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## Comparing Roman Hellenisms in Italy



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# COMPARING ROMAN HELLENISMS IN ITALY

Basil Dufallo and Riemer A. Faber, Editors

The story of Roman Hellenism—defined as the imitation or adoption of something Greek by those subject to or operating under Roman power—begins not with Roman incursions into the Greek mainland, but in Italy, where our most plentiful and spectacular surviving evidence is concentrated. Think of the architecture of the Roman capital, the Campanian towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum buried by Vesuvius, and the Hellenic culture of the Etruscans. Perhaps “everybody knows” that Rome adapted Greek culture in a steadily more “sophisticated” way as its prosperity and might increased. This volume, however, argues that the assumption of smooth continuity, let alone steady “improvement,” in any aspect of Roman Hellenism can blind us to important aspects of what Roman Hellenism really is and how it functions in a given context.

As the first book to focus on the comparison of Roman Hellenisms per se, *Comparing Roman Hellenisms in Italy* shows that such comparison is especially valuable in revealing how any singular instance of the phenomenon is situated and specific, and has its own life, trajectory, circumstances, and afterlife. Roman Hellenism is always a work in progress, is often strategic, often falls prey to being forgotten, decontextualized, or reread in later periods, and thus is in important senses contingent. Further, what we may broadly identify as a Roman Hellenism need not imply Rome as the only center of influence. Roman Hellenism is often decentralized, and depends strongly on local agents, aesthetics, and materials. With this in mind, the essays concentrate geographically on Italy to lend both focus and breadth to our topic, as well as to emphasize the complex interrelation of Hellenism at Rome with Rome’s surroundings. Because Hellenism, whether as practiced by Romans or Rome’s subjects, is in fact widely diffused across far-flung geographical regions, the final part of the collection gestures to this broader context.

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