ROMAN *SPOLIA*, APPROPRIATION AND CULTURAL MEMORY

DE JONG (I.J.F.), VERSLUYS (M.J.) (edd.) *Reading Greek and Hellenistic-Roman Spolia. Objects, Appropriation and Cultural Change*. (Euhormos: Greco-Roman Studies in Anchoring Innovation 5.) Pp. xvi + 292, b/w & colour ills. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2024. Cased, €99. ISBN: 978-90-04-68269-6.

HELM (M.), ROSELAAR (S.T.) (edd.) *Spoils in the Roman Republic. Boon and Bane*. Pp. 467, colour ills, b/w & colour maps. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2023. Cased, €84. ISBN: 978-3-515-13369-2.

HOLLIDAY (P.J.) *Power, Image, and Memory. Historical Subjects in Art*. Pp. 288, b/w & colour ills. New York: Oxford University Press, 2024. Cased, US$35. ISBN: 978-0-19-090108-0.

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The twenty-first century has seen prolonged, diverse interest in the nature and influence of Roman appropriation. This interest has been prompted in part by a shift away from Romanisation models to a more postcolonial framework, in which scholars have paid greater attention to the networks of appropriation and the cultural and economic impact beyond the initial acquisition of war booty. Central to the question of Rome's 'cargo culture' (M. Loar et al. [edd.], *Rome, Empire of Plunder* [2018]) is the question of *spolia*. Drawing primarily on literary accounts, scholars have analysed every facet of spoliation, from acquisition to triumphal parade, to auction, to use in public construction, to private collections and to consumer goods.

Since *spolia* represented a nexus between war, politics, religion and aesthetics in the Republic (C. Pieper, 'Spolia as Exempla/Exempla as Spolia', in: de Jong and Versluys, p. 46), studies focused on *spolia* have been necessarily interdisciplinary, making it hard to pinpoint a particular catalyst or even a specific, linear historiography. In one of the works under review, Versluys ('*Triumphus* and the Taming of Objects', in: de Jong and Versluys, pp. 30–1), adapting categories from anthropologist H.P. Hahn, organises appropriation into four stages: material appropriation, objectification, incorporation and transformation. These stages are beneficial for any analysis of *spolia* and their impact, but they can also function as an organising principle for the various historiographical and methodological approaches to Roman appropriation. Doing so allows us to situate these three works within the wider historiographical context and to survey the many different avenues according to which scholars have analysed *spolia* in recent decades.

Versluys' first stage is the one with which readers are likely to be most familiar: 'material appropriation'. This stage was characteristic of Roman territorial expansion, as is

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evident in the detailed descriptions of plunder that are rife in Livy, Plutarch, Polybius and Diodorus Siculus. Appropriation was an integral part of Roman military practice (N. Rosenstein, 'Spoils and the Roman Military', in: Helm and Roselaar). Most, though not all, Roman victories led to stripping the conquered city of its valuables, including human captives, both to humiliate the conquered and to enrich the Romans. For Roman elites in the Republic, appropriation was their primary goal both for the prestige that *spolia* provided and for the political cachet (S. Lentzsch, 'Problems and Opportunities of Warfare in Allied Territory in the Second Punic War', in: Helm and Roselaar).

On the other hand, some scholars have cautioned that the drive for prestige was not the primary motivator for warfare, and that greater attention should be paid to economic incentives (e.g. P. Kay, *Rome's Economic Revolution* [2014]; J. Tan, *Power and Public Finance at Rome* [2017]; M. Taylor, *Soldiers and Silver* [2020]). Certainly, for ordinary soldiers plunder was often their sole reliable form of monetary enrichment since pay in the Republic could be sporadic. Regardless of the motivation, an extractive mindset typified elite Roman cultural identity, so much so that Roman commanders at times behaved irrationally and dangerously in their pursuit of financial profit, even exceeding the boundaries of their command, up to and including unprovoked attacks to attain plunder (i.e. L. Licinius Lucullus against the Vaccaei in Spain) and blatant extortion (as with C. Verres in Sicily).

Indeed, one of the most enduring debates on material appropriation has been the question of how much authority Roman generals had over their spoils. One school has argued that the general had virtually complete authority (e.g. I. Shatzman, 'The Roman General's Authority Over Booty', *Historia* 21 [1972]; W. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327–70 BC* [1979]). They argue that commanders could decide how much of the spoils to provide to the treasury or as donatives to their soldiers, while keeping the rest for public construction and to adorn their houses. The other school has argued a much more limited control, restricted mostly to what amount went towards public construction (e.g. F. Bona, 'Sul concetto di "manubiae" e sulla responsabilità del magistrato in ordine alla preda', *Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris* 26 [1960]; J.B. Churchill, '*Ex qua quod vellent facerent*: Roman magistrates' authority over *praeda* and *manubiae*', *TAPhA* 129 [1999]).

The issue of jurisdiction has remained a controversial and much-discussed question in part because it touches on so many other subjects, from *ex manubiis* temple construction to soldiers' pay and to how Rome funded its wars. The debate over jurisdiction and financial profit is a backdrop to many of the chapters in *Spoils in the Roman Republic. Boon and Bane* and particularly those touching on finance and strategy (J. Rich, 'Roman Spoils and Triumphs'; M. Taylor, '*Tributum* and Spoils in the Middle Republic').

In recent years, scholars have placed greater emphasis on Rome's extractive mentality. Many have pivoted towards describing Rome as a 'cargo culture', arguing that appropriation was a central mechanism of Empire (M. Loar et al. [edd.], *Rome, Empire of Plunder* [2018], p. 6). Particularly since the publication of *Rome, Empire of Plunder*, scholars have examined how this acquisitive mindset shaped Roman cultural identity and practices and therefore have somewhat left behind questions of the more economic aspects of extraction.

The contributors to *Spoils in the Roman Republic* return to that debate to understand the myriad networks of appropriation and the degree to which the Romans standardised or legally defined any part of the process. The volume's editors situate their work within the historiography on predatory warfare (e.g. W. Harris [1979]; J. Armstrong, *War and Society in Early Rome: From Warlords to Generals* [2016]; P.J. Burton, *Roman Imperialism* [2019]). Their approach to spoils centralises networks of extraction, in particular the state,

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armies and merchants. Thus, the volume defines spoils as 'any investment or transfer of forcefully exacted resources into areas of Roman dominion' (p. 18). This broad definition includes money, moveable objects and human cargo; but, unlike many other volumes, this book focuses more on organised resource extraction. In doing so, the volume takes a more comprehensive approach to spoils as a category of analysis than has heretofore been seen.

To accomplish this, the volume's editors cluster the contributions around themes of extraction: war and its spoils as an economic resource; land distribution as a type of spoil; modes of extraction; the value and impact of spoils; and their symbolic dimensions. Foregrounded in the volume is the concept of value, that war brought spoils, and spoils provided economic, political and symbolic value to the conquerors. Thus, while many of the chapters fit well within the material appropriation stage, they also touch on later stages. Consequently, their broad approach allows for unique connections to be made regarding spoils. They are not just something to be seized, sold or used as decoration. Indeed, a significant percentage of the volume focuses more on bringing aspects of how the Romans paid for war into the discussion of *spolia*, including taxation, soldiers' wages (G. Cabezas-Guzmán and T. Ñaco del Hoyo, 'Spoils, Army Wages and Supplies in Rome's Early Intervention in Hispania'), indemnities and coin production (M.K. Termeer, 'Spoils and the Allies').

M. Taylor, for example, re-examines the *tributum*, arguing that the focus on spoils has meant scholars have overlooked the important role the citizen tax played in the state's ability to finance war ('*Tributum* and Spoils in the Middle Republic', p. 215). In contrast, J. Rich argues that despite massive indemnities, as well as the huge figures Livy and Polybius routinely quote for the coins and bullion plundered in these wars, Rome's wars were not 'profitable'. Only the wars in the Greek East might have brought in enough spoils and indemnity payments to pay for themselves (J. Rich, 'Roman Spoils and Triumphs', p. 238).

This debate on the profitability of Rome's Hellenistic Wars is part of a wider discussion of war profits that has stressed that Rome rarely, if ever, generated enough income from spoils and indemnities for wars to pay for themselves (e.g. P. Kay [2014]; H. Beck et al. [edd.], *Money and Power in the Roman Republic* [2016]). While many scholars now acknowledge that Rome's wars could not have paid for themselves, B. Jordan ('The Revenues of Asia and the Evolution of the *Res Publica*') takes a broader perspective on profitability, arguing that, while the Roman state did not purposely seek economic gain as part of its military strategy, long-term revenue streams indicate that the Romans began to exploit their provinces more systematically and on a much larger scale in the first century BCE.

The other novel addition to the debate on material appropriation that *Spoils in the Roman Republic* provides is the emphasis on land distribution and the shifting relationship with allies. P. Vanderpuy theorises that land spoliation and redistribution was Rome's solution to the increasing inability of small tenant farmers either to supply the necessary production for the Roman army or, by implication, to qualify for military service ('The Art of Acquisition'). In Vanderpuy's view, territorial expansion in the fourth century BCE fundamentally restructured the 'agricultural-economic structure of Roman society' (p. 110), imbedding spoliation in the infrastructure of the Roman economy. This restructuring is also evident in the shift to a more predatory form of warfare, observed by Helm ('Born to Plunder'). Roselaar, on the other hand, looks at a particular type of land spoliation in the form of colonies ('The Grand Strategy?'). In her view previous scholarship on colonisation has tended to read the two functions of Roman colonies, strategic and economic, as mutually exclusive – a colony could be one or the other but not both – whereas she sees colonies as a significant component of Roman strategy *because* colonies could provide both (p. 179).

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In contrast to *Spoils in the Roman Republic*, in which the emphasis on extraction requires a primary focus on war, the contributors to *Reading Greek and Hellenistic-Roman Spolia* are interested in the impact that *spolia* had on the Romans after the battlefield. They stress that *spolia* always involved taking things from one place, which represented the 'Other', and moving it to another, where it had to be incorporated into the 'Self' (Versluys, '*Triumphus* and the Taming of Objects'). As such, they argue that studies of Roman war booty belong to the wider field of connectivity studies and globalisation, which is why they analyse Greek, Hellenistic and Roman *spolia* together (de Jong and Versluys, 'Spolia and the Question of Appropriation', p. 4). Their focus on the cultural impact of spoils places most of the volume's chapters firmly in the stages after material appropriation in Versluys's categorisation.

The second of those stages of appropriation is 'objectification'. In this stage, plundered objects and human captives took on new meanings as commanders transported spoils to Rome for their anticipated triumphs and as the merchants who purchased spoils abroad brought them to Rome for sale. Statues have always been of particular interest for objectification because of their fungibility. More than most other *spolia*, statues had the ability to add new meanings while retaining aspects of their original meaning or function. S. van de Velde demonstrates this by exploring the Ludovisi acrolith, unpacking how it and similar items accrued new meanings upon their arrival in Rome (S. van de Velde, 'Spoils of Sicily and Their Impact on Late Republican Rome'). In particular, she argues that, due to the complex, potentially dangerous process of integrating new cults into Rome, cult statues had to retain some of their original meaning.

Versluys takes a very material approach, defining the objectification stage as one in which the 'alien object' is renamed and endowed with new meaning in its new context (p. 30). In other words, once acquired, plunder ceases to be solely a foreign cultural object; it is now both foreign and Roman. P. ter Keurs ('How to Deal with "Things from Outside"') and Versluys stress that the objectification stage was highly charged, with the potential for danger to the community. While one focuses on Indonesia and the other on Rome, they both argue that *spolia* required an object-transfer ritual to deactivate the foreign, potentially threatening components of an object to refashion it as part of the conquering community. For Versluys this object-transfer ritual is the triumph itself. While he acknowledges that we have no evidence for the lustration of objects in Rome, he still believes that it represented a form of purification of the foreign objects (p. 38). While difficult to prove, this idea opens interesting avenues for the relationship between the triumph and other ritual parades as well as with other apotropaic processes.

When juxtaposed with C. MacDonald's argument ('Distortion on Parade: Rethinking Successful Appropriation in Rome', in: M. Loar et al. [2018]) that triumphal parades were carefully manufactured distortions of reality, a sort of invented tradition, it paints an interesting new picture of the triumph that supplements the rich body of scholarship on the triumphal parade (e.g. M. Beard, *The Roman Triumph* [2007]; I. Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession* [2009]). The triumphal parade has always been essential to any study of *spolia*, but in the last twenty-odd years scholars have tended to focus increasingly on what happened to the spoils after the parade, which is evident in the volumes under review. H. Beck, for example, observes that in the Republican period, the urban landscape was already undergoing drastic change, and adding the continual circulation of plunder and the resultant funds for public construction into that mix made plunder 'part of the Roman DNA' ('Global Spoils on a Local Stage: The Case of Republican Rome', in: Helm and Roselaar).

One approach to the objectification of spoils after the parade has been to analyse architecture, especially so-called manubial temples. E. Orlin (*Temples, Religion, and*

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Politics in the Roman Republic [1997; 2002]), for example, argues that the Senate had significantly more authority in temple construction than previous scholars have allowed (e.g. A. Ziolkowski, *The Temples of Mid-Republican Rome and Their Historical and Topographical Context* [1992]). Scholars have also investigated the political and social functions of public architecture and how commanders and their descendants utilised buildings associated with their family's achievements as a form of political cachet (e.g. J.R. Patterson, 'Spoils, Infrastructure and Politics in Rome and Italy', in: Helm and Roselaar; T. Hölscher, 'The Transformation of Victory into Power', in: S. Dillon and K. Welch [edd.], *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* [2006]; A. Russell, *The Politics of Public Space in Republican Rome* [2015]; P. Davies, *Architecture and Politics in Republican Rome* [2017]).

Another branch has focused on the decorative function of spoils and their symbolic value, noting that spoils gradually enhanced both public and private buildings with a museum-like quality, which, as with temples proclaiming family achievements, provided social and political cachet (K. Welch, '*Domi Militiaeque*: Roman Domestic Aesthetics and War Booty in the Republic', in: S. Dillon and K. Welch [edd.], *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* [2006]; S.H. Rutledge, *Ancient Rome as a Museum: Power, Identity, and the Culture of Collecting* [2012]). While this model predates Versluys's concept of stages of appropriation, the disposition of spoils after the triumph and their social function fits neatly in Versluys' third category of appropriation, 'incorporation', when the object has moved beyond the 'Other' to function effectively in its new environment (*Reading Greek and Hellenistic-Roman Spolia*, p. 30).

Versluys stresses that in the incorporation stage objects could be read in myriad ways, not all of them anticipated by the communicator. There is a vast body of scholarship on the communicative function of Roman objects – from sculptural programmes to statues to coins. Scholars have, for example, explored how Roman elites, generals and emperors created a sort of visual language through *spolia* and commissioned art that communicated power and cultural values (e.g. P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* [1988]; T. Hölscher, *Visual Power in Ancient Greece and Rome* [2018]). Recently, however, the focus has been on the local idiosyncrasies of Roman imperial imagery and its ability to have multiple, overlapping meanings that did not always speak to the needs of the conquerors (e.g. A. Russell and M. Hellström [edd.], *The Social Dynamics of Roman Imperial Imagery* [2020]; A. Roy, *Empire of Images: Visualizing the Conquered in the Roman Republic* [2024]).

Because of this lack of control, incorporation also sparked anxieties over how the constant influx of spoils was reshaping Roman values. The so-called *luxus* debate has a rich historiography. Sparked by E.S. Gruen's analysis of elite Rome's complex relationship with philhellenism (*Cultural and National Identity in Republican Rome* [1992]), scholars have expended significant energy on assessing the Romans' generalised anxiety about the spurious influences of luxury on traditional Republican values (e.g. C. Edwards, *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome* [1993]; A. Dalby, *Empire of Pleasures* [2002]; E. Zanda, *Fighting Hydra-Like Luxury* [2013]). Other scholars have emphasised that cultural influence was not a top-down, unilateral process, and that Roman anxieties stemmed more from the rapid cultural change wrought by imperial expansion than fear of foreign luxury. A. Wallace-Hadrill, for example, suggests that Hellenisation generated such angst among Roman writers in part because it was a multi-directional process that involved prolonged adaptation, resistance and reinterpretation not only among Roman elites but also among other Italians (*Rome's Cultural Revolution* [2008]).

One of the key goals of *Reading Greek and Hellenistic-Roman Spolia* is to interrogate the commonly understood gap between what Roman authors say about luxury and what

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scholars can see archaeologically. Pieper, for example, asserts that the concern with *luxuria* was a literary strategy that allowed Roman writers to grapple with the potential dissonances between idealised collective ethics and the personal ethics of Roman commanders ('Spolia as Exempla/Exempla as Spolia'). He also suggests that, as literary quotations, *exempla* were themselves a form of *spolia*, serving a similar function for moralists that writing about material spoils did (p. 49). Part of their performative strength rested on the fact that, as with material spoils, textual *spolia* retained part of their original cultural meaning when culled for *exempla* (p. 50).

Taking a different approach to the anxieties over luxury, L. van Gils and R. Henzel analyse the evidence for a 'gastronomic revolution' beginning in the second century BCE due to changing fashions spurred by Roman expansion. While much of the rhetoric from Livy and others about these changing fashions blames Rome's Hellenistic conquests, van Gils and Henzel observe that the changes in consumption stemmed more from innovations in production, including meat consumption, and the growing availability of banqueting accoutrements (p. 155). Significantly, they speculate that increasing access to silver tableware stemmed less from the despoliation of Hellenistic kingdoms and more from access to Spanish silver mines, the output of which, as other scholars have noted, vastly increased Roman coin production and revenue (e.g. K. Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy* [1996]; M. Taylor, *Soldiers and Silver* [2020]).

Like the works of many other scholars, both edited volumes use the triumphs of M. Claudius Marcellus (cos. 214 BCE) and L. Aemilius Paullus (cos. 168 BCE) to examine Roman elites' evolving relationship with spoils, including the tension between the consumer demand for the new fashions these triumphs introduced and the fear that those same spoils were eroding traditional Roman values. They diverge, however, in that they focus not on what Marcellus did with his spoils or how his spoils created new aesthetic tastes; rather, they focus on the impact that Marcellus' spoliation had on Syracuse itself and on the long friendly relationship that Rome had once had with Syracuse. L. Pfuntner, for example, investigates how first Marcellus and then Scipio Aemilianus navigated the diplomatic ramifications of Syracuse's despoliation – a theme famously picked up on by Cicero in his accusations against Verres ('Sicily, Rome, and the Communicative Power of Spoils', in: Helm and Roselaar).

While Roman writers presented the triumph of L. Aemilius Paullus as an *exemplum*, with a heavy dose of moralising, it did not occupy quite the same position in Roman literature as Marcellus' triumph did. It has always been noteworthy that, despite how frequently Roman writers discussed Marcellus' triumph, they did not record his spoils with much specificity. Descriptions of Paullus' campaigns, triumph and spoils, on the other hand, are much fuller. That richness is the subject of M. Buijs's 'narratological-linguistic analysis' of Plutarch's and Diodorus Siculus' accounts of Paullus' triumph ('Showing and Telling Spolia', in: de Jong and Versluys). Buijs walks through how Plutarch makes the reader an eyewitness to the parade, creating an almost cinematic effect, whereas Diodorus provides a more structured, hands-off description.

In contrast, R. Strootman draws on Versluys's four stages of appropriation to trace Paullus' spoils from their original Hellenistic context through their Roman transformation ('The Glory of Alexander and Philip Made Spoil By Roman Arms', in: de Jong and Versluys). Strootman demonstrates that Diodorus' account provides telltale evidence about Perseus' soldiers and the importance of military leadership in Macedonia. Strootman then connects back to Versluys's appropriation stages, arguing that Macedonian spoils were transformed from symbols of military power into 'symbols of powerlessness' that were all the more potent for their tangential association with Alexander the Great.

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A final but no less critical element of the incorporation stage is the entry of human captives into Rome in staggering numbers. While slavery has always been of interest to Roman historians, it was mainly after the publication of K. Hopkins's much-debated *Conquerors and Slaves* (1981) that scholars began to look more broadly at how conquest reshaped Roman demography and transformed Rome into a 'slave society', to borrow from M. Finley (*The Ancient Economy* [1973]). In *Spoils in the Roman Republic* K. Huemoeller takes an extractive approach to human spoils, arguing that the perceived value of captives to the Romans, both monetary and social, has been underestimated ('The Human Spoils of the Roman Republic'). She reads captives as an adaptable form of spoil, one that can be sold or exploited in numerous ways. As such, captives were as much a market, a resource to be extracted, as the fashionable luxury goods that caused Roman writers so much anxiety.

Huemoeller's approach adds a different perspective to scholarship on captivity in ancient Rome, which has generally focused on how captives were transported and where they ended up once enslaved. In particular, A. Richlin's work has highlighted that Plautine comedy engaged with the realities of war in its contemporary moment, but that many of the performers and artisans involved in comedic performance were part of a wider circulation of human cargo into Rome via conquest (A. Richlin, 'The One Who Paid the Butcher's Bill', in: J. Clark and B. Turner [edd.], *Brill's Companion to Military Defeat in Ancient Mediterranean Society* [2017]; A. Richlin, 'The Traffic in Shtick', in: M. Loar et al. [edd.], *Rome, Empire of Plunder* [2018]).

Human captives lead us to the final stage of appropriation, 'transformation'. For Versluys, this is when *spolia* have become part of the *habitus*, fully integrated into Roman culture (*Reading Greek and Hellenistic-Roman Spolia*, p. 31). He stresses that this integration need not mean that *spolia* lost all connection with their original context. In fact, part of their cultural value stemmed from their association both with the triumph and with foreign cultures. The transformation stage is, arguably, the stage at which the Romans began to negotiate and adapt their own identities as they absorbed material, people, tastes and ideas into their own culture. In other words, this is when Roman elites and emperors could use spoils to shape public perception and memory.

One way in which the Roman elites deployed plunder ideologically was through architectural programmes that harmonised *spolia* with Roman themes. P. Zanker's work on Augustus' ideological sculptural programme established a trend for viewing Augustus' reign as a major turning point in Roman visual ideology (1988). Similarly, E. Orlin demonstrates that Augustus' redesign of the southeastern portion of the Campus Martius carefully balanced restoration and innovation to invest meaning and memory in buildings such as the Temple of Apollo Sosianus and the Theatre of Marcellus (Orlin, 'Augustan Reconstruction and Roman Memory', in: K. Galinsky [ed.], *Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity* [2016]).

While Augustus was undoubtedly instrumental in shaping imperial imagery and ideology, K. Hölkeskamp and others have demonstrated that elite self-fashioning through spoils began to shape public memory much earlier (Hölkeskamp, 'The Self-Fashioning of the New Elite', in: Helm and Roselaar; K. Welch, '*Domi Militiaeque*', in: S. Dillon and K. Welch [edd.], *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* [2006]; M. Popkin, *The Architecture of the Roman Triumph* [2016]). While memory studies are always central to Hölkeskamp's work, in this volume he focuses on the transition from the style of highly militaristic historical representation of the fourth and third centuries BCE to the much more artistic, and consequently abstract, representation of Roman militarism that began after M. Claudius Marcellus' conquest of Syracuse. The Romans had to find a way to merge two entirely different visual systems, which they did by creating 'ensembles'. They developed a visual

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vocabulary that relied on groups of signs and that was governed by grammatical rules – in this case, artistic conventions – to convey meaning.

Cultural memory has been a popular subject in recent scholarship. The Romans in many ways are an ideal case study for cultural memory because they invested so much symbolic meaning in monumental architecture that individual structures became sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*). At the same time, the Romans, like many other empires, did not place much value on accuracy when it came to historical representation. Rather, historical representation was intended to communicate the achievements of an individual elite man, a family, an emperor or Rome itself through a language of shared cultural values. That those achievements might be embellished mattered little.

The last of the three works under review takes up the challenge of exploring how cultural memory functioned in the art of historical representation. Holliday is a renowned expert in Roman historical art, but in *Power, Image, and Memory. Historical Subjects in Art* he moves far beyond Rome, tracing historical representation from ancient Mesopotamia to Pablo Picasso. Central to his study is the question of how individual leaders and states conveyed power through imagery and how they drew on or shaped cultural memory. Utilising Maurice Halbwachs's definition of collective memory as 'a reconstruction of the past in light of the present', Holliday states that for memories to move from the individual to the collective they need to be invested with a certain amount of prestige but also to be rooted in reality. Commemoration, therefore, provided a means to 'reinforce ideological assumptions' (p. 7) that bolstered whoever was in power.

Holliday's work draws on a prolific historiography on Roman cultural memory that sees cultural memory as something actively shaped by various cultural processes, including commemorative practices (e.g. K. Galinsky [ed.], *Memoria Romana* [2011]; [ed.], *Cultural Memories in the Roman Empire* [2016]; D. Larmour and D. Spencer [edd.], *The Sites of Rome* [2007]; M. Dinter and C. Guérin [edd.], *Cultural Memory in Republican and Augustan Rome* [2023]). While many Roman historians shy away from the term 'propaganda', Holliday embraces it in its most literal sense, arguing that art functioned as propaganda because it shaped individual and communal memories of specific events, creating a 'politics of truth', in the Foucauldian sense (p. 7). Propaganda's goal is to control the experience of the viewer, who interprets art based on culturally imbedded artistic conventions and values, so that the viewer will become invested in the propaganda's agenda and, more importantly, encourage others to share that view (pp. 12–13).

Holliday's case studies show that propagandistic art shares certain principles regardless of the society employing it, and that it relies heavily on idiosyncratic artistic conventions and cultural values. For example, he notes that in Akkad Naram-Sin's attempt to claim his own divine agency through his victory stele this was held up by later writers as the hubristic reason for the fall of the Akkadian Empire (p. 30). In Egypt, by contrast, divine authority was central to pharaonic power and contributed to a highly conservative and symbolic artistic style. When Ramses II wanted to diverge from those conventions by flooding his reliefs with narrative detail, he only had the freedom to do so in Nubia (p. 40). Holliday's wide-ranging case studies demonstrate effectively how art could project the 'intentions of communities of makers' (p. 13) and shape a community's memory of events that were central to its identity.

The three books under review make valuable contributions to the study of the relationship between spoils and power in ancient Rome and beyond. Spoils have always been difficult to analyse comprehensively because they require scholars to trek through so many different subfields within an already vast historiography. By attempting to take a more global, connected perspective and by utilising a broader definition, *Spoils in the Roman Republic* and *Reading Greek and Hellenistic-Roman Spolia* provide fresh perspectives on

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the entire life history of spoils, from their initial extraction through their transformation into Roman cultural objects. Holliday may not speak directly about spoils, but his work illustrates that spoils are not the only things transformed through war and appropriation. Memory itself is reshaped to create new identities and invest a community in shared representations of its past. Despite how comprehensive these three volumes are, they only seem to highlight how much more we can learn by applying different methodologies to generate new questions of seemingly well-known source material.

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