

urban leasehold law but he has much to say about the physical conditions of life, especially at Ostia; on which see Russell Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1973). Among the many interesting articles reprinted from the journal *Past and Present* in M. I. Finley (ed.) *Studies in Ancient Society* (London and Boston, 1974) is P. A. Brunt's splendid 'The Roman Mob' (pp. 74-102).

The debate about trade and labour and social attitudes towards them, reopened by Finley in *The Ancient Economy* (London, 1973), has been vigorously pursued; see, for instance, the collections of studies edited by Peter Garnsey, Keith Hopkins and C. R. Whitaker, *Trade in the Ancient Economy* (London, 1983), by Garnsey and Whitaker, *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Philological Society, Suppl. Vol. 8, 1983), and by John d'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1981). On the techniques of farming, K. D. White, *Roman Farming* (London, 1970).

On the role of law in social life, see J. A. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (London, 1967), and on the penal system of the Empire Peter Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1970) and more generally A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1973). On slavery and social relations there are articles of interest in M. I. Finley (ed.) *Slavery in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1960), and see from a very different historical tradition Joseph Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man* (transl. Thomas Wiedemann, Oxford, 1974).

Social relations in general are discussed in two most illuminating books, written with characteristic zest and an eye for detail, by Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1967) and *Roman Social Relations, 56 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven, Conn., and London 1974). Zvi Yavetz, *Plébs and Princes* (Oxford, 1969) discusses the relations between the Emperor and People of Rome in the context of developments from the late Republic, and has most interesting material on modes of popular expression. Keith Hopkins, *Sociological Studies in Roman History, I: Conquerors and Slaves, and II: Death and Renewal* (Cambridge, 1978 and 1983) offers a radical approach to the evidential problems inherent in the writing of ancient social and economic history. Still more intractable are those relating to religious history, on which a stimulating introduction for the imperial age is E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1965).

## 16

### Roman Art and Architecture

R. J. A. WILSON

#### Republican Prolegomena

When the chaos and civil war which marked the collapse of the Roman Republic erupted in the third quarter of the first century BC, there had already been sown some of the seeds of architecturally productive fruit during the early years of Empire. Yet, down to the middle and later years of the second century BC was not marked by any brilliant outpouring of artistic creativity, or by many works which display striking originality: little that is genuinely and independently 'Roman' can be identified in the art of early- and middle-Republican Rome. Rather it was the twin cultural influences of Etruria and the Greek world that were dominant, the latter being by far the more significant. When, sometime around 300 BC, a Latin-speaking artist called Novios Plautios made in Rome a splendid bronze circular box (known as the 'Ficoroni cist'), his total dependence on the Greek artistic repertoire (the mythological scene on the body of the box, for example, or its fine lotus and palmette border), as well as his familiarity with the masterly Etruscan techniques of metal engraving, are abundantly clear. Etrusco-Hellenic influence was similarly at work in the Roman ('Italic') style temple as it emerged in the course of the third and second centuries BC after a long period of experimentation. The frontal emphasis and the lofty platform (*podium*), both features foreign to full-dress

Greek temples, are derived from Etruscan architecture, but the ornamental details, such as the use of engaged columns or pilasters to decorate the sides and back of the *cella*, as well as the architectural order itself, are almost invariably of Greek derivation and inspiration. A good surviving early example of the type is the second-century-BC 'temple of Fortuna' (probably dedicated to Portunus) near the Tiber in Rome.

By the time that this temple was built, Greek influence on the artistic life of the capital was all-pervasive. It had first made an impact in Italy in the sixth century BC, when it began to affect the development of Etruscan art, and some Greek artists are known from scattered literary references to have lived and worked in Rome from the fifth century BC onwards; but it was only in the third century BC, when Rome's political expansion brought her into direct contact with the Greek cities of southern Italy and Sicily (Tarentum's fall in 272 and Syracuse's in 212 being notable landmarks), that the steady trickle of Greek culture flowing into Rome became a constant stream; and that in turn reached flood proportions in the second century BC, when first Greece and then Asia Minor came within the orbit of Rome. Not only were Greek artists migrating westwards in increasing numbers in response to the demands of a new, large, and wealthy clientele; in addition, the craze for collecting Greek originals to adorn town and country houses grew to fever pitch, and led to the wholesale looting of masterpieces from their original settings. When originals were not to hand, copies could be manufactured, ever more faithful to their models thanks to continuing improvements in the pointing technique; and major workshops were already established in Athens, Rome, and elsewhere to meet this huge demand, which continued well on into the Empire. There were, of course, some commissions for new types, and the school of Pasticles enjoyed modest success in producing pastiches of classical figures in novel arrangements, but free-standing sculpture in general at this period broke little fresh ground. Portraiture is quite another matter. Early in the first century BC there appear the first examples in a long and

impressive series of marble portrait busts, in which the sitter is represented with striking fidelity, double chins, wrinkles, warts, and all (see Plates 9 and 10). This was a far cry from the bland, impersonal idealism of most (but not all) late classical and Hellenistic Greek portraits; the new type reflects, perhaps, a pragmatism, a rugged determination, and a certain ruthlessness in the Roman character, as well as a taste for unvarnished truth. The busts are generally of imported Greek marble, a material with which Italian sculptors were unfamiliar, and there can be little doubt that it was Greek sculptors working in Rome who were responsible for their execution; but although the strikingly uncompromising realism of this portrait-type has been seen as a reflection of the Greek artist's disgust for his sitter, the patron must have liked what he saw—otherwise the portrait sculptor would soon have been out of business, and the fashion would never have caught on.

One or two pieces of Roman relief sculpture in the last century of the Republic also show hints of a fresh approach, one that was to be fully developed only under the Principate. A pair of crisp but lifeless limestone reliefs depicting victory trophies, from the Capitoline hill in Rome, perhaps executed early in the first century BC in commemoration of African campaigns against Jugurtha, stand at the beginning of a long series of commemorative relief sculptures designed to leave a permanent, tangible record in stone of actual historical events. The approximately contemporary marble relief known misleadingly as the Altar of Domitian Ahenobarbus shows the hand of a Greek sculptor working none too confidently for a Roman patron. While Hellenistic tradition, carved with confidence, even gusto, the fourth has the hitherto unfamiliar (and very Roman) scene of the sacrifice of pig, sheep, and bull (*suovetaurilia*), probably on the occasion of a military census-taking: the rather awkward arrangement of the figures and the disparity of scale between animals, humans, and 'props' such as the altar, betray the sculptor's unfamiliarity with his subject.

Wall painting, too, embarks on a dramatically different and more adventurous course from the beginning of the first century BC, again the fruit of successful co-operation between Roman patrons and (for the most part at least) Greek artists. Private houses up until c.100 had their walls rather monotonously decorated in imitation marbled blocks, sometimes simply painted, sometimes executed in moulded stucco as well (the so-called First Style of Roman painting). That gives way to an ambitious scheme of wall decoration which depends for its effect on a series of architectural frameworks and vistas in different planes, giving the illusion of space as the viewer looks out on a succession of often fantastic architectural creations receding into the distance. There can be little doubt that some of the features of this elaborate style came from the painted stage sets of the Hellenistic theatre, witnessed by such recurring features as the central door, the broken pediment, the circular pavilion, and above all the theatrical masks; indeed, a room in the villa at Boscoreale near Pompeii has paintings which correspond exactly with Vitruvius' description of the tragic, comic, and satyric sets of the Greek theatre. The originality of this style of painting (the so-called Second Style) lies not so much in its subject matter as such, as in the varying combinations of a stock repertoire of motifs to form new varieties of composition; and new, too, as far as we can tell, is the idea of placing these gaudy, overbearing architectural decorations within the intimacy of the private house. Some of the grand, large-scale, figured fresco cycles, such as the figures from another room at Boscoreale, or the frieze from which the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii takes its name, are also likely to owe much to lost Greek painting; but the adaptation of original models to suit both individual room sizes and the demands of the patron led in each case to a good deal of innovation and variation of the prototype or prototypes. Contemporary mosaic work tended to be somewhat sober, in order not to compete with the riot of colour and decorative detail on the walls, but the taste continued for set-piece, small-scale, figured panels of great intricacy (*emblemata*) in the centre of the floors of the more import-

ant rooms. This, however, was wholly a legacy of the Hellenistic tradition; Roman mosaic only begins to show major originality with the gradual development of a quite different black-and-white technique from Augustan times onward.

In the architecture of late Republican times onward the Greek world was not inconsiderable. Too, the impact of with streets intersecting at right-angles, which first the Etruscans (from c.500) and then the Romans adopted for their new foundations, was with only minor adjustments the legacy of Greek orthogonal planning; and both the garden peristyle of the Greek house, introduced in the course of the second century BC, and many building-types in Roman public architecture, such as the stoa/portico, the theatre, and probably the basilica (its name means 'royal' in Greek), were more or less closely derived from the Hellenistic Greek models. Much more significant, however, was the emergence in Italy of the new building technique of concrete, which (for once) owes nothing to the Greeks. In the second half of the third century BC, Italian architects discovered that when mortar was made with the volcanic brick-earth known as pozzolana, widely available in central and central-southern Italy, and added with lime and water to rubble aggregate, the result was an enormously strong (and waterproof) mass capable of bearing great stress. Expensive and cumbersome large-block ashlar construction could now be discarded in favour of concrete walling, the facing material of which was of no significant structural importance. At the same time the Romans first made use of another architectural feature they were to adopt very much as their own, the arch—an invention, in fact, of the Greeks, but never fully exploited by them. The more or less simultaneous discovery in central Italy of concrete and of the potential of the arch, prompted in turn the creation of the semicircular barrel vault in concrete, a revolutionary means of spanning a space which broke utterly free from the conventional timber beam-and-truss roof. An early maturity in the handling of tiered ranks of barrel vaults with interconnecting arched openings is displayed in the gigantic warehouse in Rome of 193 BC,

the Porticus Aemilia (some 487 m. long), and later in the second century it was concrete that made possible the creation of the finest surviving architectural complex of the Roman Republic, the great sanctuary of Fortuna at Palestrina. Here barrel vaulting was used to fashion a series of orderly terraces and retaining walls out of a rugged hillside, although, in contrast to the Porticus Aemilia, the concrete structures were for the most part concealed behind respectable colonnades in time-honoured Greek fashion. The traditional Greek orders were also used as a decorative frame for arched openings, an idea soon picked up and repeated in many other buildings (the Theatre of Marcellus, for example: p. 419). Concrete also played a vital role in the development of the Roman bath-house, in which concrete vaults were a more practical alternative to timber for roofing the heated rooms with their steamy atmosphere. The first surviving examples come from Campania, where the amphitheatre, another quintessentially Roman building, also made its earliest appearance, before the end of the second century BC (Pompeii's of c. 80 BC being a well-preserved early example); but it was only after further advances in concrete architecture under the Empire that both building-types were to reach full maturity.

### *The Augustan Principate*

When C. Octavianus (soon to take the title Augustus) emerged triumphant from the battle of Actium in 31 BC, he lost little time in embarking on a building programme the like of which Rome had never seen before. The reign of Augustus was an age of enormous architectural and artistic fervour, in which cautious conservatism was combined with revolutionary new ideas. The establishment of the Principate created for the first time a stability which enabled a long-term, coherent planning programme to be worked out for the monuments of the capital. The Emperor, with his family and associates, provided a motivated patronage which drew architects, sculptors, and painters to the capital, a patronage which was vital for creating the right

### *Roman Art and Architecture*

conditions for works of art and buildings on the grand scale; and with that imperial patronage came the centralized control of state funds. Such conditions had of course existed before in the ancient world—in Periclean Athens, for example, and especially in the Hellenistic kingdoms such as Pergamum—but for Rome they were essentially new. Augustus was also not slow to realize the political overtones of a lavish architectural and sculptural programme: Caesar had already shown the way with his great vision of a monumental reorganization of the heart of Rome, and some of his projects were duly completed by Augustus. Caesar's adoptive son launched a building programme on an even more ambitious scale which, by his death in AD 14, had totally transformed the physical appearance of the capital. Mobilizing the building industry was one way of stimulating the economy; building theatres and amphitheatres, baths and basilicae, *fora* and temples, carried favour with a restless populace; and in the showpieces of the Augustan programme the potential for using monuments as vehicles of elaborate propaganda was exploited to the full.

Some idea of the scale of the new building programme can be judged from Augustus' astonishing claim that he built or restored no less than eighty-two temples in one year alone, quite apart from other types of building; add to that the projects sponsored by other energetic builders in his family, and one can gain some impression of the building fever that gripped Augustan Rome. Many of the new structures were essentially conservative, repeating the formulae already tried and tested in the late Republic. The Theatre of Marcellus, for example, begun by Caesar but not finished until c. 13–11 BC, with its seats raised on concrete substructures and with an outer façade of superimposed arcades (each row framed by a continuous colonnade of engaged columns, a formula which much influenced architects from the sixteenth century onwards), was essentially the type of building already established at Rome by the earlier Theatre of Pompey (55 BC). Many of the temples, too, continued to use traditional materials, either travertine (a hard white limestone

quarried near Tivoli) or one of the variety of local volcanic stones liberally covered with stucco. Such conservatism in the Augustan buildings programme would have delighted the contemporary architect, Vitruvius, whose ten books *On Architecture*, written between about 28 and 23 BC, enjoyed enormous fame from the Renaissance onwards, especially as a sourcebook for the Classical Greek orders. Conscious, but disapproving, of the radical changes going on around him, Vitruvius issued strictures against the haste and the boldness of the new generation of architects, while lavishing undiluted praise on the use of ashlar, on the materials of local quarries, even on the usefulness of mud-brick. Vitruvius was no progressive; his writings are more important for the light they shed on Greek and Roman Republican architectural practice than as a commentary on his own age.

For the materials on which Vitruvius pinned his faith were not to be those of the future. The Augustan age was an age of experiment, in using new materials and in exploring fresh uses for old. The quality of concrete, for example, was constantly being improved, and innovative architects were trying out a new method of roofing, the hemispherical dome in concrete, which was to play such a vital part in the Roman architectural revolution of the next 150 years: the earliest surviving example, probably Augustan, is the so-called 'Temple of Mercury' at Baiae. Another arrival of lasting significance was kiln-fired brick, not a newly-invented material as such, but employed now for the first time as a continuous facing for concrete. In Rome it appears to have been used only modestly until after Augustus' death; real confidence in handling the new material was gained elsewhere, especially in Italian cities such as Turin. With brickwork, as with the dome, the significant developments were yet to come, but Augustan architects deserve credit for pointing the way forward.

A more immediate impact on the architectural scene was made by marble. Augustus boasted, according to Suetonius, 'that he found Rome a city of (mud-)brick and left it a city of marble';

and it is clear from the sheer number of marble-faced buildings which sprang up in the capital that this was no idle boast. Caesar had probably been the first to realize the potential of the Carrara marble quarries near Luna in north Italy, but their full-scale exploitation began only with Augustus' reign. Dead-white, crystalline, and clean-breaking (and therefore excellent for full-carving and cutting), this handsome material won immediate and widespread popularity. Alongside Luna appeared an increasing range of polychrome marbles from abroad: yellow African marble, salmon-pink marble from Chios, and greenish-blue *cipollino* from Euboea, as well as Phrygian marble from Asia Minor. Marble had come to stay; and although the Augustan use of polychromatic effects, both for columns and in paving and wall veneers, remained restrained by comparison with later fashions, the new material gave a welcome touch of elegance and sophistication, as well as a splash of colour, which the architecture of the capital had hitherto lacked.

But the exploitation of marble brought with it a problem, lack of Roman expertise in handling it. That is why an army of Greek craftsmen were drafted into the capital: their role in shaping the distinctive creations of the Augustan programme is hard to overestimate. A new, precise language of architectural ornament, based on that of classical Greece, but with fresh variations and combinations, set the tone for the rest of the Empire and in turn was a source of inspiration for generations of Renaissance and Neo-classical architects. Even the one original Roman contribution to the classical orders, the Composite, with its blending of the volutes of Ionic with the acanthus leaves of Corinthian, makes its first known appearance in Augustan Rome and is hardly to be dissociated from the creative genius of Greek craftsmen in the capital.

The marriage of Greek skills and traditions with Roman taste and demands is nowhere more clearly documented than in the two monuments which mark the culmination of the Augustan programme, the Ara Pacis Augustae (dedicated in 9 BC), and the Forum of Augustus (2 BC). The forum in concept and planning is

quintessentially Roman: the great Italic-style temple of Luna marble on a lofty podium dominates an open space flanked by porticoes, a formal, axial layout following the strict principles already established in Republican architecture. Roman too is the use of the forum as a portrait gallery of the great trail-blazers of Roman history, including Augustus himself, identified as just another hero in a long line of Republicans. As an ingenious and disingenuous piece of imperial propaganda and as a blueprint for architectural planning, the forum of Augustus was unmistakably Roman; yet its detail was no less unmistakably Greek: the textbook Corinthian capitals, the zoomorphic pilaster capitals with figures of Pegasus at the corners, most obviously of all the line of Caryatids above the colonnades, are closely marched in the Classical or late-Hellenistic architecture of Attica.

The Altar of Augustan Peace is an even more eloquent witness of the cultural interchange of Greece and Rome. The altar itself, set on a stepped platform, was surrounded on all sides by lofty screen walls broken by entrances on the west and east. Mythological panels flanked each entrance—Mother Earth (see Plate 11) with children on her lap and personifications of Ocean and Water at her side, a scene carved fully in the Hellenistic tradition and exuding the blessings of tranquility and renewed fertility that accompanied the Augustan peace; Aeneas sacrificing at the spot where he first set foot on Italian soil. Just around the corner, near the head of the procession on the south side, is Augustus in the same act of solemn sacrifice: the propaganda message is being hammered home, that Augustus is the new Aeneas, the bringer of hope and the architect of a Rome reborn. The rest of the south side shows members of his family while magistrates and their families fill up the north side; it is a commemoration in marble of an actual procession and sacrifice that took place in 13 BC in thanksgiving for the Emperor's safe return after a provincial tour. The idea of historical relief sculpture to record a specific event had been tentatively explored during the late Republic, but it was to find full expression only during the Empire. As an exercise in political propaganda,

the Ara Pacis succeeds brilliantly in presenting some of the essential values that Augustus stood for: *gravitas* witnessed by the solemnity of the occasion; *humanitas* witnessed by such touches as a tired child pulling at his father's toga and by the overall flavour of a 'family occasion'; above all *pax*, peace both in Italy and in the world at large. As a sculptural monument, too, the friezes of the Ara Pacis are superlative, a tribute to the skills of the Greek sculptors who worked on them. The influence, above all, of Athens is paramount: in the overall form of the altar, a copy on a more monumental scale of the Altar of Pity in the Athenian *agora* (c.420); in the processional friezes which inevitably recall those of the Parthenon; in the quiet solemnity reminiscent, perhaps, of Attic grave reliefs of the Classical age; and in lower half of the screen wall, which, while at present most closely paralleled in Hellenistic Asia Minor, may well have been derived from now lost Attic models. The Ara Pacis epitomizes the Roman genius for borrowing freely from the Greek repertoire, but moulding it and adapting it into something new and distinctively Roman.

Another vital element of the new Roman propaganda machine was image-building; and Greek sculptors played a key role in fashioning a series of portrait-types of Augustus which copied in vast numbers so that all corners of the Empire which were systematically bombarded with the image of the *princeps*. The types now created for Augustus and his family could be ruthlessly realistic portraits of the late Republic, but a delicate blend of realism and statesmanly ideal. The mood might vary from the grim determination of the Capitoline Octavian, fashioned at a time before the total consolidation of his position, through the sober *auctoritas* of Augustus as *pontifex maximus*, carved some thirty years later yet with hardly a hint of ageing, to the supremely self-confident *Primaporta* Augustus, where the Emperor with expansive gesture harangues an unseen populace; but the overriding impression of a determined, efficient, authoritative leader is common to all.

In private life Augustus is reputed to have been a man of simple tastes who chose to dwell in a modest house unostentatiously adorned; certainly the property excavated on the Palatine and identified as his shows no greater luxury than comparable patrician residences of its day. In the fresco paintings of this and other properties of the imperial family, the overbearing architectural schemes which characterize the full-blown Second Style give way instead to decoration with a lighter touch, which favours architecture of less substantial form and an increasing emphasis on large central mythological 'panel' pictures as the focal point of each wall. The logical culmination of this trend was to deny altogether the illusion of depth and to emphasize instead the solidity of the wall. The new scheme of decor which thus emerged (the so-called Third Style) depended for its effect on intricate and often fanciful decorative detail, especially floral and abstract designs, usually interspersed with figured tableaux which varied a good deal in size and number, while architectural elements, if they survived at all, now became flimsy and unreal. The new decorative scheme can be seen fully developed at another imperial property, the country house at Boscorecase near Pompeii (see Plate 5). The elegance and restraint of the frescoes here, in stark contrast to the excesses of the Second Style at its most extravagant, mark the culmination of a quiet but decisive revolution in artistic taste, achieved through the skill of court painters, but dictated, no doubt, by the personal preferences of the imperial family itself.

The individual ingredients of the new style of painting reflect the eclecticism of Augustan art as a whole. One ingredient was unashamedly classicizing: the wall schemes adopted by Augustan decorators, with their mythological panel pictures, large and small, were ideal vehicles for the widespread copying of Classical and Hellenistic Old Masters, and in this they set the tone for Roman wall painting for the next century. Another ingredient was the Egyptianizing element. This, like copying, was not entirely new, but it received an undoubted boost after the annexation of Egypt in 30 BC, when the curiosity value of

things Egyptian ran high in Italy for a time. Some of the recurrent decorative features in Third Style compositions, such as sphinxes, ibises, cult objects, and figures of Isis, as well as vignettes of Nilotic scenes, were directly derived from the Egyptian repertoire. More controversial is the source of another popular ingredient in Augustan and later painting, the dreamy landscapes loosely referred to as 'sacro-idyllic' because they usually centre around a fanciful 'votive' column or flimsy shrine, with a variety of figures in attendance. Though they are often claimed as the products of Alexandrian mannerism, inspired by the bucolic poetry of Theocritus, no Hellenistic precedents in painting are so far known, and while some elements may well have had Hellenistic forerunners, the idea of peopling these artificial settings with shepherds, flocks, and dogs appears to begin only with the striking sacro-idyllic pictures from Boscorecase; they may, therefore, be essentially an Augustan creation. Here the name of Studius is possibly relevant. He was the first, so Pliny tells us, who went in for the 'very charming paintings' of landscape gardens and the like filled with people engaged in the tasks of everyday life. This sounds like the sort of thing which impressionistically in flat monochrome, walking and fishing and chatting and going about their daily business, in a setting of bridges, porticoes, and topsy-turvy pavilions. Certainly Studius did not invent landscape as such, nor can his name be associated with another masterpiece of Augustan painting, the 'Garden of Livia' from her villa at Prima Porta: here are no human figures, and so far from being impressionistic, the garden of this wilderness of a paradise garden are executed with a loving care for naturalistic detail. Judgement must be suspended on this unique painting as to whether it, too, owes all or something to Hellenistic predecessors, or whether it is rather an exuberant product of the Augustan genius for originality.

The principal advances of Augustan art and architecture were worked out, of course, mainly in the capital; but the Augustan age saw in addition an enormous outpouring of building energy

elsewhere in Italy and the Empire, especially in the western provinces. In many cases, indeed, we have to turn to these areas for preserved examples of buildings which are only fragmentary, or have vanished altogether, in Rome itself. One such is the triumphal arch, a characteristic monument of imperial propaganda of which several early examples still stand in north Italy and southern Gaul. Commemorative arches of a sort had been known in Republican Rome, but the developed form, articulated with columns, architrave, and attic bearing an inscription, is essentially an Augustan creation. Many of the buildings newly erected in the provinces at this time were based directly on metropolitan blueprints or from models elsewhere in Italy. Indeed in some instances (as at the famous Maison Carrée in Nîmes of AD 2–3) the presence of stonemasons and sculptors who had actually worked on the Augustan building programme in Rome can be argued. One of the most familiar of all Roman monuments, the stately Pont du Gard aqueduct near Nîmes (see Plate 3), a harmonious structure which vividly demonstrates that the aesthetics of appearance need not be divorced from practical function, is also an Augustan monument, erected in the last quarter of the first century BC. In the East, where urbanization was already deeprooted, the impact of Augustus was less dramatic; but in the West—above all in his creation of a road system and in his establishment or refounding of innumerable, carefully chosen towns in Yugoslavia, Gaul, the Iberian peninsula, and along the north-African littoral—Augustus left a decisive and enduring stamp on the map of western Europe.

*The Julio-Claudians: Tiberius to Nero (AD 14–68)*

Augustus died on 19 August AD 14, and within a month he had been deified. Among the trappings of the official state cult of *divus Augustus* was a newly created iconographical language for depicting the deceased Emperor in the company of gods. An eloquent early expression can be seen in the cameo known as the Gemma Augustea (see Plate 7), a frank glorification of the

*Roman Art and Architecture*

dead Augustus, half draped, as befits his divine status, and surrounded by personifications of Rome, *Oikoumenê* (the inhabited world), Ocean, and Earth. Yet the new language rarely lost an opportunity to speak clearly also about the living, emphasizing the 'continuity factor' between the old regime and the new. On the Gemma Augustea, for example, Augustus looks across to his chosen successor Tiberius stepping from the chariot of victory, while the lower register alludes to Augustus' German wars, in which the prime architect of victory was none other than Tiberius. Some scholars claim that this and similar scenes were intended for private circulation during Augustus' lifetime; but that the man who himself shunned personal worship scenes instrumental in creating the new idiom seems unlikely. These scenes stand at the beginning of a long line of historical reliefs which use elaborate allegorical paraphrase to convey a political message.

Few monumental reliefs of Julio-Claudian date from Rome survive; those that do display a rather dry style entirely in the Augustan classicizing mould. The grand processional reliefs in the Villa Medici, for example, thought by some to be part of an executed very much in the manner of the Ara Pacis; only in one major respect do they break fresh ground, in their detailed rendering of architectural setting, though the problem of providing this without sacrificing the prominence of the figures has yet to be solved. A roughly contemporary relief showing a procession of city magistrates also makes an advance in its hesitant adoption of a slightly aerial perspective rather than a horizontal one: the heads of the second row are raised slightly above those in the foreground. Neither architectural setting nor vertical perspective was entirely new to the sculptural arts, but for the state reliefs of the capital they were a fresh departure, much exploited in the years to come.

Sculpture in the round was long to be dominated by the influence of Greek works and of the 'neo-Attic' school. Much of this was dreary and repetitive copying of the established

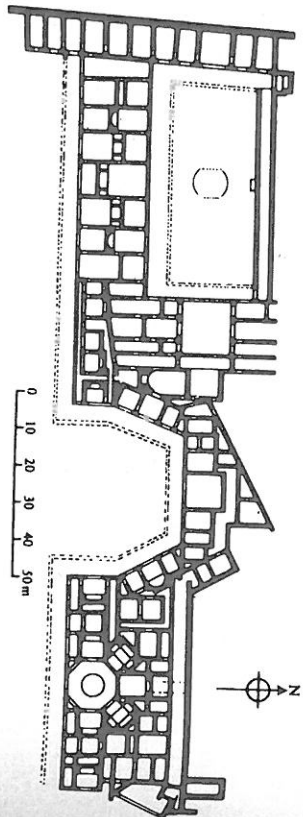
Classical and Hellenistic masterpieces, in constant demand for decorating the town and country houses of the rich, as well as public *fora*, gardens, and bath-buildings; what little originality existed was usually limited to feeble pastiches. Not all of this sculpture, however, lacked vitality: witness, for example, the outstanding work produced by the Rhodians Hagesander, Athanadorus, and Polydorus. One, the Laocoon, found in the Golden House of Nero, exerted a powerful influence on Michelangelo and his contemporaries; the other, a series of dramatic larger-than-life groups including the Blinding of Polyphemus and Odysseus' ship passing Scylla, adorned a grotto in Tiberius' villa at Sperlonga. None of this sculpture was probably wholly original, being best regarded as adaptations and reworkings from Hellenistic models; but nor is it derivative hack-work: it testifies to the continuing vibrancy, intensity, and superb technical quality of Hellenistic baroque at its best, well into the early years of Empire.

Magnificent sculpture of this sort was to play an increasingly important part in grandiose interior decoration; the more generous the setting, the more colossal the sculpture to suit it. Nor are other indications lacking of a growing luxury in Julio-Claudian interior decor: an expanding range of polychrome marbles for floor slabs and wall veneer, abandoning the comparative restraint of Augustan taste; wall mosaic using glass tesserae of dazzling colours, which was soon employed to good effect in sparkling fountains at Pompeii and elsewhere; mosaic work, too, to cover the soaring surfaces of concrete vaults, a medium with a long future down into Byzantine and early medieval times. Wall-painting, too, shared in the increasing desire for elaboration. One has only to compare some examples of the late Third Style, as in the House of Lucretius Fronto at Pompeii (c.34-45), with the early-Augustan versions of the same style (as at Boscorecase) to appreciate just how significant a shift in taste had taken place: there is still the horizontal wall division into three, still the prominent mythological panel in the centre, but the restraint and elegant simplicity of an earlier

generation has been replaced by a riot of contrasting sweeps of colour, and by a wide range of intricate, often fussy detail; while the virtuosos pavilions in the top register with their shifting planes look forward to the even more elaborate developments of the Fourth Style.

The transition to the fully developed Fourth Style seems to belong to the 50s; certainly its use on the grand scale is brilliantly seen a decade later in the frescoes of the Domus Aurea, the Golden House of Nero (AD 64-8), inspired creations of the court painter Fabullus. It is a style marked above all by the 'opening up' of the wall to provide once more an architectural vista, usually to each side of a central panel (more rarely in an 'all-over' composition). No longer, however, in the Fourth Style are the architectural forms grounded in reality. In the Golden House they form a scintillating essay in airy and insubstantial fantasy, creating a whimsical framework around full-length figures, mythological panels, landscapes, and patches of 'solid' wall in a dazzling *tour de force*. Enlivened too by dainty arabesques, the whole series of frescoes is executed with a light touch; while some of the vignettes, displaying deft and rapid brushwork, are masterpieces of the Roman impressionistic manner. Many of these features recur in varying degrees of elaboration. countless examples of Fourth Style paintings at Pompeii and Herculaneum; and another aspect of the frescoes of the Golden House, the use of white as the background colour, was also to be of lasting influence, for it gained increasingly in favour, especially from the mid second century onwards. Even today, especially by the passage of time, the decoration of the Golden House makes a stunning impact on the visitor, just as it did nearly five centuries ago when Raphael and Giovanni di Udine, according to Vasari, 'were both seized with astonishment at the freshness, beauty, and excellent manner of these works'.

The Golden House of Nero was indeed no ordinary building. In the history of architecture, too, it represents a watershed, the octagonal room in the east wing is roofed by the first surviving dome in the capital. This major achievement provided



NERO'S GOLDEN HOUSE (AD 64-8): the Emperor's fabulous urban villa contained mechanical wonders and decorations 'all smeared with gold and picked out with jewels'; but more significant was its experimentation with new shapes and volumes within the basically rectangular plan. The novelty of the experiments is indicated by the presence of awkward, redundant triangular spaces between the main groups of rooms.

a novel flexibility in interior planning which at once opened up exciting possibilities for the future. The octagonal plan in itself (as also the five-sided court immediately to the west) is symptomatic of an impatience with the traditional rectangular room shapes which had long dictated architectural planning. Now, with concrete roofing a flexible tool in the hands of confident architects, the exploitation of circular, ovoid, and apsidal shapes in conjunction with stock rectangular ones created a variety in interior design that had not been possible before. In time, when the exterior shell was stripped away, the juxtaposition of widely differing room shapes with their medley of domes, semi-domes, barrel-vaults, and cross-vaults, often produced a positively ugly exterior. But the new Roman architecture is not an architecture of the exterior: rather it derives its dramatic impact from the

### Roman Art and Architecture

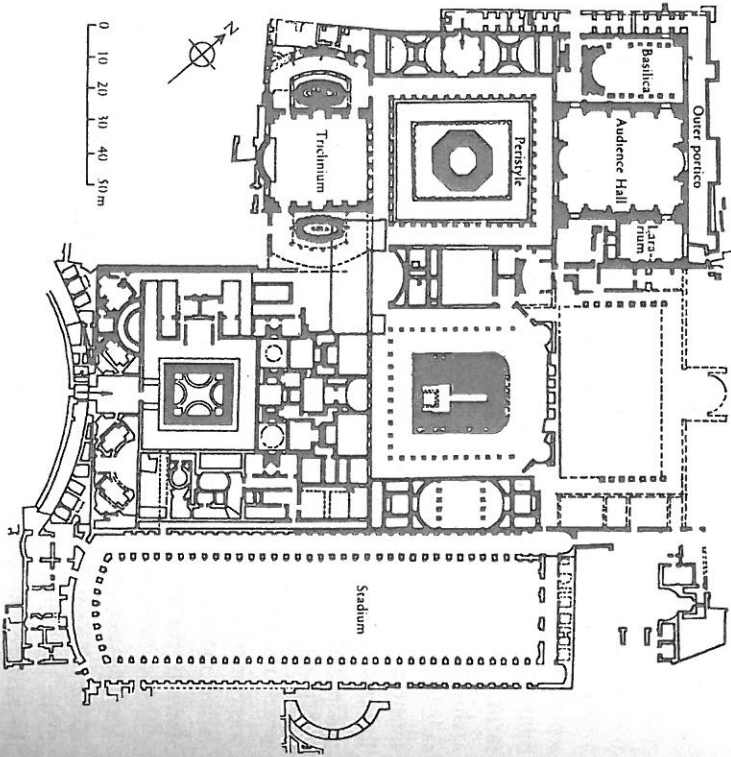
interplay of light and space in the interior, so that the void becomes every bit as important as the solid envelope that encloses it. The dome of the Domus Aurea is but a small beginning, but it heralds the dawn of a new architectural approach which had a decisive influence on European architecture down to the present century.

The Golden House and its attendant pleasure park were created by an act of opportunism and imperial greed after the great fire of AD 64 had devastated the heart of Rome. That fire also presented Nero's city planners with a golden opportunity for revitalizing the domestic housing of the urban poor by replacing the sprawling tenement dwellings of the past with the tight, rational planning of the multi-storey rectangular apartment block (above, pp. 367 f.). It was a severely functional architecture, its sober façades rarely relieved by decorative detail; but it also has an uncompromisingly modern look, for the formula was repeated countless times in the urban housing of Renaissance and modern Rome. The material which made all this possible was brick-faced concrete, a winning combination which was strong, light and, as far as possible, fireproof. Having served its apprenticeship under the Julio-Claudians, brickwork was poised to sweep all before it and to take over as the principal facing material for major construction work in central Italy down to the very end of antiquity.

### The Flavians, Nerva, and Trajan (AD 69-117)

In the autumn of 69 Vespasian established himself as sole master of the Roman world. A man of plebeian stock, he was a down-to-earth realist with the common touch, and it is probably not accidental that the best-known portrait of him, in Copenhagen, strips away the idealizing varnish and reveals a tough, experienced, ageing man, his leathery skin creased by long years of military campaigning. It is a frank portrayal in the Late Republican vein, shunning the blend of idealism and realism normally adopted in imperial portraits of the time.

Vespasian's name is indissolubly linked with the most celebrated of all Roman buildings, the Colosseum, the amphitheatre



DOMITIAN'S PALACE (the Domus Augustana) in Rome (AD 81–92). The palace consisted of three main blocks: at the left the official palace including the state rooms; in the centre the Emperor's private residence; at the right the so-called Stadium, a sunken garden in the form of a hippodrome. The detailed planning shows a new facility in the integration of curvilinear and rectilinear shapes.

### Roman Art and Architecture

433

he provided for the entertainment and gratification of the Roman people. Only in its enormous size, however, which called for great architectural ingenuity to ensure efficient crowd control, does it break fresh ground; in other respects it is essentially conservative. Two other Flavian buildings are more important as trend-setters in the brick-faced concrete style. One is the public baths of Titus, which stands at or near the head of a distinguished line of imperial bath-buildings, each rationally and symmetrically arranged around its central short axis. The other is the imperial palace built by Domitian on the Palatine hill in the 80s and early 90s, a building which later spawned numerous provincial imitations. Within its tight rectilinear exterior, the Palatine palace enunciates many of the distinctive tenets of the new architectural thinking: confident handling of enormous masses of brick-faced concrete, grouped in split-level arrangement to take maximum advantage of a complex site; a colonnade which opens out into alternating apses and rectangular recesses, now fully integrated with the maze of rooms beyond; and a delight in the curvilinear at the expense of the rectangular. All created novel visual and spatial effects, replacing the expected with the unexpected at every turn. But Domitian's palace was designed not just to surprise, but to impress. 'The edifice is august, immense, splendid,' wrote Statius, 'an edifice to stupefy the neighbouring abode of Jupiter the Thunderer'; and awe, even intimidation, was the keynote of such halls as the palace vestibule (down in the forum) with walls 98 feet high, the vast audience chamber, the dining-room only slightly smaller, and the 'basilica' in the north-west corner where the Emperor sat in judgement. This, with its apse and double row of columns, probably derives from the palaces of Hellenistic kings, but the distinctive plan was later to have a decisive influence on the layout of the early Christian church. Ablaze with brilliant polychrome marble, adorned, too, with enormous statues, these grandiose state apartments, among the largest interiors yet created by Roman architects, were designed to overwhelm, to

make the visitor feel he was in the presence of a very god. Domitian paid the price of an assassin's dagger for such overt assumption of divine honours, and his immediate successors played down this inflated image of the imperial personage, even though they continued to live amid the splendour of his palace.

Domitian's conviction of his own divine status is further emphasized by one of the reliefs from the Papal Chancellery, where he sets out for war in the exclusive company of deities. There can be no doubt that this relief was carved in the Emperor's lifetime, as his head was later reshaped with the features of his successor Nerva. No earlier relief indisputably shows a living Emperor in such divine company; but the almost contemporary relief from the Arch of Titus, erected by Domitian in his brother's memory, is an equally frank glorification of the Emperor, showing him accompanied by Roma and other personifications rather than by ordinary mortals. From now on this elaborate allegorical shorthand became a fully fledged part of the grand tradition of historical relief sculpture, and by the time of Trajan a generation later the conventions are fully established, without hubristic overtones.

The Chancellery reliefs, competently carved but overall rather dull, are still firmly shaped by the mould of Augustan classicism. By contrast the lively reliefs on the Arch of Titus are brim-full of the excitement of a triumph in progress, especially in the procession of the spoils (see Plate 12), where the participants spring along past the spectator, placards waving, and wheel round through an archway into the distance. There is a new interest in the handling of depth here, with the figures carved in higher or lower relief according to their distance from the spectator; but the illusion of life and movement owes more, perhaps, to the Hellenistic tradition than to any immediately preceding Roman work, even though the subject matter is an entirely Roman one.

Nowhere, however, is a sense of life and movement more dramatically conveyed than on the stupendous 700-foot frieze of Trajan's Column in Rome. Dedicated in AD 113, and designed to

commemorate the Dacian Wars of 101-2 and 105-6, it undoubtedly represents the very apogee of continuous narrative sculpture in the ancient world. The problem of receding space was not tackled in any consistent fashion; rather the designer's first priority was to present an almost uninterrupted flow of action-packed scenes. The constant switching between horizontal and bird's eye perspective, the frequent placing of figures 'above' and 'below' one another without perspective diminution, the incongruities of scale for some figures in relation to buildings, tend not to detract from the whole but to lend to it increased variety and vitality; the action relentlessly unfolds from bottom to top, never flagging despite its enormous length. Here, then, is a veritable textbook of the Roman army at work—gathering stores, preparing for the march, foraging for supplies, building camps, engaging the Dacian foe—delineated with supreme attention to detail (see Plate 13). When Trajan appears it is always as the calm, authoritative commander-in-chief addressing his troops, consulting his generals, performing sacrifices, receiving envoys: for on the column there is nothing of the majestic tone of the 'grand style' reliefs with their episodic sonifications are entirely absent except when required for occasional scene-setting. The overall organization of the frieze called for imagination and dexterity of the highest order; and no less remarkable is the execution in very low relief of some 2,500 figures by a group of sculptors who (as on the Parthenon frieze) reached a uniformly high level of craftsmanship. The modelling of the figures is still firmly rooted in the Classical tradition, and some of the battle scenes can be traced back to late-Hellenistic groups, while other set-pieces are derived from the established repertoire of imperial iconography. But the overall effect is totally novel, a fully fledged product of pure Roman art, un-Greek in conception and execution. Most original of all is the use of a 100-foot column as a vehicle for propaganda sculpture, a bold stroke which marks the Column of Trajan with a touch of genius.

That touch of genius may well have been furnished by Apollodorus of Damascus, the architect of the forum in which the column stands. A man of forceful character, later to fall out with the Emperor Hadrian (who had strong, if idiosyncratic, architectural ideas of his own), Apollodorus was a first-rate structural engineer whose achievements included a half-mile-long bridge over the fast-flowing Danube, an amazing technical feat justly admired in antiquity. His forum too won high renown, not least for its impressive scale and the riot of gilded statues and polychrome marbles; but with the exception of the column and the integration of a basilica on the transverse axis (a novelty for the capital), the forum as a whole was closely linked with the past, consciously imitating the Forum of Augustus; and the relief sculpture, too, harks back to an Augustan dignity and simplicity of line. By contrast the friezes on a contemporary monument (the rebuilt temple in the Forum of Caesar) favour instead an ornate, highly decorative style with deep undercutting (intended to provide strong shadows and hence a powerful 'black and white' effect), a style with a longer future ahead of it in later Roman sculpture than restrained and sober classicism.

While Apollodorus' forum, however, looks decisively to the past, the accompanying market and shopping precinct terraced into the Quirinal hill looks no less emphatically to the future. Here is a complex where Apollodorus' mastery of the contemporary architectural idiom is displayed to the full: some 170 shops, offices, and storerooms, in brick-faced concrete up to four storeys high, brilliantly arranged on no less than six levels in an immensely complicated and irregular site. The jewel of the whole complex is a covered market-hall, roofed by one of the earliest large-scale examples of groined cross-vaulting to survive. This simple idea—a barrel-vault on the long axis intersected at right angles by a series of lesser barrel-vaults—marks an enormous architectural stride forward: for now the weight of the roof can be borne by great piers at intervals instead of by the entire length of the side walls, and windows can be opened up to the very crown of the vault, thus creating an imaginative, well-lit

interior instead of the cavernous gloom of the usual barrel-vaulted hall. The first tentative steps in this direction were taken in the reign of Nero, but it needed the architectural ingenuity of a master-builder of Apollodorus' calibre to bring the idea to full fruition. Henceforth the cross-vault was to play a major role in Roman architecture, not least in the central halls of imperial bath-buildings with their impressive vistas opening off in all directions; and it is hardly surprising that the baths of Trajan, the first mature example of the axial type, three times the size of Titus' baths, were also the creation of Apollodorus himself.

#### *Hadrian and the Antonines (AD 117–193)*

It is tempting to link Apollodorus' name also with Hadrian's temple to all the gods, the Pantheon (see Plate 1), the construction of which was already in full swing within a year or so of Trajan's death; but no ancient authority does so, and the creator of what is unquestionably one of the great architectural masterpieces of all time remains anonymous. Characteristically it is not the exterior which wins admiration. The façade with its rectangular porch and gable was very much run-of-the-mill harmonious. Yet this incongruity is quite forgotten once one steps inside the enormous rotunda: for the impact of the interior, as any visitor to the Pantheon knows, is breathtaking. The eye is drawn up, immediately and irresistibly, to the superb lines of its coffered concrete dome, at 148 feet in diameter the largest element in the world until modern times. Sheer size is one element in the building's appeal: surprise is another. For the Pantheon is designed not along the lines of a conventional temple building dominated by a longitudinal, horizontal axis, but around a vertical axis, an invisible line joining the centre of the floor with the opening in the summit of the dome. Nothing is allowed to distract from this vertical aspect of the building, so that the articulation of niches and *aediculae* in the cylindrical

drum wall is deliberately restless. Even the impact of the apse opposite the door is muted, no longer fulfilling its usual role as the focal point of a temple building. Yet despite this apparent complexity the essential geometry of the Pantheon is based on a simple, harmonious formula: the diameter of the whole building is identical to its height. Size, surprise, simplicity—these are three keynotes of this extraordinary temple. It is a building which embodies all the principal characteristics that define the specifically Roman contribution to architecture since Augustus: controlled use of polychrome marbles for columns, floor paving, and wall veneer, from Africa, Egypt, and Asia Minor; mastery of the properties of brick-faced concrete in its 20-foot-thick walls, constructed with numerous relieving arches and recesses to lessen the chances of settlement; mastery, too, in the pouring of some 5,000 tons of concrete for the soaring dome, with carefully graded ingredients ranging from strong basalt near its spring-line to light pumice at its summit. Above all the Pantheon is a supremely eloquent essay in the creation of interior space, and in the lighting of that space, through a single, bold opening at the very crown of the dome. More than any other Roman building, it has inspired countless imitations and adaptations, starting in Hadrian's own reign with the Temple of Asclepius at Pergamum, and continuing on well into the present century.

The other architectural *tour de force* of Hadrian's reign is the sprawling stately home constructed by the Emperor near Tivoli over an enormous tract of rolling countryside. The whole bears the unmistakable stamp of the personality of its self-indulgent owner, who had at his disposal both the technical resources and the bottomless purse necessary to create the succession of luxurious living quarters, baths, pavilions, banquet halls, libraries, and grandiose ornamental pools (see Plate 15). Throughout the villa the variety of room shapes and the ingenuity shown in their interrelationship betoken a lively interest in the architecture of interiors; while in the central court of the pavilion in the Piazza d'Oro, or in the villa-in-miniature on its artificial island (where Hadrian could retreat when in reclusive mood), a

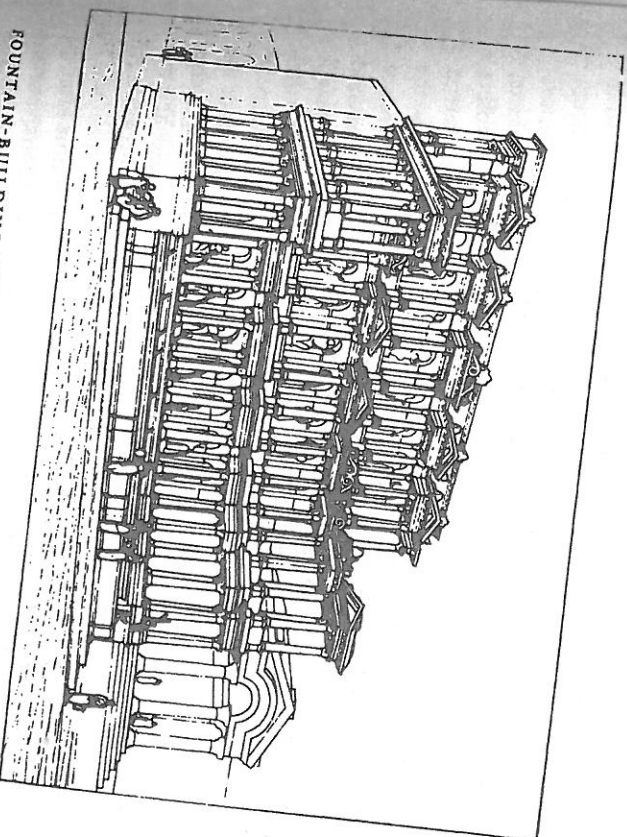
delight in the curvilinear is carried to baroque extremes. Roofing, too, was the subject of fresh experiment: the dome in the vestibule of the Piazza d'Oro was no longer provided with an outer masonry skin to cloak its inner form (a frank admission that it was interior effect, not exterior appearance, which really mattered in Roman architecture); while the Serapeum has a spectacular example of the new 'pumpkin' dome, composed of distinct radiating segments alternately concave and flattened. Hadrian himself had a personal interest, possibly even a creative role, in this fresh variation of the dome, and an even more ambitious example occurs in another of his palaces, in the Gardens of Sallust at Rome.

While the architecture of Hadrian's villa was uncompromisingly Roman, the sculptural detail was no less uncompromisingly Greek. Hadrian was by far the most philhellenic of all Roman Emperors, and the enthusiasm which earned him the nickname of 'Greeklings' carried him on occasion a little too far: his attempt to implant a temple of entirely Greek form, the Temple of Venus and Rome, in the very heart of the capital was widely regarded as an aesthetic failure. Sculpture, however, was a different matter; and such was the influence wielded by artistic patronage that the personal predilections of the Emperor could and did leave a decisive mark on the sculpture of the age. When Hadrian opted for a 'Classical revival' he stopped dead in its tracks for a generation the development of an authentically Roman sculptural style, such as was beginning to emerge on Trajan's Column. Instead he welcomed to Rome Greek sculptors and craftsmen on a scale not seen since Augustus' day, and evidence of their work can be detected in the embellishment of all the major projects associated with Hadrian. That evidence points to Asia Minor as the homeland of these gifted men, for detail for detail, with work at Pergamum, Ephesus, and elsewhere. Much of it was carved in the fine white marble (with a pronounced blue streak) from the quarries of Proconnesus near Istanbul, a material which arrived in Rome for the first time with

these Asiatic craftsmen. Also carved by them on Italian soil was a wide range of sculpture both in relief and in the round, much of it with life and spontaneity suggestive of genuine creativity. Certainly it was to sculptors from the Greek world that Hadrian turned to perpetuate the melancholy beauty, diffident manner, and lithe and sensuous frame of his boyfriend Antinous, deified after drowning in the Nile in October 130. In original creations such as this Greek artists made a more important contribution to Hadrianic sculpture than did routine copies of Caryatids and other fifth-century Attic masterpieces which line the Canopus pool at the Tivoli villa, copies mechanically reproduced in Italian workshops long accustomed to demands of this kind.

The introduction of fresh currents from Greek lands into the mainstream of art and architecture was also symptomatic of an increasing cosmopolitanism in Rome and the Roman world under Hadrian and the Antonines. The second and third quarters of the second century were a particularly glorious age for the provincial cities of the Roman Empire, as self-confidence increased, living standards rose, and horizons widened. One graphic witness of the new outlook is provided by the rush to construct or refurbish in marble, which resulted in an astonishing boom in the export of coloured marbles. Its beginning can be dated to the early years of Hadrian's reign, and by the middle of the century nearly all new public buildings in major provincial cities were being constructed with marble columns and architraves and marble veneers. In some cases there is evidence that the imported materials were carved on arrival by craftsmen from the country of source, a process also documented later in the second century (as well as in the third) for the elaborate marble relief sarcophagi from Greece and Asia Minor, which were shipped in a roughed-out state and only worked in detail once they had reached their destination. This is no longer a Rome-centred world in which a metropolitan building type or decorative motif could be transmitted without substantial transmutation to a provincial centre: instead we are presented

with an infinitely more complex and sophisticated organization which took architects, sculptors, and even jobbing masons far from their homes, with the resulting diffusion of fresh ideas and even the dominant force in shaping provincial art and architecture: other vital creative centres had their part to play, leading to the emergence of an art which was no longer always



FOUNTAIN-BUILDING AT MILETUS (beginning of second century AD). The reconstruction reveals a number of features characteristic of Roman 'baroque' architecture: the elaborate play of advancing and receding entablatures, the sideways misplacement of pavilions so that those of the upper storeys straddle the spaces between those below, and the enlivenment of the whole façade with statue-niches. Such features were especially common in the eastern provinces.

individualistic along narrow provincial lines, but was common to widely separated parts of the entire Roman Empire.

That Asia Minor was among the most important of those creative centres has already been made clear. While art and architecture in the region generally retained its conservative, late-Hellenistic flavour during the first century, sparks of originality were also there: the recently discovered Sebasteion reliefs from Aphrodisias for example, dating to the fifties, glorify members of the imperial house in an individual style untrammelled by the dictates of Italian state sculpture. But it was in architecture that the sparks of creativity really flew: and in such marble extravaganzas as the fountain building at Miletus (c.100) or the library of Celsus at Ephesus (c.117–20) we are treated to a controlled display of traditional, classical architectural elements presented in new guise: simple two-columnar *aediculae* are combined in straddle formation to achieve novel visual effects, heightened by baroque detail such as segmental and volute pediments. The notion of such elaborate columnar screens won widespread popularity, especially in theatre back-drops the length and breadth of the empire; while the language of baroque architecture finally became common currency during the second century in the architectural repertoire of the East, although it only occurred spasmodically in Italy or the West until Renaissance architects discovered it in the late fifteenth century. It is possibly also to the Hellenistic East that we must look for the origins of another highly influential idea, that of springing arches direct from columns, a device with a long and distinguished role to play from the early fourth century onwards in the architecture of the Christian church.

In fresco painting all the indications point to a decline after the end of the first century. There are some exceptions, but the monotonous frescoes from Ostia show that in general Hadrianic and Antonine interior decorators were content with repeating hackneyed decorative schemes which echo the Third and Fourth Styles of the previous century with increasing simplification and hardly a hint of originality—broad splashes of colour, especially

red and yellow and white, but fewer and fewer mythological figures or motifs floating free in the centre of each zone. Ceiling decoration, by contrast, reached new heights of inspiration during the Antonine period: the strikingly detailed stuccoes from the Tombs of the 'Valeii', the Pancratii, and the Nasonii at Rome, all c.160, represent the very apogee of the Roman stucco-worker's craft. But it too seems to have declined thereafter, and by the early third century we have instances of walls and ceiling in the same room being painted with identical, humdrum, compartmentalized schemes, as in some of the early catacombs. Only in the occasional 'all-over' figured composition does second-century wall painting show signs of a different approach, as in a lively Hadrianic fishing scene from near the Porto Flumentano in Rome, but this appears to have become widespread only from early in the third century.

While painting was apparently in the doldrums, second-century mosaic work took on a new lease of life. The richly coloured, intricately figured panels of Hellenistic origin had continued to be made in Italy throughout the first century, and black-and-white figural mosaics in a silhouette style from the Augustan period onwards. From about AD 110 fresh life was injected into this style, with ambitious and enormously successful wall-to-wall compositions, depending for their effect not on spatial depth or naturalistic detail but on superb draughtsmanship. Outstanding Hadrianic examples include lively marine tableaux in the Baths of Neptune, and animal scenes in the Baths of the Seven Sages at Ostia; but the black-and-white style flourished throughout the Italian peninsula (and occasionally elsewhere) well into the third century. Purely ornamental mosaics in black and white, also widespread in Italy, became increasingly ornate, and both complicated curvilinear patterns and delicate floral arabesques enter the repertoire now. Ornamental designs were carried further in the experiments in polychromy that followed, both in Italy and the western provinces, from the

mid second century; while the floral arabesque was adopted in polychromy by African workshops, which were already preparing the way for the enormous outburst of creativity that mosaicists there were to display during the third and fourth century. That story, however, lies outside our scope; but in the prelude to the full flowering of mosaic in late antiquity, the second-century mosaicists of Italy had a vital role to play.

In state sculpture too, the second century represents a crucial transition, heralding the emergence of a late antique style which breaks free from the shackles of the Classical heritage. We have seen how the personal tastes of Hadrian left a distinctive mark on the sculpture of a generation; and an entirely classicizing spirit, technically excellent but frigid and dull, can be seen on 'official' relief sculpture from his reign, such as two panels from a demolished triumphal arch (c.136–8). The subject of one depicting the apotheosis of his wife Sabina, borne to heaven by a winged female figure and watched by Campus Martius and an impassive Hadrian, is taken up again on the monumental base for Antoninus' Column, dedicated posthumously in 161. Here it is the deceased Emperor as well as his consort who are conveyed aloft on an even more preposterous winged figure, probably a personification of the Golden Age, with Campus Martius and Roma in attendance below. Again we are dealing with sculpture which shows consummate naturalistic handling of its material; yet the overall impression is static, pompous, even comic. The same serene and rather lifeless quality also pervades some of the reliefs dedicated by Marcus Aurelius, probably on an arch of 175–6; these display in addition an increasing simplification of composition and the beginning of a more frontal emphasis for the Emperor, a pose that was to become *de rigueur* by the fourth century. All these state reliefs, however, despite high technical skill, mark the very end of the road for the Classical tradition: sculptors now found themselves in a cul-de-sac, anxious for an avenue of escape from what was becoming routine and devoid of challenge. The earliest sign of the search for a new sculptural language comes on the Antonine Column base of 161, in two panels showing scenes of a funeral procession, each with

ten footsoldiers of the Praetorian guard encircled by seventeen horsemen. The combination of horizontal and bird's eye perspective in a single scene is not in itself new, but on this scale it is novel, on a neutral background stripped of all setting; and the handling of the individual figures, with their large heads and dumpy bodies, also represents a new departure. The trend towards a fresh simplicity and abstraction of form is further developed on the Column of Aurelius, commemorating the Marcomannic Wars of 172–5 but not finished until 193. Inevitably compared unfavourably with the Column of Trajan, it lacks the involved action, the variety, the attention to detail of its forerunner. But its designer and sculptors were not seeking to make a duplicate of Trajan's Column. They intended to convey an impression of war rather than a detailed commentary on it, by presenting fewer episodes carved boldly and clearly, and instead of careful modelling we find rather flat surfaces, with grooved lines for drapery, and deep undercutting around the figures, designed to enhance the 'black-and-white' effect of the whole. A yet further stage in the development of what might be termed impressionistic sculpture can be seen on the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum (AD 203). It is easy to dismiss the groups of ill-proportioned two-dimensional figures with their heavily drilled hair and clothing as native and degenerate products, representative of sculpture in decline; but as the figures of the Seasons or the Victory spandrels on the same Arch—or indeed the magnificent contemporary figured sarcophagi commissioned by private patrons—amply demonstrate, the sculptors of the period had not forgotten how to carve naturalistically; they were merely searching for a new and different means of expression. In this they paved the way for the transition to late antiquity, and ultimately, through Byzantium, to the cathedral sculpture of medieval Europe.

### Further Reading

An excellent collection of source material in translation with brief linking commentary can be found in J. J. Pollitt, *Art of Rome* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ,