

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

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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 fulfillment 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.