Marble And Munificence: Reassessing The Basilica Of Junius Bassus At Rome

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Abstract
Several transitions mark Late Antiquity as a departure from the Roman world's political, religious, economic, and social past. Among these was Constantine's foundation of a “new Rome” at Constantinople. Without the emperor's presence to underpin the city's prominence, the aristocrats of Rome sought to reassert their political influence and proclaim their elite standing. My dissertation investigates the ways elites used competitive display to redefine a world without Rome as its sole center, recovering as its central case the now-lost fourth century CE “Basilica of Junius Bassus” on the Esquiline Hill. The apsidal hall was revetted with an eclectic set of marble panels, including a portrait of the patron in procession, a mythological scene of the rape of Hylas, Egyptianizing trompe l'oeil drapery, and animal combats in the arena. My project is the first comprehensive treatment of the hall, and calls on a variety of data sets (epigraphy, literary sources, Renaissance drawings, archaeological data) to place the hall in its social, historical, topographic, and art historical context and analyze the way one member of Rome's late antique aristocracy built and used monuments and manipulated urban topography to evoke and re-shape honorific memory. This study refigures the hall through close looking and socio-historical contextualization, while asking how we can understand and reliably reconstruct a monument from the past with a rich but fragmentary material record.

Degree Type
Dissertation

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Graduate Group
History of Art

First Advisor
Ann Kuttner

Second Advisor
C. Brian Rose

Keywords
Bassus, euergetism, Late Antiquity, marble, opus sectile, Rome

Subject Categories
Classics | History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology

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MARBLE AND MUNIFICENCE:
REASSESSING THE BASILICA OF JUNIUS BASSUS AT ROME
Stephanie A. Hagan
A DISSERTATION
in
History of Art
Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania
in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
2018

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MARBLE AND MUNIFICENCE: REASSESSING THE BASILICA OF JUNIUS BASSUS AT ROME

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of a scholar’s work is solitary, but this endeavor would not have been possible without the community that energizes and sustains that solitary work through its support, its curiosity, and its generosity of spirit.

I would first like to express my appreciation to my advisors, Ann Kuttner and Brian Rose. Ann’s ability to interpret and coach not-fully-fledged ideas and to not only tolerate but cultivate sustained meditations on single objects has been essential to my research and training. Her imagination of the Romans as real people has been an inspiration, deepening my own connection to the ancient world. Brian’s ability as a storyteller and teacher have informed my own writing and teaching, and I regret only that I have not been able to join him in a music video at the Penn Museum. I extend my gratitude also to Dale Kinney, in whose course on medieval Rome I stumbled over the Basilica of Junius Bassus, for her always good-humored but honest feedback and her incredible knowledge of Rome and its sources.

Other faculty members at the University of Pennsylvania not responsible for me on paper have gone to great lengths to support me personally and professionally, especially Bob Ousterhout, Larry Silver, David Brownlee, Andre Dombrowski, Cam Grey, Caitie Barrett, and Julie Davis. These professors have helped me by serving as sounding board, reading my writing, introducing new theoretical vantage points, and sparking curiosity as a human and a humanist. So too have Katy Blanchard, Jane Hickman, Ann Brownlee, Lynn Makowsky, and Alessandro Pezzati assisted with my work with the collections of the Penn Museum, where there is endless material to
fascinate and intrigue. Thanks also go to the faculty of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Penn, and to Darlene Jackson, whose reliability and problem-solving talents have gotten me through more than one pinch.

Elsewhere too I have found individuals who have supported my endeavors, whether in coursework, conferences, or other contexts: Sarah Lepinski, Elizabeth Bolman, and Monica Hellstrom. I thank Michael Koortbojian, for a formative course on Late Antiquity at Princeton.

I am grateful to have found such a collegial department in History of Art and Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World, where students genuinely wish well for each other and are happy to see their peers succeed. I thank Lara Fabian, Steve Renette, Jordan Pickett, Emily Neumeier, Emily Warner, Heather Hughes, Cody Castillo, Patricia Kim, Miriam Stanton, Juliana Barton, Marica Antonucci, Jane Sancinito (Ancient History), Megan Boomer, Petra Creamer, Brooks Rich, Marina Isgro, Larisa Grollemond, Liz Lastra, and Alex Kauffman for the roles they have played as classmates, colleagues, and travel companions. To the diss buds among these in particular I extend my thanks, and especially Juliet Sperling and Kurtis Tanaka, not only for keeping me company in goal-setting and striving, but also for sharing baked treats, sample cover letters, and personal successes. Anna Sitz has also been a constant friend and companion in bibliography and beverages. To Dallas Simons and Alice Hu particularly for their assistance with Latin translations, and moreover to Alice for all the panna and puns we have shared.
I am grateful for the moral support and advice of Meg Andrews, Sarah Beckmann, and Susanna McFadden, whose studies preceded mine and who generously offered wisdom and feedback as “Doktorschwestern.” The friendships of Kaelin Jewell and Laura Gibson have sustained me through apartment moves, exams, defense, and countless other trials, and I am glad to share Philadelphia with these gems.

Daira Nocera was one of my first and fastest friends at Penn. I feel fortunate to have found a friend of such intelligence and talent who also has an appreciation for good gelato, good music, and a good time. She provided limitless help in the form of Italian translation and orientation, editing and practice runs, architectural drawing, and archaeological expertise. She has been a well of strength in this process, and has helped me recognize my own. For her teachings in friendship and her “adoption” of me I will be forever grateful.

I benefited from field training at the American Academy in Rome as participant in the Classical Summer School. My thanks to Susann Lusnia, Claudia Moser, my instructors that year, as well as Genevieve Gessert, and to my classmates in the program, whom I think of fondly when I am picking out shoes for brunch or I encounter really good saldi. The Captain William Edward McGinn, Squad 18, FDNY Scholarship and Steven D. Latner Travel Fellowship in the History of Art department enabled me to attend this program and pursue independent research that summer.

I was fortunate to receive additional travel funding for research in Rome through the Penn Museum Summer Field Research Grant, the McCoubrey/Campbell Travel Grant in the History of Art department, and the Salvatori Research Travel Award. My research
in Rome would not have been possible without the assistance of archivists and librarians at numerous institutions, who tolerated my passing Italian with good humor and took seriously my efforts to re-excavate the Basilica of Junius Bassus. I thank the staff at the Ashby Archive at the British School in Rome; the Fondo Lugli at the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, Biblioteca Romana Antonio Sarti; the Fondo Lugli at the Biblioteca di scienze dell’antichità, Sezione di Topografia antica at La Sapienza Università di Roma; the Fondo Lugli at the Fototeca dell’Istituto nazionale di archeologia e storia dell’arte; the Fondo Muñoz at Palazzo Braschi; the Archivio Capitolino Ripartizione X (Appendice 1921-1931); parts of the archive of the Russicum; and the Archivio Storico e Archivio Disegni dei Beni Archeologici and Archivio Gatti at the Sovrintendenza di Roma Capitale (Via Ostiense). I also consulted archivists at the PIAC, PCAS, and the Vatican Library, and was told no relevant material was to be found there. The only archival evidence I came across was in the archives of the Ministero della Publicca Istruzione in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, located with the help of Dott.ssa Luigia Attilia in copy at the Palazzo Altemps. My thanks to her and to the numerous archivists and librarians who assisted me with this research, which would not have been possible without their help.

I have enjoyed many conversations with Eric Varner, Kim Bowes, Susann Lusnia, Joanne Spurza, Sarah Levin-Richardson, Olof Brandt, and Michele Salzman at the American Academy and elsewhere in Rome. My time in Rome was made more stimulating and productive by our conversations, and I appreciated their connecting me with students and colleagues, pointing me down research paths, and encouraging me. I
would also like to acknowledge Chrystina Haueber, for her encouragement to my study of Esquiline topography, and for allowing me to benefit from her long study of the area and her work in Rome through correspondence and conversations.

The Visualizing Venice program was an important training ground, where I not only learned specific softwares and skills but also was invited to reflect on the principles and problems of digital humanities—whatever that might mean. For this experience I thank Mark Olson, Victoria Szabo, Chiara di Stefano, Ludovica Galeazzo, and Hannah Jacobs for the cheer and patience with which they welcome newcomers to these pursuits. I am grateful to the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation scholarship and Getty Foundation for making this program possible.

At Penn, I was able to deepen my engagement with the digital humanities through an incubation grant from the Price Lab for Digital Humanities. This grant enabled my work with collaborating architect Natasha Sanjaya, during which she showed flexibility, good humor, and digital nimbleness producing countless variations in accordance with every thought experiment and teaching me more about the thinking of an architect. For her good company and this collaboration I am grateful. I also thank Sasha Renninger for her assistance and expertise in trouble-shooting and project planning. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Peter Cobb, for encouraging me to pursue digital methods for exploring this topic, and for offering me his classroom as a venue to discuss this work.

The Price Lab for Digital Humanities offered me further support through the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Price Lab Fellowship, which supported me financially and intellectually in the last year of my program. I also owe a great debt to the Kolb
Foundation for supporting two years of study and many fruitful travels. I thank Margaret Spencer for her ever-amiable administration of the Society of Fellows.

For generously sharing forthcoming work and pieces of his dissertation, and for reading conference material and offering feedback, I thank John Weisweiler. I am immensely grateful to Daniela Gionta for sharing with me her work on the Sienese Codex’s sylloge of inscriptions when no library in the world could provide me with it.

Finally but in no way least, I thank my husband, Sam Bryant, for his unfailing support and assistance in tasks big and small, from travel arrangements to systems administration. He has searched for apartments while I did research abroad, bussed across Sicily as well as New Jersey, hauled my Books by Mail home from work, and changed jobs to support me in this endeavor. I am grateful for his patience on many late nights, for his service as unpaid research assistant, and for his intelligence, which I take for granted. Thanks for raising DDHB with me. Your husband percentile is 99.
ABSTRACT

MARBLE AND MUNIFICENCE: REASSESSING THE BASILICA OF JUNIUS BASSUS AT ROME

Stephanie A. Hagan
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Several transitions mark Late Antiquity as a departure from the Roman world’s political, religious, economic, and social past. Among these was Constantine’s foundation of a “new Rome” at Constantinople. Without the emperor’s presence to underpin the city’s prominence, the aristocrats of Rome sought to reassert their political influence and proclaim their elite standing. My dissertation investigates the ways elites used competitive display to redefine a world without Rome as its sole center, recovering as its central case the now-lost fourth century CE “Basilica of Junius Bassus” on the Esquiline Hill. The apsidal hall was revetted with an eclectic set of marble panels, including a portrait of the patron in procession, a mythological scene of the rape of Hylas, Egyptianizing trompe l’oeil drapery, and animal combats in the arena. My project is the first comprehensive treatment of the hall, and calls on a variety of data sets (epigraphy, literary sources, Renaissance drawings, archaeological data) to place the hall in its social, historical, topographic, and art historical context and analyze the way one member of Rome’s late antique aristocracy built and used monuments and manipulated urban topography to evoke and re-shape honorific memory. This study refigures the hall through close looking and socio-historical contextualization, while asking how we can
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INTRODUCTION

With the emperor’s foundation of a new capital at Constantinople in 324 CE, Rome lost its pre-eminence, and the Eternal City fell into the shadow of New Rome.¹ For this reason, most treatments of Roman art end with the Arch of Constantine, and forecast the development of medieval Christian art and its Byzantine counterpart. This project investigates what happens at the old capital of the Roman empire once students turn the last page of their textbooks, asking how aristocrats there continued to claim and proclaim their status—even when their capital and their emperor were elsewhere. My dissertation recovers the so-called “Basilica of Junius Bassus,” a single-naved apsidal hall on the Cispian Hill, as an example of the way visual culture responded to the exigencies of political status and prestige in Late Antiquity.

Built in 331 CE, the Basilica of Junius Bassus is best known for its splendid panels in *opus sectile*, a medium usually regarded as a subset of mosaic, wherein highly polished slabs of stones of irregular shape are pieced together and inlaid to form geometric patterns or figural decoration, whether on the wall or floor. Only four wall panels survive from the hall, and they form an eclectic group. One depicts a frontal figure processing in a biga, flanked by figures in coordinated costumes of red, green, blue, and white, who represent members of the circus factions. I argue this panel depicts Bassus on the day of his inauguration as consul, leading the crowds to the start of the games he sponsored to begin the new year. A second panel is topped by a hemispherical scene of a

¹ This of course is not the version of the narrative accepted by all scholars. See Chapter One, under “Negotiating New Rome” for other views.
youth named Hylas, raped by nymphs while on a voyage with the Argonauts. Below hangs a *trompe l’oeil* curtain, around the hem of which Egyptian figures process. The two remaining panels depict tigresses pitted against helpless bovine prey, in a depiction of the kinds of animal spectacles Bassus would have hosted as part of his games. (See Figures 0.1-0.4).

While these polychrome panels often plaster book covers, insisting on the continued vibrancy of the late Roman world, little of substance has been written about the monument and its place in late antique Rome. The most substantive treatment of its decoration and function is an appendix by Giovanni Becatti, who added his analysis of the Basilica of Junius Bassus to his volume on the roughly contemporary marble revetted hall he was then excavating at Ostia (See Figure 0.5). While the two buildings’ contemporaneity and their similarity in iconographic themes certainly warrants a comparative look, Becatti subordinated his study of the Basilica of Junius Bassus to an existing agenda, arguing for the interpretation of the Ostian hall (and therefore Bassus’) as a neo-Pythagorean *schola*, a gathering point for philosophical discussion on eschatology. The study treats the decoration of the Bassus hall in relation to this already-settled hypothesis, coaxing all the fragments into uncomfortable alignment with this function. As a result, Becatti failed to address the Bassus monument on its own terms, assuming the hall was a private *domus*, overlooking its location in the city of Rome, and

\[2\text{ Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*.}\]
passing over the resonance between the patron and his political role with the hall’s decorative scheme.

Before we can delve further into Becatti’s and others’ treatments of the hall, we need to establish a basic narrative of the building’s history, and gather the strands of evidence that allow us to construct that history.

The hall was dedicated by a consul in 331 CE named Junius Bassus, which we know from an inscription in the apse, now lost, which was recorded in later manuscripts.3 Sometime in the following centuries, the hall passed, through unknown means, into the hands of a Goth general named Valila, who donated it at the end of the 5th century to Pope Simplicius (r. 468-483). The pope converted the hall to a church dedicated to St. Andrew brother of Peter. We know this from a dedication inscription, once placed in the apse of the hall-turned-Church of Sant’Andrea Catabarbara.4 The only alteration Simplicius made to the hall’s decoration, as far as we can know, was the addition of an apse mosaic depicting Jesus and six apostles, which we presume to have been on view along with the Bassus-period decorations. (See Figure 0.6.) In the centuries that followed, a monastery was attached to Sant’Andrea. By the 13th century, however, a larger church, Sant’Antonio Abate, had been built, and the Church of Sant’Andrea Catabarbara became part of Sant’Antonio’s hospital complex. Patients came there seeking treatment for ergotism,

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3 CIL 1737: IUNIUS BASSUS V(IR) C(LARISSIMUS) CONSUL ORDINARIUS PROPRIA IMPENSA A SOLO FECIT ET DEDICAVIT FELICITER. The sources for this inscription will be discussed in Chapter 3 and in Appendix B.

also known as “St. Anthony’s fire,” and monks scraped mortar off the walls and fed it to patients as a curative. Over time, the hall fell into decrepitude, such that sources report its use as a cattle stall and granary, far reduced from its once-splendid state. Giovanni Giustino Ciampini reports its destruction at the end of the 17th century, though he does not detail its final ruination. Eventually the hall was lost to sight. It was only with construction on the block in the 1920s that the building was rediscovered and excavated.

The project is very much a recovery effort, invested in the re-excavation and re-examination of the legacy data available. The first part of the dissertation is the biography of this building, which arises from a re-excavation or sifting through of the material that has been gathered on it and affixed to it in the past. It is not that the hall has never been the object of scholarly study; rather, it is that what scholars extracted from their studies was colored by the particular agendas that motivated them to turn to the building as a piece of evidence in the first place. In her recent work “How Archaeological Evidence Bites Back,” Alison Wylie discusses the “epistemic anxiety” of trying to read archaeological evidence, and particularly, of putting old evidence to new uses:

…the recovery of archaeological data is necessarily selective and often destructive; what the original excavators did not know to recover is gone forever and what they did record may be so thoroughly configured by preunderstandings that it cannot be expected to expose error inherent in them and is most likely not usable for purposes they did not anticipate.³⁶

⁵ *Vetera Monimenta*, chapters 7 and 27.

While this project cannot recover data that is gone forever, its aim is to uncover some of the “preunderstandings” that have structured earlier studies, and to refigure the hall through reassessment of the sources, close looking, and socio-historical contextualization. The first half of the dissertation makes a new argument about the purpose of the hall and its place in the landscape of late antique Rome. This portion also examines, through a study of the basilica’s afterlife, the continued charge of the site on which it stood. The second half of the dissertation reexamines the basilica’s surviving decoration in order to apprehend the multisensory experience of viewing and being in the hall, and the ways that this decoration presented and promoted its patron.

**Constantine and the Triumph of Christianity**

The scholarly record is indebted to the hall’s transformation to a church, since this conversion makes us heir to records of donation and renovation through historical compilations like the *Liber Pontificalis*, the *Vitae Pontificium*, and other church-associated archives and documents. However, the hall’s history as a church has also colored scholarly treatment of the monument, causing it to be studied through the lens of Christian history.

Scholarship on the Christian church holds up Constantine as the first Christian emperor and the author of the Edict of Milan, which allowed for freedom of religious practice—notwithstanding that the Edict of Toleration issued by Galerius two years earlier had accomplished the same thing. “Christian triumph” has been held up as part of

---

7 The more obscure and unpublished of these have been most thoroughly reviewed in Enking, *S. Andrea cata Barbara e S. Antonio Abbate sull’Esquilino*. 

5
a defined upward historical trajectory.\textsuperscript{8} With this triumph as the overarching narrative, Constantine has been enrobed in founder mythologies, a kind of avatar advocate of the Catholic Church and political counterpart to St. Peter. The image of him constructed by history depicts him as a pious ruler who contributed to the legitimacy of the Church and its lineage at Rome. In the interest of accruing more credit to this heroic figure, and concretizing the narrative of the Church’s early history, writers attributed to Constantine any manner of deeds with little factual backing.

Though Constantine’s personal faith has been called into question, and the motives of his church-building examined with greater scrutiny, these critical views of the first Christian emperor are rather modern interventions.\textsuperscript{9} The Renaissance scholarship credits him with much, and consequently, the Basilica of Junius Bassus has been wrapped up in their agendas.

This is made apparent by the company the Basilica of Junius Bassus keeps in many of the Renaissance sources. The extant Renaissance drawings of the hall, and written accounts of visitors from the period, were made and collected because of those authors’ interest in documenting the artistic marvels of early Christian Rome. (For analysis of these drawings and accounts, see Chapter Three, Graphic Evidence, and

\textsuperscript{8} This narrative is still evident in the titles of Lim, “Christian Triumph and Controversy,” or Elsner, \textit{Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph}—though neither author can be accused of writing without nuance about the problem of the Christian triumph as a teleological destination.

\textsuperscript{9} There are numerous studies on the identification of Constantine with the sun-god Helios, e.g. Marlowe, “Framing the Sun: The Arch of Constantine and the Appropriation of the Roman Cityscape,” proposing that the Arch of Constantine was erected to frame a statue of the sun god.
Appendix B, Visitors’ Accounts.) While some books that survive to document the basilica are antiquarians’ notebooks, others are encyclopedias of churches (Panvinio) and records of donations by church figures (Grimaldi), and revolve largely around demarcating pagan material culture from that of Christians and setting them in opposition to each other. Martinelli’s *Roma ex ethnica sacra sanctorum Petri et Pauli apostolica praedicatione profuso sanguine* (“Rome delivered from pagan religion by the apostolic preaching of saints Peter and Paul, and by [their] blood shed forth”) provides a telling example of the narrative these authors wished to emphasize: of a pagan city transformed by the revelation of Christianity. Ciampini even believed the hall to date to the 1st century, the age of the Apostles, but credited Constantine with returning it to the Christians from former pagan use and expiating it from the stain of the “ethnici,” i.e. the pagans.\(^\text{10}\)

Giovanni Battista de Rossi carried similar views into the 19th century. In his extensive 1871 study, he argued the hall was a victory monument to Constantine, celebrating the triumph of the Christian emperor.\(^\text{11}\) Carlo Bock, writing at the same time as de Rossi, agreed, theorizing that the basilica was the site of solemn public feasts at the end of October, when the *evictio tyranni*, the defeat of the “tyrant” Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312 CE, was celebrated annually, and that Bassus provided the funds for these feasts.\(^\text{12}\)

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\(^{10}\) Ciampini ch. 27 p. 243. Thanks to Alice Hu for assistance with this translation.

\(^{11}\) De Rossi, “La Basilica Profana Di Giunio Basso.”

\(^{12}\) Bock, “Die Basilika Des Juniuss Bassus Zu Rom.”
Other Proposals: Temple or Basilica Siciniana?

Earlier sources offered alternative proposals for the function of the basilica, though these ideas were not necessarily any less entangled in views about late antiquity as a period when Christian truth stomped out pagan darkness. Philip van Winghe, the Flemish antiquarian, studied the Christian monuments of Rome around 1590 and judged the basilica to have originally been a temple to Diana.\(^{13}\) He found the support for this identification in the Roman poet Martial, because Martial calls the Esquiline “the hill of Diana” and makes an oblique reference to one of her temples there.\(^{14}\) Plutarch also refers to a temple of this goddess on the Esquiline.\(^{15}\) Grimaldi and Gianantonio Bruzio\(^ {16}\) also advanced this viewpoint, while others regarded the hall instead as a temple to Isis Patricia.

This and other views were further influenced by the desire to link the Basilica of Junius Bassus to ancient textual sources. Many authors believed the Basilica of Junius Bassus to be the “Basilica Sicinini” mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus as the site of riots in 367 arising from conflicts between followers of papal contenders Ursinus and

\(^{13}\) Cod. Bruxellens. 17872 f. 27, 28.

\(^{14}\) *Mart. lib. 7*: *Esquiliis domus est, domus est tibi colle Dianae et tua patritius culmina vicus habet*. Lib 12: *Aut collem dominae levis Dianae*

\(^{15}\) Plutarch, *Moralia IV.20.3*.

\(^{16}\) Giacomo Grimaldi, Cod. Vat. 6437 f. 36, 36 v; Giovanni Antonio Bruzio, Cod. Vat. 11875, earlier Arch. Vat. Misc. arm. VI vol. 7, f. 177-192.
Damasus, and labeled it “Basilica Siciniana.” Giovanni Giustino Ciampini labeled the basilica under this heading in his *Vetera Monimenta*, and so did Luigi Canina in the 19th century.

The ramifications of this identification have not been explored. First, the identification of the Basilica of Junius Bassus as the Basilica Siciniana would imply a different timeline for the original conversion of the hall into church than we currently reckon, placing its Christian consecration not in the 5th century with Valila but within only four decades of the building’s initial construction in 331. It is perhaps possible that the hall was a church before Valila’s 5th century donation inscription was put up, but this makes the already muddled question of possession and inheritance by Valila even more unclear: if it were a church already, how would the Goth general come to possess it, and why would it need to be dedicated to the pope?

Second, since Ammianus’ story describes the attack by the Damasian faction (Nicene Christians) on the adherents of Ursinus (Arians) in the church they had taken up, the identification would suggest a definitively Arian persuasion for the church in its earliest incarnation. An Arian church in this location would not be out of the ordinary for the period: Arianism was associated with the Goths of Rome, and with this geographical area between the Esquiline and the Caelian, where they concentrated their residences and

17 G. De Spirito, *LTUR* 1.188, s.v. *Basilica Sicinini*; Amm. Marc. Hist. 27.3.11-16; Rufinus 2.10.

the place of worship. One early Arian church, S. Agatha in the Subura, was decorated by Valila’s commander Ricimer, and others in the area have been identified as likely Arian congregations. Valila, however, is thought to have been of the Nicene persuasion. If indeed the Church of Sant’Andrea Catabarbara had earlier been, in its guise as the Basilica Siciniana, an Arian church, Valila may have had it reconsecrated as part of his dedication. This identification would suggest the Basilica of Junius Bassus/Sant’Andrea Catabarbara/Basilica Siciniana was brought into an early religious conflict—perhaps a foreshadowing of the way in which it would be used in the exchange of power in later centuries (see Chapter Ten, Afterlife).

Fascinating though it is to consider an early Arian identity for the Basilica of Junius Bassus, this possibility seems unlikely to me. De Rossi dismissed the equation

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20 This inscription is copied in Mathisen, “Ricimer’s Church in Rome: How an Arian Barbarian Prospered in a Nicene World,” 309 and survives in *Barb. Lat.* 2161 f. 86r. Note that Ricimer’s identity as an Arian is based on his Ostrogothic and Suevic background and on the fact that the church is reconsecrated as a Nicene one in the 6th century (see Mathisen 309-310), leading us to believe it had started as an Arian one. There is no textual source that declares the general’s religion.

21 This claim is made by Kalas, “Architecture and Elite Identity in Late Antique Rome,” 295 note 46 where he says that Valila’s donation to the pope proves his Nicene identity. The iconography of the apse is not decidedly Arian, however (see Mathisen, “Ricimer’s Church in Rome: How an Arian Barbarian Prospered in a Nicene World,” 311-313). Mathisen also notes the possibility at p. 319 that Valila’s apse decoration was consciously imitating Ricimer’s.
between the Basilica Siciniana and the Basilica of Junius Bassus, considering the Basilica Siciniana to be the same as the Basilica Liberiana, i.e. Santa Maria Maggiore.22

**The Basilica in the 20th Century**

A new surge of data comes out of the Fascist period in Italy, when the site of the Basilica of Junius Bassus was rediscovered. Immediately following the construction of the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology on the block, during the preparations for the construction of the “Russicum,” an seminary of the Russian rite, the basilica was located and excavated by Giuseppe Lugli, who began the task with the help of Thomas Ashby. Lugli’s find is recorded in a letter from 1929 I discovered in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato (see Figure 2.2) and detailed in a 1932 volume of the *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*.23

Around this time, Christian Hülsen’s work on the Basilica of Junius Bassus addressed the problems with the de Rossi/Bock hypothesis that it was a victory monument to Constantine.24 He re-dated the hall, establishing that the Bassus who built the hall was consul in 331, not 317, as de Rossi had believed, and so must have been built many years after the Milvian Bridge battle the hall was supposed to commemorate. Hülsen also tore down the interpretation of Renaissance drawings that de Rossi had used

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22 De Rossi, “La Basilica Di Giunio Basso,” 19. There is no scholarly consensus on whether the Basilica Liberiana and Basilica Siciniana are the same, nor is there agreement on whether the Basilica Liberiana has disappeared or still stands today as the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.


to substantiate his claim about the basilica’s function. He focused on the drawing of Giuliano da Sangallo, who drew a partial interior elevation of the hall’s decorated around the end of the 15th century or the beginning of the 16th, arguing that Sangallo invented more than he recorded, and identifying the coin reverses and other Roman monuments from which Sangallo might have copied to fill in panels in the hall.

Even after Hülsen’s compelling argument against the basilica as a monument to Constantine, however, the idea endured, at least in the mind of Orazio Marucchi, president of the newly-founded Pontifical Institute for Christian Archaeology. Marucchi opened the Institute’s first meeting in their new location at Via Napoleone III in 1928 with a flowery oration praising the director of the institute Monsignor Kirsch, the beneficent Pope Pius XI its founder, and Giovanni Battista De Rossi, through whose initiative the organization had taken root in the late 19th century. In his favorable appraisal of the institute’s location, he noted the proximity not only to the Basilica of the Savior in the Lateran and the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore on the Esquiline, but also the institute’s founding “in the same area as the basilica of Junius Bassus, which with its triumphal Labarum recalled the Constantinian victory and the triumph of Christian civilization.”

The Lateran belonged in the grouping in Marucchi’s comments less for its geographic proximity (although it is true that the processional pathway of today’s Via

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25 Vat. Barb. Lat. 4424, f. 31v

Merulana linked the Lateran with Santa Maria Maggiore both by topographical route and by spiritual procession; see Chapter Ten on the afterlife of the Basilica of Junius Bassus) and more for its symbolism as a triumphal monument of the Christian era: having been built over the barracks where Maxentius’ troops had been housed, the Lateran was in one monument a sign of the eradication of enemy strength and a monument to its pious founder’s generosity. By displacing and destroying this military fortress and turning it to the purpose of worship, Constantine made a statement about not only his own power but about the power and significance of the Church in Rome’s new political configuration. The parallel drawn by Marucchi was meant to emphasize that so, too, had Bassus’ pagan hall been converted to the service of the Christian cause.

To read the monument as one of Christian triumph can be seen as symptomatic of the agendas of a new kind of institutional and institutionalized Christian archaeology. The 19th century saw the formation and formalization of several papal commissions and institutes whose sole responsibilities were to find, study, and conserve the Christian monuments of Rome.27 Marucchi’s comments at the opening of the latest of these institutes expressed the hope that the institute’s efforts in the scientific field would yield the “most copious fruits of dogmatic apology and the traditions of the Catholic church.” A few years later, he would publish his Manual of Christian Archaeology (1935), which “illustrates the oneness of the faith throughout the ages and presents the reader with irresistible proof of the validity of the church's claim to continuity of belief and

27 See e.g. Brandt, “Il cerimoniere, l’epigrafista e la fondazione del Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana.”
For Marucchi and his peers, the finds they made were material evidence, marshalled to establish the authority of the church and its doctrine. Their academic discipline was in service of their institutional canon and spiritual practice.

Scholarship from the middle of the 20th century was also quite taken up with the question of the origin of the Christian basilica as an architectural form, and what made it suitable for adaptation to Christian worship. The basilica of Junius Bassus is often brought into these conversations, but it becomes apparent when looking to other basilicas for hints this architectural type might give about the original uses of the building that that comparison is of limited use as a hermeneutic for this project.

First, the designation of the hall as a basilica is an early modern application, not an ancient one. The term appears for the first time in Platina’s “Life” of Pope Simplicius. In this context, the use of the word “basilica” is only a term that designates a site as a church. Second, the Roman basilica was not a single static type in plan or elevation. The earliest examples in the Roman world (the Basilica Julia Porcia from 184 BCE, now destroyed, and the Basilica Aemilia from 179 BCE) were longitudinal, with entrances on the long sides. But the Roman basilica could take any number of forms, varying in proportion and axial direction; sometimes with open sides and other times closed; sometimes with a second story gallery and other times not; and with different proportions.

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30 *Vitae Pontificum* (1475) s.v. Simplicius
numbers of internal divisions producing different numbers of aisles; and appearing in
different contexts, sometimes public and monumental, other times domestic. In the 15th
century, Alberti wondered whether the term as applied to Christian churches derived from
forum basilicas in Rome, and only after that did the term come to denote a single
category of architectural form.\textsuperscript{31}

Not only was there not a single architectural type that comprised the category
“basilica,” the term in the Roman secular world referred to buildings of a wide range of
function: some used as markets or commercial areas for specialized industries; others as
courts; others as offices for magistrates; others for military exercises; and often for some
combination of these activities. Given this, anyone who wrote or spoke of Junius Bassus’
hall before it was a basilica \textit{qua} church may well have called it a basilica \textit{qua} multi-
purpose space, but we cannot know.

The use of the Basilica of Junius Bassus as an early example of the form
appropriated for Christian use is another instance of the way scholarship on the
Constantinian period has revolved around ecclesiastical history and development. The
narrative of Christian triumph as a predetermined path corresponding to the decline of
classical antiquity underlies much of the early work on the Basilica of Junius Bassus and
informs the broader scholarly projects of those authors.

Interpretations from later in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century varied widely. Walter Schumacher in
1958 tied the Basilica of Junius Bassus to a sarcophagus fragment he believed belong to

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{De Re Aedificatoria}, Florence 1485 (repr. 1975) I. VII, cc. 3, 14, 15.
the basilica’s patron, and suggested that the hall was a funerary basilica, a kind of cenotaph for a member of the Bassus family. Giovanni Becatti took up a study of the hall about a decade later because of its similarities with the *opus sectile* hall at Ostia he excavated. While he pointed out that the inscription’s failure to mention any dedicant made it unlikely that the basilica commemorated some deceased person, he did agree with Schumacher that the decoration of the basilica resonated with themes of death and rebirth. A less mystical but scantly-defended theory about the function of the basilica comes out of Ragna Enking’s study of the Church of Sant’Antonio Abate. Enking suggests almost off-handedly that the basilica was the library of a consul, but does not offer any argument for the idea. There are no shelves or niches in the main hall of the basilica to suggest the building held a collection of books, though it is possible portable furniture could have fulfilled such a role.

**The Domus Theory and Current Views**

Today the basilica is usually labeled a *domus*, or rather part of one, based on the shape of the hall, which has been likened to presentation halls in late Roman elite residences. The consensus around this argument may arise from the popularity in recent decades of the study of late antique housing forms and the function of the domestic

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32 Schumacher, “Zum Sarkophag Eines Christlichen Konsuls.”

33 Enking, *S. Andrea*, 5.

reception hall as a space of self-representation.\textsuperscript{35} I will address the evidence pertaining to this theory in Chapter Four, on the dedication inscription, where I argue that it was a civic hall dedicated to public use, given by Bassus to Rome. Existing treatments of the hall as a domestic building have lent deserved attention to the hall’s decoration as an artifact of self-fashioning for the consul, but the comparison to other domus offers a somewhat disjunct context. This approach fails to account for the way that patronage contributed to status in late antique Rome (and indeed in earlier centuries, as well as in the Medieval period and the Renaissance); just as with domestic décor of reception spaces, patrons advanced their status not simply by donating but by the visual content of their gifts. By redesignating the basilica as a civic space, we can study it in connection with late antique civic euergetism, and integrate strands of evidence that have been treated in isolation.

The project aims to advance an account of how one member of Rome’s late antique aristocracy built and used monuments and manipulated urban topography to evoke and re-shape honorific memory. In doing so, it engages with recent work by Gregory Kalas, Carlos Machado, and John Weisweiler.\textsuperscript{36} These authors’ significant work

\textsuperscript{35} For late antique housing forms see eg eg Baldini-Lippolis, Valenzani R. Santangeli, JP Sodini. See e.g. Barbara Polci, “Some Aspects of the Transformation of the Roman domus between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages;” P. Allison, “Using the material and written sources: turn of the millennium approaches to Roman domestic space;” Ellis, End of the Roman House and “How the Late Roman Aristocrat Appeared to his Guests.”

\textsuperscript{36} For example, Kalas, Restoration of the Roman Forum in Late Antiquity Transforming Public Space; Machado, “Urban Space and Power in Late Antique Rome;” Ibid., “Building the Past: Monuments and Memory in the Forum Romanum;” Ibid., “The City as Stage: Aristocratic Commemorations in Late Antique Rome;” and John Weisweiler, “From Equality to Asymmetry: Honorific Statues, Imperial Power and Senatorial Identity in Late-Antique Rome.”
typically deals with epigraphic evidence, often statue base inscriptions, as indicators of monumentality and honorific use of public space. While such inscriptions offer a trace of the works of art with which they were once associated, the statues themselves have been removed—reused, melted down, collected, or otherwise denuded of their original contexts. As a result, their studies can only go so far in treating the visual sphere. A study like this one permits us to see the way images advanced and maintained social stature, and the way that the aesthetic delights gifted by a patron interplayed with his spectators’ wonder over exotic animal combats or his peers’ appreciation of a fine building.

**Chapter Overview**

Chapter One introduces the patron of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Known to us by this name from a building inscription, the founder might be any one of several members of the Bassus family tree, and has been variously identified in the last century and a half or so. The inscription identifies this Bassus as ordinary consul, allowing us to pinpoint him in Roman lists of office-holders. Identifying him as the Bassus who was consul in 331 CE is what permits us to date the eponymous building, and this provides a concurrence of a known archaeological site connected with a securely attested historical personage. Moreover, establishing a link between the building and this particular Bassus affords an understanding of his biography—his training, his possible origins, his economic class, his duties as consul and praetorian prefect—and with that, a better grasp of his motives and intentions in presenting himself to the public. From this basis, I expand outward to look at not just Bassus as an individual, but his peers of the late third and first part of the fourth century: the senatorial aristocracy, administrators of a changing
Roman empire. Competition between these elites has left a legible mark on the archaeological and textual record, in the form of honorific statues, inscriptions and documents testifying to the restoration and arrangement of public spaces, and elaborate domus with interior decoration. This section sets us up to understand how Bassus participated in these modes of competitive self-display, and in what he ways he diverged from the usual performance of self-presentation.

Chapter Two collates the archaeological evidence of the basilica, excavated by Giuseppe Lugli during an excavation at the end of the 1920s. This evidence is compared to the other kinds of evidence we have about the hall, such as that presented in Chapter Three, which lays out the graphic evidence from the basilica, both in the form of surviving panels and Renaissance period drawings. A close look at these materials reveals gaps and discrepancies in our fragmentary record of this monument. I have undertaken a digital reconstruction project, produced with the help of architect Natasha Sanjaya, which I hope will assist readers in visualizing the basilica, although there are difficulties involved in producing a reconstruction that makes any definitive claim to historical accuracy. While this text does not comment extensively on the process and problems of virtual reconstruction, I have included some illustrations of our work here for the reader’s reference.

Most thorny of the historiographic issues is what the function or “destination” of the Basilica of Junius Bassus was when it was first constructed. Though we know the building was converted to a church, it was not built as one. The fourth chapter looks at
the epigraphic evidence from the site to argue that the inscription would only make sense in a building dedicated to public use.

Having established the monument was a civic benefaction, I turn in Chapter Five to the landscape of Rome’s Esquiline Hill, which would have been the existing backdrop for the Basilica of Junius Bassus. The area is generally looked at as a residential quarter with few if any monumental buildings. Against earlier interpretations, I construe this zone as a significant node of civic life in Late Antiquity. I argue that the Basilica of Junius Bassus contributed further to the burgeoning monumentality of the zone, and that Bassus may have chosen the site for the locational authority offered by institutions likely located on the hill, such as the urban prefecture.

Part Two of the dissertation takes up the surviving decoration from the hall, four panels in *opus sectile* that are now held in the Museo Capitolino and Palazzo Massimo in Rome. The imagery borrows from a vocabulary of themes and motifs already familiar to the Roman viewer. Bassus exploits the familiarity of these images and themes, mobilizing their meanings from other contexts in order to evoke associations with power, wealth, and eternal victory. Each chapter considers treatment by earlier scholars, offers comparanda for the iconography, and positions the panel in the context of the wider decorative scheme of the basilica, at least as far as it was known or can be reconstructed. The chapters vary in methodological approach, each representing a possible interpretive frame through which the panel can be read. While each frame can be overlaid onto the basilica as a whole, no chapter is meant to offer a key for decoding the visitor experience in its
entirely. Rather, these chapters are “interpretive soundings” that explore vectors of the experience of seeing the basilica’s interior and walking around in it.\(^\text{37}\)

Chapter Six examines the panel of a magistrate processing in a *biga*, flanked by representatives of the four circus factions (See Figure 0.1). Against previous interpretations that suggest the man depicted is Bassus-as-charioteer or even the later property owner Valila, I argue that the panel represents Bassus in the *pompa circensis*, a parade to the Circus Maximus. The panel commemorates his inauguration as consul and solemnizes his gift of spectacular games to open the new year. I analyze the image as a depiction of movement through the city, highlighting the ways in which the procession required the consensus of the people, enacted through their movement with the consul through the city’s landmarks. By placing this ceremonial imagery inside his Esquiline Hall, Bassus transported to the northeastern zone of the city the kinds of civic *gravitas* usually seen in the monumental zone of the historic center. This chapter also looks at late antique panegyric and its imagery of consular investiture, with particular attention to the consular robes as a sign of the consul’s identity and of his inhabiting a role equal to the emperor. Finally, the chapter considers the consul’s role as agent of renewal and cosmic order. By virtue of his association with calendrical rhythms and the festivities of early January, the consul was bringer of a new year. The circus, the site of the games the consul orchestrated, was understood by ancient viewers to be a microcosm of the wider universe. Authority or victory in the arena symbolized a more lasting, universal authority and

\(^{37}\) I am grateful to Cam Grey for this formulation.
victory. By association with circus imagery, then, the panel elevates Bassus’ consular accession to a kind of cosmic triumph.

Chapter Seven takes up the rape of Hylas, a mythological lunette that depicts the handsome youth abducted by nymphs while on a voyage with the Argonauts (see Figure 0.2). Most studies of the Hylas myth in art focus on composition and iconographic origins, an approach that lends little to an interpretation of the panel in its context. Those who have examined this particular panel have seen this as an allegory for the transcendence of the soul. I think it more likely to have been an instance (perhaps one of many) of mythological content in the basilica, meant to show the patron’s paideia and comfort with literary culture. My treatment of the panel, by contrast to other approaches, is aimed at a wider investigation of viewing and reception in the ancient world as a multi-sensory experience. The story of Hylas originated in the Hellenistic period, but even as its various textual variants transformed across the centuries, all versions preserved the tale’s sonic dimensions: Hylas shrieking when he is overtaken by the nymphs, and Hercules crying out in anguish to find his beleaguered beloved. In some accounts, Hylas is transformed into an echo, his voice ringing and thwarting Hercules’ search. The chapter takes advantage of the sonic resonance of the Hylas tale to explore the aural dimensions of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. The hall does not leave enough material remains for modeling the reverberation of sound in the basilica for a “sensory archaeology” study. Ancient texts, however, especially Lucian’s On the Hall and Philostratus’ Imagines.

38 Becatti, Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina, 198-105.
indicate that vocalized response was an expected part of interacting with image programs. This analysis allows us to not only see the Hylas panel, but to attempt to hear it, as an ancient viewer-visitor would have, and opens up new avenues for understanding the sensorially-heightened reception of art.

Chapter Eight focuses on the faux tapestry beneath the Hylas lunette and the procession of Egyptian figures that tread along its hem. Earlier interpretations have taken the Egyptianizing content of the decoration as bespeaking the pagan temple function of the hall, or as indicator of Bassus’ own adherence to an Isiac cult. I read this motif not as an indicator of Bassus’ religious affiliation, nor as a political statement about conquest, but as one of a range of possible luxury images. Its foreignness displays the patron’s sophisticated, cosmopolitan taste, and signals Roman access to the resources of the entire ancient world. The Aegyptiaca thus serve as a paratext, a kind of framing motif that invites the viewer to see the program (or what survives) in light of Rome’s position in the Mediterranean world, which permitted them access to and appreciation of the antiquity and learning of other lands.

Chapter Nine discusses the tiger panels, now in the collections of the Museo Capitolino in Rome (See Figures 0.3 and 0.4). The iconography of a predator attacking a defenseless animal is far older than the Roman tradition, and Bassus leaned on the familiarity of the imagery to call up associations with kingly power and nobility. In this context, we should see the tiger panels as documenting the animal displays and matched

39 Valladares, “Pictorial Paratexts: Floating Figures in Roman Wall Painting.”
combats that took place at Roman spectacles. Such creatures were valuable commodities, increasingly more so in the late empire. Bassus had not only to invest vast material wealth, but also to mobilize social networks and political connections to gain access to the kinds of infrastructure (largely under imperial control) necessary to capture, house, and transport exotic animals to Rome from across the Roman world. Similar investments were required to procure the materials for Bassus’ hall. The marbles used in his decoration, which were often called after their countries of origin, stood for the expanse of the empire and the extent of the Roman world. The resources gathered in the hall, whether in the form of stone or represented in stone, displayed Bassus’ wealth and influence as well as the centrality of Rome as *caput mundi*.

In the final chapter of the dissertation, I trace the post-antique afterlife of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. The hall was transformed into a church, Sant’Andrea Catabarbara, by Pope Simplicius in the 5th century, after it came into the possession of a Goth general named Valila. During the centuries of the medieval period, Sant’Andrea became the home of a community of monks, and was intermittently placed in the charge of the neighboring papal basilica, Santa Maria Maggiore. As such, its fate was often tied up with that church and with the popes who favored its position in preference to the Lateran basilica. The church of Sant’Antonio Abate was constructed just southeast of the site of the basilica, and the newer church incorporated the older into its complex, using the latter as a hospital building to treat patients for a skin disease known as “St. Anthony’s Fire.” Sant’Andrea turned hospital eventually became a storage house where
grain and animals were kept. It suffered spoliation and demolition, and eventually vanished altogether.

The site, however, retained its significance through the centuries of the Renaissance, the early modern period and the unification of Italy, and into the Fascist era. When the Vatican purchased this city block in the 1920s and began work there on several pontifical institutes, the Basilica of Junius Bassus was rediscovered, in what today we would call a “rescue” or “salvage” excavation. The excavation of the hall took place during Mussolini’s rule over Italy, just as the Pope and Prime Minster were formulating a series of accords known as the Lateran Treaty. My archival research indicates that the finds from the Bassus excavation were implicated in this power struggle, just as the site had been wielded as a token of power in earlier centuries. The demolished monument has much to tell us about not only its fourth century context but also the vicissitudes of time and transformation in Rome over the centuries between then and now.

Though this monument is but one example of an aristocrat asserting his power through architectural and visual means, it is a powerful one, where several threads of evidence come together: an archaeological site; a collection of remarkable, if scant, material remains; epigraphy; textual sources; primary source accounts from later periods in the form of both writing and drawing; and archival material. These have never been brought together into a comprehensive account of the hall. Here, I take staples from our Late Antique pictorial repertoire and turn them back into the monumental décor they once were. Arising in an environment where the contest for status and recognition was enacted
across not only in the political arena but across the landscape of Rome, the Basilica of Junius Bassus has much to offer our understanding of Late Antiquity.
PART I
CHAPTER 1
Junius Bassus: The Man, His Peers, and His City

Junius Bassus makes a remarkable case study in part because there are historical texts that survive to match up with the archaeological record. Besides the dedication inscription from the basilica and the usual consular *fasti*, we have several *constitutiones*, that is, correspondence from the emperor to his officials. These communications are preserved for us due to their later compilation in the Codex Theodosianus and the Justinianic Digest. These documents have been used to piece together the late antique prosopography, using details such as their dates and their addressees to situate magistrates in chronological and geographical arrangement. Among these are several pieces of correspondence *ad Bassum*, sometimes with an office or title appended, and other times lacking such a helpful identifier. Altogether, these records chronicle the career progress of no fewer than four distinct Bassi who held office in the first part of the 4th century: Septimius Bassus, Caesonius Bassus, and two men with the name Junius Bassus. Our first task, then, is to establish which Bassus is at the center of the current study.

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40 Porena, *Le origini della prefettura del pretorio tardoantica*, 345 ff. Porena’s view here is a revision of the chronology proposed by Otto Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n. Chr. Vorarbeit zu einer Prosopographie der christlichen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche, 1919), based on the constitutions sent to a Bassus recorded in the *CTh*. This prosopography is also taken up by Evrard, “Une Inscription Inédite d’Aqua Viva e La Carrier Des Junii Basil[,]” discussed below.
The Bassus Inscription

To learn about the patron of the basilica, his political career, and his donation, we must begin with the signature inscription of the hall. It is reported to have been on the interior of the church on a stone frieze beneath the apse mosaic, either just above (according to Menestrier) or just below (according to Ugonio) the later 5th century inscription that commemorated the re-dedication of the building as a church. As recorded in full by an anonymous writer in Cod. Sen. K X 35, f. 139 r (for which see Figure 1.1), the inscription reads:

IVNIVS BASSVS V[IR] C[LARISSIMUS] CONSUL ORDINARIVS PROPRIA IMPENSA A SOLO FECIT ET DEDICA VIT FELICITER

Junius Bassus, vir clarissimus, ordinary consul, built [this] from the ground up at his own expense and dedicated it auspiciously.

The inscription is part of a sylloge (ff. 123v-141r) in the larger manuscript, preceded by the title Res priscae variaque antiquitatis monumenta undique ex omni orbe collecta. The compendium contains nearly 80 inscriptions, which have only recently been scrutinized as an epigraphic corpus. The inscriptions are interrupted mid-page on 141r,

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41 Ugonio Cod. Vat. Barb. Lat. 2160, earlier 1055, then XXXI, 45, describes it as being in a “fregio di pietra,” which could have meant the letters were incised and painted, or perhaps that bronze letters were installed in the marble. This distinguishes it from the Valila inscription that seems to have been done in mosaic. Figure T6, a 17th century engraving by Ciampini, depicts only the later inscription.

42 This citation is given correctly by de Rossi in ICUR, though he does not indicate whether it is on the recto or the verso of the page. He gives K X 135, incorrectly, in the CIL and BAC.

43 By Daniela Gionta, to whom I am grateful for sharing a copy of her article when no library could provide me with it: “Una Piccola Sylloge Epigrafica in Un Manoscritto della Roma
and five blank pages follow before the *Menologium Rusticum Vallense* (ff. 146v-148r).\(^{44}\) The sylloge is preceded by *De Roma Instaurata*, by Flavius Blondus (Flavio Blondo), in the same hand.\(^{45}\) Gionta dates the quarto to between 1447 and 1457,\(^{46}\) and identifies its copyist as Theodericus Bucking (also Buckink, Buchinch, Buchinck), a copyist from Münster working at the Curia in the mid-15\(^{th}\) century, known to have been under the employ of Giorgio di Trebizonda (or George of Trebizond) and Giovanni Toscanella.\(^{47}\)

Gionta points out that this collection, if its *terminus ante quem* is indeed 1457, offers us the oldest testimony for many inscriptions contained in the collections of

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\(^{44}\) This is as described by Gionta at p. 198. A recension of this manuscript is also given at number 30 (S2), p. 656-7 in Fabio Della Schiava and Marc Laureys, “La Roma Instaurata Di Biondo Flavio: Censimento Dei Manoscritti,” *Aevum* 87, no. fasc. 3 (2013): 643–65. Following the *Menologium* are *De iuris notarum significatione* (ff. 149r – 150v) and *Excerpta de notis antiquis* of Valerio Probo (ff. 150v-156r). The codex is indexed in Lorenzo Ilari, *La Biblioteca Pubblica Di Siena*, vol. VI (Siena: Tipografia All’insegna dell’Ancora, 1847), p. 434.


\(^{46}\) Gionta, p. 205. Scholars in the 19\(^{th}\) century had already pinpointed the mid-15\(^{th}\) century as its date: ICUR II, 1 p. 343; and in the 20\(^{th}\), Huelsen p. 59.

\(^{47}\) On Bucking, see Elisabetta Caldelli, “Per Un Autografo Di Andrea Contrario,” 142-3.
Marcanova, Giocondo, and Pomponio Leto, as well as Redi. 77. Many of the inscriptions at the beginning of the compendium seem to be drawn from Poggio and Signorili, though some of its contents are found in neither collection. The sylloge also overlaps substantively with inscriptions from the collection of Ciriaco of Ancona, but Gionta notes some inscriptions that are not in Ciriacus and are found only in the later manuscripts of Giocondo or Pomponio Leto or Redi. 77. These overlaps suggest the circle of antiquarians in which the manuscript was produced, even if we are not able to say whether the inscriptions are owed to the collection of Ciriacus of Ancona as de Rossi theorized.

To Gionta’s analysis I can contribute a few data points from my own study of an image of folio 139r. There are two full inscriptions on the page besides the Bassus inscription, plus two other inscriptions that run from the preceding page or onto the following. Some are otherwise attested, and some are found only in this codex. At the top of the page, a passage from the Justinianic Digest carries over from the previous folio.

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48 Gionta 204. For an introduction to this milieu, see Marco Buonocore, “Epigraphic Research from Its Inception: The Contribution of Manuscripts.”

49 Gionta 201.

50 Gionta pp. 201-202, noting duplication with transcriptions handed down by Ottob. Lat. 2967.


52 As recorded in the codex:
This content suggests the sylloge must contain inscriptions from a variety of sources, some perhaps not inscribed in durable material, and with material from Rome predominating. The next text is an inscription, *CIL* 6, 1947, located *In sancto Salvatore prope pontem*, that is attested only by the Sienese codex.\(^{53}\) The Bassus inscription is next, and while it is recorded elsewhere, only here does it appear in such complete form.

```plaintext

EOS QVI NEGLIGENTER I
GNES APUD SE HABVERVNT
POTES FVSTIBVS VEL FLA
GELLIS CEDI IVBERE · EOS AV
TEM QVI DOLO FECISSE IN
CENDIVM CONVICENTVR
AD FLAVIVM CILIONEM PRAE
FECTVM VRBIS AMICVM PRÆ
MITTERE · ET FVGITIVOS
CONQVIRE EROSQVE DOMI
NIS REDDERE DEBES.

With some alterations/corrections at *Dig.* 1.15.4.

\(^{53}\) As recorded in the Sienese codex:

D. CAESILIVS SINGENVS APPAR.
AEDILIC. PRAEC. VICAR. VETE
RIBVS CVBIC. HYPETR. CVM
ORNAM · SVIS · D · S · D · D

With slight variations in the *CIL* edition. The inscription is discussed in Traugott Shiess, *Die Römischen Collegia Funeraticia Nach Den Inschriften* (Munich: Theodor Ackermann, 1888) where it appears as no. 16a. The CIL recension suggests a spelling error (“s” where we would expect a “c”) on the part of the scribe or the source he was copying, and the edited version removes the “s” at the beginning of *ingenus*, turning the manuscript’s *Singenus*, presumably intended as a proper name, into the flattering adjective “clever.” The transcription in the manuscript does not, however, appear to invent endings or supply additional words that the CIL editors saw fit to remove.

\[^{53}\]
Beneath that comes a votive inscription to Jove Ammon and Silvanus from the church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere that is corroborated elsewhere.\textsuperscript{54}

These samples may not be representative, given that this is but one page of inscriptions representing four examples of nearly 80 in the collection.\textsuperscript{55} Still, they give no

\textsuperscript{54} In Sancta Cecilia [in Trastevere]

\texttt{IOVI HAMMONI ET SILVANO}

\texttt{D. STERTIRILVS QVARTVS}

\texttt{D.D}

Not to my knowledge listed in \textit{CIL}, but treated and illustrated in Jan Gruter and Georg Graeve, \textit{Inscriptiones Antiquae Totius Orbis Romani in Absolutissimum Corpus Redactae} (Amsterdam: Franciscus Halma, 1707), pag. XXI no. 7 under the heading \texttt{DEDICATORVM}. These authors annotate the drawing to indicate the inscription comes from Mazochio and Apiano, ie Jacopo Mazochio’s 1521 \textit{Epigrammata antiquae urbis} (the first printed collection of inscriptions in Rome) and Petrus Apianus (or Peter Bienewitz) who together with Bartholomaeus Amantius printed a corpus of inscriptions in Ingolstadt in 1534. See Nancy de Grummond, s.v. “Epigraphy, Latin” p. 398. I have not discovered whether Mazochio and Apianus were transcribing from autopsy or relying on earlier testimonies for this inscription, but the illustration in Gruter and Graeve would suggest a source different from the Sienese copyist, since he does not reproduce the format of the inscription on an object, and merely transcribes the lines.

\textsuperscript{55} The final inscription on the page continues on to the next page. As visible on this folio, it reads:

\texttt{Ante Sanctum Stephanum in Caro}

\texttt{C·TERENTIO C·L·PAMPHILO}

\texttt{SACARIO. POST · AEDEM CASTO}

\texttt{RIS · CALPVRNIAE · D·L. SALVIAE}

This corresponds with \textit{CIL} VI, 9782: \texttt{C(aio) Terentio C(ai) l(iberto) Pamphilo, / sagario post aedem Castoris, / Calpurnia D(ecimi) l(ibertae) Salviae, / Mariae L(uci) f(iliae) Rufae, / C(aius) Terentio C(ai) l(iberto) Rufioni, / Terentiae C(ai) l(ibertae) Polini, / C(aius) Terentius C(ai) l(ibertus) Eros, his omnibus qui supra scriptii / sunt et sibi faciundum curavit.} The inscription is published in Alessandro Cristofori, \textit{Non Arma Virumque: Le Occupazioni Nell’epigrafia Del Piceno} (Bologna: Lo Scarabeo, 2004) on p. 436, no. 13. Aside from a spelling difference in in \texttt{sagario} (apparently derived from \texttt{sagus} or \texttt{sagum}, a heavy mantle distinguished from the toga,
prima facie rationale for dismissing or distrusting the Sienese copyist. Rather, they indicate that there is information contained in the Sienese codex not otherwise duplicated, on which scholars of the 19th century and later have relied.\footnote{There are a few inscriptions that appear uniquely in this sylloge: a dedication to Caracalla from the 5th cohort of the vigili: CIL 6, 1066. de Rossi, “Le stazioni delle sette coorti dei vigili nella città di Roma,” \textit{Annali dell’Istituto di corrispondenza archeological} 30 (1858) p. 286.} Besides uniquely attested inscriptions this information sometimes takes the form of headings and captions that give details not contained in other epigraphic collections: the location of the \textit{Menologium Vallense}, for example.\footnote{As recorded in CIL 6, 2306, 19 = 32504. Gionta 198 notes this information is not included in the collections of Pomponio Leto, Ferrarini, or Giocondo.}

It is on the Sienese manuscript’s version of the Bassus inscription that I rely in this study. There are later, more lacunose transcriptions, which I will discuss below, but the majority of the data aligns with the reading in the Sienese codex, and we can reasonably imagine that the gaps that arose between the earliest record and the latest ones can be explained by the ongoing degradation of the building and its lack of maintenance during that time. We know for example from Grimaldi’s report that monks were scraping the walls in these centuries to give the resulting dust to their patients.\footnote{Grimaldi Cod. Vat. Lat 6437, 36 and 36v.} While this does not evidence direct damage to the inscription, it does indicate a lack of concern for the state of the antique monument. It would be expected for the paint in an inscribed text to fade, or for inlaid bronze letters to be spoliated under these circumstances.

\footnote{discussed on p. 434), the Sienese writer’s transcription appears reliable. My thanks to Ann Kuttner for locating this inscription when I could not.}
One objection that might be lodged against the transcription of the Bassus inscription in the Sienese codex is that its label says “In St. Antonio,” where one might expect it to say “Sant’Andrea Catabarbara,” the name of the church to which the Basilica of Junius Bassus was converted. Sant’Antonio, however, was the name of the new church (c. 13th century; see Chapter Ten, “Afterlife”) at the site, which absorbed Sant’Andrea into its functions. Sant’Andrea appears to have been used as a hospital hall by the monks at Sant’Antonio. Its name no longer appears in the church catalogues of the 12th-15th centuries, and Ragna Enking notes the increasing prevalence of the designation Sant’Antonio in this period,\(^59\) so it is perhaps not surprising that the source for the Sienese codex employed the prevailing church’s name. This is not to say that the name of Sant’Andrea had entirely disappeared; it is used by Ciacconi, Ugonio, and Grimaldi, but other sources put the designation Sant’Antonio ahead of Sant’Andrea in their descriptions (van Winghe) and note the conjunction of the two churches (see Appendix).

**The Later Recensions**

The most lacunose versions of the inscription come from the last two decades of the 16th century. Ugonio and van Winghe both record the same content at this time, though they arrange it differently on the page.\(^60\)

\(^{59}\) Enking 56.

\(^{60}\) As I note in the appendix, I viewed these pages in person at the Vatican Library. I have been unable to provide images here because of the prohibitive cost and low quality of reproduction images. In the case of the Menestrier manuscript, I counted the number of ticks or ellipses (35 in the first line, 26 in the second) in case this was meant to indicate a specific number of missing letters. I did not do the same for Ugonio, and merely confirmed that the text was as de Rossi and Huelsen had it, so I have reproduced it here as de Rossi has it on p. 26.
Van Winghe:

……………………………… S.V.C. CONSVL

O…………………….. ET DEDICAV

ER\(^61\)

Ugonio:

S · V · C · CONSVL O…….. ET DEDICAV……. ER\(^62\)

Between these chronologically is a version recorded by Petrus Sabinus:

SSVS CONSVL · ORDINARIVS · PROBIN · ET DEDICAVERUNT FELICITER\(^63\)

From the more fragmentary versions of the inscription we can derive at least enough information to determine that a consul made a dedication, since all the attestations include the use of the verb “dedicate,” whether in singular or plural, and record “consul” in the nominative. If we take the “O” in the van Winghe and Ugonio recensions to stand for *ordinarius*, as the Sabinus version and its predecessor suggest we should, then we can assume we are searching for a dedicant who held the position of ordinary consul. Though this post, as distinct from the suffect consulship invented by Augustus, is as ancient as the Republic, de Rossi informs us that it was not until the 3\(^{rd}\)

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\(^61\) For van Winghe, c. 1590: cod. Bruxellens. 17872 f. 27, 28, via Cl. Menestrier cod. Vat. 10545 f. 227v., discussed by de Rossi p. 11-12.

\(^62\) Ugonio: cod. Vat. Barb. Lat. 2160, earlier 1055, then XXXI, 45, f. 130.

\(^63\) Cod. Marc. Lat. X., 195 p. 298, as cited by de Rossi p. 27. I have not been able to obtain a copy of this page, although my correspondence with the library up to this point suggests the page reference might be incorrect.
We can reason that as access to the ordinary consulship grew more restricted, it was only this office that granted the same magnificence, and thus holders wanted to emphasize that they held the “real” consulship, not the inferior suffect consulship.

If we accept only the final S that precedes V.C. in the two latest manuscript versions, this does not get us far with possible names of consuls for the period—there are too many, and we must content ourselves with an unnamed patron. If we go further, however, and accept Sabinus’ transcription of SSVS based on its corroboration with the Sienese manuscript, we can assume we are dealing with an inscription placed by a consul whose name was Bassus—though not necessarily the Bassus discussed in this study.

Working from the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (which of course was not published for another century after de Rossi was writing), we have the following Bassi who were consuls from the 3rd to 5th centuries:

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64 De Rossi BAC p. 43-4. CLRE p. 3 echoes this, pointing to Mommsen *Staatsrecht* II.1, chapter 3 “Das Consulat,” p. 92, saying the earliest examples are from 212 and 214, which may be an error because these are given in Mommsen’s note 7 as C. Octavius Sabinus, cos. 214 (*Ephem. Epigraph.* 1872 vol 1, p. 130) and C. Vettius (or Valerius) Gratius Sabinianus, cos. 221 (Borghesi *Oeuvres complètes* T. 5, 396).

65 This is consistent with Robert R. Chenault, “Rome Without Emperors: The Revival of a Senatorial City in the Fourth Century CE” (The University of Michigan, 2008), p. 71, which points out that by the Severan period there were 12 suffect consuls and the position consequently lost prestige, so that by the fourth century only ordinary consuls had the high status the position had formerly afforded. CLRE p. 1 says there were as many as 25 suffects in 190 CE.
Bassus (PLRE I 1), cos. 262/266;
Caesonius Bassus (PLRE I 12), cos. 317;
Junius Bassus (PLRE I 14), cos. 331;
M. Magrius Bassus (PLRE I 16), cos 289;
Pomponius Bassus (PLRE I 17), cos. 259, 271;
Anicius Auchenius Bassus (PLRE II 7), cos. 408; and
Flavius Anicius Auchenius Bassus (PLRE II 8), cos. 431.  

De Rossi worked his way through his own list, eliminating Bassi who were not
named Junius in accordance with the Sienese codex’s version of the dedication
inscription. Believing the name of Bassus 12 (cos. 317) to have been uncertain, and

66 De Rossi identifies all of these as possible candidates for builders of the basilica except the
first. This Bassus (personal names unknown), may have been unknown to de Rossi at the time.
The PLRE reports that he is not listed in the fasti, and I expect he would not be eligible for
consideration because he was not designated ordinary consul, but was consul in the Gallic empire
under Postumus. Additionally, de Rossi considered the consul of 452, whom he lists as as Flavio
Basso Ercolano, referencing ICUR 1 p. 33 n. 757, but this name is not retained in the more
modern prosopography.

67 On p. 44-5 de Rossi goes through each of these in reverse chronological order, as follows:
the consuls of 431 and 408 belonged to the gens Anicia, not Giunia; the consul of 330 [sic] he
eliminated because he believed to him to be of the gens Annia, not Giunia. Huelsen corrected this
using a later transcription of the Athanasian letter than de Rossi had used, done by Eduard
Schwartz. The letter was in Greek but preserved only in a Syrian translation. Schwarz’s reading
gave, instead of “Anniou” (which de Rossi had taken to mean of the gens Annia), “Iouniou.” The
consul of 289 was named M. Macrius Bassus, and the consul of 259/271 was named Pomponius
Bassus. The next oldest Bassus who was consul held the magistracy in 211. De Rossi reasoned
that he would likely not have used the “ordinarius” designation in his inscription, and at any rate
his name was Pomponius. This left only the consul of 317, whom de Rossi said might be called
Septimius, but he regarded the documentation of his name as insecure. (In fact Septimius Bassus,
or Bassus PLRE I 19, was not consul, but urban prefect of Rome from 317-319. The consul of
317 was Caesonius Bassus, as indicated above.) Since de Rossi reasoned the monument to be
Bassus 14 (cos. 331) to have been called Annius, he settled on Bassus 12. It was Christian Hülsen who first identified the patron as Junius Bassus consul in 331 instead.\textsuperscript{68} Chastagnol followed.\textsuperscript{69} These authors all trusted the Sienese codex (and the corroboration of the Sabinus text) far enough to search for a “Junius” among the Bassi.\textsuperscript{70}

The Sabinus recension of the inscription is the most problematic. It is missing \textit{VC}, indication of the dedicator’s rank, but still has \textit{CONSVL ORDINARIVS} as evidence of his magistracy. De Rossi explains this by attributing the error to a copyist, rather than Sabinus himself.\textsuperscript{71} This is speculation, of course; either Sabinus failed to see something de Winghe and Ugonio were able to see later, or he or his copyist made a mistake, we cannot know. De Rossi posited that perhaps Sabinus understood \textit{PROBIN} to indicate a “Probina” (perhaps clarissima femina, wife of the named \textit{SSVS}), which compelled Sabinus to make a “correction” to the text he saw, making \textit{dedicavit} into the plural form \textit{dedicaverunt}. An alternative possibility is that \textit{PROBIN} was simply a misreading of \textit{propria} (perhaps from an elision of \textit{propria impensa} such as \textit{prop.imp.}, although I have dedicated to Constantine shortly after the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, it was Bassus consul in 317 who was his patron of choice.

\textsuperscript{68} Hülsen 63. See note above.

\textsuperscript{69} Chastagnol, \textit{Les Fastes de La Préfecture de Rome Au Bas-Empire.} p. 70 (on Septimius Bassus) and p. 150-1.

\textsuperscript{70} Not available to these scholars was an inscription discovered in the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century on the Via Flaminia that clarifies the relationship of our Junius Bassus, consul in 331, and his son, also Junius Bassus, who died in the office of urban prefect in 359: AE 1964, 203. This inscription will be discussed below rather than here, as it does not serve to verify anything about the identification of the basilica’s dedicant.

\textsuperscript{71} De Rossi p. 27.
not found comparable examples of such abbreviations). De Rossi’s rehabilitation of Sabinus’ transcription results in a reconstruction that addresses these discrepancies, bringing it into line with the other redactions.72

I cannot explain the Sabinus transcription any better than de Rossi’s speculations do, but I would reiterate that the majority of the evidence we have aligns with or at least does not conflict with the version in the Sienese codex. We might have reason to be skeptical of the earliest record of the inscription if its language deviated sharply from the characteristic habits of dedicatory epigraphy, but this is not the case. The mid-15th century author’s documentation is utterly consistent with the formulae of dedication inscriptions in the Roman world. Phrases like *propria impensa* and *a solo* are customary in inscriptions that dedicate renovations or new construction. (Specific parallels will be adduced in chapter three.) I follow specialists with greater epigraphic expertise in adducing this text as the authoritative edition.73

A skeptical reader can substitute “the Bassus of the Esquiline basilica” where I speak specifically of Junius Bassus if she is not satisfied with the evidence that eliminates

72 Ibid.: *baSSVS V·C·CONSVL·ORDINARIVS et PROBIna c[larissima] f[emina] eius [i.e., uxor] fecerunt ET DEDICAVERVNT FELICITER*. De Rossi does not strongly defend this reconstruction, however, nor does he relate Probina to Bassus cos. 317 or any other Bassus. The reconstruction is possible but perhaps somewhat wishful. I do not see reason to accept it over the evidence of the Sienese manuscript.

73 Not only de Rossi, Huelsen, and Chastagnol, but also Gregor Kalas, who argues that Valila’s choice to leave the inscription on view when he installed his own served to appropriate Bassus’ identity as Roman consul (Gregor Kalas, “Architecture and Elite Identity in Late Antique Rome: Appropriating the Past at Sant’Andrea Catabarbara,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 81 (2013): 279–302) as well as John Weisweiler, with whom I have corresponded.
the other Bassi. Even a more incredulous reader might reasonably concede that the
evidence propounded suggests the building was a dedication by a(n ordinary) consul. If
we are forced to generalize to this extent about the identity of the patron, the arguments
that follow in this thesis remain intact, insofar as they touch on consular self-presentation
of the late antique aristocracy.

**Bassus and His Career**

To most casual students of art history and classics, the more famous Junius Bassus
is the owner of the columnar Christian sarcophagus now housed in the Vatican collections
(see Figure 1.2).\(^74\) The inscription on the sarcophagus lid relates that this Bassus died in
359, while serving as urban prefect of the Rome, and that he was newly baptized upon his
death.\(^75\) The dedication inscription from the hall, however, indicates that its builder was
consul, whereas the *cursus* inscribed on the sarcophagus offers no indication that its
inhabitant ever was. Had the Bassus who was urban prefect in 359 attained this office,
such an accomplishment would not have been omitted from the building inscription. This
fact rules out the identification of Bassus the neophyte (i.e. Bassus Jr.) with Bassus the
basilica-builder (i.e. Bassus Sr.). Thus de Rossi’s identification was dismantled, and the
Bassus who built the basilica was established as the one who was consul in 331.


Epigraphic evidence discovered in the 1960s helped the scholarly community to near-unanimity in this identification. A statue base inscription found on the Via Flaminia 32 miles outside Rome that mentioned both Bassi conveyed their familial relationship and filled out the picture of their political careers:  

76  


To Iunius Bassus, vir clarissimus, *comes* of the first rank, *vicarius* of the city of Rome, prefect of the city, judge of sacred causes, son of Iunius Bassus vir clarissimus, praetorian prefect during 14 years and ordinary consul.  

78  

On the left side face of the stone is a complementary inscription that dates the dedication:  


[The statue was] dedicated the 15th day before the calends of August, under the consulate of Divus Iovianus and of Varronianus (18 July 364)  

79  

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76 For discussion of the finds and extensive documentation of the statue base inscription see Evrard, “Une Inscription Inédite d’Aqua Viva e La Carrier Des Junii Basii.”  

77 Evrard points out that from the arrangement of the text on the monument it would appear *Theotecnii* was at first meant to be the only word on the first line, and that *Bassi* was added after second thought. For discussion of *Theotecnos* as a name and *Theotecn(i)us* as an individual or collective *signum* that may have indicated membership in a familial college or religious group, see p. 622 and ff.  

78 Translation based on Evrard 614.  

79 Evrard 617.
The Bassus who is called *Theotecnius* in this inscription can be identified as the same dedicant of the aforementioned sarcophagus, urban prefect in 359 and deceased the same year. He was the son of a man who, the inscription goes on to inform us, was praetorian prefect for 14 years, and ordinary consul. The statue dedication was made in 364, only a few years after the death of “Bassus Jr.” in 359, which further shores up the identification of these protagonists. Hence the general scholarly consensus that the Bassus who built the basilica hall is the Junius Bassus who was consul in 331, and that the Bassus who died a newly baptized Christian in 359 was his son.

The archaeological remains with which the inscription is associated comprise a villa with a private bath complex and can be dated to the Constantinian or post-Constantinian period. We know that this town, known in antiquity as Aqua Viva, was popular among aristocrats of the era.\(^8^0\) There is no mention of the dedicant of the statue, and this absence, together with the location of the inscription and other features of the writing, suggest that the dedication was a private act, offered not by the senate or by a citizen who wished to thank Bassus, but instead by a social or familial group or gens.\(^8^1\)

While this inscription and the *fasti* from the relevant periods identify the protagonist of this narrative and anchor the basilica’s construction securely in the first half of the 4\(^{th}\) century, they fail to tell us much more about this family, and there is still much we cannot know about the biography of Bassus himself. For example, we do not

\(^{8^0}\) Evrard 610.

\(^{8^1}\) Evrard 620.
know whether our Bassus was Christian as his son was (though the hall’s decoration has often been used to suggest he was not). Nor do we know about the previous generation of Bassi.

Because we do not know about Bassus’ father's rank, and because of the administrative changes that took place in this period, it is impossible to determine whether Bassus belonged to the equestrian order and was adlected, by virtue of his office, to the senatorial class, or whether he was already a *vir clarissimus* when he became praetorian prefect. 82 This distinction may look like mere bureaucratic hair splitting, but at issue is whether Bassus was a "new man," who benefitted from Constantine's reforms such that he enjoyed promotion because of the personal favor of the emperor, or whether he came from an already-established family of senatorial rank, perhaps descending from the patricians of Republican Rome. If the latter, we might be tempted to project onto Bassus feelings of anxiety and resentment toward upstarts who did not represent old senatorial stock and who benefitted from the tides of the moment, and to construe his building efforts and self-presentation as expressions of such class anxieties. The former, on the other hand, might lead us to view Bassus as fiercely loyal to Constantine for his promotion. We might, in this light, view Bassus as a social striver, carrying out his office

82 Porena notes this impossibility p. 558 n. 294 with regard to not only Bassus but also to Petronius Annianus, who preceded him as praetorian prefect, and Flavius Constantius, who was appointed prefect after him. Kalas, “Architecture and Elite Identity in Late Antique Rome: Appropriating the Past at Sant’ Andrea Catabarbara,” 282 follows Porena on this point, at p. 282. Evrard, on the other hand, found it difficult to believe that Bassus would have attained such status and been able to build the Esquiline hall if he were not already vir clarissimus (see p. 638). I suppose on the basis of Porena’s work that Bassus was an equestrian prior to his prefecture. See also Chastagnol, “Les préfets du prétoire de Constantin,” 337–40.
and his benefaction in a kind of aspirational angling for standing among his peers. This might also affect how we see his son's political achievements.

While these biographical and psychological insights would lend an interesting slant to the interpretation of the material at hand, they are methodological folly. The equal possibility of either being true should dissuade us from the temptation of such speculation.

We can, however, determine from solid evidence that Bassus' position was a unique one: a tenure of 14 years as praetorian prefect was exceptional, both in the period of Bassus' incumbency and up to the time of the Aqua Viva inscription that documents it in 364. Moreover, tracing his career in the praetorian prefecture tells us something about the prefectoral college and imperial administration in a key moment of transition. In the second half of the 3rd century, praetorian prefects were recruited from the equestrian class. Constantine, however, seems to have viewed it as possible to draw from the senatorial class for this position as well, and the office came to be one that conferred senatorial status on any holder who took office as an equestrian.

It appears Bassus served a first term as praetorian prefect beginning in 317. A dedication inscription from 317 at Ephesus, offered by the praetorian prefects in March of that year in honor of Licinius and Constantine after their treaty at Serdica, indicates there

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83 See Porena, *Le origini* for a discussion of Bassus’ term(s) and comparable terms of office during his lifetime and after.

were only two prefects at that time, one for each diarch. Under Licinius served Iulius Iulianus, while under Constantine served Petronius Annianus. Bassus took the latter man’s place when he took up service under Constantine later that year. We believe he was the only praetorian prefect to succeed Annianus; that is, that he remained the single prefect under Constantine in his pars. Porena argues convincingly that the prefecture would split into its regional arrangement only after Constantine's defeat of Licinius and his taking over as sole emperor in 324. Though there is less evidence for the workings of the praetorian prefecture dating to the period from 317-324, i.e., from the peace at Serdica to Licinius’ fall—perhaps due to political strife between the emperors in this interval—the multiplication of constitutiones sent to prefects after 324 bolsters the argument for this dating.

The first evidence we have for the new prefectoral college is in the form of an inscription from Aïn Rchine, in Tunisia, on another monument dedicated by the prefectoral college to the emperor. The inscription likely dates to somewhere between 328 and 332. Bassus' name appears on this arch, behind that of Valerius Maximus and before that of Flavius Ablabius. The latter man would be Bassus' co-consul in 331. Two other names, no longer legible, indicate that the prefectoral college had a total of five

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86 Porena Le origini, 341.

87 AE 1981, 878. For this inscription and the implications of its discovery see Porena Le origini, p. 403-4 and ff.
members, offering us a *terminus ante quem* for the shift in the way the praetorian prefecture was administered. By this point praetorian prefects operated as administrators of Illyricum, Italy, Gaul, and Africa, and the East. Later dedications by the prefectoral college at Antiochia and Tubernuc, dated to 335/6,\(^8\) do not carry Bassus' name, indicating that by then his time as prefect had certainly ended.

In light of the evidence from Aïn Rehine, which indicates Bassus' membership in the reformed prefectoral college system, we believe that the fourteen years of serve as praetorian prefect mentioned in the Aqua Viva inscription likely do not comprise consecutive years of a single term, but rather, two separate mandates. Porena theorizes that Bassus served a first term as prefect under Constantine from 317-22, under the old organization, and then a second term as a member of the newly reformed prefectoral college from 326-333,\(^9\) perhaps as praetorian prefect of Illyricum. This totals 14 years if counted inclusively, as consular years would be.

If Porena’s reconstruction of these changes is correct, Junius Bassus is a *unicum* in the historical record. He was the only one in the college of prefects who entered the newly reformed system having already served a term in the old one.\(^{90}\) Not only was his

\(^8\) AE 1925, 72 (Tuernuc) and AE 1985, 823 (Antioch).

\(^9\) Porena *Le origini* 459-60

\(^{90}\) Porena *Le origini* 465. Porena notes (461-3) that while contemporaries would have understood and distinguished between a single office and two separate terms, the Aqua Viva inscription did not make this distinction. Terms such as “bis” and “iterum” are used epigraphically to make this clear—and we know from instances of such use that Bassus was not the only one to serve separate terms—but what the family wished to emphasize was really the length of Bassus’ office, not its particulars. They may especially not have cared to dedicate space
14-year tenure remarkable, but managing to be recruited under both the old system and the new shows Bassus to have been very well favored by the emperor, apparently both lucky and loyal, which allowed him to serve across a period of political and administrative transition.

Bassus’ powers as praetorian prefect would have been substantial. Ammianus Marcellinus, writing later in the century, describes the office of the prefect as “always looked up to. . . With the old-time respect, as the peak of all authority.” Zosimus, writing from Constantinople in the 5th century, concurs on the power of the office, describing the post as “esteemed the next post of honour to that of emperor.” There is debate about how much lasting power praetorian prefects had, however. Porena argues that the office holders of the later 3rd and 4th centuries had few ties to the city of Rome, often executing their offices from other parts of the empire, and leaving few epigraphic and archaeological traces at the capital. They did not necessarily produce multiple generations of politically powerful, influential, and wealthy sons—though Bassus, whose son would become urban prefect, proves Porena’s rule is not without exception.

to this career detail, since it was Bassus’ son, not our Bassus, who was not the dedicand of the statue. Whether the Ain Rchine inscription gives any indication of Bassus’ two offices is not clear because of the inscription’s condition.

91 Amm. Marc. 21.16.2. Rerum Gestarum.

92 Zos. Hist. Nov. 2.32. Zosimus’ passage describes Constantine’s interventions in the office, from two prefects to four, divided by region, and also the ways in which the emperor diminished their powers, by the creation of offices such as the magister militia that kept military service apart from civic administration.

93 This is the overarching argument of Porena’s article.
Constantine’s reforms of the office—regarded in a negative light by Zosimus—sought to lessen the authority of the praetorian prefects, at least with regard to their military control. The office began as a wholly military one, with prefects serving as bodyguards to the emperor and protectors of the city of Rome, as well as leading military command in Italy and the provinces when the emperor could not or did not wish to do so himself. Constantine disbanded the praetorian cohorts after the battle of the Milvian Bridge, dissolving the authority of those loyal to Maxentius and working to remove any potential threat from that corner. He continued the later 3rd century trend of recruiting more prefects with judicial training, and excised military duties from the office entirely, creating alternate offices such as the *magister militum* to handle those responsibilities.\textsuperscript{94}

In its more administrative incarnation, the office of the praetorian prefecture handled judicial and financial matters across the empire. Bassus would have managed a large staff of clerks, who were responsible for everything from criminal trials, including the oversight and indexing of the prefect’s court cases, and the custody and treatment of prisoners, as well as taxation and collection, through management of and correspondence with vicars of different dioceses.\textsuperscript{95} On the whole, the praetorian prefecture linked the court to the expanded territory of the empire.\textsuperscript{96}

If Bassus did begin his career as a military man, it is all the more remarkable that his career survived and indeed thrived in the climate of Constantine’s administrative

\textsuperscript{94} Porena “I prefetti del pretorio,” 330.

\textsuperscript{95} Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, vol. 2, p. 587.

reforms. Even with the emperor working to circumscribe and limit the powers of the praetorian prefecture in its previous incarnation, he permitted Bassus to rise in these ranks and to continue his service there. This makes Bassus’ donation all the more remarkable. It serves as sign of his ascendancy and autonomy with respect to the imperial administration, on the one hand, and marks him as claiming prestige with respect to his elite peers, on the other.

In 331, Bassus was also consul, apparently even as he continued to hold the office of praetorian prefect concomitantly. The office of the consul was largely regarded as an imperial favor by this time, a symbolic office with few meaningful responsibilities. The symbolic meanings of the office will be discussed further in Part II of the dissertation, with analysis of the Bassus processional portrait.

In order to understand the relevance of the administrative changes discussed above, we need to broaden our lens to understand something about the Rome that Bassus inhabited, and the changes the city and the empire were undergoing at that time.

**Negotiating New Rome**

Constantine’s foundation of a new capital at Constantinople in 324 left Rome without the emperor’s presence to underpin the city’s prominence. This was of course not the first time an emperor had set up residence elsewhere; Rome had in the previous century withstood the creation of eastern and western tetrarchic capitals, which diverted power and prominence away from Rome. As early as the end of the second century,

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Herodian wrote that Rome as a capital was not a fixed place, but a motile concentration of power that traveled with the emperor wherever he was.98

Constantinople, however, was a competing capital of a different category altogether. Even under the tetrarchic system, when Rome was not the seat of any member of the imperial college, her primacy was tacitly acknowledged: granting one of the tetrarchs the historic capital of Rome as his own would have lent him greater legitimacy than his colleagues and upset the balance of power the tetrarchy was meant to structure.99 By contrast, Constantine’s new capital, “New Rome,” showed signs of becoming a true equal or at least worthy rival to the Eternal City.100 Constantinople appropriated the institutions of Old Rome, such as the receipt of a corn dole from Egypt and administration under an urban prefect.101 A senate was established at the new capital.102

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98 Herodian, Historia 1.6.5: “Rome is where the emperor is.” See also Mayer, Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist, a study of public monuments in the cities that were imperial residences in the 4th and 5th centuries that takes its title from this passage.

99 This is Marlowe’s formulation in Marlowe, “Constantine and the Symbolic Capital of Rome,” p. 18.

100 Grig and Kelly, Two Romes, Introduction, p. 4 and ff. The authors undertake to establish what makes a capital and at what point Constantinople presented an alternative capital to Rome. There are many gaps in the early records pertaining to Constantinople, but one helpful reference point is a poem from before 326 by Publilius Optatianus Porphyrius that calls Constantinople “altera Roma” (Carm. 4.6) See Grig and Kelly for the imperial and diplomatic prerogative.

101 Grig and Kelly, Two Romes, Introduction, 10.

102 Skinner, “The Early Development of the Senate of Constantinople.” The timing of this is not clear from the historical record, and there are different views on whether this was meant as a snub to Rome or merely to celebrate the accomplishments of an emperor who could unite all the parts of his empire. While Skinner believes the Constantinopolitan senate was not formed until the mid 4th century under Constantius II, Peter Heather believes this happened earlier, under
As such institutional fixtures were shared with the eastern capital, Rome also lost her primacy in imagery of the cities of the empire.\textsuperscript{103} As never before, the personification of Roma or its Tyche (Fortune) appeared in pairs or groups of city personifications, suggesting Rome now shared a stage as part of a network of capitals, rather than having her court be the center of the empire.\textsuperscript{104} And the emperor privileged the city of Rome less and less, declining to favor the city with his presence.\textsuperscript{105} The reign of the emperor Maxentius saw an attempted reversal of this trend. Maxentius fashioned himself as “conservator urbis suae,” initiating building and reconstruction projects that demonstrated his commitment to the Eternal City.\textsuperscript{106} This must have made the turn away from Rome and toward Constantinople by Constantine a more palpable blow.\textsuperscript{107}

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\textsuperscript{103} Grig and Kelly, \textit{Two Romes}, Introduction offers a stimulating discussion of what constitutes a capital and whether the tetrarchic capitals should be counted as such.

\textsuperscript{104} See Salzman, \textit{On Roman Time}, 27. See also Grig, “Competing Capitals, Competing Representations,” 31 for a comparative discussion of city and landscape imagery.

\textsuperscript{105} Chenault calculates that in the nearly 100 years between Maxentius being defeated at the Milvian Bridge and the sack of Rome in 410, an emperor was present in Rome only for a time totaling about two years. No emperor visited from 337 – 357. See “Rome Without Emperors,” 3, 52.

\textsuperscript{106} Among these, renovating the Temple of Romulus and the Temple of Venus and Roma, and construction of the Basilica Nova. For a more in-depth treatment of Maxentian Rome as rejected by Constantine, see Marlowe, “Constantine and the Symbolic Capital of Rome,” 38 ff.

\textsuperscript{107} Marlowe makes the point that Maxentius tried to reorient the situation with Rome at the center, so Constantine’s foundation was in a way a direct rejection of Maxentius’ attempt.
This is not to say that the foundation of Constantinople, or the establishment of tetrarchic capitals before it, would have signaled to residents of Rome that the empire as they knew it was going to change permanently. Such prescience is only ours by hindsight—and such a narrative reflects a limited purview.

But perhaps the aristocrats of Rome took note of their local political landscape and its reverberations in other parts of the empire. A number of administrative reforms enacted by Constantine spelled potentially disconcerting change, as more men joined the senatorial class. Traditionally, social class was hereditary in ancient Rome. Thus one’s father’s rank, along with wealth requirements, determined one’s place in the hierarchy. Above the ordinary citizens of the empire were the equestrians (equites), and above them was the senatorial class, or clarissimate. Belonging in the senatorial class typically meant progressing through the magistracies of the cursus honorum, from quaestor, to praetor, and so on, performing at each stage the duties of the office as well as the benefactions and entertainments the office entailed.

Some upward mobility was possible, however—now perhaps more than ever. By adlection, whether by the senate or the emperor, one could attain a certain office or be promoted to a certain status without being required to first fulfill the station’s requisite liturgies.\textsuperscript{108} Constantine expanded the senatorial class by designating a number of offices that had previously belonged to members of the equestrian class as being senatorial

\footnote{\textsuperscript{108} For a view on who controlled adlections, see Salzman, \textit{Making of a Christian Aristocracy}, 34.}
offices. In doing so, he opened up far wider avenues of access to senatorial status than heredity offered. The effect of these administrative changes was the engorgement of the senatorial class: a group of about 600 members at the end of the third century numbered around 2000 by 359. The equestrian class, from which new clarissimi were typically recruited, was proportionately depleted.

There is evidence that these administrative changes created new pressures and status anxieties, rankling those who enjoyed the exclusivity of their status. The historian Ammianus Marcellinus wrote in praise of Constantius, son of Constantine, in whose army Ammianus had served in his youth. Ammianus writes that under Constantius “no leader of an army was advanced to the rank of clarissimus” — a piece of praise that would seem to be an indirect reference to Constantine’s expansion of the senatorial class. His comment that under Constantius “it very rarely happened that any military officer passed to a civil magistracy, and on the other hand, none were put in command of soldiers who had not grown hardy in the dust of battle” can be read as evidence that Constantine, by contrast, was seen as promoting men with little experience and without regard for the appropriateness of their station. While some credited the emperor Constantine for

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109 Heather, “Senators and Senates.”

110 Ibid., 190-191.

111 Salzman, *Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 31. Salzman argues that some of these changes can be attributed to Constantine but that Chastagnol ascribed to him too much of the responsibility for this change.


elevating “the best men of every province” whatever those men’s pedigrees, others criticized these changes, mocking the senate at Constantinople for its sons of butchers, metalworkers, and cloakroom guards, who were not regarded as equal to their counterparts at Rome. 114

By some historians’ accounts, Constantine’s changes contributed to an increase in the prestige of the institution of the senate. And indeed, the propaganda of panegyric credits the emperor with restoring to the senate its former authority.115 The senate could be said to operate with greater autonomy than of late, with the emperor not resident in Rome, and its members had a large body of support to draw from, even if they did not have much opportunity to express views of dissent from imperial policies.116

As a simple mathematical matter, however, the expansion of the senatorial class created more eligible candidates for the highest offices of the cursus. As such, it narrowed an aristocrat’s chances at the most prestigious offices. Opportunities for political promotion were further constricted by the fact that an emperor frequently occupied an office such as the consulship, often for multiple years, and he may not have been willing to hold the office alongside a private citizen.117

114 While the orator of 321 praised this policy (Pan. Lat. 4(10) 35.2, ex omnibus provinciis optimates viros curiae tuae), Libanius mocked it: Or. 42.11, .22-.25.

115 Pan. Lat. 12(9) 20: Senatum auctoritaem pristinam reddisti.

116 This is expressed in Salzman, The Making of a Christian Aristocracy, 34ff, and fleshed out in Ibid., “Constantine and the Roman Senate,” esp. p. 36.

117 Chenault, “Rome Without Emperors,” 72 reports that between 284 and 395 half of all ordinary consulships were held by emperors or members of imperial family.
The expansion of the senatorial class had other effects vis-a-vis the esteem and authority of the elite. With the widening of the cross-section of society that inhabited the clarissimate, there developed more granular distinctions of prestige within the senatorial order. Essentially, its membership of equals developed new vocabulary to differentiate themselves from senators who were “less equal:” while *vir clarissimus* applied to any man of senatorial rank, *vir spectabilis* was for men of higher rank by virtue of certain offices, and *vir illustris* was limited to those who attained the highest civic offices, such as consul or urban prefect. These fine-grained distinctions became important in a political climate where there were far more men eligible for the highest offices than before, and simultaneously a narrowing field for the highest forms of political aggrandizement.

Finally, the administrative changes made my Constantine can be seen as undermining the centrality of Rome’s elite and their claims to exclusive status. Senators had long been required to hold a residence at Rome, if only when the senate was in session there. This made Rome a central node for power, since even provincial aristocrats had to come there to carry out their political duties. Constantine relaxed these residency requirements and acknowledged primary domiciles outside of Rome, so that magistrates could practice politics and carry out their responsibilities from a distance. This policy, 

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118 See Heather, “Senators and Senates,” 190, who dates this change to the 350s and the institutionalization of it to Valens in 372. See C.Th. 7,6,1.

119 Leaves of absence had been granted to magistrates not resident at Rome before, but Constantine’s reforms effectively institutionalized this as a regular practice rather than a concession. See Salzman, *Making of a Christian Aristocracy*, 32-3. On Roman residence as an
combined with the linking of status to imperial service that made proximity to the emperor and his court desirable, effectively dispersed resources and investment that had been concentrated at Rome.

There are a number of different formulations of the relationship between senate and emperor in the fourth century that developed in the aftermath of these and concomitant changes: whether there was conflict or resistance, whether religion divided the emperor from the aristocracy, and how they characterized their service to or leadership of Rome.\textsuperscript{120} One view is that the emperor’s absence from the old capital, and along with some of Constantine’s administrative reforms, allowed for a newly senatorial Rome, one administered by an autonomous body of aristocrats.\textsuperscript{121} John Weisweiler instead believes that the emperor and his subjects, including those of senatorial rank, articulated an entirely new relationship dynamic in this period: the increasing divinization of the emperor moved his range from “first among equals” to a more god-like status,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{120} Eligibility requirement, Chenault cites the example of the year 365, when the consul Valentinian was at Rome and Valens in Constantinople, pointing out that not even the consulship required that one live at Rome. This may be a flawed example, since the consuls in questions were themselves emperors, but then again half of the consuls in the period were.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Salzman offers a helpful historiographic summary of scholarship on emperor-aristocracy relations in late antiquity at the beginning of “Constantine and the Roman Senate.” The essay goes on to parse emperor-senatorial relations as separate from the question of whether the aristocracy felt pressure to convert to Christianity, and identifying as a third factor in this power dynamic what avenues were available for communication of disagreement or resistance by the senatorial aristocracy.
\item \textsuperscript{121} This is the view of Chenault, “Rome Without Emperors,” and of Machado, “Urban Space and Power in Late Antique Rome.”
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making it possible for senators to display power in ways that he formerly had, without threatening to encroach on his status.

While the problem of the senator-emperor power dynamic is relevant here, this project concerns itself more with questions of interrelations between senators as peers. This is an important area of investigation because the conferral of legal status, of office or rank, was not enough to give him status and prestige. The former, an aristocrat could get from the emperor, but the latter, he needed from his fellow elite. Certainly, one’s office circumscribed one’s identity, insofar as it dictated one’s rights and responsibilities; and it is a useful index of status, since it is preserved for us so well by the historical record. But admission to the clarissimate was de jure, not de facto, and one had not just to meet the requirements of senatorial office but also to win friends and influence people. Roman aristocrats brokered their power through complex networks of friendship and patronage of clients. Peer approval figured prominently, as did gifts and personal favors. Through friendship, gifts, favors, and social and familial ties, far more ineffable than legal codes and lists of offices that survive in the text record, the members of the senatorial aristocracy built and performed this “unwritten code.”

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122 This is pointed out by John Weisweiler in the first chapter of his unpublished dissertation, “State Aristocracy: Resident Senators and Absent Emperors in Late Antique Rome, c. 320-400,” which I thank him for sharing with me.

123 As Salzman summarizes the plexus of this upper echelon in Making of a Christian Aristocracy, 43: “Since aristocrats relied so heavily on one another for recognition, they held the keys to each other’s identities, conferring and withdrawing approval in relation to a highly detailed but unwritten code of honorable activity in the circles in which they moved. Thus the status culture of the senatorial aristocracy was a significant unifying system, weaker or stronger depending on the individual’s inclination and position in it.”
These reciprocal and mutually reinforcing social connections are not readily apparent to us 1600 years later, but glimpses of their shape are recognizable in Rome’s landscape and monuments.

*Self Presentation in the Public and Private Spaces of Rome*

Before the imperial period, a senator might gain renown for military victories by processing in triumph through the city, receiving acclaim from the crowd as he paraded booty and captives won in his hard-fought battles through the streets with painted illustrations of his military conquest. The triumph itself was ephemeral, but the victorious senator could make a more lasting memorial of his achievements by dedicating a manubial temple, funded by his spoils; by hosting games; and by erecting honorary statues in the city that commemorated the victor and his family. By the middle-Augustan period, however, access to the triumph had vanished. Armies formerly led by consuls were instead put under the command of legates who were surrogates of the emperor. These legates had no claim to *imperium*, but carried out their duties as proxies of the emperor. Thus any riches gained from the conquests were the emperor’s, as was the right to claim the triumph.


125 See for example Chenault, “Statues of Senators in the Forum of Trajan and the Roman Forum in Late Antiquity.

126 See Eck, “Competition for Public Space,” 91-2.
Public honorific statuary became a more constricted phenomenon. Those who did receive the honor of a public statue tended to be members of the imperial family or the emperor’s closest advisors, not long-standing senatorial families.\textsuperscript{127} Worthy generals could still receive honorific statuary, but they did not erect it themselves: it was done at the will of the emperor, and through a \textit{senatus consultum}. Such statues were located according to the wishes of the emperor, who, in the case of Augustus, used them to decorate the Forum Augusti, accruing to himself the glory of the victories won in his name and gathering these statues around his image.\textsuperscript{128}

Just as the introduction of the principate saw new restrictions on self-presentation in statuary, the early imperial period also witnessed the reduction of private senatorial spaces in favor of imperial structures. The Portico of Livia, for example, replaced the Esquiline house of Vedius Pollio, and the Domus Aurea on the Palatine replaced residences that were destroyed by fire. These conversions of private spaces have been taken by Carlos Machado as an assertion of imperial control over the topography of Rome.\textsuperscript{129}

Given these strictures on self-presentation in public spaces, the elite sought new ways to proclaim their standing and successes. The domestic sphere offered one alternative to public space, and it is largely here that we find inscriptions attesting to

\textsuperscript{127} Weisweiler, “From Equality to Asymmetry: Honorific Statues, Imperial Power and Senatorial Identity in Late-Antique Rome.”

\textsuperscript{128} See for this forum Zanker, \textit{Forum Augustum: das Bildprogramm}.

\textsuperscript{129} Machado, “Aristocratic Houses,” 140.
honorific statuary. The migration of honorific statues to the relatively private space of the domus is known as the “Eck effect,” after the scholar cited here for extensive study of the phenomenon.\textsuperscript{130} An aristocrat could also choose to erect honorific statuary or architecture in another city, where he would not be competing with the emperor. The library of Celsus is one example, as are the 25 or so statues of the senator C. Antius A. Julius Quadratus in Pergamon.

In Late Antiquity, however, we see in Rome an opening up of former strictures. While the honor of a public statue remained rare, the circle of recipients swelled. The types of statuary received also widened, including for example the possibility of gilding, a cosmetic embellishment available to aristocrats in the late Republican period but permitted only to imperial family members since.\textsuperscript{131} While the majority of statue bases are found in private contexts, as before, there is a threefold increase in public statues in Late Antiquity.\textsuperscript{132}

Weisweiler warns against seeing this shift as a “hostile take-over of public space by the Roman aristocracy.” In his view, the relaxation of the earlier rules arose out of a growing asymmetry between the emperor and his subjects, a change that allowed the emperor to slacken earlier restraints on aristocratic self-presentation that he no longer viewed as a threat or competition to his own. Since public commemorations of the senatorial aristocracy remained limited, and such commemorations were put up only by

\textsuperscript{130} Eck, “Competition for Public Space,” 101.

\textsuperscript{131} Weisweiler, “From Equality to Asymmetry.”

\textsuperscript{132} Weisweiler, “From Equality to Asymmetry.”
imperial order, it would be wrong to see the rise of such commemorations as indication of weakening control of the emperor. Whatever power dynamic these monuments arose from, it is clear that the aristocracy found these modes of self-display meaningful in late antiquity, and that their choices to erect, rearrange, and restore statues shaped Rome’s landscape after their own image.

Alongside this kind of artistic commemoration, we see aristocratic claims on space in late antiquity calculated to take advantage of existing resources and to appropriate them for private use. Machado tracks several instances of *domus* converted from earlier *insulae*. A Hadrianic insula in the modern Via in Arcione was converted in the fourth century, as was a Neronian era insula nearby. The phenomenon is not exclusive to the fourth century—the House of Gaudentius on the Caelian Hill was built by taking over an insula in the 2nd century—but the degree to which this happened all over the city in late antiquity suggests to Machado a demographic decline that permitted fewer people to take up greater amounts of space. His examples also show that construction of features like apses onto the new *domus* frequently diverted the flow of traffic and limited public access to earlier throughways, signaling a prioritization of private interests over public ones. Public goods were also repurposed as, for instance, in the case of the *domus* at Sette Sale, which was built over the cistern that had once supplied the Baths of Trajan. To take over such a structure and alter it for domestic use

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133 Ibid.


135 Spinola, “Il Dominus Gaudentius,” and “La domus di Gaudentius.”
clearly asserted the aristocrat’s prestige and power.\textsuperscript{136} The phenomenon was common enough to have incited legislation that sought to control private building activity.\textsuperscript{137}

Private buildings were not the only ones implicated in urban change in late antiquity. Public spaces also allowed room for aristocrats to carve out space for self-presentation. Construction and renovation efforts, documented by still-extant building inscriptions, tell the story of elite manipulation of the city’s most central spaces. And unlike private spaces, public spaces allowed aristocrats to cast themselves as donors and benefactors in the very context of their benefactions.

The senatorial aristocracy undertook numerous acts of restoration and \textit{restitutio} in the Late Antique Roman forum. Their benefactions are examined in a recent study by Gregor Kalas.\textsuperscript{138} As Kalas argues, patrons preserved older structures even as they rearranged or reordered them, thus using rehabilitation of the past, rather than erasure of it, to write themselves into a continuing history. By refurbishment and renovation, elite patrons could manipulate the way time was displayed in these areas. They left behind signs of age and decay, while recuperating the structures and returning them to former function. Architectural interventions followed patterns of renewal and reclamation of the

\textsuperscript{136} Machado, “Aristocratic Houses,” 147.

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 150-151 offers several examples from the Theodosian code, for example: minimum distance between private and public structures (\textit{CTh.} 4.24); protection of warehouses from private interests (\textit{CTh.} 15.1.12); outlawing encroachment on public buildings (\textit{CTh.} 15.1.38); affirming right of public above individual interests for public access (\textit{CTh} 15.1.4).

\textsuperscript{138} Kalas, \textit{Restoration of the Roman Forum in Late Antiquity}. 
past, bringing former benefactors into the present and present benefactors into pious continuation of their predecessors’ efforts.

These interventions were made largely through official modes, even imperially sanctioned ones. The urban prefect was in a prime position to vaunt his power through building and renovation. As the representative of the emperor when he was away from the city, the urban prefect was in charge of construction. His efforts in this vein accrued honor to himself and emphasized his relationship to the emperor. Some urban prefects must have gone too far in taking credit for their work, for Arcadius and Honorius issued a decree that if an official put his name on a finished building instead of the names of the emperors it would be considered treason. Weisweiler’s interpretive framework seems to hold for public architecture in the same way that it did for honorific statuary. The emperor maintained a superior position, delegating the task of construction to favored members of the senatorial class and permitting them to attain a certain degree of honor by their projects as well as by association with him. The emperor made sure he was credited, reinforcing the asymmetric power dynamic, but otherwise allowed the aristocrat fairly free rein over his consigned duties.

Though the mechanisms for controlling the urban landscape had changed, and there were expectations for and limits on self-presentation that had not existed in the Republican period, aristocrats of the fourth century continued to vie for power through topography. Their efforts to “take up space,” quite literally, including by renovating buildings and other civic construction, beautifying the city as they maintained its infrastructure; by laying claim to previously public spaces; and by erecting honorific
statues and so dispatching replicas of themselves into the world (or at least into their own
gardens). Besides being city amenities, these architectural and artistic adornments
functioned as extensions of the selves of their senatorial patrons. They served not only to
exhibit and amplify the contributions that senatorial benefactors made to the city, but also
to convey the benefactor’s presence by proxy. The patron thus carved out for himself a
piece of Rome’s urban landscape, claiming credit for having improved it and summoning
in the viewer’s imagination an image of the man responsible.
CHAPTER 2
The Material Evidence of the Basilica

This section aims at collecting and presenting all the physical evidence uncovered from the archaeological excavation of the basilica. I will indicate several categories of evidence that have major gaps, or where the archaeological and historic record conflict, and point out the evidentiary problems that get in the way of a cohesive interpretation of the site. I do this to offer the reader full transparency as to the data gathering for this project, and in hopes that the retrospective commentary will elucidate my historiographic endeavor.

This undertaking reveals that even the seemingly most objective and scientific features of a monument—hard facts like measurements, dates, or materials—may require interpretive footnotes. In the end, the record of the excavation Giuseppe Lugli produced leaves much to be desired. To those who reflexively counter that an excavation that took place nearly a century ago would naturally lack the kind of scientific accuracy and precision we have come to expect today, I would point out that Lugli was a superb archaeologist and esteemed topographer, whose methods were advanced by comparison to others practicing archaeology in his era. This project was a salvage excavation, so Lugli may have had to make some sacrifices for efficiency, but he would also have known that this was the final and only opportunity to collect data about a very significant monument of Late Antiquity.
In some cases, the evidentiary gaps are explained (and at times exacerbated) by the exigencies of Italian politics in the 1920s and early 1930s; in others, the record is simply silent, or the legacy data we have available to us is not what we would wish were we to excavate the site today. Some gaps and inconsistencies are particularly puzzling, and it is unfortunate that no additional excavation data has been located in archives in Rome; but these uncertainties and incongruities must be tolerated and the dissonances between them held in mind if we are to lend integrity to each fragment.

The Salvage Excavation and its Executors

Giuseppe Lugli undertook the excavation of the Basilica of Junius Bassus along with his colleague Thomas Ashby in 1929 during the preliminary excavation to build the seminary known as the Russicum that now stands in Via Napoleone III.\textsuperscript{139} (See Figure 2.1) Ashby was to take up the decorative panels of the hall and their reproduction drawings in the Windsor Collection, but he fell ill, leaving Lugli to complete the publication of the basilica without him, as Lugli’s preface to his 1932 article on the excavation indicates. Lugli seems not to have completed the work alone, however. He indicates that Pietro Mottini served as assistant, and the mechanical work of digging was contracted by the construction firm Impresa Castelli.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{139} The date given for the excavation tends to be 1932, based on the publication year of Lugli’s article in \textit{Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana}, but the archival document indicates that Lugli was corresponding about his discovery in February of 1929. See Figure 2.2.

\textsuperscript{140} Lugli, “La Basilica Di Giunio Basso Sull’Esquilino,” 234.
Lugli also notes the supervision of the Regia Soprintendenza alle Antichità di Roma (probably at that time Giuseppe Cultrera) from the beginning of the project.\textsuperscript{141} Archived correspondence, on the other hand, names Antonio Muñoz the director of the work at the site (See Figure 2.3).\textsuperscript{142} This is a puzzling contradiction not only because Muñoz is named instead of Lugli, but also because Muñoz’s role was as Ispettore Generale delle Antichità e Belle Arti of the newly-instituted Governatorato, which in Fascist Italy took the place of the Comune, or municipal government of Rome. While the Regia Soprintendenza represented the Italian State on a federal level, the Governatorato operated as a sovereign authority of the municipality (commune, now Roma Capitale). Even today in Rome these two administrations represent separate, divided powers, each owning and exercising jurisdiction over its own properties and archaeological sites. In short, there is no explaining why both the state (represented by Paribeni) and the municipality (represented by Muñoz) were involved in the excavation of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Nor is it clear whether it was the Comune or the Stato that carried out the excavation and requisitioned the study—if indeed it was either, and not an arm of the

\textsuperscript{141} In 1929-1930, Giuseppe Cultrera was the soprintendente. In 1928 it was likely Roberto Paribeni. This is according to my personal correspondence with Simonetta Serra, Curatore Bene Culturali at the Sovrintendenza Capitolina. Both names appear on correspondence I found relating to this period.

Vatican, which had since about 1923 owned this land following earlier expropriation of the site (See Figure 2.4).  

The fact that Lugli’s final publication was published in the *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*, the official journal of the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology, (and not, for instance, in the *Bollettino Comunale*, where a notice of the excavation appears), suggests that the Vatican (or more specifically the PIAC) may have been behind the excavation after all. Lugli’s role at the time of the excavation was as Ispettore and then Direttore delle Antichità for the region of Lazio, but perhaps his membership in the Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia contributed to his selection as principal investigator of the site. At any rate, the question of who ordered the excavation, and subsequently, where all the records of it went, has stumped not only this author but several archivists in Rome.

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144 “Notiziario--s.v. Basilica Junii Bassi,” *Bollettino Della Commissione Archeologica Comunale Di Roma e Bollettino Del Muso Dell’Impero Romano* LXI (April 1933): 249. I have consulted the Vatican Secret Archives for material relating to this excavation, without success. The Vatican librarian Marco Buoncore Vatican Archive told me there was no relevant material.

145 The archives in Rome I searched for material relating to the excavation include: the Ashby Archive at the British School in Rome; the Fondo Lugli at the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, Biblioteca Romana Antonio Sarti; the Fondo Lugli at the Biblioteca di scienze dell’antichità, Sezione di Topografia antica at La Sapienza Università di Roma; the Fondo Lugli at the Fototeca dell’Istituto nazionale di archeologia e storia dell’arte; the Fondo Muñoz at Palazzo Braschi; the
Whoever was digging there, we can say that the re-discovery of the Basilica of Junius Bassus was expected, since topographers had hypothesized its location on this block, even though the building itself had long disappeared from sight. Lanciani had in the late 19th century conjectured a location in Via Napoleone III, though slightly to the northwest of its actual position (See Figure 2.5). Christian Hüelsen had pinpointed the hall’s location with more accuracy and precision, underneath the convent of St. Antonio. (See Figure 2.6)

**The Plan and Dimensions of the Building**

The single-naved basilica is rectangular in plan, with an apse at its eastern end and an elliptical vestibule at the western end. (See Figure 2.7) Its axis runs northwest to southeast, so that it is roughly parallel to Via Napoleone III. The rectangular part of the hall was approximately 19 meters long by 14.5 meters.\(^{146}\) The dimensions of the building, however, comprise one of the problems in the evidence. Lugli’s publication gives the measurement as “49 x 14.5 m,” but the former figure must be a printing error. Not only does it deviate remarkably from measurements found in other sources, the proportions it

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Archivio Capitolino Ripartizione X (Appendice 1921-1931); parts of the archive of the Russicum; and the Archivio Storico e Archivio Disegni dei Beni Archeologici and Archivio Gatti at the Sovrintendenza di Roma Capitale (Via Ostiense). I also consulted archivists at the PIAC, PCAS, and the Vatican Library, and was told no relevant material was to be found there. The only archival evidence I came across was in the archives of the Ministero della Publicca Istruzione in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, located with the help of Dott.ssa Luigia Attilia in copy at the Palazzo Altemps. My thanks to her and to the numerous archivists and librarians who assisted me with this research, which would not have been possible without their help.

\(^{146}\) These dimensions are given by Hülsen, “Die Basilica des Iunius Bassus,” 54.
denotes do not agree with the plan published by Lugli.\textsuperscript{147} (See Figure 2.7b for a markup of Lugli’s plan and 2.8a and b for versions of a newly drawn plan that attempt to reconcile the plan with the given measurements. Compare also the plans of Sangallo, Figure 2.16, and Ciampini, Figure 2.17.) Such measurements are also radically off the norm for other basilical halls of the period.\textsuperscript{148} Santa Balbina, for example, measured about 5 meters longer than the Basilica of Junius Bassus, its main \textit{aula} 14.67 m X 24.18 m.\textsuperscript{149}

Even if the publication had printed the correct measurement (19 instead of 49), problems remain. Lugli does not indicate whether the measurements he gives are the dimensions of the hall measuring from inner wall to inner wall or including the walls. Nor does he cite the wall thickness. This matter is not helped by the fact that Lugli’s published plan is not accompanied by a scale.

The height of the wall was around 15 meters. Lugli says in his text “circa 15 metri [25 braccia fiorentine]), while the reconstruction drawings created by D.B. Martin at the  

\textsuperscript{147} Krautheimer, \textit{CBCR} I s.v. “Sant’Andrea in Catabarbara,” 62-3 gives 18.3 meters by 14.25 meters. Guidobaldi, “L’edilizia abitativa,” gives 12.5 X 21 m, including the apse, which is on the smaller side of the measurement range.

\textsuperscript{148} For comparison to other apsidal halls in Rome, see Guidobaldi “L’edilizia abitativa unfamiliare.” For buildings that the reader might be able to call to mind more readily from their own experience, the hall was slightly wider than the Sistine Chapel, though only half its length, and its ceiling about five meters shorter. Six basilicas the size of Bassus’ hall would fit into the footprint of Santa Maria Maggiore’s central nave.

\textsuperscript{149} Krautheimer, \textit{CBCR} I s.v. “Santa Balbina,” 87.
time of excavation report a height of 15.45 meters (See Figure 2.9). Krautheimer reports a height of 14.6 meters (40 Roman feet). Lugli found the walls preserved up to a height of eight meters in some places on the south side of the building, but does not explain how he extrapolated the original height of the wall from these remains. (See Figure 2.11 for photographs of the surviving walls.)

The apse measurement is given as 6.25 meters “di corda, misure che corrispondono in massima.” This would indicate that the depth of the apse is 6.25 (“di corda” meaning “from the chord,” the diameter of the apse opening, typically the line at which the altar would stand). Lugli’s report that the measurements correspond “for the most part” would seem to suggest a perfect semi-circle, rather than a U-shape. The apse survived only to a height of 1.5 meters from the ground, but a semi-dome may have topped the space. (See Figure 2.12 for the remains of the apse and 2.13 for a proposed reconstruction of the apse decoration.)

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151 Krautheimer, *CBCR* 1 s.v. “Sant’Andrea in Catabarbara” note 6 says “Judging from Sangallo’s measurements I can not see how Ashby-Lugli can assume a height of 15.45 m for their reconstruction.” Sapelli, “Basilica” follows Krautheimer’s height measurement.

152 Enking, *S. Andrea cata Barbara*, 18 gives an apse diameter of 8.85. See Figure 2.16 for the Sangallo plan with measurements annotated. I thank Daira Nocera for measuring this drawing. The measurements she produced based on this plan were: 9.15 meters for the apse diameter and 5.54 meters for the chord. Enking’s other measurements are based on Sangallo, 18.30 m long, 14.25 m wide, 14.60 m high.

153 Without exact dimensions for the apse, it is difficult to tell whether a domed vault would have required tube vaulting to be supported by the width of the walls. Lugli does not give this figure; I have assumed 0.75 m in my own reconstructions. For an overview of the structural forces at work, see Lancaster, *Innovative Vaulting*, 12-13.
The narthex of the basilica was preserved intact in the cellar of the former convent of St. Antonio.\textsuperscript{154} The vestibule had apsidioles on its short sides, perhaps vaulted. Lugli describes them as “elongated,” (5.10 x 3.3 meters).\textsuperscript{155} In the walls flanking these apsidioles were niches of diameter 1.45 meters, the sills of which sat at 2.75 m up from the floor level.\textsuperscript{156} These niches would likely have been filled with statues, but whether portraiture or mythological figures is uncertain.\textsuperscript{157}

Lugli makes no mention of any passageways or openings that would have allowed the basilica to communicate with other buildings, nor does his plan show such passageways. We can take this to mean that the building was free-standing, like the contemporary hall that became S. Balbina.\textsuperscript{158} (See Figure 2.14) Then again, Lugli also does not indicate a main entrance to the building in his plan. The other caveat is that


\textsuperscript{155} In conversation with Natasha Sanjaya, my digital architecture collaborator, I have interpreted this to mean that the chord of these apsidioles was 3.3 m and their diameter was 5.1 m, with height not given. This would produce a slightly U-shaped apse, its diameter smaller than a perfect semicircle.

\textsuperscript{156} Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” 237: “mentro nel muro pieno dei fianchi delle absidi stesse, quattro piccolo nicchie…si aprivano all’altezza di m. 2.75 dal livello primitivo della basilica, avente un diametro di m. 1.45. . . .” Lugli’s language would suggest to me four niches that opened into the narthex, flanking the apses, but the plan reveals that two of the apsidioles were on the façade of the basilica, while the other two were on the inside of the rectangular part of the hall, facing the apse. While he indicates that their sills were 2.75 meters off the ground, he did not have the data to guess at their height.

\textsuperscript{157} The use of statue niches on the façade became more common in medieval church architecture, but it is hard to trace the presence of this feature in the fourth century because renovations do not necessarily preserve the original facades. I thank Dale Kinney for pointing out to me the similar case of niches in Santa Costanza.

\textsuperscript{158} See Krautheimer, CBCR I, s.v. “Santa Balbina,” 82-92.
Lugli does not indicate what phase of the building his plan is meant to illustrate. I take this to mean he drew what he found, as sealed off in the convent’s basement, rather than trying to illustrate the original plan of the building or its Simplician-era incarnation.

The Basilica of Junius Bassus’ brick-faced walls were built over Augustan-era walls in opus reticulatum.\textsuperscript{159} The earlier walls were cut down to the level of the basilica’s foundation, and the basilica adopted the same orientation of the earlier building, slightly off axis with the direction of the modern Via Napoleone III. Indicated on Lugli’s plan as walls B through I, they formed part of an Augustan complex that fronted onto via Napoleone III (i.e., toward the northeast).\textsuperscript{160} These walls also extend outside the walls of the basilica, indicating that the earlier structure was larger than the hall constructed over it. Lugli mentions the connection of these walls to those discovered years earlier under the PIAC, apparently with reference to the work of Antonio Colini, who excavated on the block in 1926.\textsuperscript{161} The location marked “F” on Lugli’s plan is likely to be understood as joining to the easternmost walls discovered by Colini. (See Figure 2.15 for E. Gatti’s

\textsuperscript{159} Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” 240.

\textsuperscript{160} Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” 240.

\textsuperscript{161} Unfortunately Lugli does not give additional maps or point to a source for more information about this excavation. However, it seems Colini carried out the excavations under the PIAC and some account (though scant) of it is given in his notebooks: Antonio Maria Colini, \textit{Appunti Degli Scavi Di Roma I: Quaderni I Bis - II Bis - III - IV}, ed. Carlo Buzzetti, Giovanni Ioppolo, and Giuseppina Pisani Sartorio (Rome: Quasar, 1998); see notebook no. I bis, April 1926 – March 6, 1932, p. 1-2 and 63, “Scavi per le fondazioni del Pontificio Istituto d’Arch[eologia] nel cortile dell’ex Convento di S. Antonio.” It is not clear how Lugli’s plan aligns with the remains mapped by Colini/Gatti, but presumably Lugli’s area “F” is represented by one of the intersecting walls on the PIAC property.
drawing of these finds.) The complex was divided into smaller rooms or areas accessed by a single corridor, presumably a group of shops.\textsuperscript{162} This was not a very rich building, but in the southern part it was continuous with one that had remains of painted plaster. Outside the walls of this earlier building, toward via Napoleone III, was a large dump of worn stone (\textit{cocciame minuto romano logoro}), glass, plaster, and mosaic tesserae. Also associated with this complex are two pipes beneath (not clearly indicated in Gatti’s drawing, although Lugli’s plan uses a dotted and dashed lined to indicate ancient sewers). Neither Colini nor Lugli offers an assessment of the Augustan complex, and we cannot know whether it was still in use up to the time of Bassus’ construction, which clearly took over the building and its foundations for its own use.

\textit{Later Building and Renovation}

In the fourth century, the building’s entrance was a single arch, 6.20 meters wide, with an echoing arch that led from narthex to nave.\textsuperscript{163} An overturned marble cornice served as the threshold for the central arch of the internal entrance, and travertine jambs 0.32 m wide remained set into the shoulder of the original arch. Lugli’s excavation findings suggest the building’s entry arches were divided into tripartite arches when the building was converted to a church. This renovation appears to be represented in Sangallo’s drawing (See Figure 2.16). The middle fornix measured 2.06 m wide, separated from the side arches by columns with travertine bases measuring 0.75 X 0.75 m.

\textsuperscript{162} Barracks might be another possibility. See Colini, “\textit{Appunti},” no. I bis, p. 1-2.

\textsuperscript{163} Lugli, “\textit{La Basilica di Giunio Basso},” 234.
and standing 0.39 meters high. The flanking arches measured 1.32 meters, with pilasters with marble bases measuring 0.70 meters by 0.70 meters at their outer edges.\textsuperscript{164}

Lugli describes three windows on the front-facing facade of the main hall, looking over the roof of the narthex, as being lower and at right angles to three larger windows on the long sides of the hall. He seems to have based this description on Ciampini’s depiction of the hall (see Figure 2.17), but the configuration matches Santa Balbina on the Aventine (with a single-storey narthex) as well as Ss. Giovanni e Paolo on the Celian (with a two-storied narthex like that depicted by Ciampini). Lugli did not recover the height of the narthex and so we cannot confirm whether it was indeed two storeys as Ciampini has it; nor do Lugli’s finds offer any explanation for Ciampini’s four-fornixed scheme. Lugli surmised that the main hall of the basilica was divided into three parts by transverse walls (indicated in his plan’s legend as “fondazioni medievali,” at a and b).\textsuperscript{165} He offers no description, but indicates that these may be supporting arches meant to shore up the building, rather than complete walls.

\textit{The Floor and Pavement}

Lugli found about 3 square meters of pavement \textit{in situ} in the middle of the hall. This remnant is described and schematically illustrated on the plan, but no photograph is provided. (See Lugli plan, Figure 2.7, at his location \textit{e}. See Figure 2.18 for possible

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 236.

\textsuperscript{165} Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” 229. This division is also seen in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome, though Brandt counters that this is not true. See Brandt, “La Data Delle Arcate Trasversali Di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.”
variants on the floor reconstruction.) Guidobaldi and Guidobaldi classify the remnants as likely belonging to the “large module” scheme, most like S. Pietro in Vaticano, S. Giovanni in Laterano, the triclinium of the Domus Flavia, the temple of Venus and Roma, and the Basilica of Maxentius.\footnote{166} Whether these remnants were part of an all-over pattern that covered the floor, or merely one piece of a more variable scheme, is impossible to tell from what remains.

The pavement is thought of as contemporary with the 4th century wall decoration, but it is impossible to date from the surviving evidence. Lugli places it at 70 cm above the original floor level of the hall, over a fill of earth and rubble. Lugli’s description is difficult to interpret because he does not give more information about the stratigraphy of the site or how he identified this “original” floor level.\footnote{167} If there was a pavement associated with an earlier, lower level, no trace of it was found in the excavation. Lugli may have identified the lower “piano primitivo” based on the level at which the building walls meet the foundation, but he does not date the fill, nor is there any indication of when a raising of the floor may have happened.\footnote{168} It is not clear how Lugli’s hypothesis

\footnote{166 Guidobaldi and Guiglia Guidobaldi, \textit{Pavimenti marmorei di Roma dal IV al IX secolo}, 41.}

\footnote{167 This description, on p. 236, follows from his description of the pilasters and columns at the basilica entrance: “…erano incastrate in un murello di mattoni che aveva sopraelevato il piano primitivo di 0.70 m circa in corrispondenza con l’elevamento di tutto il pavimento della basilica. . .”}

\footnote{168 At p. 237, he writes, “Anche il piano interno dell’aula è apparso rialzato di circa 20 centimetri con un riempimento di terra e calcinacci…” surmising that this might have come from the crumbling of the roof and upper parts of the walls. He says the excavation furnished no evidence as to when this might have happened,
about an earlier pavement squares with his observation that the entire monument had a single foundation, suggesting a single building phase. Lugli writes that the land around the building was even, and that the internal and external levels of the building were the same, while noting that the descending slope of the land meant the north corner of the building’s façade had a thicker foundation remaining, to make up for the drop in level. Perhaps the earlier floor level Lugli identified actually belonged to an earlier use of the area. Perhaps a lower floor level was anticipated during rebuilding of the Augustan remains on the spot, and then the specifications were modified by the time a pavement was laid. Perhaps the same pavement was laid at the lower level and then later re-used 70 cm higher. Without any independent information to date the pavement, even relative to a conjectural lower level, it makes the most sense to assume its contemporaneity with the 4th century wall decoration.

**Wall Decoration**

Lugli removed the plaster from the modern walls in an effort to uncover any remnant of the opus sectile that once revetted them. No marble was found, save for thin flakes amid the debris of the excavation, among which Lugli notes porphyry, serpentine, giallo antico, and rosso antico. His efforts did, however, uncover the remains of bronze clamps and some impressions in the plaster that allow the reconstruction of the wall decoration.  

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169 Ibid., 234.  
170 Ibid., 234, 237.  
171 Guidobaldi and Guidobaldi, *Pavimenti*, 43.  
172 This is the view of both Becatti and Guidobaldi, though they acknowledge the problems.
panelling scheme in the sockel.\textsuperscript{173} (See again Figure 2.9.) Further evidence of the walls having been at one time revetted in marble was a 10-12 cm layer of calce povera, with fragments of clay and marble wedged in it, as is typical of \textit{opus sectile} wall preparation, so that revetment can better adhere.

On the south side of the basilica, the walls were preserved to a height of eight meters, at which height Lugli saw bricks protruding from the wall.\textsuperscript{174} Lugli identified these as possible remnants of the brackets drawn by Ciampini and Sangallo at about mid-height of the wall, which would indicate the articulation of depth in the wall decoration by sculptural modillions above eye-height. Besides this, the evidence for wall decoration belongs to a different category than archaeological findings, and is discussed in the Chapter Three.

\textsuperscript{173} Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” 237 and 240.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid., 229.
CHAPTER 3

The Graphic Evidence

The following chapter lays out the visual material surviving from the Basilica of Junius Bassus, both in the form of extant panels of inlay and as reconstruction and drawings from the Renaissance. The surviving panels are in the Capitoline Museum and Palazzo Romano in Rome, having entered those collections by way of private collections centuries earlier. Their various materials, both stone and glass (some of it definitely re-used from an earlier context) are reviewed below, along with their states of preservation, their restoration and collection histories, and their representation (or lack thereof) in the Renaissance evidence.

Chief among the sources in the latter category is Giuliano da Sangallo (c. 1443-1516), whose drawing from around 1500 is the earliest of the records we have of the basilica’s decoration. At the end of the 17th century, Giovanni Giustino Ciampini published the first volume of his Vetera Monimenta, which documented works in mosaic in Rome, with both engraved illustrations and textual commentary. Between these two bookends, the basilica was documented by works in the collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588-1657). Dal Pozzo set out to create a “paper museum” of works of art as well as phenomena of the natural world. Some of the artists whose works he collected are known by name, but other pieces by unidentified hands, and we cannot be sure to what extent these draughtsmen relied on earlier drawings (including those by Sangallo) rather than on autopsy. For more on these sources of visual material on the basilica, see Appendix A, Artists and Collectors.
With the help of collaborating architect Natasha Sanjaya, I have placed the extant panels into a digital reconstruction of the basilica (See Figure 3.35). The reader will see that the famous panels were likely quite high up on the wall, which may have posed a challenge to visibility, both in the fourth century and the early modern period. We have also created a version of the hall that collages together all of the surviving Renaissance imagery (see Figure 3.36) with the surviving panels. Though this visualization is not to be relied on for accuracy, as it includes motifs I do not think can have been part of the original decoration of the basilica, it is a helpful way of seeing how little of the hall remains, relative to the original ensemble, and how fragmentary our evidence is.

**Extant Panels**

**The Biga Panel**
Collection of the Museo Nazionale Romano (Palazzo Massimo), Rome.
Inv. 375831
75 cm high x 111 cm long

Attested by: Sangallo in elevation drawing (?) (Figure 3.23) (with major variation: quadriga, no background figures); Ciampini (in text and plate XXIII) (Figure 3.6); Windsor, RL 19224 (Figure 3.1); Windsor/Vittoria RL 9605 (Figure 3.2); Eclissi Bar. Lat. 4402, fol. 33 (Figure 3.3); Conti/Uffizi collection? (Figure 3.4); Raymond Lafage (Figure 3.5)

A bearded Bassus makes his way forward, dressed in the *toga praetextata*, the elaborate garment of the consulship, with inset jewels and gold threads indicated by the gilding on the panel. The polychromy of Bassus’ dress is a rare survival, since other depictions of the *toga praetextata* come down to us in ivory or in reproductions like the Calendar of 354 (See Figure 3.7 and 3.8). He stands in a biga (a two-horse chariot, as opposed to a four-horse one) lightly incised with indistinct human figures, drawn by two horses made out of palombino. His right arm is raised in a gesture that echoes that of the
men who accompany him. Flanking him are representatives of the four circus factions, displaying the colors of their professional chariot teams, riding on horses in giallo antico. Each rider holds a long-handled object. These have been variously identified as palms, sometimes carried in the processus consularis and pompa circensis;\textsuperscript{175} lacrosse-like rackets for a ball game called sphaeromachia;\textsuperscript{176} musical instruments,\textsuperscript{177} or horns of abundance, a possibility to which I will return below. The composition lacks a groundline, with Bassus in biga floating at center, and riders rendered slightly above him to suggest their depth in the plane. The ground of the panel is in serpentine, replaced in some places with verde antico and gabbro, while the other colors (red, blue, green, and white) are made of glass.

The composition puts one in mind of a triumphal procession, wherein the victor would parade through the city in a quadriga, receiving acclaim from the crowd as he processed through the streets with booty, captives, and painted illustrations of his military conquest. However, since the middle Augustan period, private citizens had lost access to the triumph. Armies formerly led by consuls were instead put under the command of legates who were surrogates of the emperor—and thus their victories belonged to him. A

\textsuperscript{175} For which see several numismatic depictions cited by Bastien, “Remarques sur le Processus Consularis dans le monnayage romain.”

\textsuperscript{176} This possibility is put forth by Nesbitt, “On Wall Decorations in Sectile,” 286, citing Seneca’s mention of the game in Ep. 80. We do not have comparable depictions from this period, and this identification raises questions about what charioteers are doing with ball-game rackets.

privilege that remained open to the consul, however, and provided similar splendor and public visibility, is that of the processus consularis, or consular procession. The pompa circensis, the parade with which the games-giver inaugurated the entertainments he hosted, offered a comparably estimable spectacle. Both pompae were related to and thus resembled the triumph, so much so that they are difficult to tell apart from one another in visual representations.

Emperors whose coinage depicts the processus consularis or the pompa circensis are often seen drawn by teams of four or six horses, or even elephants, but the biga also appears in these depictions.\(^{178}\) Sub-imperial depictions of these ceremonies are rare, but the circus riders in the Bassus biga panel clarify the context of the depiction. Jacob Latham suggests, on the basis of the so-called “Maffei Relief,” (See Figure 3.9) that statues of praeses ludorum driving biga were erected to commemorate the games-giver’s lap around the circus.\(^{179}\)

Ciampini identified the panel as showing Mark Antony, having fallen prey to Cleopatra’s charm after leading Artabazes king of Armenia to Alexandria in triumph.\(^{180}\) Ciampini’s description of this panel mentions figures near the chariot, looking like they are beating each other, and identifies this as a scene of human sacrifice, in which humans

\(^{178}\) Latham, *Performance, Memory, and Processions in Ancient Rome*, 123 supposes depictions of the biga as opposed to quadriga “may suggest a modicum of restraint.”

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 153.

\(^{180}\) Ciampini, *Vetera Monimenta*, 56-7. He cites Plutarch in support of this argument.
were sacrificed to Hercules as part of a triumph. Enking believed the panel to depict Valila, but the costume seems inappropriate to a Goth general, given that he never attained the consulship. Dunbabin argues that the central figure is a victorious charioteer, or Bassus in the guise of one. Certainly a charioteer would not be permitted to process in consular robes (nor would competing in one be feasible). The latter interpretation is compelling, since it allows the rider to be both an individual and a generic victor, but it ignores the fact that the praesides ludorum himself drove a chariot around the track before the beginning of the ceremony.  

*Other versions*

Several images that survive of this panel depict a variation that includes an additional four figures, two on either side of the magistrate. These figures, who are on the ground, are dressed in the circus colors like those on horseback. They seem to be fighting: in each pair, a standing figure raises an arm against the other figure, who crouches down. This is interpreted by de Rossi as a scene of manumission, which would have been performed by the consul at the beginning-of-year festivities. The slave endured the alapa, or slap, and vindicta, beating, which represented the last pains he would suffer at his master’s hands before becoming free. Becatti concurred, saying this functioned allegorically as a depiction of relief from the pains of mortal life.

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181 Ibid., 57.

182 These views are further taken up in Chapter Seven.

183 De Rossi 47.

Kyle Harper agrees, arguing that the ivory diptych from 517 cited by de Rossi as a depiction of the event offers a parallel for this imagery’s inclusion in the context of the consular festivities. (See Figure 3.10) To me the images do not look similar, and the manumission hypothesis would not explain why the figures who would represent master and slave in the biga panel are dressed like the circus faction representatives. While this theory would explain the apparent violence of the image, I am skeptical that the manumission is what is depicted here, not only because of the costume of the figures, but also because this would mean the biga panel scene is representing one of the legal ceremonies of the new year as occurring alongside and part of the moving procession, a proposition I do not find feasible.

On closer look, all these depictions also show a scattering of objects on the ground, perhaps the *sparsio missilium*, containers of goods or tokens that could be redeemed for items of value. The crouching figures may convey the harried excitement of crowds scurrying to benefit from these gifts, or they might depict hired *sparsatores*, or “sprinklers,” who participated in distribution of the sparsio. The latter possibility would explain their costumes, if not necessarily their poses. Circus riders as *sparsatores* might also support the identification of the objects they hold as cornucopia, from which

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185 Harper counters in *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275-425*, 471, that the act depicted is a performance miming a manumission, and thus a “quintessentially late antique image: a universal manumission ritual, within a mime act, performed as part of the consular installation, and frozen in time on an ivory diptych.”

186 For evidence of the hiring of *sparsatores* and possible depictions of them, see Day, “Scents of Place and Colours of Smell,” 181-2.
gifts were distributed, a symbol of Fortune’s bestowal of good things.  

For one such depiction of circus figures bearing cornucopia, see Figure 3.11.  

The small circus mosaic from Piazza Armerina also shows some of its child figures carrying amphorae or reticulated horns under their arms as they race behind or exhort their bird teams. (See Figure 3.12) A gold medallion depicting Constantius II with coins falling from his fingertips offers a contemporary parallel for the *sparsio* performed during the ceremonies of the new year. (See Figure 3.13) This may explain Bassus’ raised right arm, though not so much his clenched fist, which puts us in mind of the mappa-clutching consuls depicted at games on ivory diptychs.

The four additional *sparsatores* (?) figures may have been removed in the course of 18th century restorations.  

I would agree that this was likely the time when the biga panel was excised from the pendant drapery below, but I hesitate at the idea that four additional figures would have fit into this field, and thus have to wonder if there were multiple Bassus panels. This is speculative—unlike the case of the lions discussed below, we do not have more evidence that there were additional similar panels—but the likely repetition of tapestries down the length of the hall may suggest the possibility that some of the lunettes above them were also repeated.

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187 For Fortune as a symbolic aspect of the *sparsio*, see Simon, “Un aspect de largesses impériales: les sparsiones des missilia à Rome (1er siècle avant J.-C. - IIIe siècle après J.-C.).”

188 The animal heads at the base of the cornucopiae in this image put the viewer in mind of *rhyta*, perhaps suggesting a liquid *sparsio* like those discussed by Day.

**Condition and Provenance**

This panel, along with the Hylas panel, was removed between 1660 and 1667 to the collection of Cardinal Massimo at the Palace of the Four Fountains.\(^{190}\) Its presence there is attested by drawings made there by several artists, and by the 1677 inventory of his collection.\(^{191}\) The panel later passed, with the palace itself, into the possession of the Nerli in 1679 following Massimo’s death in 1677, then the Albani (c. 1719), until the property became the Palazzo del Drago in the 19\(^{th}\) century.\(^{192}\)

In the middle of the 20\(^{th}\) century, this work and its companion piece in the collection, the Hylas panel, were involved in illicit art dealings and a subsequent recovery mission. Prince Alfonso del Drago clandestinely sold the biga and Hylas panel, along with several other works, in 1948, and they ended up in Switzerland. They were returned to Italy at the end of the following decade, with the help of Rodolfo Siviero, a former agent of the Servizio Informationi Militari in Italy whose efforts after World War II were focused on the repatriation of illegally exported works.\(^{193}\) Upon recovery, the works were conserved by the Opificio delle Pietre Dure e Laboratori di Restauro in Florence. It was

\(^{190}\) Cima and Rubolino, “Giunio Basso: la ‘basilica’ scomparsa,” 70.

\(^{191}\) For which see Pomponi, “La collezione del cardinale Massimo e l’inventario del 1677.”

\(^{192}\) See Fusconi, “Un taccuino di disegni antiquari,” 49.

\(^{193}\) This fascinating tale is recounted by Maurizio Martinelli, “Cronaca Di Un Restauro Dimenticato: I Pannelli in Opus Sectile Dalla Basilica Di Giunio Basso All’Opificio Delle Pietre Dure.” This article also provides the most extensive published conservation records for the biga and Hylas panels.
acquired by the State of Italy in 1965 and transferred to the Museo di Roma (Palazzo Massimo).

Situating the panel

In reconstructing the basilica, I have placed the panel 10-12 meters above the floor, at some distance above eye level. (See Figures 3.35-36) This is based on my expectation, following both Sangallo and more recently D. B. Martin, that the curtain panels hung between the windows of the basilica. If the cornice in the hall was about eight meters up, as the Renaissance records would suggest and as Lugli’s discovery of protruding bricks in the wall corroborates, the Bassus panel would be at some distance above this height. Its height might pose some challenges to visibility, but its proximity to the windows and the light they provided would mitigate these challenges. So too would the familiarity and recognizability of the composition, which would be easy to discern as a type, especially if it occurred multiple times in the hall. The stateliness of the image was certainly not derived from its size, the scale of its figures being somewhat smaller than those of the Hylas panel. Instead, its grandiosity came from its triumphal associations, and was amplified by its rigid heraldic symmetry and frontality, the hieratic gaze of the five figures, and the underlining of the tapestry frame.

The Hylas Panel
Collection of the Museo Nazionale Romano (Palazzo Massimo), Rome.
Inv. 375830
137 cm high X 130 cm wide
Attested by: Windsor RL 19225 (Figure 3.14); Ciampini, in text and in plate XXIV (Figure 3.15) Antonio Eclissi, BAV Barb. Lat. 4402 fol. 32 (33?) (not pictured); Florence, uffizi, Arch. 7121, no. 293 in Conti 1983 p. 103, pl. CXIX (Figure 3.16)
In a hemispherical field we see three nude nymphs of palombino arrayed around a muscled giallo antico Hylas, also nude, but for his red mantle. While the nymph at left stands propped up against a vessel from which the blue glass waters of the spring pour, the two on either side of Hylas grab at his arms and shoulder, one of them reaching to touch his hair. His figure splays in a diagonal across the foreground, an outstretched arm reaching for escape. His red drapery—also in glass, like the yellow and blue garments of the nymphs and the water—flies behind him, implying his frenzied motion to escape their grasp. In his right hand he holds a water pitcher, its metallic sheen replicated by the mother of pearl inlay, which glints off the nymphs’ jewelry armbands. The Hylas myth is situated against a background of serpentine, with a variegated alabaster serving as the groundline. The rock on which Hylas rests his knee is clearly made of a re-used piece of marble: the beads of an earlier moulding are visible at the base. The chapter devoted to this panel in the second half of the dissertation discusses earlier iconographic studies of the Hylas myth and its relationship to depictions in painting and mosaic.194

The scene is a violent one, as much as the animal combats, except that it represents mythological violence, at some remove from the real world. This is the only surviving imagery from the hall that depicts a mythological narrative. It may have been included for some direct connection to the consul’s inaugural festivities, since these would have included theatrical performances (ludi scaenici), but it may have been selected for another reason entirely. I do not imagine that this vignette was repeated in the

194 See, for a basic introduction, LIMC V, 1, p. 574-579, s.v. Hylas, by John H. Oakley.
hall, but it may suggest there were additional mythological scenes in the original decoration.

Notably, the Hylas panel is absent from both the Sangallo and Ciampini drawings of the wall elevation, though Ciampini does describe the panel in his text as being at the Palace of the Four Fountains\textsuperscript{195} (like the biga panel) and illustrate it separately. He associates this panel with Antony as he did the biga panel: As the nymphs dragged away Hylas, so did Cleopatra drag away Antony.\textsuperscript{196} Ugonio describes this panel as Apollo standing with men around (see Appendix B, Visitors’ Accounts), an understandable interpretation if the Hylas panel was displayed next to the Delphic tripod, since the viewer may have associated the male nude with Apollo’s quiver and bow, especially if he were unable to see the panel at a distance. This identification might also have been sustained by the idea that the hall was a temple to Apollo’s twin Diana.

Some authors believe this panel to be the work of an earlier era, because of its difference in style and what is usually regarded as a higher quality, as registered in its greater naturalism and grounding in the landscape, by contrast with the biga figure’s rigidity, abstraction, and symmetry. H. C. von Minutoli’s work on ancient colored glass suggests the Hylas lunette is Hadrianic in date, while the Egyptianizing tapestry below “betrays a decline” that dates the appended drapery to a later period.\textsuperscript{197} Edmund Oldfield,

\textsuperscript{195} Ciampini, \textit{Vetera Monimenta}, 60.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 63.

\textsuperscript{197} Von Minutoli, \textit{Über die Anfertigung und die Nutzanwendung der farbigen Gläser bei den Alten}, 15.
in correspondence to Nesbitt, suggested that the Hylas was originally intended as an allegorical depiction of Hadrian’s love Antinuous. De Rossi does not, with the other authors, assign the panel specifically to the Hadrianic period, but he does take its difference to suggest that other panels decorating the Esquiline hall were taken from earlier monuments and installed alongside 4th century works. The shape of the Hylas composition fits and fills the lunette quite cleanly, however, suggesting that it was constructed for this setting.

A copy of the Hylas panel, without the nymphs, is in the collection of the Museo Regionale Casa Siviero in Florence. (See Figure 3.17) Apparently made from remnants from the Basilica of Junius Bassus, the replica panel holds an interesting claim to material authenticity. It was apparently owned by the Barberini, and then sold by Urbano Barberini (1664-1722) to a Di Castro, then acquired by Eugenio di Castro in 1955.

Given its matching drapery, the Hylas panel likely corresponded to the biga panel in placement. Thus it was probably 10-12 meters off the ground and on one side of a

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198 Oldfield’s letter is published at the end of Nesbitt, “On Wall Decorations in Sectile,” Answering Nesbitt’s views on the Hylas panel, expresses his skepticism that the fourth century could have produced art of such good style: “But observe, that though (as I think I have before written to you) bad art is of all periods, yet good art is not; and this is why I cannot admit that by carrying the consul down to the fifth [century] you become entitled to assign the Hylas to the fourth century. . .”


200 I thank Ann Kuttner for this observation and counterargument.

201 See Paolucci, Catalogo del Museo Casa Rodolfo Siviero di Firenze.

202 This is according to a note tacked to the back of the panel written in Siviero’s hand. See Martinelli, “Cronaca di un restauro dimenticato,” 308.
window. It may have been next to a panel of a Delphic tripod, if we believe Fig 3.14, but the connection between the myth and the tripod is not a direct one.

The Aegyptiaca Frieze
Extant (1, partial). Currently in the collection of the Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Massimo, inv. 375830. 137 X 130 cm.

Attested by: Whitehouse cat. 30 Antonio Eclissi Windsor RL 9030 (Figure 3.18); Sangallo elevation drawing (Figure 3.23); Whitehouse cat. 27 (three times, including with biga scene and Hylas scene) (Figure 3.28)

With biga scene above: Whitehouse catalogue no. 29 Windsor, RL 19224 (with biga) (Figure 3.1); Windsor 9605 From Becatti XLVI.1 (Figure 3.2); Conti Uffizi image (Figure 3.4); Lafage? (Figure 3.5) Ciampini (in text and plate XXIII) (Figure 3.6)

With Hylas scene above: RL 19225 Pietro Testa (Figure 3.14); Ciampini (in text and plate XXIV) (Figure 3.15)

The drapery that hangs beneath the Hylas panel, and that presumably also decorated the Bassus biga panel, is made of green serpentine, its folds highlighted in lighter pieces, perhaps of verde prato. The hem of the tapestry is an Egyptianizing frieze on white ground, minutely detailed, with colorful figures made of glass in red, yellow, green, orange, two shades of blue, and millefiori. Some of these figures sit, crowned and enthroned, while others move around the edge to bring them offerings. The folds of the curtain zig zag down the sides of the panels, fanned to display their folds to greatest effect and to frame the Hylas lunette on three sides.

Many efforts have been made to turn the figures into identifiable deities. Ciampini argues, for example, on the basis of the writings of the Christian apologist Minucius, that the scene on the drapery hem below the biga panel shows an enactment of the Isiac mysteries. Ciampini numbers several of the figures in his drawing to create a legend in
the text, identifying the figures as Anubis, Isis, Horus, etc. He proposes a different theory about the other drapery, that beneath the Hylas panel, as being related to the voyage of the Argonauts, thus tying the drapery frame to the subject of the lunette. In this Ciampini reveals his desire to link the each part of the decor to a textual source, and to fit each motif into a narrative scaffold. In neither case do these identifications bear out, and the figures seem merely to stand in for Egyptian-looking characters.

De Rossi associated the tapestry with the *vela Alexandrina*, imported to Rome from Alexandria, valued not only in the ancient world but also given by popes for centuries after. The drapery has frequently been assigned allegorical valences, since a curtain could conceal or reveal, but I suspect the tapestries did not denote this kind of symbolic meaning. Rather, they provided a fanciful *trompe l’oeil*. Because they look as if they are hung around the wide drums of columns, they suggest a colonnade where the basilica had none, creating a spatial illusion that pressed against the walls of the hall to suggest expansion. The creation of a soft, flexible material out of an unyielding, durable one demonstrated the defiance of the bounds of medium. Though the drapery border employs less valuable materials than the majority-stone lunettes and certainly the tiger panels, the care with which every detail is attended to must be noted for its own value. The precious miniature quality is clearly on display, especially given that each panel would vary slightly from its companion pieces.

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203 Ciampini, *Vetera Monimenta*, 58.

204 De Rossi, “La Basilica Profana Di Giunio Basso,” 56.
Elevation drawings of the hall suggest the curtain motif appeared multiple times down its length. While we cannot say for certain, this repetition of faux drapery is certainly common enough in Roman interior decoration (especially in the lower portion of the walls) that we can consider this very likely.

**The Tiger Panels**

Collection of the Museo Capitolino, Rome.

Right-facing tiger: MC 1222. 124 cm X 184 cm.
Left-facing tiger: MC 1226. 124 cm X 183 cm

Attested by: Ciampini (2; plate XXII) (Figure 3.19); Alfonso Ciacconio (BA V Vat. Lat. 5407, fol. 100v) (not pictured), with description (see Appendix B, Visitors’ Accounts; see there also Ugonio, Grimaldi, and Ficoroni); Windsor RL 11480 (Figure 3.20). Oddly, they are not represented in this form in Sangallo’s drawings, but Sangallo does depict a lion being attacked by a centaur.

The two mirror-image panels depict tigresses that have captured their arena quarry, helpless bovines whose small horns suggest they are young males. In each of these large horizontal intarsias, a heavy-teated tigress hunches over a white cow, pinning it down with one back paw and wrapping her front paws around the cow’s vulnerable neck as she sinks her teeth in. The cow’s head, in three-quarters profile, shows one eye wide with terror. Incisions mark where the claws of the tiger have scored the calf’s flesh in MC 1222, while these bits of punctured flesh are spotted in small droplets of blood on MC 1226. At nearly two meters long and about one and a quarter meters high, the panels made for imposing images on a larger scale than the others in the

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205 Some species of cattle do show horns in the female. Neither udders nor genitalia are shown, so the sex is not determinate.
Basilica of Junius Bassus. Unlike the panels in the Palazzo Massimo, the tiger panels are constructed of only organic stones and marbles, not man-made materials.\textsuperscript{206}

The panels were apparently placed in the Church of Sant’Antonio, perhaps around the end of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{207} In 1892, the land having been expropriated after the declaration of Rome as capital of Italy, the Commissione Archeologica Comunale decided to move them from Sant’Antonio. They were installed in the Capitoline Museum in 1903.\textsuperscript{208}

The suggestion of the panels’ pendant relationship is made clear by the matching composition of the two panels, with the tigers wrestling the calves so that they mirror each other, the trunk of a tree standing behind them like bookends, their tails curving above their backs in a loop that encloses the tree branch. The two panels are quite similar: if you overlay the outlines of the two panels, reversing one to account for their different orientation, they have similar dimensions, with similarly cut pieces in the same place.

That said, the right-facing tiger (1222) is better preserved, and there are some differences in choice of materials between the two panels. Both tigers are made of giallo antico, with serpentine stripes. The tree and the earthen ground on the panel with the

\textsuperscript{206} Cima and Rubolino, “Giunio Basso: la ‘basilica’ scomparsa,” 81.

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 69 points to ASC, SPQR Commissione archeologica, Repertorio carteggio amministrativo (1883-1924) fasc. 1138 for the letters that document the request to move these panels to the Capitoline. There is a Parker collection of images, one of which shows the panels in the chapel at the base of the lateral was, beneath the frescoes with scenes of the life of Saint Anthony.

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 69.
right-facing tiger are made of oriental alabaster (a calcite type, to be distinguished from the softer gypsum type). Leaves from the tree blossom in palombino bianco. The cow is executed in marmo bianco. The left-facing cow is also largely of marmo bianco, but its stone has a pale green veining. On the panel with the left-facing tiger, the earth is composed of broccatello, and the tree is portasanta.  

The faces of the tigers are also slightly different. The right-facing tiger has eyes of slate and marmo bianco, with its snout formed out of giallo antico, the edges of which have been fired to bring out chromatic subtleties in the upside-down heart shape of its muzzle. The pieces have some incisions, but these have been filled with colored plaster. Its left canine is articulated, but is camouflaged by the color of the calf. The left-facing tiger, by contrast, has eyes of brown limestone, with no pupil at center. Rosso antico highlights the opening of its mouth and outlines its teeth against the neck of the calf. Its muzzle is articulated differently than that of the other tiger, without the regular slender pieces of fired giallo antico. Instead the muzzle bears incised whiskers in place of inlaid ones, and circular incisions that add more textural detail to the snout.

The calf in this panel, too, is evidently different. Its head and upper body are clearly the result of a restoration, perhaps carried out at the time when it was taken from the basilica wall and placed in the church of Sant’Antonio. Marmo grigio insertions have been made at the cow’s head and chest area, and its marmo bianco has veining that tends

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209 All of the marble types discussed here are as reported by Ibid., 81-2. Further identification, such as more precise specification of “marmo bianco” or “marmo grigio” is not possible without archaeometric analysis.
toward pale green, while veining of the white marble of the right-facing cow resembles pavonazetto. The tiger’s right paw is not seen wrapped around the cow’s neck in this panel as it is in the other. The serpentine pieces that make up the background are less regularly cut than the pieces making up the tiger, and have larger interstices between them. Some of these appear to have been made of re-purposed miniature columns.210

The most recent campaign of restoration was undertaken by Edilrestauri di Vicenza, under the direction of Maria Pia Rubolino, and completed before the reopening of the Capitoline Museums in 2000.211 The differences between the two panels give evidence of restoration campaigns undertaken at various points over the objects’ lives. While the panels must have been made using a common pattern or cartoon, they also display a distinct individuality that is in tension with their uniformity.

Situating the Panels

These tiger panels were two of what is likely four if not more animal combat panels in the basilica’s program. Several of the Renaissance accounts name other wild beasts: Ugonio mentions a lion attacking a horse, a bull, and a wild goat; Grimaldi mentions a turtle and a horse torn apart by a lion; Mellini mentions a lion tearing a deer to pieces and a leopard that kills a cow, along with “similar savage creatures.”212 Ciampini later indicates that he saw panels of wild beasts in locations A and B on his picture (see


211 Analyses conducted by Società R & C Scientifica. See also Cima, Baldan, and Rubolino, “Restauro di tre mosaici di un pavimento in opus sectile dagli Horti Lamiani e delle tarsie marmoree dalla basilica di Giunio Basso.”

212 See Appendix B, Visitors’ Accounts.
Figure 3.27). He describes these, with reference to his plate XXII (see Figure 3.19) as a lion wounding a bull and a leopard devouring a stag.\footnote{Ciampini, \textit{Vetera Monimenta}, 56.} He also reports that these were later turned into tables at the monastery. Since the Museo Capitolino pair show tigresses, not a lion or leopard, the ones mentioned by Ciampini must have been other panels. The surviving pair were detached from the basilica (it is not clear whether Ciampini saw these in place or not) and installed in the chapel of Sant’Antonio.\footnote{Cima and Rubolino, “Giunio Basso: la ‘basilica’ scomparsa” provides an image (their figure 1) from the Parker collection (Parker n. 1460) but unfortunately it is not possible to determine from the image of the panels in situ where they were placed.}

Ficoroni repeats some of this in one of the latest descriptions of the hall, in 1744. He says at this time there are two lions on display in the basilica.\footnote{Ficoroni, \textit{Le vestigia e rarità di Roma antica}, 111.} If we believe that Ciampini, writing at the end of the 17th century, saw a pair of animal panels (a leopard and a lion) removed, and that Ficoroni saw two more lions in the hall a half century later, with the addition of the Museo Capitolini tiger panels we are up to six animal combat panels. The only problem with this is that Ficoroni describes the panels in Sant’Antonio’s chapel as bearing lions, so unless there was yet another pair, we may not be able to trust Ficoroni to remember or accurately report on the identification of the predators depicted. While Ficoroni and perhaps some of the other descriptions might be mistaken, we should not assume that Renaissance writers did not know the difference between a lion, leopard, and a tiger; it is far more likely that several of these were shown.
The program of the Ostian marble hall fits four similar images on the wall, arranged so that mirror images of the same animals are displayed on one wall and similar combats (roughly 2.10 m X 1.2 meters) are opposite on the other long wall. The larger size of the Bassus hall could have accommodated more panels on this scale. The decoration at Sette Sale clearly included depictions of wild cats (see Figure 3.33) but the number is not certain.

Where Ciampini places his leopard and lion panels is where I have tentatively reconstructed placed the tigers with bovines: at opposite ends of on long wall, so that their topmost edge aligns with the top of the windows’ arches. Here they would be close to fifteen meters off the ground, but the size and coloration of the panels, as well as their recognizability and duplication, would have contributed to their legibility, as would their proximity to the light coming in from the windows.

A Note on Style and Reception of the Surviving Panels

It has often been noted that the biga panel is more iconic, hieratic, even “medieval” or “Byzantine” than the more “classicizing” or naturalistic depictions of animal combats and of the nude body seen in the other surviving panels. De Rossi regarded the difference in style between this panel and the others surviving from the basilica to be so flagrant as to be injurious to the eye\textsuperscript{216}. Many authors took this style difference as a reflection on the date of the Hylas panel: it was “too good” to come from the fourth century, and therefore it must have been spoliated from an earlier context.

\textsuperscript{216} De Rossi, “La Basilica Profana Di Giunio Basso,” 47
Nesbitt countered with a rather sophisticated view on this question, acknowledging the problem of dating by style by saying that too much emphasis is placed on “goodness of style as a criterion of date,” when “much bad work was produced at periods when that of the best artists was excellent.” As far as can be seen from Sangallo’s drawings, he reasoned, the panels from the basilica “would seem to have been of tolerably good style. . . and, indeed, show the characteristic qualities rather of a living and vigorous than of a feeble and decaying art.” Nesbitt appears to be defending the ability of the fourth century to produce “good” art. On the other hand, his view of what “good” art comprises was anchored to the veneration of the naturalistic. Given the biga panel’s unrealistic viewpoint, the awkwardly splayed wheels of the biga, the awkwardly handled toga, and the somewhat ungainly figures and faces, Nesbitt reasoned that it was not the product of the same period as the rest of the basilica’s decoration; instead, it must have come from a later, more decayed period.217 It is clear these authors have trouble with the possibility that a single period might deploy a number of different formal vocabularies, operating in different styles according to purpose, rather than trying to attain a unity the modern eye would regard as consistent.

His lukewarm defense of the late antique aside, Nesbitt’s opinion is undergirded by an anachronistic judgement about spoliation. He reasons that surely such a grand

building would not employ reused works, a view recent scholarship has made clear is not consistent with late antique visuality.  

*The Additional Evidence for the Decoration in the Hall*

**A. Motifs for which we have isolated pictures**

**Delphic tripod**
No longer extant.
Attested by: Windsor RL 19225 (Figure 3.14); Windsor, RL 9031 (Antonio Eclissi) (Figure 3.21, left); Windsor, RL 9032 (Figure 3.21, right)

The tripod drawings are very different in style, with 9032 being rendered squatter and heavier, with deeper coloration that emphasizes the serpentine background and the blue omphalos, while 9031 looks like it might well be a painted wall decoration in the Pompeian fourth style, with its fine detail, candelabra motifs, and fantasy architecture. All the tripod drawings have the bow and quiver in the lowest register and show knotted netting over the omphalos,

The authenticity of this motif is adduced partly by its presence in a panel adjoining the Hylas lunette: that is, the accuracy of the Hylas part of the images lend credence to the adjoined tripod. This motif was likely part of the original decoration of the basilica, perhaps as a repeating element.

**Hippocentaur**
Attested by: Ciampini (plate XXII) (Figure 3.19); Windsor, RL 11481 (Figure 3.22); Alfonso Ciacconio cod. Vat. 5407 f. 193 (not pictured)

In the Windsor drawing the winged centaur is holding something like a plume. It may be a part of what Sangallo means to convey with his drawing at location 3 (See Figure 3.24 and below), although his figure holds a club and is attacked by a lion.

Ciampini’s text expresses disbelief about this incredible monster, but reassures the reader that it definitely existed on the walls of the basilica. The wings drawn by the artists may be a misinterpretation of a cape or mantle (See Figure 3.37 for an example). I am inclined to believe this image is authentic to the original decoration of the hall. Ciampini’s explanation of the image as linking Antony to Hercules by ancestry is far less believable.\textsuperscript{219} The centaur could be a specific character, such as Chiron, or a generic protagonist, perhaps in a hunting scene, garden, or bath.

The Ciampini image and Windsor sheet show the centaur facing opposite directions, so perhaps there was more than one such creature in the hall.

\textit{B. Wall elevation drawings (The Evidence for the Ensemble)}

This section will address the five drawings or engravings of one of the long walls of the Basilica of Junius Bassus, focusing on differences between the elevations and compositional choices and setting aside the picture panels depicted therein for Part C.

These drawings and their contents cannot be assessed without reference to the work of Cristian Huelsen, whose 1927 article rigorously reviewed the evidence concerning the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Huelsen broke with the interpretation prevalent in Christian archaeology at the time, that the hall was a victory monument to Constantine.

\textsuperscript{219} Ciampini, \textit{Vetera Monimenta}, 56.
following his defeat of Maxentius in 312. This view of the monument and its message was based largely on the ways de Rossi and Bock interpreted imagery from these. Huelsen thus set about dismantling several pieces of the system of decoration as attested by Sangallo. His methods of doing so warrant scrutiny, before we label as unreliable testimony everything Sangallo drew and everything later draughtsmen might have based on his earlier work.

As a methodology, Huelsen sought comparanda for Sangallo’s imagery, as any good art historian would. When he identified pieces drawn by Sangallo that appeared in other ancient objects, he used these parallels to argue against the faithfulness and reliability of Sangallo’s rendering, suggesting that its author borrowed scenes from other models rather than observing and documenting them from the monument before him. This argument is not definitive, however, because the same logic might also be used to indicate that a particular scene or motif used by Sangallo has parallels that place it in the wider context of late antique iconography, and thus to argue for the reliability of the drawing as documentation.

Huelsen also refuted the credibility of Sangallo’s drawing by finding other designs by the artist that used the same composition. This is more damning, since it suggests the draughtsman may have viewed iconography as fungible, and interchanged scenes without regard to their actual context, either because he cared more for the architectural scheme than for the decorative one, or because parts of the basilica program were damaged or missing and he wished to record it as an intact whole, in accordance with antiquarian practice at the time. It is, however, possible that the same scene appeared
across multiple works as Sangallo observed them. I do not always agree with Huelsen’s identification of duplicate scenes and will point out the discrepancies in Part C below.

Most significant is that Huelsen does not give proper credit to the work of Ciampini as independent testimony of the building’s appearance. He justifies this by saying Ciampini’s drawing is based on Sangallo’s, and thus reliant on an inaccurate model. But Ciampini by no means executed a blind mechanical copy of Sangallo’s drawing; there are several difference between his engraving and Sangallo’s drawing. Ciampini also had firsthand knowledge of the basilica, according to his testimony. Though we cannot know whether Ciampini recorded exactly what he saw (or in what condition he saw it), this firsthand investigation puts him ahead of many of the unknown artists of surviving drawings. Moreover, Ciampini does acknowledge sources in his text, but does not do so for Sangallo, which calls into doubt whether he was working with a knowledge of Sanallo’s drawing at all.

Finally, we know that Ciampini’s motives were different from Sangallo’s. That is, Ciampini was not working as an artist/architect, gathering pieces to construct his own classically-inspired works and give models for those of other designers, but was instead interested in the practice of documentation and analysis of the originals. However those aims may have been carried out differently in the 17th century than today, the testimony of Ciampini should be evaluated on its own merits, not as mere mimicry of Sangallo.

That debate aside, a few comments can be made as an overview to all five of the elevation reconstructions. Three of the drawings depict only a single elevation wall (or part of it). To the extent the drawings are related, they likely depict the same wall (the
southwest one, the windows of which were filled). Only one draughtsman selected a view into the corner, and none of the drawings offer a view facing the apse or the other short wall of the basilica, near the entrance.

Some of the features of the elevation drawings can be checked against the data from the excavation. First, the modillions depicted as running across the wall midway up are likely true to life, not fantastic perspectival inventions but actually projected from the wall there. Lugli’s discovery of bricks protruding from the wall accords with this feature. This would have made the wall a dynamic surface, rather than a smoothed, flush facing of stone. The planar variation would have transformed the experience of a single-naved basilica into something with a kind of pulsing, alternating interior. Second, the divisions of the lower part of the wall in the Sangallo drawing are apparently inaccurate. The excavators found bronze cramps that indicated the wall was divided into panels of equal width, so the bottom half of the wall did not match the division of the upper part. (See DB Martin reconstruction, Figure 2.9) This feature introduces rhythmic variation that makes each register independent of the others, rather than fitting the upper and lower wall into consistent vertical divisions.

**Sangallo elevation** (Figure 3.23)

Sangallo’s drawing is characterized by high density of decoration and articulation. Cornice lines are doubled or tripled, insistently holding each register apart from the next. Non-figural panels are outlined to rearticulate their shape, so that every element has its

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profiles re-enunciated and traced. This framing and re-framing is in evidence in the Ostian marble hall, and is rendered more exaggerated because of the program’s polychromy.

The drawing depicts just half of one of the long walls of the basilica. Why he chose this division is not clear, but perhaps a half view sufficed to show a structurally and compositionally symmetrical wall. By way of explanation, Sangallo captions his text in the band of the wall between the lower panelling and the dado: “La meta della fac(ci)ata di Santo Andrea da lato di dentro [in] Roma, tutta piana lavorata tutta di pietre fine cioè porfido serpantino madreperla e di più ragioni di pietre fino a uso di prospettiva: cosa maravigliosa.” Sangallo does not hide his wonderment. He also annotates the drawing of a pilaster base profile that hovers loosely in the half-arch of the right hand window. A lightly-penned scale runs along the bottom of the page.

One question raised by Sangallo’s selective shading of the drawing is how far, if at all, parts of the wall were in relief. Besides the modillions, some of the vertical rectangular panels and the H-shaped motifs beneath them seem to be colored to indicate the wall was textured. This would be inconsistent with what reports seem to indicate about the wall being entirely made of opus sectile, but it is possible there were sculpted relief portions.

Not only Huelsen but also those familiar with Sangallo’s larger oeuvre have cautioned against relying on his drawings as strict records rather than reconstructions. Before and apart from the question of whether Sangallo is truthful we must ask what he was actually able to see, given the height of the walls, and their condition (indeed, what
even still remained on those walls) by the time he visited. If the lower part of the wall was most susceptible to damage and removal, we might logically assume this is the least reliable part of the drawing.

**Ciampini elevation (engraving)** (Figure 3.27)

Ciampini leaves to us a lengthy textual description and analysis of its contents to accompany his engraving. He introduces the image as leaving nothing to be desired. This is wishful. Though he tells us that some of the panels were marked out by stories, and others blank, because they have been destroyed by the “gluttony of time” or put to some other use, he does not signal wear at all. He instead depicts the wall as a whole, if somewhat altered. His only way of pointing to re-use is by his labels at A and B, from which points he says the tiger panels were removed. This means Ciampini does not provide the viewer with a way of distinguishing whether other rectangular frames in the image also once held figural pictures, as A and B had, or whether they are only geometric specchiature, exactly as pictured. On the other hand, Ciampini can at least not be accused of inventing imagery to fill blank panels, since he leaves panels undecorated even in places where Sangallo depicts figural decoration (see, e.g., Sangallo location 2 compared with Ciampini’s open rectangle in the same place). This may be a suggestion of Ciampini’s commitment to accuracy: we would not expect him to fill in panels with invented decoration, as Sangallo might be accused of doing.

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221 Ciampini. *Vetra Monimenta*, 52.
Ciampini’s choice to depict two-thirds of the wall, not the whole wall nor the half Sangallo showed, is inexplicable. His other major divergence from the Sangallo drawing is his arrangement of the socle. He keeps the horse-drawn cart at left (his figure 2) and the adlocutio scene at right (his figure 3), but adds an additional roundel. Where Sangallo had two facing portraits in profile, Ciampini fills only one of his three roundels with a profile portrait. In other respects, Ciampini’s drawing is much the same as Sangallo’s, with an even more forceful division of the upper wall from the lower one. He does not, however, credit Sangallo. This is worth noting because he shows elsewhere his dedication to attribution, citing a number of ancient sources as well as expressing his debt to Antonio dal Pozzo. Ciampini may have been working from the Codex Ursinianus Copyist’s drawing of the wall RL19267 (See Figure 3.26). This version comes from earlier in the century and was in the dal Pozzo collection, but again, he does not acknowledge this source. At any rate, his modifications and omissions from the Sangallo drawing indicate his engraving is certainly no blind copy of the Sangallo reconstruction, but a separate record, or at minimum a reworking of a separate record, of the building. Ciampini’s report that he saw the building suggests, too, that he would be at least capable of working from an earlier drawing in a way that discerned fact from invention. This is critical, given that this evidence of the basilica is one that fits within the wider context of Ciampini’s project of historical documentation.

Most illuminating for our purposes is Ciampini’s textual description of some elements of the composition while he is silent on others. Though I am not convinced by Ciampini’s description of individual scenes, I find the fact of his description compelling:
his documentation, however flawed, is not careless. These descriptions will be discussed beneath individual panel images below.

**Windsor/Vittoria RL 9604** (See Figure 3.25)
**P.S. Bartoli (after Sangallo), 1674?**

A student of Poussin, Bartoli was a painter and engraver, whose work was patronized not only by dal Pozzo but also by the Barberini family. He also served as papal antiquarian and antiquarian to Christina Queen of Sweden.²²² His father-in-law was Giacomo Grimaldi, mentioned below in the visitors’ accounts. This puts him at most one degree of separation from having seen the basilica himself, though of course we cannot say whether Bartoli’s drawing was vetted by the eye-witness Grimaldi.

The artist does not claim to have seen the hall, and in fact indicates his drawing is quarried from several preceding ones, including Sangallo’s, as well as works from dal Pozzo’s collection.²²³ Bartoli’s inscription on the page also suggests he viewed the panels that had been removed from the basilica to Cardinal Massimo’s collection. The Hylas panel with drapery had been removed by this time, but Bartoli includes drapery in his drawing, which may support the claim that there were several of these curtains down the length of the wall of the basilica.

²²² Pace, “Bartoli, Pietro Santi.”

²²³ “Prospetto di una terza parte del Tempio antico chiuso nella clausura de’ padri di S.to Antonio nel Monte Celio [sic], Cavato da diversi disegni; come di uno da Sangallo fatto nel 1485 che oggi si trova nella libreria barberina, altri pezzi originali staccati dall’opera nel palazzo di Massimi, altri da disegni del famoso studio dell’Ill.mo del Pozzo; et altri capitatomi nel 1660 nella compra di diverse cose di Valenti uomini.” This transliteration comes from Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” 245.
Bartoli transcribes Sangallo’s caption for the drawing onto his own page. His drawing is in many ways quite close to Sangallo’s original, though Bartoli makes some changes in proportion, shrinking the modillions and giving the lowest register more bulk and breathing room. He drew one-third of the wall, rather than Sangallo’s half, just beginning the arch of a second window and filling it with heftier brackets. This part of the drawing seems to veer away from the documentary, since the modillions across the window make no architectural sense; still, it seems significant that he maintains the tiny dolphins and trident motif from Sangallo’s work by transferring it here.

The Bartoli inscription says he sourced, in addition to the Sangallo and dal Pozzo drawings, “others he stumbled upon in acquiring things from the Valenti men” in 1660 (see note above). He does not, however, say what these things were (nor is it clear who the Valentini were). There is no figural material in Bartoli’s drawing that does not find a correspondence in Sangallo’s, but presumably he means that drawings he purchased from the Valenti furnished further evidence of the basilica’s decoration.

RL19267
Codex Ursinianus Copyist (fl. C. 1625-c. 1635) (Figure 3.26)

This drawing also comes out of the dal Pozzo collection, as part of a set of copies from Sangallo’s notebook. The majority in the set are mechanical copies that vary little from the original, though sometimes they omit details, annotations, or measurements. These copies were likely produced by tracing, so omissions may point to details that were too faint to trace. This particular drawing, however, is one of only two in the set where

\[224\] Campbell, *Ancient Roman Topography and Architecture*, vol. 2, 479-80
the drawing is not a mechanical copy of Sangallo’s original. The copyist covers more of
the length of the wall, puts three tondi in the dado instead of two, and varies the upper
register.

To class this drawing as a copy of Sangallo’s might be useful in the larger task of
cataloguing the dal Pozzo collection, but it glosses over important differences between
this drawing and its purported original. Given that other drawings in the set are more
mechanical reproductions, we should take notice when the author deviates from Sangallo.
Moreover, as the Bartoli drawing above makes clear, some copyists working on this
monument were comfortable reproducing Sangallo’s drawing, and yet this draughtsmen
demurred. Whether the adjustments the “copyist” made were informed by some other
drawing, by firsthand knowledge of the hall’s decoration, or otherwise motivated, we
ought well to regard this drawing as at least somewhat independent from the Sangallo
drawing, admitting of another data point regarding the hall’s decoration.

The drawing’s nearness to Ciampini’s image could suggest that Ciampini had his
engraving made from it.225 By the transitive property, this would make the Ciampini
elevation image an indirect copy of Sangallo’s (and therefore as unreliable as Sangallo’s
drawing is alleged to be). This equivalence is an uneasy one. First, Ciampini does not
credit the author of this image as he credits dal Pozzo when speaking about the later
Christian decoration of the hall. If Ciampini did use this image as the basis for his

225 This is Campbell’s argument in the catalogue.
engraving, we might regard this as a shortcut, rather than dismissing Ciampini’s firsthand knowledge of the hall.

Whitehouse no. 27 (17th C Italian) Private collection, previously SMA, fol. 5 (Figure 3.28)

This sheet is the most pared-down of the Renaissance era drawings of the wall, and the only one to include the animal combat iconography extant from the hall. The draughtsman seems to have struggled somewhat with representing the corner of the room, and the angle of the walls here is not managed with particular virtuosity. The fraction of the wall he gives—perhaps only one third or one fourth of its total length—would still seem to require a window, which he does not show, making it unclear how the panels as arranged would have made room for an opening. Evidently we are to imagine the wall at right is the interior wall of the narthex, and not the wall of the apse, but this is not made clear.

This drawing employs fewer figural panels, and conjectures more repetition of those panels than do the other drawings. The modillions are placed lower down the wall than in other drawings in a top-heavy arrangement. In the lower zone, this artist has drawn a blind arcade, which may show the zone divided evenly (it is hard to tell in this perspective), whereas the other depictions alternate between thinner and wider panels. The framed diamonds and circles in the uppermost register of the drawing are not seen in any of the other reconstructions, but this type of panel is seen in the Ostian marble hall and elsewhere.

Also unique to this representation is the absence of a second division of the dado: the pilasters come nearly to the floor, rather than making way for a register of tondi and
rectangular panels beneath. The excavation team’s reconstruction by D.B. Martin also omits this lowest decorative register, opting instead for a cornice on an otherwise blank dado. Martin’s choice here, however, seems to be an acquiescence to Huelsen’s warnings as to the accuracy of Sangallo’s drawings, and not an interpretation of archaeological evidence.

The differences exhibited by this drawing suggest that the artist took a different approach, perhaps working from known panels and trying to create a cohesive whole out of them, rather than seeing or envisioning a wall structure and trying to slot panels into it.

As a group, the elevation drawings suggest the interior decoration of the hall was a dense and rich scheme. The rhythmic re-articulation of several shapes—the rectangular panels framed and re-framed, the peltae repeating, architectural responds—we must imagine this same echoing or reverberating quality in the structure of the wall, so that parts pulsed out as others withdrew, drawing viewers in and then rebuffing them with an unyielding flat surface.

19th century reconstruction drawings (Figures 3.29 and 3.30)

Luigi Canina’s (1795-1856) drawings of the Basilica of Junius Bassus are the most recent. They are part of a larger work dedicated to the buildings of the early Christian era and aimed at demonstrating the suitability of the basilica shape to “Christian temples.” Under Canina’s classification, the basilica is called the Basilica Siciniana.

Since Canina was working after the destruction of the Basilica of Junius Bassus, we must view his drawings as reconstructions, rather than as primary sources. This is not to say that the other drawings are purely documentary or innocent of invention. Sangallo,
Ciampini, and other draughtsmen whose work is discussed here undoubtedly present restorations and reworkings, aimed more at the conveying a general impression of the original than its one-to-one translation.

Since Canina’s drawings cannot be firsthand accounts, I have not considered them as attestation of individual motifs or arrangement. Examining them is nonetheless interesting, since their completeness gives us the most thorough proposal for coherent decorative system—however fantastic that system may be.

C. Panels and motifs depicted in the elevation drawings

Some of the motifs depicted are found in the partial elevation drawings of the basilica but not recorded as independent pictures. This section focuses on the picture panels depicted in the elevation drawings, in order to assess the likely accuracy of specific figural compositions and floating motifs within the larger arrangement of the wall.

I begin with Sangallo’s elevation drawing, referencing motifs using location numbers overlaid on the Sangallo drawing. Sangallo is the backbone of the study because his drawing is the earliest, and therefore the one most likely to be recopied and translated by later draughtsmen. None of the later drawings include or invent new figural compositions or motifs that do not accord with something in Sangallo’s original.226

“Antony” with pimps and lions/Magna Mater drawn by lions
Sangallo Location 1 (See Figure 3.24 for Sangallo with locations indicated for this and the entries that follow)

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226 The one exception to this is the Delphic tripod in the Whitehouse cat. no. 27 elevation drawing, but the tripod is attested elsewhere.
No longer extant.
Attested by: Sangallo, Bartoli, Ciampini, Codex Ursinianus Copyist

The panel shows a procession toward the left. At front is an illegible figure, who in Sangallo’s drawing is holding or next to something that may be a palm. In the other versions this plume is missing and the frontmost figure is rendered like a foot soldier carrying a shield. Behind in the procession is a man on a horse, his mount rearing up. Behind them two lions draw a cart that bears a seated figure. Whether this is a human, divinity, or even a statue is not clear.

Ciampini describes the scene as a triumphal chariot being drawn by lions, with Marc Antony holding the scepter of imperium in the chariot, preceded by a man on a horse and before him a citharode. Ciampini’s interpretation of the scene is rather tortuous, winding through several competing texts that he evaluates as possible keys for the image.

Huelsen, on the other hand, identifies the figure in the chariot as Magna Mater, drawn by two lions, preceded by a warrior on foot in combat with an equestrian. He refutes the authenticity of the image by finding a model in two antique images: in the right half, he sees a copy of a relief on a statue base dedicated by Scipio Orfitus (this is reversed so that the chariot on the statue base proceeds to the right, and Sangallo’s drawing depicts in proceeding to the left); and at left, a warrior on foot in combat with a rider, for which he found no specific model, but identified it as similar to Neronian-era coin reverses.

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227 Ciampini, *Vetra Monimenta*, 52.

Huelsen’s interpretation of the drawing perhaps too readily assumes invention on Sangallo’s part. The elevation drawing may show Magna Mater, but the fact that there exist in Roman art images of her drawn by lions and images of foot soldiers with riders seems hardly to be enough evidence to suggest that Sangallo was copying from them. Huelsen also discredits this image by pointing to Sangallo’s drawing of the Arch of Malborghetto (f. 38 in the same codex as our drawing; see Figure 3.38) where he says Magna Mater appears again in a panel where Sangallo was similarly inventing fill. I do not find this similarity compelling. The two images do both have figures in carts, but this is hardly disqualifying. The Malborghetto figure does not resemble Magna Mater (it is in fact probably male) and is drawn by horses. He is seated on a curule chair, a feature we would more likely see associated with a consul or emperor.

It would be most productive here to set aside Huelsen’s accusation of fabrication and assume Sangallo did his best to depict what he saw, even as we hold in mind the possibility that Sangallo could not make out all the details of the uppermost register. Given the difficulty of making out Sangallo’s image, and the discrepancy between his and the other renderings, we must be satisfied with the barest of outlines when assessing this panel. We can be reassured, however, by the fact that Ciampini takes up this panel as the object of description. This suggests that there was indeed some sort of figural panel here, rather than the geometric diamond and circle panels seen in Whitehouse 27. There was likely some kind of procession depicted, though whether it was related to circus activities or a ritual is impossible to say.

Two riders/“Decursio”
Sangallo location 2
Attested by: Sangallo, Bartoli (in bottom register)

Sangallo has drawn a double horse and rider in profile, flanked by the initials “SC” (for which see below). His arrangement of the upper register, alternating between squares and rectangles, would suggest that this space should be filled not by a square composition but by a rectangular one. The horses and riders seen could be part of a truncated procession running to the left, but Sangallo’s placement of the “SC” makes the square look like a complete composition, casting doubt on whether this imagery was found in the panel at all.

Huelsen identifies a numismatic source for the riders in coins produced under Nero. Sangallo uses the same composition in the right hand spandrel of a funeral monument he designed for Nera Sassetti. While this fact alone does not preclude the possibility that this scene appeared in the Basilica of Junius Bassus (he could for instance have seen the decoration in the basilica and used it as inspiration in his work for the Sassetti family), Sangallo labels the composition on the Sassetti monument with the inscription “DECURSIO,” which would not be an expected convention for wall decoration. Sangallo also applies a variation on the scene to a relief panel on the Malborghetto arch.

If there were equestrians depicted in the upper register, Ciampini did not take up the subject in his text, nor does he include a corresponding composition in his engraving.

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This leaves us with little evidence to substantiate the presence of this decorative panel, and no idea as to its significance if it was a part of the original scheme.

**Centaur attacked by a lion**  
**Sangallo Location 3**  
Attested by: Sangallo, Bartoli

This image likely relates to the centaur that is depicted as a stand-alone panel discussed above. Sangallo may have conflated the centaur with the tiger panels, merging this with the animal combats, but it is also possible there was once a panel showing a centaur attacked by a wild cat as Sangallo has rendered here. We see such a pairing in a mosaic at Hadrian’s villa at Tivoli, and similar imagery is also to be found in mythical hunt scenes he cannot have known (see e.g. Figure 3.40), though it is possible he knew other examples.

Ciampini does not include the centaur in his elevation engraving, although he does document the winged centaur as a separate panel, leaving us to wonder how the panel fit into the architectural framework. Given the difference between this rendition of the centaur and the others, it is difficult to say which version was found in the basilica, or if perhaps there were multiple centaurs in the hall.

**Frontal figure in a quadriga and “SC”**  
**Sangallo Location 4**  
Attested by: Sangallo only.

This scene depicts a nearly-frontal figure drawn by four horses, a palm or oversized plume under one arm and a scepter raised in the other. The orientation of the figure, the outstretched arm, and the horses make the image resemble the extant panel of
Bassus in a biga, though there are no figures in the drawing that equate to the circus factions in the panel.

Where this panel is in every other drawing, it is depicted as blank. I am inclined to trust that Sangallo has given us the location not depicted in the later drawings because it had already been taken to the Palazzo Massimi when those drawings were made. This hypothesis, however, is in conflict with the association made between the Bassus biga panel and the drapery panel in some of the Renaissance images that place the former in the lunette above the latter to match the format of the Hylas lunette with drapery beneath. Perhaps the extant biga panel is not what is depicted here, and it instead an illustration of a victorious charioteer, like the Polydus and Compressore mosaic at Trier depicting Polydus in his quadriga (See Figure 3.41).

The “SC,” an abbreviation for Senatus Consultum/o, is frequently seen on coin reverses, either alone or with each letter on either side of a central image. Because the phrase implied the Senate’s support for the emperor, and was thus an indicator of his legitimacy, de Rossi and Bock used its presence in Sangallo’s drawing to bolster their argument for the hall as a triumphal monument to Constantine, recent victor over Maxentius.230

If a title were granted to the emperor by the senate, or a monument dedicated, “SC” might be used, but this would be a part of a longer inscription naming the honor. Huelsen rightly dismissed this detail as a numismatically-inspired fabrication. Sangallo

230 See Kierdorf and Klose, “Senatus Consultum.”
may have made this emendation in response to an impression that the scene looked like an official one, a triumph or similar procession, and wanted to underscore that quality. His insertion of the letters as a kind of label or framing device on which to seat his figure does not fit with the conventions of Roman wall decoration.

**Victories (Amores?) above drapery**
**Sangallo location 5**
Attested by: Sangallo only.

The Victories depicted by Sangallo are not attested by any other artistic depiction, nor are they described by Ciampini. It is interesting that Huelsen makes no mention of them, since they would have made excellent fodder for the argument that the hall was a victory monument. It is entirely possible, but not provable, that there were Victories in the decoration of the hall, though they would also have been easy inventions for a restoration-minded antiquarian.

**Carpentum/Tensa**
**Sangallo location 6 (=Ciampini’s figure 2)**
Attested by: Sangallo, Bartoli, Codex Ursinianus Copyist, Ciampini

Ciampini identifies the wheeled, covered vehicle depicted here as a carpentum drawn by mules. He points to a coin of Agrippina the Elder on which the same vehicle is depicted. Huelsen takes this similarity as evidence that Sangallo fabricated the image from a coin reverse.

Such a vehicle was the mode of transport for a wealthy individual, especially elite matrons; thus the conveyance was associated with a degree of pageantry. The fact that the

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city regulated transit within its walls made this conveyance an even greater privilege. The inclusion of a such a motif would not be out of place in a scheme that speaks so much to privilege and status,²³² but of course we should not be compelled to admit the motif into evidence on the ground of its usefulness to our argument.

Perhaps like Huelsen we ought to be circumspect, particularly with regard to the decoration of the lowest register of the wall, which would have been most susceptible to damage and disappearance. It is possible Sangallo did copy this image from a coin and that it was never part of the hall’s decoration. I would reiterate, however, that Ciampini’s record is backed by firsthand witness, and that it was part of a larger intellectual project of documenting antiquity. Ciampini was more likely to go about researching Roman wheeled transport if he actually believed such a thing was depicted on the walls of this monument. The fact that he trusted or followed Sangallo’s depiction—something he did not do indiscriminately, as his treatment of the panels below will show—may counter our skepticism.

**Portrait roundels**

**Sangallo location 7**

Attested by: Sangallo, Bartoli, Codex Ursinianus Copyist, Ciampini

Sangallo places two profile portraits in roundels in the middle of the socle, arranged so that they face one another. The later images all render the register differently, either adding to or reducing the number of medallions (to one or three); they all fill only

²³² Conveyances of power (literally and metaphorically) are the subject of an entire dissertation on wheeled transport in Rome: Hudson, “On the Way: A Poetics of Roman Transportation.”
one roundel with a profile portrait. The faces resemble one another quite closely, but de Rossi tried quite hard to identify each one. They wear laurel crowns with ribbons fluttering behind, as we might see on an imperial coin.

Huelsen again rejects the authenticity of this iconography on the basis that it is a copy of a numismatic portrait, used to fill the wall. Here I am more inclined to follow Huelsen than before. Portrait busts did appear on walls in this era, in multiple media. The two heads in the marble revetment at Ostia offer an example of portraits in this medium, and reports from excavations at the house in via Giovanni Lanza indicate that there were sculpted portraits of philosophical figures in roundels on the walls there. Painted depictions of interiors indicate that tondo portraits or clipeatae could also be hung on walls.

What makes Sangallo’s portraits unusual is that they are in profile, a convention not typical of Roman art except in the numismatic realm. Huelsen points out the head as Sangallo has rendered it would tower over one meter high, a mural colossus. Such a decoration also makes little sense in the lower zone of the wall. Its placement defies the logic of architectural support, and would be surprising in a Roman context. Ciampini’s silence on the portraits does not inspire confidence. All these factors suggest the portrait roundels are dubious, unless they actually were displayed on the truncated part of the wall or the opposite wall and recorded out of place in Sangallo’s drawing.

**Adlocutio w/ soldier’s head on a stake**

**Sangallo location 8**

Attested by: Sangallo, Codex Ursinianus Copyist, Ciampini
This scene of an emperor or consul addressing troops is a formulaic composition in the Roman world. Huelsen identifies it as a common coin reverse, and the composition is also familiar to us from one of the spoliated panels on the Arch of Constantine. Ciampini, however, identifies this as a specific historical scene from Plutarch, when Antony is brought the severed hand and head of his enemy Cicero and laughs with delight at Cicero’s gruesome end. This interpretation is highly implausible.

This same composition appears in Sangallo’s decoration of Francesco Sassetti’s tomb, in the right spandrel, helpfully labeled by the draughtsman “Adlocutio.” As with the “decursio” motif above, also identified on a Sassetti tomb, the fact of it being there does not exclude the possibility of its authenticity; but, the fact that this is such a stock scene raises doubt. Nor is it clear why this scene is missing from the Bartoli elevation, where it has been replaced by the “decursio” Sangallo pens in the upper portion of the wall. Finally, it does not fit into Sangallo’s composition: it is a square arrangement laid out where Sangallo had placed a rectangular panel, with its right side truncated by the sketch of bronze doors. These points suggest the scene should not be considered part of the original decoration of the basilica.

**Miscellanea**

Several motifs appear consistently across the wall elevation images. The shutters seen in the uppermost register of the wall, for example, appear consistently across the wall elevation drawings. They are certainly a believable aspect of the design, inasmuch as

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Roman wall decoration does show shutters on the sides of painted panels (*pinakes*), which may appear as if resting on an upper cornice. Masks, too, make frequent appearance in Roman wall painting. Also likely to have been part of the original decoration are the dolphins that spring up in Sangallo’s drawing like sprouting stems in the spandrels of the medallions. They are so tiny as to be easily overlooked, but they are taken up again by Bartoli, who puts them above modillions in the middle of an arched window. Though they are attached, in the Bartoli drawing, to somewhat nonsensical architecture, they should perhaps not be dismissed, since the dolphin motif does occur in the marble hall at Ostia and is one of the motifs identifiable from the remains of the hall at Sette Sale (See Figure 3.33). Also at Ostia, in both the wall and the pavement, are peltae, which probably belonged to the original decoration of the basilica in some fashion.

The trophies arrangements in the lowest register are the most dubious of this set of designs, but it is not impossible they once were affixed to the walls of the hall. Pliny writes that trophies can accompany portraits of famous ancestors (and indeed, it may have been this that inspired Sangallo to piece together such a combination). Campanian and other examples suggest that trophies were not limited to public monuments, and in fact there were painted trophies at the 4th century villa of Piazza Armerina.

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234 Pliny 35.7 “aliae foris et circa limina animo rum ingentium imagines erant adfixis hostium spoliis.” For one partially preserved example in the Villa of the Mysteries, see Sheila Dillon and Katherine Welch, *Representations of War in Ancient Rome*, 144, fig. 45.
Ciampini does not take up any of these in his text—perhaps he viewed them as not needing any explication, since they are not historiated scenes like the ones he chose to describe. We can trust the authenticity of these embellishments only insofar as we trust the authors of those images to have been faithful recorders of the basilica’s original appearance.

*The Christian Decoration*

*Apse Mosaic*

In the fifth century, Pope Simplicius added an apse mosaic that featured Jesus and six of the apostles (see Figure 0.5). Jesus stands at center on a rock from which the four rivers of Paradise flow, a motif we see in the 6th century apse mosaic at San Vitale in Ravenna. At right are Peter, an older apostle, and a much younger one, perhaps John. At left is Paul, followed by Andrew, who is identifiable by his long, parted hair and beard.\(^{235}\) Christ wears a halo inscribed with a cross, in an early example of the motif.\(^{236}\) The composition depicted by Ciampini is quite close to that of Santa Prassede in Rome, founded near to our site in the 5th century. Santa Prassede’s decoration is from the early 9th century, but has the same division of three figures on either side of Christ, with an inscription running below. Ss. Cosmos and Damian in Rome, a church in the Roman Forum with 6th century decoration, also exhibits these characteristics. D.B. Martin may have taken further inspiration, such as the row of lambs beneath the inscription and,

\(^{235}\) These identifications are according to Enking, *S. Andrea cata Barbara*, 37.

\(^{236}\) Ibid., 47 compares the motif seen in the Lateran Oratory mosaic, dated to 462-468.
above the apse on the triumphal arch, the depiction of the evangelists and the 7 candlesticks, from either of these church’s mosaic decoration. While Martin’s additions are supported by the frequency of these motifs in other churches, there is no evidence for their appearance in this particular church.

There is no written or archaeological evidence to indicate whether the installation of the apse mosaic entailed the destruction of earlier decoration in the apse. It is hard to imagine Bassus having left such a space blank, but we can only speculate as to its original appearance.

Window

This window painting was probably added in the late 8th or early 9th century, when the church underwent a roof restoration under Pope Leo III. Only one of the window frescoes is known to us, through Ciacconio and Ciampini (see Figure 3.31). Its subjects are the preaching and martyrdom of Peter and Paul. In the upper half of the window, within a walled city meant to indicate Rome, Peter and Paul are depicted as if standing back to back, engaged in preaching to the people. Beneath the wall is inscribed the caption PETRVS ET PAVLVS ROMANIS PRAEDICANT ET DOCENT DE REGNO (dei). In the lower register of the window is depicted the saints’ martyrdoms: Peter by crucifixion, upside down, at left, and Paul by beheading.

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237 Ibid., 39-40 tries to date the fresco on the basis of the appearance of the walls: short and stocky like the walls Aurelian built, or with tall and slender towers like those added by Leo IV (847-55)? She also notes donations by Leo III to the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, according to the Liber Pontificalis, included tapestries with depictions of the martyrdom of Peter and Paul and the brothers preaching to the people, so the themes that appear in this fresco would find parallel in his other donations.
Pope Leo III is known to have made other donations to monasteries and churches that were consistent with the theme of this window. To the papal basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul Outside the Walls, for example, Leo III gave tapestries that featuring St. Peter and St. Paul.\textsuperscript{238}

\textit{Comparable Ensembles}

Comparable programs in \textit{opus sectile} are few. Comparison is made difficult by the fact that the publication of parietal \textit{opus sectile} is disparate and poorly illustrated. Most of the literature is in Italian. There is no collected corpus;\textsuperscript{239} most finds of parietal \textit{opus sectile} are published by site, with no synthetic work\textsuperscript{240} analyzing trends over chronology or geography. There are also known examples of late antique \textit{opus sectile} that have not

\textsuperscript{238} Duchesne LP II, 23 lists what he gave S. Andrea but not actually to the other churches. See also Chapter Ten, “Afterlife.”

\textsuperscript{239} A few exceptions mark the attempts that have been made so far: Dohrn, “Crustae,” collects some examples; Assimakopoulou-Atzaka, \textit{Η Τεχνική Opus Sectile Στην Εντοίχια Διακόσμηση} explores the medium; and the dissertation by Kelly, “Motifs in Opus Sectile and Its Painted Imitation from the Tetrarchy to Justinian. (Volumes I and II) (Intarsia, Greece, Marble),” has done much of the work of compiling a corpus. Brief treatments by the leading expert, Federico Guidobaldi, have addressed Roman examples: Guidobaldi, “L’opus sectile parietal a Rome,” and “L’intarsio marmoreo nella decorazione parietale e pavimentale di età romana.” For the use of colored marble as a decorative element more broadly (including in sculpture), De Nuccio and Ungaro, \textit{I marmi colorati della Roma imperiale}. Barry, “Painting in Stone” addresses antiquity but the project is focused on the longue-durée.

\textsuperscript{240} For example: Volpe, de Felice, and Turchiano, “Musiva e sectilia in una lussuosa residenza rurale dell’Apulia tardoantica: la villa di Faragola (Ascoli Satriano, Foggia);” Balty, “L’opus sectile pariétal de la maison aux consoles d’Apamée.”

Treatments of \textit{opus sectile} pavements are more abundant, and offer typologies and chronologies lacking for marble wall decoration.
been entirely inventoried and catalogued, much less fully published and analyzed, like the *domus* at Sette Sale in Rome.

The most immediate parallel is of course the marble hall at Ostia, though it was about half the size of the Basilica of Junius Bassus (See Figures 0.6 and 3.33) Its aula was 7.45 m by 6.7 m, and its rectangular exedra measured 6.0 m wide and 3.9 m wide. Its walls were 7.8 meters high, again only about half the height of those at the Bassus basilica. This was likely part of a domus, though its excavator believed it to have been the seat of a Christian guild Becatti associated w/ Ragonius Vincentius Celsus, a Christus *praefectus annonae* from 385-388.241

The extraordinary state of preservation of the program of this room, and its reconstruction in the Museo dell’Alto Medioevo, offers a rare chance for more thorough study,242 even though the hall collapsed (probably due to an earthquake) before it was ever finished. The back wall of the exedra reproduces the pattern of *opus reticulatum* brickwork, but does so in elaborate polychromy, replacing the humble building materials that would have been expected for reticulate work (which would have been covered up with plaster, not exposed on the room’s interior) with the finest of hard stones.243 The side


242 Taken up by Becatti chiefly but also Bente Kiilerich, “The Opus Sectile from Porta Marina at Ostia and the Aesthetics of Interior Decoration.” See also Kiilerich, “Sublety and Simulation in Late Antique Opus Sectile” and Kiilerich, “Trompe-l’oeil i antik kunst.” For marble use at Ostia more broadly, Pensabene, *Ostiense marmorum decus et décor. Studi architectonici, decorativi e archeometrici*.

243 A similar reversal of materials is seen at Domitian’s villa in Sabaudia, where the floor in the palaestra’s quadriporticus is a marble pavement made to resemble *opus spicatum*. 
walls feature several animal combats, along with vegetal scrolls, geometric panels, and *peltae*. One wall also has two portraits, apparently unrelated, one of a beardless youth and one of a nimbed figure thought to be either Jesus or a philosopher. Overall, the coloration of the program is more restrained than the Basilica of Junius Bassus, because it does not have the same numerous glass insertions, though some are introduced, for examples in the jewels of the lions’ harnesses.

Not far from the Basilica of Junius Bassus, on the Oppian Hill, was the above-mentioned Sette Sale *domus*. There is much yet to learn from the over 300 crates of marble fragments from the site. Some of the estate’s *opus sectile* floors have been reconstructed on the basis of *in situ* finds and mortar impressions. This task is made more straightforward by the fact that floors tend to have repeating geometric modules, so partial survival is sufficient to reconstruct a whole floor. Parietal *opus sectile*, by contrast, is no longer *in situ*, due to damage to the walls, and while figural fragments can be identified, there has been no attempt to piece together the program. What we are able to tell, however, suggests there were certainly small marine animals resembling unreconstructed fragments at Ostia and snails that may have populated scrolls; small human figures; larger animal combats like those at Ostia and the Bassus hall; as well as other incised pieces that are not possible to identify (see Figure 3.33).

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Also contemporary to the Basilica of Junius Bassus, and mere steps away on the Esquiline, is the church of Santa Lucia in Selci.\textsuperscript{245} While the decoration does not survive, Albertini’s account at the beginning of the 16\textsuperscript{th} century suggests the \textit{opus sectile} there was figural:

That is not to mention, furthermore, the marbles and porphyritic stones of various colors, and walls fashioned (in the manner of painters) into effigies, as appears in the portico of Saint Peter’s and Santa Maria in Trastevere and in the church of Sant’Andrea encrusted with wonderful artifice (as I said in the \textit{Stationibus Urbis}), and in the church of Santa Lucia in Selci, in which churches pictures of animals and birds are depicted as if they were made of mosaic and painting [and] the spoils of Roman temples and baths are to be seen.\textsuperscript{246}

Finally, there is the glass \textit{sectile} program that survives from Kenchreai, the port of Corinth.\textsuperscript{247} A cache of over 100 panels of glass, probably manufactured in Egypt around 350 CE, was found still packed in crates on the floor the “fountain court,” a two-part room near the harbor with an apsidal hall flanking a rectangular exedra. The way they were found suggests they were newly arrived at the site, and never installed. Their decoration consists of Nilotic scenes and twelve so-called “hieratic” panels. The excavators have reconstructed the program so that the Nilotic scenes are at bottom. Over these are six architectural panoramas, divided by the figural panels (see Figure 3.34).

\textsuperscript{245} Krautheimer, \textit{CBCR} II s.v. Santa Lucia in Selcis. See also Serlorenzi, “Santa Lucia in Selcis.”

\textsuperscript{246} Francesco Albertini, \textit{Opusculum de Mirabilibus Novae et Veteris Urbis Romae}. Translation Fabio Barry.

\textsuperscript{247} Ibrahim, Scranton, and Brill, \textit{Kenchreai, Eastern Port of Corinth}.  

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Some of the figural panels show statues of philosophers and literary figures on pedestals, while two preserve indications of figures in regalia that suggests consular rank. They are poorly preserved, but what remains suggests the *segmentum* on the shoulder of a *toga praetextata*, and the framing of the figures by a curtain, a motif seen frequently in depictions of magistrates. Estimated to have been about one meter wide and one and a half meters tall, the consular figures would have been on an imposing scale. The two figures likely would have been surrounded by the philosopher figures, of a type we also see in the decoration of the fourth century *domus* in via Giovanni Lanza in Rome. The pairing was clearly meant to convey that the patron’s virtues included not only the achievement of office but also the correct education in and appreciation of Hellenic thought that constituted *paideia*.

Also surviving from Kenchreai are the remains of furniture in ivory and bone. One curved panel made of bone appears to have depicted a consul at its center (perhaps an imperial one?) flanked by attendants, two of which may be personifications of Rome and Constantinople (see Figure 3.35). The figure seems to preside from a tribunal, seated on his *sella curulis*, a marker of his office. The curved panel may have belonged to an armarium used to house books for preprandial reading, though the authors are careful

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248 For treatment of monumental figures in an architectural environment, see McFadden, “Courtly Places and Sacred Spaces.”


to note that there is no evidence to support that hypothesis.\textsuperscript{251} If the range of bone fragments was indeed meant to decorate a single large piece of furniture, that \textit{armarium} would have displayed a wide range of mythical, natural, and literary/aristocratic subjects: a Dionysiac procession, animals, erotes, a hunting scene, the four seasons, and seated figures thought to represent philosophers. While we may not immediately perceive the interrelationships between and among the subjects of such a wide-ranging assemblage, such combinations are evident in late antique decoration.\textsuperscript{252}

The presence of this piece of furniture in the glass \textit{sectile} room gives us an idea of the way that portable furnishings might have related to permanent decoration, sometimes taking up the same themes or motifs across multiple media. This would have created a recursive visual echo, a visual “surround sound,” where each image in the space functioned like a separate “speaker” to re-sound the messaging. Even as architectural forms might direct a viewer’s focus, the decoration of the space would disperse that focus. We can only speculate about the way the furnishings of the Basilica of Junius Bassus might have related to its revetments.

Moving outside the realm of graphic wall decoration, we might also consider decorative ensembles such as the Arch of Constantine, or even the Calendar of 354, as bringing together imagery from disparate sources into one whole.

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid., 281. See 291, figure VII.2 for possible reconstructions of the furniture p. 291 (fig VII.2).

\textsuperscript{252} Ibid., at 292 and 294 discusses range of representations and comparable works from silver to mosaic that combines these seemingly disparate themes.
Viewing the Ensemble

From the Renaissance evidence and the surviving panels, we can make a few generalizations about the decoration in the Basilica of Junius Bassus. It seems to have been divided horizontally into four registers: first, into approximate halves, with the three-dimensional modillions running the length of wall to separate the register of the windows from the orthostats of the lower half. The uppermost register ran above the windows, frieze-like, punctuated with repeating theatrical motifs and perhaps horizontal procession compositions, divided by shutters. The lowest part of the wall, the dado, was likely not figured, as Sangallo and others have it, but certainly it was marked off from the wall above, horizontally, and it might also have been divided into squarish panels or articulated vertically, since this is a standard treatment of the socle zone documented in both wall painting and revetment from the Republic through Late Antiquity. Given the height of the hall, around 15 meters, parts of the decoration may have been difficult to see, though repetition of imagery would have mitigated this difficulty. The fact that figural work seems to have been applied even to the uppermost register of the wall suggests a preciousness, with no expense spared, that contributed to an aesthetic of miniaturization even within a monumental space.253

The framing and re-framing of the panels in the Ostian hall, and the way we see these frames articulated in Sangallo’s drawing, suggest a transparency about paratactical placement. The design scheme seems to admit of the fact that panels were manufactured

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253 For the aesthetic of miniaturization in Late Antiquity, see Elsner, “Late Antique Art: The Problem of the Concept and the Cumulative Aesthetic.”
elsewhere and then slotted into spaces on the wall. Each panel is self-contained, one element in a modular design. This creates an effect very different from approaching the wall as a unified composition. The design may seem to a modern viewer blocky and lacking cohesion, but to a late antique visitor it might have seemed like the setting of so many jewels into a framework constructed for their display.

The floor of the hall, too, was *opus sectile*, so we must imagine a building entirely encased in marble, except for possibly its roof, about which we do not have any data. It may have been coffered and vividly painting, like the ceiling from a domestic room found beneath a church at Trier,\textsuperscript{254} or perhaps stuccoed, but any speculation about its decoration is groundless.

The building combined both highly polished, very hard, valuable marbles with less valuable glass or glass paste.\textsuperscript{255} While the inclusion of lower-value materials is not seen in earlier known *opus sectile* examples, this becomes more common in Late Antiquity. Glass sectile seems to have been used at Faragola, as well as *opus sectile* in stone.\textsuperscript{256} A sixth century house at Apamea also had wall revetment that incorporated slate, stucco, and even ceramic sherds.\textsuperscript{257} Fragments from Aizanoi (though poorly documented)

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\textsuperscript{254} For which see Simon, *Die konstantinischen Deckengemälde in Trier*; Lavin, “The Ceiling Frescoes in Trier and Illusionism in Constantinian Painting;” and Rose, “The Trier Ceiling.”

\textsuperscript{255} For the use of glass in ancient sectile, see von Minutoli, *Über die Anfertigung und die Nutzanwendung der farbigen Gläser bei den Alten*.

\textsuperscript{256} Gliozzo et al., “The Sectilia Panels of Faragola,” and Volpe et al., “Musiva e sectilia.”

\textsuperscript{257} Balty, “L’opus sectile pariétal de la maison aux consoles d’Apamée.”
seem to made of less valuable stones, with incisions imitating a champlèvé technique.\textsuperscript{258}

These examples suggest the possibility of a trend toward broadening the materials used in opus sectile revetment, whether for pragmatic reasons or for the sake of experimentation with different media.

The panels do not have a single unifying theme or subject. While three of the four surviving panels can be tied to the consul’s inauguration and associated ceremonies, the Hylas panel and the lost tripods, masks, and other decorations suggest the hall was not merely an illustration of every moment of those celebrations.

Edmund Oldfield wrote in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century that “in these illustrations no thread of continuity, or even congruity, can now be traced,”\textsuperscript{259} because Bassus had combined mythology, history, games, and animals into the decoration, perhaps giving thought only to what fit in the space on the wall. More than a century later, Bente Kiilerich has written that the subject of the basilica’s decoration was secondary to its material message.\textsuperscript{260} That is, the figuration of the hall was meant to highlight the expense of the medium and to display the virtuosity of the artist, who had to come great difficulty to fashion a stubborn, durable material into something resembling painting.

While Kiilerich is no doubt right that one of the aims of the decoration was the extravagant display of materials, mobilized to elicit pleasure and awe at the way materials

\textsuperscript{258} Illustrated in Dohrn, \textit{Crustae}.

\textsuperscript{259} Nesbitt, “On Wall Decorations in Sectile,” 296. Oldfield’s letter is signed from Cumloden, Bournemouth, 7\textsuperscript{th} April, 1879.

\textsuperscript{260} Kiilerich, “Subtlety and Simulation in Late Antique Opus Sectile.”
could imitate other media,\textsuperscript{261} I do not think this means the ensemble’s subjects should be discounted entirely. Certainly we may not be able to find a single programmatic through-line or organizational principle for the space that satisfies a 21\textsuperscript{st} century mind, but we might bear in mind, given the late antique value placed on eclecticism and the “cumulative aesthetic,”\textsuperscript{262} that this lack of pat unity is the through-line. Its richness lies in the opulence of the medium, certainly, but also in its profusion of subjects and motifs, of scales and relationships between panels, so that a viewer can zig-zag his way from wall to wall or trace a line down a single register, appreciating different permutations on each viewing.

Even when panels repeat the same figural or geometric motif, they are distinct from one another, by virtue of the inimitability of each piece of stone. While this is in part thanks to the unique qualities of the medium, it is a Roman aesthetic that transcends marble, and is at play whenever collections of sculpture display pendant replicas offered for the delight of comparison.\textsuperscript{263} That is to say, part of the value of the decoration comes

\textsuperscript{261} And indeed, I pointed these out as operations of the decoration in a paper at College Art Association, “The Medium is the Message,” in New York in 2016, before I was aware of this article.

\textsuperscript{262} Elsner, “Late Antique Art: The Problem of the Concept and the Cumulative Aesthetic.”

\textsuperscript{263} See for comparison Trimble, Women and Visual Replication in Roman Imperial Art and Culture. Ellen Perry’s review of the work BMCR 2012.08.07 synthesizes this idea nicely, offering the contemporary analogy of the Oscar statue distributed to Academy Award winners. These replicas are “valued not as copies of a valued original, but because they are widely (but not \textit{too} widely) replicated and widely (but not \textit{too} widely) distributed. Conversely, their widespread replication confers recognizability on the type, and that recognizability signifies and confers status—that is to say, membership in an elite group.”
from an interplay between unparalleled pieces of iconography (like the Bassus in a biga) and its belonging to a set of images used by elite (like the animal combat panels seen at both the Bassus Hall and Porta Marina).

When Christian imagery was added to the hall, presumably without destruction to the original decorative program, the overall aesthetic would have admitted of even greater variation, not only spanning centuries but also encompassing a religious divide.
CHAPTER 4

From Domus to Dedicavit: The Dedication Inscription

Today, scholars and sourcebooks identify the apsidal hall known as the Basilica of Junius Bassus as belonging to the *domus* of the eponymous consul. In fact, the *domus* hypothesis is just the latest in a number of interpretive proposals that have been put forth to explain the function of the hall. This chapter reviews the basis of the *domus* claim. I offer a new contribution to these interpretations by bringing to the forefront the epigraphic evidence from the hall that has previously been ignored. A dedication inscription known to us through several Renaissance manuscripts declares that Junius Bassus built the hall from the ground up, using his own funds, and dedicated it auspiciously: *Iunius Bassus vir clarissimus consul ordinarius propria impensa a solo fecit et dedicavit feliciter.*

This inscription is radically out of place in a domestic context, as I demonstrate by a review of the usage of the vocabulary. The verb *dedico* was rarely used with the object *domus* in Latin texts and inscriptions, and more typically indicated the setting up and devotion of something (if not for a deity) for public enjoyment or spectacle. Moreover, a patron hardly needed to remark that his house was built by himself with his own funds. By contrast, such an emphasis on self-funding is common in inscriptions by

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264 See for example Guidobaldi, “L’edilizia abitativa,” and *LTUR* s.v. “domus.”

265 *CIL* 1737.
Roman magistrates who wished to distinguish between their personal donations and the improvements they made in their capacity as city officials.

Through such inscriptions we have evidence for five privately funded fora in Late Antique Rome. This basilica was likely a similar public or semi-public donation, which would have stood apart from the imperial horti and elite residences that surrounded it. Emerging from a long period of imperial restriction on public building projects, Bassus’ benefaction adhered to a long tradition of civic euergetism with roots in Republican Rome.

**The Domus Theory**

The earliest visitors in the era of San Andrea Catabarbara were drawn there by its marvelous revetments and by their interest in early churches. It was clear that this monument did not begin its life as a building of Christian worship. It was invested with many myths about its history, from pagan temple to funerary basilica to home. The domus theory is the latest in the historical gloss. The single-naved apsidal hall fits the architectural paradigm of the late antique audience hall, so of late the building has customarily been identified as a presentation hall in an elite domus on the Esquiline.

Among the surest archaeological proofs of domestic habitation is the presence of inscribed fistulae (water pipes) on a property.\(^{266}\) The names on these fistulae indicate that they belong to the private infrastructure that diverted water from the public supply to a private residence. In other cases, inscriptions at the site name the proprietor of the domus.

\(^{266}\) Baldini, *L’architettura residenziale nelle città tardoantiche*, 283.
But sites with scattered or sparse remains are harder to read: without fortuitous survivals of permanent furniture (like the *stibadium*) and markedly domestic configurations (combinations of atrium, peristyle, fauces, etc. known to us from Pompeiian excavations), the characterization of a space as domestic is difficult to substantiate. The difficulty increases when we try to judge remains from late antiquity. We have a far less complete data set for comparison, and the data we do have is fragmentary with respect to both individual sites and to the preservation and study of entire residential quarters. The architectural features we expect from earlier houses fall to the wayside (gone is the peristyle, at least as far as the city of Rome is concerned), and the re-use and renovation of earlier structures transformed to new ends make remains more difficult to read.267

In the case of the Bassus hall, there are no known *fistulae*, nor is there evidence of its link to a site known to be domestic. The hall apparently stood independently, not communicating with any connecting structures or related buildings to help fill in the picture of what once stood near it. It is true that the hall is in an area known to be an elite residential quarter, but this was not the exclusive identity of the neighborhood, as the following chapter will demonstrate. Unlike the archaeological remains of, say, a bath complex, the function of which is made evident from particular features of the buildings, the evidence of an apsidal hall cannot point singularly to a domestic complex; that is, form alone is not sufficient to indicate function.

267 Baldini Lippolis, *La domus tardoantica* and Baldini, *L’architettura residenziale nelle città tardoantiche*. 

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In sum, there is no archaeological evidence that the hall was domestic, as even advocates of this theory admit.\textsuperscript{268} The support for the claim is instead based on comparisons to similar structures. This comparative method is sound enough, but devising a reliable typology of late antique housing forms is difficult and imprecise work because often the remains that are discovered are too fragmentary to serve as complete models for the delineation of reliable categories.\textsuperscript{269} In a study of the hall alongside its nearest late antique parallels, the hall is likened to the \textit{domus} at Sette Sale for its wide apse, closed lateral walls, the presence of wall decoration, and an apparent similarly between pavements. The last claim is suspect because no pavement fragments survive from the excavation of the Bassus hall.\textsuperscript{270} The similarity of wall decoration is a more valid comparison, but is based on the very limited pieces known from both halls, as only a fraction of what survives from Sette Sale has been pieced back together and only a fraction of what was once on the walls of the Basilica of Junius Bassus survives. More significantly, there is no rationale, whether stylistic or iconographic, by which the known decoration points to a singularly domestic (or any other) function for the building. To put it another way, there is not a category of decoration that belongs to a house to the exclusion of some other type of building. Nor, arguably, is there enough surviving parietal \textit{opus sectile} to divine such a defining decorative system for this medium.

\textsuperscript{268} As even Guidobaldi, “L’edilizia abitativa” acknowledges, p. 451, note 49.

\textsuperscript{269} Guidobaldi, “L’edilizia abitativa,” 167.

\textsuperscript{270} This is the reasoning laid out by Guidobaldi, “L’edilizia abitativa,” 186. Lugli describes a surviving piece of the pavement, and provides a schematic drawing, but it would be difficult to draw a secure parallel from this fragment.
Guidobaldi’s comparison to Sette Sale also implicates a third apsidal hall, that of Santa Lucia in Selci: its decoration (known to us only through descriptions by Albertini; see Chapter Three, above) showed similarities to the Basilica of Junius Bassus, and therefore it, too, should be identified as a domus. This seems to me to build one unsteady conclusion on the basis of another. The equation’s teetering logic relies on the proposition that the presence of rich parietal *opus sectile* in these three halls points to a domestic function for all of them. It should also be noted that Santa Lucia in Selci, the third basilica in this theorem, was originally regarded by a Krautheimer not as a *domus* but as a public or semi-public basilica.

The other evidence for the identification of the Basilica of Junius Bassus as a *domus* is the Valila inscription, which has been read as referring to the hall’s conversion from house to church. The verse says that the pope, coming into this property, lay the mystical laws on the house, where “house” is the Latin *domus*. But the inscription’s use of the word *domus* is not denotative of a domestic space: *domus* was in this period often used to mean a spiritual house, that is, the house of God, rather than the residence of an individual. The use of the word *domo* continues the metaphor taken up two lines earlier when the poem says that Saint Andrew had no *limina*, literally “threshold.” Here “threshold” is used metonymically for “home,” in the sense that Saint Andrew has no

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273 This is cited as evidence by Guidobaldi, “L’edilizia abitativa,” 451, note 49.

274 *TLL* vol. V, 1, 49, 20’ s.v. *domus*. 

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place of worship, no shrine in Rome. To read these lines as if they were meant to
document the phases of the building mistakes the purpose of the epigram and thus its
meaning. It is, after all, a poem; it takes some literary license to credit the pope (and
Valila) with furnishing Saint Andrew a home in a city where he had none before.

If the versewriter did intend his use of the term domo to describe the function of
the building as it was under Valila’s ownership, this does not preclude the hall having
served a different function in Bassus’ time. (Indeed, the land may have been a part of
Bassus’ estate, and thus of his own domus, before he dedicated it.) We do not know how
Valila came into this property; it may have been abandoned in the sack of 410, or seized
by the emperor and later given as a gift to the Goth. Even if dedicated to public or semi-
public use, it may have remained the material property of Bassus, with him and his
descendants serving as custodians for purposes of maintenance and repair, and later
passed to Valila through purchase or marriage. At any rate, the possibility that it was a
domus under Valila’s care (if that is indeed what the poem means) does not preclude it
having been built with a different purpose in mind.

275 HAEC TIBI MENS VALILAE DECREVIT PRAEDIA CHRISTE
CUI TESTATOR OPES DETULIT ILLE SUAS.
SIMPLICUS QU(A)E PAPA SACRIS CAELESTIBUS APTANS
EFFECT VERE MUNERIS ESSE TUI
ET QUOD APOSTOLICI DEESSENT LIMINA NOBIS
MARTYRIS ANDREAE NOMINE COMPOSUIT
UTITUR HAEC HERES TITULIS ECCLESIA IUSTIC
SUCCEDENSQUE DOMO MYSTICA IURA LOCAT.
PLEBS DEVOTA VENI, PERQUE HAEC COMMERCIA DISCE
TERRENO CENSU REGNA SUPERNA PETI
There has long been an interest in the basilica as a markedly Roman architectural form, and in tracing the basilical hall to its pre-Christian origins. Recent investigations of elite use of apsidal presentation halls have caused a kind of selective attention to such halls. In our eagerness to reevaluate known structures for their correspondence with this function, I think we may have been blind to its shortcomings as an explanation for this particular monument.

*A Monument Built from the Ground Up*

What none of the aforementioned theories takes into account is the dedication inscription that once ran along the bottom of the apse’s semi-dome.276 The inscription’s central location, on axis with the single entrance to the basilica, would have meant that it confronted the viewer in his line of vision immediately upon entering. It served to label the building and orient the visitor by introducing him to the patron of the space into which he had stepped. The inscription read:

IVNIVS BASSVS V[IR] C[LARISSIMUS] CONSUL ORDINARIVS PROPRIA IMPENSA A SOLO FECIT ET DEDICA VIT FELICITER277

Junius Bassus, most outstanding man, *consul ordinarius*, built [this] from the ground up at his own expense and dedicated it auspiciously.

The inscription identifies Bassus as belonging to the highest ranks of society, that is, the senatorial class, whose status was frequently indicated by *vc*.278 Apart from his

276 The Renaissance sources differ on whether Valila’s inscription was above Bassus’ or vice versa; see Appendix B, Visitors’ Accounts. See also Mazzoleni, “Osservazioni su alcune epigrafi basilicali romane.”

277 *CIL* 1737. See Chapter One for information on the documentation of this inscription.
consulship, his other magistracies are omitted. Perhaps they are assumed as part of the 
cursus honorum that led to this point, but the naming of only this office is so singularly 
focused as to suggest that the inscription should be dated to the year of that consulship. 
Also omitted is the illustrious family lineage that tends to appear in an honorary 
inscription.

Even in the absence of material remains, we know that the inscription pointed to 
the structure housing it, rather than to a statue, not only because of its place on the wall of 
the building, but also because the verb fecere used epigraphically refers to architectural 
constructions. While a sculpture or a mosaic might also be described by this verb, no 
Roman patron would be the same man as the craftsman and manual laborer responsible 
for the work of making a sculpture or mosaic. The sharing of fecit and dedicavit by the 
same subject confirms that the verbs’ unnamed object is the building. The ubiquitous 
Latin verb facio is also significant here because it distinguishes the dedication as 
something constructed from start to finish, as contrasted with a restoration or a 
renovation.

278 Within the clarissimate, a man might also be designated vir spectabilis or, if he came to 
hold the consulship or the urban prefecture, he could be called vir illustris. This gave the 
 senatorial order a way of distinguishing themselves from others, of creating demarcations in a 
group that was once exclusive and had become hugely oversubscribed. A class of 600 at the end 
of the 3rd century, the senatorial order numbered 2000 by 359, according to Salzman, Making of 
the Christian Aristocracy, 31.

279 TLL vol. VI 1, 82, 38' s.v. facio A statue could certainly be dedicated, but it would not also 
be made by its dedicator.
Roman viewers were absolutely attuned to the distinction between new construction and rebuilding, or even between superficial repairs and more substantial renovations, and to the ways these were encoded in building inscriptions. *Reficere* or *restituire*, along with *reparare*, *reformare*, *renovare*, *reponere*, *restrarare*, and even *recurare* could point to efforts to return an already-existing building to its former glory. The man who performed this could call himself *instaurator*, “restorer,” while the patron of new construction might instead be named *conditor*, “founder.” Besides having a defined title as founder or builder, a patron of a building enjoyed the right to be named on that building, and never to have his name removed, even in the face of future renovations or rebuilding efforts. This permanence would have been one enticing factor in a patron’s decision about whether to sponsor spectacles or spend his money on construction.

Whether the related epigraphy can be considered reliable documentation of the actual material state of a building before restoration, or of the extent of the patron’s contribution toward its building, has been disputed. A comparison of inscriptions with archaeological evidence suggests some inscriptions might have been hyperbolic. To

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280 Dig. 50.10.7.1: *Si quis opus ab alio factum adornare marmoribus vel alio quo modo ex voluntate populi facturum se pollicitus sit, nominis proprii titulo scribendo: manentibus priorum titulis, qui ea opera fecissent, id fieri debere senatus censuit.*

281 This dilemma, and the points in favor of each choice, are discussed in Kokkinia, “Games vs. buildings as euergetic choices.”

282 See Thomas and Witschel, “Constructing Reconstruction: Claim and Reality of Roman Rebuilding Inscriptions from the Latin West” for a discussion of whether we ought to take inscriptions as accurate records of what the patron’s contribution was.
stretch the truth in such a way was considered bad form, as Ammianus Marcellinus makes clear in his criticism of Rufius Volusianus Lampadius, urban prefect in 365. Ammianus memorializes Lampadius as a vain man, unable to stand doing anything, even spitting, without being praised for it. According to Ammianus, the haughty prefect “had his own name inscribed” in areas that had been adorned at imperial expense “not as the restorer of old buildings, but as their founder.”

To claim to have erected a building when you were only its restorer might be seen as petty, or merely as participating in the rhetorical conventions of self-aggrandizement. After all, a patron who was overly bombastic about his contribution would be ridiculed by those who knew better, thus undermining his efforts at gaining respect through his euergetic acts. The transgression of exaggeration was an “insignificant” one, according to Ammianus, but it was somewhat underhanded behavior, not to be emulated by good officials. Ammianus’s accusation confirms that there was a high level of consciousness on the part of the Roman viewer about what these inscriptions meant to convey.

283 Amm. Marc. 27.3.7 non ut veterum instaurator, sed conditor. Lampadius apparently found himself in good company in this flaw: the emperor Trajan was jokingly called “wall-wort,” Ammianus says, because his name was to be found on every wall, as pervasive as ivy.

284 Thomas and Witschel, “Constructing Reconstruction.”

285 This is pointed out by Fagan, “The Reliability of Roman Rebuilding Inscriptions,” a response that counters that inscriptions should be more trusted than Thomas and Witschel suggest.

286 Kokkinia, “Games vs. buildings as euergetic choices,” points out at 101 that if a patron did extensive reconstruction or renovations he might take credit for the whole thing. See Dig. 50, 10, 7, 1 above.
A contemporary inscription belonging to a statue base suggests dedication inscriptions were sometimes composed in response to bombastic claims like the one made by Lampadius. Faustus uses redundant language to credit his father with the founding of a forum, as using repetition to insist on the truth of his words:

Acilio Glabrioni Sibidio, ἓ(ιρο) ἕ(λαρισσιμο) ἐτ ὀμνιβος meritis industri, legato in provincia Achaia, consulari Campaniae, vicario per Gallias septem provinciarum, sacri auditorii cogni

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tori, fori huiusce inventori et conditori pri
mo, patri reverentissimo, Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus, ἓ(ίρ) ἕ(λαρισσιμος), loci ornator, togatam statuam offerens piae non minus quam de votae mentis religione ponendam erigendamque curavit.  

To Acilius Glabrio Sibidius, of clarissimus rank and distinguished in all merits, legate in the province of Achaea, governor (consularis) of Campania, vicar for the seven provinces of Gaul, judge of the imperial court, first creator and founder of this forum. Anicius Acilius Glabrio Faustus, of clarissimus rank, the embellisher of this place, offering with the reverence of both a pious and devoted mind, saw to the placing and erecting of a togate statue to his most revered father.

It would be needless for Faustus to identify his father as both “inventor” of this forum and its first founder, but the inscription is adamant about the father’s role in building the forum: no mere restorer is he, it seems to say. In emphasizing that any credit for the forum’s construction should goes to his father, Faustus also preempts anyone who might later claim the same titles for himself. Finally, he explicates his subsidiary role as ornator, depicting himself as a good caretaker of the city’s legacy (by tending to such a space) and of his father’s legacy (by doing so with a filial devotion to his father’s efforts).

287 CIL VI 1678= ILS 1281/EDR 129297. Translation EAGLE.
Similarly, the Bassus inscription uses the formulation *a solo* to reiterate the extent of his project. The phrase *a solo*, “from the soil,” or more idiomatically “from the ground up,” redoubles the meaning of *fecit*, emphasizing that his building is not a renovation or reconstruction, but in fact a new, purpose-built edifice. The phrase was not, however, limited to pairing with the verb *facio*; it could also be used in cases of repair or renovation, as in the example below, which credits Firminus with a full-scale renovation, not to be confused with a lesser (or less expensive) refurbishment:

*Excubitorium ad tutel(am) / signor(um) e(t) imagin(um) sacrar(um) / P(ublius) Turran(ius) Firminus vet(eranus) ex / cornic(ulario) leg(ionis) II adi(utricis) Anto/ninian(a)e p(ecunia) s(ua) a solo res[ituit] / Sabino II e(t) Anullino c[o(n)s(ulibus)]*

Conversely, *a solo* could also be used to suggest the extent of destruction, as when a monument is razed to the ground, or, in this case, consumed entirely by fire:

*[Imp(erator) Caes(ar) divi Nerv]ae f(ilius) Nerva Traianus / [Aug(ustus) Germ(anicus) Dac(icus) pont(ifex) m]ax(imus) trib(unicia) pot(estate) VIIIII imp(erator) IIII / [co(n)s(ul)] V p(ater) p(atriae) thermas igni c]onsumptas a solo restituit.*

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288 I am grateful to Joe Farrell for suggesting this translation to me when I had mistaken the words to mean “by himself,” and therefore inserted to emphasize Bassus’ personal initiative in undertaking the building project. In fact these words they serve to modify *fecit* rather than to restate *propria impensa*. This is demonstrated by the parallels cited above. Inscriptions employed other phrases to convey the same meaning, such as *a fundamentis*. The same formulation is found in Greek inscriptions, as at the odeion at Troy: Frisch, *Die Inschriften von Ilion*, 244, no. 158, plate 117. I am grateful to Brian Rose for pointing out this inscription to me.

289 HD 067844; Hungary, 216 CE.

290 HD 032467; Aquileia, 104-105 CE.
In the absence of further archaeological evidence we can hardly compare the claim made by the Bassus inscription to the facts on the ground. However, the choice to pair *a solo* with *fecit*, a verb that would have been sufficient alone to signify construction instead of renovation, parallels Faustus’ redundant vocabulary. Both insisted on the accuracy of their inscriptions, averring not only the extent of their works, but also entering into a dialogue with contemporary inscriptions in order to set themselves apart from men like Lampadius who made hyperbolic claims.

A third piece of the inscription warrants discussion: *propria impensa*. This indicates that Bassus spent his own money on the building, and contrasts that with *pecunia publica*, which would indicate money came out of the public treasury or fiscus. Inscriptions might also use the formulas *sumptu proprio, sua pecunia*, or simply *de suo*. This formulation is common in dedicatory inscriptions, and is used to designate the funding source for everything from a *turibulum* (censor) given by a slave to a temple funded by a priest or an apse on a bath building built by one Publicus Rutilius, *curator rei publicae*.292

The distinction between *propria impensa* and *impensa publica* helps us to tease apart two species of Roman euergetism: that carried out by an individual in a private capacity (and thus out of his own pocket), and that executed by a magistrate in fulfillment of the outlined responsibilities of his office. The above mentioned *curator rei publicae*

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291 Examples include HD 030823 (a temple), HD 019662 (an arch), and HD 032455 (a bath), among others.

292 HD 041923, HD 051897, and HD 053903, respectively.
Publicus Rutilius gives us a good example of an inscription that calls to mind both these strands:

\[\text{Nepotia[no et Facundo]o co(n)s(ulibus) / P(ublius) Rutilius V[--- flam(en)] / perp(etuus) curator [r(ei) p(ublicae)] / absidam a solo [in ther]mis / hiemalibus sua pecunia addidit}\]^{293}

The naming of his magistracy explains why he might have taken an interest in such a construction project, but the mention of his own funds informs the reader that the funding for the project came out of his own pocket. By contrast, a dedicatory inscription which names the magistracy of the patron but makes no mention of funding leads the reader to assume the funding was public. We can take as an example the case of the pious son mentioned above, Faustus, who mentions one of his three praefectorships in a renovation inscription, presumably because it was in this role that he carried out the work:

\[\text{-----?} / \text{[Anicio Acilio] Glabr[ioni Fausto v(iro) c(larissimo) et inl(ustri)] / [quaest(ori) candi]dato pr[aet(ori) tutel(ario) comiti intra] / [consistorium p]raef(ecto) [urbi ---] / [-----?}\]^{294}

The fact that such works were funded from the public treasury did not prevent a prefect or another such official from publicly commemorating his work through an inscription. And certainly the use of public funds did not diminish the significance of their work. Like government officials today, he carried out projects from a public budget, overseeing a vast number of projects including street re-paving, aqueduct and sewer

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^{293} HD 053903.

^{294} CIL VI 1676; see also 1677.
repairs, and maintenance of public monuments, which he was in no way expected to self-fund. But the inscription’s silence on the point of funding makes clear that he was an administrator and executor of this work—handling contracts, finding workers, perhaps seeking out supplies—and not its financial patron.

The distinction between official works and optional benefactions, or between gifts of a magistrate and those of a private patron, was not unique to late antiquity, of course; nor was it limited to one class of patron. In fact the emperor employed the same language when he acted as benefactor of the city, to highlight his gift as a private patron, one who just happens to be the emperor, instead of as representative of the empire acting in an imperial capacity.295 His designation as patron of all citizens and pater patriae, which grew out of the language of republican era patronage, allowed the emperor to perform munificence on a grand scale while still presenting himself as equal to any other member of the republic.

These and countless other examples demonstrate the distinction between munificence required by one’s office and munificence carried out as an individual who wished to do good for the city. The former acts constituted a kind of involuntary euergetism, inasmuch as such efforts were required by the office-holder. Similarly, the games held by quaestors, praetors, aediles, and consuls, cast as celebrations of their offices and gifts of entertainment to the populus, were mandatory responsibilities of those offices. The epigraphic evidence and the legislation barring overspending on personal

295 See Horster, “Urban Infrastructure and Euergetism Outside the City of Rome.” Emperor as euergetes is examined fully in Horster, Bauinschriften römischer Kaiser.
donations such as games and related gifts reinforces the distinction between the two species of euergetism, and suggests that Romans (at least the literate ones) differentiated between them.

We do not know how these strands of euergetism related to each other proportionally. We suspect that the private gift is over-represented in surviving ancient evidence, and that even though gifts from public funds were also commemorated they were not as grandly documented. It would be misguided to seek a bright line between these two types of euergetism in the Roman world, as the demarcation was frequently blurred by euergetes themselves. Personal donations could be added on top of public funding; or an officeholder could capitalize on his official games by deciding to construct or restore a theater where some of his entertainments would be held, thus extending his euergetism to the realm of something less ephemeral in commemoration of his office.

Both kinds of euergetism were active and essential parts of the Roman gift economy, in which gifts of money and maintenance were exchanged for honor and respect of clients for their patronage.

The use of the phrase *propria impensa* that we find in the Bassus inscription makes a point of the difference between the two types of benefaction. Parallels for this phrase come from dedicatory inscriptions in which funding might conceivably come from a public pot or from private funding—that is, from public buildings. Such a phrase would be meaningless in a context where the funds would be expected to be private. After all, why should a home not be funded privately? This phrase, to my mind, removes the Bassus hall from the realm of the domestic and into the realm of the public benefaction.
Dedicare

Thus far the Bassus inscription seems not very much at home in a domestic context. I wish finally to look at the verb of dedication used in the inscription to determine whether a Roman house could be said to be dedicated, and thus whether this inscription’s presence in the building might remove the doubtful possibility that this building is a part of a *domus*.

The verb *dedico* is similar enough to its English equivalent that it requires little in the way of translation. The most immediate associations we have with the verb may be religious ones, as “to consecrate,” or “to give to the gods.”⁵ But *dedicare* need not have religious overtones, and is frequently used to describe the installation or unveiling of non-sacral objects and monuments such as aqueducts, sewers, and baths. Alexander the Great famously dedicated a city to the memory of his horse Bucephalus; Tiberius dedicated the books of many prestigious authors to public libraries. Where such monuments are concerned, *dedico* indicates the gift of a building, announces its completion and readiness for public use, and observes the commencement of the new use of the building. Often in the case of a public monument, the verb goes without a named indirect object. Of all the things that can dedicated in this sense, including the meaning of giving after completion of a building or reconstruction project, I submit that a house does not seem to be one of them. Further, the presence of the dedication inscription in the Basilica of Junius Bassus

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⁵ *TLL* vol. V, 1, p. 257, 71′ – 261, 69′ s.v. *dedico*.
suggests that the most likely identification of the hall is as a benefaction of Bassus, perhaps given on the event of his consular inauguration.

Certainly the Roman house does not lack for inscriptions. Often they proclaim the wealth and sophistication of the house’s patron, complimenting his good taste. Others wish good fortune on those who enter the house, or serve an amuletic function to drive away ill. But a Roman house could also have a dedicatory inscription, such as the example below:

Corfidius Cremen
tius fl(amen) p(er) p(etuus) / avorum atavorumq(ue) morum probita/te auctis insignibus erga publi[ca] privataq(ue) pre
p Newfoundland (us) domum comparα[vit in] umbili/co sitam patrie ruinis iam dii informib(us) tris/tem felicius quam condita est restituit et ad/ecto decori in aeternum robore sibi pos/terisq(ue) laetioribus d(e)d(it) Corfidiorum

Corfidius Cremen
tius flamen perpetuus exceeding his grandfather and great-grandfather with increasing insignia and in moral probity with relation to public and private things furnished a home situated in the middle of the country which had for a long time been sad in formless ruins, and restored it forever, happier than when it had been founded, with oak and spread out decoration, gave it to his [offspring] and to the even more fortunate descendants of the Corfidii.

This inscription has a dedicatory character, in that it proclaims the gift of this property to the descendants of the Corfidii in perpetuity. But to function in this testamentary way, the inscription must make explicit the recipient, in much the same way as a will would. Note the verb *dare* is used, not *dedico*.

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297 For several essays treating writing in the Roman house, Corbier and Guilhembet, *L’écriture dans la maison romaine*.

298 Scheibeler-Gail, “Inscriptions in the Late Antique House: Some Thoughts About Their Distribution and Function.”

299 HD 050000=AE 1997, 1728; Timgad, Algeria (Roman Numidia), House of the Corfidii.
A house’s dedicatory inscription could even name the builder as the patron responsible and use the same language discussed above to express the idea of “from the ground up.” Flavius Iovinus and his son Flavius Paulus commemorate their building of a house which they ordered to be made:

\[
Fl(avius) \text{ Iovinus ex p(rae)p(osito) / militum Histriconum / et Fl(avius)
Paulus biarcus / pater et filius domum / a fundamentis / iusserunt fabricari}^{300}
\]

Similarly, a freedman commemorates his building of a house and names the architect responsible:

\[
P(ublius) \text{ Confuleius P(ubli et) M(arci) l(ibertus) Sabbio sagarius /}
domum hanc ab solo usque ad summum / fecit arc(h)itecto T(itio) Safinio
T(itii) f(ilio) Fal(erna) Pollione^{301}
\]

These honorific inscriptions tout the accomplishments of their owners and commemorate the commissioning and building of the homes to which they refer. They can be categorized as dedicatory inscriptions (and are, in the Heidelberg database), but they do not perform the same function as the first example. They lay claim to the house, and to credit for its building, as the first example does, but they do not consign the house to another. It should be noted that in none of these inscriptions is the verb *dedico* used. That verb apparently does not appear in house inscriptions, and certainly not with *domum* as its object.

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^{300} HD 031864. Hungary, 306-363 CE.

^{301} HD 001190; Capua, Italy; 70 BC-30 CE.
Literary examples, on the other hand, admit of a wider use of the verb (and any other vocabulary), in part because of the much greater range of contexts, as opposed to the more formulaic, less variable uses of the verb in inscriptions. There are a few literary examples of the verb *dedico* being used with *domum* as its object. These are compiled in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*. The instances appear under the first definition of *dedico* in the *TLL*: *consecrare, dis dicare*, but also *hic ille notione rei ad novum usum instaurandae*, that is, the verb can also refer to the “notion of a thing to be established to a new use.” Even though the instances given are all collected under the heading of this definition, a closer look reveals that *dedico* has a fairly extensive semantic range, even within this limited number of examples.

The first example demonstrates that *dedico* can mean to give something, and to assign something a new use. Vitruvius discusses the house of Croesus, which is given by the people of Sardis to the elders of their community to use as a kind of retirement home.\(^{302}\) The dedication of this building repurposes it and gifts it to a particular group of people. Those people are identified as the recipients of the gift in Vitruvius’ example, which is one way in which this instance must be set apart from the Bassus inscription.

Another early instance of the dedication of a house, from Cicero’s *De Domō Sua*, involves Cicero’s attempts to disentangle the religious and the domestic. Cicero’s property had been seized during his exile and parts of it dedicated by the tribune P.

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\(^{302}\) Vitr., *De Arch.* 2.8.10. *Croesi domus, quam Sardiani civibus ad requiescendum aetatis otio seniorum collegio gerusiam dedicaverunt*: “There is the palace of Croesus, which the people of Sardis dedicated to their fellow-citizens for repose in the leisure of their age, as an Almshouse for the College of the Elders.”
Clodius Pulcher as a temple to Libertas. The use of the term *dedico* in this instance refers unambiguously to the consecration of a previously non-sacral space to the gods.\(^{303}\) This makes it divergent from the Bassus inscription, which does not seem to be using *dedicare* synonymously with *consecrare* as Cicero was. But the speech happens to contain some incisive remarks apropos of the possibility that a Roman house could be dedicated. Cicero describes the dedication of a house—at least in the strict sense intended here, as consecration—as inconceivable (*neque fas erat*). Papirius, the maker of the law concerning these things, “never dreamed or suspected that a situation would arise involving danger of consecration to the dwellings or properties of uncondemned citizens.” This was an unimaginable scenario, “since the buildings which it was customary to consecrate were not private dwellings, but those to which the name sacred is applied. . . not the consecration of our estates. . . but that performed by a general upon lands conquered from an enemy.”\(^{304}\) While Cicero’s speech pertains to finer points of Roman law and rights to land, which have no bearing on the 4th century, we do have here some indication that to the Roman mind, the *domus* is an unusual object to pair with the verb *dedico*.

One exception to this is the house as house of God, in reference to a place of Christian worship. A commentary on the psalms refers to the dedication of house: *Domus, id est Ecclesia, adhuc fabricator postea dedicabitur*: “A house, that is a church, while yet

\(^{303}\) Cic. *Dom.* 120, 122, 133.

being built, will be dedicated afterward.” Similarly, Saint Augustine describes the new Christian covenant as a house that will be dedicated. Here *domum* again has a metaphorical meaning, likened to the covenant of God with his people, and means something like to be sanctified, to be fulfilled in holiness. The same use of the term *domus* applies in the Jewish tradition, as we see in a discussion of Solomon’s dedication of the temple described in the Vulgate.

Another Vulgate passage introduces us to an alternative use of the verb *dedico*, where its meaning is closer to the English word “inaugurate.” The passage says a man who has gone off to battle without “dedicating” his house should return home, lest he die in battle and never get to do so. The dedicator in this instance is observing the beginning of the house’s use, inducting it to its new function as family home. It is tempting to think

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305 Rufinus Aquileiensis (Pseudo-Rufinus), *Commentarius in LXXV Psalmos*, Psalm 29, para. 2.

306 Aug *Civ. Dei*. 18, 48. *Maior est itaque gloria domus huius novi testamenti quam domus prioris veteris testamenti, et tunc apparebit maior, cum dedicabitur.* “And so the glory of this house, the new covenant, is greater than that of the former house, the old covenant, and will appear yet greater when it shall be dedicated.”

307 II *Chron.* 7:5 (Vulg.) *Mactavit igitur rex Salomon hostias, boum viginti duo millia, arietum centum viginti millia; et dedicavit domum Dei rex, et universus populus:* King Solomon offered as sacrifice twenty-two thousand oxen, and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. Thus the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. (Trans. New American Bible.)

308 Deut. 20:5 (Vulg.) *Duces quoque per singulas turmas audiente exercitu proclamabunt: Quis est homo qui aedificavit domum novam, et non dedicavit eam? Vadat, et revertatur in domum suam, ne forte moriatur in bello, et alius dedicet eam.* “Then the officials shall speak to the army: “Is there anyone who has built a new house and not yet dedicated it? Let him return home, lest he die in battle and another dedicate it.” (Trans. New American Bible.)
of something like a housewarming, an event that formally marks the instantiation of new hearth.

Two further literary examples employ this meaning of the verb *dedico*. In the *Historia Augusta*, the author describes the house of the Tetrici on the Celian (which, incidentally, would not have been far from Bassus). The brothers have a mosaic made that shows the emperor Aurelian bestowing upon them the bordered toga and the rank of senator, and their gift to him of a scepter, chaplet, and robe. When the brothers dedicate the work, they invite Aurelian to a banquet:

*Tetricorum domus hodieque exstat in Monte Caelio inter duos lucos contra Iseum Metellinum, pulcherrima, in qua Aurelianus pictus est utrique praetextam tribuens et senatoriam dignitatem, accipiens ab his sceptrum, coronam, cycladem. pictura est de musivo, quam cum dedicassent, Aurelianum ipsum dicuntur duo Tetrici adhibuisse convivio.*

The house of the Tetrici is still standing to-day, situated on the Caelian Hill between the two groves and facing the Temple of Isis built by Metellus, and a most beautiful one it is, and in it Aurelian is depicted bestowing on both the Tetrici the bordered toga and the rank of senator and receiving from them a sceptre, a chaplet, and an embroidered robe. This picture is in mosaic, and it is said that the two Tetrici, when they dedicated it, invited Aurelian himself to a banquet.

In this text we see that the word *dedico* can be applied to something private, in a domestic context, and that the word need not be limited to religious dedications. The verb carries instead the sense of a launch or unveiling, where the completion of a work is celebrated and it is revealed to its intended audience. Of course, it is not the *domus* itself.

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that is being dedicated in this instance, as it is in a passage by Suetonius describing the emperor Nero’s completion of the Domus Aurea:

\[
Eius modi domum cum absolutam dedicaret, hactenus comprobavit, ut se diceret quasi hominem tandem habitare coepisse.\textsuperscript{310}
\]

When the edifice was finished in this style and he dedicated it, he deigned to say nothing more in the way of approval than that he was at last beginning to housed like a human being.

I take this example to be quite similar to that of the brothers Tetrici, though it is hard to say when Nero is the subject. Perhaps Nero, megalomaniac that he was, believed his house to be the dwelling of a god, and Suetonius used this verb to hint at Nero’s misguided belief that the Domus Aurea being dedicated in the manner of a holy place. Suetonius means to point out to the reader how ridiculous it is that such a lavish residence would be the standard of decency for mere mortals.

At any rate, these examples show the literary use of \textit{dedico} can extend to mean not just “give” or “dedicate” but also “exhibit,” “unveil,” “inaugurate,” “turn to new use.” I have said already that the epigraphic use of the verb does not appear to be so flexible, and that the verb \textit{dedico} is not known to have been used in house inscriptions.

In only a few instances do inscriptions combine the word \textit{dedico} with \textit{domus} at all. One example refers to consecrated relics, \textit{reliquae} . . \textit{dedicatae}, and then uses the term \textit{donat} to refer to a priest’s gift of his house to a church.\textsuperscript{311} Another inscription also pertains to the gift of a house, which the author bequeathes to Marcus Albanus Raspaletus

\textsuperscript{310} Suet. Nero., 31.

\textsuperscript{311} EDCS-46400446.
and his descendants. As in the first inscription, a form of *donare* is reconstructed, so the force of the verb is not solely dependent on *dedico*: *dedit* stands alongside *dedicavit* to amplify the bestowal of the bequest and form part of a common alliterative formula, *dono dedit dedicavit*, “gave and dedicated as a gift,” often seen abbreviated to simply *D-D-D*. Both read like wills, which require the testamentor to name the recipient of the bequest. This is most like the Corfidius inscription at the beginning of this section, in which Corfidius left his house to his children and their descendants. The Bassus inscription sets itself apart from these bequests: first, by using the verb *dedico* absolutely, that is, without a direct object; and second, by failing to specify an indirect object recipient. These differences indicate the Bassus inscription cannot have functioned in the same way as these examples, as an inscription of will or bequest.

Another dedication of a home follows the same formula of *dedit dedicavit* as the two mentioned above, and seems to describe the building of a house for a woman in fulfillment of a vow:

*Pietati Aug(ustae) / [qu]o[d] Cor(nelia) C(ai)i (f)ilia Mar[ulli]/[n]a posituram se o[rdini] / Castulonensi[m] / [pr]omiserat in m[emori]/[a]m L(uci) Cor(neli) Maru[lil filii] / [su]i hoc domum [illius] / [C(aius)] Cor(nelius) [Bellicus heres eius] / [e]x arg(enti) [libris C d(edit) d(edicavit)] / editis circensibus*

The remaining examples are clearly to be excluded from comparison with the Bassus inscription. One is an epitaph describing the action of two pious sons dedicating swords

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312 *CIL* 03, 02165 (p 1031) = *CIL* 05, #00677 / EDCS-27700006.

313 HD 019204.
to their long-lived father after his death. The domus mentioned is not a house dedicated to him, but instead a metaphorical, otherworldly home, which they describe him as deserving. The other is a similarly metaphorical use of the term domus, referring here to a basilica that houses the relics of Saint Antiochus. The inscription credits the bishop Peter with his renovation of a basilica where the relics of Saint Antiochus were kept, and describes his splendid decoration and restoration efforts as fitting for the resting place of such relics. None of the instances where domum is used as the object of dedico in an inscription offers a parallel case for the dedication of the basilica of Junius Bassus.

The examples discussed above were gathered using the Heidelberg, EDR, and Clauss-Slaby databases, database and EDR database, searching for the coincidence of these two terms. Epigraphic databases make this search a remarkably more feasible a proposition than it might have been a decade or two ago. But as the TLL says, though on tablets (ie in epigraphic use as opposed to literary) dedico refers most often to the dedication of various monuments, unless the inscription occurs on or near the dedicated object, the identification of the monument is frequently not communicated at all. In some

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314 CIL 08, 21790 = ILCV 03674/ EDCS-27100200

315 EDCS-22100652.

316 The remaining two inscriptions require no discussion, because while they do happen to include both a form of domus and a form of dedico in them, the former is not the object of the latter. EDCS-13301371 describes a votive monument following a military victory, and while the end is so corrupted as to make its sense hard to make out, domum Roman seems to be in the accusative to indicate motion toward it, in relationship to the verb misisti. EDCS-45500034 is an honorific inscription that mentions the house-household of Augustus, but does not pertain to the dedication of an actual house.
cases inscriptions that lack a named object contain other contextual clues that suggest a
certain type of object is being dedicated. For example, *dis manibus* in a dedication
inscription alerts us to a funerary context, so we can be certain that inscriptions
containing that phrase do not refer to houses. Where such a formula does not appear,
though, we do not have an identifying marker to show what object is being dedicated, and
we are left with a group of dedication inscriptions that we can neither eliminate nor use to
shed light on what a house dedication might mean or when it might appear. It is of course
possible there are inscriptions like these that use the word *dedico* to refer to a house
without naming their object.

I have thus far covered the exceptions to the rule, treating the few examples where
*dedic* and *domus* co-exist. But *dedicare* has an overwhelmingly public character in
inscriptions, and tends to indicate the giving of a construction or renovation to the people.
This is clear from a survey of inscriptions that use the verb *dedicare* in the fourth century.
A majority of these inscriptions pertain to the dedication of some public good, whether
religious, cultural, artistic, or utilitarian: a stable, a shrine, a temple, a portico, a bath.
*Dedicare* serves in these cases as essentially a synonym for “give,” signaling that the
patron has completed his act of renovation or construction, and now presents and offers
that work for its intended purpose. Mounting an inscription with the term *dedico* might be
thought of as the ancient equivalent of today’s ribbon-cutting ceremony. Except where
the inscription names a god to whom a shrine or temple is dedicated, the inscriptions lack
indirect objects; that is, the recipient need not be named, but is assumed to be the
readership of the inscription.
Of course, the study I have made does not constitute an exhaustive examination of the epigraphic evidence. Unfortunately, to review all of the 3600 inscriptions in the Clauss-Slaby database that contain the stem *dedic* would be an impractical undertaking ill-suited to the broader purposes of this project. Worse, from a methodological point of view, it would fail to provide the evidence to make my point: if the inscription does not name the thing being dedicated, we may not know what it is by reading the inscription. Not all material evidence survives from antiquity, and there are, as the popular phrase goes, “unknown unknowns.” One cannot prove a negative; theoretically, it is possible that a house dedication unearthed tomorrow would prove the exception to the absence of such a dedication from the other 3600 inscriptions. But from the available epigraphic evidence, it seems reasonable to conclude that Romans did not inscribe their houses with the verb *dedico*, except in cases of an inscribed will, where the recipient of the bequest was named.

Thus the presence of the verb *dedico* in the Bassus inscription suggests we are not dealing with a house inscription. No other elite residence in Rome has turned up evidence of a similar inscription, certainly. In a discussion of the various functions of writing in the Roman house, Guilhembet has helpfully compiled a table of inscriptions from houses in Rome and their functions.\(^\text{317}\) While many inscriptions in the author’s chart are labeled “ded.,” for “dedicatory, these instances can be labeled as serving a commemorative,

\[^{317}\text{Guilhembet, “Le role de l’écrit.”}\]
honorific function. These functions are certainly shared by the Bassus inscription, but they are not the function conveyed by the term *dedicavit*.

Placement of the inscription in the Basilica of Junius Bassus may also be a useful consideration here. Writing in houses could belong to any number of categories, from graffiti to painted labels on walls or mosaics to writing on moveable furniture and *instrumenta domestica*. Setting aside graffiti, most of the fixed house inscriptions we know survive from pavements. Such pavement inscriptions might include artist signatures, explanatory captions or labels for decoration, or text relating to the construction or decoration of the house. The freedman’s construction inscription discussed above (HD001190), set in mosaic, is an excellent example of this last type. We have few if any comparable inscriptions that appear on walls.

The Bassus inscription is, by comparison, particularly ostentatious in placement. It is not designed for a viewer looking down at his feet, but rather insistently bold, front and center. Its placement on a standing architectural feature monumentalizes the inscription and by association the building in a way that a floor inscription does not. The public nature of the building, as conveyed by the placement of its inscription, is further underscored by the position of Valila’s inscription beneath it. The arrangement of Valila’s inscription answers the original founder’s inscription in kind, using its position to transpose the honor of the public dedication of Bassus’ gift onto an expression of Christian piety and a new purpose for St. Andrew’s congregation.

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318 See Corbier and Guilhembet, *L’écriture dans la maison romaine* and Scheibelreiter-Gail, “Inscriptions in the Late Antique House.”
A similar example of an architectural inscription by a private citizen is to be found in the late republican basilica of Eumachia at Pompeii, where she dedicated a building to Augustan Concord. The dedicatory inscription appears on the architrave of a colonnade around the forum she built with her son, with another copy above the south entrance to the building. Parallels contemporary to the Basilica of Junius Bassus are hard to find, given that walls do not always survive to such a height and the inscriptions we do have do not necessarily preserve the context around them.

The most reasonable explanation for the presence of this inscription is that the Bassus hall was not a part of the consul’s domus, but instead, a basilica offered for public or semi-public use. This verb employed in the Bassus inscription is not merely the marker of a dedicatory inscription, but instead, a verb that overtly signaled the completion, offering, and unveiling of an object or monument for use by others. In fact it often appears with the dative noun dono, indicating that the donor dedicates the thing “as a gift.” Such a verb, whose operative meaning was to inaugurate and consign to a new purpose, is only as meaningful as its public presentation allows it to be, and would not have been compatible with private use. We can infer from this verb, combined with the use of the phrase propria impensa, that the basilica was a benefaction made by Bassus in commemoration of his consulship, though not as an extension of that office, but rather as a personal donation.

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319 ILS 3785.
Basilica as Benefaction

It is odd that the Bassus inscription has been treated with such half-blindness. It is this inscription that allows us to designate this hall the work of Junius Bassus, and to give it a date based on the consular year of that Bassus. Indeed, much of the early work on the basilica was written in an effort to sift through the *fasti* of the third and fourth centuries for the Bassus who would fit the identification of the patron. And yet the inscription has never been analyzed to determine what other significant content it holds, and what implications it holds for our understanding of late antique Rome.320

This may be in part because the suggestion that this basilica was a secular benefaction is in contradiction with scholarship’s current narrative of civic euergetism. According to that broadly-accepted narrative, secular benefaction was dying out by 300 CE, as evidenced by a decline in the epigraphy of euergetism and the kinds of large-scale constructions the empire had grown accustomed to receiving from their wealthy senatorial patrons.321 Only the emperor’s patronage remained.

This decline has been attributed to multiple causes. Some have argued that elites simply no longer had pockets full enough to fund large-scale public works. Diocletianic reforms made Italy responsible for taxes like any other province, which may have

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320 The only article to take the inscription for granted in interpreting the building is Kalas, “Architecture and Elite Identity.”

321 This is described by Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. His chapter on Late Antiquity is tellingly titled “The Decline of Secular Munificence”—though he does say (at p. 21) that Rome saw some continuity of secular benefaction into the 5th and 6th centuries.
disincentivized building. Some of the monies that might have been directed to public works were funneled instead into church-building or to acts of Christian charity. The latter has been differentiated from traditional forms of Roman patronage in that the recipients of Christian charity were the poor and disenfranchised, and rather than being a part of a gift economy, the benefactor gave with no hope of return or reciprocity in earthly terms.

Well before what has been characterized as the “decline” of Late Antiquity, the role of the private individual as civic benefactor had been restricted by the emperor’s interest in dominating that position. During the imperial period, thanks to restrictions on the placement of honorary statues in public places, self-aggrandizement of that particular republican flavor was diverted to the private sphere, with statue dedications and busts dedicated instead at an aristocrat’s *domus, villa, or horti*. The emperor held a monopoly on public patronage, which usurped the role of *eurgetes* from the senatorial class where building projects were concerned. But in the fourth century, with the emperor at Milan and the new capital at Constantinople, Rome was in some respects made into a city like

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322 Smith, “Restored Utility, Eternal City,” 149.

323 This is a major theme of Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*. A helpful discussion euergetism as a kind of “gift economy” on the model of Paul Veyne is also discussed in Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces*, 102 ff.

324 Smith, “Restored Utility, Eternal City,” 150: “From the days of Augustus onwards, it is a commonplace, that the very presence at Rome of a Princeps—when not as a physical presence, at least as one for whom Rome was the acknowledged natural home—had restricted the field in which the aristocracy could indulge in high profile collective patronage: the Emperor was the *eurgetes* of the Roman plebs, its patron in all but name…and not to be challenged in the part.”
any other, in that it could make space for the kind of patronage enjoyed by provincial cities.\textsuperscript{325}

We know that some kinds of patronage did continue into Late Antiquity. There were for example buildings constructed and restorations carried out for trade guilds.\textsuperscript{326} Bronze plaques called \textit{tabulae patronatus} were displayed in the atria of private houses alongside ancestor portraits, demonstrating the new patronage of contemporary generations and its joining with the family’s noble lineage.\textsuperscript{327} There were other kinds of euergetic projects in this era (as in previous centuries) which leave no archaeological trace: patrons offered loan deferment, employment, letters of introduction, and numerous other advantages that did not take physical form.

A law of 364 forbade the construction of new buildings at Rome, suggesting that too many public works risked crumbling from lack of maintenance as aristocrats chose flashier new building projects over workaday upkeep.\textsuperscript{328} Such legislation would not have been handed down if there were a dearth of new building projects. In fact, we might reason that the law was made because \textit{too many} patrons were building new buildings, and

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{325} Lomas and Cornell, \textit{Bread and Circuses: Euergetism and Municipal Patronage in Roman Italy}, 9; Smith, “Restored Utility, Eternal City,” 153-4. Smith also points out at p. 150-1 that “the withdrawal of the Emperor and Court from Rome gave its great senatorial families a renewed opportunity to indulge in civic self-display, and in doing so to evoke a senatorial style of times long gone.”
  \item \textsuperscript{326} Smith, “Restored Utility, Eternal City,” 148 lists two examples: Anicius Paulinus (urban prefect in 334, \textit{ILS} 1220) and Valerius Proculus (urban prefect in 337; \textit{ILS} 1240).
  \item \textsuperscript{327} Ibid., 156. For \textit{tabulae patronatus} see Nicols, “Tabulae Patronatus: A Study of the Agreement between Patron and Client-Community.”
  \item \textsuperscript{328} \textit{C.Th.} 15.1.11.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the emperor thought their efforts should be redirected toward preservation of existing structures. Where, then, is the evidence of new construction in the fourth century, so robust that it needed to be reigned in by legislation? Perhaps it has been ignored or discounted because it contradicted the previously entrenched theory that aristocratic patronage had already breathed its last.

We might see benefactions of this kind in the semi-private fora that are thought to have been built by aristocrats in the fourth and fifth centuries, perhaps on their own properties but for private use. These are known through inscriptions that refer to their respective founders: Apronianus, probably the Apronianus who was urban prefect of 362-4; Eupraxius, urban prefect of 374; Acilius Glabrio Sibidius Spedius of the early fifth century; Petronius Maximus, twice urban prefect and briefly emperor (443-445); and Epityncanus, urban prefect 450. The fora themselves do not survive, so they cannot be located precisely, nor do we know about their arrangement or their relationship to the imperial fora.

Some of the relevant inscriptions name the magistracy of their founder, suggesting that the forum was overseen by an urban prefect but publicly funded. The forum of Eupraxius is one such example, the building of which is documented in an inscription copied by the Einsiedln pilgrim: curante Flavio Eupraxio[viro]

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329 The most helpful condensation of the evidence for these fora is found in Palmer, Studies of the Northern Campus Martius in Ancient Rome and Bauer, “Einige weniger bekannte Plazanlagen im spätantiken Rom.”
Another inscription names Eupraxius as *conditor: Fori conditor*... *squalor summoto.* The inscriptions do not mention funding for the forum, so we assume it was funded by the three emperors of that year (374).

The latest of the private forum inscriptions identifies Epityncanus, urban prefect in 450, the founder of a forum on the Esquiline. The inscription was found in the church of St. Vitus: *v(ir) c(larissimus), praef(ectus) urb(i), conditor huius fori, curavit.* The same text was on another statue base near the Arch of Gallienus, found in situ. These have been taken to refer to the nearby Forum Esquilinum, rather than a separate forum founded by Epityncanus. Palmer disagrees arguing they were probably two separate fora, while Bauer argues they probably were the same. The question depends on whether the term *conditor* was a truthful appellation or a rhetorical exaggeration. I see no reason to dismiss the possibility that this was a new foundation undertaken by the urban prefect. Whether Epityncanus truly founded the forum or merely cared for its statuary display, however, it is worth mentioning as a place outside the monumental city center of Rome where magistrates and elites displayed their euergetic acts, and will be discussed in the next section as part of the topography of benefaction.

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330 *CIL* VI 1177 = 31252 = *ILS* 776.

331 *CIL* VI 1197, 1198 = *ILS* 807/8.

332 *CIL* VI 1662/*ILS* 5357

A third forum, the Forum Aproniani, seems to have been made for use by a corporation, that of the navicularii (shippers), to carry out their business.\textsuperscript{334} This we gather from an imperial letter of 400 addressed to the urban prefect regarding shipping fraud and shipping privileges, which they asked to have posted in the Forum Aproniani.\textsuperscript{335} This sets the Forum Aproniani apart from the other examples, which do not declare any group as their intended audience, and were presumably intended as public. Because of its relationship to shipping, Bauer suggests this forum might have been on the Tiber, but we cannot be more specific about its location.\textsuperscript{336}

Some authors have argued that these fora were not new foundations, but instead hyperbolic references to the maintenance or restoration of previously existing foundations.\textsuperscript{337} And indeed, the reliability of inscriptions as conveyors of archaeological fact is a questionable methodology. But also questionable is to believe that every founder of the fourth century is but a restorer masquerading as something more. To hold such a view dismisses a significant body of epigraphic evidence, and does not even go so far as to analyze why, if these are epigraphic lies, the pseudo-founder felt compelled to cast himself in such a light, knowing a fraudulent claim to patronage could do more harm to his reputation than good. It is useful to return to Ammianus’ anecdote about the dishonest

\textsuperscript{334} Palmer 46.

\textsuperscript{335} C.Th. 13.5.29.


\textsuperscript{337} This is the view held by Smith, “Restored Utility, Eternal City.” 153. See also Matthews, Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, A.D. 364-425, 356-7. Salzman believes the opposite, with Bauer, that these were indeed new foundations.
Lampadius. A few sentences after he accuses Lampadius of calling himself founder when he was only a restorer, he continues with his defamation, calling Lampadius stingy and dishonest, “whether building new buildings or restoring them”\textsuperscript{338}—confirming that even if his behavior was not admirable, we can credit Lampadius with overseeing new construction.

Bassus’ basilica may share something in common with these forum donations, in that the dedication inscription would make sense in a public space like those offered by other fourth and fifth century founders. Because we do not have any archaeological evidence to link Bassus’ foundation to adjoining architecture, we can only guess about its possible relationship to the space around it, so it would be purely hypothetical to suggest it was situated within a forum complex. Even independent of a surrounding complex, the basilica might have functioned as a kind of public lobby.

There are other basilica-shaped halls in the Roman world that might inform our understanding of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. The \textit{schola iuvenes} at Makhtar (Tunisia) served as a kind of clubhouse for young men, and where they went for training in gymnastics and fighting but also for lessons in finance in culture. The fifth century House of Proclus in Athens contained an apsidal hall that is sometimes thought to have been the site of a philosophical school where lectures were given to young sophists because Proclus was an important figure in philosophical circles.

\textsuperscript{338} Amm. Marc. 27.3.10: \textit{Aedificia erigere exordiens nova, vel vetusta quaedam instaurans}...
In Rome, a very near parallel is the republican Auditorium of Maecenas, just
down the hill from the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Like the basilica of Junius Bassus, this
garden pavilion or nymphaeum has a single nave, and the two are very similar in size.
The Basilica Hilariana in Rome is another early parallel. Renovated in the Antonine
period and then again restored in the third century, the Basilica Hilariana contained a
statue base inscription to Manius Publicius Hilarus, given by the college of the
dendrophori. By equation with the Regionary Catalogues’ mention of the *arbor sancta* in
this area, their dedication has led us to believe that the basilica served as their
headquarters. These examples add garden pavilion and cult headquarters to our list of
functions of earlier basilicas. Other old, traditional Roman basilicas, including the
Basilica Aemilia, were being renovated around this time, following a fire in 284.⁴³⁹

In sum: basilical halls could be used as reception rooms in elite houses, certainly;
but they have also been identified as schools, lecture halls, club houses, garden pavilions,
nymphaea, and places of worship. The basilical hall on the Esquiline was no doubt a
multi-purpose space, the form of which could accommodate any number of functions.

If indeed Bassus’ hall was a public benefaction, the consul’s benefaction was a
rather radical act, a practice on which the emperor had had a monopoly for a good long
time. This may explain in part the difficulty of finding comparable structures outside the
Roman house.

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⁴³⁹ See Kalas, *Restoration of the Roman Forum in Late Antiquity*.
Unlike other acts of patronage for which archaeological evidence does not survive, this example offers the evidence of a monumental footprint and its placement in the landscape. Because inscriptions are often detached from the buildings they describe, and honorific statues are mobile, we often cannot use them to create a topography of euergetism, and our resulting understanding is limited to certain monumental quarters of the city. In the Basilica of Junius Bassus we have some evidence of the epigraphy, the architecture, and the decoration, which could contribute to the beginnings of a topography of euergetism in late antique Rome. Moreover, it adds to the scholarship on the landscape of senatorial representation in the city of Rome, which has been pursued with great interest in recent scholarship, particularly with respect to the late antique forum. Analysis of this area, and the Basilica of Junius Bassus situated within it, extends our picture of senatorial representation into the suburbs of Rome, closer to the periphery. As the next chapter will show, recent work suggests this area, near the Porta Esquilina, was becoming a central node in its own right in the late antique period. It was monumentalized during the Severan dynasty, when an imperial palace was built and the fountain of Severus Alexander created outside the gate. The Aurelian wall cut through the area later in the third century, but Constantinian building renewed the area once more.

Also significant is the proximity of the Basilica of Junius Bassus to the urban prefecture, where petitions were filed, prisoners held, sentences passed, and various other bureaucratic functions fulfilled. A center of administrative power, this office seems to
have drawn a cluster of senatorial aristocrats to establish their properties nearby. The area also has a high concentration of inscriptions recording the actions of the urban prefect, from renovations to statue dedications and edicts and regulations. These inscriptions served to caption the space, reinforcing senatorial authority and grandstanding with reminders of earlier good deeds. In such an environment, Bassus’ dedication would have been among many competing claims to honor clamoring for attention. But his would have claimed a notably sized footprint; and in a quarter of the city that had been claimed for imperial horti and was now populated by elite domus, Bassus’ benefaction would have contrasted with the others, as an instance of space offered to the public amid a sea of exclusive private domus.

Bassus managed to merge the late antique mode of self-presentation—through hieratic imagery, splendid ornamentation—with the older Republican model of taking self-aggrandizement purely public. Contemporary inscriptions display a historical self-consciousness about donors’ desire to replicate or return to Republican models of euergetism, acknowledging that they act now act liberated from the former restraints on patrons other than the emperor. They offer gifts “on the model of former times,” for example, or remark that such a gift has been unheard of since the time of Caesar. Within texts, this self-aggrandizement may have been made more palatable through the use of conservative forms and epigraphic patterns.


341 These inscriptions are discussed in Smith, “Restored Utility, Eternal City,” 153–54.
CHAPTER 5

Situating the Basilica of Junius Bassus on the Esquiline

Redesignating the Basilica of Junius Bassus as a monument offered to the public changes the way we should look at this quarter of Rome. Studies of the area have focused on its features as an elite residential zone, and for this reason it has been dismissed as “decidedly unmonumental,” at least until the fifth century, when the papal basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore was built at the peak of the Cispian and changed the sacred and processional topography of the area. This characterization, however, along with limited archaeological understanding of the area, has led us to overlook the ways in which this quarter served as a civic center and nexus for the operations of city life in Late Antiquity. Several buildings of great civic and commercial significance are known to have been located nearby, including the urban prefecture and the Macellum Liviae. Other features, like a monumental fountain complex and public fora, beautified the area and signaled investment in it. Together these landmarks lent the area prestige and fostered civic pride. While the Esquiline could not compare with the monumental heritage of the Palatine and Capitoline hills—the former being the site of Rome’s legendary founding, and the latter the site of its greatest temple, with the Roman and imperial fora stretched out between—this study suggests the area played a similarly significant role in civic life and offered comparable venues for commemoration and self-fashioning. In such a landscape, the

Basilica of Junius Bassus would have held great esteem, both gaining pre-eminence from its distinguished surrounds and contributing its own prestige to the neighborhood.

**The Early Esquiline**

The Esquiline is one of the seven hills of Rome, rising to the east of the Colosseum. Ancient references to the *Esquiliae* included the areas we now sometimes identify separately as the Cispian and Oppian spurs, in the northern and southern parts of the hill, respectively, and the Fagutal, to the west.\(^{343}\) Besides Augustan region V (Esquiliae) the Esquiline also included part of Region III (Isis et Serapis), which included the Colosseum valley and the Oppius, as well as part of Region IV (the Fagutal).

The area covers a massive zone of a somewhat unascertainable character, different from the other parts of the city where imperial monuments serve as defining landmarks and the archaeological past has been exhumed and laid bare to the modern scholar. Many of the distinctive features of the area have vanished or cannot be pinpointed exactly. Ancient peri-urban estates, for example, the *Horti Maeceneani, Sallustiani, Lamiani*, and *Liciniani*, are mentioned in literature that does not clearly delineate their borders or narrate their development. Scholars like Kim Hartswick and Chrystina Haüber have done a great deal of work to assign archaeological finds to these areas, but gaps in the

evidence, magnified by changes of name and ownership, make definite conclusions largely impossible.\textsuperscript{344}

Hasty excavations during the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, when Rome was made capital of the new nation of Italy, made less sense of the area than we might like. This, together with and additional construction in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century on Termini station, a history of continuous occupation, and repeated levelings and demolitions in service of various piano regolatore schemes since the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, have left us with a fragmentary record and thus a somewhat garbled historical narrative.\textsuperscript{345}

From this murkiness arise a few features that defined the area and were integral to the city’s identity and operations. Chief among these is the Servian Wall, which sliced north-south over the hill.\textsuperscript{346} Built during regal rule of Rome, the wall exploited an existing embankment that sloped up to the inner side of the wall. On the outside of the wall was a ditch, or fossa, that made it more difficult to scale the city’s defenses.\textsuperscript{347} Also on the Esquiline was a necropolis, its earliest burials dating to the 8\textsuperscript{th} century BCE. (See Figure 5.1). Burials continued through the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BCE outside the city’s

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{344} Hartwick, The Gardens of Sallust; Häuber, The Eastern Part of the Mons Oppius in Rome.
\item \textsuperscript{345} This history is summarized in Coarelli and Cuccia, Via Cavour: una strada della nuova Roma.
\item \textsuperscript{346} A 4th century BCE date is typically ascribed to the wall but see M. Andreussi, LTUR 3.319-324, s.v. Murus Servii Tulii; s.v. Mura Repubblicane for discussion of evidence of the wall in earlier centuries. In the 4th century BCE Servius Tullius is supposed to have added the area outside the wall to the city: Liv. I.44.3; Dion. Hal. 4.13.2; Strabo 5.3.7; Aur. Vic. Caes. 7.6.
\item \textsuperscript{347} These features are described by Dionysus 9.68.3-4 and 14 and Strabo 5.3.7.
\end{itemize}
The sacred grove of Libitina, or Venus Lubentina, a goddess who presided over funerals, was likely also located in this region, at least by the 2nd century BC, with a temple likely right outside the Porta Esquilina as well as the headquarters of the *libitinarii*, a guild of professional undertakers.  

The Republican and early imperial eras saw a rehabilitation of this former graveyard area. After 143 BC, the Aqua Marcia could carry water to the Porta Viminalis, north of the Porta Esquilina.  

Agrippa’s construction of the Julian aqueduct in 33 BC improved the supply further and enabled the cultivation of vineyards along the walls of the “the watery Esquiline.” The Esquiline became a desirable real estate commodity, known for its pleasantness: “Nowadays it’s healthy to live on the Esquiline, and on the rampart you can walk in the sun, where once there was only a gloomy view of a field of white bones.”  

The *Horti Maecenatis* were laid out here, between the Porta Esquilina and the Porta Querquetulana, with areas both in and outside of the Servian Wall.  

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348 For mass graves: Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.10.  
349 This is based on an inscribed cippus, *CIL* VI 3823 = 31577. See also F. Coarell, *LTUR* 4.10 s.v. *pagus montanus* and 5.117 s.v. *Venus Libitina, lucus*.  
353 C. Häuber, *LTUR* 3.70-74, s.v. *Horti Maecenatis*. For the literary evidence of the Horti of Maecenas and other Esquiline properties, see Häuber, “The Esquiline Horti: New Research.” It is far outside the scope of this chapter to enter into the debates about the exact boundaries of this or other horti. The reader interested in this question should consult the thorough and expert work of Chrystina Häuber and Kim Hartswick, who have undertaken the study of the topography of this area through the study of both textual and material evidence over many years.
lands south of where the Basilica of Junius Bassus would be were willed to the emperor Augustus, and remained in imperial hands, so that a number of emperors, including Tiberius and Titus, as well as friends and instructors to the emperors like M. Cornelius Fronto (tutor to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus) spent their time in leisure there.\footnote{Häuber, \textit{The Eastern Part of the Mons Oppius in Rome}, 878.}

Maecenas was not the only one to construct pleasure gardens on the Esquiline. Another friend of Augustus, M. Lollius, laid the \textit{Horti Lolliani} out in the area that lies between the areas now occupied by Santa Maria Maggiore and the Baths of Diocletian.\footnote{E. Papi, \textit{LTUR} 3.67, s.v. \textit{Horti Lolliani}. Inscribed cippus: \textit{CIL} VI 31284. These became imperial property. The fate of the gardens is discussed in Wiseman, \textquotedblleft Stroll on the Rampart,	extquotedblright 18 and Ibid., \textquotedblleft A Roman Villa,	extquotedblright 72-7; 77-110.}

The \textit{Horti Lamiani} are called after the name of their probable founder L. Aelius Lamia, friend to Tiberius and consul in 3 AD, though they had passed into imperial ownership by the time of Caligula\footnote{Became imperial property: \textit{CIL} VI 8668. Where Caligula’s body was buried: Suetonius, \textit{Calig.} 59. See also W. Eck, \textit{LTUR} 3.61 s.v. \textit{Horti Lamiani} 1 and M. Cima Di Puolo, \textit{LTUR} 3.61-4, s.v. \textit{Horti Lamiani} 2. For these gardens and debates concerning their boundaries and the finds from them, see Cima and La Rocca, \textit{Tranquille dimore degli dei}.} at a much later date they became part of the Villa Palombara. There are remains associated with this property in today’s Piazza Vittorio Emanuele and to the south.\footnote{For recent excavations in these gardens: Barbera et al., \textquotedblleft La Villa Di Caligola: Un Nuovo Settore Degli Horti Lamiani Scoperto Sotto La Sede Dell’ENPAM a Roma.	extquotedblright} To the east, between the church of Santa Bibiana and Porta Maggiore, were the \textit{Horti Liciniani}, property of the emperor (Licinius) Gallienus (r. 253-268).\footnote{We hear of his properties \textit{in summo Esquiliarum monte} in the \textit{SHA Gall.} 17.8.}

These are the gardens of which the so-called \textit{“Temple of Minerva Medica”} was a part,
and are implicated in the 3rd century monumentalization of this area, to which I will return.

The horti as a group and their history of ownership more broadly relate to the Bassus hall because it is likely, in my view, that his basilica stood on land that formerly belonged to one of these parcels. Because many of the earlier horti are not mentioned in late antique regionary catalogues, and because pieces of their sculpture collections have been discovered to have been used as wall fill, it is assumed that the luxury villas and their estates were broken up or abandoned, eventually becoming smaller private properties. Unfortunately we do not know how this process took place, though we do have several late antique residences on the Esquiline that point to aristocratic habitation there in late antiquity.

It is the residential character of the Esquiline that is most emphasized in accounts of its history. Besides the access to water that the aqueducts gave it, elites found its heights appealing and salutary. Fragments of the marble plan suggest that there were

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359 Cima Di Puolo, LTUR 3.61-64, s.v. Horti Lamiani. She says at 62) that the gardens within the wall were probably subsumed into the Domus Aurea. Then, in the middle of the imperial period, “si fosse diffusa la tendenza a suddividere e privatizzare le grandi proprietà dell’Esquilino.” Her opinion is supported by the fact that the fine sculpture collections of these gardens are used as wall fill, which is how many of the works were discovered, suggesting that the horti and their collections had been abandoned. The view that the horti were subdivided and became the property of private owners is shared by other experts of the horti, including Häuber, “The Horti of Maecenas,” http://www.rom.geographie.uni-muenchen.de/texts/hm_text3.html “It is assumed that in late antiquity (for example contemporary with the construction of the first phase of the Aurelianic Walls, AD 271-275) all the former Horti on the Esquiline Hill were parcelled up to smaller estates.”

360 See Carucci, “Domus on the Late Antique Esquiline.” See also Purcell, “The Horti of Rome and the Landscape of Property” on the contestation over this category of land.
some *domus* in the area of the triangle dividing the Viminal from the Cispian (See Figure 5.2), and indeed there are numerous excavation finds that document *domus* in the area across multiple phases.\(^{361}\) Filippo Coarelli says the Esquiline’s residential character through the late antique period is confirmed by an absence of public buildings and important cult places.\(^{362}\)

Characterizing the Esquiline as residential is not wholly inaccurate, as the evidence cited above makes clear, but this designation reflects an overly simple classification of a rather fragmentary body of evidence. Archaeological finds have been linked to literary mentions, and bodies of archaeological evidence discovered centuries apart and several meters distant have been related to one another in service of creating a tidy narrative. Our evidence is not consistent or complete enough to justify such streamlined conclusions, and yet there has been an inattention to the zone as an area of potential power. In fact, some of the monuments and infrastructure of the Esquiline suggest that this area, in which the Basilica of Junius Bassus stood, was a central node of


\(^{362}\) Coarelli, “L’area tra Esquilino e Viminale,” 128. He does note the Cispian’s temple of Giunone Lucina and Mefitis temples, but makes no mention of the temple of Isis and Serapis, for which see M. de Vos, *LTUR* 3.110-112, s.v. *Iseum Metellinum.*
Rome in Late Antiquity, in spite of (or because of) its relationship to the city’s edge at the Servian Wall.

**The Servian Seam**

Recent scholarship has taken up the question of periphery within the capital, focusing on the eastern parts of the wall circuits of Rome and the ways they functioned as permeable barriers. Simon Malmberg and Hans Bjure have written cogently about the movements and activities associated with Rome’s walls as an edge, arguing that it was neither a passive nor rigid boundary, but a dynamic “seam” of the city, the activities and monuments of which catalyzed urban development. This interpretation opposes a reading of the view of the city as an entirely centralized network, focused around a single nucleus and radiating out from that core. Rather, the periphery, an important node of activity in its own right, can catalyze movement and development, eventually even capable of surpassing the importance of the city center. Although I am borrowing from Malmberg and Bjure’s “edge phenomena” approach, I do not mean to suggest that the Servian Wall and the area immediately within it were a distant border zone. This part of the Esquiline was certainly legally part of the city of Rome, apparently well built up, and within an easy distance to the Curia or the Circus Maximus. At the same time, however, it was peripheral, inasmuch as it made up the boundary of the city, cinching it together and controlling the pathways of what came in and out.

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363 Malmberg and Bjure, “Suburb as Center.”

364 “Edge phenomena” and other more theoretical aspects of Malmberg’s methodology are taken up in his 2008 article in “Finding Your Way in the Subura.”
Applying this approach to the Servian wall and the area immediately surrounding is a corrective to earlier work centering on the monumental zones of the Roman forum and imperial fora. These latter were, undoubtedly, high value areas for monument-raising, and parts of the city with long legacies of memory and identity construction. The inscribed statue bases that survive from these areas comprise an invaluable body for study: they are usually preserved in situ, since their size and bulk make reuse and transport difficult, which makes it possible to study the context of their display. As a consequence, however, the more enigmatic area of the Esquiline has been largely overlooked, though it shows many of the same indications of self-presentation as this central zone.

Malmberg and Bjur look eastward and to the south of the Basilica of Junius Bassus, toward Porta Maggiore and the Lateran, identifying three phases of monumentalization. The first, from 200-270 CE, was marked by military and imperial presence in the area. The next (320-360 CE) was the elevation of this zone to a significant social, cultural, and economic node. The last phase (430-500 CE) saw the building of a number of churches along the city’s edge. It is largely on the second phase of Malmberg and Bjur’s model that I wish to focus, though I will also note pre-existing structures that


366 See Galinsky and Lapatin, Cultural Memories in the Roman Empire.
shaped the landscape nearby and movement within it. Ultimately, the goal is not to offer a story of the development of the Esquiline over time (for this, see Häuber’s massive work, with phase maps), but to understand the Basilica of Junius Bassus’ place in the urban fabric of Rome. My aim is to establish Bassus’ building as a compelling extension of the evidence in support of the narrative of Esquiline monumentalization in late antiquity.

The wall and the structures associated with it would have been a defining feature of the area, since they controlled coming and going and the direction of movement. Besides being a means of defense and an enclosure for the city, the Servian ramparts were a boundary for commercial, military, and cultural ingress. The gates in the wall were permeable and dynamic, serving as intersections and points of interaction between exterior and interior. These portae would have been high-traffic areas, where bottlenecks formed as people and goods converged to enter or leave the city. They would also have been logical places for warehouses and inns to spring up, for blacksmiths to offer their services to travelers, and for vendors of all kinds to make themselves available to a high concentration of potential customers.\(^{367}\) They were also customs barriers, where fees could be levied on inbound goods.\(^{368}\) Certain types of wagons were not allowed to go into the city, so large transports had to be unpacked and reloaded onto pack animals and smaller carts.

\(^{367}\) Malmberg and Bjur, “Suburb as Center,” 114.

\(^{368}\) CIL VI 1016a.
Nearest to the Basilica of Junius Bassus was the Porta Esquilina (Esquiline Gate) which stood just to the southeast.⁶⁶⁹ One arrived at this gate by way of the Clivus Suburanus, which led all the way from the imperial fora. The easternmost jog of the Clivus Suburanus ran up the Esquiline slope along the same route as today’s Via in Selci and curved into modern Via di San Martino ai Monti. At the intersection of this last street with Via Merulana, the Clivus Suburana hit the Esquiline Plateau. Continuing east across the plateau by way of what is today called the modern Via di San Vito, the path ran out of the city through the Porta Esquilina, branching into the Via Tiburtina and the Via Labicana. Augustus monumentalized this gateway with a triple-bayed arch, which was altered in the third century.⁶⁷⁰

Inside and outside this gate were centers of commerce. On the city side was the Forum Esquilinum.⁶⁷¹ On the outside of the gate, to the north of Via Tiburtina, lay another market square, the Campus Esquilinus. Squares like this often attached themselves to the gates in the Republican wall.⁶⁷² There was a macellum here, probably a wholesale market from which retailers could buy stock and bring it into the city to sell.⁶⁷³ This macellum can be associated with remains still visible today in the Piazza Manfredo.

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⁶⁶⁹ For the Porta Esquilina, see F. Coarelli LTUR 3.326-7, s.v. *murus Servii Tulii*.

⁶⁷⁰ This arch is still *in situ*, though the evidence of its lateral bays is no longer visible; see Coarelli in LTUR on Porta Esquilina, op. cit. See also Holland, “The Triple Arch of Augustus.” The arch is also known as the Arch of Gallienus, which will be discussed further below.

⁶⁷¹ See Coarelli, LTUR 2.298, s.v. *Forum Esquilinum CIL* 6.2223; 9179–9180

⁶⁷² Malmberg and Bjur 115.

⁶⁷³ This characterization of the macellum is Malmberg and Bjur 115.
Fanti that dates to the early 2nd century. These remains show evidence of a court measuring 80 X 25 meters, surrounded by porticoes and shops. Its entrance faced south, toward the Via Tiburtina. Most archaeologists identify this macellum as the Macellum Liviae. The market, built by Augustus and named after his wife Livia, runs parallel to the Servian wall in this area. This is regarded as of a piece with the Augustan rehabilitation of the Esquiline.

The area immediately inside the Porta Esquilina was also the location of the Forum of Epityncanus, discussed above in the section on the dedication inscription as an example of a privately founded forum. Whether or not this was a separate forum from the Forum Esquilinum, we know that Epityncanus wanted to associate his name with the place, and wanted to be designated its founder. We can also assume that he undertook some kind of curatorial responsibility for the area. The presence of the inscription, whether or not it is accurate, suggests this area of the Esquiline was a desirable place for self-display and that association with it would be advantageous. This supports the

374 Ibid.

375 Ibid.

376 It should be noted that Malmberg does not ascribe to this view, because he does not believe Santa Maria Maggiore to correspond with the Liberian Basilica. He regards the Macellum Liviae, therefore, as having no discovered remains. See G. Pisani Sartorio, *LTUR* 3.203-4, s.v. *Macellum Liviae*. This market was restored by Gratian, Valens, and Valentinian between 367 and 375, according to an inscription on an epistyle that is now lost but was recorded in the Itin. Einsiedln, *CIL VI* 1178 = *ILS* 5592. *Cur. Not.* puts it in Reg. V Esquiliae but another inscription on the collar of an enslaved person says the macellum was in the tertia—so it could be between V and III. Magi, *Il calendario dipinto sotto Santa Maria Maggiore* maintains that the Macellum Liviae is the building under Santa Maria Maggiore.
claim that the Servian seam and nearby areas were a secondary site of self-aggrandizement, away from the Roman forum and imperial fora, and should be further investigated as part of Rome’s honorific topography.

3rd Century Monumentalization

While these structures indicate commerce and other kinds of activity in the region, these areas were not unique to the Esquiline, and do not necessarily lend the quarter a monumental character, even if they do signal a high-density urban environment. Malmberg and Bjur point to a more calculated program of monumentalization and imperial presence on the Esquiline in the Severan era. Many of the examples they cite demonstrate an imperial interest in building in the southeastern part of the city. For example Septimius Severus began the Sessorian Palace south of the Porta Maggiore, near where today’s Church of Santa Croce stands. (See Figure 5.3.) He also quartered his troops at the Castra Peregrina on the Caelian, southeast of San Stefano Rotundo. This area is somewhat far to the southeast of our primary area of interest, but connected, in Malmberg and Bjur’s view (and that of Tedeschi Grisanti) by the Campus Esquilinus,

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377 SH could be helpful to have some kind of monumentalization theory here, esp for app to Getty on this theme

378 F. Guidobaldi, LTUR 4.304-308, sv Sessorium. The earliest textual mentions are in the 6th century, but they refer to events in earlier eras, such as foundation of the basilica Hierusalem (today S. Croce) in the Sessorian: LP I, 179 in life of Felice IV (526-530) with reference to epoch of Silvester 314-335. See also Lusnia, Creating Severan Rome, esp. chapter 6 for palaces, and Angelova, Sacred Founders: Women, Men, and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding, Rome Through Early Byzantium, 135.

379 E. Lissi Caronna, LTUR 1.249-250, s.v. Castra Peregrina.
which “served as a kind of grand forecourt to the imperial district” to the south,\footnote{Malmberg and Bjur, “Suburb as Center,” 117, with reference to [Tedeschi Grisanti, \textit{Il Ninfeo dell’Acqua Giulia sull’Esquilino}. I am not entirely convinced by this formulation—the imperial district at this point is pretty far to the south, and though the authors characterize it as belonging to “the via Tiburtina space,” I only see it becoming meaningfully related to the Campus Esquilinein after the construction of the Aurelian Wall, which ties them by incorporating them both into an intramural area. For Aurelian’s walls, see Dey, \textit{The Aurelian Wall and the Refashioning of Imperial Rome}.} and more broadly, categorized as part of the third century investment in the periphery of the city.

The crowning monument of this Esquiline imperial district’s “forecourt” was the Nymphaeum of Severus Alexander, the last emperor of the Severan dynasty (r. 222-235).\footnote{Tedeschi Grisanti, \textit{LTUR} 3.351-2, s.v. \textit{Nymphaeum Alexandri}. See also Tedeschi Grisanti, \textit{Il Ninfeo dell’Acqua Giulia sull’Esquilino}. Excavations in the 1980s actually revealed that the Severan work was on an opera reticulata structure form the Augustan era. Most recently, see Longfellow, \textit{Roman Imperialism and Civic Patronage}.} Visible today in the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele are remains thought to belong to this structure. (See Figure 5.4) The fountain was a trapezoid, built over an earlier Augustan structure and designed to fit into the fork dividing via Labicana and via Tiburtina. It faced west, toward the city, rather than outward. Its triple apse would have been reminiscent of a tripartite triumphal arch, according to Brenda Longfellow, and even more so with its quadriga on top.\footnote{Longfellow, \textit{Roman Imperialism and Civic Patronage}, 194.} The monument suggests a reimagining of triumphal monuments, a celebration of imperial victory in the form of a beautifying public utility.

While we are not able to completely reconstruct the fountain’s sculptural program, we know that some parts of it were earlier works reused in this context; Severus was
apparently known for rearranging sculptures around the city.\footnote{See SHA Alex. Sev. 26.4.} The so-called “Trophies of Marius,” likely Domitianic or Trajanic, based on their quarry marks, were a part of the nymphaeum until the end of the 15th century.\footnote{These were documented when the sculptures were moved from the fountain installation to the Capitoline, where they are today, in 1590 by Pope Sixtus V. See Tedeschi Grisanti, \textit{Il Ninfeo dell’Acqua Giulia sull’Esquilino}, 56-7.} (See Figure 5.5) According to Longfellow, this nymphaeum exhibits the earliest programmatic use of \textit{spolia} known at Rome, long before the more commonly discussed Constantinian period of spoliation.\footnote{Longfellow, \textit{Roman Imperialism and Civic Patronage}, 196.} Bringing trophy sculptures from an earlier century out of their original context not only allowed Alexander Severus to associate himself with the earlier “good emperor” Trajan; it also de-specified the victory that they were originally created to commemorate, and left them with the charge of a general victory, standing for ongoing triumph over any enemy to Rome.\footnote{Ibid., 202.} In Longfellow’s view, Alexander Severus’ nymphaeum was meant to associate the emperor with Trajan (whose statues he had re-used) and Augustus (whose foundation he had built on) not only because of their victory as generals, but also because of their roles as the greatest benefactors of Rome and the empire.\footnote{Ibid., 203} Through decorative programs that resembled or reused these emperors’ modes of display, she says, Alexander Severus signals his plan “to emulate their transformations of the cityscape. . . emphasisiz[ing] his role as ultimate benefactor of the Roman people.” Longfellow even
suggests that the placement of the nymphaeum may have been meant to recall Augustus’ reclamation of the Esquiline.

Longfellow’s argument is a compelling one. Alexander Severus’s fountain seems to have expanded not only the modes of imperial triumphal display (through spoliation and an arch-like but not arch structure) but also its topography: a good distance away from the city’s major monuments, Alexander Severus expanded the imperial image to the edge of the city.

The fountain seems not to have been Alexander Severus’s only intervention in the area. Haüber also identified a cryptoporticus building that apparently belonged to him, on the evidence of a water pipe inscribed with his name.\(^{388}\) The use of the building is unknown, but suggests further imperial efforts to aggrandize the area and to endow it with the imperial presence.

Whether Alexander Severus was deliberately calling on the memories of former emperors to magnify his own image, he certainly brought imperial building projects to the area. This is also signaled in the rather more banausic presence of the barracks of the *vigiles* of Rome (the city’s fire and police departments) just south of the Via Labicana and outside the Campus Esquilinus. Locating this piece of urban infrastructure, crucial to city safety, signals the civic character of the area.\(^{389}\)

\(^{388}\) Haueber, *Eastern Part of the Mons Oppius*, 878, under her explanation of map 14 (*Horti* of Maecenas in Late Antiquity). Haueber’s map 13 in this volume shows the cryptoporticus structure at nos. 1-6, and the nymphaeum at no. 40; M.

\(^{389}\) *CIL* 6.414a–b; 1059
Not all of the efforts toward monumentalization of and investment in the Esquiline seam were actually carried out. About two decades after Alexander Severus’ nymphaeum, Gallienus would aspire to continue the trend of monumentalizing the area by planning to erect a colossal statue of himself. The statue was to stand in the emperor’s gardens at the height of the Esquiline. We presume by this spot the text means to point to the current location of Santa Maria Maggiore, at the height of the Cispian. The colossus of Gallienus depicted as sun god, holding a sword so large a child could have climbed into its hilt, would have been twice the size of that built by Nero to the southwest near his *Domus Aurea*.  

Gallienus was assassinated in 268 and never had the chance to build his colossus. Had he gotten his way, however, the Basilica of Junius Bassus might have stood in the shadow of this colossal statue and of the horse and chariot that the emperor wanted to accompany it.

While the Gallienus colossus was never constructed, Gallienus nonetheless received a monument in this landscape. A re-inscription of the Porta Esquilina in 262 dedicated the monument to the emperor Gallienus and his wife Salonina. The so-called “Arch of Gallienus” is merely a gate in the Servian wall, but it was apparently enlarged,

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390 SHA, Gallieni duo, 18, 2-5.

391 E. Rodríguez Almeida, *LTUR* 1.93-4, s.v. *Arcus Gallieni* and “Alcuni appunti su due archi di Roma.” Inscription: *CIL* VI 1106 = *ILS* 548: *Gallieno clementissimo principi, cuius invicta virtus sola pietate superata est, et Saloninae sanctissimae Augustae,* *Aurelius Victor, v(ir) e(gregius), dicatissimus numini maiestatique eorum.* “Aurelius Victor, the excellent man, [dedicated this] in complete devotion to their majesties’ will, to Gallienus, the most clement emperor, whose unconquerable virtue is only outdone by his piety, and to the sacred empress Salonina.” The two lateral arches were demolished in the late 1400s but we have Renaissance representations of them. Lugli, “L’Arco di Gallieno.”
and with its inscription in either bronze or marble would have resembled a triumphal arch. It is unclear whether the rededication bore any relationship to a military expedition, victorious or otherwise. In any case, the “arch” here singled out this particular gate in the wall, signaling that the location was suitable for a monument that honored the emperor, and thus contributing to the landscape of honors and decoration of which it formed a part.

**The Aurelian walls**

The Severan period of monumentalization was interrupted in 271 by the construction of the Aurelian walls, which ran through the palace area and divided the Via Tiburtina at the longitude of the aqueduct that ran north-south. The wall ran along the city’s aqueducts (Marcia, Tepula, and Claudia) in the southeast quadrant of the city and even appropriated some parts of the Aqua Claudia as part of its defensive structure. The wall expanded the boundaries of the older city, which had long since outgrown the Republican walls. This also created an intramural expanse, inside Rome but outside its earlier confines, and displaced some of the activities around the Republican wall out to the new edges of the city.

The Aurelian wall, and the city expansion that it demarcated, called for the relocation of some of the barriers and entry and exit points defined in the earlier to the new, outer boundary of the city. In some instances this meant the duplication or

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392 Malmberg and Bjur, “Suburb as Center,” 117. See also Dey, *The Aurelian Wall and the Refashioning of Imperial Rome*.

393 See e.g. Mulryan, *Spatial “Christianisation” in Context: Strategic Intramural Building in Rome from the 4th-7th c. AD.*
redoubling of the kinds of spaces that existed along the Republican walls. As an example, the Porta Tiburtina, the gate in the Aurelian wall that straddles the street of that name, corresponds to the Porta Esquilina, a more eastern analogue on the city’s expanded beltway. Presumably the customs gate would have relocated to this outer border.\footnote{Malmberg and Bjur, “Suburb as Center,” 114.}

Aurelian’s wall also incorporated the \textit{castra praetoria} in the northeast part of the city into its fortifications, bringing an extra-urban structure into the structure that defined the city’s perimeter and protected the city within.\footnote{E. Lissi Caronna, \textit{LTUR} 1.251-254, s.v. \textit{castra praetoria}.}

The parallel for the Forum Esquilinum, inside the Porta Tiburtina, was the Forum Tauri.\footnote{G. De Spirito, \textit{LTUR} 2.347-8, s.v. \textit{Forum Tauri}.} The existence of this forum is based on an inscription from the Forum of Trajan that honors Flavius Taurus as the builder of the eponymous forum.\footnote{\textit{CIL} 6.41336 = AE 1934, 159} Because the later name for the Porta Tiburtina is the Porta Taurina\footnote{G. Pisani Sartorio, \textit{LTUR} 3.312–313, s.v. \textit{Porta Tiburtina}.} the forum is thought to have been located here, where the sources say the body of the martyred S. Bibiana was exposed.\footnote{Some authors identify the Forum Tauri as the Forum Boarium.}

This forum is not to be confused with the Theodosian forum of the same name at Constantinople.
4th Century Monumentalization/Constantine on the Esquiline

Constantine’s building activity focuses on the eastern and southeastern periphery of Rome, marking a second period of monumentalization on the city’s edge, and according to Malmberg and Bjur, the greatest such period of three similar phases, during which “the area became one of the main political, economic and religious centres of Rome. . .” Like some of the Severan dynasty’s interventions in the landscape, some of these are distant from our primary area of interest, but illustrate the significance of such peripheral zones outside the city center.

Constantine’s choice of palatial residences is one place where his preference for the periphery is expressed. The emperor took over the Severan palace and installed his mother in the same area. His estate may have continued outside the walls along the Via Labicana, if it was contiguous with a mausoleum on that road built for Constantine but used by his mother where today’s Ss. Marcellino e Pietro is located (ad duas lauros, not the church on Via Merulana by the same name with the addendum “al Laterano”). The palace may have gone as far north as where today’s Santa Bibiana is located (northwest of Porta Maggiore). In this area a 15 X 9 portico mosaic was found, depicting the hunt for circus animals.

400 Malmberg and Bjur, “Suburb as Center,” 118.
401 Malmberg and Bjur, Suburb as Center, 118.
402 Now on view at the Museo Centrale Montemartini but not, so far as I know, assessed as an imperial work of art, though these authors would seem to want to assign it to Constantine’s palace. The definitive work on this is Cima, “Gli horti Liciniani.”
Nearby, in the triangle formed by the intersection of Via Labicana and Via Tiburtina with the city wall, is the rotunda referred to as the “Temple of Minerva Medica,” the brickstamps of which date it to the 320s.\(^{403}\) This building was probably not a temple at all, but built for receiving guests and dining. In the middle of the 4th century, fountain courts were added on each side of the building. Some scholars believe this to have been on the grounds of the Horti Liciniani, but given the dating of the structure and other factors of its location, it is possible that this structure was part of the imperial estate of Constantine.\(^{404}\)

The fourth century also saw the construction of a number of churches on the periphery of Rome. One was the Liberian basilica built in the 350s, which was either an early church located where Santa Maria Maggiore is today, or a forerunner of Santa Bibiana, further to the southeast.\(^{405}\) There was also the church of S. Eusebius, next to the Campus Esquilinus, and built in the house of the saint; the Church of Santa Lucia in Selci; the Titulus Equitius where San Martino ai Monti stands today; and the Church of San Vito, near today’s church of the same name.\(^{406}\) These churches signaled the

\(^{403}\) Ibid. and Malmberg and Bjur, “Suburb as Center,” 118.

\(^{404}\) This view is cogently argued in Guidobaldi, “Il ‘Tempio di Minerva Medica.’”

\(^{405}\) Malmberg and Bjur think the Liberian basilica was the forerunner to S. Bibana, not to be identified with Santa Maria Maggiore, “Suburb as Center,” 120.

\(^{406}\) S. Eusebius: \textit{CBCR} 1.210–216; \textit{LTUR} 2.239–240. Malmberg and Bjur, “Suburb as Center,” 121 note the possibility that this was an Arian church built to counter the Liberian one. S. Lucia: \textit{CBCR} 4.87–124; 2.186–190; \textit{LTUR} 3.191. San Vito: most recently Andrews and Bernard, “Urban Development at Rome’s Porta Esquilina and Church of San Vito over the Longue Durée.”
collective contributions of private individuals, emperors, and bishops, all of whom saw this area as appropriate for locating churches, whether by conversion of their homes or by new construction.

The Urban Prefecture

I now turn to a monument that we are not able to locate, but that would have been a major contributor to the Esquiline Hill as a locus of senatorial authority: the urban prefecture. The urban prefecture was an official headquarters around which civic activity centered in late antiquity. The office’s control of provisions and of judicial matters would have given it major influence over real estate, business negotiations, access to building materials, and any number of resources needed for the execution of business. The prefecture likely contributed to the desirability of the Esquiline Hill as a location for elite residences, since elites would want to maintain close connections to power. Especially as the office grew more important and its responsibilities expanded in late antiquity, this office would have become a more important hub. There is little literary or archaeological evidence to guide us in locating the physical office of the urban prefecture, but two schools of thought have developed, both of which place the prefecture to the southwest of the Basilica of Junius Bassus in Late Antiquity.

407 For the significance of this office in Late Antiquity, see Lançon, Rome in Late Antiquity: Everyday Life and Urban Change, AD 312-609, chapter 4, as well as Chastagnol, La préfecture urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire.

408 Carucci, “Domus on the Late Antique Esquiline.”

409 Sinnigen, The Officium of the Urban Prefecture During the Later Roman Empire.
The first theory originated with H. Jordan and G. Gatti, who believed the marble map in the Templum Pacis shared a location with the atti of the prefecture, and thus that the prefecture was located somewhere between the Templum Pacis and the Basilica of Maxentius.\footnote{Marchese, “La Prefettura Urbana,” 615.} Coarelli believes that the prefecture was based at the Basilica Aemilia. When, with the construction of the Basilica Nova (where Coarelli believes the prefecture’s juridical activities to have taken place), the prefecture’s activities migrated southward, the prefecture migrated with it to a location referred to as the secretarium tellurense, i.e., the offices near the temple of Tellus, thought to have been located to the west of the Baths of Trajan.

The second theory, to which I adhere, was developed by Lanciani on the basis of inscriptions found in the area relating to the prefecture, and puts the prefecture’s headquarters further from the fora, somewhere near S. Pietro in Vincoli: north and slightly east of the Colosseum, and thus rather close to the Basilica of Junius Bassus).\footnote{Marchese “La Prefettura Urbana,” 614 gives Lanciani 1892, 22-25, where he lists inscriptions found in this area.} This view has been defended more recently by Palombi.\footnote{Palombi, \textit{Tra Palatino ed Esquilino}, 151-153.} Because the epigraphic evidence that supports this conjecture dates to the fourth century, no claim is made as to the location of the prefecture in an earlier era; this proposal applies only to location of the fourth century prefecture in its newly expanded role.
The fact that this proposal relies on fourth century inscriptions in particular makes it more relevant for our purposes, and more defensible as a theory about where the prefecture was in late antiquity. Recent work by Maria Elena Marchese takes up the epigraphic evidence relating to the urban prefecture and the men who held that office. By sorting the locations where these inscriptions were found, Marchese attempts to pinpoint the location of the urban prefecture itself. These inscriptions are typically carved onto statue bases and architectonic elements, the size and weight of which would have made the stones difficult to transport. Thus Marchese assumes that translocation of the inscriptions from their original sites is minimal and that they may, as a group, point to the original location of the prefecture. Based on the concentration of known inscriptions, Marchese concludes that the urban prefecture was likely close to San Pietro in Vincoli. I follow her in this conclusion. This area, then, must have been where the enormous staff subordinate to the urban prefect spent a lot of their time and carried out their duties. Access to this office and the people who worked in it would have smoothed communication for exchange of patronage favors and business dealings, making it a place where power concentrated.

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Marchese studied 243 inscriptions, 238 of which are datable by half-century. She tracks a major uptick in inscriptions relating to the prefecture in the first half of the 4th century, which is in line with other evidence that suggests the growing importance of this office in the Constantinian period. (See her figure 1, p. 616—unfortunately not all the information is legible at this resolution).

To build near this area, as Bassus did, was to graft himself onto a very significant political artery of the city, and it should not be taken for granted how quickly he must have acted to do so when he did. We cannot say when the prefecture relocated its offices, nor pinpoint a particular year when the office of the urban prefect surpassed all others in rank, but given that these were connected to Constantine’s administrative reforms, they cannot have happened until after 312. It was likely only five years later when became praetorian prefect, perhaps elevated from equestrian status by Constantine to hold that rank, and thus granted access to the upper echelon of the Roman aristocracy. For him to build his hall less than two decades later so near the urban prefecture likely demonstrates how swift he was to follow the trajectory of the new administration and to ally himself with the major power-players in that administration by the strategy of geographic proximity. Bassus’ marvelously revetted hall would have struck the same chord as the honorific statues of the urban prefecture, giving him the chance to display his image alongside text that declared himself founder of a euergetic donation.

Even if the offices of the urban prefect were not here, many of the inscriptions erected by him or to him were concentrated here. Their density alone marks out the significance of the zone as a space for self-display. Marchese analyzed over 240 inscriptions, some dedicated to the emperor, others to the urban prefect. Approximately half mention public works, such as construction or restoration. Their collection here signals that this was a desirable place for office holders and patrons to be honored and to be seen honoring the emperor. This work suggests a kind of satellite space of honorific
statuary, ancillary to the monumental city center. As such, this sector of Rome ought to be considered alongside the Roman and imperial fora as a space for elite honorific display.

**New Topographies**

While I have stressed in this chapter the commercial, administrative, and religious buildings on the Esquiline, and especially those given as benefactions, in order to emphasize that the quarter was not wholly domestic, the domestic sphere, too, is implicated in this honorific topography. Machado’s dissertation and work since makes clear that aristocratic houses were also political spaces, and “to some extent alternative centres in the late antique topography of power.” Some aristocratic houses on the Esquiline took over public resources or blocked access to them. The *domus* at Sette Sale, for example, was built over the cistern that had supplied the Baths of Trajan. This behavior was not specific to the Esquiline, or even to the city of Rome, but it was indeed one way in which elite power marked the landscape in late antiquity. The takeover and repurposing of such resources demonstrates these patrons had the power to override or ignore the public good to carry out their wishes, which tells us how much power and influence they must have had.

That said, the buildings, fora, and inscriptions described above indicate that the pleasant places on the Esquiline were not simply imperial horti and elite residences, but that there was also a sprawling group of public utilities in this space, many of which were funded or at least supervised by magistrates or other late antique elites, and which

advertise their status as monuments gifted to the city. Machado has used the phrase “topography of power” to describe the way the senatorial aristocracy of late antique Rome shaped the urban landscape of Rome according to its own interests.\textsuperscript{416} His dissertation on “Urban Space and Power” and work proceeding from it is crucial to this study, as it considers not only epigraphic evidence but also the experience of architectural and urban space.

Resituating the Basilica of Junius Bassus as a civic benefaction gives us the necessary impetus to explore this topography of power, or perhaps “honorific topography,” with particular attention to the Esquiline as an example of space serving as an alternative to the major historical monuments of the city’s center. I want to consider, in particular, a euergetic topography, which might be one way of uniting civic benefactions and church donations to create a less divided narrative of building and shaping and marking the landscape in late antiquity.

In building a euergetic monument on the Esquiline, Bassus was not only not alone, but he was also not the first. He was in fact preceded by an emperor from a century before, Alexander Severus, who built his nymphaeum just outside the Esquiline gate, oriented toward Romans departing the city. The Forum of Epityncanus (whether it was built from the ground up or only refers to this urban prefect’s interpretation and curation of the Esquiline Forum) provides another example of care given to a gathering place of civic importance. The urban prefecture, too, with the many inscriptions attesting to the

\textsuperscript{416} Machado, “Aristocratic Houses,” 136.
works of its officeholders and the possible presence of its office nearby, suggests the Esquiline zone near the Servian seam was an important late antique civic center, even though it was near the city’s formal boundary.

Andrews attributes to the construction of the 5th century basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore the bringing of the Cispian—the Esquiline’s northern spur—“into a monumental urban landscape from which during the imperial period it had been increasingly excluded,” arguing that “the new basilica immediately gave the hill a sacred and civic importance it had never before enjoyed.” While Andrews is no doubt right about the significance of Santa Maria Maggiore on the area, especially as regards the Christian topography of Rome, perhaps the pre-Marian Cispian ought not to be characterized so modestly, especially in light of the basilica’s new designation.

The Esquiline quarter, and in particular the seam along the Servian wall and the surrounding area, merits closer study, especially as concerns the late antique city and the use of space in it for the purpose of claiming power and invoking memories in service of that claim. Studies of elite self-fashioning and peer prestige have focused on the imperial fora and the Roman forum, neglecting the less well-understood archaeology of this area, though discourses on the periphery and suburbs are beginning to change that. Finally, revelations about liturgical topography and the practice of procession in late antique Rome can be expanded to include the topography of euergetism or topography of administration. Understanding how the activities of administration marked the landscape

might well aid in an understanding of the shifts in government practice in late antiquity and helps us interpret the monuments in the area with regard to their locational authority.

We may even imagine the Basilica of Junius Bassus becoming a kind of civic anchor in this landscape. Perhaps Bassus’ own inaugural procession ended here. If it was used as a court building, it would have been part of an administrative precinct, controlled by the city’s magistrates in a satellite to the offices of the center.

This quarter of the city remained appealing throughout the centuries that followed. Popes performed the same actions as their ancient predecessors, restoring water supplies, constructing their own palaces, serving as patrons of art and social services, and inscribing the record of their contributions on their constructions. The continuity of the post-antique Esquiline, and the afterlife of the Basilica of Junius Bassus, is the subject of the next section.

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418 For the history of the papal habitation in this area see Wiseman “A Roman Villa,” with attention to papal acqueduct revival projects at p. 78-9.
PART II
CHAPTER 6
Picturing Procession: The Biga Panel

This chapter treats one of the four surviving panels from the Basilica of Junius Bassus. The panel depicts a magistrate in gold-emblazoned toga on a two-horse chariot (biga) flanked by representatives of the four circus factions, apparently in procession to the Circus Maximus. I establish that this is a portrait of Junius Bassus in a biga at the beginning of the new year, when he is entering into the office of the consulship and inaugurating the new year’s games, which would have been staged at his expense. By depicting him in the act of procession, the panel connotes his relationship to the urban landscape of Rome, and confers on him an association to the monuments therein. As both an accession portrait and donor portrait, the image portrays Bassus as successor to civic and political traditions of benefaction and office-holding. Moreover, it situates him as heir to the past and affords him a role in the continuity of those traditions.

Methodologically, this chapter offers two vantage points. First, it reads the biga panel image through the lens of panegyric, the genre of praise poetry (or prose) that was frequently performed at festive occasions such as consular inaugurations. The link between panegyric as a literary form and the visual habits of late antiquity has long been established, chiefly by Sabine MacCormack, who analyzed the way panegyrics offered ekphrastic treatments of ceremony that found parallels in the stock visual imagery of the
period. Writing in this genre is one of the main sources of documentation for consular inaugurations and other late antique court ceremonial, so the extensive work that has been done to understand panegyric can productively be brought to bear on our understanding of this image. Despite their shortcomings as records—panegyrics are in no way journalistic accounts of the event—they do give us an account of ceremonial occasions that we would not otherwise have, and they tell us something about how the late antique audience experienced the events they describe. When we place these ekphrastic tableaux alongside actual rendered images, the comparison discloses a deeper reading of the image. In other words, the panegyric lens helps elucidate how the image functioned within its broader cultural context. This chapter touches on clothing and other consular attributes in the image, but focuses particularly on what panegyric from Late Antiquity and earlier periods can tell us about the significance of the assembled crowd attending a procession, by comparing how visual and textual arrayal of the attendants signaled the magistrate’s status.

A second methodological frame of reference for this chapter is the interdisciplinary work on procession and movement through the landscape as a ritual that formed collective civic identity. The pompa (processions) of the Roman world were

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419 MacCormack, Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity.

kinetic enactments of the people’s approbation, a process of professing acquiescence by means of bodily movement through the landscape. In the city of Rome, the landscape at hand was not mere soil and stone, but terrain endowed with centuries of significance by association with legendary and historic events. As processions wound their way through the monumental heart of the city, participants wove past markers of Rome’s founding, in the shadow of temples that attested to their builders’ piety. They brushed by edifices of civic service and statehood like the Curia (Senate house), and walked within sight of honorific statuary that recognized men of great virtue. In so doing, the procession recalled important historic events and individuals, re-iterating their significance and joining the present procession to that historic list. As Diane Favro has written of Roman triumphal processions, the procession “inscribed memory” by “selecting and linking sites into an itinerary” that unfurled a narrative over the ground of the city.\textsuperscript{421} The accompanying throng elevated the magistrate by their physicalized ratification.

To previous studies of processional movement I add a topographical understanding of the city of Rome in Late Antiquity. I argue that the biga panel’s reference to procession served to translate the monumental qualities of the city’s center to the Esquiline. As I demonstrated in Chapter Five, the Esquiline was not previously a monumental zone, but received increasing attention and civic investment in late antiquity.

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Monuments, Memory, and Identity; Galinsky, Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity and Memoria Romana; and Roy, “Engineering Power: The Triumph as Material Expression of Conquest.”
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\textsuperscript{421} Diane Favro, “Moving Events: Curating the Memory of the Roman Triumph.”
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The biga panel served to co-opt an entire monumental landscape and its memorial traces, and to impart that association to the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Thus Bassus could depict himself as belonging to the historical monumental tradition, as one of many participants in the city’s palimpsest, even though his monument was situated outside of it.

The final section of the chapter situates the ceremony depicted in panel in the social and cultural context of the Roman calendar. The new year was a moment of renewal and transformation (*renovatio*). The consul’s inauguration was one aspect of this renewal, placing his magistracy in continuity with the past and bringing the tradition of the consulship into the present. The consul’s gifts—of games, of the *sparsio* (distribution of largesse), of *sportulae* and *strenae*—shared and showcased his affluence, marking the new year as prosperous and abundant. The consul also gave his name to the year, as the Roman calendar was chronicled according to the consular *fasti*. As such, the figure of the consul was one that calibrated civic, calendrical, and cosmic time. His role as master and measure of time is elaborated in late antique texts on the circus as microcosm of the year and its passing seasons. Even though the biga panel’s subject is a single fleeting moment of motion, its composition conveys a fixity that connotes Bassus’ role in a timeless, perpetual accounting of time.

*The Panel*

The composition of the panel gives Bassus pride of place. (See Figure 0.1) He is at center, forward-facing, his right arm raised. The two white horses who draw his chariot have their bodies turned out, but turn their heads back in to frame the consul-rider. Behind Bassus, at a slightly reduced scale, trot out four additional horses, each bearing a
representative of the circus factions in his respective color costume. The horses offer the viewers their profiles, while their riders contort impossibly to face forward. Each rider extends his racket or horn in a diagonal toward the middle of the scene, where the light-catching white of Bassus’ horses and the gilding on his toga bring the eye to focus on the consul.

The panel presents the viewer with a cleaved composition, as if the maker has driven a wedge between the faction riders and instructed them, like a stage director, to “cheat out” to their audience. The open-faced composition of the panel collects and conflates several possible viewpoints, then splices them together and holds them in suspended relation. This compilation of perspectives makes visible multiple dimensions of their performance of the circus procession, while anchoring it in relationship to the central figure of that stage. Its composite angles confer upon the viewer an impossible, idealized, perspective, not one any real spectator of the procession would have had.  

**Earlier Treatments and Variations**

There has not been a consensus in scholarship as to the identification of this image and its central figure. Ragna Enking suggests, following earlier scholarship on the basilica, that the biga panel depicts the Goth Valila, who later came into possession of the

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422 This might be described according to Jacob Latham’s construction as an image of the Weberian “ideal-type” of the pompa—an imagined amalgamation, as much as a historical event: Latham, Performance, Memory, and Processions in Ancient Rome: The Pompa Circensis from the Republic to Late Antiquity, 15 and 21. That is, it expressed a collage of many pieces of the day (or days), rather than laying out a single moment of a single ceremony.
This interpretation assumes that the panel dates a century later than its usually agreed-upon date of c. 331, and that Valila would be depicted in the garments of a consul, though Enking provides support for neither of these claims. There is no evidence to suggest that the biga panel is separated in time from the rest of the hall’s decoration, and thus from the original patron. Becatti argued on the basis of the biga panel’s size that it could not be a portrait, and was instead an allegory of victory over death.\textsuperscript{424} This suggestion facilely ignores the range of miniature portraits in Late Antiquity, as well the difficulties with viewing portraits on monumental-scale works, which would have been far above eye level on historiated columns or arches, while failing to explain why a portrait but not an allegory must be represented on a larger scale on the wall.\textsuperscript{425} If Becatti’s argument is one about visibility and legibility (i.e. that a panel high on the wall would not be sufficiently legible to viewers to present the portrait subject in his best light), it is not backed by certainty about where on the wall this panel appeared; nor would it be the only instance of small, fine, detailed work beyond comfortable eyesight in the Roman world.

\textsuperscript{423} Enking, \textit{S. Andrea cata Barbara}, 26. She notes her reliance on Nesbitt and Oldfield.

\textsuperscript{424} Becatti, \textit{Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina}, 197. This interpretation relied partly on his conviction that the items held by the circus faction riders were palms of victory.

\textsuperscript{425} It is true that wall portraits in Late Antiquity need closer examination. For monumental scale imagery on walls see e.g. McFadden, “Courtly Places and Sacred Spaces.” Portraits we know to have been depicted on late antique walls are not always identifiable as portraits of the patrons. Sometimes they are philosophers and writers, as at the house in via Giovanni Lanza in Rome, or the hall at Kenchreai. The Ostian marble hall has an unidentified portrait (of Jesus?) and a portrait of an unidentified youth, neither of particularly impressive size, though certainly legible to the viewer.
Katherine Dunbabin identified the panel of Bassus in a biga as a scene where the magistrate replaces or stands in for the charioteer, as she argues a god or emperor sometimes did in Roman imagery. Her interpretation arises from an article in which she tries to establish separate starting points for imagery of frontal chariots. She argues that one strand of iconography arose from depictions of victorious charioteers and another from imperial triumphal imagery, maintaining that these two strains of imagery came to resemble one another, but not because of an ideological relationship, since they developed separately. I find these distinctions tenuous. Even if these two strands of iconography arose from different motivations, I cannot see them being kept apart in the viewer’s mind.

Even if Dunbabin’s schema for separating the two strands of iconography is accurate, I find her reading of the panel as depicting Bassus-in-the-guise-of-charioteer untenable from an iconographic standpoint. When we compare the Bassus panel to charioteer mosaics like Polydus with his horse Compressor from Trier in the mid 3rd century (see Figure 3.41) or Eros at Dougga with his horses Amandus and Frutus (see Figure 6.1) we see that he lacks the attributes of a charioteer as participant and winner in the race: a whip for urging on his team, a laurel crown and palm symbolizing his victory. The mosaic charioteer figures are also labeled: they and their horses are celebrities.

whose names bring immediacy to the depiction of their victory and mark the image as referring to a specific competition.\textsuperscript{427}

Setting aside the iconographic intricacies, Dunbabin’s interpretation does not account for the processions of great significance that would have been part of the new year’s festivities of Bassus’ inauguration. The magistrate installed at the new year was entitled to both a \textit{processus consularis}, a consular procession celebrating his investiture, as well as a \textit{pompa circensis}, a circus parade during which the gods were brought to the Circus Maximus and the entertainments begun. I argue that it is in the act of one these processions, probably the latter, that Bassus depicts himself, riding as \textit{praeses ludorum}. This interpretation is more straightforward than imagining Bassus in the guise of a competing charioteer, and reflects Bassus’ interest as patron in collecting on the prestige of his donation. Through such donations, patrons like Bassus performed what Latham calls “ritual alchemy,” converting financial capital to honor and esteem.\textsuperscript{428} The imagery of Bassus in the act of this procession capitalizes on the prestige afforded by this alchemy, representing him at a moment of peak pageantry and public recognition.

Dunbabin does not give any evidence against this reading. Olovsdotter, who follows Dunbabin’s interpretation in her study of consular diptychs, suggests Bassus would not depict himself in procession because he risked impersonating an emperor in

\textsuperscript{427} For a commemorative monument celebrating the accomplishments of a charioteer, see Cameron, \textit{Porphyrius the Charioteer}.

\textsuperscript{428} Latham, \textit{Performance, Memory, and Processions in Ancient Rome}, 2.
I argue, contra Olovsdotter, that the Bassus biga panel is meant to trade on its proximity to triumphal imagery, and that the context of the circus procession gives him full warrant to depict himself in procession without the risk of being accused of appropriating the emperor’s prerogative to *triumphator*.

**Procedures and Processions of the New Year**

Texts from across the late Republic and the Empire and into Late Antiquity allow us to reconstruct the ceremonies that opened the new year. The festivals on the kalends of January began at home, where the consul, dressed in his insignia, initiated its beginning by stepping over his threshold before his assembled friends and clients. Led by the lictors, who carried the *fasces*, and then by any equestrian friends or clients, the consul went out, surrounded by other members of the Senate. The troop processed up to the Capitoline Hill, the consul distributing coins in an act of largesse called the *sparsio* along the way. On the Capitoline, the consuls with priests and assistants slaughtered white bulls in fulfillment of the vows for the health of the Republic, the *vota pro salute rei publicae*. Following the sacrifice the consuls were received formally by the Senate and

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429 Olovsdotter, *The Consular Image*, 181-2. The exception to this taboo, according to this author, is the Basilius diptych, which I will discuss below.


431 Sacrifice was not prohibited until the end of the fourth century. For more on the transformation of late antique religion in this aspect and others, see Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice*. Latham’s study looks at changes to the *pompa circensis* and its ideology in Late Antiquity, with attention to the Christianization of the ceremony. See esp. p. 183-6. For sacrifice as one aspect of these ceremonies, and Christian responses to it, see p. 194 and sources therein.
the new *fasti* were presented with the names of the new year’s consuls. The year’s first meeting of the Senate opened with an oration. They could be stirring and polemical speeches, but by Late Antiquity they were formulaic panegyrics. The consul might speak in praise of the emperor, in gratitude for his conferring of the magistracy (*gratiarum actio*), or a panegyric in praise of the consul would be read. The consul returned home to receive clients’ and friends’ wishes for the year.\(^{432}\)

The following day was reserved for domestic rites and rest, with a return to public festivities on January 3. On this day vows for the well-being of the emperor and his family, the *votorum nuncupatio*, were made. The Senate and emperor exchanged official gifts, or *strenae*. Rome also celebrated the new year with the manumission of slaves in a ceremony where the enslaved underwent the *alapa* (slap) and the *vindicta* (beating). These acts represented the last pains the slave must endure at the hand of his master, and afterward, the consul declared his freedom.\(^{433}\) On this day a second procession, the *pompa circensis*, or circus parade, was held to commence the year’s first and most sumptuous games. As *praeses ludorum*, president of the games, the consul spent an extraordinary amount of time, money, and effort to impress not only the populace but

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\(^{432}\) It is not clear which actions the consuls performed together and when they separated.

\(^{433}\) The date of the manumission ceremony is not clear. Its procedures are discussed in Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World*, 351-2. Harper, like Meslin, points to Amm. Marc. 22.7.1-2 for the date. The historian recounts an anecdote of the emperor Julian who, accustomed to exercising the authority of the manumission, incorrectly pronounced the freeing of the slaves in 362, forgetting that on that day it should have been the consul Mamertinus’ prerogative to do so. Recognizing his *faux pas*, Julian fined himself for the offense. Ammianus specifies that this occurred on the kalends, but whether the *manumitio* was regularly practiced on that date, or whether this date adjustment might have been made only in late antiquity, is unclear.
also his peers who were responsible for similar games as part of their accession to other offices.\textsuperscript{434} Chariot races, theatrical presentations, \textit{venationes}, and gladiatorial games were put on, with the festivities lasting for several days. Staging them was the most compelling consular obligation, especially by this time, when the office had become a sinecure rather than a burdensome duty. The circus faction representatives in the biga panel establish the \textit{pompa circensis} as the subject of the image, although the serpentine ground of the panel gives no hint of the throngs who would have accompanied Bassus, whether as participants in the parade or spectators of it.

Beginning at the Capitoline Temple, where the previous procession had ended, the crowd wended its way to the Circus Maximus. The route could vary each time, but approximation of the consul’s travel through “the most historically saturated terrain” of Rome is mapped out by Latham for the Republican and late antique periods (see Figures 6.2 and 6.3).\textsuperscript{435} Images of the gods were carried in the procession, at least until the end of

\textsuperscript{434} \textit{Pace} Alan Cameron, who expressed skepticism that new year’s/inaugural games were a regular event before the fourth century, at least in the western part of the empire: Cameron, “The Origin, Context and Function of Consular Diptychs,” 200. He cites the compilation of evidence from six centuries in the sources cited here (Jullian, Salomonson) as “indiscriminate.” This accusation seems a bit unfair: given the sparsity of textual sources, these authors could hardly have been expected to discard some evidence in favor of a myopic view of only excerpts from it. Nor do I find these authors to be entirely uncritical about the variances in their sources. Moreover, Cameron’s agnosticism about consular games prior to the fourth century is based in part on absence of evidence. This is not a much harder methodology than that which he criticized. “At any rate,” he writes, “a tetrarch held one if not both of the consulships for most of the years between 305 and 320. If all or most gave circus games at their inauguration, this must have created an expectation of races in January, and it is understandable that non-imperial consuls and lesser officials too were pressured into following suit” (p. 201). I am satisfied that even if his third, second, and first century predecessors had not always given circus games, Bassus did.

the fourth century, and coins were distributed to revelers along the way in a second *sparsio*. Upon arriving at the tribunal in the Circus Maximus, the consul gave homage to the images of the emperor that were exhibited there.\(^{436}\)

The biga panel’s depiction of the consul in the act of this procession may be peerless. The most similar image is from the diptych of Basilius, nearly 200 years later. On the consul’s right shoulder lies a *segmentum* that depicts a magistrate in a biga, facing forward, in a fashion that matches the Bassus panel, except that it is missing the faction representatives. (See Figure 6.4) The fact that Basilius hovers above a register in which chariot races are depicted, and that this depiction is part of a diptych that was likely distributed at the new year to celebrate Basilius’ consulship, strongly intimates the context in which it is meant to be read. The man depicted on the textile is most likely Basilius himself, taking part in the *processus consularis*, the *pompa circensis*, or perhaps an initial lap around the racetrack that the *praeses ludorum* made when he ended the procession before going to his seat.\(^{437}\)

In commenting on the rarity of this subject in sub-imperial art, Olovsdotter suggests that the *segmentum* could depict a relative to Basilius, perhaps someone who

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\(^{436}\) Meslin, *La fête des kalendes de janvier*, 68, citing a 5th century law that evidences the continued presence of the imperial *imagines* there, though prohibiting adoration of those images: *C.Th.* XV, 4, 1.

\(^{437}\) Olovsdotter, *The Consular Image*, 182 suggests the Basilius image could depict *sparsio* but acknowledges there is no evidence of coins being thrown. Another variation of the Bassus biga panel preserved for us by Renaissance drawings may show the consul in the process of distributing coins during the procession. See Chapter Three for discussion of this version of the panel.
had previously held the consulship. While consuls were sometimes apparently gifted robes covered in portraits of the emperor, such a portrait would need to have been recognizable to an ancient viewer, on the strength of likeness to coin portraits and public statuary. It seems needlessly oblique to theorize that the image is of a consul at one remove from the consul who is wearing it. I am not convinced that this particular portrait within a portrait would have been legible as a depiction of someone other than the diptych’s subject, and thus I prefer to think of the segmentum as a duplicative tableau, imaging the wearer in a woven frame.

The basis of Olovsdotter’s interpretation is nonetheless worth taking up: essentially, her argument is that the Basilius image could not depict a living wearer in a pompa circensis because such a depiction could be mistaken for a depiction of triumph, and thus be too close to pretension of imperial or divine victory. I argue that it was exactly this proximity to the imagery of imperial triumph that made the panel so effective an illustration of Bassus’ accomplishment. It borrowed from the iconography of triumphal procession, but the circus imagery grounded it in the specifics of the games, making clear that Bassus was not impersonating the emperor or encroaching on his exclusive right to triumphal imagery by showing him with only two horses, not four, and not wearing a crown or nimbus or holding a scepter. The section that follows examines why Bassus elected to have this image of procession commemorate his inauguration and

438 Olovsdotter, Consular Image, 182.

439 Ibid.
emblematize his political life, how the image relates to the actual experience of a procession like the *pompa circensis* or the *processus consularis*, and what the viewer was meant to understand about Bassus from reading the image.

**Movement and Escort in the Roman World**

Much of Roman political life was conducted in motion. Among the elite, major moments in civic, religious, and personal life were celebrated with a procession. Perhaps the greatest and most magnificent was the triumphal procession, which welcomed back a victorious emperor-general and celebrated his conquests over the enemy.

On a smaller scale, and more quotidian, was the *deductio in forum*, when a *dominus* left his home after receiving clients and walked to the forum, the center of civic life. Accompanied by slaves, friends, and clients, he entered the forum, signaling the start of the day’s public business. The first time a young man did this signaled a rite of passage simultaneously into adulthood and into public life. The act of escort, of being accompanied in public, was central to status in the Roman world.

Domestic settings cast an equivalent of the public cortege as private entourage. The accompaniment of elite individuals in public is attested in both textual and material sources. Not unlike the *pompa circensis*, such walks were highly formalized, had ritual qualities, and were performed for public display. One late Roman example is seen in the mosaic at Piazza Armerina in which the servants of the *domina* accompany her to the baths. The number of people who accompany an aristocrat in public gives witness to a

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large client list, and by extension his largesse and his influence.\footnote{Östenberg, “Power Walks: Aristocratic Escorted Movements in Republican Rome,” 17.} His entourage, then, is an index of his authority and status.

The Bassus procession is a civil rendition of such a retinue of clients, belonging not to any day’s sycophancy but instead obtaining specifically to the festival of the new year. Whether the members of the factions escorted him in an actual procession, they do so in the image for the purposes of the image as markers of his patronage and attestation of his gift of entertainment to the populace.\footnote{Latham suggests they did, as “a sign of the times” (p. 208). It is true equestrians performed the role of accompanying and escorting the consul, so this could be a particular set of equestrians represented here.}

The procession’s backdrop was the city of Rome. Its route varied from one instance to the next, but generally began at the Capitoline, wove through the Roman Forum, and ended in the Circus Maximus, traversing touchstones in the city’s memory along the way. (See again Figures 7.3 and 7.4.) Its starting point was Rome’s most important religious site. Begun, according to legend, by the last king of Rome, and dedicated in the year that the Republic was founded, the Capitoline temple would not only have signified religious piety but also betokened Rome’s early beginnings.\footnote{Tarquinius Superbus founding: Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 4.61; Livy 1.55–56.1. Dedicated in the Republic’s founding year, 509 BCE: Livy 2.8.} The procession passed by the Curia, where Roman senators performed their political obligations and continued the traditions of Rome’s founding, and by the \textit{Lapis Niger} where Maxentius had only two decades earlier dedicated a statue “to Mars Invictus,
Father, and to the founders of his eternal city” on April 21, the anniversary of the city’s founding.\textsuperscript{444} This recursive reference to the city’s beginning, to its anniversaries, to its continuation, and to its eternal perdurance were themes Bassus would have wanted to capitalize on, and the movement of his procession did so. The parade may also have gone past Republican-era monuments restored in recent years, which would have put participants in mind of pious acts undertaken by other aristocrats, and cast Bassus’ own dedication in a similar light.\textsuperscript{445} At the end of the \textit{pompa circensis}, Bassus would have gone through the gate of the Circus Maximus, a ceremonial entrance that resembled a triumphal arch, concluding a ceremony replete with the valences of victory.\textsuperscript{446}

We might even speculate that this particular procession, or one of the ones that Bassus participated in as part of his inauguration, included as one of its landmarks the Esquiline hall that he donated to the people. Whether or not Bassus ever processed to his Esquiline basilica, I would argue that by virtue of the biga panel image a translation nevertheless occurred: that is, his installation of this image in the Esquiline hall served to bring the entire monumental core of the city to this location. All the arches through which the procession passed, the sacred sites by which it paraded, the civic spaces endowed

\textsuperscript{444} \textit{CIL VI} 33856. See Machado, “Religion as antiquarianism: pagan dedications in late antique Rome,” 343.

\textsuperscript{445} For further elaboration, see Latham’s chapter on the late antique itinerary, p. 220-230, with the caveat that many of the restorations he mentions took place in the decades following Bassus’ inauguration.

\textsuperscript{446} For the evidence of this gate, see Latham, \textit{Performance, Memory, and Processions in Ancient Rome}, 229.
with long lineage—these were encapsulated by the suggestion of the procession’s itinerary here on a marble wall. By proceeding through and along and past these sites he gathered them on an itinerary, inscribed on them the trace of having been there and accrued to himself the *genius loci* of these places. The image of the procession effectively carried the monumental city center to the Esquiline, performing a *translatio* through its distilled reference to the route.

As the setting of the procession changed, so too did the sensory experiences of its members. The ground beneath their feet and the sky above them parceled out an ever-changing set of sense impressions moment by moment: stairs here, an incline there; shade in this spot, full sun in another; the clamor of horses’ hooves ahead, the tinkling of bells behind. Some members of the retinue may have stepped in slow, somber dignity, while others marched apace to catch up with friends or greet spectators. Meanwhile several meters back another part of the company may have accordionied out, making space for dancers and acrobats to perform, or stopping to play music. From the spectators’ perspective as well as that of the participants, different viewpoints offered wholly varied experiences of the procession. Not only did the sights change as the procession moved, its backdrop a living city, but so did the smells and sounds: the fragrance of incense, the smell of the sacrifice, the aroma of baking bread, or the scent of animals bound for the arena might catch the wind. The laughter at bawdy shows, the press of bodies, the glint of the magistrate’s embroidered garb in the sun, the smell of the horses and their clopping on the cobblestones of Rome—all were aspects of the procession, some programmed,
others incidental to the day, the moment, or the particular corner of the city through which a participant passed.

Other authors have remarked on these sensory stimuli as contributing to the creation of memories of the event, memories that would have been evoked by association with the image of the procession.447 I would add that these sensory phenomena are part of translating and concretizing a concept so abstract as approval or consensus. Consentio, the verb from which consensus comes, means to agree or harmonize with, to hold the same view in common, but literally to “feel together.” The shared feeling is expressed by participation in the sensory stuff of procession. By a literal “feeling together,” the procession enacts the crowd’s acquiescence: the transformation of approval into palpable performance. The section that follows will continue on the theme of consensus, taking up the evidence from panegyric and other texts that suggest the consensus of the crowd was acted out by their escort.

Procession as Ratification

As I indicated in Chapter One, the conferral of legal status, of office or rank, was not enough to give a man status and prestige. Certainly, one’s office circumscribed one’s identity, insofar as it dictated one’s rights and responsibilities; and it is a useful index of

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447 See especially Favro, “Moving Events: Curating the Memory of the Roman Triumph.” Favro cites Varro Ling. 6.49: “To remember derives from memory, since in this there is movement which is a return to what has remained in the mind.”
status, since it is preserved for us so well by the historical record. But admission to the clarissimate was de jure, not de facto, and one had not just to meet the requirements of senatorial rank but also to win friends and influence people. Roman aristocrats brokered their power through complex networks of friendship and patronage of clients. Peer approval figured prominently, as did gifts and personal favors. As Salzman summarizes the plexus of this upper echelon: “Since aristocrats relied so heavily on one another for recognition, they held the keys to each other’s identities, conferring and withdrawing approval in relation to a highly detailed but unwritten code of honorable activity in the circles in which they moved. Thus the status culture of the senatorial aristocracy was a significant unifying system, weaker or stronger depending on the individual’s inclination and position in it.” Through friendship, gifts, favors, and social and familial ties, far more ineffable than legal codes and lists of offices that survive in the text record, the members of the senatorial aristocracy built and performed this “unwritten code.”

A letter from Ovid from his exile on the Black Sea to his friend Graecinus (16 CE) gives us a glimpse as to one of the ways this code was performed by peers through their attendance at public events. Though the letter pre-dates our period by centuries, we can imagine it still reflects truth about ceremonies maintained in the fourth century. The author laments that he cannot be there to celebrate his friend’s investiture. Repeatedly the

448 This is pointed out by John Weisweiler in the first chapter of his unpublished dissertation, “State Aristocracy: Resident Senators and Absent Emperors in Late-Antique Rome c. 320-400,” which I thank him for sharing with me.

language of the letter emphasizes the presence of attendants whose company elevates the

For since without my presence you will reach the Capitol as consul, and I shall form no part of your retinue, let my missive take its master’s place and bestow the homage of a friend on the appointed day. Had I been born with a better fate, did my wheels run on a true axle, that duty of greeting which my hand now performs in writing my tongue would have performed; and along with pleasant words of congratulation I should give you kisses, nor would that honour be less mine than yours. On that day, I confess, I should be so proud that scarce any house would contain my haughtiness. While the throng of holy senators surrounded you, I as a knight would be bidden to go before you, and though I should be very eager to be always near you, I should rejoice to have no place at your side. Nor should I complain, though I were bruised by the crowd; at such time ’twere pleasant to feel the crush of the populace. I should behold with joy the long line of the procession and the dense throng on its long route. And that you may know how trivial things interest me—I should examine the texture of your mantling purple. I should inspect even the outline of the figures on your curule chair—all the carved work of Numidian ivory. ...There should I be counted among your attending friends if only kindly fate granted me of right to be present in the city, and the pleasure which now only my mind can catch would then be wholly grasped by my eyes also.\[450\]

The presence of all these people alongside Graecinus signals their consensus around him, without which he would not have power, his office notwithstanding. By their conveyance they engage in an extended performance of ratification, a process of seeing and acknowledging him installed.\[451\]

The crowd in attendance features prominently in late antique panegyric.

MacCormack referred to this motif as “enumeration,” a part-for-whole description of

\[450\] Ov. Pont. 4.9.

\[451\] See for example MacCormack’s reading of Julian’s accession adventus, Art and Ceremony, p. 46-8: “Such ratifications were not regarded as mere ceremonial by-products of political events, but as political events in themselves.”
representative members of a group to stand in for an assembled plenary. The device
“serves to indicate that everyone was present, that this body of people was in a position to
express that consensus omnium which was fundamental to most classical and late antique
theories about legitimate government.”\(^{452}\) The groupings that appear might represent
gerographic areas or the senate of Rome. That these individuals come together in
concerted movement signals their unity around the magistrate’s power.

In imperial panegyric, the array of peoples gathered around the consul often
betokened the races of every corner of the world, and in this way represented not only the
consul’s veneration by his peers but also the extent of his authority across the empire.
Claudian described those present at the inauguration of Honorius for his fourth consulate
in 398:

> All the nobles, all the youth of Rome and Latium attend your ceremonies; the
> most exalted on earth, who owe their honours either to you or to your father,
> assemble together. Consul, you are flanked by many a consul, and you rejoice to
> receive the company of the Senators. The Tagus surrounded you with its famous
> sons, Gaul with its native scholars, Rome with its whole senate.\(^{453}\)

The members of the procession represent the diversity of Rome’s subjects, a
cortege both backing the consul’s authority and submitting to it. Not only is Rome’s
senate there in full throng, but Gaul has sent its most educated,\(^{454}\) and the Tagus, an
Iberian river—mentioned for the chance it gives the author to highlight Honorius’ father


\(^{453}\) Claudian, *IV Cons. Hon.*, 577-583. Translation Barr, *Claudian’s Panegyric*.

\(^{454}\) The schools of Gaul were famous for their rhetoricians in this period. Barr, *Claudian’s
Panegyric*, 90.
Theodosius and his shared heritage with the “good emperor” Trajan—sends its famous sons. The entourage of the consul stands as a diplomatic microcosm, marking the extent of Rome’s power, and of the consul’s prestige by association with it. Claudian was of course writing in praise of an emperor-consul, and so the references to empire and the extent of Rome’s authority are emphasized, but the private citizen’s consular procession is no less a mobile microcosm, remarkable for its size and array. For the emperor-consul, as for the sub-imperial consul, the presence of other senators girds him (*numeroso consule consul cingeris . . . patres*). Their company does not merely surround him because of his dignity, but serves to dignify him further by their own escort.

In the biga panel image, we find enumeration in the form of representatives of the four circus factions, each team represented by its signature color. Dunbabin would see these figures as simultaneous victors, part of the schema of the charioteer as an emblem for victory, but that assessment does not take into account the context of Bassus’ processions. I read it instead as a sign of ecumenical backing of the magistrate. Together the four represent a complete array, signaling that all, not merely one party or team, support and esteem him.

The same device appears in a *gratiarium actio* by Mamertinus in 362. Mamertinus’ words, composed to thank the emperor Julian for appointing him consul, offer an account of the unity expressed by the crowd congregating in procession:

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455 The verb *cingo* can have the meaning of wreathing or crowning, not only encircling or surrounding him.

456 See Cameron, *Circus Factions*. 
We witnessed faces struck with awe and admiration, rejoicing manifested in all its guises, the surging of the packed throng of bodies. From the heart of the crowd arose a confused uproar as they gave free rein to their acclamations. The whole vast assemblage danced on and on, capering with joy. Amidst the overriding merriment all sense of decorum and propriety was forgotten. There arose such a flurry of togas, such a frolicking of bodies, for people hardly realized what they were about. … What is more he [the emperor Julian] offered to accompany us himself and so, flanked on either side by his consuls wearing the *toga praetextata*, he proceeded forth, not easily distinguished from his magistrates by the nature and color of his robes.  

The description of the procession sketches the “packed throng,” raising acclamations as a “vast assemblage.” Mamertinus is flattered that the emperor Julian deigned to join them, ennobling the procession with the imperial presence. But the foundation of Mamertinus’ public support is not symbolized by Julian, but by the number of senators (“a flurry of togas”) coming together to acquiesce to his consulship. The biga panel’s use of the four circus factions works on the same principle: it is the action of the group, depicted as full and complete, that validates and affirms the consul’s place.

This passage in Mamertinus’ text also refers to acclamations. Not entirely unlike religious congregations voicing “Amen” or a voting body consenting with “Aye,” an acclamation was a group commendation that bestowed titles and epithets on the honoree. Though crowds performed this support through vocal (and therefore ephemeral) practice, acclamations from late antiquity are preserved for us in the form of inscriptions and law

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codes. The so-called “Magerius mosaic” from the third century in Tunisia provides an example where the acclamation text finds its way into a depiction of the patron of *munera* and the event at which he was acclaimed. (See Figure 6.5) Arranged around the pavement are human-beast pairs facing off in a *venatio*. Each animal and its combatant are labeled, lending a concreteness and specificity to the mosaic that suggests a documentary purpose. Disrupting that sense of historicity is the figure of the goddess Diana, who appears at the side to aid in obtaining these animals for the amphitheater. At right, near the other inscription addressing Magerius, is Liber Pater.

The patron portrait in the Magerius mosaic (upside down relative to the acclamation text) is largely destroyed, but a mosaic inscription gives a loose transcript of the events. According to this text, the Telegenii, a professional guild of hunters who provided the animals for the entertainments, requested their price. The crowd urged Magerius to pay:


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460 The logistics of these proceedings are debated. Did the Telegenii perform unsponsored, hoping that the crowd would harangue some patron into paying the afterward? Or is this a staged cry for a volunteer to pay, when Magerius has already agreed to host of the games?
By your example, may future benefactors understand the spectacle! May its echo reach the benefactors of the past. From whom have we had such a munus?461 When did we have such a munus? On the model of the quaestors you will give a munus, at your own expense you will give a munus; it will be your day!

Their encouragement emphasizes the grandeur of the example set by Magerius in his generosity, the renown of which promises to reach patrons of both the past and the future. The crowd’s cries flatter the patron, remarking that his gift is matchless (Unde tale? Quando tale?), even as they exhort him to act “on the model of the quaestors” indicating that this kind of gift is typical of the political office of quaestor.

No secret is made of the aforementioned expense: at the center of the mosaic are bags of money carried on a tray, 1000 denarii in each bag, amounting to twice the performers’ asking price. When Magerius agrees, the crowd acclaims him:

*hoc est habe/re hoc est posse, / hoc est ia(m)!*

That’s what it is to be rich! That’s what it is to be powerful! Yes, that’s really it!462

Their acclamation suggests the gravity of expectation placed on those of high status: to be rich and powerful is to give of one’s resources for the people’s entertainment. Power and prestige are secured and reinforced by such acts of patronage. Patronage is thus both an obligation and a guarantor of status. Its repayment is the crowd’s favor and consent to that status.

461 A munus is a tribute or present, but the term can be used specifically of entertainments like gladiatorial combats and beast hunts, given upon entry into an office.

The Bassus mosaic provides no such transcript of his patronage, or of a crowd acclamation, but the inscription he installed in the building can be thought of as a more succinct reminder of the same act. The clustering of the circus faction representatives as charioteers around him, corresponding to the hunters in the mosaic, is figuration of the same kind of backing.

**Quos habitus!**

*Quos habitus, quantae miracula pompae vidimus*⁴⁶⁴

-Claudian, *On the Fourth Consulship of Honorius*, 398 CE.

Claudian exclaims at the fourth inauguration of the emperor Honorius as consul, “What clothes! What marvels did we see of such a great procession!” Of all the wonders recorded by the author Claudian takes special note of the consular clothing, which might be called the *toga picta* or *toga palmata*, the *palmata vestis*, or the *trabea*. This last term is most common, because this was the garment worn by kings on ceremonial occasions, and consuls of the Republic wore it as indication that they were being vested with the same authority.⁴⁶⁵ Properly, the *trabea* is a short, colored (often purple or crimson)

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⁴⁶³ This inscription (*CIL* 1737), discussed in Chapter Four, says Bassus built the basilica named after him with his own money from the ground up and dedicated it happily. It is the grounds for my argument that the hall was benefaction, not a domestic building. Bassus’s use of his own funds (*propria impensa*) is echoed by the crowd’s *de re tua* (“from your things,” i.e. “out of your own pocket”).

⁴⁶⁴ Claudian, Hon. IV, lines 565-6.

⁴⁶⁵ Dewar, “Spinning the Trabea,” 2008, 219-220. Here Dewar explains finer distinctions between the *toga picta*, the *tunica palmata*, both of which were purple, and sometimes embroidered in gold. The *toga picta* was rare in the Republic, and only worn for celebrating a triumph. The triumphator might also wear a *tunica palmata* beneath it, because of the association of palms with victory.
garment (in contrast to the long white toga). By the fourth century, though, these terms
were largely interchangeable, and could all be taken to indicate the clothing of consulship
in contexts pertaining to the magistracy. The trabea is one of the consul’s attributes, and
as such it is a locus of expression of political and dynastic ambitions and a carrier of
consular authority.

The vestis triumphalis/toga triumphalis/vestis palmata worn by the consul was
frequently given to the consul by the emperor, and sometimes bore imagery of the
emperor himself. The consul’s investiture was thus marked by the literal putting on of a
garment, which showed the consul to be literally and figuratively cloaked in imperial
authority.

The gift of consular robes is a central theme of the gratiarium actio of Ausonius
from 379.\textsuperscript{466} The speaker, once tutor to the emperor Gratian, thanks his patron for
bestowing on him the gift of the office, and of the robes that accompanied it. The speech
is a speech of gratitude that gives the writer (a teacher of rhetoric) the chance to compose
a panegyric for the emperor. Ausonius comments on the presence of the emperor as
embodied by his gift. The toga is embroidered with pictures of Gratian’s father
Constantius, as well, so its decoration endows the garment with the dignity of imperial
office and of dynasty through literal figuration of the emperor and his father.

The consular robe, while tied to imperium, is contrasted with military garb in
literary references, because the consul’s power after the Republican period no longer

\textsuperscript{466} Grat. Act. 51-54.
extended to the martial realm. The passage contrasts several times the dress of war with
the dress of the consulship as vestment of peace, demarcating the proper civil sphere of
the consul from the exclusive right of the emperor to military victory: “Spears are being
brandished in Illyricum, but you, for my sake, distribute the robes of civilian office in
Gaul; while you wear your breastplate [ie armor], you handle the matter of my toga.”

In Ausonius’ formulation, his consulship is due to Gratian, not only because Gratian gave
him the office, but because Gratian’s military might maintains a world order that permits
the continuation of civic government at Rome.

Ausonius’ formulation of the consulship as owed to the emperor also references
the fact that the consulship is the only office that can be held by both the emperor and the
citizen, wherein the emperor and citizen are equal. Claudian’s panegyric to Fl. Manlius
Theodorus in 399 takes note of this link, as materialized in the consular vestments:

The robe that links Senate-house and palace, that unites nobles with their
prince — the robe that he [the emperor Honorius] himself has four times
worn, he hath at the year's end handed on to thee, and left his own curule
chair that thou mightest follow him.

467 The poet continues by explaining that the toga is also suited to military victory; the dress
of the victorious soldier is no longer the breastplate, but the self-same toga: “For just as that garb
belongs to the consul in peacetime, just so it belongs to the triumphator.” Peace is only attained,
and the triumphal garments properly earned, when conflict has been quashed: only by the battle
done by the man in breastplate can the peace of the togate magistrate be enjoyed. This contrast is
treated by Mathisen, “Adventus consulaire.” Another example: Roma dresses Stilicho (2.365-
367): “Next she put around shoulders suited to war the garments of Romulus; the garb of Latium
rested over his breast and where once the breastplate was, the toga suited well.”

468 Claudian, Panegyric on the Consulship of Fl. Manlius Theodorus, 259-262.
The robes of consular office are shared in common, whether the wearer inhabits the palace or the Senate-house.

In the Bassus image, as in the ekphrastic images from panegyric, we see the consular robe functioning as a metonym and emblem for the consul’s role. In this medium, the consular trabea is highlighted by the gold leaf on the pertinent sectile fragments. The segmentum on his raised shoulder finds a parallel in the medallions we see on the consul’s robes in the Calendar of 354. (See Figure 3.8) While we cannot decipher the content of Bassus’ segmentum, Gallus’ toga indicates some are portraits, others mythological scenes, which put us in mind of the imperial portraits mentioned by both Ausonius and Claudian. Across Bassus’ chest drapes a swag of fabric dotted with jewels, indicated in the panel by blue glass paste. This detail matches the costume of the other consul of 354, the Augustus Constantius II (See Figure 3.7).

The panegyric texts also take up the lavishness of the consular costume that is indicated in these images. In Claudian’s other late fourth century works, the author highlights the labor and skill that went into creating these garments, and the precious materials they required. Both signaled the status of the wearer, even striking awe that commanded respect and submission:

The golden chair [ie the sella curulis] and its divine occupant, weightier because of his new regalia, are borne on the necks of youths. Indian stones bead the robe and the costly fine-spun stuff is green with emeralds; amethysts are worked in and the brightness of Spanish gold tempers the blue of the hyacinth with its hidden fires. Nor was the simple beauty of such a web considered enough; embroidery enhances its worth and the work is vivid with pictures traced in metal threads: portraits throng together in a wealth of jasper and the sea-pearl comes to life in many a pattern. What ambitious distaff was able with the fingers’ art to give softness to materials so hard? What comb, what sturdy looms combined
their skill to fashion the jeweled threads into cloth? Who explored the pathless pools of the war sea and plundered the bosom of Tethys? Who sought out the seed-pearls of rich sea-weed amidst the burning sands? Who joined the precious stones to the purple? Who mingled the glowing colours of the Red Sea and the Sidonian? Phoenicia it was who lent the colour, China the silken web and Hydaspes the weight of precious stones. Were you to have passed through the cities of Maeonia in this robe, Lydia would have handed over the thyrsus of vine-tendrils to you, Nysa performed her dances in your honour, the Bacchanals would have wondered to whom they owed their frenzy, the tigers meekly accepted your bonds.469

Color and material stand for the extent of the consul’s power: gold from Spain, pearls from the bottom of the sea, from Hydaspes (in India’s Punjab region, and incidentally, the place where Alexander the Great won a victory that allowed him to annex the Punjab territory and expand his empire into its easternmost reaches) the precious stones, silk from China. The garment becomes a political map of power and resources. In this particular example, it must be borne in mind, the holder of the office is an emperor, whose dominion extends across the empire in a way the sub-imperial consul’s might not. We find the same terms, however, in Claudian’s panegyric to Theodorus mentioned above suggesting this extent-of-empire trope as borne out in the materials and making of the consular garment is not exclusive to imperial wearers.470 Claudian also employs the same conceit in a speech against Eutropius (In Eutropium),

469 Claudian, IV Cons. Hon., 584-605. Translation Barr, Claudian’s Panegyric.

470 A further example is seen in line 200, where Theodorus reluctantly takes the “reins” of the consulship, each of which stands in in the poem for a river or land: The first harnesses the rivers Po and Tiber and Italy with all her glittering towns; the second guides Numidia and Carthage; the third runs out across the land of Illyria; the last holds Sardinia, Corsica, three-cornered Sicily and the coasts beaten by the Tyrrhenian wave or that echo to the Ionian.
declaring against the wearing of a consular *trabea* by a eunuch. His effeminate state defames the revered garment, which cannot redeem its wearer, for all its worldly wealth:

Though India enrich you with huge gems and Arabia with perfumes, and China enrich you with her silks; still none is so destitute, none pressed so hard by poverty, that he would wish to exchange his fortune and the members of his body for those of Eutropius.”

The geographical extent of Roman domination and influence implied by these passages is not limited to an imperial wearer, in part because a consul stands in for the emperor, and is considered his equal. The distant networks of precious resources used to fabricate the consular toga will find echos in the final chapter, which discusses the far-off origins of the animals sourced for the *venationes* and the similarly exotic supply points and laborious acquisition of colored marbles.

The panegyric texts make clear how closely the consul is to be identified with the toga. It is this close tie that allows the so-called consuls at Kenchreai to be identified on the basis of their robes, even though the condition of the glass panels leaves much to the imagination. Bassus’ clothing in this panel is one reason to insist against Dunbabin’s interpretation of the figure as a charioteer. The portrait subject is clearly cloaked in the consulship, and as such is meant to emblematize that role.

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471 *In Eutr.* 1.224-228. Latin text and translation from Dewar “Spinning the Trabea” 222.

…Te grandibus India gemmis,
te foliis Arabes ditent, te vellere Seres:
nullus inops adeo, nullum sic urget egestas,
ut velit Eutropii fortunam et membra pacisci.

Though the basilica’s program had (to our knowledge) no calendar or subject matter that expressly depicted time and its passage, its decorative content nonetheless conjures up the range of ways in which Romans named, ordered, and figured time. As decoration that memorialized a specific event and the particular office of a particular patron, it worked to freeze or extend time, rendering a single ephemeral event permanent by its commemoration.

Junius Bassus’ inauguration as consul made him part of an ancient and unbroken lineage of respected magistrates that had begun with the first consuls of Rome in 509 BCE and which would not end for over 1000 years, with the last consuls of 542 CE. In Republican Rome, years were identified eponymously, and referred to by the names of the consuls who held office in that year. Those consuls were chronicled in the fasti consulares, knowledge of which was a significant part of civic and cultural education. This held true even after Augustan calendar reforms introduced the system of dating ab urbe condita. School children learned the sequence of consuls, the calendar being an important part of paideia, and historians dated events according to the consulships under whose magistracy they had occurred. By becoming consul and having his name assigned to the year, Bassus very literally wrote himself a place in Roman history that would be commemorated in the future and become a permanent piece of the recording of civic time.

The persistent association of consular investiture with the new year is evidenced by several calendar images that still use the consul as the emblem of January, even
several centuries after the Bassus hall. At a villa in Argos, a mosaic pavement (6th century) depicting the months of the year, January is represented standing alongside February by a standing consul. He scatters coins with one hand and holds the mappa in the other. While the other months are represented by laborers who perform the tasks of every season, January is marked by the abundance of the consul’s gift and the symbol of the consul initiating games. The sella curulis is also depicted, an apt illustration of the consul taking his seat in that month. Another mappa-holding consul, also from the sixth century, is depicted as representative of January in a church in Jordan.\(^{473}\) His opposite hand holds the scepter of office.

Closer in date to the Basilica of Junius Bassus is the Calendar of 354. Besides the portraits of the Constantius II and Gallus, the year’s consuls, the January page features a more generic image of a consul, referencing his functions at the new year.\(^{474}\) (See Figure 6.6.) He makes a sacrifice of incense while holding a clover for luck. The rooster at his feet is the one who would have crowed early that morning to announce the start of the new year, waking the people early to decorate their houses with laurel and take auspices. These images all speak to the strong association between consular investiture and the

\(^{473}\) Cameron, “The Origin, Context and Function of Consular Diptychs.”

\(^{474}\) Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity*, 80-82 identifies this man as a consul, but Cameron (“Context, Origin, Function,” 198) takes the view that he is a vicomagister sacrificing to the Lares at the Compitalia. I am inclined to agree with Salzman, because of her point that only consuls could wear gem-studded togas. She also points out that the Compitalia became assimilated to and associated with the New Year’s festivities.
month of January, and to the significance of the consular events as characteristic of the start of the year.

Further resonances of the management and control of time are connoted by Bassus’ role as games-giver, because the circus, too, was a marker of the new year, and carried with it valences of renewal and transformation. Late antique authors endowed the circus, its participants, and its procedures with a range of heavenly and celestial meanings, so that colors, numbers, shapes, and landmarks associated with the circus furnished a cosmographic illustration.

A couple centuries later, Corippus’ panegyric for Justin II (c. 565 CE) elaborates the significance of the colors for which each faction rides. Not merely team colors, they are in this poem seasonal signifiers, which are further tied to the colors that blanket the earth in each season: red fruits in summer, green meadows in spring, blue/purple grapes and ripened olives in autumn, and white frost in winter.

In times of old our fathers established shows in the new circus in honor of the welcome sun. By some mode of reasoning they thought that there were four horses of the sun, signifying the four seasons of the continuous year, and in their image they established the same number of drivers, alike in meaning, number and appearance, and the same number of colors, and made two factions with opposing loyalties (320) as winter cold vies with the flames of summer. For green is of the spring, as the meadow, the same color as the grass, the olive bursting with foliage and all the woods grow green with luxuriant leaves: red is of the summer, shining in rosy garb just as some fruits redden with glowing color: (325) the blue of autumn, rich with dusky purple, shows that the grapes and the olives are ripe: white, equaling the snow and the frost of winter in brightness, joins together and allies with blue. The great circus itself, like the circle of the full year (330), is closed into a smooth ellipse by long curves, embracing
two turning posts at equal distance, and a space in the middle of the arena where the course lies open…

The representation of each of the circus’s four colors stood for a greater enumerated host, arrayed not unlike the consular procession’s roster of provinces. As a group they comprise a greater whole. The last epigram of the *Anthologia Latina*, 188 (=197R), probably also written in the sixth century, continues the conceit of the circus as a circuit of the year:

*On Circus Races*

A circus is a mirror of the heavens, and the learned men of old fashioned its form in accordance with numbers of the celestial region. For the openings of the starting stalls represent both the months, which are born in groups of twelve, and the signs of the zodiac, which the golden sun passes as it rushes by. The horses reflect the seasons, the colours the elements; the charioteer attaches four horses to his chariot, as does Phoebus. The starting stalls shut in the chariots with hinged doors for each; Janus, raising his flag, gives them the order to start. But when the bars are drawn back and let loose the chariots, and one has to go in front of the others, they strive to complete orbits with circuits of the turning posts; for the two axes of the track illustrate rising and setting, and the spina lies between them like a great ocean, and the top of the obelisk is at the mid-point of the center. The race for victory also concludes with seven circuits, which is the number of planetary orbits that ring the heavens in like manner. A two-horse chariot is always dedicated to the Moon, a four-horse to the Sun, and single horses are traditionally dedicated to the Castors. Our races are founded on matters divine, and their esteem has grown great by their honour of the gods.

The author of the epigram links the faction’s colors to the elements. As symbols of the seasons he ascribes instead the four horses of each quadriga. Each other element of the circus also finds a correspondence in the cosmos, linked through a shared symbolic

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numerology: 12 starting gates stand for the 12 months of the year, or for the 12 signs of the zodiac. So too is the physical layout of the circus a cartographic charting of the universe: the chariots round the track as the planets orbit the sun. The race of the chariots around the arena is also said to imitate the passage of Apollo across the sky, the hours of the day measured from sunrise to sunset. It is Janus, god of the passages and transitions, governor of beginnings, who gives the signal for the race to begin.

While Corippus and the author of the epigram were writing some two centuries after the Basilica of Junius Bassus was built, the elemental and seasonal symbolism of the circus colors appears much earlier, in the writings of the Christian polemicist Tertullian, around 200 CE. The author urges against attendance at the circus and arena by Christians because of the games’ associations with non-Christian gods, as symbolized by the colors of the racing factions: “So too are the colors of the charioteers dedicated to false gods: white sacred to Winter because of the whiteness of snow, and red to Summer because of

477 Kay provides an illustration of the circus by which to follow the epigram, but points out, rightly, at p. 370, that the correspondence suggested by the author is not a tight and tidy one. The poet presents the chariots going around the track as analogues for the planets, but incongruously, there are 12 chariots, five too many for the planetary seven. He is forced to impose the significant number seven in another way, writing that the chariots go around the track seven times. Also problematic is that the rush of the chariots to achieve their final round and beat the other contenders finds no parallel in the calculated, unantagonistic course of the planets. The author’s geocentric model misses the opportunity to draw a symbolic link between the obelisk at the center of the track and the sun, but he cannot be blamed for not catching up to the astronomical knowledge of the Renaissance.

478 On Janus and the development of his cult in relation to the new year, see Meslin’s introduction to La fête des kalendes de janvier, “Une fête de Janus.” For one theory of Janus’ relationship to the fasti, see p. 26 ff.
the redness of the sun.” Tertullian also transmitted an aetiology of the circus colors as representative of the world’s elements: green for earth, blue for sea or sky, red for fire (Mars), and white for wind (the Zephyrs). These views, then, were not new in the sixth century, and certainly were part of the literary context of the fourth century when Bassus built his hall.

These one-to-one correspondences and equivalencies, whereby white signals winter or the twelve competitors represent the twelve signs of the zodiac, are not meant as coded translations to some mystical understanding of the Bassus processional panel or his choice of circus imagery more broadly. Whether a viewer would have, upon seeing the procession panel, translated each circus color to its corresponding season or aligned element is not important, nor is it what I mean to claim here. Rather, they are included as allusion to wider systems of order. Together the faction representatives form not just the full cohort of the racing teams, but a greater cosmic whole. Their grouping represents a unity and plenitude that is characteristic of literary treatments of processions as microcosms made up of elements that together make up a multitude. The circus was an arena that symbolized not only laurel-worthy victories, but also cosmic triumph. By initiating and providing for the new year’s games, Bassus takes up a role not unlike that of Janus in inaugurating the new year.

Bassus is depicted in the procession panel as Rome’s highest-ranking magistrate, holding the one office a citizen could share with an emperor. In place of his courtiers or

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empire full of subjects, we see in his procession those whose entertainments he offers up for the people. The procession image is a dense compression of several features: of triumph and eternal victory, of procession as spectacle, as encapsulation of a whole represented by component parts (whether factions or provinces), and as recreation of the pageantry of the donated games.

By depicting his new year’s games in the basilica, Bassus laid claim to a place in the circus as a cosmic arena, initiating its splendor, organizing its mechanisms, and partaking of its victories. Besides bearing permanent witness to Bassus’ munificence, the decoration claims for him an important place as historic individual, participant in and organizer of civic time, and an agent of renewal and renovatio. By figuring Bassus at the center of this decoration, the program ascribes to its patron the power and social standing of managing of civic time, playing a symbolic role in cyclical, cosmic time, and brokering the renewal or renovatio that came with the new year.

To commemorate a single instance in a permanent visual medium made it possible for the viewer or visitor to recall and even to re-experience the thrill of those games. This in itself is a way of manipulating time: by bringing the public show from the circus into the basilica, the Bassus decoration wrangles the past into the present, and renders an ephemeral, time-sensitive, time-specific event a thing that can be experienced and admired at any time, with no expiration date. The decoration moves us from a specific-historical and passing event to the eternal and perpetual, through the act of representation and commemoration.
CHAPTER 7

Sounding Hylas

Sounding:
1 a. The fact of emitting or giving out a sound or sounds, or the power of doing this; the sound produced or given out by something, esp. a bell or trumpet.

Or

5. The action of examining by percussion; spec. auscultation; an instance of this.

Or

1 a. The action or process of sounding or ascertaining the depth of water by means of the line and lead or (now usually) by means of echo; an instance of this.

- The Oxford English Dictionary

In the last chapter, I proposed that the range of stimuli perceived by the sensorium of the crowds was part of the construction of consensus and expression of it. This chapter examines sensory experience not along the processional route but inside the Basilica of Junius Bassus, with a focus on sound and hearing as part of the viewer-visitor experience of the hall. In the first place, I undertake to appraise the hall as an acoustic space, that is, the way that this enclosed space would have functioned as an aural envelope for visitors, sonically delimiting inside from outside and wrapping visitors in a particular sonic surround. Second, I examine the hall as a source of sound and not just a container of it. Using the Hylas panel as an entry point, I explore ways in which images were said in antiquity to elicit or themselves emit sound, whether music, speech, non-verbal vocalizations, or percussive sounds like clatters, claps, and footfalls. Finally, I will investigate the other facets of sonic experience that we might extrapolate for the Basilica of Junius Bassus, in order to round out the auditory account of this space in Late Antiquity.
This line of inquiry is ekphrasis-adjacent, insofar as it takes up the idea of word-image relationships, or at least word-sound relationships. Greeks and Romans asked how texts could mediate or translate vision, in part through the project of ekphrasis, or vivid description, and their attention to verbal illustration had both a textual component and an aural one. The ekphrastic project is one aimed at describing a picture or an event so vividly that it appears in the mind’s eye of the listener. He imagines it, in the sense that he fashions an image of it for himself, holding it up in the inner space of his mind. The phenomenon I want to investigate, and interpose in our understanding of the process of Greek and Roman viewing, is a kind of inversion of this conceit, whereby the picture is so vivid it stirs the viewing subject to sound, causing him to produce a word or a vocalization in response, whether in sympathy, in pain, in astonishment, or in fear. I propose there is a dual phenomenon, too: that of audiation, or hearing in the head: holding up in the mind’s ear an imagined sound. My investigation here is thus about the possibility of bringing about hearing by seeing.480

This auditory investigation is not one categorically bound by or limited to the Basilica of Junius Bassus. This undertaking might be productively engaged with respect to any decorated space, real or imagined, and certainly speaking pictures and the noise of images have roots that go back centuries. However, the hall has never been the subject of a study that asks how visitors saw and responded to the space, so it is fitting to take this

480 In an inversion of Hermogenes, who says ekphrasis is “an interpretation that almost brings about seeing through hearing” (τὴν ἑρμηνείαν διὰ τῆς ἀϰοῆς σχεδὸν τὴν μηχανᾶσθαι). Hermogenes Prog. 10.48.
up as one element of the viewer-visitor experience. Even if the building is not singularly suited to this approach, it can offer a useful case study for exploring sonic experience as it intersects with the visual. Even absent the kinds of material evidence that enable experimental acoustic appraisals of built space, we might hope to describe the auditory dimensions of viewing within, and to establish the usefulness and limitations of a sensory archaeology approach for a vanished monument. Moreover, the Hylas panel examined here, with its attachment to a particular literary and narrative tradition, offers us the opportunity to use this panel as a springboard to examine the intersection of sound, speech, vision, and embodied experience in architectural space.

Of course, the Hylas panel, and the basilica more widely, need not be viewed in exclusively sonic terms. There are admittedly other approaches this chapter might take, and other themes that the Hylas picture sheds light on. The image is one of lost love, eroticism, and violence. As an image of sexual violence, the picture inverts the usual power dynamic between the sexes, feminizing the victim and casting the nymphs as masculine aggressors. Earlier studies, like that by Susanne Muth, have looked at the figure of Hylas as a symbol of homoerotic love.\footnote{Muth, “Hylas oder der ergriffene Mann: Zur Eigenständigkeit der Mythenrezeption in der Bilderkunst.”} Christian authors did not countenance this love, and the persistence of the image in the hall long after it was converted to a church deserves consideration.

The rape of Hylas myth also had funereal associations, the waters to which he surrendered serving as a kind of Elysium. The panel can thus be read as an allegory of

\footnote{Muth, “Hylas oder der ergriffene Mann: Zur Eigenständigkeit der Mythenrezeption in der Bilderkunst.”}
Christian death resurrection or of an encounter with the divine and divine love.\textsuperscript{482} This is the thrust of Becatti’s interpretation of the panel in the context of the basilica’s decoration, and will be discussed further below. In fact, however, Hylas rarely appeared in Roman funerary imagery.\textsuperscript{483} Given the lack of evidence that the hall served a funerary function, this valence of the myth seems, for our purposes, to be the least apt. More valuable would be to examine the pre-Christian transformation and transmission of this myth from Greek literature into Roman culture. Certainly its appearance in the hall is partly to evidence its Roman patron’s \textit{paideia}, but whether the myth was otherwise acculturated or had other associations in Roman culture, is still open to question.\textsuperscript{484}

Kenneth Mauerhofer and more recently Mark Heerink have studied Hylas as a metapoetic figure who stands in for the intertextual relationships of authors.\textsuperscript{485} Art historical studies of Hylas have focused on the transmission of the composition and iconography into the Roman world, and variation between media. This and some of the other approaches to the Hylas panel will be addressed in the first section of the chapter.

My approach, however, is orthogonal to these. In what ways did viewing in the ancient world demand or anticipate full immersion in a picture, up to imagining sounds

\textsuperscript{482} See Ausonius’ epigrams 106 and 107 and the writings of Dracontius, \textit{Romulea} 2.

\textsuperscript{483} Zanker and Ewald, \textit{Living with Myths}. See p. 90-91 for one 3rd century sarcophagus on which the deceased is represented as Hylas and his family surrounds him.

\textsuperscript{484} This is a wider question, applicable to any myth deriving from Hellenistic sources, undertaken by Newby, \textit{Greek Myths in Roman Art}. Muth’s study suggests the Romanized version of the myth could be an illustration of \textit{virtus}: if in the Roman world Hylas was cast as a more typically masculine hunter figure, the nymphs’ desire for him was un-queered.

\textsuperscript{485} Mauerhofer, \textit{Der Hylas-Mythos in der antiken Literatur}, and Heerink, \textit{Echoing Hylas}.
and even vocalizing responses? What might a picture do to bring about hearing, and how did the sonic environment of such pictures shape the aural dimension of viewing? This chapter will explore the rape of Hylas myth in its many iterations, all clamorous and noisy. Second, I will probe ekphrastic texts, largely from the *Imagines* of Philostratus the Elder, written in the 3rd century CE, that shed light on ancient expectations for the viewer’s oral or aural engagement in the pictorial world. I will also look to Lucian’s 2nd century CE *On the Hall* and other texts that comment on the space of a picture as one of the factors in the viewer’s embodied experience of it. While these Greek texts pre-date the Bassus hall by a century or more, they may well have been known to him as an elite male, and were certainly familiar in the educated Roman milieu. We can thus extrapolate their readings to the late Roman world. Finally, I will look beyond the picture world to extrapolate other auditory events that might have occurred in the hall, in hopes of enriching our understanding of the way the Basilica of Junius Bassus was experienced through the sense of hearing.

**The Rape of Hylas**

The handsome youth Hylas was the companion of Hercules, and journeyed with him and the Argonauts in the quest for the golden fleece. On a stop in Mysia, in northwestern Anatolia, Hylas was sent to fetch water as the others prepared a meal and pitched camp. The nymphs whom Hylas encountered at the spring were so taken with the boy that they pulled him into the water and out of the earthly realm. Hercules, bereaved for his beloved, cried out in search of him, but was answered back by only a faint,
echoing cry. This is one of the episodes told in Apollonius Rhodius’s epic *Argonautica*, and in a number of other sources from the Hellenistic world to late antiquity. The myth seems to have become popular in the 3rd century BCE, with its earliest representation in material culture following on that literary heyday.

**Visual Models of Hylas: Pairings and Thematic Links**

The tale of Hylas seems to have achieved a good degree of popularity in Roman domestic art. Though it comprised only a minor episode in epic and has no defined role in any mythological painting cycles, the Hylas story is nonetheless depicted in painting, mosaic, and stucco, and is represented in all parts of the Roman world across a broad span of time. It continued to be depicted in the Mediterranean through at least the 7th century, when it appears in an Umayyad aristocratic villa’s bathhouse in Jordan alongside images of Dionysus and Hercules. (See Figure 7.1.)

One study of the iconography of the Hylas narrative, by Roger Ling, takes up (largely but not exclusively) pre-Vitruvian examples from Campania. Ling’s study is primarily aimed at cataloguing instances of the appearance of Hylas, beginning with Roman wall-painting; there do not seem to be Greek vases that carry the depiction, nor is

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486 *Argonautica* 1.1153-1363 esp. 1207.

487 Ling, “Hylas in Pompeian Art,” 786 notes that there are no known depictions of the myth on vases, suggesting the models for Hylas iconography can’t be earlier than the Hellenistic period.

488 For the rape of Hylas in an Umayyad bathhouse at Qusayr Amra, Leal, “The Symbolic Display of Water at the Qusayr Amra Bathhouse, Jordan.”
there evidence for a model or prototype from the Greek world. Ling looks to categorize the Roman examples into iconographical typologies, tracing the development of the story across multiple media and through multiple compositional formats in 33 depictions of the myth.

Ling’s study also investigates the companion-pieces to depictions of Hylas in rooms of the 3rd and 4th styles, which arranged several painting panels in a kind of imaginary gallery. This is an important consideration, since other works in the same room might inform a viewer’s approach to a particular narrative. Sometimes Hylas is depicted as part of a Hercules cycle, alongside pictures of the god’s exploits. Another grouping, in a bath at Baiae, places together with Hylas the rape of Amymone by Poseidon, pairing one watery abduction with another. More often than not, however, Ling’s study documents cases where there are no obvious ties between scenes, and no apparent lens than drives the program of a room or a house, or unites the pictures therein. The conclusion drawn is that sometimes there are meaningful and thematic connections to be found in the works that surround the Hylas picture, and sometimes there are not.

The nearly 40 years since Ling’s original study of the depictions of this minor epic have produced a number of other iconographic studies, including that by Janine Lancha, which looks at later material, especially in mosaic. Lancha likens the Bassus

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489 Ling, “Hylas in Pompeian Art,” 786.
490 As at the Herculaneum “basilica,” Ling’s catalog no. 5, p. 801.
491 Ling catalog no. 6, p. 802.
492 Lancha, “L’iconographie d’Hylas dans les mosaïques romaines.”
example, among the latest in this grouping of works from about 175-400 CE, to a mosaic pavement from two centuries earlier on the Via Appia in Rome, which like the Bassus example has the three nymphs arrayed around the scene, with Hylas as the second figure from left. Also similar, with Hylas diagonally splayed and resting on one knee, is a 3rd century CE mosaic example from St. Romain en Gal (see Figure 7.2), though the nymphs are reduced to two. This mosaic pictures Hylas as a hunter, putting a spear in his hand. In other mosaic examples, the nymph overpowering Hylas stands behind him, grabbing him around the waist, as in a 4th or 5th century CE example from Djemila in North Africa (see Figure 7.3) or by the wrist, as in a 2nd century CE mosaic from Syedra in Turkey (see Figure 7.4).

Lancha observes that the arrangement of figures depicted in mosaic examples of the myth (the posture of Hylas, the number of nymphs who surround him, the presence of other figures like Artemis) conforms more closely to comparanda in stucco and relief than to painted examples, wherein the sad lover Hercules sometimes appears and landscape tends to be featured more prominently. Her suggestion that mosaics may relate more closely to (if not derive from) more three-dimensional models rather than

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493 For this see Korsunka, “Mosaic Mit Hylasdarstellung.” The work is now in the Hermitage. While it is badly damaged and heavily restored, we know Hylas is on one knee in the original arrangement.

494 Blanchard-Lemée, Maisons a mosaïques du quartier central de Djemila (Cuicul).

495 Scheibelreiter, “Ein mythologisches Mosaik aus Syedra/Nauloi.”

painted ones establishes the possibility that the Hylas myth may bear a meaning specific to the medium in which it is depicted.

The study reveals further that the pieces pendant to Hylas mosaics depart from the companion pieces in painting discussed in Ling’s study. When Ling does identify connections between paintings in the same program, the links are narrative ones. Lancha classifies the themes that relate Hylas to proximal paintings: surprise (like Actaeon sneaking up on Diana at her bath), health (Perseus and Andromeda), hunting (Hylas in some versions of the story was off on a hunt, hence Meleager or Artemis as pendant subjects), or captivity (Io and Argus).\textsuperscript{497} By contrast, Lancha argues, mosaic groupings seem to share with the Hylas image only non-narrative affinities. Hylas is paired with Orpheus or Bacchus, for example, in a way that Lancha suggests emphasizes the symbolic content of the myth and perhaps a mystery cult association.\textsuperscript{498}

In neither painting nor in mosaic do we find pendant images that match those paired with Hylas in literature.\textsuperscript{499} In Petronius’ \textit{Satyricon}, for example, the visitor Encolpius goes into a picture-gallery in which a painting of Hylas is hung by one of Hyacinthus, the lover of Apollo who is accidentally killed by the god, and as well as by a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Lancha, “L’iconographie d’Hylas dans les mosaïques romaines,” 386.
\item Hylas is associated with Bacchus or his procession in examples from Constantine, Italica, Vienna, and Volubilis. The last two also include Orpheus: Ibid., 389. In the last example especially, the death of Hylas becomes an allegory for life in the beyond, which initiants to the bacchic rites are promised. It is this reading that enables Lancha to suggest at p. 390 that the Hylas image was permitted to stay up in the basilica as a “new life” figure.
\item Ibid., 386.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
picture of Zeus and Ganymede. Literature from centuries later preserves similar narrative relationships: in Ausonius’ fourth century epigrams, for example, the Hylas epigrams are flanked by epigrams about Narcissus and Hyacinth. These literary collections of gods and their loves are not groupings that we find in actual surviving examples of programs that include the Hylas myth. This lack of narrative connection in decorative programs, argues Lancha, supports her reading that Roman patrons and viewers were taking something else from the story altogether. Lancha conjectures that the Roman world’s view of Hylas, and its treatment of the figure, departed entirely from the view inherited from the Hellenistic world, emphasizing instead the symbolic content of the myth and relationship to mystery cult. By this rubric, Hylas’ death can be understood as an encounter with the divine.

It is not so clear, however, that this rule is as hard and fast in decorative programs as Lancha would have it. While Lancha is correct that Hylas is never seen with the boy loves of the gods the way he is in Petronius’ *pinacotheca*, but he is certainly seen in other love pairings. As Lancha herself notes, Hylas is grouped with a scene of the rape of

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500 Petronius *Satyricon* 83.4. See also Dufallo, “Ecphrasis and Cultural Identification in Petronius’ Art Gallery” and Elsner, “Seductions of Art: Encolpius and Eumolpus in a Neronian Picture Gallery.”

501 See Kay, *Ausonius: Epigrams*. The Hylas epigrams are 106 and 107, followed by three Narcissus epigrams. Kay notes that the Hylas epigrams open a series of 9 mythological epigrams, all with “an erotopathological angle.”

Amymone by Poseidon at Amphipolis. Amymone, like Hylas, had gone to look for water and was raped. This pairing is seen at several other sites, including Neapolis (Nabeul) in Tunisia and Chania in Crete. Lancha takes both images as allegories for passage to the world of the gods.\footnote{Lancha, “L’iconographie d’Hylas dans les mosaïques romaines,” 389.}

But Hylas is also seen in other love groupings that conform to this interpretation less neatly. In a fourth century mosaic program at Carranque in Spain, the Hylas lunette appears on one side of the floor (see Figure 7.5), in the company not only of the rape of Amymone, but also Ovidian metamorphoses: a scene of Pyramus and Thisbe (the only western example of the subject in mosaic), and Diana at her bath.\footnote{Fernández-Galiano, “The Villa of Maternus at Carranque,” and Arce Martínez, “La villa romana de Carranque (Toledo, España): identificación y propietario.”} The death of Adonis is to be seen not too far away, in the triclinium. These groupings would seem to support the interpretation of Susanne Muth, who reads the pictorial versions of the myth as departing from literary renditions, arguing that the scene of Hylas and the nymphs appears in domestic programs simply as an articulation of desire, beauty, and eroticism, and violence associated with those conjunctions.\footnote{Muth, “Hylas oder der ergriffene Mann: Zur Eigenständigkeit der Mythenrezeption in der Bilderkunst.”}

Clearly, the cultural resonance of the Hylas story was not static, and pictorial context is important for determining its intended valences. The fact that depictions of Hylas find themselves in the company of an unfixed range of other figures indicates the futility and foolhardiness of speculating about what else may have been in the basilica’s

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\footnote{Lancha, “L’iconographie d’Hylas dans les mosaïques romaines,” 389.}

\footnote{Fernández-Galiano, “The Villa of Maternus at Carranque,” and Arce Martínez, “La villa romana de Carranque (Toledo, España): identificación y propietario.”}

\footnote{Muth, “Hylas oder der ergriffene Mann: Zur Eigenständigkeit der Mythenrezeption in der Bilderkunst.”}
decoration alongside this image. Certainly Hylas’ divine erastes Hercules may have been featured, and even a larger Herculean cycle, but any other depiction—and not just in the mythological register—is equally possible. We simply do not have enough evidence to substantiate a claim about what images may have surrounded Hylas in the decoration of the basilica.

**Hylas in the Basilica**

This difficulty has not deterred scholars from advancing theories as to what the Hylas panel may have conveyed to its viewers, presumably an educated class of men, living in its late antique framework and seeing it in the intended backdrop of the hall’s decoration.

Giovanni Becatti addressed the decoration the Basilica of Junius Bassus in an appendix to his study of the marble revetted hall from the same period at Ostia. He argued that the Hylas image in the basilica should be interpreted as part of a neo-Pythagorean reading of the hall, which he says was used for gatherings wherein adherents discussed their philosophical doctrines and the destiny of the human soul. Citing the Hylas myth’s use on sarcophagi, Becatti focuses on its funerary resonances, arguing that it functioned allegorically to illustrate the bringing of the soul into another sphere in a kind of apotheosis.\(^{506}\) Becatti had a vested interest in fitting the Hylas imagery into this paradigm, since he was arguing that the Ostian hall at the heart of his study (which bore imagery similar in many ways to that of the Bassus hall) was also a neo-Pythagorean

\(^{506}\) Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*, 196.
schola. If neo-Pythagoreanism was primarily interested in the soul’s union with the
divine, Becatti could justify his use of almost exclusively funerary imagery as supporting
comparanda, since such imagery concerned itself with the soul’s life apart from the
body—even as he acknowledged that the Bassus hall did not have a funerary function.
Somewhat at odds with this, and problematic for Becatti’s reading, is that Hylas appears
rather infrequently on sarcophagi. 507

A more socio-historical reading, still sympathetic to late antique spirituality and
concern for the soul, would see the Hylas image as indexing the “late antique interest in
love that confers immortality.” 508 For Gregor Kalas, the Hylas panel operated in this
wider social frame, but also served as a kind of mythological parallel for Bassus to
project his individual identity onto. The presence of the Hylas image, according to Kalas,
would have reminded the viewer of the story of Hercules leaving behind his exploits in
order to search for his beloved. Hercules was thus a stand-in or surrogate for Bassus, who
had stepped down from a military role to join the elite world of the senatorial aristocracy.
Hylas, too, as a sexually submissive figure, offers a different version of masculine
identity outside the military. While a queer reading of the Hylas decoration is certainly
possible, such a reading might make more sense within the Greek model of pederasty,
rather than in the distant context of the Roman world. The gap between them is not
something Kalas accounts for in his interpretation.

507 See Zanker and Ewald, Living with Myths, 90-1.

I find Kalas’ reading of the Hylas panel overdetermined. First, it assumes that Bassus used the decoration of the basilica in part to make a visual argument for the appropriateness of his position, and did so through the choice of a mythological subject. It may be the case that Bassus was a newcomer to the senatorial aristocracy, rather than the most recent heir of some long-established elite lineage; but we do not actually know that this was his history, nor should we assume that he felt any need to justify his path to his peers.\textsuperscript{509} We risk over-psychologizing if we apply this interpretation to the artwork in the basilica and go so far as to attribute to a literary-mythological work such a personal identification on the part of the patron.

Even if we knew what Bassus intended, or could ascertain that he made (or expected the viewer to draw) such a personal connection to the artwork, Kalas’ interpretation relies on a parallel not only between Bassus and Hylas, but also between Bassus and Hercules—a figure who may or may not have been a part of the hall’s decorative program. Kalas suggests even if the god did not appear in some other marble panel, he would certainly have been conjured up in the mind of the viewer by the Delphic tripod, which would have evoked the memory of Hercules’ struggle with Apollo over the tripod. By that logic, we might also assume the viewers contemplated this conflict.

\textsuperscript{509} In fact, Ausonius’s \textit{Gratiarum Actio}, 4 hints at equality, however one arrived at the consulship: “You have appointed, and will appoint others also as consuls, most kindly Gratian, but never on similar grounds. Men of military renown: and as these are always associated with you in the toils of empire, so they, in common with you, hold the greater share in its distinctions, having been your colleagues in soldierly virtue before they became so in civil dignities; men of ancient and famous lineage: for an illustrious name secures much, and distinction may serve as a substitute for achievements; men distinguished for their trustworthiness and tested by official duties. . . .”
between Hercules and Apollo and read this as pertinent to a family feud among Bassi brothers. This takes one step too many.

If we are looking for programmatic ties across the decoration of the hall—remaining aware that there may be no single thread to tie everything together—it is important to note that the Hylas panel participates in the theme of violence announced prominently by the animal combat panels. While the nymphs do not draw blood from their victim as the tigers do, they perform a violent act in overtaking the youth. His innocence might be compared to that of the bovines in the panels. Where the tiger panels illustrate a truth about the natural and expected order of the world, however (powerful over weak, hunter over hunted, predator over prey), the Hylas panel instead offers an unexpected reversal of roles. Usually it is nymphs who suffer sexual violence—harassed by satyrs, overpowered by the over-sexed. Instead they are here the aggressors, and the male in the story assumes an altogether passive role to this brutality.\footnote{This is one of the points made in Fabiano, “Eco al maschile. Paesaggi sonori nel mito di Ila,” esp. at p. 211. Fabiano also claims this as an exemplum demonstrating the power of Eros over even the brawny Hercules (p. 212).}

I do not propose this thematic link in order to proffer it as a framework that ought to be imposed on Bassus as a patron or a historic individual in the way that I believe Kalas does. Rather, I think that the viewer may have seen a relationship between these images and noted their dual depictions of violence, both as mythologized in the Hylas panel and as re-staged in animal combats like the ones depicted here.
Whatever its meaning in the original context of the basilica’s decoration, we must consider that the panel remained in the Basilica of Junius Bassus long after the hall was converted to the church of Sant’Andrea Catabarbara. It would be tempting to see the panel in this context as pertaining to hope of an afterlife, a kind of pagan martyrdom resulting in eternal joy—a Christian take on Becatti’s interpretation. Such a reading would help explain why the panel remained in the hall even after its consecration as a Christian holy place. This interpretation does not, however, seem to be licensed by contemporary Christian views. One indication is the speech of Prudentius *Contra Symmachum*, in which the Roman Spanish poet casts aspersions on Hercules for not feeling any shame with regard to his relationship with the young boy, and for mourning the youth “as if he had lost a wife” suggesting, it is most restrictive reading, the inappropriateness of this male love in an early Christian view, and in a broader reading, Prudentius’ disapproval of the temple of Hylas on the Aventine. As Kalas points out, the sexuality and desire that drives the Hylas narrative—both Hercules’ love of the boy and the nymphs’ lust for him—made it a “racy” image, difficult to reconcile with Christian views.

Of the above interpretations, any are, in theory, possible valences that the viewer of the basilica’s decoration might have lit upon in his examination of the marble panels.

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There is no one driving, dominant interpretation or thematic resonance of the Hylas story that can be adduced for this context, given that Hylas had come to mean a lot of things in Late Antiquity and that the hall had much more decoration that does not survive to offer its own contextual commentary.

**Sound Studies in Roman Art**

Archaeology is said to be in the midst of a “sensory turn,” seeking to recreate sensory experience in antiquity, to capture a history of such ephemeral experience, and to explain how the senses were culturally mediated.\(^{513}\) This chapter takes up that thread of inquiry, departing from the above iconographic and socio-literary attempts to decode Hylas, and instead investigating the Hylas panel as a conceptual entryway to the aural imagination as provoked by pictures.

Sound studies in particular arise in part from anthropological recording and ethnomusicology. R. Murray Schafer coined the term “soundscape” in the work leading up to his 1977 publication *The Tuning of Our World*.\(^{514}\) The Canadian composer’s project began as an “acoustic ecology” effort, aimed at preserving the sounds of environments before complete industrialization subjected them to noise pollution. A sonic parallel to the vocabulary of “landscape,” the term refers to an environment of sound, or the body of sounds within a given space. Though his approach has been critiqued many times


\(^{514}\) Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*.  

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since,\textsuperscript{515} it has been taken up by many other authors to become critical in the progression of the field of “sound studies.”\textsuperscript{516} More recent work on the sonic environments of the ancient world have refined this approach to refer to not just the sum of sounds in a space, but rather the interaction between the sonic world and an individual perceiving them with the sensorial apparatus of his time.\textsuperscript{517} Vincent’s intervention is the assertion that the object of soundscape studies is not merely a set of measurable sonic vibrations, but instead, that sound and the experience of it are culturally mediated by a “period ear” informed by a given time and place and its cultural apparatus.

One sector of sound studies is primarily concerned with acoustics, the science of the production, transmission, and effects of sound, effects that can be predicted and described numerically. Quantitative terms such as the absorption coefficient, a number between zero and one that describes how much sound is reflected or lost, can describe what happens when sound waves come into contact with a given material. An absorption coefficient closer to one means sound is absorbed, or lost, while an absorption coefficient closer to zero means sound is reflected, and reverberates. While researchers have

\textsuperscript{515} For example Kelman, “Rethinking the Soundscape. A Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies” and “Four Objections to the Concept of Soundscape,” ch. 11 of Tim Ingold, Ingold, \textit{Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description}.

\textsuperscript{516} e.g. in Bettini, \textit{Voci: Antropologia sonora del mondo antico}. Bettini uses an Italian calque of the term, “fonosfera.”

\textsuperscript{517} This modified definition is that of Alexandre Vincent: see the introduction, p. ix, of Emerit, Perrot, and Vincent, \textit{Paysage sonore}.
analyzed the acoustical properties of Roman theaters, catacombs, and basilicas, rarely has this been used to infer something about the qualitative sonic experience of an architectural space. One notable exception is the work of Bissera Pentcheva on the acoustics of Hagia Sophia and their relationship to visual and spiritual experience there. Pentcheva seeks to revive the idea of “aural architecture,” pulling together both literary and philological work with scientific experimentation. Her major argument is that the reverberation of sound in the highly resonant church-turned-mosque-turned-museum had a kinship with the optical shimmer (marmarygma) of the building’s marble (and gold) decoration. Both would have made for a dynamic experience of the space and, in accordance with her understanding of the Byzantine liturgy, would have supported and amplified the spiritual goings-on there.

Not all acoustic conditions can be measured, however, especially when the spaces and materials that once surrounded them are not preserved. A far more speculative set of investigations aims to recover the sonic world of antiquity and say something about how it was experienced. A recent example took texts that described the tuba and its strident sound to better understand the quality of sound Roman authors implied when

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518 Examples include Trematerra and Iannace, “The Acoustics of the Catacombs of San Callisto in Rome,” and much earlier Raes and Sacerdote, “Measurements of the Acoustical Properties of Two Roman Basilicas.”

519 Byzantinists are forging an exciting research path in this area. See for example Papalexandrou, “Perceptions of Sound and Sonic Environments Across the Byzantine Acoustic Horizon,” and the rest of the volume.
characterizing other sounds, like the human voice. Such a study reveals how texts can help us reconstruct the Roman sensorium, even at a great distance from our own.

There is far too little in the way of evidence to reconstruct a model of the Basilica of Junius Bassus that could be relied on to reflect acoustic absolutes. That said, we can certainly surmise that coming into the hall in the first place would likely have signaled a soundscape shift for the viewer-visitor. Near to the hall—though its exact location is disputed—was the Macellum Liviae, where goods would have made a sonic imprint, whether by the voices of hawkers or the clacking of cart wheels. Animals would have squawked, chirped, or lowed; knives would have fallen down upon purchases, and weights clanged on metal scales. The “Servian Seam” discussed in Chapter Five was an artery of activity. Along it was the Porta Esquilina, a gate to enter and exit the city, where fees were levied on inbound goods, transports were loaded and unloaded, and services from blacksmithing to lodging and animal care were offered to those coming and going. Inside the Porta Esquilina was the Forum Esquiline, a central square for gathering and exchange that would have been characterized by dialogue, possibly in numerous languages, and by the commotion of those interactions. Slightly to the south, where the Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele is located today, was the massive Nymphaeum of Severus Alexander. The flow of this fountain would have had its own trickling din, contributing, with the aqueducts on the hill, to the area’s epithet of “the watery Esquiline.” If, as I have argued, the area saw an increase in building activity and civic investment during the late

Vincent, “Tuning into the Past.”
antique period, we must also imagine the sounds of construction and renovation as private *fora* were built, churches were raised, and dedicatory inscriptions were erected. In service of this development, we can envision building materials and works of art making their way to these monuments in progress, workers streaming to the construction sites, and surveyors and patrons visiting the sites to observe and proffer approval or complaint at the progress. A century after the Basilica of Junius Bassus was built, it would be joined nearby to the papal Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, which would bring with it the chants and music of services and of festival processions.

It is my hope that this chapter can describe what the science of acoustics cannot, by placing alongside one another literary texts, the remnants of an architectural space, and a picture panel, and extrapolating from here what we know about viewing and listening in the Roman world.

*Sounding Hylas*

The composition of the late antique Hylas panel is one viewers would have been trained to see as noisy and chaotic. His hand is outstretched in a gesture of speech, his outcry confirmed by the slit of mother of pearl that in-fills his open mouth. His body diagonal, his footing is already lost to the stream. His cloak flies behind him, as does the drapery of the nymph at left, showing the speed of their onslaught.

The same urgency and noise are legible in depictions of other abductions from antiquity. (See for example Figure 7.6) Images of Persephone, Ganymede, Cassandra, and Helen, from across the Roman world and its time span, all demonstrate the same vocalizing gesture, their arms outstretched in protest and dismay. Persephone’s gesture
pulls her apart from her abductor. Ganymede’s precarious posture is like that of Hylas; Cassandra plants herself at a statue, her hair flying behind her, like Helen’s drapery fluttering as she flees from Theseus.

That we are supposed to read clamor and cacophony in these gestures, particularly in the case of the Hylas story, is attested by the numerous literary accounts of the abduction, which no doubt were still part of the literary tradition of Late Antiquity. The tale of Hylas is a richly sonic one in every version, with noisy associations appropriate to a tale whose protagonist’s name likely derives from the word ὑλάω, “howl”— which is exactly what Hylas does when confronted by his nymph-assailants.521 The narrative tradition around Hylas frequently included or referenced vocalizations and echoes: the pained wailing of Hercules, the shouts of Hylas’s name by Polyphemus or other crew members who stayed behind to search for the youth, and the plaintive yelp of Hylas himself when he is overtaken. Some accounts explicitly foreground these sonic elements of the story, likening the characters’ cries to the noises of animals or associating Hylas with a repeating sonic event through poetic use of repetition or onomatopoeia.522

In one of the earliest Hellenistic renditions of the tale, by Theocritus, Heracles himself howls, seeking out his beloved, in a thrice-played call-and-response: Hylas!” he

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521 Heerink, *Echoing Hylas* offers an etymology that points to the origin of Hylas’ name in the word for “stuff” or “matter,” as in the material out of which something is made, or, more abstractly, subject matter. Sarah Harden in BMCR Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2016.12.21 warns that Heerink’s etymology of Hylas from ὑλη “subject matter” is probably not right and that the word is instead probably derived from “ὑλάω,” “howl.”

[Heracles] bellowed, as loud as his deep throat could cry, three times. Three times the boy replied, but his voice rose faint from the pool; though close, it sounded far away.\(^{523}\) Heracles’ frenzied search is likened to that of an animal alerted to the location of its prey:

“When a fawn cries in the hills, some ravening lion will speed from his lair to get him a meal so ready; and even so went Heracles wildly to and fro amid the pathless brake, and covered much country because of his longing for the child.”\(^{524}\) That the crazed Heracles resembles a hungry lion, and poor Hylas a mewling deer, may have caused viewers familiar with the Theocritan passage to see the animal combat scenes displayed nearby in a different light.

Apollonius intones the same motives, both the call-and-response of the search and the trope of hunter after quarry, in his Argonautica. The lines of the Hylas narrative read like an orchestral score, and this is no accident. The attention Apollonius gives to the human and animal qualities of sound, to vocal eruptions and spewing water, is not just for the sake of decorative detail; rather, it situates the narrative within a soundscape that is itself integral to the drama. This is significant to the act of interpreting visual media in part because we can assume that late antique viewers were familiar with Apollonius’ epic, and with later authors’ accounts, which rebound the same sonic components. The

\(^{523}\) Theocritus Idyll 13.58-60. (3rd C BCE, Hellenistic)

τρὶς μὲν Ὕλαν ἄυσεν, ὅσον βαθὺς ἤρυγε λαιμός·
τρὶς δὲ ὁ παῖς ὑπάκουσεν, ἀραιὰ δὲ ἵκετο φωνά
ἐξ ὕδατος, παρεὼν δὲ μάλα σχεδὸν εἴδετο πόρρω.
Translation Heerink Echoing Hylas, 6.

\(^{524}\) Theocritus, Idyll 13, 61-63.
relevance of this literature extends more broadly than familiarity with these specific texts, however. The recurrence and salience of aural dynamics in literary accounts suggests habits of reading and aurality in antiquity that would have a bearing on and a parallel with habits of viewing. They suggest readers would have formulated a soundtrack in the mind that would bring to the experience of looking at art.

Polyphemus, one of the crew members of the Argo, hears the boy’s cry. Polyphemus gives chase, “in fear lest the boy should be the prey of lost beasts” or the victim of highway robbery, “an easy prey,” his own search ardent as that of the very beast he fears has fallen upon Hylas: “He rushed toward the cry and drew near to Pegae, like a wild beast to which comes the bleating of sheep from afar, and, burning with hunger, it goes in pursuit …” Unlike Hylas, the sheep are safely penned in, however, and the beast is kept at bay. Frustrated, the beast “groans and roars vehemently until he is weary.” In such a way does Polyphemus “groan mightily and wander about the spot calling out,” though his cries are in vain. When Polyphemus encounters Heracles he has to break the news that something awful has happened to the boy, whether robbers have carried him off or beasts are tearing him to pieces. He offers his aural witness as testimony: “I heard him shouting.”

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525 Roman texts often talk about viewing as a form of reading. As Elsner says, “…Roman writing is ambivalent about how to differentiate the two activities of reading texts and looking at art;” Elsner, Art and Text in Roman Culture, 1. Although we should not conflate reading and viewing, Elsner goes on to point out in his introduction that art is not independent of other cultural expressions, and is instead intertwined with their networks of meanings (p. 3).

526 Argonautica 1.1240-1260.
On hearing this, Heracles comes unhinged. Apollonius introduces another animal into his string of metaphors, comparing the hero’s impassioned response to that of an injured bull. Untamed yowls punctuate Heracles’ roving and flailing, his feral frenzy vocalized.

As when, stung by a gadfly, a bull charges forth, leaving the meadows and marshlands, and pays no attention to the herdsman or the herd, but at times makes his way without stopping, while at other times he stands still and raises his broad neck and lets out a bellow, having been stung by a vicious fly—thus in his frenzy he sometimes moved his swift knees without a break, then sometimes ceased from his labor and shouted piercingly into the distance with a mighty cry.527

The pitch of this passage departs wildly from that of the narrative around Hylas’ abduction (lines 1221-1239). The stream where Hylas is overtaken is a rhythmic, canorous landscape, in contrast to the ferocious, unrestrained noises of hunter and prey that mark the aftermath of the abduction. Hylas reaches the water just as nymphs are processing to the stream to begin their evening chorus to Artemis. One of the nymphs notices him as he bends to collect water, and is immediately enamored:

Cypris confounded her thoughts, and in her helpless state she could barely collect her spirit. But as soon as he leaned on one side and dipped the pitcher into the stream, and the abundant water gurgled as it poured into the echoing bronze, at once she raised her left arm over his neck in her longing to kiss his tender mouth, while with her right hand she pulled on his elbow and plunged him into the midst of the swirling water.528

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527 Argonautica 1.1265-1272. ὡς δ᾿ ὅτε τίς τε μύωπι τετυμμένος ἔσσυτο ταῦρος/πίσεά τε προλιπὼν καὶ ἐλεπίδας, οὐδὲ νομήων/ οὐδ᾿ ἀγέλης ὄθεται, πρήσσει δ᾿ ὁδὸν ἄλλος/疬αινος ἵππος/ἄλλος δ᾿ ἱστίμενος καὶ ἀνὰ πλατῖνοι ἀχηροῖ ἁφείωσιν ῥόκαμα, κακῷ βεβολημένος ὀστροφ/δ᾿ ἄγεμῦνοι ὄτε μὲν θοὰ γούνατ ἐπέλλειμ/συνεχέοις, ὄτε δ᾿ αὐτὲ μεταλλήγοις καμάτωι/τῆλε διαπρύσιον μεγάλῳ βοῦασκεν ἀντῇ.

528 Argonautica 1.1232-1239 τῆς δὲ φρένας ἐπτοίησεΝ/Κύπρις, ἀμηχανίῃ δὲ μόλις συναγείρατο θυμὸν/αὐτὰρ δ γ᾿ ὅτε τὰ πρῶτα ῥῷ ἐνὶ κάλπιν ἐρείσεν/鹣ρίς ἐπίμημβης, περὶ δ᾿
The reader is attuned to the sonic character of this passage by the flowing sounding of the water: the unceasing water rang (ἄσπετον ἐβραχὲν ὕδωρ—the verb an onomatopoetic rattle or roar) into the ever-sounding bronze (χαλκὸν ἐς ἠχήεντα φορεύμενον). This gushing, gurgling water is markedly unlike the piercing, sporadic wails of the bull or the groans of the wild beast. The liquid rhoticism of the stream’s (ῥόῳ) brimming roar however, is interrupted by the clamoring sforzando of the bronze pitcher (κάλπιν... Χαλκὸν). Hylas’ intrusion represents a rupture, the consonantal percussion of which is notated by the author’s insistence on the kappa and chi consonants, introduced in line 1234 by Κύπρις, a name for Aphrodite that fits Apollonius’ alliterative scheme.

Notwithstanding the discordance between the abduction passage and the sections on Polyphemus’ search and Heracles’ reaction that follow, there are sonic parallels between them. Hylas cries out, then Polyphemus, then Heracles, each part voiced as an animal. The throat of Hylas (αὐχένος in line 1237) is re-scored as the wide throat of the bull from which a cry issues in line 1268. The unceasing (ἄσπετον) water of line 1235 sounds again in line 1247, in which Polyphemus, groaning, roars unceasingly (ὁ δὲ στενάχων βρέμει ἄσπετον). Interestingly, ἄσπετον can also mean unutterable or unspeakable. Not only does this suggest a contrasting sonic character to the water, it also imparts an unspeakableness to the nymph’s malfeasance and to the depth of emotion


d' ἅνευσεν ἀγκῶν᾿ ἔσπασε χειρί· μέσῃ δ᾿ ἐνὶ κάββαλε δίνη.
voiced by Polyphemus’ groans. The theme recurs once more in line 1267, but this time with different vocabulary, ἄπαυστος, to describe the bull’s sometimes halting, sometimes unstopping frenzied charge.

These careful choices on the part of Apollonius do not merely paint an eloquently onomatopoetic picture. They also make clear that sonic effects and phonic play were themselves themes of the Hylas myth. Their salience in the poetic treatment of the story should no less find parallel in the visual realm.

As noted earlier, the sonic resonances of the story echo throughout later literature. In Propertius’ elegy 1.20 (2nd half of the 1st century BCE), the author advises the addressee, Gallus, to look after his beloved, warning him of the fate of Hylas:

At last, he prepares to draw water with cupped palms, propped on his right arm, drinking his fill. The Dryad nymphs are excited by his whiteness, they break off their usual chorus and stare. Lightly, they draw him, slipping, into the gentle water. Then, his body caught, Hylas raises a shout. Far off, Hercules sends a response, but the breeze returns the name from distant mountains. You've been warned, Gallus: protect your love. You appear to have trusted your beautiful Hylas to the Nymphs.529

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As in Apollonius, Hylas’ intrusion marks a dynamic change, with the nymphs ceasing from their activities. The texture of the sound is frictionless, gliding and smooth. This shifts with the shout of Hylas and Hercules’ reply, but the answer is obscured by a breeze: the sounds of the tale become absorbed into the landscape.

The contemporary Eclogues of Virgil mention briefly the fate of Hylas. Here, too, the story’s sonority is part of the land, the shore echoing back the call of the search party: “He adds also at what well Hylas had been left when his ship-mates had shouted his name, so that all the shore sounded “Hylas, Hylas.”

The so-called “Latin Argonautica” of Valerius Flaccus repeats the themes now familiar to the reader. In the Flavian-era account Juno sends a stag so that Hylas will chase after it, “madly afire for so near a quarry.” Again Hylas is taken, and Hercules is likened to both a stung bull and a raging lion. He cries after Hylas, the repetition of the Latin rursus Hylan et rursus Hylan flagging the futility of the effort; “the forests answer him, and the wandering echo emulates his cry.”

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530 His adiungit Hylan nautae quo fonte relictum Clamassent, ut litus “Hyla Hyla” omne sonaret. Translation Nisbet, “The Style of Virgil’s Eclogues,” 60


532 Flaccus Argonautica 3.590-595.

533 Flaccus Argonautica 3.596-7. “Hylas” and yet again “Hylas” he calls through the pathless distances; the forests answer him, and the wandering echo emulates his cry.”

rursus Hylan et rursus Hylan per longa reclamat avia; responsant silvae et vaga certat imago.
Hylas’s association with echo and repeated vocalization is also propounded outside the world of poetry, in Strabo’s *Geographica*. Strabo explains that each year the inhabitants of Prusa wander the forests and mountains while calling out the Hylas’ name, just as Heracles and the other crew members did when they were looking for the lost youth.\(^{534}\) This cultic tradition re-enacts the search party’s pursuit and reiterates the association of the story with echoing call-and-response.

Other versions of the tale turn Hylas’ repeated cries into an alternate etiology for the echo. In the version of the myth by Nicander, “The nymphs, fearing that Heracles might discover that they had hidden the lad among them, changed him into an echo which again and again echoed back the cries of Heracles.”\(^{535}\) Their action obscures Hylas’ true location and what has happened to him, disguising his cries as a natural phenomenon of the wood.

The association of Hylas with echo is also seen in late antique texts like the fourth century epigrams of Ausonius, wherein the Hylas epigrams are followed by epigrams about Narcissus, whom we might consider a close mythological relative. Not only do the two protagonists both die by water, they are both accosted by nymphs: Echo tries to throw her arms around Narcissus’ neck, as the nymph does to Hylas in Apollonius’

\(^{534}\) Strabo 12.4.3.

\(^{535}\) Nic. fr. 48 G-S (=Ant. Lib. 26.4) This translation is Heerink’s, *Echoing Hylas*, 4. Nicander’s *Metamorphoses Synagoge*, now lost, was another Hellenistic account, but is preserved by the 2\(^{nd}\) or 3\(^{rd}\) C text of Antoninus Liberalis, indicating the persistence of the text into the high empire or the late Roman period.
account. Narcissus is undone not only by self-love but by confusion around Echo, and Hylas is lost because his cries resound uselessly.

By association with echo, Hylas was made into a literary trope and a metaphor for the process of intertextuality and allusion. As Mark Heerink argues in *Echoing Hylas*, the abducted boy began to be used by poets as a metapoetic figure, a vehicle for expressing the aims of their own literary projects in opposition to the aims of traditional epic. Whereas Hercules stood for the strong, stable, revered forms of epic, the youth emblematized a younger, innovative alternative to earlier forms of literary production. The authors working in the anti-epic sphere identified themselves as “Callimachean.” Though their work had little direct connection with the Hellenistic poet Callimachus himself, the term designates a group of self-conscious, self-reflective authors looking to respond to their learning of the literary past while carving out their own space in the literary tradition. Their imitations and emulations of earlier models are referred to as “echoes” of the tradition, inasmuch as they do not simply re-sound earlier ideas and forms but also morph and reshape them in their new reverberations.

*Audiation and the Visual Realm*

Whether the metapoetic function of the Hylas character was patently legible to educated readers and viewers in antiquity, it is apparent from the sonic motifs woven

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536 Ovid’s *Met.* 3.389 has the nymph Echo throwing her arms around Narcissus’ neck, as the nymph does to Hylas in Apollonius’ telling. See Elsner, “Late Narcissus: Classicism and Culture in a Late Roman Cento,” section 5.2.4.

537 For their similarity see also Heerink, *Echoing Hylas*, 203 n. 81.
through multiple versions of the tale that the story came with a soundtrack, the elements of which were as consistent as its cast of characters. When the Hylas story was not read from a text, but instead viewed, the score was not played or voiced, but audiated by the viewer. Audiation is a kind of inner hearing, the aural companion to envisioning. Rather than forming an image of a thing in the mind’s eye, as one does when one imagines, one gives voice internally to a sound.\textsuperscript{538} A viewer of a Hylas picture might, in his mind’s ear, hear the nymphs at play, laughing or singing, and the trickling of the stream. He might inwardly transcribe the details of Apollonius’ account, such as the water brimming from the sounding bronze, or startle at the clang of the metal vessel on the rock as Hylas is snatched by the arm, letting go the pitcher from his hand.

Images of the Hylas myth carry over into the visual realm some of the sonic components present in the literary accounts. The most visibly raucous is a mosaic from Volubilis that shows Hylas ambushed from both sides (See Figure 7.7). A nymph at left catches his wrist, while the nymph at right, whose body is rotated toward him in a posture that mirrors his own, silences the boy. Not only has a nymph snatched Hylas’ water pitcher from his hand, removing the percussive vessel from his grasp, she clinches the jaw of her victim to staunch his cries.

\textsuperscript{538} The term was first coined in the 1970s by Edwin Gordon as one of the fundamental components of musicianship. See for example http://library.sc.edu/music/gordon/317.pdf. The phenomenon can be musical—a musician audiates a melody as a kind of mental rehearsal—or meditative—the voice of a friend, the mantra of a teacher, the soundscape of a peaceful place. One might think of a song stuck in one’s head as a melody repeatedly audiated.
The other examples of the Hylas are not so visibly uproarious, but they are not without their own sound effects. A mosaic pavement at Syedra (Naüloï, on the southern coast of Turkey), possibly 2nd century CE in date, shows Hylas with lips parted, a cry having just fallen from his lips.539 (See Figure 7.4) Behind him stands a nymph who grips the wrist of his outstretched arm, her eyes fixed, like his, on their point of contact. The nymph seems to will his noisy gesture silent, as Hylas looks in disbelief at having been caught. The lower half of the mosaic is destroyed. A Spanish example, probably dated to the early third century CE, is unusual for Hercules’ presence in the same frame as Hylas abduction.540 (See Figure 7.5) The condition of the mosaic does not allow us to see whether Hylas speaks, but Hercules (whose figure may have been added later) raises his arm like an orator. Their appearance in the same scene indicates a communication that the narrative precludes. We can only imagine the cacophony of their echoing voices crossing. Other examples of the Hylas story convey a sense of movement, as in the Tor Bel Monaca example, where Hylas lowers the pitcher to the stream, his mantle fluttering behind him and the nymph reaching out to stop his hand (See Figure 7.9).

The Hylas panel is not unique in illustrating sonic effects, nor in inviting or anticipating the reader-viewer’s aural engagement. Ancient texts regularly reference sounds emitted and received in the picture world, commonly making use of sonic detail in order to flesh out the picture described in an ekphrastic account. At times, the action of

539 Scheibler, “Ein mythologisches Mosaik aus Syedra/Naüloï.”

540 Mañas Romero, “El mosaico italicense de Hylas.”
the picture produces a sound, to which the viewer is privy if he attends closely enough. Diegetic sound (sound originating in the world of the picture) has a great deal of agency in ekphrastic texts. It is described as effecting action within the picture world, and at times even penetrates the barrier between picture and viewer to catalyze action within the plane of the viewer.

Ekphrastic texts frequently employ audio detail to lend vividness to verbal description. In this way a soundtrack is called to accompany the picture in the mind’s eye. In Philostratus’ description of the sacrifice of the Persian queen Rhodogoune, the viewer half expects to hear her image speak. Another example of this interweaving of vision and voice is found in Philostratus’ *Bacchantes* (1.18), in which the women, goaded on by Dionysus, pant out the Bacchic cry. The visible representation is convincing enough to convince the viewer that he hears it: “you would even say they [the women] were raising the shout of victory” (ἀλαλάζουσιν). In the onomatopoetic verb, the audiated cry, and its visual representation in the women’s heaving chests, the *imago* cleverly links the verbal, the visual, and the aural. Michael Squire describes this phenomenon as ekphrasis “knowingly turned on its head: rather than words summoning up virtual visions, (we hear how) pictures are on the verge of virtual words, all thanks to the verbal

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541 Philostratus, “Rhodogoune,” 2.5 “So listen: Rhodogoune is pouring a libation for her victory over the Armenians, and the artist’s conception is of a woman praying. . . . The mouth is delicately formed and filled with “love’s harvest,” most sweet to kiss, most difficult to describe. But you may observe, my boy, all you need to be told: the lips are full of colour and even the mouth is well proportioned and it utters its prayer before the trophy of victory; if we care to listen attentively, perhaps it will speak in Greek.”
visualizations and visual verbalizations of the virtuoso Philostratus." Squire refers to these aural conceits as “games” that intertwine the visual and the verbal.

But such sonic details, playful though they may be, do not seem to be mere diversions. In the *Bacchantes*, there is a confounding twist to the story’s phonosphere. The viewer seems to hear the cries of the women pictured, but the women for their own part seem to hear bellowing and roars. Though “they say they hear a lion’s roaring, in fact the sounds are Pentheus’ cries as they tear him apart. Their audition deceives them, rendering them unaware of what they are doing. By contrast to the women whose misguided ears cause them to murder Pentheus savagely, the viewer is aware of the visible truth at odds with the story’s soundscape.

Just as sound has the capacity to propel destruction, sound also has the agency to build. In Philostratus’ *Amphion* (1.10), the sound of an instrument animates inert rocks. As Amphion plays the lyre of Hermes, the wall of Thebes builds itself, its stones

542 Squire, “Apparitions Apparent: Ekphrasis and the Parameters of Vision in the Elder Philostratus’s *Imagines*,” 110. Squire’s note 88 in particular encapsulates some of the support of this argument. For example, he points to the description of Hippolytus, forbidden love of his stepmother Phaedra. The viewer is to observe Hippolytus’ panicked horses, and hear their shrill whinnies, unless he fails to hear the painting (2.4.2). The reader is also invited to hear the warning shouted to Oenomaüs, father of Hippodameia, whose chariot has been rigged so that he will lose the race against his daughter’s suitor (1.17.1). Manieri, “Colori, Suoni e Profumi Nelle *Imagines*: Principi Dell’estetica Filostratea,” 111–21, also cited by Squire, includes in her work a list of ekphrastic texts that include aural detail as a means of making the description more vivid. Finally, Squire points out that there are 27 instances of the verb akouein (hear) in the elder Philostratus’s *Imagines*, citing the 19th century concordance of Benndorf and Schenkel 1893.

543 εἶπος δ’ ἂν καὶ ὡς ἀλαλάζουσιν, οὕτως εὔιον αὐταῖς τὸ ἄσθμα. Διώνυσος δὲ αὐτὸς μὲν ἐν περιωπῇ τούτοις ἐστηκεν ἐμπλήσας τὴν παρείαν χόλου, τὸν δὲ ὀίστρον προσβακχεύσας ταῖς γυναιξίν. οὔτε ὁρῶσι γοῦν τὰ δρώμενα καὶ ὁπόσα ἱκετεύει ὁ Πενθεὺς λέοντος ἀκούειν φασὶ βρυχομένου.
following the musician’s command: “They all run together toward the singing, they listen, and they become one. . . The stones are eager in rivalry, and happy, and devoted slaves of music; and the wall has seven gates, as the strings of the lyre are seven.” So harmonious are the stones with the lyre’s song that they arrange themselves according to the seven-stringed configuration of the instrument. The story illustrates that the picture is not a mute thing, and that it leverages its sonic dimension to enact narrative.

Sound within the picture world has enough agency to drive action even outside the picture world, and to stir the viewing subject. The viewer is called on to read, respond, and react—not merely to passively see, but essentially, to complete or activate the picture by his engagement with it. The picture is thus sometimes animated by the viewer’s vocalization or verbalization. Philostratus’ *Hyacinth* (1.24) provides one example wherein the viewer is asked not only to read an image but also to recite it. The image depicts the sorrowful tale of Hyacinth, beloved of Apollo, who is killed by a stray discus. When Hyacinth’s blood drips on the ground, the god who mourns him declares that a new flower will blossom there, one whose shape imitates his groans of woe. The line alludes to an Ovidian tradition wherein the form of the hyacinth flower spells out the lament “AI AI.” In Philostratus’ account, the hyacinth itself wails (θρηνέω). The reader

544 On the reader’s role in activating a late antique text, see Pelttari, *Reading Latin Poetry*.

545 Ovid *Met.* X. 205-216
answers by reading the pictogram. Thus not only does the viewer hear the image speak, he deciphers and pronounces on the image by speaking the woe recorded there.

A picture can require not only emotional utterances but also intellectualized answer. In Philostratus’ *Singers* (2.1), the author describes a group of maidens praising an ivory Aphrodite in a grove. “Do you wish us to pour a libation of discourse on the altar?” he asks. He goes on to lay a verbal “offering” on the altar depicted by the artist, alongside the frankincense, cinnamon, and myrrh burning there. He praises the artfulness of the painting, the artist’s seeming ability to paint with light, his skill in depicting the choristers and their garments, because they are so effective “he even makes us hear the hymn.” Philostratus’ “libation” of praise immerses the viewer in the fiction of the picture. By making the viewer an offeror he blurs the boundary between picture world and viewer. The question of how the viewer should respond to an image, and whether his response is audible or unuttered, will be taken up further below. For the time being, this example serves to indicate that not only can the viewer hear the sounds emitted by a picture, he can also take part in the image by his own sonant response.

These few examples of sonic entanglement with the visual world could of course be expanded. My intention has been to demonstrate that audiation is not merely the invention of a 20th century musical theoretician. While a great deal of the literature on

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546 Squire, “Apparitions Apparent,” 107 describes this picture as containing a pictogram, becoming a make-believe text for reading (p. 107) and the translator renders the introduction to the *Hyacinth* as “Read the hyacinth, for there is writing on it which says it sprang from the earth in honor of a beautiful youth…” with “read” coming from ἀνάγιγνω (ἀναγιγνώσκω) know, recognize, hence to read.
ancient ekphrasis treats the clever slippage between visual and verbal, between writing and painting, this work does not so readily investigate the vocal or auditory as one facet of expressing the verbal or activating the visual. These texts make clear, however, that sound was a dimension of the synesthetic process of viewing.\textsuperscript{547} Though ekphrastic texts are a rich source for investigating the process of viewing and interpreting images in antiquity, I would argue that aurality is not a feature of viewing confined to the ekphrastic project. Considering the sonic engagement of the viewer in antiquity can broaden our understanding of seeing in the Roman world.

\textit{Hylas in the Hall}

If, as Hermogenes instructed, the job of ekphrastic description was to “bring about seeing through hearing,”\textsuperscript{548} what, conversely, might a picture do to bring about hearing? And what did the sonic environment of such pictures do to shape this aural dimension of viewing?

As noted above, the Bassus panel exhibits many cues as to the decibel-level of Hylas’ struggle. Composed much like the Ganymede mosaic pictured, the Bassus Hylas kneels, just as he does in the Italica (see Figure 7.8), Volubilis, and St.-Romain-en-Gal examples. Visible at his right hip is a sheathed dagger or sword attached to a strap across his chest. The diagonal thrust of the spear that cuts across many of the Hylas compositions is drawn here instead by his outstretched hand. Hylas is pulled in two

\textsuperscript{547} See, further, Butler and Purves, \textit{Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses}.

\textsuperscript{548} \textit{Prog.} 10.48
directions, one nymph stroking his hair and wrapping her hand around his shoulder, the other one tugging at him with both arms. He still clutches the pitcher, inlaid in mother-of-pearl so it matches the iridescent sheen of the nymphs’ jewelry. He opens his mouth to cry out. A deep red mantle flies behind him, a ruddy reiteration of the nymph’s drapery at left.

The Hylas panel and its materials, both represented and real, colluded in their sonic and spatial antics. First, the iridescent mother of pearl pitcher marks the vessel as metallic, according it a clangorous potential. This material imparts implied noise to the panel. Beneath the narrative lunette hangs a faux curtain, which was supposed to resemble a luxurious drapery, with Egyptianizing figures marching around its hem. The insinuated material suggests a sonic foil to the clanging metal vessel; that is, if a textile were indeed hung against the wall, the material would have dampened sound by absorbing it. The curtain’s duplicity, however, is revealed by its material. When the marble tapestry sends sound ringing back into space, instead of absorbing sound the way drapery would, its artifice is undone.

The bluffing textile folds another layer of suggestion into its trompe l’oeil: that of spatial illusion. The curtain appears to be pinned up at the corners, as if tacked to the sides of a column. This suggests deeper space in the form of a colonnaded side aisle, an imagined extension of the single-naved hall. Sound would immediately controvert that appearance, however, trompe l’oeil being possible where trompe l’oreille is not. The contemporary Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa explains why this is so:

Sight isolates, whereas sound incorporates; vision is directional, sound is omni-directional. The sense of sight implies exteriority, whereas sound
creates an experience of interiority. I regard an object, but sound approaches me; the eye reaches, but the ear receives. Buildings do not react to our gaze, but they do return our sound back to our ears. . . . We stroke the boundaries of a space with our ears.\textsuperscript{549}

Because sound is a tool for perceiving space, for locating one’s body within it, for sensing scale and measuring distance, however subjectively, sound belies the perspectival deceit. Sound corroborates or contradicts the visual. Here again the appearance of the curtain is undermined by a truth sussed out by the ear.

I argue that the display context of the Hylas panel would have amplified the visual and literary cues laid out above. Its stony surround offered a particular kind of container for the sounds therein, and extended to the viewer-visitor a particular invitation to connect the intellectual and sensory experience of the hall by exploring its phonosphere.\textsuperscript{550} Incidentally—and appropriately, given the watery setting of the Hylas story—this kind of acoustic environment is described as “wet.” A dry acoustic is more absorptive, so sounds do not rebound, but instead are sponged up by the materials of the environment. No doubt the marble sheathing of the high walls of the Bassus hall would have heightened a multi-sensory encounter with the decoration there, as would the opus sectile paving the floor beneath the feet of the viewer, every surrounding surface but the roof serving as sounding board for Hylas’ cries. The following section considers the ways in which the sites of seeing are sonically implicated.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{549} Pallasmaa, \textit{Eyes of the Skin}, p. 53-55.}\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{550} This term is Bettini’s, \textit{Voci}.}
On the Hall

The examples above have treated the ways in which a picture was said to create a sound, and how viewers responded to and interacted with those sounds. But ekphrastic texts are not our only evidence for sonic engagement. Lucian’s On the Hall investigates the question of how an educated viewer is supposed to respond to a beautifully decorated space. The essay asks which mode of response to the overwhelming visual wonder is most appropriate and most fitting. Is a viewer to look, awestruck and dumb, or to intellectualize his response and answer with praise? If he speaks, does his oratory add to the magnificence of the surrounds, or merely pale in comparison to its visual splendor? And can any spectator hope to concentrate on speech when faced with such sights, or is the speaker only wasting breath? These questions are posed by two speakers of opposite viewpoints, each of whom presents the rationale for his opinion—though ultimately both end up lauding the hall and describing its wonders. The essay stages a contest between two senses, between the faculty of comprehending with the eyes and expressing with words. While Lucian’s essay is about vocalized response to viewing, a second theme of the essay is the description of the sonic conditions of the hall. These are not only detailed as a setting and circumstance for viewing, but portrayed as a character who engages with and responds to the viewers within.

The first speaker lays out the grounds of the debate:

Then can it be that on seeing a hall beyond compare in the greatness of its size, the splendour of its beauty, the brilliance of its illumination, the lustre of its gilding and the gaiety of its pictures, a man would not long to compose speeches in it, if this were his business, to seek repute and win glory in it, to fill it with his voice and, as far as lay in him, to become part and parcel of its beauty? Or after looking it over carefully and admiring it,
would he rather go away and leave it mute and voiceless, without 
according it a word of greeting or a particle of intercourse, as if he were 
dumb or else out of ill-will had resolved to hold his tongue? 

This speaker anticipates that in the face of luminous and impressively illustrated 
hall, the appreciative viewer will feel compelled to respond with verbal praise, answering 
visual beauty with spoken eloquence. As ekphrastic speech conjures up an image, here, a 
beautiful image spurs the viewer to verbalize what he sees. Thereby he joins himself to 
the beauty of the hall. Walking away silent is taken as a kind of discourtesy, as if walking 
by a person without acknowledging him or “without…a word of greeting.” The hall in 
fact compels verbal acknowledgement, “excites the speaker’s fancy and stirs it to speech, 
as if he were somehow prompted by what he sees.”

For this reason, a man of culture “will not be content . . . to be a silent spectator of 
their beauty,” he claims, and will instead linger in the face of it to “make some return of 
the spectacle in speech.” The theme of return or exchange recurs (ἀμείψασθαι 2.13; 
ἀμοιβὴ 3.3; later, in 3.14, ἀντίδοσιν) suggesting a transactional relationship between 
space and viewer, whereby the viewer becomes speaker in order to requite the hall’s 
beauty. His speech fulfills a kind of contract, offered in exchange for the hall’s 
magnificence. This can also be thought of as a transformation, a change from a thing seen 
(θέαν, 2.13) into words (λόγῳ, 3.1): “No doubt something of beauty flows through the 

551 The Hall 1.5-14
552 Lucian, The Hall, 4.
eyes into the soul, and then fashions into the likeness of itself the words that it sends out”
(4.3-5). A kind of alchemy happens when the visual is translated into the verbal.

The rejoinder that is made by the speaker is met with a receptive space, which
attends as if listening intently. The hall answers as if in dialogue with the viewer-speaker.
He paraphrases, echoes, and responds, himself joining in (Συνεπηχον, to join in singing,
chime in, re-echo, 3.10) and prolonging or expanding (παρατείνων, stretch, 3.11) the
words of the speaker, amplifying their grace. In the mind of the first speaker, this audio-
visual exchange is fitting:

It is very delightful, I think, that the fairest of halls should be flung open
for the harbourage of speech and should be full of praise and laudation, re-
echoing softly like a cavern, following what is said, drawing out the
concluding sounds of the voice and lingering on the last words; or, to put it
better, … like an appreciative hearer, and applauding the speaker and
gracefully repeating his phrases.554

Lucian’s comparison of the hall’s echoing response to the caverns of the natural
world brings to mind the call and response of Hercules and Hylas. Lucian further
elaborates the metaphor by likening the cavern’s echo to the way the piping of the
shepherds is returned by repercussion in the mountains. The writer illustrates the hall to
be a living environment, a building envelope that participates in the life of sound, making
itself party to the speaker’s rejoinder and integral part of the sonic worlds of picture and
viewer.

For the uneducated viewer, Lucian admits, it is sufficient “just to see” (ιδεῖν
μόνον Hall 2.6), “but to harvest their [the images’] charms with his eyes alone” leaves

554 Lucian, The Hall, 3.
the viewer without full delectation of the hall’s beauty. Visual beauty comes to full
fruition when actuated by speech. Vocal response, therefore, is an appropriate reaction to
beauty, a way to receive and repay the sight of the hall, and even to further activate its
resonances. The hall functions as an amplifier and echo chamber, and this too is a happy
effect, like music resounding through nature.

The opposing view is presented by a figure whom the translator calls “Mr. Point
o’ View.” While the first speaker asserts that the duty and compulsion of an educated man
upon seeing such a space is to speak in praise of it, “Mr. Point o’ View” argues that the
hall does not call for verbalizing, since speech is inevitably drowned out and
overwhelmed by the beauty of the hall. The sight of it dazzles, and the tongue is no match
for the eyes. The danger, as he puts it, is that in the midst of all the visual splendor of the
hall, what he says fades and dims (ἀμαυροῦται 16.3) by comparison. This speaker, too,
treats the hall as a character in the dialogue, but instead of a conversational partner the
hall becomes a competing noise:

This danger, certainly, the speaker must guard against, and also that his
voice be not disturbed when he speaks in a hall so musical and echoing,
[εὐφώνῳ καὶ ἠχήεντι, 16.7]555 for it resounds, replies, refutes with its own
utterance.556

555 This word, echoing, is also used of “ringing halls” in the Odyssey, 4.72.

556 The English translation nicely parallels with “re” the Greek repetition of the prefix “anti:”
ἀντιφθέγγεται (echo), ἀντιφωνεῖ (rejoin, reply), ἀντιλέγει (speak against, contradict).
Undoubtedly this was intentional on the author’s part, so that the vocabulary of repetition, echo,
and answering back was conveyed with language that itself performed those things phonetically.
_The Hall_ 16.6-7.
Here again we see the language of echoing or returning an answer, in concert with the idea introduced by the first speaker; but instead of a response that completes what preceded it, the answer of the hall will gainsay, countering and overwhelming the speaker. This defendant warns that the responding hall “drowns his utterance, just as the trumpet drowns the flute when they are played together, and as the sea drowns chanty-men when they undertake to sing for the rowers against the noise of the surf. For the great volume of sound (ἡ μεγαλοφωνία) overpowers and crushes into silence all that is weaker” (16.5-12).

His words imply that the obstreperous hall will overtake the speaker by volume, but also that vision has a forceful eloquence all its own. The beauty of the decoration will daze the audience, and those listening to the speech will “become spectators instead of hearers” (ἀντὶ ἀκροατῶν θεαταὶ καθίστανται) (18.3). Even the speaker himself will be distracted, because “it is inevitable that the speaker’s own mind should be occupied in looking, and that the accuracy of his thinking should be disturbed because what he is looking at gets the better of him, attracts him and does not allow him to attend to what he is saying.” All those present become dazzled, their sight preventing them from formulating speech or listening with full attention. The beauty calls to the speaker (καλούση call/summon, 17.16). It is as if the hall speaks his name, crying out as Heracles did for Hylas.

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557 ἡ μεγαλοφωνία means “loudness of voice” but is also translated as “grandiloquence.” The play is that the hall is sonically loud as a space but also that it is itself a speaker, and an eloquent one.
The only way to guard against this response is to excommunicate the visual sense: the listener must be blind, or listen in the dark. Otherwise the visitor is “flooded with beauty” upon entering the hall. The participle περιχυθεὶς (drenched, poured over) in 18.6 continues the watery metaphor from above, wherein the speaker was inundated like chanty-men by the sea. By this account the hall swallows up speech, its wet acoustics making hearing impossible. Like Hylas, Lucian’s viewer is submerged. Zahra Newby has described this as a kind of erotic immersion, an irresistible yielding to beauty. The first lines of Lucian’s prolaia frame the allure of the hall by comparing it to the Cydnus in which Alexander bathed:

Alexander longed to bathe in the Cydnus on seeing that the stream was fair and clear, safely deep, agreeably swift, delightful to swim in and cool in the height of summer; even with foreknowledge of the fever which he contracted from it, I do not think he would have abstained from his plunge. Then can it be that on seeing a hall beyond compare in the greatness of its size, the splendour of its beauty, the brilliance of its illumination, the lustre of its gilding and the gaiety of its pictures, a man would not long to compose speeches in it… to fill it with his voice and, as far as lay in him, to become part and parcel of its beauty?

The speaker indicates that he cannot resist, any more than Alexander could upon seeing the delectable stream, even knowing he would come to a bad end. His desire to speak in the hall is a desire to become absorbed and immersed in it, “to become part and parcel of its beauty.” To speak, then, to verbalize, is for the speaker a way of joining in with the beauty of the hall. As Hylas is pulled into the stream, and Alexander into the

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Cydnus, so is the speaker pulled into and fully immersed in the aesthetic experience of the hall.  

The second speaker does not concede, but he does close by noting that the “jury” is looking around rather than listening to his speech, and offers to paint them a word picture. Perhaps it is ironic that the speaker who has so adamantly insisted on the foolishness of speech in this place ends up offering discourse on it. He concludes by expressing his hope that in doing so he has doubled his listeners’ pleasure.

Whatever the appropriate response in the face of visual beauty, the essay makes clear that in a decorated space the hall itself must be regarded as a speaker, a sonic contender to be reckoned with. Similarly, the associations of Hylas with sonic phenomena like the echo or the repeated, sonorous cry must enter into our account of the experience of the basilica. This sonic element of the story, presented in the architectural space of hall revetted entirely in marble, created possibilities for vistas not just visual and intellectual, but also aural. The story and its orchestration may have inflected other experiences in the hall.

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559 Newby, *Greek Myths in Roman Art*, 149. While I follow Newby in reading this “plunge” as allegory for immersion in visual beauty, in “Testing the Boundaries of Ekphrasis” she opposes immersion with “an intellectualised, rhetorical viewing”—an antithesis we also see in Philostratus the Elder’s *Imagines*—suggesting that the verbalized response can keep the speaker from being sensually overtaken. I would argue that the speaker, too, is submerged. See also Newby, “Absorption and Erudition in Philostratus’ Imagines.”


561 ἐπιδείξαντα καὶ διπλασιάσαντα3 ὑμῖν τὴν ἡδονήν. 21.14-15
On the most literal or immediate level, we should consider that the space of the basilica was likely used for the performance of speech, song, and drama, whether during the consular investiture and the inauguration of the building, at other public gatherings, or as part of entertainment during banquets. There need not have been a reading of the account of Hylas or a dramatic re-enactment of his story in the hall to warrant the consideration of how speech and music may have been imprinted by the architecture. The “phonosphere” of the hall—the range of sounds that took place in it, as well as how those sounds resonated interacted with the space and its materials, whether they were amplified or dampened, echoed or muffled, would certainly have included these speeches and performances.

*The Wider Phonosphere of the Basilica*

The Hylas panel was not the only image in the Basilica of Junius Bassus that might have ignited the aural imagination. First, as discussed in the previous chapter, the biga panel that depicted Bassus in procession would have evoked sense memories of the clamoring crowd along the parade route: wheels clacking, horses clopping and whinnying, musicians piping or cymbals clanging. The tiger panels may have evoked the low bawl of a calf overpowered by its predator, with accompanying terrible roars and the rending of flesh, or the sound of the crowd present at such entertainments. We might even imagine that the images of the Delphic tripod, which do not survive to today but whose presence is suggested by Renaissance drawings, might have brought to mind the ecstatic vocalizations of the Pythian priestess, intoning the prophecy of the goddess.
But we should not imagine the hall to have been a silent place where the only activity was the quiet contemplation of the hall’s decoration. There were proceedings and performances we know would have taken place here, which would have constituted the aural furnishings of the place. Certainly on the day of the hall’s dedication a fine speech was given, a “panegyric resounding” like the kind Lucian mentions, which would have lingered on the marvels of the decoration, creating a word-picture of the splendors within, and elaborating on these as a way of declaiming both the magnificence of the hall and the generosity of the patron in dedicating it. We might imagine, too, that the patron enjoyed an acclamation on that day, with long life and long office wished to him. The Magerius mosaic discussed in the previous chapter offers one example of a crowd’s expression of approval. Several other late antique examples from Aphrodisias studied by Charlotte Rouché evidence public approbation for patrons, recorded in physical form so that onlookers could witness and join the acclamation by reading along. Whether or not any written acclamations were recorded in the Basilica of Junius Bassus, we might imagine crowd approval vocalized with loud enthusiasm.

If the hall were a court, as I have suggested, we can imagine hearings taking place here, perhaps centered around the main apse. The advocate would have had to speak in ringing tones to be heard in the hall, with claques on each side adding to the din. The hall may also have served as a place of entertainment, where dramas were staged or readings were done. If the hall was treated as a reception room, there may well have been banquets

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562 Rouché, “Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New Evidence from Aphrodisias.”
held, at which wine was poured, silver clanged, and peals of laughter punctuated the festivities. Ultimately we can only imagine the array of sounds that filled the hall, but it is well to consider that the basilica was a space populated by people and enlivened by their activities. As the hall housed these goings-on, so too did its architecture and materials shape the sensory experience therein.

The phonosphere of the hall was not static. When the Basilica of Junius Bassus was converted to a church and eventually a hospital, its soundscape would have changed with its function. Congregants gathered there would have heard singing, prayers, and chanted services, as well as bells intoning the hour. Later, the hall served as a hospital, where patients with ergotism were cared for. They were ministered to by monks who scraped mortar from the walls, the abrasion audible by the sufferers to whom it was given as a curative. As the building fell into greater ruin, it was used as a granary and a stall for animals, whose sounds profaned the previously sacred space.

The sonic imaginings discussed above are necessarily in the subjunctive, each one expressed as likelihood and possibility by association with the imagery on the walls. Though these auditory events can only be conjectured, this imaginative exercise nonetheless has value, because it prompts us to remember that the panels which now hang denuded on the walls of the Museo Capitolini and the Palazzo Massimo were once ensconced in a context not only architectural and pictorial but also sonic.
CHAPTER 8
The Aegyptiaca Tapestry

Beneath the tableau of Hylas' abduction is suspended a piece of drapery, which hangs in a lunate shape as if attached on either side of the Hylas emblema. The bulk of the drapery is represented in green serpentine, with highlighted areas for the folds. Though Egyptianizing figures march around the curtain’s hem, the border does not resemble any surviving fourth century Egyptian tapestry.\(^{563}\) With its graphically striking and geometrical Pharaonic style, its ordered row of figures and severe folds of drapery, the fabric looks little like an imitation or import. It is intended, instead, to give “un tono egitizzante all’ornato”\(^{564}\) or to lend an Egyptian “mien, abandoning the pretense that the work in question came from Egypt.”\(^{565}\) It conveys a certain idea of Egyptian-ness to Roman eyes, certainly, but its authenticity does not lie in its likeness to an Egyptian-made object.

The figures of the frieze, the top half of their bodies turned to the viewer and their lower halves in profile, cannot be distinguished by facial features (only a white dot

\(^{563}\) This is pointed out by Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*, 192; “ma v’è una completa libertà nei particolari, un’incomprensione del reale aspetto e significato di tutti gli elementi. . . che non trovano alcun riscontro reale con l’iconografia egizia.” It is also acknowledged by de Rossi before him and Nauerth, “Die ‘Vela Alexandrina’ Der Basilika Des Iunius Bassus in Rom” more recently (at p. 227). Not all authors have seen it as drapery: See Matz-Dunn, *Bildwerke III*, pg. 245-7. Nr. 4114/4115, and Alföldi, “Die alexandrinischen Götter und die Vota Publica” 66, cited by Nauerth at 225.

\(^{564}\) Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*, 192.

\(^{565}\) Swetnam-Burland, *Egypt In Italy: Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture*, 19.
suggests an eye) or identified by their attributes. Their garments are etched in cut stone as well as in glass paste or millefiori glass, so that much of the clothing looks ornately decorated with embroidery or weaving. Neither their dress nor the skin color of the figures signals one kind of being or status (human or god, slave or ruler) over another. There is a central figure, enthroned and wearing the crown of lower Egypt, but this figure is dwarfed by another seated figure to the right who wears a headdress like the crown of upper Egypt, so neither scale nor centrality cannot be counted on as clues to the significance of these figures in a broader narrative.

More seated figures appear on the zig-zagging vertical band of the drapery. Like the figures in the frieze, they hold what appear to be scepters, but with three orange-red triangles atop them, these scepters are clearly not the was or sekhem types known from Egyptian art. Figures bring pitchers and plates heaped with what may be loaves of bread toward offering tables. Tall candelabras are interspersed between the figures and tables. At the uppermost edges of the frieze are small rowing boats called horeia, truncated so that only their curving sterns and the suggestion of cargo are visible. These suggest a river setting, though the figures are not situated in water as Hylas and the nymphs are above. In front of each boat is a blue-skinned figure seated on a cushion, holding a torch.

566 Nauerth, “Die ‘Vela Alexandrina’ Der Basilika Des Iunius Bassus in Rom,” 226 reads these beaked pitchers as a type used in Isiac worship.

567 Nauerth offers an alternative description. She does not identify the individual figures as recognizable gods, but does find resemblances in some figures to Hermes-Anubis. She views the offering tables as holding pointed loaves.
None of the figures or objects overlaps, each one placed a measured distance from the next so there is no hint at depth or perspective. These static, paratactic figures strike us as purely ornamental, almost pattern-like, not meant to interact with the space of the viewer or even within the space of the picture plane. This sets them apart from the Hylas scene, where characters interact in a narrative, and even from the more static consular procession panel. The triple-trimmed border of the fabric runs along the blue curve of the stream in which Hylas stands. On the outermost edge, a row of red triangles interlock with white triangles; next, a row of four-lobed flowers joined by green and yellow stems are set in lapis; and finally, a row of red stone like a strand of ribbon lines the top and bottom of a frieze of figures on white ground. This edging pattern is repeated in reverse on the bottom of the frieze, and can be seen zig-zagging in perfect folds down the vertical sides of the curtain.

This motif of the Egyptian processional likely repeated on the hems of draperies down the length of the hall. Extant drawings suggest that a similar velum once hung below the biga panel, though it has now been excised. These drawings suggest that there was a biga processional panel(s) other than the one in the Museo Palazzo Massimo with the addition of crouching figures on either side of the consul (See Figure in Renaissance drawings catalog). This companion piece is depicted as having been framed by drapery as well, supporting the idea that there were curtains repeating down the length of the hall.

The tapestries have been taken to denote the patron’s adherence to Egyptian religion, and even to support theories about the function of the hall as a neo-Pythagorean schola. In my view, the inclusion of the frieze was not meant to signal any particular
religious or cultic adherence, or make a statement about Bassus’ political or personal relationship to Egypt. Rather, it served to position its patron, and indeed his fellow citizens at Rome, as participants in a cosmopolitan culture, which had access to a range of valuable goods because of its centrality in the ancient world. The style of this decoration hinted at his taste, an aesthetic of luxury and worldliness very much at home in the period’s eclectic visual environment. Its content made reference to an already ancient, venerated civilization, suggesting Rome’s power was in continuity with that long authority and positioning the Roman world as heir to it, holder of the status of caput mundi. At the same time, the objects represented stood in for gifts of actual textiles like those donated by esteemed patrons from the Republic to his own time, and thus situated Bassus in a long line of donors. The decorative frieze thus served as a kind of frame or paratext, a device meant to shape reception of the larger program. That is, the Aegyptiaca tapestries help the viewer to contextualize the gifts of the patron, the splendor of the hall, and the enormous wealth on display, by backgrounding it with an even more ancient regime.

The section that follows will review previous interpretations of the Egyptianizing tapestries. To understand these, however, it will be useful to define terms and identify some of the problems of studying Egyptian(izing) art in Rome.

*Aegyptiaca: Terms and Histories of Interpretation*

The most recent scholarship grapples with not only the significance but even the very category or label for such scenes as this one, deconstructing terms like
“Egyptianizing” and “Orientalism,” “exotica” and “Nilotica.” Some scholars speak of Roman “Egyptomania;” this term is typically applied to 19th fashions churned up in the period following Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt and the subsequent European consciousness of this far-off land. While Egyptian decoration did enjoy similar surges of popularity in the Roman world, especially after key events like Octavian’s victory at Actium, to describe such enthusiasm as a kind of obsession or madness (“mania”) wrongfully judges the Roman aesthetics of syncretism and adaptation. “Nilotica,” a metonym with the virtue of being Latinate in origin, is too narrow to describe both style and subject, though some authors have fashioned a broad definition for this term’s employ. The term “Egyptianizing” has been recently in vogue, but because its suffix suggests a Roman product made in emulation of an Egyptian idea, this term implies the Roman product is a bastardization or perversion of a more “authentic” original, falling short of genuine “Egyptianness” because of the place of its production or the ethnicity of its maker. In the absence of any substantive indication from Roman texts about how

568 For a more thorough examination of these terms with attention to their uses and meanings (intended and unintended), see Malaise, “La diffusion des cultes Isiaques: un problème de terminologie et de critique,” 34 ff.

569 Versluys, Aegyptiaca Romana. Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt, 28 offers one definition: “Nilotic scenes or Nilotic landscapes can be defined as images of the (flooded) Nile and the banks of the river with the flora, fauna, structures and activities of the population.”

570 Swetnam-Burland, Egypt In Italy: Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture, 116. See for example Roullet, The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome, 20: “It is interesting to note that the second generation of Egyptian workers in Italy had already lost the skill and style of their fathers . . . If Domitian's production could still be classed as Egyptian, Hadrian's creations were often only Egyptianizing . . . The late Roman Empire was to Egyptian art what the 19th century was to mediaeval art, and Hadrian's revivals could match Viollet-le-
Romans themselves would have labeled these allusions to Egyptian culture, I opt for “Aegyptiaca,” to mean objects or pictures that reference Egypt or Egyptian themes, whether or not they are Egyptian in provenance.571

Though “Egyptian-ness” in material or style is the defining trait of Aegyptiaca, its foreignness is not the only source of their meaning. Whether they originate in Egypt or are made in Rome in an “Egyptianizing” style, Aegyptiaca such as the Bassus frieze take up residence in the Roman world, and thus are read by Romans. Their foreignness may lead us to ask questions about authenticity: Did this really come from Egypt? Is it truly an Egyptian object, accurate and faithful to the (real or imagined) Egyptian original? And did the Roman viewer-user maintain an “appropriate” sense of its significance or meaning, one that would match up with the sense of an Egyptian viewer?572 As Molly Swetnam-Burland’s recent work warns, however, questions of provenance and authenticity may be anachronistic, distracting us from the intention of the Roman patron.

571 For a discussion of the rarely-used term aegyptiacus and its interchangeability with aegyptius, see Swetnam-Burland, “Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy,” 119. My definition is adopted from hers, at 116. Another of Versluys’ definitions, from “Exploring Aegyptiaca and Their Material Agency throughout Global History,” 122, is also usefully flexible.

572 Swetnam-Burland, “Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy,” passim but esp. 114-6. This concern, according to Swetnam-Burland, causes the viewer to get too caught up in whether the Roman use or view of an object was correct, as if she is expecting to catch the Roman viewer in a ridiculous misunderstanding or misuse of the Egyptian object’s usual or intended function.
Romans were happy to display “real” and “fake” or “original” and “copy” side by side, with no disquietude over the differences between them. Roman sculptural installations, in fact, often demonstrate an interest in displaying pieces from different eras together because of the visual dynamic between them and the conversation it invited.\textsuperscript{573} Roman-made works that resembled Egyptian imports—whether they accurately imitated actual products, reproduced literal meanings from Egyptian writing systems, or successfully captured Egyptian iconography—should also be seen as authentic, insofar as they represent efforts to bring a distinctly Egyptian style into Roman visuality.

Art historians will naturally question how these depictions reflect a Roman view of a foreign “Other,” and how Roman Aegyptiaca reveals the Romans’ own construction of self-identity through ideation of a cultural foil.\textsuperscript{574} Versluys suggests that while the Judaic tradition, on the basis of the book of Exodus, defined Egypt in contrast to Jewish identity, the Greco-Roman one looked at Egypt reverentially, as the “cradle of wisdom and civilization.”\textsuperscript{575} This is oversimplified, of course; there is no single answer to this question where applied to a vast empire that morphed over its centuries of power, nor is this the central inquiry of this study. Rome’s depictions of Egypt (and subsequently of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item E.g., the Iseum Campense sphinxes. Another example is the obelisk fashioned by Diocletian—a then-contemporary reproduction of an ancient object.
\item Edward Said’s analysis may be relevant here. Versluys says in his introductory essay to \textit{Nile into Tiber} (p. 2) that we may want to widen our study of Aegyptiaca so that it is not viewed in isolation, but alongside other “Oriental” influences, incl. Hellenization, Phrygians, etc.
\item Versluys, “Exploring Aegyptiaca and Their Material Agency throughout Global History,” 134-5.
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itself) are naturally inflected by the background of economic, religious, and political interactions with Egyptians both in Egypt and in Rome. From obelisks imported and installed in the Circus Maximus to the Tomb of Cestius and the black frieze of Aegyptiaca in the Villa of the Mysteries, there are too many examples of Roman Aegyptiaca in too many varying contexts to hazard a single sweeping statement about how Rome viewed Egypt.

There are, however, two interpretive habits that have held powerful sway over the reading of Aegyptiaca. The first of these interpretive lines hangs on the defeat of Egypt at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E. In this sea battle the young Octavian defeated his fellow triumvir Antony, whose lovesickness for Cleopatra had rotted his Roman virtues. Egypt, already an important source for the Roman food supply, was handily annexed as a Roman province. Aegyptiaca installed in the wake of this political watershed are taken almost universally as a flaunting of Rome's conquest of Egypt and the re-establishment of a virtuous Roman republic by Augustus. Augustan coinage figured crocodiles leashed to palm trees, symbolizing the “taming” of Egypt, and the emperor transported obelisks from Egypt to the Circus Maximus and the Campus Martius. The latter obelisk served as the *gnomon* for his horologium, signaling that Augustus had conquered Egypt and harnessed its resources into the maintenance of proper order in Rome. The interpretation of Aegyptiaca as propaganda of conquest is legitimate, and certainly Aegyptiaca on coins and in public monuments impelled by this battle should be interpreted in light of it.

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576 For other examples see Roullet, *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome*. See also Rose, “The Egyptianizing of Rome in the Wake of Actium.”
Indeed the Egyptian aspect was emphasized in Augustan political art, in part because Octavian required a defeated enemy to hold up as trophy, and Antony, a fellow Roman, would not do. Thus Cleopatra, and Egypt more broadly, served as surrogate, absorbing the humiliation of defeat and being appropriated to celebrate the new Augustan peace.\(^{577}\)

It follows naturally that this political moment would produce a swell of Aegyptiaca in Rome, if only as a side effect of cosmopolitanism and international exchange.\(^{578}\) Incidentally, Versluys has observed that Aegyptiaca after this moment did not become more accurate or realistic in response to increased exchange between Rome and Egypt, but actually took a turn towards parody, generating exaggerated caricatures of Egyptian figures and fancies.\(^{579}\) Aegyptiaca with less direct connection to the battle of Actium are less easily explained. Some can be understood as archaizing references, recalling Augustus' victory over a foreign enemy and so reflecting some of his glory onto the current emperor. Should we view Aegyptiaca in Campanian houses as domestic re-enactments of the emperor's total victory? These interpretations do not satisfactorily account for Aegyptiaca in contexts far removed from Augustan political art.

Enter the second golden hammer for this interpretive nail: religion and ritual. It is a joke among archaeologists that objects whose functions cannot be identified are assumed to have a ritual significance. Accordingly, Aegyptiaca found in unclear contexts


\(^{578}\) De Vos, *L'Egittomania in pitture e mosaici romano-campani della prima età imperial*, 79.

are frequently deemed “Isiac” and taken to have some kind of cultic significance. In a direct equation between biography and decoration, domestic and funerary Aegyptiaca are read as indications of the owner's adherence to the cult of Isis and his or her belief in the promise of new life in the afterworld through admission to her mysteries. The decoration of the basilica was at one point used to argue for the existence of a sanctuary for Isis Patricia nearby. But not every piece of Aegyptiaca should be tied to the worship of Isis, nor is the presence of Egyptian themes in a domestic program necessarily a reliable indicator of the dwellers' belief system.

This latter pattern of interpretation may help us see previous scholarly readings of the Bassus Aegyptiaca in clearer light. Becatti identified the drapery as the velum Alexandrinum, a term borrowed from Pliny to describe a textile manufactured in Alexandria. He pointed to comparanda on sarcophagi, on which flying Erotes hold up a drapery behind the deceased, framing them to indicate their separateness from the material world and their transcendence of it. Becatti’s comparanda derive exclusively from funerary contexts, ignoring the common use of the motif in domestic and civil

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580 In the pattern of religio-biographical interpretation, Aegyptiaca produced for imperial persons are assumed to be evidence of imperial involvement in the cult of Isis. Hadrianic art is often singled out as manifesting a particular obsession Egypt. The death in 130 C.E. of the emperor Hadrian's lover Antinoos in the Nile has been attributed as the catalyst for the emperor's construction of the “Canopus” at his villa in Tivoli and his continued obsession with the East.

581 Versluys, Aegyptiaca Romana. Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt, 345. This theory was refuted by Lafaye, Histoire du culte des divinités d'Alexandrie Sérapis, Isis, Harpocrate et Anubis hors de l'Egypte depuis les origines jusqu'à la naissance de l'école néo-platonicienne, 210-211.
In funerary settings, Becatti and others argue, the curtain alludes to the celestial apotheosis or heroization of the soul, or the abandonment of the body by the soul as the body would slough off a garment. Transferring these symbolic meanings to the decoration of the basilica, however, which was not funerary, is problematic. Still, Becatti used the frieze to support a sacra-religious framework for the building, interpreting the decoration as neo-Platonic. The drapery’s association to other imagery like the rape of Hylas, in Becatti’s view, marked those images as similarly allegorical: the triumphant charioteer and the rape of Hylas were allegorical representations of the transcendent soul, in line with neo-Platonic philosophy.

This religio-philosophical interpretation is still advanced by de Vos, who qualifies Becatti’s hypothesis by calling the function of the hall at least “commemorative,” if not necessarily funerary. De Vos comments that the repeated Aegyptiaca friezes in the hall function as brackets, uniting and circumscribing otherwise disparate imagery, including Hylas and the consul in biga panels, to convey that these images pertain not to the mundane but instead reference some other world or plane of existence. I am reluctant to accept the theory that faux drapery, a common motif in Roman art, was being used as a signal for viewers to read images in a different register, though de Vos’s idea of

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582 For a study of the use of textiles in domestic settings, and the depiction of such, see Stephenson, “Veiling the Late Roman House.”

583 See Becatti, Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina, 194-5.

584 The otherworldliness of Aegyptiaca has also been interpreted as a kind of escapist fantasy: Takacs, Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World, 32 ff. suggests Nilotic scenes offer the viewer a chance to immerse himself in a world away from Rome’s norms and demands.
bracketing and uniting is apt. Claudia Nauerth concludes that the subject of the Aegyptiaca friezes is the mysteries of Isis—even though her thorough description of the figures contained therein does not include any identifiable deity.\textsuperscript{585} She suggests, not unlike Becatti and de Vos, that the friezes are adjacent to the Hylas lunette because both the frieze and the mythological scene depict the process of entering into another world, redoubled in “eine doppelte Formensprache.”\textsuperscript{586} This idea is consistent with connoting Egyptian art and culture to a kind of otherworldliness, even an escapist fantasy.\textsuperscript{587} These same associations led Nilotic scenes to be interpreted as symbols of \textit{otium}, with its pleasurable leisure, and \textit{truphe}, abundance and luxury.\textsuperscript{588} Nauerth’s view, which does not include the neo-Pythagorean philosophy that Becatti’s does, fails to explain the allegorical tie between the biga procession and the Aegyptiaca frieze, nor would it suffice to explain the repetition of the motif if, as the Renaissance drawings have it, the drapery repeated down the length of the hall.

\textit{Egyptian Visual Culture in Late Antique Rome}

The views expressed above do not take into account social and economic factors at work outside of religious and philosophical belief systems. Few scholars have worked to illuminate the confused maze of Rome-Egypt relations after Diocletian, and the work

\textsuperscript{585} Nauerth, “Die ‘Vela Alexandrina’ Der Basilika Des Iunius Bassus in Rom.”

\textsuperscript{586} Ibid. Nauerth offers as comparison two graves at Kom-esch-Schugafa in Alexandria, whose decoration pairs the rape of Persephone with an embalming scene.

\textsuperscript{587} Versluys, \textit{Aegyptiaca Romana. Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt}, 33, 257-61.

\textsuperscript{588} Ibid., 257-8.
that looks at Egypt during this period does not focus on how Romans saw Egypt.\textsuperscript{589} It is said that the Egyptian gods vanished in the fourth century along with the Roman ones, and studies of the later period's visual material focuses on the early Christian valences that attached themselves to the Nile, newly named one of the rivers of paradise.\textsuperscript{590} Catalogues of Egyptian and Egyptianizing monuments typically do not extend into the fourth century. Versluys suggests, somewhat inexplicably, that there were fewer instances of Aegyptiaca in Roman material culture in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages\textsuperscript{591} (as compared, presumably, to the Augustan period) but in fact a great deal of Egyptian and Egyptian-looking material could be viewed in fourth century Rome, and indeed in Bassus’ immediate environs. If we look more closely at Egyptian art in Rome, whether imported or Roman made, we see that an Egyptian aesthetic was very much present in the late antique city.

Obelisks were one major force in the visual landscape of late antique Rome.\textsuperscript{592} Augustus had, of course, brought obelisks to Rome from Egypt, installing one in the Circus Maximus and another as a \textit{gnomon} in the Campus Martius. Later empires followed suit, sometimes importing obelisks from the pharaonic period and at other times

\textsuperscript{589} Bagnall, \textit{Egypt in Late Antiquity}.

\textsuperscript{590} A brief overview of Egyptian cults in Italy in Late Antiquity: Malaise, \textit{Les Conditions de Pénétration et de Diffusion Des Cultes Égyptiens En Italie}, 444-455.

\textsuperscript{591} Versluys 2017 p. 134-5.

\textsuperscript{592} For a complete study of obelisks in Rome and Constantinople (and Arles and Vienne) that focuses on the 3rd and 4th centuries, see Julius, “Obelisks in Late Antiquity: Roman or Egyptian? The Symbolic and Functional Meaning of Egyptian Obelisks in the Roman World in the 3rd and 4th Centuries AD.”
having obelisks manufactured from Egyptian stone and sent to Rome. Domitian, for example, had an obelisk made in Egypt and sent to Rome to put in his Temple of Isis.⁵⁹³

These obelisks continued to have symbolic lives in Late Antiquity, thanks to their curation and movement by later figures. When Romulus, son of the emperor Maxentius, died at the beginning of the fourth century, the emperor erected a sanctuary and circus in his son’s honor, and moved the Domitianic obelisk from the Temple of Isis to the circus he had constructed on the Via Appia.⁵⁹⁴ It hardly matters that this obelisk was a Roman construction: it symbolized Egyptianness, and Maxentius’ interest in moving the monument suggests the meanings attributed to it remained active even over two centuries after its import. The obelisk now stands in Piazza Navona.

Constantine, like his co-emperor Maxentius, also showed an interest in obelisks, although the 15th century BCE specimen he acquired from Aswan only made it as far as Alexandria before Constantine’s death. It was his son Constantius II who managed the feat, bringing the obelisk to Rome in 357⁵⁹⁵ and having it erected in the Circus Maximus. Ammianus Marcellinus recorded the travel of the obelisk from the port of Alexandria,

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⁵⁹³ Lançon, in *Rome in Late Antiquity*, 26, does not seem to regard this obelisk as “real” because it is not pharaonic in date. The Horti Sallustiani example discussed below, by contrast, he sees as an “effort to perpetuate an aesthetic tradition and an extravagant element, as eccentric as it was conspicuous, of imperial benefaction.”

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., 25. See also Richardson, *Topographical Dictionary*, s.v. *obeliscus Isei Campensis*, 274.

describing the monument’s origins and meanings. Through the kind of education performed by this author, Roman taste and aesthetic appreciation was shaped.596

“Of the countless shapes, however, called hieroglyphs, which we see on it, incised everywhere, an ancient authority makes evident the antiquity of the first wisdom.597

Truly, they carved birds and beasts, and even many species of another world, so that the memory of things achieved might more ably survive for the future centuries of another generation; [the obelisks] gave evidence the vows of kings, whether promised or carried out.”598

Ammianus’ description demonstrates a kind of reverence for the culture from which the obelisk derives, calling Egypt the site of primeval wisdom and noting with some approval their writing system’s capacity to preserve the past for future generations. His mention of posterity suggests Rome is slotted in as the “future centuries of another generation” once provided for by these histories.

Ammianus explains that while Augustus brought some obelisks from Egypt, this one had been left by the first emperor, because it was specially dedicated to the Sun God and he did not wish to profane it. The emperor Constantine, however, “rightly thought that he was committing no sacrilege if he took this marvel from one temple and

596 See Swetnam-Burland Egypt in Italy p. 90 ff for the concept of “educating Roman eyes” and teaching Roman viewers what it meant to have Egyptian artifacts like obelisks in their midst.

597 17.4.8: initialis sapientiae vetus insignivit auctoritas.

598 Amm. Marc. 17.4. Translation Swetnam-Burland, Egypt in Italy, 93. For more on this passage, see Benaissa, “Ammianus Marcellinus ‘Res Gestae’ 17.4.17 and the Translator of the Obelisk in Rome’s ‘Circus Maximus.’”
consecrated it at Rome, that is to say, *in the temple of the whole world...* \(^{599}\) (emphasis mine), and proceeded with its removal. The centrality of Rome, in Ammianus’ estimation, makes it right that a monumental object be brought out of Egypt to the capital of the Roman empire.\(^ {600}\)

I take his use of the word *templum* here to mean not literally a place of religious worship or sacrifice, but more figuratively a center, a point of powerful conjunction. Ammianus seems to have borrowed the phrase from earlier texts: the phrase *temple of the whole world*, which is also found in the Corpus Hermeticum, a set of treatises likely dating to the 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) or 3\(^{\text{rd}}\) century CE. In the earlier instance, however, it refers not to Rome, but to Egypt: “Do you not know, Asclepius, that Egypt is an image of heaven or, to be more precise, that everything governed and moved in heaven came down to Egypt and was transferred there? If truth were told, our land is the *temple of the whole world.*”\(^ {601}\)

Fashioned as a dialogue between the title character and Trismegistus, the treatise speaks to the significance of Egypt as holy place and as microcosm of heaven. The dialogue goes on to foretell the decline of Egypt. Ammianus likely appropriated the phrase “temple of the whole world,” using this quotation from an earlier text as a rhetorical underlining of his argument that Rome was heir to the central place in the

\(^{599}\) *id est in templo mundi totius* 17.4.13


\(^{601}\) Copenhaver, *Hermetica: The Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius.*
world’s cultural order. The Ammianus passage also describes the technical feat of moving the obelisk, noting the massive size “hitherto unknown” of the boat, its 300 oarsmen, and the efforts of hoisting up “that veritable mountain.” Naming Rome the center of the world and boasting of her capabilities, Ammianus makes clear that Rome is a suitable and deserving heir to the primitive knowledge represented by this monument.

This obelisk was of course transported and erected by Constantius II almost a quarter of a century after Bassus’ hall was built, so it cannot be said to have catalyzed the Aegyptiaca in the hall. Its removal and erection at this time does, however, serve to demonstrate the persistent interest in obelisks as one kind of Egyptian material culture in the fourth century. Ammianus’ treatment of the monument, moreover, affords us some insight into fourth century Roman views on Egypt.

Ammianus mentions other obelisks at Rome, including one in the Horti Sallustiani, a set of gardens near to the Basilica of Junius Bassus that had been established by its republican era namesake but then transferred to imperial ownership. Besides the obelisk, the horti contained, as 18th century excavations revealed, a group of over-life-size granite sculptures from pharaonic Egypt. The cluster included

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602 Cancik and Cancik-Lindemeier trace this phrase much farther back, suggesting a deeper and richer intertextuality than Ammianus’ quotation alone would reveal, in “‘Tempel der Ganzen Welt:’ Ägypten und Rom.” See their diagram, p. 51.

603 For the obelisk see Richardson, Topographical Dictionary, s.v. obeliscus hortorum Sallustianorum.

604 For a fuller discussion of the Egyptian sculptures found in the garden and a fleshing out of the issues surrounding their context, see Hartswick, The Gardens of Sallust, 130-8.
identifiable rulers of Egypt as well as a Roman copy of the pharaonic sculpture of Arsinoe. Though we cannot say how late this group was collected or displayed in this arrangement, it is likely they still stood that way in the fourth century, as the area was largely abandoned except for Christian communities (who, presumably, would not have cared to curate collections of profane Egyptian sculptures). There is also some evidence that they were found in the ruins of a building, which is referred to as the “casino di stile egizio.” We can take from this that at least part of the garden’s sculptural installation and perhaps also an architectural feature in the area was characterized by Egyptian style or objects.

Further afield, to the southwest of Bassus’ estate stood the pyramidal tomb of Gaius Cestius, and the Iseum Campense, restored by Severus Alexander in the first third of the third century, continued to support the worship of Isis and Serapis as it had since the republican period. Caracalla built a Serapeum on the Quirinal at the start of the third century.

The Egyptian monuments in Rome discussed above as the situational landscape for the Bassus Aegyptiaca are not helpful as close comparanda. More apt are the glass opus sectile panels from Kenchreai, which include Nilotic motifs that bordered larger figured scenes (See Figure 3.34). Because of their stylization and their lack of depth, the Kenchreai and the Esquiline friezes resemble one another, and together mimic an

605 For a brief survey of the Egyptian and “Egyptianizing” monuments of Rome, see Roullet, The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome, which gives a short outline of the establishment of Egyptian cults in Rome and the trends from one emperor to the next, esp. p. 1-6. For a catalogue raisonné, p. 53 ff.
Egyptian arrangement of figures on a groundline. Like their marble counterparts in Rome, the Kenchreai panels also demonstrate an interest in marking off the boundaries of these scenes with multiple framing devices, whether rows of diamonds on point or a succession of mottled stones that serve as a groundline for an array of flamingos and lotuses. According to archaeologists' reconstructions, the Aegyptiaca panels from Kenchreai were arranged beneath larger panoramic scenes, so their (somewhat ancillary) role within the larger program is similar to the subsidiary or framing role played by the Egyptian frieze at the Basilica of Junius Bassus. This focus on ornamental borders may seem trivial, but with no means of mechanically duplicating repeated motifs, but the amount of labor required (albeit cheap labor) would be extraordinary. Such a design requires the artisan to cut, shape, sand, and polish tiny pieces of glass or stone into tiny, uniform, close-fitting shapes, not for the sake of a decorative afterthought, but in service of a governing design ethic that integrates discrete pieces into a visual coherent program.

Also contemporary were the Nilotic mosaics of the Mausoleum of Santa Costanza, no longer surviving but recorded around 1530 by Francesco Ollandia.

It seems that there was never a moment when Aegyptiaca vanished from the skyline of Rome or from its curated interiors, but is there any clue to the specific fourth century resonances of Aegyptiaca at Rome? Clearly aristocrats were continuing to use Aegyptiaca in their self-presentation, as the Egyptian sculpture group from the Horti Sallustiani demonstrates. Despite these pieces of inspiration and influence, “What did Egypt mean to Late Antique Rome?” is quite a difficult question to answer, especially given that many studies stop with the late empire. I believe, however, that the
Aegyptiaca-studded landscape described above makes a case that Egypt was not merely a far-off exotic land, but was very much present in Roman life in the fourth century.

Absent new analyses of Egypt in the eyes of fourth century Rome, we need to shift our viewpoint if we wish to augment our understanding of the Aegyptiaca frieze in the Basilica of Junius Bassus, and perhaps other decoration like it. First, a corrective is required: we must see the frieze as a Roman product in a Roman context, as opposed to seeking Egyptian meanings that we assume the Roman patron was trying to convey. In the context of the Bassus program, the friezes must be seen as decoration. Far short of being the key to the program's meaning, or exposing Bassus' religious proclivities or some personal aspect of his self-aggrandizement, this ornament is instead a paratext to the larger program of decoration. In the following section I investigate how the application of these viewpoints would shift the reading of the Aegyptiaca frieze toward something like the way a fourth century Roman viewer might have experienced them.  

**Frieze as Paratext**

When we view this frieze not as a foreign insertion, but as a Roman product made for a Roman program, we see that it is not symbolic religious content or foreignness that is the force behind its message. In fact, taken literally in terms of signification, it is nonsense: as a series of symbols or iconography the Aegyptiaca means nothing.  

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606 A recent M.A. thesis takes on this topic: Kruijer, “The Hylas Panel from the Basilica of Iunius Bassus. Understanding ‘Egypt’ in Rome in the Fourth Century CE.” Unfortunately the thesis is embargoed and the author has not responded to my inquiries.

607 Compare the example offered by Swetnam-Burland of the so-called “Mensa Isiaca.”
interpretation instead regards the Aegyptiaca in the basilica as a kind of *paratext*. This designation is indebted to the work of Hérica Valladares on pictorial paratexts.\(^{608}\) Valladares suggests that we analyze as *paratexts* those components of decoration which are figuratively and formally sidelined, and which seem to make no meaningful contribution to the narrative program. Her examples are the “floating figures” of Campanian painted programs, such as cupids at work or disconnecting dancing figures, often ignored by early archaeologists and excised by early collectors. More than precious miniature space-fillers, these “floating figures” actually served to frame the viewer’s perception of the pictorial ensemble. She argues that such figures can be read as a “paratext,” re-stating the messages of the program, or serving as visual riffs using contrast in scale and subject.

The Aegyptiaca frieze uses miniaturization and formal contrast to play off the rest of the panels. In the decoration of the Esquiline hall, the Egyptian friezes must be viewed as a kind of marginalia. The procession of figures, which might otherwise be megalographic subject material, is turned into a border pattern by miniaturization and abstraction. Their designation as decoration, however, does not mark them as insignificant. Rather, I argue that they serve semantically, as formally, to frame the wider pictorial program of the hall. As a piece of decoration that borders the drapery and hems

\(^{608}\) Hérica Valladares, “Pictorial Paratexts: Floating Figures in Roman Wall Painting.” The author notes her work’s reliance on Gérard Genette’s development of the concept for literary texts in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, originally published in French as *Seuils*, “Thresholds.” Valladares notes in note 12 that Genette himself builds on Derrida’s idea of the *parergon*, a work beside or in addition to the work.
in the curve of the tableaux, this ornament also delineates and seams together the timeline of the images depicted. By referring to deep history, a time before even Rome was founded, they add *gravitas* to the program. To put Roman content—a consul’s procession, for example, an historic event with a distinct date and finiteness—alongside a decoration that implies agelessness and eternity, as the Egyptian figures do, is to “add value” to the depiction of a Roman historical event. It gives the depiction of circus games and factions and a consular portrait the same dressing as a pharaonic tomb, lending these images the same sense of grandeur, permanence, and constancy that one would get from the impression of an obelisk. In this way the frieze has a cosmographic function, helping to limn the rest of the decoration and to order the viewer's conception of it by suggesting a long-stretching timeline, wherein manifestations of *Romanitas* have earned a place.

For Elsner, the age of the frieze’s formal devices is most significant: the figures, their lower halves in profile, arranged paratactically with no depth and a basic symmetrical composition, follow canons of Egyptian art as old as the pharaohs. Elsner views the friezes in the hall as expressions of classicism, loosely defined, where any quotation of an older thing is classicizing, in that it looks to a model of form or subject to emulate and call up an earlier time. I agree with this view, insofar as the friezes are

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610 Elsner “*Classicism in Roman Art,*” 283 It is true that even here I have excised this ornament from the figural tableaux it once adorned, and pulled it apart from the *trompe l’oeil* drapery device it surrounds. I do so in part for practical reasons: I wish to address the complex matter of the historiography of Roman Aegyptiaca, and it seems least cumbersome to devote a separate section to this subject matter.
meant to call up an ancient culture to which Rome had access and in some way viewed itself as beneficiary and successor. If the adoption of Egyptian formal vocabulary is there to give us a sense of the chronological scale of cultural accomplishment, it is also a means of incorporating a new style or formal language to reinforce the same message of power. The presence of motifs and a style so markedly different from either the “classical” naturalism of the Hylas panels or the more static, iconic, “Byzantine” look of the biga panel struck 19th c archaeologist de Rossi as so jarring as to be injurious: “Nei compartimenti o saggi superstiti dell’opus sectile della basilica di Giunio Basso ferisce l’occhio una non lieve differenza d’arte e di stile.”611 This unsubtle difference, however, is not for lack of skill, nor is it intended to insult aesthetic sensibilities. Rather, it is to state the basilica's message of power in multi-lingual ways, and to situate Rome in this pedigree, as ruling *caput mundi*.

I would agree further with Elsner’s admonition against compartmentalizing the interpretations of these markedly Egyptian forms, so that we categorize them in iconographic ghettos as either low-brow kitsch or as mysterious and sacred—and in either case, insulated from the “Roman-ness” of Roman art. His treatment of this and other Aegyptiaca as a dialect of classicism is therefore useful because it takes this decoration seriously without elevating it to the divine and mysterious.

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Malaise introduced with his *culturel* vs. *cultuel* dichotomy the possibility that Aegyptiaca can bear cultural meanings without having a link to the cultic.\textsuperscript{612} The most widely accepted of these cultural signifiers is the connotation of *truphe*.\textsuperscript{613} Because Egypt was a wealthy land with a long history of culture and civilization, Aegyptiaca are read as a totem of affluence and happiness. The patron who adorns his environment with Aegyptiaca hopes to bring wealth and fortune to his home as Rome brought Egypt under its will. Barbara Borg offers some nuance to this interpretation, highlighting the ways in which Roman culture recognized Egyptian culture as one of remarkable riches and accomplishments, not just the source of enthralling zoomorphic religion.\textsuperscript{614}

*Truphe* could be taken as one meaning of the Aegyptiaca in the Basilica of Junius Bassus, and indeed there is nothing prohibiting such a reading, but it does not explain why Aegyptiaca were chosen, when so many other motifs of abundance and fortune might have served a similar purpose. Where this is relevant, I think, is that the Egyptian tapestries frame the program (as it survives) in terms of abundance, richness, variety, and delight, allowing the patron to give gifts that fit this description. Textiles were frequently

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{612} Malaise, “La diffusion des cultes Isiaques: un problème de terminologie et de critique,” 34 begins his discussion of terminology, headed “*Culturel et cultuel.*”
\item \textsuperscript{613} Ibid., 37, but also this is the main thrust of Versluys' *Aegyptiaca Romana*. At p. 295: “It should be concluded that Nilotic scenes are thus primarily *truphe* motifs, whose specific meaning can differ strongly and depends on the context in which the depictions functioned.”
\item \textsuperscript{614} Borg, “Traumland Ägypten -- Zur Rezeption ägyptischer Luxusmotive.” Borg’s examples look at hairstyles formerly attributed to cultic links with Serapis and to toga folds thought to imitate the clothing of Isiac priests. Both these trends, she argues, persist when there is no evidence of cultic affiliation, suggesting Romans adopted these styles as part of elite self-fashioning rather than religious adherence.
\end{itemize}
given in the Roman world, as church donations recorded in the Liber Pontificalis attest. Bassus also had an example set for him by Pompey, whose portico was decorated with *attalica*, gold-embroidered cloth so named for the Attalid court whence they originated.\textsuperscript{615}

Fourth century Rome continued to value Egyptian religion, culture, and art. Isiac cult was alive and well at this point, even as Christianity gained ground. Even as Rome had just lost access to some of Egypt’s riches, as the surplus of Egypt’s grain was diverted to Constantinople,\textsuperscript{616} Bassus’ inclusion of the motifs that referenced Egypt frames a view of Rome as continuing to cover the world. The meaning we can add, by viewing this as a Roman work instead of an imitative one, is that the expression of power and in late antique art is not limited to a single formal language of expression or bounded by the constraints of a traditional progression of style. In its syncretic embrace of all styles, the Bassus program subsumes its peripheries, suggesting that Romanness is transcendent and all-consuming, dynamic and chameleonic in its manifestations.\textsuperscript{617}

\textsuperscript{615} Propertius 2.32.11-12: *scilicet umbrosis sordet Pompeia columnis porticus, aulaeis nobilis Attalicis.*


\textsuperscript{617} Cf. Otto Brendel, who argued that the eclecticism of Roman art was intentional, and employed different styles for different meanings.
CHAPTER 9

The Tiger Panels

“It will be a disgrace to you if I have no Greek panthers.”
-Marcus Caelius Rufus, in a letter to Cicero, 50 BCE

Subject and Origins

The tiger panels from the Basilica of Junius Bassus form a mirrored pair. In each panel a tigress, striped in serpentine against giallo antico, attacks a white bull. The combat—the outcome of which holds no suspense—is set on a dark serpentine ground of serpentine. Behind the tiger is a small tree, a branch of which bends over the tiger’s back in imitation of her curving tail. This tree and the brown spotted ground are the only indications of a landscape.

The panels depict *venationes*, staged animal combats that were part of arena spectacles in the Roman world. *Editores* mounted both contests between animals and encounters that pitted humans against animals; the word *venatio* does not denote which type was meant, and might even mean simply the display and exhibition of animals. Such

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618 Cic. Fam. 8.6.

venationes may have had their roots in spectacular processions like that in 275 BCE in Alexandria, described by Athenaeus. Ptolemy II Philadelphus’ triumphal procession included not only soldiers, slaves, costumed actors, metal vessels, and images, but also fatted oxen, camels, dogs, sheep, leopard, bears, and exotic birds. Their origins are listed: from the Phasis (the Black Sea coast) from Ethiopia, Euboea, India, Arabia. In the ancient Near East, too, rulers maintained menageries stocked with animals to allow those at court to hunt for pleasure and exercise when they wished. It is from these hunting parks, called paradeisos, that our word “paradise” comes. Animals might also be brought as tribute from remote regions. Like the material riches brought to these kings, the animals symbolized the wealth and extent of the kingdom and the king’s mastery over it.

At Rome, the earliest animal displays in the Republic featured local animals such as deer, bulls, bears, and boars, with elephants being among the first foreign animals to be featured. The earliest record of the appearance of exotic species in games at Rome dates to 186 BCE, when Livy tells us that Marcus Fulvius Nobilior sponsored wild

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620 Deipnosophistae 5. For a survey see Shelton, “Beastly Spectacles.”

621 For which see Llewellyn-Jones, “Keeping and Displaying Royal Tribute Animals in Ancient Persia and the Near East.” At p. 307: “Across the ancient Near East, gifts of horses, falcons, parrots, peacocks, lions, giraffes, bears, tigers, zebu, camels, and many other forms of faunal exotica occurred in the context of a ruler’s relationship with foreign lands – be those lands conquered vassal states obliged to pay tribute, semi-autonomous satellite states tactfully proffering gifts, or super-powers engaging in status competition through lavish gift-displays – the very appearance of those animals heralded the cosmic significance of Near Eastern monarchy.”

622 Elephants: Their use on two occasions, 275 B.C. and 251 B.C., is recorded by Seneca (Brev. 13.3; 14.2), Eutropius (2.2.14), Varro (L. 7.389.39), and Florus (1.18.26) on the occasion of Republican military triumphs.
animal hunts, complete with lions and leopards. It quickly became evident how such events garnered public favor, and along with it power and status. A ban on the import of African animals followed, though it was only in effect for 16 years. After this, spectacles escalated accordingly, as the magistrates who arranged them sought to give ever more generous and astounding displays. Images that illustrated these munera or depicted animals kept in enclosures were popular for domestic decoration from the 1st century BCE on. It was the public appreciation for and pleasure at such displays, and the centuries long tradition of these images, that spurred Bassus to select them as a major subject of the panels in his hall. The tiger panels are larger than the other surviving panels, and constructed on a larger scale. The images commemorated a magnificent spectacle, one which required years of planning and the mobilization of resources of a personal, political, and financial nature. To depict these venationes was to epitomize these efforts on behalf of the Roman people, to vaunt Bassus’ ability to afford such a display, and to preserve the memory of his having done so.

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625 Gaius Aufudius, a spokesperson for the plebs, demanded that the ban be overturned, indicating how great the demand for these entertainments was. Pliny NH 8.24.

Epplett 508 discusses the increasing variety of animals used in venationes in the Late Republic, with innovative pairings and stagings to keep the spectacles from growing stale.
Just as the practice of collecting and displaying fierce and/or exotic species seems to have come from Near Eastern and Hellenistic traditions that had assimilated Near Eastern and Egyptian practices, so, too, did the iconography of the animal hunt. The same imagery is seen across multiple media in all parts of the Mediterranean. Its earliest parallel may be the Achaemenid imagery of the bull and lion *symplegma* (intertwining) at the audience hall of the palace at Persepolis (6th century BCE). (See Figure 9.1) This imagery, however, seems not to be a representation of actual animal combats, like those between lions and deer or other horned animals seen on seal impressions. It is the female in feline species who typically hunts, yet the *symplegma* shows two male animals. Furthermore, the bull may not stand for a domesticated animal of prey in this imagery: it, like the lion, symbolized kingship in the Persian world. Their pairing together is a joining of nature’s most powerful and noble beasts, and the iconography is almost entirely exclusive to palatial sculpture. The balance of their powers signaled a kind of harmony in nature. The iconography transfers across media and across centuries to adorn 2nd century BCE Parthian horse trappings on which a lion attacks a stag. (See Figures 9.2a and b)

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626 Root “Animals in the Art of Ancient Iran,” 201.


Hellenistic art continued to feature savage beasts attacking other animals, typically in the context of hunt depictions. The lion hunt relief on the “Alexander sarcophagus” for a Phoenician king of Sidon is a good example of the association between animal-on-animal combat and royal hunts for animals: we see the hunt’s quarry, the lion, attacking a horse, this time head-on. Hellenistic hunt imagery depicted the ideal leader as exercising dominion over nature. This theme moved into the Roman visual repertoire as an illustration of bravery and virtus.629

The triumphalist significance of circus games in the Roman world was discussed in the chapter on the processional panel, but they re-echo here. While the tiger panels in Bassus’ hall can be said to intimate a particular Roman spectacle, they are not free from their iconographic history. By installing this imagery in his hall, then, Bassus was able to commemorate his own games as well as gesture to a rich history of distinguished cultures and their most noble qualities.

Becatti’s interpretation of the tiger panels is more tightly determined—too much so, in my view. He argues that the animal victims depicted symbolize the mortal body, the destruction of which by death is inevitable.630 Becatti quotes Prudentius’ Hamartigenia, in which the author discusses the origin of sin.631 He reads the centaur panel (not


629 See Tuck, “The Origins of Roman Imperial Hunting Imagery: Domitian and the Redefinition of Virtus under the Principate.”

630 Becatti, Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina, 188.

631 In Harmartigenia 219-221, ferocious lions feed on harmless cattle.
surviving, but attested by Sangallo and Bruzio; see Renaissance drawings catalog) along similar lines. The lion who attacks the centaur is a symbol of evil, destructive forces; the centaur, a closer relative to the refined Chiron than to the centaurs who battled the Lapiths, is victorious.632 An alternative reading, as opposed to Becatti’s allegorical battle between good and evil, suggests that the tigers devour the helpless bovines because this is the rightful order of things: this is the way nature is supposed to work, with the strong triumphing over the week.

The Spectacles and their Depiction

The origin of the *venationes* is the hunt, the activity of kings, heroes, and the aristocracy that demonstrated manliness, bravery, and dominion over the natural world.633 Emperors and other editors of games extended the analogy between this spectacle and the hunt by distributing gifts of meat and other foodstuffs, as if the crowds were partaking of the spoils. Spectators received food items or small animals, or in some cases tokens that they could exchange for animals.634 Some emperors even licensed audiences to carry animals out of the arena as they wished, aggrandizing themselves through their

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632 Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*, 189-90. Becatti offers examples of sarcophagi that show combats between lions and centaurs.


634 Suet. *Dom.* 4.5; Dio 67.4.4.
generosity. Donald Kyle points out that when spectators scuffled over tokens, or left their seats in the stands to enter the arena and take their “quarry,” these audience members themselves became participants in the spectacle, re-enacting the contest of the hunt as if “players in a communal sporting drama.” I would add that this extension of the spectacle was a performance of consensus, not unlike the crowd’s participation in the pompa, which signaled their endorsement of the games-giver and their acquiescence to their position relative to him. Futrell writes about the violence of the arena as a kind of “compensatory violence,” a safe outlet that replaced war. Venationes in particular were a kind of ritual offering of booty (like animals brought as tribute). Their destruction in the arena was meant to illustrate the “dire consequences of challenging Roman authority” and to maintain the status quo of power dynamics.

The venationes began the morning’s spectacles, with gladiatorial combats in the afternoon. In between was the damnatio ad bestias, the practice whereby criminals were executed by exposure to animals in the arena. This punishment, for non-Roman citizens only, is depicted in the Zliten mosaic from the 3rd CE (see Figure 9.3), as are other sporting events of the day. Many modern viewers have wondered why this and

635 SHA Gord. Tres 3.5-8.; SHA Prob. 19.2-4; SHA Heliogab. 8.3.
636 Kyle, Spectacles of Death, 311.
638 Ibid., 51.
639 Kyle, Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World, 312-314.
640 See Parrish, “The Date of the Mosaics from Zliten.”
other scenes of violence were appealing and pleasurable subjects for adorning interiors in the Roman world. Newby looks at mythological landscapes that depict danger to human as devices that draw the viewer into their illusion and keep him safe from actual danger, balancing his position as voyeur and victim. Her work focuses more on the natural realm, and settings in gardens, which does not describe our viewing context, but the idea of balancing safety and thrill might still hold. Henry Maguire argues that in church contexts, Byzantine viewers no longer saw images of animal violence as “literal illustrations of unredeemed nature,” but instead experienced a shift in vision that caused them to see these depictions as allegorical and even as talismanic or protective.

Becatti’s reading is not far off from this. Shelby Brown would see the lion and bull depictions as an assertion of nature’s rightful order, the killing of a weaker animal by a stronger one, and thereby (similar to what Futrell says) an illustration and maintenance of current power structures. My study does not take on the challenge of answering why violent themes suited viewing audiences, except to say that the Greco-Roman appetite for violent images is clearly demonstrated by the record. Instead, I take up the panels as evidence of the editor’s self-fashioning, investigating the ways in which these scenes commemorate his efforts and manifest the intangible resources and influence of the patron. These are artifacts that render material and concrete his social and political

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642 Maguire, “Profane Icons: The Significance of Animal Violence in Byzantine Art.”

relationships, even as they advertise the ongoing strength and extent of the Roman empire.

**The Parallels from Ostia**

The Bassus tiger panels are very close relatives to the animal combat panels seen in the slightly later decoration of the hall at Porta Marina in Ostia. The Ostian hall is about half the size of the Bassus hall, with its main space measuring 7.45 m x 6.7 m, but the scale of the animal combats is similar. The Ostian room, usually written of as a *schola domestica* or some other kind of reception room, was never completed. It was found with its walls having collapsed inwards, perhaps due to an earthquake, with raw materials intended for installation still littering the floor. Its reconstruction in the Museo dell’Alto Medioevo in Rome is based on the find spots of the panels. (See Figure 0.5)

The Ostian examples feature a matched pair of lions facing opposite directions so that they mirror each other, like the tiger panels at the Basilica of Junius Bassus. These lions attack grey deer, their teeth and sharp claws drawing blood that pearls up in red glass against the animals’ skin. They are costumed in jeweled harnesses, which make the

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645 The exedra of the Ostian hall is 6 m x 3.9 m. For reference, the Bassus hall’s main *aula* was about 14.5 m X 19 m, not including the narthex or the apse. Coins dating to the reign of Magnus Maximus (383-388) were embedded in the mortar of lion panel, providing a terminus post quem. The latest coins at the site date to the reign of Flavius Eugenius (392-394). Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*, 41-47.
ferocious and fine animals even more precious. The lions are reconstructed on the right side of the wall, while on the left there survives one tiger panel, much like the Bassus panel, again, except the victim is a brown deer or antelope instead of a white cow. One would expect this tiger to have a companion piece to mirror it like the opposite wall.

The Bassus hall likely had more animal combat panels than survive today. Renaissance period texts mention lions (ancients as well as early modern audiences knew the difference between these large felines) and other animals like horses and goats.\textsuperscript{646} Similar themes likely decorated the 4th century domus at Sette Sale.\textsuperscript{647} While the fragments of the decoration have not been reconstructed, teardrop-shaped pieces that match the claws of the Bassus tigers indicate Sette Sale once had the same subject on its walls, perhaps also in matched sets. (See Figure 3.33)

The similarities in these depictions, all produced in the mid to late fourth century in or just outside of Rome, suggests a local workshop capable of turning out somewhat uniform sets of images. Their similarity to each other suggests the existence of something like a pattern book from which clients could select panels when commissioning opus sectile decoration.\textsuperscript{648} That these examples are in some way uniform suggests they belong

\textsuperscript{646} See Appendix B, Ugonio, and other depictions discussed in Chapter Three, Graphic Evidence.


\textsuperscript{648} Kiilerich, “The Opus Sectile from Porta Marina at Ostia and the Aesthetics of Interior Decoration.”
to a kind of generic category, as did the animal mosaics before them, even though they reference the Roman world’s most rare and exotic animals using the empire’s most expensive imported materials. Their participation in a type parallels the fact that the standards for magistrates’ games was uniformly high, while the slight differences between individual examples parallels the desire for each patron to offer entertainments that were innovative and uniquely memorable.

The theme was clearly a popular one in other media as well. A North African 2nd century CE floor mosaic on which a lion attacks an onager, or wild ass, displays the same type of conquest of prey by a predator (see Figure 9.7), although the surrounding works of art do not survive to indicate whether this was part of a larger set of arena scenes. Consular diptychs, too, frequently took up the theme of animal combats, frequently featuring the competitions in the lower register of a diptych, beneath a large image of the magistrate himself. The right panel of the diptych of Anastasius (517 CE) for example, depicts a semicircular arena in which bears try to get at “hunters” being lifted up in baskets by their colleagues (See Figure 9.8). This bear-baiting game was riskier for the human participants but spared the bears from being wounded or killed—and thus saved

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649 For which see Parrish, “A Mosaic of a Lion Attacking an Onager” and Belis, *Roman Mosaics in the J. Paul Getty Museum.*), no. 5, with earlier bibliography and additional domestic comparanda.

650 See Olovsdotter, *The Consular Image,* 51 for further description of this scene and her catalogue entry 11 for this and other Anastasius diptychs. Additional examples include the Bourges diptych and the Areobindus diptych in Zürich. For a comparative discussion of some of these scenes, see section 4.1 “Motifs and Scenes related to the consular Munera,” 123-127. Unlike the opus sectile and mosaic examples, these diptychs feature *venationes* with human participants.
the patron money. At the bottom of the scene, slaves open doors to release bears or provide exist strategies for the human players, while between them an acrobatic figure tries to leap over the bear. The so-called Liverpool *venatio* panel of course derives its name from its depiction of animal spectacle to which it devotes two-thirds of its space. Hunters emerge from arena doors to fight the horned animals trapped there (See Figure 9.9).\textsuperscript{651}

**Hunting and Capture**

Another category of artworks related to animal spectacle depicts the process by which the animals reached the Roman arena: the scenes of hunting, trapping, and transporting exotic animals. This is a common subject in elite mosaics. Most famous for its depiction of this theme is the great hunt mosaic from the Villa del Casale at Piazza Armerina.\textsuperscript{652} (See Figure 9.10) The long, scroll-like composition contains several vignettes, some of animals already locked in battle, or attacking the soldiers who hunt them. Several scenes depict the loading of the captured animals onto transport ships.\textsuperscript{653} Oxen pull heavily-laden carts of their wild loot back toward ships, and men carry large closed boxes on poles, toting their quarry on board. An elephant climbs the ramp toward a ship, apparently submitting itself willingly to the journey. At the far southern end of the

\textsuperscript{651} See Gibson, *The Liverpool Ivories*, and Cameron, “The Origin, Context and Function of Consular Diptychs.”

\textsuperscript{652} See most recently Steger, *Piazza Armerina: La Villa Romaine du Casale en Sicile*, with earlier bibliography.

\textsuperscript{653} For the transport of wild animals from their natural habitats to the site of the spectacle, Bertrand, “Remarques sur le commerces des bêtes sauvages.”
hall is a tigress who sees her own impression in a mirror or a glass sphere, while a hunter flees from her to the safety of his ship.654

A bear hunt mosaic from Baiae, also from the 4th century CE, depicts the trapping of bears by the use of nets.655 (See Figure 9.11) Two names are legible in the mosaic, “Lucius” and “Minus,” which label two beaters at the left of the composition. The figure indicated as “Minus” is on a fragment separate from the rest of the mosaic in the Naples Archaeological Museum (MANN 11477). Together with two other beaters they hold sticks and flush their snarling prey into the area that is surrounded by netting. This example of named hunters may suggest famed professionals, perhaps members of hunting guilds like the Telegenii (named in the Magerius mosaic) as well as the Pentasii, the Synematii and the Tauriscii.656 It is likely, too, that local people were coerced into these hunts.657 Although hunting was an aristocratic activity, it is highly unlikely that the patrons of the games themselves helped capture the animals for their spectacles. They did, however, interact with military bureaucracy and provincial administrators, working across their amicitia networks to expedite the process. Christopher Epplett has also demonstrated that the Roman army was instrumental in capturing animals for the games.

654 This is the interpretation of Steger, Piazza Armerina, 117-118.

655 See Belis, Roman Mosaics in the J. Paul Getty Museum, no. 2 (entry by Kenneth Lapatin).


657 See Ibid. 7 for the few literary mentions of indigenous people being assigned to hunting expeditions.
and that positions were delegated this responsibility, either on a rotating seasonal or permanent basis.\textsuperscript{658}

Closer to the Basilica of Junius Bassus was a fourth century hunt mosaic, found under the church of Santa Bibiana in what is presumed to have been the former Horti Liciniani (see Figure 9.12).\textsuperscript{659} The format was a long corridor, like the Great Hunt at Piazza Armerina, but only 60% of the mosaic was removed. The Santa Bibiana mosaic is arranged in two registers, so that a viewer on one long side sees the lower half of the action but the upper half of the mosaic is upside down, meant to be viewed from across the hall. If the viewer is standing where the Horti Liciniani consuls are displayed in the Museo Centrale Montemartini, he sees at right a hunter on horseback, assisted by a dog, who spears a wild boar. At left, bears are chased into a trap box that is held ready by one of the beaters. On the other side of the mosaic, dogs chase antelopes or deer. All of this action takes place within a perimeter lined with nets, like those seen in the late 3\textsuperscript{rd} century CE villa mosaic from Hippo Regius (See Figure 9.13). In this last, large felines have been baited by groups of deer or other herbivores, and then soldiers lower torches to flush the beasts into nets. These mosaics give us some sense of the strategies used to capture wild

\textsuperscript{658} Epplett, “The Capture of Animals by the Roman Military.”

\textsuperscript{659} Cima, “Gli horti Liciniani,” 435. Goes on to explain links w/ texts about hunting, like Pseudo-Oppian's \textit{Cynegetica} treatise (written in Syria c. 215 CE). Suggests given the links between text and image perhaps an illuminated manuscript might have spread the iconography of the hunt motif.
animals, as do texts like Oppian’s *Cynegetica* (c. 215 CE) and the *Cestoi* by Julius Africanus (c. 225 CE).^{660}

Though the combat panels themselves omit any clue as to the procurement process of these fine specimens, patrons undoubtedly intended that viewers be impressed by their ability to gather such a variety of species from so far away. While many attendees at the games may not have had any idea what steps one had to go through to acquire a tiger from India, they would know whether the last consul had been able to do so, and they might hope for novelties each time. The editor’s peers, moreover, would have had a detailed sense of what sorts of machinations went on behind the scenes of the *ludi*, and the success of the spectacle was determined as much by the aristocrats’ more informed impressions of it as by the satisfaction of the plebs.

Neither do the animal combat panels convey directly the enormous costs associated with provisioning for these festivities,^{661} at least not as explicitly as the kind of “receipt” given on the Magerius transcript. Yet this, too, was something that was implicitly communicated by these images. By depicting strong and ferocious exotic animals in a material that was itself costly and exquisite, Bassus redoubled the communication of the panel that no costs were spared on the event.

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^{661} For some sample costs, see Marcone, “L’allestimento dei giochi annuali a Roma nel IV sec. d.C.: aspetti economici e ideologici.” 117-118.
As games became more extravagant, official measures were taken to curb spending. Sumptuary laws were introduced to restrict the amounts that could be spent on games and limit the extravagance of gifts associated with them. As Marcone has it, magistrates like Symmachus expressed gratitude for the moderation encouraged by these new limits (Ep. 9: 126), but Symmachus’ own efforts to organize his son Memmius’ praetorian games were hardly marked by restraint. In addition, the number of praetors was doubled, with the idea that the expenses would be divided among a greater number of sponsors.

We have little evidence for the prices of animals, but the Magerius mosaic offers some specifics. For each leopard exhibited, according to the text on the mosaic, the company received 1000 denarii (4000 sesterces, about 25,000 pounds). While this is recorded as being twice the asking price (because Magerius was so magnanimous), it might be worth pointing out that the cost of getting leopards to Hadrumentum (Sousse, Tunisia), the nearest city to Magerius’ villa, his extravagant expenditure might not have

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662 One might think of this as a kind of campaign finance reform.

663 E.g. by Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, in the senates consultum de prettiis gladiatores minuendis, the text of which is preserved in CIL 2.6278=ILS5163. These prices specifically refer to gladiatorial munera. See Bomgardner, The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre, 208 for a table of allowed costs/wages/fees with modern equivalents, and, further, his appendix on the text. Further price edicts were issued by Diocletian in 301.

664 Requested by the senate: CTh 6, 4, 21, 6-7. CTh 6, 4, 25. See Polara, Le venationes: Fenomeno economico e costruzione giuridica.

665 For these conversions, see Bomgardner Story of the Roman Amphitheater, 211. His note 54 p. 257 explains that a denarius, or 4 sesterces, was the working wage for a day’s labor. His calculations would put that day wage at 25-35 pounds (in 2000).
been far off for prices at Rome or in other parts of Italy, to which the journey was longer and there was an urban up-charge.\textsuperscript{666} It is not clear whether this includes the animals’ food and lodging, or their keepers’.

Diocletian’s price edict of 301 gives a maximum charge of 600,000 sesterces, or almost 4 million pounds for an African lion. A lesser lioness would run the editor about 400,000 sesterces, closer to 2.5 million pounds.\textsuperscript{667}

Games-givers not only took on the direct monetary expenses of the games, but also withstood an enormous amount of risk involved in provisioning for them. Typically this was not in the form of personal risk—though hunters and arena workers must certainly have been killed in acquiring, transporting, caring for, and working with fierce animals. Instead, the \textit{editor} risked losing his valuable investments to shipwreck or to injury and disease from the journey.\textsuperscript{668} Symmachus wrote when preparing for his son’s games to Flavianus, then praetorian prefect, fretting that he had not received the merchandise he was promised, nor the back-up animals, and his games were quickly approaching:

\begin{quote}
In the meantime, right as we are about to hold the games, we remain without the bears that were often promised us and on which we had long
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{666} Ibid., 211 points out that the lesser lioness costs 1000 more than the exorbitant price paid by Magerius for a leopard. The difference in the value of these animals notwithstanding, this discrepancy may give some clue either about the multiplication of costs for Roman spectacles, or simply for inflation over the century that separates these two data points.

\textsuperscript{667} See again Bomgardner’s conversions, \textit{The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre}, 211.

\textsuperscript{668} Shipwreck letter: 9.117. See also MacKinnon, “Supplying Exotic Animals for the Roman Amphitheatre Games,” 11-12 on the difficulty of the voyage.
counted. We just barely received a few cubs, consumed by fasting and fatigue. Neither do we have news of the lions: their arrival was supposed to allow an African combat\textsuperscript{669} to make up for the missing bears.\textsuperscript{670}

In addition to the cost of organizing the games, the aristocrat had to take on the expenses of gifts, including tokens and food for the crowd of spectators, as well as contorniates and, from the late fourth century on, ivory diptychs, that served as souvenirs of the games and of his office for a more select group of his peers.\textsuperscript{671}

\textit{Resources in the Political Arena}

Setting aside costs, dangers, the hassle of orchestrating logistics, and unpredictable losses, aristocrats who organized games had to lean heavily on their friends and personal connections, i.e. their \textit{amicitia} networks,\textsuperscript{672} and even on the emperor himself, since many of the resources an \textit{editor} required to pull off his games were managed and monopolized by the emperor. A magistrate’s ability to produce grand spectacles, then, was an indicator of not only his monetary wealth but also his social and political capital.

In the Republic, it was sufficient to have a few friends in high places who might assist with some of the more difficult acquisitions. In one of the most-cited passages on

\textsuperscript{669} \textit{congressio Libyca}

\textsuperscript{670} Letter 2.76. My translation, adapted from Cecconi, \textit{Commento storico al libro II dell’epistolario di Q. Aurelio Simmaco}.

\textsuperscript{671} Marcone, “L’allestimento dei giochi annuali a Roma nel IV sec. d.C.: aspetti economici e ideologici,” 111 and 116. See also Symm \textit{Ep.} 2, 81.

\textsuperscript{672} Epplett, “Roman Beast Hunts,” 512 cites the fourth century CE letters of Libanius, which offer witness to the author’s efforts to help his friends with organizing spectacles at Antioch.
the topic, from 50 BCE, Marcus Caelius Rufus writes to Cicero, then governor of Cilicia, asking if Cicero would help provide panthers for Rufus’ aedile games. The letter closes with a plea that borders on threatening: “It will be a disgrace to you if I have no Greek panthers.” Rufus justifies his stridentness with the argument that it is really out of concern for Cicero’s reputation: if Rufus looks bad, Cicero will be seen to have been stinting and ungenerous. Requests for assistance like this one needed to balance fawning and praise with other strategies that conveyed the urgency and import of the request.

In a later letter, Rufus renewed his inquiry, this time appealing to Cicero’s competitiveness by appealing to him to do better than their mutual friend Patiscus:

In nearly every letter I have mentioned the subject of the panthers to you. It will be a disgrace to you that Patiscus has sent ten panthers to Curio, and that you should not send many times more. And these very beasts, as well as ten more from Africa, Curio has presented to me, lest you should think that he does not know how to make any presents except landed estates. If you will only not forget, and send for some men of Cibyra, and also transmit a letter to Pamphylia—for it is there that they are said to be mostly captured—you will effect what you choose.

Rufus emphasizes that it would be simple for Cicero to help him; he only need say a word in Rufus’ favor and the desired animals will be procured. That Rufus and other clients were able to sway their friends and benefactors by appealing to their pride and sense of personal obligation illustrates how deeply connected personal success and image were with the ability to provision these spectacles.

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673 Cic. Fam. 8.6

674 Cic. Fam. 8.9

336
Letters from some 400 years later are not all that different in tack or tone. We have hundreds of the letters of Symmachus, which give us insight as to his extensive preparations for his son’s games and the way his friendships assisted him in those preparations. These letters convey that patrons often entrusted friends and business colleagues with the task of making selections and purchases on their behalf when they could not be there themselves to do so.675

In a letter to his friend Virus Nichomachus Flavianus,676 Symmachus thanks and praises his friend for gift of seven Scottish dogs:

Your contribution to the editorship of our games is customary and at the same time special: you think of everything, with the style of traditional generosity and yet capable of finding innovations, in order to bring upon our quaestorship the favor of the plebs. Your gift of seven Scottish dogs has done it. Rome admired the praelusio, and it was thought that the dogs must have been transported in iron cages [because they were so fierce]. Therefore I thank you infinitely for this and for all the other niceties, even if in these things, with the dedication you offer to your brothers in friendship according to your magnanimity, you do not think you give a benefit but instead receive one. Be well.677

Symmachus praises his friend for showing a “traditional generosity” even as he seeks novelty. This framing suggests a high value placed on the length of their connection and the way that their social ties rely on long-established conventions of behavior. Even though the dogs are apparently a novelty of some kind, an innovation as to the specifics of the spectacle, Symmachus’ letter demonstrates a kind of conservatism in his estimation

675 See e.g. Symm. Ep. 4.58 and 4.59, asking Euphrasius to select Spanish horses for his son’s games.

676 Praetorian prefect of Italy 390-392, 393-4, and consul in 394.

of his social workings with Flavianus. Symmachus’ letter manages to thank Flavianus, even as it underscores that this type of support is expected by implying that Flavianus might think himself to be receiving a benefit from his magnanimity.

Garnering imperial favor required even more acrobatic courtesy, as aristocrats asked for permissions to stage grander and grander displays while trying to make it look like these honored the emperor rather than aggrandizing the patrons themselves. In a letter to Stilicho, Symmachus asks for permission to fill the Colosseum with water, and reasons that he should be allowed to give the gift of silk garments.678 Aristocrats may also have had to seek dispensations for using certain kinds of animals, because of restrictions that limited those species to imperial entertainments. Because of the restricted supply of animals, it seems the use of lions in spectacles was exclusively the purview of the emperor and his relatives.679 Symmachus had to ask for dispensation to include lions in his sons’ games.680 Other animals, like elephants and leopards, may also have been held by imperial monopoly. Patrons also needed access to several infrastructural resources run or monopolized by the emperor. Emperors ran the gladiatorial schools at Rome, for example, and owned facilities for the maintenance and hoped-for breeding of captured

678 Symm Ep. 4.8.

679 Epplet, Gladiators and Beast Hunts, 133, 165. The date on this is not clear but since the cost of lions is laid out in Diocletian’s price edict, presumably the restriction took place after 301.

animals.\footnote{MacKinnon, “Supplying Exotic Animals for the Roman Amphitheatre Games,” points out the scarcity of archaeological or faunal evidence for such facilities in Rome, though he does offer several cases for North African sites (p. 15 and note 39; p. 16 and note 40). Literary mentions of vivaria (including Procop. Goth. 1.22.10 and 1.23.13-23) mention vivaria and the role of zookeepers or custodes vivari, and the regionary catalogues refer to a facility outside the Porta Praenestina: CIL 6.130.}
The imperial government also held the \textit{cursus publicus}, the courier and transit system that crossed the empire, the provisioning and staffing for which were supported by imperial taxation.\footnote{The Peutinger Table shows the extent of this network c. 400 CE. For more on this transit system, see Kolb, \textit{Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im römischen Reich} and, more recently and with more attention to the late empire, Lemcke, “Imperial Transportation and Communication from the Third to the Late Fourth Century: The Golden Age of the Cursus Publicus.”} Way-stations along the route provided lodging, care for animals, and maintenance and repair of any equipment.\footnote{Way-stations (mutationes and mansiones) are documented in the \textit{Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum vel Burdigalense} (333 CE).} Symmachus thanks Stilicho in a letter for sanctioning his use of the \textit{cursus publicus}, without which we have to imagine provisioning the games would have been impossible.\footnote{Symm. \textit{Ep.} 4.7.}

Finally, Symmachus’ letters demonstrate the extreme expectations and high pressure placed on an \textit{editor} to give a sufficiently inspiring display. Even if money were no object, the patron had to consider how best to win public approbation for his efforts. Symmachus wrote to his contact Euphrasius on the topic of race horses, so that arrangements could be made well in advance of the games in order that the resulting horses correspond to the expectation of the Roman populace.” He goes on, “I do not fear that in this predicament you will judge me to be seeking the favor of the plebs. You know
in your wisdom that mean spirits are not suited to the magistracies of a large city.”

Symmachus’ letter suggests he is not doing this simply for public favor—that would be base—but even so he makes clear that audience approval is the standard driving his provisioning.

One way to please the crowds was with variety. A later letter to Euprasias asks him to acquire four quadrigas’ worth of horses from Laodicean herds (in Anatolia). Symmachus makes this request even though Euphrasius was usually his contact for Spanish horses. By way of explanation, Symmachus writes, “You must be stunned I am not drawing from your high quality herds, which are better than the best of Spain. Our city is bored if the spectacle is monotonous, and I have to accomplish fullness with variety. It would be sufficient for you to make the choice and pull from other stalls that equal the fame of yours.”

Clearly high quality was important in the selection of animals for the games, but too much uniformity—no matter the caliber—would be met with indifference.

A letter to Paternus (proconsul of Africa in 393) expresses Symmachus’ concern over impending deadlines.

To the request that we have already made I add the great weight of repetition: it is for this I resume my request regarding the venationes exhibitions, so that the repeated writings more easily solicit your concern. The day of our games draws near: but the generosity of the candidate

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685 Symm. Ep. 4.60.

686 fastidium patitur uniformis spectaculi civitas nostra, cuius satietas mihi varietate vincenda est.

687 Symm. Ep. 4.63.
alone is not enough, if we lack able fighters for the arena. The munificence is without signification, in fact, if it is carried out with unworthy means. For this reason I pray you get me, in the name of your authority as governor and your affection as brother friend, the best hunters, to give a great contribution to all that we are preparing without worry for expense for the entertainment of our fellow citizens.\textsuperscript{688}

In repeated supplications the author warns that a half-done show is worse than no show at all. If the games were not truly spectacular, they were as good as meaningless.

By the third century, the supply of animals had constricted, due to over-hunting and ecological disruption caused by agriculture and urban development in formerly undisturbed areas.\textsuperscript{689} The rise in amphitheaters across the empire, especially in North Africa, may have coincided with a decline in available animals. As a result of how costly and difficult it was to acquire healthy animals for spectacles, the \emph{venationes} changed somewhat. In Late Antiquity they were less likely to be fatal to the animals on view, so that more rare and valuable animals like large felines might be used for multiple shows.\textsuperscript{690} This meant they might be trained to perform amusing tricks, rather than simply violent hunts, or they chased humans around the arena in displays like the bear-baiting scene on the Diptych of Athanasius. Spectacles also came to rely more on locally

\textsuperscript{688} Symm. \textit{Ep.} 5.59.

\textsuperscript{689} Bomgardner, \textit{The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre}, gives numbers under Trajan vs. under Philip the Arab in 248 at p. 215, pointing out that numbers that used to be in the hundreds and even thousands were counted by the dozens at Philip the Arab’s games for the millennial celebration of Rome. Late Rome also saw an increase in herbivores and locally available animals. See Jennison, \textit{Animals for Show and Pleasure in Ancient Rome}, 83-98.

available species. Killing animals in the arena was prohibited at the end of the 5th century by the emperor Anastasius, but the *venationes* persisted, like the chariot races, at least into the mid-6th century, against Christian objection. 691

**The Poetic Treatment of Provisioning**

In stark contrast to what we know from letters and other sources to have a time-consuming, expensive, and arduous process, poetic treatments of the provisioning of animal spectacles do not admit of any of the frustrations or challenges associated with this task. They neither acknowledge the constricted supply of exotic beats, nor do they permit any thought as to the danger, the cost, or the labor that went into provisioning the event. Instead, late antique panegyric paints the supply as ample, and the trapping and seizing of animals as easy and often divinely assisted. Authors emphasize the majesty of the specimens, their physical prowess and ferocity, the qualities underlying the pleasure crowds took in seeing these animals. These qualities also make the booty seem more noble, lending further grandeur to the accomplishment of vanquishing them. These depictions suggest the abundance of the empire and imply that the gods look favorably upon games-giver, audience, and Rome more broadly.

In one such example Stilicho is praised for his liberality:

691 For the decline in gladiatorial exhibitions in late antiquity, and increasing difficulty stocking them, see Marcone, “L’allestimento dei giochi annuali a Roma nel IV sec. d.C.: aspetti economici e ideologici.” The latest textual evidence for a *venatio* at Rome is provided by Cassiodorus *Variae* 5.42, which tells us Maximus was permitted by Theodoric to stage one for his inauguration as consul in 523. The evidence for Constantinople reaches to 537: Justinian, *Novellae* 105, 1. See also final chapter of Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World.*
Whatsoever inspires fear with its teeth, wonder with its mane, awe with its horns and bristling coat — all the beauty, all the terror of the forest is taken. Guile protects them not; neither strength nor weight avails them; their speed saves not the fleet of foot. Some roar enmeshed in snares; some are thrust into wooden cages and carried off. There are not carpenters enough to fashion the wood; leafy prisons are constructed of unhewn beech and ash. Boats laden with some of the animals traverse seas and rivers; bloodless from terror the rower's hand is stayed, for the sailor fears the merchandise he carries. Others are transported over land in wagons that block the roads with the long procession, bearing the spoils of the mountains. The wild beast is borne a captive by those troubled cattle on whom in times past he sated his hunger, and each time that the oxen turned and looked at their burden they pull away in terror from the pole. 692

Neither intelligence nor physical skill allows the animals to escape the consul’s traps. The captured prey is so numerous, the author claims, that the carpenters assigned with making cages cannot keep up. Those who transport the beasts are struck by terror: the oxen, so often prey of such wild animals, pull away from their cargo even as they haul it toward Rome, and the rowers who power the ships go pale with fear of their freight.

In the next passage, Claudian lists the animals captured for the consular games (lions, leopards, elephants) and paints a picture of the followers of the huntress Diana who come to the consul’s aid in executing this task:

By now Phoebus’ sister had wandered o’er the torrid plains of Libya and chosen out superb lions who had often put the Hesperides to flight, filled Atlas with alarm at their wind-tossed manes, and plundered far and wide the flocks of Ethiopia, lions whose terrible cries had never struck upon the herdsmen’s ears but as heralding their destruction. To catch them had been used no blazing torches, no twigs strewn over turf undermined; the voice of a tethered kid had not allured their hunger nor had a diggèd pit ensnared them: of their own free will they gave themselves up to capture and

692 Claudian Stil. 3.318-332. Wishes for a similarly rich display in both the violent games and the theatrical and acrobatic entertainments are also expressed in Claudian’s *On the Consulship of Manlius Theodorus*. 343
rejoiced at being seen the prey of so great a goddess. At length the countryside breathes again and the Moorish farmers unbar their now safe huts. Then Latonia [Diana] collected grey-spotted leopards and other marvels of the south and huge ivory tusks which, carved with iron into plaques and inlaid with gold to form the glistening inscription of the consul’s name, should pass in procession among lords and commons. All India stood in speechless amaze to see many an elephant go shorn of the glory of his tusks. Seated upon their black necks despite their cries the goddess shook the fixed ivory and tearing it up from its bloody roots disarmed the monstrous mouths. Nay, she fain would have brought the elephants themselves as a spectacle but feared that their vast weight would retard the ships. 693

Here again the frightfulness of the animals is emphasized: they have “filled Atlas with alarm” and terrorized flocks and farmers. A further conceit is that these animals have given themselves up willingly, as they are supposed to do for sacrifice to the gods. Even though animal spectacles were decidedly distinct from religious sacrifice, this resonance with sacrificial practice is re-echoed in the custom of distributing the meat of animals killed during the spectacle. The passage also illustrates the violent sourcing of ivory. Because of their enormity, the elephants themselves are not brought for the games, but they still will appear, metonymically, in the spectacles, their tusks “carved with iron into plaques and inlaid with gold” to “pass in procession.” In this way they are, like the other wild animals, mobilized as a vehicle of representation for the consul’s glory.

The Geography of Spectacle and its Meaning

“Morning hunts symbolized Rome’s far-flung territorial control…”694

693 Claudian Stil. 3.333-355.

694 Kyle, Spectacles of Death, 312.
Animals for Roman *venationes* were sourced from far and wide. Futrell writes that the animals gathered from foreign lands for *venationes* operated as a kind of booty, the spoils owed Rome by virtue of her control of these areas.\textsuperscript{695}

Which species came from which lands is not always clear cut: MacKinnon notes that sources like panegyric tend to use generic names for areas, and animals like lions inhabited larger territories than they do today, making it hard to pinpoint the actual origins of the animals captured.\textsuperscript{696} Other sources, like Oppian’s hunting manual and Pliny’s Natural History, offer more specific locations. For example, Pliny identifies Mauretania and Numidia in North Africa as places where exotic species could be hunted, claiming there were “forests teeming with the wild animals that Africa engenders” (5.1.9).\textsuperscript{697}

Often sources name animals’ epithets that include their native countries. Symmachus’ letter above, complaining that only a few scrawny bear cubs have arrived, calls the planned replacement a “Libyan combat.” This reference suggests that a staged encounter between two lions might have been labeled by association with where the lions came from. Animals, then, stood in for distant lands, so that each spectacle was like a


\textsuperscript{696} MacKinnon, “Supplying Exotic Animals for the Roman Amphitheatre Games,” n. 8.

\textsuperscript{697} Pliny *NH* 5.1.6: herds of elephants; of Numidia, 5.2.22: The country produces nothing remarkable beside the Numidian marble and wild beasts; between Africa and Ethiopia “it teems with wild beasts and animal life and produces forests” (5.10.53). Other animal sourcing data points are collected by Rea, “Gli animali per la venatio: cattura, trasporto, custodia,” 261-2.
gathering of the corners of the world, orchestrated by the games’ patron. Nor were the *venationes* the only forum in which captured animals stood for conquest. Augustus exhibited a hippopotamus after his annexation of Actium, as symbol of Egypt coming under his rule. In this instance, too, animals could serve as metonymic reminder of a province and its subjugation to Rome.

I suggest we read the animal combat panels in Bassus’ hall not as a literal map, but as a kind of illustration of the way that his influence could reach to the farthest edges of the Roman world. By sourcing animals from across the empire, editores like Bassus demonstrated that they could rally not only their personal and professional networks, but that they could also manipulate and marionette the apparatus that allowed Rome to control these far-flung lands could also be manipulated. By summoning these animals to themselves and providing them for the entertainment of the people, they put their own social status on display, but they also offered a statement as to the continuing power and strength of the empire, a world view all the participants could celebrate.

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698 In a related vein, the great hunt mosaic at Piazza Armerina, for example, has been read as a kind of schematic map of the Roman world. While Steger has countered that the mosaic does not show real, identifiable locations, and therefore cannot have served as a real map, the idea of the mosaic as laying out an inventory of the world by illustrating its animals is still apt. Settis, “Per l’interpretazione di Piazza Armerina,” 945-956 says there are links between certain regions of the world and the chasse practiced there: Mauretania and the panther, provinces of Numidia and the antelope, Africa and the lion, palus Tritonis (Bzacene) for the boar. See also Nicolet, *L’inventaire due monde*.

699 See Rose, “The Parthians in Augustan Rome.”
The Geography of Display: The Marbles in the Hall

“By mapping the stones, one is mapping the extent of the empire: in addition to their beauty and costliness, these marbles from all over the world make a territorial display of imperial power and might.”\(^{700}\)

The marbles collected for the opus sectile decoration of the Bassus hall, like the exotic animals displayed on the walls there, came from the reaches of the Roman empire. (See Figure 9.14) Their names refer to their various locations, their origins often substituting for more precise identifying information or geological specification. In the imperial period, marbles serve as material stand in for parts of the empire conquered by Rome, their presence in monuments symbolizing the submission of the people from whose land they hailed.\(^{701}\)

Suetonius’ praise of Augustus, that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble, was colorfully illustrated by the rather sudden increase in the public display of polychrome stones in the city.\(^{702}\) Such marbles had not been widely available, but imperial consolidation of quarries facilitated access and connection to ports and river transport, while the emperor’s administration and the Roman army provided the


\(^{701}\) See on this topic Schneider, Bunte Barbaren: Orientalenstatuen aus farbigem Marmor in der römischen Repräsentationskunst.

\(^{702}\) Suet. Aug. 28.
necessary infrastructure networks to mobilize the resource.\textsuperscript{703} The Basilica Aemilia (rebuilt in 14 BCE) for example, held Phrygian and Numidian marble sculpted captive Phrygians, which Schneider reads as a direct result of recent conquests in Anatolia and Africa. The Forum of Augustus and Forum of Trajan offer examples of this, where Parthian captives sculpted in porphyry stand in for Phrygia and Numidian ones for Dacian conquest. Foreign marbles thus encapsulated and embodied Rome’s foreign conquests. After the Battle of Actium, Augustus ordered two obelisks from Egyptian, one for the Circus Maximus and one for the Horologium Augusti. The inscriptions on each reference the conquest, the material of the obelisk standing in for the territory.\textsuperscript{704}

This ideology of power and conquest exhibited through material stuff is perpetuated not only in the built environment but also in Roman literature, which uses epithets for stone that tie each marble to its point of origin, thereby linking distant lands to their very matter. Martial calls Numidia “marble-painted,” for example.\textsuperscript{705} Basil the Great (329-379 CE) describes marbles used in houses to regulate temperature: Phrygian marble radiates heat, while Laconian and Thessalian marble keep an area cool.\textsuperscript{706}

\textsuperscript{703} This is the argument made by Schneider, “Coloured Marble: The Splendour and Power of Imperial Rome.”

\textsuperscript{704} \textit{CIL} VI 701 (Circus Maximus), 702 (Solarium).

\textsuperscript{705} \textit{Epigr.} 8.55.6: \textit{marmora picturata lucentia vena}

\textsuperscript{706} Basil \textit{Hom.} 7.
Claudian refers to Phrygia as “precious for the marble painted with purple veins,” marking the place as special for the stone quarried there.707

Barry argues that this association between stone and location faded in the late Roman period, but in fact numerous sources continue to link material with its provenience. Sidonius Apollinaris writing in the late 5th century to describe a throne of Roma constructed of four marbles to symbolize the four quarters of the earth:708 Ethiopia, Greece, Numidia, and Asia. In the mid-to late-fourth century, Gregory of Nyssa wrote of men decorating their homes with a variety of foreign stones:

Then, stone from Sparta, Thessaly and from Carystos are cut with steel into slabs, and even the quarries of the Nile and those of Numidia are sought out; for these complex effects one even takes the Phrygian rock, which, thanks to the random mixing of the purple tint in the whites of the marble, become a game for the most avid eyes, because she paints on the white the dispersion of the varied color in a thousand figures. Oh what efforts are made to find such things, and what artifice is employed! Some saw the stuff with water and steel; others work day and night with their human hands, those who labor to extract the sawn blocks. And that is not all for those who labor for vain ornaments; even the purity of glass is altered with products in order to obtain varied colors, in order to add with it to the luxury given to the eyes.709

707 Eutrop. 2.272-3: pretiosaque picto/marmore purpureis caedit quod Synnada venis. See Carey, Pliny’s Catalogue of Culture: Art and Empire in the Natural History, 91-2, on Pliny’s discussion of foreign marbles: “Pliny’s history of marble is both a history of the Roman conquest of the world and a history of the world in Rome.” Also useful for stones’ origins are Lazzarini, “La determinazione della provenienza delle pietre decorative usate dai Romani” and Pensabene, Ostiensum marmorum decus et décor.


Gregory writes with disdain, but his description no less indicates the strong
connection between stones and their quarry locations. This place-based naming
convention suggests that the foreignness and far away-ness of marbles was still
prominent in the minds of writers and speakers who mentioned them. Since stones were
known by their origin points rather than merely by color or by geological terms, the link
between stone and origin persisted.

Also like the exotic animal specimens acquired for the arena, colored stones were
a costly investment. The most precise cost information we have comes from the Price
Edict of Diocletian in 301, which lists 18 stones. The most expensive were Egyptian
porphyry and Lacedaimonean green porphyry (also known as serpentine), which cost 250
denarii per foot. Giallo antico and pavonazzetto were 200 denarii per foot.\footnote{Lauffer, \textit{Diokletians Preisedikt}, 192-3 and 280-1; Kropff, “New English translation of the Price Edict of Diocletianus.” See also Lazzarini, \textit{Poikiloí lithoi, versiculores maculae}, 3.} In
assembling what must have been hundreds of square feet of marble decoration in his hall,
Bassus spent a fortune, over and above the cost of the consular festivities they
commemorated. The tiger panels that survive to today are the display piece of the
consul’s commitment to the expenses and exertions of arranging a spectacle and
commemorating it in stone.
CHAPTER 10

The Afterlife of the Basilica and its Site

The Basilica of Junius Bassus came into the possession of a Goth named Valila, who donated it to Pope Simplicius in the 5th century for conversion to a church dedicated to the apostle Andrew. While the small church of Sant’Andrea Catabarbara was subsumed by the more imposing Sant’Antonio Abbate in later centuries, the hall was incorporated into the new complex. The brothers of Sant’Antonio’s monastery founded a hospital, of which the Bassus hall became a part.

With the construction of the papal basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore very nearby in the 5th century, the location of the hall at the top of the Cispian gained great importance. The site became a sister location to the Lateran, through processional practice and careful papal attentions, and thus became a site of power brokerage. The former basilica of Junius Bassus was implicated in many of these shifts, indicating the continued significance of the area.

Valila and the Church of Sant’Andrea Catabarbara

After Bassus, the next event we know pertaining to his basilica comes at the end of the fifth century, by which time the property had passed to a Goth named Flavius Valila. Valila served as senior military officer of the western Gothic troops, comes et magister utriusque militiae, after the death of the Germanic general Ricimer in 472. How he came to be the owner of this property or any of his other real estate in and around Rome—whether through marriage, endowment for his service, or some other means—is
not known, but the same is true for other barbarian generals in the 4th and 5th centuries who came to legal ownership of land as would any other Roman citizen.\footnote{See Mathisen, “Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire” 1026, note 21 for other examples of this type of inheritance.}

Like Bassus, Valila was a member of the senatorial class. He was also a Christian. As a symbol of this he took the Christian denomination Theodovius (or Theodobius), sometimes using this in place of his markedly non-Roman cognomen.\footnote{The name Flavius Theodobius is used without “Valila” in the inscription on a Colosseum seat reserved for the general. The inscription is \textit{CIL} VI 32169: FL(avius) THEODOBIUS V(ir) C(larissimus) ET IN(lustris) COM(es) ET MAG(ister) VTRIVSQ(ve) MILIT(iae). This inscription is published and parsed in Hülsen, “Il fondatore della Basilica di Sant’Andrea sull’Esquilino;” see esp. 173 ff.} In 471, in further testament to his piety, he donated a property near Tivoli to the church, specifying his continued right to use of the property as long as he lived and granting his heirs right of seizure if any of the terms of the donation were not upheld.\footnote{We know this from its foundation charter, \textit{CIL} VI.32169, 32221.}

Between 476 and 483, Valila handed the Esquiline hall over to Pope Simplicius, who converted the hall to a Christian church dedicated to St. Andrea. Andrew is sometimes regarded as eastern parallel to his brother Peter, one of Rome’s patron saints, but we do not know whether this dedication was stipulated by Valila or simply chosen by Pope Simplicius. It may have been at this time that the hall’s single entranceway was converted to a tripartite entrance, with columns dividing the single opening into a major
fornix flanked by two minor ones. Simplicius also added a mosaic in the apse, which shows Christ flanked by the apostles, who converse animatedly with him, hands gesticulating. This is preserved for us by Ciampini and by drawings from the Windsor collection. (See Figure 0.6; described in Chapter Three, Graphic Evidence.)

According to Ciampini’s depiction an inscription ran in two lines below the apse mosaic. This was probably above the dedicavit inscription put up by Bassus and declares Valila’s gift like that of the Roman before him:

HAEC TIBI MENS VALILAE DECREVIT PRAEDIA CHRISTE CUI TESATOR OPES DETULIT ILLE SUAS.
SIMPPLICUS QU(A)E PAPA SACRIS CAELESTIBUS APTANS EFFECTIT VERE MUNERIS ESSE TUI
ET QUOD APOSTOLICI DEESSENT LIMINA NOBIS
MARTYRIS ANDREAECOMINE COMPOSUIT
UTITUR HAEC HERES TITULIS ECCLESIA IUSTIC
SUCCEDENSQUE DOMO MYSTICA IURA LOCAT.
PLEBS DEVOTA VENI, PERQUE HAEC COMMERCIA DISCE
TERRENO CENSU REGNA SUPERNA PETI

Valila’s wish was to consecrate his estates to benefit you, Christ; To you this testator has dedicated his resources. Pope Simplicius, by making the adjustments for heavenly rites, Rendered these things truly in your service. And because we lack the house (threshold), He arranged for these things [to be] in the name of the apostolic martyr, Andrew. This church, as your heir, takes possession of its lawful title (titulus iustus) And, being your successor, it [the church] places mystical laws in the house. Come, devout people, and learn from this transaction,

714 Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” 236 attributes the change to this phase, when he records the pillar and column fragments. Though he gives no evidence for the dating, it is conceivable that this may have been the moment for this change.
To seek the heavenly kingdom with earthly wealth (*census*).\textsuperscript{715}

The inscription was recorded by Platina in a way that obscured Valila’s name, but de Rossi used alternative copies of the inscription by Pietro Sabino, Pompeo Ugonio, and Phillip de Winghe to reconstruct the name of the testator.\textsuperscript{716}

Recent work by Gregor Kalas points out that Valila did not destroy the previous *dedicavit* inscription put up by Bassus. Rather, the Goth registered his own donation in parallel to that made by Bassus, thus accruing to himself the prestige and status that the late Roman aristocrat had, and writing himself into Roman history by association with Bassus’ benefaction.\textsuperscript{717} Kalas’s reading compellingly explains the patron’s actions, characterizing Valila as not merely suffering the earlier inscription but actually embracing and appropriating it.

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\textsuperscript{715} Translation Kalas, “Architecture and Elite Identity,” 293. Recorded by Philipp de Winghe in manuscript in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Vat. Lat. 10545, fol. 227v. See Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{716} Platina, *Vitae Pontificum in Simplicio*. De Rossi, “La Basilica Profana Di Giunio Basso,” 22 says Platina’s “L” is actually a D, crediting Bock, “Die Basilika Des Junius Bassus Zu Rom.” See also Hülsen, “Il fondatore della Basilica di Sant’Andrea sull’Esquilino,” 172. Cecchelli, “L’iscrizione Di Sant’Andrea All’Esquilino” would like to preserve Platina’s reading of the inscription, *Haec tibi mens valide decrevit praedia Christe*. She argues that the later reading invented a *testator* named Valila, and led scholars to equate this Valila with the donator in the Carta Cornutiana. Instead, she wants to see the *testator* of the inscription as Pope Simplicius himself. According to the author, the Bassus estate, including the land on which Santa Maria Maggiore sits, became the property of the church by the time of Sixtus II (432-444), who then built the Marian basilica. I see no evidence for this claim, and Kalas answers the arguments raised by Cechelli as to Valila’s name and choice to leave the Bassus dedication inscription.

\textsuperscript{717} Kalas, “Architecture and Elite Identity in Late Antique Rome: Appropriating the Past at Sant’Andrea Catabarbara.”
His interpretation does not, however, go so far as to account for the persistence of
the decidedly “pagan” visual content of the hall, so apparently contradictory to our
modern expectations of Christian content. How did nude mythological figures like Hylas,
practically idolatrous figures like the Bassus panel, and allusions to the power of pagan
gods like the Delphic tripods survive alongside Christian decoration in a Christian place
of worship? While some scholarship has assumed Christian antagonism toward pagan
imagery, there is evidence to suggest that Christians in Late Antiquity maintained an
aesthetic appreciation for older works of art, even those with explicitly pagan content.  

It is possible that some panels were removed or replaced during the building’s tenure as a
church, but no records of church intervention refer to removal or destruction of earlier
material as part of the renovation process. The 9th century window painting depicting the
martyrdoms of Ss. Peter and Paul, for example, did not overwrite existing decoration, but
instead took over blank space that was created when the windows were walled over on
one side of the basilica. The apse mosaic installed by Pope Simplicius likely displaced
earlier decoration, since it is improbable this space was left blank in the hall’s original
incarnation as a public monument.  

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718 For a fuller exploration of this phenomenon and the evidence on both sides: Saradi-
Medelovici, “Christian Attitudes Toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy
in Later Byzantine Centuries.”

719 This assumes that the apse was in fact originally vaulted, which it may not have been.
Perhaps instead it was, like the Leonian Baptistery, built with a timber roof and later replaced
with a domed one. My conversations with Lynne Lancaster in November 2016 suggests the walls
would have been too thin to support a cement vault over such a large span. This assumes a wall-
width of 0.75 meters. If it did, this would be an early example for the city of Rome. The Crypta
Balbi is another example of 4th century use of tubed vaults in Rome, as is the Church of Cosmos
marbles is one of re-use, but still in Christian context: Ciampini reports that animal combat panels were removed in the 17th century and used as tabletops for the brothers of St. Antonio.\(^\text{720}\) No changes to the basilica seem to have been motivated by hostility toward or intolerance of pagan imagery.

**The Development of the Church and Surrounding Property (6th-9th Century)**

The basilica's role as a site for the negotiation of identity and power did not end with Valila. Instead, the church of Sant'Andrea Catabarbara remained, in its post-antine afterlife, a nexus for the assertion of authority, this time by members of the Church clergy. Their interventions built on Bassus' foundation, sometimes borrowing prestige from the past by appropriating earlier material, and at others accruing prestige by renovating or restoring the site. The church and its adjoining properties were presented as diplomatic gifts in its later age, in a recapitulation of the offering Valila had made to Pope Simplicius. Standing in the shadow of Santa Maria Maggiore, one of Rome's papal basilicas and sometime "co-cathedral" to the Lateran, Sant'Andrea was also frequently implicated in transactions concerning the Marian church. As such, it served as one of the maneuverable tokens of power that were used in the mapping of papal and political authority on the Esquiline from the 8th to 15th centuries.

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\(^{720}\) Ciampini, *Vetra Monimenta*, 56. He identifies the panels as having come from locations A and B on his depiction of the wall elevation. He calls them lions, not tigers like the panels we have still extant today. See also Chapter Three, Graphic Evidence.
When the former basilica was subsumed by the Church of Sant'Antonio Abbate, the descendant of which still stands on the site today, there remained echoes of the Bassus benefaction, left to us in the form of architectural dedication inscriptions. This legacy of power brokerage continued into even Mussolini-era Rome, with the 20th century renovation of Sant’Antonio and the construction of new Vatican properties on the same block where Bassus had built.

A convent was added to the church of Sant’Andrea at some point in the century or two after Valila's dedication. This may have happened under Pope Gregory I (590-604), who seems to have had an affinity for St. Andrea, but the textual evidence for the establishment of this religious community comes from the period of Pope Gregory II (715-731), who reorganized the monastery and placed it in the care of Santa Maria Maggiore along with a gerocomium (an asylum for the old) that was located nearby at Ss. Cosmas and Damian. Gregory II may have placed the community under the care of Santa Maria Maggiore because the papal basilica did not have its own clergy, and relied

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721 Saxer, Sainte-Marie-Majeure, 72 places the foundation here under Gregory the Great (=Gregory I). Enking, S. Andrea cata Barbara, 12-13 gives the passage from the life of Gregory II LP I, 397 s, “Hic gerocomium (on to p. 13) quod post absidam sanctae Dei genetricis ad Praesepem situm est monasterium instituit, atque monasterium sancti Andreae apostolic quod Barbare nuncupatur ad nimiam deductum desertionem, in quo ne unus habitabatur monachus, adscitis monachis ordinavit ut utraque monasteria ad sanctam Dei genetricem ad sanctam Dei genetricem singulis diebus atque noctibus Deo laudes canerent.” What, exactly, Gregory II did to the monastery, and what its prior state was, depends on which edition of the LP you read. See Saxer 72-4 for this analysis. Saxer concludes that it was in fact Gregory III, successor to Gregory II, who entrusted S. Andrea’s monastery to the care of SMM. Saxer indicates the oratory at Cosmas and Damian was also founded, like S. Andrea, by Pope Simplicius.
on neighboring monasteries to have clergy to conduct the liturgy of the hours. From this time the church was given the epithet “Cata Barbara Patricia,” a name for which there are several etiologies, none of them satisfactory.

The church was given its first relic under Hadrian I (772-795), who opened the tombs on the via Nomentana. He had the body of St. Restituto sent to Sant’Andrea, where it remained for centuries. The church never had a relic of its namesake.

Under Leo III (795-816), the hall underwent a roof renovation. It was probably at this point that the windows on one of the long sides of the basilica were walled over and painted. (See Figure 3.31)

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723 We do not know where this appellation comes from. Enking, *S. Andrea cata Barbara* notes a woman named “Barbara” may have founded the convent. She was the daughter of Venanzio, governor of Siracuse and ex-friar who was a friend to Pope Gregory I (p. 12). Saxer, *Sainte-Marie-Majeure* repeats this (p. 72) and notes that this Barbara founded a women’s convent at St. Peter and a men’s convent near to Santa Maria Maggiore. This version of the story would make a fascinating tie between one papal basilica and another, with S. Andrea implicated in that connection. De Rossi, “La Basilica Profana Di Giunio Basso,” 25 on the other hand points out Ugonio’s conjecture that another woman named Barbara, a Neopolitan, managed to transfer the body of S. Severno to her city at the end of the 5th C. These authors all reject the hypothesis put forth by Marucchi, “I lavori ad intarsio della Basilica di Giunio Basso sull’Esquiline” that the name comes from “barbarius patricius,” “barbarian patrician,” with “cata” being a Greek word used in Latin topographical vocabulary to mean at/belonging to like the Latin *apud*. De Rossi cites the church of S. Silvestro as being called *cata Pauli*, because it was made domo Paulo, at the home of pope Paolo I, so the phrase would mean something like “at the place of the barbarian senator/patrician.”

724 Enking, *S. Andrea cata Barbara*, 44, citing *Vita of S. Restituto* and notary acts from a later period when the relics were sent to France.
There remains no material evidence from this period in the church’s history. Nor is the church seen on the map of the Einsiedeln Anonymous (8th or 9th century). Enking notes the recovery of pre-Romanesque architectural decoration, including crosses, designs of braids, crabs, fragments of sculpted peacocks and serpents, and column capitals. These she compares to the furnishings of other Roman churches from between the sixth and tenth centuries, including S. Maria in Comedian, S. Maria in Trastevere, and the collection of Castel St. Angelo. According to her, some of these fragments were found immured in the wall of the left aisle of St. Antonio and in the garden of the Pontificio Istituto Orientale. Enking must have gotten this from oral histories, since she cites a “P. Amman” but no other source for the discoveries, which are not noted in Lugli’s report.726

Notwithstanding the sparsity of evidence for this period, the interventions made at this stage should not go unremarked. That we know of Leo III’s roof renovation is due in large part to the Liber Pontificalis, (the same source for the Gregorian monastery addition), a book of papal biographies that lists the gifts made by each pontifex. The book is itself a work of identity construction, insofar as it operates in service of each pontiff’s self-distinction. The records therein are meant to cast each pope as contributor to and sustainer of an artistic, architectural, and heritage greater than himself.727

725 Enking, S. Andrea cata Barbara, 38: LP II 28: Sarta tecta basilicae beati Andree apostolic quae appellatur cata Barbara patricia, quae per olitana iam fuerant tempore vetustate consumpta noviter restauravit.

726 Enking, S. Andrea cata Barbara, 43.

727 For analysis of this, see for example McKitterick, “Narrative Strategies in the Liber Pontificalis.”
According to this source, Leo III made donations to other monasteries that were in the service of Santa Maria Maggiore, including Ss. Cosmas and Damian and Ss. Lawrence and Hadrian. Nor was Santa Maria Maggiore the only papal basilica to receive Leo III's favor. He also gave items to S. Peter and S. Paul Outside the Walls, which included tapestries of these apostles' martyrdoms and of their preaching to the people. His selection of subject for these tapestries asserted his own connection to these martyrs, as scion of Peter in apostolic succession and heir to the architectural heritage contained in their eponymous papal basilicas. At the same time it connected him to this spiritual heritage, it also implicated him in the expressly civic or urban sacredness of the city's patron saints. Whether Leo III's choice to depict the princes of the apostles again at the Church of Sant'Andrea (whatever the decoration of the other walled-over windows may have been) was part of a larger, coherent program of imagery he disseminated across Rome, it can at least be regarded as bringing the minor church of Sant'Andrea into association with his more famed brother Peter and Peter's counterpart Paul.

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729 Enking makes note of Leo III’s other donations in the LP by way of trying to place the painting of the walled-over windows to the same period as Leo III’s renovation of the roof. She does not, however, note the significance of the imagery to the pope’s image formation.
By this period, Santa Maria Maggiore was regarded as the co-cathedral of the Lateran.\textsuperscript{730} Popes celebrated Easter Mass there, embracing it as a fitting setting for the greatest festival of the church calendar. Some pontiffs chose it as the location of their papal residence as well, concentrating power on this part of the Esquiline (or more precisely on the Cispian) rather than further south. Hadrian II (867-872) was one of these popes, living in the palace attached to Santa Maria Maggiore before he became pope and remaining there after his coronation.\textsuperscript{731}

The apparent flowering that followed these popes' attentions to Sant'Andrea and the area permitted Pope Benedict VIII, in the beginning of the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, to leverage the monastery as a transactional item in his diplomatic relations with Henry II. Benedict had crowned Henry II Holy Roman Emperor in 1014, in exchange for Henry's backing against the antipope Gregory VI. Benedict traveled to Germany to consult with Henry about ongoing political troubles in 1020. At a Mass in May of that year, Pope Benedict gave public reading of the concessions granted to S. Salvatoris and S. Boniface. In gratitude, Henry II granted the pope his royal convent at Fulda. The monks there had to come to Rome for their investiture, so Benedict offered them a fixed abode there to

\textsuperscript{730} For Santa Maria Maggiore as “co-cathedral” see Saxer, \textit{Sainte-Marie-Majeure}, 117; 124-5; and 124 note 47. The Vatican Borgo was not the de facto site of the papal palace until the 15th century, though earlier popes, including Symmachus and Leo III, did carry out building projects there. See Keyvanian, \textit{Hospitals and Urbanism in Rome, 1200-1500}, 98-99.

\textsuperscript{731} Andrews and Bernard, “Urban Development at Rome’s Porta Esquilina and Church of San Vito over the Longue Durée,” 98.
relieve the expense and burden of their travel: Sant’Andrea. This gift is recorded in a papal bull of 1024.\footnote{Enking, S. Andrea cata Barbara, 14: \textit{Iterum concedimus hac donamus uobis monasterio in honore sancti Andree apostolic quod exaiulo. Quod situm est iuxta ecclesiam sanctae dei genericis semperque virginis Marie que a presepe. Cum omnibus mansionibus, caminatis, cellis uinariis, et quoquina. Cum uineis et ortis iuxta se. cum diuresis arboribus pomorum. Cum curte atque puteum. Cum introit suo et exito per porta maiore a uia publica et cum omnibus ad eum generaliter pertinentibus. Seu que foris extra urbem siue infra urbem sunt. Que ei iuste ac rationabiliter pertinere dinoscitur. Enking notes at p. 15 that one side effect of the monks of Fulda coming to Rome was the familiarity they gained with pontifical documents, which appears to have resulted in their ability to forge these documents. Beside the authentic donation of S. Andrea by Benedict VIII in 1024 are forgeries of the donation that would have made the donation earlier.}}

The bull’s reference to S. Andrea \textit{quod exaiulo} seems to indicate a change in the church’s nomenclature. No longer does the suffix “cata Barbara” appear; instead, the church and associated monastery are referred to variously as S. Andrea in Aurisaurio, S. Andrea in Assaio, and S. Andrea in Exaiulo.\footnote{Saxer calls S. Andrea in Exaiulo a new foundation entirely. The earliest sources to use this name come from about 998-999. This name comes from a bill of sale found in the archive at Santa Prassede, which is signed by a priest from Sant’Andrea Exaiulo. See Enking, S. Andrea cata Barbara 15-16, where she discusses additional variations in this appellation, and parallels. Enking also indicates at p. 13 the possibility that this foundation is not continuous with the earlier one, but in any case the property in question is the same.} These suffixes seem to derive from the idea of the church being \textit{in aiuolo}, that is, in the garden. Decrees like the one above frequently mention the vineyards and other arable land adjacent to the church (see bolded text cited below above, "with vines and gardens next to it, with diverse trees") and this green space seems to have remained a part of the church and monastery’s identity for
centuries, with flowerbeds and vineyards represented by both Falda and Nolli in their plans of Rome in 1675 and 1748, respectively.\textsuperscript{734}

S. Andrea was not to remain in the hands of Fulda’s monks or of the Holy Roman Emperor. At the end of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century, a papal bull by Celestino III (1191-1198) asserts the ownership of S. Andrea by Santa Maria Maggiore, signaling that it had again passed from a royal possession to a curial one, though the circumstances under which this occurred are unknown.\textsuperscript{735}

\textit{The Transformation of Sant’Andrea/Sant’Antonio Abbate (1308)}

The period that followed appears to have witnessed the decline if not outright abandonment of the church of Sant’Andrea, which is missing from the major church catalogues of the 12\textsuperscript{th}-15\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{736} A hospital, however, was built nearby in the mid-13\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{737} Cardinal Pietro Capocci, prelate of Santa Maria Maggiore, from a noble family whose estate was on the Esquiline, left instructions for the establishment of this institution in his will, stipulating that it should treat patients suffering from a disease known as “sacred fire,” a form of ergotism caused by moldy grain.\textsuperscript{738}

\textsuperscript{734} Enking, \textit{S. Andrea cata Barbara}, 15-16.

\textsuperscript{735} Ibid., 14-15.

\textsuperscript{736} Hülsen, “Die Basilica des Iunius Bassus,” 55.

\textsuperscript{737} Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” 27 and Hülsen, “Die Basilica des Iunius Bassus,” 54 cite a 1289 document that mentions Nicolas IV giving the custody of the hospital built 40 years earlier over to the brothers of Vienna.

\textsuperscript{738} Enking, \textit{S. Andrea cata Barbara}, 45.
The “sacred fire” was also known as “the fire of St. Antony,” so called after two nobles founded an order of S. Antony Hermit to thank Antony for curing them of their condition. In the Middle Ages, the disease was an epidemic in Italy and France. As early as 1190, the Antonians had instituted a priory (a small monastery, dependent of a larger abbey) called the “Hospitale S. Antonii in Curia Romana portatile,” which functioned as a kind of mobile ambulance service that followed the pope on his travels. Its superior, “Prior of the City” or “Prior of the Roman Curia,” was the confessor of the Roman curial up to cardinal, and had the right to have a plate from the pope’s table each day. This portable hospital had its home, when in the city of Rome, at the Church of Ss. Marcellino and Peter at the Lateran.

The acquisition of land for Cappocci’s more permanent hospital did not begin until 1264. By 1266, the hospital was ready, and Pope Clement IV (1265-1268) named

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739 Ibid., 53.
740 Ibid.
741 Ibid., 54.
742 Ibid., 46 note 41 gives evidence of the Antonian brothers having bought up local houses to expand the property in the form of a list in the Atti degi Antoniani (Acts of the Antonian frs): fol. 13r. Roughly translated, the document reads:

20 August 1264: A Roman woman, once the wife of Albert Casalis, sold to the agents for the hospital one house sited near the church of S. Andrew. Nicolaus Philipus is the notary.

25 August 1264: Sale of the house for the construction of the hospital of S. Andrew.

26 August 1264: The purchase of two houses near S. Andrew for the construction of a hospital with the money left by Cardinal Capuccio.
its first rector, Fra Sanguineo. The portal, still preserved in Rome, bears an inscription crediting its founder as well as cardinal Giovanni Gaetani (later Pope Nicolò III, 1277-1280) and bishop Otto of Toscolo (one of the seven dioceses of Rome), executors of Cappocci’s will.

DNS PETRUS CAPOC CARD MANDAVID COSTRUI HOSPITALE ILOCO ISSTO ET DNI O TUSCUL EPS ET I GAIETAN CARD EXECUTORES ET FIEI FECERUT P AA DNI PET CAPCC

It was common, in this period, for hospitals to be concomitant with spiritual centers. Besides administering the kind of medical and therapeutic services we think of as the purview of hospitals today, they were major centers of charity and social welfare, offering distributions of food to the poor, giving shelter to the homeless and sick, and providing social and economic assistance like banking services and even dowries for orphaned girls. This is to say that while the site under discussion might seem to have changed function entirely in the ten centuries since Bassus’ dedication, in fact the support offered by the church and hospital here were not altogether different from those Bassus would have provided for his network of clients. Moreover, the Gaetani-Otto inscription is evidence that the donors had the same inclination that the preceding founder Bassus had, to record a donation and mark the building with plainly visible evidence of that

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743 Ibid., 49.

744 Ibid., 51. The portal is the only Romanesque one still preserved in Rome.

745 See Keyvanian, Hospitals and Urbanism in Rome, 1200-1500, 1 and the rest of the introduction for the role of urban hospitals in Europe beginning in the 12th century.
benefaction. In referencing the earlier will of Cardinal Capocci, the Gaetani-Otto hospital inscription is also similar to the inscription erected by Valila. Just as the Goth wished to partake in the reflected prestige of the aristocratic senator’s benefaction, so too did Gaetani and Otto link themselves to the past, naming themselves executors of the will of Cappocci and thus tying themselves to a lineage of generosity. Since the Bassus and Valila inscriptions are recorded in manuscripts from later centuries, we know the older inscriptions were still visible. The founders of the hospital would likely have been aware of the inscriptions, and may even have viewed themselves as operating in a similar tradition or in relationship to the much earlier patrons.

The papacy of Nicholas IV at the end of the 13th century (1288-1292) saw a major investment in Santa Maria Maggiore and the surrounding quarter. Nicholas IV was shored up by the Colonna family, who held not only land but also a great deal of influence in the area. The artistic and architectural legacy of their joint patronage is still visible in this part of Rome today. Nicholas IV restored the papal palace by Santa Maria Maggiore, at the mouth of the Via dell’Olmata, where Hadrian II had resided. Nicholas IV also made contributions to the decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore: his portrait appears in the 13th century apse mosaic by Jacopo Torriti depicting the coronation of the Virgin. His fellow donor Cardinal Giacomo Colonna is also depicted there.

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747 See Keyvanian, *Hospitals and Urbanism in Rome, 1200-1500*, 278, fig. 88.
reader has seen in Chapter Six on the Bassus processional panel, the donor portrait had precedents that preceded the Christian context of the site.

In this era, the co-cathedral status of Santa Maria Maggiore with the Lateran was emphasized by the direct line between the two, called the "Colonna Avenue" (today the Via Merulana), and by the religious processional route that joined the two churches (both of which were "slathered with Colonna emblems.") Each year, under the direction of a confraternity of the Colonnas called the Raccomandati del SS. Salvatore, an effigy of Christ known as the Salvatore Acheropita was translated from the Lateran along Via Maior, through the Roman forum, then across the Forum of Nerva to the Via Suburrana to the Salvatore Acheropita icon, bowing to the icon of his mother (the *Inchinata*) at the co-cathedral, where it spent the night before being processed back to the Lateran along the Via Merulana.

Running in parallel to the spiritual translation of Christ's effigy along the path from Lateran to Santa Maria Maggiore was the relocation of resources from one to the other. Sant'Andrea was very much implicated in these machinations and pathways: Nicholas IV endowed the peak of the Cispian with a great deal of significance, not only by his donations to the decorative program of Santa Maria Maggiore’s decorative program and the construction of his papal palace there, but also by his continued

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748 Keyvanian, *Hospitals and Urbanism in Rome, 1200-1500*, 282. See 219, fig. 61 for map of Colonna street.

749 Ibid. For more on the procession, variations in the itinerary, and changes in the effigies, see note 133.
investment in Sant’Andrea and the associated complex.\textsuperscript{750} One example is his intervention in the hospital there. To strengthen the hospital established by Capocci’s will a few decades earlier, he moved the Antonians’ portable hospital from its Lateran headquarters and summoned a group of brothers from France to establish an order of Antonians there. Nicholas IV also transferred the ambulatory hospital into the holdings of the curia, that is, directly under papal control, an action that signaled its importance to him. As its overseer he appointed Jacopo Colonna, who was a cardinal and a close associate of the pope, as its overseer, thus using the Sant’Andrea complex in the brokerage and consolidation of power and authority.\textsuperscript{751} This action interposed the Colonna family into the development and management of Esquiline institutions and demonstrated further commitment to Capocci’s earlier vision.\textsuperscript{752}

\textsuperscript{750} Enking, \textit{S. Andrea cata Barbara}, 54. Enking says they had been unable to do this earlier because the Guelfi popes were in charge and the Colonna family were Ghibellines. Guelphs are characterized as supporters of the papacy, and Ghibellines of the Holy Roman Emperor, so the later are sometimes called the imperial party.

\textsuperscript{751} This arrangement, however, did not last: just five years later, under Celestino V (1294), the hospital was returned to the dependency of Santa Maria Maggiore as it had been under Gregory II. See Enking, \textit{S. Andrea cata Barbara}, 55, with reference to a bull of October 1, in her note 48. Enking says illustrations of the period show 3 columns to illustrate the Colonna brothers: Jacopo on one side, Pietro on the other, with the pope, symbolized by his mitre, depicted as another column between them. Clearly there were many exchanges made, as the Colonna brothers propped up this pope and received gifts in return.

\textsuperscript{752} At any rate, what Nicholas IV and the Colonna are doing is reinforcing the will of Capocci, whose family had estates on the Esquiline. The consolidation of papal power on the Esquiline is consistent with the narrative proposed by Andrews and Bernard in “Urban Development at Rome’s Porta Esquilina and Church of San Vito over the Longue Durée.” The authors argue that the 13th century saw increased attention turned to the papal basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, and it seems Sant’Andrea was implicated in this.
In a short time, the 13\textsuperscript{th} century hospital on the Esquiline and the St. Antonian hospital that had been transferred there were fused with into one.\textsuperscript{753} In these years and into the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, the hospital was known as S. Andrea and Antonij, recognizing the appellations jointly, but “S. Antonio” or “S. Antonio de Urbe, ai Monti” began to prevail.\textsuperscript{754}

\textit{The Church of S. Antonio}

The Antonians constructed a church on the Esquiline next to Sant’Andrea and their hospital there, probably in 1308, under Phillip IV.\textsuperscript{755} By the following decade, the Antonians had abandoned their earlier headquarters on the Lateran in preference for the church on the Esquiline. We know little about the form or exact location of this church until it was entirely restored late in the next century. The restoration was carried out in 1481 by a Tuscan architect working under Cardinal Guillaume d’Estouteville, archpriest of Santa Maria Maggiore and superintendent of Roman construction between 1480 and his death in 1483.\textsuperscript{756} The inscription he erected built on the earlier hospital inscription of Cardinal Capocci, his predecessor, referring to the hospital’s age and earlier history:

\begin{quote}
CONSTANTIUS GUILLELMII PBR
AEDEM HANC VETUSTATE
COLLABENTEM A FUNDA
MENTIS INSTAUARAVIT
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{753} Under Benedict VII, 1294-1303, who was the last Roman pope for a while as the Avignon papacy ascended. Enking, \textit{S. Andrea cata Barbara}, 56.

\textsuperscript{754} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{755} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{756} Ibid., 57.
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The inscription’s *a fundamentis* echoes the *a solo* of the fourth century epigraph—which, again, should still have been visible. It also shares in common with many of the inscriptions from late antiquity its reference to the building’s age and decrepitude, in order to underscore more vividly the impact of the patron’s intervention on it.

The church had to be restored a second time not long after. A testimonial written in 1517 by Fra Mariano da Fissile reports that the structure had collapsed. Pius IV (1559-1565) constructed a new hospital and memorialized his construction by placing an inscription over the former one:

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PIUS IIII MEDICES PONT OPT MAX
HUIUS HOSPITALIS INSTAURATOR
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757 Enking, *S. Andrea Cata Barbara*, 57. In note 54 she says the *Archivio degli Antoniani a Roma* (Iura Casalium Sancti Antonij de Urbe, fol. I verso, 1472) names instead Constantius Gulli.

758 Parallels might be drawn to other Roman building inscriptions that noted the former ruin of a place. See Smith, “Restored Utility, Eternal City.”

759 Enking, *S. Andrea Cata Barabara*, 59, note 56 quotes Fra Mariano da Firenze, *Itineraries Urbis Romae* ed E. Bulletti. Rome 1931. p. 147: *At vero in sinistra retorquens, ad ecclesiam sancta Antonii abbatis perveneris iuxta plateau sancta Maria Maioris, apud quam est sancti Andreade apostoli per Simplicium papa exstructa, sicut carmina scripta ibidem indicant; quae omnes penitus destitute iamque collapsae, cum ampla domo et hospitali et horreis Fatius Sanctor cardinalis sanctae Sabinae renovavit*. Roughly: But turning to the left, you reach the city, according to the plateau to the church of Saint Mary Major and Saint Anthony the Abbot, where the pope constructed [the church of] S. Andrea, as is shown by the song writer is in the same place; all completely destitute now collapsed, all of which, with a large house and hospital and warehouses, Fatius Sanctor cardinal of Saint Sabina was renovating.

760 Enking, *S. Andrea Cata Barabara*, 52.
In both these instances at the new church, we witness the same desire to record a donation with a building inscription like the one erected by Bassus, and again, to place that inscription in relationship to earlier records of patronage.

_Sant’Antonio in Sistine Rome and the 17th Century_

The foundation of the church of S. Antonio accompanied the apparent decline of the former Basilica of Junius Bassus. By the late 15th century we see writers like Platina lamenting the condition of the basilica. Sources like Giacomo Grimaldi a few decades later and Giovanni Antonio Bruzio in the 17th century comment further on this deterioration, indicating that during this period monks scraped mortar from the wall decorations at Sant'Andrea and administered it to their patients as a curative. (See appendix of visitors’ accounts.) Sant’Antonio itself did not fare much better in the period: when Charles Anisson arrived in Rome as vicar general for Italy at the end of the 16th century, he found the hospital and church of Sant'Antonio in a scandalous state of disarray, its possessions in tatters, while its clerics neglected their duties to enjoy games and good food in the streets. Anisson's endeavors to renew Sant'Antonio with architectural and artistic commissions are recorded in his _Memoriale_, a text that offers us further detail concerning the circumstances of both churches. One passage indicates that Sant'Andrea, besides being destroyed bit by bit by the monks' harvesting of mortar, was being used as a stable and granary. Anisson writes that lambs, pigs, and charcoal

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761 Enking, _S. Andrea Cata Barbara_, 63. For Anisson’s interventions see _Il Memoriale di Charles Anisson, priore di Sant’Antonio_.

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(apparently supplies for use by Sant'Antonio and its hospital) were sent “to their usual place in S. Andrea.”

In the decades that followed, the Sant'Andrea/S. Antonio complex was only somewhat altered by the interventions of Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590) in the area, and its fortunes remained inextricably linked to the neighboring church of Santa Maria Maggiore, as they had in the earlier period. Sixtus began buying up land in the neighborhood in 1576, when he was still cardinal Peretti, to build up what would become his papal villa, the Villa Montalto. In 1587, Sant’Antonio sold some of its holdings to Pope Sixtus V to add to this estate. The map of this area by Cipriani (see Figures 10.1 and 10.2) indicates that Sant’Antonio’s cultivable land was a sizable parcel that lay to the east of Sant’ Antonio and Sant’Andrea, and comprising terrain both inside and outside the Servian wall. A wall built by Domenico Fontana, who would become the court architect for Pope Sixtus (and who was also awarded the commission for a new chapel at

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762 Enking, S. Andrea Catabarbar, 85 draws the conclusion that this must have been going on for some time, given the nonchalance with which Anisson mentions it.

763 For development of Rome under Sixtus V, Gamrath, Roma sancta renovata. Sixtus V issued a papal bull in February 1586 announcing his intent to shape a new Christian Rome. He was also interested in revitalizing the area of modern-day Monti, worked to get potable water to the area. The direct line from Santa Maria Maggiore to the Lateran was in place, via the Via Merulana, in 1575, but he added a new autonomous link between the Lateran and the center of Rome by constructing via S. Giovanni in a direct lane from the Lateran to the Colosseum. See map from Gamrath, her fig. 59, which makes it clear that he linked the area more directly to lots of parts of the city: via Porta S. Lorenzo, and via Marsala, which went to port S. Lorenzo to the Baths of Diocletian.

764 Culatti, Villa Montalto Negroni, 3ff.

765 See Cipriani’s annotations. The area is indicated on Cipriano’s other map by the letter D.
Sant'Antonio) enclosed the hospital, convent, and church.\footnote{Enking, \textit{S. Andrea Catabarbara}, 63.} This is visible in a 1593 drawing by Tempesta (see Figure 10.3). Happily, then, the main building of S. Antonio was unaffected by the pope’s \textit{piano regolatore}. Surely some of the remains from the villa must pertain to Bassus’ donation and the area around it, but given the documentation of the finds in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, and the impossibility of associating them with specific contexts, it is not currently possible to establish meaningful connections between his collection and the Bassus property.\footnote{Culatti, \textit{Villa Montalto Negroni}.}

In 1686 Ciampini witnessed the destruction of the apse of Sant'Andrea.\footnote{Ciampini, \textit{Vetera Monimenta}, 286. According to Enking, \textit{S. Andrea Catabarbara}, 63 note 74 the Elenco Lione says at f. 81 v. that the place was formerly deconsecrated: Licentia profanandi Ecclesiam S. Andrea.} Before this, the surviving marble panels were transferred to private collections. The Hylas and biga panels went to cardinal Nerli at the House at the Four Fountains, which became Palazzo Massimi. These subsequently entered the Drago-Albani collection, eventually ending up at the museum at Palazzo Massimi alle Terme in Rome. The two tiger panels that survive are usually conflated with the ones described by Ciampini, which he says he saw in place on the lateral walls of the church, and which he then indicates were converted into altar tables.\footnote{Ibid., 56.} In fact, however, of the panels Ciampini illustrates, one (in poor condition) shows what might be a deer, and the other shows a tiger attacking a cow. The panels at the Museo Capitolino both show cows, and the tigers face opposite

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directions (unlike Ciampini's two right-facing tigers). Another source, B. De Montfaucon, says two tiger panels with bulls were displayed in the back of the chapel of S. Antonio, in two niches by the altar. It must be these that that remained in Sant'Antonio until 1893, when they were moved to the Capitoline Museum following the deconsecration of Sant'Antonio. Perhaps one of these was Ciampini's cow panel, and his deer panel was lost; or perhaps both Ciampini's panels were lost and it is Montfaucon's that survive to the present day. At any rate, there were probably more animal combat scenes in the original basilica decoration than survive to today.

Sant’Andrea/S. Antonio Abbate in the 19th and 20th Centuries

At the end of the 18th century, the church of Sant'Antonio had little vitality, in spite of attempts at restoration earlier in the century, so the priory was abolished and the existing monks joined with the Order of Malta. The hospital was closed and the church apparently deconsecrated. Though the church was reconsecrated under Gregory XVI (1831-1846) in 1833, following the unification of Italy, the property seems to have come under the ownership of the Comune. The religious in residence there were expelled and

770 Montfaucon, *Diarium Italicum*.

771 Enking, *S. Andrea Cata Barbara*, 75–76 and note 75; see Montfaucon, *Diarium Italicum*, 107: in utroque latere capellae leonem qui vaccam suffocat exprimunt, roughly, “in each of the side chapels is a lion that suffocates a cow.”

772 Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) decreed in a bulla of 21 December 1776 their fusion.

773 Enking, S. Andrea, 104–5 reports this based on her finds in the Archivio di Stato, where she located correspondence about Sant’Antonio in this period and found the last Registro dei Conti of the Camaldolesi, to whom had passed the church’s property. The expulsion date is based on her discoveries in the archives of Santa Maria Maggiore, where she located Gazette Officiale
the church deconsecrated again. The hospital was converted to a military hospital in 1877, and the church was made part of the hospital—just as Sant'Andrea had been centuries earlier.

After these many reversals of fortune, the property of this block (between via Napoleone III and via Carlo Alberto, bounded by via gioberti and via Carlo Cattaneo) was purchased by the Holy See in the years leading up to the Lateran Treaty with Mussolini. The Vatican undertook the construction of several pontifical institutes: the Pontificio Istituto Archeologia Cristiana, on the northern corner; the Pontificio Istituto Orientale, to the left of the church of Sant'Antonio Abate; the Pontificiale Commisione di Archeologia Sacra; and the so-called "Russicum," or Pontificium Collegium Russicum Sanctae Theresiae a Iesu Infante, which was funded by the donations in excess of the amount necessary for the canonization of Saint Theresa. On the same day as the opening of the PIAC was celebrated, February 14, 1928 the construction of the Russicum began,

n. 230 of 24 August 1871 (for the 18 of August). Enking p. 104-5 reports this based on the Archivio di Stato, where she found correspondence about Sant’Antonio in this period and located the last Registro dei Conti of the Camaldolesi to whom had passed the church’s property.

Enking puts this purchase at 1928, but archival correspondence would indicate the property was purchased earlier, in 1926. Moreover, my research in the Ripartizione X archives indicates building requests were being made by 1926 for approval of new building plans, so presumably the land was already owned by the Holy See by then. Her writing indicates that it was the property of the Commune (as opposed to the Stato), which would be helpful in clearing up who undertook the excavation there.

Brandt, “Il cerimoniere, l’epigrafista e la fondazione del Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana.”

For the foundation of the Russicum, see http://www.carmelites.net/cr/issues/v44n2/st.therese-russian-college.php and the pamphlet in hard copy I obtained from the Russicum’s part-time archivist and its Rector.
with the symbolic laying of its cornerstone. It was during the construction of the Russicum that the Basilica of Junius Bassus was discovered, as Lugli reported to Paribeni.

The archival records of this period do not, unfortunately, reveal more than has been discussed earlier about the archaeological state of the material from the Bassus hall. It does, however, signal that the block was a kind of crucible for wider-ranging tensions between the Vatican and Mussolini as each party, religious and governmental, tried to establish its territory. In these years too the Church of S. Antonio was in these years converted by Antonio Muñoz for celebration of the eastern rite, and the church was given to Russian Catholics, who continue to worship there today.

777 How this plays out in the dispute over the finds from the Basilica, and in the attempts at building on this land, will be the topic of a future article.

778 Motu proprio of 28 October 1932, under Pius XI. For renovations to the site made by Muñoz see Bellanca, Antonio Muñoz, 215–20.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has aimed at seeing the Basilica of Junius Bassus through new eyes, calling on a variety of data sets (epigraphy, literary sources, Renaissance drawings, archaeological data) to reassess this singular monument.

This project redesignates the category in which we place the Basilica of Junius Bassus, upending the typical identification of the hall as a Roman *domus* and identifying it as a civic benefaction. This reclassification inflects our understanding of how the senatorial aristocracy at Rome were able to represent themselves during this period and what tools were available to them to shape the late antique city. As the first act of architectural benefaction by a private citizen at the capital in some 300 years, the hall might be seen as signaling a change in imperial hold, and in aristocratic perception of and response to that change. Perhaps Bassus’ donation was a nostalgic kind of archaism, one meant to recall Republican modes of patronage and ways of performing aristocracy. Alternatively, we might see Rome as suffering a kind of demotion immediately after Constantinople’s founding: where before the city had been jealously guarded by the emperor, receiving his architectural patronage exclusively, it was now seen as ranking like any other city that might become the client of many patrons. The Bassus hall contributes a new data point to the question of what makes a capital, and in what ways Rome’s status was ceded to Constantinople. Moreover, this study thus invites us to construct a bigger picture of late antique euergetism in which to situate Bassus’ gift. Certainly it forces us to broaden our view of late antique civic *euergetism* as a persistent phenomenon, not one that waned or was exclusively diverted into Christian channels. Yet
architectural patronage is often studied through a Christian or secular either/or lens, when uniting the two phenomena might reveal wider patterns.

Reconsidering the hall’s classification and function opens the question of whether the monument served as a far more public building than previously assumed. Whether as a place for court proceedings or some other purpose, the hall would seem to have been dedicated to civic purposes. Such a building introduced a new civic element to this part of the Esquiline, shedding some light on the way this quadrant of the city developed even before Santa Maria Maggiore and further church construction in the area. This analysis is in conversation with recent work on “edge phenomena,” which has placed more emphasis on urban margins replaced the center to periphery model with attention to multiple nodes operating as “centers” to drive the development of Rome. At the very least, consideration of this monument adds breadth to the numerous studies of civic self-presentation that focus on the Roman Forum and its curated collections of statuary, both by contributing to the geographical coverage of those studies, and by expanding the investigation to include surviving architectural material when usually statue base inscriptions denuded of their statues are all that we have.

The function of the building notwithstanding, its decoration can be seen as molding the city’s ceremonial topography. As Richard Lim writes on the inversion of center and periphery in late antique Christian Rome, “topography need not be seen as primarily made up of bricks and mortar; rather, the topography of a city may be said to be constituted by the interactions between particular practices and imaginative structures,
and by specific patterns or modalities of temporal and spatial use.”779 By bringing the act of procession to the Esquiline—if only pictorially—Bassus translated with it the procession’s associations and strong ties to civic memory.

It is apparent from the medieval and modern sources that the power with which the site of the Basilica of Junius Bassus was charged did not dissipate with its original patron. Valila used the hall and his dedication of it for his own self-fashioning, accruing to himself, as Gregor Kalas has it, a layered elite identity to which Junius Bassus’ authority as patron, consul, and Roman contributed. When the site grew to include Sant’ Antonio Abate and its monastery and hospital, the parts of the complex were used to assert authority: the monastery was brokered as a political gift between pope and king, while the hospital was built in fulfillment of a vow to a decedent whose will called for it; administration of the hospital and church was commended to the authority of friends and allies as token of favor. Later patrons of these institutions erected inscriptions as testimonial to their interventions, echoing (consciously or not) the acts of patronage that had been commemorated there centuries earlier. Why did this site, in the shadow of Santa Maria Maggiore, remain so charged? Even in 20th century Rome, after the Vatican purchased the property, we can trace disputes over jurisdiction and ownership, when the finds associated with the Bassus excavation became the object of a quarrel between State and Comune, but then were yielded to the Vatican. This study begins to fill in a centuries-

779 Lim, “People as Power,” 265-6
long history of agency expressed through topography, though further lines need to be
drawn to flesh it out.

This study’s assessment of the decoration of the basilica is the first to take the
hall’s political and social context into account in reading its imagery. A variety of
methods have been brought to bear on these marble panels. This multi-pronged approach
respects both the multivalence of Roman interior decoration and the fragmentary nature
of the evidence, which prevents us from using a single unifying lens or programmatic
mold.

The biga panel framed movement through the Roman cityscape, and the people’s
consensus as enacted through that movement. By depicting himself in the act of being
seen in procession, in the garb appropriate to his office, Bassus turned himself into an
emblem, not merely an individual serving a specific historic moment, but also a
figurehead, whose office was in continuity with Rome’s deepest traditions. The image
closely resembles imagery of imperial triumph, but carefully avoids imperial pretension
through the insertion of the representatives of the circus factions. Their presence casts the
parade as a *pompa circensis*. The picture of Bassus as host and donor made a fitting
centerpiece (if only figuratively) for the decoration of the hall that Bassus gave to
commemorate his consular year.

The Hylas panel offers an example of the expansive range of formal vocabularies
the late antique artist had at his disposal. A depiction of Greek myth underlined by
Egyptianizing figures, the panel displays the cosmopolitan sophistication of the patron,
while displaying the kinds of knowledge and culture to which Rome was heir. The sounds
summoned up by the Hylas narrative—the boy’s cries, Hercules’ frantic search for him—may once have played out in performance in the hall. The aural and embodied experience of this and other panels was a key component of viewing in Late Antiquity, a fact more salient with the rise of sensory archaeology. This investigation lends insight as to the phenomenological experience of the space and the multiple levels on which a visitor might access or understand the decoration therein, a vantage point from which the hall has never been studied before.

As the biga panel translated late antique ceremonial practice to the space of the hall, it also spoke to the continuing value placed on consulship and its symbolism. As consul, Bassus was broker of renewal, bringer of renovatio. His inauguration was emblematic of the new year and reassurance of the ongoing evolution of Rome’s customs. So, too, did the consulship come with practical obligations, not least among them the provisioning of spectacle, which Romans still expected and appreciated. Writing in the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus calls the Circus Maximus “the true temple and spiritual home of the Romans.” Ammianus is writing derisively of the rabble of the city, but he no less reveals where the pleasures of the people lie and in what activity they find their identity. Bassus’ tiger panels show him to be a patron of the city’s pleasures, capable of drawing on his financial resources, his favor with the emperor, and his personal networks to access the best that the empire had to offer. As sponsor of these

780 Amm. Marc. 28.4.29, translation Lim.
games, Bassus was able to cast himself as orchestrating a cosmic arena, and as sharing in its victories.

As one of the advisors of this thesis has often commented, we as students of antiquity and art would never have guessed that these panels belonged together, if we did not know that they came from the same monument. They make up an eclectic set, which we would undoubtedly find to be even more varied were it complete. While some panels employ traditional iconographical forms or reference an archaizing style, others innovate, casting a new, non-imperial figure as the center of a procession. Lucian wrote of appreciation “of pictures so beautiful and so varied. The exactness of their technique and the combination of antiquarian interest and instructiveness in their subjects are truly seductive and call for a cultivated spectator.”

It is possible that the Basilica of Junius Bassus is a hapax, a monument without parallel. As such we cannot understand it simply by comparison to similar monuments, and must use all the context at our disposal to illuminate it from many directions. In undertaking this work I have hoped to cultivate a group of more informed spectators, so that they can be seduced by this monument’s beauty.

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781 …ἄλλως τε καὶ πρὸς οὕτω καλὰς καὶ ποικίλας τὰς ὑποθέσεις.

τῆς γὰρ τέχνης τὸ ἀκριβὲς καὶ τῆς ἱστορίας μετὰ τοῦ ἀρχαίου τὸ ὑφέλιμον ἐπαγγεύον ὡς ἄληθὸς καὶ πεπαιδευμένον θεατῶν δεόμενον. Lucian On the Hall, 21.7-10
FIGURES

All images have been redacted for copyright reasons.

Introduction and Touchstone Images

Figure 0.1 Panel from the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Consul in a biga followed by representatives of the four circus factions. Museo Nazionale Romano inv. 375831. 75 X 111 cm.

Figure 0.2 Panel from the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Hylas raped by nymphs, with Aegyptiaca frieze. Museo Nazionale Romano Palazzo Massimo) inv. 375830. 137 X 130 cm.

Figure 0.3 Panel from the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Tiger attacking bovine (right-facing). Museo Capitolino, Rome. MC 1222. 124 cm X 184 cm.

Figure 0.4 Panel from the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Tiger attacking bovine (left-facing). Museo Capitolino, Rome. MC 1226. 124 cm X 183 cm.

Figure 0.5 Marble Hall at Porta Marina, Ostia, as reconstructed at the Museo dell’Alto Medioevo in Rome.

Figure 0.6 Apse mosaic, 5th century renovation addition. Image from Ciampini, Vetera Monimenta, plate LXXVI.

Figure 0.7 Archival letter from Giuseppe Lugli to Roberto Paribeni, describing his rediscovery of the Basilica of Junius Bassus in February 1929.

Chapter One: Junius Bassus: The Man, His Peers, and His City

Figure 1.1 Cod. Sen. K X 35, f. 139 r, from the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, Siena.

Figure 1.2 Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, urban prefect 359 CE. Collection of the Vatican Museums.

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Figure 2.1 Views of the Russicum and the site of the Basilica of Junius Bassus today. Rome.
**Figure 2.2** Giuseppe Lugli, “Letter to Roberto Paribeni,” February 2, 1929, Ministero della Pubblica Instruzione aa.bb.aa 1929-1933 Div II. B. 191 Roma Chiese, Archivio Centrale dello Stato (EUR, Rome).

**Figure 2.3** Roberto Paribeni, “Letter to Antonio Muñoz,” May 27, 1929, Ministero della Pubblica Instruzione aa.bb.aa 1929-1933 Div II. B. 191 Roma Chiese, Archivio Centrale dello Stato (EUR, Rome).


**Figure 2.5** Lanciani’s *Forma Urbis*, Plate 24, upper right quadrant detail.

**Figure 2.6** Map of Sant’Andrea and Sant’Antonio by Christian Hülsen, 1926, from Hülsen, “Die Basilica des Junius Bassus,” Abb. 8.

**Figure 2.7a** Plan of the Basilica of Junius Bassus, drawn by Giuseppe Lugli. Published in Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” fig. 1.

**Figure 2.7b** Plan annotated by Natasha Sanjaya.

**Figure 2.8a** Plan of the Basilica of Junius Bassus, based on Lugli’s plan. Produced by Daira Nocera.

**Figure 2.8b** Plan of the Basilica of Junius Bassus, based on Lugli’s measurements. Produced by Natasha Sanjaya.

**Figure 2.9** Reconstruction of the interior wall elevation of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. By D. B. Martin. Published in Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” fig. 16.

**Figure 2.10** Partial interior wall elevation by Giuliano da Sangallo, c. 1500. Vat. Barb. Lat. 4424, f. 31v. Annotations by Daira Nocera.

**Figure 2.11** Photograph of a general view of the excavation. Published in Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” fig. 2.

**Figure 2.12** Photograph of the interior of the apse during excavation. Published in Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” fig. 4.

**Figure 2.13** Reconstruction of the apse decoration in the Church of Sant’Andrea Catabarbara. By D.B. Martin. Published in Lugli, “La Basilica di Giunio Basso,” fig. 19.
Figure 2.14 Santa Balbina, Rome. Left flank (south). Image from Krautheimer CBCR I, fig. 58. Photo J. H. Parker, c. 1870.

Figure 2.15 Excavations in Via Napoleone III in 1926 under the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology. Drawing by Emmanuel Gatti. Published in Colini, Appunti degli Scavi Di Roma, tav. 1.

Figure 2.16 Plan of the Basilica of Junius Bassus by Giuliano da Sangallo, c. 1500. Vat. Barb. Lat. 4424, f. 29v. Annotations by Daira Nocera.

Figure 2.17 Plan and ¾ view of the Basilica of Junius Bassus by Ciampini. Published in Vetera Monimenta, figs. 3 and 4.

Figure 2.18 Some possible reconstructions of the opus sectile floor of the basilica. Drawings by Natasha Sanjaya.

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Figure 3.1 Biga panel with drapery. Windsor, RL 19224. 17th century Italian. (Pietro Testa?) Published in Whitehouse, Ancient Mosaics and Paintings, no. 29 p. 153.

Figure 3.2 Biga panel with drapery. Windsor, RL 9605. By P.S. Bartoli, based on Sangallo. Published in Becatti, Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina, XLVI.1.

Figure 3.3 Biga lunette. By Antonio Eclissi. From Cod. Vat. Lat. Barb. 4402, fol. 33. Published in Enking, S. Andrea cata Barbara, p. 28, fig. 7.

Figure 3.4 Biga panel with drapery. Uffizi collection. Published in Conti, “Disegni dall’antico agli Uffizi ‘Architettura 6975-7135,’” no. 260, tav CX.

Figure 3.5 Biga panel with drapery. 17th century. From Caylus, Recueil de peinture antique, Paris 1757, tav. xxx. Published in Fusconi, “Un taccuino di disegni antiquari,” p. 49 fig. 15.

Figure 3.6 Biga panel with drapery. Ciampini, Vetera Monimenta, plate XXIII.

Figure 3.7 Portrait of the Consul of the Year (the Emperor Constantius II) from the Calendar of 354. Published in Salzman, On Roman Time, fig. 13.

Figure 3.8 Portrait of the Consul of the Year (the Caesar Gallus) from the Calendar of 354. Published in Salzman, On Roman Time, fig. 14.

Figure 3.9 Maffei Relief. Original 2nd–4th century CE. From Onofro Panvinio, De ludis circensibus, libri II. De triumphis, liber unus f. 18.
Figure 3.10 Diptych of the Consul Anastasius, purportedly showing a manumission scene. Published in Harper, *Slavery in the Roman World*, fig. 12.1.

Figure 3.11 Textile in the Louvre with circus figures and *sparsatores*. Published in Cahier, *Melanges d'archéologie, d'histoire et de literature*, I, 4, plate 20.

Figure 3.12 Bird circus mosaic. From Piazza Armerina, Sicily.

Figure 3.13. Gold medallion, 335 CE. Quadriga with consular Constantius II distributing the *sparsio*. Dumbarton Oaks Collection BZC.1951.17.

Figure 3.14 A Delphic Tripod and the Rape of Hylas above Egyptianizing drapery. RL 19225. 17th century Italian. (Pietro Testa?) Published in Whitehouse, *Ancient Paintings and Mosaics*, cat. 28 p. 149.

Figure 3.15 Rape of Hylas with Egyptianizing drapery. Ciampini, *Vetere Monimenta*, plate XXIV.

Figure 3.16 Rape of Hylas lunette. Uffizi collection. Published in Conti, “Disegni dall’antico agli Uffizi ‘Architettura 6975-7135,’” no. 293, tav. CXIX.

Figure 3.17 Hylas copy in Florence, from the collection of Rodolfo Siviero. Published in Martinelli, Martinelli, “Cronaca di un restauro dimenticato,” fig. 2.

Figure 3.18 Egyptianizing drapery with no narrative lunette. Windsor RL 9030. By Antonio Eclissi. Published in Whitehouse, *Ancient Mosaics and Paintings*, no. 30 p. 155.

Figure 3.19 Centaur, Tiger attacking a deer (?), and tiger attacking a bovine. Ciampini, *Vetere Monimenta*, tav. XXII, figs. 1-3. tigers and centaur

Figure 3.20 Tiger attacking a bovine watercolor. Windsor RL 11480. 17th century Italian. Published in Whitehouse, *Ancient Mosaics and Paintings*, no. 33 p. 161.

Figure 3.21 Left: Delphic tripods. Left: Windsor RL 9031. By Antonio Eclissi. Published in Whitehouse, *Ancient Mosaics and Paintings*, no. 32 p. 159. Right: Windsor, RL 9032. 17th century Italian. Published in Whitehouse, no. 35, p. 159.

Figure 3.22 Winged centaur. Windsor. RL 11481. 17th century Italian. Published in Whitehouse, *Ancient Mosaics and Paintings*, no. 35, p. 165.

Figure 3.23 Partial interior wall elevation by Giuliano da Sangallo, c. 1500. Vat. Barb. Lat. 4424, f. 31v. (Unannotated)

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Figure 3.24 Partial interior wall elevation by Giuliano da Sangallo, c. 1500. Vat. Barb. Lat. 4424, f. 31v. Annotated with location numbers of individual motifs discussed in the chapter.

Figure 3.25 Partial interior wall elevation. Windsor/Vittoria RL 9604. P. S. Bartoli, after Sangallo. Published in Whitehouse, Ancient Mosaics and Paintings, as comp. fig. 27ii.

Figure 3.26 Partial interior wall elevation. Windsor RL19267. Codex Ursinianus Copyist. Published in Campbell, Ancient Roman Topography and Architecture, no. 194, p. 549.

Figure 3.27 Partial interior wall elevation. Ciampini, Vettera Monimenta, tab. XXI.

Figure 3.28 Partial interior wall elevation, with corner. Private collection, Rome. 17th century Italian. Published in Whitehouse, Ancient Mosaics and Paintings, no. 27.

Figure 3.29 Multiple views (reconstructed) and plan of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. By Luigi Canina, Ricerche sull’architettura, tav. XV.

Figure 3.30 Longitudinal section of the Basilica of Junius Bassus (reconstructed). By Luigi Canina, Ricerche sull’architettura.

Figure 3.31 Preaching and martyrdoms of Peter and Paul. Window painting from the Church of Sant’Andrea Catabarbara, 9th century (?). Ciampini, Vettera Monimenta, tab. XXV.

Figure 3.32 Reconstruction graphic of interior wall elevation of the marble hall at Ostia. From Aurea Roma.

Figure 3.33 Figural fragments from the domus at Sette Sale, Rome. From Bianchi et al., “Domus delle Sette Sale. L’opus sectile parietale dell’aula basilicale. Studi preliminari” and photograph from the storage magazzino.

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Figure 3.35 Longitudinal section render of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. Hypothetical reconstruction with surviving panels only. By the author, with drawing by Natasha Sanjaya.
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**Figure 3.37** Lapiths and centaurs mosaic. Collection of the San Antonio Museum of Art. 3rd-4th century.

**Figure 3.38** Arch of Malborghetto. Drawing by Giuliano da Sangallo. Before 1491. Vat. Barb. Lat. 4424, f. 36v.

**Figure 3.39** Sassetti tomb, designed by Giuliano da Sangallo. 1485-90. Santa Trinita, Florence. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

**Figure 3.40** Mosaic of winged centaur holding a club. Palmyra, 2nd century CE.

**Figure 3.41** Polydus and Compressore Mosaic. Collection of the Rheinishes Landesmuseum. From Trier, 3rd century. Charioteer and quadriga.

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No images.

**Chapter Five: Situating the Basilica of Junius Bassus on the Esquiline**

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**Figure 5.2** Archaeological map of the area between the Esquiline and the Viminal. By S. Sisani. From Coarelli and Cuccia, *Via Cavour: una strada della nuova Roma*, p. 124-5.

**Figure 5.3** Map around the Sessorian Palace in the 4th century. Rome. By Bill Nelson. From Angelova, *Sacred Founders*. Map 6, p. 136.

**Figure 5.4** View through Porta Esquilina to the Fountain of Alexander. By Giuseppe Vasi. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

**Figure 5.5** Sant’Antonio on the plan by du Perac, 1577. From Enking, *S. Andrea cata Barbara*, fig. 16.

**Figure 5.6** Map of the Esquiline in Late Antiquity. By Chrystina Haueber. Map 5 at http://www.rom.geographie.uni-muenchen.de/horti/maecenas/hm_map5.html

**Figure 5.7** Diachronic map of the Esquiline. By Chrystina Haueber. Map 6 at http://www.rom.geographie.uni-muenchen.de/horti/maecenas/m6zout.php
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Figure 6.2 Map of the Republican route of the pompa circensis. By Maria Saldaña. From Latham, Performance, Memory, and Processions in Ancient Rome, Map 1.

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Figure 6.4 Diptych of Basilius, with segmentum detail. 541 CE. From Olovsdotter, The Consular Image, Plate 8.

Figure 6.5 Magerius mosaic. Tunisia, 3rd century CE. Sousse Archaeological Museum.

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Figure 7.2 Rape of Hylas, mosaic, at St.-Romain-en-Gal. 3rd century CE.

Figure 7.3 Rape of Hylas, mosaic, from the House of Hylas. 4th-5th century CE. Djemila Museum. From Blanchard-Lemée, Maisons à mosaïques du quartier central de Djemila (Cuicul), pl. XLIII.

Figure 7.4 Rape of Hylas, mosaic, from Syedra (Turkey). 2nd century CE.

Figure 7.5 Rape of Hylas, mosaic, from the Villa Materno, Carranque (Spain). 4th century CE.

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**Figure 7.7** Rape of Hylas, mosaic, from the House of Venus, Volubilis. 2nd-3rd century CE.

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No images.

**Chapter Nine: The Tiger Panels**

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**Figures 9.2a and b.** Phalera (metal horse harness disk) depicting a lion attacking a stag. Parthian, 2nd C BCE. Left: Getty 81.AM.87.2. Right: Getty 81.AM.87.4 (part of a four piece set). Silver with gilding. 9 x 12.6 cm.

**Figure 9.3** Zliten mosaic. 3rd century CE. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

**Figure 9.4** Lion attacking an ass (left-facing). *Opus sectile* panel from the marble hall at Porta Marina, Ostia. 2nd half of the 4th century CE. From Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*.

**Figure 9.5** Lion attacking an ass (right-facing). *Opus sectile* panel from the marble hall at Porta Marina, Ostia. 2nd half of the 4th century CE. Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*.

**Figure 9.6** Tiger attacking a deer. *Opus sectile* panel from the marble hall at Porta Marina, Ostia. 2nd half of the 4th century CE. Becatti, *Edificio con opus sectile fuori Porta Marina*.

**Figure 9.7** Mosaic of a lion attacking an onager. From Tunisia, c. 150 CE. Getty 73.AH.75. 98.4 X 160 X 7.6 cm. Image By I. Sailko, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.

**Figure 9.8** Diptych of Anastasius. Victoria and Albert Museum inv. 368-1871. Image from Olovsdotter, *The Consular Image*, plate 11:2.

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Figure 9.12 Hunt mosaic under Santa Bibiana, formerly Horti Liciniani? Collection of the Museo Centrale Montemartini.

Figure 9.13 Hunt Mosaic from the House of Isguntus, Hippo Regius. 4th century CE.

Figure 9.14 Map of marble quarries used by the Romans. From Lazzarini, “La determinazione della provenienza delle pietre decorative usate dai Romani,” p. 264.

Chapter Ten: The Afterlife of the Basilica and its Site

Figure 10.1 Map of the area surrounding Sant’Antonio Abate. By Cipriani Published in Vittorio Massimo, Notizie istoriche della Villa Massimo alle Terme Diocleziane, 1836, tav. 1.

Figure 10.2 Part of the plan of Rome before Sixtus V built the Villa Montalto. By Cipriani. Published in Vittorio Massimo, Notizie istoriche della Villa Massimo alle Terme Diocleziane, 1836, tav. III.

Figure 10.3 Sant’Antonio on the map of Rome by Tempesta, 1593. From Enking, S. S. Andrea cata Barbara, fig. 17.
Giuliano da Sangallo

Giuliano da Sangallo (c. 1443-1516) was a Florentine architect and sculptor who enjoyed the patronage of Lorenzo de Medici. The family’s artistic legacy was continued by Giuliano’s younger brother Antonio and by Giuliano’s nephew (known as Antonio da Sangallo the younger).

Giuliano began drawing monuments from antiquity around 1465, focusing on those in Rome and surrounds but also venturing south to the Bay of Naples and to southern France to see monuments in person. The source he gives us for the Basilica of Junius Bassus is the Barberini Codex BAV Barb. Lat. 4424, in which he provides a plan of the hall (f. 29v) and a partial elevation drawing of its southwest wall (f. 31v).

The reliability of Giuliano’s drawings as a source for reconstruction has been taken up both by specialists in ancient art who know Giuliano’s models, and by scholars of the Renaissance aware of the traditions and aesthetic tendencies that informed Giuliano’s work. Giuliano’s work does not demonstrate absolute fidelity to the model in every detail. Indeed not everything he drew was informed by personal inspection: some of his work was based on other artists’ drawings. Some drawings, when compared to an actual surviving monument, reveal Giuliano’s “corrections” and alterations: “In the process of recopying his own sketches or those of someone else, Giuliano often changed his model: proportions were altered, missing parts of ruins supplied, intercolumniations
modified, and vertical and horizontal axes shifted.” This may have been in part because the Renaissance taste for mathematic order did not always find satisfaction in Roman models. Moreover, this methodology of adaptation was encouraged by Giuliano’s contemporary Leon Battista Alberti, encouraged artists to cull from ancient sources and adapt models to their own purposes.

Aesthetic aims aside, knowledge of Giuliano’s working process may also inform our analysis of his sketches. His notebooks are filled with not only drawings of complete monuments, but also of isolated patterns and motifs, recorded for possible application to his own architectural projects. While his sketches seem to have served as memory aids and studies, many of the drawings show underdrawings, and reveal the use of straight edges and compasses, which suggests that the drawing was not done on site, but laid out carefully and with consideration in a studio.

The early studies of Sangallo’s drawing of the Basilica of Junius Bassus put complete confidence in the accuracy of the draughtman’s drawing (de Rossi, Bock). More recent work (Hülser) has thrown out nearly everything Sangallo drew of the

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782 Brown, “Sangallo, Giuliano Da (Giuliano Di Francesco Giamberti); Hülser, Il libro di Giuliano da Sangallo; and Borsi, Giuliano da Sangallo. I disegni di architettura e dell’antico, esp. 169-73. Other sources on Sangallo’s relationship to the antique as a part of designing his own projects: Brothers, “Reconstruction as design;” and on remaking what he saw: Brown and Kleiner, “Giuliano Da Sangallo’s Drawings after Ciriaco d’Ancona.”


784 Ibid.

785 Ibid., 323.

786 Ibid.
basilica, on the basis that it came from other ancient models. This debate is important in part because Sangallo’s drawing is the earliest surviving illustration of the basilica’s decoration. Because the hall suffered such decay over the centuries, this early drawing is our best chance at a view of the building before its total destruction. If its details are part fabrication, however, we must consider whether its creative liberties contaminated later sketches by artists who relied on Sangallo as a model.

**Giovanni Giustino Ciampini**

Giovanni Giustino Ciampini (1633-1698) is another major source, whose work provides us with both textual and visual evidence of the Basilica of Junius Bassus. An ecclesiastical archaeologist and papal secretary, Ciampini undertook a range of theological, scientific, academic, and practical pursuits: he wrote books on the church offices, assisted in the publication of a scientific and technical journal, and oversaw the renovation of Trajan’s aqueduct under Innocent XII. Among his archaeological publications were a book on holy buildings constructed by Constantine the Great and *Vetera Monimenti*, the full title of which was *Vetera Monimenti, in quibus praecipue Musiva Opera Sacrarum, Profanarumque Aedium Structura, ac nonnulli antiqui ritus, dissertationibus, iconibusque illustrantur* [roughly: Ancient monuments, in which especially mosaic works of sacred things and temple structures of profane gods, and several antique rites, are illustrated by written description and pictures]. The book, dedicated to Pope Alexander VII, was intended as a four-volume work. The first volume
was published in 1690, and the second (the only other volume to be completed) published at the end of the decade, after Ciampini’s death.\textsuperscript{787}

Volume I takes up the art of mosaic, its origins and kinds, and its materials and techniques, through a study of examples from churches and tombs from the early Christian and medieval periods in Rome (including S. Agatha in the Subura, the Lateran Baptistery, S. Maria Maggiore, and Sant’Andrea Catabarbara) as well as Ravenna and other cities.

Ciampini discusses the decoration of the Basilica of Junius Bassus turned Sant’Andrea Catabarbara under the name “Basilica Siciniana.” Most scholars believe this basilica, mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus as the site of a riot, to be the same as the Liberian Basilica, that is, Santa Maria Maggiore.\textsuperscript{788} Ciampini’s text makes clear that he is describing the building we are concerned with, whatever names he thinks apply to it.

Ciampini illustrates part of one long wall of the basilica, his drawing looking much but not exactly like Sangallo’s: he illustrates two-thirds of the length of the wall, rather than just half, and some of the images with which Sangallo filled panels do not appear on Ciampini’s version. Ciampini worked over a century and a half after Sangallo, and may have been working from Sangallo’s drawing, but I am hesitant to dismiss his drawing as a mere copy of Sangallo’s. Besides the small differences between Ciampini’s drawings and that of his predecessor, Ciampini makes clear at various points in his text

\textsuperscript{787} Fiorentino, “Ciampini, Giovanni Giustino.”

when he owes knowledge of a decoration or drawing to another draughtman, as in one case where he thanks Antonio dal Pozzo, younger brother of Cassiano (see below), for supplying him with the necessary information to fill in this part of the description.\footnote{Ciampini, \textit{Vetera Monimenta}, 58.} He also makes clear he has seen the basilica in person: for example, he points out that he saw the tiger panels on the wall at points he designates on the illustration.\footnote{Ibid., p. 56.} (See Ciampini plate XXI, A and B for tiger panel locations.) At another point he says a motif was “most definitely there” (\textit{extitisse certum est}), as if to insist on his firsthand knowledge of the monument, as he illustrated and described some improbable imagery.\footnote{Ibid. This is with regard to the centaur.} Even though we must acknowledge that the aims and methods of archaeological illustration in the 17th century were different from today’s, Ciampini does seem to have concerned himself with accuracy, and with documentation as a kind of historic preservation. Ciampini was interested in detailed illustration and in interpretation of his illustrations, work which continued to be used by later generations of Christian archeologists.\footnote{Ristow, “Ciampini, Giovanni Giustino.”}

Ciampini embarks on his Sant’Andrea Catabarbara chapter with a discussion of public monuments and their tendency to display images of conquered enemies as trophies. This is a foundation for his later argument that the basilica is a triumphal monument to the emperor Constantine, whose enemy Maxentius is represented here by the treacherous Antony. The opus sectile panels are then laid out as episodes in the life of
Mark Antony, or as allegorical illustrations of Antony’s character and lineage. Though Ciampini’s illustrations have remained important in historical scholarship, they were no less subordinated to textual evidence, as if installed to illustrate captions from historical sources. Ciampini’s interpretations of the hall’s imagery are characterized by a dogged insistence on identifying—whether in poetry, drama, or history, he does not discriminate—textual passages that, to his mind, informed the image program.

Ciampini illustrates and describes the following decorations from the basilica:

“Mark Antony with pimps” panel from upper register (above “C” in Ciampini’s plate XXI; also illustrated in Huelsen’s Tafel V fig. 1); “carpentum” vehicle dragged by mules (Figure 2 in Ciampini’s plate XXI); the consul Antony addressing soldiers (adlocutio) (Figure 3 in Ciampini’s plate XXI); tigers attacking tame animals; “Mark Antony in triumph” (Bassus in a biga), with “human sacrifice” scenes flanking (manumitio?) (his plate XXIII); “Egyptian mysteries processions” and “Argonauts” (two instances of drapery with Egyptianizing motifs along the hem); rape of Hylas; winged hippocentaur (Ciampini’s plate XXII); Peter and Paul at Rome and their martyrdoms (his plate XXV) (later renovation). His identifications of the panels, his less credible borrowings from Sangallo, and his text-based interpretations of the images are discussed in Chapter Three, Graphic Evidence.

_Cassiano dal Pozzo and the Paper Museum_

Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588-1657) took up the task of recording the decoration of Sant’Antonio Abate in the 1630s. The endeavor was part of a much larger project of dal Pozzo’s to construct a “paper museum,” an inventory of drawings and prints that
documented the natural and manmade world, ranging from botanic specimens and faunal remains to ancient sculpture and medieval monuments. A patron of artists and a member of the Barberini household, dal Pozzo worked with his brother to assemble these works into a single visual repository for human knowledge. Its numerous albums were passed down for two generations and then dispersed to pay off family debt, ending up in the collection of the Albani family.\textsuperscript{793}

A surviving to-do list in dal Pozzo’s hand (for which see Whitehouse Appendix I doc. 3) informs us of his intentions with regard to Bassus’ hall, reminding him to “Finish the three [interior] facades of the temple and the apse and have the plan made by La Greca (?).”\textsuperscript{794} Dal Pozzo himself was to be responsible for the plan of the building, while other draughtsmen were deputized to make drawings of the rest of the hall. No comprehensive series of wall elevations was produced as Cassiano would have wished, however, whether because the project was simply never finished, or because the condition of the basilica by that time allowed for only a fragmentary pastiche.

The collection of drawings is thought to have been made for the purpose of studying the represented objects, whether as records of ancient material culture, as study materials toward an iconographical dictionary for antiquity, or simply as a compilation of

\textsuperscript{793} Whitehouse, \textit{Ancient Paintings and Mosaics}, 13.

\textsuperscript{794} Ibid., 139. This assignment is scratched out and replaced with “all Contini,” suggesting that Francesco Contain (1599-1669), an architect in the employ of the Barberini family, was to be asked to do the plan, though there is no evidence he did. Ibid., 50.
artistic material to inspire later generations of artists, is unknown. The authors and compilers may not have imagined that their work would be turned to aid in the cause of reconstruction many centuries later, but it does seem they had a documentary purpose, rather than a motive toward virtuoso expression.

This aim does not, however, assure us of the accuracy of the surviving images, which in some cases were copies of earlier drawings, not necessarily drawn from observation and autopsy of the original. Though natural history drawings in the Paper Museum collection were sometimes accompanied by measurements, drawings after the antique apparently did not have this convention. Documentation that would situate a decoration in its architectural context, such as an elevation or a ground plan, was not a priority of Cassiano’s draughtsman. Moreover, we glean from multiple drawings of the same subject that we cannot count on artists to have rendered proportional relationships or even compositions in a way that is internally consistent or faithful to the original.

Had dal Pozzo completed his intended treatment of the Bassus monument, we might have a more coherent picture of the hall and its decoration, however flawed that picture was. As it is, we are left with several drawings that we must reconcile with the remaining evidence (where there is any), and weigh against doubts about how far to trust them as documents of the original decoration of the basilica.

795 Ibid., 51-2.
796 Ibid., 33.
797 Ibid., 50-1.
The dal Pozzo collection contains nine drawings of the Basilica of Junius Bassus, including images of the Delphic tripod, the biga scene, the rape of Hylas, and the Egyptianizing drapery.
APPENDIX B

Visitors’ Accounts

The following are descriptions of the Basilica of Junius Bassus recorded in Renaissance manuscripts. These come from an appendix compiled by Huelsen, who had selected relevant excerpts. I include with each entry a note about the author of the manuscript and the title of the book in order to contextualize the scholarly project that the book undertakes. Each entry indicates whether I have consulted the manuscript in person. I thank Dallas Simons for assistance with the translations.

1. Onofrio Panvinio

Title: *Schedae De Ecclesiis Urbis Romae, 1560*  
Shelfmark: Cod. Vat. 6780  
Consulted digital copy at the Vatican Library.

Onofrio Panvinio (1530-1568) was an Augustinian monk who served as librarian to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese.798 His works include genealogies of well-to-do families in Renaissance Rome, books on the Roman calendar, and counter-Reformation writings on the primacy of St. Peter. The title page of this work gives in brackets forms of churches that the author covers, e.g. [Basilicae], [Tituli] [Diaconiae], [Xenodochia], [Oratoria], [Monasteria]. Our St. Andrea is listed as *Andrea prope S. Antonium in Esquires prop S. Maria Maiore.*

f. 63v.

798 For more on Panvinio and his use of sources, see Bauer, “Historiographical Transition from Renaissance to Counter-Reformation: The Case of Onofrio Panvinio (1530-1568).”
S. Andreae iuxta S. Antonium basilica antiqua fuit, porticum habens in capite et triplicem portam arcus forma, ipsa sex ampliss(imis) fenistris, hinc inde tribus, ornata. ... [illegible word]. Tota tessellate ex marmoribus variis et miris ornamentis. ... at[unda] tedly something “phresata,” but it any case not what de Rossi has, ornata] Facta ecclesia habet aram et sedem marmoreas, absidem cum Christo et sex apostolic. Toreumata (?) etiam de venatione vid. Venatoria. Habet tectum ligneum imbricatum.

There was an ancient basilica of S. Andrea near S. Antonio, having a porch at its front and a triple gate in the form of an arch; it [the basilica] was filled out with six windows, on this side three, ornamented [ie the basilica] ... [illegible word]. The whole decorated with various marbles and marvelous ornaments [ata, acc to de Rossi “ornata” but according to Huelsen “phresata”] The church as it was made had a marble altar and a marble throne, with Christ and six apostles in the apse. [It had] as well embossed/relief works of the hunt, as evidenced by hunting gear. It had a roof of tiled wood.

2. Claude-Francois Menestrier (via van Winghe)

Shelfmark: Cod. Vat. 10545
Personal inspection conducted June 26, 2015 in the BAV.

Claude-Francois Menestrier (1631-1705) was a Jesuit best known for his work on heraldic imagery, but was also a student of archaeology. Menestrier seems to have discussed the imagery in the basilica with Claude Peiresc, with special attention to the tripod motif. This book is a copy of cod. Bruxellens. 17872 (excerpt ff. 27-8) by the Flemish antiquarian Philipp de Winghe (d. 1592) titled Inscriptiones sacrae et prophaneae collectae Romae et in aliis Italiae uribis. The book appears to be an antiquarian’s notebook, with descriptions and drawings of ancient works as small as gemstones and as large as architectural monuments, and containing many inscriptions, particularly from

799 “Menestrier, Claude-François.” From Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (Treccani). http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/claudie-francois-menestrier/ According to de Rossi 12 he was also a schoolmate of van Winghe.

800 See Whitehouse, Ancient Paintins and Mosaics, 139.
tombs. It is divided into “ethnic” (meaning in this case pagan) monuments in the first half of the book and Christian ones in the second half.

f. 227 v.
Iuxta aedem S. Antonii in Esquiliis est sacellum S. Andreae olim dicatum, nunc ruinosum et desertum. Exornatum est undeque opere vermiculato aut musivo ex marmoris frustis concinnato, in quibus figurae deorum gentilium, equitum et venationum, unde auguratuntur Dianae olim fuisse. Mart. lib. 7: Esquiliis domus est, domus est tibi colle Dianae, Et tua patricius culmina vicus habet. Lib. 12: Aut collem dominae levis Dianae. In absida seu fornice eodem opere visitur mutila inscriptio

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . S. V. C. CONSVL O. . . . . . . . . . . . . ET. DEDICAV. . . . . . ER
Dictus fornix ornatus est musivo, sed ex vitro qualia sunt reliqua quae Romae visuntur, ut postmodum superinductum videri possit, converso templo in usum Christianum. Stat Christus indutus toga purpurea, circum eum sex apostolic cum togis albis et soleis antiquo more, singuli volumina singula manibus tenentes, opere satis elegantii quoque ad ethnica tempora proxime artificio accedat. Indicant id versus subscripti diverso charactere a superioribus:

HAEC TIBI MENS VALILAE DEVOVIT PRAEDIA XPE. cet.

Near the sanctuary of S. Antonio on the Esquiline is the chapel which was once called [that of] S. Andrew, now ruined and deserted. It was fitted out everywhere with vermiculated work or mosaic fitted from marble pieces, in which were figures of the gods of the gentiles [here pagans], of horsemen and hunts, whence they suppose it was once [a temple] of Diana. Mart. lib. 7: “On the Esquiline is a house, a house is yours on the hill of Diana and the patrician’s quarter has another of your gables.” Lib. 12: “. . . [while you wander, Juvenal, in the Subura] or you tread [Loeb has “teris,” “you rub/wear away,” Hülsen says “levis,” “light”] on the hill of the goddess Dianae. In the apse or the fornix of the same work is beheld a truncated inscription—

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . S. V. C. CONSVL O. . . . . . . . . . . . . ET. DEDICAV. . . . . . ER
The said arch is decorated with mosaic, but of glass as are the others that are seen in Rome, so that it can be seen that it was added later when the temple was converted to Christian use. Christ stands robed in a purple toga, around him six apostles with white togas and slippers according to the ancient custom, each one holding in his hands his own volume, a work of such elegance in every respect without exception that it approached the time of the pagans with its artfulness.
In verses of a different character from those above, the things written underneath declare:

HAEC TIBI MENS VALILAE DEVOVIT PRAEDIA XPE. etc.
3. Alfonso Ciacconio

Alfonso Ciacconio (1540-1599) was a Spanish-born scholar and student of Christian antiquity who belonged to the Dominican order. This text has a number of illustrations, including the apse of Santa Prassede and figures from numerous other churches in Rome, annotated to say what medium the works are executed in, and under what pope they were made. Interspersed with the textual description of S. Andrea he includes two illustrations from the Christian apse mosaic as well as three images from the original decoration: the centaur and two lion panels. Ciacconio’s tigers face opposite directions like the extant panels do (not as they were rendered by Ciampini). Ciacconio also departs from Ciampini in not illustrating damage to the panel. The centaur he depicts is like Ciampini’s, but faces the opposite direction. The Ciacconio centaur may have been the source for RL 11481 (=Whitehouse 35) but the differences suggest the RL drawing was made independently.

ff. 189-193

[Then the inscription HAEC TIBI MENS VALIDA DECREVIT PRAEDIA CHRISTE and drawing of 3 apostles.]

Hi sex apostoli hinc et inde claudunt utrumque latus Christi, S. Petrus sinistrum, Paulus vero dextrum. Candidis vestibus amicti cum signo huiusmodo [upside down T], tunicis subtus purpureis talaribus, cum stolis singuli et calciamentis apostolico ritu. Omnes uno except versus sinistram ultimo volumina habent in manibus, unde colligitur Petrum et Paulum, Mattheum, Ioannem, Iacobem et Iudam eos esse, qui soli sciuntur scriptores
fuisse, quod volumina indicant. Ille autem qui solus est sine volumine, Andreas fortasse erit Petri germanus, in cuius memoriam et ecclesia haec et titulus eius condita, a Simplicio papa, multis post eius obitum censibus, redditibus et opibus illi relictis. Hinc colligitur, nullum templum fuisse usque ad huius dedicationem in memoriam B. Andreae in urbe erectum. Opus auctem vermiculatum quo fuit ornatum, inter elegantissima esse et debere computari cernimus.

[Next page has a drawing of the Christ figure; p. 191 is empty]

f. 193
Opus certe egregium et commendation dignum. Habebat autem tota haec basilica picturas elegantissimas ex incrustatione marmorum, peculiariter ex tabulis porphyreticis et opificis concinnata et opera insuper vermiculato interposito, ubi ferarum diversarum insultus et prædae cernuntur in alias mitiores bestias facta, ut hic cernere est. Quid autem factum est de tot censibus et opibus quas Simplicius papa huic basilicae moriens reliquit, Galli rationem reddant, velia lii qui eas occuparunt.

[Following is a drawing of the centaur and the two tigers.]

In the holy church of S. Andrea in Barbara on the Esquiline near S. Maria, joined to the temple of S. Anthony, now made secular, ornamented with the most beautiful vermiculate work now extant, made by Pope Simplicius and endowed in the annual census after his death. He died here in 482 [sic], made pope in the year 474, 10 August. [sic] He dedicated the Basilica of S. Stephanos on the Celian and this S. Andrew on the Esquiline near S. Maria Maggiore, S. Stephan near S. Laurentius outside the walls, and S. Bibiana ad Ursum. The pastor/presbyteros set this up on behalf of penitents. He was buried in the basilica with the prince of the apostles. The six apostles here flank Christ, St. Peter on the left, Paul on the right, wearing white robes with a symbol of this sort: [upside down T] Underneath they were wearing purple tunics down to their ankles (talaribus). They also are wearing stolae and sandals in accordance with apostolic custom. All of them but one are holding volumes of verses on the left in their hands. On the left is Peter, Paul, Matthew, John, Jacob, and Judas, who are the only ones who are known to be writers. The only one without a volume, Andrew, perhaps the brother of Peter, in his memory this church his name church, dedicated by Pope Simplicius many years after his death from his testament. From this, one can gather that there was no temple up to the time of this dedication in the memory of Blessed Andreas that was erected in the city. It had vermiculate work and we think that it ought to be reckoned among the most elegant types. The work was indeed renowned and worth commendation. It had most elegant decorations of marble incrustation, finished from porphyry and serpentine with vermiculate above all of that, where there were the combats between different types of beasts, and where could be seen meaner beasts preying on the more mild. But what was made from many censuses and works which pope Simplicius had left, dying, the Gauls [the French priests of Sant’Antonio?], or the others who occupy it, are restoring.
4. Pompeo Ugonio

Cod. Vat. Barb. Lat. 2160, earlier 1055, then XXXI, 45,
Personal inspection conducted June 26, 2015.

Pompeo Ugonio (1572-1614) was a professor in Rome who kept notebooks of the topography of ancient and medieval Rome. He was another of the companions in the circle with Ciacconio, van Winghe, and author of Roma Sotterranea Antonio Bosio. This particular text deals with the urbanization of Rome from the ancient period. It has few illustrations and very difficult handwriting. Ugonio’s reference to an Apollo likely refers to the image of Hylas with the nymphs. His “houses and towers” around the top of the wall may have been a misinterpretation of the shutters that appear on either side of the picture panels in all the elevation drawings. 801

f. 130
S. ANDREAE IN BARBARA. Passata S. Maria Maggiore contigua a S. Antonio è rinchiusa questa chiesa ancora tra il chiostro e la vigna di S. Antonio bellissima. La fece Simplicio papa Tivolese. Ha questa chiesa un bel corpo assai conveniente e la tribuna di muraici, dove sono un Salvatore in mezzo che benedice, poi tre santi apostolic, a man dritta S. Paolo, a man sinistra S. Pietro. Versi sotto
   Haec tibi mens Valilae decrevit praedia Xre
   Etc.
Di sotto è un altro fregio di pietra dove si legge solo ch’io ho potuto vedere
   . . . . . CONSVL O . . . DICAV . . .
Ha una nave sola assai grande sostenuta da archi alti di mattoni. In capo si sale all’altare grande, dove è dietro il presbiterio e la sedia di marmo episcopale; è tutto incostato di pietre di varii colori fatte a lavoro e disegno di diverse figure. La cima attorno attorno è figurate come torri e case: sotto vi è certe tavole di pietre larghe e lunghe diversamente lavorate, perchè vi è come un panno tessuto che pende di varie figurine, e in un loco sopra come un Diana (?triano?) in un carro che lancia una saetta e di qua e di la cavalla, in un altro loco sono certi che tirano un huomo a sedere. Nel 3º pare un Apolline in piede

801 This is the hypothesis of Hülsen, “Die Basilica des Iunius Bassus,” 62. Of course, to question whether we can trust these authors on the basis that saw something other than what they have written can lead us down a slippery slope.
con huomini attorno e sotto il medesimo panno con un fregio lavorato a figurine bellissimo. Tutta la chiesa è similmente così incrostata per ogni verso e nei canti... e nel mezzo leone che assale sopra un cavallo, poi un toro, poi una capra selvaggia, bellissimo lavoro da vedere.

Beneath is another frieze of stone where one reads only what I was able to see:

. . . CONSVL O. . . . DICAV . . .

It has a single nave, rather large, supported by high arches of bricks. At the head there rises a large altar, which the priest stands behind, and the bishop’s seat of marble; it is all incrusted with stone of various colors worked and patterned in diverse figures. The top is figured round and round like towers and houses; under which are certain panels of wide, long stones variously worked, because it is like a woven fabric of various figurines that hangs down, and in one place above like a Diana (?) in a cart who hurls an arrow and on each side a horse; in another place are certain ones who pull a seated man. In the third (place) there is an Apollo on his feet with men around and under the same a fabric with a frieze worked with beautiful figurines. The whole church is similarly incrusted in every direction, and in the corners... and in the middle a lion that assails a horse, then a bull, then a wild goat, beautiful work to see.

5. Giacomo Grimaldi

Shelf mark: Vat. Lat. 6437 (part 1)
Consulted in person June 30, 2015 at the BAV.

Giacomo Grimaldi (1568-1623) was a scholar of early Christian Rome whose life’s work was very much in sympathy with our current task of reconstructing the past. He witnessed the destruction of the medieval part of the Lateran in 1585, which impressed upon him the necessity of recording as many details as possible about the basilica of St. Peter in anticipation of its destruction. As part of this endeavor he archived the documents belonging to the church and made an inventory of all its implements and possessions, from silver and textiles to sarcophagi, medals, inscriptions, and painting.
This text is a book of churches founded by popes and cardinals, organized according to their patrons.802

S. Andreae in Barbara coniuncta ecclesiae S. Antonii apud S. Mariam maiorem, in Aurisario deinde appellate, hodie ad usus profanes redacta. . . Dianae, ut fertur, quondam templum, habet pulcherrimas incrustationes ex lapidibus serpentinis, marmoreis et aliorum colorum ad diversos flores et factorum argumenta elaboratos; hodie cernitur testudo (in the margin: Paulus III testudinis argumento usus cum litteris: festina lente) et equus a leone discerptus, Caesaris ingeniosum inventum et aliqua ipsarum incrustationum fragmenta; quae in dies Galli illi barbari, qui ecclesiae ipsae (sic) S. Antonii deserviunt, crassa ignorantia destruunt, et mixturae glutinum, quo incrustationes tenentur, recipiunt ad febres sananas. In apside cernitur Salvator mundi cum apostolis, a Simplicio papa musivo opere ornate, cum eius nomine ut carmina in zophoro ostendunt; quod musivum pro illi aetate pictoribus non displecit.

S. Andrew joined to the church of S. Antonio near S. Maria Major, in Aurisaurio it was then called, today is returned to profane use. It was once a temple of Diana, and it is said, it had most beautiful incrustation from serpentine stone, and ornaments of different colors and elaborating different subjects of deeds; today is seen a turtle and a horse torn apart by a lion and a clever invention of Caesar and some fragments of the incrustation; which eventually those foreign Galls [the French priests of Sant’Antonio] who came to serve in the church of S. Antonio, which they destroyed because of their lazy ignorance, and the adhesive mixture which held the incrustation together, they received for the healing of their fevered patients. In the apse is seen the Salvator Mundi with apostles, adorned with mosaic work by Simplicius, with whose name the poems display in the frieze bearing animals; which mosaic for its age is not displeasing.

6. Benedetto Mellini

Shelf mark: Vat. Lat. 11905 earlier Arch. Vat. Misc. arm. VI vol. 38, f. 215
Personal inspection conducted June 26 and June 30, 2015 at the BAV.

Mellini (c. 1592-1670)803 was librarian to Queen Christina of Sweden and the author of a number of books, including a compilation of Roman authors and a text on San

802 Ceresa, “Grimaldi, Giacomo.”

803 The most detailed biographical synopsis of Mellini, including a discussion of the evidence around the dates of his birth and death, is found in Guidobaldi and Angelelli, La “Descrittione Di
Lorenzo in the Lateran.\textsuperscript{804} \textit{Dell’antichita di Roma} was probably copied from many different sources, rather than authored by Mellini himself.\textsuperscript{805} This text was of a piece with 17\textsuperscript{th} century efforts to compile a comprehensive description of Rome and its monuments.\textsuperscript{806} It is mentioned by Cassiano dal Pozzo and is known to have been in the library of Ciampini.\textsuperscript{807}

Dallo spedale (di S. Antonio) per una porticella a mano destra si passa al convento, nel quale in capo al cortile si vedono per fianco i vestigii della chiesa di S. Andrea detta in Barbara. . . Questo vestigio di chiesa è volto a settentrione, piglia il lume ad oriente da tre finestroni arcuati, che sono gli antichi del gentilesimo: altri tre finestroni haveva ad occidente, ma furono già murati e dipinti sopra histories acre. Ha nelle pareti, et alle teste alcune figure profane di marmi orientali commessi, un leone che sbrana un cervo, un leopardo che uccide un bue, e simile fiere selvage, e per quanto si scorge da alcuni archivolti di finestroni e da molti framenti nel muro, questo edificio era tutto riportato di marmi orientali. Vi si scorgono ancora vestigii di pitture sacre, S. Pietro, S. Paolo ed il loro martirio, la sepoltura di S. Pietro e pitture simili di goffissima maniera, le quali stimo sieno del tempo di Leone III, di cui si legge l’ultima restauratione di questa chiesa.

From the hospital (of S. Anthony) through a little gate on the right side one passes to the convent, in which at the head of the courtyard one can see on the side the remains of the church of S. Andrea called “in Barbara.” This vestige of the church is facing north, catching the light from the east by three large arched windows, which are the old things of the pagan era (here “gentile”): it had three other large windows at the west, but they were already walled and painted over with sacred stores. It has on its walls, and in the upper parts, some profane figures of oriental marbles, a lion that tears a deer to pieces, a leopard that kills a cow, and similar savage creatures, and however (per quanto) you can glimpse from some of the arches and windows and from many fragments in the wall, this

\textit{Roma” Di Benedetto Mellini Nel Codice Vat. Lat. 11905.} For S. Antonio/S. Andrea see esp. 331ff; 338ff.

\textsuperscript{804} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{805} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{806} Ibid., 49.

\textsuperscript{807} Ibid., 16 and 32.
building was all illustrated in oriental marble. There stand also vestiges of sacred pictures, S. Peter, S. Paul and their martyrdom, the burial of S. Peter and similar pictures in the most clumsy manner, which we estimate to come from the time of Leo III, of whom one reads was the last restoration of this church.

[there follows an argument about the gammadia, which Ciampini, Vetera Monimenta I p. 98f. published in Latin translation).]

7. Giovanni Antonio Bruzio

Shelf mark: Cod. Vat. 11875, earlier Arch. Vat. Misc. arm. VI vol. 7
Title: Theatrum Romanae Urbis sive romanorum sacrae aede
Consulted only in digital copy.

Bruzio (1614-1692) was another in the circle of scholar clerics of 17th century Rome. He spent twenty years compiling this text with the intention that it would be published and given as a gift to visitors to Rome. Bruzio gives for each church or institution a historical summary, a description of the congregation or society there, and a list of the things belonging to the church. Its value as a document about antiquity and the Middle Ages has been called into doubt because Bruzio is thought to have attained the knowledge recorded in it second hand, and offers little critical analysis in the volume.808 In particular, parts of Bruzio’s volume bear a striking resemblance to the manuscript by Mellini described above. Since Bruzio died some 20 years after Mellini, presumably it was he who copied Mellini and not the other way around.809 Bruzio does give the dimensions of the basilica “longitudinem pal. 120, in latitudinem 60.”810 Presumably the

808 Neveu, “Bruzio, Giovanni Antonio.”

809 This is discussed in Guidobaldi and Angelelli, La “Descrittione Di Roma” Di Benedetto Mellini Nel Codice Vat. Lat. 11905, p. 43ff.

810 at § 14, f. 180 v.
unit intended is the Roman palm. It is not clear to what dimensions of the basilica we are
to append these measurements, but we may reasonably guess that the hall was about
twice as long as it was wide.

177-192
Regio Montium tom. II lib. IX caput I. De aede S. Antonii Abbatis, monasterio et
nosocomio, nec non de antiqua aede S. Andreae in Barbara, sive in Barbaris, cui postea
inditum nomen in Aurisario.

The selected excerpts here follow Hülsen’s selections\textsuperscript{811} under the above heading,
which falls under a larger section that treats monuments on the Celian hill. Hülsen reports
that the first 24 paragraphs in this section contain no unique information and little
description of the basilica itself.

For example:

§ 8 f. 179 v. plures antiquarii autumant Dianae templum hic positum. Picturae id docere
videntur, quibus ornatae ethnicae aedis parietes, et fararum uas dea venatrix pereremit, et
Hippocentauri, a quibus dictam inde credunt Sancti Andreae in Barbara aut Barbaris.

Many antiquarians say that the Temple of Diana was placed here and pictures seem to
indicate this. Pictures with which the walls are adorned, and which beasts the goddess of
the hunt has killed, and there are horse-centaurs, because of which they believe that S.
Andrea in Barbara was called Barbaris.

In § 12 (f. 180) Bruzio gives excerpts from a codex which was preserved by the
Antonians (probably not earlier than the previous century):

In eodem codice habes ichnographiam templorum S. Andreae et Antonii, hospitalis
domus aediumque Antonianorum. His enim verbis loquitur: ubi signatum. . . , color
flavus indicat, referunt olim Dianae templum fuisse, quod a summo pontifice Simplicio
sacratum Divo Andreae apostolo fuit. Ibique. . . Prioratus et Hospitalis templum et in eo

\textsuperscript{811} The digital copy to which I had access was of very poor quality, and I trusted that Huelsen
reported adequately o the contents he had examined.
conservantur ornamenta opere vermiculato vel mosay elegantissimo, in quo Christi imago et B. Andreae et aliquot aliorum apostolorum visuntur cum huiusmod inscriptis versibus: [. . .]
Et hoc idem templum a quibusdam appellatur S. Andreae in Barbaris, quia in muris eius variae ferarum imagines a Diana Venatrice et ab Hippocentauris conficiuntur, opera partim tessellato ex variis confecto marmoribus, partim vero vermiculato.

In this codex you have an iconography of the temples of S. Andrea and Antonio, the hospital’s home and the temple of the Antonians. It is spoken in these words where it is signified, a golden color indicates, there was a temple of Diana here once, which was dedicated by Simplicus to the divine apostle Andrea. There was a temple of the priories and hospitalis and in it were preserved ornaments of vermiculate work very elegant, in which the image of Christ and Blessed Andrea and other apostles are seen with this verse inscribed: [there follows the Valila inscription according to Platinus]
And this same temple is called by certain people Andreas in Barbaris—barbaris because on the walls there were various depictions of beasts that were killed or hunted by Diana the huntress and by hippocentaururs, which is partially tessellate, finished from various marbles, and partially vermiculate.

In § 16 he goes on to say:


The temple, whatever is there with the time progressing with the Christian era, no one is able to deny that it came into being in the Christian era. Ss. Peter and Paul each hold books in their hands. There is an image of them holding it with the following inscription: Peter and Paul announce things to the Romans and teach about the kingdom. There were images witnessing to this of Peter hung upside down on the cross and Paul with his head cut off….

In the last § 24 (f. 182) he says:

Hoc unum est animadversione dignum, masticham quae e veteri aedificio reliqua ad crustandas marmoribus parietes, sistendae diarrhoe mirabilem per innumerous non frustra adhibitam suppeditantibus Antonionas patribus totam omnino periiisse.

And this one thing is worthy of note, that the rest of the things from the ancient building were used for the incrustation of the walls with marble. That resin that came from the
ancient building was used with encrusting the walls with marble, curing people wonderfully…; not in vain—with the Antonine fathers helping the whole thing perished.
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