

At the very conclusion of his work, Mitchell states: "It is unlikely that so many and varied comic representations could have been produced under other circumstances than in democratic Athens. It is unlikely to be tolerated in a 'totalitarian' regime or simply a more militaristic one such as Sparta, where power and obedience take precedence." (p. 313). I find this not very convincing argument. Humour cannot be considered a by-product of democracy: as Clarke's study on Roman visual humour shows, the production of comic scenes was possible in an imperial society, too. Humour is such a universal phenomenon across time and space that its visual expression cannot be restricted to democratic regimes alone. As Clarke and Mitchell himself superbly show, we need to reconsider the "serious" interpretations of some ancient images and to see their potentially comical effect: the eye-cups, for example, which are traditionally interpreted as having an apotropaic function, may rather been seen as comical, when they are accompanied by visual puns (pp. 36–46). To ascertain the comic character of some images is a difficult task, as the production and perception of humour are also influenced by the personal, cultural, and social factors of a specific culture. But even members of the same cultural system may not agree with ideas on what is humorous. For example, despite our shared identity as scholars of classical art and archaeology in postmodern times, I find some of the vases discussed by Mitchell not humorous at all: for instance, the scene with Diomedes (pp. 96-8), the image of the greedy Iris (pp. 140–43), or the Nicosthenic amphora (p. 166). Similarly, the apparent lack of visual humour in the totalitarian society of Sparta may due to our difficulties in recognizing the comic effects of some scenes.

In all, this is a pioneering, challenging, and provocative book that gives interesting insights into ancient Greek society.

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*The Parthenon and Its Sculptures*. Edited by MICHAEL B. COSMOPOULOS. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004. ISBN 978-0-521-83673-9. XVI, 214 p. GBP 50, USD 88.

This book consists of the non-Elginian papers read in the conference "The Parthenon and Its Sculptures in the Twenty-First Century", and organized in 2002 at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Parthenon specialists were presented an opportunity to get together and evaluate the state and future of Parthenon studies. The ten writers highlight the Parthenon from four main view points, the traditional formal analysis of the pictorial decoration, the historical and socio-political background, new technology, and the later destiny of the building.

Symeonoglou, by going beyond compositional and iconographical similarities, analyses carving details or execution of ten blocks. Three masters, A, B, and C, each with his own crew, seemed to have worked in close collaboration. The masters could apparently deviate from the master design, having also individual specialized skills, such as carving of drapery and animals, or male bodies and dramatic representation. The third master with his singularly innovative and brilliant command of anatomy, drapery, perspective, movement, etc., was possibly the leading master, and none other than Pheidias, who also carved the three gods of the east frieze. Younger, in contrast to Symeonoglou, democratizes the sculpting process. He gets away from the limiting notion of a master sculptor responsible for the general design and argues for

gangs of workers, advancing from prepared sketches, transferring cartoons, repeating figures, making mistakes and then rectifying them.

Neils examines the narrative strategies of the frieze, especially the time-space continuum of the Great Panathenaic procession, an event which spread over a kilometre and lasted an entire day. As a method, this progression in stages of specific moments is better known from other media of Athenian visual arts. A somewhat earlier vase painting depicts consecutive phases of a symposium, and a monumental painting in the Stoa Poikile displayed three phases of the battle of Marathon, as reported to us by Pausanias. The short sides of the Parthenon frieze depicted, according to Neils, the moments before and after the procession, while the procession proper was shown on the long sides. The enigmatic composition of the eastern short side should tie the two entering processions with the central stage with the Olympian gods. This can best be understood by envisioning the gods sitting in a semicircle. Interpretation of the central scene is inspired by scenes of Attic vase painting and reliefs. It is understood as the refolding of the peplos, after the acceptance of the gift by Athena, to be stored until the Kallynteria festival.

Mostratos' article examines the reconstruction of the Parthenon's east pediment, the central part of which suffered considerably, as is well known, from the later constructing of an apse and the even later explosion caused by Morosini. In the author's opinion, the best key to the problem is offered by the Parthenon's west pediment, where two figures of equal status instead of an axial figure are presented. The newly born Athena and her father Zeus are the chosen deities, separated by a flying Nike. Another puzzle is the identification of the many preserved sculpture fragments, the original whereabouts of which in either of the two pediments are unknown. A calm overall scene is proposed for the reconstruction.

Political realities may have shaped the iconography of the large base of the statue of the Athene Parthenos, the subject of which was the dressing with peplos and adorning of Pandora, the first woman, by the goddess herself. This event was often depicted in art and reported about by both Greek and Latin authors. Robertson ponders over the Athenians' reason for choosing this subject, the story of which originates from the Boeotian environment. He explains it convincingly as originally used as a symbol of imperial power, which lived on both in the statue base and the east side of the Parthenon frieze.

Digital photography and image-based software programmes, supported by the examination of the related images both in sculpture and vase painting, may help us to reconstruct the missing pieces of the Parthenon's east metopes. The fascinating article by Schwab examines the potential of current media technologies. New technology is also used to understand the wide distribution and varied uses of Pentelic and other white marbles. At least thirty Pentelic quarries were worked in ancient times. Pike, in his article, summarises the development of the database of the high-resolution marble stable isotope. With its help, the exact marble quarries from which the material for a sculpture or an architectural fragment once was extracted may be identified. This article opens huge new vistas on the whole field of marble studies.

The postclassical history of the Parthenon was the object of St. Clair and Picken's article, in which they come forth with previously little known or unknown 17th-century material. In their article, they present an account of Athens by an anonymous Frenchman twelve years after the Morosinian explosion. We get a glimpse of the Parthenon's appearance, of the nature of the roof, and information on the frieze, which causes new problems for its already perplexing interpretation.

The publication of this book coincided with the Athenian Olympic Games in 2004. Even though the Elginian papers were excluded, the book has not lost now, some years later, any of its topicality, and it can also be understood as a contribution to the efforts to restore the Marbles. The Parthenon is an unclosed Pandora's Box, which inspires specialists from different fields to draw inspiration from it. The results, such as some of the articles in this book, may be contradictory; nevertheless they are all very interesting reading.

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SUSAN I. ROTROFF: *Hellenistic Pottery: The Plain Wares*. The Athenian Agora XXXIII. The American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Ann Arbor 2006. ISBN 978-0-87661-233-0. XXVII, 440 pp, 98 figures, 90 plates. USD 150, GBP 95.

This volume is based on the excavations of the Athenian Agora by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, and it is the third and final volume – see Agora XXII for moldmade bowls, and Agora XXIX for other fine ware forms – in the publication of the Hellenistic pottery from the site. For this study, about 1,400 Hellenistic vessels in the category of plain wares that had been entered into the excavation record were divided up by function: ca. 25 % of them were identified as small oil containers (unguentaria), 30 % as cooking vessels and 45 % as forms designed for various uses in a household. These three groups are represented in the book by a catalogue of 847 objects, while some other related classes, such as transport amphorae and terracotta altars, have been omitted for well argued reasons.

It must be said in the outset that like many others ceramologists working in the Mediterranean, Susan Rotroff has also faced the unfortunate fate of a scholar who has "inherited" a substantially large pottery assemblage with evident inherent quantitative bias. As demonstrated by the fine ware / plain ware -ratio, the original study material has been partly discarded due to excavation activity taking place in the first part of the 20th century and the following reduction process dictated both by the lack of storage space and also the belief of scholars that they had squeezed out all the necessary information from the assemblage.

The aims of the study, the construction of both form- and fabric-based typologies, and the definition of respective chronologies, are traditional but nonetheless are goals well worth pursuing. As the majority of the examples used for this purpose pertain to closed contexts like wells, the control over the chronological framework of the study is considerably better than in sites where redeposition and residuality are the two catchwords. The absolute time frame for the Hellenistic pottery in this book runs from the last quarter of the 4th century well into the 1st century BC, slightly beyond the Sullan sack of Athens in 86. The author's main argument for this convention is the Hellenistic character of the late 1st century BC pottery, and one can only agree with her general observation that while the historical and archaeological record are interrelated in a broad sense, the latter often lags behind the former and will rarely exhibit the same nuances.

The study is organized in a clear manner, starting from the introductory chapter providing information on several aspects of the assemblage. Thereafter, the focus is turned to pottery fabrics, the conventional study which has been complemented with instrumental neutron activation analysis (INAA) and Raman laser microprobe (RLM) spectroscopy. The nomenclature