THE Museum of
Augustus

The Temple of Apollo in Pompeii, the Portico of Philippus in Rome, and Latin Poetry

PETER HESLIN

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Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum

FRONT JACKET: Mosaic with the Removal of Briseis,
    second century (detail, fig. 70)
BACK JACKET: François Mazios, Reconstructed view
    of north elevation of the Temple of Apollo in
    Pompeii, n.d. (detail, fig. 46)
TITLE PAGE: Félix Emmanuel Callet, Elevation of the
    East Wall of the Portico of the Temple of Apollo in
    Pompeii, early nineteenth-century (detail, fig. 28)
PAGES 24–25: Wall Painting of the Taking of Briseis
    from the Atrium of the House of the Tragic Poet,
    Pompeii (detail, fig. 69)
PAGES 194–95: Giuliano da Sangallo, Drawing of the
    Ruins of a Roman Portico, late-fifteenth or early
    sixteenth century

For Gracie (this one has pictures)

Generalizations as expansive as these:
that there is a universal poetry that is
reflected in everything or that there may
be a fundamental aesthetic of which
poetry and painting are related but
dissimilar manifestations, are speculative.
One is better satisfied by particulars.

—Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel*

Contents

Foreword

Nostoi (myths of return) recount the journeys of warriors who set sail after the fall of Troy. The war's end hastened an ill-fated homecoming for some survivors, yet for others it launched a diaspora to new destinations and destinies. The mythical exploits of Odysseus and his companions narrated in Homer's *Odyssey* were a prequel to the exploration of the western Mediterranean by Greek merchant sailors. Throughout the Italian peninsula, at his ports of call and in places where his tales were told, colonial and native communities alike adopted the hero as their founder. Rome claimed descent from the Trojan prince Aeneas, whose settlement on the Tiber River gave birth to a city and an empire. As the forefather of the Julio-Claudian line, Aeneas figured large in the Roman cultural imagination. Italy was thus already a thoroughly Homeric landscape by the time Virgil accepted a commission from Augustus to compose the *Aeneid*, which transformed Aeneas's adventures from a dynastic legend to Rome's national epic.

In *The Museum of Augustus*, literary scholar Peter Heslin explores the nexus of connections between Latin poetry written during the Early Empire and paintings of the Trojan War displayed in prominent Roman buildings. It cannot be coincidental that three such pictorial cycles were created over the first two decades of the emperor's reign, between about 29 and 10 BC. All of them adorned temple precincts and illustrated climactic events of the ten-year Trojan War from the *Iliad* of Homer. Only two of these cycles existed in reality, however, while the third was the product of Virgil's literary imagination. Fragmentary frescoes discovered in the Temple of Apollo at Pompeii, Heslin argues, reproduce forty or so originals that had been on view in the surrounding colonnade since the late first century BC. Featuring several episodes with Aeneas, the Pompeian pictures reflect a Roman sensibility. Their apparent model was an influential metropolitan precedent—a series of paintings by Theoros installed in the Porticus Philippi in Rome. This portico, constructed as a frame for the Temple of Hercules Musarum around 29 or 28 BC by a relative of Augustus, survives only in its foundations; its artistic program is lost. Pliny the Elder made brief note of the many panels, which shared the gallery with a famed old master painting depicting another Iliadic theme, Zeuxis's *Helen*.

Although physical vestiges are scant, the significance of the actual Trojan cycles lies in their relationship to the third sequence, which is described in Book I of the

Aeneid, when Aeneas tearfully beholds scenes of the Trojan War in the Temple of Juno in Carthage. From these elusive remains, Heslin has proposed a painstaking reconstruction of two major monuments that occupied crucial urban and ideological spaces. Poets and artists reacted to the saturated visual environment of imperial building projects and their embellishment, but rather than simply copying earlier Greek sources, they experimented with the devices of allusion and quotation to create an innovative artistic language.

Viewers brought their own layers of association to pictorial representations of glorious battles and ancestral heroes that informed their historical consciousness and identity, multiplying the complex resonances among them. To paraphrase Heslin, domestic images that were familiar to the residents of Pompeii could have quoted local temple paintings that imitated a fictional ecphrasis in the *Aeneid*, which in turn was inspired by a monument in Rome containing a cycle of Hellenistic paintings that illustrated Homer's *Iliad,* a compilation of remembered songs, pictures, and texts. In considering how such a proliferation of imagery conditioned responses, Heslin tackles the "uneasy marriage" between words and pictures, as well as reproductions and originals, reversing the usual subordination of art to literature, and Roman visual culture to Greek paradigms.

Parts of the present study were advanced while the author was in residence at the Getty Villa during the 2010–2011 scholar year, which engaged "The Display of Art" as a research topic. His project relied on the burgeoning pool of digitized drawings, plans, photographs, and archives that supported a reconstruction of the buildings and their fresco cycles. At the Getty, the Research Library and Museum collections chronicle three hundred years of Pompeian excavations and the history of archaeology in Italy. Peter Heslin's recuperation of the archaeological remains through intertextual readings of contemporary poetry and art offer intriguing insights into patronage and image making in the age of Augustus.

Claire L. Lyons
Curator of Antiquities, J. Paul Getty Museum

Acknowledgments

This book is a product of the digital revolution that is transforming the study of the material culture of antiquity. Literary scholars can carry copies of their texts around in their pockets, but until recently art historians had to rely on having direct physical access to archives, collections, and specialized libraries and on possessing an acute visual memory. Now, however, the Internet provides instant access to a multitude of images of ancient artifacts, to scans of expensive and rare books, and even to many archival documents. Images can be stored and manipulated on a computer so that working with objects no longer needs to be much more inconvenient than working with texts. The recent so-called material turn in the humanities is in part a response to this explosion of access to visual evidence. Whatever one thinks of the consequences of opening the study of material culture so suddenly to a wider range of nonspecialists, my experience has been that art historians and archaeologists are very welcoming and generous with their expertise to an author such as myself coming from a background as a literary critic. Whether the interpretations advanced in this book are right or wrong, it is surely remarkable that a newcomer to this material has been able to discover new images of genuine importance to the reception of Homer in Roman Italy without leaving his office and using only a Web browser.

Most of the research for this book was thus done online rather than in museums, at sites, and in archives. I could not have written it without access to a wide range of digital resources and I am very grateful to the pioneers who have taken the risk of investing their time and money in assembling these resources for the study of visual culture in antiquity, and also to those rights holders who have understood that digital access is an opportunity rather than a threat. One hopes that more cautious institutions will soon follow suit. In particular, I wish to thank the people behind the following online projects, which were essential to my research: *Bibliothèque numérique* (Institut national de l'histoire de l'art); *Blogging Pompeii*; *Cat'zArts* (École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts); *Digital Collections* (Getty Research Institute); *Digital Collections* (The Warburg Institute); Digital *Forma Urbis Romae* Project (Stanford University); *Digital Library for the Decorative Arts and Material Culture* (University of Wisconsin–Madison); *Digitale Bibliothek* (Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg); *Gallica* (Bibliothèque nationale de France); *La fortuna visiva di Pompei* (Scuola Normale Superiore); and *Pompeii in Pictures*. I also wish to record my debt to those libraries and archives that have

Introduction

Temples Real and Imaginary

T HIS BOOK IS ABOUT THREE TEMPLES, each of them surrounded by a portico decorated with a cycle of paintings representing the Trojan War: two of them are real temples, one in Rome and one in Pompeii; the third is fictional, and it is the most famous of the three. In the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the hero Aeneas arrives in Dido's newly founded city of Carthage. He enters the temple dedicated to the city's patron goddess, Juno, and in its portico he sees a series of paintings depicting the Trojan War.[1] This precipitates a tearful and intense emotional response as Aeneas sees his own experiences transformed into art. He reads (or misreads) the artwork as promising that the inhabitants of the city will be sympathetic to his people's suffering.[2] By showing so early in his epic an example of an intense emotional response to a work of art depicting the Trojan story, Virgil apparently provides a key for reading his own poem, which is a depiction in words of that same story. He also, perhaps, provides a model for the perils of misreading it.[3]

About ten years later (for the revised dating, see chapter 4), the people of Pompeii decorated the portico of their Temple of Apollo in a strikingly similar fashion, with scenes from the Trojan War. This coincidence has been remarked upon before. F. H. Sandbach, for example, says:

> Virgil does not specifically say where Aeneas found the pictures of the Trojan War which brought him comfort, but they seem to be *in luco* [1.450] and *sub ingenti templo* [1.453]. A Roman could hardly help applying his own experiences and imagining them as a colonnade enclosing the sanctuary; this was pointed out already by Heyne. By a strange chance paintings (now lost) of Trojan scenes were found at Pompeii on the walls of the colonnade of Apollo's temple there.[4]

In this book I set out to explore the circumstances of that "strange chance." In fact, the paintings mentioned by Sandbach have not been completely lost. Some aspects of them have long been familiar to a specialist audience, and in a recent book surveying the subject of ancient temple painting, E. M. Moormann usefully sets out what has traditionally been known of the decoration of the Pompeian temple portico.[5] He briefly considers the possibility of a link between Virgil's imaginary temple and the real one in Pompeii but dismisses it. Like Sandbach, Moorman is at a loss to make much more of the possibility, in part because the evidence previously available was

not very extensive or suggestive. The first four chapters of this book are devoted to using archival sources to extend considerably our knowledge of the Trojan paintings that decorated this temple.

The third portico I discuss is the least known of the three. The Portico of Philippus was built by a very close relative of the Roman emperor Augustus, but nothing of it has survived. Sources say that in this temple portico there was, yet again, a series of paintings depicting the Trojan War. This structure is generally passed over without comment in studies of Augustus's massive building program, under the assumption that it was a minor work of a minor imperial hanger-on. In fact, the evidence suggests that it amounted to a complete remodeling of Rome's de facto Temple of the Muses, or "Museum." (The word "Museum" is capitalized throughout this book to indicate a place of worship for the Muses, either in Rome or in Alexandria. It should not be confused with the word "museum" in the modern, generic sense, as a secular institution for the display of art; all ancient temples were places for the display of art, but only incidentally so.) This would seem, then, to be the perfect point at which to ask whether there was a connection between the poetic and architectural patronage of the regime. In fact, there has been a recent explosion of scholarly interest in the building that the Portico of Philippus surrounded and recontextualized: the Republican Temple of Hercules of the Muses. It is now widely agreed that there was an important symmetry between the patronage of Fulvius Nobilior in constructing the temple and decorating it (probably) with a copy of the Roman list of annual magistrates (the *fasti*) and his patronage of the poet Ennius, author of Rome's first hexameter epic, the *Annales*, which detailed in similarly annual fashion the exploits of those magistrates. Thus it is no coincidence that the decorative scheme of the Portico of Philippus articulated precisely the same relationship to the *Aeneid* as had once existed between Fulvius's temple and the *Annales*. The Portico of Philippus is the public justification in the language of Roman architecture of Augustus's patronage of poetry; it is his importation of the Museum of Alexandria into a Roman context.

The potential connections between these three Augustan temple porticoes have been noted in passing often enough before. What makes this book different is that it brings to bear a large mass of new evidence for reconstructing the Pompeian portico. It turns out that a great deal more can be established beyond the prior state of research as illustrated in Moormann's general survey: there are more Trojan images that can be attributed to it than were previously known, and, crucially, many of these can, for the first time, be situated in precise locations on the walls. This in turn permits us to show that a number of the traditional identifications of subjects of those images are mistaken. So, for example, it turns out that Aeneas was a prominent figure in the Pompeian portico, which reinforces the argument that there is a link between it and the imaginary temple of the *Aeneid*. The huge popularity of Virgil in Pompeii is attested to by the frequency with which quotations appear in graffiti.[6] By contrast,

there is only a single painting in the town that is certain to depict a scene from the *Aeneid*, so the conclusion has been drawn that Latin poetry did not have much impact on Roman painting.[7] And yet the oldest and perhaps the most prestigious cult sanctuary in the town was remodeled in a way that made it strikingly reminiscent of an imaginary building in Virgil's poem. Perhaps in hunting for fleas one omits to notice the dog. The subjects of the individual paintings in the temple are Homeric, but the installation as a whole is Virgilian. Moreover, the paintings in that sanctuary display a special interest in the figure of Aeneas. The frequency with which the townspeople of Pompeii copied images from this pictorial cycle for use in their domestic spaces attests to its importance. It may be that the people of Pompeii employed an iconographical vocabulary that remained firmly Greek, but they combined those elements to create a Roman visual language, which surely was influenced by the Latin poetry they were reading and scribbling onto those same walls. To put it in terms borrowed by Norman Bryson from Roland Barthes, the denotative elements in Roman painting were almost exclusively Greek, but the connotative dimension was very Roman.[8]

Images of the Trojan War were, of course, ubiquitous in the Greek and Roman world, both in and out of porticoes. The distant ancestor of the Roman painted portico, the Stoa Poikile in Athens, included a painting by Polygnotus of Ajax and Cassandra after the fall of Troy. The same artist made the Lesche of the Cnidians at Delphi famous for his paintings of the sack of Troy and of Odysseus in the underworld.[9] Homeric paintings were equally popular in the Roman world. Pompeii offers several examples of extensive Iliadic friezes in domestic contexts, both painted and relief. Vitruvius recommends Trojan themes for galleries, and, in the city of Rome, the fresco known as the Odyssey Landscapes was fitted with a framing device that represents the pictures as if being seen from a portico. Petronius testifies to the popularity of such scenes by attributing to his grotesque fictional creation Trimalchio a particular taste for painted Homeric subjects.[10] Despite this evidently widespread distribution of Homeric paintings in the Roman world, the three monuments dealt with in this book form a distinctive group: they all feature a cycle of discrete panel paintings that narrate individual episodes from the Trojan War and are mounted as a series in a temple portico. This is what the painted plaster of the Pompeian portico imitates, and this is what Virgil visualizes in his imaginary Carthage. Furthermore, my demonstration (in the second half of chapter 4) that the fourth-style decoration of the Pompeian monument was a renovation of the original Augustan second-style pictorial cycle reveals that all three Trojan cycles, real and imaginary, were created within a span of about twenty years: between 29 and 10 BC. It does not look like a coincidence.

It is not possible to prove in absolute terms that there was a connection among these three porticoes, since direct visual evidence from the Portico of Philippus, which was the bridge between the other two, is lacking. Nevertheless, I show that circumstantial evidence for a link is very strong. This becomes less surprising once it

is clear just how important that Roman portico was in the ideological program of the first Roman emperor. Accordingly, I trace other responses to the Portico of Philippus as the new Roman home of the Muses in Latin poetry beyond the *Aeneid*. This monument was a matter of concern to all poets, not just writers of Trojan epic, since it was the headquarters of Rome's guild of writers and poets. In chapter 6 I examine not only the relationship of the *Aeneid* to the Portico of Philippus but also the ways in which a variety of Roman writers, including Horace, Propertius, Ovid, and Petronius, responded to that relationship.

In order to explore the links among these three porticoes, I need to deal with a large number of technical questions. How reliable are the nineteenth-century sources for lost Pompeian artworks? Can they reveal what paintings were mounted in which places in the Pompeian monument? What is the correct date for the construction of the portico relative to the Hellenistic Temple of Apollo it surrounded? What is the pre- and postearthquake chronology of its painted decoration? What was its meaning in its local context and what was its impact upon domestic decoration? Moving to Rome, what can I reconstruct of the layout of the Portico of Philippus? How extensive were the renovations of the Temple of Hercules Musarum within it? What was its ideological function in its historical context? Where did its Trojan panel paintings come from? What was the building used for? These methodological issues of a historical, an archaeological, and an art-historical nature regarding the reconstruction of the Pompeian and Roman porticoes and their relationships are addressed as they come up in the course of the rest of the book. But before proceeding any further I must address a set of major controversies that attend the introduction into this mix of Virgil's imaginary, textual portico.

Does the Pompeian temple respond to Virgil's text? Does the Virgilian text respond to the Roman temple? Does the text of the *Aeneid* mediate the response of the post-Virgilian Pompeian monument to the pre-Virgilian Roman one? When Virgil's first audience encountered his text, were they supposed to think, in part, of the Roman temple's decorative program and its relationship to the new ideology of Augustus? Did Virgil's provincial readers have the same or a different experience when they encountered a local version of this type of monument? Does the popularity of images from this Trojan cycle in domestic contexts in Pompeii reflect the impact of the local monument, of the Hellenistic originals displayed in the metropolitan monument, of Virgil's text, or of all of the above? These questions all have to do with two areas that have always been and continue to be of enormous methodological controversy: the relationship between images and texts in antiquity and the relationship between "copies" and "originals" in Roman art. Those two questions are related in that both are driven by a sense that scholarship has been distorted by parallel prejudices: on the one hand, the dismissal by traditional, classical philologists of classical art as mere illustration of textual master-narratives and, on the other, the dismissal by traditional classical art historians of Roman art as entirely derivative.

In demonstrating that the Romans used the whole range of Greek art as a palette of styles from which they chose quite deliberately and from which they created a language for articulating their own concerns, Tonio Hölscher has led in the work of rehabilitating the phenomenon of the copying of Greek models in Roman art.[11] This work is of fundamental importance but it does leave one class of phenomena unaddressed. In Campanian painting there are many examples of copying not on the level of style but of particular figural compositions. The temptation has always been to see these commonalities as being due to their status as "copies" of Greek masterpieces. The idea that domestic Roman paintings reproduced Greek "old masters" has been slow to die despite the complete absence of evidence for the practice. In chapter 4, I try to drive another nail into the coffin, by, for example, giving a better explanation for the proliferation at Pompeii of the same scene of the discovery of Achilles at the palace of Lycomedes. The traditional explanation has been to link this with Pliny's description of a famous Hellenistic painting. In fact, a better explanation is that these are domestic copies of a painting that was found in the portico of the local Temple of Apollo, which in turn had fresco copies of a particular series of Hellenistic panel paintings that hung in the Portico of Philippus in Rome.

In other words, there is indeed a Hellenistic painting behind the proliferation of Pompeian copies, but not because local householders wanted copies of "old masters" and not because journeyman painters had to work mechanically from pattern books filled with such compositions. At first glance, this approach may not seem like such a win for the cause of rehabilitating Roman art from the charge of being dull and derivative. Does it help matters to see domestic paintings as copies of local models rather than of distant, transcendent Hellenistic originals? In fact, it does, because it permits us to understand the intertextual dynamics at play in such acts of quotation and reappropriation. The evidence under review in this book offers a very special opportunity to examine how copying works, because the same compositions appear both in an important public context and in a variety of domestic contexts (both indoor and outdoor). Furthermore, very similar compositions of the same figures appear on the *tabulae Iliacae* (Iliadic tablets), which come from the neighborhood of Rome. This suggests a metropolitan model, and hence a further level of copying. This is therefore a particularly rich locus for examining the practice of copying in a Roman context.

I offer in chapter 4 a model of intertextuality in Campanian figural painting in which it is not the style that speaks, as for Hölscher, but the content. This approach permits me to infer from each instance of copying its full cultural significance. First, Rome appropriates a set of Hellenistic panel paintings of the Trojan War and gives them a new home and a completely new meaning in the context of the emerging ideology of the emperor Augustus. Then the leading men of the city of Pompeii put a new portico around their old Temple of Apollo and advertise the particular, local nature of their alignment with the emperor and his patron god by decorating their portico in a

way that recalls the Roman monument and its meaning. Then the same compositions appear in domestic contexts in Pompeii, where they have a wide array of meanings, from the erudite display of learning in the atrium of the House of the Tragic Poet to the whimsy of the mosaics on the garden building in the House of Apollo. The correct answer to the charge of banal copying in Roman art is intertextuality: a theory of reappropriation of cultural artifacts that describes the meaning created by the dialogue between the context(s) of the original(s) and the new context. When the owner of the House of Apollo decorated a tiny refuge at the bottom of the garden, he or she was probably thinking most immediately of the local Temple of Apollo, but also, perhaps, of the Portico of Philippus in Rome and the Temple of Juno in Virgil's Carthage. The more layers of context that come into view, the clearer becomes the mock-epic character of the building and the better the viewer can appreciate the wit of the joke.

Futher details of this discussion of the issue of copies and models in Campanian figural painting are deferred until chapter 4, which is largely devoted to the subject of copying, or, to put it more usefully, to the subject of visual intertextuality, in Pompeii. But the issue of the relationship of art and text is so broad, so controversial, and so fundamental to the subject of this book that it needs to be addressed in more detail at the very outset. The very act of putting Virgil's fictional temple portico in the same book as a discussion of two real porticoes might be seen as evidence of an inability to distinguish the properties of the material from the textual, the real from the imaginary. Once again, the way forward is via a theory of intertextuality, but this time across the divide between texts and images. Viewers of the Pompeian temple portico would have experienced it in the light of previously experienced paintings and monuments but also in the light of their familiarity with the texts of both Homer and Virgil. Conversely, ancient readers of the *Aeneid* would have brought to that text their knowledge not only of Homer but also of the myriad visual representations of the Trojan War that surrounded them. The key to developing intertextual strategies of relating art and text is, of course, to avoid subordinating one to the other, a problem that has a long history.

Ecphrasis between Text and Artifact

There are two opposing tendencies in the study of art and text in antiquity: first, to separate them into "parallel worlds" of distinct discourses, and second, to see them as mutually complementary ways of framing myth and history. As with most such binarisms, there is much to be said for both ways of looking at the relationship, and controversies are often really just a matter of emphasis. It is undoubtedly true that visual and textual works require completely different modes of reading and that, in order for a visual artifact to be legible, the viewer must situate it within a realm of iconographical parallels and visual cues that are quite separate from what one might have learned from texts. On the other hand, it should be equally obvious that an

ancient audience did not experience visual art in isolation from whatever it knew from texts, either through reading or orally, about the figures represented there.

The study of antiquity has a long history of treating visual art dismissively, as if it were nothing more than mere illustrations of the master narrative embodied in the text. Some readers may therefore be wary of a book that professes to treat once again the relationship between mere painted plaster and two poems that were the most canonical texts of the Greco-Roman world. But this can be done without subordinating the images to those texts. Many of the readings I offer suggest that the paintings took a playful, and occasionally even a critical, posture toward the epic tradition. When art is isolated from texts, one is deprived of the opportunity to appreciate this playful intertextuality. The urge to separate art from text in order to give visual works space to be appreciated in their own right as autonomous objects has been motivated by noble intentions and has been a reaction to the particular philological bias of the study of classics. Today, however, it should be possible to discuss questions of intermedia intertextuality without being accused automatically of blindly imposing a retrograde and old-fashioned philological worldview.

The tendency to isolate art from text does not apply only to the study of material artifacts; it has also affected the study of texts. In recent years, there has been an explosion of interest in ecphrasis; in this book I use this term in the narrow sense of the figure of speech, whereby a visual work of art is described within a poem. As is well known, one of the usual functions of this trope is to provide a meta-commentary on the surrounding text. By embedding a description of a work of art in its texture, verbal narrative turns a mirror on its own mimetic strategies. It therefore corresponds not to some real, visual object external to the world of the text but to the text itself. The ur-ecphrasis in classical culture is, of course, the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*. Its description occupies nearly a whole book of the epic and it quite obviously is not meant to describe a "real" shield. It is an ideal object, and in some ways an impossible one.[12] Scholars have reacted strongly against the tendency in previous generations to treat ecphrasis naively, as if its point were to describe a real object as accurately as possible.[13] For this reason, many recent discussions of ecphrasis have emphasized that it cannot, by its nature, have any relation to a particular, real object. For such critics, the present book might seem to be making a fundamental category error in confounding the fictional world of Virgil's Carthage with the real world of Rome. As Barchiesi says, quite reasonably, "There is no reason to suspect that Virgil attempts to describe actual artifacts in any of these passages."[14] But this objection is something of a red herring: I doubt that anyone would be so naive as to claim that Virgil was describing real objects in his ecphrases, which form part of a distant, heroic, fictional world. The more interesting question is whether he might have alluded, in the spirit of intertextuality, to famous objects in the real, Roman world, just as he alluded to texts well known to his audience.

An example of the excessive concern to isolate ecphrasis from real objects can be found in a review by Jaś Elsner of *The Captor's Image: Greek Culture in Roman Ecphrasis*, a recent book by Basil Dufallo. Discussing a particular chapter, Elsner makes an objection to linking literary and real temples in Augustan Rome:

> The focus is on temples, rather than statues, at the opening of *Georgics* 3.13–36 and in the temple of Phoebus at Propertius 2.31. My one hesitancy here is Dufallo's keenness to read these complexes in relation to Augustus' Palatine temple of Apollo; he is of course right that the context of this monument is significant, but it is surely reductive to tie a fictional and hence deliberately open ecphrastic account too narrowly to a specific monument, known to us only through fragmentary archaeology and much speculation.[15]

That proviso of "too narrowly" is self-evidently reasonable; but in reality Dufallo is not doing anything excessive or out of the ordinary here. Propertius presents his poem as a description not of a fictional, poetic monument but of the very real, recently completed portico around Augustus's new Temple of Apollo. This is not to say that his description of that monument is unbiased or lacking in tendentiousness—far from it; but he does present it as a genuine description of a real object and the poem cannot be understood in isolation from it (see chapter 6).[16] The meagerness of the archaeological evidence for the temple does not change that fact. Virgil's temple in *Georgics* 3 is different. It is a clearly imaginary temple, located in his hometown of Mantua, but generations of scholars have associated it, on account of its gleaming marble and aspects of its iconography, with the Temple of Palatine Apollo in Rome.[17] I happen to agree with Elsner here that it is reductive to equate these two monuments, but that is because the Palatine parallel leaves many features of the appearance of Virgil's imaginary Mantuan temple unexplained. I argue in chapter 6 that Virgil is merging allusions to the Portico of Philippus and the Palatine temple, which is a natural consequence of the unified ideological function of these two buildings. I do not agree, however, that it is automatically a reductive gesture to link an imaginary Augustan temple with a real one (or two), provided that the link is made in the spirit of intertextuality rather than of description. Elsner himself has been a leader in the integration of textual and visual approaches to Roman culture and has written eloquently of the need to give play to both text and image in the study of ecphrasis. As he says, "Bringing to mind the described object with *enargeia* required listeners or readers to have sufficient familiarity with the kinds of art that were the subjects of ekphrasis."[18] The question is whether, in some cases, the audience is expected to have familiarity with something more particular than merely a "kind of art": that is to say, with a specific visual intertext rather than a genre. In his own work, Elsner has put literary ecphrasis in bold juxtaposition, if not frank dialogue, with specific works of visual art; but even this is too much for some art

historians.[19] Objections seem to arise when one connects an ecphrasis not merely with the visual in general or with a kind of visual art but with a specific, real object. Does an allusive, intertextual link between an ecphrasis and one particular, famous artifact necessarily collapse the text into mere description and drown out the voice of the artifact itself?

The limitations of the current ecphrastic orthodoxy can be demonstrated by the way Virgil modifies and extends Homer's practice of ecphrasis. After Homer's extensive description of the shield of Achilles in the *Illiad*, its new owner has no interest in reading its images. He takes a quick, appreciative look but does not respond in detail to the decoration; he is consumed with anger and simply wants to use it as an implement with which to avenge Patroclus (19.15–20). Virgil makes a small but crucial change when he adapts this scene in the *Aeneid*. After the extended description of Aeneas's new shield, Virgil says that the hero gazed in wonder and appreciation at it but stipulates that he was unable to understand it (8.729–31). In other words, Aeneas's failure to engage with the ecphrasis is modeled upon Achilles's reaction, but with this difference: his total lack of an intellectual or emotional response is explicitly justified not in terms of angry impatience or a lack of interest, as might be presumed in the case of Achilles, but on the grounds of the object's unintelligibility within the story. Without the reader's knowledge of the future narrative of Roman history and its iconographical language, the images on the shield are totally mute. Aeneas's ignorance here contrasts strongly with his firm knowledge of his own past that he calls upon when reading the images in the Temple of Juno in Carthage. There, he seems to be an authoritative interpreter, since he knows the story of the fall of Troy, as opposed to the rise of Rome, all too well. Or is he authoritative? His interpretation of those images has a strongly pro-Trojan and anti-Greek bias, which may or may not be how the people of Carthage intended them.

Since the legibility of the Temple of Juno for Aeneas contrasts so strongly with the way neither Achilles nor Aeneas reads his own shield, it seems wrong to insist that the temple must belong to the same category of ecphrasis. The temple is not an impossibly dense object, *non enarrabile textum* (8.625), like the Homeric and Virgilian shields.[20] Given the allusive interplay between Virgil and the Greek poems from the epic cycle that described the episodes from the Trojan War depicted in the fictional paintings, why should we not bring to bear our knowledge of well-known paintings of those events as well as textual versions? Virgil, in fact, encourages us to do this by another important way in which the ecphrasis of Juno's temple contrasts with the shield of Aeneas. An orderly, comprehensive, and objective catalogue of the shield's contents is given for our benefit, but the temple ecphrasis is none of those things. Instead, we get an account of Aeneas's tearful and impulsive emotional reactions to a disordered and incomplete set of images. The account is so strongly focalized through his viewpoint that we seem to have no access of our own to the reality of the temple's

decoration. This is the opposite of the situation with the shield, where we know and understand far more than Aeneas does.

In other words, Virgil divides ecphrasis into subjective and objective varieties that demand different strategies for reading and that may call for different levels of engagement with one's knowledge of real monuments. Objective ecphrasis is textually self-sufficient, but subjective ecphrasis depends in part on the reader supplying knowledge from outside the text, to fill in a sense of what it is that the internal viewer is responding to. The subjectivity, disorder, and incompleteness of the Carthage ecphrasis invites the reader to fill in the resulting blank spaces in order to construct a sense of the temple. In so doing, one would naturally call upon knowledge of temples with similar decorative programs. By encouraging the reader to compare a fictional temple portico with a similar program of decoration in a recently constructed building in Rome, Virgil opens up the possibility that Aeneas's identifications and interpretations may not have appeared completely reliable to a Roman audience. To reiterate, this is not to reduce the ecphrasis to an account of the real portico; rather, introducing a material intertext increases the polysemy of Virgil's text.

Scholarly wariness in keeping ecphrastic texts separate from real artifacts and the desire to protect the autonomy of visual narratives from the tyranny of the text are both rooted in a fear of reductive philological readings of artifacts as mere illustrations of canonical, authoritative texts. But there is a cost to this intertextual apartheid for both objects and texts. In this book I hope to show that, just as an awareness of real Trojan temple porticoes can help to unlock important ambiguities in Virgil's account of Aeneas's reaction to a fictional portico, Trojan images from Pompeii and elsewhere in Roman Campania can often benefit greatly from being considered as witty and sophisticated commentaries on Homeric and Virgilian texts. Fortunately, a powerful argument against this "apartheid" in the study of ancient art and text has recently been made in an important book by Michael Squire.[21] It should be clear that I wholeheartedly endorse Squire's call for a return to joining up the study of art and text and that I would like to present this book as a contribution to that project. Squire gives a compelling account of the bias against the visual and in favor of the verbal in the modern German intellectual tradition that has influenced the philological study of the ancient world so decisively. Squire's emphasis on the modern oppression of image by text leaves a small gap in the picture, one that, however, is crucial for the argument of this book. As a result I, perhaps perversely, spend more time in the next few pages discussing the one minute point where I disagree with Squire than the much larger areas on which we agree entirely.

The problem with focusing on the tyranny of what Squire calls "Protestant art history" is that one can document the denigration of the visual in most branches of the Western intellectual tradition.[22] This points to a deeper root than Martin Luther; iconoclasm and logocentrism have long histories before the Reformation. Ultimately, the distrust of visual mimesis in Western thought goes back at least to Plato. Of

course, Squire knows all this, but his choice of emphasis tends to leave the reader with a picture of antiquity as a prelapsarian paradise in which images were free from textual oppression.[23] For my purposes, however, it is crucial to see how this conflict between the visual and the verbal extends back into antiquity. This is because the Portico of Philippus was the forum in which the agon between poetry and the plastic arts played out, quite self-consciously, in Augustan Rome.

In order to see just how strong the impulse to denigrate the plastic arts could be in some corners of antiquity, it is useful to glance at an anecdote surrounding one of the wonders of the ancient world, Pheidias's massive chryselephantine statue of Zeus at Olympia. It is reported that when he was asked where he got his model for the statue, the artist said that he took his inspiration from a few lines of the *Iliad*: "The son of Cronos spoke, and bowed his dark brow in assent, and the ambrosial locks waved from the king's immortal head; and he made great Olympus quake" (1.528–30). This anecdote need not imply a particular hierarchical relationship between the media of poetry and sculpture; indeed, it is reported by the geographer Strabo (8.3.30) in quite neutral terms, with the sculptor simply referring to Homer as the canonical authority on the Greek gods. Another ancient author, however, used this anecdote as the starting point for a denigration of the visual arts that is far more scornful and dismissive than the writings of Martin Luther or G. E. Lessing on which Squire focuses his criticisms.[24] Dio Chrysostom delivered a speech at Olympia in front of Pheidias's statue in which he takes the story of Pheidias's Homeric inspiration as an admission of the insufficiency of the visual arts in expressing the divine as compared to poetry (*Or.* 12.49–83).

Dio imagines putting the (long-dead) sculptor on the witness stand and compelling him to defend his masterpiece against the charge that it is an inadequate representation of the divine majesty of Zeus. In the speech he puts in the sculptor's mouth, "Pheidias" does not defend his work as a representation of divinity on its merits but rather accepts the charge of its insufficiency without demurral; instead he takes the approach of blaming the poverty of his artistic medium. This fictional sculptor defends himself by claiming that he did the best he could to represent the divine with the meager resources available to a visual artist. He contrasts the limitless ability of the poet to say anything his imagination fancies with the mute, lumpish, uncooperative materials with which the sculptor is forced to work. Most things that are possible with poetry are simply impossible to express with his materials. In the end, "Pheidias" is acquitted, but only because he has abased himself as a visual artist before the power of the word. What lies behind Dio's extraordinary gesture of contempt toward a supremely famous and venerable work of plastic art, which was considered a wonder of the world, is not just sophistry and straining for paradox. Dio's view is rooted in a Platonic hierarchy of being and mimesis: words can approximate pure ideas and so adumbrate the divine, but visual art can only imitate dumb objects and so it is doubly removed from the realm of truth.

Another amusing example of this ancient attitude of contempt toward the visual arts can be found in the "Dream" of Lucian. In this pseudoautobiographical narrative, the author tells us that his father had the idea of apprenticing him as a young man to his uncle, who was a sculptor, so that he could learn a profitable trade. Unfortunately, the narrator gets off to a bad start: having been given a piece of marble to work, he strikes too hard and shatters it. His uncle whips him and he runs home in disgrace. That night, he has a dream, in which two women appear to him and each attempts to win him over. The first is a personification of sculpture (Ἑρμογλυφικὴ τέχνη, 7); she is dirty and masculine and bears the signs of hard physical labor; she speaks like a barbarian. The other is a personification of education (Παιδεία, 9); she is beautiful, elegantly dressed, and eloquent. She warns the narrator that as a sculptor, no matter how successful he might become, he would always be considered a lowly manual laborer, and she convinces him to follow her in the study of wisdom and eloquence toward a future of wealth and honor. There is an absolute contrast between the dull, dirty, and mechanical trade of the sculptor and the creative autonomy of the orator who works with words and ideas. It was once believed that this tale was genuinely autobiographical and that Lucian came from a family of sculptors, but we need not be so naive. The fictitious incident in which the narrator shatters a block of marble clearly arises out of the same tradition found in the apology of Dio's Pheidias, where he blames the awkwardness and intractability of the sculptor's materials in contrast with the poet's. Here, the implicit contrast is with the raw materials of the rhetorician: words, which are characterized by their infinite malleability and plasticity.

So contempt for the mimetic capabilities of material art already had a firm place in ancient thought. But what of the other side of the debate? Are there any artists whom one can place in counterpoint to Dio's condescending prosopopoeia of Pheidias and Lucian's contemptuous personification of sculpture? Would any visual artist in antiquity dare to suggest that his materials were equal to Homer's, or even in some respects superior? It happens that there is such a figure, the great painter Zeuxis, and the work in which he challenged the capabilities of Homer's art, his portrait of Helen, came to be put on display at Rome in the Portico of Philippus. This curatorial gesture indicates the self-consciousness with which that building was made in the place in Augustan Rome where architecture, sculpture, and painting came into dialogue with history and poetry, especially epic. The irony is that the correct interpretation of this painting as a vindication of the capabilities of the visual arts was first expressed by none other than Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his *Laocoön*, a work that is nowadays viewed as one of the chief instruments of modern Western logocentrism and its subjugation of the visual.[25] So in order to explain how the present book fits into contemporary debates about the relationship between art and text, I need to take a closer look at Lessing's *Laocoön* and the way it has been reduced to a caricature in much recent scholarship.

Lessing and Zeuxis's Helen

The *Laocoön*, an essay "on the limits of painting and poetry," is one of the foundational texts for the study of art, and some art historians have never forgiven Lessing for writing it. His central test case is, of course, the famous ancient sculptural group depicting the death of the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons. He begins by contesting the earlier interpretation of that sculpture by J. J. Winckelmann, who he claims gave insufficient respect to the particular virtues of Virgil's textual account of the same episode. Lessing then goes on to use this as the starting point for his famous distinction between the textual, which has the ability to represent ideas and duration in time but can only represent the physical world indirectly, and the visual, which has a complementary set of strengths and weaknesses.[26]

The shout or groan of Laocoön, whose full articulation Virgil could represent and the sculptors allegedly could not, on account of both its temporal dimension and its incompatibility with the demands of physical beauty, has become synonymous with the limits of the plastic arts. Many of Lessing's modern readers are thus content to read him as a polemicist against the power of the visual.[27] And it is true that he shared the general Enlightenment bias toward canonical classical texts and saw himself as reasserting the priority of words over pictures, which he dubiously claimed had been lost.[28]

Given Lessing's polemical stance toward Winckelmann and others, his failure to distinguish between various physical media, his overriding concern with correcting literary practice so that it conformed to his own standards, and his fundamental lack of interest in visual art except as a foil for literature, it is not surprising that he has become something of a bête noire for art historians, just as he has been an icon for those who admire him.[29] Despite Lessing's polemics and his total indifference to actual works of visual art, it is unfair to rebuke him for failing to deliver a perfectly balanced assessment of the claims of the two kinds of media, for he was a playwright and a literary critic and, as E. H. Gombrich has pointed out, was interested in material culture not for its own sake but only as a tool to use against the sort of literature he did not like. Nevertheless, there is another, rarely remarked, aspect to Lessing's essay, where he speaks of the power of the visual and the corresponding limitations of words.

Lessing presents the power of the visual more obliquely, so it is easy to overlook it. An important example of this ungenerous approach is found in an article by W. J. T. Mitchell that has been widely influential on the contemporary negative view of Lessing.[30] The first half of that article is mainly an effort to disprove the universality of Lessing's distinction between the temporal dimension of texts and the spatial dimension of images.[31] The force of this demonstration is undermined by Lessing's prior admission of many of these very same exceptions, as Mitchell himself has to acknowledge.[32] As a critic, Lessing was a gadfly and the antithesis of the doctrinaire taxonomist that he has become in art-historical demonology.[33] The second part of Mitchell's article develops a theory that Lessing's purported dichotomy assigns opposite sex

roles to the two media: that he assigns visual art to a subordinate, feminine position while privileging poetry as active, male, and dominant. However, Lessing never says or implies anything remotely like this, as Mitchell again has to acknowledge.[34] This latter part of the article is based upon mere inferences from a passage in the *Laocoön* that Mitchell takes to be an "unguarded moment of free association" in which Lessing betrays his anxiety at a beautiful divine image obscenely adulterated by a monstrous phallic snake fetish that invites respectable women to dream of scandalous sexual unions. Mitchell completely misunderstands and misrepresents both the ancient anecdotes and what Lessing is trying to say with them.[35]

Since this passage has been so misunderstood, and since it is an important witness to Lessing's respect for the power of images, it is worth taking a moment to examine it:

> Aus diesem Gesichtspunkte glaube ich in gewissen alten Erzählungen, die man geradezu als Lügen verwirft, etwas Wahres zu erblicken. Den Müttern des Aristomenes, des Aristodamas, Alexanders des Großen, des Scipio, des Augustus, des Galerius, träumte in ihrer Schwangerschaft allen, als ob sie mit einer Schlange zu tun hätten. Die Schlange war ein Zeichen der Gottheit; und die schönen Bildsäulen und Gemälde eines Bacchus, eines Apollo, eines Merkurius, eines Herkules, waren selten ohne eine Schlange. Die ehrlichen Weiber hatten des Tages ihre Augen an dem Gotte geweidet, und der verwirrende Traum erweckte das Bild des Tieres. So rette ich den Traum, und gebe die Auslegung preis, welche der Stolz ihrer Söhne und die Unverschämtheit des Schmeichlers davon machten. Denn eine Ursache mußte es wohl haben, warum die ehebrecherische Phantasie nur immer eine Schlange war.

> (From this point of view I believe I can find some truth in some of the ancient tales which are generally rejected as outright lies. The mothers of Aristomenes, Aristodamas, of Alexander the Great, Scipio, Augustus, and Galerius all dreamed during pregnancy that they had relations with a serpent. The serpent was a symbol of divinity, and the beautiful statues and paintings depicting Bacchus, Apollo, Mercury, or Hercules were seldom without one. These honest mothers had feasted their eyes on the God during the day, and their confused dreams recalled the image of the reptile. Thus I save the dream and abandon the interpretation born of the pride of their sons and the impudence of the flatterer. For there must be some reason why the adulterous fantasy was always a serpent.)[36]

Lessing is saying that a god did not father those mighty sons, as the flattering versions of the stories claim, but that the mothers' dreams on the nights of conception were nonetheless true, though confused. During the day, each mother went to the temple of the respective god and viewed his statue, and "feasted her eyes" on its beauty. That

night, while having intercourse with her less-than-godlike husband, she kept an image in her mind not of him but of the god she had been gazing at during the day. Her dream preserved a confused memory of her fixation on the image of the statue during intercourse. Instead of the whole statue, her dream recalled only the snake that was a part of the statue. The greatness of character exhibited by Alexander, Augustus, and the others was due to the power of the image of the divine statue in the mind of their mothers during their conception. This is an extraordinary thing to say—statuary is stronger than semen—and it is not surprising that it has been misunderstood. Naturally, Lessing had to veil his meaning in a certain amount of circumlocution, but he is simply explaining the sexual mechanism by which beautiful art produces beautiful men and the inverse, as he had just finished saying:

> Erzeugten schöne Menschen schöne Bildsäulen, so wirkten diese hinwiederum auf jene zurück, und der Staat hatte schönen Bildsäulen schöne Menschen mit zu verdanken. Bei uns scheinet sich die zarte Einbildungskraft der Mütter nur in Ungeheuern zu äußern.

> (If beautiful men created beautiful statues, these statues in turn affected the men, and thus the state owed thanks also to beautiful statues for beautiful men. With us the highly susceptible imagination of mothers seems to express itself only in producing monsters.)[37]

The erroneous assumption that Lessing always and automatically privileged writing over painting accounts for the misinterpretation of his startling statement of the power of images in sexual intercourse and human reproduction.[38] It also explains why critics have neglected one of the most important parts of his treatise. In addition to giving that account of the power of visual beauty at the moment of conception, Lessing spends a large part of his essay dealing with an area in which painting was far more powerful than poetry: the representation of physical beauty. For Lessing the greatness of a poet is revealed in the way he finessed this inherent weakness of his medium. Just as the mute and immobile statue of Laocoön and his sons exemplified the limits of the plastic arts in comparison with Virgil's narrative, so Lessing adduces again and again a particular work of ancient art to exemplify the opposite: Zeuxis's *Helen*. It functions in the treatise as the inverse of the Laocoön statue, an anti-Laocoön, marking out the limitations of poetry and its inability to venture into the territory where painting reigns supreme. Ironically, this Greek painting survives only as a textual description; or perhaps it is natural, given Lessing's near-total lack of interest in actual, surviving ancient art. Like the Laocoön, this painting is of a Trojan subject. In this case, the textual point of comparison is not Virgil but Homer. Zeuxis's *Helen* was a painting that accumulated anecdotes; stories were told about it by many Greek and Latin authors.[39]

The particular anecdote that is crucial for Lessing's purposes is preserved by the Roman moralist Valerius Maximus:

Zeuxis autem, cum Helenam pinxisset, quid de eo opere homines sensuri essent expectandum non putauit, sed protinus hos uersus adiecit:
οὐ νέμεσις Τρῶας καὶ ἐυκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς
τοιῇδ᾽ ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν.
Adeone dextrae suae multum pictor adrogauit, ut ea tantum formae conprehensum crederet, quantum aut Leda caelesti partu edere aut Homerus diuino ingenio exprimere potuit?

(When Zeuxis painted Helen, he did not think he should wait to see what the public would think of that work, but then and there added these verses himself:
No blame that Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans
Should suffer pains so long for such a woman.
Did the painter claim so much for his hand as to believe that it had captured all the beauty that Leda could bring forth by divine delivery or Homer express by godlike genius?)[40]

Valerius uses this anecdote to illustrate artistic arrogance (*adeo...adrogauit*) but does not explain precisely why it was arrogant to inscribe these lines. The other ancient source for this aspect of the painting likewise views it as hubristic. In a speech defending himself from the charge of egotism, Aelius Aristides includes the Homeric tag on Zeuxis's painting likewise to exemplify artistic insolence.[41] Both Valerius and Aelius seem to draw upon the same ancient tradition that interpreted Zeuxis's Homeric tag as an act of shocking arrogance. Why? Aelius says that it was because Zeuxis was comparing himself with Zeus, who had fathered the "real" Helen. Valerius gives a version of that explanation but then offers the alternative that it was because Zeuxis was daring to rival Homer. This is closer to the truth, but it took the genius of Lessing to first understand precisely the nature of the jibe Zeuxis was throwing at Homer here.

The two lines Zeuxis quoted, together with their original context, show that Homer does not in fact give a verbal expression of Helen's beauty that compares with the artist's visual image. Lessing saw that Homer's virtue is that he, contrary to what Valerius implies, refused to attempt to "express by godlike genius" the beauty of Helen. Instead of reciting a vague and insipid catalogue of physical features, he describes Helen's effect on the withered old men of Troy, and it is this Homeric evasion of any serious attempt at description that Zeuxis inscribed on his painting:

Eben der Homer, welcher sich aller stückweisen Schilderung körperlicher Schönheiten so geflissentlich enthält, von dem wir kaum einmal im Vorbeigehen erfahren, daß Helena weiße Arme und schönes Haar gehabt; eben

der Dichter weiß demohngeachtet uns von ihrer Schönheit einen Begriff zu machen, der alles weit übersteiget, was die Kunst in dieser Absicht zu leisten imstande ist. Man erinnere sich der Stelle, wo Helena in die Versammlung der Ältesten des trojanischen Volkes tritt. Die ehrwürdigen Greise sehen sie, und einer sprach zu den andern:

> οὐ νέμεσις Τρῶας καὶ ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς
> τοιῇδ᾽ ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν·
> αἰνῶς ἀθανάτῃσι θεῇς εἰς ὦπα ἔοικεν·

Was kann eine lebhaftere Idee von Schönheit gewähren, als das kalte Alter sie des Krieges wohl wert erkennen lassen, der so viel Blut und so viele Tränen kostet?

Was Homer nicht nach seinen Bestandteilen beschreiben konnte, läßt er uns in seiner Wirkung erkennen. Malet uns, Dichter, das Wohlgefallen, die Zuneigung, die Liebe, das Entzücken, welches die Schönheit verursachet, und ihr habt die Schönheit selbst gemalet.

(The same Homer, who so assiduously refrains from detailed descriptions of physical beauties, and from whom we scarcely learn in passing that Helen had white arms [*Il.* 3.121] and beautiful hair [3.329], nevertheless knows how to convey to us an idea of her beauty which far surpasses anything art is able to accomplish toward that end. Let us recall the passage where Helen steps before an assembly of Trojan elders. The venerable old men see her, and one says to the other:

> Small blame that the Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans should for a long time suffer misery for such a woman; she is marvelously like the immortal goddesses to look upon.

What can convey a more vivid idea of beauty than to let cold old age acknowledge that she is indeed worth the war which had cost so much blood and so many tears?

What Homer could not describe in all its various parts he makes us recognize by its effect. Paint for us, you poets, the pleasure, the affection, the love and delight which beauty brings, and you have painted beauty itself.)[42]

The juxtaposition that Zeuxis contrived between the strategic evasion of Homer and his own portrait of Helen is noteworthy for the way it undermines this tidy equivalence of poetry and painting. For he makes the viewer see that Homer pointedly does not attempt to describe Helen's beauty, because he lacks the adequate resources to do so, but instead simply describes the consequences it has had. The true force of Zeuxis's Homeric quotation is that it highlights the *difference* in the way poetry and painting achieve their effects and hence the painter's originality and independence from the canonical text of Homer. This was Lessing's crucial insight.

Lessing's bias toward the textual is evident in the way he declares the contest between Homer and Zeuxis a draw, even though on his own analysis Homer's strategy is to refuse combat:

> Zeuxis malte eine Helena, und hatte das Herz, jene berühmte Zeilen des Homers, in welchen die entzückten Greise ihre Empfindung bekennen, darunter zu setzen. Nie sind Malerei und Poesie in einen gleichern Wettstreit gezogen worden. Der Sieg blieb unentschieden, und beide verdienten gekrönt zu werden.

> (Zeuxis painted a Helen and had the courage to write at the bottom of his picture those famous lines of Homer in which the delighted elders confess their feelings. Never were painting and poetry engaged in a more even contest. The victory remained undecided, and both deserved a crown.)[43]

For Lessing, this anecdote is more important for what it says about the genius of Homer than about the arrogance of Zeuxis. In keeping with the literary focus of his essay, Lessing frames this as a parable about great poetry: Homer's virtue lies in the way he negotiates one of the serious, inherent limitations of language, the vagueness of its descriptive powers. This becomes the launchpad for Lessing's attacks on excessively descriptive passages in modern literature, such as his famous critique of Ariosto's description of the beauty of Alcina. Lessing's real target in the *Laocoön* is never the visual arts; it is always bad modern poetry. Visual art, as Gombrich wisely shows, Lessing simply did not care about. He did understand, however, that the inscription on Zeuxis's painting was the painter's critique of the inevitable silence of words in the face of beauty. It was thus the perfect antithesis for the silent scream of the Laocoön statue.

The point of this discussion of Lessing's *Laocoön* has been to emphasize that the agon between visual art and the text goes back to antiquity. Moreover, even in the Enlightenment there was a realization that there were two voices in that ancient debate. Even though Lessing was firmly in the textual camp, he did leave room in his treatise for the visual arts to make their own limited claims for beauty and mimetic power. His identification of Zeuxis's *Helen* as an intervention in the ancient debate was a major insight, but it has been ignored; this is a consequence of the extreme caricature of his work as purely antivisual. This is not to deny that the text has reigned supreme in modern classical scholarship. Indeed, the same hierarchy existed in antiquity. It is noteworthy that Dio could safely ridicule the chryselephantine statue of Zeus at Olympia in his prosopopoeia of Pheidias. Zeuxis, by contrast, found his gesture toward the insufficiency of Homer's language in the face of Helen's beauty treated as an *exemplum* of artistic hubris and arrogance. There is no doubt that verbal discourse had the upper hand over the visual both in antiquity and in modern

scholarship. But that makes it all the more important to listen carefully for the other side of the debate.

At this point I turn back toward ancient painting to consider what the painting and inscription of Zeuxis came to mean in its Roman context. Valerius says that Zeuxis put the lines on his painting and there is no good reason to doubt it.[44] He was making a subtle intervention against the ancient *ut pictura poesis* tradition. Plutarch attributes to Simonides the original observation that painting is silent poetry and poetry speaking painting.[45] Zeuxis surely examined Homer's descriptions of Helen before commencing his portrait of her; he will have found, as Lessing did, that they are remarkable in their vagueness. In its original context, Zeuxis's Homeric quotation was not a compliment to Homer or an empty boast. It was a statement that his portrait confronted and solved an aesthetic problem that Homer could only throw up his hands at. In the absence of adequate guidance from Homer, Zeuxis had to face a different problem: what model could he use for a painting of a woman who was by definition more beautiful than any other mortal? His famous solution was to make a composite portrait, combining the best features of the five most beautiful girls in Croton. Appearing on the painting of the composite Helen in all her splendor, Homer's words must have seemed an evasion and a provocative accusation of the inadequacy of words in the face of an image.

How well did ancient viewers understand Zeuxis's gesture? Valerius and Aelius, though they report his attitude as hubristic, do not clearly show that they understand that the painter was juxtaposing the power of the visual and the insufficiency of Homer's words, so one might wonder if Lessing's interpretation is a modern construct. The best demonstration I can offer that Lessing's interpretation was current in antiquity is an elegy of Propertius (2.3), which I discuss in chapter 6 in connection with the impact of the Portico of Philippus on contemporary poetry. Zeuxis's painting was an ironic and provocative presence in that building, which housed a famous set of statues of the Muses. Each of the daughters of Memory in that temple symbolized a different modality of remembrance, with an important exception: there was no muse of the visual arts. In its Roman setting, Zeuxis's painting drew attention to that oversight, pointing out the general limitations of the verbal forms of remembrance presided over by the Muses. This juxtaposition of image and text was the theme of the building's decoration, with its cycle of paintings depicting the Trojan War.[46] When Virgil's first readers encountered the Temple of Juno in Carthage, they would have been prompted to think of the Portico of Philippus, not only by the similarity in decoration, but more importantly by the way Virgil's ecphrasis continues the same dialogue between epic art and epic text that was begun with the Roman monument.

Virgil's ecphrasis of the Temple of Juno is usually taken to be a purely literary trope, but this is incorrect on two levels. In a basic sense, one has to realize that,

beyond the literary treatments of the Trojan War that Virgil engages with here, there is a Roman temple with a series of Trojan paintings that also acts as an important intertext. On a more fundamental level, the presence of Zeuxis's *Helen* in that particular Roman monument implies that Virgil's use of this space to contrast the verbal and the visual was no coincidence. The intimate relationship between Virgil's first major epic ecphrasis and a real Augustan building illustrates how the *Aeneid* participates in a dialogue with the visual arts in general and, more specifically, with the ideological aspects of the Augustan building program.

The Structure of This Book

In this book I attempt to understand the relationship between material culture and text in Augustan representations of the Trojan War, not in the traditional sense of the subordination of painting to the master narrative of epic poetry, but in the spirit of Zeuxis, to see the two media acting in a dynamic tension of rivalry, supplement, and symbiosis. Since nothing of the Trojan cycle of paintings from Rome survives, I begin by expending a considerable effort in the first four chapters to reconstruct the cycle of Trojan paintings from the portico of the Temple of Apollo in Pompeii. I must stress that the Pompeii portico does not stand as a proxy for the Roman portico, which had its own very particular agenda in its local context, but it does provide a sense of how Virgil's readers in one provincial Roman town constructed a local analogue of the very sort of fictional portico that Aeneas encountered in Carthage. The Pompeian cycle has not received much attention for the simple reason that the paintings were exposed to the weather and rapidly disappeared in the first decade after the monument's excavation in 1817. It turns out, however, that very early nineteenth-century archival sources can reveal a great deal of new information about these Trojan paintings. Chapter 1 provides an overview of these disparate nineteenth-century sources, assessing their usefulness and their problems for the project of reconstruction. Chapter 2 reconstructs the placement of paintings on the east wall of the portico, where the paintings were best preserved after excavation. Chapter 3 considers the much more exiguous evidence for the other three outer walls of the sanctuary. The Temple of Apollo was arguably the most venerable cult site in the city of Pompeii, so the pictorial cycle that decorated its portico was of particular importance to the inhabitants. Chapter 4 examines the impact of the temple's decorative program on Pompeian houses, and on this basis I tentatively suggest a few more scenes that might have been drawn from the temple but did not survive there. This chapter also has a full reexamination of the archaeological evidence for the dating of the portico and for the several phases of its decoration. It concludes by suggesting some links between this building project and the Portico of Philippus as its Roman model, taking into consideration current debates over the relationship between Roman provincial and metropolitan culture. This Pompeian half of the book, consisting of the first