

POPE JULIUS II AND GAIUS JULIUS CAESAR:



The powerful, pliable past

By Trine Arlund Hass & Sine Grove Saxkjær*

This paper explores how the reputation and achievements of Gaius Julius Caesar were used to stage the della Rovere pope Julius II (1443–1513, pope from 1503). Assuming that the pontifical name to be more than merely an adequate translation of his given name, Giuliano, the paper first examines the role of Julius Caesar’s architectural plans in the building programme of Pope Julius II’s, next presents a reading of the eclogue “Damon” written by the Venetian humanist Andrea Navagero, suggesting that Navagero establishes Julius II as an emulated Caesar in his poem.¹

Although it is contested to what extent pope Julius II (papacy 1503–13) intentionally modelled himself after Gaius Julius Caesar, it is common knowledge that the model culture of his time was that of antiquity.² Renaissance patrons, princes, popes, generals, artists, architects etc. looked to persons and works of this period to find examples for themselves, their works, and deeds. In a context where the classical world was so in vogue, it is hard

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¹ Navagero would, in this case, not be the only one to explore this comparison. It is perhaps most famously explored as a means to criticize the pope in the dialogue *Julius exclusus*, attributed to Erasmus. Ferguson notes four instances of comparison with Caesar in the dialogue (lines 89, 423, 692, and 732) and further references its use in two of Erasmus’ letters (*Ep.* 205.38–39 and *Ep.* 262.2), as well as in “Epigramma Erasmi in Iulium II”, which Ferguson estimates was meant for Thomas Moore; Erasmus 1933, 36–37 and 68. For examples of flattering comparisons with Julius Caesar, see Stinger 1981 (Navagero’s “Damon” is not mentioned there).

² Notably Shaw underlines how suggested parallels between Julius II and Julius Caesar by others do not necessarily mean that Julius II himself intended any identification, and she makes the same claim for Alexander VI’s relationship to Alexander the Great (Shaw 2005, 43). On the other hand, Stinger simply calls Julius II “the ‘new Julius Caesar’” (and Leo X “the ‘new Augustus’”), Stinger 1998, xiv and similarly Temple 2011.

to imagine that Giuliano della Rovere chose the name Julius upon his election as pope without any intention to evoke allusions to his ancient namesake, especially considering the hostile relationship between him and Rodrigo Borgia, who as pope took the name Alexander VI (r. 1492–1503). Regardless of his personal considerations and reasons for choosing the name he did, it inspired comparisons between him and Caesar. In the following, we set out, in the spirit of the excursions of the Danish Academy in Rome, to bridge material and textual evidence in exploring parallels between Julius II and Julius Caesar.

Caesarean references in the Roman cityscape

We will begin our investigations of how the legacy of Gaius Julius Caesar was embedded into the public image of Pope Julius II by examining examples from Julius II's elaborate building programme. With this, the article follows a well-proven recipe borrowed from the Danish Academy's excursions, where Rome's architecture has often served as a steppingstone for further investigations of related textual evidence. What is more, the reference to Julius Caesar seems evident in the papal architecture under Julius II. Not unlike Julius Caesar himself,³ Julius II had far-reaching ambitions for Rome's urban layout. With Donato Bramante assigned as architect, Julius II initiated several widescale architectural projects, the most renowned being the Cortile del Belvedere, Palazzo dei Tribunali and the new St Peter's Basilica. In addition, several of these projects demonstrate how Bramante was a keen promoter of Julius II as a second Caesar.⁴

Taking the never completed Palazzo dei Tribunali as an example, its location on the west side of Via Giulia, approximately one third from its northern termination, makes a good starting point (see Figure 1).⁵ In fact, one of Bramante's lesser-known projects for Julius II was the creation of Via Giulia as one of two roughly parallel and rectilinear streets situated on opposite banks of the Tiber, Via Giulia and Via della Lungara. The street itself was likely based on an Imperial ideal. In general, there was very much interest during the Renaissance in the Roman triumph, its route and its canonical triumphator Julius Caesar.⁶ This interest is also reflected in contemporary art, one example being the work *The Triumphs of Caesar* (c. 1485–1505) by Andrea Mantegna. The series of nine paintings shows a single triumphal procession, culminating in the depicting of Julius Caesar on a

³ Liverani 2008.

⁴ Temple 2011, 2.

⁵ Temple 2006, 115, Fig. 7.2; Temple 2011, 94.

⁶ Gwynne (forthcoming) examines Julius II's use of the Roman triumph and portrayals of him as triumphator.

chariot passing in front of a triumphal arch.⁷ The lack of archaeological evidence, however, had hindered the identification of the ancient triumphal route, the reconstruction of which instead had to rely on written ancient accounts of various Roman triumphs. On this basis, Flavio Biondo had in his *De Roma Triumphante* from 1479 reconstructed the ancient Via Triumphalis from the Vatican to the Capitoline Hill, highlighting the principal buildings and monuments along its way.⁸ Reconstructions of ancient Roman topography dating from the time of Julius II furthermore suggest that Via Giulia was seen as a remodelling of the ancient Via Triumphalis,⁹ running parallel to part of its assumed course.¹⁰ It is likewise highly plausible that Via Giulia too was intended for ceremonial processions as it was the main north-south thoroughfare on the east bank of the Tiber. This potential ceremonial function is further indicated by the location of Palazzo dei Tribunali. The palace was commissioned by Julius II around 1506 and was the first real office building made since antiquity.¹¹ As one of Julius II's religious-political initiatives, Palazzo dei Tribunali was intended as a new place of lawgiving and justice, representing a unification of civic and canon law.¹² The project ended up being abandoned by Julius II after a few years, but it has been argued that had the project been realised, the planned square in front of Palazzo dei Tribunali would have become a new Forum Iulium.¹³ In fact, Arnaldo Bruschi suggests that the square was directly based on Imperial models such as Augustus' Forum,¹⁴ while Nicholas Temple draws a parallel between the square and its adjacent developments and Julius Caesar's Forum with his rebuilding of the Curia.¹⁵ What is more, one could argue that since Julius Caesar's Forum became a benchmark for the architectural display of imperial power and set the standard for the later Imperial Fora, this is two sides of the same coin. Either way, at the time when Palazzo dei Tribunali was commissioned, Julius Caesar's Forum lay deserted as part of a swamp area, colloquially known as *i Pantani*, which had developed since the eleventh century, when the medieval occupation of the site had been abandoned.¹⁶ The

⁷ See the site of the Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/52/collection/403966/the-triumphs-of-caesar-9-caesar-on-his-chariot>, 10 January 2022.

⁸ Temple 2011, 38–40.

⁹ Temple 2006, 113–114.

¹⁰ Temple 2011, 38, Fig. 2.3.

¹¹ Frommel 1986, 51.

¹² Temple 2011, 94.

¹³ Frommel 1986, 53.

¹⁴ Bruschi 1969, 600.

¹⁵ Temple 2006, 116.

¹⁶ Meneghini 2017; Jacobsen *et al.* 2021, 38.

urbanisation of the Caesar's Forum area was not initiated until 1548, when the Della Valle family, who owned land, obtained authorization to open new roads, leading to the establishment of the Quartiere Alessandrino.¹⁷ The architectural layout of Julius Caesar's Forum was likewise known from the written sources, which also report on its intended function. This is of special interest in relation to Palazzo dei Tribunali, as the Tabularium would otherwise seem to have been the strongest ancient influence for Bramante's palazzo in terms of function and symbolism.¹⁸ Still, if we look at e.g. Appian's description of Julius Caesar's Forum (App. *B Civ.* 2.102), its function within the sphere of justice is highlighted:

ἀνέστησε καὶ τῇ Γενετείρᾳ τὸν νεῶν, ὥσπερ εὐξάτο μέλλων ἐν Φαρσάλῳ μαχεῖσθαι: καὶ τέμενος τῷ νεῷ περιέθηκεν, ὃ Ῥωμαίοις ἔταξεν ἀγορὰν εἶναι, οὐ τῶν ὀνίων, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πράξεσι συνιόντων ἐς ἀλλήλους, καθὰ καὶ Πέρσαις ἦν τις ἀγορὰ ζητοῦσιν ἢ μανθάνουσι τὰ δίκαια.

He [Julius Caesar] also erected the temple to Venus Genetrix, as he had vowed when about to do battle at Pharsalus, and laid out a precinct around the temple which he specified as a forum for the Roman people, not for buying and selling, but as a meeting place for the transaction of public business, like the Persians had a meeting place for those seeking justice, or wanting to find out about it.¹⁹

Accordingly, Julius Caesar's Forum had a dual religious-civic purpose as a place for worship as well as a place for lawsuits and public speeches, mirroring how Julius Caesar was both the religious and political leader of ancient Rome. This is not unlike Julius II, who was likewise Rome's secular and religious ruler,²⁰ adding further support to Palazzo dei Tribunali with its piazza being planned as a new Forum Iulium.

An even more direct reference to Julius Caesar is found within the Vatican itself, more specifically in the design of the new St Peter's Basilica and the Vatican obelisk. The red granite obelisk, known as St Peter's Needle, was the only obelisk in Rome to have remained standing since Antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages.²¹ Since the obelisk is without any hieroglyphic inscriptions, its dating and original use is unknown. In contrast, its life within a Roman context is documented by its two inscriptions. After Augustus' conquest of Egypt, the obelisk was set up by the prefect Cornelius Gallus in the Forum Iulium in Alexandria. This is recorded in the obelisk's first

¹⁷ Meneghini 2009, 237–238.

¹⁸ Temple 2011, 104.

¹⁹ Translated by McGing 2020.

²⁰ Temple 2006, 116.

²¹ Osborne 2003, 280; 2006, 100.

inscription, situated on its base. This inscription was created with bronze letters, and while the letters are long lost, it has been possible to make a reconstruction of the inscription based on the holes drilled to attach the letters.²² The obelisk's second inscription, still visible today, was created during the reign of Tiberius or, less likely, Caligula.²³ This dedication honours the deified Augustus, son of the deified Julius Caesar, and the emperor Tiberius, son of deified Augustus:²⁴ "DIVO CAESARI DIVI IVLII F AVGVSTO TI CAESARI DIVI AVGVSTI F AVGVSTO SACRVM". From Pliny the Elder (Plin. *Nat.* 16, 76), we know that Caligula had the obelisk transported to Rome in 37 AD, where it was set up on the *spina* of the circus he was building on Mons Vaticanus, later to be completed by Nero. From the time of Constantine the Great, a shrine or a church stood near the site, while the Old St Peter's Basilica was erected in the fourth century and the construction of the present St Peter's Basilica initiated by Pope Julius II in 1506. However, Caligula's original positioning of the obelisk remained unchanged until 1586; accordingly, it stood adjacent to the south flank of St Peter's Basilica. In 1586, the obelisk was moved by Pope Sixtus V to its present location in the centre of the St Peter's square (see Figure 2).²⁵

The name "St Peter's Needle" is known from medieval texts, probably emerging due to the obelisk's location close to St Peter's Basilica as well as the belief that St Peter had suffered his martyrdom in Nero's Circus.²⁶ The obelisk was, however, also imbued with a different memory. During the Middle Ages, it was widely believed to be the tomb of Julius Caesar. While a misinterpretation of the above-cited inscription – "DIVO CAESARI DIVI IVLII" – has been suggested as the reason behind this identification, its origin is unknown.²⁷ Among the earliest known sources to make this identification is a bull (*Convenit Apostolico Moderamini*) of Pope Leo IX, dating to 1053, in which the obelisk is used as a landmark and denoted as the "agulia quae vocatur Sepulcrum Iulii Cesaris" (the Needle which is called the tomb of Julius Caesar).²⁸ In the twelfth-century pilgrim's guidebook *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, the obelisk is described as "memoria Caesaris, id est agulia" (memorial of Caesar, which is to say the Needle).²⁹ The term *augulia* is believed to be a corruption of *acus Iulia*, i.e. "Julian needle". In *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, the bronze sphere situated on top of the obelisk is furthermore

²² Magi 1963, 50–56.

²³ Iversen 1965.

²⁴ *CIL* VI, 31191.

²⁵ Osborne 2006, 99.

²⁶ Osborne 2003, 282.

²⁷ Osborne 2006, 101.

²⁸ Osborne 2003, 282, n. 26; Anonymi 1752 22–27.

²⁹ Nichols 1889.

described as a *sarcophagus*.³⁰ A description is likewise found in *De mirabilibus urbis Romae*, written by Magister Gregorius in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, this time the obelisk being equated with a pyramid:

There are many pyramids in Rome, but of all of them the one which deserves the greatest admiration is the pyramid of Julius Caesar, made from a single porphyry block. It is indeed a marvel how a block of stone of such height could have been cut, or have been raised, or remain standing; for they say that its height is 250 feet. At the top there is a bronze sphere, in which Julius Caesar's ashes and bones are deposited.³¹

The idea that the bronze sphere contained the ashes of Julius Caesar remained intact until 1586, when the orb was taken down in connection with the relocation of the obelisk and proven not to contain any human remains.³² During the papacy of Julius II, however, the obelisk was still believed to be the final resting place of Julius Caesar. As mentioned above, Julius II initiated the construction of the present St Peter's Basilica with Bramante as architect, his design proposals remaining subject to scholarly debate.³³ Bramante's initial proposal is recorded in two accounts: Giles of Viterbo, a sixteenth-century Augustinian friar and humanist, and Onofrio Panvinio, a sixteenth-century commentator.³⁴ This proposal is of special interest in terms of Julius II being a second Caesar. According to Giles of Viterbo, Bramante suggested to Julius II that the new St Peter's Basilica should be rotated ninety degrees, i.e. on the north-south axis, so that its entrance would face the obelisk, which he referred to as "the monument of Julius Caesar".³⁵ An important feature of Bramante's design was the tomb of Julius II that should be placed within the choir of the basilica, thus entailing that the tomb would be on axis with altar, St Peter's tomb and the obelisk.³⁶ In Giles of Viterbo's account, Julius II rejected the proposal of reorienting the church as he forbade the movement of things "which ought not to be moved", while in Onofrio Panvinio's description he did not reject the proposal right away, but had a model of it made.³⁷ In the end, the new St Peter's Basilica maintained the orientation of the old, while the tomb of Julius II, begun by Michelangelo in 1505, was not

³⁰ Temple 2011, 180; Osborne 2006, 101.

³¹ Gregorius 1970; Osborne 1987, 34.

³² Pigafetta 1586.

³³ See e.g. Klodt 1992; Frommel 1994; Tronzo 2005.

³⁴ Temple 2006, 123.

³⁵ Osborne 2003, 283; Shaw 2005, 49; Giles of Viterbo, *Historia viginti saeculorum*, Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, lat. 502, fol. 194r.

³⁶ Frommel 1994, 401.

³⁷ Temple 2006, 123; Temple 2011, 185.

completed until 1545 on a much reduced scale and ended up being situated in the Basilica di San Pietro in Vincoli on the Esquiline Hill.

Caesarean subtexts in Navagero's eclogue "Damon"

Returning to the sustained interest in the Roman triumph, manifested e.g. in the Bramante's design of Via Giulia and Palazzo dei Tribunali, this may be reflected in contemporary literature as well. The Venetian humanist Andrea Navagero (1483–1529) composed the eclogue "Damon" in celebration of Julius II's triumph over the French, who left Italy during the summer of 1512. Regarding Julius II's possible imitation and use of Julius Caesar in his self-fashioning, Temple pays special attention to Julius II's triumph over the Gauls and considers if he is hinting at Caesar's Gallic triumph and Camillus, the first dictator to take up war against the Gauls and the first to perform a triumph:

This threefold relationship could be said to support an underlying theme that permeates the Festa di Agone procession of 1513, namely, *Italianità*. Understood as an early form of Italian consciousness, *Italianità* was propagated in the Renaissance by the desire to re-establish the Italian peninsula as a major political and religious focus centered on papal Rome.³⁸

In the following, it will be explored if the eclogue "Damon" can be understood to follow the same idea. The normative collection of Vergil's ten eclogues features poems understood (in the similarly canonical readings traceable to the commentaries of Donatus and Servius) as celebrations of Caesar (esp. eclogue 5) as well as Augustus (esp. eclogue 1). Navagero's "Damon" does not meticulously follow either of them throughout, but we must ask ourselves if the choice of the eclogue as form alone would not have ignited a spark of expectation in contemporary readers to encounter creative uses of these canonical poems and their well-known imagery, including parallelization of Julius II and Julius Caesar.

Alice Wilson has edited, commented, and translated Andrea Navagero's eclogue "Damon", poem number 20 in her edition of his work *Lusus*.³⁹ Wilson's commentary deals with the relationship of "Damon" to the genre on a general rather than textual level, but she does find that the "Damon" draws on Vergil's eclogues 6 (in vv. 33, 70) and 1 (in vv. 40–41). She furthermore mentions Vergil's eclogue 3 as model for including holiday games and Vergil's eclogue 8 as source of the name used as the title, "Damon". For our particular purpose, that is, searching specifically for parallels between Julius

³⁸ Temple 2006, 117.

³⁹ Navagero 1973.

II and Julius Caesar, we will be looking for similarities between Navagero's "Damon" and Vergil's eclogue 5. In the latter, according to tradition, the death of Julius Caesar, called Daphnis in the poem, is mourned by the shepherd Mopsus in the poem's first part and his apotheosis celebrated in the second by the shepherd Menalcas. But first an introduction to the poem and how Julius is introduced in it.

Navagero does not reveal straight away that this is a panegyric eclogue honouring Julius II. In an initial address of the Naucelidian nymphs, the object of song is anonymous (v. 3). Next follows a longer description of the gloomy, sorrowful, and fearful landscape of Northern Italy, suffering from the threat coming from the Alps (vv. 7–33). There is talk of the enemy making the area their plunder, of how flocks had been taken away and houses of the locals burned down. The grass stopped growing and even the rural deities were in hiding if they had not fled. In the end, the enemy had made sure there was nowhere anyone could escape to – even shepherds sleeping out on the rocks were chased away, causing some to attempt crossing waters although unaccustomed to the ocean. The pastoral *locus amoenus* is turned into a *locus terribilis*:

[...] et litore curvo
Pro viridi cytiso, pro molli graminis herba,
Et spinis paliuri, et acuta carice pastae
Potarunt salsas nitidis pro fontibus undas:
Et saepe irati timuerunt murmura ponti.

and on the curving beach, in place of green clover they fed on spiny thorn, and on sharp sedge instead of soft grass-shoots, and drank salt water instead of glistening springs, and feared the roar of the angry sea.⁴⁰

The hero stopping the enemy's plunder and raging is introduced while simultaneously describing a worst-case scenario of what would have happened, had he not come down from the Olympus:

Quod si non novus ex alto demissus olympo
Hanc cladem nostris deus avertisset ab oris:
Ausoniis esset nullus iam pastor in agris.
Nos miseri patria extorres, rerum omnium egeni
Ah dolor, externas longe erraremus ad urbes.
Hic nobis dulces saltus, hic pascua nota
Restituit: tutique inquit iam pascite tauros:

⁴⁰ Vv. 28–32. This and all subsequent translations of Navagero's "Damon" are by Wilson (Navagero 1973).

Iam solitas tuti collo suspendite avenas:
Et desueta diu responent carmina colles.

And if a new god, sent down from high Olympus, had not driven this scourge from our shores, there would not be a shepherd in Ausonian fields. Driven wretched from our land, destitute of everything – Ah, what sorrow! – we would be wandering far to foreign cities. He restored to us our sweet woodland pasture and our familiar meadows, and said, ‘Now graze your cattle in safety, now safely hang the accustomed pipe from your neck, and let the hills echo to a long unpractised song’.⁴¹

The excellent heaven-sent saviour shines brighter on the austere background. The passage clearly draws on Vergil’s first and most famous eclogue where Tityrus’ turmoil is ended by the god in the city, declaring that Tityrus should let his flock grass as before.⁴² Defining the saviour as *novus* suggests that like Navagero’s eclogue is one in a line of tradition, so is the saviour he celebrates. Finally, in the third address in v. 45, his name is spoken in an emphatic line thrice repeating the personal pronoun in the vocative, thus miming the worship of the land:

Magne pater: nostrisque diu cantabere silvis.
Te rupes, te saxa, cavae te maxime Iuli
Convalles, nemorumque frequens iterabit imago.

For this, all the shepherds will perform sacred rites for you, great father, as for Apollo and for Pan, on set days each year, and your praises will long be sung in our woods. The cliffs, the rocks, the hollow valleys, and the frequent echo of the groves will repeat your name, great Julius.⁴³

From here on, the eclogue effectively celebrates Julius, promising yearly pastoral celebrations with libations and singing competitions. The narrator furthermore promises that Damon – famous enough, apparently, to need no introduction except that he was trained by Sebetian Aegon – will sing tunes he has learned from the singer Aegon. The example mentioned is a song about Venus, which we shall return to below. In another exclamation addressing Julius – this time as *pater* – the narrator wishes his own skills were comparable to Damon’s but nonetheless promises to sing only of Julius. He hopes to do so in a manner that will be found worthy of Julius’ triumph (“*digna triumphis tuis*”), believing that the worthiness of the subject has the ability to make his song second to none, rising above even the songs of

⁴¹ Vv. 37–41.

⁴² Wilson notes that especially v. 39 alludes to Vergil’s first eclogue, Navagero 1973, 86.

⁴³ Vv. 44–46.

Daphnis. To conclude, the narrator begs Julius to lend an ear to the songs as well as to keep the peace established by him.

If we look at the tricolon introduction of Julius II in the poem, it begins rather anonymously in an initial address of the Naucelidian nymphs where the object of song and praise is presented merely as “quem canimus” (v. 3). Wilson’s translation reveals that she here senses a similarity to the suspended introduction of the protagonist of the *Aeneid* since her translation “...worthy of the man I sing” echoes Dryden’s translation of *Aeneid* 1.1 “Arms and the man I sing”. The second mentioning of Julius is the likewise adjectival “novus ex alto demissus olympo” (v. 33) mentioned above. Besides capturing how Julius as Vicar of Christ is Christ’s emissary on earth, it is noteworthy how his “journey” is contrary to Caesar’s: while Caesar was raised to the stars, Julius has been put on earth by those in the Heavens. Finally, in the third colon, he is addressed directly, first as *magne pater* (v. 44), and since (v. 45) with an adjectival qualification: *maxime Iule*, which of course means ‘greatest Julius’, but given that the name is an adjective denouncing members of the *gens Julia* may be taken to imply also that he is the greatest of the Julians. Consequently, in the presentation of Julius in the poem, we may see a reference to Aeneas, founding father of the Roman and pre-founder of Rome, an emulative play on the deified Julius Caesar, in that this new Julian has been placed on Earth by the Heavens while the old Julian was given a place there upon his death. Lastly, in the culminating address, we have the confirmation that he is the greatest of Julians – that he embodies their finest deeds and adds further glory to the name. The narrator’s celebration of him echoes Vergil’s eclogue 1, as pointed out by Wilson. The “new god, sent down from high Olympus” must have reminded the readers of the god in the city of Vergil’s eclogue 1, who secured peace and restored to Tityrus his lands.⁴⁴ In fact, the entire dichotomy of the horrors caused by war and plunder set against the new peace established by the divine hero celebrated follows the logic of Vergil’s poem can be seen to reflect Vergil’s first eclogue. However, Navagero’s organization of his poem in a first part dwelling on the gloomy aspects and a second, which is positive and celebratory, also resembles the structure of Vergil’s eclogue five. Vergil’s poem falls in two parts comprising Menalcas’ and Mopsus’ songs respectively. Of these Menalcas mourns Daphnis’ passing – and describes how the entire landscape does too – while Mopsus celebrates his ascension to heaven, and the mood thus changes from sad in Menalcas’ to quite joyful in Mopsus.’

Besides from the change in mood, “Damon” is structured by the use of direct address. So far, we have treated the initial evoking of the nymphs and

⁴⁴ Navagero vv. 34–40; Navagero 1973, 86.

the evocations of Julius II. In the passage describing ways in which he will celebrate Julius, the narrator promises songs by Damon, gives an example, and finally addresses Damon, expressing admiration and respect for his skills and education. Like in Vergil's eclogue 6, Navagero's Damon has learned from an even greater master, Aegon.⁴⁵ In contrast, the narrator takes a humble approach to his own abilities, as mentioned earlier, yet has faith that the chosen topic will make his songs eminent. The address and the passage including Damon's song thus becomes an indirect contest between Damon and the anonymous narrator – or Navagero and Castiglione, whom Damon is found to represent.

The topic of Damon's song (vv. 72–84) is Venus' (*dea* – a goddess) love of Adonis (*Assyrius pastor* – an Assyrian shepherd) and how she preferred him to everyone else. It contains a repeated address of Adonis using the phrase *fortunate puer* (fortunate youth, vv. 75, 81), borrowed from Vergil's eclogue 5.49. In Vergil's poem, the boy referred to is Mopsus, the singer who sings of Daphnis' apotheosis. There, the exclamation expresses Menalchas' recognition of Mopsus' skill and song, thus confirming his abilities as a singer. In Navagero's poem, the young Adonis is declared to fortunate since Venus shears and milks his sheep with him and scorns everyone else, even Mars who "wastes away with useless love of the goddess".⁴⁶ Venus' only care is for young Adonis, and she stays with him in his humble environment.

As in the case of the staging of Julius, the narrative of Adonis and Venus has a Christian and a classical layer. Adonis, the god who died, has been used as an allegory of Christ, just like Venus of the Virgin Mary.⁴⁷ In the classical context, it is noteworthy that we encounter here the mythical ancestress of the Julians celebrated by Julius Caesar, perhaps most notably by vowing a temple to her on the Forum Iulium. Mars too is a Julian ancestor, and the idleness of the god of war is, of course, appropriate to the theme of "Damon". If we are to interpret the song of Damon in relation to a staging of Julius II as a second, amended Caesar, it could be seen as a way of showing Julius' devotion to keeping the peace: the divine ancestress is doting her affection on the shepherd rather than the war god, meaning that war skills are at hand, but employed only when needed, not cultivated per se. Stress is on cultivation the

⁴⁵ Grant 1965, 332–333 suggests that Damon is the mask of Baldassare Castiglione and that Aegon (v. 70), said to have trained Damon in the art of singing and whom Damon has often listened to, is the mask of Giovanni Pontano, Navagero 1973, 87.

⁴⁶ V. 80: "At Mars ipse deae cura tabescit inani".

⁴⁷ Caruso 2017 examines the role of Adonis in bucolic poetry, including Navagero's "Damon", suggesting an interpretation drawing on Ovid's treatment of Adonis and Venus in *Met.* 10.532–357 (section 13–15 in the open online edition).

virtues of Christ, the ideal shepherd who rules and works in a paradisiac landscape of peace and harmony.

The narrator's address to Damon, clearly the mastersinger of this local environment, leads to the conclusion of the poem summarized above, which includes the aforementioned reflection on his own skills. By feeling confident to rival Daphnis when singing of Julius, the narrator introduces Vergil's Daphnis in another capacity than the one we have treated until now: in eclogue 5, Daphnis is the deceased mastersinger interpreted by tradition as a mask of Julius Caesar, but Daphnis is also *the* mastersinger of the bucolic universe in general, in Vergil's (cf. also eclogues 7 and 8) as well as Theocritus' works (esp. idyll 1). It is the narrator, Navagero, who competes with Daphnis in the poem; we might have expected Daphnis to represent Julius, but we have been told already long ago that he is Julius maximus. Thus, elegantly, this Julian is not Daphnis but works in the same way as a modern muse, enabling his worshipper to become larger than the classical mastersinger by singing his praise.

The title of the collection of poems, to which "Damon" pertains, is *Lusus*, and Navagero's way of relating to the classical namesake of his protagonist is just that, playful. Rather than presenting a straightforward casting of Julius II as a new, Christian Caesar, he is presented as the greatest Julius or Julian, and we are presented with various elements in the mythological staging used by the Julians – Caesar and Augustus – not pinpointed directly to Julius II's narrative but definitely relatable, while also given a Christian dimension. Julius II is inscribed in the Julian narrative, or is the Julian narrative inscribed in that of Julius?

Concluding remarks

It is well known that Dante, in the *Commedia divina*, placed Caesar's murderers alongside Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ – literally showing them off as the worst human beings ever. Dante thereby also confirms the premise on which this paper builds, that the vicar of Christ, by overtaking the seat and position of the Roman emperors, is intrinsically linked to them – even after the donation of Constantine had been proved to be a forgery. In the case of Julius II, we see that not only Caesar's military skills are a welcome association. The triumphant way, used as it was by Caesar as well as so many others, to make manifest their accomplishments, strength, and splendour, may have appeared to Julius II as a useful backdrop for religious processions, giving them an extra dimension. Likewise, it seems he did not lose sight of Caesar's role as a reformer. The grand plan of how his own funerary monument would be fitted into an architectural narrative about succession, including the funerary monuments of Julius Caesar as well as St

Peter clearly indicate his eye for both how the past was useful as a means to construct his own image and how he would maintain it in his afterlife. Navagero's playful emulation of Vergil's allegorical handling of Caesar's death as well as his celebration of Augustus is tuned in to comply with and confirm this narrative. This Julian has not been raised to the heavens (yet) but placed on earth to do the work of the heavenly father. The ancient Julian narratives used in the consolidation of Caesar's position are flexible enough for them to become part of the consolidation of Julius II as a religious bringer of peace, albeit with military means, just like his ancient namesake. To Julius and those furthering his image – from Navagero, Michelangelo and Bramante – the past was a useful and powerful yet pliable example.

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Illustrations

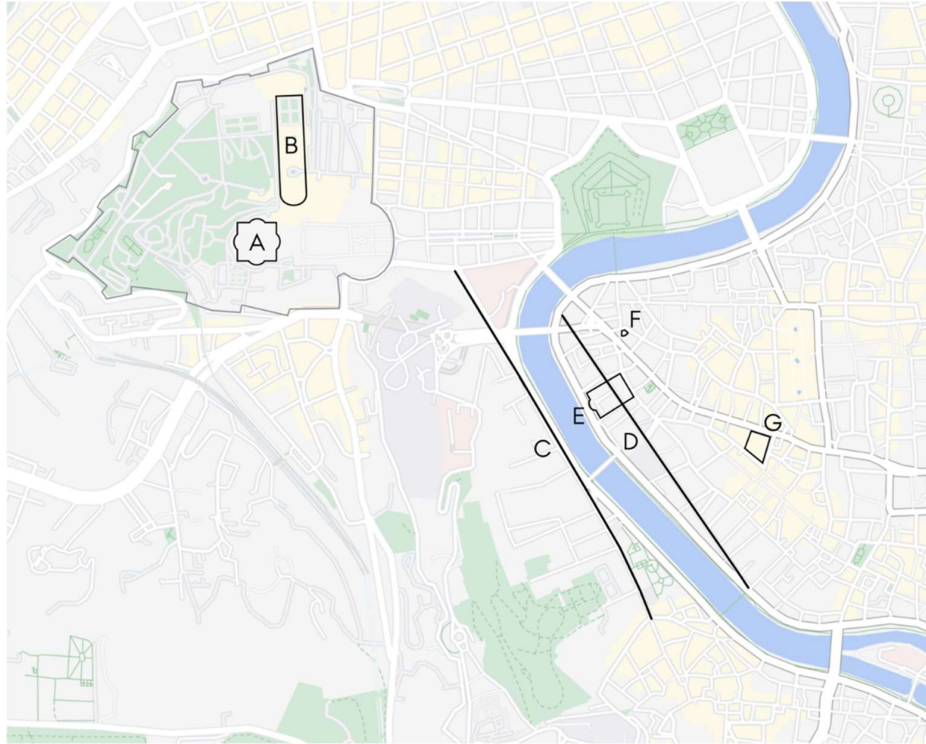


Fig. 1: Map of modern Rome with the principal urban and architectural developments under pope Julius II indicated. A: St Peter's Basilica; B: Cortile del Belvedere; C: Via della Lungara; D: Via Giulia; E: Palazzo dei Tribunali; F: Papal Zecca; G: Palazzo della Cancelleria. (Illustration by Sine Grove Saxkjær)

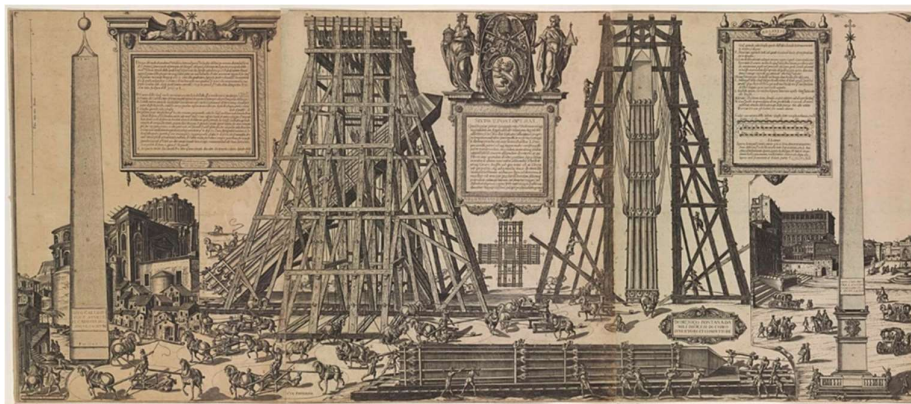


Fig. 2: The engraving from 1586 by Natale Bonifacio da Sebenico shows the movement of the obelisk to its current position on the St Peter's square. (Rijksmuseum, Public domain, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/search/objects?set=RP-P-OB-207.580#/RP-P-OB-207.580,0>)

