

SVENSKA INSTITUTEN I ATHEN OCH ROM
INSTITUTUM ATHENIENSE ATQUE INSTITUTUM ROMANUM REGNI SUECIAE

Opuscula

Annual of the Swedish Institutes at Athens and Rome

5
2012

STOCKHOLM

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Prof. Gunnel Ekroth, Uppsala, Chairman
Prof. Arne Jönsson, Lund, Vice-chairman
Ms Lisbeth Andersson, Stockholm, Treasurer
Dr Erika Weiberg, Uppsala, Secretary
Dr Jesper Blid, Stockholm
Prof. Peter M. Fischer, Göteborg
Prof. Karin Hult, Stockholm
Prof. Arja Karivieri, Stockholm
Prof. Anne-Marie Leander Touati, Lund
Dr Arto Penttinen, Athens
Prof. Barbro Santillo Frizell, Rome
Dr Märten Snickare, Stockholm

SECRETARY'S ADDRESS:

Department of Archaeology and Ancient History
Box 626
SE-751 26 Uppsala, Sweden
E-mail: secretary@ecsi.se

EDITOR:

Dr Jenni Hjohlman, Stockholm
E-mail: editor@ecsi.se

DISTRIBUTOR:

eddy.se ab
Box 1310
SE-621 24 Visby, Sweden

For general information, see www.ecsi.se
For subscriptions, prices and delivery, see <http://ecsi.bokorder.se>

Published with the aid and of a grant from the Swedish Research Council
The English text was revised by Ms Catherine Parnell, Athens, and Dr Carole Gillis, Lund

Contributions to *Opuscula* should be sent to the Secretary of the Editorial Committee (address above) before November 1 every year. Contributors are requested to include an abstract summarizing the main points and principal conclusions of their article.

For style of references to be adopted, see www.ecsi.se/guide-contributors. All articles are sent to referees for peer review. Books for review should be sent to the Secretary of the Editorial Committee (address above).

ISSN 2000-0898

ISBN 978-91-977798-4-5

© Svenska Institutet i Athen and Svenska Institutet i Rom

Production and graphic design by eddy.se ab, Visby 2012

Printed by Elanders Sverige AB, Mölnlycke 2012

dressed other topics that seem controversial. For example, is it reasonable to do as Shanower wants to do, and reconcile *all* the versions of the story into one? Are not the different versions parts of the story? Further, does it make sense to place the story, which was so clearly part of a “distant Greek mythological past,” in an archaeologically well-defined Bronze Age? Thomas E. Jenkins, finally, analyses adaptations of the *Odyssey* in the well-known “adult fantasy” magazine *Heavy Metal*.

The volume ends with an extremely helpful section of references. First, there is a list of “Classical comics” most frequently referred to in the anthology and considered most important by the editors. Second, there is a list of other comics that are also of some importance. These are augmented with lists of resources, both in print and digital, on comics and comic-based theory. The book is handsomely printed and edited, and this reviewer could find no apparent typos or errors.

This, truly, is a pioneer work. The contributions explore a wide range of different issues and a variety of methodological approaches, from the sophisticated comics theory employed by Johnson to intertextuality as utilized by Stevens. The volume also outlines a range of topics that await further exploration. This is all to be expected from an anthology that represents a “first” in the field.

However, the reader is also left with an impression of a certain lack of coherence, and that certain discussions could have been taken further. For instance, the different appropriations of the traditions from Classics that seem to be apparent in European *bandes dessinées* on the one hand and American comics on the other, simply beg for analysis. Still, it could be argued that these matters could be taken up in another volume or in a number of volumes where they could be examined in greater detail. But above all one lacks a coherent discussion of “Classics” and comics. A number of contributions end up discussing the links between comics and “culture” or “heritage” in general, never really arriving at the question of what—if anything—is special to the relations between comics and Classics.

There are two further somewhat problematic issues that should be mentioned. The first one is that of illustrations. There is simply too few of them. Frequently this reviewer found himself logging on to Google in order to search for artwork from the comics discussed just in order to get an impression of what the discussions were about. One could argue that if this volume made me curious enough to seek out the comics under discussion for myself, that alone is a success. And it is fully understandable if copyright issues restrict the amount of artwork from various comics that can be reproduced in a volume of this kind. Still, this presents problems, not least as some contributions refer in detail not only to the visual style of the comics under scrutiny but also frequently to individual captions.

The second issue is that of readership. The editors consider their target audience “the capeless classical scholar” (p. 5). One could note that some of the contributions probably work better if the reader has some knowledge of the issues discussed in the individual papers. Above all quite a few of the contributions benefit from at least some acquaintance with the comics discussed. The reader could be expected to have some knowledge of *Asterix*, but it is not so obvious that the he or she is familiar with some of the others, such as Gaiman’s *The Sandman*, a work of great complexity and intricacy, nor is it indeed self-evident that a European reader is familiar with the myriad of US superhero comic characters that pass through the pages of this volume.

Classics and Comics is evidently a labour of love: in the concluding presentation of the contributors, which is written in a congenially light tone, C.W. Marshall writes that he “has been conducting research for this volume since he was eleven”, p. 248). On the whole, enthusiasm shines through. This is a good thing. It is to be hoped that this volume provides a starting point for further research in the field, and that the capeless teachers and researchers in Classics are inspired by it to get acquainted with the field of comics. If this happens, then this volume will indeed be a success.

RAGNAR HEDLUND
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History
Uppsala University
Box 626
SE-751 26 Uppsala
ragnar.hedlund@antiken.uu.se

M. Prusac, *From Face to Face: Recarving of Roman Portraits and the Late-Antique Portrait Art* (Monumenta Graeca et Romana), Brill, Leiden & Oxford 2011. xxii + 202 pp. + 155 plates ISBN: 978-90-04-18271-4.

This book is a significant contribution to the study of Late Antiquity. During the last two decades, immense interest in this period has swept across the various fields of Classical studies and Art history: what is new in Marina Prusac’s (hereafter MP) study is the specific focus on recarving techniques in Late Antique portraiture. MP examines how, and under which historical circumstances, this phenomenon may be explained, and how it influenced the specific style or styles of Late Antique portraiture. In other words, she studies how developments in techniques and style were closely intertwined with social practices. It is argued throughout the book that, whilst earlier 1st and 2nd century AD portraits were usually recarved as a consequence of public memory sanctions *damnatio memoriae*, the recarving of portraits in Late Antiquity must be understood in the wider context of reuse during Late Antiquity, a practice which increased dramatically from

around AD 250. These recarved portraits can only be understood in this particular context of reuse whereby it becomes “possible to identify a connection between recarving methods and Late Antique portrait styles” (p. 10).

The “Introduction” briefly discusses the various kinds of reuse, and stresses that reuse was certainly not a novelty during Late Antiquity, nor the recarving of portraits, attested from ca 100 BC and continuing into the mid-6th century AD. Thus, the catalogue contains what is described as “a representative selection of recarved portraits from the Late Republican period to the 6th century AD” (p. 5). The catalogue is not meant to be complete but, since it includes 508 entries, it would have been useful to know how large a percentage of the known recarved portraits this is.

Chapter 1 is concerned with setting up criteria for identifying recarving on portraits, as well as understanding the phenomenon within the wider context of *spolia* (the reuse of sculpture and architectural members) during Late Antiquity. It is stressed that repairs and larger restoration work are common to all types of sculpture during Late Antiquity, when the sculptural output declined. However, recarving with the purpose of giving a sculpture new identity and new meaning is particularly characteristic to portraits. Contemporary portrait statues were still in demand and the recarving of earlier portraits became the rule rather than the exception with recarving becoming an art in itself and an ideology of power. The recarved portraits often sport abnormal proportions, such as too large eyes, too high forehead, too big ears often placed too high, and a too small or too big mouth. MP gives a highly informed and useful overview of how the decline in sculptural output, from the middle of the 3rd century AD, has been explained in various ways in previous scholarship. She seems inclined to see this decline as a consequence of economic crisis (p. 13). This may well have been the most important factor, but a shift in mentality towards ephemeral performances such as games, instead of monuments in stone, may also have played a role.

Chapter 2 deals with the relationship between recarved portraits and those portraits which were carved from new marble between the 1st and 6th centuries AD. The sampled material, 1592 portraits in total, of which 118 meet the criteria to be classed as “recarved”, consists of portraits published in four collections: the Capitoline Museums in Rome, the Louvre in Paris, the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen. The reader is made aware of the problems involved in using such material, including how modern collecting habits may distort the picture. Therefore, these assemblages are tested against the chronological distribution of the recarved portraits in MP’s catalogue and illustrated by four highly informative diagrams. In spite of the insecurity concerning the datings, the tendency

is clear: during period 1, ca 100 BC to AD 235, there are 38 recarved portraits = 0.14% per year; from period 2, 235–284 AD, there are 8 = 0.15% per year; period 3, 284–565 AD, there are 73 = 0.22% per year. Period 3 accounts for 62% of all the recarved portraits, which must be characterized as a significant increase. The reader is informed that recarving is mainly concentrated to Imperial portraits during period 1 and 3, due to *damnatio memoriae* during period 1 and the historical tendencies during period 3 (p. 30) but it would have been useful to have another diagram illustrating this shift in figures.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the *damnatio memoriae* practice during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. MP shows that retrospective connections to a former ruler were something which the Romans drew on from the Republic, in particular concerning the reuse of portraits of Alexander the Great. In contrast to for example Carey,⁷ MP is of the opinion that the heads of condemned Emperors were recut in order to completely eliminate the memory of the condemned—unless there was a wish to identify with the sitter of the previous portrait—in which case traces of the former portrait could be left visible. This would prevent the *archetype* (the power associated with the perfect copy i.e. both the Emperor represented and the Imperial institution) from exerting its power (p. 38–39). That, however, leaves open the question as to why the head was not simply removed and replaced with a head of the new Emperor. It remains highly questionable as to whether it was more economical to recarve than to supply a new head. The actual process of recarving the portrait, putting up scaffolding, the noise of the tools striking the marble whilst eliminating the facial features of the condemned, the rededication of the statue etc. must have been more important if the ancient viewer did not even notice afterwards that the portrait had been transformed into a portrait of someone else.⁸

Chapter 4 deals with the 3rd century AD, when recarving increased dramatically. While one might disagree with some of the points made, e.g. the explanation of the so-called crisis in the 3rd century, increase in the number of private portraits being produced (p. 50) or the cause of a change in attitude towards the *archetype* of the portrait (p. 51), the main argument is both very convincing and very important. MP proves that Gallienus was the first Emperor to substantially reuse portraits, including those of “good” Emperors like Hadrian. This was a significant break with earlier traditions.

⁷ S. Carey, ‘In Memoriam (perpetuum) Neronis. “Damnatio Memoriae” and Nero’s Colossus’, *Apollo* July 2000, 20–31.

⁸ C. Vout, ‘The Art of “Damnatio Memoriae”’, in *Un discours en images de la condamnation de mémoire*, eds. S. Benoist & A. Daguet-Gagey, Centre Régional Universitaire Lorrain d’Histoire, Metz 2008, pp. 153–72; on how the condemned could almost feel the blow.

Chapter 5 discusses former interpretations of Late Antique portraiture as psychological, spiritual, metaphysical or plebeian, in the new light of recarving. Recarving is again placed in the context of the general use of spolia and attitudes towards *renovatio memoriae*, conservation and transformative memory and ideology, which are crucial to the understanding of the reuse. The chapter constitutes a convincing attempt to explain the ambiguity in the portraiture of Constantine, as well as how details of Constantinian portraiture—in particular the big eyes—were caused by recarving an earlier portrait (Sketch 1, p. 70). Even if one might disagree with MP as to whether isolated portraits were recarved from earlier portraits or not (cf. CAT 342, 345), the argument that most portraits of Constantine and the successive Emperors were recarved, is absolutely convincing.

Chapter 6 provides insights into the technical aspects of recarving, and Chapter 7 attempts to classify a number of Late Antique recarved portraits into six subgroups, according to specific forms and methods of recarving.

Chapter 8 demonstrates how a distinction between Imperial and private portraiture was kept, even in the reworked portrait. This could be linked with the different *archetypes* of the portraits of the two groups, as suggested by MP. However, if the phenomenon is mainly restricted to Late Antiquity, it may also be explained in the light of the extraordinarily re-

mote and superhuman role which the Emperor held in Late Antiquity, and which may have made reuse across social borders problematic. The chapter also includes interesting observations on the recarving of female portraits. It is suggested that the portraits of female members of a family (Imperial or private) may not have been considered as owners of personal character because of the idealized facial expression, but to what extent “portraits of earlier female members – mothers, sisters and wives” — “could be substituted with portraits of daughters, daughters-in-law and new wives” needs further scrutiny (p. 114). It also remains to be seen whether the stronger expression of verism observed in female portraiture during Late Antiquity should be seen in the light of recarving.⁹

The book shows how changed economic conditions and modifications in technique and style were heavily intertwined, and how these conditions, particularly reuse, were important instigators for the shaping of a new Imperial image and ideology. My only issues are that the text is so packed with information that it is sometimes difficult to follow the main argument, and although the book is lavishly illustrated almost all photos are too dark and some are even unsharp, which is a deficit in a work concerned with technical and stylistic issues. However, this does not distract from its significance as an important and innovative contribution to the understanding of Late Antique portrait styles, and Late Antique art and society.

JANE FEJFER
The SAXO-Institute, Classical Archaeology
University of Copenhagen
80 Njalsgade
DK-2300 Copenhagen S

⁹ K. Schade, *Frauen in der Spätantike – Status und Repräsentation. Eine Untersuchung zur römischen und frühbyzantinischen Bildniskunst*, Mainz am Rhein 2003.