

## ROMAN CULTURAL MEMORY

DINTER (M.T.), GUÉRIN (C.) (edd.) *Cultural Memory in Republican and Augustan Rome*. Pp. xvi + 475, ills, maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Cased, £115, US\$150. ISBN: 978-1-009-32775-6.

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This volume of essays further contributes to the burgeoning field of cultural memory studies in Roman antiquity, adding to others such as those by A.M. Gowing (*Empire and Memory: The Representation of the Roman Republic in Imperial Culture* [2005]), A.B. Gallia (*Remembering the Roman Republic: Culture, Politics, and History Under the Principate* [2012]) and K. Galinsky (ed., *Memoria Roma: Memory in Rome and Rome in Memory* [2014]). An introductory chapter sets out the theoretical framework for the study, clarifying the important distinction between history, which allows for reconstruction of the past, and memory, which is more abstract, dynamic in its interpretation, contentious and perpetuated variously through media such as texts and coins, via rituals, or even through the evocative significance of individuals (such as, in this volume, Brutus or Cato). Memory further serves to construct a communal or national identity, although that kind of memory can be fragmented even within a single nation or people, whose individual communities decide which versions of the past are acceptable and which are not, something of significance particularly in the later essays of the volume, which discuss memory and commemoration beyond Rome.

The book is divided into 4 discrete sections with 22 chapters in total; since space does not permit to treat all the essays, I have chosen select examples representative of each section for more detailed discussion. I would admonish, however, that any omission is not a statement of quality; all the essays are excellent, original in their approaches and collectively make a valuable contribution to our understanding of cultural memory and its complex dynamics.

Part 1 surveys the construction of cultural and historical memory in the context of Latin literature from Naevius to Ovid. The second and third essays of this section intriguingly suggest Roman comedy as itself a space for memory. A. Corbeill's 'Creating Roman Memories of Plautus', considers how Plautus came to occupy a significant *lieu de mémoire*, and how Plautus became an authoritative source for Latin usage and style. Cultural memory of Plautus serves as an example of how memory can be transmitted via institutional organisations, in this case the grammarians who helped determine Plautus' cultural significance making him a part of 'a system of values' to educate, civilise and humanise (p. 46). Consequently, commentators and writers such as Servius and, well before him, Varro viewed Plautus' language as authoritative, while the memory of Plautus had been reconfigured based on characters of low background from his text. Dinter's essay, 'Comedy and Its Pasts', complements Corbeill's: it argues that literary genres themselves create a shared body of cultural knowledge and memory and uses the example of the comedies of Plautus and Terence, whose stock comic figures constitute commemorative virtual 'museum' pieces. Dinter examines the *parasitus* by way of example, a character type with a rich post-Plautine and Terentian afterlife in authors such as Horace and Petronius, and which, despite the *parasitus*' Greek origins, receives its own Roman twist, creating a uniquely Roman memory.

I. Leonardis's 'Varro and the Re-foundation of Roman Cultural Memory Through Genealogy and *Humanitas*' serves as a transition piece from the Republic into the

Augustan period. The essay deftly explores the question of perceived cultural decline that set in during the late Republic and continued into Augustus' principate, the attendant loss of cultural identity, and the attempt to arrest that decline via antiquarianism and a Roman identity shared throughout the Empire. Chapters 7–9 look at the role of Augustan poets in the context of cultural memory. These include original contributions over some well-traversed ground. B. Delignon's 'Cultural Memory, from Monument to Poem: The Case of the Temple of Apollo *Palatinus* in the Augustan Poets' considers how Propertius, Horace, Tibullus and Ovid make Apollo's temple a '*lieu de mémoire*, reinventing the narrative of the battle of Actium, or of the triumph' that ultimately puts 'poetic power at the service of the temple's memorial value' (p. 133). The following chapter, '*Monumenta* and the Fallibility of Memory in the *Odes*' by S. Beckelhymer, argues cogently that Horace illustrates cultural memory's impermanence – physical monuments perish, while commemoratives are instable due to memory's fallibility, hence cultural memory is inaccurate, and physical media transitory. Horace underscores this in several poems where monuments are menaced with destruction, where looming catastrophe threatens to mix chaotically the mythological and the historical, throwing into question the clarity of recent historic memories.

Part 2 considers the politicisation of cultural memory, starting with A. Eckert's 'Sulla's Dictatorship *Rei Publicae Constituendae* and Roman Republican Cultural Memory'. The essay examines how Sulla and Caesar corroded the office of dictator under the pretence of constitutional reform and the implications this had particularly for Augustus. The republic itself was a signifier of Roman cultural identity; hence Sulla and Caesar presented themselves *qua* dictators as restorers of the republic. The bitter memory of both, however, forced Augustus to exploit Roman cultural memory of the republic in a new way, discard the title dictator and present himself as the republic's defender. The following two chapters examine cultural memory in the context of public oratory. The second of these, C. Steel's 'Cultural Memory and Political Change in the Public Speech of the Late Roman Republic', investigates how Roman orators used historical examples and exemplarity from the past to help make sense of and contextualise Rome's 'chaotic present'. In the process the past was idealised and exacerbated controversial policies. By way of illustration, Steel draws on the memory of Sulla and how Cicero deftly and cautiously treated his tenure in his oratory. Finally, K. Tempest's 'Remembering M. Brutus: From Mixed and Hostile Perspectives' and M. Thorne's 'The Making of an *Exemplum*: Cato's Road to *Uticensis* in Roman Cultural Memory' concern two personalities who became symbolic lightning rods from their own lifetimes into the early Empire. Tempest considers the competing discourse over Brutus, whom Antony portrayed as a parricide, as Augustus and subsequent writers did as well, including Valerius Maximus, Dio and Appian. Yet even writers one would think less hostile show a complex attitude, their approval qualified, as with Horace and Lucan. Thorne similarly considers how Cato the Younger's memory was transformed from living man to republican martyr between 63 BCE and when Sallust, who acts as something of a synthesis, was writing two decades later. Beginning with Cicero's portrayal in his speeches, Thorne looks at the contentious discussion over Cato's reputation and how he would be remembered, including an interesting discussion of Caesar's *De Bello Civili*, in which he argues that Cato is portrayed as undermining all his supposed virtues before disappearing from Caesar's narrative altogether. However, it was Cicero's version of Cato that prevailed in the end and influenced how Cato would be remembered subsequently – including in Sallust.

Part 3 examines how memory was assessed in the context of political speech, rituals, inscription, even architecture. K. Vuković's 'The Festival of the Lupercalia as a Vehicle of Cultural Memory in the Roman Republic' is an excellent examination of how the

Lupercalia festival became a ritual ripe for political exploitation and how the festival perpetuated the memory associated with it, entangled as it was later with the memory of Caesar's assassination. Caesar exploited the festival, associated with Rome's foundation, to present himself as Rome's second founder; Cicero, on the other hand, exploited Caesar's regal designs at the festival for political ends. M.E. Palmer's 'Inscriptions on the Capitoline: Epigraphy and Cultural Memory in Livy' examines how Livy's description and discussion of inscriptions on the Capitoline sought to preserve older, traditional commemoratives (the *lieux de mémoires*) that were shifting and changing in Augustus' Rome as he sought to legitimise his regime. E. Shaw's 'Cultural Memory and the Role of the Architect in Vitruvius' *De Architectura* completes this section; in this chapter he considers a different contemporary response to Augustus' building programme. Shaw argues that Vitruvius sees the architect as a mediator of memory. A building (and its designer) can serve to codify memory and express Roman identity, whereby the architect becomes a new source of authority, an alternative to the orator or historian.

The final section reaches beyond the city of Rome and considers historical and cultural memory in four distinct regions of the Empire: Roman Italy, Spain, Africa and Greece. In 'Exchanging Memories: Coins, Conquest, and Resistance in Roman Iberia' A.M. Roy explores how coinage in Spain, from the Second Punic War onwards, helped disseminate Roman authority through the monetary use of triumphal and military images reminding provincials of Rome's 'growing reach', of past conquest and warning against future rebellion. Roy notes that the coinage functioned 'as storehouses of Roman memory, a complex mix of commemoration, invented tradition, and erasure' (p. 336). Coins in Iberia were generally more martial than elsewhere due to the difficulty of the province's conquest. Almost no local coins (among known coin hoards from the period) preserve local historical memory until Augustus, when the names of local magistrates appear such as those at Saguntum, and eventually coinage even became a means by which local elites incorporated their memories into Roman memory. Next, C. Bruun's 'Cicero and Clodius Together: The Porta Romana Inscriptions of Roman Ostia As Cultural Memory', offers a lively discussion over the competing memories between Clodius and Cicero in Ostia. A late Flavian inscription over the entrance of Ostia's gate (for those coming from Rome) mentions both Cicero and Clodius as involved in the gate's construction. Why are these two lethal enemies mentioned together? Bruun argues that the powerful *collegia* and *corpora* at Ostia were closely affiliated with Clodius, for which he was long remembered after his death, resulting in the preservation of both names. Finally, G. Schörmer's 'Different Pasts: Using and Constructing Memory in Augustan Carthage and Corinth', examines the nexus between architecture, literature and cultural memory in Augustus' establishment of Roman colonies at both sites. The *princeps* emphasised integration and incorporation of old memory in new *lieux de mémoires*; to achieve this, both cities were re-founded as Roman colonies on the exact sites as their previous locations, retaining their pre-Roman names, drawing on a mix of native inhabitants and Romans, and maintaining civic spatial continuity as much as possible, while integrating Roman urban concepts.

The book is well-produced, and the essays are of high quality: lucid, well argued, well documented and with original perspectives. Explanations of terms are clear, and the essays are readily approachable by those in other disciplines, with translations provided for readers who do not know classical languages. In sum, the volume recommends itself to those interested in the subject of memory in Roman antiquity, but also in culture, identity and memory as dynamic subjects in general, and as such constantly subjected to revision and contingent on the shifting currents of a given society. What is more, it is likely that a

number of the essays will prove foundational by virtue of their approach and originality to the subject of memory in antiquity and beyond.

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