

this monograph). Instead, Rocco's gaze falls rather on what she considers overlooked links to vase-painters of the Cycladic islands, whose monumental shapes and scenes helped inspire an 'Attico-Cycladic' phase of vase decoration that she identifies in the early seventh century (her Group III). She sees this influence, which formed mid-century narrative scenes as well as the large vessels of this phase, as more lasting than that of the miniaturizing Protocorinthian style (limited to two minor groups in Athens), as it also shapes the latest, polychrome Protoattic productions. She also argues for a reassessment of the 'Wild Style', a somewhat loose group comprising the New York Nessos Painter and the Thebes louterion associates, which she sees as the background to the Black and White Style, rather than its ragged follower (as I argued in 1984), by connecting its vases to examples from earlier tombs. In her view, the lack of continuity between dozens of painters and their workshops is due to rapid innovation and assimilation of new trends, in the early and late seventh century, along with the presumed mobility of craftsmen in these periods (for example, from the Cyclades to the mainland).

Much of Rocco's argumentation and classification depends on affiliations by shape and ornament, ever a sound method in the study of vase-painting, but some will question the proliferation of artists and groups linked by single motifs and without shared contexts. Her careful assembly of isolated ornaments, grouped in figures that support each chapter/group, follows the more bewildering use of this technique by Kübler, and will no doubt call for closer evaluation. Specialization by shape is more convincing, and supports the notion that groups and workshops produced certain containers and scenes for different contexts and consumers (louteria for ritual purposes, loutrophoroi for bridal shrines, special standed kraters for funerals).

The latest Protoattic discoveries just escaped this publication: they stem from Thebes, where a Sanctuary of Herakles has produced several new louteria with mythological scenes, including an Early Protoattic spouted dinos with Herakles, Nessos and Deianeira, close to Rocco's Group IV.C3 (especially to the Thebes louterion and its Incononata counterparts), as well as a later, Black and White Style dinos with a ship scene. Their find-spot offers a possible clue to the original context of the Thebes louterion (Athens, National Museum 238), found in the 1880s. This calls for the next important study of Protoattic pottery,

beyond Rocco's focus on its Cycladic and Geometric origins, to explore its export, influence and/or migration to patrons and consumers beyond Athens (as M. Denoyelle initiated in 1996). Over more than a century, Protoattic vases were largely discovered and dispersed outside of licensed excavations, leaving many without provenance (including the Ortiz krater that anchors Rocco's 'Attico-Cycladic' phase) and this study incomplete, despite the author's careful efforts to base dates and affiliations on tomb groups and excavated examples. Behind the forest of scattered acquisitions and collections, those excavated in Italy as well as in Greece (outside of Athens) point to a prominent role for Attic artists and styles of the Orientalizing period in inspiring vases commissioned for ritual use.

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MITCHELL (A.G.) Greek Vase-Painting and the Origins of Visual Humour. Cambridge:

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There once was a time when Greek vases with their phallic scenes and lascivious themes were repainted to conceal the dirty bits, turned away from public view in museum display cases or locked away in storage making them accessible only to 'specialists'. Books on the subject illustrating too great an erotic content were relegated to special collections or rare-book rooms. The publication of this book, as well as two others documenting related matter (D. Walsh, *Distorted Ideals in Greek Vase-Painting* (2009); T.J. Smith, *Komast Dancers in Archaic Greek Art* (2010)), suggests a healthy development in the current study of Greek art: we are finally taking ourselves a bit less seriously. The reader here soon realizes that what was once considered ugly, grotesque and unacceptable has become attractive, appropriate and meaningful to scholarship. There is more to be said about the underbelly of ancient society.

A large number of images, many unfamiliar or rarely discussed, have been collected by the author under the heading of 'visual humour'. An inherent difficulty is immediately apparent. How can we assume that one ancient viewer thought the same things funny as another, not to mention as us? Luckily, Mitchell considers the problem from a

number of different angles, among them theoretical, philosophical, archaeological, even psychological and physiological. He appreciates the possibility of regionalism and inside jokes, as well as public versus private behaviours. Some images are more obviously funny than others and lend themselves more readily to ludic interpretations (for example, Eurystheus and the Erymanthian boar, the Kerkopes) – in part as a result of the absurdity of the tales themselves.

The book comprises four core chapters that structure the topic into broad categories of daily life, myth, satyrs and caricatures. These are framed by an introduction laying out themes and issues, and a concluding chapter that reflects on broader social and cultural meanings. For Mitchell, humour was controlled by various groups with diverse purposes, among them the artists themselves: ‘It is much more likely that painters amused themselves from time to time without thinking too much about the eventual purchaser or end-user’ (297). He separates Greek pottery into four functional categories, excluding the possibility of vases produced exclusively for ritual purposes. Nonetheless, it is useful to consider, as he does at the book’s end, these images with regard to shapes, techniques and painters.

The first two proper chapters, looking at ‘humour in the city’, demonstrate the author’s approach to iconography. He believes in the importance of detail, both on the part of the ancient painter and on his part as modern translator. His generous division of the material makes for an effortless read, free from the burden of excessive secondary sources and citations. In fact, most of the footnotes are references to individual objects and their relevant bibliography. The third chapter, concerned with satyrs and comic parody, expectedly takes a stand on the supposed relationship between vases and dramas: ‘there is no need to conjure up theatrical explanations’ (234). Chapter 4, perhaps the strongest in the book, demystifies the Theban Kabirion vases by arguing in favour of ‘a yearly carnivalesque festival’ at the sanctuary (279), complete with drinking, feasting and Dionysus, rather than for serious cult proceedings. More might have been made of the widespread use of visual humour in Boeotian black-figure during the previous generation. Their komast scenes – complete with buffoonery, amusing antics and vessel abuse – are easily paralleled with many described throughout the book. Some potential confusions should be noted: the black-figure psykter with satyrs in

Brussels (fig. 111) is likely Boeotian not Attic (*cf.* K. Kilinski, *Boeotian Black Figure Vase Painting of the Archaic Period* (1990) 55); the Corinthian phiale from Perachora (214, n.285) is not in the British School at Athens (*cf.* T.J. Smith, ‘Black-figure vases in the collection of the British School at Athens’, *BSA* 98 (2003) 347–68); and Boeotia has been under extensive archaeological survey since the late 1970s (*cf.* 252). The abundant use of vectorized drawings in place of original photographs, focusing on specific details rather than the whole object, may elicit mixed reactions. Such minutiae aside, readers are encouraged to relax, put their feet up and have a laugh.

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SMITH (T.J.) *Komast Dancers in Archaic Greek*

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This detailed iconographic study deals with the male (and occasionally female) dancers, often comic, sometimes lewd, which appear in groups, friezes or individually on vase-painting throughout the seventh and sixth centuries. These figures have already been the subject of some study, both from an iconographic perspective and also by those interested in early depictions of Greek drama. Smith has contributed to the debate on drama elsewhere. Here she is concerned with drawing together material already collected in vase-painting studies to consider the komast by region, examining its appearance and actions in an attempt to determine a meaning or situational context for the figure. She also includes the rare representations in other visual media.

Smith discusses the imagery with a keen eye for detail, focusing on the clothes and then the actions of the dancing figures, before moving on to their context in the overall scene and on particular vase-shapes. This emphasis on the wider visual context is important and has largely been ignored in other studies of komasts. Smith considers the subject by region, beginning with Corinth, where the earliest of these figures appear, then Attic black-figure (but not red-figure), then Laconia, Boeotia, east Greece (divided by production centre) and finally the west (both ‘indigenous’ production and the more overtly Hellenizing wares). This regional division is