

*Classical Review* – Thomas J. Nelson Review of *D'Alexandre à Auguste* 2015. In: *CR* 67.1 (2017): 246-8  
Author Manuscript. DOI of published version: [10.1017/S0009840X16002468](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009840X16002468)

## POETRY AND ART FROM ALEXANDER TO AUGUSTUS

LINANT DE BELLEFONDS (P.), PRIOUX (É.), ROUVERET (A.) (edd.) *D'Alexandre à Auguste. Dynamiques de la création dans les arts visuels et la poésie*. Pp. 319, ills, colour pls. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015. Paper, €29. ISBN: 978-2-7535-4080-4.

This attractive volume presents the proceedings of the final colloquium of the CAIM research project ('Culture antique et invention de la modernité') held at the INHA in Paris in May 2012. In the introduction, the editors express their wish to interrogate 'les possibilités de croisement entre texte et image' from the early Hellenistic to Augustan ages and to pose 'des questions d'ordre méthodologique sur la façon même de mettre en relation les deux formes de création artistique' (p. 8). These are important issues and the editors have assembled an impressive cast of scholars to investigate them. Of the twenty-two contributions, arranged in six sections of varying cohesion, two are written in English, two in Italian, and the remaining eighteen in French. As often in such proceedings, the papers are eclectic and wide-ranging and although a great number are of excellent quality, the central concerns of the project are addressed inconsistently throughout. It is only when we come to the conclusion by Rouveret (287-293) that an attempt is made to synthesise the diverse range of topics treated; I feel that the avowedly 'brève introduction' (only two pages) could have been considerably expanded to lay out the key questions more clearly.

Scholars who do address the fruitful interplay between image and text include G. Biard on the reciprocal relation between statue and epigram in Hellenistic honorific statuary (83-94); F. Klein on Horace and Ovid's conflicting political and aesthetic responses to Augustus' patronage, mediated through Alexandrian models and their differing attitudes towards the sculptor Lysippus (111-123); and J.-C. Jolivet on how both Pompeian wall

painting and Roman poetry reflect the ambiguities and scholarly controversies surrounding the Homeric Penelope's recognition of Odysseus (201-207). In addition, A. Canobbio (167-175) and M. Harari (177-180) offer complementary perspectives on the hybrid figures at the start of Horace's *Ars Poetica*: the former detects polemical allusions to Pacuvius, while the latter sees echoes of specific artistic types, including the post-classical and Hellenistic 'Scylla'. This diptych successfully demonstrates the advantages of viewing the same material through different disciplinary lenses.

Two papers stand out above all for their especially stimulating treatments of the volume's mission statement. Prioux and J. Trinquier (31-56) combine literary and artistic evidence in a rich and detailed examination of the Ptolemaic queens' connections with an unusual pair of animals, the ostrich and lion, particularly noting potential echoes of these associations in Callimachus' *Aetia* and possible debts to Egyptian religion. M. Squire, meanwhile, addresses the 'semantics of scale' in Hellenistic poetry and art (183-200), offering not only a useful synthesis of his recent work for Francophone readers (cf. esp. *The Iliad in a Nutshell* [2011], pp. 247-302), but also a number of fresh observations and examples. I particularly relished his inclusion of the Antikythera mechanism as another specimen of the Hellenistic obsession with scale: it explains and contains the whole cosmos in a small, portable form. At its best, then, the volume's interdisciplinary approach deploys both art and literature to write probing narratives of cultural history.

Most other contributions, however, adhere less closely to the editors' objectives. They can be divided into two separate groups: those which deal primarily with literature, and those which focus on art.

Topics in the former category include the Lindian chronicle in its intellectual context (R. Robert, 11-29); Hellenistic antiquarian interest in Nestor's cup (F. de Angelis, 57-68); tradition and innovation in Hellenistic *ecphrasis* (F. Cairns, 127-133); Hephaestus' marginal but metapoetic role in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (C. Cusset, 135-141); the puzzling description of snakes born from the blood of Titans at the start of Nicander's *Theriaca* (S. Barbara, 151-166); the differing approaches to Italy in both Virgil's *Aeneid* (P. Le Doze, 217-231) and the Argonautic epics of Apollonius and Valerius Flaccus (M. Simon, 209-215); and Philodemus' Epicurean-inflected critique of Hellenistic literary theorists, alongside his possible influence on Roman poets (D. Delattre, 275-286).

The latter category, meanwhile, embraces papers on the identification of the figures on the Berthouville *Dichterbecher* (K. Lapatin, 69-80); the spiral as a programmatic motif of *leptotes* in Apulian vase-painting (C. Pouzadoux, 143-148); the tension between faithful mimesis and flattering idealisation in portrait painting from Macedonia to Greco-Roman Egypt (H. Brécoulaki, 95-109); Dionysiac friezes in Roman painting from Republican to Neronian times (S. Wyler, 235-247); the cultural eclecticism on display in the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale (G. Sauron, 269-274); and the iconographic programmes of two provincial monuments from the early Principate, the *Sebasteion* at Aphrodisias and the theatre at Arausio (E. Rosso, 249-267). While many of these contributions are excellent (especially Barbara's perceptive analysis of Nicander), their interdisciplinarity is of a rather shallow kind, largely restricted to literature talking about art or art depicting literary scenes, alongside the occasional intermedial cross-reference. This lack of continued focus on the editors' central theme is perhaps a reflection of the original Paris conference's broader title: 'Mémoire, déconstruction, recreation dans les arts visuels et la poésie de l'époque

hellénistique au premier siècle apr. J.-C.'; not all contributors have revised their pieces to fit the publication's narrower scope.

Despite the limited perspective of most individual papers, however, an implicit interdisciplinary dialogue does develop across the whole collection. As with a book of ancient epigrams, the reader is invited to tease out recurring themes and larger questions: above all, should we impose or expect the same cultural patterns in both literature and art? Squire sees both media participating in a shared aesthetics of scale, while others import literary terminology into the artistic sphere (Lapatin on *leptotes* in vases, Biard on *leptotes* and *semnotes* in honorific statuary). Do such mappings expose an underlying cultural continuity between media, or obscure significant differences? This question is even more pertinent for discussions of allusion: can we use the same paradigm of intertextuality for verbal echoes in literature (as in Klein's treatment of Horace and Ovid), iconographic citations in art (as in Rosso's *Sebasteion*, esp. pp. 257, 262) and cross-references between media (as with Squire's *Tabulae Iliacae* or Jolivet's Odyssean frescoes)? So too for intercultural contact: can we discuss Etruscan influence in Sauron's Boscoreale villa in the same terms as Egyptian influence on Hellenistic poetry and art (Prioux/Trinquier on Ptolemaic queens, Barbara on Nicander)? These are big questions, to which the book offers no definitive answers, but they do highlight some possibilities for the 'croisement' between image and text that the editors wish to unearth.

Given such provocative juxtapositions of disparate subject matter, there is a clear benefit in reading the book cover-to-cover, but I suspect that the volume is largely destined to a fate shared by other collections of such a heterogeneous nature: to be mined piecemeal by scholars interested in specific contributions, rather than consumed in its entirety. The

thorough indices (five in total) will help in this regard, although it is a shame that there is no consolidated bibliography for each article, or even the whole volume; the pervasive use of '*op. cit.*' and '*art. cité*' throughout does no favours to a reader, who is often forced to traipse back through pages of footnotes to find a single reference. Nevertheless, the volume is well-produced, with good formatting, numerous illustrations (usually of a good size and quality), and only a few obtrusive typos. My only other quibble would be a request for a small gap between original text and modern translation to make in-set quotations more legible.

As noted in both the introduction and conclusion, the conference from which this volume stems also witnessed the official unveiling of Callythea, an online database which catalogues Hellenistic poets' treatments of mythological material, alongside appropriate iconographic comparanda ([www.cn-telma.fr/callythea/](http://www.cn-telma.fr/callythea/)). One of the stated aims of this resource is to explore points of convergence and divergence between images and texts that treat rare mythological traditions, reflecting the same interdisciplinary spirit as this volume. At its best, this approach is both inspiring and exhilarating, and more projects of its kind should be encouraged.

*Trinity College, Cambridge*

THOMAS J. NELSON  
[tjn28@cam.ac.uk](mailto:tjn28@cam.ac.uk)