

Pouzadoux, Claude & Pollini, Airtor (dirs.), *Synopsis. Images antiques, images cinématographiques*. Col. «Travaux de la MAE» 29 (Paris, Editions de Boccard, 2022). 260 pp. ISBN 9782701805689.

This volume gathers a series of papers in honor of Agnès Rouveret (1948-), the leading French scholar, a renowned student of ancient images. The 22 contributors are themselves scholars in four different countries (France, Italy, Greece and Canada) and all of them stress their debt to the inspiring emerita professor Rouveret. The volume starts by an introduction (repérages, location-hunting, pp. 1-6) by Claude Pouzadoux (Université Paris-Nanterre and comprises six thematic sections:

Lights (Essais lumière pp. 7-50): Hariclia Brecolaki, Maud Mulliez, Dora D'Auria;

Framing (Cadrage, pp. 51-88): Sophie Montel, Lauren Haussmeir, Amina-Aïcha Malek;

Camera...action! (Moteur...action! pp. 89-141): Alexa Piqueux, Jean Trinquier, Jean-Pierre de Giorgio, Stéphanie Wyler;

Camera Movements (Mouvements de camera, pp. 143-169): Florence Le Bars-Tosi, Valérie Naas, Sandrine Dubel;

Editing (Montage, pp.171-231): Natacha Lubtchansky; Marlène Nazarian-Trochet, Renaud Robert; Évelyne Prioux; and

Ethnic Fictions (Ethnofictions, pp. 233-260): Claire Joncheray, Airtor Pollini, Mathild Simon, Vanessa Berger.

Each contributor produced a single paper on a specific subject within the section, varying in length. Overall, dozens of images, most of them colorful, enable the reader to follow the arguments, as well as most Greek and Latin quotes are translated or explained. Each image is interpreted, often in innovative ways, so that even the most known ones foster new perspectives and insights. As there are so many chapters, the comments will address some general issues and perspectives.

Claude Pouzadoux and Airtor Pollini edited a volume around a daring and challenging subject, as it aims at discussing ancient images and cinema ones, relating ancient and modern experiences. Daring, for it not obvious to relate modern perceptions to try and interpret ancient ones. It is also a challenge for several reasons, not least the need for a scholarly knowledge of different types of evidence. Accepted though the daring challenges, the results may surprise the reader, providing instigating insights on ancient iconography. To try and achieve that, the contributors explore several disciplines, from archaeology and art history, to linguistics and literary studies, classical languages, including

cinema studies, mythology and religion, among others. This multidisciplinary approach contributes to achieving complex, intricate and innovative understanding and interpretive proposals. A second methodological move relates to image analysis, beyond ancient iconography in vases, mosaics, wall paintings or coins. In this regard, a couple of aspects may be stressed starting by the study of narrative or literary image representation, as a way to explore the possible ancient different understandings. Literature and iconography may be related by the specific perspectives of the ancients. In this respect, this hermeneutical approach may be related to Paul Veyne's search for an inventory of differences, how images were expressed and interpreted differently from our own modern received ideas. In a different move, theatre spectacles, assembly meetings, festivals, triumphs, action and movement may be also considered. Ancient people experienced the world of images by the frequentation of those and other social activities. Theatre and scene experience is a most recurrent subject along the volume, considering how important it was for ancient collective life. As in a "cup decorated with skeletons" from a villa in Boscoreale, Pompeii (p.34), dated to the Hellenistic Age, which depicts the skeletons of famous Greeks, such as Sophocles and Moschus, Epicurus and Zeno. They recite the following verse: "Life is a theatre", in Greek, as in tragedy (p. 234) or comedy (p.133). Direct references to comedy scenes attest to the important of the theater imaginary (pp. 99-102; 254).

In a different direction, there is the main daring move of using cinema as a way of renewing the interpretation of ancient evidence. Camera movement enables the viewer unique experiences in cinema theaters or even house living rooms. These sensory experiences foster new ways of interpreting imaginary spaces (p.43), background representation (pp. 61-71), out framing (p. 60), taking into account walking movements of observing people (pp. 71-84), mental representations (p.96), tracking shots (p. 145), fragmentation and unity (p. 172), editing or reediting (pp. 190-203), among others. The usefulness of the cinema approach goes beyond formal issues, but include several subjects, as notably intercultural contacts (p. 234), ethnic conflicts and interaction and imperialism and colonialism (pp. 239-246), both modern concepts, but useful for understanding ancient realities too. This is possible thanks to an original multidisciplinary approach, particularly putting into interaction literary studies (pp. 8; 157; 165; 251), archaeology, art history and cinema studies (most chapters), all of them servicing the interpretation of images. This leads us to other social issues raised by the volume, beyond formal ones. The most ubiquitous is perhaps the uses of the past, editing or reediting the past for present purposes, even if the present here is now also already past. There are appropriations of the past, as a narrative, in ancient times themselves (pp. 171-179), and in the modern historiography (pp. 239-246). Those uses may be opportunistic and artificial, but very effective. Opportunistic, a cut (*Keiro*) producing an opportunity (*Kairos*) in specific historical circumstances to invent a narrative explaining and justifying interests (p. 211). Invention is finding out and imagining at once (*inuenio*, I find and I devise) and time and again this move of re-elaboration is discussed in different contexts. Etiological historical or mythical narrative,

enemy representation (p. 251) and parody and invective (pp. 124-133) are some of the mixed uses of the past.

The social and cultural issues then follow, centering on power relations. Power may be thought as commandment, a beginning and an authority (*arkhé*) and it is symptomatic that the herdsman is from at least Plato the judge, ruler and commander, defending his flock (p. 185). Michel Foucault would develop the analysis of the implications of this metaphor in later Christian thought and its aftermath. This metaphor reveals a lot about social values, as it is in tune with a hierarchical social structure. The defense of the flock, as in the ancient iconography, is related to imbalances and asymmetries, otherwise no herdsman or ruler would be necessary (cf. 1 Samuel 8:5, “now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” King James translation). Several chapters deal with those power issues, opposing collective and individual power (pp. 143-145), encompassing the myriad aspects of colonial and imperial relations. These issues appear in such unsuspected contexts as triumphs (p. 153) and empire representations taken as imperial archives (p. 157), in public and private spheres. This may appear as the overall change from archaic fragmentation to classical unity (p. 172) or the micro-perspective of active perception of images (p. 84), encompassing formal and political aspects. This also leads to another related issue: religiosity. This contemporary social theory concept is a useful one, as it may comprise a plethora of practices and feelings relating to people’s varying tendencies to commit themselves to spiritual beliefs, principles, and activities. Magic (p. 14), warding off practices (p. 21), demons (p. 109), deities (p.105), heroes, may all be included in the sphere of social relations and supernatural powers. Even animals, as serpents (p. 102), are imagined as both natural and supernatural, always taken as mediators between people, power providers.

Overall, the reader concludes that unusual methodological approaches, like using cinema studies to understand ancient images, may be indeed thought provoking. It is also a most adequate homage to Agnès Rouveret and proves how fruitful is her legacy, fostering a whole generation of scholars. There is nothing more important than that.

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