

REMEMBERING TRAJAN IN FOURTH-CENTURY ROME: MEMORY
AND IDENTITY IN SPATIAL, ARTISTIC, AND TEXTUAL NARRATIVES

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I dedicate this work to my grandfather, John (Jack) R. Thienes, who taught me the art of storytelling and the importance of history.

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ABBREVIATIONS

All abbreviations follow the conventions set forth in Oxford Classical Dictionary (fourth edition) except those specified below, which are either not found in or differ from it:

<i>IV Cos. Hon</i>	Claudian, <i>Panegyric on the fourth consulship of Honorius</i>
<i>Eutr. Brev.</i>	Eutropius, <i>Breviarium ab Urbe Condita</i>
<i>Fest. Brev.</i>	Festus, <i>Breviarium Rerum Gestarum Populi Romani</i>
<i>HA</i>	<i>Historia Augusta / Scriptores Historiae Augustae</i>
<i>HE</i>	Eusebius of Caesarea, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
<i>In Ruf.</i>	Claudian, <i>In Rufinum</i>
<i>KG</i>	<i>Kaisergeschichte</i>
<i>VC</i>	Eusebius of Caesarea, <i>Vita Constantini / Life of Constantine</i>

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ABSTRACT

In this study I examine how fourth-century authors, senators, and emperors used, memorialized, and emulated the emperor Trajan (98–117 CE) from the time of Constantine to the Theodosians. More importantly, I prove that the figure of Trajan was selected in order to signal narratives of cultural renewal for the senatorial aristocracy and emperors seeking to establish their cultural identity. Rather than reading Trajan as an artifact of history, this study is about the processes of social memory in the context of space, art, and text through which Trajan is used to tell a story. Trajan’s career made a substantial impact on Rome, and he was important for fourth-century Romans who wanted to connect the fourth century to the second century indicating the fulfilment of the “Age of Restoration.” Therefore, Trajan was an exemplum invoked by elites in order to praise or critique his imperial successors. His monuments were used and copied by emperors in order to project an identity of familial heritage and military distinction. He also served the narrative of Christian authors, who were establishing their history in the fourth century and viewed Trajan as having a reasonable policy towards Christians.

This study applies theories of social and public memory and uses them to examine fourth-century Roman society. The first chapter specifies terminology and lays out historical background for Trajan. In the second chapter, I study the use and function of Trajanic monuments and art in Rome as evidence for the perpetuation of Trajan’s legacy for the capital. Likewise, I demonstrate that the incorporation of Trajan into new art and space established a connection with him—the Arch of Constantine being a prime example. In addition, Trajan’s Forum was singularly the most important space for commemorating members of the senatorial aristocracy with statues and inscriptions, which unified the new social class. In the third chapter, I survey fourth-century literature, specifically histories (Ammianus Marcellinus, Festus, and Eutropius), biographies (the *Historia Augusta*, Aurelius Victor, *Epitome de Caesaribus*, Julian, and Ausonius), and panegyrics (the *Panegyrici Latini*, Claudian, and Sidonius Apollinaris) to observe how Roman elites of this period treated Trajan and used the memory of his tradition to form written narratives to praise or critique past and current emperors. In the final chapter, I explore Trajan’s legacy as it was received by Christian authors seeking to write the history of the church. From the Christian point of view, Trajan was problematic because of his paradoxical response to Christian practice. Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, is the foremost author to establish the canonical historical interpretation of Trajan. Eusebius’ Trajan is regarded as a virtuous emperor, who decreases Christian persecution across the empire. Subsequent authors, Orosius, Jerome, and Sulpicius Severus, for example, maintain the “Eusebian version” of Trajan, setting up Trajan to be an exemplary “noble pagan.” By the time of Gregory the Great, tradition arose that Trajan was posthumously baptized by the pope’s tears and released from Hades. Trajan, an exemplar in his own right, served the needs of later Romans telling their own story.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Trajan was incredibly popular in the fourth century, a fact which modern scholars have noted.¹ He was admired not only for his accomplishments in his own day but also because his career met perceived political and military demands of the fourth century. Romans wanted and needed a new Trajan. This study shows how Trajan was incorporated into late Roman culture to address specific parts of fourth-century society. This study examines this phenomenon through the lens of public memory, which offers a theoretical framework that explains the prevalence of Trajan in a wide range of contexts and genres. Late antique authors, senators, and emperors incorporated images and references to Trajan in art, inscriptions, and text in order to serve the purposes of larger historical narratives of renewal, cultural identity, and imperial critique. In addition, this study demonstrates that ancient representations of Roman emperors were the product of a complex association of communicative areas. In other words, it examines the material and literary machinery that helped to create a public image of the emperor.

From a late antique perspective, the admiration and pervasive use of Trajan reveals a desire for fourth-century Romans to establish a narrative of continuity between their own time and the prosperous high Roman Empire. Trajan first and foremost stood for the apex of Roman imperium and military might, having pushed the boundaries of Roman conquest to their furthest limits. As Romans in the fourth century contended with incursions on the borders along the Danube and Euphrates against Goths and Persians,

¹ Most notably Ronald Syme's (1971, 89–112) chapter, "The Fame of Trajan," examines his popularity above other exemplary emperors in the fourth century. See also Chenault 2012 and Bennett 2001, xvi–xvii.

they looked to the past to find examples of success in this arena—Trajan fit the profile well. Additionally, Trajan was a sponsor of a vast building program for Rome and the provinces, he maintained good relationships with the aristocracy, and he governed the empire justly, all of which characteristics of his legacy were highlighted in the fourth century by a new class of social elites desiring to restore Rome. Trajan was also used as a critique of the later emperors, both serious and satirical, to evaluate the shortcomings of those seeking to model themselves on Trajan. Moreover, fourth-century Christians were forming narratives by reconciling biblical and Roman traditions in order to make sense of persecution and Christian triumph with which Trajan was involved.

Narratives rely on an interpretation of past events and historical figures by remembering and forgetting certain people, institutions, and stories, which is a nearly universal feature of human culture. To generalize, Roman culture was particularly receptive to public displays of memories. The familial cult of the *imagines* was an ancient tradition of memorializing the ancestors in the home and during festivals.² In addition, public spaces of Rome were filled with inscriptions, monuments, and honorific dedications to stand as testaments to future ages about the past, reminding viewers about their ancestry and cultural heritage. Ritual events, like triumphal processions were not only religious and civic celebrations, but a tribute to the memory of Roman conquest.³ Conversely, the act of *damnatio memoriae* was the deliberate removal of an individual from public memory.⁴ Acts of remembering and forgetting in written words and public

² Plin. *HN* 35.2. See further Gruen 1994, 153–6; Jenkyns 2014, 16.

³ Hölkeskamp 2006, 483–4.

⁴ The term, *damnatio memoriae*, is a modern designation for the ancient practice of systematically scrubbing any public references to the person designated an enemy of the state. It was not any kind of official procedure, but rather a group of penalties that repressed the memory rendering the target anathema to society. See Hedrick 2000, 91–4; Carroll 2011, 65–6.

spaces are essential in showing how Romans identified their own past. Additionally, collective memory is useful in understanding the process of forming the public identities of the emperors, whose *personae* themselves were the products of a complex array of information largely based on the messages and perceptions of others.

The zeitgeist of the fourth century embodied an age of renewal.⁵ Common inscriptions on coins of the period declare: *ubertas saeculi*, “the abundance of the age”; *gloria saeculi virtus Caesarum*, “the glory of the age is the virtue of the Caesars”; *gloria et reparatio temporum*, “glory and restoration of the times”; *felicium temporum reparatio*, “the restoration of fortunate times”; and *felicitas perpetua saeculi*, “perpetual felicity of the age.” Images of the phoenix, symbolic of both eternity and renewal, are frequently portrayed alongside the emperors and inscriptions of renewal.⁶ Inherent in the notion of a “restored age” is recognition by fourth-century Romans that they were inheritors of a long and enduring culture, and they needed to frame themselves within the historical traditions of the past. As Averil Cameron adroitly states, “The men and women of late antiquity . . . wished devoutly to connect with a past which they still saw as part of their own experience and their own world.” Yet, as she also points out, there was intense competition among various groups to claim the past for their current understanding of the world in which they lived.⁷

⁵ Brown 1989, 34.

⁶ *RIC* VII 152; 193, n. 335–6; 226; 245, n. 114; 280; 328, n. 277, 279; 366, n. 41; 451, n. 207; 500, n. 10; *RIC* VIII 153, n. 212–225; 154, n.226–44; 182–4, n. 69–106; 210–2, n. 99–128; 257–60, n.135–161; 324–5, n. 108–21; 364–7, n. 197–258; 386, n. 25–7; 435, n. 79–80; 453–4, n. 78–94; 475–6, n.60–73; 496–9, n. 88–116; 522, n. 121–41; *RIC* IX 192–3, n. 6–8; 209, n. 2; 214, n. 14; 215, n. 17–9; 239, n. 1; 240, n. 4–7, 9; 250, n. 1; 251, n. 8. For examination of coins as a medium for the projection of imperial ideology, see Manders 2012, 29–37.

⁷ Cameron 2001, 2–3.

Of the many heroes of Rome, the emperor Trajan among others was revered and emulated in the fourth century. Trajan, on the one hand, did much during his own life to establish an imperial image. He was a military commander and he was adopted by Nerva as his son and heir because of this strong tie to the military. Trajan's martial image continued throughout his reign as he pushed the limits of empire through his conquests of Dacia and Parthia. He was also one of the great builders, thereby creating a lasting testament to his rule on the physical landscape of Rome: the Baths of Trajan, the hexagonal basin at Portus, and the Markets and Forum of Trajan. He was popular with the masses as a sponsor of games. On the other hand, fourth-century Romans, in light of their contemporary anxieties, looked back to Trajan as an exemplary figure in hope that Constantine or Julian or Theodosius would restore the Roman Empire to the military and cultural strength of the early second century and become a "new Trajan."

My research establishes that an examination of public memory and memorialization of Trajan in the fourth century is crucial in understanding the formation of Roman cultural identity. In an age seeking to establish stability and continuity with the past, Trajan was advantageous in forming these narratives. I have chosen Trajan because he is ubiquitous in the fourth century as the model emperor who embodied the military might of the Roman Empire. I investigate the ways in which fourth-century Romans remembered Trajan and incorporated the tradition inherent in his name in contexts of space, art, and text. The first chapter examines Trajanic space in Rome as well as visual objects, both stationary and portable. The Forum of Trajan in Rome not only kept the memorialized version of Trajan a fixture in everyday life, the space was used to establish aristocratic identity in continuation of the long history of Rome. The

second chapter examines references to Trajan in fourth-century histories as an exemplum of the ideal emperor. It also looks at genres of satire and panegyric, in which Trajan appeals to an aristocratic audience. The third chapter focuses on the sacred, specifically on Christian literature as it dealt with the classical tradition and perception of Trajan as a persecutor. This chapter inspects the synthesis of historical and sacred traditions primarily through Tertullian and Eusebius, who established the historical narrative of the church and its relationship with the emperors. I will also explore how the emergent Christian narrative established a mythological trajectory of Trajan into the Middle Ages, where Trajan transcended the other emperors by becoming one of the so-called “noble pagans.”⁸

This study has broad implications for understanding social memory among Romans and how they conceived imperial power. It has implications for Roman historiography in identifying some of the processes of historical evaluation by means of exemplary figures. Historians often shaped the imperial image—the public persona of the emperor—directly through narrative accounts and indirectly through associations with exempla. Moreover, Trajan became a metonym not only for the model emperor but also for Rome itself. The narrative trajectory of Trajan continues well beyond the confines of Late Antiquity in a way like no other emperor.

Section 2: Review of Scholarship on Memory and Trajan

Memory studies have been applied extensively to classics and history. Previous scholarship on the topic of social or cultural memory has demonstrated that studies of memory are viable and worthwhile exercises in understanding how an ancient society

⁸ Trumbower 2001, 141–3.

constructed narratives important to identity formation and historical inquiry. The idea of shared memory has been developed as a theory of academic inquiry by many scholars in many disciplines over the past half-century or so. The following scholars lay the theoretical foundation and application necessary for this study.

Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora have been pioneers in observing and defining collective memory as a sociological and cultural phenomenon. In the 1940s Halbwachs developed the concept of collective memory as it pertained to society and first coined the terminology. He claimed that the formation of memories and the understanding of the past is more than individual cognition, and he argued that other people and external influences contribute to the understanding of the past. Halbwachs also demonstrated that public space is an important factor in creating memory. He suggested that space also contributes to the memory of the past and that the physical arrangement of structures and monuments shapes the collective perception of both the present and the past: “The urban group,” he asserted, “has no impression of change so long as streets and buildings remain the same.”⁹ Pierre Nora, exploring the construction of nationalism and the French past, has also been a forerunner in the field of collective memory with particular regard to history, which he views in conflict with collective memory. For Nora, rather than interpreting history as a linear progression, history is a collective enterprise of continuously creating meaning.¹⁰ In other words, Nora is concerned less about the events of history as they happened and more about how the events are used and reused in the present.¹¹

⁹ Halbwachs 1980, 131.

¹⁰ See Nora 1985, 1996, 2001.

¹¹ Nora 1996, 1: xxiv. See also Tai 2001, 907–8.

In addition, Mary Carruthers' works on memory have made a significant impact on the way scholars have understood past cultures. She has investigated memory as a means of understanding medieval culture. In *The Book of Memory*, for example, she shows that memory is developed through both oral culture and written text. In the medieval period, the book served as a point of interaction between text and memory.¹² She examines how the classical world understood memory, and she combines this understanding with cognitive psychology, physiology, and neurology to demonstrate the formation of mental pictures via the text, which for the medieval reader is merely a tool to aid memory. "What defines a mental image," Carruthers states, "is not its pictorial qualities but whether its user understands it to represent a certain thing."¹³ Carruthers' interpretations of memory have implications for the relationship between text and the reader who recalls and derives meaning from a combination of textual and cultural traditions.

Theories of public memory have also been applied directly to classical studies and Roman society by several scholars. Alain M. Gowing's *Empire and Memory*, for example, applies to the early Roman Empire the methodology set forth by Maurice Halbwachs.¹⁴ He demonstrates that the process of constructing the imperial image intentionally engaged the past to create a narrative that the emperor was the restorer of the republic by portraying of public messages of traditional Roman virtues. For example, Gowing uses Pliny's panegyric to Trajan to show how Pliny used specific language to

¹² Carruthers 2008, 18.

¹³ Carruthers 2008, 26.

¹⁴ Gowing 2005, xiii.

state that Rome had returned to the age of the Republic under Trajan.¹⁵ In addition, he examines how imperial space was a place where the past was reinvented and recalled. The Forum Augustum, for instance, was built as an “architectural and artistic declaration of the restored Republic.”¹⁶ That is to say, the building and its associated iconography communicated an identity that viewers could “read” and understand. In short, space and text were integral in forming and transmitting stories from the emperor to the populace.

Furthermore, Dennis Trout’s work demonstrates that fourth-century Christians, in this case the bishop of Rome, shaped the interpretation of the past by commemorating and erasing specific “portions of the past.”¹⁷ That is to say, Roman identity and culture were shaped through commemorative inscriptions at particular locations, which in turn influenced the topography of the city and its associated memories. Like the Augustan period, Romans, especially Christian Romans, were undergoing an identity crisis and thereby had to negotiate their movement within the cultural framework of a rich and long Roman tradition. Trout points out that Damasus “demonstrated how Christian poets and their readers might keep their Vergil and their Ovid while continuing to polish and display their own literary sensibilities in acceptable fashion.”¹⁸ Damasus syncretized classical literature in a Christian commemorative context by officially sanctioning the places around the city of Rome that were central to the emerging narratives of Christian triumph through the celebration of Roman martyrs. The commemoration of space communicated a unified cultural identity for Romans from the mid-fourth century on.¹⁹

¹⁵ Gowing 2005, 120–1.

¹⁶ Gowing 2005, 138.

¹⁷ Trout 2005, 299. Also see Trout 2014.

¹⁸ Trout 2005, 303.

¹⁹ Trout 2014, 312.

Furthermore, Andrew B. Gallia develops the understanding of cultural memory, cognitive process, sociology, and cultural identity to demonstrate that imperial-age Romans employed their own memory of the Republic as a social and cultural process.²⁰ According to Gallia, Romans did this out of a need to define their own identity under the principate. They achieved this by coopting “words, images, and even institutions that had been central to Roman self-identification during the Republic.”²¹ Gallia also explores how space and architecture “created a unique opportunity to redeploy the recursive frames of Roman cultural memory through which the ideals of the Republic continued to exert influence with the developing authoritarian culture of the Principate.”²² For example, the reconstruction of the Capitoline Temple to Jupiter, according to Gallia, became a catalyst for the association of republican *libertas* with *imperium*.²³ Moreover, the formation of the narrative was a means to power and control for the emperors, who could direct the interactions with the past through actions and inscriptions.²⁴ In a similar fashion, the late antique emperors shaped public space in order to exert their influence and justify their *imperium vis-à-vis* their imperial predecessors. For instance, Maxentius rebuilt the colossal temple of Venus and Roma, which was begun under Hadrian. Accordingly, the renovations at Rome were part of a conscientious effort to align fourth-century Rome with the long arc of Roman traditions displayed in public space.

Similarly, Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp has written a valuable study on collective memory and history in the Roman Republic, in which he lays out an extensive theoretical framework of collective memory and establishes its value for Roman history and

²⁰ See Gallia (2012, 3–5) for a discussion and refinement of Halbwachs’ theory.

²¹ Gallia 2012, 9.

²² Gallia 2012, 48.

²³ Gallia 2012, 74.

²⁴ Gallia 2012, 86, 126–7.

culture.²⁵ Hölkeskamp focuses particularly on the public spaces of Rome as contexts for communicative memory, or what he defines as “monumental memory.” As a hallmark of their culture, Romans placed significance particularly on portraying events, deeds, ceremonies, and customs in public and enshrining them in stone and bronze. In other words, certain men, events, and deeds were chosen to represent the shared values of the society and they communicated this to the viewers for generations.

Additionally, Simon Price has established that social memory is an aspect of social and political power. Shared memories are passed on by specific social groups who use shared memories and experiences to establish the dominant order.²⁶ Moreover, he establishes a framework within which classicists are able to observe the constructed public memories of ancient civilization. He divides his structure into four categories “in which networks of memories were constructed: first, objects and representations, second, places; third, ritual behavior (and associated myths); and fourth, textual narratives.”²⁷ Through these groups, ancient memories can be studied.

Raymond Van Dam, too, incorporates the study of memory in his book, *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge*. Van Dam’s work concerns memory as it pertains to the historical memory of an emperor. In particular, he analyzes how a specific historical event, the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, is remembered as a pivotal point within the historical narrative of Constantine’s rise to power and a catalyst for his conversion. He challenges the usual primary sources and investigates how the various independent accounts shaped the formation of Constantine’s own memory of the event.

²⁵ Hölkeskamp 2006.

²⁶ Price 2012, 16.

²⁷ Price 2012, 17.

“The past,” according to Van Dam, “did not generate fixed memories; instead, memories constructed a past. The memories became collective when communities accepted particular versions of what was memorable by designing monuments and celebrating commemorative festivals.”²⁸ Certain memories are constructed, as Van Dam suggests, especially during periods of “dramatic social transformation” such as the fourth century, when Christians and non-Christians alike had to negotiate new social and political situations. Van Dam also points out the significance of oral traditions in the construction of memory. In other words, there was an actual event of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, but it was remembered through eye-witnesses telling many versions of it. Each account was a performance that created “distortions of selectivity and emotional involvement” in response to the audience. “Constantine hence performed as an ensemble of one. For his own stories he was both an actor in the past and the narrator in the present.”²⁹

Most recently, Karl Galinsky edited a volume entitled *Memoria Romana* in which several scholars apply memory studies to Roman society. Most relevant to my study are the chapters by Richard Jenkyns, T.P. Wiseman, Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp, and Jessica Hughes. T.P. Wiseman applies Hölkeskamp’s theory (somewhat critically) but favors primary-source evidence over Hölkeskamp’s theoretical abstractions as they pertain to Roman history.³⁰ He uses both epigraphic and literary evidence that “embody the community’s memory.” He points out that it was not images and monuments alone that carried memories, but the written word that accompanied them in inscriptions and in

²⁸ Van Dam 2011, 9.

²⁹ Van Dam 2011, 10.

³⁰ Wiseman 2014.

histories, and falsified inscriptions led to false histories.³¹ In addition, Wiseman examines the Roman tradition of historiography and poetry. Often it is assumed that because authors read books, their works were products of and for a “bibliocentric” society, yet Wiseman argues that the role of oral tradition and performance ought to also be considered for the transmission of historical memories. He concludes that it was entirely probable that any Greek or Roman could have a “decent literary and historical education without ever having to open a book.”³²

Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp’s subsequent chapter offers a rebuttal of T.P. Wiseman’s criticism reiterating the importance of an abstract theoretical framework. He asserts, “It goes without saying that the ancient historian (or the “classicist”) cannot hope to decode the full complexity of Roman (republican) culture—but we can and should try to . . . formulate a theory or at least a framework of questions, concepts, and categories in order to make some historical or ‘cultural’ sense of the ‘relics’ that we do have.”³³ Hölkeskamp supports his theories with extensive examples to show that the senatorial aristocracy used “memory-focused strategies of self-fashioning” to use and reuse space and texts to project collective Roman identity.³⁴

In addition to studies focused on remembering the past, the concepts of purposefully forgetting and silence (*damnatio memoriae*) in Late Antiquity have been investigated by Charles W. Hedrick, who examines the cultural practice of creating and erasing memories as a fundamental aspect of Roman society.³⁵ His study focuses on the

³¹ Wiseman 2014, 47. See also Livy 8.40.3–5.

³² Wiseman 2014, 62.

³³ Hölkeskamp 2014, 66.

³⁴ Hölkeskamp 2014, 69.

³⁵ Hedrick 2000.

removal of a dedicatory inscription of Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, which was erected in the Forum of Trajan. Flavianus was then granted imperial pardon and his inscription was subsequently restored. This example demonstrates the power of the political figures (mostly emperors), who shape and control public images through removal and rehabilitation. Emperors were active in the restoration and creation of an observable version of the past.³⁶ Similarly, D.S. Levene examines the process of forgetting (usually inadvertently) in Roman historiography. “Societies shape stories about their history through selectivity, a process of forgetting as well as one of remembering: for without such forgetfulness, no story could be shaped at all.”³⁷ Harriet Flower, too, has an important study on forgetting in a Roman political context. Cultural memory and the annihilation of it were important aspects in the formation of elite social identity for the Romans. She contextualizes *damnatio memoriae* as an act of “cultural repression” of those members of the group who were deemed unworthy.³⁸ They could be cast out and publically removed through the removal of inscriptions and mutilation of sculptures. In addition to examining Roman examples of forgetting, she finds precedents in the Greek Hellenistic period. Flower asserts: “While Rome, like most Mediterranean cities, had its own culture of remembering and forgetting, the vivid and dramatic erasures that Romans witnessed and were the direct cause of [*sic*] throughout the eastern Mediterranean almost certainly affected how contemporary Romans, both at home and abroad, came to think of themselves and of their particular role in creating and destroying the memories of kings and their empires.”³⁹ In short, remembering and forgetting were culturally useful.

³⁶ Hedrick 2000, xxii.

³⁷ Levene 2012, 217.

³⁸ Flower 2006, xix–xx.

³⁹ Flower 2006, 41.

Through the memorialization and erasure of public monuments, Romans shaped their collective memory and cultural identity. These authors are beneficial in that they show the selective process in which the past is used to create an identity and a political ideology for the present.

While this study is less about Trajan in the second century and more about how later generations received him, nevertheless, a brief discussion of the relevant scholarship on Trajan is necessary. There are many current studies of Trajan and his monuments, and discussions of Trajanic Rome among modern scholarship are abundant. There is not room to discuss all of the treatments of Trajan, but I will mention the works most important to my research.

James Packer's extensive study of the Forum of Trajan in Rome provides an exceptional source of information on the most important Trajanic monument in Rome, his forum complex.⁴⁰ His monumental work published much-needed information about one of Rome's most important buildings that had been almost entirely unpublished in recent times. In addition, he provides an overview of the total history of the site from construction to modern excavations. Furthermore, his work contains numerous illustrations and reconstructions, which illuminate the former grandeur of this space. Since the publication of the large three-volume edition, he produced a smaller single-volume version that is more accessible.⁴¹ In addition to Packer's publications on Trajan's Forum, Roberto Meneghini has published information from recent archaeological

⁴⁰ Packer 1997.

⁴¹ Packer 2001.

excavations in and around Trajan's Forum. His work is valuable for understanding the south entrance to the Forum and the precise location of the equestrian statue.⁴²

There are two notable works that have aggregated and interpreted numerous pieces of evidence on the function and activities of the urban landscape of Rome: James Anderson's study on the historical topography of the imperial fora, and Franz Alto Bauer's work on the urban landscape of Rome throughout antiquity. Both are invaluable in studying Trajan's Forum, particularly in the gathering of all kinds of data on the function of public space. Similarly, Robert Cheneault's article on senatorial inscriptions in Trajan's Forum is central to understanding how the Roman aristocracy used Trajan's Forum to promote their own elite identity.

Ronald Syme's chapter, "The Fame of Trajan," examines the popularity of Trajan as standing out from others in the canon of the good emperors in the *Historia Augusta* and elsewhere in the fourth century. The chapter is useful in that it surveys the many places Trajan is referenced. However, while Syme does offer some good explanations as to why he was so famous, he is ultimately interested in understanding the *Historia Augusta* as a historical text. He notes the frequent appearance of Trajan in the work, and he looks to contemporary uses for guidance. Some of his examples lack analysis because Syme lets the examples speak for themselves. In some instances, however, he goes so far as to deny that inquiry is even possible, since he is strictly looking at what Trajan represents for communicating historical information, and not how Trajan could be received by an audience reading the text for entertainment and satirical commentary. For instance, he claims that "the evocation of Trajan tells us nothing about Severus Alexander

⁴² Meneghini 2009, 118.

[in the *Historia Augusta*]. Nor does it provide much illumination about Trajan.”⁴³ Syme is not concerned with the satirical nature of the comparison, which does tell us something about the author’s perceptions of both Severus Alexander and Trajan. Despite such interpretations, the chapter has been valuable in surveying the numerous appearances of Trajan in the *Historia Augusta* and elsewhere in the fourth century.

Gunnar Seelentag’s study, *Taten und Tugenden Traians: Herrschaftsdarstellung im Principat* examines the construction of the imperial image of Trajan through the use of images, speeches, and monuments with particular focus on the imperial messages conveyed on coins.⁴⁴ Seelentag’s work studies the processes that project the idealized public persona of Trajan ultimately resulting in the continued conception that Trajan was the *Optimus Princeps* through the advertisement of the deeds and virtues of traditional Roman exemplars.⁴⁵

There are a few modern biographies of Trajan. Roberto Paribeni’s biography of Trajan, published in the 1920s, has been the standard work as a modern account of Trajan’s life. Paribeni collected an exhaustive accumulation of Trajanic references in literature and inscriptions, even those that are fragmentary and relatively unimportant. Paribeni sees Trajan’s social policies, such as the *alimenta* and the formalization of the baker’s guild, as the origins of the later rigid programs and class structure of the later empire.⁴⁶ His work has been criticized for being overly enthusiastic for Trajan’s policies and for the benefits of the empire.⁴⁷ While still valuable, Paribeni’s work was in need of

⁴³ Syme 1971, 111.

⁴⁴ Seelentag 2004.

⁴⁵ Seelentag 2004, 501.

⁴⁶ Paribeni 1975 II, 164–5.

⁴⁷ Longden 1927, 230–1.

being updated since its original publication in 1926–7. In 2001, Julian Bennett published a much-needed modern biography of Trajan, entitled *Trajan: Optimus Princeps*.⁴⁸ His work encompasses the entirety of Trajan’s life and career, and attempts to fill in the gaps of modern knowledge. Despite the paucity of contemporary accounts of Trajan’s life, Bennett weaves together a fitting interpretation of Trajan’s principate that is thorough.⁴⁹ He uses fourth-century evidence for Trajan cautiously, attempting to use as much contemporary information as possible. In addition, he avoids the scholarly trend to apply French sociological and philosophical attempts to explain social processes, choosing to rely only on surviving primary evidence.⁵⁰ In the prologue, however, he mentions the long and lasting memory of Trajan, referencing many of the works that are discussed in this work. Bennett’s view of Trajan attempts to be true to ancient sources, which sometimes lead him to paint an “over-optimistic picture” of Trajan.⁵¹ Bennett, for instance, refutes claims that Trajan was a “megalomaniac” and a “pathological warmonger” because his contemporaries did not portray him this way.⁵² He does admit, however, that Trajan’s style of governance was more autocratic than Domitian’s principate, and he suggests that Trajan’s motivations for war were driven by his desire for personal glory.⁵³ Bennett’s biography is valuable in providing ample historical background for Trajan and the Roman world of the early second century.

⁴⁸ Bennett 2001.

⁴⁹ There are a few odd assertions, poor translations, and other criticisms. See Wheeler’s (1998) and Shotter’s (1999) reviews. Many of the problems raised by reviewers were addressed by Bennett in his revised second edition. See Bennett 2001, 214–25.

⁵⁰ Bennett 2001, xiv.

⁵¹ Jones 1998, 859.

⁵² Bennett 2001, 189.

⁵³ Bennett 2001, 208, 188.

In addition to Julian Bennett's work, Annette Nünnerich-Asmus edited a book based on a conference celebrating the 1900th anniversary of Trajan's ascent that contains several chapters that explore various historical problems associated with Trajan's principate.⁵⁴ The book does not constitute a biography per se, but it is valuable in pursuing aspects of Trajan's empire observed through extant material evidence. In addition, the images and diagrams are of particularly high quality, further illuminating the arguments made throughout the work.

Section 3: Defining Key Concepts

3A: Memory

Memory is a cognitive process of retaining and recalling information that relies on a complex network of stimuli, experiences, and instruction. Recollections of the deceased, especially a public figure of good repute, are often shared by members of society reliant on a tradition of shared information. That is to say, memory exists individually but is formed through social and behavioral interaction, communication, and observation within the public sphere. It depends on a mutual understanding of collective material. Trajan was an emperor of beloved memory among the Roman people. Public memory does not exclude the memories and experiences of the individual (first-hand experiences) but rather is combined with them through consolidation.⁵⁵

Various adjectives have been applied to memory to express differing aspects of public memory: popular memory, collective memory, social memory, communicative memory, and monumental memory. Elizabeth Minchin and Jan Assmann, as well as

⁵⁴ Nünnerich-Asmus 2002, 3.

⁵⁵ Anastasio 2012, 79.

other scholars, have made distinctions among these terms for the sake of clarity. Minchin, for instance, differentiates between collective memory, social memory, and cultural memory in a temporal sense. Collective memory, for example, embraces “the communal store of shared experiences, stories and memories that members of a social group acquire in their interactions with each other.” Social, or as she puts it, communicative memory, “stores information about a society’s recent past,” and cultural memory encompasses traditions and institutions that reference the remote past.⁵⁶ Other scholars use and define memory in other ways, too. Simon Price, for instance, defines social memory as that which is constructed and transmitted in public discourse for purposes of social and political power. Social memory is both written and oral, and it is both inscribed (in art and texts) and embodied (performed ritual and behavior). The contexts for social memory are constructed through physical objects and artistic representations, physical places, ritual behavior, and textual narratives.⁵⁷ Further descriptions on public memory involve public space and monuments—thus the term monumental memory. T.P. Wiseman defines monumental memory as a community’s memories as conveyed through art and architecture and the accompanying inscriptions and artifacts displayed within. In addition, as Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp specifies, monumental memory is also that space that itself bears “memory-generating capacity.” Roman monuments, like the Lacus Curtius in the Roman Forum, exemplify such space.⁵⁸

All of these designations point to the fact that theories of public memory sometimes require differentiation for slightly different aspects (temporal, physical,

⁵⁶ Minchin 2012, 77–8. See also Assmann 2006, 1–30.

⁵⁷ Price 2012, 16–7.

⁵⁸ Wiseman 2014, 44; Hölkeskamp 2014, 64.

literary, or other) of the same phenomenon. Nevertheless, popular memory, collective memory, or cultural memory all store and communicate a body of shared cultural information. Public memories of Trajan, whether they exist in monuments, inscriptions or literature, all bear witness to his principate and shape the perception of him in the past and resonate with the present. Most of this study will focus on manifestations of so-called “inscribed memory” through textual narratives, art, and space, as defined by Simon Price.⁵⁹ In this study, I use the terms social memory and collective memory interchangeably. From the fourth-century perspective, Trajan was a part of the “cultural memory” of the Romans (beyond three generations), yet memories of a historical figure are also made through a process of accumulated associations. Therefore, I make the distinction between cultural memory and memorialization.

3B: Memorialization

Memorialization is related to memory and relies on it but it is different in that its goal seeks to establish a tradition that cannot be altered.⁶⁰ A memorial is a public endeavor designed to preserve a particular memory or set of memories. Memorialization occurs in both physical space and literary accounts, which establish sanctioned interpretations of deeds, events, and personal traits that contribute to the narrative of public memories. For example, Trajan was primarily associated with military conquest. Not only did he himself successfully lead campaigns, but the Forum of Trajan memorialized his achievement in marble and bronze. The decorative scheme ensured this

⁵⁹ Price 2012, 17.

⁶⁰ Other scholars, such as Elizabeth Minchin, would call this cultural memory, since it can refer to the remote past, though assigning temporal definitions are too restrictive since it appears that Trajan was more-or-less instantly an exemplum and did not need to be removed by generations in order to be secured in memory. See Bennett 2001, 208–13.

association, as it was literally set in stone. Similarly, inscriptions helped to connect the memory of the individual to the inscribed words that met defined social and political categories.⁶¹ Likewise, historical accounts of Trajan established his credentials as a military leader, and this characteristic was often mentioned even if the mentioning of Trajan was not about conquest at all. The association of Trajan with the military is almost like a poetic epithet in that the aspect is fixed to Trajan. Therefore, a fourth-century interpretation of Trajan necessarily relies on a foundation of canonical associations. Memorialization is a more precise term than cultural memory and is used throughout this study to refer to the fixed traditions associated with Trajan.

3C: Space

Ancient Rome was a city prominently decorated with public spaces and monuments because Roman society was especially preoccupied in the preservation of memory. Within the city, there were expansive areas of public space consisting of structures and formalized open spaces, which were almost entirely built, funded, and maintained by the aristocracy for the use of the urban population as a whole. During the empire, this activity was almost entirely taken over by the emperors who built enormous structures and commemorated them with inscriptions. The topography of the city had been continuously shaped by dedications of temples, sanctuaries, baths, circuses, and more since the time of the middle republic.⁶² Scholars estimate that as much as forty to fifty percent of the urban landscape of imperial Rome consisted of public space.⁶³

“Public space,” Pamela Doms defines, “is part of the urban landscape that facilitates

⁶¹ Carroll (2011, 65) discusses the relationship between funerary inscriptions and memory, but the concept is similar for public inscriptions within the city.

⁶² Torelli 2006, 97.

⁶³ MacMullen 1974, 63.

public life and is a spatial echo of existing developments. This means the urban landscape reflects developments in a society, for example political and social changes. The urban landscape is the décor of daily life and creates collective experience and knowledge because everybody takes part in it.”⁶⁴ Within public space, Romans created networks of associative and communicative ideas through art, architecture, and inscriptions. For instance, Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp demonstrates that the urban landscape helps to reinforce cultural identity and collective memory through shared practices (festivals, ceremonies, public funerals, triumphal processions, etc.) that take place in the social spaces of the city. “Cultural memory,” he declares, “needs spaces and places. In ancient city-states in particular, well-defined ‘public spaces’ take on particular importance: they form the concrete venues in which the process of political decision-making, religious festivals, and everyday communication among citizens take place.”⁶⁵ Therefore, the public spaces of Rome have a “monumental memory” that can be “read like a text” for they enshrine messages that store, affirm, and communicate the history and culture of the Romans to all viewers.⁶⁶

3D: Memory and identity

Certain memories matter and are repeatedly recalled in order to define cultural identity. Cultural identity (*Romanitas*) is the general cultural characteristics that distinguish a group of people (Romans) from others by means of a body of common cultural precepts—values, history, rituals, customs, traditions, language, and memories. Definitions and categories constantly change, though they operate within a range of static

⁶⁴ Doms 2013, 194.

⁶⁵ Hölkeskamp 2006, 481–2.

⁶⁶ Hölkeskamp 2006, 483.

parameters. In the fourth century, the senatorial class, emperors, and Christians deployed memories of Trajan in the formation of their respective cultural identity in order to make sense of the events and traumas of the age.

Richard Miles' introductory chapter of his book, *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity* illuminates the efforts and challenges of fourth-century Roman society to define identity groups such as Christian, pagan, Roman, Greek, barbarian, etc. Perception of the past as a fixed record (what I call the memorialized past) was essential in forming late antique identities by "validating present attitudes and actions by affirming their resemblance to former ones."⁶⁷ Scholarship on Roman cultural identity is vast. Erich Gruen's work on Roman cultural identity is indispensable in discussing the role of art and literature in shaping cultural (aristocratic) ideologies.⁶⁸ Karl Galinsky's and Paul Zanker's essential studies on Augustan Rome are similarly foundational in examining the role of art, space, and literature to convey messages of Roman identity in the emergent Roman Empire.⁶⁹

The space, art, and literature of the fourth century was built, written, read, and used by and for social elites in part to define and publically assert characteristics of the senatorial class. The old aristocratic families and nouveau riche had the resources, ambition, and connections to participate in the bureaucracy of the late Roman Empire through which they could attain the level of *clarissimus*, the lowest order of the senatorial class (*spectabilis* and *illustris* being higher). Michele Salzman has demonstrated the pervasiveness of status distinctions among fourth-century Romans. "The late Roman

⁶⁷ Miles 1999, 11.

⁶⁸ Gruen 1994.

⁶⁹ Galinsky 1996; Zanker 1988.

clarissime,” she writes, “as it developed over the course of the fourth century, was a social stratum legally defined and requiring high social and economic status in one of several distinct sets of elites.” The clarissime was the senatorial class, but achieving *clarissimus* was more a designation of social status than political involvement. That is to say, the clarissime did not necessitate active participation in the actual Roman senate, but rather it was a class of men eligible for service to the state and shared a common identity. The classification of ranks was initiated by Constantine and his successors to establish a “unified whole,” but under the supreme status of the emperor. In addition to establishing a larger senatorial class, Constantine also increased the size of the Roman Senate from 600 to probably 2,000.⁷⁰ This class of senatorial aristocrats had a shared set of “values, culture, and privilege.”⁷¹ The terms aristocracy and senatorial class are used interchangeably in this study to refer to those Romans who were members of the clarissime or higher. The term, “elite,” is more general, since not all elites were of the senatorial class. Nevertheless, elites, being educated and well-to-do Romans, also contributed to the formation of Roman identity through participation in literature and rhetoric.

Literature is the primary window through which Roman elite culture and identity can be observed. Thomas Habinek established that Latin literature developed quickly as a colonial resource in order to define and assert aristocratic identity in the changing world of the Punic Wars and after.⁷² Similarly the fourth century was a time of social redefinition for the empire and for its aristocracy. Constantine redefined the

⁷⁰ Salzman 2002, 23,31.

⁷¹ Salzman 2002, 24.

⁷² Habinek 1998, 34–5.

qualifications for aristocratic status, even naming new ethnic barbarians and military men to the consulship.⁷³ Therefore, the massive resurgence of Latin literature in the fourth century is indicative of “the maintenance of a specifically Roman aristocratic hegemony.”⁷⁴ Michele Salzman points out the connection between literary and aristocratic culture in the fourth century stating that, “The uniformity in education curricula and training across the empire spread this appreciation of cultural and literary achievement throughout the aristocracy.”⁷⁵ In addition, the scholarship on the social role of literature in fourth-century society by Lieve Van Hoof and Peter Van Nuffelen establishes that fourth-century literature was a continuation of classical learning and that literature served a social function in the display of *paideia* for upper-class Greeks and Romans.⁷⁶ Just as was seen in other periods of Latin literature, Latin authors of the fourth century were often outsiders on the periphery of the empire—they were not Italian. Ausonius or Ammianus Marcellinus, for instance, were not initially part of the traditional aristocracy, yet they wrote literature primarily to a Roman aristocratic audience. Many of the works discussed in this study were written for an elite readership centered at Rome.

In the fourth century, Romans were conscious about the geographical and cultural limits of the Roman Empire. Moreover, geographical awareness influenced the formation of cultural identity. The third century had witnessed a withdrawal along the Rhine and Danube frontiers, and the Eastern frontier with Persia was lost a century later.⁷⁷ In addition, many emperors of the third and fourth centuries made their military

⁷³ Salzman 2002, 33.

⁷⁴ Habinek 1998, 36.

⁷⁵ Salzman 2002, 48.

⁷⁶ Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen 2014, 4–8.

⁷⁷ Okamura 1996, 11.

careers along the frontiers.⁷⁸ Because of Trajan's previous successes, he repeatedly appears in discourse about the later emperors.⁷⁹ Romans wanted to find the "new Trajan" who would succeed in subduing the frontiers. Mark Graham's scholarship on the Roman frontier is vital in showing how frontier consciousness formed Roman identity.⁸⁰ Graham observes a shift in the perceptions of the Roman worldview and the frontiers of Rome demarcated Roman space to be protected from non-Romans.⁸¹ Part of the new Roman identity in the fourth century came from new ethnic groups and geographic awareness. Certain boundaries of the Roman Empire received more attention than others. "Romanitas always was the touchstone against which social, intellectual and political developments were measured," Danuta Shanzer and Ralph Mathisen assert. "Barbarians were still becoming Roman, as opposed to creating some new form of ethnic identity. Meanwhile, the changing role of barbarians on the frontier affected Roman culture—and by the later period, life throughout the empire was informed by what happened on its borders."⁸² The desire to maintain the boundaries of the Roman Empire in the face of losing territory resulted in social trauma that necessitated a call for military leaders who could be victorious.

Identity and memory often capitalize in the context of social trauma. Loss of territories, battles, and cities create social anxieties that require an assessment and rationalization of the circumstances surrounding such losses. Likewise, Christian persecution was a social trauma that resulted in much writing and the veneration of the

⁷⁸ For overview on the crisis of the third century and the Illyrian emperors, see Odahl 2004, 15–41.

⁷⁹ Brauer 1975, 19.

⁸⁰ Graham (2006, 11–12) claims previous scholarship tended to focus on the frontiers from the perspective of a military and political framework.

⁸¹ Graham 2006, 42.

⁸² Shanzer and Mathisen 2011, 3.

martyrs. Much has been written about the link between memory and trauma in historiography, particularly in modern studies of the Holocaust. With respect to ancient Roman society, Richard Alston and Efrossini Spentzou's work examines Roman identity and historiography within the context of traumatic events. For them, the past must be rewritten in order to incorporate new events that did not fit neatly in collective memories as they existed after the trauma. They use Julius Caesar and the civil war as an example of the trauma and Lucan's *Pharsalia* as evidence of a work that "scours the past for resemblances with the present."⁸³ They assert that traumatic events form sociological scars that require a reassessment of established history and not just nostalgia for the world prior to the trauma.⁸⁴ This lends understanding for authors like Ammianus Marcellinus, who wrote his history in light of the trauma of Roman losses against the Persians and Goths, or the prolific use of inscriptions about security (*securitas perpetua*) on coins.⁸⁵ Therefore, the hope for a Trajan-figure is born out of contemporary events and thus his frequent appearance in late Roman literature. Memory of Trajan was not simply nostalgia but a remedy.

The fourth century was not only integral for imperial and senatorial identities but was also an important age for the formation of Christian identity, for it is out of this time that the term "pagan" is used to distinguish Christian from non-Christian. Prior to its seemingly universal adoption by the end of the fourth century, Christian writers primarily followed Jewish convention and referred to non-believers as Greeks (Ἕλληνες or *Graeci*)

⁸³ Alston and Spentzou 2011, 174–5.

⁸⁴ Alston and Spentzou 2011, 192.

⁸⁵ *RIC* VII, 332 n. 299, 626 n. 160, 397 n. 33, 473 n. 42, 610 n. 57, 683 n. 38; *RIC* VIII 281, 393, 424, 464, 532; *RIC* IX 281, 298, 299, 300. Manders (2012, 210–11) states that *securitas perpetua* was used in times of particular political instability. The slogan was also used to promote the security of the empire and its inhabitants.

or gentiles (ἔθνη, *gentes*, or *nationes*). By the fourth century, Christians needed to construct their own identity by defining “the other,” and the term *pagani* was adopted to refer to those outside the group. Alan Cameron’s opus, *The Last Pagans of Rome* in which he reassesses modern scholarly interpretations of late antique cultural activity, is essential in understanding the social and religious developments in the fourth century.⁸⁶ Rather than identifying a so-called “pagan revival,” Cameron sees the cultural products—historical narratives, poetry, and art—in the context of elite culture and not a pagan vs. Christian polemic.⁸⁷ For Cameron, the invective went one direction; Christians wrote vehemently against paganism but not the other way around. “Roman paganism,” Cameron writes, “petered out with a whimper rather than a bang.”⁸⁸ In addition to defining terms, fourth-century Christian authors had to make their case to non-believers and to believers in the establishment of orthodoxy. Many Christian writers had to come to terms with their own history and the major trials of their day: persecution, imperial favor, and heresy.

Additionally, Richard Lim’s work is useful in this context in that he offers a concise summary of the challenges and themes present in Christian texts.⁸⁹ In other words, he asserts that the “religious landscape” of the Roman Empire was “neither tranquil nor monolithic” after the imperial favor of Constantine and the mandate of Theodosius.⁹⁰ Christians had to navigate problems concerning theology, heresy, the Jews, non-Christian traditions, and the power and authority of the church and the emperor

⁸⁶ Cameron 2011, 14–24.

⁸⁷ Cameron 2011, 4–13.

⁸⁸ Cameron 2011, 12.

⁸⁹ Lim 2001, 196–218.

⁹⁰ Lim 2001, 197.

throughout Late Antiquity. It was out of these controversies that Christian identity and orthodoxy were established.

The aforementioned concepts of memory, memorialization, space, and identity work together to explain the phenomenon of Trajan's popularity and purpose in fourth-century space, art, and texts. The memories and monuments of Trajan were used and reused by later emperors and by social groups in order to create their respective identities and narrative goals. Through the use of Trajan's name, the collective memories of Trajan's principate were recalled to fulfill a specific role in the fourth century. In other words, fourth-century Romans responded to Trajan because he represented a desire to recapture the height and power of the Roman Empire.

Section 4: The "Recoverable" Trajan: Historical Background

This study is about representations of Trajan in fourth-century art and literature; in other words, they are about an "imagined" Trajan as created through later Roman sources. Fourth-century accounts rely on the historical memory of the emperor of the early second century. Of course, the emperor and his public persona were also imagined in his own day, in that the image of the emperor is a product of a "constructed self" through various media—deeds, art, inscriptions, coins, monuments, public appearances, perceptions, and the oral and textual narratives of others. That aside, there is a "version" of Trajan that historians, both ancient and modern, seek to recover; namely the deeds and accounts of his life contemporary to his own life. What follows is a brief biographical sketch of Trajan and the relevant sources concerning his reign, and the major deeds and

monuments from the early second century for which Trajan himself was primarily responsible. This is offered to give necessary background about Trajan's Rome.

4A: Ancient Sources for Trajan's life

Contemporary narratives of Trajan's life are few and many have not survived. Later sources record as many as four biographical accounts of Trajan's life.⁹¹ Due to a lack of biographical and historical accounts, other genres are required to reconstruct his career. Pliny's *Panegyric* in praise of Trajan's consulship in the year 100 endures as an important record of Trajan's first two years as emperor, although, given the context of imperial panegyric, its praise borders on the exaggerated and theatrical. Pliny's correspondence with Trajan while serving as governor of Bithynia is also a source of information about the age of Trajan, though the letters are more revelatory about Pliny and Bithynia and Pontus than Trajan. Pliny is primarily concerned with the administration of his province; each letter contains queries concerning official business, though some are more personal in nature.⁹² To what extent Trajan's own voice is observable in the letters is not known, since much of the content was written by official scribes of the imperial chancellery, and emperors undoubtedly received a great deal of correspondence.⁹³ Trajan must have been consulted on some of these matters raised by his friend and employee but much of the text of the replies was a product of the imperial secretariat. Through the letters, however, an image emerges of a "hard-working, rational, judicious administrator in the management of a humane and benevolent empire."⁹⁴

⁹¹ *HA Alexander Severus* 48.6

⁹² For a concise investigation of the nature of the correspondence, see Noreña 2007.

⁹³ Sherwin-White 1966, 536; Noreña 2007, 251.

⁹⁴ Noreña 2007, 252.

Dio Chrysostom's four discourses on kingship (Περὶ βασιλείας) were delivered to Trajan at Rome.⁹⁵ Although the views within are drawn from traditional Greek philosophy, they “reflect the existing circumstances and tenets of the new ruler [Trajan].”⁹⁶ Throughout the speeches, Chrysostom draws numerous parallels to Zeus (Jupiter), Alexander the Great of Macedon, and also to Hercules. Allusions to Jupiter, Alexander, and Hercules become part of the language surrounding Trajan's principate and conquests, not only in the second century but also in the fourth.

Cassius Dio's *Roman History*, written in the early third century, is the oldest extant source for Trajan's life (book 68), though it survives only in the abridged history by John Xiphilinus, an eleventh-century monk. Despite the epitomized version, Dio's account is the longest and most detailed historical narrative of Trajan's principate and is valuable in that regard. Modeling his style on Thucydides, Dio is a clear writer and is generally regarded as a reliable historian. In addition to Dio's life of Trajan, there are a few surviving Latin accounts of Trajan's life that are relatively short, appearing in the fourth-century epitomizers, Festus, Eutropius, and Aurelius Victor. Ancient sources refer to a Latin “Life of Trajan” written by Marius Maximus, which does survive only in fragments but was used as a source for later accounts.⁹⁷

Epigraphic evidence has been illuminating for study of Trajanic Rome and adds much needed evidence for Trajan's reign. For example, the Acts of the Arval Brethren, a collection of the deeds of the Arvals inscribed on marble tablets in the temple of Dea Dia,

⁹⁵ Dio Chrys. *Or.* 1–4.

⁹⁶ Bennett 2001, 68.

⁹⁷ Birley 1997, 2721; 2725.

contain a prayer for the victory and return of Trajan from his first Dacian campaign.⁹⁸ The invocation not only confirms Trajan's imperial titles for the year 101 but it also corroborates Trajan's devotion to Hercules Victor as his patron god. Inscriptional evidence for Trajan is vast due to the great number of his building projects. Numismatic evidence also helps fill in gaps about Trajan's reign. Images on coins testify to a broad range of topics ranging from his relationship with the Roman Senate to his ambitious building projects. For instance, depictions of Trajan's monuments on coins are invaluable in creating modern reconstructions of such structures as the façade of the Basilica Ulpia.⁹⁹

4B: Trajan the man and the emperor

Marcus Ulpius Traianus was the son of Marcus Ulpius Traianus (the elder) and Marcia. The *Gens Ulpia* was an Italian family of likely Umbrian origin and the town of Todi (ancient Tuder). The elder Trajan served as the commander of the tenth legion (*Legio X Fretensis*)¹⁰⁰ during the Jewish War under Vespasian from 67 to 68 CE. He was rewarded with a governorship followed by his election to the consulship in 70 CE, becoming the first man in the family to enter the senate (*novus homo*). He later served as governor of Hispania Baetica and Syria. While in Syria, he supposedly stopped a Parthian invasion into the eastern Roman Empire.¹⁰¹ He had a prestigious career as a military man, a path that his son followed. It was his connection to the Flavian emperors that

⁹⁸ Henzen 1874, 122–4.

⁹⁹ *RIC* II 261, n. 246–8.

¹⁰⁰ Prior to his command under Vespasian, he probably served in the tenth legion under Gn. Domitius Corbulo in his Parthian campaign during the reign of Nero. Domitius was the brother-in-law to Caligula and the father-in-law to Domitian. This legion, the *Legio X Fretensis*, was levied by Augustus in 41 BCE during the civil wars. The legion continued as late as 410 CE.

¹⁰¹ Pliny, *Pan.* 14; Bennett 2001, 18.

likely led to the elder Trajan's (and by extension, his son's) political and military ascent.¹⁰² He seems to have died before or around the time of his son's ascent to emperor and was deified.

Trajan, future emperor, was born in Italica, a Roman colony in Hispania Baetica on September 18, 53 CE.¹⁰³ Dio is careful to point out that he was a Spaniard of Italian descent, rather than an Italiot, a resident alien or foreign colonist in Italy.¹⁰⁴ As a young man, he rose up through the ranks of the Roman military. From 76–77 CE, he served as *tribunus legionis* in Syria under his father, who was the governor at the time.¹⁰⁵ In 91 CE, he was nominated and served as consul in Rome.¹⁰⁶ After his consulship, through the sources are silent on the matter, Trajan likely held a consular command or was one of the *comites Augusti*, since he was known as a *vir militaris* by the time Nerva selected him as his successor.¹⁰⁷ The generally accepted view is that Trajan gained prominence in the military along the Rhine and/or Danube Rivers (in either of the *Germaniae*, Pannonia, or Moesia) against the Germanic Suebi during the reign of Domitian.¹⁰⁸

After Domitian's assassination, Nerva gained the principate, yet he lacked the support of the army. It seems that he was at odds with the praetorian prefect, Casperius Aelianus, who was loyal to Domitian. He sought out Domitian's assassins and forced

¹⁰² This is one of Bennett's (2001) general theses about Trajan's rise to power.

¹⁰³ The Codex-Calendar of 354 supplies the date of Trajan's birth. There is some discrepancy about the date of Trajan's birth, but most historians rely on Eutropius' assertion that Trajan was sixty-three when he passed away in 117. For discussion of the various proposed dates, see Bennett 2001, 12–13.

¹⁰⁴ Dio Cass. 68.4.1.

¹⁰⁵ The *tribunus legionis* was a high-ranking staff officer of the Roman legions.

¹⁰⁶ He was elected *consul ordinarius* with Acilius Glabrio. Bennett (2001, 44) points out that they were only the second pair of non-imperial consuls elected during Domitian's reign.

¹⁰⁷ Bennett 2001, 44–5.

¹⁰⁸ Bennett (2001, 45–6) shows that, while Trajan may have had a command in Germania Superior, Pannonia was a more likely senior post later in his career, since the Rhine frontier was relatively quiet during the 90s, so that a command here would not have distinguished him. His evidence is circumstantial, but it is nonetheless persuasive.

Nerva to execute them. Therefore, Nerva's choice to adopt Trajan, who was popular with the army, as his successor was probably to avoid usurpation.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, from the view of the aristocracy, adoption was favorable over heredity, and the senate responded by bestowing the name Caesar upon Trajan, which solidified his position as heir. At this point, Trajan was appointed supreme commander of the German provinces.¹¹⁰ In 98, Trajan was named consul along with his adoptive father, Nerva. This was Trajan's second consulship, though his term in office did not last long. Nerva, already advanced in years, died on January 27, 98 CE having reigned for scarcely fifteen months. The senate confirmed Trajan his successor, and Trajan had his adopted father deified.

Trajan was emperor for twenty years, ruling from 98–117 CE—a fairly long time for a Roman ruler to stay in power. Trajan's style of rule has been characterized as autocratic and militaristic, which is reminiscent of his predecessor Domitian. His temperament, behavior, and treatment of his peers, however, separated him from tyrannical associations. K.H. Waters' 1969 study points out that many of Trajan's policies were identical to Domitian's, though the two were remembered in vastly different ways.¹¹¹ Domitian was remembered as a paranoid tyrant and Trajan a benevolent and just ruler. Similarly, the scale of Trajan's monuments and his title *optimus princeps*, with its obvious reference to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, portrayed an image of the emperor that “surely strained the idea of what a *princeps* was supposed to

¹⁰⁹ Dio Cass. 68.3.3. For a thorough discussion of Nerva's problem of succession, see Grainger 2003 and Alston 1998, 191–207.

¹¹⁰ Bennett 2001, 48–9.

¹¹¹ Nerva's brief reign likely also had an impact on the way Domitian and Trajan were perceived. Grainger (2003, chapter 5) discusses the role of Nerva as an intermediary between Domitian and Trajan.

be.”¹¹² Pliny goes to great lengths to present Trajan as far distant from Domitian in the manner of his rule.

Trajan seemingly had few faults, but ancient authors speak of his lack of education and his love of wine and young men. Despite this, each time his vices are mentioned, they are treated as minor problems and explained away. Cassius Dio, for instance, relates that Trajan committed no crime, harm, or anything deserving of censure as a result of his lascivious behavior. Similarly, he reports that Trajan always remained sober, regardless of the volume of wine that he consumed.¹¹³

Trajan married Pompeia Plotina, who was from a well-connected family from Nemausus (modern-day Nîmes). Plotina was given the title *Augusta* in 100, though she refused to accept it until 105 CE.¹¹⁴ She had an interest in philosophy, particularly Epicureanism. By all accounts, their marriage was amicable, though they never produced any children. She strongly favored Hadrian for adoption, and while in Cilicia with Trajan on his death bed, she orchestrated the adoption of Hadrian. There were suspicions that the adoption was not sanctioned by Trajan and was a result of a deal struck between Attianus, Plotina, and Hadrian.¹¹⁵ Cassius Dio stated that the fact that his will had been signed by Plotina was out of the ordinary. On the other hand, Trajan had suffered a stroke and as a result was partially paralyzed and drowsy.¹¹⁶ Hadrian was selected because of his

¹¹² Noreña 2007, 258.

¹¹³ Dio Cass. 68.7.4. Later in his account, Dio (68.10.2) relates that Trajan was enamored of a certain pantomime dancer named Pylades.

¹¹⁴ She did not appear on coinage until 112.

¹¹⁵ Dio Cass. 69.1.1–4. Around the year 86 CE, Trajan’s cousin, P. Aelius Afer passed away orphaning his two children, Paulina and Hadrian. The two children enter into the custody of Trajan’s house and Publius Acilius Attianus. Attianus was a praetorian prefect and guardian to the emperor. Dio suggests that he and Plotina were lovers.

¹¹⁶ Dio Cass. 68.33.3.

proximity and his large military force, since he was in command of the Syrian legions.¹¹⁷ Trajan died in 117 CE in Cilicia. His remains were transported to Rome, where his ashes were interred in the base of the Column of Trajan in his forum. He was subsequently divinized by Hadrian.

The following material highlights aspects of Trajan's principate that are of particular interest because they provide contexts for later uses and references to Trajan. His military conquests, triumphal titles, social policy, sponsorship of games, portraiture, and extensive building projects were used and recalled due to their relevance in fourth-century Roman society.

Unsurprisingly, Trajan spent much of his principate on campaign. His later reputation largely rested on his enlargement of the empire by adding four new territories. Two of these, Armenia and Arabia, were obtained via annexation, while Dacia and Parthia were taken by military force. His conquest of Dacia was his hallmark achievement solidifying his reputation as a military commander and bringing about a massive inflow of money and patronage to Rome. The new Forum of Trajan, financed by the wars, commemorated the two Dacian campaigns and permanently memorialized his fame. Unfortunately, no contemporary written account of Trajan's Dacian campaign survives. Trajan himself, following in the manner of Julius Caesar's commentaries, wrote commentaries on his subjugation of Dacia, the *Dacica*, which is lost except for a single fragment preserved in Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*.¹¹⁸ It has also been thought that the sculptural frieze on the Column of Trajan followed the narrative of the

¹¹⁷ Dio relates that one of his sources was his father, Cassius Apronianus, who was governor of Cilicia and had knowledge of the details surrounding Trajan's death and succession to Hadrian.

¹¹⁸ Prisc. *Inst.* 6.13. See also page 53.

wars from Trajan's own account, and the images are a major source of information about the sequence of events of the wars.¹¹⁹ Similarly, the Tropaeum Traiani (at modern day Adamklissi, Romania) commemorated the Dacian Wars with a series of 54 relief panels placed around the exterior of the tumulus.¹²⁰ The monumental trophy was built in 107 or 108 CE and dedicated to Mars Ultor.

The Dacian Wars took place between 101–102 and 105–106 CE in response to the threat of the belligerent King Decebalus.¹²¹ Trajan successfully defeated the Dacians and turned much of the kingdom into a Roman province in which Romans began colonizing and mining. Dacia was rich in gold as well as other metals, such as silver, iron, and copper.¹²² Accordingly, after the subjugation of Dacia, Trajan ordered the reclamation of immense amounts of gold and silver. On the word of a Byzantine epitome, the sum was some five million pounds of gold and ten million pounds of silver. While these numbers are probably inflated, the volume of the influx of wealth to Rome was nonetheless staggering.¹²³ In addition, some 500,000 Dacians were taken prisoner, consequently bringing in a large slave population. In celebration of his victories, Trajan was given two triumphs, received numerous foreign embassies, and lavished the urban population with *congiaria*. In addition, Trajan issued 117 days of games involving almost 5,000 pairs of gladiators, 11,000 animals displayed and hunted, and numerous mock sea-battles.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Davies 1997, 43.

¹²⁰ Of the original 54 metopes, 49 survive: 1 in Istanbul and the remaining 48 in the Adamklissi Museum.

¹²¹ Rome had suffered devastating losses in 85 and 86 CE with the annihilation of the Fifth Legion *Alaudae*. For a detailed account of the wars, see Bennett 2001, 85–103. Also see Rossi 1971; Matyszak 2004, 213–31; or Schmitz 2005.

¹²² Schmitz 2005, 29.

¹²³ Bennett 2001, 101.

¹²⁴ Smallwood 1966, n. 22; Bennett 2001, 102.

While on campaign, Trajan's interactions with his army reveal the character for which he became so famous among later Romans. Cassius Dio relates an anecdote about Trajan's disposition towards his subordinates: after a battle with the Dacians, both sides incurred many wounded, and Trajan even cut up his own clothing so that the strips could be used as bandages for his troops (68.8.2). This story exemplifies Trajan's disregard for conventional social hierarchy, as he did not shy away from interacting with regular men. This behavior was praised as virtuous, and it continued to be a part of the imperial virtues of Trajan remembered by later generations.¹²⁵

After his successful campaign against the Dacians, Trajan turned his attention to Parthia.¹²⁶ In 113 CE, he began his last campaign, though his motives for war are unclear.¹²⁷ They may have been in part economical, since he had directed tremendous resources to facilitate commerce coming from the East.¹²⁸ There also appear to have been political motivations to depose the king of Armenia, who had been propped up by the Parthians. Trajan first went to Armenia, annexing it for Rome. By 115 CE, Trajan directed his armies towards Mesopotamia, with Rome taking the northern cities of Nisibis and Batnae after which King Abgaros VII accepted defeat and his kingdom became a protectorate of Rome. After wintering at Antioch, where he almost lost his life in a devastating earthquake, he resumed his campaign.¹²⁹ He took Seleucia and Ctesiphon, which ended his campaign that year with the appointment of a client-king,

¹²⁵ Eutr. *Brev.* 8.4.

¹²⁶ Lepper (1948) is the standard work in English for Trajan's Parthian War. Also see Bennett 2001, 183–204.

¹²⁷ Bennett 2001, 184.

¹²⁸ Trajan constructed a new road connecting the Red Sea to Arabia, deployed a Roman fleet to the Red Sea (Eutropius, 8.3.2); and excavated a new canal linking the Red Sea at Clysmon to the Nile. In 107 he extended Roman hegemony over Arabia Nabataea making it a new province. See Charlesworth 1926, 20; Young 2001, 27–89.

¹²⁹ Dio Cass. 68.24–25.

Parthamaspatēs.¹³⁰ In 117 CE, residents of Hatra revolted, to which Trajan responded by laying siege to the city. Although he breached the defenses at one point, he lifted the siege and withdrew to Antioch as a result of oncoming winter and failing health.¹³¹ Despite the volatility and subsequent loss of Mesopotamia shortly after Trajan's death, Trajan was forever distinguished from his counterparts for stretching the bounds of the Roman Empire to its furthest reaches.

Like all Roman emperors, Trajan bore a litany of imperial titles; most of them were customary, though a few were unique to Trajan. For his victories, Trajan was honored with victorious cognomina *Germanicus* (late 97–early 98 CE),¹³² *Dacicus* (Dec. 102 CE),¹³³ and *Parthicus* (Feb. 116 CE).¹³⁴ Trajan's numerous victorious titles identified him as a great conqueror. In the tradition of Augustus, Trajan bore the title *Filius divi Nervae*, “Son of the divine Nerva.”¹³⁵ Like Augustus, Trajan was adopted as the son of the emperor. Pliny makes much out of this relationship in his *Panegyricus* (5–11; 23.4). Trajan, too, took pride in the designation and found the association with Nerva and his policy of *libertas restituta* to be politically advantageous.¹³⁶

Like his imperial predecessors, Trajan also took on the title *Pater Patriae*, “Father of the Country.”¹³⁷ While this honor was obviously shared by his predecessors and

¹³⁰ Dio Cass. 68.30; Bennett 2001, 200.

¹³¹ Dio Cass. 68.31; Bennett 2001, 200–1.

¹³² Trajan was named *Germanicus* while governor of the province of Germania. See Pliny, *Pan.* 9.2.

¹³³ Bennett 2001, 96.

¹³⁴ Smallwood 1966, n. 23; Bennett 2001, 196.

¹³⁵ *ILS* 283–304.

¹³⁶ Gallia 2012, 219.

¹³⁷ Trajan was given the title *Pater Patriae* in 98 upon his ascent to the principate, though Pliny (*Pan.* 21.1) says that Trajan declined this title as a matter of modesty. See Braund 1998, 62–3. Despite this, *pater patriae* appears on coinage of the following year. See Stevenson 1889, 605. The title was also attested on the inscription on the base of Trajan's Column (*CIL* VI.960).

successors, the paternal designation became strongly associated with Trajan.¹³⁸ In addition, Pliny referred to him as *parens noster, parens publicus, and communis omnium parens* throughout his panegyric.¹³⁹ The paternal image of Trajan is also portrayed on artwork. For instance, Trajan is portrayed in art as a fatherly figure receiving Italian children on his triumphal arch at Benevento.¹⁴⁰ Trajan's authoritative position also conveys a sense of paternity in several scenes on his monumental column.¹⁴¹ The perception of Trajan as a fatherly figure is important in understanding Romans' later reception of him.

Of all of Trajan's titles, *Optimus Princeps* was the most unique and most important in shaping the image of the emperor. The senate conferred this title on Trajan in 98 CE, which is curious since it was given so early in his reign. Pliny takes full advantage of this title in his panegyric to the emperor, and he foretells (correctly) that *Optimus* will forever be associated with Trajan, as the title *Augustus* was associated with the emperor Octavian.¹⁴² Additionally, like Augustus' name, the term *Optimus* bears connotations of divinity for its resemblance to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the chief god of the Romans.¹⁴³ Trajan's titles *Optimus* and *Dacicus*, although clearly associated with Trajan, are given to Constantine to deliberately put him in concert with Trajan.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Bennett (2001, 138–60) and Kampen (2009, 38–63) study at length the paternal references and manifestations of Trajan's principate. Currie's chapter (1996, 153–81) on the sculpture of the Beneventum arch also discusses the theme of Trajan as a father figure to the Italian people.

¹³⁹ Pliny, *Pan.* 2.3; 3.2; 21; 26.3; 29.2; 39.5; 53.1; 57.5; 67.1; 87.1; 87.3; 89.2; 94.4; cited in Kampen 2009, 43–4.

¹⁴⁰ Currie 1996, 162–3.

¹⁴¹ Kampen 2009, 45–55.

¹⁴² Pliny, *Pan.* 88.4–10. See also Braund 1998, 63.

¹⁴³ Galinsky 1996, 313–16.

¹⁴⁴ Barnes 1976, 153.

Similarly, Trajan's title, *Parthicus*, instead of the expected title *Persicus*, is cited in Ammianus (22.12.2) as the desired title of Julian. A wish to emulate Trajan is apparent.

Numerous portraits of Trajan survive from antiquity, and he is instantly recognizable for his thick and powerful build (*fig. 1*).¹⁴⁵ His hair, cropped in military fashion, is combed forward, probably to conceal a receding hairline. He is always depicted clean-shaven; he had a long and somewhat bulbous nose and slightly jowly cheeks. Diana Kleiner describes Trajan's portraits as the "ageless adult" in contrast to Augustus' "eternal youth," and she makes several comparisons between the portraits of Trajan and Augustus.¹⁴⁶ The portrayal of Trajan as a mature adult promoted his distinguished military career and likely contributed to the perception of him as a fatherly figure. The physical characteristics of Trajan's portraits were copied by later emperors. Constantine's portraits, in particular, emulated those of Trajan with regard to his facial features and hairstyle.

As previously introduced, the correspondence between the emperor Trajan and Pliny the Younger provides important first-hand information about provincial operation and imperial policy. For the purposes of this study, Pliny's correspondence with Trajan concerning the matter of Christians in Bithynia (*Epp.* 97 and 98) are particularly important for observation on Roman attitudes towards Christian practices. Pliny the Younger (61–112 CE), Roman statesman and quintessential Roman gentleman, published his letters including his correspondence with the emperor Trajan, while he was serving as governor (*legatus Augusti*) of Bithynia and Pontus. In 112 CE, Pliny deemed it necessary

¹⁴⁵ See Pliny, *Pan.* 22.2; Dio Cass. 68.6.3.

¹⁴⁶ Kleiner 1992, 208–9.

to investigate Christians in his province. He was also apparently troubled enough to report his findings in a letter to the emperor. This type of correspondence between administrators and the emperor was not extraordinary but was the customary method of communication regarding official provincial business.¹⁴⁷ These letters are the primary source for Trajan's involvement with Christian persecution, and they are the source (either directly or indirectly) for Tertullian and Eusebius after him.

According to his letter to Trajan (*Ep.* 10.96), Pliny was bothered by the number of Christians being brought to trial, who were presumably causing a problem with their non-Christian neighbors. As Robert Wilkin points out, the problem seems to have arisen from local merchants involved in the butchery and sale of sacrificial meat, which the Christians refused to purchase.¹⁴⁸ The Romans were generally suspicious of religious and private organizations because they had previously been sources of political unrest.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, a local community of Christians was viewed by the Romans as a potential threat to the social order and political stability. Pliny then states that he put to an end this custom of the communal meal, and that he did so under the imperial edict that banned political societies (*hetaeriae*).¹⁵⁰ It is clear that Pliny is using the law against societies to restrict Christian activities, which he saw as a possible threat to the social order of the cities in the provinces. There may have even been some disturbances due to conflicts between Christians and non-Christians, as hypothesized by Wilkin.

¹⁴⁷ Sherwin-White 1966, 536.

¹⁴⁸ Wilkin 1984, 15.

¹⁴⁹ This had happened before when, for instance, the Roman Senate issued an S.C. against the Bacchicals in 186 BCE, and thus all associations had to be approved by the state according to Livy (39.17–18).

¹⁵⁰ Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.7.

Such charges were also being brought by an anonymous pamphlet that apparently contained the names of those being accused of being Christians (*propositus est libellus sine auctore multorum nomina continens*).¹⁵¹ Pliny then reports the findings of his investigations: Christians met before dawn to chant verses in honor of Christ; aside from being Christians they abstain from any criminal activity; and they come together to eat ordinary food. Those Christians who denounced Christ and offered sacrifices to statues of the emperor and gods, Pliny dismissed. Then Pliny sent his letter to Trajan to seek counsel concerning his course of action. In reply to Pliny's letter, Trajan sent the following:

Actum quem debuisti, mi Secunde, in excutiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant, secutus es. Neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest. Conquirendi non sunt; si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt, ita tamen ut, qui negaverit se Christianum esse idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est supplicando dis nostris, quamvis suspectus in praeteritum, veniam ex paenitentia impetret. Sine auctore vero propositi libelli in nullo crimine locum habere debent. Nam et pessimi exempli nec nostri saeculi est. (*Ep.* 10.97.1–2).

You have followed the right course of procedure, my dear Pliny, in your examination of the cases of persons charged with being Christians, for it is impossible to lay down a general rule to a fixed formula. These people must not be hunted out; if they are brought before you and the charge against them is proved, they must be punished, but in the case of anyone who denies that he is a Christian, and makes it clear that he is not by offering prayers to our gods, he is to be pardoned as a result of his repentance however suspect his past conduct may be. But pamphlets circulated anonymously must play no part in any accusation. They create the worst sort of precedent and are quite out of keeping with the spirit of our age. (Translation by Radice, 1969)

Trajan supported Pliny's actions, and his response suggests lenience and fair treatment towards Christians, since Christian behavior was not inherently threatening to

¹⁵¹ Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.5.

the stability of the empire.¹⁵² He emphatically states that no universal policy can be established against them, that they should not be sought out, and that anonymous charges must not be permitted. Trajan's even-handed response to Christians was seemingly characteristic of his style of governance. He sought to keep peace and bring stability to the empire.

In accordance with a policy of concern for the people, Trajan improved the food supply for Rome and Italy. One of Trajan's most interesting programs was the establishment of an alimentary system, which offered food subsidies to low-income Italian families financed through the interest on loans to farmers. The alimentary program may have been initiated by Nerva and carried out by his successor, but the details are lost.¹⁵³ Two inscriptions from Veleia describe the details of the *alimenta* (literally food or provisions).¹⁵⁴ Likewise, the arch of Benevento depicts Trajan with Italian children. The goal of this scheme was not to create a vast welfare system, but to develop an imperial largesse to benefit the populace, like *congiaria*, and to stimulate population growth fully in line with the tradition of wealthier citizens supporting their cities.¹⁵⁵

In addition, Pliny praised Trajan for improving the roads and harbors, which also helped to improve the food supply to Rome.¹⁵⁶ According to Aurelius Victor, a fourth-century author, Trajan established a permanent *collegium* for bakers in Rome, implying

¹⁵² Mitchell 2015, 256.

¹⁵³ Bennett 2001, 81.

¹⁵⁴ *ILS* 6509, 6675.

¹⁵⁵ Garnsey 1968, 379; Bennett 2001, 83.

¹⁵⁶ Pliny, *Pan.* 29; Erdkamp 2005, 5, 237–238.

that Trajan was imposing supervision of the bakeries and the grain market in Rome.¹⁵⁷ The jurist Gaius writing in the second century about attaining Roman citizenship, tells that Trajan issued a decree stating that bakers and millers (*pistores*) could earn Roman citizenship by milling at least 100 measures (*modii*) of grain per day for three years.¹⁵⁸

The Roman people loved Trajan for his sponsorship of numerous games. In honor of his triumph over the Dacians, he celebrated his victory by giving lavish games including gladiator combats, beast hunts, and pantomimes.¹⁵⁹ He also rebuilt and expanded the Circus Maximus in Rome, which was still not fully repaired from the damage of the fire of 64 CE. He did not, however, rebuild the bleachers out of wood, as they had been, but out of brick and stone.¹⁶⁰ The seating area was enlarged, and the exterior façade was made permanent out of bricks and vaults, which gave it a similar appearance to other monuments, such as the Colosseum and the Theater of Marcellus.¹⁶¹ An inscription giving thanks to the emperor for the enlargement of the seating of the Circus testifies to his benefaction to the populace and their beloved racetrack.¹⁶²

As emperor, Trajan enacted an ambitious building program that patronized Rome, Italy, and the provinces. His imprint upon Rome and the Empire was profound.¹⁶³ For

¹⁵⁷ Aurelius Victor, *Caes.* 13.5 As Erdkamp (2005, 253–4) suggests, there may have already been a baker’s guild, and Aurelius Victor conflates Trajan’s actions with the later imperial distribution of bread (*frumentationes*) under Alexander Severus or Aurelian. Regardless, Victor records Trajan’s intervention into the supply of grain in Rome, which is supported by the evidence left by Gaius.

¹⁵⁸ Gaius, *Inst.* 1.34.

¹⁵⁹ Pliny, *Pan.* 33.1; Dio Cass. 68.10.2.

¹⁶⁰ Dio Cass. 68.7.2.

¹⁶¹ Dodge 2013, 563.

¹⁶² *CIL* VI.955. See also Pliny, *Pan.* 51.3–5. For discussion of the inscription as it relates to the imperial virtue of *liberalitas*, see Noreña 2001, 162.

¹⁶³ Trajan’s great monuments, of course, would not have been possible without the ingenuity of his architect, Apollodorus of Damascus. Apollodorus designed many of the major monuments for the emperor including: the stone bridge over the Danube River, the Forum of Trajan, and the Baths of Trajan. See MacDonald 1965, 129–137.

instance, the fourth-century author of the *Epitome de Caesaribus* wrote that Constantine called Trajan a “wall herb” (*herba parietaria*) because his name appeared on countless inscriptions throughout the world (41.13).¹⁶⁴ He sponsored a great road-building campaign in Italy and throughout the provinces, which led to the revitalization of the areas along the improved routes. The impact of Trajan’s projects for the Roman Empire was so vast that encountering them was unavoidable centuries after his death. The following is an overview of his most famous projects, which is most relevant for this study, with particular focus on the capital.

4C: The Forum of Trajan: overview of form and function

The first and arguably the most impressive Trajanic monument was his forum complex, the *Forum Traiani*. Trajan’s Forum was the largest and last addition to the imperial fora in Rome, and it enshrined the memory of Trajan and the might of the Roman Empire in lavish ornamentation. According to the *Fasti Ostiensis*, it was officially dedicated in 112 CE.¹⁶⁵ The forum itself consists of three parts: the court with two large exedrae, the basilica, and the precinct to the Divine Trajan, which included the column, the libraries, and the temple to the divine emperor (*fig. 2*).¹⁶⁶ The forum complex also included the adjacent market complex built into the slope of the Quirinal Hill and the Basilica Argentaria, located behind the Forum of Julius Caesar on the slope of the Capitoline Hill. The Atrium Libertatis was also associated with Trajan’s Forum (*fig. 3*). The forum was lavishly decorated with granite and marbles from all over the

¹⁶⁴ See chapter 3

¹⁶⁵ Cited in Anderson 1984, 151.

¹⁶⁶ Wightman 1997, 75. Scholars are divided as to whether it was Trajan, Hadrian, or both who began construction on the temple to Divine Trajan. For the purposes of this study, I agree with Wightman that the point is moot on whether the temple itself is Trajanic or Hadrianic since its function with regards to memory is the same regardless of who constructed it.

Mediterranean and formed a coherent expression of Trajanic Rome.¹⁶⁷ As Laura Nasrallah puts it, “the architecture, the juxtaposition of buildings, the sculptures, and the inscriptions of Trajan’s complex would have been thick with messages of Roman power, piety, *paideia*, and justice.”¹⁶⁸

Trajan’s Forum was part of the grand tradition of the previous imperial fora: they were designed to memorialize the past and present together.¹⁶⁹ Its visual scheme incorporated traditional republican imagery with a new imperial one. It differed from its predecessors in both style and function.¹⁷⁰ For example, in Augustus’ forum the *summi viri* of Rome’s glorious past were displayed along the porticos and exedrae.¹⁷¹ The attic decoration also visually aligned the present Augustan age Rome with the Greek past by employing caryatid columns, which closely resemble those found on the Periclean Erechtheon in Athens, and reliefs of Jupiter Ammon on roundels, which may have represented Augustus’ conquest of Egypt. These images were also not-so-subtle allusions to Alexander the Great and his divine lineage.¹⁷² Trajan’s forum, on the other hand, exhibited the images of Trajan’s Dacian conquests.¹⁷³ Alain Gowing contrasts the two imperial fora stating, “The focal point of Augustus’ Forum was the great temple to Mars, dwarfing the quadriga with Augustus in front, flanked by the niches with their

¹⁶⁷ Although not recent, Carcopino (1968) offers an extensive and vivid description of the Forum of Trajan, 3–9.

¹⁶⁸ Nasrallah 2010, 123.

¹⁶⁹ The tradition of imperial patronage was one born out of the republican tradition of elites constructing benefactions to the city in the form of roads, aqueducts, and monuments. These were maintained by magistrates, who were limited in their ability to upkeep them. Thanks to Augustus, the role largely moved to the emperors and maintenance to the new urban administration. See Dumser 2013, 142–3.

¹⁷⁰ Gowing 2005, 146–9.

¹⁷¹ This was both traditional and innovative on the part of Augustus. The sculpture gallery also permitted a revision of history, in that certain men could be forgotten, while the deeds of the Julian clan were filled in. See Zanker 1988, 210–5. Alexander Severus moved statues of the *summi viri* from elsewhere in the city to Trajan’s Forum. *HA* 26.4. Bauer 1996, 94.

¹⁷² Kleiner 1992, 100.

¹⁷³ Gowing 2005, 146.

summi viri (figs. 7–8). Trajan’s Forum and Basilica, by contrast, were not organized around a temple; overseeing if not dominating the space was the famous towering column supporting a gilt bronze statue of Trajan. When you raised your eyes, you saw not Mars, but the emperor. The column’s relief, commemorating the emperor’s Dacian campaigns of 101–2 and 105–6 CE, positioned the emperor at the center of recent history rather than past.” Although drawing on stylistic parallels to Augustus’ Forum, Trajan’s Forum conveyed a message of imperial dominance and military conquest.¹⁷⁴ In other words, the style and artistic scheme of Trajan’s Forum implants the grandeur of the *imperium Romanum* rather than allusions to a restored republic (fig. 4).

The forum complex, first and foremost, was a monument to the emperor and his military conquests of Dacia, which were enshrined here in bronze and marble. The general plan of the forum is reminiscent of a military camp with the Basilica Ulpia set up transversely across the middle of the complex like that of the *principia*.¹⁷⁵ In addition, the bronze equestrian statue of Trajan loomed in the vast opening of the forum in a pose of symbolic conquest (fig. 6).¹⁷⁶ The decorations were also martial in style: Atlantes columns as captive Dacians adorned the attic story; chariots guarded the entrances to the Basilica and the Forum itself; and legionary standards served as acroteria (fig. 20). Most famously, the colossal column on which the narrative of the Dacian Wars unfolded like an unwinding scroll around the massive column stood behind the basilica as the centerpiece and resting place of the emperor (fig. 9). The relief sculpture on the column

¹⁷⁴ Gowing 2005, 147.

¹⁷⁵ Bauer 1996, 94. This is not surprising since Trajan’s architect, Apollodorus of Damascus, was one of the emperor’s engineers on his campaigns and designed, among other things, Trajan’s bridge over the Danube River.

¹⁷⁶ In Ammianus’ account (16.10.16), the Persian Hormosidas cheekily tells Constantius that he should first build for himself such a “stable” and imitate Trajan. See Edbrooke 1975.

is a visual account of his *res gestae* that is focused directly on Trajan the conqueror and his army.¹⁷⁷ Subsequent emperors continued the motif of military décor in Trajan's Forum. Hadrian erected statues of his *comites* here, and Marcus Aurelius put up images of the officers who died in his military campaigns.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, Trajan's Column also became the model for subsequent columns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius found elsewhere in the city.

4C1: Entrance, forum Square, exedrae and the Basilica Ulpia

One of the main entrances to the forum was through a grand series of colonnaded halls projecting towards the Forum of Augustus (the other main entrance was near the monumental column).¹⁷⁹ The monumental doorway facing inwards towards the forum square was crowned with the emperor driving a six-horse chariot accompanied by winged Victory (*fig. 2*).¹⁸⁰ The entrance is attested on several coins bearing the legend "FORVM TRAIAN[I]," though the image might represent the façade of the basilica. On either side of the arch were two smaller lateral arches that also permitted access to the courtyard, which were each topped with *bigae* (two-horse chariots).¹⁸¹ The eastern wall angled outwards towards the Forum of Augustus in order to negotiate between the two spaces. Along the interior, the entablature was decorated with marble reliefs bearing cupids and

¹⁷⁷ Rossi 1971, 98–9.

¹⁷⁸ Bauer 1996, 94.

¹⁷⁹ This had previously been hypothesized to be a triumphal arch, but excavations have revealed the extent of the architecture of the entrance. Meneghini 2009, 132–3.

¹⁸⁰ There has been some speculation, given the beauty and grandeur of Trajan's Column, that the original entrance to the forum complex was from the north and that this plan was modified to allow for the construction of the temple to the deified emperor by his successor. See Meneghini 2009, 118. The primary problem with this, however, is that it dismisses the idea of a temple in the initial plan and ignores the monumental foundation walls of the temple podium. See Packer 2003. All the forum precedents have a temple and associated ritual space. Moreover, new excavations around the north end of the forum precinct support Packer's hypothesis that there was a large temple to deified Trajan and Plotina. See Cavallero 2011.

¹⁸¹ *RIC* II 262, n. 255–7; Packer 2001, 54.

lion-griffins, fragments of which are in the Vatican Museums.¹⁸² Recent archaeological investigations have revealed a colonnaded vestibule of sorts connected to the main entrance to the forum (*fig. 4*).¹⁸³

The entrance to the forum opened onto the main open square, which measured c. 200x120m. On either side of the piazza were two large exedrae, which were similar to those in Augustus' Forum. The entire square was lined with a covered portico of Corinthian columns. The floor of the square was paved with white marble. Along the portico, the forum was decorated with commemorative statues and inscriptions, which had been initiated by Trajan himself in honoring three Roman senators with statues: Q. Sossius Senecio, A. Cornelius Palma, and L. Publius Celsus, whose statue was probably placed in the newly dedicated Forum of Trajan.¹⁸⁴

In the middle of the square stood the colossal equestrian statue of Trajan, probably made of gilt bronze (*fig. 6*). The impressive statue of the emperor was the centerpiece of the open square and reminded viewers of Trajan's tradition of the subjugation of Dacia. The sculpture, which is also depicted on coins, showed the emperor on horseback holding a spear with the point down to the ground in a symbolic act of conquest.¹⁸⁵

The presence of a basilica set Trajan's Forum apart from the other imperial fora and was instead reminiscent of the old Forum Romanum. The basilica, spanning across

¹⁸² Packer 2001, 58.

¹⁸³ Meneghini 2009, 118, *fig. 134*.

¹⁸⁴ Chenault 2012, 119.

¹⁸⁵ *RIC* II 264 n. 291. The statue, however, was not centered axially front to back with the large eastern exedrae, as had been previously assumed. See Packer 2001, 60. Recent excavations (1998–2000) have shown that the statue was closer to the east end of the forum (*fig. 5*). The statue faced west towards the façade of the Basilica Ulpia. See Meneghini 2009, 119–20.

the complex and forming the backdrop for the forum square, measured 117x55m, making it the largest basilica in Rome. The ends of the basilica finished in two large apses. There were two rows of marble columns on either side of the nave that supported an upper gallery; the central nave was illuminated by clerestory windows. The Basilica Ulpia was approached by steps of giallo antico marble from North Africa. The exterior of the basilica was decorated with a large decorative façade and attested on Trajanic coins. Large exterior columns supported an entablature that was decorated with *quadrigae* and statues of *triumphatores*. The roof was supported by large timber beams and covered in bronze. Pausanias mentions the beams as one of the most remarkable features of the basilica.¹⁸⁶

This space was used primarily for law courts and the administration of justice, commerce, and public appearances of the emperor in Rome. Here, for instance, the emperor Commodus distributed *congiaria* to the needy citizens of Rome.¹⁸⁷ This space became associated with justice: consuls and presumably other city officials held court proceedings here;¹⁸⁸ Hadrian burned promissory notes of public debtors to the state in Trajan's Forum;¹⁸⁹ and manumissions of slaves were among the activities pertaining to justice in the basilica.¹⁹⁰ The remnants of the marble Forma Urbis Romae designate the west apse of the basilica as "[LI]BERTA[TIS]" in reference to this space's association with manumission, suggesting the forum supplanted the *atrium libertatis* (fig. 3).¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Pausanias 5.12.6; 10.5.11.

¹⁸⁷ *HA Comm.* 2.1.

¹⁸⁸ Gellius 13.25.2.

¹⁸⁹ *HA Hadrian* 7.6.

¹⁹⁰ Sid. Apoll. *Carmina* 2.544–545.

¹⁹¹ Cited in Packer 2003, 147, fig. 130.

4C2: The sacred precinct: the column, libraries and temple

The section of the complex situated north of the Basilica Ulpia comprised of the temple, the libraries, and the famous column. This precinct represents the sacred area of the Forum of Trajan since it is most associated with the divinity of the emperor (*fig. 5*). Trajan's Column stood to remind visitors of the military conquest of Trajan and the subjugation of Dacia, and it was the focus of the space standing on the principle axis (*figs. 2–5*).¹⁹² In addition, the base of the column enshrined the golden urn of the deceased emperor's ashes within the sacred *pomerium* of the city.¹⁹³ Such honors were historically reserved for the *summi viri* and were reminiscent of the commemorative column of Numidian marble erected in the Forum to Julius Caesar, which, according to Suetonius, was inscribed with the honorific title *pater patriae*, a title for which Trajan was famous.¹⁹⁴ The visual nature of the sculpted column captured the attention of visitors, and the spiral design was intended “to engage the viewer, encouraging his mental interaction as he read the narrative, thereby forcing him to perpetuate Trajan's memory.”¹⁹⁵ Penelope Davies posits that the narrative was based on the emperor's own written account of the wars, the *Dacica*, of which only four words survive.¹⁹⁶ The base of the column, about 6m tall, was sculpted as a trophy of heaped armor, and the shaft stood on top. Together with the base, the column measured 35 meters in height and was

¹⁹² Lino Rossi and Penelope Davies' works respectively offer good descriptions and perspectives on Trajan's Column. Rossi 1971; Davies 1997.

¹⁹³ Johnson 2009, 26. Scholars have debated whether or not the column was originally intended to be the tomb of Trajan, given his sudden and premature death. Dio states that this was the intention of the column, and the chamber itself seems to have been designed to accommodate the two urns of Trajan and Plotina. See Zanker 1970, 532–3; Davies 1997; Johnson 2009.

¹⁹⁴ Suet. *Julius Caesar* 85.

¹⁹⁵ Davies 1997, 59.

¹⁹⁶ Davies 1997, 43. The fragment of Trajan's commentary comes from Prisc. *Inst.* 6.13: *inde Berzobim, deinde Aizi processimus*. Cited in Peter 1967, 117.

built of twenty thirty-two-ton drums of Carrara marble carved in relief.¹⁹⁷ The monument was traditional, in that it hearkened back to other column tombs and monuments, but it was innovative in its design that “echoed the rite of *decursio* done around the funeral pyre.”¹⁹⁸ Trajan’s column was directly copied in the column of Marcus Aurelius, erected some seventy years after Trajan’s Column.¹⁹⁹ “The parallel with the Column of Trajan,” Martin Beckmann suggests, “would have been immediately apparent to any viewer with at least knowledge of the imperial capital. In the eyes of the ancient Romans, Trajan was one of the two most revered emperors who had ever lived.”²⁰⁰

Trajan’s burial in his eponymous forum also evoked the memories of other conquering heroes buried within their cities, such as Alexander the Great, interred in Alexandria.²⁰¹ The presence of the imperial tomb within the forum complex and within the sacred boundary of the city positioned the deified Trajan in premier status. In addition, the remains were placed near the temple of deified Trajan and Plotina, where they were venerated. These structures created a sacred space, which strengthened the formal associations to the memory of Trajan. To add an additional layer of complexity to Trajan’s imperial image was the process of divinization and the imperial cult, which ritualized public activity around the supreme ruler of Rome. The imperial cult required Roman citizens to offer sacrifice to the emperor because the cult practices “served to

¹⁹⁷ Lancaster 1999, 426–8.

¹⁹⁸ Johnson 2009, 28.

¹⁹⁹ There was a commemorative column dedicated in 161 to Antoninus Pius. The column collapsed, but it was discovered in the 18th century. The Antoninus column had no spiral frieze like the one on Trajan’s or Marcus Aurelius’ columns. For an analysis of the images on Marcus Aurelius’ column derived from Trajan’s, see Beckman 2011, 84–106.

²⁰⁰ Beckmann 2011, 209.

²⁰¹ Davies 1997, 47.

generate Roman identity.”²⁰² Therefore, cultural memories of Trajan also existed in the sphere of ritual activity and duty to the state.

Also located in the northern half of the complex was a great double library.²⁰³ Like most Roman libraries, it consisted of both a Latin and Greek library which are usually identified as the two structures flanking his famous column and final resting place.²⁰⁴ The twin halls measured 20.10m x 27.10m and 14.69m tall.²⁰⁵ The brick libraries were roofed by a groin vault and illuminated by lunate windows similar to those found in large bath complexes (*fig. 10*). Such windows provided ample light for reading but were indirect so as not to damage the papyrus and linen scrolls. The interior was splendidly decorated and on par with the rest of the forum complex. A colonnade in the Corinthian order ran around the interior, and supported an upper gallery. Between the columns were large wooden *armaria* that held the collections. Bronze screens that were set between columns at the front of the halls controlled entry to the libraries. The floors were paved with gray granite squares from Egypt, which were separated by strips of yellow marble from North Africa. The brick walls were veneered with pavonazzetto, a gray-veined marble from Carrara. The column bases, capitals, cornices, and frames were all of white marble. It is likely that inside the Bibliotheca Ulpia stood a colossal statue of

²⁰² Heyman 2007, 46.

²⁰³ For a full description of the libraries, see Packer 2001 and Casson 2001.

²⁰⁴ The *Fasti Ostiensis* does not mention the dedication of the libraries, which it ought to since these buildings were separate entities. It is possible that the libraries were started by Trajan, but completed and dedicated along with the temple to the deified Trajan by his successor, Hadrian. This is supported by the fact that Gellius refers to the library in association with the temple (*bibliotheca Templi Traiani*). For a full discussion see Anderson 1984, 152–4.

²⁰⁵ Packer 2001, 78.

Trajan looming over the vast collections.²⁰⁶ There was, therefore, a constant reminder to the visitors that Trajan established these libraries and furnished them with books.

The library's collection was quite large, with the capacity of the *armaria* estimated around 10,000 scrolls.²⁰⁷ There are several references to the Bibliotheca Ulpia and the texts housed within. The diaries and correspondence of the emperor Aurelian were stored here.²⁰⁸ The transactions of the Roman senate were archived in the Bibliotheca Ulpia.²⁰⁹ Aulus Gellius also mentioned the *Bibliotheca Templi Traiani*. He stated that he was looking at the edicts of the early praetors there (*edicta veterum praetorum*), indicating that state records were also stored at Trajan's Libraries.²¹⁰ Rare books, such as Julius Caesar's autobiography and Trajan's *Dacica*, his own commentaries on the Dacian Wars, were also stored here.²¹¹ In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Gellius states that also he had philosophical conversations with friends at the library.²¹² This sort of activity, as T. Keith Dix points out, was usually reserved for private spaces, such as villas, porticoes, or gardens.²¹³ These various references testify to the importance of the Bibliotheca Ulpia as one of the great imperial libraries of Rome.²¹⁴ The persistent use of this space for literary and cultural activities was vital in the public perception of Trajan as a patron of the arts and aristocratic ideals of *paedeia*.

²⁰⁶ Casson 2001, 87; Packer 2001, 79.

²⁰⁷ Packer 2001, 79.

²⁰⁸ *HA Aurelian* 8.1; 24.7.

²⁰⁹ *HA Tacitus* 8.1.

²¹⁰ Gell. *NA* 11.17.1.

²¹¹ Packer 2001, 78.

²¹² Gell. *NA* 11.17.4.

²¹³ Dix 1994, 285.

²¹⁴ Other imperial libraries were also located at Vespasian's Temple of Peace (Gell. *NA* 5.21.9); were Augustus' at the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, and at the Porticus Octaviae.

It has been traditionally assumed that north of the column and libraries stood the massive temple to deified Trajan and Plotina (*fig.2*). The *Historia Augusta* reports that Hadrian built a temple to his adopted father, Trajan, and that he marked it with his own name,²¹⁵ which is corroborated by a dedicatory inscription that survives in the Vatican Museums.²¹⁶ In addition, a surviving monolithic, granite column, found near the Column of Trajan, 2m in diameter with a white marble Corinthian capital, has been thought to have come from this temple (*fig. 5*).²¹⁷ The temple was octostyle peripteral and stood on a podium around which was a portico. Recent excavations have revealed further evidence of the presence of the temple foundations and surrounding portico in the northern part of the forum.²¹⁸

4D: Portus Augusti

Trajan commissioned the expansion of the imperial harbor located 4km north of Ostia at Portus. This vast undertaking created a better protected harbor that secured the grain ships hauling food to Rome. In 42 CE, Claudius's began construction of the harbor, which was protected by two large moles jutting into the sea.²¹⁹ Tacitus reports that a large storm sunk some 200 grain ships berthed in the harbor in the year 62 CE.²²⁰ In 100 Trajan ordered the enlargement of the harbor by adding a hexagonal basin with an area of

²¹⁵ *HA Hadrian* 19.9.

²¹⁶ *CIL* VI.966

²¹⁷ The precise location of the temple is a matter of dispute between Packer and Meneghini. Recent investigations have revealed new information, suggesting that there was a temple to the divine Trajan and Plotina at the north side of the forum. Meneghini had posited that the temple was not present at the north, but instead at the monumental propylaea, and the temple to Trajan was housed in the triple peristyle hall discovered on the south, thereby completely changing the orientation and direction of access to the forum. Packer suggests a more reasonable interpretation that the temple was not only located at the north side of the complex, as generally assumed, but also part of the original design of the complex. I agree with Packer that the temple was at the north. See Packer 2003, 109–36.

²¹⁸ See Cavallero 2011.

²¹⁹ For a thorough discussion of Claudius' harbor and supporting primary evidence, see Keay 2005, 11–12.

²²⁰ Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.18.3.

97 acres further inland behind Claudius' port and connected to the Tiber by canals.²²¹

Additionally, great warehouses were added to store the shipments of grain to Portus.²²²

This enhancement was done in order to divert the Alexandrian grain fleets from Puteoli to Portus. Trajan's port project, taken with his alimentary program, shows an interest in the prosperity of Rome by securing and enlarging the infrastructure of grain transport to the capital. "The new Ostian harbor should be seen as the central feature of a comprehensive plan to set the maintenance of Rome on a more secure and economic basis."²²³

In addition to the expansion of Portus, Trajan also built new harbors at Centum Cellae (modern Civitavecchia), Ancona, Ariminus (modern Rimini),²²⁴ and (possibly) at Terracina.²²⁵ He also commissioned the extension of the river docks along the Aventine Hill in Rome by constructing new retaining walls along the Tiber. Several inscribed *cippi* ascribe these improvements to Trajan.²²⁶ The new docks were needed in order to deal with the increased volume of traffic from the new port down river.²²⁷

4E: Conclusion

Much of the surviving evidence points to Trajan as an ambitious yet magnanimous autocrat governing a prosperous and thriving empire. The monuments

²²¹ Trajan's port is mentioned in Juvenal, *Satires*, 12.75–82; Pliny *Ep.* 8.17.1–2; and Pliny, *Pan.* 29.2; it is also commemorated on coins which depict the hexagonal port in a bird's eye view; *RIC* II 288, n. 631–2.

²²² Russell Meiggs's study (1973, 54–62; 85–9) on Ostia provides a good overview of Portus. Recent reports of excavations at Portus have been published extensively by Simon Keay et al. 2005; 2011. Douglas Boin's recent work (2013) examines Ostia in late antiquity and has some discussion of Portus in late antiquity.

²²³ Meiggs 1973, 59.

²²⁴ Blake 1973, 285–6.

²²⁵ For the construction of the port at Centum Cellae, see Pliny, *Ep.* 6.31.15–17. While there is no surviving evidence to concretely demonstrate that Trajan was responsible for the new harbor, his engineers cut a road from the port to the Via Appia. Meiggs (1973) 59, n. 3. In addition, one of the moles is built out of the brick wall construction characteristic of the Trajanic period. Bennett 2001, 143.

²²⁶ *ILS* 5930.

²²⁷ Blake 1973, 37–38.

were grand and dazzling, representing the emperor's ability to mold the urban landscape to his will. His military successes brought about fame and glory for Trajan. His expansionist policy assimilated new territories, which hearkened back to the time of the Roman Republic and the age of Caesar and Augustus. Despite any personal flaws, Trajan's temperament was perceived as virtuous by his contemporaries, and the Romans remembered him well and almost immediately he was an exemplum for them. Romans in the fourth century desired to recreate Trajan's legacy because they perceived it to fulfill a role in contemporary society.

CHAPTER II

BUILDING MEMORIES: TRAJANIC SPACE AND LATE ROMAN TOPOGRAPHY

Trajan was inescapable in the urban landscape of Rome in the fourth century. The messages conveyed through art and monuments in Rome promoted an image of Trajan as the ideal emperor. Furthermore, visual associations in, around, and in imitation of Trajanic space communicated a narrative of elite identity for the emperors and aristocracy of Rome wishing to establish fourth-century Rome as the Age of Restoration. Physical space, as Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp established, is a communicative context between the past and the present, and the monuments of Rome perpetuated public memories of Rome's aristocracy and memorialized powerful emperors.²²⁸

This chapter examines the late antique use and function of Trajanic space in Rome with particular focus on Trajan's Forum in order to demonstrate how Trajanic spaces and monuments were vital in projecting elite Roman culture. Trajan permanently established his own deeds and memory through his forum complex, the *Forum Traiani*, arguably Rome's largest and most splendid monument. The Forum of Trajan primarily memorialized Trajan's legacy of military conquest and a robust imperial program, but as Alain Gowing elucidated, the Forum of Trajan enshrined a program of messages about imperial power and the status of Rome as the center of the world.²²⁹ The space continued to be used to promote messages not only about Trajan but also about the present and the future of Rome as well. The Forum of Trajan was particularly important for the senatorial aristocracy who used the space to commemorate the ruling class and form a

²²⁸ Hölkeskamp 2006. See also Hölkeskamp 2014, 64; Wiseman, 2014, 44–6. Also see Price 2012, 12.

²²⁹ Gowing 2005, 146–9.

unified identity. In addition, other spaces such as the Baths of Trajan and the Arch of Constantine, provided a venue for a decorative scheme that used images referential to Trajan that promoted the current emperor through direct and indirect associations.

Association with Trajan also happened outside of Rome; Constantinople became the new focus for imperial monuments, and the Theodosian emperors in particular created visual associations with Trajan in “Second Rome.” Likewise, the universal popularity of Trajan is evident through his frequent appearance on contorniate medallions, which demonstrate Trajan’s status as an exemplary figure for the Roman populace.

Section 1: Trajan’s Forum: the Courtyard and Basilica Ulpia

1A: The Courtyard and the Equestrian Statue

Trajan’s Forum remained one of the most important centers of Rome in late antiquity (*fig. 2*). It continued to enjoy imperial and senatorial patronage in contrast to the nearby Forum of Peace, which had fallen into disrepair.²³⁰ Trajan’s Forum, on the other hand, underwent repairs in 508 by the urban prefect, Decius Marius Venantius Basilus.²³¹ There are numerous pieces of evidence that show that Trajan’s Forum continually served as an important civic and cultural center for the ancient city, as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter. No evidence of burning or destruction has been found around the area of the Forum, suggesting that this space survived the sacks of 410, 455 and 472 CE.²³² When Constantius II visited Rome, according to the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, he was stunned by the beauty and grandeur of the Forum of

²³⁰ Boin 2013, 147.

²³¹ Packer 2001, 5.

²³² Bauer 1996, 97.

Trajan, being particularly enamored with the colossal equestrian statue (*fig. 6*). He writes:

Verum cum ad Traiani forum venisset, singularem sub omni caelo structuram, ut opinamur, etiam numinum assensione mirabilem, haerebat attonitus, per gigantes contextus circumferens mentem, nec relatu effabiles, nec rursus mortalibus appetendos. Omni itaque spe huius modi quicquam conandi depulsa, Traiani equum solum, locatum in atrii medio, qui ipsum principem vehit, imitari se velle dicebat et posse. (Amm. Marc.16.10.15)

But when [Constantius] came to the Forum of Trajan, a construction unique under the heavens, as we believe, and admirable even in the unanimous opinion of the gods, he stood fast in amazement, turning his attention to the gigantic complex about him, begging description and never again to be imitated by mortal men. Therefore abandoning all hope of attempting anything like it, he said that he would and could copy Trajan's steed alone, which stands in the center of the vestibule, carrying the emperor himself. (Translation by Rolfe, 1950)

In this passage, Ammianus records two notable things: first the splendor of the forum which was still so marvelous in the fourth century, and second that after seeing it, Constantius wished to emulate the great equestrian statue of Trajan. Constantius' desire to imitate Trajan demonstrates the power of the image of the emperor and the memories tied to it. Moreover, it brings to light the desire of later emperors to be associated with an earlier imperial age. The third century saw numerous calamities and few memorable rulers. Fourth-century emperors sought to associate their rule with the memory of emperors from the earlier principate, such as Augustus, Trajan, or Marcus Aurelius, when the empire was more prosperous and stable. Visual associations serve to legitimize the authority of the present ruler by recalling a well-known entity. For similar reasons, Augustus adopted the visual imagery of the classical Greek world as a signal of cultural

renewal.²³³ By expressing a desire to copy the equestrian statue of Trajan, Constantius II was making a statement that suggests that his age would be like the age of Trajan.

1B: The Basilica Ulpia and the routine operations of Rome

The Forum of Trajan, and the Basilica Ulpia within it, functioned as an administrative and judicial center for the city of Rome that continued throughout the fourth and fifth centuries. Much of the official business that had previously transpired in the Forum Romanum was transferred to the Forum of Trajan. It is well attested that Trajan's Forum retained the governmental offices for the city of Rome including the offices of the urban prefect (*praefectus urbi*),²³⁴ who was appointed by the emperors to maintain public order in the city and the surrounding area. The urban prefect was required to be a senator of *illustris* rank, and his duties included the publication of laws,²³⁵ criminal adjudication, maintenance of public works and ports, and the provisioning of the urban populace, all of which took place within the forum complex.²³⁶ The activities of the urban prefect in Trajan's Forum have been evidenced by inscriptions, and legal documents such as the *Codex Theodosianus* and Justinian's *Digest*. For example, the *Codex Theodosianus* reports that senators on trial could only be tried by the *praefectus urbi* in the Forum of Trajan, presumably in the Basilica Ulpia.²³⁷ Many statues of fourth- and fifth-century urban prefects were found in the Forum of Trajan, which is explained by the increasing prominence of the urban prefect in the fourth and

²³³ This is an obvious over-simplification of a complex transformation of visual, literary, and political themes. For a more detailed analysis, see Zanker 1988.

²³⁴ There were offices of the urban prefect at the Forum of Trajan, but the main offices were usually on the Velian Hill near where S. Pietro in Vincoli now stands. Anderson 1984, 165, note 86.

²³⁵ According to the *Codex Theodosianus* some 20 laws pertaining to civil and criminal cases were posted in Trajan's Forum. See Lugli 1965, XVI. 73–8.

²³⁶ The urban prefect administered the 14 districts of Rome, the Tiber River, Portus and Ostia, and a 100-mile zone around the city. Lançon 2000, 46.

²³⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 2.1.4 and 1.6.11. See Anderson 1984, 164–166.

fifth centuries, as emperors were increasingly absent from the Eternal City.²³⁸ This also explains the importance of Trajan's Forum as a civic center in this period.

Among the urban prefect's staff was the *praefectus annonae*, who was directly responsible for maintaining the food supply. The *annona* was still operational in late antiquity. Sidonius Apollinaris, upon his appointment to urban prefect, wrote a letter to his friend Campanianus in 468 CE in which he bids him to stir the prefect of the *annona* to action lest a grain shortage cause a public uproar.²³⁹ The distributions of bread, oil, wine and meat were organized by the *officium urbanum* and distributed at various stepped distribution centers (*panis gradilis*) throughout the city. Recipients were to receive their allotment from the *gradus* nearest to their place of residency.²⁴⁰ The Forum and adjacent Markets of Trajan likely served as the offices for the organization of the *annona*, and may have also served as a place of distribution of goods.

In addition to the duties of the urban prefect, the Basilica Ulpia housed consular and tribunal courts, *congiaria*,²⁴¹ public appearances of the emperor, manumission of slaves,²⁴² the forgiveness of public debts, and the publication of laws. The legal archive associated with the Atrium Libertatis was either linked to the Basilica Ulpia or possibly

²³⁸ Bauer 1996, 94.

²³⁹ Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 1.10.

²⁴⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 14.16.3; 14.17.3; Rickman 1980, 208.

²⁴¹ *HA Commodus* 2.1.3 states that Commodus gave public *congiaria* in the *Basilica Traiani*, which could either be a reference to the Basilica Ulpia, or the *Aula Traiani*, the large vaulted hall in the markets sitting on the hill above the forum. See page 83.

²⁴² The Forum of Trajan and the Atrium Libertatis became interchangeable during the imperial period since the activities of manumission moved to the Basilica Ulpia, which previously took place in the *Atrium Libertatis* (as the name implies). Moreover, the census records were housed in the *Atrium Libertatis*, which were necessary for the process of manumission. Thus, these two structures were linked in function and physical proximity. Anderson 1984, 172, 177.

housed in a separate section in the libraries on either side of the column (*fig. 3*).²⁴³ Judicial and legal activity would have necessitated ease of access to such materials.²⁴⁴ The Theodosian Code, for example, stated that laws were posted on bronze tablets in the Forum of Trajan.²⁴⁵ Aurelian, emperor from 270–275 CE, burned proscription lists in Trajan’s Forum.²⁴⁶ No doubt, all of these tasks required a staff of *servi publici*, who served as clerks, secretaries, heralds, and functionaries for the courts and administrative services that were conducted at the Basilica Ulpia.²⁴⁷ One can imagine the everyday hustle and bustle of people in and around Trajan’s Forum.

The civic and judicial activities transpiring at Trajan’s namesake location undoubtedly contributed to the tradition that Trajan was a just ruler. Trajan becomes further associated with justice because justice was publicly administered at his forum.²⁴⁸ The belief that he was a just emperor is rooted in evidence; there are written testaments, beginning with Pliny, to Trajan’s even-handed style.²⁴⁹ Additionally, Cassius Dio’s historical account puts direct emphasis on justice and civil administration: “He did not, however, as might be expected of a warlike man, pay any less attention to the civil administration nor did he dispense justice any the less; on the contrary, he conducted trials, now in the Forum of Augustus, now in the Portico of Livia, as it was called, and

²⁴³ Ancient texts record different names: *bibliotheca Ulpia* and *bibliotheca templi Traiani* or *divi Traiani*, suggesting there may have been two distinct collections, one connected to the Basilica Ulpia and the other located in the sacred precinct near the column and temple to divine Trajan and Plotina. Anderson 1984, 174–5.

²⁴⁴ Anderson 1984, 173–4.

²⁴⁵ *Cod. Theod.* 14.2.1. Also see Bauer 1996, 95–6.

²⁴⁶ *HA Aurelian* 39.3.

²⁴⁷ Anderson 1984, 166.

²⁴⁸ Nasrallah 2010, 161.

²⁴⁹ Pliny, *Pan.* 65.1–2.

often elsewhere on a tribunal.”²⁵⁰ The notion of justice also derives from visuals, such as the relief from Trajan’s column depicting Trajan receiving the Dacian emissaries. The use of the Basilica Ulpia for judicial proceedings, combined with the exemplary status of Trajan in the literature, provides the context to mythologize Trajan. The “Justice of Trajan” is a myth that can be observed taking shape in the fourth century. It appears as a type-scene in literature and art developing over the centuries: as seen in the Life of Gregory the Great, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, a painting by Flemish painter Rogier van der Weyden, a famous painting by Eugene Delacroix, and as recently as the United States Supreme Court building.²⁵¹ The scene usually portrays Trajan, mounted on his horse, beseeched by a widow whose son was murdered. She begs for justice, and at first, Trajan tells her to wait until he returns from his campaign. She points out that he may never return, and then Trajan halts his march to Dacia to hear the case.²⁵² Without a doubt, the conception of the “Justice of Trajan” myth was multifaceted; some versions explicitly present Trajan as just, while others rely on allusion and tradition. These accounts of Trajan as the arbiter of justice were surely aided by the judicial activities, which were integral to the operation of the ancient city.

1C: The images of the clarissimi: Trajan’s Forum and the Senate

Trajan’s forum complex had a strong connection to the Roman senate in the fourth century.²⁵³ Trajan’s Forum was used as a place for honorific inscriptions and

²⁵⁰ Dio Cass. 68.10: οὐ μέντοι, οἷα πολεμικὸς ἀνὴρ, τᾶλλα ἤττον διῆγεν ἢ καὶ ἤττον ἐδίκαζεν, ἀλλὰ τοτὲ μὲν ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ τοῦ Ἀγούστου, τοτὲ δ’ ἐν τῇ στοᾷ τῇ Λιουία ὀνομασμένη, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ ἄλλοθι ἔκρινεν ἐπὶ βήματος.

²⁵¹ Bennett 2001, xvii.

²⁵² Dante, *Purgatory* X.73-90. Trajan is also obliquely referenced in *Paradise* XX.43–8. See page 202.

²⁵³ Robert Chenault’s extensive study (2012) of senatorial inscriptions in Trajan’s Forum is vital on this subject. Also see Mitchell 2015, 335.

statues (*fig. 7*) of Roman senators (*clarissimi*) and urban prefects; both in the high empire and again in the fourth century (after a hiatus during the crises in the third).²⁵⁴ This was a purposeful resumption of a previous use of the Forum. The practice of commemorative statuary in public space is mentioned by Pliny the Elder, who declared that the public commemoration of men appeared in the fora, not only in Rome but in every town.²⁵⁵ From the surviving evidence, it appears that these commemorative images were placed along the covered porticoes that flanked the square, the *exedrae*, and in the Basilica Ulpia (*fig. 8*).²⁵⁶ In the fourth century, the practice of emperors granting statues of senators in the Forum of Trajan resumed, with the earliest evidence coming from a letter of Constantine to honor the urban prefect L. Aradius Proculus in 337 CE.²⁵⁷

The placement of senatorial statuary in Trajan's Forum must be viewed as fundamental evidence of the construction of a unified aristocratic identity in Rome. As Rubina Raja points out, despite the fact that public spaces were created by a single person (in this case, the emperor), the monuments in the space were "expressions of the community's desire to define and represent its public identity."²⁵⁸ Raja's point is good, but it needs clarification. Public space did not necessarily represent the identity of the community as a whole but those with power, who wanted to project the notions of aristocratic (senatorial) and autocratic (imperial) rule. In the fourth century, emperors rarely spent much time in Rome, and the messages in public space in Rome were expressed by aristocrats who promoted themselves as restoring Rome to its former glory.

²⁵⁴ Bauer 1996, 95; Chenault 2012, 120.

²⁵⁵ Plin. *HN* 34.9. See also Wiseman 2014, 46.

²⁵⁶ Anderson 1984, 172; Packer 2001, 63.

²⁵⁷ Cameron 2011, 9.

²⁵⁸ Raja 2013, 163.

In addition, traditional aristocratic virtues were celebrated in the inscriptions accompanying the statues, thereby forming a class identity.

Trajanic space was useful because of the inherent memories associated with Trajan. It is also important to remember that Trajan himself was the adopted son of Nerva, who was a life-long senator; a connection that Trajan astutely maintained and exploited. Pliny pointed out that Trajan restored the Roman nobility and even revered the long tradition of great families.²⁵⁹ Moreover, Trajan himself dedicated statues to three Roman senators: Q. Sosius Senecio, A. Cornelius Palma, and L. Publius Celsus. It is not known where these statues were erected, though it is likely that at least the one of Celsus was put up in Trajan's Forum, since he was honored the year after the Forum was dedicated.²⁶⁰ Trajan thereby established a precedent of issuing public honors to senators in his imperial forum. There is substantial epigraphic evidence to show that there were also numerous senatorial statues in Trajan's Forum during the time of Marcus Aurelius.²⁶¹ It is logical that in the fourth (and fifth) century, senators would want to distance themselves from the third century by associating with the memory of a time when the prestige of the Roman senate was esteemed—the second century. Trajan was the ideal candidate and his forum the perfect setting since the practice had already been established. Moreover, senatorial Romans used Trajan as an exemplary model. Symmachus, for instance, in a letter to Ausonius, praises the vigor of Trajan as a comparison to the emperor Gratian (*Ep.* 1.13.3). Therefore, the Forum of Trajan became the space for commemoration and operation of senatorial activities.

²⁵⁹ Pliny, *Pan.* 69.5–6. For further discussion, see Gowing 2995, 127–8.

²⁶⁰ Chenault 2012, 119.

²⁶¹ Chenault 2012, 119.

To offer a typical example, the senator Flavius Sallustius was honored in 364 CE with the following inscription:

Fl(avio) Sallustio, v(iro) c(larissimo), | cons. ordinario, | praef(ecto) praet(orio), comiti | consistorii, vicario | urbis Romae, vicario | Hispaniarum, vicario | quinq(ue) provinciarum, | pleno aequitatis | ac fidei, ob virtutis | meritorumq(ue) gloriam, | missis legat(is) ius(sione) sac(ra) | Hispaniae dicaverunt.

In latere: Dedicata V Kal(endas) Iun(ias) | divo Ioviano Aug. et Varronian[o] | coss. (CIL VI.1729 = ILS 1254)

To Flavius Sallustius, a man of senatorial rank, consul ordinarius,²⁶² praetorian prefect, an official of the imperial council, deputy of the city of Rome, deputy of the [two] Spains, deputy of the five provinces, full of fairness and faith, for the sake of the glory of virtue and things deserved, with legates having been sent at the sacred order the Spains dedicated. Dedicated five days before the Kalends of June in the consulship of Jovianus Augustus and Varronianus. (Translation by author)

Clearly Flavius Sallustius had a distinguished career in the administration of the city and in the service of the empire, and he was honored in the Forum of Trajan among other fellow notable senators.²⁶³ The inscription is typical of other dedications to senators in the fourth century. All of the extant inscriptions reveal that the men honored in Trajan's Forum received their rank exclusively through civil magistracies and not military ones. This is a marked difference from the time of Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius, who all used this space to honor men of military rank. However, the honors displayed demonstrate the importance of the senatorial class in civil and military administration during the fourth century. Flavius Sallustius, as shown above, clearly served in the imperial administration as a praetorian prefect and as a *comes* as well as consul and an officer (*vicarius*) in the provinces. In addition, the inscription praises

²⁶² Flavius Sallustius was consul ordinarius along with the emperor Julian for the year 363 CE, and the dedication was made the following year.

²⁶³ This inscription is typical of the kinds of honors displayed on dedicatory inscriptions to senators in the Forum of Trajan. For more examples, see Lugli 1965, XVI. 64–72.

traditional aristocratic virtues, *aequitas*, *fides*, and *virtus*. Such language defined the status of the senatorial aristocracy seeking to assert itself as a distinct and unified group and as inheritors of the ancient nobility.²⁶⁴

Trajan's Forum, as Robert Chenault demonstrates, was the most important place in the ancient city of Rome for honorific statues and inscriptions for men of senatorial rank. In contrast to this, the Forum Romanum remained the favored location for imperial statuary.²⁶⁵ Most of the honorific statues from Trajan's Forum do not survive, but the inscriptions accompanying them do. Despite the loss of the statues, the number of senatorial figures outnumbers imperial ones by a ratio of 3:1 or 4:1 based on the current totals of extant inscriptions.²⁶⁶ The presence of these numerous dedications suggests a renewed importance of the ancient political class of the city of Rome. In addition, the epigraphic evidence provides the best evidence of the continued use of the space, since literary references are few and archaeological evidence is scarce due to later spoliation of materials. The inscriptions are evidence of an emergent "coherent governing class" of imperial senators formed from traditional aristocratic families and new men who arose through the military and civil bureaucracies.²⁶⁷

Constantine had an interest in forging a unified identity for the elites since he created a new senate at Constantinople and greatly expanded the number of people holding administrative posts. The Roman senate itself also affected this revived authority through some key policies. For example, the urban prefect, Ceionius Rufius Albinus (335–337 CE) enacted the power to nominate quaestors to be vested once again in the

²⁶⁴ Chenault 2012, 112–3.

²⁶⁵ Chenault 2012, 103.

²⁶⁶ Chenault (2012, 106) reports that at least twenty inscriptions survive that are clearly senatorial (*clarissimi*) with an additional nine that possibly honor senators.

²⁶⁷ Chenault 2012, 107.

senate, thereby giving control of its membership back to the ancient body.²⁶⁸ According to Robert Chenault, this was an inevitable move by the emperor but nonetheless gave the senate control of its own membership—something that had not happened since the time of Julius Caesar: “With Constantine wholly absorbed in eastern affairs, the prefect Albinus’ petition was very well timed, for it allowed both emperor and senate to demonstrate a shared interest in confirming the authority of the senate. It also represented a tacit acknowledgement on both sides that the emperor’s absence from Rome implied a greater role for senators in the administration of the city.”²⁶⁹ The revival of dedicatory inscriptions to the *clarissimi* is evidence of the renewed importance of the republican institution during a time when the imperial presence in Rome was waning.²⁷⁰

Asserting the importance of the senatorial class in connection to Trajan was advantageous in forming a narrative of a restored Roman Empire. Trajan embodied a strong military emperor, but one who respected the traditions of the aristocracy. In addition, Trajan “restored” the senate from the clutches of Domitianic tyranny.²⁷¹ In return, the senate bestowed upon Trajan the honorific title of *optimus*.²⁷²

The Roman senate continued to reference Trajan as a model emperor beyond his own life. The senate granted the name, *Traianus*, to the emperor Decius (249–251 CE), who himself was a senator, having held the consulship in 232 CE and afterwards the urban prefecture. Decius also began to revive the censorship, allowing the senate to vote

²⁶⁸ Chastagnol 1960, 405; 2012, 107.

²⁶⁹ Chenault 2012, 107–8.

²⁷⁰ Cameron (1993, 55) points out that the enlargement of the senatorial aristocracy by Constantine had consequences; it eventually led to the disappearance of the equestrian order.

²⁷¹ Pliny, *Pan.* 11.3; 18.1; 20.5; 23.1–3; 45.3–6; 50.5–7; 53; 54.5; 55.6–7; 57.5; 62; 69–71; 76; Dio Cass. 68.5.2; 68.7.3.

²⁷² Pliny, *Pan.* 2.7; 88.4. See further Dio Cass. 68.18,3b; Trajan first received this title in 98 when he also received the title of *Pater Patriae*. Coins bearing the title *optimus* begin from 103 CE, and from 114 CE the title was included in official inscriptions. See Radice 1969, 326 n. 3.

the future emperor Valerian to office (though he afterwards declined the office).²⁷³ As discussed in the next chapter, Eutropius reported that Trajan and Augustus were model emperors for senators and emperors alike.²⁷⁴

Both senators and the emperor would do well for their own image-building to align themselves with the memory of Trajan. These honorific statues of senators and accompanying inscriptions provide a visual link to the past heroes of Rome. According to the author of the *Historia Augusta* (26.4), statues of the *summi viri* were moved to Trajan's Forum by Alexander Severus, so the memorialization of late antique senators in Trajan's Forum honored them in the context of heroes of Rome's past.²⁷⁵ The placement of contemporary statues among the venerated men of Rome's past elevates their significance and establishes continuity with an ancient tradition.

Further evidence shows that the Forum of Trajan serviced Rome's senate. For instance, senators stored their strong-boxes (*opes*) here to deposit silver plate and money, as recorded by a fourth-century scholiast to Juvenal.²⁷⁶ According to this source, this activity continued up to the prefecture of a certain Cerealis, who has been identified as Naeradius Cerealis, the urban prefect of Rome from 26 September 352 to 8 December 354 CE. This is probably to whom the scholiast was referring, which places this commentator in Rome in the middle of the fourth century.²⁷⁷ This was probably routine operation since

²⁷³ There are other parallels between Decius and Trajan. Both men served as governors of Germania and had military campaigns along the Danube.

²⁷⁴ Eutr. *Brev.* 8.5.3.

²⁷⁵ Chenault (2012, 110 n. 39) cautions that these statues are not to be understood as a "'hall of fame' for outstanding men in general," and that such honors could not be expected for high office or literary achievements. While I agree with this, it is important to see the statues of fourth-century senators within the context of exempla that were on display in the forum.

²⁷⁶ Schol. ad Iuv. 10.24: *Usque ad Cerealem praefectum in foro Traiani arcae habuerunt senatores, in quibus argentum aut pecunias tutius deponerant. Propterea et locus ipse, in quo erant arcae positae, 'Opes' dictae sunt.*

²⁷⁷ Cameron 2010, 569.

the strong-boxes were stored at or near the offices of the prefect (likely in the adjacent markets), but this activity strengthens the senatorial association with this space.²⁷⁸

Because Trajan's Forum was used on a routine basis, visitors to the forum entered into the monumental space surrounded by commemorative signs and statues conveying messages of Trajan's legacy along with the celebration of the old aristocracy. Trajan's Forum serviced the needs of the (new) aristocracy because it was a physical connection to the past, which was valuable in the narrative that the fourth century was an age of restoration.

Section 2: Trajan's Forum: The sacred precinct and cultural center

The area of the forum north of the Basilica Ulpia, which contained the column, libraries, and temple, was space reserved for veneration of the divine Trajan and for literary pursuits (*fig. 5*). Also present in this area was the temple to the divine Trajan and Plotina, attested in an inscription, and recent excavations have yielded additional evidence.²⁷⁹ Fourth-century sources are silent about the temple, but presumably it still continued to operate with respect to the imperial cult.

2A: The Column of Trajan

Trajan's Column stood as the most iconic feature of this area and was still considered to be a marvel in the fourth century (*fig. 9*). It was a monument dedicated to Trajan's conquest of Dacia—a visual reminder to the greatest expansion of the Roman Empire. In the fourth century, the column appears in literature, and emperors emulated

²⁷⁸ The offices were housed in the adjacent markets, but this space was associated with the forum complex, as understood from the source.

²⁷⁹ *CIL* VI.966, 31215; Cavallero 2011.

the form of the column in order to make direct links to Trajan.²⁸⁰ The column was apparently open to ascend to the upper platform via the narrow spiral staircase.

Ammianus Marcellinus offers this description of Rome that many have thought to refer to the Column of Trajan (and also the commemorative columns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, which imitated the design of Trajan's column):²⁸¹

elatosque vertices qui scansili suggestu consurgunt, priorum principum imitamenta portantes. (Amm. Marc. 16.10.14)

And the exalted heights which rise with platforms to which one may mount, and bear the likenesses of former emperors. (Translation by Rolfe, 1950)

If Ammianus' is referring to these aforementioned columns, and it is likely that he is, then it is a testament to the enduring impression of Trajan's monument that celebrated his campaign and his principate. It is not known who was able to ascend the column, and whether it was open to the public or restricted to notable visitors. Nonetheless, when visiting Rome, Constantius II (or someone on his behalf) left his mark inside the column.²⁸² Regardless, it appears that Constantius was impressed by the famous monument. As Penelope Davies suggests, "The column can be recognized as a fully dynamic monument, intended to draw the visitor into a dialogue to ensure the perpetuation of memory as sculpture and architecture conspire to present a dramatic propagandistic message concerning Trajan's life and afterlife."²⁸³ That Constantius signed his name to the interior of the monument confirms Davies' statement—he was drawn into the memory associated with the space. The iconic monument was also copied

²⁸⁰ See Columns of Theodosius and Arcadius in Constantinople mentioned below.

²⁸¹ Rolfe 1950, 250 and Davies 1997, 60–1. This description may be referencing something else as Davies admits, but the description certainly seems to fit these imperial columns.

²⁸² Lepper and Frere 1988, 13.

²⁸³ Davies 1997, 65.

by the Theodosian emperors at Constantinople, signaling that Trajan's column was not only recognizable but helped to propagandize Theodosius and Arcadius.

The Column of Trajan continues to stand today; long after the rest of the forum collapsed and marble decorations were stripped away to decorate Rome's churches. The Column was and is a monumental marker that reminds the viewer about the once prosperous and innovative time of Trajan and his military achievements. It was a permanent mark on the urban landscape of Rome. On December 4, 1587 when Pope Sixtus V crowned the column with a new statue of Peter to replace the absent image of Trajan he was, in effect, replacing the prince of Rome with the prince of the apostles.²⁸⁴

2B: The Bibliotheca Ulpia: The library as power and memory

Trajan was, of course, not only remembered for his military achievements; he was also known for being a sponsor of cultural and intellectual activities that took place in and around the two libraries flanking the column (*figs. 2 and 10*). In the *Panegyricus* Pliny lauds Trajan for holding rhetoricians and philosophers in esteem, which is further supported by the use of space in Trajan's Forum for accommodating schools of grammar and rhetoric in the exedrae and libraries and honoring literary figures with statues.²⁸⁵ The use of Trajanic space for such purposes memorialized Trajan as a supporter of Rome's cultural heritage.

Perhaps no other kind of building in antiquity is tied so closely with memory as the library—especially as a repository of cultural heritage and literary activity. A library

²⁸⁴ The statue of Trajan seems to have been torn down or fell down due to earthquakes sometime in the medieval period. See Paoletti and Radke 2005, 541.

²⁸⁵ Pliny, *Pan.* 47.1. For the rhetorical school in the exedrae, see Marrou 1932, 99, also cited in Bauer 1996, 97.

is a unique type of structure in that the function of the space itself operates as a link between the present and the documents of the past. It is a repository for cultural and literary material that is purposely accessed by its users. As Yun Lee Too points out, “Memory thus plays a role in forming the canon, the body of generally accepted texts that stand for a community’s literature.”²⁸⁶ They are not necessarily to the exclusion of other texts not in the library, but a library collection does create a kind of monopoly on information. Moreover, literature was one of the leisurely activities of the senatorial aristocracy and other social elites.

In addition to the works inside, the library itself stands as a perpetual reminder of its founder. Ancient libraries, as Laura Salah Nasrallah points out, “demonstrated imperial support of *paedeia* in both [Greek and Latin] languages, and the importance of Greek culture, even if Greeks were a conquered people.”²⁸⁷ Classical antiquity’s first library, according to Aulus Gellius and others, was established at Athens by the tyrant, Peisistratus.²⁸⁸ His collection of texts may not have been a library as we conceive it today or even by Hellenistic standards. Cicero, for example, merely credits Peisistratus with ordering the sequence of the Homeric epics,²⁸⁹ or at least an Athenian version, as Plutarch stated.²⁹⁰ The role of Peisistratus, though, persists in the memory of the formation of the library, which ultimately is an “articulation of the ruler’s power.”²⁹¹ The works of Homer formed the basis for Greek identity and shared history or a kind of cultural capital. Therefore, the creation of the library around the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

²⁸⁶ Too 2010, 184.

²⁸⁷ Nasrallah 2010, 160.

²⁸⁸ Gell. *NA* 7.17.

²⁸⁹ Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.37.37.

²⁹⁰ Plutarch, *Theseus* 20.2.

²⁹¹ Too 2010, 24.

cements the contribution of Peisistratus into the lasting memory of the Greeks (and Romans) as a patron to this cultural identity.

The largest and most famous library was of course the *Bibliotheca Alexandrina*, which was an accumulation of (mostly) Greek collections “re-founded on Egyptian soil, [which] helps to authorize Ptolemaic Egypt and Alexandria as a Greece transformed.”²⁹² It is, therefore, not surprising that Ptolemy III Euergetes “borrowed” the Athenian manuscripts of the tragic playwrights for his collection.²⁹³ This action not only pays homage to the Greek literary tradition, but also appropriates it from Athens, the cultural powerhouse of the classical age.

The Bibliotheca Ulpia was a continuation of this tradition of cultural capital and shared memory as libraries appeared in Rome during the Principate. The first public Roman library was built in the *Atrium Libertatis* by Asinius Pollio, himself an author and supporter of Julius Caesar, who had initially planned to build it.²⁹⁴ This library had twin chambers for Greek and Latin literature. Pollio’s library was likely absorbed into the new Trajanic library. Augustus, Tiberius, and Vespasian also lavished the capital with libraries. Trajan’s was the last such imperial library to be built as a part of his larger forum complex.²⁹⁵ Of all the libraries from ancient Rome, the remains of Trajan’s library are the best preserved, so reconstruction of the space is possible (*fig. 10*).²⁹⁶

²⁹² Too 2010, 31.

²⁹³ Galen (*comm. in Hipp. Epidem.* 3.2.4) reports that Ptolemy III paid fifteen talents of silver to borrow manuscripts of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The Alexandrians apparently kept the originals and sent back to the Athenians copies.

²⁹⁴ Plin. *HN* 35.2; Suet. *Aug.* 29; Isid. *Orig.* 6.5. Also see Casson 2001, 80.

²⁹⁵ Subsequent libraries were built but became incorporated into public baths, which serviced a wider audience. Casson 2001, 89.

²⁹⁶ Casson 2001, 84.

The fame and importance of the Bibliotheca Ulpia can be seen in the numerous references to it in the fourth-century *Historia Augusta*.²⁹⁷ The author of the *HA* referred to the Bibliotheca Ulpia seven times in various passages throughout the work and claimed to have used the collections there.²⁹⁸ There is some controversy about the whereabouts of the library's contents in the fourth century. In the Life of Probus, it is stated that the collections of the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* were moved to the libraries of the Baths of Diocletian, which, as James Anderson suggests, was due to the increasing importance of Trajan's Forum for the operations of the urban prefecture.²⁹⁹ Therefore, the collection would not have been at its original location during the writings of the *HA*, raising suspicion about the author's access to the Bibliotheca Ulpia. The account, that the library collection was moved, may be entirely a fabrication—one of many in the *HA*. Regardless of the whereabouts of the collections, references to them lent credibility to the author's texts because it was a reputable source. "There are repeated passages throughout the *HA*," Lorne Bruce says, "that show the author is anxious to convey the impression that his efforts to research and record history have been quite extensive."³⁰⁰ It must have seemed plausible to the readers that the author did or could have accessed materials at the Bibliotheca Ulpia and the other imperial libraries.³⁰¹

Because of the library and accompanying literary activities, the Forum of Trajan was the proper setting to honor lettered men in the service of the emperors. All but one of the literary persons commemorated in Trajan's Forum either held office or delivered

²⁹⁷ The veracity of the references to the Bibliotheca Ulpia in the *HA* has been challenged by scholars, or dismissed altogether, because the author seems to have taken information directly from Aulus Gellius. See Bruce 1981.

²⁹⁸ *HA Aurelian* 1.7.3; 1.10.4; 8.1.1; 24.7.2; *Tacitus* 8.1.2; *Probus* 2.1.2; *Carus et Carinus* 11.3.4.

²⁹⁹ *HA Probus* 2.1; Anderson 1984, 176.

³⁰⁰ Bruce 1981, 553.

³⁰¹ Dix 1994, 286.

panegyrics in praise of the emperors. According to Sidonius Apollinaris, the library was located at its original home in the Forum of Trajan in the fifth century.³⁰² He states that after delivering a panegyric to the emperor Avitus (455-56 CE), he was rewarded with an honorific statue between the two libraries. “There is, then, good reason to believe,” George Houston writes, “that the double library in the Forum of Trajan was still in existence at least as late as AD 455.”³⁰³ This is significant because many scholars have assumed that Rome’s public libraries had been closed by 380 CE,³⁰⁴ because Ammianus Marcellinus mentions that the libraries of Rome were closed off forever like tombs.³⁰⁵ As Houston points out, however, this passage is in reference to collections in private homes and had nothing to do with the public libraries of Rome, among which the Bibliotheca Ulpia remained open until at least the middle of the fifth century.³⁰⁶

Just like Sidonius Apollinaris, other men of letters were honored in Trajan’s Forum, likely near the libraries. In addition to honorific inscriptions for senators, there were also those dedicated to rhetoricians and poets, particularly those who delivered panegyrics in honor of the emperors.³⁰⁷ Claudian, for example, composed and delivered panegyrics to Stilicho and Honorius. In addition, Flavius Merobaudes and Sidonius Apollinaris, who were both also imperial panegyrists, were privileged with statues. In 400 CE, a bronze statue was set up in honor of the poet Claudian, and it was

³⁰² The inscription to Sidonius Apollinaris is the only concrete evidence that confirms the libraries in Trajan’s Forum. *CIL* VI.1724. See Bruce 1981, 559; also see Houston 1988, 261–2.

³⁰³ Dix 1994, 262.

³⁰⁴ Boyd 1915; Thompson 1940; Vleeschauwer 1964, cited in Houston 1988, 258.

³⁰⁵ Amm. Marc. 14.6.18: *Bibliothecis sepulcrorum ritu in perpetuum clausis*.

³⁰⁶ Houston 1988, 259.

³⁰⁷ Chenault (2012, 111) mentions that there is one exception. The Neo-Platonic philosopher Marius Victorinus, is known only through literature (Jerome’s *Chronicle*), and he may have received the honorary rank of *clarissimus*, which is found in some of his manuscripts.

accompanied by a dedicatory inscription, which was composed as usual in Latin but also had an additional Greek couplet:³⁰⁸

[Cl(audii)] Claudiani, v(iri) c(larissimi). | [Cla]udio Claudiano v(iro) c(larissimo), tri | [bu]no et notario, inter ceteras | [de]centes artes prae[g]loriosissimo | [po]etarum, licet ad memoriam sem|piternam carmina ab eodem | scripta sufficient, adtamen | testimonii gratia ob iudicii sui | [f]idem, d(omini) n(ostri) Arcadius et Honorius | [fe]licissimi ac doctissimi | imperatores senatu petente | statuam in foro divi Traiani | erigi collocarique iusserunt.

εἰν ἐνί βιργιλίῳ νόον | καὶ μοῦσαν Ὀμήρου | Κλαυδιανὸν Ῥώμῃ καὶ | βασιλῆς ἔθεσαν. (CIL VI.1710 = ILS 2949)

To Claudius Claudianus, a man of senatorial rank, tribune and notary, among the remaining appropriate arts most renowned of the poets, although the poems written by him would suffice for everlasting memory, nevertheless for the sake of testimony in the interest of the faith of his judges, our lords, Arcadius and Honorius, most blessed and learned emperors with the request of the senate ordered a statue to be made and set up in the forum of divine Trajan.

In one man, the mind of Virgil and the inspiration of Homer, Rome and the emperors placed Claudian. (Translation by author)

It is significant that the inscription records that the emperors ordered the statue to be put up in the Forum of Trajan explicitly. Stating the place-name of the dedication is formulaic, and there are several inscriptions from the second century and late antiquity that declare that the statue was placed *in foro divi Traiani* or *in foro Ulpio*.³⁰⁹ The phrase, however, is not present in all inscriptions, so not required in the formula. Regardless, the toponym would indicate to the viewer that, even if the statue and accompanying inscription were moved, it belonged in this place. Moreover, the reference to this place must have been understood. The forum space preserved memories of Trajan as well as honored individuals. Additionally, in this inscription alone, several names are

³⁰⁸ The title of *vir clarissimus* listed on the inscription was probably honorific. See Chenault 2012, 111. See Cameron (1970, 248–50) for a discussion about the context and motivations to honor Claudian.

³⁰⁹ Sample of dedications with phrase *in foro divi Traiani*: CIL VI.1549,1599,1540,1727; dedications with phrase *in foro Ulpio*: CIL VI.1749, 1724; samples of dedications without: CIL VI.1789, 1783.

used along with Trajan's: first and most obvious, the name Claudian, about whom this inscription was written. The next two are the names of the emperors, Arcadius and Honorius, who, along with the senate, commissioned it. Then there is an epigram inscribed in Greek below the Latin text which likens Claudian's skill and artistry to Virgil and Homer respectively. All of these aforementioned names carry substantial tradition, each able to evoke memories associated with them. Even though the inscription is not about Trajan at all, his name appears along with a network of other important cultural icons.

In addition to honoring lettered men, the Forum of Trajan was also a center of literary activities. Three references, as Bauer points out, survive from c. 400 CE that verify that Trajan's Forum was used for editing and writing.³¹⁰ The *subscriptio* after declamation X by Pseudo-Quintilian states that a certain Domitius Dracontius edited the text in the *schola fori Traiani*.³¹¹ Another source, taken from an inscription, tells that a *grammaticus* named Boniface refers to the *atrium Traiani*.³¹² This is probably a conflation of the names of *Forum Traiani* with the adjacent *Atrium Libertatis*.³¹³ It is likely that the school where these scholarly activities took place was a room or series of rooms attached to the libraries.³¹⁴ Moreover, Aulus Gellius mentioned that he accessed state records here and also used the space to discuss philosophy with friends.³¹⁵

³¹⁰ Bauer 1996, 95.

³¹¹ Codices Parisinus 16230 and Sorbonianus 629 in Planter 1929; "Schola Fori Traiani"; Bauer 1996, 96, n. 129.

³¹² *CIL* VI.9446; Anderson 1984, 177; Bauer 1996, 96.

³¹³ Anderson 1984, 177.

³¹⁴ Platner 1929, "Schola Fori Traiani."

³¹⁵ Gell. *NA* 11.17.1–4

Trajan's Forum continued as a site of scholastic and literary activity into at least the seventh century. Venantius Fortunatus, a poet, bishop, and contemporary of Gregory the Great, recounts that it was usual for poets to recite their works in Trajan's Forum.³¹⁶ Henri Marrou goes so far as to suggest that Trajan's Forum served as a kind of proto-university for late antique and early-medieval Rome.³¹⁷

The library was an important space for the memorialization of Trajan as a patron of Rome and scholarly pursuits, which were of particular importance to aristocratic ideals. The sheer size and lavish decorations represent the prosperous age of the early second century. More importantly, the library housed texts that created the canon of literary material that served as the repository for the cultural heritage of Rome. Inside the library likely stood a colossal statue of Trajan that memorialized the emperor among the collections of scrolls.³¹⁸ The many visitors were constantly reminded of Trajan's patronage of the city in the way that Peisistratus and Ptolemy were venerated for their sponsorship of their libraries. The numerous references to the Bibliotheca Ulpia in the *HA*, however dubious the work might be, indicate that the libraries were famous for their collections well into the fourth century.

Section 3: Trajan's Markets

Adjacent to the forum stands the multi-story structure known as Trajan's markets, built into the scarp of the Quirinal Hill (*fig. 2*). It was likely built to replace the *macellum* that was displaced in order to construct the new forum. Of all the great Trajanic-era monuments from Rome, none survives as well as the market complex, though the original

³¹⁶ Cited in Bauer 1996, 97 and Packer 2001, 5.

³¹⁷ Marrou 1964 382; Bauer 1996, 97.

³¹⁸ Casson 2001, 87; Packer 2001, 79.

extent of the markets is unknown.³¹⁹ Today there are one hundred seventy rooms still remaining. Although chronologically and architecturally tied to the forum complex, the markets were separated from the forum by a street and a fire wall.³²⁰ Additionally, the markets were never abandoned or dismantled like the forum was. Instead, as the city changed, so did the space, eventually housing several religious organizations and parishes in the Middle Ages.³²¹ It is reasonable to assume that the rooms inside this complex were used for administrative offices and additional storage space for archives of laws and records. As James Anderson points out, the two library buildings and the hemicycles of the basilica had sufficient space to store the necessary records for the operations and proceedings of the urban prefects. The contents of the collection, however, were regularly changing on account of the ever-shifting nature of the Roman legal system.³²² The general consensus is that most of the rooms were market stalls, and shops built into the new markets restored those displaced by the construction of Trajan's Forum.³²³ The name of the street running through the upper and lower markets still retains the name *Via Biberatica*, which probably derives from the Latin verb *bibere*, to drink, in reference to taverns found along the street (*fig. 11*).³²⁴ The forum-level rooms probably held the offices and storehouses of the imperial treasury (*arcarii caesariani*).³²⁵ The allotments of provisions (*annona*) were organized and probably distributed from the upper-level shops

³¹⁹ MacDonald 1965, 76–7.

³²⁰ Anderson 1984, 148.

³²¹ MacDonald 1965, 77.

³²² Anderson 1984, 167.

³²³ MacDonald 1965, 78.

³²⁴ The name of this street is not likely to have been the original name but a later appellation. For derivation from *bibere*, most scholars have assumed that this was in reference to the *tabernae*, market stalls, and shops located along the road. The street name might also come from a corruption of *piper*, pepper, which was a favorite commodity in Rome throughout history. Zosimus (*New History* 5.41.4) records that 3,000 pounds of black pepper were used, along with gold, silver, and silk, to bribe Aleric and the Goths from sacking Rome in 408 CE. For a concise history of pepper in Rome, see Sidebotham 2011, 224–6.

³²⁵ As previously mentioned, senators are said to have stored deposits of money and treasures here, thereby leading to the conclusion that the imperial treasury operated within the complex. Schol. ad Iuv. 10.24.

and offices as well, though much of the actual distribution of food to the urban populace took place at various points throughout the city.³²⁶

The persistence of the functional use of this space within the day to day activities of Rome kept Trajan alive in the minds of its occupants as it related to the activities in the forum. The design and appearance of the vast structure are clearly utilitarian. Therefore, despite the persistent use of the market complex, the markets do not memorialize Trajan in the same way as the forum proper. The markets likely contributed to the social memory of Trajan's patronage of the city on some level, even if the building did not have a commemorative function. The market complex continued to be used for civil administration well into the sixth century. The urban prefect was assigned a complement of troops to enforce the laws of the city. In the sixth century, a garrison of Byzantine troops was stationed at the Markets by the emperor Tiberius Constantine (578–582 CE), which suggests the continued centrality and importance of the space to Rome.³²⁷ The market building, however, was not by itself a monument akin to the forum, with its richly decorated marbles with their array of artistic messages. There are no mentions of this building in ancient literature, save for the reference to the Basilica of Trajan in the life of Commodus in the *HA* reporting that the emperor held a *congiarium* there.³²⁸ It has been suggested that this passage refers to the aula (*Aula Traiana*), the large vaulted hall, and not to the Basilica Ulpia located in the forum below.³²⁹ The massive brick complex resembled a small city and served the “vast urban social program” that Trajan

³²⁶ MacDonald 1965, 78. Also see Rickman 1980, 208.

³²⁷ Bauer 1996, 97.

³²⁸ *HA* Commodus 2.1.3.

³²⁹ MacDonald 1965, 77.

sponsored.³³⁰ The enormous complex of the Markets and Forum of Trajan conveyed messages of the “social, economic, and technological forces” of the Roman Empire and the emperors’ ability to “mold Roman topography to their will.”³³¹

Section 4: The *Thermae Traiani* and Bathing in Late Antiquity

To the east of the imperial fora loomed another great Trajanic complex. The Baths of Trajan were the first of the giant imperial bathing complexes and provided the template for imperial baths for the next two centuries.³³² The nearby baths of Titus were dwarfed by the new baths on the Esquiline. The baths opened in 109 CE just two days before the dedication of the Aqua Traiana, the aqueduct that supplied the new baths.³³³ It was built over a substantial portion of Nero’s *Domus Aurea* on a large terrace on the south slope of the Oppian Hill, the southern spur of the Esquiline (*fig. 12*). It is not attested in literature, but it does appear on the marble plan of Rome, the *Forma Urbis Romae* (205–6 CE). There are still visible ruins of the walls. Moreover, this structure served as the template for all subsequent imperial baths with innovations like the use of the triple groin-vaulted *tepidarium* that served as the central focus of the complex, the open-air *natatio*, and the axially aligned *caldarium*.³³⁴

Bathing was still a prevalent activity in late antiquity as evidenced by the two new enormous bath complexes built in the capital in the fourth century: the Baths of Diocletian, dedicated in 306 CE, and the Baths of Constantine, dedicated in 315 CE. The new bath complexes recall the earlier imperial baths commissioned by Trajan and the

³³⁰ MacDonald 1965, 93.

³³¹ Nasrallah 2010, 156.

³³² MacDonald 1965, 75.

³³³ Yegül 2010, 107.

³³⁴ Yegül 2010, 107.

Severans, which were still open and operational during the fourth and fifth centuries.³³⁵ In addition, Ammianus Marcellinus reports that the Roman aristocracy frequented the baths along with their retinues.³³⁶ Evidence for continued use of Trajan's baths comes from the fourth-century commentary on Juvenal, which reports that little figurines (*sigillaria*) were sold in the porticus of the baths at the end of the Saturnalia festival.³³⁷ This evidence does not give much information about the baths themselves, but it does indicate continued use and cultural significance. The Saturnalia was popular and a socially significant event for Romans.³³⁸ In addition, an inscription records that Julius Felix Campanianus, urban prefect near the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, adorned Trajan's Baths with new statues.³³⁹ The renewal of this space suggests that this site was not only still operational, but also an important site for cultural patronage. This bath and others throughout the Roman world were still important spaces for the display of sculptural materials.³⁴⁰ Moreover, the replenishing of sculpture indicates an active and vibrant city into the fifth century.

Baths, like the great imperial fora, were also places of cultural activity beyond the act of bathing. They often housed Greek and Latin libraries, though the contents of these libraries remain a mystery.³⁴¹ For whatever reason, public libraries became associated with the leisurely activities of the public bath complexes.³⁴² Within Trajan's Baths, the

³³⁵ Lançon 2000, 21; La Rocca 2001, 121.

³³⁶ Amm. Marc. 28.4.9.

³³⁷ Schol. ad Iuv. 6.154. See Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.10.24.

³³⁸ Macrobius' *Saturnalia* has been understood as evidence for the continued observance and popularity of the ancient festival.

³³⁹ *CIL* VI.1670 = *ILS* 5716: *Iulius Felix Campania/nus v.c., praefectus urbi, | ad augendam therma|rum Traianarum gratiam | conlocavit.*

³⁴⁰ Stirling 2012, 68.

³⁴¹ Yegül 2010, 125.

³⁴² Casson 2001, 89.

two apsidal structures have been thought to have housed the Greek and Latin libraries. As stated above, the precise contents of the bath libraries are not known, but they served a similar cultural function to those libraries located in the imperial fora. These were likely not used to house state records and official documents but rather texts associated with philosophy and literature, since Roman baths were modeled on the Greek gymnasia, which were traditional places for education.³⁴³

The author of the *Historia Augusta* claimed that the contents of the *Bibliotheca Ulpia* were transferred to the baths of Diocletian.³⁴⁴ The authenticity of this statement has been questioned by modern scholars.³⁴⁵ Regardless of the location of the library, or whether or not the author actually consulted the collection there, the claim that the library was in a bath building suggests that the reader would have accepted such a claim as plausible. This, along with a single inscription that mentions a Greek library in a bath, provides evidence of libraries in Roman bath complexes.³⁴⁶ Beyond this, there is scant evidence for the actual identification of library facilities in the Baths of Trajan or any other imperial bath complex. Despite this, it is assumed that the large bathing complexes, modeled after gymnasia, provided the city with social and cultural space that included libraries for the purpose of *otium* and *paideia*; the baths represented the civilized urban way of life.³⁴⁷

The Baths of Trajan, like the other imperial baths, remained in use until probably the sixth century, when they fell into a state of neglect during the Gothic Wars in 537 CE.

³⁴³ Yegül 2010, 125–26.

³⁴⁴ *HA Probus* 2.1; for discussion of the movement of the library, see Bruce 1981, 559–60.

³⁴⁵ Bruce 1981, 559–60; Dix 1994, 286–8.

³⁴⁶ *CIL* VI.8679; see Yegül 2010, 123.

³⁴⁷ Toner 1995, 54.

When the Goths destroyed the aqueducts to the city, the baths and the entire Oppian Hill were completely abandoned. These aqueducts were restored after the wars, but with the diminished population of Rome, maintaining the numerous imperial baths was no longer feasible.³⁴⁸ Until then, the *Thermae Traiani* stood as a testament to Trajanic-era Rome throughout the fourth and fifth centuries, and use and revitalization of this space embodied the spirit of the age.

Section 5: Portus in Late Antiquity

Portus Augusti, the large port for Rome situated north of the mouth of the Tiber, was within the purview of Rome and the urban prefect. There are numerous literary references from the fourth century that mention the continued operation of Trajan's hexagonal port and canal to the Tiber at Portus, north of Ostia. It remained a vital part of the trade and servicing of the old capital. Regular usage likely declined in the fifth and sixth centuries as a result of "Rome's dwindling need for imported foodstuffs, and interruptions to their supply."³⁴⁹ But in the fourth century, the port was protected by strong walls built during the Constantinian period, the remains of which have been confirmed by archaeological excavations.³⁵⁰ Moreover, an inscription attests to a settled community at the port that was legally designated civic status.³⁵¹

The port remained a vital space for commerce and the supply of food to Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries, and beyond.³⁵² Although the port is mentioned numerous

³⁴⁸ Lançon 2000, 21–2.

³⁴⁹ Keay, et al. 2005, 13.

³⁵⁰ Keay, et al. 2005, 13.

³⁵¹ *CIL* XIV.4449.

³⁵² Procopius states that Portus was still operational and merchants were able to transport their goods to Rome. *Wars of Justinian* 5.26.3–19.

times in fourth-century imperial edicts and in literature, Trajan does not appear to have been memorialized in this space to the same extent as in other places in Rome. To what extent Trajan continued to be associated with this space in the fourth century is not clear. There were Trajanic-period inscriptions from Portus commemorating Trajan's construction of the port and canal.³⁵³ The fourth-century scholiast of Juvenal refers to the port as *Portus Traiani*,³⁵⁴ and a single inscription also uses the same term.³⁵⁵ Elsewhere, the port is referred to as *Portus Augusti*, *Portus Tiberis*, *Portus Urbis Romae*, *Portus Ostiensis* or simply *Portus*. The *Fossa Traiana*, the canal connecting the hexagonal basin and the Tiber River, was one of the most impressive feats of Roman engineering, being among the largest canals ever dug, and measuring ninety meters wide. It continued to function in late antiquity as Cassiodorus, Procopius, and Rutilius Namatianus all make reference to it.³⁵⁶ The continued use of the port for the city of Rome into the fourth and fifth centuries was an important part of Trajan's legacy, though it was not tied to the memory of Trajan like his forum complex was.

Section 6: Trajan and fourth-century imperial art

Roman imperial art conveyed official messages and historical allusions recognizable to the viewer.³⁵⁷ Its very nature was designed to be commemorative, and thus its use in a study of memory is obvious. Imperial art has been discussed earlier in this chapter as it appeared in the Forum of Trajan. The great column with the spiral frieze commemorated Trajan the conqueror of Dacia and formed the monument for the

³⁵³ *CIL* VI.964.

³⁵⁴ Schol. ad Juv.12.75.

³⁵⁵ *CIL* XV.6.

³⁵⁶ Cassiodorus, *Variae* 7.9; Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu Suo* 1.179–182, in Keay, et al. 2005. 325–6.

³⁵⁷ See Zanker 2012; Elsner 1995.

final resting place of the divine emperor. It is, therefore, not surprising that he was most often cited for his military record. The spiral frieze and sculptural decoration on the base of the Column of Trajan depicting his campaign, combined with winged victories, eagles, military standards, weaponry, and the captive Dacians that adorned the attic story of the forum, enshrined the military renown of Trajan for generations (*fig. 9*).

6A: Imperial Portraits and Inscriptions in the Forum of Trajan

The Forum of Trajan was used to display portraits of the emperors, who resumed military themed decoration in Trajan's Forum in the fourth century. There were at least three statues of Constantine erected in Trajan's Forum, which suggests a message that Constantine belonged among the order of good emperors and that his rule ushered in a new "golden age."³⁵⁸ Constantine, for instance, had placed a portrait of himself in the Forum of Trajan after his victory over Maxentius at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. The most recent of the re-carved marble portraits, recovered in 2005, bears stern features that "recall the traits of Trajan," who was the principal model for Constantine's reign.³⁵⁹ Evidence of a previous diadem and balding have been detected, showing that the portrait of Constantine was re-carved from an earlier portrait (*fig. 13*).³⁶⁰ Constantine made extensive use of imperial portraiture in public spaces, and he re-carved older images more than his predecessors.³⁶¹ For instance, the famous colossal statue of Constantine erected in the

³⁵⁸ Elsner 2000, 152. This phenomenon was wide-spread in the literature of the fourth century, which is discussed at length in the next chapter.

³⁵⁹ David 2005.

³⁶⁰ Prusac 2011, 147, cat. 309.

³⁶¹ Varner 2004, 287, cat. 9.4; Prusac 2011, 147, cat. 307. The most famous example, as Harrison (1967, 94), Prusac (2011, 68), and Varner (2004, 217–8) point out, is the colossus of Constantine from the Basilica of Maxentius in Rome, now on display at the Museo Capitolino. This portrait was originally of the emperor Trajan or Hadrian and had started to be re-carved into the likeness of Maxentius. The pose and dress immediately recall images of Jupiter, though Constantine is clean shaven, the first to appear this way since Trajan.

Basilica Nova may have originally been a colossal Trajan or Hadrian from the nearby Forum of Trajan or the Temple of Venus and Roma.³⁶² As Marina Prusac suggests, recarving portraits by Constantine was not done because of financial constraints. Instead, it was done to adopt an earlier paradigm of imperial portraiture in order to separate himself from the portraiture of the Tetrarchy and the soldier emperors of the third century.³⁶³ Similarly, Constantine's short-cropped hair brushed over his brow (*fig. 14*) bears an uncanny resemblance to Trajan's haircut (*fig. 1*).³⁶⁴ To place the portrait of Constantine in the guise of (and alongside) earlier emperors was to form a visual comparison to the memory of a golden age.³⁶⁵ In addition to Constantine, statues of Constans, Theodosius, Honorius, and others were also placed in Trajan's Forum, thereby creating their own imperial reputation by positioning their likenesses in a context of Trajan and other *summi viri*.³⁶⁶ As James Anderson points out, the imperial statues erected in Trajan's Forum were not simply placed there by happenstance but were part of the decorative scheme intended to display emperors and other great men. Open space for statuary seems to have been intended from the beginning. The implication is that the Forum of Trajan was designed as a place of memorialization, like many Roman monuments. The imperial portraiture is reminiscent of the sculptural program found in Augustus' Forum, but this was not simply a duplication of the decorative scheme. "This program grew in the

³⁶² Harrison 1967, 94.

³⁶³ Prusac 2011, 64.

³⁶⁴ Wright (1987, 493) claims that Constantine's hairstyle and youthful face are reminiscent of Augustus. I agree that the youthful appearance recalls Augustus; the hairstyle, however, is much closer to that of Trajan. Admittedly, most of the emperors of the first century maintained similar styles, and Constantine's portraits were intended to look like any (or all) of the early emperors, not necessarily any specific one. See Elsner 2006, 261.

³⁶⁵ Bassett 2004, 64.

³⁶⁶ Bauer 1996, 94; Anderson 1984, 172; *CIL* VI.1783, 1789, 1724.

making, and as a result its symbolic currency and its importance remained to the end of the Empire.”³⁶⁷

Furthermore, many joint imperial dedications were made in Trajan’s Forum in the fourth and fifth centuries: Valentinian and Valens, Valens and Valentinian II, Arcadius and Honorius, and Theodosius II and Placidius Valentinian.³⁶⁸ James Anderson points out that these pairs of later Roman emperors “chose to assert their legitimacy in a place that would directly connect them with Constantine himself and with the great pairs of Emperors of the past: Trajan and Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, Septimius Severus and Caracalla,” who all had a visible presence in Trajan’s Forum. These imperial pairs of the second century were of noteworthy military renown and all obtained the principate because of their martial careers. Anderson also notes that several of the later pairs were associated with problems of succession. This suggests that fourth-century emperors were cognizant of the inherent resonant tradition of space with public memory of Trajan. It also insinuates that Nerva’s selection of Trajan could be used for later justification of imperial succession in the context of military necessity. Anderson points to Hadrian as an example. When Hadrian’s’ right to succession was doubted, Hadrian made extensive use of Trajan’s Forum in order to publically associate himself with his adoptive father.³⁶⁹ Anderson admits, however, that the point cannot be pushed too far, since the evidence does not overtly show that such a connection existed.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Anderson 1984, 172.

³⁶⁸ *CIL* VI.1736, 1727,1710, 1783, 1789, 1724, 1725 cited in Anderson 1984, 171–2.

³⁶⁹ Anderson 1984, 170.

³⁷⁰ Anderson 1984, 172.

In typical Roman fashion, an honorific inscription to the emperor Constantine, celebrating his litany of imperial titles, was also placed in the Forum of Trajan.³⁷¹

Among his titular designations, Constantine was named *Pater Patriae* (father of the country) in 307 CE, which hearkened back to the emperors of the first and second centuries.³⁷² More importantly, there are several Constantinian inscriptions from the provinces that ascribe to Constantine the title *Optimus Princeps*.³⁷³ The following inscription is one example showing the Trajanic title:

Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) Fla(vio) | Constantino Maximo P(io) F(elici) | Victori Aug(usto). Pont(ifici) Max(imo) | Trib(unicia) Pot(estate) XXIII. Imp(eratori) XXII | Consul(i). P(atri) P(atriciae). Procon(suli) | humanarum rerum optimo principi. Divi | Constantii filio | bono rei publicae nato. (*CIL* V.8079)

To the Emperor Caesar Flavius Constantinus Maximus, pious, blessed, victor, Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, holding tribunician power twenty-three times, declared emperor twenty-two times, consul, father of the fatherland, proconsul, the best prince of all human affairs, son of the divine Constantius, born for the good of the republic. (Translation by author)

The deliberate use of *optimus princeps* is an obvious impersonation of Trajan.

Furthermore, allusions to *optimus princeps* also appear on several Constantinian coins.³⁷⁴

Another of Constantine's titles appearing in inscriptions on coins (and in the inscription above), *Victor Omnium Gentium*, conveyed his military career.³⁷⁵ To name Constantine the "victor of all nations" has overtones of Trajan who was most famous for his subjugation of foreign peoples. Similarly, Constantine styled himself a leader devoted to

³⁷¹ Lugli 1965, XVI, n. 383.

³⁷² *Pater Patriae* was a title given to Cicero, Caesar, and all emperors from Augustus to M. Aurelius except Tiberius, Vitellius, Otho, and Galba, though the title had strong connections to Trajan likely as a result of Pliny's panegyric and the ubiquity of Trajanic inscriptions. See Amm. Marc. 27.3.7. For a study of Trajan as the father figure for Rome, see Kampen 2009, 38–63.

³⁷³ *CIL* V.8004, 8041, 8059, 8069, 8079, 8080.

³⁷⁴ *RIC* VI, 222 n. 815; 297 n. 114; 390 n. 345–52; 407, n. 69; *RIC* VII, 114 n. 1; 235 n. 7–12. Cited in Varner 2014, 65.

³⁷⁵ Stephenson 2010, 227.

his soldiers and referred to his troops as his “fellow soldiers” (*commilitiones*) like Trajan, who was the last emperor to use this word in public documents until Constantine.³⁷⁶ He was also depicted on coins emulating Trajanic coinage with the reverse showing the emperor on horseback with a spear being thrust on the enemy (*fig. 15*).³⁷⁷ While not a type-scene exclusive to Trajan or Constantine, it is a scene that usually appears on coins of emperors famous for military victories.³⁷⁸ In addition, this image is also strikingly similar to the relief of Trajan on horseback from the Great Trajanic Frieze on Constantine’s triumphal arch (*fig. 18*). That Constantine wished to align himself with Trajan is also supported by his military conquests and subsequent titles. Constantine rebuilt Trajan’s bridge over the Danube and waged war against the Sarmatians and Goths in three campaigns (332, 334, and 336 CE), wishing to restore Roman control over lost territories. Similarly, Constantine restored Trajan’s victory monument, the Tropaeum Traiani at Adamklissi.³⁷⁹ In 336 CE, he was awarded the title *Dacicus Maximus*, which was the hallmark title of Trajan’s career.³⁸⁰ The choice of titles is interesting because Constantine chose to emulate Trajan, rather than the expected title, *Gothicus*, since Constantine’s victories were over the Goths. The (re-)conquest of Dacia put Constantine in comparison to Trajan. Constantine was also named *Germanicus Maximus* four times, which was another designation he shared with Trajan.³⁸¹

³⁷⁶ Stephenson (2010, 140) claims that the Constantinian document was incorporated into the Codex Theodosianus (7.1.10).

³⁷⁷ *RIC* II 258, n. 208, n. 534; cp. *RIC* VII 333, n. 308, 309.

³⁷⁸ The scene of the emperor on horseback spearing the enemy was common also on coins of the Flavian emperors, Marcus Aurelius, and Septimius Severus.

³⁷⁹ Varner 2014, 65.

³⁸⁰ Barnes 1976, 152; Barnes 1981, 250.

³⁸¹ Constantine was twice given the title *Gothicus Maximus* and *Sarmaticus Maximus*. Barnes 1976, 153.

Constantine's principate coincided with the bicentennial of Trajan's principate, which may have further contributed to the comparisons between them.³⁸² Likewise, Constantine claimed to have been a descendent (likely fabricated) of the Illyrian soldier emperor, Claudius Gothicus, which further legitimized his claim to power and added prestige to his family's history.³⁸³ Trajan was particularly important for Claudius Gothicus and the other Illyrian emperors because Trajan granted citizenship to the Illyrians, and Illyricum was a major recruiting area for the Roman legions.³⁸⁴ Conscious connections to Trajan established Constantine as the emperor who restored the Roman Empire and appealed to the Roman constituency, which was crucial to Constantine's ascension.

6B: The Arch of Constantine as new Trajanic Space

Trajanic imagery continued to be displayed famously on the fourth-century triumphal Arch of Constantine, which created a new space intended to draw connections between Constantine and Trajan. The colossal arch, standing between the Palatine Hill and the Colosseum in Rome, was dedicated in 315 CE by the senate in honor of the emperor's victory over Maxentius, and the dedication coincided with the emperor's *decennalia* (fig. 16).³⁸⁵ Constantine's triumphal arch incorporated Trajanic images, which created a visual link between Constantine and Trajan in order to "endow

³⁸² Varner 2014, 65.

³⁸³ Lenski 2006, 66. Cf. *Pan. Lat.* 6(7).2.1–2. See page 121 ff. for satirical comparisons between Claudius Gothicus and Trajan in the *HA*.

³⁸⁴ Wilkes 1992, 256, 264.

³⁸⁵ Stephenson (2010, 151–3) points out that recent excavations have shown that the arch had been begun in 312 by Maxentius, and, like the Basilica Nova, had been appropriated by Constantine. He argues that Constantine retained the artwork of the second-century emperors because it suited his needs, and the arch required only that the heads be re-cut with his own likeness.

Constantine with an impeccable imperial lineage and sovereign legitimacy.”³⁸⁶ As Jessica Hughes suggests, the Arch of Constantine is “an obvious choice of subject for an exploration of Roman memory,” for two reasons: the monument itself is primarily commemorative, and it was built using parts of sculpture and architecture (*spolia*) from the second century.³⁸⁷ The second-century artwork, spoliated from elsewhere in the city, was deliberately chosen as recognizable works in order to associate the memory of Constantine with the emperors of the second century: Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius, who were remembered as virtuous rulers of a more prosperous and peaceful time (*fig. 17*). Among the *spolia* were major works of Trajanic-period art: sections of the so-called Trajanic Frieze, which were mounted on the inner walls of the central arch and on the ends of the top register (*fig. 18*); and statues of captive Dacians, which also adorned the attic story (*fig. 19*). In these panels, the heads of Trajan were re-sculpted to bear the likeness of Constantine.³⁸⁸ In addition to Trajanic-era artwork, eight Hadrianic roundels decorate the middle register, and eight relief panels from a monument (likely an arch) to Marcus Aurelius were placed on either side of the arch depicting the virtues of the emperor. Jaś Elsner, for instance, argues that the final product of the arch of Constantine was a wholly Constantinian monument and not a disconnected assemblage of reused sculptures.³⁸⁹

The use of *spolia* on the Arch of Constantine represents intentionality that was designed to evoke the memory of recognizable sculptures and styles from well-known emperors and link them to Constantine. Although the arch was dedicated by the senate

³⁸⁶ Varner 2014, 65.

³⁸⁷ Hughes 2014, 103.

³⁸⁸ Stephenson 2010, 155.

³⁸⁹ Elsner 2000, 153.

and people of Rome, it is understood, as Prusac recognizes, that the “plans would not have been realized without the emperor’s consent.”³⁹⁰ The builders of this structure were certainly not the first to incorporate *spolia* from other monuments in Rome. For example, the near contemporary so-called temple of Romulus³⁹¹ commissioned by Maxentius in 307 CE used sculpture from other buildings.³⁹² “By ransacking the monuments of earlier ‘good’ emperors—Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius—Constantine was associating himself symbolically with them and inaugurating a reign that was intended to be as crowned with blessings as theirs.”³⁹³ Although there have been many scholars who have conjectured that Constantine’s Arch lacked an ideological message or coherent theme,³⁹⁴ the more traditional view is that the *spolia* were intentionally selected to “direct [Constantine’s] political affinities towards those of the ‘good’ emperors of the second century.”³⁹⁵ The reuse of sculptures was not intended to eliminate these monuments from public memory but to transform them.³⁹⁶ The Trajanic Frieze, for instance, would have been recognizable to viewers since the contemporary spiral frieze on the column depicts the same subject; Rome’s conquest over Dacians (*fig. 18*).³⁹⁷ The various find-spots of the pieces of the Trajanic Frieze suggest that the builders of the arch could have only used a relatively small section for the arch.³⁹⁸ The original context of this frieze is

³⁹⁰ Prusac 2011, 65.

³⁹¹ This structure was dedicated to Valerius Romulus, the son of Maxentius who died and was subsequently divinized in 309. It was probably a restoration of the Temple of Jupiter Stator or the temple to the Penates. It was later Christianized and consecrated as the basilica to SS. Cosmas and Damian.

³⁹² Elsner 2000, 153.

³⁹³ Bowder 1978, 25.

³⁹⁴ Kinney 1995, 58; Liverani 2004; Pace 2004, 213; Liverani 2005; La Rocca and Zanker 2007, 149–50; cited in Prusac 2011, 65.

³⁹⁵ Prusac 2011, 65. See L’Orange 1939; Elsner 1998, 187–9; Holloway 2004, 19–52.

³⁹⁶ Sande (2012, 278–81) reports that Aelius Marcianus, the Roman jurist, reported that it was apparently common practice to recut imperial statues if they were weathered and damaged by old age; thus the use of *spolia*, as Sande conjectures, was likely commonplace by the third century and later.

³⁹⁷ Touati 1987, 29; 31; 36–7.

³⁹⁸ Sande 2012, 285.

admittedly lost, but the depictions of Trajanic events are not. In addition, the reason they were chosen to decorate Constantine's Arch is clear; Trajan was one of the imperial exempla for Constantine.

The placement of statues of captive Dacians on the attic story of the arch provides convincing evidence of the intentional alignment of the arch with the emperors of the second century (*fig. 19*). The Dacians may have been taken from storage or from the Forum of Trajan itself, but presumably there were several still in their original location. The viewer would have been able to recognize these from Trajan's Forum and be reminded of the subjugation of a nation opposed to Roman rule.³⁹⁹ In fact, as Siri Sande points out, the entire arch "looks like a small part of Trajan's forum taken out of its context, topped by the Dacians and furnished with columns which were of the same height as those on the forum" (*fig. 20*).⁴⁰⁰ Thematically, the Trajanic sculpture on Constantine's arch commemorates military victory. This is not surprising given that they were reused on a triumphal arch. Moreover, the arrangement of the *spolia* was designed to evoke thematic similarities. For example, "Both Constantine and Trajan appear [on the arch] fighting and entering the city in triumph. . . . The physical placement of the reliefs encouraged viewers to recognize the parallels in their content."⁴⁰¹ In addition, there was another but subtler visual link to Trajan on the arch. In the frieze depicting the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, Maxentius' cavalry are wearing non-Roman armor remarkably similar to the armor worn by the Sarmatian cavalry on Trajan's Column.⁴⁰² The art on the triumphal arch, like the art and imagery in the Forum of Trajan, conveyed

³⁹⁹ Edwards 2003, 68.

⁴⁰⁰ Sande 2012, 285.

⁴⁰¹ Hughes 2014, 108.

⁴⁰² Varner 2014, 65–6.

a message of barbarian subjugation. Similarly, Trajan was famous for coming into power after Domitian; Constantine was being honored for his victory over Maxentius.

6C: Nova Roma: Trajanic Space in Constantinople

In the fourth century, building of new imperial monuments largely moved to Constantinople, which was often referred to as New Rome or Second Rome.⁴⁰³ The emperor Theodosius, like Constantine, was a great builder (though Constantine also sponsored several projects in Rome). In effect, the Theodosian era ushered in a new setting for the construction of imperial triumphal art and architecture.⁴⁰⁴ Theodosius' equestrian statue in Constantinople, located in his forum, portrays the emperor raising his hand towards his column. It was also inscribed with the phrase “a second light bringing sun,” which immediately conjures comparison to Constantine—both to his devotion to Sol and his patronage of the city.⁴⁰⁵ Like Trajan at Rome, Theodosius commissioned a new harbor, an imperial forum, and the monumental base of an obelisk erected at the hippodrome.⁴⁰⁶ He established his imperial court and residency in Constantinople. An emperor living in a capital was something that had not happened in some length of time—not since Antoninus Pius resided in Rome. Therefore, Theodosius had to symbolically and visually establish Constantinople as the seat of his empire.⁴⁰⁷ He was “creating the necessary preconditions for a permanent symbiotic political relationship

⁴⁰³ See Van Dam 2010, for an introduction to the transition of imperial presence from Rome to Constantinople. Socrates Scholasticus (*Hist. Ecc.* 1.16) reported that Constantine himself ordered his new city to be designated Nova Roma. See further Georgacas 1947, 354.

⁴⁰⁴ Brenk 1980, 46.

⁴⁰⁵ Anthologia Planudea 16.65 cited in Croke 2010, 259.

⁴⁰⁶ Errington 2006, 145–6; Brenk 1980, 46; Mitchell 2015, 339–40.

⁴⁰⁷ After Theodosius I, Constantinople was the continuous residence for Arcadius (395–408) and Theodosius II (408–50). In fact, there was almost always an emperor in residence until Heraclius (610–641), who resumed the tradition of going out on military campaigns. See Ward-Perkins 2000, 63–4.

between autocratic ruler and the city population of the ruled.”⁴⁰⁸ Trajan, whose legacy encompassed more than conquest, was regarded positively for his patronage of Rome and was therefore an expedient model for the builders of New Rome.

Because of Theodosius’ Spanish origins and his alleged lineage to Trajan (considered below), associations with his apparent ancestor were a hallmark of Theodosius’ monuments and those of Honorius and Arcadius, Theodosius’ two sons and successors.⁴⁰⁹ This was realized in the Forum of Theodosius (formerly the *Forum Tauri*) rebuilt by Theodosius in 393.⁴¹⁰ The building and its iconography made obvious connections to Trajan; the plan of the new forum “seems to have resembled in an uncanny, therefore deliberate way, Trajan’s forum at Rome.”⁴¹¹ The Forum Theodosii was probably smaller than its counterpart in Rome, though it seems to have had a large exedra extending out to the north, further demonstrating its likeness to Trajan’s Forum. Its dimensions are uncertain, but estimates range from 120 by 100 meters to 55 by 55 meters.⁴¹² Most notably, in celebration of his victory over the Goths in 386, the emperor was honored with a carved spiral column depicting the conquest. Atop the great column stood a portrait of Theodosius, and inside was a spiral staircase that permitted access to the top. Theodosius’ column, the centerpiece in his forum, was a clear imitation of Trajan’s column in Rome.⁴¹³ The Goths were seen as the successors to the Dacians, who

⁴⁰⁸ Errington 2006, 147.

⁴⁰⁹ For the connection between Theodosius and Trajan in literature, see the next chapter, which discusses Pacatus’ panegyric to Theodosius and Claudian’s panegyric to Honorius.

⁴¹⁰ The *Forum Tauri* was originally built by Constantine and probably named after the urban prefect, Flavius Taurus. The other possible explanation for the name is that emulated a forum in Rome of the same name. See Croke 2010, 258.

⁴¹¹ Errington 2006, 146; Mitchell 2015, 339.

⁴¹² Berger 2000, 167–8.

⁴¹³ Constantine, too, had a column erected in his forum in Constantinople, though it was made of porphyry and does not have the spiral frieze, nor was the image of the emperor placed on top. See Mango (1993) for a thorough history of Constantine’s column.

occupied the area of Trajan's expansion beyond the Danube (as witnessed by Constantine taking the title *Dacicus* for his victories over the Goths).⁴¹⁴ The triumphal monument served as a visual statement about Theodosius' model emperor and declared that Theodosius was a new Trajan.⁴¹⁵ In addition, the forum was ornamented with motifs of Hercules. The columns of the triumphal arches at the entrances to the forum were carved into the shape of stylized clubs (*fig. 21*) of the famed hero and even had roughly hewn fists grasping the end as the column capitals.⁴¹⁶ Hercules was a patron god of Trajan⁴¹⁷ and Hadrian, the two previous Spanish emperors, and the decorative scheme served as a reminder of Theodosius' purported origins.⁴¹⁸

In addition to the Forum Theodosii, Theodosius adorned the Milion, the great tetrapylon in the heart of Constantinople, with a bronze equestrian statue of himself alongside equestrian statues of Trajan and Hadrian, thereby forming a dynastic group.⁴¹⁹ Trajanic imagery and dynastic connections served as useful propaganda for Theodosius and his patronage of the new capital city. It helped legitimize and consolidate his power in a traditional manner that hearkened back to the high empire. Though not in Rome, the allusions to Trajan in the new capital demonstrate his usefulness due to his fixture in

⁴¹⁴ Errington 2006, 146.

⁴¹⁵ Theodosius' Column is unfortunately lost to us. It was torn down in the sixteenth century by Sultan Bayazit II in order to make space for the construction of new baths. Beckmann 2011, 210.

⁴¹⁶ Ward-Perkins 2000, 70.

⁴¹⁷ Several Trajanic coin types bear images of Hercules or simply his iconic club. (*RIC* II 247, n. 37, 49, 50; 249, n. 79; 293, n. 699; 294, n. 700). Dio Chrys. (*Or.* 1.56–84) assigns Hercules to be Trajan's prototype and protector in his first oration. See Braund 1998, 67.

⁴¹⁸ Croke 2010, 259. Cf. Pliny (*Pan.* 14.5 and 82.7) who uses both Spain and Hercules in reference to Trajan.

⁴¹⁹ Croke 2010, 260; The Milion was the official mile-marker serving as the starting point for all distances from the new imperial capital. It was built by Constantine, and it had the appearance of a double-triumphal arch topped with a dome or a pyramid. It served the same function as the *Milliarium Aureum* in Rome. This structure became an important place for imperial imagery from Constantine to Justin II.

Roman memory. Trajan made a significant contribution to the topography of the old capital, which the builders of Constantinople sought to emulate.

Like his father, Arcadius had a triumphal column commemorating his victory over the Goths in 400 CE. This column, erected in the Forum of Arcadius in Constantinople, also had a spiral frieze and was crowned with a statue of the emperor—a clear imitation of the Column of Trajan in Rome.⁴²⁰ It was probably almost as large as or even larger than Trajan’s column in Rome.⁴²¹ In addition, the design of Arcadius’ column was a direct copy of Trajan’s because the column pedestal included a chamber within it like the one used for Trajan’s burial urn.⁴²² Arcadius’ column, like the one commemorating his father, reminded viewers of his dynastic ties to Trajan. Unfortunately, only the base and a few fragments of the spiral reliefs survive, but a series of sketches from the sixteenth century preserve its appearance (*fig. 22*).

6D: Trajan in the hands of Romans: Contorniate Medallions

In the fourth century, Rome produced a series of commemorative medallions (for lack of a better term). They have the appearance of coins in that they have a profile portrait on the obverse and some commemoration, deity, personification, or type-scene on the reverse. They are similar in that many have images copied from known coins.⁴²³ They, however, have a deeply carved border around the outside of the portrait, from which these objects derive their name. The function of these medallions is elusive.

⁴²⁰ The column was weakened by earthquakes and was subsequently dismantled, though sketches of the column from 1575 survive.

⁴²¹ Ward-Perkins 2000, 68.

⁴²² Beckmann (2011, 210) also points out that Arcadius’ Column did not directly imitate the scenes on Trajan’s Column, but had larger and thus fewer windings depicting a single short war. In addition, the opening scenes depict Constantinople.

⁴²³ Comstock 1968, 39.

Daniël den Hengst, echoing Andreas Alföldi, suggests that the contorniates were given as New Year's gifts among the aristocracy, though this is not always accepted.⁴²⁴ Because Nero and Trajan were the most popular figures to be depicted on these contorniates, some have hypothesized that they were some kind of gaming piece distributed at public games or tokens for admission to festivals.⁴²⁵ Well over a thousand of these surviving contorniates bear the profile of Trajan and Nero, who both sponsored lavish games for the Roman people. The patronage of games is one of the few common features of these two emperors.⁴²⁶ Images on the reverse depict a variety of gods, personifications, and other scenes, but numerous portrayals of chariots, the circus, and beast hunts appear on the contorniates (*figs. 23–25*).⁴²⁷ Therefore, it is likely that these medallions were distributed to the people in the context of spectacles and races. After Trajan's second victory over the Dacians, he celebrated by sponsoring games lasting 117 days, during which some eleven thousand animals were killed and ten thousand gladiators fought each other.⁴²⁸ In addition, Trajan expanded the Circus Maximus and upgraded the seating to stone.⁴²⁹ Therefore, the contorniate medallions bearing the profile of Trajan remind Romans of his military exploits and subsequent celebrations.

Andreas Alföldi argued the popularity of Trajan and Nero represented the so-called "pagan revival" of the late fourth century, because these two emperors were persecutors of the Christians.⁴³⁰ Alan Cameron, however, points out the reputation of

⁴²⁴ Hengst 2010, 83; Syme 1971, 109.

⁴²⁵ Comstock 1968, 35,

⁴²⁶ Syme 1971, 109; Cameron 2011, 695.

⁴²⁷ Alföldi 1976 n. 3; Comstock 1968, 37; Syme 1971, 109.

⁴²⁸ Mittag 1999, 136. See also Dio Cass. 68.10.2. Cf. Pliny, *Pan.* 33.1.

⁴²⁹ Dio Cass. 68.7.2; Trajan's enlargement of the Circus Maximus was also commemorated on coins: *BMC* 853, *RIC* II 284, n. 571; Humphrey 1986, 100–15.

⁴³⁰ Alföldi 1976, 37.

these emperors as persecutors was only popular among Christians.⁴³¹ This was especially true for Nero, but Trajan was more problematic as Christian authors of the fourth century had mixed interpretations about Trajan's involvement in persecution.⁴³² Moreover, Nero was the most commonly used example of a bad emperor in fourth-century history and literature, even more than Caligula or Domitian in non-Christian texts.⁴³³ It is difficult to find similarities between Trajan and Nero other than their beautification of the city and their sponsorship of lavish games and their reconstruction of the Circus Maximus. Nero repaired some damage to the Circus after the great fire in 64 CE by ordering the construction of wooden bleachers. Nero likely had plans to continue reconstruction, but those ended with his suicide.⁴³⁴ Trajan rebuilt the Circus in 103, as it was still damaged. Given the fame of Trajan (and the infamy and reputation of Nero), their support of the games is the likeliest commonality for commemoration. Furthermore, it is attested that tokens, prizes, gifts, and other handouts were dispensed to the crowds at the games.⁴³⁵

Regardless of the original context for the contorniates, the frequency of Trajan upon the contorniate medallions is evidence that public memory of Trajan was alive and well in fourth-century Rome, and these pieces reminded Romans about his sponsorship of the games. Peter Mittag suggests that the contorniates reflect everyday life in Rome, and they were often reused as amulets of sorts suggesting a desire to be close to the images of emperors, gods, and other heroes.⁴³⁶ In addition, one contorniate type bears the bust of the genius of Roma inscribed with *Invicta Roma Felix Senatus* on the obverse and a hunting scene on the reverse with the legend *Reparatio muneris feliciter*, which is

⁴³¹ Cameron 2011, 695.

⁴³² See next chapter

⁴³³ Cameron 2011, 965.

⁴³⁴ Humphrey 1986, 101.

⁴³⁵ Suet. *Nero* 11.

⁴³⁶ Mittag 1999, 226.

emblematic of the zeitgeist of the fourth century as an age of restoration.⁴³⁷ If there is any sort of “revival,” it is a resurgence of general Roman art, literature, and culture and not directed towards the Christians. The contorniates ought to be viewed in the context of revived Roman tradition rather than in a Christian-pagan polemic.

Section 7: Conclusion

The art and monuments relating to Trajan, both those built by him and later ones imitating the form and style of Trajanic monuments, enshrined an image of the emperor in marble that memorialized Trajan’s military career and his benevolence to Rome. These buildings were both grand and fundamental to daily operations, so that Trajan was a constant fixture in the collective memory of the Romans. By the fourth century, Trajan’s Forum and its associated structures were as much the cultural center of Rome as the old Forum Romanum, if not more. Trajanic spaces and images, however, not only memorialized the reign of Trajan, they also served the needs of Romans in the fourth century seeking to assert cultural revival. The senatorial aristocracy had renewed importance in the functioning of the city in a capacity not seen since the Republic, and Trajan’s Forum was central to their efforts. A revitalization of the Trajanic landscape was a central to the renewal of the city as a whole. Emperors similarly established legitimacy and reputation by deliberately imitating Trajan by inserting images of themselves in Trajan’s Forum and by creating new monuments.

⁴³⁷ Alföldi 1976, 122–3, n. 176–7. Cp. n. 204.

CHAPTER III

MELIOR TRAIANO: TRAJAN IN FOURTH-CENTURY HISTORIOGRAPHY,
BIOGRAPHY, AND PANEGRIC

In fourth-century literature, Trajan signaled a model of imperial power. His name alone conjured a past familiar to Roman elites, as demonstrated by Eutropius, who declares “*felicior Augusto, melior Traiano*” (more fortunate than Augustus, better than Trajan) to be a formal salutation of senators to emperors (*Brev.* 8.5.3). Trajan’s name, with no need to recount his accomplishments, recalled a tradition that resonated with the addressee and the largely Roman aristocratic audience. His historical legacy becomes a model suited to meet the challenges of the fourth century among Roman elites seeking to establish the fourth century as an age of renewal. Roman authors thus remember him in a specific context. The past is not only invoked merely as an exemplum for the present, but also it embodies anticipation for the future. As a historical figure, Trajan advanced to exemplary status in the long tradition of Romans memorializing great men in the service of the state. As such, he was used by fourth-century authors as a model emperor to evaluate contemporary emperors appearing in histories, biographies, and other genres. Trajan’s popularity was so ubiquitous in fourth-century literature that his legacy was vital in forming the narrative of the Roman Empire.

References to Trajan abound in fourth-century texts, which immediately evoke an image of the emperor for the reader. He was not the only emperor elevated to exemplary status; Augustus, Vespasian, Titus, Nerva, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius also appear frequently in fourth-century texts as exempla. Out of this group, Trajan was primarily important for his specific association with military skill. This chapter investigates the ubiquitous popularity of Trajan in Late Roman history and literature, and

it explores how such references perpetuate the tradition of Trajan as the model emperor. Moreover, the practice of bringing in Trajan to the text was a narrative device that Roman authors deliberately incorporated in order to allude to greatness and military prowess. “The imperial role,” as Claudia Rapp suggests, “required that the emperor was first and foremost set in relation with exempla from Roman history, preferably great men of the Republic or of the early empire.”⁴³⁸ Numerous fourth-century historians, poets, and panegyrists engaged in this literary technique, which will be demonstrated throughout this chapter. When an author references Trajan, his name resonates and summons for the reader not only the historical figure and his deeds but also the associative cultural network inherent to Trajan. Literary accounts of the emperors rely upon association with the past. These narratives also contribute to the construction of a body of shared memory among the people. Through the appearance of Trajan in literature, authors and readers perceived Trajan as an exemplum, who was held in memory as an ideal emperor benevolently ruling a prosperous and stable Rome.

On a higher level, however, this chapter, by revealing the cultural and social context, offers an explanation as to why Trajan was selected as an exemplum. The authorship and readership of many of the following works have a context centered on the city of Rome. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, encountering Trajan was inescapable in the cityscape of Rome. His popularity in literature indicates that Trajan resonated with the audience. The Roman aristocracy was a primary consumer of literature so an upper-class context is understood.⁴³⁹ To this audience, Trajan needed no

⁴³⁸ Rapp 1998, 286.

⁴³⁹ Habinek (1998) established that Latin literature primarily served the interests of aristocratic power in Rome.

introduction. Trajanic memory and his status as exemplum represented a useful mode of discourse between the emperor and the governing class. Furthermore, Trajan appears in literature as a signifier of larger narrative themes. He principally connotes military conquest and accompanying stability in Rome and the territories beyond the Danube and the Euphrates Rivers.⁴⁴⁰ He also emerges as a figure representing continuity of the long arc of Roman history that sought to link the fourth century to the second. He likewise embodies a critique of contemporary emperors and their imperial virtues, even surfacing at times through a conduit of satirical expression. In other words, fourth-century authors incorporated Trajan as a way to negotiate the social anxieties produced by the third century and a means to understand their contemporary events. Peter Brown, in his seminal work *The World of Late Antiquity*, intelligently points out that the fourth century was a period of restoration dominated by a new ruling class; the phrase “the Age of Restoration” (*Reparatio Saeculi*) was a favored motto in the fourth century.⁴⁴¹ Inherent to the concept of restoration is something to be abolished, forgotten, and removed from memory. Many Latin authors used known historical entities like Trajan to bring themselves into conversation with the aristocracy. Trajan stood as a link to the past connecting the Age of Restoration to the Age of Prosperity.

Section 1: Historiography

History as a genre is textual narrative that is, as Simon Price says, an act of remembrance. Although history and memory are not inherently the same thing, there

⁴⁴⁰ Graham’s work (2006) establishes the “frontier consciousness” of the late Roman Empire, and historians of the fourth century used Trajan’s name to “encourage emperors to restore the Roman world to its furthest limits” (158).

⁴⁴¹ Brown 1989, 34.

exists a productive relationship between them; they depend on each other.⁴⁴² This can be observed in the histories and imperial biographies of the Late Antique period: Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae*; the *Historia Augusta*; and the epitomes written by Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Festus, and the author of the *Epitome de Caesaribus*. These authors crafted histories that largely focused upon the actions of emperors. They extolled their virtues and criticized their vices by comparing them to their predecessors. By doing this, these historians developed a canonical list of good and bad emperors who were used to evaluate, flatter, or disparage through associative memory. That is to say, the historian evaluated the recent emperor in reference to past ones. Among the imperial exempla, Trajan is always listed among the virtuous. As time progressed, Trajan outlasted all the others due in no small part to the tradition of Trajan being the "best."

IA: Trajan as exemplar in Ammianus Marcellinus

Ammianus Marcellinus (c. 330–395 CE) is, perhaps more than any other, the preeminent historian of Late Antiquity. His historical opus, *Res Gestae*, written in 31 books, covered the history of the empire from the time of Nerva, where Tacitus ended his history, to Valens and the disastrous battle of Adrianople (96–378 CE).⁴⁴³ It is likely that this traumatic event was a motivating factor for him to write his history. In addition, Ammianus had witnessed the loss of Roman territories to the Persians. Trauma necessitates a context for memory and evaluation. Only the last eighteen books detailing

⁴⁴² Price 2012, 15–17.

⁴⁴³ If Ammianus used only thirteen books to cover more than 250 years of imperial history then the first fourteen books had a considerable lack of proportion for the earlier emperors. Scholars have tried to explain this in numerous ways: Barnes (1998, 26–31) suggests that the lost books were eighteen in number. Others postulate a different hypothesis that there were actually two works of thirty books each by Ammianus and what survives is a fragment of the second work, though there is no evidence to support this theory. See Sabbah 2003, 47–8. Kelly (2008, 299) suggests that Ammianus started his history with Nerva so that he could establish a historical backdrop by which he could frame Julian.

the principates from Constantius II to Valens survive. Unfortunately, the books that included the reign of Trajan are lost.⁴⁴⁴ Consequently, Ammianus' interpretation of Trajan's period is mostly unknown and can only be observed through his exempla. Given the way Ammianus applies his name later in the work, it is likely that an account of Trajan's reign was highlighted and given more than a cursory summary.⁴⁴⁵

Admittedly, it is impossible to reconstruct his audience with certainty. A Roman audience, however, provides a context for Trajan's name as an implicit marker that resonated with the readers at Rome. Ammianus wrote his history in Rome and a Roman readership is surmised as his primary audience.⁴⁴⁶ He describes himself as a Greek, yet he chose to write his history in Latin and continued the tradition of Roman historians rather than Greek ones.⁴⁴⁷ Furthermore, the context for a Roman composition and reception is revealed through Ammianus' digressions on Roman topography (15.7.3; 17.4) and the urban prefecture (17.11.5) and by his criticisms of senators (16.8.13; 26.3.4; 27.11.1). Readers and listeners of public performances were likely members of an educated upper-class, though not necessarily of any particular political group, since Ammianus is critical of the Roman elites.⁴⁴⁸ For this audience, then, Trajan needed no introduction, for his legacy in Rome was memorialized in art and monuments throughout the eternal city.

⁴⁴⁴ See Frakes 1995.

⁴⁴⁵ Sabbah 2003, 49.

⁴⁴⁶ Sabbah 2003, 50–4; Kelly 2008, 109–10; As Kelly (2008, 181–2) points out, however, Ammianus is also writing to a wider audience (14.6.2), and thus his purpose and audience should not be strictly limited to Rome. A large scope akin to Herodotus or Thucydides must also be considered.

⁴⁴⁷ Frakes 2000, 392.

⁴⁴⁸ Frakes 2000, 396.

The emperors, who are central to Ammianus' view of Roman power, figure prominently throughout his history. Ammianus served as a soldier and guard in the imperial court. His history clearly has a disposition towards the conflicts and military campaigns of the emperors.⁴⁴⁹ Furthermore, Stephen Stertz astutely declares that an "important factor in the study of an historical work is the attitude of the author to persons and events of the past. Much can thereby be deduced of the general philosophical, political, and social viewpoint of the author."⁴⁵⁰ Therefore, an examination of Ammianus' recollections of earlier emperors is fundamental in understanding his history. Given his perspective as a soldier, his admiration of Trajan, who had a long and decorated military career pushing the boundaries of the Roman Empire to its zenith, is logical. Moreover, Ammianus was necessarily cognizant of Trajan because he engaged in campaigns in the east against Rome's perpetual foe, the Parthians.⁴⁵¹ He makes fifteen total references to Trajan in the extant parts of the history. Trajan appears in the author's voice as referential to Trajan's own military deeds; he is used as a measuring device to compare his subject's ability to master the role of emperor; and Ammianus also inserts references to Trajan in the voice of his subjects in speeches. All of these uses work to move the historical narrative for the author and his Roman readership.

He gives a few clues to what his account of Trajan's reign must have been like through his discussions of the later military campaigns of Ursicinus and Julian, where

⁴⁴⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus reports that he was a *miles quondam et graecus* (31.16.9). He served as a *protector domesticus* assigned to Ursicinus, who was governor in Nisibis and *magister militum*, and he also probably served Julian after Ursicinus fell out of favor with the emperor. Ammianus' rank suggests he would have had insights into the imperial and bureaucratic court of the late fourth century. As Barnes (1998, 101) points out, it would be difficult to imagine that his military career would not have an impact on his historical narrative. Also see Matthews 1989, 301.

⁴⁵⁰ Stertz 1980, 487.

⁴⁵¹ The Parthian Empire, ruled by the Arsacid Dynasty, was eclipsed by the Sassanids in 224 CE. It was declared the new Persian Empire and Ctesiphon remained the capital city.

Ammianus makes references to the lost sections. While Julian's army was on the march against Persia, Ammianus cites the previous campaigns and the failed attempts to take the city of Hatra. Therefore, Ammianus is attempting to establish continuity between the Roman-Persian conflicts of the fourth century and previous military excursions:

Hac etiam suspicione iam liberi, properantesque itineribus magnis, prope Hatram venimus, vetus oppidum in media solitudine positum, olimque desertum, quod eruendum adorti temporibus variis Traianus et Severus principes bellicosi, cum exercitibus paene deleti sunt, ut in eorum actibus has quoque digessimus partes. (25.8.5)

Relieved now from this anxiety and hastening on by forced marches, we approached Hatra, an old city lying in the midst of a desert and long since abandoned. The warlike Trajan and Severus tried at various times to destroy it, but almost perished with their entire armies, as I have related in the account of their lives. (Translation by Rolfe, 1940)

In this passage (*in eorum actibus has quoque digessimus partes*) Ammianus cites his earlier accounts of Trajan and Septimius Severus, which, like his extant accounts, almost certainly focused on their military exploits, with particular interest in the East because it was personally imperative for Ammianus as a soldier and survivor of Rome's conflicts with the Neo-Persian Empire. Ammianus' above attribution of "warlike" (*bellicosi*) to Severus and Trajan illuminates the author's intentional association between these emperors and their successful wars involving the Parthians. On one level referencing previous emperors points towards actual historical events but in this context, mentioning the names of Severus and Trajan works as a narrative tool that places the present contest within the larger arc of Roman history.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵² Stertz (1980, 500) claims that Ammianus' use of *bellicosi* indicates criticism of Trajan, though the adjective is also frequently used to describe people and groups like the *gens Romana*, as simply warlike, which is not necessarily a negative term. See *OLD* "bellicosus."

This is not the only place where Ammianus refers back to the lost sections of his history. Elsewhere in his text (14.7.21) Ammianus hints at a lost digression on Mesopotamia and a history of the conflicts between Roman and Parthia; no doubt he included Trajan, Lucius Verus, and Septimius Severus in this digression.⁴⁵³ These emperors were of particular interest to Ammianus because of his own military career and his personal experience in the eastern wars. The following excerpt likewise demonstrates the martial context and language in which Ammianus refers to Trajan:

Hanc provinciae imposito nomine, rectoreque adtributo, obtemperare legibus nostris Traianus compulit imperator, incolarum tumore saepe contunso, cum glorioso Marte Mediam urgeret et Parthos. (14.8.3)

It was given the name of a province, assigned a governor, and compelled to obey our laws by the emperor Trajan, who, by frequent victories crushed the arrogance of its inhabitants when he was waging glorious war with Media and the Parthians. (Translation by Rolfe, 1950)

Conquest in the east is of particular interest to Ammianus Marcellinus, who himself was on campaign with Ursicinus and who survived the siege of Amida, barely escaping the capture of the city.⁴⁵⁴ Trajan initially had success in the East against the Parthians; albeit, his success was moderated by his inability to capture Hatra and his failing health.⁴⁵⁵ In addition, the new Roman province of Mesopotamia that Trajan established was also short-lived; Hadrian gave the territory back to the Parthians after Trajan's death. Nonetheless, memories of his victories persisted despite the temporary gains and Ammianus contributes to this tradition. He specifically refers to his conquest as *glorioso Marte*, tapping into the perceived glorious and famous nature of his campaign.

⁴⁵³ *Absque Mesopotamia, iam digesta cum bella Parthica narrarentur*. See Frakes 2005, 240.

⁴⁵⁴ Amm. Marc. 19.8.

⁴⁵⁵ Bennett (2001, 199) states that Trajan apparently sent a letter to the Roman senate declaring that his old age kept him from extending his campaign to the extent of Alexander the Great's, which is echoed in Julian's satire, in which Trajan follows after Alexander.

In describing the rule of Constantius II, Ammianus Marcellinus informs that Constantius desired to emulate Trajan's colossal statue.⁴⁵⁶ When visiting Rome, Ammianus reports that Constantius took a tour of the most famous and important monuments in the Eternal City. The finale of the tour describes the emperor's astonishment at Trajan's Forum. In this passage, Ammianus states that Constantius wanted to copy the great equestrian sculpture of Trajan standing in the center of the forum, thereby demonstrating the appeal of Trajan's legacy for Constantius because a Roman audience no doubt saw the famous sculpture themselves and understood its historical significance.⁴⁵⁷ Elsewhere, Ammianus indicates that Constantius was careful to craft his own imperial image, so adopting a Trajanic appearance was a prudent choice for Constantius.⁴⁵⁸

Within Ammianus' history, Trajan appears most prominently in Ammianus' narrative of Julian's career, in which Trajan primarily functions as an exemplum of military excellence because Ammianus' Roman audience were familiar with Trajan's accomplishments.⁴⁵⁹ Julian features so conspicuously because he was exceptionally admired by the historian. Many scholars have commented on the fact that Ammianus' work can be characterized by an adulation of Julian bordering on flattery.⁴⁶⁰ Ammianus himself concedes that his account of Julian's life almost belongs to the realm of

⁴⁵⁶ Amm. Marc. 21.16; Ammianus has some good to say about him, but his overall judgment of his character seems critical. See Whitby 1999, 77.

⁴⁵⁷ Amm. Marc. 16.10.15.

⁴⁵⁸ Amm. Marc. 21.16.1. See also Whitby 1999, 83.

⁴⁵⁹ The use of exempla in Roman history is not unique to Ammianus Marcellinus. He builds on the historical tradition of Roman authors such as Livy, who also employs exempla throughout his narrative. See Sabbah 2003, 59.

⁴⁶⁰ Syme 1968, 94; Seager 1986, 101; Smith 1999, 90; Tougher 2007, 6; Kelly 2008, 301–17; Hengst 2010, 225–6.

panegyric; hence Ammianus is aware of his own bias.⁴⁶¹ As Gavin Kelly suggests, Ammianus likely began his history with Nerva and the second-century emperors in order to include them as examples for Julian and his telling of the Persian wars.⁴⁶² For Ammianus, Julian was the new model emperor, and echoing Trajan served a purpose in constructing an image of Julian because of their similar military activities in the east. In addition, by stating that Julian was comparable to Trajan, Ammianus established that Julian restored to Rome the martial status of the past. Julian's Persian expedition of 363 CE is a long-running centerpiece of his life in Ammianus' work. Trajan was the preeminent Roman conqueror of Parthia, having successfully captured Ctesiphon and been given the victorious cognomen *Parthicus*. Therefore, because of Julian's campaign, Trajan becomes a clear choice for comparison. As shown below, Ammianus offers Trajan, along with other exemplary emperors, as a way to illustrate Julian's virtues:

Videtur enim lex quaedam vitae melioris hunc invenem a nobilibus cunis ad usque spiritum comitata supremum. Namque incrementis velocibus ita domi forisque colluxit, ut prudentia Vespasiani filius Titus alter aestimaretur, bellorum gloriosis cursibus Traiani simillimus, clemens ut Antoninius, rectae perfectaeque rationis indigine congruens Marco, ad cuius aemulationem actus suos effingebat et mores. (16.1.4)

For with rapid strides [Julian] grew so conspicuous at home and abroad that in his foresight he was esteemed a second Titus, son of Vespasian, in the glorious progress of his wars as very like Trajan, mild as Antoninus Pius, and in searching out the true and perfect reason of things in harmony with Marcus Aurelius, in emulation of whom he moulded his conduct and his character. (Translation by Rolfe, 1950)

By mentioning the names of Titus, Vespasian, Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius, the author calls to mind the reader's knowledge of these past emperors. They form a recognizable standard by which to measure Julian and his numerous virtues. Therefore, because of the

⁴⁶¹ Amm. Marc. 16.1.3: *Quicquid autem narrabitur . . . ad laudativam paene materiam pertinebit.*

⁴⁶² Kelly 2005, 416; 2008, 299.

fame of Trajan's military conquests, Julian's military prowess is likened to Trajan's. All of Trajan's other merits and achievements are not used, though they are implicit in the use of his name; his military achievements are what define him as an exemplum for Julian. Ammianus does not need to expound on Trajan or on any of the other emperors listed. He relies on the implied memory of his audience to recognize the association between Trajan and *gloriosi cursus bellorum*. Trajan is the obvious choice as a military hero for Julian, for not only was he a virtuous emperor, but also he had military success in Germania and in Parthia, both peoples against whom Julian also had major military engagements. In fact, Ammianus makes a point to comment that when Julian crossed the Rhine into *Germania*, he repaired a fort that had been built by Trajan.⁴⁶³ Initially, this fact may seem trivial, but it helps to establish the similarity between Julian and Trajan. Ammianus did not need to mention that the fort was Trajanic.

Ammianus reports that Julian himself modeled his command of the army on Trajan's campaign, and he attributes Julian's motivations for war with Persia to a burning desire to achieve the cognomen *Parthicus*, a title that carried undeniable connotations of Trajan.⁴⁶⁴ A victory against Persia would not only remind the Romans of Trajan but also would unify the empire, signaling that the age of Julian restored the glory of Rome to a period of prosperity, putting Julian on par with Trajan.⁴⁶⁵ Ammianus further strengthens connections between Trajan and Julian by inserting references to Trajan into Julian's speeches, which highlight Trajan's military achievements while at the same time giving voice to fourth-century aspirations to establish continuity with the past. Ammianus recounts that while on campaign, Julian declared that he made public oaths about his

⁴⁶³ Amm. Marc. 17.1.11.

⁴⁶⁴ Amm. Marc. 22.12.2: *ornamentis inlustrium gloriarum inserere Parthici cognomentum ardebat*.

⁴⁶⁵ Murdoch 2003, 162.

military conquests in the same manner as Trajan in his invasions of Dacia and Parthia.⁴⁶⁶ Ammianus also reports that Julian names Trajan and all the other emperors—Lucius Verus, Septimius Severus, and Gordian III—who had military conquests in the east against the Parthians and Persians in order to show the significance of the present contest.⁴⁶⁷ As John Matthews asserts, the claim that Julian invoked Trajan in his speeches is problematic in that the actual words can never be recovered.⁴⁶⁸ Within ancient historiography, however, speeches figure prominently because they provided a narrative and rhetorical purpose. “Virtually all ancient historians,” D.S. Levene points out, “give a high prominence to speeches.”⁴⁶⁹ A speech act gives a kind of authenticity to the history. Thucydides famously admitted that the speeches in his history were not necessarily the actual words spoken. Instead, he adhered as closely as possible to the kind of speech one could expect considering the context and character of the speaker.⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, in Ammianus’ history, it is difficult to know the extent to which Julian’s words are accurate. Given that Julian himself also writes about some of these figures in his satirical work, *Caesares*, which is discussed later in the chapter, it is reasonable to assume that Julian would have made such references to previous Roman conquerors and that Trajan was a real exemplum for Julian.

In elevating Julian as the new ideal emperor, Ammianus Marcellinus necessarily puts him and the fourth century in the context of the exemplars of the second century.

According to Ammianus, however, it is on account of fate or divine will that Julian did

⁴⁶⁶ Amm. Marc. 24.3.9.

⁴⁶⁷ Amm. Marc. 23.5.17: *Sed ut a vetustate discedam, haec quae tradidit recens memoria replicabo. Traianus et Verus et Severus hinc sunt digressi, victores et tropaeati, redissetque pari splendore iunior Gordianus, cuius monumentum nunc videmus honorate.* Note that Gallerius is absent in this list, but he is referenced many times elsewhere in the narrative.

⁴⁶⁸ Matthews 1989, 130.

⁴⁶⁹ Levene 2009, 212.

⁴⁷⁰ Thuc. 1.22.1.

not conquer the Persians.⁴⁷¹ Hence the author's hope of a new Trajan ends: "And in order to restore the Orient with similar energy, he attacked the Persians, and he would have won from them a triumph and a surname, if the decrees of heaven had been in accord with his plans and his splendid deeds."⁴⁷² Ammianus makes a thinly veiled allusion to Trajan, who was bestowed the cognomen *Parthicus* and even granted a military triumph posthumously.⁴⁷³ Julian perished in the east after his attempted conquests, as did both Alexander and Trajan.

Ammianus uses Trajan as a gauge for the emperors after Julian, too. He employs the formula of inserting names of famous emperors with Valentinian, but in his case, he instead uses Trajan and Marcus Aurelius to show that Valentinian failed to achieve the lofty heights of these famed emperors.

Consentaneum est venire post haec ad eius actus, sequendos recte sentientibus et probandos: ad quos si reliqua remperasset, vixerat⁴⁷⁴ ut Traianus et Marcus. (30.9.1)

It is fitting after this to pass to those acts of his [Valentinian's] which were praiseworthy and to be imitated by right-thinking men; and if he had regulated the rest of his conduct in accordance with these, his career would have been that of a Trajan or a Marcus. (Translation by Rolfe, 1939)

Although the context is slightly different, the effect is the same. The allusions to Trajan and Marcus Aurelius suggest for Valentinian military prowess, fair administration, and intellectual pursuits. Later in the account, he is critical of Valentinian (and also

⁴⁷¹ Smith (1999, 91) points out that Ammianus charges Constantine with stirring up trouble in the east against the Persians, and therefore Julian had no choice but to quell what his predecessor had started.

⁴⁷² Amm. Marc. 25.4.26: *Itaque ut Orientum pari studio recrearet, adortus est Persas, triumphum exinde relaturus, et cognomentum, si consiliis eius et factis illustribus decreta caelestia congruissent.*

⁴⁷³ *HA Hadrian* 5.9; Dio Cass. 69.2.3; Eutr. 8.5; The triumph was memorialized on coins depicting a *quadriga* bearing his effigy and a palm branch: *BMC, Hadrian*, 47 cited in Bennett 2001, 286 n. 107.

⁴⁷⁴ It is stylistically noteworthy that Ammianus employs the indicative mood (*vixerat*) in the apodosis of the condition setting up the expectation that his life was akin to a Trajan or a Marcus, thereby making the contra-factual protasis all the more poignant.

seemingly Trajan) for the numerous building restorations on which he inscribed his name, to such an extent that Ammianus names him *herbam perietinam*.⁴⁷⁵ Trajanic inscriptions are numerous, and presumably Ammianus was witness to the ubiquity of Trajan's impact on the empire.

To sum up, for Ammianus Marcellinus, Trajan offered a platform to illustrate the military prowess of his fourth-century successors to his readers: a Roman aristocracy seeking to contextualize the fourth century within the framework of the larger grand strategy. The past heroes in Ammianus' history, including Trajan, become utterly conventional, and the exempla develop into a catalog of good rulers with respect to the Roman senate.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, the desire for a new Trajan is a response to the military losses that Ammianus saw. Marcus Aurelius and Trajan are the "recognized paragons in late antiquity," and Ammianus perpetuates their memory by relying on their perception to narrate the present.⁴⁷⁷ Other contemporary histories shed some light on Ammianus' lost account of Trajan's principate, given that the authors may have had access to the same historical sources.⁴⁷⁸ The works of Festus and Eutropius are similar to Ammianus' work in that they focus on the deeds of the emperors and their military conflicts, especially with Persia. They are also created in an aristocratic context since both Eutropius and Festus wrote their respective histories in gratitude for public offices.

1B: Epitomes of Roman History

The fourth century is witness to several epitomes encapsulating the long narrative of Roman history into a concise format. These relatively short works serve a specific role

⁴⁷⁵ Amm. Marc. 27.3.7: *Quo vitio laborasse et Traianus dicitur princeps, unde eum herbam parietinam iocando cognominarunt*. The same phrase, "wall herb" (*herbam parietariam*), is also attributed to Trajan in the life of Constantine in the *Epitome de Caesaribus* (41.13).

⁴⁷⁶ Stertz 1980, 495.

⁴⁷⁷ Stertz 1980, 492.

⁴⁷⁸ Birley 2003, 129.

in the cultural revival of late antiquity—namely to demonstrate the greatness of Rome. As G. Bonamente offers, “The purpose is to propose the continuity of the history of Rome in its ethical values, political institutions and military prestige as a model for the state of the empire and its future stability.”⁴⁷⁹ The histories of Festus and Eutropius were popular and survived in numerous manuscripts. The latter was translated into Greek in the fourth century by Paeanius and again in the sixth century by Capito, demonstrating the popularity and longevity of Eutropius’ breviary. Both authors’ style was straightforward and easy to read, which contributed to their attractiveness.⁴⁸⁰ These were not always received well due to their brevity and perceived lack of detail. Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, was critical of such endeavors to gloss over important historical details.⁴⁸¹ The authors of the epitomes take their information from earlier histories and imperial biographies, such as Marius Maximus’ lost history and an unknown and unnamed work.⁴⁸² Within the epitomes, like in Ammianus’ history, Trajan

⁴⁷⁹ Bonamente 2003, 85.

⁴⁸⁰ Bird 1993, lv–lvi.

⁴⁸¹ Amm. Marc. 15.1.1.

⁴⁸² Many scholars postulate that the late antique epitomes and also the *HA* rely upon a lost and unknown source. In 1883, Alexander Enmann, in the pursuit of source criticism (*Quellenforschung*), observed parallels in content, structure, and formulation of verbs between Aurelius Victor and Eutropius and postulated such a source of emperors’ lives, dubbed the *kaisergeschichte* (KG). Modern scholars, Syme (1968), Barnes (1968/1969), Barnes (1978), Bird (1973), Burgess (1995), Burgess (2005), Birley (1997), and Rorhbach (2008) 108, all advocate for the KG written in Latin between 337 and 357 and covering history from Suetonius to the fourth century. The KG theoretically contained brief accounts of emperors’ lives, and was not an in-depth history like the lost work of Marius Maximus, see Syme (1968) 495–496. Though not the first to do so, Cameron (2011) 665–68 posits a Greek history for the KG rather than a Latin text, citing similarities between Aurelius Victor and Zosimus. The problem with the notion of the KG is that there is no named author or historical text, which, if such a work existed, should have at least been named somewhere. Burgess (1995) suggests that the KG was a history written by Eusebius Nanneticus, a Gallic author interested in imperial usurpers. Other scholars, such as den Boer (1972) and Dufraigne (1975) entirely reject the notion that there was a KG at all, and they argue that it was a product of nineteenth-century scholarship. Similarities do not necessitate a common source, but can be explained by common memory, shared cultural heritage, oral traditions, rhetorical training, school textbooks etc. Other fourth-century sources, such as Jerome’s continuation of Eusebius’ Chronicle and the codex calendar of 354, share similar information, too, which might indicate a common source, or speak to a tradition. The problem, however, is as Bird (1993, xliii) points out, “all the extant, historical writings of the fourth century have points in common which must have derived from a common store of information about Roman history which each author used according to his need and objectives.” This repository of information does not

is used to link the present with the past.⁴⁸³ He represents a key figure in the arc of military conquest and a model of the virtues of a man of senatorial rank. The various *breviaria* ultimately serve to elevate Rome.

IBI: Festus

Rufus Festus wrote a *Breviarium*⁴⁸⁴ dedicated to the emperor Valens in 379 CE. Festus' main purpose in writing was to narrate two conquests: the formation of the Roman Empire (*imperium*), and the wars with Persia.⁴⁸⁵ Festus' account of Rome under the empire does not follow the paradigm of biography and the reign-by-reign style, but narrates chronologically only those emperors who have important dealings with the eastern limits of the empire. Unsurprisingly, Festus writes about Trajan within the context of his Dacian and Parthian conquests.⁴⁸⁶ He focuses particularly on Armenia, Assyria, and Mesopotamia, equating Trajan with Alexander as the only other conqueror to reach the boundaries of India.⁴⁸⁷ For Festus, Trajan fits into the narrative of a 'grand strategy' of the Roman Empire in the East.⁴⁸⁸ Trajan expanded Roman *imperium* in the east against a constant foe. This was important for Romans in the fourth century, who continued to see Persia as a major military rival. Consequently a Roman military leader who followed in the tradition of Alexander, Trajan, served the contemporary narrative of

require a single text but a shared body of tradition. Despite the unsolvable complexities of source criticism here, this study is interested in the reception of Trajan in fourth-century sources. If Trajan made an appearance in the so-called KG, it likely contained information about his military conquests and was favorable towards his reign.

⁴⁸³ Bonamente (2003, 86) states that the driving force behind fourth-century historiography was a desire to revive the past and demonstrate a continuity that the fourth century restored the culture and stability of the early empire.

⁴⁸⁴ The full title is *Breviarium Rerum Gestarum Populi Romani*.

⁴⁸⁵ Fest. *Brev.* 3.1 and 3.4.

⁴⁸⁶ Fest. *Brev.* 8.2; 14.3–4; 20.2–3.

⁴⁸⁷ Fest. *Brev.* 20.2: *usque [Traianus] ad Indiae fines post Alexandrum accessit*.

⁴⁸⁸ Lightfoot 1990, 115.

Roman military glory in the East.⁴⁸⁹ Moreover, he was an exemplum for Festus' reader, the emperor. All other details of Trajan's life and character are excluded in Festus's account.

1B2: Eutropius

Flavius Eutropius (b. after 320 CE⁴⁹⁰) wrote one of the most popular and widely read of the breviaries. He composed the *Breviarium ab Urbe Condita* in ten books covering the history of Rome from Romulus to Jovian. Little is known about Eutropius' life, as he does not reveal many details in his history. In the dedication of the *Breviarium*, his title is listed as a *vir clarissimus* (senatorial rank) and *magister memoriae*. It is therefore clear that he is a member of the senatorial elite in the service of the imperial administration.⁴⁹¹ Eutropius, furthermore, states that he accompanied the emperor Julian on his Persian campaign.⁴⁹² From this evidence, it is apparent that he had a lengthy career as a bureaucrat in the imperial administration from Constantius II to Theodosius, giving Eutropius the necessary context for his narration of the "deeds of illustrious men in governing the empire."⁴⁹³ H.W. Bird suggests that his lengthy career indicates that he was competent, loyal, and politically shrewd.⁴⁹⁴ Eutropius probably composed the *Breviarium* in gratitude to the emperor Valens for the appointment to his position in the imperial secretariat, and the emperor and the new aristocracy at

⁴⁸⁹ The likening of Trajan and Alexander continued in the fourth century, which can be observed not only here, but also in Julian's satire, *Caesares*. See p. 131 ff.

⁴⁹⁰ Dates for Eutropius' life are not known, but Bird (1993, vii) proposes that Eutropius was born soon after 320 CE because he was a contemporary of Valens and Julian, under whom Eutropius had an active career.

⁴⁹¹ That he was of senatorial status is certain. Burgess (2001, 76–8), however, argues that the title of *magister memoriae* may be a conflation of him and Festus and this was an office that Eutropius never held. Most scholars maintain the tradition that Eutropius was the *magister memoriae* in 369 CE under the emperor Valens. Cf. Bird 1993, xiii and Conte 1999, 647.

⁴⁹² Eutr. *Brev.* 10.16.

⁴⁹³ Eutr. *Brev.* Praef.: *inlustrum virorum facta in administrando imperio*. Rohrbacher 2002, 49.

⁴⁹⁴ Bird 1993, xiii.

Constantinople was the target audience.⁴⁹⁵ Hence, his history is a “glorification of Rome and its governing class.”⁴⁹⁶ His style, like Festus’, is characterized as plain and straightforward, though thematically Eutropius focuses on the main events of Roman history rather than a specific conflict.

Eutropius’ *Breviarium* contains a brief account of Trajan’s reign, but it was fairly lengthy compared to his summaries of other emperors, spanning four chapters. Most other emperors received only one or two chapters. Eutropius states right away that Trajan “governed the state in such a way that he was deservedly preferred to all the emperors, being a man of extraordinary courtesy and bravery.”⁴⁹⁷ Then Eutropius summarizes Trajan’s military conquests. He subsequently claims that Trajan’s military reputation (*gloria*) was surpassed only by his graciousness (*civilitas*) and restraint (*moderatio*), citing that only one senator was put to death during Trajan’s reign and the sentencing passed without the emperor’s knowledge. In Eutropius’ version, Trajan’s only fault was that he was too accessible to ordinary citizens.⁴⁹⁸ For the author, Trajan is an important figure to tell the history of Rome from a senatorial perspective because he was also famous for his amicable relationship with the senate. Because of such passages that appeal to the governing class, the audience has been thought to have been the senatorial class. In addition, it is a subtle hint to the emperor Valens on how he ought to treat the aristocracy. In comparison to all the other emperors in his history, “it soon becomes apparent that Trajan was Eutropius’ most revered emperor.”⁴⁹⁹ He even goes so

⁴⁹⁵ Bird 1993, xiii–xix.

⁴⁹⁶ Conte 1999, 647.

⁴⁹⁷ Eutr. *Brev.* 8.2.2: *Rem publicam ita administravit, ut omnibus principibus merito praeferatur, inusitatae civilitatis et fortitudinis.* Translation by Bird 1993.

⁴⁹⁸ Eutr. *Brev.* 8.4.1; 8.5.1.

⁴⁹⁹ Bird 1993, xxxv.

far as to say that Trajan ought to be compared to Romulus, the mythical founder of Rome.⁵⁰⁰ There is no mention of his vices: his lack of education or his fondness for wine or young boys, which are mentioned in Aurelius Victor's account (which contains much of the same information as Eutropius').⁵⁰¹

Eutropius famously declared that Trajan's name was used as a common salutation from senators to emperors: "*felicior Augusto, melior Traiano*," "More fortunate than Augustus, better than Trajan." Eutropius himself recognized that the phrase paid tribute to Trajan's memory (*memoria*) because of his use as an exemplar. He continues, "To such an extent has the reputation of his goodness lasted that it provides those who either (wished to) flatter or to praise sincerely with the opportunity to use him as the most outstanding model."⁵⁰² It was the highest compliment that could be delivered to any emperor, for Augustus (revered) and Trajan (best) were fixed in the tradition as exemplary rulers who successfully unified the empire by negotiating the delicate balance of appeasing the Roman people, senate, and the military. Likewise, it directed the current emperor to emulate two pro-senatorial emperors. If a fourth-century emperor could do these things well, he would be remembered among the best. Conversely, historical exempla afforded the senatorial aristocracy a means by which to critique the emperors falling short of a Trajan or an Augustus. Eutropius' anecdote confirms that Trajan was used as one of the standards for emperors and that Trajan's name was used to praise fourth-century rulers.

⁵⁰⁰ Eutr. Brev. 8.8.1: *vir [Pius] insignis et qui merito Numae Pompilio conferatur, ita ut Romulo Traianus aequetur.*

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Dio Cass. 68.7.4; Julian, *Caesares* 311c, 318c.

⁵⁰² Eutr. Brev. 8.5.3: *Adeo in eo gloria bonitatis obtinuit, ut vel adsentantibus vel vere laudantibus occasionem magnificentissimi praestet exempli.* Translation by Bird 1993.

Section 2: Emperors' Lives

Although Trajan makes numerous appearances in writings of later historians, no complete biography for him survives from the ancient world.⁵⁰³ The writing of biography, a genre that grew out of the Greek tradition, like many other genres, had been assimilated into Latin literature.⁵⁰⁴ What were typically written, however, were not complete biographies but rather short biographical sketches, or lives, of famous men—brief portraits that describe important features of character, deeds, and anecdotes. Varro's *Imagines* and Cornelius Nepos' *De Viris Illustribus*, both lost works, formed the foundation for later writers, such as Suetonius.⁵⁰⁵ Biography and history are related, and both genres heavily rely on each other. The Roman focus on exempla, descriptions of men with outstanding character, is visible throughout imperial historiography.⁵⁰⁶ It is often difficult to separate the two, as demonstrated in Ammianus Marcellinus, Festus, and Eutropius, who adopt varying aspects of a biographical model for the framework of their histories.⁵⁰⁷ In the fourth century, there are some important works that adopt the format of a strictly biographical approach; they use brief sketches of the lives of the emperors as the model for historical narrative. The *Historia Augusta*, Aurelius Victor, Julian's *Caesares*, and Ausonius' *Caesares* will be used to illustrate how Trajan's career was memorialized in the typical fourth-century *vita Traiani*. Thematically, Trajan appears in

⁵⁰³It was reported in the *Life of Alexander Severus* in the *Historia Augusta* that there were at least four biographies of Trajan, one of which was written by Marius Maximus. *HA Alexander Severus* 48.6: *Scio vulgum hanc rem quam contextui Traiani putare, sed neque in vita eius id Marius Maximus ita exposuit neque Fabius Marcellinus neque Aurelius Verus neque Statius Valens, qui omnem eius vitam in litteras miserunt.*

⁵⁰⁴ See Hägg 2012, for a careful study of the origins of ancient biography and its use in classical literature.

⁵⁰⁵ Conte 1999, 547.

⁵⁰⁶ Gowing 2009, 334.

⁵⁰⁷ This is not unusual for historiography, especially Roman tradition, which historically marked the passage of time by the names of the consuls. During the empire, the consular model fades and is replaced by the emperor as a chronological marker.

two ways with respect to emperors' lives. The first category poses a summary of Trajan's life and deeds, which are described in order to fit the narrative strategy of the work as a whole. The second category uses Trajan as an exemplum to evaluate the lives of later emperors. Within both contexts, Trajan appeals to a target audience of elite readers, who were the primary consumers of this kind of biographical literature.⁵⁰⁸

2A: *Historia Augusta*

The *Historia Augusta* (hereafter *HA*) is a collection of imperial lives from Hadrian to Carinus of various lengths and sometimes dubious information. There is no "Life of Trajan" in this text, and Trajan usually appears as an exemplum.⁵⁰⁹ The dating and purpose of this text have been much debated by modern scholars.⁵¹⁰ Much of this work is deemed problematic and historically untrustworthy because it contains fabrications, anachronisms, and inaccuracies.⁵¹¹ Sir Ronald Syme declared the *HA* to be an imposture of a single author that was composed around 395–400 CE. Syme's date range is generally accepted among contemporary scholars.⁵¹² Recently, however, Alan Cameron has proposed an earlier date range, c. 361–386 CE, arguing that the *HA* served as a source for Jerome and possibly other authors as well.⁵¹³ Concerning the *HA* as an historical work, Ronald Syme is correct that the text is not a true history. Mark Thomson, however,

⁵⁰⁸ Thomson 2012, 63.

⁵⁰⁹ Some have hypothesized that lives of Nerva and Trajan were originally included in the *HA* because of the text's apparent imitation of Suetonius, which ended with Domitian. Moreover, Marius Maximus' lives, often named in the *HA* as a source, apparently also began with Nerva. For a full discussion, see Meckler (1996), who makes a strong case for the *Vita Hadriani* as the intended beginning of the *HA*.

⁵¹⁰ Syme 1968, 72–9; Syme 1983; Hengst 2010, 92–3; Cameron 2011, 743–82; Thomson 2012, 37–53.

⁵¹¹ Dessau 1889; Syme 1983, 6–11. For a concise summary of the problems with the *HA*, see Mellor 1999, 158–9.

⁵¹² Syme 1983, 12–13; Thomson 2012, 7; the names of the authors are most certainly pseudonyms, but they are likely chosen as puns, genealogies, or typologies recognizable to the readership. See Thomson 2012, 29–32.

⁵¹³ Cameron 2011, 772.

rightly declares the term “imposture” and other similar designations to be unsatisfactory because they are too restrictive and possibly lead to “inappropriate categories.” Instead, the work as a whole ought to be viewed as a product of fourth-century culture with an entirely different perspective of historical “truth,” such as didactic value. As such, the past was not necessarily a linear process but a collection of examples to be used and arranged in a variety of ways.⁵¹⁴ Similarly, Tony Honoré suggests that the “*HA* combines a number of genres—history, entertainment, riddles, and a covert form of political commentary.”⁵¹⁵ Even though there is no life of Trajan in the *HA*, Trajan appears as an exemplum used to gauge the reigns of later emperors, as was noted in the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus. This is done in the *HA* to a far greater extent, though Trajan appears in multiple layers of meaning. Some uses of Trajan as an exemplum give the *HA* a veneer of plausibility for didactic purposes, while other appearances of Trajan are clearly silly and intended to satirize the kinds of interactions that Roman senators had with emperors.

The difficulty is that the *HA* is not simply a satirical work, but is a complex combination of sardonic elements and real history, signifying a sophisticated elite readership.⁵¹⁶ There has been extensive study to demonstrate that the author of the *HA* references known sources of Roman history, and therefore the work ought not to be roundly dismissed.⁵¹⁷ Much of the information on the emperors of the second and early third centuries is historical and is supported by other historical accounts and types of evidence. For example, the work cites Marius Maximus, an author whom other sources

⁵¹⁴ Thomson 2012, 118–9.

⁵¹⁵ Honoré 1987, 156.

⁵¹⁶ Thomson 2012, 69, 115–8.

⁵¹⁷ Thomson 2012, 7–9.

also quote. Marius' *Lives* probably included lives of Nerva through Elagabalus, but it unfortunately does not survive.⁵¹⁸ Other sources for the *HA* include Herodian, Dexippus, Eunapius, and the epitomators Eutropius and Aurelius Victor, and the author of the so-called *Kaisergeschichte*.⁵¹⁹ Likewise, the spurious names and information offer insight into the intended aristocratic audience.⁵²⁰ Whether the *HA* is a farcical hoax or a moralizing history, it ought not to be dismissed since the creator was still operating within the confines of the genre of imperial biography.⁵²¹ Some of the information is reliable and common with other fourth-century histories. Moreover, as Ronald Syme concedes, "the dubious document could surely be exploited to cast light upon its own epoch."⁵²² The theme of the *HA* is overwhelmingly pro-senatorial,⁵²³ so an aristocratic context must be inferred. As Mark Thomson concludes, the *HA* was a product that "emanated from the networks of cultural production centered upon the aristocratic elite of the city of Rome, from which the intended audience was drawn."⁵²⁴

For the purposes of this study, the *HA* remains an important piece of evidence because it is valuable for observing the manner in which memories of exempla are woven into imperial biographies through allusions and comparisons. Specifically, the *HA* seeks a pro-senatorial imperial ideology in the established literary tradition employing many of the modes and conventions of classical biography and Roman history. The exempla employed throughout the *HA*, including Trajan, were all emperors who maintained good

⁵¹⁸ Syme 1983, 30–45; Birley 2003, 127–8; Thomson, 2012, 8. Syme (1983, 30–45) claims that Marius Maximus was employed to add credence to the hoax of the history.

⁵¹⁹ Thomson 2012, 19.

⁵²⁰ Thomson 2012, 55.

⁵²¹ Thomson 2012, 13–14.

⁵²² Syme 1983, 111.

⁵²³ Stertz 1980, 489.

⁵²⁴ Thomson 2012, 69.

relationships with the aristocracy. Therefore, by naming Trajan within the text, the author created a two-part effect: he gave the work the appearance of Roman biography by recalling the sanctioned past and created a compact and instructive scene that either revered or satirized later rulers. “[The author’s] fabrication of an elaborate authenticating apparatus reflects a desire to imitate as scrupulously as possible the works of Suetonius and Marius Maximus, his predecessors in the sphere of imperial biography.”⁵²⁵ Therefore, the narrative necessarily reproduced the established parameters about imperial biography and Roman ideals of good government with respect to the aristocracy.⁵²⁶

As was seen before in Ammianus Marcellinus’ history,⁵²⁷ references to Trajan’s principate in the *HA* signaled an evaluation of the present emperors’ capacity to rule. As might be expected, Trajan features prominently in the life of Hadrian because Trajan, as portrayed in the text, was responsible for Hadrian’s career. The author of the *HA* even went so far as to say that Hadrian modeled his behavior after Trajan, including his fondness for wine, which further endeared the emperor to Hadrian.⁵²⁸ The life of Hadrian, the first biography in the *HA*, closely followed the style of Suetonius, and while discussion of Hadrian’s succession is written with a Suetonian tone of intrigue, the author wrote a true biography in that the information is validated by other accounts.⁵²⁹ For the most part, the author maintains a favorable view of Hadrian, but at times he is portrayed

⁵²⁵ Thomson 2012, 117.

⁵²⁶ Syme 1983, 127.

⁵²⁷ Syme (1968) proposes that the author of the *HA* read a section of Ammianus Marcellinus and proceeded to craft his work based on the *Res Gestae*. This hypothesis has not been entirely accepted and seems tenuous, though there are similarities between these texts. See Momigliano 1973.

⁵²⁸ *HA Hadrian* 3.3

⁵²⁹ *HA Hadrian* 4.1–10; Meckler 1996, 365.

as manipulative (2.6; 14.11) cruel (20.3; 23.7–9; 24.4), and murderous (9.3; 24.8–10).⁵³⁰

Despite these passages, the author points out that Hadrian was careful to observe the traditions and honors of the senate (6.2; 7.4; 8.1–11) and was pious towards Trajan (5.9–10; 6.1–3; 19.5, 19;). Throughout this biography, Trajan is the model of a good and popular emperor against whom Hadrian is compared. For example:

Inter haec tamen et multas provincias a Traiano adquisitas reliquit et theatrum, quod ille in Campo Martio posuerat, contra omnium vota destruxit. et haec quidem eo tristiora videbantur, quod omnia, quae displicere vidisset Hadrianus, mandata sibi ut faceret secreto a Traiano esse simulabat. (*HA Hadrian* 9.1–2)

And yet, at the same time, Hadrian abandoned many provinces won by Trajan, and also destroyed, contrary to the entreaties of all, the theatre which Trajan had built in the Campus Martius. These measures, unpopular enough in themselves, were still more displeasing to the public because of his pretense that all acts which he thought would be offensive had been secretly enjoined upon him by Trajan. (Translation by Magie, 1921)

This excerpt, and most of the *Life of Hadrian*, is believable, and it is likely that the author began his text with a historically sound biography in order to “condition the original readers to accept the validity of the biographies to follow.”⁵³¹

For the remaining lives, the author is largely silent on Trajan until he reaches the lives of the usurpers and soldier emperors, which take on a satirical nature. Mentions of Trajan appear in discussions of succession, which is illuminating because it reveals that problems of legitimacy and succession as major themes in the *HA*.⁵³² In addition, Trajan appears as a way to flatter and even mock the soldier emperors, who sought legitimacy by

⁵³⁰ See Syme 1968, 90–1.

⁵³¹ Meckler 1996, 375.

⁵³² *HA Avidius Cassius* 2.2; 8.6; *Septimius Severus* 21.3; *Pescennius Niger* 12.1; *Gordiani* 2.2; *Aurelian* 14.6.

emulating historical military exemplars. For example, the author claims that Claudius Gothicus hearkened to the Scipios, the Camilli, Trajan, Antoninus, Augustus, and even Moses, the Hebrew prophet.⁵³³ The comparison, however, to past military heroes is not altogether unexpected since Claudius Gothicus was of the group of Illyrian soldier-emperors who made their careers along the Danube frontier and the province of Dacia in the third century. The memory of Trajan's conquest in this region was not forgotten especially because Trajan was responsible for granting Roman citizenship to the Illyrian peoples.⁵³⁴ At first, it may seem that Claudius is to be considered among the good emperors, but, upon closer reading, Claudius' comparanda were famous for their military victories and their long tenures as emperor, so comparison to Trajan and the Antonines evokes an ironic tone:

Longum est tam multa, quam meruit vir ille, perscribere; unum tamen tacere non debeo, quod illum et senatus et populus et ante imperium et in imperio et post imperium sic dilexit, ut satis constet neque Traianum neque Antoninos neque quemquam alium principem sic amatum. (*HA Claudius* 18.4)

It would be too long to set forth all the many honors that this man earned; one thing, however, I must not omit, namely, that both the senate and people held him in such affection both before his rule and during his rule and after his rule that it is generally agreed among all that neither Trajan nor any of the Antonines nor any other emperor was so beloved. (Translation by Magie, 1967 / 1968)

Without providing any details, the author described the reign of Claudius by referencing Trajan, which resonates with the readers because it satirizes Claudius Gothicus. At first glance, it appears to be a compliment, but beneath the surface lies an ironic comparison. The author, however, had to cautiously mask criticism of Claudius because he was an

⁵³³ *HA Claudius* 1.3–2.4.

⁵³⁴ Wilkes 1992, 256.

ancestor to Constantius.⁵³⁵ To the emperors, association with Trajan would be a flattering comparison, but it was also a delight for an aristocratic readership, who would detect the comparison as ironic. Claudius was one of the Illyrian emperors, who were not favored by the Roman aristocracy.⁵³⁶ His military victory at the battle of Naissus in 268 CE against an army of Goths was a significant military achievement, though nowhere near akin to Trajan's subjugation of the Dacians. Moreover, Aurelian, Claudius' successor, abandoned the province of Dacia, the territory that Trajan conquered.⁵³⁷ Claudius Gothicus, and likely the other Illyrians, saw themselves as parallel to Trajan's efforts along the Danube, but the aristocracy did not. Referencing previous emperors is done to such an extent in this work that it becomes a kind of rhetorical trope, which occurs some fifteen times throughout the work. The end result is that the rhetorical device reveals a canon of the particularly good and bad emperors, which are used numerous times elsewhere in the *HA* in order to evaluate the emperors from an aristocratic perspective through satirical commentary.⁵³⁸

To give another example of the trope of good and bad emperors, the life of Elagabalus is framed within the emperors Caligula, Nero, and Vitellius, the so-called bad emperors who, like the good emperors, are employed as comparanda. The narrative effect is similar as above in the *Life of Claudius*, but the criticism towards Elagabalus is greater, since the exempla are all negative. Previous emperors are named to give a compact character profile of Elagabalus. The lives of the good emperors (Augustus,

⁵³⁵ *HA Claudius* 1.1.

⁵³⁶ Syme 1971, 194. Cf. Aurelius Victor *Caes.* 42.

⁵³⁷ *HA Aurelian* 39.7.

⁵³⁸ *HA Aurelian* 42.3–6.

Trajan, Vespasian, Hadrian, Titus, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius⁵³⁹) are then listed to offer consolation for the reader, and a simile is provided: just as earth bears serpents among the flocks, poisonous plants among the grain, so too bad emperors are found among the good.⁵⁴⁰ Even if this is written as a hoax for entertainment of elites, the author calls forth the memories of the emperors. Elagabalus' account does not give any attributes to Trajan, but it does not need to. The author relies on the tradition inherent to Trajan among the other good emperors.

The author again features Trajan prominently in the life of Alexander Severus, who is first contrasted with his predecessor, Elagabalus, who is left unnamed in this passage. Observe how the names of the emperors are used to create an image of Elagabalus and Alexander:

Item, imperator dixit: “nuper certe, p. c., meministis, cum ille omnium non solum bipedum sed etiam quadrupedum spurcissimus Antonini nomen praeferret et in turpitudine atque luxurie Neronis, Vitellios, Commodos vinceret, qui gemitus omnium fuerit, cum per populi et honestorum coronas una vox esset hunc inepte Antoninum dici, per hanc pestem tantum violari nomen.” . . . Item dixit: “si enim Antonini nomen accipio, possum et Traiani, possum et Titi, possum et Vespasiani.” et cum diceret, adclamatum est: “quomodo Augustus, sic et Antoninus.' et imperator.” (*HA Alexander* 9.4; 10.1)

Then the emperor [Alexander] said:” Surely, not long ago, O Conscript Fathers, when that filthiest of all creatures, both two-footed, and four-footed, [Elagabalus]vaunted the name of Antoninus, and in baseness and debauchery outdid a Nero, a Vitellius, and a Commodus, you remember what groanings arose from all, and how in the gatherings of the populace and of all honourable men there was but a single cry—that he was unworthy to bear the name of Antoninus, and that by such a plague as he that great name was profaned.” . . . Again he [Alexander] spoke: "if indeed I take the name of Antoninus, I may take also the name of Trajan, the name of Titus, and the name of Vespasian." And when he had spoken,

⁵³⁹ Note the order of the emperors listed by the author of the *HA*, which places Augustus and Trajan at the front of the list.

⁵⁴⁰ *HA Elagabalus* 1.1–3

there were acclamations: "As you are now Augustus, so also be Antoninus." (Translation by Magie, 1967 / 1968)

Trajan is employed among the throng of the good emperors of the first and second centuries. The list of good or bad emperors offers a compact model to explain the shortcomings of Alexander, for who could really say that he was comparable to Trajan or the others? The irony is revealed later when the senate proclaims that Alexander "will be the proof that the senate can choose its rulers with wisdom. You will be a proof that the choice of the senate is best of all."⁵⁴¹ The choice of Alexander led to crises of the third century—nearly a half-century of civil wars, foreign invasions, and a fractured empire. Comparisons to Trajan, as Ronald Syme points out, were intentionally made to bolster the military reputation of the young emperor, who lacked martial achievements.⁵⁴² In fact, it was his alienation of the legions that led to a conspiracy to assassinate him.⁵⁴³ References to Trajan appear eight times in the life of Alexander Severus, and the subsequent instances essentially operate to point out the failed principate. This is so pervasive throughout the *HA* that the readership would instantly recognize the criticism through the over-the-top praise heaped onto Alexander. Although Alexander wanted to emulate Trajan, he was no Trajan.

Some of the Trajanic connections are utterly absurd. For instance, according to the *HA*, on the day of Alexander Severus' birth, an image of Trajan, which hung above his father's bed, fell down, implying an omen of military likeness (or unlikeness). The passage is told as if this act was a fortuitous portent, but the readers could infer the problematic comparison between Trajan, beloved by the military, and Alexander, hated

⁵⁴¹ *HA Alexander* 10.7

⁵⁴² Syme 1971, 98.

⁵⁴³ *HA Alexander* 59.8; 63.1.

by them. The passage continues even more ridiculously to point out that the young Alexander was nursed by a woman named Olympias and reared by a peasant man named Philip, thereby likening him to Alexander the Great, another great military hero to whom Trajan was also compared.⁵⁴⁴ Trajan and Alexander the Great are elsewhere compared to each other because of their eastern expansion.⁵⁴⁵ The inclusion of Trajan and Alexander the Great in the life of Alexander Severus is evidence of the farcical nature of the *HA*. The readership would have understood that such comparisons existed in real historical narratives or public blandishments to the emperors, but the resemblances did not hold true.

The explanation for the ridiculous uses of Trajan is understood by the intended aristocratic audience, which had an appetite for juicy imperial biographies in the style of Suetonius or the satirists.⁵⁴⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, complained that Roman aristocrats read nothing except Juvenal and Marius Maximus.⁵⁴⁷ The *HA* is certainly reminiscent of these works that Ammianus criticizes in providing a salacious account of the emperors. The tradition of “good” and “bad” emperors suited the literary tone of the *HA*, and all of the emperors are put into this context. Trajan fits into the narrative as a famous entity easily recognizable for his positive attributes, and the author compares other emperors to him. Through this phenomenon, the author perpetuates a portrait of Trajan as a good emperor immovable from the canon of good emperors.

⁵⁴⁴ *HA Alexander* 13.3–4: *Tu praeterea, quod tabula Traiani imperatoris, quae geniali lecto patris imminebat, dum ille in templo pareretur, in lectum eius decidit. His accessit quod nutrix ei Olympias data est, quo nomine mater Alexandri appellata est. Nutritor Philippus provenit casu unus ex rusticis, quod nomen patri Alexandri Magni fuit.*

⁵⁴⁵ Dio Cass. 68.29.1 See also Julian, *Caesares*.

⁵⁴⁶ Thomson 2012, 69.

⁵⁴⁷ Amm. Marc. 28.4.14.

2B: Aurelius Victor

Aurelius Victor, born around 320⁵⁴⁸, also provides a life of Trajan in his epitome, *Liber de Caesaribus* (also known under the title *Historiae Abbreviatae*). Victor, a provincial from North Africa, left his home to go to Rome, where he obtained a position in the imperial administration.⁵⁴⁹ Probably between 358–60 CE, Aurelius was appointed to a bureaucratic position at Sirmium, where he composed his book of lives.⁵⁵⁰ His career continued beyond Sirmium; he was further appointed governor of Pannonia Secunda by Julian, and he was also appointed by Theodosius to the office of urban prefect, for which he subsequently dedicated a statue and inscription to the emperor in the Forum of Trajan.⁵⁵¹ Although Victor's work contains much of the same information as Eutropius' epitome,⁵⁵² his work is markedly different due to his addition of "moralizing commentary and stylistic flourishes."⁵⁵³ He is primarily motivated to convey the importance of Rome's ruling class as the driving force behind Rome's successes; thereby his text is an example of the narrative that the fourth century was an age of restoration. The lives of the emperors are evaluated with respect to Roman elite culture, so Aurelius Victor stresses traditional Roman values communicated through education and culture.⁵⁵⁴

For Aurelius Victor, Trajan is among the exemplary emperors, whose virtuous principate stemmed from his senatorial rank and his distinguished military career.

⁵⁴⁸ His birth is not firmly established. See Bird (1984, 5–10) for a description of his early career.

⁵⁴⁹ Bird 1984, 6–7.

⁵⁵⁰ Bird 1984, 10.

⁵⁵¹ Amm. Marc. 21.10.6; *ILS* 2945.

⁵⁵² Most scholars hypothesize a common source between Aurelius Victor and Eutropius known as the *kaisergeschichte*. See note 49.

⁵⁵³ Rohrbacher 2002, 44–5.

⁵⁵⁴ Bird 1994, xv.

Therefore, Aurelius Victor lauds Nerva's choice in Trajan as his successor.⁵⁵⁵ Aurelius Victor's own career and status as an imperial official strongly influenced his work, and the *Liber de Caesaribus* provides an insight into the aristocratic view of Roman biography. Trajan is not the only emperor praised for his exemplary behavior, but episodes from his life are particularly used to demonstrate the virtues of integrity and self-control.⁵⁵⁶ As expected, Aurelius Victor highlights Trajan's campaigns in Dacia and Parthia, though he erroneously claims that Trajan conquered territories between the Euphrates and the Indus Rivers, which may be a misunderstanding of Trajan's desire to continue his campaign beyond Mesopotamia. Dio, for instance, records that Trajan said that he would have continued his campaign into the east in emulation of Alexander were it not for his old age.⁵⁵⁷ In addition, Aurelius Victor lavishes him with praise for his improvements in Rome, his concern for the grain supply, and his use of the postal system. "Trajan was fair, merciful, extremely patient and very loyal to his friends."⁵⁵⁸ He does not shy away from mentioning one of Trajan's vices, but Victor spins Trajan's famous fondness of wine to demonstrate virtue—knowing the limits of his self-indulgence. In this account, however, deflecting one of the few vices of Trajan and revealing the author's rationalizing and moralizing traits, it is said that Trajan moderated his love of wine by disallowing any orders to be carried out after banquets.⁵⁵⁹ Victor also credits Trajan with the separation of the titles of Caesar and Augustus with differing and unequal powers.⁵⁶⁰ This is incorrect, but again, Victor attributes this action to Trajan as a prudent method for administering the empire. In conclusion, Aurelius Victor's extensive use of

⁵⁵⁵ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 13.1; Rohrbacher 2002, 46.

⁵⁵⁶ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 13.9, 10. See further Bird 1984, 100–3.

⁵⁵⁷ Dio Cass. 68.29.1.

⁵⁵⁸ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 13.8.

⁵⁵⁹ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 13.10; Cf. Dio Cass. 68.7.4.

⁵⁶⁰ Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 13.12.

moralizing exempla in the life of Trajan (and throughout his work) is characteristic of Roman tradition of historiographic discourse between the author and the shared “historical consciousness” of the readers, reinforcing a set of traditional values and moral standards.⁵⁶¹

2C: *Epitome de Caesaribus*

The *Historia Tripertita*, sometimes attributed to Aurelius Victor, is an anonymous corpus of three small works: the *Origo Gentis Romanae*, which offers a brief account of the foundation of Rome; the *De viris illustribus*, summarizing lives from Proca (king of Alba Longa) to Marc Antony; and the *Epitome de Caesaribus*.⁵⁶² The last work is similar to the other epitomes summarizing the lives of emperors, their virtues, and their deeds, and should be understood in a similar aristocratic context. Including the versions of Trajan’s life in Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and Festus, the life of Trajan from the *Historia Tripertita* is the most flattering to the extent that the author claims that Trajan was the fulfilment of divine prophecy for the remedy of a ruined empire.⁵⁶³ One of the recurrent themes of the *Epitome* is the frequent use of signs, portents, and natural phenomena—illness, earthquakes, plagues, floods—as a causative force, which makes the text appear sensational or even superstitious. The lives of good emperors of the first and second centuries are significantly longer than the later ones, and tremendous amounts

⁵⁶¹ For an introduction to exemplary historiography in Roman history, see Roller 2009.

⁵⁶² Although the manuscript tradition attributes the *Historia Tripertita* to Aurelius Victor, it is the work of other authors. See Conte 1994, 646.

⁵⁶³ *Epitome de Caesaribus* 13.10: *Quae omnia eo maiora visebantur, quo per multos atque atroces tyrannos perditio atque prostrato statu Romano in remedium tantorum malorum divinitus credebatur opportune datus, usque eo, ut adveniens imperium eius pleraque mirifica denuntiaverint. In quis praecipuum cornicem e fastigio Capitolii Atticis sermonibus effatam esse: καλῶς ἔσται.*

of praise are heaped upon them. To give an example of the praise given to Trajan in the *Epitome*, the following selection demonstrates the author's attitude toward him:

habens diligentiam in re militari, in civilibus lenitatem, in sublevandis civitatibus largitionem. Cumque duo sint, quae ab egregiis principibus exspectentur, sanctitas domi, in armis fortitudo, utrobique prudentia, tantus erat in eo maximarum rerum modus, ut quasi temperamento quodam virtutes miscuisse videretur, nisi quod cibo vinoque paululum deditus erat. Liberalis in amicos et, tamquam vitae condicione par, societatibus perfrui. Hic ob honorem Surae, cuius studio imperium arripuerat, lavacra condidit. De quo supervacaneum videtur cuncta velle nominatim promere, cum satis sit excultum atque emendatum dixisse. Fuit enim patiens laboris, studiosus optimi cuiusque ac bellicosi; magis simpliciora ingenia aut eruditissimos, quamvis ipse parcae esset scientiae moderateque eloquens, diligebat. Iustitiae vero ac iuris humani divinique tam repertor novi quam inveterati custos. (*Epitome* 13.3–9)

he [Trajan] possessing diligence in military matters, mildness in civil affairs, and largess in supporting citizens. And since there are two things expected of distinguished *principes*—integrity at home, bravery in arms, and prudence in both—so great was the quantity of what is best in him that, as if in some due proportion, he seemed to have combined the virtues, except that he was somewhat given to food and drink. He was liberal toward friends and, as much as befit his style of life, thoroughly enjoyed fellowships. He established baths in honor of Sura, with whose zeal he had secured *imperium*.⁵⁶⁴ With regard to this, it seems unnecessary to want to dedicate everything in his name, when it was enough to have said that he improved or repaired it. He was certainly tolerant of labor, a devotee of each best and warlike thing. He highly esteemed very straightforward characters or men most erudite, although he himself was of slight theoretical knowledge and moderately eloquent. But of justice and human and divine law he was as much a deviser of the new as a guardian of the traditional. (Translation based on Banchich, 2000, modified by author)

As observed above, there is very little use of specific examples from Trajan's life, and strangely no stating his military conquests or titles, which would be expected in an account of Trajan. The military career was obviously important to the author's image of Trajan, but he did not mention his campaigns in Dacia or Parthia. Perhaps they were already so well known that they needed not be repeated. The author, however, has given different examples to portray Trajan in a greater capacity than just a military man. He

⁵⁶⁴ The mention of Licinius Sura suggests that the author is referencing Dio's account of Trajan. See Dio Cass. 68.15.3–4

highlighted his reverence for Roman traditions, hearkening back to the Republic: he was buried under his image like the *triumphatores* of old, and he entered the city accompanied by the senate preceding the army (pointing again to a senatorial audience). In addition, he pointed out Trajan's responses to disasters—flood, famine, earthquakes, fires and pestilence—concluding that Trajan deservedly received the title *pater patriae*.⁵⁶⁵ Although numerous other emperors from Augustus through the Severans also received this title, Trajan is the only one named as such in this entire epitome.

The author makes no mention of Trajan again until the lives of the fourth-century emperors. The author is likely echoing a common occurrence that Trajan was a popular exemplum for the "Age of Renewal." Trajan and his wife, Plotina are mentioned as exempla in the life of Constantius II (42.21). Trajan is used again by the author of the *Epitome* to assert the legitimacy of Theodosius, who probably promoted himself this way, claiming that Theodosius was a direct descendent of Trajan (48.1). Likewise, the author states that Theodosius also had a physical resemblance to Trajan (48.8–9). Furthermore, Theodosius was even more virtuous in that he shunned intoxication (*vinolentia*), for which Trajan was known (48.10). The *Epitome* fits into the context of a narrative of continuity for the Roman Empire and provides entertaining material for its readers.

2D: Historical themes in non-historical genres

The genre of emperors' lives is adapted to other classical categories in fourth-century literature. That is to say that a historical consciousness of the emperors forms the basis for narrative. The emperor Julian and the poet Ausonius apply biographical themes to several writings, in which they incorporate the reign of Trajan. These two authors thereby further testify to his continued popularity in the fourth century. Given the prevalence of imperial biographies from this time period, there was presumably an aristocratic audience that enjoyed and consumed this literature.

⁵⁶⁵ *Epitome de Caesaribus* 13.11–14.

2D1: Julian's satire

Julian attests to the fame and reputation of Trajan and other good emperors, but he does it through the medium of satire. By the time of Julian, the elevation of the so-called good emperors had become so prevalent that the scheme could be an object of comedic ridicule. Julian himself provides a caricature of Trajan in his satirical work *Symposion* or *Kronia*,⁵⁶⁶ or as more commonly named in manuscripts, *Caesares*, in which past Roman emperors are dining in the presence of the Olympian gods at the Saturnalia. Julian wrote this work at Antioch in 362 CE in Menippean satire in the tradition of Lucian, Seneca, and Menippus. Julian's purpose for writing such a work is not entirely clear, but modern scholars have pointed to this work as a potential clue to his own personal inspiration.⁵⁶⁷ Modern scholars have also used the *Caesares* in order to catch a glimpse of the mind of Julian, who, in using the shared memories of his imperial predecessors, reveals something about himself and how he wished to be perceived.⁵⁶⁸ The six exempla in his satire were all made to look foolish, except for Marcus Aurelius, on whom Julian most wanted to model his own career.

In the satire, all of the deceased Roman emperors are invited to dine with the gods at the festival of Saturn. From the guests, five emperors, Julius Caesar, Octavian (Augustus), Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and Constantine, are summoned from among the guests to participate in a contest. They are to give accounts of their lives and their virtues in a (farcical) competition before the gods, but Hercules protests that a Greek is not present and therefore summons Alexander the Great to the game. All six of these figures

⁵⁶⁶ Kronia is the Greek name of the festival of Saturnalia as Kronos was associated with the Roman Saturn.

⁵⁶⁷ Tougher 2007, 65.

⁵⁶⁸ Bowersock 1978, 159–72; Athanassiadi 1981; Relihan 2005.

were rulers who were held as exemplars, except for possibly Constantine, who is only permitted to stand at the door and not enter the presence of Zeus and the Olympians. Julian is clearly being critical of Constantine's religious devotion to Christianity by having Zeus prohibit Constantine from his hall. The *Caesares* is to be understood as a satirical commentary on the usual Roman archetypes. The effect, however, like the use of exemplary rulers in historiography, served to elevate Julian's reign.

Julian's *Caesares* attests to Trajan's deeds and imperial virtues held within public memory but responds to the tradition in a satirical fashion. For instance, Trajan is portrayed as carrying around the trophies of his spoils over the Dacians and Parthians, which turns Trajan's hallmark accomplishment into a comic device. Furthermore, Julian's account puts Trajan's vices, which are usually suppressed or explained away, in full view for ridicule.⁵⁶⁹ He is also ribbed for having an affinity to wine and young Ganymede:

εὐθέως οὖν ὁ Τραϊανὸς εἰσήρχετο φέρων ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων τὰ τρόπαια, τό τε Γετικὸν καὶ τὸ Παρθικόν. ἰδὼν δὲ αὐτὸν ὁ Σειληνὸς ἔφη, λανθάνειν τε ἅμα καὶ ἀκούεσθαι βουλόμενος, Ὡρα νῦν τῷ δεσπότη Διὶ σκοπεῖν, ὅπως ὁ Γανυμήδης αὐτῷ φρουρήσεται. (311c)

Accordingly Trajan entered forthwith, carrying on his shoulders the trophies of his wars with the Getae and the Parthians. Silenus, when he saw him, said in a whisper which he meant to be heard, "Now is the time for Zeus our master to look out, if he wants to keep Ganymede for himself." (Translation by W.C. Wright, 1969)

καὶ ὁ Σειληνὸς ἐπισκώπτων, Ἄλλ' ὅπως μὴ, νομίσαντες αὐτὸ νέκταρ εἶναι, Τραϊανὸς τε καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος ἅπαν ἐκροφήσουσι τὸ ὕδωρ, εἶτα ἀφελοῦνται τοὺς ἄλλους. (318c)

Whereupon Silenus said sardonically, "Take care, or Trajan or Alexander will think it is nectar and drink up all the water and leave none for the others." (Translation by W.C. Wright, 1969)

⁵⁶⁹ Julian, *Caesares* 327b–328b.

The latter passage also plays up the similarities between Trajan and Alexander the Great, which Julian does again to an even greater extent. This too is echoed in the *HA* life of Alexander Severus.⁵⁷⁰

While the contest is underway, the selected emperors state their case before the gods. Trajan is mocked for his inability to speak eloquently, stating that though he had some talent for oratory, he left his speeches to his writer, Sura, and then he shouted at the gods.⁵⁷¹ Once again, Julian portrays Trajan holding his trophies; yet, in addition, he is depicted as fawning after Alexander. He has Trajan blame his old age for not extending his Parthian campaign further. After Trajan made his case to the gods, it was his virtue of clemency (πραότης) that the gods found most favorable.⁵⁷² Ronald Syme suggests that because of this virtue, Trajan “outdistanced” Caesar and Augustus, but falls to the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius, whom Julian most admired.⁵⁷³ By way of the panel of contestants, Julian establishes a hierarchy of imperial heroes, and Trajan finishes near the top, though he does not win.⁵⁷⁴

Just when the winner appears to be Marcus Aurelius, Julian’s ideal emperor on account of his philosophical aspirations, the winner is not announced. Instead, the game is changed, and Hermes declares that all are permitted to enter heaven and are to select a patron god. In proper satirical fashion, the choices are also laughable. Rather than choosing a patron god for himself, like Hercules Victor, Trajan follows after

⁵⁷⁰ See page 132–4.

⁵⁷¹ Julian, *Caesares* 327a–b. Cf. Dio Cass. 68.7.4.

⁵⁷² Julian, *Caesares* 328b: *τοιαῦτα ὁ Τραιανὸς εἰπὼν ἐδόκει τῇ πραότητι πάντων κρατεῖν, καὶ δῆλοι πως ἦσαν οἱ θεοὶ μάλιστα ἡσθέντες ἐπὶ τούτῳ.*

⁵⁷³ Syme 1971, 98.

⁵⁷⁴ Julian, *Caesares* 329c.

Alexander.⁵⁷⁵ Cassius Dio (68.29.1) recounted that Trajan said that he would have followed after Alexander to conquer India were it not for his age. Julian may have been aware of Dio's account or at least the association between Trajan and Alexander. While Julian satirizes the scene, the references to Trajan and Alexander are also illuminating with respect to Julian's military aspirations in the east. Ammianus Marcellinus, as discussed above, associates Julian with Trajan chiefly with respect to his Persian campaign. Perhaps Julian satirizes Trajan as a response to the widespread use of Trajan as a model and critique. As Joel Relihan concludes,

There is no need to deny that there are serious issues at and below the surface in Julian's *Caesars*. Julian surely establishes himself as the true and just ruler, and the parade of former emperors is an ironic Mirror for Princes, showing how not to think, how not to worship, how not to rule. But . . . Menippean satire is here in the service of autobiography, and the inward turning of the genre in late antiquity has as prideful subtext, that Julian alone is the true believer, that Julian alone is the true emperor, that history converges on him and that he is the focal point of the divine gaze.⁵⁷⁶

Therefore, despite its satirical nature, there is still a line drawn between the author and the most celebrated rulers of Rome. Julian is suggesting that he is a part of the tradition of the conquerors Trajan and Alexander but by having Trajan follow after Alexander, he separates himself from them.

If Ammianus Marcellinus is to be believed, Julian desired comparisons between himself and Trajan. As stated previously, Ammianus claims that Julian desired the epithet *Parthicus* and that he took public oaths in the manner of Trajan.⁵⁷⁷ With his own words, Julian's satire supports Ammianus' claims that he wished his legacy to be in line with

⁵⁷⁵ Julian, *Caesares* 335d.

⁵⁷⁶ Relihan 2005, 115.

⁵⁷⁷ Amm. Marc. 24.3.9.

Trajan's. At the very least, it shows that Julian was aware of such inferences. For Julian, Trajan was an exemplum. The usual praise for Trajan is ever present throughout the work. Despite the irreverent and playful attitude, Trajan is a virtuous emperor, with a distinguished military career, whom Julian viewed as one of his models.

2D2: Ausonius

As evidence of an elite readership of biographical material, Ausonius (c. 310–395 CE), one of the preeminent poets of the Late Antique period, wrote a short poem in quatrains on the lives of the twelve Caesars of Suetonius, but he additionally continued the poem beyond the twelve Caesars from Nerva to Elagabalus.⁵⁷⁸ The poetic accounts are brief, but Ausonius voices the most famous attributes of each emperor.

Unsurprisingly, Ausonius observed Trajan's military accomplishments, but chose to highlight his adoption of Hadrian (about whom he appears to be ambivalent). The passage on Trajan is as follows:

adgreditur regimen viridi Traianus in aevo,
belli laude prior, cetera patris habens.
hic quoque prole carens sociat sibi sorte legendi,
quem fateare bonum, diffiteare parem.
(Ausonius *Caes.* 14–Trajan)

Trajan comes to the throne in life's prime, for
war's renown more eminent, for all else like his
father. He also, lacking offspring, takes for his
partner by hazard of choice such an one as we
allow worthy, but disallow as equal.
(Translation by Evelyn-White, 1919)

⁵⁷⁸ Green (1999, 577–8) suggests that there were possibly plans for two more sets of twelve emperors (including the usurpers) to Gratian, though may have never been penned by Ausonius. He, however, stated in a letter that he treated all the emperors that he knew and the last couplet on Elagabalus is missing, thereby suggesting there was more to his poem. See also Green 1991, 557.

He continued the theme of adoption from Nerva to Antoninus and laments Marcus Aurelius having had a son. Ausonius' poem contains themes found in other works and authors (most notably Pliny and the *HA* as discussed above), who extol the adoption of successors as a virtuous quality.⁵⁷⁹ Romans interpreted the adoption as evidence of prudence, since blood was not a reliable indication of becoming a good emperor. The Julio-Claudians and Commodus were examples of this; Commodus is a matter of particular lament for him as he judged him to be a disgrace.⁵⁸⁰

There is nothing particularly astonishing about Ausonius' portrait of Trajan or any other emperor. If anything, as R.P.H. Green indicates, Trajan is surprisingly less becoming than one might expect. He merely echoes the tradition, though artistically crafting each emperor in four lines. Ausonius sought pithiness, not sophistication, for his poem.⁵⁸¹

Section 3: Panegyric

The genre of panegyric has become associated with the Late Antique period due to the number of surviving panegyric addresses from the fourth and fifth centuries.⁵⁸² This genre of literature, like others, has a long history that developed throughout antiquity. It dramatically shifted from its origins in the classical period as a festival speech to honorific speech to (usually) the emperors. Panegyric became an important tool in the construction of the image of the emperor. Moreover, it served as an avenue for conversation with the past, recalling both the works and deeds of the addressee, and also

⁵⁷⁹ Pliny, *Pan.* 6.1 cited in Green 1991, 566, n. 95; *HA Tacitus* 6.9.

⁵⁸⁰ Ausonius, *Caes.* 18.

⁵⁸¹ Green 1991, 558.

⁵⁸² Nixon (2012, 224) points out that there were many panegyrics from the earlier empire, most of which do not survive. Therefore, the association with panegyric exclusively as a revived genre in the fourth century is false, and based solely on the "accidental" survival of the Gallic manuscript.

his relationship with his imperial predecessors both directly and indirectly. It would be easy to dismiss late antique panegyric as imperial propaganda, though recent scholarship has shown that the genre is more complex. Panegyrics were speeches of performance with high standards of rhetorical delivery.⁵⁸³ The literary mode becomes par excellence for praising the later Roman emperors, and Pliny's *Panegyricus* in honor of Trajan serves as the template for many of the surviving panegyrics.

3A: Pacatus and the Panegyrici Latini

The manuscript tradition for fourth-century panegyric preserves a corpus of panegyrics, the *Panegyrici Latini*, written by authors who came out of the so-called Gallic school over the course of the late third century to the late fourth century. This group of speeches was likely assembled in Gaul, and was associated with the Gallic school of rhetoric. The school was elevated in importance because of the presence of an imperial capital at Trier. Pliny's speech stood at the front of the manuscript as the "undisputed model."⁵⁸⁴ The question remains whether Pliny's panegyric was used as the model for later panegyrists because of Trajan or because of Pliny's exemplary speech, or perhaps both. The remaining eleven speeches were written much later—between 289 and 389 CE and address Maximian, Constantius I, Constantine, Julian, and Theodosius. The panegyrists of the Gallic school, most of them anonymous,⁵⁸⁵ were learned men, many of whom also held office. They looked back to classical Latin models, such as Cicero, Livy,

⁵⁸³ Nixon 1993, 231–2.

⁵⁸⁴ Conte 1994, 633.

⁵⁸⁵ Nazarius, Claudius Mamertinus, and Pacatus are the named in the headings as orators. It has been suggested that Pacatus was the likely editor of the *Panegyrici Latini*, since he was the last panegyrist and because he heavily borrowed ideas and phrases from the other authors. Nixon and Rogers 1994, 6.

Vergil, and, of course, Pliny.⁵⁸⁶ The reliance on Pliny's work helped to fix Trajan into the canon of exemplars. The author of *Panegyric* 10 appears to have been familiar with Pliny's *Panegyric* since there are several verbal likenesses throughout the speech. Likewise, the panegyrists of *Panegyric* 5, 6, and 7 all demonstrate awareness of Pliny's text.⁵⁸⁷ The rhetorician, Pacatus, is the most significant author for the use of Trajan in this corpus.

One of the difficulties in detecting references to Trajan, who is rarely explicitly mentioned by the panegyrists of the *Panegyrici Latini*, is the lack of overt references to other emperors. This is explained, however, because not mentioning imperial predecessors was a matter of rhetorical style. As Ronald Syme points out, "The official orators (it appears) concentrate their efforts, whether for praise or for blame, on present transactions or on the exposition of timeless truths and consecrated platitudes. Even of Augustus there is scant mention: he occurs only four times in these orations."⁵⁸⁸ Instead, references to Trajan are masked in allusions, thematic elements, and the traditional language of panegyric and rhetorical discourse. For example, the fourth-century panegyrists emulate Pliny's use of private virtues.⁵⁸⁹ In particular, Mamertinus praises Julian's *civilitas* in a manner similar to Trajan: his treatment of the senate and his appearing in the company of citizens.⁵⁹⁰ In addition to inspiration from Pliny, the panegyrists use thematic formulae derived from rhetorical handbooks, one of which was

⁵⁸⁶ Nixon 2012, 225; Nixon and Rogers 1994, 16–19.

⁵⁸⁷ Nixon and Rogers 1994, 18.

⁵⁸⁸ Syme 1971, 90.

⁵⁸⁹ This is probably due to the fact that his speech was delivered so early on in Trajan's career and he did not yet have a long imperial resume of accomplishments. Braund 1998, 58–61; Rees 1998, 79–83.

⁵⁹⁰ Rees 1998, 93; Cameron (1993, 95) points out that Julian prided himself on the traditional virtue of *civilitas*, which was celebrated in the panegyrics for his patronage of the cities of the empire.

ascribed to Menander of Laodicea.⁵⁹¹ Therefore, there are common patterns among many of the panegyrics in the *Panegyrici Latini* that conform to Menander's βασιλικὸς λόγος: comparisons to exempla, distinguished family, portentous upbringing, heroic deeds and military achievements, philanthropy to the people, and finally, the subject replaces all other heroes and becomes the new model. Through a patterned speech, it is entirely possible for an audience to detect similarities to the other exemplary emperors without them having to be named.⁵⁹² Therefore, a Trajanic element can be sensed because of the collective memory of Trajan. The pattern set out in the handbooks is used more or less as a perfunctory guide, though some orators did not strictly adhere to it.⁵⁹³

Pacatus, breaking from the tradition of the other authors, explicitly named Trajan several times in his panegyric to Theodosius delivered in 389 CE in Rome in the senate house.⁵⁹⁴ Pacatus' panegyric has a distinctly Roman context intended to appeal to the audience of senators. Like Trajan's appearance elsewhere in the literature of the fourth century, citing his name serves a purpose to remind the audience of Trajanic Rome and subsequently elevates Theodosius by establishing continuity with the past. Theodosius, like Trajan, was from Spain, which fact was used by Pacatus in his speech.⁵⁹⁵ Their common Spanish origin does not guarantee greatness, but the panegyrist intends to sway the audience otherwise. This rhetorical statement is successful because Trajan remained favorable in the minds of the Romans. This might also be an allusion to the (fictitious)

⁵⁹¹ Nixon and Rogers 1994, 11.

⁵⁹² See comparison between Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* and Pliny's *Panegyricus* in the following chapter.

⁵⁹³ Pacatus, as is shown below, least follows Menander's precepts, though there were many other manuals and handbooks. For further discussion, see Nixon and Rogers 1994, 12.

⁵⁹⁴ Latinus Pacatus Drepanius was a fourth-century rhetorician and probably an instructor of rhetoric at Bordeaux. He was a friend of the poet Ausonius, who dedicated two works to him. His panegyric to Theodosius was selected for the manuscript due to its stylistic derivation from Pliny and for its rhetorical excellence. Nixon and Rogers 1994, 7, 443–4.

⁵⁹⁵ *Pan. Lat.* 2(12).4.23–25.

assertion that Theodosius was a descendant of the household of Trajan, thereby adding additional legitimacy to his claim to imperial power. Evidence of Trajanic lineage arises in Claudian's *Panegyric on the Fourth Consulship of Honorius*, which names Theodosius a descendent from Trajan's house.⁵⁹⁶ Claudian did not invent this ancestry, since it appears elsewhere,⁵⁹⁷ but incorporated it to add prestige to the Theodosian household. It is for this reason that of all the emperors named in his panegyric to Honorius, Claudian has the most to say about Trajan.⁵⁹⁸

In addition to Theodosius' lineage, Pacatus draws additional comparisons. He highlights that Theodosius conducted campaigns along the Danube against the Saxons, Sarmatians and Alamanni, people whom Trajan also battled.⁵⁹⁹ Likewise, Pacatus notes Theodosius' stature and beauty, traits which were compared to Trajan's in other texts.⁶⁰⁰ No doubt the audience would have understood this reference to his physical appearance. Pacatus praises keeping oaths, Theodosius' willingness to fill offices by promoting worthy men, his justice, and his opposition to tyranny.⁶⁰¹ From these selected traits, it is easy to see that Pacatus is recalling Trajan in his description of Theodosius.

As seen in contemporary historians and biographers, Pacatus uses the conventional list of good emperors along with their usual virtues in comparison to Theodosius: gentle Nerva, darling Titus, pious Antoninus, Augustus for beautifying the city, Hadrian for his instruction of law, and finally Trajan for extending the frontiers of

⁵⁹⁶ Claudian, *IV Cos. Hon.* 20–24. MacCormack 1981, 209.

⁵⁹⁷ The *Epitome de Caesaribus* (48.1) also states that Theodosius traced his ancestry to Trajan.

⁵⁹⁸ Cameron 1970, 341.

⁵⁹⁹ *Pan. Lat.* 2(12).5.2–4.

⁶⁰⁰ *Pan. Lat.* 2(12).6.2; *Epitome de Caesaribus* 48.8.

⁶⁰¹ *Pan. Lat.* 2(12).17.5, 18.1–5, 20.1–2, 20.3–6.

the empire.⁶⁰² It is surprising to find this list here in the genre of panegyric, which almost always avoids comparisons from the empire as a matter of style. Conversely, examples from the early republic are common. It is, however, altogether unsurprising that Pacatus cites Trajan for his expansion of the empire.

Trajan is used again by Pacatus in his praise of Theodosius for the virtue of friendship (*amicitia*), though he is only referenced by his famous title:

Optimus ille ditabat, non etiam diligebat; prodesse noverat, amare nescibat. Tu amicitiam, nomen ante privatum, non solum intra aulam vocasti, sed indutam purpura, auro gemmisque redimitam solio recepisti, reque non verbis adservisti principis mentem tanto in suos benigniorem esse debere quanto sit fortuna praestantior, cum fide ac faultate paribus agas et familiaribus tuis imperator tribuas quod privatus optaras. (2(12).16.2–3)

That “best” of the princes would give you a fortune, but he would not give you his esteem as well; he knew how to further your prospects; he did not know how to love. Friendship, a term once used of private citizens, you not only summoned to the palace, but clothed in purple, wreathed in gold and gems and installed on the throne. By your deeds, and not merely by words, you have affirmed that the feelings of a prince ought to be all the more benevolent toward his subjects the greater his fortune is, for you act with equal loyalty and generosity, and as Emperor you extend to your friends what you had wished for them when a private citizen. (Translation by Nixon and Rogers, 1994)

Pacatus needs merely to refer to *Optimus* to reference Trajan.⁶⁰³ As seen repeatedly throughout this chapter, by mentioning Trajan, it recalls the convention of Trajan as an exemplary ruler and insinuates that Theodosius is comparable to him. Pacatus’ mention of Trajan’s lack of friendship (*amare nescibat*) is a rare criticism of Trajan in favor of Theodosius, especially given the tradition that Trajan is celebrated

⁶⁰² *Pan. Lat.* 2(12).11.6.

⁶⁰³ Pliny (*Pan.* 2.7, 88.4) exploits this title in his panegyric, too. Pacatus is imitating clearly imitating Pliny.

elsewhere for his openness and accessibility to his troops and civilians.⁶⁰⁴ Pacatus is imitating the oratorical style of Pliny by the use of private virtues, as other panegyrists do. By using Trajan's title, *Optimus*, Pacatus reminds the audience to whom Theodosius ought to be compared: the ideal emperor. Since he surpasses Trajan in friendship, the rhetorical effect is that he is so virtuous in this respect, that he is better than the best; a compliment that Theodosius no doubt appreciated. Moreover, the senatorial audience would obviously understand the reference to *Optimus*, and it would give them hope for a restored Rome.

3B: Claudian

Claudian (370–404 CE), was a Latin poet associated with the court of Honorius, and is regarded as one of the most important poets of the Late Antique period.⁶⁰⁵ Even though he was a Greek from the Eastern Mediterranean, he established himself in Rome, even receiving a bronze statue in the Forum of Trajan by the age of thirty.⁶⁰⁶ Claudian proclaimed the return of the Golden Age:

en aurea nascitur aetas, en proles antiqua redit. (*in Ruf.* 1.51–2)

Behold! A golden age dawns; behold! The ancient generation returns.
(Translation by author).

Furthermore, as the emperor Augustus had Vergil to proclaim the Golden Age of Augustus, now the Theodosians had Claudian to proclaim the Age of Restoration.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. Pliny, *Pan.* 24.2–3. Ausonius (*Grat. act.* 17) makes a similar statement in his praise of Gratian, whom he claims surpassed Trajan in kindness (*comitas*). See Nixon and Rogers (1994) 466 n. 49.

⁶⁰⁵ Alan Cameron (1970, vi) states that Claudian's poems "are our fullest source for the thriving school of Greek professional poets of which he is a representative member."

⁶⁰⁶ See p. 71–2. See also Cameron 1970, 361.

⁶⁰⁷ Ware 2012, 111.

This notion was expressed for Roman viewers as confirmed by the inscription to his honor:

εἰν ἐνὶ βιργιλίῳ νόον | καὶ μοῦσαν Ὀμήρου | Κλαυδιανὸν Ῥώμη καὶ | βασιλῆς ἔθεσαν.(*ILS* 2949)

In one man, the mind of Virgil and the inspiration of Homer, Rome and the emperors placed Claudian. (Translation by author)

As mentioned above, Trajan is the primary model in Claudian's panegyric to the emperor Honorius. His panegyric on the fourth consulship of Honorius was delivered at Rome in 398. Claudian understandably cites Trajan's conquests, though he is not always named.⁶⁰⁸ Most significant, however, is the Spanish origin of Honorius' father, Theodosius, who claimed Trajan as a blood relative. Claudian exploits this in his poetry:

Haud indigna coli nec nuper cognita Marti
Ulpia progenies et quae diademata mundo
sparsit Hibera domus. Nec tantam vilior unda
promeruit gentis seriem: cunabula fovit
Oceanus; terrae dominos pelegique futuros
inmenso decuit rerum de principe nasci.
Hinc processit avus. (*IV cos. Hon.* 18–24)

Not unworthy of reverence nor but newly acquainted with war is the family of Trajan and that Spanish house which has showered diadems upon the world. No common stream was held worthy to water the homeland of so illustrious a race; Ocean laved their cradle, for it befitted the future lords of earth and sea to have their origin in the great father of all things. Hence came Theodosius, grandfather of Honorius.⁶⁰⁹ (Translation by Platnauer, 1956)

Such high praise for Theodosius and his household! Claudian goes on to bid the emperor to follow the example of Trajan (*ne desine tales, nate, sequi*); not only for his military conquests, but for his gentleness to the country (*mitis patriae*).⁶¹⁰ Claudian's use of

⁶⁰⁸ Claudian, *III cos. Hon.* 201; *IV cos. Hon.* 316–18; *cos. Stilicho* 193.

⁶⁰⁹ The elder Theodosius, father of emperor Theodosius I.

⁶¹⁰ Claudian, *IV cos. Hon.* 315–320.

Trajan exemplifies Alan Cameron's statement that the poet's knowledge of Roman history was "little more than an anthology of *exempla virtutis et vitii*" derived from rhetorical handbooks intended to appeal to his audience in Rome.⁶¹¹ Claudian could therefore rely on the collective memory of his Roman audience who understood his declaration:

Victura feretur | gloria Traiani (*IV Cos. Hon.* 315–6)

The fame of Trajan will never die. (Translation by Platnauer, 1956)

All Romans needed to do was look around them in the urban landscape to see the lasting fame of Trajan. Claudian knew his audience and it is clear that he is aware of the memory and reputation of Trajan, which are advantageous in Claudian's performance of praise.

3C: Sidonius Apollinaris

Trajan persists as an exemplum in panegyric well into the fifth century, which can be observed in the poetic panegyrics of Sidonius Apollinaris (c. 430–489 CE). Sidonius was a Gallo-Roman aristocrat, poet, bishop, and diplomat. He was also the son-in-law of Avitus, the Western Roman Emperor from 455–456 CE, and upon Avitus' ascension to the customary consulship of the first year as emperor, Sidonius delivered a panegyric to him in Rome.⁶¹² In the *Panegyric to Avitus* (*Carm.* 7), Sidonius selects Trajan as the ideal emperor and declares Avitus the one to restore Rome in the manner of Trajan. In the poem, Sidonius creates a scene in which the goddess Roma, the personification of the Eternal City, beseeches Jupiter upon his throne and surrounded by the gods. Jupiter is

⁶¹¹ Cameron 1970, 350, 352.

⁶¹² Gillett 2012, 276.

also described as being surrounded by the personifications of the rivers. Sidonius specifically specifies the Rhine and Danube Rivers and names the barbarian Sygambrians⁶¹³ and Scythians swarming over them (*Carm.* 7.42–4). Then comes Roma—weary, without her helmet, disheveled, dust-covered, and longing for the return of her former glory (*Carm.* 7.39–50). This paints a poetic picture of the state of the Roman Empire. Roma recounts the many great heroes of Rome from Romulus to Trajan, and she requests another Trajan to restore Rome. By specifically naming the rivers that form the boundaries of the Roman Empire, this portrayal exhibits a frontier consciousness and confirms that Romans sought a new Trajan as a remedy for the military conflicts of the late Roman Empire. In the words of Roma:

post quem tranquillus vix me mihi reddere Nerva
 coepit, adoptivo factus de Caesare maior;
 Ulpus inde venit, quo formidata Sygambri
 Agrippina fuit, fortis, pius, integer, acer.
 talem capta precor. Traianum nescio si quis
 aequiperet, ni fors iterum tu, Gallia, mittas
 qui vincat. (*Carm.* 7.112–118)

After him [Domitian] the tranquil Nerva scarce began to make me myself again,—Nerva, who made himself greater by the Caesar he adopted. Then came Trajan, by whose doing Agrippina⁶¹⁴ became the terror to the Sygambrians, an emperor gallant, faithful, righteous and vigorous. In my captivity I pray for such another. I know not if anyone can match Trajan—unless perchance Gaul should once more send forth a man who should even surpass him. (Translation by Anderson, 1936)

⁶¹³ Also named Sugambri, Sycambri, Sicambri, or Sigambri in Latin texts. They were one of the many Gallo-Germanic peoples in conflict with the Romans along the Rhine River and first mentioned by Julius Caesar (*B. Gall.* 4.16.2). Martial (*Spect.* 3.9) describes them as having knotted hair. They are often named alongside the Suevi. See Pseudo-Ovid *Consolatio ad Liviam* 17, 311–2; Suet. *Caes.* 21.1.7; Tac. *Ann.* 2.26.12; and Florus *Epitome Bell. Omn. Ann. DCC* 2.30.11, 2.30.15. Sidonius is likely using the name as a poetic and archaic reference to the Salian Franks, who apparently adopted this archaism for themselves in order to deliberately identify with an ancient Roman foe. See Howarth 1909, 638. Cf. Shanzer and Mathisen 2011, 31.

⁶¹⁴ Colonia Agrippina, the provincial capital of Germania Inferior, was the military headquarters under Domitian.

Out of a long succession of available options, she stops at Trajan. In response to Roma's request, Jupiter gives to her Avitus, the new Trajan (*Carm.* 7.153-4). Sidonius twists history for the sake of his rhetoric. He again names the Sygambrians, stating Trajan conquered them, and he declares that Trajan was from Gaul in order to more closely associate him with Avitus. Trajan was not from Gaul but may have conducted business in Colonia Agrippina (modern Cologne) while serving in the military under Domitian.⁶¹⁵ Similarly, there is no evidence that Trajan had any dealings with Sygambrians, but this is probably a poetic trope to refer to barbarians in general.

Sidonius is likely deliberately aligning Trajan and Avitus to appeal to the senatorial aristocracy in Rome. Andrew Gillett goes so far as to say that Sidonius' panegyric constitutes overt political propaganda on behalf of the honoree.⁶¹⁶ Avitus had a lengthy career in Gaul as praetorian prefect and *magister militum*. Through his service, Avitus established strong ties with the Visigoths, whom he persuaded to ally with Rome to fight the invading Huns in 451 CE. Avitus was recalled to serve again as the *magister militum* under emperor Petronius Maximus. The Visigothic king Theodoric II backed Avitus along with the Gallic forces and proclaimed him emperor in Toulouse in 455 CE after the Vandalic sack of Rome and the death of the emperor. Avitus needed the support of the aristocracy and the eastern emperor Marcian in order to secure his power. In the wake of the sack of the city and the major military incursions into the Roman Empire, a Trajan-like figure would be most welcomed by the Romans. In addition, Avitus, like Trajan, had no familial claims to the imperial throne and was named emperor for his

⁶¹⁵ During the reforms following the death of Constantine, the administration of the Spanish provinces was put under Constantine II and the praetorian prefecture of Gaul. It is possible that Sidonius is using the name Gaul loosely in order also to refer to Spain.

⁶¹⁶ Gillett 2012, 283.

military accomplishments.⁶¹⁷ It was a shrewd choice for Sidonius to liken Avitus to Trajan in the context of a Roman audience. Unfortunately for Sidonius and for the Romans, Avitus was certainly no Trajan, and his imperial career ended abruptly, being deposed by the generals Ricimer and Majorian in the following year. The latter was proclaimed the new western emperor, and Sidonius avoided all references to Avitus in his subsequent works.⁶¹⁸

Sidonius delivered a panegyric to Avitus' successor Majorian in 458 CE in Gaul, but the occasion was not for his consulship but rather for clemency towards those in Gaul who opposed Majorian.⁶¹⁹ Sidonius declares that Majorian, the Western Roman Emperor from 457–61 CE, in a similar fashion to Avitus, came to power in the same manner as Trajan; that he was already a conqueror when he was called to power.⁶²⁰ This is similar to his predecessor, Avitus, for whom Trajan is also the primary model, as shown above. Later in his poem, Sidonius also equates Majorian's behavior towards the praetorian prefect Magnus (458 CE)⁶²¹ to Trajan's, where Trajan apparently gave a sword to his praetorian prefect saying, "Take this sword, in order that, if I rule well, you may use it for me, but if ill, against me."⁶²² Trajan is used in Sidonius' panegyrics in the same way that he uses exempla from the early republic: heroes like Fulvius, Camillus, Scaevola, or the two Scipios.⁶²³ By the fifth century, the use of Trajan among the exempla becomes rhetorically obligatory.

⁶¹⁷ Watson 1998, 193.

⁶¹⁸ Mathise 1979, 165–6.

⁶¹⁹ Gillett 2012, 276.

⁶²⁰ Sid. *Carm.* 5.317–327.

⁶²¹ Martindale 1980, 700, n. 2.

⁶²² Sid. *Carm.* 5.560–561. Cp. Pliny, *Pan.* 67; Dio Cass. 68.16.1; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 13.

⁶²³ Sid. *Carm.* 5.556–557; 76–80; 100–104. The usual canon of good emperors (Caesar, Augustus, Vespasian, Titus, and Nerva) are also named for their particular virtues in the panegyric to Majorian, though Sidonius tends to prefer exempla from the republic. See Watson 1998, 19. Cf. Pliny, *Pan.* 13.4.

Section 4: Conclusion

This survey of fourth-century history and literature, with their various references to Trajan, demonstrate Trajan's popularity in fourth-century Rome. The repeated use of his name memorialized his legacy and led to his advancement to exemplary status, which resonated with the largely Roman audience. Moreover, it reveals how a historical figure was incorporated in order to create new textual narratives: Trajan was used to illustrate the military aptitude of fourth-century emperors; his involvement in Armenia and Parthia provided a background to the story of the conflict between Rome and Persia, and accordingly showed continuity to contemporary Roman conflicts. In short, Trajan became an exemplar used to critique other emperors. His name was a signal that established continuity with the past and declared a return of Roman power and culture for Rome. Trajan served as a logical choice for writers to measure the cultural revival after the disastrous third century full of usurpers and a fractured empire. By the fourth century, the second was remembered as a period of prosperity, expansion, and thriving culture that was exalted and emulated by rulers and the men who recorded their era. Fourth-century Romans needed a new Trajan to quell the conflicts and fulfil the optimistic Age of Renewal.

The use of Trajan in literature continued beyond the fourth century. In the manuscript of Ammianus Marcellinus, two anonymous additions known as the *Excerpta Valesiana*, record two brief historical accounts: Constantine's (composed c. 390 CE) and Theodoric's (composed c. 550 CE) reigns respectively. They mimic the style and tradition of Ammianus, although the authors derive their information from other

sources.⁶²⁴ Trajan had sponsored great games in Rome, which the Romans had not forgotten. Likewise, the latter author reported that Theodoric the Great lavished the capital with such fantastic games that the Romans named him Trajan.

exhibens ludos circensium et amphitheatrum, ut etiam a Romanis Traianus vel Valentinianus, quorum tempora sectatus est, appelaretur. (Anon. Valesian. 60)

[Theodoric] gave games in the circuses and the amphitheater, so that even by the Romans he was called a Trajan or a Valentinian, whose times he took as a model. (Translation by Rolfe, 1939)

Moreover, the passage also states that Trajan's (and Valentinian's) reign served as a model for Theodoric's time, furthering the notion that, even as late as the Ostrogothic period, Trajan remained the ideal ruler for Rome. Similarly, it suggests that the Romans continued to praise rulers in the manner that Eutropius described. Theodoric was named a "Trajan," hence Trajan's name legitimized the king for a Roman constituency. The Romans of Late Antiquity desired a new Trajan and used his reign as an exemplum for the later rulers of Rome.

⁶²⁴ Rolfe 1939, 506–507.

CHAPTER IV

FROM PERSECUTION TO SALVATION: THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO TRAJAN

Trajan was a problem for Christians.⁶²⁵ As an emperor, he represented the power and authority of the Roman Empire. Trajan was involved in Christian persecution,⁶²⁶ yet Roman tradition regarded him categorically as one of the few good emperors.⁶²⁷ Therefore, when Christian authors⁶²⁸ were faced with accounting for Trajan, they had a unique challenge in fitting him into the usual schema of historical narrative, which typically portrayed emperors as hostile towards Christians. The various Christian attitudes towards Trajan give insight into the developing positions of the fourth-century church towards the Roman Empire. Trajan appealed to a readership of non-Christian elites and Roman Christians seeking to understand the significant events of the fourth century (persecution then imperial favor) through the reconciliation of Roman and Christian narratives. “History, for Christians,” as Michael Stuart Williams asserts, “was

⁶²⁵ I am focusing solely on Christians in the Roman Empire, who were also, of course, Romans, and were often inheritors of Roman tradition as well as Judeo-Christian ideals. Therefore, part of their social memory would be derived from the reconciliation of their common heritages. Moreover, despite the efforts of many writers, bishops, and apologists, there was not a unified Christianity. As we can observe in Christian texts, however, they frequently self-identified as being a distinct group apart from their Greek or Roman countrymen. Eusebius, for example, uses the term, *τὸ φῶλον*, race or tribe, to distinguish Christians as a distinct group, who had their own set of shared experiences and memories. As with any social unit, there is a need to establish solidarity, part of which comes from a common experiences and shared memory. Therefore, Christians in the fourth century interpreted their past.

⁶²⁶ See Pliny *Ep.* 97 and 98.

⁶²⁷ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, it was commonplace for fourth-century historians, such as Ammianus Marcellinus, to compare contemporary emperors with the “good” Roman emperors from the past. These emperors were successful militarily, they were popular with the people, and they got on well with the Roman senate. And, of course, they all died of natural causes. Not all emperors are named all the time, but there are a usual few that are repeatedly used. The list of good emperors: Augustus, Vespasian, Titus, Nerva, Trajan, (sometimes) Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius. See *HA Aurelian* 42.3–6.

⁶²⁸ Christian writers—apologists, exegetes, philosophers, polemicists, historians, biographers, theologians, etc.—involved a vast array of people writing to internal and external audience in many different genres, many of which developed out of both the biblical and classical traditions. See further DeVore 2013.

more than a narrative, more than a series of unconnected events. As in any good drama, these events possessed a deeper significance: they formed part of an underlying plot.”⁶²⁹

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, was the principal narrator in forming the Christian representation of Trajan as an exemplary emperor in order to tell the story of the inevitability of Christian triumph. He received Trajan from the Christian apologetic tradition, namely Tertullian, and crafted an image of the emperor that is taken up and continued by subsequent authors: Orosius, Jerome, Cassiodorus, Sulpicius Severus, and Rufinus, who all preserve Eusebius’ treatment of Trajan thereby establishing a canonical interpretation of Trajan.⁶³⁰ Through the process of transmission, the foundation is laid for later myths of Trajan’s posthumous salvation.

Christian authors used the Pliny and Trajan incident as an exemplum in order to advance their agendas of Roman tolerance, compatibility, or the triumph of Christianity within the Roman Empire. As a result, there emerged a tendency among Christian authors to adhere to the standing Roman interpretation of so-called “good” and “bad” emperors. These categories, however subjective, developed out of the writing of Roman biographers and historians, who evaluated the merits and deeds of the emperors against their perceived adherence to traditional Roman (aristocratic) morality. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this tradition continued to be a popular motif throughout the fourth century. It was easier, and perhaps prudent, for Christians to adopt and maintain the traditional Roman account and rely on these other memories rather than on the memories of persecution. Good emperors, such as Trajan or Marcus Aurelius, were

⁶²⁹ Williams 2011, 280.

⁶³⁰ It is only through either Tertullian or Eusebius that subsequent Christian authors had knowledge of Trajan’s rescript, who do not seem to have access to Pliny’s letters directly.

considered to be good by the Christians, and bad emperors, such as Nero or Domitian were tyrannical persecutors of Christians, even though, as scholars point out, the evidence does not support such an interpretation.⁶³¹ These emperors, however, both good and bad, were valuable in forming the fourth-century Christian narratives of persecution, persuasion, and triumph.

Section 1: Tertullian and the Apologetic Tradition

1A: Introduction to early Christian Apologetics

The goal of the Christian apologists was to respond to external criticisms and demonstrate to a non-Christian audience that Christians held allegiance to the Roman Empire and should not be punished for their differences.⁶³² In general, authors of apologetics seek accommodation with their readership and distance themselves from deviant Christian groups and rumored practices.⁶³³ Justin Martyr, for example, declares that true Christians do not engage in “upsetting the lamp stand,” promiscuous intercourse, and the eating of human flesh (1 *Apol.* 26.7).⁶³⁴ Furthermore, apologists appeal to philosophical sensibilities by attempting to show that Christian beliefs and practices were not the product of human institutions, but descended from God by means of the divine *Logos*, a known Platonic and Stoic philosophical concept.⁶³⁵ The actual readership of Christian apologies, as Simon Price points out, is unknowable, but even if Christians made up the primary audience, they could incorporate the apologists’ arguments into

⁶³¹ Sider 2001, 18.

⁶³² Rhee 2006, 159.

⁶³³ Wilken 1984, 21.

⁶³⁴ This is likely a reference to rumored practices that are described by Minucius Felix (*Octavius* 9.5–6), whereby Christians partake in a cannibalistic meal where a dog is tied to a lampstand. After the dog is tempted by food, the lights go out and the attendees engage in indiscriminate and incestuous lustful acts. See Wilken 1984, 18–20.

⁶³⁵ Justin Martyr, 1 *Apol.* 5; Theophilus *ad Autolyicum* 2.10; 2.22; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 1; *Stromateis* 5.6.3; Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.10, 17; Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 2.12.5; 2.13.4. See also Rhee 2006, 117.

their own discourse in order to reach outsiders.⁶³⁶ So, whether directly or through a devout readership, the apologies disseminated arguments intended to address outside misconceptions of Christians.

1B: Tertullian

Tertullian (c. 155/60–230/40 CE) was an early Christian apologist and polemicist from Carthage.⁶³⁷ Though little is known of his personal life, Jerome claimed that Tertullian was the son of a Roman centurion, and a priest.⁶³⁸ He is also traditionally thought to have been a lawyer trained in Rome,⁶³⁹ but this has been largely questioned by modern scholarship due to the lack of legal particulars in his texts.⁶⁴⁰ Regardless, Tertullian received a good education in rhetoric, philosophy, and medicine, writing in both Latin and Greek, so he must be considered a member of the social elite.⁶⁴¹ He makes use of traditional rhetorical forms of argumentation and has a fair knowledge of Roman law, typical of a Roman gentleman.⁶⁴² He was an active writer, producing a great number of Christian texts in Latin and is often regarded as one of the founders of Christian theology in the Latin West.⁶⁴³ Tertullian's *Apology*, arguably his most influential apologetic work, aimed at making a defense of Christianity against pagan

⁶³⁶ Price 1999, 105–6.

⁶³⁷ See Barnes (1971, 57–9) for examination of proposed dates of his writing career, birth, and death.

⁶³⁸ Jerome, in his *De viris illustribus* (53), gives a brief sketch of Tertullian's life, in which he reports that Tertullian was the son of a *centurio proconsularis* and was a priest of the Church of Carthage though lapsed into the doctrines of Montanism. Barnes (1971, 1–3) questions and refutes Jerome's claims that he was a priest and the son of a centurion.

⁶³⁹ Eusebius (*HE* 2.2.4) comments on Tertullian, saying that he was skilled in Roman law at Rome, which formed the basis for the supposition that he was a lawyer.

⁶⁴⁰ For investigation of Tertullian's rhetorical and legal training, see Barnes (1971, 22–9), who believes that Tertullian the apologist was a different man than Tertullian the jurist named in the *Digest* and the *Codex Justinianus*. On the other hand, Sider (1971, 1) claims that Tertullian's legal training is "indisputable."

⁶⁴¹ Sider 2001, xi; Dunn 2004, 5.

⁶⁴² Barnes, 1971, 27; Osborn 1997, 6.

⁶⁴³ This is Osborn's (1997) general thesis, which examines Tertullian's theological contributions to the western church with a particular focus on his influence on Augustine.

accusations of murder, cannibalism of infants, lustful acts (*Apol.* 2.5), sacrilege, and treason (*Apol.* 10.1). “He wanted his readers,” as Geoffrey Dunn points out, “not to get the impression that Christians were somehow a separatist sect.”⁶⁴⁴ Tertullian’s text is similar to the writings of the other apologists in that it intended to persuade an external audience, but it is the earliest surviving Christian work to incorporate Trajan’s policy as it is witnessed from Pliny’s letters. Consequently, Tertullian’s *Apology* is an important text in tracing the development of the ‘Christian version’ of Trajan.

Tertullian identifies his external audience as Roman magistrates (*Romani imperii antistites*), whom he urges not to persecute Christians by appealing to their own sense of justice (*Apol.* 1.1) and shedding light on their ignorance (*Apol.* 1.4–13).⁶⁴⁵ For the most part, he is not harsh towards his Roman audience; on the contrary, he praises the rational laws for bringing justice and stability to Rome. He applauds virtuous emperors and magistrates who administer the laws. Likewise, he asserts that virtuous and public-minded Christians are devoted to Rome and loyal to the emperor. He even asserts that Christians believe the emperor is appointed the power to rule by God (*Apol.* 33.1; 36.2). Tertullian praises his audience by declaring that the emperor’s administrators are not tyrants and therefore should accordingly not treat Christians as a tyrant would:

Hoc imperium, cuius ministri estis, civilis, non tyrannica dominatio est.
(*Apol.* 2.14)

This Empire of which you are ministers, is the rule of citizens, not of tyrants. (Translation by Glover, 1931)

Tyrants use torture as a penalty. Good governors use torture moderately and only to exact confession. According to Tertullian, true criminals are tortured for admission of

⁶⁴⁴ Dunn 2004, 41.

⁶⁴⁵ See further Osborn 1997, 84–6.

guilt, whereas Christians are tortured to make them deny (*Apol.* 2.10). Therefore, civil administrators ought not to torture Christians for being Christians alone because this kind of torture was tyrannical. He argues that there is nothing illegal about Christian worship and that non-Christians were erroneous in bringing charges against them.⁶⁴⁶ After dispelling the first set of accusations (murder, cannibalism, and sexual acts), the bulk of the work argues the injustice of the charges of treason and sacrilege.⁶⁴⁷ Against these charges, Tertullian attempts to demonstrate that Christians are neither treasonous nor sacrilegious, for they pray for the safety of the rulers and magistrates of Rome and for the bravery of Rome's armies (*Apol.* 30.1; 30.4). He argues for compatibility:

Si haec ita sunt, ut hostes deprehendantur qui Romani vocabantur, cur nos, qui hostes existimamur, Romani negamur? (*Apol.* 36.1)

If it comes to this, that men who were called Romans are found to be enemies, why are we, who are thought to be enemies, denied the name of Romans? (Translation by Glover, 1931)

Because of his station as a governor, Pliny makes a suitable example for Tertullian to appeal to his intended audience, for Pliny was, in fact, a Roman magistrate who investigated the charges against Christians. For Tertullian, Pliny's investigation proves that from the viewpoint of a magistrate, the Christians were not guilty of any actual crimes and had prohibitions against theft, adultery, and dishonesty.

Atquin invenimus inquisitionem quoque in nos prohibitam. Plinius enim Secundus cum provinciam regeret, damnatis quibusdam Christianis, quibusdam gradu pulsus, ipsa tamen multitudine perturbatus, quid de cetero ageret, consuluit tunc Traianum imperatorem, adlegans praeter obstinationem non sacrificandi nihil aliud se de sacramentis eorum conperisse quam coetus antelucanos ad canendum Christo et deo, et ad confoederandam disciplinam, homicidium, adulterium, fraudem, perfidiam, et cetera scelera prohibentes. (*Apol.* 2.6)

⁶⁴⁶ Dunn 2004, 39.

⁶⁴⁷ Barnes 1971, 109–10; Price 1999, 110.

And yet we find it is forbidden even to hunt us down. For when Plinius Secundus was governing his province and had condemned some Christians and driven others from their steadfastness, and still the sheer numbers worried him as to what he ought to do thereafter, he consulted the emperor Trajan. He asserted that, apart from an obstinacy that refused to sacrifice, he had learned nothing about the Christian mysteries—nothing beyond meetings before dawn to sing to Christ and to God, and to band themselves together in discipline, forbidding murder, adultery, dishonesty, treachery and the other crimes. (Translation by Glover, 1931)

According to the witness of a governor, Christians were guilty of no crime except the name “Christian” alone (*Apol.* 2.20), which Tertullian later seeks to prove harmless (*Apol.* 3).⁶⁴⁸ Their only supposed “crime” was not sacrificing to the emperor, which Tertullian later declares not to be a crime at all (*Apol.* 10; 28–29).⁶⁴⁹ By highlighting that Pliny found the Christians to be a community of law-abiding citizens, he could appeal to a sense of justice.

Trajan’s reply is also rhetorically advantageous because the emperor, the ultimate Roman authority, confirms Pliny’s actions and declares that Christians ought not to be sought after, but only punished when encountered.

Tunc Traianus rescripsit hoc genus inquirendos quidem non esse, oblatos vero puniri oportere. (*Apol.* 2.7)

Trajan replied in a rescript that men of this kind were not to be sought out, but if they were brought before Pliny they must be punished. (Translation by Glover, 1931)

⁶⁴⁸ Pliny is apparently aware of these charges and investigates accordingly, which explains why he specified that the food was ordinary and their activities, other than singing songs to Christ, were in accord with all Roman laws and traditions.

⁶⁴⁹ It was largely concerning the imperial cult that Christians entered into conflict with their non-Christian neighbors. Pliny, for example, cites the Christian refusal to offer wine and incense to the image of Trajan as their crime (*Ep.* 10.96.5). Price (1984, 125) points out that from the Roman point of view, this action of refusal disrupted the civic and religious order of the empire (constituting *sacrilegium*). Secondly, the rejection of imperial sacrifice was also perceived to be subversive to the emperor and, by extension, the state (constituting *maiestas*).

Tertullian, however, is perplexed by the seeming paradox that Christians were not to be sought out, but then punished as criminals if they were brought before Roman judges. Tertullian engages in a brief rhetorical discourse about the apparent contradiction within Trajan's reply:

O sententiam necessitate confusam! Negat inquirendos ut innocentes et mandat puniendos ut nocentes. Parcit et saevit, dissimulat et animadvertit. Quid temetipsum censura circumvenis? Si damnas, cur non et inquiris? Si non inquiris, cur non et absolvis? (*Apol.* 2.8)

What a decision, how inevitably entangled! He says they must not be sought out, implying they are innocent; and he orders them to be punished, implying they are guilty. He spares them and rages against them, he pretends not to see and punishes. Why cheat yourself with your judgment? If you condemn them, why not hunt them down? If you do not hunt them down, why not also acquit them? (Translation by Glover, 1931)

Since Trajan recommended that Christians should not be sought out, Trajan testifies to the normative nature of Christians.

Tertullian is clearly familiar with the fine reputation of Trajan, and he uses this to benefit his argument—the flimsy nature of the crime of being called a Christian. His case relies on the memory that Trajan was a just and fair emperor (despite that he essentially set out the parameters for persecution).⁶⁵⁰ Moreover, his use of Pliny and Trajan as exempla is evidence of his rhetorical training.⁶⁵¹ Tertullian was indeed an educated man trained in Roman oratory; hence he would have known the appeal of Trajan with his audience and Trajan's association with justice. Furthermore, Tertullian portrays the actions of Trajan as opposite those of Nero and Domitian (*Apol.* 5.3–4) asserting that they were cruel and tyrannical, which is in accord with how traditional Roman authors viewed

⁶⁵⁰ Cp. Pliny, *Pan.* 65.1–2; Dio Cass. 68.10. The Forum of Trajan in Rome was also used for the dispensation of law and justice. See chapter 2.

⁶⁵¹ Sider 1971, 7.

these two disgraced emperors. In fact, according to Tertullian persecutions of Christians were carried out only by emperors who received the *damnatio memoriae*.⁶⁵² He concludes that Trajan refuted the laws enacted by bad emperors (Nero and Domitian) by prohibiting Christians to be sought out:

Quales ergo leges istae quas adversus nos soli exercent impii, iniusti, turpes, truces, vani, dementes?⁶⁵³ quas Traianus ex parte frustratus est⁶⁵⁴ vetando inquiri Christianos, (*Apol.* 5.7)

What sort of laws, then, are those which are only administered against us by the impious, the unjust, the foul, the fierce, the vain, the demented? Laws which Trajan in part refuted by forbidding Christians to be sought out. (Translation based on Glover, 1931, modified by author)

Tertullian acknowledges that Trajan, along with Hadrian, Vespasian, Antoninus Pius, and Lucius Verus, were all good emperors, and therefore had policies of tolerance towards Christians (*Apol.* 5.7).⁶⁵⁵ Tertullian names these as the best (*optimi*) emperors, and through their wisdom and virtue, they held moderate positions towards Christians. Tertullian, clearly using the memory of the good emperors, appeals to a Roman readership familiar with the traditions of the exemplary *principes*.

Marcus Aurelius, like Trajan, is also a problem for Tertullian. He shows that, on the one hand, Marcus Aurelius gives credit to his Christian soldiers in alleviating the drought in Germany through their prayers.⁶⁵⁶ Yet, on the other hand, he did not give

⁶⁵² Barnes 1981, 131.

⁶⁵³ Tertullian used several of the same adjectives to describe the persecutors (*insecutores*), Nero and Domitian, just a few lines previously (*Tert. Apol.* 5.4).

⁶⁵⁴ In legal action, *frustror* can mean “to prevent, delay, or refute.” Glover’s translation of *frustratus* using the derivative “frustrated” did not convey the whole sense of the verb with respect to Tertullian’s use in distancing Trajan’s words from Domitian’s and Nero’s policies.

⁶⁵⁵ Barnes (1968, 34–7) points out that there seems to have been no official law (either *senatus consultum* or imperial decree) concerning the actual legal status of Christians. And if there was, it is not clear that Trajan’s reply actually made a change to the legal position.

⁶⁵⁶ The account given by Tertullian is based on a forged letter from Marcus Aurelius to the senate that was appended to the second apology of Justin Martyr. See Glover 1931, 30 n. b.

Christians legal protection (*Apol.*5.6). Like Trajan, Marcus Aurelius has a confused policy towards Christians, and upon deeper inspection does not support Tertullian's thesis as well as he might have hoped. That either of these emperors ever had a favorable view towards Christianity is almost entirely unhistorical,⁶⁵⁷ but such an interpretation serves the purpose of Tertullian's apologetic work. Tertullian can rely on the tradition that Trajan and Marcus Aurelius were regarded as good and fair emperors.

The aim of Tertullian's *Apology* is quite in line with the Christian apologetic tradition. He attempted to defend Christianity directly to the rulers of Rome by showing that hatred of Christians is unjust and unfit for Romans who believe in justice. The correspondence between Pliny and Trajan, therefore, is used as an example in support of Tertullian's thesis. To a Roman audience, Trajan was a model emperor, and Tertullian has an interest in depicting Trajan in the best way by demonstrating that a good emperor is not a persecutor of Christians. In addition, Tertullian uses the Trajanic rescript to frame the conversation in the context of justice, for which Trajan was known. Despite Tertullian's attempt to portray Trajan in this way, his conclusion is not wholly satisfying. He qualifies Trajan's rescript, which he called confused (*sententiam confusam*), by stating that his policy only hampered anti-Christian action "in part" (*ex parte*). Trajan was a problem for Tertullian, despite his best efforts to employ him in his argument. Regardless, Tertullian relies on the reputation of Trajan as an exemplary ruler to whom his audience will relate. Tertullian essentially sets the tone for later Christian authors who adopt his interpretation as an example of Roman tolerance.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁷ Wilken 1984, 82.

⁶⁵⁸ Barnes 1968 33–5.

Section 2: The Fourth Century and New Christian Narratives

The fourth (and early fifth) century was a formative time for the development of the Christian movement.⁶⁵⁹ Christians suffered under the so-called Great Persecution at the hands of the Tetrarchs in 303 CE. Shortly thereafter, in 313 CE the Edict of Milan changed the legal status of Christians, and the Church received imperial favor through the benefactions of Constantine and his successors. This period marks the “double process of integration—” as Marie Verdoner says, “the ‘Romanization’ of Christianity and the ‘Christianization’ of the Roman Empire.”⁶⁶⁰ During this developmental phase, Christian authors sought to resolve their Roman and Christian traditions and were thus selecting historical events that dealt with the clash of these two world-views. It was through this period that many Christian thinkers, theologians, and bishops sought to establish orthodoxy and a part of that process is the establishment of the narrative history of the Church. Which stories and memories were to be passed down? How were they to be interpreted?

For example, Lactantius (c. 250–325 CE), a Christian rhetorician and theologian, is notably silent on Trajan, despite his publication of *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, in which he describes the deaths of the vicious persecutors as evidence for divine justice. The work is satirical, but at its core it does maintain some level of historical accuracy of the tetrarchic period with respect to imperial policy.⁶⁶¹ Writing this work during his own life and after the great persecution, Lactantius’ main focus concerns the contemporary

⁶⁵⁹ I am using the “long” fourth century as the scope of my study, roughly from the ascension of Diocletian in 285 CE to the Visigothic sack of Rome in 410 CE, and the subsequent publication of Orosius’ and St. Augustine’s responses.

⁶⁶⁰ Verdoner 2011, 1.

⁶⁶¹ Mitchell 2015, 19.

persecutors—Galerius, Maximian, Diocletian, and Maximinus. He does, however, write a brief history of the fate of previous emperors: Nero, Domitian, Decius, Valerian, and Aurelian. He adopts the same narrative as Tertullian that the traditional bad emperors, principally Nero and Domitian, were cruel persecutors of Christians and therefore met cruel and unjust ends themselves. The good emperors, however, were not persecutors and he omits Trajan from his history of persecutors. He even goes so far as to state:

Rescissis igitur actis tyranni non modo in statum pristinum ecclesia restituta est, sed etiam multo clarius ac floridius enituit, secutisque temporibus, quibus multi ac boni principes Romani imperii clavum regimenque tenuerunt, nullos inimicorum impetus passa manus suas in orientem occidentemque porrexit. (*De Mort.* 3.4)

Therefore, with the deeds of the tyrant [Domitian] rescinded, the church was not only restored to its former state, but also it shone out much more brightly and floridly; and in the following times, by which many good princes held the helm and direction of the Roman Empire, the church suffering no attacks from her enemies, extended her hands into the east and the west. (Translation by author)

According to Lactantius, there was no persecution again until the reign of Decius (*De Mort.* 4.1). Therefore, Trajan is being counted among the *boni principes* that Lactantius mentions here. This claim, that there were no persecutions between the reigns of Domitian and Decius, is demonstrably false. It is doubtful that Lactantius was ignorant of all of this, given his education, but he has no apparent desire to contest the tradition that Trajan was a good emperor and as such would not be seen as an enemy of God. After all, Trajan stated in his letter that Christians were not to be sought out.

Central to creation of the Christian narrative is Eusebius, a contemporary of Lactantius, for his writing of the first history of the Christian movement. With Christianity receiving greater acceptance, Eusebius developed narratives that placed the

history of the Church within the context of the Roman Empire. In other words, he sought to reconcile the history of the Church with the events of his own age and culture seeking to show the ultimate triumph of the Church.⁶⁶² Averil Cameron rightly points out that the past was adapted to fit the needs of the present.⁶⁶³ This is arguably the purpose of social memory in that the survival of certain memories helps to understand as much about the present as it does about the past. Additionally, Timothy Barnes suggests that Eusebius' worldview reflects the prevailing optimism present among Christians during this time period, where the course of human events concluded with the rise of the Church, and consequently Eusebius wrote his narrative to show this.⁶⁶⁴ There is, too, the imperial connection: Christians had inevitably encountered both hostile and favorable imperial policy towards Christian practice, so the negotiation of imperial power was very much a part of Christian history. Therefore, previous interactions between Christians and the emperor contributed to the narrative. Trajan's correspondence with Pliny concerning the Christians in Bithynia was then relevant to the story of the Church in the fourth century. The Trajan episode is helpful in understanding past events, and it is also representative of the relationship between the Church and Roman authority.

Section 3: Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–339/40 CE) is the Christian writer who most embodies the merging of the biblical and classical traditions developing in the early fourth century.⁶⁶⁵ Eusebius was the first historian of the Christian Church (since Luke's

⁶⁶² Brown 1997, 4.

⁶⁶³ Cameron 2001, 1.

⁶⁶⁴ Barnes 1981, 164.

⁶⁶⁵ For thorough discussions of the classical historiographical tradition of Eusebius, see Morgan 2005, Adler 2008, and DeVore 2013.

Acts of the Apostles) and was influential upon other Christian writers and their interpretation of Church history.⁶⁶⁶ He is also the most important figure in figuring Trajan into a Christian context. Eusebius includes Pliny's encounter and correspondence with the emperor in both his *Chronicle* and his *Ecclesiastical History*, and he concludes that Trajan, although initially involved in persecutions, diminished persecutions to a large extent.⁶⁶⁷ His version of Trajan separates him from the persecutors and puts him in the context of the "good emperors," and his interpretation is either accepted or rejected by subsequent Christian authors.

In addition to writing history, Eusebius also wrote on other topics, and his compositions have been divided into various categories: apologetic,⁶⁶⁸ exegetic, dogmatic, and letters. Eusebius' career began as a student of Pamphilus, who was a priest at Caesarea and developed the library there, which was founded by Origen.⁶⁶⁹ This library afforded Pamphilus and later Eusebius access to numerous writings that allowed him to compose his numerous works.⁶⁷⁰ Together they defended the literary career of Origen, whose work was condemned during the Great Persecution.⁶⁷¹ Between 308–310 CE Pamphilus penned five books of the *Defense of Origen*, while Eusebius completed the work and added the sixth, thereby launching his writing career.

⁶⁶⁶ Recent scholarship has reassessed Eusebius as an important and pivotal figure. See, for example, Inowlocki and Zamagni (2011) and Johnson and Schott (2013), which are both edited volumes focused on the role and the context of Eusebius' works.

⁶⁶⁷ Tertullian's *Apology* was apparently the only work of his with which Eusebius was familiar. He cites it in the *Ecclesiastical History* as the main source for his account of Pliny and Trajan. See Barnes 1971, 2.

⁶⁶⁸ Barnes (1981, 164) posits that Eusebius was not primarily an apologist, but rather a biblical scholar and historian and became an apologist out of circumstance.

⁶⁶⁹ It is his association with his mentor that Eusebius is often referred to as Eusebius Pamphili.

⁶⁷⁰ For a detailed history of the library at Caesarea, see Carriker 2003, 1–36.

⁶⁷¹ Barnes 2009, 2.

After the martyrdom of Pamphilus, Eusebius, in 313 CE elevated to bishop of the church of Caesarea, continued to write numerous works during the course of his life on various topics. His proximity and personal experience with martyrdom can be seen throughout his works, as it is a recurrent theme in them.⁶⁷² Eusebius was also present at the council of Nicaea, though his view, sympathetic to Arius, was on the losing end of the council.⁶⁷³ He personally met Constantine on at least four occasions, and thus Eusebius is an important figure in the formation of a Christian interpretation of the emperors and imperial power.⁶⁷⁴ In addition, he delivered a panegyric to the emperor Constantine, the *Oratio* or *Laus Constantini*, delivered at the celebration of Constantine's *tricennalia* in 336. Eusebius also wrote a biographical account of Constantine's life, the *Vita Constantini*. Eusebius may have begun composition while Constantine was still alive, but the work was never finished because of the death of Eusebius.⁶⁷⁵

3A: Eusebius' Chronicle

Prior to Eusebius, there was very little, if any, attempt at a comprehensive account of the early church; his work, therefore, satisfied an urgent need.⁶⁷⁶ It is in his historical works that Eusebius primarily contributes to the memory of Trajan: the *Martyrs of Palestine*, the *Chronicle*, and his most famous work, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (hereafter *HE*). "As all historians inevitably do," Josef Ton observes, "Eusebius brought to the facts his own general conception of the world and of history, editorializing and

⁶⁷² Eusebius compiled a list of martyrdoms, which he used as a reference tool for his later works (in particular, his work on the martyrs of Palestine, which was incorporated into book 8 of the *HE*). See Barnes 1981, 94.

⁶⁷³ Morgan 2005, 193–4.

⁶⁷⁴ Barnes 2009, 4.

⁶⁷⁵ Barnes 1981, 265.

⁶⁷⁶ Adler 2008, 585.

commenting upon the facts according to his own personal world-view.”⁶⁷⁷ This is also true for his interpretation of Trajan. Since much of his early work centered on persecution and martyrdom, Eusebius discusses Trajan within the framework of persecution. He first writes about Trajan in his *Chronicle*, which set out to synchronize classical and biblical history. Unfortunately, the work does not survive in the original language but survives primarily in Jerome’s translation into Latin.⁶⁷⁸

In traditional fashion, rulers were used to mark time. The text of the *Chronicle* includes important events, Olympiads, deeds of the Hellenistic kingdoms, Roman consular and imperial activities, as well as a sequence of Jewish events, Christian events, and lists of the bishops of the major apostolic churches as they happened within the framework of Greco-Roman history. In the *Chronicle*, Eusebius records the political and military achievements of the emperors to give historical context for the events of the church. As is generally the function in this text, the emperor and his deeds are used to organize time, and thus church events are listed in relationship to them. This is true for Eusebius’ description of the time of Trajan. For instance, Eusebius summarizes Trajan’s military conquests, and he also mentions the earthquake in Asia.⁶⁷⁹

Eusebius, however, ascribes persecutions to Trajan, which are listed as follows:

Traiano adversum Christianos persecutionem movente, Simon, filius Cleopae, qui in Hierosolymis episcopatum tenebat, cruci figitur. Cui succedit Iustus. Ignatius quoque Antiochenae ecclesiae episcopus Romam perductus bestiis traditur. Post quem tertius constituitur episcopus Heron. Plinius Secundus cum quendam provinciam regeret et in magistratu suo plurimos Christianorum interfecisset, multitudine eorum perterritus

⁶⁷⁷ Ton 1997, 363.

⁶⁷⁸ The chronicle also survived in an Armenian version, but scholars have established that Jerome’s edition is the more complete and reliable. For discussion of the two versions, see Grant 1980, 3–4.

⁶⁷⁹ Euseb. *Chron.* (Helm) ad ann. 101–5 p. Chr. (p. 194).

quaesivit de Traiano, quid facto opus esset, nuntians ei praeter obstinationem non sacrificandi et antelucanos coetus ad canendum cuidam Christo ut Deo nihil aput eos repperiri, praeterea ad confoederandam disciplinam vetari ab his homicida furta adulteria latrocinia et his similia. (*Chron.* (Helm) ad ann.197–8 p. Chr. (p. 194–5))

With Trajan inciting a persecution against the Christians, Simeon, the son of Cleophas, who was holding the episcopacy in Jerusalem, was crucified. Justus succeeds him. Ignatius, also, bishop of the church of Antioch, having been led to Rome is given to the beasts. After him, Hero is made the third bishop. Pliny the Younger, when he was ruling a certain province and in his magistracy had killed very many Christians, being disturbed by the number of them, he inquired from Trajan what he should do, reporting to him that, except for stubbornness of not sacrificing and meeting before daybreak to sing to a certain Christ as to a God, nothing was discovered among them. In addition, for the purpose of unifying discipline, they were prohibited from homicide, theft, adultery, robbery, and similar things. (Translation by author)

Eusebius portrays Trajan as having an active role as a persecutor, but the extent of Trajan's involvement in persecution is unknown to us. Trajan's reply is cited, and Eusebius names Tertullian as his source for this information, which is noteworthy since he knew very little of Tertullian's work, and was likewise ignorant of his life and career.⁶⁸⁰ Nonetheless, Eusebius relies on Tertullian's interpretation for the persecutions of Nero and Domitian and the rescript of Trajan.

Ad quae commotus Traianus rescripsit hoc genus quidem inquirendos non esse, oblatos vero puniri oportere. Tertullianus refert in Apologetico suo. (*Chron.* (Helm) ad ann. 108 p. Chr. (p. 195))⁶⁸¹

Disturbed by these things, Trajan replied that this group must not be sought out, but when presented, they require to be punished. Tertullian records this in his Apology. (Translation by author)

Eusebius does not interpret or expound on these events, which he does do in his history, which will be discussed later. Instead he simply lists the events as he understood them in

⁶⁸⁰ Barnes 1981, 131.

⁶⁸¹ Given the similarity to Eusebius' version in the *HE*, Jerome was probably faithful to Eusebius' original language in his translation into Latin. It is also almost the same as Tertullian's account verbatim (Tert. *Apol.* 2.7). Cp. Eusebius, *HE* 3.33.2: *πρὸς ταῦτα ἀντέγραψεν Τραϊανὸς τὸ τῶν Χριστιανῶν φῶλον μὴ ἐκζητεῖσθαι μὲν, ἐμποσὸν δὲ κολάζεσθαι.*

a concise manner, but this is not surprising given the nature of the work. The *Chronicle* was just that—an ordering of events.⁶⁸² It was a reference tool used in the writing of his history, which afforded the opportunity for a more analytical approach.

3B: Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History

Eusebius wrote the first historical narrative of its kind in writing his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Never before had the writing of history focused on a single institution, though he does write about the triumph of the church in the manner that Herodotus, for example, writes about the triumph of the Greek *polis*.⁶⁸³ The chronological framework within his history was taken from his own *Chronicle*—specifically the reigns of the emperors and the list of bishops of the apostolic churches.⁶⁸⁴ The *HE* has a great deal more information on the early history of the Christian church than does the *Chronicle*.⁶⁸⁵ Eusebius used his *Chronicle* in the composition of the *HE* but expounded the historical events. Moreover, Eusebius' history was produced through a series of editions, alterations, and revisions over the course of his career.⁶⁸⁶ This history was also more influential upon later writers than the *Chronicle*.⁶⁸⁷ He, in great detail, composed a history that reconciled Church history with Roman history (much in the same way that he set out to achieve in his *Chronicle*), but the *HE* was designed to elucidate Eusebius' theological aims, which can be seen through the recurrent themes throughout it: the fate of the Jews, heretics, synods, martyrs, apostolic churches, and the writings of the Church

⁶⁸² Barnes 1981, 126.

⁶⁸³ Morgan 2005, 193.

⁶⁸⁴ Barnes 1981, 130.

⁶⁸⁵ Grant 1980, 6.

⁶⁸⁶ For a thorough discussion of the various editions of the text, see Grant 1980, 10–21.

⁶⁸⁷ Although others continued the chronographic tradition, Eusebius is the first in what became a long tradition of writing ecclesiastical history. Rufinus of Aquileia, for example, among his numerous works translated the first nine books of Eusebius' *HE* and wrote a summary of the tenth. He also added two books himself. See Van Deun 2003, 162.

fathers. His work is organized into blocks rather than a linear narrative. These blocks represented the popular themes for Christians, or at least for Eusebius, a Christian bishop in the fourth century. As Doron Mendels says, “Taken together, the models or blocks collected and formulated by Eusebius can be defined as the emerging collective memory of the early Church.”⁶⁸⁸ One of these blocks or themes that Eusebius used to frame his work was that of persecution.⁶⁸⁹ Martyrs had a two-fold function within the narrative of the *HE*. Firstly, they were the heroes of the church who lived and died for their belief, which was the ultimate imitation of Christ. Secondly, according to Mendels, the martyrs served as the vehicle by which the inner sphere of Christian believers was able to reach the outer sphere of non-believers on a large stage.⁶⁹⁰ For Eusebius, martyrdom also served as the vehicle for the Christian victory in the Roman Empire. It is upon this stage of martyrdom that the emperor Trajan plays a part in Eusebius’ narrative. In Eusebius’ own lifetime, Eusebius perceived that Christianity had conquered Rome, as demonstrated by the actions of Constantine and illustrated in the documents supplied by Eusebius in book ten of the *HE*. Constantine, the emperor, was responsible for the liberation of the Christian Church after the persecution; therefore the benevolent emperor played a key role in the narrative of Eusebius’ history. Subsequently, the memory of the preceding emperors became relevant to contemporary events and to the fourth-century understanding of history. More importantly, it is logical that Eusebius would have a nuanced view of the Roman emperors, for he witnessed in his own lifetime different attitudes between Rome’s rulers and the Church. The emperor was the ultimate political power in the world, which was often hostile to Christians. Therefore, Trajan’s role with

⁶⁸⁸ Mendels 2004, 104–5.

⁶⁸⁹ Mendels 2004, 107.

⁶⁹⁰ Mendels 2004, 107–8.

respect to Christian persecution matures from the way Eusebius portrayed him in the *Chronicle*. Eusebius takes on a more interpretive and balanced view in the *HE*. This may or may not be conscious on Eusebius' part, but it is important in understanding why the mention of Trajan or any emperor matters.

The *HE*, like any work, must be understood within the context of its objectives: the promotion of the Christian Church as a distinct institution. As H.A. Drake points out, there was no singular and monolithic Church, but rather a variety of Christian interpretations and practices.⁶⁹¹ Eusebius, however, represents the Church as a singular entity, and heresies were not competing Christian sects but rather corruptions of true practice.⁶⁹² Arnaldo Momigliano succinctly describes the *HE* as “an account of the Christian Church based on the notion of orthodoxy and on its relations with a persecuting power.”⁶⁹³ Furthermore, Eusebius was demonstrating to his readers that the Christian faith far predated any classical religion or deity, and the Roman religions were outgrowths from the true faith.⁶⁹⁴ In doing so, “Eusebius tells us not only what happened,” Doron Mendels states, “but what really mattered in the early Church. In this respect his *HE* serves as the most important site of memory for that period, a monument erected to tell future generations what they should remember about the early Church (and what should rather be forgotten).”⁶⁹⁵ In other words, Eusebius had an agenda, and his work served as a filter through which the history of the Church could be understood through the events and writings of the past. He had to negotiate and interpret the events

⁶⁹¹ Drake 2006, 111–2.

⁶⁹² Eusebius (*HE* 2.13–14), for instance, attributes Simon Magus to demon possession and corruption rather than a differing interpretation of Christ.

⁶⁹³ Momigliano 1963, 91.

⁶⁹⁴ Barnes 1981, 126.

⁶⁹⁵ Momigliano 1963, 105. For discussion of the development of the cult of Christian martyrs, see Brown 1981.

of the past, thereby actively contributing to the formation of identity through collective memory. To Eusebius, the church is a people, a nation unto itself (*τὸ Χριστιανῶν φῶλον*),⁶⁹⁶ which thereby creates solidarity for Christians in the face of their persecution.⁶⁹⁷ Yet, the process is complex, for the history of this new race (i.e. the Church) is informed by diverse strands of Jewish, Greek, and Roman traditions, as well as events from the Christian past (martyrdom, Church synods, heresy, and ecclesiastical offices).⁶⁹⁸

For Eusebius, Trajan figures into the narrative of martyrdom which is one of the recurrent themes throughout the *HE*. The stories of the martyrs, as previously stated, served as the emerging site of collective memory.⁶⁹⁹ Intertwined within the stories of the Christian martyrs are accounts of persecution and torture at the hands of the Romans. Obviously martyrdom could not happen without it. Romans in Eusebius' text are agents of political power, and most frequently are represented by the emperor. Since, however, Eusebius was seeking to correlate church history with the Roman timeline; emperors were also used as chronological markers.⁷⁰⁰ For instance, when Eusebius first introduces Trajan, he does so by listing him with the bishops of the major churches: Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome (*HE* 3.21–22), which is largely how Eusebius tracks the sequence of events in the *HE*. After giving accounts of the episcopates for the major churches, Eusebius narrates the events that occurred under the emperor, which often entailed the persecution and the martyrdom of Christians.

⁶⁹⁶ Euseb. *HE* 3.33.2.

⁶⁹⁷ Barnes 1981, 128.

⁶⁹⁸ Mendels 2004, 104.

⁶⁹⁹ Mendels 2004, 107–8.

⁷⁰⁰ Verdoner 2011, 161.

Eusebius adopts the interpretation that the traditional good emperors had favorable policies towards Christians, while the bad ones did not, even though the evidence presented by Eusebius does not always support his own interpretations. Like Tertullian, Eusebius relates that Nero and Domitian, both of whom were remembered as tyrants by the Romans, persecuted Christians.⁷⁰¹ Moreover, Eusebius informs us that Domitian not only persecuted Roman senators and Christians (*HE* 3.17.1), but also sought out the grandsons of Judas for claiming to be descendants of David (*HE* 3.19.1). Domitian, however, upon questioning them about Christ and his kingdom, did not condemn them but dismissed them, regarding them as simple (*HE* 3.20.5). Interestingly, even though Eusebius describes Domitian as being as cruel as Nero (*μέρος ὧν τῆς Νέρωνος ὀμότητος*), he quickly states that he has more sense than to actually follow through with his persecutions (*ἀλλ', οἶμαι, ἅτε ἔχων τι συνέσεως*) and allows those banished to return (*HE* 3.20.7). Eusebius again quotes the argument made by Tertullian (*Apol.* 5.4). Therefore, even though there is some evidence stating that Domitian persecuted Christians, Eusebius concludes that Domitian ended his persecution of the church (*HE* 3.20.5). He is nonetheless remembered for his cruelty.⁷⁰² This demonstrates the trend that the so-called “bad” emperors were almost always treated as such in Christian memory, regardless of actual deeds.

Trajan, however, was not considered one of these bad emperors—quite the opposite, in fact. There were persecutions and martyrdoms of Christians during Trajan’s rule, and Eusebius had to reconcile this with his understanding of Trajan. As represented

⁷⁰¹ Eusebius (*HE* 3.20.7) cites Tertullian as one of his sources, and he follows a similar interpretation of these Roman emperors.

⁷⁰² Eusebius (*HE* 3.18.4) uses the example of Flavia Domitilla, niece of Flavius Clemens, who was banished because of her witness to Christ. This, however, pales in comparison to the cruelty of Nero. Cf. Euseb. *HE* 2.25–26.

in the *HE*, Eusebius was reluctant to attribute the persecutions to him. Echoing his own *Chronicle*, Eusebius relies on three examples to piece together persecutions in the time of Trajan: Simeon son of Cleophas as mentioned by Hegesippus (*HE* 3.32); the persecution and investigation under Pliny as cited by Tertullian (*HE* 3.33); and the martyrdom of Ignatius as stated by Polycarp and Irenaeus (*HE* 3.36). Eusebius expands and engages in more detailed inquiry concerning these three persecutions, ultimately distancing Trajan as the agent of persecution. For example, in narrating the martyrdom of Simeon, the bishop of Jerusalem, he curiously omits the name of the emperor Trajan from this passage: “After Nero and Domitian tradition says that under the Emperor whose times we are now describing persecution was raised against us sporadically, in some cities, from popular risings (*HE* 3.32.1).”⁷⁰³ It is also curious that Eusebius specifically points out that these persecutions were sporadic (μερικῶς), localized, and a result of popular outcry instead of imperial directive. This single sentence removes Trajan from the direct role of the persecutor.

When Eusebius quotes Hegesippus later in the same chapter, he states that Trajan was emperor but was careful also to point out that a certain Atticus was consular (ὀπατικός), who appears to have been the official before whom Simeon was tried (*HE* 3.32.3).⁷⁰⁴ Even though Roman officials were operating under the authority of the emperor and, as his agents, represented the will of the emperor, Eusebius distances Trajan from the persecution itself. Instead, the emperor is being used in this story as purely a chronological indicator rather than the agent of persecution.

⁷⁰³ Translation by Lake, 1926.

⁷⁰⁴ This is probably Tiberius Claudius Atticus Herodes I, who was from an old Athenian aristocratic family. He was the father of the sophist of the same name and the son of the vastly wealthy Hipparchus. He likely served as *legatus* of Judea from 99 / 100 to 102 / 3 and was one of the suffect consuls for the year 104 CE. See Smallwood 1962, 133.

Eusebius then contends with the correspondence between Pliny and Trajan taken from Tertullian. He takes the uneasy conclusion of Tertullian and interprets it as Trajan stopping general persecution (*HE* 3.33). Eusebius inserts this story in order to show that exemplary emperors tend not to persecute Christians. Unlike the previous episode, Trajan himself is involved in this persecution, and is thus the most important one in studying the Eusebian version of Trajan.

Τοσοῦτός γε μὴν ἐν πλείοσι τόποις ὁ καθ' ἡμῶν ἐπετάθη τότε διωγμός, ὡς Πλίνιον Σεκοῦνδον, ἐπισημότατον ἡγεμόνων, ἐπὶ τῷ πλήθει τῶν μαρτύρων κινηθέντα, βασιλεῖ κοινώσασθαι περὶ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ἀναιρουμένων, ἅμα δ' ἐν ταῦτῳ μηνῦσαι μηδὲν ἀνόσιον μηδὲ παρὰ τοὺς νόμους πράττειν αὐτοὺς κατειληφέναι, πλὴν τό γε ἅμα τῇ ἔφ' διεγειρομένους τὸν Χριστὸν θεοῦ δίκην ὑμνεῖν, τὸ δὲ μοιχεύειν καὶ φονεύειν καὶ τὰ συγγενῇ τούτοις ἀθέμιτα πλημμελήματα καὶ αὐτοὺς ἀπαγορεύειν πάντα τε πράττειν ἀκολούθως τοῖς νόμοις: πρὸς ἃ τὸν Τραϊανὸν δόγμα τοιόνδε τεθεικέναι, τὸ Χριστιανῶν φύλον μὴ ἐκζητεῖσθαι μὲν, ἐμπεσὸν δὲ κολάζεσθαι: δι' οὗ ποσῶς μὲν τοῦ διωγμοῦ σβεσθῆναι τὴν ἀπειλὴν σφοδρότατα ἐγκειμένην, οὐ χεῖρόν γε μὴν τοῖς κακουργεῖν περὶ ἡμᾶς ἐθέλουσιν λείπεσθαι προφάσεις, ἔσθ' ὅπη μὲν τῶν δήμων, ἔσθ' ὅπη δὲ καὶ τῶν κατὰ χώρας ἀρχόντων τὰς καθ' ἡμῶν συσκευαζομένων ἐπιβουλὰς, ὡς καὶ ἄνευ προφανῶν διωγμῶν μερικὸς κατ' ἐπαρχίαν ἐξάπτεσθαι πλείους τε τῶν πιστῶν διαφοροῖς ἐναγωνίζεσθαι μαρτυρίοις. (*HE* 3.33.1–2)

The persecution which at that time was extended against us in many places was so great that Plinius Secundus, one of the most distinguished governors, was disturbed at the number of the martyrs, and reported to the Emperor the number of those being put to death for the faith, and in the same document mentioned that he understood them to do nothing wicked or illegal except that they rose at dawn to sing to Christ as though a God, and that they themselves forbade adultery, murder and similar terrible crimes, and that they did everything in obedience to the law. In answer to this Trajan issued a decree to the effect that the tribe of Christians should not be sought for but punished when it was met with. By this means the imminent threat of persecution was extinguished to some extent, but none the less, opportunities remained to those who wished to harm us. Sometimes the populace, sometimes even the local authorities contrived plots against us, so that with no open persecution partial attacks broke out in various provinces and many of the faithful endured martyrdom in various ways. (Translation by Lake, 1926)

What is striking is that Eusebius' interpretation accounts for persecutions during the time of Trajan yet leaves Trajan rather blameless for them. This account is faithful to both the pagan and Christian literature, but there is some apparent uneasiness in Eusebius' account of Trajan, which might originate from his source. He does not label him in the same way as he does Domitian—as “the successor to Nero’s campaign of hostility to God.”⁷⁰⁵ Nor does he completely absolve him of his involvement with persecution. Furthermore, Eusebius testifies to the reasonableness of Pliny in his investigation of Christian practices and to Trajan’s reaction to it. Trajan did indeed instruct Pliny not to seek out Christians, yet there are Christian martyrs during this time, as Eusebius testifies. He is able to reason around this by stating that persecutions were sporadic and at the hands of local officials (which is likely historically accurate).⁷⁰⁶

The crucial addition from his account in the *Chronicle* is the statement that persecutions diminished as a result of Trajan’s response. Tertullian arguably intimates this when he says that Trajan “frustrated” the laws of Domitian and Nero, but there is no explicit evidence that Trajan’s rescript lessened persecutions. Eusebius remembers Trajan as a reasonable and just emperor, and he absolved Trajan from being directly responsible for further persecutions. This conclusion is logical given the experiences of Eusebius’ own day. He lived through an imperially mandated and systematic persecution of Christians in which his own mentor was martyred. In contrast to the Great Persecution, Trajan’s policy appeared just and fair. Additionally Eusebius does not apply

⁷⁰⁵ Euseb. *HE* 3.17.1. It was typical, especially in fourth-century martyr tales, to describe the persecutors as tyrants, enemies of god, or as being possessed by insanity or a demonic force. See, for example, Prudentius *Peristephanon* 5.168, 12.23, 14.21.

⁷⁰⁶ MacMullen 1984, 33.

the label “tyrant” to Trajan, which was a common characterization of emperors and Roman officials who persecuted and condemned Christians.

The third persecution that Eusebius relates is that of Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, who, according to tradition, was sent to Rome where he was put to death by wild beasts.⁷⁰⁷ Trajan is completely omitted in this episode. He places the story of Ignatius chronologically after Pliny’s encounter and Trajan’s rescript. Pliny’s correspondence, however, with the emperor dates to 112 CE, and in Eusebius’ account of the martyrdom of Ignatius, he reported that Ignatius was brought before the emperor in the ninth year of his reign (dated in his *Chronicle*),⁷⁰⁸ which was well before his rescript. There is neither his name nor allusions to the emperor (nor any other Roman official). By this omission, Eusebius distances Trajan from persecution, which helps to construct the image of an emperor who diminishes persecution. This is in direct contrast to other narratives around the martyrdom of St. Ignatius, which portray him being brought before the emperor Trajan himself (as shown later in the chapter). Eusebius, who likely did not know the exact dates of the martyrdoms, establishes a narrative that portrays Trajan as initially hostile to Christianity but, upon investigation, ending persecution. This is essentially the same interpretation Eusebius makes concerning Domitian, but the two are described very differently. Eusebius’ interpretation opens the door for absolution of Trajan in association with persecution.

⁷⁰⁷ Euseb. *HE* 3.36.3–4.

⁷⁰⁸ Euseb. *Chron.* (Helm) ad ann. 108 p. Chr. (p. 194).

Eusebius was responsible for declaring Trajan's letter to be official imperial policy.⁷⁰⁹ Eusebius (*HE* 3.33.2) reported that Trajan issued a decree (*πρὸς ἅ τὸν Τραιανὸν δόγμα τοιόνδε τεθεικέναι*), which suggests a formal stance of Rome on the Church. It is significant that Eusebius refers to Trajan's reply as a "δόγμα," for this word establishes Trajan's actions as formal law.⁷¹⁰ Among the wide range of uses, this Greek word is used to describe the Latin imperial *edictum* as well as the *senatus consultum*.⁷¹¹ This is the same word that he uses to describe the actions of Nero against the Christians in the previous book (also quoting Tertullian).⁷¹² Therefore, it is likely that Eusebius is interpreting this from a later reference to laws (*leges*) in Tertullian, where he claims that the good emperors did not uphold the laws of the tyrants (*Apol.* 5.7). In the *HE*, after already having given a summary of the discourse between Pliny and Trajan, Eusebius repeats the episode directly citing Tertullian as his primary source.⁷¹³ The language used in Eusebius' quotation of Tertullian (*HE* 3.33.3) is almost identical to the previous passage of Eusebius' own narrative (*HE* 3.33.1–2), except that Eusebius does not make any reference to a decree (*δόγμα*) in his citation of Tertullian. Instead, Eusebius says that Trajan simply wrote a reply to Pliny. The change in meaning is slight, but it is significant enough to warrant discussion. In the context of Eusebius, the word conveys a sense of official decree or position, where the letter to Pliny does not establish actual law or

⁷⁰⁹ Kunkel (1973, 127–9) points out that Roman jurists in the third century interpreted any orders or recommendations from the emperor to any of his subordinates as imperial *edicta*. Therefore, when Eusebius read the account of the letter, it was considered by then to be formal law because all imperial correspondence produced by the imperial secretariat would have this status. That Trajan's letter carried the weight of law in the second century may be anachronistic. Cf. Barnes (1968, 36–7) whose study has shown that there were no formal laws specifically written against Christians in the first or second centuries.

⁷¹⁰ Eusebius uses this word 52 times in the *HE*. Elsewhere it is often used to reference Christian doctrine or teaching.

⁷¹¹ See δόγμα in Mason 1974, 39.

⁷¹² Euseb. *HE* 2.25.4.

⁷¹³ Tertullian is one of the primary sources of information concerning five important passages in his history, but, as Barnes points out, Eusebius was not familiar with this author or his writings except for his *Apology*. See Barnes, 1981, 131.

decree. Rather, in the actual letter published by Pliny, Trajan himself states that there is no way to establish a universal policy regarding the Christians.⁷¹⁴ This suggests that at the time of Pliny and Trajan's letters (112 CE), this was not a formal imperial decree, but administrative advice. As Timothy Barnes points out, "It is not clear whether Trajan, in his reply, made a change in the legal position of Christians or not."⁷¹⁵ Eusebius (or Tertullian before him) may have had knowledge of some legal precedent, but if so, he does not mention it. If he only has access to Pliny's letters or only Tertullian's *Apology*, which seems to be the case, his conclusion that Trajan set down a formal decree (*δόγμα*) is interpretive on the part of Eusebius.⁷¹⁶ Eusebius formalizes the actions of Trajan and construes routine correspondence between an imperial agent and the emperor to be official policy.

Eusebius interprets Trajan's policy as formal law because it serves the larger narrative of the imperial position towards Christians in his own day. In the *HE* Eusebius tells us that Trajan established an official imperial policy of reasonable tolerance towards Christians. He also states that Trajan put an end to broad persecutions. In other words, Eusebius uses Trajan as an exemplum of good imperial policy, and he relies on the general perception and tradition that Trajan is a just and fair emperor. In contrast to Nero and Domitian, his policy towards Christians was different. Eusebius is not apparently troubled by the seeming paradox of Trajan's reply in the way that Tertullian was. Instead, Eusebius declared that persecutions diminished during the time of Trajan. He admits that persecutions were indeed transpiring under Trajan during this time, though

⁷¹⁴ Pliny, *Ep.* 10.97.1: *Neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest.*

⁷¹⁵ Barnes, 1968, 37.

⁷¹⁶ Eusebius was working from a Greek translation of Tertullian's *Apology*, which does not survive. See Barnes, 1971, 6.

there were no great or systematic persecutions.⁷¹⁷ In addition, Pliny himself stated that he attempted to quell an increase in anonymous charges against Christians, which became more numerous as he began to try them.⁷¹⁸ There is never any indication in Eusebius' account that Trajan originated any of the persecutions as was the case of both earlier and later emperors. Eusebius attributes them, as previously stated, to local administrators or localized public outcry against the Christians rather than a systematic persecution by imperial directive.

3C: Eusebius' Life of Constantine

After Constantine, both Christians and non-Christians had to deal with the emperor and political power in a new way. Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* (hereafter *VC*) reflects the difficulty in blending the traditional imperial role with Christian practice. Eusebius depicts Constantine as the Christian version of traditional Roman imperial ideology, and he projects an image that Constantine's empire is a "replica of the kingdom of heaven, the manifestation on earth of that ideal monarchy which exists in the celestial realm."⁷¹⁹ This work, composed near the end of Constantine's life, necessarily forced Eusebius to reflect on the role of the emperor.⁷²⁰ The *VC*, while containing important biographical details of the emperor, is more aptly described as an "uneasy mixture of panegyric and narrative history."⁷²¹ The style of this work is similar to his historical works in that Eusebius interprets the Christian emperor as the inevitable conclusion of

⁷¹⁷ Euseb. *HE* 3.33.1–4.

⁷¹⁸ Pliny, *Ep.* 96.4.

⁷¹⁹ Barnes, 1981, 254.

⁷²⁰ The work was incomplete at the death of Eusebius. Some have even challenged the authorship. For a thorough discussion of the authenticity, see Cameron and Hall 1999, 4–9.

⁷²¹ Cameron and Hall 1999, 1.

human history.⁷²² Eusebius strives to establish that Constantine is the new standard for all later emperors, an honor traditionally reserved for Trajan, whom Constantine himself used as one of his exemplars.⁷²³ In addition, panegyric themes are present in Eusebius' speeches that not only resemble traditional panegyric, but also bear strong thematic overtones to Pliny's *Panegyric to Trajan*.⁷²⁴

Pliny's panegyric to Trajan served as an implied model for Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, even though a direct reading of Pliny is not necessary. Public memory held Trajan in high regard. Therefore, later emperors entered into conversation and comparison with their predecessors. Like many other panegyrists, Eusebius avoids naming Constantine's imperial predecessors, but allusions persist throughout and are woven into the story of his life.⁷²⁵ The following table shows many of the thematic parallels between Constantine and Trajan as portrayed by their respective panegyrists.

Eusebius' <i>Vita Constantini</i>	Pliny's <i>Panegyricus</i>
Constantine was a conqueror comparable to Alexander the Great (1.7–8)	Trajan was comparable to Pompey the Great (29.1–2)
Constantine compared to Moses (1.12)	Trajan compared to heroes of the republic (13.4)
Constantine was a terror to the enemies of Rome (1.46)	Trajan was a terror to the enemies of Rome (12.2)
Constantine was a pious son of a pious father, Constantius (1.9)	Trajan was a pious son of a pious Nerva (7–9, 11.3)
Constantine came to power after tyrannical emperors of the tetrarchy (1.23, 26; 3.1)	Trajan came to power after the tyrannical Domitian (18)
Maxentius was murderous to the Roman people (1.35)	Domitian was murderous to his family members (48.3–4)
Constantius and Constantine restored money to the treasury (1.14)	Trajan restored money to the treasury and did not waste money on selfish projects (36)

⁷²² Barnes 1981, 249.

⁷²³ Constantine was named *Optimus Princeps* in several inscriptions (*CIL* V.8004, 8041, 8069, 8079, 8080), alluded to on coins, and of course used Trajanic art on his triumphal arch in Rome. See chapter 2. See also Varner 2014, 65.

⁷²⁴ See page 144 ff. for Trajanic themes in the *Panegyrici Latini*.

⁷²⁵ It is typical for imperial panegyric to make no direct mention of other Roman emperors. Cameron and Hall 1999, 202.

Constantine was granted power by the will of God (1.24)	Trajan was granted power by the will of the Roman gods 10.4–5)
Constantine's entry to Rome described and the population rejoiced (1.39)	Trajan's entry into Rome described and celebrated by the people (22)
The people of the provinces rejoiced at the benefactions of Constantine (1.41)	Trajan cared for the feeding of the province of Egypt (31) and every province prospered under the bounty of Trajan (32.1)
Constantine cared and fed the poor (1.43)	Trajan cared for the urban population and cared for the children (32; 25–27)
Constantine had good relationships with the bishops and attended their synods (1.44)	Trajan had good relationship with the Roman senate and he attended sessions and respected their traditions (76)
Constantine's character was described as mild and agreeable to the people (1.45)	Trajan was described as mild and he was friendly to all people (3.4; 80.1)
Licinius confiscated property, which Constantine later restored (1.52; 2.35)	Trajan returned confiscated property to the state (50.1–2)
Constantine repaired churches and built numerous new ones (2.46)	Trajan restored the temples and buildings and added new grand constructions to Rome (51)
Constantine offered tax relief to the people (4.2–3)	Trajan offered tax relief to the people (37)
Constantine surpassed all other emperors for his worship of God and is the new model emperor (4.75)	Trajan's title of <i>Optimus</i> is discussed to show that he ought to be closely associated with Jupiter Optimus Maximus and he will forever be the model emperor (2.7; 88.4–10)

Eusebius' *VC* portrays Constantine in way that is strongly reminiscent of Trajan.

Eusebius does not have to mention Trajan in order for the parallel to be evident. For instance, the comparison to Alexander the Great is reminiscent of Trajan, and associations between Trajan and Alexander were made elsewhere in the fourth century, as shown in the previous chapter. Similarly, while not giving him a title per se, establishing Constantine as surpassing all other emperors puts Constantine in historical conversation with Trajan.⁷²⁶ Admittedly, the similarities could be attributed to the rhetorical stylistics of the genre, and some of them undoubtedly are generic *topoi*. For example, Nazarius, in his *Panegyric of Constantine*, praises the following: Constantine

⁷²⁶ Euseb. *VC* 4.75: οἶων οὐκ ἄν τις τυχόντα οἷός τ' ἂν γένοιτο ἐξαιρεῖν τινα οὔτε παρ' Ἑλλησιν οὔτε παρὰ βαρβάρους οὐδέ γε παρ' αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἀνωτάτω Ῥωμαίοις, ὡς οὐδενὸς τοιοῦτου τινὸς εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ παντὸς αἰῶνος μνημονευομένου.

was a terror to the barbarians (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 3.5), Constantine's familial piety (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 3.5–7), the virtues of Constantine's father (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 5.5–6), Constantine has rescued Rome from a tyrant (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 6.2; 27.5), Constantine rules by divine favor (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 7.3), Constantine's virtues (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 7.4–9.5), a comparison to Hercules (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 16.6), Constantine is the best emperor (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 16.4), Constantine's military conquests (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 17–33), and his benefactions to the people (*Pan. Lat.* 4 (10) 35.1–5). All of these are panegyric themes typical of most imperial panegyrics, following the pattern outlined in rhetorical handbooks.⁷²⁷ Despite this, each panegyric must inherit and compete with the panegyric tradition. As is seen in the *Panegyrici Latini*, Pliny's *Panegyric* to Trajan was the singular model.

What distinguishes Eusebius' *VC* from other contemporary panegyrics is the conscientious of using topoi specific to Pliny's praise of Trajan. In addition, Eusebius' *VC* is much longer than most other contemporary panegyrics, so he must look to other examples. Although Eusebius echoes panegyric themes similar to those found in the Latin panegyrics of the *Panegyrici Latini*, Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall determine that Eusebius likely did not know the *Panegyrici Latini*.⁷²⁸ In addition to the panegyric elements, much of Eusebius' *VC* incorporates Christian theology, history, and biblical themes, as well as events specific to Constantine's career. The text is similar to the *HE* in that it merges the classical and Christian traditions for a new kind of praise. The parallels, however, between Eusebius' praise of Constantine and Pliny's praise of Trajan are too numerous and too alike to be a coincidence, but the point cannot be taken too far.

⁷²⁷ See page 155.

⁷²⁸ Cameron and Hall 1999, 21, 32.

Section 4: The Successors to Eusebius

Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* inaugurated a new sub-genre of historical writing. Many subsequent Christian authors carried on the tradition of writing ecclesiastical history, yet none of them sought to rewrite the accounts of the early Church.⁷²⁹ Eusebius' history instead was translated, appended, and circulated around the Christian world. Rufinus of Aquileia, for instance, translated the *HE* into Latin and added additional material covering the history of the Church from Constantine to the time of Theodosius.⁷³⁰ He and others relied upon Eusebius' work and accepted his version as both instructive and authoritative. The historical writings of Jerome, Orosius, and Sulpicius Severus all relied heavily upon Eusebius, which can be seen in their respective treatments of Trajan, who appears briefly in each. All of them take Trajan and his policy towards Christians from Eusebius' *Chronicle* or the *Ecclesiastical History*.

4A: Jerome

Jerome (c. 347–420 CE), was a priest and theologian and became known as one of the doctors of the Latin Church. He is most famous for his Vulgate translation of the bible into Latin, but also authored several other works major works. Jerome is not particularly interested in discussing “good” emperors with respect to Christians because Jerome was a proponent of asceticism and monasticism, both of which sought a rejection of the world and of political power. Upon his conversion, which he himself does not

⁷²⁹ Theodoret, Sozomen, Cassiodorus, Socrates, Philostorgius, and Evagrius Scholasticus all wrote ecclesiastical histories from where Eusebius more or less ended his history.

⁷³⁰ Humphries (2008) demonstrates that Rufinus' translation of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, usually considered inferior to the Greek original, attempted to be faithful to the original while changing it in order to make it fit within the “new vision of Christian history that took account of events subsequent to the age of Constantine.”

discuss, Jerome rejected his potential political career in favor of a life devoted to becoming a “friend of God.”⁷³¹ Jerome saw the involvement of emperors in the church as problematic and a source for corruption. Despite this, through his time at Rome and Constantinople, Jerome had encountered and maintained connections with the Christian elites of the empire, who were the audience for much of Jerome’s writings.⁷³² Jerome is faithful to Eusebius’ portrayal of Trajan, and he continues the narrative of Trajan’s rescript, though he makes no attempt to absolve him for his persecutions in the manner of Eusebius.

4A1: Jerome’s Chronicle

Jerome was also one of the direct heirs to Eusebius’ scholarship, for he translated Eusebius’ *Chronicle* into Latin and added a continuation down to his own time while at Constantinople in the early 380s CE. The general aim of this work was to boost the career of Paulinus, the bishop of Antioch, who baptized Jerome, by writing him into the chronology as the only orthodox bishop at Antioch.⁷³³ Thus Jerome had a similar purpose to Eusebius in writing church history in establishing orthodoxy. In the *Chronicle*, Jerome states that persecutions were initiated by Trajan.

Traiano adversum Christianos persecutionem movente, Simon, filius Cleopae, qui in Hierosolymis episcopatum tenebat, cruci figitur. (*Chron.* (Helm) ad ann. 107 p. Chr. (p. 194))

With Trajan inciting a persecution against the Christians, Simeon, the son of Cleophas, who was holding the episcopacy in Jerusalem, was crucified. (translation by author)

⁷³¹ Rebenich 2002, 7.

⁷³² Rebenich 2002, 23–4.

⁷³³ Paulinus, a member of the ultra–Nicene faction, was embroiled in a contentious rivalry with Meletius who had been consecrated by Arians. See Rebenich 2002, 22.

This may have been specified this way in Eusebius' version of the *Chronicle*, but in the *HE*, Eusebius attributes the death of Simon to Atticius and not to Trajan, as discussed previously. This may show an evolution in Eusebius' treatment of Trajan, which Jerome reliably transmits.

With respect to the rescript of Trajan, Jerome's fidelity to Eusebius' *Chronicle* is observable. Because Eusebius quotes Tertullian in the *HE*, Eusebius likely quoted directly from his own Greek version of the *Chronicle* and not from his Greek translation of Tertullian's *Apology*. Jerome worked from Eusebius' *Chronicle* in Greek. Therefore, Jerome's translation of Eusebius' Greek text into Latin and Eusebius' original Greek text both survive for comparison:

Ad quae commotus Traianus rescripsit hoc genus quidem inquirendos non esse, oblatos vero puniri oportere. (*Chron.* (Helm) ad ann. 108 p. Chr. (p. 195))

πρὸς ταῦτα ἀντέγραψεν Τραϊανὸς τὸ τῶν Χριστιανῶν φύλον μὴ ἐκζητεῖσθαι μὲν, ἐμποσὸν δὲ κολάζεσθαι. (*HE* 3.33.2)

The only oddity seems to be Jerome's use of the participle *commotus*. There is no way to know if this was inserted by Jerome or Eusebius had a similar construction in the original Greek. If Eusebius was faithful in quoting his own work from the *Chronicle* for the *HE*, then *commotus* was added by Jerome likely conflating it with the earlier use of *perterritus* (cp. *ταραχθεὶς*), which was the word used to describe Pliny's reaction to the anonymous Christians being brought before him. The addition of *commotus* changes the sentence only slightly, but it does give Trajan slightly more humanity, since it shows that he was also disturbed by the number of Christians being tried. Translational minutiae aside,

Jerome's translation demonstrates fidelity to Eusebius' version here and throughout the work of the *Chronicle*.⁷³⁴

4A2: Jerome's On Illustrious Men

In *De Viris Illustribus*, Jerome extends the classical tradition of writing about esteemed men to the Christian world of Christian saints and martyrs. In the *praefatio*, Jerome addresses this work to a certain Dexter, likely Nummius Aemilianus Dexter, the praetorian prefect of Italy in 395 CE, an associate of the emperor Theodosius.⁷³⁵ Therefore, an elite Roman readership must be assumed. Jerome works out of the classical tradition, which he openly states by comparing his work to Cicero's catalogue of Roman orators, by writing short lives of historical exempla but for a new class of exemplars. Jerome also specifies Eusebius' *HE* as his primary source.

In chapter sixteen, he provides an account of the martyrdom of Ignatius of Antioch that is clearly based on the account of Eusebius. Jerome states that Ignatius was condemned to the beasts during the persecution of Trajan (*persecutionem commovente Traiano, damnatus ad bestia*).⁷³⁶ Jerome quotes his own translation of the *Chronicle* here. If he used the *HE*, as he says he does, presumably Jerome is familiar with Eusebius' omission of Trajan in his account of the death of Ignatius. For Eusebius, Trajan ultimately limits persecution, but Jerome makes no attempt to do the same. He does not bother to depict any emperor in a flattering way. Trajan represents the Roman Empire from which Jerome sought to withdraw and encourage others to do the same.

⁷³⁴ Rebenich 2002, 75–6.

⁷³⁵ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus praef.* 1. See also Rebenich 2002, 24.

⁷³⁶ Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 16.1. Cp. Jerome, *Chron.* (Helm) ad ann. 108 p. Chr. (p. 194).

4B: Sulpicius Severus and his Chronicle

Sulpicius Severus (c. 363–425 CE), a Christian writer from Aquitania composed two major works. He wrote the *Life of Martin of Tours* and a chronicle of church history, the *Chronica* or *Historia Sacra*, written in two books (c. 403 CE), in which he echoes the tradition concerning Trajan’s rescript from Eusebius. His chronology, however, was distinct from his predecessors in that he sought to establish a singular historical narrative rather than assembling historical information into a chronological tabular format, like the chronicles of Eusebius and Jerome. Therefore, Sulpicius’ text reads more like Eusebius’ *HE* but with particular emphasis on the events of the Old Testament. Sulpicius’ account, however, lacks the detail and historical inquiry that Eusebius’ *HE* contains. The purpose for his writing was to bring secular history into agreement with Christian scriptures in order to show a meaningful pattern of divine interventions foretelling the Christian age.⁷³⁷ Sulpicius is inimical to most of the Roman emperors, who, in his view, were responsible for Christian oppression. The persecutors, however, offered instances for Christian martyrs to witness to the Roman world.

non multo deinde intervallo tertia persecutio per Traianum fuit. qui cum tormentis et quaestionibus nihil in Christianis morte aut poena dignum repperisset, saeviri in eos ultra vetuit (*Chron. Trajan* 2.31.2)

Then with not much respite there was a third persecution through Trajan, who, when he had discovered with tortures and investigations nothing against the Christians worthy of death or punishment, prohibited further savagery against them. (Translation by author)

Sulpicius removes Pliny from the narrative entirely, which results in a compact juxtaposition of the persecutions and the subsequent ending of them. For Sulpicius, however, Trajan testified to the overall narrative goal of Sulpicius’ history—the truth of

⁷³⁷ Williams 2011, 294–6.

Christian faith, as manifested by Trajan being persuaded by the witness of Christians. Despite the truncated and ahistorical information, Sulpicius' account contributes to the image of Trajan as a reasonable and just emperor and one who brought an end to persecutions.

4C: Orosius and his History against the Pagans

The legacy of Eusebius' Trajan can also be seen in the work of Orosius (c. 375–418 CE).⁷³⁸ He was a Christian priest, theologian, and historian who traveled to study with both Augustine and Jerome.⁷³⁹ Orosius' chief work was the *Historiae Adversus Paganos*, in which he wrote a universal history from Adam down to his own day. His history interpreted the past by explaining that the misfortunes that transpired upon humanity were a result of pagan worship. For Orosius, historical events were about causation. This was a direct response to pagan charges that the world had gotten worse as a result of the rise of the Christian faith. Specifically, the Visigothic sack of Rome in 410 CE was seen as the consequence of Rome's abandonment of the traditional pagan gods. Orosius' work was intended to be a companion to Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* at the request of Augustine himself, according to whom, human suffering is found at all times.⁷⁴⁰ As David Rohrbacher explains, however, Orosius developed a more radical

⁷³⁸ As Rohrbacher (2002, 135) points out, his contemporaries refer to him as only Orosius. Starting in the mid-sixth century, historians began referring to him as Paulus Orosius, which may be an erroneous attribution of the abbreviation "P" for presbyter as Paulus. Among Orosius' sources was Jerome's translation of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, as well as Caesar, Livy, Justin (historian), Suetonius, Tacitus, and Florus.

⁷³⁹ Most of the information about Orosius' life comes from writings by Augustine between the years of 414–18. Rohrbacher 2002, 135.

⁷⁴⁰ Augustine (c. 354–430 CE), arguably the most influential Christian author for the next millennium, is almost entirely silent on Trajan, save for a brief excerpt in the *City of God*, in which he makes no attempt to redeem him or any of the emperors. Gowing (2005, 128–30) points out that Augustine is critical of all Rome's heroes, except for the mythical heroes of the early republic. Given that the theme of this work is to

interpretation and found that the coming of Christianity had instead reduced human suffering throughout the world.⁷⁴¹ He adopted a structure similar to Eusebius' in order to explain the history of the Church within the context of the history of the world's empires, ending with Rome.⁷⁴² The history was both in the classical tradition and a Christian one, attempting to explain the scheme of the succession of empires.⁷⁴³

In his seventh and final book, Orosius accepts Eusebius' interpretation of the persecutions from Nero to Maximian and details the reign-by-reign accounts of the emperors and their fates as a result of their pagan deeds. He, however, notably breaks from Eusebius with respect to Constantine, regarding whom he is rather cold and does not accord the same "epoch-making significance" that Eusebius does.⁷⁴⁴ Regarding Trajan, however, Orosius portrays him in a similar fashion as Tertullian and Eusebius. He began as an uninformed oppressor of Christians but ceased after Pliny enlightened him. The usual analogue of persecution and disaster does not hold for Trajan.

In persecendis sane Christianis errore deceptus, tertius a Nerone, cum passim repertos cogi ad sacrificandum idolis, ac detrectantes interfici praecepisset, Plinii Secundi, qui inter caeteros iudices persecutor datus fuerat, relatu admonitus, eos homines praeter confessionem Christi honestaque conventicula nihil contrarium Romanis legibus facere, fiducia sane innocentis confessionis nemini mortem gravem ac formidolosam videri, rescriptis illico lenioribus temperavit edictum. (*Adversus Paganos*. 7.12.3)

In persecuting Christians [Trajan] was truly deceived by an error, the third from Nero, when from time to time he ordered those who were discovered to be gathered up to make sacrifices to idols and those who refused to be killed, in reference to Pliny the Younger, who among the other judges had

set apart the city of God from the city of man (i.e. Rome), Augustine did not need to historically interpret any of the emperors. Augustine, however, must have been aware of the narrative of Trajan's rescript.

⁷⁴¹ Rohrbacher 2002, 138–9.

⁷⁴² Rohrbacher 2002, 186. also see Zecchini 2003, 325.

⁷⁴³ Zecchini 2003, 321.

⁷⁴⁴ Zecchini 2002, 325.

been assigned as a persecutor, he advised in reply, that those people besides their confession of Christ and reputable meetings do nothing contrary to Roman laws, truly trust of an innocent confession seems to no one a grave and terrible death, immediately he tempered his edict with gentler replies. (Translation by Deferrari, 1964)

Orosius sought to establish that Trajan's persecutions caused the multitude of earthquakes that devastated the eastern empire during that time. Despite this, Orosius is bound to the memory of Trajan as a good emperor and gives him a rather soft treatment. He is initially introduced as a persecutor, but by the end of the passage, Trajan is depicted as fair. In the manner of Eusebius, that is, he remains problematic. He is both responsible for persecuting and tempering persecution. Thus Orosius contributes to the memory of Trajan in the Eusebian tradition; he was not a tyrant like other emperors who persecuted Christians, but something different. In addition, it is interesting to note that Orosius reports that Trajan's letter was an *edictum*, thereby demonstrating the authority of Eusebius for this account.

For Orosius, the emperor was not necessarily an enemy of God. His overall thesis was that things were better as a result of the presence of the gospel, and Trajan, living in the Christian age, helped to illustrate Orosius' point. In his interpretation, the late republic was a violent and corrupt period, and Rome improved as a result of the actions of Augustus. Orosius, for example, equates Augustus' opening of the doors of the temple of Janus with the Epiphany.⁷⁴⁵ The empire represented a time of peace and prosperity for Rome, through which the gospel and the church would flourish. Calamities and disasters were brought by God as a response to specific actions. For instance, the civil wars that

⁷⁴⁵ Oros. *Adversus Paganos* 6.20.3.

happened after the death of Nero happened because Nero persecuted Christians.⁷⁴⁶ Therefore, Orosius looked back upon the principate to specific events to support his thesis, which sometimes resulted in a distorted view of history. “Orosius’ vision of history,” David Rohrbacher explains, “is more complex than the simple distinction between bad, pre-Christian times and good, Christian times.”⁷⁴⁷ His handling of Trajan demonstrates this complexity by combining the evidence of persecution in Pliny’s encounter with the tradition of Trajan as the ideal emperor. Trajan can exist in this fashion because Pliny testified to the truth, and the emperor responded by diminishing the persecutions. From Orosius’ interpretation, a caricature of Trajan emerges. He is an emperor going about his business, and when he learns about the truth of the Christians, he changes and has a “gentler reply.”

Section 5: Competing traditions: Trajan, the tyrant

Accounts of the lives and acts of the Christian martyrs served as an important source of social memory for Christians. Of course, martyrdom largely came about through a number of persecutions at the hands of Roman power. Therefore, the appearance of Trajan within Christian writings serves to describe the relationship between the church and the emperor, the personal representation of Rome. Christian authors, who were also inheritors of the classical tradition, were undoubtedly aware of the fondness that Romans had towards Trajan, and this can be observed in the way he was treated by Eusebius, who, despite Trajan’s involvement with Christian persecution, tells a favorable version of Trajan’s encounter with Christians. Not all martyrdoms,

⁷⁴⁶ Oros. *Adversus Paganos* 7.8.2. Also see Rohrbacher 2002, 186. This interpretation of events can also be seen in Eusebius’ *VC* (2.26–27): emperors who persecute are plagued with wars.

⁷⁴⁷ Rohrbacher 2002, 144.

however, depict Trajan in a favorable light, and there was a competing tradition that made no attempt to redeem elements of Roman authority (i.e. the emperor). The authors of the following accounts were completely ignorant of the tradition of Trajan's rescript as passed down from Eusebius. The dates of many of the martyrs' lives are late and are especially difficult to ascribe precise dates.⁷⁴⁸ The cult of the saints, however, developed in the fourth century and became overwhelmingly popular in the fourth century and beyond. Written accounts, derived from earlier oral stories and the monumentalized spaces of the saints and martyrs, likely emerged in the fifth and sixth centuries as largely formulaic stories that created a unified identity for Roman Christians.

5A: The martyrdom of St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius of Antioch, a contemporary of Trajan, was a bishop of Antioch, who wrote many letters to other churches and church fathers, such as Polycarp. His martyr tale, although considered by some to have been an eye-witness account, was probably a late antique composition of the fourth or fifth century. In this account of his trial and martyrdom, Ignatius is brought before the emperor Trajan himself, who was in Antioch on campaign (the memory of Trajan's conquest persisting).

Cumque in faciem Regis Traiani astitisset, Traianus dixit: Quis es tu, cacodaemon, qui nostra praecepta festinas transgredi, et aliis persuades ut male pereant. Ignatius dixit: Nemo Theophorum cacodaemonem vocat. Longe enim recedunt a servis Dei daemonia. Scio quidem, quia eis molestus sum. Propterea me male cacodaemonem vocasti. Confiteor enim me Christum Regem habere caelestem, et dissolvo eorum consilia. Traianus dixit: Et quis est Theophorus? Ignatius dixit: Qui Christum habet in pectore. (*Life of St. Ignatius 2*)⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁸ Trout 2014, 313.

⁷⁴⁹ *Acta Sanctorum* Feb. part I, p. 29.

While [Ignatius] stood in the presence of Trajan the king, Trajan said, “Who are you, evil wretch, who hastens to transgress our commands, and persuades others in order that they may miserably perish?” Ignatius said, “No one calls Theophorus an evil wretch. For by far the demons recede from the servants of God. I know indeed because I am an annoyance to them. On account of these things you wrongly call me an evil wretch. For I confess that I have Christ the King of heaven, and I destroy their plans.” Trajan said, “and who is Theophorus?” Ignatius said, “He who has Christ in his heart.” (Translation by author)

Trajan quickly condemns Ignatius to death in the arena for not worshipping the gods of Rome, for which Ignatius rejoices. Trajan is unabashedly depicted as a persecutor, who is physically present in the narrative to personally hear and sentence Ignatius.⁷⁵⁰ Despite the probably fictional account, a vitriolic Trajan condemns Ignatius showing no signs of remorse. The account makes no mention of the investigations by Pliny and the rescript of Trajan.

5B: The Martyrdom of St. Phocas

The martyrdom of St. Phocas, a contemporary of Ignatius, portrays the protagonist being brought before the emperor Trajan himself, and they have a lengthy conversation about the gods, the divinity of the emperor, and about sacrifice. After the lengthy discourse, Phocas refuses to sacrifice and he is put to death in the furnace of a bath. Upon seeing the miraculous state of Phocas’ body, which was undamaged by the flames, Trajan, in recognition of the miracle, proclaimed that there was truly only one God in heaven. But Phocas appeared to Trajan foretelling his grim fate:

Καὶ ἐπιφανεῖς αὐτῷ ὁ μακάριος Φωκάς πρὸ τοῦ πυλῶνος, ἔφη· Τραϊανὲ τύραννε, πορεύθητι εἰς τὸν ἡτοιμασμένον σοι τόπον, εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον τὴν μεγάλην, εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰωνιον. Ἐμοὶ γὰρ ἀνεῳγε ὁ παράδεισος τῆς τρυφῆς, σοὶ δὲ ἀνεῳγε ὁ ἄδης καὶ τοῖς εἰδώλοις σου. Οὐκ ἔστιν οὖν σοὶ

⁷⁵⁰ Later versions of St. Ignatius’ martyrdom do contain accounts of Trajan’s rescript, such as the Life of St. Ignatius written by Symeon Metaphrastus (ca. 10th century).

ἔνδοσις οὐδεμία, πλὴν τριῶν ἡμερῶν· πολὺ γὰρ αἷμα δίκαιον ἐξέχεας. Ὁ δὲ Τραϊανὸς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ παλάτιον αὐτοῦ ἔμφορικός, καὶ πυρετῶ συνεχόμενος, καὶ πεσὼν εἰς τὸ κλινίδιον αὐτοῦ, σκολικόβροτος γενόμενος ἐξέψυξεν. (*Martyrium S. Phocae* 19)⁷⁵¹

And appearing to him in front of the gateway, blessed Phocas said: “Trajan the tyrant, go into the place prepared for you, into the great abyss, into the eternal fire. For a paradise of delicacy is open to me, but Hades is open to you and your idols. There is not one way out for you, after three days: for much righteous blood poured out.” And Trajan went into his palace shuddering, and contracting a fever, and fell down into his bed. Eaten by worms, he died. (Translated by author)

While this story has the usual type-scenes for martyrologies (interrogation, witness, miraculous event, death of the persecutor), it is completely and utterly ahistorical. Trajan is imagined a tyrant and condemned to a wretched death with no regard to the historical narratives passed down by Eusebius or any other historical source. Even so, the presence of the emperor in these stories served as a narrative topos in showing the persecution of Christians to be a fulfillment of Christ’s prophecy found in the gospels, in which Jesus said that his followers will stand before governors and kings and they will bear witness to them (Matthew 24:9; Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12).

Section 6: Gregory the Great and the Salvation of Trajan

For the most part, the memory of Christian writers regarded Trajan as a moderate and reasonable emperor, who saw his own error in persecuting Christians and ended persecutions (temporarily) during his reign. This act led to a later mythologized Trajan, who becomes posthumously baptized by Pope Gregory the Great in Rome. The account survives in two versions: one in the Latin West and one in the Greek East. The Latin account was written by an anonymous monk from Whitby and the Greek account by

⁷⁵¹ *Acta Sanctorum*, July part III, p. 610–7. See also Conybeare, 1894, 89–102.

(pseudo?) John Damascene and the two versions agree on the basic information. The Latin version, however, is more detailed, and is discussed below.

The date of the Latin *Life of Gregory* is uncertain, but it was probably written in the early eighth century between 704 and 714 CE.⁷⁵² According to the biography, the Romans told a story about Trajan being baptized by Pope Gregory.⁷⁵³ While walking through Trajan's Forum in Rome, the pope remembered a moving tale about Trajan, which is summarized in the biography. While departing Italy on campaign, Trajan encountered a widow, who pleads to the emperor for justice because her son was killed by some men. She begged that Trajan bring the men to justice. Trajan is moved by her appeals and he halts his journey to bring justice to the widow. According to Gregory's biographer, Gregory considered this deed so charitable that it was more likely to have been done by a Christian than a pagan. The pope is moved to tears by this story and he intercedes on Trajan's behalf. The tears of the bishop baptize Trajan and release him from hell.⁷⁵⁴ Trajan receives honors greater than all the other Roman emperors prior to Constantine, and he appears to be the only emperor to have been posthumously baptized and by the tears of the pope!⁷⁵⁵

Indeed, it is impossible given the nature of the sources to determine the origin of this legend, though it appears in two accounts of great geographic expanse. Neither the Greek nor Latin versions of this story dispute the validity of this Trajanic myth. As

⁷⁵² Colgrave 1968, 47–8.

⁷⁵³ Whitby *Life of Gregory* (Colgrave) ch. 29 (p. 126–7): *Quidam quoque de nostris dicunt narratum a Romanis, sancti Gregorii lacrimis animam Traiani imperatoris refrigeratam vel baptizatam, quod est dictum mirabile et auditu.*

⁷⁵⁴ Whitby *Life of Gregory* (Colgrave) ch. 29 (p. 128–9).

⁷⁵⁵ There are other instances of posthumous salvation, which is the topic of Trumbower's 2001 study, which surveys the various traditions of posthumous salvation in the early church.

Jeffrey Trumbower suggests, “both presuppose that the story has been around for some time.”⁷⁵⁶ It is likely that these two distant accounts stem from some oral tradition regarding Trajan and Gregory, since in both cases, this myth is associated with the tradition of Gregory.

This account arguably is more about Gregory and the power of the Roman bishop than about Trajan. This story, however, is significant in the way it contributes to the commemoration of Trajan: not as a persecutor, but as a merciful and just emperor deserving of redemption. Such a memory of Trajan requires a tradition of imperial beneficence and justice, for no other emperor receives such treatment. This legendary Trajan, portrayed as a model of justice and temperance, was shaped by the accounts of Trajan in Eusebius and other fourth-century works.

As in so many other instances, Trajan appears in the literature to serve as a metonym for a larger narrative purpose. Gregory’s legend functions to de-authorize Trajan’s imperial authority and to appropriate him in order to demonstrate the power and authority of Gregory.⁷⁵⁷ The story of Gregory and Trajan is used to demonstrate the supremacy of the Roman pontiff over the Roman Empire and for the city of Rome. Trajan’s posthumous salvation is a representation of the baptism of the city and empire, and it projects the temporal authority of the papacy. As Trumbower points out: “In the background here is Matt. 16:18: ‘the gates of Hades’ will not prevail against Peter and the church.”⁷⁵⁸ The See of Peter is able to rescue Trajan from damnation. In addition, this

⁷⁵⁶ Trumbower 2001, 145.

⁷⁵⁷ The term, de-authorization derives from Jacques Derrida’s use of linguistics, and by Christos Tsagalis (2011) as a neo-analytic approach to traditional sources and Homer. I am using the term more generally to mean the re-rendering of tales to express the transference of imperial authority to the papacy.

⁷⁵⁸ Trumbower, 2001, 145.

legend also contains within it the necessity of baptism for salvation, which was a tenant of the Roman Church.⁷⁵⁹ Trajan is treated in a fashion similar to the ancient biblical kings and patriarchs, who received salvation during Christ's decent into Hades.⁷⁶⁰ By Gregory's time, there was no western emperor. The position existed solely as a memory. By baptizing Trajan's soul with the tears of the pope, the emperor, in other words the city of Rome, becomes a part of the Church.

Beyond late antiquity, Trajan was transformed by late antique writers into one of the so-called 'noble pagans', who is rescued from damnation by the tears of the pope. Trajan's legend has a whole new life in the Middle Ages appearing in literary and theological works by subsequent authors such as the *Golden Legend*, Thomas Aquinas, Jacobus, John Wycliffe, Dante, and Machiavelli, who all draw from the memory of Trajan as the ideal emperor. These later authors and works generally adhere to the paradigm established by late antique authors and perpetuate the memory of Trajan as the standard for the model ruler for both the ancient past as well as the contemporary age.

Section 7: Conclusion

In the foundational Christian writings of Eusebius, Jerome, Orosius, and Sulpicius Severus, any emperor represents the personification of Roman authority. The way the Christian church interacts with the persecuting power of Rome is represented through the various narratives of the emperor. Some emperors were obviously enemies of the Church, such as Nero and Domitian, who persecuted Christians and were thus described

⁷⁵⁹ This account provides a unique method of baptism via tears, which demonstrates more about the power vested in the pontiff than it does about methods of salvation.

⁷⁶⁰ The doctrine of Christ's descent was being formed in the fourth century by Athanasius of Alexandria and Nicene theology, and relies on the work of earlier authors like Tertullian (*De Anima* 55.2).

in the texts as cruel tyrants. Other emperors, however, such as Marcus Aurelius and Trajan proved to be more difficult to interpret. It is clear that Tertullian and Eusebius are uneasy about Trajan's response to Pliny's handling of Christians. They rely on the knowledge that Trajan was the ideal emperor bearing the title *Optimus*. For them, Trajan represents the possible goodness found in a pagan ruler. This interpretation of Trajan undoubtedly relies upon and perpetuates the tradition that Trajan was an emperor worthy of admiration. Authors like Jerome are familiar with Eusebius but have no desire to rescue Trajan. Yet, despite their differing conclusion, these latter authors are responding to the way he appears in Eusebius.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Trajan was an accomplished emperor in his own day, but he was not simply an artifact of history. His popularity in fourth-century art, space, and literature says something more about the fourth century than it does about Trajan. Fourth-century Romans were looking for a new Trajan in order to meet the challenges of that era. Romans had accepted the need for a military strongman, but the third century produced many with disastrous results. They needed a military leader who also respected the ancient traditions and acknowledged the prestige of the senatorial aristocracy, who served as bureaucrats in the imperial administration. Trajan was remembered fondly as the best, and the memories associated with him appear in specific contexts in spatial, artistic, and textual narratives of identity and renewal. His tradition resonated with Romans who desired to express the return of political and social stability, cultural revitalization, and restoration of the city.

In the city of Rome, Trajan was inescapable in the urban landscape. The monuments, inscriptions, and statues testified to his enduring memory, and they portrayed Trajan as a conqueror and magnanimous ruler. Trajan's Forum was among the largest and most beautifully adorned imperial monuments in Rome, richly decorated with marbles from across the empire and boasting a decorative scheme that communicated the military might of Rome and the supremacy of the emperor. Patronage of Trajanic space was central in renewing Rome because of its functional importance to the operation of the city. Moreover, the Forum of Trajan was used to commemorate the senatorial aristocracy, which sought the renewal of its class identity. Through the erection of

dedicatory statues and inscriptions to senators, urban prefects, and poets who praised the emperors, the ruling class established a unified identity through the communication of their collective virtues and exemplars. Placing fourth-century aristocrats alongside the statuary of the *summi viri* created a visual “story” for viewers to recognize the return of the glorious past, and the celebration of exemplars reinforced traditional Roman morality. The dedicatory inscriptions, approved by the emperors, signified an approval of the cohesive governing class from which the emperor drew to fill the ranks of the imperial administration. The relationship between the senators and the emperor was sometimes difficult, and Trajan was referenced by senators and emperors alike as the ideal ruler, since Trajan was both of consular rank and held military command, like the idealized men of the republic. Furthermore, Trajan’s treatment of senators was highlighted as one of his virtues. Trajan was one of the few imperial figures to achieve such status. Only Marcus Aurelius, Augustus, or Julius Caesar could arguably match the fame and longevity of Trajan.⁷⁶¹

Additionally, Trajan was a valuable exemplum for later emperors. Because of Rome’s continued conflicts in the east with the Persians and along the Danube frontier, emperors saw Trajan’s qualities as a remedy. Roman losses on the frontiers were a source of trauma that the emperors needed to undo for the sake of the stability of the Roman Empire, and Trajan was exemplary because of his military conquest and expansion in these parts of the world. Furthermore, Trajan served as a template for ascent to imperial power through the military, as many of the careers of later emperors

⁷⁶¹ As demonstrated in the first chapter, there were others in the canonical list of exemplary emperors. Nerva, Vespasian, Titus, Antoninus Pius were often named in texts as exempla, though they were not copied and referenced as much as those above.

originated in the army. Therefore emperors such as Constantine, Julian, Theodosius, and Arcadius intentionally incorporated elements of Trajan's legacy into their own in order to bolster their own images in art, literature, and monumental architecture. Insertion of imperial statues into Trajan's Forum alluded to the greatness of the fourth-century emperors by visual association with Trajan, who was regarded as "the best" emperor. Similarly, Trajanic elements were incorporated into new ones, such as the Arch of Constantine, and Trajanic monuments were copied in Rome and in Constantinople for the same reason—they advertised that the emperors were like Trajan.

Although specifically dealing with memory and identity, this study necessarily encounters the process of the formation of the imperial image. In other words, the perception of Trajan was shaped by later use of Trajan, and the identity of later emperors was formed by adopting Trajan as an exemplum. The Roman emperors were, undeniably, real men doing real deeds and commanding very real armies. Emperors, however, were represented through public appearances, formalized speech, inscriptions, coins, monuments, and other media.⁷⁶² Therefore, any emperor was an imagined figure in some regard even while living. Much of what any emperor left behind were the monuments and inscriptions that he wanted to remain to bear witness to his legacy, therefore memories were shaped by what remained. Furthermore, because they were public figures, the emperors were subject to public perception, and they were subsequently immortalized by Roman authors who record imperial deeds in the poetry and prose literature composed for an elite audience. Part of the construction of the

⁷⁶² See Galinsky (1996) for an extensive study of the origins of the imperial persona and culture that was formed from Augustus. In addition, see Vout (2009) on the Roman historians' representations of the Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors.

imperial image, too, was the purposeful recalling of the past through exemplary figures in order to say something about the present emperor. The fourth century was an important period for imperial image-building, for the emperors desired to reestablish the peace and prosperity of the early empire and therefore needed to distance themselves from the disastrous third century by drawing connections to Nerva, Trajan, and the Antonines.

The revival of literature in the fourth century was a part of the intention to establish a renewed age, and inherent to the idea of renewal is awareness of the distance between past and present. Trajan was one avenue of asserting a return to the former prestige of the empire, and there were undoubtedly others. The practice of using exemplars was traditional, and the repeated appearance of Trajan was a feature of the fourth-century literature looking back, aware of its position as descending from an ancient tradition that Romans were trying to maintain. The numerous references to Trajan in historical texts show that Romans were conscious about the enduring connections between past and present. Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, integrated references to Trajan in order to narrate the accounts of fourth-century emperors, Constantius II, Julian, and Valentinian, as a means of evaluating their military abilities. In addition, several epitomized histories were written in the fourth century in order to establish continuity with the long and storied past. Trajan fits into this paradigm particularly in constructing narratives of Roman conquest. Likewise, the popularity of the genre of emperors' lives reveals a desire for Roman elites to commemorate those men who publicly served the state in the tradition of the ancestors. In addition, biographical accounts often also served as entertainment. Salacious accounts were used to criticize contemporary emperors and offered a venue for satirical commentary. As shown in the

Historia Augusta or Julian's *Caesares*, Trajan was incorporated for his exemplary status, which was also used as a critique. In a similar manner, fourth-century imperial panegyric used Trajan as a model emperor. Pacatus, Claudian, and Sidonius Apollinaris invoked Trajan to announce to the audience that the emperor would restore the glory of Rome. In panegyric, as in other genres, Trajan provided a compact narrative of the ideal emperor.

Similarly, Christian historians of the fourth century were writing their histories in order to establish a unified and orthodox interpretation of the past. Christian persecution remained a source of traumatic memory for Christians in the fourth century, who had to reconcile the horrors of persecution with biblical prophecy and the optimism of Christian witness and triumph. In general, Trajan entered into the narrative as one of the virtuous emperors who ended (for a time) wide-spread persecution of Christians during the early second century. Whether this was historically accurate or not, the story was useful in the creation of fourth-century narratives in order to reconcile Roman and Christian traditions, which were thrust together in the fourth century. Eusebius was central to this Christian interpretation of Trajan, and his *Historia Ecclesiastica* was enormously influential and regarded as authoritative. His successors continued to mention Trajan as an emperor who, after investigations, found no reason to continue to persecute Christians. He was proof of how a good emperor recognized Christians as harmless and not be sought out. Even Christian accounts hostile to Trajan, as found in some of the martyr tales, incorporated Trajan into their narratives to depict him as receptive to the witness of the martyrs. Ultimately, through the combination of non-Christian and Christian traditions, Trajan was held in such regard that it led to his (mythological) baptism and redemption.

The overwhelming popularity of Trajan in spatial, artistic, and textual contexts shows that he was valuable to fourth-century Romans, who sought to renew their culture and identity. Trajan represented the height of the Roman Empire, which later generations wanted to reestablish. The idealization of Trajan, beginning in his own lifetime, perpetuated the image of Trajan as the best emperor. Trajan's title *Optimus Princeps* was a formality conferred on him for his position, but he came to embody the title through his own career; moreover, Trajan became the best because later generations looked back to him and regarded him as such. In other words, each Trajanic reference tapped into the collective memory of Trajan, which portrayed Trajan as the best prince. Furthermore, each subsequent use continued to shape perceptions of Trajan as an exemplum by continually affirming his role as an exemplary ruler. Trajan fulfilled his title as the best emperor through his continued relevance for Romans in the fourth century.

FIGURES

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Figure 1: Bust of Trajan from the Glyptothek, Munich (public domain, URL: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Traianus_Glyptothek_Munich_336.jpg).

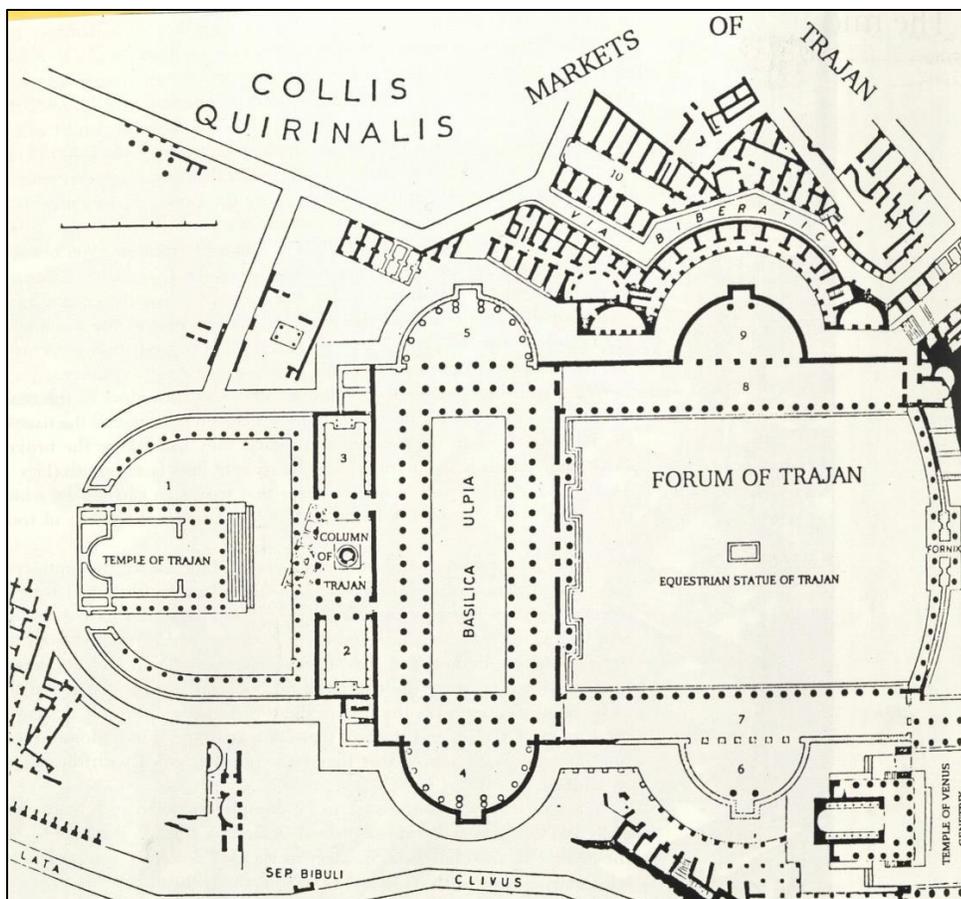


Figure 2: Plan of Forum of Trajan in Rome (Packer 2001, 8 fig. 3).

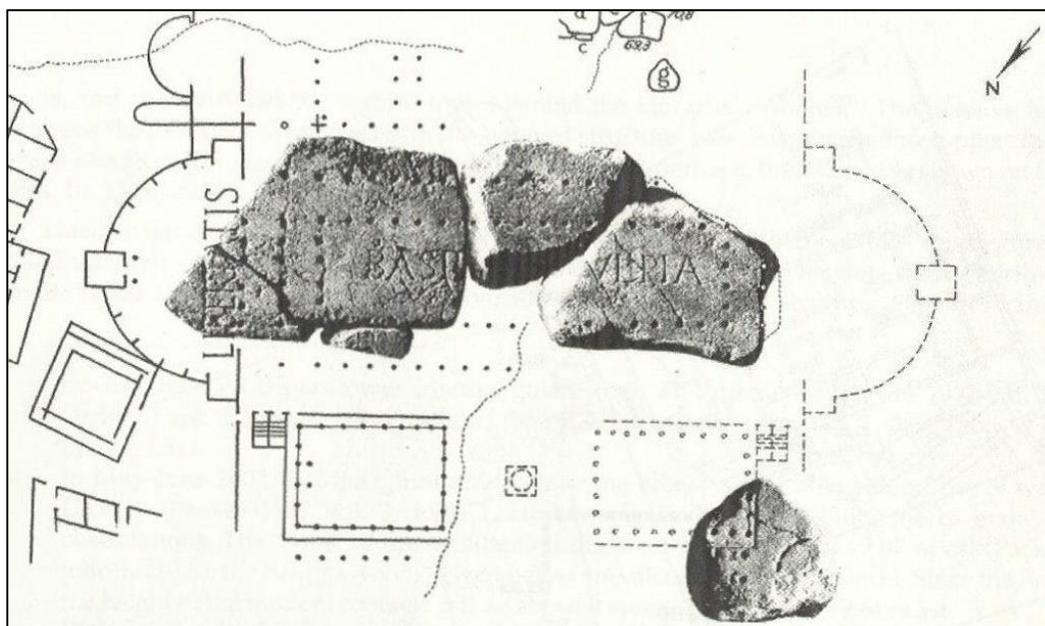


Figure 3: Fragments of the marble Forma Urbis of Basilica Ulpia / Atrium Libertatis (Packer 2003, 117 fig. 10).

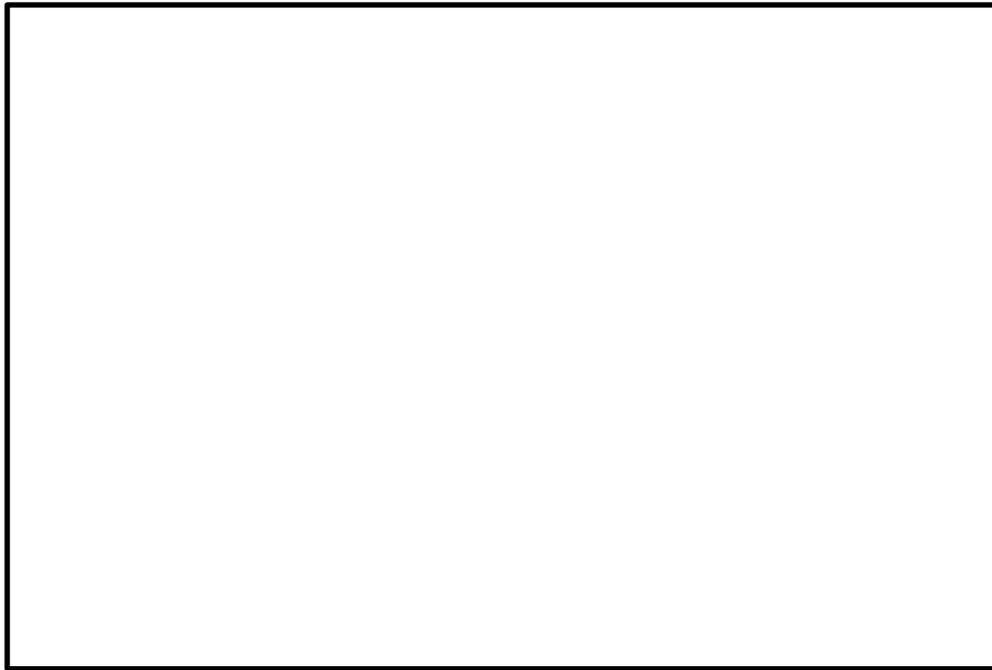


Figure 4: Plan of Forum of Trajan with results from recent excavations (Johnson 2009, 27 fig. 10).

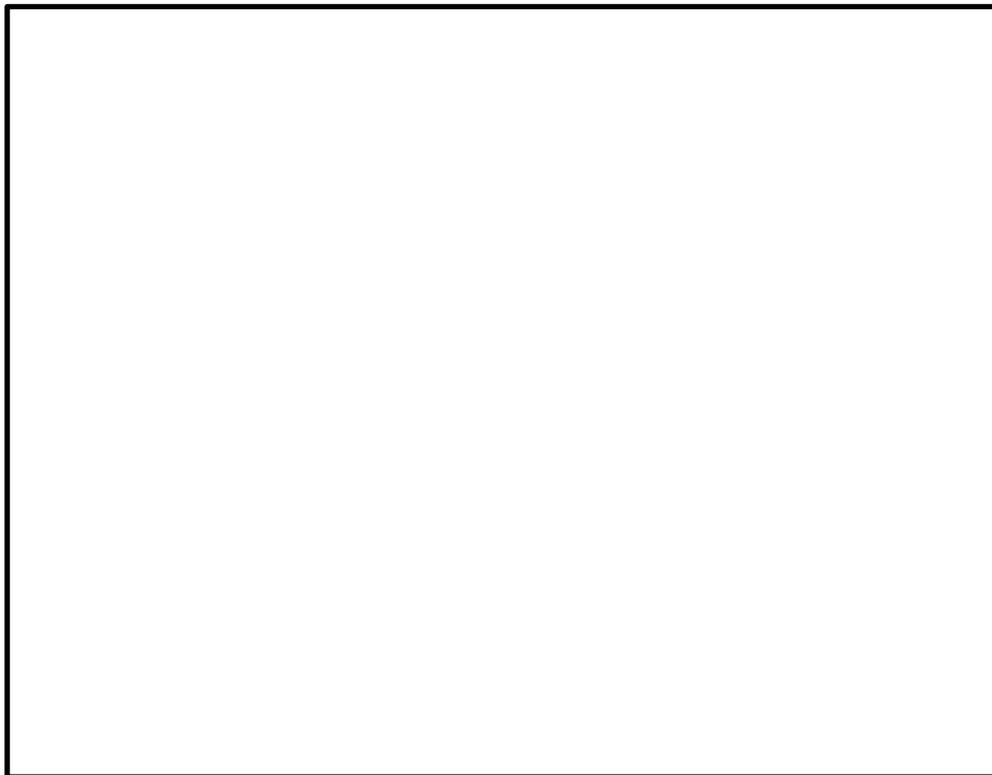


Figure 5: Plan of recent excavations and evidence for the Temple to Trajan (Cavallero 2011, 53).



Figure 6: Reconstruction of equestrian statue of Trajan in Forum of Trajan (Meneghini 2009, 120 fig. 137).



Figure 7: Statue of togate figure from East Hemicycle, Forum of Trajan (Packer 2001, 68 fig. 65).

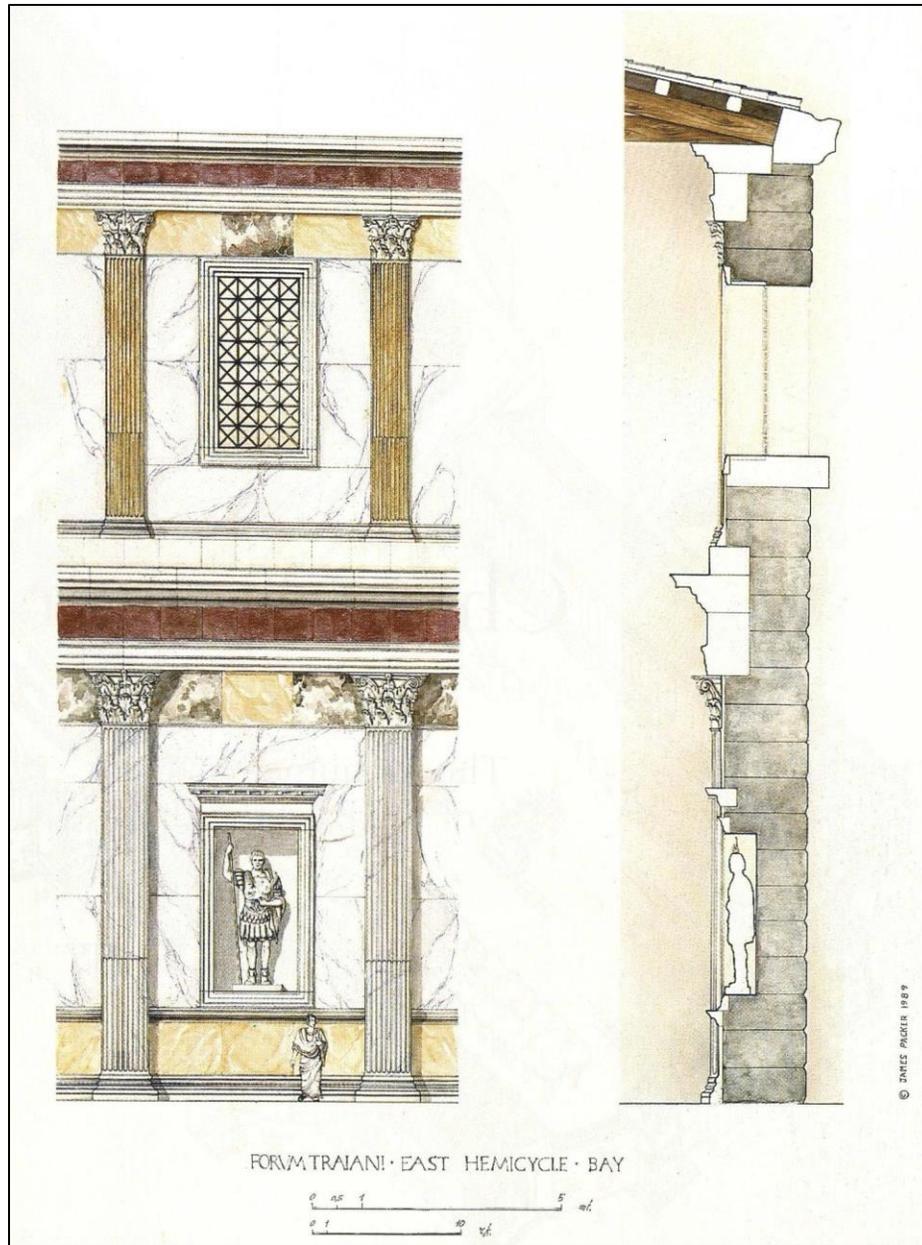


Figure 8: Reconstruction of East Hemicycle with niche for statuary (Packer 2001, 69 fig. 66).



Figure 9: Column of Trajan in Rome (photograph by author).



Figure 10: Reconstruction of West Library (Packer 2001, 82 fig. 78).



Figure 11: Via Biberatica in Trajan's Markets (photograph by author).

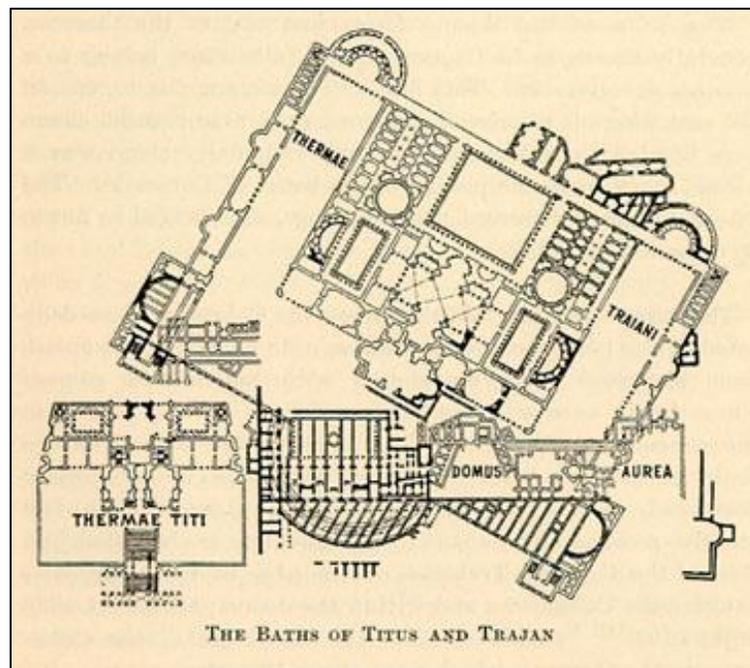


Figure 12: Plan of the Baths of Trajan, Rome (public domain, URL: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trajanbathplan.jpg>).

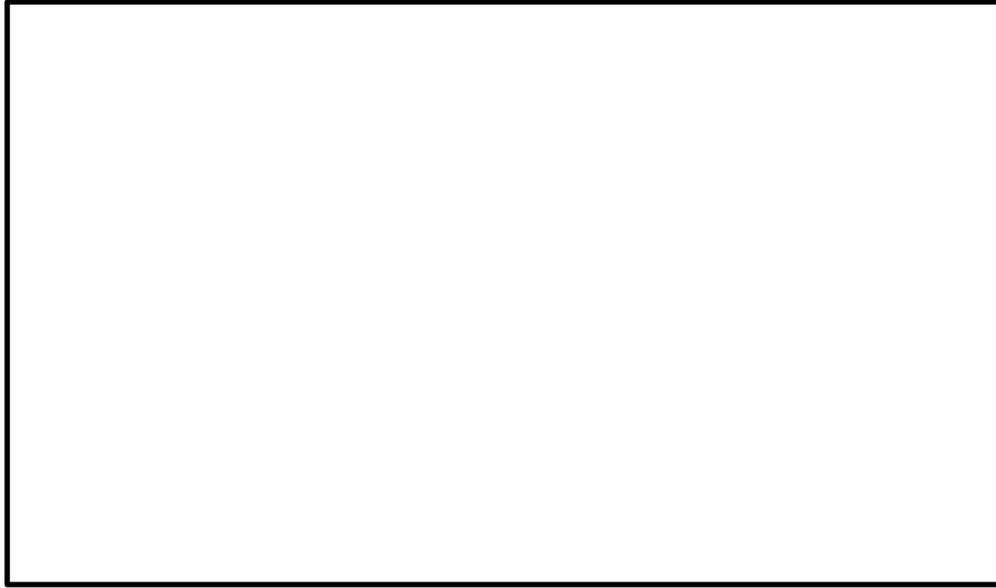


Figure 13: Recarved portrait head of Constantine from Forum of Trajan (Prusac 2011, pl. 58 n. 61a & b).



Figure 14: Portrait head of Constantine recarved from Trajan (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 26.229, open access, URL: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/252884>).



Figure 15: Trajan on horseback (*RIC* II pl. X n. 183). Constantine on horseback (Robertson 1982, pl. 43 c.c. 9).



Figure 16: Arch of Constantine at Rome (photograph by author).

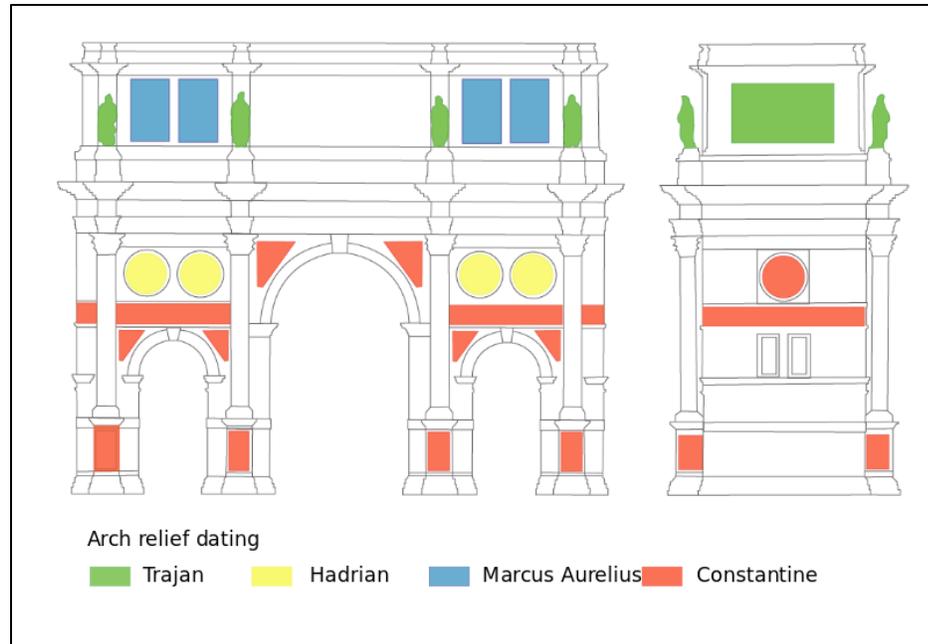


Figure 17: Schematic of Arch of Constantine (CC license, URL: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Constantine_arch_datation_en.svg).



Figure 18: Great Trajanic Frieze, Trajan on horseback, Arch of Constantine (Photograph © Vanni Archive/ Art Resource, NY).



Figure 19: Detail of attic story of Arch of Constantine (photograph by author).

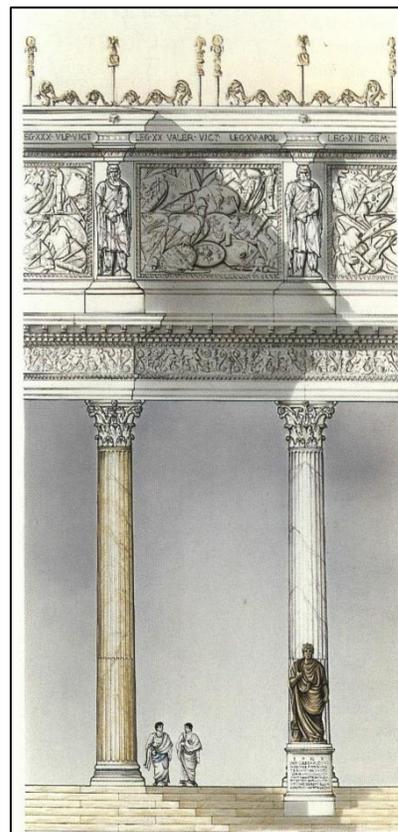


Figure 20: Reconstruction of the attic story of the Forum of Trajan (Packer 2001, 185 fig. 152).



Figure 21: Remains of column shafts from the Forum of Theodosius, Constantinople (CC license, URL: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Forum_Theodosius_Istanbul_March_2008_%283%29.JPG).

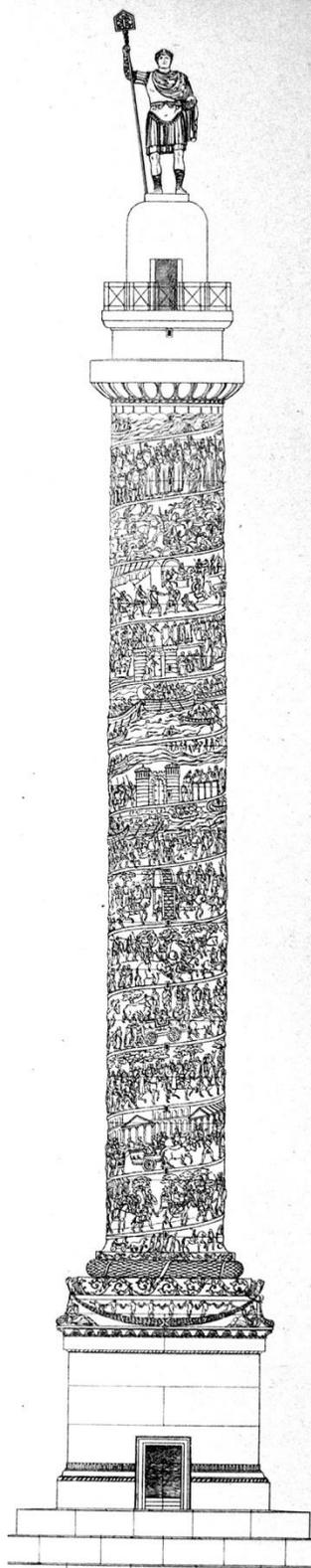


Figure 22: Drawing of Column of Arcadius, Constantinople (public domain URL: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gurlitt_Arcadius_Column.jpg).



Figure 23: Contorniate with Trajan and Circus (Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1974.500).



Figure 24: Contorniate with Trajan and charioteer (Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1971.244).



Figure 25: Contorniate with Trajan and water organ (Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 68.612).

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Roman, Imperial Period, Mid–late 4th century A.D.

Mint: Rome

Bronze

Diameter: 38.5 mm. Weight: 20.73 gm. Die Axis: 6

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Contorniate with bust of Trajan

Roman, Imperial Period, Mid–late 4th century A.D.

Mint: Rome

Bronze

Diameter: 36.5 mm. Weight: 17.41 gm. Die Axis: 6

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Contorniate with bust of Trajan

Roman, Imperial Period, about A.D. 364–383

Mint: Rome

Bronze

Diameter: 39.5 mm. Weight: 26.93 gm. Die Axis: 1

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Relief of Trajan and Roman cavalry trampling Dacians reused on Arch of Constantine. © Vanni Archive/ Art Resource, NY.

VITA

Eric M. Thienes was born June 25, 1980 to Michael and Katherine Thienes in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. As a boy, he loved to play in his sandbox and recreate ancient monuments with his Lego blocks, which he now realizes was foreshadowing for his future career in classics and archaeology. Eric received his BA in history with minors in religion and anthropology in 2002 from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA, where he was first introduced to academic study of the ancient world. His education was enhanced by two J-term study-abroad trips to London and Rome under the supervision of Professors Stewart Govig and Samuel Torvend, respectively. After graduating, Eric continued his study of Latin and began ancient Greek in night classes held at the Seattle Language Academy. He then moved to Tucson, AZ to pursue graduate study in Classics with an emphasis in Classical Archaeology at the University of Arizona. While there, he began to learn archaeological fieldwork under Professor David Soren, excavating two seasons in Chianciano Terme. After receiving his MA in 2007, he taught Art History and History at Pima Community College, which confirmed his desire to continue a career in higher education. In 2009, Eric moved to Columbia, MO to pursue a doctorate in Classical Studies at the University of Missouri. In his final year, he received a departmental fellowship to finish writing his dissertation. While teaching and studying classical languages and literature during the school year, Eric spends his summers excavating Etruscan and Roman remains in central Italy working as a supervisor at Coriglia, near Orvieto.