

The political point of the *Georgics* was to celebrate Augustus's gift of farmlands to veterans of the civil wars, but in its exaltation of the myths and traditions of Italy, it served as a precursor to the *Aeneid*. It was written in dactylic hexameter, the verse form that Homer had used in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (the metrical form of the translation above, however, is iambic pentameter—five rhythmic units, each short long, as in *dee-dum*—a meter much more natural to English than the Latin dactylic hexameter). In dactylic hexameter, each line consists of six rhythmic units, or feet, and each foot is either a dactyl (long, short, short, as in *dum-diddy*) or a spondee (long, long, as in *dum-dum*). Virgil reportedly wrote the *Georgics* at a pace of less than one line a day, perfecting his understanding of the metrical scheme in preparation for the longer poem.

The *Aeneid* opens in Carthage, where, after the Trojan War, Aeneas and his men have been driven by a storm, and where they are hosted by the Phoenician queen Dido. During a rainstorm, Aeneas and Dido take refuge in a cave, where the queen, having fallen in love with the Trojan hero, gives herself willingly to him. She now assumes that she is married, but Aeneas, reminded by his father's ghost of his duty to accomplish what the gods have predetermined—a classic instance of *pietas*—knows he must resume his destined journey (see Reading 6.8 on pages 209–210). An angry and accusing Dido begs him to stay. When Aeneas rejects her pleas, Dido vows to haunt him after her death and to bring enmity between Carthage and his descendants forever (a direct reference on Virgil's part to the Punic Wars). As his boat sails away, she commits suicide by climbing a funeral pyre and falling upon a sword. The goddesses of the underworld are surprised to see her. Her death, in their eyes, is neither deserved nor destined, but simply tragic. Virgil's point is almost coldly hard-hearted: All personal feelings and desires must be sacrificed to one's responsibilities to the state. Civic duty takes precedence over private life.

The poem is, on one level, an account of Rome's founding by Aeneas, but it is also a profoundly moving essay on human destiny and the great cost involved in achieving and sustaining the values and principles upon which culture—Roman culture in particular, but all cultures by extension—must be based. Augustus, as Virgil well knew, claimed direct descent from Aeneas, and it is particularly important that the poem presents war, at which Augustus excelled, as a moral tragedy, however necessary.

In Book 7, Venus gives Aeneas a shield made by the god Vulcan. The shield displays the important events in the future history of Rome, including Augustus at the Battle of Actium. Aeneas is, Virgil writes, “without understanding . . . proud and happy . . . [at] the fame and glory of his children's children.” But in the senseless slaughter that ends the poem, as Aeneas and the Trojans battle Turnus and the Italians, Virgil demonstrates that the only thing worse than not avenging the death of one's friends and family is, perhaps, avenging them. In this sense the poem is a profound plea for peace, a peace that Augustus would dedicate himself to pursuing.

The Horatian *Odes* Quintus Horatius Flaccus [KWIN-tus hor-AY-she-us FLAK-us], known as Horace (65–8 BCE), was a close friend of Virgil. Impressed by Augustus's reforms, and probably moved by his patronage, Horace was won over to the emperor's cause, which he celebrated directly in two of his many odes, lyric poems of elaborate and irregular meter. Horace's odes imitated Greek precedents. The following lines open the fifth ode of Book 3 of the collected poems, known simply as the *Odes*:

Jove [the Roman Zeus, also called Jupiter] rules in
heaven, his thunder shows;
Henceforth Augustus earth shall own
Her present god, now Briton foes
And Persians bow before his throne.

The subject matter of the *Odes* ranges from these patriotic pronouncements to private incidents in the poet's own life, the joys of the countryside (Fig. 6.17), the pleasures of wine, and so on. His villa offered him an escape from the trials of daily life in Rome itself. In Ode 13 of Book 2, for instance, Horace addresses a tree that had unexpectedly crashed down, nearly killing him (see Reading 6.9 on page 211). He begins by cursing the man who planted the tree but then concludes that we all fail to pay attention to the real dangers in life. Apparently lost in thought, he begins to imagine the underworld, the abode of departed souls, where he sees the love poet Sappho (see Chapter 4) and the political poet Alcaeus both writing poetry. Their lyrics give comfort to the dead, just as Horace's own poem has comforted him and allowed him to forget his near-death experience. No Roman poet more gracefully harmonized the Greek reverence for beauty with the Roman concern with duty and obligation.

Ovid's *Art of Love* and *Metamorphoses* Augustus's support for poets did not extend to Publius Ovidius Naso [POO-ble-us ov-ID-ee-us NAY-so], known as Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE). Ovid's talent was for love songs designed to satisfy the notoriously loose sexual mores of the Roman aristocrats, who lived in somewhat open disregard of Augustus and Livia's family-centered lifestyle. His *Ars Amatoria* [ahrs ah-mah-TOR-ee-uh] (*Art of Love*) angered Augustus, as did some undisclosed indiscretion by Ovid. As punishment—probably more for the indiscretion than the poem—Augustus permanently exiled him to the town of Tomis [TOE-mus] on the Black Sea, the remotest part of the empire, famous for its wretched weather. The *Metamorphoses*, composed in the years just before his exile, is a collection of stories describing or revolving around one sort of supernatural change of shape or another, from the divine to the human, the animate to the inanimate, the human to the vegetal.

In the *Ars Amatoria*, the poet describes his desire for the fictional Corinna. Ovid outlines the kinds of places in Rome where one can meet women, from porticoes to gaming houses, from horse races to parties, and especially anywhere where wine, that great banisher of inhibition, can be had.

Women, he says, love clandestine affairs as much as men; they simply do not chase after men, "as a mousetrap does not chase after mice." Become friends with the husband of a woman you desire, he advises. Lie to her—tell her that you only want to be her friend. Nevertheless, he says, "If you want a woman to love you, be a lovable man."

Ovid probably aspired to Virgil's fame, though he could admit, "My life is respectable, but my Muse is full of jesting." His earliest major work, the *Amores* [ah-MOHR-eez] (*Loves*), begins with many self-deprecating references to Virgil's epic, which begins with the famous phrase, "Arms and the man I sing":

Arms, warfare, violence—I was winding up to
produce
A regular epic, with verse-form to match—
Hexameters, naturally. But Cupid (they say) with
a snicker
Lopped off one foot from each alternate line.
"Nasty young brat," I told him, "who made you
Inspector of Metres?"

Nevertheless, Ovid uses dactylic hexameter for the *Metamorphoses* and stakes out an epic scope for the poem in its opening lines:

My intention is to tell of bodies changed
To different forms; the gods, who made the changes,
Will help me—or I hope so—with a poem
That runs from the world's beginning to our
own days!

If the *Metamorphoses* is superficially more a collection of stories than an epic, few poems in any language have contributed so importantly to later literature. It is so complete in its survey of the best-known classical myths, plus stories from Egypt, Persia, and Italy, that it remains a standard reference work. At the same time, it tells its stories in an utterly moving and memorable way. The story of Actaeon, for instance, is a cautionary tale about the power of the gods. Actaeon happens to see the virgin goddess Diana bathing one day when he is out hunting with his dogs. She turns him into a stag to prevent him from ever telling what he has seen. As his own dogs turn on him and savagely tear him apart, his friends call out for him, lamenting his absence from the kill. But he is all too present:

Well might he wish not to be there, but he was
there, and well might he wish to see
And not to feel the cruel deeds of his dogs.

In the story of Narcissus, Echo falls in love with the beautiful youth Narcissus, but when Narcissus spurns her, she fades away. He in turn is doomed to fall in love with his own image reflected in a pool, according to Ovid, the spring at Clitumnus [clye-TOOM-nus]. So consumed, he finally dies beside the pool, his body transformed into the narcissus flower. In such stories, the duality of identity and



Fig. 6.17 *Idyllic Landscape*, wall painting from a villa at Boscorecase, near Pompeii. First century BCE. Museo Nazionale, Naples. This landscape depicts the love of country life and the idealizing of nature that is characteristic of the Horatian *Odes*. It contrasts dramatically with urban life in Rome.

change, Aristotle's definition of the essence of a thing, becomes deeply problematic. Ovid seems to deny that any human characteristic is essential, asserting that all is susceptible to change. To subsequent generations of readers, from Shakespeare to Freud, Ovid's versions of myths would raise the fundamental questions that lie at the heart of human identity and psychology.

Augustus and the City of Marble

Of all the problems facing Augustus when he assumed power, the most overwhelming was the infrastructure of Rome. The city was, quite simply, a mess. Seneca reacted by preaching Stoicism. He argued that it was what it was, and one should move on as best one can. Augustus reacted by calling for a series of public works, which would serve the people of Rome and, he well understood, himself. The grand civic improvements Augustus planned would be a kind of imperial propaganda, underscoring not only his power but also his care for the people in his role as *pater patriae*. Public works could—and indeed did—elicit the public's loyalty.

Rome had developed haphazardly, without any central plan, spilling down the seven hills it originally occupied into the valleys along the Tiber. By contrast, all of the empire's provincial capitals were conceived on a strict grid

CLOSER LOOK

The Forum Romanum, or Roman Forum, was the chief public square of Rome, the center of Roman religious, ceremonial, political, and commercial life. Originally, a Roman forum was comparable to a Greek *agora*, a meeting place in the heart of the city. Gradually, the forum took on a symbolic function as well, becoming a symbol of imperial power that testified to the prosperity—and peace—that the emperor bestowed upon Rome's citizenry. Julius Caesar was the first to build a forum of his own in 46 BCE, just to the north of the Forum Romanum. Augustus subsequently paved it over, restored its Temple of Venus, and proceeded to build his own forum with its Temple of Mars the Avenger. Thus began what amounted to a competition among successive emperors to outdo their predecessors by creating their own more spectacular forums. These imperial forums lined up north of and parallel to the great Roman Forum, which over the years was itself subjected to new construction. Stretched out along the Via dei Fori Imperiali (Street of Imperial Forums) were Vespasian's Forum of Peace (laid out after the Jewish War in 70 CE), the Forum of Nerva (completed in 97 CE), the Forum of Augustus, the Forum of Caesar, and the Forum of Trajan (completed by Hadrian, ca. 117 CE). The result was an extremely densely built city center. Trajan's was the last, largest, and most splendid forum. It sheltered the Column of Trajan, Trajan's Market, and the Basilica Ulpia—the largest basilica in the empire (see the discussion of the basilica in Chapter 8, page 260).

SEE MORE For a Closer Look at the *Forum Romanum* and Imperial Forums, go to www.myartslab.com

Something to Think About . . .

The shopping center at Caesar's Palace Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, is called The Forum. In what ways is a modern shopping mall comparable to the Roman Forum? In what important ways do they differ?



Contemporary view of the Forum Romanum. Little remains of the Forum Romanum but a field of ruins in the heart of the city. The rounded white columns are the ruins of the Temple of Vesta, one of the earliest buildings erected there.



Forum of Trajan, Rome. 110–112 ce. Restored view by Gilbert Gorski. To make up for the destruction of a major commercial district that was required to construct his forum, Trajan commissioned a large marketplace. Like a contemporary mall, the market had 150 different shops on several levels.

The Forum Romanum and Imperial Forums



Reconstruction drawing of the central hall, Basilica Ulpia, Forum of Trajan, Rome. 113 CE. A basilica is a large, rectangular building with a rounded extension, called an apse, at one or both ends, and easy access in and out. It was a general-purpose building that could be adapted to many uses. Designed by Trajan's favorite architect, the Greek Apollodorus of Damascus, the Basilica Ulpia was 200 feet wide and 400 feet long. In a courtyard outside a door in the middle of the colonnade to the right stood the Column of Trajan. Relatively plain and massive on the outside, the basilica is distinguished by its vast interior space, which would later serve as the model for some Christian churches.



Model of the Roman Forum and the Imperial Forums, Rome. ca. 46 CE-117 CE. This model emphasizes the dense building plan of ancient Rome.



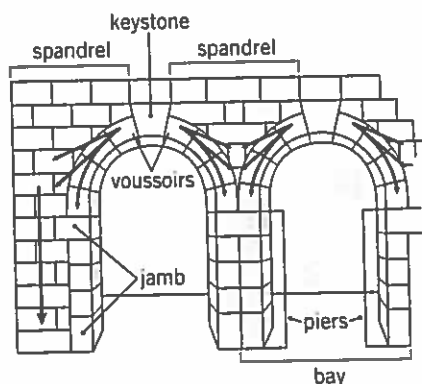
Arches and Vaults

While the arch was known to cultures such as the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians, and the Greeks, it was the Romans who perfected it, evidently learning its principles from the Etruscans but developing those principles further. The Pont du Gard, a beautiful Roman aqueduct in southern France near the city of Nîmes, is a good example.

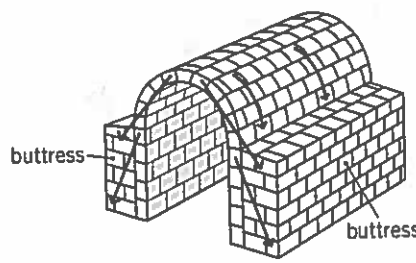
The Romans understood that much wider spans than the Etruscans had bridged could be achieved with the **round arch** than with post-and-lintel construction. The weight of the masonry above the arch is displaced to the supporting upright elements (**piers** or **jamb**s). The arch is constructed on a temporary supporting scaffolding and is formed with wedge-shaped blocks, called **voussoirs**

[voo-swarrs], capped by a large, wedge-shaped stone, called the **keystone**, the last element put in place. The space inside the arch is called a **bay**. And the wall areas between the arches of an **arcade** (a succession of arches, such as seen on the Pont du Gard) are called **spandrels**.

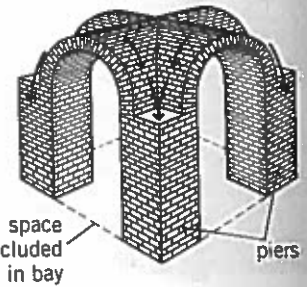
When a round arch is extended, it forms a **barrel vault**. To ensure that the downward pressure from the arches does not collapse the walls, a **buttress** support is often added. When two barrel vaults meet one another at a right angle, they form a **groin vault**. The interior corridors of the Colosseum in Rome use both barrel and groin vaulting. Since all the stones in a vault must be in place to support the arched structure, the vault cannot be penetrated by windows.



Round arch



Barrel vault



Groin vault



Pont du Gard, near Nîmes, France, late first century BCE–early first century CE. Height 180'. The Roman city of Nîmes received 8,000 to 12,000 gallons of water a day from this aqueduct.

LEARN MORE View an architectural simulation of the round arch at www.myartslab.com

Rome thrived under the rule of the Five Good Emperors: Nerva (r. 96–98 CE), Trajan (r. 98–117 CE), Hadrian (r. 117–138 CE), Antonius Pius (r. 138–161 CE), and Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180 CE). The stability and prosperity of the city was due, at least in part, to the fact that none of these men except Marcus Aurelius had a son to whom he could pass on the empire. Thus, each was handpicked by his predecessor from among the ablest men in the Senate. When, in 180 CE, Marcus Aurelius's decadent and probably insane son, Commodus (r. 180–192 CE), took control, the empire quickly learned that the transfer of power from father to son was not necessarily a good thing.

Triumphal Arches and Columns During Vespasian's reign, his son Titus (r. 79–81 CE) defeated the Jews in Palestine, who were rebelling against Roman interference with their religious practices. Titus's army sacked the Second Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE. To honor this victory and the death of Titus 11 years later, a memorial arch was constructed on the Sacred Way. Originally, the Arch of Titus was topped by a statue of a four-horse chariot and driver. Such arches, known as *triumphal arches* because triumphant armies marched through them, were composed of a simple barrel vault enclosed within a rectangle, and enlivened with sculpture and decorative engaged columns (Fig. 6.20). They would deeply influence later

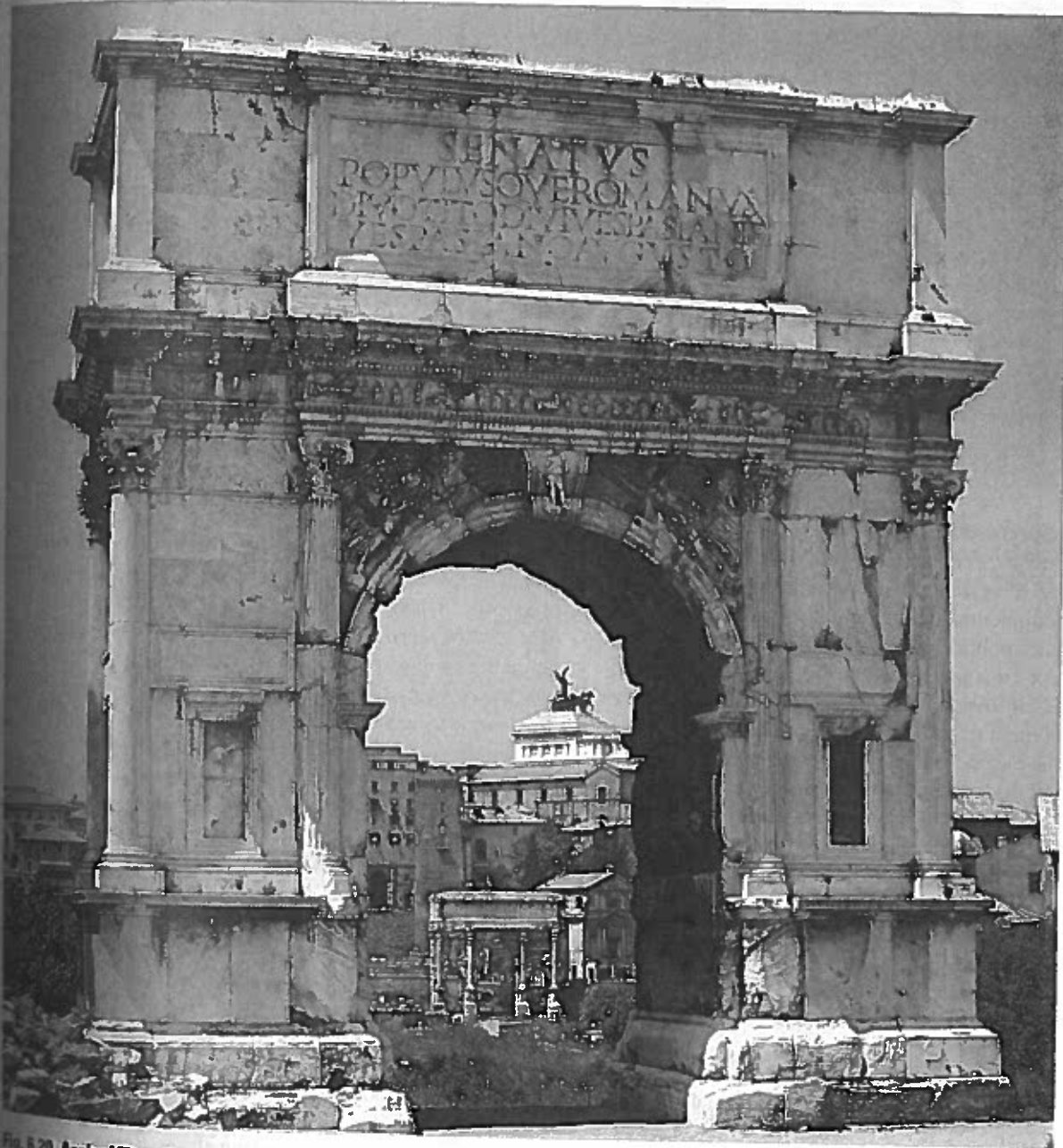


Fig. 6.20 **Arch of Titus, Rome, ca. 81 CE.** The inscription at the top of the arch, which reads "The Senate and Roman people to the Deified Titus Vespasian Augustus, son of the the Deified Vespasian," was chiseled deeply into the stone, so that it might catch the light, allowing it to be read from a great distance.



Fig 6.21 *Spoils from the Temple in Jerusalem, a detail of the interior relief of the Arch of Titus.* ca. 81 CE. Height of relief, approx. 7' 10". The figures in the relief are nearly life-size. The relief has been badly damaged, largely because in the Middle Ages, a Roman family used the arch as a fortress, constructing a second story in the vault. Holes for the floor beams appear at the top of the relief.

architecture, especially the facades of Renaissance cathedrals. Hundreds of arches of similar form were built throughout the Roman Empire. Most were not technically triumphal, but like all Roman monumental architecture, they were intended to symbolize Rome's political power and military might.

The Arch of Titus was constructed of concrete and faced with marble, its inside walls decorated with narrative reliefs. One of them shows Titus's soldiers marching with the treasures of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (Fig. 6.21). In the foreground, the soldiers carry what some speculate might be the golden Ark of the Covenant, and behind that a menorah, the sacred Jewish candelabrum, also made of gold. They bend under the weight of the gold and stride forward convincingly. The carving is extremely deep, with nearer figures and elements rendered with undercutting and in higher relief than more distant ones. This creates a sense of real space and, when light and shadow play over the sculptural relief, even a sense of real movement.

Another type of monument favored by the Romans and with similar symbolic meaning—suggestive not only of power but also of male virility—is the ceremonial column. Like the triumphal arch, it was a masonry and concrete platform for narrative reliefs. Two of the so-called Five Good Emperors who ruled Rome after the Flavian dynasty—Trajan and Marcus Aurelius—built columns to celebrate their military victories: Trajan's Column, perhaps the most complete

artistic statement of Rome's militaristic character, consists of a spiral of 150 separate scenes from his military campaign in Dacia, across the Danube River in what is now Hungary and Romania. If laid out end to end, the complete narrative would be 625 feet long (Fig. 6.22). At the bottom of the column, the band is 36 inches wide, at the top 50 inches, so that the higher elements might be more readily visible. In order to eliminate shadow and increase the legibility of the whole, the carving is very low relief. At the bottom of the column, the story begins with Roman troops crossing the Danube on a pontoon bridge (Fig. 6.23). A river god looks on with some interest. Battle scenes constitute less than a quarter of the entire narrative. Instead, we witness the Romans building fortifications, harvesting crops, participating in religious rituals. All in all, the column's 2,500 figures are carrying out what Romans believed to be their destiny—they are bringing the fruits of civilization to the world.

The Pantheon Hadrian's Pantheon ranks with the Forum of Trajan as one of the most ambitious building projects undertaken by the Good Emperors. The Pantheon (from the Greek *pan*, "all," and *theoi*, "gods") is a temple to "all the gods," and sculptures representing all the Roman gods were set in recesses around its interior. The facade is a Roman temple, originally set on a high podium, with its eight massive Corinthian columns and deep portico, behind which

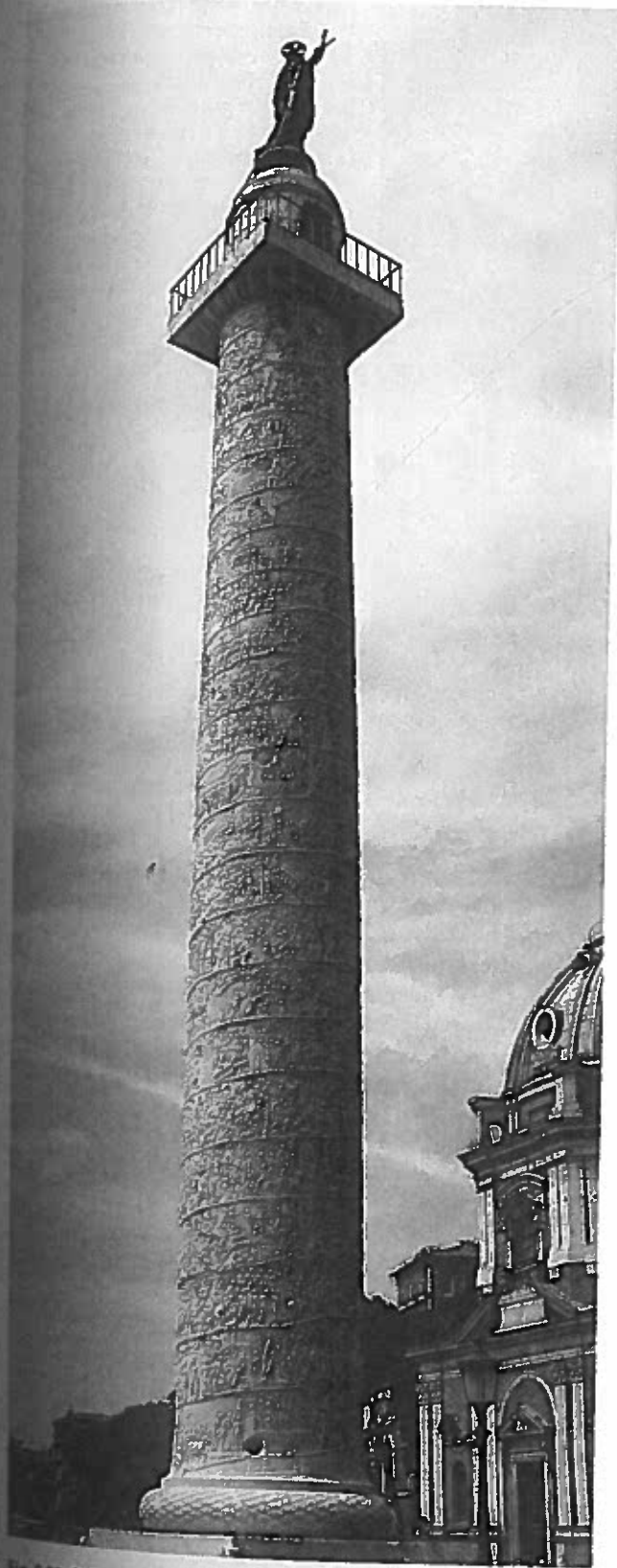


Fig. 6.22 Column of Trajan, Rome. 106–113 CE. Marble, overall height with base, 125'. Winding through the interior of the shaft is a staircase leading to a viewing platform on the top.

SEE MORE For a Closer Look at the Column of Trajan, go to www.myedsfab.com

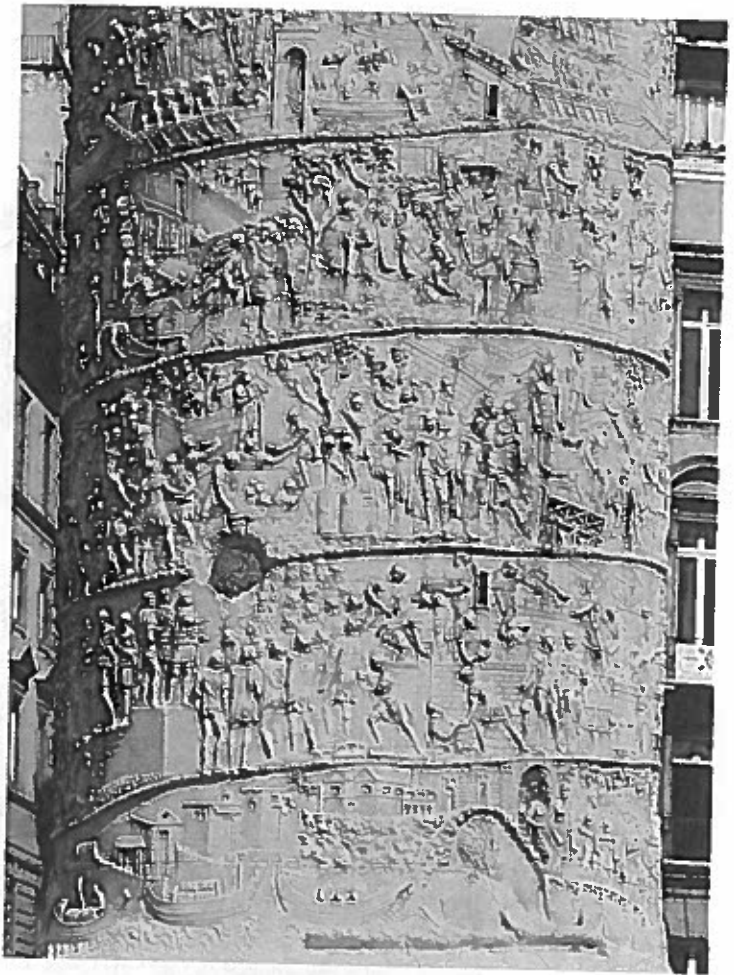


Fig. 6.23 Lower portion of the column of Trajan, Forum of Trajan, Rome. 106–113 CE. To the left of the second band, Trajan addresses his troops. To the right of that scene, his troops build a fortification.



Fig. 6.24 The Pantheon, Rome. 118–125 ce. The Pantheon is an impressive feat of architectural engineering, and it would inspire architects for centuries to come. However, Hadrian humbly (and politically) refused to accept credit for it. He passed off the building as a “restoration” of a temple constructed on the same site by Augustus’s closest friend, colleague, and son-in-law, Marcus Agrippa, in 27 to 25 bce. Across the architrave (the bottom element in an entablature above the columns) of the facade is an inscription that serves both propagandistic and decorative purposes: “Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, three times consul, made this.”

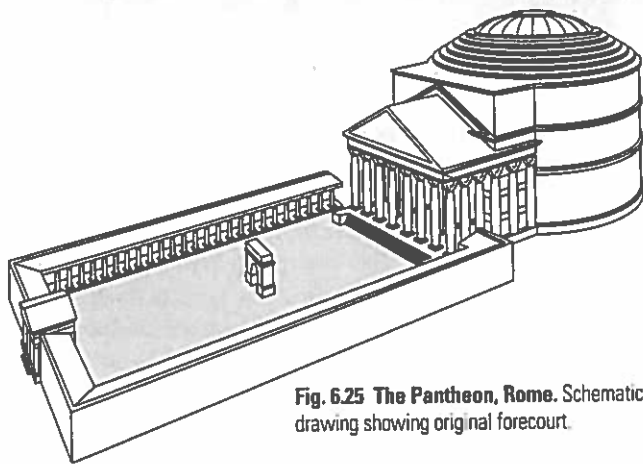


Fig. 6.25 The Pantheon, Rome. Schematic drawing showing original forecourt.

are massive bronze doors (Fig. 6.24). Photography presents little evidence of its monumental presence, elevated above its long forecourt (Fig. 6.25). Today, both the forecourt and the elevation have disappeared beneath the streets of modern Rome. Figure 6.24 shows the Pantheon as it looks today.

The facade gives no hint of what lies beyond the doors. The interior of the Pantheon consists of a cylindrical space topped by a dome, the largest built in Europe before the twentieth century (Fig. 6.26). The whole is a perfect hemisphere—the diameter of the rotunda is 144 feet, as is the height from floor to ceiling. The weight of the dome rests on eight massive supports, each more than 20 feet thick. The dome itself is 20 feet thick at the bottom but narrows to only 6 feet thick at the *oculus*, the circular opening at

the top. The *oculus* is 30 feet in diameter. Recessed panels, called *coffers*, further lighten the weight of the roof. The *oculus*, or “eye,” admits light, which forms a round spotlight that moves around the building during the course of a day (it admits rain as well, which is drained out by small openings in the floor). For the Romans, this light may well have symbolized Jupiter’s ever-watchful eye cast over the affairs of state, illuminating the way.

In the vast openness of its interior, the Pantheon mirrors the cosmos, the vault of the heavens. Mesopotamian and Egyptian architecture had created monuments with exterior mass. Greek architecture was a kind of sculptural event, built up of parts that harmonized. But the Romans concentrated on sheer size, including the vastness of interior space. Like the Basilica Ulpia (see *Closer Look*, pages 194–195) in the Forum of Trajan, the Pantheon is concerned primarily with realizing a single, whole, uninterrupted interior space.

In this sense, the Pantheon mirrors the empire. It, too, was a single, uninterrupted space, stretching from Hadrian’s Wall in the north of England to the Rocks of Gibraltar in the south, across north Africa and Asia Minor, and encompassing all of Europe except what is now northern Germany and Scandinavia (see Map 6.1). Like Roman architecture, the empire was built up of parts that were meant to harmonize in a unified whole, governed by rules of proportion and order. And if the monuments the empire built to celebrate itself were grand, the empire was grander still.

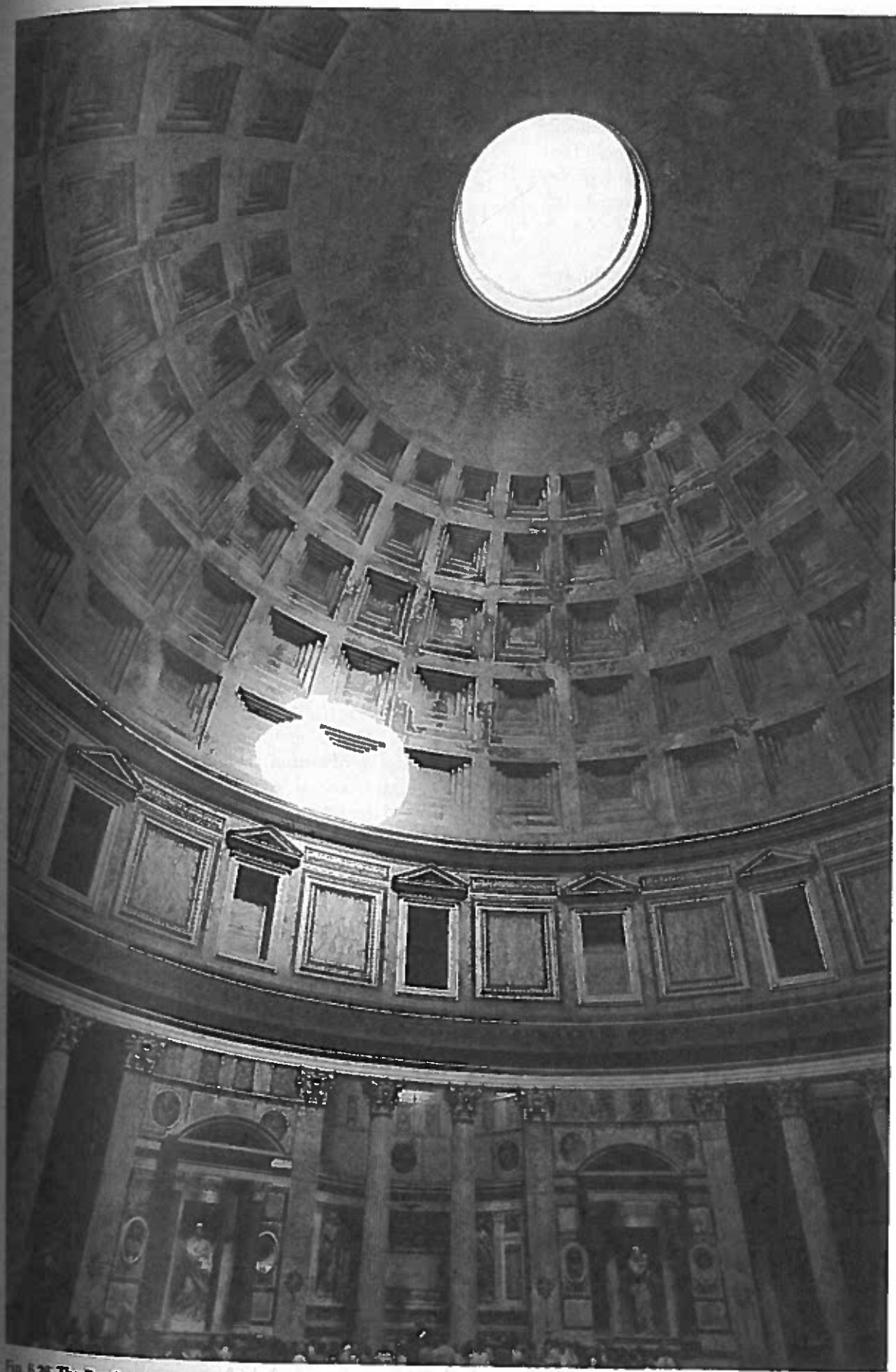


Fig. 6.26 **The Pantheon, Rome.** Interior. The sun's rays entering through the *oculus* form a spotlight on the Pantheon's interior, moving and changing intensity with the time of day.

Pompeii

In 79 CE, during the rule of the Emperor Titus, the volcano Vesuvius erupted southeast of Naples, burying the seaside town of Pompeii in 13 feet of volcanic ash and rock. Its neighbor city Herculaneum was covered in 75 feet of a ground-hugging avalanche of hot ash that later solidified. Living in retirement nearby was Pliny the Elder, a commander in the Roman navy and the author of *The Natural History*, an encyclopedia of all contemporary knowledge. At the time of the eruption, his nephew, Pliny the Younger (ca. 61–ca. 113 CE), was staying with him. This is his eyewitness account (Reading 6.10):

READING 6.10

from *Letters of Pliny the Younger*

On 24 August, in the early afternoon, my mother drew his attention to a cloud of unusual size and appearance. He had been out in the sun, had taken a cold bath, and lunched while lying down, and was then working at his books. He called for his shoes and climbed up to a place which would give him the best view of the phenomenon. It was not clear at that distance from which mountain the cloud was rising (it was afterwards known to be Vesuvius); its general appearance can best be expressed as being like an umbrella pine, for it rose to a great height on a sort of trunk and then split off into branches, I imagine because it was thrust upwards by the first blast and then left unsupported as the pressure subsided, or else it was borne down by its own weight so that it spread out and gradually dispersed. . . .

They debated whether to stay indoors or take their chance in the open, for the buildings were now shaking with violent shocks, and seemed to be swaying to and fro as if they were torn from their foundations. Outside on the other hand, there was the danger of falling pumice-stones, even though these were light and porous; however, after comparing the risks they chose the latter. In my uncle's case one reason outweighed the other, but for the others it was a choice of fears. As a protection against falling objects they put pillows on their heads tied down with cloths. . . .

We also saw the sea sucked away and apparently forced back by the earthquake: at any rate it receded from the shore so that quantities of sea creatures were left stranded on dry sand. On the landward side a fearful black cloud was rent by forked and quivering bursts of flame, and parted to reveal great tongues of fire, like flashes of lightning magnified in size. . . .

You could hear the shrieks of women, the wailing of infants, and the shouting of men; some were calling their parents, others their children or their wives, trying to recognize them by their voices. People bewailed their own fate or that of their relatives, and there were some who prayed for death in their terror of dying. Many besought the aid of the gods, but still more imagined there were no gods left, and that the universe was plunged into eternal darkness for evermore. . . .

Pliny's uncle, Pliny the Elder, interested in what was happening, made his way toward Vesuvius, where he died, suffocated by the poisonous fumes. Pliny the Younger, together with his mother, survived. Of the 20,000 inhabitants of Pompeii, 2,000 died, mostly slaves and the poor left behind by the rich who escaped the city after early warning shocks.

Much of what we know today about everyday Roman life is the direct result of the Vesuvius eruption. Those who survived left their homes in a hurry, and were unable to recover anything they left behind. Buried under the ashes were not only homes and buildings but also food and paintings, furniture and garden statuary, even pornography and graffiti. The latter include the expected—"Successus was here," "Marcus loves Spendusa"—but also the unexpected and perceptive—"I am amazed, O wall, that you have not collapsed and fallen, since you must bear the tedious stupidities of so many scrawlers." When Pompeii was excavated, beginning in the eighteenth century, many of the homes and artifacts were found to be relatively well preserved. The hardened lava and ash had protected them from the ravages of time. But eighteenth-century excavators also discovered something unexpected. By filling the hollows where the bodies of those caught in the eruption had decomposed, they captured images of horrific death.

Domestic Architecture: The *Domus* Although by no means the most prosperous town in Roman Italy, Pompeii was something of a resort, and, together with villas from other nearby towns, the surviving architecture gives us a good sense of the Roman *domus*—the townhouse of the wealthier class of citizen. The *domus* was oriented to the street along a central axis that extended from the front entrance to the rear of the house. The House of the Silver Wedding at Pompeii is typical in its design (Figs. 6.27 and 6.28). An atrium, a large space with a shallow pool for catching rainwater below its open roof, extends directly behind the vestibule. The atrium was the symbolic heart of the house: the location for the *imagines* (see Fig. 6.12) and the main reception area. *Imagines* were also housed in the reception rooms just off the main one, which in turn opens onto a central peristyle courtyard, surrounded by a colonnaded walkway. The dining room faces into the courtyard, as do a number of *cubicula*, small general-purpose rooms often used for sleeping quarters. At the back of the house, facing into the courtyard, is a hall furnished with seats for discussion. Servants probably lived upstairs at the rear of the house.

The *domus* was a measure of a Roman's social standing, as the vast majority lived in an apartment block or *insula*. The house itself was designed to underscore the owner's reputation. Each morning, the front door was opened and left open. Gradually, the atrium would fill with clients—remember, the head of a Roman household was patron to many—who came to show their respect in a ritual known as the *salutatio* [sah-loo-TAH-tee-oh]. Passersby could look in to see the crowded atrium, and the patron himself was generally seated in the in the open area between the



Fig. 6.27 Atrium, House of the Silver Wedding, Pompeii. First century BCE. This view looks through the atrium to the main reception area and the peristyle court. The house gets its name from the silver wedding anniversary of Italy's King Humbert and his queen, Margaret of Savoy, in 1893, the year it was excavated. They actively supported archeological fieldwork at Pompeii, which began in the mid-eighteenth century.

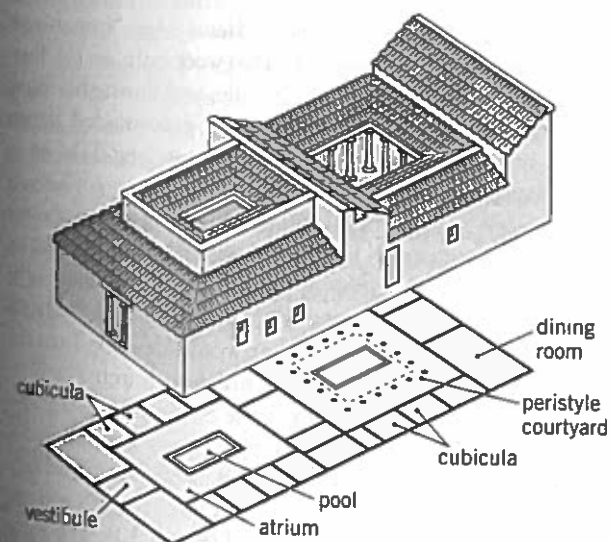


Fig. 6.28 Plan of the House of the Silver Wedding, Pompeii. First century BCE.

atrium and the peristyle courtyard, silhouetted by the light from the peristyle court behind. Surrounded by the busts of his ancestors, the symbol of his social position and prestige, he watched over all who entrusted themselves to his patronage.

At the center of the Roman *domus* was the garden of the peristyle courtyard, with a fountain or pond in the middle. Thanks to the long-term research of the archeologist Wilhelmina Jashemski, we know a great deal about these courtyard gardens. At the House of G. Polybius [poe-LEE-bee-us] in Pompeii, excavators carefully removed ash down to the level of the soil on the summer day of the eruption in 79 CE, when the garden would have been in full bloom. They were able to collect pollen, seeds, and other evidence, including root systems (obtained by pouring plaster into the surviving cavities) and thus determine what plants and trees were cultivated in it. Polybius's garden was lined, at one end, with lemon trees in pots, which were apparently trained and pruned to cover the wall in an *espalier*—a geometric trellis. Cherry, pear, and fig trees filled the rest of the space. Gardens at other homes suggest that most were planted with nut- and fruit-bearing trees, including olive, which would provide the family with a summer harvest. Vegetable

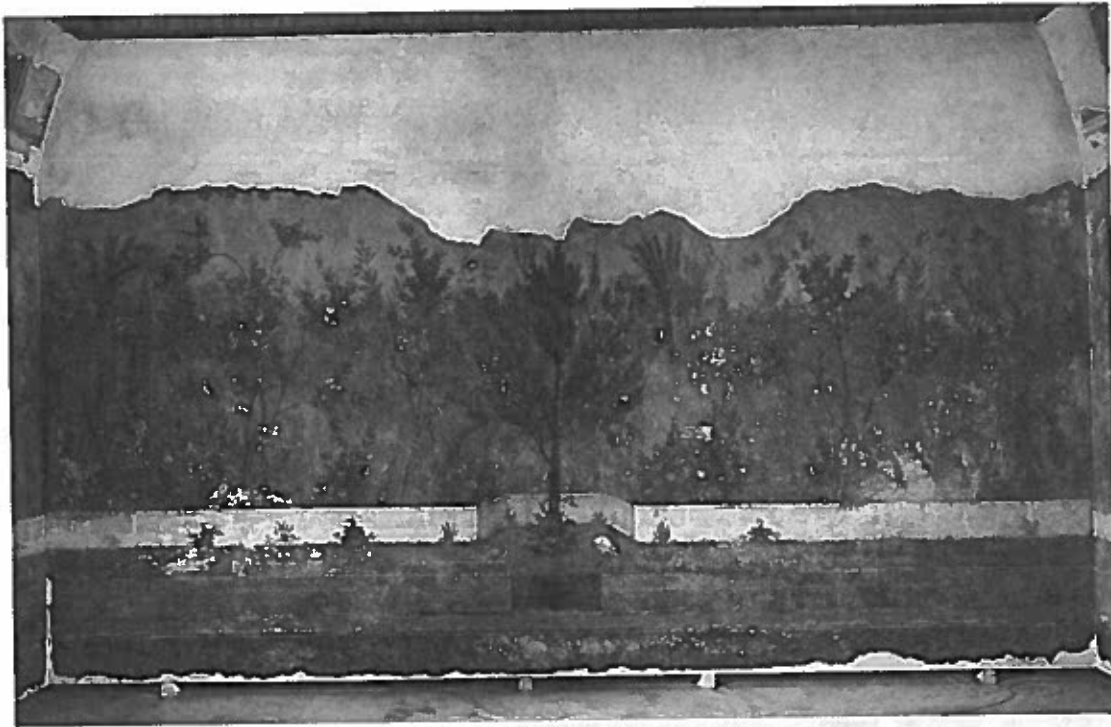


Fig. 6.29 *Garden Scene*, detail of a wall painting from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta, near Rome. Late first century BCE. Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome. The artist created a sense of depth by setting a wall behind a fence with its open gate.

gardens are sometimes found at the rear of the *domus*, a source of more fresh produce.

The garden also provided visual pleasure for the family. In the relatively temperate South Italian seaside climate, the garden was in bloom for almost three-quarters of the year. It was the focus of many rooms in the *domus*, which opened onto the garden. And it was evidently a symbol for the fertility, fecundity, and plenty of the household itself, for many a Roman garden was decorated with statuary referencing the cult of Dionysus.

Wall Painting Mosaics decorated many floors of the *domus*, and paintings adorned the walls of the atrium, the hall, the dining room, and other reception rooms throughout the villa. Artists worked with pigments in a solution of lime and soap, sometimes mixed with a little wax, polished with a special metal or glass, and then buffed with a cloth. Even the *cubicula* bedrooms were richly painted.

Writing in the second century CE, the satirist and rhetorician Lucian (ca. 120–after 180 CE) describes what he takes to be the perfect house—“lavish, but only in such degree as would suffice a modest and beautiful woman to set off her beauty.” He continues, describing the wall paintings:

The . . . decoration—the frescoes on the walls, the beauty of their colors, and the beauty, exactitude and truth of each detail—might well be compared with the face of spring and with a flowery field, except that those things fade and wither and change and cast their beauty, while this is spring eternal, field unfading, bloom undying.

Just outside Rome, at the villa of Livia at Prima Porta, a wall painting depicting a garden full of fresh fruit, songbirds, and flowers reflects this sensibility (Fig. 6.29). It is rendered as if it were an extension of the room itself, as if Livia and Augustus and their visitors could, at any time, step through the wall into their “undying” garden. Thus, although naturalistically rendered, it is an idealistic representation.

THE LATE ROMAN EMPIRE: MORAL DECLINE

Most of the late emperors were themselves “romanized” provincials. Both Trajan and Hadrian were born on the Iberian peninsula, near present-day Seville, and during his reign, Hadrian had the city redesigned with colonnaded streets and an amphitheater. Septimius Severus [sep-TIM-ee-us suh-VIR-us] (r. 193–211 CE) was African, and two of his successors were Syrian. Septimius Severus lavished an elaborate public works project on his hometown of Leptis Magna, on the coast just east of Tripoli in present-day Libya, giving the city a new harbor, a colonnaded forum, and an aisled basilica, the Roman meeting hall that would develop into the earliest architectural form of the Christian church.

In the third century CE, during the Severan [suh-VIR-uh] Dynasty (193–235 CE), Rome’s every amenity was imitated at its outposts, especially its baths. Septimius Severus began construction of enormous baths, dedicated in 217 by his son and successor, Caracalla [kar-uh-KAL-uh] (Fig. 6.30). The baths were set within a 50-acre walled park on the south side of the



Fig. 6.30 Baths of Caracalla, Rome. 211–217 CE. Rome's baths and public waterworks required enormous amounts of water. The city's 14 aqueducts brought 220 million gallons of pure spring water per day from the Apennines, the mountain chain that extends the length of the Italian peninsula. This water supplied 11 public baths, 856 private smaller baths, and 1,352 fountains and cisterns.

city and were fed by an aqueduct dedicated exclusively to this purpose. Although no ceilings survive, the vaulted central hall appears to have been 140 feet high. There were three bathing-halls with a combined capacity of 1,600 bathers: the *frigidarium* [free-gee-DAR-ee-um] (cold bath), the *tepidarium* [te-pee-DAR-ee-um] (lukewarm bath), and the *caldarium* [cal-DAR-ee-um] (hot bath). There were two *gymnasia* (exercise rooms) on either side of the pools, as well a barbershop and a hair salon, sauna-like moist- and dry-heat chambers, and outdoor areas for sunbathing or exercising in the nude. Other amenities of the baths included libraries, a painting gallery, auditoriums, and, possibly, a stadium. Early in the fourth century, the emperor Diocletian [dy-uh-KLEE-shun] would build even more enormous and sumptuous baths at the northern end of the city. Although dedicated to public health and hygiene, the baths came to signal a general decline in the values that had defined Rome. Writing as early as the mid-first century CE, in his *Moral Letters*, Seneca complained that no one in his day could bathe in the simple ways of the great Republican general Scipio Africanus [SIP-ee-oh af-ruh-CAN-us], who had defeated Hannibal in 202 BCE (Reading 6.11):

READING 6.11

Seneca, *Moral Epistles*, Epistle 86

Who today could bear to bathe in such a fashion? We think ourselves poor and mean if our walls are not

resplendent with large and costly mirrors; if our marbles from Alexandria are not set off by mosaics of Numidian [noo-MID-ee-un] stone, if their borders are not faced over on all sides with difficult patterns, arranged in many colors like paintings; if our vaulted ceilings are not buried in glass; if our swimming pools are not lined with Thasian [THAY-zhun] marble, once a rare and wonderful sight in any temple. . . . What a vast number of statues, of columns that support nothing, but are built for decoration, merely in order to spend money! And what masses of water that fall crashing from level to level! We have become so luxurious that we will have nothing but precious stones to walk upon.

To many citizens at the time, such material excess signaled an atmosphere of moral depravity, inevitably associated with the public nudity practiced at the baths. In Carthage, the Christian writer Tertullian [tur-TUL-yun] (ca. 160–ca. 240 CE) had argued against the worldly pleasures of secular culture, as early as 197 CE, going so far as to propose the “rule of faith” over the rule of Roman law. By the early fourth century CE, Christians across the Empire forbade visitation to the baths, arguing that bathing might be practiced for cleanliness but not for pleasure. Thus would the Empire find itself defined in moral opposition to a growing religious community throughout its territories. With its moral authority challenged, its political power would inevitably be threatened as well.

Christian Rome

Throughout its history, the Roman Empire had been a polytheistic state in which literally dozens of religions were tolerated. But as Christianity became a more and more dominant force in the Empire, it threatened the political and cultural identity of the Roman citizen. No longer was a Roman Christian first and foremost Roman. Increasingly, that citizen was first and foremost Christian.

In reaction to this threat to imperial authority, during the chaotic years after the fall of the Severan emperors in 235 CE, Christians were blamed, as their religion spread across the Empire (see Map 8.1), for most of Rome's troubles. By the end of the third century, there were about 5 million Christians in the Roman Empire, nearly a tenth of the population. Rome had a particularly large Christian congregation with considerable influence, since its leadership was believed to have descended from Jesus' original disciples, Peter and Paul. In 303, the emperor Diocletian [di-o-CLEE-shun] (r. 284–305 CE) unleashed a furious persecution of Christians that lasted for eight years.

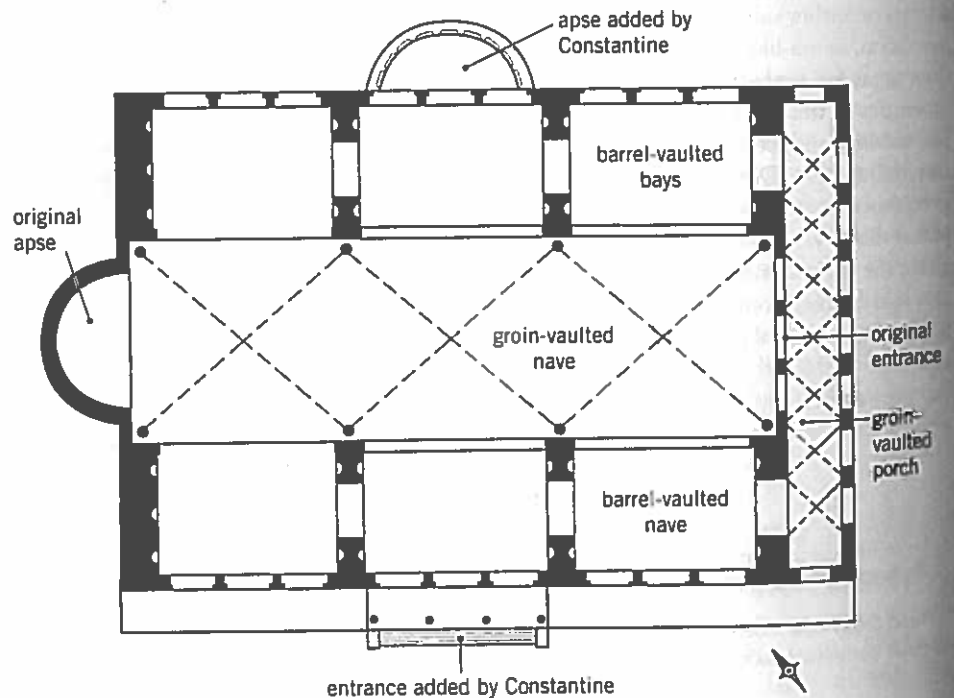
Diocletian saw the Roman Church as a direct threat to his own authority, recognizing that it had achieved an almost monarchical control over the other dioceses, or Church territories, in the Empire. He forbade Christian worship, ordered churches destroyed, burned books, and had all bishops arrested. Under penalty of death, Christians were compelled to make sacrifices to the emperor, whom non-Christian Romans considered divine. Thousands refused, and the martyrdom they thus achieved fueled rather than diminished the Church's strength.

In 305, Diocletian retired due to bad health, ushering in a period of instability. Finally, Constantine I, known as "Constantine the Great" (r. 306–337), won a decisive battle at the Milvian [MIL-vee-un] Bridge, at the entrance to Rome, on October 28, 312, establishing himself as emperor. Two years earlier, as Constantine was advancing on Rome from Gaul, the story had circulated that he had seen a vision of the sun god Apollo accompanied by Victory (Nike) and the Roman numeral XXX

symbolizing the 30 years he would reign. By the end of his life, he claimed to have seen, instead, above the sun, a single cross, by then an increasingly common symbol of Christ, together with the legend, "In this sign you shall conquer." At any rate, it seems certain that at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Constantine ordered that his troops decorate their shield with crosses, and perhaps the Greek letters *chi* [ky] and *rho* [roh] as well. These letters stood for *Christos*, although *chi* and *rho* had long meant *chrestos* [KREH-stohs], "auspicious," and Constantine probably meant only this and not Jesus Christ. While Constantine himself reasserted his devotion to the Roman state religion, within a year, in 313, he issued the Edict of Milan, which granted religious freedom to all, ending religious persecution in the Empire.

Constantine's architectural program in Rome would leave a lasting mark on subsequent Christian architecture, particularly his work on a basilica at the southern end of the line of Imperial Forums (see *Closer Look*, pages 194–195). Originally built by Maxentius, it was the last of the great

Figs. 6.31 and 6.32 The Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine, also known as the Basilica Nova (right), and plan (below), Rome, 306–313 CE. Constantine added an imposing entrance on the southwest side of Maxentius's basilica and another apse across from it, perhaps to accommodate crowds.





imperial buildings erected in Rome (Figs. 6.31 and 6.32). Like all Roman basilicas, the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine (also known as the Basilica Nova [NOH-vuh]) was a large rectangular building with a rounded extension, called an *apse*, at one or both ends and easy access in and out. It was, similarly, an administrative center—courthouse, council chamber, and meeting hall—and its high vaulted ceilings were purposefully constructed on the model of the Baths of Caracalla (see Fig. 6.30). Its nave, the large central

area, rose to an elevation of 114 feet. One entered through a triple portico at the southeast end and looked down the nave some 300 feet to the original semicircular apse at the other end of the building, which acted as a focal point. The basilica plan, with the apse as its focal point, would exert considerable influence on later Christian churches. These later churches would transform the massive interiors from administrative purposes to religious sanctuaries, whose vast interior spaces elicited religious awe. ■

THINKING BACK

Who were the Etruscans?

Roman culture developed out of both Greek and indigenous Etruscan roots. Most of what we know of the Etruscans comes from sculptures and paintings that survive in tombs. How does a Roman temple, such as the Temple of Fortuna Virilis, differ from a Greek temple, such as the Parthenon?

The Etruscans also provided the Romans with one of their founding myths, the legend of Romulus and Remus.

According to legend, it was Romulus who inaugurated the traditional Roman distinction between patricians and plebians with its system of patronage and *pietas*. Describe this system.

How did Rome conduct itself as a republic?

During the Republic, Rome embarked on a series of military exploits culminating in the Punic Wars, which began in