Recarving is easy – when you are not detected

Abstract

It has long been recognised that the majority of the portraits made in Rome and the western part of the Empire during the fourth through sixth centuries AD are recarved from older portraits. This conclusion derives primarily from studies of male portraits, whose facial features have been altered to a greater or lesser degree by the late-antique sculptors. In contrast, recarved female portraits have so far often gone undetected, because their faces have been altered in a more subtle manner or sometimes not at all. Instead, the sculptors focused their efforts on recarving coiffures, which served as individual markers. For the study of female recarved portraits, therefore, the back and profiles are more important than their faces. This observation makes it imperative to photograph female late-antique portraits (and preferably the male ones as well) from all four sides in order to enable scholars and students to see alterations made to their hair. This will allow for a fuller picture of recarving practices to be established.

The point of departure for this paper is an article by Helga von Heintze in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 14 (1971), where the author tried to make a chronology of late-antique female portraiture from the fourth century onwards.¹ In the next issue of the *JbAC* von Heintze was criticised by Elizabeth Rosenbaum and especially by Marianne Bergmann.² The latter pointed out that von Heintze had wrongly dated a number of second-century portraits to the fourth century. One of these portraits was a late Antonine bust of a young girl from Ostia,³ which von Heintze compared to a fourth-century portrait in the Louvre, the so-called Fausta (FIGS. 1-3).⁴ von Heintze’s fourth-century dating of the Ostia portrait, which she repeated in influential and often consulted works such as the Helbig guide and *Propyläen Kunst-...
geschichte,⁵ is clearly wrong, as was remarked by Raissa Calza in her catalogue on the portraits from Ostia.⁶ While von Heintze had seen “the second-century connection” between the portraits, she drew the wrong conclusion. One should rather look for second-century clues in “Fausta,” which was recarved from a portrait of that period. The original “Fausta” portrait is earlier than the one from Ostia, since an early Antonine head served as material. A head published by Klaus Fittschen gives an idea of how the original head must have looked.⁷ Fittschen commented on its resemblance to “Fausta,” without noticing that the latter had been recarved.

Many female portraits of the early Antonine period have a braid which rises from the nape of the neck to join a large “nest” of braids covering the top of the head. A characteristic of the early Antonine “nest” is that it forms neither a wreath nor a bun. It stretches lengthwise, sometimes almost reaching the forehead. This type of coiffure is perfect for being turned into a late-antique Scheitelzopf (crown-braid) hair arrangement. The braid on “Fausta’s” portrait originally covered only a stretch of the head, but the late-antique sculptor has elongated it so that it ends above the forehead as a Scheitelzopf arrangement should do. It does not follow the skull, however, but raises above a braided bun on the top of the head. This is what is left of the original “nest.” It has acquired a new braided pattern enlivened by metal pins, which made Richard Delbrück think of an imperial diadem – hence the name “Fausta.”

Part of the hair of the original portrait was coiled into a thin braid encircling the head. Traces of this braid are still visible, especially on “Fausta’s” right side. The braid has determined a tripartite vertical division of the coiffure, and a trace of the braid is marked by a dent. Between it and the bun the hair has been worked back, forming thin, vertical strokes. The original portrait had little curls escaping from the rest of the hair. They have been retained in the late-antique version. The ears have suffered during the process of reworking, probably because they were partly covered by the hair. The right ear is mutilated, while the left one (now missing) had to be worked separately and attached. Below the eyes the face has been left as it was, as far as I can see. It retains the rounded, childish cheeks and the soft lips. The brows have been thickened by means of chisel strokes, and the eyes have been recarved. This process was not entirely successful, since one eye sits higher than the other (a feature we shall see in other recarved portraits).

I have started with “Fausta,” because it is easy to follow the late-antique sculptor step by step in his recarving of the earlier portrait. However, one may alter a portrait only partially and still make a rather successful fourth-century version out of it. An example from the National Museum of Athens was also included in von Heintze’s article (FIGS. 4-6).⁸ The author believed that this example is a fourth-century portrait which has been influenced by second-century fashions. I, however, think that it is a second-century portrait which has been partly reworked. The hair in front appears to have been left as it was, but further back the original waves have been recarved into thin, vertical strands, as in the case of “Fausta.” To me the face looks untouched, but some might say that the eyes have been altered on account of the deeply drilled pupils. To some scholars it is something of an axiom that such pupils are a sign that the eyes are late-antique, no matter what the rest of the head looks like.

⁵ Helbig IV, 3129; von Heintze 1967.
⁶ Calza 1978, 27.
⁸ von Heintze 1971, 65, 69-70, Gruppe II, 5, Pls. 6 d, 7 a; Bergmann 1972, 224.
Together with the portrait I have just mentioned, von Heintze published another portrait in the National Museum of Athens, originally from the Strathatos collection.\(^9\) The portrait has an early Antonine coiffure, which is unfinished at the back. Still, one can easily recognise the vertical braid, which von Heintze compared to that of “Fausta.” Does this mean that the Strathatos portrait was in the process of being transformed into a fourth-century portrait? Or was it unfinished from the beginning?

This may be difficult to determine, as can be seen from a late Trajanic/early Hadrianic female bust, now in the depots of the Musei Capitolini in Rome (Figs. 7-8).\(^10\) The bust shows several signs which suggest recarving, such as the deformed, blocked-out ears and the blank space left in the coiffure. Is the unfinished state due to a reworking which was not completed, or was the portrait not finished originally? In this case, the second suggestion is correct, since the bust was found \textit{in situ} in a second-century columbarium. Klaus Fittschen and Paul Zanker, who published the portrait in their catalogue, suggested that the bust was a stock piece, and that the blank space served to affix a toupee if the buyer so wished. For this portrait the cheapest version was preferred. The face also gives evidence of tight economy. Only the central part has been finished, while the cheeks and temples were left rough.

The existence of blocked-out portraits on sarcophagi is well known, but such stock pieces are likely to have existed for portraits in the round as well. In the exhibition catalogue \textit{From Caligula to Constantine: Tyranny and Transformation in Roman Portraiture}, Susan B. Matheson presented a female portrait in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.\(^11\) It shows a matronly woman wearing a stiff, leathery coiffure which was popular in the Trajanic period, especially among the women in Trajan’s own family. Three tiers of locks curled with the \textit{calamistrum} and probably waxed, rise diadem-like above the forehead. A number of drill-holes among the locks indicate that the hair originally formed a mass of little curls, which can also be seen at the back of the “diadem.” Such coiffures were popular from the Flavian period into the reign of Hadrian.\(^12\)

Matheson suggested that the portrait originally wore a late Flavian coiffure which was “updated” into a Trajanic one about twenty years later, because the sitter had changed her hairstyle. The notion that female portraits had their hairstyles “updated” as fashions changed is now generally abandoned. The face of this portrait is untouched, moreover, and one may well ask why a woman, who was young during the Flavian period, should have wanted to present herself as the matron she was to become twenty years later. It is more likely that the Boston portrait was a stock piece with blocked-out features and a more or less finished coiffure of little curls. This coiffure was contemporary with the stiff, leathery one which the sitter preferred, but which the workshop did not have. The solution was then to recarve the coiffure. This operation did not only affect the hair above the forehead but also the back of the head, to which a thick coil of braids was added. It was evidently impossible to remove all the small drill holes in front. They must have been filled with wax or stucco, and when the hair was painted, they would have been visible only on close inspection.

\(^9\) von Heintze 1971, 65, 69-70, Gruppe II, 6, pls. 7 b, 8 b; Bergmann 1972, 224.

\(^10\) Inv. no. 4973. Lugli 1919, 323-324, Fig. 18; Jucker 1961, 72-73, St. 10, Pl. 24; Fittschen, Zanker 1983, 55-56, cat. 72, Pls. 90-91.

\(^11\) Matheson 2000, 73, Fig. 3; 216-219, cat. 57 (text: K.M. Dickson).

\(^12\) For this type of coiffure, see especially Buccino 2017.
The Boston portrait is recarved but not re-used since we see it in its first (and only) version as a portrait. I think that the existence of stock pieces may explain certain oddities, notably in portraits which seem to have been recarved shortly after they were completed. In a portrait from the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen, the lower part of the hair in front was added on both sides.\textsuperscript{13} This is clearly not a repair. It may be explained by the existence of a stock piece showing the ears wholly or partly, while the sitter wanted them to be covered.

The portrait in Copenhagen is an example of piecing, while the coiffure of the Boston lady is partly recarved (the front part) and partly pieced (the braids added at the back). Recarving and piecing are sometimes confused, but they are two different techniques. Recarving removes volume from the piece which is being altered, while piecing generally adds volume to it. Occasionally both techniques were used on the same head: the Boston lady, a head in the Museo Nazionale Romano (FIGS. 9-10),\textsuperscript{14} the seated empress Helena in the Musei Capitolini,\textsuperscript{15} and possibly a head in the Museo Torlonia (FIGS. 11-12).\textsuperscript{16} While a recarved portrait aims to alter the identity of the sitter, the reasons for piecing may vary: lack of material, a flaw in the stone, to repair damage inflicted during the carving or later. One could also think of stock pieces being partly altered to conform to the wishes of the buyer.

Since the subject of this article is recarving, I shall not go into the question of piecing but shall draw attention to an interesting article on pieced portraits, published in 2004 by Mark Hirst and Gina Salapata.\textsuperscript{17} They give a list of pieced portraits, and it is hardly fortuitous that they are all female. The coiffure meant so much to a female portrait that its personality could be altered by adding pieces to the hair.

An example is furnished by a portrait in the Louvre, which was apparently altered to transform a late Severan coiffure into something more sumptuous, with masses of little curls descending behind the ears.\textsuperscript{18} This portrait represents Julia Mammea (AD 222–235). But why should the empress’s portrait be updated according to new fashions? Imperial portraits are normally iconic. Faustina Minor changed her hairstyle many times, but every time a new portrait type was made for her.\textsuperscript{19} There is no evidence that her earlier portraits were tampered with in order to update them.

Julia Mammea was murdered together with her son Alexander Severus in AD 235. She was very unpopular, and though she was apparently not subjected to a formal \textit{damnatio memoriae}, there is evidence that her portraits were destroyed or mutilated.\textsuperscript{20} And a portrait which can be destroyed may also be recarved. I believe that Julia Mammea’s portrait was turned into that of her successor, Caecilia Paulina (AD 235-238), through the simple expedient of changing her hairstyle and probably also by repainting her hair in a different colour.

\textsuperscript{13} Inv. No. 791. Poulsen 1974, 116, cat. 109, Pl. CLXXXIII; Johansen 1994-1995, II, 260-261, cat. 108; Matheson 2000, 74, Fig. 5.
\textsuperscript{14} See below, n. 25.
\textsuperscript{15} See below, n. 36.
\textsuperscript{16} See below, n. 26.
\textsuperscript{17} Hirst, Salapata 2004.
\textsuperscript{18} Inv. No. MA 3552. Wiggers, Wegner 1971, 311, Pl. 60 a-b; Fittschen, Zanker 1983, 31, no. 21; Wood 1986, 59, 126; De Kersauson 1996, 424-425, Cat. 196; Varner 2001, 50-51, Fig. 3; Varner 2004, 197-198, 282, 7.27, Fig. 199; Hirst, Salapata 2004, 154-155, no. 5. For portraits with descending curls, see Fittschen, Zanker 1983, cat. 161-163, Pls. 188-191; Wood 1986, Figs. 16, 17, 41; De Kersauson 1996, 432-435, Cat. 200.
\textsuperscript{19} Fittschen 1982.
We generally underestimate the effects of colour when we study the re-use of portraits, but to turn a brunette into a blonde (or vice versa) would in itself have made a considerable difference.

Caecilia Paulina’s portrait is known only through coins, which show her *capite velato*.

She was probably already dead when Maximinus Thrax ascended the throne, and she was made a *diva* in AD 236. Portraits of her in the round are likely to have existed, but it is by no means certain that the coiffure of such a portrait was copied when the Julia Mammea in the Louvre was altered. Those behind the alteration wanted a new empress, and a new coiffure and a new name on the base would probably have sufficed. The portrait did not escape mutilation, however. When Maximinus Thrax was murdered, his portrait and those of his family suffered the same fate as those of the last Severans.

The coiffures of female portraits were sometimes radically changed, as in the case of an originally Severan head from Rome, now in the Musei Capitolini. Most of its hair was removed to be replaced by the late Tetrarchic *Scheitelzopf*, rendered by means of piecing. The Severan face is almost untouched apart from two horizontal furrows on the forehead, which seem to have been incised later. A portrait bust, also in the Musei Capitolini, was fitted with a detachable late Severan wig. The bust itself, on which the head sits unbroken, is datable to the first half of the second century. The wig fits the head so well that most, if not all, of its original hair must have been chiselled off (unfortunately the wig is fastened to the head with plaster, so it cannot be removed). The unusually deep-set eyes appear to have been recarved. Seeing that so much labour has gone into the transformation of the coiffure, it seems odd that the face is practically unaltered, especially since the young woman has very characteristic features. Perhaps she was descended from the second-century woman, whose features were retained to underscore a family resemblance.

In the Museo Nazionale Romano, a portrait head with a Hadrianic turban coiffure had a large piece added on each side to make the coiffure into a fourth-century *Rundflecht* (FIGS. 9-10). The eyes have been recarved. Also, part of the chin and the right cheek were restored in antiquity, probably in connection with the recycling of the portrait. A portrait head in the Museo Torlonia also has the lower part of its *Rundflecht* restored (FIGS. 11-12). Without an autopsy it is impossible to say whether this restoration is modern or ancient, but if it is ancient, one would have another case of a turban coiffure to which a new piece was added. If this head is re-used, as I think, the workmanship is of very high quality. The original hair in front was probably crimped into tight waves as it is now, but the single strands of hair have been reworked to give a stronger contrast between light and shade. The eyes and brows are

---

21 Delbrück 1940, 67, Pl. 1; Felletti Maj 1958, 122, Pl. IX, 31, X, 32.
23 Inv. no. 2689. Helbig IV, 1636; Bergmann 1977, 192, Pls. 55, 4, 56, 4; Fittschen, Zanker 1983, 116, cat. 175, Pl. 204; Matheson 2000, 75-76, Fig. 8 A-B; Hirst, Salapata 2004, 155, no. 15; Prusac 2011, 157, cat. 488, Pls. 141-143, Figs. 154 a-c; LSA 995.
26 Inv. No. 615. Visconti 1885, 412, cat. 615, Pl. 160; Delbrück 1933, 172-173, Pl. 71, Fig. 59; Felletti Maj 1942, 79-80, no. 12; von Sydow 1969, 88-89; von Heintze 1971, 74-75, Gruppe III, 10, Pl. 10d; Calza 1972, 265-267, no. 178, Pl. XCII, 323-324; Meischner 1992, 225, Pl. 88,3; Schade 2003, 188-189, I 28, Pl. 41.1-2; LSA 575.
reworked, but the rest of the face seems more or less unaltered, being of the nondescript, bland beauty, which was popular in Roman female portraiture.

The Torlonia head has often been presented as a portrait of a female member of the imperial family, since it was found in the mausoleum of St. Helena (Tor Pignattara). From the same context comes another female portrait, which is also in the Museo Torlonia (Figs. 13-14). Both are in my opinion recarved. The material for the second Torlonia head was probably a portrait shown capite velato, like the statue of Eubolion’s mother-in-law from Rome and now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek. Her portrait has been recarved but in a less radical manner. The original turban coiffure has been turned into a Rundflecht in front, and some changes have been made to the face. The sculptor of the Torlonia head removed the textiles (an indentation seen in profile may mark the original border between hair and fabric), creating one amorphous mass where the details of a large Rundflecht must have been rendered in paint. In front, the original portrait probably had a series of waves, but the Torlonia sculptor gave his own version where the waves are no longer convex but concave, with sharp ridges between them. The eyes and brows were remodelled, but the rest of the face may have been left more or less untouched.

I believe that both of the Torlonia heads were recarved in the Constantinian period. Wilhelm von Sydow, Jutta Meischner, and Kathrin Schade have dated the younger Torlonia woman to the late fourth century; however, it may be that the difference between the faces is due not to style but to the different ages of the original sitters. In one case we have a woman whose face has been modelled to show a certain age, in the other case a young woman with a smooth face and nondescript features, a recurrent ideal in Roman portrait sculpture. If the two Torlonia heads are recarved, they are masterpieces. Their sculptors treated the original portrait heads as if they were blocked-out pieces, on which they could work freely. The sculptor of a head in New York also treated the original as a blocked-out piece (Figs. 15-17). It must have had a second-century turban coiffure, out of which the late-antique craftsman created a large Rundflecht, leaving no trace of the original surface. In order to keep as much material as possible for the hair, he diminished the face. The head is therefore under life-size, the face being narrow in relation to the neck, which seems to have been retained in its original state.

Other sculptors were more timid and followed the structure of the original head slavishly, limiting themselves to just altering the surface. A good example is furnished by a head in Strasbourg (Figs. 18-19). The original portrait, which dates from the Trajanic period, had a strip of short, curved locks (not the sitter’s own) framing the face and ending in a little curl in

---

27 Inv. no. 614. Visconti 1885, 411, cat. 614, Pl. 160; Delbrück 1933, 51, Fig. 20; Felletti Maj 1942, 83-84, no. 30, Pl. 48,10; von Sydow 1969, 67-68, Pl. 1; Calza 1972, 132-133, no. 43, Pl. XXXI,85-86; Schade 2003, 180-181, I 18, Pl. 33.3-4; Settis, Gasparri 2020, 169, Cat. 24 (text: I. Romeo); LSA 972.
28 Inv. no. 710. Felletti Maj 1942, 83, no. 28; Blanck 1969, 58-60, A37, Pls. 28-29; von Heintze 1971, 73-75, Gruppe III,2, Pl. 9 b; Poulsen 1974, 204-205, cat. 211, Pls. CCCXLIV-CCCXLVI; Johansen 1994-1995, III, 196-199, cat. 87; Schade 2003, 181-182, I 19, Pls. 34, 35.3; Schade 2016, 252-253, Fig. 203; LSA 409.
30 Inv. no. 47.100.51. Delbrück 1933, 202-203, Pls 99-101; Felletti Maj 1942, 83-84, no. 30, Pl. 48, 12; von Sydow 1969, 93-95; von Heintze 1971, Gruppe III, 4, Pls. 9 c, 11c; Meischner 2001, 115, Fig. 311; Schade 2003, 190-191, I 3; Pl. 41, 3-4; Zanker 2016, 232-234, cat. 90.
31 Inv. no. 2332. Felletti Maj 1942, 83, no. 28; Delbrück 1933, 173-174, Pl. 72, Fig. 60; von Sydow 1969, 151 (he considers it a second-century portrait); LSA 576.
front of each ear. The late-antique sculptor has altered the shape of the locks turning them into a fringe with a parting in the middle, while the braids in the turban coiffure at the back have become two *Rundflechte*. The eyes also have been recarved. The portrait wears a diadem which has in all probability been recarved from a “diadem” of stiff curls, as worn by the portrait of Marciana and the posthumous version of Matidia. Apart from the diadem, the sculptor has followed the structure of the coiffure, the alterations merely affecting the surface.

As a piece of hair could be turned into a diadem, so a diadem could be turned into a *Rundflecht*. A portrait in the Museo Gregoriano Profano, formerly in the Lateran collection, appears to have a *Rundflecht* when seen from the front (Figs. 20-22). In profile, however, the braid stops at the height of the ears instead of being laid around the head. The original portrait had a third-century Scheitelzopf, of which there are traces at the back. The eyes have the typically Constantinian pupils, but apart from those, little or nothing has been done to the face. On a head in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, the *Rundflecht* stops just in front of the ears. In profile one can still discern the sharp outline of the original diadem. The back of the head has been worked over with summary chisel strokes, while the face appears to be untouched apart from perhaps the irises and pupils.

The second-century turban coiffure and the fourth-century *Rundflecht* are often confused, but they are in actuality two different coiffures. In her postscript in the *JbAC* regarding von Heintze’s erratic dating of second- and fourth-century female portraits, M. Bergmann made some pertinent observations on the differences between these portraits. Her remarks concerned mainly their back sides. Bergmann pointed out that the second-century heads are markedly convex at the back, and that the bun or braids are clearly differentiated from the rest of the hair. By contrast the back sides of the fourth-century portraits are flat and undifferentiated: “Der Zopf, so voluminös er auch sein mag, liegt nicht mehr sperrig dem Hinterkopf auf, sondern wird hinten nach unten gezogen, so dass er sich mehr um die Seiten des Kopfes legt und in der Profilansicht fast senkrecht nach abwärts tief in den Nacken verläuft. Das rückwärtige Profil lädt nicht mehr aus, sondern bleibt flach und undifferenziert.”

The downward motion of the *Rundflecht* could cause difficulties in recarving when the original portraits had little material at the nape of the neck. One solution was to add new parts, as was done in the case of the portrait in the Museo Nazionale Romano (Figs. 9-10), the seated Helena in the Musei Capitolini, and possibly one of the Torlonia heads. Other-
wise, one had to make do with the available material. A head formerly in the Vatican Gardens originally had a third-century Scheitelzopf as can be deduced from the remains below the ears (FIGS. 23-24). This coiffure was carved into a Rundflecht which gives the impression of being thick, but which is in actuality very flat. It is practically flush with the hair in front, which appears to have been worked back a little to give the illusion of a difference in height. A head in the Schloss Fasanerie near Fulda in Germany was also recarved from a third-century portrait, probably shortly after the middle of the century (FIGS. 25-26). Here, the frontal waves of the original portrait have been recarved in a bolder pattern and continued all around the head, while the wide but flat Rundflecht is separated from the wavy part through a barely perceptible groove.

Sometimes the original portrait did not contain enough material even for a flat Rundflecht. This is the case with a portrait in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (FIGS. 27-29). Its face is framed by a series of small, tight curls with a drill hole in the middle. In my opinion, these are left over from the original portrait, which was probably made in the Neronian period. Such portraits did not have a bun or braid at the back of the head, but the hair was taken into a pouch, which descended at the nape of the neck. Due to lack of material, the sculptor of the New York head gave the illusion of a Rundflecht by placing two braids near the top of the head. They meet in front, where their curled-up ends give the impression of a “bun.”

Interventions such as these were radical, but female portraits could be recarved by changing only a few salient features. A head in the Salone of the Museo Nuovo in the Musei Capitolini has a very thin Scheitelzopf which protrudes only a couple of centimetres from the rest of the hair (FIGS. 30-32). The coiffure with its tight waves might be early Severan or late Antonine. By working back the hair on the top and back of the head, a Scheitelzopf could be formed, but there was not enough material to tuck the end under the plait, thereby creating a crest. The waves in the hair were partly recarved to harmonise with the Scheitelzopf. The face seems to be untouched apart from the eyes, which have Constantinian irises and pupils. Very often the eyes were recarved, as they are in an originally Severan portrait sitting on a statue of the so-called Aspasia type (not belonging) in the atrium of the Museo Nuovo (FIGS. 33-34). The back of the head cannot be photographed, but according to Fittschen and Zanker the original bun at the nape of the neck is recarved. The rendering of the eyes also suggests a Constantinian date for the recarving of this portrait.

A more comprehensive recarving of female portraits does not seem to have been undertaken very often. One example is furnished by a portrait in the depots of the Musei Capitolini
At first glance it seems that the original portrait had a late Severan hairdo which was partly retained in the new version, but the extreme thinness of the neck suggests that parts of the latter were cut away together with the hair that covered it. The original portrait may have had one of the voluminous, early third-century coiffures which reached below the jawline. Out of this mass of hair, a Scheitelzopf-Frisur was created. The ears, which were not visible in the first version, therefore had to be carved. A deep drill hole in each ear may have given a clue to the sculptor as to where they had to be placed. Still, the right ear came to sit lower than the left one, which is also slightly larger. Zanker compares the ears to those of Maxentius’s and Constantine’s portraits.

As in other cases of recarved Scheitelzöpfe, this one is very flat. To carve it the whole hairline had to be lowered, with the result that the brow became very low. The upper part of the face seems to have been recarved more or less along the lines of Marina Prusac’s “Bandit group,” which resulted in large, upward-looking eyes. Like the ears, the right eye sits lower than the left one. It is as if the sculptor carved first one side and then the other, without looking at the whole. The subtly modelled cheeks and the small, firm chin were probably retained from the original portrait. The mouth is so damaged that it is difficult to see if something has been done to it.

Zanker dated this portrait to the late Tetrarchic period. Eric Varner was more explicit and suggested that the portrait represented Valeria Maximilla, the wife of Maxentius, and that it was mutilated after Maxentius’s death. I am not so sure that the damage to the face is due to deliberate mutilation in this case. It could be the collateral effects of the blows inflicted on the face when the nose was cut off. It should be noted that without the nose, the face offers an almost flat expanse, ideal for being set into a wall as building material. The portrait may therefore be later than the Tetrarchic period. I think it is difficult to arrive at a more precise dating than the fourth century. The style has been altered because of the recarving, and the Scheitelzopf was popular throughout the century.

The female portraiture of the fourth-century AD presents a somewhat confusing picture. There are two main reasons for this. One is that a number of portraits (especially from the second century AD) have been presented as late-antique, chiefly because they are of mediocre quality and/or provincial. This was pointed out already by von Sydow and later by Bergmann. The other reason – perhaps the most important one – is that the majority of fourth-century female portraits has been recarved. For a long time, Horst Blanck’s pioneering work Wiederverwendung alter Statuen als Ehrendenkmäler bei den Griechen und Römern (1969), was the main point of reference for those who wanted to study the recycling of ancient portraits. In a way, Blanck’s title with its emphasis on Ehrendenkmähler has been emblematic, since most of the later research has concentrated on re-used public monuments: portrait

---

42 Inv. no. 1063. Fittschen, Zanker 1983, 117, no. 177, pl. 206; Varner 2001, 55-57, Fig. 6; Varner 2004, 219-220, 288, 9.6, Fig. 214; LSA 997.
44 Zanker, in Fittschen, Zanker 1983, 117.
45 For the “Bandit Group,” see Prusac 2011, 93-94.
46 Zanker, in Fittschen, Zanker 1983, 117.
heads, statues, or bases. The lack of interest in private portraits created a lacuna which has partly been filled by Matheson and Prusac.\textsuperscript{49} Still, recarved female portraits have often been neglected. The main reason for this, I think, is that these portraits are more difficult to detect, since they are recarved in a different manner from the male ones.

In a male portrait the recarving is concentrated in the face. The hair is often just worked back to form a cap (sometimes parts of the original locks are left at the back of the head). In late-antique recarved portraits especially there is a discrepancy between the often mobile facial features and the block-like structure of the original portrait further back. This “split” was characterised by Hans Peter L’Orange in the following manner:

A striking characteristic of the portraits of this group is the frequently recurring restlessness of the structure, the nervous contractions and displacements of the musculature...And yet this life occurs inside a façade, externally it clings to the block of the head-mass and so remains isolated on part of the physiognomic surface; it does not flow from a movemented and enlivened whole....Asymmetry is neutralized as a form of motion, consequently as a form of expression it no longer suggests a momentary physiognomic movement; solidified in this manner, it acquires a new spiritual value, it turns into an inner, more painful and incurable distortion, an insurmountable splitting and splintering of the soul.\textsuperscript{50}

A modern audience will probably contest L’Orange’s spiritual values, but he has in a very precise manner characterised the “split” between the outer façade and the block behind, which is typical of many recarved portraits. With L’Orange’s characterisation in mind one can pick out a number of male portraits, but this method can rarely be applied to female portraits. Their faces are altered in a much more subtle manner and sometimes not at all. The fact that the ideal female face was represented by a bland beauty with few if any individual traits throughout antiquity, makes it more difficult to discern faces from different periods. For female recycled portraits, a more fruitful approach consists of the study of their coiffures. While male recarved portraits often have a flat face with the back of the head bulging, female portraits present the opposite picture. Their facial features protrude normally, while the back of the head is recut. In the back, a certain amount of material may have been chiselled away, resulting in the downward sagging hair in the new version, as aptly characterised by M. Bergmann.

The study of recarved female portraits, therefore, presents different challenges from the study of male ones. One must be aware that the faces of the women are often altered in more subtle ways. Often only the eyes are recarved, or the pupils alone may have been altered. Occasionally nothing has been done to the eyes at all. A portrait in the Vatican, whose Turbanfrisur has been turned into a Rundflecht, still retains its blank eyeballs.\textsuperscript{51} The original portrait is probably datable to the early Hadrianic period. The head in the Vatican has been published by Calza together with two others whose third-century Scheitelzopffrisuren, originally with a diadem, have acquired Rundflechte decorated with jewelled pins. One of the portraits, from the gardens of the Villa Borghese, is so weather-beaten that it is difficult to

\textsuperscript{49} Matheson 2000; Prusac 2011.
\textsuperscript{50} Originally published in German in L’Orange 1933, 31. English translation by D. Kinney in Kinney 2012, 108-109, published here with the kind permission of the author.
\textsuperscript{51} Calza 1972, 172, no. 82, Pl. LV, 165-166.
study the details of its face (Fig. 39). The other, a heavily restored head in Berlin, has recarved eyes. All three portraits were in my opinion altered in the same period, that of the empress Helena, whose recarved portraits were conveniently published by Calza on the same or adjacent plates. The heads in the Vatican and Berlin illustrate how the recarving of the latter’s eyes makes a great difference. It would be easy to see the unaltered face of the Vatican head as a sign of “Classicism,” while it may only be evidence of the fourth-century sculptor’s lack of interest in the face – he wanted to alter the coiffure alone.

It is my opinion that all the female fourth-century portraits from the western part of the Roman Empire presented by Calza, von Heintze, and later by Schade are recarved. The majority of them come from Rome. As remarked by Carlos Machado and Julia Lenaghan: “Portraits of late antique women appear nowhere else in such quantity.” This is not surprising. Rome was still one of the two the capitals of the empire, and large amounts of recyclable material were available there. As pointed out by Robert Coates-Stephens, the building of Aurelian’s city wall in the AD 270s must have destroyed all the buildings in the area of the wall and adjacent to it, while fourth-century projects such as the construction of aqueducts and baths would have added to the destruction. With regard to imperial portraits, warehoused portraits of undesirable individuals from the past waited to be transformed into new rulers and their consorts. For private portraits, abandoned houses and mausolea belonging to defunct families must have been a goldmine to enterprising sculptors. It is also probable that private individuals brought portraits of long-forgotten members of their own family to the workshops in order to have them recarved.

There must have been so much reusable material available that it was not necessary to carve new portraits. Indeed, one may wonder if recarved portraits simply became fashionable. Male honorary monuments from the fourth century in Rome and Italy show a predilection for re-used second-century togate bodies, reflecting a wish to perpetuate the age of the “good emperors.” The recarved female portraits may be seen as counterparts to such statues, indicating that the sitters had appropriated the unchanging female virtues of their ancestors. Ul-

---

52 Inv. no. 2842. Felletti Maj 1942, 80, no. 15; von Heintze 1971, 66-67; Calza 1972, 174-175, no. 86, Pl. LV, 170, 172; Bergmann 1977, 200; L’Orange et al. 1984, 147; Ensoli, La Rocca 2000, 579, no. 264 (text: M. Bergmann); Schade 2003, 176-177, I 12, Pl. 30, 3-4; LSA 968. Schade remarks that there are traces at the back of the head of a broad “nest” of braids, typical of Julia Domna’s time. This must be the date of the original.

53 Inv. no. 449. Blümel 1933, 50, R 120, Pl. 76; Felletti Maj 1942, 78-79, no. 8; von Heintze 1971, 64, Gruppe I, 4; Calza 1972, 172-173, no. 83, Pl. LV, 169, 171; Bergmann 1977, 200; L’Orange et al. 1984, 143-144; Schade 2003, 176, I, 11, Pl. 30, 1-2; LSA 967.

54 Calza 1972, Pls. LII-LIV.

55 Schade 2003 presents I 8 – I 10; I 19 – I 20; I 22 – I 25, I 34 as recarved. The two portraits from Chiragan, I 42 and I 43, are not recarved and would therefore seem to contradict what I have said. However, like Jean-Charles Balty, I will date those portraits earlier than the fourth century (see Balty 1996, 241).

56 Machado with Lenaghan 2016, 132. Rome is problematical because so many ancient sculptures, including portraits, were taken out of the city to enrich European and American collections during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of them are said to have come from Rome, but the provenance is not always certain. For a discussion of this problem, see Machado with Lenaghan 2016, 131-132.


58 A considerable time might elapse before imperial portraits of persons subject to damnatio memoriae were recycled into new ones. For examples see Varner 2001, 75-76 with n. 255; Varner 2004, 5 with n. 30.

59 Ulrich Gehn speaks about the “ruhmreiche Vergangenheit” against which the honourands wanted to measure themselves (Gehn 2012, 188).
rich Gehn has pointed out that a considerable number of bases for statues of men belonging to the Roman aristocracy were erected in private contexts.  

This was also the case with the bases of their consorts. Of the eight preserved Roman examples of bases or inscriptions giving a female honourand, only one was awarded by a client; the others were dedicated by family members. The women were valued in their relation (wife, sister, daughter) to important males. Unfortunately, the record of the findspots of their statue bases is vague or lacking, but they will have stood in houses or mausolea belonging to their families. Rodolfo Lanciani suggested that the statue of Lucia Baebia Sallustia (LSA 1322), together with that of her husband Crepereius Rogatus (LSA 1321), originally stood in a mithraeum on the property of the latter. The statue of the priestess Fabia Aconica (LSA 1474), which was erected between AD 384 and 400, cannot have stood in a public context due to the late date, but one may think of a private shrine.

The only late-antique female portrait which has come to light during an excavation in Rome in modern times was found in the basilica Hilariana on the Caelian hill, a sanctuary containing the sacred pine of Cybele. Since only the head was found, it cannot be established whether the original statue was set up in the sanctuary, or if it came from a domus such as that of Gaudentius or Symmachus nearby. This portrait head is slightly under life-size, having been subjected to a complete recarving which has removed all the original surface. Only its third-century hairstyle may have been copied from the older portrait. Thin, incised lines follow the undulating waves of the coiffure.

The fourth-century sculptors treated the material in various ways. In cruder versions, they made no attempt to include parts of the original coiffure but chiselled everything away to make room for a flat Rundflecht, as demonstrated by a head in the Museo Nazionale Romano. In other versions, such as the above-mentioned head in Strasbourg (FIGS. 18-19), the structure of the coiffure has been retained, only the surface is altered. A head in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Florence has a Rundflecht blocked out, but the surface is carved with thin incisions that look like short hairs, as if the woman wore a fur scarf around her head. The crimped waves of the hair in front are worked over in a filigree-like pattern which bears little relation to hair. The majority of the recarved portraits retain smaller or larger parts of their original coiffure, often elaborated to suit late-antique taste. Some of these portraits,
RECARVING IS EASY – WHEN YOU ARE NOT DETECTED

like the Torlonia heads and a pavonazetto bust in the Musei Capitolini, are in my opinion masterpieces.

Since the hair meant so much to female portraiture, it is all the more important to study the coiffure of recarved portraits, especially at the back of the head. This is from a practical point of view the biggest challenge, since the majority of museum catalogues show the heads only from a frontal position, perhaps also from one side. Even in a museum it can be difficult to study the back of the heads because the monuments (be it heads, busts, or statues) are generally lined up against a wall. I have in this paper leaned heavily on the catalogue by Fittschen and Zanker because practically all the portraits are photographed from all four sides.

Recarved portraits are often regarded as inferior versions of the “real thing.” But in our time and age, when recycling has become popular, we may come to regard the recycled portraits with new eyes. In the female coiffures especially, we can admire the way in which the recarver took over the original coiffure, how he retained the parts which were still serviceable, elegantly merging them with the elements of the new coiffure while cutting away the rest. Fittschen and Zanker, who were very reluctant to admit that a portrait had been recarved, had to admit with regard to a bust in the Musei Capitolini: “Trifft diese Schlussfolgerung zu (that the head had been recycled), so muss konstatiert werden, dass dem severischen Bildhauer die Umarbeitung meisterhaft gelungen ist.” There may be other masterpieces waiting to be revealed – the best ones may never be detected.

Siri Sande
Norwegian Institute in Rome
siri.sande@roma.uio.no


69 Fittschen, Zanker 1983, 105, under cat. no. 155.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Carignani A. 1990: “Ritratto femminile tardo antico dal Celio”, BA 5-6, 189-191.


Donati A., Gentili G. 2005: Costantino il Grande. La civiltà antica al bivio tra Occidente e Oriente (exhibition catalogue), Milano.


Fittschen K., Zanker P. 1983: Katalog der römischen Porträts in den Capitolinischen Museen und den anderen kommunalen Sammlungen der Stadt Rom, III, Mainz A.M.


Giuliano A. 1957: Catalogo dei ritratti romani del Museo profano Lateranense, Città del Vaticano.

Hirst M., Salapata G. 2004: “Private Roman Female Portraits: Reworked or pieced?”, BABesch 79, 143-158.


La Roca E., Parisi Presicce C., Lo Monaco A. (eds.) 2015: L’età dell’angoscia (exhibition catalogue), Roma.
L’Orange H.P. 1933: Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts, Oslo.
Prusac M. 2011: From Face to Face. Recarving of Roman Portraits and the Late-Antique Portrait Arts, Leiden-Boston.
Schade K. 2003: Frauen in der Spätantike – Status und Repräsentation. Eine Untersuchung zur römischen und frühbyzantinischen Bildniskunst, Mainz A.M.
Stutzinger D. (ed.) 1983: Spätantike und frühes Christentum (exhibition catalogue), Frankfurt A. M.
Visconti C. 1885: I monumenti del Museo Torlonia, Roma.
von Heintze H. 1967: in Th. Kraus (ed.), Das römische Weltreich (Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, 2), Berlin: Text to Fig. 332a, 263-264.
von Heintze H. 1968: Die antiken Porträts in Schloss Fasanerie bei Fulda, Mainz A.R.
Wegner M. 1956: Hadrian, Plotina, Marciana, Matidia, Sabina (Das römische Herrscherbild II, 3), Berlin.
Figs. 1-3 – Female portrait head in Musée du Louvre, so-called Fausta (from Delbrück 1933, Pl. 66-67).
Figs. 4-5-6 – Female portrait head in the National Museum of Athens (D-DAI-ATH-NM-4737). Photo: E.-M. Czako.
Figs. 7-8 – Female portrait bust in the Musei Capitolini, Rome (arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/8891662). Photo: G. Fittschen-Badura.

Figs. 9-10 – Female portrait head in the Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome. Su concessione del Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali e per il turismo – Museo Nazionale Romano.
RECARVING IS EASY – WHEN YOU ARE NOT DETECTED

Figs. 11-12 – Female portrait head in the Museo Torlonia, Rome (D-DAI-Rom/entity/1086713). Photo: C. Faraglia.

Figs. 13-14 – Female portrait head in the Museo Torlonia, Rome (D-DAI-Rom/entity/1086603). Photo: C. Faraglia.
FIGS. 15-17 – Female portrait head in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (MET_4710051_a_c_b).
Figs. 18-19 – Female portrait head in the Musée Archéologique, Strasbourg
(arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/709907;
arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/709910).
Photo: G. Fittschen-Badura.

Figs. 20-22 – Female portrait head in the Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano
(arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/5191223;
arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/5191229;
arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/5191228).
Figs. 23-24 – Female portrait head formerly in the Vatican gardens (from Calza 1972, Pl. XCII, 325-326).

FIGS. 27-29 – Female portrait head in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (MET_4710052_a-b-c).
Figs. 30-32 – Female portrait bust in the Musei Capitolini, Rome. © Roma-Sovraintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali.
FIGS. 33-34 – Female portrait head in the Musei Capitolini, Rome (arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/6677136; arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/6677134). Photo: G. Fittschen-Badura.

FIG. 35 – Female portrait head in the Musei Capitolini, Rome (arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/4931737). Photo: G. Fittschen-Badura.
FIGS. 36-38 – Female portrait head in the Musei Capitolini (arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/4931740; arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/4931741; arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/entity/4931745). Photo: G. Fittschen-Badura.
FIG. 39 – Female portrait head on statue (not belonging) in the gardens of the Villa Borghese, Rome. Photo: Author.