

Roman imagery across chronological, geographic and social contexts makes it an essential resource for any scholar of antiquity.

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AMY RUSSELL and MONICA HELLSTRÖM (EDS), *THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF ROMAN IMPERIAL IMAGERY*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xvi + 292, illus. ISBN 9781108831211. £75.00.

On their surface, the workshop-generated contributions to this volume all revolve around a simple question: how were images related to Roman emperors produced and consumed in shifting contexts by different groups? Reacting against Zanker's *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (1987) and models that stubbornly continue to see representations of emperors primarily in relation to the emperor — whether as their author, approver, interlocutor, or audience — the volume seeks to locate imperial images in their localised contexts, entangled with agentive co-creators of meaning and commodified to structure social relations. In that sense, the volume falls very much in line with much recent work on the appropriative and adaptive image-worlds of empire, particularly at its edges (e.g. M. Egri *et al.*, eds., *Beyond Boundaries: Connecting Visual Cultures in the Provinces* (2016)). Through its kaleidoscope of case studies, the form of the volume itself makes an argument for replacing linear, arboreal models of how imperial representations were produced and adopted — whether 'top-down,' 'trickle-down' or 'bottom-up' — with more rhizomatic sets of interconnections among images, agents and audiences.

Each individual paper will be of interest to those working on related material, and each compellingly offers its own way of de-centring the emperor in imperial art. Amy Russell challenges Zanker's notion of iconographies that trickle down from imperial models, losing 'meaning' in the process; for her, the altars of Rome's compital shrines clothe common ideologies in distinctive iconographies, subsequently serving as the locus where Rome's inhabitants would encounter imperial imagery. In a similar vein, Megan Goldman-Petri argues that the 'Hedulus altar' (the association between P. Perelius Hedulus' inscribed dedication of a temple and the altar is far less secure than she, and others, have posited) from Carthage should not be seen primarily in relation to Augustan imagery at Rome, but rather as a set of images drawn from a wider iconographic buffet for their personal and local resonance. Benjamin Kelly de-centres the emperor in a very different manner, proposing a model of the imperial 'court' (*sensu* Norbert Elias) to replace single agents like 'emperor' or 'senate' as producers of images.

Mediation — both as the materialisation of ideologies, and as navigating or pivoting between stratified social powers — also serves as a common thread of the contributions. Julia Wilker argues that, like Russell's mediating *vicomagistri*, client kings played a key role in circulating and reshaping imperial imagery — though limited in how they could appropriate such styles for themselves by their positions of dependency, which necessitated maintaining sharp distinctions between levels of authority. In looking at the erection of imperial statues in North Africa, Monica Hellström argues that the practice had little to do with creating ties to emperors; instead, the statues served to structure relationships between elite dedicators, their communities and perhaps also the provincial power-centre at Carthage.

Other contributions focus instead on how imperial imagery makes claims of belonging, refracted through localised production and concerns. For Nicolas Tran, the epigraphically attested portraits of emperors displayed in the clubhouses of boatmen use imperial representations not only as markers of loyalty, but also to assert their honourable, upright standing in an imperial world. Caillan Davenport shows how images from the Greek East of the emperor himself violently subjugating personified peoples arise out of localised traditions and discourses, and how such images allow their consumers to participate in conquest as part of the in-group of empire, despite their own peripheral status.

But the highlights of the volume are those essays that explicitly stretch into questions of signification itself. Nandini Pandey focuses on Ovid's consumption and creative re-representation

of imperial portraits in *Pont.* 2.8, drawing on Marx's notion of *Warenfetischismus* to bridge the gap between representation and social relations. For Pandey, as much as Ovid might reproduce hegemonic forms of consumption, he also mobilises a shared image for ideological contestation and the creation of his own agency. Clare Rowan's interrogation of lead tokens and coinage makes a strong case for the way everyday, ubiquitous portraits of the emperor became a form of 'pre-mediation', the raw material through which other experiences and ways of being might be expressed and communicated.

But in a work concerned with the multiplicities of relational meaning-making and their social dimensions, it is striking that explicit discussions of semiotics are rare ('modern media studies', perhaps unfairly caricatured as privileging two-sided models of communication, are dismissed as too simplistic: 10). Every paper is concerned with the range of ways producers and consumers of imperial images might situate such signs in relation to particular referents — many of which may have had little to do explicitly with the emperor — and with how mediating individuals or groups might exploit (often, in the accounts put forward here, primarily in calculating and self-serving ways) the instability and indeterminacy of the sign–referent relationship. This is precisely the area with which contemporary semiotic studies are concerned, and these might well offer solutions to one of the central problems left unresolved in the volume: the implications of signification (rather than the signs themselves) for the reproduction of social inequalities.

Throughout the volume, the pairing of 'images *and* ideology' is a common refrain — perhaps because the relationship between the two (if they are ever actually separate entities!) is never fully expressed. Indeed, the existence of an independent imperial ideology is taken as a given in most chapters, drifting above its articulations as unmediated expectation (for example, of emperor-worship) or transmittable from the emperor as a kind of 'memo' (204). Each chapter may de-centre the emperor from imperial imagery, but 'ideology' grants him a back door through which he might sneakily return to the heart of power relationships.

The tensions exposed by the papers here — the decentralised centrality of the emperor, the multiple latent referents and potential divergent 'meanings' pulling in different directions, the localised instantiations of globalised images — ultimately expose what may be the central problem in Roman art and society: how modes of signification themselves recursively created the power structures of empire, distinguished between agentive producers and passive consumers, made subjects and objects. Anthropologists like Webb Keane have drawn attention to the roles that 'semiotic ideology' (an alternative to 'images and ideology') might play in determining historically specific structures of power (e.g. *Language & Communication* 23 (2003), 409–25); his work could offer a template for how to proceed from the foundations laid here. Closer to home, one might look to Jeremy Tanner's work (*JRS* 90 (2000), 18–50, perhaps ignored in the present volume for its focus on pre-imperial images) as a means of bridging the conceptual chasm between material representations and social power.

Still, the volume contributions collectively offer a powerful critique of many models that continue to shape accounts of Roman imagery and society. It will be a key point of reference for future work on the social history of art in the Roman Empire. And, perhaps like a *vicomagister*, African *flamen* or client-king, it will begin to pivot us from studies of signs to studies of signification.

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ANNE WOLSFELD, *DIE BILDNISREPRÄSENTATION DES TITUS UND DES DOMITIAN* (Tübinger Archäologische Forschungen 32). Rahden: Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2021. Pp. x + 398, illus. ISBN 9783896468635. €69.80.

Anna Wolsfeld's adaptation of their 2015 dissertation brings together, for the first time since Max Wegner and Georg Daltrop's 1966 study, all the extant portraits of Titus and Domitian and proposes a new typological categorisation using the established *Kopienkritik* method. This is, however, not the sole aim of the work. W. also analyses the portraits of Titus and Domitian as