Augustus in the Making:
A Reappraisal of the Ideology behind Octavian's Palatine Residence through its Interior Decoration and Topographical Context*

Sic noua dum condis, reuocas, Auguste, priora
Mart., *Epigr*. 8. 80, *Ad Domitianum*

1. *Introduction*

Since his previous imperial residence had been destroyed by a fire, in 1873, Meiji the Great, emperor of Japan, founder of a new dynasty and the champion of Japan's political, social and industrial revolution (known as the Meiji Restoration) was in need of a new residence.[1] After much debate, and in accordance with a revived interest in traditional religion that marked the first period of the Meiji era, it was finally decided that the new palace should be erected following the guidelines of traditional Japanese architecture.[2] The construction took place not long before the ratification of the first law for the restoration or rather, the rebuilding (in Japanese *kaitaishūri*) of ancient religious buildings of

[1] Emperor Meiji (1852 – 1912), 122nd Emperor of Japan, ruled from 1867 until his death on July 30th, 1912. Up until 1873, he had occupied the so-called Edo castle (*Edo-jo*) in Tokyo, which had originally been built in 1457 and was the place of residence of the Tokugawa shoguns, Japan's ruling dynasty until 1867.

[2] The construction of a new palace did not start until 1884, due to financial constraints, and another four years would pass thereafter before its completion. Opinions on the style in which the palace was to be built were conflicting, swinging between Western-style designs and more 'traditional' architectural plans. Finally, a palace consisting of 36 buildings linked together by a common corridor took shape, which was "primarily Japanese in inspiration, built of wood and with roofs fashioned in the classical Irimoya style", FUJITANI (1996), p. 77. Cf. also WENDELKEN (1996), p. 30-31.

national significance.[3] The nation and the empire were meant to appear as if they were emerging out of a traditional past, yet, simultaneously, significant efforts were made to modernise Japan with the intent of connecting it to a wider political network with the West.[4] Indeed, Emperor Meiji, while presenting himself as the champion of ancestral religion, was ultimately celebrated as 'the great moderniser'.

If we look at Roman history, a similar radical moment of innovation can be identified in Octavian's rise to power following Julius Caesar's death, and the creation of a new form of government, the Principate. A turning point of which Octavian's contemporaries were fully aware, as attested by the definition of *Saeculum Augustum* bestowed upon the years of his rule at the time of his death.[5] The innovation had occurred when the attempts of maintaining the political status quo during the first century BCE had failed, resulting in a series of civil wars and a continuous struggle to increase personal power among the ruling élites. When Octavian appeared on the scene, the *res publica* had long since proved to be a non-sustainable model. The time was ripe for a new course.[6]

Octavian, however, while both drastically innovating the political system and boasting the honorific title of Augustus offered to him by the Senate in 28 BCE, made it his duty to emphasise how in fact nothing had ever changed. The new form of government was presented as a prolongation of the previous system, the *res publica restituta*, and his power formally equalled to the power held by his fellow magistrates: *potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri*.[7] On a political level, the appearance of a Republican system was therefore maintained, accompanied by an emphasis on the valorisation of Rome's traditional past and

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[3] The law for the protection of ancient shrines and temples (*Koshaji Hozon Hō*) was passed in 1897, and with it the first funding for the restoration of historic buildings was ensured. Cf. WENDELKEN (1996), p. 34.

[4] On the active 'creation' of a tradition during the Meiji period, cf. FUJITANI (1996) with reference to the pivotal work of HOBSBAWM / RANGER (1992). On the appearance of an 'ancestor religion' supported by Japan's imperial household, cf. MORIOKA (1977).

[5] SUET., *Aug.* 100; cf. ZANKER (1989), p. 3.

[6] Cf. TRIGGER (1989), p. 269: "Innovations occur only when the cost of maintaining the status quo exceeds that of change".

[7] *Res Gestae* 34.3: *Post id tem[pus a]uctoritate [omnibus praestiti, potest]atis autem nihilo ampliu[s hab]ui quam cet[eri, qui m]ihi quoque in ma[gis]tra[t]u conlegae f[uerunt]*. The nature of Augustus' *auctoritas* is debated. While being generally regarded as a reference to a certain 'moral authority' possessed by Augustus and recognised by the senators, – cf. e.g. GALINSKY (1996), p. 10-41, esp. chapter 1 'A principal concept: *Auctoritas*' –, the notion has recently been challenged by ROWE (2013), who rather understands *auctoritas* at *Res Gestae* 34.3 "as a function of Augustus' formal rank, and so a metonymy for *princeps senatus*" (p. 15). Only rarely used during the imperial age besides Augustus' *Res Gestae*, the term *auctor* features in Republican literature with the meaning of 'first speaker' (during senate's decisions), as does *princeps*. The passage at *Res Gestae* 34.3 should thus be interpreted as "an affirmation that he [Augustus] conformed to collegiality"; cf. ROWE (2013), p. 15.

the shared values of the *mos maiorum*. A mythical 'golden age' of Rome was reinvented and populated by the ancestors of the old senatorial families. A sign of the value attached by Octavian to the concept of tradition is represented by the restoration of ancient religious buildings, especially those bearing more prominent public significance. Octavian actively carried out these restorations throughout his rule. The most significant, however, took place at its very start.

Although this paper does not aim to compare Roman and Japanese imperial systems, it is interesting to note some similarities between Octavian Augustus and Emperor Meiji. Both rulers faced similar challenges, especially at the beginning of their rule, with the difference that the responses and the actions undertaken in the wake of these challenges are less thoroughly documented when it comes to Octavian. Both men had to confront a society which was not only deeply rooted in tradition, but, as such, characterised by a certain "disinclination to novelty" – as phrased by van Groningen first, and echoed more recently by D'Angour, in reference to Greek and Roman societies.[8]

No matter how necessary the change in order for the nation, the state, or the *res publica* to survive, resistance was to be expected. One way of dealing with this apparent paradox would be to adopt clear reference points to show continuity with the past while making it acceptable for the system to be moving forward. Such reference points can be interpreted as forms of 'anchoring', a term borrowed from social psychology, where 'anchoring' stands for the link between the innovation and ''what people know, believe, want, value, and can understand".[9] Octavian Augustus and Emperor Meiji, thus, encouraged some parts of the societies they were reforming to be presented as "unchanging and invariant",[10] while also constructing some of their actions as 'traditional'.

Bearing these concepts in mind, the focus will henceforth be on the type of architectural and decorative choices carried out by the first emperor of Rome in regard to his private dwellings, and on how the residence of the newly established ruler was conceived by those in power and perceived by its 'audience'. Occasional references to the house of Meiji will serve as an eye-opener towards a better understanding of Octavian's building policies.[11]

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[8] VAN GRONINGEN (1953), p. 22, as cited in D'ANGOUR (2011), p. 41.

[9] For a definition of the concept of 'anchoring innovation' and its application to the study of classical societies, cf. SLUITER (2013). On the concept of 'anchoring' in social psychology, cf. TVERSKY / KAHNEMANN (1974); ARIELY *et al.* (2003).

[10] HOBSBAWM / RANGER (1992), p. 2.

[11] While the Roman empire has served in many occasions as useful comparison to understand imperial rule on a global scale, Rome has seldom been the centre of comparative analysis. In recent years, however, an increasing number of historical publications have been applying comparative paradigms to the understanding of Rome and Roman society. Among such scholarly work I would like to cite the pivotal endeavours by MUTSCHLER / MITTAG (2008) and SCHEIDEL (2009) on the comparison between Rome and China, and the series *Ancient World: Comparative Histories*, in particular the volume by ARNASON / RAAFLAUB (2011).

2. *Octavian and the implementation of the Palatine as a 'mnemonic site'*

In order to understand Octavian in his private sphere, however, it is necessary to take first a step back, in order to analyse how he chose to respond to the need for continuity among his fellow citizens and his behaviour on a *public* level. As already mentioned, the emphasis was initially directed to the restoration of religious buildings. By 28 BCE, as he himself states in the *Res Gestae*, Octavian had already restored eighty-two temples around the city of Rome, while the instrumental restoration of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill dates to the year 9 BCE.[12] As Zanker rightly pointed out in his seminal work on Augustus, at the time when Octavian took control of the city Rome was long in need of such an enterprise.

By late Republican standards, however, restoring ancient temples was not as remarkable and politically valuable as building new edifices.[13] Octavian thus took on the neglected task and fitted it into his own political discourse, as an anchor to the past. Additionally, while re-appropriating religious buildings and re-instating (if not completely re-inventing) religious rites and orders, such as the *Flamines* or the *Fratres Aruales*,[14] he went even further to exploit historically and religiously significant locations around the city of Rome, thus creating a 'topography of memory' while transforming the appearance of the *Vrbs* to serve his own purposes.[15] An example of such reuse was the transformation in 27 BCE of the *Porticus Metelli* into a structure now dedicated to Octavian's sister, with its anniversary changed to September 23, the date of Octavian's birthday.[16] On a literary level, the spaces created or described by contemporary poets, such as Vergil and Propertius, additionally testify to the spreading and success of Octavian's 'mnemonic policy' around the city of Rome, where places and monuments came to embody repositories for national memories.[17]

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[12] *Res Gestae* 20.1: *Capitolium et Pompeium theatrum utrumque opus impensa grandi refeci sine ulla inscriptione nominis mei*; 20.4: *Duo et octoginta templa deum in urbe consul sex[tum ex auctoritate] senatus refeci, nullo praetermisso, quod e[o] tempore [refeci debebat].*

[13] ZANKER (1989), esp. p. 24-25.

[14] These reintroductions all took place in the years comprised between 44 and 28 BCE. For an in-depth discussion on Octavian's 'religious program' before 28 BCE, cf. SCHEID (2005), p. 178-186.

[15] On the monumental transformation of Rome and the reuse of memory, cf. esp. GOWING (2005), p. 132-159, and more recently ORLIN (2016), *passim*. Galinsky refers to this combination of topography and memory as 'memoryscape'; cf. GALINSKY / LAPATIN (ed.) (2015), p. 1.

[16] For the significance of the *Porticus Octauiae* within Octavian's policy of 'memory management', cf. GALINSKY / LAPATIN (ed.) (2015), p. 4. On the widespread practice of changing the *dies natalis* of Roman temples and public buildings into the date of Octavian's birthday, cf. also LA ROCCA (1987), p. 356.

[17] For a thorough discussion on the close literary connections between topography and memory in the landscape of Rome (both imperial and Republican), cf. EDWARDS

In the first decades of Octavian's rise to power we observe therefore the exploitation and creation of what the French historiographer Nora has termed as *lieux de mémoire*: realms to which societies 'anchor' their collective memories when the "consciousness of a break with the past" is made evident.[18] They can either exist as intangible rituals, traditions, and practices or as "calculated transformation(s) of the physical appearance of various shrines, buildings and other public places" with the intent of giving "new meanings to the acquired territory".[19] As such, they can be aptly referred to in English as 'mnemonic sites'.[20]

A clear example of Octavian's active appropriation of a mnemonic site is to be seen in the construction and dedication of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill.[21] The temple was located on the south-west edge of the Palatine, where there existed important associations with Rome's earliest past. It was the site where Evander had first settled upon his arrival in Italy and where Romulus had also allegedly built his hut.[22] The intention of building a temple on the Palatine Hill dedicated to Apollo was first announced by Octavian in 36 BCE, after the naval victory of Naulochus (although temple and victory were in all likelihood not connected), while its official dedication only occurred on 9 October 28 BCE, after the conclusion of the civil wars against Mark Antony and upon Octavian's triumphant return to Rome.[23] Significantly, the announcement for the new building was made following the mid-Republican practice of dedicating temples in expiation of a prodigy, with the only difference that this particular dedication did not stem from a senatorial decree, as it was customary, but from Octavian's will

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(1996), p. 27-43. On Propertius' Fourth Book and its connections to Augustan Rome, cf. DEBROHUN (2003), p. 90-91. On Vergil, cf. SEIDER (2013), *passim*.

[18] The concept of *lieux de mémoire* first appeared, in the context of a reconstruction of the history of France, in Nora's ground-breaking work *Les lieux de mémoire* (1984-1992). The definition of *lieux de mémoire* presented here was elaborated from NORA (1989), esp. 7-9. On collective and societal memories, I refer to the pivotal work of HALBWACHS (1925) and all following re-interpretations.

[19] FUJITANI (1996), p. 18. On the *lieux de mémoire* only existing as calculated acts, cf. also NORA (1989), p. 12.

[20] The expression is borrowed from FUJITANI (1996). The term *lieux de mémoire* has otherwise been variously translated in English as 'places of memory', 'sites of memory', or 'realms of memory'.

[21] The Temple of Apollo was one of the only four new temples erected by Octavian, the other three being the Temple of Diuus Iulius in the Forum Romanum (dedicated in 29 BCE), the Temple of Iuppiter Tonans at the entrance to the Area Capitolina (22 BCE), the Temple of Mars Vltor in the new Forum Augustum (2 BCE), cf. HEKSTER / RICH (2006), p. 153. On the excavations of the area of the temple, cf. CARETTONI (1966-1967); CARETTONI (1978). On the active "reconfiguration of memory at Rome" during the period of Augustus, cf. GALINSKY / LAPATIN (2015), p. 3-4.

[22] More on the significance of the location in ZANKER (1989), p. 220; MEYBOOM (2004); MEYBOOM (2005), esp. p. 223, 228-229.

[23] On the dedication and archaeological reconstruction of the temple, cf. recently ZINK (2008) and CLARIDGE (2014), with up-to-date scholarship.

alone.[24] In the case of the Palatine temple, the prodigy was described as a light-ning bolt, which had presumably stricken part of Octavian's private residence:

> *Templum Apollinis in ea parte Palatinae domus excitauit, quam fulmine ictam desiderari a deo haruspices pronuntiarunt* (Suet., *Aug.* 29.3)

> "He [Octavian] erected the temple of Apollo in that part of his Palatine house, which, when it had been struck by lightning, haruspices had declared to be desired by the god."[25]

Suetonius thus informs us that temple and house were closely connected.[26] The location chosen for the erection of the temple appears then significant for two reasons: the location itself, the very place where Rome was founded, and its proximity to Octavian's residence. Both, house and temple, shared and exploited the same 'mnemonic site', and even though the house preceded the foundation of the temple, it is only when the temple was announced that it acquired an instrumental function within Octavian's ideology.[27] Octavian had purchased the property in 42 BCE, after it had been confiscated from its previous owner, Q. Hortensius Hortalus, the year before.[28] He then proceeded to

[24] HEKSTER / RICH (2006), esp. p. 156.

[25] On the prodigy of the lightning, cf. also DIO 49.15.5. For an in depth-analysis of the meaning of the dedication following a natural prodigy, and its particularity in the context of the Late Republic, cf. HEKSTER / RICH (2006), *passim*.

[26] The temple was connected to Octavian's private dwelling by an internal passage in the form of a ramp, and shared with it part of the front terrace. It was, by all means, "a private shrine on a monumental scale", MEYBOOM (2005), p. 239. The ramp belonged to the residential complex identified nowadays in scholarly literature as the House of Augustus, excavated first by Carettoni, with the assistance of L. Fabbrini, between 1956 and 1982. Except for a few articles by Carettoni himself, the excavations, remained mostly unpublished until 2014, when the excavation diaries were gathered in TOMEI (2014b). As of today, almost no doubt exists that the structures found by Carettoni must have belonged to part of Augustus' (or rather, Octavian's) residence on the Palatine, although some uncertainties remain on the dating of the different construction phases. For the most recent discussions: IACOPI / TEDONE (2006); LA ROCCA (2008); CARANDINI / BRUNO (2008); WISEMAN (2009); CARANDINI / BRUNO / FRAIOLI (2010); PENSABENE / GALLOCCHIO (2011); COARELLI (2012), with complete bibliography; TOMEI (2014a).

[27] On the house of Octavian and its symbolism in connection to the mythical origins of Rome, cf. in part. MEYBOOM (2005), p. 233-234. DIO describes the connection as follows: "The royal residence is called Palatium (…) because Caesar dwelt on the Palatine and had his military headquarters there, though his residence gained a certain degree of fame from the mount as a whole also, because Romulus had once lived there" (53.16.5).

[28] On Hortensius' *domus* cf. CORBIER (1992), esp. p. 886-893; PAPI (1995a). Q. Hortensius [Hortalus] was the son of the great orator Q. Hortensius Hortalus, whose Palatine residence he had inherited in 50 BCE and possibly lost, due to proscription, in November 43, cf. HINARD (1985), p. 475-476. Octavian subsequently bought it from the confiscated properties in 42 BCE, the same year of Hortensius' death at Philippi, although he probably did not occupy it before his return to Rome in 41 BCE. On the dating of the purchase, cf. COARELLI (2012), p. 538.

acquire adjacent properties in the area with the purpose of enlarging his own residence, as mentioned by Velleius Paterculus and Dio.[29] The project, however, came to an halt in 36 BCE; cf. Vell. 2.81.3:

> *Victor deinde Caesar reuersus in urbem contractas emptionibus complures domos per procuratores, quo laxior fieret ipsius, publicis se usibus destinare professus est, templumque Apollinis et circa porticus facturum promisit, quod ab eo singulari exstructum munificentia est.*

> "Caesar, having returned in victory to the city, declared that he was making over for public use several houses which he had purchased through agents to make his residence more spacious, and promised to build there a temple of Apollo and surrounding porticoes."[30]

Therefore, in the year 36 BCE Octavian deliberately chose to discard the grander plans for his private dwelling[31] and focus instead on turning the temple into the central point of his establishment on the Palatine.[32] This is a hypothesis that is reinforced by reading further into the sources. When Vergil praises Octavian in the *Aeneid* as a *triumphator*, he imagines him on the steps of the temple (*Aen.* 8.720):

> *Ipse sedens niueo candentis limine Phoebi*

> "He himself seated on the snowwhite threshold of radiant Apollo."[33]

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[29] Velleius refers to *complures domos*, without any further specification, possibly alluding to the common Late Republican practice of purchasing and annexing neighbouring properties. In Octavian's case, these would include: the *domus* of Hortensius (*domus Hortensis*), the *domus* of Q. Lutatius Catulus (Suet., *Gramm.* 17 *domus Catulina*), and possibly the house of Octavian's freedman C. Iulius Gelos (Suet., *Cal.* 18.3 *domus Gelotiana*). Cf. Coarelli (2012), p. 373-374 with a revision of Wiseman (2009), p. 533.

[30] The words "several houses" translate *complures domos*. Now wanting a house, the Senate seemingly awarded him one from public funds. The information is mentioned in Dio 49.15.5: "They decided that a house should be given him from public funds; for the place which he had bought on the Palatine for house-building he had made public property and had dedicated to Apollo, since lightning had struck it."

[31] That, at least, was what he wanted people to believe. However, we know that even after 36 BCE Octavian's actual property on the Palatine comprised a series of adjacent houses, known today as the House of Augustus (cf. note 25), the House of Livia and the Aula Isiaca. On the excavations and the site of the House of Livia, cf. in particular Iacopi (1995); Tomei (1999), p. 363-440; Tomei (2000), p. 7-8; Coarelli (2012), esp. p. 431. On the Aula Isiaca, cf. Iacopi (1997). For a discussion of the 'unit', cf. Tomei (2000). All references to the house of Octavian throughout the present article should be regarded as a reference to the entire Palatine complex, including all properties, and not exclusively the structures labelled in modern scholarship as the 'House of Augustus'.

[32] The more so if we consider how the Temple of Apollo might be the first archaeologically attested example of an *aureum templum* (Prop. 4.1.5; Plin., *NH* 33.18) by use of gold marble as well as extensive gilding. For an in-depth study of the polychromy of the temple, cf. Zink / Piening (2009).

[33] As translated in Meyboom (2005), p. 238. Cf. also Haensch (2012), p. 272.

When Ovid describes the Palatine as it stood at the time of Augustus, he halts at the entrance of the house, embellished by the Apolline laurels of the triumph and the *corona ciuica*, as in Octavian's own description in the *Res Gestae*, an honour bestowed upon him by the senate in 28 BCE:

> *Quo pro merito meo senat[us consulto Au]gust[us appe]llatus sum et laureis postes aedium mearum u[estiti] publ[ice coronaq]ue ciuica super ianuam meam fixa est (Res Gestae 34.2)*

> "For this service I was named Augustus by senatorial decree, and the doorposts of my house were publicly clothed with laurels." (transl. Cooley)[34]

The civic crown – together with the golden shield displayed in the Curia and inscribed with the words *uirtus*, *pietas*, *clementia*, and *iustitia* (all Republican virtues) – is the only symbol of personal power ever accepted by Octavian.[35] Exactly like the shield, it is also a symbol imbued with Republican values. The presence of the civic crown on the façade of Octavian's residential complex on the Palatine constitutes, additionally, a further bond between the house and the Temple of Apollo, the design of which was also presented as stemming from Republican traditions of temple building. With all the difficulties of reconstructing a temple of which little remains today, it has been recently suggested by Zink that the building was indeed erected with a deliberate conservative design in mind. While other temples around Rome, such as the Temple of Apollo Sosianus, were constructed following more innovative designs, the architectural outline of the Palatine shrine was purposefully rooted, on the contrary, in the tradition of old Tuscan and Republican temples.[36] On the Palatine, the Roman audience was therefore presented with a house that was embellished with a Republican façade – interestingly, almost exclusively the only part described or mentioned in contemporary

[34] Cf. DIO 53.16.4: "For the right to place the laurel trees in front of the royal residence and to hang the crown of oak above them was then voted him to symbolize that he was always victor over his enemies and the saviour of the citizens"; Ov., *Fasti* 4.951-954: "Phoebus lives in one part of the house, another part has been yielded to Vesta; in what remains, the third part, he lives himself. Long live the laurels of the Palatine, long live the house adorned with the wreath of oak: one house inhabited by three immortal gods."

[35] He renounced all other *insignia*, such as the sceptre or the diadem of Hellenistic kings, as well as the golden crown and purple toga of Julius Caesar; cf. EDER (2005), p. 13.

[36] ZINK (2008), p. 63. Zanker already noted how Hellenistic designs were preferred by Octavian for the construction of private temples and avoided for public commissions; cf. ZANKER (1989), p. 26. 'Archaic' elements are also to be found in the decoration of the temple, as well exemplified by the so-called 'lastre Campana', for an in-depth study of which I refer to STRAZZULLA (1990). The painted decoration of the building are unfortunately lost. For a tentative reconstruction of their content, cf. HESLIN (2014), *passim*; MOORMANN (2011), p. 26-27.

sources – and a sanctuary of Republican reminiscence, in both its architecture and the way in which it was dedicated. The location, charged with connections to the mythological origins of Rome, could only add to the picture of a complex 'house – sanctuary' of Republican tradition. [37]

3. A humilis domus *for a* pius *man? Augustan propaganda on the ruler's house*[38]

To further our understating of the ideological use of the house in the earlier years, it is necessary to resort to a source from a hundred years later. In his *Life of Augustus* (72.1), Suetonius describes the house of Augustus as follows:

> *In ceteris partibus uitae continentissimum fuisse constat ac sine suspicione ullius uitii. Habitauit primo iuxta Romanum forum supra Scalas anularias, in domo quae Calui Oratoris fuerat; postea in Palatio, sed nihilo minus aedibus modicis Hortensianis, et neque laxitate neque cultu conspicuis, ut in quibus porticus breues essent Albanarum columnarum et sine marmore ullo aut insigni pauimento conclauia.*

> "In the other details of his life it is generally agreed that he was most temperate and without even the suspicion of any fault. He lived at first near the Forum Romanum, above the Stairs of the Ringmakers, in a house which had belonged to the orator Calvus; afterwards, on the Palatine, but in the no less modest dwelling of Hortensius, which was remarkable neither for size nor elegance, having but short colonnades with columns of Alban stone, and rooms without any marble decorations or handsome pavements."

He then continues (*Aug*. 72-73) to give an account not only of the house, in which Octavian remained to live until his death in 14 CE, but of his own lifestyle in the same terms, as modest and frugal. It is evident, from Suetonius' account, that the description of the house belongs to a broader praise of Octavian's temperance, which was in agreement with his moralising program, and might

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[37] Associations between the houses of Octavian Augustus and Republican places of cult are recurrent. The Villa of Livia at Prima Porta, for example, was also characterised by a private space connected to a sanctuary-like architecture, which consisted in the insertion of a grove in the landscape of the villa (possibly reminiscent of the not-so-distant grove of Diana Nemorensis on the Alban hills) with its related (invented) cult. These elements were combined on the occasion of a re-branding of the house after Livia's marriage to Octavian in 38 BCE. For the dating of the villa to 38-28 BCE and an in-depth analysis of its grove, cf. REEDER (2001).

[38] I have chosen to adopt the term 'propaganda' when referring to Octavian's public actions in accordance with Hurlet / Dalla Rosa, who have recently challenged Zanker's and Galinsky's long established reservations on the use of terms as 'ideology' and 'propaganda' in reference to the Roman world; cf. ZANKER (1989); GALINSKY (1996), esp. p. 5. Although Hurlet / Dalla Rosa agree with Zanker and Galinsky that the term 'propaganda' should not be applied unconditionally to the entire Roman period, they also maintain it to be appropriate to describe the Augustan age, a period of crisis which demanded the central power to be more assertive. Cf. HURLET / DALLA ROSA (2009), esp. p. 194, for the complete discussion.

have had little to do with the reality of the Palatine dwelling.[39] I will return to this later.

Praises of a frugal way of life are scattered all throughout Augustan sources, and it is significant that they should often be connected to the idea of humble residences as well as to the origins of Rome. According to Horace, pious men should prefer to live in the modesty of a *humilis domus* and seek the solace of the peaceful countryside (also interpretable as a symbolic space). In the first of his *Roman Ode*s, a series of six poems celebrating the Republican values fostered by the new regime, the poet states (*Od.* 3.1.45-46):

> *cur inuidendis postibus et nouo*
> *sublime ritu moliar atrium?*

> "Why should I build a house in the latest style with an imposing courtyard and doorposts that will incite envy?"[40]

Recently, it has been suggested, by Heslin, that the comparison between Horace's humble dwelling, a metaphor for his own poetry, and a 'grandiose temple' (possibly an allusion to Vergil's epic) might in fact echo the comparison, familiar to the poet, between the 'modest' house of Octavian Augustus and the gleaming temple of Apollo next door.[41] The same god Apollo who appears in Vergil's *Aeneid* as the escort leading Evander to the very site on the Palatine where the Greek king will establish his residence, and a novel Golden Age will flourish.[42] When Aeneas – Octavian's forefather – reaches the slopes of the Palatine, he finds Evander living 'in tranquil peace' surrounded by his cattle and is invited to enter the king's home:

> *Vt uentum ad sedes, "haec" inquit "limina uictor*
> *Alcides subiit, haec illum regia cepit.*
> *Aude, hospes, contemnere opes et te quoque dignum*
> *finge deo, rebusque ueni non asper egenis."*
> *Dixit, et angusti subter fastigia tecti*
> *ingentem Aenean duxit stratisque locauit*
> *effultum foliis et pelle Libystidis ursae.* (Verg., *Aen.* 8.362-368)

> "When they reached the house, Evander said: 'Victorious Hercules
> stooped to entering this doorway, this palace charmed him.
> My guest, dare to scorn wealth, and make yourself worthy too
> to be a god: don't be scathing about the lack of possessions.'
> He spoke, and led mighty Aeneas beneath the confines
> of his sloping roof, and allotted him a mattress
> stuffed with leaves, and the pelt of a Libyan bear."[43]

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[39] COARELLI (2012), p. 373-374.

[40] As cited in HESLIN (2015), p. 284. The six odes had most likely been written around 29-24 BCE, as recently suggested by NISBET / RUDD (2004), p. XX-XXI.

[41] HESLIN (2014), p. 284, after NISBET / RUDD (2004), p. 20.

[42] VERG., *Aen.* 8.312-326.

[43] Cf. MEYBOOM (2005), p. 226.

Evander lives in a palace (*regia*), which is no more than an *angustum tectum*.[44] Vergil additionally informs his readers that Romulus will also leave his mark where Evander had his humble abode: in introducing Aeneas to the Palatine citadel, Evander points to a "vast grove, which brave Romulus would restore / as a sanctuary, and the Lupercal, the Wolf's cave, under a cold cliff" (Verg., *Aen*. 8.342-343). The *casa* or *tugurium Romuli*, variously indicated as set either on the Palatine or the Capitol or on both hills, is also defined with the term *regia* and described as a dwelling without pretence, with its roof of straw (Verg., *Aen*. 8.654). Both Evander and Romulus appear therefore typically associated with a 'pastoral lifestyle', as it is the case in Livy for Romulus, and their palaces in forms of 'huts' come to embody the physical symbols of "an earlier, more virtuous Rome".[45]

As mentioned already, Octavian attached a certain value to the circumstance that his house should be located on the Palatine, in the same mnemonic site of Evander's modest 'palace' and Romulus' unpretentious hut. The location appears of the utmost importance for Octavian's program of self-display, and according to Meyboom might be the reason behind his refusal of the *domus publica*, the house of the *pontifex maximus* in the Forum, which Octavian declined first in 36 BCE, together with the title, and again in 12 BCE, when he finally became *pontifex*. Accepting the house would have implied moving to the Forum, and away from the Palatine.[46] The first refusal, however, was most certainly prompted by diplomatic reasons. The office of *pontifex maximus* had been M. Aemilius Lepidus' since Caesar's death, and Octavian preferred to leave the privilege in the hands of the old triumvir.[47] Ideological implications came instead into play at the moment of the second refusal in 12 BCE, when, following the death of Lepidus, Octavian was finally in the position of taking the title but decided to decline the residence once again. In its place, he turned part of his residence into the *domus publica*, going as far as to move the sacred fire of Vesta and to build a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess next to his Palatine residence, in order to replicate the connection already existing in the Forum between the public house of the *pontifex* and the House of the Vestals.[48]

[44] I refer to SCAGLIARINI CORLAITA (1984) for a discussion of the concept of 'palace' in Vergil's passage.

[45] LIV. 5.53.6, as cited in EDWARDS (1996), p. 39.

[46] MEYBOOM (2005), p. 221, 225-226, 233.

[47] Control of all other priestly orders was however secured in the hands of Octavian and Lepidus' power as *Pontifex Maximus* neutralised, according to SCHEID (2005), p. 180. The refusal of 36 BCE is related by Octavian himself in *Res Gestae* 6, as well as in DIO 49.15.3.

[48] The *domus publica* was located in the Forum near the *Atrium Vestae*, to which it was closely connected. The *domus* had been formally occupied by Julius Caesar between 63 and 44 BCE (SUET., *Iul*. 46), and was finally donated to the Vestals by Octavian Augustus in 12 BCE (DIO 54.27.3), cf. SCOTT (1995); PAPI (1995). On the Palatine Temple of Vesta: MEYBOOM (2005), p. 245-246; COARELLI (2012), p. 380-381, 399-400; HAENSCH (2012), p. 271. It is interesting to note that, upon accepting the title of *Pontifex Maximus*, Octavian Augustus also moved the Sybilline Books to the Palatine, along with the fire of

Interesting to note is how the *domus publica* is referred to in ancient sources, where it appears occasionally cited as *regia*.[49] In 12 BCE, therefore, when part of the house of Octavian officially became a *regia*, the connection between the mythical *regiae* of Evander and Romulus on the Palatine must have grown even stronger. This connection, however, as I have argued, was already exploited in 36 BCE. One might think that, although the office of *pontifex maximus* could not be nominally held by Octavian in 36 BCE, the location of his residence was already presented, symbolically, as that of the guardian of traditional Roman religions and customs. The possible implications of the 'royal' elements in the legends of both Evander and Romulus call for additional attention, if we consider how comparisons between Octavian and Romulus had already been put forward by the heir of Caesar himself as early as 43 BCE.[50] Could Octavian have been looking for familiar models of individual (if not monarchic) power to present to the Roman audience in order to anchor the innovations he was pressing on, and was he applying these same anchors to his house? At the moment of Octavian's attempts to achieve sole power, a Roman monarchical language did not exist, as is evident, for example, by the difficulties encountered by contemporary poets to represent Octavian as a monarch using 'an established idiom'.[51] Contemporary monarchies were off the table as models for his rule. They were too unfamiliar to the Romans and ran the risk of appearing 'tyrannical', as had been the case with Caesar and as it was the case – in the late 30's BCE – with Marc Antony, whom Octavian's propaganda itself had conveniently labelled as an Eastern despot acting under the influence of a foreign queen.[52] To make the "name of monarchy"[53] less detestable to his fellow citizens, Octavian had to act on a different level than Marc Antony and conceal his true intentions: he thus anchored himself to Rome's mythological past and presented his 'monarchic republic' as a new foundation of Rome.[54]

Vesta. The books, in their newly revised version were transferred from the Capitol to the Temple of Apollo Palatinus (Suet., *Aug.* 31). A new religious centre was created.

[49] As in the house of the *rex sacrorum*: Cic., *Att.* 10.3a; Serv., *Aen.* 8.363; cf. Scott (1995), p. 165; Papi (1995b).

[50] On the *auspicia* of the investiture in 43 BCE (when Octavian was made consul for the first time): Suet., *Aug.* 95.2; App., *Bell. Ciu.* 3.94.388. In 28 BCE Octavian had also considered calling himself Romulus instead of Augustus (Dio 53.16.6; Suet., *Aug.* 7.2). On the connection between Octavian and the figure of Romulus, cf. e.g. Scheid (2005), p. 184-185; Edwards (1996), p. 31-32.

[51] White (2005), p. 335.

[52] On Octavian's Republican revival as propaganda opposition to Marc Antony's Eastern inclinations, cf. Eder (2005), p. 20-21.

[53] Dio 53.17.1: "The name of monarchy, to be sure, the Romans so detested that they called their emperors neither dictators nor kings nor anything of the sort."

[54] Zanker (1988); Eder (2005), esp. 13-15. For the definition of 'monarchic republic', cf. Galinsky (1996), p. 221. For the Augustan re-use of monarchical motifs previously exploited by Marc Antony after the victory at Actium, cf. Galinsky (1996), p. 221-224.

4. *Bucolic life and religious rituals within the house*

The utopian world of the origins found its way not only into the ideological
representation of the house but also on its walls, marking the introduction of
new iconographical elements in the painted decoration of the time and the evo-
lution to a new style, which, as it has now been generally accepted, had its
beginning in the houses belonging to the *princeps* and his family. The theme of
religion features now more prominently, through the representation of generic
bucolic landscapes characterised by the presence of ritual objects, such as the
baetylus in the Room of the Masks, a symbol connected to the cult of Apollo
(Figure 1). Interestingly, the only name of the painter from the age of Augustus
handed down to us by Pliny is a Studius, or Ludius, who "first introduced the
most attractive fashion of painting walls with pictures of country houses and por-
ticoes and landscape gardens, groves, woods, hills, fish-ponds, canals, rivers,
coasts, and whatever anybody could desire, together with various sketches of
people going for a stroll or sailing in a boat or on land going to country houses
riding on asses or in carriages, and also people fishing and fowling or hunting or
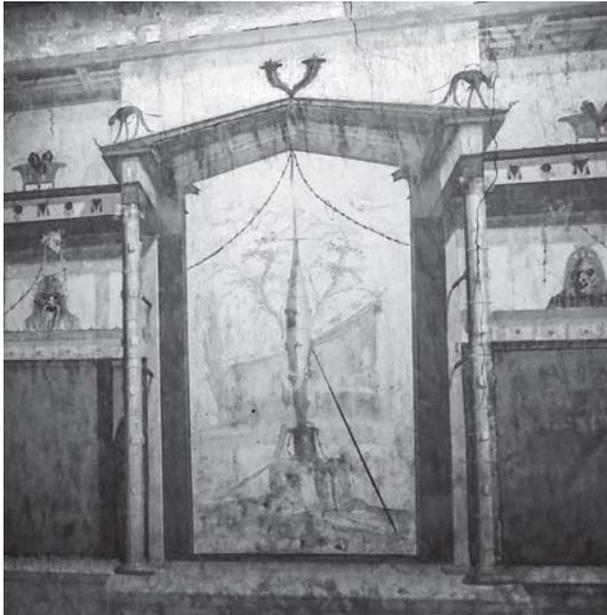even gathering the vintage" (*N.H.* 35.116-117).

Fig. 1. House of Augustus, Room of the Masks, detail of the baetylus
(A. Raimondi Cominesi, courtesy of the Ministero dei beni culturali – Soprintendenza
Speciale per il Colosseo, il Museo Nazionale Romano e l'Area archeologica di Roma).

Larger mythological scenes, set in rural settings, make their first appearance in the House of Livia, where the so-called Room of Poliphemus, opened on the atrium, featured two central pictures framed by *aediculae*: Io and Argo on one side; Polyphemus and Galatea on the other (Figure 2). All of these innovative elements were set in a stylistic framework that shows continuity with the previous tradition of Roman wall paintings, namely the architectonical ornaments of the Second Pompeian Style, although the most 'luxuriant' and richer elements of this trend are now reduced to a plainer decoration characterised but with more refined ornamental motifs.[55] For this reason, the decorations, visible in the House of Augustus, the House of Livia and, partly, in the Aula Isiaca, have been assigned by modern scholarship to the last phase of the Second or the beginning of the Third Style.[56] Following Bragantini's lead, I would
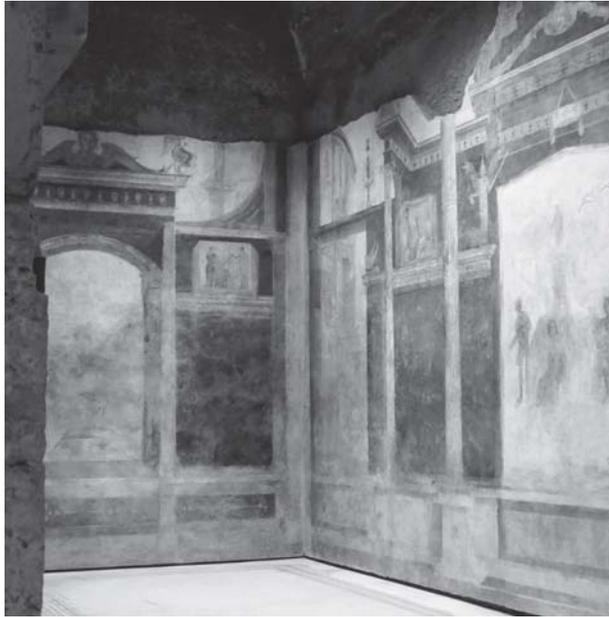

Fig. 2. House of Livia, Room of Poliphemus (A. Raimondi Cominesi, courtesy of the Ministero dei beni culturali – Soprintendenza Speciale per il Colosseo, il Museo Nazionale Romano e l'Area archeologica di Roma).

[55] This is especially true for the Room of the Masks in the House of Augustus and the Room of Poliphemus in the House of Livia, which show the most similarities with one another, while e.g. the Room of the Perspectival Wall (possibly, a library) displays more continuity with the architectonical decorations of the Second Style from the Pompeian area. For a description of the rooms, cf. IACOPI (2007), p. 15-16.

[56] For a comprehensive study of the Second and Third Style, cf. BARBET (1985); LING (1991); BALDASSARRE *et al* (2002).

however refrain from using Mau's schematic division in Four Pompeian Styles, and Beyen's relative chronology, when discussing the city of Rome.[57] The painted decorations on the Palatine not only show characteristics which are peculiar to a limited number of examples, they also present a different, earlier chronological horizon than their counterparts in the Vesuvian area, their dating having been recently reappraised, on a purely stratigraphical basis, to the years between 42 and 36 BCE.[58] This new dating shows not only that the changes in decorative fashion must have taken place first in the heart of the Roman empire – as well testified by the lack of previous examples elsewhere –[59] but also that their appearance, in Rome, coincided with the epochal transition from the Republic to the Empire under Octavian's aegis.[60] Far from wanting to affirm the existence of a deliberate political message applied to the interior decoration of Octavian's dwelling, it is however undeniable that it reflected the new "social imagery" created by Caesar's heir.[61] An imagery characterised by the representation of a bucolic life lived in peace and set in the framework of a 'sober', more linear style than the precedent. The change in style has often been interpreted as being merely the product of artistic choices promoted by the decorators. However, although it is logical to think that specific artistic choices would have been the product of artisanal skills and know-how, the fact that the content of this new figurative language coincided with Octavian's ideological program cannot be overlooked;[62] nor can the fact that the appearance

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[57] Bragantini's reason for avoiding the schematisation between Second and Third Style, and for preferring a broader historical periodisation is expressed by the author as follows: "We hope it will have become increasingly clear that painting too (…) follows the epochal rhythms that marked the end of the Republican era and the birth of the Principate and the Empire"; cf. BRAGANTINI (2014), p. 359. For the original division in styles of Roman painting, cf. MAU (1882). For their dating, and sub-grouping, cf. BEYEN (1958).

[58] For the new dating of the wall paintings, cf. LA ROCCA (2008), esp. p. 234 following the excavation report of IACOPI / TEDONE (2006). Originally, they had been dated to 36-28 BCE by their excavator; cf. CARETTONI (1983), p. 412-419.

[59] The dating for the only contemporary comparison usually suggested – the House of M. Obellius Firmus in Pompeii – is still debated, and might as well be later than the Palatine examples. On the house and its decorations, cf. BASTET / DE VOS (1979), p. 17.

[60] The artistic and cultural changes of this period have been associated elsewhere with the shift in political power represented by Octavian's new order; cf. e.g. HOFTER (1988); ZANKER (1989); WALLACE-HADRILL (2008). For the wall paintings, cf. most recently BRAGANTINI (2014), in particular p. 326-327.

[61] The expression "immaginario sociale", cf. BALDASSARRE (2009), p. 79, is in my opinion preferable to Zanker's "linguaggio figurativo di regime", cf. ZANKER (1989), p. 281.

[62] It would be reductive to affirm, as does Clarke, that the painters simply picked up a more general "taste for moderation in interior design" and applied it to their work, without any involvement on the side of the patrons; cf. CLARKE (2005), esp. p. 278. Cf. additionally DUNLOP (2009), esp. p. 15-16, for an interesting contribution on the involvement of noblemen and rich merchants in selecting the content of mural paintings

of the new style coincided with Octavian's establishment as a leader and
was first documented in his own houses, while it found its highest expression
in the following ten to twenty years in the houses of his inner circle (e.g. the
Villa of the Farnesina first and the Villa at Boscotrecase later, both Agrippa's
properties)[63]. Only after these first 'liberal' years[64] will its most innovative
elements be diluted into simple 'fashionable' accessories.

5. Modestia *versus* luxuria: *the reality of Octavian's residence*

Octavian's attempts to connect his residence to a mnemonic site that was
charged with Republican connections and the references to an ideal 'bucolic'
lifestyle scattered on the walls of his residence could thus be interpreted as a
way of inserting the house into his larger political program of restoration of the
'oldest traditions'. Octavian focused on the idea of formally reinstating Repub-
lican traditions in order to avoid the accusation of despotism.[65] The program,
as it is nowadays generally accepted, was already implemented as early as 44
BCE and fully outlined by 28 BCE.[66] The time coincides with the establishment
of Octavian's residence on the Palatine, the creation of the sanctuary of Apollo

in early Renaissance Italy. On the coincidence between content of the painted decora-
tions and ideological program, cf. BRAGANTINI / SAMPAOLO (2009), p. 47-48.

[63] For the decoration of the Villa of the Farnesina, with a reappraisal of the tradi-
tional dating of the wall paintings to the years 25-15 BCE, now pre-dated to before
28 BCE, cf. MOLS / MOORMANN (2008), p. 79. For a comprehensive collection of
the Farnesina decorations preserved nowadays in the Museo Nazionale Romano, cf.
BRAGANTINI / DE VOS (1982). Bucolic scenes are visible in the black triclinium (c).
Following the classification in Pompeian Styles, the decoration of the villa is usually
catalogued as belonging to the Third Style. To the same style, but a later phase, are also
attributed the mural paintings from the Villa of Agrippa Postumus at Boscotrecase, com-
monly dated to the years between 15-1 BCE, although construction works in the villa are
already attested as early as 21 BCE. Sacro-idyllic landscapes are a common feature of
the painted decoration of the villa, although here they acquire a new unprecedented
prominence on the walls, now inserted in larger vignettes and framed by more elegant,
slender elements, an evolution of the architectural frames of the Palatine houses (with
the transition from a three dimensional to two dimensional wall-surface). The mytholog-
ical landscapes (Galatea and Poliphemus; Perseus and Andromeda) show affinity with
the mythological panels in the House of Livia. The villa belonged to the youngest son of
M. Agrippa and Julia the Elder, Agrippa Postumus, by whom it was inherited in 11 BCE.
For an in-depth analysis of the house and its decorations, cf. VON BLANCKENHAGEN /
ALEXANDER (1990). For a discussion on the 'Romanity' of the Greek mythological
scenes selected in these houses, cf. BRAGANTINI (2014), p. 332-333.

[64] MOLS / MOORMANN (2008), p. 77: "una moda di durata brevissima, (…) frutto di
un decennio 'liberale'."

[65] On Octavian's ability to make use of the flexible boundaries of the Republican
constitution to introduce individual power in Rome, cf. EDER (2005), esp. p. 18-19.

[66] Cf. MILLAR (2000), followed by SCHEID (2005), p. 178-179.

as a 'Republican' shrine, and the restoration of many ancient buildings around Rome following conservative designs.[67]

In the late 30's, however, a parallel, less overt building program was being incentivised by Octavian, through his inner circle of friends, political allies and *clientes*, which went in the opposite direction. If public buildings were marked as 'traditional' by Octavian's interventions, private commissions presented unmistakable Hellenistic features. In his most recent publication, Heslin persuasively argues how Octavian's early interventions on the cityscape of Rome pointed towards the recreation of the Hellenistic royal quarters of, for example, Alexandria and Pergamum, with a prominent dynastic temple, a great library and a Museum – significantly spread around the city rather than concentrated in one location, as it was the case for the Hellenistic capitals. As for the Museum, Heslin suggests an identification with the Porticus of Philippus, in the area of the Circus Flaminius: completed in 29 BCE, the *porticus* incorporated the Republican Temple of Hercules Musarum in its precincts.[68] Library and dynastic temple would be represented by the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine with its adjacent libraries. The only piece missing from this Hellenistic puzzle would have been the royal palace: according to Heslin, who follows the tradition begun by Suetonius, Octavian chose to live in a 'modest' house, thus rejecting the idea of building anything which could resemble a Hellenistic palace. The concept of a modest dwelling, however, comes from an over-reading of Suetonius' passage, a recurrent mistake in Augustan scholarship. The house on the Palatine was neither modest nor small. The properties acquired by Octavian before 36 BCE were themselves in no way 'unpretentious', if we are to believe the descriptions written by ancient authors of their owners' lifestyles. By Pliny (*N.H.* 34.48, 35.130) we are informed, for example, that Hortensius was a fine collector of art, ready to pay 144,000 sesterces for a painting of Argonauts by Cydias. The house of Catulus, incorporated into Octavian's residence at an unidentified moment, was known to be one of the finest on the Palatine for its *magnificentia*.[69] Even more importantly, the archaeological excavations on the Palatine have unearthed quite a different scenario in terms of luxury and dimensions.

To begin with, it is nowadays clear that the Palatine complex consisted of a series of different house units, of which today only the so-called House of Augustus, House of Livia, and Aula Isiaca have been brought to light and, as we

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[67] The approach has been defined as "enhanced familiarity" in FAVRO (2005), p. 249.

[68] Works on the *porticus* had started soon after Actium. For the full argumentation on the *porticus* as the Museum, cf. HESLIN (2014), p. 197-198.

[69] It is written in SUETONIUS (*Gramm.* 17) that Octavian's grandsons Gaius and Lucius took lessons from the famous instructor M. Verrius Flaccus in the *atrium* of Catulus' house. On the splendour of this house: PLIN., *N.H.* 17.2. The house has been variously identified with a Republican *domus* found south-east to the House of Livia; cf. COARELLI (1995); CARANDINI / BRUNO (2008), p. 141-143; FALZONE (2010), p. 60-62.

have seen, most recently dated to the period between 42 and 36 BCE.[70] It remains unclear how much of the original Republican houses was preserved and how much was rebuilt, but the survival of underground corridors is proof of the existence of a connection between the various units.[71] Secondly, regarding the dimensions of Octavian's residence, even though each single property may not have been particularly extraordinary for its size according to Republican standards, the residential compound was. We must also be aware of the fact that it probably extended beyond the limits we are left with today, especially after 36 BCE. When Ovid (*Tristia* 3.1.31-32) describes the façade with the *corona ciuica* in or after 8 CE,[72] he declares that this was visible from the Cliuus Palatinus, which runs through the northern and central part of the hill. The so called House of Augustus as it stands today, however, would not have been visible when walking along the Cliuus.[73] This could only mean the property must have been larger and, as suggested by Meyboom, that the missing part, with the monumental entrance, might have coincided with the (post 12 BCE) *domus publica*.[74] To confirm this theory I would add that if the entrance to the house, with its prominent display of Republican symbols, was indeed facing towards the inner side of the Palatine hill, it would have paralleled the orientation of the entrance to the Temple of Apollo, according to the most recent reconstruction by Claridge, emphasising once again the existence of a close connection between the two.[75] In Meyboom's opinion, however, the reason behind the identification of this 'missing part' with the *domus publica* lies in the 'modesty' of the section

[70] The difficulties encountered during the excavations of the area, covered by the subsequent Domitianic palatial structures, must be taken into account when analysing the extent and nature of the residences at the time of Octavian Augustus; cf. Tomei (1999), p. 397-400; Coarelli (2012), p. 431-450. Residential structures dating to the Augustan period and linked to Octavian's circle have also been brought to light on the site of the so-called Vigna Barberini, at the N-E corner of the Palatine Hill. Painted decorations comparable with the examples from the House of Augustus and House of Livia animated the walls of this house; cf. Maurina (2001); Villedieu (2007), esp. p. 82-83.

[71] Cf. Meyboom (2005), p. 257, note 105.

[72] The elegy, a description of the route winding from the Forum of Augustus to the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, has been widely used by contemporary scholars to locate the exact position of the entrance to the house of Augustus; cf. Wiseman (2009) and most recently Coarelli (2012), p. 397-399.

[73] Cecamore (2002), p. 216.

[74] Meyboom (2005), p. 256.

[75] According to Claridge, the entrance to the temple would have faced towards the inner space of the Palatine Hill, thus possibly towards the area included inside the perimeter of Romulus' *Roma Quadrata*, instead of south-east towards the Forum Boarium, as it was long believed. For the complete discussion, cf. Claridge (2014), *passim*. A reconstruction of the earlier phases of the house of Augustus and its orientation is however made difficult by the fact that the original complex went through several construction phases and was ultimately destroyed by a fire in 3 CE. The orientation may have changed after this date, when the house was declared entirely public (Dio 55.12.4-5).

of the house already excavated, thus implying that the *pars publica* should have been the most luxurious one, an argument which seems to be in contradiction with what we know of Octavian's modes of self-representation, especially during the first decade of his rule. The truly 'modest' part of the house, however, was possibly not the one of which we possess evidence today, but the one described by Suetonius which is, indeed, missing from the archaeological record, as no trace of the "columns of Alban stone" mentioned by the biographer has ever been found, while the "rooms without any marble decorations or handsome pavements" cannot be identified with any of the room preserved, where the use of marble is amply attested (Figure 3).[76] One might wonder if Suetonius, like Ovid, was looking at what remained of the section of the house used by Octavian as *domus publica,* preserved at his time as a *lieu de mémoire* of the Augustan age. A section of the house manufactured as unpretentious and 'traditional'.

Fig. 3. House of Augustus, Library, C. Raddato CC BY-SA.

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[76] Although the marble itself is missing, there is ample evidence of inlaid marble floors; cf. TOMEI (2014b), esp. p. 173-174.

To this section, hypothetically, we could ascribe the painted decorations illustrated earlier as stemming from Roman decorative systems and showing the invention of a 'traditional' figurative language, although in no way should their 'sobriety of rendition' be interpreted as a sign of real modesty.[77] Yet, these decorations are not the only type of painted ornamentation documented in the houses of the Palatine, where a second, different trend is also attested. I am referring here to the group of decorations usually described, in modern scholarship, as 'Egyptianising', and located in only one circumscribed section of the House of Augustus as well as in the Aula Isiaca.[78] In the case of the House of Augustus, this type of decoration characterises the walls of a series of adjacent rooms in the south-east wing of the house, which are included in the podium of the Temple of Apollo. According to the most recent stratigraphic analysis of the complex, these rooms would have been obliterated by the foundation of the temple, which leads to the same dating of 42 – 36 BCE as the rest of the house.[79] This indication is important to correctly interpret the figurative elements of this decorative system: long believed to be a tribute to Octavian's victory over Marc Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, for its clearly Egyptian references, if painted before 31 BCE they would retain no connection with the conquest of Egypt but rather testify of the introduction to Rome of more generic 'Hellenistic' motifs.[80] The 'exotic' content was thus made more poignant by the fact that it was included in a completely new decorative style for the Roman scene. If in the case of the walls characterised by bucolic landscapes and mythological frames a certain continuity with previous Roman decorative systems was still recognisable, in the case of the 'Egyptianising' rooms, this continuity is broken off. As for their position within the Palatine complex, it is tempting to recognise in these rooms the most private spaces of the house – even though the cubiculum generally referred to as the *studiolo* (Figure 4) was not, in all probability, the famous study-room mentioned by Suetonius –[81] where Octavian

[77] Their discoverer, Carettoni, described the painted decorations in the House of Augustus as characterised by "una grande sobrietà di rendimento"; cf. CARETTONI (1987), p. 111. The same opinion is shared by LEACH (2004), p. 110, where the "sobriety of rendition" is connected to Suetonius' description of the house as modest. Wiseman even suggested that the house near the *scalae Caci* might not be that of Augustus because its decorations are "too lavish"; cf. WISEMAN (2009), p. 537.

[78] For the House of Augustus, cf. IACOPI (2007), p. 29-30. For the Aula Isiaca, cf. IACOPI (1997).

[79] Cf. note 60.

[80] Incidentally, Egyptian decorative elements did become very popular after Actium, when Augustus introduced other, more noticeable Egyptian elements (such as the obelisk currently visible in Rome in the Piazza del Popolo), testifying to the possibility of attaching multiple layers of interpretation to even simple decorative elements. On the Egyptian motifs in the House of Augustus and their meaning, cf. recently VAN AERDE (2015), esp. p. 68 ff., with previous bibliography and a reappraisal of DE VOS (1991).

[81] SUET., *Aug.* 72: *erat illi locus in edito singularis, quem Syracusas et technophyon uocabat*; cf. CARETTONI (1983), p. 388-393; TOMEI (2014b), p. 174-176.
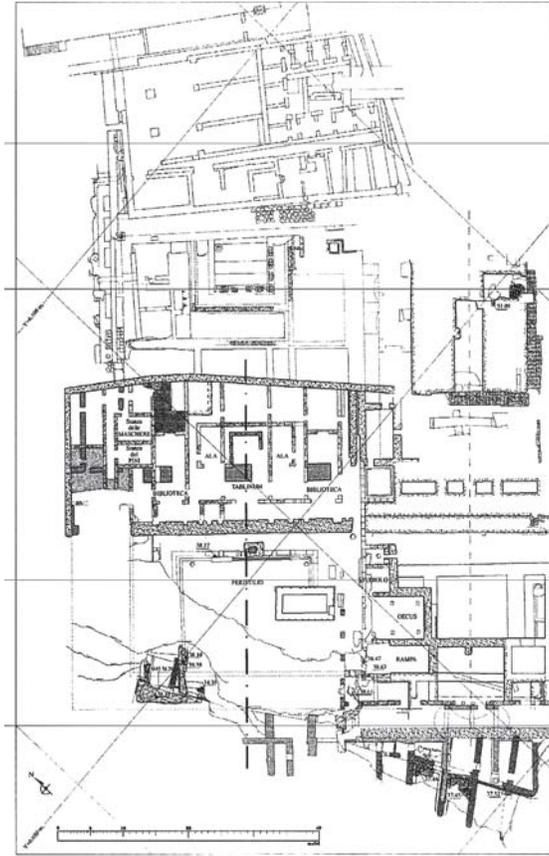
Fig. 4. Plan of the House of Augustus, first period,
lower terrace, IACOPI (2007), p. 11.

would have received not only Roman senators and *clientes*, but also Hellenistic
kings and foreign diplomats (*Aug*. 60). The difference in decoration between
these rooms and the more 'conservative' ones was most certainly an indicator of
a functional separation between the spaces, not uncommon in Roman houses.[82]
In this part of the house, as well as in the Aula Isiaca, the painted decorations on
the walls added to the creation of an 'Hellenistic' setting, both by means of
'Egyptianising' motifs (possibly derived from Alexandria)[83] and more 'luxurious'
ornamentations, characterised by a richer palette of particularly expensive

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[82] FALZONE (2010), p. 65, note 15, following EHRHARDT (1988), p. 648.
[83] IACOPI (2007), p. 29, 33; LA ROCCA (2008), p. 238.

Fig. 5. House of Augustus, cubiculum on the upper level,
Iacopi (2007), p. 38.

colours, above all cinnabar red and light Egyptian blue (Figures 5 and 6).[84] The result was a style that was Roman in its conception but enriched by a certain 'Hellenistic' flavour. A proof of the success of this new 'luxury', and of its Hellenistic target, may lie in the circumstance that reproductions of the Palatine decorations have been found in the palaces of the Hellenistic rulers themselves, above all Herod's palaces in Israel (Figure 7).[85] The three palaces at Jericho, the palace of Masada, but also the residences of Herodium and Caesarea, all

[84] On the use of expensive pigments in Rome, cf. MOLS / MOORMANN (2008).

[85] The palaces were mostly built after 25 BCE, while their 'Roman style' decorations have been ascribed to the period between 20-15 BCE by comparison with the Roman examples of the Villa of the Farnesina, Boscotrecase and other late Second-beginning of the Third Style decorations; cf. ROZENBERG (2009), p. 262; ROZENBERG (2013), *passim*. The same expensive pigments and colour palettes of the decorations in Rome are also attested in Herod's palaces; cf. ROZENBERG (2013), p. 190-195.
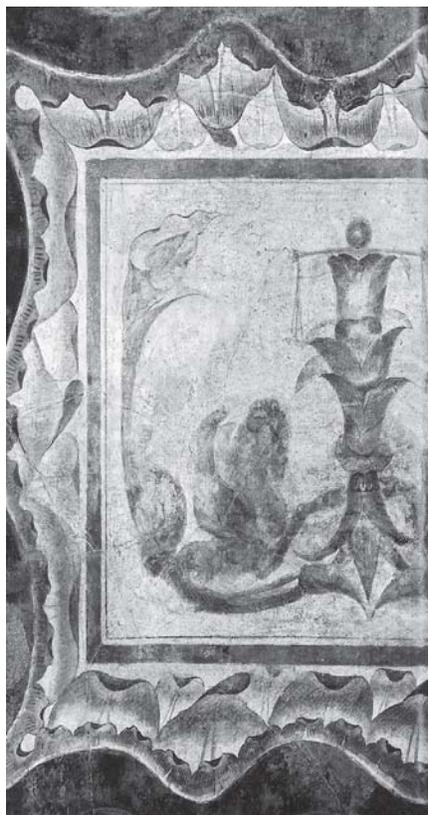
Fig. 6. Aula Isiaca, detail of the vaulted ceiling, IACOPI (1997), p. 28.

Fig. 7. Floral pattern from Herod's Third Palace at Jericho (Courtesy of the Jericho and
Cyprus Expedition, The Hebrew Museum of Jerusalem, photo credits Zeev Radovan).

display painted decorations corresponding to the 'ornamental style' of the Augustan residences, including the Villa della Farnesina and Boscotrecase, combined with, when not replacing, more commonly established Hellenistic designs (such as the Alexandrian Masonry Style).[86]

Herod is a particularly meaningful case for his close relationship with Octavian and his circle. Having resided in Rome in the year 40 BCE, and having visited the city again in 18 and 12 BCE, he must have been a guest in Octavian's house, as well as in those of his inner circle, and a witness of the changes in ornamental fashion occurring at the time.[87] It is thus plausible to think he actively chose to imitate the examples he had seen in Rome, contributing to the successful spreading of new, cosmopolitan designs originated in the Vrbs.[88] The copying of Roman designs in Herod's residences, moreover, possibly expressed not only appreciation for the new style, but political support for the new Roman ruler with whom those decorations were closely associated.[89] Rome ceased merely to imitate, and started to be imitated.[90]

6. *Anchoring a new monarchical language to private spaces*

To summarise, during the 30's BCE Octavian created on the Palatine a residential compound which was in no way truly modest, and overtly featured Hellenistic decorative elements and motifs for those admitted to the inside.[91] Anyone

[86] The technique in which the wall paintings were executed also suggests Roman influences, if not the work of a Roman workshop (additionally, the plaster layers contained marble dust, found primarily only in imperial houses in Italy); cf. ROZENBERG (2009), p. 256-257. In Israel, where the Alexandrian Masonry Style was largely diffused, 'Italian style' decors circulated with local variations; cf. ROZENBERG (2009); ROZENBERG (2013). At the Villa of the Farnesina, 'Egyptianising' motifs can be seen on the walls of cubiculum (b), cf. MOLS / MOORMANN (2008), p. 21.

[87] ROZENBERG (2013), p. 194.

[88] Marcus Agrippa's visit to Judea in 15 BCE might have prompted e.g. the redecoration of the palaces in the latest Roman fashion right before his arrival; cf. ROZENBERG (2013), p. 174. Wall paintings comparable to the examples in the Palatine dwellings can be found not only in the Hellenistic world but also in the Roman provinces, where the new decorative style spread parallel to the establishment of the new political regime. A particularly revealing example of this phenomenon can be seen in the decorations found in the area of the Gallia Cisalpina, subject of a recent publication by ORIOLO / VERZÁR (2013). On the 'booming' of Augustan art in Northern Italy, cf. also WALLACE-HADRILL (2008), p. 433.

[89] ROZENBERG (2009), p. 262.

[90] It has been recently suggested how another allied king, Juba II of Mauretania, whose youth was spent in Rome at Caesar's court, might have taken inspiration from the ideological innovations of Augustan architecture on the Palatine for his palace at Lixus. There, sections of the royal residence built around 20-10 BCE appear to have been purposefully connected to a pre-existent Republican sanctuary; cf. MAR / ARANEGUI (2016), esp. p. 347-351.

[91] On Augustus being selective of his guests, cf. SUET., *Aug.* 74.

familiar with Hellenistic royal displays would have not failed to notice an allusion to, if not a reproduction of, Hellenistic palatial complexes, with the palace associated with a major temple as a means of legitimisation for the ruler. I would argue, therefore, that the house must have already been conceived, in the 30's BCE, as a palace.[92] If the Temple of Apollo was conceived as a Hellenistic temple for the tutelary deity, as it will progressively become clear throughout the years of Octavian's rule, with all that Octavian himself had done to coat it with Republican associations it could not have been recognised as such without the house. Should the house have been truly 'unpretentious', the association may have also fallen through. At the same time, for the house to be recognised as part of a 'palatial unit' and not simply another luxurious house, it needed the temple. Each could not exist without the other.

The proximity of the house to the Circus Maximus additionally validates this theory, as it was common practice, for Hellenistic kings, to associate their residences to recreational spaces, such as theatres, stadia, or, indeed, hippodromes.[93] The same can be said for the decision to build a house and temple on the Palatine hill, thus creating a replica of Hellenistic citadels, and for the construction of yet another Hellenistic royal building around the same time: the so-called Mausoleum of Augustus. According to Suetonius, the tomb, conceived with patent dynastic intents, was completed by 28 BCE, and works on it had probably already started in 31 BCE.[94] When Ovid (*Tristia* 3.1.34) describes the house of Augustus as *tecta digna deo* in 8 CE, with the house forming a unit with both the Temple of Vesta and Apollo, the process of 'Hellenisation' of both Octavian and his house appears finally completed. In the 30's, however, the same ideology could not be overtly projected on the house yet, as Octavian was well aware of. Because he was presenting himself as the champion of tradition, he could never have explicitly publicised his house as a palace. While his political program was aimed at restraining, if not condemning, aristocratic self-glorification,[95] he had to distance himself from the common late Republican practice of building houses which could rival with the palaces of the Hellenistic reigns in a crescendo of bold statements, as it was the case for Cicero's *uilla* in the heart of Rome, Lucullus' libraries, or Pompey's house, built close to his theatre, which in turn included a temple dedicated to the Roman general's own tutelary deity, the Venus Victrix. Although Octavian did replicate features of Hellenistic palaces in the heart of Rome, and on a larger scale even than it

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[92] Cf. MEYBOOM (2005), p. 258, note 106, with previous references.

[93] NIELSEN (2016), p. 114. Cf. also MEYBOOM (2005), p. 242, 258, with a discussion on how Octavian Augustus turned the Circus Maximus into yet another space connected to his tutelary god Apollo.

[94] SUET., *Aug*. 100.8; the author additionally states that the space around the Mausoleum had been made public from the very beginning. The first burial, of Octavian's nephew M. Claudius Marcellus, dates to 23 BCE; cf. VON HESBERG (1996).

[95] LA ROCCA (1987), p. 356.

was ever done before, the reality of his residence was masked, purposefully, by appealing to a revival of earlier Republican traditions.

Before I conclude, I would like to return briefly to the new imperial residence of Emperor Meiji in Tokyo from the year 1873. There, beyond the 'traditional' wooden façade, the rooms showed a mixture of Japanese and Western design: "Japanese in conception, but not without features imported from the West", according to a British reporter of the time.[96] The choice of mixing traditional Japanese design with Western elements was made consciously by the Emperor and his entourage, and, while the innovation started in the palace, it would eventually influence all of Japan and all classes in the years to come, coming to a full bloom during the 1920'-40's.[97] The process of 'Westernisation' was thus taken up slowly, and the reason lied partially in the necessity of overcoming a strong dualism between Japanese and Western elements, one viewed as the traditional system to follow, the other as the innovative one to consider with caution. This difficulty was aptly summarised by the architect Nobuo Moriya with the words: "Unfamiliarity and novelty breed dislike. Craftwork for the Japanese must have been designed for the taste of the Japanese".[98] Moriya found a loophole in the system by transforming 'modern' Western decorations into local, alternative products. Thus, the national leap towards a modern state, one able to compete with the Western Super Powers, could only be made acceptable by *anchoring* it to a shared, traditional past. The deliberate design choices made in the residence of the emperor reflected such a struggle, and through their spreading, interior decoration contributed to bringing the ideology of the emperor into the daily life of his subjects.

In Rome, Octavian was faced with a similar challenge: turn the Republic into a political power able to compete with the Hellenistic powers of the Mediterranean. His building policies in Rome can thus be analysed with a double audience in mind: one formed by his fellow Roman citizens, in front of whom he had to justify seizing individual power, and one constituted by the citizens (and rulers) of the Hellenistic reigns, whom he could only impress by placing himself on the same level. For the Republican audience, Octavian and his circle crafted that program of revival of the ancient *mores* to anchor the new regime, which in terms of building policies entailed a combination of private sobriety and public munificence. The symbolic creation of a 'Republican' *domus publica* on the

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[96] *Japan Weekly Mail*, 6 February 1889, as cited in FUJITANI (1996), p. 77. In a colourful print dating to December 1888, the Emperor and his wife are depicted relaxing inside a classically Japanese pavilion, within the walls of the New Palace. The imperial couple display clothes in accordance with Western fashion and are sitting on Western chairs (*Maple Leaves at the New Palace,* artist unknown, illustration published on December 20, 1888, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, inv. no. 2000.237 a – c).

[97] On the introduction of Western interior design to Japan, cf. TEASLEY (2003); MCNEIL (1992).

[98] MORIYA (1927), p. 4, as cited in TEASLEY (2003), p. 64.

Palatine had this public in mind. For the Hellenistic audience, on the contrary, for whom "earlier Republican commemorations were irrelevant", [99] Octavian worked on the creation of a Hellenistic city. An essential step towards this goal (to turn a city of brick into a city of marble) was to provide his house with recognisable features derived from Hellenistic palatial architecture and decoration.

Bearing these two audiences in mind, an interesting phenomenon can additionally be noticed: the inversion of the partition, typical of Hellenistic royal residences, between a luxurious public sector, the *basilea*, and a more 'modest' private wing, the *oikos*, where the king and his family would have actually resided. [100] In the case of Octavian's residence, however, the less pretentious part of the house was more likely the one presented to the public, while it was in its more private recesses that the house bore more prominently the signs of luxury, influenced by models sought beyond the borders of Rome. By balancing traditional and innovative systems of decorations, Octavian was elevating Rome to a more 'international' level. His house, although ideologically traditional from the outside, became increasingly innovative on the inside, where Roman and Hellenistic elements were inter-mixed, and Hellenistic art was 'localised' to serve the purposes of a new style that was Roman in its concept. In the first period of Octavian's rule we therefore assist to the creation of two parallel political programs, one overtly 'Republican', the other privately 'monarchical', which are reflected in the housing choices he carried out. When the two programs will eventually converge into a "single, unified vision of the new regime" [101] and "one dominant memory" [102] by the end of the first century BCE, the house will also ultimately become *a palace* for both audiences.

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[99] GALINSKY / LAPATIN (ed.) (2015), p. 5.

[100] I will refer here once again to Herod's palaces in Judea, and the Third Palace of Jericho in particular, where the most innovative decorations (bearing a stronger similarity with the decorations from the Villa of the Farnesina and Boscotrecase) were displayed in the most prominent rooms, while simpler designs derived from Second Style patterns were used in the less central rooms. Cf. ROZENBERG (2009), esp. p. 252-254; ROZENBERG (2013), p. 195.

[101] HESLIN (2014), p. 245.

[102] FUJITANI (1996), p. 11: "Japan's governing elites invented, revived, manipulated, and encouraged national rituals (…) Through rites the rulers hoped to bring this territory, which had been segmented (…) under one ruler, one legitimating sacred order, and one dominant memory."

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