Roman Archaeology in Medieval Rome

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The image of Rome is so often a vision of ruins, crumbling romantically or standing proud against a Mediterranean sky. The ruins of antiquity, whether the rustic tufo of Republican walls and temples or the red brick and white marble of the imperial buildings, attract most attention from modern visitors. Like modern tourists, medieval visitors to the city admired Rome's antiquities and explored the ruins. Very recent archaeological research has cast light on the history of these monuments in the Middle Ages, which allows us to better reconstruct the cityscape of Rome in the seventh, eighth or ninth centuries. In the Middle Ages, the material remains of antiquity were indices for medieval attitudes and ambitions for their present. On the one hand, the roads, walls, aqueducts and buildings of ancient Rome provided a frame and a model for monumental urbanistic expression in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the legacy of Rome's Christian past lent the medieval city and its builders ultimate prestige in the crafting of the city around the cult of saints. Close attention to the material culture of early medieval Rome brings into focus the significance of ancient artefacts in the building of the medieval city and the medieval idea of the city itself. What follows is an attempt to point out two different yet related roles of ancient archaeology in medieval Rome: as models of architectural canons and the politics of architecture and as potent pathways to the sacred past. These two roles of archaeology in the medieval city diverge from the conventionally understood significance of ancient materials in the Middle Ages, as revival or Classicism, and in better understanding the uses of the past in the medieval Rome we can better understand the sophisticated constructions of authority and power which focused on it.

Excavations using modern scientific techniques are bringing to light the medieval city where our information was limited previously to imperial buildings. Few areas of Rome's ancient city centre survived the campaigns of un-stratigraphic digging in the 1880s and 1930s. Those excavations unearthed the monuments of imperial Rome, yet often failed to document ~
sometimes even to recognize -- the remains of late antique and early medieval buildings. Through new campaigns of stratigraphic excavation in key areas, and the revision of old excavation notes, it is becoming clear that many major monuments of the ancient city were still standing, if not indeed in use, in the early Middle Ages. These standing remains left a legacy for the builders of medieval Rome. At a very basic level, the materials of ruined buildings were employed in new architecture, from bricks to marble columns, entablatures and panels. But much more than architectural spolia, the ancient structures served as exempla for new buildings in the medieval period. The form and order of Rome's medieval monumental architecture were appropriated from the structures which stood among the new buildings. Similarly the placement and position of ancient monuments and sites in the city often gave significance to the location of new building projects such as churches and houses. Certain streets were preserved, and the language of ancient monumental architecture endured from late antiquity; as did, I argue, the social function of erecting monuments in central public spaces, which shifted from the donation of statues and inscriptions to the foundation of churches. I shall present this new view of the relationship between ancient and medieval monuments with a few examples drawn from areas of central Rome around the Fora.

In certain key areas, the facades of major monuments were restored in order to maintain the street fronts of important thoroughfares, even if the interiors of buildings were no longer being used. These gave an ordered face to the city which perpetuated the principles, forms and materials of imperial and late antique architecture. The Basilica Aemilia (sometimes called the Basilica Pauli) on the Forum Romanum is one example of such a restoration. The public basilica, originally constructed in the second century BCE, had been rebuilt in the period of Augustus and then again shortly thereafter, but was severely damaged in a fire in the fifth century, perhaps attributable to one of the Gothic sacks of the city. It lay at the heart of the Forum, between the Curia Senatus and the Temple of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, where the Argiletum, the main road, led down from the bustling Suburra (the Esquiline Hill) to the open paved area that marked the centre of the Forum (Figure 1.1). After the fire, the facade of the basilica had collapsed or was levelled and the sides facing the Argiletum and the Forum were rebuilt. The marble Argiletum facade with its Ionic columns was replaced with a brick wall with niches, and the Forum facade was reconstructed with a set of 24 ancient columns of granite, acquired from another building. The corners of the original portico, where the internal stairs strengthened the building, apparently survived the fire with their fluted Doric columns intact. The original Forum facade, described in antiquity as one of the most beautiful, had a double order of fluted white marble pilasters set into a rows of round arches, serving as entrances on the ground level and a loggia above; there were two Doric friezes of bucrania and rosettes (Figure 1.2). The proportions of the facade were open and spacious, with the fluted pilasters and the Doric frieze creating a visual frame of vertical symmetry while the rounded arches which actually supported the building's weight
1.1 Map of the Forum in the seventh century. Source: Author

played a minor visual role. In contrast, the fifth-century facade had a lower order of pink granite columns on tall white marble socle bases. There were 24 columns, half as many as in the earlier facade, placed close together in order to support the weight of the portico without the aid of walls of round arches. The upper storey of the portico appears to have replicated the round arches of the earlier facade, though without its pilasters or friezes. Some of these elements are typical of late antique monumental architecture: the square socle bases of the columns, the free-standing spolia columns forming a portico, and the large round arches of the upper apertures of the wall. The portico served as an important and lasting example of this architectural paradigm in a prominent location. The shops inside the portico along the Forum frontage were still in use in the sixth century when they were outfitted with marble pavements. A house was constructed in part of the facade, using blocks of tufa and parts of an ancient frieze, in the late eight or early ninth century. Indeed parts of the portico remained standing until the sixteenth century, when they were finally dismantled. Behind this facade and partial occupation lay piles of debris and the interior of the building was no longer used.

The Basilica Aemilia is an example of one kind of restored/abandoned building which shaped the early medieval city of Rome, a phenomenon which would be called facadism in modern architectural preservation terms. Certain public buildings and several large domus which were no longer used in their entirety were nonetheless preserved within the urban fabric of the city. The Forum, in particular the paved area between the first-century Rostra, the late antique Rostra and the Curia Senatus, was the site of architectural investment even after the main functions of these buildings as administrative centres were lost. This kind of preservation of monumentality, and even sporadic new construction on the Forum, continued through the seventh century. For example, in 608 CE, a new statue was placed atop a victory column in the centre of the Forum, a monument to accompany the row of similar columns atop marble-lined bases erected to commemorate victories still standing along the western edge of the Forum. The statue on top of the Column of Phocas commemorated Byzantine Emperor Phocas, who reigned from 602–610; the fluted column itself and the Corinthian capital, however, date from the mid-second century and were remounted in the fourth century on a concrete and marble base positioned in front of the Rostra. The base was placed deliberately in alignment with the passage between the Forum of Nerva and the Forum Romanum, the Argiletum, and the row of earlier victory columns on the south of the Forum. This careful squaring of the monument to these divergent axes, both in the fourth and in the seventh century, indicates the continued importance of this public space as an intersection and as the locus of public honorary monuments. Even though the interior of the Basilica Aemilia was decrepit, its facades and the streets around it continued to impose upon later urban interventions. The main axes and confines of the Forum were deliberately maintained into the ninth century. Indeed, the centre of the Forum Romanum was still the centre of the urbs. Among the ten itineraries of
the monuments and sites of Rome composed in the mid-eighth century by the Einsiedeln pilgrim, three passed through the Forum Romanum.12

Starting in the seventh century, ancient buildings around the Forum Romanum and on the Forum of Nerva were converted into churches through relatively minor modifications to their interior structures. The church of SS. Cosma e Damiano (527 ce) took over a hall which served as the vestibule of the Forum of Nerva and an adjacent rotunda.13 Its creation forced a reorganization of secondary pathways between the Fora, though the main thoroughfares remained what they had been in previous centuries.14 The new monument asserted its presence in urban space by blocking an existing pathway. To experience it from the exterior, the church was apparent, but its architectural expression was inconspicuous. The hall was fitted with new windows and a glass mosaic depicting a Risen Christ flanked by Peter, Paul, and the medical saints to whom the church is dedicated, Saints Cosmas and Damian and the founder, Pope Felix IV (526–30), and the inscription proclaimed his patronage.15 The apse mosaic also includes an image of the papal patron, Pope Felix IV, an early example of what would become a common type of apse mosaic with apocalyptic scenes of the Risen Christ and the saints in which the patron of the church stands as witness and as participant.16 This church, with its apse mosaic, is a new expression of civic munificence, in this case funded by the elite patron of the pope, whereas in previous centuries the city’s elite had erected statues of gods and of rulers and officials on inscribed bases along the streets of the Forum. Inscriptions incised in stone attest to the restoration and setting up of statues in the Forum through the fifth century.17 At SS. Cosma e Damiano, the saints and the patron are depicted and the dedication is inscribed above the hall in mosaic tesserae. As elite evergetism shifted from public ornamentation and restoration of public buildings to foundation and restoration of churches in the sixth and seventh centuries, the nature of new building on the Fora changed as did their role in the city as public space.18

In early medieval Rome, churches founded and endowed by emperors or popes, such as SS. Cosma e Damiano, were new forms of old monuments. New churches were often ensconced in the existing urban framework of streets and city blocks, in the case of the Forum Romanum literally inside ancient buildings. This practice of monumentalizing the city with major churches within ancient buildings and in ancient public spaces, which were funded by clerical elites such as the pope, emerges in the sixth century and continues to the ninth century and, mutatis mutandis, later. It is a change from the trend in Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries of building churches away from existing monuments and neighbourhoods, and different from the transition witnessed by other Italian cities in the same period where churches were built in suburbs or in reorganized residential neighbourhoods within the city.19

The relationship between the late antique buildings and the new churches of the early Middle Ages also changed over the course of the fifth to ninth centuries. Churches built outside the city walls or on the fringes of built-up neighbourhoods often took the form of basilicas: long axial buildings with
colonnaded aisles and a single apse to house the main altar opposite the main entrance door. The first public churches, the Lateran and St Peter's, are examples of this tendency, constructed on the edges of densely built up areas; these and other fourth- and fifth-century churches like St Paul's became models of the building type. Their architects employed the principles of late antique public architecture, and probably the enduring monuments of late antiquity furnished the models for some of these new monuments. For example, the interior colonnades of S. Maria Maggiore (432–30 CE), with granite and marble columns supporting an upper clerestory wall pierced with round-headed windows (Figure 1.3) resemble in many ways the exterior portico of the Basilica Aemilia. At S. Maria Maggiore, the wall above the colonnade is subdivided with pilasters framing mosaic panels, which may find their antecedent in the friezes framed by bound Dacians at the Forum of Trajan (on the façade of the Basilica Ulpia, for example). This area still served as a marketplace in the sixth century, and the columns of Basilica Ulpia stood upright until the tenth century, if not later.20

In the heart of the city, however, no churches were built until the sixth century, and then they were set into existing architecture. Such was the case of SS. Cosma e Damiano and the conversion of the Curia Senatus into the church of S. Adrian in the sixth and early seventh centuries, respectively. The exterior aspects of the ancient buildings were straightforwardly preserved, while the interiors were decorated and reorganized to form liturgically serviceable churches.21

By the eighth and ninth centuries major churches, whether in busy neighbourhoods or on the edges of the city, were often built on the models of great public buildings of the fourth and fifth centuries: the basilicas of St Peter's and St Paul's serving presumably as models. It has long been accepted that the churches of the eighth and ninth centuries in Rome constituted a 'revival' of Constantine's church architecture, as indeed Richard Krautheimer argued in 1942.22 Looking again at the profile of the city and its monuments as they stood through the early Middle Ages, with a greater understanding of the survival of antique buildings than Krautheimer enjoyed, two different observations can be made. First, that many other monumental buildings
stood to influence medieval builders, not merely the churches of Constantine. I would suggest that the Basilica Aemilia and other great public buildings, such as the Basilica Ulpia and the Basilica of Maxentius, may have served as models too. Second, that the building of spacious and regularly proportioned ecclesiastical basilicas, filled with ancient marbles and natural light, such as St Peter’s (begun between 326 and 333 CE), St Paul’s (begun 386) and later churches, such as S. Maria in Cosmedin (as rebuilt in the late eight century) and S. Prassede (c.821), was actually part of a tradition that had been in use in Rome consistently from the republican period onwards. Krautheimer’s argument for the ‘revival’ of basilica-plan churches tended to ignore basilicas built in the seventh century, which may have been destroyed but whose form can be partially reconstructed, such as S. Giorgio in Velabro (682–3). He downplayed the traditional qualities of basilicas of the sixth and seventh centuries, but we now know that there were indeed basilica churches in the early Middle Ages just as in the preceding and following periods. Over time basilica-type churches were increasingly constructed in city-centre locations, not just outside the city walls or away from populous neighbourhoods. Indeed, there was a tendency to create basilica-form churches even when refitting older buildings; the church of S. Susanna (rebuilt c.792–93), for example, was an aisled basilica with spolia colonnades fitted into a late antique aula.

In the ninth century, the areas which had previously been the screen on which the elites of Rome projected their status through conspicuous patronage of public or quasi-public monuments were taken over for a new kind of building: elite residences. The marble pavement of the Forum of Trajan, the pavers of the Forum of Nerva and of the Forum of Caesar were removed in the first half of the ninth century. Possibly a mudslide in 847 or some other contemporary event had caused the partial abandonment of S. Maria Antiqua, off the southern edge of the Forum Romanum, and its front courtyard became a cemetery. Very little further building happened to the east of the paved Forum, but new elite residences went in on the western side. Though the uses of the buildings were different, the new houses carried on traditions of the previous centuries of building in the Forum as they preserved both street frontage and the monumental layout of the area, and its architectural design principles. A two-story house was built into the portico of the Basilica Aemilia in the later eighth or ninth century (Figure 1.4). Though nineteenth-century excavators partially removed the remains, it is still clear that the ground story, of tufa, had a round-arched entrance facing the paved area of the ancient Forum. It sat flush with the walls of the Basilica itself, reasserting the architectural frame of the Forum Romanum. The lower story with a round-arched doorway was built of re-used tufa blocks. Even reused, these blocks are impressive objects, quarried by specialist stonecutters and shaped with precision. This structure was a new kind of elite house in Rome, a two-story single-family residence. A few similar buildings have been brought to light recently, in the Forum of Caesar, in the Forum of Nerva and in the area of the Porticus Minuccia. The ninth-century house on the Forum of Nerva similarly
reused prestigious materials, large squared tufa blocks and blocks of marble, for a house with a garden open to the street through an arcade. The arcade of round arches enclosed a courtyard on the lower level with street frontage and stairs to upper stories. While the form of the buildings was new, the careful reuse of drafted stones and marble adornment in their construction indicates that the hierarchy of construction materials in early medieval Rome was what it had been in the imperial period: marble was the most valued, followed by other stone blocks, brick-faced concrete, and then mud-brick or mud walls. The house that was built on the Forum of Nerva is framed with an ashlar arcade of three round arches creating a portico along the cobbled street leading down to the Forum (Figure 1.5). The proportion and scale of the three arches echoes very closely the fourth-century Basilica of Maxentius, the north face of which has two sets of three round arches on either side of an apse. The brick construction and the proportions of the arches were replicated in the walls lining the Via dei Fori Imperiali, constructed in the Fascist era as an obvious attempt to link the glory of Mussolini’s Rome to that of the late ancient city. It seems apparent that the builders of the ninth-century house intended to express the same kind of association by emulation in the early Middle Ages. For someone walking down the Argiletum from the Suburra in the ninth century, to see the new house built with reference to the ancient basilica may indeed have been a reassuring demonstration of the persistence of tradition.
Just as is the case with the churches in the Fora, the memory of the Fora as spaces of public display in the city seems to have endured into the Middle Ages. These elite buildings, though built on a scale drastically reduced from that of the ancient public buildings in the area, were nonetheless demonstrably elite buildings. Their location perhaps contributed to their prestige, the massive walls of the Roman period serving as backdrops for the elite residences. The construction of the medieval buildings in turn contributed to the preservation of the Fora.

New early medieval buildings interacted with old buildings, specifically those of late antiquity, in complex and multiple ways. The repetition of architectural frames of urban spaces, the persistence of certain areas of monumental architectural display and the continued use of building materials in conventional ways from the fourth to the ninth centuries attest to the persistence of form and function in the centre of early medieval Rome. This persistence was created by the living architecture, in the sense that the praxis and norms of building, whether new churches or political monuments or new types of houses, changed over time in relation to the existing citiescape. After the second century, there was never a moment where the Fora were entirely ancient or entirely new, but part of a continuum of construction, demolition and reconstruction which continued for centuries. This superposition of ancient and modern building in the medieval citiescape is precisely the effect described by the pilgrim of the Einsiedeln Itinerary, dated probably to the 780s. The Itinerary, recorded on pages with lists of ‘things on the right’ and
‘things on the left’, records the monuments visited on ten itineraries through the city of Rome, going from one extra-mural shrine or city gate across the city to another. For example, the pilgrim coming from the Vatican and entering the city at the Porta S. Petri would have arrived at the centre of town and would have seen:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On the left</th>
<th>On the right</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ad sanctum marcum</td>
<td>S[an]c[t]i sergi; ibi umbilicum romae [SS. Sergio and Bacco sub Capitolo; Umbilicum Romae]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[St Mark’s]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Traiani et columnna eius</td>
<td>S[an]c[t]i georgii [either St George’s in Velabro or a lost chapel of St George at S. Adriano]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Trajan’s Forum and Column]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tiberis [probably an ancient statue of Marforius]</td>
<td>Recto] Per Arcum Severi [Arch of Septimius Severus]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s[an]c[t]i hadriani. Forum romanum</td>
<td>s[an]c[t]a maria antiqua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[S. Adriano (formerly Curia Senatus), Forum Romanum]</td>
<td>[S. Maria Antiqua]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s[an]c[t]i cosmae et damiani</td>
<td>ad sanctum marciae et theodorum [S. Teodoro]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[SS. Cosma e Damiani]</td>
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before heading on to the Palatine and the Porta Asinaria. The new churches of the Forum are listed alongside their neighbouring ancient buildings, because the experience of early medieval Rome was not one of sharp divides between the urban elements of antiquity and modernity (that is, medieval). Standing monuments were attractions for pilgrims, just like ancient statuary, and, as I have argued above, they were exempla for new builders as well as urbanistic relics and quarries for spolia materials. The same Einsiedeln manuscript also preserves a meticulous report on the condition of the Aurelian walls, noting the number of towers, posterns, windows and other elements in the stretches of wall from gate to gate around the city. While this may just be a record of a very specialist kind of tourist, it may have been composed for the restorations necessary to the walls. Certain Popes of the eighth and ninth centuries restored the towers and stretches of the city walls and this kind of condition report would have aided the planning of those architectural projects.

In several different ways, then, the prestigious buildings of the early Middle Ages perpetuated the traditions of late antique monumental architecture in Rome. The ancient buildings, though they had lost their original functions as the public buildings of the imperial city, preserved the facade of ancient monumentality. Some of these were rebuilt and reused as churches and the area around the Fora continued to be the urban space dedicated to public donations and the expression of the social elite.
ARCHAEOLOGY IN MEDIEVAL ROME

Archaeology: Accessing the Sacred

The early medieval city of Rome was filled not only with monuments, old, newer and new, but also *loca sancta*, holy places. Relics of Roman buildings sometimes were used by Romans of the early Middle Ages as a means to connect with sacred history.26 Broadly speaking, the cult of saints in Rome focused upon the tombs of saints and their veneration in their original resting place from the first Christian centuries.27 This practice developed an expectation in Rome that the saints were venerated in ancient places, and that material evidence attested their cult for medieval believers. Epitaphs and other *memoriae* of martyrs, saints and confessors carved in the first, second or third centuries, served as markers for later pilgrims. For example the epitaphs of Popes Fabianus (236–50 ce) and Pontianus (230–35) have been identified along with those of a number of other early popes in the so-called Cripta dei Papi in the catacombs of Callixtus. These tombs bear the names of the popes and their title, *episcopus* and have also been carved with the first letter of the word ‘martyr’ possibly to encourage their veneration.28

By (an admittedly later) papal account, as early as the third century Pope Felix (269–75) had decreed that masses should be celebrated over the *memoriae* of martyrs.29 The emperor Theodosius confirmed in 386 that bodies, including those of saints, should not be removed from one place to another, but monuments (called *martyria*) could be built over the bodies of martyrs.30 Much of our evidence about the original setting of saint veneration at Rome, prior to the relic translations of the early Middle Ages, comes from itineraries and calendars composed in the seventh and eighth centuries, which may well have been based on epigraphic records, and which may have been privileged in the early Middle Ages as factual records. Syllodes of observable inscriptions were recorded in many of the same manuscripts as the devotional itineraries, the Einsiedlensis discussed above being a case in point. That Romans and pilgrims alike visited the catacombs to venerate tombs of saints, identified by inscriptions and other devices, is described in the seventh-century *Notitia* and other itineraries.31 In the numerous church crypts built in Rome in the early Middle Ages, as relics were translated from catacombs to sites in the city, the faithful could see the relics through small windows beneath altars. They were often held in ancient sarcophagi placed in the *confessiones* under the church, implying the direct propinquity of relic to altar that became standard after the sixth century.32 The antiquity of the sarcophagus and the permanent position of the relics under the altar are typical of Rome and different from other places in the western Medieval world, where relics were often fragmented, transportable and brought out on display.33 In Rome, this insistence on the archaeological fact of the relics' presence is indicative of the importance placed on visiting the ‘archaeological site’ where the dead were buried. The current study of the architectural setting for the cult of saints often focuses on the interventions and additions to a cult site and changes in these interventions over time. It is worth reflecting, however, on the way in
which the faithful of the early Middle Ages used the past, specifically material culture and archaeology, for the purposes of identifying relic shrines and as connections to the sacred past.

The faithful of the early Middle Ages visited ancient sites within the city of Rome as part of their visits to urban churches and these were sometimes associated with the cult of saints. In contrast to the great monuments of the ancient city visited by pilgrims alongside the new churches or cult sites, the examples described below were smaller-scale ancient architecture, which was meaningful in different ways to people in early medieval Rome. In each case the buildings were residential or commercial, not monumental structures such as those on the Fora. Their importance to the medieval visitor was tied to the history of the buildings that were older and stratigraphically ‘under’ the new medieval churches.

At SS. Giovanni e Paolo, the fifth-century basilica Pammachiana apparently gave access to some of the structures underlying the church. On the Celio two Roman Christian noblemen lived in a house, called a palatium in the sixth-century passio. They died in the persecutions of Emperor Julian in 362 and were buried beneath the staircase of the palace and venerated there, according to an inscription probably erected by Pope Damasus (366–84) or thereafter, which names the martyrs and celebrates their sacrifice. The shrine seems to have consisted of a platform, inserted into a staircase rising in a corridor of the late antique house, which led to a small window that opened onto the pit where the saints had been buried. In the early fifth century a large basilica was constructed over the top of the palace and the graves. It reused some of the walls of the residence, which had itself reused two earlier houses to create the large late-antique house. The lower levels were in part filled with rubble to support the weight of the fifth-century basilica, with the exception of a chamber on the southern side. There, descending from the southern aisle, was a staircase leading to a small oratory or chamber. The staircase and room were painted with scenes typical of the eighth or ninth century in Rome: the Harrowing of Hell, an extra-biblical story of Christ’s descent into Limbo to release the souls of Adam and Eve, and martyrdom scenes, now badly faded and impossible to reconstruct. Here there are several types of archaeology: the fourth-century shrine to the saints, with its window onto the shaft where their bodies lay, the eighth- or ninth-century stairwell leading down, and the substructures themselves, painted as an oratory. The platform and its window were accessible from a different staircase from the upper church until the twelfth century; it was decorated with paintings of the saints’ passio and Christ flanked by two archangels and Giovanni and Paolo (Figure 1.6). The passio narrative of the saints describes their burial in the urban palace; as later faithful read or heard the story recited, the structures beneath the basilica may well have served as a continual referent, the setting of the martyrdoms which witnessed the blood of these saints.

During the ninth-century rebuilding of the church of S. Cecilia in Trastevere, Pope Paschal I (817–24) developed a corridor between the new basilica and
two subterranean areas adjacent to the church site. One was a small-scale bath complex, part of a late-antique domus on the site, and the other a fourth- or fifth-century baptistery from the original titulus of the church. The importance of these spaces for the ninth-century church was that they were the rooms in which the major episodes in the martyrdom of St Cecilia had taken place. According to the passio, Cecilia was a noble woman who was martyred for her faith in her own home. She was locked into her private bathroom and eventually beheaded. The executioner failed to sever her head entirely, and in the three days it took her to expire, she turned her home into a church and her faith converted many to Christianity, who were baptized by the pope. I have argued that in the ninth century the residential structures underlying the church were believed to be rooms in St Cecilia’s house, the rooms in which she was martyred and in which the pope had baptized the faithful. To round out this archaeological locus sanctus, Pope Paschal also brought the body of the saint, her husband and companions to the church. They were placed in an ancient sarcophagus in the crypt under the altar, along with the cloth shroud that wrapped Cecilia’s body in her grave. The votive inscriptions that had been placed next to the graves in the catacombs were also brought to the urban church.

The church of S. Clemente was first built in the fourth century and then rebuilt in the late eleventh and early twelfth century by filling in the lower basilica with rubble and raising the floor level by several metres. After the upper church was rebuilt the ancient baptistery on the side of the basilica was apparently left open...
Within the baptistery, one pier was painted with a panel of the Virgin enthroned, flanked by St. Clement, with a small unidentified patroness painted on the Virgin's left side. Its subject matter and style indicate a date for the painting to the eleventh or twelfth century, and the presence of the image there, in the basilica underneath the church, suggests the continued importance of that underground space for saint veneration.

With these three examples, I have attempted to demonstrate that the archaeology of late antiquity was a means for the faithful of early medieval Rome to access the sacred past and venerate the saints of Rome. Not only relics of the saints' bodies, but also relics of the architectural history of Rome were objects of desire and devotion. In Rome, the attention paid to the place of burial of the saint and the deep urban stratigraphy of the city both encouraged the veneration of places where saints had died and been buried. The venerable qualities of these places were made clear to the faithful by their location underneath and below the ground level of the medieval city and by their designation as holy by the addition of hagiographic and votive paintings. Jas Elsner has argued that the material culture of fourth-century Rome, specifically historiated sarcophagi, crafted links between the Christian pasts of the Bible and the Holy Land and the Christian past and present of Rome. Here I argue that the material culture of ancient Rome and the physical remains of the city created the same kind of links between Romans past and present and Christians past and present.

Like the visitors to Rome on the Grand Tour, and the modern archaeologists working in the city, medieval Romans and visitors admired the antiquities of Rome and made sense of them in ways particular to their own society. The material remains of the ancient past, and specifically the buildings of late antiquity, guided new medieval buildings. They provided an urbanistic frame, an architectural model and a vehicle for monumental expression for medieval Rome. Similarly the legacy of Rome's Christian past provided material support for the growing cult of saints in the early Middle Ages. The architectural resources and material culture of late antiquity thus informed the medieval city in ways that were intrinsic to early medieval culture.

Notes

1 Of course new stratigraphic excavations shed light on periods other than the early middle ages, but for the purposes of the argument at hand, I shall limit my discussion to that period. Many new excavations are discussed in Lidia Paroli and Laura Vendittelli (eds), Roma. Dall'antichità al Medioevo, vol. 2: Contesti tardoantichi e altomedievali (Milan: Electa, 2004); Roberto Meneghini and Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani, Roma nell'altomedioevo. Topografia e urbanistica della città dal V al X secolo (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2004); Maria Stella Arena et al. (eds), Roma. Dall'antichità al Medioevo. Archeologia e storia nel Museo Nazionale Romano Crypta Balbi (Milan: Electa, 2001).

2 The preservation or destruction of ancient street frontage has become one of the nodes of the debate on early medieval urbanism in Italy, see Cristina La Rocca


6 'Basilica Paul(i)', pp. 186–7.


12 Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani, 'L’Itinerario di Einsiedeln', in Arena et al. (eds), *Roma*, pp. 154–9; for a facsimile of the manuscript, see *Einsiedlensis. Die Einsiedler Inschriftensammlung und der Pilgerfuhrer durch Rom*, edy Gerold Walser (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1987).


15 AVLA DEI CLARIS RADIAT SPECIOSA METALLIS IN QUA PLUS FIDEI LVX PERTOSA MICAT MARTYRIBUS MEDICIS POPULO SPES CERTA SALVITIS VENTI ET EX SACRO CREVIT HONORE LOCVS OPTVLIT HOC DOMINO FELIX ANTISTE DIGNUM MVNVS VT AETHERIA VIVAT IN ARCE POLI

[The hall of God radiates brilliantly in shining materials, the precious light of the faith in it glows even more. The certain hope of health comes to the people from the medical martyrs. This place derives honour from holiness. Lord Felix offers this worthy gift to God, so that he might live in the summit of heaven.]


18 On church building as elite evergetism, see Bryan Ward-Perkins, From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy, AD 300–850 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 51–84 and app. 2 (pp. 236–41); Brogiolo and Gelichi, La città nell’Alto Medioevo Italiano, pp. 159–60. Kalas has argued that the Forum Romanum lost its role as the site of processions to honour rulers and became the site of civic rituals characterized by supplication and penitence (Kalas, ‘Sacred Image/Urban Space’, pp. 290–339).

19 On church building in Rome up to the seventh century, see most recently Federico Guidobaldi, ‘Topografia ecclesiastica di Roma (IV–VII secolo)’, in Arena et al. (eds), Roma, pp. 40–51. For a picture of Italian cities and their buildings with relevant bibliography, see Chris Wickham, Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 652–56.


21 S. Maria Antiqua on the Forum and S. Teodoro in the Forum Boarium also follow this model.


29 Ibid., pp. 34–5.


32 The conclusions drawn here are intentionally framed within the terms of the ‘continuity and rupture’ debate, in order to point out the divergence of my ideas from the conventional interpretations of Roman urbanism. For the debate, see La Rocca Hudson, ‘Dark Ages a Verona; Gian Pietro Brogiolo, Brescia Altomedievale. Urbanistica ed edilizia dal IV al IX secolo (Mantua: All’Insegna del Giglio, 1993); Bryan Ward-Perkins, ‘Continuitists, Catastrophists, and the Towns of Post-Roman Northern Italy’, Papers of the British School at Rome 67 (1997): 157–76.


34 Einsiedeln Stiftsbibliothek, codex 326, fols 85a–86a.


39 Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction et commentaire (Paris: Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, 1886–92), vol. 1, p. 158. This passage was composed, most scholars agree, in the sixth century.


This is true at S. Prassede, S. Cecilia, SS. Quattro Coronati and S. Pietro in Vincoli, for example.


On the paintings, see Joseph Wilpert, *Die Römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der Kirchlichen Bauten* (Freiburg: Herder, 1924), tab. 131, 166.4, 208.2.


Goodson, ‘Material Memory’.

*Bibliotheca hagiographica latina*, nos. 1495–1500.

The baptistery dates to the sixth century, see Federico Guidobaldi, ‘S. Clemente’, in Arena et al. (eds), *Roma*, p. 627. I am grateful to Cristiana Filippini and John Osborne for facilitating a visit to the baptistery.

We await full publication of the excavation, conducted between the years 1993–95 under the direction of Professor Federico Guidobaldi.