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A Roman Matron as Figure of Memory: Social Memory and Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi

ABSTRACT: Using the frameworks of 'social memory' and 'figure of memory', this paper argues in favour of Flower's hypothesis about the statue of Cornelia. She suggested the statue was placed in the Porticus Metelli to support a new elite alliance including the Metelli and Scipiones. This statue was used as a *lieu de mémoire* and Cornelia as a figure of memory, transforming the memory of herself, her descent, and her sons. Social memory made it possible to erase incongruent elements of past and present. This way, the statue gained an important forward-looking quality, one claimed by Augustus.
Keywords: Cornelia; social memory; Gracchi; figure of memory; Scipiones; statue

Introduction

The Roman family has been the subject of intense research the past four decades, resulting in an almost complete revision of our understanding of kinship collectives in Roman society. This is especially the case for the Republican period, hitherto dominated by narratives of coherent *gentes* and the absolute *patria potestas* of fathers.[1] Broadly speaking, there has been a shift away from the primacy of legal evidence, towards a more cultural and contextual approach. Meanwhile, scholars such as Saller (1994; 1999; 2007) have played a vital role in the realisation that terminology does not correspond with fixed social roles and that individuals tend to appropriate rules and social conventions according to their specific context. These developments gradually led to the dismantling of several persistent myths about Roman kinship, such as the all-powerful *pater familias*, fixed roles for certain family members (mainly the *avunculus* and *patruus*), the complete subjugation of women, the supposed irrelevancy of non-agnatic family members, and the existence of fixed political parties based on kinship.[2] In many ways, this resulted in a paradigm shift towards smaller collectives and individual agency.

1 Bonnard, Dasen, and Wilgaux 2017: 472.
2 In recent decades, mainly Hölkeskamp (1993; 2001b; 2012a) has been vocal about his criticism towards the Münzerian (1920) approach to Roman kinship. The main point here is that "[n]either marriage ties nor collegiality in office can on their own be taken as reliable indicators of political affiliations between individuals – let alone of a durable 'factional' connection between their families over several generations. Moreover, in dozens of concrete conflicts, *gentes* and even families were obviously divided …" (Hölkeskamp 2001b: 100).

At the same time, 'memory' has become an increasingly popular topic in Roman history.[3] Studies on specifically Roman 'memory' tend to be rather nuanced, focusing more on actual practices of memory and above all the spatial foci of such processes. 'Memory' has also been applied to the Roman family in particular,[4] most notably concerning genealogies – often of a legendary or mythological character – and the well-known aristocratic funerary processions with the *imagines maiorum*.[5] However, there is still insufficient attention to the inherently flexible, subjective and mutable character of 'memory', as it is employed within groups themselves. Hölkeskamp (2006) deploys the concept of 'cultural memory' in the study of Republican elites and their strategies of representation, but ends up treating the aristocracy as a monolith, remembering almost exclusively through monuments. Blösel (2003) discusses traditions about the societal concept of the *gens* – left rather vague as a concept – as a key element of 'collective memory' – that is, Roman culture as a whole.

'Memory' as it is deployed in most cases seems to serve only to strengthen the internal coherence of family groups, disregarding the likely existence of multiple interest groups within such collectives and individuals with interests in several groups. Affirming one group identity can have destructive effects on other groups, necessitating a balanced analysis of all allegiances and how they interact. The flexible and mutative character of 'memory' allowed individuals to navigate these different memberships and to reconcile present actions with often incongruent pasts (see below). This paper argues that not only family traditions and stories are subject to the distorting processes of 'memory', but also specific family ties and the role individuals play as links within and between family collectives. The achievements or reputation of an individual can be transformed within an explicitly familial framework, in order to functionalise the memory and legacy of a particular family group. Thus, individuals can be transformed into 'figures of memory'. 'Memory' does not only serve to strengthen family groups from within, but also to purposefully transform public knowledge thereof from the 'outside' – i. e. by non-related individuals. This statement follows from the cultural and processual view on kinship in current anthropological literature, which focusses on the daily practices and interactions that create kinship relations, with constant renegotiation of personal bonds and broader social categories.[6] Institutional and ideological frameworks are still a crucial context for these actions, but are no longer considered to be all-determining. A significant part of these social processes is constituted by a variety of rituals and interactions. One particular kind of such interactions is 'social memory'.[7]

3 For recent overviews of the study of memory, see: Hölkeskamp 2006; Proietti 2012; Smith 2015.

4 E. g. Hölkeskamp 2001a; 2005; 2006; 2012b; 2018a; 2018b; Blösel 2003; Walter 2004; Cadario 2005; Flower 2006; Binot 2008; Hölscher 2009; 2014; Dasen and Späth 2010; Etcheto 2012; Hrychuk Kontokosta 2013; Ridley 2014; Pistellato 2015; Sandberg 2018; Canas 2019; Raimondi 2019.

5 For legendary genealogies, see Wiseman 1974; Peruzzi 1996; Hölkeskamp 1999; Mencacci 2001; Hekster 2006; Smith 2006: 32–43; Thaler 2012.

6 E. g. Carsten 1995; 2000; Schweizer and White 1998; Parkin and Stone 2004; Stone 2014. For the consequences of these insights for the study of ancient kinship, see: Harders 2012; 2014.

7 For a recent study which explicitly approaches the ancient family from this practical and processual point of view, see: Bonnard, Dasen, and Wilgaux 2017.

In order to show how 'social memory' can distort existing narratives of individuals as family members and personifications of family groups, this paper examines the case study of the statue dedicated to Cornelia, probably at the very end of the second century BCE. This statue has been the subject of some debate, regarding both its dating and its location. It was reportedly placed in the *porticus* of Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus, one of the major opponents of Tiberius Gracchus the Younger. This location is, therefore, a seemingly strange choice for cultivating the memory of Cornelia, who was so strongly connected to her sons and, by consequence, also to a more 'popular' style of politics in traditions of the late Republic. This paper argues in favour of Flower's (2002) hypothesis that this statue was part of a newly constructed narrative, centring around the Scipiones and Metelli and aimed at supporting a particular elite group in politically turbulent times. However, while Flower convincingly shows the rationale behind the placement of this statue by this new coalition, she does not account for the fact that Cornelia's memory had to be considerably transformed in order to function in this manner and how that transformation of public perception could have been achieved. This paper argues that processes of 'social memory' facilitated this distortion of Cornelia as a 'figure of memory', since the inherent flexibility of remembering in a social context causes social memory to be ideally suited to reconciling current opportunities and actions with seemingly contradicting past behaviour.

Social Memory and Republican Rome

The theoretical framework of 'social memory' is heavily based on Halbwachs' (1925; 1941; 1950) fundamental work on the relation between social groups and collective memories and has been fully developed by Fentress and Wickham (1992).[8] In their seminal work, they reprise Halbwachs' idea that memories are crucial devices for the elaboration of social identities. It allows groups to develop an image of themselves and to adapt to changing circumstances by transforming the remembered narratives. Whenever we retrieve memories and especially when we try to articulate and communicate them to others, there is an active and creative process going on. This means that every memory is influenced to some degree by our present situation, which can lead to alterations in said memories. Therefore, it follows that our memory is not always factually correct but rather an interpretation of stored information.[9] Memory is not some independent social structure that is continually reproduced, but concerns more specific acts of articulating and communicating remembered acts or stories. In the present study, this specifically concerns memories in a particular social group, aimed at defining or legitimising that

8 Related to 'social memory' is 'cultural memory', which is more often used in relation to Roman commemorative practices. However, this framework developed by Assmann (1992) focusses less on the direct social relations between individuals and more on cultural structures. 'Social memory' seems more applicable, then, in the context of Roman kinship. For the application of 'cultural memory' to the Gracchi and Cornelia, see: Roller 2012: 78–79.

9 Fentress and Wickham 1992: 30–38.

group or the acts of one of its members. Such memory needs to be articulated and, therefore, interpreted by individuals by definition in order to be a *social* memory. Crucially, groups do not remember or have memories: individuals remember and come together in complex ways as individual agents to create and continually recreate social memories within the context of a group. In order to communicate memories successfully within a group, there is always some simplification going on since memories are conceptualised and stored in our minds. As a side effect, this facilitates the transformation of memories into narratives that fit the characteristics and interests of said group, with contradictory parts of the original memory often soon omitted.

Once a particular meaning associated with a social memory becomes irrelevant or no longer desirable to cultivate, the original meaning is adapted into a more appropriate one or is replaced altogether.[10] Fentress and Wickham (1992: 72) thus distinguish between "an external or social context, which is regularly lost during transmission, and an internal context, which tends to be preserved." In short, information that is context-dependent and, therefore, derives its meaning from a specific social context, will tend to be lost whenever this particular social context changes.[11] In this respect, it is important to remind ourselves that narratives of families are often used as instruments to gain symbolic capital and are as such dependent upon their concrete social context. Although the specific information of such narratives may change, their function and overall meaning is very tenacious and powerful indeed. This appropriation of social memory may explain the presence of different variations of genealogies of the same family, perhaps the result of changing priorities and needs of said family or other groups.[12] In this way, each version has its own historical value, not as a vehicle for storing the 'actual' genealogy, but as a view of social practices over time and how social groups affirm a position in the present. Social memory allows groups and individuals to flexibly react to changing circumstances and reconcile their traditions and past with this new context, and this can be done both consciously and unconsciously.

Every communicated social memory was certainly not uncritically accepted as true. On the contrary, many discussions arose between groups about claimed narratives, especially contradicting ones. Cicero explicitly expressed his scepticism towards family genealogies and stated that it was often impossible to check whether these were real or not, causing many elites to fabricate an illustrious ancestry.[13] Livy (10.8.9–11) gives a speech of P. Decius Mus in 300 BCE, who attacks the patrician pretences and claims to

10 Fentress and Wickham 1992: 65–68.

11 Fentress and Wickham 1992: 72.

12 The Aemilii, Fabii, and Iulii have many versions of their genealogy, some of which are completely different (Aemilii: Festus (Paulus), p. 22L; p. 83L s. v. *Gens Aemilia*; Livy, 1.3.2; Sil., *Pun.*, 8.294–296; Plut., *Vit. Aem.*, 2.2; *Vit. Num.*, 21.2–3; *Vit. Rom.*, 2.3; Fabii: Festus (Paulus), p. 77L; Sil., *Pun.*, 6.627–636; Plut., *Fabius Maximus*, 1.2; Ov., *Fast.*, 2.375; Plin., *HN*, 18.10; Iulii: Cato, *Orig.*, 15.5; Serv., *Ad Aen.*, 1.267; Cic., *Leg.*, 1.3; *Rep.*, 2.20; Livy, 1.16.5; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.*, 2.63.3–4; Ov., *Fast.*, 2.499).

13 Cic., *Brut.*, 62. See Livy (8.40.4) for a similar criticism. Therefore, it seems to be a gross exaggeration to state that the Romans did not distinguish between the present and the remote past and that traditions of ancient exemplary persons were as vivid as the achievements of the recently deceased, as Hölkeskamp (2006: 489–490) maintains.

exclusive privileges, such as the *gens*. Fabricated or not, it shows a lack of consensus about earlier narratives about the *gens* by the Augustan period. Livy also famously stated in the preface to *Ab Urbe Condita* (pr. 7) that he had doubts about the tradition of the earliest phase of Roman history, which was "rather adorned with poetic legends instead of based upon trustworthy historical proofs."[14] However, such social memories were incredibly powerful within their respective social groups and could have a far-reaching impact on the behaviour of individuals. Social memory, therefore, does not need to lead to more social coherence, but can be used to achieve individual goals at the cost of certain groups.

There were plenty of rituals that cultivated memory of familial groups and the place of the living members within these collectives.[15] This also means that there were many contexts in which individuals with varying and changing interests had to negotiate these differences and attempt to focus on similar goals. Moreover, the context in which individuals operate was continually changing and this certainly seems to have been the case for Rome during the middle and late Republic. High mortality meant that only few lineages managed to regularly hold the most important political offices and that political alliances did not always last as long as intended.[16] In other words, elites had to regularly adapt to changing interests and available strategies, not only of themselves, but also of their kinsmen.[17] This is also stressed in Hölkeskamp's (2006: 482; 489) analysis of the monumental culture of mid-Republican Rome: elites constantly tried to claim certain memories out of the repertoire of Roman culture, which resulted in the adding of new monuments to an existing monumental landscape, and thus ever-evolving messages in the public sphere. Rome became a true arena of memory.[18] In this regard, there is a strong and continuous interaction between the claimed message or memory on the one hand, and its reception by various groups against the backdrop of a myriad of other messages on the other.

This continued interaction between claims and reception was certainly not limited to physical public monuments and we see a similar effect on narratives about the past and especially familial achievements. As will become clear later on, Cornelia's statue is one of those instances where monument and family ideology through individual reputation collided. Such a monument was, therefore, an ideal physical place to condense particular interests into one coherent message. A statue could play its role in the public discussion on the legacy of an individual and in what light this person should be viewed first and foremost, for instance as a brave warrior or as an ideal agent for their family. In this sense, such individuals were transformed into 'figures of memory'. The statue of

14 Translation by Loeb: *poeticis magis decora fabulis quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis traduntur*.

15 Most notably the elaborate aristocratic funerals and the inspiring role played by the *imagines maiorum*. Other elements could remind family members of their heritage, e. g. the *stemmata* (painted family trees), family tombs, and public monuments for Romans deemed worthy of such honours. There were also several 'memorial' practices in the sphere of domestic religion: gentilicial/familial *sacra*, the cult of the *genius* of the *pater familias* and the Penates, and the festival of the *Parentalia* among others.

16 Hopkins 1983; Saller 1994: 9–69; Etcheto 2012: 63–69.

17 Flower 2002: 159; Harders 2013: 25–26.

18 For a detailed analysis of the interwoven character of memories and monuments, see: Hölkeskamp 2005; 2012b.

Cornelia forms an interesting example of a concrete space where monumental culture, elite opinions, and public imaginary come together.[19] In its turn, this melting pot plays its role in influencing perceptions of Cornelia and her family. Social memory about the Gracchi and their heritage as well as their political impact is partly expressed through the persona of Cornelia, who is transformed into a figure of memory. This manipulation of social memory is expressed in varying traditions about the character and meaning of Cornelia, which is in its turn reflected in the creation of a *lieu de mémoire*, her statue. A place, event, or person were concrete ways to present a particular narrative or truth, which could be further developed in social memory. These images of the past serve to legitimate the present order, reconciling conflicting elements and transforming particular ideas to suit current agendas and identities.[20]

Cornelia between Cornelii Scipiones and Sempronii Gracchi

Cornelia became the central figure in a family network of the Scipiones and Gracchi after she married Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus the Elder.[21] This union was probably concluded after the death of Scipio Africanus but was a direct consequence of the new alliance between Scipio and Gracchus during the former's trial in 187 BCE.[22] Cornelia's only two adult sons, Tiberius and Gaius,[23] could claim the heritage of two illustrious families: the Sempronii Gracchi via *agnatio* and the Cornelii Scipiones – and Africanus in particular – via *cognatio*. In the latter kinship bond, Cornelia was of vital importance and the Gracchi explicitly advertised their maternal relation.[24] In addition, Cornelia functioned as a surrogate 'father', after her husband had died. This premature death left the socialisation of her sons – typically the duty and prerogative of the father – incomplete. Normally, male relatives were called upon to assist with the socialisation of the sons of widows, but Cornelia famously decided to do this herself.[25] As a consequence of her descent, marriage, and motherhood of allegedly twelve children, Cornelia became an exceptional woman by Roman standards. She was one of the rare examples of women

19 For the analysis of somewhat similar monuments and traditions, see: Etcheto 2008; Carlsen 2009; Hölkeskamp 2005; 2012b; 2018a; 2018b; García Morcillo, Richardson, and Santangelo 2016; Kinnee 2016; Stein-Hölkeskamp 2016; Sandberg 2018.

20 Cfr. Connerton 1989: 3. For 'figures of memory', see: Assmann 1992. For a recent application of this framework to Antiquity, see: Di Fazio 2018. Farney (2007) also discusses the manipulation of ethnic and cultural self-representation to fit in with changing political needs.

21 For a recent biography of Cornelia, see: Dixon 2007. Also important in nuancing the historical character of the information surrounding Cornelia: Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994; Petrocelli 1994; Hemelrijk 1999; Roller 2012. Santangelo (2005) and Dixon (2007) emphasise the role of Gaius Gracchus in developing the persona of Cornelia, utilising this family tradition for political ends.

22 Livy, 38.50.5–54.2; Polyb., 23.14.

23 For a short biography of the Gracchi, see: Brodersen 2000.

24 For the general importance of *cognatio* within the Scipionic lineages, see: Etcheto 2012: 54–57.

25 Cic., *Brut.*, 27, 104; Quint., 1.1.6; Harders 2010: 55–61. Demographic studies have pointed out that these types of situations must have occurred rather frequently. Around 25 to 33 % of children is estimated to have lost their father by the age of fifteen (Scholz 2011: 94–96).

who had a prominent public presence and were praised for their exemplary characteristics. In short, she became the ultimate Roman *matrona*, who could even single-handedly compensate for the lack of a paternal figure.[26]

Cornelia offered the ideal vehicle for cultivating a direct relation with Scipio Africanus, arguably the most famous Roman of the recent past.[27] However, it was far more common to connect oneself to one's father or paternal grandfather and Tiberius Gracchus the Elder offered many advantages in this respect. He was the son and grandson of consuls and had been a consul himself in 177 and 163 BCE and he was elected *censor* in 169 BCE. There are indeed a few references to the Gracchi cultivating their paternal bond in public. Mainly Gaius is said to have done this, once in the context of a lineage of Sempronii and once remembering the sacrifice of his father to save the life of Cornelia.[28] Of course, the latter story focused on Cornelia as well. However, it is clear that the Gracchi emphasised their maternal bond more.[29] At the very least we can say that ancient authors were more concerned with the role of Cornelia, both because of her descent as well as her exceptional character. Importantly, a tradition about Cornelia was formed which centred around her motherhood of the Gracchi. She was seen as a crucial link between the Cornelii Scipiones and the Sempronii Gracchi and this tradition influenced the imagery of mainly Gaius Gracchus and vice versa. The exceptional nature of Cornelia – regarding both her descent and public persona – undoubtedly caused some disproportionate attention to her part in the later tradition about the Gracchi and we can see that Gaius Gracchus indeed referred to his paternal ancestry. This central role of Cornelia seems to be somewhat of a distortion in and of itself and it is very likely that her exceptional status was largely developed after the deaths of the Gracchi, influenced by political agendas and outcomes of the first century BCE.[30] Ultimately, it is impossible to analyse Cornelia on her own, as her persona is so greatly transformed by the political acts of both her father as well as her sons.[31]

Despite the achievements of the Sempronii Gracchi and in particular the Gracchi's father, it seemed that the Scipiones formed a more fruitful connection for a Roman politician in this period.[32] The Gracchi could not claim a connection via concepts such

26 Hemelrijk 1999. Also see the anecdote about her children being her jewels (Val. Max., 4.4; Dixon 2007: 52–54; McClintock 2013; 2022).

27 Dixon 2007: 10. For an overview of the use of social and symbolic capital as well as the cultivation of familial memory by the Scipiones, see: Etcheto 2012: 77–82.

28 Also mentioning the stock of Scipio Africanus in the context of the Sempronian lineage: *Scholia Bobiensia*, p. 81 Stangl. For his father's sacrifice: Cic., *Div.*, 1.36.

29 While it is uncertain to which degree Tiberius did this (e. g. Cass. Dio, 83.8), Gaius emphasised this bond repeatedly (e. g. Plut., *Vit. C. Gracch.*, 4.1–2; Cic., *De or.*, 3.214; Sen., *Helv.*, 16.6).

30 However, the words ascribed to Gaius Gracchus in Plutarch (*Vit. C. Gracch.*, 4.5–6), invoking his mother in a public speech, imply that Cornelia already had a reasonably established persona by this time.

31 The reputation of Cornelia did have aspects independent from the Gracchi. The best illustration of this is the praise Cicero has for her (e. g. Cic., *Brut.*, 211), while condemning her sons. This also shows that Cornelia provided a more neutral figure suitable for appropriation by individuals and groups typically hostile to the Gracchan case, something that is elaborated upon below.

32 For the many similarities between the alleged letters of Cornelia and the purported speeches of Africanus the Elder and Gaius Gracchus, see: Hallett 2018.

as *gens* or *familia*, however, but could use notions such as *stirps*, *cognatio*, *domus*, and *consanguinitas* to state their connection to their mother, and with that, an agnatic connection to Scipio Africanus and the other Scipiones.[33] Of course, at the same time they claimed connections via agnatic ties to their paternal family.[34] We see the mingling of different kinship categories, a phenomenon that does not seem to have needed further legitimation. Our traditional focus on legal evidence leads us to believe that such categories were strictly separated, but an analysis of their actual use in daily life suggests the opposite. Saller (1994: 74–95) showed how the concepts of *familia* and *domus* are both very broad and often interchangeable. Harders (2009; 2013; 2017) analysed the use of *agnatio*, *cognatio*, and *consanguinitas*, concluding that cognatic ties were far more prominent in social life than legal evidence would lead us to believe. Martin (2002; 2009) came to similar conclusions, emphasising the legal and political importance of *agnatio*, which obscures the crucial nature of *cognatio* in daily life. Similarly, it is now widely accepted that the bilateral organisation of family groups became increasingly important throughout the Hellenistic period, with changes in practices of marriage and inheritance favouring a more cognatic orientation of family behaviour.[35] Smith (2006: 32; 44; 56–63) illustrated how *gens* and *familia* became rather similar in meaning towards the late Republic, both potentially denoting a larger lineage. In short, these familial concepts were very flexible and often rather vague, which made them ideally suited to manipulation.[36]

As Harders (2010) has demonstrated, high mortality and remarriage rates often made it necessary to be more creative in choosing one's familial examples and role models. Surrogate fathers regularly had to be found and both Roman law and social concepts of kinship were flexible enough to facilitate this. In this particular case, the Gracchi chose to stress the link with Scipio Africanus, via their mother, overriding gentilicial borders and preferring ties of *cognatio*. As the later tradition surrounding the Gracchi clearly illustrates, such representation was not deemed unsuitable or strange and it was widely accepted. Moreover, this was a period in which women became increasingly valuable members of elite families. They were highly valued as links between families and although they did not receive an *imago*, they were included in painted family trees displayed in the *atrium*.[37] In 102 BCE, around the time of Cornelia's death, we even see the first public funeral for a woman, when Popilia, the mother of the consul Q. Lutatius Catulus, received a *pompa funebris* and a *laudatio funebris* from the *rostra*.[38] Women also seemed to have had a somewhat favourable position within the lineage of the Scipiones, since they were included in the family tomb along the Via Appia.[39]

33 In order to change *gentes*, a marriage in the form of *confarreatio* was necessary, something rare by this time.
34 Dixon 2007: 23.
35 Bonnard, Dasen, and Wilgaux 2017: 467.
36 For further examples, see: Saller 1994: 79.
37 Plin., *HN*, 35.6; Mart., 4.40.1; 5.35.4; Suet., *Galb.*, 2; *Vesp.*, 12; Plut., *Vit. Num.*, 21.4; SHA, *Alexander Severus*, 44.3; Isid., *Etym.*, 9.6.28; Flower 1996: 211.
38 Cic., *De or.*, 2.44; Flower 1996: 122–124.
39 Flower 2002: 165.

However, Cornelia was also exposed to considerable tensions within the extended family group. Her cousin by birth Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus would be the main source of these troubles.[40] As his name implies, he was an adoptive son of the Cornelii Scipiones, originally belonging to another famous *gens*, the Aemilii. His biological father, Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus, was very proud indeed to have both of his sons adopted by illustrious families, the Cornelii and the Fabii.[41] As the Scipiones were in danger of dying out, the oldest son of Scipio Africanus – who was named Publius Cornelius, just like his father – adopted the future Aemilianus. According to Roman law this made Aemilianus a legitimate *gentilis* of the late Scipio Africanus and also Cornelia, fortifying the existing kinship bonds.[42] Roman law states that an *adoptio* in theory severs the ties with the old *familia*, making the *familia Scipionis* now his 'technical' *familia* and the *gens Aemilia* his relatives by *cognatio*.[43] Just like Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, Aemilianus could now boast kinship with two illustrious *gentes*.

Aemilianus now actively promoted his ties to the elder Africanus, his adoptive grandfather, who was a perfect subject for emulation.[44] However, just like the Gracchi, Aemilianus not only used agnatic but also broader cognatic ties in order to promote his own image. This image has been transmitted to us in an unusually elaborate fashion, thanks to the efforts of Aemilianus' friend Polybius, who consciously developed his persona.[45] Polybius (31.26–27) mentions that Aemilianus' generosity towards his birth mother and his aunts by adoption was rather unusual.[46] Baroin (2010: 33) used the example of Aemilianus to argue that it was quite common for adopted sons to keep cultivating ties with members of their original family.[47] Aemilianus also retained close connections with his biological father and joined him and his brother, Fabius Aemilianus, on military campaigns.[48] The fact that Aemilianus advertised these various ties publicly is implied by the famous passage in Cicero's *De Republica* (6.26), where he describes Aemilianus' dream.[49] In this passage, he listens closely to the advice given to him by Scipio Africanus

40 For a brief biography of Scipio Aemilianus, see: Zahrnt 2000. Astin (1967) still provides the standard work on this political figure.

41 Livy, 45.41.

42 It is uncertain whether she legally speaking still belonged to this *gens* after her marriage. If she was married through *confarreatio*, she would have been transferred to the *gens Sempronia*, including a change in the familial rites she was expected to uphold. Either way, important social relations with her former *gens* and *gentiles* would remain and it is likely that she was still considered to be a member of the *gens Cornelia*.

43 For the legal technicalities and social implications of the Roman adoption, see: Kunst 2005; Lindsay 2009. Specifically for the adoption of Aemilianus by the Scipiones, see: Etcheto 2012: 54–62. Combining this adoption with Aemilianus' marriage to Sempronia, the likely goal was for Aemilianus to transfer the *nomen*, while Sempronia would transmit the *genus*, creating true heirs to the elder Africanus in all possible senses.

44 Astin 1967: 20–21.

45 Dixon 2007: 8.

46 Astin 1967: 32–33; Barnard 1990: 386–387; Dixon 2007: 16–17; 37–38.

47 Cfr. Isaeus, *On the Estate of Apollodorus*, 25.

48 Astin 1967: 13–14; Etcheto 2012: 144.

49 This conceptualisation is also mirrored in one of the inscriptions belonging to the *fornix Fabianus*, which describes Aemilianus as *Paulli f.* (*CIL* I² 763 = VI 1304 = VI 8.3, p. 4677 = *ILS* 43a = *ILLRP* 392; Hölkeskamp 2018a: 445–446).

and he states that since childhood he had always wanted to follow in the footsteps of Aemilius Paullus (his biological father) and Publius Scipio (his adoptive father). This story is a literary fiction of course, but it is indicative of the traditions that surrounded Aemilianus and his complex framework of familial claims. This passage also seems to indicate that Aemilianus' ancestral claim was taken very seriously indeed. Any type of resemblance between members of the same family depends heavily on the likeness of names;[50] therefore, the *similitudo* of Aemilianus with Scipio Africanus became complete when the former was accorded the *agnomen* Africanus after the Third Punic War.

So both the Gracchi – especially Gaius – and Aemilianus emphasised their relation with Scipio Africanus the Elder. They claimed his legacy and, therefore, also his character and behaviour. However, although "the memory of ancestors is a memory of action, a pragmatic memory,"[51] this remembering did not express itself in similar political actions, as the Gracchi and Aemilianus became fierce opponents by the end of the latter's life. The bond between them was initially quite good and the Gracchi served in the military under the command of the older and more successful Aemilianus.[52] Aemilianus even got married to Sempronia,[53] sister of the Gracchi. Given the timing of the marriage, Cornelia is assumed to have arranged this union. By combining strategies of marriage and adoption, the lineages of the Cornelli Scipiones, Sempronii Gracchi, and Aemilii were brought closer together.[54] The Gracchi and Aemilianus were cognates by birth and brothers-in-law by marriage. Tiberius Gracchus and Aemilianus even seemed to be good friends,[55] but once Tiberius started to aggressively pursue his land reform, Aemilianus retracted his support.[56] Plutarch (*Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 7.4) states, however, that Aemilianus would have never violently opposed Tiberius and that it was his absence from Rome that enabled the murder of Tiberius in 133 BCE. Still, Aemilianus is said to have strongly condemned Tiberius' acts, claiming his death was deserved.[57] This staunch resistance to the agrarian reforms made Aemilianus increasingly unpopular with significant parts of the *plebs* and according to Appian (*B. Civ.*, 1.18–20) it was only his unexpected death in 129 BCE that prevented a full-scale conflict.

Cornelia was clearly perceived to be involved in these intra-familial tensions. Firstly, Tiberius was murdered by a mob instigated by Scipio Nasica Serapio, a *gentilis* of Aemi-

50 Baroin 2010: 48.
51 Baroin 2010: 30.
52 Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 4.4; 13.1.
53 For the possible effects on familial and political networks of the loosening of marriage restrictions allowing such a marriage between first cousins, see: Harders 2017.
54 Etcheto 2012: 57–59; Harders 2013: 57.
55 Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 7.1–3.
56 The episode about the initial treaty between Rome and Numantia, the repudiation of which was supported by Aemilianus, likely played a crucial role in their growing hostility as well. Tiberius served as *quaestor* under the proconsul responsible for the siege and subsequent peace negotiations (cfr. Cic., *Brut.*, 103; Vell. Pat., 2.2; Astin 1967: 179–182; Brennan 2004: 51–55; Dixon 2007: 17; 19). These souring relations seem to be illustrated by the marriages of both Tiberius and Gaius to political opponents of Aemilianus (Astin 1967: 86; Etcheto 2012: 144–145). Binot (2001: 197–198) suggests that there had always been tensions between Tiberius and Aemilianus, a true "guerre froide," greatly exacerbated by the Numantian affair.
57 Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 21.4–5; Diod., 5.7.3.

lianus and Cornelia and a cousin of Tiberius himself.[58] Despite Aemilianus' explicit order not to harm Tiberius, it was still a Scipio who was heavily involved in his murder, which must have severely strained the relation between Sempronii and Scipiones. Secondly, Cornelia allegedly expressed her frustration towards her sons over the fact that many people still referred to her as the mother-in-law of Aemilianus, instead of the mother of the Gracchi.[59] This statement may be an invention,[60] just like her letter fragments were likely a forgery as part of anti-Gracchan propaganda,[61] but either way shows the concern over these ancestral representations.[62] It also demonstrates the fact that such claims, even if they were heavily manipulated, could have a strong effect on those directly exposed to them, or even on a wider audience who heard some rumours in the streets.[63] Moreover, Cornelia was (portrayed as) annoyed by Aemilianus' success and wishing to alter her public perception. Thirdly, Aemilianus' death in 129 BCE provides a starker indication of these tensions. Appian (*B Civ.*, 1.20) speculates on the causes of his death and mentions the possibility that Cornelia and Sempronia were to blame.[64] This accusation of murdering a *gentilis* seems striking enough, but it is telling that Appian does not even mention this as being out of the ordinary. He states that Cornelia's motive would have been to protect the legislative programme of her son, clearly implying that her allegiance was not with her wider *gens* and *gentiles*, but with her sons instead. Finally, Cornelia's involvement in the political actions of her sons[65] seems to be confirmed by the suggestion that she had sent armed men from the countryside to Rome to support and protect Gaius and by the statement that Gaius retracted his bill on deposed magistrates as requested by his mother.[66] This strong involvement with her sons is further illustrated by the tradition of Cornelia's *domus frequentata*, after she withdrew to her villa in Misenum, a sign of prestige.[67] Here, she supposedly further cultivated the memory of

58 Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 19.

59 Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 8.6.

60 Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg (1994: 229) emphasise the fact that it was far too soon to expect similar achievements from her eldest son. This passage, therefore, implies foreknowledge that her sons would make their name as tribunes, Tiberius already in the upcoming year (Roller 2012: 3).

61 For a discussion about the authenticity of these letters, see: Cusugi 1970: 1.2.65–73; Instinsky 1971; Horsfall 1987; 1989; Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 228–231; 235–237; López 1998: 105–106; Hemelrijk 1999: 193–197; Dixon 2007: 26–29; Roller 2012: 25–32. It does seem certain that there were in fact letters circulating in Cicero's time believed to have been written by Cornelia (Cic., *Brut.*, 211; Quint., *Inst.*, 1.1.6). It seems likely that these letters were at the very least doctored versions of original writings (cfr. Instinsky 1971: 189; Dixon 2007: 27). See below for further discussion.

62 Cornelia allegedly refers to the political actions of her family as a whole, wondering if they will ever come to their senses. More importantly, she speaks about Gaius asking for the blessings of the family spirits after her death.

63 For these letters, also see Cic., *Brut.*, 211; Quint., *Inst.*, 1.1.6; Nepos, fr. 2.

64 For the sole implication of Sempronia, also see: Livy, *Per.*, 59; Oros., 5.10.10.

65 In this sense of political involvement she also allegedly mirrored her grandmother Pomponia, who greatly encouraged Scipio Africanus to run for office (Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 219–220).

66 On the violent support: Plut., *Vit. C. Gracch.*, 13.2; Beness and Hillard 2013: 63. For doubt about the veracity of this passage, see: Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 230–231. On the retracted bill: Plut., *Vit. C. Gracch.*, 4.

67 Cfr. Sen., *Ep.*, 21.6; Tac., *Dial.*, 6; Cic., *Att.*, 2.22.3; 1.18.1; *Fam.*, 9.20.3; 11.28.1; Cicero, *Comment. pet.*, 35; 47; Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 239. For the *topos* of the *domus frequentata*, see: Foubert 2016.

her sons, seemingly ignoring the part of her late husband in their legacy,[68] thus strongly connecting her sons to her father and emphasising a cognatic tradition.[69]

Cornelia as a Figure of Memory, Her Statue as *Lieu de Mémoire*

There was no public consensus on Cornelia's role as a symbol of the union between the Scipiones and the Gracchi. Although some texts aim at projecting a coherent image, it is clear that her reputation both as an individual and as an agent of her family – in the different forms this occurred – was subject to fierce debate and distortion.[70] As a result, there were various conceptualisations about Cornelia as a public and political figure. We have already seen certain aspects of these narratives, such as the educated mother nurturing her sons. On the other side, there was the spiteful mother resenting her sons for not making a name for themselves. In this regard, the alleged letters of Cornelia to Gaius are of great importance. Here, Cornelia urges her son to abandon his political plans, which are supposedly ruinous to the *res publica*. The fragments are full of fiery rhetoric and the whole family of the Scipiones is accused of political folly. Most scholars now suggest that if they are not entirely fabricated,[71] they are at least heavily modified originals.[72]

For the purposes of the present paper, this question of authenticity is not crucial: central is the fact that multiple traditions were formed surrounding the Gracchi, in which Cornelia played a central and mostly positive role – even in negative narratives she is typically cast as the voice of reason.[73] Ultimately, the predominant tradition surrounding the Gracchi nowadays is far from the only one to exist in Antiquity. Not only are there clear hostile traces in the surviving literary sources,[74] but there is also the con-

68 Plut., *Vit. C. Gracch.*, 19.1–4; Sen., *Ad Marciam*, 16.3; *Helv.*, 16.1; Vell. Pat., 2.7.1; Oros., 5.12.9. On this tradition, see Barnard 1990; Bauman 1992: 42–45; Burckhardt & von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 239; Flower 2002: 172–179; Harders 2010: 54–61.

69 Harders 2010: 60.

70 Plutarch (*Vit. C. Gracch.*, 13) mentions how some speculated Cornelia sent Gaius armed help, while others claimed she strongly disapproved of his actions.

71 E. g. Instinsky 1971: 189; Barnard 1990: 389–390; Plant 2004: 101–102; Santangelo 2007: 469; Harders 2010: 57.

72 E. g. Coarelli 1978; Horsfall 1987; 1989; Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 236–237; Dixon 2007: 26–29; Roller 2012: 31–32. However, Brodersen (2000) and Hallett (2002; 2004; 2018) uncritically accept their authenticity.

73 The only real accusations are that she allegedly motivated her sons to commit their 'unusual' political actions, instilling in them a strong sense of ambition (e. g. Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 8.5–6), and that she sent armed men from the countryside to defend Gaius (Plut., *Vit. G. Gracch.*, 4.3). However, given the Roman model of socialisation, the former accusation can hardly have been a convincing argument.

74 For an analysis of the various traditions, see: Pina Polo 2017. Parts of the ruling class immediately began to delegitimise Tiberius and later Gaius, as well as legitimise the violence committed by its members. This resulted in various accusations towards the Gracchi and their relatives; e. g. the accusation that Cornelia sent armed thugs from the countryside to assist Gaius (Plut., *Vit. G. Gracch.*, 4.3) or Appian's suggestion that Cornelia and Sempronia were responsible for Aemilianus' death (App., *B Civ.*, 1.20). Generally speaking, Valerius Maximus', Cicero's, Appian's, and Diodorus Siculus' comments about the Gracchi testify to a rather hostile tradition, while Plutarch is much more sympathetic towards the Gracchan cause. Cassius Dio can also be regarded as rather critical (cfr. fr. 85).

struction of the temple dedicated to Concordia on the Forum, designed as a monument legitimising state violence against Gaius Gracchus and his followers. On the other hand, large parts of the *plebs* erected statues in honour of the Gracchi in public places and the spots where they had been assassinated were consecrated.[75] This was a clear reaction to the senatorial image of unity as portrayed by the temple and circulating hostile narratives. Of course, there was also the treatment of both Scipio Nasica Serapio and Opimius by a significant part of the *populares*-minded electorate, who shunned them and basically forced them into exile according to Plutarch. Aemilianus as well would lose much of his popularity by retroactively supporting Serapio's actions.[76] Ultimately, the outcome of the political struggles of the first century BCE played a key part in the transmission of particular information and judgements about the Gracchi. It had become clear that family alliances were fragile and that multiple agendas existed within these groups. Even the supposedly tightly-knit Scipiones knew significant divisions, mainly between Aemilianus and the Scipiones Nasicae.[77]

Cornelia's death was likely a crucial moment in the developing narratives about herself and the Gracchi. Dixon (2007: 11–14; 31–32) argued that she strongly cultivated the tradition about her father and sons, and that Sempronia took up this role after Cornelia's death.[78] Cornelia's life could now be reinterpreted in light of the political actions of her sons, as well as her involvement in these, without her being able to influence these narratives. It is uncertain exactly when Cornelia died, but it would have been after 121 BCE, since she was still alive for a few years after the death of Gaius Gracchus.[79] It is also likely that she died before 100 BCE, as we know of a certain T. Equitius who claimed to be a son of Tiberius Gracchus in that year. It was not Cornelia, but her daughter Sempronia who publicly distanced herself from this man at a *contio*, showing that ancestral claims were anything but self-evident.[80]

The moment of her death is also important as it could mark the occasion for the erection of her statue. This date is equally contested, but the most likely option is sometime around 110 BCE. The statue was accompanied by an inscription, which has been found *in situ*: "CORNELIA AFRICANI F GRACCHORUM."[81] There is no explicit mention of *mater* and the "GRACCHORUM" could also imply her marriage to Tiberius the

75 Plut., *Vit. G. Gracch.*, 17.6–18.2.

76 Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 21.4–5; Vell. Pat., 2.4.4; Pina Polo 2017.

77 Etcheto 2012: 155; see below.

78 It is also suggested that Gaius himself greatly advertised family stories and legends (such as that of the death of his father and the two snakes), as he is said to have written a booklet on his family. He seems to have played a major part in the formation of the legendary character surrounding his mother (Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 233).

79 The entire chronology of Cornelia's life is highly uncertain and wrought with problems. For an elaborate – but unavoidably speculative – discussion about the dates of her birth, marriage, and death, see: Dixon 2007: 1–9.

80 Val. Max., 3.8.6; 9.7.1; *De vir. ill.*, 73; Flor., 2.4; Oros., 5.17; Flower 2002: 176; Dixon 2007: 12. For the possible dates for Cornelia's death: Carcopino 1928: 47–81; Moir 1983; Dixon 1985; Konrad 1989; Petrocelli 1994: 28–34; Dixon 2007: 1–3.

81 *CIL* 6.31610; Helbig⁴ 1679, cat. no. 6969, II 13.3, no. 72; *ILS* 68; *ILLRP* 336; Plin., *HN*, 34.31; Plut., *Vit. C. Gracch.*, 4. On the inscription, see: Kajava 1989.

Elder. However, given her public image – which consistently linked her to Tiberius and Gaius – and the use of the plural genitive, it is more likely that her motherhood is highlighted. This was also Pliny the Elder's (*HN*, 34.31) interpretation of the inscription. Still, the inherent ambiguity of the plural genitive allows for a more general reference to the Gracchi, both the father and the sons. This inscription perfectly encapsulates Cornelia's connecting role, situated between Scipio Africanus as his daughter and the Gracchi as their mother. Such monument was usually erected to celebrate a certain occasion or achievement, but this seems unlikely in this case as Cornelia never held any office and did not seem to have made any significant gift to the Roman people.

Flower (2002: 176) argues that her death offered the most likely occasion.[82] Plutarch (*Vit. C. Gracch.*, 4.3) connects the erection of the statue to the withdrawal of the law aimed at Octavius and states that "[t]he people were pleased at this and gave their consent, the people loved Cornelia and decided to honour her no less for her sons than for her father,"[83] but the statement seems chronologically out of place within the given narrative, indicated by the following "indeed, in after times they erected a bronze statue of her."[84] It seems very unlikely that she received a statue while being alive. Hallett (1984: 56) also argues that it was erected "long after her death," while Lahusen (1983: 96 n. 158) dates it in her lifetime. Ultimately, it is more likely that an officially approved statue would have been granted after her death, as it was controversial to dedicate a statue to a woman at all at that time, let alone during her lifetime. There were possibly precedents for statues for women,[85] but it was still very much the exception to the rule. As a consequence, many scholars have argued that the statue was not erected at all at the end of the second century BCE or shortly thereafter.[86] Instead, some suggest that it was placed during the Augustan period, with the *princeps* recuperating Cornelia's image as perfect

82 Cfr. Dixon 2007: 56–59. Others who assume a date in the late second century BCE, before or after Cornelia's death: Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 241–242; Sehlmeyer 1999: 187–188.

83 Translation by Loeb: καὶ ὁ δῆμος ἠγάσθη καὶ συνεχώρησε, τιμῶν τὴν Κορνηλίαν οὐδὲν ἧττον ἀπὸ τῶν παίδων ἢ τοῦ πατρός.

84 Translation by Loeb: ἧς γε καὶ χαλκῆν εἰκόνα στήσας ὕστερον.

85 Flower 2002: 169–172. Firstly, there is the presumed statue of Cloelia, which was an equestrian statue said to have been erected by the families of the other hostages of Porsenna (Livy, 2.13.6–11; Sen., *Dial.*, 6.16.2; Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.*, 35.2; Plut., *Mor.*, 250; *Pop.*, 19.8; Plin., *HN*, 34.28; *Vir. ill.*, 13; Serv., *ad Aen.*, 8.646; Roller 2004: 44–50). It has been suggested that this statue was a later reinterpretation of a Venus or that it was only placed in the third century BCE at the earliest, representing a later elaboration of the legend about Cloelia. Secondly, Tanaquil (Gaia Caecilia) is said to have had a statue in the temple of Semo Sancus on the Quirinal Hill (Festus, 276L; Plut., *Quaest. Rom.*, 30; Plin., *HN*, 8.194). Thirdly, Festus (496L) hints at the existence of a statue of Tarpeia, also within the Porticus Metelli, in the temple of Jupiter Stator. Finally, there is the statue of Quinta Claudia, who welcomed Magna Mater to Rome. This statue was unharmed during the fire in the temple of Magna Mater (Val. Max., 1.8.11), which was built by Scipio Nasica and then rebuilt by a Metellus, according to Ovid (*Fast.*, 4.348). Flower (2002: 172) suggests the statue was placed between 191 and 111 BCE, almost certainly predating the statue of Cornelia. The gilded bronze statues from Cartoceto include a female type, dated by some to circa 50 BCE. There are also epigraphic indications that Julia, daughter of Caesar, was commemorated by a public statue in the Campus Martius (circa 54 BCE). However, the monuments and portrait types of Octavia and Livia in the 30s BCE present the real watershed for women's statues. See Flower (2002: 169–170) for references.

86 E. g. Hemelrijk 1999: 266–267; 2005: 310–315; Ruck 2004.

matrona for his own moralistic legislation.[87] While the continued criticism aimed at the Gracchi among some Imperial authors suggests that they were still controversial figures at this time, it is clear that the exemplary nature of Cornelia could certainly be claimed by Augustus, especially since his power was ultimately based on Caesar and with him on the cause of the *populares*.[88] Of course, a possible recuperation by Augustus does not exclude an early date for the statue. Others maintain that we are simply dealing with a misidentification: the statue originally belonged to a female deity and was later regarded as representing Cornelia instead.[89] An argument in favour of these late alternatives is the date of the base and inscription, which could be Augustan.[90] Of course, it is perfectly possible that an earlier inscription was recarved at a later date, as Flower (2002: 173) suggests.

The discussion about the date of the statue is strongly connected to its location. According to Pliny (*HN*, 34.31) it was placed in the *porticus* built by Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus,[91] who happened to have been a major opponent of Tiberius Gracchus the Younger. This location is rather strange, as such buildings continued to be tied to the family of the person who ordered its execution; they were responsible for its upkeep.[92] It has, therefore, been suggested that it is more likely that the statue was placed there when the animosity between Gracchi and Metelli was no longer relevant, as an earlier placement would have been too controversial and possibly reason for further tension.[93] Advocating an earlier date, Coarelli and Flower have advanced their own hypotheses for the choice for this location. Coarelli (1978) argues that the statue was placed there in 100 BCE by the *populares*, as a way to celebrate their victory over Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus, who went into exile that same year. Cornelia proved to be so popular that the Metelli would be unable to remove it later without major consequences. This means that completely unrelated people erected this statue against the will of those responsible for this particular space just to make a political statement. It is difficult to believe that the powerful Metelli could not get rid of the statue or at least move it to another site.[94]

87 E. g. Hallett 1985.

88 Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 244; Flower 2002: 174; Dixon 2007: 57–58; Roller 2012: 67–77.

89 E. g. Brandenburg 1989; Chioffi 1999; Roller 2012: 59–63.

90 Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg 1994: 242; Roller 2012: 57. However, Coarelli (1978) argues that the base found in the nineteenth century is the original one and that the inscription was recarved and altered to include the word *mater* in the Augustan period.

91 On the *porticus* itself, see: Gwyn Morgan 1971; Richardson 1976; Lauter 1980–1; Hiltbrunner 1982. For the iconographic context of the statue – among which were statues of Iuno and Venus – see: Ruck 2004; Roller 2012: 61. Given the seated type of the statue (often associated with Demeter, Cybele, and Hera) and its context, it is certainly not impossible that the statue originally belonged to some goddess.

92 Flower 2002: 177.

93 Especially given the hostile narratives that surrounded the Gracchi immediately after their death. Particular senatorial factions sought to delegitimise their actions and create an image of unity among those opposing the Gracchi (such as the temple dedicated to Concordia on the Forum after the death of Gaius). However, it is also clear that these delegitimising narratives were immediately contested and countered by traditions in favour of the Gracchi. The aforementioned temple was also heavily criticised (Plut., *Vit. C. Gracch.*, 17.6; Pina Polo 2017). It could be argued that the statue of Cornelia offered a better symbol of unity, one that could be variously interpreted by different groups.

94 Flower 2002: 176–177.

Flower (2002: 176–179) suggests a more likely scenario. She sees several suitable occasions for the erection of the statue in 111 BCE. Cornelia's grandnephew P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica Serapio, the son of the Scipio Nasica who led the mob that murdered Tiberius Gracchus, became consul in that very same year. In addition, a new war started in Africa in 111 BCE, after Iugurtha rebelled against the Romans. This war proved to be far more difficult than expected and could not be resolved quickly. This put even more strain on the Roman elite, as their military leadership was increasingly scrutinised.[95] The Metelli, the most powerful family at the time, became increasingly concerned with their position. Although the main political figures of the Metelli and Scipiones seemed to have been political rivals at times during the second century BCE,[96] Flower sees a more amicable link between them around 111 BCE, which would lead to several kinship ties between these two families.[97] In 99 BCE the Scipiones were also among the leading families who demanded the return of Metellus Numidicus from exile.[98] This new and rather unexpected alliance could be explained by the increasingly unstable situation in Rome. Emotions continued to run high after the death of Gaius Gracchus, necessitating a stable alliance among the elite instead of continued political strife.

In the context of the war against Iugurtha, any member of the Scipiones, with their military legacy in Africa and considered to be invincible in this region,[99] offered a valuable ally for the Metelli and they must have concluded that it was more profitable to work together in this new situation. Scipio Nasica started the war in Africa and in 109 BCE a Metellus was elected consul to renew it, desiring a major role in ending the conflict. Cn. Cornelius Blasio would later mark the end of the war by minting *denarii* with Scipio Africanus the Elder on the obverse side, clearly signalling the importance of Africanus' legacy in the whole imagery of the war and the new political alliance, thanks to his illustrious victory over Hannibal at Zama.[100] Flower (2002: 178) sees Cornelia as an important figure in the imagery of this alliance, suggesting that Cornelia died between 111 and 109 BCE and that: "Her death could have provided her relatives with a convenient opportunity to honour her memory and heritage in a way that had resonance for contemporary politics."

This hypothesis makes sense of this complex situation and here I wish to develop Flower's suggestion further. Cornelia was ideally suited for this position as the link be-

95 Based on: Sall., *Iug.*, 5.1. For further discussions about this socio-political context, see: von Fritz 1943; Gruen 1968: 106–156; Scullard 1976: 44–50; Wiseman 1998: 58–59.

96 Cic., *Brut.*, 81; *Phil.*, 8.14; Plut., *Vit. Ti. Gracch.*, 14.4.

97 Q. Caecilius Metellus Scipio (consul in 52 BCE), for instance, who was adopted into the Metelli and who erected multiple statues of his ancestors on the Capitol in the context of his triumph, referring to the statues his adoptive great-grandfather Metellus Macedonicus had brought to Rome from the east (Cic., *Att.*, 6.1.17), as well as the *fornix Scipionis* erected by Africanus the Elder (Livy, 37.3.7) (on these monuments and Metellus Scipio, see: Hölkeskamp 2018a). Moreover, P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica Serapio – the son of the *pontifex maximus* leading the mob that killed Tiberius – was married to Caecilia Metella, the daughter of Metellus Macedonicus. For the alliance between Scipiones and Caecilii Metelli, see: Syme 1939: 32.

98 Cic., *Red. sen.*, 15.37.

99 Suet., *Iul.*, 59; Cass. Dio, 42.57.5; App., *B Civ.*, 2.87; *Vir. ill.*, 80.3.

100 Flower 2002: 179.

tween both families, since she was explicitly seen as the daughter of Scipio Africanus and as an exemplary Roman woman.[101] It was also possible for others to transform the memory of the Gracchi in favour of the Scipiones and the Metelli by instrumentalising Cornelia's legacy, which could possibly close the existing dichotomy in political approaches existing among both sides and their respective electorate. Recuperating the Gracchi was perhaps too controversial at this point, but we have already seen that Cornelia assumed a more neutral role, in both positive and negative narratives about the Gracchi.[102] This made her an ideal link to advertise the connections between the Scipiones Nasicae and Scipio Africanus the Elder.[103] These could not be achieved via direct ties of *agnatio*, but a cognatic tie was a viable option. Moreover, the exemplary character of Cornelia was clearly worth claiming, even by those who had less than amicable ties with her. She was the ultimate *matrona*, who in addition boasted almost perfect family relations. She was everything a Roman could wish for in a female relative at that time. Moreover, she was not directly involved in politics since she was a woman, making her persona more malleable and less offensive.

It seems wrong to view this situation as a simple dichotomy between those in favour of or against the Gracchans. Throughout the second century BCE the relations between the Scipiones and the Caecilii Metelli were very much flexible, with the latter family regularly changing sides in political disputes.[104] Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus was an ally of Aemilianus, but they became estranged around 140 BCE.[105] Cicero (*Amic.*, 77;

101 While Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg (1994) insist that Cornelia was largely unknown during the lifetime of the Gracchi, it seems that she already had a developed public persona by this time, perhaps also because of her involvement in her sons' politics.

102 Cfr. Dixon 2007: 28–29.

103 The continued elaboration and renegotiation of the monumental memory of the Scipiones, by Africanus the Elder, Aemilianus, and later Metellus Scipio, is discussed in detail by Hölkeskamp (2018a). The statue of Cornelia could very well have become part of this dense landscape of monumental memory.

104 The same could be said about the Cornelii Scipiones and the Sempronii Gracchi, who were hostile to each other circa 200 BCE and became allied after the death of Scipio Africanus (Dixon 2007: 15). Similarly, some members of the Metelli were fierce opponents of the Gracchi (though not necessarily of their core legislative ideas: Van Ooteghem 1967: 73–74) and Gaius Gracchus is said to have spoken publicly against Metellus Diadematus (Van Ooteghem 1967: 93), yet Sempronia exonerated Metellus Numidicus at a trial in 101/100 BCE (Cic., *Sest.*, 101). It is also possible that the oldest son of Tiberius Gracchus the Younger served under the command of Metellus (cos. 115 BCE) in Sardinia (Van Ooteghem 1967: 100). In addition, the Metelli at one point joined the Gracchan attacks on Aemilianus, despite the earlier criticism towards the Gracchi and the marriage ties with the Scipiones Nasicae (Cic., *Rep.*, 1.31; Astin 1967: 231). The Mucii Scaevolae were initially great proponents of the Gracchan case, but seem to have retracted their support once elite opposition against the Gracchi intensified (Dixon 2007: 54). However, the political stance of this family after the murder on Tiberius is rather confusing and testifies to the considerable intra-familial political differences that could exist (Cic., *De or.*, 2.285; *Rep.*, 1.31; Astin 1967: 228).

105 Astin 1967: 85. Van Ooteghem (1967: 62) sees rivalry between Macedonicus and Aemilianus already in 144 BCE. Münzer (1920: 246–252) interpreted these political relations the other way around: Macedonicus and Aemilianus supposedly were rivals at first and became allies after 135 BCE. It seems like Astin has it the right way around, especially as Q. Caecilius Metellus was an ally of Africanus the Elder (Scullard 1951: 36; 1970: 166; Van Ooteghem 1967: 32; 331) and because Macedonicus and Aemilianus had served under the latter's biological father, Aemilius Paullus, at Pydna in 168 (with Macedonicus honoured with the task of reporting the victory to Rome: Livy, 44.45.3; 45.1.1–5; Plut., *Vit. Aem.*, 22.3). The marriage between one of Macedonicus' daughters and the son of Scipio Nasica Serapio is no evidence of friendship between

Brut., 1.81; *Rep.*, 1.31) mentioned Macedonicus among others as an *obtrectator et invidus Scipionis*, while Valerius Maximus (4.1.12) described the quarrels between Aemilianus and Macedonicus as *acerrime*. However, in 140 BCE both Metellus Calvus and Aemilianus were part of an embassy sent to the allies in the east.[106] Later, a daughter of Metellus Delmaticus would marry M. Aemilius Scaurus.[107] There is also the peculiar passage in Valerius Maximus (4.1.12) and Pliny the Elder (*HN*, 7.144) where it is said that Macedonicus mourned the death of Aemilianus and ordered his sons to carry his bier. This is variously interpreted: some see this as a final attempt of a bitter opponent to ridicule Aemilianus (for Aemilianus had no sons of his own to carry his bier),[108] while Astin (1967: 94; 244; 313) argues it is evidence of the ultimate respect held between these men.

The Metelli were, therefore, far from completely against the Scipiones – who themselves were divided in their political goals and approaches – and certainly could draw upon mutual past elements in supporting a new alliance with this family. Especially the Scipiones Nasicae offered many points of similarities, but they had become rather unpopular after their role in the Gracchan episodes. It was, therefore, necessary to 'rebrand' this family and to transform their self-representation. I advance the argument that Cornelia became more than a historical character after her death. She became a true 'figure of memory', a means through which social memory was made concrete and disseminated. This memory was in itself flexible and referred both to her family relations and role as the ideal *matrona*. For different audiences, this memory must have varied. Among those involved in politics, her family relations probably stood out. For other groups, she was a person worthy of admiration because of her actions. For many women, she must have been a prime subject for emulation. It is this flexibility and multi-faceted image that made the instrumentalisation of Cornelia's memory so interesting and convenient. In addition to writings made by a small elite, this was another way to present a particular image of the past. An inherently flexible narrative about Cornelia and her family could be used to legitimate the present and blot out incongruent elements of the past, highlighting different elements based on particular needs.[109]

Social memory offered a powerful and incredibly flexible means of transforming public perceptions, especially during moments of great emotional and ritual importance. Her death seems to have provided such an occasion to manipulate this narrative, as funerals and funerary rituals are well-known to have provided "a sensuous arena in which the dead are mourned, social memories are created and (re)asserted, social bonds are renewed, forged, or broken, and individuals make claims for individual identities

Macedonicus and Aemilianus, not only because the marriage could have taken place before 135 BCE (Astin 1967: 314), but also because Aemilianus was clearly regularly at odds with the Nasicae (cfr. Astin 1967: 88; Etcheto 2012: 97–98).

106 Justin., 38.8.8–11; Diod., 33.23; Cic., *Rep.*, 6.11.11.

107 Van Ooteghem 1967: 333. Of course, he belonged to another branch of the Aemilii than Aemilianus, which could make his role less relevant.

108 E. g. Beness and Hillard 2012: 273; Etcheto 2012: 149.

109 Cfr. Di Fazio 2018: 334–335.

and group memberships."[110] Cornelia's death would have allowed a deliberate attempt to reconcile existing traditions of the figure Cornelia, the Gracchi, and the Scipiones with the current situation, renegotiating the past into a new form that largely ignored inconsistencies and focused the efforts of the group towards the future.[111] The leading men of the Scipiones Nasicae could reconcile their family past with pro-Gracchan and popular tendencies in Roman politics, assuming a more neutral position and winning back the support of significant parts of the *plebs*.[112] This new narrative would be solidified in a way through the erection of Cornelia's statue, as a *lieu de mémoire* crystalising this figure of memory.[113] The statue – and the person it referred to – could be interpreted in various ways by different political sides,[114] while for the 'average' Roman citizen it could have referred to an ideal maternal figure first and foremost. This is perhaps evidenced by the wide acceptance of Cornelia's statue, which hints at a broader image, beyond politics proper. The central role played by Cornelia in all narratives about the Gracchi and mainly the association of her persona with the *porticus* of the Caecilii Metelli, assured that the legacy of Cornelia and her sons was aimed towards supporting the new alliance.

Social Memory and Roman Kinship

This insight from memory studies and the anthropological analysis of mortuary rituals offers a strong argument in favour of Flower's hypothesis. Instead of Cornelia's statue being a political eyesore for the Metelli, it was actually a *lieu de mémoire* designed to co-opt Cornelia as a figure of memory and all attached familial links into the representation of the Metelli and Scipiones of the present. The malleability of social memory allowed to suppress the many elements contradictory to this narrative and focused attention on those elements supporting the new alliance. Although this transformed narrative did not prevent any further conflict, it did seem to have laid the foundation for the successful cooperation between the Metelli and the Scipiones. We see the culmination of complex processes of memory creation and manipulation, but also the erasing

110 Chesson e. a. 2001: 1.

111 The great value of commemorative events for social memory has also been emphasised by Connerton (1989: 4–5) and Di Fazio (2011: 717–726).

112 Astin (1967: 215–216; 226) argues convincingly that the political behaviour of the Scipiones (Nasicae) and the Gracchi was not that different from an institutional point of view, only in terms of their concrete goals. The implication is that it was perhaps not so strange after all to recuperate and condone particular aspects of the Gracchi's political past by a new alliance partly dominated by Scipiones.

113 In light of the presumed statue of Quinta Claudia in the temple of Magna Mater – initially built by Scipio Nasica and later rebuilt by a Metellus – there was already a certain connection between these families and monuments dedicated to women. It seems that the individuals involved also drew upon this tradition.

114 For instance, as the mother greatly responsible for instilling in her sons a sense of political ambition as well as influencing their political actions. On the more *optimates* side of things, she could be portrayed as the voice of reason very much against the actions of her sons, similar to what is portrayed in her alleged letters. In both interpretations, Cornelia fulfils a positive role, cfr. Burckhardt and von Ungern-Sternberg (1994: 240). Over time, it is likely that the maternal image of Cornelia became more important, together with a positive estimation of her political involvement, thanks to the results of the later civil wars.

of several elements that were important in the respective traditions before, such as the non-traditional political attitude of the Gracchi and the rumoured tensions between Cornelia and her *gentiles*.

The statue of Cornelia offers an illustration of the dynamic nature of memory and public discourse. Its placement in the *porticus* of the Metelli can be explained by Flower's hypothesis of a new elite alliance, the public image of which could only be supported with the memory of Cornelia through the mechanisms of social memory. Social memory provides us with a powerful tool to understand such seemingly conflicting behaviour and to functionalise it within specific contexts. As the context changed, so did the information stored by and disseminated from the statue of Cornelia. These ever-changing contexts necessitated a continuous reconciliation of the present with the past and of the individual with the collective.

This context was not only political in nature, but also social, as Roman kinship developed towards a more cognatic-oriented set of relationships and legal rights during the second century BCE. This opened up many more possibilities for the manipulation of memory concerning family and social relations, which were always operating within a somewhat restraining framework. Different models of family were at work, which could be navigated by individuals and collectives alike to achieve goals. This regularly resulted in tensions and conflicts of interests and discourse.[115] The mechanisms of social memory helped to blot out incongruent elements and focus the efforts of certain groups towards the future, possibly undermining overlapping collectives at the same time. The turbulent environment of Roman politics around 100 BCE facilitated such prozesses.

The many concepts of Roman kinship seem to be characterised by flexibility above all else. These concepts overlap with each other and usually refer to a complex whole of meanings. They allowed individuals to navigate social divides and position themselves according to a specific situation. Discourse analyses reveal that these are incredibly dynamic concepts, not at all like their fixated versions in Roman law.[116] Above all else, Roman kinship seems to have provided flexibility and the opportunity to deal with the demographic dangers of pre-transitional societies. This was not restricted to more 'extended' concepts such as the *gens*, but also 'narrower' forms of kinship were continually renegotiated and above all manipulated to serve present needs. The result was not inert political parties but rather the Roman elite as a whole being a flexible group. "Due to their character as an exchange of persons, obligations and property, Roman family ties helped to secure the necessary cohesion of a group that was constantly challenged by the strains of aristocratic competition for fame, honor and rank."[117] Roman law was in many ways a mechanism to facilitate this adaptation, just as social memory was one as it allowed continued transformation of group identities and provided meaning to individuals' behaviour. Aspects of social memory were, therefore, not restricted to family traditions and celebrations, but also played a key role in shaping and legitimising individual

115 Bonnard, Dasen, and Wilgaux 2017: 467–468.
116 E. g. Saller 1994: 74–96; Smith 2006: 51–64; Harders 2009; 2013.
117 Harders 2009: 47.

and group ambitions. This was only possible because Roman kinship in itself was not so much a system, as it was a framework with different categories of belonging and relating to certain individuals.

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