

The Capitoline Hill: The Politics of Landscape

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The eternal city: one Rome

also many Romes: the capital of the Roman Empire, the center of the Catholic Church, the capital of united Italy after 1871

in the landscape and in the culture, the overlays of these three critical worlds: the classical world of antiquity, carrying the imprint of the emperors of Rome; the world of the Renaissance, shaped by the princes of the Church; and the modern--defined by Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel, by Mussolini, and by the more anonymous leaders of the almost fifty governments since the last war

these=built up on top of the strata of a deeper, geological past

I. The Capitoline

hill with two summits (south with the temple of Jupiter) and the north (with the Arx or citadel of Rome) with the Piazza del Campidoglio in between.

the symbolic center of Rome and from the 11th century, the site of civic government

the status and condition of the Capitoline reflected the fortunes of the city

ancient Rome: overlooks the Roman Forum and the imperial forums--only access to the Capitoline from the Forum; temple to Jupiter on the hill--dedicated in 509BC and burned and rebuilt several times

Christian and Papal Rome:

early Middle Ages: Santa Maria in Aracoeli (the altar of heaven) -7th century church with steps (1348). On the site of the Roman citadel.

later Middle Ages and Renaissance: Challenges to the Church's power and to the centrality of Rome. The importance of the Capitoline reflected these vicissitudes.

1305-1376, popes=absent from Rome; 1378-1417, Great Schism; 1420 on, effort to establish a tradition of papal residence in Rome. During that long period, Rome=decay neglect, depopulation.

During the 1420s Poggio Bracciolini sat with a friend among the ruins of the Capitoline hill. In a book *Of the variations of fortune*, he wrote: The hill of the Capitol on which we sit was formerly the head of the Roman Empire, the citadel of the earth, the terror of kings, illustrated by the footsteps of so many triumphs enriched with the spoils and tributes of so many nations. This spectacle of the world---how it is fallen! How

changed! How defaced! The path of victory is obscured by vines, and the benches of the senators obscured by dunghills. . . The Forum of the Roman people is now enclosed for the cultivation of pot-herbs, or thrown for the reception of swine and buffalo. The public and the private edifices that were founded for eternity lie prostrate, naked and broken, like the limb of a mighty giant, and the ruin is the more obvious because of the stupendous relics that have survived the injuries of time and fortune."

returning popes--revived the finances, reestablished the bureaucracy, began to extend control over Rome and over the territory around Rome

these powerful popes became international players and suffered the consequences: the sack of Rome in 1527 by the undisciplined and unpaid imperialist armies of Charles V who chased Clement VII out and devastated Rome. Occupation (over a year) followed by a great flood in 1530, famine, another flood and famine.

revival: Papal Rome--16th century

Sixtus IV (Francesco della Rovere) restored the aqueducts, repaired the streets, straightened roads, built the Sistine Chapel—part of the capture of the city by the Popes

Capitoline= oriented to the north, away from the Forum and toward St. Peter's

piazza del Campidoglio and the stepped ramp (the Cordonata) up to it designed by Michelangelo and completed during the 17th century with modifications by Giacomo della Porta

back: Palazzo Senatorio, left (houses the mayor), Palazzo del Museo Capitolino; right Palazzo dei Conservatori (both museums)

oval star design in pavement of the square to feature the gilded bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius given a pedestal by Michelangelo (now a copy)

fountain has two giant statues (2 century ad)—the Tiber on the right and the Nile on the left and in the recess a porphyry statue of Minerva turned into the goddess of Rome

directed by Pope Paul III (1534-49) —part of the effort of the popes to appropriate Rome and to assert control over the city. Reduced the distance between the religious and the civic centers of power.

Rome the capital of united Italy:

redrew the city so that the main axes did not lead to St. Peter's, so that the Vatican no longer commanded the center—advertise the secular nature of liberal Italy

created large streets and named them after Risorgimento heroes—via Cavour,

corso Vittorio Emanuele, placed adjacent to the heart of ancient Rome--renamed zones and places--piazza del Popolo

centers of power--parliament, the ministries, the cabinet--housed in new and old structures; the King moved into the palace on the Quirinale

monuments celebrating the new nation, advertizing the values--Vittoriano--an exceptional example

II. Vittoriano

what is this? British soldiers called it a "giant wedding cake;" others a "1912 typewriter," or a "ship," others="the mauseum of memories," or the "hopes of the Country."

much maligned: "a work of such seriousness in its ugliness"--none except the Colosseum--larger. Recently restored and opened to the public.

a monument to VEII--of Piedmont-Sardinia, and first king of United Italy--died in 1878 and monument decided in 1880. [Italy=united in 1861. The French helped liberate northern Italy from the Austrians; the papal states and the duchies of central Italy under nominal Austrian rule, declared independence, and Garibaldi and his thousand liberated Sicily and southern Italy. Austria lost Venetia in 1866, and the Italians seized Rome in 1870.]

a precarious foundation for the new state--scant experience with independence or with liberty (foreign occupation, autocratic rule); no national infrastructure; striking cultural and linguistic differences

after the "poetry," said one founder, comes the "prose"--creating a nation. Another: "we've made Italy; now we must make Italians." infrastructure, laws, political institutions, education and heroes, symbols, a past

a site of national memory: VE monument; tomb of the unknown soldier; an important ceremonial location, especially under Fascism; now for celebration of national holidays, including May 25th. Ritual point of passage on inauguration day.

air raid shelters during WWII
archives and Risorgimento Museum and library
exhibit site

Royal Commission opened a competition for an "equestrian monument with an architectural base and appropriate stairways." Among the 293 submitted that of Giuseppe Sacconi, 30 years old, won.

the site: considered others but chose the most important of the 7 hills --the Capitoline--heart of the Rome and the Roman Empire

completely constructed—required major work of expropriation and destruction

believed to be solid rock, but turned out to be earth from the excavations for nearby construction, grottoes, ditches; the rock itself=full of ditches and mining tunnels

also Roman and medieval ruins—even the remains of a giant elephant—, considered too precious to destroy—so the monument=enlarged (2x the original surface area) and slightly repositioned and many elements of the ruins=incorporated into the vast subterranean structures of the monument which=planted on metal foundations struck deep in the ground

the monument:

begun in 1885, proceeded with a few halts for lack of funds, and dedicated on the 50th anniversary of Unification, 1911 with the royal family and dignitaries in attendance—but the decoration=not designed, much less completed until 1930, with the installation of the quadrigas—this=well after the death of Sacconi in 1906

changes, even during Sacconi's period,=away from simplicity, toward more decoration

material—a) Sacconi wanted travertine, but considered too expensive—decided instead for a marble from Brescia which=plentiful, not too expensive, easy to carve and which—considering the monuments there—yellowed nicely. In Rome, in fact, turned a chalky white. When used inside, more richly veined and golden; b) the floors on the inside=ancient marble, some recuperated from archeological sites

design—It was to “resume the patriotic history of Italy” and “to capture the glory of VE” and to “create an eternal memory of our transformation.”

the nation:

the equestrian monument to VE II, with the regions of Italy figured on its base.

Fountains: Adriatic Sea on the left, the Mediterranean on the right.

the altar to the country, with the tomb of the unknown soldier=decided after the Great War and finished in 1925—a) the statue=of the “Goddess of Rome” with a frieze representing athletic figures in one case led by a child, b) the unknown soldier=buried in a tomb in the crypt beneath and continually guarded—dug up 11 bodies from northern battlefields and gave them military honors in Gorizia. Then taken to a church and mothers gathered—1 from Trieste chose 1 of the 11 who=interned here—brought on a train which made its way slowly with drums and trumpets in every village

the Roman past:

winged victories: on the top of the central stairs—from the prows of ships; on the marble columns—4 winged victories each holding different emblems

friezes: inspired by Virgil's *Bucolics* and *Georgics*—Agriculture and Industry on the left and Love of Country on the right

quadrigas: of gilded bronze Unity and Liberty—approved after 1917 and installed in 1927. Unity=over via Fori Imperiali and Liberty over the *are Coeli*
[Carlo Fontana did Liberty; Paolo Bartolini did Unity]

civic values: legitimize rule and guide citizens—some ancient, some modern, bourgeois, liberal

front statues: “Thought” (angel with kneeling figure) and “Action”

behind the fountains: winged lions with shields and behind them on the left, Force and Concord, and on the other side Sacrifice and Law

seated statues: on top of columns beside the door to the museum—on left: Politics, Philosophy and on right Revolution and War and on the high frames of the 2 atriums, Poetry, Conspiracy, Propaganda, Insurrection

arches of the porticos: massive compositions—left, Strength, Faith, Work, Knowledge; Law, Valor, Peace, Union

gilded bronze statues: in entrance to the ambulatory: left Architecture and Music; Sculpture and Painting

Day 2 June 26: The Pantheon and Pompeii

I. Pantheon

why this, why here, and why this way? what does it mean?—some certainty about the general answers

built by Hadrian early in his reign (judging from the dates on the bricks not before 117)—probably dedicated between 126 and 128 --on the site of a temple to all the gods constructed under Augustus in 25BC by his minister Agrippa. It was struck by lightning and burned to the ground in 110-- Hadrian did not sign it but kept the old dedication “Marcus Agrippa, the son of Lucius, three times consul, built this” (modern letters, but faithful reproduction)—probably crowned by an eagle within a wreath

conception and design=original—with a fairly traditional front, masking the unique structure behind-- round buildings=fairly common but round temples=usually smaller with a colonnade around them—rare to combine the rectangular porch and cylindrical

body (one other example at the center of Largo Torre); the size of this one, its openness to the public, the vaulting techniques=like Trajan's market

not certain who designed it—but Hadrian=interested in architecture and immersed in Greek and Hellenistic culture

unusual durability of the structure: well-built but also fortunate—consecrated in 609 century by Boniface IV as Sancta Maria ad Martyres “after the pagan filth was removed” Adopted by the Italian state as the burial place of kings (VE II and Humbert) and famous men (Raffaello)

A. Placement

the surroundings: a) situated in the center of the campus martius, a large space built up by emperors with temples, baths, squares—subject to frequent flooding; b) faced north into a rectangular, paved square surrounded by a colonnade—frequent pattern with fora and temples—with the entrance through a columned gateway; squeezed between existing buildings on the south, west, and east c) now=below ground level (the work of flooding, and destruction and reconstruction), but at the time=approached by a low flight of five stairs stretched across the porch

B. The structure--porch, intermediate block, the rotunda

the porch:

a) 8 unfluted columns of grey Egyptian granite supporting the triangular stone pediment with 8 more similar columns of reddish Egyptian granite behind to form three aisles into the rotunda—all=monoliths, all narrow slightly toward the top, all with bases of white marble and Corinthian capitals

b) the roof=supported by wood trusses sheathed in bronze—200 tons of bronze=taken by Urban VIII and turned into 80 canons for Castel St. Angelo and the baldichino for St. Peters--- “fecerunt barberi becerunt barberini”—“what the barbarians failed to do the little barbarians did”—curved ceilings hung from the superstructure covered the roof

the intermediate block: higher than the porch—here large semi-domed niches on the flanking aisles likely held statues of Augustus and Agrippa—had stairways leading to a sloping terrace between the cylinder and the porch. Recently argued that it was originally intended as the front but that the imported columns were not large enough.

the rotunda: cylinder and the dome= not visible from the sides or from the front

almost 2x as high as the porch and 2/3 again as wide—a cylindrical structure topped by the dome

begins at the level of the highest cornice seen from the outside and not, as it

appears, from the top of the attic stage.

three cornices circle the dome; then extending about half way up a series of step-like rings that serve as buttresses—transfer the weight downward to counteract the dome's tendency to push outward; smooth part ending with a 30 foot wide oculus 150 feet over the pavement below—vaults in the rotunda cylinder also carry the load downward and distribute it over 8 piers at the ground level

originally covered in bronze (taken by emperor Constant II in 633 but stolen by Arab pirates) and later (8th century) with lead

material: three elements=a) almost all of concrete—blocks for the porch, intermediate block, and rotunda—poured for the dome covered with brick—the aggregate added to the mixture of lime and sand—heavier at the bottom lighter (pumice) at the top, b) some stone and brick in the vaults

C. The inside

what= the design? what=the elements and what=the rules governing the arrangement?—the whole, the walls, the floor

symmetry--geometrical proportion—spheres/cubes; circles/squares; triangles and rectangles as a sub motif

the whole: invert the dome and it touches the floor—a perfect sphere locked in a cube—(invisible axis rising from the middle of the paving and passing through the center of the oculus above—on any horizontal plane, all distances outward from this vertical line to the cylindrical wall are equal)

the floor: pattern of circles and squares repeating the design of the whole but with greater complexity---with the grid aligned on the north-south axis of the building with surface rising slightly toward the center----a center circle with alternating lines of circles and squares on the main and transverse axes and lines of circles or squares connecting with the diagonal niches---uniformity on the diagonals

the walls: also conform to a more complicated pattern but interrupt the regularity of the cylinder—add triangles and rectangles to the geometric patterns

first zone: floor to cornice—a) 7 large recesses punctuate the cylinder with 6 disposed to the right and left screened by two marble columns=--east-west or transverse niches=more curved than the ones on the diagonal axes, b) 8 temple-fronts or aediculae on high podia with the 4 closest to the transverse axis having curved pediments and the other four triangular ones, c) probably housed statues of the planetary deities Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, the Moon, the Sun, and Saturn (7 major niches) and the deified Caesar

second zone: redone—original=likely alternating pilasters and blind windows and a

veneering of circles and rectangles filling the spaces between the pilasters and over the windows

third zone: doesn't really rest on the cornice—but is the inner surface of the rising wall-buttress system (the step-like rings) on the outside—shaped coffers with boxes slanting inwards diminishing in size and depth and weight—with a gilded bronze rosette at the center

use of colors reinforces the variety in the regularity—creating movement
the dome: coffers seem to form 5 layers of materials and these represent the 5 known planets tracing their concentric circles. 5 rows of coffers representing the 5 planets and 28 coffers in each row, representing the days of the lunar month

D. The logic--why this, why this way?

dedicated to all the gods—a) a setting for their tangible images and b) an expression of what=increasingly important through Christianity and in paganism—an sense of the abstract, intangible qualities of the gods—the dome=the heavens, with the opening the void allowing in light c) the size and the harmony expressed order, eternity, power

expressed the order of the cosmos which=above all symmetrical—with the circle the most perfect since=without seams and without beginning or end—the circle and the square=echoed in the human body, buildings, and the city

the city: the sacred boundary, the grid—bilateral symmetry, the hole or umbilicus at the center. The whole situated in exact reference to the heavens.

the body: fits into a circle inscribed in a square—equal on both sides of a line drawn straight through it—see Vitruvius

asserted the authority and the order of the empire and the emperor: advertized Hadrian's connections to Augustus and his and the empire's links to the gods and the divine order

now: a) right side: second chapel the tomb of VEII; b) left side: tomb of Raffaello (3rd edicola) with inscription: qui giace quel Raffaello dal quale vivo, la gran madre di tutte le cose--la natura--temette di essere vinta e, lui morto, di morire." The statue of the Madonna di Sasso=done according to his will by Lorenzetto and the tomb of Umberto (second chapel)

some of the ornaments on the tomb of VE were made from the melted down cannons of Castel S. Angelo taken from the bronze covers of the ceiling beams by Barberini

II. Pompeii

Matt Simpson, Luther: Overlooking the ruins of Pompeii. Raised the question—how do societies explain catastrophic events, such as the eruption of Vesuvius? How do they

relate it to their conceptions of divine providence and an ordered universe? He offered Voltaire's account of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake (the poem) and Rousseau's response as an example. Voltaire argued that such a devastating earthquake challenged the idea of a beneficent god, mocking the notion that what may appear bad actually serves the good. ("All is for the best in the best possible world.") Rousseau contested Voltaire's skepticism, defending divine providence and suggesting that the devastation resulted from the decision of people to live in an earthquake zone. Their exchange provides one example of the ungoing struggle to explain natural disasters.

Pliny and the Pantheon demonstrate the proposition that the human body and the city mirror the constant order in nature.

Clara Hardy, Carleton. In the theater of Pompeii, she compared the role of theater in Greece and Rome and explained how the structure and the placement of the theaters reflected the nature and the purpose of drama.

The Romans were less inclined than the Greeks to place theaters on hillsides or facing in a particular direction. They tended to put them in contained spaces, with controlled perspectives. Actors in Greece were professionals and citizens, whereas in Rome they enjoyed lower status. They were not citizens, and they often traveled around in troupes. As far as we know, the Romans did not perform tragedies.