March' (analysis of accounts of popular reactions). Yet, while popular ideology is unmistakable, popular power remains another matter.

doi:10.1017/S0017383509990118 BARBARA LEVICK

Art and Archaeology

The origins of Greek art make a loaded and vexatious topic. Loaded, because such a firm tradition of images and writing about images sits upon the monumental basis created by the Greeks; vexatious, because, despite the appearance of beginning with childlike simplicity, this process cannot have been entirely *ex novo*; the mythology of Daedalus as *protos heuretes* of various arts and crafts is so obviously partisan, and the archaeology of Egyptian and other outside influences increasingly cogent. So any new study of art in the so-called 'Dark Age' of Pre-, Proto-, and Geometric Greece must be seized with hope of enlightenment; and a full monograph from Susan Langdon, one of the curators of a virtuous exhibition, 'From Pasture to Polis: Art in the Age of Homer' (1993), is especially to be welcomed. Langdon's *Art and Identity in Dark Age Greece, 1100–700 B.C.E.*[1] offers, indeed, a new paradigm for the study of the earliest Greek art: nothing to do with Daedalus, or anywhere extraneous; rather, these are images embedded in the rites and rhythms of early Iron Age society in Greece. So it is, broadly speaking, an anthropological account, whose tenor may be judged by the introductory discussion of a well-known piece, the bowl in the British Museum often taken to represent Theseus and Ariadne (the judgement of Nicolas Coldstream on this scene, emphasizing the 'crown of light' carried by 'Ariadne', seems to me persuasive[2]). Langdon specifies the shape as neither bowl nor krater but 'spouted louterion', thereby pinning its function to that of ritual purification, perhaps in a matrimonial context. If we then inquire what pertinence an image of Theseus and Ariadne might have to this context, we must not press too hard: after all, scenes of the abduction of Helen to Troy were evidently frequently deemed suitable for the *cassoni* or marriage-chests of Renaissance Florence; and Langdon is content to allow the story of Theseus and Ariadne as illustrative of an Iron Age man's claim upon a woman as his possession. But the epic or heroic resonances are less important, for her purposes, than the functional generation of the image from a practice of providing dowry: this rite should be germane to understanding what an objet d'art meant in its time. Langdon admits that the danger of her explanatory mode is that it becomes both comprehensive and unconvincing. And, after many pages of dense and verbose argument, the reader may feel there is little substantial reward: for instance, the revelation that warriors on Geometric vases 'offered a reassuring image of defense and security to a community' (249). This Structuralist approach is valuable insofar as it 'grounds' our vision in terms of gender, rites of passage, and so on; yet it seems unable to answer quite basic questions about Geometric iconography – such as why 'Dipylon warriors' are shown apparently carrying shields from some much earlier epoch. (And one has to challenge the date range promised by the title of the book: very little material is discussed that does not belong to *c*.800–700 BC.) 'Seeing Geometric art as the visual counterpart of epic poetry is no longer supportable': Langdon's declaration (3) relies heavily upon the interpretation of the term 'visual

[1] *Art and Identity in Dark Age Greece, 1100–700 B.C.E.* By Susan Langdon. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. 388. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-0-521-51321-0.

[2] J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece. 900–700 BC* (London, 2003), 354–5.

counterpart', but it is probably fair to say that the late Stephen Lowenstam, author of *As Witnessed by Images. The Trojan War Tradition in Greek and Etruscan Art*,[3] would have opposed the sentiment. His argument – committed to manuscript before his death in 2003, and seen into print by Thomas Carpenter – strikes a path between the opposed opinions of those scholars who regard Homeric epic as prime cause and catalyst of the Greek figurative tradition in art, and those (including recently, and forcibly, Anthony Snodgrass) who maintain that Geometric artists worked independently of the poets. Lowenstam's compromise is an 'interactive model' (7) in which artists display an awareness of formal epic – without necessarily aiming to 'illustrate' its narrative detail – and the poets, for their part, are sensitive to the mimetic powers of art. So when an early Athenian red-figure vase-painter (Douris) shows a youth studying the line 'Muse, for me I begin to sing of wide-flowing Skamandros', we are entitled to remonstrate that *our* text of Homer does not in fact contain this line. But, given that the verse is plausibly 'Homeric' in style and subject, it seems peculiar to suppose that this painter had no recollection of Homeric epic, nor the intention to evoke a Trojan tale. 'Poetic licence' works for artists too; and, with that principle established, Lowenstam proceeds to an analysis of various 'Homeric' scenes, some well known (early depictions of Odysseus and the Cyclops), others less so; with substantial sections covering material from Magna Graecia and Etruria. We may regret that it was not possible to extend the study into Roman areas, where, in the late Republic and early Empire, the enthusiasm for Trojan connections became so powerful – and who better than Ovid, to voice the right of every artist to retell a story in the spirit of creative acknowledgement? But Lowenstam's study provides a legacy of nuanced good sense to a debate whose protagonists have sometimes been so fixated on the difference between 'art' and 'text' that they cannot indulge a fluent rapport between the two. Among playful visual commentaries upon the epic canon are the black-figure Boeotian vases known as 'Cabiran style' on account of their votive popularity in the sanctuary of Cabirus, near Thebes, from *c.*425–325 BC. The Cabiri as deities may remain mysterious; the scenes on skyphoi dedicated at the Cabirion assume, however, a somewhat contemptuous familiarity with Homeric stories, choosing Odysseus in particular as a target for caricature. By representing our hero as paunchy, knobbly-kneed, goggle-eyed, and with an invariably dangling phallus, artists (by Lowenstam's analysis) rendered Odysseus as everyman, a 'model initiate' in the cult of the Cabiri. David Walsh sets these vases in a larger context of burlesque imagery in his thorough yet readable monograph *Distorted Ideals in Greek Vase-Painting*.[4] As he notes, the scenes on the Cabiran cups may well relate directly to theatrical performances at the sanctuary; and this, of course, opens the way to one explanation of ancient comedy, as a therapeutic antidote to or relief from the grim *catharsis* of tragedy. But rationalizations of the comic mode were altogether more complex. Plato, as Walsh observes, had little time for laughter – in that respect departing from Socrates as mentor, one feels – and Aristotle anticipates Freud in perceiving the essential elements of cruelty and *Schadenfreude* in much of what we

[3] *As Witnessed by Images. The Trojan War in Greek and Etruscan Art*. By Stephen Lowenstam. Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. Pp. xiii + 229. Hardback £33.50, ISBN: 978-0-8018-8775-8.

[4] *Distorted Ideals in Greek Vase-Painting. The World of Mythological Burlesque*. By David Walsh. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xxix + 420. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-521-89641-2.

find 'funny'. Walsh's survey of the iconography, on the other hand, leads him to a more positive assessment. Slapstick is there, undeniably, plus a certain amount of smut, and more political incorrectness than we might care to countenance in our 'civilized' Greeks – ageism, racism, and plentiful disdain for anyone with physical disability. Nevertheless, the visual evidence on the whole may induce us, in Walsh's words, 'to revere the ancient Greeks a little less and like them a little more' (287). Borrowing Kenneth Dover's categorization of 'the uglies' to denote all physical types failing to match the symmetrical perfection of some Polykleitan ephebe ('pin-ups', in Dover's parlance), Walsh has amassed a quantity of evidence sufficient to challenge the view that 'ugliness' was necessarily a form of stigma in classical times. Like the archaic poet who wished for some squat, bandy-legged, and stout-hearted companion in the phalanx, and with Socrates in mind as living contradiction to his own doctrine of *kalokagathia*, we may even have cause to revisit the Homeric stereotype of Thersites. It is customary to hold up Homer's description of Thersites (*Iliad* 2.212–19) as a classic case of physical imperfection matching cowardly behaviour: but how many ancient Greeks, we may wonder, recognized in Thersites' eloquence (as eloquence it is) the voice of commonsense? And found it ironic that Odysseus is the one who beats Thersites down; Odysseus who will, in due time, come to think about the Trojan expedition in rather the same way? We end with notice of a fresh contribution to the antiquities debate – 'fresh', but rooted in antiquity itself. Margaret Miles's *Art as Plunder*[5] is mainly about the Verrine proceedings: that is, the prosecution case made by Cicero against Gaius Verres, proconsul of Sicily in 73–71 BC. Verres, notoriously, helped himself to works of art as *praeda* of his rule on the island; exiled to Marseilles after the case, he seems to have kept quite a collection (and eventually died for it: Verres' refusal to yield some Corinthian bronzes to Mark Antony, it was said, earned his proscription). As Miles demonstrates, this 'high-profile' legal discussion of right and wrong in the ownership and connoisseurship of objets d'art resonates far beyond the late Republic: she follows the issues not only to the foundation of Constantinople, but then to Napoleon (in Egypt and elsewhere), and Elgin on the Akropolis, with incidental swipes at the Getty and so on. In the course of this exposition, one lesser-known aspect of Wellington the 'Iron Duke' emerges – as pioneer of the principle of repatriating art looted in wartime (though it was a principle hardly heeded subsequently by British forces in China and Benin). 'Whether in war or by force of commerce', Miles concludes, 'art must no longer be taken as plunder' (360). Embedded within that sentence is an allusion that can only have lawyers beaming at the thought of protracted wrangling. When Cicero buys a Greek statue for the sake of domestic decor, he is arguably operating 'by force of commerce': so should Cicero be accused of being, like the Getty Museum, 'little different from Verres' (xii)? As this book moves from impartial exploration of the ancient ethics of collecting to contemporary moralizing, it loses consistency: while the Getty is damned, the British Museum – stocked not only with recycled booty such as the Rosetta Stone, but with much else provided by Wallis Budge, a latter-day Verres if ever there was one – is praised as 'a very good steward' and the ultimate 'universal

[5] *Art as Plunder. The Ancient Origins of Debate about Cultural Property*. By Margaret M. Miles. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xiii + 426. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-0-521-87280-5.

museum' (360). The truth is that justice in such matters must be ad hoc and pragmatic; and history offers few lessons in doing the decent thing.

doi:10.1017/S001738350999012X NIGEL SPIVEY

Religion

The German physicist Martin Bojowald has recently been in the news for his development of equations that indicate that there was indeed a universe before the Big Bang, which collapsed into itself before 'our' space–time began. Despite this, in his view, we shall never be able to know anything about the true beginning of the universe, the actual cosmogony. It is Andrew Gregory's contention in his new book that there are perennial (and system-independent) 'core-problems' in cosmogony, which manifest themselves in different terms at different times but remain constant; the Greeks did not anticipate modern views, but understanding modern cosmogonic ideas helps us to fix the points at which the Greeks thought philosophically rather than mythically about the questions involved.[1] 'Philosophically' means capable of satisfying the five criteria of parsimony, invariance, consistency, rejection of the supernatural, and justifiability. The book moves in a rather lopsided historical arc from the theories of the Milesians and the Presocratics to the debates with Aristotle of the late Neoplatonists up to Simplicius (the continuation of the narrative far beyond Epicureanism and Stoicism is welcome), but well over half is devoted to writers up to Plato. Four basic options are articulated: a unique *kosmos* governed by design; multiple simultaneous *kosmoi* generated by chance; recurrent *kosmoi*; denial of cosmogony. Short subsections, many direct questions, and a lively desire to relate ancient questions to modern ones – for example, would Aristotle have accepted the Big Bang? (172) – make for easier reading. On the other hand, the reader is assumed not to gulp at teleology, hylozoism, the anthropic principle, or the *ou mallon* principle. (It is a sign of the times that one feels obliged to say openly that one does not believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible [204].) All in all, an enjoyable intellectual history, partly because of the risks it takes (for instance, declaring that the Milesians did not believe in either co-existent or successive *kosmoi*), which strives to emphasize what was at stake for different thinkers at different periods in speculating about the origins of this *kosmos*. It is to be hoped that he can fill out some of the thinner passages in the two final chapters in the course of his next book, on Islamic and later Christian cosmogonies. It is, however, unfortunate that the current book is likely to be overshadowed by David Sedley's brilliant Sather lectures, *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 2007), which, despite its title, only partly covers the same ground, being devoted to ancient arguments down to the Stoics about cosmological teleology (that is, 'cosmic external teleology') – a book I found constantly engaging and enlightening, without feeling competent to review. Lampeter in Dyfed used to boast a magnificent collection of high-performance AI bulls, the property of the local Milk Marketing Board, which would have excited the admiration of any Greek god; so it was fitting that, in 2006, the university played host to an Anglo-French *Celtic Classics* conference on sacrifice, whose proceedings have now appeared in the

[1] *Ancient Greek Cosmogony*. By Andrew Gregory. London, Gerald Duckworth, 2007. Pp. xii + 314. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-0-7156-3477-6.