

# MUSSOLINI'S IMPERIAL ROME: THE DREAM OF AN AUGUSTAN ITALY

by

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(Under the Direction of MARIO ERASMO)

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the propaganda of Fascist Italy by contextualizing its relation to Augustan Rome through specific monuments “liberated” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In chapter one, I discuss the construction of Via dell’Impero and the subsequent “liberation” of the Roman Fora surrounding it. I then consider this project in contrast to Augustus’ own building program, including the Fora of Caesar and Augustus and his temples. In chapter 2, I discuss the construction of the Piazza Imperatore Augusto. Within the context of this project, I examine the “liberation” of the Mausoleum of Augustus and reconstruction of the Ara Pacis Augustae as preparation for the Mostra Augustea della Romanità. I contextualize these projects by examining their construction under the Augustan regime in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. I then consider the culmination of Mussolini’s propaganda program for Fascist Italy: Via Del Mare, Via della Conciliazione and Esposizione Universale Roma.

INDEX WORDS: Mussolini, Augustus, Rome, Fascism, Propaganda

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by

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## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my dad for inspiring and allowing me to pursue my interest in history. To my mom for reading my countless papers for grammar mistakes and dealing with my anxiety issues throughout school.

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## INTRODUCTION

My thesis examines the building projects of Fascist Italy in Rome in chronological order in order to establish the progression, rise, and fall of the vision of Fascist Italy in the image of Augustus. Chapter 1 examines the construction process and propaganda of Via dell'Impero. I specifically examine the "liberation" of the Roman Fora surrounding Via dell'Impero that required the clearing of several medieval and papal neighborhoods in order for its construction. I then contrast the construction of Via dell'Impero with the building program of Augustus in the 1st century BCE. Specifically, I discuss the temple building of Augustus and the completion of the Forum of Caesar, as well as the construction of the Forum of Augustus.

Chapter 2 examines the "liberation" of the Mausoleum of Augustus and reconstruction of the Ara Pacis Augustae leading up to the Mostra Augustea della Romanità (MAR). I then contrast this with the original construction of these monuments during the Augustan Era and the scholarly interpretations of their purpose in Augustan propaganda. Finally, chapter 2 ends with the building projects which were meant as the culmination of the Fascist transformation of Rome, though only one was finished before the fall of the regime. The building projects in question are the Theater of Marcellus (and Via Del Mare), Via della Conciliazione, and EUR.

In 1937, Mussolini held the Mostra Augustea della Romanità (MAR) in Rome's Palazzo delle Esposizioni as a celebration of the 2000th anniversary of the birth of the emperor Augustus. Within five years of this exhibition, Mussolini wanted to present the city of Rome in relation to Augustan Rome by erasing the later accretions of Rome's medieval and papal buildings.

Through these means, Mussolini sought to become the next Augustus, and restore Rome to its former glory (as he called it). In 1925, Mussolini stated: “Within five years Rome must look wonderful to all the people of the world”.<sup>1</sup> This quotation encompasses Mussolini’s goal of showing the image of Augustan Rome to the whole world. My thesis examines this Fascist transformation of the city of Rome through the “liberation” of certain Roman monuments and sites to their supposed appearance in Imperial Rome, with the final culmination of the MAR intended to be exhibited at Esposizione Universale Roma in 1942 as a setting for Fascist Italy’s new modes of empire. The term “liberation” in the context of Fascist propaganda is important to define. Mussolini and the Fascists used language of “hygiene” and “liberation” to describe the erasure of buildup from the Italian past that stood in the way of the establishment of a clear connection because Fascist Italian and Augustan. They believed that by clearing the ancient Roman monuments of the “dirt” and “grime” that had built up through the history of Rome, these monuments would be “freed” to the open air of the city, or “liberated”. The term “liberation” is used frequently in this paper to describe this process of erasing the medieval and papal accretions of history in Rome, as this is what Mussolini and the Fascist party believed to be necessary for their propaganda program.

Fascism as a civic structure was a reactionary movement influenced by late 19<sup>th</sup> century thought that began to come to fruition as a form of government in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> There is some debate as to what thinkers or movements in particular helped spawn Fascism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. William Shirer, who lived in Nazi Germany during the 1930s, believes that Fascism can be traced in a direct line from Bismarck to Hitler. Shirer states that the views of thinkers such as

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<sup>1</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> For reference, “Machiavelli and Italian Fascism” by Joseph Femia is a comprehensive summary of early Fascist ideas, particularly Italian. Each brand of Fascism interpreted the basic ideas of the ideology somewhat differently. The ideas discussed in this paper are generally based upon the tenets of Fascist Italy and Germany from 1920-1945.

Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Johann Fichte influenced the development of Fascism in both Italy and Germany.<sup>3</sup> However, some scholars, such as Roger Lawrence Williams, believe that the first direct inception of Fascism was the regime of Napoleon III in France during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Napoleon III used censorship and martial law to control a French state that had been in the midst of continuous civil unrest since the 1790s.<sup>4</sup> His ideas of statesmanship can almost certainly be linked back to the Jacobin movement of the late French Revolution led by Maximillian Robespierre, infamous for his elimination of political opponents during the “Reign of Terror”.

The intention behind the inception of Fascism, and perhaps what makes it most easily connected with the regime of Augustus for us as scholars, was the restoration of a nationalist golden age. Fascism is characterized by national fervor, violence, manhood, purity, and cult of personality. The Fascist Italian regime drew upon the ideals of Augustus and was linked via a symbol used extensively in Roman civilization, the *fasces*. The term itself is derived from the Latin *fasces*, which was a band of rods tied together to an axe.<sup>5</sup> In ancient Rome, the *fasces* represented authority, or *imperium*, being carried by Roman *lictors* who accompanied magistrates, as well as consuls and proconsuls, in procession, hence the full terminology, the *fascio littorio*.<sup>6</sup> *Fascio littorio* roughly translates to “bundled” (*Fascis*) “lictoral” (*Littorio*). The term “fascism” naturally derives from this Latin terminology and, as the Italians used the ax and the bundle as the regime’s symbol, the term became synonymous with this authoritarian government.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Shrier, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Williams, *The Mortal Napoleon the Third*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> See *Oxford Latin Dictionary* entry on *Fascis*

<sup>6</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 95.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Even though Mussolini and the newly christened Fascists brought the *fasces* to the forefront of Italian politics, they were not the first to use derivatives of the term. By 1919, the term *fascio* was a common political expression meaning “group” or “association” in Italian politics.<sup>8</sup> In Sicily during the early 1890s, a group of peasants protesting severe working conditions formed a group known as *fasci dei lavoratori*.<sup>9</sup> Finally, in 1915, a group known as Fasci di Azione Rivoluzionaria (Fasces of Revolutionary Action) formed in order to promote Italian intervention in World War I.<sup>10</sup> Mussolini, however, took the term *fascio* and utilized both of its meanings (unity and authority) to represent his party’s ideology. By 1921, his party was referred to as Partito Fascista Italiano (Italian Fascist Party).<sup>11</sup> At this point, the members of the party were referred to as “fascists”.

The *fasces* already appeared as a symbol in many civic contexts after the fall of ancient Rome. The image was prevalent throughout the French Revolution as well as during the formation of The Republic.<sup>12</sup> The *fasces* also appeared on American buildings and statues, and were once visible on the Lincoln Memorial.<sup>13</sup> In addition, American copper coinage at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century used the *fasces*.<sup>14</sup> The concept of unity and authority was popular in late 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary thought, and thus the image was an apt one for many governments at that time. Mussolini and the Fascists, however, did not seek simply to have it as imagery, but rather to have the *fasces* as the adoption of an entirely new national identity centered upon what it

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<sup>8</sup> Cannistraro, *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, 205.

<sup>9</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 95.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*.

<sup>13</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 95-96.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

represented. Italy was to be renewed in the image of the *fasces*: order, discipline, and authority granted by unity and obedience. Mussolini said of Fascism in his 1932 “Dottrina Del Fascismo”:

“Fascism wants to remake not only the forms of human life, but the content, man, character, faith. To this end it requires discipline, and an authority that would impress the spirits and dominate them fully. Its sign is thus the *fascio littorio*, symbol of unity, force, and justice”<sup>15</sup>

The symbol became omnipresent throughout Italian society. Buildings, government documents, publications, and even clothing began to adopt the symbol of the *fasces*.<sup>16</sup> Italy as a whole was bathed in this concept of order, unity, and nationalism that it had not seen before in such an extreme degree. Not only did the *fasces* represent exactly the ideals Mussolini was attempting to instill in Italy, but they also provided a direct link back to Augustan Rome.

Along with Italy, examples of the adoption of Fascism can be seen in many countries within the years 1920-1950. Germany, Japan, and Spain adopted this form of government (along with Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Venezuela to a certain extent).<sup>17</sup> Within all these countries, the aspects previously stated can be seen, especially in the first four countries. Each had a leader at the center of a cult of personality. Adolf Hitler in Germany, Benito Mussolini in Italy, Hirohito in Japan, and Francisco Franco in Spain. All these nations also nurtured a fervent wave of nationalism as a central pillar of propaganda and envisioned reconquering (or

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<sup>15</sup> Mussolini, *Scritti e Discorsi*, vol. VIII, 73. Translation by Falasca-Zamponi.

<sup>16</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 96.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that Japan is slightly different than the other stated Fascist countries. While some of the countries in question still had figurehead kings (Romania, for example), Japan had a great deal of power tied to the Imperial house. While there were figures similar to Mussolini and Hitler in power in Japan during the era of Fascism (Hideki Tojo, for example,), the cult of personality was connected to the Emperor Hirohito, and the status which he enjoyed was unique among Fascist governments.

conquering) “rightful” territory for their ethnic group. The most relevant comparison for this thesis is Mussolini and Fascist Italy, and the evocation and restoration of Augustan Rome.

With regard to Fascist Italy, the intention of the regime was the imitation of Ancient Roman ideals for the purpose of creating something entirely new. Mussolini was not necessarily attempting to create a country which emulated Ancient Rome as he was more so attempting to create its successor. For the Italian people under Fascism, Augustan Rome came first, as the symbol of the purity and greatness of Rome. Now Fascist Italy was restoring what was lost over the past centuries. By examining the timeline in question, the sequence of events imagined by the Italian people under Fascism can be seen clearly. Republican Rome was failing prior to the reign of Augustus due to corrupt, power hungry aristocrats such as Sulla and Marius who took power away from the popular form of governance and centralized it in the figure of one man for his own purposes. Augustus proceeded to take full control of the state, and instituted an authoritative, “collective” state meant to usher in a golden era of thought, militarism, and nationalism. In this vein, Augustus was successful in ending almost a century of corruption by stabilizing the Republic as an empire. This account of history was presented by the Fascist regime as a simplistic account of the fall of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire because it fit the version of Augustus they wished to portray to the Italian people.<sup>18</sup>

Mussolini used these exact same themes of restoration and necessity with his institution of Fascism in the 1920s and 30s. With the advent of Post-Garibaldi Italy, the country was unified as one state for the first time in nearly one thousand years.<sup>19</sup> However, the influence of the medieval Renaissance and the Papal State remained especially in Northern Italy throughout the

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<sup>18</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 1-15

<sup>19</sup> Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 2-3

end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. After World War I, the crisis of Italian culture grew into one of nationalism and economics. The Italian people and army saw the Treaty of Versailles as a betrayal, as they received very little territorial concession for what they felt was a major contribution in fighting Austria during World War I. In addition, although still prior to the economic disaster of the Great Depression, Italy was suffering from a stagnant economy. Mussolini and the Fascists represented a departure from this uncertainty of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Italy, and the restoration of a glorious era of Italy.

In 1922, after 5 years of unrest following the conclusion of World War I, Mussolini was all but handed control of the government with the collapse of the liberal regime. Having the support of Victor Emmanuel, Mussolini marched on Rome on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1922. 70,000 blackshirts (a term given to the supporters of Italian Fascism because of their black dress) marched through the city of Rome with the approval of Victor Emmanuel, proclaiming the beginning of Fascist government.<sup>20</sup> On the same day, Mussolini announced his cabinet and told Victor Emmanuel that he brought the Italy of Vittorio Veneto, which was the final Italian victory over the Austrians in 1918.<sup>21</sup> Mussolini believed he would not only restore the ideals of Augustan Rome, but also combine them with the modern glories that had recently occurred in order to create his “New Rome”.

The Fascist regime intended to institute this “New Rome” by restoring the era of Augustus through the reclamation of “rightful” Roman territory, by reawaking nationalism in the Italian people, and creating the ideal disciplined Roman state. Fascist Italy would be, after 2000 years, the rightful successor to Augustan Rome. Mussolini set the Italian nation to the task of

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<sup>20</sup> Whittam, *Fascist Italy*, 39.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

becoming this rightful successor by restoring Rome to its “former” glory through building projects, just as Augustus had.



## CHAPTER I:

### VIA DELL'IMPERO

Via dell'Impero (now called Via dei Fori Imperiali to obscure its Fascist origin) created a connection between the Piazza Venezia and the Colosseum that was planned far before the initial designs of the Fascist regime.<sup>22</sup> The first plans for Via dell'Impero were developed by Alessandro Viviani in 1873, who intended to build a street from Piazza Venezia to the Colosseum.<sup>23</sup> The plan went through several more iterations before the beginning of Fascist rule, including drafts in 1883 and 1909.<sup>24</sup> The stated reasoning behind these plans was aesthetic, archaeological, and designed to improve public health. In addition, with the advent of the Fascist plans, public work was also put forth as rationale.<sup>25</sup> While Mussolini and the Fascists certainly put their own interpretation on the original designs, the regime still used the origin of the plans as a tool for boasting: the Fascists had completed a proposed project that the previous Italian regime, sometimes referred to as the Liberal regime, had failed to complete. Mussolini's chief designer on this project was Antonio Muñoz, who had been appointed the civic government's director of monuments in 1921 (he was a carryover from the regime prior to the Fascists).<sup>26</sup> By 1929, Muñoz served on commissions which were established in order to develop regulatory plans for the city. Muñoz was regarded within the inner Fascist circle as the foremost scholar on

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<sup>22</sup> Painter Jr., *Mussolini's Rome*., 22.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 54.

archaeological knowledge in the regime.<sup>27</sup> Muñoz, however, had a background based in the restoration of medieval churches, not ancient monuments.<sup>28</sup> Thus, his consultation was generally focused upon expertise in archaeology and history rather than modern planning. His list of experts included many who would later be right beside Mussolini in the construction of Rome within his vision, including figures such as Giulio Quirino Giglioli, Antonio Maria Colini, and Marcello Piacentini.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 1: The Construction of Via dell'Impero. (Jonathan Rome, Gretchen Van Horn)

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<sup>27</sup> Painter Jr., *Mussolini's Rome*, 25.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 59.

The construction process took several years, and was incredibly destructive to the surrounding neighborhoods of central Rome. It was estimated that the construction of the route would require the demolition of 138 buildings throughout eleven city blocks, which amounted to almost 10 acres of cleared land.<sup>30</sup> The Fascist regime claimed that the destruction was a necessary means to a much brighter end. According to Fascist logic, the clogged alleyways of Papal and medieval Rome would give way to a 30 meter-wide street connecting the Piazza Venezia and the Colosseum. The destruction of the poor neighborhoods around the Roman forum would improve public health dramatically, and also serve as a principal route for parades, as well as an improvement for the flow of traffic for both cars and pedestrians.<sup>31</sup> The connecting of the route to Via Cavour would provide an outlet for Termini train station, which the previous government had seized from Papal authority. Finally, the regime took pride in the surrounding Forum now being visible to all tourists and travelers who ventured to Rome.<sup>32</sup> The destruction of the poor neighborhoods would accomplish a twofold goal: the restoration of the “sanctity” of the Roman Fora and the additional modernization of infrastructure to bring Rome into the modern era of architectural planning with the likes of New York and Paris. However, Rome could never “fully” be like these modern cities. To do so, in the eyes of the Fascists, would mean that Rome was not Rome anymore. The city needed to maintain its status as a center of the Roman world, and completely modernizing it would defeat this purpose.

The excavation and subsequent “liberation” of the Roman Fora became the chief focus of the government prior to onset of the construction of Via dell’Impero. Though the clearing of the medieval and papal neighborhoods was essential for the construction of the road, Mussolini felt

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<sup>30</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 59.

<sup>31</sup> Painter Jr., *Mussolini’s Rome, Rebuilding the Eternal City*, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 81.

that the space which would be “reclaimed” would restore the Roman Fora to their rightful glory: the center of an Italian empire. Fascist archaeology followed (and would continue to follow) this concept. It sought to erase the unnecessary and “problematic” accretions that had slowly built up upon the sacred face of the Roman antiquities. The boundaries which existed between Roman and Fascist (not simply temporal, but even experiential) were to be slowly eliminated in order to make the past and present seem as one. As such, the philosophy of Fascist archaeology has been aptly described as “utopian social engineering”.<sup>33</sup>

The Fascist archeologists began to use terms of medicine and hygiene to describe the work which was being done on the Roman Fora.<sup>34</sup> They believed that the capital was “diseased”, and that they, as archeologists, were “saving” the “beloved body of the mother”.<sup>35</sup> The terms *sventramento* (gutting), *isolamento* (isolation), and *valorizzaione* (valorization) were used to describe this process.<sup>36</sup> The greatness of the Roman Fora was to be rendered “naked” by clearing away the debris that had accrued through “backwardness” and “foreign rule” (the Papal State rule). By this “creation through destruction”, the Roman Fora would surround Via dell’Impero as a “zone of silence”.<sup>37</sup> Antonio Maria Colini confirmed this philosophy while excavating the Market of Trajan in 1928, calling the project:

“A vast, hygienic, joyful oasis of light and green space. Destroyed, hidden, vilified for so many centuries, today Rome bursts forth from every quarter, in a breath of fresh air!”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 62

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Morpurgo, “La sistemazione augustea”, *Capitolium* 12.3, 147. Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Pio Molajani, “Conservare-Restauare-Creare”, *Atti del II Congresso di Studi Romani*, vol 2, 572. Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>38</sup> Antonio Maria Colini, “Una visita di SE il Capo Del Governo ai lavori in corso per la grandezza dell’Urbe”, *Capitolium*, 4.8, 408. Translation by Arthurs.

From 1925 to the construction of Via dell'Impero, these excavations commenced in earnest. The Fora of Julius Caesar and Augustus, the Forum and Market of Trajan, and the Capitoline disengagement were all a part of this "liberation" project. In addition, the Theater of Marcellus, Largo Argentina, and Piazza Bocca Della Verita were also a part of this project, though their "liberation" was not directly related to the construction of Via dell'Impero.<sup>39</sup> During these series of excavations, imperial era ruins received more emphasis than Republican ones. The reasoning behind this decision was twofold. First, the majority of monuments available for excavation were from the Imperial era and thus the obvious choice to focus upon. Second, and certainly the most important, was the desired association of the Fascist regime with Imperial Rome. Mussolini and the archaeologists on the project sought for the Imperial ruins to be at the forefront for seamless "connection" with the modern Fascist version of Rome.<sup>40</sup> In short, the "liberated" Imperial Roman ruins were desired as parts of the "new" Roman city as points of veneration, and Roman archaeology focused upon specific excavation and reconstruction of sites that fit the Fascist narrative.

Naturally, this excavation philosophy set many of the less "important" historical ruins to the wayside, and often was followed by their disregard and destruction. This led to the improper recording and preservation of hundreds of artifacts that were haphazardly thrown to the side in order to make way for what the Fascists were seeking. Perhaps the most infamous example of this was the destruction of the Meta Sudans and subsequently the Colossus of Nero for the extension of Via dell'Impero.<sup>41</sup> Fascist archaeologists justified its destruction by calling the structure a "pile of rubble" which "blocked the view of the Arch of Constantine".<sup>42</sup> Roman ruins

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<sup>39</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 64.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 65.

<sup>41</sup> Longfellow, "Reflections of Imperialism: The Meta Sudans in Rome and the Provinces", 280.

<sup>42</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 64-65.

were not the only structures to suffer this fate, with post-classical sites such as the San Urbano dei Pantani also being leveled for the purpose of Via dell'Impero.<sup>43</sup>

Predictably, this drew significant backlash within both the scholarly and tourist community for the damage being done to Roman monuments, criticism which continues to be harbored today.<sup>44</sup> The Fascist regime was forced to justify the irrevocable damage that had been done. The immediate justification was that of irrelevance. When Muñoz and Colini were excavating the area around the Capitoline, several structures were revealed dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, but were then subsequently demolished. Muñoz stated regarding these demolished structures that:

“they were not monumental buildings like the Forum Holitorium...the Temple of Vespasian, or the Temple of Concordia, but rather private buildings, large blocks, used for residence of even as mills, which do not provide interesting architectonic appearance. All constructions that we demolished were the humblest of things, unworthy constructions, built randomly, all renovated at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and of the most disparate forms and styles.”<sup>45</sup>

Muñoz further espoused upon the excavation of the Capitoline, stating that:

“traces of walls were uncovered around the base of the Capitoline, but, however interesting, they did not deserved to be left in the open view, since they limited the width and regularity of the street; thus we undertook the practice of preserving them in soil, and burying those objects lacking any value.”<sup>46</sup>

Just as with the destruction of the medieval and papal neighborhoods in the way of Via dell'Impero, the parts of the Roman Fora which were not relevant to the Fascist propaganda plan

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<sup>43</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 64-65.

<sup>44</sup> Packer, “Reports From Rome: the imperial fora, a retrospective” 1-2.

<sup>45</sup> Muñoz, *L'isolamento del colle capitolino*, 44-45.

<sup>46</sup> Muñoz, *Roma di Mussolini*, 200.

were simply discarded. In fact, the “insignificant” parts of the Roman Fora became akin to the antiquated neighborhoods: “tumors” clinging to “the body of Mother Rome” that would be cleared by a Fascists for “health and hygiene”.

Beyond the simple justification of “irrelevance”, the Fascist archaeologists even found ways to link the “sanitizing” actions to ones which took place in Imperial Rome. The Fascists saw that the Roman emperors, specifically Trajan, Augustus, and Hadrian (as well as Nero to an extent), cleared out massive, dense groups of *insulae* (Roman apartment blocks) in order to make way for “order and sanitation”.<sup>47</sup> In fact, architect Gustavo Giovannoni believed that Imperial Rome reacted to the clutter and grime of Late Republican Rome just as the Fascists were toward medieval and Papal Rome at that time. Giovannoni claimed that Late Republican alleys and buildings were “filthy and closed off” and that citizens could “shake hands with each other between houses”.<sup>48</sup> As a “tonic” of sorts, Giovannoni claimed the emperors:

“created a regular zoning system which was in no respect inferior to the most modern of zoning plans...systematically providing markets, granaries, fire brigades, and public buildings in each region; looking after the water supply and garbage removal; and above all extending the city into unbuilt areas, like the Campus Martius, which Augustus redeemed and ennobled with his monuments and which Trajan linked to the old center with great works between the Capitoline and the Quirinal.”<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, this destruction of the neighborhoods and “insignificant” ancient Roman ruins was actually a manifestation of Augustan values, according to the Fascists. The new area surrounding Via dell’Impero would be “ordered, severe, rigidly framed by its chessboard lay-out, just like the

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<sup>47</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 65.

<sup>48</sup> Gustavo Giovannoni, “L’Espansione di Roma verso I colli e verso il mare” *Roma*, 12.1, 13, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

peoples in the provinces of the Empire”.<sup>50</sup> The destruction was not only necessary for this new Rome, but also as further and proper emulation of what Augustus and the subsequent emperors would have done in a similar situation.

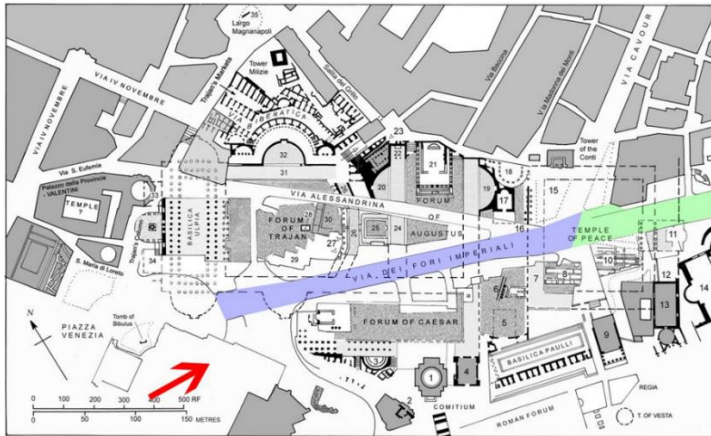


Figure 2: This map demonstrates Via Dell’Impero (Via Dell’ Fori Imperiali) on its path through the Roman forum. The image demonstrates the route’s connection to Piazza Venezia and the Colosseum (Not shown but to be assumed just off of the right side of the image). In addition, Via Dell’Impero connects with Via Cavour and bisects the Imperial Fora in two between the Forum of Caesar and the Forums of Trajan and Augustus. (“Memory and Movement in the Roman Fora from Antiquity to Metro C.”)Amy Russell, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 73 No. 4, December 2014; (pp. 478-506)

Beyond the problems created by the excavation of the Roman Fora, the Fascist government faced several challenges with the construction of Via dell’Impero, chiefly in internal reception, or the reception from the Italian people, and external reception, or the view of the rest of the world on its construction. In addition, Mussolini faced challenges to his “Roman” credentials. The regime’s desire to build a “city of marble” inspired by the age of Augustus was an incredibly difficult challenge. On the one hand, Mussolini sought to have a modernized Rome. On the other hand, any sort of modern building would seem quite modest when compared to the glory of an ancient structure. Thus, the architect was forced to meld the two styles into a

<sup>50</sup> Gustavo Giovannoni, “L’Espansione di Roma verso I colli e verso il mare” Roma, 12.1, 13, Translation by Arthurs.



seemingly impossible amalgamation. Antonio Muñoz expressed his struggle in planning Via dell'Impero and the structure around it:

“No-one could consider erecting new buildings, once the old ones had been destroyed. If they were modest, they would simply have returned us to its previous state; if they were given a monumental style, they would have brought such a pompous, rhetorical tone that the Sacred Hill would not have tolerated them”.<sup>51</sup>

This impasse is made clear not only by the Via Dell'Impero's construction, but also in the attempt in 1934 to build the national party headquarters (Palazzo del Littorio) along Via dell'Impero.

Palazzo del Littorio was envisioned by Mussolini and the Fascists as “an expression of the new artistic climate that is forming in Italy, a sign of the orientations, the revisions, the realizations, of all the spiritual forces of an epoch's artists, to capture one moment in the civilization of a people, to transmit it to the centuries”.<sup>52</sup> Palazzo del Littorio was also intended to be a museum to the Fascist revolution and a shrine to the martyrs from the March on Rome.<sup>53</sup> The headquarters was meant to face both the Colosseum and the Basilica of Maxentius as to further a connection to ancient Roman buildings in the area. Mussolini sought young architects for the project as both a representation of the new Roman youth and for contributions of modernist architecture.<sup>54</sup> The requirements sought to conform the color pallet to the surroundings of the forum, as well as the new Via dell'Impero, with the architects stating that it should “correspond to the greatness and power which Fascism has marked the renewal of national life,

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<sup>51</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 59.

<sup>52</sup> Palozzi, *Il Nuovo Stile littorio: I progetti per il Palazzo Del Littorio e della Mostra della Rivoluzinoe Fascista in Via Dell'Impero*, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>53</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini's Rome*, 22-23.

<sup>54</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 58.

in continuity with the Roman tradition”.<sup>55</sup> Stated more concisely, the architect was allowed to draw inspiration from Roman style architecture (in fact he was encouraged to do so) but was to avoid foreign styles of modernist architecture entirely.

The construction of Palazzo del Littorio was presented as an open competition. Secretary Achille Starace, and the architects Piacentini, Armando Brasini, and Cesare Bazzani were meant to judge the submissions, among others.<sup>56</sup> The cross between Italian modernism and classical Roman architecture proved an insurmountable challenge to many architects. On the construction of the headquarters, one judge reflected on the requirements:

“The colonnades of the Pantheon, the triumphal arches, the domes, the spires, the statues, the chariots would not have worked, and would have seemed insupportable falsifications in comparison to the original and venerated remains of the past; on the other hand, one of those architectural boxes which are today in style, especially across the Alps, would not have been tolerated”.<sup>57</sup>

Thus some architects refused to even submit plans, and the controversy over the design contributed to the reasons why the construction was never to be started. The project was later resurrected, but was, like many other civic projects, taken out of the context of Via dell’Impero and moved to the northern fringes of the city. It was not completed until well after the fall of Fascism in 1959.<sup>58</sup>

Palazzo Del Littorio is simply one example of the challenges that faced the Fascist redesign of Rome. Via dell’Impero naturally faced similar challenges. External and internal criticism suggested that it would, as a modern structure, interrupt the beauty of the Imperial Fora.

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<sup>55</sup> Palozzi, *Il Nuovo Stile littorio: I progetti per il Palazzo Del Littorio e della Mostra della Rivoluzinoe Fascista in Via Dell’Impero*, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>56</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 58.

<sup>57</sup> Muñoz, *Roma di Mussolini*, 220-221, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>58</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 59.

Muñoz was forced to respond to such criticism by highlighting the Fascist goal of fusing the ancient with the modern. Muñoz stated on Via dell'Impero:

“In lieu of statues, shields, tombs, or garlands, it would be enlivened day and night by thousands of vehicles and crowd of pedestrians”.<sup>59</sup>

To Muñoz and the Fascists, Via dell'Impero represented exactly the fusion between modern and ancient which they were attempting to achieve. Muñoz claimed:

“One might almost say that the street would be beautiful even without the ruins of the Imperial Fora; just as it is still beautiful when the ruins fade into the shadows in the evening”.<sup>60</sup>

The response to his statement was that Via dell'Impero would simply be a dead street, not worth the amount of destruction it wrought upon both centuries old neighborhoods and ancient sites.

Muñoz responded, just as Mussolini would have, with “exact” numbers to refute such claims:

“The road had 6,200,000 automobiles, 700,000 trucks, 27,000 horse-carts, and 14,000,000 pedestrians in one year”.<sup>61</sup>

It is certainly difficult to confirm these numbers. However, if they are to be believed, Muñoz and the Fascists had accomplished exactly what they set out to do. A section of the city, which had just years before been several narrow, polluted alleyways, just as Rome had been a series of piazzas, giving one an image of medieval Rome, was now a microcosm of the New Rome: a modern metropolis transformed physically and spiritually with an image of Ancient Rome in mind.

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<sup>59</sup> Muñoz, *Roma di Mussolini*, 209, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Mussolini was often, especially early in his regime, forced to defend his “Roman credentials” from the criticism of those in the city. As a northerner who had criticized the “parasitism” of the city during his career as a journalist, the sincerity in his desire to transform Rome was suspect.<sup>62</sup> As such, Mussolini had to prove that he had the best interests of Rome at heart, since a project as destructive as Via dell’Impero would need strong rhetorical justification for those it affected.<sup>63</sup> Mussolini tasked Antonio Muñoz and his planners with framing the project as a beginning of “Mussolini’s Rome”. Just as the city had been referred to as “Augustus’ Rome, Leo IV’s Rome, and Napoleon’s Rome” in the previous eras, Muñoz claimed that future generations would refer to the Rome of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as “Mussolini’s Rome”, and Via dell’Impero was the necessary beginning of this.<sup>64</sup> Mussolini became ever present in the construction process of Via dell’Impero in the form of his image. Perhaps the most famous image representing this omnipresence is the drawn photo of Mussolini in full uniform helping to clear the medieval neighborhoods with a pickaxe. The image appeared in the Roman magazine *La Domenica del Corriere*, and remains the quintessential image of Mussolini’s “destruction to creation” of Rome. Muñoz said of Mussolini’s presence over the construction process:

“Despite being absorbed with the great duties of politics, after having sketched out in great strokes the plan for the transformation and beautification of the old city through the liberation of its ancient monuments, the Duce follows the execution of this vast program day by day”.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 60.

<sup>63</sup> Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, 198.

<sup>64</sup> Muñoz, *Roma di Mussolini*, 210, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 3: Mussolini depicted in *La Domenica Del Corriere* (“Mussolini’s Influence on Rome” Maxwell Cohen, course.umass.edu)

With a constant flow of propaganda, Mussolini began to convince the Roman public of his intentions, leading one commentator in the *Capitolium* magazine to argue that his “Roman credentials” were “born into the fiber of his being. It was the innate Roman realism of the descendants of the Quiriti who colonized the Po Valley, abandoned by the small Umbro-Etruscan clans and by nomadic Gauls.”<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Alessandro Bacchiani, “Roma del pensiero di Benito Mussolini” *Capitolium*, 391-392, Translation by Arthurs.

By 1932, Mussolini had firmly established the goal of a New Rome with the image of the Ancient in mind. This period coincides with Fascism being firmly established in Italy, and an overall increase in Mussolini's power. Mussolini said of the inspiration of Ancient Rome: "The virtues of Classical Rome, the doing of the Romans of old, are always on my mind. They are a heritage which I try to turn to good account."<sup>67</sup> Via dell'Impero was one of the first steps in this process, and by all accounts seems to have conformed to this goal of "fusing the Ancient with the modern". Mussolini's goal with Via dell'Impero, as well as the "liberation" of other parts of Rome, was quite clear to the other Fascists. The new Rome would produce a total "physical renewal" of Rome which, in turn, would create the renewal of the Italian psyche. The Fascist terminology for the "creation through destruction" was "annulling the centuries", i.e. the medieval and papal modesty and half measures. The pickaxe would "point towards better times, with greatness and constructive clarity".<sup>68</sup> The previous centuries had seen the Roman fora "corrupted" by the local "vulgar" population. Laundry hung on the Capitoline and grazing flocks of sheep in the Forum worked against the mentality that Mussolini and the Fascists were seeking to achieve.<sup>69</sup> The greatness of Rome was not subject to the decay and intrusion of time. By this logic, the Roman ruins could not be monuments until all traces of this activity were gone from the space. Via dell'Impero offered all of this in its construction. The physical space of the Roman forum was renewed, and the ancient was connected with the modern. In addition, the clearing of the Roman Forum and the resettlement of the inhabitants around the area served to displace a great deal of anti-Fascist sympathizers.<sup>70</sup> Although the residents of Rome were traditionally conservative Catholics, the fact remains that the project was an effective way of weeding out

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<sup>67</sup> Ludwig, *Talks with Mussolini*, 198.

<sup>68</sup> Carlo Magi-Spinetti, "Colore Locale," *Capitolium*: 28,

<sup>69</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 76-77.

<sup>70</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini's Rome*, 23.

dissent. Thus, the construction of Via dell'Impero served a twofold purpose: The renewal of the Roman psyche and political solidarity.

Reception of the project was not one of universal praise, especially among the Roman lower class, who were displaced by the project, and some international historians, who were concerned about monument preservation. However, among Fascist sympathizers, the project was a resounding success. Antonio Muñoz said of the finished project:

“It is enough to point out that the grandiose solution of the Via dell'Impero has upset all those modest plans, and seems so revolutionary that it disorients even the most tenacious advocates for the liberation of imperial monuments. With the advent of the Fascist regime, the problem of the isolation of the Capitol is no longer approached with half-measures, but is confronted in full.”<sup>71</sup>

To Muñoz, Mussolini, and the Fascists, the street was a stark contrast to the neighboring Via Cavour. The Via Cavour represented the mediocrity of its era. Its monotony, vulgarity, and “arid academicism” paled in comparison to the grandeur and greatness of Via dell'Impero.<sup>72</sup> Mussolini intended a simple message: no longer was Italy going to take half-measures such as the Via Cavour, but would go forward with vigor and fervor as demonstrated with Via dell'Impero.

International opinion of Via dell'Impero was characterized by nostalgia, which was not favorable for the Fascist regime. For centuries, visitors to Rome had witnessed the half-buried columns and sheep grazing in the Forum as a charming “quaintness” to Rome. To foreigners, Rome was seen through the lens of Goethe or Stendhal.<sup>73</sup> The grazing sheep and cattle along

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<sup>71</sup> Muñoz, *Roma Di Mussolini*, 96-97

<sup>72</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini's Rome*, 22-23.

<sup>73</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 79.

with the moss-covered Colosseum and Forum were “metaphors for the frailty of human creation.” Carlo Magi-Spinetti protested foreign opinion of Rome in 1926:

“that famous Rome, so beloved by tourists before the war, a Rome taken from the nineteenth-century prints, from the memories of a soldier grandfather, and an uncle who served as a counselor for the legation to the Papal court, from the watercolors of dilettantes; a Rome made of ruins of broken pavement, of shacks clinging like scabs to the ancient monument, and always the same caricatures: the ragged and shoeless, the gamblers, the old beggar lady, and in the foreground, with sober elegance, the foreigner and a guide with his hand outstretched, whether to ask for money or to show something.”<sup>74</sup>

The chaos and locality of the Rome prior to Fascist renovation was completely gone, and many foreign visitors despaired at this fact. The Fascist regime was thus stuck with the task of encouraging tourists to enjoy the new changes to the capital and appreciate what they believed to be “necessary” changes. The “New Rome” was meant to challenge these old rustic charms by transforming the spaces “with order and discipline to distinguish it from other European capitals, and in that sense of classical values which, restored to life through Fascism, live again, like the purest flame, in the hearts of every Italian.”<sup>75</sup> This desire for a rustic Rome loved by foreigners was exactly the enemy of the Fascist idea of Rome. What Mussolini sought through the construction of Via dell’Impero was the destruction of the foreign ideal, and the embrace of the new, nationalist, disciplined ideal based upon the ideals of Augustan Rome. Therefore, foreigners reacting in such a way implies that Mussolini and Muñoz accomplished exactly what they set out to do, even if they wished to convince tourists of its necessity. As Muñoz said of the project and Mussolini’s Rome: “only great voices should resonate, only great words should be

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<sup>74</sup> Carlo Magi-Spinetti, “Colore Locale”, *Capitolium* 11.1, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 80.



uttered, and everything that is small and wretched should disappear.”<sup>76</sup> Via dell’Impero exuded the “New Rome” and the “smallness” of the Forum prior to its construction had disappeared.

In contrast, the Fascist reception for Via dell’Impero implied that it’s construction had accomplished exactly this goal. The Fascists rejected the idea of Rome being a “decaying cemetery of the 19<sup>th</sup> century” and saw Via dell’Impero existing in tandem with the classical monuments. Muñoz had much to say on what he felt was the great success of the project, stating:

“Despite the protests of some English Miss’, it is clear that classical monuments have nothing to fear from coming into contact with modern movement, nor are new men dwarfed by approaching these venerable ruins (the Forum)”.<sup>77</sup>

Italian historians and archeologists also had much to say on the new road, all of which could generally be described as ecstatic feedback. Dr. Guido Calza spoke before the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1934 on the success of the project:

“Today modern life comes into contrast and runs its course side by side with the ancient monuments. Until three years ago, the traveler arriving in Rome and proceeding from the station (Termini) to St. Peter’s, although he crossed half the city, never encountered any classical monuments. But now, through the Via Nazionale and the Via Dell’Impero, he can see the majestic ruins of the Halls of Trajan, and from the Piazza Venezia he can have a view of the Basilica of Constantine and the Colosseum.”<sup>78</sup>

The reception is best characterized by the opinions of Italian archeologist Giuseppe Marchetti Longhi. Regarding Via dell’Impero, Longhi states: “Via dell’Impero was not just a physical road

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<sup>76</sup> Muñoz, *Campidoglio*, 23.

<sup>77</sup> Muñoz, *Roma Di Mussolini*, 154-156.

<sup>78</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini’s Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City*, 24.

connecting two points, but a spiritual path, an expression of fated evolution in the past, present, and future of our race”.<sup>79</sup>

According to the Fascists, the new street had unified the ancient and the modern, and created something more. The “New” Rome was a natural successor to the Augustan one, but it was by no means intended to be a complete reinvigoration of Augustan Rome. Rather, Mussolini’s Rome was, while indeed inspired greatly by Augustan and classical Rome, an entirely new entity. Via dell’Impero is a microcosm of this concept. The street connected the spiritual entities of the ancient (the Colosseum) and the modern (Palazzo Venezia) and unified them into a singular body. It was not a coincidence that Palazzo Venezia was Mussolini’s seat of power. Mussolini held his office there, and on the balcony of Palazzo Venezia, which was adorned with the fasces, Mussolini gave some of his most famous speeches, including the declaration of the Italian empire after the conclusion of the Abyssinian war in 1936. Thus, the street further connected Mussolini with the sacrosanct idea of Ancient Rome by having his seat of power as an addendum to the Roman forum.

The street was not simply meant for “sterile contemplation of the past” but indeed it was meant to be something far more. Via dell’Impero was meant to be “a meeting place and a point of departure; a place to gather and set off towards new goals, new horizons, new ideals of civilization and progress, open to the past, but only as a bridge to a greater future!”<sup>80</sup> Giuseppe Marchetti Longhi went even further when describing this fusion, seeing, as many other Fascists did, that this progression was a pre-ordained by “primeval topography”: “Via dell’Impero has always been, and has only been reopened to us in its current form.”<sup>81</sup> This progression toward the

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<sup>79</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 66.

<sup>80</sup> Muñoz, *Roma Di Mussolini*, 154.

<sup>81</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 67.

next stage of Rome as Mussolini and the Fascists saw it was perhaps personified the best in four stone tablets which the regime unveiled on Via dell'Impero in 1934. The tablets depicted the Roman state from its earliest days to its greatest extent under Trajan. After the conquest of Ethiopia, a 5<sup>th</sup> map was added depicting the extent of the new Italian colonial empire, meant to evoke the idea of this new state being the 5<sup>th</sup> stage of the Roman empire.<sup>82</sup> Via dell'Impero was an integral part of this concept: the fusing of the modern and the ancient as the destined progression of Italy.

### THE CONTEXT OF THE AUGUSTAN BUILDING PROGRAM

Mussolini's building programs, specifically Via dell'Impero, can best be contrasted with the projects of the man he was inspired by, Augustus. While the inspirations which Mussolini drew from era of Augustus are noticeable, the contrast is also striking. In August 29 BCE, after his victory at Actium in 31, Augustus began to shift the Roman forum into a show stage for the Julian family. During the triumph for the victories won in the war with Cleopatra, Augustus dedicated the Temple of Divus Julius in the Forum, and built the new Curia under the name best known today, the Curia Julia.<sup>83</sup> Augustus set up a statue of Victoria within the Curia Julia, who was considered his patron goddess, as a further ode to the Julian family.<sup>84</sup> The Temple of Divus Julius was decorated with spoils from Egypt from the war with Cleopatra. Augustus also took the prows of the Egyptian ships (*rostra*) and mounted them on the speaker's platform within the Forum.<sup>85</sup> This new platform was located opposite to the former one which Caesar himself had moved. The original platform had been dedicated after a victory over the Antiates in 338 BCE.

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<sup>82</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini's Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City*, 22.

<sup>83</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age Of Augustus*, 79.

<sup>84</sup> Orlin, "Augustus and the Reshaping of Roman Memory", 80-81.

<sup>85</sup> Rose, "The Parthians in Augustan Rome", 4-6.

Therefore, Augustus intentionally linked his current regime with the glory days of the Republic.<sup>86</sup>

The Roman Forum was now transformed from the appearance of the Republic into the triumphant appearance of the Augustan regime. Indeed, the Forum, being previously the political center of the Republic, was now the center of the show place for the Julian family. The presence of Republican antiquities were meant as a means of legitimizing Augustus and linking the Julian family to the glorious past.<sup>87</sup> One can immediately see the links between Mussolini's and Augustan Rome in this example. The transformation of a well-traveled area of the city into something monumental (the Roman Forum and Via dell'Impero), along with the veneration of the glorious past (in Mussolini's case Augustus, in Augustus' case the Republic and Aeneas) are present in both time periods.

Just as Mussolini had sought inspiration in the greatness of Augustan architecture in the construction of Via dell'Impero, Augustus drew inspiration from traditional Greek temples, while also adding certain elements of Italic/Roman temples, to create a new style of Roman temple.<sup>88</sup> No longer were Roman temples to be made in the Republican style of tufa, with heavy wooden roofs and terra-cotta decoration.<sup>89</sup> Although this transition had already begun prior to the reign of Augustus, a degree of traditionalism was brought to temple building that harkened back to the ideology of the Republican era, while also bringing the grandeur of the Augustan era. The new, Greek-style temples fused with Italic/Roman would be a grand, new design.<sup>90</sup> High podiums, deep pronaos, and steep sloping, opulently decorated pediment would characterize the

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<sup>86</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 67-68.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 67.

<sup>88</sup> Rose, "The Parthians in Augustan Rome", 4-6.

<sup>89</sup> Orlin, "Augustus and the Reshaping of Roman Memory", 80-81.

<sup>90</sup> Rose, "The Parthians in Augustan Rome", 6-8.

new Roman style.<sup>91</sup> A steep staircase, usually with an altar incorporated upon it, was placed in front of the podium. The altar seemed to form part of the façade, a façade which served as a backdrop for rituals.<sup>92</sup> Columns rose in this backdrop in the Corinthian style, chosen intentionally as one of the most extravagant styles.<sup>93</sup> As a result, the other traditional column styles began to disappear in favor of Corinthian. Prior to the reign of Augustus, rich decoration had been a result of competition between rich patrons. Now, although Augustus was the very pinnacle of these rich patrons, his propaganda portrayed him and the new style of building as living up to the new motto and the morals of Rome: “nothing is too good for the gods”.<sup>94</sup> Augustus, as the center of this religious shift, served as the mediator between god and man.

The Temple of Divus Julius and the Temple of Mars Ultor were both characterized by this new construction style. Although these temples seemed on the surface simply a setting for the state rituals of Rome, in reality they represented something much more. Just as Via dell’Impero was meant to represent a fusion of two things (Ancient Rome and Modern Italy) as well as a new Italian self-confidence, the new Augustan temples as well as the new and renovated Fora (the Forum of Caesar and the new Forum of Augustus) were meant to be themselves a microcosm of an entirely new national mood in Rome. Rome would be renewed in the values of Augustus, simultaneously harkening back to the glory days of the Republic.

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<sup>91</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 105.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> North, “Conservatism and Change in Roman Religion”, *BSR*, 1-12.

<sup>94</sup> Orlin, “Augustan Religion and the Reshaping of Roman Memory”, 82-84.



Figure 4: The Temple of Mars Ultor (Wikipedia Commons)

With regard to the reception of Augustan changes, the building revolution in the Roman Forum, as well as in the city as a whole, received similar praise to that of the Mussolini's Rome. Suetonius said of the Augustan building program:

“Augustus beautified the city, whose appearance had in no way reflected its greatness and glory and was besides constantly plagued by floods and fires, and utterly remade it, that he could justly boast that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble.”<sup>95</sup>

Late Republican Rome had received had great deal of criticism for projecting a great deal of private wealth (*privata luxuria*) while the city rotted in an appearance of poverty.<sup>96</sup> This “splendor” was defined by the term *publica magnificentia*, and it became a prime directive in the construction of the Augustan forum to address this matter.

Augustus did exactly this with his construction and renovation of the Roman Forum. The private villas remained splendid and private luxury was still quite prevalent (instead, the villas

<sup>95</sup> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Augustus*, 28.

<sup>96</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 136.

were simply now filled with the supporters of Augustus). However, Augustus also erected extravagant public buildings which hid the disparity of wealth by combining the modest with the new building style of his age.<sup>97</sup> The villa of Augustus on the Palatine is a fine example of this. The house was built with the concepts of piety and modesty in mind, while also being extravagant in its scale. Augustus bought a preexisting, modest house built near the Temple of Apollo (which he built) and the Republican Era temple of Magna Mater.<sup>98</sup> In addition, he had a public shrine to Vesta built as a semi-public addition to his house.<sup>99</sup> Archeological evidence indicates that only a portion of the rooms in the Augustan home had marble flooring while the others had mosaic tiling, keeping with the concept of the structure being both modest and grand.<sup>100</sup> In *On Architecture*, Vitruvius offers an observation on Augustus' program, offering exactly the reaction he would have sought:

“But I observed that you cared not only about the common life of all men, and the constitution of the state, but also about the provision of suitable public buildings; so that the state was not only made greater through you by its new provinces, but the majesty of the empire also was expressed through the eminent dignity of its public buildings.”<sup>101</sup>

The public buildings, just as with Via dell'Impero and the clearing of the clogged neighborhoods around it, had no real effect, but provided a mask for the dirt and grime of the past, and a façade for a more splendid future.<sup>102</sup> In this way, the status quo of wealth distribution

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<sup>97</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 136.

<sup>98</sup> Coarelli, *Rome and Environs: An Archaeological Guide*, 208-211.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 213.

<sup>101</sup> Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, 1.2.

<sup>102</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 154.

remained, and Augustus was able to adhere to the morality of old by honoring the state and making *private luxuria* seem immoral.

Despite these similarities in Mussolini's construction of his "New Rome" and Via dell'Impero, a stark contrast exists between the two projects. Namely, Mussolini was willing to destroy in order to rebuild, while Augustus was not to the extent which Mussolini was. This fact can be seen most poignantly in Augustus' unwillingness to interfere with the old neighborhoods around the Forum, something Mussolini was all too willing to do in his construction of Via dell'Impero. The *Res Gestae* gives some insight into the mindset of Augustus with regard to his construction projects:

"The Capitolium and the theatre of Pompey, both works involving great expense, I rebuilt without any inscription of my own name. I restored the channels of the aqueducts which in several places were falling into disrepair through age, and doubled the capacity of the aqueduct called the Marcia by turning a new spring into its channel. I completed the Julian Forum and the basilica which was between the temple of Castor and the temple of Saturn, works begun and far advanced by my father, and when the same basilica was destroyed by fire I began its reconstruction on an enlarged site, to be inscribed with the names of my sons, and ordered that in case I should not live to complete it, it should be completed by my heirs."<sup>103</sup>

Though the neighborhoods in question are not discussed directly here, the language in use is important. The language of "destruction" and "cleansing" which is apparent in Mussolini's speeches is absent in the propaganda of Augustus. In addition to the idea of "destruction" being

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<sup>103</sup> *Res Gestae*, 1.20, translation by Loeb.



the antithesis of his program, the ideas in his propaganda program of *pietas* (piety) and the *mores maiorum* (traditions of the elders) insisted upon the traditional standing of the residential neighborhoods and restricted interference upon private property.<sup>104</sup> The street systems of the Republic, which included tiny alleys and streets the like of which Mussolini destroyed in his construction of Via dell'Impero, remained intact as Augustus raised his Forum.<sup>105</sup> In fact, a large retaining wall was built with the construction of the Forum of Augustus in order to prevent the spreading of fires from these neighborhoods with many wooden *insulae*, fires which had previously occurred. Furthermore, these old residential quarters even thrived under Augustus and are visible today in the Forma Urbis.<sup>106</sup> Where Mussolini kept “destruction into creation” as a central part of his propaganda, Augustus focused upon the façade of “creation through the restoration of the old”.

Perhaps the best illustration of this fact was not on the Augustan Forum, but by Strabo on the Campus Martius:

“The size of the Campus Martius alone is astonishing. It is spacious enough to allow chariot races and at the same time all other equestrian sports without any interference. Nearby are hordes of wrestlers and others playing ball or with hoops. Works of art adorn all the paths, and the lush gardens are in bloom at every season. The hilltops, which stretch to the Tiber, create a remarkable cityscape, a pleasure of which the eye never tires. Nearby is a second field, in which the many porticoes, sacred groves, lavish temples, three theaters, and one amphitheater, are all laid out in a semicircle. Here everything is so crowded, one upon another, that the rest of the city seems only incidental.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 154.

<sup>105</sup> Wiseman, “Strabo on the Campus Martius” *Liverpool Classical Monthly*, 129-134.

<sup>106</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 154-155.

<sup>107</sup> Strabo, 5.3.8

The last sentence of Strabo here is the most important. Where Mussolini saw destruction leading to the replacing of the former neighborhoods with Via dell'Impero, Augustus saw added onto and renovated the existing neighborhoods. Augustus still separated the old and new where it interfered with the aesthetic of his vision, as is apparent with the enormous wall built around his Forum. Nevertheless, Strabo was quite right in the sense that Augustus, unlike Mussolini, intentionally left much of the old neighborhoods untouched in the construction of his version of Rome to the point of, according to Suetonius, actually decreasing the size of the original construction plan as he did “not dare encroach upon the old neighborhoods.”<sup>108</sup>

One could immediately see the value which Augustus placed on the Republican past by simply examining the décor of his Forum. Augustus made a point of honoring the great men in Roman history through marble statues. Particularly, he planned to honor those from the time of his adoptive father Caesar. These were to include Julius Caesar himself, Marius, Sulla, and Pompey in a pseudo Republican “Hall of Fame”.<sup>109</sup> This was completed later in the Imperial Era, and would be referred to as the *summi viri* (the highest of men). Though Joseph Geiger acknowledges in his book on the statues that their exact original purpose and planning during the Augustan era is unclear due to lack of evidence, it is clear (as Geiger states) that the “Hall of Fame” clearly represented a continuation of this policy of honoring the past.<sup>110</sup> Augustus left out many of the finer points of Roman history which did correlate correctly with the identity he was attempting to cultivate for the Roman people. Nevertheless, this practice is in keeping with his habit of connecting the present greatness with a specific vision of the moral and physical greatness of the Republican past. While Augustus used the mythology of Aeneas to legitimize

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<sup>108</sup> Geiger, *First Hall of Fame, a Study of the Statues in the Forum Augustum*, 58-59.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*.

his rule, he used the Republic as a foundation to build upon. Although Augustus was absolutely building something new in his “New Rome”, the Republican past was the image he wanted to preserve superficially.

It is for this very reason that Mussolini was not attempting to emulate Augustus in his goal of constructing Via dell’Impero. Indeed, Mussolini took his inspiration from the Rome that Augustus built, but he himself was clearly trying to craft something entirely new, as seen by his fusion of modern and ancient in building construction. In addition, Mussolini did not value his immediate past as Augustus did with the Republic. Mussolini did not seek to preserve the old, crowded neighborhoods of Rome’s medieval and papal past which gave foreigners who visited the city such nostalgia. Nor did Mussolini seek to preserve the memory of disunity which filled the Italian past of city states. Instead, Mussolini sought not to add on, but to in fact destroy and rebuild Rome in the vein of a monumental city. Mussolini did away with any memory of the recent Italian past and fused the mythological past with what he saw as a brighter future for Rome. Via Dell’Impero represented exactly this: a destruction of the medieval past for its construction, and the fusion of the ancient and the modern for an entirely new future. Mussolini sums this point up perfectly just prior to the onset of Via Dell’Impero’s construction: “The Rome that we honor, is not nostalgic contemplation of the past, but hard preparation for the future. Rome is our departure and reference point: it is our symbol or, if you wish, our Myth. We dream of Roman Italy, wise and strong, disciplined and imperial.”<sup>111</sup> Via Dell’Impero was not an emulation of the Roman past, but rather was based upon the inspiration of its glory, creating something entirely unique.

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<sup>111</sup> Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle*, 92.

## CHAPTER II:

## THE ARA PACIS AND THE PIAZZA IMPERATORE AUGUSTO



Figure 5: Richard Meier's Ara Pacis Augustae Museum, Modern Day. (CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1813859>)

With the completion of Via Dell'Impero, Mussolini began to center his propaganda almost entirely upon Augustus. Mussolini initially honored the birthdays of Virgil and Horace, recognizing the importance of their literary achievements for Roman culture and the Augustan regime. However, after the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista in 1932, Mussolini planned what was to be the next step in this Fascist propaganda campaign: further melding of the modern and ancient in the form of the Piazza Imperatore Augusto. Just as with Via dell'Impero, the Piazza

Imperatore Augusto would require the clearing and “sanitizing” of medieval and papal neighborhoods in order to allow for the flourishing of Mussolini’s new Roman “vision”. By demolishing these neighborhoods, Mussolini planned to “liberate” the dilapidated Mausoleum of Augustus and create a space for showing his next exhibition in 1937. This exhibition would celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Augustus: the Mostra Augustea della Romanità (MAR). This process began with the “liberation” of the Mausoleum of Augustus. The former tomb had been used for several purposes prior to 1909, including as a fortress, bullfighting ring, and symphony hall. However, the Mausoleum of Augustus would not be the only monument “liberated” within this space. Mussolini sought to reassemble the great Augustan artifact, the Ara Pacis Augustae. Ultimately, this was intended to lead to the completion of the final step in Mussolini’s propaganda, the “new Rome”, Esposizione Universale Roma or EUR, for the World Fair in 1942 (though this never came to pass).



Figure 6: Teatro Augusteo prior to demolition. (Wikipedia Commons)

The idea for a Piazza Imperatore Augusto was not a new one. A proposal was put forward in 1909 for isolating the Mausoleum of Augustus as a monument, though this never

came to fruition.<sup>112</sup> However, by 1925, with Fascism being fully entrenched in Rome, the plan resurfaced. The original plan entrusted the renovation to the renowned Fascist architect Marcello Piacentini in May 1926. The outer walls were to be cleared and, because the structure had been a theater for some time, further renovation would have to occur before additional excavation could take place.<sup>113</sup> Much of the original Mausoleum of Augustus had been heavily damaged, and work slowed greatly as a result. Piacentini looked to the lead archeological advisor in the government, Giulio Quirino Giglioli, for guidance and examination of the structure.<sup>114</sup> In September 1928, Giglioli confirmed that much of the original structure had been destroyed, with a great deal of the marble having been carried off by looters. Giglioli claimed that the entire center of the monument would be destroyed, and restoration would take several years.<sup>115</sup> However, Giglioli held true to the common Fascist motif of the time. He believed that select destruction inside the Mausoleum of Augustus could not only save the monument, but even make it more attractive to the Fascist vision.

By 1929, Mussolini demanded an update on the progress of the Mausoleum of Augustus. The Mausoleum was intended to be “a monument not only of antiquarian interest, but one which should become a site of pilgrimage for modern Italians”.<sup>116</sup> As a pilgrimage site, the Mausoleum of Augustus was intended to become a place for the veneration of Augustus and *romanità*, both essential parts of Mussolini’s propaganda program. As such, the completion of the Mausoleum’s renovation was necessary. The initial renovations, however, had only cleared the site in order to make it accessible, and restored the central crypt for “study and veneration”.<sup>117</sup> Piacentini (and

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<sup>112</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini’s Rome*, 5.

<sup>113</sup> Kallis, “Framing Romanita”, 811.

<sup>114</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 68-69.

<sup>115</sup> Gio Giglioli to Cremonesi, *Capitolium* 1.1, 1925 “La Trasformazione dell’Augusteo”, Translation by Arthurs

<sup>116</sup> Gio Giglioli to Governatore, 1928, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>117</sup> Quote by Muñoz, 1929.

Muñoz as well) recognized that the monument would take at least another year before it could be visited by the public, and that decisive action was needed in order for the completion of the renovations to be expedited.

This action came in the form of a proposal by Giglioli at the Second Congress of Istituto Nazionale di Studi Romani (ISR) in 1930. Giglioli proposed that the full renovation of the Mausoleum should be completed by 1937, the supposed 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Augustus.<sup>118</sup> In addition, Giglioli proposed the relocation and reconstruction of the Ara Pacis Augustae as a complementary piece housed either in the Mausoleum of Augustus or near it.<sup>119</sup> However, the plans for the Ara Pacis Augustae were not finalized until just prior to MAR, and the renovation of the Mausoleum of Augustus was the main concern in 1930. Giglioli proposed celebration of the anniversary, and the inauguration of a new piazza to honor Augustus: The Piazza Imperatore Augusto. The celebration was to include five different themed events, namely archaeological exploration, didactic exposition, and increase of public awareness (specifically national excavations of forgotten Roman sites).<sup>120</sup> In addition, Giglioli proposed nationwide conferences lecturing on the heritage of Augustus and his relation to the modern Italy.<sup>121</sup> The spiritual centerpiece of the celebration was to be the Piazza Imperatore Augusto and, in turn, the finished renovation of the Mausoleum of Augustus.

Giglioli initially proposed a full renovation of the monument and the immediate area around it. He claimed that the Mausoleum of Augustus would become “a solemn testament to *romanità* and, encircled by a garden, would add a note of poetry to the center of the old city”.

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<sup>118</sup> Kallis, “Framing Romanita”, 812.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Palombi, *L'archeologia a Roma tra Ottocento e Novecento*, 193-195, Translation by Kallis.

<sup>121</sup> Kallis, “Framing Romanita”, 813.

The Mausoleum was to be “disengaged” entirely from the old city, and would become its own space with a new square.<sup>122</sup> The project was to adhere to the Fascist vision by combining the ancient and the modern. For this to occur, as was often the case with Mussolini’s “liberation” projects, the clearing of old papal and medieval Italian neighborhoods was necessary for the “purity” of the monumental space. The alleyways and houses represented “a grave backwardness with regard to hygiene” and therefore needed to be cleared.<sup>123</sup> According to regime statistics, the demolition of 120 houses over an area of 27,500 square meters was necessary for the project. The final product would have 5 new buildings with an area of about 9000 square meters.<sup>124</sup> Mussolini claimed this destruction would be beneficial, just as he did with the construction of Via Dell’Impero. In 1934 at the inaugural demolition, Mussolini claimed that the Piazza Imperatore Augusto would be:

“a triple utility: that of history and beauty, traffic, and hygiene. A fourth and not final use: with these works of demolition and of construction of new builds gives work for three years to numerous workers of every sort. And now I give the word to the pickax”.<sup>125</sup>

In addition Mussolini claimed that the construction process would provide several years of employment for unemployed workers (a smart ploy with the Great Depression reaching its height).<sup>126</sup> Finally, the demolition of the neighborhoods would serve the Fascist purposes of clearing the city of working class opponents.

However, Mussolini was still intent upon keeping the local “color” of the neighborhoods. Though the Fascists rejected the idea of “medieval Rome”, Mussolini felt that it was essential to

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<sup>122</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 69.

<sup>123</sup> Quote from French magazine review of MAR, *Le Nouvelliste*, 1938. Translation by Painter Jr.

<sup>124</sup> Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, 368.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 367.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 368.



at least keep some memory of this intact in order to avoid some of the propaganda problems of the Via Dell'Impero's "creation through destruction". Mussolini announced that these neighborhoods "would not be consigned to oblivion".<sup>127</sup> He ordered photographs of the interiors and exteriors to be collected into photo albums for remembrance.<sup>128</sup> Residents along the Via Del Mare were also told to take photos of their homes and gardens to be "preserved in photographs, prints, and water-colors, so that they could be rebuilt elsewhere".<sup>129</sup> Despite these promises, and the appearance of some photographs in the *Capitolium* magazine, there are no official photographic archives of these.<sup>130</sup> Whether these have disappeared from the historical record, or were never taken, is unclear. What is clear is that Mussolini never carried through on the promise of rebuilding these neighborhoods and, just as with Via Dell'Impero, almost all of the original residents were displaced by the construction of the Piazza Imperatore Augusto.

Giglioli put forward a final, more detailed proposal at the Third Congress of the ISR in 1932.<sup>131</sup> This proposal finalized the Mausoleum of Augustus as the centerpiece of the Bimillenario project, and the *Museo Dell'Impero* began cooperating with the project under supervision of the Ministry of Public Education.<sup>132</sup> In addition, the "liberation" of the monuments by tearing down the papal neighborhoods was also finalized. Finally, Giglioli officially put forward the date of completion for the project, setting a goal for September 1937.<sup>133</sup> After much further deliberation on the project, the final plan was approved by Mussolini on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1934.<sup>134</sup> The project would include the renovation of the Mausoleum of

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<sup>127</sup> Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, 368.

<sup>128</sup> Muñoz, *Via Dei Monti e Via Del Mare*, 31. Translation by Arthurs

<sup>129</sup> Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 26, 367-368.

<sup>130</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 84.

<sup>131</sup> Kallis, "Framing Romanita", 813.

<sup>132</sup> Agnew, "Ghosts of Rome: The Haunting of Fascists Efforts at Remaking Rome as Italy's Capital City", 190.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

Augustus, the relocation and renewal of the Ara Pacis Augustae, and the “systemization” of the area between Via del’Corso and the Tiber River.<sup>135</sup>

The project was entrusted to Vittorio Morpurgo for construction. Initially, Morpurgo had only been chosen to work on the square plan of the piazza (*piano particolareggiato*), but was given full command of the project after he put forth his interpretation.<sup>136</sup> Morpurgo envisioned a “closed” space dominated by the Mausoleum of Augustus as the center stage. The Piazza Augusto Imperatore would be framed on two sides by modern constructions. Morpurgo planned to execute this by installing neoclassical colonnades made of white travertine marble.<sup>137</sup> In addition, Morpurgo planned for the piazza to have several porticos in a neoclassical style.<sup>138</sup> Finally, the piazza would be complete with reliefs of heroic figures and moments from Roman and Fascist history.<sup>139</sup> Just as with Muñoz’s plan for Via Dell’Impero, the piazza was intended to evoke a reverence of the glorious Augustan past of *romanità*, combined with the glory of modern Fascist Italy to create a brand new vision, a vision based upon the propaganda of Mussolini. The dirt, grime, and pollution of medieval Italy dominated by the papacy would be removed with the old neighborhood to make way for the new Italy, an Italy that was the true “natural” successor to Augustus.

At the onset of construction on October 22 1934, Mussolini inaugurated the restoration by striking the first pickaxe on the old rooftops.<sup>140</sup> The “celebration” was observed by much of the Fascist bureaucracy. Bystanders commented on the “illumination of the dark alleys with rays

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<sup>135</sup> Paolo Rossi De Paoli, “L’isolamento dell’Augusteo e la sistemazione del traffico est-ovest a Roma”, *Urbanistica* Translation by Kallis, 32-39, 1935.

<sup>136</sup> Kallis, “Framing Romanita”, 816.

<sup>137</sup> Agnew, “Ghosts of Rome: The Haunting of Fascist Efforts at Remaking Rome as Italy’s Capital City”, 191.

<sup>138</sup> Kallis, “Framing Romanita”, 816.

<sup>139</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 69-70.

<sup>140</sup> See Giovanni Luce newsreel BO562, [www.archivioluce.com](http://www.archivioluce.com), 1934.

of sunshine” as the “roofing tiles and plaster crashed to the ground”.<sup>141</sup> This was exactly the desired effect: opening up the glory of ancient Rome to the sunlight through the destruction of the “darkness” of medieval Rome. The Piazza Imperatore Augusto, complete with the Mausoleum of Augustus and Ara Pacis Augustae, was to be the crowning achievement of the Fascist regime, and would pave the way for the “new” Rome, creating a clear link between Fascism (and thus Mussolini) and Augustan Rome.



Figure 7: The Mausoleum of Augustus, Modern Day. (By ryarwood - <https://www.flickr.com/>)

Leading up to the “liberation” of the Mausoleum of Augustus, the public had become increasingly agitated with the status of the monument as a theater, which proved to be another catalyst for the Fascist “liberation” of the monument. One recorded instance states that an anonymous letter reached Mussolini’s office from a “well informed group”. The letter contained

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<sup>141</sup> Described in Luce newsreel, 1934.

a complaint about the ethnicity and corruption of the theatre administration.<sup>142</sup> In addition, as a further indictment of foreign influence, the “well informed group” claimed that the theater showed 85% foreign repertoire.<sup>143</sup> Even after the shutdown of the theater, the outspoken *Capitolium* continued to expound upon the foreign “stain” upon the monument in a 1937 article. *Capitolium* described the forlorn figure of the music enthusiast visiting the site shortly after the demolitions, with his “nineteenth-century tie flapping in the wind, ostentatiously *bohème*”.<sup>144</sup> In addition, the article described this hypothetical man as being “like an old swallow looking for his nest under a gutter that was no longer there”.<sup>145</sup> There is little doubt that the theater within the Mausoleum of Augustus was greatly disliked by the public, particularly among Fascist sympathizers. The theater was seen as a remnant of the Liberal era that needed to be cleared in the name of progress.<sup>146</sup>

With the Mausoleum of Augustus project well under way, the assembly of the Ara Pacis Augustae came to the forefront. The process of actually putting all the pieces of the monument back together had been a major concern from the onset of the project. In December 1935, a special committee was nominated by the Ministry of Education (who headed the project) in order to unify the pieces of the Ara Pacis Augustae.<sup>147</sup> Giglioli and Carlo Galassi-Paluzzi were appointed that heads of the committee. Later, Antonio Muñoz would also join the committee in an advisory role. The first topic of discussion was the most pressing in the eyes of Mussolini: the optimal placement for the Ara Pacis Augustae. Giglioli had previously suggested that the Ara Pacis Augustae be placed inside the Mausoleum of Augustus. This option was quickly shut

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<sup>142</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 70.

<sup>143</sup> Anonymous Letter, 1929.

<sup>144</sup> “Augusteo romantico” *Capitolium* 12.3, 175.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 70.

<sup>147</sup> Kallis, “Framing Romanita”, 818.

down, and Via Dell'Impero, Capitoline Hill, and Baths of Diocletian were also suggested as possible locations for the monument (each of which had been previously discussed has locations even before the committee was formed).<sup>148</sup> The discussion of the optimal location remained a contentious point well into 1937. Finally, in February 1937, by the demand of Mussolini, the monument was ordered to be housed along the Via di Ripetta and the Tiber River, despite the fact that the Ara Pacis Augustae was not located there in antiquity.<sup>149</sup> The monument was to be housed in a rectangular structure made of concrete, steel, and glass.<sup>150</sup> This is yet another example of Mussolini crossing Augustan Rome with Fascist ideology, by housing such a revered artifact in a modern setting. The integration of the monument would “encourage the unhurried passerby to consider the enormous artistic and spiritual importance of the monument, however modest in size”.<sup>151</sup> The public would finally be able to appreciate the “intermingling of contemporary life and ancient”, producing “not a contamination, but an eloquent demonstration of the eternal youth of the City”.<sup>152</sup>

Even as the problem of the monument’s optimal location was solved, the issue of actually gathering all of the pieces still loomed. The original discovery of the Ara Pacis Augustae was under the foundation of the Palazzo Fiano, which was stretched over a few different streets and was a private building.<sup>153</sup> Therefore, it was unclear to Fascist archaeological experts whether it was even feasible to excavate the local pieces. Even more problematic were the locations of the other fragments. There were fragments in the Villa Medici in Rome, the Vatican Museums, the

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<sup>148</sup> Giulio Emanuele Rizzo, “Per la ricostruzione dell’Ara Pacis Augustae”, *Capitolium* 2.8, 1926.

<sup>149</sup> Conlin, *The Artists of the Ara Pacis: The Process of Hellenization in Roman Relief Sculpture*, 14-15

<sup>150</sup> Agnew, “Ghosts of Rome: The Haunting of Fascist Efforts at Remaking Rome as Italy’s Capital City”, 190-191.

<sup>151</sup> Morpurgo, “Ricostruzione-Commissione” presentation to ISR, 1937.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Kallis, “Framing Romanita”, 817.

Uffizi in Florence, the Louvre in Paris, and a private collection in Vienna.<sup>154</sup> Finally, even if all of the pieces were recovered, reconstruction on the actual site was impossible due to the size and delicacy of the project. Therefore, the pieces would have to be shipped to another location for reconstruction, then shipped back as a whole to the Piazza Imperatore Augusto.

With these problems in the forefront, the deadline for the completion of the Ara Pacis Augustae was moved from January 1938 to September 23, which was the latest possible date originally proposed by Giglioli for completion and coincided with the closing ceremonies of MAR.<sup>155</sup> Work began in earnest to remove the fragments from under the Palazzo Fiano. In order to avoid the destruction of the private Palazzo Fiano, an extraordinary experiment was used to ensure the foundations of the building during the excavation. The water under the building was frozen in order to maintain the building's stability during the process.<sup>156</sup> The Palazzo Fiano was subsequently gradually demolished and then rebuilt after the Ara Pacis fragment was removed.<sup>157</sup> By the end of the excavation, the results were a resounding success, finishing just before the end of 1937.



Figure 8: The Morpurgo Ara Pacis Museum, (Reed.edu)

<sup>154</sup> Giuseppe Lugli, "In attesa dell scavo dell'Ara Pacis Augustae" *Capitolium* vol. 13 (1938). 365-83.

<sup>155</sup> Kallis, "Framing Romanita", 816-817.

<sup>156</sup> Giuseppe Moretti, "Lo Scavo e la ricostuzione dell'Ara Pacis Augustae, *Capitolium* 13, 1938, Translation by Kallis.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

However, the issue of the remaining fragments still remained, and time was running out, even with the extension of the deadline to the closing ceremonies of the Bimillenario in September 1938. Since the creation of the special committee in 1935, the goal had been to fully reconstruct the Ara Pacis Augustae with the original pieces only. The committee set out specifically to accomplish this goal, establishing a law through the Ministry of Education that allowed for repossession of monument pieces throughout Italy.<sup>158</sup> Thus, recovery of the Uffizi casts was relatively easy, as state mandate forced the museum to relinquish the pieces. The recovery of the pieces in foreign possession, however, was far more difficult. To this end, the committee publicized the excavation of the Palazzo Fiano to an international audience in order for the project to get as much international exposure as possible.<sup>159</sup> It was the hope of the committee that international support for the project would put immense pressure upon the foreign entities, including the Vatican and the Villa Medici, to relinquish the original pieces to the Fascists. These pieces included the Temple of Magna Mater and Mars Ultor fragment at the Villa Medici, and part of the procession relief at the Louvre.<sup>160</sup> However, with the deadline fast approaching, it became clear the acquisition and transport of the originals would be impossible due to logistical and political concerns. Thus, the usage of reproductions was recommended and approved by the committee for “political and commercial” reasons (the mounting tensions associated with the buildup to World War II), and the originals would be recovered in “more propitious times”.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Agnew, “Ghosts of Rome: The Haunting of Fascist Efforts at Remaking Rome as Italy’s Capital City”, 191.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> See “Sacrifice at Villa Medici”,

[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia\\_romana/imperialfora/augustus/villa.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/imperialfora/augustus/villa.html)

<sup>161</sup> Letter from Reale Accademia d’Italia to Bottai, 1937, 73.

The process of the reconstruction of the Ara Pacis Augustae began at the National Roman Museum under the direction of Giuseppe Moretti. The committee was able to attain reproductions from the Louvre and Vatican museums, but still was not able to attain pieces from the other museums.<sup>162</sup> Thus, with several important pieces missing, Moretti was forced to take some artistic liberties and make educated guesses in order to rebuild the monument.<sup>163</sup> Moretti was faced with choosing between a conservative option of only using the recovered parts, or a full restoration with some artistic recreation. Opting for full restoration, Moretti put several teams on an incredibly strict deadline to work throughout the museum on producing a reproduction of the Ara Pacis Augustae,<sup>164</sup> While the deadline for the completion of the project was already challenging, transportation of the finished product from the National Roman Museum to the Piazza Imperatore Augusto would be incredibly complex due to the sheer size of the monument. However, by September 1938, despite numerous delays and challenges, the Ara Pacis and Mausoleum of Augustus were in place and ready for the conclusion of MAR, though certainly not in the desired form of the committee, nor without ample criticism from the Italian public.<sup>165</sup>

The Mausoleum of Augustus did not come close to meeting expectations of the public when the restoration was announced. With all the challenges of the monument's reconstruction, Morpurgo was forced to concede well before MAR that the exterior of the Mausoleum was completely destroyed.<sup>166</sup> The final product only rose about 12 meters above sea level. In fact, the monument was so disappointing to some that the viewpoint from the Via Del Corso, which had

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<sup>162</sup> Kallis, "Framing Romanita", 819.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 820.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Agnew, "Ghosts of Rome: The Haunting of Fascist Efforts at Remaking Rome as Italy's Capital City", 191-192.

<sup>166</sup> Vittorio Morpurgo, "La sistemazione augustea", *Capitolium*, 12.3, 146.



originally been planned to be the main staging point, was almost completely obscured intentionally to hide the eyesore.<sup>167</sup> Antonio Muñoz even admitted that the “majority of the public remained disappointed by the monument’s appearance” and that “perhaps no ancient monument has been subject to such a penetrating and systematic act of devastation”.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, the scholarly community could discern almost nothing of value from the excavations, with Guglielmo Gatti, a member of the reconstruction committee, admitting that “the remains of the monument, now isolated, unfortunately do not give us any useful indications to an answer” (the answer being the Mausoleum’s original appearance).<sup>169</sup>

Public criticism of the monument’s state was immense, and some went as far as to suggest solutions to the problem. Art critic Ugo Ojetti, who also happened to be a member of the planning committee for the Piazza Imperatore Augusto, took a “Classical” angle of improvement. Ojetti proposed a “Roman” solution, suggesting that the monument should have reproductions of famous Augustan figures carved in marble such as Virgil and Maecenas.<sup>170</sup> Ojetti demanded the monument reflect the goal of the Fascist era, and that they as its purveyors should not sit by as “excavators, scholars and restorers”.<sup>171</sup> Rather, the design should reflect “the Fascist era as much as the Age of Augustus”.

Ojetti’s solution proved to be the least radical of the suggested improvements. Adalberto Libera, a rationalist architect, proposed the installation of a “Sacrum of Empire” inside of the mausoleum.<sup>172</sup> Libera called for a cylindrical crypt formed by the inner circle of the ruins. The

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<sup>167</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 75.

<sup>168</sup> Antonio Muñoz, “La sistemazione augustea”, *Capitolium* 12.3. 146.

<sup>169</sup> Guglielmo Gatti, “Nuove osservazioni sul Mausoleo di Augusto”, *L’Urbe* 13, 493-94, 1938.

<sup>170</sup> Ugo Ojetti “Intorno all’Ara Pacis”, *Corriere Della Sera*, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 72.

walls would also be covered by the names of soldiers killed during the 1936 Abyssinian war. In addition, the Blackshirt oath “Presente” would also be engraved in constant repetition across the walls of the new monument.<sup>173</sup> Libera claimed that:

“Through this design, in addition to the spiritual value of this ruin, it would be possible to add a value that is more directly meaningful to the Italian people, by identifying the Mausoleum of Augustus with the Shrine of Empire, and especially, with the Shrine to the Fallen of East Africa.”<sup>174</sup>

Libera’s plan would have been directly in line with the goal of the regime: combining the ancient and the modern to create a new state through Fascism.

In the end, however, Mussolini and the government approved neither of these plans. Ojetti’s plan proved to be far too “classical” for the liking of Mussolini, while Libera’s plan was far too daring and “invasive” to be put into practice. The government agreed with the planning committee: the only changes should be the least interventionist. The committee decided to “add nothing new or arbitrary, beyond brickwork to fill in gaps and stabilize the structure”.<sup>175</sup> Similar to the Fascist party headquarters almost a decade earlier, along with other projects during the Fascist era, the renovation of the Mausoleum of Augustus simply proved impossible to do to a satisfactory degree. On the one hand, the government sought for the monument to be preserved as a Roman artifact, and be revered as such by not being intruded upon by modernism. On the other hand, a Fascist propaganda agenda was being pushed, and an essential part of that campaign was the imposition of Augustan values and glory as an ideal which was to be strived for. As such, a certain measure of modern imposition *had* to occur. If the administration had

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<sup>173</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 72.

<sup>174</sup> Proposal by Adalberto Libera, 1936,

<sup>175</sup> Antonio Muñoz, “La sistemazione del Mausoleo di Augusto”, *Capitolium*, 1937, 494.

crossed this fine boundary on either of these extremes, it would have compromised the claim that they restored the monument “with respect”. The Mausoleum of Augustus was left as an eyesore of the Piazza Imperatore Augusto, soon being called a *dente cariato*, or a rotten tooth, by the local population.<sup>176</sup> It was an omen of things to come for the Piazza Imperatore Augusto project.

The Ara Pacis Augustae did not fare better in the domain of public criticism. From the onset of the construction of the project’s housing, there were concerns that the structure would “diminish the already modest height of the Mausoleum.”<sup>177</sup> As the structure in question neared completion, art critics did in fact judge the building harshly. Alessandro Bacchiani of the *Giornale d’Italia* strongly disliked the design of the building, panning the “cold, museum-like” design.<sup>178</sup> Bacchiani also criticized the work of Morpurgo on the project stating:

“An artist of Vittorio Morpurgo’s caliber has on this occasion allowed himself to be guided by completely antiquarian and historical criteria.”<sup>179</sup>

Immediately, concerns of foreign influence in such an Italy-centric project also came to the forefront. The *Osservatore Romano* considered the building to be an abomination, complaining that it resembled “the Citroën offices in Brussels, or some building in Rotterdam, or anywhere else in northern Europe.”<sup>180</sup> Ugo Ojetti once again offered his opinion, as he had with the Mausoleum. He called the building “prudent construction but aesthetic indifference”. As a final indictment, Ojetti discussed what he believed to be the challenge for Morpurgo:

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<sup>176</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 72.

<sup>177</sup> Kallis, “Framing Romanita” 818.

<sup>178</sup> Alessandro Bacchiani, *Il Giornale d’Italia, Capitolium*, 1937, Translation by Arthurs.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> “Alfa”, “La bacheca dell’Ara Pacis”, *Capitolium*, 1940, Translation by Arthurs.

“Morpurgo’s challenge had been to create an empty box which did not evoke the famous work which it was meant to house; thus, above all neither Roman nor Italian, without style. He succeeded.”<sup>181</sup>

Framing the monuments were Fascist office buildings which were perhaps the only structures in the Piazza Imperatore Augusto to successfully mix classical and modern architectural styles. The offices of the national social security administration, which had helped finance the project, were covered in representations of *romanità*.<sup>182</sup> On the eastern side of the piazza, one of the office depicts the working class nature of the Italian people, having reliefs of women with healthy babies, grazing sheep and cattle. In the middle, a quote in Italian describes this scene:

Il popolo Italiano e il poplo immortale che trova sempre vna primavera per le sve speranze per la sva passione per la sva grandezza

Which Painter Jr. translates into English as:

The Italian People and the immortal people who always find a spring for their hopes, for their passion, for their greatness.<sup>183</sup>



Figure 9: Relief with Fasces and Latin quote on Piazza Imperatore Augusto (Herman Beun, NY Times)

<sup>181</sup> Ugo Ojetti, “Intorno all’Ara Pacis” *Corriere Della Sera*, 1938.

<sup>182</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini’s Rome*, 73.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

The second building in the piazza was flanked with twin winged victories holding *fasces*. Above these figures, Ferruccio Ferazzi painted the river Tiber holding up Romulus and Remus.<sup>184</sup>

Directly under the feet of Romulus and Remus, there was a Latin quote paraphrasing Livy which reads: “His ab exiguis profecta initiis Roma” or “Rome, having set forth by these humble beginnings”. The *fasces* framed a Latin quote which embodied Mussolini’s propaganda program. The inscription in Latin reads:

“Hunc locum ubi Augusti manes volitant per auras, Postquam imperatoris Mausoleum ex saeculorum tenebris est extractum araeque pacis disiecta membra reflecta, Mussolini dux veteribus Augustiis deletis splendidioribus VII aedificiis aedibus ad humanitatis more aptis ornandum censuit anno MDCCCCXL AE.F.XVIII.”

In English, this translates to:

In this place where the spirits of Augustus fly through the air, after the Mausoleum of the Emperor was extracted from the darkness of the centuries and the Altar of Peace having been scattered to pieces was restored Mussolini, the Duce, ordered, with the old confining buildings having been torn down, to be adorned by seven well-built buildings within the current traditions of Humanity. In the year 1940.

Finally, illustrations of Fascist and Roman military prowess together depict the combining of the two military entities into one, new Roman Empire. At one end of the relief arrows, shields, helmets, and swords were depicted while on the end modern weaponry was depicted.<sup>185</sup> This building is a microcosm of the Fascist intentions in the piazza. Even on the modern buildings, the Roman themes stand combined with Fascist themes.

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<sup>184</sup> Kostof, *The Third Rome, 1870-1950*, 309.

<sup>185</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini’s Rome*, 74-75.

Despite the relative success of the modern construction within the piazza, rampant criticism on both major parts of the Piazza Imperatore Augusto remained. Even though both the Mausoleum of Augustus and Ara Pacis Augustae were technically incomplete by the conclusion of MAR, very few further changes were made. Proposals for changes to both monuments continued to be put forth to the government. Marcello Piacentini proposed the creation of new traffic ramps, expansion of the “green space” of the Mausoleum, and the moving of the Ara Pacis Augustae from its new home to a museum for a more “personal” experience.<sup>186</sup> An Italian architect Armando Brasini called for a complete reworking of the Piazza, proposing a new “Mussolinian Basilica of Peace” for the purpose of housing the Ara Pacis.<sup>187</sup> Brasini believed this could reference the fact that Christ had been born during the *Pax Romana* of Augustus. In addition, it adhered to the Adalberto Libera school of thought on the monuments: the monuments should be interfered with so as to be as closely linked to Mussolini and Fascism as possible. In the end, however, as was the case with many Fascist projects in Rome, the proposals were never able to strike the “appropriate” balance between Augustan and Fascist, and no major changes were made to the monuments. Although proposals for changes were accepted as late as 1943, work was entirely suspended with Italy’s entry into World War II, and all that could be seen of what was once supposed to be the culmination of Fascist propaganda were piled sandbags for protection against Allied aerial bombing.

With the Piazza Imperatore Augusto “completed”, Mussolini opened the Mostra Augustea della Romanità on September 23, 1937. MAR used the Palazzo delle Esposizioni on Via Nazionale, which had been previously used from 1932-1934 for the Mostra della

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<sup>186</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 76.

<sup>187</sup> Brasini proposal to the government, 1943.

Rivoluzione Fascista. The exhibition contained reproductions and some original models of Imperial Roman artifacts.<sup>188</sup> The exhibit centered upon a large model of Imperial Rome at the time of Constantine, a departure from the Augustan theme of the event. Painter Jr. has suggested that this was to connect Fascist Rome with Imperial Rome at its height under Christianity, an ode to the Catholic Church after the Lateran Pact.<sup>189</sup> An entire tour of Roman history from its rise to its fall was provided. Nonetheless, Augustus and his connection with Fascism was most certainly the main theme of the event. The life and conquests of Augustus were depicted, along with exhibits on Roman law and army during the era of Augustus. Finally, Roman thought, politics, art, and language were displayed. The exhibit was meant to be a message of universal culture framed in *romanità*. Thus, though Italy was at the forefront, the exhibit was a “message for all humanity”.<sup>190</sup>

Naturally, MAR had ample connection to Fascist Rome. The opening ceremony represented this fact right away with the presentation of a live eagle to Mussolini, demonstrating the passing of the legacy of Imperial Rome.<sup>191</sup> After this presentation, as a Fascist party, members were required to attend and members of Mussolini’s youth organization were required to appear in uniform.<sup>192</sup> As opposed to the previous exhibition in 1932-1934, there was an emphasis on militarism and choreographed hierarchy among the attendees.<sup>193</sup> With the glorification of Augustus and the militarist focus of the Fascists at the exhibition, the presentation was meant to emphasize a direct connection between Augustus and Fascism. The audience was pushed by the structure of the exhibition to connect Mussolini as the founder of the

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<sup>188</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini’s Rome*, 76.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> *Almanacco Fascista del Popolo d’Italia*, 1937, 306-307. Translation by Painter Jr.

<sup>191</sup> Cannistraro, “Romanità”, *Historical Dictionary of Fascist Italy*, 463.

<sup>192</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini’s Rome*, 78.

<sup>193</sup> Stone, *The Patron State*, 246.

new empire with Augustus as the founder of the ancient empire. This connection was intentional and MAR would have been the natural link between the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista and Esposizione Universale di Roma if it ever came to fruition.

The Piazza Imperatore Augusto represented the symbolic conclusion of Fascist propaganda efforts, and ultimately their demise. Though previous efforts during Mussolini's regime of "liberation" and reconstruction had been somewhat successful, the Piazza Imperatore Augusto demonstrated the twofold problem that came to the forefront throughout Mussolini's "transformation" of Rome. First, the committee was unable to successfully "liberate" the ruins to the satisfaction of the public, both educated and uneducated. Regardless of what the regime cleared in order to "liberate" the monuments, they were still Roman ruins in the middle of a modern city. The attempts to recreate the glory of ancient Rome side by side with that of Fascist Italy by contrasting the two in an open space simply was not successful. The Mausoleum of Augustus and the Ara Pacis Augustae did not have the size or reputation of the Colosseum or the Theater of Marcellus. Neither monument harkened one back to the glories of the Roman Empire with their magnificence. The Mausoleum of Augustus, despite renovations, was still a crumbling ruin surrounded by modern buildings. The Ara Pacis, despite its beautiful surface and carvings, was surrounded by a museum of steel and glass. In short, attempts at "liberation" created a similar result to what was previously there: Roman ruins in the middle of Rome, albeit Fascist Rome.

The second, and the recurring problem throughout Mussolini's "liberation" projects, was the inability to reconcile a united vision for the Rome of Mussolini. A medium could not be found between the extremes of architecture and propaganda. The question of whether Rome should be redesigned entirely in the style of Augustus or intruded upon by Fascist propaganda



could not be answered. This is a problem that prevented the construction of the Fascist party headquarters almost a decade earlier, and once again halted any solution to the renovation of the Mausoleum of Augustus. Mussolini's vision of a Rome that was new and perfectly balanced between Augustus and Fascism simply was impossible to fulfill to his satisfaction. Even "successful" projects like Via Dell'Impero never lived entirely up to the expectations of Mussolini and the Fascist party. This very fact would ultimately be the undoing of the Fascist "liberation of Rome" prior to the deposition of the regime in 1943. The Fascist party could not "liberate" Rome in a satisfactory way, and thus the city assumed an "unfinished veneer", with half-excavated ruins and attempted modern intrusion into them, representing a flawed and incomplete vision.

#### THE AUGUSTAN CONTEXT

When compared to the projects of Augustus, Mussolini sought similar goals. With his "liberation" of the Piazza Imperatore Augusto, Mussolini intended to consolidate his propaganda by linking his regime to the heroic Augustan era. In addition, Mussolini sought to augment state and personal power by further linking himself with the omnipresent figure of Augustus through a Fascist liberation of two of the most famous Augustan monuments. Augustus successfully accomplished a similar goal with the original construction of the complex comprised of Ara Pacis Augustae, the Mausoleum of Augustus, the Res Gestae and the Horologium Augusti. Through these means, which Mussolini had intended to emulate, he linked himself to the heroic past of Republican Rome, while consolidating his personal power beyond any figure since the Etruscan kings. By the construction of this complex, Augustus moved further away from the Rome of the Triumvirs and instituted perhaps his most powerful piece of propaganda.

Considering the age of Augustus, the decision for the construction of the Mausoleum seems a strange one. Konrad Kraft has suggested that the tomb was a propaganda piece for Augustus in response to the will of Marc Antony.<sup>194</sup> Augustus illegally procured and publicized the will of Marc Antony to the Senate a year before the Battle of Actium. The will stipulated that Caesarion, the son of Caesar by Cleopatra, was the true heir of Caesar, not Augustus.<sup>195</sup> In addition, Antony expressed his desire to be buried in Alexandria, and emphasized, according to Plutarch, that he desired this even if he died in Rome.<sup>196</sup> Therefore, Kraft argues that the Mausoleum represented the antithesis to Antony's desire for burial in Egypt.<sup>197</sup> While Antony, Octavian's main political opponent, was already dead and buried in Egypt, Octavian secured his burial site in the Campus Martius, to be buried among the most preeminent figures of Roman history.<sup>198</sup> With the construction of the tomb, Octavian declared his commitment to Rome, and painted his political rival as an Eastern king. When Cleopatra arranged the burial of Antony (something which was insisted upon by Octavian), Antony took his place besides the Ptolemaic kings in Alexandria, feeding into the propaganda of Octavian.

The exact date of the beginning of the construction is not clear. The monument is mentioned by Suetonius along with *silvae et ambulationes* as being dated around 28 BCE.<sup>199</sup> This is an interesting date, and lends credence to theory of the tomb being a part of Octavian's propaganda program. Augustus had inherited an incomplete building program from Caesar, including the Basilica Julia and the Curia.<sup>200</sup> Yet all of these took a back seat to the Mausoleum

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<sup>194</sup> Kraft, "De Sinn des Mausoleums Des Augustus", *Historia* 16, 197.

<sup>195</sup> Davies, *Death and The Emperor*, 50.

<sup>196</sup> Plutarch, *Lives: Antony*, 58.3-8.

<sup>197</sup> Kraft, "De Sinn des Mausoleums Des Augustus", *Historia* 16, 197.

<sup>198</sup> Davies, *Death and The Emperor*, 139.

<sup>199</sup> Suetonius, *Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 100.

<sup>200</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 74.

of Augustus, on which construction must have begun almost directly after the victory at Actium. In addition, it is no accident that the tomb is reported to have been completed just before the first Augustan settlement, in addition to the Temple of Mars in the Forum of Augustus. The tomb was meant to have reinforced Octavian's loyalty to Italy and Rome versus the betrayal of Antony, and to have contributed to his desired image of stability and the Roman golden age that he invoked when he was named Augustus and *Primus Inter pares* in 27 BCE.

While little is known about the construction process, much can be gleaned about its value as Augustan propaganda, simply by examining ancient evidence and sources on the monument. First and foremost, the monument was a representation of the patron's great power more than a tomb.<sup>201</sup> The "tomb" was meant to overshadow all previous structures of its type built in Rome. In fact, one was supposed to be struck by its size in such a way that it could be likened to images of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus in terms of scale and greatness.<sup>202</sup> When one examines the size of honorary tombs in the Campus Martius, specifically the tomb of Caecilia Metella, this fact becomes exceedingly clear. The Mausoleum absolutely dominated the landscape around it. Upon both the Tiber and the Via Flaminia, the Mausoleum would have stood out above all else. In addition, a large park surrounding the tomb isolated it from the other buildings in the area (something which was an inspiration for Fascist architects much later).<sup>203</sup> Sources indicate that the ancient structure was likely eighty-seven meters wide and forty meters high. Strabo described the Mausoleum shortly after its completion:

"Most worth seeing is the so-called Mausoleion, a large mound set upon a tall socle by the river. It is planted with evergreen trees up to the top. Above stands

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<sup>201</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 74

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Kraft, "De Sinn des Mausoleums Des Augustus" *Historia* 16, 189.

the bronze statue of the Emperor Augustus. Within the mound are the graves intended for him, his relatives, and friends. Behind there is a large grove with splendid walks, in the midst of which is an elevated place, where Augustus's corpse would be burnt."<sup>204</sup>

Despite the monument clearly being intended to reinforce Augustan legitimacy after his triumph over Antony, one cannot help but consider it contrary to the rest of the Augustan propaganda program. While a great deal of Augustan architecture evoked a glorious image of the Roman golden age, the monument almost created the image of a Hellenistic king by its sheer size and self-glorification, something which Augustus was attempting to avoid. Augustus was attempting to create an image of himself as the restorer of the Republic, one who followed the "old" Roman values of personal modesty and *pietas* (dedication to the gods). The tomb did not evoke this image of "Republican modesty".<sup>205</sup> Due to this mixed message of glory versus modesty, there is a lack of a unified, coherent message in the architecture of the Mausoleum. Thus, if the intention of Augustus was to attempt to distance himself from Marc Antony by highlighting his dedication to Rome and the Republic, the Mausoleum did not accomplish this based solely upon its architecture.

Due to the inconsistency of the Mausoleum of Augustus when held up to the Augustan propaganda program, one of the major scholarly questions around the Mausoleum is from where Augustus drew inspiration for its design. Ross Holloway has suggested that the tomb drew inspiration from the style of Etruscan *tumuli*, considering its mound-like shape.<sup>206</sup> This theory has some merit, but I.A Richmond has also suggested that this same design was found in

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<sup>204</sup> Strabo, 5.3.9

<sup>205</sup> Kraft, "De Sinn des Mausoleums Des Augustus", *Historia* 16, 189-190.

<sup>206</sup> Holloway, "The Tomb of Augustus and the Princes of Troy", 171-173.

Republican era tombs lining the Via Appia Antica.<sup>207</sup> It is clear that the Mausoleum took some measure of inspiration from Republican era tombs such as the Tomb of Caecilia Metella. This would have linked Augustus to the heroic past and the *mores maiorum* of the Republic.<sup>208</sup>

However, this still does not explain some of the Hellenistic elements of the tomb, including its scale and interior. Penelope Davies has suggested an explanation which combines these ideas. Davies believes that, although the tomb certainly embodies Republican and Etruscan concepts, its main inspiration comes Hellenistic structures. Davies points to the construction technique used for the great lighthouse, The Pharos, in Alexandria, by Ptolemy I Soter. Pharos also supposedly supported a massive statue, and it would have required a central core incased with inclined layers diminishing in height, resembling steps.<sup>209</sup> Roman architects borrowed this construction technique, which Davies proposes played itself in the appearance of the tomb's ring walls.<sup>210</sup> In addition, Davies suggests that the Mausoleum even borrowed from the labyrinth interiors of Egyptian pyramids.<sup>211</sup> The entrance corridor of the Mausoleum of Augustus shapes like a T "junction", which forces a visitor to choose either the right or left corridor, and then to do so once again.<sup>212</sup> Davies not only attributes this to the Egyptian pyramid interiors but also notes the labyrinths described in Herodotus on the west side of the Nile (though these have not yet been identified). J. C. Reeder has also suggested this, stating that the interior of the tomb more closely resembles an Egyptian labyrinth than any smaller Roman tomb.<sup>213</sup> Finally, the presence of the Horologium Augusti in the complex was also a Hellenistic element. The obelisk

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<sup>207</sup> Cordingly and Richmond, "The Mausoleum of Augustus" 23-25.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, 51-52.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Reeder, "Typology and Ideology in the Mausoleum of Augustus", 265-304.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

evoked the image of a conquered Egyptian relic, consisting of a bronze grid inlaid into pavement.<sup>214</sup>

The conquest imagery of the Horologium Augusti is the crux of Davies' argument. She believes the combination of elements represents an ode to Augustus' conquest of Egypt.<sup>215</sup> The Mausoleum is designed with Hellenistic and Egyptian building techniques not because Augustus is attempting to be a Hellenistic king in its style, but rather because Augustus is presenting the Mausoleum (and the Horologium Augusti as well) as spoils of war. Therefore, although the architectural identity of the Mausoleum may seem contradictory on the surface, it is actually a complex manifestation of all aspects of Augustan propaganda, including the modesty of the Republic, and the demonstration of the conquered spoils of Egypt. Mussolini himself explored this type of combination in his own propaganda program. The Mausoleum itself was a commemoration of the heroic past of Italy, but further alterations were also suggested that would commemorate the veterans of the Abyssinian War in 1936 and serve as a pseudo "spoil of war". However, Mussolini was unable to successfully translate this combination of propaganda elements into a finished product, which Augustus was able to do.

In addition to the Mausoleum of Augustus, the Ara Pacis Augustae also represented a significant piece of Augustan propaganda, but it came at a much later stage of the Augustan rule. The Ara Pacis Augustae was built under the sponsorship of the senate from 13 BCE to 9 BCE in order to honor the safe return of Augustus from his campaigns in Gaul in Spain.<sup>216</sup> By this point, the power and program of Augustus had been firmly established. Augustus now held more power than any single man during the Republic and had completely transcended previous tradition of

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<sup>214</sup> Davies, *Death and the Emperor*, 17.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, 55-56.

<sup>216</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 120-121.

the *mos maiorum*, though he continued to keep the façade that his power was by mandate of the senate. The incredibly detailed relief depicted a state religious procession, with significant points of detail that reflected points of Augustan propaganda.<sup>217</sup> Upon careful examination, it becomes clear that every point of the Ara Pacis Augustae, down even to the placement of the decorative vines and laurels, is a significant piece of Augustan propaganda.

The north and south reliefs are perhaps the most important, as it was of the greatest concern to the Fascists. These panels are occupied by the four principal colleges of priests. Particularly, the *pontifices*, *augures*, *XV viri sacris faciundis*, and *VII viri epulonum*.<sup>218</sup> These figures are distinguished by having their togas pulled over their head, indicating that they are there to perform a sacrifice, while the rest of the members of the procession merely are wearing laurels.<sup>219</sup> Augustus made a point in his innovation of state religion to bring all the colleges of priests together for the annual sacrifice to Pax Augusta.<sup>220</sup> The sacrifices which occurred at the Ara Pacis Augustae were no different, not being entrusted to a single college, but all, including even the Vestal Virgins. This helped contribute the constant Augustan image of law, order, and unity. This image of law and order was of great interest to the Fascists as it demonstrated the state they wished to portray. Even though the majority of priestly duties had now been relinquished in favor of the judgment of Augustus (who generally took the lead of sacrifices and auspices holding an augur's staff), the external image of unity was a powerful one.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 150.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Lamp, "The Ara Pacis Augustae: Visual Rhetoric in Augustus' Principate", 15-16.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 16.



Figure 10: The Ara Pacis Augustae south frieze, depicting Augustus as the head priest with a child clinging to him (Wikipedia Commons, Miguel Hermoso Cuesta)

On the north relief, the image of children is also visible. At the time of the construction of the Ara Pacis Augustae, the succession of Augustus seemed secure in the person of Agrippa. However, that same year, Agrippa died prior to the completion of the monument. Yet the monument still predicts a clear picture on succession. Germanicus and Tiberius are both depicted as possible heirs.<sup>222</sup> The image depicted gives the observer a sense of continued prosperity as long as the Julian male line continues.<sup>223</sup> In addition, the focus on youth in the relief was of great interest to the Fascist party who sponsored state run programs such as Mussolini's youth movement. After years of civil strife and chaos in the last century of the Republic, this image of continuity was meant to ease public concerns and establish trust in the order of the Julian line. With Italy experiencing a similar parallel of civil strife in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Fascists interest in this relief makes sense. The depiction of unity and continued prosperity while also harkening back to Augustan propaganda and the glorification of youth were all ideal propaganda features of Italian Fascism.

<sup>222</sup> Lamp, "The Ara Pacis Augustae: Visual Rhetoric in Augustus' Principate", 15-16.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.



The rest of the relief also exudes the image of unity which Augustus was attempting to convey. The rows of men in the relief all wear similar togas and stand in ordered fashion, giving the impression of unity and uniformity. The idealization and concealing of individual identity of the majority of the figures on the relief lends itself to Augustan propaganda. The figures who are intentionally left concealed and with little engraved detail are not meant to embody themselves, but the very office they represented.<sup>224</sup> The relief indirectly depicted the end of the self-glorification and individuality of the late Republican politics. Instead, it had given way to Augustus' new Republic: a Republic which would be defined by common cause under the omnipotent figure of Augustus, focused upon the renewal of the Republic and worship of the gods.

Despite this image of unity and uniformity, one can also see the other side of Augustan propaganda on the Ara Pacis Augustae: the exultation of Augustus and his closest friends. The procession of priests on the relief is followed by the family of the princeps among other important figures who are intentionally more detailed.<sup>225</sup> The women of the imperial family wear garments which are intentionally simple, meant to evoke the modesty of the Julian house.<sup>226</sup> Drusus is also seen in their midst, having distinguished himself in military campaigns.<sup>227</sup> Finally, the children, dressed as Trojans, clinging to their parents, represent the bright future of the new order connected to Rome's Trojan past and increased birthing which Augustus encouraged.<sup>228</sup> The ordering on the relief was important, with those closer to Augustus being more significant.

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<sup>224</sup> Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 154.

<sup>225</sup> Lamp, "The Ara Pacis Augustae: Visual Rhetoric in Augustus' Principate", 16-17.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid, 18-19.

<sup>228</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 122-123.

Naturally, Augustus himself was the leader of the procession. All gather around him in some sort of circle, and it seems as though he was performing the sacrifice in question. This is consistent with religious practice during the Augustan period. Though from the outside the priestly colleges appear to be acting as the united Roman religious authority, by 13 BCE Augustus had all but absolved the priestly colleges of their former responsibilities.<sup>229</sup> There were no more bad omens, the Sibylline books were hidden, and Augustus himself interpreted all auspices himself as positive.<sup>230</sup> Augustus became the mediator between gods and men. As such, Augustus was the ultimate embodiment of *pietas* and the Rome which he wished to portray. Yet Augustus was careful to portray that he himself did not create this image, but rather the order of the Senate did. The procession and idealization of the Ara Pacis Augustae was designed by order of the Senate, not Augustus, in order to honor the state. In reality, however, Augustus is once again the center of attention on the relief, and clearly demonstrates the imperial household as holding authority over the state. While the image on the relief seems to the modern viewer to go beyond political reality, by 13 BCE this was very much the political state of Augustan Rome.<sup>231</sup> Augustus created a façade of a revived golden age, while in reality completely altering the state to an unprecedented level. The Augustan propaganda program had successfully made the Julian household the center of the Roman state, while externally evoking the image that the power of the Senate had been revived, and *pietas*, modesty, and unity were the main values of the state. With the exception of being the religious head of state, Mussolini was very interested in this image of Augustus as the head of state, and the imagery also fit within his idea of his cult of personality.

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<sup>229</sup> Orlin, "Augustan Religion and the Reshaping of Roman Memory", 77.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, 77-78.

<sup>231</sup> Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 123.

With regard to the Piazza Imperatore Augusto versus the tripartite complex of Augustus, the major difference lay in the success of the two projects. While the original construction by Augustus complimented his propaganda program perfectly, Mussolini could never create something out of these ancient relics that would live up to his expectations. In addition, after the construction of Via dell'Impero (and even during the construction to an extent), Fascist propaganda, often contradicted itself while attempting to balance the old and the new Italy. Instead of taking drastic action in either the Fascist or Augustan direction, Mussolini simply chose to remain conservative, which resulted in little change to the monuments themselves. Thus, the Piazza Imperatore Augusto remained the “rotten tooth” which it had been dubbed, and the propaganda program of Mussolini declined along with Italy as the country descended into World War II.

The overall failure of the Piazza Imperatore Augusto represented the end of Fascists “restoration” and “liberation” efforts, but it certainly was not meant to be. In fact, Mussolini outlined his final goals as early as 1925 in a letter to the government:

“You will continue to free the trunk of the great oak tree of everything that still obstructs it. You will open up space around the Theater of Marcellus, the Capitoline, and the Pantheon. Everything that has grown around them during the centuries must disappear. Within five years, a great passage from Piazza Colona must make the Pantheon visible. You will also free the majestic temples of Christian Rome from the parasitic and profane constructions. The millennial monuments of our history must loom in required isolation. Thus the third Rome will spread over the hills, along the banks of the sacred river, to the beaches of the Tyrrhenian Sea.”<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 22, 48.

Ultimately, Mussolini's goal was to reconnect Rome with the sea. Rome was again to be the center of the Mediterranean, so that the sea could become *Mare Nostrum*, "our sea", a term commonly used by the Romans after the conquest of Carthage. The effort began with the construction of Via Del Mare and included such "liberation" projects as the Theater of Marcellus. This part of the project was completed during the Fascist era, though the others were not. In addition, Mussolini wanted to repair connections with the Catholic church, both figuratively and literally, in order to further legitimize the Fascist government to a largely Catholic Italian people. The Lateran Pact, which was signed, and Via della Conciliazione, which was not finished until the 1950s, were meant to accomplish this end. Finally, Mussolini intended to hold the World Fair in the new square EUR. EUR was meant to be the culmination of all Fascist efforts, the ultimate fusion of classical and modern, and it was to become the new city center after 1942, though this never came to pass. In the end, both of Mussolini's conclusive projects were not completed until well after the fall of Fascism in 1943.

Via Del Mare was to begin the connection of Rome to the sea at the Tiber River. Its construction was the beginning of the city's push westward. Construction began in 1925 and, just as with the other projects in Mussolini's new Rome, medieval and papal accretions lay in the way of the construction.<sup>233</sup> Piazza Montanara was considered a microcosm of "old Rome" and was exactly the type of neighborhood which Mussolini was attempting to clear from the city. A market and gathering point for peasants coming from the countryside for day jobs had defined Piazza Montanara for centuries.<sup>234</sup> Muñoz hated the state of Piazza Montanara as an eyesore upon the city, commenting:

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<sup>233</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 77.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

“It is a scene from the grand tour, crowded with charlatans, the foreman who would hire those provincial construction workers who met in the area, the colorful crowd of *burini* (the provincial workers), the antiquarian hunting coins, and the open barber.”<sup>235</sup>

To Muñoz and Mussolini, the square represented “idleness” and “backwardness”, and its clearance would only improve the image and “hygiene” of the new Rome. However, the neighborhood did not lay solely in the way of Via Del Mare. Its growth over the years had become a “tumor” upon the Theater of Marcellus, an Imperial era monument.



Figure 11: Piazza Montanara in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (adrianobono.it, Abriano Bono)

Over time, the arches of the Theater of Marcellus had become filled with stables, warehouses, markets, and masses of homeless, all related to Piazza Montanara.<sup>236</sup> Ermanno Ponti, an author for the *Capitolium*, called the monument “entombed”, commenting that the Theater of Marcellus had been reduced to “a decorative element, nothing more”.<sup>237</sup> For the rhetoric of Fascism to come to fruition, the Piazza Montanara had to be cleared, both for the sanctity of the

<sup>235</sup> Muñoz, *L'isolamento del colle capitolino*, 6.

<sup>236</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 77-78.

<sup>237</sup> Ermanno Ponti, “Le memorie di Piazza Montara”, *Capitolium* 7.1, 21.

Theater of Marcellus and the construction of the Via Del Mare. By 1930, this project came to the forefront under the direction of the Istituto per le Case Popolari, the office which oversaw public housing in the government.<sup>238</sup> Piazza Montanara, just as the neighborhoods surrounding Via dell'Impero had, and those surrounding the Mausoleum of Augustus would, fell to the pickaxe. As Piazza Montanara was cleared for the construction of Via Del Mare, the Theater of Marcellus was simultaneously cleared of all shops and hovels.<sup>239</sup> The original face of the structure was exposed, overlooking the new Via Del Mare. Those traveling upon the route were exposed to a cleared face, with the arches overlooking vehicles that passed by. Just as with previous and later projects, the citizens who were displaced were promised new homes in a working class suburb outside the city. This never truly came to fruition, and the needs of the Italian citizenry remained of secondary concern to “liberating Mother Rome”.<sup>240</sup>

With the construction of the Via Del Mare signaling the beginning of the connection of Rome to the sea, Mussolini sought to normalize diplomatic relations with the Papacy as a sign of connection with the Catholic Church. The process of this normalization began with the Lateran Pact. Mussolini and Pope Pius XI agreed to the Pact on February 11<sup>th</sup> 1929.<sup>241</sup> Italy adopted Catholicism as the official state religion, with others tolerated to an extent within the law, and allowed the church access to select extraterritorial churches throughout Rome that lay outside the confines of the Vatican.<sup>242</sup> These included St John's Lateran and Palazzo della Cancelleria, both of which housed bishoprics. In addition, the Italian government paid a massive fee to the Papacy, and accepted urban-based fees that came in connection with the Vatican.<sup>243</sup> In exchange, the

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<sup>238</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 77.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Insolera and Perego, *Archeologia e città: Storia moderna dei Fori Di Roma*, 149.

<sup>241</sup> Kirk, “Framing St. Peters: Urban Planning in Fascist Rome”, 762.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

Pope lent his support to the political and social position of the Fascist regime. With the Lateran Pact, Mussolini had his connection with the church, which allowed for the second phase of normalization.

The second phase of this project would not be complete until the 1950s, but planning for it would begin after the signing of the Lateran Pact in 1929. Mussolini sought create a road which would signal the new relationship between the Papacy and Fascist Italy, Via della Conciliazione. As had become a trend with Mussolini's "liberation" projects, the construction of Via della Conciliazione required the clearing of a medieval neighborhood. In this case, the famous Borgo district required clearance for this road to be realized. Clearing of the Borgo neighborhood had been debated as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Roman and Papal bureaucracy.<sup>244</sup> The Papacy had never been satisfied with the eyesore that was the Borgo, and the clearance of such medieval "tumors" was in line with the philosophy of the Fascist regime.<sup>245</sup> Marcello Piacentini was given the lead of the project, and planning for the road began in 1931.<sup>246</sup> Piacentini sought to clear the neighborhood in such a way that the dome at the summit of St Peters Basilica would appear to be open upon "a visual axis to the majestic temple".<sup>247</sup> Piacentini believed that this would link the Papacy and the authority of Fascist state which housed it.

With Via della Conciliazione cutting through the Borgo, the old roads of Borgo Nuovo and Borgo Vecchio were opened with immense space, causing the destruction of Piazza Scossacavalli that lay between them.<sup>248</sup> However, referencing some of the Renaissance plans for clearing of the Borgo, Piacentini decided to eliminate the Borgo Nuovo entirely in order to open

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<sup>244</sup> Zocca, *Topografia e urbanistica di Roma, Roma capitale d'Italia*, 673-675.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Kirk, "Framing St. Peters: Urban Planning in Fascist Rome", 765-766.

<sup>247</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini's Rome*, 68-71.

<sup>248</sup> Kirk, "Framing St. Peters: Urban planning in Fascist Rome", 765.

even more space.<sup>249</sup> The effect created from this clearance was almost “funnel-like”.<sup>250</sup> St. Peter’s Basilica could be seen standing as an immense figure at the end of the street, towering as the main space of the urban skyline. Piacentini stated that this effect would “cancel any rapport between the street and the façade of St. Peters, bringing the church forward in an almost incomprehensible fashion”.<sup>251</sup> In addition, the angle of Via della Conciliazione would create a factor of “deep space” and “true distance” for the viewer.<sup>252</sup> Thus, the effect would differentiate the setting and set the Vatican apart from the city with Via della Conciliazione as the “boundary”.<sup>253</sup> This would be intentional, as the viewer would recognize the diplomatic separation between the two entities, but would understand the reconciliation which Via della Conciliazione was meant to represent.

Construction of the Via della Conciliazione began in 1936 with little fanfare. Most public focus was centered upon the work being done around the Mausoleum of Augustus in preparation for MAR. While Piacentini was still under orders from the Fascist regime, the only major problems which arose during construction were the street lighting and the buildings which would line the street after the clearing of the Borgo. Naturally, Piacentini sought to keep the design in line with the classicism that was meant to pervade the rest of the Fascist “restoration” and “liberation” of Rome.<sup>254</sup> Piacentini planned for 28 obelisks to line the Via della Conciliazione, each about 9 meters high, which would act as street lamps in a “Classical” style that would “light the way for pilgrims and travelers”.<sup>255</sup> The obelisks were made of travertine marble and

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<sup>249</sup> Marcello Piacentini and Attilio Spaccarelli: “La sistemazione dei Borghi”, *Capitolium*, 21-22, 1937.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>252</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini’s Rome*, 68-71.

<sup>253</sup> Kirk, “Framing St. Peters: Urban planning in Fascist Rome”, 765-766.

<sup>254</sup> Marcello Piacentini and Attilio Spaccarelli, “La sistemazione di Borghi”, *Capitolium*, 21-22, 1937.

<sup>255</sup> Kirk, “Framing St. Peters: Urban planning in Fascist Rome”, 767.



integrated at their base benches along with bronze lanterns. The obelisks were meant to be linked to the Empires of Imperial and Fascist Rome, relating to the obelisks not only of Egypt, but also the ones which Mussolini claimed to have recovered in Axum during the Abyssinian Wars of 1936.<sup>256</sup> Piacentini claimed that this would create “clear, equal, and rhythmic elements of continuity and unity along the street”.<sup>257</sup> Problems arose with the obelisks after the fall of Fascist power. Piacentini was forced to back away from the Imperialist themes of the obelisks after the conclusion of WWII in 1945, with criticism calling the monuments “an infatuation with Imperialism”.<sup>258</sup> Piacentini never again used the term “obelisk” to describe them, but instead began to refer to them as “stele” or “stations of the cross”.<sup>259</sup>

The problem of the buildings lining the street were another matter. Piacentini was supremely frustrated with the design of the buildings that lined Via della Conciliazione. The design of the buildings was usually independent and thus not in line with a singular vision.<sup>260</sup> Though the government was able to gain control of some of the buildings along the Via della Conciliazione (and thus dismantle them), they could not attain rights for all of them as some were under territorial jurisdiction of private owners who could license out to architects of their choosing.<sup>261</sup> In the end, the buildings which lined Via della Conciliazione would never have the uniform design which Piacentini sought.

Via della Conciliazione would not be complete until 1950, almost 8 years after the fall of Fascism. The street would come to represent several different facets to groups such as religious,

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<sup>256</sup> Kirk, “Framing St. Peters: Urban planning in Fascist Rome”, 767

<sup>257</sup> Marcello Piacentini and Attilio Spaccarelli, “La sistemazione di Borghi”, *Capitolium*, 22, 1937.

<sup>258</sup> Gustavo Giovannoni, “I Borghi e la Spina”, *Capitolium*, 153-154, 1937. Translated by Kirk.

<sup>259</sup> Kirk, “Framing St. Peters: Urban Planning in Fascist Rome”, 773.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid*, 772.

<sup>261</sup> Marcello Piacentini and Attilio Spaccarelli, “La sistemazione di Borghi”, *Capitolium*, 21-22, 1937.

scholarly, and political, depending upon their perspective of the streets ramifications. To some, it represented reconciliation between the church and the state of Italy. While to others, it represented the stain of Fascism as an intrusion upon a historical neighborhood and the antiquated view of Imperialism espoused by Fascism and Mussolini. The question of what the final Fascist design of Via della Conciliazione would be remains speculation for scholars based upon studies of Piacentini's incomplete vision.

The culmination of all the Fascist "restoration" was meant to be the completion of Esposizione Universale di Roma (EUR) in 1942. EUR was meant to represent the dawning of the "New Order", falling on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original Fascist March on Rome. The fair would transcend the very fabric of "space, time, and subject".<sup>262</sup> The organizers wanted the fair to go beyond what they deemed to be the "mirage of material happiness" that was espoused by the world fairs of Western democracy.<sup>263</sup> Italian achievements were not the only things that would be represented, but all peoples would be shown, in order to achieve "a synthesis of Italian and universal civilization in Rome".<sup>264</sup> The motto of EUR would have been "Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: representing the historical evolution of human progress".<sup>265</sup> The organizers were not seeking the latest science or technology to show at EUR, but rather spiritual and creative achievements that would go beyond the logical and fall more in line with the "spirit of mankind".<sup>266</sup>

Despite the outward appearance of an equal showing of all cultures, EUR would have been a showcase of Italian primacy. The presence of other cultural exhibitions would have been a

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<sup>262</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 132.

<sup>263</sup> Gregory and Tartaro (eds.) *E42: Utopia e scenario del regime*, vol. 1, 91-101.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Painter Jr, *Mussolini's Rome*, 68-71.

<sup>266</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 133-134.

means of reinforcing Italian exhibits and were to be framed as such.<sup>267</sup> The Mostra Della Civiltà Italiana is perhaps the best example of this fact. The exhibit was meant to showcase Roman and Italian civilization, and its “dominant character, as the fulcrum and propulsive center of universal civilization”.<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, it was to be understood at the Mostra Della Civiltà Italiana that “Rome and Italy imposed themselves on the world with arms, law, religion, art, and science”.<sup>269</sup> Photos, statues, and portraits from all eras of Italian civilization were to be included. Organizers insisted that:

It must show the prerogatives and conquests of Italian civilization which, especially abroad, are little known or worse, misunderstood. Document the importance that Italian civilization has had in historical events, and the beneficial influence that it has exerted through the ages. The proof of this lively vigor, which has continued up to our times and been strengthened by Fascism, is that Italy has once again conquered an Empire”.<sup>270</sup>

Naturally, EUR would have had an exhibit focused upon Ancient Rome as a link with Fascist Italy. It was to be organized by many figures who had been involved in previous “liberation” projects throughout Rome, including Giulio Quirino Giglioli.<sup>271</sup> The project was entitled the Mostra della Romanità, and it was essentially meant to be an expanded version of MAR after its conclusion in 1938.<sup>272</sup> Though the Mausoleum of Augustus and Ara Pacis Augustae would not be included, all other pieces from MAR would be, along with any other pieces discovered prior to the exhibition. Most importantly, after the conclusion of EUR in 1942,

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<sup>267</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 133-134

<sup>268</sup> Gregory and Tartaro (eds.) Plans entitled “Mostra Dell Civiltà Italiana” in *E42: Utopia e scenario del regime*, vol. 1. 105.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Untitled plan for EUR.

<sup>271</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 134.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid, 135.

the Mostra della Romanità was meant to be the final home of all these pieces, and a permanent museum of *romanità*.<sup>273</sup>

As the Mostra della Romanità suggests, the most important part of EUR was to be what came after the conclusion of the World Fair in 1942. EUR was meant to become a permanent district, and would shift the center of the city of Rome from the Capitoline and Palazzo Venezia to the edge of the city.<sup>274</sup> The location of EUR was intentional, as it avoided the historical centers of Rome, and would put the center of the city between the coast and ancient city. This move would further the vision of *Mare Nostrum* by linking Rome directly with the sea, as Via Del Mare had begun almost two decades earlier.<sup>275</sup> A new road, Via Imperiale, would link EUR with the current iteration of Rome, and would continue onward to Ostia, finally completing the link of Rome to the sea.<sup>276</sup>

As the culmination of Fascists efforts, EUR was meant to be the completed symmetry of ancient and modern. The initial planning of the site followed the guidelines of classical surveying, with the planners imitating “the scheme of ancient Rome cities”.<sup>277</sup> Being closely linked to Roman monumentality, EUR was to have “spiritual, historical, and intellectual continuity with the new Rome”.<sup>278</sup> In keeping with modern avoidance of foreign influence, EUR would adhere to a “square” shape, avoiding the “radial planning of French taste and romantic or rustic flavor”.<sup>279</sup> The planners of EUR believe bringing in any foreign influence would

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<sup>273</sup> Agnew, “The Impossible Capital: Monumental Rome under Liberal and Fascist Regimes, 1870-1943”, 5-9.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Commisariato Generale dell’Esposizione Universale di Roma, *Esposizione Universale di Roma*, 26.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid, 26-27.

<sup>279</sup> Pamphlet entitled *Eposizione Universale*, 4.

“inevitably diminish that sense of stability and solidity that we are trying to achieve”.<sup>280</sup> Finally, the style of architecture was meant to possess such symmetry between the ancient and modern that it would not ever become dated, so that “in fifty or hundred years their style will not be dated, or even worse, reviled”.<sup>281</sup>

Perhaps the best example of the architectural philosophy comes in the form of a structure which was actually completed for EUR: the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana. The building still stands today, and was designed by the architects Giovanni Guerrini, Ernesto La Padula, and Mario Romano in order to house an exhibit for EUR.<sup>282</sup> Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana had been dubbed the “Square Colosseum”, being covered on all sides by rows of arches similar to the face of the Colosseum.<sup>283</sup> The arches were constructed with white travertine, and marble statues were to be carved on all sides.<sup>284</sup> It was described in the *Pamphlet Esposizione* as:



Figure 12: The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana (By Dalbera from Paris, France - Palazzo della civiltà del lavoro (EUR, Rome), (CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24669006>)

<sup>280</sup> Pamphlet entitled *Eposizione Universale*, 4.

<sup>281</sup> Gregory and Tartaro (eds.) *E42: Utopia e scenario del regime*, vol. 1, 91-101

<sup>282</sup> Arthurs, *Excavating Modernity*, 135.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

“The power and essence of our architecture. Arches, arches, arches repeat and are superimposed across the four faces of the buildings. They have been designed according to a mentality that is classical and modern at the same time”.<sup>285</sup>

The repetition of arches was the key to the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, as well as the rest of EUR that never came to fruition. The style would represent both desired eras of Italy, classical and modern, while expressing neither in a completely concrete way. The very fact that the architectural style was undefinable was intentional.<sup>286</sup> The style was something entirely new, and completely Roman. Rome was to be remade with this style as the inspiration: the fusion of classical geometry and interwar Modernism.

However, as had often become a trend during the Fascist alteration of Rome, EUR never reached what had been envisioned, as the onset of World War II canceled the event. The square itself was completed in the late 1950s. Today, it serves as a business center in Rome, welcoming many foreign influences, far from the vision which Mussolini had originally intended. As such, EUR represents a microcosm of the impossible vision that was Fascist Rome. The perfect fusion of ancient and modern Rome was a concept that in theory seemed to be the perfect tenet of the propaganda vision of Mussolini. Yet in practice, it was an impossible vision to obtain. Whether it involved the Mausoleum of Augustus, EUR, Via dell’Impero, Via della Conciliazione, or the Palazzo del Littorio, no side was ever entirely satisfied, as either modernism was imposing itself far too much on Classical Rome, or vice versa. Unlike Augustus, Mussolini was never able to realize the combining of the antiquated roots of his heroic ancestor with his own vision of modern Fascist Rome. Thus, Mussolini left behind an indefinable vision of architecture that, though clear in its goals, could never truly be completed because the very concepts which he saw

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<sup>285</sup> Pamphlet entitled *Eposizione Universale*, 8.

<sup>286</sup> Calvesi, Guidoni, and Lux (eds.), *E42: Utopia e scenario del Regime*, vol. 2, 467-470.

as interlinked, much as they had been throughout the history of the Eternal city, were at odds with each other.

## CONCLUSION

When one examines the timeline of the Fascist “renovation” of Rome, an intentionally progressive plan of propaganda becomes apparent. Beginning with Via dell’Impero, Mussolini introduced the world to his “liberation” plan for the monuments in the city of Rome, and commemorated the spiritual beginning of Fascism, which was the March on Rome. The March on Rome was meant to be celebrated for years to come on this new road as the rebirth of the nation. Culminating in the Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista, the next phase of Mussolini’s propaganda was the Mostra Augustea della Romanità. In preparation for this exhibition, Mussolini established the direct link between his regime and Augustus by “liberating” and rebuilding the former Augustan monuments: The Mausoleum of Augustus and the Ara Pacis Augustae. Finally, Mussolini intended the “renovation” of Rome to culminate in the 1942 World Fair at Esposizione Universale Roma. At the World Fair, Mussolini intended for the transition to the “new” Rome to be complete, 20 years after the Fascist party came into power. By examining Mussolini’s building program chronologically, it becomes clear that his building program was in fact meant to lead the entire propaganda program by example by combining modern Rome with the ideals of Augustus.

As has been established in my thesis, the full propaganda plan of Mussolini never achieved this desired unified direction. However, the propaganda plan of Augustus did. With the construction of his Forum, along with the completion of the Forum of Caesar, Augustus utilized building techniques and architectural themes which evoked the golden age of the Republic, while



at the same time creating a brand new image in the frame of marble. With his original construction of the tripartite complex including the Mausoleum, Ara Pacis Augustae, and Horologium Augusti, Augustus also combined many architectural themes. Using Hellenistic, Etruscan, Egyptian, and Republican themes, Augustus created a complex that exuded his propaganda goals of glorifying the past and present, while also directly portraying his own future tomb as a spoil of victory over the Hellenistic Egyptians.

A question for future scholarship immediately comes to mind from this thesis: Why did Mussolini's propaganda program ultimately fail to achieve a unified goal where Augustus' was so successful, despite directly emulating his line of action? One could very easily answer this question by pointing to the outbreak of World War II, and Italy's entrance that eventually led to the deposition and execution of Mussolini. However, considering Mussolini's building program was receiving criticism both inside and outside Italy almost a decade before Italy's entrance into World War II, I do not believe the answer is that simple, and certainly deserves further scholarly examination beyond the scope of my thesis. It is difficult to imagine the city of Rome without the intervention of the Mussolini and the Fascists, as the marks of their work are evident throughout the city. In order to fully understand not only the city of Rome, but also the remaining ancient Roman ruins as we see them today, it is imperative to observe the modern city with a clear and informed understanding of the Fascist intervention that shaped what we see today.

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