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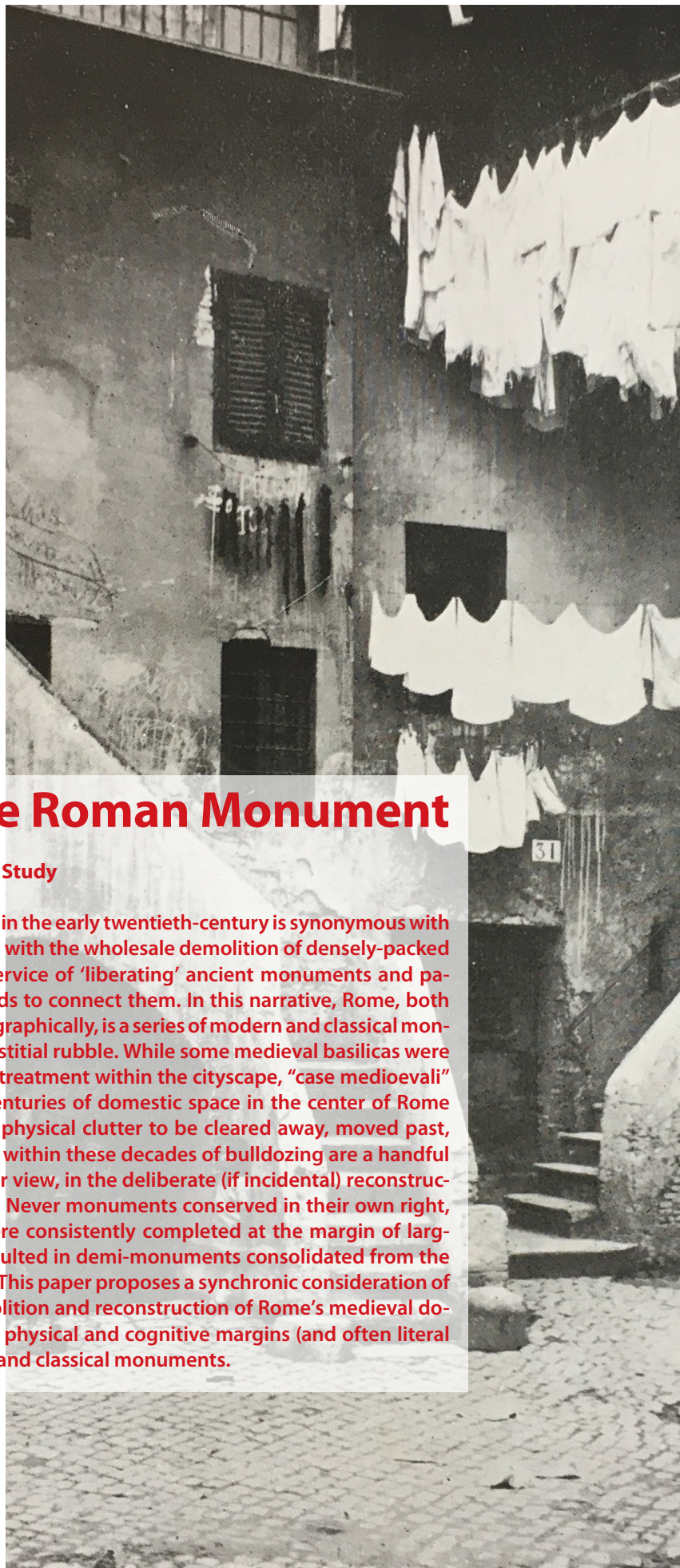
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Behind the Roman Monument

Case Medioevali as Case Study

The topography of Rome in the early twentieth-century is synonymous with looking straight forward, with the wholesale demolition of densely-packed neighborhoods at the service of 'liberating' ancient monuments and paving wide new boulevards to connect them. In this narrative, Rome, both chronologically and geographically, is a series of modern and classical monuments clogged by interstitial rubble. While some medieval basilicas were given similar 'liberation' treatment within the cityscape, "case medioevali" and their accretion of centuries of domestic space in the center of Rome were seen as visual and physical clutter to be cleared away, moved past, and forgotten. However, within these decades of bulldozing are a handful of case studies in the rear view, in the deliberate (if incidental) reconstruction of medieval houses. Never monuments conserved in their own right, these case medioevali were consistently completed at the margin of larger projects and often resulted in demi-monuments consolidated from the aforementioned rubble. This paper proposes a synchronic consideration of the process, of the demolition and reconstruction of Rome's medieval domestic landscape on the physical and cognitive margins (and often literal back side) of its modern and classical monuments.

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Introduction: Time and Space of Rome

During his inaugural year as the first director of the Museo di Roma in 1930, Antonio Muñoz exhibited Ettore Roesler-Franz's *Roma Sparita* water-color series from the last decades of the nineteenth-century.¹ In the introduction to the exhibition publication, Muñoz frames a changing Rome with equal parts regret and pragmatism, acknowledging some unhappiness with the clearing of the Capitoline Hill and the new "monotonous" river embankments, but nonetheless hailing them as necessary for the life of the growing city.² In the same breath he decries a poor restoration of the medieval Casa degli Anguillara and scolds the lack of appreciation that Romans have for both the recovery of ancient masterpieces and the building of monumental new structures.³ He admits to missing a historic Rome, but distinguishes himself from the "cittadini" – the Romans he claims only regret the lost sites of their own youth, clinging to the past with jealous, myopic nostalgia.⁴

Muñoz not only founded the Museo di Roma – an institution originally established for the collection and display of "local color" as it was actively removed from the living landscape⁵ – but also, as the inspector general of Governatorato's Fine Arts and Antiquities administration from 1929 onward, was the chief architect of a new urban landscape shaped according to Fascist priorities.⁶ The topography of Rome in the early twentieth-century, for which Muñoz was largely responsible, is synonymous with looking straight forward, with the wholesale demolition of densely-packed neighborhoods in the service of "liberating" ancient monuments and paving wide new boulevards to connect them.

In this narrative, Rome, both chronologically and geographically, is a series of enduring imperial monuments and modern administrative buildings clogged by interstitial rubble. This vision of Rome in three parts – ancient, modern, and *in-between* – follows the framing of Fascist (anti)historical time and space as articulated by historian Joshua Arthurs:

Roma nuova, the "new" Rome redeemed and remade by Fascism; Roma antica, the Rome of classical antiquity, and even more specifically the city at the apex of its development during the imperial period; and Roma vecchia, "old Rome," comprising all aspects of the city that dated from the fall of the empire to the advent of Mussolini's regime, and encompassing both papal and Liberal eras.⁷

In the *Case Medioevali* section of his *Roma Sparita* catalogue, Muñoz quotes an unnamed connoisseur of Roman architecture as describing "one of the prettiest medieval houses" that was depicted by Roesler-Franz as shining "like a precious stone in the midst of the ugliness and squalor of a small street in the Ghetto."⁸ Regardless of type or time period, everything worth mentioning is described as trapped among a useless, choking rubble of time, dirt, and sentimentality. Especially important to the current project of considering medieval houses in this context is the extent to which *Roma vecchia*, "loosely conceived as running from the demise of the ancient Empire to the March on Rome in 1922," was a conveniently flexible catch-all for anything deemed disposable – whether unimportant or embarrassing – by the regime.⁹ Any embodiment of a Fascist *rear view* was uniquely single-minded, and sought to eliminate all nuance or palimpsest implied in such a concept.

With the physical construction of *Roma nuova* alongside the isolation and monumentalization of sites from *Roma antica*, looking back is synonymous with looking forward, a cognitive dissonance that brings an imagined ancient Rome into the modern present while banishing any lingering present-day aspects of *Roma vecchia* to the vanished past. This interplay is evident again and again in how Muñoz describes the changing physical city throughout the *Roma Sparita* catalogue: "Each stroke of the pickaxe resounded painfully in the souls of the faithful of old Rome [*della vecchia Roma*]; the lucky recovery of many ancient masterpieces seen while digging the foundations of new buildings [...] were not enough to console those who preferred picturesque papal Rome [...]."¹⁰

This particular construction of history, the union of *Roma antica* and *Roma nuova* at the exclusion of everything in between, was responsible for the production of an urban landscape under similar terms. Arthurs describes in detail how these two aspirational aspects of the capital – Rome as idea and Rome as physical place – worked to reinforce themselves in the Fascist era.¹¹ This paper will explore a specific aspect of its aftermath, namely, the fact that fascism itself lies in the rear view between us and medieval domestic space in Rome. In order to view many *case medioevali* today we have to look through and behind the priorities of fascism: archaeological digs, monument liberations, and new building construction. With the treatment of medieval domestic space at the forefront, the present paper takes up how the (anti)historical rear view that guided city planners under the regime was spatialized in the city fabric, beyond the familiar *sven-*

tramento of palimpsest neighborhoods and the truism of twentieth-century over-tidying in restoration projects.¹²

Medieval Rome was built over centuries from, among, against, inside, and around surviving monumental structures from antiquity, a physical reality that resulted in wholesale demolition of medieval structures as ancient sites were “liberated.” The monumentalization of ancient buildings necessitated removing the rear view to facilitate a view in-the-round; the point of isolated or liberated monuments is precisely that they have no back, that they are impressively and imposingly visible from all angles, from all sides. The physical accumulations of time had to be stripped away to ensure that imperial monuments could “loom in necessary solitude.”¹³ In many ways this is the central story and reality of medieval domestic space in Rome: of being removed at the service of clearing visual space for other priorities. (fig. 1)



LE CASUPOLE CHE NASCONDEVANO IL FORO DI CESARE.



IL FORO DI CESARE LIBERATO.

Fig. 1. Page from the magazine *Emporium* showing “the hovels that were hiding the Forum of Caesar” (above) and “The Forum of Caesar liberated” (below). Source: Antonio Muñoz: “La Roma di Mussolini.” In: *Emporium* 78 (1933). Courtesy Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana, Vicenza.

Moreover, medieval homes that do survive bear the same fascist imprint as the ancient theaters and temples that they were detached from: namely, an isolation and monumentalization through the production of a kind of polished medieval in-the-round, a reconstruction antithetical to its accumulative nature.¹⁴

In the interest of understanding how medieval Roman houses were transformed in the modern era, this paper uses Muñoz's 1930 exhibition and publication text as one chronological bookend, and looks back toward its subject of *Roma Sparita* as understood since Italian Unification in 1871, for its second. It is in this period of rapid modernization that first efforts toward acknowledging and restoring "minor architecture"¹⁵ were undertaken, hand in hand with an effort to clear the *casupole* (small dwellings, but more often hovels) that were "clinging like scabs" to ancient monuments and thoroughfares.¹⁶ A philosophical theory of restoration is hard to pin down in this period – paradoxically, medieval houses seem to represent both backwardness and the embodied history of a noble populace.¹⁷ It is not within the scope of this paper to account for the physical structures in detail or to make assessments of the restorations themselves, but it will instead focus on the broader patterns and concerns by which medieval dwellings survived on the margins of larger projects – whether archaeological excavations, monument liberations, or modern constructions – and were in turn remade in their image: isolated and monumental.

The following sections include: a condensed topographic and architectural account of housing in medieval Rome in order to provide context for the surviving *case medioevali*, as well as to demonstrate the false dichotomy between *Roma antica* and *Roma vecchia* through the extent to which the two were physically intertwined in the urban fabric. Introducing the *ottocento* and *novecento* case studies is a general overview of the conservation philosophy that developed in the new Italian state following its unification and the patterns by which restoration took place. Photographs, prints, and archi-

tectural renderings of medieval houses from before, during, and after reconstruction have been collected from contemporary publications including the *Roma Sparita* catalogue and the illustrated arts and culture magazine *Emporium*, and collated by individual site.¹⁸ The aim is not to give nuance to or elaborate on fascist ideology and its motivations but rather to focus on its resulting effect, and specifically the physical effect on surviving medieval dwellings as we view them today.

Domestic Space in Medieval Rome

The majority of medieval houses currently visible in Rome are, in Richard Krautheimer's words, "over-restored," and in many other ways misrepresentative of the city's domestic landscape in the fifth through fifteenth centuries: "they are of late date, hardly a one prior to the thirteenth century; they are solidly built and represent upper-class housing; and they stand in the *abitato*, often as row houses and deprived of the garden plots that formed an integral part of many of them far into the sixteenth century."¹⁹ Because this paper is focused on architectural restorations in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, the case studies discussed here fit these regrettable criteria as well. The overarching approach to interventions in this period also explains these criteria, given that most other examples have been destroyed or continue to rest behind more recent building phases. While sites taken up in this essay are drawn exclusively from the high middle ages, it is within the scope of this paper to outline what is known about housing in Rome throughout the medieval period, both to highlight the contrast in what remains extant today and to work against the aforementioned idea of an indistinguishable, monolithic *Roma vecchia*.

The topography of medieval housing in Rome can be thought of in three distinct, if over-simplified, stages: a period of consolidation and reuse of existing Roman houses during late antiquity, the development of a rural city center in and amongst Roman monuments until approximately 1000 AD, and then a period of increasing density and fortification, especially in the



Fig. 2, 3. Exterior staircases and amalgamated building structures found in the Arco degli Acetari off Via del Pellegrino. Source: Giulio Ferrari: "Lazio." In: *L'architettura Rusticana*. Milano 1925. Courtesy Biblioteca Civica di Padova (above). Photo: Lidija Simleska, 2020 (below).

Campus Martius area, until the Papal reforms of the early fifteenth century.²⁰ First, during the fourth through sixth centuries, the relocation of the Roman aristocracy to Ravenna following an extended period of plagues and conflict resulted in extreme depopulation, the record of which can be seen in a housing glut and resulting adaptation in the use of both public and domestic structures.²¹ One type of shift in building use was the physical expansion of a *domus* (house) through the purchase of an adjacent *insula* (apartment building) due to the decreased demand for multi-unit housing, an early example of which can be seen in the archaeological site under Santi Giovanni e Paolo on the Caelian Hill.²²

Throughout the medieval period and as early as the fourth century, churches in both the *abitato* and *disabitato* acted as landlords and housing nuclei with

surrounding parishes supplying rent.²³ Monastery complexes dotted the truly rural *disabitato* on the city's periphery and smaller farming compounds formed within what had been the ancient center, with vast paved marble forums quickly giving way to fertile fields once Rome's frequent flooding and its aftermath were unmitigated by a strong government administration.²⁴ These farming complexes as a whole were referred to as a *curtes* or *curtis*, and generally were comprised of a *domus solarata*, a two-story house with exterior staircase, in addition to as many as ten dwellings of the single-story *domus terrinea* type for persons who worked on the property.²⁵ Both types of housing would have had a packed earth floor, with only the *primo piano* (later the *piano nobile*, or noble floor) of the main house separated from the ground and working level of the farm or, in the case of urban row houses, the workshops and vendors at street level.²⁶ (figs. 2-3)

The dense buildings and narrow streets of the Campo Marzio are today commonly associated with the medieval period. But this area, the "northern rim of the *abitato*," also remained fairly rural until the early twelfth century: "Each house, one- or two-storied, thatched or roofed with shingles, has its courtyard in front, its own garden, and, more often than not, empty lots nearby."²⁷ Throughout the city, during the tenth century onward, even aristocratic homes were "an 'accumulation' of diverse elements – ancient halls and materials, a well, a courtyard – rather than a discrete, homogeneous structure."²⁸ In this and later centuries, the floor plans reflect their organic development, a product of slow accumulation of adjoining buildings and plots of land.²⁹ The vertical elements of medieval Rome – most visible today in the ubiquitous *campanili* (bell towers) and a few enormous fortified *torri* (towers) – are specific to this later period, beginning in the eleventh century. As the city grew vertically and more condensed, larger houses would often include open air space on the upper floor, with pitched roofs facing the street and a loggia that faced either the street or a back courtyard.³⁰ Today the majority of what remains are buildings in stone and *tufelli* or *blocchetti*



Fig. 4. A colonnaded portico now enclosed, across from the south end of Ponte Sant'Angelo, Via del Banco di Santo Spirito, 60 and 61, Rome. Photo: Lidija Simlesa, 2020.

di tufo – however quaint or rustic they may seem to modern eyes, they were mansions made from expensive building materials of the time.³¹ What is not visible today are the houses that would have been ubiquitous, the countless timber homes constructed with thatched roofs and other more readily available, more temporary materials.³²

Though some monumental vertical elements remain, like the *campanili* and fortified *torri* that are still visible from myriad vantage points, the smaller domestic structures, including those once owned by wealthy inhabitants, are now mostly hidden within the landscape. Many family towers now form part of a continuous street-front rather than being the tallest part of a building or garden complex, and the porticoes that would have lined most streets have since been walled-in to increase the availability of interior, private space.³³ (fig. 4)

Though it survives in some northern cities, this particular aspect of the medieval pedestrian experience has been entirely erased from the Roman landscape, with porticoes long since absorbed into the interior space of buildings. There is a greater variety of extant exterior staircases, another characteristic element of domestic architecture in Rome since at least the eighth century, to be found in smaller nearby Laziian cities. An image from Viterbo is included here to serve as visual reference in this general overview and

compilation, as well as a historiographic point of reference – the discrepancy between Rome and the smaller hill towns of wider Lazio in the availability of extant, accessible medieval structures has been noted consistently by historians of domestic architecture of the city since at least Muñoz's assessment in the 1930s.³⁴ (fig. 5)

Beyond ephemeral construction materials used, another reason so many medieval homes were erased has to do with their direct proximity to ancient monuments that early twentieth century city planners were eager to liberate. Throughout each of the aforementioned stages of urban development in the medieval period, the monumental structures of the ancient city provided building foundations and support walls for the changing needs of the populace, from the Forum of Trajan becoming a ninth-century farming complex to the *exedra* of the Theater of Balbus housing apartments and workshops.³⁵ Other ancient sites that are notable for their incorporation into housing are the Colosseum, the Stadium of Domitian (now Piazza Navona), the Theater of Pompey (now the hemicycle building cluster east of Campo dei Fiori) and, as will be discussed in more detail below, the Theater of Marcellus.³⁶

Due to the scale of these ancient monuments, they provided the underlying structure for something closer to a village than a single home, with indi-

Fig. 5. Photograph from the early twentieth century showcasing extant medieval domestic spaces in Viterbo, including the exterior staircases and porticoes that are less visible in Rome. Source: Giulio Ferrari: "Lazio." In: *L'architettura Rusticana*. Milano 1925. Courtesy Biblioteca Civica di Padova.



vidual vaulted spaces or *cryptae* often leased out to different tenants.³⁷ From the continued reuse of Roman domestic space for medieval housing to the adaptation of monumental architecture for use in all aspects of daily life, the seemingly disparate ideas of *Roma antica* and *Roma vecchia* that Fascist ideology deemed distinct and conflicting, are in fact intricately intertwined both conceptually and physically throughout the cityscape.

Restoring Medieval Dwellings in modern Rome

Medieval Revival and Historic Conservation in Italy

Domestic architecture aside, medieval restorations and revival elements in Rome were few and far between before the unification of Italy. Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, renovated in the middle of the century (1848-55), was an early example of ecclesiastical re-medievalizing that would pick up toward the end of the nineteenth century and continue into the twentieth: Giovanni Battista Giovenale's work on S. Maria in Cosmedin (1896-99) and Antonio Muñoz's work on S. Sabina (1914-19) being prime examples.³⁸ More widely known is the interest in a medieval, and specifically gothic, revival that was present in England by the 1750ies; growing prevalent there as well as in continental Europe throughout the nineteenth century, and accompanied by emerging philosophies of historic

preservation.³⁹ Architectural preservation societies were developed in England and France, and later on in Italy as well: "In 1890, an association was formed in Rome for the protection of historic buildings, *Associazione artistica fra i cultori di architettura*, following the model of the English SPAB (Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings) and the French *Amis des monuments* [...]."⁴⁰ Presented initially in 1883 and fine-tuned over the following decade, Italy's first preservation charter eventually articulated a middle ground between England's hands-off approach and the more stylistic or interpretative approach practiced in France.⁴¹

Case Medioevali: Ottocento

Before delving into case studies of the *case medioevali* shaped by twentieth-century projects in the vicinity of the Capitoline Hill, it is useful to visit two antecedent points of comparison from across the river and earlier decades: the Casa degli Anguillara in Piazza Belli and the Casa a Piazza di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. Both houses were restored in the last decade of the nineteenth century, 1892-1902 and 1892-1901 respectively and, like medieval domestic sites during the *Ventennio*, were completed not as standalone initiatives in their own right but in the margins of other projects.⁴² There was no clear period specialization for the scholars and architects working on these sites: the same architect that



ETTORE ROESLER-FRANZ, Casette medioevali a S. Cecilia.
(Acquarello nel Museo di Roma).



Tav. IX. — Casa del XIII secolo in piazza S. Cecilia, Roma.
(Ritiro e restauro dell'Arch. G. B. Giovenale).



Fig. 6, 7, 8. *Casette medioevali* at S. Cecilia. Source: Ettore Roesler-Franz/ Antonio Muñoz: *Roma Sparita*. Vol. 1. Roma 1931, Tav. X. Sala Barbo, Courtesy Biblioteca di archeologia e storia dell'arte (BiASA), Rome (above). Drawing for the restoration of the Case in Piazza di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere by G. B. Giovenale. Source: Giulio Ferrari: "Lazio." In: *L'architettura Rusticana*. Milano 1925. Courtesy Biblioteca Civica di Padova (bottom left). Case in Piazza di Santa Cecilia after restoration. Photo: Michal Lynn Shumate, 2020 (bottom right).

preserved a medieval house was often also designing new buildings in various styles for private and public use. By example, the reworking of the Casa degli Anguillara was carried out by Augusto Fallani (1842-1930), an architect who had previously worked on the neoclassical Palazzo degli Esposizioni building on Via Nazionale (1883) and would go on to design a neogothic residence near Porta Pia in 1902.⁴³

Rather than period specialization, it is the geographic link between medieval houses and larger nearby building or city planning projects that seems to have taken precedent; Muñoz expli-

citly connects the construction of the Tiber river embankments with Fallani's consolidation and reconstruction of the Anguillara complex (1892-1902).⁴⁴ Similarly, Giulio Ferrari's *L'architettura Rusticana*, a collection of plates and photographs from 1925, includes a rendering for the restoration of the Case in Piazza Santa Cecilia in Trastevere attributed to Giovanni Battista Giovenale (1849-1934), who conducted excavations and remodeling at the adjacent church of Santa Cecilia (1892-1901).⁴⁵ (figs. 6-8)

Further research would be needed to make definitive claims about exact

timelines and the cause and effect of conservation and reconstruction efforts around the turn of the twentieth century, but a general observation can be put forward here: extant medieval houses were most often preserved or reconstructed in conjunction with, or as a result of, modernization projects to which they were adjacent.

Case Medioevali: Novecento

Both archaeological excavations and city planning projects have taken place in Rome since at least the eighteenth century, and more intensely following Italian unification; before the twentieth-century Fascist concept of *Roma nuova* came the nineteenth-century Nationalist concept of *Roma capitale*.⁴⁶ For this reason the dramatic changes under the Fascist regime should not be understood as entirely novel or as existing in a vacuum, but rather as an extreme episode in a long continuum of attempts at modernization in Rome.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Fascist interventions (1922-43) were devastatingly extensive, with a “liturgy of demolition” that stood proudly in contrast to slower-moving, piece-meal projects under earlier, more bureaucratically or democratically restrained governments.⁴⁸

While there were a broad range of figures involved in the myriad building projects across the peninsula, Antonio Muñoz is primarily responsible for the transformation of Rome’s historic fabric under the regime. The first authoritative text on the “disembowelling” of the period is Antonio Cederna’s *Mussolini Urbanista: Lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del consenso* (1979), an unequivocally critical account of urban projects under Fascism, with particular disdain for Muñoz.⁴⁹ Calogero Bellanca’s more recent *Antonio Muñoz: la politica di tutela dei monumenti di Roma durante il Governatorato* (2003), a comprehensive monograph on Muñoz’s entire career – during the Ventennio as well as the two preceding decades – offers a more balanced account of this central figure.⁵⁰ While the present author finds little to argue with in Cederna’s charmingly scathing portrait, there are a couple of case studies pertinent here in which Muñoz acted as conservator rather than *sventratore*, however anachronistic the result. In the first half of his career with the Soprintendenza di monumenti in Lazio (1909-28), Muñoz worked extensively restoring churches, many of them medieval.⁵¹ With neither the interest nor au-



Fig. 9. Cesare Bazzani, restoration project for Casa di S. Paolo, 1908. Source: Arturo Jahn Rusconi: “Una casa medioevale romana.” In: *Emporium* 27 (1908). Courtesy Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana, Vicenza.



Tav. XV. — Case a S. Paolino alle Regole, Roma.
(Restauro dell'Arch. Pio Piacentini).



Fig. 10, 11. Pio Piacentini, restoration of Case a San Paolino alle Regole. Source: Giulio Ferrari: "Lazio." In: *L'architettura Rusticana*. Milano 1925. Courtesy Biblioteca Civica di Padova (above). Casa di San Paolino alle Regole as viewed from via della Seggiola looking southwest. Photo: Michal Lynn Shumate, 2019 (below)

thority to speculate here about his inner motivations, it is nonetheless easy to imagine that this work influenced his approach to vernacular medieval structures that surfaced in the same period, and the Case a San Paolino alla Regola is one such example. Reproduced in the appendices of Bellanca's volume are a series of letters from

1913-1915 in which Muñoz suggests, and later insists, on the intact conservation (rather than demolition and reconstruction, or demolition all together) of the "Casa di San Paolo" adjacent to the planned site of the Ministero di Grazia e Giustizia on Via Arenula (1913-28), including directing the project leaders to a restoration plan from a 1908 feature in *Emporium*.⁵² (figs. 9-11)

Pio Piacentini (1846-1928), whose architecture firm worked on the Palazzo degli Esposizioni alongside Augusto Fallani, was in charge of the new Ministero building and then concurrently with saving the Case a San Paolino alla Regola.⁵³ While his firm's proposed restoration for the Case closely resembles the 1908 rendering by Cesare Bazzani (1873-1939), what ultimately transpired is more modern than medieval, with the portico enclosed and its many accumulated aspects smoothed into a uniform structure. Piacentini and his project serve as a useful transition – both chronologically and conceptually – to the preservation mode under the Fascist regime. This has to do in part with family lineage, as his son, Marcello Piacentini (1881-1961), was also an architect active from the 1910s to the 1940ies and oversaw, among many other projects, the designing of the Esposizione Universale di Roma (EUR) district on the south end of the city, originally erected for the 1942 World's Fair that never was.⁵⁴ While the neoclassical Ministero della Giustizia seems a world away from new construction in the Fascist mode, Piacentini's treatment of the adjacent medieval houses follows a pattern, present from the nineteenth century into the twentieth, above and beyond over-tidying: domestic architecture restored on the literal margins of a modern building and, in this case, formed into a discrete but incidental appendage to it in the process. (figs. 12-13)

In the same years that Muñoz was advocating for the Case a San Paolino, he also drew up revised plans for the Largo Argentina, a square block located north up the Via Arenula from the Ministero, that would similarly 'save' the medieval Torre del Papito found there. The *torre*, along with the entire residential block that enclosed it, was slated for demolition according to a

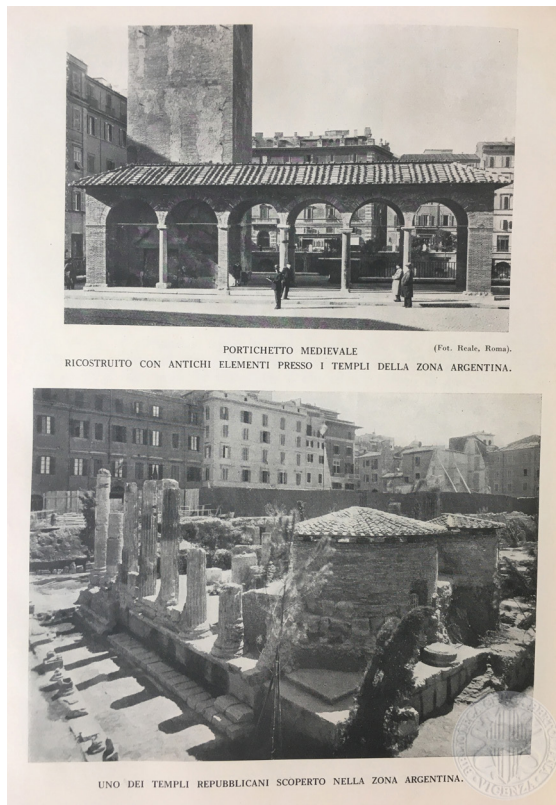


Fig. 12, 13. Photograph of the Torre del Papito, the only remaining element of a residential block razed for the excavations at Largo Argentina; the structure is visible with walls from adjacent buildings still standing. Source: Antonio Muñoz: "La Roma di Mussolini." In: *Emporium* 78 (1933). Courtesy Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana, Vicenza (left). Present day photograph of the Torre del Papito from across the archaeological pit. Photo: Michal Lynn Shumate, 2020 (right).

1909 plan to reinvigorate the area with a new commercial building.⁵⁵ Muñoz's 1916 proposal maintained the plans for destruction of the neighborhood and construction of a shopping center, but with the Torre del Papito left intact and incorporated into the new façade.⁵⁶ This plan changed with the discovery of four republican temples once demolition began; in 1928 Mussolini declared there to be no new building on the excavations and inaugurated the site as the Area Sacra di Largo Argentina on April 21st of the next year.⁵⁷ While Muñoz still kept the Torre del Papito, now hovering alone at the edge of the archaeological pit, he did not see the same value in the layers of late antique and medieval building layers within the pit itself, preferring to clear them out entirely at the service of aesthetic interests – in order to visually highlight the treasured temples and to avoid the look of a "zona terremotata" (earthquake zone).⁵⁸

While the Torre del Papito and the nearby Case a San Paolino alla Regola were originally valued and salvaged under similar circumstances, at the margins of new building construction, by the late 1920ies and 1930ies Muñoz was engaged in larger, more scenographically oriented projects. The results of this are not only evident in the

treatment of the medieval archaeological layers removed wholesale from the temple site, but also and conversely in the monumentalizing treatment of medieval domestic space south of the Capitoline Hill, from the Theater of Marcellus to the Forum Boarium. While the Torre del Papito was for the most part stripped bare to its current state, the Casina dei Vallati (1927-32) went through both destructive and additive processes and exists today as a kind of stand-alone scrapbook – an assembly of pieces from a large block of structures that had stood on or near the site, many of which were in an advanced state of disrepair and some of which had already been demolished when the reconstruction project began as part of the 'liberation' of the Theater of Marcellus.⁵⁹ Parts visible from the side facing the Portico d'Ottavia are mostly from the later Renaissance period, but the opposite side displays some architectural elements common in the thirteenth century, including a ground level portico and loggia on the upper floor.⁶⁰

As in all proceeding examples, the conservation of these medieval elements was not an initiative in and of itself, but rather a consequence of the project to restore and conserve the Theater of Marcellus and the area



Fig. 14, 15. Two photographs of the recently "liberated" medieval house as seen from the Teatro di Marcello, featured in an *Emporium* article written by Paolo Fidenzoni, director of the project. Source: Paolo Fidenzoni: "Cronache Romane, Per la più Grande Roma la Liberazione del Teatro di Marcello." In: *Emporium* 387 (1927). Courtesy Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana, Vicenza (above). Streetview of the west and south facades of the Casa dei Vallati. Photo: Michal Lynn Shumate, 2019 (below).

Fig. 16, 17 (next page). Map of the Capitoline Hill, the Roman and Imperial Forums to the east, and the Forum Boarium to the south – before (above) and after (below) "the systemization." Source: Arturo Bianchi: "Il nuovo Piano Regolatore di Roma." In: *Emporium* 78 (1933). Courtesy Biblioteca Civica Bertoliana, Vicenza.

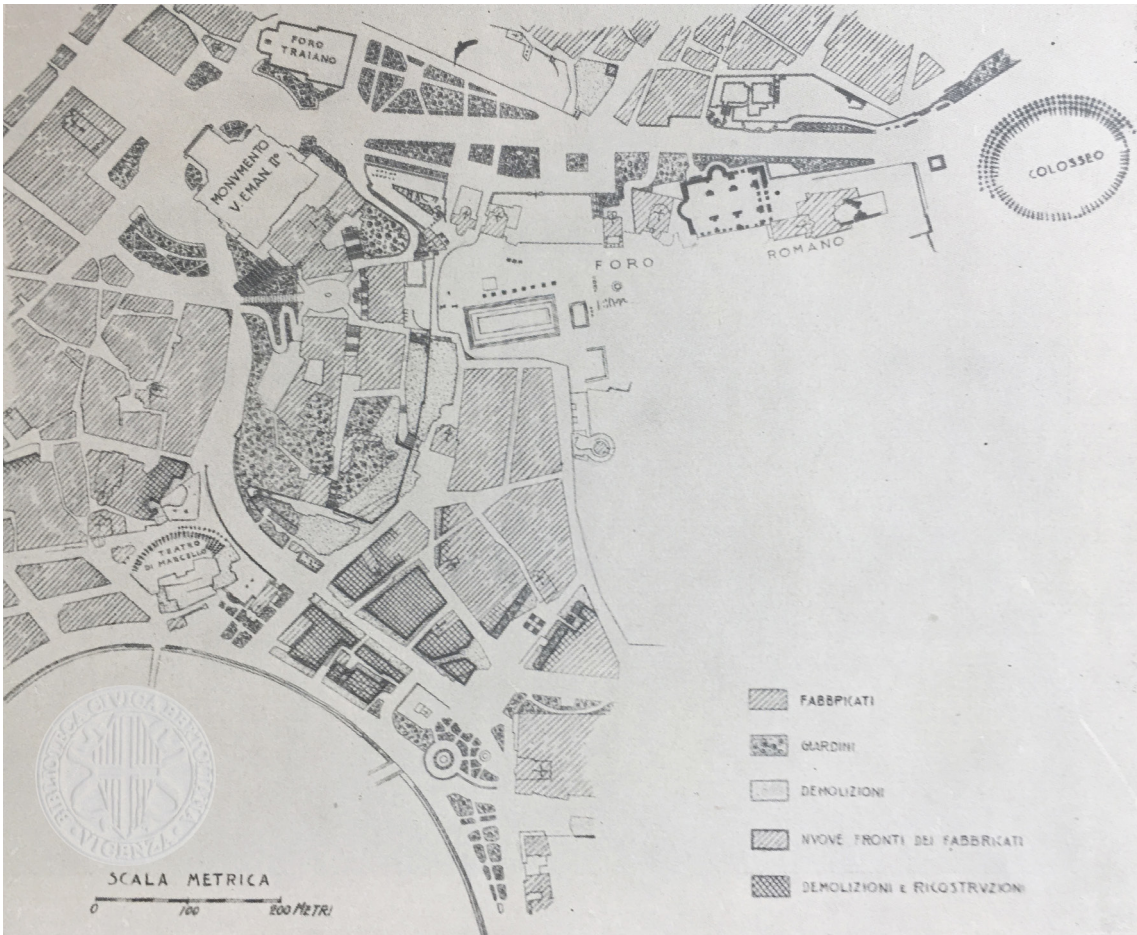
around it. As housing was stripped away from the ancient substructure and the nearby block, some of it was deemed worthy of conservation by the director of the project, Paolo Fidenzoni, who featured the discovery and reconstruction of the "casa medioevale" in an illustrated report for *Emporium* in 1927.⁶¹ While the Casina dei Vallati and the Torre del Papito arrived at their modern iterations through different avenues and circumstances, their treatment and resulting visual effect is the same: wholesale removal of adjacent medieval housing and vernacular buildings in order to create a cohesive, standalone monument worthy of Fascist ideals. (figs. 14-15)

These efforts were scaled up significantly in the following years, with urban initiatives by the early 1930s focused on the Capitoline and its environs, including the new Via del Mare to the south, a "highly symbolic mega-project for the creation of an artery of expansion from the center all the way

to the sea."⁶² The entire area, from the steps of the Campidoglio to Santa Maria in Cosmedin, was re-envisioned as a wide boulevard flanked by modern administrative buildings and ancient monuments, along with a scattering of *case* and *torri medioevali* salvaged from demolished residential blocks and remade to fit their new grand, choreographed environs – from the Casina dei Vallati near the Teatro di Marcello, to the Torre dei Pierleoni across from the Foro Olitorio, to the Casa dei Crescenzi that was joined, by way of an *edificio di congiunzione* (connecting building), to a newly constructed municipal office.⁶³ Cederna had particular disdain for this megaproject, describing it in a chapter titled *The senseless Muñoz skinned the Capitol: the Fakes of the Via del Mare*: "This completes the isolation and resulting rigor mortis of the monuments [...] a random deposit of archaeological objects, an anthological reproduction for hasty tourists: an empty and meaningless scenography in place of living and famous environments."⁶⁴ In Krautheimer's words, the Torre dei Pierleoni was "barbarously cleaned up and overrestored" and Cederna seems to agree, referring to the same structure in an image caption as *La casa "medioevale."*⁶⁵

One demonstrable shift in projects under Fascist city planning is the emergence of the architectural phenomenon of, to borrow from kindred but anachronistic modernist nomenclature, the Tower-in-the-Park: of entire medieval city blocks reduced to a single *torre* or building cluster in order to facilitate the creation of open space around them.

The Torre del Papito and the Casina dei Vallati are especially egregious examples of this, and were proudly included in reports by the regime, such as in the magazine *Emporium*. The 1933 themed issue, *Roma di Mussolini*, included richly illustrated reports on the various works accomplished by archaeologists, architects, and city planners over the preceding years.⁶⁶ (figs. 16-17) Throughout the features there is particular relish in displaying the destruction of houses that were seen to be choking noble monuments or "hiding" archaeological treasure.



From the Forum of Caesar and Basilica Argentaria north of the Capitoline, where 16,000 cubic meters of majority-medieval material were removed for the paving of Via dei Fori Imperiali in 1932,⁶⁷ to the 1928 new-construction-turned-excavation at Largo Argentina for which an entire residential block was razed, the removal of what the regime deemed interstitial rubble was as important to its own self-narrative as whatever monument the rubble's disappearance 'liberated.'⁶⁸ The glorification of *Roma antica* and *Roma nuova* required the ongoing invention and rejection of *Roma vecchia* – an insignificant, homogenous 'other' – for employment as negative example and point of comparison.

Conclusions

During the turn of the twentieth century, the story of *Roma vecchia* and specifically of medieval houses, structures that are neither monumental nor explicitly ecclesiastic, is primarily one of erasure. Above and beyond their removal from ancient sites, entire working class medieval neighborhoods were razed in order to pave wide new streets to display and connect the newly configured monumental elements of *Roma antica* and *Roma nuova*.⁶⁹

Even in the decades preceding the Fascist regime – but well after preservation guidelines had been established – implementation remained based more on the taste of the parties involved than any established conservation policies. Further archival research is needed to better grasp the nuances of how specific medieval houses were understood during the time of their restoration, especially those that have not yet received dedicated scholarly attention. The consistent geographic proximity to larger building projects, however, is an insight into the role of both expediency and serendipity in the restoration of *case medioevali* across the

period. From Piacentini's restoration of the Casa a San Paolino behind the new Ministero della Giustizia building to the salvaging of the Casa dei Vallati during Fidenzoni's liberation of the Theater of Marcellus, Rome's medieval housing was both demolished and restored on the physical margins – and in the manufactured image – of its new ancient-modern city.

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Notes

1 Ettore Roesler-Franz's *Roma Sparita* series was painted between the years 1878–1896. The text from sections of Muñoz's 1930 publication that address housing, directly or indirectly, include: "Case Medioevali," "La Casa degli Anguillara," and "L'Aventino." Ettore Roesler-Franz and Antonio Muñoz: *Roma Sparita*. Vol. 1-3. Roma 1931-36. The bound volume referenced here is located in the Sala Barbo, Biblioteca di archeologia e storia dell'arte (BiASA), Rome. For the complete works of Antonio Muñoz see: Calogero Bellanca: *Antonio Muñoz: la politica di tutela dei monumenti di Roma durante il Governatorato*. *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma*. Supplementi, 10. Roma 2003. For a detailed gloss on his career see: Raffaella Catini: "Antonio Muñoz." In: *Treccani Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. 77 (2012).

2 "Le pittoresche sponde del Tevere cedevano necessariamente il posto ai monotoni muraglioni." As cited in the same introductory section, the population grew from 208.000 to 500.000 people in the period from 1870 to 1900. Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1), Vol. 1, 1931.

3 "La costruzione quale oggi la vediamo è per quattro quinti almeno moderna, e rimonta

al recentissimo restauro che vi fece fare il Comune di Roma, dal 1892 al 1902, sotto la direzione del Fallani. Non si può dire che il lavoro non sia stato fatto con gusto, ma certo senza nessun criterio conservativo, e direi anche senza unità di stile, poiché vi si sono introdotti elementi toscani che non vi hanno a che fare." Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1): "La Casa degli Anguillara." Vol. 2, 1933.

4 "[...] non sapevano rassegnarsi alla sparizione quotidiana degli aspetti cari e consueti dei luoghi in cui avevano trascorso la loro felice giovinezza." Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1): "Roma Sparita." Vol. 1, 1931.

5 Joshua Arthurs: "Roma Sparita: Local Identity and Fascist Modernity at the Museo di Roma." In: *Città e Storia* 3 (2009), pp. 189-200.

6 Joshua Arthurs: *Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy*. New York 2013. p. 71.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

8 "Una delle più graziose case medioevali, oggi sparita, ritratta dal Roesler-Franz, è così descritta da un profondo e appassionato conoscitore dell'architettura romana: 'La gentile casetta di via Rua, avanzo divenuto rarissimo in Roma di architettura borghese dei secoli decimoterzo e decimoquarto, brilla come pietra preziosa in mezzo alla bruttura e allo squallore di una viuzza del Ghetto, prossima alle maestose rovine del portico di Ottavia.'" Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1): "Case Medioevali." Vol. 2, 1933.

9 Arthurs 2009 (see note 5), p. 192.

10 Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1): "Roma Sparita." Vol. 1, 1931. This particular line is likely in reference to the

demolition of a residential block at Largo Argentina, originally razed to build a shopping center and then shifted into an archaeological excavation upon the discovery of four republican temples now visible at the site.

11 Cf. Arthurs 2013 (see note 6), pp. 69-70.

12 For examples of over-restoration projects in Tuscany, see D. Medina Lasansky: *The Renaissance Perfected: Architecture, Spectacle, and Tourism in Fascist Italy*. Buildings, Landscapes, and Societies, 4. University Park 2004.

13 Benito Mussolini: *Opera omnia*, XXII, a cura di E. Susmel, Firenze 1957, p. 48. In: Arthurs 2009 (see note 5), p. 192.

14 Cf. Richard Krautheimer: *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308*, Princeton 2000 (1980). p. 307, and Ingrid D. Rowland (as Massimo Gatto): "A Roman Cat Fight." In: *The New York Review Daily*. November 16, 2012. <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2012/11/16/roman-cat-fight/>.

15 Jukka Jokilehto: *A History of Architectural Conservation*. York 2011, pp. 219-220.

16 Carlo Magi-Spinetti: "Colore locale." In: *Capitolium* 11.1 (1935), p. 23.

17 While beyond the scope of this paper, the treatment of medieval and vernacular or rural architecture remains of interest well into the 20th century, including exhibitions at the Triennale di Milano: *Rural Italian Architecture: Functionality of the Rural House* (1936) and *Spontaneous Architecture Exhibition* (1951). See for instance: Michelangelo Sabatino: *Pride in Modesty: Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition in Italy*. Toronto 2010.

18 In addition to Muñoz's 1931-33 *Roma Sparita* volumes,

- the two main sources are: Giulio Ferrari: "Lazio." In: *L'architettura Rusticana: dalle Capanne alla Casa Medievale: Duecentocinquanta Tavole con Illustrazioni, Rilievi, Disegni e Pitture*. Milano 1925, pp. 69-124, and Antonio Muñoz: "La Roma di Mussolini." In: *Emporium* 78 (1933).
- 19** Krautheimer 2000 (see note 14), p. 289.
- 20** This assessment is based on a synthesis of three main surveys: Krautheimer 2000 (see note 14), pp. 289-310, Robert Coates-Stephens: "Housing in Early Medieval Rome, 500-1000 AD." In: *Papers of the British School at Rome* 64 (1996), pp. 239-259, and Rabun Taylor, Katherine W. Rinne and Spiro Kostof: *Rome: An Urban History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York 2016.
- 21** Coates-Stephens 1996 (see note 20), p. 245.
- 22** For a detailed account see: Alia Englen: "Le Case Romane e le sopravvivenze altomedievali." In: *Le Case Romane sotto la Basilica dei Ss. Giovanni e Paolo*. Roma 2014.
- 23** Coates-Stephens 1996 (see note 20), p. 241. For background on the abitato and disabitato see: Taylor/Rinne/Kostof 2016 (see Note 20).
- 24** Cf. *ibid.*
- 25** Krautheimer 2000 (see note 14), p. 290.
- 26** *Ibid.*, p. 294.
- 27** *Ibid.*, p. 291.
- 28** Coates-Stephens 1996 (see note 20), p. 254, in reference to Hubert's synthesis of property documents: Étienne Hubert: *Espace urbain et habitat à Rome du Xe à la fin du XIIIe siècle*. Rome 1990. pp. 183-184.
- 29** Cf. Krautheimer 2000 (see note 14), p. 294.
- 30** *Ibid.*, p. 307.
- 31** For use of tufa in building, see: Coates-Stephens 1996 (see note 20), p. 247. For detailed discussion of medieval domestic building materials, with Trastevere as case study, see: Marisa de Felice: "Testimonianze medievali nell'edilizia abitativa di Trastevere." In: *Casa e Torri Medievali II, Atti del III Convegno di Studi, La città, le torri e le case. Indagini sui centri dell'Italia comunale (secc. XI-XV) Toscana, Lazio, Umbria*. Città della Pieve: 1996, pp. 33-45.
- 32** Coates-Stephens 1996 (see note 20), p. 255.
- 33** On visualizing medieval Rome: Robert Brentano: *Rome Before Avignon: A Social History of Thirteenth-Century Rome*. Berkeley 1990. p. 9.
- 34** Cf. Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1): "Case Medioevali." Vol. 2, 1933. See also: Ferrari 1925 (see note 18), and Krautheimer 2000 (see note 14), p. 290.
- 35** Both of these specific phenomena are well documented in permanent, on-site exhibitions at the Museo Nazionale Romano Crypta Balbi and the Museo di Roma Mercati di Traiano Museo dei Fori Imperiali. See also: Dale Kinney: "Spoliation in Medieval Rome." In: Stefan Altekamp, Carmen Marcks-Jacobs and Peter Seiler (Eds.): *Spolierung und Transposition*. Berlin 2013. pp. 261-286.
- 36** Cf. Krautheimer 2000 (see note 14), p. 299.
- 37** Coates-Stephens 1996 (see note 20), p. 254.
- 38** For comprehensive documentation of Muñoz's ecclesiastical restoration projects (1909-29), see: Bellanca 2003 (see note 1), pp. 247-343.
- 39** Influential publications from the period include: A. W. N. Pugin's series of gothic architectural drawings (1821-1838), his "Contrasts" (1836) on the medieval ethos, and "The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture" (1841); better known today is John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1853) alongside his French contemporary, Eugène Viollet-le-Duc who published a series of ironwork and masonry designs in *Entretiens sur l'architecture* (1863-1872).
- 40** Jokilehto 2011 (see note 15), p. 207.
- 41** Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 201-202.
- 42** The Casa degli Anguillara is found at Piazza Belli, 47 (Piazza Sidney Sonnino 5, 00153), across the street from San Crisogono; the address for the Casa a Piazza di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere is Piazza di Santa Cecilia, 19, 00153. Dates of restoration taken from: Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1): "La Casa degli Anguillara." Vol. 2, 1933, and Raffaella Catini: "Giovanni Battista Giovenale." In: *Treccani Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. 56 (2001).
- 43** The residence near Porta Pia was a villa for the painter Cesare Maccari on Via Collina (Piazza Sallustio), starting immediately after he finished the Casa degli Anguillara in 1902." Catini 2001 (see note 42).
- 44** Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1): "La Casa degli Anguillara." Vol. 2, 1933.
- 45** Ferrari 1925 (see note 18), Tav. IX.
- 46** For a detailed account of the Piano Regolatore di Roma of 1883, see: Spiro Kostof: "The Drafting of a Master Plan for

- 'Roma Capitale': An Exordium." In: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1976), pp. 4-20. For an overview of the long history of archaeology in Rome, see: Giovanni Maria De Rossi: *La Riscoperta di Roma Antica*. Roma 1983. For the Imperial Form specifically, see: Rosalba Quinto: "Storia di una utopia concreta." In: *Roma continuità dell'antico, i Fori Imperiali nel progetto della città*. Milano 1981. pp. 33-101.
- 47** Cf. Arthurs 2013 (see note 6), p. 53.
- 48** Cf. Aristotle Kallis: "The 'Third Rome' of Fascism: Demolitions and the Search for a New Urban Syntax." In: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (2012), pp. 40-79.
- 49** Cf. Antonio Cederna: *Mussolini Urbanista: Lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del consenso*. Bari: 1979. p. 68. A scathing bibliography of Muñoz can be found on pages xix-xx and his actions and words throughout are frequently introduced with "il solito Muñoz" (the usual Muñoz).
- 50** Bellanca 2003 (see note 1).
- 51** *Ibid.*, pp. 59-138; tellingly, Bellanca titles this section "Il Restauro," distinct from Muñoz's later work under the Governatorato (1929-44).
- 52** Arturo Jahn Rusconi: "Una casa medioevale romana." In: *Emporium* 27 (1908), pp. 238-240.
- 53** The Case a San Paolino alla Regola are located at the intersection of Via di S. Paolo alla Regola and Via di Santa Maria in Monticelli.
- 54** Piacentini was quite well known for his work in the city at the time, as seen in Antonio Nezi: "Le Sistemazioni Metropolitane Moderne: la 'Grande Roma' di Marcello Piacentini." In: *Emporium* 376 (1926), pp. 254-264. See also: Giovanni Duranti: "Marcello Piacentini." In: *Treccani Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. 83 (2015).
- 55** For a 1925 photograph of the torre when it was still part of the area's residential fabric, see figure 172 in: Maria Rosaria Coppola: "Torre del Papito." In: Lorenzo Bianchi: *Case e Torri Medioevali a Roma: Documentazione, Storia e Sopravvivenza di Edifici Medioevali nel Tessuto Urbano di Roma*. Bibliotheca Archaeologica, 22. Roma 1998, p. 255.
- 56** Cf. Maria Rosaria Coppola: "Torre del Papito: Secolo XX: i lavori di isolamento e ristrutturazione della torre." In: *Ibid.*, pp. 267-277, here p. 267.
- 57** Cf. *ibid.*, p. 268.
- 58** Carla Ardis: "La persistenza della memoria: l'Area Sacra di Largo Argentina tra propaganda e storia." In: Marina Cipriani, Angela Pontrandolfo and Michele Scafuro: *Dialoghi sull'Archeologia della Magna Grecia e del Mediterraneo: Atti del II Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Paestum, 28-30 Giugno 2017*. Paestum: 2018. pp. 319-324, here p. 320.
- 59** Cf. Maria Rosaria Coppola: "Casa dei Vallati e torre dei Grassi, 3.1." In: Bianchi 1998 (see note 55), pp. 145-174.
- 60** For a detailed account of the multi-layered restoration or reconstruction process, see Virginia Rossini: "La Casa dei Vallati a Roma: 'restauro' di un complesso monumentale." In: *Case e Torri Medievali II, Atti del III Convegno di Studi, La città, le torri e le case. Indagini sui centri dell'Italia comunale (secc. XI-XV) Toscana, Lazio, Umbria, Città della Pieve* 1996. Roma 2001, pp. 15-27.
- 61** Paolo Fidenzoni: "Cronache romane. Per la più grande Roma: la liberazione del Teatro di Marcello – La scoperta di una casa medioevale." In: *Emporium* 65 (1927), pp. 195-202.
- 62** Kallis 2012 (see note 48), p. 64.
- 63** Plans for this area are visible in a *plastico* (architectural model) of the period, a photograph of which is reproduced in Simona Benedetti: "L'area urbana fra il Teatro di Marcello e il Foro Boario: demolizioni, progetti, nuove edificazioni 1910-1945." In: Marina Docci and Maria Grazia Turco: *La Casa dei Crescenzi. Storia e Restauri*. Roma 2015, pp. 133-163, here p. 140. The Casa dei Crescenzi is located at Via Luigi Petroselli, 54, 00186.
- 64** Cederna 1979 (see note 49), p. 145.
- 65** Krautheimer 2000 (see note 14), p. 305; cf. Cederna 1979 (see note 49), p. 152.
- 66** Articles of note in the 1933 issue of *Emporium* include: Antonio Muñoz: "La Roma di Mussolini." pp. 203-222, Arturo Bianchi: "Il nuovo Piano Regolatore di Roma." pp. 223-235, and Antonio Muñoz: "Via dell'Impero." pp. 236-247.
- 67** Cf. Coates-Stephens 1996 (see note 20), p. 251.
- 68** Outside of our period, but still relevant was the paving of Via della Conciliazione in front of St Peter's (1936-50), for which the ancient *Borgo* was demolished. Cf. Jokilehto 2011 (see note 15), p. 221.
- 69** Muñoz, somewhat tellingly, refers to the similar interventions under Sixtus V as "terrible e magnifico" ("terrible and magnificent"), cf. Roesler-Franz/Muñoz 1931-36 (see note 1): "l'Aventino." Vol. 1, 1931.

