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INITIATION INTO THE MYSTERIES OF AUGUSTUS: THE LIBERALIA AND THE FORUM AUGUSTUM*

Few periods of antiquity have been studied as extensively as the age of Augustus, and in many cases it is of course the *princeps* who takes centre stage. One of the Augustan topics that has received renewed attention in recent years is Augustus' use of monumental spaces and buildings to promote his restoration of the Republic and the constitutionally ambiguous position that he came to occupy as the undisputed head of state. This includes the growing scholarship on the Forum Augustum that is being reconsidered in the light of cultural memory. I will build on existing scholarship in order to argue that Augustus set up his new Forum with the express intention of making it the centrepiece of his version of history.¹ My argument is that Roman youth (especially his grandsons Gaius and Lucius) played a key role in Augustus' vision for this new monumental space. The *princeps* tied the temporal transition of boys to manhood and the festival of the Liberalia to the new space that carried his name. Hence I start with Augustus' activities in the religious sphere and the way some of his other monuments functioned as vehicles of cultural memory.

Among the many boasts Augustus makes in the *Res Gestae*² is one about the eighty-two temples which he restored and the many others which he built. This included the rebuilding of the Republican temples in the old Forum, in the centre of which now stood the new building dedicated to his father, divine Julius. This happened in the 30s BC while the young man was still known only as Caesar. At the same time construction began on the first of his many new sacred buildings, the temple of Apollo with a *porticus* on the Palatine, right next to his house. As many have noticed,³ the

* I would like to thank the editorial team of *In Gremium* and the two anonymous referees for their valuable suggestions that helped improve this paper. I first presented a version of the paper at the Roman Cultural Memory conference in Paris, Université de Créteil in 2017 and profited from the discussion with its participants, especially Martin Dinter, Charles Guérin, Alain Gowing, Gaius Stern, Günther Schörner, Lauren Donovan Ginsberg, Darja Šterbenc Erker and Aaron Seider. The sole responsibility for the remaining mistakes rests with me.

¹ See P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, Ann Arbor 1988. On the Forum Augustum see idem, *Forum Augustum: Das Bildprogramm*, Tübingen 1968 and V. Kockel, *Forum Augustum*, [In:] *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, 2, Rome 1995, 289-95.

² RG 20.

³ Dio already noted the connection (53.16.5). See J.A. Rea, *Legendary Rome*, London 2007, 21-43 with references.

decision to set up his own home here, on top of the *scalae Caci* was not incidental. In order to assimilate himself with Romulus (whose name he even contemplated taking),⁴ he built his house at the top of a staircase that started with the shrine of the Lupercal at the bottom, where the she-wolf nursed the twins. From here one could ascend the stairs of Cacus and see the ancient house of Romulus (*casa Romuli*) said to be faithfully maintained in its primitive form for centuries. If one were of an antiquarian mind, one could also find the more recherché elements of regal topography like the *urbs quadrata* and the cornel tree of Romulus.⁵ Thus the temple of Apollo and the *princeps*' unostentatious palace literally came at the top of a series of places of Romulean memory. This appropriation of regal cultural memory serves as an example of Augustus' understanding of long-standing spatial associations in Rome, but also his perspective on the nature of Roman religion, a 'religion of place' (as Simon Price called it) that is tied to specific sacred spaces.⁶

When it comes to religion, the young Caesar's very name change to Augustus is most telling. The adjective *augustus* was used to designate divine favour, as in the phrase *augusto augurio* (which Ennius used to describe the founding of Rome) but was also attached as a divine epithet to gods such as the Lares and Concordia.⁷ The adoption of this epithet as a personal name made the young Caesar claim on divine favour explicit. Augustus boasted of restoring many obsolete festivals and rituals, including the Lupercalia, Arvales, the Salii, *fetiales*, and the *flamen Dialis*, an office of the priest of Jupiter, which had been vacant for 75 years. Many discussions of Augustus' use of Roman religion use the celebration of the Saecular games and the reformation of the cult of the Lares (and *genius Augusti*) as examples of how he skilfully manipulated Republican traditions to serve the purpose of his self-promotion. The reformation of the *ludi Saeculares* and the Compitalia show a great degree of change and conscious innovation in traditional rites. The recipients of the Secular Games (in 17BC) now included a whole new set of divinities: the Fates, Jupiter, Illythiae, Juno, Mother Earth, Apollo and Diana. The rituals were expanded to include day-time offerings, including the famous Carmen Saeculare, which Horace was commissioned to write. A new chronological framework was devised to account for the irregular duration of

⁴ Suet. *Aug.* 7. After his election for consulship in 43 BC, he took the auspices and twelve vultures appeared to him as they had done for Romulus (Dio 46.46.2, Suet. *Aug.* 95).

⁵ See T.P. Wiseman, *Conspicui Postes Tectaque Digna Deo: the Public Image of Aristocratic and Imperial Houses in the Late Republic and Early Empire*, [In:] *Historiography and Imagination: Eight Essays on Roman Culture*, Exeter 1994, 102-7.

⁶ S.R.F. Price, *The place of religion: Rome in the early Empire*, [In:] *The Cambridge Ancient History X: The Augustan Empire, 43BC-AD 69*, eds. A.K. Bowman, E. Champlin, A. Lintott, 2nd edition, Cambridge 1996.

⁷ A.E. Cooley, *Roman Religion in the Age of Augustus*, [In:] *Religion in Republican Italy*, eds. C.E. Schultz, P.B. Harvey, Cambridge 2006, 245-52.

a *saeculum* (as the last games were performed in 146BC), and the whole was sealed by the authority of a Sibylline oracles, which the *princeps* later moved from the Capitol to the Palatine temple of Apollo.⁸

These individual episodes clearly show a conscious engagement with religious tradition, and Augustus knowingly using it for his own promotion. In restoring many obscure rituals and traditions he made an effort to align them as much as possible with the new regime. As John Scheid points out,⁹ several aspects of Augustus' policy show a clear effort to appear as a traditionalist in religion. After all, in the vision of the *princeps*, the Republic never ended, it was merely suspended in the chaos of civil war, and Augustus needed to restore it. The restoration of the Republic was closely tied to the restoration of temples and ancient institutions, and appearances had to be maintained in a way similar to political manoeuvring between various Republican offices. The clearest indication of this was waiting for the triumvir Lepidus to die before adopting the position of *pontifex maximus* for himself in 12BC. According to Suetonius,¹⁰ it was at this point that he restored and/or reformed many ancient priesthoods such as the Vestal Virgins, the Luperici, and also reorganised the calendar (this involved changing the name of Sextilis to Augustus). An essential element in the programme was filling the ancient priesthood of *flamen Dialis* (that was vacant for 75 years),¹¹ a vestige of millennia of cultural memory maintained by tradition.¹² The most substantial changes in the compital shrines of the Lares were enacted only around 7BC,¹³ an action that seems to be of great interest to Augustus whose *genius* suddenly came to be worshipped on (as it were) almost every corner of the city.

This cultic omnipresence of Augustus went in sync with other projects, most notably massive-scale buildings, many of which were undertaken not by the *princeps* himself but by members of his inner circle. Augustus' closest collaborator was of course Agrippa and his name still stands on the Pantheon, the central monument of the religious and political programme of the regime. Statues of Augustus and Agrippa

⁸ *Ibidem*, 231-7.

⁹ J. Scheid, *Augustus and Roman Religion: Continuity, Conservatism, and Innovation*, [In:] *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, ed. K. Galinsky, Cambridge 2010, 175-94.

¹⁰ Suet. Aug. 31.

¹¹ Tac. Ann. 3.58. It is debatable whether he waited to become *pontifex maximus* to restore the *flamen*. Both Tacitus' evidence ('a gap of 75 years') and the Ara Pacis frieze (dated to 13 BC) that portrays the *flamen* would indicate it was earlier than 12 BC (G. Stern, *M. Aemilius Lepidus and the Four Flamines on the Ara "Pacis Augustae"*, [In:] *Proceedings of the XVIth International Congress of Classical Archaeology*, Boston, August 23-26, 2003: common ground: archaeology, art, science, and humanities, eds. C.C. Mattusch et al., Oxford 2006, 318-22).

¹² See M.T. Dinter, C. Guérin (eds., forthcoming), *Cultural Memory in Republican and Augustan Rome*, Cambridge.

¹³ I. Graedel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, Oxford 2002, 116-39.

stood at the entrance to this building,¹⁴ which was directly linked with a road to the Mausoleum of Augustus at the northern end of Campus Martius. The message was clear: the *princeps* is on his way to the gods, and already at the door of the divine realm. The Pantheon and Augustus' mausoleum were a part of a whole complex of monuments that spread over Campus Martius. But, as Joseph Geiger says,¹⁵ exploring these marvels as one leisurely strolled the great park and recreation area in the suburbs cannot overshadow the great building programme in the very heart of Rome. There the restoration of previous buildings went alongside a series of new ones carrying the name of the members of his family, porticus of his sister Octavia, his wife Livia, porticus of Gaius and Lucius, theatre of Marcellus, and the temple of his father Julius in the old Forum.¹⁶ As the old Forum was no longer sufficient to satisfy the legal and administrative needs of the growing city, two new fora to the north of it were added, one started by Caesar and the other by Augustus.

In the *Res Gestae* Augustus brags about building his new Forum on private land at his own expense. The immediate model for this was his father's Forum Iulium which he first finished¹⁷ before beginning serious work on his new project; it was larger than Caesar's Forum, with its marble paved square 125 metres long and 90 metres wide. The main entrance led from the earlier Forum Iulium into the large piazza, which was flanked on both sides by colonnades that housed a series of niches containing the statues of great men of the past. The visitor could stroll this promenade to look at the marble statues and read their titles and *elogia*, learning about each man's offices and achievements, respectively.¹⁸ At the end of the rows, a dominant central position was given to Augustus himself in a massive *quadriga* (four-horse chariot), styled as *pater patriae*.¹⁹ On each side of him the Forum expanded into semicircular *exedrae* that housed the great progenitors of the Roman race, Aeneas carrying Anchises and Romulus the *spolia opima*.²⁰

Augustus openly professed the purpose of these as honouring the memory of leaders who made the empire greater (and earned triumphs). According to Suetonius.²¹

¹⁴ In the pronaos. See Dio 53.27.3-4, Haselberger MAR s.v.

¹⁵ J. Geiger, *The First Hall of Fame*, Leiden, Boston 2008, 74.

¹⁶ W. Eck, *The Age of Augustus*, Oxford 2003, 105-12.

¹⁷ Opened in 19BC (J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 55-60).

¹⁸ J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 97.

¹⁹ Many comment on the central position of Augustus (A. Gowing, *Empire and Memory*, Cambridge 2005, 145; J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 95; G. Woolf, *Mars and Memory*, [In:] *Cultural Memories in the Roman Empire*, eds. K. Galinsky, K. Lapatin, Los Angeles 2015, 211).

²⁰ The exedrae probably also housed the other kings of Rome and the kings of Alba Longa. See J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 99-133.

²¹ Suet. *Aug.* 31.5. Translation after J.C. Rolfe, slightly modified Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars, Volume I: Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius. Caligula*, translated by J.C. Rolfe, introduction by K.R. Bradley. Loeb Classical Library 31. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.

Next to the immortal Gods he honoured the memory of the leaders who had raised the estate of the Roman people from obscurity to greatness. Accordingly, he restored the works of such men with their original inscriptions, and in the two colonnades of his forum dedicated statues of all of them in triumphal garb, declaring besides in a proclamation: "I have contrived this to lead the citizens to require me, while I live, and the rulers of later times as well, to attain the standard set by those worthy men of old."

Given the gravity of this educational task, a conscious process of selection of those included in the canon must be envisaged, not least because in one of the colonnades there was a whole row of Augustus' Julian ancestors.²² Considering the large expense of the project and the time it took to complete it,²³ it makes sense that the *princeps* deliberated on his choice of the exempla, giving his own family a prominent position.²⁴ Along such great Republican luminaries as Fabius Maximus, Duilius, Marius and Sulla one could also see Caesar's father, Drusus, Tiberius, Marcellus and Agrippa.

As Gowing points out, Augustus' selection implies a specific version of history, a creation of cultural memory of the heroes of the Republic as he saw it, men he wanted to be remembered with, at the same time forgetting those he would rather not mention.²⁵ Though the evidence is fragmentary and we do not have the material evidence for all the statues,²⁶ Gowing is surely right to surmise that the opponents of Caesar, Cato the Younger, and Brutus and Cassius were not included. As usual, Augustus' (re)organization of memory was selective.

The monumental art entailed a way of learning about the past that Woolf called 'a process somewhere between apprenticeship and initiation'²⁷ and it was open for all to see. As a visual project that any Roman could come to admire, the Forum was more accessible and easily comprehensible (and less ambiguous) than Virgil's *Aeneid* and (certainly) Horace's *Odes* or Livy's history.²⁸ However, it is interesting that the

²² J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 95, Ovid *Fasti* 5.563-4.

²³ It is unclear when the project started: J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, posits a date between the completion of the *Forum Iulium* and 19BC ('probably closer to the latter date'). M. Spannagel (*Exemplaria Principis*, Heidelberg 1999, 79-85) envisions a start in 17BC and opening of the Forum in 5BC, which is far from certain. The temple to Mars Ultor was opened later, on 12 May in 2BC (*Fasti* 5.545-98; M. Spannagel, *op. cit.*, 41-59).

²⁴ The number of statues is unknown. Geiger (J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 115-9) estimates a total of 150 with great caution.

²⁵ A. Gowing, *op. cit.*, 145; J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 98.

²⁶ The literary record is patchy and the main evidence comes from the fragmentary *elogia* that accompanied the statues. See M. Spannagel, *op. cit.*, 256-99; E. La Rocca, *La nuova immagine dei fori Imperiali. Appunti in margine agli scavi*, "Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts" 2001, 108, 171-213; A. Gowing, *op. cit.*, 117-62.

²⁷ G. Woolf, *op. cit.*, 218.

²⁸ J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 10-12.

fragmentary text of Dio's description of the opening of the temple of Mars Ultor has in mind a very specific segment of the Roman population:²⁹

...<Α>ρει, εαυτὸν δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἐγγόνους, ὅσάκις ἂν ἐθελήσωσι, τοὺς τε ἐκ τῶν παίδων ἐξιόντας καὶ ἐς τοὺς ἐφήβους ἐγγραφομένους ἐκεῖσε πάντως ἀφικνεῖσθαι.

...to Mars, and that he himself and his grandsons should go there as often as they wished, while those who were passing from the class of boys and were being enrolled among the youths of military age should invariably do so.

Dio's phrase 'those passing from the class of boys to military age' must refer to the Roman custom of the assumption of *toga virilis* which traditionally happened on the festival of the Liberalia. This was a festival of Liber on 17 March, traditionally the date on which a Roman boy would take off the bulla that protected him in childhood and exchange the child's *toga praetexta* for the *toga virilis* of manhood. In this new attire the boy and his father would ascend to offer sacrifice at the Capitol,³⁰ and then descend to the Forum to present the boy in the centre of public life.³¹ The day ended with celebration and feasting at the family home with the boy giving gifts and dinner invitations to family and friends.³²

Authors that discuss the boys' transition to manhood take Dio's information as referring to the Liberalia ceremony.³³ It is unclear at which stage the presentation in the Forum Augustum would happen, but they most likely went there after donning the *toga* at home. Dolansky points to cases of initiation in other areas of Italy and the provinces, which implies many boys would be unable to come to Rome for the purpose. Indeed, in the Republic the very date of the Liberalia (17 March) was not strictly speaking compulsory for initiation into manhood; Augustus himself assumed the *toga virilis* on 18 October.³⁴ However, the decree implicit in Dio Cassius' text probably referred to the citizens residing in Rome rather than Italy and the whole Empire.³⁵

Augustus' intervention in the Liberalia is interesting from more than one perspective. Liber was identified with the Greek Bacchus/Dionysus and this god carried the

²⁹ Dio 55.10.2. (section 1 of this chapter is lost). Translation after E. Cary (Loeb).

³⁰ App. B. Civ. 4.5.30; Serv. Ecl. 4.49.

³¹ Ovid F. 3.787-8. On Augustus' initiation see fn. 34 below.

³² See M. Harlow, R. Laurence, *Growing up and Growing Old in Ancient Rome*, London 2002, 68 (with references).

³³ B. Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Rome*, Oxford 2003, 323; M. Harlow, R. Laurence, *op. cit.*, 67-9; F. Dolansky, *Coming of Age in the Roman World*, [In:] *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, eds. J. Edmondson, A. Keith, Toronto-London 2008, 48-52.

³⁴ See Nicolaus 4.8-10; M. Toher, *Nicolaus of Damascus: the life of Augustus and the autobiography*, Cambridge 2017, 183.

³⁵ An inscription mentions a donation to the temple of Mars Ultor on the occasion. See W. Eck, *RE Suppl.* XIV (1974, 944), s.v. *Ummidius*: C. *Ummidius* Sallustius *toga virilis sumpta* M^{arti} *Ultori* <done dat>.

recent memory of Mark Antony. Augustus started out a fraught relationship with Liber/Dionysus because Antony assimilated himself with the god (following the tradition of Hellenistic rulers).³⁶ He identified himself with Apollo and used the negative aspects of the Dionysus myth to portray Antony as a drunken reveller in the East.³⁷ Later, Dionysian imagery was gradually (re)appropriated by Augustus: it appears on the *Ara pacis*³⁸, and the call for Bacchic inspiration in poets such as Virgil and Horace shows that it could have a positive value.³⁹ In any case, the artistic, political and poetic aspects of Dionysus do not in any way detract from the continued presence of the more sober Liber Pater in Roman state religion,⁴⁰ in which guise he presided over the traditional boys' initiation at the Liberalia.

We have seen that Augustus was deeply engaged with Roman religion and consistently sought to portray himself as its restorer while at the same time adding new elements to ancient tradition in order to suit his own purpose. Modifying the last stage in the Liberalia initiation would be a minor change (compared to some discussed above) and changing the place of their presentation from the Capitol and the old Forum to his new Forum would not be perceived as a deviation from tradition: the new setting was comparable to the Forum and the Capitol, not only in their capacity as public spaces, but also spaces of cultural memory, full of honorific and commemorative statues (including a statue of Liber himself on the hill).⁴¹

The new temple of Mars would be appropriate in more than one sense as it may have tapped into a very old Italic tradition, in which Mars was a god of male warrior initiation.⁴² Montanari argues that the collocation of the Liberalia with the Agonalia (or *agonium Martiale*) is not accidental as this was one of the days on which the Salii (as priests of Mars and Quirinus) danced through Roman streets.⁴³ Liber was the god of young men on their initiation to adulthood and Montanari cites the link between the noun for children (*liberi*) and the name Liber to support this idea.

³⁶ For this period see C. Pelling, *The Triumviral Period*, [In:] *The Cambridge Ancient History* X, Cambridge 1996.

³⁷ See Mac F. Góráin, *Apollo and Dionysus in Virgil*, „Incontri di filologia classica” 2012/13, 12.

³⁸ D. Castriota, *The Ara Pacis Augustae*, Princeton 1995, 87-123.

³⁹ See F. Mac Góráin, *Virgil's Bacchus and the Roman Republic*, [In:] *Augustan Poetry and the Roman Republic*, eds. D. Nelis, J. Farrell, Oxford 2013, 124-45; *idem*, Mac Góráin F., *The Mixed Blessings of Bacchus in Virgil's „Georgics”*, „Dictynna” 2014, 11 (online).

⁴⁰ Following an elaboration along the lines of Varro's tripartite theology (on which see J. Rüpke, *Religion in Republican Rome*, Philadelphia 2012, 172-85). E.g. Cicero (*Nat. D.* 2.62) differentiates between Liber, son of Semele, and Liber, son of Ceres (known from the mysteries).

⁴¹ See J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 27-30. On the statue of Liber with inscription see CIL 10.1402.

⁴² This is based on a speculative interpretation of a number of Etruscan mirrors. See G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, Chicago 1970, 243-4, 677-9; contra de Grummond N.T., *Etruscan myth, sacred history, and legend*, Philadelphia 2006, 140-5 (with illustrations).

⁴³ Montanari E., „*Figura* e *funzione* di Liber Pater nell'età repubblicana”, „Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni” 1984, 252-6.

There is some textual evidence to support this claim in a historical sense. As Greg Woolf recently noted, Dio's description of the Forum dedication comes in the midst of a narrative focused on Gaius and Lucius.⁴⁴ The two adopted sons of Augustus (born in 20 BC and 17 BC, respectively) were given the power to dedicate public buildings and on this occasion also celebrated games in the Circus. They are the first to appear in the fragment of Dio as it came down to us, right next to the mention of other boys' coming of age. This is unlikely to be an accident. In the preceding chapter Dio describes⁴⁵ Augustus' growing anxiety for his grandsons. They did not emulate his example, but supposedly indulged in luxury and idle pursuits. His response was to keep them busy with magistracies and public business, and the responsibilities of government. This included making them leaders of the youth (*principes iuventutis*), new associations of young men (and women), *collegia iuventutis*.⁴⁶ Augustus' concerns for succession were instigated by his perception of their behaviour and his own advanced age: the old man was to turn sixty in 3BC and making a mark in the form of a Forum bearing his name was just as important as securing his heritage through the choice of appropriate young heirs.⁴⁷ This may be part of the reason why the opening of the Forum was rushed to take place several years before the temple of Mars Ultor was completed.

In his very influential monograph on the Forum Augustum Spannagel argues that the Forum was first opened in 5BC to coincide with Gaius' coming of age (and introduction to the senate).⁴⁸ This is a matter of speculation, but is based on the fact that the later opening of the temple of Mars Ultor in 2BC does in fact coincide with Lucius' assumption of *toga virilis*. Simultaneously, this is also the year in which Gaius departs for his campaign in the East.⁴⁹ This is no coincidence for donning the white toga and becoming a *iuvenis* meant more than just being a young man. It implies one can now serve in the military, and Augustus was keen for his grandsons to get some experience in the field. The new Forum gave a visual expression to this sense of purpose that the young men were expected to attain in order to earn their rightful place amongst the heroes and in the eyes of their grandfather. Of course, Augustus soon learnt that they could not meet his stringent demands.

The military dimension of the Forum Augustum itself was more than obvious to its visitors: it was dominated by the massive temple of Mars Ultor, which specifically

⁴⁴ G. Woolf, *op. cit.*, 219-20.

⁴⁵ Dio 55.9.

⁴⁶ For which see C. Laes, J.H.M. Strubbe, *Youth in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge 2014, 122-35.

⁴⁷ J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 65-6.

⁴⁸ M. Spannagel, *op. cit.*, 21-34.

⁴⁹ Dio 55.10.17-9. As an anonymous referee points out, Ovid's reference to a young Bacchus in the context of Gaius' expedition (*Ars* 1.189-90) may have to do with the Liberalia ceremony.

invoked Augustus' victories over the conspirators, and which housed the recovered standards that Crassus had lost to the Parthians. The inscriptions under the statues listed the magistracies and military achievements of the men that were celebrated, and Augustus' own position in the triumphal chariot nailed the point. Also, Romulus was presented carrying the *spolia opima*, the greatest spoils of war a triumphant general could ever hope for. At the same time, it was decreed, as Dio says:⁵⁰

that those who were sent out to commands abroad should make that their starting-point; that the senate should take its votes there in regard to the granting of triumphs, and that the victors after celebrating them should dedicate to this Mars their sceptre and their crown; that such victors and all others who receive triumphal honours should have their statues in bronze erected in the Forum; that in case military standards captured by the enemy were ever recovered they should be placed in the temple.

All these directives point to the future and prescribe the way the space should be used by posterity, even anticipating new monuments for those who achieve triumphal honour. The boys becoming men come to learn about the positive qualities of manliness (*virtus*), and hope for their own place in the gallery that rewards such honours. The monumental *exempla virtutis* call for comparison with the present but also set the standard for all future leaders (Augustus himself, as we have seen in Suetonius' passage above). We are thus dealing with a site that looks not only back to the past, but forward to the future, and is thus a place of prospective memory. As Aleida Assman argues,⁵¹ the material aspects of Augustus' construction programme should be seen alongside the temporal expression of a new golden age, as announced in Virgil's *Aeneid* and the *Ara Pacis*.⁵² The marble of the Forum Augustum reflected this new age as the culmination of all Roman history and gave the sense of permanence, stability and eternity. After all this was a man whose portraits continued to represent him as a young man until the moment he died at the age of 77.⁵³

Thus the two aspects of memory that Forum Augustum invoked could be called reconstructive and prospective memory. Both of these also come together in one of the most frequent type of rituals, initiations. Initiation universally implies transition to a new mode of existence and boys' initiation into manhood is regularly accompanied by a form of ancestor worship that is essential in the formation of a man's new identity. In order to know how to be a man one has to learn this from the great men of the past. This is one dimension of the Forum Augustum that has not been sufficiently explored. Augustus' directive for boys to present themselves in his new Forum after

⁵⁰ Dio 55.10.2-4. Translation after E. Cary (Loeb).

⁵¹ A. Assmann, *Zeit und Tradition: kulturelle Strategien der Dauer*, Cologne 1999, 24-33.

⁵² D. Castriota, *op. cit.*, 124-69.

⁵³ Dinter and Guerin (forthcoming).

their initiation goes hand in hand with its function as an ancestral memorial. Many scholars have observed⁵⁴ that the statues of the Forum Augustum are comparable to the Republican custom of displaying and wearing ancestral masks in Roman families,⁵⁵ but to my knowledge no one has connected this to the Forum as the final stage in the process of boys' initiation.⁵⁶

Anthropological studies consistently maintain that elders and ancestors have a great role to play in male initiations.⁵⁷ As Assmann argues in the case of ancient Egypt, initiation and funerary rituals are closely intertwined:⁵⁸ in order to cross to the other world the deceased had to have precise knowledge and undergo interrogation by those who were already there. In the same way, an initiate (into a particular profession or way of life) has to have specific knowledge that is passed on to him from previous generations. As Eliade argues,⁵⁹ the boys have to learn the ancient lore of their people, secrets known only to the elders who are perceived to be in communion with the ancestors through generational cultural memory.

In the case of Augustus, the knowledge one had to obtain was one of military achievement and success, embodied in the ancestral exempla of the *summi viri* and the Julians that the *princeps* selected. Youth and posterity was a special focus of Augustus' policy, as reflected in a number of actions, most notably his 'moral' legislation to promote procreation,⁶⁰ and the growing sense of anxiety about his successor.

To conclude, Forum Augustum was a centerpiece of Augustus' own cultural memory, one in which the *princeps* invested a great deal of time and resources. He carefully selected the heroes he wanted to be remembered with, and laid down rules for the inclusion of future ones. He wanted this to be a sacred monumental space in which the people of Rome could learn his version of history, and this educational task was particularly directed towards boys as they transitioned into adulthood. The traditional initiation aspect of the festival of the Liberalia was ideally suited for this purpose, and I hope this paper casts some more light on the rite and the Forum Augustum.

⁵⁴ A. Gowing, *op. cit.*, 144: fn. 34; J. Geiger, *op. cit.*, 25-7, 80.

⁵⁵ Jan Assmann (J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, Cambridge 2011, 20) cites the latter as an example of a visual technique used to maintain the memory of the ancestors.

⁵⁶ Woolf (*op. cit.*, 220-1) comes closest to this interpretation. He compares walking through the Forum up to the temple of Mars Ultor to the gradual sense of revelation (and education) in prehistoric caves. For a discussion of the Liberalia itself as an initiation ritual see Montanari (1984: 255-64) with references.

⁵⁷ J.S. La Fontaine, *Initiation*, New York 1985, 141-61; H. Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity*, Oxford-Lanham MD 2004, 52-5.

⁵⁸ J. Assmann, *Death and initiation in the funerary religion of Ancient Egypt*, [In:] *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, ed. W.K. Simpson, "Yale Egyptological Studies" 1989, 3, 135-59.

⁵⁹ M. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, Putnam, Connecticut 2009, 66-71.

⁶⁰ See S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage. "Iusti coniuges" from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian*, Oxford 1991, 262-99.

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INITIATION INTO THE MYSTERIES OF AUGUSTUS: THE LIBERALIA AND THE FORUM AUGUSTUM

S u m m a r y

The paper uses the theoretical framework of cultural memory to explain Augustus' construction of Forum Augustum. The construction of Forum Augustum was a central project in the *princeps*; programme as it presented his own version of Roman history giving a special place to his family and generals closest to this vision of the ideal Roman. At the same time, the evidence for Augustus' religious reforms shows a decisive ruler who was very involved with the intricacies of Roman religion. Based on a passage of Dio we are able to see that Augustus also initiated a change in the festival of the Liberalia so that boys transitioning into manhood are inspired to great deeds by seeing his version of the great men of the past in his new Forum. The place had not only a commemorative function but also a prospective one as young men were expected to imitate the glory of their ancestors and hence a special role was given to Gaius and Lucius as *principes iuventutis*. Finally, the role of ancestors in initiation rites finds parallels in male initiations worldwide and shows Augustus' clever manipulation of Roman tradition to his own personal ends.

Keywords: Augustus, Roman religion, religious reform, Forum Augustum, initiation, Liberalia

INICJACJA W MISTERIA AUGUSTA: LIBERALIA I FORUM AUGUSTUM

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W artykule zastosowane zostały ramy teoretyczne pamięci kulturowej do wyjaśnienia idei towarzyszących Augustowi przy wznoszeniu jego Forum. Budowa Forum Augustum była głównym projektem w programie *princepsa*, jako że stanowiła manifestację jego własnej wizji historii Rzymu, w której szczególne miejsce zajmowała jego rodzina oraz dowódcy w największym stopniu odpowiadający ideałowi Rzymianina. Jednocześnie materiał źródłowy dotyczący reform religijnych Augusta ukazuje go jako stanowczego władcę, głęboko zainteresowanego zawiłościami rzymskiej religii. Bazując na tekście Kasjusza Diona jesteśmy w stanie dostrzec, że August również wprowadził zmianę do obchodów Liberaliów, by chłopcy przechodzący w wiek męski inspirowali się do wielkich czynów, przyswajając jego wizję zasłużonych postaci historycznych na jego nowym Forum. Miejsce to miało nie tylko funkcję upamiętniającą, lecz również perspektywną, jako że od młodych mężczyzn oczekiwano naśladowania wspaniałości swoich przodków. Stąd specjalną rolę dano Gajuszowi i Lucjuszowi jako *principes iuventutis*. Wreszcie wykorzystanie przodków w rytuałach inicjacyjnych ma swoje paralele w inicjacjach chłopców na całym świecie i pokazuje zmyślne posłużenie się przez Augusta tradycjami rzymskimi do realizacji własnych celów.

Słowa kluczowe: August, religia rzymska, reforma religijna, Forum Augustum, inicjacja, Liberalia