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IAN RUFFELL

III. ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Z. NEWBY and R. LEADER-NEWBY (EDS), *ART AND INSCRIPTIONS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xvii + 303, 72 figs. ISBN 0-521-86851-3/978-0-521-86851-8. £65.00/US\$120.00.

Lest expectations be falsely raised, it is important to point out that the ‘ancient world’ of the title is firmly the Graeco-Roman one. As such, the volume represents a stimulating set of discussions on themes of juxtaposition and interplay between the visual and the textual. The volume’s ten papers are pretty evenly divided between Greek and Roman topics but the coverage is not restricted to the familiar ground of classical Athens and late Republican and early Imperial Rome. Rather the papers range from archaic Greek pottery to late antique mosaics, though the concentration is upon the long ‘Hellenistic period’ of classical art that encompasses the period so defined by historians as well as the first three centuries of the Roman Imperial period. The latter end of this period also, of course, coincides with that of the peak of the Greek and Latin epigraphic habit. For readers of this journal, comments will be focused on the Hellenistic and Roman rather than Archaic and Classical topics.

This book is also very much not about the art of inscriptions. Despite a brief nod by Newby in the introduction to the potential problem in making a separation between ‘art’ and ‘inscription’ (6), an approach common to almost all authors in the volume is to treat the two as separate elements; rarely are the texts themselves considered aesthetically, the notable exception being Osborne and Pappas, ‘Writing on archaic Greek pottery’ (131–55). Indeed there is surprisingly little comment on the layout and palaeography of the inscribed texts, even from those authors more commonly associated with epigraphy than art history (the minority in this collection). This in part perhaps stems from the implicit definition of ‘art’ employed here, which contrasts in its narrowness with that applied to ‘inscriptions’. For, while inscription is taken in a broad sense to include not only texts invasively sculpted into stone or scratched into pottery but also those painted on pots and wall plaster or formed from tesserae, almost without exception (cf. Osborne and Pappas again), the art discussed is figurative, whether relief, painting, mosaic, or statuary. This is not necessarily a weakness but it is a limitation, upon which some editorial reflection might have been expected.

The papers are organized in three thematic sections and within them roughly chronologically. Part I (‘Inscribing Images, Illustrating Texts: Juxtapositions of Text and Image’) opens with Blanshard on *IG P 127*, contrasting the coherent identity implied in the personification of Samos by Hera in the relief at the head of the inscription with the political fragmentation explicit in the text, headed ‘To those Samians who have sided with the Athenian *demos*’. Next Davies, analysing ash chests, grave altars, and *klinē* monuments from Rome decorated with the funerary banquet motif, demonstrates that there is frequently a disconnection between image and text. She concludes that most commissioners of such monuments appear to consider the pictorial and textual elements in isolation but that the rarer occasions on which there is an obvious interconnection might suggest that there are connections that we are failing to appreciate in the majority. Bergmann follows with an integrated approach to the decorative scheme of the room that gives the House of the Epigrams at Pompeii (*V.1.18*) its name. From the three (of the four surviving) Greek epigrams that are known from elsewhere it is clear that the scheme’s commissioner was laying claim to a high level of literary culture. Bergmann argues that the five scenes and epigrams are paired so as to present puzzles that challenge their viewers to solve them. The first section is rounded off by Squire’s discussion of the statuary and fragmentary epigram of Faustinus (*AE 1967, 85 = 1972, 73*) from the Sperlonga grotto in southern Latium once frequented by Tiberius, a treatment that he has since reprised in ch. 3 of his monograph *Image and Text in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (2009), 202–38. Squire convincingly argues that the author of the Latin epigram, probably inscribed in the Tetrarchic period, has successfully persuaded modern commentators to see the cave’s collection of first-century statuary through his ‘text-tinted spectacles’ as a Vergilian themed ensemble where no such literary programme was originally intended.

After two papers on Greek themes, Part II ('Images and their Labels') concludes with Leader-Newby's panoramic study of 'inscribed' mosaics of the third to fifth centuries A.D. This reveals regional variations not only in the types of scene preferred but also in the prevalence of labelling. Patrons in Syrian Antioch had a penchant for inventive personifications (helpfully labelled), those in Latin North Africa favoured circus and *venatio* scenes, naming people and animals, while those of Roman Britain were much more restrained in the use of captions.

The three papers of Part III ('Inscriptions and their Statues') are far more closely intertwined thematically than the rest of the volume. Ma urges a renewed sensitivity to the grammar of dedicatory inscriptions on honorific statue bases, focusing on phenomena of omission, elision, and distancing. Although his sample is Hellenistic, his lessons are equally applicable to Greek dedications of the Roman period. He points out how the accusative of the honorand deliberately elides the distinction between the individual and the image representing him. The terseness of many texts in leaving the nature of the object commemorated to be supplied by the viewer/reader is familiar enough but Ma also draws attention to the fact that even when entire decrees are inscribed a demonstrative element pointing to the statue is missing; the honour appears *en passant* as the/a statue not *this* statue. Shear examines the re-inscription of private dedicatory statue bases of the Classical and Hellenistic periods by the *demos* of Athens to honour prominent Romans. Although there is sometimes partial erasure of the original text, there is no attempt to hide the reuse. That sculptors' labels are left unmolested implies preservation of the original statues and there is evidence for deliberate matching of the historic personage to the attributes of the contemporary honorand, a sort of visual version of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. The practice was presumably meant to flatter the Roman honorands but, as the final essay by Platt shows, contemporary commentators (Dio of Prusa and Favorinus) took a dim view of this *metagraphe*.

Although there is no intention to be comprehensive and no single theoretical agenda, many themes recur, making for a coherent collection overall and one that ought to become a common reference point for both epigraphers and art historians. However, given the minimal overlap between individual papers, even in Part III, readers would have been much better served had the bibliographies of each paper been left discrete rather than amalgamated in a single undifferentiated list at the end of the volume.

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