

This paper will argue that the stylistic effects achieved in *Rome's* opening titles create a stereotypical vision of ancient Rome. Nonetheless, they share structural similarities with the paintings and *tituli* carried in triumphal processions in that the latter also advanced ideological stereotypes such as *laus* and *gloria*.

A large part of *Rome's* appeal for the non-specialist is the realistic portrayal of historical events and characters that have assumed larger-than-life proportions. The opening titles reproduce a sense of realism in live-action footage; however, they also capture the mythic dimension of the narrative in computer-generated images such as a head that explodes, giving birth to another figure, and a Medusa's head whose snakes extend three-dimensionally from the wall on which it is represented. Other images such as a mosaic skull at the beginning of the sequence are Roman, rather than Greek-derived, but the collapsing of the two cultures makes the Rome of the narrative stereotypical. The non-specialist feels familiar with this stereotype, at the same time as looking forward to the historical representation that follows.

By contrast, an important object of interest for the specialist is the veracity of the representation. However, the interests of the specialist and non-specialist converge where the experience of watching the titles resembles that of the Roman crowd watching the paintings and *tituli* carried in triumphal processions during exactly the period the show represents (cf. Plutarch, *Pompey* 45.1-3; Appian, *Bella Civilia* 2.101). Such a display was a huge entertainment for the crowds (Peter J. Holliday, "Roman Triumphal Painting: its function, development, and reception", *The Art Bulletin*, March 1997). The representations of battles fought in distant and exotic places, along with the rudimentary narrative of the *tituli* (names of places and people, brief explanations of events) constituted snapshots of the extended action of the war itself, which became important propaganda tools for the victorious generals in subsequent political campaigns (cf. David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Reception*, Chicago, 1980).

Like the commentary of the *tituli* upon the paintings, *Rome's* CG images and graffiti comment upon the world of violence and intrigue developed in the narrative and reinforce a stereotypical notion of the period. Yet this representation is not so different from the way Roman ideology of the late Republic was disseminated and absorbed. The *triumphator* sold the people a vision of a historical event with which they could identify and which they could idealize. Ultimately, HBO depends upon a similar strategy to sell history, and *Rome*.