

# HUI216

# Italian Civilization

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# 6.0 Announcements

- <http://www.campo7.com/hui216/review.html>
- Office hours
- Assignments

# 6.1 More on the foundational myths of the Romans

- Violence and justice
- War and politics, diplomacy
- Superiority
- Assimilation
- The process of military expansion and the development of a cultural identity

## 6.2 The relevance of Roman civilization

- What remains of that civilization (physical evidence)
  - Entire cities (Pompeii, Herculaneum)
    - Covered by volcanic ashes during the 79 CE eruption of mount Vesuvius, excavated in modern times
  - Roman buildings or their ruins
  - Archeological sites
  - City plans, streets and roads
    - Sometimes entire neighborhoods in Italy are still organized around the subdivision of the areas and the system of streets and open spaces originally planned by the Romans
  - Museum collections and private collections

## 6.2 Pompei

- Pompeii or Pompei?
  - The name of the city in the original Latin language was Pompeii, the name of the city in Italian is Pompei
- *NYT* December 27, 2001: "Pompeii's Erotic Frescoes Awake" By Melinda Henneberger
  - Fifteen years ago Luciana Jacobelli, a young Italian archaeologist tunneling just outside the old city walls here, discovered an astonishing series of erotic frescoes in an ancient thermal bath
  - More stunning than the explicit pictures themselves, she said, was the condition of the more than 2,000-year-old structure, still adorned with elaborate mosaics, a remarkably intact stucco ceiling and even an indoor waterfall
  - The eight surviving frescoes, painted in vivid gold, green and a red the color of dried blood, show graphic scenes of various sex acts

## 6.2 "Pompeii's Erotic Frescoes Awake" By Melinda Henneberger (*NYT*, 2001)

- Prof. Pietro Giovanni Guzzo, who oversees the archaeological ruins of Pompeii, says that the frescoes were advertisements for sexual services available on the upper floor of the baths. Dr. Jacobelli vehemently disagrees, maintaining that they were meant to be amusing rather than arousing
- Though the first excavations here began in the 1950's, "when we started in 1985, all you could see was the top floor," the floor above the baths. "Everything else was totally covered with dirt." She pointed out the spot where she first crawled into the baths through the roof, "like a mouse," after digging through layers of volcanic rock and ash.
- The excavations of Pompeii, which was destroyed when Mount Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79, predate the American Revolution and are continuing
- ... in the years since Dr. Jacobelli first saw the bathhouse, much has already been lost, like frescoes of gladiators that have completely faded away.

## 6.2 "Pompeii's Erotic Frescoes Awake" By Melinda Henneberger (*NYT*, 2001)

- Beyond the changing room was the *frigidarium*, or cold-water pool, where at one end, bathers could swim under a waterfall covered with a deep blue mosaic of Mars, the god of war.
- The walls there are covered with frescoes of whimsical scenes set on the Nile, full of strange sea creatures and crocodiles, and these images were reflected in the pool in a way meant to give bathers the illusion of swimming among the fantastic fish.
- Beyond that are the hot rooms, each a little warmer than the last: the *tepidarium*, the *laconium* and the *calidarium*, where three huge windows would at that time have offered a view of the Bay of Naples a mile away before layers of volcanic rock got in the way.
- In the back is a surprisingly modern-looking outdoor swimming pool surrounded by cypress trees. It had been heated by fires from a furnace, then newfangled, under the pool, tended by slaves who were known as *fornacatores*. (The word derives from "fornax," Latin for "furnace" and also the root for "fornix," which is Latin for "brothel.")

## 6.3 What remains of Roman civilization (cultural evidence)

- Neoclassic architecture
  - American examples of neoclassic architecture
- Documents and texts
  - Roman and Greek documents and texts were carefully preserved and painstakingly copied by hand by Christian monks during the Middle Ages
- The language
  - Neo-Latin languages: Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, and others
  - Latin is still used in official documents of the Catholic Church, and for long time was the language of the law and of diplomacy in Europe; Italian Universities, especially in fields such as philosophy and medicine, used Latin for classes and exams well into the 19th century

## 6.3 The Calendar

- *January* derives from the Roman god Janus, whose name is connected to the stem of the word *janua* (=door, cf. "janitor")
  - Janus was the god that Romans offered sacrifices to whenever they began something important (for example war, peace), in their public or private life
- *March* derives from the Roman god Mars, the god of war
- *July* derives from the name of the famous Julius Caesar
- *August* derives from Augustus, the title used to honor the first emperor and many of the emperors after him

## 6.3 The Calendar

- *September* derives from the Roman numeral *septem* [=7]
- *October* from *octo* [=8]
- *November* from *novem* [=9]
- *December* from *decem* [=10]
  - The Romans moved from an original 10 month system to 12 lunar months
- In Venice, Florence and many others Italian cities, in the past, the year started in March
  - March happened to be also the month of the conception of Jesus, after it was decided that his birth be celebrated close to the winter solstice and to the period when the Romans celebrated their Saturnalia

## 6.4 Roman law (notes from a lecture given in 2002 by Professor Marcello Saija, University of Messina)

- All archaic societies produced rules of behavior that regulated various aspects of social life.
- Often, though, these rules were not separated from religious imperatives.
- The ancient Greeks and the Romans, for the first time in human history, established a system of laws in which social rules were separated from religious imperatives.
- The Romans were well aware of the relevance of this separation, and expressed this concept with the saying:
  - [1] *Ubi societas, ibi ius.* [2] *Ubi ius, ibi societas.*
  - [=Where society exists, there is law. Where laws exist, there is society.]
- Every time social relationships are established in the form of a community, no matter how small, men feel the need to create rules that support the organization and the development of that society.

## 6.4 Roman Law: a secular state (Saija)

- This doesn't mean that Roman society was not religious. But Romans believed in the separation of state and religion. In other words, the Roman state was one of the first expressions of the idea of a secular state. In order to reinforce this concept, the Romans had another statement that was often used to define the nature of law:
  - *Ex facto oritur ius.*
  - [=Laws originate from the facts.]
- It means that laws are not imposed by religion or by morality. Laws emerge from human experience; they accompany and support the development of human interactions.

## 6.4 Roman Law: written laws, precedents, the discretion of judges (Saija)

- Initially Roman judges did not have written laws. In order to administer justice, they had to make reference to the ideals of justice and equity that were reflected in social practices and customs. They took into consideration norms and practices of their community as they were related by the elders.
- Naturally there were times when judges could not find an appropriate reference for their judgment. In those instances the praetors resorted to their own personal interpretation of justice. Romans in those cases used the expression *aequitas bursalis* [= justice from the pocket], to signify that judges had to exercise discretion in their decision.
- Later, during the so-called second age of judicial activities, traditions, social practices and oral culture were supplemented and replaced by a more specific judicial culture, dictated by the practice of professional judges.

## 6.4 Roman Law: judges and jurists (Saija)

- During the next age the administration of justice became the responsibility not only of judges but also of jurists.
- Jurists were scholars who studied the rulings and the decisions of the judges and tried to find consistency and clear principles in the law. Jurists solved contradictions that existed in past rulings and, most importantly, they worked on the creation of a juridical science, where clearly enunciated general principles could be applied to many similar cases.
- From time to time, jurists organized and collected various rules that referred to a specific area of the law. Examples of those collections are the *Lex Cornelia de Iniuriis* (81 BCE) or the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, produced under the emperor Augustus, which regulated marriages. Jurists also produced commentaries to explain the details and to indicate the correct interpretation of those rules.

## 6.4 Roman Law: law and society (Saija)

- Throughout the centuries the power of the scholars of law kept growing, while the relevance of social practices and human experience diminished.
  - Judges came to rely primarily on the theories, the interpretations and the recommendations of jurists.
- This situation introduced an element of conflict between social life and the theoretical discussions on justice.
- This conflict will become a constant within the history of Europe. The idea of justice, which, at first, had been the expression of a whole society, of its changing cultures and customs, became the domain of an elite of scholars and high-ranking public officers.

## 6.4 Roman Law: public and private law (Saija)

- The most important contribution made by Roman jurists
  - They introduced the most significant theoretical distinction within the system of laws, the distinction between public and private law.
  - Ulpianus, a famous Roman jurist, supported the separation of the rules pertaining individuals and their private activities or relations, and the rules regarding public affairs, the administration of the state and the use of power and authority by the state.
  - This distinction, further refined and expanded, constituted the foundation of constitutional law, which also started during the Roman era.

## 6.4 Roman Law: Justinian (Saija)

- What happened to the laws and procedures put in place by the Romans when the Western Roman empire came to an end?
  - In Italy Roman laws were replaced by more primitive rules, imposed by barbarian governments.
  - In the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, an emperor of the 6th century, Justinian, ordered the best jurists of his time to collect Roman laws, rulings and commentaries from the past to the present, and assigned them the tasks of reducing the number of laws and reorganizing the entire collection into a more coherent and manageable system.
  - It is because of this reorganization that Roman Law survived the fall of the Roman Empire and was known, studied and used again during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

## 6.5 The American Founding Fathers and Rome (notes by Monica Williams)

- John Adams graduated from Harvard, while Thomas Jefferson attended William and Mary, and James Madison graduated from Princeton
  - At that time most of the textbooks were written in Latin and that language was used on many academic occasions
  - They read Polybius' *History of Rome*
- The importance of the classics to the thinking of these men is well summed up by Adams
  - "I should as soon think of closing all my window shutters , to enable me to see, as of banishing the Classics"
- Two areas reflect the influence of the classics in the thinking of the Founding Fathers
  - the structure of their new nation's government
  - the choice of architecture style in its public buildings

## 6.5 The US as the new Rome (Monica Williams)

- They saw their nation as "the new Rome"
- Basic concepts such as three part system of government, veto power, and the advisory capacity of the Senate find their roots in the Roman rule
  - <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/classics/documents/RepGov.html>
  - <http://www.house.gov/Constitution/Constitution.html>
- Many of the new nation's public buildings were designed following Roman models
  - Thomas Jefferson, who was an architect, played a key role
  - At the end of colonial time the neoclassical style was very popular in Europe
  - The eighteenth century work at Pompeii and Herculaneum spurred the new interest in Roman architecture

## 6.6 The Founding Fathers and Rome: Palladio, Jefferson in France (Monica Williams)

- This interest, combined with British enthusiasm for the Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio (<http://www.boglewood.com/palladio/home.html>) created a new classicism characterized by refinement, symmetry and proportion
- Thomas Jefferson was ambassador to France in the 1780s and made a journey to Nimes, where he saw the [Maison Carrée](#), a classic Roman temple of 16 BCE that reflected the [Temple of Saturn in the Roman Forum](#)
- This building inspired his design, done in collaboration with French architect Charles Louis Clerriseau, for the [capitol of Virginia](#) (1785-1789)

## 6.6 The Founding Fathers and Rome: the US Capitol (Monica Williams)

- Neoclassical design is seen in Washington DC and in other areas of the United States
- The US Capitol presents an excellent example of neoclassical influence
  - Its name "capitol" reflects the Roman Capitoline hill
  - Among plans for the building, the one submitted by Jefferson was modeled on the Pantheon in Rome
- Jefferson gave instruction to Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the designer of the capital city, "whenever it is possible to prepare plans for the Capitol I should prefer the adoption of some model of antiquity"
- The winning design by William Thorton (1792) reflects those instructions

## 6.6 The Founding Fathers and Rome: the US Capitol, George Washington (Monica Williams)

- Within the capitol building, Benjamin Latrobe, Surveyor of Public Buildings, adopted classical columns for the new republic
- In the Senate wing the columns' capitels are adorned with the new nation's agricultural products -- tobacco and corn
- George Washington was the incarnation of the new nation. In neo-classical sculpture, Houdon (1788) compares Washington to Cincinnatus, the Roman farmer who gave up the dictatorship to return to his fields
  - <http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Autumn03/houdon.cfm>

## 6.6 Neoclassical architecture in the US (Monica Williams)

- Outside of Washington DC excellent examples of neo-classical architecture exist at the University of Virginia (1816-1826), whose library, designed by Thomas Jefferson, is modeled on the Pantheon
  - <http://www.cr.nps.gov/worldheritage/jeff.htm>
- The Roman Catholic [cathedral of Baltimore](#) (1804-1821), designed by Latrobe (who worked on the Capitol), presents an entrance that is reminiscent of a Roman temple portico

# 6.6 Neoclassical architecture in the US (Monica Williams)

- In the late 19th century, the architecture firm of McKim, Mead, and White stressed classical designs
  - They used classical style in large American cities as if they were "the Rome of the Ceasars" (Craven, 293)
  - Their Washington Square Arch (1895), in NYC, recalls the [Arch of Constantine](#)
  - Their huge design for New York's Pennsylvania Station (1910) was modeled on the Baths of Caracalla
    - [http://www.architectureweek.com/2003/0820/building\\_3-1.html](http://www.architectureweek.com/2003/0820/building_3-1.html)
    - <http://www.trainweb.org/rshs/VD%20-%20Penn%20Station%202.htm>
    - [http://itsa.ucsf.edu/~snlrc/encyclopaedia\\_romana/romanurbs/bat\\_hscaracalla.html](http://itsa.ucsf.edu/~snlrc/encyclopaedia_romana/romanurbs/bat_hscaracalla.html)

## 6.6 Modern examples of neoclassical architecture in Washington DC

- The Supreme Court Building is an example of academic classicism. It was designed by Cass Gilbert (1935)
- National Portrait Gallery, designed by Elliot, Mills, Clark *et al.* (1836-1867)
  - <http://www.150.si.edu/sibuild/nmaa.htm>
- The Federal Trade Commission, designed by Bennett, Parsons, and Frost (1937)
- The National Gallery (1937-41), designed by John Russell Pope
- Union Station

# 6.6 Neoclassical architecture in Washington DC



## 6.6 Neoclassical architecture in NYC

- Federal Hall (1834-42)
  - <http://photo.itc.nps.gov/storage/images/feha/feha-Full.00002.html>
- The High bridge over the Harlem River (completed in 1848), multi-arched bridge modeled after a Roman aqueduct
  - It carried water to the city from the Croton Reservoir in Westchester county
  - [http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub\\_your\\_park/high\\_bridge/html/highbridge.html](http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_your_park/high_bridge/html/highbridge.html)

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## 6.7 *The New York Times*, Feb. 16, 1997, "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival" By GARRY WILLS

- The canon -- that body of Western thought and art that is supposed to be at the core of all our education -- is succumbing to attack or neglect, is opposed as repressive or dismissed as irrelevant. If so, then the ancient Greek and Roman cultures, "the classics" par excellence, the core of the old canon for so much of Western history, should be the least retrievable part of the "authorized" past.
- Which prompts a question. If the classics are a sinking ship, why are so many people beating their way (often against stiff opposition) to clamber on board?
- -- Black studies have taken up the thesis of Martin Bernal's "Black Athena," which claims African origins for ancient Greek civilization. The debate over this claim is less interesting than the fact that the way to establish historic credentials is still by association with the canon...

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": women studies

- -- Women's studies, one might think, could not get much from the male-oriented world of Greek and Roman wars, politics and athletics. But the strong women of Attic drama (Helen, Antigone, Medea, Clytemnestra, Electra) and of Roman history (Antonia Augusta, Agrippina, Justina) reveal tensions and a lack of confidence in the patriarchal structure, tensions explored by feminist scholars who are in the vanguard of classical studies (Nicole Loraux, Helene Foley, Froma Zeitlin, Deborah Lyons and others).
- ...These are not just incremental developments in ongoing scholarship, but radical, even wrenching, departures from what went before. In fact they are bitterly resented and resisted by some people. Mary Lefkowitz has organized a demolition squad to pulverize the many errors in Bernal's "Black Athena" ...

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": multiculturalizing the canon

- Quieter voices in the profession have deplored the "multiculturalizing" of the canon. For these guardians of an older tradition, making the classics "relevant" destroys their whole purpose, which is to resist the winds of change and offer a timeless ideal all later ages can aspire toward.
- This concept of a serene core of cultural values at the center of Western civilization is entirely false. After the large-scale disappearance or dilution of classical literature in the Middle Ages, the classics returned, in several stages, as a challenge to the canon of the time.
- ...Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas made the newly-translated Aristotle texts "relevant" to Christian thinking, despite rejection of them as uncanonical in centers of orthodoxy like the University of Paris.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": subversive classics

- The classics returned again as an exotic challenge in the 15th century, when a flood of Greek manuscripts from Byzantium intensified the Italian Renaissance.
- The classics were subversive, not only of scholastic orthodoxy this time, but of a whole canon of cultural biases and tastes (Gothic art and poetry and Biblical allegory).
- It was the contemporarily useful things that were revered -- rhetoric (Cicero) by Petrarch, textual authenticity by Erasmus, republicanism (Livy) by Machiavelli, historical skepticism (Tacitus) by Aretino, satire (Lucian) by Rabelais. For these men the classics were tools, even weapons, to use against the medieval order and the church, against the authorized creeds of the time.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": selective classicism

- In the 18th-century Enlightenment, the classics were at last substituted for an entire older order. They would now arbitrate taste, regulate education, set standards of thought and action. But even this universal ideal was based on a partial reading of the classics. Rome was preferred, Greece comparatively neglected, and Athens entirely reprobated (as the model of "mobocratic" unruliness).
- A century later, in the Romantic period, Athens rose up as an intruder into the Roman canon. Even the Greek texts that had been taught in Enlightenment schools acquired a new and "adversary" meaning. Homer, for instance, was now seen as a primitive bard...

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": "everything old is new again"

- These periods of classical revival are the times when (to quote the song) "everything old is new again."
- But our current idealizers of the canon would consider them all "takeovers" -- not suitably humble and submissive toward the classics, but recasting them to suit new needs and tastes.
- All forms of classicism are raids upon what is usable from a vast body of work; the "classics" aren't a single unified thing. We are talking of a corpus in many dialects of Greek stretching from the prehistoric elements in Homer to the fall of Byzantium.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative...": omissions in the notion of a "classical age"

- Classical Latin literature is not so long-lived as Greek; but it, too, is rich with centuries of varied use, from Plautus in the third century B.C. to Ausonius in the fourth century A.D.
- The older classicism omitted much of this complex history, or it jumbled eras together in a non-existent "classical age," one lacking major genres (e.g., the Greek novel) and many large aspects of both Greek and Roman life, slavery and homosexuality among them. The last two subjects took up great space in classical thought and literature, but they were played down, omitted, even denied by classical educators in the last century. Werner Jaeger's three-volume work on Greek culture, "Paideia," did not even mention slavery.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative...": multiculturalism in the *Aeneid*

- One of the elements leading to the current renewal of the classics was work done on slavery by Marxist historians of the classics like G. E. M. de Ste. Croix and Moses Finley. They brought back the realities of ancient life in a new way.
- Another element is precisely an emphasis on multiculturalism. Robert Kaster, the current president of the American Philological Association, points out that Vergil's "Aeneid" very consciously weaves different cultures into the foundation of Rome: The Greeks who brought their culture to Latium, the Latins and Sabines already there, the Etruscans -- all are presented as formative elements in the future Rome.
- In fact, one reason for the stability of the Roman Empire, embracing so many different cultures, was its openness to other peoples -- an openness that is made the secret of the Romans' own origins in Vergil's epic.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": Vergil; Black Athena

- This aspect of Vergil's work was neglected because of the narrowness of the 19th-century classical canon. Vergil was endlessly compared with Homer, whose epics were formed eight centuries before the "Aeneid" ...
- ...The one unquestionably good result of Bernal's claims about a black Athena is that he revealed the prejudices of the old canonists who wanted to make Greece an entirely European phenomenon. Those answering Bernal have to admit that Egypt had a profound influence on early Greece (but question how far Egyptians can be considered blacks). More important, they acknowledge the effect of Near Eastern semitic cultures, which gave Greece its alphabet and many of its foundational myths. The downplaying of this influence was the real scandal of 19th-century classicism. Scholars... were anti-Semitic in their Eurocentric rejection of the Orient.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative...": Eurocentrism, multiculturalism; "our classics"

- Eurocentrism, when it was embedded in the study of the classics, created a false picture of the classics themselves.
- Multiculturalism is now breaking open that deception. We learn that "the West" is an admittedly brilliant derivative of the East. Semites created the stories the Greeks revered in Homer -- just as Jewish scholars brought Aristotle back to the West from Islam in the Middle Ages.
- Multiculturalism, far from being a challenge to the classics, is precisely what is reviving them. If there is a resurgence of interest in the classics, it is because we are making them our classics -- as the Renaissances of the 12th and 15th centuries did, as the Enlightenment and the romantic period did.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": classics that look like us

- But do we want the classics to be like Clinton's first cabinet and "look like America?" Whether we want to or not, that is the only way the classics have ever been revived. The classics are not some magic wand that touches us and transmutes us. We revive them only when we rethink them as a way of rethinking ourselves.
- This need for relevance has led to partiality and exaggeration in all classical revivals. The Enlightenment Homer looked a lot like Alexander Pope, as the romantic period's looked like Ossian. In the Renaissance, Erasmus attacked the excesses in the cult of Cicero. But each era found genuine treasures in its raid on the jumble of good things bequeathed us by ancient Greece and Rome.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": the study of Latin

- Old style canonists may still wonder how we can talk about a revival of the classics when Latin has not been reinstalled in the schools as the basis for our education. People who take that position forget three things:
- First, Latin was widely studied in our schools at the very time when the classics went into decline. Children correcting their gerunds are not going to revive the classics, or even profit from a revival, just because they have had a year or two of Latin. The defenders of the canon who denounced relevance and mere utility were forced to make spurious claims of utility for the old methods of teaching Latin. They said it was a good way to learn English grammar. This is like saying that bicycle repair helps you understand computers.

## 6.7 "There's Nothing Conservative About the Classics' Revival": classics in translation

- Second, when revivals have occurred in the past, the mass of people were not educated in the original languages....
- Third, all classical revivals have relied heavily on translation. The Greek and Arabic sources were translated into medieval Latin for the 12th-century Renaissance. Classical Greek was translated into Latin during the 15th-century Renaissance -- and then into the vernaculars.
- ...The only way we get close enough to understand this is by rethinking the classics and ourselves, as multiculturalists have been forcing us to do. The ancient texts have become eerily modern in what they have to say about power relationships between men and women, gay men and war, superiors and subordinates. They have made Sappho our contemporary. They are rewriting the history of the novel. They raise again the issues of empire, democracy, alliances.

## 6.8 The classics in the Italian curriculum

- In the case of Italian students, traditionally there has been an abundance of opportunities to learn about Roman history and culture in their curricula
  - broad reforms of the Italian school system have been approved in 2002 and 2005
- Following a reform that was realized during fascism under the direction of philosopher Giovanni Gentile, Italians studied Roman history, literature and Latin language at different stages of their curriculum
  - in primary schools (Roman history and, generically, the culture of the Romans)
  - middle schools (Greek and Roman history, and, until a few years ago, basic Latin)
  - high schools (Roman history, and depending on the kind of high school, also Latin, or Latin and Greek)

## 6.8 The classics in the Italian curriculum

- Then, of course, if one chooses a humanities major, Latin will be studied at the university level too, the number of classes of Latin depending on whether that person would be required to teach it or not, and at what level
- Knowing about the exploitation of Roman culture by the fascist propaganda, it seems understandable that the fascist government would support such a reform
  - not that the contents of the reform were in and of themselves fascist: in fact the reform survived virtually intact after the collapse of fascism and the political and institutional changes of postwar Italy
  - the intellectual and politician who had promoted and written much of that reform, Giovanni Gentile, a real erudite and a great philosopher, ended up murdered by partisans at the end of the war, but it was mostly because of his visibility as a public figure, and because he was an easy target, traveling with no escort, not because he had been one of the strongest supporters of the regime

# 6.9 Classical architecture in Italy: barbarians and Barberinis

- I think it is important to remember that classic architecture was not always admired and respected in the past. For example, not only were large sections of the Coliseum taken down and the material reused in the construction of other buildings in Rome: many other Roman monuments suffered a similar fate.
- This practice became so common that one saying was created to define it, and it has survived to this day. It is in Latin and it says: "Quod non fecerunt barbari fecerunt Barberini" (=what the barbarians were not able to do, the Barberinis accomplished).
  - The sarcastic proverb makes reference to a 16th-century Pope, who took the name of Urbano VIII and whose family name was Barberini. According to rumors dating back to that time, it was the Pope's own doctor, Giulio Mancini, who came up with that stinging remark, and the action that caused such a reprise was the removal of the bronze plating from the portico of the Pantheon.

## 6.9 Classical art in Italy: the vanishing of bronze statues

- Writer and politician Cassiodorus, who lived during the sixth century of the common era, maintains that during his time there were still roughly 4000 statues inside the city of Rome, many of them (the majority) in bronze.
- After the collapse of the Roman Empire it became more difficult and more expensive to produce metal alloys, and therefore one after the other most of those statues were melted and their bronze reused.
  - Bronze statues and the bronze platings of temples and other buildings were melted and reused not to create other works of art but often for more mundane purposes; for example during the Renaissance Roman bronze was recast with other metals to make cannons (given the primitive technology applied in the fabrication of weapons at that time, the barrels and the chambers of cannons were very thick, to compensate for the lack of scientific calculations, to prevent the explosion of the cannon when it fired: therefore a lot of metal, even more than necessary, was employed). Because of the military crisis that faced the Italian states in the early 1500s, the respect for Roman civilization and for its vestiges was put aside and the needs of defense became an indisputable priority. As a result, many people today often have the erroneous impression that all or most statues of antiquity were made of marble or stone, like those that they see in museums or in the piazzas.

## 6.9 Classical art in Italy: Marcus Aurelius

- The most famous surviving bronze statue in the city of Rome is the statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, on Rome's Campidoglio, the original Capitoline hill
  - you can see pictures at this address, [http://sights.seindal.dk/sight/186\\_Equestrian\\_Statue\\_of\\_Marcus\\_Aurelius.html](http://sights.seindal.dk/sight/186_Equestrian_Statue_of_Marcus_Aurelius.html)
- But recent studies conducted to prepare the last restoration of that statue have ascertained that even the Emperor's statue had its share of rough times through the centuries
  - it probably fell (or was pushed down) during the Roman era, and later on, probably during the sack of Rome of 1527 (conducted by the troops of German Emperor Charles V), it was shot at, and the holes of the bullets, in the heads of the Emperor and of the horse, were covered with patches

## 6.9 Classical art in Italy: Master Gregory

- A few years ago Italian scholar Chiara Frugoni wrote an interesting article in Italian on foreign pilgrims visiting Rome during the 12th and the 13th century.
- In the surviving manuscripts of that period one can find references to the city of Rome as "a total ruin" which nonetheless can still manifest its pristine greatness.
- In a "guide" written by an English pilgrim by the name of Gregory, the most interesting thing from the cultural standpoint is that the attention of that travel writer is taken almost exclusively by the Roman ruins and monuments, rather than by Christian sites.
- In fact Master Gregory complains vehemently about the neglect in which many important Roman monuments are left, and he also complains about the practice of taking marble, stone and metals from the antique Roman buildings.

## 6.9 Classical art in Italy: Master Gregory visits Rome

- Only three churches are mentioned in his travelogue (3!), and few remarks are devoted to medieval Rome, to its towers and castle-like palaces. What really moves Gregory is the spectacle of Imperial Rome: the triumphal arches, the obelisks, the pyramids, the sculpted columns (like Trajan's column: <http://cheiron.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~trajan/>).
- And he also comment on the few splendid bronze statues that still survived amidst the ruins, together with the marble statues that have lived to our time.
- Among the marble statues, Gregory is intrigued by a statue of Venus, naked, and still showing traces of the original colors (almost all statues were painted during antiquity), for example painted red on her cheeks.

## 6.9 Classical art in Italy: Master Gregory and Venus

- He finds that Venus has been represented with powerful realism, and he admits to walking more than a mile from his inn, for three times, to see it, such was his fascination with it.
  - This particular statue of Venus is probably the one that you can admire today inside the Musei Capitolini in Rome:  
<http://www.museicapitolini.org/index1.htm>.
- Many pages are spent to describe the bronze statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Many of his contemporaries, Gregory writes, believed that it was the statue of the Emperor Constantine, who had converted to Christian religion (a belief that may have helped protect that statue from destruction).
  - A recent English edition of the manuscript is the following:  
*Gregorius, Magister. [Mirabilia Romae] The marvels of Rome.*  
Translated with an introduction and commentary by John Osborne.  
Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987.