

FROM RUINS TO RECONSTRUCTION: PAST AND PRESENT

Nel praticare insieme generò in noi un tanto amore, che mai né di né notte stavamo l'uno senza l'altro: e perché ancora la casa sua era piena di quelli belli studii che aveva fatto il suo valente padre [Filippo Lippi], i quali erano parecchi libri disegnati di sua mano, ritratti dalle belle anticaglie di Roma.

BENVENUTO CELLINI, *Vita*, I, 12

Among the rare surprises I had during my long permanence at Perugia, in the first place I put the discovery of the fascinating frescoes of the local Quattrocento painter Benedetto Bonfigli (on this painter, see MANCINI 1992). Twenty years ago, my colleague of Art History invited me to give a look at the restorations of the frescoes painted by Bonfigli in the years 1449-1456 in the Cappella dei Priori, the Chapel of the local magistrates inside the City Hall, the Palazzo dei Priori. News on his life are really scanty, but it is certain that Bonfigli was included into the group of painters headed by Beato Angelico, to whom Pope Nicholas V, following his decision to move the papal see from the Lateran, commissioned the decoration of the “Appartamenti Nicoliniani”, i.e. his apartments in the Vatican, unfortunately destroyed in the course of centuries. The stories painted by Bonfigli on the walls of the Perugian Chapel can be considered among the masterpieces of the Italian early Renaissance, a cycle of frescoes lamentably unknown not only to the great public, but sometimes also to specialists in art history. The frescoes represent various episodes of the life of two of the three saints, chosen to be protectors of the city of Perugia, the local bishop Herculaneus, accused of intelligence with the Byzantines and sentenced to death by the king Totila during the Gothic war, and Saint Louis from Toulouse, saint of the royal house of France, chosen by Perugia to protect the commercial interests of the town, mainly connected with clothes, the “panni”, a deal that already three centuries before suggested to a merchant from Assisi to give his son the name Francesco.

Bonfigli places here and there in his frescoes memories of the classical past to follow in his own way the brand new fashion to copy Roman monuments¹, a must for men of both letters and arts, but also to obey by instinct to his culture of the late Middle Ages, heir of the great Trecento realism. This is why he sets the funerals of Saint Louis in a church of an unmistakable

¹ The discussion about these frescoes and the representation of the Arch of Constantine in the painting of Italian Quattrocento is to be found in my essay TORELLI 1998.

early Christian flavour (Fig. 1, a) or shows the siege of a Byzantine Perugia by the Gothic king Totila against a foreshortened view of the Porta Marzia, dismantled a century later by Antonio da Sangallo to build the Rocca Paolina (Fig. 1, b) in a complex setting with the stories of the martyrdom of the bishop. These stories include the well known episode of the deacon's betrayal, who is revealing to the king Totila the contacts that the bishop Herculaneus was having with the Byzantines, and the legend of the besieged inhabitants of Perugia throwing the carcass of ox stuffed with grain to let the besiegers believe they were not short of food. But the greatest surprise for me was another fresco related to Saint Louis from Toulouse, where, in the middle of streets and palaces of a medieval city, there was the sudden appearance of the Arch of Constantine (Fig. 1, c), you would say it a work of a surrealist painter. This is the earliest and most faithful painted image of this famous Roman monument of the Renaissance, virtually forgotten by the crowd of scholars of the *Nachleben der Antike*. As I could observe in a note dealing with this exceptional fresco, at the first glance the arch seems perfect, with just a marginal concession to the medieval way of reading classical monuments, i.e. the transformation of the barbarian prisoners into towering saints each with his own nimbus, whose inspiration must be searched in the figures on top of spires and portals of the gothic cathedrals. The few mistakes he has done in the final stage of his work, when he painted the Roman monument on the walls of the chapel, allow us to reconstruct the strategy he followed to copy and subsequently to paint the monument. When he was in Rome, he copied attentively, but separately all details: unfortunately, he forgot to take accurate notes of the location of the various parts of the decoration of the arch, with the result that he placed in his fresco reliefs and inscriptions in rather wild way. These mistakes however do not cancel the overwhelming effect produced by his painting. Bonfigli's arch prodigiously springs up from a medieval urban landscape, a deliberate innovation of the painter, since in those days, the monument had not yet become the sad round-about for the chaotic car traffic of today, but was completely isolated in the "disabitato", as Richard KRAUTHEIMER (1980) calls the immense desert that characterized the spaces of the classical city from the early Middle Ages up to final decades of the 19th century. In conclusion, we cannot avoid looking for a sound reason for this impressive reproduction of the Arch of Constantine in a completely odd setting, a scene representing a controversial miracle of Saint Louis, the healing of Jean, second son of the French king Philip VI. It is not difficult to argue that the aim of the painter was to show that the intervention of the saint was made possible thanks to the power of the Church and that the king of France, a newly born Constantine, was so devoted to that Church to deserve the title of *Christianissimus rex*. Still there is another reason for his interest in the Roman monument: in 1449, just in the period of Bonfigli's stay in Rome,



Fig. 1 – a-c) Perugia, Cappella dei Priori, Benedetto Bonfigli: “Funerals of Saint Louis from Toulouse”, “The Gothic Siege of Perugia and the Martyrdom of Saint Herculanus”, “Miracle of Saint Louis from Toulouse”; d-e) Rome, Sistina Chapel: Sandro Botticelli, “Punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram”; Perugino, “The Consignment of the Keys to Saint Peter”; f) Sandro Botticelli, “cassone” with the story of Lucretia (Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum); g) Andrea Mantegna, “Saint Sebastian” (Paris, Louvre); h) Once Padua, Cappella Ovetari: Andrea Mantegna, “The Judgement of Saint James”.

Lorenzo Valla published his momentous book *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*, which immediately arose bitter discussions in the Roman Curia and elsewhere. Inevitably the arch, also because of the famous text of its inscription, soon became an icon of the papal propaganda to assert the primacy of Rome and of the Holy See, true heir of the Roman Empire.

No wonder then that the *exemplum* of Bonfigli would be quickly imitated. Thirty years later, in 1480, Sixtus IV built the new official chapel of the Apostolic Palaces, the Sistine Chapel, whose plan was inspired by that of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem (DE VECCHI 1994, 1996; PFEIFFER 2007): according to the Pope's program, the painted decoration, entrusted to famous painters, was to match subjects of the Old Testament to parallel events of the New Testament. In a wonderful "contrapposto" between the two walls, we can read a definite symbolic function behind the arches of Constantine, appearing both in Botticelli's "Punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram" (Fig. 1, d) and in Perugino's "The consignment of the keys to Saint Peter" (Fig. 1, e). The biblical episode expresses the legitimacy of the priestly mission of Moses and Aaron: the story represents a perfect analogy with the sacred task of Saint Peter's successors and is a transparent allusion to the recent Avignon Schism. It is easy to conclude that, according to the hammering propaganda of the curial intellectuals, the Arch of Constantine stands for the earthly mission of the Church. From the way in which Botticelli and Perugino painted the same arch on the walls of the Sistine Chapel, so different from the realistic arch of Bonfigli, we understand perfectly that they are mere symbols. Botticelli's arch is virtually transfigured in comparison with the original: the plain fascia of the Constantine Arch becomes a gilt palmette frieze, and equally gilt are the sculptures, both in relief and full round; the inscription does not copy the ancient text, but is a transcription of a biblical verse against a brilliant blue background, whose aim is to comment to the scene in an adequate way; with the exception of the blocks belonging to the ruined medieval superstructure on the arch, a detail that certainly struck Botticelli, always attracted by landscapes with ruins, the entire architecture of his arch looks cleaned up and polished, starting from the cancellation of the *kymatia* at the bottom of the attic. Even more distant from the original, Perugino's couple of arches have an inconsistent double attic, crowned by candelabra and festoons. More than the product of a research of symmetry, our arch, again a metaphor of the earthly mission of the Christian Church, is reduplicated to symbolize the core of the Pope's program the two *Ecclesiae*, the *Ecclesia ex circumcisione* and the *Ecclesia ex gentibus*, a very old idea, already represented in the 5th century mosaic in Saint Sabina, dating from the papacy of the predecessor of Sixtus IV, the homonymous pope Sixtus III (GIANANDREA 2015). The Curia could kill reality.

In the same years however the clerical impositions were giving way to more secular visions of antiquity. Soon after the end of his work in the Sistine

Chapel, in the same 1481, Botticelli received the commission from Lorenzo de' Medici to paint a "cassone", a marriage chest, for the wedding of Giannozzo Pucci and Lucrezia Bini. The marriage banquet painted on the "cassone", merry conclusion of Boccaccio's short story of Nastagio degli Onesti, shows a Roman arch, vaguely inspired by the monument of Constantine, as a sort of a majestic backcloth of the scene, quite identical to another "cassone" with stories of Lucretia now in Boston (Fig. 1, f). The seduction of antiquity had already started, as we can unmistakably infer from another masterpiece, perfectly contemporaneous to Bonfigli's, the great cycle of frescoes that, between 1449 and 1457, Andrea Mantegna painted in the Ovetari Chapel in the transept of the Paduan Church of the Eremitani representing scenes of the life and martyrdom of Saint James and Saint Christopher (CIERI VIA 1991; HODNE 2000; DE NICOLÒ SALMAZO 2004, 2006). Allied bombs destroyed or seriously damaged these frescoes in 1944, some of which, like the monumental "Transportation of Saint Christopher's beheaded body", have been finely restored. With a real vocation for archaeology, Mantegna feverishly reconstructs ancient scenarios, assembling a congeries of Roman buildings, inscriptions and reliefs, combined by him with results of great fascination: if Mantegna is also attracted by ruins as in this splendid "Saint Sebastian" in the Louvre (Fig. 1, g), again arches (and especially that of Constantine) have the task to be a spectacular backstage (Fig. 1, h). However, we should not forget that in the Italian Quattrocento Mantegna is an exception, the prevailing attitude of painters before him being what we could call the taste of the fragment, of the occasional citation. Artists of that epoch never try to reconstruct classical urban landscapes: their stories related to the antiquity are invariably painted within a Renaissance setting with people dressed in contemporary clothes. Individual monuments continued to be copied for a long time, though no more overloaded by special ideological values as it had been for the Arch of Constantine: the main interest of artists and architects was to discover and reproduce in the contemporary world the coveted beauty of antiquity.

A rather different story can be told about artist from Northern Europe, from Flanders and Germany (on Flemish painting, see TODOROV 2001), who came to our country in the early 16th century² and whose approach to antiquity was completely different from that of their Italian colleagues: we shall return on this subject at the end of this talk. For these artists ruins were an unusual, but fascinating reality, *magna pars* of evocative landscapes, which recalled to them the entire classical past. To understand this statement, let us consider a very instructive case, that of the Dutch painter Maarten van Heemskerck (on this painter see the excellent book by DACOS 1995), who visited Rome

² On the presence of Flemish artists in Italy, see in general: FOKKER 1931; BAUMGART 1944; I Fiamminghi 1951; DACOS 1964; VAN HASSELT, BLANKERT 1966.

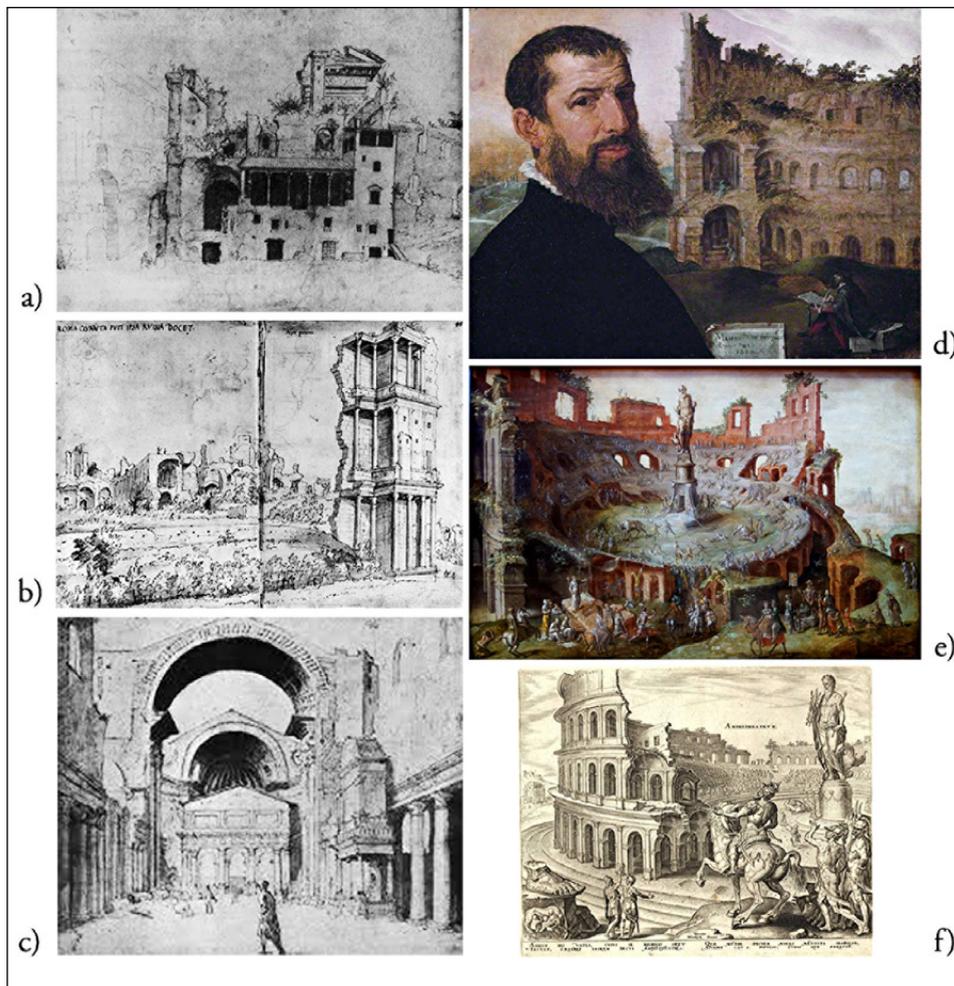


Fig. 2 – a-e) Maarten van Heemskerck : “The Temple of Sarapis”, “The Septizonium”, “The Construction of the Basilica of Saint Peter”, “Self-portrait with the Colosseum” (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum), “The Colosseum” (Lille, Musée des Beaux Arts); f) School of Maarten van Heemskerck, “The Colosseum” (print).

from 1532 to 1537 to make drawings of buildings and sculptures of classical times. Archaeologists know very well his precious *Skizzenbücher*, which have handed down to us the appearance of ancient monuments now destroyed or in those times in better conditions than today, drawn by van Heemskerck and his followers: everybody knows his drawings of the years around 1535 (still precious is HÜLSEN, EGGER 1916), which include the Roman Forum, the

Temple of Sarapis (Fig. 2, a), the Septizonium (Fig. 2, b) or views of the gardens of Roman Palaces crowded by ancient sculptures. Coherent with his approach to the classical monuments, which I would like to term sentimental, van Heemskerck and his followers may even produce whimsical views of Rome, anticipations of the “capriccios” painted two centuries later by Canaletto or Pannini. His love for landscapes of ruins has no comparisons in his times, to the point that he is urged to produce a series of drawings of Saint Peter’s Basilica (Fig. 2, c), then half way between a construction yard and an old building under demolition. The majestic image of the Colosseum, undoubtedly one of the most famous ruins in the world, is flanking van Heemskerck’s self-portrait now in Cambridge (Fig. 2, d) (TORELLI 2012), almost a clone of Michelangelo’s countenance, authentic *Zeitgesicht* for an artist of the central years of the 16th century, perhaps an effective device to emphasize the victorious confrontation of the artist both with the antiquity (the Colosseum) and the present (Michelangelo). A similar bird’s eye view of the Flavian Amphitheatre appears again in another painting of the same artist (Fig. 2, e), now in the Musée des Beaux Arts at Lille, an image of the monument not so different from that appearing in van Heemskerck’s self-portrait. In this case, however, the interior of the ruined amphitheatre is intensely animated: while small groups of men populate half-destroyed steps and others crowd the entrance in attitudes of the everyday life, in the arena men and bulls engage fights, some ended with the death of the animal, others concluded with the defeat of the man. It is clear that the artist is painting real events: we know that in post-medieval times the Colosseum housed spectacles of bull fights. But, in flagrant contradiction with this reading, the centre of the arena is occupied by a colossal statue on a high moulded base: a thunderbolt leaning to the statue’s arm and an eagle at its foot compel us to interpret the statue as a sculptural image of Jupiter, which appears also in an engraving directly inspired by van Heemskerck’s painting (Fig. 2, f). The statue of Jupiter prevents us from interpreting the whole painting as a representation of real life. We are obliged to conclude that the painter’s aim was to revive the atmosphere of antiquity, as the statue of Jupiter indicates. For van Heemskerck continuity between past and present is absolute: the ancient times are identical to the contemporary ones. In the painter’s phantasy the *ludi amphitheatrales* of yesterday are just one thing with those of today, more or less as the Colosseum of Roman times is what van Heemskerck had in front. Although he produced colour prints with the reconstruction of the Seven World Wonders, the painter does not even try to complete the ruin, which has a sort of intrinsic fascination, especially if the ruin is a very famous one as it was the Colosseum, an image whose power, as we have seen, was per se worth to match a proud *Selbstdarstellung* of the painter. No wonder if in his drawing of the Septizodium (Fig. 2, b) he added the verse *Quanta Roma fuit, ipsa ruina docet* (see TORELLI 1996).

A radical change is to be seen in events linked with the figure of Raphael. Pope Leo X, after giving him the custody of the classical marbles of Rome, in 1515 assigned to the celebrated painter the task of drawing the map of the ancient city (BECATTI 1968; CASTAGNOLI 1968; PANE 1985; FROMMEL 2013-2014): for this task the painter even invented a special instrument called the “bussola”, a sort of compass, as we learn from a letter written on behalf of Raphael by Baldassarre Castiglione. In 1520 Raphael died and there is no evidence that he had just only begun the ambitious project. But times were ripe for such experiments, foreshadowed by attempts, rooted in the medieval cartography and in bird’s eye views of towns, from the famous map of ancient Rome drawn in 1474 by Alessandro Strozzi (CANTATORE 2005, 166-168, 175) (Fig. 3, a) to this engraving of exactly a century later in 1574 by an anonymous artist; such traditional way of representing cities will be a long-lasting one, until the definitive triumph in 18th century of modern planimetry, like the most famous of all, the *Nuova topografia di Roma* published in 1748 by Giambattista Nolli (TRAVAGLINI, LELO 2103). In the central years of the 16th century we meet the masterpieces of erudition and pictorial capacity of two great personalities, Pirro Ligorio and Étienne Dupérac, who published new maps of ancient Rome, containing complete reconstructions of the ancient town, rather different from the older, partial examples. The allegation of forgery, made on clear evidence by the epigraphers to Ligorio for his copies of Roman inscriptions (ORLANDI 2012; VAGENHEIM 2015; but see also VAGENHEIM 2011), derives from a misunderstanding of Ligorio’s intentions. For epigraphers a copy of an inscription must be a faithful reproduction of the external appearance of the inscribed stone; for Ligorio, architect and artist of the Renaissance, copying ancient objects, including inscriptions, was not a philological work, but a personal reproduction of an artist, created according to his taste and destined to a final reworking in new architectures. Changing the kind of evidence, it would be as if we would accuse Ligorio of forgery, because he has inserted in the splendid gardens of Villa d’Este at Tivoli (TEN 2012) a copy of the Ephesian Diana, reinterpreted as a fountain, whose waters gush from the innumerable breasts of the goddess. No archaeologist would consider Ligorio’s Diana as a forged replica, but simply a modern “variation on that theme”.

As a matter of facts, in case of special interest, Ligorio not only can be a very fine copyist of antiquities rivalling Palladio’s drawing, attentive to all structural details, as it happens with a well-known Roman villa near Anguillara, the so called “Muracci di S. Stefano” (Fig. 3, c) (VAN DE NOORT, WHITEHOUSE 2009), but he has also a talent in making restitutions of ancient monuments, as he does, for instance, with the *Arcus Claudii* in Via Lata (RAUSA 1996, 693-740; RANALDI 2001; SCHREURS-MORÉT 2002; VAGENHEIM 2002). His ultimate aim was to resurrect the ancient architecture, the Roman *Horti* revived in his Villa d’Este, or the pavilions of the imperial villas in the Casino

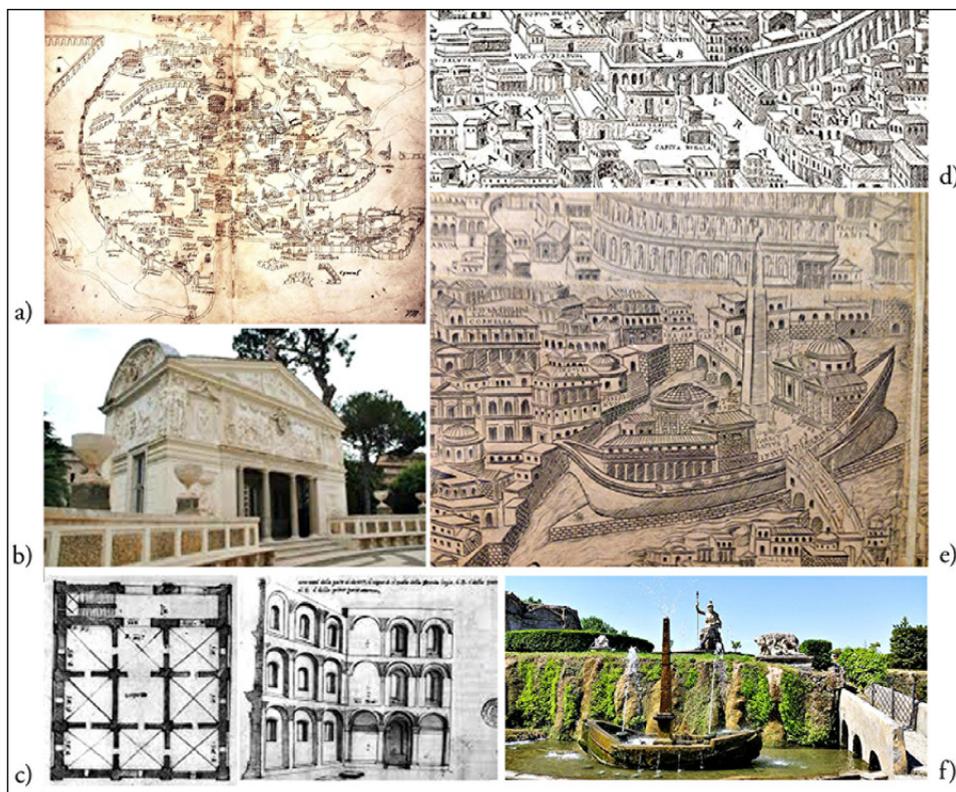


Fig. 3 – a) Alessandro Strozzi, “Map of Ancient Rome” (print); b-f) Pirro Ligorio: Vatican, Papal Gardens, Casino of Pius IV; “The «Muracci di S. Stefano» at Anguillara Sabazia”; detail from the *Imago antiquae Urbis*; detail from the *Imago antiquae Urbis* with the *Insula Tiberina*; Villa d’Este, Fountain imitating the *Insula Tiberina*.

of Pius IV (Fig. 3, b) in the Vatican Gardens (SMITH 1977; GASTON 1984), which echoes directly plan and general look of the just mentioned “Muracci di S. Stefano”. Having all that in mind, we can now move to his masterpiece in the field of survey and restitution, the plan of ancient Rome published in 1561 in his *Imago antiquae Urbis*, where each monument is represented in three dimensions and in a unified perspective, minutely surveyed not only in single tables (Fig. 3, d), but also in preparatory sketches. Again the aim was to inspire his architecture, as we can infer from his drawing of the *Insula Tiberina* (Fig. 3, e), model for a fountain at Villa d’Este (Fig. 3, f); a detailed analysis of his antiquarian information used for his map would be very instructive. Ligorio’s work established a model, soon imitated by Étienne Dupérac (DUPÉRAC 1963; ZERNER 1965), a great surveyor (Fig. 4, a) and an excellent author

of reconstructions. Fifteen years later than Ligorio's plan, in 1577, Dupérac published a *Nova Urbis descriptio* of Rome, again reconstructed according to Ligorio's formula of the bird's eye view (Fig. 4, b), without innovations, but with a better quality and uniformity of the engraving.

In conclusion, the third quarter of the 16th century establishes solid bases for the modern way of surveying and reconstructing ancient architectures and city plans. When in the 18th century there was the discovery of the buried cities on the bay of Naples and the genius of James Stuart and Nicholas Revett (REDFORD 2008; KELLY 2009) revealed the glory of Greece to the century of the Enlightenment, all that happened while the political and cultural scenario in Europe was changing with the dramatic end of the 1789 revolution. The revolutionary bourgeoisie imposed a strong neoclassical *Weltanschauung*, with its new rules for a modern approach to antiquity, a *coup de grace* of the old "vedutismo", whose story, after three centuries, was concluded by the paintings of Giovanni Paolo Pannini (KIENE 1993) and the engravings of Giambattista Piranesi (FOCILLON 1963; *Piranesi* 1990). The death of the old tradition is especially illustrated by Piranesi work, constantly close to oneiric views of the past, which however was somehow anticipating the Romantic taste (Fig. 4, c). The triumph of the neoclassical rules goes together with a more rational way of viewing a monument. A wonderful example of the new style are the tables of the four volumes of *Les ruines de Pompéi* by François Mazois (see KOCKEL 2007), published from 1812 and 1824 (GARCIA Y GARCIA 1998, 796-798; BOUQUILLARD 2002; GRAN-AYMERICH 2007, 40-42), containing his extraordinary drawings of Pompeian architectures, he could survey in the years 1809-1812, thanks to the favour of the French queen Marie Caroline, the wife of Murat. Helped by the exceptional state of preservation of the ancient city, his normal behaviour was to make simple surveys of monuments (Fig. 4, d), although we know a few restitutions of his, all finely controlled (Fig. 4, e). All through the neoclassical period we increasingly find similar restitutions of ancient monuments, generally well founded not only on the study of measures and proportions, but also on a functional analysis, which almost naturally gives birth to another methodological revolution, the philological approach to architecture and archaeology, a trend fully developed from the middle of the 19th century on.

As a consequence of this radical change, what distinguishes the various moments of this process just started is the greater attention to the function of the monument and to the available data of philological nature. But what makes these reproductions and reconstructions of ancient monuments immediately different from each other is the influence that the prevailing *Zeitgeist* exerted on them. While the acquisition of higher philological standards is strongly connected with the progress both of philological methods and of technical instruments, the contemporary taste has a heavy influence on the final results, i.e. on plans and reconstructions, to the point that the style of the

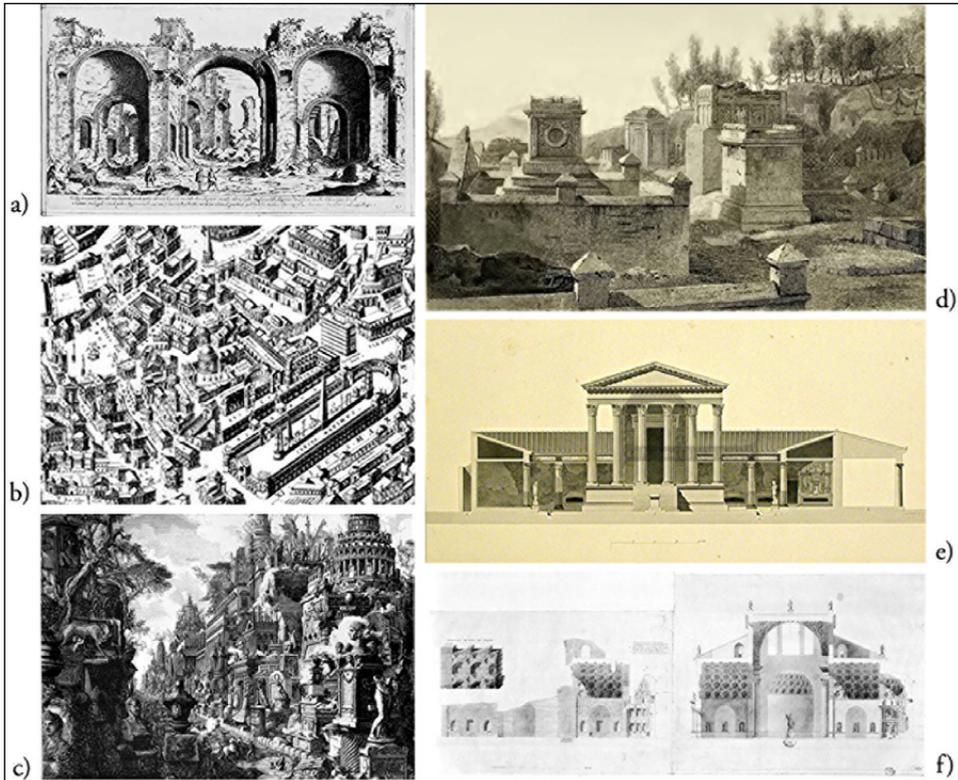


Fig. 4 – a-b) Étienne Dupérac: “Titus’ Baths” (print); detail from *Nova Urbis Romae Descriptio*; c) Giambattista Piranesi, Fantastic view of antiquities (print); d-e) François Mazois: *Les ruines de Pompéi*, “Via dei Sepolcri”; *Les ruines de Pompéi*, “Temple of Apollo, reconstruction”; f) Envoi de Pierre-Marie Gauthier (1814), “Maxentius’ Basilica” (Paris, École des Beaux Arts).

drawings is a safe guide to establish both the chronology and the ideological orientation of the author. Following the general approach of my talk, I shall conclude with a sketchy presentation of the enormous changes in taste from the late 19th century up to the present days, as they appear from the envois of the architects of the École des Beaux Arts of Paris in the hundred years from the early 19th century to the beginnings of the 20th century (*Roma antiqua* 1985, 1992; *Italia antiqua* 2002). Let’s start from the last days of the Napoleonic Empire, with the plan and the restitution of Maxentius’ Basilica by Pierre-Marie Gauthier, dated in 1814 (Fig. 4, f), where it is not difficult to appreciate his undisputed adhesion to the more sober neoclassical attitudes of the times; but few years later the long lasting neoclassical influence takes the forms of a heavy academism, though sometimes with great bravura, as in

the drawings of the Temple of Castor in the Roman Forum made in 1816 by Jean-Tilman-François Suys (Fig. 5, a) or in the elegant reconstruction of the Colosseum by Louis-Joseph Duc dated 1830-31 (Fig. 5, b). The Second Empire gradually cancels the dominating neoclassicism in favour of a “floréal” style, somehow near taste of the “pompiers” painters like Jean-Léon Gérôme (DES CARS, DE FONT-RÉLAUX, PAPET 2010): this fashion enjoyed a great fortune all over Europe in the second half of the 19th century, but the results are envois like those (Fig. 5, c), again of Maxentius’ Basilica, dated 1888 and signed by Hector-Marie Désiré D’Espouy, where the powerful building of Constantine resembles the Gare d’Orsay. The final stage is marked by the drawings by Jean-Jacques Haffner (1921), full of echoes of the pan-European *art déco* (Fig. 5, d).

I would like now to discuss briefly what happened in our country between the 19th and 20th century. From my first experiences as an archaeologist sixty years ago, I have been an enthusiastic admirer of some courageous enterprises started in the first decades of the Italian state, such as the noble and unfortunate project of the *Carta Archeologica d’Italia*, or the coeval gigantic activity of Paolo Orsi in Magna Graecia and Sicily. Adolfo Cozza, Angelo Pasqui and Raniero Mengarelli were the promoters of the unfinished *Carta Archeologica* (COZZA, PASQUI 1981), for which, between 1881 and 1897, they worked intensely in the territories of Tarquinia and *Falerii*. The project included not only plans of all sites of the area, both towns, like Norchia (Fig. 5, e), and small settlements, *pagi* as they called little villages and forts (Fig. 5, f), but also drawings of single monuments, such as the Faliscan rock-tombs. Orsi’s colossal work (LA ROSA 2010; MAURINA, SORGE 2010; LAMBRUGO 2016) was instead supported by a great draughtsman, Rosario Carta, of whom we cannot omit the drawings of the *Persephoneion* at Locri Epizephyrioi, from the plan of the sanctuary (Fig. 5, g) and of the “Edicola Tesauraria” (Fig. 5, h), to the well known *pinakes*. Hatching, “tratteggio”, was the technique universally used and gave effective results, often more successful than photographs. Behind these masterpieces we can perceive the direct impact of positivism and the high technical standards achieved by the specialized schools and by the academies of fine arts in our country in the late 19th century. At that time photography was not a device easily at hand and archaeologists, maybe not fully convinced by the quality, reliability and costs of the photographic reproductions, requested this enormous effort of the hatching, in the present days simply impossible because of its prohibitive costs.

After the First World War, European architecture experiences the development of several tendencies of rationalism, from the Bauhaus to the Fascist modernism, sometimes living together in the same school and even in the same personality. The architect-archaeologist, who better than anybody else epitomizes the prevailing styles of drawing and reconstructing antiquities in Italy in the period between the two World Wars, is Italo Gismondi (1887-1974)

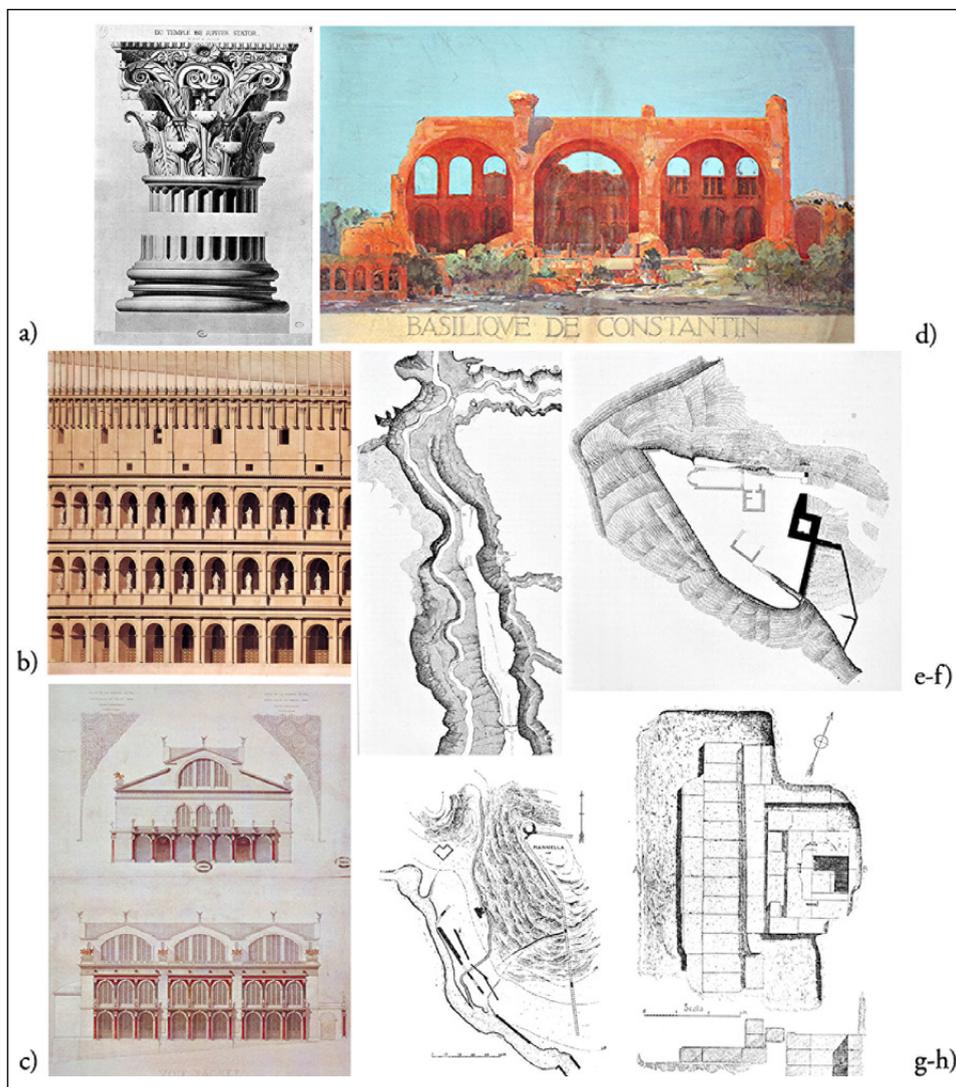


Fig. 5 – a-d) Paris, École des Beaux Arts: envoi de Jean-Tilman-François Suys (1816), “Capital of the Temple of Castor”; envoi de Louis-Joseph Duc (1830-31), “Colosseum”; envoi de Hector-Marie Désiré D’Espouy (1888), “Maxentius’ Basilica”; envoi de Jean-Jacques Haffner (1921), “Maxentius’ Basilica”; e-f) Archives of the *Carta Archeologica d’Italia*: map of Norchia; map of the *pagus S. Maria*; g-h) Rosario Carta: plan of the sanctuary of Persephone at Locri Epizephyrioi (from «Notizie degli Scavi» 1911, Suppl.); plan of the so-called “Edicola tesauraria” in sanctuary of Persephone at Locri Epizephyrioi (from «Notizie degli Scavi» 1911, Suppl.).

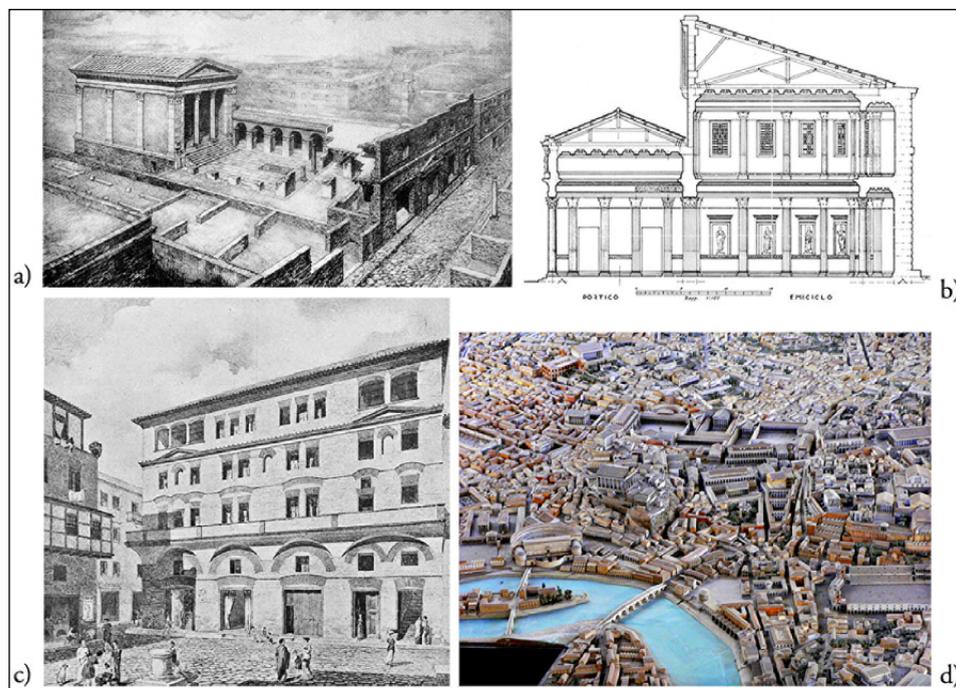


Fig. 6 – a-d) Italo Gismondi: reconstruction of the Temple of the *Fabri Navales* at Ostia, reconstruction of the Porticoes of the Forum of Augustus in Rome, reconstruction of the “Caseggiato di Diana”, maquette of Rome in the Constantine’s era.

(CIANFARANI 1975-1976; MUNTONI 1993; FILIPPI 2007). In his work, we meet first in the 1920s the continuation of the late 19th century style with the survival of abundant shadows and “tratteggio” (Fig. 6, a) and finally in the 1940s the triumph of the academic tradition (Fig. 6, b). Gismondi acquired a special fame from the colossal plaster model of Rome in the age of Constantine (Fig. 6, d) he realized for the colossal exhibition organized by the Fascist government on the anniversary of Augustus’ birth in 1938 and since then constantly up-dated. His most famous drawings were instead connected with another ambitious enterprise of Fascism, the “total” excavation of Ostia: this project, started already in the 1920s, was to give an archaeological framework to the World Exhibition, foreseen in 1942, but never inaugurated, destined to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the regime. The great architectural discovery made during the long story of this colossal dig was that of the “caseggiati” (Fig. 6, c), which since the 1920s Gismondi surveyed and reconstructed. His reconstructions of the Roman imperial “caseggiati” came even to influence some important Italian buildings still of the 1950s,



Fig. 7 – a) Saverio Muratori: Rome, Palazzo Don Sturzo; b) Massimo Limoncelli: 3D reconstruction of the Sanctuary of Apollo at Hierapolis (from CAVALIER, FERRIÈS, DELRIEUX 2017); c) 3D reconstruction of the Synagogue at Ostia (from Internet); d-f) Trieste, S. Giusto Cathedral: Roman *propylon* (reconstruction of P. Sticotti, M. Mirabella Roberti and from Internet); g) Reconstruction of the *Auditorium* discovered in 2007 in Rome at Piazza Venezia (Inklink, Florence).

like Palazzo Sturzo in Rome (Fig. 7, a), designed in 1955-1958 by a famous architect, Saverio Muratori (on this architect, see PIGAFETTA 1992), projected to be the official seat of the Christian Democrats.

Let us spend these final lines about the tendencies in the contemporary survey of ancient monuments, where two different schools are operating. One

school depends entirely upon refined computer programs in constant evolution: as an obvious consequence of the absolute dominance of machines, the results are always perfect, but cold, producing non-human scenes, deprived of any form of life. To illustrate the accomplishments of this school I would like to show two authentic masterpieces, the three-dimensional reconstructions of the sanctuary of Apollo at Hierapolis (the reconstruction has been published by ISMAELLI 2017, 314) (Fig. 7, b) and of the interior of the synagogue at Ostia (MICHEL WHITE 1997) (Fig. 7, c). The “exact” appearance of the monument, felt as a necessity for both the author and the onlooker, is always obtained at the expenses of any affective involvement in the images: reconstructions of this kind make me feel the antiquity lost for ever. Just to have a plastic view of this phenomenon, it will suffice to compare the two reconstructions of the Roman *propylon* (wrongly in the past interpreted as the local capitolium), preserved inside the church of San Giusto at Trieste (SCRINARI 1951), as drawn by Sticotti in 1933 (Fig. 7, d) and by Mirabella Roberti in 1951 (Fig. 7, e), with one of the present days (Fig. 7, f). The second school, which also employs computers, according to an old tradition, which used to add human figures to the drawing in order to enliven buildings and monuments, urban and country landscapes, adding men, animals and plants to its reconstructions. The results of the “enlivened” reconstructions of the second school are completely opposite to these “automatic” drawings: forgetting the varying quality of these restitutions, the results inevitably produce what I call the “cartoon effect” (Fig. 7, g), especially when the added figures portray people engaged in common every day actions, sometimes even prosaic. In both techniques there is a high level of trivialization of the ancient world, unveiling how far from our past is the contemporaneous “common sense”. All these images of either school give us in a non verbal form the unpleasant sensation, so well explained by the intense pages of Christian Meier’s *Von Athen bis Auschwitz* (MEIER 2002), that the contemporary world has turned its back to the ideal foundations of the so called western civilization, that our ancestors once recognized and even, as we have seen, made object of idolatry. We are now in poles apart from the Renaissance intellectuals of the northern countries of the 16th century, who used to spend whole nights in groups to read classical authors. In particular my mind goes to the nights in which Albrecht Dürer sketched Zeuxis’ centaurs following Lucian description as read and translated by his great friend and humanist Willibald Pirckheimer, intimate of Erasmus of Rotterdam (TORELLI 2012).

At the best, antiquity today is pure entertainment deprived of any form of ethic or sentimental involvement. Ruins appear more and more a Disneyland for visitors without memory in search of a totally unknown past.

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