DAMNATIO MEMORIAE

E. R. VARNER: *Mutilation and Transformation.* Damnatio Memoriae *and Roman Imperial Portraiture.* (Monumenta Graeca et Romana 10.) Pp. x + 340, pls. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004. Cased, €199, US$249. ISBN: 90-04-13577-4.

The use of imagery is a well-known way of presenting Roman imperial authority. Portraits of emperors and members of the imperial family were of major importance for presenting political authority to all parts of society. The power of portraits, therefore, is strongly connected to ideological conceptions. This is reflected by the way in which images were dealt with in antiquity. From the sources it becomes clear that a portrait was perceived as a substitute for the person represented. This is corroborated by the way in which images could be treated after an emperor had been overthrown. V. says that: 'his images were systematically mutilated and physically altered into the likenessess of other emperors. This process, popularly known as *damnatio memoriae*, is the first widespread example of the negation of artistic monuments for political and ideological reasons and it has inexorably altered the material record of Roman culture' (p. 1). The observation about the impact of damnation on the preservation of the Roman material record is very true, but this explanation of the term *damnatio memoriae* has some shortcomings. A much better point of departure would have been the remark that: 'The term *damnatio memoriae* covers a wide array of post mortem sanctions against a condemned individual's memory and monuments' (p. 2 n. 5). To be fair, V. adds to the definition, but never systematically. Throughout the discussion of the phenomenon V. treats the Romans' preoccupation with reputation and memory, and the implications of the destruction of someone's representation in word and image. As the aims pursued, V. lists cancellation from the collective consciousness, expressing loyalty to the new emperor, while at the same time showing contempt for his predecessor and setting a negative example for future emperors (pp. 2–3). In sculpture, various measures against imperial images of a condemned emperor or one of his close circle could be taken. Images were partly or completely destroyed, or taken out of public view and warehoused. In the latter case, they might be reused immediately or later, recarved into the representation of another emperor. In the second half of the first chapter (pp. 12–20) V. shows that posthumous sanctions aimed against the honour and memory of victims of *damnatio memoriae* were not an invention of the Roman imperial period, notwithstanding their employment on a large scale, but that precedents and parallels of dealing violently with representations of rulers can be found in the Near East, Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Egypt, Greece and Sicily, and the Roman Republic.

After the discussion of the developments, implications, and precedents of *damnatio memoriae*, V. continues with the concrete execution of *damnatio* in images. Chapters 2–10 (pp. 21–224) deal chronologically with emperors and members of the imperial family who have suffered damnation. The structure of all of these chapters is basically the same: a short historical background is given about the victims of *damnatio* under discussion, after which a description of some mutilated and reworked portraits of the condemned follows. These descriptions illustrate the practices of how imperial portraits were treated after an emperor was condemned, but somewhat delay the reading. Especially since there are also nine catalogues in which the mutilated and transformed statues mentioned in the corresponding chapters are discussed, it would have been

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convenient if the technical discussion of the images was confined to these catalogues. At the end of each chapter, a conclusion recapitulates the most important aspects of the representational consequences of the condemnation of the emperor or members of his family discussed. These result in some interesting observations, showing that the way in which images of the condemned were dealt with varied in time.

In the catalogues (pp. 225–88) are given not only a detailed description of the mutilated and transformed statues, but also many references to further literature. Furthermore, the index of museums and collections deserves to be mentioned, as well as the addition of generally excellent photographs of 215 objects (mostly statuary). The book is well produced, which is only to be expected, considering its price. It is, however, marred by a number of typographical errors, inconsistent use of italics, and incomplete references.

In general, the book is a good contribution to an important topic. Imperial *damnatio memoriae* is interesting and regularly discussed. However, often *damnatio* itself is not the scope, but is only hinted at. In other cases, where the focus is on damnation, this is often confined to a very specific case, e.g. discussion of a reworked head of Nero. In this respect V.'s book adds substantially to the present state of scholarship about *damnatio memoriae*. The book offers a large collection of material both directly (by means of the statues discussed and displayed) and indirectly (bibliographical references). However, the book is unclear about its methodological framework. Nowhere does the author state what the purpose of the book is, nor does he summarize his findings. Admittedly, it becomes clear soon enough that the book offers an overview of particularly the statuary evidence of condemned emperors, but some readers may be disappointed. The observation, for instance, that there is a development in the use of *damnatio memoriae* during the principate could have been explored more systematically (but see pp. 4–5 and then *passim* within the chapters, especially in the conclusions on pp. 154–5, 198–9 and 223–4). The merit of the volume under discussion is that it has made it possible for others to pursue such questions.

In conclusion, the book could be perceived as being 'merely' a catalogue of mutilated and transformed imperial statues, but in fact it has more to offer. It is a pity that its full potential has not been realized. Nevertheless, the book will be of use to anyone who is interested in the topic of *damnatio memoriae* in Roman imperial times.

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BEIRUT

L. JONES HALL: *Roman Berytus. Beirut in Late Antiquity*. Pp. xxiv + 375, map, pls. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Cased, £60. ISBN: 0-415-28919-X.

The aim of this book is 'to present not only an urban history of the city of Berytus but also a reconstruction of the self-identification of the people of Berytus' (p. 1). To that purpose, nine chapters deal with the city's geographical setting; its dependence on trade and artisan products; the continuing effect of its unique position as the only Roman *colonia* in the Levant that was (re)founded as a veteran settlement; public buildings; the adjusting provincial administration to which the city was subject; pagan cults and their reaction to the growing dominance of the public religious sphere by Christianity; the study of Roman law (which made Beirut into one of the most 'Roman' cities of the

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