

PALACE-SANCTUARY OR PAVILION? AUGUSTUS' HOUSE AND THE LIMITS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

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February 2021 saw the coincidentally simultaneous publication of two important books about the Augustan Palatine: *Dal mostro al principe* by Andrea Carandini and Paolo Carafa, and *Il complesso di Augusto sul Palatino* by Patrizio Pensabene, Patrizio Fileri and Enrico Gallochio. Since Carandini and Pensabene have been for decades the most significant archaeological investigators of the Palatine, these two major works of synthesis offer a timely opportunity to assess the historical contribution of archaeology in the 60 years since Gianfilippo Carettoni first identified 'the house of Augustus'. That contribution has been surprisingly disappointing, and this article tries to explain why.

Nel febbraio 2021 sono stati pubblicati contemporaneamente per coincidenza due importanti volumi sul Palatino in età augustea: *Dal mostro al principe* di Andrea Carandini e Paolo Carafa e *Il complesso di Augusto sul Palatino* di Patrizio Pensabene, Patrizio Fileri ed Enrico Gallochio. Poiché Carandini e Pensabene sono stati responsabili per decenni le più significative investigazioni archeologiche del Palatino, queste due grandi opere di sintesi offrono una buona occasione per valutare il contributo storico dell'archeologia nei sessant'anni trascorsi da quando Gianfilippo Carettoni identificò per la prima volta "la casa di Augusto". Quel contributo è stato sorprendentemente deludente e questo articolo cerca di spiegarne il motivo.

Ma guai a chi cede alla tentazione di scambiare una ipotesi elegante con una certezza.
(Primo Levi, *Il sistema periodico*)

In the whole long history of ancient Rome there is no more significant date than 13 January 27 BC. On that day, after fifteen years of civil war and emergency powers, Julius Caesar's adopted son restored to the Roman people the republic they had established 480 years earlier,¹ and unwittingly inaugurated the dynastic monarchy that would govern them for the next 504 years. He himself recorded the event in his bilingual statement of achievements (*Res gestae* 34.2):²

¹ As recorded in the *Fasti Praenestini* (Degrassi, 1963: 112–13): *corona querc[ea, uti super ianuam domus imp. Caesaris] Augusti poner[etur senatus decreuit quod rem publicam] p. R. rest[it]u[it]*. 'Oak Crown: [the Senate decreed] that it be placed [above the door of the house of Imp. Caesar] Augustus [because] he restored [the republic] to the Roman People.' See Millar, 1999: 6–7, for an alternative reading, [*quod leges et iura*] p. R. *rest[it]u[it]*: 'because he restored [laws and justice] to the Roman People.'

² Latin text (trans. Cooley, 2009: 98): *senat[us consulto Au]gust[us appe]llatus sum et laureis postes aedium mearum u[estiti] pub[lice] coronaq[ue] ciuica super ianuam meam fixa est.* Greek text: δόγματι συνκλήτου Σεβαστὸς προσ[ηγορε]ύθη καὶ δάφνας δημοσίαι τὰ πρόπυλά [μου ἐστέφθη], ὃ τε δρύινος στέφανος ὁ διδόμενος ἐπὶ σωτηρία τῶν πολειτῶν ὑπερά[ν]ω τοῦ πυλῶνος τῆς ἐμῆς οἰκίας ἀνέτεθη.

For this service, I was named Augustus by senatorial decree, and the doorposts [*Greek*: forecourt] of my house were publicly clothed with laurels, and a civic crown [*Greek*: the oak crown given to me for saving citizens] was fastened above my doorway [*Greek*: porch].

In the next paragraph (35.1) he recorded another prized honour, which was granted on 5 February 2 BC: ‘The Senate and the equestrian order and the entire Roman people named me *pater patriae*, and voted that this be inscribed in the forecourt of my house.’³

His house had featured in a comparably symbolic event on 28 April 12 BC, as two contemporary sources report. First, the public calendar (*Fasti Praenestini*, Degrassi, 1963: 132–3):

Holiday by decree of the Senate because on that day the statue[?] and altar[?] of Vesta was dedicated in the house of Emperor Caesar Augustus, the *pontifex maximus*, in the consulship of Quirinius and Valgius.⁴

And second, the ‘April’ book of Ovid’s calendar poem (*Fasti* 4.949–54):

Take the day, Vesta! Vesta has been received at her kinsman’s threshold, as the just Fathers have decreed. Phoebus has one part, a second has gone to Vesta, he himself as the third occupies what is left from them. Stand, you Palatine laurels! May the house stand, wreathed with oak! One [house] holds three eternal gods.⁵

Ovid’s phrase ‘at the threshold’ (*limine*) fits precisely with Augustus’ own references to his forecourt (*uestibulum*).⁶ It was a location full of powerful symbolism, represented on coin-types and monumental relief sculpture.⁷ Where was it situated?

1. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INFERENCE

Ovid’s reference to Phoebus Apollo gives an approximate position. The temple of Palatine Apollo, promised to the Roman people in 36 BC, was dedicated by the

³ Latin text: *senat[us et e]quester ordo populusq[ue] Romanus uniuersus [appell]au[it me p]atr[em] p[at]riae, idque in uestibu[lo] a[ed]ium mearum inscribendum ... censuit*. Greek text: ἢ τε σύνκλητος καὶ τὸ ἱππικὸν τάγμα ὃ τε σύνπας δῆμος τῶν Ῥωμαίων προσηγόρευσέ με πατέρα πατρίδος καὶ τοῦτο ἐπὶ τοῦ προπύλου τῆς οἰκίας μου ... ἐπιγραφῆναι ἐψηφίσαστο. For the date see Degrassi, 1963: 118–19 (*Fasti Praenestini*).

⁴ *feriae ex s(enatus) c(onsulto) quod eo di[e] ?signu]m et [?ara] Vestae in domu imp(eratoris) Caesaris Augu[sti po]ntif(icis) ma[x(imi)] dedicat[ur] Quirinio et Valgio co(n)s(ulibus)*.

⁵ *aufer, Vesta, diem: cognati Vesta recepta est | limine; sic iusti constituere patres. | Phoebus habet partem, Vestae pars altera cessit: | quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet. | state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu | stet domus: aeternos tres habet una deos*.

⁶ For the two words as effective synonyms see Verg., *Aen.* 2.469, with the commentary of Servius *auctus ad loc.* (‘he evidently said *uestibulum* and *limen* meaning the same thing’); also Cic., *Caecin.* 35, *Mil.* 75; Verg., *Aen.* 6.575; Livy 30.12.11; and note 43 below. Classical works and authors are abbreviated according to *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow (Oxford University Press, fourth edition, 2012, and online).

⁷ Coin-types: *RIC* 1² Augustus 419 = Sutherland, 1984: 74 (*aureus* of 12 BC). Relief sculpture: Sorrento base, side ‘C’ (Section 3 below).

future Augustus on 9 October 28 BC.⁸ Its site is known: the concrete core of the podium it stood on was excavated by Pietro Rosa in 1865,⁹ and the whole area was intensively explored by Gianfilippo Carettoni from 1958 to 1984.¹⁰

Carettoni discovered the surviving rooms of a late-Republican house immediately adjacent to the temple site at a lower level on the northwest side (Fig. 1). He identified it as the house of Augustus, and that is how it is presented to visitors today.¹¹ Although Carettoni never gave his reasons for the identification,¹² he probably based it on the passage in Suetonius where Augustus' most conspicuous public works are listed (Suet., *Aug.* 29.3):

He erected the temple of Apollo on the part of his Palatine *domus* that had been struck by lightning, which the *haruspices* had declared was desired by the god.¹³

But since Suetonius also says that Augustus' house was a modest one (*Aug.* 72.2),¹⁴ it is obvious that one part of it could not have contained a grand temple over 26 m wide and over 48 m long (not counting frontal steps).¹⁵

Dio Cassius' account of the event explains what happened (49.15.5, 36 BC): 'he made public the place on the Palatine which he had bought in order to build something, and consecrated it to Apollo after a thunderbolt had fallen on it.'¹⁶ Suetonius was evidently using *domus* in the extended sense of 'a property consisting of multiple adjacent buildings',¹⁷ meaning in this case the 'several houses' around his own that had been bought up before 36 BC by people acting on his behalf.¹⁸ However, it is easy to see how a casual reading of Suetonius could be taken as proof that the temple was literally part of the house Augustus lived in.

⁸ Vell. Pat. 2.81.3; Dio Cass. 49.15.5, 53.1.3; Degraasi, 1963: 209 (*Fasti Antiates ministrorum*, 9 October).

⁹ Rosa's reports, previously unpublished, are collected in Tomei, 1999: 141–56.

¹⁰ Carettoni, 1963, 1983; for his work too the detailed data have been published only recently (Tomei, 2014).

¹¹ See for instance Iacopi, 2007, and the information for the general public at <https://parcocolosseo.it/mirabilia/la-casa-di-augusto>.

¹² Except briefly (and confusingly) in the *Illustrated London News*: Carettoni, 1969, discussed by Wiseman, 2019: 23–4.

¹³ *templum Apollinis in ea parte Palatinae domus excitauit quam fulmine ictam desiderari a deo haruspices pronuntiarant*.

¹⁴ He lived in 'the modest house of Hortensius' (*aedibus modicis Hortensianis*): see Section 2 below.

¹⁵ For details of the remains see Zink, 2012; Claridge, 2014; Tomei, 2014: 193–240; Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 93–158.

¹⁶ τὸν γὰρ τόπον ὃν ἐν τῷ Παλατίῳ ὡστ' οἰκοδομησαί τινα ἐώνητο ἐδημοσίωσε καὶ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι ἱέρωσεν, ἐπειδὴ κεραυνὸς ἐς αὐτὸν ἐγκατέσκηψε.

¹⁷ As at Suet., *Nero* 31.1 and Tac., *Ann.* 15.39.1, on the *domus* that linked Nero's Palatine property with the gardens of Maecenas on the Esquiline.

¹⁸ Vell. Pat. 2.81.3 (*complures domos*), rightly noted by Corbier, 1992: 873 and Meyboom, 2005: 223–4.

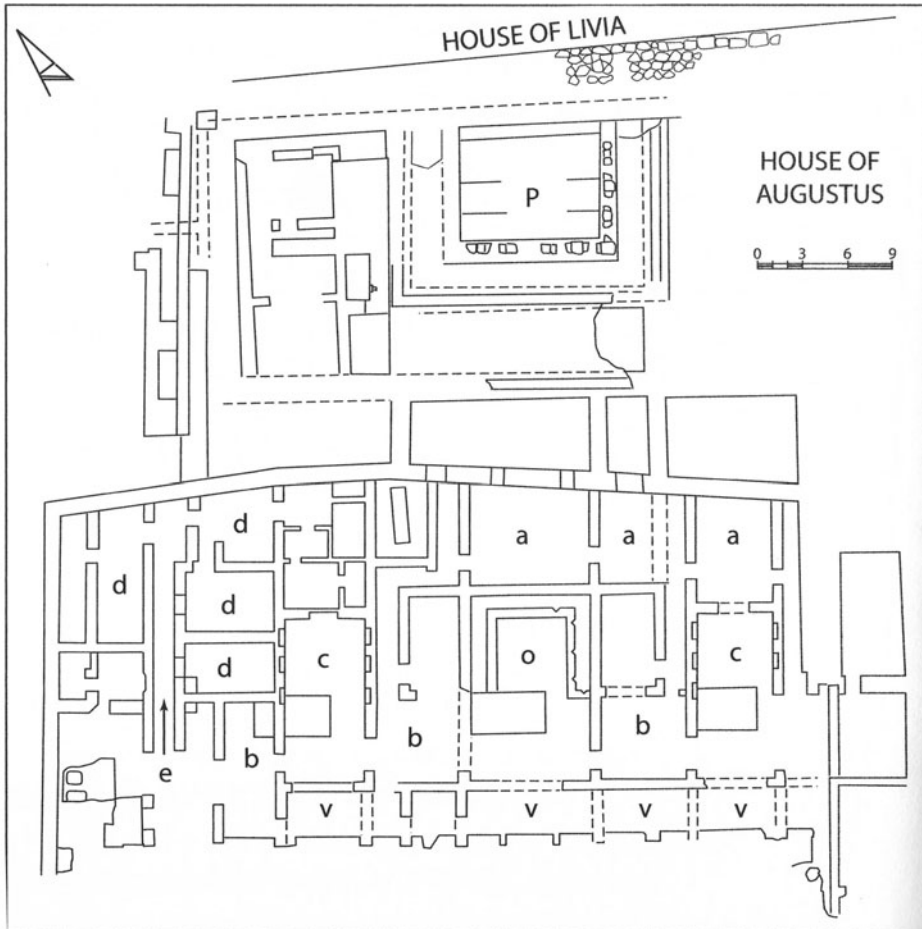


Fig. 1. The supposed 'house of Augustus': drawn by Seán Goddard after Carettoni, 1969: 24. The site is terraced on two levels, with a vertical difference of 9 m; it is not clear what, if any, connection there was between them. The upper level was evidently entered from the street by the 'house of Livia', and the entrance to the lower level, from the narrow street leading down the hill ('*Scalae Caci*'), is at the bottom left-hand corner.

By the 1970s, Carettoni had established that the house was much more extensive and imposing than had first been thought, featuring two matching colonnaded courts and a frontage of about 140 m facing out over the valley of the *Circus Maximus* (Tomei, 2014: 241–58). The importance of Carettoni's identification was emphasized by Paul Zanker (1983: 23–4; 1988: 51–2), who referred to it as '*Haus und Tempel als Einheit*' and saw it as analogous to a Hellenistic palace. Similarly, Pierre Gros (1993: 57) declared that '*le sanctuaire apollinien du Palatin ... reprenait sous une forme nouvelle le schéma des palais-sanctuaires hellénistiques*'.

This new historical understanding, presented not as a hypothesis but as a certainty,¹⁹ was based on one specific feature of the site: a ramp that was believed to have run directly from the western peristyle of the house to the terrace in front of the temple itself.²⁰ Although it later became clear that that was not the case (Iacopi and Tedone, 2006: 366–7), for more than twenty years it seemed to offer a profoundly significant insight into the nature of Augustus' principate.²¹ But even this exciting new idea did not help with the question of Augustus' honorifically decorated doorway and *uestibulum*. Carettoni never mentioned it, and there was no place for it in his reconstruction of the house.²²

Though incompatible with Suetonius' description, the newly established dimensions of the supposed 'house of Augustus' were very appropriate for a residence now interpreted as imitating the 'palace-sanctuaries' of Hellenistic kings. However, the house did not have a long life: it was soon abandoned and incorporated into the foundations of subsequent constructions at a higher level. According to Carettoni, that happened after Augustus' death (Tomei, 2014: 296), but the next detailed examination of the site proposed a different order of events.

Investigating the supposed site of the 'portico of the Danaids', Irene Iacopi and Giovanna Tedone (2006: 370–1) argued that the house Carettoni excavated had been put out of use by the construction of the Apollo complex itself soon after 31 BC: in order to make space for a grander concept ('un piano di ampio respiro'), Octavian abandoned his previous house and constructed a new residence at a higher level.²³ The true 'house of Augustus', they proposed, was adjacent to the

¹⁹ 'Die neuen Ausgrabungen G. Carettonis haben, so schwierig sich der Befund der Ruinen bislang darstellt, eines mit Sicherheit erbracht: Das Haus des Augustus war durch Rampen unmittelbar mit dem Tempel verbunden' (Zanker, 1983: 23); 'Une certitude a été acquise: la maison d'Auguste était directement reliée par des rampes à la terrasse du sanctuaire, situé 9 m. plus haut' (Gros, 1993: 56–7); 'Le temple, ne l'oublions pas, était partie intégrante de la *domus*' (Corbier, 1992: 893).

²⁰ Carettoni, 1983: 9: 'Aufgrund der besonderen Verehrung des Augustus für Apollo kann man verstehen, weshalb zuerst ein direkter Verbindungsgang zwischen dem Wohnsitz des Kaisers und der Tempelterrasse bestand.' But note 'zuerst': Carettoni knew that the ramp was only in use for a short time, a fact ignored by Zanker and Gros.

²¹ See for instance Meyboom, 2005: esp. 239 (the Apollo temple as 'a private shrine on a monumental scale'), 242 ('may have created the idea that Apollo had taken Jupiter's place and the Palatine had become the Capitol'), 244 ('since they practically shared the same house — almost like *theoi synnaoi* — the moderate prince acquired the status of a semi-divine sovereign, like a Hellenistic king'), 258 ('in every respect a Hellenistic royal acropolis').

²² See Figure 1. Carettoni's notes proposed an upper-level 'vestibolo di accesso' opening on to the street immediately south of the 'House of Livia' (Tomei, 2014: 56, cf. 45 fig. 25), and a lower-level 'vestibolo' equated with the space between the peristyle and the door on to the *Scalae Caci* (Tomei, 2014: 84); but there was no discussion of the evidence for the laurels, the oak-leaf crown, the *pater patriae* inscription or the shrine of Vesta (notes 1–5 above).

²³ Although interpretations differ as to the exact date of its abandonment, the identification of the now superseded house as 'the house of Octavian' is very widely accepted: see for instance Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 30–50, 138–79; Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 162–7; Carandini and Carafa, 2012: ill. 9, tav. 69; Carandini, 2014: 362–7; Pensabene, 2017: 43–76; Pensabene, Fileri

temple on the west side,²⁴ incorporating both the upper level of the ‘Carettoni house’ and also the so-called ‘house of Livia’ (Iacopi and Tedone, 2006: 376–7; Iacopi, 2007: 13). But still no proposal was made for the position of the doorway and *uestibulum*.

The purpose of their investigation was to explain ‘the entire pavilion of the palace that developed around the temple of Apollo’ (Iacopi and Tedone, 2006: 351).²⁵ But what exactly was a ‘pavilion’ (*padiglione*)? The word had previously been used in a classic study by Eugenio La Rocca discussing the most luxurious of all imperial properties, the *horti Lamiani*. That was where in AD 40 a Jewish delegation from Alexandria tried in vain to get the attention of Gaius ‘Caligula’ as he toured the estate inspecting the various buildings.²⁶ The eyewitness who reported that event described the buildings as ἐπαύλεις, a word with a wide range of meanings; evidently they were not simply houses in the normal sense. As La Rocca pointed out (1986: 29), the story reveals an extensive imperial residence consisting of a series of interconnected buildings and ‘pavilions’ (*padiglioni*), recalling ‘the most elaborate residential complexes of Hellenistic rulers’. To make that apply to Augustus’ residence, two assumptions are necessary: that *horti* on the Esquiline were directly comparable with town houses on the Palatine, and that Caligula, who certainly did behave like a Hellenistic ruler,²⁷ was directly comparable with Augustus 70 years earlier.

The new archaeological evidence and its impact soon resulted in major monographs on the historical development of the Palatine (Royo, 1999; Cecamore, 2002; Mar, 2005), the last of which, Ricardo Mar’s volume *El Palatí*, effectively defined a new consensus (Mar, 2005: 339):²⁸

When Augustus decided to build his house at the top of the Palatine Hill, the civil war was still far from being definitively resolved and the design of the future imperial regime was, in many aspects, still unknown. We know that the political regime was shaped with the exercise of power, first by Augustus and then by his successors. The Palatine Palace soon proved to be an important propaganda instrument . . . We have only to look at the models that guided the governing actions of Augustus. Indeed, the prince’s policy fluctuated between respect for the old Roman traditions and an attempt to establish a Hellenistic type monarchy. In the same way, his Palatine residence was conceived within the limits imposed by the Roman republic on the palaces of noblemen, but with the ultimate aim of creating the palace of an absolute monarch.

and Gallochio, 2021: 19–90 (cf. 14, ‘la prima casa voluta dal futuro Augusto, che ormai viene definita comunemente “Casa di Ottaviano”, anche se sappiamo che così non è mai chiamata dalle fonti antiche’). The idea is rejected by Wiseman, 2019: 22–3.

²⁴ In fact the northwest side, but I shall follow the usual convention in describing the site as if the temple were oriented north–south.

²⁵ Similarly Iacopi, 2007: 14 (‘il padiglione della regia incentrato sul tempio di Apollo Aziaco’).

²⁶ Philo, *Leg.* 351–2, 358–9, discussed by La Rocca, 1986: 24–32.

²⁷ See for instance Sen., *De ira* 3.18, *Ben.* 2.12; Suet., *Calig.* 22.1, 52; Dio Cass. 59.3.1.

²⁸ From the English translation of the Conclusions; see pp. 77–104 of the Catalan text for the full argument.

Since then it has been common ground that Augustus had a palace.²⁹ Some think of it as a ‘palace-sanctuary’,³⁰ others as a ‘pavilion-palace’,³¹ but with no definition of either term. And the question remains: where was the *uestibulum* with its famous doorway?

2. TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

It is worth comparing the current consensus with what the ancient sources say about Augustus’ residence. Beyond the contemporary evidence, set out above in the introduction, by far the most useful information is provided by Suetonius (*Aug.* 72.2):

He lived first near the Roman Forum above the ‘Ringmakers’ Steps’, in a house which had belonged to the orator Calvus, and afterwards on the Palatine, but in the no less modest house of Hortensius, which was distinguished for neither space nor elegance, having as it did only short porticoes with columns of Alban stone, and rooms without any marble or luxurious pavements. And for more than forty years he remained in the same bedroom for winter and summer, although he found the city unfavourable to his health in winter and consistently wintered there.³²

Since Quintus Hortensius (son of the famous orator) fought for Brutus at Philippi,³³ it is likely that the future Augustus acquired his Palatine house in the proscriptions of 43–42 BC.³⁴ The ‘more than forty’ years he used the same

²⁹ See for instance Gros, 2001: 240 (‘le système palatial augustéen’); Meyboom, 2005: 261 (‘the prototype of all royal palaces in the western world’); Iacopi and Tedone, 2006: 363; Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 43, 176–8; Pensabene and Gallochio, 2011: 477; Coarelli, 2012: 382–3; Hall, 2014: 177–9; Grandazzi, 2017: 565–8; Carandini, 2017a: 16 (‘il primo palazzo di Roma’); Carandini, 2017b: 29; Carandini, 2018: 281 (‘Potremmo capire Luigi XIV senza la reggia di Versailles? Augusto senza il palazzo sul Palatino? Nerone senza la *domus Aurea*?’); Wallace-Hadrill, 2018: 43–8; Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 10 and *passim*; Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 11 (‘il complesso palaziale augusteo’). The idea is rejected on historical grounds by Wiseman, 2019: 16–29.

³⁰ Fleury and Madeleine, 2019: 169; Carandini and Carafa, 2021: *passim*; see already Gros, 1993: 57; Carandini and Bruno, 2008: xi (‘una casa-santuario favolosa’).

³¹ Pensabene and Gallochio, 2019: 67 (‘un palazzo a padiglioni’); Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 11 (‘i vari padiglioni che costituivano il palazzo’), 291–4 (‘Padiglioni del palazzo augusteo’). Meyboom, 2005: 258, describes the phenomenon without using the term: ‘It consisted of sanctuaries of tutelary deities, legendary founders, public areas with porticoes, libraries and gardens, and private living-quarters.’

³² *habitavit primo iuxta Romanum forum supra scalas anularias in domo quae Calui oratoris fuerat; postea in Palatio, sed nihilo minus aedibus modicis Hortensianis, et neque laxitate neque cultu conspicuis, ut in quibus porticus breues essent Albanarum columnarum et sine marmore ullo aut insigni pavimento conclauia. ac per annos amplius quadraginta eodem cubiculo hieme et aestate mansit, quamuis parum salubrem ualitudini suae urbem hieme experiretur assidueque in urbe hiemaret.*

³³ Livy, *Epit.* 124; Vell. Pat. 2.71.2; Plut., *Vit. Brut.* 28.1, *Vit. Ant.* 22.4.

³⁴ No doubt it was while he was preoccupied with the civil-war campaigns of 42–36 BC that his agents bought up the neighbouring properties, and thus gave him the space to create the Apollo temple and its portico (Vell. Pat. 2.81.3; Dio Cass. 49.15.5).

bedroom must have come to an end in AD 3, when the house was burned down and had to be rebuilt.³⁵

Suetonius was well informed about the late Republic and the Augustan period,³⁶ and ‘unlike most ancient historians and some of their modern successors, understood the fundamental distinction between primary and secondary sources’ (Cornell, 2013: 126). A learned author with very wide-ranging interests, holding the posts of *a studiis*, *a bybliothecis* and *ab epistulis* on the imperial staff under Trajan and Hadrian (*AE* 1953.73), he had access to a vast range of source material, both literary and documentary. He knew what he was talking about. After giving this circumstantial account of Augustus’ successive residences, Suetonius made the specific point that the *princeps* ‘disliked grand and elaborate palaces’ (*Aug.* 72.3, *ampla et operosa praetoria grauabatur*).

If the current consensus is right, Suetonius must be wrong. Attempts are regularly made to discredit his testimony a priori, but on no good grounds.³⁷ It is not enough to assert the inherently superior authority of archaeological data.³⁸ In their conference on the Palatine in 2016 Manuel de Souza and Olivier Devillers made a brave attempt to do justice to all the different types of evidence,³⁹ and their contributor on Suetonius was Pauline Duchêne, an expert on historiography. She rightly stressed the precision of Suetonius’ treatment of Augustus’ residences (Duchêne, 2019: 345), but then went on to say that his description had been falsified by the mismatch with the ‘Carettoni house’.⁴⁰ Why not take the mismatch as showing that Carettoni’s identification of the house was mistaken? As it is, in a classic circular argument, Duchêne’s authority is now cited to justify the identification itself.⁴¹

It seems likely that Carettoni misunderstood Suetonius’ description of where the thunderbolt fell that claimed the site for Apollo (Suet., *Aug.* 29.3, *note 13*

³⁵ Suet., *Aug.* 57.2; Dio Cass. 55.12a.2; both authors refer to destruction (not just damage), which surely rules out the idea that the 40-plus years ran from 28 BC to Augustus’ death in AD 14 (Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 163; Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 184; Coarelli, 2012: 421).

³⁶ As we know from his *De grammaticis et rhetoribus* as well as from the *Diuus Iulius* and *Diuus Augustus* biographies (Wallace-Hadrill, 1983: 50–66).

³⁷ See for instance Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 83–4; Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 176–7, 209–10; Grandazzi, 2011, 310–11; Coarelli, 2012: 373–4; Hall, 2014: 182–3; Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 20, 297.

³⁸ ‘Si può qui osservare come i dati archeologici offrano un riscontro essenziale per interpretare criticamente le fonti letterarie, le quali descrivono sovente avvenimenti complessi in modo approssimativo e semplificato, che noi possiamo ulteriormente fraintendere’ (Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 83); for resistance to such arguments see Wiseman, 2019: 28–9.

³⁹ Published as de Souza and Devillers, 2019, with a tripartite structure: archaeological (‘Le Palatin en construction’), historical (‘Lieu de pouvoir, lieu d’histoire’) and literary (‘Le Palatin et ses représentations’).

⁴⁰ Duchêne, 2019: 346, citing Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli 2010: 168, and Coarelli, 2012: 373–4.

⁴¹ Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 20 (‘Va anche osservato che si è dubitato dell’esattezza dell’informazione di Svetonio’), citing Duchêne in n. 7.

above). That is important, because the error undermines Zanker's notion of 'Haus und Tempel als Einheit', and all the confident assumptions about Hellenistic-style monarchy that followed from it. The true topographical relationship of the temple with Augustus' house is not easy to establish, but any reconstruction must be compatible with the contemporary evidence of Ovid in *Tristia* 3.1 (AD 9 or 10).

In that poem, Ovid's book is imagined as making its way from the Forum to the Palatine library in the company of a friendly guide (*Tr.* 3.1.33–8):⁴²

While I'm admiring everything, I see a doorway conspicuous with gleaming arms,⁴³ and a building worthy of a god. 'Is this too', I say, 'the house of Jupiter?'⁴⁴ The oak crown gave to my mind the augury to think so. When I'm told whose house it is, I say 'I was right: it's true that this too is the house of Jupiter.'

The book goes on to enquire about the laurels and the crown for the saving of citizens (lines 39–48), leading into a prayer to the *pater patriae* to save one more citizen and recall the poet (49–58).⁴⁵ And then (59–60): 'From there, in the same direction, I am led to the shining-white temple of the unshorn god, high on its lofty steps.'⁴⁶

Three things follow from this passage. Firstly, the building was 'worthy of a god'; so however modest the house was inside, its public forecourt must have been impressive (we know it housed the shrine of Vesta, as celebrated by Ovid elsewhere).⁴⁷ Secondly, the book was 'led' from the house to the temple; so the house and the temple cannot have been an architectural unity, as Carettoni and Zanker believed. Thirdly, the book went from the Forum to the house and then 'in the same direction' to the steps of the temple; so the temple should face north, contrary to what has always been believed in 150 years of scholarship.

These consequences are rarely given proper attention by archaeologists. For example, Iacopi and Tedone (2006: 370 n. 43) cite the poem as if it were evidence for how access was provided to the supposed Portico of the Danaids:

L'ingresso monumentale del santuario, cui si giungeva, come ricorda Ov. *Trist.* 3,1,1–59, attraverso 'celsi gradus', era sul pendio meridionale del colle; il dislivello veniva superato per mezzo di rampe, impostate anche su preesistenti strutture, convergenti in sommità al centro del recinto porticato.

⁴² *singula dum miror, uideo fulgentibus armis | conspicuos postes tectaue digna deo. | 'et Iouis haec' dixi 'domus est?' quod ut esse putarem | augurium menti querna corona dabat. | cuius ut accepi dominum, 'non fallimur,' inquam, | 'et magni uerum est hanc Iouis esse domum.'*

⁴³ Captured arms and armour were hung as trophies at the doors of aristocratic houses: Cic., *Phil.* 2.68 (*in uestibulo*); Livy 38.43.11 (*in postibus*); Pliny, *HN* 35.7 (*circa limina*); Sil. *Pun.* 6.432–6 (*in limine*).

⁴⁴ The book's guide had just pointed out the temple of Jupiter Stator (Ov., *Tr.* 3.1.31–2).

⁴⁵ The address is to *pater optime* (line 49), alluding to the full title on the inscription in the *uestibulum* (Augustus, *Res gestae* 35.1, [note 3](#) above).

⁴⁶ *inde tenore pari gradibus sublimia celsis | ducor ad intonsi candida templa dei.*

⁴⁷ Ov., *Fast.* 4.949–50 ([note 5](#) above); cf. *Fast.* 6.303, where Ovid derives *Vesta* from *uestibulum* (Wiseman, 2011).

But those ‘lofty steps’ (*celsi gradus*) were the steps of the temple itself. It is hard to see how any reader of Ovid could suppose that they formed an entrance to the portico from the valley of the Circus Maximus;⁴⁸ nevertheless, the misreading continues to be endorsed (Pensabene, 2017: 96).

Building on Iacopi and Tedone’s work,⁴⁹ in 2008 Andrea Carandini and Daniela Bruno proposed an elaborate and detailed reconstruction of the ‘casa-santuario’ (Fig. 2).⁵⁰ The most striking feature of this reconstruction was that it featured two separate ‘houses of Augustus’, one on each side of the Apollo temple (but facing the other way). What is the evidence for this duplication?

The two houses were identified as ‘*domus publica*’ and ‘*domus priuata*’.⁵¹ It is certainly true that the question of public or private ownership was very important, as Dio Cassius points out (54.27.3): in 12 BC, when Augustus was elected *pontifex maximus*, ‘he did not take any public residence, but since it was absolutely necessary that the *pontifex maximus* should reside in public, he made part of his own house public property’.⁵²

Similarly in AD 3, when the house was destroyed by fire (Dio Cass. 55.12a.5):⁵³

When Augustus (re)built his house he made it all public property, either because of the contribution made by the People or because he was *pontifex maximus*, so that he might live in premises that were simultaneously private and public.

Suetonius refers to the same event (*Aug.* 57.2):⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Latinists find the archaeological consensus baffling. ‘It is unclear exactly what path [the book and its guide] will have taken to face now the front of Apollo’s temple ... The long staircase mentioned by Ovid remains a puzzle, since it does not correspond to the archaeological evidence’ (Miller, 2009: 217 n. 69).

⁴⁹ Specifically credited at Carandini and Bruno, 2008: xii–xiii; Carandini, 2017b: 13; Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 170.

⁵⁰ Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 51–104, 180–242; repeated with progressive adjustments at Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 151–225; Carandini and Carafa, 2012: 233–5, tavv. 70–2; Carandini, 2014: 368–73; Carandini, 2016: 44–59; Carandini and Carafa, 2017: 233–5, tavv. 70–2, 281b, 282; Carandini, 2018: 222–34; Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 43–56, 169–84. (The ‘casa-santuario’ became the ‘palazzo-santuario’ from 2016 onwards.)

⁵¹ This idea, for which no evidence exists, had already occurred to Meyboom, 2005: 256: ‘The now excavated house with its modest rooms may have been the Domus Privata, the private residence of Augustus. Another building that served for public functions, the Domus Publica, must have been elsewhere.’ In the latest instantiation (Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 10 and *passim*), that terminology is tacitly rejected in favour of ‘abitazione pubblica’ and ‘abitazione privata’; it is not clear why.

⁵² οὐτ’ οἰκίαν τινὰ δημοσίαν ἔλαβεν, ἀλλὰ μέρος τι τῆς ἑαυτοῦ, ὅτι τὸν ἀρχιέρεων ἐν κοινῷ πάντων οἰκεῖν ἐχρήνη, ἐδημοσίωσεν.

⁵³ ὁ δὲ Αὐγουστος τὴν οἰκίαν οἰκοδομήσας ἐδημοσίωσεν πᾶσαν, εἴτε δὴ διὰ τὴν συντέλειαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ δήμου οἱ γενομένην, εἴτε καὶ ὅτι ἀρχιέρεως ἦν, ἵν’ ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις ἅμα καὶ ἐν τοῖς κοινοῖς οἰκοῖη.

⁵⁴ *in restitutionem Palatinae domus incendio absumptae ueterani decuriae tribus atque etiam singillatim e cetero genere hominum libentes ac pro facultate quisque pecunias contulerunt.*

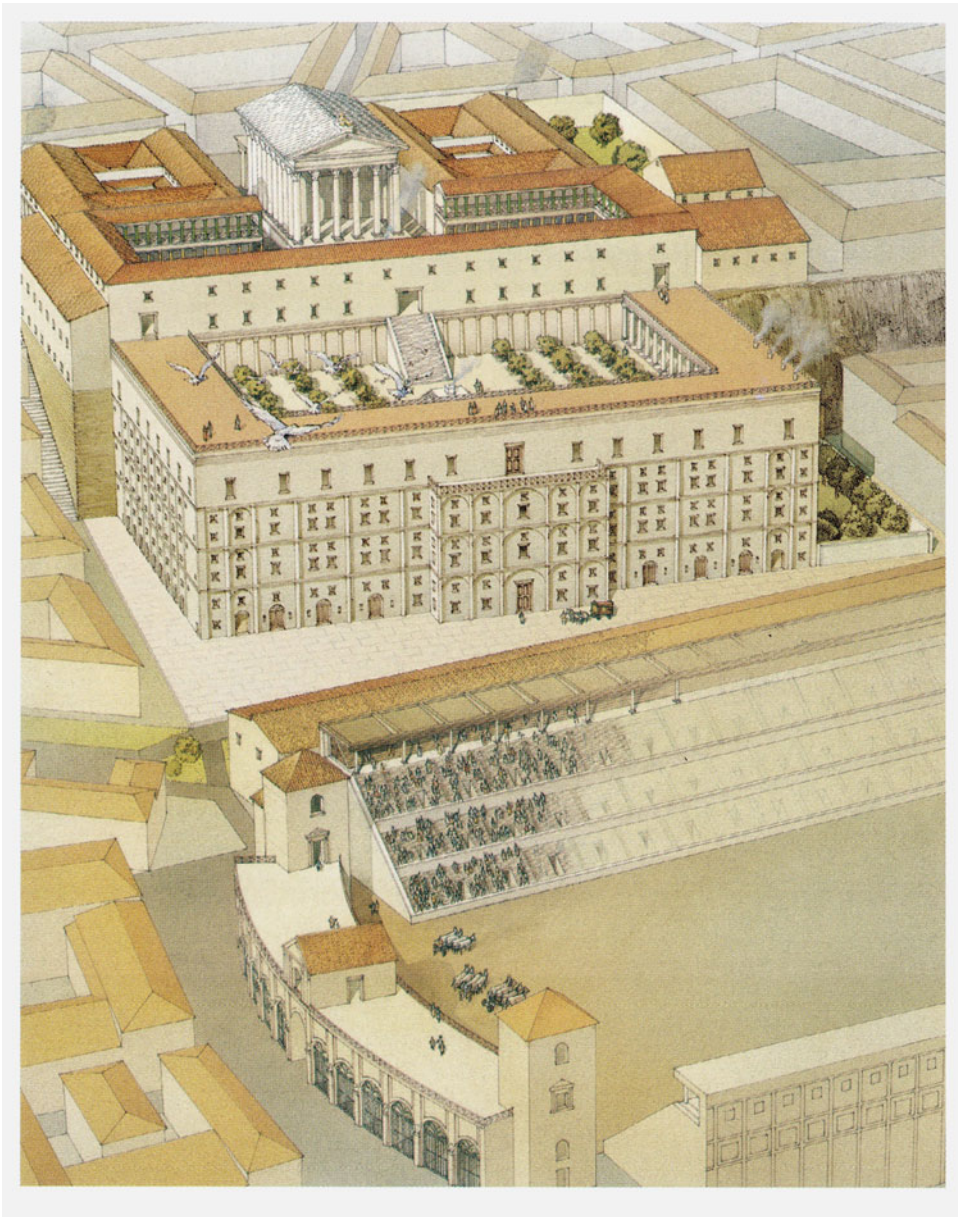


Fig. 2. The ‘palazzo-santuario’, first version: Studio Inklinc (Carandini and Bruno, 2008: tav. II).

For the reconstruction of his Palatine house after its destruction by fire, the veterans, the jury-panels, the tribes and even individuals from the rest of the community freely contributed money, each according to his means.

In each passage only one house is referred to, in the singular (τὴν οἰκίαν, *Palatinae domus*). But Suetonius’ phrase was misconstrued by Carandini and Bruno (2008: 55): ‘La casa di Augusto è definita da Svetonio al plurale: *domus Palatinae*.’

The textual evidence is clear and consistent. There was one house, one door, one forecourt; the house was modest, though the forecourt was imposing; it was called *domus publica*,⁵⁵ because it had been made public property; and it was separate from the temple of Apollo. What causes the problem is how this evidence has been used and misused in support of successive archaeological reconstructions.

3. THE SORRENTO BASE

The Carandini–Bruno hypothesis largely depends on the Ovid passage about Vesta (*Fast.* 4.949–54):⁵⁶

Take the day, Vesta! Vesta has been received at her kinsman's threshold, as the just Fathers have decreed. Phoebus has one part, a second has gone to Vesta, he himself as the third occupies what is left from them. Stand, you Palatine laurels! May the house stand, wreathed with oak! One [house] holds three eternal gods.

One *domus*, but in some sense tripartite, for Apollo, Vesta and Augustus himself.⁵⁷ Combining that with the misreading of Suetonius' *Palatinae domus* as plural, Carandini and Bruno found an elegantly symmetrical solution:⁵⁸

La *domus Publica*, connessa al culto di Vesta e dei *Penates*, e la *domus* privata, connessa al *Genius* e ai *Lares Augusti*, poste simmetricamente ai lati del tempio di Apollo, fanno pensare a Ovidio, secondo il quale un terzo del complesso domestico-sacrale era abitato da Apollo, un terzo da Vesta e quanto rimaneva, cioè l'ultimo terzo, da Augusto stesso.

The two matching houses in their reconstruction were given more or less matching internal layouts, a six-stage sequence identified as *uestibulum*, *atrium*, *tablinum*, *peristylum*, *oecus* and finally 'corte'.⁵⁹ The last and innermost recess was

⁵⁵ *Fasti Caeretani* 28 April (Degrassi, 1963: 66): *fer(iae) q(uod) e(o) d(ie) sig(num) Vest(ae) in domo p(ublica) dedic(atum)*. 'Holiday, because on that day the image of Vesta was dedicated in the *domus publica*.' The *Fasti Praenestini* for the same date (note 4 above) report it as *in domu imp(eratoris) Caesaris Augu[sti po]ntif(icis) ma[x(im)i]*.

⁵⁶ *auffer, Vesta, diem: cognati Vesta recepta est | limine; sic iusti constituere patres. | Phoebus habet partem, Vestae pars altera cessit: | quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet. | state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu | stet domus: aeternos tres habet una deos.*

⁵⁷ See note 17 above for the flexibility of the term *domus*. Compare Ov., *Met.* 15.864–5, a prayer to 'Vesta, consecrated among Caesar's household gods, and together with Caesar's Vesta you too, Phoebus of the house' (*Vestaeque Caesareos inter sacrata Penates | et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebe domestice, Vesta*).

⁵⁸ Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 55, endorsed by Pensabene, 2017: 56 ('la residenza augustea ... era ripartita in tre settori, come sappiamo da Ovidio (*Fast.*, IV, 951–952): quello pubblico dedicato a Vesta e identificato ad est del tempio, il secondo ad Apollo e il terzo a ovest riservato alla residenza di Augusto').

⁵⁹ Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 56 fig. 24 (plan), 193 fig. 83 (section). The 'corti' were later redefined as gardens (Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 212 fig. 75; Carandini and Carafa, 2012: tav. 71;

presented as housing respectively Augustus' *lararium* (in the 'private *domus*' to the west of the temple) and the *aedicula* of Vesta (in the '*domus publica*' to the east).⁶⁰

However, this position for the shrine of Vesta is incompatible with the passage in Ovid. The goddess was received at Augustus' threshold (*limine*), and the reference to the laurels and the oak wreath puts Ovid's meaning beyond doubt: she was installed in Augustus' forecourt.⁶¹ But Carandini and Bruno's reconstruction did not have a forecourt: their two houses had doors opening directly on to the street behind the temple.⁶² Although that position was quickly abandoned,⁶³ and a new plan produced for the supposed 'private *domus*', now turned through 90 degrees and equipped with an exterior porch opening on to a different street (Fig. 3),⁶⁴ there was still no place in it for Vesta, who remained, and still remains, assigned to the rear court of the '*domus publica*'.⁶⁵

Much depends on the interpretation of the reliefs on the 'Sorrento base':⁶⁶ the long side 'C' shows the Vestals with the goddess Vesta herself in front of her circular shrine, and the adjacent short side 'A' (half of which survives) shows Augustus' doorway with the oak-leaf crown (Fig. 4). It is generally assumed that the Ionic colonnade in the background of both scenes links them together as a single topographical entity (Fig. 5).⁶⁷ That would fit precisely with Ovid's reference to Vesta being received at Augustus' threshold. Carandini and Bruno,

Carandini, 2014: 372), and then as *compluvia* (Carandini, 2016: 183 fig. 11; Carandini and Carafa, 2017: tavv. 71–2; Carandini, 2018: 228 tav. 9a; Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 11, 93).

⁶⁰ For evolving reconstructions see (a) Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 74 fig. 35a–b, 78–9 fig. 37a–b (plans), 193 fig. 85 (elevation), and (b) Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 222 fig. 77; Carandini and Carafa, 2012: tav. 72D.

⁶¹ Augustus, *Res gestae* 34.2; for the terminology (*uestibulum*, πρόπυλον) see notes 2 and 6 above.

⁶² Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 56 fig. 24 (plan), 193 figs 83–4 (section and elevation); they used *uestibulum* to mean the short space between the house door and the *atrium* (2008: 189 fig. 82b, 193 fig. 83).

⁶³ After adverse criticism (Wiseman, 2009: 538–9), 'non abbiamo smesso di cercare ulteriori dati e di ripensare a quello che a noi pare l'insieme architettonico più complesso e intrigante del mondo romano, il che ha consentito di perfezionare le nostre ricostruzioni modificandone alcuni particolari' (Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 151).

⁶⁴ Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 167 fig. 66 (section and elevation), 213 fig. 75 (plan); Carandini and Carafa, 2012: ill. 10, tav. 72. Eventually the same solution was adopted for the supposed *domus publica* east of the temple (Carandini, 2018: 228 tav. 9a; Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 232 tav. 20). No explanation was offered for these ongoing adjustments: at one stage the *domus publica* itself was presented as doubtful, with no entrance marked at all (Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 212 fig. 75; Carandini and Carafa, 2012: tav. 71; Carandini, 2014: 371; Carandini, 2016: 183 fig. 11), but it has now come back into favour as Augustus' place of refuge from the machinations of Livia (Carandini, 2018: 19 and 24). Cf. Carandini, 2018: 120 and 230–1 tav. 10, for a conjectural Claudian restructuring of an already conjectural Augustan original.

⁶⁵ Carandini, 2018: 228 tav. 9a; Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 237 tav. 25; even when the *domus publica* itself was in doubt, with no other internal features marked (see previous note), the court or garden housing Vesta was still retained.

⁶⁶ Hölscher, 1988: 375–8 (Kat. 308a–d), with previous bibliography; Coarelli, 2012: 402–4 figs 120–8.

⁶⁷ See for instance Wiseman, 2009: 533; Coarelli, 2012: 407–8; Pensabene and Gallochio, 2019: 69.

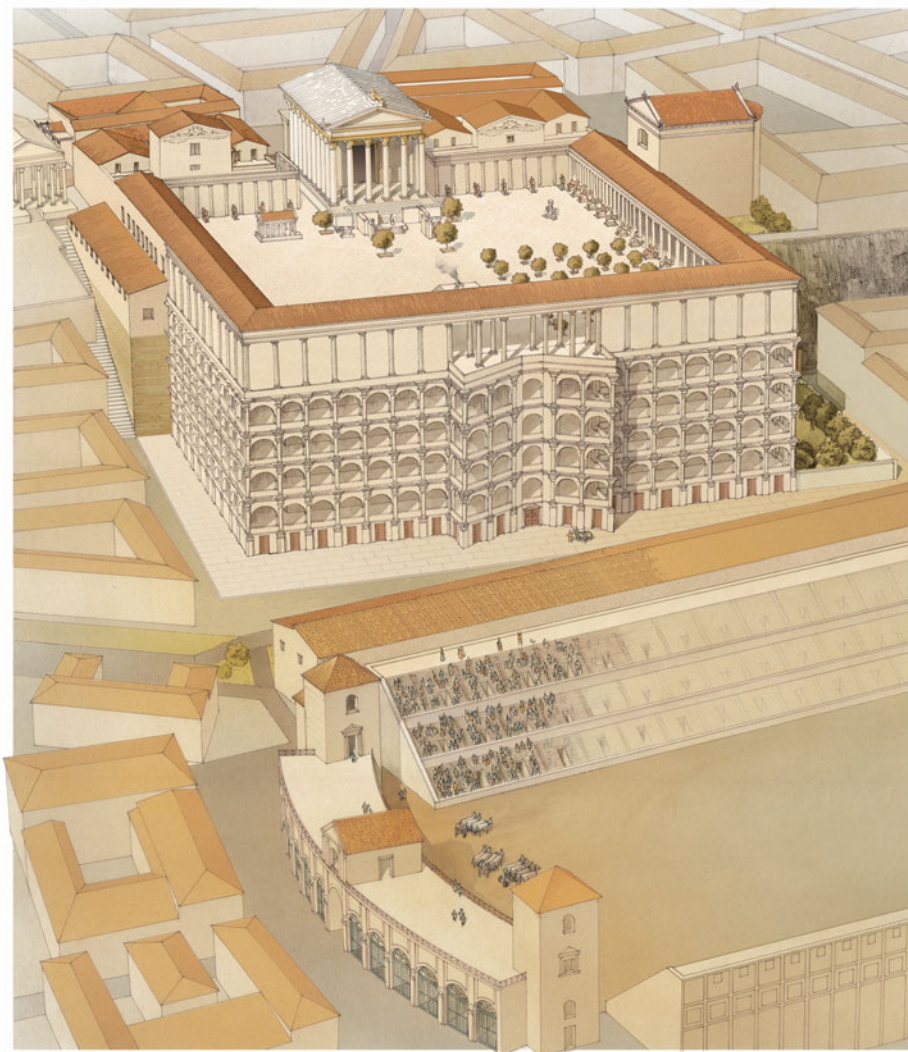


Fig. 3. The 'palazzo-santuario', latest version: Studio Inlink (Carandini and Carafa, 2021: frontispiece). Note the 'vestibolo', just visible at the top left opposite the side of the temple of Victoria.

however, treat the two scenes as separate, with side 'A' illustrating the garden court at the back of the supposed *'domus publica'* and side 'C' illustrating the doorway at the front of the supposed *'private domus'*.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Side 'C': Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 81, figs 40–1; Carandini, 2016: 183–5 figs 11D and 12g. Side 'A': Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 71, fig. 34, 184, fig. 80; Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 167, figs 65–6; Carandini and Carafa, 2012: tav. 72; Carandini, 2016: 183–4 figs 11A and 12a.



Fig. 4. Base with relief sculpture, Museo Correale, Sorrento. Left: the surviving half of the short side C (D-DAI-ROM-65.1251, H Koppermann). Right: the surviving two-thirds of the long side A (D-DAI-ROM-65.1252, H Koppermann).

Despite its incorporation into the monumental *Atlas of Ancient Rome* (Carandini and Carafa, 2012 and 2017), the Carandini–Bruno reconstruction has not been received with any enthusiasm,⁶⁹ and is hardly mentioned in the proceedings of the 2016 Palatine conference: Patrizio Pensabene and Enrico Gallochio refer to it (2019, 59), but only to note its controversial nature. Their own interpretation takes sides ‘A’ and ‘C’ of the Sorrento base as united by the Ionic colonnade, which they identify as the portico of the Danaids.⁷⁰ That too is an idea that needs careful attention.

4. THE PORTICO

The two narrative sources that report the building of the Apollo temple also report the building of a portico *around* it.⁷¹ That kind of portico is a familiar phenomenon; the best-known example in Rome is the *porticus Metelli*, which surrounded the temples of Jupiter and Juno in the Campus Martius.⁷² Nevertheless, since 2005 it has been the general archaeological consensus that Apollo’s portico, commonly called ‘the portico of the Danaids’,⁷³ was in front

⁶⁹ See Wiseman, 2009, for extensive criticism, endorsed by Coarelli, 2012: xiii, 355. However, it is accepted without discussion by Grandazzi, 2017: 597.

⁷⁰ Pensabene and Gallochio, 2019: 69–70; cf. Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 15, 163, 168–70.

⁷¹ Vell. Pat. 2.81.3 (*templumque Apollinis et circa porticus*); Dio Cass. 53.1.3 (τὸ τεμένισμα τὸ περὶ αὐτό). Confirmed by Propertius (2.31.9), who describes the portico with the temple in the middle (*medium*).

⁷² Vit. *De arch.* 3.2.5; Vell. Pat. 1.11.3; Plin., *HN* 36.42–3; Metellus’ portico (147 BC) was replaced by the *porticus Octaviae*.

⁷³ Because there were statues of Danaus’ 50 daughters between the columns (Prop. 2.31.3–4; Ov., *Ars am.* 1.73–4, *Tr.* 3.1.61–2).

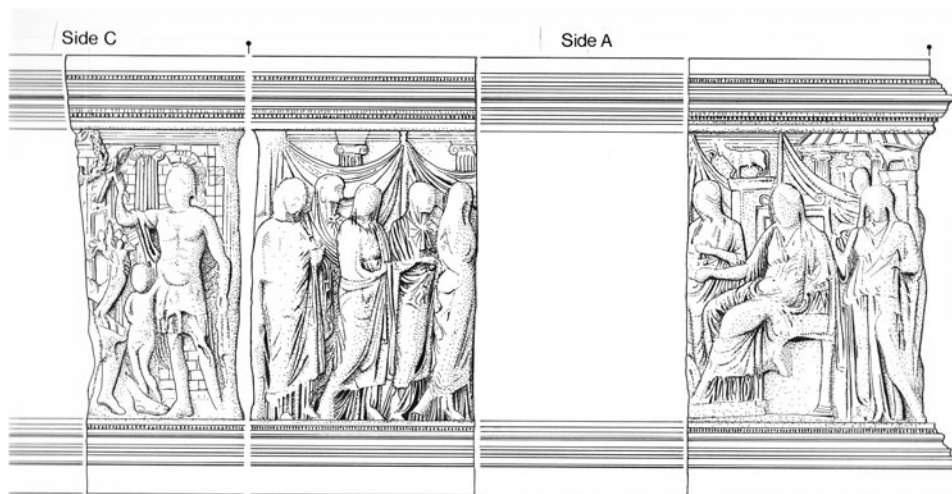


Fig. 5. The ‘Sorrento base’, combination of sides ‘C’ and ‘A’: drawn by Seán Goddard (Wiseman, 2009: 532 fig. 1).

of his temple, built out beyond the natural slope of the hill on an artificial platform extending towards the Circus Maximus (Figs 2 and 3).⁷⁴ Evidence for its alleged outer limit at the site of S. Anastasia is about 110 m from the supposed frontage of the temple and at a level 33 m below it.⁷⁵

It is important to understand that this conjectural portico is very largely an imagined concept, supposedly on top of a huge building (‘corpo di fabbrica’), more than 100 feet high,⁷⁶ of which neither the construction date nor the architectural design has ever been decided.⁷⁷ In its latest form it is provided with an altar commemorating Augustus’ refounding of Rome in 7 BC (*sic*).⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Mar, 2005: 82–95; Iacopi and Tedone, 2006: 370, n. 43; Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 84–98, 205–34; Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 211–25; Bruno, 2012: 234–5; Carandini and Carafa, 2012: ill. 10, tavv. 70–2; Carandini, 2014: 16–20, 370–3; Carandini, 2016: 183, fig. 11, 187, fig. 14; Carandini, 2017a: 15–16; Grandazzi, 2017: 597; Pensabene, 2017: 45–51; Carandini, 2018: 228–34; Kraus, 2019: 81–5; Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 161–77; summary of ‘vecchi scavi e interpretazioni’ in Ippoliti, 2021: 169–72.

⁷⁵ See Carandini and Carafa, 2012: tav. 72, for the vertical difference, the temple at 46.3 m above sea level (m a.s.l.) and S. Anastasia at 13 m a.s.l.

⁷⁶ Ippoliti, 2021: 189 (31.65 m, so about 104 ft); for the carefully neutral phrase ‘corpo di fabbrica’ see Carandini, 2017a: 15; Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 15, 85, 96, 98; Ippoliti, 2021: 188.

⁷⁷ Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 205, 232–3 (built 25 BC, three storeys with mezzanines); Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 187 (five storeys); Bruno, 2012: 234 (four storeys); Carandini, 2014: 20, 24 (built 8 BC or soon after, four storeys); Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 96 (five storeys); Ippoliti, 2021: 186, 189 (built AD 3, four storeys).

⁷⁸ Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 49 (‘quando Augusto ha rifondato Roma nel 7 a.C.’), 99 (‘l’ara della rifondazione augustea della città’), supposedly attested by Festus 310–12L (cf. Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 53 on Verrius Flaccus), but absent from Augustus’ *Res gestae*.

Rather than invent symbolic monuments, it makes better sense to test the portico hypothesis against the real evidence for Augustan ideology. This ‘palazzo-santuario’ model dispenses with the original idea of a grand staircase down to the Circus Maximus, as suggested by Mar and endorsed by Pensabene (2017: 96); what is proposed is a huge square as large as the Roman Forum, completely enclosed by the portico on three sides and by the temple and the supposed two houses on the other. The only entrance to the ‘sanctuary’ area is from the north,⁷⁹ and so the only access to the portico itself is by the passages that ran along the two sides of the temple.

With that in mind, let us consider one of the most iconic passages in the whole of Augustan literature, the culminating scene on the shield of Aeneas in Virgil’s *Aeneid* (8.714–23):⁸⁰

But Caesar, who had entered the walls of Rome in a triple triumph, was consecrating an everlasting vow to the gods of Italy — three hundred great shrines throughout the whole city. The streets were loud with gladness and games and applause; at all the temples there were matrons dancing, and altars, and before the altars slain bullocks strewed the ground. He himself, seated at the snow-white threshold of gleaming Phoebus, is reviewing the gifts of nations and fixing them to the proud doors. The conquered peoples process in a long line, as varied in language as they are in costume and arms.

Real events are referred to: the triple triumph (13–15 August 29 BC),⁸¹ the vow to restore the temples (February 28 BC) and the newly instituted quadrennial games (autumn 28 BC).⁸² Caesar Augustus sits ‘at the marble threshold’ of Apollo’s temple, dedicated on 9 October 28 BC, and the ‘gifts of nations’ are of course the spoils of war, brought as tribute by ‘the conquered peoples’ and now to be put on display.

Virgil was writing in the 20s BC, when he and his readers knew exactly how one approached the new temple.⁸³ If the post-2005 consensus is accepted, he must have imagined this long procession of peoples and booty approaching from behind the temple along one of the passages, turning round in the portico to face Augustus and present the ‘gifts of nations’, and then filing out again,

⁷⁹ Ippoliti, 2021: 177–8 (‘L’accesso all’area sacra di Apollo avveniva da nord’), identifying the entrance as the ‘arch of C. Octavius’ attested by Pliny (*HN* 36.36); but it seems strange that visitors entering through such a grand portal should be confronted with the rear wall of the temple.

⁸⁰ *at Caesar, triplici inuectus Romana triumpho | moenia, dis Italis uotum immortale sacrabat, | maxima ter centum totam delubra per urbem. | laetitia ludisque uiae plausuque fremebant; | omnibus in templis matrum chorus, omnibus arae; | ante aras terram caesi strauere iuueni. | ipse sedens niueo candentis limine Phoebi | dona recognoscit populorum aptatque superbis | postibus; incedunt uictae longo ordine gentes | quam uariae linguis, habitu tam uestis et armis.*

⁸¹ Degrassi, 1947: 344–5 (*Fasti Barberiniani*), Livy, *Epit.* 133; Macr., *Sat.* 1.12.35 (*senatus consultum* of 8 BC). Pace Miller (2000), Virgil’s imaginary scene was clearly not meant to represent the triumph itself; the perfect participle *inuectus* at line 714 refers to a completed past action, and the triumphal procession necessarily ended at the temple of Capitoline Jupiter.

⁸² Temples: Aug., *Res gestae* 20.4; Livy 4.20.7; Ov., *Fast.* 2.59–66; Dio Cass. 53.2.4–5. Games: Dio Cass. 51.19.2, 53.1.3–6.

⁸³ As did Ovid (*Tr.* 3.1.59–60, note 46 above).

presumably along the opposite passage. But since Virgil's scene clearly implies a temple facing on to a street or piazza accessible by wagonloads of booty, the hypothesis of an enclosed sanctuary is better abandoned.

The less elaborate 'pavilion-palace' model of Pensabene and Gallocchio equally presupposes the huge square portico in front of the temple, and is equally incompatible with what Virgil says; their main entrance is still on the north side at the rear of the temple, and the procession with its gifts would hardly have come up a staircase from the Circus Maximus. But they do at least recognize that the portico should be 'around' the temple, and they therefore extend the colonnade along its two sides (Pensabene, Fileri and Gallocchio, 2021: 169 fig. III,14).

5. THE VESTIBULUM

In their reading of the reliefs on the Sorrento base, Pensabene and Gallocchio take it for granted that the Ionic colonnade in the background of sides 'A' and 'C' represents the 'portico of the Danaids', and therefore that both the doorway of Augustus' house and the shrine of Vesta set up in 12 BC are to be found in the immediate vicinity of the Apollo temple.⁸⁴ They place the doorway to the west of the temple, identifying 'the new pavilion of the house of Augustus' with the so-called 'House of Livia', and suggesting a sort of 'propyleum' projecting into the portico;⁸⁵ on the other hand, they place the Vesta shrine to the east of the temple, in the supposed 'public sector' of the complex (Pensabene, 2017: 56).

Pensabene and Gallocchio deliberately separate Vesta from Augustus' residential quarters because they take Ovid's passage in *Fasti* 4 (note 5 above) as guaranteeing a tripartite arrangement (Augustus, Apollo, Vesta), without also noticing that Ovid places Vesta at Augustus' threshold, therefore in the forecourt (*uestibulum*) of his house.⁸⁶ The same error was made by Carandini

⁸⁴ Pensabene, Fileri and Gallocchio, 2021: 168–9: 'Il portale parrebbe raffigurato aperto sulla parete di fondo del portico, e non sullo stesso allineamento delle colonne: in ogni caso indicherebbe che la nuova casa di Augusto, costruita con il tempio si sviluppava verso nord apparentemente dietro il portico. Il tempietto apparirebbe invece all'interno dell'ambulacro del portico, mentre Vesta seduta, avendo sullo sfondo il parapetasma tra le colonne del portico, dovrebbe essere raffigurata davanti al tempietto, ma fuori il colonnato.'

⁸⁵ Pensabene, Fileri and Gallocchio, 2021: 171 (identification as 'House of Livia'), 172–3: 'Se ipotizziamo che il lato nord della *porticus* era allineato con il muro di fondo del podio del tempio, dovremmo considerare la piccola corte testimoniata dalle fondazioni conservate subito a sud della Casa di Livia ... come fondazione del propileo di entrata al nuovo padiglione della casa di Augusto costruita in contemporanea al tempio e che si estendeva dunque a nord del portico: il propileo verrebbe dunque a sporgere dal muro di fondo del portico, all'interno di esso, ed essere allineato al podio del tempio, proiettando su un piano spaziale il rapporto tra Apollo e Augusto, in modo analogo a come si manifesta nella base di Sorrento.'

⁸⁶ Pensabene, Fileri and Gallocchio, 2021: 167: 'In età augustea si verifica una seconda fase di trasformazioni nell'area a est del tempio dopo la morte di Lepido nel 12 a.C., quando s'introduce nel complesso il luogo di culto di Vesta. Di esso, come è noto, vi è la rappresentazione nel monumento sorrentino, che indica che l'*aedes Vestae* era in stretto rapporto con il portico. Non si

and Bruno (2008: 55); it became the basis of their symmetrical ‘palazzo-santuario’ layout, and continues to be repeated (Ippoliti, 2021: 183).

Since both reconstructions started from Carettoni’s original identification of the house immediately west of (and below) the Apollo temple as the house of Augustus,⁸⁷ it is not surprising that the ‘new pavilion’ of Pensabene and Gallocchio should be sited in practically the same place as the ‘private *domus*’ of Carandini and Bruno. They differ, however, in their placing of its formal entrance, the famous *uestibulum* featuring the laurels, the oak-leaf crown and the *pater patriae* inscription, with which this article began.

To start with, as noted in Section 3 (note 62 above), Carandini and Bruno ignored the *uestibulum* and had both their houses opening directly on to the street. Their revised version, which still incorporated the so-called House of Livia into the ‘private *domus*’, now positioned a colonnaded porch at its western end, with a door opening directly into an imagined *atrium* on the lost upper storey (note 64 above).⁸⁸ That solution has been criticized (Wiseman, 2013: 261):

Less than 3m out from the wall of the house, the imagined columns [of the porch] stand on a platform about 5m above the level of the street, facing the side wall of the temple of Victoria; a flight of steps leads down at an improbably steep angle, but even so the bottom step is only about 3–4m away from the temple wall opposite.⁸⁹ There is, of course, no room for the Vesta shrine.

This porch (Fig. 3) is hardly ‘a building worthy of a god’ (note 42 above), or a likely place to choose for the lying-in-state of Augustus’ coffin.⁹⁰

Pensabene and Gallocchio avoid that objection with their idea of a ‘pavilion’ opening on to the great portico,⁹¹ but are equally mistaken in their separation of the doorway from the shrine of Vesta. If the Ionic colonnade really is

ha alcuna indicazione archeologica di un monumento circolare in questo settore specifico anche se ci sono indicazioni per strutture sia precedenti alla costruzione del Tempio, sia successive. Certa è solo la vicinanza dell’*aedes* al tempio e la sua distinzione dal settore occupato dalla residenza di Augusto data la notizia più volte citata di Ovidio sulla divisione in tre parti dell’area del Palatino.’ At p. 173 they attribute the tripartite arrangement to ‘il noto passo di Svetonio’.

⁸⁷ Redefined, as the changing archaeology required, as ‘the house of Octavian’ (note 23 above).

⁸⁸ See most recently Ippoliti, 2021: 180–1: ‘L’accesso alla casa privata del principe avveniva dalla strada che proseguiva le *scalae Caci* e si trovava in corrispondenza del vestibolo della dimora di Lutazio Catulo. A questo *vestibulum* si accedeva tramite una scalinata ... Salite le scale e varcata la porta, si accedeva nell’atrio, già di Catulo.’ For the equally hypothetical *uestibulum* of Lutatius Catulus see Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 92, and Ippoliti, 2021: 167.

⁸⁹ The distances are generously estimated from the scales provided at Carandini, Bruno and Fraioli, 2010: 167 fig. 66, and Carandini and Carafa, 2012: tavv. 71 and 72. The steps have a tread-riser ratio of 1:1 (about 5 m in both vertical and horizontal distance), as opposed to the 2:1 or more recommended by Vitruvius (*De arch.* 3.4.4) ‘so that the ascent will not be hard’.

⁹⁰ Suet., *Aug.* 100.2: ‘The equestrian order took up the coffin at Bovillae, brought it into the city and placed it in the *uestibulum* of his house.’

⁹¹ It is not clear whether they want their ‘propileo’ (note 85 above) to be identical with the *uestibulum* attested in the sources.

continuous from side ‘A’ to side ‘C’ of the Sorrento base (Fig. 5), then the common site it represents should be the *uestibulum* of Augustus’ house, with Vesta’s shrine ‘at the threshold’ within it.

The fact is that each of the competing archaeological reconstructions of the supposed ‘palace of Augustus’ depends on a combination of misreadings of the ancient sources:

(1) Suet., *Aug.* 29.3 (note 13 above). It is assumed that the thunderbolt fell on Octavian’s living quarters, which were therefore at the exact site of the Apollo temple,⁹² rather than ‘on the place he had bought in order to build something’, as Dio Cassius reports (note 16 above).

(2) Ov., *Fast.* 4.949–54 (note 5 above). It is assumed that the ‘house holding three eternal gods’ attests a tripartite complex that separated Vesta from Augustus himself, rather than received her ‘at his threshold’.

Other clear statements are simply ignored:

(3) Suet., *Aug.* 72.2 (note 32 above): Augustus’ house was modest in both size and decoration.

(4) Suet., *Aug.* 72.3: Augustus ‘disliked grand and elaborate palaces’.

(5) Ov., *Tr.* 3.1.59–60 (note 46 above): the house and the Apollo temple were in different places, and the columns of the temple pronaos were approached from the north.

(6) Prop. 2.31.9, Vell. Pat. 2.81.3, Dio Cass. 53.1.3 (note 71 above): the Apollo temple was in the middle of the portico, and the portico went round it.

(7) Virg., *Aen.* 8.714–23 (note 80 above): the Apollo temple looked out on a space accessible to a long procession bringing substantial gifts of tribute.

Too often, when faced with textual evidence, archaeologists have resorted to special pleading (note 37 above), mistranslation (Carandini and Bruno, 2008: 55) or declarations that such sources are inadequate,⁹³ as if modern investigators necessarily know better than people who were there at the time.

6. THE TEMPLE

The Apollo temple is normally reconstructed as facing south, with six columns across the front. The hexastyle pronaos owes its existence to Giuseppe Lugli’s

⁹² Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 51–2, claim to know exactly where it fell: ‘il punto è identificabile con il muro del *tablinum* nell’atrio posto al centro tra i due peristili . . . il centro dell’intero sistema.’

⁹³ For example, Carandini and Carafa, 2021, 14: ‘le fonti letterarie, che dicono tante cose importantissime, quasi mai rendono conto e con precisione delle tre dimensioni spaziali, per cui sono sovente da interpretare, ad esempio nella topografia di Roma antica, proprio per questo sempre dibattutissima.’ See also note 38 above.

interpretation of four spaces left by robbed-out masonry that had once been deeply embedded in the concrete core: his inference that the missing blocks had supported six columns (Lugli, 1965: 276) is taken as proof of the temple's orientation.⁹⁴

However, Amanda Claridge (2014: 138–41) has shown that Lugli's hypothesis is inconsistent with the testimony of Vitruvius, who defined different types of temple by the respective distances between their columns. The third of his types, called 'diastyle', was 'when we can insert the thickness of three columns in the intercolumniation, as in the temple of Apollo and Diana' (Vitr. *De arch.* 3.3.4). He was certainly referring to the Palatine temple, which we know from contemporary sources — Virgil, Horace and the *ludi saeculares* inscription — belonged equally to Apollo and his sister.⁹⁵

But if the temple was diastyle, the known width of the podium makes a six-column pronaos impossible; Lugli's interpretation of the robbed-out masonry holes will have to be rejected, and the evidence for the temple's south-facing orientation disappears. Claridge argues persuasively that the temple faced the other way. If it did, then two of the problematic passages noted above are immediately solved: the long line of conquered peoples reviewed by Augustus in Virgil's imagined scene (note 80 above) bring their tributary offerings from the direction of the Forum; and Ovid's book, approaching the same way 40 years later (note 46 above), is led in the same direction from Augustus' doorway to the frontal columns of the temple.

It is a particularly acute example of the mismatch between archaeological inference and textual evidence. Vitruvius was an architect, precisely contemporary with the construction of the temple; it is impossible to imagine a better-qualified authority. Though Claridge made the case for a north-facing temple in 2014, seven years later Pensabene makes no mention of it in the 'sources' section of his chapter on the archaeology of the temple (Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 93–6), and a subsequent brief reference to Vitruvius simply states that the architect should not be taken literally.⁹⁶

My own book on the house of Augustus did take Vitruvius literally, and incorporated Claridge's argument into a wider discussion of the Augustan Palatine, based explicitly on primary sources. It was presented as a challenge to archaeological thinking (Wiseman, 2019: 22–9), but whether there will be a

⁹⁴ See for instance Zink, 2012: 389: 'The SW orientation of the Palatine temple of Apollo was never questioned over the last 150 years for a single, good reason: a series of enormous foundation holes indicates the location of the temple's columnar façade.'

⁹⁵ Virg., *Aen.* 6.69; Hor., *Carm. saec.* 1–4, 61–76; *CIL* 6.32323.141–6; confirmed by Diana's presence with Apollo and Latona on the Sorrento base and the Villa Albani relief (Hölscher, 1988: 376–7).

⁹⁶ Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 111: 'Vitruvio (3.3.4) aveva osservato che il colonnato del tempio di Apollo e Diana, dove è da intendere il tempio palatino, era definibile *diastylos* cioè con intercolumnio largo tre diametri dei fusti, ma ancora una volta l'architetto non è da prendere alla lettera, in quanto la distanza tra le colonne del pronaos è inferiore, ma non molto, rispetto alla prescrizione vitruviana.'

meaningful response remains to be seen.⁹⁷ There has certainly been no movement on the orientation of the temple: Lugli's interpretation has become a dogma.⁹⁸

7. CONCLUSION

Sixty years have passed since Carettoni identified the house he was excavating as the house of Augustus. Since then, the ongoing efforts of distinguished archaeologists have still failed to find an agreed answer to the question posed at the beginning of this article: where was the historic forecourt in which Augustus' doorway was flanked by laurels and decorated with the oak-leaf crown?

I think the reason for that failure is that archaeologists have repeatedly not taken proper account of the textual evidence in testing their own inferences from the surviving material remains. The first error, I suggest, was Carettoni's original identification of the late-Republican house 9 m below the level of the Apollo temple; building on that, other misconceptions have followed, notably the idea of Octavian as a Hellenistic monarch, with its corollary, the assumption of an Augustan palace.

Neither the 'pavilion-palace' model of Pensabene and Gallochio nor the 'palace-sanctuary' model of Carandini and Bruno (now Carandini and Carafa) is compatible with the statement of Augustus' biographer that he disliked grand and elaborate palaces and lived for over 40 years in the same modest quarters. Outside the door of his unpretentious house was the much more impressive forecourt, a building described by a contemporary author as 'worthy of a god', containing the shrine of Vesta that marked Augustus' election as *pontifex maximus* in 12 BC. Where was it?

The best answer was given long ago by Ferdinando Castagnoli: the house of Augustus was where the Flavian palace was,⁹⁹ and the Flavian palace was called *domus Augustana* for that very reason.¹⁰⁰ In that case Augustus'

⁹⁷ So far there has been only the restatement of entrenched positions: see for instance Lipps, 2020 ('Wiseman's general disregard for the self-evident nature of archaeological finds'); Carandini and Carafa, 2021: 16 ('considerazioni per lo più epistemologicamente sprovvedute e anche archeologicamente approssimative e poco concludenti').

⁹⁸ 'The orientation of the temple towards the Circus Maximus is clear from traces of the robbed foundation blocks in the *caementicium* core, which demonstrate that there were six columns' (Lipps, 2020); 'Solo Amanda Claridge (2014) e T.P. Wiseman (2019) propongono di invertire l'orientamento del tempio, ma le fosse di spoliazione delle colonne del fronte sono un elemento decisivo per confutare l'ipotesi' (Ippoliti, 2021: 173).

⁹⁹ Castagnoli, 1964: 186: 'È assai verosimile che la *domus Augustana* sia la casa di Augusto (piuttosto che dell'Augusto) come la *domus Tiberiana* è la casa di Tiberio, e cioè possiamo pensare che Domiziano costruì la sua grande dimora sul luogo di quella di Augusto e come una continuazione ideale (così come non cambiò il nome della *domus Tiberiana*, anch'essa totalmente ricostruita).'

¹⁰⁰ AE 2007.252 (found *in situ*); CIL 6.2271, 6.8640–51, 6.33736, 15.1850, 15.1860, 15.7246; full details in Panciera, 2007. For property identified by the adjectival form of a previous owner's name, see for instance Nep., Att. 13.2 (*domus Tamphiliiana*); Cic., Att. 1.6.1 (*domus Rabiriana*),

forecourt would correspond to the entrance to the Flavian palace, which looked out on to the summit plateau of the Palatine; and we happen to know that Augustus' forecourt looked out on to a space that could accommodate thousands of people watching the *ludi Palatini* in AD 41.¹⁰¹

That seems to be a good fit, but the evidence is not allowed to mean what it says. We are told that *domus Augustana* must be just 'the house of the emperor',¹⁰² and that the *ludi Palatini* must have been held in front of the Magna Mater temple, like the *ludi Megalenses*,¹⁰³ or else at the imagined monumental steps leading up from the Circus Maximus to the 'portico of the Danaids'.¹⁰⁴ 'L'ipotesi di Castagnoli appare superata dagli scavi Carettoni' (Sasso D'Elia, 1995: 41);¹⁰⁵ it is assumed that archaeological inference trumps textual evidence.

That is how it has been for more than half a century, and the outcome is not satisfactory. The main difficulty is the sheer complexity of the different types of evidence that must be taken into account, but that problem is compounded by a general reluctance to take seriously what the literary sources say. The result is that the experts have still not provided an agreed, empirically defensible description of that historically pivotal time and place, the Augustan Palatine, and the reasonable expectations of non-specialist colleagues and students continue to be frustrated. In the absence of any serious counter-argument, I believe the reconstruction presented in *The House of Augustus* (Wiseman, 2019) offers the most reliable explanation of the Augustan Palatine, if only because it gives systematic priority to what the contemporary evidence implies.

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1.13.6 (*Autroniana domus*), 1.14.7 (*Paciliana domus*), 4.3.3 (*Anniana domus*); Cic., *Fam.* 7.20.1 (*Papiriana domus*); Suet., *Gram. et rhet.* 17.2 (*Catulina domus*), *Tib.* 15.1 (*Pompeiana domus*).

¹⁰¹ Joseph., *AJ* 19.75 (πρὸ τοῦ βασιλείου, 'in front of the residence'), cf. 76 (thousands of people), 223 (ἐν εὐρυχωρίᾳ τοῦ Παλατίου, 'in the open space of the Palatine', probably translating *in area Palatina* in Josephus' Latin source). See Wiseman, 2019: 92–4, 142 fig. 67.

¹⁰² Gros, 2001: 252: 'L'entité juridique et spatiale du palais, considéré dans sa fonction officielle et de représentation, ne peut être que la *domus August(i)ana*, puisque c'est sous ce nom qu'elle a traversé les siècles: quelle que soit la dynastie, elle restait le siège des *Augusti*.' But as Castagnoli noted (note 99 above), that leaves the *domus Tiberiana* unexplained.

¹⁰³ Coarelli, 2012: 248, 281, 342 ('come sappiamo'), 444, 445–6, 450. But how was that site 'in front of the residence' (note 101 above)?

¹⁰⁴ Pensabene, 2017: 96 (dependent on Mar, 2005), 110–11; Pensabene, Fileri and Gallochio, 2021: 200.

¹⁰⁵ So too Meyboom, 2005: 250 n. 86 ('Before the discovery of the present house it was commonly believed that the house of Augustus was located beneath the *Domus Augustana*'), though he did allow that a supposedly separate '*Domus Publica*' could be there (Meyboom, 2005: 257–8, cf. note 51 above).

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