



The Art of Roman Britain by Martin Henig

Review by: Glenys Davies

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Antike Marmorskulpturen auf Schloss Broadlands (Hampshire). By Dagmar Grassinger. Monumenta Artis Romanae XXI = Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani III, fasc. 4. Von Zabern, Mainz, 1994. Pp. 194, Abb. 223. Price: DM 158. ISBN 3 8053 1492 2.

This handsomely produced volume with its splendid photographs by Raoul Laev catalogues forty-eight items of sculpture, mainly ancient but including some contemporary copies, acquired by Henry Temple, second Viscount Palmerston upon the Grand Tour in 1763–1764 and now at Broadlands. It forms part of a series on Classical Sculpture in English Private Collections initiated by the Archaeological Institute of the University of Cologne in 1972 to replace A. Michaelis's *Ancient Marbles in Great Britain* (1882), and the work has been done to a format where it can serve as part of *CSIR*.

The *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani* for Britain is known to most of us through Vol. I produced under the aegis of the British Academy and soon to be completed in eleven volumes. Eleven British scholars (of whom this reviewer was one) and a heroic Italian (Sergio Rinaldi Tufi) battled, for the most part, on limited and usually insufficient material and financial resources to complete the project. Sometimes academic or museum photographers were available, but more often not. The reviewer cannot judge his own work but for the rest they indicate that art-historical talent is by no means lacking in these islands. Vol. II comprises sculpture, not from Britain, in the British Museum. What has appeared already displays the qualities we expect from that enlightened institution.

That Vol. III was not put in train by a British institution (presumably the Academy) was disgraceful. Although Geoffrey Waywell produced a volume on the Hope Collection for the Cologne project in 1986, for example, there is no excuse for the archaeological establishment in this country to continue its shameful neglect of ancient art, which is the mainstay of archaeological research in some other countries. The talents and enthusiasms of our art-historians should be fostered and not ignored simply because those in positions of power have other interests.

In the case of the volume under review, something else follows. Who will use, still more buy, this book? Old collections in this country are part of our heritage, and nowhere more so than at Broadlands where the setting of sculptures in the octagon and hall were integral to the neo-classical effect. They deserve to be freely shown to the interested public in such a setting – is there any case at all to be made for strictly private antiquities collections? – and published in English for the enlightenment of all of us.

While all the items are informative about taste, they are intrinsically of variable quality. The hand of the restorer is never far away, so that the Ceres (No. 1) and Hygeia (No. 2) have attributes and more skilfully supplied in the workshop of Bartolomeo Cavaceppi. The head and body of the Muse (No. 6), indeed, come from different statuettes. There are some attractive items which demand to be better known; a relief of Maenads (No. 25) and a krater with offering-scene (No. 3), both in neo-Attic style and of early Augustan date, belonging to a decisive moment of Roman taste; a head of Africa (No. 12) of Flavian date as shown by the free use of the drill for the hair though the pupils of the eyes are not engraved; the charming ash-chest of Titus Aquilius Pelorus (No. 20), perhaps very slightly later and showing the final farewell within the frame of an open doorway. Of the portraits there is an attractive study of a round-faced Severan boy (No. 10).

What have these to do with Roman Britain? I do not think one can appreciate Roman civilisation unless one can look beyond post-holes and robbed-out walls. The study of Roman Britain reached maturity not long after the Broadlands collection was assembled in the age of Samuel Lysons whose clientele were the same Dilettanti who had been on the Grand Tour. A first step in understanding Roman temples is to visit the romantic reconstructions at Broadlands or elsewhere: Stowe, Stourhead, Rousham. It is the very fact that our generation has lost this intense empathy for the Classical past that has led to a project such as this being handed over to foreigners.

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MARTIN HENIG

The Art of Roman Britain. By Martin Henig. Batsford, London, 1995. Pp. 225, pls 16, figs 126. Price: £55.00. ISBN 0 7134 5430 X.

There is a real need for a new standard work on art in Roman Britain to update Jocelyn Toynbee's seminal studies of the 1960s: Henig has the expertise and detailed knowledge to produce this, but in many ways the present book is a disappointment, in part at least because of his consciously old-fashioned literary style and his elitist approach

to art history. It represents H.'s crusade (surely by now anachronistic?) against the 'rather negative view of Romano-British art expressed so eloquently by Haverfield and Collingwood': this pervades his writing and perhaps explains the at times obtrusive authorial voice. In ch. 1 H., who clearly has little sympathy with non-figurative arts, characterises the art of the Celts as narrow in scope, satisfying the limited requirements of a tribal society and lacking the human dimension: the Romans, therefore, should be seen as 'most useful nurses' leading the Celts towards an adult world of the arts of civilisation. The second chapter details the mechanisms by which this was achieved in the era of the conquest. Roman art (epitomised by the Ara Pacis Augustae) was imported even in the pre-Conquest period in the form of prestige items; after the conquest Roman soldiers required tombstones, arms and armour. Britons found their living-standards improved and native artists responded to the stimulus: art changed but did not decline. The nature of art produced by and for the army is examined again in ch. 3: the legions brought a Romanised lifestyle with a variety of arts including stone sculpture and monumental inscriptions. Ch. 4 introduces another important recurrent theme: the role of the patron as Romanisation encourages competition and emulation. This chapter ('The Uses of Art in Roman Britain') is divided into sections on: art for the state, and for the community; private competitiveness (as provincials 'attempted to cut a figure in society'); commemoration (principally funerary); comfort and lifestyle – seen in house decoration, the paraphernalia of dining, dress and jewellery; and religion, both in the home and in temples.

Ch. 5, 'Natives and Strangers in Roman Britain', is in some ways the least satisfactory. H. takes issue with Toynbee's 'rationalisation of value judgements' in defining three categories of art in Roman Britain: art imported from the Mediterranean; high-quality provincial work, by Gaulish artists; and low-quality art, by British artists – a mode of thinking which H. sees as dictated by 'long-established English feelings of cultural dependency on France'. Questioning these assumptions is entirely justified, but H.'s attempt to create and illustrate an alternative, more complex, model is confused and difficult to follow, overloaded as it is by a bewildering array of examples. It is in this chapter in particular that H.'s erudition and desire to mention a huge volume of material makes it difficult to see the wood for the trees. Nor does he adequately explore the criteria to be used for deciding that a particular object was made by a Gaul or a Briton, a soldier or a civilian.

Ch. 6 continues the theme of artists and patrons, looking at the beginning of patronage (by provincial governors and the army), the evidence for sculpture workshops (principally in the Cotswolds, Lincoln, and Carlisle areas), and the patronage and workshops for interior design. In this chapter too he introduces an idea taken up again in ch. 7: that the model for the mythological scenes on fourth-century mosaics was likely to have been illustrated manuscripts in the patron's own library rather than any pattern books owned by the mosaicists. This interesting suggestion needs to be argued more fully and cogently. It is perhaps in ch. 7, on art in late Roman Britain, that H. appears at his best: here he begins to achieve his aim of contributing towards understanding society in the province. A substantial proportion of the chapter is on mosaics, especially those reflecting the more esoteric religions, but H. also considers a wide range of arts to create a vivid picture of this 'Golden Age' in Roman Britain. The final chapter, on attitudes to the art of Roman Britain, returns to his criticism of the attitudes of earlier writers, put in the context of the history of the study of Roman Britain.

Art in Roman Britain is masquerading as a general book, but it is not really for the non-specialist, who would find parts of it rather obscure and dense. H. should perhaps have written several books: the late antique section in particular could have been expanded into a full-length book to its advantage. The Romano-British specialist nevertheless will find many points of interest in its pages, and it will no doubt become a starting point for future studies in this area.

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GLENYS DAVIES

Inscriptions latines d'Aquitaine (I.L.A.), Nitiobroges. By B. Fages and L. Maurin. Supplément au tome 118.1 de la *Revue de l'Agenais*. Centre Pierre Paris, Bordeaux, 1991. Pp. 89. ISSN 0035 1288; ISBN 2 904001 10 1.

Inscriptions latines d'Aquitaine (I.L.A.), Santons. By L. Maurin. Centre Pierre Paris, Bordeaux, 1994. Pp. 518, map. Price: Fr. 160. ISSN 0035 1288.

These two volumes mark a new beginning in the epigraphy of the Three Gauls. They are the first *civitas*-catalogues to replace those contained in *CIL* XIII (the replacement of *CIL* XII has already begun: *Santons*, 9); and they are the first to employ the publishing-conventions of P.E.T.R.A.E. ('Programme