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The Case of Apollo and the Sibylline Books

In this paper I examine Augustus's reconceptualisation of the Sibylline books' role in Roman culture, religion and politics, focusing on the affiliation between the prophecies and Apollo. These oracles were described as the fata et remedia Romana; this concept, arguably, allows us to uncover that in republican religion Apollo's position was similar to the one occupied by the libri Sibyllini: both served to avert prodigies and help pursue the pax deorum. I believe, that Augustus utilised this connection to the benefit of his chosen god-patron, and appropriated the books in order to emphasise his reign as a new age, where no more prodigium could occur. Tibullus and Vergil contribute to this narrative. The Sibylline books did not lose all significance, rather they were reconfigured as instruments legitimising Augustus, supporting his desire to celebrate the ludi saecularis in 17 BC. Finally, I will present an alternative view on the Sibylline books' incorporation into the Augustan system using Ovid's distinctive treatment of the Sybil's story in Metamorphoses.

Keywords: Sibylline books, Augustus, Roman religion, Sibyl, Apollo, prodigies, Vergil, Ovid, Tibullus

According to Suetonius, when Lepidus — the *pontifex maximus* at the time — died, Augustus seized his position and immediately implemented several religious reforms, revived old cults and reorganized others.¹ One of the most striking reforms of his was the relocation of the Sibylline books to the Palatine Hill into the newly built sanctuary of Apollo (Suet. *Aug.* 31, 1):

[...] solos retinuit Sibyllinos, hos quoque dilectu habito; condiditque duobus forulis auratis sub Palatini Apollinis basi.

¹ Suet. *Aug.* 31; see WARDLE (2014: 249–259).

It was a striking move indeed, for since the first recorded consultation, these important and unique instruments of Roman religion were kept in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, in the political-social-religious epicentre of the *res publica*. According to the most widely accepted traditions, these three rolls of books containing Greek hexameters were purchased by Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome.² Their main function was to help interpreting, eliminating and expiating the various *prodigia*, thereby keeping control over the *pax deorum*: religious harmony between the divine and human spheres.³ Whenever an error (*prodigium*) or defect has occurred in the sacred integrity of the state, the books had been continuously consulted during the years of the republic.⁴ They had always been *fata et remedia*⁵ for the *res publica* in the time of severe crises (whether they be religious, political, military); accordingly, the books were only consulted when the most terrible prodigies were reported.⁶ They were under the supervision of a special priestly collegium, initially

² Aul. Gell. 1, 19; Dion. Hal. 4, 62; Zon. 7, 11; Serv. *ad Aen.* 6, 72. Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1, 6, 11; Sol. 2, 14–18. On the origins of the books and their relation to the various Sibyls of the Mediterranean, see: RADKE (1987: 58–59); PARKE (1988: 76–78) GILLMEISTER (2010: 9–11). KESKIAHO (2013: 146–155).

³ On the concept of *pax deorum* see MADEJSKI (2010); SATTERFIELD (2015). Both of them argue that *pax* is not a state which is achieved through the Sibylline books (or other expiatory rites), but an always changing condition that is needed to be pursued and constantly desired. It should also be noted that the Sibylline books were not a traditional collection of prophecies, but rather a list of instructions in hexameter, explaining how to handle those *prodigia* which may pose a threat to the *pax deorum*. KESKIAHO (2013: 156) states that there was no significant difference between the books and other Greek oracular texts (e.g. *Oracula Sibyllina*). In fact, they worked similarly for the Romans as Delphoi or Dodona for the Greek city states, see: Aul. Gel. 1, 19, 11: *Ad eos quasi ad oraculum quindecimviri adeunt cum di immortales publice consultendi sunt*.

⁴ For the complete list of consultations in the Republican period (till 83 BC), see ORLIN (2002: 202–207). From 83 BC, see PARKE (1988: 202–212).

⁵ Varro fg. 56c Cardunus (=Serv. *ad Aen.* 6, 72): *in quibus erant fata et remedia Romana*. Cf. Liv. 10, 5, 7: *quod remedium euis mali*. Plin. *N.H.* 11, 105: *saepe populo Romano ad Sibyllina coacto remedia confugere*.

⁶ Liv. 22, 9, 8: [...] *pervicit ut, quod non ferme decernitur, nisi cum taetra prodigia nuntiata sunt, decemviri libros Sibyllinos adire iuberentur*. Cf. Dion. Hal. 4, 62 5: *τεράτων τινῶν καὶ φαντασμάτων μεγάλων καὶ δυσευρέτων αὐτοῖς φανέντων*. See SATTERFIELD (2008: 15–19.)

formed by two members, hence called *duumvir sacris facundi* (*Ilviri*), then expanded to twenty-one members by the time of Augustus.⁷ Since they were the only members of Roman society who had access to these books, it was their responsibility, via the authorisation Senate (*senatum consultum*), to visit (*libros adire iussi*; Liv. 21, 62, 6) the temple of Jupiter to inspect (*inspicere*) the scripts, find a relevant passage (*consulere*), and afterwards communicate it towards the Senate.⁸ Thereafter, the Senate decided how to act based on these instructions in order to eliminate the *prodigium* (e.g. introduce a new cult, hold an *obsecratio*, *supplicatio*, a *lectisternium*, or in the most severe cases even sacrifice humans).⁹ Thus, the Senate held full authority over the books, keeping their content in utmost secrecy.¹⁰ This predetermined and strictly supervised practice of the consultations, and the fact that the scripts were kept in the most sacred temple of Roman statehood, shows that these books were closely tied to the *res publica's* most essential religious and political traditions.¹¹

At the beginning of the 1st century BC, there was a rupture in this old tradition, and a radical transformation under the reign of Augustus. First, the 'original' scrolls were destroyed by a fire on the Capitoline Hill in 83 BC, and they were replaced by new ones seven years later. Alt-

⁷ In 365 BC – according to the *leges Liciniae-Sextiae* – the collegium was completely reorganised, and from then on it was made up of five patrician and five plebeian members (*Xvirii*). There was another enlargement up to fifteen around Sulla's dictatorship (*XVvirii*), and a third one during Augustus. See RE (1963: 1126); POTTER (1994: 149–150); GILLMEISTER (2007); SATTERFIELD (2008: 27–36).

⁸ Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1, 6, 13: *nec eos ab ullo nisi XVviris inspicere fas habent*. Following the example of one of the first *Ilviri* (M. Atilius), if a member broke his confidentiality, he was sewed up in a sack and casted into the sea. Cf. Val. Max. 1, 1, 13.

⁹ E.g. a sacrifice of a Greek and Gaul couple (cf. Liv. 22, 55–57). On the cults, rites, temples etc. introduced by the books, see: ORLIN (2002: 85–105). On a discussion about the consultations as a part of a 'social drama' see: GILLMEISTER (2015a: 183–188); KESKIAHO (2013: 161–162).

¹⁰ We do not have much information about the exact procedure. ORLIN (2002: 82–97) provides a detailed discussion about the topic. See also: RADKE (1987: 61–63); PARKE (1988: 191–192); KESKIAHO (2013: 158).

¹¹ SCHEID (1995: 25–26). Cf. SATTERFIELD (2008: 27): 'During the Republic, the two symbols of Roman power and its communion with the gods always stood together, occupying the same space, and asserting the same claims on divine favor and human respect.'

though the traditional system of interacting with the books seemingly had not been altered much, their cultural, religious context and relevance did change significantly. Furthermore, — as Suetonius' passage shows above — Augustus relocated the prophetic scripts to the newly built sanctuary of Apollo Palatinus. From then on, an enormous drop in the number of consultations can be noticed. Clearly, there was a distinct change in the form and function of the Sibylline books; not only the nature and political importance of the prophecies were transformed,¹² but the collection which once belonged to Jupiter and Juno was given a final Apollonic profile. Seemingly, the once important instruments of achieving the *pax deorum* were pushed into the background of Roman divination practises, becoming more of a cultural and literary phenomenon closely related to the Augustan Apollo. In this paper, I would like to present this process of transformation and provide a new perspective on the function and status of the Sibylline books in Augustan Rome. In my view, the double concept of *fata* and *remedia* attributed to the books help to better understand their role and significance in Roman religion, as well as why they were appropriated through Apollo by Augustus.

Fatum/a, in the context of the Sibylline books, meant to follow the *remedia*, a form of recommended instructions implied by the Senate using the interpretation of the collegium of the *XVviri*. They had to be followed in order to avoid any *nefas* of consequences to happen and to live and act according to the *fas*, thus ensuring the safety and future of the community.¹³ Through a partial republican connection to Apollo, the books were subjected and incorporated into the ideology of the principate, where the patron god of Augustus stepped forward as a symbol of the new system, a renovated, 'healed' *res publica*, following the divine *fatum*. In the years of the republic the books were one of the most important means to gain the power of knowledge: knowledge of the future

¹² GILLMEISTER has thoroughly examined the relocation of the books under the tutelage of Apollo. According to him, by the time of Augustus the character of the Sibyl emerged as a cultural phenomenon, and became a symbol of the new 'global', imperial identity to the Mediterranean (using the term of 'acculturation'); GILLMEISTER (2015).

¹³ RADKE (1987: 65). Originally the *fatum* was under the realm of Jupiter. See Cic. *N. D.* 1, 39. Verg. *Aen.* 3, 375–76; 5, 784.

and the appropriate rituals, practices, communication channels to expiate the gods. Augustus monopolised this power, and affiliated the books with Apollo, thus merging an already similar political-religious unit, in order to emphasize that by his reign, Rome has gained an everlasting *remedia* for any kind of prodigies, but most importantly that the course of history, the *fatum* is approved and supported by the gods.

Apollo and the Sibylline Books during the Republic

When the Sibylline books first appeared in Rome (around the 7th-6th century BC) they were in no way attached to Apollo. They could not had been, since his first shrine was inaugurated only in 431, much later than the first consultation was recorded.¹⁴ The shrine was called *Medicus*, as — according to Livy — Apollo was introduced into Rome to cease the ongoing epidemic and to preserve the health of the people (*pro valetudine populi*).¹⁵ This could be the first connection between the god and the prophecy collection. Following the ambiguity of Livy's account, Apollo's cult was either established following the instruction of the books,¹⁶ or as one of the separate actions carried out by the *IIviri* to avert the severe plague (see Livy's wording in n. 15) devastating Rome since 436 BC.¹⁷ When the god was first officially introduced in Rome,¹⁸ it served a

¹⁴ Even those Greek city-states which were famous for their Sibyls had no sanctuaries of Apollo, see PARKE: (1988: 71 and 78). KESKIAHO (2013: 159–161) argues that these early consultations are hard to historically verify. See also GAGÉ (1955: 66–8). Cf. SIMON (1978: 204–5).

¹⁵ Liv 4, 25, 3 *Pestilentia eo anno aliarum rerum otium praebuit. Aedis Apollini pro valetudine populi vota est. Multa duumviri ex libris placandae deum irae avertendaeque a populo pestis causa fecere; magna tamen clades in urbe agrisque promiscua hominum pecorumque pernicie accepta. Famem quoque ex pestilentia morbo implicitis cultoribus agrorum timentes in Etruriam Pomptinumque agrum et Cumas, postremo in Siciliam quoque frumenti causa misere.* On the introduction of the cult, see: LATTE (1960: 222); RADKE (1987: 31–38 and 54–57); OGILVIE (1965: 574).

¹⁶ Eg. RE (1963: 1137); cf. GAGÉ 1955: (129 and 181); OGILVIE (1965: 574).

¹⁷ Liv. 4, 21, 5.

¹⁸ Livy 3, 67, 4. mention a hill called *Apollinare* before the official cult's introduction happened. See SIMON (1978: 208–209).

similar role as the *libri Sibyllini*: to pursue the *pax deorum*.¹⁹ Instead of applying some kind of expiatory rituals (*lustrum, auspicia*)²⁰ the god himself was the *remedium*. Protecting the physical health of the people and guarding Rome from various epidemics (which were also considered *prodigia*)²¹ was another key element to the concept of *pax deorum*, as these epidemics — which were thought to be crises of a religious origin — constantly afflicted the city and caused religious and literal physical pollution.²² This was not the only occasion when Apollo's healing capabilities and the Sibylline books' expiatory ability were deployed at the same time. In 399 BC, during a pestilence — as a result of a consultation of the Sibylline books — the rite of the *lectisternium* was introduced.²³ Imitating the Greek *theoxenia*, six deities were honoured during this expiating festivity, among them one of the central gods must have been Apollo (at least in the early ceremonies),²⁴ presumably because of his established cult title as *medicus*.²⁵ The *lectisternium* became a permanent, basic ritual for this purpose, as many other cults and rites which were introduced using the books. Of course, these early similarities do not mean that the books were related to Apollo in any way, but as the expression of *fata et remedia* shows, in this characteristic and function they resembled each other.

¹⁹ In Ennius (Alexander fr. 38–48) when Priam searched for *pax*, he offered a sacrifice at the altar of Apollo. Cf. Cic. *Div.* 1, 21.

²⁰ MADEJSKI (2010: 111).

²¹ For the definition to *prodigium*, see ENGELS (2007: 264–268); GILLMEISTER (2015: 219); SATTERFIELD (2015: 432–433).

²² There are 53 consultations until 83 BC, 14 are caused by pestilence (Liv. 4,21, 5; 4, 25, 3; 7, 2; 7, 27, 1; 10, 31; 10, 47; Oros. 4, 5; Liv. *ep.* 49; 38, 44; 40, 19; 40, 37; 41, 21, 10 ; Obs. 13; 22). The introduction of Aesculapius, one of the most important healing cults in Rome, happened also on behalf of the books (Liv. 10, 47, 6–7). On the epidemics in Rome see SCHIELD (2013: 51–52), GARDNER (2020: 20–28). Epidemics as prodigies, see ANDRÉ (1980).

²³ Liv. 5, 13. See LATTE (1960: 242–244); OGILVIE (1965, 664–666); SATTERFIELD (2008: 117–120).

²⁴ Liv. 5, 13, 6; 7, 25, 1. See LATTE 1960, 243; DUMÉZIL (1996: 567–568). Later the focus shifts to Jupiter (*epulum Iovis*) as the main god of the rite.

²⁵ PARKE (1988: 193–194).

As a result of the rich and intense cultural exchange between Rome and Greece, the Roman Apollo started to take a more Hellenistic shape, namely as a seer-god. Furthermore, Apollo was not only associated with prophecies and healing, but with victory and, with the safety and welfare (*salus*) of the entire Roman state.²⁶ The establishment of the *ludi Apollinares* during the Second Punic War shows the change in Apollo's position as he became a popular character in Roman religion. Following the battles of Lake Trasimene and Cannae, Rome found herself not only in a military and political crisis, but a religious-spiritual one as well.²⁷ Hannibal was still plundering the lands of Italy when the Senate, in order to ease the increasing superstitious turmoil, ordered all unauthorized, popular prophecy books to be collected, which started causing neglect among the populace towards rites and customs, undermining the authority of the political elite.²⁸ Among the gathered collection of prophecies there were two attributed to a fortune-teller called Marcius. One's authenticity was proved post-factum by foretelling the defeat at Cannae, the other — as Livy expressed himself — gave prediction about the *incertiora futura*: if the Romans seek to prevail over Hannibal a *ludi* should be held for Apollo (Liv. 25, 12, 9–10):

hostes, Romani, si ex agro expellere uoltis, uomicam quae gentium venit longe, Apollini uovendos censeo ludos qui quotannis comiter Apollini fiant; cum populus dederit ex publico partem, privati uti conferant pro se atque suis; iis ludis faciendis praesit praetor is quis ius populo plebeique dabit summum; decemviri Graeco ritu hostiis sacra faciant. hoc si recte facietis, gaudebitis semper fietque res uestra melior; nam is deum exstinguet perduelles uestros qui uestros campos pascit placide.

To confirm these oracles, the Senate ordered the *Xviri* to consult the Sibylline books for approbation, thus establishing the *ludi Apollinares*.²⁹

²⁶ GAGÉ (1955: 349–393); LATTE (1960: 223–224).

²⁷ See Polyb. 3, 112, 8. See also Liv. 22, 36 and 24, 10. For more sources and discussion, see ENGELS (2007: 767–768); KESKIAHO (2013: 162, especially n. 142).

²⁸ Liv. 25, 1, 6–12.

²⁹ About the *ludi* in detail, see: SCULLARD (1981: 159–160); BERNSTEIN (1998: 171–181); LATTE (1960: 223).

Although the games were ordered and supervised by the *praetor urbanus*, it was the *Xviri* who performed the sacrifices and rites, so this priestly body, that was originally created to oversee the Sibylline books, started to become affiliated with Apollo (or maybe it already was).³⁰ Livy states that Apollo was invoked not as healer, but as a symbol for victory (25, 12, 15): *haec est origo ludorum Apollinarium, victoriae, non valetudinis ergo ut plerique rentur, votorum factorumque*. However, the Marcian oracle uses a strong pestilential-medical metaphor to describe the instructions: *vomica ... hostem ... gentium ... expellere* (on the latter see OLD s. v. 1b.). This presupposes a symbolic connection between pestilence and the enemy, thus, in terms of the narratology, Apollo was seen as an obvious choice to eliminate it. The oracle's wording clearly testifies how the god was viewed at the time. In this regard, Livy perhaps was mistaken in his sources, and was influenced by Apollo's recent image as the victor of Actium (Prop. 4, 6, 69–70: *Apollo victor*), or simply wanted to reflect on the discourse of his time (*ut plerique rentur*).³¹ Nevertheless, Apollo did not bring victory immediately (for that purpose another Sibylline oracle inspired cult, Magna Mater, was installed in 202 BC),³² but his *ludi* became permanent in 208 BC as a response to a severe plague.³³ This multifaceted profile of the god does not counteract itself. In fact, Apollo, by the end of the Second Punic war, became an important, versatile god in Roman religion, summoned whenever the external or internal integrity of the Roman state was under threat.³⁴ In this manner, Apollo further resembled some of the Sibylline books' functions: they

³⁰ RADKE (1987: 66); GAGÉ (1955: 24–26); LATTE (1960: 221–221).

³¹ Cf. Macr. *Sat.* 1, 17, 25; 27. See MILLER (2009: 29).

³² Liv. 29, 10, 4–29, 11, 8.

³³ Already in the years of 211 (Liv. 26, 23, 3) and 209 (27, 11, 6) were attempts to make it permanent. For 208 (Liv. 27.23.5–7): *eo anno pestilentia grauis incidit in urbem agrosque, quae tamen magis in longos morbos quam in peritiales euasit. eius pestilentiae causa et supplicatum per compita tota urbe est et P. Licinius Uarus praetor urbanus legem ferre ad populum iussus ut ii ludi in perpetuum in statam diem uouerentur*. For context see BERNSTEIN (1998: 181–182).

³⁴ ALFÖLDI (1997: 76), examining Apollo's appearance on coinage of that time, remarks: 'Apollo was a versatile divinity, and his attraction for people could be due to the diverse aspect of his cult.'

shared the same priestly collegium, and both of them can be thought of as important instruments through which the *pax deorum*, the very equilibrium of the Roman imperium, could prevail. However, the Sibylline books were consulted more frequently at the time, and ' [...] were used in accordance with current needs and religious trends' as Keskiaho states. Meanwhile, he adds: '[...] by the end of the 3rd century they were connected with Greek rituals, Apollo, and, by association, prophecy.'³⁵ As Rome set foot on Greek soil, and with it Roman ambassadors and generals became regular visitors of Delphi,³⁶ the books slowly began losing their unique monopoly as state oracle,³⁷ and started to be affiliated with a Sibyl or Sibyls.³⁸

By the 1st century BC, all sources treat the Sibylline books as a collection of prophecies under the supervision of Apollo.³⁹ Despite this, in 83 BC, when the books were destroyed in the devastating fire of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, they were replaced in their original loca-

³⁵ KESKIAHO (2013: 165).

³⁶ According to Livy (1, 56) already in 511–10 BC Delphi had been visited by a Roman delegation, but its historicity is uncertain. At the time of Camillus, there was one visit due to the flooding of the Alban lake (Liv. 5, 15 3 and 5, 28, 1–5). Fabius Pictor was sent to Apollo's famous oracle after the defeat at Cannae (Liv. 22.57.4–5). When he returned (23.11.1–2), he proclaimed that the command of Pythia is to make atoning sacrifices and lead ceremonies to gain the blessing of the gods. For discussion on the former visits, see PARKE–WORMELL (1956: 265–282); OGILVIE (1965: 216–218 and 660, 689–693); GAGÉ (1955: 377–384); KESKIAHO (2013: 164); GILLMEISTER (2015: 215 n. 24).

³⁷ ALFÖLDI (1997: 73–75).

³⁸ The first mention of the Sibyl in Roman literature is by Navius, in his *Bellum Poenicum*. FGrH 70 fr. 134. See PARKE (1988: 71–74); POTTER (1994: 73–74); GILLMEISTER (2015: 217).

³⁹ Liv. 10, 8, 2: *decemviros sacris faciendis, carminum Sibyllae ac fatorum populi huius interpretes, antistites eosdem Apollinaris sacri caerimoniarumque aliarum plebeios videmus*. Cic. *Har. Resp.* 18: *fatorum veteres praedictiones Apollinis vatium libris, portentorum expiationes Etruscorum disciplina contineri putaverunt*. Most scholars accept an early connection with the books, see: WISSOWA (1902: 239); SIMON (1978: 203–204); ALFÖLDI (1997: 69–71). Against the connection with Apollo, see: LATTE (1960: 222); ORLIN (2002: 76–85). The coinage of the members of the *viri sacris facundi* frequently displays Apollonian symbols, which again may provide evidence for an interrelation.

tion seven years later.⁴⁰ This ‘new’ collection remained in the old, traditional centre of the state. However, from this date on, their content and the nature of each prediction significantly changed, gaining a Hellenistic profile.⁴¹ We only find one traditional *prodigium* and a following expiation ritual in 38 BC,⁴² instead of these past uses, it became frequent to turn to the predictions (that were attributed to Sibylline books)⁴³ in political or party struggles. Moreover, the content of such predictions has taken on an eschatological character, according to which the success or misfortune of the state as such depends on the individual. For example, Publius Cornelius Lentulus, one of the chief participants of the Catilinarian conspiracy, claimed in front of the Allobrogian delegates that he

⁴⁰ According to Appian (*B. Civ.* 1, 83) the fire on the Capitol was marked as one of the prodigies of the forthcoming civil wars. See also: Cic. *Verr.* 2, 4, 69; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4, 62; Plut. *Sull.* 27, 12–13; Plin. *H.N.* 33, 16; Tact. *Ann.* 6, 12, 5; Obs. 57; Cassiod. *Chron.* 132, 486. Sulla began to rebuild the temple, but did not live to see its dedication in 69 BC (Tac. *Hist.* 3, 72, 8–10). The new set of collections was gathered and copied down by various private texts from all around the Mediterranean and Asia (Erythrae, Italy, Samos, Ilium, Africa). Lact. *Div inst.* 1, 6, 13. See GAGÉ (1955: 446–461); POTTER (1994: 78). According to ORLIN (2010: 203) this wide range for the recollection meant that the Roman state recognized these *poleis* as members of the Roman community. See also: KESKIAHO (2013: 166); SANTANGELO (2013: 135–136).

⁴¹ There are already uncommon consultations before the fire (Liv. 38, 45, 3; Liv. *epit. Oxyrh.* 54). On these, see ENGELS (2007: 501–502); KESKIAHO (2013: 163–164); SATTERFIELD (2008: 129–136). A Sibylline oracle was consulted during the war against Mithridates as a religious instrument implemented in the struggle over the East, see SANTANGELO (2013: 129–133). One of the reasons for this changing character may be the failing traditional political system, see FLOWER (2009: 62–114). KESKIAHO (2013: 168–169) argues that the book’s content did not change that drastically, rather the political culture of the time itself shifted to a different state. The growing role of the individual political leaders, generals and their authority over the state and the official religion had affected the Sibylline prophecies: ‘At the very least, we can say that the oracles of the Sibyl seemed to have had, since the time of Sulla, a role in the propaganda around political leaders that they had not had before.’

⁴² Dio 48, 4. See SATTERFIELD (2008: 200–201).

⁴³ There is a debate among scholars that after the reinstatement these ambiguous prophecies came from the original collections, handled by the *XVviri* and the Senate, or from private ones. See RADKE (1987: 65–66); Cf. KESKIAHO (2013: 168) argues for their genuineness. GILLMEISTER (2015: 217–218) emphasizes the influence of the *oracula Sibyllina* on the *libri*.

has to be a future leader of Rome, for, according to the Sibylline books, three Cornelii should rule over Rome: after Sulla and Cinna, he must be the third.⁴⁴ Another illustrative example would be when, in 45 BC, prophecies (also supposedly from the Sibylline books) circulated in Rome stating that only a king would be able to defeat the Parthians. This meant that Caesar should become king before he leaves the already planned Parthian campaign in 44 BC.⁴⁵ It is hard to determine whether these prophecies were of an authentic origin, but it is certain that they were used as a legitimizing tool and distributed during late republican political strifes, and thereby affected public discourse.

These examples somewhat explain Augustus' definite policies against any prophetic texts. He not only banned and burned all other Latin and Greek, private, anonymous prophecy collections that were still popular and circulating in Rome at the time, but also issued to edit copies of the state controlled Sibylline books (*hos quoque dilectu habito*).⁴⁶ Strict action against the aforementioned popular, eschatological predictions of obscure origins is clear: the Roman state always had tight control over these private religious texts.⁴⁷ When Augustus ordered these ambiguous, unofficial collections to be handed over to the *praetor urbanus*, and simultaneously instructed the *XVviri* (whose *magister collegium*

⁴⁴ Sall. *Cat.* 47, 2: *eadem Galli fatentur ac Lentulum dissimulantem coarguunt praeter litteras sermonibus, quos ille habere solitus erat: ex libris Sibyllinis regnum Romae tribus Corneliis portendi; Cinnam atque Sullam antea, se tertium esse.* Cf. Plut. *Cic.* 17, 4; *Cic. Cat.* 3, 9. Cf. in 87 BC some verses from the books were read aloud, requiring the expulsion of Cinna and six others in order to attain peace. See PARKE (1988: 206). SATTERFIELD (2008: 180–186).

⁴⁵ Suet. *Iul.* 79: *proximo autem senatu Lucium Cottam quindecimvirum sententiam dicturum, ut, quoniam fatalibus libris contineretur Parthos nisi a rege non posse vinci, Caesar rex appelleretur.* Cf. Plut. *Caes.* 60, Dio 44, 15; App. *BC* 2, 11; Cicero in the *De Divinatione* (2, 111–113.) tell us about this particular prophecies. He complain that these kind of prophecies should be treated more carefully, since it is not certain for which age or occasion it applies. PARKE (1988: 209) on the account of this sources state that in the time of Cicero, there was already an irregularity in the usage of books. Cf. SATTERFIELD (2008: 196–200).

⁴⁶ Suet. *Aug.* 31, 1. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 6, 12, 2. For discussion on the Suetonius *loc.* see: WARDLE (2014: 246–247).

⁴⁷ Cf. Liv. 25, 1, 12; 40, 29, 12–14. Tact. *Ann.* 6, 12, 2.

was Augustus himself)⁴⁸ to review the unordered Sibylline books, his aim must have been to eliminate any other prophecies, which would undermine his authority or position. Cassius Dio reports that the Sibylline books had to be renovated, because apparently they became unreadable over time. He also adds that it was done personally by the *XVviri*, so that their contents would remain in secret.⁴⁹ These simultaneous orders clearly show Augustus' attitude towards prophecies as such: unofficial ones had to cease to exist,⁵⁰ and official ones had to be cleared from any uncomfortable content, while being accessible only to him and a few select members of his clientura.⁵¹ As Keskiaho notes: 'the consultation of the books happened in secret, we have to allow for an indefinite amount of agency to the *Xviri* in the composition of the oracular responses or even in the alteration of the books themselves.'⁵²

These policies, the austere regulation and control over (un)official prophetic texts indicate their importance in the eyes of the Augustan authorities. Nevertheless, a remark of Dionysius of Halicarnasseus contradicts this statement. The Greek historian, living in Rome, expresses his concern about the neglect of the Sibylline books — which he considered the most valuable possession of the Roman state⁵³ — by his contemporaries.⁵⁴ Dionysius noticed a shift in the acceptance, importance and cultural context of the books after the Augustan reorganization, which I believe was the deliberate intention of Augustus. Via the strong

⁴⁸ Octavian was a member of the magistrate from the early 30's (if a coin [BMCR Gaul 115] from 37 BC interpretation is correct), later become a magister (RG 4, 36–7.); see SATTERFIELD (2008: 210); MILLER (2009: 19).

⁴⁹ Dio 54, 17, 2: καὶ τὰ ἔπη τὰ Σιβύλλεια ἐξίτηλα ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου γεγονότα τοὺς ἰερέας ἀποχειρῖα ἐκγράψασθαι ἐκέλευσεν, ἵνα μηδεὶς ἕτερος αὐτὰ ἀναλέξηται.

⁵⁰ The purging of private oracular texts was not enterally successful: an account of Tacitus (6, 12.) states that still in his day plenty of them were circulating in Rome.

⁵¹ See SATTERFIELD (2008: 211).

⁵² KESKIAHO (2013: 159).

⁵³ Dion. Hal. 4, 62, 5: συνελόντι δ' εἰπεῖν οὐδὲν οὕτω Ῥωμαῖοι φυλάττουσιν οὐθ' ὅσιον κτῆμα οὐθ' ἰερόν ὡς τὰ Σιβύλλεια θέσφατα.

⁵⁴ Dion. Hal. 7, 37, 3: ὧν οὐκ ἤξιον οἱ τότε ἄνθρωποι καθάπερ οἱ νῦν ὑπερορᾶν. ENGELS (2012: 160–161) emphasizes the Anti-Augustan tone in this remark, moreover reinforces his argument with Cicero's and Livy's (43, 13, 1) critics about the neglection of *prodigia publica* of their times, which presumably a result of Augustan policies.

supervision and (re)politicisation of the collection, Augustus intended to marginalise and degrade the once important books of the Republican religion. As matter of fact, we find only one consultations during Augustus' reign,⁵⁵ and in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* the term *Sibylla* itself is barely mentioned (seven times in total).⁵⁶ Numerous consultations known from other sources are not mentioned, and after all, the specific origin myth of the books, Tarquinius Superbus and the old Sibyl from Cumae, are completely omitted. According to Gillmeister, the adjective *sibyllini* was later added to the collection, so Livy perhaps adjusted his terminology to the policies of his era, a time when the books became vague, distant and rarely used (and, in a way, more special) items of the many Roman divination types. Meanwhile, the Sibyl's significance peaked as a cultural and a literal phenomenon. It is also possible that Livy did not want to include a 'popular story' in his work, nor wanted to choose between the Jovian and Apollonian traditions. As a historian with strong republican sympathy, Livy might have expressed his disagreement on the reorganisation of the books by not including any origin story.⁵⁷ Either way, it is certain, that the name *Sibyllini libri* is a later adaptation and a cultural invention.⁵⁸ Still, I would argue that the books did not completely lose their original importance and republican appearance as *libri fatalis* providing *remedia*.

At the feet of Apollo Palatine

Another important aspect of the relocation of the Sibylline books was the destination itself, the sanctuary of the Apollo Palatinus. It was an obvious choice for two reasons. First and foremost, it was practical to place the books (more precisely to seal them *sub Apollonis basi in duobus foruli aurati*) inside the pedestal of the sanctuary in the immediate vicinity of the princeps, since Augustus' humble residence (cf. Suet. *Aug.* 72.1)

⁵⁵ In 17 BC on the occasion of the *ludi saeculares*; see later in the study.

⁵⁶ Only the phrase *libri* emerges 19 times, three times the books named as *fatalis*. Cf. in Dionysius' version of the origin story there are no Sibyl mentioned. GILLMEISTER (2015a: 178); (2015: 213, n. 11). See the discussion in KESKIAHO (2013: 156–157, especially n. 91).

⁵⁷ GILLMEISTER (2015a: 179); (2015: 213); POTTER (1994: 81–83).

⁵⁸ GILLMEISTER (2010: 11 and 15).

stood right next to Apollo's new temple and was even connected to it by a *porticus*.⁵⁹ As the *magister collegium* of the *XVviri*, the *princeps* could easily control access to the books, having institutional and literal physical authority over them.

Secondly, this location is closely related to Augustus' religious-cultural aspirations. He was trying to break with the Jovian origins and emphasise the more recent Apollonian tone of the books. This, on the other hand, indicates a confrontation between the principal cult of the Roman state and his personal patron god. Jupiter Optimus Maximus's old temple on the Capitolium slowly lost its importance and the new sanctuary of Apollo on the Palatine Hill took over some of its functions.⁶⁰ But this change of emphasis in Roman religious customs and divine hierarchy did not arise out of blasphemy against the ancient state-cult of Jupiter, at least our sources never mention such intentions. Apollo Palatinus' brand-new, dazzling, monumental sanctuary complex represented Augustus' new statehood, and easily became the very symbol of it. The temple's iconography incorporated the god's victorious vengefulness (Apollo Actio), as well as his peaceful, cosmical image (Citharoedus, Sol), showing the full prism of the politico-religious ideology and propagandistic narrative of the new regime.⁶¹ The Palatine's image incorporated the old cult of Apollo Medicus as well,⁶² thus the god continued to represent — as discussed above — the health and safety of the Roman state, and it is highly likely that Augustus utilised this specific aspect of the god's image in order to be seen as the 'healer of the

⁵⁹ Suet. *Aug.* 29, 3. See WARDLE (2014: 228–230).

⁶⁰ BREAD–NORTH–PRICE (1998: 200–201).

⁶¹ On the Augustan Apollo see ZANKER, (1989: 65–70 and 82–89); GALINSKY (1999: 213–224); MILLER (2009: 186–196).

⁶² The temple of Apollo Medicus was restored between 34 and 32 BC by C. Sosius, a former confidant and *legatus* of Antonius. Despite this, the temple was inaugurated on Augustus' birthday (23 September), and Sosius became a pardoned ally of Augustus, and as a member of the *XVviri*, he was even participated in the *ludi saecularis*. For Apollo as healer during the Augustan Age: Hor. *Carm.* 1, 21, 13–15; CS. 61–64. MILLER (2009: 176–177).

state'.⁶³ This politically and culturally saturated place became the new home of the Sibylline books.

The purpose of the relocation was not only to keep up with the changing late republican religious habits and practices, nor only to have authority over these old, prestigious divination instruments of the *res publica*, but to incorporate them into the framework of Augustan ideology. In fact, Augustus was trying to make it appear as though the relocation of the books was a necessary, compulsory move. As if keeping the Sibylline books on the Capitol Hill was an error in the tradition which had to be ameliorated. Augustus partially discarded the original status and function of the books and replaced it with a new one, which was still loosely based on their original purpose.⁶⁴ The *pax deorum* had been replaced with *pax Augusta*,⁶⁵ under which no more prodigies could occur, at least since the policies of the *prodigia publica* had been reshaped.⁶⁶ Thus, the safety, the health and the future of the Roman state was secured by Augustus, through the values represented and symbolised by Apollo: *fatum, remedium, victoria* and *aura saecula*. With the relocation, Augustus finalised the association between the god and the books,⁶⁷ simultaneously creating a new religious-cultural unity. This was not a sudden invention, but part of a longer initiative, to which both Vergil's *Aeneid* and Tibullus (2, 5) attested and contributed to, forming this new, modified image of the collection.

In the beginning of the 6th book of the *Aeneid*, after Aeneas finally reaches the shores of Italy, he instantly ascends to the temple of Apollo, and to the dreadful secret cave of the Sibyl (6. 10–11: *horrendaeque procul secreta Sibyllae, / antrum immane*) to ask her for directions to the underworld, in order to seek the shadow of his father, Anchises. The portrait of the Cumean Sibyl as a prophetess of Apollo, and the whole topography of Apollo's Cumean sanctuary was a Vergilian innovation. There is

⁶³ WICKKISER (2005).

⁶⁴ Cf. GILLMEISTER (2015: 221): 'The political role of the Roman state oracle had become minimal while at the very same moment the renaissance of the Sibyl in Roman culture had reached its zenith.'

⁶⁵ CORNWELL (2017: 155–186).

⁶⁶ SATTERFIELD (2008: 208–210).

⁶⁷ GAGÉ (1955: 542–555); KESKIAHO (2013: 169).

no other evidence which makes such a connection between Apollo and Sibyl, or between Aeneas and the Cumaean Sibyl.⁶⁸ Although Apollo had an old sanctuary in Cuma, the Cumaean Apollo had minor influence on Roman culture, and was not affiliated with the Cumaean Sibyl before Augustus.⁶⁹ Miller points out that it seems as if Vergil reorganised the topography of the area ‘in order to highlight Apollo’,⁷⁰ thus emphasising the Apollonian character of the scene at the expense of the Sibyl’s. Furthermore, this literary, constructed place of the god’s sacred *arx* with the Trivia’s (Diana) *lucus* (cf. 9–10) resembles mostly Rome’s imperial Palatine temple, inaugurated in 28 BC.⁷¹ This meta-historical and cross-spatial connection between past and present, Cumae and Rome, becomes evident when Aeneas enters into the cave of the *Delius uates* (highlighting the Sibyl’s Apollonian profile) who *aperit futura* (12.). After some encouragement, the Trojan hero makes a vow to her (69–76):

tum Phoebo et Triuiaie solido de marmore templum
 instituum festosque dies de nomine Phoebi.
 te quoque magna manent regnis penetralia nostris:
 hic ego namque tuas sortis arcanaque fata
 dicta meae genti ponam, lectosque sacrabo,
 alma, uiros. foliis tantum ne carmina manda,
 ne turbata uolent rapidis ludibria uentis;
 ipsa canas oro. [...]

The promise of the new temple and festivity eventually will be fulfilled not by Aeneas, but Augustus. The *marmore templum* is clearly a reference to Apollo Palatinus, but the identification of *festus dies* is not so evident. It could refer to the *ludi Apollinares*,⁷² or, sticking to the Augustan timeline, it can also allude to either one of the victory games founded after Actium, or the *ludi saeculares* itself.⁷³ Aeneas, in addition, lists two more

⁶⁸ ZETZEL (1989: 279–280).

⁶⁹ MILLER (2009:134–135 and 146); HORSFALL (2013: 84–89). GILLMEISTER (2015: 214 and 218).

⁷⁰ MILLER (2009:135); Cf. CLARK (1977).

⁷¹ MCKAY (1973: 53–54 and 61–63); MILLER (2009: 136).

⁷² Serv. *ad Aen.* 6, 70; See also MCKAY (1973: 54); HORSFALL (2013: 113).

⁷³ MILLER (2009: 139).

segments: the Sybil's *sortes* containing *fata arcana* and the priestly body (*XVviri*) to oversee them.⁷⁴ In just a few lines the Vergilian narrator draws a parallel between Aeneas and Augustus: both of them founding temples, religious practices and priesthods.⁷⁵ A key segment and a main cause of the Augustan reorganisation appears in these lines. The medium (cf. OLD sors 3.) of the Sibyl's oracular responses, the physical object itself and the mediated message, the secrets of the divine *fatum*, the future of the Roman race belong to Apollo,⁷⁶ and has to be stored in the sanctuary of Apollo, at least, this is what Aeneas promised (*funditque preces rex pectore ab imo*; 55) to the Sybil in exchange for her oracle (cf. 6. 83–97). We do not know the precise date when Vergil wrote these lines and whether he was influenced by the cultural-religious changes of his time or whether he was a herald of the Augustan relocation,⁷⁷ but from the perspective of the Augustan (contemporary) reader it does not necessarily matter. Vergil's epic presented, and at the same time legitimised the notion that the secrets and fate of Rome always belonged to Apollo, and Augustus was the one who corrected these 'mistakes' of the republican religious tradition. Servius, the 4th century commentator of the *Aeneid*, does not even mention any more connection with Jupiter and situates the books without any doubt under the guardianship of Apollo.⁷⁸

Hence, the *Aeneid* constructed the aetiology story of the Sibylline books within Apollo Palatinus' temple. In Vergil's epic, the concept of *fatum* (originally attributed to Jupiter) is clearly connected to Apollo, albeit, the episode of the Sibyl and Aeneas does not say much about the books' exact role within the ideology of the principate. Tibullus however, who happened to be the least political poet of the Augustan Age,⁷⁹ in his poem 2.5, depicts a very 'Roman' theme by commemorating the inauguration of his patron's son, M. Valerius Messalla Messallinus, into

⁷⁴ Serv. *ad Aen.* 6, 73; For detailed discussion, see HORSFALL (2013: 113).

⁷⁵ Cf. Suet. *Aug.* 29; 31, 4. MILLER (2009: 139). On the comparison of Augustus and Aeneas see WEEDA (2015: 137–140).

⁷⁶ RADKE (1987: 65).

⁷⁷ On a possible dating see HORSFALL (2013: xiv–xv).

⁷⁸ Serv. *ad Aen.* 6, 72: *qui libri in templo Apollinis servabantur*.

⁷⁹ See GOSLING (1987: 333 n. 2).

the *XVviri*.⁸⁰ The poem shows the influence of Vergil, but most importantly attests to the functional, cultural and ideological exchange between Apollo and the books. Tibullus further develops the Vergilian notion of placing the books into the sanctuary of Apollo, and portrays them as one of the inseparable items of the seer-god (15–20):

Te duce Romanos numquam frustrata Sibylla,
 Abdita quae senis fata canit pedibus.
 Phoebæ, sacras Messalinum sine tangere chartas
 Vatis, et ipse precor quid canat illa doce.
 Haec dedit Aeneae sortes, postquam ille parentem
 Dicitur et raptos sustinuisse Lares;

The Sibyl tells the *fata* to the Romans in hexameter (*seni pedes*). These verses are found in the books (*sacras chartas*); again the materiality of the prophecies are highlighted, as the *tangere* infinitive also shows. Messalinus' duty, as priest and an expert, was to visit the temple, and to communicate the book's messages as the Sibyl did in the *Aeneid*.⁸¹ Thus, the poem gives the appearance of continuity: the Sibyl, as a prophetess (*vates*) of Apollo, provided the verses containing *fata* to Aeneas, and now Messallinus does the same, albeit without direct reference, to Augustus. The Sibyl and Apollo are together responsible for the *fatum*, and it seems like Apollo and the books almost completely merged by this time; they surely formed an inseparable religious unit, to say the least. Following Gillmeister's argumentation (2015), the Sibyl and the books are also completely identical, both of them being merely an item for Apollo to reveal his prophecies.

In between lines 19–64, the poem shows the same vision as the *Aeneid*: blissful and idyllic proto-Rome, the arrival of Aeneas, his struggle, and after all, the founding of Rome and her future as an empire.⁸² This is

⁸⁰ PUTNAM (1973: 182).

⁸¹ MURGATROYD (1994: 176–180).

⁸² The wording of this sentence is similar to the lines of Anchises in the *Aeneid*, when he proclaims the famous mission of Rome (6, 851–853: *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*. Cf. PUTNAM (1973: 189–190).

the *fatum*, which Apollo proclaimed through the Sibyls (Amalthea, Marpesia, Herophile, Phoeto, Graia, Aniena) and their books (*sacras ... sortes*) (cf. 65–70),⁸³ launched into motion by Aeneas, and finally fulfilled by Augustus. Surprisingly, when the poem jumps back to its present time, it begins to list typical prodigies (71–78).⁸⁴ As Burkowski noted, Tibullus here makes a sharp distinction between the recent ominous, unstable age of the civil wars and the prosperity of the proto-Roman past.⁸⁵ These *mala signa*, which are similar to the ones appearing in 44 BC following Caesars murder,⁸⁶ are the *fatum* (cf. 78: *fataque vocales praemonuisse boves*) that needs to be interpreted and expiated. In this context Apollo appears to be taking over the basic characteristics of the Sibylline books, namely, to annul prodigies and ensure that the correct solutions were given to them (79–82):

Haec fuerunt olim, sed tu iam mitis, Apollo,
 Prodigia indomitis merge sub aequoribus,
 Et succensa sacris crepitet bene laurea flammis,
 Omine quo felix et satur [sacer]⁸⁷ annus erit.

Those prodigies belong to the realm of the past now; meanwhile, the poet asks Apollo to throw future ones into the fierce seas (*sub indomitis aequoribus*).⁸⁸ Apollo, with the help of the Sibylline books, even prevents any malicious *omen* or *prodigia* occurring in the future, and in this way (ironically) making it meaningless to consult the books anymore. Livy informs us that prodigies are no more reported in his time.⁸⁹ Thus, the

⁸³ See MURGATROYD (1994: 207–211).

⁸⁴ PARKE (1988: 209–210) raises the possibility that these lines are inspired by the original content of *libri Sibyllini*.

⁸⁵ BURKOWSKI (2016: 164–165). The distinction, however, is also emphasised with the future, bucolic prosperity as well (cf. 83–104).

⁸⁶ PUTNAM (1973: 191); MURGATROYD (1994: 211–212); Cf. Verg. *Georg.* 3, 464–88.

⁸⁷ See the critical appendix in MURGATROYD (1994: 280–281).

⁸⁸ Tibullus here may refer to the old custom of throwing protents into the sea, but in Livy (27, 37, 6) it is done following the order of the *haruspex*. Dio (24 frg. 84 Bossevain) informs about a case, where a statue of Apollo was thrown into the sea.

⁸⁹ Liv. 43, 13, 1–2: *Non sum nescius ab eadem negligentia qua nihil deos portendere volgo nunc credant neque nuntiari admodum ulla prodigia in publicum neque in annales referri.*

original function of the Sibylline books, the main reason they were used during the republic, is absorbed completely by Apollo. To be precise, by the sanctuary of Apollo Palatinus, where the addressee of Tibullus' poem is going to be a priest, and where the Sibylline books are closed off forever under the full authority of Augustus.

This forthcoming age without prodigies is going to be *felix et satur*, an abundant, blissful era with Apollo's insurance. Although the poem was written possibly a few years before the *ludi saeculares*,⁹⁰ these expressions and the following themes and imagery (83–104) recall the atmosphere and symbols of the festivity.⁹¹ Here Tibullus once more invokes Vergil. After Aeneas landed in the underworld with Anchises' guidance, the future of Rome appears in front of him. The Trojan hero foresees Augustus, with a short but meaningful description (6, 791–793):

hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,
 Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet
 saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arua
 Saturno quondam, [...]

The narrator (in the guise of Anchises) portrays Augustus in the line of Roman heroes, as an enabler of that *aurea saecula*, which once ruled all over Latium.⁹² This secular and cyclical imagery of Vergil and Tibullus not only shows the importance of the *ludi saeculares* in Augustus self-representation, but also further proves that both poets contributed to the construction of this image. The arrival of the new *saeculum* had been anticipated at least since the early 40s BC, as various prophecies and prophetic texts were circulating proclaiming the change of ages, and the arriving era of Saturn. However, due to the ongoing civil wars, there was little effort to celebrate it.⁹³ Virgil's famous, optimistic 4th eclogue

⁹⁰ For dating see MURGATROYD (1994: 163); CAIRNS (1979: 85–86).

⁹¹ CAIRNS (1979: 85–86); MILLER (2009: 260). Messallinus' name can be found on the *Acta* of the *ludi saecularis* 17 BC as *XVviri* (CIL VI 32323. 152).

⁹² HORSFALL (2013: 54–542).

⁹³ In 49 BC the coinage of L. Valerius Acisculus features Sol, Luna, Mercurius and Apollo, gods that are usually linked to the cyclical changes of time (RRC 474, 1 and 5). Cic. *N. D.* 2, 51; *Cens. DN.* 17, 2. According to ALFÖLDI (1997: 68–92), the appearance of

(who put his thoughts and hopes in the mouth of the Cumaean Sibyl)⁹⁴ or Horace's pessimistic and apocalyptic 16th epode reflects on the double nature of their times, and shows their 'space of experience' and 'horizon of expectation'.⁹⁵ Both Vergil and Tibullus were affected by the religious-cultural milieu of their time, which was full of cosmological-secular themes and conceptions, and they indeed further developed this notion in their poems. Augustus eventually capitalised on the concept of the recurring *saeculum* for his own advantage, incorporating his ideological narrative of himself. For this purpose, he used the Sibyl (and her books), who, under the authority of Apollo, gave the long awaited prediction of the new *saeculum* to begin. The single consultation of the Sibylline books during Augustus' reign proclaimed that a *ludi saecularis* should be held.⁹⁶

The Sibylline books and the *ludi saeculares*

The transfer date of the books is debated. Some argue that they were relocated right after the inauguration of the temple of Apollo in 28 BC.⁹⁷ According to Dio's narrative, the transition potentially occurred somewhere between 19 and 17 BC, when the recopying and editing could have happened.⁹⁸ Suetonius puts it to 12 BC, after Lepidus' death, when Augustus seized the position of the pontifex maximus.⁹⁹ The account of Vergil, Tibullus, and a *denarii* minted by Anistus Vetus,¹⁰⁰ suggest an

Apollo and the Sibyl on the coinage of that time represented the cyclical-secular conception.

⁹⁴ Verg. *Ecl.* 4, 4–7: *Vltima Cumaei uenit iam carminis aetas;/ magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo / iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna, / iam noua progenies caelo demittitur alto.*

⁹⁵ KOSSELLECK (1985: 267–288).

⁹⁶ CIL VI 32323. 141.

⁹⁷ PARKE (1988: 141); ORLIN (2002: 98).

⁹⁸ GAGÉ (1955: 542–554); SATTERFELD (2008: 213–218).

⁹⁹ GALINSKY (1996: 102); SANTANGELO (2013: 138); MILLER (2009: 240 n. 118); WARDLE (2014: 248–249).

¹⁰⁰ RIC I² 365 is a possible representation of the Sibylline books. The coin dates to 16 BC, on the reverse side a statue of Apollo stands on a chest within three coil-like forms. See GAGÉ (1955: 545–555). However, this identification is contested; cf. WARDLE (2014: 248).

earlier dating.¹⁰¹ Without any conclusion on this topic, what is certain is that during the aforementioned review (maybe in 18 BC) of the books the *XVviri*, with Augustus' guidance, found that a *ludi saecularis* should be held.¹⁰² Both the first (249 BC) and second (146 BC) *ludi Tarentum* were arranged according to the instructions of the Sibylline books, due to a severe plague and other prodigies.¹⁰³ However, unlike those other earlier games, the occasion in 17 BC was completely reshaped by Augustus. Its date, magnitude, rites, ceremonies and other sacrifices were changed, Apollo and Diana (next to the original pair of Dis and Proserpina) had given a crucial role and the new Palatine building complex was serving as one of the most prominent locations during the three day long festivity. Apollo, together with his sister Diana, appear not only as symbols and allegories of the cyclical change of time — as shown by Horace's *Carmen Saecularis* — but as a representation of the new Augustan Rome. The new games laid more emphasis on hopes for the future, rather than concentrating on the *chthonical* expiation rites of the past.¹⁰⁴ In Horace's hymn, the poet depicts Apollo in full splendour: prophecy, archery, healing (CS. 61–64) are the main *aretai* of the god and were constantly displayed in Augustan Rome. Apollo's prominence in the festivity, however, is further assured by the Sibylline books, as Horace mentions it right after the invocation of Apollo and Diana (1–5): '*Phoebæ silvarumque potens Diana, [...] quo Sibyllini monuere versus.*' The Sibylline books reminded the *XViri*. Namely Ateius Capito, who according to the tradition found during a review the exact oracle that prescribed the *ludi*.¹⁰⁵ Satterfield states that prodigies in 17 BC, preserved by Julius Obsequens, were the reason for the consultation. She argues that these prodigies were fabricated by Augustus in order to have a steady reason

¹⁰¹ SATTERFIELD (2008: 213–216).

¹⁰² Cens. DN. 17, 9; FGrH 257 F 37.5 = Zos. 2, 6, 1.

¹⁰³ For 249 and 146 see: Liv. 7, 27; Zos. 2, 4, 1. Liv. Peri. 49, 6; Cens. DN. 17, 7–11. See BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (1998: 71–72); THOMAS (2011: 271–273) SANTANGELO (2013: 118–119).

¹⁰⁴ About the games of Augustus in general, see SCHNEGG-KÖHLER (2002: 245–262). See also: ZETZEL (1989: 280); THOMAS (2011: 271–273).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. BEARD–NORTH–PRICE (1998: 205); GALINSKY (1996: 102); SANTANGELO (2013: 138).

to consult the books, and link them with the previous ones.¹⁰⁶ Augustus' *ludi saecularis* was supported by the Sibylline books, he manipulated them in order to support his desire to organise a *ludi saecularis*, and thus celebrate the renewed Rome. The books, therefore, were still an important part of the legitimisation and ritual processes. Fortunately, we have the exact text of oracle (the response) and the inscription (*Acta*) commemorating the games. The two texts are the main sources on the event and to a certain degree, give us a clear look on how Augustus used the Sibylline books to promote his *ludi saeculares*, and how he changed the traditional ceremonies, putting Apollo, Diana and the Palatine hill in the focus. The text of the oracle, which Phlegon of Tralles handed down to us, and what seems like a genuine, Augustan origin,¹⁰⁷ highlights Apollo, and the god's connection with Sol:¹⁰⁸

[...] „καὶ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
ὅστε καὶ Ἥλιος κικλήσκειται, ἴσα δεδέχθω
θύματα Λητοίδης.” [...]

The inscription of the *Acta*¹⁰⁹ almost exactly follows the words of the Sibylline's response, and constantly refers back to it (92, 105, 117, 121, 136, 141, 146). The books describe the order and specific rites, ceremonies of the *ludi*. Among these descriptions we find the prayer and due sacrifices to Apollo (141):

APOLLO, VTI TIBI IN ILLIS LIBRI[s sc]RIPTVM EST, QVARVMQVE
RERVM ERGO QVODQVE MELIVS SIET P(opulo) R(omano),
QVIR[itibus,]

It is apparent, then, that the Sibylline books served as the main authority on where and when to organise the *ludi saecularis*. Augustus in this way easily reshaped the original *Secular Games*, his patron god, and the political-religious centre on the Palatine Hill emerged as the new focal point.

¹⁰⁶ SATTERFIELD (2016). Obs. 71. Dio (54, 19, 7) reports that there were prodigies in 16 BC as well.

¹⁰⁷ THOMAS (2011: 56); HORSFALL (2013: 584).

¹⁰⁸ FGrH 257 f 37 = Phlegon; cf. Macr. 99, 4 = Zos. 2, 6, SCHNEGG-KÖHLER (2002: 221–228).

¹⁰⁹ On the *Acta* se SCHNEGG-KÖHLER 2002: 24–45; THOMAS (2011: 274–276).

Through this celebration, the ideology of this new Rome manifested itself. The first line of the Sibylline response is ‘μεμνήσθαι, Ῥωμαῖε’ (remember, Roman)¹¹⁰ echoes the famous lines from the freshly published *Aeneid*, proclaimed by Anchises to Aeneas (6.851): *tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento*. This strong allusion, as Horsfall notes, ‘binds Anchises to the Sibyl and lends oracular authority to Anchises’ words.’¹¹¹ Not only the mission and future of Rome, a segment of the Jupiter-provided *fatum*, communicated by Apollo through the Sibyl, is revealed for Aeneas, but the substance of Augustan imperialism. It is impossible to establish who is alluding to whom,¹¹² but in terms of the cultural/ideological meaning, both texts show the Sibylline books’ precise function in Augustan Rome. Indeed, to some degree, they lost their old republican status, as they were only consulted when a specific political situation required so. But at the same time, the books were incorporated into the ideology of Augustus, as a conveyor of the Augustan *fatum*.

Conclusion

Before concluding, I would like to further develop my argument and illustrate through an example a potentially different view of this transition. In the 14th book of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid retells the encounter of Aeneas and the Sibyl,¹¹³ but in an indistinguishably Ovidian manner, leaving behind the ‘metaphysical explanation and historical prophecies’¹¹⁴ of Vergil. Aeneas, as he arrives at the Sibyl’s cave, asks her to help him descend under the Avernus. Ovid sums up the whole *katabasis* in just a few lines (14, 116–121) and instead turns his attention to the Sibyl’s character and background story. On the way back to the surface, Aeneas thanks and praises her, and eventually makes a similar kind of vow, as in the *Aeneid* (127–128): *pro quibus aérias meritis evectus ad auras templa tibi statuam, tribuam tibi turis honores*. The Sibyl here rejects Aeneas’ worship: she does not want nor need a temple since she is not a god-

¹¹⁰ Cf. Hor. CS. 5: *mouere*; See THOMAS (2011: 53–53, 70).

¹¹¹ HORSFALL (2013: 584).

¹¹² See ZETZEL (1989: 277–279).

¹¹³ ELLSWORTH (1988: 49–51).

¹¹⁴ MYERS (2009: 77).

dess, but a human being.¹¹⁵ Once Apollo eagerly desired her, and promised to grant her eternal life (*lux aeterna dabatur*), but since the Sibyl was not attracted to him, and refused the god's advances, as a punishment Apollo cursed her with as many years as many grains there are in a heap of sand. But without perpetual youth, the Sibyl became a constantly ageing, deformed elderly woman, wasting away over time. This story was not attested elsewhere before Ovid, and it was probably an innovation of his own on the pattern of Cassandra, Aurora and Tithonus.¹¹⁶ For Ovid, the Sibyl is not a *sanctissima vates*, a possessed mouth piece of Apollo, but a de-mystified human being and most importantly a victim. One of the many victims of the god's sexual desire, positioning her in the company of Daphne or Io. However — as Galinsky puts it — Ovid treats this episode more seriously.¹¹⁷ In the case of Daphne, Apollo's unsuccessful seduction is commemorated by the laurel trees being derived from her, and, as many have previously noted, is a clear reference to Augustus, more precisely to his house's door jamb, on which, in order to honour him, two branches of laurel were hanged. The laurel became a symbol for Augustan renovations and victory, however, for Ovid, it was an emblem of authority, oppression and bloodshed.¹¹⁸ Thus, the Sibyl's miserable fate in the *Metamorphoses* could be interpreted through the Augustan policies concerning the Sibylline books. She is just another item appropriated and subjected to the Augustan state embodied by Apollo. Although, unlike Daphne, after her death the Sibyl will be denied and forgotten by the god (150–151). This means she has to live a thousand years (*Met.* 14, 1), exactly the same time needed for dead souls to return to Earth in Vergil (*Aen.* 6, 748):¹¹⁹

[...] nam iam mihi saecula septem
acta, tamen superest, numeros ut pulveris aequem,
ter centum messes, ter centum musta videre.

¹¹⁵ MILLER (2009: 358–359).

¹¹⁶ ELLSWORTH (1988: 50–52 especially n.14); MYERS (2009: 83).

¹¹⁷ GALINSKY (1975: 226–229).

¹¹⁸ See PADNEY (2018); MILLER (2009: 338–355).

¹¹⁹ In Greek tradition, the Sibyl was thought to live for a thousand years, see PARKE (1988: 20 n.15), POTTER (1990: 116).

tempus erit, cum de tanto me corpore parvam
 longa dies faciet, consumptaque membra senecta
 ad minimum redigentur onus: [...]

Ellsworth by using this information calculated that this long period of a thousand years ended exactly when Tarquinius Priscus bought the Sibylline books. According to his interpretation the voice that the Sibyl left behind is the Sibylline books themselves. However, Ellsworth's calculations does not seem to be entirely correct.¹²⁰ Yet, Ovid's usage of the phrase *saecula* — in light of the *ludi saeculares* — has an Augustan, contemporary political echo. There was a belief that Rome, and any other nation, could only exist merely for ten *saecula*.¹²¹ When the *sidus Iulium* appeared in 44 BC the Etruscan diviner Volcatius interpreted it as a sign that Rome's tenth saeculum had arrived, and according to Servius's commentary, this was supposed to be the saeculum under the dominance of Apollo (Sol).¹²²

After all, this Ovidian episode is not only a tragic story about beauty and love and their relationship with the passing of time, but a *metamorphosis*, the transformation of the Sibyl from a young and beautiful girl to a bodiless voice (152–153): *usque adeo mutata ferar nullique videnda / voce tamen noscar; vocem mihi fata relinquunt*. She is going to become what she already is in Vergil's *Aeneid*: only a voice, an intermediary of Apollo, a featureless communication channel, through which the *fatum* is revealed. Just like in the case of Augustus: the once prestigious collection of books, containing the *fata et remedia Romana*, reduced to a cultural, literary and political motif. A simple device under the realm of Apollo, through which the Augustan system justified itself as a new golden age, where there are no more prodigies; the *pax deorum* could not be disturbed under the *pax Augusta*. The transferring of the Sibylline books into the temple of Apollo Palatinus meant that an everlasting *remedium*

¹²⁰ Cf. FEENEY (1999: 21).

¹²¹ Cens. DN. 17, 5; cf. the cycle of ten cosmic ages in *Orac. Sib.* 4, 47, 8.199R.

¹²² Cf. Serv. *Ecl.* 4, 4: *VLTIMA CYMAEI V. I. C. A. Sibyllini, quae Cumana fuit et saecula per metalla divisit, dixit etiam quis quo saeculo imperaret, et Solem ultimum, id est decimum voluit: novimus autem eundem esse Apollinem, unde dicit 'tuus iam regnat Apollo*. See WAGENVOORT (1956: 1–5); COLEMAN (1977: 131–134); MILLER 2009: (254–260).

was implied — there were no consultations after the relocation.¹²³ The appropriation by Augustus and Apollo is perhaps best illustrated by the Sibyl's own words, preserved by Phlegon (FGrH 257 fr. 37 V.7–13):

At that time glorious Leto's son, resenting
 My power of divination, his destructive heart filled with passion,
 Will release the soul imprisoned in my mournful
 Body, shooting my frame with a flesh-smiting arrow.
 (trans. William Hansen)¹²⁴

The Sibyl's own, sorrowful words are supported by a relief found on a statue ('Sorrento') base in Sorrento. The figure of Diana, Apollo and Latona standing next to each other in their full glory, in front of them in the right corner sits a small and old woman, identified as the Sibyl, wearied and subdued, holding the urn containing the Sibylline books — almost like an offering.¹²⁵

Abbreviations

CIL VI	<i>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</i> . Berlin, 1996.
FGrH	Jacoby (ed.): <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin–Leiden, 1923–30 and 1940–58.
OCD	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> . Oxford, 1968.
RE	<i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . Stuttgart, 1893–1980.
RRC	M. H. Crawford (ed.): <i>Roman Republican Coinage</i> . Cambridge, 1974.

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BERNSTEIN 1998	F. BERNSTEIN: <i>Ludi Publici: Untersuchungen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der öffentlichen Spiele im Republikanischen Rom</i> . Stuttgart 1998.

¹²³ See GILLMEISTER (2007: 71 n. 17); GILLMEISTER (2015: 219). Tacitus tells us how Tiberius declined a consultation when Tiber flooded.

¹²⁴ HANSEN (1996: 55).

¹²⁵ Sorrento, Museo Correale, inv. 3657.

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