

Charles I stated before the court that would condemn him to death: 'I do stand more for the liberty of my people, than any here that come to be my pretended judges.'

Of course, he said that precisely because the people's liberty was a notion habitually associated with the other side. His appropriation of it does not at all mean that it was not, at the time, a significant political marker characteristic of one of the two rival camps; in fact, it indicates just the opposite. Indeed, until a relatively late stage, the king's opponents were no less insistent on their loyalty to the crown (while opposing the king's evil counselors) than he himself claimed to be devoted to the liberty of the people (and to the privileges of Parliament) — rightly understood. Is it then any wonder that Cicero (and also more die-hard *optimates*) would claim to be devoted to the true interests and the rightly-understood liberty of the Roman people, while the radical tribune Memmius is described by Sallust (*Jug.* 31.25) as 'specifically defend[ing] the authority of the senate' (171) — against the small and corrupt clique that has, he claims, betrayed it? Such mutual stealing of the other side's rhetorical clothes is part of the usual stuff of political controversy in many political cultures.

But however much it "invited" a manipulative appropriation, the term *popularis* might also be used in a much more straightforward "party-political" sense, denoting a political tendency, opposite to the optimate one, with which one disagreed — without necessarily claiming that it was "seditious". This is what Cicero does in *Pro Sestio*; and however much his treatment of the popular/optimate divide there may have been influenced by the exigencies of the particular case at hand, as R. insists, it could not have helped Cicero's case to describe Roman politics in a way that his audience would have found fundamentally unrecognizable. In the Fourth Catilinarian oration Cicero, having noted that Caesar was known to follow the *via popularis* in politics, praises him for the severity of his proposed punishments for the conspirators, and stresses the difference between Caesar and those other *populares* who had preferred to absent themselves from the crucial session of the senate: *Intellectum est, quid interesset inter levitatem contionatorum et animum vere popularem saluti populi consulentem* (*Cat.* 4.9). In this case, a *vere popularis* is not an optimate posing as the people's friend, but a real *popularis*, a respectable political opponent — "the right honorable gentleman opposite". The two labels examined in this book could mean different things in different contexts; among other things, they were certainly capable of denoting what they are usually assumed to denote.

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Marina Prusac, *From Face to Face: Recarving of Roman Portraits and the Late-Antique Portrait Arts* (Monumenta Graeca et Romana, Volume 18), Leiden: Brill, 2011. xxii + 202 pp. + 155 plates. ISBN 978-90-04-18271-4.

The practice of fashioning portraits from reused images (either portrait-statues or mythical figures) and architectural members, long occupies the study of Roman portraiture. Several important studies, among them those written and edited by Eric R. Varner¹ in the last two decades, deal with *damnatio memoriae*, the reuse of sculpture and *spolia*, and the recarving of imperial and private portraits. All these matters are referred to in the Introduction (1-11) and Chapter One (13-27) of Prusac's (henceforth P.) book. The definition of "style", discussed on pp. 7-10, points to the difficulties in specifying and interpreting the various artistic styles, and hence undermines, from the very beginning, the final conclusion 'that the influence of recarved portraits upon late-antique

¹ E.g. Eric R. Varner, 2004, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture*, Leiden; *idem* (ed.), 2000, *From Caligula to Constantine Tyranny & Transformation in Roman Portraiture*, Atlanta, Georgia.

sculptural styles was significant' and that 're-carving techniques appear to have had a fundamental impact on the artistic expressions of the period' (124).²

In Chapter Two (29-36), the author examines the distribution of reworked portraits in three periods (between 100 BCE and 565 CE), by a sample-group of portraits (118 out of the 1592 published) housed in four collections. P. admits that the collections are problematic, that the calculations, being relative rather than factual, should be treated with caution, and that the numbers provide only a general indication. The more specific indications gleaned from the catalogue (131-158) make the statistical analyses in Chapter Two superfluous.

Chapter Three (37-45) demonstrates the correlation between the extent and nature of memory sanctions carried out (against members of the imperial family and private individuals), and the propaganda, context, and availability of both reused and raw materials during the first and second centuries CE. It appears that 'towards the third century, it had gradually become more common to destroy the portraits of unwanted individuals rather than to re-carve them' and that 'private portraits', rather than imperial, 'started to dominate among the re-carved examples', regardless of sanctions associated with *damnatio memoriae* (43). The reason, as suggested by P. in Chapter Four (47-57), was first and foremost economic. The inflation of prices, resulting from the economic crisis and the wars, affected the marble trade, limited availability of skilled sculptors, and led to changes in attitude, hence also in styles and techniques.

P. argues that re-carving portraits of earlier-popular-emperors came into practice under Gallienus, with the Senate's consent, without being considered a sacrilege. The practice continued into the fourth century and soon became a common custom not only for imperial dignitaries, but also among ordinary people who could afford a reworked portrait.

Chapter Five (59-78) points to a consistent growth of eclecticism in styles from the Tetrarchy to Justinian I; it opens with a comparison between the granite portraits (none of them is re-carved) and reworked marble portraits of the Tetrarchy, arguing that the latter 'show greater affinities with those of the soldier emperor types than those made in porphyry' and that the differences 'behind the symmetrical frontality and the exaggerated expressions they share, might be due to re-carving' (61-62). Although carving methods can, to a certain degree, explain the differences between the granite and marble portraits, P. should have further considered the context and the resulting meaning of images displayed within the public sphere versus images displayed within the private sphere.³

P. discusses with greater caution the context, function and meaning of re-carved portraits in the Constantinian period; however, not one of the interpretations given is unfamiliar or innovative. P.'s observation that 'most portraits from the period of Constantine were re-carved from earlier originals' cannot be disputed, but her view 'that the [re-carving] methods employed influenced the visual expression of the period' (69) is, in a way, misleading. Methods indeed influenced visual expression, whether the portrait was carved in raw material or re-carved, but it was not for the sculptor to regulate the visual expression of the period. In late antiquity, as before, the preferred expression was determined by the patron/customer and not by the sculptor, whose duty was to employ the most suitable technique to achieve the best result. Likewise, in late antiquity, as before, ordinary people adopted and imitated, with more or less success, the imperial trends in style and technique.

² Especially since carving and re-carving techniques are basically the same; even the solutions offered to problems occurring while sculpting, are alike.

³ The official granite groups in Venice and Rome were intentionally stylized to create an effect of regimentation and the impression of strength that lies in the unity and solidarity of the four. An image of a single tetrarch, whether reworked or not, must have been interpreted in a totally different manner based on the context and circumstances of display. On style, function and meaning of Tetrarchic portraiture see: R. Rees, 1993, 'Images and Image: A Re-Examination of Tetrarchic Iconography', *Greece & Rome*, 40: 181-200.

The carving methods dealt with in Chapter Six (79-92) point to the parameters of a convincing recarved portrait: good technique, harmonious proportions, apparent individual traits, style, and quality of marble. A convincing portrait, according to P., is a successfully recarved one that enables the viewer to sense the character behind the image. The more convincing a recarved portrait the more difficult it is to recognize it as such. The use of the word 'convincing' is somewhat problematic, as it is not clear enough who is meant to be convinced, the modern scholar or the ancient viewer. Obviously, any skilled sculptor anytime could produce better workmanship than an unskilled one, even if the marble he used was of a lesser quality; yet harmonious proportions were by no means an essential parameter in late antiquity, nor were 'apparent individual traits' a criterion for a 'convincing' recarving in a period when implicit individual traits became a stylistic standard.

The report on marble quarries (79-83) is out of place; it would have been preferable to present it in an appendix or include the relevant information in respective annotations. In pages 84-92 P. finally shares with the reader her expertise in identifying recarved portraits by means of technical methods and stylistic approaches. The rendering of the hair is put on top of the list of measures that help in recognizing a recarved head and in giving an idea of the features of the original. Enlarged eyes, reduced ears, compressed or centralized facial features, and carved cavities for inserting new facial parts, are but some of the listed imperfections making a recarved portrait recognizable.

The classification of the fourth- to the sixth-century recarved portraits into six groups, in Chapter Seven (93-107), enlightens us a bit more on stylistic and technical matters, while highlighting specific features associated with specific groups.

The last Chapter (109-122) introduces further observations on the social norms that regulated recarving. It was customary to rework a portrait of an emperor into that of another emperor, but unacceptable to rework imperial portraits into those of private individuals. Deities' heads were rarely recarved into portraits; and genders were hardly mixed, mainly because the physiognomy did not allow it. Since female portraits were often idealized, alternations from face to face were easier to make than in males. The last pages of the chapter are devoted to face recarving on sarcophagi.

Next comes a Catalogue (131-158) of 508 items dated from 100 BCE to Late Antiquity, with minimal data, basic bibliography and exquisite photographs of 160 catalogue items. One would expect to have a lot more of all these elements. A detailed description of the recarved features of each one of the portraits, and a disc of photographs of all catalogue items, would have offered a valuable contribution.

Face to Face could have been a better book if it had been organized properly, less repetitive, more focused and more accurate in the references to other studies. The title of the book and the stated purpose of the study 'to shed light on the phenomenon of portrait recarving and the extent of this practice in Late Antiquity'⁴ should have led P. to exclude from the discussion as irrelevant subject-matters such as the relocation of statues, the reuse of bases and *spolia* (unless recarved portraits), and the reuse of statues for building materials and vice-versa, referred to in various pages of the book (e.g. 2-4, 18-22, 83-84). Instead, a few observations on the existing bodies carrying the heads which are discussed in this book, would have added further insight into the matter.

P.'s book should be appreciated for the extent of research that has been put into it, as evinced by the seventeen pages of bibliography, and for assembling such a considerable number of portraits in one volume. Yet, the book could have done without lengthy summaries of previous studies, and without the many and repeated inaccuracies. P. attempts to establish a theory according to which recarving techniques in late antiquity 'had a fundamental impact on the artistic expression of the period', but fails to refer to the impact made on that expression by the

⁴ Stated in the Preface, and again in the Introduction (1).

interaction between client and sculptor. Nevertheless, this topic will doubtless be further discussed in future scholarship of late antique portraiture.

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Blömer Michael, Margherita Facella, Engelbert Winter (eds.), *Lokale Identität im Römischen Nahen Osten: Kontexte und Perspektiven*. Erträge der Tagung "Lokale Identität im Römischen Nahen Osten", Münster 19. - 21. April 2007. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2009. 350 pp. ISBN 978-3-515-09377-4.

Over the past decades the eastern part of the Empire has attracted increasing attention after a long period in which there was relatively more interest in the western provinces, the region where most modern Roman historians were based. A parallel phenomenon is an enhanced involvement in the study of the provinces of the Empire as opposed to Rome, the Emperor, imperial government, and the Empire as a whole. In the past, Roman provinces were studied mostly in isolation, by scholars interested in the region where they lived. The so-called "frontier studies" were an early manifestation of local interest in the provinces, but these focused exclusively on the Roman army in the frontier zone, not on the civilian population, its society, and culture. Mainstream historians of the Principate largely ignored the provinces. Local identity in the Roman Near East would therefore hardly have been the topic of a conference half a century ago. Nowadays it will be regarded an attractive subject by quite a number of historians and archaeologists.

The present book publishes ten papers read at a conference held in 2007 on local identity in the Roman Near East, all of them substantial, some of them very long and one of them almost the equivalent of a monograph (Oliver Stoll, ninety pages). Almost all of them are relevant to the topic at hand and some of them are most interesting.

Having said this, I must point out three weaknesses. The first is that the title promises far more than the book actually delivers. The title and the introduction (pp.10-11) present this volume as a discussion of the Roman Near East in general. In fact, only one of the ten contributions, the paper by Andreas Kropp, deals with the southern half of what is normally regarded as the Near East (see the contents, below). Otherwise Arabia and Judaea-Palaestina are ignored, as are Armenia, Cappadocia and Commagene. Arabs, Jews, Nabataeans, non-Jews in Palestine, Christians in Arabia etc.; none of them are treated. Yet every reasonable definition of the Near East accepts the region as extending southward to the Red Sea, while it may include (or exclude) the parts north of the Taurus Mountains. It is, of course, entirely legitimate to hold a conference on Roman Syria and Mesopotamia, but that has to be acknowledged as such.

The second problem is that no serious attempt is made to pull together the conclusions to be derived from the individual contributions. Admittedly, the term "local identity" and even more so the concepts "contexts and perspectives" imply a degree of pluralism and diversity, but the brief introduction does not really attempt to find any common denominator. It merely expresses the hope that some perspectives for future work have been disclosed. In this context something may be said about the structure of the volume. The arrangement of the papers follows an alphabetical order based on the authors' last names, thus conveying no sense that the book has any logical structure. This may be a missed chance. The present reviewer feels that more could have been attempted and achieved (below I will attempt to indicate how this could be done). My third objection is that no serious academic work should be published these days without an index. This is true for a collection of articles no less than for a monograph by a single author. This is not a technical issue: a good index is an integral part of an academic work and a pre-condition for its success.