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Misplaced Ingenuity?
Polychrome marble panelling: its use and reception
in Late Roman Italy (c. AD 300 – AD 600)

*Within marbles are images rich or worthless,
depending on what our talents can draw out of them*

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Abstract

This thesis is chiefly concerned with what a close reading of the contemporary literature alongside a comprehensive evaluation of stone use can reveal about marble decoration in Late Roman Italy (c. AD 300-600). As it stands, much of our understanding concerning the use of decorative stone in the Late Roman period is hindered by a restricted analysis which sees architectural elements placed at the heart of the study, consequently neglecting other forms of marble deployment such as panelling and *opus sectile*.¹ Studies that move beyond architectural elements are typically limited to a single region, city, or even a lone building. This thesis looks to partially remedy this by assessing the use of marble panelling and *opus sectile* from case studies taken from across Late Roman Italy: centring on Lombardy, Rome, and, Apulia. This is achieved through a close reading of the pertinent literature and comprehensive case-by-case analysis of each assemblage. The diverse nature of the sites culminates in a far-reaching assessment: expansive semi-rural villas in Lombardy and Apulia as well as urban *domus* from Ostia; churches from the major cities of Milan and Rome along with a single church from the comparatively small Canosa (Apulia); and, public baths from Ostia and Milan, as well as one located in the town of Aeclanum (Apulia), are all examined.

Part A, (Chapter II) of this thesis, provides a review of modern scholarship and an assessment of the contemporary antique sources which relate to marble. Part B, contains three chapters (Chapter III, Chapter IV, and, Chapter V), with each chapter focusing on a specific building type: domestic settings, bathhouses, and, church buildings. Part C (Chapter VI), features a detailed discussion based upon the data which emerged from the analyses in Part B. This thesis concludes with a short epilogue.

In its totality, the multiapproach undertaken goes someway to establishing the character of Late Roman marble use in Italy. This thesis outlines the fact that investment in marble cladding and revetment continued to be widespread across Italy at this time, feeding into the growing scholarly consensus which notes that parts of the Italian peninsula continued to prosper in the Late Roman period. Moreover, we continue to find evidence for continuity between contexts with the assemblages exposing shared trends between public and private buildings. Equally, we can see that the symbolic potency which marble was imbued with since the Late Republic remained. Yet, simultaneously, a fundamental outcome of this study is the evidence for a specific Late Roman approach to marble and, as such, the ideological significance that marble was instilled with took on a Late Roman character. In particular, issues concerning Romanness shaped much of Late Roman attitudes toward marble. A further element of this specific Late character was the appetite for variation. Potentially influenced by developments in the Late Latin literary culture, diversity with respect to lithotypes and application was prevalent and as a consequence saw new trends emerge, this vitality was

¹ *Opus sectile* is a modern term found in archaeological literature which typically refers to a design composed of carefully cut pieces of marble which are fitted together. The most analogous term used by the ancients is *sectilia pavimenta*, which both Vitruvius (7.1.3,4) and Suetonius (Div. Iul. 46) use. In the 5th century Sidonius Apollinaris refers to *sectilibus partes tabulis crusatus* (Carm.22.146). For a more expansive discussion see, Dunbabin 1999: 254-268.

signalled by the range of seemingly newly imported lithotypes used alongside local marble and re-used elements in Late Roman contexts.

Lay Summary

This thesis is a study of marble panelling and *opus sectile* in Late Roman Italy (c. AD 300-600). It centres on both archaeological evidence and written texts. At the moment, our understanding of marble use in Italy at this time is inadequate because the majority of the studies on the subject only focus on large architectural elements, like columns, or limit the scope of research to a single region, city, or simply one building. This study is more holistic, since it assesses the deployment of panelling from across Italy with assemblages from Lombardy, Rome, and, Apulia all examined. What is more, instead of focusing on a single building this thesis includes a diversity of buildings with urban and non-urban domestic spaces, bathhouses and churches evaluated. This thesis is split into three parts. The first part, Part A (Chapter II), reviews the current scholarship pertaining to marble, particularly the scholarship relating to the Late Roman period. Part B (Chapter III, Chapter IV, and, Chapter V), is concerned with the three specific building types examined in this study. Part C (Chapter VI), features a detailed discussion based upon the findings from Part B.

In its entirety, this approach which includes an assessment of literary sources alongside archaeological data, reveals that marble continued to be the source of significant investment in Italy at this time. More importantly, we find that there was a Late Roman approach to marble. Specifically, the analysis shows that there were shared fashions which impacted both public and private buildings. We can also see that *spolia*, which is to say reused stone, had a symbolic potency in the Late Roman era which established a link between the decorative practices of the time and the perceived glories of ancient Rome. A further element of marble use in Late Roman Italy was the appetite for variety. What is particularly noticeable is the relationship between the variation in Late Latin literary culture and the varied approach to marble use. Marble use was marked by a sense of the past demonstrated in the literary tradition and in the archaeological record. In sum, marble use in Late Roman Italy was one defined by vitality.

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NOTE ON MARBLE NAMING PRACTICE

A short note on the nomenclature of marble. I have used the best-known names. In most cases, white stones are named with a reference to their place of origin marble and Proconnesian marble, for example. For polychrome stones, this is not always the case since the naming conventions mostly widely used today was set out by Italian *scalpellini*. In order to assist the reader I have provided a short glossary below.² Further details on many of the lithotypes named in this thesis can be found on the CORSI collection website.

ITALIAN NAME	LATIN NAME	MAIN SOURCE	DESCRIPTION
AFRICANO	<i>Marmor Lucullem</i>	Teso, Turkey.	Breccia with black or green matrix containing pink, white, red, and green clasts.
ALABASTRO COTOGNINO	-	Nile valley, Eastern desert, Egypt.	Creamy white with streaks.
ALABASTRO FIORITO	-	Pamukkale area, Denizli, Turkey.	Golden brown travertine with some brecciated areas.
ARZO	-	Ticino, Italian/Swiss Apls.	Grey with red or yellow clasts.
MARMO DI LESBOS	<i>Marmor Lesbium</i>	Moria, Lesbos, Greece.	Patchy grey white stone.
BARDIGLIO	-	Tuscany, Italy.	Greyish white with smooth streaks.
BIANCO NERO	-	Hautes-Pyrénées, France.	Black Breccia with white granular calcite matrix.
BRECCIA CORALINA	-	Verzirhan, Turkey.	Breccia with coral red ground and cream-white clasts.
BRECCIA DEL LAGO DI GARDA (OR ROSSO AMMONITICO)	-	Lake Garda, Brentónico, Italy.	Yellow with some red or pink streaks.
BRECCIA DI SETTEBASI	<i>Marmor Scyrium</i>	Skyros, Greece.	Breccia with purple ground and white, sometimes pink or orange, clasts
BRECCIA ROSATO GARGANO	-	Northern Apulia, Italy.	Pink/red breccia with yellow or pink clasts

² Taken from Russell 2013a: xxi, with amendments.

BROCCATELLO	<i>Marmor Schiston</i>	Tortosa Tarragona, Spain.	Dark yellow with streaks of reddish brown.
CIPOLLINO VERDE	<i>Marmor Carystium</i>	South-eastern Euboea, Greece.	Streaked green and white marble.
CIPOLLINO ROSSO	<i>Marmor Lasense</i>	Kiyi Kislacik Milas, Mugla Province, Turkey.	Dark red with streaks.
FIOR DI PESCO	-	Eretria, Greece.	Pink–purple to brown marble streaked with white.
GIALLO ANTICO	<i>Marmor Numidicum</i>	Chemtou (ancient Simitthus), Tunisia.	Breccia with a ground of purple, orange, or yellow and yellow clasts.
GRANITO DELLA VERDE SEDIA	<i>Lapis Ophytes</i>	Wadi Semna, Eastern Desert, Egypt.	Dark green with speckles.
GRANITO DEL FORO	<i>Marmor Claudianum</i>	Mons Claudianus, Egypt.	Speckled black and white granodiorite.
GRANITO SARDO (OR GRANITO A MORVIGLINONE)	-	Between Aswan and Shellal district, Nile Valley, Egypt.	Speckled black and white granite, sometimes with pinkish patches.
GRECO SCRITTO	-	Near Ephesos, Turkey	White marble with meandering lines of black markings.
MARMO DI LUNA	<i>Marmor Lunense</i>	Carrara, Tuscany, Italy.	White or blue/grey marble.
MOSCHINATA VERDE OR SERPENTINA MOSCHINATA	-	Wadi Semna, Eastern Desert, Egypt.	Dark green, sometimes speckled.
NERO DELLE PREALPI	-	Northern Italy.	Uniformly black.
PAVONAZZETTO	<i>Marmor Phrygium</i>	Iscehisar (ancient Dokimeion), Turkey.	Breccia of white clasts in a purple matrix.
MARMO PENTELICO	<i>Marmor Pentelicus</i>	Attica, Greece.	Milky white.
PIETRA DI BOTTICINO	-	Near Brescia, Italy.	Uniformly beige.
PIETRA DI VERONA	-	Verona, Italy.	White.
PIETRA DI VICENZA	-	Vicenza, Italy.	White.
PIETRA DI ZANDOBBIO	-	Near Bergamo, Italy.	White.
PORFIDO ROSSO	<i>Rubet Porphyrites</i>	Gebel Dokham, Eastern Desert, Egypt.	Uniformly purple with pointed speckled.
PORTASANTA	<i>Marmor Chium</i>	Chios, Greece.	Breccia of pink or grey clasts in a red–pink matrix.
MARMO PROCONNESIO (PROCONNESIAN MARBLE, IN ENGLISH)	<i>Marmor Proconnesium</i>	Marmara Island, the Sea of Marmara.	Blue/Grey streaks.
ROSSO ANTICO	<i>Marmor Taenarium</i>	Cape Matapan, Greece.	Uniformly red–brown marble.

SERPENTINO VERDE	<i>Marmor Lacadaemonium</i>	Krokeai, near Sparta, Greece.	Dark green porphyritic andesite with a lighter green speckled pattern.
MARMO TASIO	-	Thasos, Greece.	Medium grain white stone.
VERDE ANTICO	<i>Marmor Thessalicum</i>	Kassamboli, near Larisa, Greece.	Breccia with light green ground and green, black, or grey clasts.

NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

Where possible, all abbreviations for the ancient sources follow *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th Edition. Biblica sources, other early Christian sources, and further exceptions are abbreviated in the following way:

Amb. Nab.	Ambrose of Milan	Homily of Naboth
Chor. LM.	Choricius of Gaza	Laudatio Marciani
Egin. Vita.	Eginhard	Vita Karoli Magni
Ephrem. Hymn .Ed.	Ephrem of Edessa	The Hymn of Edessa
Gal. Fiam. Crona.	Galvano Fiamma	La Cronaca estravagante di Galvano Fiamma
Greg. Great. Lib. Epist.	Gregory the Great	Epistles
Ger. Mel.	Gerontius	The Life of Melania the Younger
Greg. Nazianzus. Orat.	Gregory of Nazianzus	Orations
Greg. of Nyssa. Theo.	Gregory of Nyssa	On Theodore
Hist. Vitae. S. Sabini.	Anonymo scripta	Historia Vitae Inventionis
Isid. Etym.	Isidore of Seville	Etymologiae
John. Mal. Chron.	John Malalas	Chronicle
Leo. Ser.	Leo the Great	Sermons
Ori.Coll.	Orobasisus	Collectiones Medicae
Matt.	Matthew	
Pal. Agri.	Palladus	On Agriculture
Paul. Sil. Descr. S.	Paul the Silentiary	Description of Santa. Sophia
Sophia.		Epsitle to the Colossians
Paul. Col.	Paul	
Phot. Hom.	Photios	Homily

Poly. Phil. Polycarp.	Polycarp	The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians
Tert. Idol.	Tertulian	On Idolatry

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this thesis, I have largely used the term ‘Late Roman’ as a means of describing the period between the 3rd and 6th centuries, as experienced on the Italian peninsula. To my mind, and I hope to have shown this in my thesis, it is clear that the people of the Italian peninsula thought of themselves, their institutions, and their way of life, as *Roman*. While some scholars prefer something along the lines of “the Late Antique period”, my feeling is that this phrase is more broad and as a consequence includes communities who were somewhat less attached to the idea of Romanness. Where I have used Late Antique/Late Antiquity I have done so either when quoting or paraphrasing another scholar or when I have sought to make a point that extends beyond the explicitly ‘*Roman world*’.

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Chapter I: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, and Case Studies

'But whoever first discovered how to cut marble and carve up luxury into many portions was a man of misplaced ingenuity. The cutting of the marble is effected apparently by iron, but actually by sand, for the saw merely presses the sand upon a very thinly traced line, and then the passage of the instrument, owing to the rapid movement to and fro, is in itself enough to cut the stone.'

Pliny the Elder. *Natural History*. 36.9. (Trans: Eichholz).

'Stone from Laconia and Thessaly and from Carystos is split apart with iron tools into slabs, and the quarries of the Nile and of Numidia are scoured, and maybe even the Phrygian stone is called in for these endeavours, because, having sprinkled purple dye at random on the whiteness of its marble, it becomes a luxury for greedy eyes, as it depicts the pattern of the colour in many different forms and shapes against the white. What great pains, what great ingenuity, are spent over these things, as some saw through the materials with water and iron, while others toil day and night with human hands as they finish the work of cutting!'

Gregory of Nyssa. *Ecclesiastes Homiliae*. 3. (Trans: Hall & Moriarty).

At some point in the middle of the 1st century AD, the famed natural philosopher Pliny the Elder discussed one of his age's most pressing issues: the manufacture and deployment of marble veneers. Several centuries later, in the second half of the 4th century AD, the bishop Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-395) captured the spirit of Pliny's original statement and like the naturalist he drew upon the role of sawn marble veneers in Rome's decorative diet. Like Pliny, Gregory identifies, with sardonic wit, that the slicing of the veneers was an act of '*ingenuity*'. In their own way, both of these passages alight on the centrality of marble in the Roman world. In his study of the natural world, which in reality was more expansive than the title affords, Pliny uses marble as a tool for analysing contemporary Roman morality. Likewise, Gregory's work, which was expressed in explicitly Christian terms, also considers the impact that marble had on Rome, and the world more broadly. Of course, Pliny and Gregory were not the only Romans to contemplate the marble. Indeed, it is no overstatement to say that Rome was obsessed with marble. Following the introduction in 146 BC of the hard, glittering, and, most of all, alluring material, Rome was infatuated.³ Marble, and what it symbolised, became central to Rome's understanding of herself and the world around her. Moral debates were discussed in the context of marble use; a wide reaching and complex industry was sustained by Rome's appetite; many of the very buildings within which Romans, lived, worked, rested, and worshipped were marked by this seemingly ubiquitous stone. As

³ Russell 2013a:13.

the centuries past, and Rome's economic, military, and political power ebbed and flowed, marble remained; taken down, reworked, and repurposed, marble was redefined as quintessentially *Roman*. In the Late Roman period, the material started to encapsulate the very ideals of the Imperial Roman past: emperors and kings in the East and in the West built and remodelled cities in marble, just as Augustus had done centuries prior.⁴ In this context, it is no surprise that Pliny, and an array of other Roman writers, examined marble and the role it performed.

The aim of this study is to examine this obsession. More precisely, this study asks how marble was thought and written about and how the deployment of polychrome veneers and *opus sectile*, including what is termed '*crustae*', was carried out in on the Italian peninsula, in the Late Roman period (c. AD 300-600). By way of tackling this question, this study will look to consider how Roman writers responded to the varying ways in which marble was deployed and to think about how the use of, and the following reactions to, marble changed over the course of the Roman period.

The vast corpus of literary sources who discussed stone in the Late Roman period did so in view of the hermeneutic and conceptual boundaries laid before them by their Republican and Imperial forebears.⁵ This is reflected in a large body of literature, the output of which keenly expressed a strong feeling of attachment to the past through discourses on marble. Yet, at the same time, a development in the debate saw the very ideals of the past restyled and instilled with a sense of energy and innovation that marks much of the Late Roman era. This analysis of the Late corpus, pertaining to marble, in the light of the earlier tradition, constitutes the first principle basis of this thesis and the debates within. The second component of this study is the evaluation of stone use in Late Roman contexts; domestic spaces, public baths, and churches from across the Italian peninsula are all appraised. Here, the character of the assemblages is considered and where possible the available marble is carefully quantified. Where it is impossible to effectively quantify the material, or the material is no longer available, a careful description will suffice.

In its totality, it is hoped that the analysis of the written material and the archaeology has the capacity to develop our understanding with regards to stone in Late Roman Italy. Specifically, the outcome of this research should improve our understanding of the following:

- How did the literary sources describe veneers and *opus sectile* and how did it relate to the archaeology?
- What was the nature of the marble industry in Late Roman Italy? What role did reuse play?
- The character of the various marble assemblages – did local or regional trends emerge and did the type of building decorated impact marble use?

The importance of these research questions are addressed throughout this study. All things considered, this thesis highlights the distinct character of marble use in Late Roman Italy; notwithstanding this, the deployment of marble use was heavily impacted by what went before, both in terms of the literary tradition and built environment. By highlighting this fact, it is hoped that the study can assist in the development of our appreciation of marble use in

⁴ Suet. *Aug.* 29 (Trans: Rolfe).

⁵ De Angelis 2008: 80.

Late Roman Italy and, more generally, feed into wider debates concerning the Late Roman period more broadly.

To begin, this chapter will look to contextualise this thesis with a discussion of the relevant scholarship which impacts this study. The development of marble studies is discussed first before moving on to outline specific studies regarding the use of marble in non-architectural decoration (such as statuary) and then architectural decoration; the discussion regarding marble architecture is complete with a subdivision which specifically covers houses, baths, and churches as per the format of this study.

Finally, an overview of the literature relating to the Late Roman period more generally is discussed. This review of the literature is followed by an overview of the case studies featured in this thesis. In each instance a broad background to each site is provided, with the Roman character emphasised. In doing this I hope to explain the validity of each site and outline how an assessment of the sites, as a collective, can further our understanding of stone use across Late Roman Italy.

Literature Review

Marble Studies

In 1965 the *Comitato per lo studio del Marmo e della Pietra nell'Antichità* was established in Rome with Ward-Perkins at the forefront.⁶ Ward-Perkins' contribution, here, and elsewhere, would go on to provoke a growing interest in the field of marble studies.

As Dodge would later note, Ward-Perkins sought to foster interest in the study of marble beyond artistic parameters; he looked to 'treat marble not as a disembodied medium for artistic and architectural expression, but as an industry whose strengths and limitations radically affected both the diffusion of marble and the way in which it was used'.⁷ A demonstration of this approach is exhibited in a number of the collective papers of J.B. Ward-Perkins, which were amassed into a single volume by the British School at Rome and published 1992. These studies, primarily on the marble trade, covered a number of topics including quarrying, resource management, transportation and connectivity, and touched on the influence of 'taste' and fashion in the Roman marble business.⁸

The continued influence of Ward-Perkins was confirmed by the editors of his collected papers who, in their opening remarks, underline that 'there is so far no general and fully accessible book on the ancient use of marble'.⁹ The statement may well have been accurate at the time as studies often only valued marble, and decorative stone more broadly, as part of wider discourse in the study of subjects such as the Roman economy, urbanisation, art history, and architecture.¹⁰ This left a paucity of scholarship that embraced marble as a subject in its own right. Fortunately, over the past 30 years, particularly in the last decade or so, the study of marble has flourished. The emergence of the multidisciplinary Association for

⁶ Monna 1988:4.

⁷ Dodge 1991: 28; Dodge & Ward-Perkins 1992:1.

⁸ Dodge & Ward-Perkins 1992.

⁹ Ward-Perkins 1992.

¹⁰ For instance, Burford 1969:1-18; Krautheimer 1965:190; Finley 1985:127-133.

the Study of Marble and Other Stones in Antiquity (ASMOSIA), a successor to *Comitato per lo studio del Marmo e della Pietra nell'Antichità*, continues to bring together archaeologist, geologists, art historians, ancient historians and architectural historians, all of whom have an interest in antiquity and place stone at the centre of their work. The ASMOSIA series was not alone in promoting the value of marble décor in the Roman period and later. Indeed, L'Associazione Italiana per lo Studio e la Conservazione del Mosaico (AISCOM), encouraged scholars working in Italian to place stone at the centre of their analysis. Beginning in 1994, and initially led by Farioli Campanati and Baldassarre, the association continues to publish studies relating to marble use.¹¹ Focused primarily on the study of marble use in Italy, AISCOM publications are split along regional lines (i.e Emilia-Romagna or Toscana, Umbria, Lazio) with studies often analysing marble use in specific buildings, or locals. Pertinent to this study, the AISCOM series was at the forefront in the analysis of marble panelling. Furthermore, like ASMOSIA, AISCOM also includes studies pertaining to broader theoretical topics such as provenance studies and the application of new technologies.

This new environment, which was supported by both ASMOSIA and AISCOM has helped produce a diverse field of scholarship. This newfound vibrancy saw Fischer, in 1998, describe the field as 'fashionable' while more recently in 2013 Russell, demonstrating sustained growth in the field, concluded that marble studies were 'booming'.¹² Over recent years datasets have increased significantly typified by the online Corsi collection, which built on the work of Borgini and Gnoli who both published catalogues of marble lithotypes used in antiquity, providing a visual description besides images of over 1000 marble typologies.¹³ Similarly, Russell's *Gazetteer of Stone Quarries in the Roman World* indicates considerable numbers of new quarrying sites that have been discovered, highlighting the intense expansion on marble studies.¹⁴ While many of the early studies, however, discussed marble from an architectural perspective, following the lead of Ward-Perkins, a number of his associates developed other fields of marble scholarship. Amanda Claridge's early work assessed marble use in sculpture and carving techniques during the Imperial period.¹⁵ Later, Hazel Dodge offered a broad, if brief, overview of the marble trade in the Roman empire demonstrating a holistic approach by commenting on issues concerning quarrying, transportation, distribution, as well as noting the impact that the arrival of polychrome marble had in Rome on moralists Pliny the Elder and Seneca.¹⁶ The work of Claridge and Dodge saw the study of marble move away from a solely architectural background, and, as a consequence, set the tone for an more inclusive field. The inclusivity engendered here saw both a growth of the marble studies leading to the development of new areas of research such as identification and provenance, economics and trade, quarrying logistics, spoliated marble, legal developments applied to marble, sarcophagus studies, and marble decoration.¹⁷ In addition

¹¹ Farioli Campanati & Baldassarre 1994.

¹² Fischer 1998: 7; Russell 2013a: 3.

¹³ Online Corsi collection: <http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/corsi/>; Gnoli 1988; Borghini 1998.

¹⁴ Russell 2013b.

¹⁵ Strong & Claridge 1976.

¹⁶ Dodge 1988a; Dodge 1988b.

¹⁷ For identification and provenance see, Attanasio et al. 2006: 245-354; Bruno et al. 2002: 347-358. Herrmann Jr 2009: 200-209. For economics and trade, Dodge 1988: 65-80; 228-532; Russell 2009: 533-539; 2013; Toma 2009: 549-559; 2013; Marano 2016: 111-132. Quarrying logistics, Peacock 1988: 97-103; Djuric et al. 2006; 2007; Molist & Otiña 2009: 688-703. On aspects pertaining to the law, Barker and Marano 2017. On spoliation, Alchermes 1994; De Steabler 2018; Hansen 2013; Jacobs 2013. For sarcophagus studies see, Herrmann Jr 2009:93-103; Russell 2013a.

scholars have also sought to consider how marble was received by contemporaries with regards to notions of heritage and identity.¹⁸

Stone identification and provenance studies is one field that has seen continuous development in recent years thanks to the role played by increasingly sophisticated technology which allows for precise identification of marble typologies and source locations – in the past scholars relied on visual identification combined with readings of ancient text. ASMOSIA have played a fundamental role in the increased recognition of this field.¹⁹ The continuous development here is typified by the work of the Norwegian physicist Dyseth who, in the spirit of ASMOSIA's interdisciplinary approach, developed the XFR-en analyser: a portable 'pistol' with the capacity to identify white marble typologies in a completely non-invasive manner.²⁰ This growth, however, has resulted in a somewhat amorphous field. In an attempt to draw together the scattered constellation of studies in this area Attanasio, Brilli and Ogle published *The Isotopic Signature of Classical Marbles* in 2006.²¹ Yet, while the study demonstrated the efficacy of marble identification technology, recording an extensive dataset of marbles typologies, it failed to fully place the identification and provenance research into the wider marble studies discourse. Fortunately, in recent years, a number of scholars have looked to achieve just this. Al-Bashaireh, Antonelli, Basarrate and, Taelman have all used identification and provenance technology as a means of assessing trade and identifying distribution networks.²² These studies feed into the wider discussion of marble trade in the Imperial period and, in doing so, contributes to the especially fertile area of marble studies: the Roman stone trade.

Studies of the Roman stone trade have looked to place the trade of marble into the context of the broader economics of the Imperial system. Early work in the field is typified by Braemer who between the 1970's and 1980's completed a number of influential studies where he sought assess the localised patterns of connectivity in specific regional zones, in Gaul and Spain²³ In a similar way Fischer, in 1988, completed his study on Roman Palestine, in which he assessed trade networks in the region.²⁴ Taking a different tact, Fant, has contributed a great deal to the discussion on the Imperial stone trade; principally dealing with the role of the Imperial state in the marble industry as well as considering distribution networks.²⁵ Pensabene too has played a pivotal role in this work; working with a large qualitative dataset he has evaluated the administrative relationship between stone quarries, distribution networks, and architectural projects.²⁶ Likewise, work by DeLaine has added massively to the study of stone economics, especially concerning building energetics.²⁷

Building on the work of these scholars, Russell's *The Economics of the Roman Stone Trade* invigorated the discourse on the economics of the marble trade during the Imperial period. Russell takes a holistic approach, noting the diversity of practice within the stone trade, and as a consequence deals with quarrying, transport, patterns of distribution and,

¹⁸DeLaine 2002: 210-211; Carey 2003; Kiilerich 2012: 9-29; Siwicki 2019.

¹⁹ASMOSIA VIII: Degryse et al. 2009; Moroni et al. 2009 ASMOSIA XI: Mesisca et al. 2019; Csorba et al. 2019; Paviato & Zara 2019.

²⁰Dyseth: forthcoming.

²¹Attanasio et al. 2006.

²²Al-Bashaireh 2011; Antonelli & Lazzarini 2015; Taelman & Antonelli 2022.

²³Braemer 1971:167-174; 1982:81-92; 1984:57-72; 1986a:267-286; 1986b:287-328.

²⁴Fischer 1988.

²⁵Fant 1986; 1988; 1992; 1993a; 1993b.

²⁶Pensabene 1972:317-62; 1978:105-118; 2001:63-127; 1993;2013; Pensabene et al. 1999:147-156.

²⁷DeLaine 1997.

importantly, the vital role of consumers.²⁸ Russell's acknowledgement of the consumer, in this context, picks up on an increasingly salient point: the importance of choice. Indeed, stones studies have developed in such a way that research now looks to incorporate elements of the marble business into a discourse that places a high value on aesthetics, fashion, and the socio-cultural cachet of stone. More recently, Marsili's monograph on the marble industry in Late Antiquity studied marble workshops and labour as means of getting to grips with the processing cycle; via an investigation of literary sources and an exceptionally large body of epigraphic evidence, Marsili shone new light on the marble industry.²⁹

Concerning trade networks, the impact of foreign stones has been a part of the marble scholarship since its inception. The ASMOSIA series, aforementioned, has played a fundamental role in this dynamic. However, the importance of local stones is increasingly a feature of the field. Concerning Italy, in particular, a number of studies have highlighted the deployment of local lithotypes.³⁰ However, there is a paucity of studies which interrelate the various local networks within the Italian Peninsula.

Non-Architectural Marble Decoration

Although the focus of this thesis is primarily based in architectural decoration, in the guise of panelling, a great deal of scholarship has investigated other types of marble use: statuary, portraiture, and other decorative monuments – like grave markers and obelisks, and sarcophagi. Pertinently, these analyses have impacted the way in which architectural studies have proceeded. Indeed, the prestige associated with certain lithotypes was observed as early as 1948: Vasiliev is his study of the manufacturing of Imperial sarcophagi, from the Byzantine period, observed the importance associated with porphyry.³¹ What is more, various analyses of statuary since the 19th century have included a range of topics which impact studies of marble use in architectural contexts. In the late 19th century Redford, who's work accounts for some of the earliest study of statues in the Mediterranean, gives a visual and technical description, including an evaluation of carving practises, for statuary from the Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek, and Roman worlds. His work has drawn a stylistic link between each tradition as well as to record distinctive characteristics.³² Andrew Stewart, who took a comparable stylistic approach, looked to further the discourse with attempts to provide an insight into the psyche of sculptors through an visual interpretation of their work.³³ In terms of portraiture, however, scholarship has, in recent years, sought to look beyond stylistic commentaries. Both Dillon and Keesling eschewed the traditional path in the hope of investigating the message, be it political, religious, or something else entirely, that Archaic Classical Greek, and later Roman portraiture looked to convey.³⁴ However, it was Pollitt followed by Neer who really changed the discourse. In his *The Emergence of Classical Style in Greek Sculpture*, Neer developed the field further by outlining the cultural importance of marble through an astute combination of technical analysis alongside a study of contemporary literature and

²⁸ Russell 2013a.

²⁹ Marsili: 2019.

³⁰ Terracina 1991; Previato & Mareso 2015; Bugin et al. 2018; De Stefano 2015: 114.

³¹ Vasiliev 1948: 2-18.

³² Redford 1882. Although much of Redford's work assess stone he also provides some analysis on bronze, terracotta, and wooden statuary.

³³ Stewart 1990. See pages 36-39 for a short discussion on the use of marble.

³⁴ Dillon 2006; Keesling 2017: 154-182.

aesthetics.³⁵ Likewise Pollitt, in an article published in 1978, sought to assess the function of Greco-Roman art, including marble statuary, and its socio-cultural significance, picking up on ideas such as religion and heritage through an evaluation of primary texts.³⁶

At the forefront of studies on Roman art is Paul Zanker who's work, which has often taken the form of traditional art-historical practices, arguably peaked in 1987 with the publication of *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*.³⁷ In an all-encompassing study dealing with numismatics, architecture, as well as statuary and other media, Zanker assesses the wider impact of Roman, in this case Augustan, art with a holistic attitude rather than via a select of choice pieces. Zanker's methodology reveals the power of images and the language that was spoken through them.

With the notion of the visual language in mind, the ground-breaking work carried out by the *Tracking Colour Project* has placed colour, and its connection with the materiality of marble, at the centre of research into Roman sculpture. Amalie Skovmøller, in particular, has sought to use colour as a means to get closer to the Roman visual experience. Skovmøller has applied a combination of sophisticated scientific examination with traditional art-historical and archaeological 'readings' to assess how, and to what effect, marble statuary was polished or painted.³⁸ Other members of the project have looked to discuss alternative elements within this topic. Indeed, given that the field is relatively new, both Hedegaard and Ostergaard have looked to outline the validity and authenticity of the research area while Brøns has reflected upon potential societal considerations that newly discovered painted statuary can infer, particularly with regards to the role of women, children and non-elites within Roman society.³⁹ The work of these scholars has, for the first time, placed materiality and colour of decorative stone at the forefront of the scholarship into marble statuary.

In a study of the literature pertaining to colour in the Roman world Bradley has discussed in depth the psychology of colour and names given to colours in the Imperial Roman world. Although Bradley's monograph, *Colour and Meaning in Ancient Rome* is not a study of colour and marble his other work shows just how insightful an understanding of the role colour had in Rome and how we can apply a knowledge of this to the study of marble.⁴⁰

Architectural decoration and symbolism

The study of architectural decoration has grown and often intersects with other fields within marble studies. Concerning church architecture, for example, studies on the visual experience are plentiful: Nasrallah's *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture* places the emphasis of on the Christian viewers and their interactions with monuments and monumental decoration in the 2nd century; Patricos' work on Byzantine church architecture has considered how decoration affected religious practices.⁴¹ This point has been touched on

³⁵ Neer 2010: 70-102.

³⁶ Pollitt 1978: 155-174. Also see, Stewart 2003.

³⁷ Zanker 1987. Translated into English in 1995 - a paragraph from the original German text p.171, curiously omitted from the translated English, specifically refers to the importance of 'eloquent monuments in gleaming marble' of the Augustan statuary.

³⁸ Skovmøller & Therkildsen 2012; Skovmøller 2020.

³⁹ Brøns, Skovmøller, & Gisler 2017; Brøns & Harlow 2020: 219-240; Ostergaard 2017: 149-176; 2020: 100-119; Hedegaard & Brøns 2020: 7-25.

⁴⁰ Bradley 2006; 2009a; 2009b.

⁴¹ Nasrallah 2010; Patricos 2014. Also see Krautheimer 1965: 152.

by Ousterhout in his recent study of architecture in the Byzantine world.⁴² Schibille's study, *Hagia Sofia and the Byzantine Aesthetic Experience* similarly deals with and considers the role marble played in the visual experience with an emphasis on how people responded to marble, via a particular focus on the literary tradition. Pentcheva's work, which has culminated in the 'Enchanted Images Project' at the University of Stanford, considers the role marble in religious experience, through an architectural study and a study of contemporary literature, suggesting that stone has a metonymic value which was able to evoke a sense of the divine.⁴³

In her discussion of marble used at the *Terme di Caracalla*, Gensheimer cites marble's symbolism, mainly the sense of wealth and exotism, as essential to marble's appeal in antiquity.⁴⁴ In the same volume, Tronzo's '*Justinian's Hagia Sophia, angels and restlessness*' expands on the impact that marble's abstract qualities can have on the viewer.⁴⁵

However, it is Barry's impressive *Painting in Stone* which really advances the importance of the potent symbolic value that marble had.⁴⁶ With a chronology that extends from the ancient near east (c.3300-3100 BC) to the stone use in the Enlightenment, *Painting in Stone* utilises, where possible, contemporary texts. A wholly multidisciplinary approach, Barry mentions a range of literary sources from the Greco-Roman period, citing contemporary writers including Homer, Pliny the Elder, Seneca, Lucian, Cassiodorus, and Paul the Silentiary, alongside a technical geological and architectural study. Indeed, this approach is a feature of Barry's earlier works, most notably in an essay titled *Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, published in 2007.⁴⁷

The symbolism associated with marble has impacted the discussion concerning spoliated stone too. Greenhalgh's *Marble Past, Monumental Present: Building with Antiquities in the Medieval Mediterranean*, is a wide-ranging volume.⁴⁸ The chronological (AD 500-1400) and geographic scope of Greenhalgh's study is such that it includes sites usually associated with the Mediterranean world, as well as places like Aachen and Caernarfon, and adventurously provides an in-dept discussion on the tradition of marble (re)use in the Muslim world.⁴⁹ Importantly, Greenhalgh alights on the debate which dominates much of the discourse concerning reuse/*spolia* at the moment: was the reuse of marble a wholly pragmatic use of available material or was the deployment of reused marble symbolically charged?⁵⁰ A volume edited by Brilliant and Kinney, published in 2016, typifies this dispute since some of the contributors, such as Brandenburg along with Greenhalgh, contest the symbolic implication while others, namely Flood, advocate strongly for the added emotive value that reused stone could have.⁵¹ Other studies have also sought to tackle this debate. These are typified by the work of Jacobs and Hansen who have published *The Aesthetics Maintenance of Civic Space*, and *The Eloquence of Appropriation: Prolegomena to an Understanding of Spolia*, respectively.⁵² In her thematic study of building aesthetics in the Late Roman East, Jacobs, who is principally concerned with urban transformation, identifies

⁴² Ousterhout 2019.

⁴³ Pentcheva 2011; 2018.

⁴⁴ Gensheimer 2018.

⁴⁵ Tronzo 2018.

⁴⁶ Barry 2020.

⁴⁷ Barry 2007.

⁴⁸ Greenhalgh 2009.

⁴⁹ For a further discussion on marble use and the Muslim world see, Greenhalgh 2006.

⁵⁰ Greenhalgh 2009.

⁵¹ Brandenburg 2016; Greenhalgh 2016; Flood 2016a.

⁵² Hansen 2003; Jacobs 2013.

the processes and proclivities associated with reused stone. Key themes which emerge here include concerns around which buildings were prioritised for remodelling; discussions on who was responsible for maintaining civic structures; and, vitally, the importance of civic pride in the maintenance of the local environment. Hansen, in her study, places a focus on the use of spoliated stone concluding that during the Late Roman period the spoliation of marble was an expression of active interest in the materials reused oppose to passive use of left behind resources. Other studies concerning *spolia*, which have emerged in recent years, cover a range of further topics. Murer has focused specifically on the reuse of funerary *spolia* in the Late Roman period.⁵³ Gering has considered the role of workmanship in the modification and redeployment of *spolia*.⁵⁴ Further studies have highlighted the importance of *spolia* in the Late Roman world as indicated by the various pieces of legislation associated with the practice. Thus, a number of scholars have discussed the impact of these laws and pondered what they say about stone use during this time.⁵⁵ The extent of Pensabene's near-exhaustive studies into the practice of reuse and spoliation in Rome and Ostia sit in contrast to the large body of piecemeal studies on the subject.⁵⁶ In particular, *Ostiensium Marmorum Decus et Décor* deals in part with the deployment of reused stone a large and how reused elements were integrated into Ostia's urban fabric.⁵⁷

Houses, baths, and churches.

Concerning the various building types assessed in this thesis, a number of studies have taken place over the last several decades. On domestic architecture, a number of analyses have provided both wide-ranging overviews of housing in the Late Roman period and thematic analyses. The edited volume *Housing in Late Antiquity*, published in 2007 seeks to provide a survey of the different types of housing in the Late Roman period. In part a thematic text, a number of chapters focus on a range of issues including building legislation and analyses of mosaics.⁵⁸

Concerning the deployment of marble, this is largely confined to studies of specific *domus* or villas: Volpe's analysis of ecclesial residences in Canosa are a case in point.⁵⁹ Likewise, the evaluation of the so-called 'Bestie Fertie' and 'Tito Macro' *domus* carried out by Previato and Mareso, in Aquileia, as well as the study on 'Domus A' and 'Domus B', located in Rome, completed by Napoli and Baldassarri, place marble at the centre of the respective assessments.⁶⁰ By contrast, Sfameni's volume, published in 2007, *Ville Residenziali Nell'Italia Tardoantica* surveys the entire Italian peninsular providing a wide-ranging perspective of domestic architecture and decoration. However, although Sfameni brings marble use to our attention, little time is spent analysing how marble was deployed and what this may express.⁶¹ Similarly, Bowes thematic analysis, *Houses and Society in the Later Roman Empire*, does not deal in detail with the decorative features of residential settings in the Late Roman

⁵³ Murer 2016; 2018.

⁵⁴ Gering 2004 2013.

⁵⁵ Alchermes 1994; Barker 2021; Barker & Marano 2017.

⁵⁶ Pensabene 2007.

⁵⁷ Pensabene 2007: 432-547.

⁵⁸ Lavan et al. 2007.

⁵⁹ Volpe 2007.

⁶⁰ Previato & Mareso 2015; Napoli & Baldassarri 2015.

⁶¹ Sfameni 2007: 113-189.

period.⁶² Fortunately, Ellis, who has long focused on the Late Roman house, spends more time considering the decorative approach in Late Roman *domus*, deploying archaeology and textual sources. Indeed, Ellis' approach has placed domestic decoration in the wider debates concerning the Late Roman period: Ellis highlights the impact that public architecture had on domestic places and looked to investigate how power and wealth was displayed in domestic settings.⁶³ Other studies by Balmelle and Polci have similarly argued this point noting the role marble and other decorative modes played in this development.⁶⁴ Furthermore, a PhD completed in 2003, by Muntasser, entitled *The Late Antique Domus in Ostia: Patterns of Diversity and Transformation*, closely considers the role of marble in Late Roman *domus* highlighting both the proliferation of coloured marble with a special interest given over to the relationship between spatial organisation and the use of *opus sectile*.⁶⁵ Excavation reports have highlighted the deployment of decorative stone more closely: Bugini et al. have highlighted the use of marble in the Lake Garda villas, noting the varieties of stone deployed; Volpe's studies on the villa at Faragola as placed marble in the context of his wider study, although it did not provide quantified analysis.⁶⁶

Concerning bathhouses, Yegül's work is some of the most extensive in recent years. Yegül provides both an outline of the architectural framework and discusses what role bathhouses played as a social institution.⁶⁷ In a similar fashion, Fagan has combined an understanding of the archaeology with a strong knowledge of the cultural sensibilities around bathing.⁶⁸ Yet, while Yegül has looked to bring discussions concerning Late Roman bathing complexes to the fore, it is Maréchal's study which has developed this field more fully. Maréchal's utilisation of written sources and the archaeological data demonstrates the continued endurance of baths in the Roman world whilst emphasising the physical architectural changes bathing complexes went through.⁶⁹ Yet, despite this detailed overview, a serious examination of marble panelling is lacking.

The study of churches and church architecture similarly has been subject to a range of studies. Krautheimer's *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, is an early example. Krautheimer's work considered how church architecture developed and what impacted the changes. However, the role of marble is only touched upon in limited terms.⁷⁰ Stalley's overview of so-called early medieval architecture (AD 313-1200) is likewise wide-ranging and highlights the impact that the professed Roman styles had on later architectural developments.⁷¹ Additional reports on church architecture includes Webb's *The Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome* and Brandenburg's *Ancient Churches of Rome from the Fourth to the Seventh Century*. Although both these studies provide good insight into the architectural developments, little attention is paid to the use of marble veneers.⁷² Likewise, *Le Chiese di Milano*, an edited volume on the various churches in Milan, rarely mentions the deployment of stone in the antique cases

⁶² Bowes 2010.

⁶³ Ellis 2000.

⁶⁴ Balmelle 2001; Polci 2003.

⁶⁵ Muntasser 2003.

⁶⁶ Bugini et al. 2018; Volpe & Turchiano 2010.

⁶⁷ Yegül 2003; 2010.

⁶⁸ Fagan 2001.

⁶⁹ Maréchal 2020a.

⁷⁰ Krautheimer 1965.

⁷¹ Stalley 1999.

⁷² Webb 2001; Brandenburg 2005.

studied.⁷³ Indeed, in a similar way to the studies focussed on bathhouses, it is excavation reports where the presence of stone feeds into details concerning the broader studies of ecclesial decoration. The two recent studies on Santa Maria Antiqua are a case in point.⁷⁴

The Late Roman Period

The profound change that occurred during the Late Roman period has attracted continuous scholarly interest.⁷⁵ Yet, it was Brown's *The World of Late Antiquity*, published in the second half of the twentieth century, which energised the field.⁷⁶ With a focus on the cultural shift occurring at the time, *The World of Late Antiquity* manoeuvres away from the obligatory emphasis usually placed on the 'decline' or 'transformation' discourse. Indeed, while this debated lingers – Brian Ward-Perkins and Liebeschuetz continue to argue that the Roman world in the West was waning - scholarship in recent years has side-stepped this approach and instead looked to simultaneously treat the period on its own terms while also being aware of the historical context.⁷⁷ As a result, the study of the Late Roman period is flourishing with a range of emergent and intersected topics. Indeed, a feature of *The World of Late Antiquity* is the focus placed upon social change with special emphasis on the emergence of the so-called holy men, which is also the subject of a remarkable article published by Brown in 1971.⁷⁸ Other topics includes wide-ranging studies into the Late Roman economy, the developing Christian world, the military, the lives of non-elites, and the role played by women during this period. Cameron's *The Later Roman Empire: AD 284-430* and *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395-700* also cover many of these issues.⁷⁹

More precisely targeted studies include Clarke's, and more recently Cooper's, accounts of women in the Late Roman world.⁸⁰ Similarly, Sarris' analysis of the market economies which has looked to provide a balanced account of the Late Roman economy by examining the 'free market' nature of the economy alongside the 'interventionist' tendencies of the Roman state.⁸¹ Wicklow's overview of interregional trade, rightly highlights the importance of Hayes' *Later Roman Pottery* which, via a close inspection of ceramics sherds, Hayes helped develop our understanding of production and trade in the Late Roman world. In particular, Hayes observed how patterns of distribution changed during this period.⁸² More recently, Vroom's study of the ceramic evidence from the south of the Italian peninsula highlights the nature of trade and commerce during this time.⁸³ Relating to marble, various studies on shipwrecks, and their cargoes of stones, have likewise sought to develop our knowledge of commercial and distribution networks.⁸⁴ For example, a new in depth study of the Marzamemi 2 wreck, which contained a cargo of various stone architectural elements,

⁷³ Fiorio & Bandera Bistoletti 1985.

⁷⁴ Andaloro et al. 2016; Rubery et al. 2021. Also see, Osborne et al. 2004.

⁷⁵ Cameron 2007: 233-238. See, Bury 1923; Piganiol 1947; Jones 1964; 1965; 1966.

⁷⁶ Brown 1971.

⁷⁷ Liebeschuetz 2003; Ward-Perkins 2005 cf Wickham 2009.

⁷⁸ Brown 1971a; 1971b.

⁷⁹ Cameron 1993; 2012.

⁸⁰ Clarke 1993; Cooper 2014.

⁸¹ Sarris 2015.

⁸² Hayes 1972; Wicklow 2015.

⁸³ Vroom 2021.

⁸⁴ Packer 1992; Russell 2013b.

touches on the subject of commercial trade and delivery along with a sophisticated assessment of labour and production.⁸⁵

- ONE SENTENCE MARBLE STUDIES.

Methodology

By and large, studies concerning marble decoration in the Roman period tend to focus on specific buildings. This thesis, by contrast, looks to take a more holistic approach and considers stone use from a range of locations from across Late Roman Italy. In light of this, the methodical approach to this thesis is wide-ranging, reflecting the nature of this study. As outlined above, this thesis is concerned with an assessment of material evidence alongside a reading of the pertinent corpus of Roman literature centred on marble. Naturally, this has culminated in two distinct procedural styles, one historical the other archaeological. Regarding the historical method, I have sought to identify how writers, from the Late Roman era and before, have thought about marble. Further, I have looked to consider what internal and external factors impacted them. This was done via a close reading of both primary and secondary literature. Finally, I have debated how the traditions apparent in the literature impacted the actual deployment of stone.

The approaches used to assess the material evidence are more diverse. Since the nature of the material is inconsistent the assessment of the stone at the centre of this thesis was done so in a few ways. The following section will provide an overview of the methodical approaches applied in this thesis.

The marble assemblages in this thesis can broadly be separated into two separate categories: *in-situ* material and loose material. Both types of assemblages present methodological opportunities as well as challenges. What is more, even within these two categories there are added variances both in terms of the decorative choices applied (*opus sectile* vs the application of large slabs) and relative levels of preservation. As a consequence, there are several methodological approaches taken. At the same time, there are some processes that I have been consistently deployed throughout this study. Therefore, before outlining the various different analyses used I will first provide an overview of the practises which were employed consistently across this thesis. Only then will I move on to the discreet techniques used.

The first thing to say is that prior to analysing marble remains, an initial desk based survey of each site and each building studied in this thesis was carried out. This process included a historical and archaeological overview of each city or regional zone included in the study before moving on to cover specific buildings and assemblages. Buildings were surveyed by in a number of ways. In concert with site plans found in the relevant literature, Google Earth was used in order to identify how the places studied fitted into their surrounding environment. After this analysis was complete, I made in person visits to each site in order to detail more closely the buildings under consideration.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Leidwanger et al. 2018; Leidwanger & Russell 2020.

⁸⁶ The exception to this process occurred when assessing the villa at Faragola. Here a desk basis analysis was used.

The second phase of my analysis was dependent on the nature of the remaining material. In some instances, I once more relied upon the data found in the literature. In the case of *Santa Maria Antiqua* in Rome I am grateful to Henry Hurst for supplying me with his own unpublished data.

Regarding the *in situ* stone, other methods were used. In several of the buildings studied some of the stone found has simply been described, without being carefully counted. In most of these instances, a careful description provides sufficient detail from which to draw a conclusion regarding the marble use: the marble used in the *nymphaeum* of the eponymous domus is an example of this procedure. Likewise, in the case of the *Porta Marina domus*, I have simply provided a description since the remains are now part of a museum exhibit. In other cases a count of the marble remains was carried out, with the findings recorded. This process saw individual lithotypes identified and counted. This method was used where computational analysis (discussed below) was unfeasible. Typically, counts occurred when spaces were clad in large marble panels over a large space. In some instances, where the space concerned was especially large and decoratively homogenous, such as in the *Terme del Foro* in Ostia, a section of the entire assemblage was assessed.

When it came to more intricate *opus sectile* arrangements, I have deployed computational analyses. This was carried out by uploading augmented colour photographs into the image analysis software ImageJ. This process requires that for each separate photograph a separate image, for each different lithotype, is created. In each of the separate photos, the lithotype in question is coloured white. Once an image is uploaded into ImageJ the software calculates how many of the pixels are white and then provides a percentage ratio. Once this process is repeated we can quickly work out the relative ratio of each lithotype in any given photo.

The analysis of loose material is somewhat more straightforward. Here I identified and separated the various different lithotypes. This was followed by separating each lithotype into categories dependent on their thickness: 0-1cm, 1-2cm, 2-3cm, 3-4cm. Finally each of these sub-groupings were weighted separately. In doing it is hoped that we can garner some insight into which into how certain lithotypes were deployed (very thick elements were unlikely to have been deployed on as wall décor) and in what relative quantities. Indeed, by separating lithotypes by lithotype and thickness we can begin to see certain trends emerge which form the basis of much the work here.

Case Studies

The following section provides a brief background for the case studies assessed in this thesis. In each instance, each case study was carefully picked. Of course, the primary motivation behind the decisions to choose these sites was based upon the presence of marble and the fact that each site was occupied during the Late Roman period. Beyond this, other factors were at play: it is important that sites which are home to either domestic spaces, baths, or churches were selected. Additionally, I felt that it was essential to try, as much as possible, to include a good geographic spread (Fig.1). I have also sought to include case studies from large and medium sized urban centres as well as from rural locations since it is my hope that by assessing a diverse range of building types and locations this thesis can provide a reliable overview of marble deployment across the Italian peninsula in Late Roman period.

Milan

A well-appointed city positioned in the centre of the Po basin, Milan had, since the Imperial period, been a well-thought-of commercial and administrative centre, becoming a *colonia* in 89 BC.⁸⁷ By the Late Roman period, Milan was complete with a forum, theatre, *horrea*, large mansions, a mint, and, on the city's periphery, an amphitheatre.⁸⁸ Situated, as it was, on the great east-west and north-south cross-roads, that connected much of the Western Empire to the East, Milan was perfectly placed to prosper in the period following the crisis years of the 3rd century AD. Designated an imperial capital by Diocletian in AD 286, Maximian Herculeus' decision to make the city the seat of his power, between AD 293 and AD 305, was the beginning of Milan's newfound prominence, which saw the city develop and enlarge during this period.⁸⁹ New walls, towards the northeast, provided the city with an extended boundary with new baths located in the centre.⁹⁰ To the southwest, a circus and a palace were soon added. Colonnades and roads embellished the city with Maximian's grand mausoleum also constructed.⁹¹ A cathedral complex was built near the forum while a number of greater or lesser churches steadily accumulated around the city's suburbs, cemetery, and outside the walls.⁹²

Although Milan never achieved the status of *caput mundi*, in the way Rome had and Constantinople would, in the period between AD 286 and AD 402 Milan was the central Imperial seat in the Latin West.⁹³ An unbroken line of western emperors from Constantine and Constantius II, to the child emperor Honorius, used the city as the principal legislative and military capital leading to Milan outshining other leading western centres like Trier, Aquileia, and Carthage. As well as a centre for state administration, Milan also became the centre of the West's theological dispute between paganism, Arianism, and Christian orthodoxy.⁹⁴ This was personified by Ambrose (AD 339-397), Bishop of Milan from AD 374 until his death who played a leading role in these theological disputes and oversaw the construction of several basilicas and churches across the city. Following his death, further ecclesiastical buildings, namely the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*, were also constructed.

In AD 402 Alaric's Visigoths threatened the city. This saw the Imperial seat move east to the more easily defensible Ravenna.⁹⁵ Milan suffered from Attila's sacking of the city in AD 452 with further damage caused during the conflict between the Ostrogoths and Justinian's armies.⁹⁶ Odoacer (r. AD. 476-493), in his role as King of Italy, embraced *Ticinum* (Pavia), a

⁸⁷ As early c.120 BC Polybius. 2.34. (Trans: Paton) notes that area around Milan is famed for its agricultural output. See, Edwards. 1964: 14.

⁸⁸ Ausonius *Ordo. nob. urb.* 7; Krautheimer 1983: 69; Moorhead 1992: 23; Sparavigna 2016: 1. On Ausonius, although he most likely knew Milan, some scholars have suggested that his Order of Noble Cities was simply an exercise in 'the verbal geography of empire'. Yet, given that much of the remaining archaeology is consistent with Ausonius' description, of a grand city, seems reasonable to suggest that Ausonius' account is more than an application of geographic knowledge. See, Green 1999.

⁸⁹ Balzaretto 2019: 137; Herrin 2021: 2.

⁹⁰ Caporusso et al. 2014: 147-149.

⁹¹ Krautheimer 1983: 69.

⁹² Tcherikover 2021: 65.

⁹³ Between AD 345 and AD 451 five church synods were held in the city.

⁹⁴ Marano 2007: 107; Caporusso et al. 2014: 210.

⁹⁵ Herrin 2021: 9.

⁹⁶ On Attila's sacking of Milan, Zhumagulov & Sadykova 2020: 3; Dunn 2022. On the impact of the Romano-Gothic war on Milan see, Procopius. *Goth.* 5 8-12.(Dewing); Moorhead 1983: 579.

city just to the south of Milan, as his capital. Milan was consequently governed by bishops.⁹⁷ The buildings studied in this thesis, are highlighted in Figure 2.

Lake Garda

Situated 75 miles to the east of Milan on the doorstep of *Brixia* (Brescia), Lake Garda, was a favoured site for wealthy Romans since the early Imperial age.⁹⁸ Since Lake Garda is located on the eastern side of the river Oglio, the lake, and the villas in the vicinity, were situated in *Venetia et Histria* rather than in *Transpadana*, where Milan was located.⁹⁹ The remains of a number of conspicuous villas on the shore of the great lake, and nearby, have been uncovered.¹⁰⁰ During the 3rd century AD, the area around Lake Garda was subject to increasing incursions by Germanic populations resulting in long periods interspersed with violence. Despite this, expensive villas continued to populate the area until the 5th and 6th centuries AD (Fig. 3).

Rome

Rome's situation in the Late Roman period was complex. No longer the political and military centre of the Roman world, on these terms the city of Rome had been eclipsed by a number of other centres. Even on the Italian peninsula, Rome struggled against the political centrality of Milan and then Ravenna. Raids by Goths (AD 410, AD 472, AD 559) and the Vandals (AD 455) inflicted damage on the city. Yet, the city of Rome remained emblematic as the home of the Roman state. A senate remained in the city, aristocrats sought prestigious offices, and far-off writers celebrated the city's pre-eminence: Ausonius ranks Rome top amongst the later empire's most noble cities; in a panegyric celebrating his sixth consulship, the young emperor Honorius is asked if he still favours his *penates* in the Palatine complex, thus reminding us that Rome was still the centre of the world even if emperors no longer inhabited the city.¹⁰¹ More prosaically, the city's civic and religious offices continued to administer the city: duties included the administration of the *annona* (until c. AD 429); maintenance of weights and standards; management of commercial rules; the governance of church parishes (by Christian leaders); the looking after of small civic monuments (statues and fountains); and even the appointment of public doctors.¹⁰²

Concerning building work, the early 5th century saw the Aurelian walls subject to extensive rebuilding.¹⁰³ As part of Theodoric's building program a number of public buildings are restored or built.¹⁰⁴ The development of early ecclesiastical structures and the building of churches saw the city's topography change. Hand-in-hand with this the physical change, social change saw bishops become increasingly influential. The 5th- century Pope Leo promoted the value of charity and stressed that it should be practised through Rome's churches. Machado uses Leo's sermon to highlight the growing importance of the Church and Christian spaces in

⁹⁷ Sparavigna 2016: 2.

⁹⁸ Gibson 2020: 35; Henig 2022: 182.

⁹⁹ Bugini and Folli 2023b: 559; Bugini et al. 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Corláita et al. 1992: 25.

¹⁰¹ Claudian. *Cons. Hon.* 3.10 (Trans: Platnauer); Machado 2019: 28.

¹⁰² Machado 2019: 41-43.

¹⁰³ Coates-Stephens 1998: 167.

¹⁰⁴ Cassiod. *Var.* 2.35;3.3.29;3.9-10;4.3;7.6.

the city.¹⁰⁵ The role of the popes in 5th and 6th- century Rome and the importance of Christian spaces mirrors the dynamic noted in Milan, a century earlier, and the situation in Canosa from the 4th to 6th centuries. Domestic spaces in the city also continued to be remodelled. Various imperial residences and a number of lavish *domus* were maintained in the city.¹⁰⁶ One of the city's most prestigious bathing facilities, the *Terme di Caracalla* had continued to function until the early middle age, despite damage caused to the main water flow in the Gothic siege of AD 537.¹⁰⁷ In sum, although Rome was no longer vital to the Empire's administration, the city functioned: it remained well administered, building work continued, and thanks to the church it would become, once again, a capital city. See Figure 4 for the location of Santa Maria Antiqua, in Rome.

Ostia

Ostia had a long uninterrupted history as an urban site.¹⁰⁸ There was an incredibly persistent tradition across a number of literary sources, in the Republican and early Imperial periods, that date the foundation of the city to reign of the fourth King of Rome Ancus Marcius (c. 677-616 BC), who if he indeed existed did so in the seventh century BC¹⁰⁹. Certainly this was believed by later generations.¹¹⁰ In fact, this belief sustained well into the later Roman period. Servius (4th AD), Aurelius Victor (d. AD 390) and Isidore of Seville (AD 560-636) all recognise Ancus Marcius as the city's founder.¹¹¹ In this way, Ostia was understood as a genuinely antique city, one infused with Rome's ancient prestige and consequence.

Ostia's position as Rome's principal port, which was augmented with the development of Portus during the reign of Claudius, contributed to the economic flourishing which saw significant urban development during the Imperial era.¹¹² This was marked by intense building activity culminated in the construction of large theatre, *horrea*, aqueducts, temples, shops, barracks, bathhouses, bars, as well as a range of domestic spaces that catered the elites, middle classes, and poor.¹¹³

Late Roman Ostia, has, like much of the discourse around the Late Roman period more generally, long been characterised as an urban centre in sharp decline. Scholars like Paschetto, Calza, Mieggs, and more recently Aldrete, have spoken of a diminishing centre.¹¹⁴ However, Boin has remarked that scholarship such as this is unduly influenced by literary and pictorial sources, namely the work of Rutilius Namatianus (born. c AD.370) and the *Tabula*

¹⁰⁵ Leo. Sermon. 16.5.(Trans: Bright); Machado 2019: 30.

¹⁰⁶ Machado 2019: 29.

¹⁰⁷ Mulryan 2012: 127-128.

¹⁰⁸ The city walls, Calza & Becatti 1971: 7; Mieggs 1973: 19; Aldrete 2004: 201; Boin 2013: 17. Boin Provides the most precise date for the construction of the walls at 305 BC. Also see, Mieggs 1973: 21. Mieggs notes that fragments red-figure ceramics uncovered in Ostia parallel closely to a variety of pottery produced in Olynthus, a city destroyed in 348 BC.

¹⁰⁹ Cicero. *De Rep.* 2.3.5. (Trans: Keys); Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 3.44.3 (Trans: Cary).Brand 2002: 24.

¹¹⁰ CIL XIV, Suppl. 4338.

¹¹¹ Aur. Vict. *De Vir.* 5.3. (Trans: Pichlmayr); Serv; *ad Aen.* 1.13; 6.815.(See, Thilo). Isid. Etym. 15.1.56. (Trans: Bradley et al.).

¹¹² Aldrete 2004: 205-206.

¹¹³ Aldrete 2004: 206.

¹¹⁴ Paschetto 1912: 92; Calza & Becatti 1971: 12-22; Calza & Nash 1959: 117, Aldrete 2004: 207.

Peutingeria, which have been interpreted as painting Ostia as a deteriorating city.¹¹⁵ Indeed, more recently, scholarship has largely moved away from the notion that characterises Ostia as either broken or in a state of transformation. Consequently Late Roman Ostia has started to be reinterpreted. New scholarship has sought to present Ostia as a city interspersed with elements of both decay and renovation. Archaeologists such as Gering, whose view on Ostia I contend with (Chapter IV), and Boin have sought to bring attention to the nuanced nature of the Late Roman city.¹¹⁶ Like Rome and Milan, Ostia was also subject continuous building projects during this period which saw lavish *domus*, public baths, a synagogue, and even public fountains maintained (Fig.5).

Aeclanum

The city of Aeclanum was an important regional centre which lay east to the Bay of Naples in the inland district of *Hirpinia* (Irpinia), which in antiquity lay on the border of south-eastern *Campania* and north-western *Apulia et Calabria*.¹¹⁷ The earliest material culture from Aeclanum may date to the early 5th century.¹¹⁸ Lo Pilato and Isayev have suggested that by the 3rd century BC the city was home to a Samnite community and may well have held a prominent position as an important regional centre given its relative proximity to the ancient sanctuary of Mefitis at *San Rocca San Felice*.¹¹⁹ Later, during the Social War, Aeclanum was sacked by Sulla in 89 BC and turned into a Roman *municipium*.¹²⁰ The city was later transformed into a *colonia* in AD 120 under Hadrian and ultimately developed into a Christian bishopric, which prospered between the 4th and 7th centuries AD. As Russell and Di Simone have shown, investment in Aeclanum continued well into the Late Roman period.¹²¹ As an ecclesiastical hub, home to the renowned 5th- century AD Pelagian bishop Julian of Aeclanum, the city was fitted with an impressive basilica, construction of which perhaps started as early as the 4th century AD.¹²² In addition, an adjacent *domus*, the so called '*Casa con peristilio*', was restored in the 4th century AD and may well have been in use, as a *domus*, until the Vesuvian eruption of AD 472. Lo Pilato has speculated that the *domus* in question may have been part of an *insula episcopalis*, and therefore hints at a larger and potentially grander episcopal complex.¹²³

The city's early prominence was largely owed to its position on the *Via Appia* which pressed through the region and connected the city of Rome to her new *colonia* of *Beneventum* (268 BC); the road later extended into *Apulia et Calabria* reaching *Brundisium*.¹²⁴ In effect, Aeclanum was well connected with local and regional centres.¹²⁵ Yet, despite the subsequent construction of the *Via Traiana*, which bypassed Aeclanum, at the beginning of the 2nd century

¹¹⁵ Rut. *Namat.* 175-180: 'Tiber cleaves his way right. The channel on the left is avoided for its unapproachable sands: its one remaining boast is that it welcomed Aeneas' (Trans: Duff & Duff). For a history of the *Tabula Peutingerina* see Talbert 2010; Boin 2013: 22-25.

¹¹⁶ Gering 2004; Boin 2013.

¹¹⁷ Galladini & Galli 2004; Russell & De Simone 2023: 193.

¹¹⁸ Russell & Di Simone 2023: 190.

¹¹⁹ Lo Pilato 2005:154; Isayev 2013:14; 22-24; Russell & De Simone 2023: 194.

¹²⁰ App. *B Civ.* 1.51 (Trans: White).

¹²¹ De Simone & Russell 2019a; Russell & De Simone 2020: 372; Russell & De Simone 2023: 194-196; 201-202.

¹²² De Simone & Russell 2018: 278; 383-384.

¹²³ Lo Pilato 2010: 351-352.

¹²⁴ Cic. *Att.* 7.3; 16.2. (Trans: Shackleton – Bailey); Russell & De Simone 2023: 191.

¹²⁵ CIL IX: 6072; 6074; 6075.

AD the city did not decline. In fact, a sizeable number of inscriptions attest to a flourishing regional centre well into the Late Roman period (Fig.6).¹²⁶

Canosa

Located at the basin of the Otranto river in northern Apulia, Canosa was inhabited from the Bronze Age until the Middle Ages.¹²⁷ Large buildings were first constructed on the site at some point during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Yet, although Canosa was incorporated into the Roman Republic, few Republican or Imperial buildings have been excavated so far.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, it seems plausible that extensive urbanisation occurred from the 1st century BC. As Pensabene has shown, epigraphic evidence from this time names a certain P. Curtius Salassus, who was associated with the construction of the city walls.¹²⁹

During the reign of Augustus, Canosa became an increasingly important agricultural hub. The expansion of the southbound *Via Traiana* in the 2nd century AD saw a bridge constructed over the Otranto, which connected Canosa to one of Rome's most important thoroughfares.¹³⁰ The Severan period sees the development of large public monuments with the construction of the porticoed '*Nymphaeum Rella*', a monument with terraces, painted walls, and sculptures. At this time the *Terme Ferrara* was also built.¹³¹ Occupying 2500m² the baths were adorned with mosaics depicting marine scenes and; marble in the form of *Cipollino Verde* was deployed - the baths would be remodelled in the 4th century AD. The Temple of Jupiter Taurus was also built at this time and was decorated with Proconnesian marble and an array of other 'Attic marbles'.¹³² Pensabene has suggested that specialist stone workers from the East were employed to process the marble which decorated the temple. Reflecting the influence of eastern decorative modes used at nearby Faragola, covered at length in Chapter V, Pensabene's analysis speaks to the tradition whereby stone decoration in Apulia is influenced by, and sometimes carried out by, workers from the eastern Mediterranean.¹³³

Despite being somewhat secluded, located 12 miles inland away from other urban centres in the region, in the Late Roman period Canosa transformed from an ordinary *municipium*, albeit one with an especially vibrant agricultural trade, into one of the most important centres in southern Italy.¹³⁴ This culminated in Canosa becoming the administrative centre of *Apulia et Calabria* with the provincial governor's seat and *Concilium* located in the town.¹³⁵ Importantly, for this study, Canosa also thrived as a Christian centre until the late 6th century, following the Romano-Gothic war. In AD 591 administration of the diocese was

¹²⁶ Lo Pilato 2019: 153-185; Camodeca 2021: 90;92.

¹²⁷ De Benedetto et al. 2011: 1317.

¹²⁸ Pensabene 2012b: 68-69.

¹²⁹ CIL: I², 3183 Pensabene 2012b: 69-70.

¹³⁰ Germano 2022: 1-2.

¹³¹ Pensabene 2012b: 73.

¹³² Pensabene 2012b: 72-73.

¹³³ Pensabene 2012b: 73.

¹³⁴ On Canosa as a trading hub: Canosa was an important supplier of wool; Suet.Ner. 30. Falla Castelfranchi has noted that the town's proximity to the Ofanto river and the *Via Traiana* facilitated the city's prosperity. See, Falla Castelfranchi 1993; Grelle 1993; Maréchal 2020a: 287. On Canosa's location, the map of cities c. AD 400 (Brown 2012: 7) shows that Apulia in the period was sparsely populated with urban centres at this time. It is situated located 42 miles northeast of Bari and 97 miles west of Naples.

¹³⁵ Pensabene 2011.

transferred to the bishop of Siponto.¹³⁶ The 9th-century saw Canosa sacked by Muslim forces under the Abbasid Caliphate.¹³⁷

Faragola

The villa at Faragola is located in the territory of *Ausculum* (Ascoli Satrinio), in the province of Foggia, on the Carapella valley. The villa was near the *Via Aurelia Aeclanensis* and the *Via Herdonitana* and so was connected to nearby urban centres.¹³⁸ The site was first settled by Daunian inhabitants (4th - 3rd centuries BC), it was later re-established as a Roman farmhouse (1st century BC to 3rd century AD), a Late Roman villa (4th - 6th centuries AD) and, lastly, an early medieval village (7th - 8th centuries AD). During this later phase, the site was characterised by small houses, workshops, and some tombs before being abandoned during or just after the 8th century. This all testifies to an exceptionally long-lasting occupation of the site.¹³⁹

Structure

This thesis aims to explore the use, and responses to, marble panelling and opus sectile in Late Roman Italy (c. AD 300-700). It combines an analysis of the Late Roman literary material with an inspection of veneers and *opus sectile*. It examines how marble was deployed across a range of different buildings and locations on the Italian peninsula and considers how the diverse selection of structures and localities impacted how marble was deployed. Although, by the 4th century, marble was a fixture of many private and public buildings in Italy this thesis seeks to assess the specific Late Roman character of marble use. This character is in part defined by the sheer range of lithotypes used as well as the relative quantities of certain lithotypes in individual assemblages. In this way, colour palettes can be observed with comparisons drawn between stone use in various building types while the potential to identify local, regional, or Italy wide trends is also available. An assessment of the large corpus of literary material examines the interplay, such as it was, between the professed ideals of the literary elite and actual marble use on the ground. Indeed, since the Roman corpus which pertains to marble use is so expansive this thesis can, in some way, map how the attitudes towards marble in the Late period developed and what impacted them. This thesis contains six chapters, five of which are arranged into three primary parts: Part A, Part B, and Part C.

Part A: follows this literature review, and introduction to the different case studies assessed, and contains Chapter II. Here, an assessment of the primary written source material, along thematic lines, is discussed. Each thematic topic is discussed separately and while there is an emphasis on the Late Roman material the role of earlier traditions is also covered here.

Part B: the largest section in this thesis. It contains three separate chapters (Chapter III, Chapter IV, and, Chapter V) all of which focus on marble use in specific building types. At

¹³⁶ Falla Castelfranchi 1993.

¹³⁷ Gadolin 1982:124; Deliyannis 2021: 603.

¹³⁸ Volpe et al. 2004: 127.

¹³⁹ Santagostini et al. 2008: 451; Fiorentino et al. 2010: 1084; Gliozzo et al. 2010: 389; Laurenti et al. 2010: 119; Volpe et al. 2004; Arthur 2021: 453.

the beginning of each chapter a short primer, discussing the character of each building type, is given. By and large, these overviews focus on the Late Roman nature of the buildings. Similarly, within each chapter, a short survey of each building studied is provided. This is then followed by an examination of the material evidence. Chapter III covers domestic spaces. This includes urban *domus* from Ostia as well as rural villas from the area around Lake Garda, in the north, and Apulia in the south. Chapter IV discusses bathhouses. Here, the material from baths situated in Milan, Ostia, and Aeclanum are all presented. The final chapter in this part, Chapter V, deals with church buildings. Once again, buildings from all three geographic zones are assessed.

Part C: looks to integrate the results from the analyses of the material evidence with the written sources. Here, Chapter V, draws together the various constituent themes which have emerged in this thesis with the hope of providing a coherent appraisal of how marble panelling and *opus sectile* was used and considered in the Late Roman period. External to these three principal parts, the thesis closes with a short epilogue which contains some concluding remarks with a particular focus on where this thesis fits into the wider scholarship. In addition, the epilogue makes space for some thoughts on how this study could be developed or built upon in coming years.

Part A

CHAPTER II: Writers on Marble

Introduction

This chapter explores the various themes which emerged from the literature pertaining to marble during the Roman period. The basis of this discussion is grounded in an analysis of the extensive body of Late Roman texts. Perhaps surprisingly, this mass of written material pertinent to this discussion is extensive: texts as varied as sermons, panegyrics, personal letters, and even a hagiography are considered. Yet, a fundamental part of the debate that follows considers the impact that written sources prior to the Late Roman period had on the latter's discourse. Throughout this chapter, the influence of literature from Imperial and Republican Rome, and at times the Hellenistic period, are explored as well. Indeed, the effect of conceptual models, concerning marble and its place in the Roman world, expressed during the Imperial period in particular, greatly impacted the approach to stone in the Late Roman era. Equally important, however, is the distinct Late Roman nature of the texts responding to marble use and the discourse around it. Consequently, this section will seek to identify the specific Late Roman character of this discourse.

The first part of this chapter will introduce the concept of 'marble literacy'. An idea which, at its broadest, acknowledges that individuals and communities were aware of what marble was, and what it represented. This discussion is multifaceted and accordingly covers a range of topics concerning the marble's ability to articulate certain symbolic messages and the fashion in which it was conveyed. Further, this part considered the ideological attitudes which impacted the discourse around marble, including ideas regarding the sanctity of the natural word, issues around imported excess, and, how conceptual disputes concerning the role of foreign and local stones emerged in the Late Roman era. Following this, attitudes towards marble use in private and public contexts are explored. A significant part of this discussion will consider the impact that explicitly Christian sources had on the discourse. This chapter concludes by analysing the way in which the language used to describe marble changed over the course of the Roman period.

Marble Literacy

The core function of this chapter is to explore the role of marble, specifically veneers and *opus sectile*, in the Late Roman literary tradition. In order to best achieve this, a broad range of texts are considered. This, reveals an underappreciated, and yet vital, point: marble was a fixture in many texts indicates and to a greater or lesser degree that authors were familiar with nuances of the various decorative stones in use. The extent of their familiarity and what this can tell us about attitudes towards marble is the focus of this first section.

'What more? You will not find anything impressed in this surface that would have not been more virtuous not to be seen...Now, if you were to ask about marble: neither Paros, Carystos, Proconnesos, Phrygia, Numidia nor Spartans have placed here their slabs of multicolored stone; nor are there

stones from the Ethiopian cliffs and slopes coloured purple by their native shell-fish, simulated for me the scattered brain. But although we are not rich for the chillness of foreign stone, my huts and cottages have their local coolness'

Sidonius Apollinaris. Epist. 2.2.7.(Trans: Hindermann).

The 5th century aristocrat and bishop of Clermont, Sidonius Apollinaris (c. AD 430-489), in a letter to his friend Domitius, demonstrates a broad familiarity with marble. In this short passage the bishop establishes his knowledge of a range of different lithotypes and their place of origin. What is more, Sidonius demonstrates an awareness of the symbolic resonances that marble was imbued with during this time. As I will discuss in depth below, he acknowledges that local and imported stones are intangibly different. He also draws upon the Roman notion that excessive private décor is inappropriate. This sophisticated understanding expressed by Sidonius is what I define as 'marble literacy': a phenomenon whereby authors exhibit an understanding of what marble looks like, where it comes from, and what it represents. This section explores this concept in some depth and considers the extent to which it impacted marble use.

To begin, this section will cover what I believe to be the two most basic aspects of marble literacy. Firstly, I will test, Mark Bradley's theory which suggests that a knowledge of marble was a marker of elite intellectualism.¹⁴⁰ Secondly, I will consider marble's role as a means of communication. In particular, I will debate the extent to which marble was used as a means of demonstrating Rome's military and political prowess and reach.

An elite pursuit?

In his study of colour in Imperial Rome, Mark Bradley asserts that while Pliny the Elder (AD 23/24 - 79) clearly had reservations regarding marble use, and the industry more broadly, his familiarity with marble were indicative of class and wealth: Pliny, by way of his detailed work on marble, had 'set the bench mark for the educated elite'.¹⁴¹ In some respects this is an appealing proposition since references to marble in the literary sources are plentiful. In fact, since Cicero (106-43 BC), who is our first Roman writer to mention polychrome stones, a number of poets and scholars from the Augustan and post-Augustan period, who were buoyed by the rapid expansion of marble extraction across the empire, demonstrated a good knowledge of a diverse range of marble, noting in particular where certain lithotypes were quarried.¹⁴² Indeed, Pliny helpfully tells us that a familiarity with marble amongst Rome's elite was widespread: *'It is not important to mention the colours and species of marble when they are so well known, nor is it easy to list them when they are so numerous'*.¹⁴³

In the Late Roman context, it seems that Bradley's assertion is credible. Paul the Silentiary (d. c. AD 580) in his *ekphrasis* illustrates his knowledge concerning marble types

¹⁴⁰ Bradley 2009: 89.

¹⁴¹ Bradley 2009: 89.

¹⁴² Pensabene 2013: 93; McAlpine 2014: 42-45. Cic. *Scaur.* 2.45 (Trans: Watts); Cic. *Leg.* 2.2.5 (Trans: Keys); Virgil. *G.* 3.1-48 (Trans: Fairclough) *Juv.* 1.6-5; 3.3; 3.25-29; 4.13-14; 6.47; 7.37; 8.9; 8.50; 9.2; 11.12; 13.15; 14.2;14.3;14.20 (Trans: Ramsey) Horace. 2.8, 3.1 9 (Trans: Rudd.) Ovid. *Tri.* 3.10.47 (Trans: Wheeler); Prop. 2.31.32; 3.7.22; 3.9.7. (Trans: Good).

¹⁴³ Plin. *NH.* 36.9.53-55.

and their origins with a great degree of expertise.¹⁴⁴ Other members of the elite, like the military official and historian Ammianus Marcellinus (AD 330-395), and the aforementioned bishop Sidonius, the wealthy senator Cassiodorus (AD c. 485-580), along with some of the Church fathers, such as Ambrose of Milan, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, deployed marble in their discussions.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, as I will come to show, a number of these writers were fully aware of the various cultural mores attached to marble as well as being familiar with the more banal aspects of stone.

Thus, the textual evidence from the Late Roman period seems to coalesce with Bradley's theory that a knowledge of marble was a marker of education and social status. However, as with other kinds of literacy, marble literacy can be evaluated on a spectrum. As such, it is plausible to have a passing or partial understanding of what marble is and what it symbolises without being absolutely aware of every facet of contemporary marble culture. Crucially, I assert that it is quite conceivable that a significant body of Rome's population had some understanding of what marble was and what it meant. Furthermore, it is my view that in order to really understand the extent of marble literacy, in Rome, we should consider how marble was used and what was being communicated.

In her recent study of the marble from the *Terme di Caracalla*, Gensheimer argued that the various stones used to adorn the baths 'plainly evoked the breadth of the Roman Empire and the omnipotent reach of the emperor Caracalla'.¹⁴⁶ During the 6th century, in an almost identical fashion, the marble displayed in the Hagia Sofia was deployed as a manifestation, in stone, of Justinian's attempt to revive Rome.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, Gensheimer's argument is convincing and as such can be applied to both the *Terme di Caracalla* and the Hagia Sofia. Moreover, the sense of continuity in the way marble was used and understood is important to appreciate too. However, in addition to this slightly intricate message acclaiming Rome's prestige, the use of marble in both these instances could feasibly symbolise wealth, industrial prowess, or something else entirely. Indeed, evidence from bar counters in Pompeii and Herculaneum, and later from Late Roman Ostia tells us this much.¹⁴⁸

Equally, the ancient naming conventions applied to marble (*Marmor Phrygium*, *Marmour Numidicum*, *Marmour Lacedaemonium*, *Marmor Luculleum*, and so on) was surely enough to inform some non-elites both where the lithotypes come from but also what they signify when used in building projects.¹⁴⁹ Although we cannot be certain that marble lithotypes were named 'correctly', it certainly seems plausible. If we consider the introduction of an *Giallo Antico* obelisk in Rome, which was brought to the city in order to commemorate Caesar's victory at Thapsus, it is entirely realistic to imagine bystanders and passers-by discussing the new monument and, potentially, identifying the stone.¹⁵⁰

Consequently, in this environment, the point proposed by Bradley is somewhat diminished. Or at least, we can see that an awareness of what marble was and what it could represent was not confined to a small section of society. As a result, we can begin to appreciate that marble literacy was an uneven concept with different individuals or

¹⁴⁴ Paul. Sil. *Descr. S. Sophia*. 617-647.

¹⁴⁵ Amm. Marc. 28.4.12-13 (Trans: Rolfe); Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 2.2.7.; Cassiod. *Var.* 2.7; 2.39 (Trans: Bjornlie); Ger. *Mel.* 18. (Trans: White).

¹⁴⁶ Gensheimer 2018: 16.

¹⁴⁷ Schibille 2014: 98. Paul. *Descr. S. Sophia*. 617.

¹⁴⁸ Meiggs 1973: 482; Fant et al. 2013; Amiet et al.: 2018.

¹⁴⁹ Bradley 2006: 1; 36. Suet. *Iul.* 85; Stat. *Silv.* (Trans: Shackleton-Bailey).

¹⁵⁰ Prop. 2.31.1-2. McCann 2015: 27.

communities approaching it in a variety of ways. Still, this is not to say that marble was not used to produce a consistent message. As both Gensheimer and Schibille have argued, marble arranged in a certain way could efficiently convey a specific meaning.¹⁵¹ This notion of a shared significance is a fixture that features throughout the rest of this chapter. Before moving on, however, I will hone in on the way in which marble was deployed in order to express a consistent and coherent message: dominion. While this was not the only significance marble was capable of communicating it had a long history of being used in this fashion, extending from the Roman age and afterwards.¹⁵² What is more, a distinct Late Roman deployment of this message displays certain character from the period.

An Empire set in stone: marble as a means of communicating dominion?

Following Justinian's attempt to reconquer the Western Empire, marble came to epitomise an expression of Rome's power. However, as Gensheimer has shown, the use of marble in this way was not unique to Justinian or the Late Roman period more generally. Quite the opposite, as far back as the Hellenistic era, the philosopher Theophrastus (born c. 372 – 322 BC), describes how the Persian King Darius (552-486 BC), following his conquest of Egypt, stipulated that after his death he was to be buried in an alabaster sarcophagus.¹⁵³ Given that alabaster was already by this time a product associated with Egypt, Darius' decision here seems to draw on the notion by deploying alabaster the king was communicating, presumably to an audience familiar with alabaster and its associated meaning, his dominion over Egypt.¹⁵⁴

Darius' understanding of stone, as Theophrastus explains it, seems to have survived intact into the later Roman era. Indeed, the idea of displaying Rome's prowess, particularly in terms of its military and political dominion, became an established exercise.¹⁵⁵ The best example of this practice emanates from the deployment of *giallo antico* in Republican and Imperial Rome. As discussed above, yellow marble, from Chemtou in modern Tunisia, it was used regularly in order to indicate some sort of relationship to North Africa, Numidia in particular.¹⁵⁶

In light of this tradition, it should not surprise us that Romans in the Late period were comfortable communicating with stone in this way. However, asserting control over a foreign land and its peoples' was not the limit of the communicative power of stone in antiquity. Indeed, it has been argued that Augustus' expansive use of Luna marble was motivated by a desire to celebrate the existence of Italian stone; a *Roman* stone, as good as any Greece could produce.¹⁵⁷ In the Late Roman period, we find that this sort of messaging was even more

¹⁵¹ Schibille 2014; Gensheimer 2018.

¹⁵² Brenk 1987: 108-109.

¹⁵³ Theophr. *On Stones*. 7. (Trans: Caley & Richards).

¹⁵⁴ An alternative reading of Theophrastus' text may conclude that it was Theophrastus, not Darius, who was drawing upon the idea that alabaster was associated with Egypt. In this way, account provided as literary device which his audience could respond to. With this in mind, it should be noted that prior to Theophrastus, Herodotus reports (Hdt. III. 20. 1. Trans: de Sélincourt), that around 525BC Cambyses sent the Ethiopian king an alabaster incense box upon the completion of the Persian invasion of Egypt. Moreover, Earlier examples attest to former Egyptian pharaohs, from as early as the XVIII dynasty (c.1550-1292 BC), also providing alabaster gifts to elite members of other nearby kingdoms. See Castro 2015: 78-80.

¹⁵⁵ Müskens 2017: 59.

¹⁵⁶ Livy. 37.3.7. (Trans: Yardley); Plut. *Sulla*. 6.1.(Trans: Perrin). Also see, Mart. *Spect.* 3.8.55 (Trans: Shackleton-Bailey); McCann 2015: 26.

¹⁵⁷ Russell 2013a; 91: 186. Bradley 2006: 3; 11; Lamp 2013: 39.

present. Returning to Paul's *ekphrasis*, while the bulk of the stone described was imported, Paul explains that Proconnesian marble was situated at the heart of Justinian's new construction. An overtly local stone, sourced from nearby Marmora island, Paul tells us that: 'the hills of Proconnesus have gladly offered their back to the life-giving Queen to cover the entire floor...'.¹⁵⁸ As the passage suggests, large slabs of Proconnesian marble provided the church's decorative foundation; the church's walls, clad in a vast section of imported marble, are supported by Constantinopolitan marble in the same way the far reaches of the empire are supported by the capital city. Furthermore, the Hagia Sofia was far from the only building to use Proconnesian marble in this way.¹⁵⁹ Instead, the sheer quantity of the grey-white stone used in the city led Sodini to suggest that it was as if Proconnesian marble was a cloak worn by the city.¹⁶⁰ Sodini's inference is borne out by evidence unearthed during excavations of the Church of St. Polyeutos, built in the first half of the 6th century. Here it was revealed that the church was completed with a large amount of the local stone.¹⁶¹ In addition, there is further evidence for extensive Proconnesian marble cladding on Constantinople's golden gate.¹⁶² Meanwhile, Procopius (AD 500-565) tells us that during the 6th century the vestibule of the Great Palace was clad in a stone which was most probably Proconnesian marble:

'And the whole interior of the building, as far as the mosaics above, is clothed with handsome marbles, not only the upright surfaces, but the whole of the pavement as well. Some of these marbles are of Spartan stone which rivals the emerald, while some simulate the flame of fire; but the most of them are white in colour, yet the white is not plain, but is set off with wavy lines of blue which mingle with the white'

Procopius. On Buildings. 1.10.19. (Trans: Dewing).

Beyond the widespread diffusion of Proconnesian marble in the capital, a further passage from Procopius indicates that Justinian intentionally exported the stone, for the use in churches, in territories his armies had reclaimed.¹⁶³ In this way, we get a sense of Proconnesian marble acting as a touch stone for Roman identity abroad as well as at home. Furthermore, the surviving archaeological remains indicates that Procopius' claim was accurate. For instance, the famous 6th-century wreckage known as the Marzamemi II, which had departed from Constantinople under Imperial patronage, was loaded with 28 Proconnesian marble elements, the bulk of the cargo, as well as with some pieces of *Verde Antico*.¹⁶⁴ A range of other 6th century sites have demonstrated the breath of the trade in Proconnesian marble at this time. In Italy, for example, a vast amount of Proconnesian marble was distributed.¹⁶⁵ Of course, this marble had long been imported into Italy, with distribution expanded rapidly in the middle of Hadrian's reign.¹⁶⁶ Yet, this does not negate Justinian's' intension. Instead, the distribution of Proconnesian marble may well have seen a reversal of

¹⁵⁸ Paul. Sil. *Descr. S. Sophia*: 664-665.

¹⁵⁹ Ward-Perkins, B. 2012:76.

¹⁶⁰ Sodini 2002:129.

¹⁶¹ Mango & Ševčenko 1961:243.

¹⁶² Bardill 1999: 671.

¹⁶³ Procop. *Aed.* 6. 2.18-23.

¹⁶⁴ Castagnino Berlinghieri & Paribeni 2011:69-71.

¹⁶⁵ On the diffusion of Proconnesian marble in Italy see, Tůmová et al. 2016:41; Baldini 2020.

¹⁶⁶ Russell 2013a:186.

how marble was deployed in places like the Hagia Sofia. Instead of symbolising conquest, the use of Proconnesian marble in the West may have formed part of Justinian's attempt to integrate more fully the reclaimed Empire.

In sum, Justinian's approach to stone and its capacity to project Roman power therefore is largely reliant on the almost standardised Roman approach. An approach which sees Rome advertise her dominion, or perceived dominion, over a territory via the deployment of stone. Likewise, Justinian's use of Proconnesian marble in the Hagia Sofia and across Constantinople may reflect a similar dynamic to Augustus' usage of Luna marble. If there is a slight shift in this presentation it is perhaps the fact, as told by Procopius, that Justinian seems to have purposefully used Proconnesian marble as a way to boost his prestige abroad. While during the reign of Augustus Luna marble was exported outside of Italy, especially to the west, there is little sense that Augustus encouraged exportation abroad as a way to assert his, and Rome's, power.¹⁶⁷

The tension, therefore, between imported marble and local marble used by imperial leaders and the state is well established. Simply put, Proconnesian marble used in Constantinople felt different to the very same lithotype used abroad. The feeling, or understanding, regarding the difference between imported and local stone is the theme of the next section. Importantly, the following section consider marble usage beyond palaces and the like. Instead, it will also consider how attitudes towards marble varied depending on the context in which it was used. Yet, before this, the section will consider the ideological boundaries which framed how imported and local marbles were distinguished in the literary tradition.

(un)Roman Stone? Attitudes towards 'foreign stone', native marble, and their usage

"In the aedileship of Marcus Scaurus there was a spectacle of 360 columns being taken to the stage of an improvised theatre that was intended to be used barley for a month...were not the laws silent also when the largest of those columns, which were fully 38 feet long and of Lucullean marble, were placed in the hall of Scaurus' house? And there was not secrecy or concealment...The law were still silent when these great masses of marble were dragged to a private house past the earthenware temples! Nor can we suppose that Scaurus surprised with elementary lesson in vice...of course these matters were disregarded by the morals were already lost."

Pliny the Elder. *Natural Histories*. 36.1.4-36.26-7.

As we have already seen, Sidonius was one of several Roman writers who was especially familiar with the symbolic heft carried by marble.¹⁶⁸ Sidonius alerts us to the tension between imported and local lithotypes by keenly expressing his disregard for 'foreign stone'. Accordingly, Sidonius suggest that his home, a private bathing space to be precise, is adorned with local marble. Sidonius' familiarity with this convention is informative since it is clearly suggestive of a shared understanding relating to marble use.

¹⁶⁷ Russell 2013a: 158-161; 168.

¹⁶⁸ Sid. *Epist.* 2.2.7.

As Russell observed, in Roman antiquity, one strand of literary rhetoric saw foreign stones were improper and suggestive of excess. Local stones by contrast, were entirely correct.¹⁶⁹ Accordingly, Sidonius was not the only writer who consciously engaged with this ideological distinction. Cicero, Pliny the Elder, Seneca, and, Horace, and later, Ambrose of Milan all drew on this tradition.¹⁷⁰ The fact that so many of our sources engaged with this concept is illustrative of its pervasiveness in the Roman psyche. As the second passage here demonstrates, the great naturalist and scholar, Pliny the Elder, like Sidonius, was deeply mindful of the conventions regarding appropriate public and private décor. By noting how Scaurus dragged 360 columns, produced in foreign marble, past unadorned and potentially neglected local temples Pliny taps into the established understanding, or motif, which governed how marble should be treated. The following section will explore how this debate was rationalised in the Roman literary corpus.

Natural Boundaries

A study on the impact that foreign marble had on the Roman approach should, first, consider the concept of foreignness and the importation of foreign products since, as Sidonius indicates, not all marble was problematic.¹⁷¹ A useful place to begin is with Pliny the Elder. As noted, Pliny was a famed naturalist who composed his wide-ranging *Natural Histories* (*Historia Naturalis*) in the middle of the 1st century AD. More expansive than the title suggest, the *Natural Histories* encompassed subjects as broad as astronomy, botany, chemistry, geography, medicine, mineralogy, pharmacy, and zoology.¹⁷² In addition, Pliny's work includes studies of art and architecture. However, Pliny's study was no dry encyclopaedia. With a moral core, the *Natural Histories* are steeped in traditional ethics influenced by Pliny's own interpretation of Roman values.¹⁷³ Intersecting with his artistic and historical analysis, Pliny's so-called moralising sees his tone switch between dryly sardonic and plainly scornful.¹⁷⁴

Regarding marble, Pliny's tendency to moralise, however, does not diminish his analysis. Instead, nuanced in his assessment, he is perfectly willing to praise stone in some instances and critique it at other times.¹⁷⁵ In some respects, this distinction sees Pliny separate marble elements between what he understands to have a function or *utilitas* and those which are simply crass displays of wealth.¹⁷⁶ In this dynamic beautifully sculptured pieces have a value that mere revetment does not always boast.¹⁷⁷ However, a more profound aspect of Pliny's bi-faceted approach to marble returns us to the topic at hand: imported marble. For Pliny's the wide-ranging marble industry which underpinned the demand for decorative stone was a transgressive force that upended nature's boundaries. Consequently, he was unambiguous in his condemnation of the industry:

¹⁶⁹ Russell. 2017: 238.

¹⁷⁰ Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.55; Plin. *NH.* 36.1.4-36.26-7; Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.145-150; Horace. 2.18; Amb. *Nab.* 4.18; 5.20.

¹⁷¹ Sid. *Apoll. Epist.* 2.2.7.

¹⁷² Healy 2004: xvii; xix-xxxiii.

¹⁷³ Goodyear 1982; Wallace-Hadrill 1990: 80-82; Healy 2004: xxxiv-xxxv; Cecere 2023.

¹⁷⁴ Plin. *NH.* 2.22 (Trans: Rackham) cf 36.60.

¹⁷⁵ Plin. *NH.* 36.60; 36.4.20; 36.4.32-33.

¹⁷⁶ Cecere 2023:178. On the influence of Vitruvius on Pliny's sense of *utilitas* see Fane-Saunders 2015:74. On Cicero's approach to art and *utilitas* see Leen 1991: 235-239; 345.

Mountains however, were made by nature for herself to serve as a kind of framework for holding firmly together the inner parts of earth and at the same time enable her to subdue the violence of rivers to break the force of heavy seas and so to curb her most restless elements with the hardest material of which she is made...Now these self-same Alps are quarried into marble of a thousand varieties. We removed the barriers created to serve the boundaries of nations, and ships are built especially for marble...Headlands are laid open to the sea, and nature is flattened. We remove the barriers created to serve as the boundaries of nations, and ships are built specially for marble. An so, over the waves of the sea, Nature's wildest element, mountains ranges are transported to and fro and even then with greater justification then we can find for climbing to the clouds in search of vessels to keep out drinks cool, and for hollowing out ricks that almost reach the heavens so that we may drink from ice

Pliny the Elder. Natural History. 36.1.2.

Disdainful here, Pliny presents his analysis in quasi-environmentalist terms. He laments the removal of barriers and worries that the frameworks set in place by nature, to 'protect her most restless elements' have been destroyed.¹⁷⁸ Instead of viewing man's capacity to move marble across the world, ('we removed the barriers created...and nature is flattened') in triumphant terms, for Pliny the marble industry epitomises man's betrayal of nature; in an earlier passage Pliny's even portrayed the quarrying process as analogous to sexual assault:

We trace out all the fibres of the earth, and live above the hollows we have made in her, marvelling that she gapes and occasionally being to tremble - forsooth it is not possible that this may be an expression of the indignation of the holy parent! We penetrate her inner parts and seek for riches'.¹⁷⁹

Pliny the Elder Natural History. 33.1.1-2

This protective stance feeds into a broader theme in Pliny's account where emphasis is placed on the well-ordered natural world. Pliny's brutal tone, in the second passage presented here, is expressive of the contempt he has for man's greed and his capacity to betray all natural boundaries. As if to stress this point, Pliny specifically cites the use of ships built specially for marble, and thus, across natural borders.¹⁸⁰ What is more, to make things worse, Pliny at the end of Book 37, tells us that Italy is unsurpassed in terms of its natural resources: 'there is no land so well adorned with all the wins Nature's crown as Italy'.¹⁸¹ Despite having everything they need Rome's greed take her further abroad.

Of course, Pliny's position regarding the sanctity of nature's boundaries was not the only opinion available. In fact, his nephew celebrated man's capacity to defy the natural world.¹⁸² Perhaps even more boldly, the poet Statius (AD 45 – 96) loudly celebrated Claudius

¹⁷⁸ Wallace-Hadrill 1990:85-86; Cecere 2023:177-179.

¹⁷⁹ Plin. *NH*: 33.1.1-2.

¹⁸⁰ Plin. *NH*. 36.1.2.

¹⁸¹ Plin. *NH* 37.77.201.

¹⁸² Plin. *Ep*: 8.4. 1-2 (Trans: Walsh).

Etruscus' multicoloured marble baths.¹⁸³ Yet, broadly speaking, in the literary tradition at least, there was some consternation with overseas trade, particularly the marble trade. The Augustan era poet Horace (65 - 6BC), for example, lamented the introduction of foreign marble into Rome. In fact, in a style rather reminiscent of Sidonius' own critique of foreign marble, Horace likewise condemns the marble industry by highlighting the lack of expensive marble in his own home:

*Carven ivory I have none;
No golden cornice in my dwelling shines;
Pillars of choice Libyan stone
Upbear no architrave of Attic mines...
You have hands to square and hew
Vast marble blocks hard on your day of doom,
Ever building mansions new
Nor thinking of the mansions tomb
Now you press on oceans bound
Where waves in Baiae beat, as earth were scant;
Now absorb your neighbours ground*

Horace. Od. 2.18.

As Percy observed, Horace deploys marble in this instance, as if to focus on society's disregard of the natural world and its predisposition for extravagant luxuries.¹⁸⁴ This link between foreign luxury, often termed *luxuria*, and the dissolution of nature's boundaries is a fairly consistent point made in the texts.¹⁸⁵ Many imported foreign goods, like ivory, precious metals, and even slaves, were naturally understood as inherently opulent. As a consequence, there existed an intellectual relationship between the dissolution of nature's boundaries and foreign *luxuria*. For Pliny and Horace, however, it was the marble industry which seems to have epitomised Rome's avarice and her subsequent rejection of the limits set by the natural world. Further, with the work of Pliny's and Horace in mind, we are reminded of Sidonius' rejection of 'foreign stone' and his preference for local materials. By intentionally naming the various lithotypes which do not ornament his home, Sidonius is aligning himself with an earlier model of localisation and the rejection of imported luxury.¹⁸⁶

The centrality afforded to local stones in the Roman literary corpus is demonstrated further via the seemingly mirrored approach to stone deployed in the Greek world. Certainly, in contrast to his discourse on marble panelling and revetment in Rome, when Pliny discusses marble use in Greece he is largely positive. Citing the case of Menander, he notes that whilst Menander was accustomed to high living, and utilised marble decoration of many colours, the poet was a man "unrivalled for perception in literary knowledge".¹⁸⁷ This sits in contrast to his condemnation of marble use in Rome, where Lepidus is described as "sordid" for having

¹⁸³ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.145.150;1.5.30.40 (Trans: Shackleton-Bailey).

¹⁸⁴ Percy 1977: 780.

¹⁸⁵ On ivory and marble: Horace: 2.18; On precious metals: Livy: 36.6.6-9; On slaves: Mart. *Spect.* 7.30.3-4; Tacitus. *Ann.* 3.53.4. Also see: Juv.6.2.94.7. Parker 2002: 49-50.

¹⁸⁶ Sid. *Apoll. Epist.* Ep. 2.2.7.

¹⁸⁷ Plin. *NH.*36.4.43-46.

the temerity to use marble door-sills.¹⁸⁸ This separation between imported marble used in Italy and Greek marble used in Greece exemplifies the crux of the issue regarding marble and foreignness in Pliny's work, and subsequently the work of later texts. Yet, the foreign nature of marble is only one of the elements feeding into the distrust Roman writers felt for the material. As various sources make clear, it was not only the foreignness of marble that was problematic, but its specific Greekness.

Marble's corrupting power

A reluctance to engage too much with Greece and her culture had long been custom in Roman texts. As Henrich has shown, the relationship between so-called Greek culture and Rome was complicated.¹⁸⁹ Yet, despite this, there is a consistent sense in the sources that Greek customs and artefacts had the power to lead Rome and the Romans away from their traditionally austere principals.¹⁹⁰ In his *Epistle* to Augustus, Horace famously acknowledged this very point: '*Greece the captive captured her savage victor captive, and brought the arts into rustic Latium*'.¹⁹¹ Horace of course was not alone in his reading of Greek influence on Rome. Indeed, a whole range of Roman texts picked up on this point.¹⁹² Most intriguingly, the Julio-Claudian writer Valerius Maximus (c. AD 1 – 50) compares the lavish lifestyle led by Metellus Pius, in Spain during the 70s BC, to the lives led by Greeks whose, 'luxury could corrupt Austerity herself'.¹⁹³ This belief, that Greek practices are corrupting, was added to by a sense in some sources that Greek extravagance could be transmitted through physical objects brought to Rome. This notion of transmittable decadence, as if it were a virus, has been commented on and discussed by Wallace-Hadrill who observes that the utilisation of a mixed set of marble columns in the *Porticus Metelli*, in 146 BC, was viewed as an importation of foreign excess.¹⁹⁴ Gruen too observes this perception around foreign art noting that it was considered to have had a negative effect on the Roman character.¹⁹⁵ Cicero (106-43 BC) emphasised this belief by contemptuously likening art brought back from Corinth, by Mummius (53-2 BC), as intellectual enslavement:

"when I see you gazing and marvelling and uttering cries of admiration, I judge you to be the slave of every foolishness. 'Then are not those kinds of things delightful?' Granted that they are, for we also have trained eyes; but I beg of you, do let the charm that those things are deemed to possess make them serve not as fetters for men but as amusements for children."

Cicero. *Stoic Paradoxes*. 5.37. (Trans: Rackham).

¹⁸⁸ Plin. *NH*. 36.4.46-48; 36.7.48-50; 36.9.51-55.

¹⁸⁹ Henrichs 1995.

¹⁹⁰ On the Roman sense of austerity: Cato, *Agr*. Intro – 1. (Trans: Hopper & Ash); Varro. *Rust*. 2.1 (Trans: Hopper & Ash); Livy 1.11 6-7.

¹⁹¹ Horace. *Epist*. 2.1.156-157. (Trans. Fairclough).

¹⁹² Plin. *NH*. 33.5; 34.14; 37.12.; Polybius: 9.10.1-2 (Paton); Livy 25.40.1. (Trans: Yardley).

¹⁹³ Val. *Max*. 9.1.5. (Trans: Shackleton Bailey).

¹⁹⁴ Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 175.

¹⁹⁵ Gruen 1992: 84.

The idea that marble had the capacity to poison or weaken Roman society persisted well into the Late Roman period. In the 4th century, in a fashion redolent of Seneca's (4 BC – AD 65) own denunciation in the 1st century, Ammianus engages with this notion, observing that marble panelling could potentially have a corrosive power.¹⁹⁶ This enduring approach to marble is illustrative of the sense of Romanness felt by Late Roman writers. Indeed, while Cercer has shown that Pliny's value system and moral approach pertaining to marble was influenced by a particularly vehement rejection of *luxuria*, emergent in the Flavian period. The evidence presented here therefore suggests that opposition to wealth and by association marble was a longstanding and seriously held belief.¹⁹⁷ Thus, we can see that attitudes regarding luxury which date from Cicero, Pliny, and others up to Ammianus and Sidonius are fairly consistent.

Marble sits comfortably in this dynamic. An expensive material that was often associated with Greece and the wider Greek world, it should not surprise us that it came to stand in for the concerns regarding *luxuria*.¹⁹⁸ However, the conceptual boundaries which governed how marble was understood during the Roman era was multi-layered. As such, it was rarely the case that a single rule or tenet governed how marble was deployed in every instance. While there was evidently a reproachful tone to the idea of imported marble in Rome, further idiosyncrasies in the tradition saw marble both criticised and praised for the nature of its deployment. The final section of this part will discuss attitudes regarding marble use. It will explore how attitudes vis-à-vis marble use were impacted by the tension between public and private décor. I will show that attitudes regarding the correct deployment of marble, in the Late Roman era, were overtly influenced by a desire to connect with the proceeding Late Republican and early Imperial tradition.

You know your Cicero: Attitudes towards marble in public and private contexts during the Late Roman period

'You are wise enough to know that tight-fisted attitudes do not suit the magistrates of the great city. You know your Cicero: even he laid down that, in private life, high spending luxury was to be condemned, but not magnificence in public matters'

Symmachus. Epistulae. 4.60.3 (Trans: Salzman.).

'Why should I speak of Marcus Marcellus, who took Syracuse, that most beautiful city? Why of Lucius Scipio, who waged war in Asia, and conjured Antiochus, a most powerful monarch? Why of Flaminius, who subdued Philip the king, and Macedonia? Why of Lucius Paullus, who with his might and valour conquered king Perses? Why of Lucius Mummius, who overthrew that most beautiful and elegant city Corinth, full of all sorts of riches, and brought many cities of Achaia and Boeotia under the empire and dominion of the Roman people? - their house, though they were rich in virtue and honour

¹⁹⁶ Sen. Ep. 115-8-9; Amm. Marc. 28.4.12-1.

¹⁹⁷ Cercer 2023: 169-170; 179.

¹⁹⁸ Plin. NH. 36.5.43-46; 33-36.

were empty of statues and paintings. But we see the whole city, the temples of the gods, and all parts of Italy, adorned with their gifts...

Cicero. *Against Verres*. 2.1.55 (Trans: Greenwood.).

In the 4th century the aristocrat Symmachus unambiguously revealed, in correspondence with a horse trader in Spain, that the legacy of Rome was central to his understanding of the correct way to approach public and private decoration. Clearly, familiar with Cicero's *oeuvre*, Symmachus' work draws upon a longstanding Roman convention: while public munificence was a vital tenet of patrician life, private opulence is unbecoming. Florus (c. AD 74-130) reports that, this convention had been in place since at least the 5th century BC.¹⁹⁹ While the exact details for Florus' work can be debated, the tenor seems reliable. This sense of antiquity, which seems to have buttressed Symmachus' regard for these traditional principles, overtly impacted the attitudes of various other Late Roman writers.²⁰⁰ Indeed, this sophisticated approach to the mores associated with marble are essentially a further instances of what I have termed marble literacy.

So far, by exploring attitudes towards foreign marble, we have already seen how Sidonius made a clear effort to emphasise the paucity of imported stone in his home, favouring local lithotypes instead.²⁰¹ Not only does this add further credence to the idea that foreign marbles are intrinsically lavish, the bishop also draws attention to his influences. Specifically, Sidonius' references to his 'poor hut' which a 'plain citizen' may aspire to live in is redolent of Cato the Elder's own account, when the senator, and a man of great wealth, reasoned that homesteads should be without extravagance and that good men should live an austere life.²⁰² Likewise, Seneca's description of Scipio Africanus' (235-183 BC) private bath as 'hewn in stone', without light and expensive foreign revetment, feeds into the tradition which Sidonius later engages with.²⁰³ What is more, by celebrating instances of public munificence Sidonius reveals his willingness to accept the other facet of this dynamic. In a letter which applauds the varied use of marble in a nearby basilica, Sidonius' view on the relationship between displays of public and private wealth crystalises:

'The whole basilica is bright with diverse marbles, floor vaulting and windows all adorned with figures of most various colour, and mosaic green as a blooming meadows shows its design of sapphire cubes winding through the ground of verdant glass. The entrance is a triple portico proudly set on Aquitanian columns; a second portico of like design closes the atrium at the farther side, and the mid-space is flanked afar by columns numerous as forest stems. On the one side runs the noisy highway, on the other leaps the Saône.'

Sidonius Apollinaris. Ep. 2.2.

¹⁹⁹ Flor. 1.6.10-11 (Trans: Forster).

²⁰⁰ Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* II.2.7; Moorhead 1992: 42-45.

²⁰¹ Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* II.2.7.

²⁰² Cato. *Agr.* 1.6.

²⁰³ Sen. *Ep.* 86.

In a celebratory tone, Sidonius observes the array of lush polychrome marble deployed in a newly built basilica. Certainly, the exultant manner with which he describes the stone marks a tonal shift from his letter to Domitius. Viewed side-by-side, the two texts leave no room for misunderstanding. We find that once again, the impact of Republican and Imperial traditions seems to impact attitudes towards stone deployment a great deal. In fact, it seems as if, one's use of marble provides a sort of litmus test for one's Romanness. If you use marble in an appropriate fashion you live up to the Roman ideals set out centuries earlier; if you deck out your house in expensive coloured stone you fail to meet these standards. However, it would be wrong to view these aesthetic choices as if they were some kind of archaic affectation. Instead, it is likely that Sidonius, as well as Symmachus and others, deeply valued their own sense of heritage. Indeed, besides their deployment of stones, both Sidonius and Symmachus seem to have imitated the literary styles of preceding Roman authors.²⁰⁴ In sum, the passages studied so far set out the conventions which governed the appropriate standards which should be applied to public and private décor. Sidonius, in particular has shown how marble played a key role. Yet, beyond the texts studied here other sources from the Late Roman period are available. Few, however, manage to demonstrate the important symbolic role marble played in Late Roman Italy more than the 6th-century official Cassiodorus.

A prominent senator and magistrate, Cassiodorus served the Gothic Amal dynasty.²⁰⁵ In his correspondence, which he completed on behalf of the Theodoric who styled himself as the King of Italy, Cassiodorus demonstrates that in 6th century Italy ornamentation of public buildings was viewed as proper and correct, in keeping with Roman traditions. Indeed, a fundamental facet of Theodoric's rule was his attempt to frame himself as *Roman*.²⁰⁶ Even before his accession, Theodoric had sought to steep himself in Roman traditions. In AD 481, he became *master militum* (master of soldiers) of the Roman emperor Zeno, based in Constantinople, before being honoured with the title Consul, in AD 484.²⁰⁷ Following his rise to power, in AD 491, Theodoric looked to burnish his credentials further. Hence he drew on the long standing tradition of public munificence in an effort to restore Italy to its former grandeur.

Described by Brenk as one of Italy's greatest ever builders, Theodoric's inclination to restore Italy, via either the construction or repair of public buildings led to the author of the 6th-century text known as the Anonymus Valesianus II described the king as a 'Lover of building and a restorer of cities'.²⁰⁸ Indeed, as Arnold observed, cities such as Ravenna, Verona, Pavia, Parma, Como, and, Aquileia all saw the construction or renovation of palaces, aqueducts, churches, or baths.²⁰⁹ In a letter written on his behalf, to Tancila, *Vir Spectabilis*, we see an example of this sort of munificence:

'It is exceedingly grievous that the accomplishments of the ancients diminish in our times, we who desire to increase the adornment of cities daily. Wherefore, we urge you in the present command, that with full devotion you

²⁰⁴ On Sidonius Apollinaris, Gibson and Morello 2012; Brolli 2013: 104; Kelly & van Waarden 2020: 2.; Hinderman 2022: xv-xx. On Symmachus see, Heather 2005: 19-20; Creese 2007: 172.

²⁰⁵ Bjornlie 2019: 1-10.

²⁰⁶ Fanning 2002: 327; Murdoch 2006: 114-116; Wiemer 2023: 8-9.

²⁰⁷ Wiemer 2023: 4.

²⁰⁸ Anonymus Valesianus. 1.70 See, Brenk 1987: 107.

²⁰⁹ Cassiod. *Var.* 3.9; 3.10; 4.31; 7.6; Arnold 2014: 200.

carefully inquire after the bronze statue at the city of Como, which happens to have been lost.'

Cassiodorus. *Variae*. 2.35.

Theodoric states plainly his desire to adorn Como's public spaces, and although there is no explicit reference to an earlier Roman practice this passage makes it clear that public ornamentation is valued. In a subsequent letter, this time received by the *Praefectus Urbis* of Rome, Theodoric demands that derelict buildings are restored to ensure they are not visible among the 'ornaments of the city'.²¹⁰ Similarly, in the context of his capital Ravenna, Theodoric explicitly states the importance of marble in this dynamic by demanding that columns and slabs from outside the city to 'be gathered up' and sent to his capital.²¹¹ This desire to adorn the city in marble goes beyond beautifying the urban fabric; it looks back to an earlier, successful, Roman age which was typified by monumental buildings clad in polished stone. As if to make this certain, Theodoric explicitly outlines the importance of stone. Adhering to the prescribed Roman principle of public munificence, Theodoric, like Symmachus before him, explicitly evokes the tradition as a *Roman*:

'Therefore, let your illustris nobility arrange for the blocks of marble which lay torn down and neglected throughout the city to be culled by those known to be attached to this work in the building of walls, so that a venerable fortification may return something to public beauty and so that stones cast beneath ruins may adorn.'

Cassiodorus. *Variae*. 2.7.

Here Cassiodorus, who would later describe Theodoric as '*Romanus Princeps*', recalls Rome's heritage with respect to both the emperor's role in munificence and, importantly, the function of marble in this process.²¹² As Marano has shown, Theodoric's visual reprisal of the past and investment in the future was a form of propaganda.²¹³ Theodoric had the wealth, logistical capacity and above all the inclination to demonstrate that he had the power to return Rome to her former glory.²¹⁴ His attempt to turn a crumbling Rome into a beautiful city re-clad in marble is, of course, reminiscent of Augustus' claim in the late 1st century BC he turned Rome from city of brick into stone.²¹⁵ Like Augustus before him, Theodoric seeks to use marble as his means of re-establishing Rome's pre-eminence. This was suggested in a contemporary inscription which described Theodoric as: '*Our Lord, the most Glorious and Celebrated King Theodoric, Victor and Triumphator, ever Augustus*'.²¹⁶ By leaning on the example set by Augustus, Theodoric redeployed large quantities of marble and wreathed his cities in stone. The relationship, therefore, between public munificence, and marble, is one,

²¹⁰ Cassiod. *Var.* 3.29.

²¹¹ Cassiod. *Var.* 3.9;3.10.

²¹² Cassiod. *Var.* 3.16.3.

²¹³ Marano 2012: 1001.

²¹⁴ Cassiod. *Var.* 3.19; Greenhalgh 2009: 34.

²¹⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 29.

²¹⁶ Moorhead 1992: 42-45.

with origins in Rome's deep history and is evidently a phenomenon writers in the Late Roman era sought to participate in.

The high regard for public munificence during the Late Roman period was therefore evidently intact. Given this, it is worth spending more time considering attitudes which pertain to domestic décor. As we have already seen, Sidonius sought to highlight his own Romanness by suggesting that he neglected to spend lavishly on his own home. In the 4th century the Roman military official and historian Ammianus Marcellinus (b. AD 330) also demonstrates his unease with extravagant domestic decoration. Further, Ammianus deploys the alleged use of polychrome marble in the homes of the elites as symptomatic of the problem. In his history, private displays of excess are heavily criticised:

'Their houses are frequented by idle chatterboxes, who with various pretences of approval applaud every word of the man of loftier fortune, emulating the witty flatteries of the parasitise in the comedies. For just as the parasitises puff up and boastful soldiers by attributing to them the sieges and battles against thousands of enemies, comparing them with the heroes of old, so these also, admiring the row of columns hanging in the air with lofty façade and the walls gleaming with the remarkable colours of precious stones, raised these noble men to the god.'

Ammianus Marcellinus. 28.4.12-13.

Exasperated by the foppery of the babbling wasters who idled their time staring at expensively acquired stone, Ammianus, betraying his contempt for Rome's soft elites not only criticises their excessive private decoration but deploys marble as a short hand for this sort of excess. In a reversal of Sidonius' letter, he notes that the walls here were lined with an array of coloured stones. For a man like Ammianus, who felt a strong connection to the old traditions of Rome, this 'un-Roman' deployment of marble must have been particularly galling.²¹⁷ Happily, Ammianus' denunciation of the 'chatterboxes' shows that he understood the values of the conservative Romans of the Late Republic and early Imperial period. Moreover, in his condemnation, Ammianus' influences are revealed. Primarily, we can think of the conservative Seneca whose attack on wealthy members of the urban class, who idled their time staring at marble clad walls, is remarkably redolent of Ammianus' own text. Both Seneca and Ammianus agree the gazing fools are at odds with Roman perceived traditions:

'Children are pleased by the smooth and variegated pebbles which they pick up on the beach, while we take delight in tall columns of veined marble brought either from Egyptian sands or from African deserts to hold up a colonnade or a dining-hall large enough to contain a city crowd; we admire walls veneered with a thin layer of marble, although we know the while what defects the marble conceals. We cheat our own eyesight, and when we have overlaid our ceilings with gold, what else is it but a lie in which we take such delight? For we know that beneath all this gilding there lurks some ugly wood.'

Seneca. Letters. 115. 8-9. (Trans: Gummere).

²¹⁷ Kelly 2003.

The similarities in their condemnation of decadent Roman elites notwithstanding, the function of marble in both passages is highly instructive. For both Seneca and Ammianus, marble, especially polychrome marble, symbolised the excesses associated with domestic decoration. In both instances, the deployment of expensive marble at home weakens, or diminishes, those who view the stone. As I have shown above, there was a sense in some Roman texts, especially those from the Imperial period, that foreign marble was almost parasitic. Here Seneca describes those who gaze at the panelling as have a sort of moral feebleness. Lacking the proper courage, they are taken in by the superficial beauty marble provides and consequently demonstrate their own shallow character. Ammianus, is somewhat more blunt and explicitly cites the parasitic nature of those who stare at imported stone. Luxury at home, therefore, can almost induce a physical or moral feebleness.

The relationship, between Ammianus and Seneca once again demonstrates a fundamental point: a large body of Late Roman sources were influenced by their Late Republican and early Imperial counterparts with respect to their position on the display of wealth in private and in public. However, not everyone, straightaway at least, was quick to follow the established tradition. The flourishing Christian religion saw an initial development in how marble was thought about. The next section will explore this progression and consider what motivated a change in attitudes towards marble.

Early Christian Perspectives

As we have seen the Roman view with respect to the utilisation of private and public wealth remain unchanged in the Late Roman era: extravagant private displays of wealth were disregarded while public displays celebrated. Furthermore, as Symmachus, Sidonius, Cassiodorus, and Ammianus detail, the influence of earlier Roman sources played a fundamental role in shaping the Late Roman position. However, in order to fully understand how wealth was understood during this period we should also consider explicitly Christian sources. This section will show that the early Christian texts (c. AD 100-200), as well as those completed during the Late Roman period, condemned the extreme wealth in a private context in line with traditional Roman views. However, this section will also note, via a reading of Tertullian's *On Idolatry*, that the issue of public munificence was somewhat more complex. Tertullian's work hints at a rejection of the Roman notion of public munificence on the basis of his theology. Yet, as I will outline below, a large portion of the later Christian sources shifted away from Tertullian's position. This resulted in overtly Christian writers aligning themselves with the aforementioned traditional Roman interpretation

Rhee observes that from its inception, Christianity had struggled to deal with the issue of wealth in society.²¹⁸ Likewise, we find that within the Jewish tradition there was an issue with wealth. This is outlined in the 1st century AD Josephus who records that the Essens, a Jewish sect, vehemently rejected wealth.²¹⁹ This position was later taken up by the early Christian sources who repeatedly denounce examples of greed and avarice: Paul the Apostle (d. AD 64/67), Mathew the Evangelist (d. AD 74), Polycarp (AD 65-155), and Tertullian (b. AD

²¹⁸ Rhee 2012: 1.

²¹⁹ Joseph. *BJ*. 2.112 (Trans: Thackeray).

160).²²⁰ Indeed, Paul, in various treaties, Polycarp in his epistle to the Philippians, and, Tertullian all describe avarice as a sinful. However, there are no Christian texts from this period that hail the use of wealth as a way for enriching society, in the way earlier Romans had done through grand acts of munificence. In fact, as Rhee notes, in his *On Idolatry*, Tertullian condemned Christians who sought to fulfil their civic role through the funding of bathhouses, festivals and other forms of patronage:

'...in whatsoever office, under the mere name of the office, neither sacrificing nor lending his authority to sacrifices; not farming out victims; not assigning to others the care of temples; not looking after their tributes; not giving spectacles at his own or the public charge, or presiding over the giving them; making proclamation or edict for no solemnity; not even taking oaths: moreover (what comes under the head of power), neither sitting in judgment on any one's life or character, for you might bear with his judging about money; neither condemning nor fore-condemning; binding no one, imprisoning or torturing no one-if it is credible that all this is possible... He [Christ] has condemned; what He condemned He has counted as part of the devil's pomp... Let even this fact help to remind you that all the powers and dignities of this world are not only alien to, but enemies of, God'

Tertullian. *On Idolatry*. 17-18 (Trans: Waszink, & van Widen).

Although Tertullian's text was not a commentary on the proper utilisation of wealth, we can note that he perceives the maintenance of public buildings and the financial support of public spectacles as inappropriate. Waszink and van Widen note in their commentary that Tertullian portrayed the decoration of public buildings as a celebration of the Roman state, the emperors, and by extension the Roman religion. As a consequence, acts of public munificence were idolatrous.²²¹ Tertullian's interpretation is an isolated account, since no other Christian source from this period mentions munificence in this way. Yet, it remains credible that the relationship between public munificence, the Roman state and, religion ensured that early Christian sources, of the 1st and 2nd centuries, identified the practice of euergetism as inappropriate. Moreover, if we consider this passage alongside Christian sources from later periods, we can see a shift in the way public munificence is spoken about. Indeed, the Christianisation of the Roman empire, which saw the emperor no longer considered a false idol, enabled Christian sources to participate fully in civic life. In his momentous work, *Through the eye of the needle*, Brown observed the continuation of this theme in the Late Roman period remarking that 'when they spoke about wealth, Augustine and preachers like him spoke as if they were heirs to the ancient world'.²²² For example, Gregory of Nazianzus (AD 329-390) and capriciously Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335-395) both show that the celebration of the public use of wealth was a feature of Christian writing at this time.²²³ This admiration

²²⁰ Paul. *Col.* 3: 5-6 (Trans: Garland); Matt. 19.23 (Trans: Quarles); Polycarp. *Phil.* 11.2.(Trans: Lake); Tert. *Idol.* 11.

²²¹ Waszink & van Widen. 1987: 238; 340-342. Price. 1984: 209; 2201-221. Both have shown that Jewish and Christian sources had long viewed the Emperor's notional divinity as idolatrous.

²²² Brown 2012: 53.

²²³ Greg. Nazianzus. *Orat.* XVIII 39 (Trans: Mango); Greg. of Nyssa. Theo. 62.25. (Trans: Mango) at one point celebrates the deployment of wealth in a public context and yet later remarks that "Which would the thirsty

is contrasted against the continued condemnation of private wealth. In a sermon given by Ambrose of Milan (AD 340-397) the resentment towards excessive private wealth, typified by panelled 'marble floors' is palpable and continues to be evocative of earlier Roman work:

'Or are you uplifted by spacious halls? They should instead arouse compunction because, although they might hold a crowd, they exclude the voice of the poor. Furthermore, your palace itself does not serve to embarrass you, since in building it your aim is to overtop your wealth, and yet you do not overcome it. You clothe your walls and you strip human beings. A naked man cries out in front of your house and you ignore him; a naked man cries out and you are worried about what marbles you should use for your floor. A poor man looks for money and has none. A man begs for bread, and your horse champs on the gold [bit] under his teeth. Precious ornaments delight you, while others have no grain.'

Ambrose. *Homily on Naboth*. 13.56. (Trans: Ramsey).

Sharply critical of private wealth, Ambrose's engagement with the older Roman practice of condemning excess is clear. Yet, his take on the issue is also embedded in the Christian tradition: the excessive ornamentation of one's home goes hand in hand with the neglect of the destitute. As Brown notes, Ambrose's condemnation, in the guise of a biblical story, was a social commentary – the bishop's time in Milan coincided with an economic boom which saw gold pour into the city.²²⁴ In fact, *On Naboth* is replete with a number of attacks of the covetous, uncaring nature of contemporary Milanese society.²²⁵ Placed in a Christian framework Ambrose's sermon associates marble with the contemporary societies most abhorrent ills. This echoes the sentiment of conservative Romans who, during their own lifetime equated decorative, panelled marble with the corrupted and weak.²²⁶

Ambrose was not working in a vacuum, and despite his Milan-centred writing his position was taken up by those outside the city. Indeed, this Christian framework, whereby marble is cast as an exemplar of society's ill deeds, manifests in the most Christian of ancient texts: the hagiography. In his account of the life of Melania the Younger, Gerontius (c. AD 430) records that the Devil, in an attempt to corrupt the ascetic, offered her the 'precious marble' of her past.²²⁷ Gerontius' account, coupled with Ambrose's work shines a light on the Christianised understanding of marble. We see that marble, in a private context, is condemned as a vice in an entirely Christian way but relies on the conceptual boundaries set out by Cato, Cicero, Pliny, and their contemporaries. It is quite clear that marble, used in a private context, is the material of choice for the ungodly Christian, in the same way that it had been the material of choice for the unworthy Roman. Likewise, in the way triumphal booty brought to Rome's temples was lionised, marble deployed in monumental public contexts, especially when the contexts were ecclesiastical, was commemorated.

man rather choose for the supply of his own need, to see marbles beautifully disposed or to find good spring water" (Trans: Ogle. Letters 13).

²²⁴ Brown. 2012:139; Brown 2015: 86, notes that the supporting the destitute had long been a Judeo-Christian matter.

²²⁵ Amb. *Nab.* 4.18; 5.20.

²²⁶ Sen. *Ep.* 115. 8-9.

²²⁷ Ger. *Mel.* 18. (Trans: White.).

This analysis of literary sources has revealed a fundamental truth about the utilisation of marble in the Late Roman era: marble, for better or worse, was *Roman*. The work of Sidonius, Symmachus and Cassiodorus all reveal marble's position as a fundamentally Roman substance and that its proper utilisation can bestow as sense of Romanness. Although only Cicero was mentioned by name there is nevertheless a sense that Roman ideals are being lived up to. From the unadorned 'hut' of Sidonius to the ornamented streets of Theodoric's aggrandised Como, the notion that marble employed in a certain way was an evident marker of Romanness remained.

The sense that the utilisation of marble is a hallmark of Romanness is even more distinct when we consider how the overtly Christian sources discussed marble use in public buildings. Providing advice to prosperous Christians, who might have been tempted to beautify their urban environment, Tertullian, who notably referred to acts of munificence as nothing but the 'devil's pomp', warns them that Roman customs are tainted by idolatry and so closed off to Christians.²²⁸ Predictably, the rejection of Rome, and munificence, was only corrected with the Christianisation of Rome following the Edict of Milan in AD 313 and the Edict of Thessalonica in AD 380. During this period Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa celebrated the beauty of marble used in a public context while Ambrose condemned the deployment of marble in private contexts. In short, as Christianity becomes increasingly embedded within the Roman state, the Roman model of munificence binds itself to the new state religion. In the 6th century this process culminates in Paul the Silentiary's *ekphrasis* to Justinian's Hagia Sofia whereby Justinian's reign is venerated through the construction of a highly decorative, Christian, structure. As Caesar's triumph at Thapsus had been celebrated with *Giallo Antico*, Justinian's conquests were represented in a range of stone. Justinian's new Hagia Sofia, in this way, represented a continuation of the theme whereby Rome's imperial dominance was represented with marble. Justinian's reign also saw this dynamic reversed since stone local to the capital was purposefully sent abroad as a means of connecting the empire's provinces to the capital. In short, the deployment of marble largely relied on the audiences understanding of what marble meant, a sense of marble literacy. The next section concludes this chapter. Here the specific language used to describe marble is discussed. It will explore what stylistic changes tell us about how marble was conceived on in the Late Roman context.

The Language of Marble

Poetry during the Late Roman era was the product of a tension between the work of prestigious forerunners, working in the Greek and Latin tradition, and the specific customs and aesthetic predispositions of the Late Roman world.²²⁹ Yet, as Roberts tells us, much of what makes the Late Latin literature so vibrant is the specifically Late Roman flavour which sees a rather sharp departure from the style and form of the past.²³⁰ This development in style saw a taste for texture, metaphor, and vividness creating a sense of visual immediacy which emerged from the language. Claudian's (AD 370-404) use of visual metaphor to describe

²²⁸ Tert. *Idol.* 18.1-4; Rhee. 2012.612.

²²⁹ Pelttari 2014:2-9.

²³⁰ Roberts 1989.

Rome, for example, demonstrating the trend in the Late Roman era to provide an intense physical description:

'Look round at the seven hills, which rival the sun's rays in their golden brilliance, the arches clad in spoils, temples reaching to the clouds, and all that so many triumphs have built.'

Claudian. *Cons. Stil.* 3.65-70.(Trans: Roberts).

This comparison between the sunlight and the brilliance of the gilded buildings on the seven hills achieves a rich visual picture. Yet, it was not the case that metaphor and textural descriptions had not been completely neglected in earlier literature. Statius' work is resplendent with a range of textural descriptions.²³¹ In a similar way, albeit with less of a flourish, Ovid deploys metaphor to describe stone; Propertius' description includes labelling an unidentified marble as 'gleaming'.²³² Yet, by and large, the poets and scholars writing during the Republican and Imperial periods are far more lacklustre in the way they describe stone. The poets of the Late Roman period, by contrast, established a change. Marble, which was arguably the perfect medium for this development, epitomised the broader revolution in Late Roman poetry which, as outlined by Michael Roberts, saw written language employed in an attempt to create an image.²³³

The growth in the variation of the literary style saw marble utilised as a medium from which vivid pictures could be represented in language. Visual descriptions of the textures along with the shape of the marking on the stones start to proliferate in the marble discourse. Rutilius (c. AD 400), writing at the beginning of the 5th century, in a fashion similar to Propertius, alerts the reader to the texture of his subject by citing the 'glittering temples'; there is no mention of any specific colour.²³⁴ Procopius, speaks of the 'wave of fire' and 'wavy blue lines'.²³⁵ Paul the Silentiary, who was likewise working in the Greek tradition in Constantinople, goes further and expands his use of visual metaphor to its fullest. In fact, he is one of our best sources for analysing the shift in the language used to describe stone. In his *ekphrasis*, dedicated to Justinian, and his new Hagia Sofia, Paul provides a number of metaphors in a flurry of visual descriptions of the marble displayed. His emphasising of the iridescent, shimmering, glowing, and glittering qualities of the stone rather than focusing on any specific hue illustrates that he is really concerned with the textures and the broader visual make-up of the stones used:

'Yet who, even in the thundering strains of Homer, shall sing the marble meadows gathered upon the mighty walls and spreading pavement of the lofty church? Mining [tools of] toothed steel have cut these from the green flanks of Carystus and have cleft the speckled Phrygian stone, sometimes rosy mixed with white, sometimes gleaming with purple and silver flowers'

Paul the Silentiary. *Descr. S. Sophia.* 617.

²³¹ Vessy 1974:7-14; Robert 1989:120-121; Stat.*Silv.*1.2. 143-153;4.3.

²³² Ov.*Tr.* 3.10.47; Prop. 2.31.32. See, Langley-Cook 2020:46-47.

²³³ Roberts. 1989:53.

²³⁴ Rut. *Namant.* 1.93.

²³⁵ Procop. *Aed.* 1.10.19.

This assessment of the marble goes well past simply identifying colour and shows how the language used to describe marble had developed. Paul extends his lexicon, employing what Flood called quasi-mimetic descriptions of marble. This sees marble described as if imitating natural patterns in the form of spots, streaks, speckles and swirls.²³⁶ Indeed, Paul refers to ‘speckled Phrygian...gleaming with purple’ and identifies ‘glittering crocus’ and ‘slanting creaks’ and deploys metaphor and overemphasis by calling to attention the veneers by describing them as ‘marble meadows gathered upon the mighty walls’. Working a generation prior, Choricius of Gaza (d. AD 518) described the church of St. Stephen at Gaza in a similar way. Some of the marble columns are styled as gleaming ‘whiter than snow’ whilst others are ‘are dyed by nature with the colour of imperial raiment’.²³⁷ The St Polyeuktos Epigram, completed in the 10th century demonstrates the continuation of this style since the walls of the edifice are described as ‘marvellous meadows of marble’.²³⁸ This diverse use of language in these instances encapsulates the Greek notion of *poikilia* (*varietas* in Latin), which despite its adaptable definition, generally refers to a variety of ornamentation.²³⁹ This preferences for variety is characteristic of the ‘jewelled’ or ‘flowered’ style observed by Roberts.²⁴⁰

This newly developed linguistic approach allows us to detect a change in the way marble is discussed. As I have already noted, with the exception of Statius, Roman writers from the Republican and Imperial eras described marble in a fairly direct fashion. The shift in the descriptive style makes it clear that marble, and the perception of it, extended beyond its role as a proxy for wealth, decadence, and dominion. This is, of course, not to say that marble lost its association with wealth and prestige entirely. As we have seen, the marble displayed in the Hagia Sofia was a manifestation, in stone, of Justinian’s attempt to revive Rome.²⁴¹ Nonetheless, the work of Paul and Choricius sees marble interpreted in a new way. For the first time, marble, even in the form of panelled veneers, was identified as art. This adjustment in interpretation is most clear on line 605 of Paul’s *ekphrasis* where he compares cut ‘book matched’ marble (a process which sees marble sliced across its vertical section) to ‘the art of painting’:

‘The joining of the cut marbles resembles the art of painting for you may see the veins of the square and octagonal stones meeting so as to form devices: connected in this way, the stones imitate the glories of painting’

Paul the Silentiary. Descr. S. Sophia. 605.

The demand for this ‘book matched’ style was not limited to Constantinople. In one of his many letters on behalf of Theodoric, Cassiodorus writes:

‘...you will send to us from Rome the most skilled marble workers, who may bind select pieces with fine seams, such that they would counterfeit in a praiseworthy manner a natural likeness conjoined with intertwining

²³⁶ Flood 2016; Paul. Sil. Descr. S. Sofia. 617 Paul. Sil. Descr. S. Sophia.

²³⁷ Chor. LM. II 28 (Trans: Mango).

²³⁸ The St Polyeuktos Epigram. AP.1.10. (Tran: Whitby).

²³⁹ Grand-Clement 2015: 406-407. Also see, Niewöhner 2018.

²⁴⁰ Roberts 1989: 54-55; Greenhalgh 2009: 35; Schibille 2014: 102.

²⁴¹ Schibille 2014: 98.

veins...The variegated surface of marble is woven with a most pleasing variety of figures'

Cassiodorus. *Variae*. 1.6 (c AD 507-9).

These sources reveal the widespread appreciation of marble at this time. Whereas Pliny described the production of thinly sliced marble veneers as 'misplaced ingenuity' for those in the Late Roman period marble of this kind was highly prized.²⁴² This is a fundamental development in the way marble was considered. Less a means of demonstrating wealth, marble used in this way was just as artistically worthy as a painting or mosaic.²⁴³ The intellectualisation of marbled panelling and veneers in the Late Roman period should give us pause for thought when assessing Late Roman stone decoration. Clearly, in some instances, Late Roman people used marble because they liked the way it looked and maybe they appreciated the sense of prestige it brought them. However, in other instances, there may well have been a less rational approach, one shaped by an artistic appreciation of stone.

Summary

The subject of marble remained of great interest and importance to the Romans for centuries. A feature of the Roman canon since the Republic, marble in many respects became a touchstone for what it was to be Roman. Getting marble right, as it were, could be a tricky thing to achieve. Indeed, the wrong type of marble deployed in the incorrect manner could result in a great deal of derision, as Pliny illustrates. On the other hand, marble used correctly, marked an individual out as authentically Roman. This dynamic seems more vital in the Late Roman period when writers such as Symmachus, Sidonius, Ammianus, and Cassiodorus, on behalf of Theoderic, were consciously looking to advertise their Romanness in a way earlier generations had not needed to.

This situation is perhaps even more stark in the Christian texts. As noted, above, Tertullian is the only 2nd/3rd century Christian writer to touch on the subject of munificence and by extension marble use. Yet, his denunciation of the practice, as if intended to strip a sense of Romanness from his Christian identity is telling. The reversal of Christian thought in this regard, highlighted by Ambrose and Paul in Silentiary, in particular, is equally revealing.

Beyond a feeling of genuine Romanness, more ideologically driven values were understood via the prism of the marble industry and marble use more generally. Pliny and Horace, remark upon the disruption to nature's boundaries, caused by the invasive marble industry. Sidonius in his rejection of 'foreign stone' seems to pick up on this point too. Likewise, marble's association with wealth, predominately wealth imported from abroad, is cited as corrupting influence on Rome from the Republic to the Late Roman period.

Yet, despite the impact of earlier Roman eras, there are signs that attitudes towards marble, and consequently marble usage, shifted in the Late Roman period. The use of marble as a signifier for successful foreign conquests and political dominance were flipped in the 6th century by Justinian who seemed to deploy marble as a means of welcoming the West back into the Roman fold. Besides this, the changes in Latin poetry culture seem to have impacted

²⁴² Plin. *NH*. 36.9.

²⁴³ Chor. *LM*. II 28.

how marble was understood. Straightforward references to colour were replaced by more verbose language which often described visual textures. This change in language, saw *opus sectile* and veneers as art in their own right; in this way, marble panels were appreciated as they had not been before: Pliny's assertion of '*misplaced ingenuity*' was swapped for Paul's description of '*cut marbles [resembling] the art of painting*'.

In sum, marble was a material and topic understood by Romans from across much of the social scale and across the full spread of the Roman period. A complicated material, it was not in the eyes of the writers a neutral topic and instead was ingrained with meaning and symbolism.

We will now move the material evidence for marble use, as revealed by the archaeological contexts. The next section, will consider the in domestic settings is studied. As outlined in Chapter I, this section will begin with an overview of the pertinent scholarship on the use of marble in domestic spaces before moving on to some primary texts which mention marble use at home. The bulk of the chapter, which follows, assesses marble assemblages from domus and villas. Each individual building is contextualised before the assemblages are evaluated.

Part B

CHAPTER III: Domestic Spaces

In the 5th century, Sidonius Apollinaris tells us that his home is deprived of gleaming foreign marble.²⁴⁴ This chapter will test the extent of Sidonius' claim by introducing and discussing the domestic buildings evaluated in this thesis. After summarising some of the pertinent scholarship, this chapter will consider to what extent marble was implemented in domestic settings. Since the types of domestic building and their assemblages vary, the data presented is not always done in a consistent fashion. Nevertheless, the data is such that it contributes to bettering our understanding of domestic marble use and feeds into this thesis' broader research questions.

This chapter establishes that on the Italian peninsula at least, coloured marble continued to be used widely in domestic settings with a diversity of lithotypes deployed, across a range of contexts: slabs of marble revetment are attested on both the walls and floors with intricate examples of *opus sectile* and more simple geometric patterns featuring; reused and newly quarried stone was employed. In conflict with Sidonius' own account, we find both imported and local lithotypes used. In its entirety, we find that marble was as one of the principal decorative modes in domestic spaces during the Late Roman period.

Marble in Domestic Buildings: Literary Sources

Housing during the Roman period was just as varied as it is today and was, consequently, a subject which was discussed by a range of sources. However, Roman literature that relates directly to the form and function of domestic spaces was, with the exception of Palladius (c. mid-5th AD), largely restricted to the Republican and early Imperial periods. In general terms, these sources discuss rural villas; large buildings that function both as an agricultural base as well as a home.²⁴⁵ Although Columella (AD 4 - 70) splits this definition into three, with the *pars urbana* being a residential space, *pars rustica* as the industrial part (including slaves and overseers' quarters); and *pars fructuaria* used for storage, the general sense of homes being split between work and pleasure remains. This dynamic bleeds into Palladius' work, reflecting a close reading of Columella, since he kept similar divisions in his own manual.²⁴⁶ In a similar fashion to Columella, Vitruvius (born. c 70 - 80), who was influenced by pre-Roman Italic and Greek architecture, applied a strict set of tenets that promoted a particular set of fixed spatial zones within domestic settings.²⁴⁷ However, beyond this static interpretation of domestic living, Vitruvius advocated for domestic architecture that reflected, and accommodated for, the social status of those who inhabit the property; houses should exhibit the *maiestas* of their owners.²⁴⁸ Therefore, Vitruvius argues, an advocate or professor should be housed in such a way that allows a certain amount of dignity and respect, as well as providing them with sufficient space to accommodate their audiences. Equally, those of high rank, particularly those whose duty it is to serve the state, should be accommodated in a manner which reflects

²⁴⁴ Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 2.2.7.

²⁴⁵ Columella *Rust.* 1.6.1 (Trans: Ash); Cato. *Agr.* 1 1-7; Varro. *Rust.* 3.2.3-12; Vitruvius. *De Arch.* 6.6 1-3 (Trans: Granger); Ackerman 1990.

²⁴⁶ Pall. *Agri.* 6 .1-23 (Trans: Fitch).

²⁴⁷ Vitruvius. *De Arch.* Brown 1963: 102-103; Wilson Jones 2000: 33-35; Meyers 2005; Fitzpatrick Nicols 2017:83.

²⁴⁸ Vitruvius. *De Arch.* 1.2.9.

their majesty.²⁴⁹ In this way, a domestic building's form, and arguably décor, impacts not only the way people live day to day but also influences the wider community's perception of the residents. Thus, in his manual, Vitruvius led a shift away from an exclusively practical understanding of architectural design and instead offered a formula that mitigates for social convention and sees domestic buildings as proxies for broader civic life. Regarding urban living, specific references to *domus* or *insula* are more limited, and somewhat indirect. For example, Juvenal reflects on the hazardous nature of urban homes, liable to either collapse or to be set on fire, as well as referring to the abundance of slaves kept in city dwellings.²⁵⁰ Further references are found in Petronius (c. AD 27-66) and Apuleius (c. AD 124-170), both of whom cite a servile workforce living in urban homes.²⁵¹

Concerning decoration in domestic settings, Apuleius' fiction, which presumably draws on genuine examples of decoration, describes the lavishness of Cupid's home by remarking on the gleaming marble décor.²⁵² Real-life accounts include the description of the *domus* adjacent to the *Porticus Catuli* on the Palatine hill, occupied by Fulvius Flaccus and later Cicero, noting the building's opulence.²⁵³ Similarly, Statius later celebrates the richness of the decorative stone used in the baths of Claudius Etruscus.²⁵⁴

In the case of Late Roman houses, literacy sources are few and far between. Although we have the aforementioned Palladius, his work closely mimics the work of earlier writers, as noted above, and so there is little sense in his *De Rustica* of changes occurring in rural living.²⁵⁵ Indeed, overall, there is a scantiness of texts from this period that sufficiently explains the dynamics of rural or urban residences at this time. One of the few that can assist us comes from Libanius (AD 314-395), a resident of Antioch, who describes city dwellings as being detached from one another to such a degree that for those who reside, feel like 'they are separated from one another not less than those who live in different cities'.²⁵⁶ Intriguingly, Libanius also notes that the houses of his time were more elaborate than earlier styles. Although somewhat vague, Libanius at least draws attention to development in urban residences. Further, by 'elaborate' he could equally be referring to size, form, or perhaps décor.

On the deployment of marble, texts completed by Sidonius Apollinaris, Ambrose, Gerontius, and others have outlined that marble continued to be used in villas and *domus*.²⁵⁷ However, the nature of the sources means that we seldom get an insight into how marble was employed, what lithotypes were preferred and, what motivated people to make specific decorative choices. For this, we must rely on the remaining material evidence.

²⁴⁹ Vitr. *De Arch.* 6.1.2-3. This approach applies to public architecture just as it does to domestic settings.

²⁵⁰ Juv. *On Hazards*: 3. 190; 222. *On Slaves*: Sat. V. 66.

²⁵¹ Petron. *Sat.* 3.29-30; 3.62 (Trans: Schmeling); Apul. *Met.* 1.20-26; 3.17-19 (Trans: Kenny).

²⁵² Apul. *Met.* 2.4.

²⁵³ Plin. *NH.* 17.2.

²⁵⁴ Stat. *Sil.* 1.5.10-15.

²⁵⁵ Pall. *Agri.*; Like the work of Cato and Columella Palladius' *On Agriculture* is primarily an agricultural guide; Rodgers 1975: 85; Fitch 2013.

²⁵⁶ Lib. *Orat.* 11. 215 (Trans: Downey).

²⁵⁷ Amb. *Nab.* 13.56.; Ger. *Mel.* 18. Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 2.2.7.

Domestic Building: Scholarship

In urban centres, the lavish *domus* of the aristocracy coexisted alongside *insula* and the modest homes of the urban poor. Towns and villages had a similarly varied selection: local elites maintained well-furnished houses while the working classes resided in apartments contained in small one or two-storied *insulae*. The underprivileged survived in garrets attached to other residential buildings or in nearby huts and cottages.²⁵⁸ In rural areas, expansive villas stretched across the countryside while the poor lived in simple farmhouses.²⁵⁹ The obvious abundance of these spaces means that domestic buildings comprise one of the largest and most rich bodies of material culture from the Late Roman era.²⁶⁰ The remains of some 1,000 aristocratic residences as well as modest abodes, dated to the Late Roman period, from across the Roman world, have so far been discovered across a variety of contexts.²⁶¹ The sheer breadth of material has bred a large body of scholarship culminating in a range of theoretical approaches, which cover topics ranging from decoration, the study of slavery, aristocratic client relations, and 'Romanisation'.²⁶² In fact, as observed by Bowes, the study of homes, well beyond the Roman period, has often been understood as a means of getting to grips with broader societal conditions: the 'egalitarian' homes of the Greeks, Viking longhouses, the fortified towers of French lords, and the imposing *palazzi* of Florentine elites, have all been used by scholars to develop a more complete understanding of the period in question.²⁶³ Unsurprisingly, this approach has been applied to the domestic buildings of the Late Roman period as well.

Ellis and Polci have speculated what the change in domestic architecture during the Late Roman era suggests that the increasingly explicit distinction between public and private spheres within homes reveals an increased concentration of wealth and ultimately a more autocratic society.²⁶⁴ An example of this dynamic comes from a villa studied in this thesis, the villa at *Desenzano del Garda* which includes a so-called glory path, a trail which snakes around the villas' edge, taking in a view of the water, before finishing in the heart of the villa.²⁶⁵ Similarly, Esmonde Cleary has considered that the increased controls on access between different spaces in *domus* and villas heightened the sense of majesty towards the *dominus*.²⁶⁶ Further, he notes the role played by lavish decoration in this dynamic. Describing the arrangement of a villa located in Gaul, he summarises that those granted admission to the interior of a house would find themselves guided down an axis of increasing intimacy and opulence before arriving at the most privileged innermost suite. By way of contrast, Ellis in

²⁵⁸ Potter 1987: 63-95; Dyson 1992: 176-177.

²⁵⁹ Concerning villas, Corlàita 1997: 57-86 provides additional layers to the types of villas in existence outlining the differences between villas situated on plains, villas near lakes and lagoons, and suburban villas. See Carandini 1985; Purcell 2003 154-157 on suburban agricultural activity.

²⁶⁰ Bowes 2010: 11-12; Stephenson 2019.

²⁶¹ Stephenson 2019: 1.

²⁶² On Decoration, Gazda 1991; Ellis 1991; James 2017: 129 On Slaves: Carandini et al. 1985; Joshel and Peterson 2014; On Aristocratic Patronage see, Saller 1982. On Romanisation see, Ackerman 1990; Okay 2009.

²⁶³ Bowes 2011: 11; On Greek domestic space: Blanton 1994. On Viking longhouses: Eriksen 2004. On French Lords see, Duby et al. 1988. On Florentine elites see, Goldthwaite 1972; 1982.

²⁶⁴ Ellis 1988: 565-576; 1991: 123-129; Polci 2003: 89.

²⁶⁵ Bugini 2007.

²⁶⁶ Esmonde Cleary 2013: 219-220.

his study of late domestic architecture in the Middle East and the Balkans and Arthur, in his study of Late Roman and Early Medieval Naples, both contend that the increased division of space in large urban houses, for which the outcome was a larger number of smaller rooms, is indicative of a progressively large urban population, representing an influx from the countryside.²⁶⁷

Besides societal considerations, it is also the case that scholars like Ellis and Batty have argued that domestic buildings were indicative of the preferences held by an individual or household. In his work, Ellis has stated that 'It is worth repeating that houses tell the stories of the individuals and their families whereas public buildings represent the overall conventions of a society.'²⁶⁸ Batty furthers this point. In her detailed study on the *Domus del Ninfeo* in Ostia, she declares that every *domus* is different since they are 'conceived to suit the needs of the occupant'.²⁶⁹ Yet, as Ellis concedes, houses do not exist in a vacuum: they, like public spaces, are restricted by external elements. Indeed, millions of people, particularly those from a limited economic background, lived, and continue to do so, in homes they neither liked nor found functional.²⁷⁰ Even the super-rich cannot always avoid every boundary. Societal norms and expectations coerce occupants to live in a certain way. Further, more prosaic factors, namely building regulations and issues surrounding economic connectivity and trade can also take effect; we should also note the role architects play.²⁷¹

Of course, this point does not seek to diminish the role of choice, particularly when it comes to a home's décor. It is quite clear that for those who can, there was and is an abundance of choices available. Nevertheless, acknowledging the point that choice occurred within a specific framework is important. In sum, houses can act as tools which we can use to understand both the preferences of an individual as well as broader societal conventions. Furthermore, we can apply this framework to an examination of decorative stone in domestic settings. We can consider what typologies are used and in what context. Moreover, we can also think about how the use of marble in dwellings differs, if at all, from marble used in public contexts. We may also explore the diversity in stone use based upon geographic and topographical factors. In this way, we are able to draw a number of conclusions that move beyond a solely aesthetic evaluation.

Marble in Domestic Buildings: the Italian Peninsula

On the Italian peninsula, marble use in Late Roman domestic buildings was widespread, in the homes of the elites. As will be discussed, Ostia is noted for the amount of urban *domus* that employed a range of polychrome stone typologies with panelling and *opus sectile*.²⁷² Other sites noted in this study include the rural villas at *Desenzano del Garda*, Faustinella, Toscolano, and Faragola all of which were decorated with marble. Beyond these case studies, other

²⁶⁷ Ellis 1988: 566-569; Arthur 2002: 768-769. Polci 2003: 101-102 observes that these sets of circumstances are rather localised. Cities, such as Rome and Athens, for example, see population decreases during this period.

²⁶⁸ Ellis 2007: 1.

²⁶⁹ Batty 2018: 2.

²⁷⁰ Ellis 1997: 38.

²⁷¹ Suet. *Ner.* 38. Tac. *Ann.* 15. 43; Cod. Theo. 15.14. Regarding the interaction residents and neighbours interact over domestic decoration: Barker et al. 2020. On laws and building procedures: Kennedy 1985: 21-22; Baldini Lippolis 2004. On the distinctions between *mechanikoi* and *architektones*, see, Jacobs 2013: 490-491.

²⁷² Mieggs 1973: 261.

examples of marble-decorated domestic buildings are notable, the most renowned of which is probably the palatial 4th century AD villa of *Piazza Armerina*, in Sicily. Best known for its stunning array of mosaics, the villa also employed a range of white, grey, and coloured marble, 19 varieties in total.²⁷³ Other villas similarly utilised marble: *Masseria Ciccotti* in Basilicata, occupied from the Late Republic until the middle of the 4th century AD, was home to a combination of decorative marble and mosaics.²⁷⁴ In Calabria, the monumental villa at *Palazzi di Casignana* is particularly splendid. Occupied during the 3rd and 4th centuries the villa was complete with two sets of baths, fine mosaics, apsidal rooms, as well as a range of decorative marble veneers and *opus sectile*.²⁷⁵ Other examples of marble use in villas are noted in central Italy. The '*Pian Della Noce*', and '*Castro dei Volsci*', both of which are located in Lazio, employed marble. The '*Pian Della Noce*' was decorated with white marble revetment; marble typologies from *Castro dei Volsci* have not been recorded.²⁷⁶ Further north, in Tuscany at *San Vincenzino*, a large villa, which was remodelled during the first half of the 5th century AD, had a number of rooms decorated in marble.²⁷⁷ The nearby *Villa dell'Oratorio* which was similarly adapted, this time in the 4th century AD, and like other contemporary villas is best regarded for its mosaics - elaborately produced polychrome designs depicting hunts - features white/grey decorative stone.²⁷⁸

In short, across the Italian peninsula we continue to see domestic spaces decorated with marble along with other decorative modes, namely mosaics and paintings. As a consequence, there is a bi-faceted sense of continuity. On one hand, it may be the case that domestic settings on the Italian peninsula maintained some of the decorative customs, vis-à-vis the use of marble in domestic decoration, as a way of engaging with a past which saw marble used regularly. On the other hand, given that contemporary homes from across the Roman world, in locals diverse as the French Pyrenees, Spain, North Africa, Asia Minor, and the Balkans, continued to employ marble, the widespread use of it on the Italian peninsula may well reflect the fact that Italy continued to be plugged into regional-wide social, economic and political trends, all of which had the capacity to impact marble use.

The analysis of the domestic buildings, in the case studies evaluated here, will initially be composed of a brief background to each building, including a summarisation of any changes to the form or function that may have occurred during or prior to the Late Roman period. Following this, an examination of the stone typologies is carried out. Here the data pertaining to marble use, both in terms of what marble typologies are employed as well as their relative quantities, are noted. The data provided here, used alongside the data analysed in the other case studies feeds into this thesis' broader research questions concerning the variety of lithotypes in the various assemblages, the impact of reused stone, and the relationship between the literary sources and material evidence. Table 1 provides an overview of the domus assessed in Ostia.

²⁷³ Pensabene et al. 2015: 641-649. Typologies: Proconnesian marble, *Alabastro al Pecorella*, *Bigio Vento*, *Grecco Scritto*, *Giallo Antico*, *Lumachela Orientale*, *Nero Antico*, *Bardigilo*, *Verde Antico*, *Rosso Antico*, *Cipollino Verde*, *Fior di Pesco*, *Breccia di Skyro*, *Bigio*, *Breccia Coralina*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Lasense Brecciato*, *Africano*, and *Portasanta*.

²⁷⁴ Fracchia et al. 1999: 308-314 (Typologies: not listed).

²⁷⁵ Bruni 2009: Typologies listed: Pentellic marble, *Cipollino Verde*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Giallo Antico* and *Porphyry*. These typologies only are listed in the text. However, other stones such as *Greco Scritto* and *Proconnesian* can be observed in various images within the thesis.

²⁷⁶ Marzano 2007. For *Pain della Noce*, see page 291; For *Castra dei Volsci*, see page, 331.

²⁷⁷ Castiglia 2018: 226.

²⁷⁸ Raneri et al. 2017: 10-115. Archaeometric analysis has shown that along with Pentelic marble and Proconnesian much of the white stone used was local.

Housing in Ostia

'The most striking common feature of these houses [in Ostia] is the wealth of marble that they display. Framed marble panels form the dadoes on their walls, and many of their pavements have elaborate opus sectile designs in coloured marbles. To what extent this lavish use of marble represents a new fashion we cannot say, for even the oldest private houses changed with the times, but in pavements, at least the widespread use of marble probably represents a change.'

Meiggs, R. 1973.

Ostia during the Late Roman period was no longer a major urban centre, as it once had been during the Imperial era. Yet, nor was it a backwater devoid of any vitality or prestige. Instead, Ostia's geographic position, with its close proximity to Rome and its access to the sea, ensured that the city maintained a degree of status and importance.²⁷⁹ This is reflected in the city's built landscape, which includes the city's urban *domus*. As Meiggs' 1973 volume outlines, the city's vibrancy was illustrated by the persistent and widespread deployment of marble veneers and *opus sectile*. The following section will record the extent to which marble veneers and *opus sectile* was used across the city.

As we will see, a number of these *domus* had been occupied since Rome's Imperial height. By the Late Roman period, many had been redeveloped and redecorated in order to suit the needs of their contemporary occupiers. The newly decorated *domus* incorporated a range of decorative approaches with painted walls utilised alongside mosaics, revetted marble, and monumental architecture.

Domus di Amore e Psiche

The *Domus di Amore e Psiche* is located to the north-west of the city centre, bound between *Via del Tempio d'Ercole* to the east; to the south, the *Vicolo delle Terme di Buticous*; and to the west an unnamed road (Fig. 7).²⁸⁰ The *domus* is one example of the trend in Late Roman Ostia which saw buildings originally established as *insulae* later transformed into a single house. The *insula*, which was likely established over two floors and included a number of commercial spaces, was built during the 2nd century AD before being converted into a *domus*, during the 4th century.²⁸¹ The renovation saw two-thirds of the original structure transformed with the entirety of the first floor abandoned; culminating in the stairwell to the west of Room C being closed off.²⁸² Despite its comparatively small size, relative to its former grandeur, the *domus* was ornately decorated with marble throughout.²⁸³ Additionally, remnants of mosaics, one in black and white and the other polychrome, also remain: the black and white mosaic which is located in Room H decorates the entire surface of the room's floor (Fig. 8; Fig. 9). A

²⁷⁹ Boin 2013: 52. Although large ships coming into Ostia's port were hindered by encroaching sandbars smaller vessels were still able to navigate the harbour.

²⁸⁰ Packer 1967: 123.

²⁸¹ Van Aken 1949: 246; Packer 1967: 123; Pavolini 2011: 1032; Michielin 2019: 154; Lucchetti 2022.

²⁸² Packer 1967:125; Michielin 2019: 155.

²⁸³ Meiggs 1973: 261.

further colourful mosaic is found in the *domus*' central corridor, Room B. The lavish deployment of marble in this *domus* is typified by the large decorative *nymphaeum*, located in the main salon (Fig. 10; Fig. 11). Completed with five niches, the *nymphaeum* was outfitted in marble revetment as well as with a number of columns in Proconnesian marble and a greyish granite all of which were finished with white bases and capitals.²⁸⁴ Fitted in front of the *nymphaeum*, to the west, a low wall clad in white stone and complete with four columns, one in white marble and the others in granite, all with white bases. The remnants of the revetment belonging to the *nymphaeum* niches are unevenly distributed, the two most southern niches being more damaged than the other three. However, from what remains, it seems likely that the central niche was outfitted in *Cipollino Verde* with the other four being dressed in a white/grey marble (Fig. 12).

As observed by Van Aken in the 1950's, in domestic settings, *nymphaea* were increasingly stylistically grand, imitating elements of public architecture.²⁸⁵ As it is, the *nymphaea* in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, with its columns and marble-clad niches, is certainly evocative of imposing public works. The same is true of *nymphaea* found in other *domus* in Ostia, notably, the *Domus del Ninfeo* and the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria*.²⁸⁶ In response to the growth of grand *nymphaeum* in Late Roman Ostia, Hansen concluded that they were a result of deteriorating public space and an increasing emphasis on the private.²⁸⁷ There is no doubt there is some credence to this view. Indeed, Wheeler's assessment of aquatic displays in a neighbourhood south of the *Cardo Maximus* demonstrates the proliferation of impressive ornate water features in Ostian residences at this time.²⁸⁸ Yet, it is also the case that the development and preservation of so-called 'water luxury' was not only confined to the private sphere. The *nymphaeum* of *Bivo del Castro*, established in the 4th century, was located at a major junction between the *Decumanus* and the *Via della Foce*. Complete with a 26m long façade, which housed arcaded niches, it was decorated with *Giallo Antico* cladding.²⁸⁹ Similarly, two other, smaller, public *nymphaea* in the city also date to the Late Roman period: the *nymphaeum* opposite the *Foro della Statua Eroica* and the *nymphaeum* in the *Piazzale della Vittoria*. Dated to the late 3rd century and 4th century, respectively, they, along with private *nymphaea* discussed in this study, attest to the fact that imposing *nymphaea* were concurrently part of domestic and public architecture. The

²⁸⁴ Since the Imperial period *nymphaea* had featured in domestic architecture. During this time, so-called 'grotto' *nymphaea* were in vogue. During the Late Roman period *nymphaea* become more monumental and closer reflect public architecture. Hansen has suggested that this style may have been a result of the deteriorating public space and the increasing emphasis on the private. See, Neuerburg 1965; Hansen 1997: 115.

²⁸⁵ Van Aken 1951: 282.

²⁸⁶ Meggs 1973: 261. Since the Imperial period *nymphaea* had featured in domestic architecture. During this time, so-called 'grotto' *nymphaea* were *in vogue*. During the Late Roman period *nymphaea* become more monumental and closer reflect public architecture. Calza and Becatti concluded that the monumentalisation of *nymphaea* in the Late Roman period was a typically Ostian phenomenon. More recently, however, Lavan has speculated that the monumentlisation of *nymphaea*, found in Ostia, may have reflected a similar development found in the now lost Late Roman Rome. On *nymphaea* in public architecture see, Neuerburg 1965; Calza & Becatti 1971: 22; Lavan 2012: 650.

²⁸⁷ Hansen 1997: 115.

²⁸⁸ Wheeler 2020. Wheeler notes that the recent discovery of a 2nd century fountain in the Casa di Diana makes clear that domestic 'water luxury' was not a novel development in the Late Roman period. Nevertheless, the widespread inclusion of fountains, pools, and *nymphaea* in the late period suggest that they were increasingly fashionable.

²⁸⁹ Lavan 2012: 681-684; Lamare 2020: 42. Lavan identifies 'white marble with orange veins [as] possibly *Giallo Antico*'. No other lithotypes are not reported.

nymphaeum in the *Piazzale della Vittoria*, to the south of the *Decumanus*, is noteworthy for having a basin both on the front and back of the structure. The *nymphaeum* opposite the *Foro della Statua Eroica*, stretched to 11.5m across the street and was complete with a semi-circle basin with a radius of 4.5m. Five niches, two semi-circles and three squares, adorned the wall, looming over the basin below. Additional pilasters and columns were also present.²⁹⁰ Both *nymphaea* discussed here were decorated in marble and what is more, they were fitted with the same lithotype used in the *nymphaeum* belonging to the *Domus di Amore e Psiche: Cipollino Verde*.²⁹¹ In the case of the *nymphaeum* opposite the *Foro della Statua Eroica*, where *Cipollino Verde* was used to decorate the flooring of the *nymphaeum* and to clad the façade, white marble was also present.²⁹² Concerning the *nymphaeum* in the *Piazzale della Vittoria*, fragmentary elements of *Cipollino Verde* on the front basin were documented. With this all in mind, it is clear that the popularity of *nymphaea* in Ostian *domus* is not solely down to a deterioration of public architecture.²⁹³

Beyond the *nymphaeum*, the *domus* is complete with further revetment, especially in Room C and Room D, along with a substantial amount of *opus sectile* in the same rooms. A small set of stairs, leading up to Room D, are also complete in marble. The stairs only employed white and grey marble apart from two fragments: a single riser in *Cipollino Verde* and an external stringer in *Pavonazzetto*. A further five thresholds in marble also remain with four in white marble and one in *Cipollino Verde* - the same ratio as the white to *Cipollino Verde* in the *nymphaeum* niches. Beyond the main salon, the *domus* had four additional rooms. Room C, located to the north of the *domus*, is the largest and the most ornately designed room in the *domus* and is dominated by *opus sectile* flooring. With the exception of a strip of grey marble, which runs adjacent to the room's entrance, the flooring is covered in a range of polychrome stones applied in a number of designs, five in total. Unfortunately, two of these have been damaged to such an extent that the designs, not to mention the typologies, are too difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty.

The other three, however, retain some of their original splendour to varying degrees. Type 1 (Fig. 13), which covers most of the floor space in the room, and is the best-preserved, is made up of 75 individual squares measuring 60x60 cm. Type 2 (Fig. 14), although severely weathered does include some stone typologies that can be identified by eye.²⁹⁴ There are four examples of Type 2 which measure at 120 x 120 cm. Type 3 (Fig. 15), which has been laid in a line parallel to the room's southern wall and entrance measure at 21 x 21 cm and on

²⁹⁰ No details concerning the material used for the pilaster or columns are recorded.

²⁹¹ The *nymphaea* belonging noted inside the *Domus del Ninfeo* and the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* largely employed white stone, although some *Cipollino Verde* is found on the *Domus del Ninfeo*.

²⁹² Lavan 2012 679-681. Lavan notes that the white stone used was 'probably pentelic'.

²⁹³ An intriguing example of an Ostian *nymphaeum* is the *Ninfeo degli Eroti*. Clad entirely in white/grey marble, with the exception of a fountain base in *Giallo Antico*, this *nymphaeum* includes a 2.5-meter wide doorway which opens directly on the *Cardo Maximus* with smaller doors to the rear, connecting the *nymphaeum* to the *Domus della Nicchia a Mosaico*. Wheeler has determined that the larger 'front door' was constructed thus in order to allow as much light into the room as a possible. Wheeler also concluded that the *nymphaeum*'s association with the *Domus della Nicchia a Mosaico* was demonstrative of controlled access to water features in Ostia at this time. However, although there is little doubt that whoever owned the *domus* in question also managed access to the *nymphaeum*, the large decision to construct such a grand entrance way, on a busy throughfare, is surely more than a means of letting in sunlight?

²⁹⁴ In order to easily discuss the various *opus sectile* arrangements a simple numbering system has been employed. In each separate *domus* individual patterns will be listed by number, starting with Type 1. When two patterns with the same number are compared they are separated with the name of the *domus*: i.e. *Domus Amore e Psiche* Type 1 vs. *Domus dei Pesci* Type 1.

occasion 29 x 29cm. Room D, situated to the south-east of Room C, is a smaller space and as such only utilises a single design scheme, Type 4 (Fig. 16).

As indicated, (Fig. 17) Type 1 is dominated by two major lithotypes, *Giallo Antico* and *Portasanta*, with a choice selection of a limited amount of other stones used too.²⁹⁵ As the image shows, *Giallo Antico* was widely proliferated. Since Type 1 it is the most common pattern in Room C its probable that *Giallo Antico* was the most widely employed stone in the room, with the exception of the wall revetment. The high amount of *Giallo Antico* represented in this *domus* is markedly similar to that found in the *Domus dei Pesci*. The extent of *Serpentino* and *Porfido Rosso* observed is especially suggestive of a significant investment, given the status and cost of these particular lithotypes.

Type 2, like Type 1, sees both *Giallo Antico* and *Portasanta* widely proliferated, perhaps reflecting the preferences of the whoever commissioned these designs (Fig. 18) Indeed, given the damage that Type 2 has suffered the data presented here may unrepresented the true coverage that these lithotypes had.²⁹⁶

Type 3 reflects an entirely different decorative choice compared to Type 1 and Type 2 (Fig. 19) Firstly, the basic arrangement of the stone used seems somewhat incongruous when viewed alongside the other designs utilised in the room. The curved bands of *Serpentino* and the leaf-shaped *Giallo Antico* and *Portasanta* panels are replaced by squat angled squares and triangles.²⁹⁷ Secondly, the colour scheme uses an alternative palette to those observed in Type 1 and Type 2. The yellow/orange hues which take primacy in Type 1 and Type 2 are replaced. Instead, Type 3 sees a high proportion of white and grey stones employed. In total the use of polychrome stone is minimal. Yet, while the predominance of white/grey stones are noted, the use of *Broccatello* and some other polychrome lithotypes indicates a consistent appetite for colour, even if there was a departure from the styles used elsewhere in the room. It should be noted, however, that like assemblage Type 2, the true character of Type 3 is masked somewhat by damage caused to some stones.²⁹⁸

Even the most fleeting examination of Type 3 makes it clear that it is far more closely aligned with the flooring in Room D than anything else in Room C. The distinct difference in the way marble was employed across this Room C may be indicative of the remodeling changes made to the *domus* during the phases of reconstruction, in the 4th century. Given that design Type 3 is laid just in front of the closed stairwell, to the east of Room C, it is plausible that it was incorporated during this time.

Room D is a small room located on the west side of the *domus*, just to the south of Room C. During the initial excavations of the building a small statue of *Amore* and *Psiche* embracing was uncovered. The flooring (Type 4) around the statue is decorated with a thin ribbon of *Serpentino*. The rest of the *domus'* flooring is complete in a single design. The change of aesthetic register here is a challenge. While the *opus sectile* use in Rome C is more ornate than Room D, it would be wrong to dismiss the plainer style used in Room D as

²⁹⁵ Total Type 1, Room C, assemblage: *Giallo Antico* (c.41%), *Portasanta* (c. 26%), *Serpentino* (c. 19%) *Porfido Rosso* (c. 3%), *Moschinata Verde* (c. 3%), white/grey (c.1%), and unidentified stone (c. 7%).

²⁹⁶ Total Type 2, Room C, assemblage: *Giallo Antico* (c.20. %), *Portasanta* (c. 11%), *Verde Antico* (c.5%), *Serpentino* (c. 2%), white/grey (c. 27%), and unidentified stone (c 33%).

²⁹⁷ The arrangement of the stone here is in a style observed elsewhere, across the much of the Roma period. For example floor inserts, in *Greco Scritto* at the *Casa di Sallustico*, in Pompeii, are arranged in exactly the same way. See: Perna & Scognamiglio 2023: 142.

²⁹⁸ Total Type 3, Room C, assemblage: *Greco Scritto* (c. 11%), *Portasanta* (c. 5%), *Broccatello* (c. 3%) *Giallo Antico* (c. 2%).

inferior.²⁹⁹ Instead, the approach taken in Rom D is perhaps indicative of the decorative variety or playfulness that characterises Late Roman decoration; it is hard to say from our vantage point.

The decorative walling in both Rooms D and C is identical (Fig. 20; 21). It seems likely that both walls were clad almost entirely in marble to the height of around 2m. The remains of plaster high up the walls suggests that the upper parts of the walls were completely decorated in plaster, potentially painted, as is the case with the *Domus del Ninfeo*.³⁰⁰ As indicated, the palette used for the decorative revetment is limited. This is not to disparage the design. Indeed, the revetment may appear to modern viewers as stylishly understated. Intriguingly, the pattern employed here closely resembles wall paintings used in two nearby Late Roman *domus*, near the city of Rome. In these instances, white panels framed with bands of red paint were produced. Although the white panels are decorated with finely drawn animals there is nevertheless a stylistic resemblance apparent.³⁰¹ With the exception of a small niche to the south-west of Room C which includes fragments of *Verde Antico* along with white stone, the entirety of rooms C & D were completed in this design.³⁰² This moderately minimalist approach sits in contrast with the range of polychrome stone used for the flooring.

Domus dei Pesci

The *Domus dei Pesci*, a 4th century *domus*, is located to the south of Ostia's main thoroughfare. Like the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, it underwent a number of construction phases.³⁰³ Although these phases are difficult to distinguish, it seems likely that most occurred between the 2nd and 4th centuries (Fig. 22).³⁰⁴

The *domus* hosted a range of marble typologies, although it was more limited in range than the stone used in either the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* or the *Domus del Ninfeo*. Noteworthy is the use of porphyry and *Serpentino*, along with a white stone, used in a figurative mosaic in a small vestibule. Additionally, marble is used in a number of small water features with two adjacent revetted pools and a fountain, located in the centre of the house.

The most lavish example of marble comes in the form of *opus sectile* found only in Room H. In addition to this decoration, columns in grey stone stand on the threshold of Room N. Indeed, there are several marble thresholds here, all in white stone. The centrality of the water featured in the *domus* reflects their continued importance in Roman domestic architecture during the Late Roman period. Oval in shape, the largest pool, Pool A, with a diameter of 3.85m and an arc of 2.20m, included a small pipe that allowed water to flow down to the adjacent lower Pool B. Pool A has a low brick wall which is unadorned. The flooring has evidently been restored in the recent past, as shown by a large amount of cement used to refit the marble. In terms of count, white and grey stone dominates the pool. Broadly, this reflects the overall appearance although it should be noted that despite there only being four individual pieces of *Verde Antico* one element is especially large measuring 38 x 8cm.

²⁹⁹ Total Type 4, Room D, assemblage: *Portasanta* (c. 9%), *Cipollino Verde* (c. 3%), white/grey (c. 76%), and unidentified stone (c. 7%).

³⁰⁰ Bakker 1994: 33.

³⁰¹ St. Clair 2002: The 'Palatine East *domus*' (Pre-Diocletian) and the *Piazza dei Cinquecent* the most recent decorative redevelopment occurring in the c. AD 400.

³⁰² Bakker 1994: 32-53.

³⁰³ Kałużny 2020: 20.

³⁰⁴ Heres 1982: 495; Boersman 1985: 193; Muntasser 2003: 129.

Consequently, *Verde Antico* is represented somewhat more than the data initially suggests. Pool B, which forms a modified square shape, the southwest corner of which was altered to accommodate the pipe that connects it to Pool A, measures 1.73 x 1.73m. It is primarily noted for having a central plinth clad in white marble, topped by a small pyramid also in white marble. In addition, Pool B seems to have retained more of its original decorative arrangement compared to Pool A: the pool walls and flooring are decked in well-fitted panels of mostly Proconnesian marble and *Cipollino Verde*. Pool B has a slightly more limited selection of stone than Pool A even if the general palette is similar. The use of an inscribed piece of white stone in the flooring for Pool B looks to be an example of stone being repurposed. The final water feature located in the *domus* is another pool, Pool C, which is adjoined to the north wall of the central salon. The back wall, and parts of the pool's inner walling, as well as the base of the niche, are adorned with dark grey marble, *Marmor Lesbium*, with white stone cladding decorating the base of the niche.

Across all three water features, there is a clearly defined colour scheme: mostly white and grey stones supplemented with green additions. Although there is a slight issue with the data, namely the fragmented nature of some of the stones, and hints that Pool A has been subject to considerable modern intervention, the overall picture here is broadly reliable.

The *opus sectile* employed in the *Domus dei Pesci* is limited to Room H. In total it is composed of five polychrome stone types with white/grey stone also used. However, despite this range of stone types, the vast majority of the stone is *Giallo Antico* and *Portasanta*. It is these two typologies that are used in a single design repeated throughout the majority of Room H. The only break in the pattern is a large central panel (Fig. 23). This panel (Type 1), measuring 180 x 120cm, utilises five polychrome lithotypes with the addition of white stone too. *Giallo Antico*, takes primacy here with *Moschinata Verde* prominent too.³⁰⁵ Striking here is the composition of the panel which employs a large disk of green stone in the centre of the design. This decorative feature is repeated in a number of homes in Ostia.

The smaller *opus sectile* squares, used throughout the rest of the room, measure 60x60cm and are complete with a central 'Maltese cross' motif (Fig. 24). There are two varieties featured, with both types forming a mirror image of each other: Type 2 being dominated by *Giallo Antico* with a smaller amount of *Pavonazzetto* and Type 3 dominated by *Pavonazzetto* with less *Giallo Antico* (Fig. 25; Fig. 26). No other typologies are present in these designs. Analysis of a single panel in Type 2 and a single Type 3 panel side by side demonstrated that the split between *Giallo Antico* and *Pavonazzetto* is almost exactly 50:50. When both types are measured individually, the dominant marble accounts for 70% of the stone with the secondary typology taking up the remaining 30%. Although the issue of preservation means that it is impossible to know which of these palettes featured most, it seems likely that the split between Type 2 and Type 3 was even. In addition to panels Type 2 and Type 3 a further panel, Type 3b, is noted. Type 3b has the same dimensions, as the other assemblages, except for the inclusion of a central square, in grey marble, in place of the aforementioned cross. It is impossible to say how many of these tertiary designs are featured in the room. However, since only one out of around 75 complete or partially complete panels with this design remains it seems unlikely that Type 3b was especially well represented in antiquity. Indeed, the existence of Type 3b may well speak to an instance of repairs made to a damaged section of the floor. Whatever the case may be, I have separated Type 3b from the rest of the analysis.

³⁰⁵ Total Type 1 assemblage: *Giallo Antico*, *Moschinata Verde*, *Fior di Pesco*, *Pavonazzetto*, and *Portasanta*.

The abundance of *Giallo Antico* in the *domus* reflects the fashion noted in other houses in the survey. Similarly, the uniform pattern of the *opus sectile* noted is also observed elsewhere in Ostia, notably the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* where a single pattern is repeated. The use of *Pavonazzetto* in such quantities, however, represents a choice unique to this *domus*.

Domus delle Colonne

The *Domus delle Colonne*, with the main entrance on the southern stretch of the *Cardo Maximus*, is adjacent to the *Domus dei Pesci*, connected by its southernmost wall (Fig. 27). The *domus*, which has a rough rectangular plan, was built around a pre-existing framework that dates to the middle of the 2nd century with alterations carried out until the 4th.³⁰⁶ Although, it seems likely that decorative marble featured throughout the house what remains is inconsistent.

The best-preserved marble is located in Room I, a *triclinium*, to the rear of the *domus*. Here *opus sectile* decorates the central portion of the room's flooring, bordered by smart mosaics complete with geometric patterns. A threshold and two columns in white marble mark the entrance to this room. The *opus sectile* was arranged in the *quadrato* style with angular squares and triangles used to create the overall pattern. The size of the individual squares differs somewhat with the smaller forms measuring 30 x 30 cm and 40 x 40 cm; while the larger examples are made up of rectangles measuring 60 x 85 cm (Fig. 28). Given most of the marble that was in this space is no longer extant there is no obvious pattern.³⁰⁷ What we can say, however, is that polychromy and variety were valued. Indeed, although there was an inconsistency in the size of the various arrangements and the lithotypes used, this is not necessarily indicative of a lack of thought. Rather, we can appreciate a particular aesthetic choice.

Further marble decoration is noted in the house's central courtyard, Room H, where a large pool is located. The walls of the pool have retained only a small portion of their original decoration: comprised of fragments of white marble which is evident both on the internal and external sides of the wall (Fig. 29). More interestingly, a small niche at the eastern end of the pool is clad in narrow strips of white marble and *Cipollino Verde*. Made up of spoliated stone, as evidenced by the mouldings on various elements, the split between the two varieties is just about in favour of the white stone with circa 60% in white marble and 40% in *Cipollino Verde* (Fig. 30). Two stout columns in white marble, complete with bases and Corinthian capitals sit in front of the niche. As for the remainder of the courtyard, it is mostly covered in a pavement of white *tesserae*. Some parts of the flooring do feature marble, entirely Proconnesian marble and *Cipollino Verde*. However, the stone here is very fragmentary, and it is unclear if the current design reflects the antique reality.

Domus del Ninfeo

³⁰⁶ Muntasser 2003: 102; Heres 1982: 489. On the topic of redevelopment phases there is little scholarly consensus. See, Becatti 1949: 15-16; Heres 1982: 488-493; Pavollini 1988: 193; Tione: 2000: 191-207, and Muntasser 2009: 102-103.

³⁰⁷ The damage suffered by the *opus sectile* has impacted the results here: some stone typologies are unidentifiable due to severe damage while the use of cement and pebble-dash as filler in place of the original stone impacts the results.

The *Domus del Ninfeo* is a multiphase structure situated on the *Decumanus Maximus* to the west of the city's centre. The original structure, which is dated to the reign of Hadrian, consisted of two storeys which included space for a number of shops and an outside area, as well as two apartments on the ground floor; the top floor accommodated further living quarters (Fig.31).³⁰⁸ Around the 3rd or early 4th century, the building was radically remodelled with the upper floor completely dismantled and 80% of the ground floor converted into a well-appointed *domus*.³⁰⁹ With a large outdoor area, contained within the limits of the *domus*, and the nearby gardens associated with the so-called Hadrianic 'Garden Houses' the available open-air space is exceptional in the context of Ostian domestic buildings.³¹⁰ In this instance, the large eponymous *nymphaeum*, fixed to the west-facing wall, made the most of the space available.

The *domus* has large quantities of marble mostly in the form of revetment and *opus sectile*. The majority of the stone is located in Room D. Here lies the broadest range of typologies with 14 polychrome types used, supplemented by white/grey lithotypes. Room D has a west-facing tripart window supported by two columns (Fig. 32). An additional column in white sits on the threshold of Room B; all are complete with white bases and capitals. A niche, clad in narrow strips of white marble, sits just beneath the window and may well have had a religious function.³¹¹ In addition to Room D a sizeable quantity of marble remains spread over other parts of the building with the above-mentioned *nymphaeum* and Room H both containing revetment while both Room B and Room C are decorated with fragments of white and grey floor paving.³¹²

As noted, Room D features the finest array of *opus sectile* in the *domus*. Here, there are three principal panels. Noteworthy not only for the array of stone employed but also for the intricacy of the patterns.³¹³ These panels exist in various states of repair with only Type 1, conspicuous thanks to the depiction of the so-called Gordian's knot remaining completely intact (Fig. 33; Fig. 34). Concerning the other design, Type 2 (Fig. 35; Fig. 36) has suffered some minor damage while Type 3 is severely harmed (Fig. 37).

Regarding Type 1, *Cipollino Verde* (c.12%) and *Rosso Antico* (c.12%) are the most prominent, although no single polychrome lithotype dominates. In fact, thanks to the intricacy of the central design, the eye is drawn to the black and white lithotypes which compose the knot.³¹⁴ Nevertheless, the inclusion of small amount of *Portasanta* (c.6%), *Pavonazzetto* (c.9%), *Giallo Antico* (c.6%), and *Breccia Corallina* (c.2%) does provide a sense of colour and variety. Likewise, design Type 2 utilises a good amount of colour and whereas *Cipollino Verde* was extensively used in Type 1, here it dominates (c. 24%). *Giallo Antico*, *Rosso*

³⁰⁸ Heres 1982: 473; Pellegrino & Pompili 2017: 557; Batty 2018: 1.

³⁰⁹ Batty 2018: 1.

³¹⁰ Muntasser 2009: 195.

³¹¹ Barker: 1994.

³¹² Pellegrino & Pompili 2017: 558-559.

³¹³ Guidobaldi 1983: 194-197; 2005. While Guidobaldi believes that the quality craftsmanship suggest these panels were prefabricated in Rome. The quality of the marble at the *Porta Marina Domus*, however, suggests that high quality marble work could be produced in Ostia.

³¹⁴ Total Type 1, Room D, assemblage: *Porfido Rosso* (c. 12%), *Giallo Antico* (c. 12%), *Portasanta* (c. 6%) *Pavonazzetto* (c. 9%), *Giallo Antico* (c. 6%), *Breccia Corallina* (c. 2%), unidentified black stone (c. 22%) and white/grey stone (c 40%).

Antico (c. 13%), as well as *Africano* (c. 6%) and the precious alabaster are well attested too.³¹⁵ As noted, what is interesting about these examples is that each design is arranged around a prominent motif in the centre of the panel. Type 1's prominent 'Gordian's knot' is especially blatant although Type 2 and Type 3 also feature this decorative element.³¹⁶ Besides, this pattern is a recurring feature throughout Ostia.

In addition to these principal panels there is also a selection of small geometric squares, which correspond to the *modulo quadrato* pattern identified by Guidobaldi.³¹⁷ Located to the periphery of the room these *quadrati* fill in the gaps between the elaborate marble panelling in the middle of the room, and the walls. Firstly, Type 4 (Fig. 38) which is composed of two small squares and a single rectangle, and measures 115 x 54 cm, is presented. The second panel, Type 5 (Fig. 39), is a single rectangle measuring 115 x 40. Finally, Type 6 measuring 120 x 80 cm. Similar in style to Type 3 and Type 4, located in the *Domus of Amore* and *Psiche*, Type 6 appears out of place in Room D (Fig. 40).

Both Type 4 and Type 5 use small selection of polychrome stone types.³¹⁸ The reason for this may be due to the fact that these panels are situated in the centre of Room D close to the larger decorative panels and so better contribute to the room's overall palette, which sees lots of colourful lithotypes used. By contrast, Type 6 is dominated by white/grey stone typologies with *Greco Scritto*, featuring prominently.³¹⁹ These panels employ a simplified structure which is reminiscent of the design Types 3 and Type 4 employed in the *Domus of Amore* and *Psiche*. Given that Type 6 was used around the edge of Room D they are not well integrated with the rest of the floor paneling. This may explain the divergence in style. In addition to the flooring, the walls in Room D were also decorated. In terms of marble, the *in situ* remains show the bottom of the walls lined with slabs of grey marble. Above this, wall paintings featured. The remains of four panels show a bucolic scene set in a garden or the countryside. From what remains, the palette here is red and yellow. Although Muntasser has suggested the yellow paint used represents *Giallo Antico*, this remains unclear.³²⁰

In its totality the décor covered here displays a large body of marble arranged in both intricate designs with more basic, formulaic approaches taken too. Returning to the theme cited above, we find variety in action with a range of lithotypes and carved shapes marking a number of the panels. The paintings of course, add to this sense of variety. More than this, however, the large principal panels illustrate not only a willingness to invest costly stones but also highlight the quality of the craftsmanship available in Ostia during the 4th century AD.

Beyond Room D, other spaces in the *domus* were decorated in marble. Batty has indicated that Room B and C may have featured *opus sectile* decoration.³²¹ However, as it

³¹⁵ Total Type 2, Room D, assemblage: *Cipollino Verde* (c. 24%), *Giallo Antico* (c. 15 %), *Africano* (c. 6%) Alabaster Cot. (c. 4%), *Rosso Antico* (13%) *Breccia Corallina* (c. 2%) *Serpentino* (c.1%) *Pavonazzetto* (c.1%), unidentified black stone (c. 4%) and white/grey stone (c. 25%), and unidentified (c. 5%).

³¹⁶ Lithotypes present in Type 4, Room D: *Bianco Nero*, *Cipollino Verde*, *Giallo Antico*, *Rosso Antico*, *Serpentino*, White/Grey.

³¹⁷ Guidobaldi 2005:1-19.

³¹⁸ Total Type 4, Room D, assemblage *Africano* (c. 6%) *Cipollino Verde* (c. 13%), *Portasanta* (c. 29%) *Giallo Antico* (c. 18 %), *Rosso Antico* (c. 11%), *Serpentino* (c.2%) White/Grey (c. 35 %) *Bianco Nero* (c. 31%). Total Type 5, Room D, assemblage: Alabaster (c.13%), *Africano* (c. 7%), *Cipollino Verde* (c. 35%), *Giallo Antico* (c. 15 %), *Portasanta* (c. 8%), *Rosso Antico* (c. 5%) White/Grey (c. 20%).

³¹⁹ Total Type 6, Room D, assemblage: *Giallo Antico* (c. 2%) *Greco Scritto* (c. 30%) *Pavonazzetto* (c. 7%) *Portasanta* (c. 7%) White/Grey (c. 49%) unidentified (c. 4%).

³²⁰ Muntasser 2009:196.

³²¹ Batty 2018:105-106.

stands there remain only some small fragments of white and *Cipollino Verde* wall revetment. Room H, however, provides more firm evidence for marble decoration. A small semi-circle shaped room which opens up into the garden, to the west of Room D, Room H has a neat black and white design entirely characterised by precisely cut interlocking *lozenge* (Fig. 41).

Situated in the *domus'* outside space is a large marble-clad *nymphaeum*, abutting the north wall (Fig. 42) The *nymphaeum* is complete with a deep basin and seven niches. The niches are now completely unadorned. The basin, in contrast, is wholly adorned in white and grey stone with a few exceptions in *Cipollino Verde*. Some evidence of reuse is clear since two of the panels used are fluted (Fig. 43). The basins' back wall which is complete in a dark grey stone, *marmor Lesbium*, shows a consistent moulded design perhaps indicating that carving was carried out, especially for this feature.³²² The only example of polychrome stone can be found just below the niches: four small detailed ramps feature narrow strips of *Breccia Corallina*, *Broccatello*, *Cipollino Verde*, and *Portasanta* (Fig. 44).³²³ Limited as this range is, the use of coloured stones sits in contrast to the mostly white and grey of the rest of the *nymphaeum* and is effective.

Domus della Fortuna Annonaria

The *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* is situated in a largely residential area of the city located on *Via della Fortuna Annonaria* and the important *Semita dei Cippi*.³²⁴ A peristyle house, the *domus* dates to Augustus' reign in the 1st century AD although an earlier structure on the site was likely built during the 2nd century BC (Fig. 45).³²⁵ Alterations took place during the Flavian and Antonine periods with the final model produced in the 4th century AD.³²⁶ As well as marble panelling and *opus sectile*, the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* is noteworthy for the array of sculptures and portraits, uncovered within the premises.³²⁷

Marble decoration is noted throughout the building with much of the revetment and remaining *opus sectile* being applied in the 4th century AD.³²⁸ The largest indoor space in the house, Room 15, is home to most of the marble. Both the floor of the main room and that of the apse had featured an *opus sectile* floor of polychrome marble pieces arranged in a geometric pattern, only very limited traces remain.³²⁹ The wall revetment, however, is in a good state of repair. On the southern wall, the remains of a *nymphaeum* suggest that it was completed entirely in white marble (Fig. 46). The northern wall by contrast was clad in a range of polychrome lithotypes: large panels of *Africano*, *Cipollino Verde*, *Portasanta*, *Serpentino*, *Verde Antico*, and grey stone are separated by thick strips of white marble. Beneath these panels, separated by a moulding, horizontally fixed rectangles of grey/white marble remain (Fig. 47).

³²² The *Marmor Lesbium* used also features on the backwall of the large water feature in the *Domus dei Pesci*

³²³ Pensabene 2007: 502 refer to a 'a number of pink stones like *Portasanta* and *Broccatello*'. He does not note if this list is exclusive. Moreover, Pensabene notes that only three nooks exist. However, a fourth is clearly visible.

³²⁴ Stöger 2007: 356; Michielin 2019: 139.

³²⁵ Boersman 1985: 156.

³²⁶ Van Aken 1949:246; Heres 1982: 543; Boersman 1985: 156-160; Muntasser 2003: 139. Heres noted that a 'bench' located in Room 22 was installed in the 6th century.

³²⁷ Murer 2022.

³²⁸ Muntasser 2003: 140-143.

³²⁹ Boersamn 1965: 418; Muntasser 2003: 155.

The entrance to this space is marked by three arches supported by squared columns and stylobates in white Luni marble (Fig. 48).³³⁰ Thresholds in *Pavonazzetto* and *Africano* are also noted.³³¹ Further, thresholds in white stone are located on the doorway between Rooms 2 and 3 while a small rectangular pool in Room 9 utilises four white marble panels. The remaining *opus sectile* (Type 1) is limited to a small room, Room 10 at the back of the house, identified by Michielin as a reception room (Fig. 49).³³² The range of stone used for the *opus sectile* is, like the *Domus dei Pesci*, more limited than that on display at the *Domus del Ninfeo* and *Domus di Amore e Psiche* with only three varieties of coloured stone used along with white/grey typologies.³³³ However, the constraint applied to the range of colours does not imply a kerbed decorative scheme. Indeed, the *domus' opus sectile* is carefully arranged and, as a consequence, produces an elegant result. The pattern, which places *Giallo Antico* at the heart of the design sees other typologies used to border the Numidian stone. Consequently, *Giallo Antico* is the most used of the coloured stones with *Cipollino Verde* and *Greco Scritto* scarcer. This pattern suggests that in this instance the white/grey stones, along with *Cipollino Verde*, are interchanged with little importance given to their specific arrangement.

Domus dei Dioscuri

A medium-sized house, located to the west of the city next door to the *Domus del Ninfeo*, the *Domus dei Dioscuri* is best known for its eponymous polychrome mosaic of the Dioscuri located in Room H (Fig. 50). Other polychrome mosaics are located in Room I and Room L. Originally built in c. AD 100, the construction of walls in both *opus latericium* and *opus vittatum* added in c. 500 AD speaks to a long period of occupation.³³⁴

The most noteworthy feature of the structure, beyond the mosaics and gardens, are two pools used for bathing: a shallow apsidal pool as well as a circular plunge pool (Fig. 51). Van Aken has noted that the *Domus dei Dioscuri* is one of only two homes to feature private bathing facilities.³³⁵ Both the pools are accessed via Room O to the south-west of the house and are decorated in a uniform fashion utilising white and grey stone which includes the use of Proconnesian marble and *Greco Scritto*. While the stone from the larger apsidal pool is especially fragmentary the plunge pool has retained much of its Late Roman cladding. Here, the decoration consists of smooth narrow panels along with the addition of moulded elements. Aside from the pools, stone is employed as thresholds with six completed with white stone, two in *Greco Scritto* and a further two in grey stone.

Domus del Tempio Rotondo

³³⁰ Murer 2022: 156.

³³¹ Marking and mouldings on the thresholds indicates that they were used for game playing.

³³² Michielin 2019: 139. Michielin also observes that like the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* and *Domus del Ninfeo*, the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* was originally constructed over two floors.

³³³ One of the identifiable stone typologies is *Bigio*, a dark grey stone. This is included in the white/grey category.

³³⁴ Van Aken 1949: 248; Heres 1982: 479; Tighe 2004:229. On *opus vittatum* in the Late Roman period see Brienza and Delfino 2006: 107; Astolfi 2021:209.

³³⁵ Aken 1949: 248 Has suggested that the existence of these baths, both in the *Domus dei Dioscuri* and other *domus*, is connected to the cessation of public baths in the city. Heres 1982: 393-401; 515; 549; etc has shown that public baths in the city continued to be maintained into the fifth and sixth centuries. Thus, the relationship between newly constructed private baths and public baths is unlikely to be as direct as Aken postulates.

A *domus*, situated to the south of the city, sits among a number of public buildings. Like other *domus*, the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo* had multiple stages of construction. Both Heres and Pensabene agree the first phase was at the end of the 3rd century (Fig. 52; Fig. 53). Pensabene notes further that a second phase of development was carried out during the second half of the 4th century AD.³³⁶

A rectangular structure, for which Becatti labelled as 'homogenous', the *domus* is dominated by a large central courtyard (Room D and Room C). A U-shaped corridor around this central space leads to a number of smaller rooms which are located to the east and west.³³⁷ Richly decorated, the *domus* utilised both mosaic and marble décor. Indeed, precisely arranged geometric black and white mosaics decorated the flooring of the wide corridor that enclosed the central courtyard atrium.³³⁸ The nature of the marble remains, which are severely damaged by weathering, provides some challenges. Nevertheless, enough stone remains to draw some meaningful conclusions.

The marble used here comes in a number of assemblages; the decorative fountain and flooring in Room C; the decorated stairs leading from Room C to Room D; the *opus sectile* in Room D; the wall revetment used throughout the main corridor; and, the revetment and *opus sectile* used in small private rooms N, M, and O. In addition, other architectural remains are evident: two columns which are beside the entrance to Room D and a marble threshold marking the entrance to Room N. The majority of the remaining stone in Room D is currently unidentifiable by eye: severe weathering has blackened the stone to such an extent that only a large green disk in *Moschinata Verde*, which provides the centre point of a tidily arranged design in the centre of the room, is identifiable by eye. Usefully, Pensabene has been able to identify the stone typologies used noting that this room was home to a range of stylistic designs used side-by-side.³³⁹

The north-east corner of the room features a number of hexagonal tiles in white and grey stone, with the exception of a single tile in *Breccia Corallina*. In the south, there is a pattern formed of rectangle slabs in white, grey and polychrome stones: *Africano*, *Cipollino*, *Pavonazzetto*, and *Portasanta*.³⁴⁰ On the west side, rectangle slabs in white and grey typologies are used.³⁴¹ A similar pattern is observed in the north of the room where white and grey stones are employed. Some large slabs of granite are also located in this part of the room. As noted, the central design featured a large sphere in green stone. It is surrounded by a strip in *Giallo Antico* which forms a border. Additional elements of *Greco Scritto* were featured too. The range of patterns employed in this room makes a concerted decorative scheme difficult to establish. Broadly speaking, it seems that white and grey typologies dominate much of the floor even if some polychrome lithotypes are present. Further, we can say that the central motif, with its disk of *Moschinata Verde* and *Giallo Antico* border, sees the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo* utilise a pattern employed elsewhere in the city (Fig. 54). The *Domus dei Pesci*, the *Domus del Ninfeo*, the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, and the *Porta Marina Domus* all employed a large disk of green stone, surrounded by *Giallo Antico*, at the centre of their decorative schemes.

³³⁶ Heres 1982:379; Pensabene 2007: 493.

³³⁷ Becatti 1949: 267.

³³⁸ Only the mosaic on the western side of the corridor remains intact. However, it is surely likely the entire corridor was decorated in this way.

³³⁹ Pensabene 2007: 494-495.

³⁴⁰ Quantities not listed.

³⁴¹ Luna marble, Proconnesian marble, Thasian marble (*Marmo Tasio*), Bardiglio, and *Greco Scritto* marble.

The most intact assemblages in the *domus* are the decorated pool in Room C and stairs leading from Room C to Room D. For the flooring in Room C we once again rely on Pensabene's work in order to establish what lithotypes were used: a simple design of rectangle panels in an array of stone types including Proconnesian marble, *Pavonazzetto*, *Bardiglio*, *Greco Scritto*, as well as white lithotypes identified as Luna and Pentelic marble.³⁴² The central pool is decorated in much the same way as the flooring: clad entirely in white and grey stone with the exception of two elements of *Cipollino Verde*. The pool's plinth employs the same decorative scheme, minus the green stone. The stairs, by contrast, employ a range of polychrome stone typologies, with pieces of *Cipollino Verde*, *Giallo Antico*, *Greco Scritto*, *Portasanta*, featuring.

The remaining wall revetment is limited. However, it seems likely that the main corridor to the west of the building was outfitted in a substantial amount of white marble revetment as indicated by fragments that line the entire length of the wall. In Room O there are very limited remains of *Cipollino Verde* wall revetment.

Domus del Protiro

Like the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria*, *Domus del Protiro* is also located on *Semita dei Cippi*. Built during the second or 3rd century AD, as a 'court-peristyle', with modifications taking place until the 4th, or possibly early 5th, century (Fig. 55).³⁴³ The house is noted for its lavish central courtyard and a large room to the back of the building as well as its large fourth-century entrance. The *domus*' monumental entrance constitutes a pediment in white marble flanked by two grey columns with white capitals and bases. Other architectural elements in the house include two grey semi-circle *timpani* with white architraves. Additionally, a single column of white/grey granite complete with a white capital and white marble base is located on the threshold of Room 13. The threshold of Room 24 is made of *Cipollino Verde*. The non-architectural collection of marble here is relatively unorthodox in its composition with several assemblages indicating few signs of a measured decorative scheme. This situation is most stark in the application of floor panelling in Room 12. The room, which features a discoloured central disk in marble, encased in a square of a lighter coloured lithotype. Geometric designs, which are somewhat inconstant in size, surround this central disk.³⁴⁴ In 1994, Flower-Gyepesi observed that the central square in these designs was lighter than the rectangles that enclosed them. Indeed, Flower-Gyepesi has speculated that the rectangles were either grey, *Portasanta*, or *Cipollino Verde*. In the current state of preservation it is difficult to establish the veracity of this claim, although it is credible. In addition to this main design, the flooring also includes a range of a seemingly unsuitable selection of marble squeezed into a space largely composed of a black and white mosaic. The design in question includes a single piece of red marble, possibly *Rosso Antico*, boarded by four white/grey elements: three slabs of white marble, in different shapes, as well as a single piece of Alabaster *Cotognino* which sits close by (Fig. 56). Like the stone in the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo*, other examples of marble remains in the building suffer from particularly severe weathering and so there is some difficulty in drawing a precise conclusion. Indeed, the patterns on the flooring of Room 13 indicate that *opus sectile* had been used, however, the state of preservation makes it

³⁴² Pensabene 2007: 494.

³⁴³ Van Aken 1949: 146;151; Heres 1982: 531; Stöger 2007: 362.

³⁴⁴ Flower-Gyepesi 1994: 60.

impossible to identify the typologies by eye (Fig. 57). Further marble revetment in white marble is fragmentary and limited to what seems to have been a pool in Room 32.

Porta Marina Domus

Home to the most spectacular *opus sectile* remains in Ostia, the *Porta Marina domus* is located to the far west of the city (Fig. 58). The building is a large complex, looking out towards the sea. Organised around an L-shape peristyle, the *domus* included two reception halls and a large *aula* where the decorative marble was found.³⁴⁵ Excavated in 1938, 1940, and in 1959 the *opus sectile* was finally restored and exhibited in the Museo Nazionale dell'Alto Medioevo, in Rome, in 2006.³⁴⁶ The remains of eight columns, in various stages of repair remain at Ostia

Unlike other *domus* in the city, the function of the building has been subject to some controversy no doubt due, in part, to the building being abandoned in 395 AD before ever being completed.³⁴⁷ Becatti and Meiggs interpreted the building as the new seat of a Christian guild in the city and thus destroyed by pagans during the reign of the usurper Eugenius in AD 393.³⁴⁸ Zanker, in opposition, has interpreted the building as pagan, leading to the destruction at the hands of Christians during a stage of pagan revival.³⁴⁹ However, Frazer, in writing in 1971, asserted that the building was in fact a *domus*. As Frazer notes, the seaside location combined with the fact that the building featured elements similar to other domestic structures in Ostia indicate that *Porta Marina Domus* was most likely a residential buildings.³⁵⁰ Recent scholarship seems to side with Frazer's position with both Pensabene and Kiilerich outlining their belief that the building was a *domus*.³⁵¹

The marble wall and floor panelling here is extensive (Fig. 59). Moreover, its reconstruction means much of it is in an excellent state of repair. The *opus sectile* flooring, which is similar to the design used for the flooring in Room C of the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, has a central pattern which is concentrated around disks in *Porfido Rosso* and *Serpentino*, set at regular intervals between *Serpentino peltae*. Despite the spectacular effect, only four marble typologies are used; *Giallo Antico* is dominant. Concerning the revetment, the back wall is complete in *Giallo Antico* and is decorated in such a way as to imitate brickwork and architectural arches. Additional sections in marble *reticulatum*, made up of *Serpentino*, *Pavonazzetto*, and *Rosso Antico* fill in the space around the ersatz brickwork. The orthostats course, which sits to the east and west of the back wall are complete in several stone types, with *Serpentino*, *Giallo Antico*, and *Pavonazzetto* being the most conspicuous.

The lateral walls, which feature the most ornate decoration, are dominated by the same typologies noted elsewhere in the space. With the exception of minor variations, both the east and west walls are identical. The lower part of the walls are dominated by rectangle panels in *Giallo Antico*, with additional detailing in *Porfido Rosso*, *Serpentino*, *Pavonazzetto*, and white stone (Fig. 60; Fig. 61). The detailing here mostly consists of further *peltae* and

³⁴⁵ Kiilerich 2014: 169.

³⁴⁶ Kiilerich 2014: 169.

³⁴⁷ Zanker 1995: 315; Boin 2013: 60; Kiilerich 2014: 171.

³⁴⁸ Becatti 1969: 71.

³⁴⁹ Zanker 1995: 315-317. The conflict in opinion is based upon a reading of an *opus sectile* portrait on a wall in the *domus*: a bearded man, dressed in white, is noteworthy since he is adorned with a nimbus. Becatti and others have identified the man as Christ while Zanker claims he is simply a teacher.

³⁵⁰ Frazer 1971: 319-320; 324.

³⁵¹ Pensabene 2007: 526; Kiilerich 2014: 171. Kiilerich has noted that a natural disaster may well have led to the abandonment of the building.

disks as well as an unidentified youth and the contested figure of Christ. This lower section is divided from the upper part with a *rinseau* frieze composed mostly of *Serpentino* with embellishment in *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto* and white stone. The upper part of the walls are noteworthy for their depictions of hunting animals: a tiger on the west wall, and a lion on the east. *Giallo Antico* is most prominent, being used on both predators as well as a deer. Grey marble, for the depiction of the lion's victim, as well as *Serpentino* are widely employed as well.³⁵²

Housing in Lombardy

As noted in Chapter I, Milan's role as an imperial capital (AD 268-402) led to the construction of a number of opulent public and, pertinently for this chapter, private buildings. Indeed, we are reminded of Ausonius who tells us that the prosperous city of Milan was complete with large mansions during this period. However, despite this, Milan's continuous evolution over the centuries means that there is limited available evidence for the Roman houses in the city. As a consequence, this study instead evaluates the three large villas located on the edge of Lake Garda, to the east of the city. Like the *domus* at Ostia, the villas discussed here, at *Faustinella S. Cipriano*, *Desenzano del Garda*, and *Toscolano*, all utilised marble panelling and *opus sectile* along with other modes of decoration like statuary, mosaics, and paintings.³⁵³ Table 2 lists the marble used in Milan and around Lake Garda.

Desenzano del Garda

The villa at *Desenzano del Garda* is located near the south-west shoreline of Lake Garda and was originally built at the end of the 1st century BC. At the beginning of the 4th century AD the villa was completely reconstructed; the villa was abandoned early in the 5th century AD (Fig. 62)³⁵⁴ A series of excavations, since the late 19th century and the early 20th century, revealed the remains of large parts of the villa demonstrating that it was equipped with a number of large rooms, many of which were ornately decorated with rich mosaics in both figurative and geometric designs, wall paintings, marble panelling and, most famously, an array of marble statuary.³⁵⁵ The residential part of the villa seems to have been composed of several structures: A, B, and C. Sector A, the largest, is centred around a rectangular peristyle with a three-apsed *triclinium* on the western edge and an octagonal vestibule on the eastern edge, which provided access to an internal garden. As for Sector B, we can see that it was marked by a west-facing apsidal hall along with some other smaller rooms. Although not much of the original marble from Sector C remains, signs of the hypocaust in it suggest that it was part of a residential bathing facility.

The villa which may have been associated with the Decentii family, who were active in Milan's imperial court during the 340's, was complete with extensive decoration.³⁵⁶ Mosaics, formed a large part of the decorative scheme. Composed of geometric designs, along with figural depictions of agricultural pursuits and domesticity, the mosaics were largely

³⁵² Kiilerich 2014: 175 identifies the grey stone as *Bigio Venato*.

³⁵³ Bugini et al. 2018: 231.

³⁵⁴ Roffia 1994: 29; Brogiolo & Chavarria Arnau 2018; Bugini et al 2018: 231. Finds from the villa at *Desenzano del Garda* were first publicised at the Exhibition of Prehistoric Archaeology and Fine Arts held in Brescia in 1875.

³⁵⁵ Brogiolo & Chavarria Arnau 2018; Bugini et al. 2018: 231.

³⁵⁶ Scott 2004: 46.

polychrome and most likely completed during the villa's final decorative phase. In addition, colourful wall paintings and architectural decorations, in marble, were present too. What is more, the villa at Desenzano was home to the largest known collection of marble statuary of any private villa in Italy.³⁵⁷ As for marble panelling and *opus sectile*, the surviving evidence is somewhat limited. Confined to Sector B and Sector C, no in-depth quantitative assessment of the marble here has been carried out. Instead, for this site, we only have an approximate range of the various thickness of each lithotype present. However, despite this setback, and Bugini's characterisation of the early excavations as 'unscientific', it has been possible to attribute the excavated marble to a period of redevelopment in the late 4th and early 5th centuries AD.³⁵⁸ Moreover, what is clear is that the polychrome marble used here was extensive in its variety, with 12 different typologies employed. Furthermore, the singular example of *in situ* marble remaining in the villa, located in a small room to the north-east of Sector B's apsidal hall, provides some further insight. Here partial remains of the flooring are complete in white, dark grey, with a small amount of detailing in *Portasanta* which culminates in a neat interlocking *lozenge* pattern (Fig. 63). This distinct pattern is similar to that utilised in the *Domus del Ninfao* in Ostia as well as in the early Christian Basilica in Milan, the *Basilica di Santa Tecla*. In both of these instances, *Portasanta* is not present, but the overall appearance of the design is similar.

Villa at Toscolano

The villa at Toscolano is located on the western shore of Lake Garda, just north of the Roman colony at *Pagus Salodium* (modern Salò). The villa was built in the 1st century BC and inhabited until its abandonment in the 5th century AD (Fig. 64).³⁵⁹ Excavated in the late 20th century, the remains of the building occupy a large space, covering an area of 200 meters. This large complex included three spacious rooms complete with a portico that marked the edge of a large pool, measuring 47 x 6 meters wide.³⁶⁰

The assemblages taken from the Toscolano villa are recorded in a similar fashion to those at Desenzano with the range in thickness of each lithotype provided. However, in this instance, there is no indication from where or how the marble was deployed. We can only really be sure of the variety of the stone used. Limited as this is, we can nevertheless use the data we have to compare the typologies utilised, with the other villas and buildings in this study. As Table 2 indicates, the variety of typologies used across each of the villas in this study is informative in that it shows quite clearly that not only a similar range of lithotypes were employed, 12 in total, but also that a number of typologies are present in all three villas studied here. Thus, as the consistency in the decorative approach suggests, to some degree, there was a localised trend in the area. The point is explored further in Chapter IV.

Faustinella - San Cipriano

The most southern of the villas studied, the villa at *Faustinella - San Cipriano* sits a few kilometres inland from Lake Garda (Fig. 65) As it stands, there is some dispute concerning the

³⁵⁷ Brogiolo & Chavarria Arnau 2018.

³⁵⁸ Corlàita 1992: 5; Roffia: 1994; Corlàita 1998: 200-203; De Franceschini 1998: 147-151; Bugini et al. 2018: 231.

³⁵⁹ Roffia & Portulano 1997: 228.

³⁶⁰ Bugini et al. 2008: 231.

period of occupation at the villa. Although there is broad agreement that the villa at *Faustinella - San Cipriano*, like the villas at *Desenzano del Garda* and at *Toscolano*, was originally constructed in the 1st century BC, the abandonment stage remains uncertain. Bugini promotes the thesis that it was abandoned in the early 5th century AD.³⁶¹ Roffia and Simonotti, however, have concluded that the villa underwent a distinct period of decline before finally being abandoned in the 7th century AD.³⁶² Whatever the case may be, it is certain that the villa was subject to several stages of redevelopment and construction prior to its final abandonment.

Excavations of the villa were first carried out in the 1990's, revealing a villa which occupies a rectangular area, of around 50x35 meters, with two identifiable apsidal rooms based around a central yard.³⁶³ The function of the southernmost apsidal space, Room K, has, so far, not been conclusively identified. However, given that the room is centrally located and that it features an especially large proportion of marble Roffia has suggested that it was probably a prestigious *triclinium*.³⁶⁴ Thanks to the remains of the hypocaust system, it has been possible to positively identify the remains of the other apsidal room, Room E, as a private bath space. Here, along with fragments of marble, the *in situ* remnants of polychrome mosaic remain. Similarly, in two other rooms, Room C and D, located directly to the north of the bathing space, there remain *in situ* fragments of mosaic work on the floor.³⁶⁵ Given the proximity and consistent decorative theme it may well be the case that these rooms were also part of the bathing complex.

Concerning the use of decorative stone, the marble assemblage from the villa at *Faustinella-San Cipriano* indicates that marble panelling and *opus sectile* was employed across the villa since out of the six rooms identified by Roffia, five have been shown to have exhibited marble.³⁶⁶ However, in terms of the overall quantity, the amount of stone is limited with only 77 individual elements in polychrome lithotypes recorded. Another 36 elements in a range of white and grey lithotypes are also present (Table 3).³⁶⁷ With this in mind, two possible conclusions are available: 1) the villa was richly ornamented with vast amounts of marble, which have subsequently been lost; 2) small amounts of marble were used across the villa and supplemented with other decorative modes. With the evidence at hand, it is impossible to draw a definitive conclusion. However, what Table 4 indicates is that *Giallo Antico* and *Cipollino Verde* featured in four and five rooms respectively, more than any other stone type. If we couple this information with Table 3, which demonstrates that *Giallo Antico* (24) and *Cipollino Verde* (16) had the highest number of individual fragments, with the exception of *Rosso Antico* (24), we get the impression that a defined colour scheme was employed within the villa.

On the precise deployment of the marble, the study carried out by Bugini and Folli has identified much of the marble as 'slabs'.³⁶⁸ This seems to suggest that the marble was utilised either as paving or as veneers used for wall décor but the nature of the material means that it is impossible to distinguish the two with any degree of certainty: a flat sheet of marble could

³⁶¹ Bugini et al. 2018:231; Roffia 2007:44; Simonotti 2007:61.

³⁶² Simonotti 2007:61.

³⁶³ Simonotti 2007:18; Bugini et al. 2018:231.

³⁶⁴ Roffia 2007: 44.

³⁶⁵ Bugini et al. 2018 states that marble is located only in Room C, D and E. However, in Bugini and Folli's monograph the data clearly outlines that marble is found in a number of other rooms.

³⁶⁶ Bugini and Folli 2007b:73.

³⁶⁷ Bugini and Folli has separated the white marble into fine and medium grain types.

³⁶⁸ *Lastra* and *lasri* have been translated as 'slabs' rather than panels (*panello* and *panelli*).

work just as well on the floor as it does on the wall.³⁶⁹ Indeed, since all but one of the elements uncovered are less than 3cm thick they possibly could just as easily be applied to the walls as to the floors. Furthermore, the vast majority of the slabs detailed in this study show none of the hallmarks used to help identify the particular use of the stone in question. An exception here are three panels of *Bigio Antico* which are complete with pinholes used to attach the elements to the wall. Beyond, these slabs some listels can also be precisely located. The lithotypes used in these instances are *Settebasi*, *Serpentino*, and *Rosso Antico*. As Table 3 shows, listels in *Rosso Antico* are found in two of the villa's rooms: Room F and Room K. A single listel in *Serpentino* is also recorded in Room K. The combination of red and green stone types has already been noted in a number of *opus sectile* designs in *domus* from Ostia. However, the combination of the red and green stone on the walls is unique to this villa.

The evidence for *opus sectile* in this villa is limited with only five elements in total identified as shaped fragments; three different lithotypes are attested. Three *Giallo Antico* elements are recorded: two pieces are described as very thick and 'rectangular shaped' while the third is rhombic.³⁷⁰ In addition, a further rhombus-shaped piece of *Africano* and a single piece of 'veined white' marble have been observed.

Housing in Apulia

Late Roman Apulia was an uneven economic zone. As Arthur has noted, some of Apulia's important cities floundered during this time. *Curiales*, who had governed the cities, left for the countryside while the magistrates who remained had little in the way of executive power.³⁷¹ However, at the same time, trade and commerce continued: Apulia's renowned wool trade remained healthy and trade in amphora from western Asia Minor flourished, far outstripping the trade, which arrived in the ports of the Tyrrhenian sea.³⁷² As Chapter V shows, the influence of the Church in urban centres saw large-scale urban construction, and a subsequent degree of prosperity. Elites constructed and reconstructed their villas. Down to the time of the Romano-Gothic war, villas in the region became increasingly grand. A case in point is the large villa of *Piano di Carpino* at Avicenna (modern Foggia) which was developed from a modest Late Republican villa into a larger, more substantial, building in the 2nd or 3rd century.³⁷³ In the 4th century, the villa was subject to a second phase of redevelopment which saw a large apsidal hall constructed. A similar cycle of development followed by redevelopment is noted at the Imperial period villa at Porto Saturo, near Tarentum. A large villa, it is noteworthy for having a grand *triconch* which has been dated to the late 3rd or very early 4th century.³⁷⁴ The villa at *Masseria Cioccitti*, in Lucania, was invested with a similarly

³⁶⁹ Bugini & Folli 2007b: 74 identify *Greco Scritto* as forming part of the wall decoration simply on the basis that the piece in question is small. On the difficulties connected with distinguishing between slabs: Bugini & Folli 2007b: 72. Here it has been observed that since slabs of different thickness were used side by side both on the floor and for walling meaning that in most cases the thickness of a fragment cannot clarify where or how it was employed. Furthermore, since the fragments that compose this assemblage are very small the tell-tale sign of pin holes, often used to attached revetment to wall, are non-existent.

³⁷⁰ Bugini and Folli 2007b: 71

³⁷¹ Arthur 2006: 395-396; Small & Small 2022: 262.

³⁷² Arthur 2021: 453-456.

³⁷³ Gualtieri 2018: 163.

³⁷⁴ Sfameni 2004: 159-161.

large *triconch*.³⁷⁵ At Faragola, in northern Apulia, southeast of Foggia, another grand villa followed a similar cycle.

Faragola

The villa at Faragola is located in territory of Ascoli Satriano (*Ausculum*), in the province of Foggia, on the Carapella valley (Fig. 66). The villa was near the *Via Aurelia Aeclanesis* and the *Via Herdonitana* and so was connected to nearby urban centres.³⁷⁶ The site was first settled by Daunian inhabitants (4th - 3rd centuries BC), it was later re-established as a Roman farmhouse (1st century BC to 3rd century AD), a Late Roman villa (4th - 6th centuries AD) and, lastly, an early medieval village (7th - 8th centuries AD). During this later phase, the site was characterised by small houses, workshops, and some tombs before being abandoned during, or just after, the 8th century. This all testifies to an exceptionally long-lasting occupation of the site.³⁷⁷

Although partially excavated in the 1990s, it was not until 2001, and then in 2004 and 2005, that the first systematic campaigns were complete. The first study in the 1990s revealed that the structure had been decorated with both marble paving and mosaics. However, it was also concluded that the building had been a religious centre. It was not until the campaigns of the early 2000s revealed that the building had in fact been a villa, which probably belonged to a rich senatorial family; perhaps the *Cornelii Scipiones Orfiti*.³⁷⁸ Monumentalised during the Late Roman period, the villa was a rough L shape structure. To the north of the villa, and of particular interest, is a monumental *cenatio* which was complete with a rare masonry constructed *stibadium*, in a semi-circle shape, which was adorned with marble decorated panels and a decorated fountain.³⁷⁹ Entered from the north, the *cenatio* has a rectangular plan and measures 9.60m long with a width of 6.80m (Fig. 67). The floor was on three levels with a sunken centre.³⁸⁰ The walls were complete with niches and openings which Volpe contends provided space for flower arrangements; two porticoes were connected to the room via secondary entrances. To the south of the *cenatio* several other rooms are located. Most of these are smaller rooms, of varying sizes, and have been provisionally identified by Volpe as 'service rooms'.³⁸¹ To the southwest of the *cenatio* was a large *balneum* which occupied multiple rooms and employed a great deal of marble.

The reoccupation of the villa in the 7th century, following the abandonment of the Late Roman villa, was preceded by a period of systematic spoliation which saw the recycling of roofing and plumbing materials, furniture, and walling and flooring decoration. As Gliozzo notes, in this respect, Faragola is not dissimilar to other villas in southern Italy and the western provinces.³⁸² However, despite the loss, there was significant evidence from Faragola that testifies to the conditions within the villa during the Late Roman period. Since 2010, Gliozzo,

³⁷⁵ Lippolis 2006: 49-51;89.

³⁷⁶ Volpe et al. 2004: 127.

³⁷⁷ Santagostini et al. 2008: 451; Fiorentino et al. 2010: 1084; Gliozzo et al. 2010: 389; Laurenti et al. 2010: 119; Volpe et al.: 2004; Arthur 2021: 453.

³⁷⁸ Santagostini et al 2008: 451; Volpe et al. 2004 129; Gualtieri 2018: 170.

³⁷⁹ Volpe et al. 2005: 276-277.

³⁸⁰ De Felice et al. 2007:1; Volpe et al. 2004: 129.

³⁸¹ Volpe et al. 2010a: 60.

³⁸² Gliozzo et al. 2016: 114.

and others, have been able to highlight a range of building materials, vitreous glass, *tesserae*, and marble employed in the villa.³⁸³

Marble use at Faragola was widespread. Moreover, prior to the destruction of the archaeological site, suffered in 2017, the remains were extensive. The devastating damage caused at this time means that opportunities to study the villa in further detail are limited.³⁸⁴ Fortunately, studies, particularly those led by Volpe prior to the recent destruction, were able to provide good insight into the marble employed. Although, no quantification of the stone was carried out, Volpe study managed to observe how, and where, the marble was employed and also brought attention to the range of lithotypes employed. In addition to marble, monochrome and polychrome mosaics are used throughout the villa demonstrating that marble decoration was only a single part of the overall decorative approach.³⁸⁵

The marble remains in Faragola were preserved in the *cenatio* and bathing complex. The *cenatio* had an apsidal wall to the east, which could be flooded with a sheet of water for spectacular effect, and was paved in marble slabs.³⁸⁶ The majority of the slabs were mostly in white/grey marble, alongside the limited selection of polychrome lithotypes. In addition to the slabs, three ornately decorated panels in a range of polychrome marble, in concert with a number of other materials, such as a glass-like vitreous material, in a range of colours, provided a quasi-marble *opus sectile* arrangement.³⁸⁷

On the section in front of the *stibadium*, the flooring is composed of white/grey slabs along with the inclusion of other slabs simply been identified as ‘pink breccia’, now identified as *Breccia Rosato Gargano*.³⁸⁸ A single slab of *Cipollino Verde* belonging to the *cenatio* has also been excavated.³⁸⁹ The use of large marble slabs does not replicate the precision of the *opus sectile* patterns but the decorative style does show an attempt to create a cohesive arrangement, particularly in the centre of the room where the white/grey stones and polychrome stone were laid on the floor one after the other in a consistent fashion.³⁹⁰ To the east of the room, behind the *stibadium*, the flooring is made up of a section of fragmented polychrome lithotypes that were most likely spoliated material, as per an inscription on some stone that references the Augustan period.³⁹¹ The fragmentary elements utilised here provide an alternative decorative slant to the more elegant panels displayed in front of the *stibadium*.

Volpe has reasoned that the homogeneously arranged slabs of white/grey and *Breccia Rosato Gargano* were used in front of the *stibadium* because it was part of the room that visitors saw the most. Consequently, more care was taken to provide an exact decorative approach in this part of the room than the area behind the *stibadium*, where a diverse selection of elements in terms of lithotypes and the dimensions of the individual fragments, was employed. This approach, however, is formed on the basis of two assumptions: firstly, it

³⁸³ On building materials: Gliozzo et al. 2015; On glass, Santagostino Barbone et al. 2008; Gliozzo et al. 2016. On *tesserae*, Gliozzo et al. 2012; On marble, Gliozzo et al. 2010.

³⁸⁴ De Felice 2018: 155-156.

³⁸⁵ Volpe et al. 2010b: 222; 225-227.

³⁸⁶ Volpe et al. 2004: 128.

³⁸⁷ Santagostino Barbone et al. 2008: 451-473; Gliozzo et al 2010: 389-415; Laurenti et al. 2010. Gasparini 2022 The use of glass sectile had originated in Ptolemaic Egypt and Palestine before spreading west to Rome. In the Imperial period glass sectile used alongside marble was a customary decorative feature. This trend continued into the Late Roman period: Freestone et al. 2002; Saguí 2008; Gasparini 2022.

³⁸⁸ De Felice et al. 2010: 189-187.

³⁸⁹ Gliozzo et al. 2010: 410.

³⁹⁰ De Felice et al. 2010: 186.

³⁹¹ Volpe et al. 2010b: 224-229; 2004; 141.

suggests that the owner of the villa, who has invested a great deal into the construction and remodelling of the building, was happy for a substantial part of the dining hall to be decorated without much consideration, as an afterthought; secondly, Volpe works on the assumption that homogeneity is the principal aspiration when it comes to decorating a space with marble. Instead, it is surely the case that whoever commissioned the villa valued the change in the decorative register that the area behind the *stibadium* affords: the contrast between homogeneity displayed on the western sides of the room and the heterogeneity of the eastern side may well have provided a striking visual effect. In a study carried out in 2003, Hansen advocated for the intentional use of heterogeneous designs in Late Roman architectural decoration.³⁹² Hansen, and earlier studies by Brenk and Waelken, have shown that in Rome public buildings, churches in particular, used an array of reused lithotypes and architectural elements with no attempt to hide the fact.³⁹³ Similarly, in Ostian domestic buildings evidence for a partiality towards heterogeneity is also present. A number of *domus* such as the *Domus del Protiro*, the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo*, and the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* all employ a heterogeneous approach at some point. We should not consider, therefore, the use of fragmentary polychrome lithotypes as an economic decision, nor does it play second fiddle to the main decorative performance. Instead, we should view the use of heterogenic designs, alongside more consistent applications, as working in concert in an articulate decorative approach.³⁹⁴

The outward-facing wall of the *stibadium*, i.e. the front facing wall, was richly adorned: three, carefully arranged perpendicularly inserted panels, which were framed by a band of *Cipollino Verde* displayed a range of marble lithotypes, carefully positioned.³⁹⁵ The panels to the left and right of the *stibadium* wall are dominated by a central *tondo* which themselves were placed in the middle of a *Cipollino Verde* rhombus. Although only one *tondo* survives, and it is fragmented, it is possible to identify a carving, in light relief, depicting a barefooted woman dancing, while facing a snake which hovers above a *cista*.³⁹⁶ An excavated fragment belonging to the *tondo* revealed that the dancing woman was wearing a *kalathiskos*, a Greek headdress made of woven reeds. Volpe has tentatively identified the *tondo* as an *oscilla*, dated to the 1st century AD, and therefore possibly demonstrative of pagan piece of art being reemployed in a Late Roman domestic context.³⁹⁷ Besides the *tondo*, smaller *tesserae* elements in white marble, glass, and gold leaf are used creating a stylised impression of waves, or perhaps flames. Strips of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* and *Serpentino* complete the design. Although the northern panel no longer includes the central *tondo*, an imprint of the *tondo* remains, and it is likely that both panels were similarly arranged. Both of these panels were seemingly separated by a central panel without a *tondo*, although the damage suffered makes it hard to appreciate: the central panel only retains two fractured pieces of *Porfido Rosso* and some smaller pieces of *Cipollino Verde* and *Giallo Antico*.

As noted above, the *cenatio* floor was also complete with three intricate *opus sectile emblemata* panels. Gasparini notes that although the panels were not employed on the walls

³⁹² Hansen 2003:13.

³⁹³ Brenk 1987; Waelken 1999: 567; Hansen 2003.

³⁹⁴ De Stefano 2015.

³⁹⁵ Volpe et al. 2004:135.

³⁹⁶ In the Greek tradition a *cista*, or *cistella*, were associated with mystery cults and often contained serpents, as depicted here. See, Voss 1979.

³⁹⁷ Volpe et al. 2005a: 276. Volpe points out that this phenomenon was not uncommon. In fact, depictions of *Dionysus*, in particular, as well as other images were used widely in reception and dining rooms. See, Baldini Lippolis 2001: 73.

of the room, or the *stibadium* as had previously been thought, their composition shows that they had been originally intended as wall decoration.³⁹⁸ The panels, employed bone, glass, gold leaf, marble, and a single ivory listel.³⁹⁹ All three have suffered significant damage. Nevertheless, studies carried out by Santagostini and Gliozzo, along with the conservation led by Laurenti, were able to provide significant insight. These studies highlight the various colourful vitreous *sectile* elements used with discussions concerning provenance and production. The analysis demonstrates that a range of coloured glass was favoured: blues and greens in various hues along with red, orange, yellow, and blackish elements also present. Concerning marble, *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Serpentino Porfido Rosso*, and *Breccia Rosato Gargano* are existent. In a similar fashion to the flooring décor noted in a number of contexts in this study, and the marble panels belonging to the *stibadium*, the marble is primarily arranged with a central *tondo* and border.

Panel A (120 x 64 cm) is marked by extensive use of blue, green, and yellow with additional hues in red and orange employed to a lesser extent.⁴⁰⁰ The centre of the panel is dominated by a *Serpentino* disk in a fashion similar to the decoration used in buildings across Late Roman Italy. Fragmented strips of *Serpentino* frame parts of the panel. Elements in *Pavonazzetto* provide a further secondary frame. Similarly, Panel B (120 x 64 cm) features a central *tondo* in *Porfido Rosso* framed with a band of *Serpentino*. Here, blue, green, orange, and yellow glass feature prominently. The third panel, Panel C (127 x 86 cm), unlike the other two, seems not to have featured a central *tondo*, and instead was marked by an arrangement of smaller, intricate, elements like concentric circles, sharp triangles, and spindles around what was presumably a large central lozenge.⁴⁰¹ The colour palette of the central design relied on the utilisation of a large amount of blue glass with smaller amounts of green glass present too. White marble is used to provide some of the small elements and unlike the other two panels it employs the local *Breccia Rosato Gargano* which was as a frame. The use of this stone indicates that, alongside a taste for fancy imported styles and materials, there was an appetite for local stone.⁴⁰² Both panels A and B are decorated with vegetal motifs and employed architectural imagery: Panel A features columns topped with capitals while the *tondo* on Panel B sits beneath an architrave. Panel C is without any architectural pattern, although features some vegetal references in the guise of carved leaves. The assessment of Santagostino and Laurenti's is that both Panel A and Panel B share technical and iconographical similarities with panels uncovered in Kenchreai, at the eastern port in ancient Corinth.⁴⁰³ Gasparini, makes no distinction between the three panels noting that they are all part of a decorative tradition that even in the Late Roman period continued to be associated with Egypt. In a recent study, Gasparini draws the connection between Kenchreai and Alexandria, in Egypt, noting that finds from Kenchreai were likely worked in an Alexandrian production centre prior to being exported to Italy and other parts of the Roman world.⁴⁰⁴ In light of this, Gasparini has concluded that Faragolan panels were either produced in Egypt or

³⁹⁸ Gasparini 2022:162.

³⁹⁹ Santagostino Barbone et al. 2008; Gliozzo et al. 2016; Gasparini 2022: 160. None of the studies concerning the panels quantify the marble lithotypes used.

⁴⁰⁰ According to Gliozzo, Panel A measures to 127x70 cm. Gasparini argues that the panel is 120x64 cm, the same as Panel B. Laurenti has both Panel A and Panel B at 137x84. Laurenti et al. 2010: 199.

⁴⁰¹ The central element, the lozenge, is now missing.

⁴⁰² Santagostino Barbone et al. 2008: 452; Laurenti et al. 2010:120; De Stefano 2015: 114.

⁴⁰³ Laurenti et al. 2010: 119; Gasparini 2022: 164.

⁴⁰⁴ Kiilerich & Torp 2018; Gasparini 2022: 157.

by craftsmen practised in the Egyptian style.⁴⁰⁵ Although the main thrust of Gasparini's study is focused on the production centre in Egypt, it is worth pondering the popularity of Egyptian-produced luxuries in Italy at this time. If nothing else, this existence of the glass and marble panels indicates that the villa at Faragola, and possibly Apulia more broadly, was connected to the wider Roman world and had the economic and cultural dexterity required to engage with current decorative approaches.⁴⁰⁶

The *balneum* in the villa was extensive with cold and hot rooms available. The decorative scheme applied here saw a large amount of marble used. Furthermore, the marble was in good condition when initially excavated. The floor of the room was complete with extensive white stone supplemented by polychrome lithotypes. The room is paved with smooth panels, 28 in total, all of the same dimensions (1.40 x 1.80 m) and placed in neat rows orientated east-west. In the middle of the room a square, measuring 1x1m, was located. Unlike the white stone, this section was made up of irregular pieces that were likely reused elements: *Cipollino Verde*; *Breccia Rosato Gargano*; along with white stone was used. Volpe has speculated that a basin or tank was set on top of this platform. Some minor signs of repair in the room have also been noted. To the north-east of the room, a small space is decorated with fragmentary pieces of *Cipollino Verde*, *Greco Scritto*, *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, different types of white stone, and even bricks were used to pave the floor. Some of the white panels are marked with inscriptions. The walls of the room were framed with a *zoccolo* in *Cipollino Verde* and with a cornice in white stone.

The second room, is decorated in largely the same way. Paved with uniform panels of white marble, identified as *Bianco Venato*, the elements are smooth and well fitted with the dimensions of the individual slabs ranging from 50-60cm in width and more diverse in length.⁴⁰⁷ The walls of this pool are marked by 15 marble panels with more or less the same dimensions, measuring c. 160x40cm. These panels are fairly thin measuring only c.1-1.5cm thick. The presence of *Cipollino Verde*, *Greco Scritto*, and *Breccia Corallina* represents a period of minor remodelling, flowing some minor damage. The *natation* seems to have been completely paved, wholly in white stone. Although only four *in situ* panels are remaining, based on traces of plaster, it seems that another 20 elements would have been in place. Like the other rooms noted, the stone here was carefully arranged, this time arranged in five rows. Concerning the walls, only small fragments of white stone have been recorded. Lots of polychrome stone used for the listels and other elements in both rooms. The ceiling of these rooms seems to have employed mosaics. In the other warm rooms, some *in situ* slabs and others that had been excavated, which relate to the building collapse, suggest that *Breccia Rosato Gargano* was used as paving and to decorate walls.

⁴⁰⁵ Santagostino Barbone et al 2008: 452; Gasparini 2022: 164. Debates concerning the location of the workshop which produced the panels is on-going. Although there is some tepid consensus that they were probably produced in Egypt, Bruneau advocated for production in Italy. Gliozzo's technical analysis, however, has proven inconclusive: 'current knowledge does not allow us to attribute the panels to specific Eastern, local, or Western workshops'. For Egypt see, Brill 1976; Volpe-Turchiano 2009; 100;175. For Italy see, Bruneau 1980: 552. On the technical analysis see, Gliozzo et al. 2010: 410. On the discussion concerning the assemblage of the panels see, Turchiano 2008.

⁴⁰⁶ Studies concerning the use of glass and marble sectile in tandem for the decoration of Late Roman panelling are limited with the focus on major centres. Rome (Crypta Balbus): Mirti et al. 2000; Mirti et al. 2001. Rome (Villa of Lucius Verres) Gasparini 2022: 148-150; Rome (The so-called Imperial Palace at Portus) 151-156. On Constantinople, Harrison & Gill 1986.

⁴⁰⁷ It is not clear if '*Bianco Venato*' refers to a specific lithotypes or is simply a description of the stone appearance.

Evidence from the *sudatio* is limited with only 1.12m of the floor preserved. Here four fragmented slabs of the *Breccia Rosato* were uncovered. Along the eastern wall there is some evidence for the heated walls being clad in *Breccia Rosato* is present. Volpe has speculated that the *calidarium* was subject to the same decorative approach: the walls here feature skirting boards in white stone while the upper parts of the wall – not preserved – may have been complete with *Cipollino Verde*, in line with the scheme adopted in the cold rooms.

In general terms, despite the lack of quantification, it has been noted that white stone and *Cipollino Verde*, along with the *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, were the most widely used polychrome lithotypes. It is certainly the case that white lithotypes along with *Cipollino Verde*, either in concert or separately, are noted in numerous bathing complexes, in the Imperial and Late Roman periods.⁴⁰⁸ More intriguingly, the use of the *Breccia Rosato Gargano* speaks to the diffusion of a local stone. De Stefano has identified the lithotype as the same used in the later 13th century *Castel del Monte* located inland, in the Apulian province of Barletta – Andria – Trani.⁴⁰⁹ The use of the local stone testifies to significant industry within the region demonstrating that in Apulia, at this time, there was the capacity to not only extract the stone but also carefully manufacture the material in order to make it suitable for the beautification of buildings.⁴¹⁰ Furthermore, Volpe has, in part, framed the wide use of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* as an economic decision. It is noted that procuring marble and arranging transportation was expensive and, consequently, the utilisation of a local stone likely reduces some of these costs. However, much of the marble used in the bathhouse was not spoliated. Indeed, Volpe himself notes that the white stone and the *Breccia Rosato* were quarried especially for the embellishment of the building.⁴¹¹ The instances where irregular fragments of spoliated polychrome lithotypes are used are limited and so reflect the wide use of newly quarried stone. With this in mind, it seems unlikely that economic factors were of primary concern given that it was surely the case that other spoliated stones were probably available and cheaper to attain.⁴¹² Indeed, the sheer extent of the villa indicates a willingness to invest heavily. Instead, the use of the *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, and the broader decorative approach, simply reflects the taste of whoever commissioned the property. What motivated these choices are more difficult to grasp.⁴¹³ However, as discussed in Chapter IV of this study, the use of white and green lithotypes in bathhouses, and other water features, was a common approach in Late Roman Italy. Equally, the use of the local *breccia* may well reflect a sense of regional pride or perhaps the owner simply liked the particular hue.

Stones use here indicates that white stone was sought and seemingly especially prized: much of the white stone used shows little sign of spoliation given that the slabs, particularly in the baths, appear to fit the space required precisely. The coloured lithotypes, however, are sometimes fragmentary which may indicate that the elements were used in

⁴⁰⁸ See page, 135-137.

⁴⁰⁹ De Stefano 2015.

⁴¹⁰ *Breccia Rosato Gargano* is attested in northern Apulia and eastern Lucania since the Imperial period. In the Late Roman period, up until the 6th century AD there is an increase in distribution in the region.

On the use and distribution of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* in the Roman period.

⁴¹¹ Volpe 2010: 189.

⁴¹² Bruno has shown, in connection with this particular breccia, that the use of local stone alongside high quality imported stone was not indicative of an economic substitute. Bruno hypothesises that it may well have been indicative of refinement. Bruno 2002: 283.

⁴¹³ De Stefano observes understanding the ideological significance of this particular lithotype is hard to establish. Nevertheless, she notes that pinkish *breccias*, regardless of provenance, were established as high status lithotypes. De Stefano 2015: 116.

another context prior to their deployment here. Indeed, although Volpe's analysis is often concerned with homogeneity it may well be the case that in Late Roman Italy clear-cut, uniform, patterns were not always prized. As discussed, examples of inhomogeneity during this time are well attested.

Summary

Despite the protestations in the sources, marble was extensively deployed in the homes of the elites. From rural villas to urban domus, marble was widely employed. In this respect, Late Roman elites, operated in the same way as their earlier Imperial counterparts. Used, alongside frescoes, mosaics, architectural elements and statuary, marble panelling was vital part of domestic décor. In this way, the domestic buildings assessed here balance well with other Late Roman Italian domestic spaces which likewise employ polychrome marble.

The evidence presented here indicates that there is little sense in the Late Roman period that investment into marble was stalling. As with bathhouses and churches, covered below, the deployment of marble goes some way in presenting Late Roman Italy as a place with a robust economic and cultural environment. In Ostia, as well as the area around Lake Garda and in Apulia, large quantities of newly quarried stone were deployed in tandem with expertly repurposed pieces of *spolia*. Further, we find local lithotypes deployed alongside imported stones. In its totality, the deployment of marble in domestic spaces speaks to continued popularity of stone.

CHAPTER IV: Baths

He who has bathed in Christ has no need of second baths.

Jerome Ep. 14. (Trans: Mierow).

Unfortunately for Jerome, public bathing showed few signs of decline in Late Roman Italy. In a tradition that stretched back centuries, inhabitants of large cities, as well as provincial towns, and rural villas made use of public and private bathing facilities well into the Late Roman period. In some instances, bathing complexes were so pervasive that they appear almost omnipresent with most neighbourhoods containing a bathhouse of some type.⁴¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, therefore, the type of public bathing complexes was varied: extensive, and ostentatious, complexes which served thousands could be situated within close proximity of minor establishments which provided for a small, sometimes select, clientele.⁴¹⁵ The commonality of the bathhouse speaks to the popularity and their enduring place in Roman culture, which I will come to below, and is highlighted by the continuous investment into such buildings; baths were expensive to build and remodel with additional costs associated with maintenance of the baths and the infrastructure they rely on high.⁴¹⁶

This chapter concerns the use of marble in three bath complexes: an urban bathhouse in the centre of an Imperial Capital, Milan; a bathhouse in a medium-sized Italian centre at Ostia; and, finally, a bathhouse in a town located in the hills above Naples, at Aeclanum. The approach, which includes a case study from the north of the Italian peninsula, central Italy, and the south, means that this study includes examples from a range of urban and geographic perspectives. This diversity ensures a fuller understanding of marble deployment in Late Roman Italy, than a study of a single site, or regional zone, allows.

Prior to introducing each case study, this chapter provides a brief outline of bathing culture during the Late Roman period primarily through an assessment of the pertinent literary sources alongside a short review of the development of bathing complexes at the time. Following this, each case study is reviewed. Each case study relies on a data compiled either by myself, individually or part of a project, or through the analysis of data studied by other colleagues and scholars. This diverse treatment of the material means that the nature of the data is not always uniform. Nevertheless, enough good material is available to draw some conclusions on the use of marble in Late Roman baths and feed this in this thesis' research questions.

Baths in the Late Roman Period

The popularity of public baths and bathing in Rome was extraordinary. Following the establishment of Roman baths around the 2nd and 1st centuries BC in Rome and Campania, bathhouses increasingly became part of life.⁴¹⁷ Indeed, baths are one of the most common types of building in Roman cities and urban spaces, more common in fact than any other type

⁴¹⁴ Maréchal 2020a.

⁴¹⁵ See, page 87.

⁴¹⁶ Janssen et al. 2017: 595-599.

⁴¹⁷ Fagan 2001: 418-422; Yegül 2010: 40.

of building, with the exception of domestic structures.⁴¹⁸ The popularity of bathhouses throughout the Imperial Roman period and into the late period is difficult to overstate, as Martial tells us: for some Romans, bathing rituals took place daily.⁴¹⁹ A review carried out by Agrippa in 33 BC shows that the city of Rome had 170 baths; by the 4th century this increased to 856⁴²⁰ with an additional 10 or 11 exceptionally large, and opulent, bath complexes termed *thermae*.⁴²¹ Beyond Rome, the Italian peninsula, Sicily, and Sardinia during this time (c. late 3rd – 7th centuries), were home to another 100 or so baths that we know of.⁴²² The *Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae* reveals that by the early 5th c. AD (c. AD 425-440) Constantinople was home to 153 baths with an additional 8 or so *thermae*. So common were baths in the city that every district was home to at least five.⁴²³ In the 6th century the Syrian chronicler John Malalas (AD 491-578) names several baths in Antioch.⁴²⁴

The composition of bathhouses across Rome's empire shows surprising similarities both in terms of their individual components as well as their general layout. A Roman bathhouse in the late 1st century AD consisted of an *apodyterium*, in which to dress and undress, a *tepidarium*, supplied with warm water to acclimatise the body to the heat, a *calidarium*, for sweating with a hot pool, and a *frigidarium* with a cool pool.⁴²⁵ In the Late Roman period baths generally maintained this standardised form.⁴²⁶ Further rooms, however, could be added depending on the requirements of owners and patrons. Indeed, some baths had a number of pools, or wet rooms, which were all heated to an ever so slightly different temperature - opposed to the more simplified version cited above.⁴²⁷ In addition, other establishments provided space for recreation, massage, body-culture, and relaxation - and for social interaction from gossip to commercial gatherings. The larger baths, even included education spaces such as libraries, lecture halls and galleries.⁴²⁸ It is also worth noting that although baths from the Late Roman time were, broadly speaking, smaller than their Imperial counterparts *thermae* actually peaked in size under the reigns of Caracalla (AD 198-217) and later Diocletian (AD 284-305).⁴²⁹ Indeed, although the Baths of Trajan (c. AD 109-530) had stood as Rome's most extensive bathing complex, extending to 112,200 m², the subsequent *Terme di Caracalla* (c. AD 212-53) and the later *Terme di Diocletian* (AD 306- c. AD 550), in Rome, reached roughly 120,000 m².⁴³⁰ In other leading western cities such as, Arles, Carthage, and Trier there were also complexes on a considerable scale.

Baths in Literature

⁴¹⁸ Laurence et al. 2012:203.

⁴¹⁹ Martial. *Spect.* 10.48

⁴²⁰ Yegül 2010: 3.

⁴²¹ DeLaine 1988: 19-22; Adam 1994: 271.

⁴²² Maréchal 2020a: 250-252. Maréchal's catalogue includes private baths, public baths and semi-public baths, such as those in church complexes.

⁴²³ *Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae*. (Trans: Mathews).

⁴²⁴ John Malalas. *Chron.* 11.14-15 (Trans: Jeffreys); Maréchal 2015: 128.

⁴²⁵ Maréchal 2020b: 149-150.

⁴²⁶ Maréchal 2020a: 183.

⁴²⁷ Maréchal 2020a: 194.

⁴²⁸ Dix 1994 288; Yegül 2003: 56; 2010: 2; Rimell 2010: 160; Ousterhout 2019: 144; Maréchal 2020: 12.

⁴²⁹ Maréchal 2020a: 183.

⁴³⁰ On the *Terme di Caracalla* see, DeLaine 1998:193; Fagan 2002:115. For the *Terme di Diocletian* see, DeForest 2013.

The centrality of bathhouses in Roman society was reflected in their appearance in contemporary literature. In Plautus (c. 254 -184 BC), who is our earliest written source for bathhouses in Italy, baths provide the backdrop for a number of his sketches, perhaps indicating that they were already by the late 3rd century BC fairly commonplace.⁴³¹ Subsequent sources, Cicero, Martial, Ovid, Horace, and later Aelius Aristides (c. AD 117 – 181) also frame the bathhouse as familiar, noting that they were generally an agreeable place to while away the hours.⁴³² Alongside this broadly positive position, there was an undercurrent of material which criticised baths and bathers. Tacitus, Martial and, most insalubriously Suetonius, remarked that baths were the setting for acts of servility and perversion; Demetrius the Cynic (c. AD 12-71) reportedly arrived at the *Thermae of Nero* in Rome on the day of its dedication and delivered a speech against those who bathed declaring them pollutants and complaining about the ‘useless expenses’ of these institutions.⁴³³ The Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 121-180) associated baths with the soft femininity of the Greeks.⁴³⁴ Indeed, there is a sense in the sources that bathhouses acted as a touchstone for debates on morality. This dynamic is most clear in the work of the conservative Seneca who draws a close relationship between the bathhouses and concern for moral depravity. He contrasts the traditional private bath of the famed republican general Scipio Africanus (235-183 BC) to his own contemporary public baths:

‘I have inspected the house [of Scipio], which is constructed of hewn stone ...the small bath, buried in darkness according to the old style, for our ancestors did not think that one could have a hot bath except in darkness. It was therefore a great pleasure to me to contrast Scipio's ways with our own...But who in these days could bear to bathe in such a fashion? We think ourselves poor and mean if our walls are not resplendent with large and costly mirrors; if our marbles from Alexandria are not set off by mosaics of Numidian stone, if their borders are not faced over on all sides with difficult patterns, arranged in many colours like paintings; if our vaulted ceilings are not buried in glass; if our swimming-pools are not lined with Thasian marble.’

Seneca. Epistulae. 8.5.(Trans Gummere).

Seneca’s presentation of the shift from traditional private baths, with their walls of ‘hewn stone’, to the extravagant, marble-clad, public bathhouse is redolent of the way he presents the use of decorative stone: indicative of Rome’s departure from her arcadian and prudent past. It is surely the case that the connection Seneca draws between baths and marble goes beyond a simple architectural or decorative observation. Instead, public baths, like polychrome stone, act as examples of lavish and corrupted modernity that led a departure away from ancient traditions.

⁴³¹ Plaut. *Asin.* 356-57; *Bacch.* 350 (Trans: Dixon); *Poe.* 705 (Trans: De Melo).

⁴³² Cic. *Pro Clu.* 141. (Trans: Hodge); Horace. *Sat.* 1.6.125; 1.4.76 (Trans: Fairclough); Ovid. *Ars. Am.* 3.15.30 (Trans: Goold & Mozley); Aristid. *Or.* 356; 366 (Trans: Trapp).

⁴³³ Mart. *Spect.* 1.59; 2.14.12.19; Philost. *V A.* 4.42. (Trans: Conybeare) Suet. *Calig.* 37; Tacitus. *Hist.* 1.72 (Trans: Moore).

⁴³⁴ M. Aur. *M L: Vulc. Gall. Vit. Av. Cass.* 5.5. (Trans: Haines).

Late Roman Literature

The textual sources relating to baths and bathhouses from the Late Roman period are ample and reflective of the continued centrality of these buildings during the period. The sheer diversity of sources hints as much.⁴³⁵ From secular and church histories, to personal correspondence, poetry and sermons, baths and bathhouses remained an important touchstone of Romanness for writers from a broad tradition. Naturally, the range of source material brings its own problems, and it is not the function of this study to analyse every response to bathhouses. Instead, this section will look to introduce the distinctive response to baths and bathing in the Late Roman period as well as providing a brief overview of marble use in baths during this time.

Even the most cursory examination of the sources pertaining to bathhouses from the Late Roman period reveals a supposed, or a perceived, relationship between baths and Rome. This dynamic is found across a variety of sources from a number of traditions and demonstrates a strong feeling of continuity between the Imperial Roman era and the later Roman period. A useful example of this comes in the form of a curious text: a hagiography of Symeon the Fool. Completed in the 7th c. AD, by the Cypriot Bishop Leontius of Neapolis, it reveals, in a usefully understated fashion, that baths continued to be perceived to be almost universal in urban contexts. In Leontius' account Symeon is imagined, after a stint in the desert, walking through the city stopping off at various buildings, one of which is a public bathhouse.⁴³⁶ As Krueger notes, in the accompanying commentary to the text, the reference to the bathhouse was likely used to engineer a sense that the fictional Emesa was a generic Late Roman city.⁴³⁷ Indeed, what is especially telling here is the unassuming reference to the baths: it is as if a city without a bathhouse cannot really be imagined.

More conventional texts also highlight the sense that an urban centre without baths is incomplete. The best-known example of this comes from Procopius (c. AD 500-570) in his description of Justiniana Prima:

'In that place also he constructed an aqueduct and so caused the city to be abundantly supplied with ever-running water. And many other enterprises were carried out by the founder of this city—works of great size and worthy of especial note. For to enumerate the churches is not easy, and it is impossible to tell in words of the lodgings for magistrates, the great stoas, the fine market-places, the fountains, the streets, the baths, the shops. In brief, the city is both great and populous and blessed in every way'

Procopius. Aed. IV, I. (Trans H. B. Dewing, G. Downey).

Here we find baths listed amongst the structures considered fundamental to the Late Roman city. Baths, like palaces, aqueducts, stoas, and walls, are all considered vital to a Roman urban centre. Furthermore, it cannot be said that this was a uniquely Eastern phenomenon. Cassiodorus, in a similar vein to Procopius, provides three examples where Theodoric restored a number of bathing facilities.⁴³⁸ In his *Ordo Urbium Nobilium*, a catalogue of famous

⁴³⁵ Foss 2002: 72; DeForest 2018: 137.

⁴³⁶ Leo. Nea. *Symeon*.149 (Trans: Krueger).

⁴³⁷ Krueger 1996.

⁴³⁸ Cassiod. *Var.* 2.39; 4.24; 8.31.

cities, Ausonius, a statesman and bishop of Bordeaux, demonstrates rather explicitly that bathhouses were associated with Roman Imperial heritage in his description of the cityscape of Milan in the 4th century:

'At Milan also are all things wonderful, abundant wealth, countless stately houses, men able, eloquent, and cheerfully disposed; besides, there is the grandeur of the site enlarged by a double wall, the Circus, her people's joy, the massy enclosed Theatre with wedge-like blocks of seats, the temples, the imperial citadels, the wealthy Mint, and the quarter renowned under the title of the Baths of Hercules; her colonnades all adorned with marble statuary, her walls piled like an earthen rampart round the city's edge: - all these as it were rivals in the vast masses of their workmanship, are passing grand, nor does the near neighbourhood of Rome abase them'

Ausonius. *Ordo Urbium Nobilium*. 7. *Mediolanum*. Trans. Evelyn-White (1919) LOEB.

Ausonius' text contextualises bathhouses in two ways. First, Ausonius frames baths in a thoroughly Imperial Roman context by placing them alongside other imperial institutions. Furthermore, as the passage from Procopius noted above makes clear, the construction and maintenance of baths during the Late Roman period was directly tied to an emperor's patronage. A sense of this is prominent in the numerous pieces of epigraphic evidence which refer to emperors restoring or rebuilding baths.⁴³⁹ In addition to Justiniana Prima, Procopius lists seven occasions in *Buildings* where Justinian either restored or constructed bathhouses during his reign.⁴⁴⁰ A sense of this dynamic is also found in Themistius' (AD 317-387) eleventh oration, which sees the rhetor hail the Western Emperor Valens as the true leader of Constantinople following his construction of baths in the city.⁴⁴¹ The consistent connection made between baths and emperor paints the construction of baths as emblematic of Rome's heritage. While there is credence to the notion put forward by Zanini, which speculates that the construction of baths by emperors maybe developed into a frequently rolled out *topos* used to demonstrate an emperor's authority, it is nevertheless correct that the relationship between the construction or reconstruction of baths and the imperial throne imbued a sense of Roman presence.⁴⁴² The second part of Ausonius' contextualisation sees the bishop include a number of buildings where an individual might find pleasure or amusement: stately homes; the theatre; and the circus. Here bathhouses continue to be presented as symbolic of a well-rounded and pleasurable life. This was encapsulated in a number of texts all of whom identified bathing as key to good health.⁴⁴³ This is encapsulated by Oribasius (c. AD 320-400), a physician who advocated for bathing as part of a healthy lifestyle, and his contemporary John Chrysostom (c. AD 354 – 407) who also encouraged bathing as part of a stimulating life; focusing on spiritual wellbeing rather than physical.⁴⁴⁴ He noted that:

'And I know indeed that there is nothing less pleasant to you than these words. But to me nothing is pleasanter. And would it were possible at our

⁴³⁹ See, Marcéhal 2020a: 227-243.

⁴⁴⁰ Procop., *Aed.* 2,6; 5,6; 6, 5; 5,2; 5, 3.

⁴⁴¹ Themistius .*Or.* 11. 151b-151b (Trans: Swain). See, Crow: 2012: 118-120.

⁴⁴² Zanini 2003: 199.

⁴⁴³ Cic. *Fam.* 14.20.1 (Trans: Shackleton-Bailey). Seneca. *Ep.* 95.22. 2. See, Fagan 1993.

⁴⁴⁴ Oribasius. *Coll. Med.* 7.2.19; 7.6.5; 8.6.32-33. See, Maréchal 2020a: 44-45.

dinner, and our supper, and our baths, and everywhere, to be discoursing about hell. For we should not then feel the pain at the evils in this world, nor the pleasure of its good things.'

John Chrysostom. Hom. Rom. 36. XVI 5 (Trans: Walker et al.).

The idea then, that bathhouses were signifiers of Romanness and the Roman state as well as spaces to find pleasure, was a well-established idea.⁴⁴⁵ The importance of bathing in the Late Roman period is such that some of the largest bathing complexes in Roman history were constructed during this period. What is more, we find is that baths were not only regarded as a fixture of Roman urban space, instead they had become a central element in forging a relationship between the contemporary Late Roman period and earlier Roman past. The sources show that baths play an increasingly symbolic role in the contemporary Late Roman period. They were the heart of the conceptual framework of a Late Roman city demonstrating from what can be termed the 'golden age of baths houses' in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD when bathhouses seemed almost ubiquitous.

Baths adorned with marble

'Constantine built from the entrance of the palace up to his forum two splendid colonnades decorated with statues and different kinds of marble, and he called the place with the colonnades the Regia. Nearby he built the basilica with the great columns and statues outside; this he called the Senaton, opposite this he set up a statue of his mother Helena as Augusta, on a low porphyry column. This place he called the Augusteion. Likewise, he completed a public-baths known as the Zeuxippus and decorated it with columns and marbles of many colours...'

John Malalas. Chronicle. 13.8.

Here John Malalas (AD 491-578), notes that Constantine's attempt to fashion Constantinople into an imperial city saw the emperor position the Baths of Zeuxippus at the centre of his new city. Constantinople's premier bathing complex, the halls sumptuously adorned with statues, mosaics, and, of course, marble veneer and panelling are easily imagined. As various passages discussed above have suggested, marble decoration remained a feature of Late Roman baths. Yet, beyond the account of Malalas, and the other textual sources, the archaeology of bathhouses in the Late Roman period demonstrates the continued utilisation of decorative stone across the Mediterranean.

Excavations of the 3rd-century AD East Baths at Gerasa (Jerash) have shown that the baths were home to a range of carved marble statues, along with architectural elements, completed in stone, extracted from Greece and Asia Minor.⁴⁴⁶ Furthermore, the late 3rd to early 4th century AD *Baths of Diocletian*, in Palmyra, was decorated with stone used for architectural elements and in statuary. Significantly, they were also ornamented with a range of coloured stone including *Cipollino Verde*, *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto*, Proconnesian

⁴⁴⁵ Jer. *Epist.* 14.10. It is also worth observing that the conflict between Jerome and John Chrysostom etc demonstrates quite clearly that Christian writers were not uniformly against baths and bathing. See, DeForest 2019 for further discussion.

⁴⁴⁶ Friedland 2001: 461-477; 2003: 413-448; Lepaon & Weber-Karyotakis 2018; Al-Bashaireh et al. 2020: 21-43.

marble, and 'Red Egyptian Granite' used in veneers and *opus sectile*.⁴⁴⁷ Other examples of marble-decorated baths in the Near East are the *Nicopolis baths* (c. AD 600-700) and *Umm el-Amr Monastery Baths* (c. AD 700-800) in Palestine.⁴⁴⁸

In Greece, we see a similar trend. Research carried out in the early 1990s demonstrated that the bath complex at Palaiochora, Southern Euboea (c. AD 450), features some marble revetment, while excavations of the Late Roman bath complex in Corinth have revealed that, along with a distinctive mosaic, the bathhouse was decorated with statuary, marble revetment in a range of coloured stone, as well as polychrome *opus sectile*.⁴⁴⁹

Moving into the Western Mediterranean, North Africa contained a number of generously decorated Late Roman baths from across the region; Chott Baths (c. 4th – 7th centuries AD), Carthage (Tunisia); *Baths of the House of Europe, Baths of the House of the Donkey*, Ciucil (Algeria); Baths of the Sitifis (c. 5th century AD), Sitifis, Algeria.⁴⁵⁰ Further north, on the Iberian Peninsula, the continuation of bathhouses, was somewhat more limited with few new bathhouses being constructed.⁴⁵¹ Nevertheless the baths found at Campo Valdes in Gijon, which were originally built in the 2nd century AD were still in use during the 4th century AD. The baths at Braga seemed to have a similar chronology while evidence from those at Segobriga have shown that white marble was employed.⁴⁵²

In Italy, as noted above, baths remained a common feature of the urban fabric in the Late Roman environment. The aforementioned 2nd century AD *Terme di Traiano* and *Terme di Caracalla* which, as noted above, were used until the middle of the 6th century AD.⁴⁵³ Studies of the former have demonstrated widespread use of polychrome veneers ranging from red porphyry, *Africano*, *Cipollino*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Giallo Antico*, *Portasanta*, *Rosso Antico* and *Serpentino* across the complex.⁴⁵⁴ Furthermore, DeLaine's detailed account of the latter highlighted both the use and importance of coloured marble in a bathing context.⁴⁵⁵ DeLaine notes the relationship between the varied stone typologies and the coloured stucco, gold and silver leaf, as well as the role played by natural light. Moreover, the keenly observed design of interlocking marble veneers, which divided the wall space into 'horizontal zones', makes clear that marble used in decorative contexts was considered in great seriousness. Maréchal has speculated that the Baths of Diocletian (AD 306 - c.650) were equally lavishly decorated. Although the remaining evidence is limited, the presence of glass *tesserae*, decoratively carved architrave blocks, porphyry columns, and the existence of imprints left by iron clamps, likely used to hold decorative veneers in place, hints at significant decorative input.⁴⁵⁶

In addition, a number of smaller public baths in Ostia, including the Baths of the Forum (c. AD 193 – 395), the *Terme dello Scheletro* (c. AD 300-600), the *Terme del Sileno* (c. AD 350)

⁴⁴⁷ Dodge 1988: 215-230; Wielgosz 2013: 319-332.

⁴⁴⁸ Marcéchal 2020a: 430; 445.

⁴⁴⁹ Kosso 1996: 201-230; Sanders: 1999: 441-480; Biers 2003: 310. Marble typologies are not noted in any of these studies.

⁴⁵⁰ Marcéchal 2016:126; 2020a: 311-333.

⁴⁵¹ Kulikowski 2004: 100.

⁴⁵² Kulikowski 2004: 101.

⁴⁵³ DeForest: 2016 40 has argued that in terms of the size at least the Baths of Trajan acted as model for the later *Terme di Caracalla*. However, surely the decorative scheme, not to mention the function of the complexes should also be considered.

⁴⁵⁴ Barker 2009: 25.

⁴⁵⁵ DeLaine: 1997: 70-78. DeLaine records that alabaster, Numidian, Docimian marble, red porphyry, Carystain marble, and grey/white marble were used here.

⁴⁵⁶ Marcéchal 2020a: 282-283.

, and the *Terme del Mitra* (c. AD 300) were all dressed in a variety of polychrome stone types ranging from *Cipollino Verde*, *Giallo Antico*, *Greco Scritto*, *Portasanta*, Proconnesian marble, *Porfido Rosso*, *Serpentino*, and *Verde Antico*.⁴⁵⁷ Similarly, sites with fewer surviving archaeological remains, in Rome, include the *Via Marciana Baths* (c. AD 300) and *The Baths of Elagabalus* (c. AD 300-700), both of which were in use from 4th c. to the 7th c. AD, and employed slabs of white marble - The Baths of Elagabalus was also decorated with a number of marble statues.⁴⁵⁸

Away from Rome, the scholarship assessing Late Roman baths in Italy is more limited. Nevertheless, studies into the Milanese *Terme Erculee*, which was continuously restored up until at least the 4th c. AD and used until the 5th c. AD, have shown that it was decorated with intricate mosaics and up to 20 different coloured and white marbles in the form of veneers.⁴⁵⁹ Similarly, in Apulia, evidence from the *San Pietro Schiavoni Baths* (c. AD 500) and *Terme Mansio* (c. AD 400) in Brindisi and the baths at Egnazia (c. AD 300-400) and at Aeclanum, which ceased to operate post c. AD 350, have revealed significant evidence for marble use at this time with a range of polychrome marble typologies being employed across the sites.⁴⁶⁰

Case Studies

Milan

As an Imperial capital, it is surely the case that Milan was a city home to a number of public bathhouses during the Late Roman period. As noted in Chapter I, Milan was, for a number of years, the capital of the Western Empire with an array of fine public buildings. Yet, despite this, few records account for public bathhouses in the city. Literary sources during the period fail to remark on the existence of any public bathhouses in the city, save the *Terme Erculee* which are noted by Ausonius.

The *Terme Erculee* (c. AD 285) are not the only extensive public baths in the city that we are aware of.⁴⁶¹ Other bathhouses, the Baths on *Via Santa Maria Valle* (c. AD 375-425); the Baths on *Via San' Maurilio* 1; and, the Baths on *Via Soncino* 2 (c. AD 400-499) have all been located.⁴⁶² Yet, our knowledge concerning these three structures is very limited: the size and the decoration in these baths is largely unknown to us. This is no doubt due to the fact that the remains of these Milanese bathhouses are concealed beneath the modern city. Despite this setback, we have some good data pertaining to the *Terme Erculee*, set out below.

Terme Erculee

⁴⁵⁷ See, page 134 further discussion on these complexes.

⁴⁵⁸ Brilli & Savin 2019; Marcéhal 2020a: 270-272.

⁴⁵⁹ Marcéhal 2020a: 266.

⁴⁶⁰ Cassano 2009: 1-20; De Simone & Russell 2019a: 359-380; De Simone & Russell 2019b: 336-340; Marcéhal 2020: 264; 292-293.

⁴⁶¹ Bugini & Folli 2005: 145; Sparavigna 2016: 2.

⁴⁶² Haug 2003: 425.

Located in the centre of Milan, the *in situ* remains of the late 3rd century *Terme Erculee* now occupy a small space between Corso Europa and Corso Vittorio Emanuele, near the present day *Piazza San Babila* (Fig. 68; Fig. 69). Following Maximinian's decision to base himself in the city, he embarked on an intense building project which saw a number of public buildings constructed. This process included the *Terme Erculee* and culminated in the redevelopment of the complex in either the late 3rd or early 4th century, the original construction probably dating to the reign of Commodus (AD 161-192), as per an inscribed stone element:

'[---c]urat(or) / [---dat(us) ab impe]ratore / [— Comm]odo Ant/[onino —]
ther[m(as) Mediolani]ens(es) [---] /---'

AE. 1974, 347⁴⁶³

Ausonius, who visited the district around 100 years after Maximinian's reconstruction, praised the quarter that housed these buildings telling his readers that even the neighbourhoods of Rome cannot outshine it.⁴⁶⁴

The complex was first partially uncovered in the early part of the 18th century; however, it was not until the period following the Second World War that the main body of the complex was revealed.⁴⁶⁵ Unfortunately, despite being one of the best examples of Late Roman public architecture in Northern Italy, much of the complex was sacrificed in order to allow for the redevelopment of public infrastructure in Milan's urban centre. Consequently, at present, the remains of the bath complex constitute little more than small sections of broken-up walling which indicate the level of damage the baths have suffered since they fell into disuse, following a fire in the 5th century.⁴⁶⁶ Nevertheless, studies carried out in 1959 and then in 1985 and 1988, have been able to shed some light on both the complex's structural and architectural character. This means that we now have a basic understanding concerning both the layout of the bath complex as well as some insight into the decorative approach within.⁴⁶⁷

The *Terme Erculee*, which spanned a total area of 14,000 m², were large but not exceptional in size: two bathing complexes from another Late Roman Imperial capital, Trier, were both larger with the 2nd century Barbara Baths and the later 3rd century *Kaiserthermen*, constructed during the reign of Constantine, measuring 20,640 m² and 15,270m², respectively.⁴⁶⁸ Likewise, large baths in Rome also dwarfed Milan's complex. Yet, despite this comparable modesty, the *Terme Erculee* featured several cold and hot pool rooms as well as a large *palaestra*. The core of the baths was based around a centrally located *calidarium*, to the south of the structure, a *tepidarium*, and a *frigidarium*. These rooms were flanked to the east and west by two *apodyteria*. The *apodyteria* were probably entered through the large open *palaestra* which was situated to the north of the structure. The *palaestra* was most likely porticoed on the east, west, and north with the entrance also to the north.⁴⁶⁹ A number of small additional rooms, located on either side of the cold and hot rooms have also been noted

⁴⁶³ Ceresa Mori 1990: 101; Maréchal 2020: 265-266; Zaccaria 2020: 151.

⁴⁶⁴ Ausoni. *Ordo. Nob. Urb.* 11. Milan. 7.

⁴⁶⁵ Bugini et al. 2018: 113.

⁴⁶⁶ Haug 2003: 424; Bugini et al. 2018: 113; Maréchal 2020: 266.

⁴⁶⁷ Haug 2003: 424; Bugini et al. 2018: 113.

⁴⁶⁸ Nelson 1993.

⁴⁶⁹ Haug 2003: 424.

although their purpose is not clear. A number of the complex's rooms were complete with apsidal walls, reflecting the architectural fashion of the time. With respect to décor, excavations of the premises have shown that mosaics and coloured plaster were a feature of the decorative approach. Additionally, a colossal torso of Hercules has also been recovered; unearthed in 1827.⁴⁷⁰ This is the only significant sculpture from the complex that has survived. Since the baths have been excavated, approximately 800 fragments of marble have been uncovered. This is only a small portion of the total stone used.⁴⁷¹

Marble Assemblage

The first study of the stone was performed by Tatti in the mid-19th century who published on the excavated material from the western *apodyterium* in 1844, a large number of small fragments belonging to the baths had been uncovered. The range of stones noted is extensive: *Africano*, *Cipollino Mandorlato*, *Cipollino Verde*, *Giallo Antico*, *Fior di Pesco*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Porfido Rosso*, *Rosso Antico*, *Sanguigno*, and *Verde Antico*, were all present.⁴⁷² A later excavation, carried out in 1959, from the same room, reportedly exposed slabs of *Serpentino*.⁴⁷³ The variety of lithotypes used here is instructive in that it shows a preference towards polychromy. Moreover, despite the fact that Tatti neglected to quantify the lithotypes used, some initial conclusions concerning the application of marble can be drawn. Firstly, since mosaics decorate much of the floor space, we can tentatively determine that the marble was used to decorate the *apodyterium*'s walls. Tatti's notes also observe the liberal use of stucco remaining on the fragmented marble which he concluded was used in order to attach the marble elements to the wall. The mosaics detected were, for the most part, black and white with only a few touches of red.⁴⁷⁴ The effect of this arrangement is that bright colours, in the form of marble, are used for wall decoration with plainer tones used for the flooring.

A second study of the stone is comprised of marble excavated between 1959 and 1988. Excavations from the *frigidarium*, which measures around 1,100m², revealed small sections of rectangular slabs in *Fior di Pesco* covering a portion of the floor space. The entirety of the flooring in the *Tepidarium* was covered with a veined white marble.⁴⁷⁵ Although the use of marble flooring in these is contrary to Tatti's suggestion that mosaics lined most of the complex's flooring, the use of the greyish *Fior di Pesco* along with white marble does align with the idea that the bathing complex's decorative approach saw light tones used for flooring. Beyond this, *in situ* material of another large body of loose marble was unearthed which Bugini et al. have partially quantified. The excavated stone also comes from the *tepidarium* and *frigidarium* was well as an additional small room to the west of the complex.⁴⁷⁶ In a fashion similar to the stone observed by Tatti a large body of polychrome stone was found. This assemblage can be split between moulded and smooth pieces. In addition, fragments of architectural elements were also present.

⁴⁷⁰ Neri et al. 2016: 188; Bugini et al. 2018: 114.

⁴⁷¹ Bugini et al. 2018b: 114.

⁴⁷² Tatti 1844: 69-70. Tatti identifies '*Sanguigno*'. It is unclear, exactly what this lithotype is but it presumably refers to a red or purple stone.

⁴⁷³ Bugini et al. 2018b: 115.

⁴⁷⁴ Tatti 1844:69-70.

⁴⁷⁵ Bugini et al. 2018b: 120.

⁴⁷⁶ Bugini et al. 2018b: 118. A fragment of a fluted column in *Giallo Antico* has also been recovered.

Concerning the identification of the stone, in addition to the lithotypes observed by Tatti, *Alabastro Fiorito*, *Breccia Corallina*, *Settebasi*, *Granito Verde della Sedia*, *Greco Scritto*, and *Portasanta* were all uncovered, along with a body of white, grey, and black stones.⁴⁷⁷ Bugini's study speculates that the monochrome lithotypes may have been quarried locally, or regionally, but no scientific analysis has taken place so far.⁴⁷⁸ With respect to this assemblage, Bugini and his colleagues lament the fact that the investigation into the stone was poorly recorded with no details pertaining to the how, or where, exactly this stone was used.

The largest portion of this assemblage, concerns polished elements, without any mouldings. The limited number of moulded elements are discussed below. The study led by Bugini seems to have quantified a limited portion of the overall assemblage with only four polychrome lithotypes, from the entire assemblage, studied. It is unclear why the other polychrome varieties have been neglected. As it is, over 234 individual elements were quantified: elements of *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Porfido Rosso*, and *Serpentino*, were counted and weighed. From this analysis, *Giallo Antico* and *Pavonazzetto* are used widely with *Porfido Rosso* and *Serpentino* deployed more sparingly (Fig. 70). The colour palate and quantities of the lithotypes used have led some scholars to note that the arrangement of marble is redolent of the so-called Neronian quadrichromy patterns; patterns which are a feature of the marble arrangements found in the Ostian *Porta Marina domus* and the *domus* of *Psiche Amore*.⁴⁷⁹ However, since the total assemblage is only partially quantified meaning we do not know how much *Portasanta*, for example, was employed and so it is hard to see how any colour palette can be proposed. Indeed, all we can say, is that costly lithotypes like *Porfido Rosso* and *Serpentino* were used somewhat more sparingly than other less expensive stones.

With respect to the moulded pieces, four fragments of worked *Giallo Antico* elements have survived, all of which were found in the *tepidarium*. Two of these fragments were uncovered during the excavation of 1959 and seem to depict shields, as per a central *umbo*. Two additional panels, this time found in 1962, are less decorative and are instead complete with basic geometric patterns.⁴⁸⁰ Agostini's study of the 1st century AD baths at Chieti, in central Italy, which saw a similar panel bearing a shield carved in relief, indicates the use of the shield motif in the decoration of walling was not limited to the baths in Milan, nor was it a Late Roman innovation (Fig. 71; Fig. 72).⁴⁸¹ Indeed, it may be the case that the panels featured in the *Terme Erculee*, were spoliated elements taken from earlier structures, or different contexts, before being used in the baths.

In addition to the fragmentary pieces, in 1962, white slabs used for wall skirting were uncovered, following an examination of the *tepidarium*, along with an assemblage of glass and *tesserae*. A fragment of a column, in *Porfido Rosso*, was also found in the same space. Bugini et al. report that a column in the same stone, allegedly seen in 1500, was said to have marked the entrance to the nearby *Santa Maria della Passarella*.⁴⁸² In addition, it has been

⁴⁷⁷ Bugini et al. 2018b: 118-119.

⁴⁷⁸ Bugini et al. 2018b: 119-120.

⁴⁷⁹ Bugini et al. 2018: 126; Saachi & Marchisio 2019: 63. Saachi & Marchisio observe that the use of *Granito Verde della Sedia* is the first known in Milan.

⁴⁸⁰ Bugini et al. 2018: 125-123. See, Chapter VI on the deployment of local stones in Late Roman Italy.

⁴⁸¹ Agostini et al. 2002: 74.

⁴⁸² Mirabella Roberti 1984: 74; Saachi & Marchisio 2019: 63.

reported that a significant portion of green stone, both *Cipollino Verde* and *Verde Antico*, in the form of slabs and fillets, had been identified in the complex.⁴⁸³

Assessing the stone from this complex is challenging. The overall array of marble varieties is, however, noteworthy. Moreover, it seems probably that polychromy on the walls was favoured, with cooler hues for floor décor. Overall, the investment in the marble here feeds in to the broader picture of bathhouse decoration in Late Roman Italy.

Ostia

Ostia during the Late Roman period was a city bristling with public bathhouses. DeLaine's study has shown that there were approximately 26 functional public baths in the period between the 3rd century and 5th century in Ostia.⁴⁸⁴ The situation is summarised in Table 5 with two distinct phases of construction apparent. Of the 26 operational public bathhouses in Ostia, 15 were built in the period between the reigns of Nerva (AD 96-98) and Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180). These baths are of a standardised design, characterised by a rectangular block which contained various rooms, for bathing and other services, complete with an outside *palaestra*.⁴⁸⁵ A second boom saw the remaining 11 public baths built in the period between the end of the 3rd century and into the 4th century.

As the table demonstrates, the city's early baths, particularly the largest examples, were often subject to renovations during the later periods. In a similar fashion to the baths at Aeclanum, examined below, we find that baths in Ostia were a continued focus of investment. What this reveals about life in Late Roman Ostia has been subject to some debate. Several scholars have speculated on the clientele of specific baths noting that some baths may have served individual neighbourhoods, certain interest groups like philosophers or athletes, or specific religious communities.⁴⁸⁶ Indeed, DeLaine has proposed the idea that some baths were tailored to match the needs of regular users. In some instances, this might be found in the decorative approach employed: the so-called Bath of the Philosopher featured numerous busts of well-known philosophers.⁴⁸⁷ Hänninen has even proposed that the *Terme dei Cisiarii* (modified in c. 350 AD), this time named after mosaics in the building, was in some way under the ownership of Ostia's *collegia* for hauliers.⁴⁸⁸ More profoundly, it has been suggested that the *Terme di Musiciolus* (4thc. AD), located near Ostia's synagogue, served Ostia's Jewish community and therefore incorporated a deep cold water pool which acted as a *miqwa'ot*, used in the *miqveh* (*miqweh*) purifying ritual.⁴⁸⁹ More generally, contrary to the assessment made by Van Aken, who argued that public bathing in Late Roman Ostia was diminishing, it is quite clear that bathing remained a popular activity in Ostia at this time.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸³ Bugini et al. 2018: 116-118.

⁴⁸⁴ DeLaine 2007: 339; Boin 2013: 57.

⁴⁸⁵ Cicerchia & Marinucci 1992: 20.

⁴⁸⁶ Mieggs 1973 419; DeLaine 2007: 338; Hänninen 2020:151; Mulryan 2020: 298.

⁴⁸⁷ DeLaine 2007: 340-342.

⁴⁸⁸ Hänninen 2020: 151.

⁴⁸⁹ DeLaine 2007: 340-342. Reich 1988: 108-109; Boin 2013:123; Choi 2017: 80. Choi notes that evidence from Jerusalem, dating to the 1st century AD, has shown that a Jewish neighbourhood in the city was home to four separate 'hot bath-rooms', small seemingly private bathing facilities, attached to large homes all of which had a detached plunge pool needed to observe the *miqveh*. Choi has also concluded that for some Jews bathing was only permissible if followed by the *miqveh*.

⁴⁹⁰ Van Aken 1949; Underwood 2019: 45, says that some of the new baths in Ostia 'may have been private baths like those in the *Domus dei Dioscuri*' which is connected to the broader trend of private bath suits being created

The continued construction, use, and maintenance of these buildings exposes the fact that parts of Ostia continued to flourish into the 4th century. This general point has been made by some scholars in recent years.⁴⁹¹ Yet, if we consider the baths in Ostia closely, it is possible to speculate that certain areas of the city were doing especially well. This point, of course, has already been made by Gering who in 2004 argued that Late Roman Ostia was a city of two characters: one based upon the central promenade where lavish buildings continued to be maintained; the other situated on backstreets which, by contrast, were increasingly desolate.⁴⁹² However, considering the location of the various bathing complexes, functional during the Late Roman period, we can see that they are dotted across the city and not limited to Ostia's foremost boulevards. Although several complexes are on the *Decumanus*, or *Cardo Massimo*, a number are situated several streets away. One such example is the *Terme di Musiciolus*, already discussed above, which operated outside the city walls, on the city's southern shore. Although Boin has suggested that the construction of this particular complex, along with the *Porta Marina domus*, signals that the southern shore zone was an increasingly fashionable part of town, and perhaps an outlier in Gering's model, the fact that it is located off Ostia's main central avenues runs contrary to Gering's approach.⁴⁹³ Besides, there were additional complexes built away from the centre of Ostia. For instance, in the north of the city, in a part of Ostia described by Gering as an area 'increasingly turned into a wasteland in the 4th century', the *Terme del Mitra*, a complex that was subject to renovation in the 4th century, is found. Though marble remains from the *Terme del Mitra* are extremely limited, there is, nevertheless, some marble panels along with a number of grand architectural elements, in the guise of columns and bases, along with black and white mosaics. The decorative elements here hint at the fact that the bathhouse was richly decorated and consequently unlikely to be located in an abandoned backwater.⁴⁹⁴ Similarly, another complex, the *Terme Byzantino*, built at the end of the 3rd century, was located just south of Ostia's centre. Although there are almost no remains, bar some limited brick walls, it seems improbable that the new structure was not a costly endeavour, not just in terms of decorative embellishments, since the daily running costs for bathing complexes often outstripped entry fees.⁴⁹⁵ In light of this, the bathing culture and the existence of new and refurbished baths in Ostia allow us to reflect on Gering's original concept. It may well have been the case that in Ostia examples of economic and social vitality sat side-by-side with instances of deprivation. David in his recent study of Ostia records that the area to the southwest of the city was described as one of the city's sordid places ('*sordentes loci*' recorded by an epigraphic source) in the second half of the 4th century, perhaps representing the feelings of some visitors to the area.⁴⁹⁶ This neighbourhood was home to obscure workshops and isolated meeting places.⁴⁹⁷ Yet, at the same time, this part of the city was also home to two bathhouses that continued to function as late as the 5th century; the *Terme della Porta Marina* was even renovated in the 5th century.⁴⁹⁸ Therefore, instead of viewing Late Roman Ostia through the prism of the

in late antique *domus*'. However, beyond a few limited examples, the evidence for Late Roman period Ostia points towards the continued popularity of public bathing.

⁴⁹¹ Boin 2013; Murer 2016: 178.

⁴⁹² Gering 2004: 300-301.

⁴⁹³ Boin 2013: 65-66.

⁴⁹⁴ Gering 2004: 301.

⁴⁹⁵ Meggis 1960: 405; Christie 2010: 131. See, Blyth (1999) for fuel costs in bathhouses.

⁴⁹⁶ CIL XIV. 4721.

⁴⁹⁷ David 2018: 37-38.

⁴⁹⁸ David et al. 2015.

Decumanus and *Cardo Massimo* thoroughfares it is surely more suitable to see Ostia as a city where the wealthy lived alongside the poor and where large urban structures continued to be used and maintained.

Terme del Foro

Located in the centre of Ostia, brick stamps suggest that the *Terme del Foro* was constructed in the reign of Antoninus Pius and remodelled several times with the last occurring in 380 during the reign of Theodosius (AD 379-395) (Fig. 73).⁴⁹⁹ Despite being the largest baths in the city, covering a total area of 3200 m², the baths were unlikely to have been funded directly by the state. Instead, epigraphic evidence suggests that a certain Ragonius Vincentius Celsus, *praefectus annonae* contributed to the restoration of the baths in the 4th century, while the original foundation of the building was led by Gavius Maximus, a praetorian for Antoninus Pius.⁵⁰⁰ Following some studies in the early 20th century, further analyses have taken place including those by Bloch, Thylander, Meiggs, Becatti, Zevi and Pohl, Steinby, Cicerchia and Marinucci, Pensabene, and, finally Pavolini.⁵⁰¹

The baths are by no means intact: walls are run-down and in parts collapsed; the complex's decorative elements are in a similarly patchy state of repairs with few unblemished examples of decoration remaining. However, despite the damage, the building has retained much of its structure and, consequently, it has been possible to provisionally identify the rooms and their function (Table 6). The bath's form saw Meiggs' memorably note, that the *Terme del Foro* was, by Ostian standards imposing and the plan 'adventurous'.⁵⁰² Whereas many of Ostia's baths, such as the *Terme di Nettuno* or *Terme del Sileno*, consisted of uniform rectangular-shaped structures, by the 4th century the *Terme del Foro* was complete with several rooms with a diverse variety of shapes and designs. Located to the south of the building, the distinctive feature of these rooms, as identified by Meiggs, is that each had south-facing windows which opened out onto the complex's large open *palestra*, thus allowing for maximum sunlight.⁵⁰³ Each of these southern rooms retains some of their 4th century marble panelling

Marble Assemblage

Concerning decoration, only a small quantity of the bath's Late Roman splendour remains. Few statues are left and there is no sign of wall paintings or decorative coloured plaster. There is, however, a relatively substantial amount of marble that survives. In fact, the *Terme del Foro* is one of the only bathing complexes in Ostia with a substantial amount of marble *in situ*. Large columns in *Cipollino Verde* and white stone as well as other architectural elements can still be found along with a considerable amount of marble cladding. As Table 6, indicates, the remaining marble panelling is saved for the heated rooms in the southern part of the complex. The marble in these rooms is fairly evenly split between wall and floor panels. The largest body of remaining marble is by some margin, white marble. Concerning polychrome marble,

⁴⁹⁹ Meiggs 1973: 411; Romano 2004: 18; Pavolini 2006: 107-9; Hänninen 2020: 149.

⁵⁰⁰ Bloch 1953; 1959.

⁵⁰¹ Bloch 1938; 1953; Thylander 1951-52; Meiggs 1973; Becatti 1961; Zevi and Pohl 1970; Steinby 1978; Cicerchia & Marinucci 1992; Pensabene 2007; Pavolini 2016.

⁵⁰² Meiggs 1960: 411.

⁵⁰³ Meiggs 1960: 413.

however, there is a fairly balanced distribution. *Cipollino Verde* seems to be the most widespread and based on the remaining fragments although another eight varieties of lithotypes are present with *Africano*, *Broccatello Giallo Antico*, *Granito del Foro*, *Greco Scritto*, *Pavonazzetto* Proconnesian marble, *Rosso Antico*, and *Verde Antico* are all present. Concerning the application of the marble within the complex, further observations can be noted.

Firstly, the distribution between the flooring and walling is broadly similar to the overall allocation of marble in the complex with white marble being the most dominant stone on both the floors and the walls. However, it is also the case that *Broccatello* and *Cipollino Verde* are only present on the flooring. In addition, it seems like a large proportion of the stone used in the baths were spoliated. The lack of homogeneity between the floor panels, in terms of lithotypes and the dimensions of individual elements, in concert with no obvious decorative design gives the impression that elements from other contexts were being redeployed in the baths. Moreover, in some instances moulded, or otherwise decorated elements, are employed in clearly incongruous settings which further hints at reuse. Of course, the original context of these elements is near impossible to determine. However, as compellingly reasoned by Gering and Pensabene, marble reuse in Ostia during the Late Roman period was widespread and highly organised with marble magazines and workshops ready to provide the city with newly readied stone, stripped from abandoned or changed buildings from within the city, primed for various new and redeveloped structures.⁵⁰⁴

With respect to individual rooms, it is possible to draw some partial conclusions on the range of lithotypes used. Room 15, an octagonal shaped room, is limited in its decoration with only a moulded threshold noted. Linked to Room 15 by a small corridor is Room 16. An oval-shaped *sudatorium* on a north-south axis. Room 16 was dominated by white stones, including *Greco Scritto*, which were all used to decorate benches abutting the east, west, and south wall in a quasi-semicircle formation. Interestingly a small number of fragmentary elements in white/pinkish lithotypes are also noted.⁵⁰⁵ Yet, these elements appear to have been hidden by the benches' brickwork and, consequently, it seems unlikely that they were visible during the bath's last period of use. Finally, a single fragmented panel of white stone used at the base of a niche, in the northern wall, is also present. Room 17 and Room 18, both of which were *tepidaria* are like Room 16 dominated by white/grey lithotypes; only a small amount of polychrome stone is present. (Fig. 74). In both these instances, the stone was used for wall and floor decoration. Interestingly, the stone here seems to include a mix of lithotypes that had seemingly been spoliated from other contexts and stone that appears to have been designed especially for use in the baths. Spoliated examples include those that are clearly fragmentary and others which show signs of out-of-place decoration, one example sees a large fluted pilaster used for flooring. By contrast, elements of wall cladding appear well fitted and are complete with coherent decorative moulding. Room 19 is an irregular shape, complete with two apsidal walls, the room is made up of a square space, to the south, connected to a rectangular space to the north by a small passageway. Identified as a *calidarium*, the room includes three pools which are all located in the square portion of the space.

⁵⁰⁴ Pensabene 2007: 434; Gering 2018.

⁵⁰⁵ *Pavonazzetto* and *Portasanta*. Cicerchia & Marinucci (1992) have speculated that most rooms in the complex had marble-clad walls up to a height of 10m. Although once can imagine this being the case, there is little evidence to support his proposal.

Two of the pools have retained a significant portion of their marble stone. In both instances, white lithotypes are dominant (Fig. 75). However, a small amount of *Cipollino Verde*, *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto*, and *Verde Antico* are present, clad to the exterior walls of the pools. The remaining marble in this room is saved for the wall and flooring (Fig.76). White lithotypes are again the most widely employed. However, it should be said, some polychrome lithotypes are apparent with a single element of *Cipollino Verde* and three elements in *Pavonazzetto* clad to the walls. Similarly, the marble-clad flooring, which is found in the rectangular portion of the room, is complete mostly in white stones with an additional small amount of *Cipollino Verde* and *Pavonazzetto*. In this instance, the flooring is so fragmented that the dimensions of the elements range from around 100 x 160 cm to 2 x 2 cm. Once again, the fragmentary nature of the stone seems indicative of spoliated elements being employed. The rest of the bathhouse, rooms 1-14, which hold the remains of some large architectural pieces are without significant marble panelling.

Aeclanum

Aeclanum, unlike the other two case studies, was a town in the hinterland removed from any nearby large conurbation. Despite this, the town was home to public baths of modest size but ornately decorated with a range of marble panelling, as well as mosaics.

Northern Baths

Masonry suggests that Aeclanum's Northern Baths were first constructed during the early 2nd century.⁵⁰⁶ They were subject to extensive periods of redevelopment, not least following an earthquake in AD 346.⁵⁰⁷ The newly developed structure saw a new pool inserted; floors raised and a mosaic added. However, the Vesuvian eruption of AD 472 seems to have heralded the demise of the baths: despite displaying few signs of physical damage there is no evidence of continued use after this date.⁵⁰⁸

A number of studies in recent years have sought to appraise Aeclanum's Northern Baths. Most notably the work carried out by the Edinburgh-Apolline project. The work, completed between 2016-2019, was primarily focused on two main trenches (2 and 3) along with some additional work in two smaller trenches in the southern part of the complex (4 and 7).⁵⁰⁹ Trench 2, the largest opened, extended across the entirety of a partially excavated pool as well as encapsulating a small area to the north and east of the pool. Trench 3, was situated a couple of meters to the northeast of the pool area and is abutted by a large decorative mosaic. The smaller trenches, 4 and 7, are both located to the southwest of trenches 2 and 3.

In the first instance, these excavations reappraised the work carried out during the excavations headed by Onarato in the 1950's and assessed the damage caused over the intervening years.⁵¹⁰ From the outset, it was clear in the period between Onarato's excavations and the Edinburgh-Apolline project's arrival on site that the bathing complex had

⁵⁰⁶ Di Giovanni 1996; Di Colucci & Di Giovanni: 1999.

⁵⁰⁷ De Simone and Russell 2019a; Astolfi et al. 2023: 179.

⁵⁰⁸ Astolfi et al. 2023: 178.

⁵⁰⁹ Trench 2 corresponds to Room 10; Trench 3 to rooms 8 and 9.

⁵¹⁰ Following Constans II's sacking of the city in AD 662, and the abandonment that followed, Aeclanum faded from memory until the mid-eighteenth century when Cassitto uncovered some artefacts, including some epigraphy, from the site. However, it was not until Onarato in the 1950 that Aeclanum was first studied in depth

suffered significant damage. In particular, the pool's northern wall suffered partial destruction, following the refilling of Trench 2. However, beyond a reassessment of Onarato's study, the excavation of the bath complex looked to engage with the idea that Aeclanum, like much of the surrounding area, was a city in flux: a city which portrayed elements of vitality along with some signatures of decline. With this latter point in mind, the extensive excavation carried out by the Edinburgh-Apolline project was able to shed light on the various phases of development the baths were subject to as well as draw attention to the afterlife, characterised by spoliation following their abandonment in AD 472.⁵¹¹ Work carried out around in the baths highlighted so far unknown structural elements of the complex, locating, for example, the *frigidarium* (Room 3) which was situated adjacent to the pool in Room 10 as well as noting the location of the sewers, which were revealed by opening a deep pit (Trench 4). Furthermore, this work also clarified that the baths underwent various structural phases. The floor level of Room 8 was raised and finished with a decorative mosaic; a new pool in Room 9 was inserted; and, there was a raising of the floor in Room 10 along with new relayed marble paving in both Room 10 and the *frigidarium*.⁵¹² Given that the raised floor level beneath the mosaic was composed of rubble containing 4th century ceramics it is likely therefore that these architectural and decorative modifications followed the post-AD 346 earthquake.⁵¹³ In this way, the baths at Aeclanum conform to the trend that is noted elsewhere in central Italy which saw the continued investment, and restoration, of baths between the 4th and 5th centuries AD.⁵¹⁴

Ward-Perkins has reasoned that the renewal of investment into baths is tied closely to the Emperor's Valentinian's (AD 321-375) decision in AD 374 to grant back to urban centres a third of their revenue, from civic lands to maintain public buildings. However, epigraphic evidence from Venusia (modern Venosa) has shown that some restoration of baths was already taking place.⁵¹⁵ Two inscriptions from Venusia, dating to the first half of the 3rd century AD, document the restoration of baths in the city via the patronage of governor *Aelius Restitutus* in the name of the emperor Constantine (AD 272-337).⁵¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is the case that a number of baths are restored by governors following Valentinian's proclamation.⁵¹⁷ In the middle of the 4th century AD the local governor, or *Corrector*, of Samnium, in lower central Italy, was enthusiastically involved in resorting, among other public buildings, baths in Isernia, Seapinium, and Allifae.⁵¹⁸ Additional epigraphic evidence from across central and southern Italy paints a similar picture with governors restoring baths in Antium (Anzio) between AD 379-382 and at Tarracina at some point in the late 4th century AD.⁵¹⁹ Additionally, another inscription, dating between the 4th and 5th centuries AD, from Puteoli (modern Puzzoli) extols the governor referring to him as the 'restorer of the baths'. Furthermore, surveys of various urban centres in the region have brought to light other examples of baths being restored: '*Terme Ferrara*' and '*Terme Lomuscio*' in Canusium (modern Canosa) were both remodelled, as indicated by the use of Late Roman *opus*

⁵¹¹ Astolfi et al. 2023: 179.

⁵¹² De Simone and Russell 2019a.

⁵¹³ De Simone and Russell 2018: 300; De Simone and Russell 2019a.

⁵¹⁴ Ward-Perkins 1984 22;24; 28-29; Christie 2006: 199; 2011: 131-132; Brown 2013: 32; Volpe & Goffredo 2020: 65.

⁵¹⁵ Ward-Perkins 1984: 21-22.

⁵¹⁶ Marchi 2010: 201; Volpe & Goffredo 2020: 64.

⁵¹⁷ The redevelopment of Ostia's *Terme del Foro* was completed in AD 380.

⁵¹⁸ Christie 2006: 199.

⁵¹⁹ Antium CIL x. 2919; Tarracina: CIL x. 6312; Puteoli: CIL x. 1707.

Vittatum, in combination with the earlier Hadrianic period *opus mixtum*. In Venosa, as well, a bathhouse was restored, once again, this time in the 4th century AD while further south, on the coast, baths at Taranto were repaired at the same time; lastly, the baths at Herdonia (modern Ortona), which were restored possibly following an earthquake, underwent a significant amount of work, reminiscent to that at Aeclanum since it includes repairs to a mosaic floor and the construction of new heated rooms.⁵²⁰

The various restoration projects required not only funds and a workforce, but also relied on the notion that these buildings were fundamental to a thriving public life. Indeed, we can determine from these examples that there was a continuous faith in the popularity of baths and, just as pertinently, urban centres in the in central and southern Italy considered the remodelling and upkeep of baths to be entirely viable. In the context of Aeclanum, we find that while the bathhouse was subject to remodelling in the 5th century, the town's *macellum*, to the east of the centre, was not.⁵²¹ This is initially surprising since Aeclanum was a significant trading point on the southward's road from Rome and although it might be the case that a *macellum* could adequately function in a state of disrepair, in a way that a bathing complex could not, it is nevertheless instructive that the baths were maintained, at significant expense. Indeed, beyond Aeclanum's Northern Baths at least one other bathing facility, in the vicinity of the city's forum, has been identified following geophysical analysis of the site.⁵²² In its totality, the prospect of at least two bathing complexes in the Late Roman era city reinforces the continued importance of the baths for the local community which was recognised by local elites.

Marble Assemblage

The new decorative scheme was applied to the baths following the remodelling that occurred after the abovementioned earthquake of AD 346: this updated decorative scheme saw marble used in abundance. The body of evidence from the baths, which includes three separate marble assemblages: a deposit of loose revetment and paving amassed during the 1960's - although we are unable to be certain where exactly this marble belonged we can be reasonably sure that it was excavated directly from the baths or from a nearby public building, conceivably a *palaestra*; second, in situ paving from the north of the *frigidarium* composed of new, and reused, panels; and lastly, sizeable quantity of *in situ* wall revetment salvaged from the post-abandonment deposits excavated throughout the complex, including the pavement just to the north of the pool which, although partially spoliated, continues to have remnants of *Verde Antico* (Fig. 77; Fig. 78). In addition, it should be noted that Onarato's excavation revealed two columns used to separate the heated *suspensurae* and *apodyterium* as well as a series of pieces from a sculpture.⁵²³ Although these pieces date to the Imperial period it is probable that they were installed in the baths during the remodelling phase.⁵²⁴

The stone from Room 10 which consists of fragments uncovered in 2016 and 2018. Additional material, from Room 8 and Room 9, where the 1960's deposit was located has subsequently been unearthed. The combined data shows that *Cipollino Verde* was dominant;

⁵²⁰ On the *Terme Ferrara*, Cassano and Bianchini 1992: 730-735. On the *Terme Lomuscio*, Bertocchi and Bianchini 1992: 736. Venosa and Taranto: 2019 Underwood: 40. On, Herdonia: Flavia et al. 2000: 131-134; Maréchal 2020.

⁵²¹ De Simone & Russell 2019: 384.

⁵²² Russell & De Simone: 2023: 195-200.

⁵²³ Avagliano 2017.

⁵²⁴ De Simone and Russell 2019a; Astolfi et al. 2023: 179-180.

this was likely the case across the entire bath complex (Fig. 79). The floor was also clad in *Verde Antico*, and since it had only been partially excavated we should expect to find more of this stone should it even be excavated in the future.⁵²⁵ *Cipollino Verde* account for the largest portion, accounting for 43% of the polychrome stone recovered. As it stands, besides *Cipollino Verde*, *Greco Scritto* is the next best attested identified stone, although a large body of unidentified white stone is represented too. A range of other lithotypes also feature in small amounts

In short, both spaces have yielded large quantities of new and reused marble incorporating wall revetment, paving slabs, and geometric *crustae* of the *sectilia* type. Additionally, further decorative pieces such as some architectural elements including listels and bases, capitals, column shafts, pilasters, cornices, friezes, and a *trabeation*. Although there are fewer examples of these decorative examples when compared to the revetment or paving, it is nevertheless noteworthy that a range of reused elements have been incorporated here. The preserved *in situ* stone in these spaces is limited to *Verde Antico*, *Cipollino*, Proconnesian marble as well as a number of other white and grey stone types, *Verde Antico* being especially dominant. These stones are, in the main, used as revetment and paving and as such are employed on the walls and floor - given *Verde Antico's* geological make-up, which includes large clasts, the stone is broadly used as paving since it is difficult to slice it thinly.

Summary

Bathing complexes in the Late Roman period continued to be used and invested in; in some instances new baths were built while in other cases existing baths were redeveloped. The archaeology, in this way, correlates closely with the written record which highlights the importance of bathhouses in Late Roman society. Indeed, in a similar fashion to investment made into churches, covered below, we find that baths are equally important in small towns as they are in imperial capitals. Moreover, we can see that, in some respects, bathhouses can act as a proxy for broader public investment: in Ostia investment in a number of bathing complexes that large parts of the city thrived; in Milan, the baths, are, similarly, part of a wider investment program funded during the reign of Maximian, which saw a number of public buildings erected; at Aclanum too, investment in bathing facilities may well have been matched by the development of church buildings.⁵²⁶ Yet, what is striking about Aclanum is that the baths are continued to be used up until the eruption of AD 472 whereas both the theatre and *macellum* had already been abandoned by this point.⁵²⁷ This, perhaps, reinforces the idea that baths, like churches, were a fundamental part of urban living in the Late Roman period. Importantly, for this study, it is apparent that the use of marble was a marker of public investment.

The deployment of marble panelling and *opus sectile* is a feature of peninsula wide investment which feeds into a long tradition whereby marble, alongside mosaics, was viewed as the most appropriate decoration for grand bathing facilities. However, beyond this, the variations of the stone used across the baths studied is limited: while there are few signs of preferred colours associated with bathhouses, the deployment of certain lithotypes in large

⁵²⁵ Astolfi et al. 2023: 178.

⁵²⁶ De Simone & Russell 2019: 374.

⁵²⁷ Astolfi et al. 2023: 177-179.

quantities, with other stones supplementing in limited amounts, is a feature of Late Roman decoration in bathing complexes. This situation, may reflect a number of factors concerning the location of the respective bathhouse, stone available for reuse, or simply choice. What we can say is, that across all the baths polychromy, to some degree, was valued: in total 18 different polychrome lithotypes were deployed across the bathhouses assessed. What is more, we can see that this proclivity was nourished via the utilisation of newly quarried material as well as stone taken from other buildings. Across each case study we can see new stone deployed alongside *spolia*. In this way, marble use in baths feeds into the trends observed in domestic spaces and church buildings.

The use of marble across each of the three bathhouses studied is not only testament to the continued vibrancy of the Late Roman Italy, but, on bathhouses specifically indicates their importance in the Late Roman city. The next chapter will explore another emblematic building of the Late Roman period, the church.

CHAPTER V: Churches

'Who could recount the beauty of the columns and the marbles with which the church is adorned?'

Procopius. Aed. I. 1.23.

Procopius, in his description of Constantinople's Hagia Sofia, relays the impact that marble had upon onlookers. Constantinople, however, was not alone in astounding visitors with beautifully ornamented churches. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter II, there is plenty of literary evidence, from across the Roman world, which celebrates the central role marble played in the decoration of churches.⁵²⁸ This seems particularly true of churches in Italy.

Thus, this chapter, the final in Part B, is concerned with the study of marble in an ecclesiastical context. Here case studies from all three regions are assessed. From Milan, three buildings are studied. Two of these, the *Basilica di Santa Tecla* and the *Battistero di Giovanni al Fonte*, are no longer standing, while the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*, the other church in the study, continues to operate as a place of worship. From Rome, *Santa Maria Antiqua* is assessed and in Apulia, the *Battistero di San Giovanni* is evaluated. Neither of the churches are currently functioning as religious institutions. Instead both *Santa Maria Antiqua* and the *Battistero di San Giovanni* are now contained within archaeological parks.

Although the remaining stone from the Milanese churches is somewhat limited, a number of studies carried out over the last couple of decades or so make up for this shortfall. Regarding the other churches, datasets are such that a quantitative analysis of the material is possible. Consequently, the data drawn from these studies can provide a number of insights pertaining to the range and quantities of the lithotypes employed. As with the discussion regarding bathhouses, the diversity of the material studied here is such that it potentially provides an opportunity to understand the role marble in ecclesiastical setting from across the peninsula.

Churches in Milan

The 4th and 5th centuries in Milan were characterised by the erection of churches with the construction of the *Basilica di San Lorenzo Maggiore*, *Basilica di Santa Tecla*, *Battistero di San Giovanni al Fonte* and others, including the *Basilica di San Nazaro* (dedicated in AD 368), *Basilica di San Simpliciano* (AD 347-397), *Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio* (AD 386), and *Basilica di San Giovanni in Conca* (AD 347-397).⁵²⁹ The construction of the buildings coincided with Milan's status as an Imperial city. In Latin Europe only Rome and Trier were home to more churches than Milan during this period.⁵³⁰

Several factors were at play here. The most prosaic of which is that Milan, like Rome and Trier, was an Imperial city. Indeed, following Ravenna's rise to prominence in the 6th century it too was adorned with a number of fine churches. Another factor, raised by Bugini

⁵²⁸ Brandenburg 2005; Hansen 2015; Pensabene 2015.

⁵²⁹ On *San Nazaro*, Weitzman, 1978: 665-667; On *San Simpliciano*, Mirabella Roberti 1984: 132-134; *San Giovanni in Conca*, 1984: 157.

⁵³⁰ On Trier see, James 1993. On Rome see, Krautheimer 1979; 1983; Krautheimer et al. 1959; Brandenburg 2016.

and Folli, is that Milan is situated near mountains which are home to large clay deposits which were exploited in order to produce bricks. While proximate clay deposits were unlikely to be a primary driver of church construction in the city, it was no doubt advantageous. Indeed, all of Milan's churches from this period were constructed largely in brick, rather than stone.⁵³¹ The third factor behind the number of churches in Milan at this time is linked to the city's bishop, Ambrose.

Originally from Trier, Ambrose, who was most likely born in AD 334, became the Bishop of Milan in AD 374. During his time as bishop, he became the city's most prominent individual, and arguably one of the most important people in the Western Empire. His power was such that he was even able to confront three emperors on matters of religious and political doctrine: he preached Christianity to Gratian (AD 359-383); he defied Valentinian II (AD 371-392); and, in an unprecedented way, brought Theodosius (AD 347-395) to his knees in an act of public penance, following the Massacre of Thessaloniki in c. AD 390.⁵³² His power was such that during his lifetime Ambrose has been identified as, and acted as if he was, the *de facto* ruler of Milan.⁵³³ Although he is best known for his theological diatribes, importantly, for this study, Ambrose used his position to commission a number of churches in and around the city; the extra-mural churches are sometimes referred to as a 'crown' around Milan's Roman walls.⁵³⁴ This building projects no doubt enhanced the bishop's religious prestige as well as his political heft. Significantly, this conceptual outlook which valued the impact that public buildings could have is fully integrated into the Roman tradition whereby the construction of grand public buildings acts as a demonstration of leadership, authority, and beneficence. Consequently, in a fashion redolent of the emperors propensity to adorn important public buildings with marble, Ambrose's churches, as well as other churches built in Milan at this time, were ornately decorated.⁵³⁵ This trend has also been observed in Apulia and is discussed below.

Basilica di San Lorenzo Maggiore

Now located in the centre of Milan, the *Basilica di San Lorenzo Maggiore* remains one of Milan's principal churches. Situated just outside Milan's ancient city walls on the road south to Ticinum (Pavia), via Ticinensis, the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* was not far from the Imperial Palace, and other contemporary churches (Fig. 80).

Concerning the date of the building there is significant debate. Krautheimer first identified the building of *Basilica di San Lorenzo* as pre-Ambrosian.⁵³⁶ However, on the basis of Kinney's work, Krautheimer came to believe as, Chierici had done in the mid-20th century, that the basilica was the legendary *Basilica Porziana* over which Ambrose and the Arian Court quarrelled between AD 378 and AD 386.⁵³⁷ Meanwhile, Kleinbaur's study, which is primarily based on the analysis of the brickwork, argues that the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* was built following Ambrose's death, in AD 397. Similarly, Lewis has suggested a Theodosian date of

⁵³¹ Bugin and Folli 2008.

⁵³² MyLynne 1994.

⁵³³ Campenhausen 1929; McLynn 1994: 220; Evenepoel 1999; Lenox-Conyngham 2005: 213; Brown 2012: 127-135.

⁵³⁴ Edwards 1964: 4.

⁵³⁵ This trend has also be observed in Apulia and is discussed later in this chapter.

⁵³⁶ Krautheimer 1965: 55-57; 1983: 113.

⁵³⁷ Kinney 1972.

construction while, on the basis of liturgical sources, Cattaneo has advocated for the foundation of San Lorenzo in the 4th century, attributing it to the generalissimo Stilicho (AD 359-408).⁵³⁸ Following Fieni's archaeological and archaeometric study of ceramics, located behind the church's façade, there is now broad consensus among scholars that *Basilica di San Lorenzo* was probably constructed at some point between the late 4th century and the early 5th century.⁵³⁹

As it stands, the basilica is still positioned on the edge of a small colonnaded square.⁵⁴⁰ The building itself is comprised of a series of chapels, towers, galleries, and domes. Many of these appendages were added in the Early Medieval and Late Medieval periods.⁵⁴¹ The early church, was based on a central quatrefoil structure with two L-shaped rooms which are located to the north and south of the west-facing entrance. The entrance, which is still used to this day, was preceded by a small *propylaeum*. The *propylaeum*, which is now formed with arches, was in the Late Roman period complete with columns.

Marble Assemblage

Today the church's decoration is much changed from its ancient past, following periods of subsequent redevelopment. However, multiple literary sources, along with an analysis of the remaining stone, suggest that the church was likely decorated with both glittering mosaics and marble.

Bishop Veranus of Cavaillon (d. AD 590), who had visited both Ravenna and Rome, thought that the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* was Italy's most beautiful church.⁵⁴² In the 8th century the *Versus de Mediolano Civitate* describes it as the epitome of Milanese splendour, complete with a gold cover and shining marble. Later, in the 9th century, Benzo of Alba (d.1089) detailed some of the decoration remarking that 'there was no church more beautiful...all in porphyry and gold'.⁵⁴³ Benzo, here, is the first of three sources to remark upon the use of *Porfido Rosso* in the church. Later, Galvano Flamma (1283-1344) likewise comments upon the use of porphyry and other marble located in the chapel of *Sant'Aquilino*.⁵⁴⁴ In the 15th or early 16th century the famed architect, who would later remodel the façade of the basilica, Giuliano da Sangallo (1445-1516) in his notes marvelled at 'all the porphyry' in the church.⁵⁴⁵ Although no further detail is provided, we are at least afforded with the sense of splendour present within the old building.

Although several studies on the stone in the Basilica have taken place, none have ever studied the material in its entirety. Since the early 20th century there has been some focus on marble belonging to the chapel of *Sant'Aquilino*. Located to the south of the church, the chapel is best known for its colourful mosaics. Yet, a study carried out by *Soprintendenza ai Monumenti della Lombardi* on the chapel, published in 1913, recorded, in conjunction with Boni, that a number of polychrome lithotypes were present in the church. The lithotypes in

⁵³⁸Chierici 1951; Kleinbauer 1968; Kinney 1972; Lewis 1973; Cattaneo 1985.

⁵³⁹ Feini 2008; Neri et al. 2019: 79.

⁵⁴⁰ Ceresa Mori 1989: 11-12.

⁵⁴¹ Kleinbauer 1967; Stalley 1999: 67; Fieni 2008: 407.

⁵⁴² Trans: Neri et al. 2018: 82.

⁵⁴³ Ben. Alba. Ad Hein. 5.25. (Trans: Neri et al. 2018).

⁵⁴⁴ Gal. *Chron.* (Trans: David & Chiesa).

⁵⁴⁵ Sangallo Tacuino Sense; See Mirabella Roberti 1984: 152; Donetti 2022: 11.

question, are mostly *crustae* although some slabs were used too. The report notes compiled by the *Soprintendenza* suggest that the marble panelling was most likely used to decorate the floor, although a more recent study by Neri et al. have identified the stone as belonging to the walling. The earlier study successfully identified *Brocatello*, *Cipollino Verde*, *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Porfido Nero*, *Porfido Rosso*, Proconnesian marble, and *Serpentino*.⁵⁴⁶ The presence of the porphyries and *Serpentino*, in particular, indicates just how lavish the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* decoration was.

The reassessment of the stone, carried out by Neri et al., which has partially quantified the lithotypes, revealed a number of important facts concerning the assemblage.⁵⁴⁷ Firstly, the analysis led by Boni in the 20th century was shown to be largely accurate with lithotypes identified also noted in Neri et al.'s later study. However, in addition, Neri and her colleagues were able to observe a number of other lithotypes including *Africano*, *Arabescato*, *Bianco Nero*, *Fior di Pesco*, *Grigio*, Thassian marble, and *Rosso Antico*. Significantly, Italian stones were also identified with *Breccia del Lago di Garda* (identified by Neri et al. as *Rosso Ammonitico*), Majolica limestone, and *Nero delle Prealpi* all attested.⁵⁴⁸ Indeed, the presence of the locally sourced *Nero delle Prealpi*, in particular, is important since it accounts for 10% of the total assemblage.⁵⁴⁹ More broadly, the study was able to show that 49% of the assemblage was composed of white stone with 41% of the assemblage made up of coloured lithotypes. *Pavonazzetto*, followed by *Giallo Antico*, is the most popular lithotype, with the other stones used more sparingly. Indeed, the 2019 study reveals the limited presence of porphyry, with only a single fragment of the so-called *Porfido Rosso* noted.⁵⁵⁰ This revelation highlights a fundamental problem associated with the historiography of marble studies in that specific lithotypes have a certain cachet which sees writers provide them with undue attention.

As discussed above, three separate writers specifically cite the use of porphyry in the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* as if trying to give the impression that the church was awash with the expensive and highly prized red and black stone. Although the archaeological assessment was not exhaustive, since it assessed only a small portion of the total marble assemblage, it nevertheless appears that porphyry was carefully applied in limited amounts only. The mixed evidence from the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* should remind scholars that while textual sources are valuable, they are not written for historians and archaeologists looking for architecturally accurate reports. Besides the use of porphyry and the lavish mosaics, the presence of *Brocatello* and *Serpentino*, which were especially prestigious, is, nevertheless, indicative of a high level of investment in the church. Since Milan was a major city this is not wholly surprising. We are, however, reminded of the city's prosperity. Perhaps more interesting is the revelation that the widespread use of local stones, alongside foreign imports, were deployed. Although we cannot know for sure, the presence of *Nero delle Prealpi*, and the other local lithotypes, may simply be representative of an economic decision, since local stones were often a more inexpensive option.⁵⁵¹ Alternatively, it could be indicative of a sense

⁵⁴⁶ *Soprintendenza Lombardy*. 1913: 33-34; Neri et al. 2019: 83.

⁵⁴⁷ *Porfido Nero* like *Porfido Rosso* was quarried in Egypt. Quarrying took place between the 1st century AD and the 5th century. 1450 individual *crustae* elements have been identified in total.

⁵⁴⁸ Neri et al. 2019: 84-85.

⁵⁴⁹ The importance of the local lithotype here is discussed fully in Chapter V.

⁵⁵⁰ The study does not quantify all the lithotypes served with none of polychrome stones individually measured, with the exception of the blackish/green *Nero delle Prealpi*.

⁵⁵¹ Although, local marbles were typically a cheaper, than foreign imports, this is not always the case. See, Russell 2018: 139-142.

of local pride, thus chiming with the argument for localism espoused by Pliny the Elder and Sidonius Apollinaris.⁵⁵²

Concerning the shapes of the fragments, four squares and nine hexagons are observed with a large number of triangles and listels present too. Lozenges in white stone, coloured stone and *Nero delle Prealpi* are attested, reflecting a similar pattern to that noted in the Basilica di Santa Tecla. Large slabs of *Cipollino Verde* and a black limestone are recorded along with a single element in *Serpentino* (the only piece of *Serpentino* recorded). Thinly sliced elements in *Giallo Antico* (c. 0.8cm) are recorded, most likely used as part of a figural pattern. In addition to the slabs and *crustae*, larger architectural elements have been recorded. Following the discovery of two wide elements, Neri et al. have speculated that the chapel was separated with a marble made partition, in a fashion similar to San Vitale, in Ravenna.⁵⁵³ Three columns bases and a further six fragments of *lesenae*, in *Cipollino Verde*, topped with 2nd century capitals also remain. Curved listels suggest the presence of an inlaid *rotae*. Finally, carved elements, in white stone, depict naturalistic scenes, such as fish and birds, while other examples depict vases and floral images.

The extravagance in the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*, therefore, is reflected in the deployment of a range of foreign and local/regional stones, alongside dazzling mosaic work. Both imposing architectural pieces and delicate *crustae*, are attested. However, other churches in the city pre-dated the basilica. The next two discussed here, the *Basilica di Santa Tecla* and the *Battistero Giovanni al Fonte* which were part of a single complex, at the heart of the city are cases in point.

Basilica di Santa Tecla and the Battistero Giovanni al Fonte

Basilica di Santa Tecla

Located in the heart of Milan, the remains of *Basilica di Santa Tecla* now lie beneath Milan's principal piazza, *Piazza del Duomo*, occupying much of the space that the current Late Gothic cathedral (1386) now dominates (Fig. 81). During the Late Roman period, the church was no more than a few meters away from the city's *Terme Erculee* while a little further afield to the north lay the *Basilica of San Lorenzo* and the city walls. Although the foundations of the structure are usually identified as belonging to the AD 70's, some of the structures' brickwork has been dated by Mirabella Roberti and Paredi as late 3rd century or early 4th century AD.⁵⁵⁴

Despite still being an important parish centre, in 1548 Pope Pius II issued a bull which allowed Milan's ruler, Francesco Sforza, to finally demolish the church, following a period of nearly one hundred years (1462-1548) which had seen the church pulled down twice and subsequently rebuilt.⁵⁵⁵ Following its destruction, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that the location of the structure was relocated. In 1904 Ugo Monneret de Villard, recognised that the walls, which had been located during the development of Milan's sewers in 1870, were ancient. Later, in 1943, following the works for the construction of air-raid shelters in the *Piazza del Duomo*, Alberto De Capitani d'Arzago also concluded that the masonry beneath the piazza floor was of an ancient origin and probably belonged to a

⁵⁵² Plin. *NH.* 37.77.201; Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 2.2.7.

⁵⁵³ Neri et al. 2019: 80; 83.

⁵⁵⁴ De Capitani D'Arzago 1952: 3; 98; Mirabella Roberti & Paredi 1974: 13.

⁵⁵⁵ Welch 1995: 40-42.

church.⁵⁵⁶ However, it was not until the excavations in the 1960's, which took place as part of the construction of the Metropolitana Milanese, that a more complete understanding of the building was fully established. The excavations, which started in 1961, and would last until 1965, saw much of the remaining building excavated and converted into a museum space.⁵⁵⁷

Excavations of the church have revealed that the original structure was exceptionally large measuring 81.80m in length and 45.30m wide. Later, during the medieval period, the church was redeveloped with the length of the church reduced to 67m. The Late Roman church was complete with five aisles; the central aisle measured 17.50m wide with the minor aisles measuring between 5.5m and 6m.⁵⁵⁸ The excavations of the church have shown that much of the remains were severely damaged with walls only reaching heights between 0.5m and 2.30m. Furthermore, unsurprisingly, much of the decoration was damaged or indeed replaced during phases of reconstruction and development during the medieval period. Nevertheless, the excavations carried out in the 1960s have shown that both marble décor and mosaics, dating from antiquity, remain.

Marble Assemblage

Concerning the decoration of the *Basilica di Santa Tecla*, it seems likely that marble was used both to decorate the walls and floors although only a few elements survive. Given this paucity, it is difficult to judge the extent of marble used on the walls. Much of the remaining marble, all of which is white/grey, is on the walls and skirts the floor; there is little sense that marble cladding was used higher up the walls. However, there is some scope for analysis. Some frescos, which date from the 13th and 14th centuries, on the walls do remain. This might be representative of an earlier decorative approach which saw marble used in the lower parts of the walling with frescos used further up. Alternatively, limited remains from the *Battistero di San Giovanni al Fonte*, discussed below, indicated that neat elements of polychrome *crustae* decorated the walls, perhaps incorporated into the painted designs. Given the decorative approach between the two structures hints at a likeness between the buildings, as the use of black and white marble on the floor shows, it is viable that the *Basilica di Santa Tecla* also employed polychrome stone on the walls.⁵⁵⁹

Concerning flooring decoration, a significant portion remains *in situ*. This decoration, which was found beneath a floor in *cocciopesto*, was seemingly split between mosaics and marble panelling. The central aisle was adorned with marble while the other four were decorated in mosaics.⁵⁶⁰ The marble used consists of a split between black and white lithotypes, no polychrome marbles are present. The stone was carefully arranged in a pattern which consists of combined hexagons, triangles and other geometric designs (Fig. 82).⁵⁶¹ In a new study Bugini and Folli have suggested that a range of local and imported lithotypes were present in the church; the lithotypes are said to be used as part of floor decoration.⁵⁶² Unfortunately, details pertaining to how the lithotypes were used and in what quantities have

⁵⁵⁶ De Capitani D'Arzago 1952; Mirabella Robert 1963: 77.

⁵⁵⁷ Mirabella Robert 1963: 77; Mirabella Roberti & Paredi 1974: 15-16.

⁵⁵⁸ Mirabella Robert 1963: 80; Edwards 1964: 3.

⁵⁵⁹ Mirabella Roberti & Paredi 1974: 15.

⁵⁶⁰ Mirabella Robert 1963: 83-84.

⁵⁶¹ Mirabella Roberti 1984: 105-106. Bugini and Folli suggest that some 'red' stone is noted here too. However, I was unable to observe any. Bugini & Folli.

⁵⁶² Bugini & Folli 2023a: 18.

not been provided. As a consequence, it is difficult to judge this assemblage beyond simply noting that a range of polychrome stones were used.⁵⁶³ In addition to the stone, the remaining mosaics used were in a range of colours and are in fact one of the few examples of polychrome mosaics used in Milanese churches.⁵⁶⁴

Battistero di San Giovanni al Fonte

The baptistry of the *Battistero di San Giovanni al Fonte* is now located within the *Santa Tecla* complex (Fig. 83) and is the smaller of the two buildings. Mirabella Roberti and Paredi have shown that the baptistry was built during the time when Ambrose was the bishop of the city, most likely between AD 378-386.⁵⁶⁵ Although it was first identified by Monneret de Villard, like the *Basilica di Santa Tecla*, the baptistry was only subjected to a detailed excavation in the early 1960s as part of Milan's underground development.⁵⁶⁶ The structure takes the form of a large octagon with the addition of four semicircle niches and four rectangular niches. In each niche, a column on a plinth was located.⁵⁶⁷ In the centre, a large baptismal pool, also in the shape of an octagon, dominates the space. The pool, which measures around 6m and was originally misidentified as a *frigidarium*.

Marble Assemblage

The decorative approach in the baptistry is broadly similar to the associated church. The basilica's central pool was completely covered in large white slabs; the flooring around the font was decorated with black lozengers separated with bands of white stone; the rectangular niches employed black squares; the semi-circle niches used a combination of hexagons and triangles.⁵⁶⁸ This approach, which neglects the use of polychrome stone, is striking since the combination of black and white lithotypes, in such large quantities, is uncommon. Nevertheless, since it is also a feature of the decorative approach in the *Basilica di Santa Tecla* it could well be the case that the widespread use of black and white lithotypes, used in geometric formations, was a common feature of Milanese church decoration. It is also worth noting that this approach was utilised in the villas around Lake Garda.

In contrast to the ubiquitous use of black and white stone to ornament the floor, evidence for decoration on the walls indicates that some polychrome stone was employed along with white marble. In a similar fashion to the *Basilica di Santa Tecla*, the lower parts of the walls are marked by slabs of white stone used as skirting boards. However, some evidence of polychrome stone is also noted: a small number of fragments in *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Porfido Rosso*, *Serpentino*, and white and grey stone are kept in a small cabinet

⁵⁶³ Proconnesian marble, *Africano*, *Breccia Corallina*, *Cipollino Verde*, *Cipollino Rosso*, *Fior di Pesco*, *Pavonazzetto* and *Verde Antico*.

⁵⁶⁴ Mirabella Roberti 1963: 83. Mirabella Roberti says that marble 'came from the north'. This presumably refers to a quarry, but it is unclear. David 1996: 64, notes that another example of black and white, marble arranged in hexagons and triangle, has been located on Via Amedei, just a few minutes away from the *Basilica di Santa Tecla*.

⁵⁶⁵ Mirabella Roberti 1963: 90; Mirabella Roberti & Paredi 1974: 15.

⁵⁶⁶ De Capitani D'Arzago 1952: 94; Mirabella Roberti 1963: 85.

⁵⁶⁷ Mirabella Roberti 1963: 86.

⁵⁶⁸ De Capitani D'Arzago 1952: 92-95 identified the white stone as marble from Ossola, a site near Lake Maggiore.

within the church. Mirabella Roberti simply states that a few smalls element of polychrome *crustae* are attested, with no further detail provided.⁵⁶⁹

Bugini and Folli have suggested that wall veneers in a range of lithotypes were deployed: *Africano, Breccia Corallina, Breccia di Settebasi, Cipollino Verde, Cipollino Rosso, Fior di Pesco, Giallo Antico, Greco Scritto, Pavonazzetto, Porfido Rosso, Serpentino, Rosso Antico*. In addition, they have claimed that a small number of local stones such as Arzo and Majolica, and a black limestone were also part of the wall design.⁵⁷⁰ No further details concerning the usage or quantities of these stones have been provided and so, once again it is difficult to draw any further analysis. Nevertheless, in their totality, the marble assemblages from both of the churches in the complex beneath the modern Duomo, and *Basilica di San Lorenzo Maggiore*, suggest that a wide range of stones were used. In each instance especially prestigious lithotypes were used alongside local or regional stones. This not only speaks to Milan's economic and cultural prosperity during this period but also indicates that local and regional stones were well regarded, since they were deemed worthy of cladding the walls and floors of the city's great buildings. In the next section, a summary of church buildings in Rome is provided before the study of *Santa Maria Antiqua* is introduced.

Churches in Rome

'They have not only worked with me for Christ, but they have faced death for my sake, Not only I, but all the Gentile churches, owe them a great debt. Give my love to the little church that meets in their house'

Paul. Romans.16.5. (Trans: Ziesler).

Paul, in his letter to the Christians, in about AD 57, attests to the presence of Christians in Rome during the 1st century.⁵⁷¹ His letters also reveal that while Christians had a 'Church', which is to say the foundation of their religious institution, they mostly worshipped in private residences and not in public buildings.⁵⁷² Although, Krautheimer claimed that the private residences belonged to the lower and middle classes, there is in reality little detail.⁵⁷³ As it is, the labels lower class and middle class could easily be applied to everyone who was not a member of the elites.⁵⁷⁴ Moreover, accounts of wealthy Christians are not unheard of. T.

⁵⁶⁹ Mirabella Roberti 1963: 88.

⁵⁷⁰ Bugini & Folli 2023a: 18.

⁵⁷¹ Petersen 1969: 265. Petersen notes that the Greek in Paul's letter translated here as 'houses', *οἶκος*, can refer to a dwelling but also has the sense of community or family. Nevertheless, other early Christian texts (Acts 16.15; 18: 8; 20: 7; 34) shows quite clearly that Christians met in domestic spaces.

On Christians and Jews in Rome, although scholars have often defined early Christians as 'a Jewish sect' (White 2000: 700-702; Webb 2009: I) Green (2010) has shown that the Jews in Rome retained their distinctive traditions and was not the source of Christianity in the city. Instead, the Christians of Rome were something separate with a distinct identity.

⁵⁷² White 2000: 702-710.

⁵⁷³ Krautheimer 1981: 2.

⁵⁷⁴ In Brown's discussion on the social class of Christians he makes the point that in the period following Constantine's conversion, Christianity was a religion made up of people from across the social spectrum. His summary of Christian catacombs, in Rome, shows that artisans, tradesmen minor officials, and 'mediocres' (middling men) shared their religion with those who could afford marble sarcophagi and, in some instances, had 'houses sheathed with marble'. Brown 2014: 37-38.

Flavius Clemens, nephew to the emperor Vespasian and consul in AD 95, probably died as a Christian martyr.⁵⁷⁵

As noted, most Christians living in Rome prior to AD 313 most likely worshipped in domestic spaces. In Rome, these houses came to be known as *domus ecclesia* or house-churches and were occasionally altered in order to allow space for growing congregations.⁵⁷⁶ Following Constantine's Edict of Milan (AD 313), and the later Edict of Thessaloniki (AD 380), provided space to ensure that Christianity could quickly spread across the Roman world.⁵⁷⁷ In light of this, we might expect a sudden explosion of church building, characterised by brilliantly gleaming basilicas standing tall amongst the building of Rome's earlier age, all for the glory of God. Indeed, according to Eusebius, Constantine's conversion presented just this opportunity:

'On account of these things, no longer being satisfied with the older buildings, they erected from the foundations churches of spacious dimensions in every city.'

Eusebius. Hist. eccl. 8.1.5 (Trans Oulton).

Eusebius imagines that the Christians, who have long lived in obscurity, are suddenly able to lift the Church up and praise God in an environment suitable for his majesty. However, the dynamism he describes was surely exaggerated. As I will show below, the growth of Christian architecture at this time was not explosive; Christian places of worship gradually spread and were slowly aggrandised. However, despite this, some modern scholarship has seemingly taken the word of Eusebius at face value. As recently as 2009, in a fashion strikingly similar to that of Eusebius, Ramsey MacMullen envisages Roman Christians immediately hurling together immense churches, complete with 'rare marbles':

'those miles and miles of tunnels under the modern city and suburbs of Rome, in which it was once imagined that the Christians had to sustain their faith clandestinely, until, with the converted Constantine enthroned in their very midst, they could emerge to freedom of worship in the open air. They might do so, then, in the vast assembly halls the emperor built for them, sparkling with rare marbles and mosaics, in the capital at first and then throughout the ancient world.'

MacMullen, R. 2009. IX.

However, while Eusebius suggest that the old churches, which had sustained the Christians in secrecy, were quickly replaced by grand halls, in reality we find that, in Rome at least, early examples of churches were often built into existing *domus ecclesia*.⁵⁷⁸ An early example in Rome is the *Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo*, located on the Caelian hill, just to the north

⁵⁷⁵ Dio. Hist. 37. 14.1.

⁵⁷⁶ Petersen 1969; White 2000: 710-711; Webb 2001: xiii; Patrich 2008.

⁵⁷⁷ Davies 1952: 8; Petersen 1969: 266; Brown 1971a; Krautheimer 1981; Webb 2001: xii-xiii; MacMullen 2009: ix; Odahl 2010: 2.

⁵⁷⁸ White 2000: 710.

of the *Terme di Caracalla*. Prior to becoming a purpose-built church, the building had been an *insula* which seems to have been used simultaneously as a domestic building and as a place of worship.⁵⁷⁹ Other examples include the 4th century church of *Sant'Anastasia* and the 5th century church of *Santa Cecilia*, both of which were built upon pre-existing domestic spaces.⁵⁸⁰ In these instances, the scale of the new churches is not necessarily redolent of the imposing basilica that would later mark the city. However after the aforementioned AD 313 Edict of Milan, which was followed up by a further edict in AD 321, provisions to allow bequests of property and land to be made to the Church were provided. Predictably, the Church became increasingly wealthy and influential.⁵⁸¹ In Rome, this finally culminated in an array of fine new churches being established. In a number of instances, these buildings occupied spaces that earlier civic or pagan buildings had. This is apparent in the case of *Santa Maria Antiqua* which was constructed in the *Forum Romanum*, in the civic heart of Republican and Imperial Rome. This outcome has seen some suggest that churches symbolised the triumph of Christianity.⁵⁸² However, as White has argued, early churches in Rome were not distinctive structures that a bystander could easily identify as specifically Christian: there was not as yet an architectural standard that could be picked-out. Indeed, early churches, in Rome and elsewhere, combined local traditions with a reliance on standardised forms. In Rome, this saw church buildings appropriate the architectural framework of basilicas.⁵⁸³ The effect of this saw churches integrated into the local environment. *San Giovanni Laterano* is a striking example. In its first conception as a Christian building, it was composed of a long five-aisled colonnaded hall with a plastered exterior and lavishly decorated interior.⁵⁸⁴ In this way we can see that the churches in Rome did not directly replace the older institutions but instead they coalesced with them and were marked by the same architectural language. A key part of this dynamic is the way in which churches were decorated. Of course, it is well known that churches like other expansive public buildings in Rome employed marble in form of panelling and architectural elements like columns and architraves. Indeed, although almost all of Rome's early churches have since been remodelled, Christian sources from the Late Roman period reference the use of marble in churches at this time.⁵⁸⁵

Despite the large number of early Christians churches in Rome, there are very few examples of churches that have retained their original, or even the early phases, of decoration character. The church of *Santa Maria Antiqua* is exceptional in this respect since it has a large body of Late Roman marble to assess. As discussed below, unlike other churches in the city which were continuously subject to renovation, *Santa Maria Antiqua* was abandoned in the 9th century; much of the remaining marble was not repurposed. In this way, the church is unique and offers a good insight into marble use in Late Roman Rome.

Santa Maria Antiqua

Located on the Palatine hill, the structure that became the church of *Santa Maria Antiqua* dates to the 1st century AD. The original function of the building is unclear; some have

⁵⁷⁹ Petersen 1969: 267-268; Webb 2001: 101-104.

⁵⁸⁰ The church of St. Cecilia was incorporated into a *domus* that featured a private bathhouse.

⁵⁸¹ Sáry 2023: 697-699.

⁵⁸² MacDonald 1977: 12; Kalas 2017: 168.

⁵⁸³ Krautheimer 1939, 1979; Ward-Perkins 1954; White 2000: 726-733.

⁵⁸⁴ White 2000: 727.

⁵⁸⁵ Pesabene 2015: 88-291.

suggested that it was either a monumental vestibule set up by Domitian or an *athenaeum* set up by the emperor Hadrian.⁵⁸⁶ Either way, the building was later remodelled and turned into a church (Fig. 84). This transformation was dated by Rutherford, to the first half of the 6th century.⁵⁸⁷ Tea, and later Webb have reasoned that the building was transformed into a church in the 6th century on the basis of three coins of Justin II (565-579) allegedly located beneath a column in the church. However, recently, Parabeni and Hurst have noted inconsistencies in the study that initially brought notice to the coins in question.⁵⁸⁸ Hurst, like Boni before him, has argued that the structure became a Christian building in the 4th century. Hurst's analysis of the brickwork, particularly the *opus spicatum* for the flooring, along with the analysis of a coin hoard dated to AD 312 have indicated that his analysis is accurate.⁵⁸⁹

In the 6th century the church was subject to a small amount of remodelling: none of the external walling seem to have been altered. The internal section of the southernmost wall was, however, modified in order to create an apsidal section at the head of the church. Later a pre-existing ambo was restored by Pope John VII (AD 705-707).⁵⁹⁰

Once the church was established it underwent a number of decorative alterations with a succession of popes from Martin I (AD 649-653) to Hadrian I (AD 772-795) providing patronage.⁵⁹¹ For the most part, the artistic benefaction consisted of new frescos which to this day still adorn the church's walls.⁵⁹² The marble flooring however, remained unchanged from the second half of the 4th century. The motive behind the fixed design is unclear. It may reflect the fact the altering of inlaid marble flooring was a time consuming, difficult, and expensive job. By contrast, frescos could have been easily applied and are relatively inexpensive. However, it may also reflect an aesthetic preference for combining ornate marble floor designs with wall frescos.⁵⁹³

A landslide, caused by the earthquake of AD 874, badly damaged the church. As a result, Leo IV (AD 847-855) had a new church built in the forum and transferred the possessions, duties, rights and name – the new church became *Santa Maria Nova*. In the 14th century, a chapel dedicated to *Maria de Inferno* was built in the atrium of *Santa Maria Antiqua*, which was subsequently replaced by *Santa Maria Liberatrice*. In the 17th century, these chapels were pulled down. *Santa Maria Antiqua* was finally excavated in 1901 by Giacomo Boni.

The church is approached from the North facing atrium, which now bears the frescoes completed during the papacy of Hadrian I. The excavation of 1901 uncovered a number of graves, organised in neat rows, dated to the 8th and 9th centuries. The narthex, which is paved in *opus spicatum*, leads into the central nave, the nave is bordered by a corridor on each side. South of the nave a small bema and a *tablinum*, complete with an apsidal wall formed in the

⁵⁸⁶ Tea 1937; Webb 2001: 113; Rubery et al. 2021: 5. Tea is inconsistent with respect to how many coins were found. Webb states that there was three.

⁵⁸⁷ Rutherford 1902; Krautheimer et al. 1959; Osborne 1987: 186; Webb 2001: 113; Rubery et al. 2021: 12.

⁵⁸⁸ Parabeni 2011: 1003-1023; Hurst 2021:164. cf Tea 1937.

⁵⁸⁹ Hurst 2021: 161-166. How exactly the coin(s) of Justin II managed to find their way beneath a column remains unclear. The prospect of the coin(s) being left behind following a period of reconstruction has not so far been raised. See, Hurst 2021: 163-166 for a full discussion.

⁵⁹⁰ Hurst: 2021 171-173.

⁵⁹¹ Webb 2001: 113 Costambeys 2021: 373-383.

⁵⁹² Webb 2001: 113.

⁵⁹³ Mâle 1960: 82-84. Mâle has reasoned that since a number of the frescos adorning the walls depict holy figures they were most likely completed by artists who were fleeing the eastern Mediterranean, during the period of iconoclasm (c. AD 730-840).

6th century, are located.⁵⁹⁴ To the east of the *tablinum* there is the so-called Chapel of Theodotus with the Chapel of the Holy Physicians found to the west. Each of these rooms is decorated with a figurative fresco.

Decoration

It is well documented that Santa Maria Antiqua was decorated with an array of frescos. The frescos, which depict the life of Christ, the Church fathers, a series of popes, and other images from the Christian tradition were a common theme in ecclesiastical decoration.⁵⁹⁵ Over the course of the centuries some of the frescos were updated, or erased and then replaced.⁵⁹⁶ The treatment given to the frescos was not uniform across the building; in some instances frescos date from the 8th century in other places the 9th. However, it is likely that across the building most frescos were at some time altered. Bordi's recent study into the frescos' decorating the apse shows that it had ten phases of redecoration between the first half of the 4th century and the first half of the 9th.⁵⁹⁷

Concerning the use of marble, this study is primarily concerned with five assemblages excavated from the church. The first of these was assessed by Boni in 1901. The other three form the bulk of this assessment and come from a recent study carried out by Hurst and Booms.⁵⁹⁸ All three of the excavated marble assembles were used to decorate the walls of the building.

Marble Assemblage

From the 4th century, marble was used to decorate the walls of *Santa Maria Antiqua*. The use of *opus sectile* here seems to form the basis of the building's early decorative scheme. The first assemblage mentioned above was originally excavated in 1901 as part of Boni's extensive study of the buildings.⁵⁹⁹ The marble fragments, which were recently rediscovered in the storage deposit of the *Parco Archeologico del Colosseo*, are composed of 97 individual fragments of marble *crustae*.⁶⁰⁰ Along with around 50 listels, the assemblage also features a small selection of figurative elements. Notable among these pieces are elements which when fitted together depict a human face (6 x 5.5 cm), characterised by thick bushy hair rendered in *Giallo Antico*. Other pieces include a small fragment in the shape of a bent leg (4 x 4.5cm) and the hoof of an animal (3.5 x 1.4cm).⁶⁰¹ Thought to belong to the Chapel of Theodotus, this assemblage has been dated by Bordi and Guidobaldi to the late 4th century, just prior to the time when the building was first converted into a Christian site.⁶⁰²

⁵⁹⁴ Hurst 2021: 171-173.

⁵⁹⁵ Nordhagen 1962; 1968; 1978; Bordi 2021; 281-296; Pogliani et al. 2021: 299-313.

⁵⁹⁶ Bordi 2021: 397-442 For the first time, Bordi shows how plaster like other mediums can be reused and in turn considered *spolia*. Bordi notes that like other materials painted plaster is *spolia* in the sense that there is actual physical redeployment that is based on a perceived liturgical, ideological, or political significance.

⁵⁹⁷ Bordi 2021: 391.

⁵⁹⁸ For Boni's study see Bordi & Guidobaldi 2016: 364-365; Hurst and Booms study is forthcoming and I am very grateful to Henry Hurst for allowing me to use this data in my thesis.

⁵⁹⁹ Bordi & Guidobaldi 2016: 364-365.

⁶⁰⁰ Bordi 2021: 389.

⁶⁰¹ Bordi & Guidobaldi 2016: 365.

⁶⁰² Bordi & Guidobaldi 2016: 365.

It is probable that the marble here was used to decorate the church up until the 6th century, when most of the marble was removed in order to make space for wall paintings.⁶⁰³ At this time, some of the stone was left in place and incorporated into the subsequent 6th century decorative scheme. Similarly, skirting boards in white/grey marble remained in place. This development, which sees much of the marble removed so wall frescos can be incorporated is perhaps initially surprising since it is often considered that marble was the most sought after mode of decoration. However, decoration, like any other part of an architectural plan, needs to match the needs of a building's users and, as noted above, we find that the frescos, which replaced the marble, deploy Christian themes. Given that the marble excavated by Boni has been in place prior to the Christianisation of the building it is entirely plausible that marble décor was not Christian art and therefore needed replacing by frescos, which can more easily illustrate the various stories and events from the Christian tradition. Indeed, in the instances where marble did remain it seems to have provided geometric embellishments to larger examples of explicitly Christian art.

In their respective studies of some of the frescoes present at *Santa Maria Antiqua* Bordi, and Knipp, have shown that fragments of marble and glass *incrustationes* were part of larger fresco designs. Knipp's study has shown that this practice was employed in the vestibule while Bordi has assessed the three Christological cycles present in the sanctuary.⁶⁰⁴ Although not much of the marble is left the remaining stone noted is often *Serpentino* with or *Porfido Rosso*, indicating that these two lithotypes retained their primacy even when much of the other marble elements were removed.

The other assemblages of marble from *Santa Maria Antiqua* are those collected by Hurst and Booms.⁶⁰⁵ It is unclear how the material from these assemblages was deployed. They comprise of three groups labelled 126, 243, 243a. Assemblage 126, which is the largest, single grouping is composed of 272 fragments from the south west part of the aula; Hurst and Booms have concluded that they were initially excavated in 1901. Assemblage 126 is notable for having a large proportion of 'circle in square pieces' and, strips (between 2.3-2.8 cm) and moulded *fascias* (5.5 cm in length). Groups 243 and 243a contains 199 fragments between them. These assemblages were probably from a drain in the building; the elements labelled 243a are similar to those from 243 and come from a crate which had a missing label (Fig. 85; Fig. 86; Fig. 87). Regarding the range of lithotypes, we can see that 13 different typologies are present.⁶⁰⁶ As the graphs indicate, *Giallo Antico* and *Pavonazzetto* were abundant, which both lithotypes popular across all three assemblages. In fact the similarities across the assemblages is a clear trend which emerges here with other stones including *Bianco Nero*, *Greco Scritto*, and *Porfido Rosso* featuring prominently.

Concerning the treatment of the floors, the central nave was floored first in *opus spicatum* and then with slabs of white granite and white marble. The bema, to the south of

⁶⁰³ Bordi & Guidobaldi 2016: 364-365.

⁶⁰⁴ Bordi & Guidobaldi 2016: 364-365; Bordi 2021: 288; Knipp 2021: 183-186: Both Bordi and Knipp note that while there are few remnants of either glass or marble, the type of plaster employed to attach the pieces to the walls remains *in situ*. Knipp notes that the use of marble in concert with painting was likely employed prior to the re-development of the space that took place under the papacy of John VIII (AD 705-707). Indeed, on the basis that *San Vitale* in Ravenna (AD 548) and the *Basilica Eufraiana* at Poreč (AD 559) employ a similar pattern, Knipp has suggested that the decoration took place in the 6th century.

⁶⁰⁵ Hurst and Booms. Forthcoming.

⁶⁰⁶ *Africano, Bianco Nero, Cipollino Verde, Giallo Antico, Greco Scritto, Pavonazzetto, Porfido Nero, Porfido Rosso, Rosso Antico, Serpentino(verde), Serpentino Nero, Grainto Troad, Verde Antico, and white/grey stone.*

the building, was originally completed with *opus sectile* and later *opus Alexandrinum* and then, in the 6th century, *sectile-tessellate marmoreo*.⁶⁰⁷

The next section, which assesses a church from inland Apulia provides a stark contrast to *Santa Maria Antiqua*, located in the centre of Rome. Yet, like its Roman counterpart, the *Battistero di San Giovanni* was home to a large body of decorative material

Canosa, Apulia

At its height, at the centre of a prestigious diocese, Canosa was home to powerful bishops who not only took part in religious administration but also engaged in civic matters and could occasionally perform diplomatic duties.⁶⁰⁸ The bishops of Canosa controlled a number of smaller centres such as Cannea, Barduli (modern Barletta), and Turenium (modern Trani).⁶⁰⁹ Evidence for bishops in Canosa starts with the identification of Stercoreus who was in attendance at the Council of Serdica in AD 343.⁶¹⁰ Between Stercoreus and the 6th century another five bishops are documented.⁶¹¹

The bishops in Canosa led the construction of churches in the town. For example, the aforementioned Stercoreus is said to have built the *Basilica di San Pietro* although there is no archaeological evidence for him doing so.⁶¹² Instead, Volpe's study has indicated that the Christian complex known as *San Pietro*, like a number of other religious structures in Canosa, was likely built during the 6th century by one of Canosa's best-known bishops Sabinus (AD 461-566), as indicated by bricks stamped with his monogram.⁶¹³ Sabinus, who was in his position for a little over 52 years (AD 514-566), was famed for the religious structures he commissioned: a text known as the *Historia vitae inventionis translationis sancti Sabini episcopi* bestowed Sabinus with the epithet '*venerabilis vir restaurator ecclesiarum*' indicating that he restored churches too.⁶¹⁴ According to the tradition Sabinus is purported to have overseen the construction of the *Basilica di Santi Cosma e Damiano* (later re-dedicated as *San Leucio*), and the *Chiese dei Salvatori*.⁶¹⁵ In this way, Sabinus was part of an ecclesiastical expansion which saw a number of Italian bishops including Elias of Grado and Ambrose of Milan, looked to extend the church's influence through the construction of religious buildings.⁶¹⁶ This apparent boom in church buildings indicates that Canosa was not only an important administrative site but a wealthy Christian centre while also signifying that the authority in the town lay with the Church. However, it is also noteworthy that during this time there was a continued investment in public baths. So far, two public baths in the city have been recorded. In both cases, the structures were 2nd century buildings redeveloped in the 5th or 6th century.⁶¹⁷ With this in mind we can see that investment in Canosa was more holistic and nuanced than a simple expression of ecclesiastical power. Instead, the investment into

⁶⁰⁷ Hurst 2021:170.

⁶⁰⁸ Anon Valesianus: 15:88.

⁶⁰⁹ Volpe 2007a: 134. Trani became an autonomous episcopal seat in the 6th century.

⁶¹⁰ Falla Castelfranchi 2014; Volpe 2007a: 136.

⁶¹¹ Volpe 2007a: 136; 2007b: 24.

⁶¹² Falla Castelfranchi 1981:143-144; d'Angela 1984: 341; 1992; Campione & Nuzzo 1999.

⁶¹³ Volpe 2007b: 137

⁶¹⁴ Hist. Vitae. S. Sabini.2.6.

⁶¹⁵ Volpe 2007b: 136.

⁶¹⁶ Wataghin 2006: 294-303.

⁶¹⁷ Giuliaini & Leone 2005: 152; Pensabene 2011: 73; 80-82; Maréchal 2020: 303.

churches and bath complexes is indicative of a dynamic urban centre in the Late Roman period.

Battistero di San Giovanni

The *Battistero di San Giovanni*, one of Canosa's oldest and most important religious structures, is located in the south-eastern part of the town near the *Via Traiana*. According to the *Historia Vitae*, the *Battistero di San Giovanni* was commissioned by Sabinus of Canosa in the mid-5th century.⁶¹⁸

As Giuliani and Leone have shown, the site upon which the baptistery occupies had had been in use since the Republican period and only falling into abandonment in the 19th century.⁶¹⁹ A 2001 study carried out by the University of Bari found that the building was built on the remains of a *domus*.⁶²⁰ A subsequent study a year later in 2002, headed by the *Soprintendenza Beni Archeologici della Puglia* and the University of Foggia, was able to evidence the antiquity of the site following the unearthing of a bronze table, uncovered in the 17th century by an agricultural worker. Dated to 223 BC it was inscribed with the list of decurions.⁶²¹ However, despite this extended period of occupation, evidence for much of the Republican and Imperial periods is scarce.⁶²² As noted, the site was later transformed into a Christian complex which thrived until at least the 7th century. After the complex declined the site was subsequently used in the medieval period before becoming agricultural land. The building was subsequently abandoned until the 19th century when it was used as an *ad hoc* olive oil production centre.⁶²³

In 1967 the first attempts to systematically assess the site were carried out. This resulted in the broad plan of the baptistery being identified.⁶²⁴ Between 1971-1973 the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali, Architettonici, Artistici e Storici della Puglia* embarked on a conservation process and it was at this time that the baptistery's vast mosaic was rediscovered. This project was followed up a decade later by the *Soprintendenza Archeologica della Puglia* who uncovered an apsidal pool along with a series of walls, parallel to each other, on an east-west axis. These walls stretched eastwards, away from the baptistery, and were attributed to a basilica built at the same time as the baptistery or alternatively an atrium in front of the baptismal buildings. Later, in the 1980s, a small number of graves, attributed to the 7th century, were uncovered on the site.⁶²⁵ The aforementioned 2002 study led by the *Soprintendenza Archeologica della Puglia*, in conjunction with the University of Foggia, carried out an extensive survey of the baptistery in order to better understand the chronology of the various phases of construction and redevelopment. Concerning the Late Roman structure, this study located another wall which measured 16.14m and was constructed in *opus listatum*. The length of this wall, which is on a north-south axis, outlined a vast space that likely extends beyond the current archaeological site. Additionally, the study located five buttresses, evenly spread out at 2.5m intervals, attached to the wall, which despite some

⁶¹⁸ Volpe 2007b: 137.

⁶¹⁹ Giuliani & Leone 2005: 150.

⁶²⁰ Cassano 2005; the date of the *domus* is not recorded.

⁶²¹ Silvestrini 1999: 195-205.

⁶²² Giuliani & Leone 2005: 150.

⁶²³ Giuliani & Leone 2005: 147; Also see, Cassano 1968

⁶²⁴ Giuliani & Leone 2005: 147.

⁶²⁵ Giuliani & Leone 2005: 147.

heavy restoration, have been identified as either 4th or 5th century.⁶²⁶ The nearby *Terme Lomusco* featured masonry comparable to that employed on the buttresses.⁶²⁷ To the north of this building is the baptistry, already discussed, which itself was preceded by a large atrium measuring 30 x 26.6m. The 2002 campaign was able to identify the foundations and floor of both the baptistry and atrium; Giuliani and Leone note that the attribution of the baptismal building to the patronage of bishop Sabinus provides a precise date for the construction of the building.⁶²⁸

The monumental baptismal building is a circular dodecagon which is composed of an inner and outer wall. Access to the baptistry is made from an eastern door which opens into a narthex. The baptistry is the only part of the structure that maintains high walls. A portion of the south-east section retains some mosaic flooring. The atrium is composed of two porticoed halls, 5m wide, and a central open space which measures about 18 x 23m.⁶²⁹ At the eastern limit it is complete with an apsidal basin. Limited evidence from the corridors which flank the central hall, indicates that polychrome mosaics were used to decorate the flooring

Here it is worth considering the similarities between the *Battistero di San Giovanni* and one of Canosa's other religious buildings, the *Basilica di San Pietro*. The basilica, like *Battistero di San Giovanni*, was constructed during Sabinus' reign as bishop of Canosa.⁶³⁰ Moreover, both buildings employed a porticoed atrium with the dimensions in both instances fairly similar: *Battistero di San Giovanni* measures 30 x 26.60m and at the *Basilica di San Pietro* measures 30 x 27m; the width of the porticoed wings was 5m in both structures. Additionally, as observed by Giuliani and Leone, the use of polychrome mosaics in the flanking corridors of the atrium is a feature of both buildings. In short, we can observe a degree of continuity in the form, but also the decorative approach, across both buildings. This detail is worth bearing in mind during the discussion of the marble assemblage belonging to *Battistero di San Giovanni*, discussed next.

Marble Assemblage

No in depth studies have analysed the marble belonging to the *Battistero di San Giovanni*, prior to this thesis. I have been granted access to the baptistry's marble assemblage which in total weighted 470.12kg.⁶³¹ *Battistero di San Giovanni* had an exceptionally large variety of lithotypes with 14 different polychrome typologies observed.⁶³² I have split this assemblage into four groups, which are separated by the thickness: 0-1cm = 11.45kg; 1-2cm = 214.kg; 2-3cm = 192.77; 3-4cm = 51.32. The range of thicknesses here can, perhaps, provide some insight into how the stone was employed: on the walls or as flooring, for example (Fig. 88; Fig. 89; Fig. 90; Fig. 91).

⁶²⁶ Giuliani & Leone 2005: 151.

⁶²⁷ Bertocchi & Bianchini 1992: 736-740.

⁶²⁸ Giuliani & Leone 2005:152.

⁶²⁹ Giuliani & Leone 2005:152-153. Giuliani & Leone have suggested the use two porticoed entrances to the atrium is indicative of influenced from eastern architectural practices.

⁶³⁰ Volpe 2007b: 136-137.

⁶³¹ Many thanks to the *Soprintendenza Archeologica, Bella Arti, e Paesaggio per la province di Barletta-Andria-Trani, e Foggia* who kindly provided me with permission to assess the assemblages. I would like to give special thanks to Ing. Sabino Germinario from the Comune di Canosa and Renato Tango from the Fondazione Archeologica Canosina who were both on hand to assist me throughout my time in Canosa.

⁶³² *Africano, Breccia Corallina, Cipollino Verde, Granito Troad, Greco Scritto, Moschinata Verde, Pavonazzetto, Portasanta, Porfido Rosso, Rosso Antico, Settebasi, Serpentino, Verde Antico*, and white/grey stone.

While no archaeological records pertaining to the excavation of the stone are available, the remaining evidence is such that we can at least be sure that a large surface area of the baptistry was adorned with marble veneers. On the basis of DeLaine's analysis, which has determined that a 1m³ block of hard stone can be turned into 40m² of veneer, the studied assemblage from *Battistero di San Giovanni* could adorn a surface of approximately 7m².⁶³³ It should be noted that the assemblage here is mixed and therefore DeLaine's figures cannot be precisely applied. Despite this the calculation remains useful. Indeed, the extent of the assemblage is such that it provides a great deal of insight in terms of the lithotypes used and their relative quantities.⁶³⁴ The range of different lithotypes is extensive. Moreover, while the assemblage is, for the most part, made up of smooth fragments there are also a few examples of ornately carved pieces and listels. In addition to these assemblages, a number of bases and cornices in white/grey stone as well as *Rosso Antico* and *Verde Antico* have been identified.

The analysis of the stone illustrated obvious preferences. Primarily, we see a preference for polychromy and variety. More exactly, the separation of the various thicknesses has indicated that in some instances some lithotypes were deemed more suitable to certain usages. The thinnest pieces (0-1cm), for examples, show a comparatively high volume of the prized *Serpentino*, with *Porfido Rosso* also featuring prominently too. *Granito del Foro* is only attested in this grouping. This might indicate that these pieces formed parts of *opus sectile* arrangements. It is equally plausible that the stone with measure between 1-2cm and 2-3cm also adorned the walls.

While some stones, were mostly saved for very thinly sliced elements, other lithotypes feature prominently across multiple assemblages: *Cipollino Verde* one of the best attested polychrome lithotype across all four assemblages while *Portasanta* and *Giallo Antico* dominate all but the final grouping. With respect to the thickest elements, 88% of the stone assessed are white lithotype with polychrome stone only accounting for 12% of the stone deployed. In light of the other assemblages, it seems that colourful stone was more likely to be applied to delicate walling and it may have the case that the church floor was largely white.

Concerning the types of lithotypes and the range employed, 18 different typologies were used. As a way of comparison, the *Santa Maria Antiqua*, in the heart of Rome, features 13 lithotypes. The extent of the variety here, and the overall quantity of stone used, is indicative of a wealthy well-established centre, which we know Canosa to have been at this period. More generally, the use of such a range of stone, found here and elsewhere, is testament to the sustained levels of commercial connectivity and economic vitality that marks the Late Roman era. Simultaneously, the investment in marble here is redolent of the decorative and architectural pretensions of the elites throughout much of the Roman period. In this way, stone use here is indicative of the value placed in decorative stone and illustrative of its continued role as a desirable commodity at this time.

⁶³³ DeLaine 2007:180. The marble assemblage from *Battistero di San Giovanni* has a total weight of around 470.12 kg. In order to calculate the volume of that marble assemblage, I have divided the weight of 470.12 kg by the density of hard stone/marble which is 2,700 kg m³. The resulting figure for the volume of the marble assemblage from *Battistero di San Giovanni* is 0.1741 m³. Subsequently, to estimate the area covered by the marble assemblage I have multiplied the resulting volume of marble, 0.1741 m³, by DeLaine's figure of 40 m²/m³ which equals 6.96 m².

⁶³⁴ The marble was stored in a basement under the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Canosa di Apulia in crates all marked CN06 Saggio IIB *San Giovanni* U.S 308.

Summary

Marble use in Italian churches was organised in different ways across the peninsula. In each of the three regions studied here there is distinct regional variation. However, these variations sit alongside examples of peninsula-wide consistency. In each of the regions assessed here, there is a clear indication that marble was well regarded with continuous investment in stone. The similarities in the ways the marble was used are clear: in each region, we find large slabs of marble used alongside ornate *sectile* elements; marble was used to adorn floors as well as walls; both reused and newly quarried material was likely employed. At a basic level, this demonstrates that investment in ecclesiastical architecture was a feature of Late Roman society. This was consistent across the peninsula and indicative of a broad consensus in the minds of architects, commissioners, and benefactors.⁶³⁵ Much of this is unsurprising. Similarly, the range in lithotypes employed is, initially, to be expected.

However, the nature of the variation in the lithotypes employed does give a little cause for surprise: in the south, in Canosa, 14 separate lithotypes are observed; at Rome 14 lithotypes are also observed. However, in Milan eight polychrome lithotypes were employed. Although this will be expanded on below, it is worth highlighting the nature of the variety shown here. Notwithstanding the prosperity of Canosa during the Late Roman period, as laid out above, it is surprising that a church situated in inland Apulia had a more extensive array of lithotypes than in two imperial capitals. As indicated above, the range of marble, coupled with the volume of stone, used in Canosa is indicative of a thriving centre with the capacity and desire to invest heavily in religious buildings; the existence of two bathhouses demonstrates that investment extended beyond purely religious structures, however. Nevertheless, the situation is at odds with what we might usually expect. Apulia's geographic location is a key factor here. Facing eastwards towards Constantinople and other major cities, and the source of much of the polychrome stone, the region was well placed to benefit from stone coming westwards. As will be outlined in Chapter VI a significant portion of the region's marble, and non-marble, economy was plugged into the Eastern Mediterranean.⁶³⁶ In this light, the range of lithotypes employed is more easily explained. As for the churches in Rome and Milan, viewed individually on their own terms, they all display a good range of marble typologies indicating that the preference for an assortment of stone remained a peninsula-wide phenomenon. However, specifically on Milan, the fact the churches studied displayed a large body of local stone there is a hint that the city was developing an ornamental style of its own thus suggesting that while polychromy was well regarded across Italy regional variation was thriving.

Another feature of the marble studied is the relationship between marble and other decorative modes. We have seen that marble was rarely the only medium used in the decoration of buildings. This chapter has detailed the various ways in which marble was used alongside mosaics and paintings. Two striking features of this dynamic are noted here. The first concerns the use of mosaics in floor adornment. In this study two of the case studies the *Basilica di Santa Tecla*, and the *Battistero di San Giovanni*, along with the addition of *Basilica*

⁶³⁵ See Chapter IV, on public bathhouses.

⁶³⁶ Marano 2016: 123-124; 131; Arthur 2021: 455; Gliozzo et al. 2023.

di San Pietro, were complete with five aisles.⁶³⁷ In each instance, the four aisles which flanked the central aisle, or the nave, were complete with mosaic decoration. In the case of the *Basilica di Santa Tecla*, we know for sure that marble was employed here.⁶³⁸ While there is a temptation to conclude that the deployment of marble in the central aisle is indicative of a sense of prestige associated with marble, in truth this supposition is inconclusive. Mosaics, after all, were regularly employed in prestigious locations.⁶³⁹ The wall paintings in *Santa Marta Antiqua*, were similarly, prestigious and there is little to suggest that the deployment of marble superseded them. In short, marble use should be viewed holistically, as part of broader decorative patterns. The instances of the *Basilica di Santa Tecla* and *Santa Maria Antiqua* make this clear.

On *Santa Maria Antiqua*, the church was primarily decorated in fresco wall paintings along with marble cladding and *opus sectile*, used to complete the flooring. The wall paintings on display were updated several times during the life span of the church and are noted for their emphasis on Christology. The desire to decorate a church with events from the life of Christ goes some way to explaining why frescoes were employed: painting and repainting walls are less labour-intensive and more cost-effective than replacing marble fittings; and, significantly, the mimetic aspect of pictographic forms made the stories depicted easier to tell and with their ideas universally communicated.⁶⁴⁰ Writing in the late 6th century Pope Gregory the Great (AD 540-604) alerts us to the importance of paintings asserting that they were for people who: 'are ignorant of letters, to learn what had been done...by turning their eye to the story itself'.⁶⁴¹ This shift away from the aniconic, was not a 6th century development. Paulinus of Nola (AD354-431) had made a similar point several centuries earlier.⁶⁴² Nevertheless, the energy spent on continually replacing, and reinterpreting, frescoes is indicative of an increasingly admired decorative form. As it is, several Late Roman churches in Rome and elsewhere have retained some of their early frescoes, most notably *Santa Maria Maggiore* and *San Martino ai Monti*, which in the case of the latter were certainly redone over time.⁶⁴³

⁶³⁷ Krautheimer 2000: 132-133; Yegül & Favro 2019. Krautheimer asserted that Rome's Lateran Basilica (c.AD 350) had established some elements of a church architecture on the Italian peninsular. However, Yegül & Favro have shown that early church architecture was reliant on Roman public architecture.

⁶³⁸ The Apulian churches are without a significant portion of *in situ* stone and so it is impossible to know what decorated the central aisle.

⁶³⁹ James 2017.

⁶⁴⁰ Aronberg Lavin 1990: 1.

⁶⁴¹ Greg. Great. *Lib.* 11. *Ep.* 13. (Trans. Schaff). Also see, Kessler 1985.

⁶⁴² Die Nie 2005: 2.

⁶⁴³ Davis-Weyer & Emerick 1984: 21-22.

Part C

CHAPTER VI: Marble Panelling in Late Roman Italy, Themes and Discussion

Architectural decoration in Late Roman Italy was characterised by extensive marble use. This thesis has investigated this phenomenon in detail by identifying and quantifying a variety of marble assemblages from across Late Roman Italy. As a result a number of emergent themes have developed.

The first section of this chapter will consider regional trends, with the Milanese and Garda sites considered before moving on to Rome and Ostia, and finally Apulia; peninsula wide trends are then discussed. The next section considers the discreet application of marble in the different building types studied here. After these somewhat comparative sections, thematic issues including the economic factors which impacted the use of veneers; the impact of *spolia* in Late Roman Italy; the contrast between literary trends and the archaeological realities; aspects of design; and, finally, attitudes towards localism are all debated.

Regional Variation

Approaches to decoration saw some lithotypes utilised widely across the Roman world. Stones such as *Cipollino Verde*, *Serpentino*, *Porfido Rosso*, and to a lesser extent Proconnesian marble are all noted in the Western Mediterranean as well as in the East, where they were quarried. Their popularity was observed by Roman writers, and has been acknowledged by scholars ever since. However, the way lithotypes were employed differed greatly. On the Italian peninsula, regional attitudes towards popular stones are identifiable. Significantly, many other lesser-known varieties were only utilised in specific regional environments.

The importance of regional lithotypes has until recently been overlooked; lithotypes fashionable in antiquity remain fashionable in modern scholarship. In recent years, however, the idea that prestigious lithotypes were often used in concert with local or regional stones has gained more traction. The rise of regional studies, which look to connect small regional zones with the wider Roman environment, has brought the use of local and regional lithotypes into focus. These studies have considered closely the deployment of lithotypes quarried and then employed in the nearby vicinity. De Stefano's work into the distribution of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* has highlighted deployment of this particular lithotype in Apulia.⁶⁴⁴ Similarly, Pages' study of commerce in Northern Italy, has shone a light on the importance invested into local marble in the region.⁶⁴⁵

This study looks to build on this shift in emphasis by considering how the case studies assessed here fit into their own regional environments. The impact of external factors, which influenced the deployment of local stone is considered too. The breadth of this study which sees Northern, Central, and Southern Italy assessed means that a range of localised trends can be observed.

⁶⁴⁴ De Stefano 2015.

⁶⁴⁵ Page 2022. Also see, Terracina 1991; Folli and Ferrario 2002; Previato & Mareso 2015; Bugini & Folli 2016.

Milan, Lake Garda, and intra-regional variation

In Northern Italy a large portion of foreign lithotypes are employed alongside a variety of local stones. The result of this thesis, which has been carried out by an analysis of assemblages from Milan and Lake Garda, and a review of earlier studies, is that intra-regional variation was a feature of stone use in this part of Northern Italy, during the Late Roman period. This trend was a result of the necessities associated with overland trade of marble, which serviced Northern Italy.

The case studies assessed in this thesis provide some challenges since not all the stone was quantified. The partially quantified assemblage from the *Terme Erculee*, in Milan, is marked by a dominance of two lithotypes; *Pavonazzetto* and *Giallo Antico*, which account for 51% and 41%, of the assemblages respectively.⁶⁴⁶ *Serpentino* (c. 5%) and *Porfido Rosso* (c. 2%) account for the remainder of the quantified assemblage (Fig. 70). As an isolated case, this data is somewhat unremarkable. Yet, the use of *Pavonazzetto* and *Giallo Antico* in tandem is observed elsewhere in the city. As discussed in Chapter V, Neri et al.'s study of the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* also revealed that *Pavonazzetto*, followed by *Giallo Antico*, were the polychrome stones used the most.⁶⁴⁷ Consequently, although the dataset is limited, we can begin to appreciate a sense of marble use in Late Roman Milanese public buildings. What is more, the decorative choice made in these instances seems to be exclusively Milanese since just a short distance away, in the villas around Lake Garda, there is a different approach to marble décor with different lithotypes popularised. Here we find a combination of imported lithotypes as well as local and regional varieties which are not observed in Milan.

The breakdown of marble lithotypes at the *Faustinella Villa*, on the edge of Lake Garda, shows, as in the Milanese buildings, that *Giallo Antico* (18.75%), then *Rosso Antico* (14.76%) are the most widely distributed stones. However, other additional eastern stones, not present in Milan, are also noted: *Cipollino Verde* (c. 10%), *Africano* (c. 7%), and, *Breccia Corallina* (c.5%). Furthermore, *Pavonazzetto* (c.2%) , so pervasive in Milan, only accounts for small amount of the of the stone used. Although the rarity of *Pavonazzetto* at the Faustinella Villa may appear immaterial, the prevalence of the stone in Milan is such that the scarcity around Lake Garda is plausibly indicative of a choice defined by local taste. In addition to the foreign imports, it is significant that a number of local stones from the Lessini and Berici mountain ranges - mountains which are located to the east of Lake Garda - have also been identified.⁶⁴⁸ Although the stones have not been counted, their presence, sourced from a quarry in the vicinity of the villas, exposes the taste for a decorative choice which in this instance is buoyed with local resources.

It is true that the data here comes from a range of different buildings: that marble used in domestic structures often differed from the stone used in public buildings; different types of public buildings were often decorated in distinctive ways too. Nevertheless, as it is, the data from *Terme Erculee*, the *Faustinella Villa*, along with the information from *Basilica di San Lorenzo* indicates that stone use in Northern Italy was not uniform and that even in an area as small as the Milan-Lake Garda zone differences in stone use are apparent. The evidence from the *Faustinella Villa*, in particular, indicates that local lithotypes played a key

⁶⁴⁶ As noted in Chapter IV, not all the stone from these baths has been published. However, Sacchi and Marchisio (2019), note in their study the *Pavonazzetto* and *Giallo Antico* account, between them, for 40% of the entire stone.

⁶⁴⁷ Neri et al. 2019: 84-85.

⁶⁴⁸ Roffia et al. 2009:560-569.

role here since they could, alongside foreign imports, provide the impetus for localised decorative choice.

Concerning the deployment of local and regional stones here, the study is impacted, by the challenges that come with assessing white and grey lithotypes. The principal challenge concerns the identification of the stones in question. In many cases, although by no means all, the local and regional stones deployed are often white/grey lithotypes which, generally speaking, need to be subject to archaeometric and petrographic analysis, in order to secure a precise identification. Black stones, and some white/grey limestones too, often require similar sort of examination. The utility of studies carried out by Folli and Ferrario, Betori et al., and Marano, which I will come to shortly, is that they include carefully identified white stones. Terracina's work on Milan also includes a large proportion of locally-sourced white lithotypes.⁶⁴⁹ For the most part, however, a precise analysis of the stones has not taken place.

A range of white/grey lithotypes, as well as the other stones which cannot be identified by eye, are noted at the *Basilica di Santa Tecla* and the *Battistero di San Giovanni al Fonte*. Limestones used in the *Terme Erculee* have not been scientifically identified. In these instances, we can only speculate about the provenance of the white stone. Indeed, the most recent study of limestones from the *Terme Erculee* has forcefully speculated that the stones used were quarried near Milan since the locally quarried stones are well attested in Lombardy.⁶⁵⁰ Despite the conjecture, the argument made is convincing. Certainly, the studies carried out in this thesis imply that there was a proclivity for local lithotypes. The study of *Terme Erculee* revealed that while some of the white/grey stone employed came from The East, *Marmor Lesbium*, and *Bardiglio*, sourced in Carrara, was also attested.⁶⁵¹ Since 76% of the material studied was either white or grey marble, with only 21% of the stones being polychrome, it is plausible that a large portion of the stone used in these baths was locally quarried.⁶⁵²

On the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*, the invaluable study led by Neri has also established the presence of white lithotypes: they account for 41% of the total assemblage.⁶⁵³ Although the stone is not identified, it is eminently plausible that the lithotypes used were sourced locally in a fashion similar to the *Terme Erculee*. The white stone deployed in the Lake Garda villas allows us to draw a firmer conclusion. Roffia et al.'s analysis of the marble from the villas at Desenzano and *Toscolano* have shown that a number of locally sourced white lithotypes were deployed.⁶⁵⁴

Regarding polychrome lithotypes, while it is true that foreign marble was used it is also the case that both in Milan and around Lake Garda locally or regionally quarried stones were employed in significant quantities. Returning to the *Terme Erculee*, as outlined by Bugini et al., a number of local polychrome limestones, along with the black limestone, were also used to decorate the baths.⁶⁵⁵ Equally important for the study of local stones, Neri and her

⁶⁴⁹ Terracina 1991.

⁶⁵⁰ Bugini et al. 2018: 119-120.

⁶⁵¹ Bugini et al. 2018: 199. An additional unidentified white stone was also present.

⁶⁵² Bugini et al. 2018: 126.

⁶⁵³ Neri et al. 2019: 85.

⁶⁵⁴ Roffia et al. 2009:560-563;566-569. At Desenzano, white *Biancone* limestone, and a number of other (unidentified) medium-grain white stones. The villa at Toscolano employed a number of other locally quarried white marbles and limestone.

⁶⁵⁵ The limestones cited by Bugini et al. is not part of the quantitative analysis that was undertaken. Consequently, it is difficult to know exactly how they were employed and how prevalent they were. The stones

colleagues have identified an abundance of the local *Nero delle Prealpi* in the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* complex, thus highlighting a strong local trade in the region. What is more, the presence of two other local lithotypes, *Breccia del Lago di Garda* and *Majolica* limestone further relays the reliance on local or regional markets. These markets have also impacted the stones employed around Lake Garda where a number of polychrome lithotypes, sourced very near to the villas, were employed as walling and in *opus sectile* arrangements.⁶⁵⁶

In sum, it is evident from the data presented here that in this part of Northern Italy there was widespread distribution of local lithotypes in tandem with a number of fashionable foreign stones. Furthermore, the emergence of popular local or regional lithotypes across the region was one of the factors which saw intra-regional variation thrive.

The intra-regional variation identified here feeds into the broader context of marble use in Northern Italy, where the diffusion of local lithotypes, alongside marble from the east Mediterranean basin, engendered bespoke decorative choices. Other studies on the deployment of decorative stone in Northern Italy similarly indicate that distinctive decorative choices were made across the region. Pertinently, Page's extensive study of commerce in Northern Italy, which focused on the inland trade, observed that during the Late Roman period the exchange in ceramics reflected a similar dynamic to the trade of foreign marble veneers.⁶⁵⁷ Ceramics, both amphora and fine wares, relied on long-distance trade since much of what was sourced came from North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.⁶⁵⁸ By observing the importance of overland and oversea transport, Page points out that flat lands to the east of the region helped secure the trade of foreign imports, since they could be shipped up the Adriatic before being moved inland.⁶⁵⁹ As it is, the nature of these supply chains, which facilitated the trade of ceramic wares deep into the Northern Italian interior, do not seem to have been used as a means of transferring marble into Italy's northern hinterland. Why this might be is at this stage unclear. Northern Italy's inconsistent topography, which includes hilly and mountainous areas, provides a barrier to the movement of heavy marble cargoes; costs associated to the movement of marble are not necessarily the same as those link to the transportation of ceramics. Further still, the ready supply of local marble may have, in some parts of the Northern Italy, lightened the burden of imported material somewhat. The second point certainly seems credible on the basis of the relative distribution of lithotypes in the region.

At Italy's current northeast boundary, close to the sea at Aquileia, Previato and Mareso have observed the pervasiveness of lithotypes sources in The East, with c. 68% of the stone coming from either Asia Minor (c. 38%) or Greece (c. 27%).⁶⁶⁰ Marano has observed the presence of white Thasian marble in nearby Veneto, this time employed during the 5th century.⁶⁶¹ Somewhat further inland, at Brescia, Folli and Ferrario's study of white lithotypes sees stone from the Eastern Mediterranean account for c. 48% of the total assemblage, with

employed include: *Pietra di Botticino*, *Pietra di Verona*, *Pietra di Vicenza*, *Pietra di Zandobbio*, and so far unidentified black lithotypes probably from Lombardy.

⁶⁵⁶ Roffia et al. 2009: 560-563; 566-569. At Desenzano, *Pietra di Verona*, *Sacglia Rossa*, the white *Biancone* limestone, and a number of other medium-grain white stones. The villa at Toscolano employed *Pietra di Verona* and a number of other locally quarried white marbles and limestone.

⁶⁵⁷ Page 2022: 253-269.

⁶⁵⁸ Page 2022: 201-205; 234-235.

⁶⁵⁹ Page's study largely accounts for modern Lombardy and Veneto.

⁶⁶⁰ Previato & Mareso 2015.

⁶⁶¹ Marano 2006: 118-119.

c. 33% of the stone sourced in The West.⁶⁶² As the assemblage from Brescia hints, sites located to the west were marked by a decrease in the proportion of eastern lithotypes uncovered, with local stones making up the shortfall. This dynamic is noted in Milan and elsewhere in the region. Indeed, if we return to Milan, Francesco Terracina's study of *opus sectile* and panelling from various urban sites from the city, from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, revealed a significant reduction of eastern lithotypes, compared to the sites closer to the Adriatic sea.⁶⁶³ In fact, although c. 41% of the stone uncovered came from Asia Minor, mainland Greece, or the Aegean islands, a larger proportion came from the Italian peninsula (c. 47%), with the largest single regional assemblage coming from so-called Italian Alpine quarries (c. 39%). Additional sources include Egypt and North Africa (c. 10%), and Gaul (c. 1%). Likewise, at Como, just north of Milan, a small assemblage of veneers is marked by an even split between white/grey lithotypes and polychrome stones. Notably, the most dominant lithotype is white/grey stone from Musso (c. 19%), a quarry in the vicinity of Como. Another white limestone has been employed widely too, however, its provenance has not been identified. Concerning polychrome lithotypes, most come from The East although the Western Giallo Antico (c. 12%) is the best attested.⁶⁶⁴ Meanwhile, the most extreme version of the shift in favour of local stones comes from Susa and Aosta, two Alpine cities in Italy's far west, where 100% of the marble deployed, during the reign of Augustus, was sourced in Italy.⁶⁶⁵

The range of different types of stones, used across Northern Italy, is a trend that likely emerged during the Augustan period and seems to have developed into a local tradition. Encouraged by a range of practical and economic reasons, perhaps in concert with less prosaic motivations, Northern Italy, has since this time, been home to a number of micro-regions. The deployment of marble, studied in this thesis, correlates rather closely with this dynamic and, consequently helps expand our understanding of the diversity of marble use in the region during the Late Roman period. Specifically, the difference in stone used in Milan compared to that at Lake Garda is suggestive of intra-regional variation and trends which have not before been fully appreciated. Indeed, while Page's study was able to outline regional differences across Northern Italy, here we can see that even within the region there was significant flexibility in terms of the stone used. The motivation for the diversity in stone use will be discussed below. The situation in Rome and Ostia, however, differs. As the next section outlines, marble use across the two cities is mirrored with similar styles in both cities emerging.

Rome and Ostia

In his book, *Rome: Portrait of a City*, Krauthemier tells us that in the early 4th century, wines, oil, grain, timber, and marble continued to unload at Ostia and Portus before being moved into Rome.⁶⁶⁶ Certainly, Martin's analysis of amphora supports Krauthemier's claim.⁶⁶⁷ Martin has shown that a large volume of amphora continued to be brought into Ostia; North

⁶⁶² Folli and Ferrario 2002. 11% of the lithotypes have not been identified.

⁶⁶³ Terracina 1991: 159-164; Page 2022: 163; 172.

⁶⁶⁴ Bugini & Folli 2016: 74-77.

⁶⁶⁵ Betori et al. 2009: 90-98.

⁶⁶⁶ Krauthemier 2000: 4.

⁶⁶⁷ Martin 2008: 109. Martin notes that North African trade was reliant on *garum* and oil. No wine was imported from the region at this time.

Africa in particular continued to dominate the Ostian market with 61% of all amphora imports originating from the region. Similarly, Krauthemier's reference to marble was also accurate.

Although the continuous process of spoliation and reuse has seen a large body of material redeployed, in a way that obscures the ancient past, recent studies have demonstrated that large quantities of marble were imported into Rome, during the Late Roman period. Russell, in his study of shipwrecks with stone cargoes, reminds us that Rome was still the central drop-off point for stone in Italy, for ships coming from North Africa and The East.⁶⁶⁸

The 3rd or 4th century AD wreck (c. AD 280-350), located at Sicily's south-east extreme, at the Isola della Corrente, was carrying an exceptionally heavy cargo, c. 350 tonnes, of Proconnesian marble. Likewise the Capo Granitola D wreck (c. AD 350-350) seems to have been heading to Rome before being wrecked off the coast of Sicily, south of modern Marsala. Carrying a similarly heavy cargo, weighing c.350 tonnes, the haul was mostly composed of architectural elements in Proconnesian marble.⁶⁶⁹ The size of the freight not only shows that expansive trade in marble continued but is also indicative of the popularity of eastern stone. However, it should be noted that smaller vessels also imported stone into Italy. A wreck, this time dated to the 6th century AD, was loaded with a small selection of Proconnesian marble architectural elements, at Cefalù on Sicily's northern coast.⁶⁷⁰ Further evidence for the trade of stone into Rome comes from Bruno et al., who have shown that during the 4th and 5th centuries AD both white marble, and black marble from Göktepe were used widely for portraiture in Rome and Ostia, as well as other locations on Italy's west coast.⁶⁷¹

The continuous importation of marble into Rome and Ostia provided both cities with vast quantities of foreign stone. Equally, the limitations associated with the overland trade of Italian marble, highlighted below, may have exacerbated a reliance on foreign imports to these cities.⁶⁷² As a consequence, Roman and Ostian buildings were clad in a range of lithotypes, many of which were quarried in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, despite the abundance, the assemblages from this thesis have indicated that some lithotypes were especially popular culminating in a decorative style observable at both Rome and Ostia.

The quantified data from this thesis included 22 different lithotypes from Rome and Ostia. The most widespread stone was *Giallo Antico* (16.28%). From the stone studied at Ostia, the largest single body of material in this thesis, *Giallo Antico* was the most popular lithotype in three of the five quantified *domus* studied and the second most popular in the other two, with *Cipollino Verde* proving popular as well. It is evident that in Late Roman Ostia a taste for yellow marble supplemented by lithotypes with green and red/purple hues was prevalent: the colour schemes noted in *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, the *Porta Marina Domus*, and the *Domus dei Pesci* are all notable for their use of these palettes. Equally, albeit less obviously, the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria*, and the *Domus del Ninfeo* all employed large amounts of yellow and green lithotypes.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁸ Russell 2013: 334b; 2012: 535-537.

⁶⁶⁹ Russell 2021: 102.

⁶⁷⁰ Purpura 2004: 121-125. Purpura, suggests that the ship was originally part of Justinian's military campaign. However, the existence of carefully carved marble elements is difficult to dismiss. It may well be the case that the existence of Proconnesian marble elements feeds into the idea that Justinian consciously exported Proconnesian marble as a means of displaying his own and Rome's pre-eminence. See Chapter II.

⁶⁷¹ Bruno et al. 2019: 462-467.

⁶⁷² Russell 2018: 140.

⁶⁷³ Whereas the *serpentino* is present in the *Porta Marina domus*, *Cipollino Verde* was utilised in the other *domus* studied.

Importantly, the data from *Santa Maria Antiqua*, in Rome, indicates that *Giallo Antico* was particularly widespread (c. 28 %) with *Pavonazzetto* (c. 20%) and *Serpentino* (c. 7%) both well attested also. In effect, the colour palettes employed at Ostia mirror those used in Rome. This general point has already been observed by Frazer who remarked upon the similarities between the marble in the *Domus di Junius Bassus*, dated to AD 331, and the stone employed in Ostia, particularly, the *Porta Marina Domus*.⁶⁷⁴ More recently, Hagan and Kiilerich have drawn similar conclusions.⁶⁷⁵ Further, observing more than just the colours deployed, Kiilerich has speculated that since the marble décor in the *Domus di Junius Bassus* and the *Porta Marina Domus* is so similar, both featuring ferocious wild animals hunting weaker prey, it is plausible that both buildings may have been designed and fitted by artisans from the same workshops.⁶⁷⁶

The similarities in the lithotypes used and the arrangement of the stone, at Ostia and Rome is not limited to the assemblages studied in this thesis. Indeed, returning to the *Domus di Junius Bassus*, Beccati and Hagan demonstrated the continuous esteem particular lithotypes such as *Giallo Antico*, *Serpentino*, *Porfido Rosso*, were held in.⁶⁷⁷ An even more extensive range of stone, this time in the guise of floor panelling, comes from the *Villa dei Quintili*, located to the south of central Rome.⁶⁷⁸ The villa had been an aristocratic residence until AD 182 before it became an Imperial residence. The villa slipped into disuse in the 4th century. The marble flooring, some of which remains *in situ*, was complete with a range of Eastern lithotypes. Although the stone has not been quantified, a study of the villa has demonstrated the stone was used in a number of rooms throughout the villa. We can see that *Bardiglio*, *Giallo Antico*, and *Palombino*, the only non-eastern stones identified, were used across the entire villa.⁶⁷⁹ At Ostia, Massimo David's in-depth study of a former *mithraeum* has shown that, in the middle of the 4th century, the building was decorated with 16 coloured marbles were used; 82% lithotypes being polychrome with only 18% in white stone, including Proconnesian marble. *Africano* is the predominant lithotype, accounting for 40% of the stone used, with *Giallo Antico* also present in large quantities (c. 30%).⁶⁸⁰

In the light of this evidence, it is clear that stone from abroad remained attractive to those in Ostia and Rome. Equally, the continuous investment in foreign stones is indicative of the economic potency which the two cities continued to maintain. Yet, it should also be noted that the limited trade of local stone in Rome and Ostia is not surprising. Russell has suggested that the transport costs associated with moving Luna marble, from the inland quarries at the foothills of the Apuan Alps, into Rome might have been more expensive than bringing Proconnesian marble into the city.⁶⁸¹ In a fashion similar to the cities near the Adriatic, discussed next, Ostia and Rome retained its access to the sea and therefore access to stone delivered from outside of Italy. However, more than this, there is a sense of a burgeoning style in the two cities which favoured a select array of stone.

⁶⁷⁴ Frazer 1971: 320.

⁶⁷⁵ Hagan 2018: 326.

⁶⁷⁶ Kiilerich 2014: 187.

⁶⁷⁷ Beccati 1969: Appendix; Guidobaldi 1995: 69-70; Hagan 2018.

⁶⁷⁸ Fichera et al. 2014: 81-82.

⁶⁷⁹ Frontoni & Galli 2014: 149-160. On *Palombino*, a white stone, there remains some disagreement on the source of the stone. Gnolli (1988) suggest that the stone was sourced from Egypt. No other white stones at the villas have been identified.

⁶⁸⁰ David 2015: 38; 2018: 123.

⁶⁸¹ Russell 2018: 140.

Across both Rome and Ostia we can see that assemblages analysed in this thesis fit into the wider narrative of stone use which is to say that a select number of foreign lithotypes were used widely across both cities. At the same time, evidence from both Rome and Ostia indicates to some degree that there was consistency in the lithotypes used: with yellow and green stone being especially popular. Yet, this aesthetic preference noted in both cities went beyond a partiality for certain marble lithotypes or colours. Instead, other factors were likely impactful too.

The Adriatic, Apulia, and The East: a continued exchange?

Apulia's location on the southeast of the Italian peninsula helped ensure that the region was well positioned to be able to maintain a strong relationship with the Eastern Mediterranean. In a tradition that dates to the growth of Greek colonies in the Archaic period, Apulia was able to maintain long-lasting ties with The East. Of course, the region was not entirely unique in this way: Sicily and Calabria held similarly resilient bonds with the East while Ravenna, to the northeast, became a Constantinopolitan metropole, looking towards the Bosphorus for political, military, religious, and artistic assurance.⁶⁸² Apulia's own relationship with the Eastern Mediterranean, especially Constantinople, was nonetheless strong. This is reflected in the literature and in archaeological record. Procopius tells us how hundreds of cavalrymen safely landed at the southern Apulia ports of Brindisi, Taranto, and Otranto before moving on to Rome during the Romano-Gothic war of the 6th century.⁶⁸³ With respect to archaeology, Arthur notes that the Apulian trade in ceramics, produced in Asia Minor was exceptionally intense, with table wares from Asia Minor far surpassing any other in the region; although amphoras, with wine and oil, did come from North Africa a large portion came from the Aegean, Asia Minor, and the Levant.⁶⁸⁴ Indeed, a number of studies have revealed an extensive distribution of different eastern ceramics wares in Apulia.⁶⁸⁵

The widespread diffusion of wares produced in the Eastern Mediterranean is summarised by Christie who notes that following the Vandal occupation of North Africa exports of African sigillata into Italy were reduced, with eastern-produced types taking their place.⁶⁸⁶ The arrival of ceramics from the Eastern Mediterranean signals a change of economic practices with a range of pottery types, from different parts of the East imported into Italy. Concerning Apulia specifically, various Apulian inland and coastal sites record the extensive presence of a number of different ceramic types including Phoenician sigillata, Late Roman C wares, Late Roman Painted Wares, and Late Roman Amphoras 1,2,3, and 4.⁶⁸⁷ Equally, Apulia was not simply a passive recipient in this exchange. Vroom has shown that a number of wares that were most likely produced in Apulia were traded in across the Adriatic, mostly into Albania, but also as far away as Malta.⁶⁸⁸ Against such a lively commercial background, the popularity of eastern lithotypes on the Italian side of the Adriatic is not surprising, particularly along the central and southern Adriatic coast.

⁶⁸² Borri 2021: 84-85; Brown 1984: 21-37; Christie 1989: 254; Herrin 2009: 64-69; 2013: 30; 2021; Herrin & Nelson 2016; Sklobar 2021: 3.

⁶⁸³ Procop. *Goth.* 6.5.1.

⁶⁸⁴ Arthur 2021: 455.

⁶⁸⁵ Arthur 2021; Vroom 2021.

⁶⁸⁶ Christie 1989: 259.

⁶⁸⁷ McCallum & Hyatt: 214: 174.

⁶⁸⁸ Vroom 2021: 51.

Concerning the trade of marble, the assemblages from this thesis are concerned with a public bathhouse at Aeclanum, in the hinterland to the west of the region, a church complex and a villa, both are situated on the flatlands south of Foggia. Quantified data from the *Battistero di San Giovanni* and Aeclanum's Northern bath complex have been produced. Detailed published data from the villas at Faragola is available, although it is not quantified. Concerning Faragola, the major study of the villa, led by Volpe, has indicated that the majority of the stone was utilised as floor slabs; white lithotypes, which have not been precisely identified, were the most common stone. A single slab of *Cipollino Verde* was identified, while the pink *breccia*, *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, sourced locally, was seemingly abundant. In addition to marble used as revetment, a number of other lithotypes such as *Cipollino Verde* and *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Porfido Rosso*, and *Serpentino* were all in use in small *opus sectile* arrangements. The proliferation of white stone as the flooring indicates was one of the most widespread lithotypes in the villa.⁶⁸⁹ The utilisation of white stones in other parts of Apulia, and around the Adriatic more generally, suggest the white lithotypes employed were probably sourced from the East. Transport costs associated with moving white stone overland likely limited the use of Luna marble and other white Italian stone. *Giallo Antico*, therefore, was the only imported stone present that was sourced in the West. The assemblage from the nearby *Battistero di San Giovanni*, in Canosa, once more reflects this taste for eastern lithotypes.

Stone from the *Battistero di San Giovanni*, is dominated by *Portasanta* (c. 14%), *Cipollino Verde* (c. 9%), and *Giallo Antico* (c. 6%).⁶⁹⁰ Once again, Eastern lithotypes dominate the stone used with the extensive use of *Giallo Antico* providing an outlier.⁶⁹¹ At the Northern baths in Aeclanum, lithotypes from the Eastern Mediterranean are equally abundant. However, across the city more broadly, there is a slight variation with respect to the dominance of marble sourced in the Eastern Mediterranean basin.

The results of the case study from these baths show that *Cipollino Verde* was by far the most dominant stone with 41% of the share; *Greco Scritto*, the next most-attested stone accounted for c. 8%. Several other lithotypes have less than 2% of the total share. A very small quantity of typologies, *Broccatello* and *Giallo Antico*, are the only non-Eastern lithotypes employed. Broadly, the stone from Aeclanum's baths reveals a similar dynamic to the stone presented at the villa at Faragola. However, the stone from other buildings in Aeclanum provides a more nuanced overview of stone use in the city. Although I have speculated that the white stone employed at Faragola was most likely imported from the East, the presence of Luna marble at Aeclanum's theatre, alongside a limited amount of *Bardiglio* that exists in the baths, indicates that white lithotypes quarried in the east such as Pentelic, Thasian, or Proconnesian marble were not entirely dominant.⁶⁹² Indeed, the use of *Bardiglio* and Luna, both of which are quarried in Italy's north, indicates a capacity to employ stone quarried on the peninsula. Moreover, as with *Bardiglio* and Luna marble, the application of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* at Faragola is another example of Italian lithotypes being exploited. Of course, there are differences in the application here. The deployment of white stones sourced in Italy could reflect issues concerning availability or economic imperatives; there is less of a sense of an aesthetic priority associated with specific white lithotypes. With respect to the deployment

⁶⁸⁹ Russell 2018: 140.

⁶⁹⁰ No white lithotypes have been identified.

⁶⁹¹ *Giallo Antico* was used in abundance in the Western Mediterranean. Its presence in contexts which are largely dominated by lithotypes imported from the East should not come as a surprise. See, Röder 1988.

⁶⁹² Astolfi et al. 2023: 177-178.

of *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, at Faragola and elsewhere, the situation is reversed. The use of a brightly coloured *breccia*, sourced locally, arguably indicates that a specific stone was sought. One explanation, advocated for by De Stefano, is that *Breccia Rosato Gargano* was used as a so-called ‘substitute marble’, most likely used in place of *Portasanta*.⁶⁹³ Although substitute marbles were deployed in some instances, and have been discussed at some length in modern scholarship, I am not convinced that the use of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* at Faragola was an example of this practice.⁶⁹⁴ As I will discuss shortly, in more detail, it is my understanding that the close proximity of the *Breccia Rosato Gargano* quarry to Faragola speaks to a concerted attempt to use local stone.

The analysis of the assemblages here indicate that during the Late Roman period, the majority of stone used in Apulia was imported from The East, with only a few instances of local, or Italian stone deployed. While Apulia’s relationship with the Eastern Mediterranean was not exclusive – stones quarried in The East were used across the peninsula – the assemblages studied here feed into other studies which have highlighted longstanding economic tradition whereby stone was imported, from the Eastern Mediterranean, into the towns and cities of Italy’s eastern coast.⁶⁹⁵ What is more, beyond the assemblages assessed here, plenty of additional studies have considered the importance of this relationship during the Late Roman era. For instance, Del Pietro’s 2009 study showed that a number of architectural elements from Salento, in the south of Apulia, which seem to have been employed between the 4th and 5th centuries AD, were completed in Proconnesian marble. Additional panelling in *Cipollino Verde*, *Greco Scritto*, and Proconnesian marble have also been identified.⁶⁹⁶ A century prior, the trade in *Cipollino Verde* into Apulia, specifically Herdonia, thrived into the 3rd century AD.⁶⁹⁷ In addition to Apulia, evidence from sites located further north indicate that lithotypes imported from the East retained their popularity along much of Italy’s Adriatic coast. A recent analysis of imported marble into Ravenna adds further credence to the notion that the marble trade between the Italian side of the Adriatic and the East thrived during between the 5th and 6th centuries with over 1500 tonnes of marble identified as Proconnesian marble imported into the city, in order to serve ecclesiastical structures.⁶⁹⁸ A 2016 study led by Tůmová revealed that more than 82% of the marble from the late 6th century church complex of *San Severo*, actually located within the walls of Ravenna’s port Classe, came from the Eastern Mediterranean.⁶⁹⁹ Likewise, the church of San Vitale was also noted for its imported stone, with Proconnesian marble especially widespread.⁷⁰⁰ As observed by Sodini, in the Late Roman period the stone was not only a lithotype from the East, but one closely associated with the new Imperial capital at Constantinople.⁷⁰¹ Moreover, specific decorative designs, which had originated in the East,

⁶⁹³ De Stefano et al. 2018: 153-154.

⁶⁹⁴ Williams-Thorpe & Potts 2002: 185; Russell 2013: 166.

⁶⁹⁵ Antonelli 2007: 107-109; Marano 2019: 44.

⁶⁹⁶ Del Pietro 2009.

⁶⁹⁷ Masi et al. 1995: 35.

⁶⁹⁸ Harper 1997: 146. Baldini 2019: 89-114; 2021: 709; Baldini et al. 2020. Harper’s calculation excludes furniture such as ambros, floor and wall revetment, as well as sarcophagi.

Russell’s survey of Late Antique shipwrecks shows that the weight of the marble transported fluctuated. In some instances, the weight could be less than 10 tonnes. In other cases, however, the amount of stone could range from 100-350, sometimes even more. Russell 2013: 351-354.

⁶⁹⁹ Pensabene & Barsanti 2008; Tůmová et al. 2016; Tůmová, & Cirelli 2022.

⁷⁰⁰ Christie 1989: 266; Deliyannis 2010: 231.

⁷⁰¹ Sodini 2002:129; Leidwanger et al.: 2021 297.

were also in favour in Ravenna; this spread of Byzantine style ‘basket capitals’ and church decoration in Ravenna is long established.⁷⁰²

Overall, it seems that during the Late Roman period, Apulia was well connected to, the Eastern Mediterranean’s stone economy with stone imported from Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt. The addition of local stones and lithotypes from North Africa, Spain and, Gaul, presents a region with sophisticated models of overland and oversea trade. Moreover, the presence of architectural and sculptural fashions in the region indicates that Apulia was more than a commercial hub. Instead, we get the sense that the region was one which remained fully integrated with the Eastern Mediterranean basin sharing political, economic, and cultural values.

Summary

The regional variation in stone used across the Italian peninsula has been clearly demonstrated here. Of course, while there is significant overlap in the terms of some of the stones used, especially in major conurbations, the degree to which localised trends have emerged is striking. In Milan, and the area around Lake Garda, it has been shown that while imported stones were used, a large proportion of local and regional lithotypes were also applied. As Page has shown, geography plays an important role. Cities, towns, and villas located away from the coast or away from navigable rivers and waterways, were difficult to supply with stone. A consequence of this situation is that we can see micro-regional trends emerge impacting the decorative styles. We can also see the impact of local stones within the region, and how, even with a limited local space, stone use varied considerably. In Rome and Ostia, there is evidence for the continued importation of stone. Importantly, it is also apparent that local trends developed, this is especially obvious in the domestic buildings in Rome and Ostia whereby a large body of material has been studied: the widespread use of yellow, green, and red/purple stone is noticeable. Rome’s position as a culturally significant place surely impacted stone use in Ostia with fashions in the former capital copied at the port city. Analysis of case studies, from Apulia, see the region fit in with the wider developments observed along the Adriatic coast: the region was heavily impacted by fashions emanating from the East. In this way, Apulia’s reputation as a part of the peninsula that looked eastward remains valid.

Stone use across various regions on the Italian peninsula was just that, regional. As each case study has shown, trends emerge that are specific to each place. In this way, we are reminded that Italy was not a single entity or an uncomplex place. Instead, the peninsula was one with distinct local and regional traditions, fashions and needs, all of which had the capacity to impact stone use. The next section investigates how decorative stone was applied across different building types and consider the various trends that emerge.

⁷⁰² Ward-Perkins 2000: 75.

Buildings

Domestic Buildings

The deployment of marble in the homes of the Italian elites, during the Imperial period is well established, having been described so by contemporaries and borne out by the archaeological data.⁷⁰³ Marble panelling, architectural elements in stone, mosaics, wall paintings, as well as fixtures and fittings were all part of the decorative milieu, while elements of public architecture are applied to domestic architecture; the columns and pediment, along with expansive marble panelling in the *Domus del Protiro* at Ostia are a case in point.

The sense of continuity is no surprise. Nevertheless, there is a Late Roman character to the remaining assemblages, thus providing a certain guide of stone use in domestic settings, in particular the sheer variety of the décor on display. The principal focus, is the range of lithotypes used. In Ostia, the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* features ten identified lithotypes; the *Domus del Ninfeo* has 13. A slight anomaly here is the *Porta Marina Domus* which only features four polychrome lithotypes. Yet, even in this instance, the vibrancy of the arrangement is such that there is no sense of monochromy. Away from Ostia, around Lake Garda, all three of the villas studied feature 12 varieties of polychrome marble. The villa at Faragola featured seven identified polychrome lithotypes. This demand for a variety and polychromy, while not unique to domestic buildings, is evidently a feature of domestic architectural decoration at this time. As I will show below, this sits in contrast with Sidonius' description of his own house, which he had claimed was frugally decorated.⁷⁰⁴

At the same time, the deployment of polychrome stone in this way feeds into the Late Roman literary motif which suggests that Imperial Roman decorative traditions, particularly concerning marble, were replicated in Late Roman Italy. As I have illustrated already, Pliny and Seneca, like Ammianus rejected the practise of deploying polychrome marble as wall décor at homes. Additionally, beyond the literary sources, the evidence from the case studies illustrates that the application of marble was also rich and varied with a multitude of marble lithotypes used. Further still, we find a contrast between the lithotypes used to decorate floors and those used to clad walls can also be noted. The section to follow will first consider *domus* architecture before moving on to the villas studied.

Urban Domus

Concerning the Ostian *domus*, where the stone from five *domus* was quantified, we can see that there was a fashion for opulent *opus sectile* flooring with a city wide, coherent, colour palette. This is not to say that all the *domus* looked the same: the overall effect in the *Domus del Ninfeo* differs greatly from the appearance of the *Domus delle Colonne*. Equally, it is important to remain aware of the nature of this research which often has to contend with incomplete evidence. Notwithstanding this, results from Ostia suggest that the most popular choice for lithotypes used to decorate the flooring was *Giallo Antico* with lithotypes like *Cipollino Verde*, *Greco Scritto*, *Pavaonzetto*, and *Portasanta* also well attested across the city.

⁷⁰³ Vit. *de Arch.* 7.5.1; Clarke 1991: 39;43 58; Van de Liefvoort 2012; McAlpine 2013.

⁷⁰⁴ Sid. *Apoll. Epist.* 2.2.

Although no two *domus* are identical, the consistent deployment of the same select lithotypes in Ostia is indicative of a certain aesthetic fashion within the city. Moving beyond the lithotypes deployed, other trends are harder to establish.

The consistent approach to flooring provides a discernible index of aesthetic choice which can be observed across the city. Floor decoration was largely colourful, particularly in large rooms. For example, in both the *Domus del Ninfeo* and the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, the largest rooms in the house are marked by ornate and highly decorative flooring designs. Equally, the marble in decor in the *aula* of the unfinished *Porta Marina Domus* is especially lavish. With this in mind it seems plausible that the grand atrium in the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* (Room 16), which has been stripped of most of the remaining stone, was likewise clad in polychrome marble.

However, the range of styles applied to marble clad walls proves perplexing. Firstly, there are fewer examples of well-preserved wall decoration to consider. As discussed in Chapter III, *domus* such as the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo* and the *Domus del Ninfeo* leave only the most fragmentary scraps of marble. Indeed, the figural wall painting in Room 10 of the *Domus del Ninfeo* reminds us that marble was one of several mediums used to decorate walls; wall paintings, were readily used in Ostia *domus* until the 4th century AD, but were less likely to survive in the archaeological record. Nevertheless, what the marble assemblages studied do indicate is that variation was a key part of the decorative approaches. Indeed, more so than with the floor decoration, the approach to marble clad walls in Late Roman Ostia differ greatly. In contrast to the flooring, the remaining wall décor in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* (Fig. 8) is restrained: they are clad largely in white and grey stone, with the exception of some bands of *Rosso Antico* used to frame the white/grey revetement. The approach taken here, chimes with application to the marble clad walls of the 3rd-century *Cortile del Dioniso domus*.⁷⁰⁵ In a similar way, the remaining section of the south wall in the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* is decked out only in white stone. Yet, the flexibility which defines wall decoration in Late Roman Ostia is characterised by Room 15 in this *domus* since the north wall features a diverse selection of different polychrome lithotypes.⁷⁰⁶ Indeed, the decorative approaches to wall décor in Ostia is varied, so that while the walls in *Domus di Amore e Psiche* are subtly ornamented, both the flooring and walling in the *Porta Marina Domus*, were decorated with equal lavishness with the flooring and walling both dealing in the same palette with yellow, green, and red/purple, marble employed in a distinctly elaborate style.

So far then, I have looked to establish that Late Roman decoration in Ostia was not always bound by specific decorative styles. Instead, along with mosaic work and paintings, residents deployed marble in a number of different fashions and styles. Broadening the scope of this analysis the next section will consider *domus* from beyond Ostia. As I will show, the decorative approach taken in some of the Ostian *domus* reproduces, quite closely, decorative approaches taken elsewhere on the Italian peninsula. Indeed, not only do we find contemporary decorative similarities but the evidence presented below shows that *domus* from as early as the 2nd century deployed some of the decorative motifs found in Late Roman Ostia.

⁷⁰⁵ Pavolini 2002: 328. Unlike the walling in *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, which survives only a few centimetres above marble revetment, the decorated wall in the *Cortile del Dioniso* is better maintained and retains a single rectangular shaped piece of plaster which is painted bright red. Although only one piece remains, this approach to decoration may well have been replicated elsewhere in Ostia.

⁷⁰⁶ The stone studied in the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* comes from two different room: the walling from Room 16 the flooring from Room 10.

As outlined, the analysis of other *domus* indicates that the aesthetic preferences for polychromy extended beyond Ostia. The following section will assess this consistent aesthetic and consider what the implications were for the deployment of stone.

A study by Previato and Mareso of two 2nd century AD *domus* in Aquileia reveals striking similarities to the stone used in Ostia. In the so-called *domus* of the 'Bestie Fertie', *Greco Scritto* (c. 8%) and *Cipollino Verde* (c. 7%) were the most common polychrome lithotypes used for slabs. In the *domus* of 'Tito Macro' *Greco Scritto* (c.8%) is the second most commonly applied stone with *Cipollino Verde* (c. 11%) the most popular stone.⁷⁰⁷ Both of these lithotypes are well attested in Ostia. It is striking then that Ostian *domus* decorated in the 4th and 5th centuries are decorated in a fashion similar to *domus* used in the 2nd century. Likewise, another *domus*, this time from the 4th century AD, the *Domus dei Putti Danzanti* also located in Aquileia, features a number of lithotypes present in Ostia, laid out in the style defined as the Q2 arrangement by Guidobaldi, with a significant portion of *Africano* (c. 14%) and *Cipollino Verde* (c. 10%), as well as *Pavonazzetto* (c. 10%), employed.⁷⁰⁸

At Rome, an analysis of a 4th-century *domus*, now located beneath the Palazzo Valentini, once more reveals a consistent approach to marble decoration in urban *domus*.⁷⁰⁹ Although the building may have originally been a single *domus* it was subsequently rearranged and split in two, at some point during the late 2nd century.⁷¹⁰ Both subsequent buildings, 'Domus A' and 'Domus B', were later reorganised with the final antique phase occurring in the 5th century AD.⁷¹¹

The first space, *Domus A*, was seemingly handsomely adorned. So far, however, only two rooms have been preserved but originally the *domus* extended both southwards and to the east.⁷¹² In these spaces, Napoli and Baldassarri noted that while the flooring is marked by mosaics the walls were 'marble veneered'. The lithotypes used have not been recorded.⁷¹³ Fortunately, the *Domus B* remains home to a significant portion of its ancient decoration.

With both a rich flooring and walling décor *in situ*, part of the 'Domus B' complex includes a small private bathhouse now known as the *Piccole Terme*.⁷¹⁴ The marble décor from this bathing space, and the remaining residential area, is extensive with a variety of lithotypes noted. Interestingly, for this study, there are similarities between marble use in this space and the *domus* in Ostia. Indeed, to some extent the walling in *Domus B* matches some of the styles found in Ostia: the grey and red marble used to adorn the walls of the apsidal *aula* is evocative of the walling in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*.⁷¹⁵ The approaches taken to

⁷⁰⁷ Previato & Mareso 2015: 303-305. In both assemblages, polychrome elements account for 49% of the total assemblage with white stones, some of which are unidentified, accounting for 51%. Concerning the deployment of stone, it seems like the authors have separated the assemblages into 'floor and wall coating' (one group) and 'architectonical elements'.

⁷⁰⁸ Guidobaldi 2005: 1-19; Gomez, et al. 2012:313-314; Rinaudo 2012.

⁷⁰⁹ Baldassarri: 2017.

⁷¹⁰ Napoli & Baldassarri 2015: 95.

⁷¹¹ Napoli & Baldassarri 2015: 95-96.

⁷¹² Napoli & Baldassarri 2015: 95.

⁷¹³ Napoli & Baldassarri 2015: 96.

⁷¹⁴ Napoli & Baldassarri 2015; Baldassarri 2017.

⁷¹⁵ Napoli & Baldassarri 2015. The authors do not precisely identify any of the lithotypes featured here with the exception of the black and white *occhio di pavone*.

flooring décor are even more similar. In the same apsidal area, the flooring in *Domus B* was made up of a series of interlocking square and triangle tiles, in Guidobaldi's Q3 arrangement, with *Africano*, *Breccia Corallina*, *Cipollino Verde*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Porfido Rosso*, *Serpentino*, and a small portion of *Broccatello*, as well as a range of white and grey stone are all present.⁷¹⁶ Examples in Ostia of this sort of arrangement and colour palate are noted in Room C of the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* and in Room I of the *Domus delle Colonne*. Indeed, the very same designs and lithotypes are noted in a room tentatively labelled as a *apodyterium*, situated in the *Piccole Terme*.⁷¹⁷ Furthermore, analysis of another section of the flooring in the *Piccole Terme* indicates that it was remarkably similar to marble employed in Ostia, particularly Room D in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, and the overall design in the *Porta Marina Domus*. Made up of *Giallo Antico*, *Pavonazzetto*, *Porfido Rosso*, and *Serpentino*, the stone is arranged with central *tondos* and other detailing in either *Porfido Rosso* or *Serpentino*, with *Giallo Antico* and *Pavonazzetto* providing the background.⁷¹⁸

The consistencies in colour palette and arrangement in the *opus sectile* from the Ostian *domus* noted here and *Domus B* reflects a uniformity in the aesthetic values between Rome and Ostia. This is unsurprising, since, as noted above, all marble use at Rome and Ostia indicates a strong relationship between the cities. What may surprise us, however, is that beyond the Late Roman buildings which populate this study there was a decorative resemblance with *domus* from 2nd – century Aquileia (*Bestie Fertie* and *Tito Macro domus*). This potentially speaks to a consistency in the marble use in urban *domus* across the Italian peninsula not yet identified.

Villas

Concerning stone from the villas, less quantifiable data is available. The stone from the villa at Faustinella, the only villa where it has been possible to quantify the stone, reveals the *Cipollino Verde* (c. 19%) and *Rosso Antico* (c. 15%) are the most popular lithotypes. However, beyond Faustinella, the preference for polychromy is identifiable. Here, and the other two Lake Garda villas, 12 individual lithotypes are present. Moreover, the assemblages from the Lake Garda villas reveal that there was a consistent approach to the lithotypes used. There are only a few lithotypes which do not feature in all three villas. At Faragola a more limited selection of seven polychrome stones has been identified. Nevertheless, all but one of identified polychrome lithotypes used at the villas at Faragola, the local *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, are attested at Lake Garda. Consequently, there is a sense here that certain polychrome stones were considered appropriate for villas decoration. Indeed, in contrast to the deployment of white stones, where local lithotypes were abundant, we can see that when it came to the decoration of villas, for the most part, polychrome marble from across the Roman world were prized. The next section will look to contextualise the deployment of polychrome stone via a comparison with other villas on the Italian peninsula.

Villas: comparative studies

⁷¹⁶ Baldassarri 2017: 253. These lithotypes have not been quantified.

⁷¹⁷ Baldassarri 2017: 253.

⁷¹⁸ Napoli & Baldassarri 2015: 97; Baldassarri 2017: 253.

Beyond the villas studied here, we can see that other villas also employed a large array of marble varieties. As observed in Chapter II, polychrome marble was often a principal feature of elite villas. Namely the grand 4th century AD *Piazza Armerina* villas in Sicily and the later the 6th-century *Villa dei Quintili*, which was occupied until the 6th century and employed 12 different polychrome lithotypes as well as a number of other white/grey stones, remain renowned for the extent of variety of the stone deployed.⁷¹⁹ In brief, stone use from these villas reflects a similar penchant for a variety of coloured lithotypes observed at *Faragola* and Lake Garda.⁷²⁰ While a preference of polychromy could easily be dismissed as an obvious statement, studies on a number of exceptionally large villas in southern Gaul have indicated that white marble was preferred to polychrome stone.⁷²¹ Although this is a limited comparison, the villas in Gaul remind us that polychromy was not inevitable and its use across Italy is a direct manifestation of choice.

Summary

The evidence from the *domus* and villa sites presented here varies greatly. Although in some instances the data is patchy it nevertheless provides us with enough information to draw a number of conclusions. Firstly, we can confidently say that colour and variety was a hallmark of elite homes in Late Roman Italy: both the urban *domus* and villas studied here are marked by the range of polychrome lithotypes; variety, which applies to this range of lithotypes, also applies to the different decorative registers used in some homes whereby lavishly decorated floors are contrasted to more austere walls. This contrast in styles provides a measured feeling of decorative dexterity; this blend of styles side-by-side is in itself a demonstration of decorative variety. Identifying this as an Italian phenomenon is difficult. Certainly, studies from villas in southern Gaul have indicated that white stones were preferred to polychrome material.⁷²² In Iberia, however, polychrome stones seem to be widespread, even if the variety is not quite as extensive as in Italy.⁷²³ What we can do more easily, however, is note that the decorative trends in Late Roman Italy were heavily impacted by decorative styles observed in earlier periods, located on the peninsula.

In her study of the *opus sectile* from *Domus B* at Rome, Baldassarri reasons that the ornateness of the stone used, and the expense it likely incurred, is illustrative of wealthy elites in Rome looking to reassert themselves and the city as politically and culturally significant. Baldassarri cites a passage from Ammianus Marcellinus as evidence for a pseudo-court culture emerging in Rome. Yet, in reality, Ammianus is simply complaining about the depraved life led by soft elites, in a fashion not too dissimilar to Seneca a number of centuries earlier.⁷²⁴ Pensabene too has also understood the grandness of the Late Roman *domus* as a means of emulating court life.⁷²⁵ Yet, while the general position that Baldassarri and Pensabene take may have some credibility, namely the implementation of architectural flourishes which were

⁷¹⁹Fichera et al. 2014: 81-82; Pensabene et al. 2015: 641-649; Belfiore et al. 2016: 237.

⁷²⁰Quarried near Smyrna in Eastern Anatolia, *Greco Scritto* has in the past been associated with public decoration. Although this has been partially reassessed in recently, it is still the case that *Greco Scritto* was largely used in private settings. See, Pensabene 1976; 2002; Antonelli et al. 2009. *cf* Perna & Scognamiglio 2023:141.

⁷²¹Balmelle 2001: 223;397-398.

⁷²²Balmelle 2001.

⁷²³Kulikowski 2004: 112.

⁷²⁴Amm. Marc. XXVIII.4; 8-12. *Cf* Sen. *Ep.*115.8-9.

⁷²⁵Baldassarri 2017:264. Also see, Pensabene 2013:101-103.

traditionally saved for the imperial court were being deployed in private residences, the consumption of stone across the Italian peninsula may indicate something more. Indeed, although it is credible that aristocrats in Rome were looking to recreate a sense of political heft, the fact that the people in Ostia and Aquileia were looking to achieve the same thing is less convincing. As it is, given that there were similarities between stone use in 2nd-century Aquileian *domus* and the Ostian-Roman *domus* it seems more indicative of a prolonged aesthetic taste on the Italian peninsula rather than an attempt to engineer a pseudo-court.

Equally, this thesis has shown that the use of marble in Late Roman *domus* is suggestive of an attempt to maintain a connection with the past. By imitating earlier styles, via the use of the same lithotypes and *opus sectile* arrangements, there is a clear sense that decorative traditions were meticulously maintained. Beyond the archaeological evidence presented here, the desire among elites in Late Roman Italy to replicate their predecessors architectural and decorative approach has already been established in a literary context. As discussed in Chapter II, both Symmachus, Sidonius, along with Theodoric explicitly state this desire. The deployment of marble, in the instances studied here, represents the realisation of this desire and although domestic decoration may not initially strike us as a fundamentally important element of Roman life, the evidence presented here suggests that it for those living in the Late Roman period a carefully arranged home, with all the right marble, was a legitimate means of connecting with the past. As a consequence of this, the deployment of marble is a means of communication by which one's aesthetic choice is representative of their Romanness and the maintenance of decorative traditions. The drive to preserve decorative traditions saw a continuation of investment in stone. As all the case studies looked at here suggest, large amounts of resources were used in order to achieve this aim.

It is evident that marble used in domestic contexts continued to be valued at this time. However, more than this, it is clear that investment in luxury goods, beyond marble panelling, remained a fundamental part of elite life during the Late Roman period.⁷²⁶ As noted above, a desire to retain decorative traditions via the use of marble, clearly impacted how *domus* in Ostia were decorated. We can see this dynamic play out in the decorative practises applied to villas as well. Certainly, the deployment of coloured glass, ivory, and gold leaf alongside marble, in the form of decorative panels, at *Faragola*, is indicative of a willingness to invest in decoration. The large collection of statuary at the Desenzano Villa, and the widespread deployment of mosaics in the villas and *domus* studied here, is yet more evidence and indicates that those investing valued variety. Indeed, the extent of the investment noted here has been picked up on by Beckman, who has observed the 'substantial architectural and decorative aggrandisement' of Late Roman villas.⁷²⁷ This aggrandisement of villas was not only a material reality, but increasingly part of a literary tradition. This has been identified by Métraux who has defined the process as a 'status creep', a phenomenon whereby writers seek to glory in the architecture, decoration and, value of domestic spaces.⁷²⁸ Viewed in this light, the deployment of stone in domestic spaces can simultaneously be understood as part of an extended aesthetic tradition and part of a novel economy in which elites in a new fashion sought to increase the size and richness of their properties.

⁷²⁶ Volpe et al. 2016: 232-33.

⁷²⁷ Beckman 2022: 25.

⁷²⁸ Métraux 2018: 411-413.

Bathhouses

The stone from the bath complexes studied has two defining features: firstly, although, an analysis of the lithotypes from the bath complexes revealed that a range of marble was used, more interesting is the emergence of the trend whereby a limited selection of lithotypes dominate. The colour palettes chosen, however, are not consistent; there is little to suggest that bathing complexes were completed with a specific colour scheme in mind. Instead each bathing facility relied on a different selection of dominant stones. Consequently, despite the associations in the literary sources, and the use of these lithotypes in *nymphaea*, only the Northern Baths in Aclanum attest to the use of large quantities of green and white marble in tandem. This is a somewhat surprising development which is perhaps indicative of the disunity between literary ideals and archaeological realities. Lastly, the use of marble in bathhouses illustrates the continued importance of these structures in Late Roman society as well as indicating how prestigious marble décor remained at this time. Indeed, the investment in bathing complexes, which saw bathing established, rebuild, remodelled, and redecorated reflect the important space they occupied in the Late Roman imagination.

Emerging colour palettes

The use of polychrome stone in the context of bathing complexes was extensive: 18 identifiable lithotypes are noted in the Aclanum; 11 lithotypes observed in the *Terme del Foro* baths at Ostia with the *Terme Erculee* featuring 10 identified polychrome lithotypes. What is more, by looking closely at the make-up of the lithotypes deployed a clear trend materialises: bathing complexes were often dominated by a small range of lithotypes with a selection of other stones providing supplementary colour.

At Aclanum this trend is clear. As discussed in Chapter IV, while much of the stones studied has been excavated, a large portion remains *in situ*. From the excavated assemblages, *Cipollino Verde* (c. 43%) was by far the most prominent lithotype deployed. The next best attested identifiable lithotype is the white and black *Greco Scritto* (c. 9%). In addition, a variety of other white/grey lithotypes were also present accounting 33% of the stones utilised. Combined with *Greco Scritto*, in total, the white/grey lithotypes account for 42% of the excavated stone assemblages. Six additional lithotypes make up c. 15% of the total excavated stone. As a result, the excavated stone portrays a distinct decorative style where green and white lithotypes dominate the bathhouse's overall appearance. This style is also reflected by the remaining *in situ* material. Located in the bath's *frigidarium*, this material is marked by a large body of the emerald coloured *Verde Antico* used in concert with a range of white/grey marble, including Proconnesian marble.

The colour palette at Aclanum's Northern Baths is distinct and indicative of a carefully planned decorative approach. Here, the combination of a range of white/grey stones, along with two different green lithotypes, indicates that for architects and designers ensuring that a coherent colour scheme was achieved was far more important than the exact identity of the lithotypes used. The dominance of two colours is observed in quantified material from Milan's *Terme Erculee*. Although only four lithotypes account for all of the polychrome stone studied, 93% of the stone is split between *Pavonazzetto* (c. 51%) and *Giallo Antico* (c. 42%).

At Ostia, the assemblage from the *Terme del Foro* differs somewhat. Eleven different polychrome stones were deployed in the Ostian *Terme del Foro* with only *Cipollino Verde* appearing dominant or widespread. The data indicates that while polychrome stone was

used, there is little sense that there was a colour palette associated with the bathing complex. However, the limitations concerning the dataset from the Ostian bathhouse prove challenging here: severe weathering to much of the stone means it is hard to securely identify a large portion of the material. Nevertheless, it is worth noting Ostia's position as an importation hub for stone since this may have provided more opportunities to gather large quantities of different types of stone. Equally, the *Terme del Foro* was Ostia's principal bathing complex and a significantly larger building than the other two discussed here and provides more opportunity for decorative variation. In this sense the *Terme del Foro* is somewhat of an outlier. In fact, beyond the *Terme del Foro*, the use of marble in other bathhouses across the Italian peninsula reflects more closely the deployment noted in Aeclanum and Milan. Indeed, even in Ostia bathhouses were largely decorated with a limited number of lithotypes.

A study led by De Togni in 2017 on a small Ostian bathhouse used in the 4th and 5th centuries AD, known as the *Terme dello Scheletro*, typifies the approach to marble use in Late Roman bathing complexes.⁷²⁹ Here, a large portion of white marble, c. 67% of the total stone, was deployed alongside three dominant polychrome lithotypes: *Portasanta*, *Cipollino Verde*, and *Giallo Antico* which, overall, account for 79% of the total polychrome stone.⁷³⁰ The dominance of these three colours once more represents an approach to decoration that largely relies on a limited selection of hues. Further still, the way in which the stone was organised, which saw the marble arranged in a checkerboard formation, with the squares alternately arranged between dark and light tones, indicates that the shade of the hues, rather than the lithotypes, drove the decorative approach.⁷³¹ Once again, the centrality of the colour scheme is evident and reflects the cultural environment of the time. As discussed in Chapter VI, the importance of hues and tones in the marble discourse mirrors the importance placed on pattern and design found in the application of marble.

The *Terme del Sileno*, also in Ostia, which were most recently refurbished in the 4th century AD, were likewise marked by polychrome stone.⁷³² Although the stone has not been quantified, David et al. have shown that along with a number of white and grey stones, including *Greco Scritto* and Proconnesian marble, *Cipollino Verde* and *Giallo Antio* were also present.⁷³³ Although we cannot be sure, the extensive use of white stone alongside a select number of polychrome typologies is similar to the deployment observed in the *Terme dello Scheletro*. Finally, this very same approach is observed at another of Ostia's 4th century AD bathing facilities, the *Terme del Mitra*: out of 36 revetment panels counted 27 were unidentified white elements, with an additional three in *Greco Scritto*. A further two slabs were in *Cipollino Verde* and four in *Portasanta*. Here large quantities of white stone are supplemented by coloured material.⁷³⁴

⁷²⁹ De Togni et al. 2018: 364.

⁷³⁰ De Togni et al.'s study is somewhat confusing since it states that over 100 marble elements were uncovered. However, only 70 elements are cited: 46 white elements, in a range of lithotypes, and an addition variety of 24 polychrome elements. Since the polychrome stones have been accounted for individually, I have concluded that the missing elements are unidentified white lithotypes. Polychrome lithotypes: *Africano* (c.4%); *Breccia Coralina* (c.4%); *Cipollino Verde* (c.25%); *Giallo Antico* (c.21%); *Portasanta* (c.33%) - percentage represent the percentage of the polychrome stone used, not the overall stone.

⁷³¹ De Togni et al. 2018: 364.

⁷³² DeLaine 2007:339.

⁷³³ David et al. 2013:7.

⁷³⁴ DeLaine 2007: 339.

Away from Ostia, in Apulia, De Stefano's study of a bathhouse at Herdonia, which was abandoned in the 5th century, evaluates a total assemblage of 753 elements.⁷³⁵ Polychrome stone only accounts for 6% of the total assemblage (46 pieces) with 70% identified as white stone (527 pieces); De Stefano includes *Greco Scritto* here with the white stone. *Greco Scritto* constituted a major portion of the assemblage with c. 163 pieces observed.⁷³⁶ The extent of white stone here is unusual. Nevertheless, while the sample size is small, a clear decorative trend which sees a select few lithotypes dominate the colour scheme of a bathhouse is noted

Water Colours?

A significant body of the literature from antiquity associates the colour green with water. In the Late Roman period, in particular, this relationship was drawn on by a number of poets. In the 4th or early 5th century AD Prudentius (AD 348-413) described the waters of the river Ana as 'washing the handsome walls as it sweeps along with its green waters'.⁷³⁷ Ausonius, in his description of the Moselle river in Germany repeatedly draws allusion to green and water.⁷³⁸ The court poet Claudian refers to green rain.⁷³⁹ Interestingly, the association between the colour green and water almost certainly impacted how marble and other stones were depicted. As early as the 4th century BC Theophrastus associated emeralds (*smarados*) with water.⁷⁴⁰ Further still, writers, discussing marble, draw comparisons between the green, and white/grey, marble lithotypes to water: Ovid describes the seas around Tomis as 'frozen marble'; a famous passage by Statius took this a stage further when he not only commented on the hue but also on the texture while describing *Cipollino Verde* as 'wavy Carystos'.⁷⁴¹ Several centuries later Paul the Silentiary observed that should you visit the Hagia Sofia 'you may see the bright green stone of Laconia and the glittering marble with wavy veins found' further suggesting that green stone, specifically *Cipollino Verde* was watery in make-up.⁷⁴²

In this environment, it is unsurprising that both the public and private *nymphaea* which adorn Late Roman Ostia are largely clad in green and white marble.⁷⁴³ The negligible amount of public bathhouses which use these lithotypes in tandem is, however, surprising. As noted above, we can be certain that the Northern Baths at Aeclanum, employed this colour scheme. Similarly, the *Terme del Sileno* were decorated in green and white: *Cipollino Verde* along with a quantity of various white/grey lithotypes are attested⁷⁴⁴ As noted, in a recent study by Astolfi et al., green marble, especially *Cipollino Verde*, was deployed with some frequency in bathhouses.⁷⁴⁵ Studies of Late Roman bathing complexes have demonstrated the validity of this remark.⁷⁴⁶ Yet, despite the literary tradition, and the alluring combination of colours not all baths were subject to this colour scheme. Indeed, only c. 5% of the stone used in the *Terme Erculee* was green. The *Terme del Foro* likewise had a limited portion of

⁷³⁵ De Stefano et al. 2008: 154-156.

⁷³⁶ A further 23% of the assemblage is made up of limestone while the final 1% is represented by basalt.

⁷³⁷ Prudent. *Perist.* 3.183 (Trans: Thompson).

⁷³⁸ Auson. *Mos.* 55-70; 204-217.

⁷³⁹ Claud. *De Raptu.* 2.98.

⁷⁴⁰ Theophr. *On Stones*: 4.

⁷⁴¹ Ovid. *Trist.* 3.10.47; Stat. *Sil.* 1.5.30.40.

⁷⁴² Paul. *Sil. Descr. S. Sophia.* 617-647.

⁷⁴³ See, Chapter III.

⁷⁴⁴ *Giallo Antico* is also attested.

⁷⁴⁵ Astolfi et al. 2023: 180.

⁷⁴⁶ Corremans et al.: 2009: 41-44; Abd Al-Tawad: 2012: 164-165; Taelman & Antonelli 2020: 9;16.

green stones.⁷⁴⁷ What this tells us, exactly, about the decorative stone in Late Roman baths, on the Italian peninsula, is uncertain. So, it is worth considering the phenomenon which saw green marble, especially deployed in bathing facilities.

Perhaps the most widely deployed marble from the Roman period, *Cipollino Verde* was employed in a range of contexts often as veneers, as well as columns; it should not surprise that elements in the stone are regularly attested in bathhouses. Nevertheless, the use of this lithotype is something to ponder. In the 2nd century AD, during the reign of Hadrian, the distribution of *Cipollino Verde* was subject to the partial oversight Imperial state.⁷⁴⁸ This coincided with the extensive circulation of the stone during the Imperial period.⁷⁴⁹ This detail is not necessarily shocking, given Rome was at her apex during this period. However as Fant, and Millar before him, observed, Imperial patronage during this period saw marble employed as a gift.⁷⁵⁰ This culminated in stone being provided for public works in cities across the empire.⁷⁵¹ In their survey of the bath complex at Sagalassos, Corremans et al. have suggested that the *Cipollino Verde* used was donated by the emperor for use in the baths.⁷⁵² Importantly for this study, Corremans et al. have been able to chronologically map the deployment of certain lithotypes. They have shown that it was likely that that deployment of newly quarried *Cipollino Verde* occurred during the 2nd century, probably during the reign of Hadrian. Later developments, occurring during the 4th or 5th centuries AD, however deployed significantly less *Cipollino Verde* than the Hadrianic phases.⁷⁵³

What does this mean for Late Roman baths on the Italian peninsula? Well, as this thesis has already shown, regional trends and fashions existed in antiquity and it is not the case that an example of marble use in one part of the Roman world can be easily superimposed on another. Yet, it is worth considering the deployment of *Cipollino Verde*, in light of the study at Sagalassos. Certainly it is true that *Cipollino Verde* was distributed less widely in the Late Roman period than in the preceding centuries; political leaders on the peninsula lost their capacity to easily gift newly quarried stone years earlier.⁷⁵⁴ The quantity of *Cipollino Verde*, therefore, was clearly reduced, although some material available for reuse would have been accessible. What is more, if we look closely at the Late Roman bathing complexes, which do use *Cipollino Verde*, a trend emerges: a number of the complexes still in use during the Late Roman period which originally built during the Imperial period feature good quantities of the green stone. The Northern Baths at Aeclanum are the best examples however others like the *Terme dello Scheletro* and the *Terme del Sileno*, both in Ostia and both originally built during Hadrian's reign are also notable for their quantities of *Cipollino Verde*. Likewise, the *Terme Ferarra*, also built during the reign of Hadrian, in Canosa, deployed *Cipollino Verde* alongside mosaics depicting marine scenes.⁷⁵⁵ By contrast, the *Terme Erculee*, constructed near the end of the 3rd century had a relative paucity of green stone. Although the examples here are limited, and by no means exhaustive, there is an suggestion that bathing complexes built during the 2nd, particularly during the reign of Hadrian, were

⁷⁴⁷ 15 % of the polychrome stone from the baths at Herdonia was in *Cipollino Verde* while the stone was also present in the *Terme del Sileno* and *Terme del Mitra*.

⁷⁴⁸ Fant 1999: 101; Corremans et al. 2009: 43; Chidioglou 2010: 48.

⁷⁴⁹ Chidioglou 2010: 51-53.

⁷⁵⁰ Millar 1977; Michell 1986: 344-345; Fant 2001:155-156.

⁷⁵¹ Fant 2001: 156.

⁷⁵² Corremans et al. 2009:49.

⁷⁵³ Corremans et al. 2009:43.

⁷⁵⁴ Chidioglou 2010: 48.

⁷⁵⁵ Pensabene 2012b: 73.

ornamented with significant quantities of *Cipollino Verde*. Bathhouses built *ex novo* in the Late Roman era feature significantly less.

Bearing in mind the archaeological evidence presented here, the persistent comparisons between green marble and water provides a further challenge. Certainly, there is often a tension between the literary reports and the evidence on the ground; literary standards are not always a reliable means with which to analyse the material past. Yet, the use of green stone in a number of public *nymphaea* in Ostia, discussed at length in Chapter III, suggest that beyond the literary output the combination of green and white, in the context of water luxury, still resonated in the Late Roman period. If nothing else, this reflects a long held tradition that feeds into the notion of continuity, demonstrating a connection with between Late Roman people and their ancient forebears. Perhaps, the limited quantities of *Cipollino Verde* in newly constructed Late Roman era bathhouses better reflects the economic realities associated with the marble trade during the period, rather than a rejection of the ‘*Cipollino* and water’ phenomenon. Concurrently, the varying combination of stone deployed, in place of green and white lithotypes, draws on Russell’s key argument which reminds us that choice was at the centre of marble use in the Roman period.⁷⁵⁶ Despite the archetypes available to the decorators and designers, the range of palettes on display in Late Roman bathhouses remained an indicator of availability and choice. In fact, the importance of choice, with respect to architectural decoration continued to be one of the driving features of behind the investment into bath complexes during the period.

Summary

In summary, the evidence from this study reflects the importance of bathing complexes in Late Roman Italy. Of course this is not too much of a shock. Nevertheless, the fact that bathhouses seem to have outlasted other public buildings such as theatres, in the case of Aeclanum, is worthy of report. Indeed, bathhouses, and bathing culture more broadly, seem especially robust. The evidence from Ostia, as well as elsewhere in southern Italy, where new bathhouses are constructed and old bathhouses are renovated, is instructive.⁷⁵⁷ In this regard, the role of marble in this dynamic is equally informative: as I have reiterated throughout this study, marble was a difficult and costly material to deal with, even if there was a ready supply on hand. The fact that the people of Aeclanum chose to remodel their city’s Northern Baths with stone in the 4th century speaks not only to the city’s continued vitality but also the centrality of bathing in Late Roman Italy.

Regarding the lithotypes used, there seems to be little evidence for dominant lithotypes in Italy at this time. Yet, despite this, we can observe a somewhat consistent style whereby a small number of prevalent hues are supplemented with some additional colours. In particular, the use of stone in Aeclanum, and at the *Terme dello Scheletro* at Ostia, highlights the centrality of a specific colour scheme with the hue of a stone perhaps holding more importance than the identity of the lithotype itself.

The decorative style, is perhaps indicative of a development with regards to the use of marble in baths which took place over the course of the Roman period. As I have discussed, it seems as if a number of bathing complexes in the 2nd century were outfitted with large amounts of green stone, namely *Cipollino Verde*. While the fashion for green hues does not die in the Late

⁷⁵⁶ Russell 2013a: 7; 144-146.

⁷⁵⁷ Regarding the redeveloped baths in the south Italy see pages, 91-92

Roman period, the evidence for this colour scheme, on the basis of this research at least, seems limited. However, the preference for a single dominant hue, remains. This aesthetic development is redolent of some larger themes which have emerged in this study. The limited deployment of green stone speaks to a change in taste. At the same time, the lasting preference for dominant hues is indicative of a aesthetic continuity between those living in the Late Roman era and those before. Furthermore, it may even be the case that the fairly consistent use of green lithotypes in *nymphaea* is part of this developing conversation since it is still the case that the relationship between a green lithotype such as *Cipollino Verde* and water is well regarded. As illustrated above, this latter point remained a fixture of the Late Latin literary corpus. In the next section, church décor is discussed.

Churches

Emblematic of the Late Roman period, the arrival of churches outfitted in marble provides ample opportunity to assess the diffusion of stone during the period between the 4th and 6th centuries. In broad terms, the use of marble in church buildings, although widespread, was in no way standardised: in some cases large varieties of lithotypes were employed, in other cases there appears to be a more limited array of typologies.⁷⁵⁸ Yet, via an analysis of the Milanese churches it has been possible to identify the emergence of a regional trend which perhaps indicates that across the peninsula church decoration, specifically veneers, was developing organically, with limited reference points to literary narratives regarding Romannes, which seem to have impacted the décor in domestic setting and bathhouses. A further point considered here is the role marble performs in churches as an artistic medium in a spiritual settings, which became part of the religious experience in Late Roman Italy.

Decorative variation

The majority of the churches studied here employed multiple lithotypes: the *Battistero di San Giovanni* features 14 polychrome lithotypes (Fig. 16), *Santa Maria Antiqua* (Fig. 17) had 18, while 17 lithotypes are reported at the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*. This fashion for polychromy reflects the same trend observed in the other public and private buildings in this study. In this way, a clear trend in Late Roman church decoration appears to materialise. However, the evidence is not so clear-cut. Two of the Milanese churches feature a more limited selection of marble. In addition to the black and white stone used in the churches, *San Giovanni al Fonte* has only another four attested polychrome lithotypes while *Basilica di Santa Tecla* features none. Although it is almost certain that both these churches were heavily spoliated, in order to assist in the adornment of the *Basilica cattedrale di Santa Maria Nascente*, we cannot be sure which lithotypes were deployed.⁷⁵⁹ From what remains, the *in situ* black and white

⁷⁵⁸ It should be noted that the churches studied here were invariably grand buildings which were either located in important cities or, as was the case with *Battistero di San Giovanni*, part of an important ecclesiastical community. Consequently, the value of polychromy may go hand-in-hand with wealth. An analysis of smaller community churches or rural churches, either from antiquity or later may be able to shed light on this dynamic.

⁷⁵⁹ No studies have sought to systemically assess the stone used in Milan's *Basilica cattedrale di Santa Maria Nascente*. As it stands, it is impossible to say what lithotypes were taken from *San Giovanni al Fonte* and *Santa Tecla*. What we do know is that the cathedral, built in the so-called 'International Gothic style' employed a vast amount of marble with a large quantity of the white-pink *Candoglia* marble, quarried west of Lake Maggiore, brought into the city. See, Marchetti & Costa 2014; Bugini & Folli 2008.

lozenges decorate a large portion of the floor of both buildings and indicate an aesthetic motif which shies away from the polychromy observed in *Battistero di San Giovanni*, *Santa Maria Antiqua*, and, the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*.⁷⁶⁰ As a consequence, the notion that there is an identifiable way marble cladding was used in Late Roman churches is a difficult one to maintain. Instead, the assemblages here hint at more than a single approach to marble use.

A Regional approach to church decoration?

The ornate decoration that fills the majority of the churches studied here can, in the broadest terms, be understood as the archetypal approach to ecclesiastic decoration. However, the range of typologies employed are so varied that it is hard to nail-down a consistent trend. In part, this issue is connected to the nature of the data at hand: small sample sizes or unquantified assemblages fills the analyst with a sense of trepidation. Nevertheless, what we can say is that variety was vital to church decoration at this time. Yet, beyond this, the assemblages bear little resemblance to each other. The two churches with quantified datasets, at *San Giovanni al Fonte* (Apulia) and *Santa Maria Antiqua* (Rome) have few similarities and although the assemblage from the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* in Milan has some lithotypes in common with the other two, without quantified data further conclusions are hard to draw.

Identifying why there is such variety in these assemblages is difficult. It may be the case that architectural decoration in churches at this time was particularly regional. Certainly, the churches at Ravenna and Classe were decorated in a particular way through the utilisation of *Verde Antico* column shafts, Proconnesian marble slabs, basket capitals, and golden mosaics.⁷⁶¹ Equally, the deployment of black and white lozenges in the aforementioned *Battistero di San Giovanni al Fonte* and *Basilica di Santa Tecla* shows a consistent approach to floor décor that may reflect a Milanese attitude to decoration in the context of churches. Indeed, scraps of marble paving from the 4th century *Basilica di San Nazaro in Brolo*, located in the centre of Milan, indicate that angular hexagonal, rectangular, and triangular pieces of black and white decorated a portion of the church floor.⁷⁶² Elsewhere in this study, the other churches assessed are located in different parts of the peninsula thus prevented further intra-regional analyses.

Organic development

The different way in which marble panelling was applied to Late Roman churches gives the impression that an organic decorative development, one not impacted by a peninsula wide aesthetic register, was emerging. The decorative dexterity, which saw a diverging range of lithotypes employed, engendered a certain sense of flexibility with respect to how marble revetment and *opus sectile* was used. Recent studies on the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*, for instance, have concluded that polychrome marble revetment was used to decorate the walls of the church. Likewise, in the 5th century church of *Santa Sabina* in Rome, detail in *Serpentino* and *Porfido Rosso* decorated the spandrels, with white/grey stone reserved for the

⁷⁶⁰ The damage that both these buildings have suffered makes it difficult to clearly assess the overall aesthetic palette employed. It is plausible that large amounts of polychrome marble were employed. Alternatively, mosaics or frescos may well have been used.

⁷⁶¹ Deliyannis 2010: 231-232; Tumová et al. 2016: 35.

⁷⁶² David 1984:7;10.

flooring.⁷⁶³ At *Santa Maria Antiqua*, polychrome stone was most likely saved for the flooring. In Apulia, at *San Giovanni al Fonte* polychrome marble panels could have plausibly been a feature of both floor and walling décor. Similarly, at *San Vitale* in Ravenna large panels of coloured stone cladding decorate both the floor and walls of the buildings.⁷⁶⁴

The lack of any standardised way to deploy stone in Italian churches, at this time, may, in part, be due to Italy's political make-up. Less centralised than it had been in the past, church décor could be more easily influenced by local forces. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter V, bishops from Apulia, as well as St. Ambrose in Milan, played a central role in the construction of churches in their dominions. In a similar way, Deliyannis reports that Ecclesius, bishop of Ravenna, was influenced by Constantinopolitan styles, even traveling, or sending underlings his behalf, to the city in order to procure the correct materials.⁷⁶⁵ *Santa Maria Antiqua* was redeveloped several times at the behest of the Pope. It seems probable that other churches in Rome were treated in the same fashion. Moreover, as already discussed in this chapter, the decorative approaches taken in domestic settings and bathhouses during the Late Roman period fed off a notion of what Roman houses or bathing complexes should look like and how they should be decorated. For obvious reasons, there was less of an artistic tradition to draw upon when it came to the question of how to deploy marble in churches. As outlined in Chapter V, there was not a clear decorative ideal, dictating how marble could be used, that could easily be applied to Italian churches. While facets of the architecture which clearly relied on large scale public buildings from earlier eras or other places, could be used and amended, marble use seems somewhat variable.

The development of early churches, in Italy, seems to have encouraged an adaptability in the way marble was used. However, beyond thinking about what marble was used for it is worth pondering what marble meant, and the aesthetic impact it could have in the context of church decoration. The use of marble panelling, in particular, like wall paintings and mosaics, was a distinctly artistic medium which, as covered at some length in Chapter II, became increasingly important in the Late Roman period.

Beyond decoration

By comprehensively assessing the inconsistent deployment of marble in Late Roman church buildings it has become clear that marble was used in an inconsistent way. So far, I have postulated that regional trends may have emerged and that a developing sense of how churches were adorned provided local agency and adaptation to the availability of materials. However, this interpretation also leaves space for thinking about what marble was supposed to accomplish in churches. The following section, will consider the value of marble, beyond what we might usually consider abstract decoration and instead think about the symbolic impact the stone could have.

It has been observed by Swift and Alwis, and later Osterhout, that the nature of Late Roman religious practice had an effect on contemporary church architecture and decoration.⁷⁶⁶ A notable fixture in early churches is the propensity to depict clearly figurative images, usually dealing with Christological scenes or other religious narratives. The importance of figurative images in Greco-Roman tradition have been emphasised in a large

⁷⁶³ Stalley 1999:18-19; Osterhout 2019:38-39.

⁷⁶⁴ Cristo 1974; Tumová et al. 2016:35.

⁷⁶⁵ Deliyannis 2010: 231-232.

⁷⁶⁶ Swift & Alwis 2010: 206; Osterhout 2019:3.

body of scholarship. In the 1950s Kitzinger spoke about the power that holy images had over viewers in antiquity.⁷⁶⁷ Elsner, discussed the phenomenon of ‘mystic viewing’, citing the mosaics of the *Basilica di Sant’Apollinare Nuovo* which depict a procession of saints: participants at mass, in sight of pictorial mosaics or paintings, conflate the real and represented and thus become closer to god.⁷⁶⁸ Certainly, one can imagine how the mosaics from Ravenna and Classe, as well as the Christological narratives from *Santa Maria Antiqua*, could inspire viewers.

It is my view, that these very same subtleties that explicitly figurative conveyed could also be communicated via marble. Mitchel and Tronzo have argued that the so-called ‘book-matching’ of marble panels also had the capacity to produce anthropomorphic images.⁷⁶⁹ Likewise, in her study of Hagia Sofia, Fobelli asserts that the visual effect produced by book-matching technique saw male and female heads materialise in stone.⁷⁷⁰ While Fobelli cites Paul the Silentiary as evidence for this dynamic, perhaps the best evidence of this comes from the 15th century when the ambassador of Henry II of Castile saw an image of the Virgin and Child in one gallery and John the Baptist in another which was produced without ‘human artifice, either of the sculptor or painter.’⁷⁷¹ Recently, Barry has sought to dismiss the notion that the physical embodiment of entities was represented in abstract stone, suggesting that images produced were more akin to representation of the natural world.⁷⁷² The work of Claudian, Procopius, as well as Paul the Silentiary, all of whom compare stone to topographic landmarks, certainly adds credence to Barry’s argument.⁷⁷³

Yet, whether ones feels that the images which materialised from the stone depicted the natural world or celestial bodies the emergence of images produced without ‘human artifice’, ‘*acheiropoieta*’, and therefore by the authority of God is consistent. As Tronzo discusses, this concept gained popularity during the 6th century, with various texts citing examples of images emerging without human manufacture.⁷⁷⁴ Moreover, while Tronzo’s work largely considers panelling, Swift and Alwis have made clear, patterns and non-figurative designs were able to exhibit depth and meaning.⁷⁷⁵ In particular, *opus sectile* arrangements also had the capacity to engender a sense of wonder. Located in the *Basilica dei Santi Cosma e Damiano*, at Rome, a small inscription dated to the 6th century AD celebrates the mosaics which adorn the church:

*‘bright metals, the splendid hall of God shines/in which the precious light of
faith flashes even more radiantly’*

As James observes, the vocabulary in use here rejoices in the shining, gleaming, materiality of the mosaics which produces, or seems to produce, God’s light.⁷⁷⁶ It is easy to imagine that

⁷⁶⁷Kitzinger 1954.

⁷⁶⁸ Elsner 1996:222; Swift & Alwis 2010: 207.

⁷⁶⁹ Mitchel 2012: 18-23; Tronzo 2018: 26.

⁷⁷⁰ Fobelli 2005: 185.

⁷⁷¹Paul. Sil. Descr. S. *Sophia*. 605; Fobelli 2005: Tronzo 2018:26.

⁷⁷² Barry 2020: 179-180.

⁷⁷³ Procop. Aed.1.1.23.; Paul. Sil.Descr. S. *Sophia*. 617.

⁷⁷⁴ Ephrem. *Hymn. Ed.* (Trans: Mango); Cameron 1996; Tronzo: 2018:29-30. For further discussion on ‘*acheiropoieta*’ see, Cameron 1983.

⁷⁷⁵ Swift & Alwis 2010.

⁷⁷⁶ James 2017: 122-123.

highly polished individual *sectile* elements could have the same effect.⁷⁷⁷ In this way, while a large part of the decorative vocabulary in churches is focused on figurative art, marble panelling and *opus sectile* contributed to the spiritual atmosphere created in Late Roman churches.

Summary

The emergence of widespread polychromy across all three building types studied here is the most striking feature of this study. Luxury in stone was evidently a defining feature of private and public building at this time. Indeed, in some instances the marble used in private residences is remarkably similar in terms of colour palette and arrangement. The flooring in Room H of the *Domus del Ninfeo* is redolent of the flooring in *Santa Tecla* and *San Giovanni al Fonte*. This dynamic which sees public buildings decorated in a similar way to private building feeds into the wider sense among scholars that Late Roman private architecture was aping public architecture. In this way, Late Roman architecture follows established practices espoused by Vitruvius. However, there are also features of the marble use which are specific to the buildings types. Domestic buildings, for example, look as if they are all drawing on a precise decorative doctrine. Studies from Rome and Aquileia support this view. Even the villa at *Faragola* utilises many of the lithotypes noted in the other houses studied.

On bathhouses there is a somewhat defined decorative scheme that can be observed across the peninsula: two or three key lithotypes, or hues, dominate a large part of the space with a number of other stones used to supplement the overall design. This composition is observed in a number of bathhouses. With churches, there is little to suggest that there was a defined decorative approach to marble use: different hues and lithotypes are found in multiple churches and there is little to indicate that there was an especially determined trend. The only consistent feature of marble use in churches is that often they were complete with an assortment of coloured panels and column shafts along with an array of differing capitals and bases. Indeed, this sense of variety, which is covered below in more detail, seems to be a particular feature of domestic decoration and church décor.

The final thing to say on marble use here is that Late Roman Italy was awash with coloured stone. The deployment of newly quarried stone along with *spolia* demonstrates the continued sense that marble was a luxury item and hence the feeling that willingness to investing in decorative stone was worthwhile. Indeed, the fact that marble was utilised in these buildings is an indicator of just how vital they were to those living in Late Roman Italy. Although this is an obvious point with respect to houses, the relentless investment into the public buildings covered here demonstrates the value society placed in them and reminds us how vibrant and able Late Roman society was. The next section will move away from specific analyses of building types and look more broadly at the impact the Late Roman marble economy had on stone use on the Italian peninsula.

The Economy of Marble Veneers: Trade and Application

⁷⁷⁷ Phot. *Hom.* 10, 4. (Trans: Laourdo). Marble in the 8th century Pharos church is described a ‘gleaming’.

The study of regional variations has alluded to the impact that established trade links had on the deployment of stone in Late Roman Italy. Although the implementation of spoliated stone was increasingly a fixture of public and private architecture, marble nevertheless continued to arrive from abroad. However, there was also a significant local aspect to the lithotypes used. Although the preference for certain stones was no doubt multifaceted, one of the factors that contributed to the choices made was the capacity to transport stones from quarries to villas, towns, and cities.

Over a number of years, scholars have observed the favourable conditions that overseas transportation offered; Russell, has noted that only shipping could realistically move large bulks of stone over middle or large distances.⁷⁷⁸ While maritime trade was not without its own dangers - the Late Roman period may have seen an increase in piracy while environmental problems lead to wreckages - shipping remained the most viable option when it came to moving large portions of stone.⁷⁷⁹ This is reflected in the trade of Luna marble: the silting of the harbour used to transport Luna marble during the 3rd century AD has been attributed as a factor in the diminished importance of the stone in the face of competition from better-placed Proconnesian and Thasian marble quarries.⁷⁸⁰

In addition to overseas trade, which is largely concerned with shipping over open water or along coastal areas, it seems increasingly likely that other modes of transportation performed an important role in the economic cycle of the stone trade. Various studies in recent years have highlighted the importance of river transport when moving large cargoes.⁷⁸¹ Specially designed carts pulled by pack animals were also used.⁷⁸² To be clear, it is not right to conclude that alternatives to maritime trade were comfortable, Russell has outlined the problems associated with alternatives to seaborne travel: issues concerning the seasonal weather could seriously impact the capacity to move cargoes up and down rivers; overland haulage could be equally problematic with the topography of the land causing significant delays and consequently invoking astoundingly high costs.⁷⁸³ Yet, Taelman's new study reminds us that inland quarries with limited access to the sea thrived for long periods. The *Dokimeion* quarries in Phrygia and the Göktepe quarries were both located in inland Anatolia. *Porfido Rosso* was famously quarried in Egypt's Eastern Desert. Furthermore, the presence of marble in somewhat remote inland towns and villas shows that not insignificant marble elements could be manoeuvred on over land.⁷⁸⁴

In short, we can recognise that transporting stone was expensive, especially overland, and at the same time acknowledges that decorative stone remained popular across the Italian peninsula. The question, therefore, is what impact the trade, and specifically the transportation, of marble had on the deployment of stone in Italy, in the Late Roman period.

The transportation of marble veneers: different shapes and sizes.

⁷⁷⁸ Russell 2013b: 356; 2018: 131-136; Taelman 2021: 241-242.

⁷⁷⁹ Russell 2018 136-139; Lampinen 2022.

⁷⁸⁰ Russell 2008: 109.

⁷⁸¹ Franconi 2016; 2017; Russell 2013a: 105-106; 2018; Page 2022.

⁷⁸² Adams 2001: 175-176; Russell 2013a: 97-103; 2018: 138-139; Taelman 2021: 249-251.

⁷⁸³ Russell 2018: 140. Russell notes that the transport costs involved in moving a block of Proconnesian marble to Trier could be as much as five times more expensive than moving the same element to Rome. The mostly overland journey, moving the stone up from Rome into Germany was the source of the additional costs.

⁷⁸⁴ Greenhalgh 2008: 132; Taelman 2021: 242.

Transport constituted a significant cost in construction.⁷⁸⁵ Transportation costs associated with marble were, however, not based on the desirability of a certain lithotype. Instead, these costs can be reduced to factors which broadly speaking concerns expended energy. The more energy required to move a cargo the more expensive the overall cost of transport was. Since the costs associated with the moving of stone over sea were somewhat consistent quarries located close to the sea were preferable to those located inland.⁷⁸⁶ Yet, alongside accessibility to the sea, another factor was at play: the form of the marble transported. Clearly, the product came in a number of guises: statuary, architectural pieces (including columns), sarcophagi, and veneers. The transportation processes associated with shipping the different products varied. As Russell has discussed at length, the production and commercial activities associated with the sarcophagi industry were particular and somewhat removed from the trade in other marble elements. Working methods, demand, and approaches to transport were all specific.⁷⁸⁷ Similarly, Pensabene, in discussing the trade of foreign white stone in North Africa, has reflected upon the specific nature of the trade of statues compared to the trade in architectural elements.⁷⁸⁸ Likewise the operational practices employed in the transportation of veneers were different to those used in the transportation of large architectural elements. Significantly, the nature of marble veneers, thinly sliced panels, allowed them to be transported more easily and therefore more economically than other elements. The next section, will outline the logistical practicalities associated with the transport of veneers and consider how the movement of marble veneers was more easily completed than other mediums; considering how this effected the use of stone in Late Roman Italy will subsequently be assessed.

Transportation: overseas.

Given the efficiencies associated with seaborne transport, the vast majority of foreign stones were shipped. As discussed above, the processing of transporting marble veneers was relatively straightforward and at times offered flexible solutions to logistical problems faced. Evidence from quarries indicates that in some cases stone blocks were shaped, or roughed out, into panels at the quarry or in nearby workshops, or more commonly fashioned into stepped blocks, prior to transportation.⁷⁸⁹ These blocks and panels could be more easily stacked aboard a ship.⁷⁹⁰ Indeed, the flexibility afforded by veneers is illustrated by the different way marble veneers were loaded. Evidence from the 3rd century AD Punta Scio B wreck, located near Crotona, indicates that slabs were simply placed on top of heavy blocks.⁷⁹¹ A different approach is observed at another 3rd century AD wreck, now known as the Torre Sgarrata wreck, located south east of Taranto. According to Throckmorton, marble veneers were stowed inside empty sarcophagi.⁷⁹² As Russell observed, veneers were

⁷⁸⁵ Taelman 2021: 241. See, DeLaine 1997: 219-220 on the costs transport costs associated to with the Baths of Caracalla.

⁷⁸⁶ Taelman 2021: 252.

⁷⁸⁷ Russell 2013a: 256-293.

⁷⁸⁸ Pensabene 1972: 327-328.

⁷⁸⁹ Mazeran 1998; Calla et al. 2009: 334; Bartoli 2008: 107-108; Gabellone et al. 2009: 325-328; Russell 2012: 536-537; 2013a: 50; 133; 234; 254-255. *cf* Ward-Perkins 1951: 90.

⁷⁹⁰ Russell 2008: 113.

⁷⁹¹ Bartoli 2008: 58.

⁷⁹² Throckmorton 1985: 263; Meijer 2002:150; Gabellone et al. 2009: 320.

often a part of mixed stone cargoes.⁷⁹³ In this commercial environment the utility of veneers, as illustrated by the Torre Sgarrata cargo, is that they could easily supplement larger and more awkward cargoes.

At port, the loading and unloading into transports or at the final destination was a relatively simple, if back-breaking, task. By contrast, the organisational and mechanical skills required to effectively load large columns were complex, time-consuming, and required a significant body of skilled labour.⁷⁹⁴ The process of loading a large block or monolithic column was difficult, particularly given the limitation of the cranes and other lifting appliances available at ports.⁷⁹⁵ Indeed, it is unlikely that all ports had the prerequisite infrastructure needed to load and unload large elements. This fact was seemingly observed contemporaneously as indicated by a law which specifically reprimands overseas transporters for damage caused to columns during transit.⁷⁹⁶ Lastly, if needed, a single assemblage could be split up into multiple cargoes. Obviously, this option was not available to monolithic elements. In her examination of the costs associated with the transportation and application of mosaics, James has claimed that the majority of vessels in the 4th and 5th centuries had a carrying capacity of 12-60 tonnes.⁷⁹⁷ Given that large monolithic elements could weigh as much as 100 tonnes, the availability of shipping on offer to even slightly smaller elements was, presumably, limited.⁷⁹⁸ All this considered, it is clear that when it came to overseas transport it was much easier and more convenient to ship veneers, or elements primed and readied to be sliced into veneers, than it was to move monolithic elements. The shape, or form veneers and potential veneers came in, alongside the fact that they were relatively small pieces ultimately provided options to those wishing to ship them. As I will outline below, a similar dynamic occurs when it came to the overland transportation of stone.

Transportation: overland

The transportation of marble elements in the Roman period almost always involved an overland journey. In some instances, this meant that marble needed to be moved from a quarry to a port before being shipped; upon arrival at the docks further overland transport was often needed. In other situations, marble quarried locally, or regionally, was moved directly from the quarry, sometimes via local workshop, to the final destination. In the case of Late Roman Italy, the use of imported lithotypes alongside local lithotypes saw both these processes carried out.

The relative ease associated with the movement of veneers overseas, compared to larger elements, is mirrored in the challenges associated with overland transport. The capacity to stack marble veneers or blocks aboard a ship also made it possible to easily load carts or wagons. Similarly, it was easier for pack animals, such as donkeys or mules, using panniers since the weight of a load could be equally balanced or split between a number of animals. Over short overland trips, or instances where a particularly steep hill or precarious passage needed to be navigated, a cargo of panels could be easily unloaded and reloaded in order to be carried over multiple journeys. Given their weight, size, and the fact that were

⁷⁹³ Russell 2012: 536; Barresi 2016: 7; Leidwanger 2018 et al.: 345-346.

⁷⁹⁴ DeLaine 2007; 2017; Maschek 2016: 399-400.

⁷⁹⁵ Pensabene 2016: 54; Russell 2013a: 135.

⁷⁹⁶ Cod. Iust. 19.2.23.7.

⁷⁹⁷ James 2017: 105-106.

⁷⁹⁸ Adams 2001: 184.

often monoliths, columns and other large elements provided far more logistical challenges; there was no easy way to haul a single large column to the top of a hill, never mind the multiple shafts needed for a colonnade.⁷⁹⁹

Adam's study of the mechanisms, tied to the transportation of stone in Roman Egypt has highlighted the sheer animal power required to move monolithic elements; Penã, via analysis of 2nd century documentation in papyri, and Maxwell have shown how this impacted local economies; Russell's work in recent years has considered the bearing that local topographies had on the movement of bulky stone cargoes.⁸⁰⁰ With this in mind, the particular procedural challenge associated with the moving of large elements around overland Italy are evident. While there are no studies which systemically compare the difficulties associated with veneers compared with monolithic elements, we can safely conclude that the movement of veneers offered more flexibility and was most likely an easier procedure to manage.

So far, I have outlined the comparative ease with which marble veneers could be transported over land and sea. The next section will consider how this dynamic impacted the application of stone in Late Roman Italy.

The deployment of marble veneers

The complexities connected to the processes associated with moving veneers and columns indicates that transporting and installing veneers was more simple, and by extension cheaper; this was well known among contemporary Romans as well as modern scholars. As Ward-Perkins memorably put it: although large columns and other architectural pieces, manage to 'excite' a great deal of comment it is without doubt the case that veneers account for the bulk of the stone utilised during the Roman period.⁸⁰¹

Based on DeLaine's study of the *Terme di Caracalla* a 1m³ block of marble could provide 40m² of veneer.⁸⁰² Ward-Perkins, by comparison, calculated that the stone required for a single cornice block, measuring c.1.5m x 1.2m x 0.9m, could pave an area of 74 m².⁸⁰³ To put this into some context, Room C, the most ornately decorated room, in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* at Ostia measures c.8 m². The deployment of marble veneers, therefore, could simply be understood as an economic choice. Yet, more crucially, the use of marble veneers allows an individual to engage in a coherent decorative approach since a relatively small amount of marble can adorn an entire *domus*. By their very nature, as small individual elements, a number of veneers in a range of lithotypes, cut into a variety of shapes and sizes, could have been easily purchased and installed. It is also worth noting that buyers could also mix and match the stone they wanted from a single vendor instead of having to deal with a selection of different vendors who specialised in a particular lithotype.⁸⁰⁴ In this way, the deployment of veneers provides a sort of decorative pliability which sits in contrast to the rigid inflexibility provided by columns and other large stone elements.

⁷⁹⁹ Columns were usually partially prepared at the quarry before being shipped. Russell 2013a; De Staebler 2018: 95.

⁸⁰⁰ Peña 1989: 126-132; Maxfield 1996: 11-12; Adam 2001: 184; 2007: 64; Russell 2008: 112-113; 2013a: 101-105.

⁸⁰¹ Ward-Perkins 1951: 98; Dodge 1988; Russell 2008: 112; 2013a: 34; 121; 132-133.

⁸⁰² DeLaine 2007: 180; Russell 2013a: 229.

⁸⁰³ Ward-Perkins 1951: 99.

⁸⁰⁴ Fant. 2001.

Of course, this is not to say that architectural elements were not in use during the Late Roman period. Architectural elements were ubiquitous at the time. As MacDonald once observed, ‘column displays [were one of the] cardinal themes’ in Roman architecture.⁸⁰⁵ Yet, returning to the point made by Ward-Perkins cited above, the extensive use of marble panelling, which remained a long and costly procedure, even if procuring and installing it seemed carefree compared to the travails associated with large marble elements. The use in churches, bathhouses, homes, and even in so-called sub-elite contexts, like bars, speaks innate decorative value which panelling in marble had in the Late Roman period. In fact, the extensive use of marble veneers indicates that like columns, architraves, and other architectural elements, veneers were an equally essential element of Late Roman decoration in Italy. This point is made abundantly clear in a great deal of the literature but is probably best vocalised by Cassiodorus in the 6th century who suggests that the ‘columns and marble slabs’ were equally redolent of ‘shining antiquity’.⁸⁰⁶

The nature of veneers, from which a few blocks could provide enough stone to clad an entire *domus*, coupled with their evocation of the past means that they provided an attractive decorative proposition. Further, since marble used for veneers could be fairly easily transported, in comparison to large architectural elements, processes which concerned the shipping, haulage and application of the various marble elements may have contributed to the aesthetic appeal that variety had. However, much of what I’ve stated here was not new to the Late Roman era. While there was clearly a predisposition to diversity, with respect to the stone deployed, the processes which governed a great deal of the stone industry had not changed a great deal over the course of the centuries, with one exception. The next section of this chapter will discuss the role of *spolia* in Late Roman Italy and consider the extent to which spoliated marble was used, in the case studies covered in this study, and consider how, in tandem with newly quarried material, reused elements helped define the aesthetic flavour in Late Roman Italy.

Spolia

‘It is perhaps significant that neither historians nor archaeologists are overexcited by reuse...’

Greenhalgh. 2016: 77.

The practice of reusing building material is long established. Certainly, in a Roman context, the practice of salvaging and redeploying material has occurred since at least the Republican era.⁸⁰⁷ Contrary to Greenhalgh’s claim, the notion of what *spolia* is and what role it played in Rome has been the subject of numerous studies in recent years during which two schools of thought have emerged. Ine Jacobs, has outlined the discrete terms applied to the redeployment of building and decorative material, and has considered the motivations which saw marble reused. Reused material can be interpreted as a sensible means of redeploying

⁸⁰⁵ MacDonald 1986: 179-220.

⁸⁰⁶ Cassiod. *Var.* 3.8.

⁸⁰⁷ De Stabler 2018: 96-97.

building material and simultaneously disposing of outdated or decaying edifices.⁸⁰⁸ *Spolia*, which is often a loaded term, can be understood as a process of redeploying elements because they have a value beyond their physical or economic utility.⁸⁰⁹ This value can be ornamental and aesthetic or symbolic and ideological. The potential for the ideological power of *spolia* and what it means has been taken to its conceptual extremes with a great deal of *spolia* viewed as ‘spoils’, as in spoils of war.⁸¹⁰ This understanding of *spolia*, which is highly symbolic, can speak to a sense of domination or, less violently, appropriation. However, this methodological position, which is perhaps overly negative, fails to consider the positivity associated with *spolia*. As a great deal of Late Roman architecture, and post-Roman architecture, shows. Indeed, rather than looking to illustrative authority via the redeployment of architectural elements, or a decorative slab, the use of *spolia* can be illustrative of an attempt to earn some of the authority associated with the element in question.⁸¹¹

This distinction is fundamental to the decorative approach in Late Roman Italy: here, alongside the prosaic deployment of building materials, the deployment of *spolia* can be viewed as appropriation and in some case, such as those discussed by Cassiodorus, there was a clear desire to use *spolia* as if it were a cloak of Romanness. Although Jacobs has stated that the only reused elements which we can be sure were used for ideologic reasons are reliefs and statues it is my contention that marble panelling had aesthetic, symbolic and ideological heft.⁸¹² The following section, will consider this theoretical idea of *spolia* alongside the practicalities of the industry and the assemblages which feature in this study.

Salvaging, reuse, and meaning in Rome

In the Imperial period, the commercial stripping and salvaging of marble revetment and *opus sectile* was a profitable enterprise.⁸¹³ This process can be observed in numerous buildings from the Imperial period: in the *tablinum* of the so-called Augustan House (c. 36-38 BC) in Rome preserved imprints of marble lozenges, which had been stripped out, remain.⁸¹⁴ The *Villa of the Papyri* at Herculaneum and *Villa A* at Oplontis were being stripped when Vesuvius erupted in AD 79.⁸¹⁵ The use of reused marble in bars at both Pompeii and Herculaneum indicates that this process extended beyond high-profile buildings.⁸¹⁶ A similar phenomenon is noted at Ostia.⁸¹⁷ Perhaps the most excessive example of salvaging, however, comes from Nero’s *Domus Aurea*. Barker estimates that 687 m² of flooring and 1917 m² of wall revetment could have been salvaged.⁸¹⁸ This epitomised the highly organised and effective capacity of

⁸⁰⁸ Jacobs 2013: 552.

⁸⁰⁹ Jacobs 2013: 552.

⁸¹⁰ Kinney 2001: 138.

⁸¹¹ Cavlo Capilla: 2014.

⁸¹² Jacobs 2013: 552.

⁸¹³ Snyder 2021: 2.

⁸¹⁴ Bragantini 2016.

⁸¹⁵ Barker & Marano 2017: 835.

⁸¹⁶ Fant & Attanasio 2009; Fant et al. 2013.

⁸¹⁷ Amiet et al. 2018.

⁸¹⁸ Barker 2009: 24-25; Jacobs 2013: 553-558. Despite the efficiencies of the salvaging project, Goethe, who visited the ruins of Nero’s domus in the late 18th century, took the opportunity to collect many specimens of granite, porphyry, and marble which lay by their ‘thousands’. Bugini 2023b: 187.

the reuse industry during the 1st century. In fact, research has shown that in an Imperial context the salvaging and reuse of building materials was a crucial part of Rome's economy.⁸¹⁹

The volume of material salvaged from Nero's palace speaks to the systematic nature of the process which saw the marble flooring, including *opus sectile*, and architectural element removed before being used again elsewhere. As numerous scholars have discussed, legal texts reveal that throughout the Roman period the practice of salvaging building material was a legitimate, if closely controlled, commercial enterprise.⁸²⁰

By the Late Roman period the process of salvaging and reuse was a matter of everyday reality.⁸²¹ Axel Gering's study of Late Roman Ostia has shown that the city was home to at least three marble processing areas. The first, is located to the northeast of the forum, where remaining marble flakes indicate the area had been used as workshop. Here, Gering has supposed that the proximity to the forum indicates that this site either provided material for the forum or dealt with material from the forum. Two other larger recycling plants located near *Domus del Tempio Rotondo*, in the centre of the city, are indicative of a large-scale organised practice where a large number of coloured marble elements, bases of reworked statues along with more than 200 stockpiled architectural elements, have been uncovered.⁸²² The existence of these workshops not only advertises that marble was reused in Late Roman Ostia, but also suggests the stone was reworked and repurposed. By repurposed, I mean that craftsmen were changing the shape and form of marble elements before reinstalling them as part of new assemblages. The technical skill required to perform this task was no doubt high; the intricate nature of the task presumably speaks to the existence of well-trained craftsmen and rubbishes the old notion that Late Roman art was rudimentary compared with earlier Roman, or Greek, works.

At Ostia, there are plenty of instances where examples of reused marble have been identified. The *Domus del Ninfeo's* nymphaeum is clad with incongruously fluted elements; a pool in the *Domus delle Colonne* features a slab complete with an inscription; and, in the *Terme del Foro* a large fluted pilaster decorates the flooring.⁸²³ In other instances we can point to fragmentary elements meshed together in order to produce a new design. Examples include the north wall at the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria*, the stairs leading to Room C in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, and stairs leading to the pools in Room 19 of the *Terme del Foro*. In each instance, fragmentary elements are in a range of dimensions and colours

Further afield, the bathhouse at Aeclanum has yielded a large body of reused material. Here, we can begin to appreciate just how widespread the diffusion of reused elements was. Imprints in the mortar indicate that shafts of revetment pilasters had been placed face down on the pool floor; a carved element depicting a dolphin, also face down, was repurposed as a step. At *Faragola*, Volpe has identified a number of reused elements, primarily, fragmented pieces used to decorate the central *cenatio*.⁸²⁴ Returning to Ostia, De Togni's study of the *Terme dello Scheletro* has indicated that the flooring was made up of reused elements – no easily visible signs were present.⁸²⁵ As noted above, levels of expertise and workmanship

⁸¹⁹ Alchermes 1994: 173; Barker 2011a; 2011b; 2009: 25;27; Barker & Marano 2017.

⁸²⁰ Alchermes 1994; Barker & Marano 2017: 835.

⁸²¹ Alchermes 1994: 167; Jacobs 2013.

⁸²² Gering 2013: 23; 2018: 206.

⁸²³ Jacobs 2013: 663. Jacobs, notes that the deployment of inscribed elements in seemingly incongruous settings was a widespread phenomenon.

⁸²⁴ Volpe 2010a: 168.

⁸²⁵ De Togni et al. 2018.

among those employed at the marble yards were high.⁸²⁶ It is understandable, therefore, that some elements, like those in the *Terme dello Scheletro*, show little to no sign of being repurposed. In cases like this, it is worth thinking about what a piece of *spolia* was. While typically, we think about *spolia* as stone lifted directly from abandoned building or monuments. Evidence from Aphrodisias in Anatolia, has indicated that marble workshops not only dealt in material stripped from old buildings but also sought to work older blocks, and perhaps sculptures, which they could either repair or rework in order to be deployed again.⁸²⁷ This distinction, which sees explicitly reused elements used in some instances with less explicitly spoliated elements used in others, brings into focus the variety of reused material available.

Beyond the practicalities of salvaging and reuse at this time it is worth considering the reaction to the process and thinking about what this tells us about marble use:

‘And therefore, we have decided in the present dictate that if the testimony of those reporting is true, that none of the material is deemed now suitable for public adornment, let the above-mentioned columns and marble slabs be gathered for transporting by any means to the city of Ravenna, so that, by lovely craftsmanship, the forgotten form may be restored from sunken quarries, and so that what had been blackened with decay could reclaim that quality of shining antiquity’

Cassiodorus. *Variae*. 3.9.

In this letter addressed to town counsellors at Aestuna, Cassiodorus emphasises the role of the state in this sector of the stone industry. The reference to the ‘lovely craftsmanship’ highlights the point made above about the skill involved in the repurpose of stone. Most importantly, we learn from Cassiodorus that the reason for using the stone was to ‘reclaim that quality of shining antiquity’. This turn of phrase, can be interpreted in a couple of ways. Firstly, and quite literally, the shining of antiquity might simply mean the shining marble which was used in antiquity. This prosaic approach to reuse simply highlights the ornamental usefulness of the marble in question. More likely, however, Cassiodorus was thinking about the symbolic value of the marble and so he was looking to reclaim the essence of antiquity via the reuse of marble. New buildings can start to shine with antiquity if they are provided with the glory of antiquity. It seems logical that the building afforded with *spolia* were some of the buildings a society, or a powerful individual, valued the most: the buildings which are worthy of capturing the spirit of ancient Rome. Of course, establishing how certain buildings were recognised as worthy is near impossible. It may well be the case that particular interest groups, or individuals, sought out pieces of reused material in order to harness the symbolism of the stone. Equally, it could simply reflect the fact that buildings used regularly received most investment. The Northern Bathhouse in Aeclanum played a vital role in the community; it seems proper that it was furnished with prestigious old marble. Interestingly, as Coates-Stephens has observed, there was a sense in the Late Roman period that the Church was known for appropriating building materials from older structures.⁸²⁸ This may be indicative of

⁸²⁶ Cassiod. *Var.* 1.6., refers to the skill of marble workers in Rome: ‘...you will send to us from Rome the most skilled marble workers.’

⁸²⁷ Barker & Marano 2017: 836.

⁸²⁸ Coates-Stephens 2002: 281.

the Church looking to engineer a sense of prestige through the use of 'shining antiquity'. However, despite the clear symbolic advantages to *spolia*, the approach set out by Cassiodorus' was far from universally accepted. Appropriation of ancient stone sometimes led to conflict.

In AD 333 a governor from Campania, in an affront to the memory of Pliny the Elder, boasts that he paved his city with 'slabs cut from the mountains, and not removed from ruinous monuments'.⁸²⁹ Although the celebration of newly quarried stones is indicative of the same sort of quasi-industrialisation that Pliny earlier lamented, the pertinent element at play here is the sense that monuments of antiquity have been mutilated in order to provide stone for fairly mundane pieces of public architecture. The issue here is not that stone was without symbolic power but that important monuments of the past should be afforded the dignity they deserve. A similar sentiment is observed by Ammianus Marcellinus who alerts us to rioting in the 4th-century Rome caused by the city prefect's policy of robbing old buildings of their materials.⁸³⁰ Although the exact motivations which lay behind the different actors' actions here are not well established it seems plausible that the symbolism of the stone played a role. As with the case in Campania, Ammianus' commentary is centred on the importance of historic monuments: both the Campanian governor and the riotous citizens of Rome object to their vital monument being wantonly hacked apart for the purpose of new building projects.

Cassiodorus' sense that *spolia* can reinvigorate new buildings is met by Roman rioters and contemptuous governors who scorn the demolition of their antiquity. This clash of ideals, is surely a conflict over local identities and ideas on civic pride. Cassiodorus wants to instil new structures with Romanness; the rioters fear their heritage is being diminished. These competing reactions outline just how impactful the deployment of stone could be and reminds us that the use of marble during the Roman period, including *spolia*, was not always a neutral act. Indeed, the impact marble had on a community's civic pride, which I will come to below in the discussion on local stones, is particularly apparent in Ammianus' text. More broadly, we are reminded of the Romanness that marble had in the Late Roman period. Cassiodorus' attempt to redeploy Roman antiquity via marble, some of which was surely imported, is a departure from Pliny the Elder's notion, and that of Sidonius', who both saw the import of 'foreign stone' as problematic,

In the next section, I will discuss the ideological importance of marble veneers. In her study of the built environment in Eastern Mediterranean during the Late Roman period, Jacobs asserts that: 'the only elements that were reused for ideological or symbolic reasons with some consistency were reliefs and statuary'.⁸³¹ Yet, as both the Campanian governor and the riotous Roman citizen have shown, *spolia* in the guise of marble veneers was perfectly able to generate a sense of symbolism. Although veneers may not be as central to our idea of what a Roman building should be, in the way columns, shafts or capitals are, there is ample evidence from the Late Roman period which indicates that contemporary Romans felt that veneers retained the same ideological heft as other marble elements.

Spolia: veneers.

⁸²⁹ CIL X: 1199; Coats-Stephens 2002: 280; Jacobs 2013: 464.

⁸³⁰ Amm. Marc. 27.3.8-10.

⁸³¹ Jacobs 2013: 552. Although Jacob's study is almost entirely based on the archaeology of The East, the footnotes which follow this assertion includes references to Arch of Constantine in Rome.

Beyond, the reports concerning spoliated marble discussed above, the ideological value of veneers as well as column shafts, capitals, and reliefs is outlined in a legal text, dated to AD 389, where the value of civic ornamentation, stipulated that adorned building should be maintained. In short, while Jacobs maintains that specific carved reliefs and statues were alone in exuding a sense of symbolism, the written texts presented here indicate the smooth unmarked element could likewise have an ideological value.⁸³² Moreover, an earlier law, proclaimed in AD 365, concerning the scavenging of decorative material from 'old towns' prohibits the transfer of '...statues, marbles, or columns' indicating that marble elements, different from statues and columns, were presumably valued; the ideological weight the veneers carry was just as heavy as those supported by columns.⁸³³ Cassiodorus is not the only named source to take this position. The symbolic value placed on marble veneers by Paul the Silentiary, is well known and has already been discussed in Chapter I. Even by the 9th century the symbolic value of Roman veneers remained and was epitomised by Charlemagne who in an effort to establish himself as Roman emperor had marble columns, and potentially some floor revetment, shipped overland from Rome and Ravenna to his capital at Aachen.⁸³⁴ The application of spoliated veneers therefore, provides a reignition of the symbolic power marble had. Viewed in this light, the marble veneers, if reused, clearly had a powerful ideological meaning. This is not to say, that everyone felt the same way. Some felt strongly about the stripping and reuse of material in positive terms others disliked the practice. Many were no doubt ambivalent. Nevertheless, the ideological resonance of marble in the Late Roman period is clear.

So far I have outlined the organised nature of the industry dealing in the scavenging and reusing of stone. I have also sought to demonstrate that reused material, including veneers, were part of a process whereby marble was sought because it was valued beyond its physical function as a building material. Finally, I will consider the impact that reused material along with newly quarried material, had on the decorative approach in Late Roman Italy.

Spolia equals variety

'The Arch of Constantine, the composition of which is fine and well done in all that pertains to the architecture, but the sculptures are idiotic, without any good art or design.'

Raphael, letter to Pope Leo X.

In a letter written to Pope Leo X, in 1519, Raphael advised the Holy Father that if one looks upon the Arch of Constantine he should be able to distinguish the three phases of Roman art:

⁸³² *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.25.(Trans: Pharr et al.).

⁸³³ *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.14.

⁸³⁴ Egin. *Vita.* 26;53. (Trans: Grant); Brent 1987: 108-109. Doig 2015: 378-379. On the floor revetment, in his life of Charlemagne, Eginhard observes the emperor's use of marble on two occasions. First, he discusses the procurement of columns noting that: 'he had them brought from Rome and Ravenna'. On the second occasion, we are told that Charlemagne's crypt was built from 'mortar and marble'. While Eginhard does not specifically tell us that Charlemagne brought veneers to Aachen, Doig has persuasively argued that both Charlemagne's self-presentation as a Roman and his Christian identity mean it was likely that Charlemagne looked to procure veneers as well as columns.

ancient barbarian, and modern.⁸³⁵ For Raphael, the arch was a muddle of different artistic approaches. Several centuries later, in 1987, Brenk argued that the Arch of Constantine (AD 312) was, in fact, the epitome of a new Late Roman architectural aesthetic. The use of mixed reliefs delivered a variegated style that simultaneously provided a homogenous aesthetic with each constituent part working in tandem.⁸³⁶ In Brenks' view, the decorative approach leans on the literary tradition which places variety, or *varietas*, at its heart. Brenk's position here is convincing. However, it is my view that the evidence provided in this thesis indicates that the relationship between *spolia* and *varietas*, was more impactful than he initially suggests. Indeed, a theme that he fails to discuss in any details is the role of colour. This thesis has shown in both the literature and the archaeological date that colour was a vital element of *varietas*. Discussed at length in Chapter II, literary sources marvelled that the array of polychrome stone used in concert.⁸³⁷ More than this, the use of *spolia*, along with newly quarried material, helped define the decorative approach that delivered *varietas*.

In his study of reused columns, De Staebler identifies the impact that recycled columns had on varied architectural design observing that using recycled columns in new buildings significantly impacted the overall tenor of a building's aesthetic.⁸³⁸ Church architecture in particular is noteworthy for displaying column shafts in a range of colours or dimensions. Evidence from Rome in particular supports De Staebler's position.⁸³⁹ The *Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano* (AD 313) was complete with columns of different sizes, utilising monoliths in granite and *Verde Antico*.⁸⁴⁰ In the same way the *Basilica di San Pietro*, was complete with an assortment of monolithic columns.⁸⁴¹ Likewise, the *Basilica San Felice*, in Cimitile, was complete with 19 column shafts composed of white stone and five other coloured lithotypes. In these examples we can see *varietas* in action. Examples of the same dynamic occurring through the use of veneers are abundant too. Volpe's aforementioned study of the *Faragola villa* highlights the presence of fragmented elements in a range of lithotypes, situated behind the *stibadium*, used to decorate the floor. Consisting of a range of small elements in different lithotypes, the effect is redolent of the so-called 'jewelled style' discussed by Roberts.⁸⁴²

At Ostia, the sense of *varietas* is observed in a number of buildings. In the *Domus delle Colonne* a large portion of seemingly reused elements are employed in a range of colours; there is little sign of a consistent colour palette here beyond a desire for polychromy. In Room D, a similar fashion at the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo*, Pensabene has identified five lithotypes, arranged in a largely uncertain design.⁸⁴³ The benches leading to two pools in the *Terme del Foro* demonstrate an equally diverse use of stone. The north wall of the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* is similarly characterised by a sense of polychromy with five different polychrome lithotypes.⁸⁴⁴ The *in situ* stone, therefore, provides an insight into how reused lithotypes were used in Late Roman Italy. The analysis of the stone here sees the

⁸³⁵ Kinney 1997: 122.

⁸³⁶ Brenk 1987:104. Also see, L'Orange & von Gerkan 1939; Elsner 2000; Holloway 2004: 20-21.

⁸³⁷ Paul. *Descr. S. Sophia*; Choricus. *LM*. 2.28.

⁸³⁸ De Staebler 2018: 95; Also see, Osterhout 2019:104-106.

⁸³⁹ Kinney, Fiorio & Bistoletti 1985:409 - the columns, originally from a second or 3rd century AD temple and/or bathhouse, were reused in the construction of the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* during the 4th-5th centuries AD.

⁸⁴⁰ Brenk 1987: 104.

⁸⁴¹ Kinney 2001: 144.

⁸⁴² Roberts 1989.

⁸⁴³ Pensabene 2007: 494-495.

⁸⁴⁴ Kiilerich 2014: 186-187 has speculated that some of the stone used in the *Porta Marina domus* is reused.

archaeological material coalesces with the literary evidence which shows an increasing appreciation of variety in decoration and literature. However, another point needs to be made: it is likely that a large body of newly quarried material was used alongside reused stone. The best example of this dynamic is once again in Faragola where Volpe has been able to identify the use of new stone and spoliated stone in the same context.⁸⁴⁵ Volpe observed the use of spoliated elements behind the *stibadium* with recently quarried elements placed in front. As discussed in Chapter III, Volpe concludes that deployment of *spolia* behind the *stibadium* indicates that it was less fashionable than the newly quarried material. Yet, this was not necessarily the case. Again, as discussed in Chapter III, it is more plausible that the use of spoliated stone in concert with new stone was a concerted decorative approach. Indeed, this combination can itself be understood as an extension of *varietas* - a physical manifestation of the variety discussed in the literary texts of Claudian and Choricus of Gaza.⁸⁴⁶

The use of *spolia* discussed here, beyond the literary context, feeds into the wider debates on marble use in Late Roman Italy. The abundance of various spoliated elements provided the opportunities for architects and designers to work in new and exciting ways. Consequently, opportunities for new colour palettes and new fashions take hold. Without doubt the varied fashion, which is characterised by polychrome stone often in the guise of panelling, is a feature of Late Roman decoration. The next section will look closely at the contemporary literary debates.

Literature vs. Archaeology

'But the columns that support the baths, of what manner and size are they? Before them must bow the costly dark hue in the purple quarry of Synnada and the Numidian hill that bears stones like ivory and the marble that burgeons with grass-like veins; henceforth I spurn gleaming Paros and Carystos; poorer now seems the purple suspended in the blushing rock...The house-wall is faced with slabs of cut marble up to the gilded ceiling, which is right fitly concealed by the yellow metal, for the rich prosperity of the house, brooking no secrecy, reveals its wealth when thus it hides its roof. Behind this part there soars, passing high above a double floor, a colonnade likewise double, unknown to the double Wain.'

Sidonius Apollinaris. *Carm.* Castel of Pontius Leontius 22. 135-146 (Trans: Anderson. W.B.).

'Inside, the light sparkles and the sun is attracted to the gilded ceiling so that it moves, the same in colour over the tawny metal. Marble marked with various hues covers the arched roof, the floor, the windows; and under

⁸⁴⁵ Volpe et al. 2016: 224-229.

⁸⁴⁶ Claudii. *Cons. Stil.* 3.65-70; Choricus of Gaza. *LM.* 28. See pages, 41-42.

figures of changeable colours the grassy green mosaic angles the sapphire-coloured stones amid the green glass. There is an adjoining threefold portico, haughty with its Aquitanian pillars, and in its likeness other porticos close the forecourt on the further side, and the plain in between is surrounded by a forest of stone, made of columns set wide apart. Here the street sounds, here the River Saône resound.'

Sidonius Apollinaris. Epist. 2.10.10-20.

One of the principal aims of this thesis has been to examine the relationship between what Late Roman literature tells us about the use of marble in the Late Roman period and the archaeology of the Italian peninsula. In Chapter II, I examined how marble was written about, throughout the Roman period, and looked to identify what trends emerge in the literature. The next section will examine how precisely the marble discourse reflects the archaeological realities.

In both excerpts provided here, Sidonius Apollinaris refers to the use of polychrome stone. In the first instance, in an *ekphrasis*, Sidonius praises Pontius Leontius' estate, Burgus. In the second passage, a letter to his friend Hesperus, Sidonius describes a new church built in Lyon. In a recent translation of the letter to Hesperus, Hinderman alerts us to the similarities between both of the passages cited here, noting allusions in the text to other authors like Martial, Seneca, Staitus, Prudentius, and Paulinus of Nola.⁸⁴⁷ Yet, although Hinderman is right to emphasise the literary tradition there is scope to think closely about how Sidonius' accounts fits in with the realities of stone use in the Late Roman period. Indeed this is true for a range of literary sources from the time who discuss, or even simply mention, marble; the variety of the sources provide ample opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the archaeology and the literature. We can think carefully about what lithotypes are employed in the text and how this relates to the archaeology. Further, we can consider why references to marble are made.

This sort of analysis also provides an opportunity to better contextualise the broader Late Roman environment and the role marble played. Moreover, although it is important to remain aware that the sources discussed were not always located on the Italian peninsula and therefore their work most likely represents their own specific local realities, or in some instances literary *topoi*, which may jar somewhat with the implementation of stone on the Italian peninsula, we can nevertheless draw some conclusions concerning the use of marble panelling, and the reaction towards it.

Marble: Application and Lithotypes

As has been already discussed in this thesis, Sidonius Apollinaris famously talks about the marble in his home, noting his rejection of 'foreign stones'.⁸⁴⁸ In an entirely different register, Cetius Faventinus (3rd- 4th century AD) provides some advice on the practical uses of marble.⁸⁴⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus in the conservative tradition which dates back to Pliny the Elder, Seneca, and even Cato the Elder, views the use of marble in domestic contexts as

⁸⁴⁷ Hinderman 2022: 293;317.

⁸⁴⁸ Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 2.2.7.

⁸⁴⁹ Faventinus.19;22. (Trans: Plommer).

emblematic of contemporary decadence.⁸⁵⁰ Several of the very same conservative writers commend the use of marble in public spaces. Since the corpus of literature is so vast some challenges to analysis arise. Separating genuine decorative traditions from literary fictions and critical lecturing can be difficult and so it is important to consider the source of material closely.

What we can say is that during the Late Roman period, the debate concerning the use of stone in private contexts versus stone used in public continued. This was particularly true of self-proclaimed Christian sources who, like their Imperial ancestors, viewed the excessive use of marble in private contexts with considerable consternation, albeit for different reasons. However, despite the widespread condemnation of private decadence, often typified by references to marble in the literature, this thesis has demonstrated that marble was a ubiquitous feature of elite domestic architecture. What this reveals about Late Roman society and the validity of the literature is initially unclear. Certainly, it suggests that writers like Ambrose, Gerontius, Ammianus, and others were outliers whose views were not held by the wider public. But, at the same time, it may simply be that references to marble, in approval or disapproval, in these texts are purely symbolic, with little meaning in the real world. As argued in Chapter II, Sidonius' claim that he lived in a mere hut with only local stone to decorate his home seems like a rhetorical device rather than a genuine account of domestic decoration. Similarly Ambrose's *On Naboth* is clearly a piece of religious pedagogy, which aims to discourage vast wealth.⁸⁵¹ Gerontius' work provides a similar function. Having said this there is a great deal to be drawn from the literary tradition concerning marble use in both public and private contexts.⁸⁵² As noted already, although much of the literature concerning marble is often lyrical and poetic, informative components from the texts can be drawn out and can better inform our understanding of marble use. An example of this can be shown through an assessment of Claudian's invective against a political enemy in which the poet notes the usage of panelled marble flooring:

'When, therefore, the chief men were gathered together for consultation in this strait and to comfort the sickness of the state, forthwith they forget and, setting aside the question of war, start their accustomed fooling and engage in disputes about the Circus. With heat as fierce as it is pointless they wrangle what boy can best whirl quivering limbs in an easy somersault or sweep the marble floor with his drooping locks...'

Claudian. *Against Eutropius*. 2. 360. (Trans: Platnauer).

While the passage forms part of a wider reproach of the corrupt Eastern court and therefore could be read as an attack on Eastern decorative extravagance, in all likelihood Claudian's text simply reflects the widespread use of marble flooring among elites. Although this reference to the stone floor is not especially insightful, it does reveal an accurate connection between the literature and archaeological data. Likewise, Ambrose's text, already cited, draws on the idea that the wealthy employed marble flooring in their homes. Although there was a doctrinal message that Ambrose wishes to impart, namely the invidious power of wealth, there is nevertheless little doubt that some of the Milanese elite did clad their homes in

⁸⁵⁰ Cato. *Agr.* 1.6.; Seneca. *Ep.* 115-8-9.; Plin. *NH.* 33.1.1-2; 36.1.2.

⁸⁵¹ Amb. *Nab.* 13.56. See pages, 39-40.

⁸⁵² Ger. *Life of Mel.*

marble. Similarly, along with Sidonius Apollinaris and Ambrose, Ammianus Marcellinus remarks that polychrome stone was a feature of wall décor:

'.. the walls gleaming with the remarkable colours of precious stones, raise these noble men to the gods'

Ammianus Marcellinus. *Res Gestae*. 28.4.12-13.

Here Ammianus notes that stone was not only employed for walling and a feature of domestic decoration but that polychromy was a vital feature. This dynamic is similarly noted in the archaeological record and is repeated in textual references to marble in Late Roman churches and, to a lesser extent bathing complexes. Once again Sidonius provides some good detail, noting that a church was complete with 'Marble diversified by various shining tints pervades the vaulting, the floor, the windows; forming designs of diverse colour'.⁸⁵³ Attached to this edifice is a triple colonnade rising proudly on columns of the marble of Aquitania'.⁸⁵⁴ Eusebius too picks up on the use of marble in church décor noting:

'Nor did even the pavement, as one might suppose, escape his care. This also, for example, he hath made exceeding brilliant with every kind of fair marble.'

Eusebius. *Hist. eccl.* 10.14.

In both these instances, the use of coloured lithotypes is a prevalent feature of the decoration. Indeed, other sources cite the use of stone in churches and comment on the pervasiveness of polychrome stone.⁸⁵⁵ Concerning bathing complexes, the literature, especially from sources based in Italy and other former Western provinces, is limited. Indeed, although John Malalas notes the enthusiastic use of marble in the Baths of Zeuxippus, the only Late Roman sources to cite the use of stone in the West was Sidonius who is doing so in the context of private baths.⁸⁵⁶ What to make of the lack of literature pertaining to marble use in baths is unclear. The archaeological record demonstrates that marble was almost a defining feature of public bathhouses; written record from the Imperial period is complete with numerous references to marble use. Perhaps it was the case that stone was so prominent in baths that it disusing it was uninteresting. Whatever the case, the next section engage with the decorative themes that have emerged in the texts and consider them alongside the present archaeological data.

Decorative themes and motifs in marble

Beyond a straightforward comparison between the marble use and the sources, the next section will think about how the trends in usage are reflected in the literature. As Chapter II made clear, a large number of sources from the Late Roman period discussed marble and in many cases employed marble as a metaphorical device.⁸⁵⁷ However, the use of marble in

⁸⁵³ Sid. *Apoll.Epist.* 2.10.5-30.

⁸⁵⁴ Sid. *Apoll.Epist.* 2.10.5-30.

⁸⁵⁵ Paul. *Sil.Descr. S. Sophia*. 617-647; Greg. of Nyssa. *Ep.* 16; Choricus. *LM.* 2. 28.

⁸⁵⁶ John Mal. *Chron.* 13.8; Poems.22.139-141 (Trans: Anderson).

⁸⁵⁷ Auson. *Mos.* 49. (Trans: Evelyn- White).

poetry, along with other modes of literature, does not indicate that references to stone are always imagined or illusory. Instead, we can draw upon the variety of sources which simultaneously used marble as a means of expressive symbolism, in verse, while at the same time providing plausible examples of marble use in domestic spaces, churches, and even bathing complexes. An example of this bi-faceted approach comes from the 3rd century sophist, Philostratus of Athens (d.c. AD 244-249), who provides his reader with a brief description of the house belonging to Herodes Atticus (AD 101-177), who following the death of his wife seems to have altered his home's decoration:

'He also altered the appearance of his house in her honour by making the paintings and decorations of the rooms black by means of hangings, dyes, and Lesbian marble, which is a gloomy and dark marble.'

Philostratus of Athens. *Lives of the Sophists*. 605. (Trans: Miles & Baltussen).

In this instance, the references to dark fabrics and gloomy marble are employed in order to provide the reader with a sense of Atticus' grief. Although, it seems highly implausible that marble décor could easily be changed, the broader point, which is to suggest that could be carefully applied, and used in concert with other decorative modes in order to achieve a particular look, is informative. This dynamic is apparent across the case studies in this thesis with none of the buildings studied relying exclusively on the application of marble panelling or *opus sectile*. The effect of this dynamic on marble deployment and design is discussed in more detail below. Yet, it is worth stressing the point here. In most cases the archaeological record demonstrates quite clearly that marble cladding was used along with architectural elements in marble, and marble statuary, this is especially notable in the *Domus di Psiche e Amore* and the villa at Desenzano, while mosaics, both polychrome and black and white, are a pervasive feature of domestic spaces, churches and bathing complexes. Equally, while other types of decoration were likely employed they often fail to endure in the archaeological record. Consequently, the survival of stone distorts our results since it gives the impression that stone was dominant. In this way, Philostratus' work reminds us that marble use did not exist in a vacuum and was almost always part of a wider spectacle.

The second element of Philostratus' passage to focus upon is the reference to the intentional use of a 'gloomy and dark marble', almost as a feature of the mourning process. Here it is revealed that marble use was carefully conceived with specific decorative principles behind its implementation.⁸⁵⁸ Indeed, this mechanism has already been noted in Chapter II where it was shown how Sidonius brought attention to his sense of Romanes by declaring his rejection of 'foreign stone', in favour of local varieties.⁸⁵⁹ The passage taken from Philostratus is a reminder that marble in context should be understood as a part of an overarching decorative approach with specific themes or leitmotifs. Indeed, throughout this thesis I have shown that, marble seems to have often been used in texts to obliquely alert the reader to a particular topic. At the same time, it is probably that real decorative choices were impacted by a desire to establish meaning. As we have already seen, spoliated marble was

⁸⁵⁸ Zachos & Leka 2015: 201. Zachos and Leka have discussed the issue concerning the geology of the so-called 'Lesbian marble'.

⁸⁵⁹ Sid. *Apoll. Epist.* 2.7.

deployed as a communicative prop. Likewise, evidence from other sites indicates that marble was used in order to communicate transmit as specific message.

At Faragola, for example, the use of a locally quarried stone, *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, combined with a range of lithotypes brought over from the East, used alongside so-called eastern-style glass and marble panels, may be expressive of specific themes that the owner wants to make reference to: the inclusion of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* highlights the locality of the villa, perhaps reminding visitors to the villa of the owners' importance to the region, while the use of eastern modes of decoration, conversely, has the potential to express a sense of prestige, bringing attention to the owners' cosmopolitanism and sophistication. In public buildings too, marble seems to have been used in this way. In parts of Northern Italy, local stones are used widely. In part, the decision to use local stones is no doubt tied to issues such as availability and transport costs. Yet the use of local stones, particularly those with a coloured hue, may also have a resonance for those who saw the stone. In contrast to the careful deployment of local lithotypes, the literary sources indicate that some stones were more fashionable than others. It is these lithotypes which will be discussed in the next section.

Fashionable Lithotypes

As we have seen, it was often the case that writers demonstrated a good knowledge of marble: they were able to accurately name lithotypes, record where they came from, and describe their hues and markings. Indeed, as we have already seen, Late Roman sources often described marble in a great detail noting the shading or spots belonging to specific varieties.

Beyond the nomenclature, analysis of the texts show that, with the exception of *Bianco Nero*, referred to as 'the marble of Aquitania' by Sidonius, and *Giallo Antico*, often cited as Numidian stone, lithotypes regularly named originate in the East. The literature typically references, among others, *Cipollino Verde* (*Marmor Carystium*) or *Pavonazzetto* (*Marmor Phrygiun*) based upon the places they were quarried. Interestingly the white Parian marble, from the island of Paros in the Aegean was also named in this way, presumably reflecting the fact that though white lithotypes were, and continue to be, near impossible to identify by eye. This is broadly representative of the lithotypes employed in the case studies featured here, with white stones deriving from the East more popular than those found in the West. However, other lithotypes, quarried in the West, are represented in the archaeological record.

Lazzarini has shown how lithotypes like *Granitello Antico* from the Isle of Elba were in use since at least the Augustan period and subject to extensive reused in the post-antique period.⁸⁶⁰ *Cipollino Mandolato*, although not exceptionally well attested except for in le Marche, was nevertheless a feature of Late Roman decoration in Rome. Similarly, *Granito Sardo* (sometimes called *Granito a Morviginone*), which was described by Bruno et al., as a 'less fashionable' stone likely featured in the *Terme di Caracalla* alongside the prevalent use of Luna marble, from Tuscany.⁸⁶¹ Lazzarini observes the widespread use of *Broccatello* in Italy, as well as in Greece and North Africa. *Broccatello* is observed in a number of case studies in the thesis. Likewise, the use of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* in northern Apulia is another example of coloured Italian stone employed in the Late Roman period. Finally, as noted in Chapter V, and, recently discussed by Neri et al. in their study of the *Basilica di San Lorenzo* in Milan and the city's 4th century Mausoleum, *Majolica* limestone and *Nero delle Prealpi* were a consistent element in

⁸⁶⁰ Lazzarini 2003: 465.

⁸⁶¹ Bruno et al. 2003: 395-386; Lazzarini 2003: 465.

the decoration of the new buildings. In view of this, it is worth pondering why most sources fail to highlight the use of local stone despite a number of lithotypes featured in decorative schemes across the peninsula. It may be that given the locality lithotypes only used in places like Como or Lake Garda are not well known to most writers, or their audiences, and so have little meaning beyond regional or micro-regional environs. Indeed, although this thesis has shown that a body of the learned population was familiar with quite a significant range of stone lithotypes it is only a select few stones that appear in the literature. As noted above, Parian marble is often cited. Yet, as Van Den Hoek and Herrmann Jr, and more recently Barry, have shown, thanks to the Latin literary tradition, 'Parian' was often used as a byword for white stone, regardless of the geological veracity.⁸⁶² Concerning polychrome lithotypes, however, it may be worth returning to Lazzarini's initial point which is that some local stones were unfashionable. What drives the fashion is difficult to gauge. Certainly, we can appreciate how that stone associated with the centre of the Roman world, such as Proconnesian marble, could become more fashionable in peripheral or less economically burgeoning parts of the empire. Simultaneously, in a similar dynamic the consistent references to Parian marble, the repeated references, in the Late Roman literature, made to lithotypes like *Porfido Rosso*, *Cipollino Verde*, *Serpentino*, and *Giallo Antico*, may simply be an attempt to mirror elements of an earlier written tradition. The alleged preference for local stones, epitomised by Pliny the Elder and then Sidonius, could well be a literary device not especially dissimilar from the references to Parian marble.

The comparison between the lithotypes employed, and what the sources say, reminds us that the two accounts do not always match and that when thinking about marble deployment we need to remain cautious and remember that the literature from the Roman period is aimed at a specific audience and is embedded in a specific cultural tradition. As if to make this point, the repeated references to the use of *Porfido Rosso* in *the Basilica di San Lorenzo* prove surprising when studies of the excavated marble, at least, indicate that the stone was not especially widespread; only three small fragments have so-far been located at the site. Moving on from a focus on *spolia* the next section will consider design. Here, discussions assessing what factors impacted the design are provided with a focus on aspects of functionality, materiality, and symbolism of marble. A brief discussion pertaining of the role of other decorative modes is also present.

Design

'If you have found this noted you must be engaged in the demolishing one of the false columns that have been placed in the foyer of the Sainsburys Wing of the National Gallery. I believe that the false columns are a mistake of the architect and the we would live to regret our accepting of his design...Let it be known that one of the donors of this building is absolutely delighted that your generation has decided to dispense with the unnecessary columns.'

⁸⁶² Van Den Hoek & Herrmann Jr 2002: 342-345; Barry 2020: 33-38.

In 1990, John Sainsbury, who was critical of the decision made by architects Venturi and Scott Brown to install two large false columns in the foyer of London's National Gallery, deposited a note recording his displeasure into a concrete column as it was under construction.⁸⁶³ Protected by a plastic folder, the document, which is now on display, was uncovered by construction workers in 2023, who were in the process of tearing down one of the offending columns as part of the gallery's redevelopment. While Sainsbury's feud with the columns in question eventually came to an end, the debate around of functionality and design continues apace.

In the context of Roman studies, research into Roman decoration seeks to look at the materials used from various standpoints. In their analysis of Roman decorative practices, both Barker and Muth alight on the importance of functionality. Muth explains that decorative designs were used to emphasise a room's utility: complicated, large-scale, decorative arrangements were intended to draw an the viewer's gaze and keep their attention while in areas described as 'transitional' the repetition of simple patterns would drive the viewer's attention forward.⁸⁶⁴ Certainly, given the evidence studied in this thesis, this analysis seems to hold true: for example, in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* and the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo* corridor flooring is marked by the application of mosaics in repetitive geometric designs; the large rooms are by contrast are decorated with elaborate marble designs. Likewise, in the *Basilica di Santa Tecla*, the aisles which lead up the nave were all decorated in geometric designs.⁸⁶⁵ Another point concerning the functional approach to decoration is made by Barker. Regarding the specific use of marble, Barker makes the straightforward, yet vital, point by alerting us to the fact that marble had the capacity to make rooms more comfortable: Barker observed that marble walls are cooler than those which were heavily plastered.⁸⁶⁶ In addition, further ideas regarding the impact of social hierarchy and their impact on décor have also been postulated.⁸⁶⁷ In her study of marble assemblages from Pompeii and Herculaneum, van de Liefvoort has proposed that Italic white marble was used in rooms where clients were received while polychrome stones were saved for so-called 'static' rooms which were open to family members and guests of an equal social standing.⁸⁶⁸ The logic behind van de Liefvoort's position is that white marble lithotypes were less ostentations than polychrome varieties and therefore less likely to offend old Republican sensibilities around private *luxuria*. While van de Liefvoort's analysis is open to criticism, namely on the basis that wealthy visitors were just as likely to be aware of the issues regarding private displays of *luxuria* as sub-elite clientele, her analysis nevertheless pinpoints the reality of conscious design. Moreover, van de Liefvoort's argument works on the basis that decoration is a practice that extends beyond functionality. By saving lavish polychrome stones for private, homeowners are surely engaging with the idea that coloured lithotypes had a certain symbolic cache.

As Haug and Hielscher explain in their essay on aesthetics in Roman art and architecture: "it is [now] recognised that things resist a one-dimensional, functional

⁸⁶³ Bailey 2024.

⁸⁶⁴ Muth 2015: 410. Also see, Ling 1998: 115-118.

⁸⁶⁵ See page, 100.

⁸⁶⁶ Barker 2022: 68.

⁸⁶⁷ Muth 2015: 410-412.

⁸⁶⁸ van de Liefvoort 2012: 198.

appropriation.⁸⁶⁹ In other words, things, in the case of this study panels and *crustea* of marble, have a relevance beyond their fundamental materiality and functionality: they can have an additional symbolic potency. Indeed, throughout this thesis I have illustrated the added value, so to speak, that marble was often saturated with. I have debated at some length the numerous points of discussion which emerged in the Roman literary tradition pertaining to aspects of stone, and this often extended beyond mere function: qualities such as the local or imported nature of stone, the application of stone in private and public contexts, and the meaningfulness of *spolia*, among other things, have all been examined. However, so far, I have not fully considered the role of placement and design. With this in mind, we can begin to consider the marble designs featured in this thesis. I will discuss the colour palettes deployed and consider the relationship between polychrome lithotypes, as well as white and grey stones, in design. The discreet differences to the deployment of marble on floors and the use of wall cladding is also pondered while the interplay between marble and other decorative modes such as paintings and mosaics are reflected upon.

Before I discuss design, however, I should note that I have already illustrated that specific building types deployed specific aesthetic schemes: the use of green stones in bathhouses and *nymphaea* are an obvious examples of this dynamic. In this way we can identify a specific aesthetic choices, which seem to be informed by a longstanding association between the colour green and water.⁸⁷⁰ Further still, I have also explained how the deployment of veneers provided clients with the opportunity to use a range of coloured stones, therefore stimulating a sense of decorative flexibility.⁸⁷¹ The effect of this culminated in a real sensation of variety in Late Roman Italy. Notwithstanding this, there is more to say about design. Accordingly, the next section will include a more developed examination on the interaction between the application of marble and the deployment of certain polychrome stones, a discussion the in the role played by natural light, as well an overview of the relationship between marble and other decorative forms.

Composition and design in Late Roman Italy

The evidence for the conscious selection of specific decorative designs in Late Roman buildings is widespread. In churches and baths we can still identify numerous signs of thoughtful design while in domestic context the remaining evidence is even more plentiful. Indeed, although there are some complications associated with accurately assessing the overall appearance of these designs, namely on the basis of limited *in situ* material, there remains plenty of scope from which to draw some conclusions. Given the extensive nature of this study, it is not suitable to discuss each building individually here. Nevertheless, some theoretical hypotheses can be premised.

Evidence for the placement and design of the various marble assemblages in this thesis are abundant. Across the peninsula, a range of *in situ* assemblages remain. In other instances, excavated assemblages can inform us on other details, such as those regarding colour palettes. Certainly there is enough remaining material. In fact, the extent of the marble remains, the geographic variety, as well as the diversity in building types here means that the potential motivations which lay behind the extant designs are multiple.

⁸⁶⁹ Haug & Hielscher 2022: 3.

⁸⁷⁰ See pages, 135-137

⁸⁷¹ See page, 146-148

Let us consider the functional concerns which might have resulted in some of the marble designs observed in this study. First, it should be noted that despite the various examples of marble clad walls observed across Italy, applying marble to Roman buildings was a labour intensive and difficult task to achieve. The application of small intricate *crustae* in particular, seems to have been an especially demanding skill, as expressed by Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices (*Edictum de pretiis rerum venalium*) of AD 301, where the wages of a skilled *opus sectile* worker (*marmorarius*) are listed as at 60 *denarii* per day.⁸⁷² By comparison, stone carvers (*lapidarius structor*) were paid 50 *denarii* while a labourer (*operarius*) could expect to be paid 25 *denarii*. As it is, we often find that when walls are lined with marble it is large panels which are used.⁸⁷³ Evidence from across this study seems to reflect this reality, although the design deployed in the *Porta Marina Domus* provides a fairly conspicuous outlier.⁸⁷⁴ In addition to the size and shape of the elements used, a second design feature observed in this study is the use of cooler tones used to decorate walls. Even though this approach is not ubiquitous, the remaining wall cladding indicates that it may have been common place: from the *Faustinella - San Cipriano* villa, the remaining evidence indicates that grey marble slabs were clad to the villa's walls with hooks or nails.⁸⁷⁵ As Ostia, the *Domus di Amore e Psiche*, *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria*, and the *Terme del Foro* all feature significant amounts of wall cladding in cooler hues (Fig 20;21).

It is plausible that this reflects an attempt to generate a cool, airy, environment; Barker's comment regarding the cooling nature of marble should be taken into account here. Alternatively, this design feature may reflect that fact that relatively plain wall cladding highlights the more sumptuous floor décor. However, returning to a point I introduced above, we should also remember that marble was never the only decorative mode at play. Instead, we should consider that Roman buildings would have been full of life's general accoutrements, with furniture and fittings, along other forms of decoration, ubiquitous.

On furniture, although issues regarding the placement and permanency of some pieces of Roman furniture, remain it is without doubt that the deployment of furniture impacted how décor was designed and appreciated.⁸⁷⁶ For instance, it was almost certainly the case that hangings or curtains of some description covered parts of the walling, perhaps during evenings and winter months when the cooling effect of the marble was less welcome.⁸⁷⁷ In fact, Ovid tells us as much: '...just as when a purple awning, drawn over a marble hall, stains it with borrowed hues'.⁸⁷⁸ Further evidence for the decorative role played by curtains, this time from the Late Roman period, comes in the guise of mosaics from the 6th century *Sant' Apollinare Nuovo*, in Ravenna, whereby the famous mosaics depict drapes hanging on walls and between columns.⁸⁷⁹ Equally, we can imagine that other standing items such as tables, cabinets, vases, lamps, couches, beds, and statuary were arranged in such a way as to complement the more permanent decorative elements.⁸⁸⁰ This process may have seen plainer decorative elements obscured somewhat while the more embellished areas

⁸⁷² Barker & Russell 2023: 5;22.

⁸⁷³ Barker 2022: 71.

⁸⁷⁴ For example, the *Domus di Amore et Psiche*, the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria*, the *Terme del Foro*, and the *Faustinella* villa.

⁸⁷⁵ See page, 66.

⁸⁷⁶ Mols 2020.

⁸⁷⁷ Stephenson 2014: 12-21; Parani 2019: 146.

⁸⁷⁸ Ovid. *Met.* 10.595. (Trans: Miller).

⁸⁷⁹ Deliyannis 2018:349-350.

⁸⁸⁰ Ling 1998: 117-119; Nevett 2010: 90; 111-112; Lepinski 2016; Mols 2022: 170-174.

were augmented. We can also consider the role of natural and artificial light in Roman architecture and its impact on design.

Now without a roof, during the day the *domus*, villas, and baths studied here are consistently bright while in the evenings they are engulfed in darkness. Obviously, this does not reflect the lived experience for residents in antiquity: streams of bright sunlight through windows in the day followed by flickering candlelight in the evening would have engendered a sensory sensation quite different from those felt today. We can easily imagine how the *Basilica di Santa Tecla* and the *Battistero di San Giovanni al Fonte*, which now sit beneath the *Piazza del Duomo* in a museum setting, would have been illuminated with natural light and candles, with the murmurs of worshippers adding to the sense of atmosphere.

As Abbe explains: 'light was absolutely central to the ancient aesthetics of art'.⁸⁸¹ Indeed, Michielin has observed how home owners, commissioners, and architects in antiquity had the ability and inclination to play with light.⁸⁸² The use of doors, grills, shutters, screens, and windows could significantly impact how one saw, used, and decorated a space. At the same time, a paucity of natural light also impacted interior decoration. In her study, Michielin has proposed that the apparent 'overwhelming' visual perception which the second style frescoes found in *Cubiculum M* of the *Villa di Fannio Sinistore* generate on modern observers may have been reduced by the somewhat limited amount of natural light which permeated the space in antiquity.⁸⁸³ Likewise, according to her analysis, the low levels of natural light in the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* may have dimmed the visual experience in the building, potentially leading to more flamboyant interior decoration.⁸⁸⁴ Regarding this point, in her study of medieval mosaics, James has argued that the changes made to the architectural form of churches, from the basilica church to the centrally planned dome church, had the capacity to seriously reduce the amount of natural light admitted into churches.⁸⁸⁵ Although this architectural dynamic may have only effected the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*, with respect to this study, the impact of architectural form and design and their relationship with light is nevertheless apparent.

In this environment, it is almost certainly the case that all design pertaining to the use of marble panelling and *opus sectile*, took the amount of natural light into consideration. Accordingly, it is credible that the way certain lithotypes interacted with light influenced design choices. Concerning marble it is quite plausible that the white stone, which is clad to the walls in various Ostian *domus*, may have been deployed thanks to its capacity of white stone to effectively reflect light.⁸⁸⁶ Likewise, as Michielin hints, the varied approaches to floor décor may expose the fact that some spaces were naturally dim and therefore required further enhancement in order to provide the desired visual richness. In light of this, so to speak, the decision to decorate spaces with numerous small, interconnected pieces, may also echo the fact that light reacts differently depending on the lithotype with which it interacts, thus creating a varied visual experience.⁸⁸⁷ Perhaps the most ingenious example of marble used as a means of creating additional luminosity comes from the 11th century Hosios Loukas church in Phokis where thin slabs of marble seem to have been deployed as quasi-shutters.

⁸⁸¹ Abbe 2020: 3.

⁸⁸² Ellis 1994: 68-70; James 1996: 4-8; Michielin 2019: 239; 257; 269-270; 2021: 50-64; 115-131.

⁸⁸³ Michielin 2019; 2021; Kariveri 124-127: 2020.

⁸⁸⁴ Michielin 2021: 124; 206-223.

⁸⁸⁵ James 2017: 92. Also see, Schibille 2004: 43-48.

⁸⁸⁶ Barry 2020: 27-30.

⁸⁸⁷ Pentcheva 2011: 98; 100.

Deployed in conjunction with hidden windows, the effect was that the galleries within the churches appear to glow.⁸⁸⁸ In other instances, specific lithotypes, or the application of certain lithotypes, could have been deployed owing to the way in which shifting light can animate shadows and texture on translucent marbles. Pentcheva's analysis of book-matched stone in the Hagia Sofia suggest that this was the case.⁸⁸⁹

Of course, we should also remember that marbles had a decorative appeal of their own. As Barker points out, marbles, with their distinctive hues and patterns, were desirable in and of themselves.⁸⁹⁰ Accordingly, assessing the placement of stones in relation to each other is a worthwhile pursuit.

In the few examples where both extensive wall and floor cladding remain in good condition a number of trends emerge. Returning to Osita, we can see how walling a floor design interacted. If we look at the *Domus Amore e Psiche* (Room C and Room D) the *Domus del Ninfeo* (Room D), the *Domus di Protiro* (Room 12 and Room 13), and, the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo*, a strikingly consistent design emerges, with regards to the flooring. In each instance the arrangement of the stone is thus: colourful/ornate composition at the centre of the room with simple panels of grey white stone placed around the edges of the space. Furthermore, remaining evidence from the *Basilica di Santa Tecla* in Milan indicated that this decorative dynamic was also applied in public spaces too. In fact, additional examples of this approach are multiple with instances found across the Roman world, in both public and private contexts.⁸⁹¹ What is more, the case studies assessed in this thesis also indicate a trend white and grey stone used at the bottom of the walling, as a sort of skirting board. The consistency of this approach suggests that this design was part of a decorative trend or style. The reasoning behind this design choice remains unclear. Returning to the placement of furniture, it may be the case that pieces of standing furniture were usually located at the edges of rooms and therefore made the deployment of expensive and laborious polychrome designs in these spaces relatively redundant. Alternatively, it is plausible that bands of white or grey stone acted as a sort of boundary or frame which helped centre an observer's attention to the middle of the decorative formation. Although this analysis has the potential to sound a little negative, in reality this approach sees the bordering stones performing a specific role in a carefully arranged design and in doing so connects the walls and floors together.

A further compelling idea, postulated by Haug and Hielscher, proposes that through artistic treatment the aesthetic qualities of a material are magnified and as such are visually privileged.⁸⁹² In this way, the white and grey stones, which require relatively limited treatment are reduced to edges, corners, and the lowers walls, i.e. the visually limited spaces. It may be for this reason that we find so many *tondi* in *Serpentino* or *Porfido Rosso* situated at the centre for floor designs, in buildings across this study.⁸⁹³

Regarding the ornate floor décor, the remaining evidence is vast, with colour often, but not always, providing the central motif. In some instances, the remaining material suggests that a somewhat limited colour palette was preferred. Small rooms in the Desenzano

⁸⁸⁸ Piotrowski 2010: 112; James 2017:92-93.

⁸⁸⁹ Pentcheva 2011: 95.

⁸⁹⁰ Barker 2022: 78.

⁸⁹¹ Gallocchio 2022: 186-185.

⁸⁹² Haug & Hielscher 2022: 6.

⁸⁹³ *Domus Amore e Psiche*, *Domus del Ninfeo*, *Domus del Protiro*, *Domus del Tempio Rotondo*, and the villa at Faragola.

villa and in the *Domus del Ninfeo* are marked by a black and white floor pattern. Meanwhile, the same approach is noted at the *Basilica di San Giovanni al Fonte*, in Milan. Nevertheless, where colour is prominent, in Late Roman buildings, it is often the case that a number of lithotypes are displayed. As I have illustrated throughout this study, the sheer range of lithotypes deployed is vast. This predisposition for variety is discussed at length in this thesis but it is worth reiterating. In short, we find that Late Roman buildings were decorated in a range of lithotypes with different combinations at play. The manifestation of this, as we might expect is varied. In some instances, we find that specific decorative trends from the Imperial era retain their allure centuries later. The similarities in floor design between the Room C in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* and the two 2nd century *domus* have been discussed above. The baths at Aeclanum also share design motifs, via the use of green stone with earlier bathhouses. At the same time, novel approaches to design and colour are also attested. Assemblages from across this study have indicated that chromatic variety was central to the Late Roman aesthetic in Italy. The limited remaining evidence for the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*, for example, indicates that an array of lithotypes were deployed. Likewise, the available material from the villas at Lake Garda add credence to the view that variety was prized; it is largely the same at Ostia where evidence regarding *domus* across the city attests to a desire for chromatic diversity.

Given I have debated the influence that *spolia* had on aspect of design in Late Roman Italy above, I will not dwell on the subject here. But, I will point out that in addition to the colour palettes, some of the application we can continue to focus on the use of *spolia* and consider again important to recognise that the so-called '*modello quadrato reticolare*' styles design observed across Ostia, had been a feature of Roman décor for centuries. Moreover, as Synder points out, the individual elements from which these patterns were composed were easy to strip and then restructure.⁸⁹⁴ This dynamic provides the opportunity for designers, in the Late Roman era, to produce mixed assemblages made up of assorted typologies. Potentially the best example of this from this study probably comes from the flooring found in the *triclinium* of the *Domus delle Colonne* where the *quadrato* styles, in different sizes, are composed of a number different of lithotypes (Fig. 28). In this way, *spolia* is not only enhanced by the symbolism, but the in some instances deploying *spolia* was incredibly easy and thus no doubt proved attractive to anyone looking to create something with variety.

Yet, the Late Roman taste for variety did not stop at marble. In fact, as I have indicated across this study, marble was rarely used by itself. Instead, relief stucco, paintings, decorative woodwork, and mosaics were often employed alongside stone. The use of these different forms of architectural decors feeds into the wider picture already established in this thesis by reflecting a regard for the decorative dexterity. While some aspects of decoration such as woodwork rarely survives the test of time mosaics and paintings are relatively robust. The next section will consider how they may have impacted marble design.

More than marble: mosaics and paintings

'All Satyrs are fond of jeering, but tell me, thou too, why, looking at everyone, dost thou pour forth this laughter? I laugh because I marvel how, being, put together out of all kinds of stones, I suddenly became a Satyr.'

⁸⁹⁴ Synder 2021: 3-4:17.

While Nilus Scholasticus seems to have found the composition of mosaics positively transformative, mosaics have not always been as well regarded in scholarship, leading some to describe them as a secondary artistic medium, in comparison to marble.⁸⁹⁵ The sheer cost and labour associated with marble has no doubt generated a sense of prestige around the deployment of stone. Further, it is also the case that the application of mosaics, which were often used to decorate corridors or as a means of creating a sort of decorative boarder around more ornate marble work, has diminished the reputation of mosaics in some quarters. However, returning to Diocletian's Edict of Maximum Prices, the wages paid to mosaic workers were similar to those paid to the expert *opus sectile* cutters. As James notes, the edict proposes that a *tessellarius* was paid 50 denarii per day while 60 denarii was paid to *musearius*.⁸⁹⁶ While the nomenclature here is a slight issues, the difference between a *tessellarius* and *musearius* is uncertain, the edict does suggest at least that there was no great discrepancy between the value of the work carried out - it should also be noted that specialist painters were paid between 75 and 150 *denarii* per day.

More obviously, the evidence on the ground belies the claim that mosaics were a lesser artist medium. Mosaics from the *Basillica di San Lorenzo*, which were located in the *Cappella di Sant'Aquilino*, and across a number of church buildings in Ravenna and Constantinople, demonstrate that mosaics often held a central role in artistic expression, showcasing exception ingenuity and craftsmanship.⁸⁹⁷ Further afield, other examples indicate that mosaics were vital to private décor just as much as public décor. Perhaps best known of all, the mosaics which decorate almost 4000 sq. m of the flooring in the 4th century in the Sicilian *Piazza Armerina* demonstrate just how vital mosaics could be.⁸⁹⁸ Used alongside polychrome stone, the mosaics noted here produced enticing visual effect. Perhaps a lesser known example of fine mosaic work comes from the 5th century Christian complex at Kourion, Cyprus.⁸⁹⁹ Here multi-coloured mosaics paved the flooring on the church's narthex. In fact, across the island a number of buildings were outfitted with colourful mosaic work.

The sense of chromatic variation as applied to mosaics is also noted in textual evidence from antiquity. In the 2nd century AD, the Greek Athenaeus refers to the varied colours which made up mosaic flooring.⁹⁰⁰ Athenaeus description here is somewhat redolent of the way marble was described. Indeed, as James outlines, references to the luminosity of mosaics are noted in the literary tradition, with praised for their 'glittering and elaborate beauty' as well as the 'dazzling workmanship'.⁹⁰¹

Furthermore, away from the spectacular, even relatively plain mosaics had the capacity to contribute fully to developed decorative schemes. In some instances, the significance of mosaics may stem from the fact that they were distinct from marble, or indeed

⁸⁹⁵ Examples of mosaics in corridors and as decorative boarders see: *Domus Amore e Psiche* (Room B), *Domus delle Colonne* (Room D, Room I), and the *Domus del Tempio Rotondo* (Room A). Regarding the notion that mosaics were secondary marble see: Ling 1998:115.

⁸⁹⁶ James 2017: 100;111.

⁸⁹⁷ James 2017.

⁸⁹⁸ Wilson 2022: 1.

⁸⁹⁹ Astolfi 2022: 31-32; 53; 59; 64.

⁹⁰⁰ Ath. 5.d.; XII d. (Trans: Olsen).

⁹⁰¹ James 2017: 122-131. 'Glittering and elaborate beauty' comes from a description of St. Polyeuktos as described in the Greek Anthology 1,10, 50. On 'dazzling workmanship' see, Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 10.4.43.

paintings. As Ling notes, different decorative techniques could influence each other and dictate how they were used.⁹⁰² In a similar fashion, Burdajewicz has suggested that the contrast in materiality lay behind this varied approach: translucent marble looks and feels different to grouted mosaics. Meanwhile, the matte effective provided by painted plaster is different still.⁹⁰³ Seen in this way, the deployment of what may seem like moderately plain mosaics, such as those observed in this study, alongside more obviously lavish marble displays are in fact part of a well considered and thoughtful attempt to engender an attractive decorative richness which is based in variety.

In this environment, whereby a certain degree of decorative dexterity was well regarded, other artistic mediums like painting also had a role to play. The most noteworthy example of Late Roman walls paintings in Italy are located in Rome's *Santa Maria Antiqua*, which is dominated by the extensive wall paintings.⁹⁰⁴ Furthermore, as I have already observed in Chapter III, it seems plausible that the walling above the remaining marble revetment in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* may have been decorated in with paintings, as per remnants of plaster high on the walls above the marble cladding.⁹⁰⁵ Here, in this context, the white grey marble veneered walls change from a fairly minimalist and stark appearance to one which forms part of a more inclusive decorative ensemble with multiple decorative modes in action. Indeed, the walling for Room D in the *Domus del Ninfeo* illustrates this latter point rather well: here wall paintings sit above horizontally arranged panels of grey stone. Although the grey panels here are smaller than those deployed in the *Domus di Amore e Psiche* the interplay between two decorative modes is impactful.

In its totality, we can observe a genuine Late Roman decorative flavour in the décor discussed here. Importantly, we can also see what impacted the decorative choices on display. As I hope to have expressed, it is my sense that design choices were impacted by several factors. Prosaic reasons, such as the weather, were surely considered. Likewise, it is plausible, that repetitive designs were used in corridors as means hurrying people along. The existence of furniture undoubtably played a role too. If we consider the location of the *stibadium* at Faragola, it seems likely that the couches were arranged so that dinners could see the room's lavishly decorated central space at they lounged.

At the same time, less mundane aspects of Late Roman culture also played their role. The obsession with variety is vital here. The extensive use of different polychrome marbles appears almost common place in the homes of the wealthy and in public structures. Deployed alongside white and grey lithotypes, the use polychrome material would have appeared especially enchanting. The role of spoliated marble should not be diminished here either.

Yet, although the application of marble in the Late Roman period was defined by assortment, it was not unique in this way. Instead, decorative variety saw a range of decorative modes employed. In fact, as explained by Ling, it seems as if the range of decorative modes were used simply as means of manifesting variety: marble and mosaics are used side-by-side simply because they are different. The use of fabrics, ceramics, metal and woodwork would have all contributed here too. However, as discussed, it was painting and mosaics which would leave the most lasting impact.

All in all, then, we can see how the marble assemblages here, in concert with other mediums, feed into the wider appreciation of decorative variance. Yet, variety was not a

⁹⁰² Ling 1998: 115.

⁹⁰³ Burdajewicz 2020: 328.

⁹⁰⁴ See pages, 146-147

⁹⁰⁵ See page, 54.

given. Certainly, it is not away the case that a broad range of lithotypes were deployed, during the Roman period. Russell's study of the stone in Utica, for examples, outlines the utter dominance that *Giallo Antico* had in the city, during the Antonine period.⁹⁰⁶ Further examples, this time from southern Gaul, suggest that wealthy home owners in the 6th century preferred the widespread use of white and grey stones in favour of polychrome lithotypes.⁹⁰⁷ Yet, in Late Roman Italy, elaboration, richness and chromatic variance were were capital.⁹⁰⁸ In the last section in this thesis will consider the use of local marble.

Local Stone

'Long-distance trade in stone is an improbable phenomenon'.

Fant, C. 1988: 147.

More than 30 years after they were published, Fant's opening remarks to his seminal study of the Roman stone trade continue to be regularly cited by scholars.⁹⁰⁹ Yet, as Fant observes, stone use during the Roman period largely relied on local stone. The tendency amongst scholarship to highlight the deployment of foreign stone is, perhaps inadvertently, redolent of the trend in Roman literature which often placed foreign stones at the centre of discussions concerning marble. As discussed in Chapter II, writers from the Late Republic, the Imperial period, and then the Late Roman period, discussed imported stone at length. Less time was afforded to the implementation of local resources. Yet, the archaeological data studied here in this thesis, and elsewhere, indicates the local stone was widely employed: across each region studied in this thesis local or regionally quarried stone was present. This section, will ponder what the deployment of local lithotypes says about stone use in the Late Roman period. In line with the rest of this study both written and material sources are discussed.

Support your local quarry: the value of local stone in local and regional environments

The deployment of local stones has largely been framed as a reaction to the difficulties associated with the importation of foreign lithotypes. Indeed, in some respects this is an accurate appraisal. As demonstrated above, practical realities linked with the quarrying and movement of stone likely incentivised the deployment of local marbles.⁹¹⁰ Few have considered that the deployment of local stone was a source of pride. Yet the literary evidence is replete with writers advocating for, in some cases celebrating, local stone.⁹¹¹ Likewise, extant examples of local, or regional marble, as part of ornate decorative designs is surely indicative of a sense of local pride, even if this pride is combined with the practicalities of the

⁹⁰⁶ Russell 2019.

⁹⁰⁷ Balmelle 2001: 223; 397-398.

⁹⁰⁸ Dunbabin 1999:260.

⁹⁰⁹ Strauss 2006: 199; Russell 2013a: 142; Leidwanger et al. 2021: 283.

⁹¹⁰ Russell 2013a: 154-164.

⁹¹¹ Plin. *NH.* 36.60; 36.4.20; 36.4.32-33; Sid. *Apoll. Epist.* 2.2.7.

stone trade. Thus, the next section will consider the extent to which local stone was deployed, in the case studies assessed, before moving on to explore how ideals with respect to localism impacted marble use, during this time.

In the 2nd second century AD, the biographer Suetonius memorably remarked that following his ascension to the imperial throne, the emperor Augustus boasted that '*he had found it (Rome) built of brick and left it in marble*'. What Suetonius does not tell us, however, is that the emperor appears to have actively sought to increase the use of Italian Luna marble, in place of the widely disseminated Greek varieties across Italy.⁹¹² This preference for localism, therefore was not a theme which emerged in literary circles in the early Imperial period. Instead, it seems more than likely that in some instances local stone was preferred to imported varieties. Based on the evidence of this study, the preferences endured into the Late Roman period.

In Milan, evidence from the *Basilica di San Lorenzo*, as well as the 4th century Mausoleum located in the city, indicate that a range of lithotypes imported into the city from the nearby country were deployed; both polychrome and white lithotypes were in use.⁹¹³ Since we do not know how these lithotypes were deployed we cannot draw any conclusions on their placement. Equally, we can only speculate on the impact that local lithotypes had on those who observed them. Yet, the deployment of these stones in grand prestigious buildings may indicate that these lithotypes were well regarded in Milan.

Fortunately, the assemblage from the villa at Faragola, in Apulia, provides somewhat more detail. Although foreign stones are used, the application of the *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, in the centre of the villa's main *cenatio* and *thermae* is especially interesting; *Breccia Rosato Gargano* was employed across Apulia in public buildings, such as the baths at *Herdonia*, and in other private settings like the (1st – 3rd c. AD) villa *Masseria Ciccotti*.⁹¹⁴ Placed in a prominent position, at Faragola, as part of *opus sectile* arrangements, the use of the stone projects a strong sense of local pride. The use of the stone in this way shares some similarities with the use of more famous lithotypes like *Porfido Rosso* and *Serpentino*, which were often placed at the heart of a decorative motifs.⁹¹⁵ This centrality is surely reflective of the symbolic value the lithotypes was understood to have. In this way, the deployment here provides a rebuttal to De Stefano's claim which has sought to attribute the popularity of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* to its broadly similar appearance to the more widespread and well known *Breccia Corralina*. A somewhat reductive approach on the value that local stone could have, De Stefano's appraisal interprets *Breccia Rosato Gargano* as simply a replacement or substitute marble.⁹¹⁶ However, while the notion of 'substitute marbles' may have some value, more generally, in instances like this where local materials are placed at the heart of a decorative scheme there is surely something more significant at play. There is no reason to suggest that the use of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* across Northern Apulia in the Late Roman period was anything more than a direct attempt to proudly convey a sense of local identity. Since different lithotypes in antiquity were associated with a specific place it seems entirely possible that northern Apulia could have been linked with *Breccia Rosato Gargano*. We can view the deployment of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* and other local lithotypes as determined acts of ingenuity, pride and resource. While it was without doubt the case that many people in antiquity were able to

⁹¹² Suet. *Aug.* 29.

⁹¹³ Neri et al. 2019: 84-85.

⁹¹⁴ Gualtieri & Ferrari 2009: 275. De Stefano 2015:114; De Stefano et al. 2008

⁹¹⁵ See the various domus in Ostia, discussed above.

⁹¹⁶ Russell 2013a: 78; Herrmann et al. 2017: 780-781.

accurately identify foreign stones it is perfectly plausible that local communities were also able to identify (and proudly tell visitors about) stones quarried from their home region. The following part of this discussion will explore how localism was rationalised in the literary tradition.

Localism in literature

Cicero's famously abrupt put-down of the Chians' walls, fashioned from local marble, reveals the importance that local stones had within communities: the senator quipped: 'I would be more impressed if you had made them of travertine [from Rome]!'.⁹¹⁷ Although, Strauss has interpreted Cicero's comment as indicative of 'the snob value of only being impressed by what was exotic and therefore expensive', Cicero's retort cites travertine. Travertine, of course, was not an especially sought-after stone, certainly, there is no indication that travertine was valued in the way stones like *Porfido Rosso* or *Giallo Antico* were. Instead, Cicero's implication is that foreign stone, even humble foreign stone, is inherently more impressive than local stone. Cicero's position, despite the protestations of some writers, was one that persists through the Roman period with various writers extolling the value of imported lithotypes while at the same time ignoring local stones.⁹¹⁸ Nevertheless, the passage above makes perfectly clear that the Chians were proud of their local resources, even if the bigwig Cicero was not impressed. This is the vital point. While some, most probably members of the elite, revelled in their cosmopolitanism local communities also took great pride in their home town or region.

In a similar fashion to the pride displayed by the Chians, Vitruvius reports that the Ephesians were delighted to discover a rich source of white marble in their own territory.⁹¹⁹ The discovery and use of local stone in both these instances represent for the Chians and the Ephesians a sense of local pride. While the use of a broad range of polychrome lithotypes is rightly understood as a demonstration of wealth and empire, local stones hints at a burgeoning sense of *campanilismo* within the Roman system. This sense of pride is often overlooked in the study of stone where economic imperatives are central to most modern debates. Indeed, alongside writers like Cicero and later Paul the Silentiary, we have writers who celebrated the value of localism: once more Pliny the Elder is the prominent figure here but other namely Horace and later Sidonius also tell us that locally source material is just as, if not more, worthy than material imported from abroad. Pliny argues that Italy's geographic position, which in his view straddles both the East and West, provides her with an abundance of the greatest natural resources known to the world.⁹²⁰ Pliny's case therefore, extends beyond the utilisation of local or regional stone since it includes all natural resources. This pride in local resources, arguably dates back to at least Classical Greece and is alive today in the work of architects, agriculturalists, and environmentalists.⁹²¹ In this way, marble emerges as part of a wider debate concerning localism; noted repeatedly throughout this thesis; marble once more acts as a sort of proxy for all sort of moral and ethical debates through the Roman period. As the final section will make clear, these debates continued into the Late Roman period.

⁹¹⁷ Plin. *NH.* 36. 5.19.

⁹¹⁸ Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.145.150; 1.5.30.40; Paul. *Sil. Descr. S. Sophia.* 617-647.

⁹¹⁹ Vitruv. *De Arch.* 10.2.15.

⁹²⁰ Plin. *NH.* 37. 202.

⁹²¹ Mitchell 2000.

Marble and Localism in the Late Roman Period

Concern around localism in the Late Roman period continue to be marked by the two competing narratives which on the one hand rejected local stone in favour on imported material while on the other had advocates for more local and regionalism.

In the late 5th century, Sidonius Apollinaris plays with the symbolism of local stone in a description of the marble used in his own house. Although, as covered in Chapter II, it is my view that Sidonius' claim to have no 'foreign stone' was a literary fiction, he is nevertheless engaging with a tradition, set out by Pliny, that values local resources.⁹²² His references to 'foreign stone', of course signposts his cultivated knowledge concerning marble. The apex, of this dynamic, which situates the importance of foreign stone and local stone side by side comes in the 6th century with Paul Silentiary's *ekphrasis*, in praise of the Hagia Sofia, which is perhaps the most famous celebration of foreign stones from antiquity. Here Paul rejoices on the imported stone used to decorate the church yet, importantly, he identifies Proconnesian marble, quarried on the nearby Marmora Island, as the stone from which the foundations of the church are built:

'The hills of Proconnesus have gladly offered their backs to the life-giving Queen to cover the entire floor...'

Paul the Silentiary. Descr. Hagia Sofia. 664.

The range of foreign stones displayed in the Hagia Sofia are understood as symbols of Justinian's reconquered empire and so they are celebrated.⁹²³ Proconnesian marble, however, is the most important lithotype in the church: the local stone is the foundation of the newly invigorated empire. As Barry notes, Justinian could have chosen from an array of lithotypes, but he ends up choosing a local lithotype, thus reflecting the primacy of Proconnesian marble.⁹²⁴ Although the Hagia Sofia is obviously an exceptional building and the specific values attached to it cannot be overlaid onto other buildings elsewhere, the fact that a stone quarried only a few miles away from Rome's capital played such an important decorative role, and was celebrated in verse, is a spectacular reversal when one considers Cicero's dismissal of Chian walls. Yet, simultaneously, it represents the very same advocacy for local stone, that Augustus had pursued during his time as emperor. In this respect, we are once more, alerted to the fact that while attitudes to marble in the Late Roman period were informed by earlier traditions the period was also open to change and so, as a consequence, in Paul's poetry and in the construction of the Hagia Sofia we see foreign marble and local marble celebrated together.

The use of local stone was widespread. In Lombardy, a range of local stones are used. Since the local stone were not identified *in situ* it is impossible to know if they were placed at the heart of decorative designs or played supplementary roles. Equally, we can only speculate on the impact that local lithotypes had on those who observed them. However, the assemblage from the villa at Faragola provides some good detail. Although foreign stones are

⁹²² Sid. Apoll.*Epist.*2.7.

⁹²³ Dalrymple 1996:27; Schibille 2014: 98; Barry 2020: 165-172.

⁹²⁴ Barry 2020: 191. Barry points out that Proconnesian marble is used to floor a number of churches in Constantinople.

used, the application of the *Breccia Rosato Gargano*, in the centre of the villa's main *cenatio* and *thermae* is interesting; *Breccia Rosato Gargano* was employed across Apulia in public buildings, such as the baths at *Herdonia*, and in private settings like *Masseria Ciccotti*.⁹²⁵ Placed in a prominent position, at Faragola and as part of *opus sectile* arrangements, the use of the stone projects a strong sense of pride. Moreover, while De Stefano has sought to attribute the popularity of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* to its broadly similar appearance to the more widespread *Breccia Corralina* this seems somewhat reductive. There is no reason to suggest that the use of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* across Northern Apulia in the Late Roman period is anything more than a direct attempt to establish a local stone trade. As we have seen, Apulia was well connected with the Eastern Mediterranean and suppliers were most probably perfectly capable of importing *Breccia Corralina* into the region. Instead, we can view the deployment of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* and other local lithotypes as determined acts of ingenuity, pride and resource. Indeed, while it was without doubt the case that many people in antiquity were able to accurately identify foreign stones, it is perfectly plausible that local communities, the same way the Chians had done, were able to identify (and proudly tell visitors about) stones quarried from their home region.

⁹²⁵ De Stefano 2015:114; De Stefano et al. 2008.

Conclusion

To the untrained eye, the application of marble panelling and *opus sectile* in Late Roman Italy was identical to deployment of marble during Rome's imperial height: homes of the elites as well as grand public buildings were furnished with marble. In cities and in rural areas marble was present; stone imported from across the empire was a fixture of decoration in Italy. However, not everything remained as it was: something had changed. By studying the relationship between the use of marble in Late Roman buildings and the contemporary responses, this study has sought to examine the nature of marble use in during this period, on the Italian peninsula.

Throughout, I have sought to bring together the large body of contemporary Late Roman literature and samples of material evidence so that we may develop our understanding of how marble was deployed and what people thought about it. In this respect, this study is an analysis of taste. Or, more precisely, what motivated and impacted taste in Late Roman Italy. Naturally, the starting point for this study is with the literature. Accordingly, I have evaluated the various contemporary debates concerned with marble and looked to consider them in context, thinking about how they relate to impacted decoration.

At the beginning of Part A, I was able to make a fundamental, and no doubt surprising point: the ancients were fascinated by marble. Writers as diverse as Theophrastus, Pliny the Elder, Ammianus Marcellinus, Ambrose of Milan, and Paul the Silentary, et al. all spent a great deal of time debating marble. These wide ranging debates provided the space for complex and dynamic ideas to emerge which subsequently impacted how future writers discussed marble and, in some instances, how marble was deployed. Yet, as I hope to have shown, marble was not a subject which merely animated a few intellectuals. Instead, I argue that many Romans, including sub-elite Romans, were remarkably familiar with the colours, hues, and origin of many different lithotypes. Crucially it also seems probable that a broad section of the Roman public were aware of what marble could symbolise. This vital, if straightforward point, illustrates that marble was more than a durable stone suitable for the facing of walls and floors; marble *meant* something in antiquity. As I have asserted throughout this thesis, the various writers working on, or contemplating marble, used it as a proxy for discussing broader points, often pertaining to the contemporary political, the social climate, or morality. Marble was capable of evoking debates concerning subjects as assorted as Rome's attitudes towards the East and the interplay between public and private design; we even find similarities in the preference for variety in the Late Latin literary culture and the deployment of mixed polychrome lithotypes in architectural decoration. Importantly, Rome's relationship with her historic self is also a consistent feature of discourse pertaining to marble. In fact, as I have shown, the shadow of Rome or *Romanitas* lingered over much of the debate in the Late Roman era, as it had in the Imperial age.

The second part of this thesis, Part B, is composed of a technical study of the buildings assessed. This offered the opportunity to examine the various building types and their marble assemblages alongside each other. In a fashion similar to the opportunities provided by an analysis of the literary material, by studying the various marble assemblages I have been able to identify the decorative character of different buildings and fashions in different regions. Equally, marble assemblages, can bring to our attention issues pertaining to the political and

social fabric of contemporary Italy, developments regarding the economic environment, as well as fundamental artistic change.

The combination of assemblage analysis along with a study of the textual evidence, generates a multi-layered picture of Late Roman Italy. While inconsistencies between the literature and the archaeological data exist, used in tandem they can provide a rich picture. For example, writers working in the tradition of Pliny the Elder, such as Ammianus and Sidonius, explain that polychrome marble is unsuitable for domestic decoration. Yet, the archaeological evidence presented here indicates that many wealthy homeowners in Late Roman Italy, who were presumably unaware of their misguided anti-Plinian immoralism, decorated their homes lavishly. Of course, this general point is unsurprising. It is unrealistic to imagine that every homeowner in the Late Roman era was up-to-date with the moral protocols as applied of interior décor. Nonetheless, the combined sources indicate that the application of marble was not necessarily straightforward: options were available and there was space for choice. Indeed, as Ward-Perkins and then Russell have remarked, there was no single model that can be universally applied to the Roman stone economy.⁹²⁶ Likewise, the use of marble and the reaction to it in the Late Roman period was not singular. Yet, at the same time, there are instances when the textual tradition coalesces well with the application of stone. Most plainly, this dynamic is exposed by the variegated decorative flourishes observed across this study imitated the predisposition for *varietas* as observed in contemporary poetry.

The study of the stone here has shown that the Italian peninsula continued to prosper during the period studied. Sites as diverse as Lake Garda, Osita, and Aeclanum are all subjected to significant investment in marble. Yet, there are few signs of a consistent approach to use. In fact, this thesis has stressed that marble use in Late Roman Italy was often heterogeneous. As a consequence, the variations observed in the sources and in the archaeological data alert us to broader themes regarding marble use in Late Roman Italy. The discussions across this study have highlighted the extent of regional variation, and the importance of geography had on this dynamic, in Late Roman Italy: plugged into the wider Mediterranean world, stone, mostly but not exclusively from the East, was traded into the region, with Ostia and Rome continuing to receive vast quantities of stone.⁹²⁷ Likewise, evidence from Apulia, indicates that new decorative modes from Egypt and Greece were embraced.⁹²⁸ Simultaneously, an energetic sense of localism continued to flourish with local and regional materials used in the churches of great cities and the homes of local magnates: in Milan and Lake Garda the proliferation of local stone is remarkable; the exploitation of *Breccia Rosato Gargano* in Apulia speaks to a real sense of local pride, thus reflecting the preference for localism as espoused by Pliny the Elder and Sidonius Apollinaris.

The varied approach to marble was also reflected in how specific building types were decorated. Despite the protestations of some of the sources, we find that an abundance of different lithotypes used homes. In bathhouses a peninsula wide trend is noteworthy. *Vis-à-vis* Church décor, the assorted polychrome lithotypes seems to characterise the Late Roman craving for variation. What is more, as I have explained in Chapter IV, the colour palettes used privileged not only a multitude of different marble lithotypes but in addition it seems evident that other decorative modes, namely frescos painting and mosaics, were considered when decorative choices were made. Further, analysis of the stone has also shown the value of

⁹²⁶ Ward-Perkins 1980:61; Russell 2013a:6.

⁹²⁷ Russell 2013a:360.

⁹²⁸ Gasparini 2022.

spolia and reused material which was used alongside quantities of newly imported stone. Indeed, reflecting a literary mode emerging during the 3rd century, which valued variety, Late Roman assemblages are noteworthy for their wide-ranging displays. The evidence presented in the latter part of Chapter VI illustrates this. In particular, material from the villa at *Faragola*, where newly quarried material was deployed alongside *spolia*, exhibits this tradition especially well. What is more, the deployment of *spolia* speaks to the Late Roman preoccupation *Romanitas*. The argument made in Chapter VI does not need repeating here but it is worth reiterating that the deployment of *spolia* reflects the ideological needs of Late Romans, as cited in their writing, to highlight their connection to the ideal of Rome. Yet, as I have emphasised, there was a particular Late Roman character with respect to attitudes concerning marble; despite Symmachus' best efforts, Late Roman Italy was distinct and it is my hope that this comes through in this study.

Epilogue

Marble retained its allure well beyond the Late Roman era. As late as the 14th century the Venetian galley captain Gabriele Dandolo sent a letter home exhorting the *Collegio* to acquire fine marbles for the ornamentation of the *Basilica di San Marco* in Venice:

'Since our Church of San Marco has need of marbles in fine condition, and since we have heard reports that on the island of Mykonos and also other Roman islands [of the eastern Mediterranean], that there ... are to be found the most beautiful marbles of every colour and type, we ask ... that when you are in those parts ... you make inquiries everywhere about... white, veined, green, porphyry, and every [other] type.'

Gabriele Dandolo (Trans: Brown 1996:29)

Here, Dandolo's letter replicates the same sentiments observed in the work of writers active between the 4th and 6th centuries. He sought to capture the beauty that marble provided; he aspired to possess the variety that a range of marble lithotypes can provide. Yet, significantly, Dandolo conspicuously draws attention to the marble as something which belonged to the *Romans*. The persistent relevance and the cultural cachet of marble identified by Dandolo was reflected both in Italy and abroad. What is more, as the cladding which adorns the *Basilica di San Marco* testifies panelling, as well as *opus sectile*, was just as attractive as columns and relief elements, and statuary.

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