

Figures de l'identité Naissance et destin des modèles communautaires dans le monde romain. Eds. Maëlys Blandenet, Clément Chillet and Cyril Courrier. Lyon, Ens Editions, 2010. ISBN 978-2-84788-219-3 € 32.

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This very helpful volume of articles, the proceedings of the Lyon colloquium of 2007 was edited by the EMCA (Etudes des modèles culturels dans l'antiquité). They are the results of a two-year study concluded at the Lyon Ecole Normale supérieure. When the French government had just instituted the Ministry of National Identity, it seemed timely to revisit concepts of culture and identity in the Greco-Roman world. The *construction* of an individual, a people, a social group, or a literary community are all considered, as are models and counter models for the history of origins, for great figures of the past or for social practices or poetic genres. In their introduction, participants Blandenet, Chillet and Courrier trace the development of cultural anthropology, from the foundational work of Franz Boaz and Ruth Benedict. The notion of identity is not based simply on a received cultural heritage it is noted, but on a dynamic process of self-construction. Identity moreover is not always simply chosen or received but also imposed. These papers offer a rich diversity of investigations and approaches to the study of identity in the ancient Roman world.

The first section is entitled: “Grands hommes, héros, empereurs: l’élaboration de modèles politiques, idéologiques et littéraires” (“Great Men, Heros, Emperors: The Elaboration of Political, Ideological and Literary Models”). The Roman genius for myth was limited to that which served the formation of historical tradition, while the latter could also serve the former. M. Junius Brutus availed himself of the memory of L. Brutus as his own “intellectual property.” (37) Authors of the Augustan age superimposed the two Brutus’s as a solution to their treatment

rhetorically (Paul Marius Martin). Aristodemos, tyrant of Cumae, styled *Malakos*, was associated with the traditional debate over the benefits and liabilities of homosexual initiation of youth. As a figure of national identity, Aristodemos featured elements of Greek tradition and Roman fantasy (Stavroula Kefallonitis). The figure of Cincinnatus was treated by the historian Livy. Having been for long a model of patriotic comportment for all citizens, In Livy, the figure of Cincinnatus became the type of the ardent republican and an incarnation of future hope in an ideal *princeps* (Mathieu Jacotot). The elder Cato has most often been depicted as the austere man of tradition, though the author here proposes a reading of the personage in Livy and also in Cicero, who constructed a more supple image for Cato than he himself had done; for them he was a brilliant military strategist, an orator of renown also steeped in law, indeed a *homo novus*. He remained throughout a construction of larger-than-life ideals (Michèle Ducos). Cicero's rendering of the model of Cato the Elder transforms the rude figure of duty into one with an epicurean sense of the place justly accordable to pleasure and to the charms of nature. Cicero frankly reinterpreted the Cato figure as a mirror of himself (Laure Hermand). Patricians formed a part of the Roman nobility. M. Aemilius Scaurus a paradoxical figure of the *homo novus*, was initially a banker who entered upon the *cursus honorum* due to his eloquence. His relative poverty was interpreted in turns as a virtue and also as a disqualifying condition; while his itinerary was diversely interpreted to represent differing views of identity (Robinson Baudry). The poet Horace articulated in his verse the person of Augustus as arbiter and personification of *romanità* in all of its aspects (Robin Glinatsis). The figures of Caligula and Nero were actually articulated as *topoi* of the lawless, tyrannical dictator within the same time frame (Laurie Lefevre).

The volume's second section is entitled "Pratiques sociales et revendications identitaires" ("Social Practices and Claims of Identity"). Roman social customs were disseminated throughout the empire. Very helpfully, it is noted that a reliable portrait of

Mummius Achaïus, one of the first importers of Greek art into Rome, cannot be reconstructed, since extant accounts of him are fragmentary and dispersed over time and space (Catherine Baroin). The construction of identity in domestic, familial settings is more difficult to trace, though altars and portable images of Roman household divinities found their way into domestic cultic identity in the far reaches of the Roman world (Marie-Odile Charles-Laforge). Petrarch noted the use of domestic architecture and décor in the construction of a great man's *persona* (Jean-Marie Guilhembet). Cavalrymen depicted on Roman coinage represented the norms and virtues of the Republican period as well as those of the empire. Special attention is paid to the image and its political use, of the equestrian representations of Augustus (Arnaud Suspène).

The third and final section is entitled: "Les Figures de l'identité, entre perspectives littéraires et génériques" ("Figures of Identity, between Literary and Generic Approaches"). This section offers three articles that analyze well how the ancients evolved their models of collective identity and also articulated the existence of these through literature. Virgil played a fundamental role in constructing Roman, or indeed, Augustan identity in the first century B.C. Archemenides is discussed as a Romano-Trojan figure of survival and of civic identity (Emmanuelle Raymond). The figure of Medea as seen in Valerius Flaccus, was a counter sign in the epic genre: female, elegiac and tragic. We can agree with the assessment that the poet seems deliberately to destabilize Roman epic norms, perhaps to reinstate them better (Magalie Roux). In the final paper, the continuity of the relative prestige of a Roman identity in Gallo-Roman times is considered in the juxtaposition of two texts, the anonymous comedy *Querolus*, and the Travel Journal of Rutilius Namatianus (Bruno Bureau). Finally, this impressive collection of papers proposes compelling arguments for the existence, in all periods, of a strong and clear individual and collective Roman identity and a desire to establish and to articulate a universal romanità (Bruno Bureau).