondo un *topos* di ascendenza alessandrina.⁶ Il ricordo dell'ormai trascorsa felicità internerisce fino alle lacrime la regina, che, però riacquista subito (v. 649 *paulum lacrimis et mente morata*) la sua fiera dignità: lo indica la successione serrata dei gesti, segnalata da quella dei due perfetti coordinati con l'enclitica (v. 650 *incubuitque ...dixitque*).

'Dulces exuviae, dum fata deusque sinebat,
 accipite hanc animam meque his exsolvite curis.
 Vixi et quem dederat cursum Fortuna peregi,
 et nunc magna mei sub terras ibit imago.
 Urbem praeclaram statui, mea moenia vidi, 655
 ulta virum poenas inimico a fratre recepi;
 felix, heu nimium felix, si litora tantum
 numquam Dardaniae tetigissent nostra carinae!
 Dixit, et os impressa toro 'moriemur inultae,
 sed moriamur' ait; 'sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras. 660
 Hauriat hunc oculis ignem crudelis ab alto
 Dardanus, et nostrae secum ferat omina mortis
 651-662

L'apostrofe alle *dulces exuviae* (v. 651) esprime un sentimento di intensa affettività, a cui subentra subito il senso di amara rassegnazione dell'inciso *dum fata deusque sinebat*, che piega la felicità amorosa alle spietate prescrizioni del fato.⁷ In un sussulto di orgoglio, però,

⁶ Nel suo commento a Prop. 2.15.1-2 *O me felicem! O nox mihi candida! et o tu! lectule deliciis facte beate meis!* Fedeli (2005) 444 rinvia ad *Anth. Pal.* 5.4.5-6 (Philod.) σὺ δ', ὃ φιλεράστρια κοίτη, / ἦδη τῆς Παφίης ἴσθι τὰ λειπόμμενα e 5.181.12 (Asclep.) κλίνη μάρτυς; il motivo compare poi nel *fr.* 1 M. di Tìcida (*felix lectule talibus/ sole amoribus*) e con qualche probabilità, considerato lo stato lacunoso del testo, in Catull. 61.107 *o cubile quod omnibus*; cf. in seguito, Ov. *Ars* 2.703 *consciis, ecce, duos accepit lectus amantes* e Mart. 10.38.6-7 *o quae proelia, quas utrimque pugnas/ felix lectulus et lucerna vidit!*

la riaffermazione del proprio decoro regale spinge Didone a pronunciare un discorso appropriato alla gravità del momento, anche per la solennità dello stile; nel celebrare le imprese compiute, la regina scandisce indirettamente il proprio epitaffio: il v. 653 riassume le fasi dell'esistenza terrena di Didone, contrassegnate dall'ubbidienza ai disegni della sorte e dalla scrupolosa osservanza del volere del fato, come fa capire in *peregi* il valore perfettivo del preverbio.

La riacquistata dignità, che si realizza pienamente col passaggio al regno dei morti, con un repentino susseguirsi di piani temporali è segnata nel v. 654 prima da *nunc*, poi dal futuro *ibit*: la regina, dunque, si proietta già nell'aldilà, dove scenderà la *imago* di sé, orgogliosamente connotata dall'epiteto *magna* ed esaltata dall'allitterazione a coppie (*magna mei ...ibit imago*). Con un nuovo trapasso temporale, Didone confina nel passato i suoi trionfi (v. 655 *statui ...vidi*; v. 656 *recepi*), sebbene la serie dei perfetti attesti il profondo legame che ancora vincola la regina al suo ruolo e alla sua terra;⁸ non a caso la lista delle azioni, cadenzata dall'asindeto, tipico dello stile epigrafico (*statui ...vidi ...recepi*, col verbo sempre in *explicit* di emistichio), indica la mai sopita coscienza della sua dignità regale, l'orgoglio di essere stata artefice della costruzione di una nuova e potente città e la fiera consapevolezza di aver assistito al sorgere delle mura, comprensibilmente definite 'sue' nella 'iunctura' allitterante *mea moenia*.

Nei vv. 657-658 un nuovo momento di abbandono alla nostalgia dei ricordi è sottolineato dall'uso anaforico di *felix* (enfattizzato da *heu nimium* nel secondo membro), che nel v. 657 introduce e rimarca un singolare *makarismós*; l'evento a cui esso è legato non è l'amore breve e intenso per Enea, ma l'arrivo delle navi troiane a Cartagine, che, se non fosse avvenuto, avrebbe preservato la felicità della regina e del suo popolo.⁹ Nulla ormai può indurre Didone a un ripensamento: nell'espressione *moriemur inultae*, rafforzato in 'enjambement' da *moriemur* (vv. 659-660), il poliptoto enuncia 'il passaggio dal futuro

⁷ L' 'allure' funebre dell'inciso è confermata anche dalla sua presenza in *CLE* 1067.3 Bücheler *dum fata sinebant*.

⁸ L'appropriatezza della scelta lessicale è sottolineata da Donato: non dixit 'perfecti' sed 'statui'; statuere est enim instituere aliquod novum et quod fuerit numquam.

⁹ Nelle parole di Didone, Pease (1935) coglie 'perhaps a bitter reminiscence of those of Anna in 4.45-46 *dis equidem auspiciibus reor et Iunone secunda/ hunc cursum Iliacas vento tenuisse carinas*.'

sprevisti moriens? eadem me ad fata vocasses,
 idem ambas ferro dolor atque eadem hora tulisset.
 His etiam struxi manibus patriosque vocavi 680
 voce deos, sic te ut posita, crudelis, abessem?
 Exstinxti te meque, soror, populumque patresque
 Sidonios urbemque tuam. Date, vulnera lymphis
 abluam et, extremus si quis super halitus errat,
 ore legam.' Sic fata gradus evaserat altos, 685
 semianimemque sinu germanam amplexa fovebat
 cum gemitu atque atos siccabat veste cruores
 672-687

Dopo aver dato rilievo alle dimensioni collettive della catastrofe, che si abbatte su una città e sull'intera nazione, lo sguardo di Virgilio torna a concentrarsi sulla dimensione privata della tragedia, che, tuttavia, a quella pubblica è intimamente legata: in apertura del v. 672, infatti, *audii* rinvia implicitamente alle manifestazioni 'sonore' della città (lamenti, gemiti, urla, devastazione generale), che Anna inevitabilmente ascolta. Le sue reazioni rivelano subito la consapevolezza della tragedia: la collocazione fortemente ritardata del soggetto *soror* (v. 673) fa capire che al poeta importa sottolineare soprattutto i sentimenti e le reazioni del personaggio che irrompe sulla scena della narrazione. *L'unanima soror* non ha bisogno di constatare personalmente ciò che è avvenuto, sicché nel precipitarsi sul luogo in cui Didone si è tolta la vita, essa assume già l'atteggiamento di chi è in lutto: oltre a graffiarsi il volto con le unghie e a percuotersi il petto con i pugni (nel v. 673 l'allitterazione onomatopeica *pectora pugnīs* nel v. 673 accresce il *pathos* della narrazione), infatti, Anna non esita un solo istante a partecipare con esplicita sofferenza alla *conclamatio* (v. 674 *morientem nomine clamat*). Nei vv. 675-678 l'incredulità e la profonda amarezza della *soror* per essere stata ingannata da Didone sono rese dall'incalzare delle interrogative, mentre le forme della ripetizione e i deitici danno rilievo alla sua profonda delusione. Dopo aver espresso il desiderio irrealizzabile di una morte comune (vv. 678-679 *eadem me ad fata vocasses/ idem ambas ferro dolor atque eadem hora tulisset*), nel momento culminante del suo sfogo (v. 681) Anna attribuisce alla sorella il medesimo epiteto (*crudelis*) che Didone aveva dato a Enea nel v. 661; agli occhi di Anna, la crudeltà di Didone consiste nel non averla

il ritmo del v. 692 commenta il momento cruciale dell'episodio, perché se prima la successione spondaica (*quaesivit caelo lucem*) scandisce l'idea della fatica e della difficoltà del gesto di Didone, successivamente il repentino passaggio al ritmo dattilico (*ingemuitque reperta*), evidenzia il rapido dissolversi dell'animo con l'ultimo respiro.

Varianti d'opera

1. Dalla tragedia virgiliana alla tragicommedia di Busenello

La stretta associazione tra amore e morte che innerva la vicenda virgiliana avrà ampia fortuna nella produzione melodrammatica e costituirà uno dei grumi essenziali di un reticolo culturale, che nel corso dei secoli subirà un ampio processo di riadattamento; la *fabula lascivientis Didonis*,¹⁸ infatti, sarà prediletta dai librettisti europei dei secoli XVII e XVIII, che talora riscrivono il modello con esiti sorprendenti; in particolare sul suolo italico essa subisce uno stravolgimento vero e proprio – evidente soprattutto nel finale – nella *Didone* di Busenello, musicata da Cavalli, uno tra i più illustri esponenti dell'opera musicale veneziana;¹⁹ ciò è tanto più singolare se si pensa che si tratta

¹⁸ L'espressione esprime inequivocabilmente le riserve di Macrobio sul personaggio virgiliano: cf. *Sat. 5.17.4-6 Maluisse Maronem et in hac parte apud auctorem suum vel apud quemlibet Graecorum alium quod sequeretur habuisse. Alium non frustra dixi, quia non de unius racemis vindemiam sibi fecit, sed bene in rem suam vertit quidquid ubicumque invenit imitandum; adeo ut de Argonauticorum quarto, quorum scriptor est Apollonius, librum Aeneidos suae quartum totum paene formaverit, ad Didonem vel Aenean amatoriam incontinentiam Medaeae circa Iasonem transferendo. 5. Quod ita elegantius auctore digessit, ut fabula lascivientis Didonis, quam falsam novit universitas, per tot tamen saecula speciem veritatis optineat et ita pro vero per ora omnium volitet, ut pictores fictoresque et qui figmentis liciorum contextas imitantur effigies, hac materia vel maxime in effigiandis simulacris tanquam unico argumento decoris utantur, nec minus histrionum perpetuis et gestibus et cantibus celebretur. 6. Tantum valuit pulchritudo narrandi, ut omnes Phoenissae castitatis conscii, nec ignari manum sibi iniecisse reginam, ne pateretur damnum pudoris, coniveant tamen fabulae, et intra conscientiam veri fidem prementes malint pro vero celebrari quod pectoribus humanis dulcedo fingentis infudit.*

¹⁹ Pietro Francesco Caletti, detto Cavalli (Crema 1602 – Venezia nel 1676) apprende dal padre i primi rudimenti musicali; grazie a Francesco Cavalli, del quale per riconoscenza assunse il nome, perfezionò la sua formazione artistica a Venezia con Claudio Monteverdi; al grande musicista veneziano deve lo studio e l'approfondimento della drammaturgia musicale, che, sviluppata successivamente nelle forme squisitamente barocche, rivela un gusto sapiente della rappresentazione scenica. Dopo vent'anni di esercizio polifonistico in cappella, nel 1639 nel teatro di S. Cassiano fece rappresentare la sua prima opera (*Le nozze di Tetide e Peleo*), che rivela ancora forti suggestioni monteverdiane; ma già la *Didone*, rappresentata due anni dopo, mostra significative tracce di originalità, che diventano poi caratteristiche inconfondibili nelle opere

della prima *Didone* di cui si abbia notizia nel melodramma europeo.²⁰

Nelle sue osservazioni introduttive, Busenello guarda con favore alla libertà con cui i librettisti del tempo operavano rispetto alle storie ereditate dalla letteratura classica:

E perché secondo le buone dottrine è lecito ai poeti non solo alterare le favole, ma le istorie ancora, Didone prende per marito Iarba. E se fu anacronismo famoso in Virgilio che Didone, non solo per Sicheo suo marito, ma per Enea, perdesse la vita, potranno tollerare i grandi ingegni che qui segue un matrimonio diverso e dalle favole e dalle istorie. Chi scrive sodisfa al genio e per schifare il fine tragico della morte di Didone si è introdotto l'accasamento predetto con Iarba.

Uomo di profonda cultura giuridica e classica e rappresentante di spicco dell'Accademia degli Incogniti, Busenello svincola la storia della regina cartaginese dalle antiche regole aristoteliche, per avvicinarla alle nuove usanze del teatro spagnolo.²¹ Nella prefazione al secondo libretto veneziano il librettista rivendica la sua totale libertà non solo di 'rappresentare gl'anni, e non le hore,' ma anche, come si è appena visto, di 'alterare le favole' e persino le 'istorie' dei poeti antichi; ciò perché, sottolinea Busenello, la gente va a teatro non per deprimersi, ma per divertirsi.

Come ogni opera letteraria, anche la *Didone* del Busenello è frutto del suo tempo, profondamente influenzata com'è dall'ambiente veneziano del primo Seicento: a tale retroterra culturale, libertino e gaudente, va riconosciuto un ruolo importante nell'adattamento scenico (si tratta di un'opera in tre atti dal sorprendente lieto fine) dell'estesa e complessa vicenda virgiliana.

Le trasformazioni operate da Busenello sono esaltate κατ' ἀντίφρασιν dalla fedeltà che in linea di massima lega l'opera barocca

successive; sebbene in alcuni passaggi della sua produzione musicale esistano ancora taluni elementi di allusività monteverdiana, evidenti soprattutto nelle armonie e nei ritmi, gli spunti innovativi di Cavalli emergono dalla definizione formale e strutturale del tessuto musicale: l'arioso', che connota i passaggi drammatici di Monteverdi, ad esempio, nella produzione di Cavalli mostra una più netta definizione stilistica, che l'avvicina all' 'aria' propriamente detta.

²⁰ L'opera andò in scena nel 1641, nel teatro veneziano di S. Cassiano.

²¹ Tra i dettami fondamentali del teatro spagnolo c'è quello della necessaria verosimiglianza del racconto, come sottolinea Lope de Vega nel suo trattato (*Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*, Madrid, 1609), nei vv. 284-285 'Guárdese de imposibles, porque es máxima/ que sólo ha de imitar lo verisimil': cf. l'edizione italiana curata da Profeti (1999).

al racconto virgiliano; nella sua ‘riduzione’ teatrale, infatti, il librettista inserisce non di rado alcuni versi dell’*Eneide* che, nella ricodificazione del genere si mutano talvolta in efficaci ‘parole sceniche’ *ante litteram*. È il caso, solo per citare un esempio, dell’*incipit* corale dell’opera (I, 1 ‘Armi, o uomini, datemi armi!’ che nel modello epico (2.688 *arma, viri, ferte arma; vocat lux ultima victos*) esprime il grido di rabbia di Enea dopo la morte di Priamo. Nella *Didone* di Busenello il verso acquista una dignità tale da segnare l’avvio dell’azione scenica e manifesta al contempo sia omaggio alla fonte (l’ottonario riecheggia chiaramente la struttura metrico/ prosodica dell’emistichio virgiliano) sia l’intenzionale variazione del testo epico, che viene affidata all’esecuzione; nell’opera lirica, infatti, all’amplificazione dell’impatto sonoro concorre l’esecuzione collettiva del Coro dell’esortazione, che nel modello era espressa dalla voce singola di Enea.

Talvolta Busenello accorda spazio maggiore ai personaggi virgiliani, soprattutto a quelli femminili accomunati dal tragico destino di sofferenza per le strazianti perdite subite. Nel primo Atto il dolore luttuoso di Cassandra sul corpo esanime di Corebo (I, 4) è riproposto da Ecuba nel secondo lamento (I, 7): alla misera regina spetta l’onore di modulare l’ultima aria strofica del primo atto, con un lamento che musicalmente è connotato da basso ostinato su un tetracordo cromatico discendente. La dimensione profondamente tragica viene così esaltata dal musicista Cavalli, che attribuisce a entrambi i lamenti una tessitura vocale non dissimile (l’unica variazione è costituita dalle distinte tonalità minori di La e Sol); si tratta di un particolare di grande rilievo per la storia dell’opera barocca, perché sarà proprio questo l’archetipo formale – identico nella struttura, nella tonalità e nella sostanza drammatica – che Cavalli ‘consegnerà’ a Purcell, il quale lo impiegherà nel suo ben più celebre *Dido’s Lament*.

Le metamorfosi radicali del racconto virgiliano si verificano a partire dall’atto secondo, con il quale Busenello inizia a ‘rappresentare le cose a modo suo’: la svolta deriva dall’importanza attribuita a un personaggio secondario come Iarba, che gradualmente diviene il protagonista della vicenda. Nell’economia del poema virgiliano lo sventurato re africano ha scarso peso: i pochi versi a lui dedicati, sebbene funzionali all’intreccio del racconto e al suo epilogo tragico (anche grazie a Iarba e alle sue ripetute preghiere, infatti, Giove deciderà di

favorire la partenza di Enea da Cartagine), consentono di avere solo un'immagine sbiadita del personaggio; a Iarba, invece, Busenello affida le quattro scene più importanti del II atto (1. 2.12.13). Inversamente proporzionale allo spessore drammatico di Iarba è il progressivo svilimento del personaggio di Enea, a cui spettano solo le scene 7, 8 e 10. L'argomento principale dell'intero secondo atto è l'amore ostinato e variamente frustrato di Iarba per Didone: rispetto al modello virgiliano, dunque, tra i due personaggi si verifica uno scambio di ruoli, che costituisce il nucleo di fondo della riscrittura busenelliana. In Virgilio, infatti, Didone manifesta i segni del *furor* d'amore, dopo il rifiuto oltraggioso dell'*hospes* troiano; in Busenello, invece è Iarba a essere respinto da Didone, perché la regina prima si mostra caparbiamente fedele alla memoria del defunto marito Sicheo (II.1-2), poi è travolta dalla passione nei confronti dell'eroe troiano (II.9-10): è troppo per il povero Iarba, che, travolto dalla gelosia, con un gesto plateale si straccia le vesti sulla scena (II.12). A guardar bene, però, anche la macroscopica invenzione busenelliana della pazzia amorosa di Iarba fa leva su un dettaglio già presente nel poema epico: in *Aen.* 4.197 *incenditque animum dictis atque aggerat iras*, la notizia dell'idillio di Enea e Didone provoca in Iarba un incontenibile *furor*: vv. 203-204 *isque amens animi et rumore accensus amaro/ dicitur*. In Virgilio, dopo la richiesta di intervento rivolta da Iarba a Giove, perché Enea non continui a spassarsela con Didone (vv. 215-217 *et nunc ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu,/ Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem/ subnixus, raptu potitur*), il padre degli dèi esaudisce la preghiera, ma solo in parte, perché si limita a favorire la partenza di Enea da Cartagine; nella ripresa busenelliana, invece, il destino si mostrerà ben più generoso con Iarba, travestimento ilarotragico dell'amante sofferente e ostinato di ascendenza elegiaca.²²

Nell'Atto III gli eventi seguono la progressione tragica e ben nota del modello, con l'immane lamento finale di Didone, che, almeno nella formulazione verbale della protagonista, anche in questo caso pre-

²² Tra i numerosissimi contesti che attestano il carattere imperituro dell'amore del poeta elegiaco basti rinviare a Prop. 2.20.35-36: *hoc mihi perpetuo ius est, quod solus amator/ nec cito desisto nec temere incipio*, con il commento di Fedeli (2005) 607-609; sul motivo elegiaco dell'amore esclusivo, duraturo e incondizionato cf. la ricca documentazione raccolta da Moreno Soldevila (2011) 44.



lude al suicidio (III.9): la Regina si fa consegnare ‘la spada/ del Semideo Troiano’ dalle sue ancelle e, dopo averle congedate, si abbandona all’autocommiserazione. Il lamento non fa alcuna concessione all’invettiva o alle recriminazioni nelle *dirae* pronunciate contro Enea dalla Didone virgiliana prima del suicidio (4.661-662 *hauriat hunc oculis ignem crudelis ab alto/Dardanus, et nostrae secum ferat omina mortis*), che, intrise come erano di sonorità ‘barbare’, come già quelle dei vv. 382-285, rivelavano una chiara ascendenza apolloniana:²³ tra opposti sentimenti di odio e amore, mentre già l’amato veleggia per nuovi lidi, invece, l’ultimo pensiero della regina busenelliana è rivolto alla ‘cara luce’ di Enea, con un’espressione che ricorda la patetica apostrofe alle *dulces exuviae* (v. 651) della Didone virgiliana.

Ma è nella scena finale dell’opera che si verifica il ‘coup de théâtre’: dopo le eloquenti parole della protagonista, il testo della didascalìa (‘Qui Didone vuol ferirsi, e vi sopraggiunge Iarba, che ne la impedisce’) ci rivela che il gesto suicida della regina è rimasto incompiuto; al cospetto di quello che sulla scena deve apparire come un corpo esanime, il rinsavito Iarba reagisce da vero protagonista dell’opera seria: dopo aver protestato contro gli dèi e le loro vane promesse, il nobile Re dei Getuli dimostra l’autenticità del suo amore prima con lacrime sincere, successivamente con la decisione di raggiungere l’amata togliendosi la vita. Anche in questo caso lo sviluppo del racconto ha connotazioni topiche (si pensi solo agli ovidiani Piramo e Tisbe, antecedenti illustri degli sfortunati innamorati shakespeariani); ma sorprendentemente Didone quasi ‘risorge’ per salvare la vita di chi, a giudicare dalle sue stesse parole, ha appena salvato la sua (‘La vita a me salvasti./ la vita e la salute a te ridòno’) e infine per ripagare con lo stesso sentimento l’uomo più ostinato e follemente innamorato (III.12).

Il libretto di Busenello, i cui accenti drammatici vengono amplificati dalla partitura mimetica di Cavalli, sancisce la vittoria dell’amore di Iarba per Didone, di una passione, cioè, che non conosce ostacoli, anche contro ogni ragionevole evidenza scenica: svincolata del tutto dal

²³ Apoll. Rhod. 4.382-390 Μὴ τό γε παμβασιλεία Διὸς τελέσειεν ἄκοιτις/ ἢ ἔπι κυδιάεις· Μνήσαιο δὲ καὶ ποτ’ ἐμείο/ στρευγόμενος καμάτοισι, δέρος δὲ τοι ἴσον ὄνειρω/ οἴχοιτ’ εἰς ἔρβος μεταμώνιον· ἐκ δὲ σε πάτρης/ αὐτίκ’ ἐμαὶ σ’ ἐλάσειαν Ἴερινύες, οἶα καὶ αὐτή/ σὴ πάθον ἀτροπή. Τὰ μὲν οὐ θέμις ἀκράαντα/ ἐν γαίῃ πεσέειν, μάλα γὰρ μέγαν ἦλπιες ὄρκον./ νηλεές· ἄλλ’ οὐ θῆν μοι ἐπιλλίζοντες ὀπίσσω/ δὴν ἔσσεσθ’ εὐκηλοὶ ἔκητί γε συνθεσιάων.



rigido dogmatismo, la *Didone* di Busenello decreta nel finale il trionfo della libertà creativa del librettista, che molto deve a quella veneziana 'modernità', rivendicata con orgoglio dall'autore del testo.

2. Il riflesso tragico di Didone nell'opera di Purcell/ Tate

La tradizione operistica italiana esercita un'influenza determinante – e non solo per l'impianto drammaturgico e musicale – sull'opera *Dido and Aeneas* musicata da Henry Purcell su libretto di Nahum Tate: è questo il primo autentico melodramma inglese – una storia, cioè, interamente musicale – scritta e rappresentata in Inghilterra nel 1689 e destinata a segnare una svolta nella produzione operistica di matrice anglosassone.²⁴ *Dido and Aeneas* è connotata da una maggiore predisposizione a recepire l'influenza dello stile italiano e soprattutto a privilegiare quei segni di innovazione e di originalità artistica, che caratterizzeranno successivamente il teatro in musica di Purcell e, in generale, della scena musicale inglese.

Il contesto storico che fa da sfondo a *Dido and Aeneas* è attraversato da profondi rivolgimenti politici; dopo oltre dieci anni di governo parlamentare, nel 1660 il ritorno al trono di Carlo II Stuart è caratterizzato da un clima di euforia, determinato da un radicale cambiamento della vita culturale e sociale dei londinesi e dalla riapertura dei teatri, chiusi dal 1642 per imposizione dei puritani, alla vigilia della guerra civile. La sensibilità artistica di Carlo II, che durante il suo esilio in Francia ha avuto modo di conoscere e apprezzare il teatro musicale italiano e francese, è all'origine dello sviluppo del gusto e della produzione teatrale barocca sul suolo inglese: in questo periodo ha grande fortuna il *masque*, uno spettacolo che fa leva su un notevole impegno scenografico e sull'alternanza di musica, ballo e parti recitate. La scelta dei soggetti, veicolata naturalmente dal gusto della corona, è orientata decisamente verso l'ideale neoclassico, imprescindibile puntello culturale per la Restaurazione degli Stuart.

La non semplice situazione politica tra il 1685 e il 1689 favorì probabilmente la dispersione delle testimonianze sull'opera di Purcell

²⁴ La fama dell'irlandese N. Tate (1652-1715) fu tale da consentirgli nel 1692 di diventare *Poet Laureate*.

più nota ai nostri giorni, ma la meno influente sui suoi tempi: furono proprio i suoi contemporanei, infatti, che ‘almeno in apparenza, non sembrarono accorgersi della rivoluzionaria novità formale che essa recava.’²⁵ A distanza di secoli, tale gemma musicale pone ancora problemi, che riguardano in primo luogo la datazione: l’unico libretto a noi pervenuto, infatti, risale all’esecuzione avvenuta nel 1689 a Chelsea in un istituto di nobili giovanette;²⁶ dopo la prima rappresentazione documentata, *Dido and Aeneas* sembra sparire dalle scene inglesi fino ai primi decenni del XVIII secolo.

La vicenda narrata da Tate e musicata da Purcell prende spunto dal IV libro dell’*Eneide* di Virgilio e, conformemente alla moda del tempo, è introdotta da un prologo e conclusa da un epilogo; fra di essi si inseriscono tre brevi atti, che sviluppano gli eventi con una singolare *velocitas narrandi*, ma nell’assoluto rispetto della consequenzialità e della simmetria tra le parti. Le non ampie dimensioni di *Dido and Aeneas* inducono a pensare a un pezzo da camera:²⁷ oltre che per gli standard dell’epoca, nei confronti del modello virgiliano, infatti, nel libretto risulta subito evidente la semplificazione sistematica della storia e la riduzione del numero degli avvenimenti, dei personaggi e dei discorsi individuali;²⁸ gli dèi, che in Virgilio muovono le fila della vicenda, inoltre, vengono rimpiazzati dalle streghe, che tramano con successo contro Didone. Della *fabula* virgiliana, il librettista Tate tralascia passaggi cruciali, ma a segnare decisamente la svolta rispetto a Virgilio è il momento della morte della Didone inglese, che non si uccide con la spada.²⁹

²⁵ Cf. Fabris, Garofalo (1999) 133.

²⁶ Ricaviamo la notizia dal frontespizio della copia: *An Opera/ Perform'd at/ Mr. Josias Priest's Boarding School at/ Chelsey/ By Young Gentlewomen./ The Words Made by Mr. Nat. Tate./ The Musick Composed by Mr. Henry Purcell*; conservato al Royal College of Music di Londra, il libretto è stato ristampato anastaticamente: Britten, Holst (1961); sull’opera e sugli intricati problemi relativi alla datazione, al manoscritto e alla partitura si rinvia a Price (1986), a Harris (1987) e alla bibliografia citata da Fabris, Garofalo (1999) 133 n. 73 e n. 75.

²⁷ Come osserva Harris (1987) 7 ‘(*Dido and Aeneas*) is conceived on a small scale for what must have been small, private audience. It is short and demands less in the way of vocal technique than the later works, and its orchestra consists only of strings, whereas the dramatic operas include beautiful and effective writing for woodwinds and trumpet. Nevertheless, from our historical vantage point, *Dido and Aeneas* is the most progressive of Purcell’s stage works.’

²⁸ Cf. Harris (1987) 37; nelle pagine 35-42 lo studioso si sofferma anche sulle specificità linguistiche, stilistiche e metriche del libretto di Tate, alla luce delle esigenze ‘operistiche’ del tempo e, in particolare, sotto l’influenza della lirica di Dryden.

²⁹ Su tale aspetto si sofferma Harris (1987) 11-12 e 14-15.

L' incisiva selezione operata da Tate sul testo virgiliano, che colpisce soprattutto le fasi della passione tra i due protagonisti, deriva in gran parte dalle diverse finalità 'comunicative' del dramma musicale; se, come risulta dai documenti in nostro possesso, l'opera *Dido and Aeneas* era destinata originariamente a un collegio femminile, si comprendono le ragioni che mossero Tate a non riservare ampio spazio all'amore o alle pene d'amore, ma a dare enfasi ai motivi che esaltavano la retta condotta morale, privata e pubblica. Il radicale *restyling* trasforma la Didone di Tate fino al punto da restituirci un personaggio che poco concede alla 'trasgressione amorosa'; nel riflettere un *ethos* più 'anglosassone' che 'latino', la Didone inglese non si abbandona alla forza travolgente dei sentimenti e rimane sempre *compos sui*; nella conclusione dell'opera, infatti, *Dido* non solo non implora Enea di restare, ma è lei stessa che con fermezza gli ingiunge di partire: quale migliore *praeceptum* per le giovani collegiali di Chelsea, che devono guardarsi dalle 'avances' dei giovanotti, le cui promesse sono destinate a rimanere inascoltate?³⁰

Il libretto di Tate si distingue per la varietà stilistica e per l'impiego di versi brevi, ritmati e di lunghezza irregolare; da un punto di vista strettamente 'letterario', esso è assimilabile a una tragedia³¹ e, conformemente alle unità aristoteliche, è connotato dalla stringatezza del tempo e dalla riduzione degli spazi che, nella sinteticità della scrittura richiesta dalla ricodificazione di genere, non sacrificano però i momenti salienti della storia. Nei versi di Tate, infatti, la figura di Didone – predominante anche musicalmente, oltre che 'drammaticamente' – funge da elemento catalizzatore: non a caso, come già nel IV libro dell'*Eneide*, la vicenda narrata da Tate si apre e si conclude con un lamento della protagonista.

La seconda parte del terzo Atto, caratterizzata dall'atmosfera più patetica dell'intera opera, si apre con un bellissimo recitativo di Didone; la scrittura librettistica, ricca di effetti, è impreziosita dalla tessitura musicale, che denota la grande capacità di Purcell di inventare

³⁰ È significativo che un'allusione a tale messaggio 'didattico/ moraleggiante' scaturisce dall'allegria danza dei marinai all'inizio del terzo atto: vv. 3-6 *Take a bouze short leave of your nymphs on the shore,/ and silence their mourning/ with vows of returning,/ but never intending to visit them more.*

³¹ Anche in tale carattere strutturale va scorta una sostanziale anomalia rispetto alla moda teatrale del tempo, come sottolinea Price (1986) VII: 'a tragic, English opera created at a time when operas were hardly ever tragic and when England had no real opera.'

tracce melodiche, alle quali è affidato il compito di sottolineare e di accompagnare i cambiamenti degli stati d'animo.

La scena del suicidio di Didone è ambientata nel palazzo reale; diversamente dal modello virgiliano, Enea ha deciso di rimanere a Cartagine e tenta invano di convincere Didone a dimenticare l'affronto subito: nelle ultime battute alternate (vv. 49-51 'Let Jove say what he will: I'll stay! DIDONE Away, away! No, no, away!/ ENEA No, no, I'll stay, and Love obey!'), i due protagonisti ripetono le parole dei loro rispettivi ultimi due versi, Enea aggiungendo 'I'll stay' e Didone 'Away': si capisce che, nel cantare con la sovrapposizione delle voci, ma in modo del tutto autonomo e separato, essi hanno interrotto ogni comunicazione, perché 'non hanno più legami nemmeno nel dirsi addio.'³²

Allontanato Enea, con Belinda – che qui prende il posto di Anna – e il Coro delle ancelle, Didone ora campeggia sulla scena davanti al pubblico e si accinge a intonare la sua *ἄρνῳδία*. Sono questi i brani più ammirati dell'opera, resi celebri soprattutto dalla valorizzazione che la superba musica di Purcell fa di un testo che coniuga concisione, chiarezza nella struttura grammaticale e raffinata qualità semantica.

Riprendendo le ultime parole rivolte a Enea, Didone canta con note basse tre versi, in cui la triplice ripetizione di *death* non lascia dubbi sulla decisione di darsi la morte (vv. 52-54 'To Death I'll fly if longer you delay./ But Death, alas! I cannot Shun,/ Death must come when he is gone'). L'intervento del Coro rappresenta quasi una sospensione drammatica, che permette a Didone di riconquistare energia emotiva e vocale per la fase conclusiva della sua sofferenza, espressa dai quattro versi di *recitativo* e dai tre di *aria*, caratterizzati da intensa pateticità.

Il *recitativo* è connotato da un altissimo spessore stilistico, sia linguistico che musicale:

Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me.
On thy bosom let me rest,
more I would, but death invades me;
death is now a welcome guest

57-60

³² L'osservazione è di Paci (1994) 117-118.

Il riferimento all'oscurità (v. 57 'darkness shades me'), il successivo 'more I would, but death invades me' e l'indicazione di scena ('Cupids appear in the Clouds o'er her Tomb') indicano che la protagonista sta morendo. Le parole di Didone, del resto, commentano come una didascalia i momenti che progressivamente la conducono alla morte (vv. 59-60 'Death invades me;/ death is now a welcome guest'); di intensa commozione sono la ripetizione di 'death' e la sua connotazione come ospite, che usurpa il ruolo all'amato ormai lontano: a essere 'welcome guest', infatti, non è più Enea, ma 'death'.³³

Ha quindi inizio la breve e celeberrima *aria* di Didone, che costituisce uno dei momenti in cui Tate si dissocia palesemente da Virgilio,³⁴ perché attribuisce a Didone non il desiderio di vendetta e l'impeto insopprimibile delle *dirae*, ma un sentimento di intima sofferenza, che si nobilita anche grazie a un impulso di affetto generoso per chi la circonda:

When I am laid in earth, may my wrongs create
no trouble in thy breast;
remember me, but ah! forget my fate

61-63

La tessitura musicale è sorprendentemente ardita, per l'impiego del tono minore e del cromatismo che impreziosisce il testo e che, come si è detto, molto deve alla scrittura musicale di Cavalli. La reiterazione di 'Remember me' viene variata dalla musica, che ora sottolinea il prorompere della passione, ora il sopraggiungere della rassegnazione.

Ma come muore la Didone di Tate? Nessuno dei documenti in nostro possesso reca indicazioni di scena, tali da chiarire la tipologia del suicidio della protagonista, così dettagliatamente descritta da Virgilio: forse nella fine non scritta della protagonista va scorto il segno più evidente dell'emancipazione del capolavoro musicale dal modello; al lieto fine della tragicommedia di Busenello/ Cavalli, nella *Dido* di Purcell subentra il silenzio della parola e la voce di una straordinaria tessitura musicale, che diventa autonomamente espressiva e ci fa prefigurare la morte della protagonista 'attraverso la musica'.

³³ Come sottolinea Price (1986) 258, il termine 'guest' è importante perché richiama l'espressione di Didone in 4.323-324 *cui me moribundam deseris hospes/ (hoc solum nomen quoniam de coniuge restat)?*

³⁴ Cf. Price (1986) 258.

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⊕

‘Augusto non è morto’: Celebrating the *Saeculum Augustum* in 1937

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Please allow me to express my appreciation to the organizers of this conference for the honor of the invitation, and I am very pleased to speak in a country that obviously values its past, even when the particular details and circumstances are difficult to confront. We are in the shadow of the wonderful Torre do Tombo, the national archives, a building that draws attention to Portugal’s colonial past, as well as to the global consequences of its incursions for indigenous cultures. Indeed, the building’s architectural style marks a sharp break from the Salazar-era central square of the University of Lisbon, suggesting a constant engagement with – and a critical stance regarding – the recent past. Any nation, I would argue, must be similarly courageous in facing the wounds opened by its historical experiences, in addition to celebrating its achievements.

On the occasion of this international conference marking the second millennium of the death of Augustus, it would seem especially appropriate to turn to the international commemoration of his *birth*, in a series of events held in 1937-1938, primarily but not exclusively in Fascist Italy. Benito Mussolini was both singularly ruthless and singularly lucky. Having survived at least three assassination attempts in one year alone, he also presided over a country so rich in history that its historical anniversaries could be measured in millennia, and not mere centuries. Recognizing that 23 September 1937 marked the 2000th anniversary of the birthday of Caius Octavius, Mussolini’s government planned – and encouraged others to plan – a series of commemorative events over the course of the year between September 1937 and September 1938. In addition to the unveiling of the new Ara Pacis, one of the central products of this veritable *Wunderjahr* was the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, or ‘Augustan Exhibit of Romanness’, a

display visited by over 100,000 Italians – and also by Adolf Hitler, on his state visit to Rome in May 1938.

I am currently writing a book that examines the international context of these events, in Italy of course, but also in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. My overall intent is to gauge the international consensus of opinion on Augustus that prevailed in the late 1930s, just prior to the appearance of Syme's 'revolutionary' book in the autumn of 1939. I hope to underscore just how 'revolutionary' Syme's portrait was, one that would famously – in his Preface – make certain eyebrows rise in astonishment when they read it the first time. Much of my research has been conducted at Oxford University, where I examined the original manuscript of *The Roman Revolution*, documenting how Syme worked over some of the most famous passages in the book (as he quipped, 'Style abides'). However, I also discovered the world-wide network of scholars that surrounded the then-Camden Professor, Hugh Last. Many of those connections could be found among (generally young) Italian professors, and a small sample of the scholarship produced on this topic would include Columba (1937), Chimienti (1938), Balbo (1941), and Baratelli (1942).

Nevertheless, in this limited space, I wish to turn my attention to one of the other products of this government-sponsored exploration of Augustus' legacy: a series of papers delivered to the Accademia dei Lincei by Italy's most prominent Roman historians in 1938. This volume, composed of 12 papers, was published under the title *Augustus: Studi in occasione del Bimillenario Augusteo*, and its contents reveal the scope, depth, and strength of the connections the Fascist government hoped to make, in personal and direct terms, between Augustus and Mussolini. This paper offers a detailed analysis of several of the collected essays, written by Aldo Ferrabino (the author of the declarative statement in my title), Vincenzo Arangio-Ruiz, and – at the conclusion – a paper by Arnaldo Momigliano, on military institutions and the disbursement of forces under Augustus. However, the bulk of the paper is devoted to the essays by Pietro De Francisci and by Roberto Paribeni, weighing them against their more in-depth analyses from the same period and against their public roles in service to the regime.

The first passage to be investigated comes from Ferrabino's essay, which is the first and the second-longest (Momigliano's is the third-

shortest) in the collection. Ferrabino was a professor at the Universities of Torino and Padova who would become known for dealing with matters touching on Catholicism – and, eventually, between 1948 and 1954, a Christian-Democratic Senator. Before the war, one can notice that he is turning away from ‘la negatività tacitiana’ and stressing instead ‘the historical merit’ and long-term benefits of the system created by the Caesars. As he comments:¹

Pensiamo alla civiltà Cristiana, che tenne dietro alla Romanità. Cattolica in una prima epoca, Cattolica ed Evangelica in una seconda, essa ha continuato a elaborare forme di convivenza umana, nelle quali impero e nazione variamente cercarono di comporsi in armonia, correggendo e sanando gli opposti universalismi cosmopolitici. E finalmente ha recato in luce, nell’età moderna, tutta una serie d’imperi nazionali, che assicurano il primato d’Europa. Guardiamoci attorno: ... l’imperatore Augusto è vivo.

Let us think about the Christian civilization that followed upon ‘Romanness’. Catholic in its first period, Catholic and Evangelical in its second, it has continued to elaborate forms of human society, in which empire and nation variously sought to arrange themselves in harmony, straightening and normalizing the opposed cosmopolitan universalisms. And finally it has brought to light, in the modern era, a whole series of national empires that assure the primacy of Europe. We have only to look around ourselves to see ...the emperor Augustus is alive.

This image of the Church’s navigating between extremes may seem innocuous, but the specificity of the term ‘cosmopolitan universalisms’ may be troubling in this context. Given the general conflation of anti-Bolshevism and anti-Semitism at this time – and we should recall that 1938 was also the year in which the infamous anti-Semitic laws were implemented – the term may be a reference to the Church’s following a ‘third way’ between the extremes of Marxism and liberalism. We should also note Ferrabino’s insistence, a few sentences later, that ‘Augustus is not dead; in our world of national empires Augustus is present [and one here should think of the ‘PRESENTE’ called out by Fascist mass demonstrations] with Rome, as he had always hoped.’ Accordingly, the first essay in the collection demonstrates a common theme that is woven throughout the volume, i.e. that the long-term consequences of

¹ Ferrabino (1938) 56.

Augustus' reign, from the birth of Christ to the (Fascist) present, render him an essential object for study in the 1930s.

The application of these concepts to today's world is clear, and this attention to modern, contemporary issues is also underscored by Arangio-Ruiz, in his study of Augustus' adjustments to Roman law. The latter insists that, while Augustus saw himself as a 'protector' of the *respublica Romanorum*, he did not act as a politician or a legal official might today. In his estimation:²

Un punto che non può non fermare l'attenzione dell'uomo politico moderno, ma che corrisponde peraltro perfettamente al carattere del nuovo regime, è che nessuna legge ne abbia fissato le linee fondamentali. Se qualcuna di carattere propriamente costituzionale è mai stata presentata dal principe alle assemblee popolari, non solo interessava punti particolarissimi, ma prescindeva completamente dal nuovo regime, regolando il funzionamento della *respublica Romanorum* come tale; ...

One point that cannot escape the attention of the modern man of politics, but one that, moreover, corresponds perfectly with the character of the new [Principate and/or Fascist?] regime, is that no law fixed fundamental lines in itself. If it were something of a properly constitutional character, it would be presented by the Princeps to the popular assemblies, as it did not merely concern very specific points, but touched on the complete aspect of the new regime, regulating the functioning of the Roman republic as such ...

In this context, therefore, Augustus dealt fairly with 'the people', the ultimate source of law in the *respublica*, involving them only when it was a constitutional necessity. Diverging from Prof. Wallace-Hadrill's points raised at our opening session, Arangio-Ruiz believed that Augustus did not intend the benefits of citizenship to be distributed widely. Rather, he merely wished to restore citizens' rights and not to intrude on the prerogatives of Senators. I have also written recently on the Augustan Senate,³ and how it was viewed in the 1930s, which is another fascinating topic of research. In fact, the section immediately after this quotation from Arangio-Ruiz deals with the *Leges Iuliae de senatu* (like the *de senatu habendo* of 9 BC), and it stresses the genuineness of Augustus' attempt to reinstate the traditional dignities of the Senate and to re-establish it at the center of his government.

² Arangio-Ruiz (1938) 103.

³ Perry (2015).

At the time of writing, Arangio-Ruiz was a distinguished jurist at the University of Naples, but he played a crucial role after the liberation of Naples, going on to serve as Minister of Justice in 1944 and Minister of Public Instruction from December 1944 through June 1945. Like these two scholars, Paribeni and De Francisci were also prominent national figures – although *before* the fall of the Fascist regime. Paribeni's essay in the collection deals, very briefly and in fewer than ten pages, with Augustus' 'Public Works' – and he, as a leading figure in the design and interpretation of the *Mostra Augustea*, was in a position to know about these monuments. However, he also, on the day of Rome's foundation in April 1938, delivered a lively lecture on the theme of Augustus to the Royal Academy, and this document was published shortly afterward (that June). Over the course of this presentation, which traces Octavian-Augustus' life history, Paribeni sketches the bleeding corpse of Caesar, felled by a rain of dagger blows, 'And in the absence of a clear vision, in the confusion of ideas' lay 'a squalid ruin without glory and without consequence.' The assassins were 'blind, illogical, without a directing idea,' and motivated by greed and 'utopianism' or 'fanaticism' – but, into this chaotic situation, a young man won the loyalty of his father's troops, marched on Rome, and became, with universal consent, 'il capo dello Stato.'

In Paribeni's estimation, Augustus '[a]veva sentito, che occorreva scendere più in profondo, risanare l'organismo, ricercare ed espellere gli intimi, latenti germi dissolvitori, ritrovare, restituire fresca, intatta,' 'sensed that he would have to descend still further into the depths, to restore the organism to health, to seek out and cast out the hidden, internal degenerating germs, to rediscover, to restore [it] fresh and intact.'⁴ Once he had undertaken this act of spiritual regeneration, Augustus was in a position to recreate and reorganize the quondam glories of Rome. In his phrase:⁵

In ogni modo anche oggi, se moltissimi non hanno una chiara e precisa idea di quanto Augusto operò a vantaggio della civiltà e della potenza di Roma, tutti sanno viceversa che egli si gloriò di lasciar di marmo quella Roma, che egli aveva trovato di mattoni. Segno che anche oggi (e non manchi questa

⁴ Paribeni (1938) 26.

⁵ Paribeni (1938) 29-30.

considerazione d'esser presente allo spirito di quanti si trovano a poter disporre l'esecuzione di opere pubbliche) l'aver donato a un paese nobili e utili edifici è ritenuto un grandissimo merito.

In any respect as today, even if not very many people have a clear and precise idea of how Augustus was working to the advantage of the civilization and the power of Rome, all know that he gloried in leaving this Rome a city of marble, having found it a city of brick. The signal of this, also today (and not overlooking the consideration of being in the presence of the spirit in which so many public works can be undertaken) is that, having given noble and useful buildings to his country, he retained very great credit.

In addition to drawing upon the language of health and its restoration – which might be compared to the famous draining of marshland by the Fascist government as an anti-malaria measure – Paribeni contextualizes Augustus' building projects with contemporary allusions. The positive impact of the transformation of Rome 'from a city of brick to a city of marble' was probably designed to recall Mussolini's 'language of the pick-axe' ('la parola al piccone'). Throughout the 1930s, Mussolini claimed to be rebuilding the city – and he effectively capitalized on photographs of his actually wielding a pick-axe to document his provision of 'noble and useful buildings' to a grateful people.

Paribeni's views of Augustus at this time were also reflected in a review of the Italian edition of Robert Graves' *I, Claudius* books, published in the journal *Roma*, the official organ of the Istituto di Studi Romani (Institute of Roman Studies). The second paragraph of the review aims squarely at the Milan offices of Bompiani, the publisher that had had the temerity to publish a translation of these 'decadent' books (as they had published many other British and American authors at the time, including a collection of speeches by Franklin Roosevelt):⁶

Che un editore italiano li faccia tradurre e li stampi, e che gli Italiani li leggano e persino li lodino, mi fa dispiacere, perchè mi prova che essi non considerano ancora loro patrimonio l'Impero di Roma, e tollerano che ne siano trattati i personaggi (anche il festeggiato divo Augusto) e le istituzioni con beffarda irriverenza. Oltre a tutto, trovo anche abbastanza insulsi i due libri, accanto ai quali il *Quo vadis?* di Sienkiewicz e forse anche lo *Spartaco* di Raffaello Giovagnoli diventano grandissimi capolavori.

⁶ Paribeni (1937) 148.

That an Italian publisher would countenance translating and printing them, and that Italians would read them and, even praise them, does *not* please me, because it proves to me that they do not yet consider the Empire of Rome their own patrimony, and that they suffer its personages (even the [currently] celebrated divus Augustus) and its institutions to be handled with mocking irreverence. In addition to all of this, I even find the two books insipid enough that, alongside them, Sienkiewicz's *Quo vadis?* and perhaps even Giovagnoli's *Spartacus* appear the greatest masterpieces.

Paribeni, who in 1937 was Director General of the Museo Nazionale Romano and of Antichità e Belle Arti, could speak with considerable authority on the personages and institutions of ancient Rome, having written books on Trajan, Hadrian, and the 'masterpieces' of Roman art preserved in several Roman museums.

Pietro De Francisci also drew attention to the 'revolutionary' character of Augustus' regime, and he had an even more intimate view of the wheels of government actually turning than any of the other scholars discussed thus far, having served as the Minister of Justice in the Fascist cabinet between July 1932 and January 1935. In addition, in 1937, he succeeded Giovanni Gentile as the director of the Institute of Fascist Culture. In a revealing excerpt from his essay on the 'Augustan constitution' for the edited volume in 1938, Minister De Francisci commented:⁷

Ma, nonostante questa facoltà che viene conservata al Senato, io non credo che in alcun modo il principato possa inquadarsi nella costituzione repubblicana: sostengo anzi che le riforme augustee rappresentano una trasformazione rivoluzionaria dell'antica costituzione.

But, notwithstanding this power that came to be reserved to the Senate, I do not believe that in any way the Principate could be contained within the republican constitution: I maintain on the contrary that the Augustan reforms represent a revolutionary transformation of the ancient constitution.

Intriguingly, De Francisci goes on to defend his choice of the term 'revolutionary', and it is important to recall the early-20th-century context of this defense. While some, he argues, might object to the use of the expression 'revolutionary transformation', this is only

⁷ De Francisci (1938) 96-97.

because they believe that ‘revolution’ must necessarily be linked with ‘violence’. However:

[I] modi con cui può compiersi una rivoluzione possono essere i più varii: e nell’ambito costituzionale si può giungere a trasformazioni radicali con mezzi legali, applicando anche la procedura fissata dall’ordinamento in atto, affinché non possa sorgere dubbio sulla legalità del *novus ordo*.

The means by which a revolution can be brought about are of many different sorts: and in the realm of constitutions one may reach radical transformations via half-measures, also applying the established procedure to a regulation in fact, lest any doubt arise concerning the legality of the new order.

Here, De Francisci comes very close to the portrait sketched by Syme: a sleight-of-hand crafted, albeit without sinister intent, to ease the people’s transition to their golden cages. Early in the essay, De Francisci maintains that the Principate ‘è sostanzialmente un regime monarchico innestato sulle istituzioni repubblicane formalmente conservate’ ‘is substantially a monarchical regime grafted onto formally preserved republican institutions.’⁸ In other words, a regime that aspires to autocratic powers would do best to preserve the illusion of democratic government, and here the allusion to Italy’s experience in the 1920s (particularly after 1925, when Mussolini began tightening the Fascists’ grip on power) seems obvious.

Moreover, in a separate essay he published under the auspices of his Institute, De Francisci elaborated on Augustus’ singular achievement in his unique (but perhaps prescient) historical context:⁹

...noi abbiamo sentito rinnovarsi la coscienza profonda della virtù perenne di molti valori spirituali che nell’impero di Roma ebbero il loro germe e che il Duce, realizzatore vittorioso, ha trasformato in fermenti rivoluzionarii, composto in una nuova armonia, trasfuso nella sua costruzione politica, resi operanti in tutta la vita nazionale....

Nella vecchia Europa affaticata, percorsa da visioni apocalittiche agitate da falsi profeti, una voce fu udita, che può e deve essere di monito e di guida a quanti vogliono dare una ragione di vita alla loro azione, a quanti credono che si debba coraggiosamente e risolutamente operare per la salvezza anzi

⁸ De Francisci (1938) 63.

⁹ De Francisci (1937) 32.

per la risurrezione della nostra civiltà. Questa voce, e voce di tale che non ha oggi al mondo chi l'uguagli, viene, ancora una volta, da Roma.

...we have sensed the renewal of the profound awareness of the perennial virtue of many spiritual values that had their seed in Rome's empire and that the Duce, victorious realizer of those virtues, has transformed in revolutionary ferments, composed in a new harmony, transfused in its political construction, yielding results in the entire national life....

In old, worn-out Europe, beset by apocalyptic visions encouraged by false prophets, one voice has been heard, one that may and must be of warning and of guidance to as many as wish to give a reason for living to their action, to as many as believe that they ought courageously and resolutely to work for the salvation as well as for the resurrection of our civilization. This voice, and the voice of those in the world today that do not have something to equal it, comes, yet one more time, from Rome.

The prose may be purple, but it does highlight the connection of spiritual (and, again, biological) regeneration with the unique experiment conducted by Augustus nearly 2000 years before. A long-suppressed voice can be heard across the centuries – and one that proudly shouted, 'Presente!'

The final item of evidence I would offer is a photograph I took of a display case in the modern successor of the Institute of Roman Studies in 2004.¹⁰

I was, frankly, surprised to see that the Institute had chosen to display these items, together with other photographs of the restored Ara Pacis' dedication on that day. I am grateful that we are not holding a similar 'convegno' at our 'congresso' in Lisbon 76 years later, but I would point out the imagery of our conference's poster, which evokes the pieces of the Ara Pacis Mussolini attempted to re-assemble for the 1938 celebration.

Along these lines, the Momigliano essay is intriguing – not only for understanding Momigliano's work before leaving Italy (and he did contribute essays to the Institute of Roman Studies, as I confirmed from visiting their archives a few years ago), but also for the final footnote, in which he cites Syme's commentary on Roman soldiers in Galatia.

¹⁰ The case included four still photographs of the ISR's activities in the course of the 'Convegno Augusteo' held on 23 September 1938.

While the essay appears unrelated to its late-1930s context, it suggests that Momigliano was sufficiently respected in his own country to be invited to present on the occasion of the Bimillenary celebrations. On the other hand, the essay demonstrates that these scholars were not necessarily beholden to the government, in presenting material that deliberately connected past and present. In other words, there were alternatives to following the state's established lines of inquiry.

In conclusion, I would suggest that while these views of Augustus were not unique to Italian scholarship in the era, they took on particular forms in Italy during the inter-War period – and often incorporated reflections on recent history and the current standing of the regime under which they worked and to which, in some instances, they contributed. If anything, my research argues against the notion that we should, even today, be 'relevant' and accommodating to what our national governments desire from our scholarship. A speaker at this conference's welcoming session addressed the 'assault on the humanities' in many of our countries, but I would also caution against *cooperating* with a standing regime too closely.

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Augustus and Virgil in Contemporary Literature: Wishart, Nadaud, Vassalli

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1. A part of the renown of Augustus over the centuries is due to his relationship with Virgil, and to his role in the publication of the *Aeneid*. Virgil's work has been highly appreciated over the last 2000 years, being often considered a basic literary model: Thomas S. Eliot wrote in 1944 that Virgil is 'our classic, the classic of all Europe.'¹ The fortune of Virgil directly concerns Augustus, who has a pervasive role in Virgil's poem. First he is the descendant of Aeneas, and the *Aeneid* is the epic poem of the dynasty he was founding. Secondly Augustus was not only the patron of Virgil, but also the saviour of his work: in the ancient biography of Virgil we read that the poet, before his death, wanted to burn his poem as he considered it unfinished, but that Augustus refused to fulfill his wishes and entrusted Varius to edit and publish the *Aeneid*.

The central role of Augustus in the story of the *Aeneid* is also an important factor in the reception of Virgil. The *Aeneid* can be interpreted as an encomiastic poem, a work written to glorify the prince (it is the 'Augustan' reception studied by Richard Thomas),² but it is also possible to detect in the poem a 'pessimistic' attitude on the part of Virgil, as proposed by some Harvard scholars in the 1960s,³ who focused on the presence of critical attitudes that weaken the encomiastic purpose of the poem: Aeneas's difficult choices, the empathic participation in the fate of the vanquished, the behaviour of Aeneas in the final part of the poem.⁴

These different interpretations can be verified in the story of the *Aeneid*'s publication, which the ancient biographical tradition attributes

¹ Eliot (1945) 70.

² Thomas (2001).

³ Parry (1963); Clausen (1964); Putnam (1965).

⁴ Kallendorf (2011) has explored the presence of a 'pessimistic' interpretation in the Renaissance reception of Virgil.

to Augustus against Virgil's will. This story can be considered a sort of case study of the relationship between political power, the poet and his work. The version of the story given by the grammarian Aelius Donatus's *Life of Virgil*⁵ can be included among the 'Augustan' receptions: Virgil wants to burn his poem as unfinished. The purpose of his voyage to Greece was to revise the text of the *Aeneid* in the following three years. He justified his decision to destroy his work on account of its defects and imperfections. Augustus denies Virgil's wish, as Servius wrote, 'in order that so great a work might not perish.'⁶ We can speculate that Virgil, in this traditional version of the scene, did not publish the *Aeneid* not because too 'Augustan', but because it was not worthy of its encomiastic and 'national' purpose.

In modern times novelists have generally adopted the Donatian approach. A good example of this reception is the novel written in 1934 by Günther Birkenfeld, on the life and feats of Augustus. He reproduces Donatus's scene adding an atmosphere of pathos: Augustus suffers not only for the death of his friend the poet, but also because he has to save the poem against the latter's wishes. This difficult decision is justified by the national and patriotic relevance of the work.⁷

The political relevance of the story is less relevant in what Theodor Ziolkowski called 'perhaps the major Virgilian novel of the century',⁸ that is *The Death of Virgil* by Hermann Broch.⁹ In this novel (or rather 'lyrical novel', as pointed out by the same Ziolkowski)¹⁰ the last eighteen hours of Virgil's life are recounted: before his death the poet thinks about his work, his life, and literature. The desire to burn the *Aeneid* is attributed by Broch to Virgil's metaphysical doubts involving the crisis of values and the illegitimacy of art.¹¹

Broch worked on his novel in Austria as early as the 1930s, but wrote the final version during the Second World War in the USA, where he

⁵ Latin text and English translation in Ziolkowski, Putnam (2008), 181-199. Aelius Donatus lived in the fourth century; his *Life of Virgil* was largely based on the (lost) biography written by Suetonius at the beginning of the second century.

⁶ Ziolkowski, Putnam (2008) 205.

⁷ Birkenfeld (1934) 278-279. On Birkenfeld's novel see Privitera (2014).

⁸ Thomas, Ziolkowski (2014) 916.

⁹ Broch (1945). The original German version and the English translation were published at the same time.

¹⁰ Thomas, Ziolkowski (2014) 206.

¹¹ Ziolkowski (1993) 221. On Broch's novel see also Zagari (1986).

was a refugee. His book, composed during the Nazi era and the war, is a reflexion on the crisis of Western civilization. As regards the following decades Ziolkowski spoke of a 'post-Virgilian Age', characterized by the fragmentation of the presence of Virgil, who seems to have declined in his role of the critical literary consciousness of European culture: 'the Roman poet has lost his authenticity for writers of a new generation.'¹²

I am here considering three 'Virgilian' novels which probably belong to a new period of cultural history and Virgil's reception, a period which can be said to have started at the time of the fall of the Berlin wall (1989): the three novels were in fact written in the nineties, and reveal several and surprising convergences, even though they were written by authors working independently in different language areas. The three novels to which I refer are *I, Virgil* by David Wishart,¹³ *Auguste fulminant* by Alain Nadaud,¹⁴ and *Un infinito numero* by Sebastiano Vassalli.¹⁵ Before examining the characteristic features of their reception of Virgil, I will briefly consider the three authors, the plots of the novels and the narrative strategies they adopted.

2. The literary production of David Wishart (Arbroath, 1952) is largely founded on his classical studies in Edimburgh: his works are in fact all set in antiquity. Besides the novel I am considering, he also wrote one about the Emperor Nero (*Nero*, 1996) and another one about the Roman conquest of Britain (*The Horse Coin*, 1997). Wishart is moreover well known for the detective stories of Marcus Corvinus, who investigates crimes and intrigues in Rome during the first Imperial Age. In the first volume (1995) Marcus is called upon by Perilla, Ovid's wife, to discover the causes of the exile imposed on her husband. By 2014, the series had reached sixteen books.

The title *I, Virgil* recalls that of the famous *I, Claudius* by Robert Graves (1934) and highlights the autobiographical approach adopted by the author: Virgil himself recounts his own life. In the preface Wishart states that he used Donatus's *Life of Virgil* as a framework. Of the three novels under consideration, Wishart's is the one that

¹² Ziolkowski (1993) 229.

¹³ Wishart (1995).

¹⁴ Nadaud (1997).

¹⁵ Vassalli (1999).

actually pays the greatest attention to the ancient biography and uses, adapting it to the fictional framework, virtually all the information given by Donatus. The use of ancient biographical material is facilitated by the chronological frame of the novel, which is also carefully related to the historical context of the Augustan Age.

The only trait of the Donatian Virgil which Wishart has not used is that of his homosexuality, suggested to the ancient exegesis by the homoerotic scenes of the *Bucolics*. This trait is discarded, as Wishart himself explains in the preface, ‘for reasons of plot.’¹⁶ Instead he exploits the nickname ‘Parthenias’ (Virginal), given to Virgil, as Donatus tells, by the people of Naples.¹⁷ Wishart considers chastity, as suggested by the nickname, more suitable to the character he imagines.¹⁸ To justify this decision he introduces in the biography an imaginary story which occurred when Virgil was studying rhetoric in Milan: a schoolmate invited him to a whorehouse, where Virgil, finding himself face-to-face with a prostitute, reacted with unease and repulsion.

In addition to this psychological defeat, Wishart attributes to his Virgil another shattering experience, developing Donatus’s information about one of Virgil’s brothers who died prematurely. Wishart imagines him as a two-year-old boy who drowns in the waters of the Mincio before his brother’s eyes: Virgil could have saved him, but he did not. An unconfessed fratricide which the protagonist of the novel regretted for the rest of his life.

Donatus recounts that Virgil had a stepbrother, his stepfather’s son, Valerius Proculus, and that the poet left him, in his will, part of his wealth. Virgil’s mother, we can suppose, married another man after the death of Virgil’s father, and had a boy from him. Wishart prefers to image that Virgil, arriving in Rome, was adopted by a rich man, Quintus Valerius Proculus, a friend and admirer of Cicero. As Cicero was at that time a victim of the proscriptions ordered by Marc Antony after Caesar’s murder, Virgil, in the novel, receives as a gift from Maecenas

¹⁵ Wishart (1995) 3.

¹⁷ The Greek term means ‘son of virgin’, but in the context of the *Life* it refers to the virginal behaviour of Virgil himself.

¹⁸ A similar misogyny is attributed to Virgil by Maurizio Bettini in his short tale *Il racconto di Enea* published in 2013: see Bettini, Lentano (2013) 3-26. In this account, Virgil, who is depicted – as Broch had done – on the point of death, explains with his own erotic experience the behaviour of Aeneas towards Dido.

the house which had belonged to Proculus, confiscated after his death, but he decides to give back it, in his will, to the son of Proculus, his adoptive brother (that is the Proculus mentioned by Donatus). With the story of Proculus Wishart fills a narrative void in the ancient biography and imagines that Virgil thanks to Proculus knew Asinius Pollio and Cornelius Gallus and thus entered into the cultural elite of Rome.

Wishart's narrative frame includes several other episodes reported by the ancient biographical tradition: Virgil studies in the school of the Epicurean Siro in Naples (information given by Servius); he inherits the Siro's farm (as stated by *Catalepton* 8); another of Virgil's teachers is the Greek poet Parthenius (a doubtful statement given by Macrobius). That Virgil argued a case before the judges, once and only once, is recounted by Donatus: Wishart imagines a politically-conditioned case, whose outcome provokes Virgil's distaste and leads him to reject politics. The friendship with Maecenas begins, in the novel, during the trip to Brundisium (37 BC) as Horace tells us in the *Satires* (1.5).

Virgil's first meeting with Octavian is imagined by Wishart as having taken place in the home of Maecenas after the battle of Naulocus (36 BC). Varro was also present at this meeting, which occurred just after the composition of his treatise *On Farming*. The dialogue repeats the cultural context in which the composition of the *Georgics* is usually set: 'it's time to rebuild,' Octavian says, 'the simple peasant virtues that made Rome great. Cincinnatus on his farm.' 'Wouldn't you agree, Virgil?' Virgil answers: 'Yes, I do agree.'¹⁹ It was a sincere answer, as Virgil himself later remembers. Octavian had not only been persuasive, but was also speaking the truth: 'It was certainly pleasant, almost hypnotic. I found myself agreeing totally. He was right.' This dialogue highlights the image of Augustus shared not only by Wishart, but also by the other two other novelists I am dealing with: a modern autocrat, whose power is founded on charisma and consensus.

The outcome of the scene is easy to predict: Octavian asks Virgil to write a work on agriculture, but not a handbook and not even a dialogue like Varro's, but 'a political pamphlet, addressed to the cultured classes, explaining what we're trying to do, to bring about.'²⁰ Virgil writes the

¹⁹ Wishart (1995) 282.

²⁰ Wishart (1995) 283.

Georgics sincerely, full of a religiosity which seems in contrast with Siro's teachings and the Epicureanism he had professed in his youth. Virgil at this time thought that, if there was a man like Octavian, the gods had perhaps not completely abandoned mankind.

Virgil's faith collapses some years later, when political needs conflict with his loyalty to the friendship. Donatus states that the *Georgics* were read out loud by Virgil and Maecenas in the presence of Augustus when the Prince, after the battle of Actium, was staying at Atella (near Naples). While reading the fourth book Virgil learns that his praise of Cornelius Gallus, in the final part of the book, is not pleasing to Augustus, because Gallus, being out of favour with the Prince, had killed himself. That Virgil rewrote the *Georgics* replacing a praise of Gallus with the fable of Aristeus is stated by Servius, but this event seems very unlikely and was perhaps suggested by the perplexity of ancient exegesis about the presence of the fable in a didascalical poem. In the novel Augustus orders Virgil to cancel the praise of Gallus and to rewrite this part of the poem. This order is justified by the Prince as political: 'for the good of the state,' says Augustus, while Maecenas explains to the confused poet that his poem no longer belongs to him: 'it's not a private poem (...). It's a public statement of official policy.'²¹

After the scene in Atella the novel goes quickly towards its conclusion. Virgil obeys the order of the Prince and replaces the praise with the fable. He also accepts the assignment to write an epic poem, but soon becomes prey to opposing feelings: should he accept being a passive celebrator of Augustan policy, or should he follow his own beliefs? This inner conflict delays the work and Virgil does not complete the *Aeneid*, despite Augustus's constant insistence that he should do so. Virgil hides his work, but Maecenas finds the manuscript of the poem and reads the final part of it, where Aeneas confronts Turnus also on order to avenge the death of Pallas. Maecenas is furious, because he interprets the legend of the Danaids, depicted on Pallas's belt worn by Turnus, as an allusion to Octavian and his relationship with Antony and the Aegyptus.²²

²¹ Wishart (1995) 314.

²² Wishart (1995) 337. On Pallas's belt see Putnam (1995) 114-115.

After Maecenas's discovery Virgil sails for Greece, but arriving at Piraeus finds Augustus waiting for him. The Prince is returning to Rome and wants the poet to travel with him. Virgil goes to Megara, a town near Athens, where he falls ill after drinking cold water (in the *Life* by Donatus the poet falls ill in Megara 'under a strongly blazing sun').²³ Augustus leaves Virgil in the care of his personal doctor, the famous physician Antonius Musa, who gives him a poison, probably belladonna. Virgil dies, killed by order of Augustus.

3. Alain Nadaud (Paris, 1948) is a novelist, but also an essayist and playwright. His first hit was *Archéologie du Zéro* (1984), a thriller set in Alexandria, during the archaeological excavations of the ancient city. Also in his subsequent novels Nadaud has often proposed fusions between antiquity and the contemporary age: as in *La mémoire d'Érostrate* (1992) and in the more recent *Aux Portes des Enfers* (2004), a modern version of the voyage in the Underworld.²⁴

In *Auguste fulminant* archeology also has a predominant role: the protagonist is Gilles Virande, cultural attaché in a small museum near Carthage, in Tunisia. The museum is destroyed by a mysterious fire. Virande flies to Athens and reaches the nearby town of Megara, where he is murdered.

That Nadaud is presenting a replay of Virgil's story is also revealed by the names of other characters in the novel: René Teucère (from *Teucer*, thus is Trojan), Augustin Marate (whose name echoes that of Augustus), Anna Sidonis, archeologist who dies in Tunisia, in an incident reported as suicide by the newspapers; Anna's sister is Lisa Sidonis (Elisa is the Fenician name of Dido; she and her sister came from Sidon; but in the *Aeneid* it is Dido/ Elisa who commits suicide, not Anna).

These onomastic plays are part of Nadaud's narrative strategy, which proposes a detective-story that occurs in our days, but also reproduces the ancient story of Aeneas. The crucial event is the discovery of the correspondence between Varius and Tucca, the two friends of Virgil who, in the *Life* of Donatus, publish the *Aeneid* by order of Augustus.

²³ Ziolkowski, Putnam (2008) 193.

²⁴ See Galli Pellegrini (2009).

The fictive letters of Varius and Tuca are reproduced in the novel, together with the surveys recorded by Virande before his death, and the accounts of the destroyed museum. Thus the reader can discover the truth not only about the death of Virande, but also about Virgil's.

In the *Life* of Donatus Virgil's last voyage is from Italy to Greece, where he falls ill. The innovation introduced by Nadaud is a stop in Cathage, where the poet intends to visit the places described in the first and fourth books of the *Aeneid*. Virgil travels with Varius, who reports regularly to Tuca (through the discovered letters) the poet's intentions and actions. Tuca is in the East, with Augustus, and reports everything to the Prince. After learning that Virgil does not want to finish the *Aeneid* and is planning to go to Africa, Augustus gives Tuca a lesson in poetics: it is useless for Virgil to see directly the places of the poem, because 'the work of art has its own truth, which keeps precedence over reality and produces the reality itself, giving it that consistency without which nothing can be handed down from one century to another.'²⁵

Thanks to the following letters the reader can learn at first hand the course of the story. Varius tells Tuca of Virgil's intention to burn the manuscript of the poem. Augustus is very angry and orders both the killing of Virgil and the recovery of the manuscript. Tuca sends Varius a poison. Varius gives it to Vergil while they are travelling from Carthage to Greece. Varius is sorrowful, but justifies the Prince's decision. The death of a friend, as Tuca writes, is the price to pay for poetry: 'let's thus consider his death as price we have to pay in order that he will become one of the greatest poets of his time, and the *Aeneid* an imperishable masterpiece and intended to last for centuries.'²⁶

The poison operates slowly: Virgil is ill when he goes to Megara and Augustus visits him, to check the killers' work. In this novel the physician Antonius Musa is also Augustus's accomplice. In the end Augustus recovers the manuscript of the *Aeneid* and exults echoing the words of the epigrammist Sulpicius reported by Donatus: 'I saved the town of Troy from another fire.'²⁷

²⁵ Nadaud (1997) 121-122.

²⁶ Nadaud (1997) 184.

²⁷ Nadaud (1997) 233: 'à la ville de Troie j'aurais donc épargné un nouvel incendie.' Donatus's Latin text is: *et paene est alio Troia cremata rogo*.

4. The third novel I am examining is by the Italian writer Sebastiano Vassalli (Genova 1941-2015). His historical novels are well-known:²⁸ some of them were translated into English,²⁹ *Un infinito numero* in Czech (2003) and French (2005). Vassalli recently published another novel set in antiquity, at the time of the battle of the Campi Raudii, won by Marius against the Cimbers (101 BC).³⁰

The meaning of the title *Un infinito numero* is explained by the epigraph of the volume: ‘Tutti gli stati che questo mondo può raggiungere, li ha già raggiunti, e non una sola volta, ma un infinito numero di volte.’ (‘This world has reached all its possible conditions, not once, but an infinite number of times.’) The sentence echoes Nietzsche’s concept of eternal recurrence: ‘all things recur eternally and we ourselves with them, and that we have already existed an infinite number of times before and all things with us.’³¹ Nietzsche’s idea is also presupposed by the *urobòros*, the bracelet worn by the protagonist of the novel, whose shape is that of a serpent which eats its own tail. In the novel it is explained as a symbol of the Etruscan conception of time.

In the novel the story is told by Timodemo, a Greek grammarian bought by Virgil at the slave market of Naples. Virgil makes him his secretary and then frees him. Like Wishart, Vassalli also considers the reading of the *Georgics* in Atella as the turning point in Virgil’s career. In the Donatian *Life* the reading seems to be held before the Prince and his family. In Vassalli’s version, Virgil reads his poem in the Greek theatre of the town, before a large audience: a suitable place for the importance given by Augustus to propaganda. The war against Anthony, writes Vassalli in an explanatory essay, was ‘the first modern war in history,’ because Octavian ‘does not believe in men and perhaps not even in the gods,’ but ‘he believes in a deity which is not yet present in the Pantheon of the Greek and Roman gods, but that will have his first herald in a Latin poet, Virgil. He believes in Fame.’³² The readings in

²⁸ See Talbot (2000).

²⁹ *The Night of the Comet* (Manchester, 1989); *The Chimera* (New York, 1990); *The Swan* (London, 1998). On Vassalli, see Kerbaker (2004); Nesi (2005).

³⁰ Vassalli (2014).

³¹ Nietzsche (2003) 237.

³² Vassalli (2005) 44-45.

Atella are for Vassalli the test of the more ambitious task of propaganda assigned to Virgil: 'idea and project of the *Aeneid* born in Atella.'³³

The central part of the novel is the most far remote from the Donatian *Life*. Before writing the poem, Virgil had intended inquiring into the origins of Rome and therefore travels to Etruria, to clarify the city's Etruscan past. Virgil travels with the Etruscan Maecenas and visits his birthplace, Aretium. The tale of the travel echoes Horace's trip to Brundisium (the *iter Brundisinum*), echoed by the realistic descriptions of the discomforts of the travel, the taverns visited, the travellers' sexual adventures (Virgil included). The use of Horace is highlighted by the name of one of the secretaries of Maecenas, Sarmento: in *Sat.* 1.5 Sarmentus is a buffoon.

At the end of their journey Virgil, Maecenas, and Timodemo arrive in Sacni, a thermal town and the sanctuary of Mantus, the Etruscan god of the Underworld. In his temple they experience, in a trance, a journey through the past, which has some analogies with Aeneas's journey in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. Updating Virgil's *Heldenschau* Vassalli adopts the narrative technique of the movies: flashbacks of events and figures of the past, whose sequence allows the reader to find out what happened in the past. Hence Virgil discovers that the Trojans led by Aeneas were actually the Rasna, that is the Etruscans coming from Asia Minor, and that Aeneas was very different from the character depicted in the *Aeneid*: he was actually a bloodthirsty and treacherous chief, who slaughters men and children and rapes and subdues the women. The stories Virgil watches during the trance are the opposite of what is recounted in the *Aeneid*: Camilla, daughter of the king-priest Metabo and betrothed to Thurn, the king of a neighboring kingdom, is raped by Aeneas, but then flees and organizes the guerrilla war against the invaders. Vassalli's Camilla is clearly a fusion of the Virgilian characters of Lavinia and Camilla, the warrior woman protagonist of the ninth book of the poem. The subjection of the Latin women echos the rape of the Sabines ordered by Romulus; the imposition of the Etruscan language reverses the final of the *Aeneid*, where the invaders (the Trojans) adopt the language of the conquered people (Latin). Vassalli's description of the massacres of Aeneas is

³³ Vassalli (2005) 57.

probably an allusion to the ethnic cleansing which occurred in the mid-1990s in the former Yugoslavia.

The visions experienced in Sacni also reveal to Virgil the true history of Rome: a few centuries after Aeneas the Rasna/ Etruscans are defeated by a minor Etruscan town, 'founded by the gunman Romul, killer of his own brother,' a town that lost the ancient Etruscan language and religion and was inhabited by 'all the thieves and murderers of the Etruscan people.'³⁴ The visions end with the various massacres of Roman history, up to that of Perugia mentioned by Propertius (40 BC).

Vassalli's Virgil, like Nadaud's, at first favours the Augustan project and presents a history of Aeneas different from the truth learned in Sacni: 'the truth, said my master in a day of autumn many years ago, is always unrepresentable and art exists even for this specific purpose, to make it better and worth being told.'³⁵ But later Virgil is gripped by doubts and decides to rewrite the poem and tell the truth. Caught by a soldier he is brought to Greece, where he falls ill. Being delirious he tells the prince that the poem he wants rewrite 'will tell of men's evil and madness, and also of your evil and your madness.'³⁶ After Virgil's death Augustus recovers the manuscript of the *Aeneid* and tells Varius to publish it. Timodemo is wanted, but luckily manages to escape.

5. The three novels I have summarized are very different in their narrative strategies, style, and assumptions, but reveal some common traits that are worth examining.

First of all, these novels can be included in a popular genre of literature, different from Broch's inspired and lyrical prose: we find in them action and a plot, not the long and severe monologue of his novel. They therefore represent Virgil's transition from the 'high' literature represented by Broch and other twentieth-century authors examined by Ziolkowski³⁷ to literary forms closer to the taste of today's readers (and this choice has been also criticized).³⁸ Wishart's novel seems, from this point of view, more traditional, near to the standard of biography (or

³⁴ Vassalli (1999) 147.

³⁵ Vassalli (1999) 201.

³⁶ Vassalli (1999) 222.

³⁷ Ziolkowski (1993) 194-203.

³⁸ Vassalli's novel was e.g. criticized by La Penna (1999) and Fo (2002).

rather autobiography); Nadaud's more clearly adopts the techniques of the thriller. But in both novels the story ends with a crime, Virgil's murder.

Besides the adoption of the narrative form of fiction, the three novels reveal a closer attention to the ancient biographical tradition. Broch was more interested in the works of Virgil and their role in Western literature, than in Virgil's life. Broch only read a biography of Virgil in 1936-1937,³⁹ when he had already begun to write a book on Virgil. He had planned his work after reading the book published in 1931 by Theodor Haecker, whose idea of Virgil as pre-Christian is clearly shared by Broch.⁴⁰ In the earlier draft of the novel⁴¹ he does not consider Virgil's decision to burn his poem a crucial point of the story.

Our three authors are more interested in the biographic genre, know the various episodes of the life of Virgil told by Donatus and some other ancient authors, and have pondered the credibility of the ancient information. Vassalli is aware of its limited value: of Virgil's life, he writes, 'very little is known.'⁴² In the fiction of the novel Timodemo says that Virgil never wrote the famous epitaph engraved on his tomb near Naples.⁴³ Vassalli is also well documented on Etruscan civilization, which concerns the central part of the novel (he remembered, in an interview, that as a student he had attended the lessons of the historian Marco Attilio Levi at the University of Milan).⁴⁴ The central part of the novel, as we have seen, is largely fictional, but it is interesting to observe that some aspects of Vassalli's fiction are also provided by the ancient tradition: a negative image of Aeneas was not unknown to ancient exegesis and the scholium of the Servius Danielis to *Aeneid* 3.80 presents Aeneas as a rapist. Differently from the *Aeneid*, Vassalli's Aeneas arrives in Tuscany, not on the mouth of the Tiber: also the Greek poet Lycophron, in his *Alexandra*, writes that Aeneas landed on the mouth of the Arno and allied himself with the Etruscan chiefs (ll. 1239-1249). Another surprising 'forerunner' of Vassalli is the linguist Vladimir Georgiev, who in 1981 claimed that 'the Etruscans

³⁹ Ziolkowski (1993) 213.

⁴⁰ See Lützel (1976) 228.

⁴¹ See Lützel (1976) 215.

⁴² Vassalli (2005) 49.

⁴³ Vassalli (1999) 230. See also Vassalli (2005) 73.

⁴⁴ See Pacchiano (1999).

were descendents of the Trojans, i. e. that they were Trojan settlers in Italy.⁴⁵

A real Virgilian bibliography is cited by Virande, who investigates the origins of the discovered epistolary in the novel of Nadaud. He says that the truth about Virgil is hidden ‘in the interstices of his biography, in the shadows and the silences of it.’⁴⁶ Wishart, as we have seen, uses mainly the ancient evidence about Virgil. His detailed knowledge of the sources is sometimes hidden in the lines of the novel: before starting his last journey Virgil becomes acquainted with Horace and defines him ‘the better half of myself,’⁴⁷ that is a precise translation of what Horace says about Virgil in his *Odes: dimidium animae meae* (1.3.8).

In all three novels Virgil favours Octavian at the beginning of his career, but then develops a critical position which in the end becomes wholly anti-Augustan. For Wishart and Nadaud the turning point was the forced revision of the *Georgics*, to remove the praise of Gallus. After this event, Varius remembers in one of the letters imagined by Nadaud, Virgil ‘has not been the same.’⁴⁸ Vassalli dates the authoritarian evolution of the Augustan regime from the affaire of Cornelius Gallus, but is uncertain about the causes of Virgil’s change of attitude: ‘the initial enthusiasm gradually weakened, for reasons we do not know and can only guess.’⁴⁹ Nadaud adds a psychological interpretation, regarding the father-son relationship that had occurred between Virgil and Augustus: he wrote, after the publication of the novel, that ‘*Auguste fulminant* cannot but give the impression of a conflict with the father figure.’⁵⁰ But also in Nadaud’s novel the turning point is Virgil’s disillusion with the prince, and the fear ‘of being seen by posterity as a courtier, a sort of ideological poet.’⁵¹ The anti-Augustan attitude developed by Virgil implies a negative evaluation of the original arrangement of the *Aeneid*. In the novels of Nadaud and Vassalli Virgil plans a revision or rewriting of the poem; Wishart’s Virgil adds some anti-Augustan allusions to it, as we have seen in the case of Pallas’s balt. In this regard,

⁴⁵ Georgiev (1981) 247.

⁴⁶ Nadaud (1997) 161.

⁴⁷ Wishart (1995) 329.

⁴⁸ Nadaud (1997) 154.

⁴⁹ Vassalli (2005) 60.

⁵⁰ Nadaud (2005).

⁵¹ Nadaud (1997) 155.

Wishart clearly adopts the ‘pessimistic’ or ‘Harvardian’ interpretation of Virgil we have already mentioned. Vassalli, as has been observed by Mastroiacovo,⁵² is also influenced by this interpretation, which has moreover become widely known in the last decades.

All three writers in fact attribute an anti-Augustan position to Virgil, and consequently they emphasize the betrayal committed by Augustus in publishing the *Aeneid*, a betrayal which becomes a political act, the removal of a dissident voice. In this perspective Varius and Tucca, the editors of the *Aeneid*, become the accomplices of a political crime. In Vassalli’s novel Timodemo calls Varius a ‘professional betrayer’,⁵³ in Nadaud’s work Augustus rewards him with the authorship of the tragedy *Thiestes*, which would have been written by Virgil (actually this lost tragedy was by Varius, but Donatus wrote that it ‘was published by Varius under his own name’).⁵⁴ But we find the most striking solution in the novels by Wishart and Nadaud concerning Virgil’s death.

In the *Life* by Donatus Virgil dies as a result of an illness caused by the strongly blazing sun during his visit to Megara. For Vassalli Virgil’s death remains ‘one of the mysteries of the ancient world,’⁵⁵ but an episode in his novel suggests the possibility of Virgil’s murder: the centurion sent by Augustus to sequester the manuscript of the *Aeneid* asks if he ‘has to kill the famous Virgil only to take from him a pack of manuscript sheets.’⁵⁶ Wishart and Nadaud instead have no doubts: Virgil was killed by order of Augustus.

That Virgil was killed is the thesis proposed in 1991 by Jean-Yves Maleuvre,⁵⁷ adducing as evidence the interpretations he gave of some of the compositions of Horace, who would have alluded to the murder of his friend.⁵⁸ It is interesting that in Wishart’s novel Horace is the only friend informed by Virgil of his departure to Greece and of his intentions about the *Aeneid*.

The image of Augustus proposed by the three novelists is on the whole coherent, differently from that proposed by the twentieth-century

⁵² Mastroiacovo (2008).

⁵³ Vassalli (1999) 233.

⁵⁴ Ziolkowski, Putnam (2008) 195.

⁵⁵ Vassalli (2005) 65.

⁵⁶ Vassalli (1999) 219.

⁵⁷ Maleuvre (1991).

⁵⁸ Maleuvre (1992).

novels on Augustus, which generally outline a contradictory character, both a beneficent monarch and a subtle tyrant.⁵⁹ Besides Birkenfeld's novel, already referred to, mention should be made, in this regard, of the novels by Gilliam⁶⁰ and Williams⁶¹ and also the recent screen production about the reign of Augustus.⁶²

Vassalli highlights the role of Augustus as a political propagandist and signals his ability in creating his own image: he was 'obsessed by the idea that to control men it is necessary to control fame.'⁶³ Vassalli echoes, in this context, the analysis proposed in 1987 by Paul Zanker, who signalled the role of propaganda in the war between Octavian and Anthony.⁶⁴ Timodemo, in the novel, says that this had been 'a new type of war,' fought on the walls of the towns 'between the propaganda of Caesar Octavian and that of his rival.'⁶⁵

Nadaud sometimes offers a more traditional image of the tyrannical despot: the definition of Augustus as *fulminant* is related to a statue of the destroyed museum, the work of an artist who had perhaps wanted to disprove the clemency traditionally attributed to the Prince. But Augustus becomes 'fulminant' also when he learns that Virgil wants to burn his poem: 'he went from one end to the other of the room, grinding his teeth, tapping his foot, belching he did not care of this *Aeneid*.'⁶⁶ But his anger does not last long and soon Augustus decides upon the death of Virgil with his usual rationality. Tucca cannot fail to recognize that the decision of Augustus 'was cynical, but not without logic': Virgil wanted to betray not only the prince, but also poetry, and devote himself solely to 'the sterile and useless critical practice of philosophy.'⁶⁷

Wishart's Octavian is mainly a pragmatic opportunist: 'nothing if not a pragmatist.'⁶⁸ His republicanism, his devotion to traditional

⁵⁹ See e.g. Gibbon (2002) 1-9. On the image of Augustus in cultural history see also Carter (1983).

⁶⁰ Gilliam (1965).

⁶¹ Williams (1972).

⁶² On the TV series *Imperium: Augustus* see Goodman (2012).

⁶³ Vassalli (1999) 208.

⁶⁴ Zanker (1987).

⁶⁵ Vassalli (1999) 34.

⁶⁶ Nadaud (1997) 181.

⁶⁷ Nadaud (1997) 236.

⁶⁸ Wishart (1995)

values, his concern to flatter others: these are only all masks useful to hold and preserve power. Wishart's portrait of Augustus is that of the authoritarianism in our times.

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**Interpreting the Revolution:
Augustus, between Ronald Syme's
Roman Revolution
and Agustina Bessa-Luís' *Crónica do Cruzado Osb.***

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1. Syme's revolutionary Octavian: from republican *libertas*¹ to imperial *seruitium*

Tacitus begins his *Annales* with the public assessment of the *uersus ciuitatis status* (Ann. 1.4) which had led to a political paradox: the endorsement of Tiberius' hereditary *principatus* by the Senate, a symbol of republican *libertas*. As the great historian tries to convey the different trends of opinion within, at least, the upper levels of Roman society, it becomes clear that there was no consensus: so many were the points of view and interests involved. The man behind the almost miraculous process of establishing the new regime was also the subject of sometimes bitter discussion: *multus hinc ipso de Augusto sermo* (1.9).

The image of Augustus and his *principatus* in posterity has also been marked by different and even antagonistic interpretations, according to the taste and ideology of the writer and his times. The publication, in the summer of 1939, of Ronald Syme's landmark work *The Roman Revolution*² was precisely a reaction against the excess of whitewashing and opportunistic exploitation of Augustus;³ it happened

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¹ In order to keep the similarity with the Latin word *libertas*, I have opted for the English translation 'liberty' rather than 'freedom'.

² Hereafter *RR*.

³ 'A Tacitean reaction to his times, and to cheerful credulity,' notes Linderski (1993) 43: 'Much that has recently been written about Augustus is simply panegyric, whether ingenuous or edifying. Yet it is not necessary to praise political success or to idealize the men who win wealth and honours through civil war.' (*RR* VIII).

in a European context of totalitarianism centred in personality cult,⁴ which was about to result in the deadliest war in history. Above all, Syme tries to demonstrate that the *principatus* of Augustus

should be regarded as the consolidation of a revolutionary process by which a revolutionary leader arose in civil strife, usurped power for himself and his faction, transformed faction into a national party and a torn and distracted land into a stable and enduring government.

RR 4

This interpretation of Augustus through the perspective of revolution may sound strange to us, due to the alleged republican liberty and our modern revolutionary archetypes: the ruthless Octavian does not appear or sound like a Che Guevara nor did he establish the *liberté, égalité, fraternité* proclaimed by the Revolution of Revolutions. To the contrary, he replaced *libertas* and the *consulatus* (*Ann.* 1.1) – the greatest symbol of the republican magistracies, elected for short terms by noisy popular assemblies and introduced by the revolutionary Lucius Junius Brutus in the distant sixth century BC – by a hereditary monarchy with increasing traits of despotism.

Using Tacitus as its major source, *The Roman Revolution* also exposes several ambiguities conveyed by Tacitus, the illustrious *rerum scriptor*, among others, and repeated superficially for thousands of years. The greatest of all these ambiguities is precisely the concept of *libertas*, with a strong repercussion in all revolutions: it led posterity, including prominent mentors of the French Revolution, to exalt Julius Caesar's murderers Marcus Junius Brutus and Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis as heroes, although they were above all strenuous defenders of the *status quo*.

Roman *libertas*, in a slave society with clear class and gender distinctions in political rights, did not correspond exactly to our 'liberty':

The Romans, who distrusted democracy, were able to thwart the exercise of popular sovereignty through a Republican constitution which permitted

⁴ Among other things, see the links that some scholars established between the *princeps* and contemporary leaders. In a work published in 1936, *Princeps. Studien zur Geschichte des Augustus*, Wilhelm Weber, Professor of Ancient History in Berlin, called him *Führer*, Galsterer (1993) 3. On the Italian side, the *Mostra Augustea*, held by Mussolini in 1937, epitomized the manipulation of the past.

any free-born citizen to stand for magistracies but secured the election of members of a hereditary nobility.

RR 364

The Roman republic was not a representative democracy but an oligarchic regime – a ‘collective monarchy of the nobles’⁵ – which the anachronistic governing structure of the city-state helped to maintain. The voting powers of the *plebs* – a *Lumpenproletariat*, in Marxist terminology⁶ – were judiciously handled by the *nobiles* and access to magistracies was restricted. In fact, even the extraordinary magistracy of the tribunes of the plebs had, since the Gracchi brothers (murdered in 133 and 121 BC), been dragged into the arena of the struggle between oligarchic factions. The violent confrontation reached its peak with the infamous Publius Clodius Pulcher, who seemed to act as a sometimes uncontrollable weapon of Pompey and Julius Caesar.⁷ Eventually the *tribunicia potestas* became one of the foundations of Augustus’ absolute power.

Still, the myth of republican *libertas* became so powerful among the common people that they saw its defence as one of the fundamental virtues of their leaders, their *brevis et infaustos populi Romani amores* (*Ann.* 2.41), in particular Drusus the Elder and his son Germanicus Caesar. Those who managed to climb the social ladder, like some great plebeian houses, of urban and provincial origin, tried

⁵ Linderski (1993) 48.

⁶ The city *plebs*, steeped in traditional conservatism, accepted the system: they would not easily vote for a candidate whose ancestors were not politically known; nor would they join the slaves in order to overthrow the established order. In addition, the urban *plebs* was accustomed to being bribed by demagogues and becoming their *clientela*; this is why the *nobiles* considered the mob manageable and despised them. Frequent riots reinforced the idea that ‘the first duty of every Roman statesman’ was to control ‘the dangerous and anachronistic liberties of the People’ (*RR* 153). Karl Marx, in the *Communist Manifesto* (11), defines *Lumpenproletariat* as ‘social scum’, composed of the lower layer of the working class and the ‘undesirable’ (vagabonds and criminals). Members of the *Lumpenproletariat* not only have no interest in participating in the proletarian struggle (‘passive Verfaulung der alten untersten Schichten der Gesellschaft’) – the attitude of the *plebs* in the context of the successive Slave Wars is a clear example of this – but also tend to act as a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue (‘sich zu reaktionären Umtrieben erkaufen zu lassen.’).

⁷ A patrician from the haughty gens *Claudia* adopted by a member of the *plebs*, he was tribune in 59–58 BC and was murdered in a riot in 52 BC by fellow agitator Titus Annius Milo.

to be accepted into the oligarchy by showing a deep commitment to its rules – precisely what Cicero, and later Tacitus, did.⁸

The power of the *res publica* belonged to the oligarchy and, for them, *libertas* was to keep it,⁹ but there were limits. Indeed, *libertas* was also ‘a vague and negative notion – freedom from the rule of a tyrant or a faction’ (RR 155). This is the notion behind the word *aequalitas* used by Tacitus in the context of its loss with the *principatus*: *omnes exuta aequalitate iussa principis aspectare* (Ann. 1.4). Again, this is an ambiguous idea that Tacitus perpetuates: *aequalitas* in the access to power is exclusive to the oligarchy; and, to prevent the excessive dominance of a *gens* or *factio*, they went so far as to create *homines noui* to use them as a weapon. One such case was Cato the Censor against the Scipiones. However, the system could not withstand the test of empire.

The revolution that dictated the end of the republic began at the time of the Gracchi,¹⁰ the first in a series of ‘striking individuals’ that the

⁸ The political *libertas* of the equestrian order depended on their association with the *nobiles*. The famous *eques* from Arpinum, Cicero, was the most remarkable *homo nouus*, and also a rare case. Naturally, he was the champion of the *concordia ordinum*, between money and nobility. Most *equites* preferred the calm of provincial politics or just safer activities, such as business and agriculture. Titus Pomponius Atticus, the great friend of Cicero, managed to die of old age in one of the most turbulent periods in the history of Rome (and his granddaughter Vipsania married Tiberius). As Syme points out (RR 358), the aristocratic prejudice against the *equites* who climbed to the senatorial order or acquired too much power is evident in the contempt with which Tacitus refers to the devious Sejanus (*municipalis adulter*, Ann. 4.3), also an *eques*, but too ambitious.

⁹ As ‘The *libertas* of a Roman aristocrat meant the rule of a class and the perpetuation of privilege’ (RR 155) and ‘Roman history, Republican or imperial, is the history of the governing class’ (RR 7), the prosopographical method seemed to Syme the right one to investigate the origins of the revolution, especially because he, having witnessed the actions of Goebbels and the true face of Stalin’s constitution, distrusted public demonstrations of intent, including laws. Theories such as Mommsen’s dyarchy did not mean anything to him, for they dealt only with appearances. Syme’s study demonstrated the profound and complex relations that the great families of the oligarchy, patrician or not, established between themselves, particularly through marriage, and with other social groups in Rome, Italy and even the empire, in order to maintain the balance of power, that is, their *libertas*. Be it through *gens*, *diuitiae*, *amicitia* or *factio* among the most powerful or *clientelae* with the *plebs* – more than political affinities, what lay behind the *factiones* of dynasts, namely the triumvirates, were personal connections laboriously cultivated, sometimes for hundreds of years. Syme exposes some extraordinary power projects, such as the web of kinship woven by Servilia Caepionis, the remarkable mother of Brutus, and Julius Caesar’s mistress, whose abilities in scheming are not far behind those of Livia Drusilla.

¹⁰ ‘With the Gracchi all the consequences of empire – social, economic and political – broke loose in the Roman state, inaugurating a century of revolution.’ (RR 16); ‘The government of the *nobiles*, supported by a sacred union of the possessing classes, by the influence of their *clientela* among the *plebs* and by due subservience towards the financial interests might have perpetuated in Rome and Italy its harsh and hopeless rule. The empire broke it’ (RR 17).

republican constitution was unable to restrain. Unlike the early days of the republic, the effects of ‘civic degeneration’ (*RR* 441) were felt in a vast territory, resulting in calamitous scandals such as the Jugurthine War (112-106 BC). After defeating Cinna and the Marians (c. 82 BC), Lucius Cornelius Sulla – the first to march on Rome with an army – tried to control the internal situation and protect the oligarchy with proscriptions and political reforms. He could not, however, abolish his own example (*RR* 17) and soon other wars, caused by corruption, partisanship and instability, concentrated armies and power in the hands of dynasts. The most conspicuous case was that of Pompey, favoured by an oligarchy who considered him more manageable. Many of Sulla’s legal barriers were quickly abolished (70 BC) and the way was open for the repetition of chaos: it was ‘a crisis without an alternative’,¹¹ solved by the political genius of the young Octavian, after two triumvirates – which counted as examples of glaring *inaequalitas* within the oligarchy – and several civil wars.

The posthumous adoption that turned the 18-year-old Caius Octavius Thurinus into Caius Iulius Caesar Octavianus anointed him with the splendid *auctoritas* of the dictator, further extended by the apotheosis that made him *Diui filius*. An almost miraculous mixture of luck and precocious political acumen allowed the young Octavian to claim Caesar’s inheritance and to enjoy the apparent support of the regime – which intended to use him to restore the *status quo* – against a hostile Mark Antony. His mentor Cicero did not foresee the ‘chill and mature terrorist’ (*RR* 191) who would proscribe him when Octavian formed the Second Triumvirate to eliminate Caesar’s killers.

Part of the impact of Octavian’s revolution had to do with the construction of his *clientela* and party and the reconstruction of the oligarchy, a process that involved wealth and power changing hands many times. Proscriptions, a responsibility shared with the other triumvirs, and civil war were instrumental in purging dissonant elements and providing vacancies for supporters: *nullo aduersante, cum ferocissimi per acies aut proscriptione cecidissent*, writes Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.2). But the new leader also attracted to his *factio* a considerable

¹¹ Meier (1993) 55.

section of the traditional oligarchy, mainly by marrying Livia Drusilla and touting the hope of peace and privilege:

Ceteri nobilium, quanto quis seruitio promptior, opibus et honoribus extollerentur ac nouis ex rebus aucti tuta et praesentia quam uetera et periculosa mallent.

Ann. 1.2

The oligarchy – ‘binding link between the Republic and the Empire’ (*RR* vii) – was still there, but was opened to many *equites* whom Octavian granted the *latus clavus*, as the Divine Julius had done. Octavian also provided access via the army to the *cursus honorum*. Thus he surrounded himself with *homines noui*, many of whom were *italici*, like Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Titus Statilius Taurus or Gaius Cilnius Maecenas (*RR* 358-9).¹² These measures had a long-lasting impact on access to power: by Tacitus’ time, not only had the consulship become an easier achievement, but equestrian families, too, had already reached supreme power.

In addition to keeping the urban *plebs* as faithful *clientela* and controlling large armies with the memory of the dictator and large bribes – *ubi militem donis, populum annona* (*Ann.* 1.2) – he summoned *tota Italia* and the provinces, weary of extortion and injustice.¹³ The fostering of a national sentiment was crucial, but all this was personal, as is clearly shown by the oath of obedience and the commitment with which he gathered people and funds around Actium.

¹² ‘Dictatorship and Revolution both broke down Roman prejudice and enriched the poorer Italian gentry: the aristocracy among the peoples vanquished by Pompeius Strabo and by Sulla now entered the Senate and commanded the armies – Pollio, whose grandfather led the Marrucini against Rome, Ventidius from Picenum and the Marsian Poppaedius. (...) So the New State, perpetuating the Revolution, can boast rich and regular corps of *novi homines*, obscure or illustrious, some encouraged by grant of the *latus clavus* in youth and passing almost at once into the Senate, others after a military career as knights. C. Velleius Paterculus, of Campanian and Samnite stock, after equestrian service at last became *quaestor*.’ (*RR* 359-360); Velleius’ son became consul. The *equites* were ‘the cardinal factor’ in imperial administration, but the *liberti* had also reached a high status (*RR* 355).

¹³ Octavian took advantage of having received Italy as his share in the triumvirate to build deep connections with its people, long despised by Rome and plagued by wars and exactions by corrupt magistrates; the same was true for other provinces: *neque prouinciae illum rerum statum abnuebant, suspecto senatus populique imperio ob certamina potentium et auaritiam magistratum, inualido legum auxilio quae ui ambitu postremo pecunia turbabantur.* (*Ann.* 1.2).

On the eve of this battle on September 2, 31 BC, Rome and Italy were completely drained of human and material resources: after a whole century enduring the horror of fratricidal wars, oligarchy and people were so eager for peace that they would easily forfeit the very *libertas* that had caused so much suffering. Octavian, blessed by Fortune, was at hand to offer *cunctos dulcedine otii* (*Ann.* 1.2). In fact, says Tacitus, the true image of republican *libertas* had been lost: *iuniores post Actiacam uictoriam, etiam senes plerique inter bella ciuium nati: quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publica uidisset?* (*Ann.* 1.3). Octavian's marketing machine, which had already under-lined his role as restorer of peace, started relentlessly working public opinion and adapting the structure of the state with a *savoir faire* that the Divine Julius had lacked.

Actium is the symbol of the narrative constructed against Antony and a masterful example of 'victor's history.' The loss of the early political legitimacy provided by the Second Triumvirate was carefully counterbalanced by creating a mythologized 'moral' cause. Octavian turned a fight between two dynasts, both usurpers of the constitution, into the defence of Italy and the West against an effeminate tyrannical regime and the East, no longer ruled by Mark Antony but by an ambitious oriental woman, Cleopatra – it was 'the magnificent lie (...), the weapon forged to destroy Antonius [that] changed the shape of the whole world' (*RR* 275).

Victory achieved, Octavian took a moderate and legalistic stance, assuming the appearance of the republican system (*RR* 340): *eadem magistratum uocabula* (*Ann.* 1.3) but *munia senatus magistratum legum in se trahere* (*Ann.* 1.2). Achieving the appearance of restoration of *libertas* was therefore a fundamental step: in 27 BC, in a carefully prepared scene, Octavian returned to the Senate the special powers with which he had been invested, simulating a certain respect for *aequalitas*... but *seruitium* already prevailed among the senators, who offered him *imperium proconsulare* over crucial provinces for 10 years and then the title of *princeps*, symbolic for its similarity to the ancient *princeps senatus* but no longer meaning *primus inter pares*. In fact, his power was absolute, thanks to personal *auctoritas* and immense wealth. The common people and the Senate could resume the traditional voting: he had secured the election of members of his faction. With this appearance of legality and the absence of civil wars, *domi res tranquillae* (*Ann.* 1.3) and the *felicissimus status* of the

principatus were achieved and broadcast by his propaganda machine as indisputable truth. In 23 BC his power was officially increased through the *tribunicia potestas*, which placed the tribunes of the *plebs* under the emperor.¹⁴ Then he took control of the powers of censorship and became *pontifex maximus*, which allowed him to complete the restoration of traditional religion and morals. This campaign on behalf of the *mos maiorum* fits the studied conservatism already revealed in the political framework. However, Octavian was being true to his conservative provincial origins; sobriety and narrowmindedness could sound mediocre, but ensured tranquillity.

To make peace and normality evident, he demobilized and installed part of the armies in rural areas and embarked on a series of public works. Aware that architectural magnificence and public entertainment were essential in order for the new regime to endure, he exhibited a 'sure grasp of dramatic art and formidable skill in producing potent acts of theatre.'¹⁵ Octavian involved the audience in the theatrical process and took a prominent place himself: 'The spectators were presented with dazzling entertainments calculated to impress them with the glory of their patron,'¹⁶ but without falling into Mark Antony's recklessness. The *princeps* was following the example of Julius Caesar, but went further than him in the willingness to participate and interact with his subjects, which increased his popularity. Always thoughtful, he tried to control and regulate tightly the organization of *ludi*, ensuring that no one else could overshadow him, and he did the same with the triumphal processions.

Surnamed *Augustus* (27 BC) and proclaimed *pater patriae* (in 2 BC), he made sure that his glory and his narrative would survive beyond his lifetime and dominate posterity.¹⁷ Octavian engaged an extraordinary

¹⁴ 'The basis of power at Rome stands out clearly – the consulate, the armies and the tribunate: in the background, the all-pervading *auctoritas* of a senior statesman. Augustus, the last of the dynasts, took direct charge of the greater military provinces and exercised indirect control over the rest; and he arrogated to himself the power of the whole board of tribunes. *Proconsulare imperium* and *tribunicia potestas* were the two pillars of the edifice' (RR 38).

¹⁵ Beacham (2005) 151.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Some even accused him of putting his prestige above the interest of the state by choosing Tiberius as his successor. Allegedly, Augustus knew that his stepson's character would have terrible consequences that would enhance his own fame: *ne Tiberium quidem caritate aut rei publicae cura successorem adscitum, sed quoniam adrogantiam saeuitiamque eius introspexerit, comparatione deterrima sibi gloriam quaesiuisse* (Ann. 1.10).

generation of poets that glorified him with more or less enthusiasm, and sought legitimacy in the mythical setting of the Trojan royal ancestry of the *Iulii*.¹⁸ He also managed to control the historiography and left his own version of history imprinted throughout the empire.

The success of Augustus was so extraordinary that, when his death seemed close, there was a general fear for the future: *nulla in praesens formidine, dum Augustus aetate ualidus seque et domum in pacem sustentauit* (*Ann.* 1.4). Besides the widespread sense that monarchy was almost inevitable, the silent war between *Iulii* and *Claudii* in the imperial household, orchestrated by Livia Drusilla, had left the power in the hands of the unpopular Tiberius and promised more tragic episodes. However, more serious than these omens of instability was the state of servitude to which the oligarchy was reduced (*Romae ruere in seruitium consules, patres, eques, Ann.* 1.7) and the resulting loss of the old virtues (*nihil usquam prisci et integri moris: omnes exuta aequalitate iussa principis aspectare, Ann.* 1.4). It was a deep moral crisis that would reach new depths with Tiberius' rule.

After the loss of *libertas*, a new and cynical *aequalitas* emerged: everyone was subject to the *princeps* and not just to the laws that the republican oligarchy was used to manipulating to their advantage. Worse than that, the law *de maiestate* would be a terrible source of criminal adulation and ambition: common servitude was a tremendous price for a much desired peace.

Throughout the revolutionary process, whether as Caius Octavius, Octavianus Caesar or Augustus Caesar, the *princeps* seemed a sphinx: a 'small town bourgeois, devoted and insatiable in admiration of social distinction' and power (*RR* 368), but, above all, and unlike his hapless rival Marc Antony, a relentlessly realistic man – 'in that the young man was a Roman and a Roman aristocrat' (*RR* 113).¹⁹

¹⁸ Sponsored with considerable tact and patience by Augustus – which proves how flexible he could be – the *Aeneid* established the divine and Trojan origin of the *urbis* and the *Iulii*, thereby achieving the long-sought literary greatness of Rome. However, Vergil was deeply traumatized by civil war, as his verse *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt* (1.462) demonstrates, though many have overlooked it through the centuries.

¹⁹ Syme points out several times that the absence of such unerring sense of reality and relentless ambition was precisely the cause of the fall of the 'frank and chivalrous' but indecisive Marc Antony, not his taste for mythological costumes and wild parties, so well exploited by Octavian's propaganda machine (*RR* 104). As for the *diui filius*, 'the revolutionary career of Caesar's heir never reveals a trace of theoretical preoccupations: if it did, it would have been different and very short' (*RR* 121).

2. A fictional analysis of Augustus' *aurea mediocritas* in the context of a contemporary revolution

Although separated by two millennia, Tacitus and the contemporary Portuguese novelist Agustina Bessa-Lúis (born 10-15-1922, died 03-06-2019) share a deep interest in people's reactions to politics and politicians. Indeed, Agustina, in order to grasp the immediate impact of the first two years of the revolution of the 25th April 1974 – the Carnation Revolution –, built her novel *Crónica do Cruzado Osb.*²⁰ as a kind of fictional documentary²¹ around a group of characters who are not only affected by the process, but discuss it and place it against the background of historical experience.

History is never far from Agustina's framework of analysis. This prominent postmodern novelist, endowed with an acerbic wit,²² provided an additional historical setting to her novel by choosing a title that evokes the well-known Latin tale of the conquest of Lisbon in 1147, written by the Anglo-Norman crusader Osbern(o).²³ She seems to be relating the revolutionary period to the foundational – and also somehow revolutionary – act of conquering the future capital of the country from the hands of Muslim invaders. It is also another way of engaging her readers in the re-interpretation of history and stressing the special bond of the author-narrator with the point of view of one of her main characters.

²⁰ From now on *CCO*.

²¹ *Crónica do Cruzado Osb.* is a novel about the revolution of April 25th 1974 written as the events unfolded: the *terminus a quo* is April 25th 1974, somewhere in the Douro river region (perhaps in the town of Amarante); the *terminus ad quem* is, ostensibly, May 7th 1976, in Oporto. That is, it begins with the revolution and ends on a day between the aftermath of the parliamentary elections of April 25th 1976, and the preparation for the first presidential elections (held on June 27th 1976).

²² She wrote in *Embaixada a Calígula* (Lúis [2009] 208): 'Por espírito crítico, levaria ao inferno pai e mãe, e por amor ao conhecimento nasci num domingo, o dia mais adulto e velho da criação.' ('For critical thinking, I would lead to hell father and mother, and for the love of knowledge I was born on a Sunday, the most adult and oldest day of creation').

²³ The *De expugnatione Lyxbonensi* was written in letter-form by an Anglo-Norman participant in the Second Crusade with a religious background, perhaps 'Osber. of Baldr.' (Osbern or Osbert of Bawdsey), although the text is ambiguous (the apparent dedication to someone named 'R.' may also be understood otherwise).

Besides allusions to Osberno, the reflection on the 25th April involves other revolutions²⁴ and famous revolutionaries or counter-revolutionaries, among whom Augustus has a relevant place. Indeed, Agustina Bessa-Luís, placing herself, as usual, in the *continuum* of human experience, calls into play Octavian's Roman revolution as another perspective on the Portuguese revolutionary process usually called the PREC.²⁵

However, the historical protagonists of the Carnation Revolution are never named individually (Marcelo Caetano, the last leader of the Estado Novo, is mentioned once) and allusions to events are telegraphic and serve as time-markers of the progress of the revolution and its impact on the characters, both individual and collective. The events in the life of the characters are also presented without great concern for order, repetition or suspense.²⁶ The Carnation Revolution involved very limited violence and was mainly an overpowering experience of liberty in a country paralysed by decades of dictatorship and isolation. A digressive, vertiginous and sometimes chaotic mix of action and discussion, in which the themes and figures are linked by allusive proximity, is, therefore, an appropriate form of expression.

Agustina's purpose is precisely to verbalize that experience, as her narrator states towards the end of the book:

Em geral, as revoluções são descritas pelo prisma das ideias que elas envolvem, das heroicidades e dos horrores que nelas são cometidos. Mas ninguém as vê pela medida da timidez que se gera nas populações, da angústia que as leva a praticar delitos, tanto como a consumir as maiores

²⁴ One example among many is the parallel between the role of the military in 1795 and 1976 (CCO 134).

²⁵ The 'Revolutionary Process in Progress' or 'Revolutionary Period in Progress' – PREC – is the period of revolutionary activities during the Carnation Revolution which began with the military coup of April 25th 1974 and ended with the approval of the Portuguese Constitution in April 1976. These initials, however, are often used to refer to the critical period of the Hot Summer of 1975, following the Marxist measures of the government presided over by Vasco Gonçalves, purportedly a reaction to an alleged right-wing coup d'état of 11th March. The political, economic and social chaos that ensued led to the military coup of November 25th which restored some calm and paved the way for a general election (April 25th 1976), thus putting an end to the phase of revolutionary governments.

²⁶ For example, early in the first chapter we learn of a whole series of subsequent events, including, anti-climatically, the death of Isabel Jeremias, which eventually came to pass the next winter and is detailed in the second chapter. Isabel is the mother of Antenor, a young man who shares with his childhood companions Agostinho Aureliano and Josué Silva the status of protagonist.

inspirações. O homem comum vive numa proporção de interesses que não são matemáticos; um dia de vida dum só homem projecta-se numa dimensão tão complexa, que não são nem a religião nem a arte nem a inteligência técnica que a podem definir.

CCO 185²⁷

The overwhelming emotion of the revolution stretches people to their limits, reveals previously unknown traits and forces them to make decisions that sometimes prove fatal: Manuel Jeremias, Antenor's father, shows a never suspected aggressive temperament; his wife Isabel is unable to stand the chaos of change and lets herself die; one of their daughters gives herself impulsively to a neighbour, a Spanish engineer, and reacts as if nothing had happened when he suddenly leaves with his family; the nurse Maristela, Josué's socially awkward sister, does not measure the ethical consequences of her radical activism and tarnishes her professional reputation; etc. People, more or less consciously, are made to face their own truth and react according to their personal circumstances – of which they are often ignorant. Revolution thus allows an approach to what Agustina designates the 'mystery of Being'²⁸ – a foundational theme in her work and the main cause of her adventurous and sometimes cruel exploration of the human experience.

In *Crónica do Cruzado Osb.* Agustina is interested above all in the common man, sometimes represented by social or gender groups – the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, the military, intellectuals, women of the people. However, she chose three peculiar characters as spokesmen/witnesses, because they are keen thinkers and possess a very wide culture. They represent the elite of the Douro region, but interact in Lisbon and Oporto with all levels of society and the events of the revolution. Sometimes Agustina lets the narrator's voice mix with them,

²⁷ 'In general, revolutions are described from the perspective of the ideas that they involve, of the heroics and horrors that are committed therein. But no one sees them through the measure of the shyness that is generated in the populations, of the anguish that leads them to commit crimes as much as to consummate the biggest inspirations. The average man lives with a proportion of interests that are not mathematical; a day in the life of one man is projected in such a complex dimension that neither religion nor art nor technical intelligence can define it.'

²⁸ 'Um ser humano é uma incógnita sem precedentes, isolado na sua própria natureza, cativo do seu próprio ser.' ('A human being is a mystery without precedents, isolated in his own nature, captive of his own being'); 'Um carácter é sempre um espectáculo tão extraordinário que nos comove pondo-nos em risco de ilusão.' ('A character is always such an extraordinary spectacle that moves us, putting us at risk of illusion.'), writes Agustina in *Embaixada a Calígula* (104 e 143).

and seems to behold her creatures with delight. Agostinho Aureliano, Antenor Jeremias (a.k.a. Nor) and Josué Silva are young men in their twenties, ‘três cachorros delgados e farejantes; três meninos de ouro e prata, com rasgões nos joelhos e unhas sujas da terra’ (CCO 26),²⁹ ‘tipos diagnosticáveis de grandes subversivos’,³⁰ but ‘uma trindade musical, que anulava o tempo, recusando-se de certo modo a vivê-lo’ (CCO 91).³¹ Agustina mythologizes them to some extent: Agostinho is a kind of Messiah that the others want to follow; Josué is often named by friends and the narrator as ‘Príncipe Assur’³²; Nor is presented as Wagnerian (CCO 90). However, the revolution ends up destroying the glorious future that Agostinho’s charisma promised: extraordinary in everything, ‘não achava justo pôr os seus dons ao serviço de uma causa para esmagar alguém’³³ and flees to Africa when everyone else was returning. In so doing, he let down his erudite and proud mother Piedade, ‘Pietà’, ‘católica de grande formação’ (CCO 37),³⁴ from whom he is escaping; he also avoids the love of Olímpia, Nor’s youngest sister, and so ruins a great chance of happiness. Antenor, apparently inactive, ‘o mais inteligente, mas o mais incapaz de chegar ao absoluto (...), somente interessado no extra-lógico das situações’ (CCO 91),³⁵ seems to enjoy Agustina’s affections, perhaps because of his sharp and acerbic mind. An idle womanizer, the allure of his words was not so powerful at the end of the PREC, but he had by then fallen hopelessly in love and was preparing his marriage to a very smart woman. Josué, a controversial journalist and writer, constantly haunted by the social superiority of the Aurelianos and by the charisma and the words of Agostinho and Antenor, is the one who takes up more space (he dominates 5 of the 15 chapters, including the last two, thus getting the last word) and takes up the unexpected title of the work: like a postmodern historical novelist – or an ironic reincarnation of the

²⁹ ‘Three slender and sniffing dogs; three boys of gold and silver, with their knees bruised and their nails dirty with earth.’

³⁰ ‘Easily diagnosed types of great subversives.’

³¹ ‘A musical trinity, which cancelled time, refusing somehow to live it.’

³² The biblical Prince Asshur, mentioned because of Josué’s curly black hair.

³³ ‘He thought it wasn’t fair to put his gifts at the service of a cause in order to crush someone.’

³⁴ ‘A Catholic of great erudition.’

³⁵ ‘The most intelligent, but the most incapable of reaching the absolute (...), only interested in the extra-logical of the situations.’

actual author – he is determined to deconstruct Osberno’s tale of the conquest of Lisbon with a ‘sátira muito viva e espirituosa e também mal intencionada’³⁶ of the revolutionary present. Josué presents himself and the crusader more as chroniclers than as actors (CCO 115), and it is as such that he conveys a growing pessimism about the direction taken by the Revolution – which disappointed him and left him isolated – as a historian who sees past events through the present context. But isn’t that what everyone does? As Agustina once wrote:

O passado é para o escritor um lugar vizinho; que é para o historiador uma prova de realidade conjugada com o sentimento próprio. É diferente Suetónio de Tácito. Diferentes na fleuma, na habilidade que convence, no espírito que informa. Não há uma História, há historiadores.

Luís (2004) 352³⁷

Throughout the novel various topics related to the 25th April Revolution are repeatedly discussed: what it was and what other revolutions were, who made it and how (violence, cultural dissemination, women’s liberation, political parties), when and why it ended. In her own voice or through her spokesmen, Agustina multiplies allusions and quotations ranging from the Bible and the Church Fathers to Pericles or Napoleon Bonaparte and, insistently, ancient Rome. The theme of revolution, with the French Revolution as a natural highlight, is enriched with allusions to authors such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Morelly, Tocqueville or Lafargue, accompanied by allusions to political and cultural figures of Augustan England, such as Sir Robert Walpole or Samuel Richardson. The text seems to imply more than what is told, to the extent that such personalities and times are sometimes invoked in relation to seemingly unimportant issues, as a wink to the reader. Voltaire is mentioned abruptly in relation to the Jewish people, in a way that assumes that the characters know his opinions about other historical figures, such as Augustus. Tocqueville (CCO 113) is compared to Josué because of the method that leads to knowledge based on facts and the reader may

³⁶ ‘A very lively and witty satire, and also malicious.’

³⁷ ‘The past is for the writer a neighbouring place; and it is for the historian a proof of reality combined with personal feeling. Suetonius is different from Tacitus. They’re different in phlegm, in the ability that convinces, in the spirit that informs. There is not one History, there are historians.’

assume that his works, revalued precisely because of the revisionist approach to the French Revolution begun in the 1960s, were a kind of subtext for characters and author alike. Therefore, a very broad cultural knowledge underlies the novel and allows for cryptic interpretations.

Liberty and equality – sexual, social and cultural – are fundamental issues, almost inseparable and haunting, because they stir deeply the personal and cultural identity of the people. It is liberty that has the first and the last word. At the end of the first chapter – after the presentation of the Jeremias family and how they reacted to the events of April 25th – liberty is defined as ‘palavra sagrada (...) qualidade do espírito intemporal do homem (...), paixão de si mesmo como coisa criada do nada (...), sem princípio nem fim em outrem’;³⁸ losing liberty is ‘alienar-se aos bens do mundo, à protecção dos senhores, ao amor do ventre e da vitória’ (*CCO* 25)³⁹. The sequence of shocks experienced by the characters over the first two years of revolution eventually indicates a general alienation. At the end of the last chapter, facing Osberno’s, and especially Josué’s, disillusionment with the course of the siege, the narrator insists that liberty stands ‘na constância da paixão pela liberdade dos homens, que resiste à influência dos acontecimentos’ (*CCO* 218).⁴⁰

Equality, essential for the full enjoyment of liberty, is mainly addressed in terms of class. The main setting is the relationship between employers and employees in the great houses (and vineyards) of the Douro region. But if there is a stage of fascination, when the eagerness of the poor to level themselves with the social and economically superior is conspicuous, soon the feeling of near loss of identity produces anger. The demanding maid Glória, who treated Josué as an equal at the height of the revolutionary fever, quits his aunt Basilides’ house exasperated at having lost a status that she now sees as crucial to her own identity: outraged by the opportunism of many who used the revolution to become the new masters, she grows even more disappointed as she discovers that the apparent equality has broken the balance in her

³⁸ ‘A sacred word (...) a quality of the timeless spirit of man (...), the passion for oneself as something created from nothing (...), without beginning or end in another.’

³⁹ ‘To alienate oneself from earthly goods, from the protection of lords, from the love of the belly and of victory.’

⁴⁰ ‘On the constancy of the passion for the liberty of men, which resists the influence of events.’

relationship with her employer – a northern specificity, emphasizes the narrator.⁴¹ One of the causes of division between Josué and his circle in Lisbon was precisely the overvaluation of the university degree as a symbol of the possibility of equality through universal access to education. Josué, who valued experience, argued that a degree was humiliating as a symbol of superiority (*CCO* 68-70). Bright Agostinho Aureliano had fled, being unable to stand the idea of imposing his superiority; but the opportunists had installed new ‘sects’, reinstating the elitist schemes that the revolution was supposed to destroy.

Equality, like liberty, is ultimately impossible: all surrendered in some way ‘aos bens do mundo, (...) ao amor do ventre e da vitória.’⁴² Worse still, for it was the very cause of the revolution, ‘à protecção dos senhores’:⁴³ the Gonçalves period⁴⁴ (11th March – 25th November 1975) led to such chaos that it triggered an eager wish for stability. The analogies with the French Revolution are evidenced by terms such as ‘Termidor português’ (‘Portuguese Thermidor’) (*CCO* 84) and by the exclamation of Aunt Basilides ‘Como tarda Bonaparte!’ (*CCO* 47).⁴⁵ Indeed, ‘a autoridade não se pode distribuir’ (*CCO* 111).⁴⁶ Moreover, regardless of revolutions, inertia dominates. Other political leaders are related, at various times, to this idea of a preference for order, associated with the conservatism typical of an ‘adult society’:

⁴¹ Glória understood that it was impossible to recover the way she felt before the revolution: ‘O seu contrato com ela repousava em grande parte sobre a imaginação – imaginação da amizade e do rancor –, e desse modo durava mais do que qualquer outro que estivesse estribado na razão. Na gente do Norte existe essa espécie de relação, e é por isso que as pessoas não parecem muito interessadas num movimento revolucionário de classes.’ (‘Her contract with her [employer] rested largely on imagination – imagination of friendship and grudge – and thus lasted more than any other that was based on reason. In northern people there is this kind of relationship, and that’s why people do not seem very interested in a revolutionary movement of classes,’ *CCO* 108-109). A similar point is made by the habit of the aristocratic Piedade Aureliano of working in the vineyards together with her employees, who even use better gloves than her... As will be seen, the commentary on the role of imagination in the relationship between landlords and employees will also be applied to the relationship between the Roman people and the Emperor Augustus.

⁴² ‘To earthly goods, (...) to the love of the belly and of victory.’

⁴³ ‘To the protection of lords.’

⁴⁴ So-called because of the already mentioned Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves, an army general and radical leftist who began a period of dramatic decisions, including nationalizations of corporations and expropriations of land in the south. On November 25th he was deposed by a military coup.

⁴⁵ ‘How late is Bonaparte!’

⁴⁶ ‘Authority cannot be distributed.’

a inércia é o maior dos ministérios dentro de um Governo que se preze. (...) Filipe II adiava todos os assuntos até que eles ultrapassavam o período crítico e deixavam de jogar um papel decisivo no campo das propostas. (...) Enfim, não estamos longe de pensar que a mediocridade dos chefes faz a estabilidade dos Estados

CCO 85-86⁴⁷

Thus, the difficulty of dealing with liberty leads to the exhaustion of revolutionary enthusiasm:

O que é visível no processo de todas as revoluções é o desencanto, o fastio da liberdade que torna as pessoas inclinadas a alianças confortáveis. Onde pensaram ver uma recompensa, encontram perigos.

CCO 186⁴⁸

This is precisely the underlying theme of the two references to the time of Augustus – in spite of the differences between Roman *libertas* and Portuguese *liberdade*. The first reference hinges on Horace and occurs in a discussion about who makes the revolution: not the proletariat, but the difficult bourgeois, who somehow bears the guilt of his well-being (CCO 55). The exclamation lamenting the civil wars in Horace's 'Ode to Fortune' – *Heu heu, cicatricum et sceleris pudet/ fratrumque* (1.35.34-351) – is quoted to underline that he was one of those bourgeois, but had opted for a peaceful revolution, through poetry – hence the quote from an unidentified translation of the famous verses on the *aurea mediocritas*.⁴⁹ This preference for peaceful revolution was, after all, the attitude of most people.

Then, a direct allusion to Augustus is suddenly introduced by the narrator, when he reports the words of Josué. However, as the previous references to inertia and Napoleon pointed out, the whole novel suggests that there is a constant relation between the balance achieved by the

⁴⁷ 'Inertia is the greatest of the ministries within a government worthy of its name. (...) Philip II postponed all matters until they passed the critical period and failed to play a decisive role in the field of proposals. (...) Anyway, we are not far from thinking that the stability of states is made by the mediocrity of their leaders.'

⁴⁸ 'What is visible in the process of all revolutions is the disenchantment, the boredom of liberty that makes people prone to comfortable alliances. Where they thought to have seen a reward, there are dangers.'

⁴⁹ '[*Carm.* 2.10.5] *Auream quisquis mediocritatem/ diligit, tutus caret obsoleti/ sordibus tecti, caret invidenda / sobrius aula.*'

princeps two thousand years ago and the outcome of the process of revolutions, starting with the French: tired of the revolutionary turmoil and of great ideas – the ‘soluções milagrosas’⁵⁰ and catastrophically failed plans of the intellectuals, always putting people ‘ao serviço de grandes coisas’⁵¹ – most people want a strong leader and the comfort of small pleasures, symbolized by the crockery in provincial shop windows – ‘coisas destinadas mais ao desejo ocioso’⁵² – extensively described at the beginning of the chapter:

Dizia Josué que o que tornou grande o governo de Augusto foi a sua arte da mediocridade. Ele fez da liberdade um hábito, e não uma pretensão. Acusa-se Augusto de ele ter instituído a igualdade perante o chefe, e não a igualdade perante as leis, a qual deixaria subsistir as desigualdades sociais permanentes. Manteve as invejas aplacadas mediante a servidão comum que autorizava a liberdade comum. Exactamente o que Augusto conseguiu foi obra do seu nível trivial que o impelia ao desdém da aristocracia e à escrupulosa garantia da ordem. O poder censorial de facto correspondeu a certa função inquisidora que é mais própria dos espíritos que não são positivamente agressivos nem inovadores. Os direitos do povo estavam delegados na imagem popular do príncipe; este impressionava, sem deixar que a maioria influísse. O príncipe actuava como corpo duma imaginação cuja atitude de grandeza é vulgar empolamento.

CCO 145-146⁵³

Josué’s opinion of Augustus reveals a comprehensive consideration of the whole issue of the establishment of his regime: the magistracies and powers that the *princeps* took over, the imperial liturgy that he set up, feeding the imagination of the people, and the idea of equality for all in servitude. With his apparent narrow-mindedness and provincial triviality, Augustus could be what each one – except for a few members

⁵⁰ ‘Miraculous solutions.’

⁵¹ ‘At the service of great things.’

⁵² ‘Things more aimed at the idle wish.’

⁵³ ‘Josué said that what made Augustus’ rule great was his art of mediocrity. He turned liberty into a habit, not a pretention. Augustus is accused of having established equality before the leader, and not equality before the law, which would maintain the permanent social inequalities. He kept envies appeased by a common servitude that allowed common liberty. Precisely what Augustus achieved was the work of his trivial level, which drove him to disdain for the aristocracy and a scrupulous guarantee of order. The censorial power indeed corresponded to a certain inquisitive function that is more typical of spirits who are not positively aggressive or innovative. People’s rights were entrusted to the popular image of the prince; he impressed, while not allowing the majority to interfere. The prince acted as the body of an imagination whose attitude of greatness is vulgar pomposity.’

of the old oligarchy – wanted in a leader, particularly at that historical moment.

Making his assessment of the Carnation Revolution – ‘the most fascinating’ period of his life – Josué also emphasizes the human need for security and peace:

Em geral todos sabiam que não tinham sido nem muito desgraçados nem muito contrariados; que tinham adquirido bens e criado uma tranquilidade que não era pedagógica, mas sim ligeiramente imoral; uma tranquilidade de ócios, lucros, perversões de gosto até, e que torna os povos felizes.

CCO 185⁵⁴

The revolution seemed at some point to lead man towards his deeper being, but then it was just a fleeting hope. If ‘o gosto da servidão dura mais do que o génio da liberdade’ (CCO 114),⁵⁵ what is the point of revolution? Is the ‘paixão da liberdade’⁵⁶ also ‘uma longa servidão’ (CCO 185)?⁵⁷

3. Deciphering the chameleon

Despite the clear convergence in ideas and vocabulary,⁵⁸ some of which are repeated throughout the novel, Agustina does not allude to Tacitus or Syme. However, to judge by her previous reference to Suetonius’ and Tacitus’ way of writing history, the great Roman historian did not escape her radar, and Syme’s *Roman Revolution* probably did not either. Undoubtedly, Agustina places herself in the never-ending continuum of assessments of the *princeps*.

The obscurity of the emperor’s nature – to which he may have alluded ironically by choosing the Sphinx as his signet – and the

⁵⁴ ‘In general everyone knew that they had been neither very unfortunate nor too upset; they had acquired property and created a tranquillity that was not pedagogical, but slightly immoral; a tranquillity of leisure, profits, even perversions of taste, and that makes people happy.’

⁵⁵ ‘The taste of servitude lasts longer than the genius of Liberty.’

⁵⁶ ‘The passion of Liberty.’

⁵⁷ ‘A long servitude.’

⁵⁸ Some of the following words are mentioned in the passage that refers to Augustus, others in the texts quoted just before and after it. Servitude/ *servidão*, leisure/ *ocioso/ ócio*, tranquility/ *tranquilidade*, equality/ *igualdade*: *At Romae ruere in seruitium consuls, patres, eques* [Ann. 1.7], *cunctos dulcedine otii pellenit* [Ann. 1.2]; *domi tranquillae res* [Ann. 1.2]; *omnes exuta aequalitate iussa principis aspectare* [Ann. 1.4]), etc.

way he went from ruthless faction leader in a civil war to an almost unchallenged symbol of the *Pax Augusta*,⁵⁹ building in the process a strange mix of republican restoration and dynastic innovation, gave rise to conflicting interpretations. The views are negative or positive depending on whether one values more the start or the end point: Augustus' character or the legal process that provided a very effective solution for the dead-end at which the Republican regime had arrived.

The positive current stresses peace and stability, echoing the beautiful verses of Horace and Vergil – who in fact did not hide the bitterness of so many wars. The negative current, inspired by Tacitus, points to tyranny, premeditation and dissimulation, despite admitting the supreme political *nous* and flexibility of Augustus' character, particularly when compared to more difficult Caesars, such as Tiberius.

Augustus enjoyed a splendid fame, crafted by himself – his *Res gestae*, his patriotic poets and his censorship against dissenting historians – and by the following generations, who built a nostalgic idealization after experiencing an even greater tyranny. The fact that many of his successors were profoundly hated and even sentenced to *damnatio memoriae* favoured positive assessments by the Romans themselves and placed him unanimously at the top: *Sis felicior Augusto, melior Traiano* was, for a long time, the senatorial greeting at the inauguration of emperors.

The opinion of two equally complex and charismatic emperors, Hadrian and Julian the Apostate, is very significant. Hadrian, the restless emperor, had a 'pronounced devotion to Augustus', and followed him as a model in his government. Among the many gestures of homage to the first *princeps*, Hadrian used as signet a head of Augustus.⁶⁰ Julian highlighted Augustus' contradictions, although he did not hesitate to place the first *princeps* at the top of the list of best emperors, next to Julius Caesar, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius and, for satirical reasons, Constantine. Aware of the variable character of Augustus, Julian depicted him in the *Caesars* (4) as a chameleon, constantly changing colour, but always with the extraordinary beauty of Aphrodite and the Graces – certainly recalling his beautifully crafted statues. Hiding

⁵⁹ 'The revolutionary adventurer eludes grasp and definition no less than the mature statesman' (RR 113).

⁶⁰ Birley (2001) 96.

Augustus' ruthless side, Julian creates an Augustus who proves to be modest and subservient in his dialogue with the gods, following the lead of Marcus Aurelius and avoiding Alexander the Great's impetuousness or Trajan's rusticity. In fact, he realized that this was the best way to assure victory in the contest to be best Caesar, though he eventually lost to the Stoic emperor.

In the modern era, interest in the first *princeps* is found especially when Roman despotism is discussed and imitated: for instance, by the intellectuals of the French Enlightenment and Augustan England. Of the forerunners of the French Revolution, Montesquieu qualifies Augustus as a sly tyrant who gently led the Romans into servitude (*L'Esprit des Lois*, livre XIX, ch. III); and Voltaire, in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, attacks him fiercely as a vicious and cruel tyrant. This negative outlook is also evident in the most influential critic of the time of the French Revolution, Edward Gibbon. Stressing in the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* the British horror at the cruelty of that revolution, Gibbon followed the tradition of Tacitus: for him, Augustus is the 'artful' and 'crafty prince' who went from 'tyrant' to 'father of the country' (Chapter III, Part I). Thanks to his impact, Gibbon launched a more 'realist' trend in the Anglo-Saxon world.

At the end of the French Revolution, Bonaparte created a regime that mirrored Julius Caesar's and Augustus' empire. Caesarism would be debated at length in the 19th century, following the continuation of the revolutionary instability. German scholars such as Theodore Mommsen explored the legal specificities of the *principatus*, but the nationalistic totalitarianism of the 20th century tried to take advantage of Augustus.

Two thousand years after his death, in the 21st century, Augustus continues to fascinate us because his personality goes far beyond his beautiful statues and magnificent achievements. The contrast between the 'chill and mature terrorist' of the civil wars and the pleasant Caesar who used humour to soften difficult situations and loved playing with friends and children is particularly alluring in these times of fascination with complex and even perverse minds. But if these topics fascinated Agustina, who is naturally prone to observing people, the circumstances and political significance of the *princeps* are inescapable, particularly in times of totalitarianism and revolution.

Although this paper brings an unexpected parallel between intriguing works of different genre and context, Roman heritage links the scholar Syme (11th March 1903 – 4th September 1989) to the writer Agustina (15th October 1922 – 3rd June 2019) in several ways. In both works a sober and modest Augustus provides a safe haven for those who, little interested in politics, prefer the *aurea mediocritas* of common servility. But, above all, what unites them is their involvement, so deeply human, in the world around them, which inspired and demanded their books: the European totalitarianism that, in the thirties of the last century, used the image of Augustus to justify tyranny; and the unique experience of the Carnation Revolution, feverishly analysed in Agustina's novel in the light of the past. At any rate, both Syme and Agustina ultimately stress, more or less openly, the fundamental importance of context in historical interpretation.

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