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ALEIDA ASSMANN: *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011. ISBN 978-0-521-16587-7 (pb), ISBN 978-0-521-76437-7 (hb). 406 pp. GBP 19.99, USD 34.99 (pb) GBP 60, USD 99 (hb).

The issue of memory has received much scholarly attention in recent years and this volume on Cultural Memory will be an invaluable tool for all dealing with this subject. Assman explains that the current interest in memory is the result of the shattering and subsequent remodelling of cultural barriers across the world in the 1980s (Chapter 3). Translated from the original 1999 German edition, this book consists of 15 chapters, an introduction and conclusion, and explores the phenomenon of memory in literature and art from antiquity to the modern day. It consists of three parts, namely Functions, Media, and Archives. Each of these is subdivided into between 4 and 7 chapters, each dealing with an aspect of Cultural Memory. Unfortunately, an end bibliography is lacking, as works are cited in the footnotes as and when they are mentioned in the text, which slightly hinders the ease of use of this book. The index is short and the book is best navigated with the help of the chapter titles. The broad timeframe of the work allows the author to show how attitudes towards memory have changed over time as well as how people approached it, reacted to it, and thought about it in different eras. The book is accessible to a popular audience through its clarity of expression and varied nature of the evidence presented here even though it is clearly meant for a scholarly audience.

The introduction provides a valuable background to the work and illustrates how the process of remembering is often not a deliberate act but is reconstructive; in other words, memory is mutable and can be manipulated. Part 1 (Functions) connects memory with commemoration and shows how remembering the dead is a paradigm of cultural memory. The act of commemoration made the deceased immortal and Assman demonstrates the central role poets played for this in antiquity, as *fama* could only be bestowed upon the dead by poets such as Homer. This notion and worship of *fama* was revived in the Renaissance, though at this time people also gained an awareness of how access to the past was blocked through forgetting and dislocation. The connection between memory and forgetting occurs throughout the volume, illustrating the notion that we collectively and individually define ourselves by what we forget and remember.

The medium of memory and its connection with writing is explored in Part 2. Assman notes how it is often not possible to approach memory directly but that this requires 'an intermediary level of reflection'. Image is one such medium and through it memory can be resurrected, reanimated, and, thus, kept alive. However, while images can be used for this purpose it was writing which was truly essential for this and Assman notes how the ancient Egyptians already believed that writing was the most secure medium for the preservation of memory (Chapter 8). The tension between writ-

ing and image for the preservation of memory is noted as Assman explores an interesting contrast that occurred during the Renaissance. While English poets and scholars believed that rebirth could only take place through words, Italian artists thought that art was the true medium for this. Assman then shows the effects of book printing on memory and how writing became ephemeral and commonplace through this.

The chapters in the last part (Archives) contain further case studies but the focus shifts here from literature to art. It explores how artists such as Anselm Kiefer examine and use memory and forgetting in their works. Assman, thus, displays a multidisciplinary approach both in subject and material here. The last part focuses in particular on memory of the post-war period and how it is preserved and has become institutionalized. This is important, as Assman already noted in the introduction how the Second World War shattered cultural memory.

The particular strength of this work is how the author is able to call upon a vast body of evidence and knowledge in order to trace the uses of memory throughout history and can successfully discuss and connect views of memory as vastly disparate as those of Cicero, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth. This variety of approaches is not just shown in ancient authors but also in her handling of philosophers, sociologists, and artists. This results in an important and interesting volume which will be useful for scholars from various backgrounds. All in all, this combines into a comprehensive and thought-provoking overview of the history, use, and manipulation of memory, and this work will provide a theoretical framework for many scholarly works to come.

Ghislaine van der Ploeg

LUCA FEZZI: *Il rimpianto di Roma. Res publica, libertà 'neoromane' e Benjamin Constant, agli inizi del terzo millennio*. Studi sul Mondo Antico 2. Mondadori Education, Milano 2012. ISBN 978-88-00-74429-4. X, 182 pp. EUR 15.

It may be said that there is an ongoing renaissance in the study of Roman Republicanism and its later reception. One of the main avenues has been the exploration of what has been dubbed “neo-Roman” thought, which has emphasized issues such as representative forms of popular participation in government and the conception of liberty. Both of these themes had, of course, a rich history in Roman constitutional thought that percolated into the European tradition from Machiavelli onwards.

Fezzi’s volume on the idea of *res publica* and *libertas* in the works of Benjamin Constant thus comes on the heels of a veritable torrent of scholarship. For an author, this brings both challenges and advantages. The primary advantage is that the theme is familiar and accepted, while the main challenge is that to say something new becomes exceedingly difficult. Fezzi himself appears to recognize this, situating his work at the outset beside the three big names in the field, Fergus Millar, Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner. To study ancient and modern ideas comparatively is naturally an age-old pursuit, one that Constant himself undertook in his “The Liberty of Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns” of 1819. Often dubbed the founder of modern liberalism, Constant was a crucial character whose peripatetic life took him to numerous intellectual and legal traditions that influenced his thought, bridging British conceptions of representative government and French