

Graecomania

Review of:

Gilbert Heß, Elena Agazzi, Elisabeth Décultot, *Graecomania. Der europäische Philhellenismus. Klassizistisch-romantische Kunst(t)räume 1* – Walter De Gruyter, Berlin & New York, 2009, ISBN 978-3-11-019469-2, 372 pp., 13 black/white images

The essays in this anthology derive from an interdisciplinary conference held in December 2006 at the Villa Vigoni on Lake Como that brought together scholars from Germany, France, Italy and the United States. It inaugurates a new series, *Klassizistisch-romantische Kunst(t)räume*, which bears the further subtitle 'Imaginations in Europe of the nineteenth century and their contribution to the cultural construction of identity' (Imaginationen im Europa des 19. Jahrhunderts und ihr Beitrag zur kulturellen Identitätsfindung). As the series editors state in the preface to this inaugural volume, 'It is the goal of this series to analyze iconic moments in the attribution of cultural meaning in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth, and to take the measure of their role in the shaping of both national identities and pan-European consciousness.' The focus will be less on underlying historical processes than on 'aesthetic-artistic strategies and processes of meaning-making in this saddle period (*Sattelzeit*) that favoured the varied formation of identity' within individual nations and Europe as a whole. The editors state as their guiding thesis the idea that 'imaginings of another, better, artistically elevated life...initiated processes of self-positioning that can be situated between aestheticized reality and imagined ideal.' Thus, they argue, philhellenism and similar phenomena, like Orientalism, 'can be interpreted as pan-European fantasies, each with its own national form, that in the oscillation between alterity and identity encompassed differing but overlapping cultural models...' (ix).¹

The untranslatable pun of the series title nicely captures the goals outlined by the editors. Like the programmatic paragraph quoted above, it helps to situate the series within larger intellectual trends evident across the disciplines represented in this first volume, namely archaeology, art history, history, history of literature, and philology. The pairing of classic and romantic, two terms long set in opposition, reinforces the editors' reference to the *Sattelzeit* (saddle period), the term coined by the German historian and theorist Reinhart Koselleck for the years from roughly 1750 to 1850. It is now widely recognized that there is great continuity within this period that straddles the chronological break at 1800 and the ruptures of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Like a ridge (saddle) between

¹ Ziel dieser Reihe ist es, ikonische Momente kultureller Deutungszuschreibungen im Europa des ausgehenden 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts zu analysieren und ihre Rolle für die Ausprägung sowohl nationaler als auch eines gesamteuropäischen Bewußtseins auszuloten. Im Zentrum stehen hierbei jeweils weniger die zugrundeliegenden historischen Prozesse als vielmehr ästhetisch-künstlerische Strategien und Deutungsprozesse dieser Sattelzeit, welche die unterschiedlichen Ausprägungen der nationalen wie europäischen Identitätsfindung begünstigten. Imaginationen eines anderen, besseren, künstlerisch erhöhten Lebens –so die zugrundeliegende These – initiierten Prozesse der eigenen Verortung, die ihrerseits zwischen ästhetisierter Realität und imaginiertem Ideal angesiedelt sein konnten. So können u.a. Phänomene des Philhellenismus, des Raffaelkults und des Orientalismus als gesamteuropäische Phantasmen mit je eigenen, nationalen Ausprägungen interpretiert werden, die im Oszillieren zwischen Alterität und Identität je unterschiedliche, zum Teil sich überschneidende Kulturmodelle implizierten....

two higher mountains, the *Sattelzeit* connects the early modern with the modern and lays the foundations, conceptually and aesthetically, for much that is still taken for granted as specifically modern.² The main term, *Kunst(t)räume*, plays on the transformation of 'space' (*Raum*) into 'dream' (*Traum*) with the addition of a single letter, which is already implicit in the voicing of the final consonant of the first term in the compound, *Kunst* (art). The series title thus alludes to the underlying assumption that conceptual spaces – chronological, geographical, cultural, disciplinary, and so forth – are themselves just as much constructs as the 'aesthetic-artistic strategies and processes of meaning-making' that take place within them. Here the emphasis falls, appropriately, on the shifting, overlapping cultural spaces of Europe during the *Sattelzeit*, when modern political boundaries were not yet fixed and exchanges across those shifting spaces played a large role in the construction of national and European identity.

A desideratum for future volumes, slated to address Orientalism and the cult of Raphael, is a more thorough grounding of the discussion in theories of identity and identity formation, in both the introduction and the essays. While the editors have clearly positioned the series as a contribution to a broadly constructivist history of identity, they offer no definition of 'identity' and make no reference to specific theories of identity formation. As a concept and focus of scholarly inquiry, identity is not uncontested, nor is it conceived uniformly across different disciplines or even within single disciplines. A more explicit theoretical framework could help to show more clearly how 'processes of self-positioning' were informed by the 'imaginings of another, better, artistically elevated life' that have long been recognized as central to both classicism and romanticism. From another angle, however, the minimalist approach to theory taken in this volume could be viewed positively. It allows each author to develop his or her own argument, such that each essay functions independently as a contribution in its own field.

As briefly outlined in the forward, this inaugural volume considers philhellenism, or the love of Greece, under its two primary, and sometimes conflicting, aspects: 1) the privileging of ancient Greece as a utopian model of exemplary cultural and artistic perfection that exerted a nearly hegemonic influence over art and education, especially in Germany; 2) the intense interest in modern Greece as the oppressed descendent of that ancient model, whose suffering and struggle against Ottoman hegemony could be variously inflected as a metaphor for the political and cultural aspirations of other European nations. In this sense, philhellenism provides an appropriate topic with which to open a new series devoted to the examination of how the cultural imaginings of the past continue to inform the present. The introductory discussion of philhellenism situates the collected essays in the broad scholarship on the phenomenon, albeit with a pronounced emphasis on German-language publications. It has less to say about the specific contribution of the volume as a whole to that scholarship, although the contributions of individual essays on specific questions are demonstrated in the obligatory content summary.

² Reinhart Koselleck, 'Das 18. Jahrhundert als Beginn der Neuzeit', in Reinhart Herzog, ed., *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewußtsein*, Munich, 1987, 269-283. See also Nicholas Jardine, 'Inner History, or How to End Enlightenment', in William Clark, Jan Golinski and Simon Shaffer, eds, *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, Chicago, 1999, 478-94; and Sabine M. Schneider, 'Klassizismus und Romantik – Zwei Konfigurationen der einen ästhetischen Moderne. Konzeptuelle Überlegungen und neue Forschungsperspektiven', *Jahrbuch der Jean Paul Gesellschaft*, 37, 2002, 86-129.

The two primary aspects of philhellenism provide the organizing principle for the volume. A first section titled 'Reception of Antiquity and Worship of an Ideology – Approaches to an Ideal (Antikenrezeption und Ideolatrie – Annäherungen an ein Ideal)' includes five essays that cover various aspects of the study and emulation of ancient Greek art and culture. While the first, by Alain Schnapp, covers a wide geographic range (from England to Poland, Scandinavia to Italy), the rest are devoted to German topics ranging from Johann Joachim Winckelmann (Elisabeth Décultot) to the debates about polychromy in sculpture and architecture (Kerstin Schwedes), to the principles guiding Karl Friedrich Schinkel's emulation of ancient Greek architecture (Christian Scholl), to the reception and experience of ancient sculpture in Adalbert Stifter's novel *Nachsommer* (Gabriella Catalano). The second section, titled 'Imaginations of the Greek War of Independence and Modern Greece' (Imaginationen des griechischen Freiheitskampfes und Neugriechenlands), covers a wider geographic range. Although the emphasis still falls squarely on Germany, there are individual essays on French, Italian, and British material (primarily Byron). Valerio Funeri's essay examines the disillusioned accounts of German volunteers returning from the fight against the Ottomans and their struggle to reconcile the disastrous situation of modern Greece with the idealized image promoted by the utopian vision of antiquity. Ekaterini Kepetzis provides a cultural historical framework for French paintings of the 1820s that depict the plight of families in the Greek War of Independence. The other essays examine philhellenism in the work of Italian women authors (Arnaldo di Benedetto), historical and aesthetic freedom in Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffmann (Helmut Pfotenhauer), Byron's role in the making and unmaking of Romantic Hellenism (Diego Saglia), the visualization of Greece as an unobtainable, gender-coded object of desire in the writings of Byron and Wilhelm Waiblinger (Constanze Güthenke), Adalbert von Chamisso's Greek poems (Gilbert Hess), Hermann von Pückler Muskau's *Griechische Leiden* (Albert Meier), and the reception of philhellenic poems by the Bavarian King Ludwig II (Marie-Ange Maillet). A final section, 'Philological Approaches' (Philologische Annäherungen) consists of two essays, one on Goethe's version of a Greek poem and his view of modern Greece (Chryssoula Kambas) and another on collections of modern Greek poems in Germany and France (Sandrine Maufroy). With the exception of Saglia's essay on Byron, all are in German. The remainder of this review is dedicated to essays likely to be of immediate interest to art historians.

The first section on the reception of antiquity opens with two essays that also provide an historical and conceptual foundation for the volume: Alain Schnapp, 'The "Antiquitates" of the Greeks and Romans, their influence on the rise of antiquarian thought and their contribution to the "Rediscovery of Greece"' (Die 'Antiquitates' der Griechen und Römer, ihr Einfluß auf die Entstehung des antiquarischen Denkens und ihr Beitrag zur 'Wiederentdeckung Griechenlands'), and Elisabeth Décultot, 'Winckelmann's construction of the Greek nation' (Winckelmanns Konstruktion der griechischen Nation). Each is based upon and expands, to varying degrees, earlier works by the two authors, Schnapp's *The Discovery of the Past* (1996) and Décultot's *Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Enquête sur la genèse de l'histoire de l'art* (2000). While Décultot's essay stands on its own, Schnapp's is best read with his book in hand, for easy access to the many plates referred to in the notes (it has no illustrations). The footnotes include many sources published since the book's appearance in 1996.

In 34 very dense pages Schnapp traces the process by which the antiquarian collecting and description of objects, beginning in the fourteenth century, expanded to include their placement, by various means of topographical representation and depiction, in

their original physical and cultural contexts. He notes the increasing numbers of archaeological expeditions to Greece, concluding that just as Greece freed itself in the early nineteenth century, the old antiquarian scholarship gave way to the archaeology of expeditions, in turn transforming Greece from the site for voyages of discovery to a giant excavation. Archaeology came to present itself as working from direct experience and exact cartographic documentation, as a positive science in the service of the nation state (34-35). While the larger trajectory of increasing topographical specificity and nationalist ends is sound, the binary distinction between antiquarianism and archeology is somewhat too sharply drawn.

Décultot's essay provides a usefully concise overview of how Winckelmann defined ancient Greece as a nation, for his consideration of non-artistic, as well as artistic, factors significantly informed the construction and dissemination of the European conception of Greece during the *Sattelzeit*. As Décultot observes, it might seem that there is no common principle underlying the various elements which Winckelmann identified as constituent to Greek identity (cultural and political institutions, morals, climate, biological-genetic factors). She convincingly argues, however, that an inner coherence can be identified in his systematic privileging of the naturally given, of inborn qualities, over the inherited or acquired. Working from her intimate knowledge of Winckelmann's notebooks, she demonstrates that he departed from his many textual sources, most significantly Jean Baptiste Du Bos's *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, in assigning a greater role to blood over climate in determining the beauty of the Greek body and soul and the perfection of Greek art. Similarly, he privileged the autarky of Greek art and culture, arguing against Greek borrowings from neighbouring peoples, whose borrowings from the Greeks he cites as evidence of their inherent inferiority.

In 'Polychromy as provocation. Aesthetic debates on the colouring of sculpture' (Polychromie als Herausforderung. Ästhetische Debatten zur Farbigkeit von Skulptur), Kerstin Schwedes demonstrates the opposing positions for and against polychomy, in both ancient and modern sculpture, by focusing primarily on two pairs of scholars, one pair from mid-century, Gottfried Semper and Franz Kugler, and one from the 1870s and 1880s, Gustav Theodor Fechner and Max Schasler. Schwedes provides good support for the commonplace assertion that the reconstruction of ancient sculpture is really its construction in accordance with aesthetic conventions and popular taste. Reaching back to the foundational texts of Winckelmann, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Carl Ludwig Fernow, she identifies themes at the center of the debate: truth to materials, medium specific modes of representation, and the appropriate balance between verisimilitude and illusionism. These themes were central to much writing about art in the *Sattelzeit*, when distinctions between the art-historical and the art-theoretical were still developing; showing how they informed an important debate well into the nineteenth century is thus a contribution to the wider investigation of art-historical writing. A further contribution lies in the connection drawn, albeit very concisely, between art-historical writing about the past and art-critical polemics about modern German art. Schwedes concludes that the ideal of unpainted sculpture survived into the second half of the nineteenth century, despite ever-increasing archaeological evidence, because it was so firmly rooted in both Winckelmann's utopian ideal and governing conceptions of medium specificity fixed in the eighteenth century.

Christian Scholl's essay, "Normative visuality versus archaeological pedantry: Karl Friedrich Schinkel's aesthetic philhellenism" (Normative Anschaulichkeit versus archäologische Pedanterie: Karl Friedrich Schinkels ästhetischer Philhellenismus), offers a

concise, well argued reassessment of Schinkel's engagement with ancient Greek architecture grounded in a careful reading of primary source texts. Scholl finds the key to Schinkel's approach in the architect's own responses to criticism of his Berlin Schauspielhaus and Altes Museum, by Aloys Hirt and others, as archaeologically incorrect in their use of heavy cornices (derided as Baroque excrescences) and colossal orders. In contrast to what he denounced as a pedantic focus on individual details, Schinkel conceived his buildings as integral wholes whose positive, uplifting aesthetic effect derived from an understanding of the inner principles of his ancient models, primarily the visualization of calm and balance through the linearity of trabeation and the formal delineation of the building as distinct from its surroundings. As Scholl rightly asserts, Schinkel's break with the pedantic classicism exemplified by Hirt is not, as most Schinkel scholars have argued, an index of the architect's modernity, of a dynamic conception of history in which the past no longer functions as a norm to be followed. Schinkel is instead a characteristic figure of the *Sattelzeit*, in that his engagement with the past is both rooted in classical and early modern notions of imitation and emulation (which privilege the following of an exemplary model's inner principles over superficial formal borrowings) and also inflected by the particular interests of the early nineteenth century. Following the theme of the volume, Scholl emphasizes the latter, drawing connections to the aesthetic and political ideals expressed by Winckelmann and by Friedrich Schiller in his *Letters on Aesthetic Education*.

In 'Greek traces in Stifter's *Indian Summer*' (Griechische Spuren in Stifters *Nachsommer*), Gabriella Catalano takes up a key element in this *Bildungsroman* first published in 1857, the marble statue of a young girl prominently placed in the staircase of the house of the Freiherr von Risach, mentor to the protagonist Heinrich Drendorf. While previous scholarship has tended to focus on the aesthetic epiphany in which young Heinrich first recognizes the statue's beauty, Catalano examines the passages of exposition and dialogue that follow. Here Risach recounts how he acquired the statue and how it came to be recognized as a marble original upon the removal of a layer of plaster. In an extended reading of these passages, Catalano interprets them as demonstrating the complexities that underlie both immediate aesthetic experience and the reception of the past. She supports this reading by relating Risach's account and Heinrich's epiphany to a range of historical and contextual factors, including literary form; the histories of collecting, restoration, and plaster casts; and the larger themes of the novel.

Ekaterini Keptzis's essay 'Families in War – On the Greek War of Independence in French painting of the 1820s' (Familien im Krieg – Zum griechischen Freiheitskampf in der französischen Malerei der 1820er Jahre) examines how the central themes of the volume and the series are manifest in French Salon paintings of the 1820s that depict the plight of families during the Greek uprising against Ottoman rule. Keptzis sheds some new light on Delacroix's *Massacre of Chios* (1824; Paris, Louvre), noting its original title, *Greek families awaiting death or enslavement, etc.* (*Familles grecs attendant la mort ou l'esclavage, etc.*). She then extends the discussion to lesser known works by such painters as Ary Scheffer, François-Émile de Lansac, and Auguste Jean-Baptiste Vinchon. The argument is grounded in, and expands, the literature on images of war, which has largely overlooked images of families. Drawing a comparison with earlier traditions of depicting war and its consequences, exemplified by Rubens, Callot, and Goya, Keptzis shows how the Salon pictures of the 1820s are thematically innovative, moving away from allegory and history to create genre-like depictions of current, not past or imagined, events. These include scenes of volunteers taking leave of their families, youths defending fallen fathers, murder-suicides to avoid

capture, and mourning over the bodies of family members. Unlike earlier depictions, these paintings were meant to prompt active reception by the public, and they promoted and were often employed in actions in support of the Greek cause, such as benefit concerts and exhibitions. The appeal to public sympathy was enhanced by the fact that painters depicted the French Enlightenment ideal of the small nuclear family with one or two children, rather than the extended families that social historians have shown to have been the norm in Greece.

Ultimately this volume exemplifies an often confounding aspect of interdisciplinary anthologies, namely that their difficulties and their benefits are one and the same. The difficulties lie in making sense of a vast array of information and interpretation presented according to contrasting (or even conflicting) methods and with different emphases. The benefits arise precisely from the confrontation with new information and new ways of approaching familiar questions. While this volume may not provide a new, overarching conception of "Graecomania," the range of its essays aptly demonstrates the phenomenon's multifarious manifestations in Europe of the *Sattelzeit*.

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