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SERIE II HISTORIA ANTIGUA  
REVISTA DE LA FACULTAD DE GEOGRAFÍA E HISTORIA

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## RESEÑAS



MARCO SIMÓN, FRANCISCO, PINA POLO, FRANCISCO y REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, JOSÉ (eds). *Autorretratos. La creación de la imagen personal en la antigüedad*. 2016. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona Edicions. 260 pp., ISBN: 978-84-475-4067-9.

Rubén Montoya González<sup>1</sup>

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The volume *Autorretratos. La creación de la imagen personal en la Antigüedad* constitutes the proceedings of the colloquium held at the University of Saragossa (Spain) the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of June of 2015 under the same title. It brings together 14 contributions from different scholars and successfully fulfils the aim of analysing classical sources and epigraphy to further investigate the creation of group/personal self-portraits in antiquity. Papers mainly focus on socially relevant characters/social groups from the Classical World to Late Antiquity and, in some cases, the discourse is based on iconographic analyses of group of people (pages 159-174). This book represents the increasing scholarly interest in the last two decades in the Spanish-speaking world –as evidenced by Spanish-language publications in aspects related to representation–, in self-representation and self-portraits in classical sources, epigraphy and iconography. It also contributes to such scholarship by providing a comprehensive, critically informed discourse covering a diverse selection of case studies.

The self-portrait of the Spanish painter Diego Velázquez from *Las Meninas* or *La Familia de Felipe IV*, chosen as cover illustration of the book, catches the attention of the reader from the very beginning. Considering the theme of the volume, an illustration of a Greek/Roman portrait or other type of evidence related to the main topic would have been more apt. The monograph begins with a short preface about the nature of the work, accompanied by a brief description of each chapter open the book. Such an introduction would have further benefited from a foreword on the modern notion of ‘self’, ‘portrait’ and ‘self-portrait’, and its relation to ancient conceptualisations (see, e.g.: Gill 2006; Sorabji 2006), as Charles Guittard briefly mentions at the beginning of his paper (page 60).

The first contribution (pages 13-40), by Laura Sancho, focuses on the so-called ‘Apology for Theramenes’, from Book II of Xenophon’s *Hellenica*. It investigates the different portraits of Theramenes presented in the existing scholarship, in comparison with external information; it also aims to investigate whether or not his self-defence affected the way his image was subsequently constructed. She starts by alluding to modern adscription of the term ‘biographic illusion’ to ancient politics. Although in some cases her view is not clear within the paper (e.g. page 27), she consistent and critically analyses ancient textual sources and approaches Theramenes as a ‘traitor’, ‘cothurnus’ and ‘moderate’. Her critiques on modern approaches to apology are worth noting (e.g. pages 19, 39-40), especially those on Theramenes as a ‘moderate’ and how modern interpretations have shaped his image (page 40).

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From the second chapter onwards, papers are chronologically dedicated to the ancient Rome. The first, by Borja Díaz, focuses on the aristocratic construction of a public image in the Republic through inscriptions and spoils of war. Though his contribution initially depends mainly upon epigraphic evidence, Díaz consistently states its relationship with other iconographic or topographic elements (page 42). In some cases his discourse appears to be dependent upon textual sources (e.g. page 44), although it is supported by epigraphic and associated archaeological evidence. Excellent recompilations of examples are presented for evidence dating after the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, from both Rome and the provinces; the latter are combined with focuses on individual characters (page 54). Although sometimes it is difficult to follow author's opinion due to the vast quantity of examples presented, his view appears to be clear at the end of the paper. Díaz comments on the extent to which textual sources can provide further information on the perception of such inscriptions by benefactors and audience are worth noting (page 55).

Charles Guittard's paper focuses on the function of rhetoric, speeches and 'self-portraits' in Livy's *Ab Vrbe Condita*. His paper is preceded by thorough comments on the modern notion of 'portraits' and 'self-portraits', as well as the relationship between ancient rhetoric, political history and speeches, focusing on specific examples. Notes on types of portraits in Livy and mechanisms utilised to construct them are worth noting (e.g. pages 64-65).

The following three papers share the figure of Cicero as a nexus character. Accurate notes on Latin oratory and rhetoric forms, presented by Henriette Van der Blom in her paper, would have benefited the introduction of this succession of studies (page 87). By mainly focusing on the *edictum provinciale*, Alejandro Díaz Fernández aims to trace the way members of the elite transmitted their personal image as the result of their role as provincial governors; in order to do that, he draws his discourse upon the examples of Cicero in Sicily and Quintus Mucius Scaevola in Asia. Though his study is mainly based on selected textual sources, the author consistently admits their limitations (page 69), especially for the case of Cicero (page 74).

Henriette Van der Blom focuses on the reception of Cicero's orational self-portrait from 43 BC–AD 95. Her discourse appears clearly structured and from the beginning she justifies the focus of her paper, thematic and chronologically (pages 87-88). Furthermore, she successfully demonstrates the extent to which Cicero's self-portrait influenced his posthumous reception through the circulation of his speeches, providing very useful comments on the wider context of its reception (pages 98-99).

Further thorough comments on Cicero's self-portrait through his writing are made by Francisco Pina Polo. His paper complements the previous ones, unveiling other aspects of Cicero's character and even delving into psychological aspects. Although the author presents Paul Briot's notes on the psychology of Cicero, and the risks implied in such study, as well as debate around it are clearly mentioned (page 105). His paper concludes by stating the importance of Cicero's influence in the creation of his own image, but interestingly questioning whether or not he was completely successful. Finally, the paper presents two different images of Cicero which have coexisted in historiography from antiquity to the present (page 114).

The creation of a new personal image through the use of names from the late Roman Republic to Principate is investigated by Francisco Beltrán Lloris. Although his paper presents some bias when comparing ancient portraiture with modern selfies (e.g. pages 115-6), he accurately traces the diachronic development of the use of names to consolidate or create new personal images. This paper constitutes a general overview which focuses on specific characters (page 120 ff.) –he presents the use of such names as political strategy in relation to the context of changes experienced in Rome at that time, finishing with Augustus and the consolidation of his name.

The use of specific events as way of creating a self-portrait is approached by Michael Peachin, who focuses on Tiberius in Rhodes. Regardless of Tiberius' exilic status, the author accurately analyses the way Tiberius used the stay on the island as way of self-representation, strongly interacting with the reader when presenting the image of the character (page 142).

The following paper, by Elena Muñiz Grijalvo, focuses on Herodes Atticus and his life and career as self-portrait. She thoroughly analyses Herodes' life events, mainly based on textual sources, and, interestingly, concluding on the way in which he distanced himself from traditional aristocratic representation and decided to present his image as closer to those of Hadrian (page 156). Notes outlined on how local euergetism was used to transmit specific personal images serve to get an overview of the elite close to Herodes. Her comments on how imperial elements were adapted at a local level to create specific forms of representation are worth noting (e.g. the case of Herodes Atticus and Polydeukion [page 158]).

Mercedes Oria's contribution investigates the creation of the social image of mothers and midwives. Although her approach is mainly iconographic, there is a complete lack of images throughout the text, despite continuous references to them (e.g. pages 166-168). In spite of this, the author accurately presents a chronological and thematic discourse on midwives, birth and motherhood; analysis of official iconography and other social groups; as well as the inclusion of iconographic models from both Rome itself and the provinces are worth noting (e.g. examples from Hispania [page. 167]). This allows Oria to establish successful conclusions on the provincial evidence in relation to previous cultural substrata (page 170).

The Western Roman Empire, especially Hispania, is covered in the following two papers. The first one, by the Juan Manuel Abascal, focuses on urban epigraphy and accurately investigates the elites' self-representation. It constitutes a general overview on the topic and should be treated as such, providing updated examples related to wider archaeological contexts (page 178). His paper is organised according to the epigraphic ways of representing portraits: those made independently (pages 178-180), and those commissioned by the person depicted (pages 180-185).

Antonio F. Caballos' paper focuses on the Baetica province (*Hispania*), analyses social changes experienced by local communities in the region during the Late Roman Republic and the beginning of the Principate. First, he bases his discourse on the *Bellum Hispaniense*, and afterwards investigates a specific type of epigraphy from the territory in order to further study the new local elite self-representation stemming from the adoption of imperial models (pages 187-192).

On one hand, although Caballos underlines the social and ethnic heterogeneity of Hispania Ulterior after the Romans arrived to the Iberian Peninsula (page 193), his discourse fall into the traditional paradigm of Romanisation. By using terms such as ‘acculturation’ (page 193) or ‘indoctrination’ (page 196) and affirming that the new order excluded other expressive formula (page 194), the complexity of such reality appears minimised (see, e.g., Revell 2009). On other hand, the author analyses a group of epigraphs very well, outlining further insights into the Baetican elite (page 196) concludes the paper by outlining interesting aspects of these elites at both individual and collective levels.

The final two contributions are dedicated to the Late Antique period. Francisco Marco masterfully analyses the monument of Praetextatus and how different epigraphs on it allow the tracing different portraits of the character (pages 215, 225), including references to the wider context of the Roman religion at that time. Finally, Rosa Sanz studies the self-portrait of Flavius Honorius Augustus in the literary sources. She presents the two extant portraits of Honorius, taking into account those from both parts of the Empire, exhaustively analysing the evidence while cautiously accepting limitations and subjectivity of written sources (page 228). Her analysis is complemented by continuous references to relevant historical figures and authors up to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.

My main criticism with this volume concerns the lack of a bibliography. Although the papers are well-referenced with footnotes and more detailed references, no unified style was applied to the volume and a complete bibliography is not included at the end of each contribution, nor at the end of the book. In addition, there is a lack of images within the book (see comments above), starting with the cover illustration; Caballo’s and Marco’s papers constitute an exception. Occasionally, spelling typos are also evident (e.g. pages 24, 218 and 224). At the end of the volume, an index of classical sources, inscriptions, characters, places and subjects included in the work is presented (pages 245-256).

Above all, this book presents selection of different papers on the creation of ‘portraits’ and ‘self-portraits’ in antiquity and should be treated as such. Given the diversity of contributions included, the editors’ work to put together this variety of papers under the same topic must be acknowledged, as the volume is well-structured. Therefore, the aim of the book is fulfilled and it may be regarded as a successful in providing a copious amount of good quality –and, in some cases, novel– material, as well as a comprehensive, critically informed discourse.

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### Artículos · Articles

- 13 MARCO ALVIZ FERNÁNDEZ  
De Gibbon a Riegl. Una nota sobre los precedentes historiográficos del «descubrimiento» de la Antigüedad Tardía / From Gibbon to Riegl. A Note on the Historiographical Precedents of the «Discovering» of Late Antiquity
- 31 ALEJANDRO CADENAS GONZÁLEZ  
El culto imperial y la divinidad del emperador en la Antigüedad Tardía, dos conceptos a debate / The Imperial Cult and the Divinity of the Emperor in Late Antiquity: Two Concepts in Discussion
- 45 ISRAEL CAMPOS MÉNDEZ  
Palabras persas en el mitraísmo: la construcción de una imagen oriental del culto mitraico / Persian Words in Mithraism: The Construction of an Oriental Image of Mithraic Cult
- 65 BRUNO P. CARCEDO DE ANDRÉS & GERARDO MARTÍNEZ DÍEZ  
Nuevas estelas romanas en Lara de los Infantes (Burgos) / New Roman Steles in Lara de los Infantes (Burgos)
- 83 GREGORIO CARRASCO SERRANO  
Poder y corruptelas en Amiano Marcelino / Power and Corruption in Ammianus Marcellinus
- 97 MARÍA DEL MAR CASTRO GARCÍA  
Modelos de abastecimiento urbano de aguas en la Bética romana: las cisternas / Urban Water Supply Models in Roman *Baetica*: The Cisterns
- 125 MARINA DÍAZ BOURGEAL  
*Los Césares*. Los modelos históricos de Juliano / *The Caesars*. The Historic Models of Julian
- 143 JORGE GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ & JOSÉ LUIS CÓRDOBA DE LA CRUZ  
En torno al *Serapeum* de Cartago / About the *Serapeum* of Carthage
- 173 JAVIER DEL HOYO & MARIANO RODRÍGUEZ CEBALLOS  
*Occis{s}a a servo*. Asesinato en el corazón de Clunia. Inscripciones latinas en Huerta de Rey (Burgos) / *Occis{s}a a servo*. Murder in the Center of Clunia. Latin Inscriptions in Huerta de Rey (Burgos)
- 183 JUAN ANTONIO JIMÉNEZ SÁNCHEZ & PERE MAYMÓ I CAPDEVILA  
La magia en la Galia merovingia / Magic in Merovingian Gaul
- 205 GUILLERMO S. KURTZ SCHAEFER & JOSÉ LUIS RAMÍREZ SÁDABA  
La Inscripción de Alange (Badajoz) y el culto a San Cristóbal en la Hispania Tardoantigua / An Inscription from Alange and the Cult of Saint Christopher in Late Antiquity Hispania

- 231 ARIANNA MAGNOLO  
Nonno e Arato: alcune proposte / Nonno y Arato: algunas propuestas / Nonnus and Aratus: Some Proposals
- 255 MIREIA MOVELLÁN LUIS  
La leyenda troyana en la Antigüedad Tardía. Una aproximación a los poemas de Dióscoro de Afrodito / The Trojan Legend in Late Antiquity. An Approach to the Poetry of Dioscorus of Aphroditos
- 271 JOSÉ ORTIZ CÓRDOBA  
Colonización y emigración en el Alto Guadalquivir (siglos I a.C.- II d.C.) / Colonization and Emigration in the Alto Guadalquivir (Centuries I BC - II AC)
- 299 M<sup>a</sup> DEL MAR ROYO MARTÍNEZ  
Propaganda dinástica, militar y religiosa en las monedas de Julia Domna / Dynastic, Military and Religious Propaganda in the Coins of Julia Domna
- 323 JULIO CÉSAR RUIZ RODRÍGUEZ  
El culto a Minerva en Tarraco / The Cult to Minerva in Tarraco
- 351 GUSTAVO ALBERTO VIVAS GARCÍA  
Una fallida traducción al castellano de la *Revolución Romana* en la década de 1960. La intrahistoria de un episodio desconocido / A Failed Translation into Spanish of the *Roman Revolution* in the 1960's. The Intrahistory of an Unknown Episode

### Reseñas · Book Review

- 369 SANTOS YANGUAS, Narciso: *Militares galaicos en el ejército romano* (PILAR FERNÁNDEZ URIEL)
- 371 CANO CUENCA, Jorge: *El legado de Asclepio. Medicina hipocrática y corrientes fisiológicas en la Grecia Antigua* (EULALIA GARCÍA NOS)
- 373 SALCEDO GARCÉS Fabiola: *Tuscolana Marmora. Escultura clásica en el antiguo Tuscolano* (JORGE GARCÍA SÁNCHEZ)
- 379 OLLER GUZMÁN, Joan: *El territorio y poblamiento de la Layetania Interior en época antigua (ss. IV a.C. - I d.C.)* (ANTONIO LÓPEZ GARCÍA)
- 383 MARCO SIMÓN, Francisco & PINA POLO, Francisco & REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ, JOSÉ (eds): *Autorretratos. La creación de la imagen personal en la antigüedad* (RUBÉN MONTROYA GONZÁLEZ)
- 387 LÓPEZ MONTEAGUDO, Guadalupe: *Los mosaicos de la Plaza de La Encarnación. Roma en Sevilla* (MARIA PILAR SAN NICOLÁS PEDRAZ)
- 389 CUMONT, Franz: *Los misterios de Mithras y doce estudios más sobre la religión del Dios Invicto en el Imperio Romano* (JOSÉ IGNACIO SÁNCHEZ SÁNCHEZ)