



Response to Jeffrey Schnapp

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Schnapp's tightly focused case study proves to be a formidable vantage point from which to consider, and possibly reformulate, wider questions about modern uses of the past and archaeology's role in mediating such evocations. The paper centers on an event that did not happen, as Pavia was *not* reconstructed in the 1930s according to the Ciocca/BBPR radical modernist and corporatist urban plan that appealed to the city's Roman past; instead it remained one of the spectacular historical medieval towns of Italy. In his investigation of this non-event, Schnapp places the modernist plan's turn to the past in a rich variety of contexts as he recounts the drawing of the proposal in the wake of the 1933 CIAM at Athens, the failure of the project at the open competition for Pavia's urban planning, the ensuing controversy and the combative exhibition dedicated to the failed plan itself. These different moments take us on an interdisciplinary ride into the culture of modernity, from the Fascist culture wars, to the novel means and arenas in which these conflicts were fought—such as the exhibition at the *Galleria il Milione*—and to individuals' trajectories realized against this complex background. Schnapp stimulatingly disentangles these many threads while keeping to his leading question—the tension between the radical modernist project of urban rebuilding and its appeal to the past as framed by a quotation from Livy. He resolves this tension by exposing the urbanists' mistaken interpretation of Livy's text—*omnes in corpus unum fusi sunt*—which was wishfully understood to resonate with modern fascist corporativism. Schnapp shows how the evocation of that past, Roman austerity and its civic and rational *virtus*, was put in the service of functional architecture and the new radical modernist program. This

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106 skillful analysis is not only a case study in the use of the Roman past and archaeology in Fascist culture but also illuminates broader questions about the central role of archaeology in modernity.

The appropriation of ancient Rome in modern Italian Fascism has received considerable attention in the until recently little explored field of the history of archaeology. Well before the recent efforts to understand various aspects of Fascist culture—from industrial development, economic organization and transportation to architecture, the organization of consensus and their relation to avant-gardist movements—as distorted but somewhat genuine forms of authoritarian and compulsive modernization, the idea of Rome was long considered the only cultural component of Fascist ideology even by Italian scholars who, like Norberto Bobbio, disdainfully opposed the application of the category of culture to any of the activities of the Fascist regime.¹ Since the 1970s, moreover, the very role and work of classicists and archaeologists during Fascism has come under scrutiny, thus touching a sensitive spot for the Italian academy, which arguably displays unsettling continuities through the pre- and post-Fascist periods (for example, eight popular as well as scholarly periodicals dedicated to the ancient world of Rome were started under Fascist sponsorship, and many of them continued publication well after 1945, and some unto the present day). Luciano Canfora called as early as 1976 for both the exposure of such connections and the investigation of how such contacts influenced the content of scholarship. Debates have been harsh (most recently about the publication of some apparently “Fascist” letters by the famous ancient historian Arnaldo Momigliano); Italian colonialist archaeology overseas, as well as the excavations of the Fori in Rome, much desired by Mussolini himself, have come under close investigation and strong criticism.² But Canfora’s dismissal of Fascist ideas of Rome as devoid of any historical depth needs to be further examined: we have learned much about the misdeeds of academic archaeology under Fascism, but less about the practices and cultural contexts in which to place them, thus possibly creating an artificial gap. For example, a recent article effectively shows how in the 1930s a Roman historian strongly aligned with the regime produced both propaganda for Fascist corporativism and highly valued scholarly work on ancient Roman *collegia*.³ This simple denunciation of dichotomy rather calls for further investigation from the perspective of interdisciplinary studies. In moving across the borders of scholarly culture, Schnapp’s study leads the way, offering further insights into conflicting uses and constructions of the past in Fascist Italy.

The Pavia plan case study shows that both the past and the modes of its appropriation were fields of contest. As early as 1922 Mussolini made ancient *romanitas* central to his ideological project: he talked of an “Italian [ancient] Rome wise and strong, disciplined and imperialist” and of the need to strip and liberate Roman monuments from all that had grown around them during the centuries of decadence. But stripping is no neutral practice: it can reach different depths and reveal different layers. The Ciocca and BBPR’s proposed stripping of Pavia reveals a different ideal Fascist Rome more in line with the ambiguous attitude of Le Corbusier in “Lesson of Rome,” who ironically concluded his appeal to Rome’s example by stating that a visit to the eternal

city would cripple students of architecture for life. Le Corbusier's concern was not just that later periods' monuments obscured Roman glory, but that Rome had always been too "huddled together."⁴ According to him, Romans were at their best as great architects, and indeed the first planners in Western history, not in Rome itself, but in the newly conquered, empty regions they equipped in order to control. This was the same *romanitas* that Ciocca and BBPR laboriously searched for and claimed in Pavia's origins as a Roman *castra*. Le Corbusier, seeing through buildings and monuments of "huddled together" Rome, detected and distilled their underlying simple masses and geometries (cupolas, vaulting, cylinders, rectangular prisms, or pyramids). Pavia, on the other hand, with its rich display of essentially medieval architecture of the Lombard, communal, and Viscontean past, offered no such possibility. Ciocca and BBPR conjured their vision of the Roman past by taking recourse to Livy's narrative and pointing to the feeble traces in Pavia's maps of the Roman *castra's* original regular structure. This complex palimpsest of texts and map surveys stripped Pavia back to its Roman origins, while simultaneously projecting its future and putting the modern urbanists poised for reconstruction face to face with the ancient Roman city planners praised by Le Corbusier. But Pavia's Roman past of Scipio, Cato, and Caesar's moral and military virtue, is much different from the Augustan imperial one sought for in the excavation of Rome's imperial Fori.

Despite the different version of the Roman past pursued by the Ciocca and BBPR in Pavia and the Augustan revolution in Rome, these projects also share practices and modes of representation which further speak to the significant role of archaeology in the construction of modernity. The exhibition of the Pavia plan in Milan at *Galleria il Milione* cannot but recall the grand exhibitions on ancient Rome of those years: the 1911 exhibition on Roman culture's contribution to the West, but especially the one to honor the bimillenary of Augustus, the *Mostra Augustea* planned in 1933 and opened in 1938 (on the same day as the exhibition on Fascist revolution) which combined a chronological arc (reaching from the founding of Rome all the way to Fascist Italy) with an exploration of daily life in ancient imperial Rome. On a smaller scale and with no objects, the Pavia exhibition shared with the Augustan one the effort to move the visitor, by means of very modernly conceived images, through time and space to a vision of a city, be it future or past. The excavators in Rome boasted: "we have dug out 4,000 cubic meters of soil, we have transported to the dumps 10,000 cubic meters of remains, we have reconstructed at amazing heights 1,300 square meters of roofing." These words would have sounded just right in the mouth of Ciocca, but while special laws allowed the destruction necessary for the excavation of the Fori, Pavia was preserved. In some ways Ciocca and BBPR are the ideal archaeologists as they conjured their vision without the actual destruction that archaeological practices necessitate, but also suppress in their claims to recover the past. But as Schnapp shows, it is precisely the close relationship between construction and destruction embodied in archaeology that puts it at the center of many tropes of modernity. Encounters between ideology and scholarship take place within this wider context, in which, just as in scholarly debates, the past is contested ground. We are reminded that any such appropria-

108 tion of the past involves a selection, as Schnapp writes, by another project realized in post–World War II Italy by the surviving members of BBPR. This is the Torre Velasca, an unusual modernist skyscraper in Milan that uses, instead of ancient Rome, the model of the medieval tower (explicitly alluding to the towers of the Castello Sforzesco)—and combines a geometric and modernist shape with a Gothic look.

Notes

1. N. Bobbio, “La cultura e il fascismo,” in G. Quazza, ed., *Fascismo e società italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), 209–46.

2. Most of these debates took place in the journal *Quaderni di Storia* edited by Canfora: see especially Canfora, “Classicismo e fascismo,” *QdS* 3 (1976): 15–48; M. Cagnetta, “Augusto e la ‘rivoluzione’ fascista,” *QdS* 3 (1976) 139–81; and D. Manacorda, “Aspetti dell’archeologia italiana durante il fascismo. A proposito di Mussolini urbanista,” *Dialoghi di Archeologia* (1982): 89–96; and D. Manacorda and R. Tamassia, *Il piccone del regime* (Rome: Armando Curcio, 1985); for the polemics on Momigliano see *La Repubblica*, 16 March 2002.

3. See J. Perry, “Ancient *Collegia*, Modern Blackshirts: The Study of Roman Corporations in Fascist Italy,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 8 (2001–2002): 205–16.

4. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (1927; London: Architectural Press, 1946), 141–61.