Triumphus and the taming of objects: spoliation and the process of appropriation in late Republican Rome

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> These are questions that ask less about the material effects of ideas and ideology than about the ideological and ideational effects of the material world and of transformations of it. They are questions that ask not whether things are but what work they perform – questions, in fact, not about things themselves but about the subject-object relation in particular temporal and spatial contexts. [...] These are questions that hardly abandon the subject, even when they do not begin there. (Brown 2001: 7)

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1 Introduction

The habit of plundering and taking home (precious) objects which belonged to the defeated enemy is part of human history from its earliest beginnings, so it seems, and universal.[1] Spoliation, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as '[t]he act of spoliation, despoiling, pillaging, or plundering; seizure of goods or property by violent means; depredation, robbery' had its place in Antiquity as well. Traditionally this praxis has been exclusively studied in terms of war and booty. As an additional perspective, the emphasis of scholarly research has recently shifted from the battlefield towards the *impact* these new artefacts had on the societies that had seized them. That spolia do indeed play

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an important role in cultural interaction and communication is underlined by the remarkable symmetry between gift-giving as the *positively* charged incorporation of an object from outside the own (cultural) sphere and spoliation as the *negatively* charged variant of the same process. Either way, both gifts and spolia establish a connection between different (cultural) groups which often results in the erosion of differences between Self and Other.[2]

This essay explores how spoliation worked as a process of appropriation within the historical context of the late Roman Republic. Central to my analysis is the anthropological reality that the incorporation of the Other's objects is neither an easy nor an innocent process.[3] Through their strangeness, conceptual distance or age, objects from outside the own (cultural) sphere often create unrest and discomfort in the societies they enter. All over the world people have therefore developed 'coping practices' to deal with the unfamiliar in order to give the Other a place within their own *habitus*.[4] These practices often take the form of a (ritual) struggle.[5] It is only after this 'ritual' has been performed and its outcome proven positive that the alien object is, so to speak, 'domesticated' or 'tamed' and can begin to function in its new context.[6]

The era of the late Roman Republic is characterized by conquests of large parts of the Hellenistic East, which also established a direct Roman involvement with the 'Silk Roads' and therefore resulted in an unprecedented influx of (highly remarkable) spolia.[7] I will argue that the Roman triumphal procession should be interpreted as a ritual to enable the Romans to add them to their objectscape.[8]

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2   See the foreword by De Jong and Versluys, this volume, with the example of the Lycian Glaucus and the Greek Diomedes (*Iliad* 6.119–236). For the semantic range of the notion of spolium/spolia see also the introduction to the chapter by Pieper, this volume.

3   I owe much insight into this subject to a research project undertaken with Caroline van Eck (Cambridge) and Pieter ter Keurs (Leiden) in the framework of the *Material Agency Forum* between 2017 and 2018. See Van Eck, Versluys and Ter Keurs 2015 as well as Versluys 2020a.

4   This book provides many telling examples of both the tensions evoked as well as the coping mechanisms put in place to deal with them.

5   As explained and illustrated in Ter Keurs' contribution to this volume; see also Van Eck, Versluys and Ter Keurs 2015.

6   Sahlins 1976 describes this process as a form of 'domestication'; Miller 1995 talks about 'taming'.

7   As well as objects obtained in an economic context.

8   For the notion of objectscape see now Pitts and Versluys 2021.

2   How Does Appropriation Work? Spoliation and Impact

First, however, it is imperative to understand how processes of appropriation work in general terms and how we should understand the impact of objects that were appropriated, for instance through spoliation. I will briefly discuss these issues on the basis of the work of the anthropologist Hans Peter Hahn.[9] In his turn, Hahn draws on Daniel Miller's research on consumption, which highlighted the creative aspect of people's handling of (consumer) goods in different cultures.[10] It is important to underline that the way in which the concept of appropriation is used in the present chapter (and throughout this volume) differs from its common usage, describing robbery or stealing; here the focus is on the impact of the act of plundering on the plunderers themselves. This is not to deny the violent nature of the act or to disregard the traumatic effects the process of pillaging must have had on those who were robbed.[11] When we study Rome as an empire which constructed its own culture and identity on the basis of the culture and identity of Others – as this chapter does – we should not forget that, indeed, Rome was an empire of plunder.[12] When investigating Roman cultural formation as a process of bricolage and selection – as this chapter does – we must be aware that, as a result, things are left out, neglected and forgotten.[13] Appropriation serves well as a concept because it incorporates both the dark side of Roman imperialism as well as the transformative effect, from the outside in, which the conquered Other had on the Roman Self, as will be explained below.[14]

Let us start with Hahn's definition of appropriation:

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9   Mainly Hahn 2004 but see also Hahn 2008a/b and Hahn 2012. For a recent but different kind of introduction to appropriation, more theoretical, less methodological and heavily drawing on the important essay Nelson 2003, see the Introduction to Loar, MacDonald and Padilla Peralta 2018.

10   Miller 1998, with his now classic essay on 'Coca-Cola: A Black Sweet Drink from Trinidad'. The notion of appropriation was introduced to the social sciences by Michel de Certeau to underline agency on a local level and (socio-cultural) change thus generated; see Certeau 1980. This is exactly the perspective I aim to develop for the late Roman Republic and its objects.

11   See Miles 2008.

12   As Loar, MacDonald and Padilla Peralta 2018; see also the important remarks in Padilla Peralta 2020.

13   Cf. Woolf 2022. A focus on the first is, however, not necessarily a denial of the latter; see Versluys 2020b.

14   For a critical view on the use of the concept of appropriation in this context, however, see Vout, this volume.

> Between the production, which results in a definite material form, and the contexts of the consumed object, a connection only takes place through the local ascription of contexts. In other words, what happens here is that global commodities experience a local definition. In this process, that I call appropriation, characteristics such as value, form of use and meaning are irrevocably ascribed.[15]

As a result of appropriation, therefore, objects are no longer what they once were. To give a hypothetical example for the ancient world: a statue of Aphrodite dedicated to that goddess in a temple in Attica in the fourth century BCE becomes 'something else' when Romans integrate it in a public *porticus* in Rome in the second century BCE. This is obvious.[16] Nevertheless we should be aware that this process of appropriation is key to societal creativity and local cultural identity. To stick with our hypothetical example: the statue of Aphrodite as appropriated by the Romans plays a part in the development of the *porticus* as a sculpture gallery and in the phenomenon of Roman elites defining themselves in cultural terms as 'Greek'.[17]

Within this process of change Hahn distinguishes four different stages. First there is '*material appropriation*' when the object is taken from its original context, for instance through spoliation. Then follows '*objectification*': the alien object is classified in relation to familiar objects and given a (new) name and a (new) meaning. Objectification thus establishes a relationship between the spolium and local fields of meaning. Next follows '*incorporation*'. The object, which has moved from Other to Self, starts functioning in its new context. Through the use of the spolium, moreover, practices and mentalities in the new context change. Hahn rightly underlines that this often happens unconsciously:

> Incorporation refers more clearly than the other stages of appropriation to the fact that the process is by no means a strictly intentionally directed one. [...] Without the user noticing it, in their ways of doing certain things change through the routine use of new objects, as do their own perceptions of their surroundings.[18]

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15   Hahn 2004: 218.
16   For the story of Classical art from such a 'life history' perspective see now Vout 2018.
17   For the first aspect see Van de Velde's contribution to this volume (and further below); for elite Roman self-definition as 'Greek' see Feeney 2016.
18   Hahn 2004: 221–222. The process Hahn describes here can be identified as 'the Diderot effect', for which see the conclusion to this essay.

The fourth and final stage is one of '*transformation*'. The object has now been integrated into the new context and become part and parcel of its *habitus* and culture. In other words: the spolium is no longer a spolium. But is this indeed the case? Can an object genuinely leave its Otherness behind? Hahn's answer to this question is revealing:

> Appropriation needs not, however, result in the negation of provenance. In many cases the society lives quite well with the paradox of knowing an object's provenance as a global good, yet simultaneously considering it something of its own.[19]

Appropriation, therefore, is a process that can only be partially controlled. Moreover, its effects cannot be known in advance. From that perspective it is understandable that appropriation is often considered a dangerous and ambiguous process. As a result, the repulse of new things often goes hand in hand with their appropriation. All case studies presented in this volume testify to that ambiguity and the anxiety appropriation generates. In this respect it is remarkable that the textual sources mainly testify to a negative reception and resistance while the archaeological reality shows the receiving society actively using and building on the spolia. It is important to realize that this is no dichotomy but that both reactions are part of the same process of appropriation and testify to the impact of the spolia. One could perhaps even say that they are related in the way communicating vessels are: the stronger the (real) 'positive influence' of the spolia, the more discourse on (supposed) 'negative influence' is needed to retain the balance.

3   The Massive Impact of Spoils in Late Republican Rome

Probably the most telling example of this ambiguity is the trope, in Latin literature, that objects from the eastern Mediterranean brought by the conquering Roman generals of the late Republic corrupted traditional Roman society.[20]

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19   Hahn 2004: 222. See Versluys 2021 for this paradox of what could be called 'included alterity' in relation to the impact and agency of objects more in depth.

20   Pape 1975 and Pollitt 1978 still represent a useful overview of the available sources; now with Cadario 2014. The (large) recent bibliography can be found in Cadario 2014 as well as the contributions to this volume by Pieper, Allan, Van de Velde, Van Gils and Henzel, Buijs, Strootman and Vout.

This, for instance, is what Livy (39.6.7–9) writes about the Asian victories of Cnaeus Manlius Vulvo in 187 BCE:[21]

> For the origins of foreign luxury were brought into the city by the army from Asia. Those men, for the first time, carried into Rome bronze couches, expensive throws, curtains and other textiles, and what was then regarded as great furniture, one-legged tables and sideboards. […] At this time, cooks, whom the ancients had considered the basest of slaves, both in terms of what they thought of them and how they treated them, gained in value, and what had been labour began to be considered art.

Foreign luxury, Livy maintains, would not change Rome for the better but bring about the corruption of traditional Roman society. This discourse on spolia from the East as 'the beginning of the end' can be found in many literary sources and apparently mattered greatly to the Romans: the more or less generally accepted starting point was the capture of Syracuse in 211 BCE and the subsequent pernicious effect of the spoils brought to Rome from Sicily by Marcellus.[22] Reality was very different, and the authors who wrote about the issue were probably well aware of this. In fact, these spoils played a defining role in the development of Rome from regional power to global player and the emergence of 'Roman culture' as we commonly define it today (see below).

In order to get a better idea of the role of spolia within this process of cultural formation, let us briefly look at the impact of these alien elements on the development of what is called Roman art. In his interpretative overview, Paul Zanker describes Roman art as beginning 'with the period of the great Roman victories over Syracuse (211 BCE) and Tarentum (209 BCE) […] and culminating in the conquest and destruction of Corinth and Carthage (both 146 BCE)'.[23] Zanker puts forward an explicit relationship between the influx of spolia and a major change within Roman society, stating in the first sentence of his book that '[…] we should begin a history of Roman art at the point where it began to develop its characteristic features' which is at the moment that 'Greek art became the basis of a new visual language'.[24] As scholars we have, of course, become accustomed to the idea that Roman art looks Greek. However, the notion that the art of culture X is supposed to have started with the influx

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21   For this passage see extensively Van Gils and Henzel, this volume. Translation after Vout 2018: 47.
22   See Pietilä-Castrén 1982. For the spoils of Sicily and their impact, see Van de Velde and Allan, this volume. For 'the beginning of the end', see Vout 2018: 43 ff.
23   Zanker 2010: 1; characterizing it as 'a process of hellenization'.
24   Zanker 2010: 1.

of spolia from culture Y is in fact highly remarkable.[25] Zanker is well aware of the significance of processes of appropriation and rightly concludes that the impact of these objects was not about their original function (see above). Rather, he argues, spolia were able to 'trigger metonymic associations beyond the objects themselves and thus evoke in the viewer specific aspects of Greek culture' thus '[…] directly or indirectly, promoting specific cultural values and associations'.[26] It is in this way, Zanker maintains, that, for instance, '[t]he development of the Roman villa is directly indebted to the innovative potential unleashed by Greek culture'.[27] Within that process of unbridling, spolia played a crucial role. The literary sources, therefore, do not so much present us with 'what really happened' from 211 BCE onwards as show how those phenomena were framed or remembered by later generations. They are mnemohistory, not history, to draw on the distinction elaborated by Jan Assmann.[28]

The deluge of objects from the Hellenistic East inundating late Republican Rome is a huge and important subject which has already been much discussed, although mainly on the basis of the literary sources.[29] That debate could certainly profit from putting the concept of appropriation, as defined here, at the heart of its analyses and, for instance, try to distinguish between processes of material appropriation, objectification, incorporation and transformation in order to better understand how 'making Greek culture Roman culture' worked as a process.[30] As Denis Feeney has brilliantly demonstrated, for the domain of literature it is not so much about 'becoming Greek' as about the ways in which Romans consciously and distinctly selected elements which we would call 'Greek', but were at the time understood as something much more specific, for instance 'Athenian tragedy'.[31] Moreover, his analysis also makes

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25 The objects could be (and often were) related to peoples and ideas going by the same name (in this case: Greek); see Vout 2018: chapter 3 tellingly entitled 'Making Greek Culture Roman Culture'. This, however, is not necessarily the case as the impact of objects depends on much more than what we, from our scholarly perspective, understand as their cultural affiliation, cf. Messina and Versluys 2021. For the conclusion that people, ideas and objects going by the same name (Greek, for instance, or Egyptian or Persian) often had, in fact, rather unrelated trajectories through space and time, see Versluys 2015.

26 Zanker 2010: 15. This would result in a 'more abstract mode of reception on the part of viewers', cf. Hölscher 1994.

27 Zanker 2010: 8.

28 Assmann 1992.

29 Cf. Edwards 2003 and Van de Velde 2022. See also the observations by Vout in the present volume.

30 *Contra* Vout, this volume.

31 Feeney 2016: 121 for his conclusion that '[w]e are not dealing with "Greek" drama, but with Athenian classical drama as enshrined not only in the international performance tradition but in the canons and curricula of Hellenistic scholarship'.

us aware of the fact that the 'mimetic desire' of things 'Greek' was only one of the many options for anchoring available to a Mediterranean society at that time – and a very specific one at that.[32] Moreover, the motives behind what is often understood as a single process of Roman appropriation take different forms over time.[33] It would be worthwhile to try and understand the Roman 'translation' of material culture from the Greek and Hellenistic world in this differentiated way; as the local perception of a global phenomenon which Feeney characterizes as 'the disruptive energy of Hellenism'.[34]

To sum up. From *c.*211 BCE onwards, spolia, things from the outside, had a massive impact on Roman society and were, paradoxically, able to change it from the inside. That literary sources present this impact in a negative light only underlines how profound the effect really was in terms of innovation. Late Republican Rome was faced, therefore, with a veritable 'labour of appropriation'. Since this process concerned things coming in from the outside it was usually regarded as dangerous. It was characterized, moreover, by ambiguity and anxiety as the Other now had to become part of the Self. Anthropological studies have demonstrated that many societies develop 'coping strategies', often in the form of rituals, to domesticate elements coming in from the outside and enable them to start functioning in their new context.[35] Given the colossal appropriation enterprise the Romans were forced to undertake in the late Republic, the development of an appropriate ritual seems natural. I would like to propose that the Roman triumph could be interpreted as the rite

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32   Feeney 2016, chapter 2. See p. 13 for the term 'mimetic desire'. For the concept of anchoring in relation to cultural innovation, see Sluiter 2017 and Versluys 2022.

33   The most important shift here, according to Feeney, is one from *koine* to Imperium and taking place around the middle of the third century BCE: from indirect and freeform appropriation it becomes a '[…] direct and canonically informed model of engagement, with a new kind of determination to 'get it right' in transposing from the model culture' because of the successes of Roman imperialism and the new position Rome thus acquires as part of their network in and beyond Italy. For this important distinction see already Veyne 1979 (though with a different emphasis).

34   Feeney 2016: 68. For appropriation as a consequence of globalisation, see Hahn 2008a and b. I use the concept of 'translation' here in a wider sense, as most social scientists would do nowadays, as a methodology that resists the seeming purity of concepts such as culture, identity, tradition etc. and focuses on their non-holistic structure and complexity instead, underlining how they are always in the process of becoming, infused with the Other. See Bachmann-Medick 2014, also for the important argument that the concept of 'translation' works much better than the notion of 'hybridity'. For spoliation as translation in this sense of the word, see Jevtic and Nilsson 2022.

35   For a summary of this body of anthropological theory, see Ter Keurs in this volume, as well as Van Eck, Versluys and Ter Keurs 2015, drawing on Sahlins 1976 ('domestication') and Miller 1995 ('taming') amongst many others (see above).

that sought to tame the spolia before they could safely be added to the Roman objectscape.

4   The Roman Triumph and Its Self-Other Dynamics

Triumphal processions displaying conquered objects and peoples were a common phenomenon in the ancient world.[36] Important examples from the Hellenistic East include the 'grand procession' held in honor of the Ptolemaic king Ptolemy II in Alexandria around 275 BCE, and the festival and procession organized by the Seleucid king Antiochos IV at Daphne in the 160s BCE.[37] However, (the idea of) the triumph seems to have reached its apogee in the context of the late Roman Republic.

The triumph was one of the central religious, civic, and political ceremonies of Roman society.[38] Having originated in the early Republican period (fifth century BCE), the Roman triumph developed and changed over time, but its defining elements remained more or less the same.[39] A triumph was the exclusive right of the commander in chief – at first Roman magistrates or generals, later the Roman emperor – to enter the city of Rome at the head of his victorious army in a parade. This triumphal procession, which ended at the temple of Iupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitol, not only presented the victorious commander to the Roman people, but also the spoils and captives of his conquest, as well as representations of his successful campaign(s).[40] From around 200 BCE onwards, the triumph developed from a primarily religious and civic ceremony into a honorific celebration underlining the

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36   See Spalinger and Armstrong 2013 for a general overview. Note that this chapter does not deal with the captives and their terrible fate. This does not imply that my interpretation of the triumph seeks to deny the intense violence and human suffering involved; see Loar, MacDonald and Padilla Peralta 2018, who call their book on the dynamics of cultural appropriation in the period *Rome, Empire of Plunder* for good reasons. See also, in a more general vein, Padilla Peralta 2020 and the remarks on my use of the concept of 'appropriation' above. Captives could play an important role within cultural transmission as cultural brokers, see, in general, Cameron 2016.

37   See Erskine 2013 with earlier bibliography. For Daphne, see Strootman 2019. For the important theme of 'the returning king' in more general terms, see Strootman 2018.

38   The literature on the Roman triumph is immense. Itgenshorst 2005; Bastien 2007; Beard 2007 provide recent introductions with extensive bibliographies. Versnel 1970 remains a classic and rightly so. For the impact of all this on the Roman cityscape, see Favro 2014 and Hölscher 2017.

39   Cf. Lange and Vervaet 2014.

40   For an overview and interpretation of the spoils, captives and representations presented in the context of the Roman triumph Östenberg 2009 is fundamental.

individual glory and prestige of the commander in question.[41] This development seems to have been directly connected to the proliferation of spoils and captives from foreign cultures.[42] Although this process already started in the early third century BCE, Rome was first confronted with vast amounts of spolia when M. Claudius Marcellus (211 BCE) and Scipio Africanus (201 BCE) had their triumphs after their successful campaigns against Syracuse and Carthage respectively.[43] This was only the beginning. Such was the quantity of spoils that Flamininus took from Macedonia that his triumph in 194 BCE took three full days; it included a remarkable statue of Zeus that was consecrated on the Capitol.[44] Concerning Scipio Aemilianus' triumph after his conquest of Carthage in 146 BCE, it was said that its spoils were 'teeming with all the statues and *objets d'art* that the Carthaginians had brought to Africa from all over the world through the long period of their continuous victories' (Appian, *Pun.* 135).[45] The Roman triumph again changed significantly during the reign of the first Emperor Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE), when it became the exclusive privilege of members of the imperial family. The best-known imperial triumph is the one held in 71 CE by the Emperors Vespasian and Titus after the Jewish War, when the spoils of the temple of Jerusalem were paraded through the streets of Rome.[46]

Let us now look at some specific examples, and zoom in on Self-Other dynamics as they were played out during the triumph as well as the spolia themselves and the way in which they were handled. Can we discern any signs of rituals having to do with domestication or taming (as defined above)?

On his return to Rome in 167 BCE, after decisive victories over Macedonia and Epirus, the Roman general Aemilius Paullus was awarded a splendid triumph.[47] The spectacle lasted for three whole days and involved all inhabitants of the city and its surroundings. On the first day, hundreds of wagons loaded with (colossal) statues and paintings are reported to have been paraded through the streets of Rome.[48] Comparable amounts of arms and riches were shown during the second day, while the third and final day was reserved for the foreign captives amongst whom king Perseus. For the spectators it must have

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41   Cf. Lange 2016.
42   See the useful overview provided by Rich 2014.
43   Davies 2017: 110–130, see also above.
44   Beard 2007: 150; Davies 2017: 110.
45   Östenberg 2009: 93; Cf. Kendall 2009.
46   See Östenberg 2009: 111–119; the essays by Huitink and Moormann, this volume; and further below.
47   For the triumph of Aemilius Paullus see extensively the essays by Buijs and Strootman, this volume.
48   For all sources pertaining to this event as well as their interpretation, see Pittenger 2008: ch. 14 as well as Östenberg 2009: Index s.v. Aemilius Paullus, L.

been an experience for all the senses: during the triumph everyone was part of what has been characterized as a 'common psychological space'.[49] All kinds of internal (social, ethnic, and cultural) differences were therefore temporarily suspended, as is usual with such performative rituals. During the triumph everybody and everything *inside* was Roman: the people living in and around the city, for instance, could be identified by the wreaths of laurels or olives they were wearing, in this way distinguishing themselves from those from the *outside*. The Self-Other dichotomy was also played out literally: spoils and captives entered the city from outside the city walls and progressed slowly, via the Campus Martius and the Circus and across the Via Sacra, towards the Capitol, Rome's religious and political centre.[50] Occasions of this kind were spectacular but certainly not unique. Another example of a truly spectacular triumph is the huge procession of Pompey the Great of 61 BCE, which Cassius Dio (3.7.21) described as featuring 'a trophy of the whole world'.[51] Literary sources make it abundantly clear that it was through triumphs such as these that Rome encountered new styles and types of objects, for instance the vessels of agate and the exclusive myrrhine ware displayed in 61 BCE.[52] Pliny (*Naturalis historia* 37.6.12) comments that the victory of Pompey first made pearls and gemstones fashionable in Rome while 'the victories of L. Scipio and Cn. Manlius had done the same for chased silver, garments woven with gold, and dining couches inlaid with bronze; and that of L. Mummius for Corinthian bronzes and paintings'.[53] These sources suggest that it was principally through the triumph that Rome was inundated with novel objects and new forms and styles of material culture.[54] Certainly one of the most evocative accounts of this is from Flavius Josephus (*Bellum Judaicum* 7.134–136), who describes the Flavian triumph in 71 CE as follows:[55]

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49   For this aspect, see Östenberg 2009: 265; as well as Favro 1994 and Popkin 2016. Cf. also the analysis of the texts by Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus as presented by Buijs, this volume.

50   See Luke 2014 for the importance of 'arriving from the outside'.

51   See Vervaet 2014.

52   Davies 2017: 224–236 with references to all relevant ancient literary sources.

53   See Östenberg 2009: 92 for the translation. For L. Mummius see Yarrow 2006.

54   For an overview of these changes to the Roman objectscape see Davies 2017, who also pays attention to the impact of all these intrusive objects. Rome always had been part of regional and supra-regional (Mediterranean) networks and it therefore certainly had been confronted with the influx of foreign objects before. It might even be true that some of the objects mentioned as novelties by the literary sources in reality had already ended up in Rome as a result of this network. The point is, however: not in these quantities and not with this impact.

55   For this text and subject see the essays by Huitink and Moormann, this volume. I borrow the translation from Östenberg 2009: 1.

Silver and gold and ivory in masses, made in all kinds of forms, might be seen, not as if carried in procession, but flowing so to speak, like a river; fabrics were born along, some made of the rarest purple, others embroidered by Babylonian technique with perfect representation; transparent gems, some set in golden crowns, some in other fashions, swept by in such profusion as to correct our erroneous supposition that any of them was rare.

5   The Roman Triumph as a Ritual of Domestication?

From an anthropological point of view, one would, in the first place, expect some kind of 'purification ritual' to have taken place as a cooling-off strategy to tame the agency of the many spolia entering Rome. Purification rituals from the Roman world are well known and have been described by ancient authors as *lustratio* or *katharsis*. *Lustratio* originally was a 'magic' procedure meant to distinguish between good (inside) and bad (outside).[56] Hence it also was a ritual through which the transference from bad to good (or vice versa) could be mediated. The Roman world knew two kinds of lustration rituals: those performed when the evil had been identified and the situation could be contained ('*expiatoires*'), as well as preventive rites ('*propitiatoires*').[57] In case of intrusive spolia, one can imagine both types might be considered effective. However, amongst the many instances of *lustratio* known from the Roman world, there are no examples of the *lustratio* of objects. Objects do play an important role as *instruments* of *lustratio*, but there are, as far as I know, no examples of the *lustratio* of objects themselves. A recurring and essential element in *lustratio* rituals, however, is the *circumambulatio*. During this procession the religious expert leads the purifying instrument, usually sacrificial animals, around the object of purification, for instance a group of soldiers. There is a strong connection, therefore, between the *lustratio* and the procession. In this way, the *lustratio* developed into a sort of *rite de passage* whereby new members were added to the community.

If we look for *lustratio*-type rituals *concerning* objects, the famous Roman *evocatio deorum*, the 'calling out of the gods', comes to mind.[58] This was an

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56   The term magic should be used with great care, also for the Roman world, see Frank-furter 2019.

57   To follow the definition and terminology by Daremberg and Saglio 1904: s.v. *Lustratio*, 1412.

58   There is a large bibliography on the subject. For general introductions see (still) Bassanoff 1947 as well as Gustafsson 2000.

ancient Roman ritual that involved the integration and assimilation of the gods of the enemy, promising them better worship as well as a new temple in Rome if they would side with the Romans. Objects were central to this remarkable transition ritual. The best-known description of an *evocatio*, that of the transfer of a statue of Juno from Etruscan Veii to Rome at the beginning of the fourth century BCE, illustrates this. Livy (5.20.1–5.21.3) mentions that the young men who had been selected to transport the statue were nervous about performing their task and touching the statue (that is: the goddess).[59] However, Livy tells us, when the men asked Juno if she really wanted to go to Rome, the statue nodded in agreement. The *evocatio deorum*, therefore, was a ritual through which the agency of divine images could be changed from dangerous (Other) to constitutive (Self). As with the *lustratio*, procession mattered greatly as a kind of *rite de passage* to articulate the transference from outside to inside.[60] The *evocatio*, however, was literally about the procession of objects.

The Roman triumph was a procession of spolia entering the city from the outside. These objects would subsequently be added to Rome's objectscape, function in the Roman context, and transform it. Roman society knew different kinds of *lustratio*-type rituals, which served to mediate the transference from outside (bad) to inside (good). Do we, then, find such *lustratio*-type rituals performed on objects as part of the Roman triumph?

Sources on the handling and perception of spolia during the triumph are rare and circumstantial. Remarkably, the testimonies we have never mention individual objects or individual works of art; they stress value and volume, not artistic or art-historical distinction.[61] The taxonomy of the objects as presented in the sources is almost exclusively concerned with the material they were made of – which has much to do with their monetary value – and with their provenance. All objects from the outside were trophies, so it seems. It was customary to have all spoils officially registered at the treasury on the Capitol. After that, they were in principle redistributed throughout the Roman state. Reality, however, was often less accommodating, with the generals themselves

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59 On objects, such as statues, as active agents in their relationship with people in the Roman world, treated as if alive and positioned as partners in social relationships, see Versluys 2021.

60 On the function of processions from this perspective, also more in general, see Latham 2016.

61 As concluded by Östenberg 2009: 88 and 120. The many statues and paintings paraded through the streets of Rome, therefore, were apparently not perceived as specific 'masterpieces'. See also the remarks by Vout, this volume.

playing a defining role.[62] Pompey dedicated Mithridates' gem collection, a *dactyliotheca*, to the temple on the Capitol (Pliny, *Nat.* 37.5.11), and we hear of many more specific dedications, such as the statue of Zeus dedicated by Flamininus already mentioned, or the statue of Hercules taken from Corinth by L. Mummius, which became the cult statue of the temple of Hercules Victor he built to commemorate his conquests and triumph (*CIL* I(2) 626).[63] Around the middle of the second century BCE so many of the objects paraded in triumphs had been assembled at the temple on the Capitol that the area had to be 'cleaned'.[64] Part of the plunder was given to the soldiers, other spoils were used to adorn the houses of triumphal generals in memory of their accomplishments. Broadly speaking, it seems that booty also found its way into the private space of the Roman house.[65] Some spoils were re-used in a practical way. Not long after the Gallic triumph, for instance, the weapons taken from the Gauls were distributed among Roman criminals in a desperate attempt to defend Rome against Hannibal. Booty was also melted down. All in all, this brief and impressionistic overview makes it clear that all foreign objects quickly became Roman after having gone through the triumph – in a wide variety of ways but apparently without much enduring anxiety or difficulty.[66]

We must conclude, therefore, that there is no evidence of specific *lustratio*-type rituals focused on objects and comparable to the *evocatio deorum*. However, since from the perspective of historical anthropology it would be rational to expect the existence of such a ritual of domestication, especially for late Republican Rome, I would like to suggest that the Roman triumph *itself* – the procession of foreign objects from outside to inside and their dedication at the Capitol in a performative ceremony – was the ritual aimed at disarming or taming the agency of the spolia. Having gone through the ritual, they now were no longer dangerous. By means of the triumph, Ida Östenberg concluded,

62   As underlined and illustrated by Davies 2017: 226–229 in particular. See also the remarks on the handling of spolia after the triumph in Van de Velde, this volume. For the control Roman generals had over (their) booty, see Shatzman 1972.

63   Remarkably, L. Mummius also dedicated part of the spoils in other places in Italy, Greece and Spain, see Graverini 2001 with full documentation, as well as Yarrow 2006 and Kendall 2009. For how Hercules and his monuments came to embody the Republican triumphal tradition in later periods, see Loar 2017.

64   See Hölscher 2017.

65   As convincingly argued by Welch 2006.

66   Although most literature on the Roman triumph has something to say on what happened to the spolia after the event, as far as I know no systematic overview exists. In order to fully understand the Roman appropriation process such an overview is, however, much needed.

Rome defined herself by displaying others.[67] It is also through the triumph, as a ritual performance, that Rome 'neutralized' objects from far away and dangerous places. Only after the transformative experience of the triumph, Roman society could start to incorporate the new and use it in a constructive way. By shaping Rome's objectscape, these artefacts would renew Roman culture.

6   Conclusion: The Diderot Effect

In the conclusion to an important recent book on cultural appropriation in the Roman world, Dan-el Padilla Peralta concluded that '[…] Rome was its spoils – the *Cloaca Maxima*.'[68] Understanding this in terms of plunder, as that book does, is one important take on the phenomenon; seeing it in terms of cultural innovation another.[69] This essay has focused on spoliation in the late Roman Republic as a process of appropriation and suggested that the Roman *triumphus* served as a ritual to 'tame' these objects before they could start functioning in their new, Roman context. The Romans seem to have been well aware, therefore, of what is nowadays called the Diderot effect, a social phenomenon related to the (unintended) consequences of acquiring new things whereby old objects take on a different meaning in the light of the new ones, which will, in due course, take over.[70] One day the French Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot (1713–1784) was given a dressing gown by a friend. Delighted with this gift Diderot immediately threw away his old gown, a 'ragged, humble, comfortable old wrapper'. The introduction of this pristine object, as it turns out, makes Diderot subsequently replace more of his old and familiar stuff. He changes his old desk for an expensive new *bureau*; he discards his traditional cane chair and has it replaced with an armchair covered in Moroccan leather; he buys more fancy and expensive prints, and so on. After a while Diderot realizes that, by using the new garment, he has not only lost his old dressing gown but also the familiar and lovable balance between the objects in his study – and as a result, to his deep regret, the balance in life itself. All this, Diderot

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67   Östenberg 2009: 263; cf. Favro 2014.

68   Padilla Peralta 2018: 270. Cf. also Edwards 2003 and Miles 2008 entitled 'Art as plunder'.

69   Both perspectives are part of the same phenomenon and deserve our attention; note, however, the important remarks in Padilla Peralta 2020. By focusing on spoliation as cultural innovation, as this chapter does, it is, however, explicitly *not* my intention to add to the 'Empire-is-good-gospel' (Padilla Peralta 2020: 153); see Versluys 2020b.

70   After the formulation and interpretation of McCracken 1988. For these processes see also Appadurai 1986; Miller 1995 and Gell 1998 (who do not, as far as I see, refer to this concept however).

concludes, is the work of an 'imperious scarlet robe [which] forced everything else to conform with its own elegant tone'.[71] The spolia that inundated Rome in the Late Republic had, I would argue, a quite similar effect.

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71　Diderot, *Regrets sur ma vieille Robe de Chambre* from 1772. Originally published in J. Assézat (ed.), *Oeuvres Complètes de Diderot*. Volume 4: *Philosophie IV. Belles-lettres I: romans, contes, critique littéraire* (Paris 1875) 5–12, here quoted after the translation by J. Barzun and R.H. Bowen, *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works* (Indianapolis 2001).

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