Fernande and Tonio Hölscher (ed.), **Römische Bilderwelten. Von der Wirklichkeit zum Bild und zurück**. Kolloquium der Gerda Henkel Stiftung am Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Rom 15.–17.3.2004. Archäologie und Geschichte, volume 12. Verlag Archäologie und Geschichte, Heidelberg 2007. 270 pages with 143 illustrations.

This handsomely produced volume is the culmination of a two-year research project sponsored by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung and hosted by the German Archaeological Institute in Rome between 2002 and 2004 (Bilderwelt – Lebenswelt im antiken Rom und im römischen Reich). Each year, four research projects were funded (two doctoral, and two post-doctoral), overseen by Tonio Hölscher as research professor. In March 2004, the scholars gathered for the final colloquium: the present book provides the bilingual German and Italian proceedings. Of the eight research projects, only Marion Mirold's work goes unrepresented; additional papers by Tonio Hölscher, Fernande Hölscher and Paolo Liverani take the total number to ten, seven in German, and three in Italian. There is also a four-page foreword explaining the project's rationale, structure and development.

The overall aim was a noble one: to bring together young researchers in Rome, thereby bridging the gulf between »die praktische Arbeit vor Ort und die theoretische Forschung in der Bibliothek« (p. 10). At the same time, the project was conceived in international terms (»Gleichzeitig gehen die Ausrichtungen der Forschung in den verschiedenen Nationen immer weiter auseinander«, p. 10), although one perhaps wonders why collaboration in Rome was subsequently limited to the Austrian and Swiss institutes.

As for the specific ›Bilderwelt – Lebenswelt‹ theme, this was conceived as a deliberately broad Church. Classical archaeology, write the editors, is plagued by a »grundsätzliche Spannung zwischen zwei Aspekten und zwei damit korrespondierenden Forschungsansätzen zu antiken Bildwerken« (p. 11): the volume's fundamental question is about how best to ›decode‹ visual conventions within the pursuits of social, political and cultural history. Sceptics may wonder whether we're stuck in something of a proverbial rut; after all, Paul Zanker and Tonio Hölscher first talked in these terms some thirty years ago – and a whole army of students have been reared to follow suit. Nevertheless, the contributions pay testimony to the fecundity of the theme. Let me begin by zooming in on each chapter in turn, before zooming out to address some collective questions of theory, method and approach.

Paolo Liverani opens the book with a short piece on the relationship between literary and visual representative modes (Tradurre in immagini, pp. 13–26). This lecture was originally delivered as the conference's final keynote address; Paul Zanker's corresponding opening lecture (Ideologie des Lebensgenusses. Räume, Bilder, Rituale in der römischen Stadt der Kaiserzeit) is inexplicably missing. Needless to say, Liverani's topic has been well-trodden in recent years, and the current reviewer is no impartial observer. The author nevertheless adds some new perspectives of his own. Opening with the famous Phaedra Sarcophagus in the Museo Nazionale Romano, and proceeding to discuss a second-century Homeric (›Megarian‹) cup and a Pompeian wall-painting, Liverani observes that »i testi scritti – o, diciamo meglio, verbali – e i testi figurati seguano percorsi indipendenti e divergenti« (p. 15). Like others before him (foremost among them, Jocelyn Penny-Small), the author explains visual-verbal divergences in terms of on-going oral traditions: »l'artista stesso fa parte di questa condizione di oralità« (p. 18). The essay is rich in ›theory‹ – hence the reverential nods to Gérard Genette, Umberto Eco and Claude Lévy-Strauss, among others. But one wishes that, amid the self-confessed »digressione« (p. 18) about »una traduzione intersemiotica« (p. 21), the author had looked a little more carefully at the actual objects at hand. Exactly how is it, for example, that the aforementioned fresco is captioned »Ifigenia fra i Tauri« – with minimal formal engagement as to composition, iconography and style? Still more disconcerting is the discussion of the Berlin Homeric relief-cup, which makes no effort to engage with either imagery or inscription. (The most important recent discussions, by Luca Giuliani, go unmentioned, and of course actually viewing this three-dimensional object is very different from glancing at the two-dimensional fold-out reproduced.) This leads to a rather embarrassing error, apparently unnoticed by lecturer, audience and editors alike: this is not »una coppa ellenistica a rilievo con scene dell'Iliade accompagnate da alcuni versi del poema« (p. 21); rather, the scenes and quotations relate to the twenty-second book of the Odyssey.

Fernande Hölscher explores the limits of representation in a wholly different context: the simultaneous promise and failure of images to stand in for the gods that they at once present and represent (Götterstatuen bei Lectisternien und Theoxenien?, pp. 27–40). Hölscher's fundamental question is theological: why offer gifts of food to the gods (or rather, their images), and how were divinities themselves physically or symbolically presented or represented in such contexts? The essay uses a variety of Greek and Latin literary sources to conclude that »die Götter weder als Statuen noch als puppenartige Gebilde bei den Lectisternien anwesend waren«, but rather that they were »vertreten […] durch ihre Attribute und/oder durch Verbenen-Gebinde, die auf dem lectus den Ort

ihrer Köpfe anzeigten« (p. 40). This gets to the heart of the conference remit (cf. Tonio Hölscher's comments on pp. 111 f.). Some will no doubt be grateful that the essay ends before larger theoretical issues raise their ugly heads. My question, though, is what all this means in terms of the ontology of Greek and Roman images, and indeed their relation to our own theologically-conditioned »Bildanthropologie« in the twenty-first century western world? More specifically, I'd like to know more about how this verbally-derived discourse of epiphany enriches our cultural historical interpretation of Roman images. For all Hölscher's fascinating focus on literary sources, don't images themselves negotiate, and indeed direct, these same conceptual themes? While Hölscher mentions a Hellenistic votive relief of the Dioscuri (fig. 1), for example, this is only one of three images reproduced, and the one-sentence discussion makes only peremptory reference to what can be seen: the self-referential ontological games are somewhat overlooked. (The presence-cum-absence of the Dioscuri, I would argue, is now re-performed in and through a votive memorial that must at once present and re-present an epiphany past.) Although the volume is on the whole carefully edited, there are also some occasional typographic blips in this chapter – not least the missing references on pages 32 and 36.

Quite how Alexander Heinemann's article engages with the volume's subject is slightly harder to gauge (Eine Archäologie des Störfalls. Die toten Söhne des Kaisers in der Öffentlichkeit des frühen Prinzipats, pp. 41–109). At seventy pages with 310 footnotes, this essay dwarfs all the others. In effect, we are offered a five-part catalogue of monuments that commemorate deceased male members of the early Imperial family – pertaining first to Gaius and Lucius under Augustus, and second to Germanicus and Drusus under Tiberius. This is incredibly learned stuff: the numerous exempla and bibliography assembled – not to mention the ease with which Heinemann switches between different sorts of material evidence – make the chapter essential reading for anyone interested in how »die Söhne des Kaisers werden nach dem Tode zu Objekten eben jener stilisierten Politik des Konsenses, als deren handelnde Subjekte sie zu Lebzeiten auftreten« (p. 109). Still, I was unsure what these five sections, subsections and sub-subsections added to the volume's ›Bilderwelt – Lebenswelt‹ scope.

Tonio Hölscher, by contrast, proves the master of structured argument. His contribution examines early Imperial representation of women in cultic contexts (Fromme Frauen um Augustus. Konvergenzen und Divergenzen zwischen Bilderwelt und Lebenswelt, pp. 111–131). Hölscher juxtaposes images of »reale Kultrituale« against flagrantly fabricated »›ideale‹ fromme Frauen«, dressed in stylised Greek costume, for example, or involved in fantastic cultic acts: these exempla are used to demonstrate a grander thesis – namely, that »lebende Menschen und Bildwerke bilden zusammen eine konzeptuelle Gesellschaft« (p. 111). As we have come to expect from Hölscher, the chapter constitutes a slick tour de force: readers are swept along by not only the tide of Hölscher's logic, but also the swell of his written rhetoric. For someone approaching this material outside the Hölscherian intellectual tradition, though, it's perhaps easier to play the spoilsport (and I hope he'll forgive me). After all, can these images really be grouped into ›realistic‹ and ›non-realistic‹ groups quite so neatly? Hölscher is a dab-hand at dressing arguments. But the implication nonetheless remains that images like those on the south frieze of the Ara Pacis (fig. 4) somehow amount to »Darstellungen kultischer Wirklichkeit« in a way that subsequent exempla (e. g. fig. 6–12) do not. Still more troubling is the recourse to literary sources on pages 125–128. Whatever the knotty problems of images, it seems, texts establish ›reality‹ in a much more straightforward and unproblematic way: does Horace's use of »puellae« and »virgines« in the Carmen Saeculare really provide evidence for contemporary cultic reality (»zeitgenössischer kultischer Realität«, p. 128)? What worries me here is an underlying logocentric assumption: more on this later.

Katja Moede hits upon a wonderful case study in her contribution on the early Imperial arch at Susa (Der Augustusbogen von Susa. Römische Rituale außerhalb Roms, pp. 133–144). Examining the reliefs that run around all four sides, Moede shows why this arch is »das deutlichste noch erhaltene Symbol der historischen Vorgänge und unmißverständlicher Zeuge der Beziehungen zwischen Rom und der Alpenregion« (p. 133). The thesis, in nuce, is that the monument's north frieze represents the sacrificial procession of the local chieftain Cottius, while the south side (»grundsätzlich gleich«, p. 138) faces us with a sort of ›spot-the-difference‹ version, this time showing Augustus in a related series of schemata. This leads to further reflection about orientation and topography: »Kommt man von Norden, begegnet man im Fries der lokalen Herrscherdynastie. Kommt man dagegen von Süden, steht man dem römischen Kaiser gegenüber« (p. 141). My only reservation here is about aligning Moede's sophisticated verbal argument with the visual images themselves. One almost gets the impression that the actual figurative scenes don't much matter: how else to explain their minuscule photographic reproduction on page 136 f.? In this particular scenario, one must also wonder about the original presentation of the tiny frieze atop the arch. Moede presents her highly sophisticated argument as a sort of hermeneutic fait accompli. But reading images in a book is very different from viewing reliefs on an arch: any first-century visual response had in fact to navigate a rather different sort of medial and visual journey. Given the height of the frieze, I'm not convinced that identifying and counting the animals of the suovetaurilia was a foremost priority; it would also be interesting to know more about the east and west friezes, since these necessitate our walking around the arch rather than penetrating its central through-fare.

Moede profitably homes in on one monument, extracted from her thesis on ›Römische Opferdarstel-

lungen. Kult und Ritual‹. Hannelore Rose, on the other hand, offers a catalogue of second- and third-century grave-stelai from Metz in Northeast France (Vom Ruhm des Berufs. Darstellungen von Händlern und Handwerkern auf römischen Grabreliefs in Metz, pp. 145–179). Thirty-one examples are reproduced and discussed, all in an effort to demonstrate how the monuments identify the deceased in relation to civic and communal professions – both verbally, through inscriptions, and visually, by way of attributes and scenic representations. Rose helpfully sets up the chapter in terms of research on the social archaeology of death: »Durch ihre plakativen Aussagen über den Grabbesitzer erweckten sie die Aufmerksamkeit des Betrachters und stellten sie auf diese Weise ein wesentliches Kommunikationsmittel dar« (p. 146). She closes it by differentiating these grave monuments, with their communal interest in career and occupation, from those found elsewhere in the empire, where mythological scenes were preferred (pp. 178 f.). This is a most interesting corpus. Given the volume remit, though, it would have been enlightening to know more about the objects' material presentation rather than merely their iconography: despite the claims on page 151 and the more-or-less uniform photographic presentation, it wasn't clear that the reliefs were all the same size, or indeed crafted from the same material. Even more striking (and left tantalisingly unspoken) is the diversity of pictorial modes and frames. The crowning monument in figure 5, the vertical stacking of scenes in figures 9–11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 22, and 31, the combination of shallow carving and plastic modelling in figures 19–21, the stylistic abstraction of figure 23: there's a recurrent tendency to focus on the perceived ›what‹ of the image at the expense of the ›how‹.

Albrecht Matthaei's contribution might better have followed Moede's, given its focus on Rome-province relations and its recourse to a single case-study: the ›Parthian‹ monument from Ephesus (Polis und Imperium romanum. Die Stadtrepräsentanten des sog[enannten] Parthermonuments von Ephesus, pp. 181–189; the chapter is extracted from a thesis on ›Bilder städtischer Identität. Repräsentation und Selbstdefinition von Städten in den Provinzen des römischen Reiches‹). Matthaei uses the »formal-grammatikalische Abhängigkeiten von Syntax des Frieses« to argue »dass die Darstellungen Städte und nicht etwa personifizierte Ethnien oder Provinzen repräsentieren« (p. 182). Two brief observations must suffice: first, Matthaei founds his conclusion on what is essentially a single surviving panel; second, we are told very little about the original display of these scenes, as though »mediale Kommunikation« (p. 182) is a matter of iconography plain and simple. In this capacity, I wondered about the conspicuous breaking of pictorial frame in the single extant frieze, mirrored in at least three more fragmentary panels: in visual terms, this phenomenon raises interesting questions about the interstices between the space of the viewer and that of pictorial panel viewed.

The much-maligned collection of ›strigilated sarcophagi‹ is the subject of Giulia Barrata's essay: specifically, 176 sarcophagi that encase an ›emblem‹ in their almond-shaped symmetrical centre (La mandorla centrale dei sarcophagi strigilati. Un campo iconografico ed i suoi simboli, pp. 191–215). Like Rose's contribution, Barrata adds a beyond-the-grave dimension to the ›Lebenswelt – Bilderwelt‹ theme; the chronological span is also similar. There can be no denying the wonderfully rich material, which itself interrogates the boundaries between figurable and non-figurable traditions of representation (one thinks back to Fernande Hölscher's essay). Barrata identifies twenty-three different iconographic subjects, all of them encased between the mind-tripping waves of strigilated symmetry. But the intellectual challenge lies in taking this beyond a traditional catalogue format. By homing in on the central ›emblems‹, Barrata runs the risk of overlooking much of the pictorial play. After all, these games of framed enclosure themselves frame the framing function of the sarcophagus as container – a sort of ›Tardis‹ or ›Stargate‹ standing between this world and the unknown (and unknowable) world beyond. A presentational quibble too: as in Moede's essay, Barrata's pictures are reproduced at an impossible-to-view size, as though the table of subjects on page 207 were more important than the actual images seen. Whatever we make of the »specifica ideologia funeraria« (p. 215), doesn't it make a difference whether these strigilated »mandorle« are encased between lions, columns, standing figures, seated guardians or full-scale-portraits – or indeed nothing at all? And what of the symmetrical play, as when the two sides of a sarcophagus present reflecting mirror-images between the strigil waves (e. g. fig. 1), broken only by asymmetrical designs at the centre? The central mandorle might be »iconogrammi«, but surely they demand to be looked at rather than simply ›read‹?

Annette Haug takes the book late into late antiquity in her study of city iconography, especially between the third and the sixth centuries (Spätantike Stadtbilder. Ein Diskurs zwischen Topik und Spezifik, pp. 217–249). Asking why cityscapes should be so differently portrayed during this period, the article attempts to associate different ›Bilderwelt‹ schemata with different ›Lebensraum‹ contexts of display. Haug argues that idealised portraits of unwalled towns generally belong to the private realm (represented, for example, on mosaics, plates, lamps, sarcophagi) whereas walled ones (»befestigte Städte«) are preferred in public and sacral spaces, above all in churches: »Beide visuellen Entwürfe rufen mit jeweils unterschiedlichen formalen Mitteln die Vorstellung von einem intakten, unversehrten, heilen Lebensraum auf« (p. 248). As with other contributions, the author's iconographic interests – is the city walled or unwalled? – tend to privilege the contained detail over and above the visual framework. Needless to say, there is much more to be said. For this reviewer, what is most striking about the exempla discussed are their synoptic combinations of different points of perspectives, and not least their games of compositional symmetry (e. g. fig. 3).

The final contribution by Massimiliano Papini addresses issues of Nachleben, comparing Giorgio de Chirico's 1929 gladiatorial paintings in the Maison Rosenberg with ancient mosaic depictions (Decorum antico e moderno. La ›Hall des Gladiateurs‹ di Casa Rosenberg a Parigi e i mosaici a soggetto anfiteatrale nei triclinia di epoca imperiale, pp. 251–270). The modern case study is fascinating: the gladiatorial figure, situated somewhere between Greek idealism and Roman brutality, evidently appealed to de Chirico's notion of ›pittura metafisica‹, and at a time of growing European artistic, cultural and political uncertainty – »et quid amabo nisi quod aenigma est«, as one pictorial legend has it. I am less convinced by the pairing with ancient mosaics from, for example, Bad-Kreuznach, Nennig, and the Casa Galli-Righi near Verona: »Léonce Rosenberg quasi si elevò a novella munerarius del XX secolo, al pari dei tanti suoi antichi anticipatori che trasferirono l'atmosfera di munera e venationes nello spazio domestico« (p. 259). Papini has recourse to various ancient literary sources, above all Petronius and Athenaeus. But is the aim to suggest some sort of timeless aesthetic, or else to imply a self-conscious revival of »simili immagini« (p. 269)? Whatever we conclude, one need only glance at the juxtaposed figures to see that these images are not visually ›similar‹ at all. Naked and bronzed, de Chirico's nudes are only ›gladiators‹ in so far as some (in fact the minority) carry helmets, daggers and lances; others are deliberately semi-iconic – provocative torsos that embody a (quite literally) faceless classical aesthetic. The article could perhaps have done more to bridge this ancient-modern divide, unpacking the different stylistic modes at stake.

What, then, to make of the book as a whole? It is right that a project like this gives pause for thought about methodology, approach and disciplinary direction. Certainly, the diversity of subjects is reassuring, the articles encompass a broad chronological range, a wide geographical spread, and a diversity of media (note, though, the enduring dominance of sculpture, at the conspicuous expense of wall painting, numismatics, and above all architecture). The ›Bilderwelt – Lebenswelt‹ theme evidently stimulated new ideas and research topics. Still, it was not always clear how individual projects line up with the rhetorical promise of the foreword. If some papers engage very little with the theme (Liverani, Heinemann, Rose, Papini), others would have benefitted from further conceptual collaboration (e. g. Barrata and Rose, Moede and Matthaei). That's an unfair complaint, perhaps – after all, the editors talk of each project in terms of »umfangreiche Katalogwerke« (p. 11: something most conspicuous in the contributions by Barrata and Rose, and to a lesser extent by Haug and Heinemann). To my mind, however, this ›catalogue complex‹ appears to shut down intellectual questions rather than open them up. It's a hopelessly Anglophone complaint, I know. But one gets the impression that, if something doesn't fall within each specialist's iconographic radar, it is deemed to have little relevance.

Let me end with some perilously broad generalisations about the collective ›school‹: in particular, about how images are used here within the wider pursuit of Roman cultural history. As I see it, the contributors typically deem the ›Lebenswelt‹ more important than the ›Welt der Bilder‹ used to reconstruct it. To my mind, this perhaps explains the book's subtitle: if contributors proceed from ›Wirklichkeit‹ to ›Bild‹, they are in somewhat of a hurry to move back again! Yes, there is much talk about social life revolving around and emerging from the constructed conventions of images, and vice versa. Still, images are usually ascribed a passive role. There seems, in short, a residual sort of rationalised logocentrism: first, in the way in which images are treated in relation to texts; and second, how images are themselves ›read‹ as texts.

I have already touched upon this first trait in relation to Tonio Hölscher's essay (Literatur. Wirklichkeit und Vision, pp. 125–128). As good classical archaeologists, all contributors evidently think that they are putting the image first, and all pay lip service to the importance of the world of images (Bilderwelt): »Die Wirklichkeit ist ein Bild«, as the editors put it, and »die Bilder sind Wirklichkeit« (p. 112). When push comes to shove, though, texts lead, and pictures follow. One wonders, for instance, quite what Cicero's point of view has to do with Rose's reliefs produced many hundreds of miles away from Rome in Metz, and some three hundred years later (»Dieser Ausspruch zeigt […]«, p. 164: the reference to Terence, left untranslated in the German, suffices to show that Cicero's comments provide no straightforward ›Lebenswelt‹ witness in any case). Similarly, Papini's essay never probes the fictional literary stakes of Petronius' Cena Trimalchionis or indeed the nature of Paul Fierens' written evidence about de Chirico. Likewise, Heinemann opens his essay by taking Suetonius at his word. And although Fernande Hölscher offers a stimulating reading of literary sources, this reviewer would like to know more about the visual cultural stakes. (In antiquity, as opposed to our own post-Lutheran intellectual traditions, didn't the visual surpass the verbal as medium for thinking through divinity?)

As for my second observation, there seemed to me a predisposition for pictures recurrently and irreversibly to metamorphose into texts: the complexities of viewing images are collapsed into the hermeneutics of reading words. True to Tonio Hölscher's pioneering work of the nineteen-eighties, there is much talk of ›Bildsprache‹ (cf. »systema linguistico«, p. 15). Whether or not we accept that linguistically-derived semiotic metaphor – and yes, it is only a metaphor – the unheeded slip into ›Bildaussage‹ (p. 144), ›plakative Aussagen‹ (p. 146), ›Kommunikationsmittel‹ (p. 146) and pictorial ›syntax‹ (p. 182) makes me uncomfortable. When Matthaei takes images to be words (»nimmt man die Darstellung wörtlich […]«, p. 189), one has to wonder: what would it mean to take pictorial representation (literally) ›verbally‹. And what is lost in this particular conceptualisation of ›Bilderwelten‹? Ancient writers, artists and commentators were quick to provide

the corrective: the great wonder of images, after all, was (and is) their inability to ›speak‹ at all.

The assumed semiotics of the image ultimately prevails here. This explains the iconoclastic reluctance – or better, iconoclastic fear? – to enter the visual realm in the first place. The Hölschers predict as much in their foreword, declaring that »die medialen Aspekte der ›Bilderwelt‹ und der ›Lebenswelt‹« will be »eine zentrale theoretische Aufgabe für die Zukunft« (p. 12). But why chicken out? Contributors prove expert in hitting iconographic nails on the head. And yet they all, albeit all to different extents, perpetuate a wholly logocentric division of pictorial ›content‹ from ›form‹ – the ›what‹ from the ›how‹: this leads not only to the physical minimisation of the picture in relation to the text (why look at the Susa reliefs or sarcophagus emblems if Moede and Barrata can tell us what's to be seen), but also some misunderstandings along the way (for example, Liverani's labelling of the Homeric cup). Composition, mode, appearance, frame, style: these sorts of formal questions hardly get a look-in. Pictures are straight-jacked into the talking terms of texts.

Needless to say, things could have been very different. Indeed, given Roman art's playful stylistic games with ›realistic‹ illusion and artistic facture, perhaps most conspicuous about this book is its point-blank refusal to think about issues of stylistic replication, make-believe or simulation. Dissent here by no means tokens disapproval; the length of this review alone indicates the volume's academic importance. In the final analysis, though, the challenge remains to break free from the assumptions of our own scholarly ›Lebenswelt‹: to think more, and more self-reflexively, about Bilder as Bilder – both in the modern world, and indeed in the ancient.

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