THE ORIGINS OF ROMAN HISTORICAL COMMEMORATION IN THE VISUAL ARTS

History was an important element of Roman Republican culture, as revealed by the numerous historical accounts and panegyrics written during this period. Roman patrons also exploited the visual arts to convey messages about history whose immediacy no text could rival. In this study, Peter J. Holliday explores the development of Roman history painting and sculpture in an effort to broaden our understanding of the ways in which Roman commemorative art constructed a narrative for the ancient viewer. Providing a survey of this subject that takes into account recent archaeological discoveries and theoretical debates, he also considers how style worked in tandem with narrative and had political significance. Holliday's study sharpens our understanding of the kinds of narrative that the Roman elite wished to convey through images and what these images tell us about their achievements and the Republic that they served.

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This book had its genesis in my doctoral dissertation. Though that investigation was completed years ago, I have often come back to the intriguing problems raised in the study of historical art in general and Roman commemorative practices specifically. I wrote this book for people who share these interests, be they from the field of art history, classical archaeology, ancient history, or literary studies. I have learned much from recent work in those areas, and I hope that this endeavor will in turn prove useful for them.

I am indebted to the help of many friends and colleagues in the preparation of this study. I conducted research in Italy and wrote an initial draft with the assistance of a Rome Prize in Art History from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Academy in Rome, 1994–5. The Academy and its staff were instrumental in the completion of my work. The intellectual atmosphere fostered by the Fellows and Visiting Scholars was at once supportive and stimulating; I am especially grateful to Anthony Corbeill, Elaine Fantham, Sybille Haynes, Richard Lim, Diana Minsky, Tina Najbjerg, Christopher Parslow, and John G. Pedley. It was particularly gratifying to reconnect with a former teacher, John Clarke, who served as the Resident in Art History at the Academy in spring 1995. John not only shared his expertise, but also helped me obtain *permessi* to study objects in various collections in Rome, especially through introductions to many of his Italian colleagues. Through him I also met Eric Moormann and Roger Ling, whose conversations challenged my views. At an earlier stay at the Academy, William V. Harris generously shared his knowledge about Roman imperialism, and Robert E. A. Palmer offered many insights into Roman religious practices. Finally, the library of the Deutsches Archaeologische Institut in Rome filled those few gaps not covered by the American Academy's own fine collection. I also want to thank the Vatican Museums, the Museo dei Conservatori, and the Museo Nazionale delle Terme in Rome, the British Museum, the Munich Glyptotek, and the Musée du Louvre for allowing me to study and photograph objects in their collections. Excerpts from Robert Fitzgerald's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* are used by permission of Random House, Inc.; unless otherwise cited, all other translations are mine.

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PREFACE

It was while he walked
From one to another wall of the great temple
And waited for the queen, staring amazed
At Carthaginian promise, at the handiwork
Of artificers and the toil they spent upon it:
He found before his eyes the Trojan battles
In the old war, now known throughout the world –
The great Atridae, Priam, and Achilles,
Fierce in his rage at both sides. Here Aeneas
Halted, and tears came.
"What spot on earth,"
He said, "what region of the earth, Achatës,
Is not full of the story of our sorrow?
Look, here is Priam. Even so far away
Great valor has due honor; they weep here
For how the world goes, and our life that passes
Touches their hearts. Throw off your fear. This fame
Insures some kind of refuge."
He broke off
To feast his eyes and mind on a mere image,
Sighing often, cheeks grown wet with tears,
To see again how, fighting around Troy,
The Greeks broke here, and ran before the Trojans,
And there the Phrygians ran, as plumed Achilles
Harried them in his warcar. Nearby, then,
He recognized the snowy canvas tents
Of Rhesus, and more tears came: these, betrayed
In first sleep, Diomedes devastated,
Swording many, till he reeked with blood,
Then turned the mettlesome horses toward the beachhead
Before they tasted Trojan grass or drank
At Xanthus ford.

> And on another panel
> Troilus, without his armor, luckless boy,
> No match for his antagonist, Achilles,
> Appeared pulled onward by his team: he clung
> To his warcar, though fallen backward, hanging
> On to the reins still, head dragged on the ground,
> His javelin scribbling S's in the dust.
> Meanwhile to hostile Pallas' shrine
> The Trojan women walked with hair unbound,
> Bearing the robe of offering, in sorrow,
> Entreating her, beating their breasts. But she,
> Her face averted, would not raise her eyes.
> And there was Hector, dragged around Troy walls
> Three times, and there for gold Achilles sold him,
> Bloodless and lifeless. Now indeed Aeneas
> Heaved a mighty sigh from deep within him,
> Seeing the spoils, the chariot, and the corpse
> Of his great friend, and Priam, all unarmed,
> Stretching his hands out.
> He himself he saw
> In combat with the first of the Achaeans,
> And saw the ranks of Dawn, black Memnon's arms;
> Then, leading the battalion of Amazons
> With half-moon shields, he saw Penthesilëa
> Fiery amid her host, buckling a golden
> Girdle beneath her bare and arrogant breast,
> A girl who dared fight men, a warrior queen.
> Now, while these wonders were being surveyed
> By Aeneas of Dardania, while he stood
> Enthralled, devouring all in one long gaze,
> The queen paced toward the temple in her beauty,
> Dido, with a throng of men behind.
>
> Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.614–77
> (Fitzgerald translation)

This book investigates issues related to Roman historical commemorations, especially the development of historical painting and relief sculpture during the Republican period. There is much *communis opinio* about Roman art during the Republican period: that it is stylistically eclectic, heavily indebted to Greek practices while revealing indigenous Italic traditions in its iconography, and that it manifests important innovations in commemorative genres such as portraiture and historical relief. This study will not overturn any of these observations; indeed, the evidence presented documents their validity. Rather, my goal is to determine why Romans pursued particular themes, why they developed the tastes they did, and why their art appears so tendentious.

Some of the material in the study formed the core of my dissertation, which sat fallow for several years as I sought a structure to make sense of the rich

variety of media and images. During that period, I have benefited not only from the effects of distance but also from the new approaches of theoretical models in art history and other humanistic disciplines. As J. J. Pollitt observes: "We continually reexamine the past in the light of ideas, theories, and problems that currently happen to interest us . . . [N]ew attitudes towards works of art and literature have something to do with changing social and cultural conditions, as they did in the Hellenistic period."[1] In only a few cases has new material become available for the study of Roman historical commemorations, but recent conservation and restoration work has literally changed the appearance of some very well known monuments.

This study demonstrates the frequent interactions between Rome and other Italic peoples, especially during the middle and late Republic, important periods for contemporary historians and archaeologists. It contributes to the current discussion about how the Romans created an Italic koiné by adapting Greek precedent in areas as diverse as literature, philosophy, and art. Ancient Romans themselves recognized the importance of historical commemorations. Virgil fashioned Aeneas and his environment in terms that Romans would easily recognize. He wanted the hero's world to resonate with his audience so that Roman readers could discern the very origins of their civilization within his narrative of a mythic past. At a fundamental moment in his epic account of Rome's foundation, Virgil describes a suite of historical paintings decorating Juno's temple at Carthage. They commemorate events from the Trojan War, episodes drawn from what we regard as the realm of myth, but personally recalled as history by Aeneas and his men. (Throughout this study, it will become evident that Romans did not always choose to distinguish the realms of myth and history as we generally do today.) The *Aeneid* follows the conventions of classical epic – significantly, a Greek model – and begins *in medias res*. These passages allow Virgil to recount critical events that preceded his narrative and to propel the action into the present, explaining the emotional state of the Trojans and setting the stage for the further peregrinations of Aeneas.

It is particularly interesting that Virgil's lines present the general nature of historical art while also illuminating characteristically Roman aspects of its function and display. Historical art commemorates persons and events important to the community; representations, therefore, must be clearly individuated and recognizable to the spectator. Toward that end, such works feature recognizable protagonists, sometimes distinguished by carefully rendered iconographic details such as weapons and dress, at other times by inscriptions, and placed occasionally in specific landscape settings. Aeneas instantly discerns portraits of Priam, Achilles, and even himself. In one scene, distinctive arms and costumes characterize Memnon's Ethiopians, while in another, crescent shields distinguish Penthesilea's Amazons from Greek and Trojan warriors. Specificity of that kind, combined with commemorative intent, differentiates historical art from scenes conceived generically or drawn from daily life. Diomedes's surprise attack on Rhesus's encampment and Achilles's desecration of Hector's body are

not mere depictions of battles; rather, they stand out as singular events within an epic struggle. Significantly, Aeneas and his companions participated in the events portrayed, and are therefore able to interpret the exact meaning of the compositions and motifs, whereas spectators from another cultural background might have difficulty discerning their significance.

Historical works, similarly, often have a narrative character and tend to celebrate meaningful events; in other cases, however, they may function iconically as emblems of power and authority. Occasionally the same work may possess both qualities. Quite aside from the passage under discussion, Virgil's entire epic parallels the structures of visual narratives: recurring *topoi* reflect the repetition of compositional types, such as battles, celebrations of victory, meetings and negotiations, and scenes of religious procession and worship. Narrative, however, is a more inclusive category than history, and it embraces events from the lives of gods and heroes (and, in later art, saints). To equate *topos* with cliché, however, misses the point: *topoi* become *topoi* precisely because they work, and viewers readily accept them as explanations for things that resonate within their cultural fabric.[2] We might attribute the painted commemoration of recent events at distant Troy on a Carthaginian temple to poetic conceit, but Virgil's audience would express as little surprise as Aeneas. By the late first century B.C., Romans had grown accustomed to generals displaying paintings and sculptures in temples and public buildings to celebrate their recent military victories in far-off lands, and such decorations had become a major element in the civic environment.

Historical art is characteristic of civilizations that feature distinctively ceremonial characteristics and a predominant emphasis on personal and dynastic power. The use of historical subjects flourished under the monarchies of the ancient Near East, where depictions of battles and processions dominated the decoration of Assyrian and Achaemenid Persian palaces, and in Egypt, where history begins with a famous work of commemorative art, the small votive tablet of King Narmer.[3] Historical art was rare, however, in the Greek world until Alexander the Great and the Diadochi established a dynastic spirit. Although the Italic and Etruscan people had a rich tradition of realistic representation, especially in their funerary art, true historical subjects first appeared in Italy in the third century B.C., precisely when Rome's territorial expansion brought its ruling elite into contact with the historical art of Hellenistic centers. Roman historical commemorations flourished throughout the later Republic, stimulated by the social and political dynamics of that turbulent period.

Writing at the dawn of the Empire, Virgil looked back on generations of Roman practice. His patron, Augustus, had commissioned the poet to fashion a national epic integrating the foundation of Rome and of the Julian family in the person of Aeneas, from whom, of course, the *princeps* traced his own lineage. The Republic had witnessed the merging of individual identity and power with that of the entire *gens*, for Romans believed that families drew those qualities from their individual members. The commemorative works analyzed here raise

fascinating questions of where identity and accomplishment primarily lie: in the single person or in the *gens*, and in what the individual adds to familial prestige and tradition and what, in turn, he or she draws from his or her genealogy.

The extreme emotional reactions the densely detailed paintings evoked from Aeneas and his companion, Achates, would not startle the Augustan reader: during the political turmoil of the late Republic, members of the ruling elite commissioned historical paintings specifically to arouse profound responses from Roman audiences. Reliving the fall of Troy through painted narratives pains Aeneas; knowing that the commemoration of their achievements has proven Trojan virtue and secured them glory, however, brings him solace. On one level, Roman historical commemorations provided models of conduct for citizens and thereby reinforced collective values; but on another, they advertised the achievements of individual aristocrats maneuvering for power. Public action and private ambition meet in Roman historical art.

Aeneas and the other heroes depicted on Juno's temple were the elite of their world, and the artist brings their achievements before the eyes of the Carthaginians as models worthy of commemoration; in the same way, Virgil's words keep their deeds alive for Roman readers. Roman historians pointed to the accomplishments of great men as moralizing *exempla*, models of virtue for inspiration and instruction. History, however, is a cultural product whose narrative varies, depending on who writes it; in the Roman Republic, members of the ruling elite controlled history writing. In that highly competitive political milieu, aristocrats offered evidence of their virtue through high birth, wealth and ostentatious display, rhetorical skills and cultural refinement, victory in successive popular elections, and, above all, military leadership. This political structure reveals a compelling impetus for the development of the arts of self-promotion. Through the public commemoration of their accomplishments, aristocrats secured praise and glory from both their peers and the general electorate; at the same time, they connected themselves with national values. As this book shows, however, historicity for the Romans had less to do with telling the truth than with didacticism. History provided the Roman elite with a vehicle to define themselves in relation to their fellow aristocrats, lower Roman orders, and non-Romans, and to understand and inculcate their own conduct.

Roman historical commemorations, therefore, not only secured the private memories of participants in actual events, they also served an instructive and promotional function in the public sphere of Roman political and religious institutions. Members of the Roman governing class commissioned such works to inform a specifically Roman audience of their achievements, to educate that audience about their policies, and thus to persuade that audience to adopt their views and follow a particular course of action. Romans used historical commemorations to implement ideology.

The literature treating Roman historical commemorations is extensive. Indeed, the topic has attracted scholars since the study of Roman art – as distinct from Greek art – began more than a century ago. For example, pioneers

such as F. Wickhoff and A. Riegl attempted to discern the phenomenon of artistic change through their analyses of stylistic and formal transformation in Roman monuments, many of which were historical in nature. This book allies itself with what is often termed the "new art history" in its emphasis on the cultural context in which artistic production and reception occur. Such approaches to Roman art are, of course, hardly novel.[4] During the last century, G. Rodenwaldt, P. G. Hamberg, A. Alföldi, R. Brilliant, H. P. L'Orange, S. Settis, P. Zanker, and numerous other scholars have explored the powerful connections between Roman society and art, sharpening our comprehension of (primarily) imperial commissions. Following the Second World War, R. Bianchi Bandinelli published studies that synthesized recent archaeological findings and examined the productions of Republican society from new perspectives beyond traditional elite patronage. Scholars such as A. Carandini, J. Clarke, F. Coarelli, and M. Torelli have further developed his model and thereby deepened our understanding of the culture of the Roman Republic. Postwar archaeological excavation also intensified interest in the relationship between Roman art and its precursors. O. Brendel led the way with his inquiries into the origins of Roman art, and I. S. Ryberg and B. M. Felletti Maj made significant contributions to the vital investigation of the formation of a characteristically Roman artistic tradition. More recently, the analysis of J. J. Pollitt has focused on the interpenetration of Rome and the Hellenistic world, and T. Hölscher has contributed to our interpretation of the sign systems Roman society created and utilized in its ideologically determined art.

Throughout this book, my debt to these and other scholars is evident. While this study analyzes artistic practices in relation to various pre-Roman (primarily Italian and Greek) precedents that engendered a developed Roman art during the Republic, it does so specifically from the perspectives of current theoretical discourse in language and culture. By following such models, this project helps us understand better the Roman dependence on and independence of these alleged precedents and improves our perception of Greece's role in the formation of Roman art.[5] My goal, however, is not to displace the works under discussion from the center of critical interest or to diminish their original creative importance. Rather, by bestowing attention on the monuments as agents or signifiers of Roman social values, the analyses presented here strive to position them within the discourse at the center of current art history. This mode of inquiry permits modern viewers to imitate their ancient predecessors and consider a variety of equally meaningful interpretations, including ironic or potentially subversive readings.

Anthropological studies have suggested that the symbolic actions of ideology effectually constitute culture. Such analyses argue that an ideological statement is not simply a misconceived understanding but a rhetorical act that draws "its power from its capacity to grasp, formulate, and communicate social realities that elude the tempered language of science."[6] Ideology's symbolic actions thus

confer meaning on the world. This approach leads toward a semiotic concept of culture as an interlocked system of construable signs. Rather than constituting that through which society mediates and makes visible the material interests that organize it, culture is itself the primary agency of the social constitution of the real. Stephen Greenblatt's influential notion of "cultural poesis" bolsters this view of humans as beings who above all make meaning: not only must we read all culture as an act of symbol-making, but such creation is itself the primary category of historical action.[7]

How do we reconstruct those actions? Since the governing assumption of all historical criticism is that we can only understand a work of art in terms of some larger context, it is often assumed that the task of the historian is to reconstruct that context in all its details in order to arrive at a valid, that is to say, historically authentic interpretation. Historical context is thought to function as a court of interpretive appeal, while interpretations that slight it are considered to be by definition illegitimate.[8] It is therefore only by correcting their subjective understanding of a particular work by reference to an objective historical context ("extrinsic data") that interpreters can verify their interpretations. Ironically, the knowledge we gain from sources other than the work, however essential to our understanding, is no more objective, and therefore of no greater authority, than that provided by the work itself. The appeal to "history" so commonly made in current critical discourses of all varieties is usually to a reconstruction fabricated according to processes of interpretation that are identical to those applied to the "not-history" of the artistic work. Whether we rely on previous texts, social and political formations, or a period consciousness, we are turning not to "extrinsic data," in the sense of something instantly apprehensible and self-evidently meaningful, but rather to a mass of material, almost all of it textual, that requires interpretation before it can enter into the process of historical understanding.[9]

Some theorists have argued, hence, that the text serves not as the source of the historian's knowledge but merely as an occasion for its deployment. The interpreter possesses knowledge of the real (apparently derived from wholly extratextual sources) with which to unmask the evasions and repressions that empower the text.[10] Patterson argues that, instead, historical criticism must abandon the hope of any theoretical foundation and come to rest instead on its own historically contingent moment, and on convictions that find their final support within experience.[11]

Nevertheless, the fact that art is a social practice, serving the ends of historically distinct societies and rooted in their lived experiences, demands a contextualized approach. Images lie deep in the experiences of society, and we must analyze them in relation to that society's concerns.[12] Jauss, however, discerned a crucial problem: "Whoever confines art to reflection also restricts its influence . . . to the recognition of the already known."[13] This study seeks therefore to understand Roman historical commemorations not merely as reflections of social patterns, but as formative tools in a fluid historical condition.

In his recent study of the meaning of Alexander's imagery, Andrew Stewart has shown that historical commemorations responded to individual and collective concerns: they may therefore demonstrate strength or betray insecurity, and they may seek to fortify success or to compensate for weakness.[14] Stewart demonstrates that they are active ingredients of the social matrix and are socially formative products in their own right, making statements that can both change perceptions and mold ideas. Works of art are embedded, he notes, in what Clifford Geertz has called "webs of significance" that humans spin around themselves.[15] Representations of historical events constitute a special case within this condition. Stewart argues that a contemporary painting of a battle, for example, has more claim to be considered a primary text than a passage by any later writer: unlike the later writer, the painting is firmly embedded in the political culture of the time of the event portrayed, in the fabric of meaning that the general and his contemporaries wove around his life and deeds, in diverse ways and for diverse ends.[16] Roman commemorations, however, present some problems Stewart did not confront in his analysis of Hellenistic images. Roman history especially is a social construct, and although it may tell us a great deal about Roman society, it is not necessarily reliable in its presentation of the "facts." Roman historical commemorations also actively comment on people, events, and situations, but for their own ends.

The Roman works at the core of this study are conditioned by social forces that remain outside their own articulation, forces that the analysis will try to recuperate; but I do not intend to argue that these monuments bear a privileged relation to their historical moment, and that we must respect and rely on this privilege. Roman historical commemorations can hardly function as texts and tell us everything we want or need to know about the past, but when securely located at the center of our investigations (not as objects but as subjects), they can help us to negotiate an otherwise enigmatic terrain.[17]

Even though artists generally intended to represent specific events or situations, specificity lay with intention much more than with the imagery per se. Ideally, the imagery needed to be intelligible to all in a simple way. These were, after all, public monuments, and by definition a monument pertains to long-term memory, not just to those few immediate contemporaries with inside knowledge or to future scholars (who attempt to reconstruct that knowledge).[18] The artists who produced Roman historical commemorations therefore preferred to use *topoi* (despite whatever unique particularities they hoped to convey in their works). Roman practice again forces us to be wary of Stewart's preference for relying on visual rather than verbal texts for insight into the past. This study therefore investigates issues inherent in the use of conventions – their sources, form, and style – in Roman commissions, of their potential inconsistency with "historicity," and of their effectiveness as agents to disseminate information and ideology.

Scholarly investigations of classical antiquity typically focus their attention on the dominating structures of elites rather than on the subversive and

suppressed elements of society. The limited nature of the surviving evidence for Roman historical commemorations during the Republican period imposes this emphasis. Re-creating the ways in which the ruling classes used cultural productions in order to sustain their dominance shows how works of art, like culture in general, are not merely superstructural consequences of the material processes by which societies shape their world. Rather, "they are themselves a form of praxis, a working upon the world in order to transform it."[19] This study positions Roman historical commemoration as one of the cultural practices that constitute social reality. In effect, the cultural practice of history constituted Roman social reality. Therefore, material production and the engendering of ideology, which includes the creation of art, are related not as base and superstructure but rather as two forms of cultural activity per se.[20]

History is impelled by the consequential and determinative acts of material production. Wars of conquest, collecting wealth, building cities and commissioning works of art, imposing order: these are material processes that, while enacted in terms of and made known by symbolic forms, possess a palpable force and an intentional purposiveness.[21] These are the actions of elites. The Introduction explores how the Roman elite defined itself. This examination helps us understand why and how members of the governing class used history and art to commemorate their accomplishments to secure *gloria* and to further their political careers – a process Michel Foucault once perceptively called a "politics of truth": the construction and attempted monopoly of truth by elites.[22] In addition, the Introduction surveys the variety of forms Roman historical commemorations took. These monuments included paintings (from frescoes on tombs and temple walls to large paintings on cloth and portable panels carried in the triumphs of victorious generals), relief sculptures (small altars and statue bases, pedimental groups, and friezes decorating monumental pillars and temples), honorific portraits, and even temples and public buildings. Modes of pictorial representation ranged from full-fledged narrative scenes in landscape settings to pared-down iconic personifications and symbolic emblems.

The subsequent four chapters contain the core of the study. They present analyses of Republican monuments organized according to a series of thematic categories. Roman nobles presided over rites and formal ceremonies that kept them constantly before their peers and potential voters, and they ignored no aspect of life that could be manipulated for political gain. The historical subjects that Romans chose to commemorate included the imagery of triumph, representations of battle and conquest, funeral rites, and the religious and civic duties of magistrates. The Romans, however, did not distinguish these activities as separate spheres in the public life of a magistrate. Rather, religion, statecraft, and military prowess were closely entwined: the triumph opened and closed with sacrifices; priests called out sacred invocations to formally open a war; military insignia played a prominent role in the funerals of commanders. Analysis demonstrates that single historical monuments frequently combined

elements from these overlapping and intersecting aspects of aristocratic careers. The reader must therefore remain aware that the thematic divisions in this study are not an attempt at some capricious or arbitrary taxonomy; rather, they are merely an ordering to help make sense of a vast array of material. In effect, this account is a simplification of a complex and varied reality, but one designed to bring out something of that complexity.

These ideological functions were not exclusively public; they never addressed social power alone. In fact, as we will see in Chapter 3, very similar works decorated tombs that were visited by few people, limited to family – or even by none after the initial burial. Yet the very continuities I will trace in that chapter between public commemoration and more private funerary art suggests the broad arc of *gloria* and its ideological function, reaching even across the divide of life and death.

Roman commemorative practices flourished alongside native Italic traditions of realistic representations, but also borrowed heavily and self-consciously from Greek and Hellenistic practices. Artists in the service of Roman patrons drew on a variety of genres, compositional schemata, and iconographic motifs from diverse artistic traditions. Therefore, much of the imagery analyzed in this study is not strictly Roman; it includes analyses of monuments produced in Etruscan and Central and South Italian centers where Romans first confronted novel commemorative strategies. The social hierarchies that both structure and limit individual power are reflected in the different stylistic systems chosen by different classes of rulers and in different areas. The reader will witness this in Chapter 2, where Hellenizing art will serve one class, more local styles another class. In addition, the adaptation of one style or another became extremely self-conscious, and hence style itself can code political messages that lead to the social anxiety explored in the final chapter. There was a kind of ideological leverage governing stylistic choice. The enfolding of these styles goes along with Roman conquest and is a way of asserting that conquest within the self-fashioning of commemorative art.

Etruscan and other Italian imagery often reflect Roman rites and practices not otherwise found in the uneven and poorly preserved Roman monuments; in addition, the swift absorption and redeployment of other artistic traditions – especially the Hellenistic – was one important way that Roman aristocrats established their place in an ideological field. The historical traditions associated with Alexander were crucial for the development of Roman historical commemorative art, for his model provided the primary instance of the Roman borrowing of one established system of authority and power to enact another, new one. Finally, ancient literary testimonia describe monuments now lost, their original settings, and, when possible, Roman reactions to them. Few studies of Roman art encompass such diverse material, and its analysis here helps illuminate characteristic Roman commemorative strategies.

Hence, while I survey a range of contextual settings in the introductory chapter that follows – Republican literature, imported Greek art, histories, and

forensic rhetoric, among other matters – I do not want to approach them as inert "background." Instead, in presenting these materials, I try to emphasize their own challenges to interpretation, their uncertain and fluid siting in the charged and dynamic competition to achieve status and identity in the Republic. And while the later chapters do privilege the works of historical art that are this book's focus, I want to approach them openly as a selective focus; they are not inherently more layered or problematic than the texts or objects over which Chapter 1 passes, necessarily, more briefly.

The final chapter considers the overall significance of commemorative practices in the Republican milieu. During the Republic, Rome was a magnet, a catalyst, and an environment for cultural and artistic growth. This chapter examines how Roman historical commemorations embody the long-lived transformational process affecting the creation of works at the convergence between the Roman cultural substratum and foreign Greek models. The discussion illuminates the broader cultural shifts toward Hellenism that predominated in Rome during the Republican period and analyzes the creation of characteristically Roman traditions from the third to the first centuries B.C. even as they absorbed the predominant influences of Hellenism. This chapter also examines the problems of historicity contained in works that purport to illustrate the accomplishments of recognizable people and considers the evidence for Roman responses to such ideologically tendentious works. Finally, this book will pose the question not simply of intent and production, but of varying understandings among the many audiences of Republican Rome.

Historical commemorations operate at – and often physically move among – a number of key intersections in Roman society at which private ambition engages with the forms of public witness on which it rests. These objects were central in the making and understanding of public power at the time. They are key now to our understanding of how art and political life interacted in the Republic. Yet the remains are fragmentary, and often available to us only through ancient imitation in other settings such as funerary art, or through intermediary drawings and descriptions of more recent centuries. They demand a nuanced deployment of our most traditional tools of stylistic and iconographic analysis, textual analogy, and archaeological science. The central chapters of the book use these tools, often at some length and without apology. What I am hoping to do thereby is to draw these objects beyond the highly technical treatments where their study necessarily began, and show how much they can add to our current investigations of self-making and social power at the close of the Republic and the dawn of the Empire. More broadly, as I have tried to suggest, I am interested in the ways that all public art at once expresses individual urges to power and helps to accomplish those urges. Roman historical commemorations hence provide a particularly revealing site in which to explore the way that cultural productions at once express and constitute ideology.