

BEATRICE POLETTI

‘FOREIGN’ CULTS AT ROME AT THE TURN OF THE PRINCIPATE¹

Summary: Augustus’ approach to cults of foreign origins has recently undergone much reconsideration. Until the late 20th century, scholars largely regarded the emperor’s religious policies as deeply conservative, maintaining that Augustus was mostly preoccupied with the ‘restoration’ of ancient Italian religion and discouraged the worship of foreign gods. In the last three decades, however, scholars have identified a rather different trend, noticing, in fact, Augustus’ openness towards the ‘foreign’. In this paper, I explore Augustus’ position about ‘foreign’ rites that were highly popular in contemporary Rome, and specifically, the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Egyptian rites, the cult of Mater Magna, and the cult of Apollo (although, as I clarify below, the last one cannot be strictly labeled as ‘foreign’). I offer a survey of ancient literary sources – giving an interpretation of them as comprehensive as possible considering the nature of this contribution – and argue that Augustus was not only receptive of ‘foreign’ practices but was also able to shape the ‘foreign’ to his own advantage and self-promotion, transforming it into a vital feature of the new imperial reality.

Key words: Augustus, Roman religion, *sacra peregrina*, *evocatio*, *exempla*, Eleusinian Mysteries, initiation, grain distribution, Egyptian rites, Isis, Serapis, Apis, Egyptian art, obelisk, Mater Magna, Megale(n)sia, Cybele, Attis, *galli*, Apollo

Traditionally, the close connection between the physical space of Rome and its cults has represented a central feature of Roman religion. The majority of Roman myths

* I wish to thank Attilio Mastrocinque and Valentino Gasparini for their useful comments on previous drafts of this paper as well as all the conference attendees, who provided many valuable feedbacks on my ideas for this contribution. All errors and deficiencies remain mine.

¹ As Mary Beard has demonstrated, the term ‘foreign’ in relation to Roman religion does not have an ethnic connotation but is rather a social construction. While there is no doubt that the cults considered here had foreign origins, what justifies their definition as ‘foreign’ is their conventional representation in the ancient literary sources as alien to the Roman *mores*. Cf. BEARD, M.: The Cult of the ‘Great Mother’ in Imperial Rome. The Roman and the ‘foreign’. In IDDENG, J. W. – BRANDT, J. R. (eds): *Greek and Roman Festivals. Content, Meaning, and Practice*. Oxford – New York 2012, 323–362; also, BEARD, M. – NORTH, J. – PRICE, S.: *Religions of Rome. Vol. 1 & 2*. Cambridge – New York 1998, 160 n. 134.

are “myths of place”² and refer to Rome’s foundation and early times relating aetiological tales about the establishment of its religious institutions.³ The literature of the late Republic and early Empire shows a unique interest in this aspect, as best exemplified by the speech that Livy ascribes to M. Furius Camillus in his account of the Gallic sack of Rome. In his speech, the dictator persuades his fellow citizens to remain in the city, although devastated by the enemy, by stressing the religious foundations of its site and the necessity to celebrate the ancestral cults within their appointed spaces (Liv. 5. 51–54).⁴ Livy’s text illustrates the anxiety for the condition of neglect (either real or perceived) in which many ancient cults and cult-sites had fallen and the ensuing concern with religious restoration so typical of literary representations of his age. Augustus, as a new Camillus, responded to this preoccupation by revitalizing Rome’s oldest cults and their indigenous roots.⁵ Until recently, Augustus’ response commonly led scholars to assume that he had no interest in promoting the worship of non-Roman gods, in his attempt to both foster Roman identity around civic religion and publicly distance himself from his ‘orientalized’ enemy, Antony.⁶ To quote Eric Orlin’s words, “even when modern scholars have highlighted innovations made by Octavian as part of his ‘restoration’ of traditional Roman religious practices, they have often accepted the heuristic model of an emphasis on ancestral Roman custom at the expense and even exclusion of foreign traditions.”⁷ As Orlin notes, this emphasis is consistent with contemporary initiatives, such as the senatorial decrees passed against the Egyptian rites (discussed below, section 3b), but it contrasts with the Republican openness to foreign religious influences (*ibid.*).

Additionally, traditional views on Augustus’ conservatism appear incompatible with his deep interest in Greek religion, which was manifest in his building interventions in major Greek cult-sites (such as Olympia, Eleusis, and Delphi), his frequent involvement in Greek public celebrations, and his unprecedented promotion of Apollo’s

² PRICE, S. R.: The Place of Religion: Rome in the Early Empire. In BOWMAN, A. K. – CHAMPLIN, E. – LINTOTT, A. (eds): *The Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. 10. The Augustan Empire, 43 BC–AD 69*. 2nd ed. Cambridge – New York 1996, 812–847, here 815.

³ PRICE (n. 2) 814–820; BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 171–181; SCHEID, J.: Cults, Myths, and Politics at the Beginning of the Empire. In ANDO, C. (ed.): *Roman Religion*. Edinburgh 2003, 117–138.

⁴ ORLIN, E. M.: Augustan Religion and the Reshaping of Roman Memory. *Arethusa* 40.1 (2007) 73–92, here 78–80.

⁵ On the association of Augustus with Camillus see EDWARDS, C.: *Writing Rome. Textual Approaches to the City*. Cambridge – New York 1996, 44–52; BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 167–168.

⁶ Cf., for instance, ZANKER, P.: *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Ann Arbor 1988, 109: “For Augustus (...) the Oriental cults presented a problem. These ecstatic cults promising salvation appealed to people as private individuals, not as Roman citizens, and were thus incompatible with the principles of the Roman state religion. The new regime, just as had the Senate much earlier, saw in these cults a danger of alienation, the dissolution of society, and the creation of secret sects.”

⁷ ORLIN, E. M.: Octavian and Egyptian Cults: Redrawing the Boundaries of Romanness. *American Journal of Philology* 129.2 (2008) 231–253, here 232 with nn. 3–4. In this regard, Orlin cites, among others, GALINSKY, K.: *Augustan Culture. An Interpretative Introduction*. Princeton 1996, 288–312, and BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 167–168. Cf. also Gruen’s akin position in GRUEN, E. S.: *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Princeton 2011, 343–351.

cult, which now assumed many hellenized traits.⁸ Overall, Augustus' measures in the matter of religion – while not permitting the official introduction of new cults – facilitated the integration of rites that, to different extents, had maintained 'foreign' characteristics or were perceived as 'foreign' by Roman contemporaries. As I argue, this conduct should not (or not exclusively) be read in terms of religious tolerance and had essentially political motives. In sponsoring the Eleusinian Mysteries, Augustus sought to win the favour of the Greek and Roman 'philhellene' elites. In encouraging the worship of Isis and Serapis, he promoted the preservation of a cult which was widely popular among members of the Roman aristocracy (and which he himself respected). By incorporating Mater Magna and Apollo into the symbolism of the imperial house, he acquired two mighty personal protectors and guarantors of his power. Before detailing the *princeps*' measures and attitude concerning these cults, I discuss the notion of 'foreign' rites as well as the main developments of civic religion under Augustus as the background for such cults' reception and integration.

1. THE *SACRA PEREGRINA*

The standard definition of 'foreign' with regard to religious practices is provided, for the Augustan period, by a well-known passage from the 2nd-century AD lexicographer Sex. Pompeius Festus, who compiled an epitome from the treatise *De verborum significatu* by the late Augustan antiquarian – and court teacher for the *princeps* himself – M. Verrius Flaccus:⁹

Foreign rites are called those, which either have been introduced to Rome as gods have been summoned during the siege of towns, or which have been sought in peace on account of certain religious sanctions, such as [the rites] of the Great Mother from Phrygia, of Ceres from Greece, of Aesculapius from Epidaurus. And these are celebrated according to each custom, from which they have been received.¹⁰

⁸ Augustus' political and cultural program in Greece has been recently analyzed by SPAWFORTH, A. J.: *Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge – New York 2012 (esp. 159–206 on Augustus' interest in Greek religion, and 207–232 on Augustus' building activity). On the contemporary evolution of Apollo's cult see, in particular, MASTROCINQUE, A.: I sacerdoti di Apollo e il culto imperiale. In URSO, G. (a cura di): *Sacerdos. Figure del sacro nella società romana. Atti del convegno internazionale, Cividale del Friuli, 26-28 settembre 2012*. Pisa 2014, 223–238 (discussed below, section 3d).

⁹ The most recent and inclusive treatment of this topic, with particular emphasis on Roman Republican and early imperial religion, is currently ORLIN, E. M.: *Foreign Cults in Rome. Creating a Roman Empire*. Oxford – New York 2010. On Verrius Flaccus' career cf. Suet. *Gramm.* 17.

¹⁰ Fest. 268 L: *Peregrina sacra appellantur, quae aut euocatis dis in oppugnandis urbibus Romam sunt ꝑconataꝑ, aut quae ob quasdam religiones per pacem sunt petita, ut ex Phrygia Matris Magnae, ex Graecia Cereris, Epidauro Aesculapi. Quae coluntur eorum more, a quibus sunt accepta*. I have adopted the translation "summoned" for *conata* from RÜPKE, J.: *From Jupiter to Christ. On the History of Religion in the Roman Imperial Period*. Transl. D. M. B. Richardson. Oxford – New York 2014, 14, as the text is corrupted (cf. RÜPKE 13–16 on this passage). Unless otherwise stated, all remaining translations are my own.

According to this definition, the *sacra peregrina* included the worship of those gods of foreign origins who had been imported to Rome by *evocatio* or by specific religious prescriptions (such as the injunction of the Sibylline books or the Delphic oracle). Among the cases of *evocatio*, the best documented one concerns the cult of Juno Regina, which was imported from Veii to Rome in 396 BC, when the Romans led by Furius Camillus conquered the Etruscan city (cf. Liv. 5. 21. 3, 22; 23. 7; 31. 3; Dion. Hal. *RA* 13. 3; Plut. *Cam.* 6). Another famous instance of *evocatio* comprises Juno Caelestis of Carthage at the end of the Third Punic War (cf. Macr. *Sat.* 3. 9. 7–11; Serv. *Aen.* 12. 841). As a few scholars have emphasized, the performance of this ritual, by which an enemy's tutelary deity was 'called out' from his/her original seat and moved to Rome, by its own nature underlined the 'foreignness' of the deity involved, while indicating at the same time the Romans' willingness to adopt, instead of eradicating, the gods of their enemies.¹¹

The cases of deities introduced to Rome *per pacem* appear more numerous. Flaccus (or Festus) counts among them: the Phrygian Mater Magna,¹² whose cult was brought to Rome in 204 BC from Pessinus or Mount Ida; Ceres, who received a temple on the Aventine together with Liber and Libera in 493 BC,¹³ and Aesculapius, whose worship was introduced from Epidaurus in 293 BC.¹⁴ As a consequence of their successful integration at Rome, the *sacra* celebrated for these gods retained only a few of their original elements. This suggests that by the time of Flaccus their status as *peregrina* was more perceived than real.¹⁵ The goddess Ceres, on the other hand, had most likely a local origin but received *graeca sacra* as an addition to her cult in the mid-3rd century BC.¹⁶

¹¹ The inclusion of deities introduced to Rome by *evocatio* among the *sacra peregrina* is, however, debatable; in fact, the cults of these two goddesses were brought directly into the *pomerium* and not treated like 'foreign'. Cf., in particular, BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 82; GUSTAFSSON, G.: *Evocatio deorum: Historical and Mythical Interpretations of Ritualised Conquests in the Expansion of Ancient Rome*. Uppsala 2000, 83–105; ORLIN: *Foreign Cults* (n. 9) 36–41.

¹² The official title of Cybele in Rome was *Mater Deum Magna Idaea*, commonly shortened to Mater Magna or Mater Idaea. Hereafter, I will refer to her as either Cybele or Mater Magna or the Great Mother.

¹³ This triad was linked (or identified) with the Greek deities Demeter, Dionysus and Kore, and at Rome it traditionally had a strong association with the *plebs*. Cf. Dion. Hal. *RA* 6. 17. 2–4; 94. 3.

¹⁴ Cf. Liv. 10. 47. 6–7; Val. Max. 1. 8. 2; *vir. ill.* 22; Oros. 3. 22. 5. Aesculapius' cult was introduced after the outbreak of a severe epidemic on the advice of the Sibylline books; an embassy led by Q. Ogulnius was dispatched to Greece to fetch the god's sacred snake. In 391, the Romans dedicated a temple to Aesculapius on the Insula Tiberina, in the spot where the snake had originally disembarked. It seems that the cult maintained the ritual incubation and, for the priests, the use of snakes. The import of the cult of Venus Erycina from Eryx in Sicily in 217 BC ought to be included in this group of cults and interpreted within the same framework of growing contacts between Rome and the Greek world. Cf. BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 69–70, 83–84; ORLIN: *Foreign Cults* (n. 9) 62–65, 71–76.

¹⁵ See nn. 13 and 14, above. It seems that the cult of Juno Regina of Veii preserved, to a certain extent, the memory of its Etruscan origin (ORLIN: *Foreign Cults* [n. 9] 92–93, 126–30).

¹⁶ Cf. Arnob. 2. 73: [*sacra*] *ut Graeca dicantur novitatem ipsam testificante cognomine*; and Festus 86 L. s.v. *Graeca sacra*. The new features included priestesses regularly brought in from Southern Italy. Cf. Val. Max. 1. 1. 1; Cic. *Balb.* 24. 55; SCHEID, J.: *Graeco ritu: A Typically Roman Way of Honoring the Gods*. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995) 15–31, here 18–20, 23–24; BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 64–66, 70–71; GRUEN (n. 7) 347.

The cult of Cybele represents an instance of ambivalent reception. In 191 BC, a few years after her simulacrum was transported to Rome, a temple was dedicated to her on the Palatine, the most ancient of the urban sacred sites, and she was voted annual games, the Megale(n)sia;¹⁷ during their celebration, the Roman nobles organized in *sodalitates* held banquets in her honour (cf. Cic. *Sen.* 45; Gell. *NA* 2. 24. 2). Unlike the other *sacra peregrina* – and despite the rapid assimilation of her cult by the Roman aristocracy – the original features that Cybele's worship preserved at Rome are insistently presented as unsettling by the literary sources, as they involved the participation in her ceremonies of eunuch Phrygian priests. During the formal procession, these performed ritual self-flagellation, indulged in loud dances, clashed musical instruments and collected alms.¹⁸ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in the last quarter of the 1st century BC, describes in these terms the dual mode of celebration of Cybele's rites, which involved Roman magistrates as well as Phrygian priests:

For while the praetors perform sacrifices and games for her every year according to the Roman laws, a Phrygian man and a Phrygian woman are ministers of the goddess and lead [her] around throughout the city begging for alms, just as it is custom to them (...); but none of the native Romans, either begging for alms or being accompanied by flute players, marches through the city clothed in a coloured robe or worships the goddess with the Phrygian orgiastic celebrations, in accordance with the law and a senatorial decree. In this way, the city acts cautiously towards non-local customs concerning the gods and deprecate as ill-omened all these things being nonsense, which does not have any propriety to it.¹⁹

¹⁷ Cybele's cult was said to have been imported from 1) Pessinus (or Phrygia) in Cic. *Har. Res.* 27–28; Diod. 34. 33. 2; Liv. 29. 10. 4 – 11. 8; Strab. 12. 5. 3, C 567; Val. Max. 8. 15. 3; App. *Hann.* 56; Dio 57. 61; *vir. ill.* 46; Amm. Marc. 22. 9. 5; or 2) Pergamum in Varr. *LL* 6. 15; or 3) Mount Ida in Verg. *Aen.* e.g. 9. 80, 10. 252; Ov. *Fast.* 4. 249–250; Herod. 1. 11. On Cybele's arrival at Rome, see BREMMER, J. N.: The Legend of Cybele's Arrival in Rome. In VERMASEREN, M. J. (ed.): *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*. Leiden 1979, 9–22; GRUEN, E. S.: The Advent of the Magna Mater. In *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*. Leiden 1990, 5–33; BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 96–98; ROLLER, L. E.: *In Search of God the Mother. The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*. Berkeley 1999, 263–285; ERSKINE, A.: *Troy between Greece and Rome*. Oxford 2001, 205–218; ALVAR, J.: *Romanising Oriental Gods. Myth, Salvation and Ethics in the Cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras*. Transl. R. Gordon. Leiden–Boston 2008, 240–246; ORLIN: *Foreign Cults* (n. 9) 76–82; BEARD (n. 1) 326–329.

¹⁸ On Cybele's priests or *galli* cf. BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 164–166; ROLLER (n. 17) esp. 290–325; NAUTA, R. R.: Catullus 63 in a Roman Context. *Mnemosyne* 57.5 (2004) 596–628, here 610–618; ALVAR (n. 17) 246–261; ORLIN: *Foreign Cults* (n. 9) 100–104; BEARD (n. 1) 329–330, 340–351. The episode of Battakes' visit to Rome illustrates the discomfort of some Romans towards Cybele's priests. As the literary sources relate, Battakes, a high priest of Cybele, went to Rome on an embassy in 102 BC and was treated with contempt by the tribune A. Pompeius, who did not let him address the people. Pompeius died struck by a fever a few days later – which was interpreted as divine punishment (Diod. 36. 13; Plut. *Mar.* 17. 5–6; cf. Roller [n. 17] 290–291; BOWDEN, H.: Rome, Pessinus, and Battakes. Religious Encounters with the East. In SMITH, CHR. J. YARROW, L. M. (eds): *Imperialism, Cultural Politics, and Polybius*. Oxford – New York 2012, 252–262).

¹⁹ *RA* 2. 19. 4–5: Θυσίας μὲν γὰρ αὐτῇ καὶ ἀγῶνας ἄγουσιν ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος οἱ στρατηγοὶ κατὰ τοὺς Ῥωμαίων νόμους, ἱεράται δὲ αὐτῆς ἄνθρωποι Φρυγῆ καὶ γυνὴ Φρυγία καὶ περιάγουσιν ἀνὰ τὴν πόλιν οὗτοι μητραγυρτοῦντες, ὥσπερ αὐτοῖς ἔθος (...) Ῥωμαίων δὲ τῶν αὐθιγενῶν οὔτε μητραγυρτῶν τις οὔτε

The senatorial measures mentioned by Dionysius, by limiting the ‘exotic’ features of Cybele’s rites and the Roman participation in them, contributed to “[mark] the Magna Mater as ‘non-Roman’,” as Orlin – again – puts it.²⁰ Dionysius may have overemphasized the Romans’ estrangement from Cybele’s worship.²¹ Nevertheless, the separation of roles between Romans and outlanders in her rites seems to support the idea that the Romans, while willingly admitting foreign practices in their religious landscape, felt increasingly compelled to draw boundaries between their ‘Romanness’ and the ‘foreign’ by defining a Roman style of worship.²² The great majority of foreign cults had not been formally admitted to the Roman state religion, even though they were broadly recognized and regularly practiced in the city. The extent to which they were accepted by the members of the Roman elites varied considerably and had frequently political overtones.

2. AUGUSTUS’ RELIGIOUS POLICIES

The establishment of Augustus’ autocratic rule in the late 1st century BC entailed significant changes in the Roman religious system. The *princeps* gradually took control over the calendar and acquired unprecedented privileges for the appointment of priests, obtaining for himself the office of *pontifex maximus* (cf. *RG* 7. 3; Suet. *Aug.* 31. 2–3; Dio 51. 20. 3). Public rituals and prayers began to revolve around Augustus and his family (*RG* 9. 1).²³ Over time, the emperor emerged as the new focus of civic

καταυλούμενος πορεύεται διὰ τῆς πόλεως ποικίλῃν ἐνδεδυκῶς στολὴν οὕτε ὀργιάζει τὴν θεὸν τοῖς Φρυγίοις ὀργιασμοῖς κατὰ νόμον καὶ νήφισμα βουλῆς. οὕτως εὐλαβῶς ἡ πόλις ἔχει πρὸς τὰ οὐκ ἐπιχώρια ἔθνη περὶ θεῶν καὶ πάντα ὁπτεύεται τῷ φον, ᾧ μὴ πρόσσεσι τὸ εὐπρεπές. On the *galli*’s attire cf. Polyb. 21. 6. 7, 37. 5.

²⁰ ORLIN: Foreign Cults (n. 9) 168, cf. 102–104 on Dionysius’ text.

²¹ Dionysius wrote about Roman history with the specific intent to demonstrate that the Romans had Greek heritage, and accordingly, he tried to detach the Romans from other cultural influences (in this case, from the Phrygian mode of celebration of Cybele). I thank Attilio Mastrocinque for bringing this point to my attention.

²² This attitude, on the other hand, appears in line with a few incidents that occurred in the early 2nd century BC, such as the Bacchanalian affair in 186 BC, the burning of Numa’s books in 181 BC, and the contemporary dedication of a second temple to Venus Erycina. Cf. ORLIN: Foreign Cults (n. 9) 162–170; on the repression of the Bacchanalia cf. GRUEN: The Advent (n. 17) 34–78; BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 91–96. Cf. SCHEID: Graeco ritu (n. 16) 15–31 on the Greek mode of celebration (*ritus Graecus*) of certain cults of foreign (Greek) origin, such as those of Hercules, of Saturn, and of Apollo. Scheid argues that this ‘category’ was arbitrary since some of the cults included in it were not directly of Greek origin; this mode of celebration was rather an *a posteriori* Roman construction to separate ideologically certain cults from the ‘Roman’ ones.

²³ Cf. Dio 51. 19. 7: “And [the senators] ordered that the priests and priestesses in their prayers in behalf of the people and the senate should likewise pray in Augustus’ behalf too, and in the common meals, not only the public ones but also the private, all people should make a drink-offering for him” (τούς τε ἱερέας καὶ τὰς ἱερεῖας ἐν ταῖς ὑπὲρ τε τοῦ δήμου καὶ τῆς βουλῆς εὐχαῖς καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐκείνου ὁμοίως εὐχεσθαι, καὶ ἐν τοῖς συσσιτίοις οὐχ ὅτι τοῖς κοινοῖς ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις πάντας αὐτῷ σπένδειν ἐκέλευσαν). The public prayers were for the *princeps*’ health, whereas the libations were dedicated to his *genius* (cf. Hor. *Carm.* 4. 5. 31–36; REINHOLD, M.: *From Republic to Principate. A Historical Commentary*

religion and acquired a quasi-divine status well before his death.²⁴ Augustus, however, could not appear as a god if he were to strengthen his authority with Roman and Italian elites – just as he could not to appear as a king. From the early stages of his career, he sought to conceal the extraordinary nature of his privileges and paraded instead his attachment to the Republican religious tradition and his *pietas* – that is, his unconditioned and selfless devotion towards Rome and its legacy.²⁵ Accordingly, Augustus undertook an intense religious activity for the revival of ancestral cults and practices (cf. *RG* 7. 3; 19. 1, 13; 22. 2; Suet. *Aug.* 31. 4)²⁶ and the renovation of public temples (cf. *RG* 19; 20.4; Liv. 4. 20. 7; Ov. *Fasti* 2. 59–66; Suet. *Aug.* 30. 2). At the same time, he opened the participation to religious celebrations to larger segments of society by appointing freedmen to minor priestly colleges as *vicomagistri* and *Augustales*.²⁷ These reforms endorsed Augustus' political program in multiple ways: they underlined the alleged condition of moral and religious decline caused by Augustus' predecessors and thus the significance of his own interventions; they highlighted his reverence and emulation of Rome's forebears; they contributed to dispossess the senate of its longstanding control over religious – together with civic – institutions. Overall,

on Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, VI: Books 49–52 (36–29 BC) [Philological monographs of the American Philological Association 34]. Atlanta 1988, 151).

²⁴ While Augustus' divinity was frequently invoked in contemporary poetry and hinted at in visual arts, Augustus did not permit his public worship as a god in Rome. In the Eastern provinces, however, the imperial cult was received as successor of the Hellenistic rulers' cults (GALINSKY, K.: Continuity and Change: Religion in the Augustan Semi-Century. In RÜPKE, J. [ed.]: *A Companion to Roman Religion*. Malden, MA 2007, 71–82, here 80–82). Apparently, Augustus gave permission to build altars to himself (or jointly with the goddess Roma) as early as 30 BC in Nicaea, Ephesus, Pergamum, and Nicomedia (Dio 51. 20. 7; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 52; Tac. *Ann.* 4. 37. 3). According to a claim advanced by Cicero, in young age, Octavian publicly declared to aspire to the honours of his father (namely, to divine status; Cic. *Att.* 16. 15. 13).

²⁵ After Galinsky's definition, which emphasizes the idea of "social responsibility" in the meaning of *pietas* (GALINSKY: Augustan Culture [n. 7] 86–88); cf. SCHEID, J.: Augustus and Roman Religion: Continuity, Conservatism, and Innovation. In GALINSKY, K. [ed.]: *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*. Cambridge – New York 2005, 175–193, here 177, "Augustus restored what was supposed to be the ancestral form of the *res publica*, and in this political construction, *pietas* toward the gods was restored along with *pietas* among citizens. (...) *Pietas* was a correct social relation with the gods; it meant giving them the honors due to their rank and associating them with the government of the *res publica*, as fellow citizens, or rather as good *patroni* of the city."

²⁶ Augustus revived old functions for archaic priesthoods (such as the *fetiales*, the *Caeninenses*, the *Arvales*, and the *sodales Titii*). Scheid has argued that some of these may have been actually invented by Augustus in his construction of Roman archaic religion (SCHEID: Augustus [n. 25] 180–182).

²⁷ For an overview of Roman religion under the Augustan Principate cf., in particular, GALINSKY: Augustan Culture (n. 7) 288–331, GALINSKY: Continuity (n. 24) 71–82; PRICE (n. 2) 812–847; BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 167–210; GORDON, R.: From Republic to Principate: Priesthood, Religion and Ideology. In ANDO, C. (ed.): *Roman Religion*. Edinburgh 2003, 62–83; SCHEID: Augustus (n. 25) 175–193; COOLEY, A. E.: Beyond Rome and Latium: Roman Religion in the Age of Augustus. *Yale Classical Studies* 33 (2006) 228–252, and COOLEY, A. E.: *Res gestae divi Augusti: Text, Translation, and Commentary*. Cambridge – New York 2009, esp. 134–138, 144–157, 183–192 on the relevant passages of the *RG*; ORLIN: Augustan Religion (n. 4) 73–92; on Augustus' personal cult as well as his reorganization of the compital cult, see GRADEL, I.: *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*. Oxford – New York 2002, 109–139; on the 'negligence' of public temples before Augustus' intervention cf. GROS, P.: *Aurea templa: recherches sur l'architecture religieuse de Rome à l'époque d'Auguste*. Rome 1976, 21–22.

Augustus' ostensible religious conservatism was self-serving and helped to support the legitimacy of his position at the government.

3. AUGUSTUS AND THE 'FOREIGN'

In accordance with the religious policies outlined above, Augustus did not formally allow new foreign rites to be brought into the city. In Suetonius' biography, the *princeps* is said to have held an ambivalent attitude about foreign rites, since he revered old and well-established ones (*veteres ac praeceptas*) but despised others – on the basis of unspecified criteria:

Of the foreign rites just as he honoured with the greatest respect the old and long-established ones, so he held the others in contempt. For instance, having been initiated in Athens, when later in Rome he was examining in judgment a case concerning the privilege of the priests of Attic Ceres and certain things rather secret were put forward, after dismissing the jury and the crowd of bystanders, he heard the disputants alone. But on the other hand, not only while travelling in Egypt he refrained from diverting a little to visit Apis, but he also commended highly his grandson Gaius, since he had not offered prayers at Jerusalem passing by Judaea.²⁸

Commenting on this text, John Scheid has observed that Suetonius includes the description of Augustus' sentiment about foreign rites in his account of Augustus' personal life, not of his official conduct: "Suetonius notes, in fact, that Augustus had no private fascination for new and exotic cults or gods."²⁹ Similarly, Orlin states: "Suetonius' point here is merely to provide examples of religious traditions that Octavian himself observed: the emperor clearly was not an observer of the Jewish faith nor of Egyptian rites, in contrast to the way he had been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries, the example with which Suetonius begins."³⁰ Orlin, in addition, stresses the inconsistency of Suetonius' argument in using the criterion of antiquity as *discrimen* for Augustus' acceptance of foreign cults; Egyptian or Jewish rites could hardly be regarded as less old or less established than the Eleusinian Mysteries.³¹ Hence, the scholar advances another explanation to justify Augustus' refusal not to pay honour to Apis, which takes into account the Romans' traditional distaste for the theriomorphic shape of certain Egyptian deities (see discussion below, section 3b).

²⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 93: *Peregrinarum caerimoniarum sicut veteres ac praeceptas reverentissime coluit, ita ceteras contemptui habuit. Namque Athenis initiatus, cum postea Romae pro tribunali de privilegio sacerdotum Atticae Cereris cognosceret et quaedam secretiora proponerentur, dimisso consilio et corona circumstantium solus audiit disceptantes. At contra non modo in peragranda Aegypto paulo deflectere ad visendum Apin supersedit, sed et Gaium nepotem, quod Iudaeam praetervehens apud Hierosolyma non supplicasset, conlaudavit.*

²⁹ SCHEID: Augustus (n. 25) 175.

³⁰ ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults (n. 7) 233.

³¹ ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults (n. 7) 233; cf. BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 228–229, who do not question Suetonius' explanation.

While these observations sound legitimate, they may raise a further question: did Augustus' conduct merely reflect personal beliefs or did it also further his political ends? In order to provide a plausible answer as for why Augustus showed his preference for some cults and rejected others (and thus possibly shed some light on his political agenda), it may be useful to consider another aspect of his character and public behaviour. According to numerous literary sources, Augustus was nearly obsessed with *exempla* and made ample use of them in both private and public. In the *Res Gestae*, Augustus claims to have handed down examples for posterity in numerous fields: *ipse multarum rerum exempla imitanda posteris tradidi* (RG 8. 5). This statement is echoed by Ovid's words – put into Jupiter's mouth as he describes the future ruler – *exemploque suo mores reget* (Ov. *Met.* 15. 834), which emphasize the moral as well as the political connotation of Augustus' practice of 'exemplarity.' Suetonius, in turn, relates that Augustus had the habit of looking for "lessons and examples" (*praecepta et exempla*) in his readings, which he would copy and send to either relatives or governors and magistrates whenever they needed advice (*monitio*).³² Again, Suetonius reports that, in response to the *equites*' protests against the *lex Papia*, Augustus exhibited Germanicus' children at a public show, "signalling with his gesture and countenance that [the *equites*] should not be vexed at imitating the example of the young man" (*manu vultuque significans ne gravarentur imitari iuvenis exemplum*, Suet. *Aug.* 34. 2). The evidence of the literary sources is anecdotal; yet, it suggests a precise inclination on Augustus' part, which is moreover consistent with the didactic purpose of his new forum's decorative program.³³ It is unlikely that Augustus' conscious and persistent display of *exempla* could exclude religious practices – regardless of his actual religious preferences. In fact, specific gestures in relation to foreign rites were more conceivably meant to be acknowledged and even emulated.

a) Augustus and the Eleusinian Mysteries

In the above quoted passage, Suetonius mentions the Eleusinian Mysteries among the rites that Augustus held in the greatest respect. According to his account, Augustus

³² Suet. *Aug.* 89. 2: *In evolvendis utriusque linguae auctoribus nihil aequae sectabatur, quam praecepta et exempla publice vel privatim salubria, eaque ad verbum excerpta aut ad domesticos aut ad exercituum provinciarumque rectores aut ad urbis magistratus plerumque mittebat, prout quique monitione indigerent.* On these texts and the 'didactic' role of Augustus cf. YAVETZ, Z.: *The Res gestae and Augustus' Public Image.* In MILLAR, F. – SEGAL, E.: *Caesar Augustus: Seven Aspects.* Oxford – New York 1984, 1–36, here 19–20; CHAPLIN, J.: *Livy's Exemplary History.* Oxford – New York 2000, 173–178; COOLEY: *Res gestae* (n. 27) 40–41, 143–144.

³³ On the contemporary use of *exempla* in Roman literature see, in particular, CHAPLIN (n. 32). The Forum Augustum included two galleries of statues representing illustrious Romans of the past; the statues were accompanied by *elogia* of the characters depicted reporting their deeds and achievements, and they were to supply models of conduct for the viewers as well as precedents for Augustus' power. Cf. ZANKER (n. 6) 210–215; LUCE, T. J.: *Livy, Augustus, and the Forum Augustum.* In RAAFLAUB, K. A. – TOHER, M.: *Between Republic and Empire. Interpretations of Augustus and his Principate.* Berkeley 1990, 123–138; GALINSKY: *Augustan Culture* (n. 7) 197–213; CHAPLIN (n. 32) 174–184; GEIGER, J.: *The first Hall of Fame. A Study of the Statues in the Forum Augustum.* Leiden–Boston 2008.

showed his reverence by honoring the secrecy of the cult during a judicial hearing involving the privilege of Demeter's priests. Furthermore, Suetonius specifies that Augustus was himself an initiate (Suet. *Aug.* 93, above). The *princeps* was initiated into the Mysteries at Eleusis in 31 BC, shortly after his victory at Actium.³⁴ Cassius Dio, who also refers to this initiation in his account of the aftermath of the battle, relates that Augustus received a second initiation when he was returning from Samos in 19 BC: "Zarmarus was initiated into the Mysteries of the two goddesses, since the Mysteries were being held not in the proper season, as they say, on account of Augustus who was himself an initiate."³⁵ The circumstances of this second initiation appear unusual. The initiates could access the second stage of initiation, the so-called ἐποπτεία, only during the regular celebration of the Mysteries.³⁶ Indeed, as Cicero recalls, in 109 BC the Athenians refused to repeat the ceremony for L. Licinius Crassus, who was returning from his questorship in Asia. Crassus arrived at Eleusis two days after the initiation rites were over and left the city in anger.³⁷ In Augustus' case, the staging of the ceremony out of its appointed season had evidently a symbolic value, signifying the Athenians' goodwill and respect towards the *princeps*.³⁸

In spite of the immense prestige that the Eleusinian Mysteries enjoyed in the ancient world, it seems that the Romans took serious notice of them only in the later 1st century BC. Early evidence of the appeal that these rites held over members of the Roman elites is supplied by a passage from Cicero's treatise, *De legibus*. In this text, Cicero praises the civilizing function of the Eleusinian Mysteries, which cele-

³⁴ Dio 51. 4. 1: "And [Caesar], since there would be no further danger from the veterans, managed the affairs in Greece and participated in the mysteries of the two goddesses" (καὶ ὁ μὲν, ὡς οὐδενὸς ἔτι δεινοῦ παρὰ τῶν ἐστρατευμένων ἐσομένου, τὰ τε ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι δίκησε καὶ τῶν τοῖν θεοῖν μυστηρίων μετέλαβεν). The date according to Clinton was Boedromion (that is, late September) 31 BC (CLINTON, K.: *The Eleusinian Mysteries. Roman Initiates and Benefactors, Second Century BC to AD 267*. In *ANRW* II.18.2 [1989] 1499–1539, here 1507).

³⁵ Dio 54. 9. 10: [Ζάρμαρος] ἐμνήθη τε τὰ τοῖν θεοῖν, τῶν μυστηρίων καίπερ οὐκ ἐν τῷ καθήκοντι καιρῷ, ὥς φασι, διὰ τὸν Αὔγουστον καὶ αὐτὸν μεμνημένον γενομένων. Zarmarus was a member of an embassy from India, who had come to visit Augustus. Dio relates that right after his initiation he threw himself into the fire (54. 9. 8–10).

³⁶ On the initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries and its procedure see BREMMER, J. N.: *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*. Berlin–Boston 2014, 2–20. It is unclear whether Dio refers to the first or second stage of initiation in his text, for he uses the generic verb μυεῖν (= to initiate into the mysteries) in place of ἐποπτεύειν (= to be admitted to the highest grade at the mysteries). On Augustus' two-fold initiation cf. CLINTON (n. 34) 1507–1509; SPAWFORTH (n. 8) 167–169.

³⁷ Cic. *De or.* 3. 75: "and while returning home from there at Athens, where I would have stayed longer, if I had not been angry with the Athenians, since they would not repeat the mysteries, for which I had arrived (too) late of two days" (*et inde decedens Athenis, ubi ego diutius essem moratus, nisi Atheniensibus, quod mysteria non referrent, ad quae biduo serius veneram, suscensuissem*). On this episode cf. CLINTON (n. 34) 1503.

³⁸ Cf. Plut. *Demetr.* 26: according to Plutarch's account, Demetrius Poliorcetes wished to be initiated in all the grades of the mysteries upon his arrival in Athens. Since it was not the right season, but the Athenians did not dare to oppose Demetrius' request, they renamed the current month Anthesterion in order to lawfully celebrate the lesser mysteries. Then they changed the month's name to Boedromion and celebrated the other grades of initiation, including the ἐποπτεία (which should have followed after one year).

brated the introduction of agriculture to humankind and bore a promise for a blessed afterlife:

For while it seems to me that your Athens have generated and brought into the life of men many extraordinary and divine things, no one is better than those Mysteries, by means of which from a rustic and savage life we have been refined and civilized to a state of humanity, and as they are called initiations, so indeed we have learned [from them] the principles of life; and not only we have grasped the manner of living with happiness, but also of dying with a better hope.³⁹

The earliest known cases of initiations of notable Romans comprised Sulla, in 84 BC (Plut. *Sulla* 16); Cicero, likely in 79 BC, preceded of a few years by his close friend, Atticus; Cicero’s acquaintances, T. Pinarius and Ap. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 54 BC); and L. Munatius Plancus and his nephew, M. Titius (cos. suff. 31 BC). Antony, according to Plutarch, “would partake of initiations” (μυήσεις ἔτρεπε) while in Athens and wished to be called φιλαθηνάιος (Plut. *Ant.* 23. 2).⁴⁰ It is conceivable that Antony’s fondness and generosity towards the city sparked Augustus’ euergetism with the Athenians and his ostentatious reverence for their most ancient rites – although Augustus outdid Antony in both aspects.

On Augustus’ initiation, A. J. Spawforth has commented: “To be sure, this display of imperial *pietas* in the centre of Hellenism signalled Roman respect for Athens.”⁴¹ The scholar suggests a link between Augustus’ initiation and his concurrent grain distribution to the Greek cities (recorded in Plut. *Ant.* 68. 4), arguing that this act of kindness was meant to place Augustus within the tradition of the Hellenistic rulers “as the beneficent provider of food for mankind” (*ibid.*). Following an argument advanced by Rolf Schneider, Spawforth adds:

After Actium and again after the Parthian settlement, Augustus propagated the idea of himself as the bringer of peace and prosperity, an exalted role announced by his grain distributions and symbolised by his initiations into the Mysteries of Demeter and Triptolemus, thereby marking himself out as the devotee of these exemplary bringers of the gifts of civilisation.⁴²

³⁹ Cic. *de Leg.* 2. 36: *nam mihi cum multa eximia divinaque videntur Athenae tuae peperisse atque in vitam hominum attulisse, tum nihil melius illis mysteriis, quibus ex agresti immanique vita exculiti ad humanitatem et mitigati sumus, initiaque ut appellantur, ita re vera principia vitae cognovimus; neque solum cum laetitia vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi.* Cf. CLINTON (n. 34) 1500; SPAWFORTH (n. 8) 143.

⁴⁰ On these initiations, see CLINTON (n. 34) 1503–1507.

⁴¹ SPAWFORTH (n. 8) 168.

⁴² SPAWFORTH (n. 8) 169, after SCHNEIDER, R. M.: *Bunte Barbaren. Orientalstatuen aus farbigem Marmor in der römischen Repräsentationskunst*. Worms 1986, 88–89. It is worth noting in this context that in the *Res Gestae* Augustus claims to have returned to the cities of Asia all the *ornamenta* that Antony had seized and kept in his private possession (*RG* 24. 1). Cooley argues that Augustus may have intended to emulate Alexander the Great, who had returned to Greece the artifacts seized by Xerxes (cf.

Spawforth's interpretation is compelling. Besides enhancing his self-presentation with the Greek public, Augustus' generosity and engagement with the Greek religious sphere did not go unnoticed in Rome either. His deference for the secrecy of the Mysteries (cf. Suet. *Aug.* 93, above), in addition to his twofold initiation, was a display of *pietas* towards foreign rites addressed to the Roman viewers.⁴³ The finding of artifacts on the Palatine decorated with scenes of initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries (such as the Campana plaques and the Caetani Lovatelli urn)⁴⁴ may strengthen this interpretation by suggesting that Augustus supported these rites in a Roman setting as well.

b) Augustus and the Egyptian rites

As considered above, Suetonius relates that, while travelling through Egypt, Augustus did not pay a visit to the bull-shaped god Apis (Suet. *Aug.* 93). Orlin has persuasively argued that the *princeps*' conduct ought to be interpreted within the traditional Roman rejection for zoomorphic deities (in favour of anthropomorphic ones). A passage from Cassius Dio supports this idea and shows, moreover, that disapproval for animal-like divine figures persisted well into the later imperial period: "nor did he want to encounter Apis, saying that he was accustomed to worshipping gods but not oxen" (οὐδὲ τῷ Ἀπιδι ἐντυχεῖν ἠθέλησε, λέγων θεοὺς ἄλλ' οὐχὶ βοῦς προσκυνεῖν εἰθίσθαι, Dio 51. 16. 5).⁴⁵ In the same text, Dio adds that after the death of Antony and Cleopatra Augustus spared the Alexandrians from punishment, among other reasons, out of respect for their god Serapis.⁴⁶ As Orlin observes, "offering respect to one Egyptian divinity, and a comparatively young god in the Egyptian pantheon, while simultaneously turning away from another reveals that Octavian drew a deliberate distinction

Arr. *Anab.* 7. 19. 2, 3. 16. 17; Pliny *NH* 34. 19. 70; COOLEY: *Res gestae* [n. 27] 210–212; also, SCHEID: Augustus [n. 25] 182). This gesture certainly adds to the image painted above of Augustus as a Hellenistic king.

⁴³ Cf. SPAWFORTH (n. 8) 167; and KOCH, K.: Roman State Religion in the Mirror of Augustan and Late Republican Apologetics. In ANDO, C. (ed.): *Roman Religion*. Edinburgh 2003, 296–329, here 306: "This conversation compelled the Roman public to respect the institution of the Eleusinian rites simply by virtue of the fact that the emperor took them seriously *coram publico*."

⁴⁴ The two Campana plaques were found in Livia's house on the Palatine and reproduced scenes of initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries with the figure of Hercules (STRAZZULLA, M. J.: *Il principato di Apollo: mito e propaganda nelle lastre "Campana" dal tempio di Apollo Palatino*. Roma 1990, 54–75). A similar representation appears on the Caetani Lovatelli cinerary urn (third quarter of the 1st century BC), found in the area of the columbaria A–C of Porta Maggiore, belonging to the gens Statilia (CADARIO, M.: *Urna Caetani Lovatelli*. In BOTTINI, A. [a cura di]: *Il rito segreto: Misteri in Grecia e a Roma*. Milano 2005, 158–163).

⁴⁵ On Apis, see BRICAULT, L.: *Les cultes isiaques dans le monde gréco-romain*. Paris 2013, 58–61. On the Romans' dislike for zoomorphic gods cf., e.g., Cic. *Nat. D.* 1. 36, 3. 16, and *Tusc.* 5. 27; Verg. *Aen.* 8. 698; Luc. 8. 832; Juv. 15. 1–13. See ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults (n. 7) 233–235 with n. 5 for further references; SWETNAM-BURLAND, M.: *Egypt in Italy. Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture*. Cambridge – New York 2015, 167–172.

⁴⁶ Dio 51. 16. 4: "nevertheless he put forth as an excuse the god Serapis, their founder Alexander, and third their fellow-citizen Areius" (πρόφασιν δὲ ὁμῶς προβάλλετο τὸν τε θεὸν τὸν Σάραπιν καὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν οἰκιστὴν αὐτῶν, καὶ τρίτον Ἀρειὸν τὸν πολίτην).

between these gods, not that he held Egyptian rites in contempt.”⁴⁷ Sarolta Takács proposes another reason to explain Augustus’ visible dislike of Apis. Takács recalls the status of Memphis as a sacred city and the seat of a powerful clergy, closely connected with the royal house: “Since Augustus’ legitimacy as the new ruler of Egypt did not depend on the Memphite clergy, he may have felt it quite unnecessary to undertake the ceremonial visit to Apis.”⁴⁸ Augustus did not feel compelled to follow the Ptolemaic rituals; his regime, just as that of Alexander, initiated a new era in Egypt. Takács’ analysis, if correct, also implies that a visit of Augustus to Apis could have negative repercussions at Rome and tarnish Augustus’ popularity by hinting at his royal aspirations, since Apis embodied royalty and the power of the pharaohs.⁴⁹ Both Orlin’s and Takács’ observations thus sound legitimate, as they both involve Augustus’ care not to hurt Roman sensibilities by adopting non-customary religious practices and by openly posing as a king.

That Augustus did not despise Egyptian religion *in toto*, but only some aspects of it, seems confirmed by two episodes reported, again, by Cassius Dio. First, we are told that as a triumvir Augustus voted a temple to Isis and Serapis (Dio 47. 15. 4), although its construction was probably not carried out.⁵⁰ Secondly, Dio relates that Augustus prohibited the celebration of the Egyptian rites within the *pomerium* in two different occasions, in 28 BC (Dio 53. 2. 4–5) and in 21 BC (this second time through Agrippa; Dio 54. 6. 6). In the former instance, however, Augustus made a provision for the restoration of the shrines, in part assigning it to the owners and their heirs and in part taking it upon himself.⁵¹ Unlike previous senatorial decrees (such as those passed in 58, 53, and 48 BC), Augustus did not order to destroy the altars of the Egyptian gods, but in fact enacted long-term measures to ensure their survival.⁵² This

⁴⁷ ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults (n. 7) 235. Serapis was most certainly a recent god – a product of the hybrid culture that originated from Alexander’s conquests, possibly ‘created’ under Ptolemy I Soter. Serapis had been conceived as tutelary god of Alexandria and incorporated, in his syncretic essence, elements of the Egyptian tradition as well as features of Greek deities. Cf. TAKÁCS, S. A.: *Isis and Serapis in the Roman World*. Leiden – New York 1995, 28–29; ALVAR (n. 17) 52–62; BRICAULT (n. 45) 34–41; also, Plut. *De Is.* 28–29; Tac. *Hist.* 4. 83–84.

⁴⁸ TAKÁCS, S. A.: Cleopatra, Isis and the Formation of Augustan Rome. In MILES, M. M. (ed.): *Cleopatra. A Sphinx Revisited*. Berkeley 2011, 78–95, here 81.

⁴⁹ Cf. TAKÁCS: Cleopatra (n. 48) 80–82.

⁵⁰ In 43 BC. Cf. TAKÁCS: Isis (n. 47) 69–70, who argues that this was a symbolic gesture in honour of the deified Caesar, who had consorted with Cleopatra.

⁵¹ Dio 53. 2. 4–5: “And as for sacred rites, he did not admit the Egyptian ones inside the *pomerium*, yet he took precaution for the temples; for with regards to those which had been erected by some private citizens he ordered that both their children and descendants, if indeed some survived, were to repair them, and he restored himself the remaining ones; however, he did not appropriate the credit for their building, but conceded it to those who had built them” (καὶ τὰ μὲν ἱερὰ τὰ Αἰγύπτια οὐκ ἐσεδέξατο εἶσω τοῦ ποιμηνίου, τῶν δὲ δὴ ναῶν πρόνοιαν ἐποίησατο· τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ὑπ’ ἰδιωτῶν τινῶν γεγενημένους τοῖς τε πασίν αὐτῶν καὶ τοῖς ἐκγόνοις, εἴγε τινὲς περιῆσαν, ἐπισκευάσαι ἐκέλευσε, τοὺς δὲ λοιποὺς αὐτὸς ἀνεκτίσατο. οὐ μέντοι καὶ τὴν δόξαν τῆς οἰκοδομῆσεώς σφον ἐσφετερίσατο, ἀλλ’ ἀπέδωκεν αὐτοῖς τοῖς κατασκευάσασιν αὐτούς).

⁵² On these senatorial actions see TAKÁCS: Isis (n. 47) 56–70. The first episode (58 BC) is known through a passage of Varro transmitted by Tertullian’s *Ad nationes* (1. 10. 17); Varro relates that the senate prohibited the rites of Isis, Serapis, Harpocrates, and Anubis from the Capitol and had their altars torn down; the altars, however, were restored by popular force. Cf. ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults

decision runs counter to contemporary depictions of Egypt as a hostile country, which emerged after the war against Antony and Cleopatra.⁵³ Nevertheless, it falls within the tradition of Roman openness towards foreign rites. Takács has interpreted Augustus' bans in the light of his political program of 'restoration' of traditional morality and proper religion, as well as his attempts to maintain public order and secure his position in the early years of his rule.⁵⁴ The two restrictive measures pertained to the public sphere and did not affect the private worship of the Egyptian gods, which was actually acknowledged and even encouraged by the *princeps*' first measure (28 BC). Orlin, in addition, suggests that Augustus' bans, covering the area inside the *pomerium* only, served to demarcate the boundaries of Roman identity within it.⁵⁵

The adoption of Egyptian themes in contemporary art (both private and public) attests to the diffusion, at Rome, of Egyptian cultural elements. Egyptian motifs became widely popular and were possibly cherished by Augustus himself: his house on the Palatine, Livia's adjacent villa, the so-called *aula Isiaca*, and the *villa della Farnesina* (attributed to Agrippa and Julia) all famously displayed Egyptianizing ornamental themes in the decoration of selected spaces.⁵⁶ Lastly, the two obelisks that the *princeps* brought to Rome from Heliopolis in 10 BC and dedicated to Sol are evidence of Augustus' appropriation of traditional Egyptian symbols of power, which were now incorporated into the Roman landscape as markers of Augustus' action and profound renovation of the state.⁵⁷

(n. 7) 236–237, who notes that the presence of altars to the Egyptian gods on the Capital was, in fact, a sign of their favourable reception. According to Dio (40. 47. 3), in 53 BC the shrines to Isis and Serapis built at private expenses had to be torn down by a senatorial decree. A similar measure was carried out again in 48 BC (Dio 42. 26. 2). On the nature of these Republican altars and/or shrines of Isis and Serapis on the Capitol, cf. VERSLUYS, M. J.: Isis Capitolina and the Egyptian Cults in Late Republican Rome. In BRICAULT, L. (éd.): *Isis en occident. Actes du II^{ème} Colloque international sur les études isiaques, Lyon III 16-17 mai 2002*. Leiden–Boston 2004, 421–448, esp. 427–432.

⁵³ Cf., e.g., Hor. *Ep.* 9, *Carm.* 1. 3; Verg. *Aen.* 8. 685–713; Prop. 3. 11, 4. 6 (ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults [n. 7] 238–239; cf. TAKÁCS: Cleopatra [n. 48] 90–92). The memory of Antony and his relationship with Egypt were certainly still alive in the first years of Augustus' rule. Thus, the intention of distancing himself from Antony ought to be included among Augustus' reasons for passing restraining measures on Egyptian rites. On the 'orientalizing' extravagance of Antony, cf., e.g., Plut. *Ant.* 24. 3–4, 26. 3, 60. 3; on Cleopatra as *νέα Ἰσις* cf. Plut. *Ant.* 54. 6; on the couple as Osiris and Isis cf. Dio 50. 5. 3, 50. 25. 3–4.

⁵⁴ TAKÁCS: Isis (n. 47) 75–78, and TAKÁCS: Cleopatra (n. 48) 85–86.

⁵⁵ "By encouraging the worship of Egyptian deities and using the *pomerium* to differentiate them from Roman cults in 28, the princeps marked Egyptian rites as non-Roman... Yet by making provisions for the restoration of temples to Isis and Sarapis, Octavian publicly demonstrated that the Roman state was still hospitable to foreigners" (ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults [n. 7] 244, cf. 241–245).

⁵⁶ Cf. DE VOS, M.: *L'egittomania in pitture e mosaici romano-campani della prima età imperiale* [Études préliminaires aux religion orientale dans l'empire romain 84]. Leiden 1980, esp. 60–68; also, TAKÁCS: Cleopatra (n. 48) 87–90.

⁵⁷ The obelisk in the *campus Martius*, in particular, was the *gnomon* of Augustus' monumental *horologium* or *solarium Augusti*. Cf. ZANKER (n. 6) 144; TAKÁCS: Isis (n. 47) 79–80 with n. 23; ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults (n. 7) 240; SWETNAM-BURLAND (n. 45) 68–71. On the ideological relation between the emperor and the Sun, see ALVAR (n. 17) 412–413.

c) *Augustus and Cybele*

As mentioned in section 1, the cult of Cybele was introduced to Rome in the late 3rd century BC on a senatorial initiative and was immediately voted into the Roman state religion. Despite the long worship of Cybele, ancient literary sources frequently show aversion towards her rites, emphasizing, in particular, and even ridiculing the peculiar appearance and ritual actions of her priests.⁵⁸ In the past, such descriptions were commonly interpreted as evidence of a generalized distaste for Cybele's cult in Roman settings. More recently, however, scholars – among others, Mary Beard – have contended that the tension between Cybele's well-established place in Roman religion and the feeling of rejection for her rites expressed in literature should be situated within the cultural debate “on what could count as ‘Roman’ religious experience – in the context of a huge and ethnically diverse empire.”⁵⁹ Augustus' rule represented a watershed in the definition of ‘Romanness’ and in the harmonization of an ethnically and culturally diverse society. Literary representations of Cybele notably changed in Augustus' time and possibly under his own influence, as the goddess became, through the Aeneas legend, an active agent in Rome's foundation myth.⁶⁰ The following survey includes literary representations of Cybele and shows how her perception shifted over the 1st century BC and under Augustus from ‘foreign’ to increasingly ‘Roman’.

The alien character of Cybele is especially evident in pre-Augustan sources. Lucretius, writing in the first half of the 1st century BC, includes in his poem an account of the *pompa* in honour of Mater Magna in his days (Lucr. 2. 598–660). Jaime Alvar has observed how this account does not stress exclusively the disturbing features of the celebration, but also emphasizes “filial duty and love” (cf. Lucr. 2. 604–605, 614–617, 643) as well as the discipline and moral virtues connected with Cybele's worship.⁶¹ But despite these didactic aspects and the prominent role of Cybele in Lucretius' *cosmos* (cf., in particular, 2. 598–599, 610–613, and 2. 606–609, 624–628 on the awe that her sight is said to inspire among the bystanders),⁶² the unsettling rituals of the *galli* are dominant in the text (2. 611–623, 629–643). These are presented as a ‘troop’ rather than an orderly body of priests (*caterva*, 2. 611, 628, 643); the loud clashing of their musical instruments is mimicked through insistent

⁵⁸ Cf., e.g., Varr. *Eum.* fr. 16–27 Cèbe (132–143 Nonius); Catull. 63 (below); Mart. 3. 81; Juv. 6. 511–516. Varro's fragmentary text, which I do not discuss here, highlights – though in a playful way – the sexual ambiguity and ‘un-Roman’ aspect of the *galli* (cf. SUMMERS, K.: Lucretius' Roman Cybele. In LANE, E. N. [ed.]: *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults. Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren*. Leiden – New York 1996, 337–365, here 356–357; ROLLER [n. 17] 308–309; ORLIN: Foreign Cults [n. 9] 103).

⁵⁹ BEARD (n. 1) 325; cf. 323–326; ORLIN: Foreign Cults (n. 9) 103–4.

⁶⁰ The connection of Cybele with Troy was not a novelty of the Augustan age, being possibly attested since the 3rd century BC; however, this link tends to be forgotten in the late Republican sources and is proposed again as a *topos* in Augustan literature (cf. ROLLER [n. 17] 270–271; and LAWALL, M. L.: In the Sanctuary of the Samothracian Gods. Myth, Politics, and Mystery Cult at Ilion. In COSMOPOULOS, M. B. [ed.]: *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*. London 2003, 79–111, here 93–103 on the archaeological evidence).

⁶¹ ALVAR (n. 17) 167–168; as already in ROLLER (n. 17) 298–299.

⁶² These two aspects are analyzed by ROLLER (n. 17) 297.

alliterations of sounds;⁶³ the reference to their frenzied self-emasculation is graphic, and their aspect is terrifying.⁶⁴ Lucretius' verses are loaded with disquieting features, which seem to overwhelm the motherly and moral aspects of Cybele's cult.⁶⁵

Composed around the same years as Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, Catullus' poem on Attis (Cybele's partner and first follower) is perhaps the most extreme expression of the sentiment of estrangement depicted above. This poem comprises the account of Attis' ecstasy and self-mutilation (63. 4–11), his revelling with the *galli* and bitter repentance (63. 12–38, 39–73), and the goddess' ferocious reaction (63. 74–90). Lynn Roller has argued that the picture presented by Catullus, with Cybele as a "sexually dominant woman" and Attis being at the same time "attracted to and repelled" by her power, is a metaphor for Catullus' own relationship with Lesbia; the poet, like Attis, is enchanted by a mighty and ruthless mistress,⁶⁶ of whom ultimately he becomes a slave (cf. 63. 68, *ego nunc deum ministra et Cybeles famula ferar?*).⁶⁷ Without contesting the validity of this interpretation, it is worth underlining that for Catullus Cybele and her rites are embodiment of extreme, and even dangerous, alienation – both from one's body and sexuality (cf. 63. 27, *notha mulier*, and 69, *ego vir sterilis ero?*) and from civil society (cf. 63. 50–72) – as well as violent, maddening sexual attraction (cf. the references to Attis' state of mind at 63. 4, 31, 38, 57, 78, 79, 89). The poem concludes with the poet entreating the goddess to keep *furor* out of his own house: *alios age incitatos, alios age rabidos* (63. 93, 91–93). The strong vocabulary used to describe the effects of Cybele's power may indicate that the link between her rites and a frenzied, Maenadic state was by no means uncommon in Roman popular imagery.

In the early Augustan period, Cybele reappears in Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which she is given a prominent role as protectress of the Trojans. Timothy Wiseman has collected and commented on all the passages in which the Great Mother helps Aeneas to overcome the difficulties of his enterprise.⁶⁸ To mention a few significant ones

⁶³ Lucr. 2. 618–620: *tympa tentant tonant palmis et cymbala circum / concava, raucisonoque minantur cornua cantu, / et Phrygio stimulat numero cava tibia mentis*.

⁶⁴ Cf. Lucr. 2. 621: *telaque praeporant, violenti signa furoris*; and 2. 631–632: *ludunt in numerumque exultant sanguine laeti / terrificas capitum quatientes numine cristas*.

⁶⁵ On Lucretius' account cf. also SUMMERS (n. 58) 337–365, who, however, focuses on the *pompa* and the reconstruction of the Roman ritual described by the poet, as opposed to the Phrygian and Greek rituals.

⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., the references to Cybele as *domina* (63. 13, 75, 91), to her *imperia* (80) and her being *minax* (84). On Cybele's *imperium* in these verses see TAKÁCS, S. A.: *Magna Deum Mater Idaea, Cybele, and Catullus' Attis*. In LANE, E. N. (ed.): *Cybele, Attis and Related Cults. Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren*. Leiden – New York 1996, 367–386, here 381–382.

⁶⁷ ROLLER (n. 17) 304–307. On this poem's interpretation cf. TAKÁCS: *Magna Deum Mater* (n. 66) 76–82; BEARD-NORTH-PRICE (n. 1) 164–6; NAUTA (n. 18) 596–628 (who provides possibly the most inclusive analysis of it); ALVAR (n. 17) 170–172. The latter, in particular, underlines how Catullus describes "the conflicts experienced by those induced to perform this act upon themselves" (ALVAR [n. 17] 171) and overall reads the poem "as an ideal account of priestly self-dedication to the divine world and of the punishment that attends the violation of that ideal" (*ibid.*).

⁶⁸ WISEMAN, T. P.: *Cybele, Virgil, and Augustus*. In WOODMAN, A. J. – WEST, D. (eds): *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus*, Cambridge 1984, 117–128. Cf. ROLLER (n. 17) 299–304, who com-

– Virgil has Cybele rescue Creusa, Aeneas' wife, from certain slavery with the Achaeans (*Aen.* 2. 785–788); Cybele's sacred grove on Mount Ida supplies the timber for the Trojan fleet (3. 5–6, 9.88–89); Cybele intercedes with Jupiter on Aeneas' behalf before he sets sail to Italy (9. 80–92); she is named in the 'gallery of heroes' between Romulus and Caesar rejoicing in her vast progeny (6. 784–787); as Aeneas reaches the Tiber, he prays to *Iupiter Idaeus* and the *Phrygia mater* (7. 139); Cybele operates a miracle by transforming the Trojan ships, made with her sacred pine trees, into sea nymphs (9. 107–122);⁶⁹ Aeneas prays to her for victory before the battle with the Rutulians, addressing her as *alma parens Idaea deum* (10. 252–255). Unlike Lucretius and Catullus, Virgil addresses Cybele repeatedly as *alma* (2. 591, 664; 10. 220, 252) and as *miserata* (10. 234) – a terminology that hints at her nurturing and compassionate motherly nature. In Wiseman's reading, which is now accepted by most scholars, Virgil's text reflects the renewed importance that Cybele acquired under Augustus.⁷⁰ As it is well-known, the *princeps* built his house on the Palatine between the temple of Apollo and that of Victoria. Close by, the hut of Romulus, at the top of the *scalae Caci*, stood as a reverend symbol of Rome's foundation. Cybele had been part of this topographical complex since 204 BC, when her simulacrum was hosted in Victoria's shrine and then received an independent temple in 191.⁷¹ As a bringer of victory herself, a role that – as just considered – is recurrent in Virgil's poem, the Great Mother was "assimilated into the complex of associations [Augustus] had built up around his Palatine house".⁷²

Augustan resonances also emerge from Ovid's account in *Fasti* Book 4, which describes the introduction of Cybele to Rome and the establishment of her festival. In Ovid, the integration of the goddess into her Roman setting appears at last completed.

ments on a few of the same passages and highlights possible allusions to the *galli* in Virgil's text (cf. e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 4. 215, 9. 617–620, 12. 97–100).

⁶⁹ On this episode cf. also NAUTA, R. R.: Phrygian Eunuchs and Roman *virtus*. The Cult of the Mater Magna and the Trojan Origins of Rome in Virgil's *Aeneid*. In URSO, G. (ed.): *Tra Oriente e Occidente. Indigeni, Greci e Romani in Asia Minore. Atti del convegno internazionale, Cividale del Friuli, 28-30 settembre 2006*. Pisa 2007, 79–92, here 82–83, 92.

⁷⁰ WISEMAN (n. 68) 127. Cf. BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 197–198; ROLLER (n. 17) 299–304; NAUTA: Phrygian Eunuchs (n. 69) 79–92. In addition, Wiseman stresses the association between Apollo, who granted the sea victories of Naucolus and Actium, and Cybele's role in the *Aeneid* in providing the ships to Aeneas. Cf. NAUTA: Phrygian Eunuchs (n. 69) 80–82, who points out that the connection of Cybele with the Trojan legend is absent from the late Republican literary sources (and specifically Lucretius, Varro, and Cicero).

⁷¹ On the Palatine temple of Cybele cf. PENSABENE, P.: Architetture e spazio sacro sul Palatino. Il tempio della Vittoria e il santuario della Magna Mater. In TOMEI, M. A. (a cura di): *Roma. Memorie dal sottosuolo: ritrovamenti archeologici 1980/2006*. Milano 2007, 43–51; on Augustus' building intervention on the temple, cf. FORTUNATI, S.: L'intervento augusteo nell'area del *temenos* del santuario della Magna Mater. Stratigrafie e reperti. *Scienze dell'Antichità* 13 (2006) 455–464. The temple was damaged in a fire in 3 AD and was subsequently restored by Augustus in tufa (cf. *RG* 19. 2). Zanker has argued that the use of tufa signalled the scarce interest of Augustus for the goddess, since she was an 'oriental' deity (ZANKER [n. 6] 109). *Contra*, see BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 198: "When Augustus rebuilt the temple, he made a particular show of the venerable antiquity of the cult of the goddess: he built the temple not in marble (the material of almost all his new building projects) but in traditional tufa (...) the material of most of the earliest temples at Rome."

⁷² WISEMAN (n. 68) *ibid.*

In particular, Ovid lays great emphasis on the notion, of Augustan flavour, of 'chastity': Attis wins over the goddess with his chaste love (*casto amore*, 4. 224); when he betrays her, he is emasculated as a just punishment for his infidelity (*merui: meritas poenas*, 4. 239); after Cybele is brought to Rome, she is received by chaste hands (*casta manu*, 4. 260). Chastity is also the leitmotif of the tale of Quinta Claudia, the matron who welcomes Cybele's simulacrum in Rome (4. 305–324). Furthermore, as in Virgil's poem, Cybele is closely linked by Ovid, too, with the Trojan legend: her seat is located on Mount Ida (4. 249–250) and, we are told, she almost followed Aeneas on his journey (4. 251–254).⁷³

By the later Augustan age, then, the cult of Cybele had undergone considerable ideological transformations. The disturbing aspects of her rites were not eliminated; however, through her incorporation into the Aeneas legend and Augustus' political program they were minimized in favour of more 'Roman' nuances.⁷⁴

d) *The cult of Apollo*

Augustus' devotion to Apollo and the fresh impulse that Apollo's cult received under his rule have been extensively studied and do not require a lengthy treatment here.⁷⁵ A few aspects of this phenomenon, however, are particularly relevant for my argument. In Archaic and Classical Greece, Apollo was venerated for his healing aspect, his oracular skill (particularly in Delphi) and his patronage of the arts, especially poetry and song. Eventually, his healing function was discounted in favour of his other qualities – Aesculapius being preferred to him as the god of medicine.⁷⁶ At Rome, Apollo retained his aspect as healing god and was accordingly addressed with the epithet 'Medicus' (Macr. *Sat.* 1. 17. 15; cf. Liv. 40. 51. 7). His first temple was vowed during an epidemic and dedicated in 431 by the consul Cn. Julius (Liv. 4. 25. 3; 4. 29. 7). The temple stood beyond the Porta Carmentalis in the Campus Martius, outside the *pomerium*, as if to stress Apollo's status as a 'foreign' deity. Since 212 BC,

⁷³ Ovid's account of Cybele's myth is examined, in particular, by HERBERT-BROWN, G.: *Ovid and the Fasti: An Historical Study*. Oxford – New York 1994, 114–115; BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 197–198; ROLLER (n. 17) 299; NEWLANDS, C.: *Mandati memores: Political and Poetic Authority in the Fasti*. In HARDIE, PH. (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*. Cambridge – New York 2002, 200–216, here 208–215; KNOX, P. E.: Representing the Great Mother to Augustus. In HERBERT-BROWN, G. (ed.): *Ovid's Fasti. Historical Readings at Its Bimillennium* Oxford 2002, 155–174; ALVAR (n. 17) 173–175.

⁷⁴ Roller argues that the figure of Quinta Claudia, too, acquired political overtones in the early Principate in connection with the Claudian gens (ROLLER [n. 17] 313–314). Her statue miraculously survived the fire in Cybele's temple (cf. Val. Max. 1. 8. 1; Tac. *Ann.* 4. 64. 4; see above, n. 70).

⁷⁵ Cf., e.g., ZANKER (n. 6) 48–53; GURVAL, R. A.: *Actium and Augustus: the Politics and Emotions of Civil War*. Ann Arbor 1995, 87–136; GALINSKY: Augustan Culture (n. 7) 213–224; BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 198–9; ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults (n. 7) 245–248. The seminal work on the cult of Apollo at Rome is GAGÉ, J.: *Apollon romain*. Paris 1955. More recently, see MILLER, J. F.: *Apollo, Augustus, and the Poets*. Cambridge 2009.

⁷⁶ BURKERT, W.: *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Transl. J. Raffan. Maiden, MA – Oxford 1985, 143–149.

Apollo was also celebrated in the *ludi Apollinares*, which were inscribed in the pontifical calendar; yet, he remained a minor deity until the Augustan Principate.⁷⁷

The revival of Apollo’s cult under Augustus heightened Apollo’s Greek character; even in Rome he was now worshipped as the god of prophecy and poetic contests. The Sibylline books were moved from the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus to the new temple of Apollo on the Palatine (Suet. *Aug.* 31. 1).⁷⁸ The same temple hosted, in its colonnade, a bilingual library for works of Greek and Latin literature, perhaps serving as a stage for recitals and lectures (as well as senatorial meetings; cf. Suet. *Aug.* 29. 3).⁷⁹ The temple, in addition, displayed masterpieces of Greek art, including works by Cesiphodotus (son of Praxiteles), Scopas, Timotheus, and Myron (respectively, Pliny *NH* 36. 24–25, 32; Prop. 2. 31. 7–8).⁸⁰ As Zanker has observed, “after the victory was won, then Apollo took on his role as singer, lyre player, and god of peace and reconciliation.”⁸¹ The Citharoedus became a symbol of the Augustan peace: after ensuring the victory at Actium (Verg. *Aen.* 8. 704–705), Apollo laid aside the arms and took up his lyre – as Propertius evocatively sings.⁸²

By emphasizing Apollo’s Greek aspects to ‘construct,’ as it were, his own divine counterpart,⁸³ Augustus made a twofold political statement. On the one hand, his choice stressed the atmosphere of renewed peace and prosperity brought about by his rule, during which war ceased and gave way to sophisticated leisure. On the other hand – as Orlin has noticed – Augustus’ association with the god and his inclusion in the *pomerium* eliminated the distinction between Greek and Roman, marking “the full integration of Greek cultural elements into Rome. (...) The emperor no longer felt it necessary to define Roman culture against Greek culture but rather accepted the latter

⁷⁷ Cf. GURVAL (n. 75) 90–91; on the *ludi Apollinares*, see the extensive treatment in GAGÉ (n. 75) 257–418.

⁷⁸ The Sibylline books had been allegedly bought by Tarquinius Superbus from an old Cumaean Sibyl (Dion. Hal. *RA* 4. 62; Gell. *NA* 1. 19; Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1. 6. 10–11). The king also sent the first embassy to Delphi to inquire the oracle (Liv. 1. 56. 4–13; Dion. Hal. *RA* 4. 64; Ov. *Fasti* 2. 711–720; Val. Max. 7. 3. 2; Zon. 7. 11; cf. GRUEN: *The Advent* [n. 17] 7–9).

⁷⁹ First vowed after the victory over Sex. Pompeius at Naulochus in 36 BC, the new temple of Apollo was dedicated on the Palatine, beside Augustus’ house, in 28 BC. Cf. Vell. 2. 81. 3; Suet. *Aug.* 29. 3; Dio 49. 15. 5. According to Suetonius and Dio, the site of the temple had been previously struck by lightning, as a sign that the god himself chose the precise spot for its construction. Cf. BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (n. 1) 198–199; SCHEID: *Augustus* (n. 25) 178–179; on the vow and dedication of the temple, see GURVAL (n. 75) 113–115, 119–123.

⁸⁰ On the temple’s decoration, cf. ZANKER (n. 6) 66–69, 85–89; GURVAL (n. 75) 123–127; GALINSKY: *Augustan Culture* (n. 7) 218–222.

⁸¹ ZANKER (n. 6) 53; cf. ORLIN: *Octavian and Egyptian Cults* (n. 7) 246.

⁸² Cf., in particular, Hor. *Carm.* 1. 31; and Prop. 4. 6. 69–70: “I have sung enough of wars: Apollo as victor now asks for the lyre and lays aside his weapons for dances of peace” (*bella satis cecini: citharam iam poscit Apollo / victor et ad placidos exiit arma choros*). On Propertius’ elegy 4. 6, see GURVAL (n. 75) 249–278.

⁸³ Cf. Verg. *Ecl.* 4. 10: *...tuus iam regnat Apollo*, with Servius’ comment: “*tuus iam regnat Apollo* (...) also refers to Augustus, whose image was made with all the attributes of Apollo” (*‘tuus iam regnat Apollo’ (...) et tangit Augustum, cui simulacrum factum est cum Apollinis cunctis insignibus*, Serv. *Ecl.* 4. 10). On this passage, see GURVAL (n. 75) 107–110; MASTROCINQUE (n. 8) 223.

as a valued part of the former.”⁸⁴ The erection of a bilingual library in Apollo’s temple may be read within this interpretation.⁸⁵

In a recent contribution, Attilio Mastrocinque has called attention to the existence of an international league or *κοινὸν* of Apollo’s priests during the early imperial age, which is attested by an inscription found in Halaesa (Sicily) and counted over 800 members. The members of the league were likely in charge – besides cult-related practices – of the organization of artistic competitions empire-wide. Underscoring the later connection (or identification) of Apollo with Sol and other solar deities such as Mithras, Mastrocinque suggestively argues that the activity of these priests should be interpreted as an early form of imperial cult.⁸⁶ The existence of this league may thus support the notion of early political use of Apollo beyond common ideas about the poetic and literary associations of the *princeps* with him. The case of Apollo, as the previously examined one of Cybele, indicates that the use of ‘non-established’ deities as personal patrons could be convenient for Augustus, as their originally ‘un-Roman’ character allowed for more freedom in shaping their new features.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The theory of Augustus’ religious conservatism is now viewed as superseded by most scholarship. While not sponsoring the introduction of new cults, Augustus actively promoted the integration at Rome of several ‘foreign’ rites which had already entered (even unofficially) the Roman religious landscape. Suetonius ascribed to Augustus a certain ambivalence in religious matters and suggested that his respect or rejection of ‘foreign’ cults depended on their antiquity or – as some scholars have

⁸⁴ ORLIN: Octavian and Egyptian Cults (n. 7) 247.

⁸⁵ An episode recorded by Suetonius seems to confirm Augustus’ inclination for the diffusion of bilingualism. Suet. *Aug.* 98. 2–3: “By chance, while he was sailing by the gulf of Puteoli, the passengers and the sailors from an Alexandrian ship, which had just landed there, dressed in white and adorned with wreaths and offering frankincense showered him with auspicious wishes and the highest praises: through him they lived, through him they sailed, through him they enjoyed liberty and prosperity. (...) For the successive remaining days among various small presents [Augustus] distributed togas and in addition Greek cloaks, a motion having been proposed that the Romans should use the Greek dress and language, and the Greeks the Roman ones (*Forte Puteolanum sinum praetervehenti vectores nautaeque de navi Alexandrina, quae tantum quod appulerat, candidati coronatique et tura libantes fausta omnia et eximias laudes congesserant: per illum se vivere, per illum navigare, libertate atque fortunis per illum frui. (...) Sed et ceteros continuos dies inter varia munuscula togas insuper ac pallia distribuit, lege proposita ut Romani Graeco, Graeci Romano habitu et sermone uterentur*). Cf. also Suet. *Tib.* 21. 4–6, *Claud.* 4: Augustus apparently used code-switching into Greek in his letters. He did not compose his own speeches in Greek for lack of confidence (Suet. *Aug.* 89.1), but he addressed the Alexandrians in Greek after Actium (Dio 51. 16. 4). On Augustus’ code-switching, see ADAMS, J. N.: *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*. Cambridge – New York 2003, 11, 331–332. Cf. also Pliny *NH* 7.210, who relates that on the Palatine an ancient inscription from Delphi stating the common origin of Greek and Latin letters was set up in the library *dono principum*. On bilingualism under Augustus, cf. MASTROCINQUE, A.: Bilinguismo e cultura augustea. In MASTROCINQUE, A. – TESSIER, A. (a cura di): *Παίγνιον. Piccola Festschrift per Francesco Donadi*. Trieste 2016, 31–40.

⁸⁶ MASTROCINQUE: I sacerdoti (n. 8) 223–238.

maintained building on Suetonius' text – on Augustus' personal preferences. Against this interpretation, I have underlined how Augustus sought to be an example for his contemporaries in all his activities, including – most likely – religious practices, as part of his program of 'restoration' of *mores*. Accordingly, blatant attitudes towards 'foreign' rites (like his open aversion for Apis and his publicly-claimed respect of the secrecy of the Mysteries) should not be interpreted merely as personal preferences but followed precise political ends.

Augustus' admiration for the Eleusinian Mysteries, manifest in his two initiations, together with the concurrent grain distributions, signalled his goodwill towards the Athenians, who had previously supported his rival, Antony; at the same time, by observing the cult's secrecy, Augustus also made a display of *pietas* at Rome. Avoiding the visit to the sanctuary of Apis, while conforming with the Roman dislike for theriomorphic deities, was a visible refusal of the royal status associated with this god and was thus conceivably directed towards Roman public opinion. On the other hand, showing reverence for Serapis could win Augustus the favour of the Alexandrians (if not of the Egyptians at large). Additionally, by showing leniency towards the popular cult of Isis and Serapis at Rome, Augustus may have sought the approval of their local devotees, who were, in great numbers, members of the Roman elites. The cults of Mater Magna and Apollo represent peculiar cases, since their cult was already officially accepted, although it preserved idiosyncratic, non-Roman components. The Great Mother was an all-mighty goddess, who enjoyed major, long-standing celebrations at Rome. By emphasizing her ties with Aeneas (his personal ancestor) and Rome's origins – and therefore her 'Roman' character – Augustus could claim a special bond with her while keeping with the Roman tradition. Lastly, the revival of the cult of Apollo (formerly a minor deity) through the elaboration of his Greek features, was aimed at Roman and Greek viewers alike; it supplied Augustus with a divine foil who was, at the same time, both established and new, Roman and Greek, domestic and 'foreign', and who could be more freely shaped – on account of such distinctive characteristics – to suit Augustus' needs.

Beatrice Poletti
University of Alberta
Canada
poletti@ualberta.ca