Speaking of the Walls: Militarism, Education, and Romanità in Rome’s Città Universitaria (1932–35)

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All the world concerns itself with Rome. How ridiculous are those who want to separate human civilization from the history of Rome, as if it were possible to wipe out thirty centuries of history, and what a history!

—Benito Mussolini, “Roma e il mondo”

During the Italian Fascist period, classical culture was co-opted by the Fascist Party’s propaganda system as one of the tools of fabricating consent. This co-optation was expressed through the overarching theme of Romanità that lay at the heart of Italian Fascism’s sense of its own purpose. The Città Universitaria (or University City), built in Rome in the mid-1930s, illustrates this system through its architecture, planning, and use of Latin epigraphy (Figure 1). The Città acts as an overall reflection of the broader sociopolitical construct of militarism and education that characterized the Italian Fascist period.

Romanità acted in varying degrees throughout the regime’s temporal arc as a powerful force behind Fascist doctrine and its will to power and empire. From the sociopolitical and cultural perspective this phenomenon is well known; from the architectural and artistic viewpoint, Romanità as a style or how it was expressed in the work of individual architects and artists has also been amply addressed.1 However, there have been few case studies exploring actual manifestations of Romanità at the level of interior, architectural, and urban space, their relationship with in situ art, and how these were inextricably tied with issues of identity, ritual, and tradition. This article weaves the sociopolitical, cultural, and architectural frameworks together through the study of epigraphy as a form of architecture par excellence and as a carefully constructed presence within orchestrated urban and interior space.2 Coining the description of the Fascist idealist architects of the Enlightenment period, the term architecture par excellence refers to the practice of expressing or signifying architectural form through function and use of epigraphy. This practice was particularly favored under Fascism, which established a framework for buildings and their incorporated artworks to speak to the public with a very defined and peremptory voice, not unlike an omnipresent Mussolini, whose voice would otherwise reach the Italian people daily through public spectacles and rallies, radio broadcasts, and newspapers. Epigraphy completed the spatial experience of architecture in its urban context to help construct the collective memory of past, present, and future citizens. The epigraphy of Italian Fascism was carved in a stark and serris font through which buildings and letterforms became inextricably linked, stressing both aesthetic and iconological values. This font, known as bistone, was a modern form of lettering widely used in the areas of typography, graphic design, and journals in the modern and avant-garde circles of northern Europe. This type of lettering lent itself most appropriately to monumental inscription, as its simplicity and squareness allowed for maximum shadows that contrasted with the stark marble and travertine of the building facades and was easily read obliquely, especially from below.3

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As the paleographer Armando Petrucci has pointed out, the regime’s urban policy was dictated by ceremonial-monumental concerns that opened up new vistas and large architectural surfaces to the public gaze: “What could have been more natural than to fill these empty spaces with writing, with ceremonial and celebrative inscriptions visible at a great distance and durable in time thanks to the use of monumental writing?” Inscriptions on buildings, therefore, played a significant role in impressing the regime’s assumptions and aspirations indelibly on the public. The walls and façades of civic spaces boasted a variety of inscriptions in imitation of the plethora of public lettering adorning the walls of imperial Roman buildings. Epigraphy as an element of architecture parlante therefore constituted a significant channel of communication. While art played an important role in educating the masses in the myth and rhetoric of Fascism, inscriptions (whether in Italian or Latin) were tailored to expected audiences, with those at the Città Universitaria chosen to operate on an elite level to educate and mold Fascism’s new ruling class.

Established public institutions—most notably law courts, educational buildings, and war memorials—were the common (and logical) loci for this practice. Marcello Piacentini, Benito Mussolini’s preferred architect, was responsible for a large number of these. His earlier designs for Bergamo (1916) and Messina (1923) used epigraphy in this vein (Figure 2), as did his later design for the Milan law court (1931–41), which strongly recalls the central building of the Città Universitaria, the Rectory, in its use of striped classical elements and stern monumentality (Figure 3). In prominent positions on each of the façades, the classical words of Cicero and Horace appear alongside a classicizedmaxim proposed by Hegel, reiterating the role of law as a civilizing force for society. In the case of the war memorials, their function was also commemorative and celebratory. For example, the Victory Monument in Bolzano (1926–28) showcases an inscription that, like those of the Città Universitaria, conflates the military with the educational under the broad umbrella of a civilizing mission. Piacentini’s Casa Madre dei Mutati—headquarters of the National Association of War Wounded (ANMIG)—in Rome (1928–38) echoed the classical world in favor of short Latin mottos either derived from horsemanship or composed by the president of ANMIG, Carlo Deledda, to accentuate the concept of sacrifice and glory in war (Figure 4). The parapet of the Headquarters of the Military Police in Lecce edged the sky with the founding principle of the regime’s economic policy. Schools such as the Giulio Cesare and Virgilio Lyceums, both in Rome, included edifying phrases for the good of the children, with different quotes by Mussolini on separate, gender-specific entrances while Latin was reserved for the Aula Magna (Great Hall).

Epigraphy took on a more urgent role for new institutional types established to support and represent the new Fascist society. Inscriptions invoked the recitation of slogans, catechisms, and poetry as an integral feature of Italian (and Fascist) education. These new institutions included the Case del Fasci (local party headquarters) and the various social institutions, like the Case Balilla (Fascist youth organizations) and depales (after-work circles), that looked after the needs of (and constructed identities for) a range of different social groups (see Figure 5). Inscriptions on these buildings tended to be in Italian, as these were buildings for the less educated classes. For the most part, they featured well-known slogans and quotations from speeches by Mussolini that had been disseminated via radio broadcasts and newscasts. Even “run of the mill” apartment buildings (especially those funded by the state) were decorated with homely yet paternalistic verses from the works of contemporary poets.

Exhibitions also used epigraphy to convey Fascist political messages. The Mostra Augustea della Romenza of 1937–38 was replete with both contemporary and ancient epigraphy throughout the Palazzo delle Esposizioni’s many rooms and on its temporary façade designed by Alfredo ScalPELLI (Figure 5). The ill-fated Rome Expo of 1942, the so-called Olympics of Civilization, intended to bring this practice before an international audience. It was also evidenced on the exposition’s most iconic buildings, the Palazzo degli Uffici (1918) and the Palazzo della Civilta Italiana (1939), more commonly known as the Square Colosseum. Both featured inscriptions quoting well-known Mussolini speeches, referring to the glorified future of the Fascist empire and the unique qualities of the Italian race, respectively (Figure 6). The original plan was to have the Square Colosseum display extracts from Augustus’ Res gestae. Ampel space was instead found in the plinth of Vittorio Morpurgo’s recently completed pavilion designed to house the reconstructed Ara Pacis. The buildings that formed the northern border of the new piazza surrounding the monument were inscribed with Mussolini’s own words, which gained power through association with his forebear Augustus, while Levy’s words on the humble origins of Rome were paraphrased in the mosaic decoration above.

The epigraphy for Rome’s Città Universitaria emphasized two aspects of the regime’s consent-building process: militarism and education. Marcello Piacentini designed the Città’s overall plan with the aim of creating a city of classical Fascist culture within the external city of tradition. This occurred in parallel with the establishment of the Vatican State in 1929 and the creation of other “cities,” such as Cineteca (Gino Perosutti, 1937–43) and the City of Sport, or Foro Mussolini (Enrico Del Debbio, 1928–38) (see Figure 1). The Città’s artworks, architectural expression, and urban layout were tied together with a curated set of inscriptions that made the Città a powerful communicator of the classical tradition as well as a foundation for a militaristic drive, a unified education system, and a total Fascist culture.
The Città Universitaria, Rome, 1935

The Città Universitaria is a significant chapter both in Marcello Piacentini’s career and in the history of modern Italian architecture. Piacentini proudly proclaimed that Il Duce himself “assigned the limits and the characteristics of the overall theme to me: to erect the headquarters of the most important center of studies in the Mediterranean, and with it to express the highest and most modern possibilities of Italian building techniques.” Piacentini had a long and fruitful architectural career both before and after the Fascist period. Son of prominent nineteenth-century classicist Pio Piacentini, he began to gain influence in the mid-1920s when he presented an urban project to Mussolini titled La Grande Roma. Although that project was never executed, it prompted Il Duce to entrust Piacentini personally with the overall design for Rome’s new university and to call upon the best young architects from around the country (Gio Ponti, Giuseppe Pagano, and Giovanni Michelucci) to collaborate in the creation of the individual buildings.

The overt use of classical design principles in the master plan and main buildings of the Città Universitaria also needs to be placed within Piacentini’s own explorations of civic monumentality. Close ties to the classical spirit, which Piacentini defined as “universal, antipersoal, and of the state,” had always been fundamentally Italian. Piacentini was an active participant in debates about architecture’s role as “art of the state.” He advocated for the “arch and column” as the official language of Fascist architecture and championed the cultural validity of traditional classicism, its role in defining “Italian-ness” and “Roman-ness,” and how architecture could adequately express these notions. Because Piacentini principally designed institutional buildings, his approach has been equated with civic monumentality and the severe classicism that this typology necessarily required (see Figures 2, 3, and 4). This is why he is regularly categorized as a monumental classicist even though he had frequent contact with members of the younger generation of architects, as both students and collaborators, and placed a high value on modern systems and techniques of material and construction. While designing the Città Universitaria he sent his former student Gaetano Minnucci to northern Europe to research and document...
the latest in university design and construction and material techniques. The need for a new university campus had been expressed since the late 1880s. A site for the new Studium Urbis (University of Rome) was chosen just north of Termini station—close to the first-century Castra Praetoria, home of the ancient Praetorian Guard—both for its proximity to the existing teaching hospital and as part of a wider plan to transform this area into a cultural precinct and consolidate Rome’s position as “the center of the nation’s intellectual, civil, and political life.”

Built in the period 1912–13, it was hailed as the arrival of a new and great Mediterranean classicism that successfully incorporated the most innovative building techniques and materials with selected aspects of ancient culture. The master plan of the campus expressed, according to Piccinni, “the spirit of ancient civilization in modern forms” and brought together the Greek agora, the spaces of a Roman/Christian basilica, and Rome’s Renaissance piazzas (Figure 7). Each building was designed by a different architect and was placed hierarchically in deference to the Rektorium in a formal and stylistic unity that represented the unity of the Faculties (see Figure 1).

The creation of the Città Universitaria is a significant event in the history of modern Italian architecture and exemplifies the fraught and complex relationship between traditional classicism and modern aesthetics. How did Italian architects of the 1930s address this relationship, and how did the new university fit into this very active period in Rome’s urban transformation? At the time, new garden suburbs had just been completed at Garbatella and Monte Sacro, railway lines to Ostia were being built, and the new 1911 master plan for Rome had just been approved. The city center was being “modernized” in the Haussmann style on one hand, and the ancient past was being resurrected as a theatrical backdrop for the Fascist “culture of consent” with excavations and reconstructions on the other. As noted above, plans were also afoot for an international exposition to be held in 1932 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Fascist rise to power. All these initiatives tended toward the realization of a Third Rome of Fascism, after the First Rome of the Caesars and the Second Rome of the popes. Since Romantici risked becoming either debourgeoisized and abstract or the exclusive province of high culture, the city itself—and the buildings and urban spaces that composed it—was called to act as both a reification of Romantici and a uniting force.

The first half of the 1930s is also considered the halycon period of Italian rationalism, which had been “chosen” as the official aesthetic of the regime. Mussolini himself often defined the briefs, became involved with design processes, met with architects, made regular visits to construction sites, and was present at inaugurations for the major public works projects of this period. Examples of this period can be seen in exhibitions (such as the Mostra della rivoluzione fascista, 1932–34); influential journals (such as Casabella); the results of national architectural competitions (such as the Florence Railway Station); new post offices, party headquarters, and Fascist youth houses all over the country; and entirely new towns (such as Sabaudia, 1934). Even the younger generation of architects, such as Gruppo 7 and Giuseppe Pagano, expressed attitudes similar to those of their more traditionalist colleagues Gaio Ponti and Piccinni regarding a possible harmony between the classical tradition and modern aesthetics.

From the inception of the new university complex in 1912, the political symbolism of the project was uppermost in Mussolini’s mind. He wanted it to represent the harmonic collaboration of architects from different parts of the country, to express the unitary nature of the Fascist state. Although Piccinni acted as leader, the idea that the complex would be a group project was Mussolini’s. He intended to prove that Italy was not a country torn apart by disputes between modernists and traditionalists—as the second exhibition of the Movimento Italiano per l’Architettura Razionale in Rome seemed to indicate—but rather was a country capable of marching forth, united, on a path set by its leader. By the time of the university’s completion three years later, the Ethiopian campaign was in full flow and the building complex was co-opted to interweave militarism firmly with education. Studium Urbis was “a training ground, a lodestar, a fortress which—when joined—ensured Victory.” While inaugurating the university, Mussolini, wearing the uniform of the commander general of the army, reminded King Victor Emanuel, Rector Pietro de Francisci, and Minister of Education Cesare de Vecchi on the Tribuna degli Universitari against the backdrop of Mario Sironi’s Italy among the Arts and Sciences, fresco, 1935 (“Città Universitaria,” special issue, Architettura 14/1035, courtesy of American Academy Library, Rome).

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Figure 7: Manfredo Piccinni, master plan of Città Universitaria, Rome, map showing the locations of the new “cities” and the axis between the Rektorium and Palazzo Venezia, 1935. Image by Brandon Gardner.

Figure 8: Marcello Piacentini, Aula Magna, Città Universitaria, Rome, inauguration with Benito Mussolini, King Victor Emanuel, Rector Pietro de Francisci, and Minister of Education Cesare de Vecchi on the Tribuna degli Universitari against the backdrop of Mario Sironi’s Italy among the Arts and Sciences, fresco, 1935 (“Città Universitaria,” special issue, Architettura 14/1035, courtesy of American Academy Library, Rome).
Venezia (see Figure 7). This symbolic gesture by Fiacentin acknowledged the task bestowed upon him by Il Duce and at the same time pointed to the relationship between the ruler of the Italian state (Mussolini) and the ruler of the university (the rector).18 The Faculties of Arts and Law, by Fiacentin’s student Gaetano Rapisardi, were the other two buildings chosen for monumental lettering. They flanked the Rectory, thus metaphorically acting as buttresses, in the same way that lettering and the law upheld Augustus’s Pax Romana.

To convey the importance of education in forming the new generation of Fascists, Usani selected quotations principally from Cicero, with one each from his other two authors of choice, Horace and Lucan. Although Cicero had been critical of Julius Caesar, his reputation remained high during the Fascist period for his staunch defense of traditional Roman mores in the great speeches against Verres and Catiline, both of which are filled with eminently quotable maxims. Augustus’s poet laureate, Horace, was an obvious choice.19 Lucan, whose epic on the civil war was a searing critique of Caesar, was probably chosen because Usani had published a number of translations of his works as well as a monograph on the poet.20 Slight changes and adaptations were made to the Latin so that the phrasing would work as part of the façade composition and so that the inscriptions could be read clearly from the buildings themselves.21

**Entry Portico**

The main access to the Città Universitaria is along a wide avenue and into a vast piazza where students, professors, and visitors are presented with an immense trebled-portico of stripped-down rectangular columns (Figure 10). Faced in Rome’s most identifiable materials, travertine and brick, the portico conveys through its scale a sense of momentous entry and marks the organizing axis that leads down the main avenue toward the Rectory’s own entry portico, whose parapet proclaims, “Stadium Urbis” (University of Rome) (Figure 9). Fochini combined both city gate and triumphal arch to provide a monumental entrance into the new university as a city within a city. Before crossing the threshold, students would be greeted by the Entry Portico’s imposing Latin quotation composed by Usani and modeled on the inscriptions found on the triumphal arches of Constantine and Septimius Severus:

> **VICTORIO EMMANUELE III REGNANTE BENITO MUSSOLINI REM ITALICAM MODERANTE / VETUS VIRIS STVDIVM IN HANC SEDEM ROMANA MAGNIFICENTIA DIGNAM TRANSVLATVM EST**

> [During the reign of Victor Emmanuel III and when Benito Mussolini was governing the Italian state / the old university was moved into this site worthy of Roman magnificence.]

For those citizens continuing on their way across the piazza the inscription communicated the site’s importance and aligned it with the extant civic works of the ancient emperors. On the inside face, another inscription reminded those entering of the role of the Musei in nurturing youth and bringing culture to humankind. It is taken almost verbatim from Cicero’s speech in defense of the poet Archias:

> **HAEC SEDES MVIS SACRA MVSAE ADOLESCENTIAM ALVNT SENECVTVM OBLECTANT SECVNDAS RES ORNANT ADVERSIS PPRPVGVM / PRAEBENT VERTVTES OMNES UTILITATESQUE PROCREANT HOMINES INFIRMANT AD HVMANITATVM**

> [This site is sacred to the Muses. The Muses nourish youth, delight of old age, decorate prosperity, provide refuge in adversity, produce all the virtues and advantages and mold men to humanity.]

In one of Cicero’s most impassioned tributes to the benefits of literature, and poetry in particular, the focus is on the value of education with the use of invenio in the sense of “to instruct” or “to educate.” Its convenient alternative meaning, “to shape” or “to mold,” also references the instruction and education of youth through military-style discipline and education, to ensure the future of the Fascist regime.

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**Rectory**

The central administration building, or Rectory, marks a point of culmination on the university’s main organizing axis (see Figures 7 and 9). It makes a literal and architectural statement of the authoritative nature of the rector as the head of the university and in a wider sense of education itself. Amore Martinis’s large bronze statue of Minerva, purposely located at the crossing of the university’s main axes, expresses the duality of education (and the wisdom it necessarily imparts) and militarism through Minerva’s raised arms brandishing spear and shield (Figure 11). Unlike Mars, the Roman god of war, Minerva, the goddess of war, wisdom, and civic virtues, fought to maintain law and order. This interpretation was later applied to Italy’s “civilizing” mission in Ethiopia. One of Fiacentin’s early sketches shows how he considered the inscription, the base-relief, and the statue as integral to his unified conception of architecture within urban space (Figure 12).

The Rectory’s inscription was carefully composed of two quotations, also taken from Cicero, stretched across the building’s 120-meter parapet (Figure 13). It encapsulates the university’s overall aims and further emphasizes the militarism-education nexus:

> **IN PRIMIS HOMINIS EST PROPRIA VERINQVISITI ATOVE INVESTITO / STVDIVM VRBIS / DOCTORINAE EADEM VIDEVTVR ET RECIT FACIENDE ET BENE DECENDI MAGISTRA**

> [To search for the truth and seek it out is the first duty of mankind / The University of Rome / Education, by the same roots, is seen to be the instressor of both behaving correctly and speaking well]**
The plain rear façade in brick features a couplet from Horace’s Odes (4.4), perhaps one of the most politically charged of all his poems. Horace celebrates national pride, lauds youthful militaristic vigor in the service of the state, and refers directly to Augustus’s education program through a “right/correct” culture to strengthen the spirit:

**DOCTRINA VM PROMOVET INSTITAM / RECTIOVE CNVTVS PECTORA BOBRANT**

(*Education promotes an innate vigor / and morals give physical strength to the spirit*)

The context of the original verses would have been recognized by students, professors, and citizens alike, since Horace’s Odes were much in evidence during this period. His Carmen secundum were nominated as Italy’s first national anthem in 1926, and its visibility only increased in the lead-up to his anniversary celebrations in 1916 when the air force issued a special series of postage stamps with images of new jets, each accompanied by a Horatian tag. A shortened version of the same quotation was also used on Florence’s Libyan Arch (see Figure 6). The lines used at the Città Universitaria link education to Roman morality, which for Horace contrasts with barbarian (“or foreign”)—that is, Ethiopian—degeneracy. For Mussolini, to speak of an imperial Italy was not necessarily to allude to territorial conquest; rather, it was to promote an attitude or a norm of conduct that he described as virile, resolute, and combative. First, this norm aligns with the attitude and tone of the Horatian text; second, it highlights the connection between physical and spiritual strength that is at the heart of militarism and education. Strength of mind/ body and spirit thus became what Laura Malvano has defined as the “obliging vectors of national mythology.” These two types of strength were considered equally powerful because any youth who possessed them would guarantee the “vigor of the Race” and fulfill the “fateful” aspiration to greatness. Unami would have meant the Latin term *doctrina* as “education,” but to a less erudite audience there would have been a closer connection to the Italian word *dottorato* (doctorate). This allowed an association with the doctrine of Fascism, thus giving the inscription multiple levels of reading, where *dottorato* could be understood as referring to the act of teaching (as occurred within the university buildings themselves), the knowledge imparted by this act, and, most important, the habit incurred by all means of *dottorato* combined.

The inscriptions continue in the interior of the Aula Magna (Great Hall) above the Tribuna degli Oratori, or main stage, with an elegiac couplet composed by Unami based on the oratorical treatises of Cicero and Quintilian:

**DOCTRINAE STUDIUM VITAM PRODUCET ET AUGET / IMMORTALITIS ERIS III SAPRIS JUVENS**

(*Studies and instruction prolong and improve life / Through education, O youth, you will be immortal*)

This couplet also functions as the title for a large-scale fresco by future fascist and dedicated Fascist Mario Sironi, whose close relationship with Piccinini and high standing with Mussolini were deciding factors in hiring the commission. Artist and architect had worked together in the past on the stained glass decoration of the Palazzo delle Corporazioni and would continue with successful collaborations on the Casa Madre dei Mutilati in Rome, the Italian Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Expo, and the Palazzo Giustiziar in Milan. Sironi advocated the social role of art, promoting the education of the masses through a return to ancient practices, in particular mural painting. He believed that it is every artist’s duty to sublimate any individual stylistic or...
experimental tendency into a collective, unified expression. This was in line with Piacentini’s own convictions regarding architecture; when addressing his students just a few months after the university’s inauguration, Piacentini impressed upon them the subordinating relationship of individual expression to the spiritual interests of the Fascist state. The success of the university complex’s unitary style was also lauded by the critic Roberto Papini and by Giuseppe Pagano in Cavallino, who were always the first to speak out against the dangers of being too classical.31

Although patroned by the state, Simon’s mural dominates the space of the Aula Magna. Charged by Piacentini with the “arduous task of illustrating Fascism,” Simon chose as his subject “Italy among the arts and sciences” and presented a scene that, like other works of this period, was classical in spirit and formally rigorous in its expression of utopian social order.32 In the fresco, Italy (Italy) is portrayed as a young, robust female figure holding a sword, and Vittoria (Victory) flies overhead (Figure 14). Together they emphasize the youth of the Italian Fascist nation born of the “revolution” and allude to a great past where the myth of the Italian race was forged.33 Italy presides over a group of allegorical figures representing the arts and sciences, disciplines that were, of course, also being taught at the university. Education is thus expressed in the sense of doctrina, si arte et scientia, while militarism comes forth with the flight of Victory overhead and a stylized triumphal arch, “indestructible and eternal symbol of triumphant Nationalism,” looming in the background.34

Faculties of Law and Political Science and Arts and Philosophy

The Faculties of Law and Political Science and Arts and Philosophy appear to be, together with the Rectory, a single, dominating unit, although they are in fact three separate buildings. Their inscriptions act as “captions” for two bas-reliefs by Corrado Viglli depicting athletic youths leading horses (Figure 15). Bas-reliefs and mosaics enjoyed a revived, similar to mural painting in this period, as ancient art forms integrated with architecture to perform decorative, educational, and civic functions.35 The reliefs represent the twin demigods Castor and Pollux, known as the Dioscuri (sons of Jupiter). The Dioscuri were readily recognizable figures in Roman urban spaces, with their temple in the Forum and two sets of urban statues that stood at the entrance to the Capitol and on the Pincian Hill (Figure 16). They were also featured in frescos for the main hall of the university’s After-Work Circle and Liontio’s Club (Figure 17). Just as the twins achieved immortality in reward for their military exploits, here reference is made to the immortality to be achieved through knowledge, thus echoing the message of Usuani’s couplet in the Great Hall. The parallels being drawn between the young demigods going to war and the young scholar-soldiers presenting arms to Mussolini are evident in the voice-over in an Intestruere newsreel that reported on the university’s dedication ceremony: “Lines up on the grand stair of the Rectory a company of young volunteers to West Africa present arms to Il Duce, who proceeds to inaugurate the Great Hall.”36 The twins’ continuing significance as representations of Fascist culture was later demonstrated by Publio Morbiducci’s colossal statues of Castor and Pollux, standing as static and dynamic examples of manhood with their roaring steeds, representing Italian civilization as a whole at the proposed Rome World Expo of 1942 (see Figure 16).37

Viglli represented the demigods as lithe and athletic ephesoi, thus capitalizing on the purely symbolic dimension of youth that was integral both to Fascism and to fallen soldiers.
The naked youth communicated concepts of vital energies and eternal qualities. Statuary and bas-reliefs of this kind were used throughout Italy's urban spaces—as such as Piazza della Repubblica in front of the Palazzo degli Uffizi in EUR—as universally accessible symbolic images whose rhetoric merged with that of the architecture to ensure the communication of the Fascist message. Speed, efficiency, and physical heating were all qualities that could be understood to represent the young, modern, and dynamic Fascist state and the university students who embodied its future. Castor and Pollux could thus transcend their status as distant mythical figures and become part of living social reality. The young men stride forth toward a glorious future/harlequin, spurred on by the inscriptions below them, just as their "heirs"—the dynamic young Fascists who populated the campus and lined up on the stairs to watch their leader—stride past.30

The use of these two figures from the classical world essentially presents arms and philosophy as the twin of law and political science. To the left of the Rectory is Castor (see Figure 15) on the Faculty of Law and Political Science and below him, in large, easily read letters, the voice of Cicero proclaims:

**JUSTITIA OMNVM EST DOMINA / ET REGINA VIRTVM**

[Justice is the sovereign / mistress of all the virtues]31

Adapted from Cicero’s *De officiis* (3.28), this passage addresses the fundamental principles of human society and is concerned with the conflict between the right and the expediency, where justice, or acting justly or correctly, emerges victorious. Justice as an idea was not limited to the administration of law or to the idea of just behavior. Mariella Caggno argues that the *idea of justitia* runs like a red thread through both Roman and Fascist rhetoric on empire. Military forces were deployed in the service of justice, empire was never referred to as *dominius delle giustizia*, and the order of Rome’s civilizing imperialism centered on the rule of law.32

Youth and immortality were linked to the myth of Rome’s eternal empire and the continuity of the Latin/Roman race in perpetuity, ideas echoed in the quotation selected for Pollux on the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy (see Figure 15). Taken from Lucretius’s epic on the civil war, it is a reflection on the ability of poetry to bestow immortality:

**SACER ET MAGNVS VTVMTV / LABOR OMNIA FAYO ERFPT**

[The divine and great labor of poets / watches everything from death]33

The context of the original lines is again important as Lucretius concludes with "and gives life to mortals... future generations shall read me and about you... and no lapse of time shall concern us to animation."34 Lucretius’s exclamation comes immediately after Caesar’s visit to the ruined and desolate site of Troy, which has been saved from oblivion by Homer. Here, Lucretian contrasts the immortality of verse with the inevitable decay of architecture and the built environment, yet his words are displayed on a piece of Fascist architecture whose aim was to achieve eternity and permanence. In the original context, Lucretian’s sentiments, while lauding mental endeavor, provided a timely caveat against empire building. In the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy inscription, the lines have been truncated to mean exactly the opposite.

The Città Universitaria in Context: Militarism, Education, and Romanità

Militarism and education were at the foundation of Rome’s new university, imbuing its overall character and spirit. Militarism had been present as an element of Fascist culture since the days of its inception, together with the founding of the Fasci di combattimento in 1919. The roots of Fascism’s militaristic culture lay in the interventionist campaigns leading up to Italy’s involvement in World War I, and even earlier, in links to futurism and its credo of war as the only cure for the ills of the world. The war and the militarism that grew in the 1920s, reaching its peak during the military campaigns in Africa.35

The nationalistic/imperialist rhetoric promoting Italy’s "destiny" to reclaim its ancient empire was present from the time of the Risorgimento, with Crispi’s first attempt to conquer Ethiopia in 1896, to the annexation of Libya in 1911–12 and the East African campaigns of the mid-1930s.36 Empire was embedded within the first official definition of Fascism. It was not simply territorial, it was political, economic, and, above all, spiritual. Mussolini’s famous "Empire" speech, pronounced from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia on 9 May 1936, is replete with references that parallel the acts of the "young, robust Italian generations" who had created "an empire of civilization and humanity in the Roman tradition."37

Caggno explains that Fascist rhetoric around such expansionist tendencies was predicated on a totalitarian social construct that did not allow, as Rector Pietro de Francisci stated, dissociation between thought and action, between scientific and artistic creation, between individual and collective.38

![Figure 18 Gaetano Minucci, barracks for the university militia, Città Universitaria, Rome, plan and exterior, 1932–35 ("Città Universitaria," special issue, Architettura 14 [1935], courtesy of American Academy Library, Rome).](image-url)

Civilizing mission, a spiritual force, and the power of an idea. The Fascist concept of empire was built on the same foundations as that of the first emperor Augustus (27 B.C.E.–14 C.E.). Internal peace (*Pax Romana*), security, and rule of law (*ordo etiae giuridico*), together with ideals of discipline, duty, and sacrifice, were valued by both the ancient Roman and contemporary Fascist peoples, who were unified under a solid and singular national vision. In “conquering” Ethiopia, Italy was merely fulfilling the destiny of an *imperium sine fine* that echoed Jupiter’s prophecy from Virgil’s nationalistic epic the *Aeneid.*39 The inauguration of the Città Universitaria fortuitously coincided with the Ethiopian campaign (1935–36), allowing the new campus to be co-opted as a "fortress of arms and the spirit" to complete the glorification of Fascism’s future generations. This event added yet another symbolic layer to the Città’s collective epigraphy.

Militarism was expressed architecturally in two smaller buildings that we have not yet discussed: Eugenio Montorii’s commemorative quadrilaterals, which featured a monument dedicated to fallen students (see Figure 17), and the barracks for the university militia by Gaetano Minucci (Figure 18). The militia barracks (now demolished), not included in the original plan for the university complex, were situated just north of the Rectory on the other side of a large, open space intended to be used for rallies, military exercises, and other large-scale ceremonial activities (see Figure 7). The ground floor featured an *arvanogia* (speaker’s platform), and the long, low wings of the buildings were lightly curved and stuccoed in what would most likely have been a Pompeian red; they sat on a solid trestle base encased by wide colonnade elements that also acted as balconies for the upper level. The *quadrotropico* (now partly reused as a kindergarten) was situated next to the university’s dormitory
Millitary conditioning started very young, with boys between six and eight months old. These little Romani and Rom were called the Figi della Lupa (Sons of the She-Wolf) and were dressed impossibly in miniature soldiers' uniforms complete with baton wipers in the effort to prepare a "grand network of fighters." Universities adopted a highly authoritarian structure in order to continue the conformist mental- 
ity and exercise of ideological control that began in primary school.19 The university curriculum was supplemented by courses at the Scuola di Misericordia Fascista, and all students were required to join the Fascist University Group (Gruppo Universitari Fascisti, or GUF), an intellectual training ground for grooming potential party elites. Founded in 1920, along with the Fasci di combattimento, the GUF was the very embodiment of the meeting point between militiam and education. This principle was encapsulated in the organi- 
ation's motto, Libro e mazzocchi (Book and mace), in assign- ing this motto, Mussolini synthesized in just two words the "moral, civil, and warlike program for the youth of the univer- sities."20 The GUF organized political, cultural, and sporting activities; members wore black shirts and promoted the Fascist cause through extracurricular activities such as radio broadcasts, experimental films, and student newspapers. The communicative force of epigraphy as employed at the Città Universitaria is an excellent example of the regime's political strategy designed to impose, and even to replace, the notion of Fascist cultural policy with the adoption of the fashions of ancient Roman magisterial power as symbol of the party itself. Romanità manifested itself throughout Fascist society in myriad ways: "sword and sandals" movie epics filled the silver screens, the "ubiquitous and bourgeois" hosepipe was exchanged for the Roman salute, the Fascist calendar established 1922 as Year I, and Latin inscriptions and images of eagles and she-wolves became part of the urban landscape and were used as graphic devices on everything from postage stamps to schoolbooks. Mussolini even emulated the stance and mannerism of ancient statues when speaking to the public from his arretrari.21 The power of this typology of image lay in its potential to overlay the present regime with the heroic and monumental patria of a privileged past. The Fascist myth of Romanità could thus validate the present through a connection to a great moment in history projected onto the future by continuing the actions of the ancient Romans as heirs of the ancient race.22 This did not mean a return to the past, which was presented in a filtered and simplified form as an example for the future and had always been at the heart of Mussolini's concern.23 The purpose of remembering the past was to reproduce the practices in order to secure the future.24 This cross-temporal concept of Romanità undermined the regime's social and economic policies, and its codified forms found further expression in the declaration of 21 April (the birthday of Rome) as a national holiday and in the cycle of celebrations held to mark the 2,000-year anniversaries of the births of Virgil (1918), Horace (1956), and Augustus (1957). These sparked widespread national fervor, and Italian citizens were bombarded with academic conferences and publications, radio transmissions, newspaper articles, and even editions of stamps acting as constant reminders of their imperial heritage.

As Usuini's choice of authors shows, the Fascist govern- ment seized on Horace in particular. The author of the "so- called Roman Odes" (1.1-6) and the Carmen Sacerdotes was hailed as the poet of Romanità triumphante (triumphant Romanes- ses), while the golden age of Augustus's Pax Romana provided the foundation for the future glory of the Fascist empire.25 Horace's themes were found to be consistent with the regime's policies: family as institution and mar- riage blessed with children; the fertility of the earth, country life, agriculture; equal distribution of goods; and education and training of youth, especially military training to defend both peace and the state. Horatian motifs were also taken to the African colonies, as in the prominent inscriptions on the monumental travertine arch designed by Florestano di Fausto and located on the Via Litoranea in Libya (the new Fascist colony of Tripolitania) (see Figure 4). As we have seen with the inscriptions for the Città Universi- 
taria, Horace's decorous phrasing, when divorced from its original context, takes on an entirely new meaning.

Conclusion

The artworks, architectural expression, and urban layout of Rome's Città Universitaria were tied together with a curated set of inscriptions that made the university compose a power- ful communicator of the classical tradition as a foundation for a militaristic campus, a unified education system, and a total Fascist culture. This culture stood at the nexus of mili- 
tarism and education under the overarching themes of Romanità and the eternal spirit of youth. The Città Universi- 
taria stands as testimony to the link between a historical past and a lived present that aimed to transform students and prepare them for a glorious future.

The somber, processional organization of the university's individual buildings strongly evoked the spatial formalism and ceremonial nature of ancient Roman civic space, while the university's spatial system was of its own city type and was laid out as a City of Learning, "sacred to the Muse" within the eternal city of Rome. The buildings' comonality of relative heights and harmonic use of both traditional and new mater- 
ials within varying degrees of classicism put forth an image of unified purpose and aesthetic. The university's varied and ordered urban spaces, defined by the formal language of the architecture, were destined for both formal rallies and day- to-day movement, uses that could transform them into an arena or a stage from which didactic inscriptions were broadcast.

In addition, the choices of statues, frescoes, and bas-reliefs reflected the militarism-education relationship. Catulli's 
Gloria, Martin's Mitreo, and Sironi's Italy all share atra- 
butes and make cross-references to Vittoria. Catulli's resilient youth and Vittoria's Dacri are dynamic and virile men, well formed in both mind and spirit. Furthermore, each of the purpose-made works is closely linked with an inscrip- 
tion that serves both didactic and referential functions.

Finally, the conscious application of Latin inscription uni- 
fied the civic space, architecture, and art in reinforcing the notion that Roman history was both eternal and contempo- 
rary, as it is. Mussolini's words, "Caeasar was stabbed just yeaterday. Carefully selected, adapted, and placed in sig- 
ificant positions on the building facades, the inscriptions became an integral element of the university experience.

They promoted the formation of mind and body, the exercise of justice, and correct civic and moral behavior to ensure the immortality of the Fascist regime. Together the inscriptions synthesized the social and political climate of Italy in the 1930s, and today they serve as a reminder of a time when the classical spirit echoed throughout all levels of Italian society.

Notes

2. Tim Benton, "Roma Reclaimed In Empire: Architectures," in Art and Power: Europe under the Dividers, ed. Dewi Lewis et al. (London: Southbank Centre, 1995), 139-29. J. Wilkes, "Fascist Triumphs On the Architec- 
tural Transformation of Rome," in Domestika among the Black九十: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy, ed. Claudia Lazzari and Roger J. Crummey (Boca Raton, N.V.: Carroll University Press, 2000). For an over- 
7. On the importance of art in promoting Fascism, see Ermanno Gamlin, Il colto del Littorio: La narrazione della politica nell' Italia fascista (Rome, 1991), 189-91.
9. The quote reads, "ICHC POSTA FINE SOTTOSCrittura, HINC CETEROS E VOLUMEN LINQUAS ARBIRIUS," which can be transcribed as "Hic! This is the border of the fatherland. Beyond this point we have civilized all our neighbors with our language, our laws, and our state." Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Latin are by Paul Gigner and all translations from the Italian are by Flavia Marcello.
14. One such example of the work was known for its expression of social ideals. Quotations from Barchetti were chosen for working house built in the Roman suburbs of Stazione by the Downers.
di Care Popolani. L’inscription on one building via Gorgona roads.

"Dalle cause ben fatti e ben tese a Donne da giovane vergine / Un setto far mi si leva che brilla per l’alta fiamma / L’ve mura come una fonte di saper e ghiaccio / Il verme che ha la terra sana / La terra che fa il mondo e bene" (Lucio Vanchi, 1974).

From Jerash to New York: Columns, Archaeology, and Politics at the 1964–65 World’s Fair

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New York’s second-oldest monument is the Roman column in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens.1 The column hails from Jerash, one of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan’s preeminent Greco-Roman cities that flourished in the second century CE (Figure 1). King Hussein of Jordan gave the column to the city of New York during the 1964–65 World’s Fair, which was held in Flushing Meadows. This column, which is architecturally significant in its own right, is part of a larger, more complex, and controversial story about Robert Moses, the 1964–65 New York World’s Fair, and the political conflicts that have engulfed the Holy Land since 1948. King Hussein’s gift reflects Jordan’s strategy in the 1960s and 1970s of using its archaeological heritage to strengthen ties with the United States by bestowing columns and capitals on American cities and institutions. In this article, we consider how the column figured in the conflict surrounding the competing narratives of biblical and classical history and archaeology presented at the 1964–65 World’s Fair and in the controversy over the inclusion of a contentious mural about Palestinian refugees in the fair’s Jordan Pavilion. Finally, we consider how the Column of Jerash functioned within the narrative of nation building and the international presentation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The Column of Jerash in Queens, New York
The idea that Jordan should present a column to the New York World’s Fair originated with Hugh D. Auchincloss Jr., a well-connected American lawyer and stockbroker. In 1962, Auchincloss visited Jordan and other Arab countries to stimulate interest and encourage participation in the 1964–65 World’s Fair. While in Jordan, he met King Hussein and suggested to Jordan’s foreign minister that Jordan could give a column to the city of New York as part of the country’s participation in the fair.2 King Hussein assented and approved the exportation of a column as a gift from the government of Jordan to New York City.3

The column proposed as the gift was approximately 9.75 meters high, weighed 16,329.3 kilograms, and measured 0.91 meters in diameter. The column was shipped in seven pieces: a base, a plate on top of the base, four drums (each section was 1.85 meters), and a capital, the type of which was not identified.4 The column that arrived in New York in February 1964, however, was not the column that had been originally selected.5 According to a letter dated 24 February 1964, Dr. Awni Dajani, the director general of antiquities in Jordan, sent a somewhat smaller column.6 This column was shipped in six pieces, which, with crating, weighed 6,240.0 kilograms.7 Charles Polert and Lionel Harris, vice president and director, respectively, for international affairs and exhibits at the fair, accepted the substitute column, apparently because they did not want to reveal to Robert Moses, the president of the 1964–65 New York World’s Fair, that the column received was not the one originally expected.8 It also may have been expedient to accept the column, as noting that it was a different column and thus somehow unacceptable might have offended the Jordanians.