

Nicholas Temple. *Renovatio Urbis: Architecture, Urbanism, and Ceremony in the Rome of Julius II*.

The Classical Tradition in Architecture. London: Routledge, 2011. xvi + 350 pp. \$130. ISBN: 978-0-415-47385-9.

This book focuses on the main architectural and urban projects carried out in Rome during the pontificate of Julius II (1503–13). Its dense chapters deal with the topography of early Christian Rome and the material and symbolic traces that it left on the urban fabric of the Renaissance city (chapter 1); with the construction of the Via Giulia and the papal tribunal as instruments of authority and papal power in the city (chapters 2 and 3); with the Cortile del Belvedere and the creation of the Via della Lungara as dignified recreational spaces for popes and prelates (chapter 4); with the bold decision to reconstruct St. Peter's Basilica and the implications of its planned reorientation (chapter 5); and, finally, with Raphael's frescoed decoration of the Stanza della Segnatura and its pivotal role in the overall redefinition of the

image of the city that the pope intended to craft (chapter 6). The various facets of Julius II's patronage are here viewed as elements of an overall design aimed at remapping the city and transforming it into a reflection of the pope's visionary projects. Throughout the text, ideologically charged themes such as the creation of a New Jerusalem, of the return of a Golden Age, and of the lure of ancient imperial triumphalism recur repeatedly to frame the interpretation of individual projects within broad intellectual, theological and antiquarian themes.

To flesh out his arguments, the author relies on a variety of visual and literary sources, including medals, drawings, paintings, prints, and inscriptions, and especially the fascinating writings of Giles of Viterbo, a prominent humanist and Augustinian theologian who belonged to the inner circle of the pope's advisors. Conspicuously absent, however, are archival sources, since the book deliberately aims at synthesizing and reinterpreting works that have already been the subject of substantial scholarly investigation, with the ambitious goal of fitting the varied nature of individual projects within a unified scheme. As a result, the reader is offered a view of the patronage of Julius II in Rome as that of a carefully planned, highly self-conscious, and extraordinarily coherent scheme implemented in various media and forms to visualize Rome's universal role in the history of humankind. Everything in this book is made to fit this agenda. And everything perfectly fits, perhaps too perfectly. The alleged project to reconstruct the ancient Pons Neronianus to the South of the Pons Aelius (today's Ponte Sant'Angelo), for instance, is explained as a means of crafting a direct connection between the Via Giulia and St. Peter's, forming a triumphal gateway to the Vatican, in spite of the fact — which is somehow contradictorily acknowledged — that the Hospital of Santo Spirito in Sassia stood in between, blocking the way, and could hardly have been removed. Elsewhere, streets such as Via Giulia and Via della Lungara are described as forming straight lines between two highly symbolic landmarks, such as the Meta Remi (today known as Pyramid of Gaius Cestius), where the Via della Lungara — according to the author — would have originally ended to the south. The Meta Romuli, another pyramidal funerary monument once located near the Vatican, is here understood as the northern focal point of the Via Giulia. Both reconstructions, however, are highly hypothetical, since the Meta Remi was located far away from the site where the Via della Lungara ends, and the Meta Romuli does not seem to have been aligned precisely with the Via Giulia. The interpretation of the Via della Lungara is particularly problematic. To the north, the axis of this street would have been defined according to the author by the Belvedere courtyard, although there is scant evidence for a visual connection between the latter and the street. Although this difficulty is clearly acknowledged, the desire to integrate the street and the Vatican Belvedere within a coherent scheme leads to the mistranslation of a Latin description of the Vatican courtyard by Giles of Viterbo, which is strangely taken to refer to the Via della Lungara (126). This misunderstanding is based on an excerpt from a copy of the *Historia viginti saeculorum* held by the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome (MS Lat. 502 fol. 267^v), given as “alterum est opus: vie [sic] illius, qua relaxandi animi gratia Pontifices magna domo egrediuntur: et ad eam se conferunt: quam pulchram speculam vocant; opus triplici testudine opertum: quod veterum opera: vel vincere: vel certe . . . ac splendore aequare

videatur" (300n1). This passage has been transcribed and translated by John Barrie Hall and Annabel Ritchie for the author as "There is a second work consisting of that road along which priests go out from their great houses for the sake of mental relaxation, and betake themselves to what they call the place with the beautiful view, a work made up of triple layers which may appear either in its construction or splendour to surpass . . . the works of the ancients" (126). More correctly, Giles's words should be interpreted as: "And there is another work: that pathway through which the popes, for their own recreation, leave the [Vatican] palace to go to the so-called Belvedere; a structure on three levels which seems to surpass, or at least equal in splendor the works of the ancients." Giles is here clearly referring to Bramante's three-storey corridor, or logge, connecting the Vatican palace and the Villa of Innocent VIII, and not to the Via della Lungara, a conclusion that undermines part of the argument of the author.

These observations are not meant to deny that the architectural projects promoted by Julius II were informed by ideological concerns, but to remind us that, however tempting, it is difficult to relate the complexities of the transformation of Rome to a single, clearly defined intellectual scheme. My impression is that intellectual history can never be detached from the human character of its protagonists and, in general, from life's practical constraints, uncertainties, and contingencies. Perhaps a closer historical consideration of the life of this story's protagonists would have strengthened the fascinating ideas that run through the text.

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