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LIVING THROUGH THE DEAD
Burial and commemoration in the Classical world

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Memoria and *Damnatio Memoriae*. Preserving and erasing identities in Roman funerary commemoration

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Introduction

The Romans attached great importance to the preservation of memory. An investigation of the monuments they erected to ensure remembrance after death gives us profound insight into the ways in which texts and images were employed to convey information on peoples' lives. Funerary inscriptions, in particular, aided in defining a person's identity and in embedding that person in a well-defined social and cultural context. The naming of the deceased in an epitaph, as well as the dedicator of the memorial, commemorated both the dead and the relationship to family, friends, heirs and patrons that was publicly acknowledged in the inscription. Furthermore the text could be accompanied by a likeness of the deceased alone or with other individuals with whom bonds existed. It was considered important for the sake of memory to be able to contemplate portraits and statues of loved ones from time to time and to take consolation in sorrow from images of the departed. But what happened to the memory of the dead when their funerary monuments were neglected, vandalized, recycled or – much worse – if they were intentionally mutilated or had their texts and portraits erased and destroyed in order to condemn the dead to oblivion? These issues are explored in the following discussion.

Funerary monuments and the preservation of memory

The numerous tombs situated outside the walls of Romans settlements in many ways represented an extension of the public and private architecture inside the town. In an important sense the diversity present in the social life of the living community was reflected in the cemeteries filled over decades and centuries with monuments of various shapes and sizes that commemorated generations of the dead (Fig. 4.1). The physical appearance of funerary monuments and the texts written on them made it possible for

Figure 4.1 Some of the tombs lining the well-travelled road outside the Herculaneum Gate at Pompeii (photo, Author).

people to display and negotiate status, belonging, and social relations in the community. Ethnic and civic identities, education, public careers, professions, and complex family ties were expressed through these tombs and their commemorative inscriptions.

Whether located on the main roads in suburban and rural settings, or in the smaller, more intimate burial chambers on those thoroughfares, the tombs, their images, and their texts needed and addressed an audience (MacMullen 1982; Koortbojian 1996; Carroll 2006, 48–58). The funerary monument, according to Roman legal sources, was designed to preserve memory, and it was designed to reflect and be appropriate to the essence and standing (*substantia et dignitas*) of an individual or family (*Digest* 11.7.2.6; 35.1.27). The size and form of a monument, the building material, and the surrounding structures, gardens and other features of a burial plot were carefully chosen to convey a message and information about the person commemorated. Sextus Iulius Aquila from Gaul, for example, specified in his living will (*CIL* XIII.5708/*ILS* 8379) that "the finest imported marble" from Luna, modern Carrara, in Italy was to be employed in his tomb in Langres, and he also provided instructions for his statue and the landscaping around his tomb (Hatt 1951, 66–69; Lavagne 1987, 162–163). By leaving behind a lasting memorial, and especially by employing monumental

writing to convey essential information on status and identity, one was thought to be able to "escape the grave" or "live on after death" (Horace, *Odes* 3.30.1–9; Petronius, *Satyricon* 71). The inscribed words on funerary monuments were clearly viewed as a mnemonic aid for future generations. It was *memoria*, a notion that encompassed fame and reputation in life and in death, that gave people the hope of some form of an afterlife (Varner 2001, 46).

Roman poets such as Naevius, Pacuvius (Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 1.24.2–4), and Propertius (*Elegies* 2.1.71), and prolific authors such as Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 5.5), looked "forward to posterity" and trusted in their published works to "prolong their memories", but they were nevertheless greatly concerned about the survival of their name in a permanent medium such as inscribed stone. Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 9.19.3) knew that noble men would be famous for their deeds; nevertheless he held that "everyone who has done some great and memorable deed should…not only be excused but even praised if he wishes to ensure the immortality he has earned, and by the very words of his epitaph seeks to perpetuate the undying glory of his name." Recording something demonstrates a will to be remembered, and this attitude towards monumental writing and the perpetuation of memory persisted throughout the Roman period, even into the fifth century AD. In about AD 467, Sidonius Apollinaris learned of the desecration of his grandfather's funerary monument in Lyon, so he wrote to his nephew asking him to set things right (*Letters* 3.12.5). Most importantly, the nephew was to have the text Sidonius sent him carved in a new epitaph so that the memory of his grandfather would survive.

Inscriptions highlight the intimate connection between the written words and the spoken ones, and the epitaphs being read aloud enabled the words spoken at death and burial to survive for posterity (Carroll 2007/2008). A funerary inscription from Lyon (*CIL* XIII.2104) illustrates this point well: "Since the letters on the stone preserve my voice, it will live on through your voice when you read these lines" (Häusle 1980, 46–47). The dead, through their inscriptions, often asked the passer-by to call out his or her name. Perhaps the inscribed texts on funerary monuments replicated the calling out to the dead (*conclamatio*) in the primary ritual at death and burial, a phenomenon that in some ways was analogous to the written spells in Egyptian and Graeco-Roman texts that were considered an effective replication of the original, verbal rite (Frankfurter 1994, 195; Graf 1997, 131–133). *Vale* or *Salve* was called out three times to the deceased immediately after death and again when friends and family completed the funeral feast (*silicernium*) at the tomb and were taking their final leave of the dead nine days later. Anyone who passed a funerary monument and spoke the name of the deceased and the words *vale* or *salve* inscribed many epitaphs, therefore, repeated this ritual action and thereby conjured up the memory of an individual (*CIL* VI.32485/*ILS* 8123; *CIL* XIII.4280/*ILS* 8124). The permanent text on the stone also could preserve the words spoken at the funeral, the *laudatio funebris* (Crawford 1941/42; Flower 1996, 145–150). The inscribed *laudatio* on various funerary inscriptions (*CIL* VI.10230/ILS 8394; *CIL*

VI.37965) symbolically extended the funeral in time and allowed the eulogy to be recalled long after the spoken words had been forgotten.

The commemorative texts on tombs have in common that they all preserve the name of the deceased. The survival of one's name was of great importance in Roman society. For Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 5.8), at least, nothing affected him so strongly "as the desire of a lasting name." This sentiment is echoed in the epitaph (*CIL* VI.1343) of Marcus Antonius Antius Lupus, a military tribune put to death by the emperor Commodus. The inscription expressed the conviction that, despite his treatment by Commodus, his *name* would be a cause for perpetual celebration. Here we have the idea of *memoria* clearly meaning fame and posthumous reputation. Eloquent testimony to the importance of a name is found also in an epitaph (*CIL* XII.5276) of the early first century AD from Narbonne that reads: "…So that they have not died unknown with the loss of their name on foreign soil, the inscription on this little stone speaks of them."

The memory of the physical appearance of the deceased also could be secured by commissioning a permanent memorial bearing a likeness of one or more individuals. This might include images of illustrious family members who had died several years or even generations before, all of them part of an ancestor gallery. Particularly the leading noble families of Rome and the urban centres of the empire used portraiture to remind others of the great deeds of their ancestors, holding up these men as standards of behaviour for others. Funerary monuments with a portrait of the deceased or with multiple portraits of the family became fairly common amongst the middle and working classes as well as in the freedman sector of society in Italy and western Europe by the first century AD, the many variant combinations of portraits suggesting that the commissioner could specify what images should be carved. Some of these images may have been fashioned from death masks, although their actual survival is very rare (Pollini 2007). Approximately twenty death masks survive in various states of preservation. They have been found in Rome, Paris and Lyon, among other places, the masks having been taken from the faces of babies, children, youths and elderly men and women whose likeness in plaster, stone or bronze undoubtedly was to be fashioned from the casts of their faces (Fig. 4.2; Drerup 1980; Audin 1986, 85–86; Lasfargues 2000, 90–91; Coulon 2004, 164–165). Where we can identify the status of those individuals from whom facial casts were taken, we are not dealing with the aristocracy, suggesting that the custom of making portraits of members of the family using this technique had, by the first century AD at least, spread beyond the nobility.

Such portraits reminded the survivors of their loved ones, and they were a source of comfort in dealing with grief. Imagination and the act of reminiscence and recollection could keep a loved one alive in the heart and mind of the survivor. In the words of a foster-parent grieving for his child Asiatica in Careiae in northern Italy: "I often imagine your face to comfort myself" (*CIL* XI.3771). But fashioning an image in a permanent material could considerably extend the period of remembrance, as a text

commissioned by Cornelia Galla from Ammaedara in North Africa demonstrates. The epitaph she had carved for her dead husband tells us that "she put up a marble portrait of him…to keep the memory of their earlier life alive", adding that "his noble face will comfort her eyes and soul for a long time…." (*CIL* VIII.434). One might even engage in conversation with the image (*simulacrum*) of a loved one (Propertius, *Elegies* 4.11.83–84). Clearly there was a very close relationship between the image and the person it depicted. It acted as a focus of affection and emotion, reminded the beholder of the character and personality of that person, and was an active prompt

Figure 4.2 Plaster death mask negative of an infant found in a Roman grave in Paris, Musée Carnavalet (photo, courtesy of SAEML Parisienne de Photographie).

in conjuring up memories that not only the immediate family might share in the present and the future. As we shall see below, because of its intimate connection with its prototype, the portrait could be an easy and effective target for anyone wishing to dishonour the person depicted and eradicate his memory by mutilating or removing his image.

Loss of memory and anonymity

Given the importance of the survival of one's name, burials without texts and without a record of the name of the departed raise questions about the preservation of memory. Many of the gravestones (*columellae*) in the approximate form of a stylised human torso and head from Pompeii and other Campanian towns bear no inscribed name at all (Kockel 1983; D'Ambrosio and De Caro 1983 and 1987; Magalhaes 1999; De' Spagnolis 2001). Nevertheless, each of these was positioned above an urn containing cremated human remains, and a lead or tile pipe for liquid offerings in memory of the deceased led directly to that cinerary urn buried in the ground (see Lepetz and

Figure 4.3 Group of columellae in the south-east cemetery of Pompeii in the Fondo Pacifico area (photo, Author).

van Andringa, this volume). If the *columellae* were anepigraphic, the individual burials within the plot remained anonymous, however many of these monuments were set up within the boundaries of a tomb or were connected with a built tomb marked by a titular inscription giving the owner's family name. But there are groups of *columellae* that stand on their own, sometimes arranged in a way to suggest that they are grouped to mark the burial places of a family or household (Fig. 4.3). These have no enclosure walls around them, and no inscription naming the owner of the plot of land on which they are clustered. Here probably only the immediate family and friends would know the identity of those buried in this constellation of stone markers.

There also were many who simply could not afford to have any permanent monument, and were therefore condemned to oblivion, either immediately or fairly quickly after interment. The evidence at a number of Roman sites suggests that burials often were completely anonymous, with no marker of any kind in any material. In the Isola Sacra cemetery between Rome's harbour towns of Ostia and Portus, several hundred burials of the second and third centuries have been found which consist of bodies interred in the soil, in terracotta sarcophagi or covered by terracotta tiles, or cremated and deposited in ceramic urns with the neck of a broken, uninscribed amphora visible above ground to mark the spot and to facilitate the pouring of libations to the dead (Calza 1940; Baldassare *et al.* 1996). This area was long thought to be the cemetery of the poor, although more recent research has shown that there was no particular area exclusively

for poor burials at Isola Sacra or anywhere else in Italy (Graham 2006a and 2006b). The dead buried without a name suffered a loss of self and were forgotten. It was not the case that the poor were not interested in having their memory survive, rather unfortunate circumstance and the lack of even modest means resulted in anonymous burial and what Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 3.5.4) called "the injustice of oblivion."

Neglect was another factor affecting the preservation of memory. This could involve the oversight of the survivors to inscribe a text on a monument. Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 6.10.4–6) wrote about the neglected tomb of the consul Verginius Rufus in AD 106: "[The tomb] is still unfinished…I was filled with indignation and pity to think that nine years after Verginius' death his remaining ashes should still lie neglected without a name or inscription, although his glorious memory travels over the whole world. And yet he had made proper provision for recording in verse the immortal deed whereby his name lives forever…The dead [are] so easily forgotten that we ought to set up our own monuments and anticipate all the duties of our heirs." Here we should note that, although Pliny (*Letters* 2.1) was certain that Verginius would "continue to live forever" due to his glorious reputation, the lack of an inscription on his tomb was a serious hindrance to the perpetuation of that glory. The failure to complete a monument was another sign of neglect, and this pertains to sarcophagi in particular. Marble sarcophagi from the eastern Mediterranean and Italy often were manufactured with sections such as epitaph panels and portrait busts incomplete, so that the purchaser could have important personal details incorporated into the finished product. That this was not always carried out is apparent by the number of semi-finished and incomplete sarcophagi in the Roman world (Koch 1990, 64–65; Walker 1990, 83; Carroll 2006, 112–114). The memory of the person interred ultimately was lost.

The effects of rain, wind, fire and age on funerary monuments were only too apparent, and even the pyramids of ancient Egypt, according to Propertius (*Elegies* 3.2.19–26), were not considered "exempt from the ultimate decree of death", as they would eventually be destroyed or "collapse under the weight of the silent years." Martial (*Epigrams* 1.88) poked fun at elaborate marble tombs, writing that they were nothing more than "tottering masses of Parian stone, gifts of vain labour doomed to fall," and Ausonius (*Epitaphs* 32) lamented the fact that the decay of stone memorials and the disintegration of the letters carved on them meant that "death comes to the stones and the names on them." But until time and the elements took their toll, whenever that might be, even the poets knew that the best option people had in prolonging their lives in the memory of others was to erect a monument in permanent materials.

Intentional eradication of memory

Ultimately, no-one could stop the ravages of time, but something might at least be done about the violation and deliberate disturbance of the dead, the funerary monument,

and the burial plot by vandals and usurpers. The fear of violation is clearly apparent in many epitaphs. Changes to the epitaph also were considered a punishable offence, as numerous surviving inscriptions reveal. Two epitaphs in Rome, for example, threaten legal and financial action against anyone who either effaced the names listed in the titular inscription or altered the epitaph in an attempt to introduce an unauthorised body into the tomb (*CIL* VI.22915; *CIL* VI.24799/*ILS* 8220).

The intentional, and perhaps vindictive, erasure of a name on a sepulchral inscription meant the eradication of the memory of that individual. *Damnatio memoriae*, the eradication after death of the name and image, and thus the memory, of an individual was a device occasionally used for hated emperors and deposed officials. Several instances of this public expression of disgrace are known. When Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso was accused of having poisoned Germanicus, adopted grandson of the emperor Augustus, and was condemned by the senate in AD 20 for treason, for example, his busts and statues were to be removed, his portrait mask was not to be displayed at any of the family's funerals or in the family's home, and his name was to be erased from all inscriptions. Both the *Annals* (3.17–18) of Tacitus and the surviving senatorial decree condemning Piso confirm this official and empire-wide condemnation of his memory (Flower 1996, 24–31; Griffin 1997; Potter 1998; Bodel 1999; Flower 2006, 132–138). In another case of *damnatio memoriae*, the images of the emperor Domitian, according to Suetonius (*Domitian* 23), were "torn down…and dashed upon the ground" after his death in AD 96, and the senators "passed a decree that his inscriptions should everywhere be erased, and all record of him obliterated." Many of Domitian's portraits may have been smashed, but some of them also were re-worked as likenesses of later emperors (Bergmann and Zanker 1981; Flower 2001).

The result of such systematically conducted condemnation in the public sphere furthermore can be seen on the arch of Septimius Severus and his family dedicated in AD 203 at the west end of the forum in Rome, although the driving force behind this *damnatio* is to be found within the imperial family itself (Brilliant 1967; Flower 2000, 65; Varner 2004, 156–199). After his father's death in AD 211, Caracalla and his brother Geta for a short time ruled the empire together, but in the same year Caracalla murdered his brother and officially damned his memory. Geta's name was erased on the monumental inscription of this arch in Rome (*CIL* VI.1033/*ILS* 425). Furthermore, on the arch dedicated in AD 204 to the Severan family by the moneychangers and merchants near the Forum Boarium in Rome we can see not only the erasure, possibly in AD 212, of the name and images of Geta, but also those of Caracalla's murdered wife Fulvia Plautilla and father-in-law Gaius Fulvius Plautianus (*CIL* VI.1035/*ILS* 426; Haynes and Hirst 1939, 17–27; Flower 2000, 65–66; Elsner 2003, 212–216; Elsner 2005, 94–95).

The destruction of the images of prominent and public individuals such as these was intended to render it impossible to remember the original after whom the likeness was fashioned (Gregory 1994, 97). On the other hand there are many inscriptions that were

not so systematically deleted or re-inscribed, allowing the reader, with a bit of effort, to decipher the roughly erased name. In these cases, to quote Harriet Flower (2000, 59), "the erasure serves as a mark of shame rather than as a true attempt to remove the person from the record". Importantly there was a very close relationship between the image and the person depicted. In his study on mutilated images, Carl Nylander (1998, 238) suggested that, "image and prototype are to some extent 'identical', and what happens to the image somehow affects or reflects on the prototype". Thus, the frantic and vengeful destruction of the many golden statues of Domitian by the people of Rome, described by Pliny (*Panegyric* 52.4–5) was associated with the equivalent, if imagined, shedding of blood and the infliction of pain on the real Domitian.

From the middle of the first century AD and in many different regions within the empire, removing a name or an image to achieve the eradication of memory occasionally has its approximate equivalent in private funerary monuments, although disgrace, perhaps within the family or the community, is only one of the possible reasons for this measure. Even then, the shame and dishonour expressed did not have anything remotely like the political motivation and public impact that *damnatio memoriae* in official state contexts had, although in rare cases, as with the prominent and powerful family of the Licinii Crassi, the mutilation of private monuments could be politically motivated. Four members of this family had been executed since the reign of Claudius, primarily because of their threat to imperial power (Boschung 1986, 260–263, with a family tree; Rudich 1993, 202–203), and some kind of official revenge and memory eradication is apparent in the family's tomb chamber near the Porta Salaria in Rome (Kragelund *et al.* 2003; Van Keuren *et al.* 2003). Some of the funerary altars were smashed, and others, like that of Gaius Calpurnius Crassus Frugi Lucinianus, who was exiled under Nerva and executed by Hadrian, had their texts erased (Kragelund *et al.* 2003, Cat. 5, fig. 39; Van Keuren *et al.* 2003, fig. 17). Wiseman (2007, 423) suggests that this may have been done by decree of the Senate, the family then 'hiding' the monuments away in a modest underground chamber so that they could continue to pay their respects to their ancestors.

Usually, however, the erasure of texts and images on funerary monuments was not a political act, and there were many other reasons for erasing names in funerary inscriptions, such as changing personal circumstances, disinheritance, divorce, and legal conflicts. Often a reasonable case can be made for some of these as motivating factors, although we usually are ill informed as to the individual reasons for the disfigurement. Sometimes the erasure is so complete that we have no hope of reconstructing the original text and recognising a possible cause for the removal of a name (Fig. 4.4). In cases of official *damnatio memoriae* not only the name of the disgraced was erased or made illegible. As the ancient sources cited above make clear, images also were completely smashed or intentionally mutilated, particularly the face, an attempt symbolically to seek revenge on the dead body of the deposed person (Gregory 1994, 97). Studies thus far have tended to focus on the public and prominent cases of *damnatio memoriae*,

Figure 4.4 Funerary inscription of the Vennius family in Naples on which the last line of text with someone's name has been erased (photo, Author, courtesy of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli).

particularly those in an imperial context. Harriet Flower, for example, was concerned in *The Art of Forgetting* with disgrace and oblivion in Roman political culture, as witnessed in officially imposed memory sanctions, but she rightly highlighted that the topic of private memory eradication warrants a study in its own right (Flower 2006, 11). In the following a selection of funerary monuments with erased text and mutilated images are discussed in the context of the intentional condemnation of memory on a private level.

On a funerary altar of the first century AD from Nîmes in southern Gaul are two registers of family portraits (Fig. 4.5; *CIL* XII.3564; Carroll 2006, 194). Such monuments often were commissioned on the occasion of the death of one member of the family, the other images having been fashioned at the same time to provide a memorial for the rest of the group when they eventually died. The top register commemorates the married couple Domitia Marituma(?) and Gnaeus Cornelius Tanais. On the lower panel a male relative is depicted, possibly the couple's son, Gnaeus Cornelius Urbanus, together with another person whose face and inscribed name have been almost completely chiselled away, leaving only a few traces visible upon close inspection. Since both rows of portraits are arranged in pairs, as images of married couples often were in contemporary relief sculpture in a funerary context, it is very possible that this erased portrait next to Gnaeus

Cornelius Urbanus was female and therefore depicted his wife. If this was the case, she must have fallen out of such favour with him (and his family) that the memory of her was intentionally destroyed by erasing her face and name. It is also possible, but less likely, that the two individuals on the bottom row were both children of Domitia Marituma and Gnaeus Cornelius Tanais, in which case the removed person was a brother or sister of Gnaeus Cornelius Urbanus. It is doubtful that the person whose memory was erased had already been buried in the tomb, for if he or she had been interred the place would have become sacrosanct – a *locus religiosus* – and mutilation of the memorial would have been condemned. In any case, the removal of a face and name from the monument is a clear indication of extreme conflict and tension within the family, and perhaps disgrace on some level, and we cannot rule out an element of revenge inherent in the eradication of the *memoria* of this individual. As in the destruction or mutilation of public portraits, the treatment of the image, to use Nylander's (1998, 238) words again, "reflects on the prototype". If imagery in a funerary context was charged with keeping the memory of the dead alive, destroying that imagery condemned the dead to oblivion.

Figure 4.5 Funerary altar of the Cornelii from Nîmes with one of originally four portraits (lower left) removed and the accompanying inscribed text erased (photo, Author, courtesy of the Musée Archéologique de Nîmes).

It may appear a bit bold to claim that such bitterness could be the result of marital conflict and that it could manifest itself this way, but a large marble funerary altar with two inscriptions from the Via Flaminia in Rome should dispel all doubt that this kind of acrimony could result in the posthumous condemnation of memory. This altar was set up, as the epitaph on the front tells us, to Iunia Procula who died at the age of eight (*CIL* VI.20905; Kleiner 1987, Cat. No. 23, pl. 15.1–2; Evans Grubbs 2002; Ruffell 2003, 46–47). It was commissioned in the late first century AD by her father

M. Iunius Euphrosynus, for Iunia Procula, himself and the child's mother, the latter's name being completely erased some time later, apart from the final 'e' of her name. The woman's position in the family is nevertheless clear because she is named as wife and mother. Fortunately for us, the reasons for this *damnatio memoriae* are given in a second inscription added on the back of the monument at a later time by Euphrosynus. This tells us that the woman in question was Acte, his former slave whom he had freed in order to take her as his wife. He accuses her of poisoning, committing adultery and running off with the slaves, leaving him a broken, lonely man. Clearly in this case, the woman had not been buried on this site, so there was nothing prohibiting the defacement of the monument. Euphrosynus's hatred for Acte is so intense, that he curses her and wishes that she might be tortured, hanged by a rope, and her evil heart consumed by burning pitch. Curses such as this survive on tablets deposited in graves, subterranean contexts and in sanctuaries, the dead and the gods acting as powerful avengers invoked to mete out punishment (Gager 1992; Graf 1997; Johnston 1999). The original inscription recording the death of Iunia Procula and the familial relationship of those named in this text is entirely different in content and intent from the secondary and later inscription cursing Acte, indeed the original inscription suggests harmony in the marriage and common grief at the death of a beloved daughter. To disgrace her and condemn her to oblivion after her "crimes" against her husband, Acte's name had to be erased in the inscription that had been visible for some time on the front of the altar. This was the text that was seen and read by passers-by, and the conspicuous erasure of her name was the public aspect of her dishonour and her mark of shame. In accordance with Roman beliefs and superstitions, however, the eternal marks of infamy and shame (*stigmata aeterna*) were the words carved in stone in the other, later inscription. In order for Euphrosynus's curse to work, the condemned woman had to be named in this text designed specifically, like a curse tablet, to secure netherworldly and subterranean assistance in making her suffer. The potency of the curse was to be increased by the avenging spirit of Acte's dead daughter, an individual Graf (1997, 131) would refer to as an "infernal postman". For that reason the relationship between the deceased girl and her cursed mother is much closer than that between the cursed woman and the general viewer of the tomb. We could hardly wish for better and clearer testimony to the motivation in the private sphere for disgrace and revenge within the family, leading to the condemnation of the guilty party's memory.

A significant change in marital status and a serious rift in personal relations are clearly apparent from the epitaph of Lucius Fabius Faustus in Narbonne in southern Gaul. Faustus had a gravestone inscribed during his lifetime for himself and his wife, but the name of the wife subsequently was erased, leaving only the word 'wife' (*coniugi*) intact (Fig. 4.6; *CIL* XII.4795; Carroll 2006, 122–123). Perhaps the removal of her name was the result of a divorce. Whatever the reason, he clearly no longer wanted to be buried with her or have her name on his tomb, yet the spousal relationship with this dishonoured woman is clear, as is the marital and spousal relationship recorded on the funerary altar of

Iunia Procula cited above. These are particularly interesting cases, as they share salient features with cases of official *damnatio memoriae*. We can compare these private funerary inscriptions with an official dedication by the prefect of Egypt to the emperor Claudius and his family in AD 47/48 in Rome (*CIL* VI.918/*ILS* 210; Flower 2002, 61–62; Flower 2006, 185). This inscription was put up in hope "for the health of Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus.... and of [Valeria Messalina Augusta] and of [their] children...." The text referring to Claudius and his children is intact, however the name of Valeria Messalina has been removed completely, as has the word 'their' in conjunction with the couple's children. It is, therefore, apparent to anyone reading the inscription that the
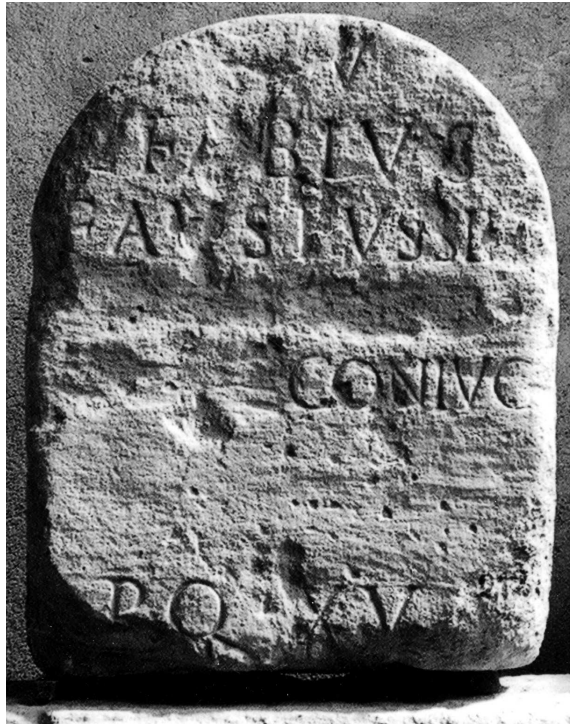

Figure 4.6 Funerary stele of a couple from Narbonne with the erasure of the wife's name (photo, courtesy of Musées de Narbonne, Jean Lepage).

person who has been shamed here is the wife of Claudius and the mother of his children. The relationship of the two is still recognizable, and perhaps it is this that highlighted her public disgrace as a result of her marital infidelity and alleged plans to stage a coup against her husband, both actions being described in detail by Suetonius (*Claudius* 26) and Tacitus (*Annals* 11.12, 26–38). As only the second woman ever at that time to have been the focus of senatorial memory sanctions (Flower 2006, 182–189), it was decreed that "her name and image should be removed from private and public places" (Tacitus, *Annals* 11.38). Although the erasure of a personal name was intended to negate that person's existence, in both this official and public erasure of a name and in the private cases of *damnatio memoriae* discussed earlier, the removal of text, but not all the text, meant that the condemned or shamed were eliminated in a highly visible way, but the chisel marks and scars left on the stone had the effect of removing these individuals without them being completely forgotten.

Damnatio memoriae in the funerary sphere could involve completely erasing the name of an individual, as it did in these cases, but it could also entail the replacement of the original name with a new one. This is illustrated by a stone commissioned in

Figure 4.7 Funerary monument of a couple from Narbonne with the name of the man's second wife re-carved over the erased name of his first wife (photo, courtesy of Musées de Narbonne, Jean Lepage).

the mid-first century AD by Gaius Livanius Auctus in Narbonne with an inscription and an image of a married couple (Fig. 4.7; *CIL* XII.3564; Carroll 2006, 193–194). This man may have divorced or spurned his wife during his lifetime, but he clearly remarried and wanted his second wife's name and his relationship with him remembered for posterity. To do this, he had the stonemason cut the stone slightly deeper where his first wife's name had been and write over the erasure with the name of his new spouse, Cornelia Maxima, daughter of Sextus. As a result, the memory of his first wife was banned from his monument and from public knowledge. Her elimination from the stone, however, is far less conspicuous than the other epitaphs leaving the scars of erasure, because a new name became the focus of attention.

Some decisive event in the private life of a Spanish family is also evident on a marble

plaque from Emerita Augusta originally naming five owners of a tomb (*AE* 1983, 494). The head of the family, whose name was later erased, set up this tomb for himself and his family, the latter consisting of his wife Varia Avita, his father-in-law Publius Varius Ligur, his mother-in-law Licinia Thelis, and his brother-in-law Publius Varius Severus (Edmondson 2000, 323–324). Not only was the man's name conspicuously erased from the inscription, but also the clause that he erected the tomb for himself. Another name was later added to the inscription by a different letter-cutter, indicating that someone named Iulia Severa was admitted into this burial community. We do not know what this man did to distance himself from the others, but his wife and her family joined ranks to see him excluded from the tomb and his memory eradicated.

What lay behind the vindictive removal or severe mutilation of portraits on some funerary monuments probably will never be clear, but there are several examples of this kind of memory eradication. A marble altar of the early second century AD in Rome commemorating a family of six, four sons and their parents, has all the portrait heads chiselled away (Kleiner 1987, No. 77, pl. 43.1–4). The inscription naming them, however, survives, although it has been wilfully damaged and some letters are erased. Several *stelae* from Capua have been given similar treatment. One of them set up to commemorate a woman named Avillia has had the two portrait busts below the inscription so thoroughly carved down that only rough patches of chisel marks are left (Eckert 1988, Cat. No. 75, fig. 75; see also Cat. No. 56, fig. 56, Cat. No. 80, fig. 80, Cat. No. 86, fig. 86). Of course, this kind of damage could be interpreted as simple vandalism of a later period, but it is striking that a certain amount of work went into removing the portraits. One would expect the stones to be smashed and broken to pieces if there were other forces, such as Christian religious fervour, at work here.

There is much evidence for co-occupancy and co-ownership of tombs, particularly of the late Republican and early imperial house-tombs (*columbaria*), built partially or totally above ground to accommodate multiple cremation burials on the roads leading into Rome and its port towns (Toynbee 1971, 113–116, 130–143; von Hesberg 1992, 40–41, 76–80; Hope 1997; Caldelli and Ricci 1999; Heinzelmann 2000, 63–69). These *columbaria* often reached vast proportions, especially if they were built by the imperial family to house hundreds of urns containing the ashes of their numerous slaves and freedmen, many of them having served together in the same household when they were alive. Other *columbaria* contained numerous burial niches that were sold, given away, or traded freely (Nielsen 1996). Each niche generally accommodated two cinerary urns, and the epitaph panel below normally was divided into two sections, one per occupant of the niche. There are numerous examples, especially in the *columbarium* on the Via Appia belonging to the empress Livia, of epitaph panels with an erased text on them (Gregori and Mattei 1999, Nos. 1304, 1321, 1351, 1401). Sometimes the name is simply erased, other times one name is substituted for another. There is no certainty about the reason for these changes. Individual or multiple cinerary niches, however, were often purchased in advance of death and the inscriptions marking them cut with

Figure 4.8 Marble funerary inscription from a columbarium in Rome on which the name of the woman who commissioned it has been crudely erased (photo, courtesy of New York University).

the owner's name; if the niche was later sold to someone else perhaps the purchaser had the inscription panel altered to suit him. Equally, conflicts, friction and changes in marital status cannot be ruled out. Lucius Gellius Felix, for example, was commemorated by his wife in the second century AD with a marble panel in a *columbarium* outside Rome (Fig. 4.8; *CIL* VI.38417a). She commissioned the panel during her lifetime for Felix, herself and their offspring, but for some reason her name was erased in a very crude fashion, and lost for posterity, leaving only the words "to her husband…" and "for their children" intact. According to Flower (2006, 10–11), enough survives of the erased letters to reconstruct her name as Valeria Onomaste. It might be that Valeria Onomaste remarried and was buried elsewhere with a new husband, but it is also possible that the relationship between her and her children had deteriorated in some way. By leaving the text passage referring to the personal relationship between the couple untouched the erasure of her name perhaps drew more attention to tension between family members than would otherwise be the case if the reference to the woman's existence as a wife and mother had also been removed. And given that such crude scars on the stone actually drew attention to the erased name, as we have seen above, we might well wonder whether it was intentional that even her name should still be recognisable upon close scrutiny.

The Roman household consisted of the nuclear family, members of the extended family, and various dependents, both servile and freed. These individuals had close ties
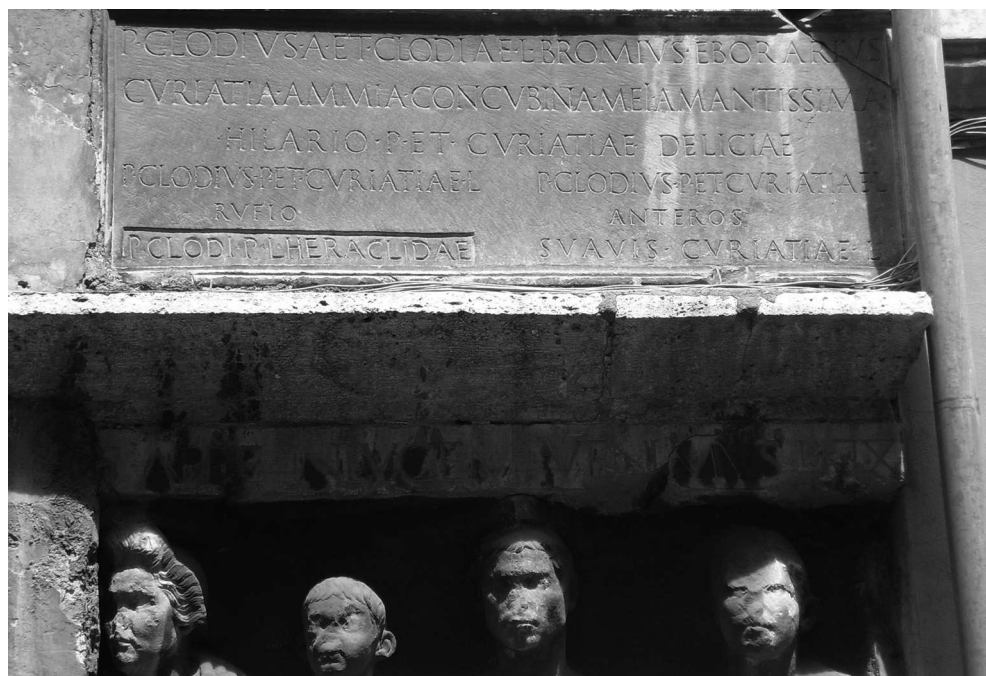
Figure 4.9 Funerary inscription of an ivory merchant and his family and dependents in Rome showing the erasure and replacement of a name on the lower left (photo, Author).

with each other not only during their lives, but also in death. Numerous epitaphs make provision for the burial of dependents, without necessarily naming them individually, but others specify precisely who was allowed to be buried in the family tomb (*CIL* VI.16664/*ILS* 8262; *CIL* VI.16068; *CIL* VI.16286). By the same token, some epitaphs name those who were barred from the tomb; often this was a freedman or freedwoman of the family (*CIL* VI.11027; *CIL* VI.13732/*ILS* 8115; Thylander 1942, A168). Usually disloyalty, non-fulfillment of obligations or unspecified offences against the patron were given as grounds for this drastic action. Some alteration to the provision of a tomb for dependents of the family is evident on a titular inscription in Rome belonging to the ivory carver Publius Clodius Bromius, freedman of Aulus and Clodia, and his concubine Curiatia Ammia (Fig. 4.9). The inscription names five other household members: the couple's "pet" (a term usually referring to a slave child or adopted orphan), two of their joint freedmen and one of her freedwomen. Originally another person, certainly a freedman or freedwoman, had been named as an entitled occupant of the family tomb, but this name was erased to accommodate another freedman of Bromius. Whilst it is possible that the originally named individual simply sold his share in the tomb and was replaced by another buyer, it is equally possible that one of the family's dependents was ejected or barred from the burial community, and his memory, as a result of his name being deleted, was eradicated. On another inscription from the same city, the names

of some members of the household of Aulus Vitellius Chryseros and his freedwoman wife Vitellia Prima were erased, ensuring that they were forgotten (*CIL* VI.29080). Two other individuals – Julia Rufina and Julius Helpidephoros – were taken into this burial group in their stead. Their names were inscribed over the erasure, thereby replacing one identity with another.

Slaves and freed slaves frequently were co-owners of a tomb or they were responsible for setting up a monument to each other, the master's household within which they had lived having become a family substitute of sorts. Illustrative of such emotional ties and family bonds is an epitaph in Rome set up by Aulus Memmius Urbanus to commemorate his fellow freedman Aulus Memmius Clarus: "…we were sold into slavery together, we were freed together from the same household, and no day could have separated us, apart from this fateful one" (*CIL* VI.22355a/*ILS* 8432). As one would expect, not all such co-operatives of freedmen were so harmonious, and conflicts within such groups might lead to permanent changes in existing epitaphs. A large inscription from Rome, for example, commemorated eight freedmen and freedwomen who had had a common master, Aulus Orcius, but four of those names were erased, indicating that something had happened for them to lose co-ownership of and be denied access to the tomb (Gregori 2003, No. 3272). The crudely erased sections of the inscription were not re-carved with new names, indicating that these four were not replaced by newcomers in the burial community. The situation is slightly different with an epitaph commemorating three individuals in Portus, none of them related by blood (Thylander 1942, A259). Their names were inscribed on a marble panel, but the name of one of them was later chiselled out, leaving only Marcus Ulpius Filetus and Titus Flavius Onesimus cited as designated owners. This third individual may have moved away and purchased a place in another tomb, or a dispute could have led to his expulsion. What is certain is that at some point another person named Marcus Vipsanius Felix was allowed burial in the tomb, and his name was added in smaller letters by a different hand at the bottom of the marble panel.

That legal disputes and conflicting issues of ownership could lead to corrections and erasures on funerary inscriptions is made clear by an inscription from the Puteoli region. In this text, we read of a quarrel over the ownership of a large plot of land with buildings that was settled by the sub-prefect of the Roman fleet at Misenum in the late second century (*CIL* X.3334). Publius Aelius Abascantus, a freedman of a certain Patulcius Diocles had bought the land from the latter's heirs, but then died, at which point the heirs of Patulcius Diocles attempted to take the land back from P. Aelius Rufinus, the son of the dead man, claiming that it should never have been sold to Rufinus in the first place because there were tombs of the Patulcii on it and it was therefore a *locus religiosus* and inalienable by law. On personal inspection of the land, the fleet sub-prefect, however, could not find the numerous and dispersed graves claimed by the heirs of Patulcius Diocles, and therefore ruled that the boundary stones marking the limits of the plot should have the names of the Patulcii on them
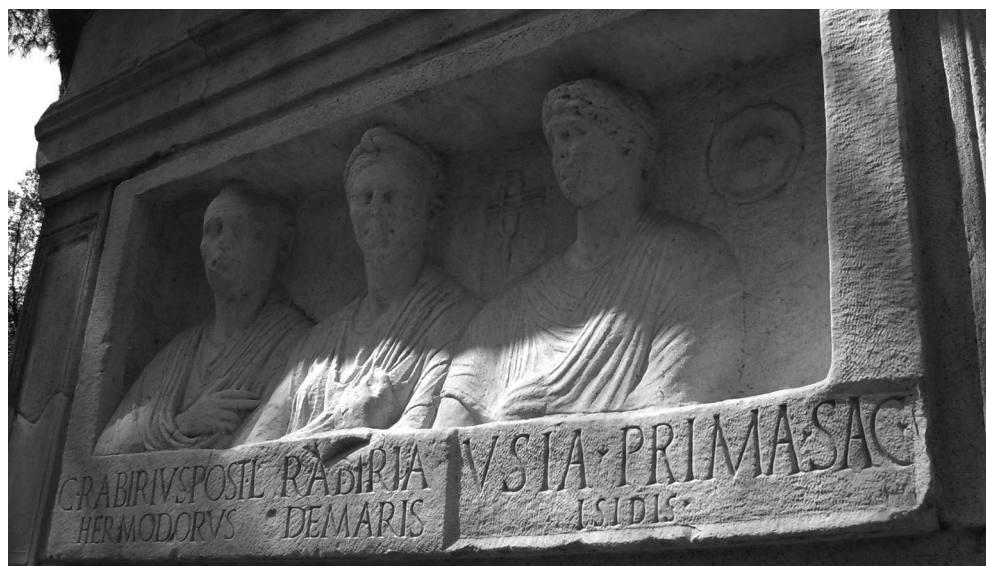
Figure 4.10 Funerary altar of the Rabirii on the Via Appia outside Rome. The third figure on the right and the inscription below have been re-cut from an earlier figure and text (photo, Author).

erased. One of these boundary stones containing a list of names has survived, and it demonstrates clearly that the family name Patulcius was indeed deleted following this ruling (*CIL* X.2826; Schrumpf 2006, 152–157). Without the second text explaining the situation, we would be left wondering why the names of so many individuals had been deleted from the boundary stone.

In official 'state' *damnatio memoriae* imperial portraits of those fallen from grace could be re-cut and re-used by their successors, as several studies of Roman portraiture have revealed (Bergmann and Zanker 1981; Pollini 1984). This alteration of a portrait was not uncommon in private sculpture too (Matheson 2000). The tomb of the Rabirii, a family of freedmen, offers a good opportunity to see the changes made to private portraiture in funerary commemoration even during the lifetime of the monument. This tomb of late first-century BC date on the Via Appia outside Rome was adorned with three portrait busts (*CIL* VI.2246; Kleiner 1977, No. 63; Eisner 1986, 47–48; Carroll 2006, 124–125). The inscription below the middle and left figure identifies Gaius Rabirius Hermodorus and Rabiria Demaris, both former slaves; the original identity of the man on the right will forever remain unknown, however, because the portrait later was re-worked and the accompanying inscription re-cut (Fig. 4.10). The head of the man was changed to depict a female one, although the male torso was left unaltered. The re-cut inscription below names this woman as Usia Prima, a priestess of Isis. There is no indication whatever of the circumstances leading to this complete replacement of identity.

Substituting old memories and creating new ones

The intentional removal of someone's identity from a funerary monument within a few years of its erection, possibly by someone else named in the inscription, is admittedly different from the alteration of texts decades later by completely unrelated individuals for the purpose of re-use. But whether decades or even centuries had expired, alterations to and erasures of texts for secondary use or recycling nonetheless negated the identity of the original monument owner, replacing the salient characteristics of that person with those of another. Even though it was forbidden by Roman law to let tombs deteriorate, funerary monuments were bound to fall into disrepair if there was no-one left to see to their upkeep. A legal ruling cited by Roman jurists on the permissibility of rebuilding a collapsed monument indicates that tombs were not always maintained in best shape (*Digest* 47.12.7). Pliny the Younger (*Letters* 10.68–69), as the governor of Bithynia, agreed to write a letter to the emperor Trajan as chief priest to ask permission on behalf of the province's citizens to relocate family graves and monuments that had fallen into disrepair. Epitaphs themselves mention the need for repairs to the tombs to which they were attached (*CIL* VI.13188; *CIL* VI.18079; *CIL* VI.18080).

Damaged or abandoned funerary monuments, however, often were not rebuilt, but were recycled for their material. Several recycled gravestones have been excavated, for example, in Areas A, B, D, E, F and G in the cemetery outside the Porta Nocera at Pompeii where *columellae* were made from reworked marble slabs, columns, cornices and other pieces of architectural material (D'Ambrosio and De Caro 1987, 216–219, 222–223, 225). Likewise marble inscriptions that had once adorned earlier tombs were simply turned over and reused in the last years of Pompeii, for example in Tomb 5OS and Tomb 17bOS, before the city was destroyed by Vesuvius in AD 79, with the old text partially intact but out of sight (D'Ambrosio and De Caro 1983). Tombs that had collapsed or been badly damaged in the devastating earthquake of AD 62 were probably quarried for these later tombs. By turning over and re-inscribing the once existing texts on such monuments, the ancient viewer had no insight into the identity of the person whose memory had been snuffed out. It is likely that those responsible for making secondary use of older material had no relationship whatever with the original proprietors; nothing vindictive is apparent, nor is there any hint of an attempt to shame or disgrace the individuals originally named.

Occasionally containers for the ashes and bones of the dead were re-used, presumably for the remains of someone else. This, at least, is what the erasure of an inscribed name on a marble cinerary urn of the first century AD in Rome suggests (Andreae 1995, Cat. No. 242a/XLI 2, pl. 412). The first two lines of this inscription have been erased, leaving only the third and last line of the inscription *suis et sibi*, for himself and his (family/dependents) intact. In those first lines was once the name of the person for whom the container was made, but by removing the name (and the ashes!) the altar

was recycled and could be re-used by someone else. The new identity of the second owner was not inscribed.

The secondary use of funerary monuments even centuries later is well illustrated by a monument of a family from Ulcisia Castra, modern Szentendre, in Hungary. This grave stele adorned with portraits of the family was reused in the third century AD by Publius Aelius Crispinus, an officer of the second legion, by using the opposite face of the stone and turning it upside down (Maróti 2003, No. 36). The original inscription, naming the family and first owners of the stone, may have been cut off (the stone is broken here), thereby effectively removing any trace of the identity of these people. Perhaps the family originally commemorated here had died out, and their now neglected gravestone was acquired by Crispinus as convenient raw material for his own memorial. The same may have been the case with a gravestone of the first century AD from Walsheim in Germany (Fig. 4.11; Cüppers 1990, 659–660). Here the original inscription below the depiction of the deceased dining in the company of servants was erased two centuries later to commemorate Barbatius Silvester, a magistrate from Speyer on the Rhine who was mourned by his sons and grandson.

Figure 4.11 Grave stele of a soldier of the first century AD in Walsheim, re-used by another man with a new inscription in the third century (after Cüppers 1990, fig. 601, drawing, J. Willmott).

Although his name and personal details have not survived, it was almost certainly a soldier or veteran who was the owner of the original stone, as the funerary banquet was a motif commonly chosen by this sector of society on the Rhine frontier at that time (Carroll 2005). This man probably had no descendents or surviving family to care for and protect his tomb. The same is certainly the case for a soldier depicted in uniform on his gravestone of the first half of the first century AD from Cologne. His monument, recently recovered during work on the sewers of Cologne, originally stood in one of the cemeteries flanking the main extramural roads, but it was secondarily used in the second half of the fourth century as a paving stone to repair the main
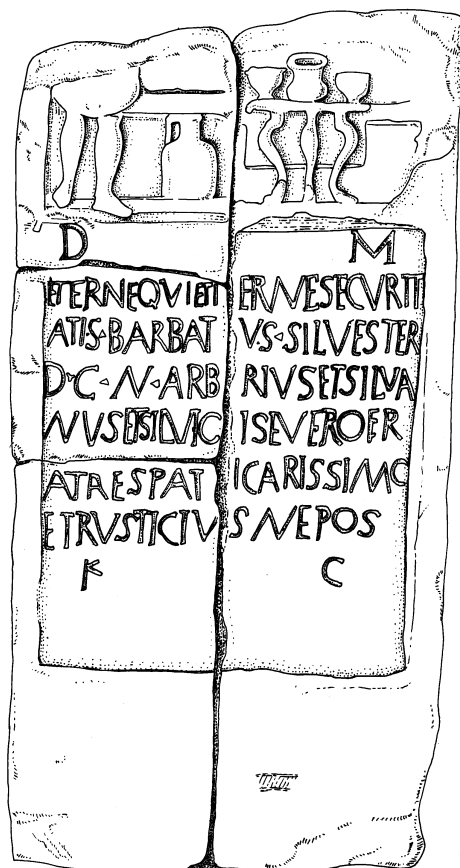
north-south street inside the city (Trier 2006, 63). Although the inscription on this stone does not survive, the soldier is recognizable as a legionary soldier and, therefore, he will have belonged to either the first or twentieth legions who in the 30s of the first century were redeployed to Bonn and Neuss (then Britain), taking whatever civilian dependents they had with them (Carroll and Fischer 2000; Carroll 2003, 24–26). None of these cases in Hungary or Germany is singular, and it is fairly common in the late Roman period to see funerary monuments recycled and the memories they originally helped to preserve lost forever (Kinney 1997; Coates-Stephens 2002; Carroll-Spillecke 1993, 382–384).

Conclusions

The texts and images on Roman funerary monuments demonstrate the will to be remembered and they give us insight into the routes taken to ensure the survival of memory. Commemorative rituals such as the offering of food and drink to the dead and the banquet at the tomb held by surviving friends and family were certainly a way of honouring and remembering the dead (Dunbabin 2003, 125–132; Graham 2005; Carroll 2006, 71–74). But the provision of an inscribed text on the tomb recording the names of the dead and details of their former lives, sometimes in combination with a visual image, contributed more permanently and more publicly towards the perception of keeping memory alive. They were, in fact, vehicles for remembrance. An inscription (*CIL* VI.37965) of the second century AD in Rome illustrates this point admirably. This inscription was set up for Allia Potestas, apparently by Allia's patron, whose common-law wife or concubine she was, and it reveals that this man attempted to preserve her memory in several ways (Gordon 1983, 145–149; Friggeri 2001, 168–169). He wore a bracelet inscribed with her name, and he specified that Allia's portrait was to be placed in his tomb. Here we have two of the essential prompts for triggering memory – the name and the physical image – but surprisingly he says that neither gave him much comfort. It was the funerary inscription itself that he regarded as the best vehicle to perpetuate her memory and tell the story of his grief. It is important here to note that the epitaph was designed to tell a story, not just about Allia but also about the man who loved her and was bereft at losing her. The epitaph declared that as long as the verses on the stone survived she would live on. In other words, a memorial afterlife was assured by the inscription that could be seen by anyone who cared to read it and reflect on it.

As Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 2.154) said, the use of monumental writing meant that a longer life was given "to men's name and memory"; likewise images of individuals ensured that "the memory of men was immortalised." Clearly, in Roman thought, the recording of a name in a funerary inscription served as a transmitter of memory and a device by which the deceased could live on, at least symbolically. The

provision of a visual image of the deceased served the same purpose. By neglecting, mutilating or erasing inscribed personal names and portraits on funerary monuments, the individual was symbolically dislodged and removed from his social and personal context and his memory obliterated. A person's hopes of continuing to live on after death by being remembered were intentionally and cruelly dashed.

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Abbreviations
AE   *L'Année Epigraphique*
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ILS H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae.* Berlin, Weidmann, 1892–1916

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