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**Katharine T. von Stackelberg, Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis (ed.), *Housing the New Romans. Architectural Reception and Classical Style in the Modern World.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xx, 327; 8 p. of plates. ISBN 9780190272333. \$74.00.**

**Reviewed by Eric M. Moormann, Radboud Universiteit (e.moormann@let.ru.nl)**

[The Table of Contents is listed below.]

This book presents a series of seven lengthy papers on the reception of Egyptian (or Egyptianising) and Greco-Roman architecture in British, French, and USA material culture during the long period of 1750-2000 – although there is little after the 1930s. In their introduction, the editors stress the importance of applying reception studies theories on material culture which, according to them, is a rather neglected aspect of the mostly literature-oriented discipline of reception studies. They note a possible series of terminological and methodological pitfalls, e.g. the use of comparisons and the applications of labels like ‘Greek’, ‘Egyptian’, ‘Neo-Classical’, etc., and illustrate their essay with examples gleaned from the subsequent papers, so that the reader gains familiarity with the book’s contents. Although the book is not the result of a round table, the editors have wisely inserted useful cross references. The numerous illustrations—many showing previously unknown objects—are a rich treasure, but apart from the eight splendid color plates, the reproductions unfortunately are rather greyish,

Ann Kuttner opens the -presented studies, which are presented chronologically, with an analysis of John Soane’s famous house at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London, now a popular museum, and Soane’s country house, Pitzhanger Manor. In a text that provides information on many related topics like excavations in Rome, discussions on taste, the concept of a ‘classical’ house, and archaeological practice, she makes clear that the adaptation of antique elements was not only a reference to the architect’s own profession and sources, but to the prestige he owned thanks to his energetic work in high society. Kuttner tellingly demonstrates the importance of the country manor as a commodity for making Soane a ‘real’ gentleman, by virtue of owning a villa, just as ancient Roman and British

noblemen did.

Caroline van Eck and Miguel John Versluys discuss the early nineteenth-century Empire interior of the Hôtel de Beauharnais in Paris, from 1818 onwards residence of the Prussian ambassador. Here a mix of Egyptian, Etruscan and Roman reminiscences resulted in one of the earliest full-fledged Empire interiors, which was a 'statement of Empire artistic politics' (p. 56). The authors see the interior as an 'immersive space': people moving around trespass into fantastic realms of Egyptian, Roman, and Turkish character, enlivened by a large quantity of gilded objects and pieces of furniture. They approach these decorations from various points of view, thus responding to the goal of the book, and try to formulate the intentions of makers and patrons, not by mere comparisons of the motifs, but by analyzing relevant contemporary theories on ornaments (and the polemics on them) and design theory as well as the selection of things Egyptian. The mixed use of formal elements (no longer in pure style classes like Doric or Ionic or the like) has to do with a personalized selection for Eugène de Beauharnais, thus changing the visitor's appreciation of the building's *caractère* as a private *immersion*. The visitor, as it were, dives into a space filled and adorned with a wild mix of elements from different ancient cultures and experiences it as if witnessing a stage work. Piranesi's plea for mixing elements, which would follow Roman tendencies, was avidly appropriated by the hybrid Empire style. The authors coin this as 'Alexandrianism' and compare it to the Second Pompeian Style and that of Augustan Rome, full of similar influences from various cultures and histories (p. 75, 78). This comparison is fine and illustrates well what they want to argue, but poses the danger of a strong anachronism, since Beauharnais and his circle will hardly have had any notion of these cultural assets.<sup>1</sup>

Shelley Hales has extensively published on Pompeian houses and Pompeii's reception history.<sup>2</sup> In this volume she explores the open-air museum of historical houses designed by the then fashionable architect Jean-Louis Charles Garnier (among others the Opéra Garnier in Paris) for the 1899 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Next to Etruscan, Roman and Byzantine houses was a Gallo-Roman one, all only known via still sparse, albeit growing, archaeological documentation and a huge book by Garnier and Auguste Ammann, *L'histoire d'habitation humaine* (Paris 1892). Hales sees the popularity of models and reconstructions as a response to the wish of the contemporary public to experience visually and bodily these realms from the past. They did not need to be authentic, despite critique from experts and the caveats expressed by the makers themselves. Pompeii formed the benchmark according to whose reliability Garnier tried to reconstruct its houses (while deploring the absence of similar evidence for other houses). At the same time, in contrast to reconstructions such as the Maison Pompéienne (which, after all, was a modern house as well), he had no ambition to present his Roman house as a device for modern adaptation. I only ask whether this sort of inspiration in the late nineteenth century was still so important for contemporary architects and interior designers, in contrast to the early Neo-Classicism, finishing with the mid

nineteenth-century Néo-Grecs (see, in fact, Hales' own skeptical remarks on the decrease of Pompeii's prestige, p. 123). In any case, Hales succeeds in defining trends within the 'neo-pompeianistica' in a much wider scope. Her article, therefore, should provide much food for further thought on this subject.

Marden F. Nichols' paper is a pioneering reconnoitering of 'Pompeian rooms' in the USA, both those still extant and those only known from publications. She dates the start of American Pompeianism in the 1850s as one of the various outlandish trends adopted in interior decoration. This introduction was made by home designers who were inspired by European, mainly French, trends. Such decorations were applied in other sorts of buildings as well, among them luxury hotels and concert halls. Nichols mentions the Capitol and the Library of Congress in Washington, where visitors are surrounded by Pompeian-style paintings from 1856-1858. These paintings were hotly criticized at the time as unbecoming of important government buildings. Nichols' paper abounds with (amusing) debates on the example Pompeii could give to 'us' or, conversely, how corrupt Pompeian style was. The fashion played itself out in the early twentieth century, but we might add the noble example of Mark Rothko's canvases for the Seagram Restaurant in New York from 1958, and, if we take into account the aspect of glitter, Donald Trump's residence in his Trump Tower in New York.

Melody B. Deusner discusses American evocations of a specific antique feature, viz. *scholae* or *exedrae* in the shape of a half circle, known, among others, from funerary monuments in Pompeii like the *schola* of Mammia (or Mamia). The main inspiration, however, was Alma Tadema's series of exedra paintings.<sup>3</sup> The oldest monumental example known is Saint-Gaudens's monument for admiral Farragut on Madison Square in New York, erected between 1877 and 1881, which is discussed at length as a place of reflection (associated with death) and relaxation alike. This and other benches belied growing insecurity and inequality in a time of rapid social and political developments between, roughly, 1880 and 1920. They were a sort of *leitourgia* not to be used by 'tramps' (p. 169-170) and other idle folk. Circular benches became a popular device in gardens as well.

Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis presents six tombs in one of the first park-like graveyards of New York, Woodlawn Cemetery. Next to stelae, column monuments, and facades with classical elements (e.g. the Leeds Mausoleum, extensively analysed), there are temple-like sepulchers erected by wealthy New-Yorkers. These monuments are expressions of the 'Neo-Antique Style', not exact copies of Greco-Roman architecture, but a blend of elements from that era, thus creating a unique American 'style' (p. 231). A couple of them were Egyptian in style, expressing 'stability, solidity, solemnity, and certainty that stood in striking contrast to rapid socioeconomic, political, and technical transformations that defined the nineteenth century' (p. 201). I quote this explanation as an example of the thorough reflection made in this book on the repercussions of using things classical and/or Egyptian. The tombs became emblematic just like

museums, public buildings, and even banks adorned with classical *peripteroi*. By drawing on such styles and motifs, *nouveaux riches* like the 'robber baron' Jay Gould could present themselves as fine and cultivated persons and obtain 'a degree of *gravitas*' (p. 211). Macaulay-Lewis subtly analyses and criticizes the monuments with respect to their (mix of) classical (and other) elements. Garvan's 1927 mausoleum with a Ionic prostyle (fig. 6.4) is compared with the prostyle Portunus Temple in Rome, but I see a reflection of the Nike Temple on the Acropolis in Athens: the side walls are smooth rather than adorned with half columns and there is a three-stepped stylobate (which, I must admit, stands on top of a Roman podium) as well as a sculpted Ionic frieze. Strikingly, several of the discussed monuments were commissioned during the lifetime of their patrons. It might be interesting to know whether these patrons were consciously imitating grandes from the classical past who also had their own mausoleums built.

Editor Katharine von Stackelberg, well known thanks to her work on Roman gardens, has studied some American villas with gardens, beginning with the famous Getty Villa in Malibu. Although its sources of inspiration are clear, the exact reasons why J. Paul Getty chose to use the Villa of the Papyri as his model remain obscure. Stackelberg addresses the problem of 'hyperreality' connected with this and other classical-like complexes raised by Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco as an extremely negative feature (p. 233). Instead of analyzing the architecture, she concentrates on the 'heterotopia' of its gardens, which are conceived as 'active landscapes of communication' (p. 238) between maker/patron and audience. The four Malibu gardens have no relation with California's flora, but try to tie in with Roman Mediterranean gardening. Perhaps because I have never been to Malibu, I find it difficult to follow Stackelberg's highly theoretical approach in which she distinguishes between 'triggers' and 'prompts', whereas the (absence of) knowledge of the originals used in new combinations apparently helps (or does not help) to see the effects created or sought after by the author. Apparently, all visitors, informed and uninformed alike, should see the in copies of the Papyri statues 'something uncanny about the frozen stillness of these doubled figures' (p. 245). Stackelberg then discusses a predecessor, the no longer extant Pompeia at Saratoga Springs, New York, from 1889, modelled after the House of Pansa in Pompeii. Franklin W. Smith built for educational purposes and included objects illustrating ancient daily life. It was built in modern materials, and accessible by modern means (train), thus being better than the original ruin in Pompeii: in sum a hyperreal construct. At the same time, it was a mix of elements from other buildings, and the objects crammed in the rooms, modern copies of heterogeneous ancient works, reflected full-packed Victorian homes. All in all, every single element had a determined value in this concept. This should also be the case in a gardenscape full of ancient elements near the present-day Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, called Crowninshield Garden and privately created in 1924. The confusing mix of industrial ruins and classical follies met with disapproval and the garden was dismantled in the 1960s. Stackelberg evidently wants to make clear that the interpretative model of

hyperreality can be applied to various expressions of reception of classical elements within houses and gardens. 'Contact with the past' (p. 267) becomes more important than the correctness of the imitations.

In an Afterword the editors tie together the threads spun by the contributors. They advocate further studies according to a 'Neo-Antique' rather than neoclassical scope. In the run of time, adaptation of ancient notions in material culture have proved to be more and more problematic, being often too elitist and narrow rather than edifying and noble, as was thought until deep in the nineteenth century. The editors refer, for instance, to the critique of Getty's Villa in the 1970s. They are right in arguing that gardens and landscape-settings should be studied together with the buildings erected. Despite the sometimes heavily theoretical passages, this book is a pleasant and inspiring read.

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## Notes:

1. What is more, the influence from Pompeian painting contained little from the Second Style, which was not fashionable at that time. It had few figural scenes (these become more used from the beginning of the first

century AD) and the ornaments, architectural elements, and the like betray the language of the third and fourth styles. The ubiquitous floating figures are uniquely used in the fourth style. An analysis of these matters still stands out. See i.a. A. Allroggen-Bedel, 'Gli scavi borbonici nelle ville stabiane. Pitture antiche a gusto settecentesco', in *Stabiae. Storia e architettura. 250° anniversario degli scavi di Stabiae 1749 - 1999. Convegno internazionale, Castellammare di Stabia 25 - 27 marzo 2000*, Rome 2002, 101-107.

2. Most recently: Living with Arria Marcella: Novel Interiors in la Maison Pompéienne, in A.-M. Leander-Touati and S. Hales (eds), *Return to Pompeii. Interior Space and Decoration Documented and Revived, 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Stockholm 2016, 217-244. This book forms a good match to the volume under review.

3. In Europe, the Pompeian *scholae* were imitated much earlier and they feature in Pompeian *vedute* and portraits, e.g. 'Anna Amalia in den Ruinen von Pompeji' by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein from 1788/1790, now in Weimar, Goethe-Nationalmuseum.

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