

## EIGHT

### A CONTENTIOUS COMMERCIAL STREET IN POMPEII

SOON AFTER BECOMING THE DIRECTOR OF EXCAVATIONS AT POMPEII, Vittorio Spinazzola embarked on an ambitious project – the disinterment of nearly a half-kilometer of the Via dell’Abbondanza.<sup>1</sup> Much of this beautifully monumentalized avenue had long been exposed, from the Stabian Baths to the forum. Where its western end joined the forum, the colonnade encircling the civic heart was interrupted to receive this key artery, the widest in the city. The one city block that had already excavated east of the Via Stabiana boasted a towering house façade and tightly packed shops; it gave Spinazzola hope that the Via dell’Abbondanza remained prominent and busy as it ran eastward through a city gate.

The *scavi nuovi*, or “new excavations,” as they were called, show a distinctly revisionist mindset on Spinazzola’s part. His posthumous publication spells out the excavation’s goals – to investigate, preserve, and reconstruct façades and their decoration, inscriptions, windows, balconies, roofs, and the like; to link the *scavi vecchi*, “old excavations,” with the city’s amphitheater; to excavate stratum-by-stratum, recording objects’ findspots and documenting discoveries with photographs; and to examine one tract of urban thoroughfare, rather than one house or city block<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 2). Spinazzola did not intend to excavate much

<sup>1</sup> Spinazzola 1953, xiii. His term lasted from July 16, 1910 to September 4, 1923. For more, see Delpino 2001; Hartnett 2011b.

<sup>2</sup> Spinazzola 1953, xii–xiii, 9–32 (esp. p. 20 for a statement about streets as an object of study). See also earlier discussion, “Streets Past and Present” in the Introduction.

beyond building façades, but, for the first time, considered the street and its facing architecture an appropriate locus of investigation. He was confident that the street alone would reveal much about Roman life.

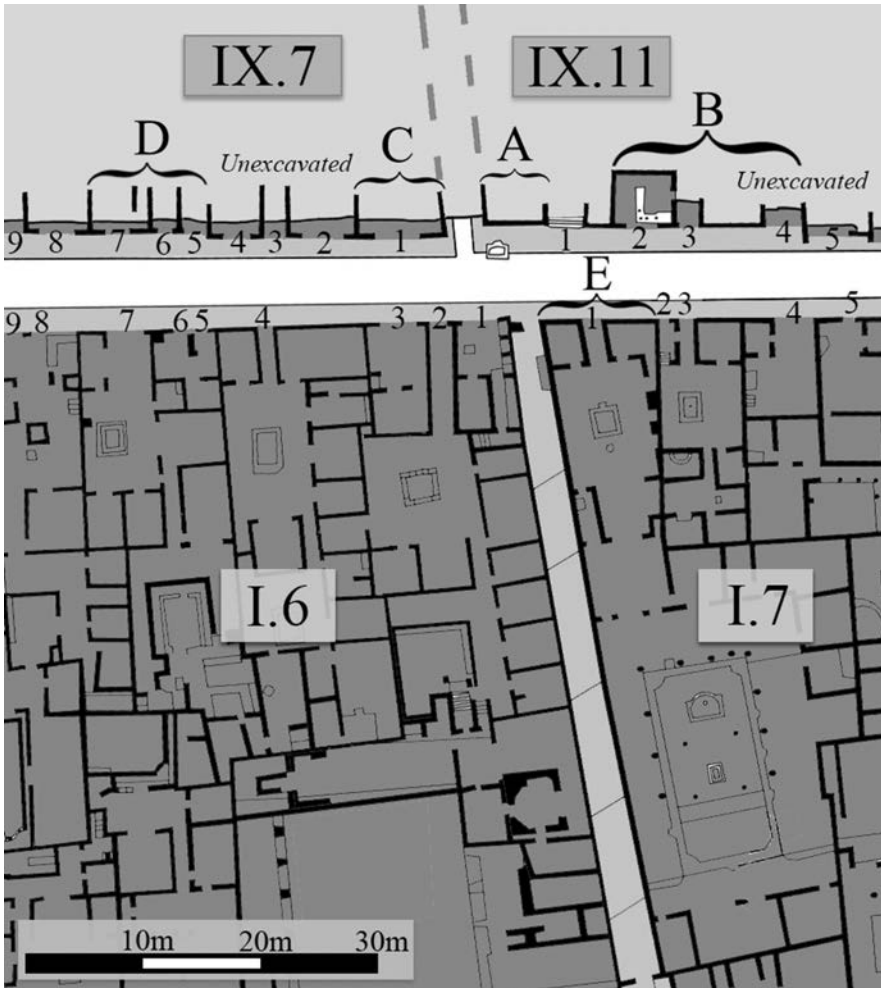
If Spinazzola hoped to unearth a vivid streetscape, his first trench did not disappoint. Within days of beginning digging, workers revealed the intersection of the Via dell'Abbondanza and the Vicolo di Pacquio Proculo that is this chapter's subject. Their first major find was a streetside fountain fronting a still-vibrant mural (Figs. 79, 80). As they continued east, they discovered a tavern blanketed with painted electoral endorsements. Over the following months, excavation progressed across from the tavern, and a large house emerged, its lofty façade topped by a balcony and its frontmost portions carpeted with mosaic.<sup>3</sup> Pleased with these results, Spinazzola joined his trench with the *scavi vecchi* to the west (Figs. 79, 81). A sizable fullery surfaced on the street's south side, while shops with elaborate paintings of deities appeared on the north. Ultimately, what he found along the street proved so tantalizing that Spinazzola dug past some façades to unveil their interiors. Subsequent work in the mid-twentieth century unveiled the remainder of the southern blocks, but no one after Spinazzola has dug on the north. While we see the streetface, the buildings' deeper portions remain buried beneath meters of volcanic material. Nevertheless, thanks to Spinazzola's vision of what counts as meaningful – not just what was *within*, but what was *between* buildings – we can approach the corner of the Via dell'Abbondanza and the Vicolo di Paquio Proculo as a space pulsing with life.

#### CONTEXT OF THE CORNER

Our intersection lay along an important and busy conduit in Pompeii's urban network. The Via dell'Abbondanza served, from the time of the construction of the city's circuit wall in the fourth century BCE (and perhaps earlier), as one of two major roadways running east from Pompeii's center, through fortified gates, and onward to a fertile plain and the towns of Nocera, Nola, and Sarno.<sup>4</sup> Stairs and a drop in the roadbed restricted wheeled traffic on the street west of the Via Stabiana. No such hindrance lay to the east, and the difference suggests the contrasting character of this street's two segments. To the west, the road – adorned with a quadrifrontal arch, widened to monumental stature, and bearing few signs of bars – likely offered a ceremonial route between the forum

<sup>3</sup> Entries in the *Notizie degle Scavi di Antichità* provided preliminary reports on the progress of the excavation: Della Corte 1911a, 1911b, 1912a, 1912b, 1912c, 1912d; Spano 1912.

<sup>4</sup> This was apparently the third circuit wall around the city: Chiaramonte 2007. Scholarly debates simmer about what stood along this roadway's eastern stretch before the establishment of the Sullan colony in 80 BCE. The arrival of Roman colonists, the construction of the amphitheater, and the refurbishment of the Stabian baths gave city dwellers more reasons to tread the street's length. Zanker 1998, 61–77 summarizes these and other changes.



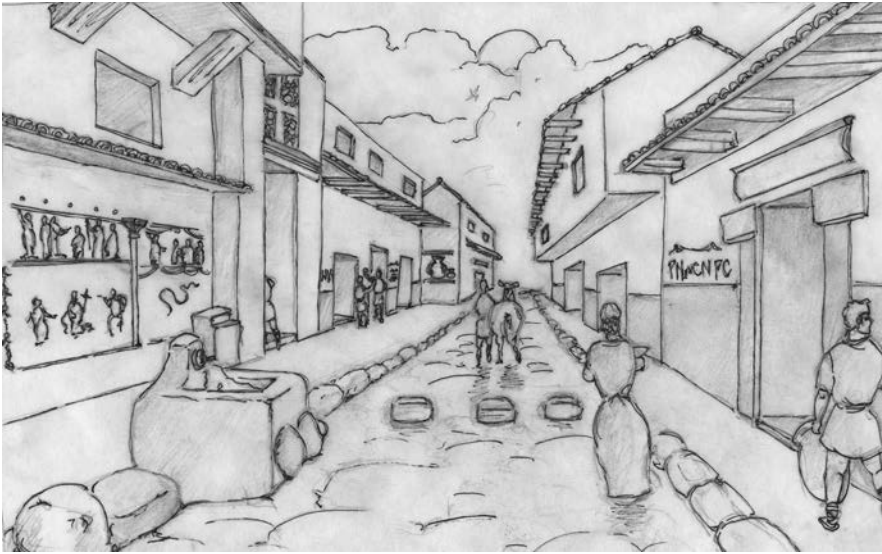
79. The stretch of the Via dell'Abbondanza studied in Chapter 8 boasts a number of fascinating properties and stories: a neighborhood altar, its murals, and the officials who curated those paintings (A); a bar, across whose frontage were painted electoral endorsements, apparently on the part of barmaids (B); frescoes of divine patrons – one a bit exotic, another very local – on the frontage of a possible feltmaker (C); a possible rival, in both cloth and iconography, just down the street (D); and the owner of a large house who sought to impress streetgoers and distinguish himself from his neighbors (E).

Drawing: author.

and the theaters with their cluster of temples.<sup>5</sup> To the east, by contrast, more than ten bars faced onto a similar length of roadway.<sup>6</sup> This stretch had fewer pretensions for elegance but plenty to attract regular traffic: a bakery and fullery, both among the city's largest; multiple residences, large and small; and an

<sup>5</sup> Tsujimura 1991, 65–68; Wallace-Hadrill 1995, 46–50; van Tilburg 2007, 136–144; Laurence 2008, 89–92.

<sup>6</sup> Ellis 2004.



80. Reconstruction of the view to the east along the Via dell'Abbondanza.  
Drawing: James Kennedy.

eclectic admixture of commerce and industry, including an inn-for-rent and dyeworks. Measuring more than 8 meters in width, façade to façade, the street accommodated two-way wheeled traffic. Carts bearing heavy burdens had worn such deep ruts into the roadway that several intersections were repaved.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter's corner thus offers up a cross-section of quotidian circumstances along a heavily populated urban artery. A broad range of players – women with exotic names, a boastful house owner, a high-end textile merchant, slaves and freedmen wearing garments normally reserved for magistrates – vie for attention and, most interestingly, respond directly to one another. Their posturing, retorts, and squabbles played out before many: those running errands, bringing goods to market, scurrying to or from events in the theaters or amphitheater, fetching water, or making their way to cemeteries and suburban shrines along peripheral roads. This chapter examines five vignettes at this corner; collectively, they offer a rich document of urban

<sup>7</sup> Tsujimura 1991, 73–75. Other notable interventions included the installation of a fountain and water tower in the Augustan era. The fountain was placed half in the roadbed and half over the sidewalk at the southwest corner of insula IX.11, which forced wheeled traffic through a narrower passage and necessitated stone “bumpers” at its corners to prevent damage from passing carts. The tower obstructed enough of the alleyway between insulae I.6 and I.7 to make it impassable to wheeled traffic. After the water system was installed, concern for drainage led Pompeians to construct ramps or blockages where side streets met the southern side of the Via dell'Abbondanza. At this intersection, new curbstones were placed in the alley's opening, a masonry lintel was built above, and a wooden door was installed: Della Corte 1911a, 422–423; Tsujimura 1991, 85–86; Poehler 2012, 99–100. An architrave similarly spans the alleyway between insulae IX.1 and IX.7, one block to the west on the northern side of the Via dell'Abbondanza.



81. Reconstruction of the view to the west along the Via dell'Abbondanza.  
Drawing: James Kennedy.

life, representing in tangible, human stories some sweeping dynamics of the Roman world.

#### STORY ONE: AN ALTAR AT THE CROSSROADS

Pompeii's most prominent citizens constructed no public monuments at our intersection. But a simple masonry altar, together with the murals surrounding it, shows how a group of slaves or freedmen used a multiregistered appeal to seek a social place akin the city's elite<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 80, Plate VIII). The mural is divided into four sections. In the lower right, a painted garland encircles the actual altar, and a snake slithers toward a small painted altar. Above, togate figures huddle around another altar. Flanking them are two larger scale figures whose short tunics, youthful faces, and rhyta identify them as Lares. On the left, a thin architectural frame was painted around two stacked scenes. The lower depicted a *genius*, his head covered for sacrifice, with more Lares. The upper register's twelve figures are Olympian deities.<sup>9</sup> The altar's corner location, together with the snake and sacrificers, make this monument recognizable as a shrine to the crossroads gods

<sup>8</sup> Although the simple forms of the altar made it an undistinguished cousin of marble specimens in temple precincts, the roof projecting over the altar and its paintings, along with the sidewalk paving of volcanic stone below them, helped to unite and to privilege this stretch.

<sup>9</sup> On this ensemble: Spinazzola 1953, 175–185; Fröhlich 1991, 335–337; Van Andringa 2000, 54–56.



82. In the upper-right scene of the mural above a compital altar (see Plate VIII), several neighborhood officials offer a sacrifice around a circular altar on the occasion of the *Compitalia*. Photo: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia, Archivio Fotografico degli Scavi, C415.

(*compita*). Often called the *lares compitales*, these protective deities safeguarded and minimized the danger inherent in an urban contact point like an intersection. More than thirty similar compital altars have been found in Pompeii, and more certainly remain buried.<sup>10</sup> This is the grandest surviving ensemble.

### *Crossroad Officials*

Let us start above the altar itself. The prime movers were neighborhood officials who sought legitimacy through the decoration they commissioned and the rites they performed here (Fig. 82). The four individuals' purple-bordered togas are pulled over their heads as they sacrifice at a cylindrical altar. One plays the double pipes, another pours a libation, and a third handles the entrails. To the altar's sides are affixed human-shaped figurines, while a pair of Lares bookend the scene.

Pompeii appears to have been divided, like Rome, into subdistricts, termed *vici*. A geographical and administrative unit, each *vici* had a *compitum* as its religious focal point and was presided over by a group of officials, typically freedmen or slaves. Inscriptions document similar Pompeian officials (even if they deploy slightly different titles), and the fresco's sacrificing figures are certainly neighborhood submagistrates of this type. In Rome, where evidence is more abundant, their duties were multiple, ranging from administering directives from the aediles, such as distributing oil and grain, to controlling fires. A requisite of the office was the ability to wear, and to be cremated in,

<sup>10</sup> Van Andringa 2000 with previous bibliography.

the *toga praetexta*, a purple-striped garment typically worn by official magistrates, decurions, and senators.<sup>11</sup>

Neighborhood officials especially enjoyed the spotlight at the annual winter rite of the *Compitalia*, when the crossroads *lares* were formally worshipped at the altar. Indeed, our officials unsurprisingly chose to depict the *Compitalia*'s climactic moment immediately above its actual location. Sources describe *vicus* households giving honey cakes at compital altars for the *Compitalia*. Although these are not discernable, the officials rendered the woolen objects that were hung by each household at the shrine or at their own thresholds.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the officials listed their own names – Successus, Victor, Axclepiades, and Cosstas – in a small *tabula ansata* above the sacrifice.<sup>13</sup> Their desire for personal recognition at the altar was hardly unique because remnants of earlier painted scenes are visible.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the poor state of preservation here has revealed at least seven layers of paint covering this wall, and another representation of figures around an altar is detectable. In other words, successive office holders continually updated the painting and made it their own, even including their names here to personalize the image. Indeed, just around the corner, another painted inscription listed at least nine officials of the *Urbulanus* sector of the city.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Wards/neighborhoods at Pompeii: Van Andringa 2000; Laurence 2007, 39–45. An inscription dating to 47/46 BCE gives a title, *magistri vici et compiti*, that cements the bond between urban districts and their shrines: *CIL* 4.60. Later fragmentary evidence gives slightly different formulations: *mag[istri] lar[um]* in a dedicatory inscription (*CIL* 4.9807) and the word *vici* by itself atop a painted list of names near an altar (*CIL* 10.927). Duties: Dio 55.8.6–7; Suet. *Aug.* 40.2, *Claud.* 18.1–2. *Toga praetexta*: Livy 34.7.2–3; Cic. *Pis.* 8; Asc. *Pis.* 6–7C.

<sup>12</sup> Date and honey cakes: Dion. Hal. 4.14.3–4 (on which see Lott 2004, 30–37). Woolen objects: Festus (Paulus) 108L; 272–273L (shrine); Macrob. 1.7.34–35 (thresholds). See also Varro, *Ling.* 6.25. Only woolen dolls appear, emblematic of free members of a *familia*, not the woolen balls that were supposed to stand in for slaves. The *magistri vici* always appear as dedicators of carved stone altars in Augustan Rome (Lott 2004), and later epigraphical evidence shows that they paid for the cult as well as the monuments (*CIL* 6.449–452, 6.30960, 6.30958). For some doubts about the officials' agency behind all the altars at Pompeii, see Hasenohr 2003, 192.

<sup>13</sup> Spellings of two names are debated: Fröhlich (1991, 337) gives Sucuus, Axcliipiadiis; Spinazzola (1953, 179) gives Concessus, Asclepiades. Other façade paintings at Pompeii also show officials: Fröhlich 1991, F17, F24, F29, F44, F66, F71. Lacking the standard *tria nomina* of citizens, these men were likely either slaves, who could be identified by one name alone, or freedmen, who for whatever reason (space, preference?) opted to represent themselves with only one name. Slave officials are documented at Pompeii: *CIL* 4.60, 4.7425. In Augustan Rome, only four of the ninety known *magistri/ministri vici* were definitely freeborn, whereas ten can be confirmed as slaves: Lott 2004, 92–94. Slaves' representation in the *toga praetexta* would have engendered still more criticism than a freedman's wearing of the garment Livy 34.7.3–10. Juvenal (10.103) apparently refers to a *vicus* official as a *pannosus aedilis*, “an aedile in rags.” Cf. Cic. *Pis.* 8.

<sup>14</sup> One ghostly figure is apparent directly behind the altar and another on a smaller scale is detectable just to the right of the group.

<sup>15</sup> Layers: Spinazzola 1953, 179; Fröhlich 1991, 336–337; Van Andringa 2009, 172–173. Cf. Spinazzola 1953, 170 (five layers of paint at northeast corner of I.11). List of officials on the eastern face of insula IX.7: *CIL* 4.7807. Six seem to be freedmen, the other three slaves.

The depictions and lists of names were but reminders of activities that played out around the altar throughout the year. Local residents gave minor offerings (like the one found by Spinazzola) to implore the local *lares* to safeguard the neighborhood. Brides may also have left a coin during their weddings. On the *Compitalia*, however, the space became the principal stage of a wider observance. Our sources suggest that, as the gathered crowd craned their necks, the officials – clad in gleaming *togae praetextae* and accompanied by lictors bearing fasces – offered a sacrifice, perhaps of a pig that had been led around the neighborhood’s boundaries. *Vicus* residents hung the woolen dolls in a ritual spotlighting the altar as a centripetal hub of neighborhood identity. Beyond the flute’s airy notes, actors and mimes may have also performed in the street as part of this “solemn and sumptuous” festival. But even absent such events, the painting’s details offered an idealized prompt of these occasions to passersby. The officials were proud of their position, which granted individuals outside Pompeii’s political elite a rare public platform and allowed them to assume many of the trappings/duties and much of the visibility of magistrates.<sup>16</sup>

### *The August Lares*

When the murals were uncovered in 1911, not all four panels were visible. In 78 or 79, someone whitewashed the lower left and painted an electoral endorsement.<sup>17</sup> When excavators cleaned off this final layer, three figures became visible: a central *genius* with a *toga praetexta* pulled over his head holds a cornucopia and pours a libation; flanking him, and on the same scale, are a pair of *Lares*<sup>18</sup> (Plate VIII). The officials, in depicting these three divine figures at the crossroads, chose a subject that resonated with developments in Rome’s *vici* and that connected them to a grand imperial sphere.

In 7 BCE, Augustus reformed the neighborhoods of the *caput mundi*. He divided the city into fourteen regions, rehabilitated the *vicus* as an administrative division, and, most notably, granted statues of the *lares augusti* – “august/sacred *lares*,” not

<sup>16</sup> Offering: Spinazzola 1953, 178. Cf. Spinazzola 1953, 169–170 (bones on altar at northwest corner of I.11). Brides: Varro apud Non. 531M. Lictors: Dio Cass. 55.8. Performances: Suet. *Aug.* 43.1. “Solemn and sumptuous”: Dion. Hall. 4.14.3–4: μέγα . . . καὶ σεμνόν. This might help explain the costs of the office: Patterson 2006, 252–263. Similar scenes may have played out at other times of the year, such as when flowers adorned the altar: Suet. *Aug.* 31.4 (perhaps on May 1 and June 27: Lott 2004, 115–116). Garlands were also a regular feature of *lares* veneration: Cato *Agr.* 143; Ov. *Fasti* 6.791–792; Pliny *NH* 21.11.

<sup>17</sup> *CIL* 4.7856: *C. Gavius Rufum II.V.I.D.O.V.F.* For the date: Franklin 1980, 61; 2001, 185–187.

<sup>18</sup> According to Fröhlich (1991, 337), this segment of the mural was likely commissioned by an earlier cadre of officials in the Augustan period. That it was later covered should not distract from the fact that generations of officials, while repainting the previous panel multiple times, recognized the continued appeal of the *genius* and *Lares* and retained this left side for the better part of a century.



“*lares* of Augustus” – to each neighborhood shrine.<sup>19</sup> If Ovid is any indication, then despite the adjective rather than the genitive, the new name resonated with the imperial figurehead himself: “The city has a thousand *lares* and the *genius* of the leader who handed them over, and the neighborhoods venerate the three spirits.”<sup>20</sup> In this way, our Pompeian officials have layered different constituencies in the painting, celebrating their local prominence and affiliating themselves with the emperor’s image, even granting it the most space in their composition.<sup>21</sup> The connection to Augustus was partly about gratitude because the *princeps* had emphasized their office, granting them and other individuals near the bottom of the social hierarchy prominence in their neighborhood and city. And the altar’s context was also relevant because it stood directly behind the fountain, which dispensed water from an aqueduct that Augustus funded and that nourished Pompeii’s baths, fed many of its houses, and allowed Pompeians to replace deep wells with streetside fountains as their primary water sources.

### *The Twelve Gods*

Sheltered underneath the painted aedicula in the mural’s upper left appear twelve representations of deities (Fig. 83). Alternating between men and women, their iconography identifies them, left to right, as: Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Minerva, Hercules, Venus, Mercury, Proserpina (?), Vulcan, Ceres, Apollo, and Diana. The group of twelve gods was encyclopedic in its evocation of divine authority. Yet subtleties in their selection and arrangement reveal an intentional curation for this location.

Another streetside representation of twelve gods adorned a façade near Pompeii’s forum and sets our officials’ choices in relief.<sup>22</sup> It featured, from left to right: Vesta, Diana, Apollo, Ceres, Minerva, Jupiter, Juno, Vulcan, Venus, Mars, Neptune, and Mercury. This selection of deities appears to be canonical; the same twelve “dined” at a *lectisternium* during the Second Punic War, for instance.<sup>23</sup> The ensemble evokes the Greek *Dodekatheoi*, but is more precisely identifiable as the Roman *dei consentes*, the supreme council that presided over human action, which was worshipped in sculpted form in the Forum

<sup>19</sup> Augustan reforms: Gradel 2002, 109–139 (esp. 121–125 for Pompeii); Lott 2004. Meanings of *augustus* in this sense: Lott 2004, 101–103.

<sup>20</sup> Ov. *Fast.* 5.145–146: *mille lares geniumque ducis, qui tradidit illos / urbs habet, et vici numina terna colunt.*

<sup>21</sup> There were few *genius* figures in Augustan Rome: Lott 2004, 110–114. However, at later periods and outside Rome, they grew in popularity: *CIL* 10.1269 (Nola), 10.3691 (Cumae), 10.4634 (Cales), 10.1581–1582 (Puteoli). Dedications to an imperial *genius*: *AEpigr* 1989, n. 346a = Manganaro 1989: 191, n. 81; Lott 2004, 112;. See also Lott 2004, 206–209, 218–219.

<sup>22</sup> The painting is now largely known from drawings: *PPM* Suppl. 679, no. 131 (N. La Volpe, 20 December 1858) = Archivio Disegni della Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei 819; Fröhlich 1991, 330–331.

<sup>23</sup> Livy 22.9.10, 22.10.9. Another identical grouping: *Enn. Ann.* 1.62–63.



83. In the upper-left scene of the mural above the compital altar, a representation of the *dei consentes* took on a particular flavor by positioning the deity with intensely-local relevance (Hercules, Venus, and Mercury) in the center.

Photo: Spinazzola 1953, Tav. D'Aggiunta 1.

Romanum.<sup>24</sup> Our officials' representation shuffles in two new divinities, but the other ten are the same, so it was also likely understood as the *dei consentes*. The order of the deities differs, and the change seems planned, since the other mural granted the Capitoline Triad primacy at the composition's center while, at our corner, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva are kept almost as a unit, occupying first, second, and fourth positions, respectively. The middle position is occupied instead by Hercules, Mercury, and Venus – figures with intense meanings in Pompeii and along this street. After Vesuvius's eruption, Martial famously penned a mournful poem honoring Campania. He recalls Pompeii not by its name, but through its divine proxy and patroness, Venus.<sup>25</sup> The goddess's potency and primacy, particularly in the guise of Venus Pompeiana, will become still more apparent later in this chapter. Hercules is said to have founded Pompeii when he made a procession (*pompa*) here.<sup>26</sup> And Mercury, in addition to receiving formal cult in the city, was especially popular along this workaday street, where the god of commerce adorned at least six other façades, the most of any divinity.<sup>27</sup>

All in all, the contrast of the two paintings reveals that the neighborhood officials appealed broadly to divine authority while foregrounding the deities

<sup>24</sup> Dodekatheoi: *LIMC* III.646–658. Dei Consentes: Aug. *Civ.* 4.23.3; Sen. *Q Nat.* 2.41.2. Sanctuary: *CIL* 6.102; Varro *RR* 1.1.4; *LTUR* 2.9–10 (“Dei Consentes, Aedes,” Nieddu).

<sup>25</sup> Mart. 4.44.

<sup>26</sup> Isid. *Etym.* 15.1.51; Serv. *A.* 7.662. As a further gauge of his local popularity, Hercules appeared at least nine more times in some form within the two excavated blocks to the south of our corner: Coralini 2001, 146–153, ns. 5–13.

<sup>27</sup> Mercury was worshipped alongside his mother Maia and later also Augustus. Inscribed plaques, given primarily by slaves and freedmen by decree of the decuriones and by the command of elected town officials, bear the imprimatur of civic authority in his worship: *CIL* 10.885, 10.887–888, 10.890. Mercury on façades: Fröhlich 1991: F6, F11, F14, F68, F69, F70. The trio of Hercules, Mercury, and Venus held a special place in the home of at least one neighborhood resident. Just down the street, in the impressive Casa di Trebius Valens (III.2.1), statuettes of the three deities were found, all on the same scale and apparently by the same artist: Spinazzola 1953, 281–296; Coralini 2001, 175–176.

with the greatest local appeal. In a way, this strategy characterizes the entire ensemble, which interwove multiple registers of identity, religion, and authority. The most cursory glance drew the composition together: throughout the three panels, figures hold *paterae*, have their heads covered, and strike similar poses. In this way, the neighborhood officials – relatively humble yet upwardly mobile – created a powerful hierarchy of images that funneled authority down from the heavens, through the imperial sphere and its figurehead, and into their very persons and city ward.<sup>28</sup> The mural offered a splendid backdrop for the officials' appearances, and, when they were absent, it offered an idealized aide-mémoire for those ceremonies, thus expanding the rare public spotlight to other times and audiences.

#### STORY TWO: BARMAIDS, POLITICIANS, AND NEIGHBORHOOD DRAMAS

A few meters east of the altar and just beyond an enormous entryway opened a one-room bar (IX.11.2) (Fig. 84). Its wide doorway illuminated a tightly packed interior: an L-shaped serving counter was topped by marble, inset with *dolia*, and furnished with a small oven.<sup>29</sup> Amphorae behind the counter were ready to accommodate the thirsty. The bar's small space – with 21 square meters of ground floor area, it was in the smallest 10 percent of Pompeii's taverns – may have pushed customers onto the sidewalk as they ate and drank.<sup>30</sup> Or they may have sought refuge from the tavern's heat and smoke by climbing the wooden stairs in the left rear corner.<sup>31</sup> A distinctive bronze tintinnabulum-cum-lamp hanging in the doorway drew streetgoers' eyes and ears. At its top was an ithyphallic pygmy who held a bell in his left hand and a razor-like object in his right. From his short *perizoma* emerged his giant member, itself topped by a smaller phallus. Additional bells and a lamp dangled from the pygmy's feet, scrotum, and phallus to make an arresting object that incited laughter and drove away the evil eye.<sup>32</sup>

About 5 meters further east, another broad doorway (IX.11.4) was tucked in front of a short spur wall decorated with a painting of several metal vessels, which may reflect goods on offer within (Fig. 85). As the spur wall closed off the structure's façade, it certainly drew welcome attention by standing directly in

<sup>28</sup> For a parallel effort on the part of a *magister vici* to appeal to local circumstances, see Lott 2004, 161–165.

<sup>29</sup> Original publication: Della Corte 1911a, 1911b. Recent work on these structures: Ellis 2004, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Ellis 2008, figs. 14, 38.

<sup>31</sup> Opposite the stairs, in the back right, a doorway once connected to a hallway, which led in from the *fauces*-style doorway at IX.11.3.

<sup>32</sup> Spano 1912, 115; Conticello De Spagnolis and De Carolis 1988, 72; Clarke 2007, 69–81.



84. An archival photo shows the bar at IX.11.2 not long after its excavation. In the small space behind the marble-topped bar, numerous amphorae were resting against the wall. Many of the finds from the bar were put on display for visitors.  
Photo: Alinari Archive, Florence.

the sightline of eastbound pedestrians.<sup>33</sup> The owner of this frontage endeavored to make it visually coherent. Unifying the streetface were a low roof projecting over the broad and distinctively paved sidewalk, as well as a façade-spanning red socle that replaced two different schemes of decoration.<sup>34</sup> The spur wall narrows the sidewalk's passable space to less than a meter, thus visually and spatially separating this stretch from other properties. Pedestrians passing through were inconvenienced by the construction, but it created an eddy in sidewalk traffic that could have hosted customers of the shop or the bar.

The façade and blockage constituted statements of dominion in themselves, but the messages painted on the wall offer more dramatic characters and events. Nineteen electoral endorsements are painted across this section of wall. They appear small and large, elegantly drawn and rather squiggly, and they span nearly a decade of electoral activity, to judge from the relative chronology of candidacies

<sup>33</sup> Fröhlich 1991, 337 (F67). A downspout embedded in the wall indicates that an upper story lay above, perhaps with small housing units for rent, although no traces remain today; the rest of the city block is buried. For the property's initial publication, see Della Corte 1911b, 1912a; Spano 1912.

<sup>34</sup> The sidewalk consists of a black *cocciopesto* dotted with small white stones and bits of colored marble. At the jambs to doorway IX.11.3, it is possible to see the earlier decoration: a black socle to the east and a white one to the west.



85. The bar at IX.11.2 was integrated into a street frontage that also featured a shop sign decorated with images of metal vessels standing in pedestrians' line of sight (right). Almost twenty painted electoral posters covered the streetface, although the only endorsers listed were women.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.

that scholars have developed.<sup>35</sup> What draws our attention is not the posters' density (although they coat almost every surface), but the identities of those who made their mark on the street through them. Fourteen messages name no endorser, but the other five intriguingly list women as endorsers.<sup>36</sup> Four women individually support candidates: Maria, Zmyrina, Aegle, and Asellina.<sup>37</sup>

That the women endorsed candidates may initially seem odd since women were not able to vote or hold office.<sup>38</sup> But female endorsements represented a mildly widespread practice, with about fifty posters. Women's inscriptions follow similar patterns to endorsements by named men. They use the same formulae and abbreviations, are visually similar, and endorse candidates in comparable proportions. In other words, there is no "female way" to enter the political fray. But, even if female endorsements were not an unrelated phenomenon, our

<sup>35</sup> Pompeian electoral endorsements: Castrén 1975; Franklin 1980; Biundo 1996, 2003; Mouritsen 1999; Chiavia 2002. Relative dating: Franklin 1980, though see also Mouritsen 1988, 41.

<sup>36</sup> *CIL* 4.7862–7864, 4.7866, 4.7873.

<sup>37</sup> Immediately across the street, another poster lists Ismurna as an endorser, which could add another woman to our cast, but more likely is another spelling of Zmyrina: *CIL* 4.7221.

<sup>38</sup> *Dig.* 50.17.2: *feminis ab omnibus officiis civilibus vel publicis remotae sunt et ideo nec iudices esse possunt nec magistratum gerere nec postulare nec pro alio intervenire nec procuratores existere.*

corner nevertheless presents an interesting situation.<sup>39</sup> After all, Maria and her colleagues were visible participants in local politics – their posters were the only ones that listed an endorser here, and they also formed a large grouping within all the female endorsements citywide. These women seem especially engaged.

Who were they? We can say little with absolute certainty, but the women's names furnish a starting point. Three have a foreign character: Maria, now so common among Italians, signaled someone of Semitic origins; Zmyrina recalls the city of Smyrna on Asia Minor's Ionian coast; and Aegle is the name of several minor Greek mythological figures.<sup>40</sup> As such, the women's names broadly represented the eastern Mediterranean, a space rich with associations for Romans. Asellina, however, derived from Latin, meaning "little donkey," an affectionate diminutive.<sup>41</sup> Despite their diverse origins, the women constituted and occasionally presented themselves as an identifiable group. Their inscriptions mass at the tavern: three on its left doorjamb, one on its right, and another immediately across the street. Such proximity suggests an adherence to this location. Moreover, one inscription, to which I will return shortly, united the women. Supporting C. Lollius Fuscus for aedile, its last two lines read *Asellinas rogant nec sine Zmyrina*<sup>42</sup> (Fig. 86). The apparent use of the accusative for the nominative in *Asellinas* is unusual, but the plural verb implies a joint endorsement that is solidified by *nec sine Zmyrina*, "especially Zmyrina." Zmyrina endorsed another candidate at least six years before this inscription, thus marking a long-visible female presence on this street and its walls.<sup>43</sup> Ever since the bar's discovery, scholars have woven the various threads present into elaborate tapestries. They picture a bar owned by Asellina because she has the Latinate name and becomes the titular head of a collective presentation. And they imagine the women as foreign workers, possibly slaves, who furnished food, drink, and perhaps sex.

Our best guess is that the women indeed worked here. Whether their labor extended beyond serving food and drink, as we know happened elsewhere, is less clear.<sup>44</sup> In addition to the tintinnabulum, a graffito drawing of an ithyphallic figure offers the only other evidence for sexual activity, and phalloi are as much a sign of good fortune as a representation of sexual organs.<sup>45</sup> Our group's

<sup>39</sup> Savunen 1995, 1997, esp. 22–28; Bernstein 1988, 2007; Chiavria 2002, 197–204.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., Virg., *Ed.* 6.20; Serv. *A.* 4.484; Pliny *NH* 35.40.

<sup>41</sup> *OLD*, s.v. *asella*.

<sup>42</sup> *CIL* 4.7863.

<sup>43</sup> Two of the women endorse the same candidate as well, C. Helvius Sabinus, for aedile: *CIL* 4.7862, 4.7866.

<sup>44</sup> *Dig.* 23.2.43.pr, 23.2.43.9.

<sup>45</sup> *CIL* 4.9097. The graffito was scratched into the red plaster just to the right of the door. It showed a nude man with ape-like features hurrying toward the tavern, arms spread wide, with a gigantic phallus. The image plays on shop-signs of Mercury, who appeared ithyphallic at the doorway of other shops, sometimes carrying a bag full of coins. Apparently in response to the drawing or some aspect of it, someone wrote *mumificius*, "bountiful" or "generous," nearby.



86. This archival photograph shows several *programmata* that appeared to the left of the bar's entrance. Barely visible in the lower left is Zmyrina's endorsement of Gaius Julius Polybius. Clearer is a group backing of Gaius Lollius for duumvir, apparently by a group of women that included Zmyrina.

Photo: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia, Archivio Fotografico degli Scavi, C436.

legal status is also in question; women – whether slave, free, or freed – use only their *cognomen* when endorsing candidates, so we lack helpful onomastic data, such as the *gentilicium* of a former owner that a freedwoman received upon manumission. It is not certain whether Asellina owned the bar or whether she was simply the most visible woman.

More than epigraphical records, the names reflected people whose daily lives unfolded here. Although the women's routine is largely lost, the material evidence allows us to stitch together some sense of their interactions. First, the space on the ground floor is very restricted, especially behind the counter, which likely put the women in close contact with one another and with customers, who may have spilled onto the extensive sidewalk or headed upstairs. The bar's wide entryway granted the women a view and perhaps knowledge of the neighborhood's workings. For instance, if the huge entryway next door preceded a sizeable house, then the women probably knew much about its activities by watching its denizens' comings and goings, by catching

up with its dependents over a glass of wine, and by hearing sounds emanating from its doorway and courtyards. Similarly with a grand residence and smaller house across the street. In the latter, an industrious doorkeeper seems to have looked back across the street while carding wool.<sup>46</sup> In other words, even if these barmaids were stationary, they soaked in much.

At the same time, the bar's broad opening made Asellina, Aegle, and the rest visible to those passing along the busy thoroughfare. To newcomers, they might have offered suggestions on how to navigate the city's central alleyways or where to leave a cart for the night. For regulars at the fountain or altar, the women were a consistent neighborhood feature. Because of what they saw, what they learned from their substantial flow of customers, and their potential role as connectors among those diverse patrons, they likely had a strong involvement in and opinions about Pompeii's affairs. It is easy to imagine them having a stake in all matter of issues, both personal and civic – upcoming festivals, the rebuilding of the town, and not least the election of officials. Even if our elite literary sources disparage bars and bar-goers, we must remember both that such establishments were a ubiquitous urban feature catering to the daily needs of many and that the worlds of bars and townhouses were far from separate. They stood side by side, endorsements bridged the two spheres, and action from one could easily spill over into the other. Juvenal, for example, imagines a rich man trying to protect his household secrets by shutting his house, muting his slaves, and taking manifold other measures. But his efforts are in vain. In Juvenal's telling, the rumors head straight to the corner bar; the nearby barkeep soon knows all.<sup>47</sup> In sum, Maria and company could have dished out neighborhood knowledge with a side of legumes.

Such high–low interaction could be contentious, to judge from a series of events at our corner. One of the earliest posters still visible along this frontage was painted left of the bar's doorway (Fig. 86). In it, Zmyrina asked for support for Caius Iulius Polybius, a candidate for duumvir, whose name was famous enough to be given by its initials alone.<sup>48</sup> Such notoriety did not insulate his candidacy from a peculiar practice. Someone – we know not who – came along and white-washed Zmyrina's name out of the poster but left the remainder untouched.<sup>49</sup> This was not a one-off phenomenon, for one block away a *rogator*

<sup>46</sup> Two doorways fronted the smaller house. I.7.3 led across a travertine threshold to the dwelling's main residential space, whereas I.7.2, which connected to I.7.3, dead-ended underneath a wooden staircase. Wool-carding equipment was found here: Della Corte 1927, 7–15.

<sup>47</sup> Juv. 9.102–110 describes gossip spreading from a house to bar. See also *Apul. Met.* 1.7, 1.21. Gossip is also notorious around crossroads: Juv. 6.407–412; *Hor. Sem.* 2.6.50; *Ov. Am.* 3.1.18; *Mart.* 7.97.12; *Prop.* 2.20.22.

<sup>48</sup> He is also identified by his initials on two endorsements along this same façade: *CIL* 4.7872, 4.7888.

<sup>49</sup> *CIL* 4.7864.



named Cuculla also endorsed C. Iulius Polybius in the same election cycle and had her name covered.<sup>50</sup> Polybius's house stood two short blocks east on this very street, so the great man, surrounded by supporters, likely walked past both endorsements on his way to the forum for public business.<sup>51</sup> Did he not appreciate a barmaid's endorsement? Did he consider it below his station or harmful in some way?

The answers are not immediately clear, but the deletion of Zmyrina's name was not the end of the story. A few years later, her name appeared at least twice more at our corner.<sup>52</sup> In Pompeii's penultimate campaign season, a poster was painted just left of the bar's door and thus immediately above the cancelled endorsement. This is the endorsement of C. Lollius Fuscus that I mentioned earlier, the last two lines of which read: *Asellinas rogant / nec sine Zmyrina. Nec sine* literally means "not without," which emphasizes Zmyrina's inclusion; the phrasing thus intensifies the message: "and especially Zmyrina."<sup>53</sup> This sentiment appears to confirm what the location suggested; namely, that whoever painted this endorsement willfully reacted to the erasure of Zmyrina's name. You rub out our friend, the message says, and we will strenuously respond by pulling for someone else.<sup>54</sup> We can only imagine the reaction of whoever plastered over Zmyrina's name upon seeing this rejoinder. Zmyrina's colleagues, by contrast, seem emboldened: in separate endorsements, Maria and Aegle both supported Cn. Helvius Sabinus in the next election cycle. Overall, these endorsements, countertactics, and further responses show the stakes of self-presentation, as well as how a wide range of participants intersected in a sometimes-explosive push and pull.

### STORY THREE: SHOP FAÇADES AND GODDESSES

The altar paintings and political endorsements were not alone in mixing different realms – human and divine, humble and elite. Across a narrow street from the altar, a wide doorway opens at the city block's southeast corner (IX.7.1; Fig. 87). Because the shop's interior remains buried, we do not know what wares it produced or offered. That it hosted felt-making, however, seems

<sup>50</sup> *CIL* 4.7841.

<sup>51</sup> It is difficult to know how much to make of Caius Julius Polybius's house, which presented a "throw-back" of sorts. Its façade, one of the most austere in the city, towered over the street with stucco molded to take the appearance of cut stone blocks; it presaged an impressive house rife with archaizing forms of decoration, such as a standalone vestibule boasting an unparalleled loggia: Leach 1993; Ciarallo, De Carolis, and Auricchio 2001.

<sup>52</sup> *CIL* 4.7221, 4.7863.

<sup>53</sup> The phrase *nec sine* is used in other endorsements as well: *CIL* 4.995, 4.1083, 4.6610, 4.7374, 4.7627, 4.7658, 4.9851.

<sup>54</sup> In fact, Lollius Fuscus appears to have had a special connection to whoever controlled this property, for the candidate's name appears no fewer than three times along this frontage, spelled out in some of the largest letters on the façade (*CIL* 4.7863, 4.7868, 4.7874).



87. Although only its front-most portions are excavated, the opening at IX.7.1 appears to have hosted work related to the felt industry. Above the entrance appear megalographic representations of the heads of deities, while flanking the doorway were paintings of Venus Pompeiana (left) and a procession in honor of Cybele (right).

Photo: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia, Archivio Fotografico degli Scavi, C495.

likely because the *quactilarii* (felters) endorse candidates on the right jamb.<sup>55</sup> The street-side furnace and an electoral endorsement from the *infectores* (dyers) suggest that a dye-works was located next door (IX.7.2).<sup>56</sup> The two businesses perhaps worked in concert or were owned by the same proprietor. A fascinating group of paintings surrounded the shop's entryway: megalographic paintings of four deities on the lintel, an ornately dressed Venus Pompeiana on the left jamb, and a procession of Cybele on the right. As we have seen, shops frequently boasted religious imagery because Romans perceived connections between commercial success and divine support. But this intriguingly catholic range of deities reveals the shop owner's careful associations, sheds light on events along this street, and opens a window onto local rivalries.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *CIL* 4.7809.

<sup>56</sup> *CIL* 4.7812.

<sup>57</sup> In general, on the façade and its paintings: Spinazzola 1953, 213–242; Fröhlich 1991, 182–184, 332–333; Clarke 2003, 87–94; Varone 2007, 129–131; Potts 2009.

Of all the paintings, those above the door and under the balcony's scalloped balustrade attracted the eye first. Each god's head and shoulders appear against a saffron background. Left to right, they are a youthful Apollo sporting a radiate crown of beams; the bearded Jupiter with a scepter (in the largest panel); Mercury with his customary caduceus and winged helmet; and Luna, the moon goddess, wearing crescent-shaped horns. Apollo and Luna both hold the whips they used to goad the horses pulling their chariots, solar or nocturnal. The paintings' position above the street's flurry made them visible, and their scale and color drew streetgoers' attention.<sup>58</sup> When streetgoers looked, how might they have "read" this display? They may have recognized the gods as four days of the week laid out in reverse order (Sunday, Thursday, Wednesday, and Monday).<sup>59</sup> But the paintings' commissioner probably had other intentions, too. Atop the façade, viewers could imagine a cosmological ensemble, framed by celestial bodies carrying the instruments of their movement and offering pride of place to the father of the heavens, Jupiter. Mercury, as we have seen, was oft revered along this commercial corridor, and he rightfully co-starred as financial guardian.<sup>60</sup>

### *A Procession of Cybele*

On the right doorjamb the owner honored another deity and perhaps also celebrated a local ceremony that passed through Pompeii's streets (Plate IV). Here appeared a procession honoring the goddess Cybele, who was also known as *Mater De(or)um Magna Idaea* as the great mother of the gods from Mount Ida. Amid garlands, candelabra, and an altar, attention concentrates on the enthroned figure of Cybele. A turreted crown, representative of her role as a city protectress, tops her head. Next to her feet sits a pair of small lions symbolizing her place as a mistress of nature. The goddess bears a patera, a long golden sprig of vegetation, and a *tympanum*, or tambourine/drum. She is represented as a wooden statue, for she dwarfs the other figures and sits atop a *ferculum*, the litter borne in many Roman parades and festivals.<sup>61</sup> Those who ferry her through the streets stand alongside, their hands resting on canes.

Cybele was a relative newcomer to Italian soil, although she had long been revered in Phrygia. When Romans were suffering at Hannibal's hands during the Second Punic War, the Sybilline books instructed them to bring Cybele's relic to Rome. In short order, a temple was built and games in the goddess's

<sup>58</sup> Viewers' attention would also have been drawn to the shop by the *gaze* of the deities, each angled slightly to turn toward the doorway's opening.

<sup>59</sup> Potts 2009, 61–63.

<sup>60</sup> Clarke 2003, 89, expresses a similar view. The following pages owe much to his interpretation.

<sup>61</sup> Abaecherli 1935–1936; Madigan 2012, esp. 39–42.

honor – the *ludi Megalenses* – joined Rome’s festal calendar.<sup>62</sup> At Pompeii, our knowledge of the cult of Cybele beyond this painting is limited. Indications are that this was neither a mainstream cult nor a tiny sect. No temple has been found, and no surviving inscription mentions one.<sup>63</sup> A marble statue of Cybele’s consort, Attis, near the forum, and three men’s self-identification as *fanatici* provide hints of formalized worship.<sup>64</sup>

The cult of Cybele also aroused suspicion, particularly for the Roman elite. Literary sources fixate on priests of Cybele, the *galli*, who were reputed to imitate Cybele’s consort, Attis, by castrating themselves in devotion to the goddess. The apprehension the *galli* engendered, according to Lucretius, sprung from the noise they aroused and the sight of the tools of their emasculation.<sup>65</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing more than 150 years after the cult’s introduction to Rome, still characterizes its rituals as foreign and describes the consequences:

[The priests] carry the image in procession around the city, begging for alms (as is their custom), wearing medallions on their breasts and beating their tympana, while their followers play tunes on the flute in honor of the Mother of the Gods. But by a law and decree of the senate no native-born Roman walks through the city dressed in bright clothes, begging for alms or accompanied by flute players, nor worships the goddess with wild Phrygian ceremonies.<sup>66</sup>

Because of such misgivings, the ruling elite severely restricted the priests’ movement around (and begging on) city streets, and Roman citizens were

<sup>62</sup> Arrival in Rome: Livy 29.11; 29.14; 36.36.3. The relic may have been a meteorite: Arnob. 6.11, 7.49. Temple dedication: Livy 36.36.4–5. Cic. *Har. resp.* 12.24 describes the games as particularly solemn and pious. Aristocratic families were especially active in the goddess’s initial reception: Ov. *Fast.* 4.291–338, 4.347–348; Aur. Vict. *De viris illustribus* 46.1–3; Val Max. 1.8.11. See Vermaseren 1977a; Gruen 1990, esp. 5–33; Beard 1994.

<sup>63</sup> In Herculaneum in 76 CE, the emperor restored a temple of the mother of the gods that was damaged in an earthquake: *CIL* 10.1406.

<sup>64</sup> Vermaseren 1977b, 4.12, no. 24. *CIL* 4.2155. The discovery of nearly fifty artworks or graffiti identified with Cybele or Attis speak to the cult’s diffusion through the city: Vermaseren 1977b, 4.12–28.

<sup>65</sup> Lucr. 2.618–623: “Taut drums thunder beneath their palms, and round about the curved cymbals crash; horns blast in a raucous strain, while the hollow pipe stirs the heart with its Phrygian tune. And they carry before them weapons, symbols of their mad frenzy, to strike awe into the ungrateful hearts and impious minds of the rabble with dread for the goddess’s majesty.” *Tympana tenta tonant palmis et cymbala circum / concava, raucisonoque minantur cornua cantu, / et Phrygio stimulat numero cava tibia mentis, / telaque praeportant, violenti signa furoris, / ingratos animos atque impia pectora volgi / conterrere metu quae possint numine divae.*

<sup>66</sup> Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 2.19.4–5: καὶ περιάγουσιν ἀνά τὴν πόλιν οὗτοι μητραγυρτοῦντες, ὥσπερ αὐτοῖς ἔθος, τύπους τε περικείμενοι τοῖς στήθεσι καὶ καταλούμενοι πρὸς τῶν ἐπομένων τὰ μητρῶα μέλη καὶ τύπανα κροτοῦντες: Ῥωμαίων δὲ τῶν αὐθιγενῶν οὔτε μητραγυρτῶν τις οὔτε καταλούμενος πορεύεται διὰ τῆς πόλεως ποικίλην ἐνδεδυκῶς στολὴν οὔτε ὀργιάζει τὴν θεὸν τοῖς Φρυγίοις ὀργιασμοῖς κατὰ νόμον καὶ ψήφισμα βουλῆς. For a similar concentration on the group’s sounds, see Juv. 6.511–516. Cf. Cat. 63.

apparently barred from joining the priestly order and from participating in self-mutilation.<sup>67</sup> By the time of this painting, reformation of the cult's practices had even drawn imperial attention.<sup>68</sup>

The fresco's commissioner and artist remained true to Cybele's worship but sought to quell any anxieties viewers felt about the goddess.<sup>69</sup> Streetgoers could discern a strict hierarchy and series of roles in the procession. At its front, the four identically dressed *ferculum*-bearers stand in position. Next come ten paraders whose leader, clothed in a white toga with red stripes, imitates Cybele's posture and attributes: his extended hands hold a green branch, a lamp-like object, and a gold patera. His two assistants in tunics complete the front row: one carrying the sacred *cista*, the other playing the pipes. Behind them, seven women wear colorful garments and hold items for the procession: a branch, a basket, tambourines, a vase, and cymbals. At the extreme left, two more musicians play the panpipes (*syrix*) and cymbals. Separating them from the rest of the procession is an archaizing head of Dionysius. This deity had special relevance because he, too, was a once-rowdy god from Asia Minor who gained acceptance in Roman Italy and especially Campania.<sup>70</sup> On the whole, the depiction of Cybele's entourage is encyclopedic of the goddess's cult, representing all the technical aspects of the goddess's worship – music, drumming, *cistae*, sacrifice, and more. That said, the artist has taken pains to represent an organized affair that contrasts markedly with the frenzied scenes presented by textual sources. Nary a *gallus* can be identified, as the men wear mainstream garb, at least two have beards, and only the women and marginal musicians add a splash of color. Additionally, by showing the procession at rest, the fresco activates all the participants in their respective roles. So ordered is the representation that some scholars believe they can coordinate individual figures with cult offices known from inscriptions.<sup>71</sup> In other words, the fresco reassures Pompeians still wary of Cybele and her worshippers.

The painting may represent a procession that passed by this shop during celebrations of the goddess. We know of two possibilities from Rome. In late March, after several days of various activities (including carrying a recently cut tree, symbolic of the tree under which Attis, Cybele's consort, expired after castrating himself), worshippers processed Cybele's statue from her Palatine sanctuary to the river Almo for its ritual washing (*lavatio*). The other major cycle was the *ludi Megalenses* in early April, which culminated in the goddess's "birthday" (*dies natalis*). It featured a procession, theatrical

<sup>67</sup> Movement and begging limited: Diod. Sic. 36.13; Cic. *Leg.* 2.22.40. Prohibitions on Roman citizens: Val. Max. 7.6.

<sup>68</sup> *Dig.* 48.8.4.2; *Codex Inst.* 42.1; Vermaseren 1977a, 113.

<sup>69</sup> Here I largely follow the reading of Clarke 2003, 87–94.

<sup>70</sup> The archaic appearance of Dionysius, in fact, may have emphasized the god's long-standing stability in Pompeians' religious life – a place worshippers of Cybele hoped to attain.

<sup>71</sup> Spinazzola 1953, 233–237.

events, games at the Circus, and aristocratic banquets.<sup>72</sup> Ovid's description gives a sense of the parade:

Let the heavens revolve three times on the eternal axis, let the sun hitch and unhitch his horses three times, and at once the curved Bercynthian flute will blow and the festival of the Great Mother of Ida will commence. The eunuchs will parade and strike their hollow tambourines, and the cymbal clashing on cymbal will jingle. Riding on the soft necks of her followers she will be carried through the city's streets amid their howling.<sup>73</sup>

The fresco certainly accords with this portrayal (though without the *galli*), while the branches carried by the retinue evoke the tree of the March cycle. They may have been a feature of the April cycle that go unmentioned, or the painting may have intentionally referenced multiple celebrations.<sup>74</sup>

Whichever celebration is shown, a procession like the one depicted would have made a powerful, if brief, impact at our corner.<sup>75</sup> Cymbals, drums, pipes, and ululations signaled the group's approach. As the parade neared, shoppers and vendors raised their voices, people squeezed onto the sidewalks, wine porters sought alternate routes, and kids scrambled atop the fountain for a better look. In sum, the street, its space, and its sensory environment were taken over by a restricted group of participants. Paraders, specially outfitted for the occasion, likely felt the spotlight. The *ferculum's* weight lightened for its bearers, musicians played lustily, and the chief officiant reveled in appearing on an equal sartorial plane with civic officials. Similarly, the parade also forged a group identity. From their lining-up to the parade's conclusion, Cybele worshippers – like other groups that paraded through the streets (families, *collegia*, leading politicians and their supporters, etc.) – constituted a recognizable unit both to others and to themselves. The procession also extended Cybele's ritual space, momentarily rendering the route sacred to the goddess and avoiding the "symbolic atrophy" of immobile sculptures anchored in the forum or elsewhere.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> On these March and April events, see Alvar 2008, 282–293.

<sup>73</sup> Ov. *Fasti* 4.179–187: *Ter sine perpetuo caelum versetur in axe, / ter iungat Titan terque resolvat equos, / protinus inflexo Bercynthia tibia cornu / flabit, et Idaeae festa parentis erunt. / ibunt semimares et inania tympana tudent, / aeraque tinnitus aere repulsa dabunt; / ipsa sedens molli comitum cervice feretur / urbis per medias exululata vias.*

<sup>74</sup> A strict reading of the painting suggests the procession's passage from left to right – that is, from west to east. But if events in Pompeii mimicked those in Rome, then the parade would thus be shown moving *away* from the theater district where the *ludi Megalenses* were supposed to unfold. To the east do lie both the amphitheater, which could have offered a suitable venue, and access points for the Sarno river, if the *lavatio* were performed at Pompeii.

<sup>75</sup> That the parade is depicted as halted in its course puts emphasis on specific points along the route, such as the shop, rather than upon the movement of the goddess and her retinue past them.

<sup>76</sup> Symbolic atrophy: Stewart 2003, 152.

The painting and real processions infused one another with meaning. When a parade made its way by, then the fresco, as a visual echo of an actual event, was legitimized. And procession participants who saw the painting could feel a special sense of reception, secure of a fellow worshipper's presence and devotion. Throughout the year, the image created anticipation for viewers, offering them a clue for what they would see and hear. Similarly, after the procession passed, the depiction shaped viewers' memories. If the procession had an impact on the scale our sources describe – with onlookers frightened and awestruck – then the painting helped to sustain reverence and wonder beyond the event.

### *Venus Pompeiana*

On the doorway's left side and thus opposite Cybele's procession, the shop owner commissioned a fresco of an intensely local divinity, Venus Pompeiana (Plate IX). The patron goddess of the city stands about three times Cybele's size and is framed by flying cupids. Each extends emblems of triumph: one a vegetal crown, the other a palm. Venus's right hand grasps a branch while her left holds a scepter and rests on a rudder, both of gold. She is dripping with finery: a tiara bearing a diadem, pearl earrings, and numerous rings are visible, while gold edges her heavy purple tunic and mantle. Her barefoot son Eros stands on a platform at her right, wings extended and hands gripping a mirror.

In depicting Venus, the owner presented a goddess with persistence and increasingly important presence in Pompeii. Venus's Samnite-era cultic identity was strong enough that linguistic fossils from Oscan – especially the epithet *fisica* – continue to appear in Latin inscriptions honoring the goddess.<sup>77</sup> When Sulla established the Roman colony, Venus's name was written into the city's new moniker (*Colonia Cornelia Veneria Pompeianorum*), and, in a fitting location for a goddess overseeing maritime affairs, a huge temple to Venus soon loomed over the Bay of Naples in the city's southwestern corner.<sup>78</sup> As time went on, the goddess gained additional shades of meaning, particularly when Augustus claimed Venus Genetrix as both an ancestress and a national protectress.<sup>79</sup> In early imperial Pompeii, the city's most prominent public "priestesshood" was that of Venus.<sup>80</sup> After seismic activity shook the city in the 60s CE, Nero and his wife Poppaea Sabina apparently gave jewelry and gold to Venus.

<sup>77</sup> The goddess is referred to as Venus Fisica or Venus Fisica Pompeiana: Schilling 1954, 383–388; Carroll 2010, 96. The epithet *Fisica* may represent connections to Mefitis, a goddess worshipped in pre-Roman Southern Italy: Coarelli 1998; Coarelli, Foglia, and Foglia 2002, 88–89.

<sup>78</sup> Carroll 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Zanker 1988, 195–223.

<sup>80</sup> It is notable for the depth of her pre-Roman legacy that, even into the first century CE, women from the foremost noncolonist families held this position: Castrén 1975, 70–72, 96–98; Franklin 2001, 33–37.

Poppaea is said to have sent a beryl (a type of crystal), a drop-shaped pearl, and another large pearl, while Nero supposedly came with an amazing weight of gold, one piece of which – a lamp – may have been identified.<sup>81</sup> The connection between Pompeii and Venus was strong enough that Martial, mourning Campania after Vesuvius's eruption, could refer to the city by its divine shorthand, *Veneris sedes*, the “dwelling spot of Venus.”<sup>82</sup>

In sum, the owner here portrayed a goddess with resonances simultaneously indigenous, local, and imperial. And our representation could have evoked those echoes: the rudder chimes with Venus's particular Pompeian location and function, viewers may have seen an Augustan element in her matronly proportions, and the pearls and abundant gold evoke imperial visits and donations. (The emblems of victory afforded by the cupids could even reference Venus Victrix, the aspect of the divinity favored by Sulla.) The commissioner displayed an image of the goddess that invited reverence on its own and also drew a favorable appraisal of the goddess's pendant, Cybele. Both hold branches and were celebrated in April festivals of fertility and renewal.<sup>83</sup> Through her mural crown, Magna Mater was recognized as a protective city goddess. If the appearance of Cybele continued to inspire trepidation, this figure of Venus offered viewers comfortable reassurance.

Venus Pompeiana's presentation is not always so richly ornamented, which raises questions about her appearance here.<sup>84</sup> There may be overlapping explanations. First, both Venus's purple garments and Eros's dark green mantle hang in heavy folds that may reflect a dense material. If this shop indeed housed felt-making, then the image (and also that of the beautifully adorned Cybele) could serve to advertise the goods produced (or on offer) here.<sup>85</sup> Second, Spinazzola argues on the basis of Venus's abundant jewelry that, as in the Cybele panel, streetgoers here saw representations of statues of Venus and Eros, which were ritually dressed and adorned by Pompeians and paraded through the streets on special occasions, not unlike processions the great excavator saw in Naples and Sorrento.<sup>86</sup> In his reading, the figures' elaborate clothing and ornament are gifts

<sup>81</sup> Temple disrepair: Carroll 2010, 87–89. The gifts of the imperial household are known from graffiti in the Casa di Julius Polybius: Giordano 1974, ns. 4–5. n. 4: *Munera Poppaea misit Veneri sanctissimae berillum helencumque; unio mixtus est.* n. 5: *Caesar ut ad Venerem venet sanctissimam ut tui te vexere pedes caelestes Auguste millia milliorum ponderis auri fuit.* Gold lamp: De Caro 1998.

<sup>82</sup> Mart 4.44.5.

<sup>83</sup> Potts 2009, 61–62.

<sup>84</sup> For instance, in the depiction of the twelve gods across the alley, she wears a veil and no discernible jewelry. A richly ornamented female bust in the Casa di Maius Castricius (VII.16.17) has been identified as Venus Pompeiana: Varriale 2006, 439–442.

<sup>85</sup> A view shared by Kellum 1999, 289.

<sup>86</sup> Spinazzola 1953, 216–217. He also contends that the base on which the “statue” of Venus is mounted is made of wood and could have been carried by worshippers. The green ground on which Venus stands, however, is drawn impressionistically with broad brush strokes and thus does not cohere with the careful execution on which Spinazzola's hypothesis depends.



presented by reverent worshippers. If Spinazzola is correct, then the shop owner's image conjures up another civically important activity on Pompeii's streets and along the Via dell'Abbondanza. Unfortunately, while groups calling themselves the *Venerii* and *Veneriosi* were present at Pompeii, Spinazzola's suggestion otherwise stretches the evidence.<sup>87</sup> The final possible explanation for the overwhelming finery blends spatial context, commercial activity, and religious allusion by looking to another painting of Venus Pompeiana that decorated the façade of a potential rival felt-maker just down the street. We continue westward toward that property.

#### STORY FOUR: A CONCATENATION OF CLOTH

Next door to the Cybele-Venus shop, as we noted, opened another broad shop-style doorway (IX.7.2). The little unearthened beyond its façade deepens our sense of this corner's character. Just inside its opening squats a heavy cylindrical furnace containing a deep leaden cauldron. An electoral poster on the adjacent doorjamb offers the support of the *infectores* (dye workers).<sup>88</sup> Dying wool or cloth could be a messy process that involved soaking material in large vats of softening agents before immersing it in cauldrons of dye. The sidewalk-side fire thus lends a sense of heat and possibly also smell to our street. Pedestrians approaching the shop may have spied wisps of smoke and crossed the street on the stepping stones just to the west, or the furnace's eye-catching decoration may have warned them off: on its front, a vertical phallus dwelled within a small temple (whose acroteria are also phalloi), while a horizontal phallus appeared on the side.

Beyond reminding us of sensory phenomena, the dye shop also speaks to the social dynamics among neighborhood workers. While the *quactilarii*, the felt-makers, endorsed candidates next door, the *infectores* do the same here. Across the street and about 15 meters to the west stood one of Pompeii's largest fulleries (I.6.5–7). Once a house with an atrium at its core, the industrial *fullonica* dedicated its space to cleaning dirty cloth and preparing new cloth for sale.<sup>89</sup> (Since fulleries were renowned for their stench, we can probably add the odor of urine to the corner's sensory inventory.)<sup>90</sup> All the fullers (*universi fullones*) advocate for a candidate along the façade, thus joining their cloth-working neighbors.<sup>91</sup> Group endorsements are widely attested at Pompeii, and scholars usually mine them for lists of occupations. What comes across clearly here is how much individuals identified with their work and their fellow

<sup>87</sup> *Venerii*: CIL 4.1146; *Veneriosi*: CIL 4.7791.

<sup>88</sup> CIL 4.7812.

<sup>89</sup> The so-called Fullery of Stephanus: Flohr 2009.

<sup>90</sup> Smells of fulleries: Plaut. *Asin.* 907; Mart. 9.63; Suet. *Vesp.* 23.

<sup>91</sup> CIL 4.7164.

laborers and how that labor was both specialized and tightly packed because related but distinct segments of the cloth industry voiced their support separately on adjacent segments of wall.<sup>92</sup> But such proximity may also have fueled conflicts among those sharing the same business.

*Verecundus, Cloth for Sale, and Dueling Goddesses*

Immediately opposite the fullery was yet another establishment linked to cloth manufacture, processing, and sale. Streetgoers could recognize its three-doorway façade (IX.7.5–7; Fig. 88) as a single unit from indications below their feet to above their head.<sup>93</sup> A travertine threshold and a pair of eye-catching frescoes singled out the westernmost opening to form a fascinating and potentially combative ensemble.<sup>94</sup>

On the doorway's narrow left jamb appears a painting in two registers (Fig. 89). An electoral *programma* occupies most of the upper panel. It is Cuculla's endorsement of C. Julius Polybius that was whitewashed, just as Zmyrina's was at the bar.<sup>95</sup> Since the figural painting below occupies a relatively small space, the inscription was likely part of the painting's initial design, which raises more questions about why Cuculla's name was stricken. The panel's remainder shows Mercury standing on a temple pronaos, dressed in elegant winged shoes, wearing a cape, and holding his caduceus. The patron god of commerce also grasps a cloth sack full, presumably, of coins. In the lower register, the scene shifts to earthly concerns and a scene of exchange. A woman seated behind a counter exhibits merchandise to a customer seated at a high-backed bench. Holding shoes in her hands, the saleswoman looks out over a spread of objects including glass cups and additional shoes. A second table in the foreground carries multicolored bundles of cloth as well as still more shoes and glassware. The proliferation of goods suggests a successful transaction in idealized circumstances. A comfortable customer surveys a bevy of goods similar to those worn by Mercury in the register above.

The right jamb repeats the two-register configuration (Fig. 90). In the upper scene, Venus Pompeiana reappears – and she bears a striking resemblance to the image five doors to the east. Eros again holds a mirror at her side; the goddess

<sup>92</sup> Joshel 1992.

<sup>93</sup> Along the street, a coherent set of curbstones fronted the façade. They bordered a sidewalk distinguished from its neighbors by marble chips set into a black *cocciopesto*. Additionally, stones set flush into the walkway spanned its width to frame the sidewalk decoration. Similar blocks elsewhere are thought to have marked property lines: Saliou 1999, 169–171. The structure's eastern neighbor projects into the sidewalk, thus strengthening the argument. Finally, a roof projecting low over the frontage spanned the three doorways to tie them together.

<sup>94</sup> On the façade in general: Spinazzola 1953, 189–210; Angelone 1986; Fröhlich 1991, 172–174, 333–335; Clarke 2003, 105–112; Varone 2007, 126–128.

<sup>95</sup> *CIL* 4.7841.



88. At IX.7.5–7, another property apparently dedicated to cloth manufacture and sale opened three doorways to the street under a low-slung roof.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.

cradles her rudder and scepter, and she is bedecked with jewelry. As down the street, palm- and crown-bearing cupids fly in from the sides. In this ensemble, however, the goddess's chiton and mantle are a bright bluish-green, and she wears a mural crown confirming (if there were any doubt) her protection of Pompeii. Moreover, a team of elephants pulls her atop a quadriga that takes the shape of a red-prowed boat, another symbol (like the rudder) of her maritime connections. Venus is joined by Fortuna, who stands atop a globe and herself holds a rudder, and by a *genius*, who pours a libation; both clutch cornucopias.

Below the divine realm, the commissioner placed a companion to the sales scene – a view of the “factory floor” that generates the final products on offer. At the center, four bare-torsoed workers roll animal fibers in coagulant to bind them into felt near a wood-fired furnace.<sup>96</sup> (Their work surface funnels excess binding agent back into the heater.) To the sides, three additional figures sit at low tables preparing wool for spinning by drawing it through combs fastened to columns running through the tables. One last personage occupies the panel's extreme right. A male figure holds up the finished product – a light brown garment with reddish-purple stripes – while wearing a hooded cloak and felt

<sup>96</sup> If a passerby were still confused, then an electoral poster running through the register might have offered clarification. In it, the *quactiliar(ii)*, or felt-makers, endorse Vettius Firmus for aedile: *CIL* 4.7838.



89. To the left of doorway IX.7.7, a two-register painting featured Mercury on a temple porch and a sales scene.

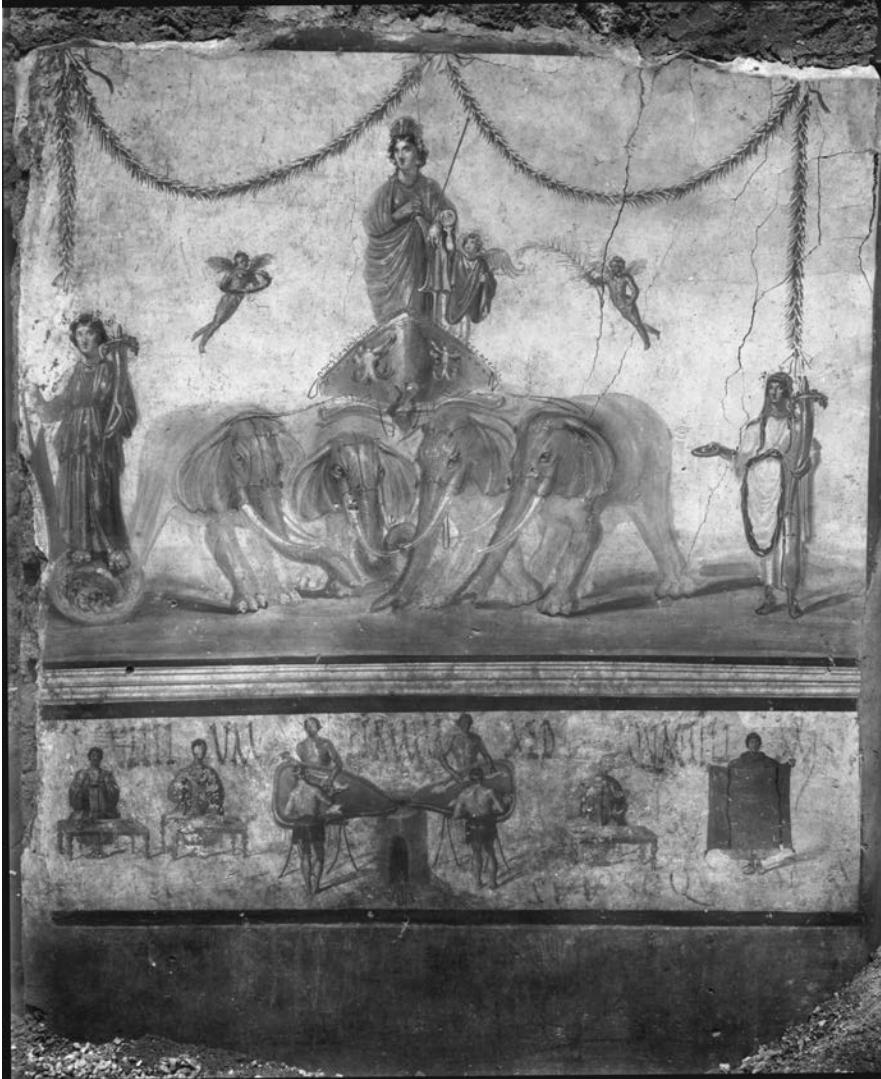
Photo: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia, Archivio Fotografico degli Scavi, C499.

shoes (both of which might have been for sale here). A passerby likely concluded that this man was responsible for the product, first, because his standing position and dress distinguish him as the overseer of the workers and, second, because his name, Verecundus, “modest,” was written in small letters below. If viewers, like modern scholars, understood the seated woman in the sales scene to be his wife, then both figures exhibit the merchandise as they bracket the lower scenes.

It is fascinating to take stock of Verecundus’s self-presentation. Elite texts show disdain about close associations between “proper” Romans and the realms of trade, commerce, and production, but the evidence on the ground suggests that figures like Verecundus had few such qualms. In fact, the lower register emphasizes both his products’ range and his operation’s scale. Wool combers and felt pressers represent two initial steps in different industrial processes, and they invite viewers to reflect on the other stages (and workers) involved in producing the two materials, such as flattening, cutting, sewing, and fashioning the felt into its final product and forming yarn from the wool, weaving it into cloth, dispelling impurities, and then adding color. In other words, Verecundus might have represented additional felt- or wool-creation steps, but it would have been at

the cost of showing fewer workers. A painted inscription at the property’s east end mentions a linen tunic with threads of gold, *tunica lintea aur(ata)*, which could be another piece of merchandise on offer from Verecundus. It thus potentially expands the range and elevates the price of the shop’s goods.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, a graffito inside a house four blocks away (V.2.16) seems to mention the proprietor again, now with his full *tria nomina* and a title: *M. Vecilius*

<sup>97</sup> *CIL* 4.9083.



90. On the right jamb of IX.7.7 appears, in the upper register, a painting of a bejeweled Venus Pompeiana drawn in a red-prowed ship by four elephants; she is accompanied by a cupid and flanked by the goddess Fortune and a *genius* figure. In the lower register is a representation of a shop floor, showing wool-carders, felt makers, and the proud owner, labeled “Verecundus,” holding up the finished product.

Photo: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia, Archivio Fotografico degli Scavi, C501.

*Verecundus vestiarius*.<sup>98</sup> *Vestiarius* would suit Verecundus’s self-presentation well since it broadly encompasses dealings in cloth, both in manufacture and sale.

<sup>98</sup> *CIL* 4.3130. Another graffito along a street (*CIL* IV.3103) seeks to denigrate some Verecundus by saying that he performs a sexual act.

Although the lack of excavation limits our knowledge of what took place inside the building, it is probably no accident that the sales scene was painted in closest correspondence to the fanciest doorway, while the manufacture scene appears closer to doorways with simpler thresholds. If Verecundus took a spot on the sidewalk or hawked his goods and proclaimed their variety and craftsmanship, he did so against a backdrop dedicated primarily to divinities. Mercury's bag of coins and the cornucopias of Venus's flanking figures helped boast his wealth and, through their garments, probably also its source. There is no reason to doubt Verecundus's gratitude to them, but the presentation of Venus Pompeiana – the elevated centerpiece drawn on her elephant quadriga and decked out in sumptuous garments, precious metals, and gems – strikes a hyperbolic note. An attentive or repeat viewer of this frontage could hardly have missed its similarity to the Venus Pompeiana five doors down (Plate IX).

Because both spaces conceivably shared an involvement in felting, viewers did not merely see two depictions of Venus but dueling images of the city's patroness, with one responding to and attempting to outdo its neighborhood rival. Evidence for the relative dating of the two Venuses is inconclusive, but, whichever came first, the other may well offer a response to its rival.<sup>99</sup> On the one hand, the repetition of Venus Pompeiana certainly speaks to her image's power, both as the object of reverence and as a visual vehicle for self-aggrandizement. Cloth merchants, like the neighborhood officials who also depicted her, venerated the city's patroness and cultivated connections with her. Registers of life, from the divine heavens to the quotidian shop floor, become conflated and exist almost seamlessly on the same walls. On the other hand, as part of that process, we here witness a further strategy of streetward display, namely reusing a neighbor's powerful image and attempting to outstrip it. In a space where getting attention and outshining others was critical, even the city's gods were not above the iconographical fray.

#### STORY FIVE: DOMESTIC EXCLUSION AND PERSONAL CLAIMS AT THE CASA DI PAQUIUS PROCULUS

Across the Via dell'Abbondanza from the bar staffed by Asellina and her colleagues, a tall doorway loomed over those passing along the street (I.7.1; Fig. 91). Strong and severe cubic capitals carried an architrave, above which hung a roof spanning the house's frontage and towering 5 meters above the sidewalk. On a street where low-slung balconies and jetties loomed over pedestrians before nearly every building, and where people came and went

<sup>99</sup> *Contra* Fröhlich 1991, 333–335. An electoral endorsement of Paquius Proculus was apparently partially covered when the socle below the depiction of Venus Pompeiana at IX.7.1 was painted, but that act need not have been contemporary with the creation of the goddess above.



91. The façade of the Casa di Paquius Proculus (I.7.1) – with its taller elevation, paucity of doorways, and cubic capitals – stood in contrast to its neighbors along the Via dell’Abbondanza. Electoral posters once covered its façade, while an endorsement in verse was painted on the inside face of the western pilaster.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.

through many closely packed doorways, this structure’s lofty façade, pierced by one stately doorway, signaled that it was a different realm.<sup>100</sup>

#### *Exterior Aspect and the Visibility of P. Paquius Proculus*

Amid a wall crowded with electoral posters, streetgoers could read the name of this house’s apparent owner in the city’s last years – P. Paquius Proculus – in three different places. The largest and most beautifully drawn *dipinti* flanked the doorway and splashed Paquius’s name across the façade. On the right, his *vicini* or neighbors endorsed him for duumvir, while a huge endorsement on the left broke from endorsements’ conventional brevity to spell out his worthiness: *dignus est*, it declares.<sup>101</sup> Paquius is the only named endorser on the façade, and other posters hint at well-forged political ties. In particular, one declares the support of the *sanctus ordo*, presumably the sacred rank of the decurions, for M. Epidius Sabinus for duumvir and warmly greets T. Suedius Clemens,

<sup>100</sup> On this house: Ehrhardt 1998.

<sup>101</sup> *CIL* 4.7197, 4.7208. *CIL* 4.7819, discovered near the shop decorated with the procession in honor of Magna Mater, is another endorsement of P. Paquius Proculus by his *vicini*.

an agent of the emperor Vespasian, as *sanctus iudex*, sacred judge.<sup>102</sup> Paquius presumably enjoyed being publicly associated with heady company.

Paquius's epigraphic visibility along this street extended beyond his house. Whoever passed through our corner encountered Paquius's name, often at a large scale, in at least eight other spots. And these formed just a fraction of the nearly 100 times his name appeared in electoral posters citywide.<sup>103</sup> Two points can be made: first, that any streetgoer paying attention to the house façade could easily deduce that Paquius ran in Pompeii's highest circles. Indeed, although streetgoers could not see them, graffiti within the house suggest his contacts stretched still higher: Nero or his eponymous month is named at least five times, and a financial official from the imperial household named Cucuta (or Cicuta) is mentioned three times.<sup>104</sup> Second, if others in the neighborhood – like the altar's officials, the barmaids, or Verecundus – were pleased to have their names listed, Paquius's epigraphic presence both at his house and through the city reflected his greater position. While their impression was locally important, his impact was both profound at this corner and widespread throughout the city's streets.

#### *Looking In: Domestic Display and Social Exclusion*

Even when Paquius himself was not grabbing the spotlight by giving games or by parading to the forum amid a retinue of supporters, his house offered a striking stand-in. Whoever was enticed by its exterior to peer in soaked up a resplendent display (Fig. 92). The polychrome mosaics carpeting the atrium impressed with their sheer size, while bright painting and stuccowork pilasters contributed the house's stateliness. But streetgoers could also look deep into the house to the lush peristyle garden, which included an outdoor dining area underneath a pergola and two small pools, one with jetting water.<sup>105</sup> In other words, amid the hot, bright, and dirty street, people making an offering at the altar, grabbing a snack at the bar, or simply shuffling along gained a view into a splendid and potentially tempting setting.

I argued in Chapter 5 that those who looked into a house but were not invited to enter received a message of social exclusion. At Paquius's house, the

<sup>102</sup> *CIL* 4.7203. See Franklin 2001, 156–163 for more on M. Epidius Rufus and T. Suedius Clemens. Only *rogator*: *CIL* 4.7210, which registers support for L. Popidius Ampliatu, a candidate for aedile who lived along with his civically active family in a monumental house (the Casa del Citarista, I.4.25) two blocks to the west. Two amphorae discovered within I.7.1 seem to reference Paquius's name: *CIL* 4.9333–9334. Mouritsen 1988, 182, n. 60.

<sup>103</sup> Mouritsen 1988, 144–145. One inscription from the amphitheater claims that all the Pompeians (*universi Pompeiani*) brought him to office: *CIL* 4.1122.

<sup>104</sup> Nero: *CIL* 4.8064, 4.8078a, 4.8092, and perhaps also 4.8095, 4.8119. Cucuta: *CIL* 4.8065–8066, 4.8075. For more, see Magaldi 1939, 129–132; Franklin 2001, 106–109.

<sup>105</sup> Jashemski 1979, 2.37.





92. A glance through the doorway of the Casa di Paquius Proculus (I.7.1) presented a view of distinct luxury and opulence.

Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

mosaic paving of the *fauces* made this point still more clearly. The dwelling's double doors were recessed about 1 meter from the sidewalk and façade, thus requiring anyone wishing to enter to step into a liminal position between outside and inside. Here, a viewer confronted a tri-color mosaic of a dog chained in front of a set of double doors (Fig. 93). The immense canine spans the entire mosaic doorway and sits on his haunches, as though prepared to pounce. An open mouth reveals sharp teeth and a red tongue, but a chain linking his red collar to the door leaf restrains him.<sup>106</sup>

Viewers may have recoiled at the sight of the huge dog. When the narrator of Petronius's *Satyricon* first enters his host's house for a dinner, he suddenly lurches back and nearly breaks his leg when he mistakes a painting of a dog for the real ticket. Paquius's example lacks the *cave canem* inscription described in the novel and visible in the *fauces* of the Casa del Poeta Tragico (VI.8.5), which also depicts a menacing yet chained dog.<sup>107</sup> Though the novel plays the episode for laughs,

<sup>106</sup> Dating of the mosaic program varies considerably: Ehrhardt 1998, 141–142 (before 30 BCE); Clarke 2007, 54 (third style); Blake 1930, 122–123 (ca. 50 CE); Dexter 1975, 9 (perhaps fourth style). The right leaf stands open, but curiously opens outward, whereas almost all front doors at Pompeii open inward, including the real one here.

<sup>107</sup> Petr. 29. Clarke 1979, 7–14. Paintings of dogs: I.12.3; IX.2.26.



93. Immediately inside the threshold of the Casa di Paquius Proculus (I.7.1), viewers encountered a mosaic of a dog chained to double doors.

Photo: Alinari Archive, Florence.

neither the words nor the images suggest a playful reading. Moreover, visitors might have heard barking as they encountered the mosaic, for the remains of an actual canine were identified near Paquius's doorway.<sup>108</sup> The mosaic's setting also upped the effect, for the artwork depicted the very space where it was located: the area immediately in front of the house's double doors. The martial implements depicted on the mosaic's door leaves – a shield and spear on the left, a double axe on the right – could not have eased the trepidation of viewers who gazed down. Although a colorful mosaic traversing the end of the *fauces* hinted at a mythological realm of centaurs and wildlife deeper within the house, its canine companion – in this dance of invitation and exclusion, attraction and repulsion – presented anything but a welcome mat to those lured by the vista and thinking of entering Paquius's stately realm.

<sup>108</sup> Varone 1987, 133–134 for this and other examples.

*Modest?! I'll Show You Modest*

One final feature of Paquius's house likely caught the eye of those moving west along the Via dell'Abbondanza. Situated high on the inside face of the doorway's right pilaster, an elegantly painted red dipinto stood out from the white background:

Gaium Cuspium aedilem	Gaius Cuspius for Aedile
Si qua verecunde viventi gloria danda est	If glory is to be given to someone who lives modestly,
huic iuveni debet gloria digna dari	To this young man ought the glory he deserves be given. <sup>109</sup>

The inscription is one of only several *programmata* written in verse – here, the last two lines form an elegiac couplet.<sup>110</sup> As such, it advertised to readers and those within earshot, if a reader pronounced it aloud, the “literary literacy” of the unnamed endorser.<sup>111</sup> The poster's position – elevated out of reach and embraced within the entryway – suggests that this was more than an anonymous endorsement and that Paquius had a hand in its creation.

Paquius stood to benefit by cultivating and advertising a connection to this *iuvenis* because Gaius Cuspius's *cognomen* was Pansa, and he was the scion of an ancient and preeminent Pompeian line.<sup>112</sup> A family monument in the amphitheater marked gifts to the city, and the candidate's grandfather had been duumvir four times, held an extraordinary office, and received, in connection with his son (our candidate's father, who himself served as *pontifex* and duumvir), the signal honor of a statue in the forum.<sup>113</sup> With his name painted all over the city, the Gaius Cuspius named here was well-known, particularly in this neighborhood since locals could watch his comings and goings from his house, which stood just west of Paquius's abode.<sup>114</sup> The larger letters of another endorsement of Cuspius on the opposite wall of the doorway caught the attention of those moving east.<sup>115</sup> It is not possible to know whether Cuspius needed Paquius's support, but playing to the street in this way signaled for neighbors Paquius's connections to a well-heeled family and, when Cuspius saw the ensemble, could only help cement that tie.

<sup>109</sup> *CIL* 4.7201.

<sup>110</sup> Milnor 2014, 104–118. See esp. *CIL* 4.6626 (to which this bears close similarities). Cf. *CIL* 4.7065.

<sup>111</sup> Phrase from Milnor 2009.

<sup>112</sup> The family could make claims to be leaders in the early years of Roman Pompeii because a Cuspius held the position of *quattuorvir*: *CIL* 10.937–938.

<sup>113</sup> Careers of the elder C. Cuspium Pansa: Mouritsen 1988, 100–101; Franklin 2001, 149–152. The grandfather apparently held the title of *praefectus iure dicundo ex decreto decurionum lege Petronia*. Amphitheater shrine: *CIL* 10.858. Forum statues: *CIL* 10.790.

<sup>114</sup> Location of the ninety-plus posters for Cuspius' aedilician campaign: Mouritsen 1988, 133; Fig. 6. House location: Mouritsen 1988, 54.

<sup>115</sup> *CIL* 4.7200.

What messages may have been sent to streetgoers by the poetic endorsement? First, by breaking from posters' standard formulae, the inscription aided the house's architecture in distinguishing this stretch of property from its surroundings. Second, the content made clear, despite and in contrast to the rote repetition of stock phrases, that the stakes of political fortune are potentially high. Words like *gloria* are not thrown around willy-nilly.<sup>116</sup> Finally, the use of the adverb *verecunde*, "modestly," was striking for two potential reasons. On the one hand, Cuspius may have stood for aedile at the minimum age, which would explain endorsements where he is also referred to as a young man (*iuvens*) and where he and his running mate are jointly called *probos*, *dignos*, and *egregios* – adjectives whose manifold positive meanings cannot be captured adequately with one English term.<sup>117</sup> Among a citywide list of moral qualities for young Cuspius, the poetic description of his modesty fits in well.<sup>118</sup>

Yet, on the other hand, *verecunde* may well have had a special ring in this location because reader-viewers were looking westward and thus toward the structure apparently belonging to the cloth producer and purveyor of the same name, Verecundus. He had proudly shown his merchandise's production and sale, and he had pictured and named himself and his goods. For someone like Paquius, such a combination of name and behavior likely struck an ironic chord, since Verecundus hardly lived up to his modest moniker by showing restraint or by seeming to be guided by a sense of shame.<sup>119</sup> Who was he – someone may have questioned – to be calling himself by this name, which resonated so deeply with elite scruples about honor? Were not his painting, livelihood, and braggadocio – someone could have huffed – the antithesis of *verecunditas*? Was the wordplay of *verecunde* intended as a wicked jibe, a clever and friendly joke, something in between, or none of the above? Did someone reciting this poster mistakenly attract Verecundus's attention by pronouncing a homophone of his name in the vocative? Answers are elusive, but if the adverb is a neighborhood cross-reference, then it underscores a phenomenon we have seen time and again. This corner was a densely packed, thickly interwoven, and deeply competitive space, where neighborhood residents and those who passed through vied for attention and control, often through statements, sometimes through responses and retorts.

<sup>116</sup> A form of *gloria* appears only once in the index of the first *CIL* 4 volume: *CIL* 4.1237.

<sup>117</sup> *Iuvenis*: *CIL* 4.317. Cf. *CIL* 4.566, 4.702. *CIL* 4.709 (*probos*, *dignos*), 785a (*dignos*), 1022 (*egregios*). See *OLD*, s.v. for approximate meanings.

<sup>118</sup> Cuspius is not unique in being described as *verecundus*: e.g., *CIL* 4.309 (*verecundissimus*), 4.456 (*verecundissimus*), 4.968 (L. Popidius Secundus is a *verecundus adulescens*), 4.3009, 4.7542 (*verecundissimus*). Paquius, our houseowner and perhaps implied endorser, was himself apparently described in one poster as very modest, *verecundiss[imus]*.

<sup>119</sup> See *OLD*, s.v. "verecundus." Intriguingly, Paquius himself may have felt the sting of a verse endorsement because someone named as *Procula* is celebrated as aedile in *CIL* 4.7065. Della Corte (1926, 148) takes the inscription as a maligning of P. Paquius Proculus through ironic means.

## CONCLUSION: THE VIA DELL'ABBONDANZA IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

When we assess this stretch of the Via dell'Abbondanza in comparison to the segment of Herculaneum's *decumanus maximus* that was the subject of Chapter 7, we recognize several distinctive qualities. Far from Pompeii's monumental centers, our thoroughfare did not have the citywide importance of its counterpart, and fewer power players vied for control through direct intervention here. But they were hardly absent, since, beyond Paquius Proculus and his impressive house, we have also seen candidates' names painted big and bold across façades as well as images of key deities deployed for many goals. In other words, this second case study shows how much, on a street that was important for movement but lacked symbolic cachet, the impact and visibility of leading figures still permeated the urban fabric and offered reminders aplenty of the power structure.

Even if our corner's actors drew mostly from the lower ranks of society, the stakes of street presentations were no lower from their perspective. Indeed, a greater range of participants has come into focus in Pompeii, and we witness these nonelite actors feverishly making their claims in front of venues associated with commerce, production, food and drink, and religion. Just as importantly, we note the responses of others. If the Herculaneum case study largely showcased individuals laying claim to status and only hinted at further interactions, then the material remains of the Via dell'Abbondanza have revealed those exchanges and contestations: the updating of the altar's painting, the white-washing of Zmyrina's name and its apparent reply, the dueling Venuses, the potentially cutting reference to Verecundus's immodest behavior. These material remains serve as physical artifacts of both the critical eye that Romans brought to the street and their reactions to slights or challenges. And, of course, their words and images are not merely reflective, but were also intended to be affective: Pompeians made their critiques visible and thereby aimed to shape others' perceptions. The street's contentious nature is rarely more visible than in these exchanges, which extended well beyond the highest ranks and most formal zones of urban life.

If the differences between the two case studies are notable, we might suggest several overlapping explanations. First is the nature of the evidence available along each street. Buildings and paintings survive to a similar degree at both locations – a function, as much as anything else, of their excavation in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet at Pompeii, the proliferation of political posters grants us a broad cast list for the street's dramas, and the frescoes suggest what occurred within shops where other evidence (or even excavation of any sort) is lacking. Meanwhile, at Herculaneum, the dossiers of wooden tablets permit deep dives into individuals' lives, and a spate of monumental building

projects gives voice to shifting political fortunes. How our inquiry takes shape and what we can therefore know about a corner's life is deeply influenced by the evidence at hand.

Second, some differences in evidence and therefore focus result directly from the streets' vital characteristics. As we saw in Chapter 1, there was no such thing as "the" Roman street either in the Roman mindset or in the physical remains, and these two stretches, though both major avenues, underscore that point. Physically, of course, they differed: the *decumanus maximus* limited wheeled traffic, boasted a pair of drainage canals, and stood about 50 percent wider than our stretch of the Via dell'Abbondanza, which saw more carts and wagons jostle along its rutted pavers. But a side-by-side comparison also highlights the "charge" they had: the one dominated at each end by columnar or arched closures belonging to monumental civic complexes, the other about 200 meters from the closest public building. If two broad and important streets could contrast to this degree, the difference urges us to question what unfolded on side streets nearby, such as Cardo IV in Herculaneum or the segment of the Vicolo di Pacquio Proculo that heads into the unexcavated escarpment. And what happened farther afield, away from the pulse of traffic, on narrow and virtually unadorned pathways?

Third, such questions prompt us to recognize the distinctly localized flavor of urban life in Roman cities, which others have emphasized in recent years. Wallace-Hadrill, for instance, has noted Rome's fragmentary nature, which had "a cellular structure operating on a local level."<sup>120</sup> Fountains and compital altars offer obvious focal points of neighborhood interaction and identity, but the density of claims and counterclaims traced in this chapter speaks to the intensity of social processes that occurred among those living and working in close proximity. They saw and heard each other every day, brushed up against one another in the street, patronized each other's businesses, shared gossip over a bowl of food, kindled petty rivalries, needled nemeses, and responded in turn. When we look at neighborhood interaction, then, we must be aware that our own notions of "neighborliness" and "neighborhood" can be too romantic. With houses, shops, bars, and other buildings stuck cheek-by-jowl, urbanites were intimately tied up in one another's lives. We only need to consider the web of signatories on the wooden tablets in Herculaneum to recognize this. And, along the Via dell'Abbondanza, the people brought together in the street were not a "cozy circle of like-minded souls," but a contentious group who regularly sought to retort, one-up, or erase one another through their material claims.<sup>121</sup> If such struggles are decipherable at a distance, we can only imagine

<sup>120</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 2003, 195.

<sup>121</sup> Cohen and Cohen 2001–2002, 68.

what would be perceptible if we could witness these individuals in the flesh or had at our fingertips the rich documentary material of later periods.

Even as we acknowledge differences and limitations, we should not overlook a distinct commonality between the streets discussed in the previous two chapters – the qualitative breadth of what occurred along each short segment of street. First, we can note the forms of street-oriented communication, which stretched from concrete shapes of monuments, sidewalks, houses, paintings, and inscriptions to personal appearances, clothing, personal interactions, and laws. Second are the various ambits of Roman life in which statements were made. To name but some: law and urban administration, commerce and religion, pride and pleasure – all have been mixed and intermingled. Finally, remarkable groups of players and registers have emerged; divinities and the emperor's *genius* share space with foreign-born slaves and barmaids, felters and metalworkers, notices about *stercus* and political couplets. Such an admixture raises two points. First, it offers a reminder that if we expect to pigeonhole individual spheres of urban life on the street, then we are sorely mistaken. Second, building an investigation around an interstitial space allows this rich confluence of realms to emerge; in an inquiry based on one group, individual, building type, or ambit of life, it might have remained hidden.

At the beginning of Part III, I argued that one of the advantages of studying individual corners was the ability to witness a range of society in action. Zeroing in on particular streets was supposed to delimit our attention, but, perhaps ironically, these chapters have instead forced us to recognize that individual streets and street corners were in dialogue with a host of sizeable issues. Still other streets, of course, had their own dramas and their own contests, yet they would likely also prompt us to recognize the potential all streets have for not just juxtaposing different realms, players, registers, and scales of activity, but fusing them together within one space.