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INTRODUCTION

By

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“Politics is an art of unification; from many it makes one. And symbolic activity is perhaps our most important means of bringing things together, both intellectually and emotionally ... The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived.”¹

One of the major changes from Republic to Empire was, inevitably, the creation of the emperor and his court. It is therefore clear that when the Impact of the Roman Empire is analysed, the impact of the emperor and those surrounding him is a central feature. When doing so, analysis of the representation and perception of the emperor, and indeed of the ‘new’ imperial structure and ideology as a whole, become obvious topics for attention.

Representation and perception of ‘Empire’ is a multifaceted area of research, which greatly helps our understanding of Roman society. Take, for instance, Pliny’s reaction after Domitian’s death, expressed in the mutilation of imperial statues: ‘It was our delight to dash those proud faces to the floor, to smite them with the sword, and savage them with an axe, as if blood an agony could follow from every blow’.² More illuminating, perhaps, is the case of Cn. Piso. After all, the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* (SCPP), reported an important story, which must – at least in this form – have been new to the biggest part of its audience, and put forward all sort of explicit values in the telling.³ The plebs is praised ‘because it joined with the equestrian order in demonstrating its devotion towards our Princeps’ (155-6), whilst it is hoped that: ‘all who were soldiers in the service of our

¹ M. Walzer, ‘On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought’, *Political Science Quarterly* 82 (1967), 191-204, at 194.

² Pliny, *Panegyricus* 52.4.

³ M. Griffin, ‘The Senate’s story’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997), 249-263, with translation on pp 250-253. See especially W. Eck, A. Caballos Rufino & F. Fernández, *Das Senatus Consultum De Cn. Pisone Patre* (Munich 1996); C. Damon & S Takács, eds., ‘The *Senatus Consultum De Cn. Pisone Patre*. Text, Translation, Discussion’, *American Journal of Philology* 120.1 (1999).

Principes will continue to manifest the same loyalty and devotion to the Imperial house, since they know that the safety of our empire depends on the protection of that House' (160-162). This value-laden document was deliberately disseminated:

"These decrees of the Senate, inscribed on bronze, should be set up in whatever place seems best to Tiberius Cae(sar) Aug., and likewise ... in the most frequented city of each province and in the most frequented place in that city, and ... in the winter quarters of each legion where the standards are kept" (169-173).

The image of a just and benevolent imperial family, whose welfare effects everyone, and that of the vices of Cn. Piso, who tried to oppose them, is spread throughout the empire. Indeed, the SCPP declared 'that the statues and portraits of Cn. Piso Senior, wherever they may have been placed, be removed'.⁴ This was exactly what the people did: '[They] had, in fact, dragged [Piso's] effigies to the Gemonian Stairs, and were engaged in dismembering them'.⁵ Imperial representation has strong political connotations, and the reception of such representation – positive and negative – can indicate consent or objections to whomever put forward the imagery.⁶

The importance of art for looking at representation and perception has been self-evident since the publication of the seminal books on the subject by Paul Zanker and Tonio Hölscher.⁷ Their notion of *Bildprogramm* has been refined by the addition of the viewer (or better, a variety of different viewers) in the work of Jas Elsner.⁸ Visual imagery, in this understanding, functioned like a recognisable 'language', with the purpose of conveying a message, or, perhaps better, invoking an 'aura', which would

⁴ *Senatus Consultum de Pisone Patre* 75-76; H. Flower, 'Rethinking "Damnatio Memoriae": The case of Cn. Calpurnius Piso Pater in AD 20', *Classical Antiquity* 17 (1998), 155-187; 160. Cf. A. Gregory, 'Powerful images: Responses to Portraits and the Political uses of Images in Rome', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 7 (1994), 80-99.

⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 3.14.6.

⁶ Cf. D. Freedberg, *Iconoclasts and their Motives* (Maarssen 1985) and idem, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago-London 1989), 407-428. See also E. Kitzinger, 'The Cult of Images in the Age before Iconoclasm', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 8 (1954), 83-150. 7 P. Zanker, *Augustus und die Macht der Bilder* (Munich 1987); T. Hölscher, *Römische Bildsprache als semantisches System* (Heidelberg 1987).

⁸ J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer. The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge 1995).

be intelligible to the heterogeneous population that constituted the Roman Empire.⁹ Indeed, important political figures from the late Republic onwards used buildings, sculptural images and the images on coins with such a purpose. In doing so, they interacted with long-standing traditions, either aligning themselves with or distinguishing themselves from traditions of royal imagery.¹⁰ Whether this 'language' could be understood was, of course, intrinsically dependent on the interpretation of the symbols used, 'on the ways art is viewed and perceived in a society'.¹¹

But representation and perception can be looked at in much broader terms as well. Indeed, one of the main purposes of Cliff Ando's monumental *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley – Los Angeles 2000) is to show, by an analysis of imperial representation and public perception of that representation, how people living within the Roman Empire had a positive 'ideological consciousness' about 'being Roman'. Ando uses a wide variety of evidence, and emphasises the importance of looking at representation in the widest possible terms. But it is this width of the subject that makes it impossible for one person to incorporate all aspects of such a complex phenomenon.

These proceedings, therefore, bring together scholars specialising in different subjects, each approaching the problem of the impact of representation and perception of 'Rome' and Roman imperial power on the heterogeneous population of the Empire. In doing so, they illustrate the different approaches, methodologies and attitudes that can (and perhaps need to) be taken into account when analysing the representation and perception of Roman imperial power.

Section 1 of the first part of the volume concentrates on the representation and perception of Roman imperial power through particular

⁹ Cf. Hölscher 1987, op. cit. (n. 7), 74: 'Das Formensystem der römischen Kunst hatte eine spezifische Leistung darin, daß es die Ansprüche einer gebildeten Elite ebenso zu erfüllen vermochte wie die Bedürfnisse der breiten Reichsbevölkerung. Die Bildsprache konnte sowohl als Ausdruck historischen Bildung und elitären Lebensführung wie auch als allgemein verständliches visuelles Kommunikationssystem dienen'. But cf. E. H. Gombrich, 'The visual image: its place in communication', in: Idem, *The Image & the Eye. Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London 1982), 137-161, for the difficulties in using imagery for unambiguous communication.

¹⁰ Cf. R. Fowler & O.J. Hekster, eds., *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome*, forthcoming 2004.

¹¹ J. Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triumph* (Oxford 1998), 53. Cf. F. I. Zeitlin, 'Visions and revisions of Homer', in S. Goldhill, ed., *Being Greek under Rome. Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge 2001), 195-266; 211-213.

media: inscriptions, coins, monuments, ornaments, and insignia, but also nicknames and death-bed scenes. This section contains contributions by Géza Alföldy (inscriptions), Olivier Hekster (coins), Fernando López-Sánchez (coins), Henner von Hesberg (ornaments), Christer Bruun (imperial nicknames), Anton van Hooff (the imperial art of dying), and Rudolf Haensch (insignia). In the second section of part 1 of this volume John Richardson, Lukas de Blois, Willem Zwolve and Concepción Neira Faleiro focus upon *imperium*, empire, and the emperor in literary, juridical and administrative texts.

Part 2 of this volume pays attention to the representation and perception of Roman imperial power in the city of Rome and the provinces. It contains papers by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (on the streets of Rome as a representation of imperial power), Gerda de Kleijn (on the emperor and public works in Rome), Silvio Panciera (on gods that were explicitly called Augustan in inscriptions from the *urbs*), Paula Botteri (on the presentation of Augustus' deeds, his *Res Gestae*, in Asia Minor), Angelos Chaniotis (on inscriptions from Aphrodisias), Bernard Stolte (the emperor on circuit in the eastern provinces), Janneke de Jong (on papyrus texts from Roman Egypt), Werner Eck (the presence of imperial power in Roman Cologne), Andreas Kriekhaus (on a noble family from Spain), and Danielle Sloopjes, on provincials' images of Roman governors in the later empire.

In Part 3 of this volume several contributors offer studies of the representation of power by individual emperors. They concentrate on Augustus (John Rich), other Julio-Claudian emperors (Yves Perrin), Nero (Eric Moormann), Trajan (Jon Coulston), Hadrian (Anthony Birley, Caroline Vout and Stephan Mols), the emperors of the tumultuous year A.D. 238 (Karen Haegemans), and Constantine the Great (Henk Singor).

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