Given the huge size and highly ambitious scope of his later works, Fabretti’s three dissertations on the aqueducts in the *De aquis* are hardly to be considered the primary achievement of his scholarly career. But this early publication must be considered the most significant of all his writings: as the first serious topographical study focused on the aqueducts of the ancient city, it had enormous influence on all later scholarship on the subject.

Fabretti’s dissertations appear to have become a standard topographical reference soon after their publication. Certainly, they were read and quickly became controversial in the scholarly world. In a digression in his third dissertation (III.6), Fabretti severely attacked the Dutch scholar Jacob Gronovius for an emendation of Livy recently published in his *Epistolae in quibus multa Titi Livii loca geographica emendantur et illustrantur* (Amsterdam, 1678). Gronovius published a sharply polemical reply, *Responsio ad cavillationes Raphaelis Fabretti* (Leiden, 1684), to which Fabretti counterreplied under his Arcadian pastoral name, as “Iasitheus Naftsius,” in an equally spirited polemical treatise, *Isathei ad Grunnovium apologema, in eiusque Titilivitia sive somnia de Tito Livio animadversiones* (Naples, 1686).1

Such scholarly controversy, while in many ways typical of the learned

world in the seventeenth century, is clear indication that Fabretti's work was being noted—and not simply in Roman circles. All three dissertations were included in Johannes Graevius's massive twelve-volume collection of treatises on Roman civilization, the *Thesaurus antiquitatum romanarum congestus* (Venice, 1732). Just forty years after its initial publication, Fabretti's work was cited frequently by Giovanni Poleni in his famous edition and commentary on Frontinus, *Sex. Iulii Frontini de Aquaeductibus Urbis Romae Commentarius* (Padua, 1722); Poleni also directly reproduces many of Fabretti's figures in his commentary. The *De aquis* was also cited repeatedly by Alberto Cassio in his *Corso dell'acque antiche* (Rome, 1756–57).

Fabretti's dissertations were reissued in a second edition published by Natale Barbiellini in the late eighteenth century (Rome, 1788), with extensive footnotes added by an unidentified commentator. Included in this second edition was a map of the Roman *suburbium* originally published in the *Ad Grunnovium apologema* and intended for Fabretti's study of the Roman *suburbium* still unfinished at the time of his death. The notes of Barbiellini's edition are, however, primarily bibliographical, with virtually no discussion of topographical problems. Because later topographers of Rome and the *suburbium* focused on subjects other than the aqueducts, Fabretti's treatise remained the single most important study of Rome's water system until Rodolfo Lanciani published his monumental commen-

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3. Poleni (26) writes: “Ilhad tamen praetermittere non possum, quod pertinet ad Dissertations de Aquaeductibus Raphaellis Fabretti; quippe quia mihi haud medio lumen attulere: etsi enim Fabrettus illustrare Frontini commentarium sibi non praeposuerat; attamen, cum res multas ex reliquis antiquitatis summa cura vestigatas, incredibili diligentia mensuris definatas, bono in lumine collocaverit, ope earundem facilius deinde fuit etiam quaedam a Frontino tradita exponere atque illustrare. Sane ille suppediavit nonnullas figuras singulari side delineatas, quas si non habuissemus ab illo, comparare tamen nobis ad institutum nostrum, debuissemus” [I cannot omit the following observation pertinent to Fabretti's dissertations on the aqueducts, since they have brought considerable illumination to me. Although Fabretti had not planned a commentary on Frontinus, nevertheless, since he brought to light many things from ancient remains, researched with the greatest care and measured with incredible diligence, it has been considerably easier to set forth and illustrate certain things handed down by our author. Indeed, Fabretti has furnished us some figures rendered with extraordinary accuracy; if we had not had them as a result of his work, we would have had to prepare them for our own undertaking].

4. The publisher, in his dedication to Pope Pius VI, describes Fabretti's treatise as "longo temporis intervallo perrarum sane, et emunctae naris viris iamdudum optatum" [quite rare and long sought by men of refinement] (Barbiellini, vi), but he does not identify the author of the notes. See Ashby, 2 n. 2 (20 n. 13).

5. The map appears opposite p. 90 in the second edition. See Ashby, 3 n. 3 (21 n. 19).
tary on Frontinus’s treatise *De aquaeductu urbis Romae* in the late nineteenth century.  

Much of Fabretti’s achievement in the *De aquis* is owed to his extensive learning and firsthand knowledge of the Roman Campagna, combined with a highly original approach to his topic. Before he published his *De aquis*, there had been relatively little scholarly interest in the water system of ancient Rome; indeed, the attention the ancient aqueducts had received was largely practical, as a result of ongoing efforts to repair existing conduits to supply water needs of the growing city of Rome in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Pope Nicholas V had begun the process of repairing the conduits, having first undertaken the reconstruction of an ancient Roman aqueduct in his restoration of the Aqua Virgo in 1453, a project completed only after eighty years, in 1570, under Pius V.  

Less than twenty years later, Sixtus V tapped the sources of the ancient Aqua Alexandrina to introduce his own Acqua Felice to the hills of Rome, thus opening higher elevations in the eastern regions of the city for residential development.  

In the early seventeenth century, Paul V reworked the ancient Aqua Traiana as the Acqua Paola to bring water to the Janiculum, with branches to Trastevere and the Vatican.  

Scholarly interest in the aqueducts was certainly not lacking, but it was primarily philological in its approach, focusing on the text of Frontinus’s *De aquaeductu*. In 1425, the book hunter Poggio Bracciolini had discovered at Monte Cassino the oldest surviving manuscript of Frontinus’s commentary on Rome’s water system, written in A.D. 97 when Frontinus began his service as *curator aquarum* under Nerva; Poggio’s manuscript was a copy made by the twelfth-century scholar and writer Peter the Deacon around

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9. The papal inscriptions on the terminal fountain of the Acqua Paola and Arco del Tiradivoli over the Via Aurelia Antica wrongly identify the water as that of the Aqua Alsietina, an observation made by Fabretti himself twice in the *De aquis* (I.4g, II.4a). On the Acqua Paola, see C. Cancellieri, “L’acquedotto Paolo (sec. XVII–XX),” in Trionfo, 225–31.  
10. Poleni (25–26) provides a comprehensive but surprisingly short list of writers who had treated the subject up to the eighteenth century (“De scriptoribus rerum ad Aquaeductus pertinentium”), dividing them into three main groups: (1) those interested in legal matters, (2) architectural writers, and (3) students of *opera Romana* (Roman construction).
the year 1130. The editio princeps of Frontinus’s treatise, based on a fifteenth-century copy of this manuscript, appeared in Rome in 1489, together with the text of Vitruvius; a second edition, published in 1513 by Giovanni Giocondo in Florence, inspired later publications of it throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries, many of them combined with Vitruvius’s treatise on architecture.¹¹

There was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a renewed general interest in the antiquities and ruins of ancient Rome, which had become a popular destination for collectors and artists in search of classical culture, as well as pilgrims visiting the seat of the church. A well-established tradition of publications about the city existed from late antiquity through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. These works made little attempt to be systematic or scientific in their descriptions of the ancient monuments until the fifteenth century, when Poggio Bracciolini’s *Historiae de fortunae varietate libri quatuor* (Rome, 1448), in an advance over earlier guidebooks, presented detailed descriptions of many of the city’s antiquities, and when Flavio Biondo’s *Roma instaurata* (Verona, 1481–82) introduced a truly systematic approach to the topography of ancient Rome; Biondo’s work was not superseded until the publication of Bartolomeo Marliani’s *Antiquae Romae topographia libri septem* in 1534.¹²

In the sixteenth century, the prominent antiquarian and cartographer Pirro Ligorio (ca. 1513–83) had included notices on water and aqueducts in his encyclopedic volumes on classical antiquity,¹³ but the only scholarly treatment focusing on the aqueducts themselves, *De aquis*, *in urbem Romam olim influentibus* (Venice, 1576) by Aldus Manutius II, was a sketchy account presenting little more than a summary of Frontinus and other literary sources and citations of a few well-known inscriptions.¹⁴ Justus Lipsius had included a chapter on the aqueducts in his *Admiranda sive de magnitudine Romana libri quattuor* (Antwerp, 1617), which was essentially a


¹². For a review of earlier topographical study, see EHCA, 550–55 (C. Sperling); Richardson, xxii–xxiv.

¹³. For a review of Ligorio’s career and publications, see EHCA, 686–82 (R. W. Gaston).

collection of quotations from Pliny, Strabo, Cassiodorus, Procopius, and Frontinus.\textsuperscript{15} This was the approach currently in vogue when Fabretti tackled the problem.

In the early seventeenth century, several highly influential guidebooks on ancient Rome appeared. *Roma vetus ac recens* (1638) by the Jesuit Alessandro Donati (1584–1640) and *Roma antica*, a large and enormously popular description of the city by Famiano Nardini (d. 1661) published posthumously in 1666, combined extensive quotations of ancient texts with accounts of ancient ruins in their present state, as well as later buildings in the modern city. However, these recently published works said relatively little about the water system of ancient Rome. Donati included in his guidebook a brief chapter on the aqueducts, focusing mainly on a discussion of the Aqua Virgo, remains of which had been discovered during construction of the Church of S. Ignazio; his treatment of the other lines was much more cursory.\textsuperscript{16} Nardini’s book, comprised of more than five hundred pages, followed an organization based on the fourteen regions of the ancient city, using the regional boundaries as topographical markers. Nardini devoted only a short section to the aqueducts of ancient Rome, citing Frontinus and well-known inscriptions, such as those at the Porta Maggiore.\textsuperscript{17}

Lacking at this time was a systematic study of the Roman Campagna. Lucas Holste, the German librarian of the Vatican Library, had corrected and updated the topographical work of his mentor Philip Clüver in *Annotationes*, published posthumously in 1666.\textsuperscript{18} Even more recently, the famous Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher had completed an illustrated historical and topographical account of Latium, *Latium: Id est, nova et parallela Latii tum veteris tum novi descriptio* (Amsterdam, 1671). Fabretti cites both of these works and criticizes them severely in the *De aquis* and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{19} Holste had also collated the Monte Cassino manuscript of Frontinus and had prepared an annotated edition of the *De aquaeductu*, which was never published after his death in 1661.\textsuperscript{20}
Fabretti’s three dissertations certainly draw from earlier scholarship. Indeed, the *De aquis* in many ways constitutes a dialogue with other antiquarians and scholars; the author demonstrates his familiarity and dissatisfaction with the works of his predecessors and contemporaries, as well as detailed knowledge of Frontinus and other ancient sources. But Fabretti’s work also marks a significant advance in modern topographical study of the aqueducts and the Roman Campagna itself. Intended for a scholarly audience, rather than the casual reader or visitor to the city, each dissertation focuses on a particular topographical problem concerning the aqueduct system. A brief review shows that the three sections of the *De aquis* were planned as individual monographs, perhaps originally presented for informal presentation as they were individually completed, but also intended to complement each other when issued as a finished publication.

**Dissertation I**

The first dissertation in the *De aquis*, the shortest but most important of the three dissertations therein, treats the route and purpose of the ancient Aqua Alexandrina, the last of the ancient conduits introduced by Alexander Severus into Rome in A.D. 226. This aqueduct seems to have been of particular interest to Fabretti because Sixtus V had tapped its sources in the late sixteenth century to supply his Acqua Felice, the introduction of which made possible the urban development of Rome in the seventeenth century. Although Fabretti credits his colleague Adrien Auzout with identification of the Aqua Alexandrina itself, Fabretti’s dissertation presents the earliest full discussion of the line (I.2), along with a detailed map of its route through the Roman Campagna (fig. 2), and demonstrates that the Alexandrina was a conduit separate from the nine aqueducts listed by Frontinus and from the other major imperial line, the Aqua Traiana of A.D. 109 (I.3). In his discussion of the sources of the Alexandrina, Fabretti also takes the opportunity to correct the recently published topographical work of Lucas Holste (I.7).

The first dissertation makes several other significant contributions to our understanding of the water system and topography of ancient Rome. First, it establishes the conduit levels at the Porta Maggiore and elsewhere within the city (I.4a, I.5). Fabretti appears to have been the first scholar to examine systematically the individual elevations of the aqueducts entering...
the city at Spes Vetus, thereby establishing the relative height of each (fig. 7). Although the conduits of the Aqua Claudia and Anio Novus had been identified by name through Claudius’s inscriptions on the Porta Maggiore, as well as through references in Frontinus’s text, and although the Aqua Marcia, Aqua Tepula, and Aqua Julia were also known through the Augustan and Antonine inscriptions at the Porta S. Lorenzo, no one before Fabretti seems to have noted or documented their respective levels.

Second, Fabretti’s first dissertation identifies the Aqua Traiana (I.4g). Fabretti approaches the problem of its identification as a corollary to his main topic, primarily to demonstrate that the Aqua Alexandrina cannot be identified with a Trajanic reworking of the Aqua Marcia. Yet his reading of the evidence here had far-reaching results. In his argument that Trajan’s aqueduct was a wholly new conduit, separate from any reworking of an earlier line and certainly not to be associated with the Aqua Alexandrina, he demonstrates that the aqueduct on the Janiculum reworked by Paul V for his Acqua Paola was indeed the Traiana.

Third, this dissertation identifies the “Trophies of Marius” as a castellum (or distribution tank) supplied by one of the Claudian aqueducts (I.4c). Before Fabretti’s work, the “Trophies of Marius” were generally thought to have been supplied by the Aqua Marcia, specifically through a Trajanic reworking of that aqueduct. Fabretti rejects that theory, arguing that only the Claudian aqueducts were high enough to supply the castellum.

Finally, Fabretti’s first dissertation gives the location of the Porta Capena, confirmed by observations on the underground course of the Aqua Appia in the immediate area (I.4d). Fabretti rejects the contemporary identification of the Porta Capena with the Porta S. Sebastiano of the Aurelian Wall, thus correcting a topographical error common at the time, and fixes more accurately the location of this gate of the republican “Servian” Wall.

Dissertation II

The second dissertation in the De aquis, the longest and most wide-ranging of the three, discusses the sources of the Aqua Marcia and Aqua Claudia in the upper Anio Valley east of Tivoli. Although Fabretti begins with a digression on the measurements of the ancient Roman foot and mile
(II.3) and includes a lengthy discussion on a possible representation of the Aqua Claudia, illustrated through comparison of similar reliefs of female divinities (II.4d), his main focus is the topography of the upper Anio. He provides an extremely detailed map of the area (fig. 17) and a description centering on two problems. The first problem concerns the course of the ancient Via Valeria, from which Frontinus reports statistics in the De aquaeductu concerning the sources and intakes of individual aqueducts. Fabretti, attacking the topographical work of Lucas Holste, argues that the original route of the Via Valeria ran directly from the Osteria della Ferrata, past Riofreddo, to S. Giorgio (II.4b). The second problem on which Fabretti centers his description concerns the sources of three ancient aqueducts: the Aqua Marcia, the Aqua Claudia, and the Aqua Augusta, the supplement added by Augustus to augment the Marcia's capacity (II.4c, II.4e–f).

In addition, Fabretti's second dissertation introduces other topics not directly germane to the topography of the upper Anio but intended to enlighten readers on points made by Frontinus. Here, Fabretti discusses the location and functioning of a settling tank of the Aqua Marcia on the Via Latina, providing shorter descriptions of settling tanks of the Aqua Claudia/Anio Novus and Aqua Virgo (II.5a–b). He also discusses here Frontinus's measurement of water (II.5c) and the identification of the Roman to be credited with the introduction of the Aqua Marcia (II.6).

**Dissertation III**

The third dissertation in the De aquis has a primarily literary, rather than archaeological or topographical, focus, examining the discrepancy between the fourteen aqueducts cited by Procopius and the twenty water sources listed in the fourth-century regionary catalogs. Arguing that ancient Rome must be understood as comprising not only territory within its walls but also outlying settlements on the main roads from the city, Fabretti presents two illustrations: a map giving detailed coverage of the Roman Campagna (already treated in the first dissertation), with a particular focus on settlements near the city (fig. 31); and a plan of the walls and gates of ancient Rome that illustrates the courses of main Roman roads issuing from them (fig. 32), the circuit of which Fabretti discusses in detail (III.3).
Fabretti next reviews Procopius’s notice that the city was supplied by fourteen conduits, to identify those not named by Frontinus in the *De aquaeductu* (III.4a–b). The lengthy discussion that follows concerning settlements along the major roads outside the city (III.5) includes a detailed description of the warehouse along the Tiber south of the Aventine commonly identified today as the “Porticus Aemilia” (III.5a[1]) and an attempt (at III.5c) to make sense of a famous topographical puzzle, Pliny’s discussion of the size of Rome based on the measurements of the roads from the Golden Milestone in the Roman Forum.

Finally, Fabretti turns to his primary topic, identification of the twenty water sources listed in the regionary catalogs (III.6). He gives a long digression on the topography of the *ager Tusculanus* and attacks Gronovius’s emendation of Livy’s text, before ending with a brief discussion of ancient drains and sewers in seventeenth-century Rome (III.7).

Together, the three dissertations of the *De aquis* constitute a roughly coherent whole, each treatise complementing the others in subject matter and focus. Although Fabretti was not attempting to present a comprehensive overview or complete account of the Roman aqueduct system, his first and third dissertations together come close to providing just that, supplemented by the second dissertation’s discussions of the sources of the Marcia and Claudia in the upper Anio Valley and the functioning of settling tanks and problem of water measurement. Fabretti’s overall title for his three dissertations is therefore apt: all three together focus on both the water sources and the conduits of the ancient city.

Fabretti’s dissertations are much more than simply treatments on their primary subjects. Each is an impressive presentation in itself, including extensive topographical information, extremely careful sketches and diagrams, and detailed maps. Each draws from literary, epigraphical, and archaeological evidence in the development of its argument. It is time to let the aqueduct hunter’s text speak for itself.