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Bachelor of Arts in History

The Building Projects of Sixtus V

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Abstract

The city of Rome underwent radical changes during the pontificate of Sixtus V. Felice Peretti ascended to the throne of St Peter in 1585, and reigned for 5 years. A genius urban reformer, he erected some of the city's most iconic monuments and boulevards. His enormous contributions to the Counter Reformation are still visible today, as he utilized public space to ideologically counter the schism that Martin Luther spawned. Traditional historiography has long portrayed Sixtus as an ascetic outsider who selflessly reformed the city, curtailing lawless brigands and returning Rome to an era of peace and justice. But this popular conception of Sixtus V is not the result of actual achievements, but the result of his ability as a propagandist. He utilized his numerous public works and monuments to craft a powerful public persona, one which would endure in Roman folk tales of "giustizie" for centuries. This paper will first analyze the political, religious, and economic motivations behind his major public works, before then examining the ways in which he utilized these works to craft a personal mythology that drew upon a myriad of past figures, both historical and mythological.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Brigid and Padraic, who have always supported me. It is also of course dedicated to Sixtus V, whose 500th birthday ominously coincides with this paper's submission deadline. Three years ago, I gazed upon this city's obelisks in confusion. As Goethe proclaimed during his own visit, "Speak, ye stones, I entreat! Oh speak, ye palaces lofty! Utter a word, oh ye streets! Wilt thou not, Genius, awake?" Three years later, I can finally hear them.

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Throughout the process of writing my thesis I have had a great deal of support. I would like to thank Professor Walters for supporting me throughout the entire process as well as helping me discover my own academic niche. I would like to also thank Professor Ogle for assisting me throughout my entire time at JCU as my academic advisor. And of course, I would like to once again thank my parents.

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1. Introduction

“Non può durare in eterno, come diceva quello che girava lo spiedo.”

All cities have a *genius loci*, a certain presiding atmosphere that animates the buildings and avenues with a certain sense of place. The ancient Roman cult believed this quite literally, identifying a spirit or “genius” which manifested and personified these areas. Herzog too talks of a “voodoo of place,” an almost metaphysical aura that subconsciously affects those presiding there, which warps even film when captured in its bounds. In few places is this more palpable than in Rome. Rome is immediately iconic and recognizable. Certain emperors and dictators have had immense power over the shape and layout of the eternal city. Augustus comes to mind, as well as Mussolini. But one figure, unknown to many, has had more influence over the modern face of the city than almost any other. A figure whose time in power was short, only five years, and yet brought radical transformations to the very face of Rome. I am referring to Pope Sixtus V.

A famous story tells, “That a priest on returning to Rome after the death of Sixtus remarked that he could hardly recognize it any more: Everything seemed to be new, edifices, streets, squares, fountains, aqueducts, obelisks.” How deliberate and consistent the plan behind his urban vision actually was; however, has remained controversial. Everything from esoteric religious messages to the degree of central control he wielded is still contested in the academic conversation. Was he an urban mastermind, who meticulously worked to transform the city into a “single holy shrine?” Or was his primary prerogative in his building projects familial self

aggrandizement? Did he exert detailed and deliberate control over the building projects, or was his approach laissez faire, relying on building contracts he awarded to independent parties? And what symbolic associations, both exoteric and esoteric, did he attempt to link to himself through his urban propaganda while crafting his pontificate's mythology?

My methodological approach will be analyzing the political, economic, and religious utility of his major building projects. I will then analyze how he utilized his building projects to craft symbolic associations between himself and various historical and mythological figures. In doing so I will demonstrate that Sixtus V was unparalleled as a counter reformation urban designer, and in effect laid the foundation for the archetypal city of modernity. I will also demonstrate the ways in which he effectively crafted a personal mythology for his pontificate, creating a legend that would abide for centuries in the minds of the Roman populace.

2. The Building Projects

Let us begin by reviewing the major building projects initiated by Sixtus V that we plan on analyzing: the streets; the erection of the four obelisks and the pillars of Trajan and Marcus Aurellius; the Acqua Felice and the Quirinal; the Ospizio dei Mendicanti; the villa Montalto; and the Sistine Chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore. We will analyze the political, economic, and religious significance and motivation behind each.

The Streets

Sixtus can best be understood as a great urbanizer, and the streets he constructed led to the “boulevardization” of Rome. He initiated the construction of a “network of far flung, dead straight avenues encircling the dense urban core and connected the major pilgrims shrines of the outlying area.” (Burroughs 58). First we must contextualize Romes road networks within the background of some of his predecessors before we approach his own contributions. Sixtus’ efforts built upon a century of Papal attempts to reform the urban landscape, to better facilitate the movement of people. (Burroughs 57). By the mid 16th century, the urban sprawl of Rome had begun to advance in a unique way. The standard direction of city development is usually East to West, but Rome was advancing in the inverse direction. From NW (the Vatican) to South East (the hills of the current Monti region and beyond). (Gideon 172). A new form of street began to appear within the city, which was characteristically long, open and straight. Two streets commissioned by Julius II set the precedent for this new form of Roman strada, the Via Julia and

the Via della Lungara. Sixtus continued this model and expanded it, connecting the seven major pilgrimage basilicas, ie, “le sette chiese.” These included: “San Pietro, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Paolo fuori la mura, San Sebastiano fuori la mura, San Giovanni in Laterano, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, e San Lorenzo fuori la mura.” The practice of visiting these seven churches in a single day pilgrimage was initiated by Saint Philip Neri, and became a Roman pilgrimage staple of the counter reformation. Sixtus’ reworking of the urban fabric was explicitly shaped by le sette chiese, as the long and open boulevards were commissioned to create a nexus for the sites, and facilitate travel for pilgrimes. Gideon goes so far as to claim that the network of streets that Sixtus pioneered inadvertently laid the standard for the modern cityscape, leaving behind the “limited, wall girded, star shaped city (of the renaissance),” and making it so that in Rome “The lines of a traffic web of the modern city were first formulated.” (Gideon 155). The significance of this is monumental, implying that the Sistine Plan was the basis for the modern Metropolis.

The Sistine street plan was overtly religious in its nature and function, as he attempted to, as the famous adage goes, forge Rome into a “single holy shrine.” Sixtus was obsessed with transforming Rome into an explicitly Christian city, a spiritual core for the Counter reformation. By crafting these streets, he opened up the city in a way that the major basilicas dominated the consciousness of its inhabitants. By transforming the city into one so appealing for pilgrimage, he in a sense “Welcomed Christians back to renew their commitment to the Catholic faith.” (Dennis 80). A counter reformation call to those who may have fallen under the spell of the reformation. And while at an obvious level the street plan seems exclusively religious, its political and economic functions were numerous. Through a political lens, the utility of the Sistine plan was two fold. The Peretti family had constructed a villa known as Villa Montalto on the Esquiline hill, right next to Santa Maria Maggiore, the major basilica in which Sixtus had

constructed his chapel and tomb. We will delve into both these projects later, but what is important to understand now is that these projects were for familial self aggrandizement, an ancient Roman tradition, and so the area acted as a nucleus for Peretti family identity. The Sistine street plan framed both buildings right in the middle, in the heart of the new city fabric. The buildings formed a “bipartite center,” both connected to one of the most important streets in the plan, the Via Felice (which also named after Sixtus added to the familial aggrandizement). (Dennis 84). This would have sent a powerful message to the Roman nobility, that although the Peretti name is a new one, it is powerful and dominates the center of this new Roman cityscape. The other political dimension to his boulevards related not to bolstering his earthly name but consolidating the power of the Papacy over the city itself. Burroughs claims that by creating the long open boulevards he fostered a sense of transparency and culture of absolutism. A city “open to the disciplining gaze and armed power of the ruler and his minions.” (Burroughs 58).

The economic utility of the new street layout was also immense. The population and economic activity of Medieval Rome was crammed into “A district wedged into a fold of the tiber opposite of the Castel Sant'angelo.” (Gideon 158). The Campus Martius were suffocating with bodies and activity while the Eastern hills were basically uninhabited aside from sparse churches. By erecting long boulevards eastwards he opened up new land to be populated and used as economic centers. Another economic boon brought by the avenues, and a motivation we have yet to touch on, is that these new wide open streets accommodated the new form of transportation, the buggy. (Burroughs 58). The new street layout would prepare the city for the influx of pilgrims which were arriving with the Jubilee year Sixtus would call, bringing an influx of money into the city as well.

The Obelisks and Columns

One of the most noteworthy and easily recognizable contributions that Sixtus made to the Roman cityscape was the erection of four ancient Obelisks, along with the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius. First a brief overview of each obelisk. The first obelisk is the one that now stands in St Peter's square. It originally stood in the Julian forum in Alexandria (but its roots are far older) and was transferred to Rome by Caligula where it stood in Nero's Circus. Reerected by Sixtus in 1586. (Sorek 63). Then we have the Flaminian Obelisk which currently stands in Piazza del Popolo. Originally completed by Ramses II, moved to Rome by Augustus and placed in the Circus Maximus. Reerected by Sixtus in 1589. (Sorek 56). Next is the Lateran Obelisk, standing near the Basilica of San Giovanni, created by Thutmose III. Brought to Rome by Constantius II for the Circus Maximus, reerected by Sixtus in 1588. (Sorek 103). Finally, the Esquiline Obelisk, now located in front of Santa Maria Maggiore, originally brought to Rome to flank the Mausoleum of Augustus. Reerected by Sixtus V in 1587. At a superficial level, there appears to be a contradiction between Sixtus' disdain for Rome's pagan past and his tireless efforts to resurrect some of Rome's most famous monuments. Sixtus' counterreformation zeal and vision of a completely Christian Rome seems to contradict his obelisk and column projects. This of course was the man who on two occasions attempted to destroy the Colosseum, destroyed the Septizodium, the rest of the Baths of Diocletian, and "cherished the intention of destroying the Arch of Janus and the Tomb of Cecilia Metella." (Cole 58). But as we will see, under the surface there was no contradiction in his religious vision and his appropriation of these pagan idols, and they also served a powerful political purpose as well.

Sixtus V did indeed see himself as a Destroyer of Pagan Idols in the same vein as Gregory the Great, the difference being that his conception of *damnatio memoriae* (at least in the case of the obelisks and pillars) was radically different and innovative. (Cole 58). The key to understanding Sixtus' intention is realizing the focal point of the monuments was not intended to be the pagan idol, but the bronze adorning the top. Atop each of the obelisks was placed a bronze cross, and atop the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius were placed bronze statues of Peter and Paul respectively. These monuments were in a sense celebrating Christ's victory over the Pagan. By erecting them in public places and placing the Christian symbol atop the idol he was in a sense nullifying the pagan and exalting the triune God. What Sixtus is doing is rehabilitating forms, transforming the symbols of past demons into those of Catholic exaltation.

While an average tourist today may not even notice the bronze effigies, a Roman of the time would have understood what was being signalled. We know this to be evident due to the significance given to the cross itself by the Pontiff and onlookers, at least in the case of the Vatican obelisk which is well documented and attested too. First the inscriptions. The north sides dedication is to the "invincible cross," while the east states, "Who are hostile to the cross to flee, for the Lion of the Tribe of Judah Conquers." "On the south side, "It records how Sixtus removed the obelisk, which had been dedicated to wicked cult of heathen gods, with great toil and labor into the precincts of the Apostles." (Sorek 68). This signals that it was the cross which was given most prominence, and was a testament to the cross conquering the pagan. To further stress the cross's importance, Sixtus publicly decreed to pilgrims that any who meditated on the cross would be given an indulgence of 15 years. (Cole 65). We also have this passage from Cosimo Gacis 1586 *Dialogo del trasporto dell obelisco del vaticano*.

Oh glorious sign! Oh sublime emblem! Oh invincible standard! Oh divine banner!
Oh exalted Cross! You are truly that celestial plan that finds no equal, that adored
mast that, admired with devotion, heals the mortal wounds. You are the
stupendous scepter that makes marvelous signs, that sublime stair, by means of
which the angels ascend, carrying to Heaven the represented prayers of mortals
and, descending, return with divine graces.(Cole 68).

Not only does this emphasize the importance of the cross itself in the obelisk monument,
but it also hints at an even greater metaphysical gravity to that so often overlooked bronze cross.

And yet Sixtus V had a major issue in this endeavour that he still had to come to terms
with. The Catholic view point at the time of pagan idols is that they were literally possessed,
housing a demon within. This is the Christian twist in perspective, as the pagans of the ancient
world believed the deity they honored actually inhabited the cult idol, so to did the Christians
believe this about the old pagan statues, the difference being that they perceived them not as
venerable gods but as wicked demons masquerading as so. And so Sixtus could not risk housing
a demon in front of the heart of Christendom, or at least he could not let the Roman populace
believe it were so. His solution was equally fascinating as it was innovative. On the day in which
the bronze cross was placed atop the Obelisk, Sixtus V publicly exorcised the monument. He
then did the same with the statue of Peter atop Trajan's column, and the rest of the obelisks as
well. Sixtus allowed the formula and procession for the exorcism of the Vatican obelisk to be
published, and we have an accurate recording of this incredible piece of history. The ceremony
began with the singing of psalms, and then he turned to the obelisks, and cried out the
incantation, "Exorcizote, creatura lapidis, in nomine Dei." From there he produced holy water,
splashing once in the middle, the right, then left, above and then below, forming with the water

the shape of the cross. He proceeded to then carve a small cross into the stone itself, followed by the word “in nomine Patris, et Filij, et Spiritus sancti.” He then crossed himself three times, before having the bronze cross placed upon the idol. (Cole 66). The ceremony is fascinating, as the formulae seems to emphasize and utilize the symbology of the cross most prominently, and the use of three, an obvious nod to the trinity. As we can see it is the cross that is the operating agent, and as Cole remarks, “The combination of obelisk, cross, and inscription, in short, perpetuates the exorcism, capturing the desired outcome of the ceremony and directing it permanently against any foes who might threaten Peters resting place.” (Cole 67). This is the *Damnatio Memoriae* of Sixtus V. Public perpetual exorcism and therefore subversion of the idol, rather than outright destruction.

Now that we have covered the lengthy religious significance of the obelisks and columns, let us turn to the political significance. Since the time of Augustus, when the first obelisks were taken from Egyptian soil, the Romans have used the obelisk as a symbol of power, dynastic exaltation, and empire. Augustus’ monument complex in the Campus Martius employed three. Two flanked his mausoleum and one stood near the Ara Pacis. The obelisk being a solar symbol, fit very well within his own political propaganda, as he directly associated himself with Sol-Apollo. Several resulting emperors erected their own Egyptian obelisks in Rome, as a symbol of their own greatness and to draw parallels to Augustus. Sixtus’ by being the first Roman to erect an obelisk in over a thousand years made a powerful visual statement, associating himself in terms of grandeur with the past emperors of Rome's golden age. (We will go more in depth upon the parallels he drew between himself and Augustus in later chapters). The obelisks also helped draw emphasis to his Sistine plan, as he used them essentially as way markers denoting the major basilicas. This would have lent a certain sense of legitimacy and grandeur to his new urban

layout, and he used his obelisks to “appropriate existing spaces or buildings as part of the reborn Roma felix, a city saturated both by Christian doctrine and Papal authority.” (Burroughs 64). So in a sense he was also claiming spaces not just for the Papacy but for his own ‘earthly’ self. The economic factors behind the massive construction project were the creation of jobs, leading to mass employment across the city.

The Acqua Felice and the Quirinal

One of Sixtus’ earliest and most impressive achievements was bringing water back to the Quirinal hill. By the time of the cinque cento, Rome had begun to expand and outgrow its medieval boundaries of the Campus Martius. Rome in the time of classical antiquity had a population as high as a million inhabitants, but by the 6th century the number had fallen to around 30,000. (Twine 1). There were multiple factors that initiated this decline, including barbarian invasions and the shift of power to Constantinople. But one of the primary causes inhibiting the city from regaining its numbers through the middle ages was the destruction of major portions of the Roman aqueducts by invaders. Without proper irrigation and clean water, a population simply cannot maintain itself. The Aqua Virgo, and its Renaissance restoration the Acqua Vergine, supplied water to the majority of the inhabitants in the Medieval nucleus of Campus Martius. However, many of the hills were still poorly irrigated. (Marder 286). Entrepreneurs who owned land in the Quirinal hill desired irrigation on the hill to spur economic activity and allow a flourishing of private enterprise; however, their hopes had long remained unrealized. (Marder 286). On May 5, 1585, the new Pontiff Sixtus announced one of his first initiatives, the construction of a new aqueduct. The new aqueduct was to be called the Acqua

Felice, and would connect the springs in Pantano di Griffi, channeling water to the peak of the Quirinal hill. It was “the first new supply of water to Rome since the destruction of ancient aqueducts by Gothic Invaders.” (Marder 287).

The economic motivations were numerous. The project created thousands of jobs, and at least 2000 workers were employed in the project daily. (Marder 287). The return of water back to the Quirinal facilitated a renaissance of economic growth and a population boom. The focal point of this was the Piazza delle Terme, now with full access to water. New roads were erected connecting the Piazza with “the busiest quarters of the center and put the whole district into communication with more densely inhabited neighborhoods.” (Marder 290). Eighteen news shops, ie, botteghe, were developed in the piazza and a large granary. Sixtus also planned to have the fairs held in the areas surrounding the city limits transferred to Piazza delle terme. (Marder 291). As Marder states, “Today we think of a fair as a place for amusements and exhibitions, but throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, fairs generated significant economic activity.” (Marder 291). A cattle market that had long been hosted in Campo dei Fiori was also transferred to the Piazza as well. The Fontana Felice he erected in the piazza, would have also attracted Romans away from the traditional source of the Tiber, making the hill all the more attractive. (Marder 288). Sixtus had used the aqueduct along with other economic incentives to transform the Quirinal and its main piazza into a hub of economic and commercial activity.

There were also several political motivations to be found in the endeavour. By constructing the first new aqueduct since antiquity in the city, and developing a sparsely inhabited area, he would have amassed tremendous political capital. The creation of the aqueduct

would have drawn associations between him and a Roman emperor, as aqueducts were in a sense synonymous with imperial Rome, and therefore to construct one made its builder in a way synonymous with an emperor. It is no wonder then that the Fontana Felice was constructed to appear similar to the Triumphal arches created by the Romans of antiquity. Stylistically, it is most similar to Constantine's Arch, with its four columns and three arches. The Fontana was a commemorative fountain erected in honor of the aqueduct. It displayed a statue of Moses flanked by scenes from exodus. (We will further analyze this in chapter 3). The opening up and economic centering of the Piazza delle Terme also had a personal political purpose. The Villa Montalto, one of the main hubs of Peretti family identity, was directly adjacent to the piazzas eastern edge. "By this means, Sixtus transformed his private retreat into a sprawling residence adjoining and shaping public space." (Marder 288). The Piazza was dominated by papal presence, and visually bolstered the power of the Papacy in the minds of the inhabitants. "In truth, Piazza delle Terme should be regarded as a predecessor of the papal enclaves of Baroque Rome, those carefully designed public places dominated by a papal residence, declamatory works, and commanding church facades." (Marder 291).

There were great religious components to the project as well. Sixtus had transferred a religious confraternity, the Compagnia di San Bernardo and Santa Susana to the area, to the area around Terme, keeping with the theme of bringing a religious presence into all his building works. In the same fashion as his obelisks, the triumphal fountain and aqueduct symbolized a Christian victory over the pagan. It was the pagan invaders who originally destroyed the past aqueducts, and so the faux triumphal arch is a testament to a kind of Christian victory. "The crowning cross refers to the papal auspices under which the aqueduct was completed, a Christian

triumph over the desecration of the city by heathen troops. (Marder 287). There is a second religious aspect of this victory, the returning of water draws direct parallels to Moses, which we will discuss in the next chapter.

The Ospizio dei Mendicanti

The Ospizio dei Mendicanti, or the Hospice of the Beggars, “represents a rather rare Sistine intervention in the heart of Rome.” (Burroughs 65). Indeed, most of Sixtus’ building projects were an attempt to build outwards from the medieval nucleus, and yet this building capped off the end of one of the central Roman boulevards, the Via Giulia, and lay adjacent to Ponte Sisto. The hospice would have given shelter to 2000 of Rome's derelict underclass at a time. (Burroughs 67). Sixtus’ predecessor, Gregory XIII, had created his own facility for Rome's poorest, but it was nowhere near as large and located much further from the heart of the city. Sixtus assigned the hospice a formal administrative body, which consisted of four patricians. (Burroughs 67). The building was essentially a workhouse for the cities underclass.

The function and location of the building had multiple political motivations and ramifications. Sixtus wished to portray himself as a great reformer, as a discipliner who was to eliminate criminals and other such undesirables from the face of the city. He wished to, “Rid the city- at least in appearance- of this large, pesky, as it turned out, extremely well organized population.” (Burroughs 64). A housing area like this eliminated on a superficial level some of the roving derelict from the city's streets, giving at least the appearance that his reforming project

was successfully underway. Additionally, the Ospizio represented a form of segregation, an effort of demarcation of population.

Efforts from the mid-fifteenth century to articulate the city by confining especially noisome activities to particular districts, preferably downstream, seem to have been relatively ineffective. The sixteenth century saw various attempts both to develop smarter districts and to confine unwanted populations. The most obvious case is the creation of the Ghetto in 1555 as an obligatory place of residence for Jews. In 1569 the so-called Ortaccio was set aside in the Campo Marzio for the city's many prostitutes. (Burroughs 70).

The Ospizio was a great physical separator, a boundary marker, “Between socially and functionally contrasting districts, in a city that had long been characterized by the co presence in its typical neighborhoods of different economic activities.” (Burroughs 70). As already noted, Sixtus had pure contempt for Rome's pagan past. His Sistine plan was a vision of a completely Christian Rome, inundated with Christian symbolism and sign, visually free of any hints of heresy. The Ospizios placement played a role in visually occluding the districts that lay further down the banks of the Tiber. “The image confronts the plain but gleaming white front of the Ospizio with the social and moral darkness beyond: the fallen monuments of paganism, the towers of the often unruly and violent urban aristocracy, and the ghetto of unbelievers, hidden, as any Roman knew, beyond the bulk of the Ospizio.” (Burroughs 70). However, it would be wrong to assume that Sixtus was particularly anti semitic (at least in relation to his contemporaries) for it was only Sixtus who expanded the Ghetto, brought water into the Ghetto, and allowed Jews to inhabit other minor cities in the Papal States. (Burroughs 68). By no means a Jewish messiah, it does prove that his counterreformation vision was not as brutal as say Paul IV’s for the Jews.

The Villa Montalto

The Villa Montalto is in a sense the occluded core of the Sistine plan. It was the true architectural personification of Peretti family identity in the entire city (along with the adjacent Santa Maria Maggiore, which we will examine next). The land that would become the Villa Montalto was acquired by Sixtus in the 1570s, and “Marked the beginning of the siblings efforts to establish a locus of Peretti family identity on Rome’s Esquiline hill.” (Dennis 77). The tract of land was massive, stretching from Porta San Lorenzo to the Baths of Diocletian. The land spanned over 270 acres, making it the largest family estate in Rome at the time. (Dennis 78). It contained two palaces, and was furnished with art. The villa itself had no economic or religious significance, but its political ramifications were immense for the fledgling Peretti name.

Within the context of the Sistine plan, the villa and Liberian basilica, i.e. Santa Maria Maggiore, form a “bipartite center.” (Dennis 84)

Taken together, Foulks's diagram, the Vatican fresco, and the Schiffmann map all indicate the cluster of Peretti projects in the easternmost of the quadrants formed by the intersection of the via Felice and via Pia, demonstrating that although Sixtus V's urban plan certainly reached all corners of the city, its core lay in the S. Maria Maggiore/ Villa Montalto complex on the Esquiline.” (Dennis 85).

Dennis argues that the centrality of the villa in the plan has been overlooked by historians for a myriad of reasons. One explanation could be that the villa's destruction in 1867 has caused many to overlook its role. (Dennis 82). Another explanation is that the idea that Sixtus was committed to familial self aggrandizement simply did not mesh with traditional conceptions of the Pope as an austere counter reformer. (Dennis 82). Regardless, the evidence cannot be

ignored, the villa functioned as a grand statement to the other nobles of the time, that the Peretti family, while new in name, were just as ambitious and powerful as the rest of the city's aristocracy. By constructing the villa geographically adjacent to Santa Maria Maggiore, he visually melded the Peretti family name with the prestigious basilica, another space in which Sixtus used for familial self aggrandizement, which we will discuss in the next section.

The Sistine Chapel at Santa Maria Maggiore

Sixtus V began constructing a burial chapel within Santa Maria Maggiore in 1581. In doing so he physically connected his name to the prestige of the storied Basilica. The tactical selection of Santa Maria Maggiore also emphasized his role as a staunch Counter Reformer. Of the four major Basilicas, Santa Maria Maggiore is the only one explicitly dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and devotion to Mary became a rallying point for the Counter Reformation, as the Protestant reformation attacked the Marian cult. Santa Maria Maggiore's original function was to bolster Marian devotion against schismatics who questioned her place as "theotokos" nearly a thousand years before. Sixtus III had initially built the current basilica, as he "Wished to single out for honour the Blessed Virgin, whom the Council of Ephesus (431 CE) had recently declared, in opposition to Nestorius, to be the Mother of God." (Miles 158). While the Nestorians christological schism was far different from Luther's own, the questioning of Mary's role in liturgical devotion resonates between the two. So it was no wonder that Sixtus V looked again to the Basilica to bolster Catholic orthodoxy.

Sixtus V further employed the space to heighten his reputation as a pious counter reformer by having Pius V's body moved to the chapel, parallel to his own grave. This of course was against Pius' own premortem wishes, as he wished to be buried in Bosco, but Sixtus of course appropriated his cadaver for political utility. Pius V was an anomaly in regards to Pontiffs of his era, as he was one of the few to be canonized. He was known as an ascetic counter reformer, famous for creating the Holy League and presiding over the Battle of Lepanto, the battle which defeated the encroaching Ottoman Turks. He was known for his aversion to nepotism, something Sixtus also wished to purvey, and his role in the council of Trent. By placing Pius' tomb next to his own, he sealed a visual association between the two.

3. Forging Connections: The Creation of Papal Myth

Political leaders have historically utilized public monuments to forge symbolic connections between themselves and other figures, either mythological or historical, for signalling and propaganda purposes. Artistic iconography has long been utilized to gain legitimacy or project a desired image in the minds of the populace, and Roman sovereigns are no different.

In this section, we will analyze how Sixtus V used his aforementioned public works to forge a personal mythology for his pontificate by connecting his persona with a myriad of historical and mythological figures. These primarily include Moses, the della Rovere Popes, and Augustus/Sol-Apollo.

Moses

The motivation behind Sixtus V forging a symbolic connection between himself and Moses via his public works can be understood easily by examining the stated goals of his pontificate. “Justice, peace, and abundance had of course always been the favorite themes of papal hagiography. But in no pontificate before that of Sixtus do we find so obsessive a concentration on justice.” (Fosi 76). Sixteenth century Rome was encumbered with banditry, and justice was rarely dispensed through legal means. The city was perceived as lawless, and

Banditry, which was spreading fast, offered the pope a proving ground for a policy of repression based on retributive justice. This policy was presented to

contemporaries as new and extraordinary, just as the pope desired. Conditions demanded not only real actions but also a decisive campaign of propaganda that would celebrate the pope's deeds and hail their outcome. (Fosi 78).

The figure of Moses is considered a kind of prototypical law bringer. He is credited as the mythical writer of the Pentateuch, and it was he who brought down the decalogue from the peaks of Mount Sinai, and therefore he is synonymous with divine legalism. Moses is also synonymous with abundance, as he brings down manna from the sky to feed the Israelites, and strikes water from the ground to quench their thirst. And of course, he was God's ordained prophet and leader, an image that any Pontiff would like to appropriate.

The first building project in which he forged a visual connection between himself and the works of Moses were the obelisks. On a superficial level, the Egyptian nature of the monuments themselves allude to Moses' own origins. But the true parallel is between the obelisks and the bronze serpent that Moses erected in the desert. When the people of Israel traveled to the Red Sea, they began to complain and speak against God and Moses.

Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived. (Numbers 21: 6-9).

By at least the time of the Gospel of John, the bronze serpent is explicitly linked to Christ and the crucifixion. (Cole 72). “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.” (John 3: 14). As discussed earlier, the reerected obelisks were topped with bronze crosses, and this was the intended exoteric focal point. The bronze cross atop the monolith imitates the bronze serpent of Moses. (Cole 72). This is further supported by a contemporary poem about the obelisk written by Guglielmo Blanchi.

Just as the priest Moses raised a bronze simulacrum of a serpent, such that it could be medicine to the sick, so now Sixtus, the other Moses, erects for the sick a bronze sign of the cross atop the Obelisk. Oh Romans, raise your faces in the air, entreating the Cross for your health and salvation. (Cole 73).

Sixtus’ aqueduct project which returned water to the Quirinal would have also alluded to Moses. Moses brings water to the people of Israel during the exodus.

So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?... Then Moses cried out to the Lord, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.” The Lord answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exodus 17: 2-6).

The conception that Sixtus wanted the Roman populace to view his aqueduct system as a Mosaic act is supported by the scenes portrayed on the fountain he erected on the Quirinal. The

centerpiece of the fountain Sixtus erected was of Moses, an obvious allusion to Sixtus himself. (Marder 287). What truly highlights the notion that he is portraying Moses returning water, is that on the left of Moses is a depiction of the children of Israel collecting Mana and on the right a depiction of the battle of the Amakelites. The story of Moses bringing water occurs chronologically between these two events. Sixtus is both implying that his building of the aqueduct was directly ordained by God, adding a providential importance to his undertaking. He is directly associating himself with Moses, and the citizens of Rome as the nations of Israel. The depiction of the Amakelites being defeated also represents his own supposed defeat of the bandits, and the mana scene reflects his bringing of abundance. And the stone tablets of the Decalogue in Moses' hand portrays Sixtus as the ultimate law bringer.

The Della Rovere Popes

Sixtus V was somewhat of an anomaly compared to Renaissance and Baroque era popes, as he did not come from an established noble family. The ways in which the nepotistic structure of the church functioned ensured that a handful of powerful families rotated upon the throne of St Peter. Sixtus did not have a noble lineage to draw upon for legitimacy and prestige. This on one hand acted as a boon to perceptions of his Pontificate, as he could portray himself as a self made outsider who stood against nepotism, and he did not have any familial baggage or ancient feuds that could hurt him. However, he must have recognized the political utility in aligning himself symbolically with an established dynasty. This concept is nothing new for sovereigns in the city of Rome. One example from the era of the empire is Septimus Severus utilizing propaganda to iconographically portray himself as a continuation of the Nerva-Antonine dynasty (the dynasty in which he himself ironically overthrew).

The Della Rovere Popes: Sixtus IV and his nephew Julius II, were a perfect choice. Sixtus IV was a Franciscan, just as Felice Peretti, and both had grand visions for urban renewal. Sixtus IV himself took the name in homage to Sixtus III, another Pontiff whose name was synonymous with wide ranging building projects. So when Felice took the name Sixtus V, he situated himself in the tradition of the great Urbis Restaurator of Rome. (Blondin 2). Sixtus IV's name held great prestige, and "Contemporary eulogists drew parallels between Sixtus and the illustrious emperor (Augustus), sometimes praising the pope as being the reincarnation of Augustus himself." (Blondin 2). As we shall see, there are multiple ways in which Sixtus V used his building projects to portray his pontificate as an extension of Sixtus IV's and thereby his nephew, Julius II.

As previously stated, Sixtus IV and to a lesser extent Julius II were both great urbanizers who altered the face of the city. Specifically, they both were focused on revitalizing the city's roads. Sixtus IV inherited a Rome with a street system in utter disrepair. "The pope did not exaggerate the poor condition of the Roman roads. The streets remained unpaved, despite traces of ancient paving. Existing roads were narrow and obstructed by porticoes, and the complete absence of thoroughfares made it difficult to visit some sites." (Blondin 10). The revitalization of the Roman stradas by Sixtus IV was also a response to the approaching Jubilee year, which would see an influx of pilgrims in need of safe and efficient travel. (Blondin 10). The Via Papale and Via Sistina are two examples of roads Sixtus IV either restored or created to better facilitate travel. Sixtus IV was also intent on eliminating porticoes.

This was not just a matter of keeping the streets clear of projecting encumbrances.

A visiting monarch, King Ferrante of Naples, had advised him that he would never be master of the notoriously unruly city if facade porticoes survived to

shelter malefactors and potential rebels. Sixtus implemented King Ferrante's advice. implemented King Ferrante's advice. Implicit in Sixtus's legislation was the idea of a transparent city, open to the disciplining gaze and armed power of the ruler and his minions. (Burroughs 58).

This design philosophy is exactly what Sixtus V would adopt and implement in his own Sistine plan. (Burroughs 58). In a sense, he copied the street structure that his predecessor had implemented in the medieval heart of the city, and then stretched it outwards, connecting far flung focal points to the cities medieval core. The religious impetus behind Sixtus IV's street project (Jubilee year) is also present in Sixtus Vs. He will even call the first extraordinary Jubilee year in Church history, in 1585.

One of Sixtus IV's crowning achievements was the restoration of the Aqua Virgo, which he renamed the Acqua Vergine. (Blondin 4). The Aqua Virgo had long supplied the Campus Martius with water, but Sixtus IV had restored it, allowing it to bring water to the Trevi district. As stated earlier, one of Sixtus V's first projects was the Acqua Felice, a new aqueduct intended to bring water back to the Quirinal. In doing so, he would have immediately drawn a new dimension of association between himself and the pope he had just named himself after.

It is important to understand the ways in which Roman builders have used monuments to link themselves with other figures by consciously utilizing physical proximity. One example is Augustus' placement of his new forum complex. By placing the Forum of Augustus right next to the Forum Julium, he further linked himself to his deified father. (Stamper 132). Forging visual connections between two monuments helps symbolically establish a connection between the

patrons. Sixtus V frequently utilized this strategy in his building projects to forge connections between himself and the Della Roveres. A prime example is the Ospizio dei Mendicanti. As discussed earlier, Sixtus' predecessor had constructed a similar project, but it was far from the city center. Sixtus' Ospizio became the "faccia della strada (giulia)." (Burroughs 64). Sixtus V rarely constructed building projects in the medieval heart of Rome, much preferring to build outwards from the center, paving new ground. (Burroughs 67). The best explanation for his placement of the Ospizio here, is that it represented a perfect location to forge a visual connection between both himself and the Della Roveres. The Ponte Sisto, Sixtus IV's bridge across the Tiber, had been built in the late fifteenth century. His nephew some thirty years later, would build the Via Giulia, connecting the Vatican with Ponte Sisto, and therefore the port area. (Burroughs 57). This urban intervention would have served a dual purpose of connecting Julius II visually with his uncle. Sixtus V, by placing the Ospizio at the end of the road, and therefore parallel to the bridge, visually inserted himself between the two popes. This genius appropriation of space served to locate himself at the focal point of the road, symbolically bridging the two della Rovere pontiffs.

Just as Santa Maria Maggiore had become a locus for Peretti family identity, so too had Santa Maria del Popolo been a nexus of Della Rovere identity. The church itself was reconstructed by Sixtus IV, and two other Della Rovere cardinals constructed chapels within the church. For example, Girolamo Basso Della Rovere is interred in the church with a lavish sarcophagus. Julius II had a keen interest in the church as well, and sponsored a handful of additions. In effect, the complex had become a dynastic monument to the della Roveres. And so it is no wonder that Sixtus V decided to reerect the Flaminian obelisk in Piazza del Popolo. The

Sistine intervention linked his name with the piazza, and therefore with the church that dominated it. The obelisk was transported a great distance from its original location, the Circus Maximus, to the piazza. The desire to link himself with the della Rovere's seems to be the reason why he chose this location. The other three obelisks he reerected were all in proximity to one of the four major basilicas. "San Pietro, San Giovanni, Santa Maria Maggiore, and San Paolo Fuori la Mura." This raises the question, why did he chose Santa Maria del Popolo as the site for the Flaminian obelisk as opposed to Saint Paul outside the Walls, the fourth of the major basilicas? The answer could of course have been a simple matter of logistics, as Saint Pauls is quite further from the other major basilicas, and transportation could have seemed too costly or dangerous. But if this was the case, then why not erect the Flaminian obelisk in front of one of the other of the Seven Churches? As demonstrated earlier, the Seven Churches were the focal points for the entire Sistine plan, so it would seem logical that he should have chosen one of them for the Obelisks new location. It seems that Santa Maria del Popolo was chosen to explicitly link Sixtus with the della Roveres. Granted, another explanation could be he wanted his grand obelisk at the opening of the city's gates, visually associating his pontificate with the first site a traveler would have of the city. I believe it is possible that both of these explanations can be true at once.

This begs the question, why did Sixtus not choose to construct his own crypt in Santa Maria del Popolo? We have already discussed the political utility in centering his identity on Santa Maria Maggiore, but there is even a deeper connection, linking himself into a deeper Sistine tradition, and therefore indirectly to Sixtus IV. Sixtus IV had taken his name as a nod to an early pope, a contemporary of Augustine, Sixtus III. Sixtus III was another Pope who is most remembered for his building projects.

In the vacuum of political power in the West, the papacy under Sixtus III made a strong claim for a new basis of Roman power—the religious primacy of the city of Peter and Paul under papal leadership. The building and decoration of Santa Maria Maggiore played an important role in the consolidation and public announcement of papal power.”(Miles 155).

Sixtus III’s reconstruction of Santa Maria was his magnum opus, and the Liberian Basilica is synonymous with the early pontiff. Sixtus V by creating his crypt and chapel in Santa Maria, links himself to Sixtus III, and therefore indirectly to Sixtus IV as well.

Augustus and Sol-Apollo

The political utility in a Bishop of Rome comparing themselves to Augustus is obvious. Augustus Caesar, the historical founder of the Roman Empire, is synonymous with empire and golden age. His reign has been alluded to and politically appropriated from the first century to the time of Mussolini. Sixtus V, through a variety of means, drew allusions between himself and the late emperor.

One of the primary means in which he did this was the erection of the four obelisks. Augustus had brought obelisks from Egypt to commemorate his subjugation of the kingdom, and just as showcasing a variety of marble types represented empire, so too did showcasing these war trophies. They were tremendous propaganda pieces, and played a “significant role in establishing

Augustus' rite to rule." (Sorek 45). Sixtus would have been the first Roman sovereign since the days of the empire to erect an obelisk, and so the imperial connotations would have left a strong opinion in the minds of the populace. The obelisk has an explicitly solar characteristic, and Augustus employed one of his obelisks as a massive sundial. (Sorek 47). Even in the days of the ancient Egyptians, the obelisks were employed as fetishes for solar deities. (Sorek 9). Augustus played with these connotations by frequently linking himself to Sol-Apollo in his imperial propaganda. This Augustus as Sol-Apollo is important for understanding the rest of Sixtus' self created mythology.

The early life and birth of Sixtus V "Sounds suspiciously like that created for the Emperor Augustus." (Mandell 18). It is reported that Sixtus' mother before his birth had a dream that her son was destined for greatness, a dream that sounds suspiciously similar to the one had by Augustus' own mother, Atia. (Mandell 18). He was the fourth of seven siblings, which brought comparisons to the sun which was in the middle of the planets, and also how in the Biblical account the sun was created on the fourth day. (Mandell 18). As a young adult, Sixtus wished to be called Crinitus, "an allusion not only to a comet and the great political change he would bring to the respublica Christiana as pope, but also to the "crinitus Apollo" of Virgil's Aeneid , and, in this sense, designed to reinforce his solarian character. (Mandell 18). And of course, his Pontificate began on April 24, 1585, the anniversary of Rome's founding. In one of the frescoes in the Salone dei Papi, Apollo looks on at Sixtus and declares in an inscription, "The earth has its Sun, why should I put forth my rays? For what is granted to you, Sixtus, was not within my power." (Mandell 19).

This entire matrix of associations and self created myth can best be summed up by a quote from Mandell.

The manna which Moses gives to his people and the grain which Sixtus v gives to his are therefore imbued with a specifically Roman significance so that the prophecy of Carmentis made soon after her disembarkment that Aeneas and the line of Augustus would rule Rome is realized and perpetuated through the pontificate of Sixtus V, and given a greater antique lineage through Moses and the era sub lege. (Mandell 26).

Sixtus' self-created mythology starts with the antiquity of the ultimate Jewish lawbringer, Moses, and then is fulfilled in the ultimate Roman, Augustus. Thereby representing the culmination of both the spiritual legacy of the God of Abraham and the civic glory of Rome. A perfect figure to bring about a new vision for a distinctly Christian Rome. The two past Popes he explicitly links himself to were also the ones most associated with the Julio Claudians of old and therefore Augustus. Julius II took his name not as a nod to Pope Julius I, but to Julius Caesar, and Sixtus IV was described as a new Augustus by his contemporaries. (Blondin 3). “Reddite ergo, quae sunt Caesaris, Caesari et quae sunt Dei, Deo.” In this symbolic framework, all is rendered to Sixtus V.

4. Conclusion and Evaluation

Sixtus V through his building projects radically changed the face of the city. As a counter reformer, he transformed the city's streets and monuments into a physical manifestation of counter-reformation piety. He reworked the urban fabric of the city so that visible references to Christ were ubiquitous, and Papal power was always symbolically present. The long narrow streets that he constructed set the standard for the modern metropolis, which would hundreds of years later become the universal standard in order to accommodate the advent of the automobile. His building projects stimulated the Roman economy, giving thousands of jobs to a Roman populace in desperate need of employment. The jubilee years he called also brought economic boons to the city, and the Sistine plan helped facilitate the travel of pilgrims. He brought water back to the Quirinal, stimulating economic activity and development. The obelisks he erected alluded to the days of the empire, bringing a sense of dignity to a city still experiencing the aftershocks of the great sack of 1527. The Christian victory over the pagan was memorialized throughout so many of his building projects, from the columns to the Acqua Felice.

But Sixtus also utilized his political station and construction projects for familial self aggrandizement. His street plan emphasized Santa Maria and the Villa Montalto, two spaces he bound with his own family name. He named a street and his fountain after himself, and each obelisk and column still bears the inscription Sixtus V. While not uncommon for Popes of the time, traditional historiography has overlooked his penchant for self aggrandizement.

Through his multiple projects he symbolically linked himself to several figures, in an effort to make his name synonymous with justice, peace, and abundance. Moses, Augustus, previous Pontiffs, and even the sun itself, he masterfully created a powerful persona that projected an aura of omnipotence, that would abide in the minds of the Roman populace for centuries.

Historiography has always presented Sixtus V as the great restorer of public tranquility, the inflexible castigator of vices and of crime, the attentive administrator of finances. Thus, it was he who finally restored his subjects' peace and plenty and who, in a Europe torn by confessional strife, concluded a fruitful religious peace with other princes.” (Fosi 75).

His self-created mythology afforded him an almost legendary status in the annals of the church, which is somewhat odd for a Pontiff who reigned only five years, and whose greatest accomplishments were building projects. “No pontificate since the Middle Ages, with perhaps the sole exception of that of Leo X, has left so great a mass of literary works, biographies, memoirs, diaries, and annals on the life and deeds of the head of the Church.” (Fosi 80). Tales of his *giustizie* are abundant. Macabre legends of his harsh but fair execution of justice.

But as modern scholars have touched on, Sixtus was not actually very effective in reforming the bandits. “The dearth of 1590 and the extended power vacuum before the election of Clement VIII both bore witness to the fragility of Sixtus' legislation against banditry. In 1590, bands of every size roamed the Papal State, as if an immense army were converging on Rome.” (Fosi 94). So while this demonstrates Sixtus' failure in executing meaningful reform, it highlights his genius as a propagandist.

Sixtus may not have actually brought “Peace, Justice and Abundance” to the city, but he certainly succeeded in giving the impression. And his building projects forever changed the urban fabric of Rome. The associations he drew between himself and other figures left a strong impression in the minds of the Roman populace, and popular folk tales still remember him as a Mosaic lawbringer, ushering in an Augustan golden age. A mythical inquisitor whose stern gaze penetrated the city's streets, as if he were the sun itself.

To conclude this paper, I would like to reemphasize the importance of Sixtus’ pontificate. As far as Rome goes, the late 16th century in many ways paralleled the late 5th century. Both eras were still recovering from some of the deadliest sacks in the city’s history. The sack in 410 by the Visigoths, and the sack of 1527 by Lutheran mercenaries. Both eras saw Pontiffs reacting to the threat of heterodox schisms, Nestorianism and Lutheranism. “In the late Roman empire, effective power was visible power.” (Miles 156). The construction of majestic basilicas and other Christian monuments were paramount in asserting theological orthodoxy and emphasizing the power of the Catholic Church in the minds of the populace. Sixtus V, just as Sixtus III more than 1000 years before, preserved the power of the church through their building projects. While urban renewal may not seem as exciting as foreign conquest, it is building projects which endure while borders recede. And it is visible power, physical signs and monuments, which truly leave impressions. An army inspires fear, but only art inspires devotion.

The fourth-century historian Eusebius, an admirer of Constantine, eulogized Constantine's church buildings because they made Christianity's dramatic change in status visible. Just as the incarnation of Christ had made God visible, Eusebius said, the triumph of Christianity was visible, incarnated in the magnificent new

cathedrals that were springing up in the empire's major cities during the fourth century. These buildings witnessed silently to the power of the God who had given the victory at the Milvean Bridge to an outnumbered and outmanoeuvred Constantine. Describing the church at Tyre, Eusebius wrote, "The cathedral is a marvel of beauty, utterly breathtaking. . . . The evidence of our eyes makes instruction through the ears unnecessary." (Miles 156).

5. Literature Review

In Gideons seminal work “Space, Time and Architecture,” the author places a profound emphasis on the importance of Sixtus’ pontificate, important not only for Rome but the development of the modern city as a whole. Gideon emphasizes how the classic city style of the Renaissance was star shaped, “A symmetrical fortified polygon, and radial streets leading to a main center.” He argues Sixtus’ urban plan presented a radical break with the archetypal design of the last century, and accomplished this due to several factors. For starters, he left the medieval heart of Rome relatively untouched, and grew the city outwards from West to East, and by creating long avenues connecting major pilgrimage sites, he laid the foundation for the modern car based traffic avenues of today’s city. The old medieval and renaissance city was formed by piazzas with streets extending outwards from the squares themselves, while the long avenues that Sixtus formed cut indiscriminately through hills and other natural topographies. Gideon emphasizes that Sixtus was “the first modern town planner,” and that his urban vision set the stage for modern London and other metropolitan cities.

In “Opacity and Transparency: Networks and Enclaves in the Rome of Sixtus V,” Burroughs largely agrees with Gideons assessment on Sixtus’ Rome being a precursor to the “space-time” of the modern city. Burroughs builds upon Gideons claims but emphasizes the importance of his conception of “Transparency.” He claims that the long and wide open avenues fostered a “transparent city,” one “open to the disciplining gaze and armed power of the ruler and his minions.” That by creating these new “via”s connecting pilgrimage sites and accommodating the new buggy form of transit, he changed the feel of the city into one in which space was open

and under the theocratic gaze of the sovereign pontiff. He further goes on to claim that sistine urbanism is really about reducing the city into emblematic space, into a network of signs.

In “Sixtus V and the Quirinal,” Marder strongly disagrees with the previous two authors' assessments, rebuking the notion that Sixtus had a robust and deliberate urban vision. He asserts that the symbolic and religious significance of sistine urban design has been vastly overemphasized, and he never actually attempted to turn the city into “a single holy shrine.” He asserts a lot of this overreach stems from a publication of Bordini, the propagandist who coined the phrase, who attempted to shape a mythology of Sixtus' which asserted his commitment to religion. He also attacks the idea of their being an overarching and deliberate plan on Sixtus' part, thereby rebuking Gideon and Burroughs idea of Sixtus' fostering a culture of absolutism in his city plan, and delegitimizes the conception of Sixtus as a mastermind and forefather of modern urban design. He argues that his building projects were sporadic and that the aqueduct was a “speculative venture by private individuals,” and that most of his proposals were ultimately hollow and unattainable gestures. He also highlights how several of the unrealized projects include several obelisks never erected, a proposed canal, and a section of porticos.

In “*Engineering the eternal city: Infrastructure, topography, and the culture of knowledge in late sixteenth-century Rome*,” the author takes a more nuanced and even handed approach to the matter of Sixtus' urban vision. In regards to whether the urban plan was more concerned with secular development, family aggrandizement, or the “holy shrine narrative,” the author asserts that “all these motivations could have existed and probably did.” She understands that it did not have to be one way or the other, and a more complex interaction of ideas probably gave shape to the final plan. The author does heavily emphasize the importance of Santa Maria Maggiore and the development of the Eastern hill area to the Sistine plan, and argues that

regardless of the underlying vision itself, the pontificate's transformation of the city is undeniable.

In "Starry Leo, the Sun, and the Astrological Foundations of Sixtine Rome," the author places heavy emphasis on the symbolic and emblematic aspects of the Sixtine plan, arguing that Sixtus was a mastermind of cryptology, and embedded esoteric signs across the city. While Sixtus V publicly banned astrology in his papal bull 'Coeli et terrae,' the author argues he was in secret heavily engaged with astrology, and claims that his entire pontificate's mythology was based on Felices natal chart. The author supports this by explaining how the symbolism he used and the mythical associations he drew to himself parallel neoplatonic astrological signs which his astrologer would have interpreted from his birth chart. There are several focal points that this symbolism manifests in, including various commissioned statues, the lions flanking his obelisks (and the symbolism of the obelisk itself), and frescoes in the Scala Sancta. The author also goes at length to explain how he associated himself with both mercury and the sun, drawing parallels to Augustus. Also, he presented himself as a Saturnian law bringer, by going at lengths to equate himself with Moses, and the evidence for which includes the Moses statue at the Aqua Felice, a Moses statue in the Villa Montalto, and the bronze crosses capping the obelisks were supposed to mimic the bronze serpent staff of Exodus.

In "Felix Culpa and Felix Roma: On the Program of the Sixtine Staircase at the Vatican," Mandell draws largely on the work done in "Starry Leo," but emphasizes the importance of the frescoes in the Scala Sancta. She deciphers the cryptic signs which would have meant little to the general public, but would have concealed esoteric messages to the ecclesiastic elite. She also focuses on Sixtus as symbolically emphasizing the translation of the pagan to the Christian. This obviously is seen clearest with the obelisk. In a fresco he had commissioned it reads, "QVI

REGVM TVMVLIS OBELISCVS SERVIT OLIM/AD CVNAS CHRISTI TV PIE SIXTE
LOCAS" (The obelisk that once ministered to the tombs of kings, you, pious Sixtus, place at the
cradle of Christ). This transformation of pagan idol to being conquered by the Christian spirit, is
emblematic of the bronze crosses placed atop the obelisks.

I am inclined to agree with the assertion that Sixtus V's urban plan had a deliberate and
consistent religious vision, (Burroughs Gideon and Mandall all agree). The streets he created
linking the seven pilgrimage spots can only be interpreted as such. "Sixtus V and the Quirinal"
assertion that his aqueduct was a "speculative venture by private individuals," and many of his
building projects went unfinished or were sporadic, does not necessarily imply he was lacking a
clear religious vision. His avenues connecting the seven pilgrimage sites affirms this, for if his
reasons were purely secular and he was simply attempting to accommodate the buggy, he would
have connected these arteries between more economically useful areas or local commercial
nodes. (As Julius II did with his Via Julia and Via Lungara, both created to facilitate the flow of
goods between the trastevere ports and the area around St Peters). Not pilgrimage sites. And this
conception of doing so had been floating around the Vatican for multiple past pontificates
already, before the dawn of the buggy. (Burroughs). His obelisks are another clear indication of
his religious vision, (as Burroughs Gideon and Mandall agree) any Roman at the time would
have interpreted their meaning very clearly, which was the triumph of the church over pagan
antiquity, the cross crowning and thus usurping the solar past. Vast sums of money would not
have been invested into re-erecting such monuments unless they served the religious aims in
which they did, for they served no secular purpose other than possibly aesthetics, but their
locations in front of primarily basilicas indicate their particular religious context. The logic of
visual association in city space during this era would not see objects placed so prominently in

front of Christian pilgrimage sites unless they were meant to draw association. The meticulous work that Mandall has conducted in interpreting the esoteric symbology of his pontificates public works and art projects confirms the ambitious and deliberate scope of his vision.

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