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Graffiti and the Literary Landscape in Roman Pompeii. Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2014. xvi, 311 pp. Pr. \$125.00. ISBN 9780199684618.

The body of graffiti found in Pompeii, amounting to some 10,000 texts (the large majority collected and published in *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV), is of great interest to classicists, notably historians, archaeologists, and linguists. However, for those interested in literature this material remains marginal at best. Until recently, there were only few accessible editions with translation on the market,¹ and scholarly literature on the subject is often restricted to technical matters or to specialised analysis of just a handful of texts. An exception are poetic quotations of Virgil on the walls of Pompeii, which have been highlighted in a number of papers in mainstream classical journals.

The new study by Kristina Milnor on literary aspects of the Pompeian graffiti is therefore most welcome. Here the body of Pompeian graffiti is taken seriously and studied as the product of Roman literary culture. Milnor focuses on canonical poets such as Virgil, Ovid, and Propertius, but also pays considerable attention to metrical graffiti that cannot be ascribed to a specific author. In addition, she constantly attempts to connect the texts to the material context (houses, public buildings, streets) in which they have been found. As a result, her book gives a rich and lively picture of ‘popular literature’ in Roman Pompeii.

After a fairly lengthy introduction (pp. 1-43), the first chapter “Landscape and Literature in the Roman City” discusses the role of graffiti in Pompeii’s public space, arguing that there was a larger place for writing here than in modern times. A number of individual graffiti are analysed that show awareness of their communicative function, e.g. threats. Some well known anonymous epigrams (e.g. CIL IV 8899 and 9123) are also presented. In “Poetic Politics, Political Poetics” (pp. 97-135), Milnor focuses on the numerous texts which carried political messages, e.g. as slogans in electoral campaigns.

The chapter on “Authorship, Appropriation, Authenticity” (pp. 137-189) is more directly literary in its approach. It studies the small corpus of poetical fragments attributed to the Pompeian poet Tiburtinus (4966-4973), a number of other, anonymous epigrams (e.g. 1893-1894; 1895; 1896; 1898), salutations (for

1 Now readers may be referred to Cooley, A.E., Cooley, M.G.L. 2014. *Pompeii and Herculaneum, a Sourcebook* [2nd ed.] (London/New York); and Hunink, V. 2014. *Oh Happy Place! Pompeii in 1000 Graffiti* (Sant’ Oreste).

which Milnor assumes a background in letter writing and school exercises), and some lines which are found in numerous variations all over Pompeii (notably the jingle-like lines *Venimus huc cupidi, multo magis ire cupimus...* and *Quisquis amat ueniat...*). The well known poem 5296 (*O utinam liceat collo complexa tenere...*) receives special attention in a long, separate chapter (pp. 191-232). Inevitably, the numerous problems posed by the Latin text are not solved here once and for all. In her interpretation of the poem, Milnor draws attention to the 'female voice' in the poem, arguing that the poem represents erotic communication between women, and so expresses lesbian desire. This is surely a sympathetic idea but I did not feel entirely convinced: the problematic state of the text does not seem to allow for such a far reaching conclusion.

The final chapter, "Virgil, Education, & Literary Ownership" (pp. 233-272) enters on what may be called 'literary ground par excellence' the works of Virgil. Milnor discusses all Virgilian quotes and echoes on the walls of Pompeii. These are not merely schoolboys' work, she argues, but reflect broader literary interests. For instance, several Virgilian quotes (other than the often repeated *Aeneid* 1.1 and 2.1) come from direct speech, that is, from lines spoken not by the narrating poet but by some character. In other words, these quotations seem connected with forms of oral communication. The chapter ends on a convenient catalogue of all 69 relevant places, neatly arranged according to the Virgilian books from which they were taken.

Graffiti and the Literary Landscape in Roman Pompeii presents a useful and inspiring study of the graffiti. Meanwhile, it is neither strictly coherent, since it uses a number of approaches to the material, nor comprehensive, since it focuses on special types of graffiti, preferring the poetical and, generally speaking, more ambitious texts to simpler messages. For instance, the numerous obscene texts, as well as jokes and riddles, found in Pompeii might have earned a closer look, although it could also be argued that such texts have no literary connections in the first place. But in the end, I would suggest, a distinction between literary and non-literary texts does not make much sense. *All* texts found in Pompeii deserve scholarly attention and sympathy, as products of the Romans who lived and worked, and died, in Pompeii.

For readers not yet well acquainted with these texts, Milnor's book forms a pleasant introduction to the Latin graffiti. At another level, specialists in the field may find many relevant, sometimes thought-provoking observations on individual texts. Finally, those looking for development of academic theory will feel equally well served, since Milnor always attempts to put her practical insights into a broader theoretical framework. *Graffiti and the Literary*

Landscape in Roman Pompeii will certainly not be the last word on those ever fascinating graffiti from Pompeii. Meanwhile, it can count as the best study in its kind available today, and as such it is a clear must buy for any serious library of classics.

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