GREEK AND PHOENICIAN ART IN CONVERSATION

MARTIN (S.R.) *The Art of Contact. Comparative Approaches to Greek and Phoenician Art*. Pp. x + 282, ills, maps, colour pls. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Cased, £52, US$59.95. ISBN: 978-0-8122-4908-8.

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This is an important book. Although M. does not always have the courage of her convictions, she has seen that attempts to talk about the relationship between Greek art and Phoenician art are doomed unless scholars own up to the problems of talk of 'Greece' and 'Phoenicia' in antiquity. The problem with models of Hellenisation is not simply that they necessarily put the agency in the wrong hands, it is that they suppose that there is something distinctly Hellenic in the first place. As M. argues, in particular in Chapter 3, 'Exceptional Greeks and Phantom Phoenicians', it is only when scholars stop drawing lines around a set of cultural traits and asserting that those traits were somehow peculiarly Greek that cultural relations between Greeks and non-Greeks can begin to be understood.

Insisting that classical archaeologists must be theoretically aware, if they are to make any headway with understanding ancient material culture, M. reviews a wide range of ways of theorising cultural contact, and finds all of them wanting. Although she is inclined to regard the various theories (hybridity, middle ground etc.) as limited in their use, rather than useless, what she effectively shows is that all these theories (like the linguistic metaphor of code-switching, which M. herself applies uncritically at one point) start from the wrong place, since they presuppose two definable entities coming into contact. Neither 'Greek' nor 'Phoenician' were emic terms; people in the ancient Mediterranean were chameleons, they altered how they identified themselves depending on their situation – as the *Odyssey* already makes clear. As the Classical 'Athenian' 'Phoenician' bankers, Pasion and sons, wonderfully show (but sadly not in these pages), people changed places, languages and status as easily as they changed money – even in the world of the Classical *polis* which had done its best to tie identity to birth (M.'s reference to Alcibiades' deme, Skambonidai, as his ethnicity [p. 77] took me aback, but if ethnic groups trace their descent to a [fictional] apical ancestor, it is strictly accurate).

M. shows herself not only unusually comfortable with archaeological and art historical theory, but also with an extremely wide range of evidence. She opens the book with a discussion of the opening of Herodotus, to whose text, as to Homeric epic, she variously returns (though to my mind she underplays the strong association between Sidon and enchanting technology in Homeric epic). She then moves deftly between art historical and archaeological discussions, as she insists upon, and explores in some detail, the archaeological contexts in which particular sculptures and mosaics have been found, as well as situates those mosaics and sculptures into a wider art historical story.

M. presses home her theoretical points with a series of substantive discussions. In Chapter 2, 'The Art of Contact', she juxtaposes discussions of the *kouros* to discussions of picture mosaics. In what is the best up-to-date discussion of the *kouros* that I know, she not only traces the history of the study of the *kouros*, but lays out with great economy its salient art historical characteristics. She insists that, despite the absence of evidence for strict Egyptian canons of proportion being used, the *kouros* was dependent upon both ideological and technological transfer from Egypt. Whereas discussions of *kouroi* have regularly debated the 'non-Greek' contribution to the type, discussions of picture mosaics have generally taken for granted that this is a Greek genre. M. shows how problematic

that is, stressing the extremely wide distribution of early picture mosaics and the wide-ranging origins of the artists who sign them, with artists from Alexandria and from Arados (Arwad), as well as artists from Samos, figuring among the early signatures on mosaics. M. concludes Chapter 2 with a set of objects which make particularly interesting comparison with *kouroi*, the anthropoid sarcophagi found in particular at the 'Ayaa Necropolis at Sidon, where what were certainly re-used Egyptian sarcophagi spawn a fashion for anthropoid sarcophagi, some of which have been identified as made of Parian marble. M. suggests that the *kouroi* and the anthropoid sarcophagi are different reactions to the same phenomenon, the 'immense religious, political, and social capital of Egypt and Egyptian art' (p. 72).

Chapter 4 explores the archaeology of two sanctuary sites, at Bostan esh-Sheikh and at Umm el-'Amed. In both cases what is revealed is the way in which elements which archaeologists are inclined to identify with very different places and ways of thought are found together, both in terms of collocation of different elements (a Greek altar together with an Astart throne) and in terms of eclectic Levantine, Egyptian, Greek and Achaemenid elements of imagery appearing variously on a single object type, the votive stele. M. notes that exactly the same is in fact found on two stelai from Athens and in the coins of Phoenician cities – 'in equal parts appropriation and innovation' (p. 129).

Chapter 5 explores two sculptures, both of which are regularly treated as unproblematically Greek. One is the Alexander Sarcophagus from Sidon, the other the 'Slipper-Slapper' group of Aphrodite, Eros and Pan from the clubhouse of the Poseidoniasts from Berytos on Delos. M. chooses to explore these under the theoretical signs of 'hybridity' and 'the middle ground'. This is a surprising theoretical move, in as far as the binary oppositions presupposed by both concepts have both been strongly undermined by the earlier discussion. M. acknowledges the 'post-colonial' background of both terms, and how problematic their use can be (cf. e.g. 'Hybridity used to construct alternative narratives with rigid historical certitude … misses the point', p. 141). She notes too that treating the Alexander sarcophagus as a hybrid ends up being 'unsatisfactory and, ultimately, somewhat colonialist' (p. 150), but I missed a strong statement of the conclusion that must be drawn, that the 'post-colonial' is an unsuitable lens through which to treat relations which were never 'colonial'. Fortunately the case studies stand on their own terms, as M.'s close readings reveal the 'dizzying ambiguity' (p. 149) of the visual conventions and style of the Alexander Sarcophagus, and the extraordinary way in which the 'Slipper-Slapper' both plays a very sophisticated game with the art historical tradition of the teasing Aphrodite, begun by the Cnidia, and at the same time links into the traditions of understanding Astart/Tanit/Isis on the one hand and Ba'al-Hammon on the other. M. is particularly good on the sculptural clues that point to the sexual initiative lying with Aphrodite, rather than Pan. I regret, however, that M.'s choice to invoke R. White's 'middle ground', and to present Delos as that 'middle ground', occludes her own demonstration that the whole of the eastern Mediterranean (at least) was middle ground. While M. defensively asserts that 'no one would claim that Aphrodite was always Isis on Delos', I would want to insist that what she has shown is that Aphrodite was always (potentially) Isis from Athens to Sidon and beyond – that is, that there was nowhere in the eastern Mediterranean where anyone felt discomfort at the easy Herodotean identifications of the gods who had one set of names in one language with the gods who had a different set of names in another language. It was that easy identification that enabled works of art such as those explored in this book to exercise such powerful agency, and that gave artists such rich material.

M. provides both the substantive material and the theoretical framework to make this an ideal book with which to introduce students to issues of culture contact, and its 45 pages of

bibliography give plentiful indication of where discussions can be followed up. The standards of accuracy are high, making it particularly unfortunate that the Emperor Tiberias makes two appearances in the final pages. He is not in the disappointing index, where it is taken to be more important that readers can trace references to Robin Osborne than to Bostan esh-Sheikh.

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ARTISTIC IMPRESSION AND GREEK VASES

HEDREEN (G.) *The Image of the Artist in Archaic and Classical Greece. Art, Poetry, and Subjectivity*. Pp. xvi + 362, ills, colour pls. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Cased, £74.99, US$120. ISBN: 978-1-107-11825-6.
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There is a great deal to learn in this deeply informed and far-ranging book, as H. attempts to follow a thread traceable from the *Odyssey* through to Archaic iambic poetry and vase-painting. The artist in question is the clever fictive self (or selves) who, though physically weak, socially inferior and ugly, prevails by craft and wit over the strong. In short, it is the victory of μῆτις over βίη. In addition to the wily Odysseus of the *Odyssey*, key figures in this study include Hephaistos, Archilochos and Hipponax, and an impressively wide swath of vase-painters.

Yet even with this expansive scope, this is *an* image rather than *the* image of the artist in Archaic Greece, as its epic model is exclusively Homeric. Almost entirely absent from this study is Hesiod's *Theogony* with its own famous image of a poet who names himself and its own story of the relation between μῆτις and βίη in his portrait of Zeus. On multiple occasions, including Hesiod would have enhanced the analysis.

Within its own constraints, H.'s analysis of individual works is compelling, especially in regard to the argument about inventive self-naming, 'the fictionalization of the self' (p. 9), used by artisans to artistic effect. Equally compelling is the effort to link literary and visual modes of communication and persuasion. The book is richly illustrated with 25 coloured plates and 65 illustrations, although at times the quality of the reproductions is poor. In analysis of vase-paintings it is hard to be definitive, but at points in this book speculation builds upon speculation, resulting in unsteady scaffolding. Also, on occasion, arguments can be difficult to follow, in part because some extended narratives lack clear direction and in part because the multi-headed argument frequently leads to repetitions and circling back to recurring themes.

The book begins (in the introduction and Chapter 1) with a particular example, that of Smikros ('Tiny') and Euphronios, both said to be members of the Athenian Pioneer Group (*c.* 520–500 BCE). H. writes that he has solved a long-standing puzzle about their relationship, by arguing that Smikros is fictitious, invented and impersonated by Euphronios as a pictorial alter ego, created in part for play, in part to bring out the ambiguity of identity, and in part to expose implausible social positions and unrealistic ambitions. Euphronios' contemporaries would have recognised these multiple namings as social and artistic commentary (Smikros as potter, as one of the symposiasts in a vase-painting, as a Tiny man whose name is written on a vase as if it were an ejaculation from a silen's penis, and perhaps even