

APPROACHES TO ANCIENT HOUSING

BAIRD (J. A.), PUDSEY (A.) (edd.) *Housing in the Ancient Mediterranean World. Material and Textual Approaches*. Pp. xviii + 499, b/w & colour ills, b/w & colour maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Cased, £105, US\$135. ISBN: 978-1-108-84526-7. doi:10.1017/S0009840X23002299

Originating in a conference organised by the editors in 2013, entitled ‘Between Words and Walls: Material and Textual Approaches to Ancient Housing’, this volume brings together fifteen chapters from presenters and others on a variety of topics related to houses and domestic life in the ancient Mediterranean. The introduction, by R. Alston, Baird and Pudsey, indicates that the intention of the volume is to move beyond the ‘hegemony of the textual’ characteristic of scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which ancient authors, particularly Vitruvius, were used to construct systems of labels for ancient domestic spaces leading to positivist explanations of room use and function, reinforcing text as the primary window onto the past and archaeology as the ‘handmaiden of history’, and simultaneously embedding now-outdated views on ethnicity, culture and gender into the received wisdom that yet permeates research. Such a goal would seem to be directly inspired by the well-known critique of current research in Roman domestic space at the ‘turn of the millennium’ by P.M. Allison (‘Using the Material and Written Sources: Turn of the Millennium Approaches to Roman Domestic Space’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 105 [2001], 181–208), whose evaluation of the contributions in light of that publication appropriately brings the volume to a close.

Each chapter deals with this goal in its own manner. Arranged largely chronologically, the chapters span the Graeco-Roman world both geographically and temporally, varying considerably in scope and datasets employed. Most take the form of case studies – examples of the ways in which current research employs archaeological data (normally architectural remains and rarely artefacts) and textual data (ancient literature and epigraphy), while others address the interaction between the two. Above all, researchers seek to ask different sorts of questions of the material than the scholarship of the past and are moreover studious to avoid arguments built uncritically upon it.

True to the direction of the volume, a number of chapters begin by detailing the detrimental impact of positivist scholarship from the past. E. Varto reveals the extent to which the poetry of Homer has proven a poor source for explaining developments in the ‘early Greek house’, arguing convincingly that the Homeric phrase *en megaroisi* had come to mean simply ‘at home’. Nevertheless, one might imagine that such a phrase was not without connotations, and it would have been interesting to see potential deeper implications considered in greater detail.

J. Morgan demonstrates how, even without a Greek Vitruvius from whom to lift terminology, scholarship managed to produce a misleading plan of ‘the Greek house’ that has obscured ancient flexibility regarding the use of space. Such malleability is indicated by the context-specific ways in which houses, and their rooms, are described in Lysias and Menander, but even with this one wonders whether a range of different sorts of activities among the spaces could be produced and how they overlapped with each other. This might illuminate the economic, social and regional differences that may have produced variations in use and terminology.

A surprisingly traditional evaluation of a particular ‘label’ derived from Vitruvius against archaeological data is presented by S. Speksnijder, who probably rightly concludes

that the word *vestibulum* pertained only to palaces of the elites and that such spaces therefore are not to be found in the houses of average Romans. It is difficult to accept, however, that such owners would not have been influenced by the elements of elite houses in the creation of their own entranceways, even if Vitruvius was unaware of such developments.

C. Meyer examines the extent to which the lingering subtexts of past scholarship in the study of ancient daily life have tended to impact museum displays and thereby continue to communicate outdated value systems to visitors framed in terms of modern domesticity. Ultimately undermining even such hallowed ground as the 'public-private' axis, the process is invigorating, but guidance is not provided for avoiding these problems in future exhibits.

Archaeological evidence forms the starting point for other contributions. M. McHugh's exploration of farmsteads, as identified through pottery distributions recovered during regional surveys, finds fault not with the misuse of ancient terminology but rather with the categories employed by modern research. Results from analysis of least-cost paths and road networks in GIS are compared against references in ancient texts, particularly Lysias, to posit a more complicated regional hierarchy between town and farm than has generally been identified. C. Kaczmarek's examination of the numerous shrines to the *lares compitales* on Delos explores correlations between house sizes, shrines and epigraphic evidence to posit reasons for the popularity of the cult with freed individuals, which are likewise elucidated by reference to literary information. The use of textual and archaeological data in these chapters is therefore relatively traditional, even if their conclusions are not. In both, it might have been useful to evaluate the broader implications of the observations reached. For instance, how might a complicated regional hierarchy impact debates around the 'consumer city' or distinctions between urban and rural housing, and why should Delos in particular have witnessed such a strong focus on *lares compitales*, especially if they were especially meaningful to freed populations?

K. Volioti employs the approach of artefact life-history to argue that distribution and decorative imagery on lekythoi suggest a broader connection to house and household than their common association with funerary dedication might otherwise imply. Corroboration from domestic artefact distributions is unfortunately limited by uncooperative excavated data, generally restricting discussion to the iconographic representations of the form. Outcomes may be of limited value for ancient housing, but nevertheless reinforce the conclusion that modern artefact categories are more restrictive and predictive than actual use during ancient daily life.

One contribution that showcases the full possibilities of a new paradigm in the relationship between textual and material data is L. Nevett's use of domestic commentary in Demosthenes' speeches to clarify and explain trends apparent in the relatively scattered archaeological remains of contemporary housing in Greece and Macedon. Through close reading of both sets of data, textual data illuminates the peculiarities in the distribution and types of houses recovered by archaeology; in turn, the characteristics of the archaeological remains also enrich our understanding of the nuances in Demosthenes' chosen points of critique – a reciprocity between material and text that showcases the advantages of treating both as equal partners.

Two chapters concentrate on evidence of housing from Egypt's Fayum. I. Uytterhoeven's largely material exploration of the remains produces a typology that employs epigraphic information to fill in details of household size and complexity, while Pudsey's exploration of kinship and endogamy as family strategies for wealth management and long-term survival as witnessed in the papyri from Tebtynis reveals just how complicated the intra- and extra-familial relationships of the inhabitants of

these houses could be. Both chapters expose the deep difficulties inherent in reconciling even the richest of material and epigraphic datasets, and they emphasise the different time scales to which each pertains. It would have been useful for deeper interconnections to be sought between these two chapters. For instance, can the marriage strategies attested in epigraphy help to explain the particular forms or transformations of structures identified in the material record?

The experience of ancient domestic space is also considered. A.C. Smith explores the important impact of now-missing textiles in the impression and meaning produced by Greek domestic contexts, especially relating to marriage. Due to the ephemeral nature of the subject matter, conclusions are naturally based largely on ancient texts and iconography deriving from painted pottery, but discussion draws attention to the complex cultural connotations that ancient spaces would have accrued that are entirely absent from the archaeological record. H. Platts uses a multi-sensory 'thick description' of the environment of a Pompeian suburban villa, not to challenge the scholarship of previous centuries, but rather in a curiously vehement condemnation of recent spatial and visual analyses of ancient domestic space that seems to mistake space syntax analysis for an effort to reconstruct the full ancient 'experience'. The broader phenomenological consideration of the remains in light of the perspectives expressed by ancient authors does imply that all human senses were in the minds of villa owners as they sought to produce environments that would impress their guests, but the process of analysis within specific architectural contexts remains speculative.

Theoretical considerations in the study of ancient housing form the focus of the remaining contributions. Baird highlights the role of time as a key factor in understanding ancient houses, both as a challenge in integrating textual information from specific moments, but also because houses embody the *longue durée* in place and space as memory. Alston revisits the philosophical underpinnings of much recent work on ancient domestic space, bringing together Bourdieu, Giddens, Foucault, Lefebvre and others, to craft an explanation of domestic space through the lens of social reproduction. It is these chapters that address the interactions between text and material data most directly, and while their conclusions naturally remain theoretical, they provide considerable food for thought.

Allison's critical response serves to bring the diverse strands of the volume together, setting each contribution against the major points of her own call to action. While considerable room for additional steps forward is identified, ultimately, she concludes that scholarship in the discipline has moved forward in recent years.

On the whole, the chapters present a sample of current research in the field, pertaining broadly to the study of ancient housing or domestic life, each of which reaches valuable conclusions that take Allison's critiques of 2001 into account. However, given that it is now nearly a quarter of a century later, readers might expect a more developed set of new methodologies and a fuller exploration of results to replace further elaboration of the issues highlighted in that pivotal article.

It is unfortunate, especially given the amount of time that has elapsed between the conference and its publication, that a number of chapters feel somewhat underdeveloped, reaching interesting conclusions that are only partially explored. It was surprising, moreover, that few synergistic interactions were drawn out between the chapters, which generally stand in isolation. Nevett's example of using text to investigate material culture and thence to enrich text might, for instance, have been profitably employed by other chapters, and Baird's observations on the dissonance of various time scales involved in data derived from ancient houses have clear resonance with similar observations made by other contributors.

Given the title and focus of the introduction, it was a little disappointing that the themes central to older scholarship on the ancient house, such as the use of space, house form and distribution did not feature in the volume. While undoubtedly in dire need of critical re-evaluation and re-alignment, such questions are surely not without continuing value or interest. While there can be no question that the research presented in the volume makes a valuable contribution to the study of housing in the ancient world, it is also clear that in challenging, deconstructing and circumnavigating the research of the past, we have yet to produce an entirely satisfactory replacement.

San Francisco State University

MICHAEL ANDERSON
maa35@sfsu.edu

SCULPTURE AND INSCRIPTIONS

DIETRICH (N.), FOUQUET (J.) (edd.) *Image, Text, Stone. Intermedial Perspectives on Graeco-Roman Sculpture*. (Materiale Textkulturen 36.) Pp. viii + 374, b/w & colour ill. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £82, €89.95, US\$103.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-077569-3. Open access.
 doi:10.1017/S0009840X23002032

‘The longstanding tradition of close study of material remains in archaeology may have sharpened our eyes for seeing in detail’, write the editors in the introduction to this anthology; ‘but, as a side-effect, it has caused us to overlook broader perspectives on Graeco-Roman art within the field of image studies’ (p. 2). Scholarship on ancient sculpture and inscriptions is presented here as a case in point. While ‘the subject matter of this edited volume does not initiate a wholly new field of research’ (p. 1), the aim is to bring together different areas of expertise, without privileging ‘any single disciplinary background’ (p. 6); above all, an objective lies in balancing more theoretical approaches to ‘the archetypical *paragone* of the arts of image and text’ (p. 1) with the ‘corpus of materially preserved statue inscriptions’ (p. 5).

The general programme of research will be familiar to many. The book derives from a conference at the University of Heidelberg in April 2019. More importantly, the volume is among the latest ‘outputs’ of a much larger interdisciplinary research project on ‘Material Text Cultures’, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG: ‘Collaborative Research Centre 933’). The project ran in Heidelberg from 2011 until June 2023: it has resulted in 38 edited books and monographs, all published ‘open access’ in the De Gruyter series of the same name. While some of these volumes offer diachronic and transcultural perspectives (e.g. T. Meier, M.R. Ott and R. Sauer [edd.], *Materiale Textkulturen: Konzepte – Materialien – Praktiken* [2015]), others have focused on Graeco-Roman archaeological and literary historical topics. Relevant titles include: A. Sarri, *Material Aspects of Letter Writing in the Graeco-Roman World, c. 500 BC – c. AD 300* (2017); P. Lohmann, *Graffiti als Interaktionsform: Geritzte Inschriften in den Wohnhäusern Pompejis* (2017); C. Ritter-Schmalz, R. Schwitter (edd.), *Antike Texte und ihre Materialität: Alltägliche Präsenz, mediale Semantik, literarische Reflexion* (2019);