

## BOOK REVIEW

*Herculaneum and the House of the Bicentenary: History and Heritage.* By SARAH COURT AND LESLIE RAINER. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2020. Pp. 176. Paperback, \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-60606-628-7.

Since 2001 Herculaneum has enjoyed a renaissance thanks to the efforts of the Herculaneum Conservation Project. The parlous state of the site in the late 1990s is a story well known with much of the site being closed to the public. The House of the Bicentenary is emblematic of the renaissance that has occurred through the collaboration of the Packard Humanities Institute and the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei culminating in the creation of the Parco Archeologico di Ercolano in 2017 and a long-term plan for the systematic maintenance of the site. Few people, if any, are better qualified than Sarah Court and Leslie Rainer to recount this tale.

Although ostensibly concerned with the House of the Bicentenary, the book does in fact range much more widely by providing a history of Herculaneum from its foundation by Hercules through Antiquity (9-29); a history of the excavations from the discovery of the town in 1709 to the present (30-75); an overview of the layout of the town (76-101); the issues affecting the site today (136-151); and a final chapter looking at recent discoveries including a newly discovered bas-relief from the House of the Dionysiac Reliefs and the use of multispectral imaging to decipher the scrolls from the Villa of the Papyri and the prospects for the site as we move on through the 21st century (152-161).

Court and Rainer bring all these themes together in a discussion of the House of the Bicentenary (102-117) and its subsequent restoration (138-151). Large-scale excavations in Herculaneum resumed on 16 May 1927 under the direction of Amedeo Maiuri with the support of the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. Maiuri's excavations of the House of the Bicentenary formed the centerpiece of the two hundredth anniversary celebrations in 1938. The House provides a microcosm of the sumptuous décor that could be found in Herculaneum with the tablinum containing some of the finest fourth style paintings to be seen in the

site. Maintaining Herculaneum is a constant struggle against the encroaching elements and lack of funding and maintenance led to the closure of the House to the public in 1983. Since 2009, the House has been the subject of a systematic program of research and restoration that has seen it recently reopened to the public for the first time in nearly forty years.

Until the publication of Andrew Wallace-Hadrill's *Herculaneum: Past and Future* in 2011, teachers, students and general public alike had to rely upon increasingly dated books like those of Joseph Jay Deiss and Michael Grant. Court and Rainer have provided us with an excellent introduction to Herculaneum. Written in an approachable style and reinforced by lavish illustrations the authors' knowledge and passion for Herculaneum permeates every page. The result is an excellent introduction not only to the House of the Bicentenary but to Herculaneum and its problems more generally that will be a valuable resource both to students and to the interested public.

BENEDICT J. LOWE

*University of North Alabama, blowe1@una.edu*