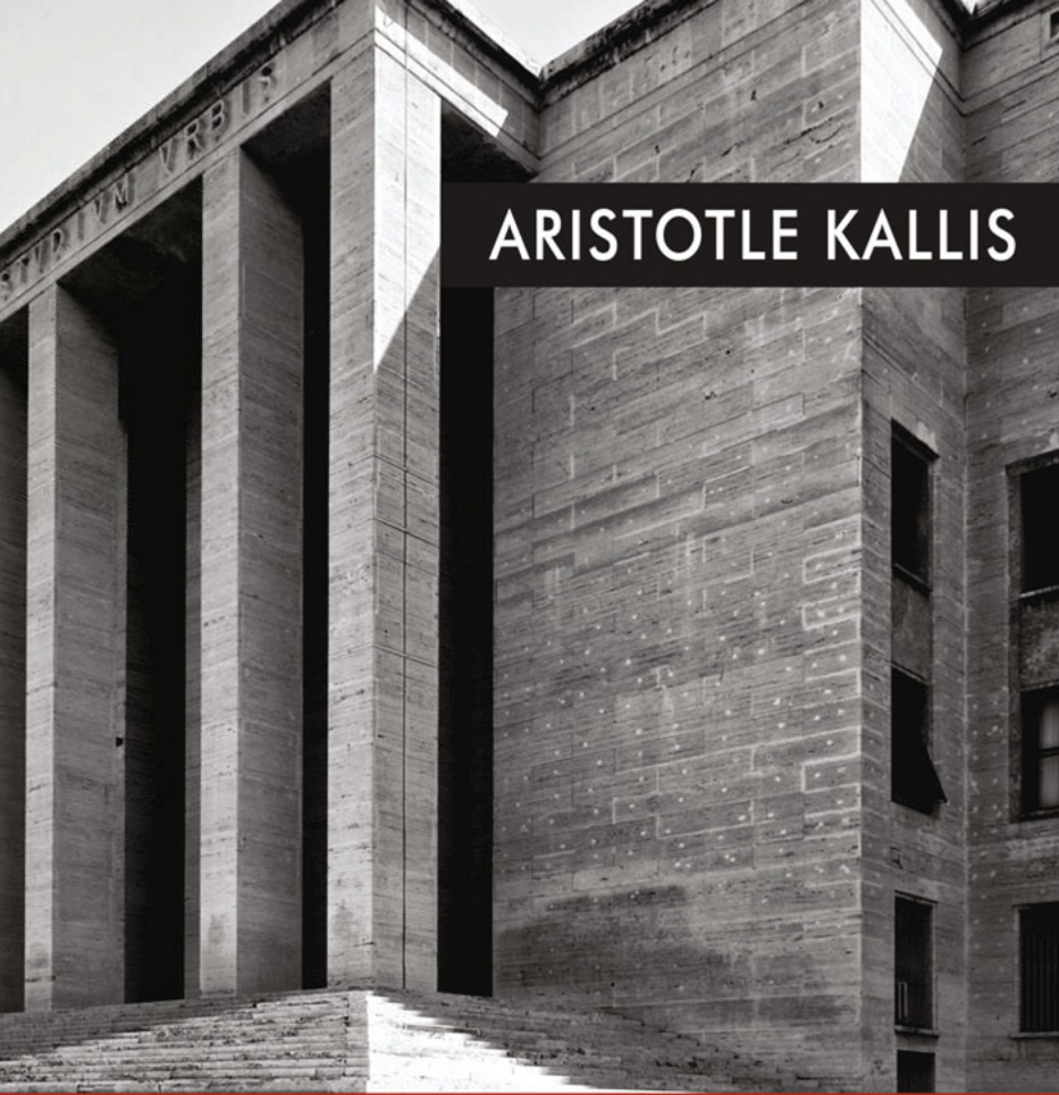
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ARISTOTLE KALLIS

THE THIRD ROME 1922–1943

THE MAKING OF THE FASCIST CAPITAL

The Third Rome, 1922–1943

Also by Aristotle Kallis

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The Third Rome, 1922–1943

The Making of the Fascist Capital

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Summary: "Rome underwent a spectacular transformation under Fascist rule; a transformation that was visual and topographical but also deeply symbolic. The 'third Rome' that Mussolini envisioned and sought to realise in the 1920s and 1930s was partly a new city, expanding in all directions from the historic centre, and partly a new vision for an ideal city that emerged from within a cityscape forged across millennia of history. This Rome was intended to be both the capital of a regenerated Italy and the sanctuary of a new international fascist political religion. Aristotle Kallis traces the plethora of visions and projects that sought to reimagine, reinvent, and reshape the city as a 'fascist capital' over the course of twenty short years. Extensive demolitions, reconfigurations of sites and monuments, as well as ambitious new constructions designed by an array of architects in wildly different styles, chronicle a fascinating story of conquering drive, ruthless appropriation, and interrupted ambition"—Provided by publisher.

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Maps

The maps and diagrams featured in the book are for illustrative purposes. The source data for the main background scans of Rome used in the diagrams are derived from OpenStreetMap and made available at http://www.openstreetmap.org/relation/41485 under the Open Database License (ODbL). See more at http://opendatacommons.org/licenses/odbl/1.0/#sthash.gPUEK5Jc.dpuf. All other aspects of the maps and diagrams constitute original artwork.

Acknowledgements

They say that a book starts with a quasi-epiphanic moment and ends with compiling the 'acknowledgements' section. I do remember the moment that I first entertained the idea of writing a book on interwar Rome. It is one of those moments that is, to use a phrase that occurs regularly in the following pages, a moment (and a memory) *rooted* in space – the corner of Via del Viminale and Via Torino in the central Monti district of Rome, to be precise. I have strolled past it on numerous occasions since then, during my increasingly longer and more frequent stays in the city, for research and pleasure, and most often both. Until now, this wholly unremarkable spot in the Roman cityscape reminded me of a project born out of love for the city but still hanging over me like a suspended sentence. Next time I pass by, I will at least recount the moment of this book's inception without the dread of *non-finito*.

I will always recall what a close friend once said to me: 'you never *finish* a book; you just find what seems like a good moment to abandon it'. Over the years since that moment in Monti, I have spent so many incredibly enjoyable months in Rome, hidden inside archives and libraries but always finding the time to get immersed in the city's majestic palimpsest. This quickly became a solitary game – to spot as many of these hidden spots where the tectonic plates of history collided, revealing the most unexpected traces of the past – of different pasts, in fact. In the process, I think I have earned the privilege of a special relationship with the city – one no longer based on the intensity of the early encounters but on a deeper intimacy with, and appreciation of, what Rome is.

The subject of the book has redirected my gaze away from the grand monuments of the city's past and towards a far more recent 'layer' in its long and vicissitudinous history. I ended up being the one who photographed a small, inconspicuous column with his back turned on the Colosseo; the one looking at the inscriptions of modern buildings in the opposite direction of St Peter's basilica; the one stopping to observe obscure mosaics in bustling railway stations; the one staring at faded insignia carved on walls that flanked Augustus' Mausoleum; the one surveying inconspicuous streets, trying to imagine how they must have looked like before the demolitions of the 1930s or how they would have looked like if the designs I had encountered during my research in the archives had been realised. No two people's Rome is the same of course. But mine is perhaps a little bit more offbeat than most.

Researching and writing this book has been a long, adventurous journey. It has spanned nearly a decade that started, in academic terms, at the Department of Historical Studies of the University of Bristol, then passed

through the Department of European Languages and Cultures at Lancaster University, and now finds me at the Department of History of the same institution. The journey has produced many lasting memories but also debts, again rooted in place and space: the Archivio Centrale dello Stato, the Archivio Storico Capitolino, the Museo di Roma, and the various branches of the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome; the Fondo Marcello Piacentini in Florence; the library of the Triennale in Milan; the library and archive of the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris; the Bodleian Library in Oxford; the National Libraries in London and Edinburgh; as well as numerous university libraries in Italy and the UK. So many people working in these institutions went out of their way to help me with locating material, suggesting resources, and making special arrangements for consulting documents. I thanked them at the time and I am renewing my thanks to them now.

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Last but not least, I am immensely grateful to Palgrave for accepting the book, waiting patiently for its completion, and then steering it with efficiency through the labyrinth that is the production process. Michael Strang, then editor of the History catalogue at Palgrave, supported the book at the early stages and was terribly kind in granting my wish to include a significant amount of illustrative material in it. But it was Clare Mence and Emily Russell who saw it through during the final, long, tortuous stretch: always available, always supportive, always willing to help me overcome the various obstacles to completion (production details, image copyrights, but above all my impressionistic attitude to timeframes and deadlines). I am also grateful to Eric Christianson for his meticulous proofreading of the manuscript during the final stages of production.

I know of many people who will be pleased to hear that I have completed this book – my parents, my colleagues at work, and my close friends with whom I discussed it at various stages and lengths (among them Mark and Tobi McBride, with whom I have always shared a unique appreciation of 'being in Rome'). I also know of just a few people who will be especially relieved, having been forced to 'live' with this book longer and closer than they had ever imagined. Well, it is over. I thank them for their unconditional support, encouragement, and inexhaustible forbearance.

Aristotle Kallis
December 2013

List of Abbreviations

ANMIG	Associazione Nazionale fra Mutilati e Invalidi di Guerra
AOI	Africa Orientale Italiana
BNL	Banca Nazionale del Lavoro
BUF	British Union of Fascists
CAUR	Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma
E42/EUR	Esposizione Universale di Roma 1942
FIaE	Fasci Italiani all'Estero
GDAFA	Direzione Generale per le Antichità e Belle Arti
GIL	Gioventù Italiana del Littorio
GUR	Gruppo Urbanisti Romani
ICP	Istituto Case Popolari
INA	Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni
INAIL	Istituto Nazionale per l'Assicurazione contro gli Infortuni sul Lavoro
INCIS	Istituto Nazionale per le Case degli Impiegati dello Stato
INU	Istituto Nazionale dell'Urbanistica
ISR	Istituto di Studi Romani
MAdR	Mostra Augustea della Romanità
MAMI	Mostra Autarchica del Minerale Italiano
MCE	Mostra delle Colonie Estive e Assistenza all'Infanzia
MCP	Ministero di Cultura Popolare
MD	Mostra del Dopolavoro
MdCI	Mostra della Civiltà Italiana
MdR	Mostra della Romanità
MdRF	Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista
MIAR	Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale
MTN	Mostra del Tessile Nazionale
MVSN	Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
ONB	Opera Nazionale Balilla

ONC	Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti
OND	Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro
ONMI	Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia
PNF	Partito Nazionale Fascista
PRG	Piano Regolatore Generale
RAMI	Raggruppamento Architetti Moderni Italiani

Introduction

Lanciani's Roman Palimpsest

At the turn of the twentieth century, the professor of Roman topography and head of the Municipal Archaeological Committee Rodolfo Lanciani was close to completing two of the most important projects of his career. The first was a reconstruction of the third-century Forma Urbis Romae – a giant marble relief showing the plan of the imperial capital that had been completely destroyed but whose fragments (both known and subsequently discovered) Lanciani and his team had painstakingly pieced together. The partially reconstructed ancient plan was presented to the public in 1903 at a special conference held in the headquarters of the municipality on the historic Campidoglio hill (Palombi 2006: 284). Lanciani's second project was a set of 46 detailed maps of Roman topography, indicating the presumed location of long-forgotten ancient monuments (from the foundation of Rome until the fourth century CE) against the visible surface of the contemporary city. The illustrations were published in serial format between 1893 and 1901 under the title *Forma Urbis Romae*, offering an incredibly detailed two-dimensional reconstruction of the imperial city on a 1:1000 scale (Lanciani 1893–1901).

At the time Lanciani was the de facto authority on Roman topography and archaeology. He supervised almost every excavation in Rome and the surrounding region of Lazio, recording meticulously every detail concerning the findings and imputing every new fragment of information into his already vast knowledge of Rome's history. The two Formae Urbis Romae that he presented – one as an archaeologist and historian, the other as an expert topographer and cartographer – shaped a detailed mental image of a city that no longer existed, having vanished across centuries of decay, neglect, and wanton destruction. With his own *Forma*, however, Lanciani achieved something that went far beyond a detailed reconstruction in two dimensions. He crafted a composite image consisting of two flattened layers – one contemporary indicated in blue colour, the other ancient and largely obscured or faded in red. By making the contemporary map of the city opaque, he delivered a vivid snapshot of Rome as an urban *palimpsest* that linked spatially the stratigraphy of the ancient city-legend with the modern visible layer of the capital.

Initially a literary term derived from the ancient and medieval practice of erasing and reinscribing parchment, the trope of the **palimpsest** (Fig. 1.1, 1.2) has been fruitfully applied to urban history by approaching the city as a field of multiple inscriptions, erasures, and emendations. The urban palimpsest is the product of *polychronicity* – that is, of change over time inscribed on space, creating a layering of space that both reveals and obscures fragments of the past. The palimpsest is a record of accumulation over time and on the actual physical surface of the space of inscription – some visible, others faded or truncated, many hidden or lost. It delivers fragments of the past, of different, often fiercely competing pasts; but it also reveals stories about the natural forces and human agencies that have shaped it. The palimpsest is both a rich, yet incongruous literal record of a city's sedimented history and a metaphorical register of memories, scars, and ambitious visions (Huyssen 2010: 74–5). But it is not a passive record of history, just like the city itself is far from a homogenous, static space. Rather, the urban palimpsest is a laboratory of a multitude of very different temporal effects, waiting not just to be revealed but also to be invented, crafted, and reinscribed on the city's contemporary space and memory. As visible and obscured/erased record, it

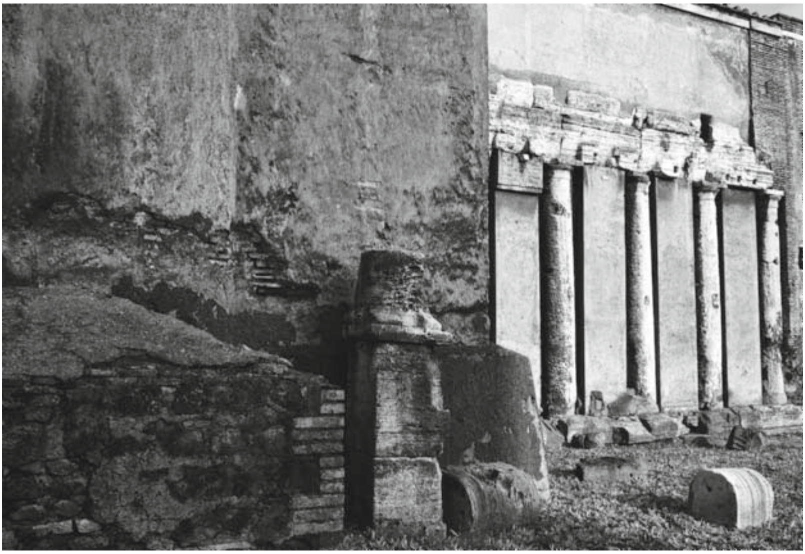

Figure 1.1 Palimpsest: San Nicola in Carcere, with remnants of ancient temple (Via del Teatro di Marcello, ex-Via del Mare)

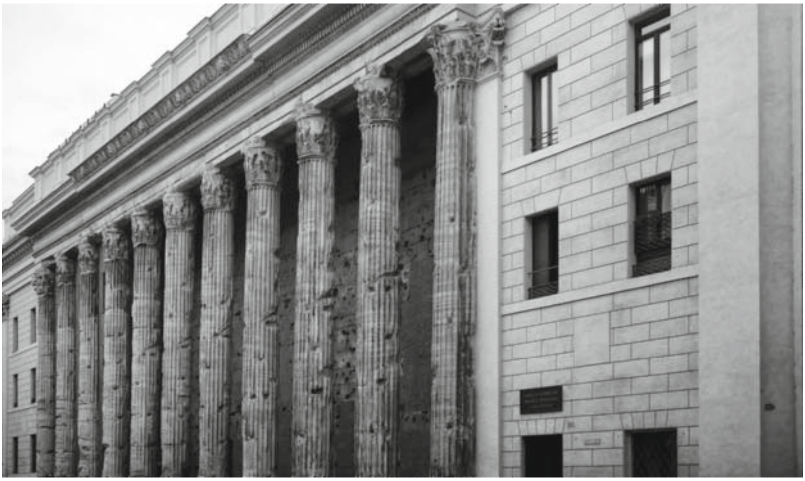

Figure 1.2 Temple of Hadrian (Piazza Petra) incorporated into an eighteenth-century building

contains the raw materials of the city's pasts but can also re-imagine and re-create the past in the present (Harris 2009: 97–101).

That Rome is one of the most complex and fascinating urban palimpsests is of course beyond doubt (Jenkyns 2013: 259). Nearly three millennia of history have left behind a prolific archive of material traces and metaphorical memories, scattered across (or beneath) the urban space. The layering effect is nothing short of fascinating, especially since it captures trails from conflicting visions and agencies over a period in which the city was considered, in different ways, a kind of global epicentre. Like every other location of long-term continuous settlement, Rome features a multifaceted visible layer that captures incongruously evidence from diverse human agencies over time – echoes from realised visions, accidents, victories, failures, and disasters. This visible layer, however, also reveals and obscures a rich array of buried layers that echo a far more eventful historical record of spatial and symbolic battles – whether as a struggle against nature or as relentless contestation by different rulers who aspired to make the city their own. All these battles – and, above all, their deliberate or unwitting outcomes – were inevitably inscribed on the city's physical environment, leaving unmistakeable traces of intention and choice, of creative contribution as well as of alteration, appropriation, and erasure. The visible layer is thus neither linear nor homogeneous in any topographical or temporal sense. It is rather like an incongruous collage that disrupts stratigraphy and time – the sediment of a multitude of vastly asynchronous efforts to contest and change the city's environment over nearly three millennia of habitation (De Certeau 2002: 201). At any point in its long history, Rome's visible layer appeared as an incongruous archive of its fortunes, past and present, that both revealed and obscured (i.e. fused, buried, or erased) evidence of earlier human agencies.

As both a historian and an archaeologist, Lanciani studied the city as a fascinating horizontal sediment *and* a multi-layered vertical section (Kavanagh 1998: 1). The sediment included a rich visible record of human interventions over time that had to be recorded in their fascinating textured forms, linkages, and juxtapositions. The section, on the other hand, revealed multiple strata of the chronotope that had to be classified, analysed separately, placed on some sort of hierarchy, and recovered where possible and desirable. Lanciani's *Forma*, however, also appeared in a deeply charged political context that involved the entire kingdom of Italy but had a special resonance in and for Rome. On 20 September 1870 the troops of the fledgling Italian kingdom breached Rome's ancient Aurelian walls at Porta Pia and marched into the city as victorious conquerors. In so doing, they completed in the most emphatic way a process of national unification that had started 11 years earlier. The Risorgimento had already delivered an Italian nation-state in 1861; but it was a state that did not satisfy the dreams of its leaders and supporters in one crucial respect, leaving Rome and its surrounding territories under papal rule. The dramatic conquest of Rome in September 1870 signified the fulfilment of a symbolic dream – to make Rome the political and spiritual fulcrum of Italian national life – whose origins stretched further back than 1859–60 – to the ill-fated Roman Republics of 1849 or even 1797 (Giardina and Vauchez 2000: 170–7; Weigel 1990: 18–1).

The year 1870 also closed a millennial chapter in the history of Rome and marked a new beginning. It took until February 1871 for the decision to transfer the capital from Florence to Rome to be taken and a few more for the move to take effect (Lasansky 2004: 30). As a modern national capital, Rome had to host the new structures of national power – the head of state, the government, ministries, and multiple bureaucracies (Hall 2006). It also had to prepare for a demographic boom, not only because of the expected influx of labour into the capital city but also because its development had been previously stifled by the anachronistic structures of the Papal States (Hall 1997: 290–8). Above all, however, the city had to devise ways to communicate clearly its novel status, functions, and aspirations as a truly national capital, worthy of the legacy of the Risorgimento (Gentile 2009: 11). This meant that Rome had to be *recoded* – visually and symbolically, both in its individual components and as a city-symbol – in order to reflect a new urban legibility that could not have been more different to the one that it had until 1870 (Kallis 2012: 44–7).

The enormity and complexity of this task was revealed to the new Piedmontese rulers of the city only in the wake of their triumph. By the time that the Italian troops made their way through the ancient city walls towards the centre, the city's ruler that they had defeated, Pope Pius IX, had already fled his official residence at the Quirinale palace to the Leonine city across the river – a resentful and frustrated ‘prisoner’ in his erstwhile sacred capital, refusing to grant even a shred of recognition to the ‘usurpers’. Thus, on this date of national jubilation, the so-called ‘Roman Question’ was also born inside Rome itself – a clash of two sovereignties and figureheads over the ownership of the city, its erstwhile territories, and above all its huge symbolic estate. There would be no ‘sack’ of the city in 1870, even if violent clashes between supporters of the papacy and the king did occur for months after the annexation of Rome and anti-clerical mobs caused damage to church property (Kertzer 2006: 112–17). Against the counsel of some of his own advisors, Pius IX never left the Leonine city. King Vittorio Emanuele II never truly settled in the new capital either. Both died within a month of each other in 1878, bequeathing the bitter legacy of the ‘Roman Question’ to their successors and beyond.

Even without the ‘Roman Question’, transforming Rome into a national civic capital after so many centuries of strong association with Christianity and the papacy was no mean task. The Rome of 1870 was a diminished city of just over 225,000 inhabitants (smaller than Naples, Milan, Genova, and Palermo), with a strikingly under-developed socioeconomic profile largely at odds with the other established modern European metropoles (Casciato 2002: 127; Pagnotta 2002: 203–9; Archibugi 2005: 1–16). It was also an alien and incongruous space, replete with discordant imagery and symbols, that was difficult to ‘occupy’ and re-signify (Giardina and Vauchez 2000: 178, 193; Bosworth 2011). It featured a bewildering assortment of monuments from across two millennia, as well as the traces and scars from earlier efforts to ‘conquer’ and appropriate it – all inscribed on (or buried just underneath) the modern cityscape (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azeryahu 2010). Rome was no stranger to the kind of visual, topographic, and semiotic recoding that its post-1870 rulers embarked on as soon as they annexed the city into the Italian kingdom. Imperial rulers had done so to the earlier Republican city (e.g. Ruff 2012). Then came the gradual but profound reimagining of Rome as a universal Christian centre, driven by the papacy throughout medieval and early modern times (Goodson 2011: 17–34; Curran 2002). The post-Risorgimento recoding of the city as a modern national metropolis was the third major such project – but with the added burden of 15 centuries of accumulated, contradictory histories (Agnew 2002: 49–52). Over centuries the ‘Christian’ Rome had emerged as a city with a unique spiritual and universalist physiognomy roughly on the location of the old imperial capital that it had superseded. Now its newly arrived Italian rulers would have to do the same for their national capital – but under the far more unfavourable and fraught conditions generated by the shadow of the ‘Roman Question’ and the belated state formation (cf. Wise 1998: 14).

In the intervening three decades between the momentous events of 1870 and the publication of Lanciani’s *Forma*, Rome’s visible layer had already changed to reflect the city's new status as national capital with a unique historical significance. Apart from archaeological excavations and restorations of landmark buildings across the historic centre, a new national **monument** to the king of the Risorgimento, **Vittorio Emanuele II** (Vittoriano), was being constructed next to the Campidoglio, dramatically transforming the look and feel of the area around it. The city had also expanded towards the northeast, with new traffic arteries connecting the new and old centre. The visible changes effected during the first three decades since its annexation by the Italian kingdom, significant though they were individually, had not fundamentally altered Rome's visible layer by the turn of the century. And yet, at the turn of the twentieth century Rome *appeared* and *felt* like a very different city to the pre-1870 one. Its visible layer had been superimposed with a very different filter – of the national capital and hub of a new Italian secular identity – that had started to supplant the earlier one associated with the 'second Rome', the 'city of the popes' and spiritual centre of universal Christianity. The national filter forced a new legibility onto the old, mostly familiar components of the city's visible layer. Meanwhile, after centuries of neglect and destruction, the city's ancient heritage (the 'first Rome') had started to receive fresh attention, not only because it desperately needed conservation but also because it served the contemporary narrative of a homogeneous, diachronic national identity and accentuated the departure from the 'confessional' city that the national capital had replaced but not fully eclipsed.

This was the political and cultural atmosphere in which Lanciani's work was conceived, carried out, and effusively praised at the turn of the twentieth century. His maps of the ancient city were a captivating simulacrum of a mythical space and time – both a scientific representation/reconstruction of something that allegedly was and a powerful statement of intent for the city that would be. The maps reminded the contemporary viewer of the glory of a bygone era and the effects of prior destruction; but they also produced a near-complete mental image of a previously invisible heritage that was portrayed as central to the new collective national identity of modern Italians (Harding 2003: 1–3). In these highly charged political circumstances of nation-building amidst the ripple effects from the 'Roman Question', Rome's palimpsest offered the possibility of a novel, powerful alternative signification, with new relations unearthed and invented to support the national and anti-clerical discourse of national unification. The city had already become an arena of political conflict for power over space and time, like so many times in its long history.

The history of Rome, as well as of Italy, would enter a new dramatic phase in the months between the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 and Italy's decision to join the conflict in May 1915. During these nine tumultuous months, a popular coalition in favour of Italy's immediate intervention (*intervento*) brought together wildly disparate forces – old and new nationalists, dissidents of the left and the right, political and intellectual radicals. The main target of the *intervento* movement was the political elites and institutions of Liberal Italy – allegedly corrupt, timid, and lacking in national vision, they were now also accused of condemning the country to the sidelines of what was seen as an epoch-defining pan-European conflict (Griffin 2008: 206–9; Roberts 2005: 15–17). Rome, therefore, became a de facto enemy of the movement as the city that epitomised the putative flaws of the 'official' Italy – the *paese legale* as they referred to it, in stark contrast to the *paese reale*, the 'real' Italy still motivated by the mythology of the Risorgimento (Vivarelli 1976). The city also became a physical battleground, where the forces of the *intervento* challenged the ailing 'official' Liberal Italy. By early May 1915 Rome was witnessing big popular rallies in favour of intervention with distinguished speakers who had come to the capital for the final showdown with the Liberal government. Piazza Venezia and the Campidoglio (not Piazza Colonna, site of the parliament building) became the chosen backdrops to the *intervento* rallies that gathered momentum during what the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio described as the 'radiant days of May (1915)' (Knox 2007: 177). It was there that D'Annunzio invoked the whole mythology of ancient Rome, the 1848 Republic, and the Risorgimento, declaring that the only legitimate parliament of the country was made up of its people (Isnenghi 1979: 83). When the decision to enter the war was finally announced on 24 May 1915, the *intervento* movement celebrated the moment as a symbolic watershed – a victory of the 'real' Italy over its decaying 'official' counterpart.

The war proved a rollercoaster for Italy – from the disaster of the battle of Caporetto in 1917 to the victory of Vittorio Veneto in 1918 and from the anticipation of territorial rewards to the frustration-ridden mythology of a 'mutilated victory' in the wake of the Versailles negotiations that delivered only modest territorial gains for Italy (Bonadeo 1995: 125–32). In hindsight, the post-First World War return to a semblance of normality proved a short and uneasy hiatus. In an atmosphere of deepening crisis – economic, political and institutional, but to a large extent psychological (Payne 1997: 87–94) – the city came to be viewed with hostility as the seat of a haggard political class that had seemingly exhausted its course. At the same time, however, another Rome – a mythical symbol of fierce discipline and dedication, of national renewal, universalist import, and civilisational primacy – was rapidly taking shape in the imaginary of new radical nationalist political forces consumed by the sense of a new beginning in the history of modern Italy (Giardina and Vauchez 2000: 215–19; Griffin 2008a: 211–13). One of these forces was Fascism – the movement founded by the dissident ex-socialist Benito Mussolini in March 1919. The choice of location for this founding event – the Piazza San Sepolcro in the centre of Milan – reflected a conviction widely shared among radicals that the northern metropolis, rather than Rome, was the 'moral' capital of the country, untainted by the decadence of the *paese legale* (Rosa 1982;

Agnew 1998: 230). Indeed, Rome remained largely marginal to the early history of Fascism, as it had done in relation to other radical movements that appeared in the effervescent atmosphere of the prewar years (Adamson 1992; Gentile 2003: 27–76). Yet, three years later, in his speech for the celebration of the city's 'birthday' (21 April 1922), Mussolini proclaimed that it was the very 'myth of Rome' that had shaped Fascism as a movement and underpinned its most cherished beliefs. Reclaimed from its disgraced rulers and liberated from the spirit of mediocrity that had marked its history since 1870, Mussolini argued, the city could be reconnected with its own supreme destiny and thus lead the way to a profound national reawakening (*Opera* XVIII: 160–1; Giardina and Vauchez 2000: 212–20).

In this sense, when the Fascists organised their 'March on Rome' in late October 1922, they were joining a long list of conquerors and self-professed liberators who sought in Rome a prized possession – territorial, political, and symbolic. The 'March' was a nakedly hostile gesture against what Rome represented at the time but also an act of putatively restoring the 'myth' to the city that gave birth to it – 'to make Rome Roman again' (De Marsanich 1942: 336). To conquer this city was regarded as the highest symbolic prize for a movement whose ambition was to usher in a new, epoch-defining beginning in the history of the Italian nation. The dramatic events of 26–8 October 1922 may have been largely invisible to the inhabitants of Rome, unfolding elsewhere in Italy or behind inaccessible official doors. Strictly speaking, Rome capitulated to Fascism without much of a fight; the 'March' of the numerous but poorly equipped Fascists expired in the outskirts of the capital, drowned in uncertainty, lack of coordination, and torrential rain (Segre 1988: 91; Baxa 2010: 47–54). Even so, when the Fascist columns were allowed to enter the city on the morning of 30 October and marched on the streets, neither they nor the few onlookers, who greeted them coldly and often with outright hostility, could fail to register the sheer symbolic significance of the Fascist squads' presence in Rome, as the closest equivalent to modern-day conquerors.

The Faces of the 'Third Rome': 1922, 1932, 1942

Fascism arrived in Rome nearly two decades after the publication of Lanciani's *Forma*. Although it did not seem like it at the time, this event marked the beginning of yet another dramatic new phase in the history of the city. Mussolini entered Rome as the figurehead of a self-proclaimed 'revolution'. But this was a peculiar 'revolution', built on a discursive paradox: a force of rupture with the recent past that was nevertheless in thrall to its myths of national palingenesis and historical lineage from Roman antiquity (Kallis 2012: 57–8). As much as it was viscerally opposed to the preceding Liberal Italy and the 'legal Rome' of the bourgeois political class, it was also captivated by the dream of Italian nationalism that had animated the Risorgimento and shaped the national imaginary after 1870.

Both before and after the March on Rome in October 1922, the Fascists had tried to appropriate landmark places from both the ancient, Renaissance, and the Risorgimental history of the city. They had claimed Julius Caesar and Augustus, Dante and Michelangelo, Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi, as their spiritual ancestors and sources of inspiration. When Mussolini and his officials spoke admiringly of the Rome that they were dreaming of, they referred to a 'third Rome' (*terza Roma*) as both a new and an iterative city that would subsume a long lineage of its glorious predecessors – the imperial and the medieval/Renaissance (papal) cities – but would equally expunge other periods from the city's mythology. This would be a city both in rupture with its perceived contemporary decadence and one whose timeless, heroic quintessence already inhered within the urban palimpsest of contemporary Rome but had to be 'reclaimed' from the ravages of time, 'liberated' from degrading accretions, and complemented by new constructions worthy of the city's vast, momentous symbolic estate (Baxa 2010: 10–12). This 'third Rome' was believed to be a city invested with a renewed epoch-defining mission like its illustrious ancient and medieval predecessors. It also promised to become the harbinger of a regenerated Italy and the vanguard of a new universal civilisation, tapping unashamedly into the unfulfilled mythopoeias of the Risorgimento (Giardina and Vauchez 2000: 238–41; Manacorda and Tamassia 1985: 158).

It took more than two years for Mussolini to take the step and proclaim a genuine Fascist dictatorship in January 1925. But the symbolic consecration of the Fascist 'revolution' came a further seven years later – in 1932, on the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome that had propelled Mussolini to power. Marking the occasion with a lavish, superbly choreographed exhibition dedicated to the Fascist 'revolution' that was held in Rome, the Fascist regime constructed a visual spectacle that sought to confirm its place of honour in the national historical imaginary. Rome, the resurgent national capital, hosted the most daring statement of Fascism's historical self-legitimisation as the culmination of a distinct historical lineage that led from the legends of Romulus and Remus to the Risorgimento and finally to Mussolini. By focusing the exhibition on the period between 1914 and 1922, Fascism located its rupture with Liberal Italy against the backdrop of the revived Roman *lictor*, the gigantic Latin numeral X that crowned the entrance to the exhibition, and the national *tricolore*. It moved its sacred symbols, the archive of its struggles, and the memory of its 'martyrs' to the heart of Rome, even if the movement's spiritual and historical cradle had been identified with the northern metropolis of Milan, where Mussolini had launched his movement in 1919. The festivities of 1932 (Decennale) covered Rome in a Fascist cloak and celebrated 1922 as a putative watershed moment of unparalleled *national* historic significance.

During its first decade of its rule, the Fascist regime authorised and carried out significant interventions inside Rome. A large part of these had either been already envisioned in previous years or followed organically from norms and priorities firmly established before 1922. The city of 1932 retained all the landmarks – ancient, medieval, modern – that it had back in 1922, with only few additions, most of which were situated in the city's peripheral zones. Seismic changes were nevertheless on the horizon. A few years earlier, in 1929, the Fascist regime had signed a series of accords with the Vatican church that had laid to rest, in theory at least, nearly six decades of bitter conflict between the Italian state and the papacy. Solving the 'Roman Question' that had scarred the city since 1870 and cast a shadow on its role as the cradle of a unifying diachronic identity for all Italians afforded a new meaning to the Fascist discourse of the 'third Rome'. While before 1929 Fascism had carved its own place in Italian history in relation to the myth of *romanità* and the spirit of the Risorgimento, bypassing (like its Liberal predecessors had done) vexing associations with the city's papal past, now the 'third Rome' could tap into the arsenal of potent millenarian myths associated with both the imperial and the Christian cities of the past.

The second important change had not happened in Italy. By the time that the 1932 Fascist exhibition in Rome closed its doors to the public on 28 October 1934, Adolf Hitler had been appointed Chancellor, entrenched his personal power, and used his authority to consolidate the National Socialist regime in Germany. Initially greeted in Italy as a victory of 'fascism', Nazi Germany was soon to be viewed by Mussolini as a threatening competitor on the international scene. By the summer of 1934, a new organisation with the name Action Committees for the Universality of Rome (Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalità di Roma, CAUR) had been established. Its primary aim was to promote Italian Fascism's international profile as the political centre of a 'third way' ideological paradigm that had already been 'exported' and could become a truly transnational alternative to either liberalism or socialism. CAUR aspired to become the nervous centre of a global alliance of kindred forces under the political and spiritual leadership of Fascist Italy. However, both the timing of the initiative and CAUR's networking strategy (not least the deliberate exclusion of Hitler's movement/regime from the alliance) divulged a deeper goal – namely, ensuring the primacy of Italian Fascism vis-à-vis the resurgent National Socialism in Germany. The chosen discursive platform for the *internationalisation* of (Italian) Fascism was the idea of Rome's universality, as the organisation's title stated – yet another eloquent statement that both served the idea of an alleged Italian custody of f(F)ascism and emphatically ostracised the Nazi regime.

Thus, in 1932–33 one cycle in Fascism's history came to a climactic end and another started. With the publication in 1932 of the official *Doctrine of Fascism* (allegedly authored by Mussolini himself but actually the intellectual product of the philosopher Giovanni Gentile's thought), Fascism acquired a programmatic statement of its origins and futural vision that would support the political project of its internationalisation. Consolidated at home and with its place of honour in the national historical narrative secure after the 1932 exhibition, Fascism reimagined itself as a regenerative force of the whole of western civilisation and the dominant doctrine of the twentieth century on a global scale. In this vision, the universal heritage of the 'third Rome' was both the key spiritual driver and its most sacred asset; while Nazi Germany was regarded as an alien newcomer and dangerous adversary.

The state of Italian–German relations throughout the rest of the 1930s proved critical not only for the Fascist strategy of internationalisation but for the fate of Italian (and international) fascism itself. The escalating suspicion and hostility of 1934–35 gave way to a steady rapprochement from 1936 onwards (especially after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia) that delivered a strong Fascist–Nazi alliance, a military pact (Pact of Steel in 1939, solidifying the Rome–Berlin Axis), and eventually a catastrophic joint military campaign. But as relations between the two regimes continued to improve in the second half of the 1930s, the symbolic competition between Fascism and National Socialism as the international driving forces of a new radical political paradigm intensified, as a subtle antagonistic undercurrent below a surface of friendship. The resurgent Nazi Germany of the late 1930s gradually established Berlin rather than Rome, Hitler rather than Mussolini, and National Socialism rather than Italian Fascism, as the de facto points of reference for the 'third way' political paradigm and its rapidly growing constituency of followers. As more and more radical movements in Europe and elsewhere came to recognise Nazi Germany as the source of an epoch-defining transformation or even shifted their allegiance from Mussolini's to Hitler's regime, the Duce witnessed with covert frustration the steady decline of his own project of Fascist international primacy (Kallis 2014b). His own regime could no longer compete with Nazi Germany on the military, political, ideological, or economic fronts, increasingly becoming a junior partner in a Germany-led and formidable international block (Kallis 2009: 227–35).

When it came, however, to historical and cultural capital, Fascist Italy still possessed a prime, unsurpassed asset – the 'myth of Rome', with its millennial historical associations and imposing visual reminders of a glorious past dotting the contemporary city. The second Fascist cycle that had started in 1932–33 was marked by expanding interventions inside the capital – new restorations, new anniversary celebrations and grand exhibitions, new monumental streets, new spatial reconfigurations that necessitated more and more invasive demolitions, as well as new constructions, some of which involving 'signature' buildings that sought to articulate architectonically, visually, and spatially the essence of Fascist values. The visible layer of the city continued to change throughout the 1930s but at a pace that far exceeded anything previously undertaken by the regime or indeed any ruler in the city's modern history. Yet the most significant change that touched on individual projects and the city as a whole concerned the Fascist regime's concerted efforts to imbue the entire city with a new form of symbolic legibility. Existing, recently recovered, and newly constructed elements of Rome's visible layer were wrapped in a cloak of *Fascist universality* that lent a very different meaning to each of them and cumulatively to the city as a whole. The 'universality of Rome' may have failed as a political project by 1937–38 (and the CAUR were officially disbanded in the autumn of 1939); but it was enacted unashamedly on the very grounds of the Eternal City, through both new projects and new superimposed connections between the diverse layers of the urban palimpsest. The Fascist regime celebrated ad nauseam the alleged 'regeneration' of the city by drawing attention to its numerous interventions that had restored and 'liberated' monuments, cleared whole areas from unsightly constructions, sanitised conditions of living for the population, improved traffic across the historic centre, and constructed new landmark edifices and monumental complexes. But by far the most portentous Fascist intervention in Rome consisted in using all these interventions to advance cumulatively a much broader symbolic re-signification of the city as the spiritual cradle of a new global order and 'civilisation'.

The Fascist cloak of universality invented a host of new connections between the ancient 'city of the caesars', the medieval and Renaissance 'city of the popes', and the visible layer of the modern city. Back at the turn of the century, Lanciani had published his *Forma Urbis Romae* as a reminder of the city's palimpsestic stratigraphy and as a statement of the ancient layer's importance for the construction of a modern national identity. Now the Fascist regime saw the 'third Rome' as a re-engineered visible layer that not only wove selective connections across the earlier layers but also flattened them into a new visible layer-discourse and transformed them into a tangible experience of a new Fascist temporality. New constructions or reconfigurations came hand in hand with extensive demolitions that expunged time from, and thus also flattened, Rome's complex chronotope. The record of Fascist interventions in Rome featured many ambitious visions and plans but few additive landmark elements in the historic centre of the capital; instead the bulk of the 'third Rome' consisted either of demolitions/reconfigurations in the centre or new constructions in the periphery of the capital. Yet the discourse of universality superimposed on the 'third Rome' invested the entire urban palimpsest with a wholly different meaning and feel that exuded an unmistakeable Fascist creative agency and communicated a sense of wholesale Fascist appropriation.

The second cycle in the Fascist regime's history was meant to come to its climactic conclusion in 1942, with the celebrations of the twentieth anniversary (*Ventennale*) of the Fascist 'revolution' coinciding with a world fair hosted in Rome. The Fascist regime spared no expenses in planning and constructing a new dedicated exhibition quarter in the southern periphery of the city – a veritable new city, a simulacrum of the *ideal* 'third Rome' made up from permanent monumental constructions and a meticulously crafted plan. The theme of universality was inherent in the Fascist vision for the world fair from the first moment that Giuseppe Bottai, then head of Rome's municipal administration, petitioned Mussolini with the idea. But the rapidly changing geopolitical context in the late 1930s eventually produced a different symbolic framing of the event. The chosen subtitle for the 'Universal Exhibition of Rome' (Esposizione Universale di Roma, E42) would be the 'Olympic Games of Civilisation' (Olimpiadi della Civiltà). The grounds of the new exhibition city would function as both the arena of this competition (a competition that, the organisers believed, Fascist Italy and the 'third Rome' were sure to win triumphantly) and a 'sacred' place of symbolic pilgrimage – along with the monuments of the historic city – to the timeless universality of Rome itself, past and future. This was a highly symbolic contest from which Fascism too would emerge victorious, without serious competition (not least from Nazi Germany), thus giving a new lease of life to its vision of a new universal civilisation with the 'third Rome' as its indisputable centre. In 1942 the intention was to proceed with the most fulsome celebration of Rome as the 'sacred' capital of a universal f(F)ascism, stealing the limelight not so much from Paris and New York (seats of the 1937 and 1939 world fairs respectively), London or Moscow, but from Berlin and National Socialism.

Rome's Palimpsest and the 'Fascist Layer'

In spite of advanced preparations, the E42 was eventually cancelled because of the global military conflict that was in full swing in the early 1940s. The new exhibition quarter was abandoned half-completed – an eloquent reminder that the second cycle in Fascism's history never reached its intended climax. And yet, by the time that the Fascist regime had collapsed and lost Rome forever in the summer of 1943, it was hard to escape from the city that it had envisioned and sought to realise. Under Fascism, the urban palimpsest of Rome was subjected to a relentless, active reordering that went far beyond anything envisaged in the five decades after the city's annexation by the Italian kingdom. The most obvious transformation involved the city's expansion towards the periphery, masterminded by a succession of regulatory and ad hoc plans. But even within the city's historic core, and in spite of the dearth of major new additions during the Fascist period, Rome's visible layer had changed dramatically. Fascist-era projects may have followed to a large extent from the same logic that had underpinned Lanciani's *Forma Urbis Romae* – namely, promoting a deferential dialogue with the city's historical past, both already present on the visible layer of the modern city and waiting to be recovered from within the tangle of invisible historic layers that made up the city's unique urban palimpsest. Nevertheless, deference belied an ambitious, sweeping conquering spirit (Kallis 2012).

Restorations, demolitions, spatial reconfigurations, and new additions were all strategies geared towards forcing the urban palimpsest as a whole to conform to an overriding Fascist legibility. The visible layer of the 'third Rome' was broken up, edited, and reassembled through new enclosing 'frames' and scenic sequences that, while spatially arranging places of historical significance, subsumed them in a Fascist hegemonic discourse of Rome's (and Fascism's) universality. Meanwhile, the complex stratigraphy of the capital was disrupted by grafting carefully selected layers of the past onto the present surface, while obscuring or erasing other, carefully selected, elements of the palimpsest. Overall, it felt as if many familiar elements of the historic cityscape had been reinserted on it, woven liberally together, and associated with new elements (both discovered and constructed) in novel, unfamiliar, yet symbolically powerful intended configurations (Baxa 2010: 63–6).

As a result, by 1945 Rome and 'third Rome' were inextricably linked. The city as a whole appeared and felt disproportionately more 'Fascist' than the sum of new additions to the urban palimpsest would have suggested. In the course of twenty short years the Fascist authorities practised a series of deliberate schemata on the city's palimpsest and invested selected buildings, particular places, and wider spaces with a new overriding Fascist signification. *Romanità* and *universalità*, already inherent in the city's heritage and arsenal of myths, would be reclaimed, set free from within a tangled chronotope, reassembled, and experienced in their most authentic form in the present tense, on the very grounds of the city that had given birth and timeless meaning to them. Excavations selectively revealed such traces and forced them onto the visible layer. Demolitions were deployed as a form of creative destruction – erasing other unwanted ('parasitical', as Mussolini famously said) traces, thereby creating pockets of empty space for a more powerful synapsis between the (Fascist) present and the city's idealised past. 'Systematisations' disrupted the inherited layering of the palimpsest and produced new visual, spatial, and symbolic connections. New additive elements – mostly in the periphery but occasionally in the dense historic centre, with many more envisioned but never implemented – were not antagonistic to their surrounding setting – like in Soviet Moscow – but rhetorically benevolent, intended as contemporary markers that served Fascism's apotheosis of the myth of Rome (Kallis 2012: 56–61). Exhibitions and other public events served as dynamic 'museums in motion' (Schnapp 1992), which either enacted a carefully edited image of the past as present experience or deliberately collapsed the temporal distance into an ideal future by recreating it as an allegedly authentic simulation. It is no coincidence that the climactic event of Fascism's second decade in power – the E42 – would be a hybrid of all these strategies: a gigantic world exhibition, served by a newly constructed ideal city on a veritable *tabula rasa* but still in syntactical dialogue with the historical city in the horizon, made up of a series of new buildings that nevertheless 'excavated', captured, reformulated, and eventually transcended the universalist heritage of Rome's urban palimpsest.

The engineered visible layer of the 'third Rome' featured the outcomes of all these processes of reconstruction, deconstruction, and re-signification undertaken during the two decades of Fascist rule. Strictly speaking, only what the Fascist regime added to the city's surface constitutes its own 'layer': individual buildings in the centre; monumental complexes rising in previously empty locations flanking the historic city; new housing estates and suburbs (*borgate*) in the periphery, catering for both the city's demographic expansion and the knock-on effect from the demolitions in the historic centre and in the peripheral shanty towns; finally, entire 'new cities' in the reclaimed lands of the Agro Pontino to the south. To these realised or at least initiated projects one could add the numerous ideas and plans for various interventions in the historic centre that were seriously entertained but never implemented or completed by 1945, for a variety of reasons though rarely due to lack of desire or ambition (Kallis 2011a). Yet, to confine the 'third Rome' to this relatively modest, dispersed, and truncated register would do very little justice to Fascism's inventive (and often invasive) appropriation of the city's urban palimpsest. The Fascist appropriation of Rome's urban palimpsest, the wilful and precise ways in which Fascism disrupted and reconfigured it – obscuring or erasing some parts, revealing others, and rendering parts of the surface opaque to enable the flattening of time and the interpenetration of symbolism – produced a visible layer with an unmistakeable and fulsome Fascist creative authorship.

This book examines the ideas, principles, and strategies through which Rome was re-imagined, re-shaped, re-signified, and eventually appropriated during the two decades of Fascist rule over the city (1922–43). The book's subtitle (*The Making of the Fascist Capital*) indicates its primary interest in how Italian Fascism envisioned Rome as the 'sacred' locus where its desired status as a *national and universal* historical force would be enacted and celebrated. Thus the regime's heavy investment in the architectural, cultural, and symbolic estate of Rome, particularly in the 1930s, should be understood on these two levels of intention: first, shaping Rome into an ideal capital of Italian Fascism, regenerated, restored to a status of unsurpassed glory, and worthy of the regime's mental image of the city as living incarnation of its own millenarian myths; and second, transforming the 'third Rome' into the 'sacred' locus of an international, universalist Fascist 'political religion' that would radiate across the world, inspiring awe in its followers and recognised by them as their undisputed spiritual beacon. The Fascist regime spared no energy or cost in order to ensure that the 'third Rome' would emerge on the same grounds of the fated Eternal City, as both its worthy heir and as the repository of – primary or even exclusive – spiritual allegiance from adherents across Europe and the world.