

## Gender and Display in Imperial Pompeii

For the Romans, the male/female dichotomy was a way of making sense of the world. Recent scholarly work on aspects of this dichotomy emphasizes the value of "analyzing the discourses that shape the categories" of male and female, or masculine and feminine, and examining the implications of these discourses for Roman social and political life (Corbeill 2010, cf. Milnor 2005). While a variety of evidence can be brought to bear on questions about masculinity or femininity, one productive line of recent scholarship has asked what visual material can reveal about women's agency. Portraits, for example, reflect the choices women made as patrons and members of their communities, and testify to the diversity of women's experiences throughout the Roman empire (Trimble 2011).

Taking our lead from studies that confirm the potential of visual evidence to enhance and complicate an understanding of Roman conceptions of the 'female' and 'feminine'--especially as these conceptions shaped women's social opportunities and limitations--our panel investigates a range of artistic and archaeological evidence from first-century CE Pompeii. Already the plentiful visual and epigraphic evidence from Pompeii has allowed scholars to gain a sense of how opportunities and restrictions shaped the lives of women up and down the social ladder. Recent work on non-elite women, for example, has demonstrated that women were simultaneously active participants in the sex-trade and subject to the desires and commercial benefits of men (Levin-Richardson 2011). Another study has shown that women were active in political campaigns, despite lacking a formal vote (Savunen 1995). Pompeian evidence has also been used to show how Roman constructions of ideal femininity informed women's religious roles (Fuchs

2010). A particular strength of our panel, which follows these previous lines of inquiry, is its commitment to investigating gender-based norms for non-elite as well as elite women.

Our first paper, "Honorific Statues of Women in Pompeii," addresses the role of elite women in civic life, and explores how later generations used their connections to female ancestors to strengthen community ties. The paper focuses on the honorific statue of Holconia, first put on view in an arch that commemorated her family's Augustan renovation of the city, and subsequently moved around the city. The second paper, "Neighborhood Knowledge at the Bar," treats the little-known case of a group of women who paid professional scribes to plaster the façade of their workplace, the Bar of Asellina, with political endorsements. A few of these female names were erased soon after, raising questions about whether the act of endorsing a candidate confounded expectations of proper feminine behavior. "Female Viewership in Pompeii's Purpose-Built Brothel," the third paper, asks how the décor of a brothel was understood by the women who worked there, and argues that by viewing the sexually explicit decorations, the women transgressed social norms. Our last two papers turn to the private sphere, investigating how images of women 'spoke' to viewers. The fourth paper, "Encountering Ovid's Phaedra in Pompeii," documents the rare case of a graffito inscribed free-hand onto the surface of a myth painting, quoting Ovid's *Heroides* and projecting Phaedra's voice and perspective into the scene. The final paper, "*Pietas* and *Pudor* in the Roman House," shows how the Roman legend of Pero and Micon, as depicted in a painting and inscribed poem in the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto, presents the ideal daughter as self-conscious and sexually virtuous, as it emphasizes the *pudor* shown by Pero as she saves her vulnerable father's life.

Taken together, the papers on our panel explore Roman assumptions and anxieties about women's behavior, and elucidate how individuals negotiated and sometimes transgressed the social constructions of womanhood. Questions will follow each paper, and ample time will be provided for discussion. The panel organizers will introduce the speakers and handle questions for the panelists.

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## Honorific Statues of Women in Pompeii

Elite women sponsored public building projects in cities across the Roman Empire. Such patronage is often linked with their tenure in priesthoods and civic offices; these official roles provided women with the authority and opportunity to bequeath monuments on communities. In return, these public patrons were commonly recognized with honorific statues and further official roles as well as funerary gifts of land or money. A woman's civic activities brought recognition and responsibilities somewhat analogous to those experienced by male counterparts, yet unlike their male counterparts, women held offices due to the needs and desires of their families and communities rather than for personal advancement along a *cursus honorum*. The preservation of multiple honorific statues in Pompeii provides the unique opportunity to consider the public faces of several benefactresses within a single city. Moreover, several of these Pompeian statues remained on view long after the benefactress' own lifetimes. Thus, statues set up in honor of women help us understand civic munificence as complex and multifaceted – and show how elite women were tied into circles of both personal and familial influence. This paper focuses on two portrait statues from Pompeii, each set up in honor of an individual woman, investigating both their origins *and* their afterlives, for each remained on display until the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

In recent years, studies of honorific portraits have moved beyond questions of typology and the putative Greek 'origins' of the imagery to consider the interlocking local and global contexts that affected the production and reception of such Roman statues. This shift away from the formal elements of the statue to social and economic contexts has opened up new avenues of inquiry, including this paper's focus on the

original location and subsequent movement of female portrait statues around Pompeii. In Pompeii, a number of women were presented with honorific statues, including two public priestesses of Venus: Eumachia, daughter of Lucus and mother of Marcus Numistrius Fronto, and Holconia, daughter of Marcus Holconius Rufus or Marcus Holconius Celer. Eumachia, who dedicated a large complex on the east side of the Forum to Augustan Concord and Piety, was honored by the fullers with a portrait statue that stood in her complex for over fifty years. The statue of Holconia, on the other hand, was displayed in at least two different places in Pompeii, one of which was the family arch outside the Stabian baths. By discussing the retention of the statue of Eumachia in its original context as well as the movement of the statue of Holconia around the city, this paper underscores the importance of tradition in Pompeii and places the statues in a larger framework of cultural memory and individual biography.

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## Neighborhood Knowledge at the Bar: A Microhistory of the *Rogatores* of IX.11.2

This paper offers a close look at one drinking establishment, the so-called Bar of Asellina (IX.11.2), to shed light on the roles played by sub-elite women in the public life of Pompeii. In this one-room shop, a counter inset with *dolia* and a small oven faced onto the street. The property's façade – located along the city's main thoroughfare, the busy Via dell'Abbondanza – was well positioned to draw the attention of passersby and to make a mark on the city. Near its door no fewer than nineteen recommendations of candidates for offices appear. Yet only five of these announcements name an endorser, or *rogator*. All of the *rogatores* are women, of whom all but one has a non-Latinate name. Our best guess is that these women worked in the tiny bar. Previous scholarship on women's participation in Pompeii's public sphere has tended to focus on their inability to vote in the city's political life, and has even argued that women's endorsements of candidates were met with resistance or hostility. This “microhistory,” by contrast, argues, first, that by emphasizing women's marginalization from the political sphere, scholars have overlooked the role that women – even those of sub-elite status – had as informal collectors and dispensers of social or “neighborhood” knowledge. Second, by reconsidering patterns of female *rogatores* at this bar and elsewhere, I contend that there is much reason for thinking that women's support for candidates was more welcome than has been previously recognized.

The first half of this paper considers how the women at this bar acted as social agents in this sector of the city. It begins by painting a picture of life in and around the bar. After considering some of the basics – who served what and to whom – I examine the physical context of this neighborhood to entertain what and whom the barmaids saw

and heard through their broad doorway, how their lives intersected with those of their many customers (and others), and therefore what knowledge they had of matters political and personal. The busy intersection that they overlooked informed the barmaids plenty, yet they also learned information from (and shared it with) a regular flow of customers. Scholars of Roman society are accustomed to considering the official mechanisms and stately settings in which city dwellers interacted. Considering improvised social arenas such as bars and street corners opens up additional hubs of gossip, news, and knowledge.

In light of these local dynamics, I take seriously the women's endorsements of candidates in the paper's second half, considering why and how they participated in the city's political life. The evidence suggests that their role could be contentious, for the name of one woman, Zmyrina, was whitewashed out of a poster that recommended a neighbor for the city's highest office. (A similar fate befell another woman's endorsement of the same candidate one block away.) Several years later, however, Zmyrina's name was emphatically appended to another endorsement on the part of multiple women, which suggests a calculated communal response to her earlier deletion. Some scholars explain this episode by drawing on literary texts from Rome that disparage establishments such as this one; their accounts weave elaborate tapestries of sex and scorn wherein the women as low-rent prostitutes with whom a great man would not want to be associated. But analysis of broader currents of female *rogatores* in Pompeii suggests instead that the support of women was quite welcome, which casts further light on the importance of these women in their neighborhood.

Overall, the result of reconsidering the evidence of female *rogatores* from the Bar of Asellina is a better understanding of how a set of individuals participated in life within and beyond their workplace in Pompeii – and a fresh perspective on how social knowledge operated in one corner of the cityscape.

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## Prostitutes' Viewership in Pompeii's Purpose-Built Brothel

A central concern of Pompeii's purpose-built brothel (VII.12 18-20) was display: the display of real bodies for sale in the five small rooms and hallway of the structure, the display of pairs engaged in sexual acts in the building's frescoes, and the display of personas—of both prostitutes and clients—in the brothel's 135 graffiti. Previous scholarship has illuminated many aspects of prostitution and the brothel (e.g., on prostitution see McGinn 2002 and 2004; on the brothel's frescoes, see Myerowitz 1992 and Clarke 1998; on the brothel's graffiti, see Varone 1994 and 2005 and Levin-Richardson 2011), but the counterpart of display, viewership, remains under-examined. In this paper, I explore the role of viewership in female prostitutes' subjectivity.

I begin with paradigms for Roman viewership found in Latin literature (e.g., Lucretius 4.1063-4, Martial 3.68). This evidence suggests that freeborn Roman women could be morally (and physically) corrupted by seeing erotic material, and thus were supposed to perform their modesty by averting their gaze. (These texts also reveal, however, that women were avid consumers of visual and textual erotica.) The corollary of this ideology is that low-status women, such as the prostitutes in the brothel, would have had fewer constraints on their viewership, as they had little or no moral and physical integrity to protect. Modern scholarship on the gaze, too, highlights the importance of gender and status to ancient viewership. David Fredrick (1995), for example, argues that Roman men could reaffirm their power and status through viewing submissive male and female bodies in domestic mythological frescoes. Building on Frederick's work, I suggest that even marginalized individuals (like female prostitutes) could temporarily experience visual power over others' bodies.

I then turn back to the brothel, exploring how these models of viewership can illuminate how prostitutes may have thought of themselves, interacted with others, and related to cultural norms regarding sexuality. I embed this exploration within the architectural, visual, and epigraphic evidence of the brothel itself, drawing, for example, on how the layout privileged certain viewpoints over others and how the brothel's graffiti reveal traces of women claiming themselves as sexual agents (e.g., *CIL* IV 2259) and occasionally expressing power over male clients (*CIL* IV 2254 Add. 216). In sum, I argue that viewership was a multi-faceted performance that could reinforce female prostitutes' societal marginalization or provide them opportunities to transgress cultural norms. Ultimately, this performance of viewership in front of others was an integral part of the brothel's culture of display.

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## Encountering Ovid's Phaedra in Pompeii: CIL 4.4133a,b from Regio V 2,10

Recent scholarship in Roman art history has explored relationships between artworks and literary texts. In the domestic sphere, interior ensembles juxtaposing paintings and poetry have attracted most attention, *e.g.*, “House of Propertius” or the “House of the Epigrams” [Squire 2009, Bergmann 2007, Valladares 2011]. In this paper, I explore a rare documented viewer response to a fresco representing Phaedra, in the form of two graffiti incised freehand onto its surface, CIL 4.4133a and 4.4133b. These quoted a line of Ovid's *Heroides*, a fictional epistle from Phaedra to Hippolytus: *non ego nequitia socialia foedera rumpam*, Ovid. *Her.* 4.17. Despite scholarly interest in the influence of Ovid's poem and other texts on artistic representations of Phaedra [Croisille 1982, de Bellefonds 1994, Jolivet 2001], this case has been overlooked. Yet it bears witness to the creative socially-and culturally-constructed act of art interpretation. While not every viewer's response to artworks or paintings was guided by literary texts, in this case or any other, the act of viewing universally required active mental engagement. This example is particularly useful in that it informs our understanding of the reception of stock images of Phaedra and of Ovid's poem.

The residence at V 2,10 was heavily inscribed with textual and pictorial graffiti, including a reference to a game, CIL 4.4132. This context informs interpretation of its literary graffiti, intended foremost to engage with others in the space. Whoever inscribed them did not look to the most recent literary source of the story (Seneca's *Phaedra*) but to an author well-beloved in the community; he did not quote verbatim but, as commonly done, offered a partial line to show his own erudition and challenge others to complete the quotation. Pompeians often used graffiti to engage in playful public dialogues [*e.g.*,

Benefiel 2010a,b]. The small subset of graffiti referencing literary texts shows not only that many in the city had an appreciation for Augustan literature, but also that they often adapted literary material to their own ends [Milnor 2009, Benefiel 2010b].

Inscribing the quotation onto the painting did not establish an authoritative reading of text or image, but began a conversation in which others joined. Other graffiti on the painting, in different hands, included an invocation of Latona, CIL 4.4135. The literary quotation also drew out a clever irony in the painted scene. Often depicted as a matron, in the painting from V 2,10 Phaedra held her mantle in a gesture of *pudicitia*, thus shown to be duty-bound to husband and family. Yet attempting to win Hippolytus' affections, Ovid's Phaedra subtly casts herself in the (male) role of the pursuer [e.g., Landolfi 2000, Fulkerson 2005]. By quoting Ovid, the inscriber gave the image a voice, echoing a line in which Phaedra diverts attention from her unseemly proposition by pretending to be unwilling to abrogate her marriage vows through immoral behavior. The combination of poetry and painting underscored the falsity of Phaedra's speech. Further, the reference to Ovid served to direct the action. The graffiti were written not on the figure of Phaedra but on the nurse, who held a small tablet -- the fateful letter containing Phaedra's thoughts. The quotation described Phaedra's state of mind, but its placement impelled the narrative toward its tragic conclusion.

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## *Pietas* and *Pudor* in the Roman House

*Pietas*, which included the bond of obligation and affectionate devotion between Roman family members, was "one of the oldest of Roman ideas" (Lind 1992). In Roman portrayals of a daughter's moral duty owed to her father, *pietas* is tightly linked with her *pudor*, her sense of shame, particularly in relation to her sexual virtue. While familial *pietas* has received attention (Evans Grubbs 2011), and *pudor* has been examined as an emotion that did considerable social work for the Romans (Kaster 2005), the ways in which *pietas* and *pudor* overlapped for the Romans, and the implications of this overlap for a daughter's role in the family, invite further examination. To this end, I investigate *pietas* and *pudor* as depicted in a painting of the legend of Pero and Micon in the House of Lucretius Fronto in Pompeii, to argue that the painting unites *pietas* and *pudor* not only to celebrate feminine or domestic virtue, but also to convey the socializing message that daughters were valued—by their fathers and by others—for showing an awareness or self-consciousness that their sexual virtue was constantly being monitored and judged.

The painting, located on the south wall of a *cubiculum* of the house, shows Pero breastfeeding her starving, imprisoned father Micon, who is cradled on her lap. A poem in the upper left-hand corner of the painting states that Pero shows both *pietas* and *pudor*. The text functions not only to enhance the viewer's experience, but to provide instruction: it guides the reader in how the painting is to be viewed, presumably out of concern that the father-daughter embrace could be regarded as incestuous (Milnor 2005, Elsner 2007). The 1st c.-CE author Valerius Maximus (5.4.7) also mentions that visual representations of the story overwhelmed contemporary viewers. I expand on this idea that the painting elicited a reaction of discomfort in viewers focusing on the importance

of *pudor*, which, for the Romans, encompassed "a proper awareness of oneself as the focus of the moralizing gaze of the community" (Kaster 2005, Langlands 2006). I suggest that in representing a scene in which a woman shows *pudor* (Valladares 2011), the painting evokes *pudor* in the viewer as well, with the effect of reinforcing the overall message about the importance of a daughter's socialization in *pudor*. Pero holds her head down in a gesture of dutiful affection that also suggests her recognition that she is being judged by the viewer. Meanwhile, viewers—whether residents of or visitors to the house—also had their sensibilities shaped when presented with this praise of this daughter's behavior and affect. That a young son and daughter might have been residents of the House of Lucretius Fronto, meanwhile, is suggested by the portrait tondos that decorate an adjacent wall.

Examining the combination of *pietas* and *pudor* in the painting of Pero and Micon sheds light, then, on both virtues as they relate to a daughter's social and familial position. *Pietas* and *pudor* converge on ideas of loyalty and obligation, and this convergence defines the father-daughter relationship largely in terms of a daughter's sexual virtue—a definition supported, incidentally, by the way fathers and daughters are represented in other anecdotes of Valerius Maximus. An investigation of *pietas* and *pudor*, then, allows us to move beyond the question of whether daughters were "highly valued" by their fathers (Hallett 1984) and to gain a better sense of the values or expectations that might have motivated and conditioned social interactions for young elite women.

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