



The Forum of Augustus and its instructive character: the history of Rome recreated in stone

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ABSTRACT. This article discusses the instructive character present in the Forum of Augustus, one of the principal constructions undertaken by the *Princeps* Octavius Augustus at the end of the first century BC. From the studies about archaeological remains and written sources, we aim to analyze the main characteristics and particularities of this Forum and to what extent it constituted a place of memory, aiding in the perpetuation of a history of Rome recreated by Augustus and his support group, in which the *Princeps* stood out as the legitimate continuator of this history and the greatest example to be emulated; in such a way that the Forum of Augustus provided a true lesson in Roman history, materializing in stone this glorious past, of which Augustus was placed as a descendant and continuator.

Keywords: roman architecture; principate; memory; instruction.

O Fórum de Augusto e seu caráter instrutivo: a história de Roma recriada em pedra

RESUMO. Este artigo trata sobre o caráter instrutivo presente no Fórum de Augusto, uma das principais construções empreendidas pelo *Princeps* Otávio Augusto no fim do primeiro século a.C. A partir dos estudos acerca dos vestígios arqueológicos e de fontes escritas, objetivamos analisar as principais características e particularidades deste Fórum e em que medida ele se constituía em um lugar de memória, auxiliando na perpetuação de uma história de Roma recriada por Augusto e seu grupo de apoio, na qual o *Princeps* se destacava como legítimo continuador dessa história e o exemplo maior a ser emulado. Dessa forma, o Fórum de Augusto fornecia uma verdadeira aula de história romana, materializando em pedra este passado glorioso, do qual Augusto se colocou como descendente e continuador.

Palavras-chave: arquitetura romana; principado; memória; instrução.

El Foro de Augusto y su carácter instructivo: la historia de Roma recreada en piedra

RESUMEN. Este artículo trata sobre el carácter instructivo presente en el Foro de Augusto, una de las principales construcciones emprendidas por el *Princeps* Octavio Augusto al final del primer siglo a.C. A partir de los estudios acerca de los vestigios arqueológicos y de fuentes escritas, objetivamos analizar las principales características y particularidades de este Foro y en qué medida se constituía en un lugar de memoria, ayudando en la perpetuación de una historia de Roma recreada por Augusto y su grupo de apoyo, en la que el *Princeps* se destacaba como legítimo continuador de esa historia y el ejemplo más grande a ser emulado. De esta forma, el Foro de Augusto proporcionaba una verdadera clase de historia romana, materializando en piedra este pasado glorioso, del que Augusto se colocó como descendiente y continuador.

Palabras clave: arquitectura romana; principado; memoria; instrucción.

Introduction

In ancient times, just as over time, architecture, in the same way that images, in general, held a great power; a didactic power and among others, convincing, political and propagandistic. Octavius Augustus who started the form of government that became known as Principate, knew how to use this power in his favor, appropriating a custom that was already present in the Republic (which is to use architecture and images to link its own name to great deeds, gods, heroes and thus

keep his name alive in the memory of posterity), taking this use of material culture to a high degree of refinement, grandeur and complexity, granting greater monumentality to the capital of the Empire.

Octavius Augustus developed an ample program of aggrandizement of the city by means of the restoration and construction of diverse architectonic works. In this period of intense construction and reconstruction, *De Architectura* of Vitruvius arose, a treatise on architecture of great importance for studies on Roman architecture

because it is the only one of its kind that has reached the present day. This work helps us to understand some of the architectural practices developed by Greeks and Romans and had a close relationship with the policy engaged by Augustus, since it was dedicated to him, probably in 27 BC.

Among the various architectural works undertaken by Augustus in his government, we discuss in this work his Forum, which he erected after performing various interventions in the Forum Romanum, constructing or concluding important public buildings and after concluding the Caesar Forum. It is clear, therefore, the importance of the forums in Rome:

The Forum was established from the start as the political and symbolic centre of this Republican city state, which grew to be the capital of Italy by the third century bc, dominating the Mediterranean world through warfare and conquest during the next century. The Forum was a public space for a range of activities including political meetings, riots, gladiatorial combats and funerals (Watkin, 2009, p. 20).

According to Diane Favro (1988), the 'Roman Forum', as a focal point for communal energy, was not just an open space in Rome; it was a receptacle of collective consciousness, so that, during the Republic, each Roman life revolved around the Forum. In addition, with all its monuments and buildings, the 'Roman Forum' could provide a true lesson about republican history, since "[...] every building, every space, every stone had a story and a moral; every individual named or depicted stood as an exemplar" (Favro, 1988, p. 18.).

This instructive aspect was masterfully materialized in the 'Forum of Augustus', where this exemplary character of important personalities belonging to the history of Rome stood up in stone and should serve as an example for the population. Through architecture, Augustus demonstrated his role as restorer of the tradition of the ancestors, the *mos maiorum*, so that architecture served as a place of memory in his government, where it worked to avoid forgetting an exemplary past and the name and deeds of Augustus. This memory, or rather the representations produced by Augustus about a memory that would be shared by a majority, was extremely linked to history and mythology, to such an extent that the Forum of Augustus and the Temple of Mars Ultor, as well as other important monuments built under his rule, had the relevant role of safeguarding and propagating an effective and common memory or a memory created by manipulating an already existing repertoire.

Based on these initial considerations, our objective in this work is precisely to deal with this

instructive character present in the Forum of Augustus, who provided a kind of informal education whose didactic function was double, on the one hand, perpetuated the memory of a glorious past for the contemporaries of Augustus and, on the other hand, should perpetuate a positive memory of the government of this *Princeps* for future generations.

We analyzed this complex through written documentation, by means of the authors who mentioned such construction, as well as through the relevant bibliography, whose authors, in general, base their studies on the archaeological data coming from this architectural complex.

Forum of Augustus: memory and instruction

Roman architecture, especially that of public buildings, had an intrinsic relationship with memory and Roman history. On the one hand, it could contain the sculptural representations of the gods and heroes of a legendary past present in the Roman imaginary as belonging to the history of Rome itself; on the other hand, it linked itself in abiding way to the people and events behind its construction, immortalizing the name of its idealizers and their deeds, or reminiscing the context that gave rise to such a building.

The construction of new temples in Rome has always been linked to a notion of prestige and the aggrandizement of the name behind such enterprise, emphasizing the commitment of its idealizer to the gods and to the people. The consecration of a new temple was always a memorable and festive event that inscribed the name of the person responsible for the work in the memory of future generations, as Eric Orlin explains:

Roman temples, then, served not only as the *loci* for ritual activity in providing places for Roman religion, but also as monuments in which Roman memories and Roman history resided. [...] As viewers encounter a temple, their attention is drawn to the specific person who built the temple and the specific event it commemorates, and are thus reminded of the accomplishments of their ancestors and of what it means to be Roman (Orlin, 2007, p. 83).

In this view architecture could serve to safeguard and perpetuate Roman memory and history by playing an instructive role in materializing the imagery related to this past, thus functioning as a place of memory, a place where a wanted collective and shared memory was represented, something that Joël Candau¹ (2011) calls metamemory related to

¹ Joël Candau (2011, p. 23-24) differentiates memory into three types: a protomemory, related to the "most resilient knowledge and experiences best

the group. These memory-related representations that some individuals of Roman society produced about a memory that would be shared by a majority were extremely connected with history and mythology.

We can encompass in this perspective the constructions undertaken by Octavius Augustus in his government, which had the important role of safeguarding and propagating an effective and common memory or a memory created through the manipulation of an already existing repertoire. Moreover, such monuments, as they perpetuate themselves for eternity in the memory of all, they would perpetuate also the name of their idealizer, as well as their remarkable achievements.

Amongst his many constructions, we deal with the Forum of Augustus, as we believe that this construction was the one that best played in his government this pedagogical role, providing a kind of informal education whose didactic function was twofold. On the one hand, it perpetuated the memory of a glorious past for the contemporaries of Augustus; on the other hand it would perpetuate a positive memory of the government of this *Princeps* for future generations.

The Forum of Augustus owned the temple dedicated to Mars Ultor in a prominent place. According to tradition, this temple would have been promised in 42 BC when the battle of Philippi against the murderers of Caesar (Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum, Divus Augustus*, XXIX, Ovid, *Fasti*, V, 569-578). In addition, the temple also commemorated the recovery of the standards that had been in the hands of the Parthians since 53 BC. The return of the standards to Rome, despite having been through a diplomatic agreement and not through a great military conquest, represented a great victory for the Roman people and was loaded with a significant symbolic charge, for in the Roman imagery the Parthians always posed a threat, an almost insurmountable obstacle, a practically invincible enemy, against which a rematch was always expected for the ignominious death of Crassus. This revenge so often planned and attempted by Antony in the Triumvirate period was at last accomplished by Augustus; at least in this way it has been propagated by various means, as in *Res Gestae*, for instance (XXIX).

The temple then would be the place to keep such standards. Although it was promised in 42 BC, it is not known with certainty the date of the beginning of the works, neither the temple nor the Forum, although many scholars have launched their hypotheses. According to John W. Stamper (2005), the works of the Forum would have begun around 37 BC, although it had a greater impetus only in the 20's BC. For Brad Johnson (2001), Augustus would have begun work after 29 BC because the victory in Egypt would have guaranteed the necessary resources. For both Lothar Haselberger (2007) and Joseph Geiger (2008), the *Princeps* would have formulated plans to erect the architectural complex (the Forum and the Temple) around 19/18 BC. Assumptions aside, what is certain is that the temple promised in 42 BC was consecrated only in the year 2 BC, although the Forum had already been inaugurated before that date, as Suetonius states (*De Vita Caesarum, Divus Augustus*, XXIX).

There still is another controversial question about the Mars Ultor Temple, for some scholars, including Haselberger (2007), argue for the existence of two buildings dedicated to Mars Ultor, so that after Augustus retrieved the standards of the Parthians, he would have constructed, with the approval of the Senate, a small temple on the Capitol dedicated to Mars Ultor, whose purpose would be to temporarily shelter such standards, which it would have held until the year 2 BC, when the standards were definitively transferred to the larger temple of Mars Ultor, located in the Forum of Augustus; other scholars, such as J. W. Rich (1998) believe that a small temple dedicated to Mars Ultor, over the Capitol, was never built, even if it was planned. There is no archaeological evidence to prove the existence of the small temple of Mars Ultor in the Capitol, so that we do not consider its existence or not, since our objective is to analyze the Forum of Augustus together with the temple of Mars Ultor that was part of this architectural complex.

What we want to emphasize is that this architectural complex was of great importance in the government of Augustus and in his policy of restoration and construction in Rome:

In fact the *Forum Augustum*, with the Temple of Mars Ultor, was the last and ultimate major enterprise in the rebuilding of Rome. The renovation of the temples which had become dilapidated during the generations of civil strife, the great Sundial, the Ara Pacis, the Pantheon of Agrippa, and even the construction of the Mausoleum of Augustus, to house his and his family's remains, all preceded that grand project. (Geiger, 2008, p. 57).

organized by members of a society, [...] is an imperceptible memory, which occurs without becoming aware of this"; the memory itself, related to remembrances or memories; and the metamemory, which is the "representation that each person makes of his own memory, [...] metamemory is thus a claimed, ostensible memory." As a representation, metamemory can be related, at the level of society, to the expression 'collective memory', that is, "a statement that members of a group will produce about a memory supposedly common to all members of that group".

The architectural complex built by Augustus was grandiose. Its forum consisted of a wide open rectangular space measuring approximately² 125 meters in length by 85 meters wide, which was, instead of prominent, the temple of Mars Ultor, to the northeast, just in front of the main entrance of the Forum which was located to the southwest (Figure 1). From the point of view of the observer who entered the Forum through this main passage, the temple would be in a prominent position, centralized in the background, with only the magnificent statue of Augustus in a quadriga³ in front of it, an honorary statue offered to him by the Senate, in which could be read in the inscription placed in its base the honorary title of *Pater Patriae*. Closing all the right and left side of the Forum there were porticoes with other access entrances. Nowadays⁴, it is known that these porticoes had an exedra⁵ at each end, a total of four exedrae, although the two near the main entrance of the forum were slightly smaller than those near the temple, so that “[...] seems safe to assume that they differed from the first ones only in the absence of larger sculptural groups at their centre, corresponding to those in the first hemicycles” (Geiger, 2008, p. 118).

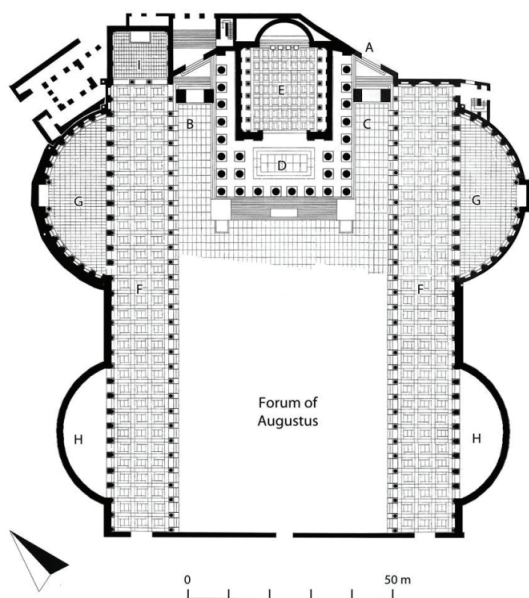


Figure 1. Plan of the Forum of Augustus: **A**, *Arco dei Pantani*; **B**, Arch of Drusus; **C**, Arch of Germanicus; **D**, pronaos of the Temple of Mars Ultor; **E**, cella of the Temple of Mars Ultor; **F**, porticoes; **G**, large hemicycles, seat of the tribunal; **H**, small hemicycles; **I**, Hall of the Colossus (Shaya, 2013, p. 86).

² The exact dimensions of the Forum of Augustus are not known, since it has not yet been completely excavated and part of it (on the southwest side) is under *Via dei Fori Imperiali* (Stamper, 2005).

³ There is no certainty about the presence or not of the figure of Augustus in this quadriga.

⁴ It was believed that there were only two exedrae, but from recent excavations it was discovered that in reality these porticoes had an exedra at each of their extremities, that is, a total of four exedrae.

⁵ Semicircular precinct, covered.

The temple of Mars Ultor glittered, made of Luna's white marble, in which on the frontispiece the figure of Mars could be seen in the center. To his right and left were the figures of Fortune, holding a cornucopia and a rudder, and Venus with a Cupid and a scepter. Next to them were the figures seated from Rome on a pile of guns, and Romulus dressed as a shepherd holding the staff, or lituus, of an augur. The recumbent figures located at the tips of the frontispiece were representations of the Palatine and Tiber⁶. The colonnade of the temple was an octastyle, that is, it had eight columns under the frontispiece. The temple was on a high podium that was 50 meters long by 36 meters wide and had, at the front, a staircase with seventeen steps in marble.

The open square of the Forum was also paved with white marble to contrast even more effectively with the yellow and red colonnades of the right and left porticoes, which were made of *giallo antico* marble extracted from Numidia. The second floor of the colonnades, in which the decoration included Caryatids and shields, was also in white marble. The marble used for the pavement of the temple was, besides the *giallo*, the *africano* and *pavonazzetto*, the latter also found in the columns of the interior of the temple. The floors of the other buildings were also quite colorful and differentiated from each other by their composition. The marble floor of the porticoes was laid out in large squares of blue-gray *bardiglio*, matching a central *africano* square with a rectangular *giallo* border. In the places where the porticoes took the form of semicircular exedrae, the pavement changed to an *africano* plaid pattern and *giallo*. At the back of the northern exedra was the 'Hall of the Colossus', which housed a monumental statue possibly of Alexander and after the Augustus' death, a statue of his own. Its plaid pavement was made in *pavonazzetto* and *giallo*, materials that were also in pilasters and columns. Other elements of the Forum were made of *cipollino*, a marble with greenish tonality (Galinsky, 1998).

We must emphasize the relation that this architectural complex had with the Forum of Caesar, so that we can say that this served as an influence for it, because, like the Forum of Caesar, that of Augustus was a large rectangular space, with porticoes on the sides and with a temple centered at one of its extremities, occupying prominent place. In addition, although the Temple of Mars Ultor was larger than *Venus Genetrix*, both had similar plants and had the same typology for intercolumn:

⁶ Most of the data relating to the images contained in the temple pediment comes from representations where the temple appears in the background.

The Forum Augustum was closely linked with the Forum of Caesar, which Augustus finished building before serious work began on his own. The deities of the two forum temples complemented one another: Venus Genetrix was the ancestress of the Romans and Julians whose illustrious scions populated the 'Hall of Fame', while Mars was the Roman ancestor. The temple in Caesar's forum was the first Roman temple with an apse, an innovation that was used for the Temple of Mars Ultor also (Galinsky, 1998, p. 208).

The Forum of Caesar was completed by Augustus, probably in the 20's BC, the same period in which he must have begun to build his own Forum, which makes Geiger (2008) suggest that, at least initially, Augustus conceived his whole Forum as a tribute to Caesar. Accepting or not this hypothesis, the relation and the similarity between the two Forums are undeniable. However,

Despite its debt to that of Julius Caesar, the Forum of Augustus is considerably more sophisticated in intent and execution. Focusing not merely on the new *princeps*' family and its place in Roman history, Augustus' Forum was an architectural and artistic declaration of the restored Republic. Certainly no Roman monument more ably showcases the seamless blending of past and present, public and private, domestic and foreign, Republican and imperial (Gowing, 2005, p. 138).

Even with all the grandeur of the Forum of Augustus, this huge project did not depart in any real sense from the great projects of other rulers of the ancient world and did not add a true new notion to the existing ideas. Indeed, there was no significant difference between the Forum of Augustus and that of his father, completed by him a few years earlier. His great innovation was the 'Hall of Fame', the Gallery of Heroes (Geiger, 2008), for along the walls of both porticoes there were several rectangular niches in which were statues of important personalities for the history of Rome, which are historical or legendary, the *summi viri*, of which we speak later.

The Temple of Mars Ultor was one of the symbols of Rome's strength. Its relation with the military sphere was enormous, not only because it was a temple dedicated to the god of war or because it was built in honor of military victories against the murderers of Caesar and against the Parthians, but also for the functions it performed. It should be noted that the Temple of Mars Ultor was a manubial⁷ temple, it means, a temple built from war spoils, the riches coming from defeated enemies, as

Augustus himself states: "On my own ground I built the temple of Mars Ultor and the Augustan Forum from the spoils of war" (Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, XXI)⁸.

The architectural complex of the Forum of Augustus played an important role in the perpetuation of a memory related to a glorious past, materializing the history of Rome, of which Augustus stood as a legitimate continuator, inscribing his name and his deeds in the memory of future generations, aspect emphasized by Vitruvius when affirming:

[...] I saw that you have built and are now building extensively, and that in future also you will take care that our public and private buildings shall be worthy to go down to posterity by the side of your other splendid achievements (Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, I, Pr, 3)⁹.

The term 'memoriae', used by Vitruvius, relates here to everything that would be recalled, remembered, so that for him the constructions would serve as a mnemonic trigger, allowing future generations, seeing such constructions, remembered the name and of the deeds behind such works. This section of the *De Architectura* is significant because it demonstrates the relationship between architecture and memory, as much as it demonstrates the concern of Vitruvius and Augustus in this regard. We see in this way the important role played by the monuments of Augustus in preserving and immortalizing a memory to some extent selected by the Emperor and his supporting group, since in his Forum he used mythology to show his descendant of a divine lineage. The Augustan monuments and especially his Forum, functioned as a place of memory, a place where the past should be perpetuated.

In addition, this memory, which found a place in architecture, modeled men and was modeled by him (Candau, 2011). It modeled the man by allowing him to see, for example, the myths and histories he had known since childhood, and could even contribute to his identity formation, since architecture had a pedagogical aspect, a didactic value, such that in an oralized society, whose great majority of the population was illiterate, the two-dimensional and three-dimensional representations present in the architecture had an important instructive role, because it materialized the histories transmitted from generation to generation, thus

⁷According to Orlin (2002), there is no consensus regarding a precise definition of the term *manubiae*, so we can only say that the term refers to war spoils and that the victorious generals had the initiative to organize their distribution.

⁸ "In privato solo Martis Vltoris templum forumque Augustum ex manibiis feci".

⁹ "[...] animadverti multa te aedificavisse et nunc aedificare, reliquo quoque tempore et publicorum et privatorum aedificiorum, pro amplitudine rerum gestarum ut posteris memoriae traderentur, curam habiturum".

helping in the transmission and sharing of knowledge related to the history of Rome.

Architecture was modified by man, who could manipulate it and use it according to his political interests, for instance, by highlighting certain histories or variants of myths in the architecture to the detriment of others, which can be seen in the Forum of Augustus, because we realize in his iconography the relationship propagated by Augustus between him and a divine lineage, linking himself to the history of Rome and to characters like Aeneas, Romulus, Mars and Venus. According to John Scheid (2003), the use of the Trojan myth under the government of Augustus served directly to his political interests and reconnected the history of Rome with that of mythical Greece.

Paul Zanker (2005) points out that the most decisive in the iconographic program of the Forum Augustum as far as the mythological part is concerned, was the combination between the myth of Troy and the legend of Romulus, so much so that, in the way that Virgil had written, Augustus was the principal representative of a divine lineage that had Mars and Venus as ancestors, since Aeneas, son of Anchises and Venus, was seen as one of the most important ancestors of the *gens Iulia*, because he was the father of Ascanius/Iulo, how it was said, had founded the city of Alba Longa. From this line descended Rhea Silvia, who, seduced by Mars, impregnated and gave birth to the twins Romulus and Remus, Romulus being the founder of Rome and its first King.

These illustrious characters had a prominent place in the Forum. Beginning with the images of the gods Mars and Venus, whose cult statues, it seems occupied notorious places on the frontispiece of the temple and inside. In addition, the statues of important personalities of Roman history appeared in the porticoes and in the exedrae located nearest to the temple:

He filled his forum with images and inscriptions that commemorated the expansion of the empire through time. Famous for claiming that he found Rome a city of brick and turned it into one of marble, Augustus performed a transformation of the public history of Rome that was equally impressive: he made it a grand imperial affair of marble and monuments. In the *summi viri*, 753 years of Roman history were in stones that seemed to guarantee the very permanence of the ideas cast into them. And all the stones and their stories belonged to the even more magnificent Forum of Augustus (Shaya, 2013, p. 89).

The exedrae had two floors and had niches between the pilasters on both levels. The central

niche in each one of the exedrae was larger than the others, both in width and height, and contained the statues of Aeneas carrying Anchises and holding the hand of Ascanius in the northwest exedra, and that of Romulus bearing the *spolia opima*, in the southeast. The descendants of the *gens Iulia* were aligned on the side of Aeneas, and the *summi viri* of Rome next to Romulus.

According to Harriet I. Flower (1996), the dedication in the Temple of Mars Ultor to the standards recovered from the Parthians was an equivalent of the *spolia opima* carried by Romulus, the first triumphant, connecting him to Augustus, the new founder of Rome. For this author, it was through these triumphant images that Augustus connected with the *summi viri* who were not directly attached to him; through his Trojan ancestry, Augustus was able to extend the comparison to Aeneas' beginning, which allowed him to include the series of Albanian kings among his ancestors.

It's clear the close relationship between the construction of the Forum Augustum and its policy, which knew how to unify the capital of the Empire through public works, with the appreciation of the past and traditions of the ancestors, the *mos maiorum*, manipulating memory and the imaginary representations of this memory and the imaginary of his time. With this, it was possible to connect his history with the mythical past of Rome, establishing a link between present, past and future.

Augustus appropriated of the past in order to recreate a history in which his name and that of his family were directly connected to a lineage of heroic origin, connecting with such characters as Mars, Venus, Aeneas, and Romulus. With the construction of his Forum, Octavius Augustus made possible a place where the population could have direct access to the representations of this history recreated by him. The Forum thus became a place of instruction and socialization of this memory selected and propagated by Augustus. According to Louise Revell (2009), Augustus used the iconography of his Forum as a way to re-create a history of Rome that responded to his political needs:

In addition, as Augustus created a mythical past to reinforce his own political power, so the adoption of those same myths as a communal heritage by people of the empire further recreated this power. Myths such as that of Romulus and Remus came to symbolize a shared sense of history, whilst at the same time maintaining the aura of imperial power (Revell, 2009, p. 107).

We realize in Augustus' government and in his monuments the privileged position conferred on the myths of Troy and Romulus, myths that told the origin of the Roman people, their institutions and

their leaders. For Scheid (2003), this preference occurred for some reasons; first because this mythological theme allowed a large number of Romans, and particularly citizens, to participate in this process of reflection. Secondly because this restriction conforms to the Roman inclination of mythology that focuses on historical, patriotic, and institutional issues. And finally, because mythical narratives were part of the circle of symbolic operations, because, even though there were those who doubted the veracity of myths, it was not a *sine qua non* condition for the efficacy of the genre. The author concludes by declaring his opinion that the mythology of the Augustan period fulfilled an active social and intellectual function.

When materializing the myths and the Roman history in its monuments, the Emperor recreated a history of Rome that culminated of glorious way in his government. Augustus recreated the past, linking his history with the history of Rome, and also connected it with the present and the future of the Empire. He sought to demonstrate that the future would be a time of harmony and progress, of peace and prosperity; in short, of grandeur and glory.

The Augustan Age was not only an age of reform, of renaissance and of reconstruction, but also to a considerable extent an age looking back and summing up the achievements and the deficiencies of the past. No satisfactory reorganization of state and society could take place without considering the men and the ethical principles that had made the Republic great [...]. Without being aware of the past it was possible neither to recognize the great achievements of the present nor to realize that in the future there could be no returning to the mistakes of that past (Geiger, 2008, p. 35).

The Forum of Augustus became, therefore, a true visual lesson of the history and greatness of Rome. In this perspective, Geoffrey Sumi (2005) argues that the restoration and valorization of the past, demonstrated by the *Princeps*, had even greater force in the topography of Rome at that time, where the memory of the city status as capital of a world empire was visible throughout part, and that perhaps the effect expected by Augustus was a “[...] demonstration that his Rome was the link between Roma’s glorious past and its prosperous future” (Sumi, 2005, p. 245).

In the *De Architectura* of Vitruvius, we notice the relationship he established with the past, a place where inspiration should be sought, the models and references to an architecture that would dignify *Vrbs* even more. In this seek for inspiration through what the ancients transmitted, the instructions and theories developed by the ancient Greeks stand out,

at least as far as temple architecture is concerned, and the other constructions were, a kind freer of Greek theory and more related to Italics mores of construction, such as building forums.

Augustus used the representations of memory, linking himself to it and making it an ever stronger memory, that is, a “[...] massive, coherent, compact and profound memory that imposes itself on a large majority of the members of a group” (Candau, 2011, p. 44) and which can be, after reformulation, collectively memorized, since it is based and rooted in a cultural tradition, namely, the glorification and praise of heroes and their lineages. Just as writing enabled the storage of information whose fixed character can provide collective referentials more effectively than oral transmission¹⁰, the monumental architecture made possible the same and allowed the socialization of memory, that is, its diffusion to a greater number of people by the entire Empire. In this way, the monumentality of the Empire achieved through architecture would inscribe the name of its idealizer, in this case Augustus, in the memory of future generations and in the history of Rome, because it would perpetuate and immortalize the deeds of this sovereign.

Augustus also had to make sure, following Vitruvius further, that his built monuments should enable the greatness of his deeds to survive in the memory of posterity; he had to make sure that, in addition to what he had already built and was building, his concern for ‘both public and private buildings’ remained active for the future (Haselberger, 2007, p. 28).

Therefore, Augustus knew how to use the monumental architecture in benefit of the valorization of his image, perceiving and using the architecture role as a place of memory.

The fundamental reason for being a place of memory, Pierre Nora observes, ‘is to hold the time, block the work of oblivion, assign a state of affairs and immortalize death’. [...] The identity function of these places is made explicit in the definition given to them by the historian: ‘any significant unity, material or ideal, from which the will of men or the work of time made a symbolic element of the patrimony memorial of any community’. A place of memory is a place where memory works (Candau, 2011, p.156-157).

In the *De Architectura* Vitruvius praises Augustus’ concern for the construction of public and private buildings, making clear to the Emperor his certainty that the construction of monuments helped to perpetuate the name and deeds of the one behind

¹⁰ This idea is defended by Candau (2011, p. 107-108), for whom the written tradition also facilitated the “[...] work of the bearers, guardians and diffusers of memory”, allowing their socialization.

such constructions as he inscribed his name in the memory of future generations as an example to be followed. However, Vitruvius goes beyond, because he does not only relate architecture to memory, but also seeks to place his own name in the memory of the coming ones through his writings. With this, we see the similarity of interests of Augustus and Vitruvius, as both sought, each one in their own way, to immortalize their names and inscribe them in the memory of future generations.

The *Summi Viri* and their Exemplary Character

We must emphasize here the close relationship between the history told in the Forum of Augustus and his exemplary character, because the past which Augustus claimed to restore had an exemplary function, as could be seen in his Forum and in the porticoes, full of representations of the great men of the past that they were, in some way, examples to be followed.

We can see this exemplary aspect of the *summi viri* in Suetonius (*De Vita Caesarum, Divus Augustus, XXXI*), in which he emphasizes the importance of the homage paid to the memory of the generals, as well as showing the extent to which such honorific statues served as example from which both Octavius and the next ones should learn and be inspired. In Suetonius' words, Augustus:

Next to the immortal gods, he paid the highest honours to the memory of those generals who had raised the Roman state from its low origin to the highest pitch of grandeur. He accordingly repaired or rebuilt the public edifices erected by them; preserving the former inscriptions, and placing statues of them all, with triumphal emblems¹¹, in both the porticos of his forum, issuing an edict on the occasion, in which he made the following declaration: My design in so doing is, that the Roman people may require from me, and all succeeding princes, a conformity to those illustrious examples (*De Vita Caesarum, Divus Augustus, XXXI*)¹².

With regard to the exemplary character of the past, Matthew Roller (2009) reminds us of Cicero's magisterial history and clarifies that:

Underlying this 'exemplary' view of the past is the assumption that the past occupies a space of

experience continuous with or homologous to the present, and therefore lies open to immediate apprehension by present actors. This homology or continuity – the framework that compellingly subsumes and connects past and present – is primarily *ethical*, since the moral values (piety, valor, trustworthiness, prudence, etc.) embodied in past actions are assumed to remain constant and diachronically valid (Roller, 2009, p. 215).

This author proposes that this 'exemplarity' is a discourse, a coherent system of symbols that organizes and represents the past in a particular way and thus also facilitates a particular way of knowing it. For him, this discourse produces his way of knowing the past through four sequential operations: 1- Someone performs an action before the members of the Roman community, which consist of those who share a particular set of practices, orientations and values, namely, the *mos maiorum*; 2- This audience evaluates its consequences for the community, judging it 'good' or 'bad' in relation to one or more of these shared values. Such action becomes a normative 'deed', potentially capable of transmitting values or stimulating imitation; 3- The deed, its performer and the judgment(s) become commemorated, and thus made available to a wider audience of contemporaries and to posterity, through one or more monuments; 4- People who encounter such monuments, and thus know of a deed and its reception are called upon to accept such a deed as normative – it means, as a moral standard for evaluating the action of other actors, or as a model of action for themselves to imitate or avoid. These spectators can, in addition, create another monument to the deed, even distant in time or space. Certainly, such spectators do not always agree with the judgments they found sedimented in the original monument, for example, to analyze the deed in an opposite way that was represented (Roller, 2009).

Accepting these notions developed by Roller (2009), we can establish a relationship between these operations and the Forum of Augustus, because this architectural complex, as a whole, had this pedagogical function to instruct the population as to the exemplary character of the Roman history personalities selected to appear in the Forum. Such examples present in this glorious past should be emulated, as should *Princeps* himself, an example of greater prominence, whereas the whole history told in his Forum culminated in him as the legitimate continuator of the past:

Augustus' Gallery of Heroes was a place of memory, but was meant above all as a place of instruction. It

¹¹ According to T. J. Luce (1990), Suetonius is wrong to imply that all were in triumphant dress, fragments of togate statues have been found, and of those for whom *elogia* survive, neither Appius Claudius Caecus nor L. Albinus celebrated triumphs.

¹² Proximum a dis immortalibus honorem memoriae ducum praestitit, qui imperium p. R. ex minimo maximum reddidissent. Itaque et opera cuiusque manentibus titulis restituit et statuas omnium triumphali effigie in utraque fori sui porticu dedicavit, professus est edicto: commentum id se, ut ad illorum ... velut ad exemplar et ipse, dum viveret, et insequentium aetatum principes exigerentur a civibus.

displayed the past, but its message was for the present and for the future (Geiger, 2008, p. 24).

The Forum, and more precisely the Mars Ultor Temple located in it, commemorated the deeds of the *Princeps*¹³, both revenge on Caesar's assassins, and the resumption of the standards that were in Parthian hands; these deeds had a close relationship with the values shared then, among them *pietas*.

In addition, the gallery of heroes, in which Augustus arranged honorific statues of important personalities of Roman history, also relates to Roller's operations (2009), inasmuch as such statues were monuments erected by Augustus, which in some cases, made mention of or even replaced existing ones, and which, on the other hand, honored great men and their deeds for the Republic. Moreover, as Peter Stewart (2003) states, the number of statues scattered throughout Rome, and especially in the capitoline area, there were so many that Augustus removed many of these. However, for this author, the reason for the removal of these statues was due not only to the fact that that region was crowded but also to the Emperor's desire to limit the individual self-promotion of the Roman aristocracy. According to Stewart, the Capitol was the most privileged place for the statuary exhibition, so it is most likely that "Augustus wished to remove the images of *nobiles* who did not belong in the reinvented past and also perhaps to prevent future erection of statues by potential rivals" (Stewart, 2003, p. 132).

On this same subject, Geiger states that:

The reconstruction of Rome by Augustus included of course not only the restoration of dilapidated public buildings and the erection of new ones, but also a total reorganization of urban space, removal of decay and a restructuring of the entire area of the public spaces of the city. Clearly the disorderly state of Roman statuary had to change: statues had to be removed, regimanted, or both. It is here that the solution involving the new Forum must have occurred to Augustus—or to somebody near to him. [...] It has been suggested that lack of space was only a secondary reason, the main motivation being that this disorderly accumulation did not conform with the programme of his Forum (Geiger, 2008, p. 74-75).

In any case, what became known with the gallery of heroes was the architectural materialization of one of the aspects to which Augustus linked his image throughout his government, that means, the valorization and restoration of the *mos maiorum* and

the old traditions, because the honorific statues of important republican figures connected him to the history of Rome since its foundation, as he represented it, either because he belongs to the same divine lineage of Aeneas and Romulus, for example, or because he possesses the same virtues that the *summi uiri* embodied, as Brad Johnson argues (2001, p. 65), Augustus may have chosen the people who would be represented on the porticoes "[...] because they each exemplified one or more of the four virtues which he had been honoured for possessing, and upon which he apparently modeled his life". According to Alain M. Gowing,

Image and text here work together to present a fairly fixed memory of a very select group of men; both media, sculpture and inscription, by their very nature suggest a sense of permanence and continuity. [...] The aim of the gallery, however, was to put the new emperor and his family into visual play with those Republican characters with whom he wished to be most closely associated [...] (Gowing, 2005, p. 139-145).

With regard to the *summi uiri* and their virtues, we must remember that they were arranged in rectangular niches on the wall that closed both porticoes. These niches stood between pillars and keep the marble and full-body honorific statues of these great men dressed, in their great majority, in triumphant clothes. Beneath each statue a brief *titulus* had the name of the individual and a long *elogium* which recounted the services of each to the Republic. Both *tituli* and *elogia* were inscribed in marble (Figure 2).

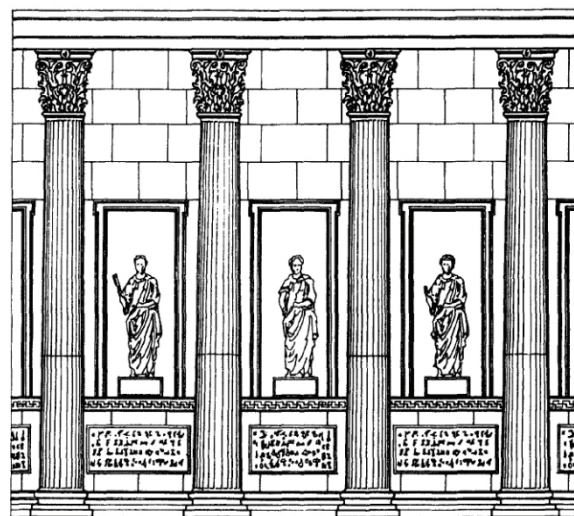


Figure 2. Reconstruction of the display of *summi uiri* in the Forum of Augustus, 2 B.C.E., showing statues of model Romans with plaques detailing their achievements (Shaya, 2013, p. 87).

¹³ Indeed, one of these deeds, that is, revenge for the murder of Caesar, was not carried out only by Augustus, because in this period the triumvirate still existed.

As we have already said, the *summi uiri* gallery materialized part of the history of Rome, serving as a true lesson on the glorious past of *Vrbs*.

Thus Augustus produced a version of Roman history that was both attractively accessible to the greatest possible number of citizens, and also presented to them the one correct rendition of events. It was to be an history whose moral would not be lost on anybody. Its function to instruct and to teach the appropriate lessons for the future was not to be left to chance, but it was to be expressed in a clearly comprehensible manner (Geiger, 2008, p. 71-72).

As Josephine Shaya (2013) enlightened us, the Forum of Augustus offered what was perhaps the closest thing to a formal lesson in Roman history that part of the population could find. This author recalls that in Ancient Rome

History texts were rare and difficult, or rather, impossible, for most to read. The Forum of Augustus offered another kind of history—public history, aimed at a broad audience within public spaces. Its materials included inscriptions, images, and buildings; it was seen, heard, and read; its audience was everyone [...]. As the very creation of the *summi viri* shows, the person in the street was interested in history and knew stories of the past in part because of what he or she heard and saw in public spaces (Shaya, 2013, p. 92).

Due to the current state of the Forum, which is in ruins and without being completely excavated, we can not determine the exact number of niches and/or statues in the porticoes when it was inaugurated in the Augustan period. Besides, it is believed that empty niches have been left for future occupants. The fragments of the *elogia*, as well as the copies¹⁴ found in other localities allow us to have an idea of what was written in some of these inscriptions, so that Johnson affirms that:

The *elogia* of twenty-eight individuals have been identified from the Forum. This number, however, reflects only those individuals whose inscriptions may be reconstructed with confidence. The literary sources reveal that other individuals were honoured in the Forum by Augustus, but these *elogia* have not survived (Johnson, 2001, p. 7).

Still according to Johnson (2001) the *elogia* of the Forum Augustum had five characteristics that can be thus identified: 1) nomenclature; 2) list of magistracies exercised; 3) military achievements; 4) personal or civil achievements; and 5) construction

programs or other information. Each entry seems to have included at least three of the components. The two firsts, nomenclature and magistracies, were probably present in all inscriptions; the remaining three, however, would occur in various combinations and with varying frequency.

Johnson (2001) explains each of these five sections that he listed in his work, so that, according to him, the nomenclature of such *elogia* follows the following structure: names are given in the nominative, *praenomina* are abbreviated, *gentilicia* are provided and affiliation is indicated through the use of patronymics. *Cognomina* were included and in some cases, additional *cognomina* were added in the nomenclature. The listed magistrates in *elogia* that come to us and those that can be determined from other sources, reveal that most *summi uiri* have performed the most important functions of Rome. It is possible that *sacerdotia* have been included in *elogia* in order to emphasize the religious importance and functions of the Forum. The third section of the *elogia* focuses on the military achievements of the *summi uiri*. In this section, military victories, major battles, capturing cities, subjugating the enemies of Rome and celebrating triumphs are more often mentioned.

This section also lists actions that were carried out in a military context, but which do not adhere to the common themes mentioned above. The fourth section of *elogia* presents what has been called *exemplum uirtutis*. This 'example of virtue' was the main reason why the individual was honored at the Forum with a statue accompanied by the *elogium* and it was this kind of behavior that Augustus desired the future leaders of Rome to imitate. The final component of the *elogia* is not common to all inscriptions, but in those that include this part, two themes seem to be common. One handles *summi uiri* sponsored construction programs and the other concentrates on special honors and positions that have been given to particular individuals (Johnson, 2001).

Regarding the inscriptions that were below the statues of the *summi uiri*, it is important to point out that the fact that a great part of the population is illiterate did not diminish the didactic and instructive function of the Forum of Augustus, since such inscriptions could be read to an audience and thus be shared with many. Moreover, many of those who could not read the inscriptions were able to decode certain iconographic features present in some statues, since some iconographic motifs were widely diffused and seen like pattern in the representation of some personalities, as, for example, the representation of Aeneas carrying the father on

¹⁴ Some, if not all, statues and *elogia* exhibited at the Forum were duplicated and placed in several places throughout Italy and elsewhere. These cities, as a result of private donations or public vote, chose to erect monuments inspired or modeled from those in Rome. As a result, copies of the *elogia* were recovered in the cities of Arezzo, Pompeii and Lavinium. These reproductions helped to restore the inscriptions found in the Forum (Johnson, 2001).

his shoulder and pulling his child by the hand. In this same perspective, Shaya (2013) clarifies that:

While some viewers were able to read or at least piece together parts of the inscriptions, such as the names, those unable to do so could 'read' the size of the texts, the iconography of the images, the number of texts and images, and the visual narrative of the vast collection 'written' into the architecture of the forum (Shaya, 2013, p. 92).

With regard to the authors who would have influenced the choice of the *summi uiri*, and the writing of the *elogia*, we can mention: Marcus Terentius Varro, Cornelius Nepos and Titus Pomponius Atticus, besides Titus Livius and Vergilius:

The activity of the near-contemporaries Varro, Nepos and Atticus reflects the new historical consciousness of the end of the Republic Varro and Nepos chose, each in his own way, to deal with hundreds of figures from many walks of life, the political and military being just one, and not necessarily the most prominent, among them, while Atticus, the intimate friend and adviser of politically active aristocrats, dealt with the genealogy of the nobility or of some of its chosen members (Geiger, 2008, p. 36-37).

The work of such biographers would, in this way, have influenced the choice of the *summi uiri* and the writing of *elogia*, so Johnson (2001), who deals with two of these three biographers, Varro and Atticus, as a possible source of inspiration, believes that the works of these two Roman biographers and the form of presentation they exert may have influenced the manner in which statuary and inscriptions were displayed in the Forum.

T. J. Luce (1990), which deals with the relationship between the work of Titus Livius and the Forum of Augustus sees the influence of one over the other as certain, although emphasizing that each one focus on different aspects, the author demonstrates how they are related, even affirming that the Forum of Augustus and *Ab Vrbe Condita* were the two most famous monuments to republican history in Augustus'era (Luce, 1990). This author also states that

On one point in particular Livy and Augustus were in emphatic agreement: history was the great repository of *exempla* by which one might pattern one's life and against which one might measure the worth of one's own contributions. Livy's remarks in his preface (10) coincide with the emperor's faith in the power of *exempla* in Roman life (Luce, 1990, p. 129).

In regard to Vergilius, Johnson (2001) argues that his work, *Aeneid*, was the one that had the greatest influence on Augustus and the disposition

of the *summi uiri* in his Forum, stating that similarities can be seen between passages in book six and seven with the layout of the Forum.

Influences aside, the Forum of August allowed an exemplary past to be made available to the population by means of a perennial support that is, in stone, being easily visualized by all those who sought the Forum for the most varied activities, constituting itself in a place of memory, instruction, sociability and sharing.

Final considerations

The Forum of Augustus masterfully expounded a history of Rome recreated by the *Princeps* and those around him, in which he and his family had a prominent role. The Roman history materialized in his Forum, bringing to the eyes of all an exemplary past, represented by the honorific statues of great men with their *elogia* summarizing their deeds, sought to keep alive in memory of all the name of Augustus as legitimate successor of the great men of the past, so that he figured as the greatest example to be followed.

In this way, the personalities chosen to appear in the gallery of the *summi uiri* should contribute to the association of the image of Augustus with the virtues in which he sought to bind himself throughout his government. In his Forum Augustus appeared as the greatest example, one that surpassed all with his deeds, his virtues and his *auctoritas*.

The Forum of Augustus and in its interior the Mars Ultor Temple clearly represented an important characteristic that the architecture, especially of the public buildings, had in antiquity, that is to function like place of memory, a place where the memory is conserved, where memory works so that oblivion is avoided. In addition to being a place of memory, it was also a place of instruction in the Forum of Augustus, which enabled the acquisition of knowledge about an exemplary past, selected and recreated by Augustus and his supporting group. In this architectural complex the image of Augustus established a double relation with memory, because it was so closely linked with the history of Rome and the memory of an exemplary past which was to be emulated, as projected in the memory of future generations, inscribing his name and deeds in immortality and assuming the place of greater example being imitated by the forthcoming.

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