

CONVIVIUM

Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean
Seminarium Kondakovianum, Series Nova



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CONVIVIUM III/1/2016

Exchanges and Interactions in the Arts of Medieval
Europe, Byzantium, and the Mediterranean

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Adrien Palladino, Veronika Trzvníková, Johanna Zacharias

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Editors—Klára Benešová (Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic), Ivan Foletti (Université de Lausanne, Masaryk University, Brno), Herbert L. Kessler (Johns Hopkins University, Masaryk University, Brno), Serena Romano (Université de Lausanne), Elisabetta Scirocco (Bibliotheca Hertziana, Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte)

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Executive editors—Karolina Foletti, Francesco Lovino, Adrien Palladino, Veronika Tvrzníková, Johanna Zacharias

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Open to Change, Faithful to Precepts

Ivan Foletti

As noted in *Convivium's* previous issue, the aim of the editorial with which we begin a new publication cycle is to explain our premise. In this monographic issue, edited by Anna Boreczky and entitled *Classical Heritage and Medieval Innovation: Illustrated Texts from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, an editorial is essential. For the first time in the journal's short history, an issue has been entrusted to a scholar who is not a member of one of *Convivium's* several committees. Such an eventuality was not considered when we founded the periodical. That said, one of *Convivium's* constants has been flexibility.

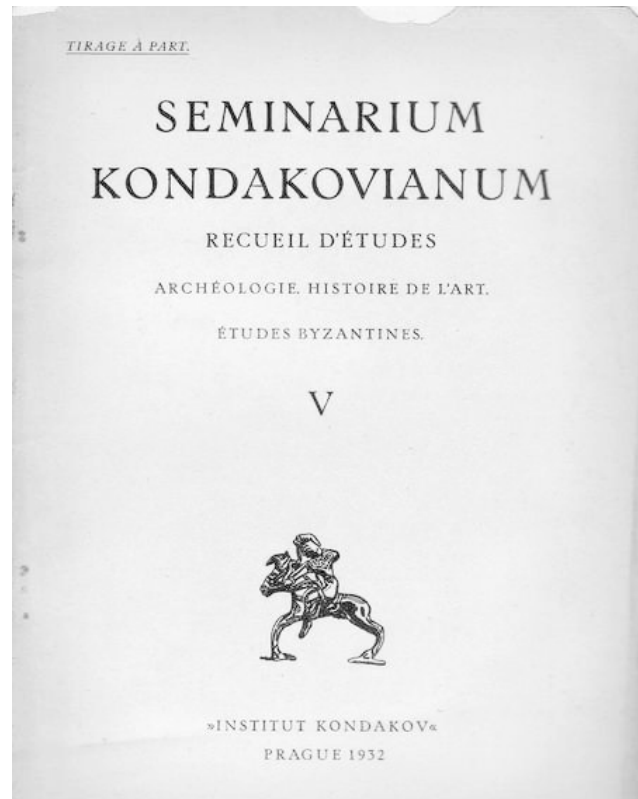
When representatives of National Széchényi Library and the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, which organized an international conference, "Facing and Forming the Tradition: Illustrated Texts on the Way from Late Antiquity until the Romanesque Time", came to us with a proposition for *Convivium* to publish the proceedings of the conference, we were happy to accept. Several factors led us to our decision. The first was the high level of the conference itself, in which eminent European and American scholars participated. Second, the conference represented an important moment of reflection after a discovery, in Budapest, of the illustrated *Apollonius Pictus* (OSZK, Cod. Lat. 4.), an object of major importance for the study of medieval manuscript illumination. Finally, the very idea of a conference

open to scholars of the East and the West, mirroring the multicultural reality that is at the root of the *Apollonius Pictus*, corresponds perfectly to one of our journal's key ambitions: to serve as a bridge connecting diverse cultures. For these reasons, Convivium has accepted the papers of the Budapest conference, and the organizer of the conference, Anna Boreczky, has edited this issue. Independent of the curatorial intention, the usual double-blind peer review has been carried out, assuring the scientific quality of the papers. With this choice the redaction wishes to present Convivium not only as a bridge between worlds, but also as a journal open to change.

A second aspect of this issue also deserves special note. In an appendix, entitled "Chronicle", appears the first essay of a series of studies dedicated to our journal's predecessor, the legendary *Seminarium Kondakovianum*. The essay, Francesco Lovino's "Leafing through *Seminarium Kondakovianum*", deals with one of the essential themes in the history of the *Seminarium*: Byzantine manuscripts. This choice of theme is not accidental. In an issue dedicated mostly to the history of the miniature, Lovino's essay implicitly indicates not only the points of contact, but also those of divergence, between the two periodicals. Furthermore, with this essay, we want to stress the attention given to historiography, one of the themes we have set out to develop from the very beginning of Convivium.

1/ Cover page of *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, v

2/ View of the city of Budapest, 1913





3/Nikodim
Kondakov and
his pupils,
Prague 1924





Classical Heritage & Medieval Innovation:

ILLUSTRATED TEXTS FROM LATE ANTIQUITY
TO THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Classical Heritage and Medieval Innovation

Anna Boreczky

The present issue of *Convivium*, entitled *Classical Heritage and Medieval Innovation: Illustrated Texts from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, is based on the proceedings of a symposium held two years ago in Budapest¹. Organized on the initiative of Xavier Barral i Altet, this workshop-like forum followed the publication of the newly rediscovered *Apollonius pictus*. Made in a Benedictine community around the year 1000, this unique manuscript sheds light on the usually underestimated secular part of monastic book-culture and preserves the oldest known illustration cycle of a Late Antique romance. The *Apollonius pictus* motivated four contributors to the present volume to question general concepts regarding the early medieval transmission of the classical, mostly Late Antique heritage, and to investigate Late Antique and medieval narrative strategies, both textual and visual. The in-depth study of the process of selection, preservation, alteration, and transmittal of classical heritage as reflected in illustrated texts called for a comprehensive interdisciplinary discussion. To the delight of the participants of the 2014 conference, *Convivium* has accepted our papers for publication, resulting in a perfect constellation, since there is an essential agreement between our interests and the spirit of the new journal.

The outcome of the intense exchange of ideas is twofold. Taken together, the papers presented here contribute to an understanding of the early medieval presence and reception of the Late Antique heritage. Continuity and/

¹ The symposium organized by Anna Boreczky (National Széchényi Library, Budapest) and Béla Zsolt Szakács (Department of the History of Arts at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Piliscsaba, Hungary) was held on 18th–20th March 2014, under the title “Facing and Forming the Tradition. Illustrated Texts on the Way from Late Antiquity to the Romanesque Time”.

or revival, admiration and/or denial, imitation and/or invention are central questions explored here. On the other hand, the most important conclusion of the study of the transmission of illustrated texts is the insight that no single interpretative model can be applied to all cases. Motifs, compositions, iconographic solutions and complete cycles of narrative illustrations, as well as shorter or longer texts and their later commentaries, might have circulated together or independently from one another throughout the centuries. This fact allowed for countless ways of combining older and younger layers of textual and visual contents in the process of renewal. The basic steps of transmission from selection and preservation of information, through its reconsideration to its perpetuation nevertheless seem to be fairly consistent. Therefore, observations based on the study of early medieval examples might be also relevant, on a more abstract level, from the viewpoint of the practices of modern knowledge-transfer.

The Early Middle Ages are neglected within scholarly literature discussing the medieval reception of classical Antiquity, even though both the Carolingian *renovatio imperii* and the “Macedonian Renaissance” are always considered as eras of classical revival. Our investigations of the transmission of Late Antique illustrated texts in the Early Middle Ages, however, lead to the conclusion that the cultural heritage of the classical reality did not need to be purposefully reanimated. Even if its continuity suffered several interruptions and ambiguous relations, Antiquity remained a living body of knowledge, or, at least, an inevitable point of reference from the fifth–sixth to the eleventh–twelfth centuries. The presence of a different culture’s heritage might have been simultaneously provocative and stimulating. But its survival, with all its eventualities, depended on the active participation of early medieval communities, which, in turn, required a constant reconsideration of its values. Made up of appropriation as much as of rejection, the relationships to the heritage of the past played a role in self-identification, and, over time, contributed to the continuous transformation of medieval culture. The ongoing changes in the process of reception can be clearly seen in the selection of works that were to be retained and in their transformation, that is, in the mechanisms of transmission.

Illustrated texts are especially appropriate for the study of transmission, since they provide insight into more complex processes than the separated investigation of textual or pictorial traditions. Related pictorial and textual contents do not necessarily have to be physically bound to one another. Therefore, this volume is not exclusively based on the study of illustrated codices. Some authors focus on depictions without textual contexts: murals or ivory carvings, the understanding of which, however, required the knowledge of a given text (usually a widespread narrative). Taking note of the complexity of the interrelationships between the textual and the pictorial forms, the preeminent role of orality in the Middle Ages, the wealth of the visual repertoire, and the creative power of the artists, the present papers reveal many different paths of transmission. Among these

the one that fits the traditional interpretative model of codicology, which is built on the assumption of an *Urtext* as well as a possibly later prototype of illustrations, appears to be only one possible option. Similarly, the concept of the unified wanderings of texts and images through a series of codices copied from one another is relevant under certain conditions, while it does not work in other cases. From the understanding of the diversity of the patterns of transmission, it follows that, instead of attempting to establish new rules, these papers raise new questions. What made certain text-image combinations long-lived and why did other, related texts and images come apart and move along different tracks? When was an old text illustrated anew, how were old images reinterpreted and transformed so that they fit new contexts? How were older and newer texts and images compiled into new juxtapositions? These are only some of the puzzles raised in these papers.

In the first article, Herbert L. Kessler sets the tone by revising his own earlier concepts about the making of the Tournian Bibles. Identifying various classical sources from which Carolingian artists compiled their motif repertoire, following the wanderings of given compositions through the Eastern Mediterranean, and analyzing the alterations of meaning classical literary and scientific illustrations went through, he arrives at a new image of a conscious and thoughtful Christian classicization. His conclusions regarding the inventiveness of Carolingian artists resonate with Martin Büchsel's results about Carolingian ivory carvings. Through the close reading of Carolingian works and their possible Late Antique/Early Christian models, Büchsel points out the skillful and freewheeling adaptations of Carolingian artists in the shaping of Christian iconography, using classical motifs and staging Christian figures in classical compositions. In Ádám Bollók's paper, similar phenomena inside of the Byzantine world are put in the historical context of the continuously rising interest in antiquities (a possible consequence of the trauma of iconoclasm). He draws a parallel between the fashion of *all'antica* works of art and the so called "compilation movement", which determined the scholarly activities of the imperial court and the written culture of the "Macedonian Renaissance".

The following three articles focus on the *Apollonius pictus*. Anna Boreczky aims to reveal visual associations that the seemingly archaic "papyrus-style" layout and the visual language of the manuscript evoked in the circle of the Ottonian readers. She argues that the manuscript does not fit into a simplified interpretative model of transmission: it is unlikely that the page-design is the heir of a Late Antique archetype, whilst the images are not necessarily modernized but seem to preserve motifs of fifth–sixth-century illustrations. Xavier Barral i Altet approaches the various representations of buildings in the *Apollonius pictus* (a brothel, a mausoleum, the temple of the Ephesian Diana/Artemis and the city of Tarsus) from the historical perspective of pictorial topoi. Through a wide

panorama of similar depictions, he considers the manuscript as a “missing link” between continuous narratives of classical Antiquity and the visual language of Romanesque art. Finally, exploring the narrative strategies of the romance through a philological analysis, András Németh seeks the logic behind the selection of episodes to be illustrated, and establishes a system which he compares to the scene-divisions of Late Antique plays. The study of secular narratives of Late Antique origin is completed by Giulia Orofino’s presentation of the oldest known illustrated copy of the *Historiae adversus paganos* by Paulus Orosius, a historical text from the early fifth century. Contrary to the drawings of the *Apollonius pictus*, the marginal illustrations of this volume do not reflect Late Antique features, but raise several questions regarding the “first” illustrated edition of a given text and the possibilities of actualizing an old text by means of pictorial commentaries.

In the following two papers, murals from the Pyrenees and Northern medieval Hungary (present-day Slovakia) are analyzed, questioning the role illustrated manuscripts might have played in the transfer of pictorial ideas to eleventh–twelfth-century monumental art. Milagros Guardia follows centuries of iconographic tradition of a fatal episode from the Genesis: the scenes of the fratricide beginning with the double sacrifice, through Cain’s anger, to the extra-biblical burial of Abel. With the help of exegetical literature, she interprets the representations as expressions of anger and regret, linking them with sin and penance. Béla Zsolt Szakács, in turn, focuses on a single monument. Considering the narrative image-cycle depicting scenes from the Infancy of Jesus in a small village-church at Kostolany pod Tribečom, he assesses the question of archaism versus provincialism. He suggests that certain pictorial elements are remote reminiscences of Roman works that have transmitted characteristic features of Late Antique/Early Christian art.

While we aimed at understanding the early medieval reception of the (Late-)Antique heritage from a well-defined perspective – through the investigation of the transmission of illustrated texts – we also intended to introduce less known works of art and cover domains that are not enough represented in modern historiography. Accordingly, this volume comprises – besides wall paintings from medieval Hungary and the *Apollonius pictus* – the first detailed philological and art historical description of a book from the Eastern Mediterranean. This manuscript, the sixth-century Syrian Diyarbakir Gospels, presented by Massimo Bernabò and Grigory Kessel within the context of Early Christian art, is among the few representatives of a cultural heritage which is seriously endangered by contemporary devastations. In the age of a new “iconoclasm”, when monuments of classical Antiquity perish all of a sudden, the eager scholarly interest in the early medieval transmission of Late Antique heritage, which gave rise to this volume, becomes a statement of the active preservation and perpetuation of the past.

