Making the Stones Speak. Pre-Constructing Rome

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By way of Introduction: a reading of two tales

In the twenty-first chapter of his Rome-book, Georgius Fabricius, the German humanist who visited the eternal city around 1542, turns from his description of ancient to contemporary Rome: "Today before our eyes lies the corpse of the Roman city, mangled by almost all barbarian tribes…".[1] In the same year that Fabricius' book was published, 1550, the young Giovan Francesco Arrivabene evoked his delight in Rome in a letter to his patron Sabino Calandra, at that time *castellano* of Mantua: "Well, because I do not always want to stick just to the bits of news, I thought of giving you an account of some nice parts of this city. So, you will be able to taste in a certain way the pleasures that we now may enjoy every day."[2]

Both authors give us two visions of Rome at a distance of less than 10 years: the carcass of a city and a city of pleasures and rejoicing. How are they to be reconciled? When looking at Rome in this period, we get the impression of a vibrant city with lots of huge and high-quality building projects: the Palazzo Spada and the Oratorio del Gonfalone are being built, Michelangelo designs the cupola of St. Peter's, finishes the Palazzo Farnese and paints the fresco in the Paoline Chapel at the Vatican. Vignola starts the Sant'Andrea in the Via Flaminia as well as the near-by Villa Giulia. It seems hard to find another city in Europe that at that moment displays a comparable activity. One would not be tempted to call it a *cadaver*, a corpse.

Then, what causes these different, even opposing views? Let us continue our readings for a moment. Fabricius goes on by saying: "[…] but her illustrious glory and brilliant name could never be extinguished, since all the learned are fighting for it. In the preceding pages, I have with diligence collected much of it from Greek and Latin writers […]".[3] Arrivabene, on the other hand, concentrates on one particular place in Rome: "Let me take a good start. Reflecting on the judgement of the late cardinal Triulci, the garden of Cesi comes before my eyes, which is very vast and

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1. Fabricius 1550, 180: *Romanae urbis cadaver, omnibus pene barbaris lacerantibus ante oculos hodie iacet…*

2. Giovan Francesco Arrivabene, *Lettera a Sabino Calandra, castellano di Mantova*, 12 gennaio 1550: *Hor perché non voglio sempre star su le novelle, mè paruto di volerle dar ragguaglio di alcuna bella parte di cotesta città, acciò di lontano possa a certo modo gustare le delitie di che tutto dì si potiamo nutrire noi presentemente.* Rebecchini 2000, 50.

3. Fabricius 1550, 180: […] *sed gloriae splendor & nominis claritas, doctis pro ea propugnantibus, extingui numquam poterit. De eo in superioribus, ex Graecis Latinisque scriptoribus multa studiose collegi* […]

wide and contains only laurels and the highest and tallest and most beautiful pines that give it the loveliest and sweetest air and sky to look at."[4]

As we can see, Fabricius constructs his Rome from books, while Arrivabene calls back to memory the places where he walked and looked around. This different attitude offers us a double perspective on the two towns they describe. Fabricius offers the readers of his "guidebook" a textual Rome in a textual frame, whereas Arrivabene offers the reader of his letter a visual Rome in a textual frame. The first brings into motion a textual transmutation: he regenerates text from text. The other, on the contrary, applies an ecphrastic technique: he generates text from image.

This difference is fundamental. As Arrivabene is describing what he saw, he guides us along his own walking around in the Cesi garden. The text becomes a narrative of his own discoveries, his own encounters – of course, selected and ordered according to his own textual choices: he does not say anything for example of the singing of birds or the odors of flowers, neither of the people in whose company he dwells, neither of the reasons why he took this walk and not another one. As a matter of fact, how did he even get into that garden?

Fabricius is clearly not describing what he saw but rather what he could not even see, like all the lost temples he describes in chapter 10. He does not even pretend to describe them, he rather "enumerates" them, as he says himself. He explicitly states his reason for doing so: "Although my diligence has no sense at all with regard to that City or rather the corpse of the City as we see it now, it can be of use, as I think, to know the names and to locate the places in order to understand the poets and historians."[5] His text thereby does not become a narrative with a movement, with a plot, but rather a static "narrative", consisting of singular juxtaposed elements, ordered according to clear principles that might help to find back each item. For, what he wants to do is to help the readers of classical poets and historians by giving names and locations.

But will his book be of help? What does it tell me when reading in Solinus' *Collectanea Mirabilium* about the altar that Hercules dedicated to Jupiter, and consulting Fabricius who says: "Of Jupiter the Finder. Close to the *Salinae*, there was a temple that Hercules dedicated to his father as the Finder after he had found his cows and punished Cacus. Sources: Dionysius and Solinus."?[6] Worse, actually, I read in Fabricius simply what is said in Solinus I.7–8, who is even more explicit

4. Giovan Francesco Arrivabene, *Lettera a Sabino Calandra, castellano di Mantova*, 12 gennaio 1550: *Ma perché io incominci da buon capo, il giudicio del cardinal Triulci di bona memoria mi mette inanti a gl'occhi il giardino di Cesis, il quale è grande molto et ampio et tutto pieno solamente di lauri et di pini altissimi et drittissimi et vaghissimi, che fanno un aere et un cielo beatissimo et dolcissimo a riguardarli.* Rebecchini, 2000, 50.

5. Fabricius 1550, 95: *Quamvis autem ad eam Urbem, vel potius cadaver Urbis, quod nunc est, nihil pertineat hæc diligentia, tamen ad poetas & historicos intelligendos, hæc vel nominum cognitio, vel locorum notatio utilis, ut opinor, futura est.*

6. Fabricius 1550, 96: *Iovis inventoris. Iuxta Salinas sacellum fuit, quod inventis bobus, & punito Caco, Hercules patri Inventori dicavit: auctores, Dionysius & Solinus.*

about where to find the place, namely beside the *Porta Trigemina* that Fabricius locates in his fourth chapter on the gateways of Rome. And even when it might not have been clear where to find the *Porta Trigemina*, it surely was not clear at all what might have been understood under the *Salinae*, a much more specialized denomination for the quarter to be found near the *Porta Trigemina*.

What kind of text did Fabricius write, then? It cannot be used as a "guidebook", for it does not "guide" us through the Urbs. Neither can it be used as a schoolbook to help scholars or readers of classical texts, for it does not give any additional information. The only way to understand this book is to see it as a written map, because it is organized as such, going from outside the walls to inside and simultaneously offering a map of ancient Rome. Indeed, Fabricius mentions how Bartolomeo Marliani, the author of the immensely popular *Antiquae Romae Topographiae* (1534, 1544 etc.), brought him to the Capitol to show him all the hills and afterwards to the starting points of the Roman roads.[7] It is a peculiar image to see these two humanists and antiquarians, the Roman and the German, on the top of the Capitol looking for the seven hills that make up ancient Rome and at the same time completely ignoring its reorganization as it was finished by Michelangelo some five years ago. Perhaps they were even grumbling at all those modern interventions that took no account at all of the sacrosanctity of the place!

Fabricius thus wrote a textual map. But with one great particularity: it is a map that does not locate all elements but leaves some buildings or places floating in the air. It is not a map with blank spaces, but with elements belonging to it that have no place there.

Each writer creates a specific textual space. Arrivabene's text brings us into a definite place where all is clearly situated and rooted in its environmental surroundings. You could draw the map of our wandering through the garden, of course without any certainty that this map would coincide with the actual Cesi garden. Fabricius, however, does not create any true spatial environment at all. At most, it is the space of an archive or filing cabinet. Rather, he offers his readers a huge number of floating elements that leaves them free to recompose them at will.

Regenerating textual/urban space

Actually, Fabricius decomposes the texts he used as sources – he rips them apart – and leaves the fragments for others to recompose them into an entirely new city space. In that sense, we may say that he is regenerating his source texts, just as Giacomo Lauro, the engraver (†1605) does with the prints upon which he based his own engravings. Indeed, in approaching the problem I want to tackle in this contribution, I got a strong impulse by the reading of Victor Plahte Tschudi's

7. Fabricius 1550, 9.

wonderful book *Baroque Antiquity*, where he focuses exactly upon this same topic but from the point of view of engraving and print.[8] And the focus is more on the buildings, on the architecture in its printed regeneration out of preceding prints.

Fabricius fits into this plan. He is offering textual *emblemata* taken from ancient sources and offered to his readers that they may recompose them into a new Rome, as textual as his own. Fabricius thereby constitutes a step in the development of Rome into the city that has little to do with the concrete and actual town in Italy, but that has become something of a common cultural souvenir and that pushes every visitor to visit the eternal City in order to find back the non-existing Rome of his textually informed memory.

The point I want to make, however, is not to trace back this regenerative technique into modern times, neither to follow it in the material sense as Tschudi has done. As a literary scholar, my interest lies in the narratives as they are created and what this might imply. The link of a narrative to a city is in that sense highly fascinating, because every city has its "tales", but these tales in their turn might inform and create the "city".

There are several ways of approaching narratives and the city. One could approach a city as a macro-text, consisting of a multitude of smaller narrative units that each in itself forms a closed entity but that together tell us a tale that both encompasses and surpasses all the singular particles.[9] As such, the city becomes a kind of never-ending collective tale of short stories. Nobody has yet dared to approach a city from this perspective, neither in literature nor in scholarship. It would not only imply telling tales about people in town, but also bringing into account the tales of monuments, streets, parks, waters...[10]

Another approach might draw attention to the multitude of narratives that a city may inspire and thereby to "map" the different faces and layers of significance a city encloses for those confronted with it. A marvelous example thereof is given by Italo Calvino's *Le Città invisibili*, *The Invisible Cities*, which pretends to narrate either the cities Marco Polo encountered during his voyages or just simply all the different faces of one and the same city. As such it is in the end understood by both the Khan and Marco Polo, by the listener and the teller.[11]

Yet another approach might take as its starting point the way the narrative interacts with the city. First of all, I think of the city informing the narrative. A good example could be James Joyce's *Ulysses*. For, one may rightly ask oneself who the true main character in Joyce's novel is. Is it Leop-

8. Tschudi 2017.

9. For the concept of macro-text see Santi 2014.

10. I am grateful to Sarah Bonciarelli for her inspiring ideas and literature. She has been doing some working on Milan as a macro-text which she illustrated in a *lezione itinerante*, walking lessons, demonstrating the sheer impossibility of reaching even the smallest result. Bonciarelli 2015.

11. Calvino 2017 (1972), 101–102.

old Bloom or Stephen Dedalus? Is it not rather Dublin that is imposing its Homeric impact upon the human characters so that they cannot but be a regeneration of their ancient models – better their "figurae"? In a completely disfigured form we could recognize this in the tourist photos and modern selfies. What is it else than to impose your own narrative upon the city, to relegate the city to the background of your own life?

The interaction can appear the other way around. For most people the tale determines what they see in the town and how they experience it. A city can meet these expectations or thwart them. That is actually what each of us is doing when visiting a city for the first time. One goes there with a tale of that city in the mind – if there is no tale, that counts as a tale too – and checks what one observes as to find out if it fits the prefigured story in one's head. Just think of those groups of tourists clustered around the one holding the guidebook, sometimes looking up all at the same moment to look for the object just read and described in the book and returning to the text (or image) as soon as they have located it. It is the book that tells them what they must see. It is the book that informs their memory of what it must retain.

Of course, nowadays, in the era of mass tourism and city consumption, cities have to allow for these pre-existing tales about themselves. And so, what we are witnessing the last century is the slow and steady transformation of cities to conform more to what people expect. Cities create tales, but tales nowadays start to determine the outlook of the cities.[12]

Retiming urban space

From this point of view we can return to have a closer look at the twelfth century and to two writers and their texts that the *Topos and Topography* project invited me to look into more carefully: Master Gregory and Benedictus Canonicus.

A short introduction seems in order. Master Gregory was an Englishman, apparently master at a school, probably in Canterbury, having visited Rome before the end of the twelfth century and asked by his colleagues and superior to write down "what he had learned in Rome that was worthiest of admiration". He composed what became known as one of the earliest so-called *Miracles of Rome* (*Mirabilia Romae*): a collection of partly real, partly fabulous works of art as they could be found in Rome (or not at all).[13] The pyramids (of Cestius as well as the obelisks), the walls, gates, arches, the *spinario* (the boy withdrawing a thorn from his foot), and a statue of Venus are mentioned besides the bronze statue of Bellerophon that is kept in the air by way of magnets, the

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12. My own city of Ghent can offer a nice illustration. Many of its "medieval" points of attraction were actually built or reconstructed in the late 19th or early 20th century.

13. Huygens 2000, 276–308. For information on Gregory, see the introduction, 277. For the quotation, 281: *quae apud Romam maiori admiratione digna didici.*

Pharos of Alexandria, and the theatre of Herakleia. Master Gregory's story thereby offers a bizarre mix of elements apparently seen and visited and elements coming out of the books, notably from another text about the seven world wonders (*De septem mirabilia*).[14]

As such, his text might remind us strongly of Fabricius' *Roma*: written for those at home who never saw the Urbs, describing both what one has seen and what one took from the books. Both texts want to inform those at home on the character of an imaginary Rome. Fabricius, of course, attempts to give an account of the elements of ancient Rome. His texts fit in the humanist and proto-historicist approach, based upon classical texts and upon rational credibility.

Master Gregory's text might seem pure fantasy to the modern reader, but actually, his way of creating his story is not that different from the one Fabricius applied, with this difference that his aim is not to reconstruct somehow a virtual ancient Rome, but rather a virtual eternal Rome as *caput mundi* that encloses in itself all the wonders of the world. Both rely heavily on textual sources, both on their personal notes and/or souvenirs, both on classical books. A potential difference for us is solely that Fabricius wants to offer the image of a Rome that is materially plausible and that fits the historical truth as it would be understood from historicism onward, while Master Gregory evokes rather what we might call a conceptual truth. He does not describe in order to reconstruct the past, but rather does so to give an image of a town that contains within its walls all the wonders one might encounter in the books.

Did they both believe in what they wrote? Fabricius undoubtedly did, just like all academic scholars still believe in what they write today. Unshakeable self-confidence is still one of the pillars of successful scholarship. As regards Master Gregory, I am less convinced. In the end, he must have known what he saw and what he did not. In the text, this can be noticed as exactly those elements that cannot be found in Rome often are much less clearly situated in the urban space and are often introduced as comparative elements. It confirms the impression that Master Gregory's chief objective is not to create a credible image but rather to tell an amazing story, a narrative that inspires awe for the city that presents itself as the centre of the Latinate world.

This brings us to that other, even more bizarre text, the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, supposedly written by the Roman canon Benedict between 1140 and 1143. It has been in the centre of much scholarly interest. No wonder, because it is often considered as the true first "guidebook" through Rome, paying surprisingly large attention to classical Rome, almost to the entire neglect of Christian actuality. For this reason, it attracted a great deal of interest from historians, art historians, archaeologists. From their traditional point of view, it was soon discarded as being of little true interest, as one of the first modern editors remarked:

14. For the source, see Huygens 2000, 278.

[t]his exegesis is of a kind that cannot be more artificial and less successful. [...] What his documents could not offer him, our writer does not have the least hesitations to tear from his own mind. [...] Often, however, he proceeds with the uttermost arbitrariness. A similar failing method could only bring him to awkward results. I would not dare to state that from the more than hundred temple locations he managed to get right even one.[15]

Yet, recently the text received new attention, notably in a thematic section of the Brill Journal *Medieval Encounters* 17, 2011, dedicated to twelfth-century Rome. Here, two contributions dealt with the text explicitly. Stefano Riccioni[16] and Louis Hamilton[17] both read the text in the context of a papal policy of *Renovatio*. They also make an important step in reconsidering the text in its material context, i.e. in the combination of texts with which it seems to have been transmitted. They reconnected it with the *Ordo Romanus* XI, alongside which it originally seems to have been bound together, and established that such was undeniably the work of Benedict the canon.

In line with a well-established philological tradition, Benedict's authorship has been questioned, first in the 1970s, again in the 1990s by eminent philologists.[18] As a result, many recent studies do not want to commit themselves to the topic and speak rather of a writer close to Benedict. Some, however, take up the defence of Benedict as the actual writer, discarding the objections as futile;[19] a reproach that is not entirely unfounded and often applicable to many traditional philological criticisms. On the contrary, some of these criticisms against a philological hyper-criticality came out of the need to connect both texts because of the liturgical or musicological interests of the scholars.

Aside from this, the point I want to get to has not that much to do with the necessity of giving the text an assignable author. Instead it touches the core of the quest after the origins of the *Mirabilia Romae* as a literary genre. None of the older transmissions of the text, in fact, calls it by the name under which we know it: *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*. Neither any of those texts that make use of it refers to it under this best-known title. Yet, the first translation into Italian that possibly dates from around 1250, as such approximately a century younger, is entitled *Le miracole de Roma*, in which *miracole* must be considered a translation of the Latin *mirabilia*, according to its traditionally Christian meaning.

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15. Fabre & Duchesne 1905, 99: "[c]ette exégèse est tout ce qu'on peut voir de plus artificiel et de moins réussi. [...] Ce que ses documents ne pouvaient lui fournir, notre auteur n'hésita pas à le tirer de son cerveau. [...] Mais très souvent il procède avec un arbitraire absolu. Une méthode aussi imparfaite ne pouvait le conduire qu'à des résultats malheureux. Je n'oserais affirmer que, sur plus de cent désignations de temples, il soit tombé juste, même une seule fois."
16. Riccioni 2011.
17. Hamilton 2011.
18. Schimmelpfennig 1973, D'Onofrio 1988, Miedema 1996.
19. Notably Romano 2010, Kinney 1990 and 2007.

At the background of my reading of the text have always been the use and meaning of *mirabilia* from Late Antiquity into far in the Middle Ages. The word was commonly used to refer to (divine) miracles. The shift back towards the more classical use of *mirabilia* in the sense of visible, concrete man-made wonders of the world denotes a profound change within the Latinate world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In order to decipher the role that Benedict's text – Benedict's, as I do not doubt his authorship – has played in this mental shift, we have to look more closely to the way it was meant to function.

Our *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* is generally considered to consist of three parts. It opens with ten short chapters, enumerating successively the walls, the gates, the triumphal arches, the hills, the baths, the palaces, the theatres, the bridges and the cemeteries, and the places where martyrs suffered.

The second part contains a number of largely fictitious stories: the vision of Augustus and the Sibyl, a story about the two marble Dioscuri of the Quirinal, the story of the equestrian statue in bronze of the Lateran, explicitly not identified with Constantine, the building and consecration of the Pantheon, the building of Saint Peter in Vincoli. This sequel is interrupted after the story of the Dioscuri by a list of courtly officials and by a short chapter with the height of the columns and the Colosseum. In the most trustworthy manuscript, a longer text then follows with an allegorical commentary on the liturgy for Lent, Easter week and Easter itself. This text, however, remains unpublished until today.[20] Besides, between the story on the Pantheon and the one on Saint Peter in Vincoli, two of the more important manuscripts insert a historical introduction to the passion of Saint Lawrence, telling how the emperor Decius came to power by killing his predecessor, the emperor Philippus and his son, presented as Christians.[21]

After the dedication of Saint Peter in Vincoli starts the third part that consists of a huge enumeration of temples organized according to the Roman regions. It is notably this part that has aroused so much criticism of scholars who were looking for concrete information on the situation

20. In the meantime, I have had the opportunity to transcribe the text and will prepare its edition, I hope as part of an edition of Benedict's entire book. As to the opinion of the editors of the rest of Benedict's book, see Fabre & Duchesne 1905, vol. 1, 33: "Dans la partie conservée des *Mirabilia*, après le chapitre des colonnes (XXXVII) s'intercale sous le titre *De ystoria ecclesiastica*, un assez long commentaire sur les spécialités liturgiques du temps septuagésimal, de la semaine sainte et du temps pascal. C'est un tissu d'explications mystiques plus ineptes les unes que les autres. J'ai cru devoir laisser inédit ce morceau sans valeur aucune." (In the part of the *Mirabilia* that is conserved [in Vallicellianus F. 73], after the chapter on the columns (XXXVII), a rather long commentary is inserted under the title *De ystoria ecclesiastica* on the liturgical specificities of Lent, the Holy Week and Easter. It is a web of mystical explications of which the one is even more incongruous than the other. I did not think it worth to edit this piece without any value whatever).
21. With the exception of the allegorical text, all the others have been edited in Fabre & Duchesne 1905, but not in their original order, nor according to the most trustworthy manuscript.

of Rome in this period. As may appear from the quote at the opening of this section, none of the temples mentioned seem to have ever existed, even when they are located in ruins or buildings of Antiquity that are known or that still can be seen.

The *Mirabilia* in themselves thus already form a bizarre compilation of different kinds of texts, originating in disparate sources and combining the strangest elements: both historical anecdotes and completely fictitious stories as the one about the statue of Marcus Aurelius, lists of buildings that are based upon classical models, as the Curiosum, a fourth-century description of the Roman regions,[22] as well as an enumeration of fantastical temples. Is it worthwhile trying to make sense out of this succession of seemingly unconnected textual documents? I think it is, and I will try to show this, first by having a look at the way the first part of the text seems organized.[23]

The *Mirabilia* opens with a simple description of the *Urbs*. It starts by giving information on the walls, then runs through the gates, beginning by the *Porta Capena* or of Saint Paul, following the walls up north till the *Porta Collina* that leads to and from the Vatican and then jumping to Trastevere for the last three gateways that bring us back to our starting point.

Next, Benedict enumerates the arches, and here we encounter the hand of the writer for the first time by way of the selection that he makes. He limits his account to eleven of them. This time, he starts from the two arches that lead to the Vatican, then jumps to the Via Appia, follows a line that brings him to the Capitol, jumps again to the Arch of Octavian on the actual Via del Corso and returns by way of this Via Lata to the Capitol. Apparently, the author was less interested in giving a complete list than in following those routes that brought him to the Capitol as the centre of ancient Rome. And indeed, the Capitol will play the most important role in his entire text.

The text is less systematic in enumerating the following elements: the seven hills in which Aventine and Quirinal coincide (which is remarkable, for a little bit later the difference between both hills is clearly maintained), the baths, the palaces and the theatres. They remain scattered over the urban surface and if there is some discernible line at all, it always seems to encircle the Capitol. More important, however, is the absence of monuments that in earlier and later descriptions are rarely left out, first of all the aqueducts. The fact that they are not taken into account suggests that the author did not want to give them any place in his ordering of the written town.

Instead, he brings us on the roads and to the places where the martyrs suffered and died. Although it starts in a clearly inward direction, the mention of the different places soon gets scattered over the urban surface in a similar way as the preceding chapters. Hereafter, the text brings us over the bridges and to the cemeteries.

22. Jordan 1871, 539–574.
23. The *Mirabilia* have been edited several times. Fabre & Duchesne 1905 vol. 1, 262–273 gave the version as it appears in the Cambrai manuscript 554 that constitutes the main manuscript for the *Liber Censuum*. More recent edition in Valentini & Zucchetti 1946. For convenience I use the separate reproduction as published by Accame & Dell'Oro 2004.

The composition in this first part thus conforms to a clear view. The text brings us inward toward the Capitol, from where we see the most important and highest points of Rome. Then we leave the town by the roads, the bridges and along the cemeteries. This last part is coloured by the martyrs' deaths along the different roads, which constitutes the only difference with the approach we saw Fabricius take.

The movement in the first part thus shows a clear composition as well as does the choice of the different monuments, because the absence of the aqueducts is too remarkable not to be noticed. When going over to the second part, combining all the strange and bizarre narratives, the proper hand of the writer will become even more present.

	Period	Theme	Topic	Place	Church
1	Augustus	Vision of Christ's birth	Sibyl and Augustus	Capitol	S. Maria in Aracoeli
2	Tiberius	Memorial for the philosophers	Horses	(Quirinal)	Statue of Ecclesia
3		Courtly officials			
4		Height of Columns and Coliseum			
5		Liturgy of Lent to Easter			
6	Republic	Victory on an Oriental king	Horse	Lateran	(S. Giovanni in Laterano)
7	Republic/ Agrippa vs. Phocas	Victory on Persia	Cybele/Pope Bonifacius		Pantheon/S. Maria ad Martyres
8	Decius	Murder on the Christian Philippus	Pope Xystus		(Quo vadis)
9	Octavianus	Celebration of Actium/S. Peter	Pope Pelagius and Empress Eudoxia	(Viminal)	S. Peter in Vincoli

Here too, some organizing principles can be recognized. One of them has been noticed already.[24] Most of the stories are linked with the building or consecration of churches. It opens with Augustus' vision of the birth of Christ on the place where now Santa Maria in Aracoeli is situated. The bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius that is explicitly denied to be a portrait of Constantine brings

24. Kinney 2007, 249–251.

us to the Lateran. The church is not mentioned but the story opens by mentioning the place. Then follow the building and Christianising of the Pantheon as the Santa Maria ad Martyres, or Santa Maria Rotunda. Finally, there is Empress Eudoxia who christianises the celebration of Actium and changes it into a festivity of Saint Peter, building the church of Saint Peter in Vincoli.

No churches are mentioned in the story of the naked marble youths and their horses on the Quirinal, the Dioscuri, nor in the story on Decius and Philippus. But each of these has its own link to the Church. Together with the marble statues of the Dioscuri, another statue is described of a woman, surrounded by snakes and with a conch shell. This statue, of which no trace is left, neither in reality nor in other writings, the author explains as representing the Church. In the story of the usurpation by Decius, on the other hand, we see the Christians suffering from the pagans. Philippus and his son are presented as the first Christian emperors, whereas the usurpation by Decius leads not only to their death but also to the martyrdom of pope Xystus, Laurentius, Abdon and Sennen. Furthermore, it has to be noted that, in the first part, Xystus and Laurentius both open and close the chapter on the places where the martyrs died.

But how should we handle the strange list of courtly officials in which ecclesiastical functions are combined with Byzantine ones? Indeed, exactly this link seems to be the ultimate goal of the list. Appearing after the introduction of the Church by way of the female statue, the officials help to create a concrete and imperial image of the Church as institution. "Nobody may go to the Church if he did not wash himself before", concludes the description of the statue with the conch shell.[25] Next, the *primicerius* is mentioned, who is in charge of all the keys to the (imperial) palace. You must not only wash yourself. You also need the keys and the guard of the keys in order to enter the palace of the Church, i.e. the heavenly kingdom. In that sense the text actually continues, even while changing from the allegorical interpretation of statues to the concrete courtly function at the imperial court. This, however, will be of importance to understanding Benedict's total project.

The chapter with officials concludes on the *referendarius* who has to bring all writings in front of the emperor. The next chapter brings us to the two imperial columns, of which the height is mentioned, together with that of the Colosseum. Once again, the mention of the Colosseum seems a bizarre interruption of the line of thought in this part. But not if we look at it from the perspective of urban space. The column of Marcus Aurelius is not that far from the marble youths on the Quirinal, where the text left us while giving a short list of imperial officials. And when following the line of the columns and the Colosseum, we find ourselves on the way toward the Lateran that will be one of our next stops. The imperial line of the columns thus leads us by way of the Colosseum to the palace of the popes.

25. Accame & Dell'Oro 2004, 130: *femina circumdata serpentibus sedens, habens conc<h>am ante se <significat Ecclesiam et> praedatores qui praedicabunt eam; ut quicumque ad eam ire voluerit, non poterit, nisi prius lavetur in con<h>a illa.*

But after the mention of the Colosseum, this continuity is interrupted by the long allegorical explanation of the liturgy from Lent to Easter. Is this part truly misplaced? Or does it help us to understand what is actually going on in this book project? Is not the entire book telling us about the Easter mystery, i.e. the Resurrection? Is not the central theme in all these stories the replacement of pagan Antiquity by Christianity, the Resurrection of pagan Rome into the rejuvenated Christian Rome? The Pantheon rises from a temple of Cybele, mother of the Gods, into a church dedicated to Mary, mother of all saints. The pagan celebration of Actium resurfaces as the festivity of Saint Peter and Paul. The pagan philosophy in the marble youths is connected and surpassed by the female statue of the Church.

The liturgical text seems central to the understanding of what Benedict is trying to say. Rome is the town of Resurrection. Death in pagan Antiquity has become Life in the papal city. The pope is the resurrection of the antique Emperors. By the force of liturgy, he is capable to resurrect pagan Rome to new life. This will be the key to understand also the last part of the text in which the urban space seems thickly studded with mostly non-existent pagan temples. But in order to open up this imaginary space, it seems obligatory first to examine the material constellation in which our text originally occurred.

The twelfth-century *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* appears in the three most authoritative manuscripts together with a couple of other texts. All of these manuscripts date from a later period, the earliest – yet unfortunately also the most unreliable – from the end of the twelfth century.[26]

According to the first editors, two later manuscripts preserved more or less the original project. It carried the title *Liber Politicus* as becomes clear from the way it is mentioned in the later manuscripts. The title has to be understood as *Liber Polyptychus*, i.e. a kind of register, literally a book with many leaves. A perhaps too literal understanding of the title in its later sense has induced some scholars to exclude our *Mirabilia* from this project. But we will see that actually it fits perfectly in the context of the *Liber*.

The Book opens with the dedication letter by Benedict to Guido de Castello, cardinal priest of the *titulus* San Marco and future pope Celestine II (1143–1144). In this letter, Benedict offers his addressee – on his request – an *opusculum* about the way the pope, the curia and the whole Roman Church have to comport themselves during the most important solemnities and during daily celebrations. This announces the first part of the book project, which is known as the *Ordo Romanus* XI, and describes the different festivities and celebrations in Rome during the liturgical year. It ends on the festivity of Saint Andrew and breaks off without any concluding remark.

26. The most ancient manuscript is the one from Cambrai, ms. 554, but, according to the editors Fabre & Duchesne it offers a less reliable text and it rearranged the contents of Benedict's *Liber*. The other two manuscripts, *Vallicellianus* F.73 and *Vaticanus* 5348, both date from the 14th or 15th century.

In the book project then followed several excerpts from older works: 1. an enumeration of the solemnities during which the pope had to be crowned, 2. an enumeration of the solemnities during which the *stationes* took place at St Peter's, 3. a selective list of popes, ending with Innocentius II, 4. the retreat of cardinals to their own churches after their ordination, 5. the *laudes* as they had to be sung on the days on which the pope was crowned, 6. a list of popular festivities that accompany some festival days during the year, notably those leading to Easter [de Albis, Easter vespers, January 1, Carnival, Halfway Lent], 7. a song that the youngest members of the *Schola cantorum* sang halfway Lent and 8. finally, our *Mirabilia*.

Indeed, this seems to be a rather heterogeneous collection. As such, it could be rightly addressed as a *Liber Polyptychus*. But the title also suggests some kind of coherency between its constituting parts: it is called a book. This has been explained as if all the texts following the *Ordo* form a collection of appendices that, however, did get mixed up somehow. Yet, when looking at it from the perspective of what we discovered to be the underlying idea of the first parts in the *Mirabilia*, all seems to become much clearer.

The Book opens with the *Ordo* that describes the papal ceremonies throughout the Roman churches and basilicas over the year. Much attention is given to the solemnities in St. Peter's and to the different processions inside the basilicas and outside through the streets of Rome. Benedict, being cantor of St. Peter's, expands largely upon the hymns and antiphons that are sung during these solemnities. But he clearly likes also to depict the splendour that surrounds the pope when leading and participating the celebrations and processions.

Is it just coincidence then, that his evocation of the papal liturgical year is followed by a list of solemnities in which the pope is crowned? They seem not only chosen because of the importance of the celebration but in the first place because of the specific dignity derived from the coronation ceremony. These are the moments in which the papal identification with the worldly rulers becomes most obvious. It is almost impossible to give more explicit expression of papal supremacy over the Emperor, notably in the period just after the Concordat of Worms.

By following immediately with the solemnities that have their *stationes* in St. Peter's the reader gets the impression that St. Peter and the Vatican actually form the papal residence. Of course, they do not. That is the Lateran, but the *Ordo* seems to express also an ongoing rivalry between the different great basilicas, in which Benedict clearly voices the position of St. Peter against both St. Maria Maggiore and the Lateran.[27]

Then follows the list of popes. It is almost complete for the first forty popes, that is until Innocentius I (†417). Only seven popes are missing. But after Innocentius I only thirteen popes are still mentioned, significantly concluding with Innocentius II. Benedict is a strong adherent of this

27. See for the musical rivalry between the Lateran and the papal *schola* of St. Peter's: Dyer 2008, 134–135.

pope, his Lord as he calls him. This partisanship can also be remarked by his leaving out the four popes between Urban II and Innocentius II, whose lives had been written in this same period by an adherent of Innocentius' rival, Anacletus II. These lives were incorporated in the *Liber Pontificalis*.[28]

In the list, most attention is given to those popes that display a truly imperial authority, starting with Saint Peter himself, but mostly elaborated for Silvester who is mentioned as the builder of the Lateran, of St. Peter's and of St. Paul fuori le mura. Moreover, his departure from Constantine is evoked when according to tradition the emperor left the pope all the *imperialia*, the imperial insignia, as the white horses and – the crown!

After the list of popes, the book continues with a number of texts that seem to make a descending move through the members of the Church. First, a short text on the cardinals, then the liturgical songs as they had to be performed by the *Schola cantorum* on the coronation days, then the popular festivals ending with, again, songs performed by the *Schola cantorum*, but now by its youngest members. Then follow the *Mirabilia*. As to the songs, they address Innocent II as the one who gained *Victoria*, who earned honour comparable to the Caesars and who reigned the entire universe in St. Peter's name. He also has to protect the Roman arms as did the ancient emperors.

When looking at this sequence of texts, it can be noticed that the *Mirabilia* suddenly do not appear that strange to the totality of the *Liber*. On the one hand, they give the background to all that precedes. They show in what surroundings these festivities and celebrations take place. But on the other hand, they also depict the lowest part in the Roman hierarchy: the classical remains, both in its ruins and in its legendary histories. Once again, in view of the post-Investiture Controversy, the *Mirabilia* seem to push the Roman Emperor in his classical prefiguration of the Pope to the lowest levels of the Roman hierarchy.

Yes, classical Rome is not even presented as an imperial town but as a space that was already consecrated in pagan times. The urban surface of Rome simply does not seem wide enough to contain all the temples bumping into each other. In that sense, as the central stories demonstrate, it was prepared to resurrect into the true Christian consecration. And the head of the pagan consecrated space, the Emperor, had to disappear and die in order to rise again as the Pope, the Christian sovereign who surpasses all earthly power.

Benedict's *Liber Polyptychus* thus seems to display a clear and specific program with more of a political than a spiritual purpose. It gives a sound and balanced impression when considered in its entirety. That we have to take it as a unity is demonstrated also from yet another perspective. The first text, the *Ordo*, introduced by the dedication letter to Guido de Castello, closes upon the

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28. Paschalis II, Gelasius II, Calixtus II, Honorius II: their lives written by Pandolphus, supporter of Anacletus II, in Duchesne 1892, 296–328.

festivity of Saint Andrew without any concluding remarks. This is a bit peculiar. One would expect some words to recommend the writing to its addressee. Nothing of the like.

The *Mirabilia* show an equally strange phenomenon. The text simply starts with the description of the walls, without any introductory remarks. Few itineraries actually have an introduction, so this should not necessarily be surprising. But while most itineraries are purely functional, I hope to have demonstrated that the *Mirabilia* clearly are not. And, indeed, they finish on a very short conclusion, stating that all these temples and palaces were to be found in Rome as the author assures having read in old chronicles, having seen them with his own eyes and heard about them from the ancients. Now, these are almost exactly the same words as those that conclude the dedication letter, where Benedict guarantees that all he writes down in the *Ordo* he had been eye-witness to, he had heard it from the wise members of the Curia and read it in the books of the teachers of the Church. In both cases, the writer stresses that he wrote it down for the memory of future generations.

It thus seems that we have both an introduction and a conclusion to the book as a whole. Remarkably, however, the introduction only regards the *Ordo*, while the conclusion only concerns the *Mirabilia*. Does this mean that they do not belong to each other? Rather, I would suggest that this clearly shows how both parts form two panels from different poles along the same axis. The first panel surpasses the second as its resurrected new image. They correspond to each other but not in a symmetrical way.

Dale Kinney has already noticed and shown this by tracing Benedict's tour around the Roman temples and comparing it to the routes taken by the different processions. When mapping them both, it becomes immediately clear that almost all the temple areas are covered by the different processions during the year.[29] The only exception is the Aventine, but this hill is likewise not described as an important temple area, and even there can we find liturgical links thanks to the enumeration of places where the martyrs suffered and died.

In Benedict's text, the Roman pagan universe thus becomes a liturgical universe that serves the depiction of the pope as the successor and even transcendent resurrection of pagan (or contemporary) emperors. Following Benedict on his tour along the fictional temples and places of antique worship, we retrace the steps we already made while following him during the processions and on his transfers from one church to another. We follow the same routes over and over and thus in our memory we will automatically record the splendour of papal processions while passing the now nude and silent ruins, for it is clear that to Benedict one of the most important features of the papal processions was the music, the song. He, the cantor of St. Peter's, pays largely attention to the different hymns, psalms, antiphons, and popular or ridiculous songs that accompanied the

29. Kinney 2007.

different festivities and celebrations. It is the part that is missing in our reconstruction but that must be considered of high significance in this period.[30]

While walking through Benedict's fictional Rome with all its temples, we will recall the music that accompanies the processions. And I think here we might come across one of the factors at the origin of the genre that still had to come into being. Benedict chants Rome. He sings the wonder that anyone can see: how the pagan ruins come to new life and resurrect into the truth of Christ – how the naked remains of classic glory come to shine again in the splendour of papal magnificence, how the silence of the past rises to new life in the music of the *Schola*. In his writings, as he states himself, he wants to recall for posterity all the glory of the past so that we may see with our own eyes and hear by our own ears what nobody can ever see, the Wonders of God, the *Mirabilia Romae*: unseen Rome both antique and actual, both classical and modern, pagan and Christian, both dead and resurrected in her material body.

Now, Benedict's text differs in one aspect from all the others we have seen in this contribution. It is the only one that seems to be destined to a reader's audience in Rome itself, i.e. a reader who is acquainted with Rome's concrete and material situation. Fabricius, Arrivabene and Master Gregory all wrote for people absent who had not yet visited Rome or those parts described, as for example the Cesi garden. Benedict wrote his text for Guido de Castello, who had been part of the papal Curia since Callixtus II (†1124) and who had been a loyal supporter of Innocent II, the reigning pope, who actually recommended him as one of those fit to be his successor.

Such an addressee, of course, changes the entire background of the text. Benedict could not allow himself to start telling pure fancies in order to make Rome into what it was not. He neither needed to give a kind of guide to a man who knew Rome. So, what was he doing in the remarkable last part of his book where he offers this incredible enumeration of temples? In my reading, Benedict wants to impose the image of Rome as the city of resurrection, showing how papal Rome under Innocent II had become the Christian counterpart of ancient splendour.

But how does he exactly create his narrative? In a certain sense, he uses the same technique – be it in a textual shape – that Victor Plahte Tschudi so nicely demonstrated was the technique that Lauro applied in his printing of the pre-constructions of contemporary architecture.[31] Benedict's ancient Rome, crowded with temples, must indeed be seen as the "pre-constructed" papal Rome of Innocent II. The churches mentioned do not serve as a guide and orientation mark for the rare

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30. See my parallel article 'Resurrecting Rome. Liturgy and Rome's Second Revival' that will be published in the acts of the workshop *Rewiring Romans. Medieval Liturgies as Tools for Transformation*, held June 15–17, 2017 in the Norwegian Institute of Rome. Inevitably, parts of both articles will show some overlap but emphasis is put different: there on the transformational force of liturgy, here on the textual pre-construction of Rome.

31. Tschudi 2017.

twelfth-century tourist, but as the starting point from where Benedict pre-constructs papal Rome. During his enumerative narration, he continuously gives indications that he actually is talking about contemporary Rome while evoking a fantastic ancient past.

His actual narrative is a sub-text, underlying and organizing his fabulous lists of temples. It groups them not only according to the places in Rome but rather according to their significance, starting with strongly imperial pre-constructions, centred around the Vatican and taking its departure from there. On the Capitol, Caesar's murder is mentioned, immediately preceding Augustus's vision of the birth of Christ. Next follow almost immediately the destroyers of Jerusalem and a temple with the treatise between Rome and the Maccabees. In short, Benedict's narrative shows a high degree of complexity that might be accessible only to someone knowing Rome in its concrete material appearance. More than the other texts we saw, Benedict puts Rome before our eyes by telling a tale. Benedict gives Christian Rome a voice and a tale, but in his case, it is architecture itself that becomes "speaking". The visible buildings contain the story for those who can see.

Conclusion

In this contribution I set out to approach the link between the city and her tales from the concrete texts in order to see if they can give us some ideas of the way tales may originate in, from or on the city. I lingered mostly on two groups of narratives, each presenting us with two authors. I took my departure from two narrators from early modern times, who display two different source-based tales: the one regenerating text from texts, the other more traditionally generating text from images. I ended with two medieval writers, both applying more or less similar techniques but with completely different and to us rather alienating results. Like Fabricius, Master Gregory is regenerating text from text but creating what to our opinion should rather be considered fiction (and perhaps it was such in his own eyes as well). But then we are to ask ourselves for what reason we consider Fabricius' regeneration to be less fictional than the one by Master Gregory. Finally, Benedict Canonicus generates text from images just as we saw Arrivabene did. But instead of offering to our reading the images he saw, we get to see the pre-constructions of these images that offer us another – less visible and holy – tale: that of the pre-construction of papal Rome. His city is telling her tale as a city: in buildings and monuments. Benedict's words show us how to understand, how to read the city.

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They developed many new techniques for buildings and construction of all types including the invention of concrete, Roman roads, the invention of Roman arches, and incredibly well built aqueducts that ran for miles before they reached the end and delivered fresh water. Public Health Programs: The Romans were great believers in healthy living. They made sure that all the people of Rome were able to get medical help. Public Welfare: The Romans also believed that all Romans should have food and shelter. Under the Empire, they developed welfare programs for the poor. No structure in Rome is as iconic as the Colosseum. Here's a look at its history, architecture, some interesting facts and tips for visiting the Colosseum. Eventually, the Colosseum was abandoned and its stones were taken for numerous building projects in Rome. By the time the 20th century arrived, almost two-thirds of the original Colosseum had been destroyed by natural disasters and human neglect. Restoration work began in the 1990's, successfully reviving the Colosseum's former glory. The outer wall was constructed with travertine stones held together with iron clamps rather than mortar. Its façade is comprised of three stories of superimposed arcades framed by half-columns. It's thought that statues were once displayed under the arches of the arcades. STONES OF VENICE Volumes I-II. National library association. New york. Chicago. The. Stones of venice. Volume I. The foundations. I believe few people have any idea of the cost of truth in these things; of the expenditure of time necessary to make sure of the simplest facts, and of the strange way in which separate observations will sometimes falsify each other, incapable of reconcilement, owing to some imperceptible inadvertency. I am ashamed of the number of times in which I have had to say, in the following pages, "I am not sure," and I claim for them no authority, as if they were thoroughly sifted from error, even in what they more confidently state. 103 On the construction of military barracks, Davidson, D. P., The Barracks of the Roman Army from the First to the Third Centuries AD (Oxford, 1989), 209–30. That the rebuilding even of the stone walls of a fort from the foundations may have been quite a regular practice, especially after a hard winter, is shown by the example of the modern walls of the Saalburg; cf. D. Baatz (n. 74), 378. For antiquity, note the numerous repairs to the walls at Vindolanda, some of them down to the lowest courses: Bidwell, P. T., The Roman Fort of Vindolanda (London, 1985), 38–46. If you're seeing this message, it means we're having trouble loading external resources on our website. If you're behind a web filter, please make sure that the domains *.kastatic.org and *.kasandbox.org are unblocked. Courses. Search. Donate Login Sign up. Search for courses, skills, and videos. Main content. Arts and humanities.