THE LAYOUT OF ROME VS. DC
& *TRIUMPHAL* ARCHITECTURE

Layout of Rome vs. DC and *Triumphal* Architecture

Key Concepts:
Orthogonal planning: The straight-angle (= 90 degrees), grid plan that arose in Hellenistic Greece and may be seen at sites such as Miletus in Turkey and Paestum in South Italy/Magna Graecia. It was adopted by the Romans when they settled new cities and is also the foundation for L'Enfant's plan of DC.
Triumph: The religious ceremony held to celebrate the highest military honor bestowed upon a Roman commander. It included a public parade of the honoree's troops and prisoners and spoils of war. The parade started from the Campus Martius and went through the Forum down the Via Sacra to end atop the Capitoline Hill at the Capitoline Temple.
Via Sacra: The main street in Ancient Rome that started on the Capitoline Hill and went through the Forum and along other important monuments (see Latin below).
Spolia: Parts of an earlier monument that a later hero or emperor takes to incorporate into a monument dedicated to himself. Sometimes an emperor went so far as to erase the faces of the person who has been honored in the earlier monument and replace them with likenesses of himself (see Latin below).
Fasti Triumphales: A master list engraved on marble slabs of all of the triumphs from Rome's foundation to the time of when it was published in 12 B.C. Now it is located in Rome's Capitoline Museum as part of the larger "Fasti Capitolini."
Baths of Diocletian: Dedicated by the Emperor Diocletian in AD 306, the baths, or "thermae," were the most extravagant of the bathing complexes in Rome. Notable especially for their size, they stood on the Viminal Hill of Rome.

Key Figures
Marcus Vitruvius Pollio: c. 80 – 15 BC, a Roman author and architect who wrote the famous description of Roman Architecture, *De Architectura.* This 10-book treatise is the only book on architecture from antiquity and provides us with a wealth of information on how the ancients thought about architecture.
Pierre Charles L'Enfant: AD 1754 -1825, the French-born architect who designed the layout of Washington, DC.
Constantine the Great: AD 272 - 337, the Roman Emperor who is most known for first accepting Christianity. He moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople (modern day Istanbul).

Latin Vocabulary
spolium, ii n.: spoils, booty
arcus, i m.: arch
via sacra f.: the sacred way
triumphus i m.: triumph
vista, -ae f.: view
therma, -ae f.: hot room, or bath building

Introduction: Vitruvius and the Layout of Rome

A lot of our knowledge of Roman building types comes from the treatise *De Architectura*, written by the Marcus Vitruvius Pollio sometime during the first century B.C. The 10-volume work is a summary of his experience as an architect under the first emperor Augustus and is considered to be the only ancient source on classical Roman architecture. From Vitruvius, we get a lot of information about Roman building methods; thus he had a major impact on Neo-Classical architects. In addition to being a profound source of information for Roman building types and architecture, Vitruvius also brought to light some of the major Roman and other classical traits of city planning. Some of the key features of Rome's city layout are monumentality**,** axiality**,** plazas, and displays of the public use of water. Before we discuss those traits it is important to address the concept of ***orthogonal town planning.*** *Orthogonal*, comes from the Greek words meaning straight-angled, so an orthogonal plan is a straight-angled (90 degree) or grid like plan. All over the world, you can see grid plans like this, an invention from the Classical world. Rome itself did not have an orthogonal plan because it was a city that was built sporadically throughout time. Therefore, Rome did not develop all at once using the Hellenistic orthogonal model. However, whenever Romans would found a town on new soil or when they remodeled cities, they used the grid plan as it is easy to set up quickly.

Rome itself is not a standard grid plan with only vertical and horizontal streets. Rome has a high degree of *monumentality*: its important monuments—arches, statues, temples, etc.—are all emphasized by the layout of the city. Rome is a city of important monuments that act as the center pieces, the reference points, and the super stars of the show. How did the Romans accomplish this degree of monumentality? An easy way to do this is by placing the important

monuments on hills, of which Rome has plenty (see chapter on the Capitol), because using the natural hills allows the monuments to be seen from far and wide. These hills provide ***vistas,*** or views, from one to the next, guiding people from monument to monument. What also provides these ***vistas*** and contributes to the monumentality in Rome is the *axiality* of the city, the way it is oriented on an axis or a central strip off of which everything branches in an organized manner. In Rome the major route that leads through all of the major monuments, the axis off of which everything branches, was called the ***Via Sacra***, the sacred way. The Via Sacra was the triumphal route in ancient Rome that led from the outskirts of the city through the Forum and up to the Capitoline Hill past and through all of the significant sites. Now this road can be seen as the Via del Corso in Rome, the road that leads from Piazza del Popolo all the way to Piazza Venezia past countless important monuments providing countless wide views of Rome's monuments.

Triumphs

What exactly was the triumphal route? And what was a ***triumph*** for that matter? A triumph was a ceremony held for a general following a major victory—the peak of Roman military achievement. During the procession, the general was carried into the city in a four-horse-drawn chariot following the display of captives and riches he had won in war. The triumphal route was therefore the path that he followed along with his troops through the city along the Via Sacra, up to the Capitoline Hill. There, upon the Capitoline Hill at the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus (see chapter on Capitols), the general would offer a sacrifice. From this practice, you can see the importance of the triumphal route: it was the way that these victorious heroes would be welcomed into the city, the pathway that led through the city became a public stage. Therefore,

the practice of triumphs had a major impact on how this main road functioned. In addition to the layout of the city, triumphs also profoundly affected architecture. After such a glorious ceremony, many of these military leaders would want to dedicate a monument or temple to commemorate the event. This led to a category of architecture called triumphal architecture often depicting military scenes or images of the captives. Examples of such types of triumphal architecture are arches like the Arch of Titus, Arch of Septimius Severus or the Arch of Constantine. All three men were emperors who celebrated great victories that they wanted to display to the people. The most famous of these arches was the Arch of Titus which was constructed by Titus' brother Domitian to honor Titus' victory of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Arch of Titus served as a model for the category of Triumphal arches, and even featured a triumphal scene (See below). Most of these triumphal arches were actually set up to span the Via Sacra. In addition to arches, large columns— like Trajan's column— were also popular triumphal monuments. These huge monuments were ways of self-promotion for these emperor-generals, but they were also a way that the general gave something to his people, something to be proud of and admire, and a way for the people to share in the victory.

Arch of Titus
Notice how the relief (this type of sculpture) on the Arch of Titus depicts the *spoils* that were involved in these triumphal scenes such as the famous menorah.

L'Enfant and the Layout of DC

By now you can probably recognize some similarities between the layout of ancient Rome and the layout of DC. Orthogonal planning, monumentality, axiality, and vistas: all of these properties are easily identified in our own capital city. Is it just a coincidence that these cities have so much in common? Guess again. In order to understand how Washington D.C. became such a classically-influenced city, it is essential to look at the key figure, Pierre Charles L'Enfant. L'enfant (you may recognize his name from L'Enfant Plaza) was the main architect and planner of DC. Born in 1753, L'Enfant grew up in Versailles and made an extremely influential trip to Paris in the 1780s. After this trip, he began to practice architecture and was hired by George Washington as the city architect of DC in 1791. His plan for DC incorporates both classical and European influences, and it should be noted that L'Enfant's primary European influence was Paris, a city that still has remnants of classical buildings from the period when Paris was under Roman rule (52 BC-486 AD). L'Enfant made the fundamental decisions about the city including the orthogonal plan with *radiating avenues*, the wide diagonal streets that fan out from the traffic circles in Washington. These circles (Dupont Circle, Washington Circle, Logan Circle, etc, which are similar to the *piazze* in Rome) also contribute to the monumentality of DC, because they provide ideal "stages" for monuments such as statues or fountains. The wide diagonal streets that lead into the (traffic) circles offer many **vistas** for such monuments. The most prominent of these wide diagonal streets in DC is Pennsylvania Avenue, the street that connects the White House with the Capitol building. This street, sometimes called "America's Main Street," where often the President's motorcade flies by and countless parades take place, can be seen as our own Via Sacra, our own triumphal route.

Triumphal Architecture in Washington, DC

Pennsylvania Avenue is not the only feature of DC that brings to mind the Roman concept of the triumph. Certain monuments in Washington are easily identified as influenced by the category of "triumphal" architecture mentioned above. In DC, we can see examples of this type of architecture in Union Station. The centrally located train station, with its own vistas of the Capitol Building, was designed by the American architect Daniel Burnham in 1907. From the front of the station (if you have ever viewed it from the outside!) you can see a three-bay triumphal arch reminiscent of the Arch of Constantine, which celebrated Constantine's victory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in AD 312 when he unified the Roman empire. Also outside the building you can see six colossal statues on top of Ionic columns in a series known as the "Progress of Railroading" by the famous sculptor Louis St. Gaudens. These statues are of Prometheus (fire), Thales (electricity), Themis (freedom and justice), Apollo (imagination and inspiration), Ceres (agriculture), and Archimedes (mechanics). These statues are modeled after the Dacian soldiers that appear on the Arch of Constantine and are an example of architectural sculpture from a triumphal monument that shows the enemy captured. Constantine actually "stole" these Dacian prisoners from an earlier monument in Trajan's forum, thus these are an example of **spolia.** The interior of the station, however, is modeled after a completely different Roman monument: the warm rooms of the **Baths of Diocletian**. Baths may seem a little bit strange for a model for a train station, but in reality the connection makes a lot of sense. Romans would not have had running water in their personal houses, so they went everyday to the bath building to freshen up. Therefore, the bath building would have acted as a place for socialization and the exchange of ideas, just as a train station in the 1900s (the train was the only way to move

people and goods then). In ancient Rome emperors built massive, luxurious, public bath buildings as part of their campaign of "bread and circuses" (a term that shows how emperors kept the masses happy and at bay, keep them fed just enough with just a little bit of luxury so they wouldn't revolt). In the same way, Burnham transformed the train station, a filthy loud place filled with less than desirable characters into a majestic monument. Like the Baths of Diocletian, Union Station features a huge, lavish, vaulted main concourse with massive columns. While the Baths held gorgeous statues including the weary Hercules, Union Station features statues of "centurions," or military officers. These centurions, also similar to Trajan's Dacian prisoners reinstalled on the Arch of Constantine, contribute to the triumphal, victorious tone of Union Station.

Other buildings in DC incorporated aspects of triumphal architecture including the National Archives building. On the outside of the building in the space above the pediment you can see medallions, or roundels, with sculptural decorations in them. There are 13 medallions representing the House of Representatives, Senate, the Great Seal of the United States, and the 10 cabinet positions. These are clearly modeled after the roundels on the Arch of Constantine. These are another example of **spolia**, as Constantine took them from an earlier monument built during Emperor Hadrian's reign. The roundels depicted hunting/sacrificing scenes on the Arch of Constantine, in which Constantine replaced the visage of Hadrian with that of himself. Both the medallions on the National Archives building and the Hadrianic roundels on the Arch of Constantine use a depiction of an idealized male figures to show the power of the government.

Latin Passages

1. Translate this passage from Vitruvius' introduction to his *De Architectura (I.1-3)*

1.1

Cum divina tua mens et numen, imperator Caesar, imperio potiretur orbis terrarum invictaque virtute cunctis hostibus stratis, triumpho victoriaque tua cives gloriarentur et gentes omnes subactae tuum spectarent nutum populusque Romanus et senatus liberatus timore amplissimis tuis cogitationibus consiliisque gubernaretur, non audebam, tantis occupationibus, de architectura scripta et magnis cogitationibus explicata edere, metuens ne non apto tempore interpellans subirem tui animi offensionem.

Notes:

Cum: "when"

Potiretur: imperfect subjunctive of potior, potiri, potitus sum (to acquire), takes ablative

cunctis...stratis: ablative absolute "when all of your enemies had been laid low"

subactae: having been subdued

nutum: command, "nod"

gubernaretur: were being governed

tantis occupationibus: with such things going on

edere: to publish

subirem: assume the form of (acc object)

1.2/3

cum vero attenderem te non solum de vita communi omnium curam publicaeque rei constitutione habere sed etiam de opportunitate publicorum aedificiorum, ut civitas per te non solum provinciis esset aucta, verum etiam ut maiestas imperii publicorum aedificiorum egregias haberet auctoritates, non putavi praetermittendum quin primo quoque tempore de his rebus ea tibi ederem... (1.3) conscripsi praescriptiones terminatas, ut eas attendens et ante facta et futura qualia sint opera per te posses nota habere. Namque his voluminibus aperui omnes disciplinae rationes.

"**cum...attenderem**": When I understood truly that.... (indirect statement)

habere curam: "to have care" "to care about"

"**praetermittendum**" -- to be passed over, to miss (as in an opportunity)

quin: so that not

"**ea...ederem**":this (piece of writing) I was producing for you

terminata: restricted

attendens, present active participle modifying the "te"... "you reading these rules"

"**ut...posses**"-- so that you will be able

"**habere nota**" to have knowledge

aperui: I have disclosed

2. Description of Latin triumph from Livy 3.29

Romae a Q. Fabio praefecto urbis senatus habitus triumphantem Quinctium quo veniebat agmine urbem ingredi iussit. Ducti ante currum hostium duces; militaria signa praelata; secutus exercitus praeda onustus. Epulae instructae dicuntur fuisse ante omnium domos, epulantesque cum carmine triumphali et sollemnibus iocis comisantium modo currum secuti sunt.

Notes:

habitus: convened

quo veniebat agmine: "in the line in which he was coming"

currum: chariot

praelata: carried in front

comisantium: of those revelling (gen. pl)

3. Inscription on the Arch of Constantine

imp · caes · fl · constantino · maximo · p · f · avgusto · s · p · q · r · qvod · instinctv · divinitatis · mentis · magnitvdine · cvm · exercitv · svo · tam · de · tyranno · qvam · de · omni · eivs · factione · vno · tempore · ivstis · rempvblicam · vltvs · est · armis · arcvm · trivmphis · insignem · dicavit

Full Text:

IMPERATORI CAESARI FLAVIO CONSTANTINO MAXIMO

PIO FELICI AUGUSTO SENATUS POPVLUSQUE ROMANUS

QUOD INSTINCTU DIVINITATIS MENTIS

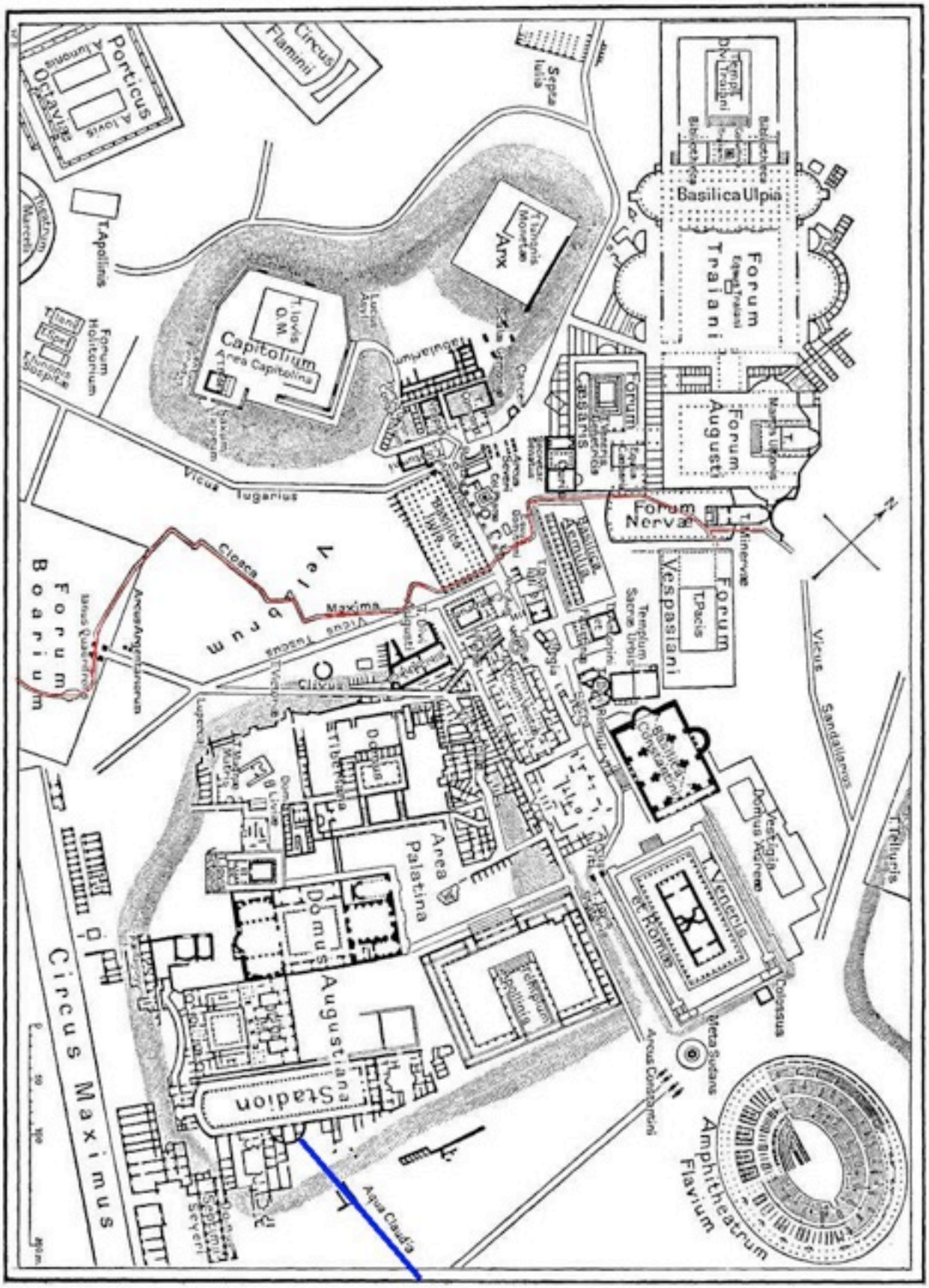
MAGNITUDINE CUM EXERCITU SUO

TAM DE TYRANNO QUAM DE OMNI EIUS

FACTIONE UNO TEMPORE IUSTIS

REMPUBLICAM ULTUS EST ARMIS

ARCUM TRIUMPHIS INSIGNEM DICAVIT


Porticus Octaviae
Circus Flaminius
Saepta Iulia
Basilica Ulpia
Forum Traiani
Arx
Capitolium
Forum Augusti
Forum Nervae
Forum Vespasiani
Vicus Tuscus
Clivus Maximus
Vicus Tugarius
Forum Boarium
Area Palatina
Domus Augustiana
Stadion
Circus Maximus
Amphitheatrum Flavium
Meta Sudans
Colosseus
Aqua Claudia


WASHINGTON, DC
To Bethesda
To C&O Canal National Historic Park
Foggy Bottom
George Washington University
World Bank
White House
Washington Convention Center
Downtown
Watergate Complex
Theodore Roosevelt Island
State Department
Octagon House
Union Station
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Union Station Plaza
Arlington
Potomac
The Ellipse
Vietnam Veterans Memorial
National Museum of Natural History
Capitol
Theodore Roosevelt Bridge
Arlington Memorial Bridge
Lincoln Memorial
Washington Monument
Smithsonian Institution
Library of Congress
Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial
Tidal Basin
Columbia Island
Park
River
Benjamin Banneker Park
Southeastern University
Lady Bird Johnson Park
Jefferson Memorial
East Potomac Park
Washington Channel
Southwest DC
0 1 km
0 0.6 mile
Pentagon

City Layout Worksheet

Using the two maps and your reading please write out your answers to the following questions to turn in on Wednesday:

1. Locate the triumphal route in Rome. Where does it begin? Where does it lead? What is along it? Can you find an equivalent on the map of DC? If so, where does this route lead? Where does it begin? What is along it?

2. Discuss the terms *axiality* and *monumentality* (see reading). How do each apply to both cities?

3. What is different about the city layouts? What aspects of Washington DC's design are clearly *not* influenced by the layout of Rome?

4. What monuments/buildings are emphasized in each of the two cities? How are they similar or different in function?

5. Consult a map of another US city (I recommend looking at NYC or Philadelphia but feel free to get creative!). Can you find any connections to this chapter? How does it compare to Rome and DC?

Union Station Worksheet

Outside the Station:

1. Locate the classical components:
    a. columnae (what type?)
    b. arci (how many?)
    c. porticus
2. Compare the arch on the façade of Union Station with the Arch of Constantine. How are they similar? How are they different? Why would Burnham choose an arch for a train station? How does the arch contribute to the *feeling* of the train station?
3. Observe the statues on Union station. How do they compare to the statues on the Arch of Constantine? How do they differ? What was the role of these statues on the Arch of Constantine? What role do these statues serve?

Inside the Station (Main Concourse)

1. Compare the great hall with the former Baths of Diocletian. What similarities do you notice? What differences?
2. What is the overall feeling of the main hall at Union Station? How does the influence of the Baths of Diocletian help to create that feeling? Consider the role of a train station in the 1900s and the role of a bath building in ancient times. Why does this model make sense for Union Station?
3. Can you find the centurions? Discuss whether you think they fit in their environment. Why or why not?