

T. Barton in J. Elsner and J. Masters (eds), *Reflections of Nero* (1994)). Otherwise, it is not surprising that in such a richly developed book, one might disagree with interpretations of individual inscriptions (e.g., there seems no reason to believe that the marble copy of the *clipeus virtutis* was displayed in the *curia* at Arles (29 n. 53)), but there is almost nothing to fault in its presentation (apart from a reference to Gros 2000–2001 (39 n. 87) which perhaps corresponds to the entry in the bibliography for Gros 2001–2002).

What this book does really effectively is demonstrate that inscriptions have a crucial part to play, as texts and monuments, in contributing to our understanding of many aspects of Roman culture and society, and that inscriptions are not just of limited historical use, merely illuminating the world of a rich, literate élite. It also illustrates the necessity of ‘reading’ inscribed texts in a sophisticated manner, not assuming them to be objective documents.

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H. I. FLOWER, *THE ART OF FORGETTING: DISGRACE & OBLIVION IN ROMAN POLITICAL CULTURE*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. Pp. xxiv + 400. ISBN 0-8078-3063-1. US\$59.95.

H. I. Flower’s book is a study in the politics of memory in Rome, with a special emphasis on ‘memory sanctions’ imposed on those regarded by the powers-that-be as public enemies (whether or not officially defined as such). After an introductory discussion of the social and political functions of memory and officially-ordained oblivion, ch. 2 deals with a wide range of Greek practices in this field, including erasure of honorific inscriptions, removal of statutes, abolition of previously voted honours, razing of houses, and denial of proper burial — all applied to those who were branded as tyrants or enemies of the city. F. suggests that Greek examples — in particular, the decrees against Philip V and his predecessors’ memory voted after his attack on Athens in 200 B.C. — had a strong influence on the later Roman tradition of memory sanctions, while the traditions on the application of such sanctions, by public authority, against suspected aspirants to *regnum* in the early Republic were, according to her, late Republican constructions. The latter suggestion is possible, though by no means certain. Of course, even if there was a kernel of truth in those traditions, this does not rule out later Greek influences. On the other hand, the brutal logic of civil strife and the extreme gravity with which tyranny was viewed in ancient city-states may have influenced Roman behaviour in this field no less than either ancient Roman precedents, real or imagined, or more or less contemporary Greek examples.

Although sceptical about the tradition regarding Spurius Cassius, Spurius Maelius, and Marcus Manlius Capitolinus as eventually shaped, F. suggests in ch. 3 that they reflect genuine cases of memory sanctions applied by family rather than by the state — as demonstrated by the ban on the *praenomen* Marcus maintained by the Manlii. This, she argues, was the original Roman way, reflecting the pivotal role of aristocratic clans in that society. Ch. 4 deals with official memory sanctions in the turbulent late Republic. Caius Gracchus is said to have been the first Roman to suffer officially-imposed memory sanctions (though it is an overstatement to say that his ‘laws were annulled’ (76); most of them, and the more important ones, were not). In the case of Saturninus in 100 B.C., the posthumous sanctions included, remarkably, the banning of his portrait. A discussion of the legal basis for this decision (and perhaps for other senatorial decisions in this field) would be useful here. What exactly was Sextus Titus found guilty of when he was exiled in 98 B.C., as Cicero tells us, for possessing a portrait of Saturninus in his house? If it was *maiestas*, this would be highly relevant to the history of this offence under the Republic; in any case, there is a sinister foretaste of imperial *maiestas* about this story. Sulla, with the extraordinary lengths to which he went by penalizing the descendants of his victims (a measure which perversely survived the dismantling of his ‘constitution’), is the main (anti-)hero of ch. 5.

Ch. 6 deals with the politics of memory and oblivion under Augustus, Tiberius and Gaius. Regarding Augustus, F. rightly stresses the fact that he failed to suppress the memory of Antonius — a decision that, given the circumstances, was far from trivial. Claudius’ delicate balancing act between his wish to distance himself from the memory of Gaius and considerations of regime and family continuity is examined in detail. Ch. 7 examines the ‘Julio-Claudian innovation’ of public sanctions against women — in a state that was now headed not just by a ruler but by a ruling family, with the resultant crucial political importance of the imperial ‘princesses’. The changing fortunes of Nero’s posthumous memory are examined in ch. 8. Here and elsewhere, F. rightly

stresses that public memory could not be fully controlled from above. In the introductory ch. 1, she had mentioned that after Agrippina's murder by Nero (who claimed that his mother had committed suicide having failed to assassinate him), a sack, obviously symbolizing the parricide's punishment, was attached to one of his statues. This way of publicly challenging Nero's version of the events, according to F., 'was clever because it stopped short of actually damaging the emperor's statue, which would have been a crime' (10). This apparently assumes that 'merely' presenting the emperor as a parricide, without physically damaging his statue, would not have been considered a crime — a rather optimistic view of Roman criminal justice under Nero. One suspects that the cleverest thing that the person or persons in question did was to avoid getting caught. The memory of Domitian, dealt with in ch. 9, suffered the double misfortune of being condemned by the Senate and, with particular vehemence, in the writings of Tacitus and Pliny, surely reflecting the weight of senatorial opinion that was taken into account (and perhaps shared) by the 'enlightened emperors'. The chapter ends with Antoninus Pius' refusal to countenance a posthumous senatorial condemnation of Hadrian, rightly stressing the significance of his insistence on the emperor's supremacy in this field. Ch. 10, with an overview of the evolution of Roman practices as regards memory sanctions, sums up the author's views on their role and significance.

Since, as F. rightly insists, 'the politics of the present was expressed in terms of the narrative of the past' (276), the scope of her topic is vast; few aspects of Roman political history since the late Republic are unconnected with it. A more detailed discussion would often be desirable (for example, on the list of emperors providing precedents for Vespasian's powers in the *Lex de imperio Vespasiani* and the significance of including or failing to include past rulers in it (281)), but in most cases this is precluded by the limits of space. Despite these limits, the book presents a comprehensive, coherent, and highly instructive picture, drawing on a great variety of sources. It is at its best when examining and interpreting physical evidence — a remarkably rich corpus of relevant inscriptions from Rome, Italy, and the provinces assembled for this purpose. Taking a decision to impose memory sanctions was one thing, implementing it effectively and consistently quite another. F. closely examines the practical effects of such decisions: what actually happened to statues; whether, and where, the 'condemned' name was indeed erased, fully or partially (sometimes this was done quite perfunctorily, without any effort to effect a real erasure). Such findings are potentially no less significant than the information on policy decisions in this field contained in the literary sources, though they are often difficult to interpret: chance, local circumstances that are beyond reconstruction, and sheer negligence must all have played a part. The shadow of Agrippina bitterly complains, in *Octavia*, that Nero has 'destroyed her statues and inscriptions throughout the world, on pain of death'; however, physical evidence shows that 'outside the capital there was apparently no systematic effort to attack her memory, even in Italy' (192). F. has produced a very valuable book on a fascinating and important subject.

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C. BADEL, *LA NOBLESSE DE L'EMPIRE ROMAIN: LES MASQUES ET LA VERTU*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2005. Pp. 498. ISBN 2-87673-415-X. €29.00.

Who exactly constituted the Roman *nobilitas*? Badel's exhaustive study explores uses of the term *nobilis* during the course of the Principate in both epigraphic and literary contexts — a topic which has, as he stresses, received little attention in recent scholarship. A detailed introductory chapter sets out the debates concerning Roman usage during the Republic. The main body of this lengthy study is devoted to developments under the Principate, while a suggestive final chapter explores continuity and change in the use of the term *nobilis* and its cognates in relation to élites in the states which emerged after the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. B.'s focus is almost exclusively on the Latin-speaking Western Empire. Indeed it is striking (and one of the most interesting things to emerge from B.'s study) that Greek texts, even the work of the senatorial historian Cassius Dio, offer no consistent equivalent to this Latin term (in what one might call its semi-technical sense) and seem largely unconcerned by it.

B. begins by endorsing Gelzer's position with regard to the Republic that the term *nobiles* was used to denote not a juridically defined category, but rather those of patrician origin as well as the agnate descendants of a consul. This emerges clearly in Cicero's attempt to promote his client Murena, who, he argues, would have been *nobilis*, if only his very talented and deserving father