Chapter 17

Memoria by Multiplication: The Cornelii Scipiones in Monumental Memory

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Tradunt subinde nobis ornamenta sua Scipiones commemoranda
Val. Max. 8.15.4

The topic of this paper is not only the creation and cultivation of memoria by a variety of visual signs in the shape of monuments erected in prominent places of the political-sacral landscape of the urbs Roma, which also served as a ‘memoryscape’ of the populus Romanus and its socio-political élite; but it is also the close-knit ‘web of significance’ in a slightly different, more specific sense than the classic definition of the term by Clifford Geertz would allow.1 In concrete terms, I shall try to reconstruct a particular ‘web’ generated by what Matt Roller, in an important recent paper on monuments and memory in Augustan Rome, called ‘intersignification’. He defined this concept as a complement and indeed extension of the well-established concept of ‘inter-textuality’, with which it stands “in a potentially productive relationship”.2

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1 Geertz (1973), 5: “Believing ... that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.” See Roller (2010, 238 and passim) on “culture-based approaches” in Roman studies.

2 Roller (2013), 119 and passim.
new concept is meant to “broaden the range of the term ‘intertextuality’ to make it refer to iconographical and architectural phenomena as well as literary ones”. In even more concrete terms, ‘intersignification’ highlights the “dynamics of reference, inclusion, modification, and appropriation”, which underlie the permanent “competition via monumental forms” in the shape of “temples, porticoes, honorific statues, arches” and visual media in general.

As “a matter of competitive self-assertion of *gloria* by the individuals and families involved”, these monuments were erected, put on display and above all paid for by Roman aristocrats, especially as magistrates and generals, in order to commemorate and indeed eternalize their successes as well as “to maintain and expand the family’s monumental portfolio”. Moreover, the concept of intersignification focusses on the complex interrelations, on the one hand, of the location and the form or genre of these monuments, which their dedicators “tended to select” in order to generate an abundance of messages and meanings by creating “a studied contrast with pre-existing monuments”. They tried to achieve this objective by a variety of ways and means, including “strategies of incorporation and imitation”, by which new monuments “might seek to appropriate their predecessors’ prestige, or alternatively, to modify, reposition, or supersede these predecessors, leaving them and their dedicators in the shadow of the later, and allegedly greater, achievement”. On the other hand, ‘intersignification’ is meant to conceptualize the interplay, ‘crossing or mixing’ of different genres as “subsystems that are to some extent

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3 Roller (2013), 119; Meadows – Williams (2001), 41; Wallace-Hadrill (1990), 158 (quotations). See also Gruen (1992), esp. chs. 3, 4; Flower (1996), 85–86, and the series of fundamental studies by Hölscher (1978); Id. (1980a); Id. (1980b); Id. (1982); Id. (1984); Id. (1992); Id. (1994); Id. (2001); Id. (2003); Id. (2006); Id. (2009) and now also Rutledge (2012), 32–52, 123–157 and *passim*. See also, on the complex interconnections between individual genres of monuments (though central aspects and approaches differ considerably), La Rocca (1990); Coarelli (1990a); Id. (1990b), and *passim*; Tanner (2000), 25–27 and *passim*; Patterson (2000), ch. 4; Holliday (2002), with the review article by Hölkeskamp (2005); Kuttner (2004); von Hesberg (2005); Welch (2006b); Patterson (1992); Id. (2006), 346–350; Id. (2010); Miano (2011); Coarelli (2011); Sauron (2013); Hrychuk Kontokosta (2013), 17–30 and *passim*. On the concept of ‘monumental memory’, see Assmann (1988) and Hölscher (2014).