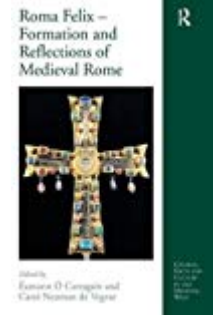**Éamonn Ó Carragáin, Carol L. Neuman de Vegvar, eds.** *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome.* Church, Faith, and Culture in the Medieval West Series. Burlington: Ashgate, 2007. x + 353 pp. $99.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7546-6096-5.

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Commissioned by Monica Calabritto (Hunter College, CUNY)

This volume undertakes the difficult task of bringing together papers delivered in sessions devoted to medieval Rome at three different international congresses--the 2003 Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, the 2003 Medieval Congress at Leeds, and the 2005 Meeting of the Medieval Academy of America. Considering the fragmentation that is often inherent in such undertakings, the editors, much to their credit, have managed to achieve a more than usual degree of coherence by organizing their material in two parts, each consisting of seven essays. The essays in the first part, "Articulating the City," revolve around communities, congregations, cults, and processions; those in the section entitled "Reading the City" deal with envisioning, interpreting, and imitating medieval Rome.

The volume appropriately opens with Alan Thacker's thorough and illuminating survey of the origins and early development of the cult of the saints: their very presence gave the city the appellation "Roma felix." Thacker demonstrates persuasively that while, in the first centuries of Chris-

tianity, Rome by no means possessed as many martyrs as is often suggested, it later "became" the repository of countless martyrs--Christendom's leading locus of sanctity--largely as a result of the activity of Pope Damasus (366-84), who multiplied the number of known saints by setting eloquent marble inscriptions in catacombs and cult sites. While Thacker concentrates on extramural Rome and the success enjoyed by catacombs and small basilicas *ad corpus* until the late seventh century, Caroline Goodson brings the story within the walls and down to the Carolingian period. Starting from the fifth century, her study partly overlaps with Thacker's, but her perspective is more architectural and archaeological, and her main aim is to show how relic movement shaped Rome's sacred topography. The key issues here are incorporeal and corporeal relics, foreign and local saints, and the move from outside to within the walls, to be seen not simply as a reaction to foreign threats but also as part of the evolving urbanization of medieval Rome and of the programmatic creation of a papal city.

Dorothy Verkerk offers a survey of some of the numerous ways in which the late antique funerary monuments of Rome and Ravenna were later redeployed or recontextualized by patrons other than those who first commissioned the sarcophagi. While the examples that she discusses are interesting and thought provoking, this type of enquiry--shifting the focus from the moment of the making of the object and its formal qualities to patterns of use and reuse--is, however, by no means as novel as Verkerk implies. It is surprising that she mentions neither the proceedings of the 1982 *Colloquio sul reimpiego dei sarcofagi romani nel Medioevo* nor the pioneering works of Salvatore Settis, Arnold Esch, and Ingo Herklotz, to cite only a few scholars who, in recent decades, have set out to explore the "afterlife" of ancient sarcophagi.[1] An assessment of their research would have lent more depth to Verkerk's study and enabled her to refine some of her assertions, such as her statement that scholarship has interpreted papal reuse of sarcophagi as dictated either by antiquarian or by purely practical and monetary reasons. Indeed, scholars have proposed several other differing motivations. For instance, the appropriation of the porphyry sarcophagus of Emperor Hadrian by Pope Innocent II (†1143) can only be understood in the climate of papal "imperial" claims following the investiture contest.

Verkerk also discusses an eleventh-century drawing (in a manuscript now at Eton) showing Gregory the Great's body resting within a strigilated sarcophagus, and aptly underlines how the artist gave visual prominence to the coffin by means of bold lines, almost overwhelming the fragile treatment of Gregory's corpse. While I agree with the idea that in the mind of an eleventh-century artist an ancient strigilated sarcophagus was the most suitable shrine for the saint's remains, I contest Verkerk's assertion that the artist depicted the translation of Gregory's relics at the time of Gregory IV (827-44). As the text of the manuscript just above the depiction makes clear, that scene illustrates the very moment of Gregory's burial in the portico of St. Peter's in 605. This is confirmed by the episode of the burning of the saint's books, shown on the right-hand side of the scene, which, according to John the Deacon, occurred immediately after Gregory's death.

From such issues of recontextualization, the volume moves to consider actual contexts and the relationship between space, images, and function in Roman churches. Carol Neuman de Vegvar argues that the fifth-century Old Testament scenes in the nave of S. Maria Maggiore were designed specifically to address the different audiences attending Mass as divided by gender and social class. Neuman de Vegvar builds on the premise, based on Cyrille Vogel's research, that at S. Maria Maggiore--an occidented church--men stood in the south part of the nave and in the south aisle, to the left as viewed from the entrance, while women occupied the opposite space on the north side. [2] It follows from this that the mosaic scenes in the south nave wall were viewed by the women standing on the opposite side of the nave; and, vice versa, the stories on the north side were viewed by men standing to the south. Neuman de Vegvar invites us to look at these scenes to discover a remarkable number of biblical matriarchs on the side viewed by women, and a comparable number of men on the other side. She suggests, therefore, that the disposition of the cycles was a reflection of the arrangement of women and men in the church below, presumably to invite the congregation to contemplate their precursors. Her argument is intriguing--but, while it adds a further layer of meaning to these complex stories, it also opens up further questions. In the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, a tabernacle for the icon of the Virgin was built in the left part of the nave of S. Maria Maggiore.[3] This was echoed at S. Maria in Aracoeli via the erection of an analogous Marian shrine in the left side of the nave, where the columns also acquired depictions of the Virgin and Child.[4] At least in the fourteenth century, the left side (as viewed from the entrance) of

a Marian church in Rome seems to have been a favorite space for women. If the opposite was the case in the earlier period, when did such a significant change take place and why?

The importance of understanding images in relation to their physical setting is the core of Stephen Lucey's contribution, which to some extent complements Neuman de Vegvar's essay. It is thus a somewhat incongruous editorial choice that Joseph Dyer's essay (chapter 5) is interposed between Neuman de Vegvar's (chapter 4) and Lucey's (chapter 6). The latter two explore the use of space within churches, while Dyer moves to the use of space outside of churches, following processional routes in the streets of Rome. It would have made far greater sense, from a thematic, methodological, and chronological point of view, to arrive at Lucey's chapter immediately after Neuman de Vegvar's contribution.

Lucey looks afresh at the frescoes of S. Maria Antiqua and their iconographic themes, placement, and inscriptions to provide significant insights on the ethnicity, gender, and social class of their patrons, as well as on the changes in function and meaning of different spaces within the church over a period of nearly three centuries. Lucey's analysis shows that, at S. Maria Antiqua, women occupied the aisle decorated with predominantly "female" depictions (images of holy women or themes associated with motherhood), while men took over the other aisle. This result--which to all appearances seems to contradict Neuman de Vegvar's reading of S. Maria Maggiore--is in fact convincingly explained in terms of private patronage and the devotional function of the images.

Dyer explores the transformation of the Roman procession of the Major Litany, which had replaced both in date and route the ancient Robigalia. The earlier "pan-urban" procession, starting from S. Lorenzo in Lucina, heading north along the via Lata and passing far beyond the city walls before heading south to St. Peter's, evolved by the mid-twelfth century into two or even three separate observances--that is, a papal-curial procession, a clergy-and-laity procession possibly distinct at least in part from the papal one, and a procession of the Lateran canons, with a new starting point at S. Marco and a shorter processional route to St. Peter's through the Parione region. Dyer not only attempts to reconstruct the arrangement of prayers and chants during the procession, but also offers a persuasive explanation for the motives behind the reorientation of the papal procession. If the poor conditions of the suburban roads played a role, then the choice of a more central route in all probability served to emphasize the pontiff's claims to jurisdiction, thus enabling him to assert hegemony over the fractious city, so often recalcitrant in recognizing papal authority.

Kirstin Noreen concludes the first part of the volume by providing a fascinating insight into the role and activities of the confraternity of the Santissimo Salvatore ad Sancta Sanctorum, an important element of the hitherto inadequately studied Trecento Rome. Noreen leads us through the "sacred space" of the city as defined by the processional life of the *Acheropita*, Rome's most famous icon, which was in the confraternity's care. Noreen argues that what defined the "sacred space" was not simply the ephemeral procession of the icon during the Assumption ceremony, but the memorialization of the ritual and the crystallization of the *Acheropita*'s eternal presence in the Monti region through the display of the confraternity's insignia on the facades of numerous buildings. The insignia, reproducing the icon often flanked by candles and brethren in prayer, not only offered visual access to a holy image that was usually hidden from view, but also provided an effective visual assertion of the role and power of the Raccomandati del Santissimo Salvatore by signaling the institutions under the confraternity's jurisdiction--namely, hospitals, hostels, and other charitable organizations.

John Osborne opens the second part of the volume by offering an important methodological chapter for dating medieval paintings, whose validity is exemplified by a significant case study: some detached murals from a lost chapel in S. Lorenzo fuori le mura. Parenthetically, it is worth noting that these are likely to be the earliest signed wall paintings of Western Europe, the work of a certain "Crescentius infelix pictor," ironically working in what had been "Roma felix." Osborne persuasively argues that their traditional eighth-century dating, founded on stylistic connoisseurship, is wrong by at least four hundred years. The importance of this chapter, however, does not so much concern this conclusion but rather the method applied to reach it, based on five "objective criteria." These categories of evidence--each clearly defined, with supporting examples--are physical setting, subject matter, accompanying inscriptions, function of the painting, and "*objective* stylistic criteria" (that is, aspects of artistic practice and elements of the vocabulary of the design). Osborne is not the first to adopt at least some of these criteria, but his merit is to present and apply them coherently and systematically as part of a "scientific" method, in contrast to the greater subjectivity of conventional stylistic analysis. The study of medieval art certainly needs more such masterly essays, teaching to "look" in a perceptive way, and contributing to the definition of art history as a discipline proper within the human sciences and more fully aware of its methods and their far-reaching applications.

Dale Kinney then quite literally conducts us through the streets of medieval Rome to discuss the method and purpose of the writing of one of the most popular texts of the twelfth century, the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*. Apparently conceived to demonstrate that Christian Rome emulated and superseded pagan Rome, this text is intriguing for its combination of claimed empirical specificity and pseudo-antique but unlikely sounding toponyms. Its interpretation in scholarship ranges between the extremes of "the oldest attempt at a learned topography" (Louis Duchesne); "born to serve as a guide for pilgrims" (Roberto Valentini and Giuseppe Zucchetti); and a work of purely textual character, belonging to the rhetorical genre of "*descriptio urbis*," with no practical utility (Nine Miedema).[5] Was the *Mirabilia* a rhetorical fiction, mainly based on literary sources, or was it a reliable (albeit imperfect) description of contemporary Rome and its ancient remains? To answer this question, Kinney compares the route from St. Peter's to St. Paul's as provided in the *Einsiedeln Itinerary* (a late eighth-century text, also variously interpreted as either a trustworthy source of topographical information or a purely literary exercise) with the same route as described in the *Mirabilia* and other twelfth-century texts, such as Canon Benedict's *Ordo*. The fascinating result is that a reader with no knowledge of physical Rome would find it hard to realize that the eighth- and the twelfth-century itineraries cover the same ground. In all cases, the route is traceable and practicable, but most of the toponyms are different. Whereas the eighth-century text deploys classical toponyms, the *Ordo* and the *Mirabilia* use toponyms that sound improbable to us. However, Kinney aptly points out that some of these were actually deployed in contemporary documents, and that some fictive-sounding temples were by no means complete invention, but rather an attempt to provide ruins with an identity. After all, the author of the *Mirabilia* described his method as a combination of textual knowledge ("read in the annals"), firsthand observation ("seen with our own eyes"), and verbal communication ("heard from the elderly"). Miedema has rightly observed that the actual combination of facts and fiction in the *Mirabilia* resulted in the latter acquiring a status of reality.[6] Kinney advances our understanding of this text by making us appreciate, through a number of convincing examples, that what we now perceive as "fiction" might have not been fiction in the mind of the *Mirabilia*'s author, and can be better understood as incorrect inference, loose terminology, or the

inability to match literary sources with the actual ruins.

Martina Bagnoli aims to show how the pictorial system of ornamentation in the crypt of the Duomo of Anagni is deeply rooted in the Roman tradition, and how some of the Roman standard motifs, which at Anagni are transformed into symbolically charged ornaments, are then used again in painted programs in Rome. Anagni, one of the most important thirteenth-century cities of the Patrimony of St. Peter, is an ideal place to study the process of artistic exchanges between Rome and its neighbors, especially since the so-called third Anagni workshop has been identified with the workshop active in the recently discovered "Gothic hall" at Santi Quattro Coronati. It is a matter of regret that the chapter, albeit interesting and with good sources, remains too focused on Anagni without fully exploiting the opportunity to provide fresh comparisons with the pictorial decoration at Santi Quattro. In the context of this volume, one would perhaps have liked to read less about the different ways in which the ornamentation works at Anagni and more on the special relationship between Rome and Anagni, as well as on modes of transmission, reception, and transformation of pictorial models.

The final four chapters offer valuable examples for understanding the nature of the relationship between Rome and the Atlantic Islands. Damian Bracken shows how Rome was seen as the "fons," the very source of orthodoxy by Colombanus and Cummian, two Irish clerics of the early seventh century. For Cummian, orthodoxy could be guaranteed only by respecting Rome's authority and remaining loyal to the source of the faith, whereas Columbanus's more sophisticated position subtly combined loyalty to Rome with the rights of junior churches--joint members of one body--to speak out and even give advice to the pope.

Charles Doherty also looks at seventh-century Ireland to show, convincingly, how Armagh claimed to be the ecclesiastical capital, the "Rome of Ireland," and, less convincingly, how pagan Tara was increasingly being presented by Christian writers as the "secular Rome of Ireland." The idea is a fascinating one, and one may well agree with Doherty's proposition that Irish clergy was concerned with a Christian form of government. However, his arguments, mainly based on the analysis of the writers' descriptive vocabulary, are too flimsy to prove that "in the ideal of the pagan high-kingship of Tara, the clergy saw the model for a Christian kingship of all Ireland" (p. 285).

In a perceptive and revisionist analysis of three stages of Anglo-Saxon coinage from the "eccentric" viewpoint of an art historian, Anna Gannon demonstrates how the shift in the iconography of the coins reflects the development of the special relations between Anglo-Saxon England and Rome in the span of four centuries. If the "conservative" gold *thrymsas* of the seventh century copied well-known Roman precedents to present the Anglo-Saxons as the true heirs of Rome, the silver *sceattas* of the early eighth century appropriated and subtly manipulated those models that best conveyed the message of Rome as the See of the Christian Church, thus reflecting the religious spirit of the time. The new silver coinage of Offa of Mercia in the second half of the eighth century deployed Roman imagery in complex and multilayered political games, whereas the "epigraphic" coins of the ninth and tenth centuries displayed lengthy inscriptions laid out as written pages or dedicatory epigraphies, a reflection of a more bureaucratic and commercial relationship with the city, but also a sign of the importance ascribed to the written word, the enduring heritage of Christian Rome.

John Doran concludes the volume by drawing our attention to a little-known text, which provides an original comparison of the city of Chester with Rome. Written in 1195 by Lucian, a Benedictine monk of St. Werburgh at Chester, this lengthy

manuscript is surprising for its overwhelmingly positive view of papal Rome in a period when criticism of the Curia, mainly for financial reasons, was the norm among English writers. Lucian's text warns us not to overestimate the caustic denunciations of the corruption of the Curia: Rome and Peter could still be seen by an English twelfth-century writer as defenders and supporters, particularly if, as Doran argues, the purpose of Lucian's writing was to curb his brothers' anxieties in the immediate aftermath of a difficult moment in the history of St. Werburgh's house. Shortly prior to his writing, the monks had secured, albeit only partially, papal protection against local episcopal interference. In its extraordinary panegyric of Rome and the judicial role of the papacy, Lucian's text reveals how valuable papal protection was for an "old" Benedictine house feeling the pressure of a changed world.

Overall, the volume would have benefited from a sounder consistency in the length of the chapters, which ranges from ten to thirty-five pages (and does not always correspond to the breadth of the topic or to the width of the chronological span covered). Despite this and the minor criticisms mentioned above, the editors have successfully accomplished a demanding enterprise, producing a readable, richly informative, and thought-provoking volume, which will be invaluable for scholars and students alike, and will be of interest to everyone who is fascinated by both the multifaceted and multilayered culture of medieval Rome, and its impact on medieval Europe.

Notes

[1]. Giovanni Agosti and others, "Visibilità e reimpiego: 'A Roma anche i morti e le loro urne camminano,'" in *Colloquio sul reimpiego dei sarcofagi romani nel Medioevo: Pisa, 5-12 September 1982*, ed. Bernard Andreae and Salvatore Settis (Marburg and Lahn: Verlag des Kunstgeschichtlichen Seminars, 1984), 155-170; Salvatore Settis, "Sopravvivenza dell'antichità: L'arte antica nel contesto medievale e l'origine delle collezioni," in *Trenta Pagine: Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità dell'Università di Padova*, 5 (Padua 2001), 1-30; Arnold Esch, "Reimpiego," in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Medievale*, 12 vols. (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 1991-2002), ix, 876-883; and Ingo Herklotz, *"Sepulchra" e "Monumenta" del Medioevo: Studi sull'arte sepolcrale in Italia*, 2d ed., rev. ed. (Rome: Rari Nantes, 1990).

[2]. Cyrille Vogel, "V*ersus ad Orientem:* L'orientation dans les *Ordines Romani* du haut moyen age," *Studi Medievali* 3, no. 1 (1960): 447-469.

[3]. Gerhart Wolf, *Salus Populi Romani: Die Geschichte römischer Kultbilder im Mittelalter* (Weinheim: VCH, Acta Humaniora, 1990).

[4]. Claudia Bolgia, "The Felici Icon Tabernacle (1372) at S. Maria in Aracoeli, Reconstructed: Lay Patronage, Sculpture, and Marian Devotion in Trecento Rome," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 68 (2005): 27-72.

[5]. Paul Fabre and Louis Duchesne, *Le Liber Censuum de l'Église romaine* (Paris: Bibliothèque des Écoles Francaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 1910), 1:98; Roberto Valentini and Giuseppe Zucchetti, *Codice topografico della città di Roma* (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1940-53), 3:10; and Nine Miedema, *Die "Mirabilia Romae": Untersuchungen zu ihrer Überlieferung mit Edition der deutschen und niederländischen Texte* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), 449-450.

[6]. Miedema, *Die "Mirabilia Romae,"* 449-450.

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