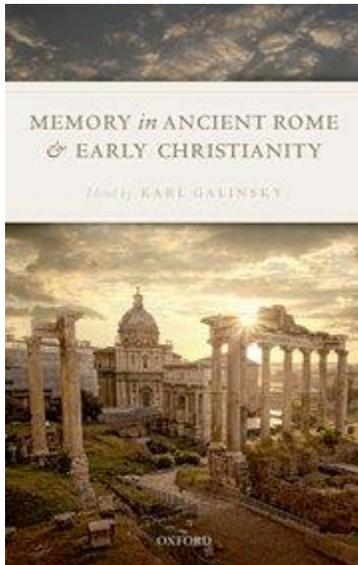




Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2017.07.05

Karl Galinsky, ed., *Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780198744764. Pp. xiv + 406. \$135.00. Hardcover.

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“Memory studies have burgeoned, nay exploded, in the past three decades” (v). Thus opens this collection of essays from the *Memoria Romana* project. Karl Galinsky provides a brief discussion of the relation of memory and history as academic endeavors as well as in Roman perspectives before offering a helpful introduction to contemporary memory studies and its relation to “the presence of *memoria* in Rome” (6–21). The Introduction concludes by framing the thirteen essays included in the book (21–35) and manages to draw them together into a coherent collection, an impressive feat considering the wide-ranging discussions contained therein.

Part I (“Memory and Roman Writers”) comprises three essays. Alain Gowing addresses the “*practical* function of memory” in the decision-making processes of individuals in Tacitus (49). Memory of an esteemed figure from the past (e.g., Tacitus’ father-in-law, Agricola) leads to the cultivation of virtue in the present through imitation. Even so, Gowing finds a paucity of individuals within Tacitus’ narratives who give the “impression of having been inspired by memory and the lessons of the past” (49). For the characters in Tacitus’ historical works, the memory and example of pre-Imperial Rome is waning as the weight of a more recent (i.e., Imperial) past waxes; “*vetus memoria* must inevitably—and rightly—give way to *recens memoria*” (60). This “giving way,” however, is fraught with uncertainty as the emperors whose lives Tacitus narrates manipulate and even abuse memory.

Brigitte Libby explores Vergil’s account of Dido’s misguided comparison of “forgetful” Theseus and “mindful” Aeneas. Libby inquires why Vergil portrays Dido miscasting Aeneas in Thesean hues. The *Aeneid*, she argues, draws attention to a shift in the ideology of memory away from the individual and the past (here, Aeneas’ love for Dido) and toward the communal and the future (viz. Aeneas’ founding of Rome); hence “mindful Aeneas.” Dido’s comparison is significant precisely

because it fails, because Aeneas is not Theseus redux. Theseus thus provides a concrete example of the paradoxical observation that memory depends on the ability to forget (72). More to the point, Libby reveals how Vergil, in the aftermath of Rome's civil war, serves the needs of Augustan rhetoric in that it affirms Rome's link with an illustrious Trojan pedigree even as Rome's post-war glory overshadows Troy's.

Jörg Rüpke begins with the enduring popularity of Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, whose discussion of religion has dominated historians' view of Roman religion. Rüpke identifies memory and history as distinct but "proximate" analytical fields, to which he adds "knowledge," which "reflects upon the medial form of what is known, and upon its systematization, transforming items of information into areas or even systems of knowledge" (92–93). Rüpke turns to the *exempla* in Valerius' first book to uncover how the latter transforms memories into knowledge. Early in the Imperial era, the emphasis of religious discourse was placed on religious *knowledge* rather than the status of religious *personnel*, and this emphasis on knowledge raises immediately the question of who controls knowledge (and so wields its power). Valerius produces "a new history, narrating a religion which is centred on, but no longer confined to, the city of Rome and which offered neatly-packaged historical proof of the benefits of divinization [of the emperor]" (107).

The next two essays form Part II ("Memory and Roman Emperors"). Eric Orlin examines the effect on Roman memory of Augustus' building projects in the Circus Flaminius. Orlin presents the reconstruction and rededication of temples in the Circus Flaminius and the relocation of the temples' *dies natalis* as dislocations of memories embodied in the older temples and commemorated on the older calendar. Changes also were wrought on Roman ritual observances. The Augustan building program affected the route of the triumphal procession, but perhaps more importantly, after 19 BCE triumphs were reserved for members of the emperor's immediate family (135–36). These changes, Orlin argues, encouraged a collective forgetting of Republican Rome (including its social structures) and established the emperor and his family at the heart not just of Roman memory but also Roman identity.

Charles Hedrick raises the question of memory's relationship not to history (the standard pairing) but to experience and fantasy, which Hedrick defines in terms of two axes: one temporal (past ↔ present) and one modal (imagination ↔ sensory; see pp. 147–49). As a result, memory (imagined apprehension of the past) is juxtaposed against experience (sensory apprehension of the present), while history (sensory apprehension of the past) is juxtaposed against fantasy (imagined apprehension of the present). Whatever reservations we may continue to harbor, this model intrigues because it refuses to force a rigid distinction between memory and history as modes of apprehending the past. The problem facing "the vast majority of the population of the Roman world" with respect to Nero—whether he died in 68 or was thought to live on in subsequent "false Neros"—stemmed from the unavailability of "direct sensory experience" of the "real Nero," so that "experience, fantasy, and memory are so confused that they cannot easily be disentangled" (150–51). Hedrick's essay brings to light the fascinating problem of killing Caesar, not in the sense of the difficulties of assassination but rather of the challenges of managing the death of Caesar's public persona and navigating the ascension of a new person into that persona.

Part III ("Roman Honorific Statues: Memory or Just Honour?") begins with Karl-J. Hölkeskamp revisiting an anecdote in which Cicero mocked the honors given to Lucius Antonius by holding

them up alongside those offered to Q. Marcius Tremulus. These honors, expressed through public inscriptions and statuary but also other forms of material presence, interact with each other through (conspicuous) location, movement, and invocation as myth and history in text and performance. The invisible but nonetheless real network of narratives and imagery that made the material *lieux de mémoire* “work” as evocations of the Roman past becomes available to historians in the multi-medial appearances of that network in Roman numismatics, rhetoric, architecture, and elsewhere. As a result, “the Forum Romanum, as a landscape of memory, was in no way a museum-like, static space for non-quotidian and reverent reflection” (203). Instead, the Forum participated in “the dynamic re-present-ation” (204) of the Roman past and so participated in the construction of a distinctly Roman present.

Elke Stein-Hölkeskamp reveals Sulla’s history-altering self-presentation and memorial construction early in the first century BCE. At first glance, Sulla’s self-memorialization appears utterly traditional. On closer inspection, however, “Sulla opened a new chapter in the history of self-representation” (219). First, Sulla placed his gilded equestrian statue next to the Comitium, thereby breaking with tradition and signaling that his memory was not subject to the state, which had exerted an “ancient monopoly over public commemoration in this particular area” (220). Second, Sulla utterly obliterated the memory of his rival, C. Marius, “one of the greatest generals and leading politicians of the previous generation” (229–30). This revolutionary mnemonic practice “marked at least the beginning of the end of equality within the aristocracy” (231) and would, eventually, lead to the end of the Republic and the rise of the Empire.

Diana Ng raises a fundamental question: “Is collective or cultural memory relevant in the study of Roman honorific portraits?” (241). Ng argues, contrary to contemporary emphases on monuments as material sites of memory, that Dio Chrysostom views statues as *private commemorative* and *public honorific* functions. We can appreciate Ng’s caution that “a default of collective memory ... can lead to assumptions about how [public statues] were understood by their viewers” (254). We should not, however, follow Ng in defining “memory” so narrowly that we disconnect it from its functions, including inscribing or commemorating honor or illuminating values and virtue via comparison. Her closing comment, that public monuments “might have been instead expensive tokens of ephemeral relationships” (254), aptly demonstrates the dangers of distinguishing too starkly between memory and its social functions.

Nicola Denzey Lewis opens Part IV (“Memory in Roman Religion and Early Christianity”) and offers an abrupt shift from late-Republican and early-Imperial eras to the Constantinian era (fourth century CE), “where new pagan monuments could not be made, nor books openly circulated” and in which “tombs ... [became] important vehicles of memory” (263). In a social milieu that was rapidly undergoing Christianization and, in the process, forcibly losing its “pagan” heritage (note the reference to “forced oblivion”; 268), the funerary art in the Catacombs of Via Dino Compagni, Cubiculum N, suggests a *patrona* who commissioned scenes expressing her cultural heritage and opposing the waxing (male) Christ-myth with a traditional yet surprising redeemer figure: Alcestis herself! Hercules, on his own a heroic figure who presents Alcestis to her husband, becomes a parodic “answer to Christ” (281). Here, sunk underground, within private space, Cubiculum N becomes a “memory theatre,” staging Rome’s pagan cultural heritage in opposition to (or at least instead of) its new-found Christian matrix.

John Kloppenborg takes the volume in a very different direction with his engagement of conservative appeals to memory and oral tradition in historical Jesus scholarship. He applies experimental studies of memory—two studies in particular, one classic¹ and one more recent²—in order to urge “strong caution against excessive claims about the infallibility of memory untutored by written documents” (292). He then applies ethnographic memory studies in order to bolster critiques of Kenneth Bailey’s inordinately influential model of “informal controlled” transmission of oral tradition. The second half of his essay examines five instances of the measure-for-measure aphorism, which exhibits “remarkable lexical stability” even as its “form and meaning ... [are] more malleable” (304–5). Kloppenborg ends with four observations, all of which undermine the view that memory and performance are conservative (or preservative): even in instances when an aphorism’s wording may be conserved, its interpretation and function may vary considerably across performances.

Jodi Magness turns her attention to the claim that certain details in the Gospel of John reflect actual history. She argues that, although some details from John’s Gospel refer to actual sites known from archaeological explorations of Jerusalem, these details are insufficient to anchor the Johannine Jesus in history. Magness’s essay is a helpful and important corrective to historians who too-easily assume that geographically and/or historically accurate details “prove” the historical authenticity of the traditions narrated in the vicinity of those details. Even so, the historical results of her essay seem unfortunately languid. She complains that Shimon Gibson’s analysis of the Pool of Bethesda “is possible but speculative” (327). Her own historical proposals, however, are introduced with phrases such as “it is just as likely” (328), “John may have” (329), that a certain tradition “could either antedate or post-date 70” (331), and so on. On the one hand, these qualifications serve her purposes well; the verisimilitude of some of the Fourth Gospel’s details “does not *prove* they were associated with the historical Jesus” (325; my emphasis). On the other hand, when she concludes that “the Fourth Gospel tells us much more about the author’s context and agenda (and those of his sources) than it does about the historical Jesus” (340), she leans out ahead of her data and relies instead on the strength of the consensus against John as a historical source.

Milton Moreland examines the development of “new aetiologies and ritualized commemorations” (345) among some Christian groups in the second century, particularly aetiologies focused on Peter’s presence, martyrdom, and burial in Rome. Moreland’s essay helpfully locates the generation and function of Petrine memories in the social milieu of second-century Rome, especially amidst such influential teachers as Marcion, Valentinus, and Justin. He emphasizes “the idea that social memory grows out of current group interests and is manifested in related sites of commemoration” (347), so that not only Peter’s prominence but even his presence in Rome is a discursive rather than historical reality. Despite the clarity with which Moreland presents the function of Peter-in-Rome memories, his analysis unfortunately severs second-century Christian discourse from any connection to the actual history of Roman Christianity. Moreland’s Roman Christians appear as mnemonic titans, conjuring the past without any concern for what actually happened (here, presumably, that Peter never ventured to Rome) or for the discursive claims of others (e.g., those who might lay claim to Peter’s memory at some other locale). Moreland portrays

¹ F. C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932).

² April DeConick, “Human Memory and the Sayings of Jesus: Contemporary Exercises in the Transmission of Jesus Tradition,” in *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospels* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 135–79.

Roman Christianity as an atemporal social construction; he ably explains *how* Rome’s second-century Christians created and manipulated Peter’s memory but not *why* they should turn to Peter (rather than, say, whichever figure[s]—now nameless—who brought the nascent *Christos* movement to Rome) to localize their discursive and commemorative interests.

The single essay comprising Part V (“A Perspective from Neuropsychology”) brings the volume to a close. In “The Neuroscience of Memory,” Ann-Kathrin Stock, Hannah Gajsar, and Onur Güntürkün provide a brief but informative “outline of the constituents and characteristics of neural systems that jointly create our memories” (369). The heart of the essay addresses four factors of memory formation: (i) perception and the selective attending to stimuli, (ii) storing a “memory trace” in the cortical areas involved in the original perception/event (and the role of the hippocampus in connecting diverse cortical areas that encode memory), (iii) retrieval of an memory trace through the activation of established neuronal networks, and (iv) the paradoxical situation that frequent activation of a neuronal network consolidates a memory trace (i.e., makes remembering easier and more efficient) and associates it with additional memory traces (thereby increasing the risk of distortion). The authors acknowledge (but do not discuss in detail) the irreducibly social nature of memory even at the level of the brain. They also employ a rather simplistic language of “original true memories” (388) versus “distortions” or “memory of incorrect facts or events that have never happened” (386), though the substance of their essay acknowledges that actual, specific memories are messier than this language implies.

Taken in its entirety, this collection of essays brings together a broad and varied *cadre* (with a hat-tip to Halbwachs) of perspectives on memory, the Roman past, and the emergence of Christianity. In the preface, the editor described the volume as “an engagement with current memory scholarship beyond routine invocations of ‘cultural’, ‘collective’, or ‘social’ memory” (v). This description applies to some essays better than others. For example, the editor’s Introduction, as a wide-ranging and order-imposing preamble that herds these essays in a more or less unified direction, is reminiscent of another very helpful introduction to memory studies for scholars of antiquarian interests: Alan Kirk’s “Social and Cultural Memory.”³ Similarly, perhaps the most unique and interesting feature of this book is the final essay; one does not frequently encounter neuroscientific discussions of memory, neuronal networks, and brain plasticity in books on Roman or early Christian history! Between these two bookends, Libby’s discussion of memory and intertextuality, Hedrick’s quadrangular model of memory, history, experience, and fantasy, Stein-Hölkeskamp’s prefiguration of the collapse of the Republic in Sulla’s take-over of Roman monumental memory, and Denzey Lewis’ presentation of a pagan response to the Empire’s Christianization stand out as especially read-worthy. One might have wished for more—even for *some*—interaction with the first and last essays within the intervening contributions. In the absence thereof, the structure encountered in the Introduction does not run right through the reading of the rest of the volume. Even so, these essays provide an admirable example of the uses to which historians of antiquity are putting the amorphous field of memory studies.

³ Alan Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory,” in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, (eds. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher; SemeiaSt 52; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005), 1–24.