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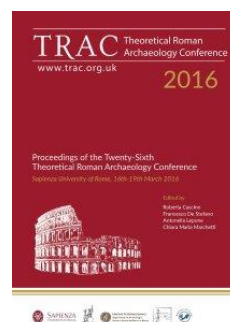
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# The *Domus* of *Apuleius* at Ostia Antica: a Private Space in a Central Point of Public Life

*Antonella Pansini*

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## *Introduction*

The *Domus* of Apuleius (II, VIII, 5) at Ostia Antica is an important study case to understand the relation between public and private through the study of ancient architecture<sup>1</sup>. The surveying and analysing of the *domus* remains have permitted to propose new hypotheses on the Four Small Temples area, one of the most important archaeological complex in Ostia: it has been the subject of fundamental studies (e.g. Meiggs 1973<sup>2</sup>, 493–501; Zevi 1973, Zevi 1976, Coarelli 1989; D’Asdia 2002; Sole 2002; Coarelli 2004; Rieger 2004; Steuernagel 2004; Zevi 2004; Pensabene 2005; Pensabene 2007; Zevi 2012) but it still provides new topics for research due to its complexity. The aim of this paper is to reconsider the relation between the *Domus* of Apuleius and its pre-existences as well as the theatre, from both points of view of city planning and architecture: the study of the juxtaposition of different kinds of buildings will shed light on the perception of the public and private space by the ancients.

## *The Four Small Temples Area and the Domus of Apuleius*

The Four Small Temples area is located in the *II Regio* of Ostia and it is bounded to the south by the so-called *decumanus maximus*, on the east by the theatre (II, VII, 2) and the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni* (II, VII, 4), on the north by a non-excavated area and on west by the *Grandi Horrea* (II, IX, 7). The main part consists in four temples (II, VIII, 2), which are placed on a single basement, in the *Domus* of Apuleius, located in the north-east corner, and in the Mithræum of the Seven Spheres (II, VII, 6), on the north one. A supposed industrial structure (Lanciani 1886: 164–165; Paschetto 1912: 340–343) is set on the west part of the area and few *tabernæ* overlook the *decumanus* (Fig. 1): various types of masonry and different grade planes suggest the existence of several phases of construction from the republican era to the late antiquity.

1 This paper springs from a wider research that the author is conducting as part of a PhD in Ancient Topography at the “Sapienza” University of Rome. Survey of the *domus* remains was done through the use of advanced topographic instruments and it made possible to draw up a new plan for the analysis of the monument; the study of the building’s masonry and of the different phases, instead, is still in progress. It was not possible to deal in a comprehensive way all the numerous and complex themes related to the *Domus* of Apuleius and Four Small Temples in this paper: for this all the useful and updated bibliography on them was been indicated in the text.

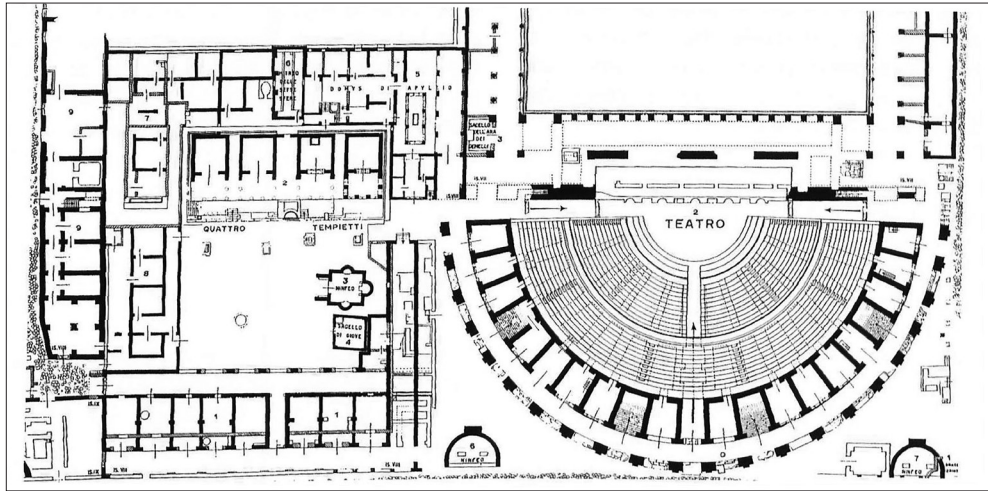


Figure 1: Ostia, the Four Republican Temples area and the theatre (Scavi di Ostia I).

The first excavation campaigns were carried out in the area by Rodolfo Lanciani since 1880. From this year to 1885 he investigated part of the *scaena* and the *cavea* of the theatre and the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni* and from 1885 to 1886 he explored the district on the westside of the theatre (Lanciani 1886). In 1905 Guglielmo Gatti oversaw the maintenance of the area (Gatti 1905) and from 1911 to 1913 Dante Vaglieri performed new excavations (Vaglieri 1913). After his death, the surveys were directed by R. Paribeni: he brought to light the remains in *opus quasi reticulatum*, that he interpreted as a triportico enclosing the sacred area of the Four Temples, the so-called *Shrine of Jupiter*, the *nymphaeum* and overlooking the so-called *decumanus* with *tabernæ* (Paribeni 1914). Ludovico Paschetto made later a detailed description of all buildings of the area, producing also a complete plan of the north sector of the area (Paschetto 1912: 365–369, 421–423, 340–343).

The fulcrum of the whole area is constituted by a single basement on which the remains of four temples of the same shape and size are present (For a complete analysis of the structure of Four Temples see Rieger 2004; Pensabene 2005; Pensabene 2007. In this works the authors proposed two different reconstructions of the four temples, in spite of to the scarceness of the buildings' remains and the almost complete loss of the walls.

These buildings, dedicated to *Venus*, *Fortuna*, *Spes* and *Ceres*, were commissioned by *P. Lucilius P. f. P. nep. P. pron. Gamala*<sup>2</sup> in the mid of the first century A.D. (Zevi 2004:

2 CIL, XIV 375: rr. 23–33 [i]dem aedem Volcani sua pecunia restituit; [i]dem aedem Veneris sua pecunia constituit/[id]em aed(em) Fortunae sua pecunia constituit; [id]em aed(em) Cereris sua pecunia/constituit; [id]em pondera ad macellum/cum M(arco) Turrano sua pecunia fecit; [id]em aedem Spei sua pecunia/constituit. The prosopography of the members of *gens Gamala* at Ostia has been studied through the several inscriptions known (for a synthetic story of the *gens Gamala* and for a complete update bibliography see Cèbeillac-Gervasoni, Caldelli, Zevi 2010: 99–104 and Manzini 2014). *P. Lucilius Gamala*, that commissioned the *Four Temples* in the Republican era, is called “*Senior*” in the modern bibliography to distinguish him from another *P. Lucilius Gamala*, called “*Junior*”, that lived in second half of the second half century A.D. (He is mentioned in CIL, XIV 376). As suggested now by Zevi 2012: 541–542, *P. Lucilius Gamala Senior* was probably contemporary of Cicero and Caesar and his activities should be placed from 70 to 35 B.C.

55–65; Zevi 2012: 541–542), thanks to a special permission by Roman authorities (Zevi 2004: 61; Van Heaperen 2006).

The temples were positioned inside the new walls of the city: according to the most recent hypothesis, in fact, these were built between 63 and 58 B.C. with a building technique similar to that used for the Four Temples (Cébeillac-Gervasoni, Caldelli, Zevi 2010: 95–96 n.8, with bibliography; Zevi 2012: 543–544. The dating of the second walls of Ostia is a particularly problematic theme: they were previously considered as they were built during the Silla age).

The position of the sanctuary, between the *Via Ostiensis* and the Tiber, allowed to advance a number of hypotheses about the ideological, sociological and religious meaning of the area (Coarelli 2004; Rieger 2004; Steuernagel 2004; Zevi 2004; Zevi 2012).

After the construction of the theatre offered by *M. Vipsanius Agrippa* (CIL, XIV 82), the area was involved in various works of resizing and monumentalization; the western temple was restored by the *duoviri C. Cartilius Poplicola* and *C. Fabius* (CIL, XIV 4134; Cébeillac-Gervasoni, Caldelli, Zevi 2010: 119–120, n.19.2 with bibliography), as the inscription on the floor mosaic attests. Moreover, the Venus Temple was restored by *P. Lucilius Gamala “Junior”* in the Antonine era<sup>3</sup>: the intervention is identifiable through the use of a *opus mixtum*.

The *Domus* of Apuleius, probably built in the second century A.D. (according to Pensabene 2007:114–115. Coarelli 1989: 29 assumes an earlier phase of the house in the Republican era. For the connection between this phase of the house and *P. Lucilius Gamala Senior*, the probable first owner, see also Rieger: 75–76), was set north-east of Four Small Temples and it was separated from their basement through a narrow corridor (Fig. 2). The name of the



Figure 2: The Domus of Apuleius, the Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres and the Four Small Temples seen from the cavea of the theatre (author's photo).

building derives from the finding of a *fistula aquaria* that bears the names of *L. Apuleius Marcellus* and *A. Fabius Diogenes* (CIL, XIV 4168 = CIL, XV 7748; Lanciani 1886: 165; Barbieri 1953: 183, n. 7748; Brunn 1991: 287–288). In 1905, G. Gatti discovered another *fistula*, in the area, with the only name of *L. Apuleius Marcellus* (CIL, XIV 5309. Gatti 1905; Barbieri 1953: 187, n. 5039, 29;

3 CIL, XIV 376: rr. 23–24 *idem eadem Veneri impensa sua/ restituit*. The *P. Lucilius Gamala* of this inscription was *Ivir praefectus* of Lucio Cesare *Aug(usti) filius*, that can be identified with Commodus (171 or 176 A.D.). For this argument Mennella 1991.

Brunn: 1991: 287; D'Asdia 2002: 433–437). For this reason F. Coarelli suggested that the first owner of the house in the mid-imperial era could be the famous Latin writer *Apuleius* of Madaura, the author of the novel “*Metamorphoses*”. He could have the same *praenomen* of the protagonist of his novel and the *cognomen* of his patron, the consul *Q. Asinius Marcellus* (Coarelli 1989: 38–42; Beck 2000; Zevi 2005: 533 note 2. For an analysis of this topic see D'Asdia 2000).

The *domus* has a L-shaped plan (Fig. 3). The access is from a vestibule with two small rooms on the left side; on the right, a staircase leads from the outside to the upper floors, probably part of the near shop. The vestibule leads, instead, to a corinthian *atrium* with eight columns and a central *impluvium*, fed with a hydraulic system: it has a white mosaic with black strips. On the eastern side there are four small quadrangular rooms, perhaps originally separated by partition walls, with raised floor; on the north side of the house the *tablinum*, a latrine and four quadrangular rooms are present. The western part presents rooms of different size and a corridor, probably the result of a modern restoration. In the south-western corner, there is another small access which leads to the posterior part of the Four Temples. The whole building was enriched with refined floor mosaics (For a complete description of the *Domus* of Apuleius remains see Lanciani 1886: 162–164; Paschetto 1914: 421–423; Rieger 2004: 75–78; Pavolini 2006<sup>2</sup>: 73–74; Pensabene 2007: 114–118. For the dating of the mosaics, that often belong to different phases, Becatti 1961 and Rieger 2004: 75).

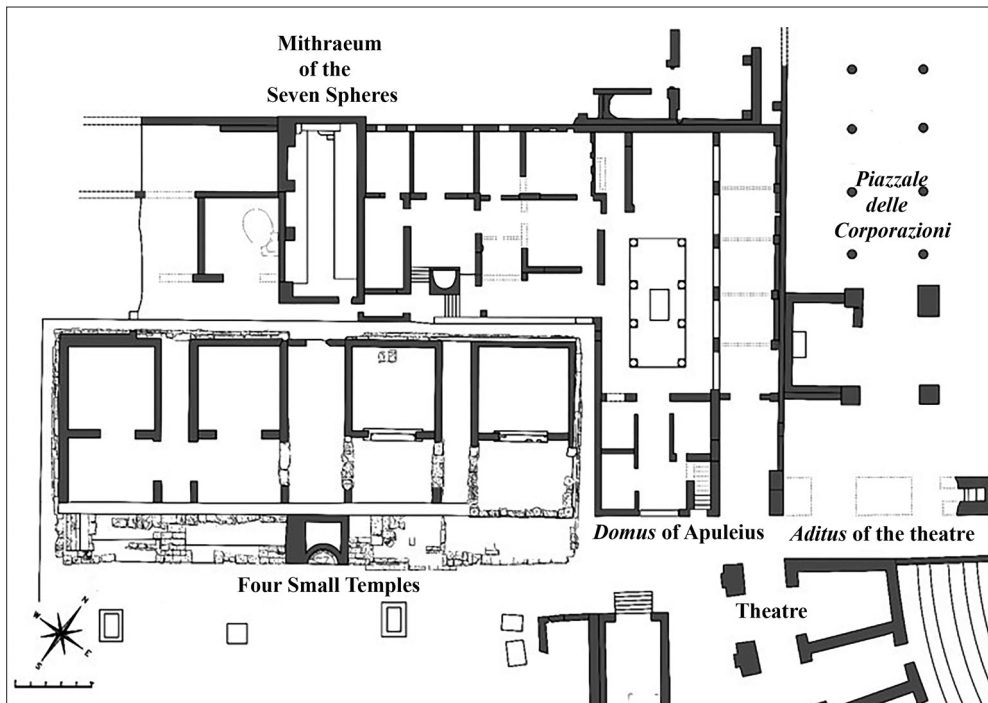


Figure 3: Domus of Apuleius plan (elaborated by the author).



	Theatre	Piazzale delle Corporazioni	Four Republican Temples	Domus of Apuleius
Built	Augustan age	Augustan age	Half of the 1 <sup>st</sup> century B.C. (CIL, XIV 375)	End of 1 <sup>st</sup> century A.D. (?) - Hadrianic age
Restoration	Claudian age	Claudian age – beginning of 2 <sup>nd</sup> century A.D.	Augustan age (CIL, XIV 4134)	Second part of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> century A.D. - Severian age
Restoration	Hadrianic age	Hadrianic age	Antoninian age (CIL, XIV 376)	Beginning of 3 <sup>rd</sup> century A.D.
Restoration	Severian age	Severian age – 3 <sup>rd</sup> century A.D.		4 <sup>o</sup> century A.D.

Figure 4: Chronology of construction and renovation works of Four Republican Temples, Domus of Apuleius and the theatre with the Piazzale delle Corporazioni.

Different kind of masonry, the overlapping of the floor mosaics and the incorporation of some walls in the structural system of the theatre of Ostia, show that the current layout of the house is the result of the absorption of previous structures with different functions and with different phases of construction. Regarding this, it is necessary to underline that the interpretation of the remains is complicated and it is compromised by the heavy modern restorations that have altered the original structure of the *domus*.

As we will see below, the life of the *domus* and the Four Small Temples area, is closely linked to the theatre of Ostia. It was possible, in fact, to correlate the construction and the renovation works that affected these buildings from a chronological, archaeological and architectural point of view (Fig. 4).

### The Pre-existences and the Spatial Conditionings of the Domus



Figure 5: Domus of Apuleius. Particular of the back wall in opus quasi reticulatum altered in a late phase of the domus (author's photo).

The analysis of the structures previous to the *domus* is one of the several problems that concern the study of the building: these, indeed, affected the planovolumetric development of the house during the following centuries.

The most important element is the back wall of the *domus*. It measures m 0.45 in thickness and will have reached a maximum height of m 3.00; it is in *opus quasi reticulatum*, similar to the basement of the Four Small Temples (Fig. 5). This wall can be identified with the remains of the triportico,

documented by Paribeni (Paribeni 1914: 431–432) during the excavations, that encircled the temples during the first building phase. The wall in *opus quasi reticulatum*, which was absorbed by the *Domus* of Apuleius, is the only still visible remain of the portico.

The other remains of this portico were positioned by Paribeni in a plan of the area and they were buried later. He described the structure as a triportico, with reinforcing pillars on the outer side, used for commercial purpose. This phase dates from the middle of the first century A.D. thanks to the inscription (CIL, XIV 375), which was mentioned above.

The structure of the porch was already altered in the first imperial age this is well shown by a series of walls in *opus reticulatum*, which occupied the original area of the portico (Fig. 6). It is possible that the walls pertain to different periods, as suggested by the different sizes of *cubilia*: in the majority of cases, indeed, *cubilia* have small dimensions (cm 5 x 5), while the *cubilia* of the quadrangular structure located to the west of *Mithræum of the Seven Spheres* are bigger and they measure cm 12 x 12/14 x 14. A further floor mosaic in *opus sectile*, discovered in one of the rooms of the *Domus* of Apuleius, has been dated by Guidobaldi (Guidobaldi 2004: 361–362) at the beginning of Flavian age (Becatti 1961: 88–89, n. 153 dated the same mosaic at the Traianic age). Paribeni identified these structures with shops and dwellings that prematurely invaded the sacred area (Paribeni 1914: 471–473).

The extraordinary case of this dynamics, brought Carcopino (Carcopino 1911: 226) and Coarelli (Coarelli 1989: 27–34) to doubt about the existence of the original portico and to support that the construction of a dwelling in the north-east corner of the area had taken place simultaneously with that of the temples in the middle of the first century B.C. The house and the four temples, according to this hypothesis, would constitute a unique architectural complex and the owner of the *domus* would be *P. Lucilius Gamala Senior* (For a further discussion of the matter, see also Coarelli 2004; Rieger 2004: 75–76). This paper won't examine the different elements that could afford to confirm one or the other hypothesis, but it's important to emphasize that, despite the scarceness of traces of the porch, its development would have conditioned, in spatial terms, the whole area. The area of the Four Temples, indeed, has preserved a particular rectangular shape, marked by the architecture and viability, also in later

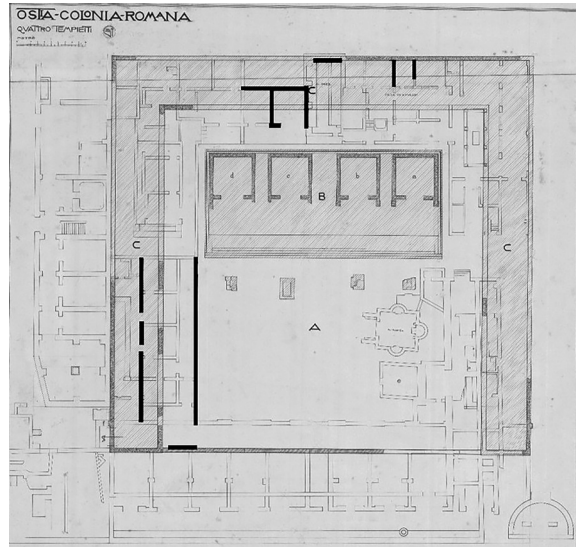


Figure 6: The reconstruction of the triportico made by Paribeni with the placement (in black) of the walls in *opus reticulatum* of the following phase (After Paribeni 1914).

periods. However, whichever hypothesis is accepted, a public space was occupied by private buildings at a certain period.

The Four Small Temples area were placed in a part of the ancient city, which was delimited by four boundary-stones of *praetor C. Caninius* in the second century B.C. (CIL, XIV 4702; Cébeillac- Gervasoni, Caldelli, Zevi 2010: 88-89 n.5, with bibliography) and was declared public as a result of probable unauthorized development. The so delimited *ager publicus* was subject over time to particular transformations (Steuernagel 2004: 60–71, for example, focuses on the transformation of a part of this *ager publicus* in a sacred area even before the construction of Four Small Temples). Regarding to this, we must remember the location of another boundary-stone near the *Caninius* one, which bears the inscription: *Privatum to Tiberim usque ad aquam* (CIL, XIV 4703). This could suggest that a portion of *solum publicum* had once again become private, by order of local magistrates (Coarelli 1989: 27–34; Coarelli 2004: 91–95; Zevi 2002; Zevi 2012): in this way, it is possible to justify the presence of private dwellings close to the temples.

It was seen as the main conditioning from the *Domus* of Apuleius consists of a long wall in *opus quasi reticulatum*, trends east-west on the north side. As correctly noted, it can therefore be attributed to the ancient portico of the Four Temples or to the first residence of *P. Lucilius Gamala Senior*. However, this space was completely altered by the successive walls in *opus reticulatum*, already analysed.

On the eastern side, the space in which the *Domus* of Apuleius would be risen later, is bordered by a long wall in *opus reticulatum*, with a north-southern direction. It is the rear wall of another public building, the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni* (Calza 1915; Pohl 1978; Terpstra 2014): this is the theatre's *porticus post scaenam*, a big porticoed space of m 78 x 107. It had four main phases of construction, that altered the original layout of the area. Already in the Augustan era, it was given the shape of a triportico, extended until the *aditus* of the structure (Pohl 1978: 332).

In the southern part of the *domus* there are no structural influence. Only the basement of the Four Small Temples was preserved. Here, however, the conditioning seems to be linked to the area way system and to the distribution system of the theatre itself: the future *domus* façade, indeed, will be in axis with the theatre's *aditus maximus* and with the front of the Four Temples.

### *The Construction of the Domus of Apuleius in the Second Century A.D.: a Private Space in a Public Space*

The *Domus* of Apuleius, to which most of the still visible remains are attributed, was built in its essential architectural schemes in the first half of the second century A.D. (For a discussion about the dating of the *domus* construction see Becatti 1961: 86; Coarelli 1989: 31–32; Rieger 2004: 76–77; Pensabene 2007: 114–115). In the entire city of Ostia this period was characterized by a strong development in building construction, because every free space, included the sacred one, was invaded by *tabernæ*, *insulae* and baths (Pensabene 2007: 24-33). Among the sacred space that suffered an obvious modification of the layout, we can mention the *Bona Dea* Temple's area (Pavolini 2006<sup>2</sup>: 185–186, 231; Pensabene 2007: 182-184) or



the Temple of *Hercules* area in *Via della Foce* (Pavolini 2006<sup>2</sup>: 119; Pensabene 2007: 64–71), with the construction of the *Buticosus* Baths (Pavolini 2006<sup>2</sup>: 123–124) and two *insulae*. In the Four Small Temples area we assist permanently to a fragmentation of the space around the sacred buildings and to a substantial change of the planovolumetric layout of the zone. In the southern sector, some shops were built, while the western sector was



Figure 7: Particular of the domus walls characterized by different kind of masonry (author's photo).

characterized by an industrial structure with tanks. There is actually nothing to preclude the existence of a second floor used for residential purpose. In this period, the floor level of the whole area was raised of cm 30–40 and the drainage system was rebuilt (Ricciardi 1996: 81).

Therefore the *Domus* of Apuleius is part of this architectural context. Its construction was probably in the Hadrianic age, with walls of *opus mixtum* (Pensabene 2007: 115). A second phase, which involved the raising of the floor mosaics of some rooms and the construction of other walls in *opus latericium*, is dated to the middle or to the second half of the second century A.D. Its unusual L-shape plan is the result of an architectural expedient, derived from the presence of previous structures in the area: the rear wall in *opus quasi reticulatum* of the original portico or of the original *domus* of *P. Lucilius Gamala* on the north side; the rear wall in *opus reticulatum* of the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni* on the east side; and the area way system and in the distribution system of the theatre on the south side. Some authors noted that the presence of a great central atrium may be compared to the pompeian houses (Paschetto 1912: 421; Blake 1936: 38) and to the houses of Ostia of the second and first century B.C. (e.g. the *Domus* of *Giove Fulminatore* IV, IV, 3): this element supports the hypothesis of the existence of private structure in an earlier era (Coarelli 1989: 29–30). In fact, it is important to observe in the *Domus* of Apuleius the lack of strict division into rooms with a precise shape and function, typical of the pompeian houses: the plan is, in this case, less schematic. It would be preferable, therefore, the identification of the *atrium* as a decisive element for the adaptation on the previous structures and to the spatial conditionings and not as a chronological factor. Also in other Ostia *domus*, dated from the first to the fourth century A.D., is possible to analyse the different methods used to deal with various external planovolumetric influences. Many of these houses, indeed, were made reusing precedent structures such as *insulae* and complexes of *tabernae*: in these houses the *atrium* or a porticoed courtyard always constitutes the decisive element to solve spatial problems.

The *atrium* of the *Domus* of Apuleius has an elongated rectangular shape, in a 1:3 proportion, with an *impluvium* working as a fountain with a supplying hydraulic system, and the *tablinium* results off-axis (The identification of the functions of the various rooms of the house has been proposed by Lanciani 1886: 184–186; Paschetto 1914: 21–23). It is not known how the *domus* was enlarged in the second century A.D. phase, because the western part was completely obliterated by the *Mithræum of the Seven Spheres*.

### *Architectural and Functional Relations Between the Domus of Apuleius and the Theatre: Towards a New Perception of the Space*

One of the fundamental events in the alteration of the Four Small Temples area was the restructuration of the theatre at the end of the second century A.D. In the Severan age, indeed, the theatre was enlarged and restored with bricks: it could hold 4000 people. The inscription CIL, XIV 114 reminds that this rebuilding was a Septimius Severus' and Caracalla's work, but brick stamps show that Commodus begun the works (For an architectural analysis of the theatre of Ostia see Calza 1927; Pavolini 20062: 64–63; Pensabene 2007: 284–290; Pensabene-De Nuccio 2010; Tosi 2003). In that period the whole district, as we can imagine, was transformed in an enormous building yard thus a private space conditioned a public one. As recent studies by Battistelli and Greco (Battistelli–Greco 2002) show, the works were focused on the widening of the *cavea* and its substructures, through the construction of a third group of rooms and the addition of an external new semicircular portico, with a prospectus with large arches supported by pillars. This new portico had little depth, because of the lack of space, due to the presence of the *decumanus* to the south and the Four Temples area to the east. Space reasons always led to the creation of a third central *aditus* that allowed the stream of the theatre-goers to pass from the *orchestra* directly to *decumanus*; the different

availability of space determined the asymmetry in the extension and the development of the two lateral *aditus*.

The restructuration of the theatre involved principally the south-east corner of the *Domus* of Apuleius. Here, indeed, there is a renovation of the junction between the rear wall of the *porticus post scaenam* and the theatre's *aditus*, which is in a brick technique, which has a module similar to the Severan theatre's masonry. This wall structurally unifies the *porticus*, the *aditus* and the *Domus* of Apuleius: therefore, they had to look like a unique architectural complex. Traces on conglomerate testify how



Figure 8: The common wall between the *Domus* of Apuleius and the theater. The arrows shows the traces of excised blocks (author's photo).

this wall was built, leaning on a wall in *opus quadratum* of the first phase of the theatre (Fig. 8). In order to understand the ancient perception of space we can refer, for example, to the theatre of Pompeii.

These works changed again the planovolumetric layout and the spatial perception of the area. The North-South road was restricted (I'm still conducting studies about the possibility of a complete interdiction of the road. In the plan published by Becatti in *Scavi di Ostia I*, in fact, he has placed the remains, no longer visible, which appear to inhibit it: in order to solve this problem, the archival records are making it possible to attribute these remains to a specific phase of the architectural complex and to understand the odds): it started from the *decumanus maximus* and crossed the East- West axis, in front of the *Domus* of Apuleius, where was the main entrance of the house, that allowed the entrance to the Theatre and to the sacred area of the Four Temples. The Temple of Venus was already been completely restructured in the Antoninian era in *opus mixtum*: it was the westernmost and the most visible among those attending the area.

The East side of the Four Temples area was completely bounded by a big rectangular structure, in *opus latericium*, which it was accessed by a staircase to the north. It was like a screen to the façade and the entrance of the house, almost totally hidden.

After this explanation about the changes affecting the area at the end of the second century A.D., it's evident how the *Domus* of Apuleius was a private space completely immersed in a public space. This leads to consider the everyday life of the owners: on one side there was the Piazzale delle Corporazioni, where trading activities took constantly place, and the theatre, where the performances were frequent and always crowded with audience. On the other side the four temples, which, although they had lost their former meaning, were still in use for religious purposes. The area had to be always noisy and crowded. Overlooking the questions about the identification of the first owner of the house, it is possible to suppose that various owners could be in some way related to the maintenance of the buildings in the area, or to the functions that were carried out in that place, as the commercial one. Lanciani (Lanciani 1886: 163), for example, suggested that the owner could be a mercator frumentarius, due to the finding of some graffiti on the plaster, with dates and counts (see also Rieger 2004: 76-78).

### *The Link Between Public and Private Space Outside and Inside the Domus*

The study of the development of Four Small Temples area formed an essential instrument for the analysis of links between public and private in the *Domus* of Apuelio. That relationship is dynamic, changing over time and it is expressed in various ways: it is urbanistic, architectural and functional. First of all, the *domus* is a private building that is built in front of a sacred area, influencing the paths and usability, and partially inhibiting the space around the *podium* of the temples. On the other hand, however, the articulation of the surrounding public space and the presence of the theatre and the *porticus post scaenam* influence the unusual plan of the house. In this case, it's not a matter of juxtaposition between public space and private space, but a real architectural integration of the different buildings. Even the presence of a shop on the front of the *domus* is an important element: in fact, it was placed in a continuous relationship with the activities that took place in *Piazzale delle Corporazioni* and took

advantage from the crowd that frequented it. The planovolumetric area reconstruction allow us to assume that whoever frequented the area probably had no perception of the boundaries between public and private, in favour, however, of an organic perception of the complex.

Nevertheless, the confidentiality of private space was guaranteed by the ingress system, typical of the “atrium houses”. The wooden remains are not preserved but, from the plan of the building, it is possible to assume the presence of an alignment consisting of door, *fauces*, second door and *atrium*, similar to that of some Pompeian houses (eg. *Casa del Fauno*). This system, in fact, did not allow passersby to see what was happening inside the house even when the front door was opened (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 44–45). The home, furthermore, despite the L shape, ensured in all required areas the performance of daily life inside.

Until now, it has been seen as the relationship between public and private is explicated by the contrast between the private *domus* on one side and the sacred area/ the complex theatre on the other side.

The relationship between public and private, however, is also established by the architecture and the distribution system of the house itself. It is possible to divide the building into two blocks: the first block is built around a vertical axis North-South and is constituted by the public spaces, namely the *atrium*, the *tablinum*, and four rooms overlooking the *atrium*. The second one, with an horizontal axis East-West, is characterized by the presence of private environments. Here, in fact, it is settled, around a central corridor, the latrine, a heated room (belonging to the last phase of the *domus*), a kitchen and other rooms with rich mosaics. The architectural development of the house thus ideologically divided the two different functions of the building.

### *The Last Phases of the Domus*

At the beginning of the third century we attend a further change of the architectural space of the area: the western part of the house, indeed, was partially obliterated by the *Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres* (Lanciani 1886: 164–165; Cumont 1891; Paschetto 1912: 394–398; Becatti 1954: 47–51; Becatti 1961: 90–92; Beck 1979; Beck 2000). It was placed in the private block of the house.

The link and the access to the *Mithraeum* is problematic: the comparison among the various available graphic documents about the *domus* (Riva 1999: 119, fig. 1; the graphic documents were provided by Lanciani, Paschetto and Becatti in different years) seems to show different internal routes in the house, which were probably altered by the modern restorations. It is still doubtful, however, if there actually was a direct passage, like a corridor, between the main entrance of the *domus* and the *Mithraeum* (This topic is widely discussed in Rieger 2004): a kitchen, whose remains have been completely deleted by the modern works, would not allow this passage (Riva 1999: 118–120). The question concerning the access point of the building remains, therefore, unresolved and uncertain.

The house suffered remarkable alterations from the third century to the fourth century A.D.: a small *nymphaeum* was built, few rooms were resized by walls in *opus vittatum* and in the northern part a heated room, equipped with *suspensurae* and a floor in *opus sectile*, was created. The south wall was reconstructed in a “double face” technique: it presents the

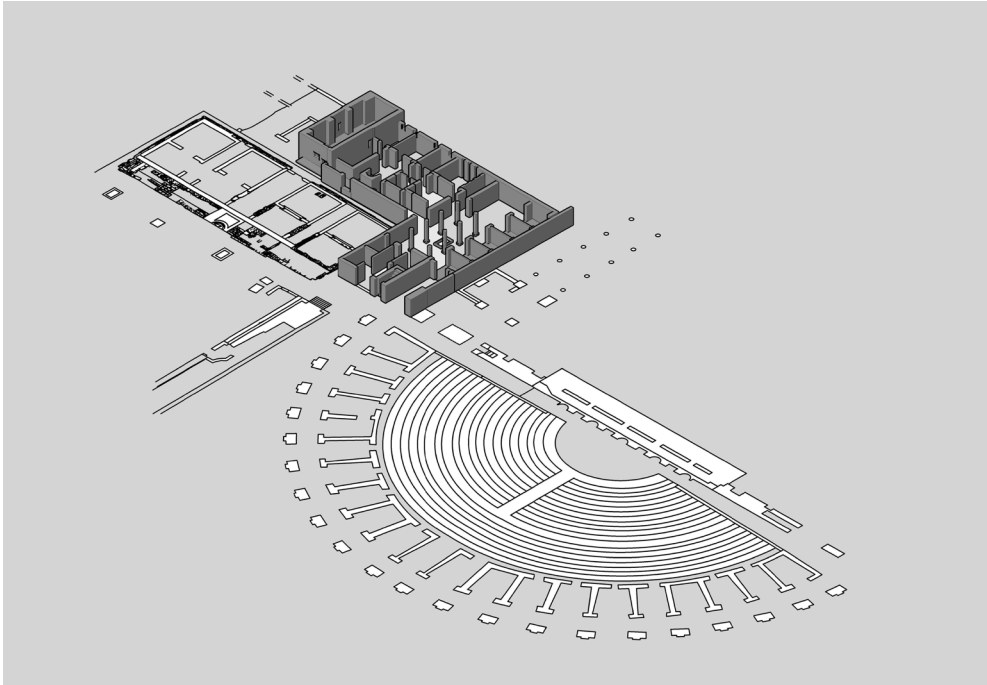


Figure 9: 3D Reconstruction of the Domus of Apuleius (author's photo).

internal part of the wall in *opus vittatum* and the external one in *opus mixtum* (Tione 1999). Eight reused columns, different one from the other, and dating between the first and the fourth century A.D. (Pensabene 2007: 116) were placed in the *atrium*, most likely for structural reasons of the building (Fig. 9). It is important to note that at this time not only in the *domus* but also in the entire area of the Four Small Temples and the theatre were carried out some building work.

### Conclusions

The *Domus* of Apuleius is a private space in a central point of the public life of ancient Ostia and it produces an important case study to the explanation of the relation between public and private in the Roman architecture. First of all the *domus* represents a private space influenced, from an architectural and planovolumetrical point of view, by pre-existing public buildings, as the theatre and the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni*, and by the sacred space, as the triportico of the Four Small Temples. It is also an example of the union, in urban and structural terms, of public and private: the *porticus post scaenam*, the *aditus* of the theatre and the *Domus* of Apuleius, indeed, had to look like a unique architectural complex, united to the Four Small Temples area. Whoever had come from the *decumanus maximus* of the city and was gone in front of the *domus*, could have chosen wheter to enter in the private space, or in the public complex of the theatre or in a sacred area. The relationship between public and private is also



expressed within the house through a clear spatial division between the public use areas and private environments.

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