

Dylan K. Rogers

7 Aquatic Pasts & the Watery Present: Water and Memory in the Fora of Rome

Abstract: The Forum Romanum in Rome is a space that was constructed on an aquatic landscape – and subsequent built structures there reminded ancient Romans of that landscape, in addition to mythical, historical, and mytho-historical figures and events of the past. This paper demonstrates how the city centre of Rome, replete with numerous monuments that did not actually have running water like subsequent grand fountains of the Imperial period, were the products of the commemorative practices of the Romans, tied directly to sensorial experiences, memory, and identity. The monuments explored here represent the power of the Romans, in addition to their naval victories and mythical past predicated on water. The metaphysical topography of the Forum Romanum provided a space intimately tied to water, which also had the potential to be replicated in other parts of the Empire, tying its inhabitants to the capital.

The city of Rome, the capital of a vast Empire, possessed spaces intimately associated with water in its Forum Romanum and adjacent Imperial Fora. Due in part to its ancient origins, the Forum Romanum became the city centre of Rome, and also provided a model upon which subsequent fora in the city and throughout the Empire were based. The Forum Romanum, however, was built upon an aquatic foundation, both literally and figuratively (Fig. 1). The Romans used the aquatic landscape of the space over time in the way they constructed the built environment there, particularly with monuments tied to water that were connected to mythical or historical figures, although without displaying moving water. The ensemble of the Forum Romanum and the later Imperial Fora demonstrates the ways in which monuments tied to water and water-displays evoke mythical and historical events and figures, allowing for the commemoration of the past and present through water and creating a shared sense of identity.

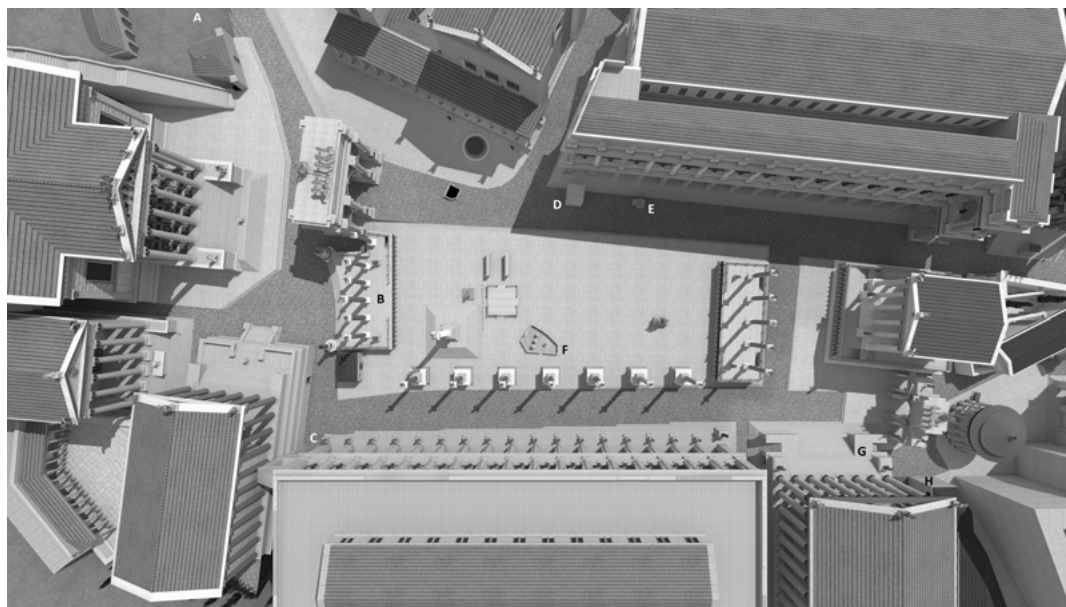


Fig. 1: Rome, plan of the Forum Romanum, ca. AD 320: Tullianum Spring Area (A), Previous Location of *Rostra Augusti* and Rostrate Columns of Augustus (B), Previous Location of Lacus Servilius (C), Temple of Janus (D), Sacellum of Venus Cloacina (E), Lacus Curtius (F), Temple of Castor and Pollux (G), Lacus Iuturnae (H).

Place and Memory

Perception of space by the five senses is important to form memories. Experiencing the built environment is a dynamic interaction that requires movement. Considering how ancient Romans viewed and physically interacted with religious structures, Richard Jenkyns suggests that humans have a sixth sense: our perception of spatial experience.¹ Indeed, it is our physicality that informs us of what is around us and what we are encountering. The act of walking in and around a space allows us to consider all five senses, as this physical movement ‘plays a central role in our relationship with the world around us; it is essential to our experience of place, to the way we see and think, and to our assumptions about identity’.² In this vein, modern scholarship has recently turned to considering the role of sensory perception in understanding ancient Roman life, society, and culture.³

In our perception and understandings of our surroundings, we can truly understand place and the material world around us. By engaging all of the senses, we are able to create a ‘sensory envelope,’ in which we seek ‘to identify the area around a given location where all of the senses are engaged, thus framing and bounding vignettes and narratives’.⁴ Sensory experiences are then tied to notions of place – which can be defined loosely as the area that we perceive and experience with our bodies.⁵

Places, then, are the repositories of memories. Modern scholarship has offered a variety of paradigms to conceptualize memory in the Roman world, including popular, monumental, cultural, and collective memories.⁶ No matter how one might conceive of how to read a monument or text, what belies memory is its universal nature, in that all humans make memories. Experience and culture are inextricably tied, especially in how one interacts with a monument to create memory. As people encounter a space, they will not only form their own memories about their experience in that space, but also remember historical or mythical associations of those monuments. In a passage of Cicero’s *De finibus*, Marcus Piso, reflecting on a visit to Plato’s Academy states:

*Is it inborn in us or produced by some trick that when we see the places in which we have heard that famous men performed great deeds, we are more moved than by hearing or reading their exploits? [...] So great a power of suggestion resides in places that it is no wonder the Art of Memory is based on it.*⁷

Piso stresses the nature of seeing and *interacting* with a monument, which, in turn, brings up its own memories. For example, when ancient Romans went to the Roman Forum and saw the Lacus Iuturnae, they would think of a number of associations, such as Iuturna, the eponymous nymph of the spring, but also the mythical figures of Castor and Pollux who watered their horses at that spot, as we will explore below. Indeed, this is what can be part of ‘metaphysical topography’, in that each of the places in the forum would have been tied to meaning for a Roman audience.⁸

Finally, memories have the ability to help construct a shared identity for a group. The relationship between a person and the place that architecture occupies has been articulated as the following:

¹ Jenkyns 2013, 1.

² O’Sullivan 2011, 3.

³ For example, see the edited volume of Betts 2017.

⁴ Frieman – Gillings 2007, 10.

⁵ Strang 2006, 149; Hamilakis 2013, 409.

⁶ For example, see the essays in Galinsky 2014; Galinsky 2017; for critical remarks on the ‘mnemonic turn’ of modern scholarship in the Roman world, see Grigoropoulos et al. 2017.

⁷ Cic. fin. 5, 2 (translation by Vasaly 1993); Vasaly 1993, 29; Edwards 1996, 29; Hopkins 2012, 88 f.

⁸ For the concept of ‘metaphysical topography’, see Vasaly 1993, 41.

*space and movement are of central importance in conjunction with the dimension of time. Human memory requires spatial concepts: objects or spaces gain a history of their own only through prolonged, continual use. This is why, in a larger circle of participants, places and their ornamental attributes have a stabilizing effect on the group; they help create a sense of identity.*⁹

Memories are created by individuals through their repeated interaction with a monument, and those memories are made by their perceptions of the structure. The shared experiences of the same monuments then help to create identity, in that members of a community have some sort of shared sense of connection with each other. The aquatic landscape of the Forum Romanum, then, it is argued here, though the mythical, historical, and mytho-historical associations of the monuments there, provided a context for passers-by to consider the multivalent connotations of the structure, thereby creating a shared sense of identity predicated on water.

The Forum Romanum

The city of Rome is connected to water by virtue of its landscape.¹⁰ The great River Tiber dominates the cityscape, carving its course through a surrounding plateau that was once created by a volcano.¹¹ There is, however, a hydrogeomorphic landscape in Rome beyond the Tiber. As the river changed the landscape to create the seven famed hills, there were lower lying areas of the city, which were prone to being swampy, especially after floods of the Tiber (Fig. 2).¹² In addition, the city was dotted with a number of streams that fed into the river, such as those draining the valleys of the Quirinal and Esquiline Hills, that later became the famed Cloaca Maxima drain.¹³ Springs were also abundant throughout Rome, especially in the city centre, including the Fons Cati (Quirinal), the Fons Iuturnae (Forum Romanum), the Tullianum and Aquae Lautulae (Capitoline), the Lupercal (Palatine), and the Fons Camenarum (Caelian).¹⁴ Rome, then, was a place where water flowed in different contexts: a large river, tributary streams of the Tiber, paludial basins, and natural springs.

The site of the Forum Romanum was the location of a swamp that prevented habitation and building. It has been demonstrated by Albert Ammerman that the forum was transformed from a paludial zone to a space that had the ability to be monumentalized by the beginning of the Republic and beyond.¹⁵ It had been previously thought that the forum area had some early habitation, but then the site was converted to a city centre by layering gravel on top, along with the insertion of drains to take away excess water. Ammerman's study of the forum has shown, however, that in order to reclaim the land, a significant amount of earth was moved into the forum, allowing the surface of the forum to lie above the swampy terrain. John Hopkins has argued that, in the period after the reclamation of the forum area, three different levels of the city were present: the areas on the hills associated with domestic spaces; the civic and commercial space of the forum; and the banks of the Tiber, connected to shipping and industry.¹⁶ The new elevation of the Forum, then, allowed it to become the prime nucleus in the urban landscape of Rome.

⁹ Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2007, 210.

¹⁰ See Campbell 2012, 13–21 for the watery landscape of Rome, which is tied to its origins as a city.

¹¹ Ammerman 2013, 169.

¹² Corazza – Lombardi 1995.

¹³ Richardson 1992, 91 f. ; LTUR I (1993) 288–290 s. v. Cloaca, Cloaca Maxima (H. Bauer).

¹⁴ For more on these springs, see: Lanciani 1975, 215–240; Cifani 2008, 307; LTUR I (1993) 216 s. v. Camenae, Camenarum Fons et Lucus (E. Rodríguez-Almeida); LTUR I (1993) 237–239 s. v. Carcer Tullianus (G. De Spirito); LTUR II (1995) 257 f. s. v. Fons Cati (F. Coarelli); LTUR III (1996) 168–170 s. v. Lacus Iuturnae (E. M. Steinby); LTUR III (1996) 186 s. v. Lautulae (C. Morselli); LTUR III (1996) 198 f. s. v. Lupercal (F. Coarelli).

¹⁵ Ammerman 1990a; Ammerman 1990b; Ammerman 2013.

¹⁶ Hopkins 2014, 54.

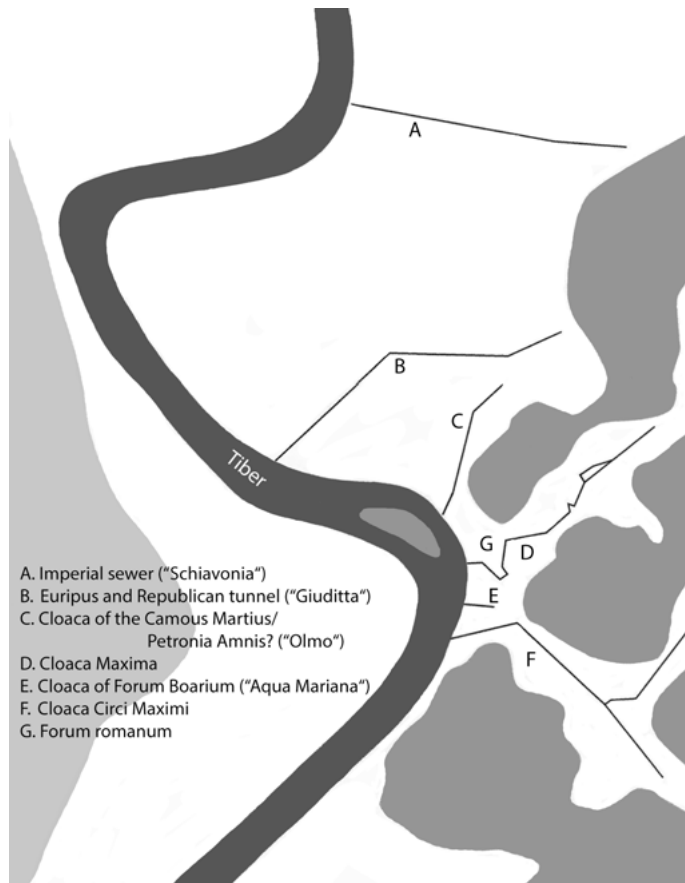


Fig. 2: *Cloacae*, or drains, of Ancient Rome.

The addition of the monumental Cloaca Maxima in the 7th century, reportedly installed by Tarquinius Priscus, permitted the space to stay dry.¹⁷ Built upon the ancient tributary streams of the Tiber, the Cloaca Maxima became monumentalized over time, such as when the drain was lined with stone in the 5th century.¹⁸ In Plautus' day, the Cloaca was still apparently open to the elements, but by the end of the Republic, it was covered over, and it was eventually restored by Agrippa in 33, who added a new lower Sabine stone course. The course of the Cloaca Maxima ran along the ancient Argiletum, later covered by the Forum Transitorium of Nerva, then turned to the east at the base of the Basilica Aemilia, cutting across the forum between the Basilica Iulia and the Temple of Castor and Pollux, proceeding through the Velabrum, and flowing into the Tiber, via the Forum Boarium. The meandering pattern of the Cloaca Maxima contrasts sharply with the more straightforward paths of other drains in the city, and it could be tied to what some scholars have considered to be a 'sacred' past, in that the original stream's course deserved special reverence even into the Empire.¹⁹ Despite having the ability to change the path of the Cloaca Maxima, the Romans kept the ancient course of the drain, perhaps in devotion to its ancient route, as a marker of its past history and associated memories.²⁰

With the forum drained, monumentalization of the space could occur, befitting the civic and commercial centre of the city. The creation of the forum, with its many buildings and structures, was not an accident, but the result of planning in conjunction with the new landscape

¹⁷ Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 3, 67, 4–5.

¹⁸ For more on the Cloaca Maxima, see: Tortorici 1991; Gowers 1995; Hopkins 2007; Hopkins 2012.

¹⁹ For the 'sacred' nature of the Cloaca Maxima, see Holland 1961, 349 f.

²⁰ Hopkins 2012, 88 f.

freed of standing water.²¹ By 480 BC, at the beginning of the Republic, the forum probably contained the Regia, the Temple of Vesta, the Temple of Castor and Pollux, the Curia Hostilia, the Temple of Saturn, and the Comitium.²² Building continued until almost the beginning of the Imperial period, when Julius Caesar decided to build his own forum to the northeast of the Forum Romanum, initiating a trend continued by his successors in that area.

The (formerly) swampy landscape of the forum basin is, then, the backdrop for the monuments that were installed in the Forum Romanum. The connections that the space has (and had) to water are crucial for our understanding of the choice and placement of the structures in the built environment of the forum. While by the late Republic there was no direct access to water, save for the springs and the flowing Cloaca Maxima, it is the memory of this past that is essential in the construction of the watery landscape of the forum.

The inclusion of monuments tied to water in the previously watery forum stresses the importance of the substance for the Romans throughout the history of this space. When considering the water-related features of the Roman Forum, we must imagine what is happening for the visitor to the space. How are they interacting with the space? Are they remembering the myths and historical events that are tied to the structures? There is a relationship between the actual site and the viewing of the site, which is 'crucial to the cognitive complexities of translating pictures, monuments, and dimensional spaces into intelligible experience'.²³ What results for certain, however, is a blurred line between the past and the present, in what some have termed a 'synchronous, permanent present'.²⁴ What this means is that those of the present can consider the past in relation to the built environment around them. Thus, monuments have a past crucial in their meaning and importance, not only to those in the past, but also to those in the present, allowing us to graft meaning on to these structures. Indeed, as Adam Rogers argues in this volume, throughout the Roman world, the materiality of water itself impacted urban landscapes, as not only pre-existing waterscapes, but also the Romans' own construction of water-related structures or monuments altered the experience one would have with a space. The Forum Romanum, then, with a number of watery monuments, would have evoked for all those encountering them the sheer importance of water in the urban landscape of Rome's past.

In addition to the actual past aquatic environment of the forum basin, there are a number of monuments within the forum itself that commemorate mythological, historical, or mythohistorical episodes of Rome's past. Three *lacus* (Iuturnae, Curtius, and Servilius), the Sacellum of Venus Cloacina, the *rostra* of the forum, and the Temple of Janus Geminus are presented in the ensuing discussion. For the most part, there are no remains of true water-displays, in that there are no known monuments with moving water, such as the grand fountains known in the Imperial period. The ancient Forum Romanum takes advantage, however, of the inherent meaning of monuments' watery past, whether it is mythical, Regal, or Republican. Many of these structures had been in the forum for generations, which gives them their own pasts and meanings for the passers-by, and would remind visitors of the ties the forum had to water.

The Lacus Iuturnae is probably one of the most well-known monuments of the Forum Romanum connected with water, given that it is a monumentalisation of an actual spring source and celebrates one of the best known of the Roman nymphs. Iuturna was believed to be the sister of Turnus, and she had a cult in Lavinium that was moved to Rome at some point in the latter part of the Regal period. Thus, she had an ancient mythology that was even present in the epic cycle of the *Aeneid*. Her importance was stressed by her cult's placement in the forum, where she is associated with the spring that is located between the Temple of Castor and Pollux and

²¹ For more on the notion of the fact that the Forum was not an accident, see Hopkins 2014, 52f.

²² Ammerman 2013, 174. See also the essays in Carandini 2017 on the development of the Forum.

²³ Larmour – Spencer 2007, 7.

²⁴ Barkan 1991, 13; Edwards 1996, 29.



Fig. 3: Rome, Forum Romanum, Augustan Puteal and Trajanic Sacellum of the Lacus Iuturnae.

the House of the Vestal Virgins, near the Vicus Tuscus that leads to the Velabrum.²⁵ Iuturna's source is also known as one of the famed ancient springs of Rome, along with those of the Camenae and Apollo.²⁶ It is believed that Castor and Pollux watered their horses at the spring associated with Iuturna after the Battle of Lake Regillus in 494 BC, and then again after Pydna in 168 BC.²⁷ Particularly in relation to the Dioscuri's epiphany in 494 BC, there is yet another connection to water, namely that the battle takes place at a *lake*. In fact, the association to the twins is strengthened by the discovery of a statue of the pair in the forum, which is dated to immediately after Pydna.²⁸ The Battle of Lake Regillus has been seen as part of the mythology of the birth of the Republic, as it was a pivotal event that led to the success of the new Roman state.²⁹ Subsequently, the battle is exploited in the Augustan period with Octavian's victory at Actium, in the context of which Vergil describes how the Dioscuri aided Octavian, just as they did the Romans 500 years previously.³⁰ In the Augustan renovations of the forum, which were well under way, if not nearly complete, by 29 BC, the memories of the Battle of Lake Regillus were easily evoked through the built environment, with Temple of Castor and Pollux next to the Lacus Iuturnae, both of which are directly across from Augustus' Actian Arch.

The ancient and mythological associations of the spring, then, make the space an important one in the built environment of the forum. The first phase of the spring, probably dated to the 2nd century BC, around the time of Pydna, monumentalized the natural spring source, by adding a rectangular basin on top, constructed of *opus incertum* and lined with *cocciopesto*.³¹ With the revival of the cult by Augustus, marble veneer was added to the basin, along with a number of dedications, including a white marble puteal, inscribed with *Iuturnai sacrum* by the *curule aedile*, Marcus Barbatius Pollio.³² In the time of Trajan, a small *sacellum* was added immediately adjacent to the basin (Fig. 3). By the 4th century AD, the area included the headquarters of the

²⁵ For more on the spring, see: Lanciani 1975, 225 f.; Ammerman 1990a; Corazza – Lombardi 1995, 198 f.

²⁶ Frontin. aqu. 1, 4.

²⁷ Scullard 1981, 64.

²⁸ Clarke 1968; Coarelli 1985, 156; LTUR III (1996) 169 s.v. Lacus Iuturnae (E. M. Steinby).

²⁹ Rebeggiani 2013.

³⁰ Verg. Aen. 8, 678–681. Rebeggiani 2013, 57–67.

³¹ For the chronology and development of the precinct associated with Iuturna in the Forum Romanum, see the published excavations of the site in Steinby 2012. See also Steinby 2015.

³² CIL 6.36807; Kajava 1989, 37–39.



Fig. 4: Rome, Forum Romanum, Lacus Curtius reconstruction, ca. AD 320.

statio aquarum, the water department of Rome.³³ Not only does the space have mythological (e. g. with Iuturna, and Castor and Pollux) and historical (e. g. the Battles of Lake Regillus and Pydna) associations, but the buildings surrounding the spring are utilized for the supervision of the maintenance of Rome's water supply. Thus, there are multivalent associations a passerby could make in antiquity when experiencing this complex.

Northwest of the Lacus Iuturnae, in the open space of the forum, between the Basilicas Aemilia and Julia, is the Lacus Curtius. There are at least four distinct phases of the structure: (1) tuff period dated to 184 BC;³⁴ (2) travertine period dated to 78–74 BC, with the repaving of the forum by Aurelius Cotta; (3) Augustan (ca. 12 BC); (4) Severan, with the new repaving of the forum of AD 203.³⁵ Still visible today, it is an irregular polygonal monument surrounded by a marble parapet, which is sunk into the pavement of the forum, the result of successive repavings of the area (Fig. 4). Excavation has revealed at least three different layers of pavement, which can help to show the longevity of this monument in this space.³⁶ In the enclosure is a circular plinth to support a *puteal*, presumably concealing an ancient water source, along with rectangular cuttings on the other side of the enclosure for square altars. In fact, by the time of Augustus, it is known that there was no water flowing to the Lacus Curtius.³⁷ During the Imperial period, the monument was a place where Romans annually tossed coins for the good health of the emperor on his birthday.³⁸

There are at least two different stories that the *lacus* was believed to have commemorated. The first version is a battle between the Romans, led by Romulus, and the Sabines, commanded by Mettius Curtius.³⁹ In a skirmish near the gate of the Palatine, Mettius fled Romulus and his

³³ There are various dedications of the *curatores aquarum et Miniciae* and a statue of *Genius stationis aquarum*. For more on these dedications, see Kajava 1989, along with Rogers 2018b, 11–13 on the water administration of Rome.

³⁴ Liv. 39, 44, 5.

³⁵ LTUR III (1996) 166 f. s. v. Lacus Curtius (C. F. Giuliani).

³⁶ Excavations revealed at least three layers of pavements, including, from bottom to top, cappellaccio, Monte-verde tuff, and travertine LTUR III (1996) 166 f. s. v. Lacus Curtius (C. F. Giuliani).

³⁷ Ov. Fast. 6, 403–404.

³⁸ Suet. Aug. 57, 1.

³⁹ Liv. 1, 12, 9–10. 13, 5; Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 2, 42, 5–6; Plut. Quaest. Rom. 18, 4. See also: La Regina 1995 and Spencer 2007.



Fig. 5: Rome, Forum Romanum, relief of Mettius Curtius, Lacus Curtius.

men, heading for the marshy forum basin, the valley between the two hills. There, he got stuck, causing the battle to stop to allow for Mettius to free himself. Romulus and his men, however, are subsequently victorious in the battle. This episode is commemorated by a relief plaque found near the Lacus Curtius in the 16th century, which was believed to have somehow decorated the *lacus* proper (Fig. 5).⁴⁰ In the second and far better known version, an earthquake or another phenomenon ripped open a hole in the middle of the forum in 362 BC.⁴¹ According to Livy, prophets stated that the chasm must be filled, or the Republic would fall.⁴² Despite the Romans' attempts to fill the hole, it was reported that it could only be closed by the 'chief strength of the Roman people'.⁴³ Marcus Curtius, a young soldier, rode on his horse into the chasm, which promptly closed.

The stories are, on the surface, drastically different. There are similarities, however, between the two that are crucial for the understood meaning behind the monument. Roman superiority is stressed, whether by Romulus' victory over Mettius' men, or the ability for Roman excellence to fill up a threatening chasm in the forum floor. Moreover, both episodes emphasize the presence of water in the forum. We cannot forget that the forum was indeed once a swamp, commemorated not only in the preserved literary and mythological traditions, but also on the relief plaque added to the Lacus Curtius for all to see. There was no running water by the time of Augustus at the *lacus*, but a Roman only needed to imagine the running waters of the Cloaca Maxima, which would have been flowing underneath the *lacus*.⁴⁴ Despite the lack of water, the Lacus Curtius was an effective commemoration of the past mytho-historical events that were said to have occurred there. The spot is illustrated by a plaque and a puteal, insinuating that at some point there was flowing water there. In a sense, the structure in the forum prompts the passers-by into 'the present of the urban condition, which allows [them] to communicate not only with the city's past (through its mythology and patrimony), but also with an imaginary future'.⁴⁵ While Romans who saw the monument, which commemorates the past, interacted with it in the present, they would also have been stimulated to consider the future, whether of the city itself and how to make the city better, or even of their own lives, perhaps given that the human condition is tied to water for survival.

⁴⁰ Coarelli 1985, 226–229.

⁴¹ Liv. 7, 6, 1–6; Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom. 14, 11, 3–4; Val. Max. 5, 6, 2; Plin. HN. 15, 78; Cass. Dio 30, 1–2.

⁴² Liv. 7, 6, 1–6.

⁴³ Liv. 7, 6, 2.

⁴⁴ Spencer 2007, 65.

⁴⁵ Spencer 2007, 67 f.

The final *lacus* to consider in the Forum Romanum is the Lacus Servilius. We know that this structure stood at the northwest corner of the Basilica Julia, at the end of the Vicus Iugarius, acting as a fountain basin, not a spring source.⁴⁶ The name *Servilius* probably derives from a Republican figure who gave his name for the fountain, whether Cn. Servilius Caepio (consul in 141 BC) or a Servilius Caepius, who might have given the structure as a *munus*, or public benefaction, in 125 BC, in connection with the construction of the Aqua Tepula.⁴⁷ We know that during the Sullan proscriptions, the heads of senators were displayed in some fashion on the *lacus*.⁴⁸ It is reported that Agrippa added a statue of a Hydra to the fountain.⁴⁹ In fact, this involvement by Agrippa is not out of the ordinary, because we know he was responsible for a number of water-related projects throughout the city as aedile in 33 BC, when he commissioned the construction of the Aqua Julia (and its incorporation of the Aqua Tepula, the original catalyst for the *lacus*). Further, he added statues to the public fountains throughout the city.⁵⁰ The monument survived into the Augustan period, and it was destroyed in the 12 BC fire that consumed the Basilica Julia, but not rebuilt in the subsequent restoration of the Basilica.

It is difficult to evaluate fully the Lacus Servilius, given that it is lost to us. The fact that the fountain was gone by the early Imperial period is also crucial: those in the Empire would have only known of the monument in memory. Perhaps they remembered the eponymous Servilius, the Hydra decoration on top, or the heads of the unlucky senators of Sulla's proscriptions, possibly from stories told to them about the forum's past. We can perhaps read a little more into the fountain through the figure of Agrippa. Because we know that he incorporated the Aqua Tepula into the larger Aqua Julia and that he added a statue to this particular fountain, Agrippa could have potentially been making his own connection to a Republican predecessor. If the Servilius Caepius of 125 gave the fountain as a *munus*, he may have done so as an aedile, just as Agrippa built waterworks during his own aedileship.

Across the forum, in front of the Basilica Aemilia, was the *sacellum* of Venus Cloacina. The figure of Cloacina is believed to be the *numen* of the waters of the Cloaca Maxima, who is later conflated as an aspect of Venus.⁵¹ Pliny the Elder mentions Venus Cloacina when relating the anecdote that when the Romans and Sabines were to fight over the carrying off of maidens, the soldiers purified themselves with myrtle that was growing in the spot later occupied by the *sacellum*, given that Cloacina derives from *cluere* ('to cleanse').⁵² The appearance of the small shrine is known from numismatic evidence (Fig. 6).⁵³ The shrine is circular with an open balustrade, marked by the legend *CLOACIN(A)*. Inside, there are two draped female statues whose right hands are lowered, perhaps supporting *thymiateria*, or incense burners, and their left hands are raised to hold perhaps the leafy branches of myrtle. The structure of the shrine suggested by the depictions on the coins was confirmed by the discovery of marble foundations of a small circular monument (2.40 m in diameter) in front of the Basilica. The foundations go deep into the ground (at least eight courses), suggesting that the shrine was in use for a long period of time.⁵⁴

The meanings behind this particular shrine are manifold. The cult of Cloacina is reported to have been instituted by Titus Tatius, before the traditional 'Regal' period of Rome.⁵⁵ In a time

⁴⁶ Fest. 370.

⁴⁷ LTUR III (1996) 172 f. s. v. Lacus Restitutus (A. La Regina).

⁴⁸ Cic. Rosc. Am. 89; Sen. Dial. 1, 3, 7, 8; Firm. Mat. 1, 7, 34.

⁴⁹ Fest. 370.

⁵⁰ Plin. HN 36, 24, 121. For more on Agrippa's water-related building activities see: Evans 1982; Roddaz 1984; Albers 2013.

⁵¹ Plin. HN 15, 119–120. See also: Liv. 3, 48, 5; Plaut. Curc. 471.

⁵² Plin. HN 15, 119–120.

⁵³ BMCRR I 577 f. nos. 4242–4254.

⁵⁴ Richardson 1992, 92; Freyberger – Ertel 2016, 22 f.

⁵⁵ Cypr. Idol. 4; Aug. Civ. 4, 8, 6, 10, 1; Min. Fel. 25, 8; LTUR III (1996) 290 f. s. v. Muri Aureliani (G. Pisani Sartorio).



Fig. 6: Silver Denarius, 42 BC, the reverse depicts the *Sacellum* of Venus Cloacina.

before the forum basin was drained and the streams of the Cloaca were yet to be canalized, it is easy to understand the desire to establish a cult to the spirit of the water that permeates the volatile landscape. With the archaeological and literary evidence, then, we can discern a cult of *longue durée*, a monument continuously seen throughout the history of the forum and indicative of its mytho-historical past. The *sacellum* was also actually in a long line of other small shrines in front of the Basilica (e.g., the Temple of Janus Geminus, etc.), which marked the space, opening onto the via Sacra, as one of a religious character, but also steeped in the historical past of the city.⁵⁶ Further, the shrine was placed over the spot where the Cloaca Maxima turns to the west, past the Basilica Aemilia, to head southwest across the forum. The waters associated with the Cloaca would have been sacred, moving, and purifying, which would easily encourage a cult of a goddess of a literally *purifying* nature.⁵⁷ Thus, the shrine of Venus Cloacina would have had a number of associations for a Roman. She was a figure in Roman history before the kings, illustrating the antiquity of the deity. And her cult celebrated the purifying and sacred waters of the great Cloaca, which stresses the aquatic landscape that once reigned in this space that was conquered by the Romans.

The Forum Romanum's watery connections were also emphasized with the construction of various *rostra*. The speaker's platforms could be found in the Roman comitium and the forum. After the naval victory of 338 BC against the Latins at Antium, however, that platform in the forum was decorated with naval beaks (*rostra*) – and so called after them.⁵⁸ After the naval victories of the Punic Wars, the *rostra* was further decorated with the beaks of enemy ships. Julius Caesar, however, decided to remove the *rostra* from the forum (connected to the ancient *comitium* that was cleared away in this period), and replace it with a new one, which was finished by Augustus and given a prominent position on the northwest limit of the forum.⁵⁹ The *rostra Augusti* had at least five phases: Caesarian (a simple 13.00 m long, 3.50 m high speaker's platform with beaks); Augustan (larger core for two rows of beaks to be added, 23.80 m long, with a marble front balustrade); Flavian; Severan (more ornate decoration added, along with five columns on top, the so-called 'Fünfsäulendenkmal'); and Late Antique.⁶⁰ There was also a Diocletianic *rostra* installed on the west side of the forum, which would have been a pendant of a similar form of the Severan period *rostra Augusti*.⁶¹ In addition to the *rostra* proper, there were

⁵⁶ Freyberger 2012, 49. See also the recent excavations of the Basilica Aemilia: Ertel et al. 2007; Lipps 2011; Freyberger – Ertel 2016.

⁵⁷ Van Essen 1956; Hopkins 2012, 96 f.

⁵⁸ Liv. 8, 14, 12; Plin. nat. 34, 20; Richardson 1992, 334 f.; LTUR IV (1999) 212–214 s. v. Rostra (età repubblicana) (F. Coarelli).

⁵⁹ Coarelli 1985, *passim*; Richardson 1992, 335 f.; Haselberger 2002, 216; LTUR IV (1999) 214–217 s. v. Rostra Augusti (P. Verduchi).

⁶⁰ LTUR IV (1999) 218 f. s. v. Rostra: 'Fünfsäulendenkmal' (A. Pulte).

⁶¹ LTUR IV (1999) 217 f. s. v. Rostra Diocletiani (P. Verduchi).

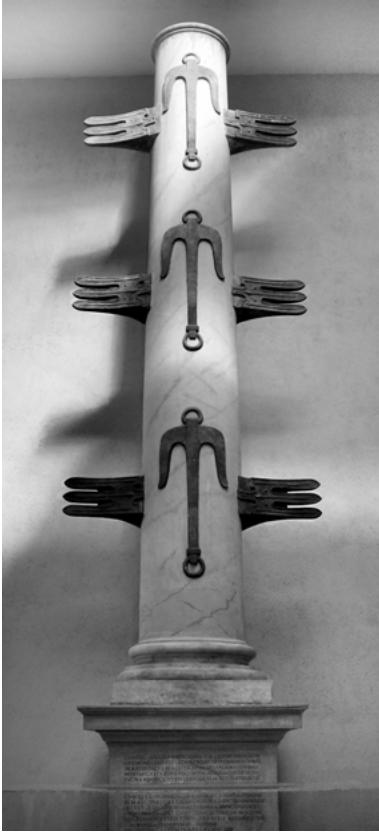


Fig. 7: Rome, Museo della Civiltà Romana, reconstruction of Rostrate Column of Duilius.

rostrated columns – columns with curved ships’ rams sticking out perpendicular to the column – marking naval victories from the Republic on, including that of C. Duilius (260 BC victory over the Carthaginians), M. Aemilius Paullus (255 BC), and Augustus (Naulochus in 36 BC and Actium in 31 BC) (Fig. 7).⁶²

The Forum Romanum, it seems, was littered with the beaks of enemy ships or models of them. By the Imperial period, there was the Augustan *rostra*, the Augustan rostrated columns, along with the nearby temple *rostra*. When Diocletian later added another *rostra*, the message of Roman naval victory was only made more manifest. First, the long-standing tradition of rostration means that, when Augustus installed his own rostrated columns, he harkened back to the memory of Duilius, whose own column Augustus refurbished, thus marking the restoration an act of *pietas* and the construction of his own column as a way to use the past as an *exemplum*.⁶³ Augustus’ new monument then gains legitimacy from an older, similar monument. The beaks of ships automatically evoke water for the passer-by, in addition to the victory that occurs on the seas. The great number of beaks that were in the forum would have reminded viewers of the long history of the Roman domination of the Mediterranean, prompting them to think back to the victories against a variety of foes, from Latins, Carthaginians, to fellow Romans, as the case was in the civil wars. Further, the *rostra* is also a symbol of the power of the Roman aristocracy, who used the speaker’s platforms throughout the Republic and into the Empire as a place to not only to sway fellow citizens, but also to celebrate fellow Romans in funeral orations, such as those of Julius Caesar and Augustus. The *rostra* and their use of beaks as a

⁶² Richardson 1992, 96 f.; Muth 2012, 11. 24; Roller 2013, 120–126. The most in-depth discussion of these columns is Palombi 1993. For a modern example, the column in the middle of New York City’s Columbus Circle, dedicated to Christopher Columbus, is rostrated.

⁶³ Roller 2013, 122 f. explores this relationship more fully.

symbol of naval victory continue the strong associations of the Forum Romanum and an aquatic landscape.

The Temple of Janus Geminus in the forum should be briefly mentioned in relation to another spring, that of the Lautolae. It is believed that this shrine of Janus was located near the southwest corner of the Basilica Aemilia and the Curia.⁶⁴ The story goes that in a battle between Titus Tatius and the Sabines, the gates of the Janus *sacellum* opened (perhaps under Juno's influence), a fact which was noticed by Venus.⁶⁵ She then persuaded the local nymphs (sometimes called the Ausonian nymphs, but usually termed the Lautolae) to aid in closing the temple doors. The nymphs accomplished this by changing their cool waters into hot, sulphurous waters, which drove away the enemy. There has been a lot of discussion about the exact location of the Temple of Janus in the forum, along with the source of the Lautolae. It should just be noted here, however, that there was at least a literary tradition of associating miraculous waters with the forum area, especially from a mytho-historical past, with historical figures (e.g. Titus Tatius) that are recurring characters in the drama that is the aquatic landscape of the forum.

This survey of water-related structures in the forum, including three *lacus*, two shrines, and the *rostra*, affords the opportunity to comprehend the ubiquity of structures that commemorate water in some respect. We can call structures, naturally, monuments, as they are reminders and memorials of the past, especially the mytho-historical past. Indeed, they can be called 'historiated' fountains, as they celebrate and call to mind a historic event.⁶⁶ Memory then plays a crucial role in their interaction with their landscape and their relationships with those viewing them in situ. We only have to remember Piso's exhortation of the *disciplina memoriae*, the 'art of memory', as seeing and interacting with monuments triggers not only personal memories of a monument, but also the constructed past of the structure. Monuments (*monumenta*) are more than the building materials that constitute them, as 'they are intrinsically concerned with the mnemonic processes of remembering and instantiating culture and tradition'.⁶⁷ Further, the various monuments within the forum are part of a process of 'intersignification' with each other, in that 'the older and newer monuments produce, in each case, an implicit narrative that carries moral and political weight'.⁶⁸ The structures of the forum then recall past events and the present commemorators, with charged meanings for a passer-by of any time period. Thus, with the inclusion of all of these structures in the forum, their patrons called on pedestrians to consider the past water-soaked landscape of the forum itself, along with the aquatic origins of Rome itself, whether from the Tiber, the twins being found along a stream, or the naval supremacy that the Romans demonstrated from the time of the first Punic War. The forum, because of its own ancient origins, creates a 'metaphysical topography' that causes those in the present to have interactions with the monuments that wholly transcend the present, but include the events and myths of that landscape in the past, along with reflecting on the potential of that space in the future.

Under Augustus, the Forum Romanum sees one of the most drastic changes in its use. With the new imperial regime, a new 'controlled access to the past' is created in the forum by Augustus.⁶⁹ In part, the power of the emperor and his family was demonstrated through architecture and ornamental programs in the Forum Romanum proper, with his rebuilding of the Basilicas

⁶⁴ Richardson 1992, 207 f.; Freyberger – Ertel 2016, 23–26; LTUR III (1996) 92 f. s. v. Ianus Geminus, Aedes (E. Tortorici).

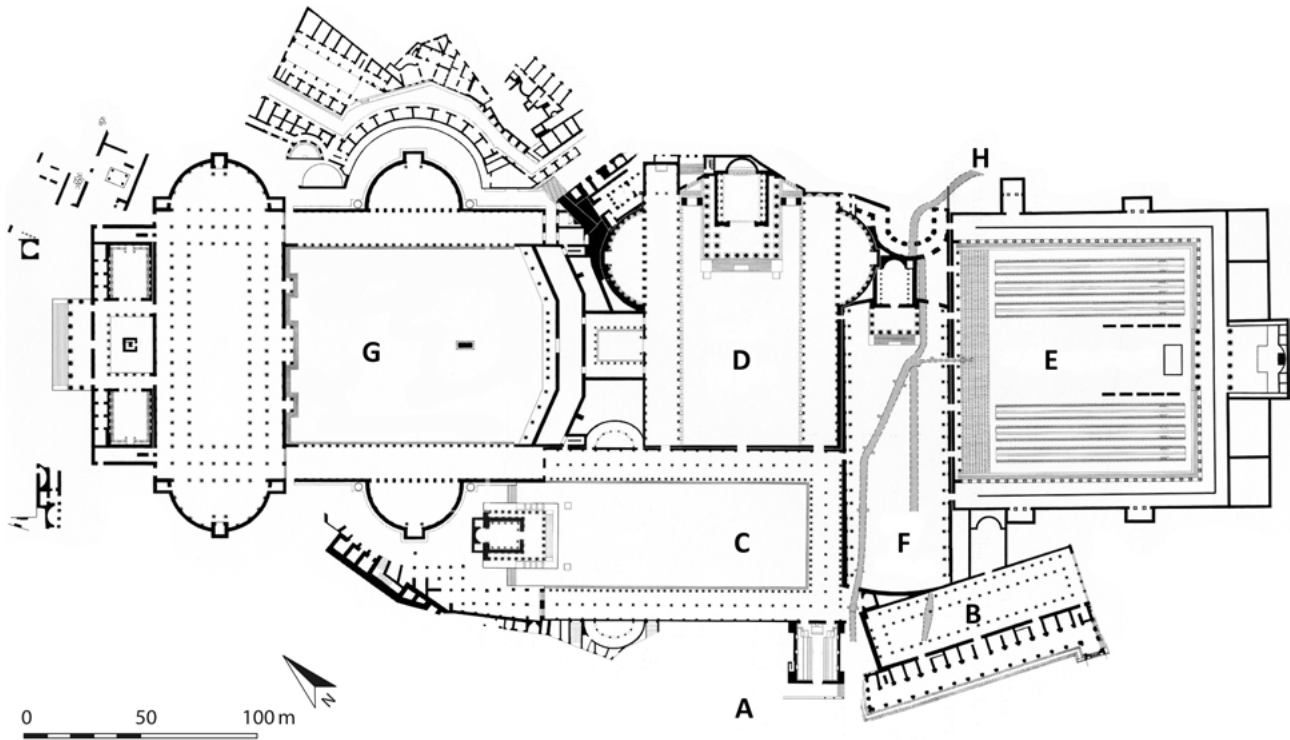
⁶⁵ Ov. met. 14, 775–804; Macr. Sat. 1, 9, 17–18; Varro ling. 5, 32. See also Meulder 2000 for a discussion of this spring, along with Lanciani 1975, 232 f. and Corazza – Lombardi 1995, 198, the latter of which show that the spring of the Lautolae could be potentially be confused with the other springs on the eastern slopes of the Capitolium, such as the Tullianum and the Aquae Fontinalis.

⁶⁶ Robinson 2005, 123 uses the term 'historiated springs' not only for the fountains of Corinth, but also for the *lacus* of the Roman Forum.

⁶⁷ Spencer 2007, 65. See also Feldherr 1998 especially 21–35.

⁶⁸ Roller 2013, 120.

⁶⁹ Muth 2012, 24.



Aemilia and Julia, the Curia Julia, the *rostra* Julia (later the *rostra* Augusti), the Temples of Concordia, Saturn, and Castor and Pollux, along with the addition of the Arcus Augusti, Temple of Divus Iulius, and the Porticus Gaii et Lucii.⁷⁰ Through the new Augustan building programme, the past was celebrated with the restoration of ancient monuments, such as the temples; however, enough was altered and added in the forum to create a dynastic monument for the new emperor. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill argues that for Augustus the Forum Romanum was ‘a new creation, carefully ‘antiqued’ in that specific monuments (e.g. the *sacellum* of Venus Cloacina) were kept, restored, and incorporated into the new space, while others (e.g. the old comitium) were demolished, some to be replaced elsewhere.’⁷¹

Furthermore, with the addition of the Forum Iulium and the Forum Augustum, the urban nodes of Rome were drastically altered, moving the city centre from Forum Romanum to the new Imperial Fora, in effect making the forum a museum, a ‘showcase of collective past achievements’, but no longer the main urban node of Rome.⁷² Many of the monuments of the forum were part of contemporaneous religious praxis, particularly given their inclusion into the new built environment of the Augustan period, but then became part of a larger historical consciousness of the Romans in the Imperial era. The careful inclusion and restorations of ancient monuments that evoke an aquatic past were important for the celebration of the watery nature of the Forum Romanum, but also the commemoration of the emperor and the bounty that he brought.

As one moves to the subsequent Imperial Fora of Rome, with the successive spaces of Julius Caesar, Augustus, the Flavians, Nerva, and Trajan, there is then a marked shift in monuments associated with water (Fig. 8). While there are still mythological associations with monuments related to water, the Imperial Fora employ true water-displays, or fountains.⁷³ With the influx of water that occurs in the Imperial period, the fora began to exploit actual water sources,

Fig. 8: Rome, Imperial Fora: Forum Romanum (A), Basilica Aemilia (B), Forum Iulium (C), Forum Augustum (D), Templum Pacis (E), Forum Transitorium (F), Forum Traiani (G), Underground Course of the Cloaca Maxima (H).

⁷⁰ For more on these renovations and additions, see Favro 1996, 195–200.

⁷¹ Wallace-Hadrill 1993, 51.

⁷² Favro 1996, 200.

⁷³ For more on the definition of a water-display, see Rogers 2018b, 46 f.

moving beyond mere allusions to an aquatic past, and show water to spectators.⁷⁴ The incorporation of water can be subtle (e. g. the Forum Transitorium built over the course of the Cloaca Maxima), demonstrative (e. g. the fountains associated with the podium temples of the Fora of Caesar and Augustus), or truly ostentatious (e. g. the large water basins in the open court of the Templum Pacis).⁷⁵ In the end, the Imperial Fora continue the tradition begun in the Forum Romanum of evoking an aquatic past, while actually using water itself to continue crafting an identity tied to water.

The Imperial Fora, in contrast to the Forum Romanum, employ the use of *moving* water, in addition to metaphorical associations with its display. For the Romans, moving water was considered to be free from impurities, and thus moving water could also be used for a variety of purposes, including drinking and religious rituals.⁷⁶ While the water-displays of the fora of Caesar and Augustus were small, compact fountains, they still provided water that could be used for drinking, in addition to adding to the aesthetic experience of the space. The Templum Pacis, on the other hand, used truly new ways of displaying water that not only included a large show of moving water, but also effectively integrated the show into a space that acted as a cohesive ensemble for a unique sensorial experience. The patrons of each of the water-displays also provided mytho-historical associations for those passing by. One only needs to think of the marine nature of Venus, born on the sea, in Caesar's forum connected to the Temple of Venus Genetrix, the naval victories of Augustus related to the Temple of Mars Ultor, and the abundance associated with both peace and water (although the two do not need to be mutually exclusive). The use of water-displays in the Imperial Fora then help to set the trend of water use in the Empire, when new aqueducts were constructed throughout the Mediterranean, allowing for new types of water-displays. Yet the Forum Romanum does not have any extant water-displays *per se*. Its watery past, stressed through the water-related structures, acts in tandem with the water features of the Imperial Fora, creating a city centre that is entirely predicated on water.

Conclusions

The built environment of the Forum Romanum, the civic space *par excellence* for the whole Roman world, was literally and figuratively founded on water. As we have seen, the numerous structures built over the centuries capitalized on the water in a variety of ways. Monuments commemorated the aquatic landscape of this part of the city, evoking the paludial history of the forum basin. Other monuments celebrated the naval victories of the Romans throughout history, extolling the virtues of domination of the seas. In other cases, monuments recalled for passers-by either mythical beings that were associated with the area, or historical events tied to water. And one of the underlying themes that ties these monuments together is the power demonstrated by the Romans, either against nature or foe – and certainly in the ability to harness water, as is the case especially in the Imperial period.⁷⁷

The monuments that we explored in the Forum Romanum do not have moving water, as was the case in the Imperial period. Instead, we have a situation here in which the Romans

⁷⁴ On the increase of water in Rome after the Republic, see Rogers 2018b, 26.

⁷⁵ On the Forum Iulium fountains located in front of the Temple of Venus Genetrix, see: Ov. ars 1, 81; Plin. nat. 36, 4, 33; Ulrich 1986; Longfellow 2011, 18–20; Delfino 2010; Delfino 2014. On the fountains in front of the Temple of Mars Ultor of the Forum Augustum, see Longfellow 2011, 20 f. On the basins in the Templum Pacis, see La Rocca 2001, 195 f.; Meneghini – Santangeli Valenzani 2007, 61–63; Meneghini 2014, 285; *contra* Macaulay-Lewis 2011, 281, n. 84; Tucci 2017, 58–62.

⁷⁶ Rogers 2018b, 8.

⁷⁷ On the power associated with water in the Roman world, see Rogers 2018b, 64–67.

created a space that became the intersection of place and memory – and the notion of water formerly flowing through the space takes on a symbolic value for those using the forum. By celebrating Rome’s historical, mythical, and mytho-historical past, the patrons were able to construct a cohesive assemblage of monuments that allowed those in the forum to reflect on the importance of the glorious aquatic past of the city. In a time when water was not as immediately abundant as in later periods, the monuments constructed in the Forum Romanum are successful in their evocation of water, without actually displaying moving water.

The water-related programme of the monuments of the city centre of Rome, it could be argued, then set up a model for other Roman cities throughout the Empire. For example, the fountains of the city of Corinth in Greece have been presented by Betsey Robinson as ‘historiated’ water-displays, which during the Imperial period evoke the vibrant and robust mythical past of that city.⁷⁸ In Rome, however, the monuments of the Forum Romanum are able to provide the stimulus for passers-by to create memories associated with water, despite the lack of flowing water, as was the case in Corinth. The effective and suggestive use of water-related structures in the Forum Romanum helps to establish a foundation there wholly predicated on water, illustrating its importance to the city. Further, with the addition of the Imperial Fora and their new water-displays later, an ensemble of monuments throughout the centre of Rome is created that allows passers-by to associate the space and its structures with water – and its importance to the Roman state, society, and culture. Finally, with the prominence of the structures in the metaphysical topography of the city centre, those experiencing them formed memories that helped to create a shared sense of identity that could go beyond the city of Rome. The mythical and historical events celebrated in the Forum Romanum were part of the Roman ethos and identity – and could be tapped into empire-wide. The experience of these monuments in Rome provided a way in which the importance of water manifested itself in the built environment of the Roman world, whether or not water was actually flowing.

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Fig. 2: After Hopkins 2012, fig. 5.1.

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Fig. 8: After Meneghini – Santangeli Valenzani 2007, Fig. 15.

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⁷⁸ Robinson 2013. For more on water-displays in fora across the Empire, see Rogers 2018a, 180–183.

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