

BOOK REVIEW

The Museum of Augustus: The Temple of Apollo in Pompeii, the Portico of Philippus in Rome, and Latin Poetry. By PETER HESLIN. Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015. Pp. xiii + 350. Hardcover, \$65.00. ISBN 978-1-60606-421-4.

This fascinating, beautifully produced book is a terrific read putting forward detailed and sophisticated arguments that will certainly provoke productive discussion. Disclaimer: I am not an art historian or archaeologist—but neither is Heslin. All the more remarkable, then, that he has produced such an intriguing, archivally rich study, with a methodology combining close reading of architectural and archaeological drawings, ancient artistic representations, and poetry with historiographical research into the excavations of the Temple of Apollo in Pompeii and the area of the Portico of Philippus in Rome. He reveals his method in his preface (xi): “Most of the research for this book was ... done online rather than in museums, at sites, and in archives”; he also relies on enlargements—only possible digitally—of scanned drawings, reconstructions, and photographs of his sites and paintings. He was fortunate in his publisher, who has reproduced quantities of these in fantastic clarity. (Paradoxically, this is a book that is very much a physical pleasure to handle and to read.) Heslin, an expert on the possibilities raised by the digital revolution, is certainly right that his method of research in this project is one of the best ways forward, not only for scholars who cannot travel to see the sites themselves, but also in cases such as this one where the on-site material has been degraded past legibility, or destroyed altogether.

Heslin begins with a detailed analysis of the drawings and reconstructions made by early visitors to Pompeii, after the frescoes in the Temple were uncovered (1817) and before they were irretrievably damaged by exposure; he also makes heavy use of the mid-19th century cork model of the city. He then moves via a study of the copies of the more popular paintings in private Pompeian houses to an analysis of the now-lost Portico of Philippus, including a lucid investigation of its development from the Republican *Aedes Herculis Musarum* which was physically incorporated into the later, larger complex erected by Augustus’ stepbrother and uncle, L. Marcius Philippus. He wants both to decipher the original fresco cycle and to show that the Apolline temple

decorations in Pompeii were based on—if not copies of—Theorus’s cycle of frescoes in the Portico. Heslin’s real target is that Roman cycle which—together with the Portico itself and the other art it contained—was “the public justification in the language of Roman architecture of Augustus’s patronage of poetry ... his importation of the Museum of Alexandria into a Roman context” (2). Augustus in fact, Heslin argues, separated the Alexandrian Museum complex into two: as a rebuilding of the *Aedes*, the Portico continued its longstanding tradition as a prestigious meeting place for the guild of poets, while Apollo—a god less congenial to the Romans, who did not build a temple to him in Republican times—received his own home on the Palatine, with the new libraries, trumpeting Augustus as the principal patron of the arts (187).

I have by necessity vastly oversimplified Heslin’s argument, the beauty and challenge of which is in the details, from readings of the Marble Plan to the *Tabulae Iliacae* to 19th century German engravings. For literary scholars, the payoff will come in his final chapter, “Imaginary Temples,” on the poets who responded to this art. Heslin looks closely at the poems that clearly refer to the *Aedes Herculis Musarum*: Vergil’s prologue to *Georgics* 3, Propertius (though the promised discussion of 3.4-5 is missing [300]), Horace’s *Odes*, and—most intriguingly to me—the decorations on Juno’s temple in *Aeneid* 1. I would especially like to believe the thesis that Aeneas is misreading those paintings not (as we have long recognized) because he sees glory for the Trojans where the Carthaginians must be celebrating their slaughter, but because, having only his own, subjective experience of the war to go by, he simply misidentifies the people represented.

What Aeneas describes can be mapped onto the cycle of paintings that Heslin reconstructs, but he gets the names wrong: so, e.g., when Aeneas sees the tide of battle being turned by a person he identifies as Achilles (*instaret curru cristatus Achilles*, 1.468), Heslin suggests that Aeneas recognizes the armor because he has seen Achilles in it, but that because he has not read the *Iliad*, he does not know that it is in fact Patroclus wearing Achilles’ armor who turns the tide in Book 16. If Heslin is right (and he has many other examples), then the depth of the effect of art on the reader(s) in the *Aeneid*—and the map of misreadings we can construct around it—is even more remarkable than has previously been understood.

But that’s a big ‘if’. Heslin disregards too much recent scholarship on the *Aedes* (especially the important work of Alexander Hardie), and he is at times

overly reductive. So, for example, in his treatment of pattern books (143), which is a mixture of assertion (“there is no evidence at all” for them—but then why do archaeologists appeal to them?) and oversimplification: assuming that local artists used pattern books “reduces [them] to more or less competent robots, slavishly attempting to imitate artistic forms that they scarcely understood”. Either the books existed or they did not; but (1) if they did, then one could profitably look at studies of 19th-century architectural pattern book use, which demonstrate that robotic copying is far from what was going on; and (2) if they did not, then this is simply a straw man, related to the straw men on whom Heslin depends far too much, of the art historian who looks at all Roman art as copies of Greek “originals,” hand in hand with the literary scholar who ignores material culture. Both of those creatures are on their way out; Heslin doesn’t need them. Better to direct scholars to works like the new book by Vibeke Goldbeck, *Fora Augusta*, on the reception of the Forum Augustum in the West, including Pompeii; that book came out too late for Heslin to take account of, but it and similar studies support his strong argument that the Pompeian cycle was part of the *imitatio Urbis*, a reinterpretation of a complex and influential building program at Rome.

CHRISTINA KRAUS

Yale University (christina.kraus@yale.edu)