

## REVIEW

### EMPIRE AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Karl Galinsky and Kenneth Lapatin, edd., *Cultural Memories in the Roman Empire*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016. Pp. xi + 296. Paperback, \$85.00. ISBN 978-1-60606-462-7.

The study of the cultural memory of communities and groups is the logical next step in the study of cultural identity in the Greco-Roman world. It has long been the consensus among scholars that the identity of *ethne*, inhabitants of a city, groups, and individual families depended on a number of different parameters, such as ethnic origin, cultural background, political and social status, and religious orientation. It is also widely recognized that the past and how it was remembered were another important parameter for the way groups and individuals shaped their own identity. One need only think of the Persian War and to what degree the victory at Salamis was fundamental to the way Athenians defined themselves in the centuries to come.

*Cultural Memories in the Roman Empire*, edited by Karl Galinsky and Kenneth Lapatin, is a collected volume of conference papers that offers a stimulating contribution to the growing scholarship on the study of memory in the Roman Empire, as spearheaded by Galinsky himself through his *Memoria Romana* project. The volume is divided into four parts: part one focuses on concepts and approaches; part two is dedicated to imperial memory and local identities; part three considers presence and absence of identity; and part four addresses the way memory transformed over time in the city of Rome. In the introduction, Galinsky points to how memory, like ethnicity or cultural identity, is a fluid, multilateral, and continuously changing concept. Cultural memory is defined by examples of cultural traditions and practices as they materialize in texts, artworks, and cultic activities (2). Moreover, the collective memory of groups and individuals is seen as constructed and as subject to continuous alterations. Galinsky offers Pausanias' description of Greece as an example of the degree to which past memories are interchangeable with and tied to the present.

Part one opens with Susan Alcock's discussion of how material culture occupies key roles in the shaping of memories. Her focus is on the interrelation between the past and the present, and on the way the perception of the past was continuously reformulated, as well as how the ability to forget or ignore compromising elements was equally important to the formation of collective memories. The ability to ignore unpleasant elements from the past is exempli-

fied by what means the population in Ephesus got over the massacre of Romans and Italians in the 80s BCE. Here, Alcock refers to the way Greeks and Romans lived peacefully together just a century after the massacre—sharing the same cultural and religious institutions and customs. It is no doubt true that Romans of Italian origin were well represented in the province of Asia, just as they were in most other Roman provinces in the East, and Romans formed associations that were able to influence local communities both economically and politically. It would, however, be worth considering whether what it meant to be Roman had changed from an ethnic definition in 88 BCE, when the cities in Asia energetically pursued their Roman masters, to a legal or social definition in the imperial period, as inhabitants of Roman Asia were becoming Romans and integrated members of Rome's political institutions. The Romans who celebrated Artemis in Ephesus were far from being all Italian; they were different parts of the Empire and, in no small numbers, men of Greek and Ephesian background.

The question of memory and monuments in Greece and Rome is also treated by Rachel Kousser. Her chapter focuses on how Roman generals used Greek works of art, confiscated in the wars against Hellenistic kings in Greece and Asia Minor, to underline their victories and personal success. Another point made by Kousser is that the destruction of artworks was a way of shaping or manipulating people's memories.

Tim Whitmarsh focuses on the writing of Pausanias and Dionysius of Periegete, two intellectuals with strong commitments to their Greek cultural background at a time when influence from Rome was considerable in the East. By comparing Pausanias' description of the temple to the Olympian Zeus with Dionysius' writing on Rome's leading role in the world he lived in, Whitmarsh explores the different perceptions of Rome and Roman power among Greek intellectuals. Where Pausanias downplays the impact of Rome and Rome culture on the Greek communities, Dionysius acknowledges the presence, influence, and greatness of Rome, but still draws a distinction between Roman power and Greek cultural superiority.

Part two opens with a chapter on memory politics in the early and later empire, in which John Weisweiler considers how members of the political elite featured both in the ideology of the state and in the provinces, where honorific monuments were intended to support the notion of the peaceful foundation of Roman imperial rule. Weisweiler considers the way statues of contemporary senators were set up in Rome in commemoration of their military achievements and to what degree Augustus and later emperors were careful to ensure a connection between themselves, the monarchical constitution, and the senatorial elite in an attempt to avoid the question of freedom (or loss of freedom) becoming too much of an issue. Tacitus' opening in the *Annals* underlines that far from all were persuaded. Weisweiler points at the Forum of Augustus and Trajan's column as examples of how the senatorial class was included in the

imperial tale of a monarchy that enjoyed the support of Rome's political elite. Another point Weisweiler makes is how in the Later Empire the provincial elite came to see Rome as an integrative world state, where a divine emperor governed what is referred to as a united citizen population. Weisweiler is no doubt convincing, but one could argue that this was already the case in the second century, as exemplified both by how Greek intellectuals, like Aristides, were acknowledging Roman rule and by the many provincials across the empire who supported Roman power in their local communities.

Carlos Noreña focuses on examples of the Hellenistic ruler cult in the Roman East and the evidence offered by epigraphic and literary references to priests, festivals and sanctuaries to Hellenistic kings. Noreña considers why cults of Hellenistic rulers continued as a part of the cities' religious landscape and, based on the work of Simon Price (1984), reaches the conclusion that the cults were not merely continuations of previous ones, which (Noreña argues) died out with the accession of Augustus. Instead, cults to Hellenistic kings are seen to have been established in the imperial period, designed to activate the memory of a distant but glorious past. The phenomenon would not, Noreña argues, have collided with the interests of the emperors and their strategies for how to appear in public. Instead of seeing the Hellenistic cults as a form of competition or as a way to confront the imperial cults, the worship of former kings was useful to Rome since it offered fora, where cities and people could gather around individual cults and the historic memories attached; this would make it less likely that they would unite under broader identities that could pose a threat to the stability of the Roman empire. Noreña is well aware of the scarcity of the material that the analysis rests on and it remains uncertain to what extent these cults represent widespread practices.

Jas' Elsner explores the connection between three topics: the assertion of sacred continuity through cultural memory, awareness of the problems related to invention of traditions, and the theological stakes involved. Elsner's case study is the cult of Melicertes-Palaemon on the Corinthian Isthmus, discussed by the sophist Philostratus in his *Imagines* and *Heroicus* from the first half of the third century CE. The way Philostratus tells the story of the cult offers an example of the way memory was constructed by leaving out elements of how the cult was practised, and the account of the cults or the rituals involved are examples of how selective silence is one method by which one version of a cult could be shaped to fit individual cultural and political agendas.

Ann Maria Yasin analyses by what means restorations of Christian cults preserved elements from the old structures as a way to link the new buildings to the original site and to establish historical ties to the original cultic or church community. Focusing on the three locations (San Paolo Fuori le Mura; the cathedral of ancient Parentium; and the shrine of St Felix at Cimitile near Nola in Campania) Yasin addresses the mechanisms by which the reconstructions of three churches frame the meaning of the site and how buildings were

means to shape the perception of time. By showing the way those responsible for carrying out the remodelling of the sites drew on selected elements from the previous structures, Yasin demonstrates that material culture had an important role in shaping the memory of the locations and how the community came to remember them.

Part three opens with a chapter on the Homeric memory culture of Roman Ilium. Brian Rose goes through examples of how the city established a connection to the myth of Troy and demonstrates that the city continued to be a point of reference for every power or individual who felt an interconnectedness with Aeneas and the refugees from Troy. In the following chapter, Zena Kamash addresses the connection between memory and religious sites in Britain. The focus is on how individuals and communities used material culture and cult activities to form individual as well as collective memories. Kamash draws attention to the way the Mithras cult at Carrawburgh and related rituals helped to bring people together in a community based on newly established common religious grounds. The last part of the chapter discusses how different Christian and pagan groups mutated the past to remember to forget and to forget to remember. Focusing on the Mithraeum at Walbrook and the temple to Mercury in Gloucestershire, Kamash points out that Christians build over previous temples to establish a link to the past and at the same time changed the past by using it to shape a new Christian present; at the same time, non-Christians could have tried to save their memories from being erased by, for instance, burying the cult statues of Mithras and Bacchus.

Alicia Jiménez treats the important difference in the way historical or pre-Roman memories were considerably more difficult to establish in the western provinces than in the East. She points to the paradox of how people, states, and communities in the eastern part of the empire had a history before Rome, while western provinces are seen to have had traditions, customs, and folklore. Jiménez points to how Punic inspired figurines, found at the city of Baelo Claudia, suggest that the inhabitants kept some kind of cultural connection to their Punic past. Jiménez's chapter is important because it addresses the essential question of why scholars insist that people in the western part of the empire acted and saw themselves differently than the Greeks in the East.

In his chapter, Felipe Rojas focuses on the Lydian lake areas and how the lakes had always been the centre of stories of kings and gods. He addresses the cultural diversity at the Lydian lakes and points to the way for thousands of years, from the Bronze age to the Roman, the lakes had been the home of both local and universal history, including the rivalries between different powers.

Part four opens with Greg Woolf's chapter on how the Forum Augustum and the temple to Mars Ultor served to shape the memory of people in Rome. The chapter raises a number of methodical questions that relate to the study of people's cultural memory. Woolf discusses the Forum Augustum as an important element in how Augustus tried to shape the memory of himself and

the Julii, and the extent to which different groups of viewer were able to understand the message Augustus hoped to convey. Pointing out how difficult it is to establish in what way Augustus' contemporary Romans understood the building and the propaganda behind it, Woolf turns to the rituals as a key element in how shared memories and history were shaped. Following that thought, it was the rituals performed in the Forum which involved the senate, the equites, and Rome's youth that shaped the meaning of the site, not the architecture or the many different statues set up to establish links between the Julii and the city's greatness.

Steven Rutledge follows the same line of thinking. His focus is on the construction of memories within the Roman elite and on how memories of the past conveyed the accepted truth of Rome's political elite. The focus is on how the patricians had the right to rule other Romans, and on the way members of the elite with roots among the plebs used their origin to position themselves as the champions of the people. Particularly exciting is the section where Rutledge focuses on how socially elevated members of the plebs, men like L. Mummius Achaicus, used the history and memories from the political strife on the Aventine Hill to communicate with the plebs, where, for instance, the temples to Ceres and other deities that tied in with the plebs were a central element in the attempt to base their legitimacy on popular support. Rutledge shows how the plebs continued as an important element to the way members of the elite shaped their particular role in Roman history or how the elite hoped to be remembered in the future. Augustus uses the *tribunicia potestas* to underline that he was the people's protector, and Tiberius carefully reconstructed the temple to Concordia, another temple important to the memory and identity of the plebs, as an attempt to present himself as someone who, like his father, would be looking out for the interests of the people.

The final chapter by Elizabeth Marlowe offers a compelling new reading of the Vicennalia monument, set up in 303 to commemorate the ten and twenty years anniversary of the Tetrarchs. With its seventeen columns, built together with the Rostra on the Forum Romanum, the monument tied in with Rome's political centre and altered a part of the Forum that since the age of Augustus had been kept largely unchanged. Marlowe questions the common interpretation of the monument advanced by the Italian archaeologist Filippo Coarelli, who saw the monument as an attempt on the part of the Tetrarchs to establish a link between themselves and previous Roman emperors by drawing a parallel between Constantius' invasion of Britain, where the navy played an important part, and the sea battles won by Claudius and Augustus.

As the place where Augustus and later Roman generals commemorated their naval victories, the Rostra was one of Rome's important sites of memory, ideal for the celebration of new naval victories. Marlowe elegantly reinterprets the monument. She suggests that it is far from certain that the Tetrarchs were behind the monument. They were rarely in Rome, had little love for the city,

its people, and in particular the senate, and little use for the symbols of oratory or the ideal of political dialogue—features that were very much associated with the Rostra. Instead, Marlowe argues convincingly that it was more likely that the senate was behind the monument and its location. By establishing a link between the Tetrarchs and the ideals of political debate and oratory symbolized by the Rostra, the senators were able to convey their expectations to the emperors and underline, once again, what they saw as the ideal form of government—one where the emperors ruled in respect and in consultation with Rome's political elite. Marlowe's analysis is compelling as it offers an example of by what means the monument and its location in the forum was just as much a memory site—although a different one than previously anticipated. Instead of shaping the memory of how the new kind of Roman emperors commemorated their naval victories at the Rostra or by the way the Tetrarchs hoped to benefit from that tradition in the attempt to legitimize their power, the monument may be read convincingly as a strategy of Rome's political elite to steer the regime towards the ideals with which Augustus was associated, or towards the ways of thinking that were tied to the emperors of the second century, who, so the tradition said, were more open to debate and the opinion of the political establishment in Rome.

This volume offers its readers a large and diverse range of topics and a well-organized introduction both to the study of memory in general and to a number of different domains and problems. It offers new analyses and a range of answers to old questions. The theoretical framework and methodologies offered in the introduction and addressed in several of the chapters can be pursued further in the scholarship richly referenced both in the chapters and in the extensive bibliography. The chapters are well written and easily accessible to non-expert readers. The volume is well produced. Evidently no volume can cover every question or every aspect of a certain field, and it is a common trait of reviewers to want something different from what is offered. Yet, one question that will perhaps deserve more attention in the future is the study of whether (and if so how) provincials of a Greek cultural background established memories which allowed them to see themselves as part of the communities of Roman citizens across the empire. Woolf's chapter could offer one line of enquiry that may provide a new approach to the understanding of the imperial cult. Instead of being an institution that allowed the Greek elite to deal with the coming of the Principate, the imperial cults would instead serve as fora where the population through the repetition of rituals would underline not just their loyalty and submission to Rome, but their belonging to the empire as citizens of Rome or as members of the communities who lived inside its borders.

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