Image and Empire

The Shaping of Augustan Rome

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Imperial Rome is an archetype of empire—and this for many reasons.[1] The shaping of imperial Rome owes a considerable debt to cultures which achieved exceptional standards in political and intellectual life as well as in the visual, written, and technical domain. This is particularly manifest in the Roman reception of non-Italian cultures, such as Classical Greece, the kingdoms of the Hellenistic East, and the realm of Carthage in the West. Equally, Rome's multi-ethnic empire was based on a variety of 'Roman' factors such as a dominant military, a worldwide economy, and a flexible religious, cultural, and social policy combined with efficient infrastructure and global imagery. I focus on the imagery, which I regard as one of Rome's most influential instruments for consolidating her empire.[2] Concentrating on the relation of image and empire I am interested in the making, function, and perception of Rome's imperial imagery—and its role in social communication. The best documented starting point for such an analysis is the reign of Augustus, Rome's first emperor (27 BC–AD 14). During his regime Rome and her empire were fundamentally remodeled.[3] In and for the process of this remodeling images of all kinds and in all contexts played a crucial part. I start with the new images of Rome's Augustan landscape, continue with the new images of Augustus, and finish with the new images of the oriental as Rome's most important cultural Other.

[1] Blois et al. 2003.

[2] In contrast to Hingley 2005 who widely excludes imagery in his stimulating book dealing with the complex issues of globalizing Roman culture; see below, however, n. 34.

[3] In this paper I take advantage of the ambivalent meaning of 'imperial' pertaining to both empire and emperor.

1. THE NEW IMAGES OF THE IMPERIAL CITY

The shaping of Rome with prestigious imagery, architecture, and infrastructure had been a competitive process for several centuries.[4] This process was fundamentally redefined under the new conditions of the monarchic rule of Augustus. His adoptive father, Julius Caesar (murdered in 44 BC and deified in 42 BC) had already set the course.[5] However, it was mainly his adopted son, the Caesar *Divi filius*, under whom the new imagery for imperial Rome was actually created.[6] After the victories over his political rivals Sextus Pompeius (36 BC) and Marcus Antonius (31 BC) the later Augustus and his followers started building projects on an exceptional scale (Fig. 13).

A principal focus of these activities was the very heart of Rome, the Forum Romanum.[7] Continuing the pioneering changes commenced by Caesar, Augustus and his followers had the Forum Romanum totally rebuilt: the Basilica Aemilia, the Basilica Iulia, and Curia Iulia (both distinguished by the name of his family), the old Republican temples of Saturnus, the Dioscuri, and Concordia as well as the new temple of his adoptive father, Divus Iulius (Figs. 14–15).[8] A change in such a short time and to such a radical extent was unique. This is even more relevant as the Forum Romanum was one of the oldest public places of Rome, and the center of her political and social identity. The ideology attached to the new imagery of the Forum Romanum is exemplarily reflected in a seemingly small act, the removal of the speaker's platform, the public place for political communication between the people and the magistrates of Rome.[9] The speaker's platform, however, was called *rostra*, meaning front prows of battleships. The prows, which gave the platform its name, had been captured in 338 BC from the rival navy of the seaport of Antium about 55 km south of Rome, and had then been fixed to the speaker's platform of the Forum (Fig. 14). Consequently *rostra* has interconnected the meaning of the prows of battleships as symbols of Rome's military

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[4] Stambaugh 1988; Patterson 1992; Claridge 1998; Coarelli 2000; Coulston and Dodge 2000; Kolb 2002.

[5] Favro 1996, 60–78.

[6] Coarelli 1988; Hesberg 1988; Zanker 1988; Wallace-Hadrill 1993; Favro 1996; Zanker 2000; Haselberger 2002; Wallace-Hadrill 2003, 189–94 (with further thoughts on Rome as image); Galinsky 2005.

[7] Steinby ii (1995), 325–42 s.v. Forum Romanum (Nicolas Purcell); Haselberger 2002, 129–30 s.v. Forum Romanum.

[8] Comprehensive summary of the individual buildings of ancient Rome, Steinby i–iv (1993–2000); Haselberger 2002.

[9] Hölscher 1978, 318–20; Steinby iv. 212–14 s.v. Rostra età repubblicana (Filippo Coarelli).
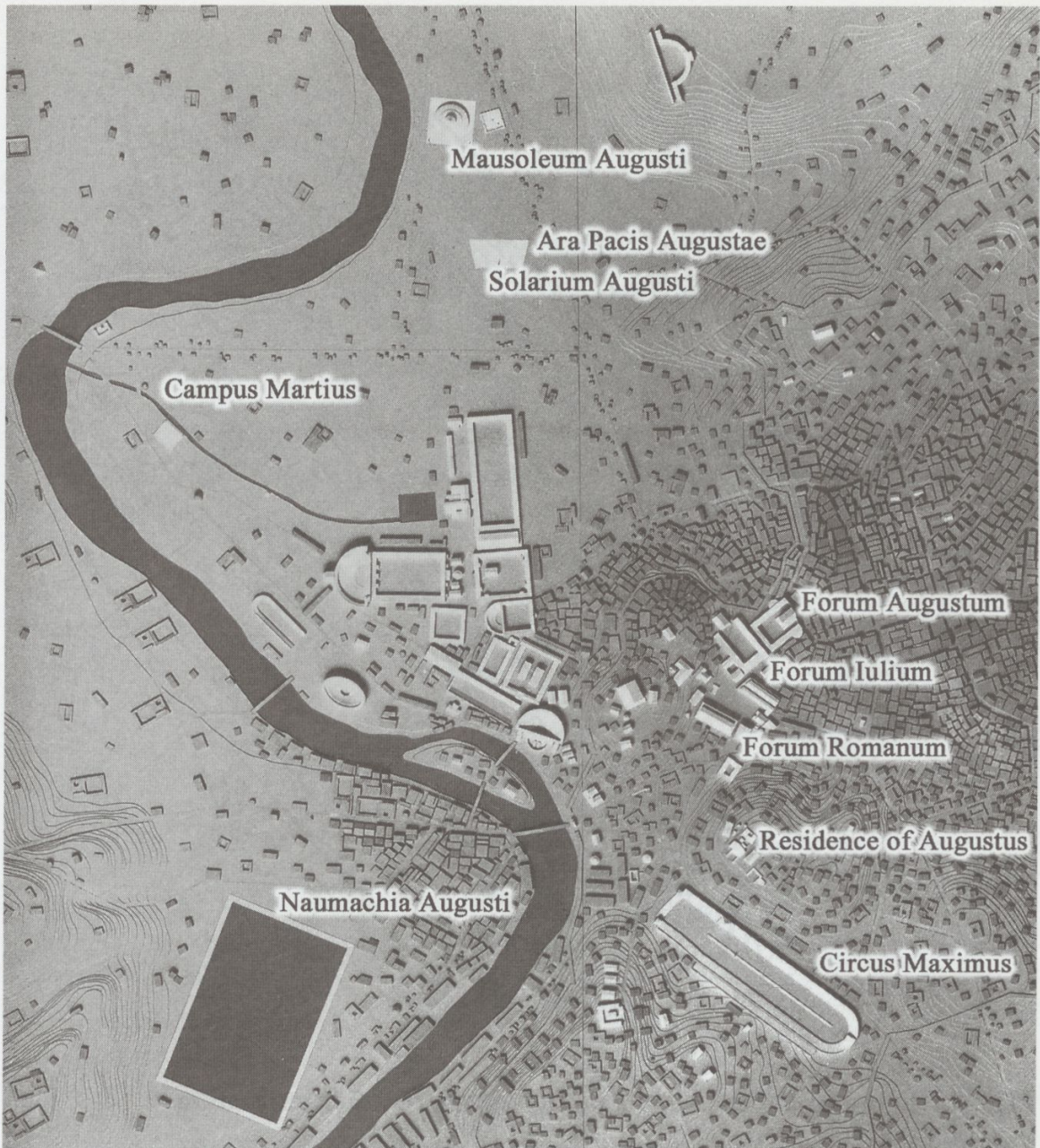
Fig. 13. Rome, model of the Augustan city (detail). Berlin, Abguss-Sammlung antiker Plastik

supremacy and the speaker's platform as a landmark of her political identity.[10] The removal of the *rostra* from the northern corner of the Forum Romanum to its center was initiated by Caesar and completed by Augustus (Fig. 15). Thus father and son broke with the political culture of the past: they changed the Republican platform of competitive politics into a monument of Augustan consensus. Like no other monument in Rome the removal of the *rostra* and its substantial reshaping marked the end of Republican Rome and

[10] In contemporary English the Latin term *rostrum* is still used to name the speaker's stand.
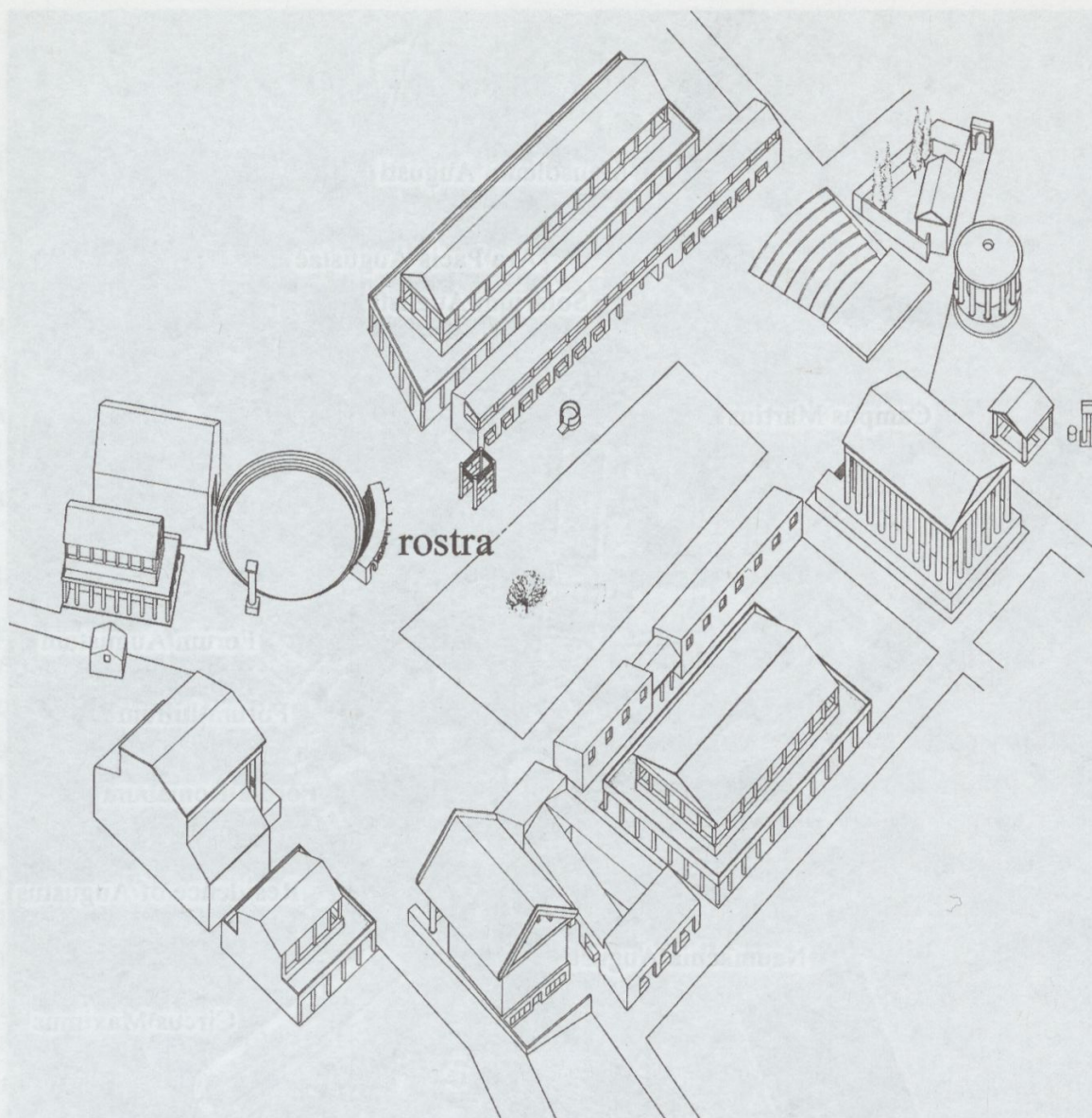
Fig. 14. Rome, Forum Romanum. Second century BC. Reconstruction

the beginning of the Roman Empire. This new, mainly metaphorical function of the 'old' *rostra* was endorsed by the introduction of a second Augustan *rostra*. The second *rostra* was significantly placed, opposite the old one and in front of the new temple of Divus Iulius.[11] The new platform was now decorated with the prows captured at the sea battle of Actium (31 BC) which marked the decisive victory of the later Augustus on his way to imperial rule in Rome.

Two other large public projects were closely linked to the Forum Romanum: the completion of Caesar's Forum Iulium and the construction of the Forum

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[11] Steinby iv (1999), 214–17 s.v. Rostra Augusti (Patrizia Verduchi); Haselberger 2002, 216 s.v. Rostra: Augustus.
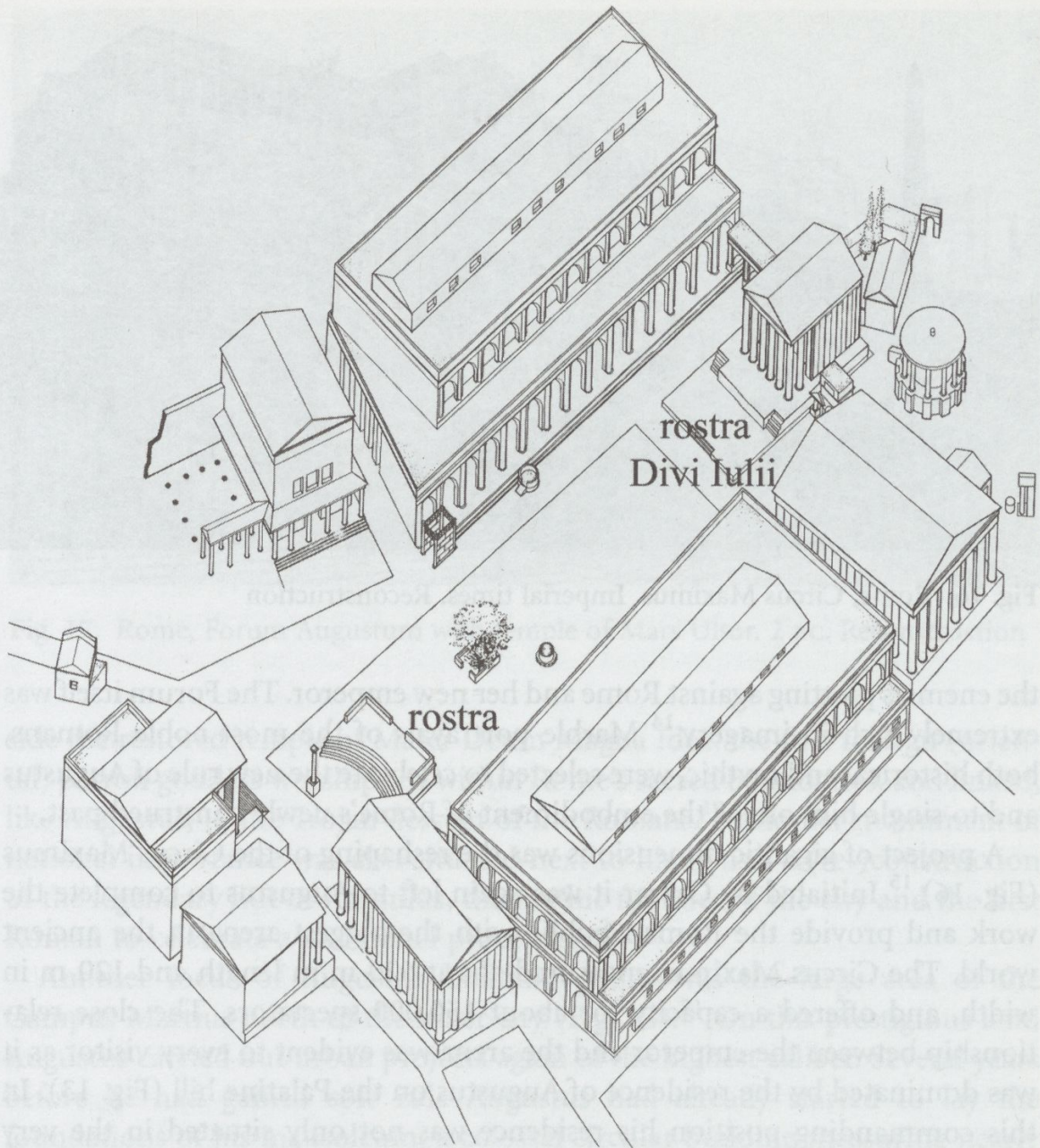
Fig. 15. Rome, Forum Romanum. Early first century AD. Reconstruction

Augustum, the latter dedicated in 2 BC.[12] The Forum Augustum was a space which transmitted the ideology of the imperial regime in outstanding complexity, workmanship, and material: the architecture and its decor were entirely made of prestigious mono- and polychrome marble (Fig. 17).[13] The Forum's temple was dedicated to Mars Ultor, both the new father god of the Romans and the old war god of revenge (*ultor*). The cognomen *ultor* refers to

[12] Steinby ii (1995), 299–306 s.v. Forum Iulium (Chiara Morselli); Haselberger 2002, 134–5 s.v. Forum Iulium.

[13] Steinby ii. 289–95 s.v. Forum Augustum (Valentin Kockel); La Rocca 2001; Haselberger 2002, 130–1 s.v. Forum Augusti; Ungaro 2002.
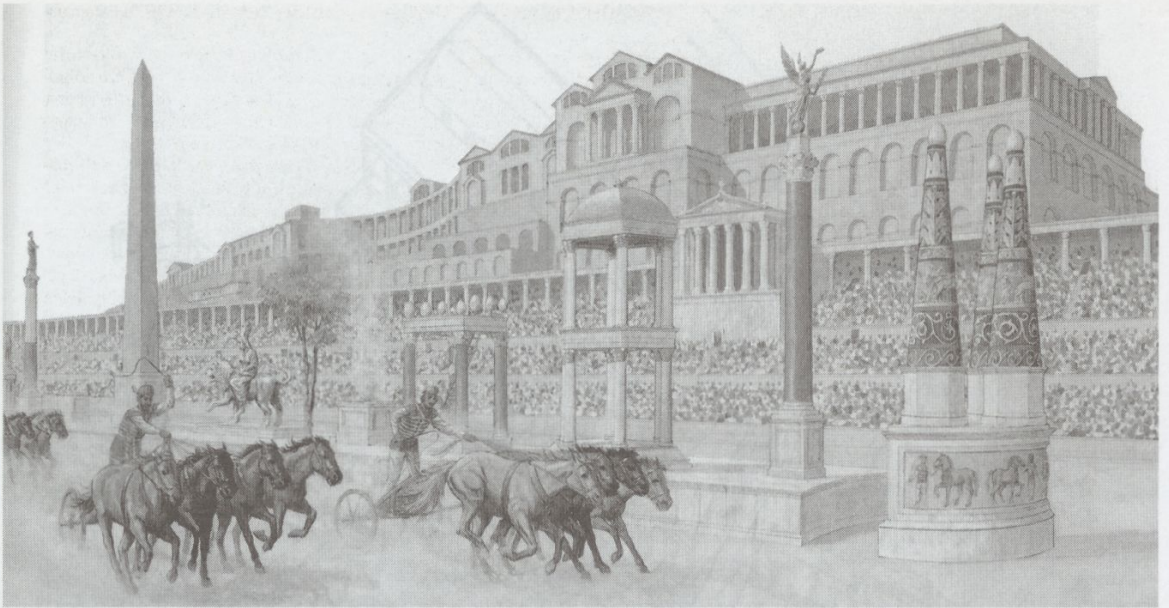
Fig. 16. Rome, Circus Maximus. Imperial times. Reconstruction

the enemies plotting against Rome and her new emperor. The Forum itself was extremely rich in imagery.[14] Marble portrayals of the most noble Romans, both historical and mythic, were selected to celebrate the new rule of Augustus and to single him out as the embodiment of Rome's newly construed past.

A project of gigantic dimensions was the reshaping of the Circus Maximus (Fig. 16).[15] Initiated by Caesar it was again left to Augustus to complete the work and provide the Roman public with the biggest arena in the ancient world. The Circus Maximus measured about 620 m in length and 120 m in width, and offered a capacity for about 150,000 spectators. The close relationship between the emperor and the arena was evident to every visitor as it was dominated by the residence of Augustus on the Palatine hill (Fig. 13). In this commanding position his residence was not only situated in the very heart of the city but also next to the oldest settlement of Rome, the mythic *urbs quadrata*.[16] The residence itself was a loose complex of several (partly older) houses lavishly redecorated in the style of the day and perhaps connected by a kind of garden.[17] The proximity of the residence to two temples was eye-catching: on the one side the temple of Apollo Palatinus dedicated in 28 BC to the patron god of Augustus and attached to his house;[18] on the other

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[14] Spannagel 1999.

[15] Steinby i. 272–7 s.v. Circus Maximus (Paola Ciancio Rossetto); Haselberger 2002, 87–9 fig. 9 s.v. Circus Maximus.

[16] Steinby iv. 207–9 s.v. Roma Quadrata (Filippo Coarelli); Krause 2004, 46–8.

[17] Nuccio and Ungaro 2002, 437–45; Tomei 2004.

[18] Steinby i. 54–7 s.v. Apollo Palatinus (Pierre Gros); Haselberger 2002, 46–7 s.v. Apollo, Templum (Palatium).
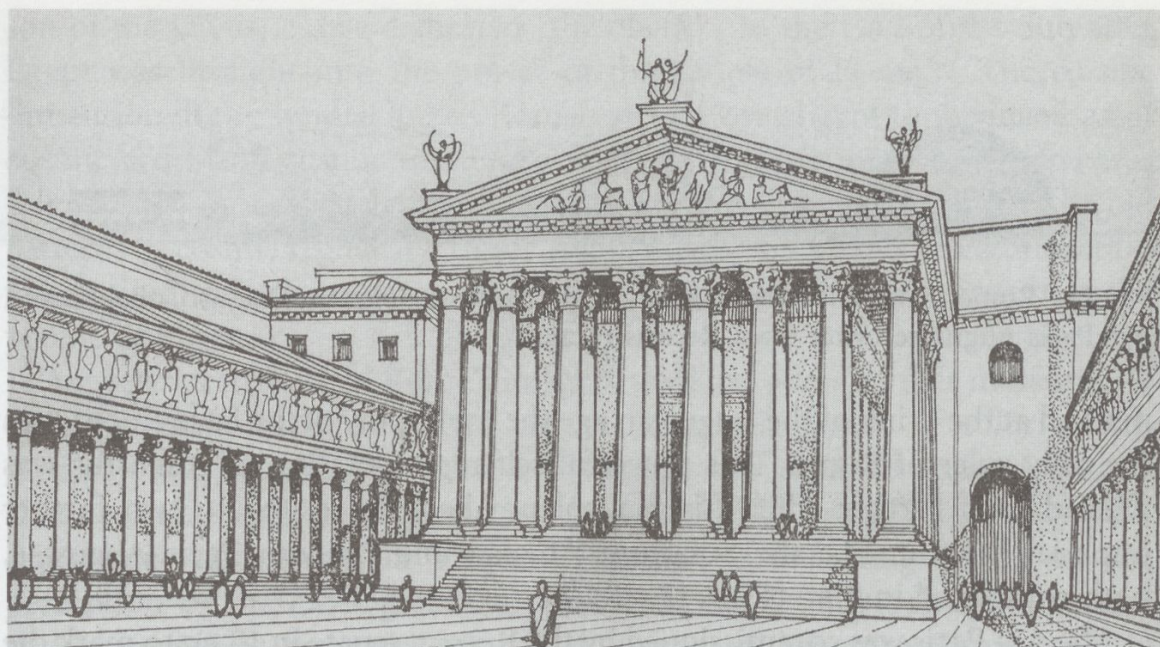
Fig. 17. Rome, Forum Augustum with temple of Mars Ultor. 2 BC. Reconstruction

side the restored temple of Mater Deum Magna Idea, the first foreign (oriental) patron goddess worshipped within Rome's sacred boundaries, and linked, like Augustus, to the Trojan descent of the Romans.[19] Another monument of national importance was also situated next to his house: a (re-)construction of the legendary hut of Romulus, the mythic founder of the city and the first Roman to celebrate a triumphal procession.[20]

Another focus of Augustan building policy was the large area of the Campus Martius north of the inner city (Fig. 13).[21] On this prestigious land Augustus carried out urban projects again of the highest caliber. Several years before he had gained sole rule Augustus had already started to lay the foundations of his mausoleum, a colossal circular building measuring nearly 90 m in diameter and 50 m in height, in size and structure a 'forerunner' of the Colosseum (Fig. 18).[22] The mausoleum's entrance was framed by two obelisks from Egypt, each about 15 m high, and two marble pillars with bronze tablets on which the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* were inscribed (cf. above p. 248, Fig. 10). Extraordinary in size and decor, the mausoleum

[19] Wiseman 1984; Pensabene 2004.

[20] Steinby i. 241–2 s.v. Casa Romuli (Filippo Coarelli); Haselberger 2002, 83 s.v. Casa Romuli.

[21] Steinby i. 220–4 s.v. Campus Martius (Timothy Peter Wiseman); Favro 1996, 206–8, 257 fig. 103; Haselberger 2002, 74–7 s.v. Campus Martius.

[22] Steinby iii (1996), 234–7 s.v. Mausoleum Augusti: Das Monument (Henner von Hesberg); Haselberger 2002, 166–7 s.v. Mausoleum: Augustus; Schneider 2004, 166–7 figs. 17–19.
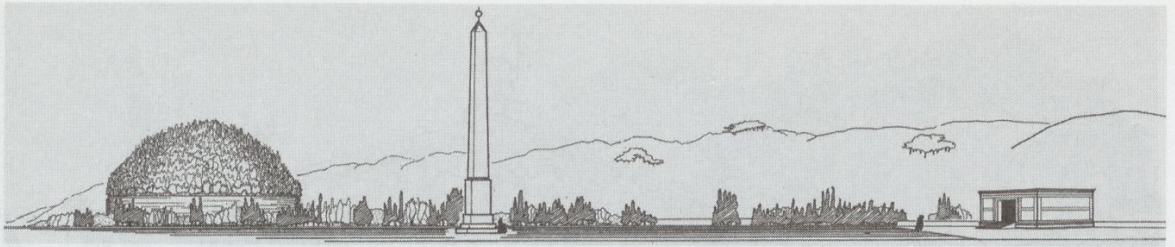
Fig. 18. Rome, Campus Martius: Mausoleum Augusti, Solarium Augusti, obelisk, and Ara Pacis Augustae. After 9 BC. Reconstruction

marked at the brink of the Augustan age the monopoly of the later emperor as the only ruler of Rome. This powerful self-representation of Augustus was pushed even further when his mausoleum became related to two further imperial monuments, the Solarium Augusti and the Ara Pacis Augustae, both completed in 9 BC (Figs. 13, 18).

The Ara Pacis was commissioned by the Roman senate in 13 BC to mark the victorious return of Augustus to Rome from military campaigns in Spain and Gaul (Fig. 13).[23] Outstanding in the richness and subtlety of its sculpted decor, the Ara Pacis portrays the chief concerns of the Augustan order: Roman gods, depictions of sacrificial rituals, public processions, representations of religious symbols and the fecundity of nature as a metaphor of the new era of the Golden Age.[24] Never before in the history of Rome's imagery was military victory so distinctly related to the ideology of peace.[25] The entire decor of the monument addresses the political *rite de passage* brought to the city by Augustus and influential members of the Roman elite.

The Solarium Augusti, laid out in front of the Ara Pacis Augustae (Figs. 13, 18), was huge: in size comparable with St Peter's Square today.[26] The center of the sundial was marked by an Egyptian obelisk, a unique booty made of pink granite from Aswan. Augustus was the first ruler in antiquity to order such obelisks from Egypt and to have them transported to Rome. This was an amazing feat, technically, aesthetically, and ideologically. Besides the two obelisks for his mausoleum, Augustus brought two Pharaonic obelisks to Rome each measuring nearly 22 m in height and weighing about 230 tons. Both were placed to attract the most public attention: one of them was erected as the gnomon of the new sundial (Fig. 18), the other as the landmark of the renewed Circus Maximus (Fig. 16). Two identical Latin inscriptions highlight the Roman significance of the Egyptian spoils: 'Imperator Caesar Augustus,

[23] Steinby iv. 70–4 s.v. Pax Augusta, Ara (Mario Torelli); Haselberger 2002, 189 s.v. Pax Augusta, Ara.

[24] Wallace-Hadrill 2004.

[25] For Augustan perceptions and policies of war and peace: Rich 2003.

[26] Buchner 1982; Steinby iii. 35–7 s.v. Horologium Augusti (Edmund Buchner); Schneider 2004, 163–4.

son of the Divus,... has dedicated [the obelisk] to the God of the Sun after Egypt was brought into the power of the people of Rome.'[27] The cosmic dimension of the sundial linked Rome's victory over Egypt to the ideology of cosmic order and cosmic time. As a result the experience of (civil) war was followed by a concept relating the new patterns of imperial rule with the old patterns of cosmic regularity. In the rhetoric of ideology this interconnection was praised as both an accomplishment of Augustus and as a benefit to the people of Rome.

Augustus transformed Rome's imagery with countless further measures, of which I name three, all linked to the (imperial) power of color: water, greenery, and marble. The volume of water nearly doubled under Augustus after repairs to existing channels and the addition of two new waterways, the Aqua Iulia and the Aqua Virgo.[28] This had far reaching effects on the perception of the city's greenery (and water). Not only private but more and more public greenery lent the landscape of Augustan Rome a newly colored image and created a kind of greenbelt around the inner city. Even more radical was the imagery of the new marble. Marble was now regularly imported to Rome in quantities and qualities unheard of before. This was particularly true of the abundant use of the polychromes.[29] The Augustan marble revolution far outstripped anything seen in the Classical world before. In contrast to the rare display of polychromes in late republican Rome colored marble was now widely used, especially for major public buildings, such as the new temples of Apollo Palatinus, Apollo *in circo*, Bellona, Mars Ultor, and Concordia, the Basilica Aemilia, and the new Forum of Augustus—all placed in the very heart of Rome.[30] The exotic polychromes transformed the old Republican city into the new imperial Rome. This change is addressed in a famous statement handed down by Suetonius (*Divus Augustus* 28): 'Rome, originally not decorated *pro maiestate imperii*, was improved by Augustus so fundamentally that he could rightly praise himself: he found her brick but left her marble'. The new display and systematic employment of the exotic polychromes became one of the most explicit symbols of imperial power and cultural supremacy Rome claimed to have achieved.

The radical changes in Rome's imagery are also manifest in the reorganization of the city's inner grid. In 7 BC Augustus invented the tradition of fourteen regions which were in turn divided into local wards or *vici*; today we

[27] *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum* VI, 701 and 702.
[28] Aqueducts and gardens: Favro 1996, 101, 111, 134–5, 176–80 fig. 81; Haselberger 2002, 49–51 s.v. Aqueducts, Water Supply and Population Density; 141–7 s.v. Horti.
[29] Gnoli 1971; Nuccio and Ungaro 2002.
[30] Schneider 2001; Schneider 2002; Ungaro 2002; Nuccio 2002.

know of 320 of them, but the number is dubious.[31] The size of Rome was now doubled: the Republican *urbs* of seven hills became the Augustan city of fourteen regions. The spatial reorganization of Rome was connected with the transformation of a popular cult. From 7 BC onwards the old cult of the *Lares compitales* was equated with the new cult of the *Lares Augusti*. The *Lares compitales* were protective spirits of the crossroads (*compita*) within the different wards in Rome, whereas the *Lares Augusti* personified the *Genius Augusti*, the divine spirit of Augustus worshiped within the new framework of the imperial cult.[32] From now on the *Genius Augusti* embodied the protection of and care for the public infrastructure of Rome. The cult of the *Lares Augusti* aimed at wide sections of the population; this cult was performed by freedmen and slaves who would have been excluded from public office. These people were now allowed to commission (quite) elaborate altars. Their reliefs demonstrate a surprising diversity of sacrificial images which testify to a lively reception of the established imperial models and the new imperial cult. The coordinated approach of the imagery of the *Lares Augusti* and the spatial reorganization of the city opened up new political pathways with which to integrate people of low social status into Rome's new imperial order. This stimulated new bonds between the people and the emperor. In a wider perspective this process was embedded in a radical reshaping of the city's sacred imagery; in 28 BC alone Augustus ordered the restoration of no fewer than eighty-two temples.[33]

Rome's new imagery altered the life in and the perception of the city in almost every aspect. Extraordinary measures of imperial architecture and infrastructure served not only the self-representation of the new emperor but created also a new cultural identity for the people of Rome. Presented with a refurbished capital members of all social classes were offered exceptional facilities of urban life, and Rome became the model for cities throughout the empire.[34] Augustan Rome was, however, not the picture book city as shown in modern reconstructions but an extremely dirty and busy building site. This was probably tolerated if not accepted by most. The reshaping of Augustan Rome must have involved more or less everybody in and around the city as it created work and income, and identity for all. In this respect the reshaping of the city's imagery was probably seen as a deed accomplished not only by the emperor but also by the collective effort of (and for) the people of Rome.

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[31] Favro 1996, 135–8 fig. 59; Steinby iv. 199–204 s.v. Regiones Quattuordecim (Domenico Palombi); Haselberger 2002, 215 s.v. Regiones Quattuordecim; Wallace-Hadrill 2003, 194–206.

[32] Hölscher 1984, 27–30; Zanker 1988, 129–35; Wallace-Hadrill 2003, 197–206.

[33] *Res Gestae* 20; cf. Favro 1996, 105–10.

[34] On the 'empire imagery' of Augustan Rome: Hingley 2005, 77–87.

2. THE NEW IMAGES OF AUGUSTUS

For centuries meritorious Romans were honored by portraits displayed in public contexts such as the forum, the sanctuary, and the necropolis. In the first century AD most Roman portraits were characterized by faces wrinkled with age. A radical change in the appearance, distribution, and perception of Roman portraits was brought about by the images of Augustus (Fig. 20).[35] He was the first to make youthful agelessness a visual standard in Roman portraiture. He was the first to show himself to the public in at least three different portrait types. He was the first whose portraits were replicated in exceptional quantity and quality throughout the Roman Empire. He was the first whose portraits were combined with almost every public body. And he was the first whose portraits were present in every kind of medium and every context of life.

At present we can identify more than 220 copies of portraits of Augustus, most of them in marble.[36] The vast majority of these portraits copy three different prototypes (Fig. 20). These prototypes are now lost. As we have no written information about the process of their shaping I will briefly outline what we can extract from the archaeological evidence.[37] At the beginning the emperor and/or his advisors composed general parameters of the appearance and the message of a new imperial portrait. These parameters were probably given to competing workshops that were to design a new image of the emperor. The proposed designs were then either rejected or accepted and perhaps further refined. Finally an imperial prototype made either in gold or silver emerged, which was replicated in plaster and made available for interested workshops inside and outside of Rome. In consequence, these plaster casts initiated a chain of further replications which spread from Rome into all of her provinces.

The hairstyle of each prototype, especially the patterns of the single locks over the forehead, was the most characteristic and coherent typological feature copied in the portraits of Augustus. This focus became the standard for the portraiture of all subsequent emperors. The distinctive hairstyle helped modern scholars to establish the formal typology, the chronological order, and the individual identity of the imperial portraits. Today we also identify people very much by their hairstyle. Revealing is the clever advertisement on the flyer of a Munich bank circulated a few weeks before the general

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[35] Vierneisel and Zanker 1979; Boschung 1993; Smith 1996; Fejfer 1998; Schneider 2003, 60–3.

[36] List of surviving portraits: Boschung 1993.
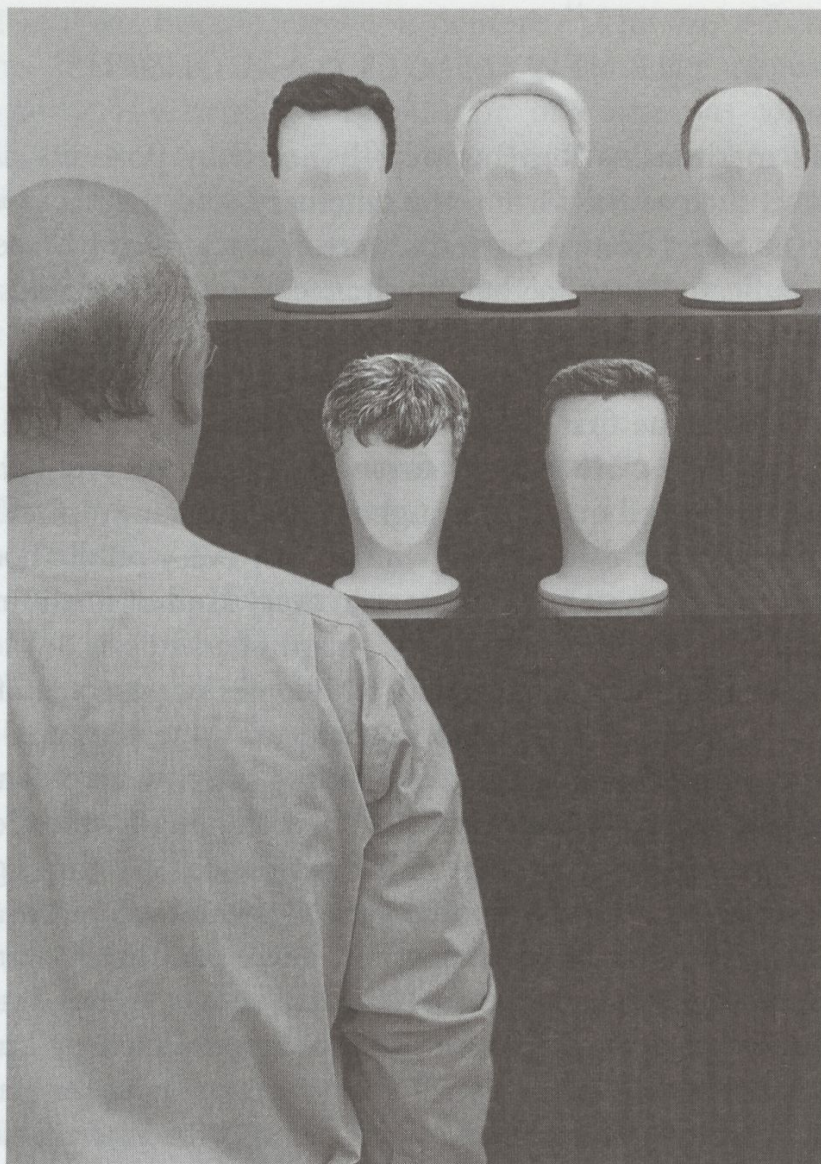
[37] Schneider 2003, 74–5.

Fig. 19. Wigs of five German party leaders. General election of 2002. Flyer, Hypovereinsbank Munich

election in Germany in September 2002 (Fig. 19).[38] Five faceless heads individualized by five different wigs are (hierarchically) placed on two shelves. The heads are inspected by a male viewer who, in turn, is shown from the back and is distinguished by an almost bald head. The stand of each head is marked by a different color referring to the six main political parties. The different style and color of the hair makes it easy to identify the five faceless party leaders. From left to right are portrayed: on the *upper* shelf Gerhard Schröder (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands), Edmund Stoiber (representing both Christliche Soziale Union and Christliche Demokratische Union), and

[38] Flyer of the Hypo-Vereinsbank München; slogan: 'Jetzt Rendite wählen: die HVB 13/3 Anleihe.'
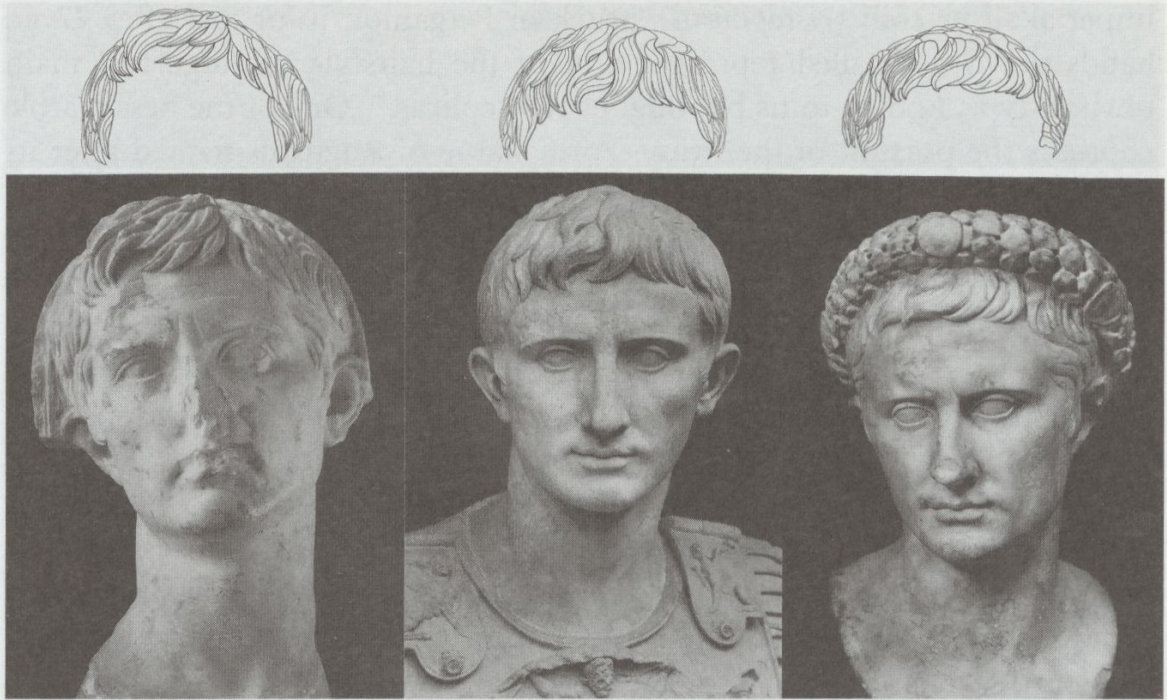
Fig. 20. The main portrait types of Augustus, each with a drawing of the front-lock pattern
Left: first type. From about 40 BC. La Alcudia
Middle: main type. From about 30 BC. Vatican, Musei Vaticani
Right: third type. Possibly from about 30 BC. Rome, Museo Capitolino

Guido Westerwelle (Freie Demokratische Partei); on the *lower* shelf Joschka Fischer (Die Grünen/Bündnis 90) and Gregor Gysi (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus).

The images of Augustus might have been perceived in a similar way: in the first instance, identified by inscription and/or context, and then, over time, probably more and more also by the distinctive hairstyle. Today, however, the vital evidence of the inscription and the context is gone. How can a modern viewer identify a portrait as one depicting Augustus? For this he needs the help of Rome's imperial coins. Under Augustus the emperor's portrait and his official name became the standard of the obverse. Depending on quality, intention, and mint the portraits of Augustus engraved on the imperial coins copy more or less precisely the hairstyle of the three prototypes.[39] The hairstyle as shown on silver coins (*denarii*) struck in Rome around 40 BC corresponds closely with the hairstyle of the first popular portrait type of the *Imperator Caesar* or *Caesar Divi filius*, as Augustus was called before 27 BC. A fine marble copy of this type is a replica found in Alcudia (ancient Pollentia) on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca (Fig. 20, left).[40] An

[39] Boschung 1993, 59–61 pls. 238–9.
[40] Ibid. 110 no. 6 pls. 7, 8, 28.3; Smith 1996, 37.

imperial silver coin (*cistophorus*) struck in Pergamon in or just after 27 BC hands down a detailed representation of the hairstyle of Augustus' main portrait type, known to us by roughly 150 replicas.[41] One of the best marble copies is the portrait of the Prima Porta statue of Augustus named after its provenance just north of Rome in the villa of the emperor's wife Livia (Fig. 20, middle and Fig. 21).[42] The third portrait type of Augustus was perhaps made around the same time as the Prima Porta type.[43] The third type was selected to portray Augustus on the south frieze of the Ara Pacis, and is well represented by a replica in Rome (Fig. 20, right).[44] The three portrait types were later neither replaced nor altered. On the contrary, they depicted the emperor up to and beyond his death in AD 14 when he was about 78 years old.

The notable difference in the conception and the message of the three youthful portrait types allows important historical conclusions. The first portrait type of the later Augustus, which was commissioned around 40 BC, shows Caesar *Divi filius* both in the expressive fashion of a portrait of a Hellenistic ruler and within the established tradition of Roman style (Fig. 20, left). The central front locks are somehow tossed over the forehead. The forehead itself is wrinkled, the root of the nose is contracted, the lachrymal sacks are shown, and the epidermis on the surface emphatically nuanced. In allusion to the portraits of a Hellenistic ruler Caesar *Divi filius* is depicted as a charismatic Roman leader who personalizes political qualities such as dynamism and power. The Prima Porta type propagates an entirely different image of Augustus (Fig. 20, middle). Now all forms of dynamism and age are avoided. The emperor is shown in a habitus which is entirely new to Roman portraiture. His hairstyle is calm and designed to form a balanced but decorative system of locks. To achieve this new image a stylistic vocabulary was used which seems to echo forms of the Classical Greek past.[45] Augustus is now represented as a ruler of unique authority who is not affected by age and is in constant control of his expression: he is portrayed in youthful agelessness and divine timelessness. A similar message seems to be conveyed by the third portrait type (Fig. 20, right).

The importance of the new portraits of Augustus for the imagery, ideology, and identity of the Roman Empire was evident in at least four ways: its systematic replication in different media, sizes, and materials; its different modes of depiction; its different contexts of display; and its diffusion throughout the empire. The portraits of Augustus were replicated in all kinds of visual media such as sculptures, reliefs, paintings, coins, military

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[41] Boschung 1993, 60–1 Beilage 8 Skizze 80 (detailed drawing of the hairstyle lock by lock).
[42] Ibid. 179–81 no. 171 pls. 69, 70, 82.1.
[43] Pfanner 1989, 208–13; Smith 1996, 37–8.
[44] Boschung 1993, 129 no. 44 pls. 36, 37, 51.1.
[45] Smith 1996, 41–5.

Fig. 21. Cuirass statue of Augustus, from the Augustan villa at Prima Porta. Detail of the Roman and the Parthian. About 17 BC. Vatican, Musei Vaticani

equipment, cameos, gems, rings, tableware, etc.[46] His portraits covered every known size from extremely small to colossal. The portraits of Augustus were produced in all kinds of materials such as gold, silver, bronze, marble, stone, precious stone, glass, bone, terracotta, wood, plaster, wax, etc. And the portraits of Augustus included every public image of the body, such as equestrian statues, cuirass statues, toga statues, statues in the look of mythic heroes and Roman gods, and portrait busts. In other words, the portraits of Augustus not only took on all kinds of social roles, civic and military, mythic and divine, but also became their (visual) model.

[46] This and the following is well documented by Vierneisel and Zanker 1979.

Images of Augustus were displayed in every context of Roman life, both public and domestic, urban and rural. The images of Augustus populated not only the fora, basilicas, sanctuaries, honorary and triumphal arches, city gates, theaters, baths, and circuses but also shops, houses, and villas. The image of Augustus was omnipresent—and as such, unavoidable to the eye. This imperial omnipresence throughout the empire was intensified by a fascinating diversity of local styles and techniques.[47] Although a more or less accurate model of the centrally defined prototype must have been available everywhere, each context adjusted this model to specific local needs and styles, and available craftsmanship. This made the perception of each imperial portrait even more powerful as it was normally not only shaped in accordance with one of the three official models but was also adapted to the local requirements of the visual narratives and their social perceptions.

Where the portrait was displayed gains further in importance when we estimate figures. We know that each Roman town housed numerous sculpted images of Augustus in a variety of public and domestic settings, not to mention rural sanctuaries and villas, and other places in the countryside. In his *Res Gestae* (24) Augustus gives an interesting hint regarding the number of his portrait statues. Alone the ones made in silver and erected in Rome probably before 28 BC numbered eighty! On the basis of this and other evidence Michael Pfanner has convincingly argued that we can easily assume the distribution of 50,000 images of Augustus in sculpture only.[48] Although this figure is hypothetical it gives an initial idea about scale. Similar was the omnipresence of the new imperial image on coins. In the time of Augustus more than 200 cities throughout the Roman empire suddenly started to strike coins with his image.[49] If we add to these figures the countless reproductions of the imperial portrait in other media such as non-imperial paintings and the depictions on objects of daily life we face a visual phenomenon unrivaled in history. No other civilization or empire up to the nineteenth century made such excessive use of the image of an emperor or ruler like imperial Rome.

3. THE NEW IMAGERY OF ORIENTALISM

The culture of imperial Rome was essentially related to non-Roman cultures. Roman politics used victories over non-Romans to legitimize imperial power. Rome claimed to rule the world. Rome integrated a wide range of different

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[47] Zanker 1983; Smith 1996, 34–5, 40–1.
[48] Pfanner 1989, 178–9.
[49] Howgego 1995, 84.

civilizations and ethnicities. And Rome communicated with people beyond the *orbis Romanus*.[50] An empire of this diversity could in the long term only survive if it offered both discourses of cultural flexibility and symbols of cultural identity capable of being widely adopted. One way to stimulate cultural identity was to establish images of the cultural Other. A model case of the cultural Other was the visual representation of non-Romans, stereotyped images of people living outside the Roman Empire. The majority of these images portrayed the cultural Other in the form of two Romanized 'ethnic' costumes, representing the peoples either of the 'North' or the 'East'. Images of non-Romans were present in all visual media, every social context, and throughout the principate. In Rome the cultural Other was an influential and ambiguous reflection of the self-representation of Rome, or in other words: in contrast to the contemporary non-Roman civilizations the image of the cultural Other was an essential constituent of Rome's cultural identity. Depending on time, place, and function the image of the cultural Other oscillated in Rome between concepts such as fascination and demarcation, acceptance and contempt, friend and foe. I discuss two different but inter-related Roman images of the oriental: the 'ethnic' image of the Parthian as the representative of the most powerful culture next to Augustan Rome, and the idealized image of the beautiful oriental used from Augustan times to represent all figures of the East, mythic and historical alike.

Official relations between Romans and Parthians started late, with a treaty of Roman *amicitia* in 96 BC.[51] This situation changed when the Roman general Marcus Licinius Crassus attacked the Parthians in the winter of 55/54 BC without first declaring war. After the defeat of Crassus and the loss of his entire army in 53 BC, Caesar propagated the ideology of revenge on the Parthians, but did not initiate war. In 20 BC, by exerting diplomatic and military pressure on Parthia, Augustus succeeded in recovering well over 100 Roman standards and thousands of captive Romans. Although it had been achieved through diplomacy, the so-called settlement of the Parthian question was interpreted in Rome's public media as Augustus' greatest victory, as the final legitimization of his new imperial rule. Images and texts throughout the Roman Empire propagated the Parthian settlement as the ultimate triumph of the Roman West over the East, and as one of the greatest achievements of Augustan foreign policy. Augustan poets even introduced a cosmic dimension to the Parthian settlement: they construed it as the political

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[50] The Augustan writer Strabo outlines a spatial model which emphasizes the geographical (implicitly imperial) centrality of Rome: Clarke 1999, 210–28.
[51] Schneider 1998, 97.

prerequisite for the beginning of the Golden Age officially 'heralded' by Augustus in 17 BC.[52]

As part of this (imperial) self-congratulation the first Roman images of the Parthian were launched. A famous example is the Prima Porta statue of Augustus sculpted in marble around 17 BC (Fig. 20, middle and Fig. 21).[53] In the center of the statue's richly decorated cuirass the two main figures are depicted: a Parthian is presenting to a military representative of Rome a standard adorned with a legionary eagle and three *phalerae*. Surrounded by non-interacting figures of geographic, cosmic, and divine nature, the Parthian and Rome's representative are the only two who stand and interact with each other. Both are, however, portrayed in significant asymmetry: on the left, and larger in size, we see the cuirassed representative of Rome from a side view, who extends his right hand as if to demand or receive the standard; on the right, the Parthian, smaller in size and mainly viewed from the front, gazes up towards the legionary eagle. This depiction is the most detailed portrayal of a Parthian in Roman art. Originally he would have been even more conspicuous as he would have been distinctively colored. The head of the Parthian is characterized by irregular curly hair, held in place with a flat ribbon or a diadem, a non-Classical nose, pronounced cheekbones, a moustache, and a long beard. He is dressed in long trousers, a belted V-neck tunic with long sleeves, and soft shoes. He is shown armed with a bow kept in a combination quiver and bow case (*gorytus*), which was attached to a belt running over his left shoulder. The dress and physiognomy (but rarely the weapons) of the Parthian became stereotypes deployed by Roman workshops to portray generically the people of the East. Distinctively Parthian is the V-neck tunic, which is widely attested in Parthian art.[54]

Roman portrayals of Parthians raise the question of what is known about actual contacts between the Parthians and the people of Rome. Under Augustus at least five Parthian legations are reported to have come to Rome. Eastern kings as well as hostages from the royal family of Parthia living with their oriental entourages in Rome were regularly paraded in front of the Roman public. Suetonius reports on a visit by Augustus to the Circus Maximus (*Divus Augustus* 43.4): 'On the day of one of the shows Augustus made a display of the first Parthian hostages that had ever been sent to Rome, by leading them through the middle of the arena and placing them in the second row above his own seat.' It is more than likely that such events encouraged

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[52] Schneider 1986, 32–6, 63, 71, 74; Wallace-Hadrill 2004.
[53] Schneider 1998, 97–9 pls. 3.1–2; Rose 2005, 24–6 fig. 4; see above n. 42.
[54] Schneider 1998, 98 (ample evidence is given in n. 25).

other forms of interactions between Romans and Parthians besides the readings promoted by Rome's imperial imagery and ideology. Such events reveal a further difference in the perception of the Parthian in Rome. Although the general appearance of a Parthian was well known at Rome, the city's workshops and their patrons were not interested in reproducing Parthian dress in authentic or ethnographic detail. Rather, when portraying the cultural from the Orient, Roman workshops followed established Greek models. The result was a conventionalized image of the Parthian adaptable to both the ideological needs of the imperial regime and the cultural preconceptions of the Roman elite.

In general, we can say that little reliable information about Parthia was available in Rome. The Romans for the most part viewed the Parthians as once the Greeks had viewed the Persians.[55] The Achaemenid Empire, Alexander the Great, and the Seleucid kings provided the Romans with appropriate stereotypes with which they could imagine Parthia. Prominent among these were the lurid details of the Perso-Parthians' brutal despotism, legendary wealth, fantastic luxury, effeminate lifestyle, and excessive sexuality. After the return of the standards in 20 BC, the Roman idea of the Perso-Parthian 'other world' acquired its fixed form. It was a world at a vast distance from Rome, beyond the frontier of the Roman Empire. Early imperial writers such as Pompeius Trogus, Manilius, and Tacitus represented the Perso-Parthian 'other world' as *alius orbis* and *orbis alter*.[56] The *orbis alter* existed outside the *orbis Romanus* and did not impinge upon Rome's claim to supremacy. The concept of two opposing worlds reflects two apparently incongruent but interconnected issues of Roman imperial ideology, namely the propagated asymmetry between Rome and the East, and Rome's interest in the Orient as her prime cultural Other.

The most suggestive visual manifestation of the eastern *orbis alter* was the image of the handsome oriental.[57] This image was introduced into Roman art around the time of the return of the standards and the first depictions of the Parthian. In contrast to the 'ethnic' stereotype of the Parthian (Fig. 21), the handsome oriental has a clean-shaven face framed by long coiffured hair, crowned by the Phrygian cap. He wears a double-belted tunic, a flowing mantle, long trousers, and soft shoes. In short, he is distinguished by youthful beauty, rich dress, and intensive color (Figs. 22, 25–6). The historical or rather

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[55] Ibid. 103.

[56] Pompeius Trogus, *Historiae Philippicae* 41.1.1: *divisione orbis*; Manilius, *Astronomica* 4.674–5: *orbis alter*; Tacitus, *Annales* 2.2.2: *alio ex orbe*.

[57] Schneider 1986; Schneider 1998, 104–10.

mythic identity of the oriental is indicated by his attributes, habitus, and/or context.

The ambiguity of the handsome oriental is especially clear in Roman images of oriental cup-bearers, which commonly served as table-legs in Roman villas. A fine example is the marble figure found in the Casa del Camillo in Pompeii, and thus made before AD 79 (Fig. 22).[58] The figure portrays a luxury-class slave from the East: young, beautiful, clean shaven, and in oriental dress. The wine ladle in his left hand denotes him as a cup-bearer, who is depicted in the act of waiting. In an ode dedicated to Agrippa's steward Iccius in 25 BC, the Augustan poet Horace confirms the desirability of such handsome oriental cup-bearers. The poet refers to the alluring prospect of great wealth and a luxurious lifestyle when Iccius returns home after his victories over the Arabs, the Parthians—perhaps even over the Chinese (*Odes* 1.29.7–8): 'What page from (oriental) court with scented locks will be set to hand your wine-cup?'

At Rome, the image of the oriental cup-bearer was closely related to the image of the Trojan prince Ganymede, the most beautiful cup-bearer from the (Phrygian) East. To show the beauty of his body Ganymede was convention-ally portrayed naked except for a mantle and the Phrygian cap.[59] Just like the figures of oriental cup-bearers, sculptures of Ganymede often served in Roman villas as table-legs. Ganymede is usually accompanied by an eagle, which recalls his abduction to Olympus by Zeus and his fate to serve wine eternally to the gods. The Trojan cup-bearer was the mythic prototype of the historical slave cup-bearer from the East. Both cup-bearers betoken the ability of the Roman elite to command all the resources of the empire in the endlessly enjoyable task of projecting and maintaining their rank.

The Augustan statue of Ganymede at the stately villa at Sperlonga, on the coast about 110 km south of Rome, sheds further light on the relations between imperial Rome and the Orient (Fig. 23): for it is not only the earliest known Roman representation of the handsome Trojan prince but it is also the only one wearing oriental dress.[60] The statue was spectacularly set up above the entrance to a cavern, which served as the large villa's dining room: Ganymede here is not small but larger than life, he is displayed not indoors but as a landmark outside, he appears not naked but in rich oriental dress, and he is made not of monochrome stone but polychrome marble from his Phrygian homeland (in contrast to the head and the lost hands of white marble). As a Trojan, Ganymede was a mythic ancestor of Rome; however, as

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[58] Schneider 1998, 107–8 pl. 14.2.
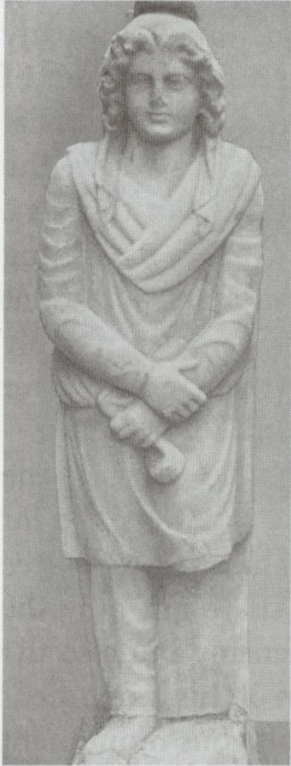[59] Ibid. 102 n. 50.
[60] Ibid. 108 pl. 15.1.

Fig. 22. Oriental cup-bearer with wine ladle as table-leg, from Pompeii (Casa del Camillo). Before AD 79. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

Fig. 23. Statue of Ganymede made of *marmor Phrygium*, from the stately villa at Sperlonga. About 10 BC–AD 10. Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico

an oriental servant on Olympus he embodied the service 'owed' by the East to the Roman elite. Consequently, the statue at Sperlonga neatly merges the paradoxical themes of amity and enmity, friend and stranger, Roman and oriental. This makes the Sperlonga statue of Ganymede a case in point regarding the ambivalent aspects of orientalism in Augustan Rome.

Two further motifs of the handsome oriental were introduced into the imagery of Augustan Rome: standing (Figs. 24–5) or kneeling (Figs. 26 and 28) sculptures in the gesture of support.[61] Both statue types are over-life-size and mostly made of colored marble. In the Renaissance, however, the hands

[61] Schneider 1986; Schneider 2002, 84–8, 433–6 nos. 136–8.

and face(s) of the kneeling oriental(s) were restored suggestively but wrongly in black marble (Fig. 26). Originally these parts of the body were carved separately in white marble as shown in the statue of Ganymede in Sperlonga (Fig. 23). In the Augustan period these 'support' figures were related to both the Parthians and the Persians. Following a standard set by Cicero, Augustan poets such as Virgil, Propertius, Horace, and Ovid usually refer to the Parthians by the name of their famous historical ancestors, Medes, Persians, or Achaemenians.[62] This was a clear allusion to the Persian Wars of the early fifth century BC: after the return of the standards in 20 BC the equation of the Parthians with the Persians became a focal point of Rome's imperial ideology.[63] A visual highlight of this ideology was a grand sea battle, the *naumachia Augusti*, to celebrate the dedication of the Forum Augustum in 2 BC. The staged battle took place in a specially excavated basin measuring 540 × 360 m (approximately 48 acres!) and was fed by a purpose-built aqueduct (Fig. 13). In addition to an unknown number of oarsmen roughly 3,000 fighters were forced to re-enact the victory of the Athenian navy over the Persian (in reality largely the Phoenician) fleet at Salamis in 480 BC.[64]

A victory monument, now lost, was erected shortly after the return of the standards in 20 BC. It can be reconstructed on the basis of two different sources: a brief phrase by the imperial Greek writer Pausanias, and three statues of kneeling orientals. They form one set as they share not only the same size, motif, Phrygian marble, and Augustan workmanship but also the same origin, Rome (Figs. 26 and 28).[65] The precise location of this monument is unknown. Pausanias (*Periegeta*, 1.18.8) describes an analogous monument placed in the sacred precinct of Zeus Olympios at Athens and probably erected around the same time as the monument in Rome: 'There are also statues of Persians made of Phrygian marble supporting a bronze tripod; both the figures and the tripod are worth seeing.' The three Persians in Athens and the three kneeling figures from Rome correspond so closely to each other that we are able to define their function. They must have served to support a large bronze tripod, at least three to four meters high (Fig. 28).[66] Historically, this tripod referred to the famous tripod dedicated in the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi by those Greek cities that defeated the Persians at Plataea in 479 BC (Fig. 27).[67] Politically, however, it referred to two central claims of the Augustan regime: to have 'defeated' Parthia and to have restored *pietas*.[68]

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[62] Schneider 1998, 111.
[63] Schneider 1986, 58–67; Schneider 1998, 110–13; Spannagel 1999, 75–7, 206–23, 226–30.
[64] *Res Gestae* 23; Schneider 1998, 112–13; Spannagel 1999, 15.
[65] Schneider 1986, 18–97.   [66] Schneider 1986, 50–7 pl. 9.   [67] Ibid. 58.
[68] Augustan tripods and *pietas*, ibid. 67–72; Schneider 1998, 112 with n. 129.
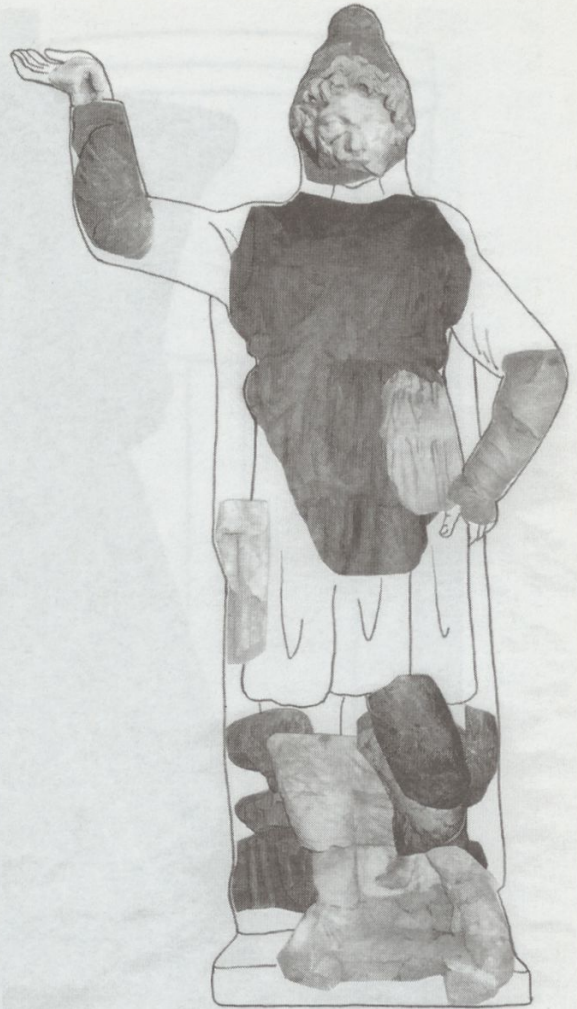
Fig. 24. Torso of a standing oriental made of *marmor Phrygium*, from the Basilica Aemilia in Rome. After 14 BC. Rome, Antiquario Forense

Fig. 25. Reconstruction of the oriental torso

More complex is the discourse which stimulated the shaping of the standing oriental in Rome.[69] In the Augustan period the nave of the Basilica Aemila on the northeast side of the Forum Romanum (Fig. 15), opposite the Basilica Iulia, was decorated with a gallery of 'telamons' all showing standing orientals; their original location in the nave is unknown.[70] Fragments (none of them published) of about twenty or more over-life-size statues of orientals in colored marble have survived (Fig. 24).[71] Their style links them to the restoration of the Basilica Aemilia after 14 BC. Since this restoration was

[69] Schneider 1986, 98–125; Schneider 1998, 108–10.

[70] Steinby i. 183–7 s.v. Basilica Paul(l)i (Heinrich Bauer); Haselberger 2002, 66 s.v. Basilica Paulli.

[71] These figures will now be jointly published by Tobias Bitterer and the author.

Fig. 26. Statue of a kneeling oriental made of *marmor Phrygium*, from Rome. After 20 BC. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale

paid for by Augustus and the 'friends' of Lucius Aemilius Paullus, we may suspect an allusion to the return of the standards in 20 BC.[72] The standing orientals are shown in the same weighted stance and are worked to an exceptional finish. As the ancient arms of the sculptures are lost we need to
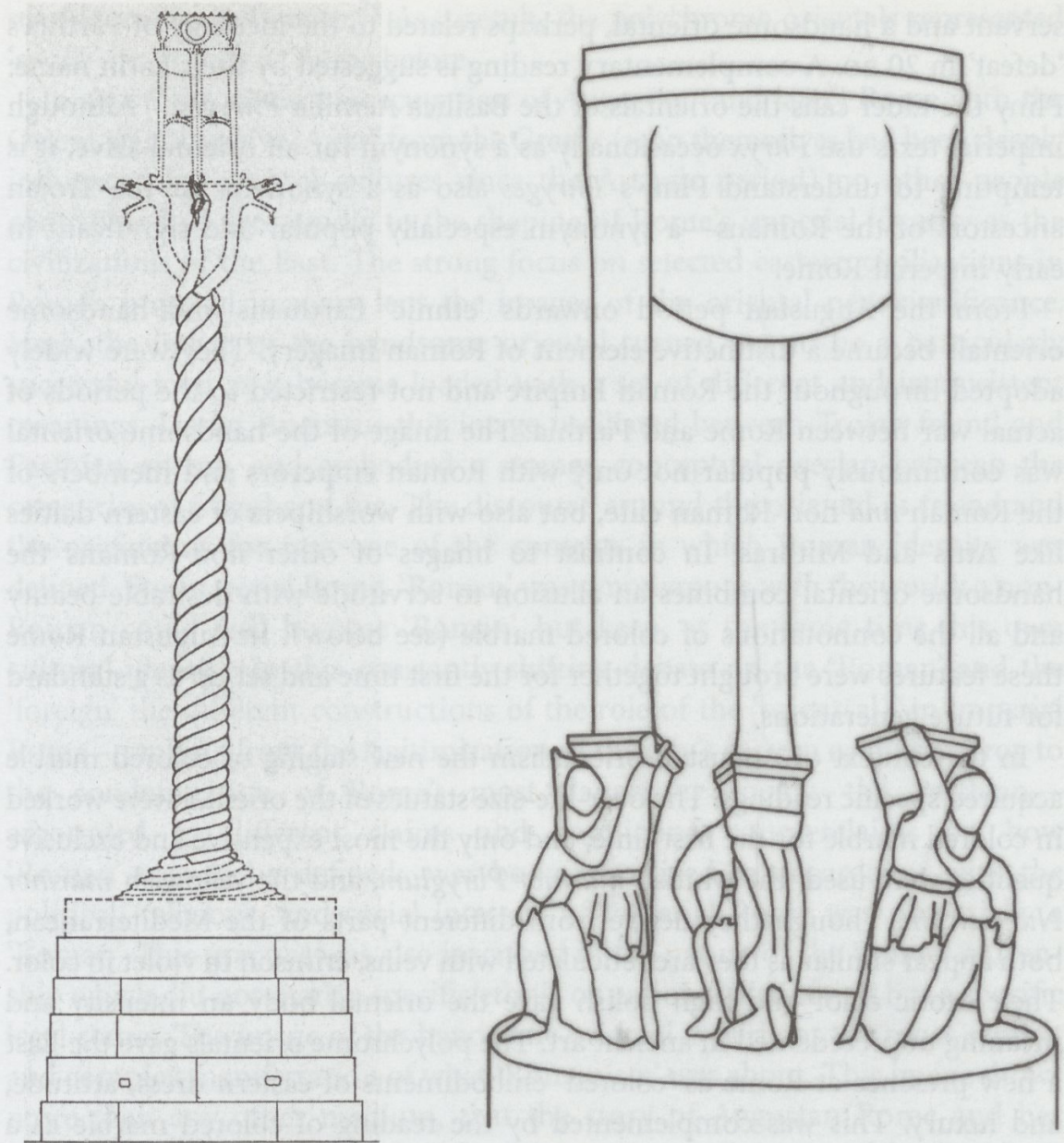
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[72] Dio Cassius 54.24.3.

Fig. 27. The Delphic tripod. After 479 BC. Reconstruction

Fig. 28. Three kneeling orientals carrying a tripod, originally set up in Rome and Athens. After 20 BC. Reconstruction

reconstruct their original pose. The evidence suggests that they were 'telamons' showing one arm in the gesture of support: the upper arm was outstretched roughly sideways, the lower arm raised upwards, and the hand again outstretched to the side (Fig. 25). The weighted stand and the position of the arm highlight the semantic construction of this pose: the standing oriental embodies the tectonic counter-model of any telamon used to support architecture. The result is a powerful image showing both a supporting

servant and a handsome oriental, perhaps related to the ideology of Parthia's 'defeat' in 20 BC. A complementary reading is suggested by their Latin name: Pliny the Elder calls the orientals of the Basilica Aemilia *Phryges*.[73] Although imperial texts use *Phryx* occasionally as a synonym for an oriental slave, it is tempting to understand Pliny's *Phryges* also as a synonym for the Trojan ancestors of the Romans—a synonym especially popular and significant in early imperial Rome.

From the Augustan period onwards 'ethnic' Parthians and handsome orientals became a distinctive element of Roman imagery. They were widely adopted throughout the Roman Empire and not restricted to the periods of actual war between Rome and Parthia. The image of the handsome oriental was continuously popular not only with Roman emperors and members of the Roman *and* non-Roman elite, but also with worshipers of eastern deities like Attis and Mithras. In contrast to images of other non-Romans the handsome oriental combines an allusion to servitude with desirable beauty and all the connotations of colored marble (see below). In Augustan Rome these features were brought together for the first time and set up as a standard for future generations.

In the context of Augustan orientalism the new staging of colored marble acquired specific readings. The over-life-size statues of the oriental were worked in colored marble for the first time, and only the most expensive and exclusive qualities were used: the whitish *marmor Phrygium*, and the yellowish *marmor Numidicum*. Though they derive from different parts of the Mediterranean, both appear similar as they are reticulated with veins, crimson to violet in color. Their exotic color and high polish gave the oriental body an intensity and meaning unprecedented in ancient art. The polychrome orientals gave the East a new presence at Rome as 'colored' embodiments of eastern dress, attitude, and luxury. This was complemented by the reading of colored marble as a symbol of Rome's imperial power over virtually everything, even the most inaccessible resources of the world. Most of the polychrome quarries were situated at the edges of the Roman world and became imperial property under Augustus. Regardless of difficulty, cost, and distance, a complex infrastructure was put in place for the delivery of colored marble from the quarries to Rome. Finished to a state of uniform perfection colored marble constituted not only a singular treasure of the Roman emperor but also a unique map of the Roman Empire. Thus, the polychromes stimulated a more advanced perception of specialization of workmanship and engineering, measures of infrastructure, patterns of distribution and trade, the marking of social and economic status, the shaping of new architectural landscapes, and the (ideologized) discourse of

[73] Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 36.102: *basilicam Pauli columnis et Phrygibus mirabilem [est]*. For this reading of the text, Schneider 1986, 120–5; Schneider 1998, 109–10.

marble, color, and power.[74] As a result, the polychrome orientals represented 'spoils' never seen at Rome before.

In short, the visual preoccupation of Augustan (and later) Rome with the Orient was obsessive. Apart from the Greeks (who themselves had been deeply influenced by oriental cultures since the Archaic period) no other people contributed so profoundly to the shaping of Rome's imperial identity as the civilizations of the East. The strong focus on selected eastern civilizations in Rome's imperial imagery lent the images of the oriental new significance. Here, the image of the handsome oriental turned out to be a particularly successful icon as it became loaded with a set of different and inconsistent meanings. Under Augustus this image oscillated between Trojan friend and Parthian enemy, and embodied a strange conceptual overlap between the categories of friend and foe. The discourse around the oriental as friend and the oriental as foe was one of the contexts in which Roman identity was defined. For imperial Rome, 'Roman' was synonymous with the world: a non-Roman could well become 'Roman', but keep, at the same time, his own cultural identity. In this constantly shifting debate on the 'Roman' and the 'foreign' the different constructions of the role of the 'orient(al)' in imperial Rome—ranging from the legitimization of the city's eastern origins at Troy to the condemnation of Rome's most dangerous enemy, the Parthian—amounted to different claims and conflicting counterclaims on how 'Roman' was to be defined: everybody who lived in accordance with the political, religious, and social interests of imperial Rome was potentially a 'Roman'. This practice was also inscribed in the nature of the Roman citizenship which did not mark a specific ethnic or national distinction but a specific legal status. The image of the handsome oriental is perhaps the most explicit and complex manifestation of what 'Romanism' was about. This image shows more than any other medium, that the story of Augustan Rome and her empire was as much the story of the Orient as it was the story of the Occident.

4. FURTHER THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS

Augustus, the Roman senate, and numerous Romans used the entire range of imagery to make the emperor omnipresent throughout the empire of Rome. The imagery of the cities reshaped in the Augustan period functioned as a kind of stage on which images of all kinds were set up to praise the unique qualities and collective virtues of the new emperor. According to the ideology

[74] Marble and color: Bradley 2004.

of the time Augustus claimed to have pacified and reunited the world not only by exercising paramount power but also by bringing to the Roman Empire new imagery and identity, new prosperity and infrastructure. Thus the Augustan images of the city of Rome, the first Roman emperor, and the 'oriental other' reveal a fundamental contrast to the practice of (correspondent) images of the Han Dynasty, a contrast which is more than striking. This contrast highlights questions which are at the core of the intercultural approach of this book. Why is public space made so abundantly available in the cities of the Roman Empire and so obviously avoided in the cities of Han China? What do we know about ritual and visual interaction between the emperor and the people in Han China—and how does this affect our understanding of social and visual communication of both cultures? What (inter) cultural conclusions emerge from the omnipresence of images of the Roman emperor and the radical absence of images of a Qin or Han emperor? Why did the Chinese need depictions of the cultural Other but no portrayal of their emperor? What new prospects can be opened up for both civilizations by analyzing the different shaping and function of the imagery of the cultural Other? And last but not least, how can the visual discrepancies between imperial Rome and Han China contribute to a broader understanding of our perceptions of empire?

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