

afterwards through construction of the *aedes Caesarum* on the north-west side and the triclinium (*cenatio Iovis*) of the Flavian Palace to the north-east.

Part 4 addresses the thorny question of the location of Augustus' house after abandonment of the first residence. Again, the Sorrento Base would suggest an architectural and topographical proximity between this house (its door surmounted by an oak wreath is shown on the relief), the Portico of the Danaids and the Temple of Vesta on the Palatine. Pensabene argues that the house is to be identified with a series of pavilions comprising the remains under the Flavian Palace, the 'Aula Isiaca' and the upper floor of the House of the Griffins, as already proposed by F. Castagnoli ('Note sulla topografia del Palatino e del Foro Romano', *ArchCl* 16 [1964], 173–99), and to these one should add the underground structures known as the 'House of Livia'. This hypothesis offers an alternative model to the controversial Sanctuary-Palace of Augustus proposed by A. Carandini and his colleagues (for the latest version of this edifice's reconstruction, see A. Carandini and P. Carafa, *Dal mostro al principe: alle origini di Roma* [2021]).

As acknowledged by Pensabene in the preface, this study is only a first step towards a better understanding of the Palatine in this historical and socio-political context – only time will reveal whether the arguments proposed here will have been widely accepted by the scholarly community (a positive review was published by E.M. Moormann, *BABesch* 97 [2022], 241–2, while a critical assessment was presented by T.P. Wiseman, 'Palace-Sanctuary or Pavilion? Augustus' House and the Limits of Archaeology', *PBSR* 90 [2022], 9–34). It may be no exaggeration to define the archaeology and topography of ancient Rome as a 'minefield', where in many instances the stories told by archaeological remains and literary sources are probably destined to keep clashing. Prioritising one source of information over the other, however, does not seem a helpful exercise. One should therefore appreciate Pensabene and his co-authors' efforts to look at both when discussing the results of their fieldwork, thus attempting to contextualise the material evidence within the respective historical setting. The wealth of data examined in the book, the proposed reconstructions of buildings and spaces, and the broader implications of these hypotheses will provide an essential point of departure for future studies, and for this we should be thankful.

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PERISTYLE GARDENS IN POMPEII

SIMELIUS (S.) *Pompeian Peristyle Gardens*. Pp. xvi + 251, figs, ills. London and New York: Routledge, 2022. Cased, £130, US\$170. ISBN: 978-0-367-64995-1. Open access.
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Over the last 30 years the study of Roman cities has developed significantly in response to the adoption of interdisciplinary approaches, methodologies and theoretical frameworks that all recognise the active role of space in the constitution and reproduction of social identities. S.'s book, which examines the relationship between Pompeian peristyle gardens and homeowners' socioeconomic status, is an ambitious and innovative addition to this

sub-field of scholarship. The book is a revision of S.'s 2018 dissertation and the latest contribution to Routledge's *Studies in Roman Space and Urbanism* series. It is available in both print and open-access PDF.

S. states (p. 2) that his 'ultimate aim is to examine how peristyles reflect the socioeconomic status of their owners' (following A. Rapoport, *Systems of Activities* [1990], and P. Bourdieu, *Judgement of Taste* [1979]), and he positions his approach to the Pompeian material within a broader consideration of socioeconomic representation in urban and domestic space in the Roman world (following A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society* [1994]). In particular, S. argues that Pompeian peristyles challenge the more traditional 'top-down' model of interpreting Roman dwellings (as adopted by P. Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life* [1998]) by showcasing the socioeconomic presentation of Roman middle class(es) – a term S. uses mainly to 'describe wealth, making it a so-called "objective class"' (p. 7). In order to achieve his aim, S. recognises that he must take 'a different approach than most' (p. 23), providing 'the first examination and comparative analysis of all 252 ... peristyle gardens excavated in Pompeii' (p. 1). To this end, S. uses a 'loose' definition of 'peristyle' (p. 18), encompassing garden spaces with four porticoes (a 'full peristyle') but also those with only one, two or three. S.'s consequent combination of extensive quantitative and qualitative study with more traditional historical narrative is thus both unique and ambitious, and he does an admirable job of bringing these strands together.

In contrast to S.'s approach, I believe it would be useful in this review to discuss the raw data and narrative somewhat separately, as both strands have their own merits as well as their own limitations. First, the extensive data-set that underpins S.'s argument is, in my opinion, the most significant contribution of this project to future scholarship. The book features 28 figures and 12 tables that provide summaries of the statistical and quantitative analysis as well as useful diagrams and plans; this is supplemented by an online appendix that provides a summary of the evidence for each of the 252 peristyles featured in the study (<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3-euw1-ap-pe-ws4-cws-documents.ri-prod/9780367649951/OnlineAppendix.pdf>). Admittedly, this data-driven approach will not appeal to some, and there are certainly elements that seem unnecessary (for example, I am not sure we need a mathematical application of the distinction between atria and peristyle in the main book, Figs 2.1 and 2.2), but it is impossible to overstate just how useful such a comprehensive body of data will be for scholars who wish to explore further Pompeian peristyle gardens, domestic space and Roman social strata more broadly; S. should be commended for making it fully accessible as an appendix to the book. It is also impossible to summarise fully the entire data-set within this review; so I would like to highlight two small examples that I see as representative of the usefulness of S.'s data-set to future studies. Figures 2.5 ('The average Pompeian peristyle') and 2.6 ('The median Pompeian peristyle') offer an important revision and refinement of L. Farrar's (*Ancient Roman Gardens* [1998], p. 16) oft-cited ground plans, which present the development of the peristyle as a straightforward evolution from a *horus* kitchen-garden at the rear of the house to a centralised peristyle structure. Whereas Farrar's plans can easily be used to perpetuate the stereotype of a linear progression away from 'productivity' and towards 'aesthetics', S.'s figures provide a more nuanced visual representation of the spatial configuration of the peristyle within the *domus*, which, in turn, allows for a more nuanced understanding of its multi-functionality. Indeed, S. showcases that at least 85% of all Pompeian peristyles have evidence of additional functions (Tables 3.1 and 7.3), alongside any aesthetic or display purposes.

Turning to the more traditional narrative, S.'s analysis is clearly organised, with chapters progressing in a logical manner and subheadings used copiously as structural

signposts. The first three chapters present the key context, positioning the work within broader fields of scholarship and investigating the functions of the peristyle within the Roman *domus*; Chapter 4 focuses predominantly on methodology; and the final three chapters dig into the data extensively to provide an extended commentary on the links between peristyles and socioeconomic status. In setting out the parameters for his study (Chapter 4), S. makes an important distinction between the architectural and decorative features that can be utilised for his socioeconomic comparison (size of area, number of porticoes, pools and basins, fountains, sculpture, wall paintings, floor decoration) and those features that cannot (plants and plantings) due to poor documentation. He then classifies the peristyles (Chapter 5) into seven groups (opulent, large full, ornamental, large painting, imitation, minor decoration, architectural) based on the previously identified features, before examining the relationships between these groups (Chapter 6) and the social standing of peristyle owners (Chapter 7). By following patterns in the data, S. argues that the evidence for the traditional ‘top-down’ model of aesthetic influence in Pompeii is rather thin. There are, to be sure, examples of imitation in the traditional and obvious sense. For example, S. identifies (p. 151) a group of peristyles that were all smaller than the Pompeian average but still maintained four porticoes and a pool in the garden, and he recognises that they could be ‘interpreted as miniature versions of the opulent peristyles’. However, S. also presents plenty of evidence (pp. 144–50) that large decorative features such as multiple fountains, sculpture collections or large paintings only appear rarely in the most elite categories of peristyles, thus indicating that such features were not (poorly done) imitations of the elite, but actually inventions and adaptations of the middle class(es). There is also a large group of 102 ‘architectural peristyles’ (p. 128) that do not have any significant decorative or display features. Although some evidence of this kind has surely been lost or corrupted over time, the volume of this type of peristyle – 40% of the entire data-set – suggests that many of the Pompeian peristyles were not designed primarily with display in mind, but, instead, were practical and multi-functional spaces offering light and air to houses owned by the lower-middle class(es) of society (p. 165).

Finally, in reviewing such a work on socioeconomic display, one cannot ignore the debate over the use of the term ‘middle class’ in classical studies, with some scholars arguing that it is simply too anachronistic and modern to be effectively applied to the ancient world (as demonstrated by responses to E. Mayer, *The Ancient Middle Classes* [2012]). However, S. is clear and emphatic throughout the book that he does not see the ‘middle class’ as a single heterogeneous group, and I agree with his application of the term as a working tool to help define ‘a group between the rich and poor’ (p. 9) that should really be called the middle classes – plural. Indeed, his study highlights the need for such a working tool, since it demonstrates the diverse needs, means and goals of peristyle owners, the majority of whom exist on a spectrum somewhere between the top elite and the lowest social groups: the most ‘opulent peristyles’ only represent about 6% of the 252 analysed, and in many ‘large full peristyles’ the indicators of socioeconomic status vary so much that they resist any straightforward interpretative model. There is still much work to be done on understanding sub-elite populations across the ancient world, and it is unclear whether the term ‘middle class’ will always be a useful framework for such work. However, S.’s book is a valuable addition to such an expansive discourse that clearly fulfils the author’s overarching aim, providing readers with a thought-provoking examination of the different levels of wealth and social status that were transmitted by Pompeian peristyles.

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