
Reviews

The Invention of Art History in Ancient Greece: Religion, Society and Artistic Rationalisation, by Jeremy Tanner, 2006. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; ISBN-13 978-0-521-84614-1 hardback, £55 & US\$99; xv+331 pp., 62 figs.

Jessica Hughes

Art-historical writing has frequently been caricatured by scholars working in other disciplines as offering an elitist and fundamentally ahistorical account of material culture, written by people whose interests in the formal and aesthetic qualities of an object preclude any consideration of its archaeological and social contexts. Jeremy Tanner's dense and highly theoretical account of Greek art ought to be the final proof that such generic attacks on art writing are badly outdated. *The Invention of Art History in Ancient Greece* — which is based on the author's 1996 Cambridge PhD thesis — uses sociological and anthropological theory to demonstrate how deeply classical art was embedded in contemporary social and political structures, and it does so in ways that are precise, concrete and nuanced.

The scope of this rich and complex book is far broader than the title suggests. The author's main concern is not so much the development of art-historical writing *per se*, but the development of the cultural institutions which framed and influenced the production and reception of classical art. The 'invention' in the Hellenistic period of a self-conscious, critical mode of viewing and writing about visual culture is actually just one of many interesting stories which emerge from looking diachronically at art against the background of its shifting social contexts. In what follows, I will briefly summarize each of the book's chapters, outlining a couple of minor criticisms of what remains a substantial and innovative rethink of the mechanisms of art production and appreciation in classical antiquity.

The book opens in the more recent past with a series of 'snapshots' of collecting, teaching and writing about classical art from nineteenth-century Britain and eighteenth-century Germany — both formative periods in the development of modern art criticism. As well as introducing some of the issues to be discussed

in subsequent chapters (such as the effect of markets and patronage on the production of art, and theories of art as expressive symbolism), this chapter uses a set of well-documented examples to show the extent to which contemporary culture influences how art history is written. The views of even the most apparently idiosyncratic individuals (Winckelmann is depicted as singing Lutheran hymns alone in his bedroom, and lecturing unsuspecting laymen on the beauty of Apollo!) are shown as wholly consistent with the socio-religious discourses of the time: particularly interesting here is the discussion of how the language of Protestant Pietism provided the structure and vocabulary for elite responses to classical art in eighteenth-century Germany.

Chapter 2 then launches into the classical material by revisiting the so-called 'Greek Revolution' of the fifth century BC. Tanner's account of the shift from schematism to naturalism in the representation of the human figure is organized around a discussion of cult statues from the Archaic and Classical periods — in particular, he explores how this stylistic change would have affected the viewer's experience of divinity, as mediated through sacred images and ritual practice. The next two chapters also focus on fifth and fourth century BC Greece. Chapter 3 investigates the growing popularity of individualized portraits, which are shown to function as symbols of reward and exchange within the space of the democratic polis. Tanner's reading of this well-known material involves some particularly astute visual analysis: the portraits of Pindar and Themistocles are read as selecting and combining physiognomic elements from older sculptures, a mode of invention which is traditionally described by scholars as characteristic of *Roman* art. The fourth chapter provides a detailed exploration of the ambiguous place and esteem of artists within Greek society, engaging with current debates in anthropology about the nature of artistic agency.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4, then, all concentrate on Classical Greece, and demonstrate — using a wide range of examples and approaches — how the making and viewing of classical art can only be properly understood when it is replaced within its contemporary cultural environment. Chapter 5 then shifts our gaze to the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, where the writing of art history really began. Amongst the social transformations which engendered this development were, according to Tan-

ner, the creation of a technical vocabulary for art criticism (adapted from the professional manuals written by Classical artists), the collecting and copying of Greek works of art, and the removal of art production from the democratic classical poleis to the Hellenistic centres of power and patronage. In undergoing aestheticization, Classical Greek artworks were disembedded from the 'pragmatic' social and religious contexts explicated by Tanner in the preceding chapters, and given an entirely different range of associations. Artists and viewers became increasingly conscious of the referential qualities of iconographic models, and increasingly adept at playing around with them. The most palpable social function of Classical art in its new Hellenistic or Roman context was the construction of personal status and power relations, as Tanner illustrates vividly using extracts from Philostratus, Lucian and Petronius.

One does occasionally feel, when reading this book, that the differences between the Classical and Hellenistic worlds are slightly overdrawn — this is perhaps due to the imbalance of the chapters, three of which focus on Classical Greece (and mainly Athens), leaving only one chapter in which to cover the (vast) territory of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. There is, for instance, some distortion in the treatment of the ancient viewers of art. Two kinds of viewer populate Tanner's book: the first is the eloquent, intellectual, upper-class male, who manipulates an increasingly technical vocabulary to compose sophisticated literary responses to the statues and paintings that he contemplates. The second type of viewer is the anonymous 'everyman', who responds primarily to the corporeality of the naturalistic statue, to its physiology, physiognomy and gestures. Tanner explains convincingly why and how the first ('intellectual') type of viewer could exist only in the social climate of the Hellenistic world of Chapter 5 — but why should the second ('embodied') type be restricted to the Classical Greece of Chapters 2, 3 and 4? Surely we can presume that naturalistic statues in later periods provoked similarly instinctive, empathetic responses from their mixed audiences? While the categorical exclusion of anonymous and illiterate viewers from the later period does serve to throw the new viewing practices into relief, it might have been more interesting to include and think about the other sorts of people who lived and looked alongside the educated, erudite members of the elite. As it stands, the only 'deviant' viewers in Chapter 5 appear in texts that poke fun at them (e.g. Petronius' Trimalchio, pp. 249–50, and Encolpius, pp. 258–61).

There are many ideas in this book which students of Classical art could and should be introduced to. However, Tanner doesn't always provide the reader with all the information needed to understand these

ideas. For example, Dionysus of Halicarnassus makes an entrance on p. 209 without his dates or any mention of his cultural background at a point when these details really do matter — neither does this writer appear in the book's index. It would also have been very helpful if the structure and goals of the book had been explained at greater length in Chapter 1 and reviewed again in a conclusion: instead, the epilogue introduces a selection of new material and ideas. Of course, the fact that a book is difficult and invites careful reading hardly counts as a criticism. But one still wonders whether Tanner's ideas might have been signposted and expressed more clearly, without compromising on the complexities of argument and depth of insight which make this one of the most important and exciting new publications in the field of classical art history.

Jessica Hughes
 Department of Archaeology
 University of Cambridge
 Downing Street
 Cambridge
 CB2 3DZ
 UK
 Email: jfh27@cam.ac.uk

*The Rise of Bronze Age Society:
 Travels, Transmissions and Transformations,*
 by Kristian Kristiansen & Thomas B. Larsson, 2005.
 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press;
 ISBN-13 978-0521-84363-8 hardback, £52.25 & US\$95;
 ISBN-13 978-0521-60466-6 paperback,
 £23.74 & US\$32.85, 464 pp., 170 figs.

Marc Vander Linden

In this impressive and provocative book, Kristian Kristiansen and Thomas Larsson display an erudition which is only matched by their ambition, as they not only wish to provide a new research agenda for European Bronze Age Studies, but also ask for no less than a New Culture History. Their main objective is to re-assert the role of mobility and diffusion in the historical development of the European Bronze Age and, beyond, of all of later European prehistory.

A New Culture History, in their view, does not imply a mere re-appraisal of migrations as a potential source of explanation, but a more complex understanding of the 'otherness' of the past. In this sense, they are