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Book Review: *The Lupa Romana: An Antique Monument Falls from Her Pedestal*

Dale Kinney
Bryn Mawr College, dkinney@brynmawr.edu

Reviews

This not quite self-explanatory volume is an intervention in the clamorous debate over the date of the bronze statue of a she-wolf preserved since 1471 in the Capitoline Museums in Rome, hence known as the *Lupa Capitolina* (Capitoline Wolf). The statue is only one version of the iconography of the *Lupa Romana,* the wolf who nursed Romulus and Remus, but it is by far the best known. Long considered a triumph of Etruscan bronze casting, the statue had been consensually dated since the mid-twentieth century to around 480–70 BCE. Shockingly, in 2006 a conservator of metals, Anna Maria Carruba, declared that on technical grounds the Etruscan dating cannot be correct and that the Wolf must be, of all things, medieval. Her finding discomfited medievalists and archaeologists alike, not to mention the curators of the Capitoline Museums, where the Wolf has its own room (the "Sala della Lupa") and is still displayed as "a bronze masterpiece dating back to the beginning of the V century BC."

The debate turns on the interpretation of technical and physical information obtained when the *Lupa Capitolina* was conserved in 1997–2000. A miniature video camera inserted through a hole in the belly revealed the means of its casting. Metallurgic and mineralogical analyses identified the sources of components of the bronze and of the sand-silt-clay casting core. Radiocarbon and thermoluminescence analyses of elements in the core provided dates. As so often with such technical investigations, many of the results were ambiguous, anomalous, or incompatible. The only certainties seem to be the source of the copper ore used for the bronze (Sardinia), the source of the core materials (the Tiber valley between Orvieto and Rome), and the method of casting. The *Lupa Capitolina* was cast in one piece by the direct lost-wax process. In this process, a roughly modeled core was covered by layers of wax in which the sculptor created the surface of the final sculpture. The model was packed in earth with openings for venting and introducing the metal, and it was then fired to melt out the wax. Molten bronze was poured in to replace the wax.

Initially, the results of the material analyses were taken to confirm the statue's origin in Veii and the date 480–70 BCE. This is how they were presented in the catalog that accompanied the Wolf's reintroduction to the public (Claudio Parisi Presicce, *La Lupa Capitolina,* 2000). Edilberto Formigli, one of the authors of the book under review and himself an expert on ancient bronze and other metalwork, claims to have been surprised at this conclusion: "when I read the volume . . . I immediately realized that this could not be an Etruscan large-scale bronze sculpture" (27). At a conference in 2003 he proposed that the statue was medieval, and he was preparing a publication on the subject when Carruba's book appeared (*La Lupa Capitolina: Un bronzo medievale,* 2006). Abandoning his own publication, he became one of her principal defenders.

To some extent the ensuing debate pits vested interests against upstarts, soft scientists against hard ones, and traditional visual methods of analysis (style) against data produced by machines. But at its heart is a genuine conundrum: there is something (or perhaps equally little) to be said for both sides. Carruba's case rests on the fact that the Wolf was cast in one piece and her conviction that one-piece casting was a postantique method

necessitated by the loss of the refined welding techniques that enabled ancient bronze sculptors to cast parts of their statues separately and then invisibly weld them together. She insists (and Formigli emphatically agrees) that one-piece casting of works on the scale of the Wolf simply was not done in antiquity, and she attributes the innovation to bell founders of the early Middle Ages. Since written sources seem to place the Wolf at the Lateran Palace by the tenth century, Carruba proposed a Carolingian date for its manufacture, but her technical and stylistic *comparanda* are much later, ranging from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. On the other hand, the Sardinian mine that produced the copper ore is known to have been exploited in the pre-imperial period but not in the Middle Ages. Moreover, while many medieval bronze statues are made of recycled metal, the Wolf is not, and the percentage of tin and lead in its composition (9.2 percent and 5 percent respectively) is comparable to Etruscan bronzes, less so to medieval ones.

In 2007 a conference at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" summoned a spectrum of experts, including Carruba and Formigli, to "pronounce themselves" on the matter of the Wolf. To judge from the published reports, Carruba's position garnered little support (Gilda Bartoloni, ed., *La Lupa Capitolina: Nuove prospettive di studio* [2010]). *Die römische Wölfin* responds to this publication as if things had gone the other way: "It struck like a bolt from the blue when the restoration of the Lupa Capitolina . . . yielded with absolute certainty a new dating for this . . . highly symbolic bronze statue" (11). The book comprises three essays, by Formigli and two emeritus professors at the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, the noted numismatist Maria Radnoti-Alföldi and the historian Johannes Fried. Formigli's contribution is a translation of the paper he presented at the 2007 conference, in which he insists that bronze technologies are just as period-specific as the styles relied on by art historians, and he justifies the redating of the *Lupa Capitolina* by pointing to other bronze statues once considered ancient that are now commonly accepted, on technological grounds, as works of the Renaissance. Johannes Fried reviews the written evidence for the medieval history of the *Lupa Capitolina* and proposes a time and rationale for its manufacture. He dismisses the tenth-century references to a place called "ad lupam" *ad Lateranis* or *in palatio Lateranensi* ("These sources cannot possibly apply to the future Capitolina, which, according to the most recent studies, was not created until between 900 and 1250," 143); thus the terminus ante quem would be circa 1230, when the statue was recorded by Magister Gregorius in the *porticus* in front of the pope's "winter palace." Despite these persistent connections to the Lateran, Fried denies that the Wolf had any symbolic resonance for the papacy and decides that it must have been created for a secular patron, settling on the counts of Tusculum because of their professed lineage from antiquity. Noting that Peter the Deacon of Montecassino claimed to belong to this family, Fried proposes that the statue was made at Montecassino around the middle of the twelfth century. This "thesis . . . based on careful conjecture" (159) is in fact pure fabrication, worthy of Peter himself.

It is important to Fried's thesis that the *Lupa Capitolina* is not the *Lupa Romana,* the wolf "with shapely neck bent back" to caress the suckling boys (*Aeneid* 8.630–34, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough), but a fiercely erect, fearsome "bestia sanza pace" (Dante, *Inferno* 1.58). The importance of this distinction is the reason for including Radnoti-Alföldi's essay, "The Fate of the *Lupa Romana,*" which also gives the book its title. "*Stürzt von seinem Sockel*" is not a metaphor for the scholarly displacement of the *Lupa Capitolina* but the literal fate of the *Lupa Romana,* according to Radnoti-Alföldi, who argues that it was pulled from its pedestal in the Hippodrome in Constantinople by marauding crusaders in 1204 and melted down. She traces the history of this other bronze she-wolf from its erection in Rome around 300 BCE through late antiquity and hypothesizes that it left Rome as part of the booty taken by the Vandals in 455. The statue would have gone to Constantinople with the spoils of Belisarius's conquest of Carthage in 533, there to suffer

a vandalic demise in 1204. Much of this reconstructed history is no less speculative than the one created for the *Lupa Capitolina* by Fried, but it at least conforms to known historical events.

Each of the three essays is printed first in German and then in English translation. The translations, two of which are credited to Carola Murray-Seegert, are generally accurate, though there are occasional mistakes ("455," page 99 for "445," page 67), omissions, and many infelicities due to the translator's unfamiliarity with proper nouns (for example, "Aenead," "Belisar," "Gregor VII," "Innocence III") and art-historical terminology ("arrangement" for *Gestaltung,* "equipment" for *Ausstattung,* "stage-managed" for *inszenierten*). The footnotes are translated, but the infuriating bibliographic abbreviations beloved of archaeologists (*AA, RA, RCC, RRC, RN*) are not expanded. The illustrations are perfectly adequate but nowhere near the quality of those in the Italian publications mentioned above.

The book's stated point of departure, "the absolute historical reality for the she-wolf of Rome . . . supplied by the technological-restoration analysis" (12), has not yet been, and may never be, reached. The question of the *Lupa Capitolina* remains open. It is a significant one for the Middle Ages, especially the Middle Ages in Rome.

DALE KINNEY, Bryn Mawr College (Emerita)

CRISTINA ANDENNA, KLAUS HERBERS, and GERT MELVILLE, eds., *Die Ordnung der Kommunikation und die Kommunikation der Ordnungen,* 1: *Netzwerke: Klöster und Orden im Europa des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts.* (Schriften der Villa Vigoni 1/1.) Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012. Pp. 307; 9 color figures. €56. ISBN: 9783515099295. doi:10.1017/S0038713413002790

The study of communication is one of the fastest growing subfields of medieval history. Marco Mostert's recent book, *A Bibliography of Works on Medieval Communication* (2012), presents an inventory of 6,843 scholarly works on this topic, most of which were written in the past two decades. German historians have been particularly industrious and influential in this field of inquiry, particularly those involved in the *Sonderforschungsbereiche* (collaborative research units) directed by Gerd Althoff in Münster. The volume under review demonstrates clearly the relevance of "communication studies" to medieval monastic history. It presents fifteen papers in English, French, German, and Italian on the broad topic of networks of communication within and between individual monastic houses and far-reaching religious orders in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. Unfortunately, the collection opens with a false start, an article on the concepts of center and periphery in light of the work of the late German sociologist Niklas Luhmann. The relevance of this contribution is unclear since, with few exceptions, none of the papers in the volume utilize these categories or invoke Luhmann in any meaningful way.

The essays that follow fall under four overlapping thematic headings. In the first section, "Inhalte der Kommunikation" (The Content [or Substance] of Communication), three papers examine the different kinds of information that circulated between abbeys and religious orders, from manuals of spiritual instruction to charters and other sources for monastic economic activity, and the communication structures along which this information traveled (general chapter meetings, visitations, letters, etc.). The second section, "Einrichtungen der Kommunikation" (Communication Management), continues this theme with three papers on the influence of the organizational structure of the Cistercian order on the mendicants in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the use of monastic archives both as a means of communication between orders and as a medium of self-representation to those outside the cloister, and an examination of the purpose of the