

The physiognomy and artistic representation of Janus with special reference to the coinage in Southern Italy

The origin and significance of this ancient god were already a matter of debate for the antiquarians of the late Roman Republic and the Principate. Even the allusions in the old *Carmen saliare* (Varro *de ling. Lat.* 7, 22; Macrob. *Sat.* I. 9, 14) were poorly understood. In his Roman calendar Ovid studied the physiognomy of the god on an *As* and queried the divine nature of Janus: How shall I say what kind of god you are, double-faced Janus? (*Fasti* I, 89: *Quem tamen esse deum te dicam, Iane biformis?*) Basically he was believed to be the god of gateways, probably also of river crossings (Holland, 1961). Linguistic explanations in antiquity related his name to the verb „ire“ (Cicero *de natura deorum* 2, 67: *Quod ab eundo nomen est ductum, ex quo transitiones, perviae, iani foresque in liminibus profanarum aedium ianuae nominantur*). He was also considered to be the deity of all beginnings. In all prayers he was mentioned first. The doors of his temple, which we know from later Imperial coinage of the time of Nero, were open in war-time and kept closed in periods of peace. Although statues of Janus were mentioned in the antique literature, for instance by the Elder Plinius (Plin. *nat.hist.* 34, 33) who refers to the big bronze sculpture of the god in his temple of the Forum, no sculpture of that kind has survived. Even busts of bronze or marble have not come down to us. But attention should be drawn to three remarkable finds: 1. A double-headed bust in terracotta which was found in a *stipa votiva* near the North gate of Vulci (Cristofani, 1981, 278, fig. 253; *LIMC* III, 1986, 307, Taf. 234, Nr. 8b). It undoubtedly shows Janus. Two very similar specimens were discovered in Tarquinia. They date from the second century BC. Although of Etruscan origin, these busts reflect the increasing influence of Roman culture in Etruria (Carandini, 1985, 39). 2. A little bronze sculpture of the third century BC in the Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca di Cortona, Inv. 1278 (Pettazoni 1955/6, 85 ff. fig.2; *LIMC* III, 1986, 307, Taf. 234, Nr.1; Bruschetti, 1996, 29, Tav. 40) which

shows Culsans which is believed to be the Etruscan name for Janus (Simon, 1996, 41). But it should be noticed that the faces of this double-headed god are beardless, and that the heads are covered by a hat which resembles the „*galerus*“ of the Roman flamines – a representation which is completely uncommon for Janus. 3. The most enigmatic sculpture is a double-headed bust of limestone from Roquepertuse in Southern France, Département Bouches-du-Rhône, now in the Musée d'Archéologie méditerranéenne, Inv. 6017, Marseille (Benoit, 1955; Lescure, 1995, 76f. fig. 73; Lescure 2002, 320f. fig. 209; 218). It is of Celtic origin, and according to the recent exciting excavations in Glauberg near Frankfurt/Germany, this bust is now considered to date from the fifth century BC (Boissinot/Gantès, 2000). There is strong evidence that this sculpture was created under the artistic influence of Middle Italy. Interestingly, a recent re-investigation has shown that the faces originally had painted beards (Barbet, 1991). A strikingly similar representation occurs later in Roman coinage on an *As* of the *prora* series from 90 BC (*RRC* 341, 4a; Berger p. 410, 2950 in particular this specimen). If this most remarkable double-headed bust really belonged to the cultural background of the Roman Janus, then the iconology of this god as a *bifrons* would be much older than hitherto believed. In spite of more or less reasonable assumptions and speculations we have to face the fact that the iconography of Republican coins remains the main pictorial source for the effigy of Janus. There is no picture of Janus in Etruscan coinage. The *Aes* grave from Volaterrae (*Velathri*) from 230-220 BC (Haeberlin 1910, Taf. 82, 1-14, Suppl. Taf. IV, Nr.8; Thurlow-Vecchi 1979, plates 42-44) which shows a double-head who is beardless and topped with a *petasos*-like hat is definitely not a representation of Janus. In addition, it should also be mentioned that Janus apparently played no role in the glyptic art of the Roman Republic and the Principate (Vollenweider, 1966; Böhm, 1997).

The following emissions have to be taken into consideration: 1. Cast coinage, Aes grave of the libral and semi-libral series of the second half of the third century BC. 2. Struck coinage, Asses of the prora series from 209 down to 46 BC. 3. One silver denarius from 119 BC, and 4. Bronze coinage from Southern Italy (Sicily and Thurioi-Copia in Lucania) of the late Roman Republic period. Furthermore, one has to keep in mind that there is, strictly speaking, no stylistic development of the Janus iconology over a period of 200 years. Elaborated and plastic representations alternate with simply depicted physiognomies in a more or less rough and geometrically executed style. But over and over again, spontaneous creations occur which reflect a new way of carefully re-considering the nature of this enigmatic god. In this study, the iconographic interest is focused first on the age and facial expression, in particular the eyes, and secondly on the question of twinlike similarity. Finally the Lupa-Gemini iconology in the metaphorical connection with Janus will be discussed.

First of all it has to be emphasized that the god is bearded (Ovid *Fast* I 259, *ille manu mulcens propexam ad pectora barbam*) in contrast to other clean-shaven janiform heads showing for instance the Dioscuri. We can also disregard janiform heads such as those of Hercules and Mercury minted in Rome 87 BC or Imperial coinage like the medaillon of a two-faced image with bearded Janus to the left and the portrait of Commodus in profile to the right. Generally the bearded god is shown at an advanced age. This is demonstrated from the early beginning of Roman bronze coinage of the Aes grave type (fig. 1: Haeblerlin Tf. 43, 12; *RRC* 38, 1 plate H). On this Aes grave of the semilibral series standard from 217/15 BC, the old age of Janus is represented with scanty plastic means. It is noteworthy that this coin which looks so archaic has been stylistically connected with a much older work of art from the 5th century BC. It is a male head of a Samnitic deity, the so-called Testa di Triflisco (Perassi, 1988, 356). The physiognomy of an old man is also shown on a bronze coin from Panormos, Sicily (fig. 1: Calciati I, 341, 67/3; *SNG ANS* 598). The characteristic physiognomy of the god can be studied on the following As (fig. 3: *RRC* 97, 22a; Berger p.170, 1112): He has a serious expression, the eyes are wide open, looking attentively both into the past and the future, the lips are closed, he is a silent observer, an incorruptible guard, constantly aware that when there is nothing to fear, something will arise to fear, as Publilius Syrus, the late Republican poet and actor said in a famous line of verse (*ubi nihil timetur quod timeatur*

nascitur, *Minor Latin Poets* I). But the physiognomy of Janus is not consistently that of an old man. There are differences, digressions from the rule which are noteworthy. Already in the early libral series of the Aes grave type we have allusions to a lesser age (fig. 4: Haeblerlin Tf. 11.10; *RRC* 35, 1, plate G). This example shows the physiognomic appearance of ripe manhood, the period around the middle of life. It is the expression of vitality and not so much of advanced age. This becomes even more evident on a bronze coin of Southern Italy (fig. 5: Calciati I, 348, 108) where we easily recognize the male face of midlife. Any doubt about this evaluation is dispersed on the next two specimens: On the skillful coin from Panormos (fig. 6: Calciati I, 344, 88/2) we meet the physiognomy of youth. The watchful gaze is so completely different from the severe look on the preceding representations, and the change to more serene youthfulness cannot be overlooked on the As of the prora series (fig. 7: *RRC* 217, 2; Berger p.310, 2063). In addition, see also the beautiful specimen *RRC* 329, 2; plate XLIII, from the year 100 BC. What does this difference tell us? What is the meaning of it? One has to consider the basic interdependence between thinking Time and imagining Time, that is to say: The impact of semantical patterns of time on our imagination and the pictorial representation of time. The past, in particular the remote past, is generally connoted with advanced age; the future, however, with newness and youth and the challenge of activity and liveliness. If the meaning of beginning is emphasized in the ritual function of Janus, then the representation of midlife or youth becomes more understandable.

As a rule, the artists aimed at a twinlike similarity of the two heads. Figure 8 shows a coin from the prora series of the second century BC (*RRC* 85, 2, Berger p.154, 988). It is a typical example for this general intention to create two equal faces. But there exist also subtle differences in the Janus iconography, and they are obviously intended. Understandably, these variations never go so far as to show two completely different physiognomies. A bronze coin from Sicily (fig. 9: Calciati I, 342, 71; *SNG ANS* 599) shows this delicate difference nicely. Other convincing examples are three Asses from the years 211-208 BC (*RRC* 84, 4, plate XVI; *RRC* 100, 1a, plate XIX; *RRC* 110, 2; for this coin see in particular the superb specimen in the Hannover collection: Berger p.191, 1262). Of course one has to be aware that in general differences may arise through long circulation and subsequent unequal effacing of the heads. Nevertheless, I would like to put forward the hypothesis that in some cases these changes over time

were deliberately considered by the artists before designing the faces. Evidence for this may be gained from studying coins of the same die but in different states of preservations (see figure 10 and 11). These two specimens come from Thurioi, the Roman *Copia Lucania* (Caruso, 1984, p.117-150, Tav. 3, 27). On the better preserved surface we see two slightly different physiognomies. The difference becomes even more marked with equal effacing of the faces. Sometimes the intended subtle difference refers mainly to the expression of the eyes, because the gaze is an important characteristic of the physiognomy in profile. This is convincingly demonstrated in a magnified section of a silver denarius (fig. 12: *RRC* 281, 1; Berger p.350, 2444). It is suggested that those delicate differences in the Janus physiognomy go back to the artist's intention to create slight variations in the state of mind in one and the same personality. Obviously, this is a sophisticated artistic goal. When we consider such subtle differences, we should bear in mind that the brilliant craftsmanship in glyptic art was also a challenge for those artists who created pictures for coins, in particular for those pieces with a diameter less than 20 mm as in denarii and the Roman bronze coinage from Sicily.

The appreciation of the physiognomy of Janus on Republican coinage would be insufficient without reference to the iconography of the Lupa Romana and the twins. The cognomen of Janus (*Ianus Geminus*) alludes to doubleness in the sense of the two sides of a gateway (*omnis habet geminas, hinc atque hinc, ianua frontes*, Ovid *Fast* I, 135). The association with twinship becomes obvious with the other cognomen: *Ianus Quirinus* (Horatius, *carmen* 4, 15; Vergil. *Aen* VII, 607-610). *Quirinus* is the synonym for *Romulus* (Ennius, *Ann.* 114-116; Vergil. *Aen* I, 292; Ovid *Fast* II, 479, VI, 375). The origin of the literary and artistic representation of the Lupa-Gemini mythology is relatively young and dates back to the third century BC. The Lupa Capitolina, a work of Italic-Etruscan craftsmanship from the beginning of the 5th century BC, had originally nothing to do with the Roman twins. This she-wolf is lacking the canonic representation which is so well-known from glyptic art and from Republican and Imperial coinage: The head is bowed down and turned backwards to the twins under her teats, licking the shoulder of one of the suckling boys with her tongue. The first depiction of the Lupa Romana on the obverse of a Republican semilibral sextans (*RRC* 39, 3; Berger p.60, 189) dates back to 217 BC. Undoubtedly, the prototype for this coin was the magnificent silver didrachm of Rome from the year 269 BC

(*RRC* 20, 1; Berger p. 26, 38) which presumably reflects in some respects the ancient bronze sculpture connected with the aediles *curuli* Gnaeus and Quintus Ogulnius, who added in the year 295 BC a bronze sculpture of the twins to a probably older work already situated at the Lupercal of the Palatine hill (Livius X, 23,11). The combination of Janus (obverse) with the Lupa-Gemini group (reverse, above the *prora*) appeared for the first time on an *As* between 169-158 BC (fig. 13: *RRC* 183, 1; Berger p. 262, 1769). The most skillful coinage of this type (see figure 14 and 15) comes, however, from Southern Italy, from Panormos (Calciati I, 348, 111; *SNG ANS* 603). Here the synopsis of obverse and reverse is achieved in a remarkable way. The physiognomic representation of Janus, the maturity of manhood, the very subtle modification of complete twinlike similarity, the penetrating look of the eyes, is of great artistic refinement, and the Lupa Romana shown here equals the beauty of similar creations in glyptic art. A delicate, beautiful difference, however, should be noticed: In contrast to the common iconography, the forelegs of the she-wolf are not upright, but stretched out thus bringing the mammalia nearer to the brood. The following verses of Virgil, where he describes a magnificent work of toreutic art on the shield of *Aeneas* (*Aen.* VIII, 630-34: *Procuuisse lupam ...*) also refer to this position. On this small bronze coin with a diameter of 18 mm, we have the unsurpassed iconographic fusion of two ideas: The old age of the god Janus and the remote origin of Rome.

The metaphorical meaning of the Lupa-Gemini iconology survived in later Imperial coinage. One of the last representations dates back to the second half of the third century AC. It is a Roman bronze coin from the Troas (Bellinger, 1961, plate 150, A495) which shows on an equally small scale the she-wolf and the twins on the reverse and a turreted head on the obverse, belonging to the female deity of Troia-Alexandria, a place where the mythological origin of Rome's future had its roots. The coinage of the Janus bifrons ceased with the end of the Roman Republic, interestingly with an *As* of Pompeius Magnus (*RRC* 479, 1; Berger p. 492, 3681; see in particular this magnificent specimen in the Hannover collection) who lent his features to Janus, thus alluding to the threshold of past and imminent future, to the doors which are open or closed in war or peace. The famous bronze sculpture of Janus, however, was still mentioned by Prokop (*bell.Goth.* 5 (I), 25, 19ff) and probably seen by autopsy in the years 536/7 AC, almost a millenium after it was placed in the temple of the Forum Romanum.

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15