

Georgina Muskett, *Mycenaean Art: A Psychological Approach*. (British Archaeological Reports, Int. Ser. S1636, Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007, 77 pp., pbk, ISBN 978-1-4073-0075-7)

Intercourse between archaeology and psychology occasionally takes place. Some may regard this intimate union between 'Amor and Psyche', the materiality of archaeology and the immateriality of psychology, incompatible and inappropriate. However, the simple fact that ancient material culture was produced and used by people with 'minds' has, in recent decades, resulted in an increased involvement of psychology in assisting archaeological research. Neuropsychology's potential is recognized in research on hominid cognitive evolution, cognitive capacities of Neanderthals and early Modern man, development of language, and on cognition and intelligence in connection with symbolic representations, religion and technology. Closely related to neuropsychology, the psychology of perception and cognition is included in research on art, from the Upper Palaeolithic and Neolithic (Deregowski 1995), and the Migration Period (Lindstrøm and Kristoffersen 2001).

Muskett's book contributes to this picture, using mainly the psychology of perception and cognition, but adding aspects of evolutionary, behavioural and comparative psychology. The objective of the book is stated in the preface: 'to demonstrate the value of psychology in the study of ancient art, enabling emphasis on the individual, in the sense of a human being or a person in a general way, in addition to denoting a discrete human being possessing an individual identity' (p. 3).

The visual, perceptual, cerebral and cognitive processes involved in perceiving are introduced in Chapter 1. Some parts are superfluous. In subsequent chapters, the reader is repeatedly referred to this information, which demands a slightly annoying leafing back and forth. This information could have been placed in the relevant chapters. More psychological theory comes in Chapter 6. A similar deficient organization is apparent in the presentation of the archaeological periods, placed partly in the introduction and partly in Chapter 2. The most striking shortcomings, however, are the missing appendix and the sparse illustrations. The perceptual-cognitive principles should not only be described, but illustrated on the art.

Chapter 2 is concerned with why there were few representations of the human form on the Greek mainland in Middle Helladic (Middle Bronze Age) art, and reasons for their method of representation. Muskett identifies the representations as cases of 'aesthetic primitive' according to Latto (1995). She also refers to Köhler's cognitive Gestalt theory, to Loewy and Gombrich, all claiming that simple forms are innately aesthetically preferred, and to Lévi-Strauss who also suggested psychological reasons for simple forms in art from various cultures. While all of this literature is adequate, it is old. What astonishes is the omission of Deregowski's extensive cognitive-psychological research on 'primitive' and prehistoric art. (Deregowski [1989] is mentioned in Chapter 1, but inadequately used.) His explanations focus not on aesthetics, but on maximization of information. With regard to aesthetics, the cognitive-psychological research by Reber and Schwarz (2006) would have been most useful.

Chapter 3 deals with recognition of the individual in the form of possible portraiture in Mycenaean masks. Muskett's arguments for attempted portraiture by exaggeration of facial features are convincing. More emphasis could have been put on the reconstruction of faces done on Mycenaean skulls (Musgrave et al. 1995) to support her conclusions.

In Chapter 4 Muskett considers psychological factors that may have influenced the composition of scenes in Mycenaean art, particularly the posture-preferences and the direction of movement, but also killing-scenes, which could also have been analysed with reference to human predator behaviour. The discussion of the direction of the painted processions is relevant and very interesting, but somewhat confusing and with no clear-cut conclusions.

Chapter 5 concerns how the uses of colour and form can be understood based on cognitive psychology. But Muskett – quite correctly – actually bases her discussion more on behavioural theory (learning) and semiotic theory (symbolic uses) than on cognitive psychology. She could have done that more explicitly.

Chapter 6 is aimed at understanding the importance of warfare and aggression in the tendency for elite males to be presented as warriors. The arguments are based on comparative studies of mammal, bird and human behaviour. More theory on human aggressive behaviour is warranted here, for instance Nell (2006). Muskett's claim that 'the application of

research by psychologists into the nature of aggression has been limited in success' (p. 60) is surprisingly ignorant. The psychological interpretations of the war-paraphernalia found in graves and art, even during the post-palatial period, could be more extensive. Interesting gender issues (females depicted in 'male' situations, buried with weapons and status-indicating grave-goods, and a possible 'warrior-goddess') cry out for further psycho-archaeological exploration and interpretation.

In this monograph Muskett sets out to defend the union between archaeology and psychology. How she does it is problematic though. Her main aim, as presented in the preface, is to *defend* psychology: 'to demonstrate the value of psychology in the study of ancient art ...' (p. 3). Later, she states her aim as being to *evaluate* psychology: 'The focus ... is the testing of certain psychological concepts against the artefacts ...' (p. 11). Is she aware that these aims are different? If so, does she reach them?

She certainly has demonstrated that psychology, primarily the psychology of perception and cognition (including neuropsychology), is valuable in analysing ancient art. But she is not the only one to have done that. Psychological analyses of ancient pictorial representations already have a history. The second aim, 'testing of certain psychological concepts against the artefacts', is somewhat grandiose. Psychological concepts are not, and cannot be, tested (validated) against archaeological material. But psychological concepts may indeed be applied on archaeological material. A more modest aim such as: 'I want to apply certain psychological principles in the analysis of Mycenaean art and artefacts' would have been a more accurate description of what she actually does. Thus stated, she reached her aim.

What then are Muskett's contributions in this book? With regard to archaeology, Muskett has provided interesting innovative analyses based on psychology. Her convincing overview and insight into the archaeological material give her a great advantage in the application of the psychological concepts and principles: she knows the relevant materials, and she can make analytic comparisons of materials from different sites and times. Given this background, it would be interesting if she, in a future work, would use the same methodology in an analysis of changes in art over time, for instance from Late Helladic to early Iron Age.

With regard to contributions to psychology, she has demonstrated that certain perceptual-cognitive principles also operated in ancient times, adding support for the presumed universality of these principles. (It should be noted, however, that Deregowski [1995] questions some aspects of the assumed universality of human perception). She could have gone further: the analysis of aggressive warrior role models in art could have been more pointed, could have been better connected to human male hierarchical competition, male reproductive fitness, human territoriality (Buss 2001), and gendered aesthetics (Engquist and Arak 1993). The gender-role indications (mentioned earlier) could have been used to support the social-constructivist view of gender roles in psychology, implying that archaeology may contribute to psychology, and not only the other way around.

Despite its shortcomings, Muskett's book is very interesting. The choices of psychological themes for the archaeological analyses are adequate although not inclusive. The book represents another case of a fruitful employment of psychology in archaeological research. Muskett has succeeded in her endeavour to promote the union of archaeology and psychology.

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Michael Greenhalgh, *Marble Past, Monumental Present. Building with Antiquities in the Mediaeval Mediterranean* (The Medieval Mediterranean 80, Leiden: Brill, 2009, hbk, xviii + 634 pp. + DVD, ISBN 978-90-04-17083-4)

Marble Past, Monumental Present constitutes a rich and multi-faceted exploration of the materiality of marble use in the late and post-antique Mediterranean, described by Greenhalgh as 'a lake surrounded by marble' (p. 3). The study significantly broadens the scope and ambition of a previous effort by the same author that was limited to the afterlife of Roman monuments in the western provinces, documenting their reuse and the experience of them through contemporary literature as well as 'archaeological' finds (Greenhalgh 1989). The new book zooms in on one particular medium, antique marble, and its (re)use in medieval architecture, both sacred and secular, but expands spatially to cover the entire Mediterranean, as well as culturally to investigate not just the Christian world (east and west), but also Islamic areas of influence (Asia Minor, north Africa, and the Near East). Its ambition is thus unquestionable.

While the topic of the book is monumentality as a feature of medieval architecture, it is in itself a monumental work of scholarship. Covering some 600 pages (including an extremely useful and very wide-ranging bibliography, organized by theme and region) and a DVD with more than 5000 illustrations (mostly copyright-free, but with the rare misidentification of sites, e.g. an interior shot of the 'desert castle' of Qasr el-Hraneh is incorrectly identified as being from the Amman citadel) and extensive additional documentation, it will perhaps be as much subject to 'quarrying' as the precious stone that it investigates in such detail. Under all circumstances, there is much more information packed into

this book and its digital compendium than could possibly be digested in one reading, the flipside being that the book comes with a hefty price tag at 159 euros.

Part One (pp. 3–86) sets the scene for the book and discusses the initial attraction of marble in Roman and late antique culture. This is perhaps the part of the book that will have the widest general interest as it provides a valuable introduction to the use of marble in both sacred and secular construction from the first to the sixth century AD. It also touches on the aesthetic experience of marble in these contexts, albeit only briefly. Much more could be done on this important issue, especially in conjunction with the increasing interest in the study of the colouring of Greco-Roman and medieval sculpture and architectural decoration (for example see: Panzanelli 2008). Greenhalgh rightly reminds us that the word marble stems from the Greek μαρμαίρω, meaning to shine (p. 7) or to shimmer, indicative of the playfulness with light that the material attains. The discussion in Chapter Two of the connections between the familiarity with pilgrimage sites and 'marble mania' is also particularly thought-provoking (pp. 81–86). In spite of the cultural and religious transformations that characterize the different historical eras discussed in this book, pilgrimage continued to be a religious practice that glued the Mediterranean together and facilitated the exchange of materials and ideas.

Part Two (pp. 89–232) focuses on the logistics of the marble business from quarry to customer by means of land and sea transport. Greenhalgh summarizes much of the recent work in the study of antique quarries and considers the extent to which extraction could have continued at some of these into the medieval period. Unfortunately, our knowledge of any such continuity is limited, given that later use has in most cases obliterated all traces of medieval quarrying, but it is certainly a field that is in need of further study. The logistics of reuse are also covered here. Marble that was lying around in local ruin-fields was deliberately avoided in many cases, as imported materials were considered to be more prestigious and potent in their symbolism. Trade, of course, was one method of acquiring such marbles from foreign lands, but looting played an equally important role. Through the looting of sites in the eastern Mediterranean