

J. J. POLLITT and SUSAN B. MATHESON, *OLD AGE IN GREEK AND ROMAN ART*. New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 2022. Pp. 295; illus. ISBN 9780300266566. £50.00/\$65.00.

This is a lavishly illustrated book with 97 figures in the text and at the end a catalogue of 186 items, all with an illustration. Thus, a veritable treasure trove for the comprehension of the representation of age and ageing, with items drawn from museum collections from across the world and from private collections.

The book takes its starting point from the literary sources for old age, that bifurcate into a catastrophic old age and an old age of liberation (ch. 1); this leads into ch. 2 and the discussion of pictorial signs of old age, from which the reader moves to chapters on veneration (ch. 3), wisdom (ch. 4) and the ‘aged sage’ (ch. 5). There is a change of tack in ch. 6, looking at ambiguous images, and this is followed by a chapter on derision of the elderly, before a final chapter on the elderly in myth.

How the elderly are identified is discussed in ch. 2 with M. seeing the elderly identified by white hair — particularly in Greek vases: grey hair; beards, thinning or stippled hair; baldness; beards; wrinkles; sagging flesh and emaciation/prominent tendons/varicose veins; toothlessness; blindness; stooped posture; reduced scale and clothing/attributes — for example, walking sticks.

Methodologically, this seems at first sight okay, but if we look beyond the field of Classical Art, we find a much more sophisticated set of methods being applied to images of people ageing. The study of self-portraits in early modern Europe has utilised recent knowledge derived from the study of the ageing face within plastic and reconstructive surgery (see, for example, Abastado *et al.*, *Ageing and Society* 25 (2005), 147–58). When applied to works by artists such as Rembrandt, who repeatedly painted his self-portrait and dated his work, there is a means for comprehending how age is represented. Rembrandt died at the age of sixty-three, an age if transposed to the discussion of the elderly in antiquity that is certainly in the category of old age — over sixty years. Moreover, many of the characteristics that M. applies can appear at an earlier age than sixty — the assumed start of old age in most life-course schemas from the ancient world. Interestingly, signs of ageing appear much earlier than sixty years and, in the case of Rembrandt’s face, as early as thirty-five years, with the period from forty-five to fifty years associated with major facial ageing. This information may allow us to consider the artistic representation of age to be associated with those over the age of forty-five rather than over the age of sixty. This coincides with the age division in Rome between *juniores* and *seniores* (Livy 1.43; Varro *ap* Censorinus 14). Thus, the images of old age cover not just the *senex* over the age of sixty, but also the *senior* over the age of forty-six.

If we are to accept that images that show M.’s characteristics of ageing could be both *seniores* and *senes*, we encounter an immediate difficulty in reading across from the visual sources to the texts that refer exclusively to *senes* over the age of sixty. This is implicit in any case, because the book includes Marcus Aurelius as an example of an emperor in old age, but he died prior to his sixtieth birthday. Yet this is resisted; he is described in the text as prematurely ageing (98–9). As in the example of Rembrandt, there are images of Marcus Aurelius over a period of decades — thus presenting an opportunity for more nuanced analysis of the ageing face in antiquity. It is also notable that some of M.’s categories of ageing overlap with those of disability (e.g. blindness) — in some ways age and ageing are debilitating. Thus, when we select imagery of old age, we are selecting against a perfectly formed body without any attributes of ageing. Yet in the book some images, such as figure 27, a funerary relief of five family members, includes a figure with a prominent naso-genial fold, who is identified as the son and grandson of the other four figures who do appear to be older. These identifications are assumptions — these five figures could equally be adults associated in non-familial ways. On another funerary group, figure 26, the relief for Lucius Vibius, Vecilia Helia and their son Lucius Vibius Felicio Felix, M. comments ‘Both [adults] look older than one would expect of parents of a young boy’, going on to add ‘but the boy may have died years before the relief was created’ (61). Our expectations of how old a person may appear are quite subjective, and harder lives lead to the more rapid appearance of the facial features of ageing. It is clear, even within the examples in this book, that ageing was placed into representations of people by artists in antiquity, well before they were old (*senes*), and the characteristics in images identified in this book for the elderly and old age could represent persons at a much earlier age. There would appear to be a misfit between this visual evidence of ageing and the representation of old age focused on Cato the Elder, living to the age of eighty-five, or Seneca the Younger, living into

his sixties, discussed at the start of the book as a means of scene-setting for the discussion of the many examples of ageing faces and bodies assembled in this book.

Putting these methodological issues to one side, this is a truly beautiful book with a huge variety of images; students now have a starting point to begin the work to understand how ageing was represented — so long as we acknowledge that the visual signals of what we call old age can occur far earlier than the age of sixty.

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THOMAS SCHÄFER, *DER RELIEFZYKLUS MEDINACELI: VON ACTIUM BIS NERO. ZEITGESCHICHTE UND SELBSTVERSTÄNDNIS IM PRINCIPAT DES KAISERS CLAUDIUS* (Tübinger Archäologische Forschungen 37). Rahden/Westf.: Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH, 2022. Pp. xvi + 390, illus., plates. ISBN 9783896468680. €69.80.

Ever since the 2013/14 exhibitions in Rome and Paris at the 2000th anniversary of Augustus' death displayed together a relief cycle showing a sea battle, a triumph and a circus procession, scholars have awaited Thomas Schäfer's final publication of the sculptures. S. has been working on the reliefs since the 1980s. It is thanks to his dedicated research that the twelve sculptured slabs, stemming from collections in Seville, Córdoba and Budapest, are today perceived as belonging to the same Julio-Claudian monument.

The much-expected publication is massive. Weighing 2.5 kg, it covers almost 400 pages of double-columned text, followed by 120 pages of plates. The first chapter tells the intriguing history of the reliefs from sometime between 1558 and 1571, when the Spanish Viceroy of Naples purchased the slabs and shipped them to Seville, via their later disunion and through modern research. S. also discusses possible sites of ancient origin (in Campania and Rome), suggesting either Avellino, Nola (site of the death of Augustus), Puteoli or Misenum, preferring one of the latter two.

Ch. 2 consists of a technical catalogue, in which S. helpfully provides measures, state of preservation and former restorations of each slab. Hereafter follow three chapters which analyse the friezes that, according to S.'s reconstruction, once adorned three walls of a Roman monument, presumably a temple or an altar. Ch. 6 forms rather a digression; here, S. sets the sea battle scene in a (to me) not fully convincing context of the rowing games that Aeneas held for his father Anchises in book five of the *Aeneid*. Ch. 7 presents an important analysis of the two types of wagons preserved on the frieze, a triumphal chariot and a *tensa*, intended for circus processions. Finally, ch. 8 discusses the dating of the frieze. After a summary follow an extensive bibliography, various indices and finally a very valuable, rich catalogue of plates, of the slabs and of visual comparanda.

The order of the slabs, as already set up by S. for the exhibitions, has generally been met with acceptance by scholars. As he shows (ch. 3), the presence on the so-called Frieze A of Apollo seated with a cithara watching a sea battle makes the identification with Actium highly likely. Further, a figurehead on one of the prows shows a centaur (restored, but known from eighteenth-century drawings), which Propertius attributes to Antony's fleet. Also, the soldiers on both fleets carry identical armour, revealing a civil war battle, indeed an exceptional motif in Roman art.

The remains of Frieze B (ch. 4) shows a triumphator in his *currus* and, on other slabs, various processional participants such as musicians and lictors. The original face of the triumphator is lost, but as his chariot follows the sea battle at Actium, most scholars, including S. himself in an earlier publication, have interpreted this frieze as depicting Octavian's triumph(s) in 29 B.C. Here, however, S. prefers Claudius, and reads the depicted event as the Emperor's British triumph performed in A.D. 44. S.'s idea is that the Actium slabs rehabilitate Claudius' grandfather Antony by showing him as an equal to Octavian, while simultaneously celebrating both Octavian/Augustus' victory and Claudius' own crossing of the sea in the invasion of Britain.