

COMBINING SPATIAL AND TRADITIONAL APPROACHES IN CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

FILIPPI (D.) (ed.) *Rethinking the Roman City. The Spatial Turn and the Archaeology of Roman Italy*. Pp. xvi + 252, fig., ills, maps. London and New York: Routledge, 2022. Cased, £120, US\$160. ISBN: 978-0-815-36179-4.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X23001464

This edited volume explores the incorporation of spatiality into the study of the Roman city, a traditional object of research in Roman archaeology. It results from two scholarly conferences organised by Filippi. In a more general context, the publication is part of a recent movement in research focusing on the analysis of space and movement in connection with the re-interpretation and re-study of traditional questions and elements in Roman archaeology, a logical reaction to the introduction of tools such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Database Management Systems (DBMS) (with a much more recent, albeit limited, adoption in classical archaeology than in other disciplines), and to the (pressing) need to provide a sound theoretical background to these new interpretations. In particular, the volume explores multimodal approaches to Roman cities that contrapose and combine initially separated disciplines (e.g. archaeology, epigraphy, history, philology, iconography) and perspectives (e.g. social, topographical, comparative), thus highlighting the lack of communication between these approaches as one of the main issues in current research on this topic. Although such a situation is not limited to this particular theme, it can be argued that the traditional character of classical archaeology (along with a certain ‘inertia’) is a contributing factor in this separation, potentially fostered further by the expansion of hyper-specialised research in historical and archaeological studies over the last decades, which a sector of classical researchers seems uncomfortable with.

Filippi’s volume focuses on Italian case studies, and most particularly on Rome, Ostia, Portus and Pompeii. However, the inclusion of several chapters discussing wider scopes provides (welcome) contextual and comparative perspectives on the general topic of spatiality in Roman archaeology in Italy. Due to this combination of diverse approaches, methods and case studies, the book constitutes an interesting contribution to the debate on the spatial turn in Roman archaeology, which will be of particular interest to early career researchers as well as to those seeking to diversify their approaches to the Roman city.

The book begins with an introductory chapter by Filippi, providing a relevant discussion on the topic of the spatial turn in Roman archaeology in Italy that successfully links the diversity of themes and approaches explored in each contribution. The volume is then divided into three parts: Part 1 sets the research context and theoretical foundations by discussing the origin of the different traditions of research in Italy and the UK (A. Wallace-Hadrill and M. Millett) as well as the different approaches applied to the study of Roman towns and cities (S. Campana); Part 2 focuses on case studies from Rome (P. Carafa), Ostia (J.D. Veitch, S. Keay), Portus (Keay) and Pompeii (A. Haug and P. Kobusch), sites amongst the best known archaeologically in the Italian context, using a wide range of methodological approaches (e.g. archival research, topography, fieldwork, geophysics), thus emphasising the multiplicity of possible perspectives and how each of them generates new (and potentially complementary) interpretations; finally, Part 3 analyses the Roman *forum* from different perspectives, adding to the understanding as a changing social construction besides as a political node, not only for the specific case

of Rome (Filippi, N. Purcell, R. Laurence), but also within the wider context of Italy (J.R. Patterson).

The contributions in Part 1 explore the history of research on Roman towns: Wallace-Hadrill and Millett discuss the differences between the Italian and the British research traditions on the analysis of ancient towns by focusing on the collaboration between William Gell and Antonio Nibby and their diverse (but complementary) approaches to the study of ancient remains in Rome and its environs at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thereby, their contribution not only moves the separation between both traditions back to more than one century earlier than usually assumed, but it also highlights the differences between the topographical and philological approaches to the analysis of Roman towns, still identifiable in a significant sector of modern research. Of particular interest is the discussion on the origin of the British cartographic institution Ordnance Survey in connection with the control of the Scottish Highlands in the mid eighteenth century, as it provides a clear example of (firstly) the close link between colonial expansion and the development of cartography and mapping technology and (secondly) how cartographic representation is intimately tied with the formation and development of imperialistic powers.

The following paper (by Campana) provides an interesting overview of the history of field survey in the Mediterranean region that highlights the dissociation between the exploration of ancient urban and rural contexts. Campana emphasises how the prevalence of the application of non-invasive methods (e.g. remote sensing, geophysics) and spatial technologies to former urban contexts entrenches this urban–rural divide further. The solution proposed by Campana relies on increasing the quality and quantity of information on ancient rural areas by extensively applying those non-invasive methodologies to identify archaeological evidence that would unravel the structure and uses of past landscapes. The emphasis on transitioning from ‘sites’ (as nodes of material evidence) to an ‘archaeological continuum’ constitutes a welcome development that bridges the conceptual and methodological gap between the archaeology of towns and the archaeology of landscapes, potentially enabling more holistic understandings of the use and transformation of landscapes by the communities inhabiting and experiencing them across time.

The remaining contributions can be placed over a wide spectrum according to their integration of different disciplines into the analysis of the Roman city, some with a stronger emphasis on the topographic component (e.g. Carafa, Keay), others leaning towards other sources (literary, iconographic) (e.g. Laurence, Purcell). Unsurprisingly, Filippi’s contribution strikes a more even balance between both trends: her archaeological study of the Roman *forum* makes use of computational tools to understand successfully its topography and changing structure through time; more importantly, by focusing on the changing meanings of a minor monument in the forensic context using literary sources, Filippi also reveals the limits of the topographical approach whilst developing a fantastic example of the potential of combining resources and approaches from different disciplines.

Among the more topographical contributions, Carafa explores the conceptual and methodological approaches to the reconstruction of the urban biography of Rome as applied in the Archaeological Information System of Ancient Rome. This resource focuses on recording ‘versions’ of buildings and the re-establishment of their changing relations as a means to create a ‘biography’ of the city of Rome through time. In combining computational tools and archival, iconographical and archaeological research, he provides useful insights into the creation of a resource that has the potential to become a sound foundation for further and more specialised studies and analyses about the development and changing perceptions of the city of Rome by its inhabitants. The posthumous contribution by Keay presents the analysis and results of the extensive fieldwork carried

out in Isola Sacra aimed at exploring a strategic (and not well understood) area connecting Ostia and Portus, following the theoretical and methodological approaches developed earlier in his work around Portus. Besides the obvious interest of presenting new data about a poorly understood location, Keay's contribution provides new and updated interpretations around open questions (e.g. the living arrangements of people working at the port). Veitch turns to the exploration of the physical engagement within street environments by adapting H. Lefebvre's conceptualisations to the Roman urban context, taking the street porticoes and portico complexes in Ostia in the second century CE as case studies. The analysis of the acoustics of noise propagation within a street environment is rare not only in Roman archaeology but also in archaeological simulations and modelling (more focused on vision), but would have required a more detailed explanation of its methodology. The last paper among the more topographic studies is the analysis by Patterson of the proliferation of *fora* in Italian towns and their possible relation with the multiplication of *fora* in Rome, leading to the identification of trends separated from the (traditional) interpretation of 'emulation of Rome' to look at agency and local developments of Italian urban communities. By focusing on the particular histories and developments of local communities, Patterson outlines how the construction of new *fora* appears to result from the need to expand *forum* functions to other topographic areas within the towns due to population expansion, changes in local and regional connectivity, and the acquisition of new privileges and promotions by local communities. As is usually the case, Patterson demonstrates that, once you start looking around and remove yourself from the traditional interpretative models, new ideas and hypotheses arise.

Among the contributions leaning more towards literary and iconographical sources is Laurence's exploration of the lived experience of (male) children and young adults in public areas. Laurence develops an analysis of literary and artistic depictions of children in the urban and forensic context, thus overcoming the lack of direct documents by this sector of the community. The emphasis lies on understanding how (male) children and young adults learned how to play the role of 'future citizens' within the Roman *forum*, a urban landscape full of historical meaning (extensively explored and discussed in Purcell's contribution), as well as their place within the wider community and history of Rome. Despite the new insights and interpretations Laurence provides, one remains wondering, nonetheless, what the experience of this urban landscape was for females and what evidence could be explored to address this other half of the community.

Finally, Haug and Kobusch develop an analysis of the spatial distribution of street paintings, reliefs, dipinti and graffiti in Pompeii as means for communication dependent upon different discourses, aims and contexts (ritual and religious, commercial, political and administrative etc.). This relatively simple analysis leads to an enriched interpretation of street communication that 'fleshes' out the city and the lived experience of successive (and at times overlapping) discourses by its inhabitants, also informing about the perceptions and interactions between these representations and the pedestrians moving within the town.

The book is well written and has a wide variety of figures that successfully illustrate the points made by the authors. However, the use of endnotes in the chapters makes using and viewing them a little inconvenient. The volume is an important contribution to the open debate on the spatial turn in Roman archaeology in two different ways: firstly, by successfully illustrating the multiple and diverse ways in which our understanding of the Roman city can be enriched; and secondly, by making researchers wonder about the materials they are studying and how they could interpret them differently by looking at them from other perspectives. As such, the volume may also constitute a valuable resource for both

early researchers and scholars looking to diversify their scopes or approaches to historical investigation.

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‘SOUVENIRS’ IN ANCIENT ROME

POPKIN (M.L.) *Souvenirs and the Experience of Empire in Ancient Rome*. Pp. xxii + 325, b/w & colour ills, colour maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Cased, £75, US\$99.99. ISBN: 978-1-316-51756-7.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X23000094

This book demonstrates that objects purchased and then transported home created not just memories of travel, but also articulated the meaning of those places, people or spectacles. The topic of souvenirs is something of a lacuna both in historical thought and in artefact studies. However, 2021 saw the publication of K. Cassibry's *Destinations of the Mind: Portraying Places on the Roman Empire's Souvenirs* (for a review see *AJA* 126 [2022], E138–40). P. notes that her book was submitted prior to the publication of Cassibry's. Not surprisingly, there are some areas of overlap, notably around the representation of cities on glass vessels, most famously of Baiae and Puteoli, and of the forts of the western part of Hadrian's Wall on enamelled vessels. Both authors come from the discipline of Art History and seek to demonstrate that ordinary objects of material culture can sustain as much debate as 'canonical artworks and monuments' (p. xvi). This is a beautiful book with 132 illustrations, almost all in colour. It would seem that the reluctance to include colour images may be waning in the third decade of the twenty-first century. The book is also a great read and thought-provoking, and it allows readers to run further with the ideas presented.

The book opens with a consideration of what is a souvenir. The personal is at the heart of this discussion, with the example of a San Gimignano snow globe that, like other souvenirs, has a story around it that is humorous, sentimental, private and performative (p. 3). This is a neat device because it causes readers to recall their own snow globe experiences. P. argues that these performative qualities were also present in ancient souvenirs and that souvenirs articulate a viewpoint of place as well as a means for the ancients to imagine a Roman empire.

Chapter 2 shifts the attention onto cult statues as souvenirs. These souvenirs are known to have been produced in antiquity, for example at Ephesus with a focus on Artemis, and P. notes the locations of various finds of these figurines. It is suggested that they might be incorporated into Lararia (pp. 29, 46, 48), but P. notes that no figurines produced as souvenirs (e.g. Artemis Ephesia) have been found in Lararia. This is somewhat surprising, given the range of gods found in Lararia in Pompeii: Jupiter, Venus, Neptune, Hercules and Persephone; some houses even added Egyptian gods such as Anubis or Isis. This raises some methodological questions: how do we define a figurine as a souvenir in the context of the current state of our knowledge of Lararia? Equally, should we see the Lararia of houses in Pompeii of the first century CE as disconnected from the production of souvenirs?