

*Herculaneum. Past and Future.* By ANDREW WALLACE-HADRILL. 310mm. 352pp. Lavishly illustrated with much colour. London: Frances Lincoln Ltd with the Packard Humanities Institute, Los Altos, California. ISBN 9780711231429, 2011. £40, \$60 (hbk)

This book showcases the Herculaneum Conservation Project, set up by the Packard Humanities Institute, California, in collaboration with the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei and with the support of the British School at Rome, to conserve the fast disintegrating fabric of the excavated remains of this ancient town. As Wallace-Hadrill states this book is a publication for this project but a 'completely personal interpretation of Herculaneum' (p.10), aimed at visitors to the site, rather than the scholarly community. As such it consists of a brief outline of historical, and some archaeological, evidence for the demise of this city, followed by an outline of its excavation history, from the Bourbon tunnels of the eighteenth century, to Amedeo Maiuri's excavations in the 1920s and 1930s, to Sara Bisel's study of the skeletal remains excavated from boat sheds along the waterfront in the 1980s, funded by the National Geographic. Other chapters provide descriptions and interpretations of domestic and public buildings, and their decoration, inscriptions and contents, as removed from the site by the Bourbon excavations for their collections, and as excavated, restored and presented by Maiuri to help visitors interpret these remains. At the same time Wallace-Hadrill discusses how these processes, particularly those used by Maiuri to restore and present the exposed remains that can be visited today, and the lack of continued maintenance of the site over the last half century, have necessitated the programme of work of the Herculaneum Conservation Project. This project commenced in 2002, to conserve these remains, to complete the analyses of the materials and to excavate drains, or rather cesspits, in parts of the site.

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, former Director of the British School at Rome, is most well-known among scholars working in Roman Campania for his book, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton 1994). Almost since his first forays into the study of this area in the late 1980s he has lamented the lack of scholarly attention to the archaeological remains of Herculaneum compared with her twin, Pompeii. In this book Wallace-Hadrill is concerned to demonstrate the importance of Herculaneum which has been largely bypassed as a tourist destination.

At the same time this book exposes, and indeed highlights many of the reasons why Herculaneum has received less visitor, and scholarly, attention than Pompeii. Essentially these reasons stem from the greater ease with which excavators, particularly in the nineteenth century, could remove the softer volcanic debris from Pompeii and so were able to expose great swathes of this town more rapidly, and to expose it such that it could be more easily visited by the increasing numbers of cultural tourists. While Maiuri unearthed some six city blocks of Herculaneum in the 1920s, together with the earlier and later excavations, including those of the neighbouring *Villa dei Papyri*, the extent of these Herculaneum excavations and the availability of their archaeological recording to scholars, pales into relative insignificance when considering the over seventy, often much larger, city blocks now exposed in Pompeii and the wealth of recording, not just the original excavation reports but the on-going study of the extant remains, that provide material for scholars to analyse and tourists to visit, novelists to write about, and film-makers to make films about for nearly 300 years. Accessibility and information breed interest, which breeds more information and more interest. The current state of Herculaneum is indeed witness to the Bourbon secrecy surrounding their excavations and difficulty faced in maintaining Maiuri's open air museum.

That said, since Maiuri made parts of this site visitable there has indeed been a steady trickle of national and international scholars working at Herculaneum, as is evident in Wallace-Hadrill's list further reading. The numbers of these studies, since the 1970s, relative to the size of the available excavated area, might be considered proportional to the numbers of those analysing the more extensive Pompeian remains during this period.

Wallace-Hadrill devotes one chapter specifically to comparing the importance of Herculaneum with that of Pompeii. However, this chapter seems to confuse the importance of Herculaneum for understanding ancient Roman society with the significance of the depositional processes and the investigation of them. While the very different volcanic conditions of these two sites, and the processes of their excavation, mean that much organic material (skeletons, wooden furniture and written documents) has been better preserved, in situ, and many fine works of art from Herculaneum are now in Museums around the world, differing conditions have also meant that much of the marble statuary and marble flooring, which Wallace-Hadrill argues was lacking in Pompeii, was robbed out long before the site was officially 'excavated'. Similarly the extensive wall-painting remains in Pompeii made it possible for August Mau to develop a typology for these paintings and to demonstrate a chronological sequence. With only six city blocks and a handful of houses excavated in Herculaneum it is much more difficult to carry out any systematic analyses of these remains.

As the name of the Herculaneum Conservation Project suggests, this project uses archaeology as a 'handmaiden' of conservation, as part of the management programme for this cultural heritage site rather than as an archaeological inquiry into its history. At the same time this book also indicates that much work will be done by the Herculaneum Conservation Project to complete the research of Sara Bisel, with new techniques that can give interesting

perspectives on the human skeletal excavated from the boat sheds, and to carry out scientific analyses of the archeozoological and archeobotanical contents of the newly excavated cesspits for information on their diet. However, there is no evidence in this book that it will carry out any detailed scholarly analysis of the remains excavated by Maiuri that are so badly in need of conservation. Hopefully this focus on presentation of this site stems from the aims of this book and not the project's overall remit, such that it can truly conserve Herculaneum for all relevant interest groups, which include the local Ercolano community whose lives continue to be impacted on by all these other groups.

This 'coffee table' book is extremely lavishly illustrated with fold-out illustrations showing both the wealth of the Herculaneum remains as well as the devastation caused to this site over the last 90 years of its exposure to the elements – it is not the sort of book that you can easily put in your hand luggage after your visit to the site. Also, rather frustratingly, the single map of the site (p.39) does not indicate the locations of most of the buildings and features discussed, and the fisheye lens images make 'reading' these building rather difficult.

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