

At the beginning of the book (p. 14), E. argues that the key to understanding the function of Roman houses lies in the accurate interpretation of contemporary written accounts of domestic activity. While some attempt is made to adhere to this principle (E. offers an eclectic selection of translated source material), it must be said that much more could have been done to exploit the great wealth of relevant textual information. Failure to do this makes discussion of such topics as the use of *triclinia* and the function of Late Roman 'audience halls' (pp. 148–52, 170–4, 182–3) less than convincing. If one is going to argue, for example, that the audience halls of Late Roman houses were designed as an elaborate setting for theatrical displays of power between patrons and their clients, it would be useful to support this by reference to contemporary accounts of such occasions. In fact, Late Roman writers rarely mention such ceremonies outside imperial residences. What they do mention, in aristocratic contexts, is frequent house parties involving large gatherings of invited guests (e.g. Symmachus *Epp.* 3.18, 6.70, 7.19), the kind of occasion for which these great domestic halls were more likely designed. E. is not alone in trying to understand Roman cultural *mores* without paying adequate attention to the ancient texts on which such an understanding must depend. In E.'s hands, textual evidence is treated with respect but not with scrutiny. Certainly there is no attempt here (as in some other recent books on Roman houses) to dismiss textual evidence as unreliable or as a form of 'disinformation'. What is missing, however, is a more thorough assessment of the textual evidence which, if included, might have lent significant support to some of the book's conclusions. Instead, many of the conclusions have to be treated with extreme caution, since the quality of the evidence on which they are based is often fragile.

In attempting to synthesize such a wide range of information and opinion about Roman housing, E. reveals not only what we know about Roman houses and their occupancy, but also what we do not know. He reminds us repeatedly that most features of Roman housing need further study. Such study must, however, proceed on parallel tracks, utilizing both the growing wealth of archaeological data and the rich, but often neglected, textual record. E.'s book makes a good start; he points to many of the key issues relating to Roman housing and offers a useful overview of where the study of Roman housing stands today.

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## THE POMPEIAN TRADITION

A. E. COOLEY: *Pompeii*. Pp. 160, ill., pls. London: Duckworth, 2003. Paper, £14.99. ISBN: 0-7156-3161-6.

Interest in Pompeii continues to gather momentum. The popularity of Pompeii with the public at large has been demonstrated in the last year, with the publication of a best-selling novel (R. Harris, *Pompeii*) and the broadcasting of the BBC's 'Pompeii: The Last Day' to 10 million viewers in Britain. Alison Cooley's book provides readers with a slightly different approach to the excavations from that of the standard coffee-table or picture and text offerings. Rather than retell the story of the ancient city or provide a guide to the site, she has focused on the reaction to Pompeii in selected periods. These are selected on the basis of when contemporary politics, advances in archaeological techniques, or scientific knowledge made an impact on the interpretation of the material found. The book as a whole provides neat summaries of debates for those without Italian or access to the necessary range of journals.

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The book opens (Chapter 1) with an appraisal of the impact of the earthquake of A.D. 62 on the town, and the evidence for earthquakes in the run up to the eruptive sequences of 24–25 August A.D. 79. C. steers a middle course through the controversy, and presents an overview of recent work by archaeologists and seismologists that would suggest that where we see repairs prior to A.D. 79, they need not be dated to the earthquake of A.D. 62/3 discussed by Seneca and Tacitus. The following chapter takes up the theme with the eruption of Vesuvius, and draws on the publications of volcanologists and relates their work to the archaeological evidence. Again, the summary is balanced. These two chapters will be of particular use for those teaching Pompeii at GCSE and for undergraduate students studying the site. My only criticism here is that the presentation of the science behind the conclusions is brief, and frequently destructive forces are described via anecdote for an audience based in the humanities.

Chapter 3 discusses the attempts by the Roman government to provide relief to the plight of the Campanians and archaeological evidence for reoccupation of the site and its surroundings. The recent excavations of the ‘Inn’ at Murecine are not referred to, but may have found their way to publication after the book went to press. C. goes on to discuss the salvage work undertaken between A.D. 79 and 1748—the beginning of ‘official excavation’. Again, C. strikes a good balance between the competing views, and presents the argument that the site, when excavated from 1748 onwards, had been subject to salvage operations and looting. Long gone is the idea that Pompeii provides some type of time-capsule. The following chapter, Chapter 4, has contemporary politics at its centre, and here the author presents us with the rôle of the ‘treasures’ of Pompeii in the manipulation of the image of Charles the Bourbon and Ferdinand IV. Travellers accounts are referred to enliven the discussion. These themes are followed through in Chapter 5, with the focus on the relationship between contemporary politics and the excavation of the site in the nineteenth century. Although the Napoleonic era is covered, strangely there is no mention of the work of Mazois. This may be because C. focuses on the personality of Fiorelli and demonstrates how his experience of dealing with Pompeii shaped his actions later as Director of Antiquities in Italy. There are also nice asides on the development of tourism, with the first Cook’s tour visiting Pompeii in 1864. These three chapters provide excellent teaching material for undergraduate courses on the Classical Tradition and the History of Archaeology.

The book then jumps to more recent times. The author reviews the importance of the pioneering environmental archaeology undertaken by Jashemski that revealed a Pompeii of gardens and horticulture in the 1960s and 1970s. On the way, she notes her disbelief in some of this evidence for a Roman urbanism that has a very green aspect to it. Clearly, the manuscript was submitted prior to the publication of W. F. Jashemski and F. C. Meyer, *The Natural History of Pompeii* (Cambridge, 2003). However, the overview by C. of the rôle of key excavation sites remains sound. What is not covered is the detail derived from the excavations in terms of variety of plant types, food remains, medicinal plants etc. The final chapter deals with the more recent emphasis on ‘stratigraphic digs’ below the A.D. 79 destruction levels that have recovered amongst other things evidence of Etruscan language. C. deconstructs the traditional attempts to impose an invasionist pattern of cultural change, which was derived from Strabo’s Samnites, Etruscans, and Oscans. Here, the stratigraphic excavations of the 1980s and 1990s have literally ripped apart the old model of stylistic dating based on building types. However, C. is less critical of the more recent desire to create a model of Pompeii as an Etruscan town based on a synoecism and the ‘decline’ of nearby villages. It raises the question: why is it important to present a specifically *Etruscan* Pompeii in the early

twenty-first century? The recent discovery of Etruscan script is read by excavators to create a new cultural identity for Pompeii, or one that is newsworthy and headline grabbing, but is ultimately based on evidence for use of a language at the site. The 'new discovery' has to be presented as dramatic, and it is the drama of archaeology as the discovery of the new that is what sponsors and fundraisers wish to see. How this factor may colour the presentation of excavation and interpretation requires further discussion.

The focus on archaeology as excavation and discovery of new things causes a slight imbalance in the book. For example, the development of scientific laboratories in Pompeii in the late twentieth century has produced dramatic results—whether the reinvestigation of skeletons, the study of ancient DNA, or the chemical analysis of a theriacal compound. Equally, the book's selection of the development of archaeological method in the nineteenth century, and the focus on environmental archaeology and stratigraphic excavation below A.D. 79 levels in the late twentieth century creates a rather heroic picture of the discovery of the past at Pompeii. However, it needs to be remembered that the location of finds, excavation notes, and other elements fundamental to archaeological interpretation have been lost, are in a poor state of preservation, or are simply absent—the study and preservation of Pompeii has had a very chequered history. Every new generation of archaeologists has sought ways to deal with this problem. However, these criticisms should not detract from a book that provides an important summary of key periods of excavation, and will prove a very useful addition for the teaching of Pompeii in schools and at university.

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## ELIS UNDER THE EMPIRE

S. B. ZOUMBAKI: *Elis und Olympia in der Kaiserzeit. Das Leben einer Gesellschaft zwischen Stadt und Heiligtum auf prosopographischer Grundlage.* (Meletemata 32.) Pp. 450, map. Athens: Research Centre for Greek and Roman Antiquity, National Hellenic Research Foundation/Paris: Diffusion de Bocard, 2001. Cased. ISBN: 960-7905-11-3.

Zoumbaki discusses the main sources for the history of Elis and its territory (honorary inscriptions; lists of cult-officials in Olympia), the economy, agrarian and otherwise, and population of the city, its magistrates, and the specialized sacred and agonistic functions in the Olympic precinct, and finally Elis' relations with the Romans and the romanization of the region. The study is to a very large extent based on a large, alphabetically arranged prosopography of 887 persons (freeborn Eleans, both autochthonous and enfranchised aliens, and slaves) which constitutes the bulk of the volume (pp. 193–413). It is a true paradise for prosopographers to walk in. For some families Z. offers detailed commentaries. The reconstruction of the stemma of the family of the Vettuleni (pp. 243–8 and 306–8) is to be recommended strongly. One of her results is that the exploits of the victorious pankratiast T. Claudius Rufus, honored in a decree proposed by M. Vettulenus Laetus, are to be dated c. 100 A.D. (before 123 A.D.) rather than to the beginning of the first century A.D.

Elis never was a particularly advanced region; urbanization was late and artificial;