

Mary EMERSON, *Greek Sanctuaries and Temple Architecture: An Introduction*, 2nd edn., London: Bloomsbury, 2018, XX, 270 pp., ISBN 978-1-4725-7528-9, £18.99.

Just over a decade after the publication of *Greek Sanctuaries: An Introduction*, Mary EMERSON [= E.] has produced an updated and corrected version of her very popular book. This new work differs from the original not only because it has an altered and more suitable title, but also due to the broader scope of her discussion (she has added chapters 15: “The Age of Greek Expansion to the West: Paestum”, and 16: “The Temple of Olympian Zeus at Akragas, Sicily”). In addition, the texts analysed previously have been re-examined. The book has been divided into 17 chapters as well as a glossary, index and bibliography. Chapters 1–4 contain a general discussion and serve as an introduction to the specific details of Greek sacral architecture. In short subsections E. explains the most important issues, beginning with ancient sources on temple construction and associated cults, on the characteristic pan-Hellenic aesthetic relating to such construction and on the ancients’ sensitivity to the beauty of the landscape and the proper siting of cultic locations. At this point it must be emphasised that this book is aimed above all at those without prior knowledge of ancient architecture and archaeology but who are interested in Greek culture and who seek a comprehensive introduction to the subject. Next we find a discussion of many fundamental issues and difficulties connected with both Greek religiosity and the history of the construction of these edifices (chapter 3: “From Mud Hut to Marble Temple: Doric and Ionic Orders”). We should note that in this introductory section the author has also included an explanation of the role of sculpture in Greek architecture (chapter 4) as an element of construction essential to it, although in the present day this mostly no longer exists, or else has been transferred to museums. Other important architectural elements are similarly elucidated, among them colour, which is almost completely absent from universal modern ideas of ancient temples. Subsequent chapters (5–16) focus on the discussion of selected sacral buildings; here the representative examples are mainly found in Athens (the Parthenon, Propylaea, the Sanctuary of Athene Nike, the Erechtheion and the Hephaisteion). Yet this is supplemented by discussion of buildings in Delphi, Olympia, Bassae, Paestum and Akragas. The book concludes with a short reflection on how sacral architecture was received by the ancients, illustrated mainly by several passages from the *Ion* of Euripides. It is worth noting here that E. often recalls ancient sources and establishes her narrative while giving a voice to the ancients, demonstrating the real-life circumstances under which these constructions were built before they became the ruins with which we are familiar. In addition to Pausanias and Diodorus Siculus, she also discusses other authors including Plato, Sophocles, Plutarch and – as mentioned above – Euripides (and supplies her own translation of the texts quoted). While discussing sacral decorations she refers to and briefly elucidates associated myths, as well as, occasionally, historical or literary events: even short allusions, such as Herodotus reading his *History* at Olympia (p. 67), lend the whole argument on the theme of architecture a certain light-heartedness.

Books which are aimed mainly at readers without a good understanding of the subject should be evaluated not only on the basis of their scholarship but equally on their instructive accessibility. In this regard, E.’s volume has many advantages. It is written in an elegant, concise and appealing style, easily understood by an untrained readership. The book is not only fluently written but also encourages the reader to want to expand his/her knowledge without being intimidating. For this reason the author decided not to include footnotes. Most (though not all) of the academic terms used are explained in the glossary (pp. 262–266).

In some sense this is not merely a work on architecture. E.’s book also enables us to understand the ancients’ mindset in relation to national symbols, political ideology and even propaganda through succinct interpretation of selected iconographic images (e.g. the Battle of the Centaurs with the Lapiths on the west pediment of the temple of Zeus in Olympia, pp. 75–77). Of course,

in such a short introduction there is no space for an in-depth analysis of the complexities of ancient religion and the specific details of cults, any more than there is for an account of the history of the locations discussed, especially in situations where, as the author herself writes, the traditions of most temples are rooted in the Neolithic period. E. is obliged to make simplifications and abbreviations and select the elements of sculpture and architecture that are in her opinion most interesting, and their associated myths. These choices are often highly subjective. However, it is difficult to understand why many sacral complexes located in the eastern part of the ancient Greek world are omitted from an introductory volume of this kind. She mentions only very briefly a temple on Samos (p. 22) and complexes at Didyma and Ephesus (pp. 243 ff.). It is true that the extant temples at Didyma, Ephesus, Priene and Sardes do not originate in the archaic or classical periods, but even so they are interesting examples of Ionian style. A methodical introduction to Greek architecture would require, for the benefit of the reader, the inclusion of the entirety of ancient Hellas, whose major places of cult and culture were located precisely on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

The discussion is illustrated through the use of 119 images (black-and-white photographs and line drawings as well as two maps of the Greek world). In order not to make the book overly expensive, too lengthy or of less than textbook quality, the author and publisher decided on a supplementary online publication of colour photographs¹. Taking into account the book's aim to be a primary textbook, this was a very good idea, as it encourages younger readers to pursue further online study. At this point, however, we must ask whether, given that the technological possibilities of such an interactive publication allow for virtually unlimited illustrations of the issues raised in the book, this could not also have included at least a handful of technologically reconstructed examples of temples and sculptures in their original colours? After all, the generation at which the book is aimed absorbs information to a large extent through the use of images. On the other hand, we should emphasise that the black-and-white photographs included in the book have both their charm and their educational value. For example, a photograph taken *in situ* (fig. 45) best illustrates how the changing light of the sun and the movement of shadow can enliven a bas-relief. The inclusion of historical engravings was also a good decision. The seventeenth-century drawing by Jacque Carrey (fig. 51) shows the west pediment of the Parthenon in all its beauty and in the state in which it was found before its barbaric denudation by Thomas Bruce, and allows us to appreciate the ingenuity of the original construction, which was irremediably ruined in 1802. It is also interesting that while E. discusses the Parthenon's reliefs for 13 pages and points out that most of the frieze is currently held in the British Museum and "can be closely examined" (p. 109), she omits the subject of the controversies associated with the despoiling of the most important temple in Athens. In a book aimed mainly at students and interested travellers, a short account of the spoliation of the Parthenon could have been a good pretext for a discussion of the ethical aspects of excavation and the responsibility of the current generation to preserve works of art for future generations.

E.'s book is worth recommending, especially to undergraduates interested in the architecture, archaeology, history of art, and Hellenic culture in broad terms. Its convenient size, weight and the paper's adequate resistance to damage also make it a practical and stimulating travel companion for curious tourists. It seems that in the age of easy access to a great deal of detailed information, the main advantage of such a volume is its ability to inspire interest and stimulate further study.

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¹ See <https://www.bloomsbury.com/cw/greek-sanctuaries-and-temple-architecture-2nd-edition/galleries/>.