THE EYE OF GREECE

STUDIES IN THE ART OF ATHENS
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EDITED BY
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FOR MARTIN ROBERTSON

When the fresh leaf is girt and green
and the lark rises in clear skies
poets and scholars of sixteen
open their eyes.

When thrushes sing in the dull west
and woods are deserts of shadows,
whether pleasure or peace is best
nobody knows:

the good, the true, sound among trees
where singing birds play hide and seek:
scholars like simpler tunes than these
and more antique.

Who wear their soul down to spirit
and drown their science in surprise,
and so with clarified eyesight
open their eyes.

Whatever is, is history,
scholars and sages brood above
ebb-tides of time, might almost be
the holy dove.

Where human heat and clarity
meet in the gospel of John
the run of time moves all, and they
like time run on.

They hear and suffer time’s footfall,
time is tragic in his motion,
fingers the sand that will end all
and the green ocean.

Who were set free, flew away free
from crowded rooms, imagining
starlight in libraries, simply
a bird might sing.

It is the freshest, obscurest
of voices in the wood of love,
of natures and callings saddest
that I know of.

When clouds of leaf die in the air
and the young swan swims out and dies
scholar and poet old and bare
open their eyes.

Who only live to die and die,
and the white flower, the green stem,
all beauty, all antiquity
have lived by them.

Peter Levi
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PREFACE

The editors would like to thank the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press for accepting this volume and Pauline Hire for seeing it to publication. Martin Robertson’s interests encompass so many aspects of classical antiquity and his circle of friends is so large that the composition of a book in his honour has presented special difficulties. We were, therefore, asked by the Press to confine the contents of the book to a few substantial articles on a unified theme: *The Eye of Greece* reflects Martin Robertson’s personal contribution to the study of Athenian vase-painting and sculpture. We have greatly benefited from the advice and active cooperation of John Boardman; others who have assisted in a variety of ways are Judith Harris, Sarah Johns, Ian McPhee, Olga Palagia, Carlos Picón, Nick Pollard, Bob Wilkins and Dyfri Williams. Jody Maxmin prepared the honorand’s list of published writings. Jack Shipwright translated Erika Simon’s article from the German.

*1 September 1981*

D.C.K.

B. A. S.
FOREWORD

Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits
Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,
City or suburban, studious walks and shades;
See there the olive grove of Academe,
Plato’s retirement, where the Attic bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long.
Milton, Paradise Regained iv 234–40

Athens was not the ‘capital’ of ancient Greece as it is of modern, yet it was chosen as the modern capital, after the brief precedence of Nauplion, more for its historical role than for the dignity of the impoverished hamlet that was Athens of the 1830s. This was strongly abetted by its surviving monuments – the Acropolis with its temples which had sturdily survived the overgrowth of Turkish building, and no little by those monuments which had not many years before been rescued both from the neglect of their foreign keepers and from the ravages of the industrial climate to come, to take pride of place in the British Museum and to instruct the western world about the true nature of that classical artistic heritage which it had glimpsed through the translations of Rome and the Renaissance.

The danger of regarding Athenian art as synonymous with Greek art is one learnt early by the student of classical antiquity. On the one hand such a view does less than justice to the achievements of other artistic centres in Greece – Corinth, Argos, Sparta; or across the Aegean – Chios, Samos, Miletos; or indeed in the western colonies of south Italy and Sicily. On the other hand it may also deaden our perception of the peculiarly Athenian or Attic character of its artistic production. But it is not only this special appeal that recommends Athenian art, it is also the sheer volume and importance of Athens’ artistic achievements in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Other centres offer distinguished examples of archaic sculpture – in the round, in relief or on buildings – but none offers the richness and variety of the long series observed in Athens. In archaic vase-painting there are other wares that catch the eye or the imagination, but Athenian black-figure soon outstrips them and the prime artists whose names come first to our lips are all Athenian, while the new technique of red-figure, invented in Athens by the end of the sixth century, was to
FOREWORD

dominate the Greek record in this most durable of the arts for another two centuries, and offer us a harvest of scenes of mythology, the stage and everyday life, which lend an immediacy and brilliance to the yet more variegated canvases of contemporary Athenian playwrights, historians and philosophers.

In the fifth century Athens became, in its way, a 'capital' for at least part of the Greek world, that of the islands and East Greece, at loggerheads still with the Persians who had been thrown back from the Greek homeland at Marathon, Salamis and Platea. It was as the direct result of this leadership that Pericles was able to embark on that programme of building in the city which left her the showplace as well as the school of Greece.

All this has occupied archaeologists and art-historians for the past two centuries. When Elgin brought the marbles to England they, and their presumed creator Pheidias, became the embodiment of the purest, most classical of all art forms. Yet in these years the Athenian origin of the hundreds of fine black- and red-figure vases which were being torn (there is no other word) from the graves of Etruria had barely been recognized. And years were to pass before the archaic and Bronze Age arts of the Greek world, let alone of Athens, were uncovered and identified. At the end of the last century the Acropolis was cleared and its buildings, statues, dedicatory vases and bronzes could be studied. In this century excavations have laid bare Athens’ cemeteries, her market place, and have explored the Attic countryside. The archaeologist and art-historian (commonly, in this field, and fortunately, the same persons) have worked towards a fuller understanding of Athens’ role in the history of Greek art, and a greater precision in understanding the chronology and in identifying artists.

The role of British scholars in this work has not been negligible. Indeed, in the study of Athenian vase-painters, Sir John Beazley has been the acknowledged guide of a whole generation of scholars and his work must dominate the subject for years to come. Martin Robertson, for whom this volume was prepared, is a Cambridge man but from early years he worked closely with Beazley and is one of those who has contributed most in this country to the furtherance of Beazley’s studies. And he came to occupy Beazley’s chair in Oxford for seventeen years. His great History of Greek Art (1975) has shown the fineness of his perception in other areas of classical art. Few, but detailed and lengthy studies of aspects of Athenian art seemed an appropriate tribute to him. They reflect, as they are bound to, both contemporary fashions in scholarship and the historian’s own breadth of interest. The subjects are not new, but the manner of treating them and the evidence brought to bear on them are new. The reconstruction of lost, but famous and influential works of antiquity has been a constant pre-occupation of scholars, but there are many new finds and new observations to take into account, some of them dramatic. Our understanding of the intention of many of the most famous monuments of Athenian art, even of the Parthenon itself, shifts as our view of the political and social history of the day is
F O R E W O R D

improved, and as our comprehension of the symbolic qualities of Greek art becomes
clearer. In one area an important change of emphasis has been effected. It was easy
in the last century to assume that the narrative content of Greek art depended wholly
on Greek literature, that the vases and sculptures could be treated as illustrations to
poems and plays. Indeed, it is a function which can be demonstrated for many
monuments, even to the point at which they can supply fresh evidence to supplement
lacunose texts. But at the same time we have come to see more clearly the worth of
representations which depend on a multiplicity of oral rather than a few literary
traditions, and to discern, often more readily through art than through literature, the
constant re-shaping of Greek myth to meet the needs of politics or cult, or simply to
comment by parable on contemporary events and problems. And all the time patient
scholarly ordering of our material, identification of artists and schools, is the better
defined. There is no lack of imagination in contemporary archaeological scholar-
ship. What we lack, perhaps, is a deeper and more unselfish awareness of the need to
present the material on which our imaginations and skills must work, especially the
masses that have gathered in museums and from excavations. The burden of this
responsibility is fairly evenly distributed in the western world, but not evenly
acknowledged.

Some aspects of these approaches to the art of Athens in the sixth and fifth
centuries B.C. are demonstrated in the essays, dedicated to a scholar who has, by his
example, done so much to stimulate our proper understanding of them.

John Boardman
### ABBREVIATIONS

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<td>Bloesch, FaS</td>
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ABBREVIATIONS

Brommer, Hephaiostos
Brommer, Herakles
Brommer, Metopen
Brommer, Sculptures
Brommer, Si
Brommer, Vasenlisten
Brunn Bruckmann
Buschor, SfD
CB
Cook, Niobe
Crome, SAE
CVA
Drougou, Psykter
Enc. Phot. iii
EAA
EVP
FGrH
Fittschen, UBS
FR
Gaidukevich
Graef
Hampe
Haspels, ABL
Helbig
IG i
IG ii

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Inscriptiones Graecae Euclidis anno antiores (Berlin, 1924)
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<td>Kleine Pauly</td>
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Other abbreviations follow those listed in *L’Année philologique*