CULTURAL MEMORIES
IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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The Romans remembered and forgot through monuments. They celebrated their great men with virtuoso portraits—and then mutilated or adapted them when the honorees fell from power. So, too, the Romans constructed elaborate historical reliefs with minutely correct details of armor, dress, and physiognomy, then recarved the heads for new protagonists. They erected immense buildings—great baths, temples, basilicas, etc., designed to enhance civic life as well as the prestige of the individuals who set them up—and even these could be appropriated, torn down, or covered over after a change of regime. As these examples suggest, the Romans did not consider their commemorative monuments as fixed objects of aesthetic contemplation. Instead, they treated them as active participants in the creation, maintenance, and, at times, destruction of collective memory.

Such practices were not, of course, uniquely Roman. Elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean as well we see royal images and historical reliefs created and ritually cultivated during the apogee of a ruler’s power, then attacked by his antagonistic successors; buildings, too, might be constructed, then left polemically unfinished or destroyed. In analyzing the interconnections of monument and memory in ancient Rome, it is thus heuristically useful to take a comparative perspective; this helps both to highlight established Mediterranean norms and to identify the characteristic features of Roman practices. My emphasis in this chapter is on Greece, the ancient civilization with which the Romans had the most intensive cultural contact, and by which they were most influenced. This Hellenic comparison helps to make clear the distinctive features of memoria Romana.

In previous literature, scholars have examined in detail certain aspects of Roman commemorative monuments. Art historians have long studied Roman portraits and historical reliefs and have generated an immense bibliography concerning their creation, for instance as regards their iconography, style, and patronage. So, too, Romanists have written extensively about the destruction of these monuments through mutilation or recarving, so-called damnatio memoriae. But due to disciplinary boundaries, art historians have rarely explored the interconnections between Greece and Rome, although the Greeks offered a powerful model—both positive and negative—for Roman commemorative monuments and memory sanctions. Scholars’ emphasis on the static nature of the imperial system has likewise discouraged analysis of the evolution of these interconnections over the longue durée of Roman history.

This chapter takes as its subject Roman commemorative monuments and their relationship to Greek artistic precedents and practices. I begin by examining the transmission of Hellenistic historical images to Rome, highlighting both the
attractiveness for the Romans of these works of art—which were extensively looted, collected, and copied during the Republican era—and also the selectivity with which they were adapted for new purposes. I analyze as well the Roman reception of Hellenistic memory sanctions, since these were often “performed” for the benefit of the new Italian overlords as well as other Greeks.

I then turn to the fully developed commemorative practices of the Roman imperial era, looking at both public works of art and private commissions. While Roman state-sponsored portraits and historical reliefs emulated the verisimilitude of their Hellenistic predecessors, works from the private sphere such as sarcophagi took a different path; their deployment of Greek myth as a metaphor for lived experience connects them more closely to Classical prototypes, even when their visual formats and styles were dramatically different. Furthermore, Roman imperial memory sanctions, while perhaps indebted to Greek models, in this period took on their own culturally distinctive qualities; most striking is the institutionalization of such practices under the Empire and their penetration into the private sphere.

For the study of memoria Romana, this analysis of Roman commemorative monuments in a comparative perspective has considerable significance. As elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean, in Rome memory was preserved above all through monuments rather than texts. At the same time, the Romans stand out due to the sheer quantity of monuments meant to preserve memory, the specificity of the memories evoked by them, and the fragility both of the monuments themselves and of the memories encoded within them. In this way, an examination of how the Romans remembered through monuments brings into focus what seems to me the most distinctive feature of Roman memory: its provisional nature, its manifest impermanence, and, concomitantly, the ongoing endeavor to counteract these liabilities.

Transmitting and Transforming Memory in the Republican Era

During the Republic, the Romans encountered Hellenistic commemorative monuments in considerable numbers, first as war booty, then as copies. Beginning around the turn of the third century BC, the Romans fought and won a series of wars against major Hellenistic kingdoms, then looted the newly annexed territories and brought the proceeds home. They used the works of art acquired in this fashion to adorn their triumphs and subsequently put them on display. After selecting a few small-scale paintings and statuettes for their houses, ambitious Roman generals used the rest to decorate the grandiose temples and porticoes they erected ex manubis, from the spoils of war. Later, as the supply of original works of art from the Hellenistic kingdoms dwindled, the Romans turned instead to Greek-style copies and new creations. These were displayed both in public and, increasingly, in private, as the competitive elite of the Late Republic created enormous villas and furnished them with the luxury items and commemorative monuments appropriate to Hellenistic kings. In this way, we see a shift over the course of the Republic from works of art directly connected to the Roman conquest of Greece to Hellenic-style images that selectively transformed their prototypes and celebrated the aspirations of Roman aristocrats in the guise of Hellenistic kings.

To begin with war booty: among the works of art looted by the Romans, the commemorative images of Hellenistic kings were some of the most visually striking and prominently displayed monuments in the capital. Dramatic in style, grandiloquent in iconography, and executed by top-notch painters and sculptors, these...
works of art were originally intended to showcase the wealth, authority, and exceptional achievements of the men who commissioned them. Newly set up in Rome, they took on different meanings. Overtly, they displayed for all to see the defeat of the glorious monarchs they had celebrated; they also provided indirect, but no less effective, testimony to the military accomplishments of the Roman generals who had won. In this way, the major Hellenistic monuments brought to Rome were significant both as precedents for new Italian creations and as powerful commemorative works of art in their own right—although the memories they generated were now directly opposed to those intended by their original patrons.

While most of these monuments have perished, their impressive visual effect is suggested by a colossal marble statue group found in Rome that likely was taken as war booty from one of the Hellenistic kingdoms (fig. 3.1). The group shows a lion ferociously attacking a horse; the exotic feline dominates the domesticated animal, which struggles wildly but ineffectively to escape. In its iconography, the group closely resembled major works of the early Hellenistic era, when the lion hunt became a key visual trope for Macedonian kingship; good parallels include the preserved images from Tomb II at Vergina and the Alexander sarcophagus, as well as literary records of massive statue dedications, for instance the Kraters monument at Delphi. So, too, the Roman group shared with these monuments a high-voltage expressive style and brilliantly executed details, for example, the thick clumps of the lion’s shaggy mane, his taut, lean body, and his heavy paws, which seem to sink into the horse’s soft flesh. Its immense scale—1.48 by 2.4 meters (ca. 5 × 8 ft.)—also fits well with literary texts describing Hellenistic royal commissions, although few of these works survive
today. It thus seems likely that the lion-and-horse group was initially part of a Hellenistic monument set up by Alexander or one of his immediate successors, then appropriated by the Romans during their eastern conquests in the second to first centuries BC. In its new display setting, the group provided abundant testimony to the military prowess of the Romans—and also to the scale and determination of their looting, given that this work of art alone weighs about 3,300 kilos (7,300 lb.).

Over time, this very determined looting took a toll, and the supply of original artworks from Greece became more limited. The Romans turned instead to copies and new creations in a Hellenic style, which became more numerous than the originals, more readily available, and more convenient, as they could be tailored to the requirements of a particular site or patron. Wealthy villa owners especially enjoyed images of Dionysos and Aphrodite, the Greek gods most closely associated with sensual pleasure and joie de vivre. But they also appreciated the commemorative monuments of Hellenistic kings, whose power, glamour, and military ambition offered attractive models for their own lives.
It is indeed remarkable how frequently we find in the Late Republican villas of the Bay of Naples images that are touchstones of Hellenistic royal art. The Alexander Mosaic, a meticulously executed replica of a major Macedonian painting of the late fourth century BC, is perhaps the most famous; exemplary also are the numerous bronze and marble portraits of Greek rulers from the Villa dei Papyri at Herculaneum. These works of art, with their historical content and precise descriptive features, fit well with Roman images of the Republican era, although they were more grandiose and more overtly regal than any villa owner could have been in public. Less common, but no less significant, were allegorical scenes like those from the late Republican villa at Boscoreale; these works, which exalted Hellenistic monarchs in a complex symbolic visual language, puzzle scholars even today and must have been difficult to interpret, if not completely opaque, for Roman viewers as well (fig. 3.2). Despite their challenges, such scenes were clearly attractive to their commissioners, as demonstrated by their monumental scale and beautiful execution. In this way, allegorical paintings, too, worked to generate an elegant Greek-style ambiance for Roman memories, notwithstanding their abstruse imagery and seeming lack of fit with local concerns.

In addition to their activities as looters and copiers of Greek commemorative monuments, Romans were also privileged observers of, and at times, participants in the destruction of these works. As they upset the balance of power in the Hellenistic world, they prompted the cancellation of prior alliances and the establishment of new ones. In so doing, the Romans encouraged the symbolic representation of these diplomatic changes via violence directed toward portraits of Greek leaders. And at times they themselves attacked or threatened damage to such images, or appropriated them for their own purposes. In this way, the Romans enhanced their understanding of the powerful real-world effects of such symbolic violence; they also saw firsthand how this violence served to affect, if not transform, collective memory.

Roman involvement in the destruction of the Macedonian king Philip V’s images is typical, albeit especially well-documented. Angered by Philip’s alliance with the great Carthaginian general Hannibal, the Romans declared war on him in 200 BC; in this they were joined by the Pergamene king Attalos I and several Greek cities, including Athens. As a visible demonstration of their new allegiance, the Athenians decreed that “all statues of Philip, all representations and their inscriptions, and also those of his ancestors, male and female, should be removed and done away with”; they also cancelled Antigonid feast days and priesthoods, and directed curses at the king himself and his entire family. Their handiwork is visible in twenty-five preserved inscriptions in which the names of Philip or his family have been meticulously erased; it may also be seen in a gilded equestrian statue that was stripped of its gilding, torn apart, and thrown into a well around 200 BC (fig. 3.3).

With these actions, the Athenians had Philip as their target—and the Romans, along with the Pergamene kings, as their implied audience. Their goal was to dishonor Philip through the medium of his monuments and to proclaim, emphatically as possible, their connection to the new political leaders of the eastern Mediterranean. They did so through a transformation of their city’s visual landscape (pulling down statues of Antigonid kings and erecting those of, for example, Attalids in their place) and also through a reformulation of the Attic ritual calendar, as old feast days were cancelled and new ones decreed. In this way, the Athenians used the instruments of civic government and religious observance to alter their collective
Figure 3.3. Fragments of a gilt-bronze statue of a mounted ruler found in the Agora of Athens; the statue was stripped of its gilding, torn apart, and thrown down a well. Hellenistic, third or second century BC. Athens, Agora Museum, inv. B 1384.

Figure 3.4. Reconstruction drawing of the monument of Aemilius Paullus found at the sanctuary of Apollo, Delphi. The Macedonian statue base was reused with additions by the Romans, ca. 167 BC. After Jaquemin and Laroche 1982, fig. 8. Drawing © EFA/D. Laroche, courtesy École française d'Athènes.
memory of Macedonian domination. They “performed” this alteration not only for themselves but also for the benefit of those, like the Romans, who might appreciate the motivations underlying the performance.

While Athenian interactions with Philip V are known in particularly rich detail, other incidents worked in a similar fashion. According to literary accounts, at the dawn of the Hellenistic era the Greeks were already destroying the monuments of unpopular rulers, for instance those of Philip II of Macedon in Ephesos.\textsuperscript{32} So, too, the Alexandrians attacked statues of Ptolemy VIII of Egypt after he treacherously killed his own son, Ptolemy Memphites, and the Achaean League took down images of Eumenes II of Pergamon, although the latter were warehoused and later partially restored.\textsuperscript{23} The Greeks seem especially to have targeted portraits of Philip V of Macedon, due both to their extensive number and to his controversial role in the politics of the era. Along with the Athenian incident, we have archaeological and literary evidence that in 219 BC, the Aetolians damaged the royal portraits and horrific inscriptions of Philip V and his ancestors during their sack of the Macedonian sanctuary at Dion.\textsuperscript{24} And some twenty years later, the Rhodians (this time in association with the Romans themselves) destroyed the king’s statues in Chalcis during their sack of the town in the Second Macedonian War.\textsuperscript{25}

As these examples make clear, attacks on royal statues played a key role in the contractual system of portrait honors outlined by R. R. R. Smith, among others.\textsuperscript{26} Just as a king’s image might be set up in response to benefactions or in commemoration of a political alliance, so, too, it might be taken down in retaliation for perceived slights or in response to a new diplomatic situation. In this way, the royal portrait served as a visually impressive and readily available substitute for the inaccessible king, facilitating the expression of the citizens’ gratitude when times were good and their anger and frustration in difficult periods. At the same time, the warehousing or destruction of a monarch’s statue also affected the image of the king within the citizens’ collective memory. When a royal portrait was mutilated and eventually destroyed, the king’s memory was dishonored, then erased from the cityscape. And while in the immediate aftermath of an attack, it was doubtless important to remember, as it were, the monarch who was being forgotten, over time oblivion would predominate, as direct political experience of the king was replaced by fragmented stories.\textsuperscript{27}

The Romans observed these attacks on political memory carefully, and the lessons they learned are apparent in, above all, the monument of Aemilius Paullus at Delphi (fig. 3.4).\textsuperscript{28} This work of art was initially commissioned by Perseus, the successor of Philip V as king of Macedonia.\textsuperscript{29} Set up near the Temple of Apollo, the monument—a gilded statue of the king atop a tall pillar—was meant to compete with the commissions of other current and former Hellenistic rulers nearby.\textsuperscript{30} But when Perseus was defeated by the Roman general Aemilius Paullus in 168 BC, the monument was not yet finished. It was seen in this condition by Paullus, who decided to complete it with his own portrait, since “it was only proper that the conquered should give way to the conquerors.”\textsuperscript{31} On the monument’s base, he erected a pillar 8 meters (26 ft.) high, topped with an equestrian statue and decorated with historical reliefs, which likely depicted the Roman defeat of Perseus at the battle of Pydna.\textsuperscript{32} Paullus also replaced Perseus’s Greek inscription on the base with one in Latin: L. AEMILIUS L. F. IMPERATOR DE REGE PERSE MACEDONIBUSQUE CEPET (Lucius Aemilius, son of Lucius, general, took [this] from king Perseus and the Macedonians).\textsuperscript{33} In so doing, he highlighted his appropriation of the monument while preserving the
memory of the Macedonian king—as a defeated enemy. Paullus thus demonstrated a keen understanding of how monuments could be made to work against themselves; the Macedonian origin of his statue base was what made it so effective in its new Roman incarnation.

**Institutionalizing Memory under the Roman Empire**

During the Imperial era, the Romans applied the knowledge of commemorative monuments that they had gained from the Greeks in an extensive, thorough-going, and systematic fashion. In public settings, they erected descriptive portraits and historical reliefs, which looked back to the Hellenistic royal monuments discussed in the previous section but now represented contemporary, emphatically Roman, subject matter. In the private sphere, by contrast, Romans surrounded themselves with images taken from the Greek mythological repertoire. Such images allowed the Romans to envision their daily lives and to commemorate their dead in an allusive, metaphorical fashion with exalted Greek-style images. And in both the public and the private realms, the Romans deployed powerful, far-reaching memory sanctions; these drew on the Hellenistic tactics described above but surpassed them in the regularity with which they were exercised and the extent of their reach. Taken together, the Romans’ commemorative monuments and practices under the Empire served to institutionalize memory—and also to reinforce its systematic and ordered destruction.

For the institutionalization of memory, there was no more appropriate forum than the public commemorative monuments of the Imperial era. Although, as noted above, such works did exist in Greece, they were both more frequent and more broadly distributed in Roman visual culture. From the processional reliefs of the Augustan Ara Pacis to the Constantinian panels on that emperor’s arch, these monuments permeated the entire chronological span of Roman imperial art; they were commissioned by a wide range of patrons; and they were popular throughout the Empire, from the desert oasis of Palmyra to the chilly forests of the Rhineland.

For this reason, public portraits and historical reliefs have long been seen as the most distinctively “Roman” works of art we have; while this view has rightly been modified in recent years, giving a greater emphasis to Greek-style monuments, there is still much truth to it. Furthermore, it is important for the topic at hand because it means that the Romans had a visual connection to the past, not, as in Greece, predominantly through allusive mythological imagery but rather through works that insisted upon their own historicity.

Clearly, Roman commemorative monuments were heavily fictionalized. They presented a programmatically shaped version of reality, which in no way offered unmediated access to the past. Still, with their particularizing details—the up-to-date hairstyles, distinctive portrait features, accurate battle gear, and so forth—these works of art put limits on their range of reference that were not present in, for example, the mythological or divine images of the Greeks. At the same time, the strong contemporary resonances of the Roman works constrained their subject matter and their mode of depiction, permitting the acknowledgment of only those aspects of Roman reality that were construed as positive.

For these issues, an illuminating comparison is furnished by the Great Trajanic Frieze panels commemorating the emperor’s conquest of Dacia (present-day Romania) and the centauromachy metopes from the south side of the Parthenon.
On one of the Roman panels, Trajan is depicted on horseback charging forward; his overwhelming force is signaled by the military cloak billowing behind him as well as the behavior of his Dacian enemies, crushed by his attack or defeated and already suing for peace (fig. 3.5). Despite the inherent implausibility of the scene—with its helmetless emperor leading the charge in a manner completely at odds with Roman military strategy—the relief’s visual details were treated in a precise and accurate manner; the faces of the protagonists have a descriptive, portrait-like appearance (although that of Trajan himself has been recarved as Constantine), the Roman military accoutrements are lovingly detailed, and even the costumes and hairstyles of the Dacians are rendered with ethnographic precision. The overall effect of the frieze is one of considerable historical verisimilitude, despite (or perhaps on account of) its unlikely imagery.

Metope 28 from the Parthenon’s south side worked very differently (fig. 3.6). It showed a scene taken from a familiar Greek myth, the battle between men and centaurs at the wedding of the Lapith hero Perithoos; like the other stories shown on the Parthenon metopes, this one functioned as an analogy for the struggle of civilization versus barbarism. The scene had also a historical reference point—the Greeks’ contest with Persia in the wars of 490 and 480–79 BC—although this was implicit rather than explicit. The centauromachy myth had functioned in this way on earlier commemorative monuments and took on particular resonances here, decorating a temple constructed atop one destroyed by the Persians.

Given the historical background of the metope, it is all the more striking that it depicts not the victory but rather the defeat of its Greek protagonist. It shows the centaur erect and powerful, the Lapith crumpled on the ground; with its spare, crisply executed style and clear differentiation of the two protagonists, the metope leaves no room for an ambiguous outcome. Such a scene would have been unthinkable in Roman commemorative art; the emperor could never have been shown
losing. It was possible on the Parthenon due to the mythological guise through which the historical war was refracted; this allowed for a contemplative distance from the events in question and a fuller acknowledgment of the failures as well as the successes of the Greeks. In this way, the Parthenon metope offered a glimpse of the complex reality of the Persian wars via a mythological metaphor; the Trajanic frieze, by contrast, provided a more programmatic, single-minded account of the emperor’s conquest of Dacia, anchored in its precise literalism.

This pronounced literalism of Roman state-sponsored commemorative monuments contrasts strongly with the artistic techniques deployed in the private sphere. Here, works such as wall paintings, domestic statuettes, and sarcophagi adopted a variety of Hellenic retrospective styles as well as images taken from the Greek mythological repertoire; they did so in order to give authoritative yet attractive form to the lived experience of their patrons. These Greek-style images also permitted the expression of strong emotions and desires in a manner that was extraordinary, if not unthinkable, using a purely Roman visual language.

It is true that some more descriptive, down-to-earth Roman-style images existed, for example the funerary monuments of working women analyzed by Natalie Kampen. These were indeed valued by their patrons for their precision and specificity; they ensured that hard-won accomplishments were celebrated in a clear, unambiguous fashion. Furthermore, such monuments frequently supplemented the visual information they provided with written inscriptions, offering the essential facts in formulaic utterances that could nonetheless be tailored to individual circumstances. Still, the works of art that filled the houses and tombs of imperial

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**Figure 3.6.** Centaur defeating Lapith; marble metope, south side of the Parthenon, Athens. Classical Greek, ca. 447–432 BC, 120 × ca. 125 cm (47 1/4 × 49 3/4 in.). London, British Museum.
Romans were by and large allusive rather than particularizing; this had important implications for the kinds of memories they evoked.

A mythological sarcophagus of the early third century AD demonstrates both the flexibility and the powerful emotional charge that this allusiveness made possible (fig. 3.7). The monument depicts the love story of the moon goddess Selene and the mortal youth Endymion; its emphasis is on the active desire of the deity as she descends in a rush from her chariot, contrasting with the languor and beauty of the nude, sleeping young man. Stylistically, the sarcophagus is a mix of Classical and Hellenistic details, with the naturalistic yet idealized body of Endymion evoking fourth-century-BC prototypes, and the energetic drapery of Selene executed in a more Hellenistic manner; the latter style is echoed in the rearing horses, the detailed landscape elements, and the numerous fluttering putti that surround the main protagonists. In its overall visual effect, this was a small-scale and delicate, yet highly expressive, representation of romantic love.

The sarcophagus was appropriate for its funerary context due to the sleeping figure of Endymion, since the analogy between death and sleep was a familiar one during the Roman era. At the same time, it alluded to the strong emotional connection between the deceased and the bereaved, suggesting both the desire for the dead felt by those who were left behind and the gulf that separated them. It also provided a reassuring narrative framework suggesting that this gulf could be bridged. The sarcophagus could do all this because of its exalted Greek style and its use of Hellenic myth, which functioned in a metaphorical and evocative rather than a literal manner. Myth also permitted a certain fluidity in the identification of the patrons with the protagonists; as we know from the inscription preserved on the sarcophagus, this paradigmatic image of romantic love was commissioned by a daughter for her deceased mother. In this way, the Endymion sarcophagus was a commemorative monument—but one with considerable flexibility and a broad range of reference.

While mythological images from the private sphere had a flexible, fluid character, the more precise and literal monuments of the Roman state were not so
accommodating. They consequently required more dramatic interventions when
the historical circumstances for which they were created changed; this is particu-
larly apparent in the images of condemned emperors such as Domitian, Commodus,
and Geta.68 Like the Greek examples discussed above, Roman leaders' portraits too
could be warehoused, mutilated, or destroyed; they were also regularly recarved and
recycled and had their inscriptions altered or erased. But whereas Greek commem-
orative monuments were frequently attacked in a spontaneous, ad hoc manner (often
when the leader they honored was still alive and eminently capable of retaliation),
Roman state-sponsored works of art were destroyed in a more systematic fashion;
by the early Imperial era at least, this practice had become institutionalized, with a
vote of the senate followed by the orderly removal or adaptation of the condemned
emperor's images and the erasure of his name from associated inscriptions.69 In this
way, damnatio offered a dramatic and concrete way to mark a break with what had
gone before and also a satisfying set of rituals that clarified the new political
situation. As the old, bad emperor's monuments were replaced by those of his successor,
their destruction made possible a condemnation of the recent past without calling
into question the imperial system itself; this had obvious advantages for political
stability. At the same time, damnatio encouraged communal involvement in the pro-
cess of altering and reconstituting collective memory.

An over-life-size portrait of the emperor Vespasian provides a good example of
this practice (fig. 3.8).68 In its present state, the marble sculpture offers a convincing
representation of the founder of the Flavian dynasty, with an energetic and unsparring depiction of his wrink-
led forehead, receding hairline, and fleshy jowls. At the same time, the portrait's flat face and long, rather
elegantly styled sideburns suggest that it has been recarved from an image of Vespasian's predecessor,
Nero. After his assassination, Nero was declared a hostis (enemy) by the Roman senate; sanctions were
also passed against his monuments and inscriptions.69 Nero's portraits suffered likewise, with many recut to
depict Vespasian or, alternatively, "safe" Julio-Claudian predecessors such as Augustus.70

The colossal Vespasian demonstrates both the extent and the limitations typical of this kind of
recarving, with a carefully precise rendering of the new emperor's facial features contrasted with the
intact preservation of Nero's sideburns. In this way, the portrait honored the current ruler, while retaining
traces of his predecessor's image; this was a common practice in the first century AD and may at times have
been a programmatic as well as a conveniently thrifty move.71 As with the column of Aemilius Paullus at Del-
phi, Vespasian's portrait bore faint reminders of the king initially commemorated; for knowledgeable view-
ers, a political transition was made visible through the transformation of a monument. But in the colos-
sal sculpture, the indications of the earlier emperor's
presence were very subtle, and with time they must have become obscure if not invisible to most Romans. This helps to explain the differing treatment accorded to such images by the third century AD, when new, more emphatic methods of damnatio were adopted.\textsuperscript{76}

A painted tondo of the emperor Septimius Severus and his family showcases these new methods in a particularly striking manner; it is all the more noteworthy since, due to its medium and scale, this may have been a private rather than a publicly displayed imperial image (fig. 3.9). The tondo, measuring some 12 inches in diameter and executed in tempera on wood, came to light in Egypt; this accounts for its unusually fine state of preservation as well as its rather grandiose imperial imagery, with the protagonists bejeweled and sceptered in a manner that would have been anathema on a metropolitan monument.\textsuperscript{74} The painting originally depicted Severus with his wife, Julia Domna, and their sons, the future emperors Caracalla and Geta; during Severus’s lifetime, much was made of the ruler’s two male heirs, a powerful symbol of dynastic continuity.

However, following Severus’s death and a brief period of joint rule, Caracalla had his younger brother executed; he then had Geta’s memory condemned via the usual senatorial procedure and his inscriptions and images destroyed.\textsuperscript{76} Some of these were erased, such as Geta’s titles on the imperially sponsored Severan arch in the Forum Romanum and his portrait from the Arch of the Argentarii, a privately sponsored work at the entrance to the Forum Boarium.\textsuperscript{76} Others were treated in a

\textbf{Figure 3.8.} Marble portrait statue of Nero recarved as Vespasian; found in Rome. Imperial Roman, ca. AD 69. 66 × 31.1 × 36.6 cm (26 × 12 3/4 × 14 1/2 in.). Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, inv. 23.119.

\textbf{Figure 3.9.} Tondo of Septimius Severus and family; reportedly found in Egypt; tempera on panel. Imperial Roman, ca. AD 211. Diam. 30 cm (11 3/4 in.). Berlin, Staatliche Museen. inv. 31.359.
more visibly humiliating manner. On the Egyptian tondo, Geta's head was literally "rubbed out," conservation of the monument suggests that this was done with excrement. Since the other members of the family remained intact (as indeed did Geta's neck and shoulders), it was quite clear on the tondo just who had been condemned; the altered image provided very striking testimony to the violent birth of Caracalla's period of sole rule. This is all the more impressive given that the tondo was set up not in Rome but in the faraway province of Egypt, and that it may have been a privately displayed work of art. It consequently provides an exemplary case of damnatio via the mutilation of images, a tactic that became increasingly popular for imperial portraits during the third century AD. The altered tondo also suggests the "reach" of damnatio—from metropolitan Rome to provincial Egypt, and from the public institutions of imperial government into, perhaps, the private sphere.

Conclusions

To sum up: this paper has analyzed the evolution of Roman commemorative monuments and practices from the Republic to the High Empire; the focus has been on identifying and evaluating their relation to Greek precedents. I began by outlining how Romans of the Republican era appropriated and adapted Hellenistic images in the public commissions of successful generals and the private artworks decorating elite villas; in both cases, the use of Greek forms and styles as well as, occasionally, actual Hellenic monuments, allowed for more grandiose and visually striking images than would have been possible using a purely Roman visual vocabulary. I also highlighted the implications of these works of art for memoria Romana, as they encouraged Roman patrons to commemorate their own lives in a distanced and exalted fashion through the use of Greek art. Furthermore, I sketched the bifurcated evolution of these commemorative visual strategies in the High Empire, with imperial public monuments adopting a highly particularized, up-to-date, and Roman mode, and private works of art deploying one that was more flexible, mythological, and Greek in origin.

At the same time, the article considered not only the initial creation of these Roman commemorative monuments but also their destruction. I showed how as early as the second century BC, the Romans were already observing and at times participating in attacks on the portraits and inscriptions of Hellenic kings; in so doing, they learned how potent such attacks could be in concretizing abstract power relations and signaling political change. I furthermore stressed the transition from these more spontaneous Hellenistic attacks on rulers' portraits to the institutionalized recarving or mutilation of images seen in Roman damnatio memoriae, and highlighted the extension of this practice into the private sphere. Such a study helps to demonstrate the Romans' indebtedness to the Greeks in terms of memory sanctions and also highlights what was distinctively their own.

Most striking, with regard to commemorative monuments and practices, is the way the Romans learned from the Greeks but also went far beyond Hellenic precedents. The Romans made more numerous, more complex, and more varied commemorative monuments; so, too, their memory sanctions were both less controversial and more fully integrated into everyday life in Rome than in Greece. Looking forward to the late-antique era, the Romans' use of such sanctions took on particular significance, because they were deployed not only against certain anathematized individuals but also against a range of broadly popular institutions, beliefs, and
practices: those of traditional Roman polytheism. As Romans of the late-antique period adapted, pulled down, or pulverized polytheist statues and appropriated or destroyed the temples of the old gods, they used tactics familiar from *damnatio memoriae*. They had occasionally applied such tactics in earlier religious contexts, in their approach to Druidism, for example, or the Roman repression of Judaism and Christianity. They now activated the same strategies on an empire-wide scale and with support from the highest echelons of political power. The result was a transformation of the Roman state, as long-established connections between imperial authority and religious observance were dramatically reconfigured for a new theological system. There is perhaps no clearer illustration of the effectiveness of Roman memory sanctions than this: the replacement of a centuries-long tradition of polytheist cult by the new, very different religion of Christianity.

NOTES

1 On the relation of monuments and memory in Rome, see, for example, Jørgensen 1997, 1–32; Walter 2004, 26–35; Gallay 2014.


4 For Roman art historians’ focus on portraits and historical reliefs and the scholarly debates they typically engender, see Hölscher 2004, 6.

5 The bibliography on *damnatio memoriae* is immense; among the most significant works for this essay are Benoist and Descartes 2008; Benoist et al. 2009; Flower 2006; Gregory 1994; Hedrick 2000; P. Stewart 2003, 267–78; Varner 2004; Varner 2008.

6 A useful exception, albeit from a more historical than art historical perspective, is Flower 2006, 18–41.

7 For the static nature of Roman imperial monuments, see Hölscher 1994, 105–34.

8 A dissenter is T. Wiseman 2014, 42–63, debated by Hölscher 2014.

9 On Roman practices of looting artworks, the best general introduction is Miles 2008.

10 On the triumph, the key forum for displaying looted artwork, see Beard 2007.

11 On the Roman use of looted art as domestic decor, see Weich 2006. For public display, see Kousser forthcoming.


13 For public display of Greek-style works in the Late Republic, see Stamper 2003, Ch. 4, “Assimilation of Hellenistic Architecture after the Panic Wars,” 46–67; for private display in villas, Neudecker 1988.


15 E.g., the Granikos monument, created by the famous fourth-century-BC sculptor Lysippus to commemorate Alexander the Great, and brought to Rome by Q. Cassius Metellus to adorn the portico of the Temple of Jupiter Stator; on this, see Velleius Paterculus 1.11.3–4; Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 36.64. For a silver portrait of Pharnaces I, king of Pontus, see Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 33.151; on a golden statue of Mithridates Eupator, Appian *Mithridatica* 17.116–17.


17 Plutarch *Alexander* 40.4; Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 34.66. See A. Cohen 2010, 257–97.

18 Arrian *Anabasis* 1.16.4 (Granikos monument, Dion); Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 36.30–33 (Mausoleum at Halikarnassos).

19 I thank Mary Hart of the Getty Villa for providing me with this information.


22 Dillon 2000.

23 On the vexed question of the interpretation of these frescoes, see Müller 1994; Pfister 1994; Sauro 2007; R. Smith 1994; Torelli 2003; Virgilio 2000.

24 For the historical background on this era, see Derow 1989b; Errington 1989a and 1989b.

25 Polybius 39.3.1–11; Plutarch *Caes. 5.8* (statues of Philopoemen threatened by Mummisa); Livy 31.23.10–11 (statues of Philip V of Macedon attacked by the Romans and Rhodians in the sack of Chalcedon).


27 On the broader historical context of the event, see Errington 1989a, 257–61.

28 Livy 31.44.1–9.

29 On the inscriptions, see Dow 1637, 47–53; for an updated commentary, Habicht 1882, 148 n. 137.

30 Such grandiose statues were reserved for kings during the Hellenistic era, and the destruction of this one as well as its chronology strongly suggest an association with Philip V. On the statue, see especially Camp 1986, 162–68; Housser 1975, 205–81; Housser 1982; Mattusch 1996, 125–29; Shear 1973, 130–34, 165–68.

31 On the significance of the Pergamene audience, see A. Stewart 2004, 220–26; for the Romans, Flower 2006, 40–41.

32 Arrian *Anabasis* 1.17.10–12.

33 Justin 36.8.32 (Ptolemy VII); Polybius 28.7 (Eumenes II).

34 Polybius 4.62; Padermann 2000, 44–58.

35 Livy 31.23.10–11.
37 On the general aspect of forgetting, see Ricoeur 2004.
39 Plutarch, Aemilius Paullus 28.2.
40 Miller 2002.
41 The story is preserved, with minor variants, in Polybius (20.10.2), Livy (45.27), and Plutarch (Aemilius Paullus 28.2); the quote is from Plutarch.
42 This subject is indicated not only by the Macedonians and Romans shown fighting on the relief (each with their characteristic shields, round for the Macedonians and oblong for the Romans), but also by the presence of a riderless horse. According to literary sources, the battle of Pydna began when a runaway horse escaped from the Roman army lines and was pursued by both sides. Slightly different accounts of the incident are given in Livy (44.40.4–10; 44.41.8–3) and Plutarch (Aemilius Paullus 18.2).
43 CIL 1.682 = ILS 8884 = ILLRP 232.
44 This phenomenon is often labeled “collective memory”; for a useful overview, see Olick, Vinitzky-Serguei, and Levy 2011.
45 Hölscher 2004, 6.
46 The bibliography on Greek-style monuments in their Roman settings is immense; some particularly significant discussions are Ganda 2008; Hölscher 1977; Hölscher 2004; Perry 2006; Zanker 1974.
47 See, for example, the (likely fictional) triumph depicted on the Arch of Septimius Severus, on which see Pepkin 2013.
50 Leander Touati 1987, 38–52.
51 Pollitt 1973, 80.
52 Kuosser 2009.
53 Kuosser 2009.
54 A similar precise literalism can be observed in some major Hellenistic monuments, for instance the Alexander Mosaic, on which see A. Cohen 1997. It is less common in earlier imperial imagery, for instance in Augustan art. On the differences between the more exalted mythological imagery of Augustus and the more down-to-earth narratives of Trajan, see Hölscher 1994, 142–43.
55 Kuosser 2010.
56 Kamper 1981.
57 Feraridi-Gruenwald 1999.
58 Ancestor portraits constitute an important but only partial exception to this rule. They were distinctly particularizing and must have appeared in the houses of some old aristocratic families, but they were most prominent in the Republican era. On them, see Kühler 1996.
60 A. Stewart 1950, fig. 249 (for Classical details), 702, 824 (for Hellenistic ones).
64 Sorabelli 2001.
66 See above, n. 5.
67 This institutionalized process is discussed in detail in Flower 2006; Varner 2000b; Varner 2004, 1–9.
69 Suetonius Nero 49.2; Varner 2004, 49–79.
72 Galinsky 2007.
74 On the provincial reception of imperial portraits and the differences in the self-presentation of the emperor from metropolitan Rome to the provinces, see Zanker 1983.
76 Flower 2008, chap. 7.
77 On the different tactics used for damnatio memoriae in Rome, see Elsner 2003, 212–19.
78 Parlasca 1977, 64; see Varner 2004, 182, for literary descriptions of similar acts.
81 At the same time, such erasures can work to provoke rather than to obliterate memory, especially initially, on which see Hedrick 2000 and Galinsky 2008.
82 Hedrick 2000.
83 The sanctions against polytheism were extensive and varied and have generated a range of scholarly responses that is similarly diverse. Particularly significant for the issue of sanctions against monuments are the writings of Cormack 1999; Hansen 2003; James 1996; MacMullen 1984; Pollini 2007 and 2008; R. Smith 2012; Thornton 1985.
84 For analogies, see P. Stewart 2003, 280–99.