3. The City of Rome in the Middle Republic (c. 400–100 BC)

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The paradoxical mixture of traditionalism and innovation that is so characteristic of the Roman outlook at all periods is nowhere more evident than in the development of the city of Rome. Alongside their reverence for ancient buildings and monuments, we can detect a willingness on the part of the Romans to experiment and to introduce new types of building, new techniques of construction, and new architectural forms. On the other hand the rapid development of the city and the phenomenal growth of its population in the Republican period did not erase all traces of its ancient past. On the contrary, many relics of the archaic period survived, their form and often their actual fabric being lovingly preserved, so that even in the late Republic the city, enormous and cosmopolitan as it was, still retained the appearance of an archaic town.

Liv. (405?–182 BC) tells an interesting story about the 2nd-century BC Macedonian prince Demetrius, who was well disposed to the Romans. His envoys at the Macedonian court, who formed an anti-Roman faction, taunted him by continually aiming insults at Rome and the Romans; in particular, says Livy, "they poked fun at the appearance of the city itself, which had not yet been beautified in either its public or its private spaces". Even at the start of the 1st century BC there was little sign of rational planning, and the few marble, Greek-style buildings stood out in stark isolation. It is often, and rightly, argued that the grandiose building projects of the dynasts in the later 1st century BC were long overdue. Pompey, Caesar and Augustus were, for the first time, giving Rome the monumental appearance it deserved as the centre of a world empire.

The period covered in this chapter, from c. 400 to c. 100 BC, witnessed a dramatic transformation in the physical appearance of the city and a phenomenal increase in the size of its population. These changes occurred as a result of the Roman conquest of Italy, an extraordinary explosion of violent energy in the period from around 340 to 270 BC, and the even more remarkable series of conquests that followed the Roman victories against Carthage in the First and Second Punic Wars (264–241 and 218–202 BC), which made Rome the dominant power in the Mediterranean. Before we consider the impact of these changes, however, it will be well to define briefly what we know about the size and character of the city at the beginning of the 4th century BC.

The story of the growth of Rome in the archaic period is described in this volume by Smith. Here it is sufficient to remind ourselves that by 500 BC the site of Rome was occupied by a substantial urban settlement forming the centre of a powerful city-state. Recent discoveries have shown that "the Great Road of the Tarquins" (la grande Roma dei Tarquini), as it has been called, was not the product of wishful thinking on the part of the Roman annalists, but was a genuine reality of the archaic period.
By contrast, the first century or so of the Republic (which traditionally began around 500 BC) was a period of decline and recession. Recent research has drawn attention to a '5th-century crisis,' which affected not only Rome, but much of Italy and other areas of the Western Mediterranean, including Carthage. The archaeological record of sites in Magna Græcia, Campania, Latium and Etruria during the middle years of the 5th century is extremely meagre: imports of Attic pottery virtually cease, craft production stagnates, and the artistic quality of prestige artefacts declines. This bleak archaeological picture is consistent with what the literary sources tell us about Rome at this period; it was an age of military reverses and political turmoil caused by poverty and social discontent.

Especially interesting is the fact that the literary sources, which record the construction of numerous public buildings during the late 6th and early 5th centuries (e.g. the temples of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Castor and Pollux, and Saturn), contain no mention of any such constructions after 446 BC. This is consistent with the archaeological record, which provides evidence of extensive building activity during the 6th century, but nothing for the succeeding period down to the early 4th century. The two sets of data fit together, which is to my mind the strongest single argument for treating the written sources with respect, and for adopting a generally conservative approach to the traditional story of early Rome.

Taken together, the two bodies of evidence suggest a picture of Rome as the start of the 4th century as a once-great city, now fallen on hard times and displaying only the faded grandeur of a glorious past. On this view it might seem that the city reached its lowest ebb in 390 BC when it was sacked by the Gauls.

That the sack was a real historical event cannot be seriously doubted. It was referred to by a number of 4th-century Greek writers, including Aristotle, but the conventional view of it as a total disaster may perhaps be questioned. There are good reasons for thinking that both ancient and modern writers have exaggerated its effects. Livy (5.42–43.1 and 5.55) suggests that the city was completely destroyed and had to be rebuilt from scratch, but in this he was demonstrably mistaken.

This conclusion is based partly on the fact that the sack has left no trace whatever: in the archaeological record, which is extremely surprising (note that the burnt layer in the Comitium, which Gjerstad connected with the sack, is now dated to around 500 BC and is most probably to be linked to the upheaval that accompanied the overthrow of the kings). But the main reason for doubt arises from general historical considerations. It is clear that the Gauls who sacked the city were a warrior band bent on plunder and adventure, and had no particular interest in Rome as such. After ransacking the city they moved south and enlisted as mercenaries under Dionysius of Syracuse before returning home to northern Italy. It had never been their intention to occupy Rome permanently, or to destroy it in a systematic fashion, and there may well be some truth in the story that the Romans bought them off with a large payment of gold, which is unlikely to have been invented.

Livy (and the many modern scholars who follow him without thinking) was quite wrong to suggest that Rome was obliterated and had to be completely rebuilt. The haphazard and unplanned character of the later city centre was not the result of hasty rebuilding, as Livy thought, but rather of its gradual development from its beginnings at a very remote period. Much of the archaic city remained standing, as the archaeological evidence confirms. Many important buildings and monuments that have been excavated down to the earliest levels can be shown to have survived the Gallic attack unharmed. They include the Regio, the Comitium, the Temple of Castor, and above all the great Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol. The archaic houses that Professor Andrea Carandini and his team
have unearthed on the northern slopes of the Palatine would also have been preserved unchanged until the later 2nd century BC. Incidentally this suggests that the aristocratic families that lived in them derived much prestige from the fact that their houses were centuries old.

Finally we should note that the Gallic raid did not seriously interrupt what seems to have been a resurgence of Roman power at the turn of the 5th and 4th centuries BC. Six years earlier the Romans had conquered Veii and annexed its territory; this was part of a concerted programme of expansion which continued during the following decades, Gauls notwithstanding. The main stages in this programme include the conquest of Tusculum (381), the foundation of colonies in Southern Etruria and Latium, the annexation of the Pompetic Plain (started in 383, completed in 358), and the beginnings of an interest in maritime affairs. The evidence for the latter includes an alliance with Massalia (380), colonial expeditions to Corsica and Sardinia, and the foundation of a fortified settlement at Ostia, dated on archaeological grounds to between 380 and 350 BC. It is possible that the main consequence of the Gallic raid was political rather than material or economic. The conflict between patricians and plebeians seems to have intensified after the departure of the Gauls (indeed it is possible that internal divisions in Rome contributed to the disaster); but these years also witnessed the beginnings of a revolution, partly resulting from the extensive resettlement of poor citizens on conquered land, and partly through the admission of plebeians to the chief magistracies under the Licinio-Sextian Laws of 367 BC (Livy 6.35-42). Tradition records that this famous agreement was made by the dedication of a Temple to Concordia in the Forum Romanum, one of a number of new constructions attributed to Marcus Furius Camillus, the semi-legendary hero who had conquered Veii and refounded the Gauls after the capture of the city (Plutarch, Camillus 4.4-5). Camillus is also said to have built temples to Juno Regina (the protective goddess of Veii) on the Aventine, and to Fortuna and Mater Matuta in the Forum Boarium (Livy 5.3.3 and 5.23.7). Camillus' Temple of Concord has been questioned by some scholars, but there is some archaeological evidence in its favour. Investigations of the later Temple of Concord, built in 121 BC after the murder of Gaius Gracchus, have revealed that the concrete platform on which it stood contained fragments of stone taken from a 4th century building, which could therefore have been Camillus' temple. The Temple of Juno has not yet been identified, but the two temples of Fortuna and Mater Matuta were located at the foot of the Capitol near the Church of Santi Onofrio, built on a vast platform with a perimeter in 144. This platform covered depth of about 6 m the earlier level together with the ruins of the celebrated archaic stage (see Smith in this volume), which had been destroyed and abandoned at the end of the monarchy. Other temples belonging to this period include those of Mars outside the Porta Capena (366 BC) and Juno Lucina on the Caelian (375 BC). Taken together this evidence indicates that in early 4th century the Romans had embarked on a new programme of monumental building, after an interval of around 300 years. This must be seen as a sign of increasing prosperity, and can be related directly to successful military conquests, since the great majority of Republican temples were built in fulfillment of vows to the gods in wartime, and were paid for out of spoils or manus libiri. There is therefore a correlation between the general historical picture recorded in our sources and the evidence for developments in the city itself - a fact that serves to confirm the authenticity of both.
But the most significant sign of the revival of Rome’s fortunes at this time is the construction of a defensive wall around the city. This is the gigantic fortification of which substantial traces remain, notably on the south side of the Aventine and in the Piazza dei Cinquecento outside the Termini station (Fig. 3.1). Although conventionally known (in modern times) as the ‘Servian Wall’, its connection with Servius Tullius is doubtful to say the least, and is not supported by any ancient source. The theory that it followed the line of an earlier defensive wall dating from the time of the kings is unlikely; the Gauls would never have been able to take the city in 390 if it had had all-round defences.

The construction of the wall began in 378 BC, according to Livy (6.32.1). It was made of tufa from the Grotta Oscura quarries near Veii, which symbolized Rome’s recent conquest of the area and incidentally confirms the date of the wall. The squared blocks were laid as headers and stretchers in a regular fashion for the whole length of the wall, which extends to some 11 km (6.5 miles) in all. Masons’ marks, in the form of Greek letters, are visible on many of the surviving blocks, and suggest that the Romans brought in specialist Greek contractors, perhaps from Syracuse, which was at that time the leading centre in fortification technology.

The construction of the wall was an immense undertaking. The ashlar blocks were of irregular size, but on average measuring around 1.5 × 0.5 × 0.6 m. The millions of blocks needed for a construction over 10 m high and 4 m thick had to be quarried, shaped, transported (over a distance of more than 12 km), and laid in place; this represents a huge investment of resources by the Roman state. A reference in Livy (7.20.9) implies that the construction of the city’s defences was still not complete in 357 BC, and it is not at all unbelievable that it took over thirty years to build.

When complete the wall enclosed an area of c. 426 hectares (about 1000 acres), including all of the famous seven hills. Although this area was probably not yet densely inhabited, the extent of the fortified area is noteworthy, and places Rome on a par with the largest urban settlements in the western Mediterranean at this date (e.g. Agrigentum 450 ha., Syracuse 315 ha., Tarentum 510 ha., Croton 615 ha.). Its population was undoubtedly considerable, probably not less than 50,000 persons (see further below). Everything suggests that by the
middle of the 4th century Rome was a large, dynamic centre with resources that few, if any, other states in Italy could match.

This conclusion is unlikely to convince those scholars who are inclined to minimize the significance of Rome at this date, and to dismiss as unhistorical and anachronistic any suggestion that she could have been, a major player in the age before the Peloponnesian Wars. Holloway, for instance, is inclined to lower the date of the ‘Servian’ Wall to the later 3rd century, largely on the grounds that Rome could not have occupied an area of 426 hectares before the time of Hannibal. But it is only by assuming that already by 350 BC Rome was the largest and most powerful city in central Italy that one can make any sense of the astonishing developments of the succeeding period.

In the second half of the 4th century Rome embarked on a programme of conquest and imperialism that continued without a break down to the late Republican period. The rise of the Roman empire was the product of centuries of continuous and successful warfare, first in peninsular Italy, which was conquered by 272 BC, and subsequently overseas, leading to the acquisition of provinces in the Mediterranean islands, continental Italy, eastern and southern Spain, Macedonia and Greece, parts of North Africa and the South of France. By the end of the 2nd century Rome completely dominated the Mediterranean basin.

These developments had a profound impact on the social and economic life of Italy, and particularly on the city of Rome itself. Most obviously, there was a vast and continuing influx of public and private wealth, deriving from war booty, taxation and the exploitation of the natural and human resources of the empire. The city grew in size, and became not only a centre of trade and production but also more particularly a centre of consumption, as the ruling elite sought to spend the profits of empire on extravagant living and competitive display. A vast service sector developed in order to support the luxurious lifestyle of the aristocracy, and to procure and supply the necessities of life for an ever-growing population.

The first signs of this transformation are evident already at the end of the 4th century BC. By then the Roman state was producing coined money, craft production had reached new levels, and a flourishing maritime trade had grown up, centred on the river harbour (Portus) which appears to have been substantially redeveloped at this time. This latter conclusion is based largely on indications in the literary sources, but there is archaeological confirmation in the fact that the earliest phases of the Temple of Portunus, the god of the harbour, go back to this period.

A further sign of the change in the nature of Roman society at this time is the increasing use of slave labour, which by the end of the 4th century was already having a marked influence on the rural economy and on the structure of the urban population. The use of slaves in urban production, and in domestic service was one of the principal causes of the rise in the population of the city, and can itself be illustrated by the growing number of manumissions. The act of manumission (the granting of freedom to a slave by a formal legal procedure) was made subject to a tax in 357 BC (Livy 7.16.7), and by the end of the century freedmen had become a significant group within the urban plebs.

The forced immigation (and subsequent manumission) of slaves was the single most important cause of the rapid increase of the city's population at this time. Voluntary immigraotion from the countryside was no doubt also a factor. In any case, the fast of population growth cannot be doubted. According to one estimate the city had a population of c. 30,000 in the mid-4th century, rising to 60,000 by 300 and exceeding 90,000 by 270. If anything, these figures are too cautious; others have argued for a population of c. 150,000 in 270.
te 375,000 by the 12th. My own opinion is that a figure of 150,000 is possible for 270, and I accept the widely held view that the city had at least 200,000 people by 200 BC.

Confirmation that this was happening is provided by evidence of measures to increase Rome's water supply. The first major public aqueduct, the Aqua Appia, was built in 312 BC on the orders of the censor Appius Claudius Caecus, from whom it took its name. The capacity of the Appia (73,000 m³ per day) was exceeded by that of its successor, the Anio Vetus, built by Manius Curius Dentatus in 272 (176,000 m³ per day). These were among the most significant public works to be constructed during the entire Republican period.

In the nature of things it would seem inevitable that the growth in population was accompanied by changes in the appearance and spatial organization of the urban area. But of these presumed changes during the middle Republic we know little. Of domestic architecture at this time we know nothing whatever, beyond what can be inferred from developments at sites such as Pompeii – on the assumption, which seems reasonable, that similar things were happening at Rome. The earliest substantial traces of domestic architecture at Pompeii date from the 3rd century, and include three early atrium-style houses (those of the Surgeon, of Pansa and of Sallust); as we now know, houses of this type had existed at Rome since the 6th century (see n. 12), and it is reasonable to postulate the continuing development and proliferation of a type of house that served so well the social needs of a wealthy, competitive and self-conscious elite.

The atrium-house provided space in which a wealthy patrician could perform the rituals and functions of patronage; it was equally able to accommodate the slaves who had become essential to the running of a well-to-do house hold.

The dwellings of the free poor, however, are entirely beyond our knowledge in the period before the late Republic. It is worth noting, however, that a curious story in Livy (21.62.3 [218 BC]) about a cow climbing to the third storey of a building in the Forum Bursarium indicates the existence of high-rise blocks (which were later the principal slum dwellings of the poor) already at the start of the Hannibilic War.

Our knowledge of public buildings in the city is not much better, but something can be done with references in literary sources and a small but significant body of archaeological material. Combining these two types of evidence can produce interesting results, even if the process is sometimes speculative. An example is provided by the case of the Comitium, the meeting place for assemblies of the people in the Roman Forum, the political and commercial centre of the city. The area was enlarged and remodelled in the second half of the 4th century, a development that is perhaps to be connected with the consulship of C. Maenius (338 BC), who decorated the speakers' platform with the beaks of the ships he had taken from Annius (338 BC). The platform was henceforth known as the rostra (the 'Beaks'), a word that has passed into modern usage (Livy 8.14.12). He also set up a column as a monument to his victory.

Victory monuments of this type became increasingly common in Rome during the course of the following centuries, as one would expect in a period of triumphant military conquest. Notable examples include the column of C. Duillius, consul in 260 BC, to commemorate a naval victory over the Carthaginians in the First Punic War, and the two arches of L. Sestius, erected after his victories as proconsul in Spain in 136 BC (Livy 33.27.4). Another arch was erected by Scipio Africanus in 190 BC at the entrance to the precinct of Jupiter on the Capitoll. These are the first known examples of the triumphal arch, a characteristic Roman structure that was to have an important place in the western tradition of monumental architecture.
By far the most common type of victory monument, however, was the votive temple, vowed to a deity during a campaign, often in the heat of battle, and subsequently constructed as a thank-offering for the victory and financed from the spoils. The series of mid-Republican temples begins around 300 BC and continues through the 3rd century and into the 2nd. After around 180 BC they are recorded less frequently, and in the 1st century BC temple construction virtually ceased until the accession of Augustus. At first sight this seems a strange pattern, and scholars have sought either to explain it as a symptom of a decline in traditional Roman religious beliefs and practices, or to explain it away as the product of gaps in the record.

Neither of these explanations is convincing. The argument from the sources is not valid, and the suggestion that fewer temples were built because the Romans were becoming less devout is unacceptable, if only because we know that the repair and reconstruction of existing temples went on unceasingly throughout the later 2nd and early 1st centuries BC. In any case, piety was never the principal motive behind the earlier temples. Their main function was to commemorate the achievements of victorious Roman generals and to confer prestige on them and their descendants. Generals were free to dispose of the spoils of war in any way they chose, and the dedication of a temple was therefore seen as equivalent to an act of private magnificence. The temples themselves were associated directly in the public mind with the men who built them, and in some cases even bore their names, at least informally, so that titles like ‘Temple of Metellus Jupiter’ became common. The Temple of Honour and Virtue (Honor et Virtus) built by Gaius Marius after his victory over the Germans in 101 BC became known simply as the ‘Monument of Marius’.

It is important to remember that the great majority of Republican temples were victory monuments paid for out of spoils (at least 85%, as far as our record goes). Many of them were dedicated to gods of victory – Victoria, Victoria Virgo, Venus Victrix, Hercules Victor, Hercules Invictus etc – and were situated along the triumphal route from the Campus Martius to the Capitol, along which victorious generals rode in triumph.

Temple dedications and triumphs were closely linked, and it is to be noted that the frequency of triumphs is exactly parallel to the pattern of temple dedications: extremely frequent in the 3rd and early 2nd centuries, with praks in the periods from 300 to 250, and 200 to 160, and with a sharp decline in the second half of the 2nd century BC. This decline, which is matched in the record of temple dedications, reflects the changing character of Roman warfare in the late centuries of the Republic.

The great majority of mid-Republican temples are known only from literary sources, and only then because of the dramatic circumstances in which they were vowed, or the fame of the persons who vowed them, rather than because of their importance as buildings or their contribution to the urban landscape. We should be careful not to exaggerate the significance of buildings that happen to have been recorded in annalistic sources whose principal purpose was to register the activities of aristocratic politicians and generals.

As far as we can tell, most of the mid-Republican victory temples were small isolated shrines in the old ‘Etrusco-Italic’ style, built of wood and rush and with terracotta decorations. The primitive state of Roman temple architecture at this time is illustrated by the story of O. Fulvius Flaccus, who as censor in 173 BC began the construction of a temple to Fortuna Equestris which he had vowed during his campaign against the Celtaiberians seven years earlier. In his effort to make it the largest and most magnificent temple in Rome, he could think of no better plan than to strip the marble roof-tiles from a Greek temple in southern Italy.
3. The City of Rome in the Middle Republic (c. 400–100 BC)

The earliest marble temples in Rome made their appearance only in the second half of the 2nd century. The first was the "temple of Jupiter Stator (otherwise known as the Temple of Metellus Macedonicus) in 146 BC, shortly followed by the Temple of Mars, vowed by D. Junius Brutus Calliacus (132 BC). Both were the work of a Greek architect, Hermodorus of Salamis, and were built of white marble transported from Greece. Another early marble temple, the round temple in the Forum Boarium, is still partly preserved; the original roof and marble entablature are missing, but the columns and part of the cela still survive, to make this one of the oldest standing structures in the city of Rome (Fig. 3.2). It is most probably to be identified with the Temple of Hercules Victor, and dates from around 120 BC. It is made of Greek (Pentelic) marble, and was almost certainly the work of a Greek architect, perhaps none other than Hermodorus of Salamis himself.

Standing remains of Republican buildings are extremely rare in Rome, but another temple, not far from the round temple and dating probably from a few decades later, is preserved almost intact. This is the Temple of Portunus (Fig. 3.3), built around 100 BC to replace the original structure of the late 4th or early 3rd century, of which traces have been uncovered by excavation (see above). Built largely of travertine, it is a classic example of a hellenized Etrusco-Italic temple, on a high podium with frontal steps, enclosed on three sides and with a deep porch supported by six Ionic columns in pure Greek style.

Other Republican temples of which traces survive include the Temple of Victory on the Palatine, dedicated by Lucius Postumius Megellus in 294 BC, but completely restored in the early 1st century, and three adjacent temples in the Forum Holitorium, once again represented by standing remains of 1st-century BC restorations (Fig. 3.4). They can be identified as the temples of Spes (Hope) and Janus (both originally built in the mid-3rd century), and Juno Sospita (early 2nd century). Finally, a group of four Republican victory temples was unearthed in the 1920s in the Largo Argentina (Figs. 3.5 & 3.6). These too were restored and reused in the 1st century BC, but traces of earlier structures remain. Identification is controversial, although the latest of them, Temple B, is almost certainly to be identified with the Temple to Fortuna huiusce diei, vowed by Quintus Lutatius Catulus during a battle

Fig. 3.2 Round temple in the Forum Boarium, probably to be identified with the Temple of Hercules Victor (c. 120 BC) (Photos: editors).
against the Cenbri in 102 BC. The others date from the early and mid-3rd century (Temples C and A respectively), and the early 2nd (Temple D).19

The archaeological evidence makes it quite clear that most of the victory temples of the 3rd and early 2nd centuries were systematically repaired and frequently rebuilt during the last century of the Republic when Augustus proactively claimed that in his sixth consulship (28 BC) he repaired 82 temples in the city (Res Gestae 20.4), he was doing no more than observing traditional practice after what if anything was only a fairly short period of neglect. But the resources and efforts expended on the task of restoration in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC were relatively small by comparison with what was spent on public works of other kinds.

In the 2nd century there was a shift from victory monuments, dedicated by generals and financed from the booty of one-off campaigns, towards civic buildings and public amenities constructed at public expense and funded from regular taxation and exploitation of permanent provinces. This shift reflects a change in the military policy and financial structures of the state. The magistrates who were at the center of this system were the censors, who held office every five years and supervised the system of public contracts, whereby private individuals and companies undertook to provide goods and services for the state. The importance of this system is beyond doubt; Polybius (6.17.2-7) tells us that the whole population had an interest in the contracts, and that ‘this dependent system made the people subservient to the senate, which provided the funds that were administered by its representatives, the censors.

The regular contracts for the construction and repair of public buildings let out by the censors are restored to us from sources, especially Livy, and included an increasing volume and range of activities as the empire grew and the state’s revenues increased. The works in question included bridges across the Tiber, such as the Pons Aemilius, constructed in 178 BC on the foundations of an earlier bridge of (probably) 3rd-century date. The existing remains, the Puente Rotondo (the “broken bridge”), are of a reconstruction by Augustus (Fig. 3.7).20 The city’s drains, perhaps including the Cloaca Maxima, were refashioned in 184, and in 179 a systematic programme of street paving was undertaken.

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These improvements to what would now be called the infrastructure were extremely significant in terms of the amount of money invested and the levels of employment created. Probably the most important of all was the Aqua Marcia, the aqueduct constructed in the years 144–40, the single most expensive building undertaken during the Republic. Its capacity was 187,000 m³ per day, and it virtually doubled the city's water supply. The need for it was apparently urgent, a piece of information that tends to confirm that the population of the city had doubled since the mid-3rd century and was now well in excess of 300,000.

The water supply was only one of the basic needs that had to be met if a city of such gigantic size was to survive. It could not have been sustained solely by the produce of its own agricultural hinterland, and we know that Rome had regularly been importing part of its food supply since the 4th century. By 200 BC most of its basic needs were being imported, which necessitated the development of new port facilities on the banks of the Tiber. The old river harbour at the foot of the Capitoline was no longer adequate, and a new commercial area with port facilities, the Emporium, was developed downstream in the area to the south west of the Aventine. The Severan Marble Plan indicates that around AD 200 this whole area was taken up with warehouses and granaries. We know from literary sources that the earliest store buildings in this area were erected in the 2nd century BC, and the substantial surviving traces of the Horrea Galbana can be attributed to Ser. Sulpicius Galba, the consul of 108 BC. Of particular historical significance were the Horrea Semproniana, built by the tribune Gaius Gracchus in 122 BC after his epoch-making law which for the first time made the food supply of the city a responsibility of the state. Under this measure grain was to be poreducated in bulk from the provinces, stored in purpose-built granaries, and sold at a fixed price to the citizens, who were each entitled to a monthly ration. By the end of the Republic these rations were being given out free, and the number of adult male citizens entitled to receive them had reached 320,000 (Suetonius, Julius Caesar 41). This figure has allowed scholars to calculate that the total population of the city, including women, children and slaves, must by then have been of the order of one million persons.

Along the river in front of the granaries ran a huge roofed structure, the Porticus Aemilia, first erected in 193 BC by the curule aediles M. Aemilius Lepidus and L. Aemilius Paullus, but rebuilt in concrete by the censors of 174 BC. Measuring 487 x 60 m, with a barrel-vaulted concrete roof supported by 296 internal pillars, it represents a vast covered space into which goods could be offloaded directly from the quayside. Parts of this remarkable building are still standing (Figs. 3.8 & 3.9), and provide evidence of the large-scale use of concrete at the start of the 2nd century BC.

This was a revolutionary development in building technology that must have been developed during the course of the 3rd century. The earliest attested use of masonry work consisting of rubble bound by mortar in Rome is in the substructure of the first Temple of Magna Mater on the Palatine, dedicated in 151 BC. This and other early concrete structures (like the Porticus Aemilia) were faced with small irregularly shaped pieces of stone (opus incertum). In the course of the 2nd century concrete facings gradually became more regular, until 100 BC, a facing known as opus reticulatum, consisting of a network of pyramidal-shaped pieces of stone, with their bases set diagonally and forming a diamond pattern, became standard (Fig. 3.10).

The reasons for these changes are not clear. The later method was no stronger than the earlier irregular one, and an aesthetic motive can be ruled out because the finished surface was rendered with plaster. The most plausible explanation is that the rapid growth of the
Fig. 3.5: Largo Argentina, Temple A (mid-3rd century BC, restored in the 1st century BC) (Photo: author).

Fig. 3.6: Republican Victory temples in the Largo Argentina: plan (after Boethius 1978).

Fig. 3.7: Remains of the Pons Aurelius (179 BC), now known as the Ponte Rotto (the 'Broken Bridge'). The stone facing belongs to a reconstruction of the Augustan age. (Photo: editors).
city in the later 2nd century necessitated the introduction of ‘industrialized’ building techniques, using regular standardized components suitable for a mass labour force, perhaps largely consisting of slaves.  

It was also during the 2nd century that the first attempts were made to introduce monumental planning and the systematic organization of urban space. In particular we may observe efforts to surround public squares with porticoes and colonnades to create an appearance of symmetry or axiality. The earliest building to be referred to as a porticus (the Porticus Aemilia, described above) was, for all its impressive dimensions, a utilitarian structure, but it was followed by others which were designed on the model of a Greek stoa, to enclose a temple precinct or to run along opposing sides of a forum or street. At least twelve of these monumental porticoes were constructed in the course of the 2nd century BC. Important examples include the Porticus Octavia built by Gnaeus Octavius (168 BC), the Porticus Metelli (147 BC) and the Porticus Minucia Veturi (110 BC), all of them in the Campus Martius.  

The precise location of these structures is still unclear, however, and few remains are preserved; some details are known from the P.L.R.  

Similar to the porticoes both in function and design were the earlier basilicas. A basilica was a large rectangular building in the form of a covered hall resting on rows of pillars, and its original purpose seems to have been to provide shelter from rain or sun for activities that would otherwise have been conducted in the open. Its name suggests a Greek origin, although variously no Greek precedents have been identified for the distinctive Roman basilicas that were constructed around the Roman Forum in the 2nd-century BC, and are found reproduced at Pompeii and many other Roman towns.  

The first was the Basilica Porcia, built by the censor M. Porcius Cato in 184 BC, followed by the Felix (179 BC), the Sempronii (169), and the Opimia (121). Nothing survives of these 2nd-century examples, which were replaced in the 1st century BC by the Basilica Paulli (Aemilia) and Basilica Julia, which flanked the northern and southern sides of the Forum (respectively) and of which substantial traces remain.  

In spite of these efforts to give the city of Rome a coherent monumental appearance, there can be no doubt that at the end of the 2nd century it was still a largely unplanned and disorganized place. It would have seemed unostentatious and backward by comparison not only with contemporary Greek cities, but even with the increasingly hellenized towns of central and southern Italy, of which Pompeii is only the best-known example. These Italian towns not only possessed a degree of formal monumentality that was far in advance of Rome (one only has to think of the elaborate hellenistic sanctuaries at nearby Praeneste and Tiberi),  

they were also served with comforts and amenities that the people of Rome were denied. In the first half of the 1st century BC Rome still possessed no permanent stone theatres, no amphitheatre, and no monumental complex of public baths, even though such facilities were well established at Pompeii and elsewhere.  

The explanation for this deliberate self-denial (for such it surely was) must be political. It is to be noted that many of the innovations described above (such as the first basilica, built by Cato the Censor) were introduced against strong senatorial opposition. Attempts to construct a stone theatre were frustrated by conservative reactionaries in 154, and again in 106 BC.  

The ostensible reason given by the sources is that a Greek-style theatre would demoralize the people, which seems hardly plausible (Tacitus, Annales 14.25). A more persuasive suggestion is that the senatorial oligarchy was alarmed by the fact that theatres in Greek cities were used for popular gatherings, and were associated with democracy.  

There may be something in this, but it is not likely to be the whole answer since the phenomenon extends to other institutions, such as baths, which are less obviously political in the same sense.
More probably it has to do with the fact that public building in Rome was always the object of competitive display among the aristocracy, and that buildings of all types, not just victory monuments, conferred prestige on the men who built them. The most obvious sign of this is the fact that all public works—roads, aqueducts and granaries no less than porticoes and basilicas—bore the family names of their authors and were regarded as in some sense family monuments.

They stood, isolated from one another, as reminders of individual achievement, with little or no attempt to contribute to a wider overall plan. The Republican city was no more than the sum of its parts. In this precisely reflected the social and political system. In Rome there was no concept of a collective abstraction such as 'the government' or 'the state' that could take action independently of the individual magistrates holding office at any one time.

The ruling senatorial nobility was a group of fiercely competing individuals, each fired by two countervailing ambitions: to be the first among equals by doing everything possible to outmatch his fellows, and to prevent at all costs any of his rivals from doing the same thing. The characteristic feature of the political system was the diffusion of official roles and the fragmentation of political authority. Official power was shared, and limited, by the joint principles of collegiality and annual tenure. Whatever a man achieved in any one year could in theory be matched or outdone by colleagues or successors. A military victory in one area did not preclude successful campaigns in other theatres or in future wars. A triumph elevated the general to the highest level—indeed to the status of a god—but lasted only for a day.44

The dedication of a victory monument was a way of creating a permanent reminder of one's achievement, but one could do the same. Major civic buildings and public works were rather more sensitive, and it is not an accident that this was an area of activity left to the caesars, the highest magistrates in the state appointed only at five-year intervals from the most distinguished ex-consuls. Even so, the more ambitious works promoted by the caesars aroused suspicion and often outright opposition. Individual civic buildings and public works were permitted, but within limited bounds, and there was no chance that any one individual would be able to make radical changes to the appearance of the city by imposing an integrated plan.

Above all, as a means, the oligarchy were suspicious of any permanent institutions or structures that would provide tangible benefits for the mass of the people. To give only one example, which has already been mentioned, Gaius Gracchus' grain law was briefly repressed, and was one of the acts that caused the nobility to murder him.45 Public entertainments that were permitted included entertainments and shows, and these were the object of intense rivalry between office-holders and their colleagues and successors. But in the nature of things the effects of a public show, however spectacular and expensive, lasted only for the duration of people's memories and were rapidly superseded. It is symptomatic of this state of affairs that the spectacles were held in public open spaces and that temporary structures were erected to stage the performance and to provide seating for the crowd (see Coleman in this volume).

Gladiatorial combats, for instance, were staged in the Forum, and the people watched from wooden seating and the balconies and upper storeys of the basilicas and other surrounding buildings.46 The temporary structures could themselves be extremely elaborate. The Elder Pliny (Natural History 36.113–15) gives a remarkable description of the temporary theatre erected by M. Aemilius Scipio, arduin in 58 BC, which supposedly held 80,000 spectators and had a stage consisting of marble columns interspersed with bronze statues. This was permitted only because the theatre was a temporary structure that was removed after the shows ended. The absurdity of this is noted by Tacitus (Annales 14.21), who observed that a
Fig. 3.8: Part of the Porticus Aemilia (174 BC), faced in opus incertum (Photo: author).

Fig. 3.9: Porticus Aemilia: axonometric reconstruction (after Boeheim 1978).

a. Opus incertum
b. Opus reticulatum

Fig. 3.10: Facing techniques for Roman concrete in the later Republic.
permanent theatre would be less costly than elaborate edifices that were put up and razed to the ground year after year at immense cost.

It follows that the crude, backward and unplanned character of the city of Rome and its urban fabric was not an accident or the product of backward technology or lack of sophistication; on the contrary, it was the result of artificial factors sustained by social, political and institutional pressures. Things eventually changed in the 1st century BC when political power became concentrated in the hands of the great military dynasts. The first permanent stone theatre was begun by Pompey in 61 BC and completed in 55. Caesar started a second theatre which was finished by Augustus and named after his nephew Marcellus. Caesar also initiated a grandiose plan to rebuild the city centre, including an additional forum, and a new Senate House. This scheme was completed and extended by Augustus, who added a new forum of his own and carried out a systematic reconstruction of all the major buildings in the city, allowing him to make the famous claim that he found a city of brick and left it a city of marble (Suetonius, Augustus 28; see Walker in this volume). His aide T. Scaurus Tarquius built the first permanent amphitheatre in 30 BC, and his son-in-law Agrippa was responsible, among other initiatives, for the first of the great public baths complexes in Rome.

The transformation of the city under Pompey, Caesar and Augustus was, as noted at the start of this chapter, long overdue. But it was only possible because of the change in the political situation. By the end of Augustus' reign the city had been transformed in accordance with some semblance of an integrated urban plan. The buildings and monuments that bore his name or those of his relatives and associates were evident everywhere, as he himself was able to boast in the Res Gestae. To anyone observing his achievements, at the time as Mazzari has pointed out, it would have been obvious that Rome was now under the rule of a monarch.

NOTES


7. Plutarch, Cassius 22, citing Herodotus Ponticus as well as Aristotle; other Greek writers who mentioned the same include the 4th century historian Theopompus (IR. 5:17 loc. cit. = Plut., Naegel History 3:57).


10. For example, GERSTAD 1961, 220, for an opposing view see CASTAGNOLI 1974, 445–27.

11. LENTIUS I, s.v. ‘Comitia’, 309–14; ‘Casari, Ardes, Temples’, 242–45; LENTIUS III, s.v. ‘Tempiere Optimus Maximi Capitolinus, Ardes, Temples (the all a 83 a c)’, 242–45; LENTIUS IV, s.v. ‘Segus’; 189–92.


3. The City of Rome in the Middle Republic (c. 400–100 BC) 57


21 CORNELL 1995, 24. The walls excluded the Campus Martius and the Transitorius region.

22 HOLLOWAY 1984, 100; the figures he gives need to be corrected.

23 HAKES 1978, 3–10, and passim.


25 For a general discussion, see ROBINSON 1992, 120–30.


27 COLINNA-BUZZETTI 1986; ADAM 1949b.


29 BRUNT 1971a, 376.

30 MORLEY 1996, 39.

31 On aqueducts, see ASHBY 1915, especially 49 (Aqua Appia) and 54 (Aqua Vetuca); HOGGE 1992; AICH 1995. See Dodge in this volume for aqueducts and delivery capacities.


33 LeCON, I, xiv; Comitum; 309–14; Colonna Maria, 301–2; LeCON, IV, xo: Rosina (re epoepolana), 312–14. A generation later, the Comitum was again reconstructed as a circular space, perhaps on a Greek, but a form that was to be reproduced in Roman coloni, which were also equipped with circular spaces for political assemblies (BOETHIUS 1789, 112; CORAZZA 1983, 183–49; BALLY 1991).

34 VERNUS 1786, 136–37; see also KUNZL 1988, 43–64; 101–3 (columns of C. Dollar) and 50 (zumiphal piers); see on victory monuments in general see HAKES 1795, 201–2; PIETILA-CASTREN 1987; AREJON 1994. See ADAM 1994; COARELLI 1996, 26–34; PATTERSON 2000, 31–8.


36 That, for example, BEAUD 1994, 356–368. The argument is premonstrateur, given the vast increase in source material of all kinds for the last generation of the Republic. Bear in mind that our knowledge of temple construction theory on these sources is built on the work of Livy, whose surviving text comes in c. 60 BC. In fact Livy is not the only source to provide information on 3rd and 2nd century temples—even without Livy, the pattern would still be quite clear, though less pronounced. It should be noted that Livy is not available for most of the 3rd century (the period 292–238), but we know of at least 25 temples that date from that period.


38 PAIS 1928, 489–506; AMPOLLS 1990, 462–89.

39 These victory cults were based on contemporary hellenistic models and their appearance in Rome at the beginning of the 3rd century is a sign of Greek cultural influence (WEINSTEIN 1977). Greek recipients of temples included warlike deities—Bellona, Mars, Homo, Virtus—and gods whose favour and protection was needed in war, such as Fortuna (fortune), Vesta (saltus), Epeius (hope), Felicita (good luck), and Fortuna hercules dedit (the fortune of the day).


41 RICHT 1993, 50.


43 For a general discussion of the "Exvogatio" site, see BOETHIUS 1978, 35–64.

44 Livy 6.7: 3, for the general point, see GROS 1976 11:2.


50 LeCON, IV, xiv: Ponte Anemurium, 106–7.

51 LeCON, IV, xiv: Calvea, Calva Mariana, 248–50.

52 Frontinus, On Aqueducts 1.7, giving the limits of 100 miles; see Dodge in this volume for discussion and bibliography, particularly on the significance of discussing aqueduct capacities.


55 LeCON, III, xiv: Hestia Sempronia, 47.

56 BRION 1791, 376–88; HOPKINS 1978, 98–9; MORLEY 1996, 33–5; STOREY 1997 argues for a much lower total figure (around 450,900), but does not convincingly
WISSOWA, G. 1912: Religion und Kultur der Römer, ed. 2, Münchens, 1912.