Strategies of Communication in the Shrines of Pompeii

by

Lydia A. Herring-Harrington

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Classical Art and Archaeology)
in the University of Michigan
2011

Doctoral Committee:

      Professor Elaine K. Gazda, Co-Chair
      Associate Professor Lisa C. Nevett, Co-Chair
      Professor Joyce Marcus
      Assistant Professor Steven J.R. Ellis, University of Cincinnati

To my husband and parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ix

LIST OF APPENDICES

Journals and reference works are abbreviated according to the conventions of the *American Journal of Archaeology*. Abbreviations of authors and titles of ancient texts are those listed by the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd ed., 1996, S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, eds., Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press). In addition, the following abbreviation is used:

PPM   Pugliese Caratelli, G., ed. 1990-2003. *Pompei: pitture e mosaici.* 11 vols. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopdia Italiana.

ABSTRACT

Strategies of Communication in the Shrines of Pompeii

by

Lydia A. Herring-Harrington

Co-Chairs: Elaine K. Gazda and Lisa C. Nevett

The Roman city was a landscape of shrines. Located in houses, bars, streets, workshops, and markets, they represented religious practice in every sphere of life. These private shrines were more than just objects of ritual, however. They were part of the web of social interactions among the inhabitants of the city.

In a city like Pompeii, where a significant number of the shrines have been preserved, the similarities among the shrines in form, composition, and iconography are particularly evident; however, no two are exactly alike. This simple point is the cornerstone of my assertion that patrons of shrines used their shrines to present themselves and their ideas to the community at large; shrines were tools in the negotiation of social relationships. Indeed, the existence of multiple shrines in one property indicates that individual shrines could have specific meanings and audiences.

Patrons communicated through their shrines by employing strategies of intentional visibility and customization. Patrons of shrines purposefully

manipulated the locations of their shrines in order to increase the shrines' visibility to a wide range of viewers. In addition to controlling access to their shrines, patrons customized the shrines' appearance, imagery, and location within a property in order to communicate messages about themselves and their interests.

The strategies employed to increase the visibility of the shrines and shape their communication were in turn shaped by the type of space in which the shrines were located. Different types of space facilitated different types of social interactions: the type of space circumscribed the potential range of persons who came into contact with the shrine. Furthermore, shrines' connections to the broader community reveal how the intentions of shrine patrons in using their shrines for communication differed throughout the city. Shrines in defined neighborhoods were, in a sense, customized to the specific character of each neighborhood as manifested in part by traffic circulation patterns and amounts of street traffic.

Through the statements about personal identity and religious and social values that they communicated, shrines provide a unique window into the mindset of individuals and social groups in a world of conspicuous large-scale, public religious rituals.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The ancient Roman city was a landscape of shrines. In contrast to their

larger counterparts the monumental, soaring temples that punctuate the urban

fabric in loud declarations of their presence, the niches, *aediculae*, and paintings that

comprise the corpus of shrines more subtly permeated the everyday life of the city.

Located in houses, bars, streets, workshops, and markets, among other spaces, they

denoted religious practice in every sphere of life. The small-scale shrines were

more than just objects of ritual, however. They were part of a web of social

interactions among the ancient Pompeians. Studying the role of the shrines in the

unspoken negotiations between different people in different spaces provides a new

window into how Pompeians as individuals used material culture to construct and

manipulate their identities and form connections with their local communities in an

urban society.

In Pompeii, where a significant number of shrines are preserved, strong

similarities among the shrines in composition, iconography, and architectural form

are particularly evident. It is remarkable, however, that no two shrines are exactly

alike. Indeed, the commonalities among the shrines make their differences that

much more significant and meaningful. This simple point is the cornerstone of my

assertion that patrons of shrines could choose to use their shrines to present

themselves and their ideas and identities to the community at large. A shrine's

1

imagery, and architectural form, among other features, represented a medium for the patron to communicate something about himself and his perspective.[1] I argue here that a shrine was a tool in the negotiation of his social relationships.

The means for this communication was the exploitation of the infinitely variable possibilities of expression available through the shrines within their constrained architectural and iconographical vocabulary. While no two shrines are alike, they are linked by common features fulfilling the needs of the same rituals. Furthermore, the existence of multiple shrines in one property is a strong indication that, since one did not suffice, the shrines could have specific, and different, purposes, meanings, and audiences.

One of the major aspects of the shrines that suggests their use for communication is their visibility to people other than those who used the shrine. They were not just coincidentally, but intentionally, made visible to a variety of viewers. It was often the case that viewers could see shrines prominently placed in locations such as gardens where they were part of a visual axis through a property, or that shrines were placed where their presence was emphasized by other features of the property, such as bar counters. I define the different ways in which patrons made their shrines visible: I consider how the strategies they used relate to the type of space in which the shrine was located and to the position of the viewer, who might have been internal or external to the property. This level of analysis of the shrines has not been undertaken before, and, from my investigation, it is clear that

---

[1] Just who these patrons might be is discussed in Chapter 2.

the patrons manipulated the visibility of the shrines through their location and also by the placement of screens, lamps, and other furnishings.

Even if a particular shrine was not placed so as to be seen easily, certain visitors could still be permitted access to it. My project focuses on the intersection between the variations in the shrines and their visibility in order to reveal their role as links between patrons and the wider urban community. I show how the patrons of shrines communicated with the other inhabitants of the city by displaying shrines that were customized to the patrons' interests. I also identify evidence that patrons manipulated their shrines to take advantage of local conditions, such as traffic circulation patterns and levels of activity on different streets, in order to maximize their shrines' visibility and potential to communicate with the community beyond that of the property in which these shrines were located.

An essential aspect of my work is that I view all of the shrines as part of a single phenomenon: their similarities in architectural form, iconography and composition, regardless of their location in different spaces bind them into a unified corpus. I contend, therefore, that all such shrines should be studied together. So many studies of the Pompeian shrines have focused only on the domestic shrines and their significance in the specific context of the *familia* that shrines in other types of space are severely underrepresented in scholarly literature. The context of the *familia* is not the primary one for commercial and industrial shrines, for instance, and their role in Pompeian life merits further investigation.

My emphasis on including shrines in all types of space is thus a departure from most earlier work that has focused on shrines in only one type of space. The

3

major studies include those of Foss, Giacobello, and Bassani on domestic shrines, Pitt on bakery shrines, and Van Andringa, Anniboletti, and Stek on street shrines.[2] Projects that represent a significant portion of the scholarly attention given to non-domestic shrines only address them as part of a larger project. These include Ellis on shrines in bars and Mayeske on shrines in bakeries.[3] Giacobello also deals with the interpretation of some shrines in bars and bakeries, but she is only concerned with their connection to possible domestic space within the bar or bakery, and not their appearance in a commercial or industrial context *per se*.[4] Husser includes several non-domestic shrines in her study of the worship of Jupiter, but they are by no means the focus of her investigation.[5]

The projects that approach the shrines holistically are the catalogues. Boyce, Orr, and Fröhlich include shrines in multiple types of space.[6] Orr even states that there is no distinction between shrines in houses, shops, or bars – but his analyses focus on the domestic versions and domestic religion.[7] He only goes so far as to wonder who might have used the shrines in non-domestic space. Fröhlich, who catalogues the shrine paintings, considers whom the *genius*, a personal protective spirit, might have represented in non-domestic contexts,[8] and he looks at some of the patterns distinguishing domestic and non-domestic shrines. His more significant analyses, though, focus on the domestic context. Fröhlich's catalogue is,

---

[2] Foss 1997; Giacobello 2008; Bassani 2008; Pitt 2009; Van Andringa 2000; Anniboletti 2008a; Stek 2008.
[3] Ellis 2005; Mayeske 1972.
[4] Giacobello 2008: 116-18.
[5] Husser 2008: 140-57.
[6] Boyce 1937; Orr 1972; Fröhlich 1991.
[7] Orr 1978: 1576-78.
[8] Fröhlich 1991: 36-37.

however, the only one to include street shrines. Orr acknowledges their existence, but does not include them in the catalogue portion of his work.

One model for dealing with shrines in non-domestic space with all due consideration is the work of Bakker on the Ostian material.[9] He treats shrines in all types of space with equal rigor, and if those in houses receive more attention in some instances, it is only because there is more evidence for them. In order to provide the complete Ostian context for shrines in each type of space, Bakker considers the physical context of the buildings (their arrangement, size, layout, distribution, and date), and all persons who interacted with the shrines. Yet, Bakker only considers the participants and beneficiaries of the ritual activity from the epigraphic and textual evidence. In contrast, for Pompeii, I consider the archaeological evidence for all persons who might have been present in such spaces and attempt to determine whether or not they were likely to have used the shrine.

I. Theoretical Framework

I am concerned with the extra-ritual use of the shrines. While I acknowledge that the use of the shrines in ritual was an important part of the their function and an essential motive for their creation, and this understanding underpins my investigation of the shrines, in this project I choose to focus on other aspects of the shrines' significance to the ancient Pompeians. This means that I do not approach the shrines from the perspective of the history of religion (e.g. the 'true nature' of the *Lares* and their origin and development). Nor do I look at the shrines from the perspective of religious or ritual theory, in that I do not investigate the structure of

---

[9] Bakker 1991.

the rituals nor their social and psychological effects on participants and witnesses. At the same time, though, theories of how ritual functions in a community, and what constitutes a ritual, influence how I think about the shrines.[10] I conceive of the shrines in different spaces as a single phenomenon in part because they hosted the same type of ritual that required shrines of the same overall physical form and appearance. The location of the shrines was not their most important characteristic.

An approach based in ritual theory is better served by studying all the religious acts performed by a particular group (such as families, neighbors, and co-workers), as done profitably by Dolansky, who studies the structure of ritual action and its accompanying beliefs in the Roman *familia*, and by Husser who employs a community model of religion.[11] One result of my consideration of only the shrines themselves is that I do not give the same prominence to the group of worshippers that both Dolansky and Husser do. While I do not deny the role of the group in ritual action, I focus on the impact of the head of such a group, the one who had control of the physical space in which a shrine was located and who had the authority to commission a shrine. I acknowledge that in some groups the various members may have had more or less input into the construction of a shrine than in others. While Husser is concerned with the conceptions of belief that determine religious action, I am more interested in the manifestations of religious action than the conceptions that lie behind them.[12]

---

[10] Cf. recent work in ritual theory by Bell, Humphrey and Laidlaw, Kyriakidis, McCauley and Lawson, and Renfrew, among others, in Kyriakidis 2007.
[11] Dolansky 2006; Husser 2008.
[12] Cf. Husser 2008: 20.

The fact that the shrines are inextricably bound to ritual activity and religion informs my conclusions, but I am interested, fundamentally, in how ritual and religion could be used for other purposes.[13] I ask how and in what circumstances the shrines were viewed, how they participated in social relationships, and how the space around them was manipulated. I analyze how the shrines conveyed meaning through location, form, imagery, and relationships to other shrines. I also explore a number of factors that led people, individually or collectively, to make decisions concerning their shrines. Key factors include the articulation of values in the shrines, the impact of different types of space in which the shrines were located on the statements made by shrines (and on the shrines themselves), and the effect of the character of a particular area or neighborhood of city on the similarities and connections between shrines. In addressing these questions, I draw on previous investigations of how Romans viewed images and material culture and on preliminary considerations of the use of shrines for communication.

A. *Viewing, visibility, and context: art history and archaeology*

In dealing with the concepts of viewing and visibility in relation to the Pompeian shrines, my work employs methodologies from both art history and archaeology. I share the interests and aims of social historians of Roman art, as represented by Stewart in *The Social History of Roman Art*, in their attention to art in

---

[13] To use an analogy on a larger scale, dedicating temples, for example, can be used for political gain by burnishing the image of the dedicator through an act of euergetism. I am not arguing that the shrines are a form of euergetism, but they are another way of building up the patron's image by means of structures ostensibly devoted to religion and ritual.

its social context and questions of who made it, for whom, and why.[14] Key points of

investigation for the social history of art are what art "was intended to do, how it

functioned, and how, in fact, it was perceived."[15] I study how art – in this case the

corpus of shrines – relates to people (patrons, artists, and viewers) and their

"networks of social interaction."[16]

Recent scholarship on the shrines has been moving in this direction, but to

date there has been no in-depth consideration of the shrines from the perspective of

social art history. Clarke, in his book *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual*

Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 355, comes the closest to

this type of analysis in drawing several shrines into his discussion of how non-elites

might have viewed the images they encountered all around them.[17] Most of the

scholars who have looked at the shrines in the framework of social art history,

however, have done so as part of a larger study of viewership and have not given the

shrines themselves sufficient attention. They do not explore the full range of

mechanisms involved in viewing the shrines, nor do they fully account for the range

of statuses and genders involved. Here, I mention the main works that have

influenced my thinking on viewing and visibility.

The Roman concept of viewing was an active one. Kellum, in her work on

idea of spectacle in viewing, evocatively describes how images were expected to be

read and interpreted by viewers.[18] Clarke adds that consciously interpreting art

---

[14] Stewart 2008: 4.
[15] *Ibid*.
[16] Like Stewart (2008: 3, 4), I use the term "art" here in a very broad sense, and I believe that the methodologies of social art history can be applied to all objects of material culture.
[17] Clarke 2003: 75-81.
[18] Kellum 1999.

was a common social practice.[19] Images were a means by which people presented themselves to others, and images were a means through which people were perceived by others. They encoded both who a person was and who they wished to be.[20]

Viewing was shaped by the viewer and the context of the viewing: viewing involved a dialogue between the viewer, the image, and the circumstances of the viewing itself. Perry, on the Roman aesthetics of artistic emulation, explores the choosing and discarding of details of an artwork on the part of the artist or patron to imbue it with a desired message, and how an "aesthetics of appropriateness" dictated that certain images were appropriate for certain spaces.[21] Koortbojian, in a look at replication and variation in Roman art, points out that a viewer was supposed to contribute to the viewing experience and that there were different ways to view a display.[22]

Indeed, one meaning for an image can be intended by the creator, but a totally different one – or even multiple meanings – can be attributed to it by viewers or by the person who places the piece in a specific context. Case studies of sculpture and painting by Linda Jones Roccos and Jennifer Trimble illustrate the possible nuances and complexities of contextual approaches in accounting for the specific context of a work of art, and how that context gives meaning to an artwork.[23] As Bergmann states, "…it is tempting to imagine a visual dialogue among the various

---

[19] Clarke 2003: 12-13.
[20] Clarke 2003: 13, 69.
[21] Perry 2002, 2005.
[22] Koortbojian 2002.
[23] Roccos 2002; Trimble 2002.

media and parts of the house."[24] Studies of domestic space, art, and architecture

have shown how all three could work together to represent a point-of-view or a

perception, or interact with the viewer to guide their actions in the space.[25] My

intention is to insert the shrines into this conversation.

Framing the viewing of images as a dialogue allows us to consider a viewer's

reaction to more than one image at a time and to imagine how the viewer's

movement and the nature of the surrounding images affected the viewing and the

range of meanings that viewers derived from an image.[26] This opportunity suggests

that it is valuable to ask which images were visible from which locations in order to

trace their significance and meaning. Powers, in her investigation of house

VI.16.7/38, the House of the Gilded Cupids, and Clarke, for example, have employed

different versions of this method of investigating the meaning of images.[27] Different

angles of view and sightlines to an object can reveal different contexts and

associations: space was an entity that could be manipulated.[28] My acceptance of

urban space in all its parts – interiors and exteriors, streets and houses, bars,

workshops – as particularly suited to this sort of investigation is indebted to

---

[24] Bergmann 1994: 254. Similarly, Ellis (1995: 65) describes Gazda (1991) as elucidating "…the 'atmosphere' and décor of the Roman house, and the impact this had on people who visited the building. The décor, wall painting, and mosaic flooring can now be seen as imparting a series of messages to the guest. These messages do not need to consist of deep mystical symbolism, but simple statements about the wealth and power of the owner." Furthermore, Clarke (2003: 222), "in considering self-representation in the Roman house in terms of message and reception, detects a lively dialogue between homeowners and guests and between the function of a space and how visual representations – especially self-representations – animate that space."
[25] E.g. Gazda 1991; Wallace-Hadrill 1994.
[26] Cf. Powers 2006: 142. Powers does not, however, describe the interaction as a dialogue.
[27] Powers 2006: 99ff.; Clarke 2003: 72, 222.
[28] Cf. also Hartnett (2003: e.g. 92-114) on securing impressive sightlines on city streets, and on manipulating space by physically (re)constructing it, not just playing with the location of an image or object.

Hartnett's vision of the bustling city and the varied range of interactions it both welcomed and facilitated.[29]

The final underlying tenet of my ideas about viewing, visibility, and context, is that an owner chose to make an image visible in a certain way or in a certain context. As articulated by Powers, who looks at the decisions behind the choices made in the House of the Gilded Cupids, "while many of the individual decisions made by [the] patron were paralleled by those of other homeowners in Pompeii, the constellation of choices made [by him] is nowhere repeated."[30] With this principle in mind, we can address a broader tension in art history between a concern for the material circumstances of artistic production and the tendency to subordinate the artist's or patron's contribution to broader cultural patterns.[31] By taking into consideration the specific contexts of the shrines, and how they were customized for their particular contexts, I argue that the shrines reflected the personal circumstances of the patron – not just the culture.

My work on the shrines thus proposes one way to think about the individual in archaeological research. The shrines are a unique medium for this investigation because they are so ubiquitous. There were certainly expectations for the location, the appearance, form, and other features of the shrine – this is what we see in the commonalities among the shrines, and these commonalities reflect broader cultural patterns – but it is the differences among the shrines that represent individuals. A patron had greater freedom to customize his shrine in the private sphere than to

---

[29] Hartnett 2003.
[30] Powers 2006: 171.
[31] Stewart 2008: 6.

make a personalized dedication in the public sphere, for instance.[32] Furthermore,

one of the audiences to which shrines were targeted was the intimate circle of the

patron, people who knew him as an individual and who could interpret the dialogue

in which the shrines participated in that light.

In my study of the factors that enabled communication through shrines, I

employ the concept of a dialogue between viewer, object, context, and patron. In

this dialogue a message is communicated by filtering the content of a shrine – its

appearance, location, and iconography – through the specific circumstances of its

viewing. I analyze the communicated message by means of archaeological and

spatial analysis, by examining the location of the shrines in relation to both

particular features (such as form and imagery) and outside influences (such as

traffic patterns) in order to further emphasize the purposeful manipulation of the

shrines on the part of patrons.

In my use of spatial analysis, I draw on the methods of previous work at

Pompeii, such as Foss's investigation of the locations of domestic shrines and Ellis's

study of the distribution of bars throughout the city along with his viewshed

analyses of them.[33] I also quantify the patterns I detect by means of statistical

correlations; I am not aware of another study that employs this type of statistical

analysis of the shrines. An important model for my own analysis is Nevett's of the

---

[32] Cf. Husser's (2008: 152-55) discussion of the impact of established modes of civic religious
expression on the actions of individual persons or communities.
[33] Foss 1997; Ellis 2004; Ellis 2005: 129-47.

positive associations between sets of architectural features, finds, and iconographic

motifs on pottery in her analysis of Greek houses and social relationships.[34]

B. *Communication through the shrines*

In dealing specifically with the idea of communication through the shrines,

and not just ideas of viewing and visibility, my work both builds on and reacts to

previous efforts to elucidate the shrines' communicative role. The past twenty years

have seen the development of several ideas about the communicative value of the

shrines, though the authors do not always frame the significance of their work in

this way. Studies relevant to my work began to crop up in the early 1990s because

that is the period when scholars started taking more notice of the physical,

archaeological, and social context of the shrines. Earlier work was primarily

descriptive and focused on individual shrines as representative of the entire corpus,

and the shrines were often treated as backdrops for artistic components like

paintings or statuettes.[35] When they were seen as intact structures, their physical

context was ignored, and they were typically studied in isolation from other spheres

of Roman material culture. Thoughts about the meaning or significance of the

shrines or their images were connected to their use in domestic ritual (from the

perspective of an approach rooted in the history of religion) and often based on the

literary sources.[36] Archaeological study of the shrines advanced throughout the

---

[34] Nevett 1999.
[35] E.g. Jordan 1862, 1865, 1872; Reifferscheid 1863; Helbig 1868; Sogliano 1879; Overbeck and Mau 1884; Mau 1899.
[36] E.g. also Waites 1920; Boyce 1942.

13

19th century,[37] but research into their broader communicative value was not yet a concern.

I should note, however, that there is a difference between studying the meaning of a shrine, and studying the communication of that meaning. A shrine could mean many things, depending on the specifics of its context; indeed, there have been numerous excellent studies on the significance of shrines, quite a few of which play a role in my discussion in Chapter 4.[38] Communication, however, implies explicit interaction with a viewer, which far fewer scholars have taken into consideration when dealing specifically with the shrines. To understand the communication of the shrines, we must understand who they were communicating with, and how they communicated with them. Here, I review recent scholarship on shrine communication in order to elucidate how I hope to move beyond this work to explore new facets of the phenomenon.

Studies of shrine communication have identified two basic forms. In the first, the shrines have a tangible effect on behavior the viewer, while in the second, they convey some message or statement about the patron of the shrine, his or her intimate circle, or the viewer(s) of the shrine. One example of the first type is given by Kellum. Describing the shrine painting of two snakes approaching an altar on the façade of *insula* 11 in *Regio* VII along the *Vicolo del Lupanare*, she explains how the

---

[37] Particularly in Boyce (1937) and Orr (1972), as well as Jashemski (1979, 1993) for those in gardens – among other worthy studies.

[38] As an example, some of the meanings that have been attributed to shrines include *Romanitas*, *pietas*, and the fertility and fecundity of the *familia* (see Hales 2003. The complexities of what a shrine might represent are seen in Cicero's expression of the desire to honor his daughter's memory with a shrine that would facilitate the observance of her death in future years (*Att.* 12.12.2, 12.18.1, 12.35-12.37a). Would a shrine set-up for this purpose resemble in function or appearance a shrine to the *Lares* or another deity watching over a residence, for example?

painting, in conjunction with a painted inscription, would have an almost physical impact on the viewer, telling him or her to hurry along and not loiter.[39] In this sense, it functioned in the mode of an apotropaic image, warding away trouble.

Kellum also sees the shrines as operating in a manner consistent with the role of images in general in the Roman world as representative of how the person responsible for them conceived of him- or herself and what was important. "In the Roman world, you were…what you appeared to be."[40] This conception represents the second type of shrine communication. Kellum cites the gladiators depicted in the street shrine painting at IX.12.7 as an example of how images might represent something important to a neighborhood.[41] She posits that they were the particular favorites of the local community.

Varying degrees of emphasis have been given in recent scholarship to this type of communication through the shrines. On the simplest level, the shrines have been interpreted through their use as a means of display. Small's overview of religion at Pompeii highlights the role of the shrines of the rich, especially, for display, and Ellis's comprehensive analysis of bars in Pompeii comments on shrines in bars as an ostentatious display.[42] None of the scholars noted here explicitly mentions the notion of communication, but the very idea of intentionally using a shrine for display presupposes that it was displayed to someone, who is viewed it for some purpose.

---

[39] Kellum 1999: 285. Cf. Fröhlich 1991, F57 for further discussion of this painting.
[40] Kellum 1999: 288.
[41] Kellum 1999: 287.
[42] Small 2007: 191; Ellis 2005: 65. Ellis is the only one that I am aware of to think of a commercial shrine in this way.

Just what such a purpose might be (that is, what information might be conveyed) is pursued in more depth by other scholars. The domestic shrines have been seen, for example, through the lens of their status as luxury products, as "asserting a place within a network of social relationships by the display of material goods," according to Wallace-Hadrill in his study of the relationship between houses and society in Pompeii and Herculaneum.[43] Frazel, while discussing Verres's many thefts during his tenure as governor of Sicily, uses this concept of a luxury good to explain how Gaius Heius, one of Verres's victims, was able to maintain his high status in society by means of the display of the statues sacred to his domestic rituals, sculptures that were of extremely high-quality and not available to all Romans.[44] He also used them to demonstrate his connection to Roman leaders, as when he lent his statue of Cupid to the aedile C. Claudiius in order to adorn the Roman forum.[45]

In a similar manner, Giacobello sees the presence of the *genius Augusti* (the *genius* of the emperor) in shrine paintings as a specific sign of the patron's acceptance of the political situation of the time; she recognizes its supportive values.[46] In order for there to be a point to the display of the *genius* in this way, however, it must have been meant to interact with a viewer. Like Ellis and Small, neither Frazel nor Giacobello specifically frame the reason for the display of shrines as purposeful communication from the patron to the viewers, but their ideas can best be understood in that sense.

---

[43] Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 145.
[44] Frazel 2008: 109.
[45] Frazel 2008: 109-10; Cicero, *Verr.* II.4.5-6.
[46] Giacobello 2008: 79.

Still others have gone further by studying the shrines in the context of viewing. In Foss' spatial analysis of different shrine types and their relationship to different groups of users, he considers who viewed which shrines in various spaces of the house to posit ritual specialization by groups in households large enough support it. His theory is based, again, on the idea that (at least some of) the shrines were intended for display. He regards the *aediculae* in the *atria*, for instance, as representing religious devotion (*pietas*) and ancestral heritage (*Romanitas*) to those who saw them.[47]

As another example, Hales has interpreted the shrine on the rear wall of the peristyle in the House of the Tragic Poet (VI.8.5/3) as having differing meanings depending on the perspective and identity of the person looking at it. She distinguishes between how the shrine would have been perceived by "outsiders" (visitors to the house), and "insiders" (the inhabitants of the house).[48] Like Foss, she sees the shrines as a means of display of *Romanitas* and *pietas*, but also, more fluidly, as able to bear other meanings associated with the leisure activities that took place in the peristyle. Like other scholars, Foss and Hales do not talk of communication, but their studies are a further step down the road to a fuller understanding of how the shrines were used for that purpose.

---

[47] Breen's (1997: 148-49, 151-56) dissertation on the use of *Lares-* and *genius*-worship imagery in Tibullus espouses a similar but less detailed version of this idea. She acknowledges that there was what she deems a "public role" for shrines within the home, and, inspired by Wallace-Hadrill's axes of differentiation (1994: 38), she recognizes that different people would have viewed the shrines in different areas of the house. A shrine in the *atrium* had a greater degree of visibility to visitors and clients and would be impressive to them if elaborately painted and large in size.
[48] Hales 2003: 113-16. Cf. Bergmann's (1994: 230) description of the shrine's relationship to the sequence of rooms in the house.

Only a few scholars truly discuss the shrines in terms of communication, and they do so in complementary ways.[49] Clarke uses several shrines as examples in his larger work on the non-elite viewers and patrons of images.[50] Bassani, who focuses on shrines in the form of cult rooms, does more with the shrines themselves, but her concept of communication is not as developed.[51] My project expands on both of these scholars' approaches in order to further this subject of study.

Bassani's study of domestic cult rooms makes a valuable contribution to the study of Pompeian shrines. She sets the shrines into their social and cultural contexts to some degree by researching the social dynamics of houses in Pompeii, and the family history and identity of the proprietors of certain houses; she is the only one to have done so this to this extent. Ultimately, Bassani conceives of the cult rooms as a form of self-representation on the part of the *dominus* that communicates about him to his equals, clients, freedmen, and slaves. The idea of communication itself, however, is really only drawn out in her conclusion and she does not explore it in very much detail. The meanings of the shrines that she uncovers are limited and largely related to the display of *pietas*, the importance of religion in a household, and the ability to afford the shrine; others are the

---

[49] Husser's dissertation recognizes the ability of the shrines to communicate, in such terms, in that, like Giacobello, she interprets the imagery of one domestic shrine in particular to issue a message of support for the emperor (2008: 161-67). In its essence, however, Husser's discussion does not advance the understanding of shrine communication beyond the notion that shrines, especially those in the more public spaces of the home, had "show-value," and could be used to draw the attention of guests. She does, however, support the idea that the placement of the shrines regulated access to them, and she considers who the viewers in different areas of the home might have been, as well as the circumstances of the viewing.
[50] Clarke 2003.
[51] Bassani 2008.

connection to family traditions and the acceptance of imperial ideology by using the cult rooms opportunistically to demonstrate it.[52]

Bassani's approach to the shrines is quite impressive, but there are several respects in which my perspective differs from hers. For one, Bassani sees the cult rooms as only tenuously connected in concept to other domestic ritual spaces. Her study structures them as a privileged form of shrine, unlike other shrine types, such as paintings, which were "generic" and did not have the same ability to communicate.[53] I disagree, as I explain in Chapter 4. Also, while she considers who the different users of a shrine might have been, she does not do so in any depth, and she considers the identity of the viewers even less. Nor does she investigate potential multiple levels of communication. In contrast, I look at the specific context of a shrine, and at multiple shrines in relation to one another other; I find great potential in interpreting the multiple shrines in a property together.

As mentioned above, Clarke goes a step further than Bassani by incorporating the shrines into his larger perspective on the function of images in Roman society, in accordance with the aims of social art history. He sees the shrines, like all imagery, as communicating information about the attitudes, belief systems, and cultural practices of ("ordinary") Romans. He uses a contextual approach to figure out what an image means and to interpret its content: he considers the physical location of the image; the circumstances in which it was viewed; who the patron was and what his or her status, profession, and knowledge may have been; and who the viewer was and what his or her status, profession, and

---

[52] Bassani 2008: 12, 153-61, 164.
[53] Bassani 2008: 5, 164-65.

knowledge may have been. Furthermore, Clarke conceives of the image as

communicating not just about the patron, but about the viewer as well, in terms of

what was expected of him or her. "The physical setting reveals both the patron's

and the viewer's attitudes toward a specific visual representation."[54] He also tries to

consider how each work might have sent different messages to a range of possible

viewers based on their gender, class, religious beliefs, and level of literacy. Although

he does not apply this approach as full to shrines as to other types of images, in his

discussion of several domestic shrines he does focus on what shrines reveal about

their patrons, and what was perhaps expected of the viewers who were members of

the *familia*, and how these viewers might have reacted to the shrines. He also

speculates on the religious practices of the patron who commissioned a shrine.

From Clarke's perspective, people found ways to celebrate their differences through

the art they both commissioned and looked at, and it encoded their social status,

identity, beliefs, tastes, and values.

I draw on Clarke's methodology for interpreting the shrines, but I attempt to

go even further. Clarke focuses, rightly enough, on the ordinary[55] viewer; that

perspective should be joined with that of the elite viewer (where appropriate) to see

how they might work in concert or in contrast. He looks only at domestic and

communal shrines, but I look at commercial and industrial shrines as well, in order

---

[54] Clarke 2003: 8.

[55] Though Clarke 2003: 274 himself acknowledges the weakness in his simple definition of "ordinary" as "non-elite" – since even these "ordinary" Romans have the resources to commission visual images. He does not address, however, whether even the non-elites with sufficient resources for these images had the slaves and clients he assumes them to have had, and whether all shrine paintings are non-elite, as he seems to imply (p. 75). I am skeptical of the latter proposition. Pompeii, the site with the best-preserved evidence for the shrines, has more "non-elite" than "elite" material, and elsewhere in the Roman empire the remains are not well-enough preserved that we can be sure that the shrine paintings in "elite" contexts have not simply been lost.

to study how shrines in different spaces communicate. Clarke attempts to look at

the overall context of a shrine, but he does not incorporate artifacts, as I do where

possible, along with inscriptions. Nor does he consider the entire physical setting of

the shrines, as I do. I also explore the communication of the shrines through aspects

other than their imagery.

In concluding this discussion of previous work on communication through

the shrines, I return to Stewart. He sympathetically critiques earlier work, such as

Clarke's, for trying, for example, to imagine the response of the viewer.[56] Stewart

correctly points out that much analysis in this direction is speculative because of the

lack of direct evidence. I focus more on what the shrines communicated about the

patron and because not all messages were appropriate for all audiences, I imagine

the presence of different kinds of viewers in difference spaces containing shrines in

order to consider what the patron was trying to communicate.

Ultimately, however, Stewart's theory of images, grounded in social art

history, offers a number of valuable thoughts applicable to the shrines despite the

fact that he does not explicitly address the relevance of his perspective for the

shrines.[57] He sees art as interacting with viewers, and, relevant to my study, he sees

---

[56] Stewart 2008: 123-25.

[57] It is odd that he does not mention shrines. It leads one to wonder if he would see the visual elements of shrines, such as the small statuettes, as somehow functioning differently from other types of images. The small statuettes in shrines completely relate, however, to his discussion of the collapsing of the distinction between cult image and dedicated (votive) image (2008: 132-33). I also say that the statuettes are maybe like the small votive reliefs (isolated images of gods distinguished by their regular attributes) that he does discuss (2008: 134). He describes them as gifts to the gods, but comments that the frontally posed figures must have facilitated a sort of contact with the dedication's divine recipient; he questions whether, as durable monuments, they perpetuated the relationship between god and worshipper, standing as permanent markers of a beneficial relationship. I believe the statuettes fit this mold –they represent communication with a different viewer – a divine viewer. But that is not the sort of communication I am concerned with in this project. I am focused on the mortal, human world.

this interaction as particularly strong in the religious sphere. I also appreciate his call to consider gender more frequently. Finally, in an effort to consider the shrines' entire context, my work marks a departure from earlier studies in that I tie my analyses of the strategies employed by patrons to facilitate the communication of their shrines to the distinctive characteristics of two different areas of the city.

II. <u>The Scope of the Study</u>

I study the shrines as material culture, in an archaeological framework. In this section, I both define what constitutes a shrine in the context of ancient Pompeii and describe site formation processes that have an impact on the identification of shrines. I end with a discussion of the criteria I used in selecting the data sample for the project, and I describe in depth the two areas of the city that I focus on.

A. *What is a shrine?*

The focus of this dissertation is the small-scale, private[58] shrines at which religious ritual action was performed. As has become *de rigeur* to point out, Roman space was suffused by ritual – both religious and non-religious – in a way that modern space is not. The ancient Romans did not draw the same boundaries between "sacred" and "profane," and so religion and ritual were closely intertwined with the everyday activities of Roman life.[59] There are, however, some characteristics common to shrines that, I believe, connect them to one another but not to other manifestations of religious ritual, and these common characteristics

---

[58] "Private" in the sense of not being state-operated, and functioning for the benefit of private individuals, in comparison to public temples. The distinction was an ancient one; cf. Bakker 1994: 1-4; Schultz 2006: 14.
[59] North 2000; Scheid 2003; Schultz 2006.

support the study of shrines as a separate phenomenon.[60] While these shrines did

coexist with other sites of ritual action in the same space, they were distinct from

them by virtue of their built, fixed form and decoration. They are united into a

single corpus of material by the shared possession of two features recognized by

Boyce in his seminal 1937 catalogue that was the first to treat shrines

comprehensively as a coherent body of archaeological material. According to Boyce,

these features are "the representation of the images of the gods to be worshipped in

[the shrines] and provision of sacrifice before these images."[61] I modify Boyce's

definition of a shrine slightly. I view the purpose of the imagery as being not solely

to depict the gods worshipped in the shrine (though that is an important part of its

role), but to attract and focus attention on the shrine by setting it apart from the

surrounding decoration. Thus, the imagery need not be a literal representation of a

deity. As Boyce also puts forward, the shared features, though common to all

shrines, nevertheless allowed a good deal of freedom in the specific articulation of

the shrines, a freedom that I explore in detail in Chapter 2.

A brief note on terminology is also in order. I use the term "shrine" rather

than *lararium* as in much other scholarship because, technically, not all the shrines

that I study were *lararia*. A *lararium* was specifically dedicated to the *Lares*,

whereas many of the shrines at Pompeii were dedicated other deities. It is possible

that they were also dedicated to the *Lares*, particularly if they contained statuettes

---

[60] Scholars who have taken a more inclusive approach to the material culture of religion and ritual
include Bakker (1991) and Kaufmann-Heinimann (2007). I believe that their perspective is valid; I,
however, am interested in the fruitful insights to be gained from focusing on the shrines.
[61] Boyce 1937: 10. Followed by Orr 1972: 86, 1978: 1576-77; Fröhlich 1991: 21. Cf. Bakker's (1994:
4) definition of a shrine.

of these divinities, but that is not always known for sure. Furthermore, the word

lararium does not appear in Latin texts until the 3rd century CE, in the writings of the

Scriptores *Historiae Augustae*.[62] Earlier writers used the terms *sacellum* and

sacrarium, among others, to refer to the small-scale ritual locations I study.[63]

B. *What is not a shrine?*

　　To further define the range of forms that constituted a shrine, I review some

features in Pompeian properties that are *not* shrines. These potentially confusing

features complicate the identification of shrines because of their similarities in

appearance. Another complication is that some features could be intentionally

ambiguous in nature and open to interpretation by different viewers: they might not

have served a solely ritual purpose.

1. Similar architectural features

　　Identifying shrines in the archaeological record can be problematic because

of the presence of other architectural features that resemble shrines in physical

form. Without surviving ritual imagery, artifacts, or altars, these features can be

difficult to distinguish from shrines. Latrine niches can resemble shallow niche

shrines, for instance. Also, features termed pass-throughs, like those found in the

sides of ovens, but also elsewhere in properties of various types, can appear to be

niche shrines lacking a preserved back wall.[64] Confusion can also arise from

rectangular holes for beams that look very much like shrine niches but supported

---

[62] *M. Aur.* 3.5. Cf. Orr 1972: 84; Bakker 1994: 8 n.19.
[63] Cf. Orr 1972: 84; Bassani 2008: 52-63.
[64] Mayeske (1972: 24) comments that the ones in bakeries allowed workers to easily transfer bread from the oven to an adjacent storeroom.

upper stories or balconies. These can sometimes be distinguished from true shrine

niches, however, by their repetition in a horizontal series, or their placement in a

position that suggests alignment with a now-missing door lintel or supporting wall.

Other ambiguous features include support vaults underneath stairways and

blocked-door recesses because some were, in fact, used as shrines.[65] Another

problem for identifying a shrine is the presence of niches that could have served a

non-ritual purpose, such as holding a lamp (particularly if by a door) or other

objects.[66] In the absence of telltale imagery or artifacts, one can sometimes isolate a

niche that was used for ritual by a square of fine white plaster surrounding it, which

prepared the niche for adornment that was often of finer quality than that of the rest

of the wall.[67] In practice, it is crucial to consider every piece of evidence –

architecture, artifacts, imagery, inscriptions, floor deposits, organic remains –

associated with the feature in question.

Built hearths are another feature that can cause confusion, as they are easily

mistaken for the remains of the podium of a particular type of shrine, the *aedicula*.[68]

It is likely that hearths were used for ritual acts, particularly in smaller properties

that could not devote sufficient resources or space to a dedicated shrine.[69] In this

project, however, I am concerned with features that were dedicated predominantly

to ritual and posses the two main features of shrines that Boyce identified. Hearths

---

[65] E.g. the shrine underneath a stair in bar I.12.5 (cat. no. 12), and likely the one along the west wall of the garden in V.3.7 (Boyce 1937, no. 112).

[66] Cf. Allison (2004: 48-51, 143), who wrestles with the potential range of functions for niches. Bakker (1994: 13ff.) has dealt with the issue at Ostia; also see his work for the argument that lamps were *not* placed in niches.

[67] The question of whether every niche was a shrine, and potential ritual indicators like the white square of plaster, were recognized early on by Boyce in his work (1937: 8, 11-12).

[68] See for Chapter 2 for discussion of shrine typology.

[69] Foss 1997: 203.

are excluded from this study because they were used primarily for cooking and lack the element of visual focus.[70]

Indeed, the lack of a visual focus is what characterizes all of the 'look-alike' features that are mistaken for shrines: in architectural form they could be shrines, but they lack the visual element of a shrine, such as imagery or elaborate decoration. Without definitive evidence like a painting, artifact, or altar to indicate that they were used as shrines, there are too many such features to include them all as potential shrines in my study. I only include features for which there is *some* reason to indicate that it served a ritual purpose.

A further complication in the identification of a shrine is that some features could have served dual purposes: they could have had both utilitarian and ritual functions.[71] Fountains are in this category. Not only do they have a high degree of display value, but they also contain niches that could have housed ritual statuettes, and the fountain itself could have been a site of cultic activity related to nymphs.[72] In my identification of shrines, I consider the entire context of the potential shrine, and always keep in mind the range of activities it could have served.[73] Often it is a matter of balancing probabilities.

2. Religious imagery external to shrines

---

[70] In the case of built hearths in kitchens over shrine paintings were placed, I consider the painting representative of the shrine, and the hearth structure itself perhaps could be considered analogous to a ledge, or podium in an *aedicula* shrine.
[71] Any time a niche has seemed likely to have been used for ritual, I have included it in my study, whether or not it actually had dual functions.
[72] Cf. Swetnam-Burland 2000: 62.
[73] This approach is similar to Bassani's (2008: 6, 9-11) methodology of looking at the entire context and identifying certain "indicators of religiosity."

Another category of ambiguous feature is that of paintings with religious subjects that are not associated with a shrine. They are the reverse of the look-alike features: instead of possessing the physical form of a shrine and lacking the visual focus of a shrine, the religious imagery external to shrines possesses the same visual focus as a shrine but lacks the physical form of a shrine. Such imagery does not have an associated altar, ledge, or niche to facilitate the performance of sacrifice and suggest actual ritual use.

One subset is paintings of deities on the façades flanking the entrance to a property. In style they are often very much like shrine paintings, and in some cases they are of similar subject matter and composition. One example is the painting of twelve deities on the eastern façade of *insula* VIII.3.[74] Twelve gods and goddesses stand in a row next to another in the upper register, above two snakes flanking a round altar in the lower register. Not only is the motif of two snakes confronting an altar found in many shrine paintings, but paratactic arrangements of deities are found in shrine paintings in house V.4.3 and bar I.8.8-9.[75] Another example is the painting of Venus Pompeiana riding an elephant that is affixed to the façade of shop IX.7.7 (Figure 1.1). Watching the spectacle is a *genius*, in the same style in which it appears in shrines.[76] It is very tempting to see these façade paintings as recipients or instigators of ritual action, but I do not consider them to shrines for the purposes of this study.

---

[74] Fröhlich (1991, F60) provides more information about the painting. Mau (1899: 230) attributes to it a generalized protection of the property, and a discouragement of defiling the area.
[75] Fröhlich (1991) describes both paintings: V.4.3 (L52), I.8.8 (L8). For the composition of shrine paintings, see Chapter 2.
[76] Fröhlich (1991, F64) provides more information about the painting.

Some other paintings and images are not as easily mistaken for shrines *per se*, but they do raise similar questions of the boundary between ritual and non-ritual function in the depiction of religious subjects. What was "religious" and what was "decorative" or for display only? Can such a distinction be made? An image or object is not inherently religious or ornamental – it is the cultural context that determines the classification, and one object might belong to both categories.[77] Such images as we find in Pompeii, even if they did have a ritual component, are not the focus of this study, but their presence certainly contributed to a general atmosphere of religiosity in which the shrines participated, and they do factor into my interpretations of the shrines located in the same space.

Pompeian houses, for example, abound with large mythological paintings of deities, and there are other smaller scenes of ritual activities, such as the landscape on the west wall of the *triclinium* of house I.12.9/14, in which two figures make an offering at an altar placed between two statues of an ithyphallic Priapus.[78] Another type of image that blurs the boundaries between what was ritual and what was not is paintings of statues that usually appear in gardens. One wonders if the painting was meant to take the place of a cult statue as the focus of worship.[79] Representations of deities in other media fall into the same category. Gods and goddesses were popular subjects for large-scale sculpture. There are also small busts of figures like maenads embedded in walls, as in house I.11.12,[80] and

---

[77] Stewart (2008: 133) has a flexible perspective on the possible functions of objects; Kaufmann-Heinimann (2007) takes a broad view on what is religious.
[78] Cf. *PPM* II, 788-89, figs. 9-10.
[79] Cf. Jashemski (1979: 125-29) for examples.
[80] Jashemski 1993, Appendix I, no. 73.

terracotta plaques that have been found inside various properties and outside on

the facades of *insulae*.[81] The plaques are thought to have been at least in part

apotropaic (the ones above ovens that could have warded away trouble during the

delicate process of producing bread[82]). Statuettes that were displayed on the

counters of bars are also considered apotropaic,[83] and furniture and lamps that bore

images that might seem religious as well.

3. Shrine rituals versus other small-scale rituals

To further contextualize the definition of a shrine by demonstrating what it is

not, I review some examples of ritual activity that co-existed with shrines in

Pompeian properties. In houses, which provide the most evidence, a number of

other small-scale ritual activities are attested. These rituals are part of *sacra*

privata, all religion and ritual activities relating to the family that took place inside

and outside of residences. Daily worship at shrines was a part of *sacra privata*, but

it also included celebration of festivals and life-cycle events, among other ritual

action.[84]

One such ritual is votive offerings of food. Within the area of the *tablinum* in

house VI.1.7/24-26, the House of the Vestals, for example, there was found a large

pit containing incense cups, neonatal pig bones, and deposits filled with remains of

food (figs, grapes, walnuts), which the excavators interpret as foundation deposits

---

[81] Interior plaques: e.g. in V.2.g (Boyce 1937, no. 105), and on the north wall of VI.15.3. Cf. Ling
(1990) for exterior plaques.
[82] Mayeske 1972: 27.
[83] Ellis 2005: 51.
[84] Cf. Dolansky 2006; Schultz 2006; Orr 1978, 1972; Harmon 1978.

tied to the original construction of the house in the late 3rd BCE.[85] It is possible that

such a ceremony could have involved a shrine, but there is no shrine extant or

recorded in the vicinity of the deposit in the House of the Vestals. Robinson,

however, has studied several of these pits in a number of houses and has concluded

that at least some do represent the performance of rituals associated with domestic

worship at shrines.[86] The food offerings were likely burned on an altar (probably in

proximity to a shrine) or in the hearth before being buried. Another example of

small-scale ritual activity is the burial of material struck by lightning in order to

consecrate it. The north end of the peristyle garden in house I.8.17/11 contains a

pit filled with lightning-damaged household material; the pit is sealed by a fragment

of roof tile with the word *fulgur* ("lightning flash") scratched on it.[87]

These examples of ritual activity are all locations where we find evidence of

ritual activity, but not a shrine, and I therefore exclude this evidence. Nor am I

concerned primarily with objects of possible ritual significance – statuettes,

portable altars, and items sometimes found in shrines such as vessels, lamps, and

shells – when they are not directly associated with a shrine.[88] Even though I do not

include this material among the shrines, I do take it into account when evaluating

the context of the shrines and their associated activities.

C. *The difficulties of working with the evidence: some caveats*

---

[85] Jones and Robinson 2004: 110; Ciaraldi and Richardson 2000: 79-80.
[86] Robinson 2002, 2005.
[87] Maiuri 1942.
[88] Cf. Allison (2004: 144-46) on potentially ritual objects not associated with shrines.

Identifying shrines can be problematic not only because of the presence of other architectural features that resemble shrines in form and function, but also because of the degradation of the site of Pompeii over time – a hole in a wall can come to look like a niche and *vice versa* – and the impact of particular site formation processes.

Due to the protective function of the shrine rituals and the deep roots the *Lares*, the domestic deities *par excellence*, had in the Roman psyche,[89] I believe it likely that every house, if not every property, originally had at least one shrine. Given that there are at a maximum about 1,197 properties excavated in the city,[90] a good number of which actually had more than one shrine, the potential total number of shrines is quite high. Only 541 shrines, however, are extant or known from archaeological reports.[91] The current state of the archaeological evidence for the ancient shrines of Pompeii ranges from extant built structures to niches to holes in the wall to references in published sources only. Several types of site formation processes could have impacted the preservation of shrines of certain materials or in certain locations.

---

[89] "*Lar*" and "*Lares*" were often used as metonyms for both the hearth and home in Roman literature; e.g. Stat., *Silv*. II.3.16, III.1.65, IV.8.23.

[90] According to Wallace-Hadrill's calculation (1994: 98-99), resulting from his reanalysis of previous figures and his reconsideration of the issue. The figure encompasses houses, shops, workshops, horticultural plots, and "other" miscellaneous usage, excluding tombs and villas outside the walls, and public buildings and temples inside the city. He suggests 1,200 to 1,300 as a reasonable estimate of the habitable units in the city as a whole. I accept his figures because they represent the most considered analysis that I am aware of.

[91] This is a rough number reached by adding the number of intra-urban shrines in Boyce's (1937) study to those excavated subsequently and listed by Orr (1972) in his catalogue compiled thirty-five years later. There are a number of other shrines known, only some of which are published (such as in the volumes of *Rivista di Studi Pompeiani*). Ellis (2005: 66) comments that today 44% of bars have evidence for at least one shrine.

For the most part, for example, upper stories are not preserved at Pompeii. Thus, the vast majority of the upstairs shrines are missing; that there were shrines on second levels is evidenced by a few painted niches and shrine paintings found on some of the intermediate and upper stories that survived.[92] These upper levels are likely to have been a mixture of independent residences, commercial properties, and residences that were genuinely two stories.[93] Ellis records that the majority of bars at Pompeii preserve evidence of an upper level.[94] Thus, our knowledge of the properties included in this study that may have had upper stories is incomplete. In the nearby city of Herculaneum, which was also buried in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE, however, there is a greater degree of preservation of organic materials. Shrines on upper stories are preserved there, and we can use them as comparanda for imagining what the shrines on upper stories in Pompeii may have looked like and where they may have been located in relation to other features in the property.[95]

Objects or features that were made of wood are seldom preserved at Pompeii. This includes wooden chests in houses and wooden counters in bars, as well as wooden versions of *aediculae* and other types of shrines, as have been found in Herculaneum.[96] In some cases, other artifacts associated with a wooden feature might provide an indication that it once existed. Detached metal fittings have been

---

[92] In houses I.2.6 and IX.5.2 / 22, and in an unknown property near *Porta Vesuviana* (Boyce 1937, nos. 5, 420, 494).
[93] Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 108, 110; Pirson 1999: 174.
[94] Ellis 2005: 76.
[95] Cf. Orr 1972: 128-31.
[96] Wooden shrines at Herculaneum: Orr 1972: 128-29; cf. Bassani 2008: 27. Ellis (2005: 41) discusses the wooden counters that once existed in Pompeian shops, but are now no longer preserved. See Chapter 2 for more information on shrines made in perishable materials.

found in Pompeian houses, presumably from chests and other such items of perishable material.[97] Otherwise, we may have no idea where wooden furniture, shrines, and features were once located. We must simply keep in mind their possible existence.

Additionally, the behavior of the Pompeians in the last moments of the city appears to have affected the evidence for shrines. Many statuettes that would indicate the presence of a shrine were removed from their ritual display or storage locations by fleeing Pompeians as they left the city. Loose statuettes have been found lying in the streets and even in the hands of the deceased who did not escape the city alive.[98] Other statuettes found by themselves in *atria* or elsewhere in the house other than in a shrine may have been dropped there in the confusion caused by the eruption.[99] In addition, some residents and other scavengers returned after the eruption to salvage what they could, particularly those items of high quality or interest.[100]

Further problems result from the action of time and modern human activity. Boyce commented that already in his day many shrines had been lost due to poor preservation.[101] Many painted shrines have simply faded away from exposure to the elements after excavation, and walls have fallen down. Efforts to remedy the effects of time have not always been helpful, as sometimes walls have been

---

[97] Allison 2004: 51-54.
[98] Boyce 1937, Appendix 1, nos. 9-12. A cast was made of a woman carrying a statuette of Cupid: Dwyer 2007.
[99] Or they could have been located on an upper floor that collapsed in the eruption, or stored in a chest or other furnishing that has not been preserved, such as the wooden cupboards preserved at Herculaneum.
[100] Allison 2004: 179-82.
[101] Boyce 1937: 7.

reconstructed without consideration of niches that may once have been present.[102]

Finally, the bombing of the city during World War II obliterated shrines that had

until then survived.[103] Today, dense vegetation prevents access to some properties,

and not all properties have been completely excavated. The latter impediment

especially impacts my study of the shrines in properties along the *Via*

dell'Abbondanza and at the southern extent of the excavated area in *Regio* I.

There are problems with record-keeping as well. Wallace-Hadrill has

commented that the diversity of housing units in the city is striking.[104] Smaller

dwellings, however, have not always been given a proportionate amount of

attention in the excavation records. We are therefore missing one end of the social

spectrum of contexts for shrines. This matters because comparanda from other

sites in Italy suggest that the smaller residences did not have kitchens or cooking

facilities, the spaces most associated with traditional imagery in Pompeian shrine

paintings.[105] Would smaller dwellings in Pompeii not have had this type of shrine?

Is our evidence for domestic shrines biased towards the upper-class *familia*? There

are also major problems with the recording of finds.[106] For example, the original

locations of small, portable altars were probably not always recorded accurately.

---

[102] Ellis (2005: 36) comments that some of the reconstruction in bars has been done incorrectly and/or obscures "unimportant" details. Cf. also Powers's (2006: 34-35) discussion of the difficulties posed by early reconstruction efforts in the House of the Gilded Cupids (VI.16.7 / 38).
[103] See García y García 2006.
[104] Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 96-97.
[105] Cf. Ellis 2005: 128. See Chapter 2 for discussion of types of shrine paintings.
[106] Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 87-89; Allison 2004: 3-6; Ellis 2005: 33-35.

Thus, we cannot assume that they are *in situ* in their current locations and must discount them from the study of the shrines.[107]

D. *The geographic and chronological scope of the project: selecting a sample*

1. Pompeii in 79 CE

Small-scale urban shrines are found everywhere throughout the Roman Empire, and to a large degree they have characteristics similar to those in Pompeii.[108] As deserving as these shrines are of study, I have chosen to focus on the shrines of Pompeii because it is the only site with a large enough body of data for addressing the questions that I am interested in. I study the shrines at a single, "static" moment in time, 79 CE, because the questions that I ask (such as those relating to traffic patterns in Chapter 3) depend on determining which shrines were in operation at the same time. The only feasible date is 79 CE because not every area of the city has been excavated below the 79 CE levels. I do not include blocked shrines in my study, because they were no longer in use at the time of the eruption, though I note their presence and factor them into my interpretations when appropriate.

Using 79 CE as the focal date of my study, however, does not come without a few potential pitfalls. Allison has discussed the life of the city between 62 and 79 CE, speculating that everything was not functioning normally between the earthquake

[107] D'Ambrosio and Borriello (2001: 15, 17) describe the preservation history of the altars in particular, and, like Allison (*ibid*.), the difficulty in connecting artifacts to the location in which they were found.
[108] Orr (1978) and Bassani (2008), though they focus on Pompeii, review and include as comparanda shrines from other sites throughout the Roman world. Select studies include Bulard 1926, Bruneau 1970, and Hasenohr 2003 (Delos); Bakker 1991 (Ostia); Kaufmann-Heinimann 1998 (Augusta Raurica in Gaul); Zabehlicky 2008 (Pannonia and Noricum); and Person forthcoming (Achaia).

in 62 CE and the day of the eruption.[109] Moreover, she considers the possibility that

some properties were unoccupied in 79 CE.[110] Such considerations are another

filter through which the evidence must be sifted. In doing so, I consider the

spectrum of evidence in each individual case for the continued use of a shrine or its

disruption.

2. Description of the study areas and their shrines

The focal areas of my study were chosen to complement each other. Because

my project studies the shrines in the context of a community in which there were

different patrons and viewers interacting with one another, it seems appropriate to

circumscribe areas of the city that were discrete neighborhoods in which the

residents lived and worked together. The neighborhood as a spatial unit enables me

to analyze the communication between friends, acquaintances, and intimate

associates, not just between members of different social groups. It is difficult to

identify actual ancient neighborhoods based on how the ancient Pompeians

themselves would have defined them, however.[111] Because there is not much direct

evidence, I considered certain other factors in defining the "neighborhoods" for my

study.

One criterion is that in a neighborhood, all basic services should be available.

Another is that each neighborhood should include a range of different types of

---

[109] Allison 2004: 182-98.
[110] Allison 2004: 192-96.
[111] Cf. Laurence (2007: 39-61) on competing and complementary definitions of "neighborhood" and how there are in fact different systems of neighborhoods at Pompeii. Lott (2004: 18-27) discusses modern vs. ancient conceptions of a neighborhood.

properties – domestic, commercial, industrial, and communal[112] – so that all types of

shrines would be represented. Since the various types of space are spread

throughout the city, this was not difficult to accomplish.[113] More importantly, since I

am concerned with the visual accessibility of the shrines to different groups of

people, the areas needed to represent a variety of visual relationships between

viewers and shrines. I have thus chosen one area with a high degree of relatedness

between spaces; that is, there are multiple spaces in the area that can be seen from a

number of directions, and from which a number of other spaces can be seen. The

second area is less coherent in terms of the visual connection between different

spaces within the area, in order to compare the different effects that each has on the

visibility of the shrines.

I also deemed it essential that each area comprise both busy and less busy

streets, in order to test whether the level of traffic had an effect on the shrines. It

was also important to include both busy and less busy streets because the

distribution of property types differs according to the level of traffic on the street.

There are more commercial properties along busy streets, for example, while there

is a scarcity of non-domestic properties away from highly-traveled streets.

a. Area 1 – *Porta Ercolano* and vicinity

Area 1 is located in the northwestern corner of the city, inside the *Porta*

Ercolano and extending south along *Via Consolare*, in *Regiones* VI and VII (Figure

1.2). The region was one of the oldest in the city, being within the first expansion

---

[112] See Appendix 1 for discussion of terminology.
[113] Cf. Eschebach and Müller-Trollius 1993, including map.

from the *Altstadt* in the southwestern corner of the city. The properties to the west

of *Via Consolare*, however, were built later when the walls were no longer needed

for defense.[114] Area 1 is characterized by revealing sightlines, and a high degree of

visual relatedness between different spaces and features.

The structural center of the area is the axis between the two street shrines

that face each other along the *Via Consolare*, one by the fountain at the southern

extremity of *insula* VI.1, and the other on the eastern façade of bar VI.4.1-2 at the

northern edge of that *insula*. They form the core of the ritual topography uniting the

---

[114] There is a general consensus on the relative order of phases of the development of the Pompeian urban plan, though the actual chronology is disputed (see Geertman 2007; the account presented is generally consistent with those in Carafa 2007, Chiaramonte 2007, Descoeudres 2007, Guzzo 2007, Nappo 2007, Jones and Robinson 2007, Peterse 2007, and Tybout 2007). The settlement began in the area known as the *Altstadt*, by the end of the 6th century BCE at the latest. There is evidence of activity elsewhere in the area now enclosed by the city wall, particularly to the north of the *Altstadt*. (The date and development of the fortifications are related issues to the urban plan, but I will not address them directly.) The *Via Consolare* and other roads outside the *Altstadt* are thought to have predated the later series of expansions that gave the city the form we see today. The first expansion to form the *Neustadt*, as it is called by some, is thought to have been to the NW quarter the city, comprising the rectangular parallel *insulae* on the orientation of the Via di Mercurio; possible dates range from the beginning of the 4th century (Geertman 2007: 90) to the early 2nd century BCE (implied in Jones and Robinson 2007: 391). *Insulae* VI.1, VI.3, and VI.4 are irregularly-shaped to accommodate the pre-existing *Via Consolare*. The *insulae* along *Via del Vesuvio* are irregular to fill the space adjacent to the *Via del Vesuvio*. Next the two rows of squared *insulae* matching the alignment of the *Via Stabiana* were established. Then the parallel rectangular blocks to the east. The irregularly shaped *insulae* in between the three zones were filled-in as the phases progressed in order to connect the zones to one another. Scholars disagree whether these phases occurred in short succession (basically contemporaneously) or if they were more spaced out. The terrace houses along the western and southern edges of the city were built on top of the walls in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE; the construction of the amphitheater occurred later in the Roman period of the city, after it was made a colony in 80 BCE. Richardson (1988: 36-43) is the only one to have proposed that the entire city plan we see today reflects a single wave of planning beginning in the mid-3rd century BCE, with the area of the NW quarter and the area of Regio VII reflecting remnants of an earlier city plan in those areas. Perhaps, though, he would propose a different account given the opportunity to evaluate the evidence from recent stratigraphic investigations.

To provide an example of counter-evidence to this narrative, Wallace-Hadrill and Fulford (Wallace-Hadrill 2005) have identified 6th century BCE remains in *insula* I.9 along the same orientation of later construction, leading them to hypothesize the existence of an earlier urban plan in the southeastern area of the city that the current plan followed. The construction of that current plan could still correspond to the above narrative, however). Furthermore, Nappo (2007: 347) believes the eastern expansion to be the first (though without clearly stating why).

area.[115] In addition to the visual axis of the street shrines, the boundaries of this area are delimited by sightlines toward and away from the neighborhood's gathering places – those places of "seeing" and "being seen." Two of these gathering places are represented by the shrines; the placement of the northern one adjacent to a fountain contributed to the construction of the space as a destination point. To the south, the boundaries are demarcated in relation to the crossroads at the intersection of *Via Consolare*, *Vico di Modesto*, and *Via delle Terme*, where a fountain created another gathering point. Research on the use of the fountains suggests that they could act as the focal points of different neighborhoods, connecting people who used the same fountain into a unified social group.[116] The boundaries of the area reflect this commonality; at the very least it seems reasonable to assume that people would utilize the fountain closest to them.[117] The "neighborhood" is united by its use of the gathering spaces.

The space around the fountain at the crossroads south of *insula* VI.3 was not just a source of water. It was a comprehensive service area, with bars, inns, and bakeries, as well as residences arrayed around the intersection; the domestic properties surround a core of neighborhood services. All the properties nearest to the fountain represent either industry or commerce. The corridor from the *Porta Ercolano* to this fountain is the heart of the area. The occupants of the north end of *Vico di Modesto* and the area around the intersection of *Vico di Modesto* and *Vico di*

---

[115] Foss (1997: 197) uses this term to describe the relations of shrines within the same spatial unit.
[116] Cf. Laurence 2007: 45-52.
[117] If the water towers could be used as fountains (as Laurence seems to claim by the inclusion of a water tower on his distribution map of fountains [2007, Map 3.2]), then the southeastern border of Area 1 should be adjusted westward to account for the effect of the water tower at the northwest corner of *insula* VII.5.

Mercurio are drawn into the study area by their sight line south, which encompasses the area of the fountain at *insula* VI.3, and the usage of that fountain and the one at *insula* VI.1. The occupants of the properties along *Vico di Narciso* would have been drawn down into the area by the fountain at *insula* VI.1, and the attractive view they had of it. The open space around the fountain is a comfortable and central location for people to meet and interact.[118] In addition to considering who would have used which fountain, the intersection of *Vico di Terme* with *Via delle Terme* just south of VI.6.2 was a further reason to place the southeastern boundary of the area where it is.

In terms of traffic, there would have been heavy traffic in and out of the city along *Via Consolare* and through *Porta Ercolano*, making it a likely zone of advertisement for proprietors trying to attract the attention of those entering and exiting the city. *Via Consolare* was thus a busy street, but it was flanked by streets that were less busy. These less-traveled side streets are connected by the sightlines and fountains mentioned above. Along them are very few, if any, shops or bars attached to the houses, in contrast to many along *Via Consolare*. Hartnett has convincingly suggested the applicability to Pompeian urban design of the principles of Jane Jacobs and New Urbanism, according to which neighborhoods integrate different types of activities and destinations to serve the needs of everyday life and foster a lively active atmosphere.[119]

b. Area 2 – *Via dell'Abbondanza* and the *insulae* to the south

---

[118] Cf. Hartnett's (2003: 35) brief description of people loitering in another sort of gathering space.
[119] Hartnet 2003: 29-30.

Area 2 is located in the southeastern corner of the city, along *Via dell'Abbondanza* at its northern extent, and encompassing regularly planned *insulae* in Regions I, II, III, and IX down to the city wall at it southern extent (Figure 1.2). It is generally thought that the current southeastern extant of the city was the latest to be laid out, sometime between the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 2nd century BCE.[120] The amphitheater and adjacent *palaestra* were later additions in the Roman period that necessitated the removal of earlier structures and triggered an increase in commercialization in the vicinity.[121] Area 2 is like Area 1 in having streets with differing levels of traffic and a mixture of space types. Also as in Area 1, the non-domestic spaces in Area 2 are located along the major thoroughfares almost exclusively. There do, however, seem to be more properties that served multiple purposes in Area 2 than in Area 1.

The area is characterized by a grid plan with limited intervisibility: there is some intervisibility across streets and intersections, but for the most part lines of sight are restricted. The axial streets lack the twists and turns that provide good views into properties, and the slope of the north-south streets *Vicolo della Nave Europa* and *Vicolo dei Fuggiaschi* prevents a viewer on *Via dell'Abbondanza* from looking south along their complete length, just as the slope of *Via di Castricio* south of *insula* I.13 obstructs the long-distance view west of a person standing on *Via di Nocera*, and *vice versa*, for all. Furthermore, there are foundations and street

---

[120] See n. 114 above. The end of the 4th century BCE: Guzzo 2007. The beginning of the 2nd century BCE: Geertman 2007; Nappo 2007; Peterse 2007.

[121] Ling 2007: 120; Parslow 2007: 214, 217-18. The amphitheater dates to 70 BCE on the basis of the quinquennial duovirate of the magistrates who provided the funds, while the adjacent *palaestra* (also known as the "Grand Palestra") was constructed in the late Augustan or early Tiberian period

shrines, where people could gather, but they are not treated as focal points as they are in Area 1, and a group of people loitering in the area might interfere with the flow of traffic.

The boundaries of Area 2 were purposefully chosen, but in a more arbitrary fashion than were those in Area 1, in order to provide a contrast to the high degree of spatial relatedness in Area 1. On the western extent of Area 2, the unnamed street east of *insula* I.9 is the first to have fully-excavated intersections along its entire length. *Via dell'Abbondanza* and *Via di Nocera*, as the busiest streets, and each connected to a gate, form a double spine for the area. *Via di Nocera* is a useful boundary marker because to the east of *insulae* II.1, II.8, and II.9 there is a clear change in the use of the space due to the presence of the *palestra* and amphitheater. This change is marked by the monumentalization of the continuation of *Via di Castricio* between II.1 and II.9, and the continuation of the eastern curb of *Via di Nocera* between II.9 and II.8.

c. Comparing the two areas

Area 1 contains a total of 60 shrines and possible shrines, while Area 2 has 142. The total number of shrines in each area is probably lower than it would have been due to the vagaries of preservation. Besides preservation, though, there are other factors that have shaped the evidence for shrines that we have today. For instance, *Regio* I (in Area 2) was excavated significantly later than the properties in my Area 1, with better recording of the archaeological data. Furthermore, differing amounts of modern restoration work have been carried out in the two areas. *Regio* I has been subject to much more substantial restoration than in the other area, where

the focus has been more on preservation than on restoration. Unclear evidence for shrines may have been treated differently in each area, resulting in varying degrees of preserved evidence for these features.

In both areas, however, the distribution of the shrines by type of space is approximately equal judging by the percentage of total shrines. For each type of space, I provide the percentage for Area 1 followed by that for Area 2: domestic shrines 62 / 60; commercial shrines 25 / 22; industrial shrines 8 / 9; restricted communal shrines 0 / 1; unrestricted communal shrines 3 / 5; unknown space type shrines 2 / 3. This tabulation suggests that the degree of shrine preservation across space type is similar for both areas; when a shrine in one type of space is more or less likely to be preserved than a shrine in another type of space, the result is the same for both Area 1 and Area 2. This fact is significant for comparing the two areas because it suggests that the differences between them are not the result of differential preservation or other processes. Even though Area 2 overall has a higher rate of preservation than Area 1, by type of space, the two areas are subject to the same forces. This finding supports my decision to compare the visibility and accessibility of shrines, among other characteristics, in the two areas.

III. Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 has two goals. The first goal is to demonstrate why the shrines in different types of spaces should be studied holistically and to review the cultural expectations for the shrines that informed patrons' decisions in designing their shrines. There was great variability among them, but they were also united by an "architectural vocabulary," and they fulfilled the requirements for the performance

of the same types of rituals. The second goal is to identify the agency behind the

creation of the shrines as well as those who used the shrines and formed their

immediate audience. (This audience of users is later contrasted to a wider, external

viewing audience – visitors to a property and others who could have seen the

shrines.) Chapter 2 also reviews the typical range of forms, images, and locations of

the shrines and provides the reader with necessary background for understanding

and evaluating the arguments I make in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 3, I set out to prove that there *was* an external audience for the

shrines, beyond that of the immediate circle of users, by revealing the steps that

were taken to increase the visibility of shrines, such as intentionally placing them in

certain locations in order to be seen by those other than the primary users. The

chapter reviews the different strategies of intentional visibility that patrons

employed throughout the city, and it identifies the patterns of shrine placement in

the two study areas. I look for the shrines' connections to the larger community by

analyzing their degree of accessibility and the association between their orientation

and local traffic patterns. The analysis uncovers differences in how shrine patrons

in each area manipulated the visibility of the shrines.

Chapter 4 focuses on the question of why it was important for the shrines to

be seen. I examine the importance of the shrines' visibility for communication, and

what the patrons wanted to communicate with their shrines. I introduce

customization as one of the most important means by which patrons communicated

messages about themselves. I discuss in detail how the shrines' location and

appearance affected their effectiveness in communicating with viewers and their

range of meanings for different groups of people in different contexts. I then return

to the study areas to reveal larger patterns in the customization of the shrines to

suit the area of the city in which they were located, and what that customization

says about the character of the area and the types of social interactions that took

place within it.

Chapter 5, the conclusion, is followed by two appendices. The first defines

terminology and explains the methodology that guided my thinking in collecting

data and analyzing it statistically. The issues underlying the identification and

classification of the use of space in the archaeological record, and the approach I

have taken to various lines of evidence for the shrines, such as their form, imagery,

and accompanying artifacts, are key points of discussion. The second appendix is a

catalogue of the shrines in the study areas that I discuss in the text. It describes the

shrines' physical appearance and location, and provides relevant contextual

information to aid readers in following and evaluating my arguments.

CHAPTER 2. THE SHRINES: THEIR FORM, FUNCTION, CREATION, AND USE

The goal of this chapter is two-fold. First, I discuss the various kinds of shrines in all types of spaces at Pompeii in order to highlight the common features that bind the shrines into a coherent body of ritual material despite their wide variety of architectural forms and vibrant images. At the same time, however, I call attention to the diversity of the shrines demonstrates their flexibility and adaptability for communicating messages and serving the social needs of patrons. Second, I identify the types of people who commissioned shrines, as well as the types of people who likely used the shrines in different types of space, in order gain insight into the kinds of viewers who comprised the immediate audience for a shrine and may have had input into the creation of it messages.[1] In later chapters, the interaction of patrons with this immediate audience through shrines will be contrasted to patrons' interaction with the broader audience of viewers who did not have an intimate relationship with the shrines. It is impossible to know with certainty who commissioned or used a shrine, especially in individual cases, but we can use the location of a shrine within a property, the depictions of ritual acts, and textual sources to identify the most likely categories of candidate.

---

[1] I will not be discussing in detail what took place during the rituals at the shrines, or when they occurred. For this information, see (e.g.) Orr 1972: 4-83, 1978: 1559-75; Fröhlich 1991: 24-27; Swetnam-Burland 2000: 62-64. These authors, in addition to Boyce (1937) and Giacobello (2008), are also to be consulted for alternate, though by and large similar, discussions of the form and imagery of the shrines. They provide more detail that I could ever hope to note here.

I. <u>Similarity and Variability in Shrine Construction, Furnishings, and Location</u>

  The shrines are variable in form, differing in their combinations of shape, size, material, imagery, associated artifacts, and location. Despite the potential for myriad combinations, however, there was a set of features essential to the common function of the shrines. These set features, included, on the one hand, platforms, ledges, and altars for facilitating the offering of sacrifice, and, on the other hand, painted images and statuettes for focusing visual attention on the shrine. It was the function of a shrine, rather than every detail of its layout, form, and design, that was mandated and standardized.[2] Part I of this chapter reviews the range of forms and types of paintings and furnishings found in connection with shrines, the types of space in which shrines are found, and patterns in the appointment and placement of shrines. The commonalities represent the cultural expectations that informed patrons' decisions in designing their shrines and served as a point of departure for customizing their shrines.

A. *Form*

  The standard architectural forms of shrines at Pompeii include altars, niches, *aediculae*, pseudo-*aediculae*, and cult rooms, all often preserving stucco and/or fresco decoration.[3] This is not to say that there were no shrines in other forms, just

---

[2] Evidence for this position is found in the almost makeshift appearance of some shrines that were set up in stair vaults, blocked doors, other recesses, and improvised spaces: these are not shrines that were precisely constructed according to a rigid ideal form of shrine. The *existence* of the shrine is what was most important for the success of the ritual, not the shrine's appearance.

[3] This is a streamlined overview of shrine typology. As with any typology, there are individual exceptions. The basic types of shrines were first classified by Boyce (1937) and he has been followed by scholars ever since; for more detail on shrine form, cf. Orr 1972, 1978; Bassani 2008. Bassani (2008: 5) was the first to deviate from Boyce's typology, though only slightly, by seeing the cult

that these are the most common elements from which the shrines were composed.

The flexibility and adaptability of the shrines allowed them to be customized by

their patrons.[4]

1. Niches

Found in many types of rooms and spaces, niches were either rectangular or square-

bottomed with an arched, pointed, or pediment-like roof (Figure 2.1). Most were at

least a meter above ground level, but not all.[5] Some niches were carved out of the

wall after it was finished, but others were built into the wall at the time of its

construction, giving us a potential means of dating this latter type.[6] A few niches

project from the wall, using a plaster or ceramic framework.[7]

Niches could be fitted with sockets for holding statuettes or ledges for

displaying statuettes and other items. These ledges are formed of a number of

different materials, including terracotta roof tiles with flared edges, placed so as to

---

rooms as only loosely related to the other types of shrines. She believes that the standard typology
does not take enough notice of the differences in form among the shrines, and overly emphasizes
their similar function as the factor uniting them into one typology. This emphasis on function,
however, is what makes the standard typology particularly suitable for my purposes.

[4] The result, I believe, of the large degree of free choice given to shrine patrons with regard to the
form and appearance of their shrine; this will be explored further in Chapter 4. Cf. Boyce 1937: 10.
Other scholars have noted the variety more abstractly. Foss (1997: 197, 201), for example, sees the
situation as one of a "wide variety of actual observance" predicated on "a general vocabulary of cultic
symbols and values steeped in Italo-Roman tradition." Swetnam-Burland sees this versatility in
domestic religion at Pompeii more broadly: she contends that it not be thought of as standardized or
canonical, but as having room for diversity and adaptation (2000: 62).

[5] *Contra* Bassani (2008: 24) who disagrees that niches near to the ground should be included as
shrines, since "a true niche should be elevated above the ground level." Likewise, Allison's (2004: 48)
blanket exclusion of niches under stairs, while appropriately critical of the tendency to identify all
niches as shrines, is misguided when dealing with the site as a whole, for there *were* shrines in some
of these spaces (e.g. in I.12.5, cat. no. 12). These and other niches that start at ground level are more
likely to be examples of features that were not originally shrines but later converted to ritual use (e.g.
what is likely a blocked door converted into a shrine in V.3.7 [Boyce 1937, no. 12]).

[6] E.g. Anniboletti's (2008) dating of shrines in *insula* facades. I do not know of any other examples of
this dating method.

[7] E.g. in VI.2.14 (cat. no. 52) and I.11.12 (cat. no. 5).

resemble altar volutes. Other ledges are of wood, marble, and other forms of

ceramic material. It seems possible that the main purpose of the ledge was actually

to increase the niche's intrusion into the physical space of the room and attract

more attention, since it was not absolutely necessary for the function of the niche in

ritual. Offerings could be displayed in niches without ledges, and sacrifice could still

take palce.

Other fittings in niches include stepped floors, presumably for a tiered

display of objects. Yet others seem to suggest special accommodation for liquid

offerings in the form of recesses or containers embedded in the wall to drain the

libation.[8] Niches could be accompanied by a portable or fixed altar set in front of

them; they could also be adorned with paintings inside the niches or on the wall

around them. Sometimes, *aedicula* façades (see below) surround the niche,

providing added visual emphasis. For shrines with multiple niches, it is probable

that at least one of the 'extra' niches was to hold objects (perhaps ritual

implements), or a lamp.

2. *Aediculae* and pseudo-*aediculae*

---

[8] For example, niches in houses I.12.7 (cat. no. 13) and V.1.7 included embedded ceramic vessels. (The niche in the latter house is located on the east wall of the peristyle, just north of another arched niche [Boyce 1937, no. 72].) There is also a cavity below the floor of the niche in the rear wall of shop VI.2.2 (cat. no. 50). On comparison with the vicinal shrines located outside particular residences (cf. Anniboletti 2008a: 220), an alternate explanation for the niche in VI.2.2 might be that it served to collect coins. Anniboletti suggests that coins were deposited in these shrines during festivals, and she also cites textual evidence connecting the ritual offering of coins upon the marriage and the integration of a new bride into her husband's *familia*. There is no direct evidence for the significance of coins in a commercial shrine, though one could speculate that they relate to the desire of the proprietor to increase his profits. (The position of the shrine behind the presumed location of a counter at the front of the property makes likely that the proprietor or someone involved with running the business would use the shrine, rather than a customer.) See below for another connection between (domestic) shrines and money.

Aediculae are rarely, if ever, located outside the "public" areas of residences such as *atria*, peristyles, and gardens. *Aediculae* are large built shrines consisting of a podium base surmounted by a temple-like *aedicula* frame, sometimes articulated with columns and pediment (Figure 2.2).[9] The top of the podium base acted as the niche floor or ledge for displaying offerings. Like niches, some also have sockets for statuettes or are stepped; there could also be niches set into the podium base for the storage of objects.[10] Fixed altars have been found with some *aediculae*, but most must have relied on the hearth or portable altars for sacrificing offerings. *Aediculae* are usually constructed from stone and/or brick masonry, but the remains of wooden *aediculae* found at Herculaneum suggest that there were probably wooden *aediculae* at Pompeii as well.[11]

Aediculae could have stucco or fresco decoration, and ritual paintings often adorned the wall(s) inside the 'niche.' *Aediculae* are the most elaborate and are among the largest shrines in Pompeii; as such, one aspect of their significance was the potential to be a striking symbol of the piety of their patrons, whether that piety was real or feigned. Their temple-like form calls to mind the grand religious

---

[9] Objects that appear to be small portable shrines of similar form have been found in the western provinces of the Empire. One such is a 4th century CE lead example from Wallsend, a Roman fort at the eastern end of Hadrian's Wall in northern England. It has the appearance of "copying in miniature the larger domestic [Romano-British] shrines…cf. a wooden cupboard shrine from Herculaneum" (Allason-Jones 1984: 231). Other similar examples come from modern Luxembourg and Titelberg, and ancient Gaul (Boon 1983: 40; Ésperandieu 1913, nos. 4193, 4206). No such portable shrines have been found at Pompeii, but it is possible that they are just not preserved if they were constructed in wood.

[10] House I.16.3 contains a good example of an *aedicula* with a stepped display feature (cat. no. 30). The niches in *aediculae* bases resemble the storage bays that Ellis (2005: 54) has identified in bar counters.

[11] Wooden shrines at Herculaneum: Orr 1972: 128-29; cf. Bassani 2008: 27. Other evidence for wooden shrines: cf. Orr 1972: 84 n. 3.

structures of public life, reflecting a religious tradition that extends back to Greece in the fifth century BCE.[12]

Pseudo-*aediculae* are less complex, less-fully-realized versions of *aediculae* (Figure 2.3).[13] They resemble niches set into a solid structure adjoining the wall (rather than the wall itself) in order to approximate an *aedicula*. Pseudo-*aediculae* lack articulated features like free-standing columns and separate podiums.

Aedicula façades, like pseudo-*aediculae*, draw on the *aedicula* form, but they are not a distinct type of shrine. *Aedicula* facades are painted or stuccoed outlines of temple structures and pediments applied around niches and paintings that imitated *aediculae* on a smaller, less expensive scale for less wealthy patrons (see Figure 2.1).[14] Some of these frames were quite elaborate and resembled shallow *aediculae*.

3. *Cult rooms*

Cult rooms (called *sacella* by Boyce[15]) are entire rooms set apart for cult practice (Figure 2.4). In the case of other shrines, only the space of the shrine itself was used in the ritual, while the room in which it was located could have hosted numerous other activities at different times of the day, depending on who was using the room. Cult rooms are predominantly found in residences, but there are some

---

[12] Boyce 1937: 12.
[13] First defined thus by Boyce (1937: 13-14), but the term was subsequently misinterpreted by Orr (1972) and later scholars such as Giacobello (2008) as refering to the *aedicula* façades surrounding niches and paintings. Bassani (2008) is the first researcher after Boyce to not make this mistake. Admittedly, Boyce's differentiation between *aediculae* and pseudo-*aediculae* is confusing, and perhaps inconsistent, but he does made a clear distinction between *aedicula* façades and pseudo-*aediculae*.
[14] Boyce (1937: 13) describes the close relationship between *aedicula* façades and *aediculae*.
[15] Boyce 1937: 18. Followed by Orr (1972, 1978) and Fröhlich (1991), among others.

examples in commercial and restricted communal spaces.[16] They contained

niche(s), altars, paintings, objects, and benches used in ritual performance; access to

cult rooms could be more carefully regulated than other types of shrines, by using

draperies and shutters, some of which have left traces in the entryways.[17] There are

only a few cult rooms known at Pompeii. Recently, Bassani made these cult rooms

the main subject of a comprehensive study. She distinguishes between *sacraria*

(rooms internal to the property) and *sacella* (self-contained rooms freestanding in

the open areas, like the garden). She sees cult rooms as only loosely related to the

other ritual spaces in a property (houses, in her project).[18] I treat cult rooms as

simply another manifestation of a shrine. It is possible that these cult rooms were

used for the gathering of participants in special religious celebrations, such as the

female participants in the yearly festival for Bona Dea. Every year in Rome the

festival of the goddess was held in the home of one of the senior magistrates.[19] The

festival was for women only, and the presence of everything male (human, animal,

---

[16] In inn VI.1.1 (cat. no. 46), and in the clubhouse spaces at II.1.11-12 (cat. no. 37) and the complex of *insula* II.4 (Boyce 1937, no. 471), for example.

[17] For example, the shutter across the opening of the cult room in II.1.11-12 (cat. no. 37). See Chapter 3 for further discussion of drapery and shutters.

[18] Bassani 2008: 5. Her identifications of rooms as cult rooms are educated guesses based on a set of "indicators of religiosity" (pp. 6, 9-11). Her identifications encompass a wider range of spaces than previous studies, in that she includes as ritual spaces that no other study does. (The Isis room in II.2.2, and the spaces relating to the *euripus* in the garden of the same property are two examples; pp. 174-75) Her range might be too broad, however; for example, a weakness in her methodology is that she leaves it open as acceptable to identify as a cult room a space with only an altar in the center of it. (The little cult room in II.3.3 that she identifies could also / actually have been a kitchen; pp. 176-77.) I use my own judgment in identifying any room as a cult room (see Chapter 1 for discussion of criteria).

[19] The scandal caused by Publius Clodius Pulcher's illicit participation in 62 BCE (he disguised himself as a woman) is the primary context in which the sources mention this rite of Bona Dea. They include Cicero (e.g. *Att.* I.12.13, 1.16; *In Clodium et Curionem*), who prosecuted Clodius (though he was later acquitted), and Plutarch (*Caes.* 9-10*)*.

and inanimate) was forbidden.[20] An enclosed space within the home would have been needed for such occasions.

4. Paintings

Paintings, as mentioned above, often accompanied other elements of shrines, and they are found in all types of space. Paintings are applied to the interior of niches and *aediculae*, or they adorn the walls beside them. They are also found by themselves. In these cases, they were most likely accompanied by a portable altar,[21] or were near a hearth that was used for the performance of sacrifice. Some paintings have ledges or even altars embedded in the wall on which they were painted (Figure 2.5). They could also have *aedicula* façades. I include in the category "painting" those images that incorporate stucco imagery (see Figure 2.11).

5. Altars and benches

Altars and benches are found in association with different types of shrines (Figure 2.6). There were portable altars and fixed altars, both of which could have painted or stuccoed decoration. Apart from those in street shrines, very few altars are found outside of residences, but they occur in a wide variety of rooms.[22] When only an altar is found in a room, it is possible that there was once other evidence of a shrine, such as a painting, that is no longer preserved. Or, if the altar is portable, it could have been moved from its location of use, either in antiquity or the modern

[20] Sculpture of male subjects was covered to hinder even their gaze (Plut., *Caes.* 9, *Quaest. Rom.* 20; Juv. 6.340).
[21] Portable altars are easily disassociated from their original location of use; see Chapter 1 for examples of both ancient and modern disturbance.
[22] I cannot think of an altar that has been found in a kitchen, probably because one was not needed where there was a hearth; cf. for D'Ambrosio and Borriello (2001: 17) for different uses of altars.

day. The versatility of shrines is seen the use of some tables as altars.[23] Finally,

features that are apparently benches, and look like the ones on the outside of houses

flanking the main entry, are also found in proximity to some shrines. They appear

often in cult rooms (see Figure 2.4) and have been found with shrines in both

domestic and commercial spaces.[24]

6. Other forms

        Beyond these more typical elements of form, there are examples that

demonstrate other ways of constructing an appropriate shrine for ritual. Sometimes

a shrine is composed of only a statue to which offerings were made. In the garden of

house III.4.2-3 a statue, perhaps Isis or Diana or a syncretic image of the two, was

accompanied by an incense burner, a container for unburnt incense, and a brazier.[25]

These 'shrines' draw on the same conception of a shrine as do the more

standardized shrine forms, at which an offering is made to an image. Another

possibility is that some trees in Pompeian peristyles and gardens were worshipped

as sacred, with altars set next to them.[26] An example is the altar amidst a clump of

trees in house I.14.2; bones and shells were buried at the base of the altar.[27]

B. *Imagery*

        There are two broad categories of painted imagery in shrines: figural and

non-figural. The line between the two is occasionally blurry, in that non-figural

---

[23] Though Bassani (2008: 28-29) cites previous studies suggesting a difference in use between altars and tables-as-altars, because the latter were not tied to blood sacrifice as altars were.
[24] E.g. in the cult rooms in inn VI.1.1 (cat. no. 46), bakery I.12.1-2 (cat. no. 10) and inn/bar I.11.1 (cat. no. 1).
[25] Cat. no. 45.
[26] Jashemski 1979: 134.
[27] Cat. no. 26. Another possible example is located in VII.6.28 (Boyce 1937, no. 291).

elements often accompanied figural representations, but, for the most part, figural

imagery comprised depictions of various deities and snakes, while non-figural

imagery was vegetal, geometric, or abstract. What follows is an overview of the

aspects of shrine decoration most important to their interpretation and significance

in the context of this study.

1. 'Traditional' compositions

A very common composition is that of a *genius* sacrificing at an altar[28]

flanked by two *Lares*, with a snake placed somewhere in the scene, usually in

association with a second altar: wrapped around it, confronting another snake over

it, or crawling along toward it (Figure 2.7). Despite the status attributed to it by

some scholars as the "true" expression of domestic ritual,[29] this type of composition

is in fact found in commercial and industrial spaces as well. Examples occur in the

inn at VI.4.4 (attached to bar VI.4.3), and in the bakery at VI.3.3/27-28.[30] Indeed, the

fact that this type of shrine painting appears in different types of spaces is in itself a

strong argument for studying all of the shrines together. The individual motifs are

recognizably similar to one another. The *Lares*, to name one example, are

represented the same way in a domestic shrine as in an industrial shrine: compare,

for example, those in house VI.15.1/27 (domestic) and bakery VII.12.11 (industrial)

---

[28] For the relation between painted altars and the portable altars actually found at the site, cf. D'Ambrosio and Borriello 2001: 37-38.

[29] E.g. Giacobello 2008: 59-60.

[30] Cat. nos. 58, 55. Admittedly, the composition's presence in non-domestic spaces is rare, and may be a holdover from previous domestic use of the various spaces (cf. VI.2.3-5/30-31 and I.12.3, cat. nos. 51, 11).

(Figure 2.8).[31] The *rhyta* and *situlae* are held in opposite hands, and the domestic

Lares are more sprightly, but otherwise, the iconography is the same.

In domestic contexts, the *genius* is often the *genius familiaris*, the guiding

spirit of the *paterfamilias* that watched over him and represented his life force and

procreative powers.[32] The *genius* could also be the *genius Augusti*; in 30 BCE, a

senatus consultum decreed that this *genius* be added to the pantheon of deities

venerated in the household.[33] Some scholars have imagined seeing portrait features

of the emperors or the *paterfamilias* in domestic *genii*. I am skeptical of this

proposal because the faces of the *genii* are not rendered in sufficient detail to

indicate the identity of a specific person.[34] Yet others have tried to formulate a

typology of *genius* representations based on clothing and attributes, but these

attempts have been flawed.[35] I agree with Tybout, in his review of the issue, that

there is no standard differentiated representation for the two types of *genii*.[36] The

genius Augusti adheres to the formal characteristics of the *genius familiaris*.

---

[31] See Fröhlich (1991, L70, L91) for further information about the paintings.

[32] Cf. Orr 1972: 45.

[33] Gradel argues (1992: 45-46) that the *genius* of the emperor does not figure into the practice – the libation was to the emperor himself. Hänlein-Schäfer (1996: 84 n. 54) says that the acclamation was to the emperor himself while the libation was directed toward his *genius*; this is the more commonly held view. Cf. Fishwick 1991 II.1: 375ff.; 1995: 22ff. As Fishwick acknowledges, however, Horace (*Carm.* 4.5.31-36) refers to the *numen* of the emperor, rather than his *genius*, opening the door for debate on the exact nature of the honors given to him. That the *genius Augusti* was venerated in domestic ritual in some way seems clear, however, based on the evidence of an extraordinary shrine painting in the garden of IX.9.13 (Boyce 1937, no. 466), in which a *genius* (preserved from an earlier phase) pours libations accompanied by the *paterfamilias* of the household. Below the painting is the graffito *EX SC*. This presumably refers to the decree incorporating the (*genius* of the) emperor into private ritual; thus, the *genius* is to be identified as the *Augusti* (cf. Mau 1899: 264; Fishwick 1991 II.1: 378 – though the latter believes that the *paterfamilias* is the *genius familiaris*. See Chapter 4 for discussion of differentiating the *genius* from the *paterfamilias* in shrine paintings).

[34] Mau (1899: 266) is in favor of identifying portrait features. Fröhlich (1991: 33, 37) also seems to be in favor, though he thinks that the *genii Augusti* are not portraits of specific emperors, but just evoke the general look.

[35] Hänlein-Schäfer 1996. Her argument is explicitly accepted by Fishwick 1995: 25.

[36] Tybout 1996: 371-74.

Sometimes the *genius* is also shown sacrificing alone or paired with another deity; sometimes, an additional figure is a woman who is taken to be the *iuno* of the *materfamilias*. Although less often represented, the *iuno* is the female counterpart of the *genius*.[37] In a few instances, the figures identified as the *genius* and *iuno* are thought to represent the *paterfamilias* and *materfamilias* themselves.[38]

Outside of the home, in other types of spaces such as commercial and industrial space, *genii* were also present; they might represent the shop or bar owner.[39] I consider this question below when discussing who commissioned and used the shrines. In compital shrines, a *genius* is either the *genius loci*, or, after 7 BCE, when Augustus reformed the compital ritual, the *genius Augusti*. Like the *Lares*, who are attested in a number of wide-ranging forms (*familiares*, *Augusti*, *viales*, *compitales*, *permarini*, *militares*, et al.[40]), the *genius* had many aspects that were applicable to almost any context in which divine benefaction was desired.

The *Lares* are typically represented as the largest figures in the composition presumably to signal their greater ritual importance.[41] They are deities connected to the preparation and consumption of food,[42] and the *Lar-genius-Lar* traditional composition is often found in kitchens. In domestic contexts, the *Lares* ensure the continued survival of the *familia*.[43] Beyond a connection to food preparation in bars

---

[37] There literary and epigraphic references to the *iuno* that connect it to the *genius*. The phenomenon was variable, however, since in North Africa there is a reference to a woman's *genius*. See Schultz (2006: 124) for discussion and references.

[38] See Chapter 4 for further discussion.

[39] See Fröhlich (1991: 36-37) for a review of different contexts in which *genii* are found.

[40] Cf. Orr 1972: 20-22; Giacobello 2008: 38-48.

[41] E.g. as in the shrine painting in house and workshop IX.13.1, 3 (cat. no. 69).

[42] Cf. Foss 1997. Pliny the Elder, *HN* 28.27, recounts that food dropped from the table was dedicated to the *Lares*.

[43] Foss 1997: 199.

and bakeries, the significance of the *Lares* in non-domestic space is an issue that I address in Chapter 4.

The snakes in such compositions are another representation of the *genius loci*.[44] There has been some thought that they are gendered, with a crested snake being male.[45] Their direct connection to the *pater-* and *materfamilias* has been disproven, however.[46] In a few shrine paintings, the snakes are rendered in stucco, perhaps to give their presence added symbolic weight. The offerings that appear on the altars of snakes (as well as on the altar of the *genius*) are typically eggs, pinecones, and fruits. Pinecones and eggs had connections to immortality; Orr observes that eggs are a common element in the diet of the Rat Snake that lives in the areas around Pompeii.[47]

Other figures that accompany the *Lares* and *genius* are the sacrificial attendants – the *tibicen* (musician), *camillus* (bearer of sacrificial implements), and *popa* (leader of the sacrificial pig[48]) – in various combinations. They can also be represented in different sizes according to their status in the scene; the sacrificial attendants, however, are usually the smallest figures. Some have speculated that their diminutive size is related to the ritual roles played by children in the household, if not elsewhere; children may have fulfilled the roles of sacrificial

---

[44] As originally proposed by Boyce (1942) and argued in further detail by Pavlick (2006). This is also the significance of the snakes when they are the sole subject of a shrine painting.
[45] Boyce 1942: 13. As Orr (1978: 1573) comments, it is not possible to determine the sex of the actual snakes still living at Pompeii through any such marker as a crest.
[46] Boyce 1942: 15-18.
[47] Orr 1972: 105, 108.
[48] Why a pig? It may be connected to the role of the pig in human living and working contexts. Mayeske (1972: 29) comments that bakers may have kept pigs to eat scraps and waste from the bread-making process. This is similar to the practice mentioned by Pliny of dedicating to the *Lares* any food that fell to the floor (see n. 42 above). Could there be a ritual connection between the roles of pigs and *Lares*?

attendants.[49] The role of the musician was, according to Pliny the Elder, to drown

out disturbing noises during the ritual.[50] Anthropological perspectives on music in

ritual focus on its ability to evoke emotion and set the mood.[51] Some paintings with

traditional compositions depict various cuts of meat along the sides of the

painting.[52] They are probably meant to represent offerings on the part of the patron

of the shrine.[53]

2. Other figural imagery

        Other deities present in Pompeian shrine paintings represent almost the

entire Roman pantheon, including personifications and Egyptian gods and

goddesses.[54] These patron guardians are known collectively by the misnomer

"*penates*" in the scholarly literature. In ancient textual references, the *penates* are

aniconic, undefined spirits watching over the storeroom of the household.[55] In

Pompeian scholarship, researchers have labelled all the non-*Lar* and non-*genius*

deities worshipped at shrines as *penates*.

---

[49] See below for discussion of who took part in the ritual performed at the shrines in different types of space.
[50] *HN* 28.11.
[51] Cf. Fless and Moede's (2007: 259-61) application of one such theory to artistic depictions of Roman ritual.
[52] E.g. the paintings in VI.6.1/8/12/13 (cat. no. 64); I.12.9/14 (cat. no. 14); I.13.2 (cat. no. 20); II.1.1/13 (cat. no. 35), among others.
[53] Fröhlich (1991: 34) sees these cuts of meat as offerings, but without specifying why. A number of the cuts come from pigs. Giacobello (2008: 99) also interprets the meat as an offering to the *Lares*. She suggests that the eel was included because the animal was linked to the infernal nature of the *Lares* as deceased and divinized ancestors, and it was commonly eaten at Pompeii, where the nearby river Sarno was particularly rich source for their capture. (Giacobello credits Prof. Mario Torelli for the latter connection.)
[54] Personifications: e.g. the Sarno river (in I.14.7, cat. no. 28); Egyptian deities: Isis, Osiris, Harpokrates, Serapis, and Anubis, in the shrines in VI.16.7/28 (Boyce 1937, no. 220) and VI.2.14 (cat. no. 52), among others.
[55] E.g. Cic., *Nat. D.* 2.67. See also Orr 1978: 1563.

In domestic contexts, *penates* appear more often in the "public" areas of the home,[56] but they are found in all types of space. Some of the *penates* outside the home can be related to the function of the property – Vesta in bakeries, for instance, and Mercury in shops and bars.[57] (Outside of the home these deities are, of course, not truly *penates* in the technical sense of the written sources, but rather are patron deities.[58]) Most of the depictions of Vesta appear in, or are associated with, bakeries, and the goddess is often accompanied by an ass, the animal used by bakers to power their mills.[59] Sometimes, these patron deities appear with the *Lares*, with or without the *genius* and snakes as companions. Vesta is one deity who appears with the *Lares*, sometimes with the *genius* as well, more often than she does alone. Their joint representation has resonance with her status as the personification of the hearth, the central symbolic representation of the home, and the *Lares*'s connection to cooking and eating.

It seems appropriate to interpret the appearance of a deity in any context as a matter of personal choice, dependent on the patron's interests, concerns, and background.[60] The most popular *penates* represented in paintings and painted niches have been identified by Orr as Fortuna, Vesta, and Bacchus, all of whom had a special significance for Pompeii. Fortuna, depicted with a rudder, looked after the

---

[56] Cf. Fröhlich 1991: 40.

[57] Cf. Fröhlich 1991: 39-39. About shrines in bars, Ellis (2005: 65) comments that they were in a "functional, aesthetic, and cultic relationship with Mercury." It is unclear whether this means he believes that all shrines in bars were dedicated to Mercury.

[58] Cf. Fröhlich 1991: 38.

[59] For Vesta as the patron deity of bakers and how her introduction into shrine ritual may have coincided with the development of baking technology, see Mayeske 1972: 157-62, 165.

[60] This view is echoed by Giacobello (2008: 116) in her discussion of what she terms 'secondary *lararia*' (versus the 'true *lararia*' in kitchens, by the hearth), and Husser (2008: 199-200) transforms it into an example of the construction of ritual informed by the conceptions of deity in a community. Cf. Husser (2008: 170-81) for Jupiter as a case study of different iconographical considerations involving depictions of *penates*.

commercial interests of the city at sea; Vesta was a quintessentially Roman goddess, and, as mentioned above, the patron goddess of bakers whose trade was popular at Pompeii; and Bacchus watched over the vineyards of the fertile Vesuvian region.[61] In one shrine painting, he is even depicted on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius.[62] Egyptian deities were also fairly popular; their depictions comprise 20% of the total for domestic shrines placed in "public" areas of the home.[63] Lastly, some mortal figures occasionally appear in the shrine paintings in scenes of daily life that depict banqueting, participating in trade, etc.[64] Most likely they relate to the particular concerns of the patron of the shrine, such as his profession.[65]

3. Non-figural imagery

Beyond figural representation, shrines could also have multiple elements of painting that seem to be primarily decorative. Vegetation is a common motif, signifying fecundity.[66] Many niches preserve paintings of long-stalked plants, or rosettes. Abstract representation of vegetation is even more common. Many niches have only dabs of color that probably represent plants or rosettes. Geometric patterns are also present, as is imitation marble that makes the shrine appear more

---

[61] Orr 1978: 1580-81. This connection to local circumstances is also suggested by differences in the relative numbers of various deities represented in statuette form in Campanian shrines as compared to those at the Roman colony of Augusta Rauricorum in modern-day Switzerland. There are far more statuettes of Egyptian deities in the Campanian shrines, while Mars and Victoria are present are far more attested in shrines at Augusta Raurica (Kaufmann-Heinimann 1998: 103, Abb. 139; observed by Hoffmann 2001). Perhaps the differences are due to Pompeii's nature as a port city, in contact with foreign influences from all over the Mediterranean, on the one hand, and Augusta Raurica's status as a military settlement on the other.
[62] In house IX.8.3-6 (Fröhlich 1991, L107).
[63] Fröhlich 1991: 41-42.
[64] E.g. in I.14.7 (cat. no. 28) and IX.14.2/4 (Fröhlich 1991, L111).
[65] See Chapter 4 for discussion of the significance of this type of motif.
[66] One manifestation of the link between vegetation and fertility in the Roman psyche is the deities whose nature encompasses both, such as Ceres, Flora, Ops, and Venus (particularly in her earliest iteration).

luxurious.[67] Niches were also simply painted in solid colors. Stucco also adorned

shrines. I have already noted *aedicula* façades and the snakes made of stucco, as

well as the decorative stucco borders on *aediculae*.

An important point to realize is that there was no absolute distinction

between what was symbolic adornment and what was not. Even small details could

have resonance in the context of rituals and religious veneration. We cannot

consider non-figural imagery to be strictly decorative just because it does not

explicitly depict a deity or a sacrifice. The association of vegetation with fecundity is

a good example. Another case in point is the niche on the west wall of the *atrium* in

house and workshop I.13.12/14.[68] The interior of the niche is painted as a carpet of

fruit and flowers on long leafy stems, among which birds fly and objects float: *sistra*,

cistae misticae, *situlae*, and *caducei*. These items are all associated with particular

deities, and perhaps can be interpreted as symbolic representations of them.[69]

4. Dimensionality and illusion

One notable feature of Pompeian shrine paintings – one that is indicative of

the ability of shrine imagery to have an affect on viewers and space beyond the

boundaries of the shrine – is their integration of the two-dimensional surface of the

painting with the three-dimensional world of the viewer. Three examples will

suffice to illustrate the point. Around many of the images, especially those with a

traditional *Lar-genius-Lar* composition, there are painted garlands. Interestingly, a

---

[67] See Chapter 3 for further discussion.
[68] Cat. no. 22. A similar example is the niche on the north wall of a small room adjacent to the *tablinum* in house II.9.4 (cat. no. 43); it is very similar in the arrangement of flowers and fruit, only this niche has *erotes* and birds flying through them.
[69] Other examples of disembodied attributes are located in II.8.2-3 and II.9.1 (cat. nos. 38 and 40).

number of these paintings also have nails inserted into them for the hanging of real garlands over the painted ones.[70] Often in paintings with snakes, the composition is arranged so that the head of the painted two-dimensional snake approaching a ledge, niche, or three-dimensional altar appears to consume the actual offerings placed there by worshippers (see Figure 2.5). In house I.12.16, a painted snake emerges from a hole in the lower left rear corner of a niche, caught perpetually in the act of approaching the offerings within the niche. Finally, in the pseudo-*aedicula* against the rear wall of the garden in house I.14.7, a channel of water flowed around three-sides of the shrine, as if spilling out from the painted river on the shrine itself.[71] Similarly, in a different medium, flowers appear to have been inserted into special holes in small portable altars.[72]

Some of the visual interplay between the two- and three-dimensional elements of these shrines may have been intended to represent a moment "frozen in time," perpetually recalling and performing the ritual act. The living garlands, for instance, were placed on the shrine during certain periods of the rituals.[73] Since they were living plants, they eventually withered and died. The painted garlands, on the other hand, were eternal, ever present, even when the ritual was not being carried out. Similarly, the paintings, with their representations of the sacrificial act of libation, and the approach of the sacrificial victim toward the altar, symbolically

---

[70] E.g. in I.12.3; I.12.11; I.14.2; I.14.7; II.9.1; VI.3.7 / 25-26 (cat. nos. 11, 15, 25, 27, 41, 56). Live garlands in shrines: Orr 1972: 121. Depictions of garlands held up by nails on small portable altars (D'Ambrosio and Borriello 2001: 29).
[71] Cat. no. 28. Giacobello (2008: 159) suggests that the shrine was set-up in imitation of a nymphaeum.
[72] D'Ambrosio and Borriello (2001: 17, 28).
[73] Giving garlands to the *Lares*: e.g. Cato, *RR* 143.2; Tib. 1.10.21-24, 2.1.59-60.

perpetuated the rituals and ensured the favor of the gods even when the rituals were not being carried out.[74]

5. Stylistic affinities

A notable feature of the paintings is their stylistic affinities, even when they occur in different types of spaces. Though representations of *Lares* vary, there is a similarity of style among different sub-groups, no matter the location of individual paintings. One such group is composed of *Lares* garbed in distinctive puffy blue and yellow tunics, and they are less gracefully rendered than two depictions of *Lares* discussed above (Figure 2.9); examples occur in both domestic and commercial space.[75] Another grouping consists of *Lares* wearing twice-belted tunic, with drapery that falls heavily against the legs, creating a slender silhouette; these *Lares* appear in domestic and unrestricted communal space.[76]

Some scholars have attempted to detect the presence of different hands and workshops in Pompeii responsible for distinct styles in shrine paintings. One proposed workshop is the Bottega della Via di Castricio, active in the vicinity of the street of the same name, whose work is characterized by "simple decorative choices realized in a limited chromatic range."[77] Another is the Bottega dei Vettii, so-called for producing paintings of the same "refined" nature as the one in the shrine in

---

[74] Cf. Giacobello's (2008: 100, 110) interpretation of the symbolic repetition of the traditional shrine paintings: she sees this as a special characteristic of the 'true *lararia*.'

[75] In houses VII.2.20 (Fröhlich 1991, L81), IX.9.b/c (Fröhlich 1991, L108), bar I.12.3 (cat. no. 11), and a villa at Terzigno to the north of Pompeii (Giacobello 2008, Villa cat. n. 4). The *Lares* depicted in shrine paintings in I.8 ? (Fröhlich 1991, L11), VI.6.1 (cat. no. 64), and VII.16.22 (Fröhlich 1991, L94) might be related to this group.

[76] In residences at IX.13.1, 3 (cat. no. 69), VII.4.26-27 (Fröhlich 1991, L85), VI.9.2 (Fröhlich 1991, L65), and the street shrine on the northern end of the western façade of *insula* I.11 (Fröhlich 1991, F7).

[77] First proposed by De Vos in 1981; cf. Giacobello 2008: 60-61.

house VI.15.1/27, the House of the Vettii.[78] Whether these painters were in fact

organized into formal workshops, and whether they produced only shrine paintings,

however, is a question that lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. Likewise, I am

not concerned here with detecting differing degrees of "quality." Whether the

shrine paintings are in a style known as "folk" or "plebeian" or show evidence of

Hellenizing influence, it is sufficient for my purposes to note that the style of

painting deemed appropriate for one type of shrine was appropriate for other types

as well, and that the same painters may very well have painted shrines in multiple

spaces.[79]

6. Imagery in context

It is important not to forget that the shrines were part of the larger context in

which they were located, and one of the ways the relation between the two was

articulated was through the imagery of the shrine. Shrines were integrated into

their surroundings to greater or lesser degrees. In the case of some interior shrines,

the appearance and adornment harmonized with the larger decorative program of

the surrounding space. In house I.16.4, the color scheme and panel-like structure of

the painting in the *aedicula* in the northwest corner matches the wall painting to

either side (Figure 2.10).[80] The red and green outlining links the different visual

elements. Furthermore, the snakes in the shrine are positioned to suggest that they

had slithered out from the flanking plants. Another example is the niche in house

---

[78] Giacobello 2008: 105.
[79] See below for further discussion of connections relating specifically to compital shrines. Cf. Fröhlich (1991: 14-20) on the history of scholarship regarding the style of the shrine paintings.
[80] Cat. no. 32.

VI.17.41.[81] The red framing device and flower-like motifs in the wall decoration

echo the blossoms in the niche. Similar harmony between niches and wall

decoration can be seen in some niche shrines located in gardens. They are painted

with vegetal imagery that blends in with garden paintings on the surrounding

walls.[82] Most likely, shrines were usually commissioned at the same time as the

decoration of the room, during its initial construction or a later renovation perhaps

motivated by a change in ownership or need to repair structural damage.

Various visual devices made the shrines more noticeable. Many shrines are

outlined in red to distinguish them from the surrounding wall space. The shrine in

house and workshop II.1.8-9 is outlined in red around the outer borders of its niche,

and around the adjoining painted panels representing images of a snake and

Hercules (Figure 2.11).[83] There is also red outlining around the interior back edge

of the niche itself. The lines of color make the niche "pop out" at the viewer and by

encompassing the snake and Hercules, the lines emphasize that these depictions

belong to the same shrine as the niche. Shrines that are placed against a red field

sometimes have yellow outlining instead.[84] Boyce comments that the niche in house

VI.5.3/22 is purposefully set off from the decoration of the wall by its placement

across the division of the upper wall panels from the lower ones.[85] These strategies

reinforced the shrines as a visual focus, attracting attention and centering that

attention on the shrine, in much the same way as did *aedicula* façades and other

---

[81] Cat. no. 65.
[82] Cf. Giacobello 2008: 67-68.
[83] Cat. no. 36.
[84] E.g. in I.12.16 and I.14.7 (cat. nos. 17, 28).
[85] Cat. no. 60 = Boyce 1937, no. 152.

features of the shrines, such as statuettes.[86] Control of the imagery of the shrine –

including its degree of integration into its surroundings – manipulated the viewer's

experience of it.[87]

C. *Artifacts*

The artifacts found in shrines have the potential to complement (and perhaps

complicate) our understanding of the shrines and their rituals, but they have not

been studied comprehensively or systematically. This is largely due to the poor

state of the excavation records concerning which artifacts were found and in what

arrangement in the shrines.[88] The situation is unfortunate because the placement of

artifacts in a shrine could increase its visibility by attracting viewers' attention and

inviting more direct interaction, and artifacts could also contribute to the message

the shrine was intended to communicate. Artifacts would also certainly allow us to

make a more precise determination of whether a niche had some ritual function.

What I present at this point is a description of the types of artifacts that have been

found in shrines and some ideas about how they related to ritual.

1. Statuettes

Many of the shrines that are now empty no doubt contained statuettes of the

deities to which they were dedicated. The *penates*, *Lares*, *genius*, and snakes are all

represented in statuettes. The painted images of *penates* may have been

---

[86] Boyce (1937: 11) comments that the *aedicula* façades, more than any other feature except the images of the gods, mark a niche as a shrine.
[87] Chapter 3 will parse the manipulation of the shrines in more detail.
[88] See Chapter 1 for further discussion. Allison's (2004) monumental study of artifacts in thirty Pompeian houses reveals the difficulties contingent on such a task.

accompanied by statuettes of the *Lares* in particular. Other figures that do not seem

to be deities might be ancestors, such as the busts that were displayed in the exedra

off the peristyle in house I.10.4, the House of the Menander.[89] These sculptures

were not, however, as is sometimes claimed, the *imagines maiorum*, the wax masks

of deceased ancestors displayed in the *atrium*.[90]

Statuettes, and sockels for their display, have been found *in situ* in both

niches and *aediculae*, but as discussed in Chapter 1, many other statuettes have been

found out of context, in the streets, entryways, and lying randomly in other interior

spaces. It is not certain if all would originally have been associated with a shrine. It

has been postulated that compared to painted representations, statuettes were a

more expensive option for representing deities, based on their common location in

the more "public" areas of the home.[91] Those espouse this view this do not specify,

however, whether there were any relative differences in status among statuettes of

non-precious materials such as wood and terracotta and those in gilt bronze, silver,

and alabaster, among other materials. No doubt the wealth of the household was a

factor in the choice of material used for the statuettes.

2. Other artifacts

Other types of artifacts found with shrines include coins, moneyboxes,

dishware, lamps, sculptures, shells, vessels, miniature altars, incense burners,

utensils of various kinds, amulets, and assorted apparent cult objects, such as a

---

[89] Boyce 1937, no. 49.
[90] Maiuri (1933: 98-106) is in favor of the identification of the busts as the *imagines maiorum*. In rejecting this view, I agree with Giacobello (2008: 71-72) and Flower (1996: 42-46). Charles-Laforge (2007: 168) also agrees that the busts are ancestors, but she does not see them as the recipients of ritual action.
[91] Fröhlich 1991: 29-31.

conical-shaped piece of lava.[92] Some of these seem to have had a particular

significance. Bassani explains the connection between the sacred rites of the

household and the monetary wealth of the *familia*.[93] Both ensured continued

prosperity, and both were passed down together from the *paterfamilias* to his heir.

The coins deposited in the shrines could be a symbol of this connection.[94] Some

items, such as incense burners, with applied busts of deities, could be associated

with the worship of those deities, like Vesta, Flora, and Libera, among others,

protectors of health and female fecundity.[95] Another sort of "artifact" is the

evidence of sacrificial offerings made at the shrines. A number of altars – in

domestic, commercial, and communal space – retained ash, remains of offerings, and

other evidence of sacrificial burning when first discovered.[96]

One of the biggest questions concerning the artifacts is how to determine

whether objects found in or near a shrine were used in rituals.[97] Is the object's

proximity to or association with a shrine enough by itself to make this

determination? We cannot know for sure, but an alternative way to think about the

---

[92] For more information, see Boyce's (1937) index, Allison (2004: 144-46), and Bassani (2008: 126, 132-36). Boyce notes at least five shrines that were found with their contents intact (nos. 108 [V.2.h], 123 [V.4.9], 221 [VI.16.7], 406 [IX.3.2], 439 [IX.7.20]). (Cat. nos. 5, 18, 28, 30, 42, 45, 67 were also found with contents *in situ*.) To give an example of an assemblage: Boyce records, for the first (no. 108), a niche with an *aedicula* façade in a small room leading from the *tablinum* to the garden in V.2.h (House of the Cenaculum): a bronze statuette of Mercury; a terracotta statuette of Minerva; a bronze statuette of a kneeling woman; a terracotta votive head of a Bacchante; a small circular altar of terracotta, in the form of a vase on a stand with traces of burning on top; a terracotta lamp, an amulet in the form of a dolphin; and two coins (an *as* of Germanicus and a *sestertius* of Nero). Cat. nos.

[93] Bassani 2008: 136-39.

[94] Coins, among other objects, were also used as talismans to ward away evil: Bassani 2008: 138-39.

[95] D'Ambrosio and Borriello 2001: 47, 61.

[96] E.g. cat. nos. 8, 9, 45, and Boyce 1937, nos. 103 (V.2 ?), 126 (V.4.13), 253 (VII.2.20), 291 (VII.6.28), 463 (IX.9. 11).

[97] Cf. Allison (2004: 143, 146) and Bassani (2008: 134), who agrees that only some items are obviously cultic and/or ceremonial. See related discussion in Chapter 1.

issue is to consider that if the objects are not of the types related to ritual, or are ambiguous, they could suggest that the shrines had multiple functions. For example, it is possible that a niche that housed a lamp used in ritual also functioned as a storage shelf for the dishware found within it. Allison has identified three potential uses for niches – religious, utilitarian, and display,[98] but her discussion implies that a particular niche would only fill one of those roles; indeed, it is a somewhat surprising conclusion, given her argument that rooms had multiple uses, and that she allows the line between large-scale display sculpture and small-scale religious statuettes to be blurry.[99] Multifunctionality is a possibility that should be kept in mind, however.

D. *Inscriptions*

The dedicatory inscriptions in stone and fresco associated with the shrines constitute another understudied body of evidence. This is unfortunate because they have much to reveal about dedicatory practices, the users of the shrines, and the goals of the rituals. For some inscriptions we know that the dedicator was a slave or a freedman.[100] The inscriptions need further, comprehensive study, but I incorporate them into my interpretations of the shrines whenever possible.

---

[98] Boyce (1937: 14) has similarly commented that a shrine could be more ornamental than religious, especially if it accommodated only a single larger-than-statuette-size sculpture like some pseudo-*aediculae*, and Giacobello (2008: 116) attributes to her 'secondary *lararia'* in rooms of representation a less religious character than that of the 'true *lararia'* in kitchens. I would argue that there is no evidence that the ancient Romans conceptualized these shrines differently, that the categories of 'ornamental' and ' religious' had any meaning for them in this context, and that the issue is, to a certain extent, moot. The shrines are presented as shrines, and it is the presentation – the effect constructed for the viewer – that matters most.
[99] Allison 2004: 84, 120-23, 145-46.
[100] Cf. Fröhlich 1991: 32.

E. *Location*

Previous studies of the shrines have uncovered broad patterns in the placement of shrines within a property and in the different types of spaces in which the shrines occur. I believe these patterns reflect trends in patrons' choices of locations for shrines, and in what they were trying to communicate with them.[101] Various shrine forms as well as venerated deities have been associated with particular locations in a property, and it has even been argued that certain shrines and locations were higher in status than others. Some of the patterns are indicative of strategies to increase the visibility of the shrines, while others satisfied practical needs arising from the performance of shrine ritual, or complemented the shrines' symbolic significance.

To begin with domestic shrines: they tend to be in areas of high circulation, that is, the "public" areas of the house, to which visitors of various identities and degrees of intimacy with the *paterfamilias* had access: a*tria*, gardens, and peristyles.[102] (Kitchens were also common, for a certain type of shrine, as I will discuss below.[103]) Shrines do appear in other rooms, and the frequencies of their appearance in different rooms in the two study areas will be discussed in Chapter 4. Here, I would like to focus on a dichotomy that scholars have identified concerning the placement of certain types of shrines in circulation areas and other types of shrines in other rooms of the house. In houses, *aediculae*, for instance, occur only in

---

[101] I will discuss the significance of shrine location for different viewers of the shrines in more detail in Chapter 4.

[102] The popularity of these locations is observed by Orr 1972: 99; Foss 1997: 217; Allison 2004: 48, 143-144; and Giacobello 2008: 6, 66. It is verified in my own analysis of the locations of the shrines in the two study areas, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4.

[103] Orr (1972: 98, 99) and Allison (2004: 48, 143, Table 6.8a) comment on the kitchen as one of the most popular locations for shrines.

the "public" areas of the house; in her study of cult rooms, Bassani notes their

overall association with these areas as well.[104] One explanation is that larger, more

open spaces, such as "public" areas tended to be, were suited to the presence of

elaborate shrines like *aediculae*. This is not to say that simple niches never

appeared in *atria* and *gardens*. They did.[105] The patterns I identify are simply

overall trends.

Another, highly likely, reason for placing of shrines in these areas is that they

were more visible there.[106] In addition, an open or unroofed area would have

provided more light for viewing the shrines and ventilation for the burning of

offerings within the home.[107] Gardens in particular would seem to provide a space

for the easy performance and clean-up of potentially messy rituals. Gardens are

perhaps significant for other reasons as well. Beyond being an easily accessible

location, perhaps value was attached to gardens as open green spaces, or the

connection to the growing of produce was valued. A connection to the natural world

is also evident in the vegetation, garlands, and various animals depicted in shrine

imagery.[108]

---

[104] Association between *aediculae* and the "public" areas of the house: Foss 1997: 213-15, 217; Allison 2004: 143-44; Giacobello 2008: 67; Husser 2008: 163-65. Cult rooms: Bassani 2008: 103.
[105] Bassani (2008: 24-25, 146) is too strong in her emphasis on niches' placement outside of *atria* and gardens – or perhaps her conclusion applies only to those residences with cult rooms. It is possible, though, that niches with *aedicula* façades were only in circulation areas, as Giacobello (2008: 69) suggests. (This observation would have to refer to *stuccoed aedicula* façades only – shrines in kitchens do have painted frames [e.g. VI.6.1/8/12/13; cat. no. 64].)
[106] Cf. Foss 1997: 217; Giacobello 2008: 67; and Bassani 2008: 111. They discuss the idea with varying degrees of explicitness. This point that will be further developed in Chapters 3 and 4.
[107] Cf. Orr 1988: 294-95.
[108] That the Romans thought of the gardens, at least, as having a deeper significance than that of the everyday is perhaps represented by the association of Diana, a goddess of rural, non-urban spaces, with gardens, evidenced in the prevalent dedication to her of the cult rooms constructed there. See Bassani (2008: 132) for the dedication of the cult rooms.

In contrast to the shrines in *atria*, peristyles, and gardens, a number of researchers have pointed out the complementary presence of shrine paintings in kitchens.[109] Indeed, the vast majority of paintings with some variation of the *Lar-genius-Lar* traditional composition are found in kitchens,[110] while the *penates* are more evenly distributed throughout the house.[111] Foss in particular sees a dichotomy between the two concentrations of shrines (in large houses especially): for example he distinguishes the *aedicula* in the atrium, representing religious devotion and ancestral heritage, from the kitchen paintings and niches connected to food and eating and the continuity of the *familia* through its food supply.[112] This is a general pattern, of course, but it has been further linked to a status differentiation among the shrines. Fröhlich has suggested that statuettes of the *Lares* were a higher-status representation and were thus found more often in larger homes and in the 'higher status' areas of the home, like the *atria*, peristyles, and gardens, with painted images of snakes or other deities, while lower status paintings of *Lares* were more often found in smaller homes and the 'lower status' areas of the home, such as kitchens and service areas.[113]

Outside of domestic contexts there are fewer clear patterns. Only niches and paintings and a few altars seem to have been employed as shrines. As mentioned

---

[109] Foss 1997: 213-15, 217; Allison 2004: 144; Giacobello 2008: *opt. cit.* 115-16; Bassani 2008: 149. The finding is verified in my own analysis of the locations of the shrines in the two study areas, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4.

[110] First noted by Fröhlich 1991: 28-29.

[111] Fröhlich 1991: 38, 40-41. Bassani (2008: 163) has found connections between certain deities and exterior and interior cult rooms, such as the above-mentioned association of Diana with gardens.

[112] Foss 1997: 217. See my discussion below of how Foss and other scholars interpret this dichotomy.

[113] Fröhlich 1991: 30-31, 33; see my discussion below of his perspective on the shrines' relationship to slaves in the household. Giacobello (2008: 60) simplifies his thesis too much in her rebuttal.

above, the *Lar-genius-Lar* traditional composition appears in both commercial and industrial properties, but for the most part, *penates* are the represented deities.[114] There is some connection between them and the function of the property; Vesta, as noted above, is found most often in bakeries. Giacobello proposes that the traditional compositions appear in bars where there are also living quarters for the proprietor, and that they serve as the *Lares* of his family.[115] She argues that these scenes appear near the counter because that is where the hearth is located.[116] In fact, in bars, all shrines, not just those paintings with traditional compositions, appear most often in proximity to the counter.[117] (Otherwise, the distribution of bar shrines in gardens and kitchens, for those bars large enough to have such rooms, is reminiscent of domestic space.[118]) Giacobello explains the occurrence of traditional compositions in bakeries by their association with the role of bread-making in the provision of nourishment;[119] no doubt Vesta's identification with the hearth was also an important factor in the choice. The traditional composition does also appear in unrestricted communal shrines, about which more is said below.

F. *Special note: street shrines*

A word must be said about the inclusion of street shrines in this study, since, despite their similarities in appearance, style, form, and basic ritual function to the

---

[114] Cf. Fröhlich 1991: 38-40.
[115] Giacobello 2008: 116-17.
[116] Giacobello's proposal is logical, but the public display of a traditional composition is still very different from its more secluded placement in homes, and significant for this reason; see Chapter 4.
[117] Noted by Ellis (2005: 67) in his study of all the bars in Pompeii, and confirmed by my research in the two study areas.
[118] Ellis 2005: 68.
[119] Giacobello 2008: 118.

corpus of shrines as a whole,[120] they were not always of the same private character

as the shrines in other types of spaces, and they have symbolic associations that the

other shrines do not. There are two types of street shrines. The most prominent are

the compital shrines at the crossroads, which take the form of altars and paintings

(Figure 2.12).[121] *Magistri* oversaw and paid for the regular performance of civic

rites at compital shrines.[122] Because of this, compital worship is not an

"unequivocally public cult" (in the sense of being a state cult), and a number of

scholars agree that it had both public and private aspects.[123] Other street shrines

are those located away from crossroads, along the facades of *insulae*; they take the

form of altars and niches, but primarily the latter (Figure 2.13).[124] These are

generally thought to be more closely connected to individual *familiae* because of

their close spatial connection to particular houses.[125]

1. Crossroads shrines

      The crossroads shrines at Pompeii are taken to be compital shrines on

analogy with those at Rome, for which we have more evidence, and because of

inscriptions naming such figures as the *magistri vici et compiti*, though it is difficult

---

[120] Orr (1978: 1584-85) and Fröhlich (1991: 34) both comment specifically on the connections between domestic shrines and street shrines.
[121] But not a shrine at every crossroads, *contra* Boyce 1939. Pompeii has at least 30 known *compita* (cf. Van Andringa 2000, who includes 38 street shrines in his catalogue, and Anniboletti 2008a: esp. 219, according to whom some of these might not be compital shrines proper [see below]).
[122] Rural compital cult was overseen by private property owners (Schultz 2006: 14); I am concerned only with urban compital ritual.
[123] Gradel 1992: 44; Fishwick 1995: 19-20; Stek 2008: 113-17.
[124] Cat. no. 54. We cannot rule out the possibility that there were once paintings with these vicinal shrines as well.
[125] Van Andringa 2000: 77-78; Anniboletti 2008a.

at Pompeii to link each shrine to a separate *vicus* as was the case at Rome.[126] One

difficulty is that only a small number of *vici* are known at Pompeii.[127] Nevertheless,

even if we cannot match the shrines to an official neighborhood and know whether

they are sited in the center of it or at its boundaries,[128] it is evident that the shrines,

by virtue of their location at crossroads (many of which are along major roads),

remained significantly tied to the life of the community. Whether they were funded

by the state or a private association, their specific locations preclude their being

associated with particular properties.

There is some debate, however, as to whether the Pompeian compital shrines

remained dedicated to the *Lares compitales* or were overtaken by the *Lares* and

genius Augusti as at Rome after the Augustan reforms of 7 BCE. Proponents of the

argument that the compital shrines did not change their dedication say that the

worship of the *Lares Augusti* at Pompeii was sited at new shrines and did not

replace the old compital shrines directly.[129] However, most scholars believe that

---

[126] Inscription: CIL 4.60. See Lott 2004 for thorough discussion of the Roman *compita* and their social significance in the city.

[127] See Lott (2004: 174) and Laurence (2007: 40, 42) for epigraphical data and description of the potential Pompeian *vici*.

[128] There is debate on the location of the *compita* relative to their (Rebublican) *vici*. In Rome, the shrines were located at the center of a *vicus*, or close to it. At Pompeii, if this were the case, some *vici* would be extremely small; thus the Pompeian *compita* may instead have been sited at *vicus* boundaries in order to define them (Laurence 2007: 42). Of course, it is difficult to be certain of the significance of their placement when some may have been removed, or lost due to poor preservation post-excavation.

[129] Van Andringa (2000: 78-79) and Laurence (2007: 44-45), who also claims there are no images of the *genius* of Augustus in the Pompeian compital shrines (citing Mau 1899: 233 and Fishwick 1995: 18-19). Mau, however, does not explain the *genii* who do appear in compital shrines. (Perhaps the compital shrines with *genii* were not yet excavated in his time?) Regarding the latter citation, Laurence is simply wrong: Fishwick does not state that the *genius Augusti* did not appear in Pompeian compital cult. Furthermore, some of Laurence's proposals for the location of these new shrines (VI.1.13, VI.8.14, VIII.4.24) are merely speculative; there is no evidence that the spaces served compital cult rather than some other ritual use, if there was ritual activity at all. For example, Anniboletti (2008b), who excavated VIII.4.24, suggests that it was a ritual area dedicated to Vulcan and closer in conception to the vicinal shrines that she has idenitified (see below).

that the *genius Augusti*, at least, is represented in some of the compital shrines, even if others continued to depict the *Genius loci* or had no *genius* at all.[130]

An essential point for the interpretation of the shrines is that the compital shrines remained in use as such until the destruction of the city. Because of his theory that the *Lares Augusti* were venerated at new shrines, Laurence argues that some of the old compital shrines fell into disuse or may have been removed, and he cites physical evidence.[131] Even if this was the case for some shrines, though, those shrines that were not blocked or painted over or otherwise put out of use seem to have continued to be relevant to the ritual life of the Pompeians. Indeed, at least two compital shrines in *Regio* I have been found with the remains of offerings still in them.[132]

There is evidence of direct influence between the shrine imagery in domestic and compital shrines. Fröhlich mentions the following motifs as being present in different types of shrines: the puppets hung from the altar during the *Compitalia*

[130] Fröhlich 1991: 33, 35; Schäfer 1996: 82; Tybout 1996: 373; cf. Anniboletti (2008a: 215), who presupposes that the *genius* of the emperor was introduced into the compital shrines. Mau (1899: 227) simply states that the street shrines at Rome were to have the worship of the emperor's *genius* added to that of the *Lares* after the Augustan reorganization, and that the colonies followed the capital's lead. Even Gradel (1992: 46), who (weakly) argues that the *genius* in state cults at Pompeii was the *genius* of the city, rather than the emperor, accepts that the imperial *genius* was the one venerated at compital shrines. Fröhlich (1991: 35) reveals that the *genius Augusti* adopted the form of the pre-existing *genius*; Hänlein-Schäfer (1996: 94-95) likewise observes that the compital *genius* resembles that in houses, and that Augustus appropriated the core imagery of the *genius* of the *paterfamilias* for his own *genius*. Lott (2004: 112ff.) presents a nuanced view. He argues, concerning the Roman evidence, that representations of a *genius* in (compital) cult could represent many things, not just the imperial *genius*, and he believes that the *Lares compitales* were still venerated in Rome after the Augustan reform, along with the *Lares Augusti*. Regarding Pompeii, however, Lott (2004: 174) does not believe that the *Lares Augusti* pushed out the earlier dedication. Boyce's view (1940) is nuanced as well: he argues that some shrines are dedicated to the emperor (those along main streets), while others are not (those along back streets).
[131] Laurence 2007: 44-45. Van Andringa (2000: 59 [no. 18] = I.11 ne corner [cat. no. 8]) has disproved Spinazzola's argument in 1953 that some shrines were abandoned before the destruction of the city.
[132] The street altars at the northwest and northeast corners of I.11 (cat. nos. 8, 9).

77

(see Figure 2.7), the presence of a *tabula ansata* (which listed the names of the

magistri in compital cult but is often empty in domestic paintings), and the inclusion

of hunks of meat as offerings.[133] He posits a more general relation between the two

shrine types, but Tybout convincingly identifies the direction of influence as moving

from the compital shrines to the domestic ones in the case of the first two

examples.[134] Both motifs have a more intimate connection to practice of compital

ritual than domestic ritual. Tybout also adduces as evidence of influence the

presence of the cult personnel in some domestic paintings, and the wearing of the

toga praetexta by the domestic *genius*.[135]

2. Side-street shrines

    The second category of street shrine comprises those that do not occur at

crossroads. Unlike at Rome and Ostia, though similar to the situation at Delos, street

shrines in Pompeii are also placed on streets along *insula* facades.[136] These shrines

are set somewhat away from crossroads and seem to have been more closely

associated with specific residential properties. Van Andringa posits that they were

linked to the large houses of prominent families in areas where a family dominated

the neighborhood and was the primary user of the shrine.[137] Interestingly, this

interpretation is similar to Anniboletti's analysis of niche street shrines.[138]

---

[133] Fröhlich (1991: 34). Giacobello (2008: 102) provides a mechanism for such transmission: the painting of both types of paintings by the same painters, who added small flourishes of their own to the overall composition.
[134] Tybout 1996: 360.
[135] Tybout 1996: 360; see below for further discussion of the sacrificial attendants in shrine paintings.
[136] Cf. Stek (2008: 119), who points out that there is only one known *compitum* at Ostia.
[137] Van Andringa 2000: 77-78. The *magister* of the shrine would then be a slave in the leading family's *familia*. Husser (2008: 149-50) similarly connects a niche shrine adorned with an image of

Anniboletti has excavated several niches carved into the facades of *insulae*,

adjacent to the main entrances of domestic properties in *Regiones* VI, VII, and IX, and

she proposes they were linked to the properties.[139] According to her interpretation,

these were shrines dedicated to the *Lares viales*, "intermediary between official

worship and private worship that constituted a point of contact between the citizen

assembly and the nuclear family."[140] Positing that they were used at the same

festivals as the crossroads *compita*, but by residents of a smaller geographical area,

Anniboletti sees the *compita vicinalia* as representing communal identity on a

smaller scale and protecting specific streets and *insulae* in communities where

family groups were significant.[141]

Anniboletti's argument is innovative in that she creates a more formal,

separate category for the street shrines not placed directly at crossroads. Other

discussions of compital shrines adopt much the same perspective on the social

significance of the different placements of street shrines. Stek, for instance, sees the

traditional compital cult as having both an official public aspect and a private family

aspect, in order to "forge a connection between the (members of the) family and a

---

Jupiter specifically to the adjacent shop, as perhaps even a marker of identification for it. Cf.
Hasenohr's (2003) work on Delos.
[138] Anniboletti's (2008a) analysis is not directly dependent on Van Andringa's (2000), though she
does cite Van Andringa in another context.
[139] Anniboletti 2008a.
[140] *Ibid.*, 218-19. Note that at least one of these shrines is also dedicated to Salus-Fortuna: Anniboletti
2008a: 217-18, cf. Mau 1899: 229.
[141] There is some overlap between this understanding of the *compita vicinalia* and Lott's (2004: 4,
14) view of compital shrines in Rome as sitting at the center hub of a *vicus* that he defines in a very
similar manner (as running the length of a section of street and comprising the immediately adjacent
dwellings on either side, with a crossroads as the center [socially if not geographically]), to what
Anniboletti essentially sees as a subdivision of a *vicus* (but she includes the street itself, and excludes
crossroads). Such ideas are still under consideration in scholarship.

larger entity," which he identifies as civic.[142] He leaves open the finer distinctions

between public and private, and the details of exactly what was celebrated where.[143]

II. <u>The Creation and Use of the Shrines: Patrons and Ritual Participants</u>

  This section of the chapter lays the groundwork for my interpretation of the

shrines in Chapter 4. I explore who used shrines, and who was responsible for their

construction and decoration, in order to suggest who contributed to their

customization and communicative use. The questions of who performed the rituals

and who commissioned the shrines are closely linked, since the latter was almost

certainly one of the ritual participants. I define the patron of a shrine not only as its

original commissioner but also as a member of a later generation who had the

authority to alter the shrine.

  The evidence is both archaeological and textual. None of the textual sources

originate from, or discuss, Pompeii specifically, so we must treat them with caution

and evaluate how they complement or contradict the archaeological evidence and

our wider understanding of Roman culture. It should also be kept in mind, however,

that both sources of evidence may present idealized statements about the use of the

shrines. In a domestic context, for example, the actual use of a shrine on a day-to-

day basis may have varied according to the composition of a particular *familia*. A

woman may have been widowed, for instance, or a household may not have had any

slaves, while another may have had many. The potential range of the users of

---

[142] Stek 2008: 113-17.
[143] In light of the impossibility inherent in demarcating "public" from "private," Stek (2008: 117)
finds it more fruitful to emphasize the inclusive, rather than exclusive, nature of the ritual
celebration.

shrines, however, suggests the possibilities for interactions with different types of

people.

A. *Domestic space*

There are two main archaeological sources of evidence for the participants in

shrine rituals. One is the content of the shrines themselves. The other is the

location of the shrines within the home. (The finds could be another source, if they

were better organized and recorded.[144])

The shrine paintings provided a unique window into the identity of the ritual

participants. The traditional compositions depict several figures performing rituals

at an altar, and their identities and positioning might well reflect the actual

performance of ritual (see Figure 2.7). The *genius* who performs the ritual

represents the *paterfamilias*, the head of the household who would have led the

domestic ritual. The *genius* is sometimes accompanied by the *iuno*, the

representative of the *materfamilias*. Husser has studied depictions of the *iuno* in

residences with a view to women's role in domestic ritual.[145] She notes that the *iuno*

is depicted as equal to the *genius* – in the traditional shrine painting in house and

workshop IX.13.1, 3, for example, they stand side-by-side, depicted at the same

scale, and both are sacrificing.[146] Husser points out, though, that when the female

figure seems to be the actual *materfamilias*, and not the *iuno* (as in the traditional

---

[144] See Chapter 1.
[145] Husser (2010) analyzes what a range of representations of women's religious action suggest about their actual practice.
[146] Cat no. 69.

shrine painting in the kitchen of house I.13.2[147]), she is not depicted sacrificing, and

instead plays a supporting role. This type of depiction may suggest that real

matronae only watched, or participated in some way other than performing the

actual sacrifice. The *materfamilias* is thus secondary to the *paterfamilias*, just as she

owed him deference in the hierarchy of the *familia*.

Paintings also offer slight hints as to the roles of other members of the

household. Around the *genius* and *iuno* in many paintings are small-size sacrificial

attendants who may be the children of the household. The same scene in house

I.13.2 depicting the *materfamilias* seems also to represent the slaves of the *familia*

looking on or taking part in some way as well.[148] A key point is that they are all

shown at the ritual together.

There are some caveats to using the paintings as sources for the use of the

shrines in this way, however. All images seeming to represent real life cannot

necessarily be taken as literal depictions of Roman activities. One reason is that the

images most likely represent the point-of-view of the patron who commissioned

them and thus the patron's perspective of household dynamics. As Stewart puts it,

the *idea* of the scene is depicted rather than its appearance.[149] We have to keep in

mind that the images, the shrine paintings in particular, are a symbolic

representation of an ideal, rather than a literal, factual depiction. Indeed, there are

several aspects of the traditional compositions that should make us wary of

---

[147] Cat. no. 20. See Chapter 4 for discussion of why the female figure in this painting represents the *materfamilias* and not her *iuno*.
[148] Dolansky (2006: 29-30) believes that this is the household – *pater*, *mater*, children, and slaves. See Chapter 4 for further discussion.
[149] Stewart (2008: 163), though he means this in a slightly different sense.

overinterpretation. Did the entire *familia* really gather together? The shrine

painting in house I.13.2, which depicts the large group of onlookers that might be

slaves, is displayed in a kitchen too small for a gathering of so many people.[150] Nor

have round altars like the ones in the paintings been found in domestic contexts;

moreover, the attendants particularly do not seem like children. One wonders,

would a child possess the skill required to play the *aulos*? They could be small in

size not because they are children, but because their role is less important in

relation to that of the others, just as the *Lares* are larger because they are more

important than the other figures depicted in the painting.

The presence of "cult personnel" raises even more questions about the

logistics of performing shrine ritual in addition to questions about the identity of the

ritual participants. Did they actually slaughter pigs in the home (or bars and

workshops where scenes of this kind have also been found)? It seems that such an

activity would be precluded by space considerations. Also, cult musicians were

specialists whose skill was necessary for the proper performance of the rituals they

participated in.[151] These musicians were organized into *collegia* and highly

respected (at least at Rome).[152] Would a musician – and the other cult personnel

depicted, the *popa* and the *camillus* – have been hired every time a sacrifice was

performed at a shrine? Alternatively, it seems equally unlikely that every

paterfamilias (or shop owner, etc.) would have had such figures as members of the

familia or as employees.

---

[150] Clarke (2003: 78) mentions this incongruity but does not pursue its implications.
[151] Fless and Moede 2007: 252.
[152] Fless and Moede 2007: 252.

83

One possible explanation for the presence of cult personnel is offered by Tybout, who hypothesizes that they represent a borrowing from compital shrine imagery.[153] Certainly, their role in a public context is easier to explain. If, however, we look at this imagery of musicians in relation to pictorial depictions of cult musicians in Roman art more broadly, we might draw a different conclusion. For example, in their investigation of depictions of ritual in texts, images, and monuments in the city of Rome, Fless and Moede have observed that music was intimately connected to sacrificial ritual, as seen by the close spatial proximity of the *tibicen* to the altar in ritual scenes.[154] Further, even when scenes of sacrifice were abbreviated into visual short-hand, the *tibicen* is one of the visual elements preserved along with the altar and worshipper; the other cult personnel are dispensed with. They also note that sacrifice scenes with the full complement of participants do not actually represent a single moment in time – the libation of the central worshipper would actually precede the animal sacrifice implied by the presence of the victim led in by the *popa*; time is compressed into a combination of non-synchronous ritual elements. If we apply this analysis to the Pompeian shrine paintings, it would suggest that they are not literal representations of the actual ritual. Perhaps, then, the cult personnel simply "set the scene" as a form of conventional visual short-hand for sacrifice. On the other hand, since music is so central to sacrificial ritual, it would perhaps be surprising if there were none

---

[153] Tybout 1996: 360.
[154] Fless and Moede 2007: 257.

involved in shrine ritual at all. Singing also accompanied various Roman rituals,[155]

and required no extra space or cult personnel.

Thus, because the shrine paintings are not literal representations, it is helpful

to consider textual sources for details of participation in rituals conducted at

shrines. Dolansky includes a well-researched discussion of the textual sources in

her larger study of the socializing and structuring features of domestic religion.[156]

Her study involves all religious activities relating to the household and the *familia*,

not just those ritual acts performed at shrines, but I think it unlikely that domestic

shrine ritual would be significantly different since it was set within the context of

the *familia*. An important caveat, which Dolansky acknowledges, is that her

identification of ritual participants reflects upper class urban lifestyles, in which the

paterfamilias owned property and slaves, simply because the textual sources as a

corpus were written by and large by upper class urban authors.[157]   Also, it is good

to keep in mind that a textual representation of a ritual, like a visual representation,

could be an idealized version of reality, and not a description of what happened in

real life. We can compare and contrast the textual evidence with the archaeological

evidence to find the points of agreement.

Textual evidence suggests that the *paterfamilias* was the head of the

household and all its religious affairs.[158] He had the responsibility for seeing that

the rites were performed properly. Much has been written on the prohibition of

---

[155] See Fless and Moede (2007: 253, 260-61) for examples.
[156] Dolansky 2006: 27-38. Schultz's (2006: 125-38) analysis of the Republican evidence on the subject of women's participation in domestic ritual generally agrees with Dolansky's interpretation; I will make reference to specific aspects of her argument below as appropriate.
[157] Dolansky 2006: 3-4.
[158] Cf. Dolansky 2006: 27-33.

women from participating in blood sacrifice, including speculation that this prohibition coincided with a far-reaching exclusion of women from ritual in general, both inside and outside the house. Dolansky accepts the exclusion of women from blood sacrifice,[159] but she argues that there is evidence for women having had some role in domestic ritual.[160] Particular actions performed by women included prayers, caring for the hearth, and putting up garlands (this last, at least, is done by *matronae* and female slaves). Husser suggests that women were the primary vow-makers,[161] and women's activities, as represented in textual sources, seem primarily to have been procuring and preparing the materials for needed for ritual, such as wine and grain.[162] Women's role was seemingly ancillary, but they could be enjoined by the *paterfamilias* to do more if so desired, perhaps especially in his absence. There were also particular festivals that focused on women, in which they would have taken part in ritual.[163]

The preeminence of the *paterfamilias*, though, is perhaps seen in a passage from Propertius in which the *matrona* laments that the household shrine is shut-up while her husband is away, and is only opened once a month when the slave sees to its maintenance:[164] the shrine is considered inactive while the *paterfamilias* is not at home. This passage is consistent with that drawn from the archaeological evidence,

---

[159] Schultz (2006: 131) is more open on this point, however; she is inclined to allow for the possibility of women performing blood sacrifice.
[160] Dolansky 2006: 33-35.
[161] Husser 2010.
[162] Schultz 2006: 127.
[163] Such as the *Matronalia*; Dolansky 2008 elucidates its domestic association. There is no direct evidence of ritual action taking place at the shrines specifically for such a festival, however, though Jashemski (1979: 118-19) does propose that the *familia* in the shrine painting in I.13.2 is gathered for the *Caristia*.
[164] Prop. 4.3.53-54.

in which the *materfamilias* is secondary to the *paterfamilias*. Furthermore, it is

interesting that a slave is the one to take care of the shrine; it is not clear, though,

whether this was due to ritual preference or simply because it was slaves who

looked after the house furnishings and fixtures.

The textual evidence that Dolansky marshals for the participation of slaves in

domestic rituals suggests that they watched and did not take an active role, except

perhaps in such activities as hanging garlands, to which there are explicit

references. Schultz argues that slaves could act as the representatives and stand-ins

when the *pater*- and *materfamilias* were unable to perform their duties, but also that

slaves had specific duties, such as venerating the *Lares* on certain occasions.[165]

There is even less information in the textual sources about children's roles.

According to Dolansky's study, children played ancillary roles in most ceremonies,

such as holding items and offerings, but were their own ritual actors in events like

the *toga virilis* ceremony.[166]

Other than the paintings, the second archaeological source of evidence for

the use of shrines is their location in various areas of the house. Evaluating the

location of a shrine for clues to who would have used it is difficult because beyond

the *tablinum*, the "office" of the *paterfamilias*, and independent service quarters in

residences large enough to support them, it is not possible to associate different

areas of the house with particular ages, statuses, or genders.[167] Smaller residences,

such as those comprised of living quarters attached to shops and bars, provide even

---

[165] Schultz 2006: 125-26.
[166] Dolansky 2006: 35-37.
[167] Cf. Allison 2004: 155-57; Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 117; Wallace-Hadrill 1996. Husser (2008: 167)
agrees.

fewer clues for spatially locating different types of people. Nevertheless, recent

theories on the participation of slaves in domestic ritual base their arguments on

patterns of shrine location in houses. I review these proposals before discussing my

own views because the proposals have important implications not only for the

identity of the participants in rituals conducted at shrines, but also the identity of

the commissioners of the shrines.

Fröhlich's theory has been the most influential.[168] As mentioned above, he

distinguishes the painted *Lares* and *genius* in kitchens from statuettes of the *Lares*

and *genius* displayed in "public" rooms with painted *penates* and in doing so

suggests that there was a separation by status in the practice of the rituals: that the

free and slave members of the *familia* worshipped at separate shrines (in houses

with sufficient resources to accommodate multiple shrines).[169] He also uses the

evidence of inscriptions associated with shrines to highlight the significant

participation of slaves and freedmen in domestic worship of the *genius*, suggesting

that perhaps they were organized in informal *collegia* mirroring those connected to

the compital rituals. The style of the shrine paintings in kitchens also suggests to

him that these paintings were created by slaves.

---

[168] Fröhlich 1991: 29-33.

[169] Bassani (2008: 112) suggests a similar idea regarding the cult rooms: that an (atypical) location outside the "public" areas of the home might indicate that it was intended for the servile *familia*. She also thinks that this idea of differentiated use explains the multiplicity of shrines in one house (pp. 148-49). (See below for my view on multiple shrines.) Foss (1997: 217) suggests that in smaller homes there would have been one, polytheistic shrine. He also proposes further symbolic meaning for the two sets of shrines: the shrines used by the free family, such as those in the *atrium*, were connected to religious piety and ancestral tradition, while those in and near the kitchen, represented the *Lares* protection of the process of cooking and eating that was essential the continuity of the *familia*. He even sees an essential parallel between the role of the slaves and the role of the *Lares* in supporting the *familia*.

The idea of slaves creating the paintings is a natural lead-in to the question of who commissioned them. As Tybout points out in his review of Fröhlich's work, Fröhlich does not directly address this issue, but several ideas can be drawn from his assumptions.[170] (It should be noted that Fröhlich is in this case referred only to the traditional compositions with the *Lares* and *genius*.) It is clear that Fröhlich believes that the consumers of the paintings (slaves and freedmen according to his interpretation) also commissioned them. Tybout logically suggests that while it is conceivable that the servant members of the *familia* may have at times renewed a faded shrine painting or depicted their own activities in one, it is not likely that they would have at all times taken control of this one aspect of domestic furnishing when otherwise the *paterfamilias* was responsible for overseeing the decoration of his house. Indeed, the shrine paintings are often contemporary with the larger decorative program (which that Fröhlich himself acknowledges).[171] Tybout also points out that the *paterfamilias* was the symbolic, ritual head of the household, and he adduces sociological perspectives on the effects of slavery to contextualize the servants' role in domestic ritual, and to explain how domestic ritual reinforced the master-slave relationship.[172]

Fröhlich's theory of a status distinction in the performance of the rituals has recently been challenged by a new interpretation by Giacobello. Like Fröhlich, Giacobello acknowledges the importance of the traditional compositions in kitchens;

---

[170] Tybout 1996: 367-68.
[171] E.g. Fröhlich 1991, L28. Cf. Tybout 1996: 367. Also see above for my discussion of how shrines are often integrated in the decorative program of the room in which they are located.
[172] Cf. Gradel's (1992: 47) definition of the *genius* in house cult as a symbol of the *familia* ritually expressing its subordination to the authority of the *paterfamilias.*

however, she sees them as the privileged form of expression for the domestic

rituals.[173] In her view, there was no separation by status of ritual practice in the

household. The entire *familia* expressed its ritual devotion through the kitchen

shrines (which she calls 'true *lararia*') to the *Lares* as guarantors of the continuity of

the *familia*, while the other shrines in the home were dedicated to tutelary deities

with a more general protective function. *Lares* represented outside the kitchen fell

into this category of 'secondary *lararia*,' along with the *penates*;[174] they were

drained of their particular association with the continuity of the *familia* through the

food supply.[175] Slave members of the household were involved in the daily

maintenance of the shrines and the rituals on behalf of the entire *familia*, but the

paterfamilias, as head of the household, had a supervisory role and led celebrations

at specific times. Giacobello accepts that the significance of the servants' role in

domestic related related to their duties in cooking for the *familia*, but she argues

that Foss goes too far in assimilating them to the *Lares*.[176] On the question of who

commissioned the shrines, Giacobello argues that it was the *paterfamilias* who bore

this responsibility.

---

[173] Giacobello 2008: 35-36, 65-66.
[174] Dwyer (1982: 118) also distinguishes between primary and secondary shrines. I do not agree with Giacobello's (2008: 116) thesis about the difference between kitchen shrines and what she terms 'secondary' *lararia*, those outside of the kitchen that are not 'true' expressions of domestic ritual. For one, she does not provide any evidence that the Pompeians themselves thought of their shrines – and specifically the *Lares* – in different ways based on where they were located. She has not proven – and I think that perhaps it cannot be proven conclusively – that the secondary *lararia* were largely decorative, as she claims. Even if they were more integrated in the decorative program of the home, that does not preclude a solidly religious use for these shrines. Peterson (2009) is similarly skeptical of Giacobello's diminishing of the shrines outside kitchens.
[175] Exceptions are those shrines with *Lares* in *atria* associated directly with a hearth (Giacobello 2008: 64-65).
[176] Giacobello 2008: 112 n. 108.

I think that both viewpoints offer valuable observations regarding the prevalence of *Lares* and *genius* paintings in kitchens, and I agree, based on the dedicatory inscriptions, that the slave members of the household played a significant role in the rituals. As to the separation of worship at different shrines by different members of the household, however, I think that while it is possible, perhaps even plausible, in a day-to-day routine based on practicality,[177] it should not be overemphasized as a formal, ideological characteristic of participation in shrine ritual. After all, there are depictions of the entire *familia* worshipping together, as mentioned above. There is not enough evidence to say that certain members were intended to use only certain shrines. Rather than interpret the presence of multiple shrines in one property as evidence of institutionalized differentiation in use, as others have, I see it as reflecting intentionally directed communication toward different groups of viewers.[178] In my view, shrines are located in certain spaces not to be used by certain groups but to communicate to certain groups or communicate certain messages to viewers. Such communication was instigated by the patron of the shrine, and this is the subject of Chapter 4.

I do also believe that the *paterfamilias* was the one to commission domestic shrines, whether or not he might at times have delegated the responsibility to his

---

[177] Cf. Husser 2008: 168.

[178] Even if some of the shrines in a multi-shrine household were older shrines constructed by previous generations and simply left *in situ*, rather than removed when a new shrine was installed, the very fact that they were not themselves transformed into new shrines or blocked up suggests that the old shrines served a different purpose than the new ones and were still useful to the patron. They were not defunct. The patron did not just need a new shrine, he needed a new shrine *in addition* to the old ones. The old shrines still communicated a valuable message, albeit one that could have been different than what they communicated when first constructed. Perhaps the old shrines indicated appreciation for family traditions, while the new shrine spoke to the current patron's interests and identity.

slaves.[179] He was, after all, the head of the household and its religious affairs. The

slaves participated in the rituals as members of the *familia* of the *paterfamilias*.[180]

They venerated his *genius* in the shrine paintings, and the vows recorded in

dedicatory inscriptions are made to the *Lares* and/or the *genius* of the *paterfamilias*,

sometimes on behalf of the safety of a third party, possibly the *paterfamilias*.[181] The

paterfamilias, or his *genius*, is the one shown conducting the ritual in the shrine

paintings, with other figures playing a supporting role. Also, as Tybout points out, it

is more likely that the *paterfamilias* would have arranged for the decoration of his

property at one time, especially given the integration of some shrines into the

household decoration. I would like to stress again, however, that this view of the

paterfamilias as the patron of domestic shrines may very well represent an ideal

conception of the rituals and the use of the shrines. As mentioned above, the actual

use of the shrines could have varied by household depending on who its members

---

[179] Husser (2010) also agrees in that she believes the images in shrine paintings reflect the point-of-view of the *paterfamilias*. Her community model of religion perceives the *paterfamilias* as the commissioner of the shrine *as the head of a community* (2008: 8-20 [esp. 9, 17], 167) – did the negotiations and conceptions of that community influence his choices? The interplay envisioned here is echoed somewhat by the negotiation posited by Foss (1997: 218) in (his view of) masters and slaves deciding who would use the single shrine in smaller households.

[180] There is some speculation that visiting clients would use the *atrium* shrines of their patron, and I imagine the basis for such use to be similar to that for slaves: if clients did use their patrons' shrines, it was likely to offer a prayer or small offering to the patron's *genius* or tutelary deities for the patron's continued health and well-being – *not* for themselves. Bassani (2008: 148) bases her suggestion on the location of the shrine in an area accessible to clients. In Acholla, there may have been in the House of Asinius Rufus a *cippus* dedicated by the *cultores domus*, clients who participated in their patron's domestic cult (Thébert 1987: 364).

[181] See Fröhlich (1991: 32) for several examples from Pompeii. It seems, from the inscriptions, that *liberti* (freedmen) also dedicated to the *genius* of their former master. Presumably this means that they were living in a property he owned and not in an independently-owned household.

were. Perhaps the shrine paintings that depict the *iuno* or *materfamilias* are those in which a woman became the *de facto* head of the household.[182]

A final point regards the painters' contribution. There is some evidence that the painter had a degree of influence on the content of shrine paintings, if perhaps the *paterfamilias* left the selection of some details up to him.[183] Giacobello's interpretive system for domestic rituals also proposes that certain elements of the imagery in the shrine paintings were "fixed" at a particular point in time as a sort of sacral shorthand.[184] On the one hand, she proposes that the choice of how much to represent was up to the *paterfamilias* (if the constraints of space were not pressing). On the other hand, the painters, if given only a general instruction as to what to paint, could pick and choose among different motifs to include in the paintings. The presence in domestic shrine paintings of representations of puppets hung at compital shrines during the *Compitalia* is thus usually explained as the result of painters who also painted compital shrine paintings simply transferring this element into another context.

---

[182] While such changes in household structure happened over time and it is likely that shrines were not altered to reflect them in every instance, there is no reason to think that individual shrines were not updated in response to such important shifts in power among *familia* members.

[183] Clarke (2003: 7) acknowledges the potential for a larger role for the painter in the creation of the content, but assumes in his case studies that the patron consciously chose the imagery. Stewart (2008: 32-38) considers the issue in more detail, and is skeptical of the tendency to attribute complete control to the patron, who he asserts might be more accurately termed the "buyer" in many situations. However, I see the shrines as being somewhat of a special case. However much control painters might have had in the creation of "art" in general, I do not think they would have chosen what deity to depict in a shrine, or what type of scene – whether traditional or not – to represent. The shrine was intimately connected to the *paterfamilias* and *familia* and the deity it was dedicated to would be one the patron thought had an interest in his life and watched over him.

I am not considering style in this discussion, but it is another aspect of the shrines that painter's could have contributed to. Patrons may have specified a particular style for a painting or hired a painter known for working in a particular style, especially if some styles were considered appropriate for shrines, but painters could have executed a painting in a style of their choice if given the freedom to do so by the patron.

[184] Giacobello 2008: 94, 100-2, 106-10.

Surely, however, we can take the *paterfamilias*' apparent acceptance of a shrine painting (as evidenced by its presence in his home) as approval of its imagery, and what it communicated. Even if a patron in some cases did not design the painted image, he accepted it as his own, as a reflection of him, by his acceptance of its presence in his residence. I suggest an analogy with the relationship between a 21st century homeowner and an interior decorator hired to redo a specific room. The decorator designs the room, perhaps working with instructions from the home-owner, or perhaps not. The homeowner, though, in accepting the final design of the room crafted by the decorator, accepts the design as something that he desires as a symbol of his taste, resources, interests, etc. He knows that the room communicates to visitors how he wants to be seen by them, and decides that the room as designed by the decorator is something that he wants visitors to use in their judgment of him. The homeowner hopes that the newly-designed, elegant room will positively shape visitors' perception of him. This is how I see envision the relationship between the shrine painter and the shrine patron in ancient Pompeii when it is the painter who chooses all or part of the imagery of the shrine. Furthermore, even when the patron did not design the shrine painting himself (and there is no reason to think that this was normally the case), he still crafted the overall experience of the shrine. All aspects of the shrine, its location, form, artifacts, and inscriptions – not just its imagery – contributed to the desired message.

B. *Rented domestic space*

There is also the question of how the creation of shrines was impacted by their use by renters. We know that some domestic habitations were rented out,

ranging from houses, rooms in houses, shops with living quarters, to second-floor

apartments.[185] Epigraphic evidence attests to the presence of rentable space in the

insula Arriana Polliana (VI.6) and the *praedia* of Iulia Felix (II.4), for instance.[186]

Whether a shrine was a feature that came with a property, or whether a tenant had

the right to modify a pre-existing shrine are questions without definitive answers.

There would have been multiple, potentially complex, relationships between

occupants and property owners in play,[187] since there were many circumstances in

which all or part of a property could have been let out for habitation. Wallace-

Hadrill believes that the popular conception of the living situation at Pompeii as one

dominated by owner-occupiers is out-of date, and that the city was in a state of

transition to a model like the one in operation at Ostia, of landlords and tenants, and

multi-family residential dwellings.[188] He argues, however, that a benefit of this

transition is that insights from Roman legal texts on tenancy can be applied to

Pompeii.[189] One informative piece of information from this source is a judgment on

what a usufructary is and is not allowed to change about a property. A usufructary

was allowed to make some changes, such as adding windows, and redecorating with

wall paintings and marble revetment, but not to change the layout of the

property.[190] This would seem to suggest that modifying or furnishing a shrine

would be among the allowed activities. Certainly, altering the painted imagery of a

shrine or outfitting it with different objects seems permissible, and if a usufructary

---

[185] Pirson 1997; 1999.
[186] See Appendix 1 for discussion of how to identify rented domestic space.
[187] Since they are not necessarily co-incident: Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 105.
[188] Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 103, 110.
[189] Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 103.
[190] Specifically *Digest* 7.8, 33.2.32-39, but also 7.1.13.7-8 and 7.1.7.2-3.

could add new windows, why not also add a niche or block one up as desired? Such

an act would not alter the layout of the property.

Does this level of freedom for a usufructary imply that a tenant had less

freedom, however? Even if a renter could not make structural modifications or

change the imagery of a painting, he could likely add some personal touches, like

statuettes or garlands, or other artifacts. In regard to painting, a pre-existing

depiction of a *genius* perhaps could be co-opted as the representation of one's own

genius. Furthermore, the rental of an entire house was rare.[191] More common were

the rented living quarters associated with shops and bars. (Houses had rentable

units associated with them, but they were also located in public buildings and leased

by the city.[192]) This is significant because, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the data for

Pompeii are biased in favor of houses rather than simpler living spaces. The study

of how any particular house was occupied and how we can distinguish rented and

multi-family properties is a lengthy project in itself.[193] I can only sketch the

possibilities and indicate the most likely candidates for control of a shrine, while

keeping in mind the range of potential candidates when evaluating any particular

shrine.

C. *Commercial space*

In his 1972 study of newly excavated shrines, Orr wondered whether shrines

in shops and inns were dedicated to the owner's *Lares* or whether the customers

---

[191] Pirson 1999: 85.
[192] Pirson 1999: 175.
[193] See Appendix 1 for possible criteria.

could use them for their own acts of worship.[194] He favored the latter, and

suggested that merchants wished to honor the deities of their customers as well as

their own.[195] This question has not been systematically addressed, however, and

thus is the subject of speculation in scholarly literature.

An approach that I deem fruitful is to study features that indicate where

customers were and were not allowed to be inside the property, and therefore

which shrines they had access to for their potential use. Ellis' recent analysis of bars

is very useful for gathering this information. One of the bar features that he studied

was counters. Customers could approach counters; [196] if a counter protruded into a

room, presumably the customer could stand adjacent to it. However, they were

likely not allowed behind counters.[197] We can conclude that any shrine placed in

that space would be off-limits to customers and reserved for the use by the

proprietor and/or his employees only. Customers would be able to participate in

the ritual as members of the broader, external audience only.

Other features that suggest entry into a property are toilets and internal

dining rooms. As Ellis relates, once bars reach a certain size, toilets are a regular

feature.[198] The exact nature of customer activities within a property is not always

[194] Orr 1972: 99. It should be noted that Giacobello (2008: 116-17) associates what she deems 'true
lararia' (those with the depiction of the traditional composition) with living quarters in commercial
properties, and believes they were for the use of the proprietor and his family only.
[195] Orr 1978: 1579.
[196] Cf. Ellis 2005: 44-45.
[197] Ellis 2005: 44. Note – the placement and arrangement of the counter does discourage access to
the space behind it for those who are approaching and entering the property from the street (as
opposed to those, like employees, already inside the property). E.g. the positioning of the counter in
I.14.15, which shows both discouragement of access behind the counter and accommodation of
customers inside the bar.
[198] Ellis 2005: 101.

clear, but he believes that they would have used the toilet.[199] Finally, if a bar had a

dining room, then obviously customers used it.[200] The shrines located in dining

spaces might well have been used by customers.[201] If the shrine were for the

proprietor and/or employees only, then why place it in an area used primarily by

customers? If a proprietor wanted to communicate something specific to the

customers, he could have placed a shrine behind the counter.

A shop, which is distinguishable from bars on the basis of the original

presence of a wooden counter rather than a masonry one as in a bar,[202] probably

functioned in the same way as a bar, except for the fact that there was no internal

dining space to accommodate customers. Shop customers stayed outside the

property and were not likely to use shop shrines. An exception might be the

commercial sales area of a bakery or 'pastry shop.' Nineteen out of thirty-one

bakeries have shops, and two (VII.4.29, VII.12.13) have what Mayeske has

interpreted as serving areas inside the bakery where customers could eat their

food.[203] The evidence on this point, however, is far from clear, consisting only of the

general resemblance of the rooms to *triclinia*. Furthermore, if the bakery was once

attached to a house, the so-called serving room might be a holdover from the

residential aspect of the property. More promising as evidence for customer access

---

[199] Note that Pirson (1999: 174) associates toilets with the presence of domestic living quarters
inside bars and shops, a possibility that Ellis does not address.
[200] Who would enter a property as opposed to staying outside to make a purchase? Those with time
to linger? Possible status distinctions in who would enter are perhaps suggested by the secluded
location of the counter in I.11.16. It is not visible from the street, and Ellis (2005:48) notes that only
customers who already knew of the bar's existence would be likely to find it. The decision not to
advertise to all and sundry suggests a degree of selection in clientele.
[201] Fröhlich (1991: 37) does think that these shrines were for the use of guests.
[202] Ellis 2005: 53, 113.
[203] Mayeske 1972: 168, 183.

are the two bakeries with benches for customers to sit on while they waiting in the sales area, as in I.12.1-2 and VI.3.3/27-28.[204]

Inns were another commercial setting for shrines. Clearly, customers had access to the inner spaces of the property when they spent the night, and inns usually had facilities for dining. Several scholars, including Orr and Husser, tentatively state that guests could have used the shrines in an inn.[205] Fröhlich agrees: he considers the inn a home-away-from-home, and he presents evidence that people traveled with their ritual statuettes.[206] Just because a customer had access to a shrine, however, does not mean that he or she would have used it. The use of the garden in inn VII.11.11/14 both as a produce garden and for guests shows that such spaces served more than one purpose.[207]

The question of who commissioned commercial shrines, however, is more difficult to investigate. In an independently-owned establishment, the business owner would most likely have commissioned and specified the physical and visual components of the shrine, even if he hired a manager to take care of the day-to-day operations of the business.[208] Some properties, however, were potentially owned by a third party and rented to the owner of a business. The city, for instance, owned

---

[204] The bench in the former is directly below a shrine painting (cat. no. 10). Mayeske (1972: 95, 180) discusses the latter.
[205] Orr 1972: 99, but also 154; Husser 2008: 161-62.
[206] Fröhlich 1991: 36.
[207] Cf. Jashemski 1964: 344-46.
[208] The situation is quite possibly parallel to that of slaves worshipping at the shrine of the *paterfamilias* in domestic context, especially if the employees of the shop or bar, for example, were slaves or freedmen who were the clients of the business owner: if the commercial shrines with a *genius* are not associated with the living quarters, then the *genius* is likely that of business owner, probably, and his employees are like his *familia*.

shop space that it rented out,[209] and the owner of a house with attached shops could

decide to rent them rather than house his own enterprise. In these cases, would the

property owner have determined the specifications of the shrine, or the owner of

the business that operated on the property? The legal sources and the tenancy

situation discussed above suggest that it was a combination of both – the

architectural form of a shrine was part of the property, but the tenant could furnish

the shrine with different statuettes (and maybe even painted images). As discussed

above, a possible indication that the tenant did have some control over the shrine is

the connection between the deity venerated and the nature of the business in which

the shrine was located. Unless the property owner himself supervised the design of

the shrine so that it was tailored to his tenant business, the tenant probably had

some input.

D. *Industrial space*

The industrial spaces that are easiest to understand are bakeries because we

have the clearest evidence for their function in the mills and ovens that survive.

Because a number of bakeries had counters at which baked bread was sold, we can

judge the degree to which customers entered the property in the same way as in

shops and bars. But customers likely would not have entered very far into a bakery,

if at all. The counter would have kept them near the entrance. Indeed, a painting at

VII.3.30 depicting a vendor selling bread shows customers approaching the counter

in order to make their purchase.[210] Thus, the customers most likely remained in the

---

[209] See Mayeske 1972: 70; Pirson 1999: 174.
[210] Discussed by Mayeske (1972: 47) and Ellis (2005: 113-14).

sales area of the bakery, and did not enter into the production area. If the bakery

did have a serving area or benches for customers to sit on, as discussed above,

customers might have proceeded further into the bakery, but still not as far inside as

the production area itself. It is therefore not likely that customers used industrial

shrines, which are set in close proximity to production areas.

There is no reason to suppose that other industrial spaces functioned

differently. The commissioner of an industrial shrine was probably in a similar

position as those concerned with commercial spaces, whether they were

independently-owned or rented. One point raised by Mayeske, who discusses

evidence for bakers as members of a trade society,[211] and Vesta as the patron deity

of the corporation.[212] While this circumstance could have limited the free choice of

the business owner if the corporation dictated uniformity in the shrines of its

member, there are still quite a number of variations among the paintings, and we

can consider the paintings in bakeries as communicating about the bakers *as a trade

society*.

E. *Communal space*

Rites at street shrines primarily serviced neighborhoods and were more

formal affairs, though individuals passing by a street shrine on their way through

town might have made small offerings.[213] The vicinal shrines that are more closely

connected to individual properties and *familiae* were perhaps less likely to be the

object of spontaneous ritual action on the part of people other than the residents of

---

[211] Mayeske 1972: 165. There is not a lot of direct evidence, however, at least not that she mentions.
[212] Mayeske 1972: 137, 141.
[213] Taken for granted by Mau (1899: 228).

the property, their neighbors, and perhaps their visitors, because these groups'

close connection with the shrine may have discouraged others. Traditionally,

women were excluded from participation in compital ritual, which was conducted

by male slaves and by freedmen, the *magistri* who held official positions in the civic

community (see above).

Thus, a crossroads compital shrine would have been commissioned by the

public administration. There may have been input from the neighborhood in which

it was located, however, because there appears to have been a connection between

different neighborhoods and the deities venerated in them, perhaps the

neighborhood's patron deity. A similar possibility is discussed by Husser in the

context of evidence from different neighborhoods in Rome – and their shrines; both

the neighborhoods and the shrines may have been connected to different ethnic

groups.[214] There is no evidence of ethnic grouping by neighborhood at Pompeii,

however, but one vicinal shrine does seem to have been dedicated to a particular

deity.[215] Perhaps these shrines were more customized to their neighborhood

locations, or the deities venerated by the residents of the adjacent domestic

property. The compital shrines only preserve evidence of a dedication to the *Lares*

compitales and *genius* of some kind, whether the *Augusti* or the *loci*. A point to keep

in mind is that at Rome, Augustus gave the crossroads compital shrines images

when he reorganized their systemization, thus further raising the issue of outside

control of these shrines (though there is no evidence of the images (statuettes most

likely) in Pompeian compital shrines having been given by the emperor).

---

[214] Husser 2008: 130-31, 133-34.
[215] Salus-Fortuna: see above n. 140.

The shrines in restricted communal space are by definition those located in spaces used by organizations such as guilds, which are exclusive in that they have a restricted membership. A member of the guild would have had clear access to the shrine, however. It seems probable that the administrators of the guild controlled the actual commissioning of such a shrine.

III. Summary and Conclusions

The small-scale shrines of Pompeii are a varied group of sacred sites dedicated to ritual action that nonetheless fulfill two requirements: the provision for sacrifice and a visual focus on some image, whether a painting or an artifact such as a statuette. The variability of the shrines is an essential element of their nature, for it is what allows their use in communication from the patron of the shrine to the viewer: the communication is composed of the content of the shrine in the form of its location, shape and appearance, and imagery, including inscriptions and artifacts. I have discussed particular patterns in the form, imagery, and location of the shrines in this chapter; in Chapter 4, I will address individual shrines and how their content is constructed in a communicative way. The particular expression of a shrine was controlled by the patron of the shrine, and the identity of this person varied according to the type of space in which the shrine was located. The users of the shrine constitute the most intimate audience for the shrine, and the meaning of the shrine for them, along with its significance for other types of audiences, is also discussed in Chapter 4. Preceding that discussion, Chapter 3 explores how the shrines were placed in order to increase their visibility, thus indicating that they were intended to be seen by different groups of people.

But to return to that shrine [of Heius], there was in this [shrine] a marble statue of Cupid that I speak of; and on the other side a Hercules made from bronze in an outstanding manner. This is said to be the work of Myron, as I believe, and certainly it is. And in front of these gods were small altars, which should be able to indicate to anyone at all the cultic nature of the shrine. There were, in addition, two other bronze statues, not the biggest, but possessing a special attractiveness, in maidenly posture and attire, who were supporting with their raised hands certain sacred things placed on their heads in the manner of Athenian maidens. The maidens themselves were called the *Canephoroe*; but they say the sculptor of them was – who? Who, pray tell? You remind me correctly – they say he was Polyclitus. When visiting Messana, anyone of our countrymen was accustomed to gaze at these statues; every day these statues were open for viewing by everyone; the house was not decorated with this embellishment any more for the owner than for the citizenry. (Cicero, *In Verrem* II.4.5[1])

So Cicero describes the elaborate *sacrarium* in the house of Gaius Heius at

Messana: this "exceedingly ancient" *sacrarium* that was "the inheritance from his

ancestors" / *sacrarium…a maioribus traditum perantiquum* (II.4.4),[2] in which statues

used for an apparently ritual purpose were openly and readily accessible to any who

might wish to see them.[3] Pompeii is not equivalent to Messana, but the visibility of

---

[1] *Verum ut ad illud sacrarium redeam, signum erat hoc quod dico Cupidinis e marmore; ex altera parte Hercules egregie factus ex aere. Is dicebatur esse Myronis, ut opinor, et certe. Item ante hos deos erant arulae, quae cuivis religionem sacrarii significare possent. Erant aenea duo praeterea signa, non maxima, verum eximia venustate, virginali habitu atque vestitu, quae manibus sublatis sacra quaedam more Atheniensium virginum reposita in capitibus sustinebant; Canephoroe ipsae vocabantur; sed earum artificem – quem? quemnam? recte admones, Polyclitum esse dicebant. Messanam ut quisque notrum venerat, haec visere solebat; omnibus haec ad visendum patebant cotidie; domus erat non domino magis ornamento quam civitati.* The Latin text is the 1935 Loeb edition. The translation is by J.M. Harrington. My thanks to Elaine Gazda for bringing this passage to my attention.

[2] Cicero stresses that the *sacarium* was inside Heius' house: *Erat apud Heium sacrarium…in aedibus a maioribus traditum perantiquum…* A *sacrarium* in this situation is best seen as a cult room in the shrine typology discussed in Chapter 2.

[3] Note that these statues are examples of material that was both "religion" and "decorative," as proposed in Chapter 1. Frazel (2009) reasonably argues that Cicero was exaggerating the sacred

the Pompeian domestic shrines to people other than those to whom they belonged, for purposes that depended on this visibility, has been noted.[4] I term this *intentional visibility*: the deliberate placement of a shrine so that it could be approached or viewed at a distance by people other than the ritual participants who used the shrine, for the purpose of facilitating its use as a communicative tool. (Chapter 4 explicates this use, and the messages that shrines communicated.) In the first half of this chapter, I discuss how the concept of intentional visibility was enacted, using shrines in all types of spaces, to appeal to viewers both inside and outside a property.

In the second half of this chapter, I analyze the intentional visibility of the shrines in the two study areas by examining the shrines' location and orientation[5] within a property; the shrines' accessibility to both physical and visual encounters with viewers;[6] and the relationship of the shrines to the amount of traffic and traffic

---

character of Heius' '*sacrarium*' for the purposes of his own attack against Verres, but such exaggeration would not negate the expectation of ritual use for the two statues that were displayed with altars in front of them, nor that of the statue of Bona Dea, which also stood in the chapel, whose description as made of very old wood (*pervetus ligneum*, II.4.7*)* recalls crude *xoana*, implying that it was of particular ritual importance. The ritual use would have to be at the very least plausible in order for Cicero's argument to be effective. Zimmer (1989: 502f.) claims that neither Hercules nor Cupid was worshipped in domestic cult at this early date, but it is quite possible that the evidence of such worship simply is not preserved, and, furthermore, the relief of a club on a private altar from the second-century BCE at Pompeii (against the north wall of the garden in II.8.2-3 [cat. no. 38]) is indicative of veneration of Hercules in this early period (other shrines dedicated to Hercules are either from a later period or undated; cf. Fröhlich 1991, L39, L48, L52, L85, L111, L120). Furthermore, Zimmer is too quick to adopt for all *arulae* Riciotti's (1978: 13f.) suggestion that some were not actually used in ritual and had a more symbolic function. At Pompeii, over a quarter of the small portable altars identified bear traces of burning (D'Ambrosio and Borriello 2001: 17).

[4] For example, as will be discussed and elaborated upon in Chapter 4, Foss (1997: 217) and Hales (2003: 113-16) describe shrines placed in areas of the home most open to guests, and that were intended to visibly represent the piety and *Romanitas* of the household.

[5] By 'orientation,' I refer to the direction in which a worshipper using the shrine, or a person viewing the shrine, was facing; see Appendix 1 for further discussion of terminology.

[6] In a physical encounter, a person can approach the shrine, examine it, walk by or around it, and, if it is a communal shrine, make an offering. In a visual encounter, when the viewer is at a distance from

circulation patterns in each area. The convergence of these different characteristics

of the shrines – location, orientation, and accessibility – supports the hypothesis

that the shrines were meant to interact with people living in, working in, and

visiting a particular community. I argue that the visibility of the shrines was

manipulated deliberately in order to facilitate their communication with a range of

difference audiences.

I. <u>Defining Intentional Visibility</u>

In this first section, I explore the various strategies of making shrines visible

in different contexts. The patrons of shrines manipulated their shrines' locations in

the architectural space of a property so as to increase their visibility, either to a

viewer outside the property, or to one who had already entered. The choice of

location and orientation for shrines was influenced by the type of space in which the

shrine was located and the audience that the patron wanted to communicate with.

In this chapter, I focus on strategies directed at viewers outside of a property, who

were looking in at a shrine, because these strategies are the most dramatic, and they

have not been dealt with by scholars who have paid some attention to strategies of

increasing visibility inside a property. I also discuss physical characteristics of the

shrines that increased their visibility and indicate that patrons intended them to be

noticed by viewers. Evidence for fixtures and furnishings in properties also reveals

the keen interest that patrons had in manipulating space and controlling the

visibility of their shrines.

---

the shrine, or prevented from approaching it because of its location inside a property, the shrine can
only be seen.

A. *Strategies of intentional visibility for external viewers, as expressed in shrine orientation and location*

One strategy for increasing the visibility of shrines is closely connected to a broader tactic used for attracting and focusing viewers' attention on a particular viewpoint. The penchant for axial outside-in views into Pompeian houses has been well documented.[7] Typically, this view proceeds through the *fauces* and *atrium* to the peristyle or garden in the rear of the property (Figure 3.1). A number of shrine owners took advantage of this axis, locating their shrines on a wall intercepting the view, so that they were centered in the gaze of the viewer. An example is the shrine on the rear wall of the garden in house VI.3.7/25-26 (Figure 3.2).[8] The altar, which was plastered and surrounded by a painting, is exactly centered in the axial view through the *fauces* so that it is framed by the architectural vista through the *tablinum* into the garden, where it is symmetrically located. Even houses with plans that do not conform to the idealized *atrium* house closely could accommodate shrines in a similar viewshed. The niche in house VI.2.24, for instance, which resembles a compressed *atrium* house (without an *atrium* proper), is centered cleanly in the space (probably a garden) opposite the main entrance (Figure 3.3).[9]

---

[7] For the classic statement of this phenomenon, see Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 44-45. He credits H. Drerup, "Bildraum und Realraum in der römischen Architektur,"*Römische Mitteilungen* 66 (1959): 147-74 and L. Bek, *Towards Paradise on Earth* (Rome, Analecta Romana IX, 1980) for its social basis and the initial observation of the artifice of "optical symmetry," respectively.

[8] Cat. no. 56. Examples are usually drawn from the two study areas, as in this example from Area 1, but they may also be drawn from elsewhere the city, because the study areas are not necessarily representative of the popularity of any one particular strategy of intentional visibility.

[9] Cat. no. 53. The popularity of a long axial viewpoint for attracting attention and conveying importance is seen also in the orientation of house facades. Of the properties in a position to take advantage of this arrangement, two-thirds have doorways located on or near the axis of the approaching street (Hartnett 2003: 105).

However, just as artifice underlies some of the axial views that only appear to be symmetrical to the outside viewer, so too does artifice play a role in the positioning of shrines in this view. The patrons of shrines sacrificed true symmetrical framing of a shrine, and accepted misalignment of the shrine's individual components in exchange for a false impression of symmetry in the view of the shrine from the main entrance. The shrine in the garden in the rear of house VII.6.3 is one example of this manipulation of architectural topography (Figure 3.4).[10] Set near the back wall in the southeast corner of the garden bordered by porticoes on the north and east is a podium once topped with columns supporting a pedimental roof. A statue of Diana once stood on top of the podium, and an altar was placed in front of it, offset slightly to the east. Both the podium and altar are visible in the axial view from the main entrance of the house and appear symmetrically framed by the surrounding architectural structure of the house. However, the shrine is not in fact centered in the garden, but lies closer to the southeast corner in order to be visible from the street. Furthermore, it is the altar, offset as it is from the podium, that is truly centered in the view. The axial framing was a desirable view for shrines, and those producers that use artifice to exploit that view only reinforce the impression that the patrons wanted the shrines to draw attention to themselves.[11]

---

[10] Cat. no. 67. Other shrines that represent the operation of the same strategy are the *aedicula* and pseudo-*aedicula* shrines in the gardens of VI.9.6-7/8-9 (House of the Dioscuroi) and VI.8.5/3 (House of the Tragic Poet), respectively. For the latter, cf. Hales 2003: 113-17.

[11] House owners that sought to align the main entrances of their residences with an approaching street axis also accepted awkward compromises in interior arrangements (Hartnett 2003: 106-7).

Other shrines that reinforce this impression are those positioned in the one place in the entire property in which they could be seen through the main entrance, even if it means they are not exactly centered (neither truly nor artificially). Shrines in this category are found both in *atrium* houses and in other types of houses. An example is the arched niche on the rear wall of the garden in house I.11.13 (Figure 3.5).[12] The garden is a popular location for domestic shrines,[13] but in this house, only the very north end of the garden is visible from the main entrance. The niche is located off-center on the rear wall, at the north end, so that it is visible from the street. The pseudo-*aedicula* shrine in the garden of house I.14.7 employs a more elaborate visual trick.[14] Because of the layout of the property, it would have been impossible to place the shrine in the garden and have it be centered and fully visible along the axis through the *fauces*, so the patron of the pseudo-*aedicula* took the next best course of action to ensure that this shrine would be visible street. The shrine is therefore centered opposite the corridor leading from the atrium to the garden in the rear (Figure 3.6). This strategy provides the maximum visibility possible through this corridor from the front of the house so that it is still (partially) visible to passersby.[15]

A somewhat similar example is the painting on the west wall of the garden in house I.11.15/9 (Figure 3.7).[16] The painting is on the very southern end of the wall, next to a portico; an altar is placed in front. Because the garden is located in the

---

[12] Cat. no. 6.
[13] Cf. Chapter 2.
[14] Cat. no. 28.
[15] Clarke (2003: 78-81) comments on the position of the shrine in the axial view, but he does not note the nuance of the manipulation.
[16] Cat. no. 7.

north L-bend of the property, there is no place within it that would be visible through the *fauces* at No. 15. The garden is, however, visible from the rear entrance at No. 9, and the shrine is placed on the one section of the west garden wall that allows it to be viewed from this position; if it were on the north or east wall, it would not be visible from the rear entrance. The patron of the shrine could easily have chosen to place the shrine on the north or east garden walls and make the shrine more easily visible to a person entering the garden from the front of the house through the *atrium* into the garden, but he did not. Instead, the painting is oriented to accommodate a viewpoint from outside the property. Shrines were intended to be visible.

The axial view, when it was utilized, was primarily adopted for domestic shrines. One example from a non-domestic property, however, is the arched niche on the south (back) wall of the rear room in shop I.11.3 (Figure 3.8).[17] A variation in the strategy, however, is that the niche is not quite centered on the rear wall because shops were generally entered on the right-hand side.[18] It is shifted slightly to the west in order to be seen through the off-center interior doorways by a person entering on the right. The industrial shrine in workshop VI.3.10 is another non-domestic example positioned to take advantage of this viewpoint, assuming the workshop was entered on the right, as in bars (Figure 3.9).[19] The niche is axially aligned in the sight of a person entering on this side.

---

[17] Cat. no. 2.
[18] Two-thirds of bars in Pompeii had doors on the right side of threshold; the remaining third positioned their doors on the left (Ellis 2009).
[19] Cat. no. 57.

Primarily, however, patrons of shrines in other, non-domestic, types of

spaces exploited their own strategies of intentional visibility. Commercial shrines

are typically placed behind counters or elsewhere in the front rooms of the

properties.[20] The arched niche on the east wall of the bar I.14.15, behind the

counter, is a typical example (Figure 3.10).[21] It lies in the sightline of traffic

approaching from the west. Of commercial shrines that are visible from the street,

81% are located in a counter room or front room. Because only a very few shrines

in industrial spaces are visible from the street, and there are only a very few

restricted communal spaces at, nothing can be said about their strategies of

intentional visibility. Shrines in unrestricted communal spaces – generally paintings

and/or altars at crossroads or niches in the long side facades of *insulae* – are by

nature highly visible. The shrines at crossroads are particularly visible in this way,

but the niches in facades are generally obscured by the oblique perspective of an

approaching viewer until he or she is close to the niche. Of course, any painting or

other decorative element (not now preserved) may have increased the long distance

visibility of these exterior shrines.

Of special interest to this study are the shrines that demonstrate intentional

visibility by deviating from expected patterns in order to be seen from a specific

location or direction. A prime example is the niche on the rear wall of the peristyle

garden in house VII.6.7 (Figure 3.11).[22] It could easily have been placed on the

central view axis from the street through the *fauces*. However, while the niche is

---

[20] The orientation of their placement relates specifically to traffic patterns within the community (to
be discussed later in the chapter).
[21] Cat. no. 29.
[22] Cat. no. 68.

visible through the *fauces* from the street, it is actually placed off-center, near the western portico of the peristyle. This location creates a primary viewpoint for those moving south from the *Vico di Modesto* past the fountain at the southern end of *insula* VI.3 onto *Via Consolare* before it intersects *Via delle Terme*. This area around the fountain was an important gathering place, with access not only to water, but also shops, bars, workshops, and an inn. The intersection of the three streets is surrounded by commercial services. The shrine is oriented so that pedestrian traffic[23] moving south on *Vico di Modesto* both toward and away from these services would also be moving directly toward the shrine. Theoretically, the shrine is visible from the point further north on the *Vico di Modesto* adjacent to house VI.5.9 because there is an unobstructed sightline, but practically speaking it would only be noticeable from much closer viewing positions. Lighting conditions would play a role, as would distance and the amount of traffic on the street.[24] Located so as to be visible from both a prominent gathering point and a long street axis in a busy area of town, the shrine is placed for maximum visibility.[25]

A further complicating factor of intentional visibility is the need to consider of *how* a shrine was seen by viewers, not just where it was located. This is

---

[23] The south end of the *Vico di Modesto* is northbound-only for wheeled traffic (Poehler 2006: 68).
[24] See below in this chapter for more in-depth consideration of the impact of lighting conditions and traffic levels on shrine visibility.
[25] The suggestion that a preferred viewpoint was the one that afforded the most visibility is also evident in the display of other features. The two fountain shrines in the large garden of II.9.5-7 (a house apparently turned into a workshop and/or bar of sorts; cat. no. 44) are axially aligned to the eastern entrance into the garden (No. 7), rather than to the western entrance off the *Via di Nocera* at No. 6 or to the entrance to the garden from the attached property (No. 5) to the south. Their orientation is seemingly designed to take advantage of the traffic coming west out of the *palaestra*. People moving along the north portico of the *palaestra* exit directly opposite No. 7, and the fountains are centered and axially aligned to their view through the entrance. The view through No. 6 off the *Via di Nocera*, despite the fact that this street may have carried more traffic at times, is less privileged because passersby could only catch a glimpse of the fountains as they went by and did not have the opportunity for sustained consideration that the view from the *palaestra* afforded.

illustrated by the shrine in the bakery in the rear portion of VI.3.3/27-28, the front

half of which functioned as either a residence and/or supported the bakery at the

time of the eruption (Figure 3.12).[26] The bakery half of the property contained four

mills and an oven to the south. The shrine, a painting of Vesta and the *Lares*, was

placed on the west wall, in close proximity to a basin, well-head, and hearth, so that

it is visible from the eastern entrance off *Vico di Modesto*. The location of the shrine

is such that, while it is visible through No. 27 to passersby on the street, it is most

easily visible to those who *enter* the bakery through that doorway or through the

side room at No. 28. Its communication is geared primarily toward the users of the

bakery, not everyone passing by, though it could still have conveyed meaning to

them as well.[27] The producers of the shrine wanted to engage a certain audience in

preference to another, and deliberately made the shrine visible to a particular

subset of the community. Why this may have been done and what the

communicative role of the shrines in this situation might have been will be

discussed in the next chapter.

B. *Strategies of intentional visibility for internal viewers, as articulated in shrine*

orientation and location

        Beyond reflecting the relationship of a shrine to the exterior world, strategies

of intentional visibility were also used to construct spatial relationships for shrines

within a property, in all types of spaces. As was discussed in Chapter 2, a common

---

[26] Cat. no. 55.

[27] Exactly who these users were – whether they were clients or primarily the employees of the
bakery – will be explored in Chapter 4. Some scholars (e.g. Maiuri 1978: 40-41) have postulated that
there was also a shop for the sale of baked bread, which, if it existed, would be an enticement to
approach the property; it seems more likely, however, that No. 28 was a stable (Eschebach 1993:
162).

strategy employed within houses was to place shrines in the *atrium* or

peristyle/garden, the two areas of the house most frequented by guests.[28] Another

example is the practice of placing niches in rooms such that a person outside the

room could see them, rather than making them visible only to those who enter the

room. The *cubiculum* south of the *fauces* in house VI.5.3/22 contains a niche located

on the west wall opposite the doorway (Figure 3.13).[29] This position makes the

niche visible to other areas of the property, in the *atrium*, and the end of the

corridor leading to the rear of the property. If placed anywhere else in the room it

would not be as visible. Another, though rarely employed, strategy was to embed a

polished piece of obsidian in the wall of a house so that, like a mirror, it reflected a

glimpse of a shrine that would otherwise lie beyond the scope of a particular

viewpoint.[30] Obsidian was an exotic, expensive material that would attract attention

in itself, increasing the visibility of the shrine seen in it.

Shrines were thus placed inside properties with specific audiences in mind,

just as shrines were placed for the consideration of specific external audiences, as in

the case of the shrine painting in VI.3.3/27-28. Inside a house, the distinction was

usually between guests and residents.[31] An example of the engagement of a shrine

with a specific internal audience is the painting on the north wall of the kitchen in

---

[28] Cf. Chapter 2.

[29] Cat. no. 60. The square niche on the north wall of a room off the *tablinum* is positioned in the same manner in house II.9.4 (cat. no. 43), as is the shrine in the kitchen of house VI.6.1/8/12/13 (cat. no. 64).

[30] Powers (2006: 1, 157-58) discusses these mirrors and their reflections in the House of the Gilded Cupids (VI.16.7); others have been found in the Houses of the Orchard (or the Floral Cubiculum, I.9.5) and of the Ephebe (I.7.10-12). The use of the mirrors to reveal otherwise obscured views is supported by Butterworth and Laurence's (2005: 138) mention that the obsidian mirror in a portico of the House of the Orchard could have revealed sexual activity in its reflection. The graffito next to the mirror describes a prostitute with appropriate characteristics (*CIL* IV 100004; Varaone 2002: 146).

[31] Again, the audience of the shrine will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

house VI.17.42 (Figure 3.14).[32] It was apparently meant to be seen by a very limited group of people, because there is a very limited range of positions for viewing the painting. Only someone standing in the kitchen or perhaps walking along the (presumably service) passageway that descends underneath the kitchen on its way to the rear of the property could see it. The location precludes the view of guests. The fact that not all kitchen shrines are similarly restricted suggests that it was a purposeful choice to place this shrine where it could not be seen by guests.

These examples are from houses, but this strategy is applicable to all types of space. In commercial properties, many shrines that are not visible from the street are instead located in areas of identifiable client activity, such as counter rooms and gardens, two of the most common locations for shrines in bars, for example.[33] They are situated where they would be seen by guests entering the property to pursue their client activities, such as dining in a bar. In inn I.14.1 (Figure 3.15), there is what seems to be a suite of rooms for guests to sleep in, arranged around a central common area. A set of three niches is located in one of these rooms, and there is another niche in the central common area of this space.[34] Shrines like these, set in spaces used by guests, are geared to that specific audience.

C. *Other factors that indicate the intentional visibility of shrines*

The decoration of the shrines can also suggest that they were meant to have an impact on viewers other than those who commissioned the shrine or were its primary users. One of these decorative effects is the application of fresco to niches

---

[32] Cat. no. 66.
[33] Ellis 2005: 68.
[34] Cat. nos. 23, 24.

and *aediculae* in order to imitate marble paneling. The interior walls of niche

shrines in house I.13.2 and house / workshop II.1.8-9, for instance, are painted to

resemble marble revetment (Figure 3.16).[35] Colored marbles were expensive

luxury items and were employed as wall and floor decoration in important rooms in

Pompeian houses. Painted versions of these marbles allowed less wealthy Romans

to partake of their impressive qualities.[36] By imitating colored marbles in the

decoration of their shrines, the Roman patrons indicated that they wished for the

shrine to be impressive to someone, most likely someone not a part of their *familia*

or, in the case of a commercial or industrial establishment, the staff.

D. *Methods for controlling shrine visibility*

Besides considering what location and orientation would give their shrines

the visibility they desired, shrine patrons had to take into consideration the

furnishings and physical environment of the property in which the shrine was to be

constructed. Doors, fabric hangings, shutters, large furniture (cupboards, looms),

and lighting and traffic conditions all had the potential to allow a patron to further

control how a shrine was seen, beyond being always visible or always obscured.[37]

For instance, shrines that would otherwise be visible from a distance – such as to a

passerby on the street – could have been blocked from view by a door or fabric

hanging at certain times during the day or night.

---

[35] Cat. nos. 18, 36.
[36] Cf. Powers (2006: 148-55) on the significance of imported and colored marbles in Pompeian houses. L. McAlpine, who has studied marble imitation in Pompeian painting, suggests that the use of painted imitations of marble had a different symbolic significance in the Republic, before the widespread use of actual marble in personal residences in the Julio-Claudian and Flavian periods (pers. comm., July 6, 2010). The shrines decorated with imitation marble that have been studied by Fröhlich (1991), however, do not date before Fourth Style.
[37] My thanks to Elaine Gazda for her thoughts on this section.

Many properties with shrines preserve evidence for doors in the thresholds of the main entry and interior rooms.[38] Commercial and perhaps industrial properties will only have shuttered their front doors at night. In houses, the main entry door is the one that would have blocked the majority of shrines from viewers outside the property, but it was typically kept open during the day,[39] so its likelihood of being an obstruction is minimal. At night, when it was closed, the darkness and decreased traffic flow make it unlikely that the shrines were intended to be seen during this period. Doors would provide more of an obstacle *within* a property. The doors to some rooms, such as storerooms, were likely closed most of the time. Others, however, were probably kept open to facilitate the flow of people, light, and air through the property. The latter would be particularly important in summer months, and perhaps there was more openness and visibility in general during this time of the year.[40] In winter months, more doors may have been closed to trap heat. Since I am not focusing on a specific moment in time – other than 79 CE – I consider how the shrines were viewed and how they operated at those times

---

[38] Hinge marks are evident in thresholds throughout Pompeii, and casts created during excavation provide evidence of doors *in situ* (see below). Also, Pliny the Younger, in his letters, mentioned doors to interior rooms in his villa (*Ep.* 2.17.5, 16, 29; 5.6.19, 29, 38).

[39] The position of *cave canem* mosaics behind the threshold, as in the House of the Tragic Poet (VI.8.3/5), is suggestive of this conclusion. There is also the mosaic of a sleeping dog in the entryway of the House of Caecilius Iucundus (V.1.23-26). To properly function as apotropaic dog substitutes, they would need to be seen before a person entered a house, and thus the door would have to be open for extended periods for visitors and passersby to catch a glimpse of the mosaic. Some doors were found open at the time of excavation, but I do not think this can be taken as conclusive. The conditions of life leading up to the eruption were surely not typical. Many Pompeians fled the eruption and may not have bothered to shut the door behind them. Also, other doors were found *in situ* in closed positions (e.g. in I.13.12/14, I.11.9/15). Furthermore, Wallace-Hadrill's (1988: 46) model of the performance of the *salutatio* requires that the front doors of residences be left open, and Laurence (2007: 102) cites textual evidence for the normalcy of leaving open the front door in Rome. He does offer the caveat, however, that only the wealthy may have been able to afford to do so because they could hire a porter to keep watch.

[40] Artifactual studies of Pompeian houses have uncovered some evidence for seasonality in room use: e.g. Nevett 1997: 289.

when the doors were open, while keeping in mind that there were circumstances in

which the door might have been closed.

Other features for controlling shrine visibility were fabric hangings and

shutters. Thébert posits that in the Roman houses of North Africa fabric hangings

were used in the peristyle to regulate light and heat and break up large volumes of

space.[41] He suggests that they allowed the peristyle to be used for different

activities simultaneously while affording privacy to each. If they were used in a

similar manner at Pompeii, such hangings would certainly have had an impact on

shrine visibility. No definitive traces of hangings have been found,[42] but Bassani has

suggested that the iron nails stuck into the plaster at the top and sides of the arched

opening to the cult room in the south-west corner of the peristyle in the House of

the Menander supported drapery.[43] It is also possible, as she points out, that a

wooden shutter covered the opening to this room, though she does not provide any

specific evidence. Jashemski, however, has revealed that a shutter was able to be

closed across the entry to the cult room off the garden in II.1.11-12, a property with

restricted communal, and industrial, use.[44] Wooden partitions could perhaps also

have been located throughout a property, as remains of examples at Herculaneum

attest.[45] Such accoutrements allowed the patrons of shrines to control when and

how their shrines were seen, perhaps with attention to a particular audience, since

---

[41] Thébert 1987: 388.
[42] As far as I have been able to determine, and as to be expected, given the fate of most organic material at Pompeii.
[43] Bassani 2008: 172. She also suggests that the cult room in the south-west corner of the atrium in the House of the Iliadic Sacellum (I.6.4) was draped with a curtain, but provides no evidence (2008: 112).
[44] Cat. no. 37; Jashemski 1979: 135.
[45] Ellis (2005: 84) points out that these partitions could potentially differentiate the containment of spaces and their activities.

the location of some shrines seems to indicate a preference for a particular type

viewer, as discussed above.[46] With regard to large furniture, however, I have only

been able to take its presence into account in the rare cases when the remains of a

chest or loom are found *in situ*; thus this aspect of interior space does not play a

significant role in my analysis.[47]

Manipulating the lighting of a particular space is another way to control

shrine visibility.[48] Today, most of the shrines are viewed in the open air, but the

ancient spaces in which shrines were located were often covered and dark, lit only

by a small window or lamp, if at all. Shrines in *atriums* or gardens (peristyle or

otherwise), however, benefited from the largest light sources available to a Roman

property, though even these spaces would not be fully lit every hour of the day.[49]

Shadows would be cast as the sun tracked across the sky, their particular location

---

[46] Bassani (2008: 112), who comments on how the domestic cult rooms could be variously hidden or revealed, interprets their treatment as indicating a desire to separate them from the daily activity of the home. As I argue in this chapter and in Chapter 2, I believe that the while the shrines are marked as discreet features within a property, their form, adornment, and location emphasize the presence of the shrines.

[47] Furthermore, there is no guarantee that any such furniture found *in situ* was in its "permanent" place of location in the property; it is known that renovation and repair projects (and other activities) during the decades leading up to the eruption in 79 CE caused disruption in the "normal" distribution of house contents (Allison 2004: 179, 182-92). Additionally, as Nevett (1997: 292) points out, the space available to a house in an urban settlement such as Pompeii was limited, making it likely that furniture was not located permanently so as to be able to be adapted to the changing needs of the inhabitants for their residence.

[48] Simon Ellis (1995: 67) points out that the use of folding wooden screens, shutters, and doors shows that Romans were conscious of the effects of lighting and sought to control it. Other than Ellis and Allison (2002), few scholars consider lighting in the their analyses of urban space. Their observations about lighting are necessarily preliminary, but they serve to problematize the availability of different light sources in the home and how lighting conditions would change over the course of a day.

[49] Vitruvius (*De arch*. VI.7.6-7) indicates a general desire for sufficient natural light in a variety of spaces in both the country and city, and acknowledges the difficulties entailed upon the latter. I have found no correspondence between shrine location and window placement, though. It is possible that the common lack of preservation of the uppermost reaches of walls in much of the city is obscuring the original presence of many windows, but the fact that in *Regio* I, where walls are preserved to a greater height, and windows are present, there does not seem to be a connection, discourages such pessimism.

and configuration changing throughout the day. As night fell, lamps would be lit to relieve the darkness,[50] and the darkest spaces would presumably have been lit by lamplight even during the day. Lamps, particularly bronze ones, could be placed on a stand in a room with a shrine or by the shrine itself. Perhaps, a lamp lit in a shrine or a nearby niche drew attention to the shrine:[51] at least thirteen shrines within the city limits have been found with lamps *in situ*.[52] There are several other ways, furthermore, in which a dark space could be enlivened. Smooth marble and plastered walls reflected light.[53] The pieces of polished obsidian that some houses had embedded in their walls could also catch and reflect light. Arranging for a shrine to be lit or shadowed in darkness at different hours of day or night was one way for shrine patrons to increase or decrease the visibility of their shrines.[54]

One circumstance that would affect the visibility of a shrine, and that a shrine patron did not have control over, is the day-to-day street traffic that probably interfered with sightlines to shrines. No doubt, the bustle of carts and animals and people created a tumultuous environment and make it difficult at times to look across a street into the property opposite, or see a street shrine at the crossroads.[55] Traffic volume fluctuated,[56] however, and I consider the situation from the

---

[50] If the property owner had sufficient resources to provide lamps. Eckhardt (2000: 8-9) suggests that the use of artificial light had significant economic implications, though her proposal that the necessary oil, tallow, and wax were "food resources" may be extreme.
[51] My thanks to Lisa Nevett for this suggestion.
[52] The figure integrates the shrines with *in situ* lamps listed by Boyce with those found in shrines in the two study areas.
[53] Ellis 1995: 68.
[54] For example, shrines in *atria* could have been positioned in areas that were lit during the morning for the *salutatio*.
[55] Hartnett (2003) evocatively describes the potentially chaotic sights, sounds, and sensations of the movement of traffic in the Roman street. Kellum (1999) also describes the riot of images in the space of the Roman street.
[56] See Hartnett 2003: 22-23.

perspective of those times when such commotion would not have interfered. Indeed, what matters most in my analysis is the effect that the patron of the shrine intended it to have on viewers.

II. Shrine Visibility in Context: Neighborhood Case Studies

In this section I examine how the patterns of shrine orientation and accessibility in the two study areas reveal the shrines' connection to the wider community in which they are located. By looking at the characteristics of shrines in conjunction with the level of traffic and traffic circulation patterns in the surrounding community, we gain a better understanding of how the Pompeians positioned their shrines for effective communication viewers who did not enter the property in which the shrine was located. The relation between the orientation and accessibility of the shrines and traffic circulation patterns represents strategies of intentional visibility at work on a scale larger than the individual shrine. In comparing the patterns of orientation and accessibility in the two areas of the city, I am thus able to contextualize them and explain them in relation to the topography and character of the different areas of the city: a comparative approach adds nuance to our understanding of which shrines were intended to be seen and by whom.

Due to the predominantly orthogonal plan in the areas of the city encompassed within the two study areas, and given the typical placement of a shrine on only one interior wall of a property, the majority of shrines (93%) are oriented to the cardinal directions (Figure 3.17).[57] In Area 1 (the area near the

---

[57] These are directions relative to the layout of the city – for example, by "north" I mean "Pompeii north," which is true northwest. All percentages are valid percentages (in this example, this means

Porta Ercolano), overall, there is a demonstrable preference for shrines oriented to the north or to the south (60%), that is, along the sidewalls of the vast majority of properties (Figure 3.18). The remaining shrines are almost entirely oriented to the east and to the west (36%), with only a very few shrines oriented to the intermediate directions. In Area 2, the area south of the *Via dell'Abbondanza*, patrons preferred to orient their shrines to the east or to the west (56%). As in Area 1, the remaining shrines are distributed evenly between the other two cardinal directions (north and south, 37%), with relatively few shrines oriented to the intermediate directions.[58]

Given the differences in overall preference in shrine orientation between the area near the *Porta Ercolano* and the area south of the *Via dell'Abbondanza*, what is it that explains them? What characteristics particular to each area underlie the choices made for the orientation of the shrines? It is not the type of space in which the shrines are located, nor is it their degree of accessibility *per se*: for both measures, the overall pattern of shrine orientation remains the same.[59] I argue below that it is not, in fact, the specific direction in which the shrine is oriented that matters, but, for Area 1 at least, the alignment of the shrines' with the layout of the

they are calculated from the total number of shrines with valid responses for the orientation variable; that is, the shrines with unknown orientation are excluded).

[58] Though among the shrines oriented to the intermediate directions, a majority is oriented to the northwest, followed by the southwest. The west-preference is consistent with that for the cardinally-oriented shrines.

[59] The chi-square values for the relationship between shrine orientation and space type are 0.960 for Area 1 and 0.972 for Area 2, revealing a lack of correlation; the chi-square values for the relationship between shrine orientation and accessibility are 0.651 for Area 1 and 0.409 for Area 2, also revealing a lack of correlation. The significance and patterns for the former are not changed, but are rather further supported, when the shrines with some uncertainty about their space type are excluded from the analysis. For all analyses involving space type, it should be assumed, unless otherwise stated, that correcting the data sample for the uncertainty of identification of space type does not change the results significantly.

property, in the case of domestic spaces, and the traffic circulation patterns of this

area of the city in the case of commercial spaces. For Area 2, we are not able to

achieve so specific an understanding of the shrines' placement, due to the lack of

adequate evidence of traffic circulation patterns, but we can still uncover key

patterns in the shrines' relationship to traffic level and the type of space in which

they are located.

A. *Area 1 –* Porta Ercolano *and vicinity*

In Area 1 we get a sense of what is going on when we look at the accessibility

of the shrines *together with* the type of space in which the shrines are located.

There is a definite statistical relationship between the two variables. For the

purposes of this study, I have determined the degree of accessibility from the

perspective of a passerby on the street. In my analysis, 'high accessibility' indicates

that a shrine is either a communal one, located in the streets for all to see or

approach, or, if located inside a property, that it was visible to a person on the street.

'Low accessibility' indicates that the shrine was only visible to a person who entered

the property in which it was located. Among the different types of space overall in

Area 1, high- and low-access shrines are split evenly (Figure 3.19). When we look at

the commercial and domestic space, however, we see a different pattern.[60]

Commercial spaces have far more high-access shrines than low-access shrines,

while for domestic spaces it is the opposite (Figure 3.20). The patrons of

commercial shrines are far more interested than patrons of domestic shrines in

---

[60] In general, for Area 1, there are not enough shrines in other types of spaces to form a significant
sample size (there are only five industrial shrines, two unrestricted communal shrines, and no
shrines in restricted communal space).

making their shrines visible to the multitudes of passersby. The patterns of

orientation within each subset of shrines (high-access domestic, low-access

domestic, high-access commercial, low-access commercial) further reveal how

shrines interacted with viewers in different ways (Figure 3.21).

The domestic shrines in low-access spaces are distributed with some

preference for north and south orientations: 59% of these shrines are oriented to

the north or south, while 36% are oriented east or west. While space type and

shrine orientation are not directly related overall, as shown above, space type and

shrine orientation among low-access shrines in Area 1 may be.[61] In this subset of

shrines, the preference for north and south orientations could simply reflect the fact

that due to the general east-west orientation of the house properties in this area of

the city, there was typically more interior wall space available on the north and

south walls, since they were the longer sidewalls of the property. Even if the

orientation of these low-access domestic shrines does not follow a larger pattern,

however, we should remember that they still could have been manipulated on an

individual basis and selected for certain placements based on the strategies of

intentional visibility discussed in the first part of this chapter.

This is certainly true for those domestic shrines that are high-access. The

majority (72%) of these shrines are oriented to the east and west – but the key fact

is that most (75%) fall within the important axial view through the main entryway

to the rear of the property (or are as close to it as possible) that has been discussed

---

[61] In this particular analysis, the correlation disappears with the use of the sample adjusted for
uncertainty in space type classifications, but in other analyses, the results between the two data sets
are very similar.

above. Because of the orientation of the properties in this area of the city, it is natural that most shrines falling within the axial view are oriented to the east or west. One of the two other high-access domestic shrines not placed within the axial view (in VI.1.12[62]) is located in what have been tentatively identified as living quarters in the back of a shop, rather than in an independent house. This altered situation probably explains why it does not conform to the pattern. The positioning of high-access shrines in domestic spaces thus corresponds to the strategies of intentional visibility for domestic spaces discussed above.

The same is true for shrines in commercial spaces. In commercial spaces, 93% of shrines are located in high-access positions. (The one low-access commercial shrine is located in a property [VI.1.1[63]] that incorporates some combination of the functions of a restaurant, inn, and residence, so it is possible that the shrine is in an area of the property that is connected to the living quarters of the proprietor and should actually be considered domestic.) Most (79%) are in counter or front rooms, which is consistent with the general pattern for high-access commercial shrines.[64] 64% are oriented to the north or to the south, and 36% are oriented to the west or to the east. As shown above, neither the space type nor the accessibility of the shrines *per se* explain this pattern of orientation. It is my contention that these high-access commercial shrines are primarily oriented to the direction of traffic circulation in this area of the city.

---

[62] Cat. no. 48.
[63] Cat. no. 46.
[64] See the first part of this chapter above.

125

In *Regio* VI, a section of which comprises a large part of Area 1, Poehler has studied patterns of wear on the kerbstones, stepping-stones, and narrowing stones of the city to uncover the pattern of wheeled traffic circulation.[65] According to his study, *Via Consolare* and *Via delle Terme* are both dedicated, two-way streets (Figure 3.22). The south end of *Vico di Modesto* is one-way, northbound. The north end of *Vico di Modesto* and *Vico di Narciso* were alternating one-way traffic. *Vico di Mercurio* is one-way, westbound. Poehler has also determined that vehicles drove on the right-hand side of the street. When we compare the circulation of traffic to the orientation of the commercial shrines, the preference for north and south orientation in Area 1 makes sense if the shrines are placed on the wall opposite the oncoming traffic in order to be seen both sooner and more easily. The preference for orientation to the north and south is more than a preference for the sidewalls, which, as mentioned before, because of the east-west alignment of most of the properties, are the walls with the greatest amount of available space. The orientation of the shrines to oncoming traffic implies that the shrines were intended to be seen.[66] If this orientation did not matter, the shrines could as easily have been located in the rear of the property or on a wall not visible to oncoming traffic.

---

[65] Poehler 2006.

[66] Contrary to some speculation, there is no reason to think that carts were not allowed to traverse city streets during the day, when shrines would be most visible. Wallace-Hadrill (1995: 51), and, more tentatively, Hartnett (2003: 27), wonder whether the restrictions of the *Tabula Heracleensis* (a series of regulations of Caesarian date; cf. Hartnett 2003: 184-85) on vehicle traffic would have applied to Pompeii. However, we should not assume that the regulations were applicable outside of Rome or that they necessarily remained in operation over 100 years after their enactment. Indeed, the text specifically mentions Rome and its suburbs. Furthermore, we may ask why there would have been need to have a set pattern of traffic circulation at Pompeii (cf. Poehler 2006) if wheeled traffic could only travel at night. Why would there have been a need to block carts from entering the forum at night when it was not crowded with people carrying out their daily activities?

Of the high-access commercial shrines, 71% are oriented to traffic (Figure

3.23). A reason for this may be that there were many choices for a person looking

for a business establishment to frequent, and the commissioners focused on

attracting the easier-to-obtain attention of those approaching on their side of the

street. Of the remaining high-access shrines, 21% of the total are oriented in a

manner such that oncoming wheeled traffic, as defined by the pattern of circulation,

would not be able to see the shrine before passing beyond the entrance to the

property and looking backwards. Traffic in the opposite direction, however, would

still be able to see at least two of these three shrines (those in shop VI.1.12 and inn

VI.4.4[67]), so there might have been other influential factors in the decision of where

to locate these shrines that overrode the preference for an orientation to traffic. The

latter, for example, is in a prime spot for being seen from the fountain just south of

insula VI.3, which was surely a much-frequented gathering spot for pedestrian

traffic; thus, this shrine employed a different strategy of intentional visibility. The

other remaining high-access commercial shrine (in inn VI.4.4; 7% of the total) is

neutral to traffic in that it is equally visible to traffic from either direction: since the

shrine is located on a rear wall, neither direction of oncoming traffic had an

advantage in viewing the shrine.

The traffic patterns of Area 1 also contextualize the positioning of the high-

access domestic shrines, most of which represent the strategy of placement within

the axial viewshed. All but one (86%) are traffic neutral.[68] The one high-access

---

[67] Cat. nos. 48, 58.
[68] It should be acknowledged that two of these high-access domestic shrines (in house VI.5.5/21 and house VI.5.10; cat. nos. 62, 63) do have the effect of being more visible to one direction than another.

domestic shrine that is not traffic neutral is the one mentioned above as located in VI.1.12 in living quarters in the back of a shop; as before, its different circumstances probably explain its different characteristics. This traffic-neutrality makes sense if the commissioners of these domestic shrines were more interested in simply increasing the visibility of their shrines rather then setting them up to be seen from a certain direction, as the producers of the high-access commercial shrines were. The traffic-neutrality could also be dictated by the typical layout of a domestic property: once the decision is made to make these shrines highly accessible, there are not very many places they can be placed within the typical *fauces-atrium-*peristyle layout and be visible to a viewer outside the property. Placing a shrine in the axial viewshed of a domestic property thus often has the effect of making it traffic-neutral. Since the typical *fauces-atrium-*peristyle view is symmetrical (or manipulated to appear so), it, and anything in it, had equal visibility in different directions.

At this juncture it is important to raise several issues in relation to the impact of traffic circulation patterns on shrine placement. Poehler's study involved wheeled traffic. I do not think, however, that the orientation of some shrines to traffic patterns is a case of the commercial shrine commissioners wanting to single out wheeled traffic, as it is the result of a desire to make the appeal of the shrine as broad as possible. Foot traffic was not necessarily restricted in the same way as

---

However, I believe this is due more to the layout of the properties and available space: the shrines are as traffic neutral as possible within the specific configuration of space available to them for high-access placement, and furthermore one of them is in a *fauces-atrium-*peristyle view (the one in house VI.5.5/21; see next paragraph). Both shrines are located on the *Vico di Modesto*, which is alternating one-way traffic.

128

wheeled traffic. Ellis has identified several sections of the city where, based on the

direction of bar counters, there is some indication of directional movement of

pedestrian traffic,[69] but pedestrians had the ability to cross streets, change direction

suddenly, and enter properties in order to view more shrines than were visible from

the street. They could also move more slowly, and even stop, in order to get a closer

view of shrines and other neighborhood features. Pedestrians thus had ample

opportunity to see the shrines in business establishments as they moved through

the city, but wheeled traffic needed assistance in viewing the shrines effectively, and

thus the producers of shrines placed them where this audience could see them.

This is not to say that ancient Pompeians did not have an interest in and a

general awareness of the foot traffic around a property: Ellis' finding is that counters

were placed in bars near the threshold in such a way as to attract the attention of

foot traffic and entice passersby into the establishment. In particular, bars on

corners orient their counters to the busier of the cross streets.[70] These components

of urban space, that rely on their clients' patronage, are obviously designed to be

seen, and by nature need to be seen, and they were located in high-traffic areas.

They provide a useful analogy for the shrines. If shrines were highly accessible, it is

likely they are meant to be.

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned two shrines that were oriented to

pedestrian traffic. For the patrons of both the shrine in inn VI.4.4 and the shrine in

house VII.6.7, the confluence of people and activity utilizing the fountain and the

commercial and industrial services offered in the vicinity represented a significant

---

[69] Ellis 2005: 138-47. (Previously published as Ellis 2004: 381-83.)
[70] Ellis 2005: 133-38. (Previously published as Ellis 2004: 379-80.)

audience and an inducement to direct their shrines in that direction. The appeal and

opportunity was great enough in the case of the former to override the usual

preference for commercial shrines to be oriented towards wheeled traffic. The

amount of foot traffic can be another motivation for the intentional visibility of the

shrines.

As such, it is clear that there were more shrines in highly-trafficked areas,

whether or not they were explicitly oriented towards pedestrians. In the area near

the *Porta Ercolano*, important thoroughfares like the *Via Consolare*, associated with

a city gate, and the *Via delle Terme*, a street that formed one of the major east-west

through-routes, saw high levels of activity. The designation of these streets as high-

traffic ones is supported by Laurence's study of different levels of foot traffic and

other types of activity in the city of Pompeii.[71] Laurence determined the level of

activity along streets by analyzing the frequency of doorways. In the area near the

Porta Ercolano, the *Via Consolare* and *Via delle Terme* are in Laurence's category of

highest activity (Figure 3.24). *Vico di Narciso*, *Vico del Farmicista*, and *Vico di*

Modesto hosted a lower level of activity; *Vico di Mercurio* was less busy still.

My analysis shows that properties along busier streets – those with a

relatively higher level of activity – accommodated a larger number of shrines. This

indicates that interaction with a range of persons was a desirable aspect of the

shrines' function. To determine the density of shrines along the high- and low-

---

[71] Laurence 2007: 102-9. There have been several critiques of Laurence's work (e.g. Ulrich 1997),
and he is inaccurate in at least one instance (see Chapter 2, n. 129), but his methodology is innovative
and provides important information in this case.

activity streets, I calculated the average number of shrines per property.[72]

Calculating *by property* accounts for the greater number of properties along high

activity streets, and also avoids circularity that might ensue from using doorways

(the unit in Laurence's study). Properties that exit onto both high- and low-activity

streets were grouped according to the location of the main entrance.

The high-activity streets do have greater densities of high-access and traffic-

oriented shrines (Figure 3.25). These are the types of shrines that would have been

most affected by differing levels of traffic in an area. For high-access shrines, the

high-activity streets have an average density of one shrine for every 3 properties,

while the low-activity streets average one shrine for every 6.8 properties. For

traffic-oriented shrines, the high-activity streets had an average density of one

shrine per every 6 properties, while the low-activity streets average one shrine for

every 34 properties. Breaking it down further, the relative percentages of high

versus low-access shrines for each street roughly correspond to the ranking of the

streets in Laurence's categories, in that the street with the highest traffic level

(*Consolare*) has the highest percentage of high-access shrines, and the street with

the lowest level of traffic (*Mercurio*) has one of the lowest percentages of high-

access shrines (0%; Figure 3.26).[73] In areas with large amounts of traffic, shrines

were placed to best take advantage of the visibility afforded by that traffic.

---

[72] For this calculation, I am defining "property" as a sequence of connected spaces. Thus, a house
with two attached shops fronting the street would count as one property. An unattached shop or bar
counts as a separate property, since it was likely under separate ownership.
[73] This measurement is only an approximation because the percentages also depend on how many
low-access shrines are in the properties along each street. The properties along a busy street may
have more high-access shrines, but if they *also* have a large number of low-access shrines, for
whatever reason, then the relative percentage of high-access shrines might not be significantly large
(and *vice versa*).

B. *Area 2* – Via dell'Abbondanza *and the* insulae *to the south*

Similar and different factors underlie the placement of shrines in Area 2. I will first discuss the overall pattern, then the high- and low-access shrines, respectively. There is a confluence of data to suggest that in Area 2, as in Area 1, there was a connection between the frequency and accessibility of shrines and more highly-trafficked areas. There are also several characteristics of shrine placement specific to Area 2 that distinguish it from Area 1.

First of all, as with Area 1, I do not think that the overall pattern in the orientation of shrines introduced above (in Area 2, to the east and west) is due to the side, or longer, walls of a property having more space. Since the properties in Area 2 are a mix of north-south and east-west alignments, there does not seem to be a predominance of north-south property alignment that would place the long walls with greater amounts of open space to the east and west. Furthermore, when we examine shrine orientation by street, both the streets running north-south (*Via di Nocera, Vicolo dei Fuggiaschi, Vicolo delle Nave Europe*, and the unnamed street west of *insulae* I.11 and I.16), which have properties with predominantly east-west alignments, and the streets running east-west (*Via dell'Abbondanza, Via di Castricio,* and *Via della Palestra*), which have predominantly north-south property alignments, show a preference for shrines oriented to the east and west (Figure 3.27).[74] The larger amount of space available on east and west walls might be the motivating

_____

[74] It should be noted that shrine orientation and street direction are not statistically related. The example is given to further support my point that shrine orientation is not connected to the alignment of properties.

factor in individual cases of shrine location and orientation, but it does not explain the overall pattern.[75]

In Area 1, the patterns of wheeled traffic circulation were an important factor in the placement of a number of the shrines. Unfortunately, it is not possible at this time to investigate directly whether the patterns of shrine orientation and location in Area 2 also correspond to the circulation of vehicular traffic. There is no study of the *Via dell'Abbondanza* and its environs equivalent to Poehler's for *Regio* VI. Indirectly, though, there are some suggestions we may make about potential shrine orientation to this type of traffic. When shrine orientation is compared to the accessibility of the shrines along east-west streets versus north-south streets, 82% of high-access shrines on north-south streets are oriented to the east or west, and 18% are oriented to the north or south (Figure 3.28).[76] On a street running north-south, however, a shrine with an east or west orientation can only be neutral to traffic; it cannot be oriented to it. This suggests that perhaps there is no link to traffic patterns in Area 2. Furthermore, 50% of high-access shrines on east-west streets are oriented to the east or west, and 50% are oriented to the north or south. On these streets, a shrine with a north or south orientation can only be neutral to traffic.

That leaves at most only 41% of all high-access shrines that could potentially be oriented to traffic (that is, the 50% of shrines on a street running east-west with

---

[75] The phenomenon *is* more pronounced for the east-west streets (with north-south property alignments).
[76] The relationship between shrine orientation, accessibility, and street direction is not statistically significant, but I am using these figures as proxies for traffic orientation, not as relevant measures in themselves.

an east or west orientation, plus the 18% of shrines on a street running north-south with a north or south orientation). In Area 1, 48% of all high-access shrines were oriented to traffic, with the real significance of the relationship being that only the commercial shrines were oriented to traffic, while the domestic shrines were predominantly traffic-neutral. Of the potential traffic-aligned shrines in Area 2, 65% are commercial, 24% are domestic, and 5% are industrial.[77] Like Area 1, then, there *could* have been a connection between commercial shrines and traffic patterns in Area 2, and, also like Area 1, very few or no industrial or restricted communal shrines are (potentially) so aligned. Unlike Area 1, however, there might be some domestic shrines in Area 2 that were aligned with traffic. Thus it seems as if there is potential for Area 2 to have been like Area 1 in having a link between shrines and wheeled traffic patterns.

There are also similarities between Areas 1 and 2 in the connection between shrine density and the levels of traffic on the various streets. Exploring the accessibility of a shrine and its location in a busy or less-trafficked area of the city sheds further light on the patterns of shrine location and visibility. In the area of the *Via dell'Abbondanza* and the *insulae* to the south, the busiest roads were the throughways and major shortcuts: *Via dell'Abbondanza*, *Via di Nocera*, and *Via di Castricio*. The *Via dell'Abbondanza* was one of two important east-west routes through the city, from the *Porta Sarno* in the east to the *forum* (though wheeled traffic was excluded from the forum and the section of the *Via dell'Abbondanza*

---

[77] Unrestricted communal shrines in Area 2 are in a separate category from north-south and east-west streets since they are all located at crossroads.

directly entering into it[78]). *Via di Nocera* directed traffic north from the *Porta*

Nocera to the *Via dell'Abbondanza*, and beyond, to the *Via Nola*, the second main

east-west throughway; *Via di Castricio* was a more direct route for foot traffic from

the amphitheater back to the *Via Stabiana* (wheeled traffic could only approach and

leave the amphitheater / *palaestra* complex via a street off the far east end of *Via*

dell'Abbondanza[79]). *Via di Castricio* could also serve as a shortcut between *Via di*

Nocera and *Via Stabiana*[80] for those travelers who did not need or want to go as far

as the *Via dell'Abbondanza* – if their ultimate destination was the southern end of

the *Via Stabiana*, for instance. These three streets are in Laurence's top two

categories of doorway frequency (Figure 3.29).[81] Low-traffic streets in Area 2 are

Vicolo dei Fuggiaschi, *Vicolo della Nave Europa*, and the unnamed street west of

insulae I.11 and I.16. These three streets fall into Laurence's lowest category of

doorway frequency,[82] and traffic was blocked from entering these streets from *Via*

dell'Abbondanza.[83] *Via della Palestra* is difficult to categorize. It is not fully

excavated, so we cannot be sure that it functioned as a shortcut to the *Via Stabiana*

like the *Via di Castricio*. Perhaps this is why Laurence does not include it in his study

of doorway frequency. However, using his methodology on the excavated portion of

---

[78] Tsujimura 1991: 64-65.
[79] Tsujumura 1991: 64.
[80] Cf. Tsujimura 1991: 73.
[81] Laurence 2007: 105-07. The first is in Laurence's category of most doorways; the latter two are in his second category. The problem with putting them all in same category as I do here is that I split them up in Area 1; in the end, however, what I am really I'm looking at is *relative* traffic levels within an area.
[82] Laurence 2007: 107-08. Although, it should be noted that the distribution of doorways is not at all even from north to south, and the northern ends of the streets between *Via di Castricio* and *Via dell'Abbondanza* likely received far more traffic than the sourthern ends. Thus, a more precise measure of activity level for these streets would be desirable for future analyses.
[83] Tsujimura 1991: 64-66, 85-86. The blocking was not originally planned when the street was constructed; it was added later, probably to accommodate altered drainage requirements.

the street, it seems that it should fall into his second highest category, and be included among the high-traffic streets in Area 1.[84]

Looking at the accessibility patterns street-by-street, again, as with Area 1, there is a general correspondence between high-access shrines and busier streets: there were more high-access shrines along the highly-trafficked streets (one shrine per every 1.44 properties), while the less-travelled streets had fewer high-access shrines (one shrine per every 2.67 properties; Figure 3.30). The connection is logical if communication was an important part of the shrines' function, since it appears that interaction with a range of persons was a desirable aspect of the shrines' function. The relative percentages of high-access shrines in Area 2 also roughly correspond to the ranking of the streets in Laurence's categories of activity level, in that the streets with the highest traffic levels generally have the highest percentages of high-access shrines, and the street with the lowest levels of traffic generally have the lowest percentages of high-access shrines (Figure 3.31).[85]

Looking further at the accessibility of the shrines in Area 2 reveals other patterns that set it apart from Area 1, however. Area 2 has a greater percentage of low-access shrines than Area 1. In Area 1, 49% of the total shrines in Area 1 are high-access, and 51% are low-access, while in Area 2, shrines are 33% high-access and 67% low-access (Figure 3.32). This relationship is also true for all space types except commercial space, which comprises 55% high-access shrines and 45% low-

---

[84] Occurrence of doorways = length of street in meters / number of doorways (Laurence 2007: 103). Based on a measurement taken using Google Earth, the excavated portion of *Via della Palestra* is 111 meters long, and it has 16 doorways (based on Foss and Dobbins 2007, Map 3 = The RICA Map of Pompeii, 1984, courtesy of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei).
[85] The caveat expressed above in n. 73 also applies here.

access shrines (Figure 3.33).[86] It stands, however, in sharp contrast to Area 1, where the ratio of high- to low-access shrines in commercial properties was 93% to 7%. This particularly means that Area 2 does not show the same strong correlation between commercial properties and high-access shrines as Area 1. It is possible that there are relatively more low-access commercial shrines in Area 2 because these establishments tended to be larger in Area 2 than in Area 1, with more rooms for clients to enter, and there were more rooms for shrines to be placed in; there were fewer single- or double-roomed, unattached (independent) commercial spaces.[87] Ellis notes that nicely-decorated walls in bars were associated with both larger examples and dining areas, both of which would encourage or accommodate customers wishing to linger inside the property rather than take their food with them.[88]

It should be noted, however, that there is an exception to the overall decrease in connection between commercial space and high-access shrines in Area 2 compared to Area 1. Along the *Via dell'Abbondanza*, there is a much higher ratio of high- (73%) to low-access (27%) shrines among commercial properties.[89] Thus, it is more similar to Area 1 in this regard, in having many highly-visible commercial shrines despite the trend toward larger commercial properties.

---

[86] The unrestricted communal shrines are a special case, since they cannot be low-access.
[87] If true, it does not affect the idea that the visibility of the commercial shrines in Area 1 is intentional, because they are still predominantly oriented to the traffic patterns in that area of the city.
[88] Ellis 2005: 82.
[89] This is the only street for which the space type and accessibility correlation is statistically significant (chi-square = 0.012). In the corrected data sample, though, the shrines in properties along the *Via di Castricio* are 63% high-access and 37% low-access. In the corrected sample, 88% of the shrines in properties along the *Via dell'Abbondanza* are high-access and 12% are low-access.

For the industrial shrines, those in Area 2 are predominantly low-access (85%). The industrial shrines in Area 1 were evenly split between high and low accessibility, but there perhaps were not enough to form a significant sample. The pattern for industrial shrines in Area 2 seems to suggest that there was not as much interest in interacting through or communicating with these shrines in relation to an audience outside the property.[90] This corresponds to the apparent overall lack of strategies of intentional visibility used by industrial shrines (as discussed in the first part of the chapter). It suggests that there was less need for clients to view industrial shrines before entering into a space than there was need for commercial shrines to be seen ahead of time. Perhaps this means that the industrial shrines were intended more for employees.[91]

Thus, for Area 2, though we have not been able to determine the significance of the overall pattern of shrine orientation with its preference for east and west – and probably will not be able to do so until a study of the wheeled traffic patterns of the region has been made[92] – we have nevertheless uncovered essential information on the placement of the shrines that connects them to the busier streets of Area 2 and documents their relationship to different types of space.

III. Summary and Conclusions

In the urban shrines of Pompeii, a number of strategies were employed to enhance the visibility of shrines to different audiences viewing them from both

---

[90] This is the situation of the shrine in a bakery (VI.3.3 / 27-28) discussed earlier in the chapter.
[91] This idea will be explored further in Chapter 4.
[92] The necessity of a specific study of the traffic patterns is indicated by Tsujimura's (1991: 71) observation that while wheeled traffic along *Via di Nocera* was possibly two-way below *Via di Castricio*, the street is too narrow to have accommodated it north of this point. Complex traffic patterns like this cannot be reconstructed through indirect methods.

inside and outside a property. The particular strategy used was influenced by the type of space in which the shrine was located. Both the general discussion of different strategies and the two case studies support the interpretations of different strategies used in different types of space.

Domestic shrines were often oriented along an axial view that originated outside the house, and their patrons did resort to manipulations of both architectural space and their shrines' location in order to seem to achieve this axial perspective. Within houses, shrines reflect this same principle of axiality in achieving intentional visibility, but they also very often occurred in public spaces, such as *atria* and gardens. In the case study for Area 1, all but one (86%) of the highly-accessible domestic shrines were placed in the central axial viewshed. In Area 2, 61% of the high-access domestic shrines were placed in the same manner, and another 33% were visible in this view, but not on the central axis.

Highly-accessible commercial shrines were placed in the front rooms of their properties, often behind counters. The case studies for Areas 1 and 2 also support this pattern. Furthermore, in Area 1, high-access commercial shrines were aligned to the traffic circulation patterns of that area of the city. Within commercial properties, shrines were placed in areas frequented by clients. Industrial shrines reveal no common strategy of intentional visibility to reach audiences outside the property, but this accords with the predominantly low-access character of the shrines in the two study areas. It seems the shrines were geared more towards people entering into the property.

Juxtaposing the two study areas yielded further insights. In both areas, streets with a higher level of activity accommodated larger numbers of shrines, and it was apparently commercial shrines that were aligned to traffic. The differences between the two areas, however, are more interesting for their larger implications. Area 2 has more low-access shrines, suggesting, perhaps that it was less "neighborhood"-like. Possibly there was less desire to interact with the community or attract the attention of passersby moving through the area. The fountains in Area 2 do not have the same open gathering space around them as do the fountains in Area 1. Area 2 is more grid-like in its layout than Area 1, and the position of the *Porta Nocera* is less central to Area 2 than *Porta Ercolano* is to Area 1.

Interestingly, the *Via di Nocera* does not match expectations for a busy street formed by studying other busy streets in Areas 1 and 2. It does not have the same relative percentage of high-access shrines, and there is no potential correspondence to traffic patterns. The residents of Area 2 were more concerned with east-west traffic through the region, rather than traffic coming and going from the city through the *Porta Nocera*, in contrast to the interest in traffic evidenced by the shrines of *Via Consolare* in Area 1. Thus, the nature of the interactions in this region of the city seems to have differed from that of interactions in Area 1. Perhaps the residents of Area 2 were more concerned with the traffic to and from the amphitheater.

The characteristics of the commercial properties support this overall different picture of Area 2. Within the commercial properties themselves, the presence of high- and low-access shrines is more evenly distributed than in Area 1. There is less strict correspondence between commercial properties and high-access

shrines, except along some of the east-west streets. I have hypothesized that perhaps this was due to the different configurations of commercial properties in each area. Possibly the patrons of commercial shrines in Area 2 were dealing more with customers who could enter a property and stay, shop, or eat, rather than clients who would "grab-and-go" from the smaller commercial establishments in Area 1. There would have been fewer people milling about at gathering spaces because they were inside the properties. Again, this could be related to traffic to and from the amphitheater, which would likely have been largely pedestrian, and perhaps have been more likely to stop and linger in the area. There were more commercial properties on east-west streets than the north-south ones, while the industrial properties were primarily "out of the way" on the north-south streets. Perhaps they were purposely isolated to minimize the intrusion of offensive smells or noises.

Of course, it is best to not overemphasize the importance of periodic traffic, like that from an amphitheater, but the *Porta Nocera* does not seem to have been the main focal point of the area; it could be that amphitheater traffic simply coincided with the primary use of the east-west streets to traverse this region of the city to reach other regions. Tsujimura's observation that the *Via di Nocera* may have been two-way below *Via Castricio*, but not above it, and the evidence for carts turning NE/SE at each intersection along it, may also suggest that *Via Nocera* was not as important for direct travel through the area, though it still would have been a busy street.[93] In general, however, in Area 2 as in Area 1, the placement of the majority of

---

[93] Tsujimura 1991: 71.

shrines strongly indicates a desire to maximize the visibility of shrines in the spaces

in which they were located.

CHAPTER 4. CUSTOMIZATION AND COMMUNICATION IN THE SHRINES OF POMPEII

In Cicero's description of Heius's shrine, he comments that it was open to the public on a daily basis to anyone who wanted to view it and that "the house was not decorated with this embellishment any more for the owner than for the citizenry" (*In Verrem* II.4.5). In appreciating the beauty of the shrine, the viewers also appreciated the aesthetic taste of the producer of the shrine, Heius. It is possible that Cicero was exaggerating the accessibility of Heius's shrine; after all, he was trying to rouse public opinion against Verres by suggesting that the former governor injured the townspeople and visitors to the city, as well as Heius, by removing the sculptures. Cicero could not have hoped for the appeal to be successful, however, if there was no expectation at all on the part of the townspeople of being able to have some degree of access.

The participation of its patron in the broader cultural conversation on décor is thus one idea communicated by the shrine of Heius.[1] Other messages and values communicated by shrines are connected to the shrines' social function and meaning. In this chapter, I discuss how some of the ideas were expressed through the customization of shrines to their particular circumstances. Customization is how shrine patrons expressed themselves by manipulating the shrines' location,

---

[1] Cf. the concept of décor as employed by Perry (2002) and discussed in Chapter 1.

surroundings, and appearance to communicate messages. It is both a cause and result of the variety of the shrines discussed in Chapter 2.

It is thus the purpose of this chapter to elucidate both various strategies of customization and the different ideas communicated by the shrines in different spaces to different groups of people. This chapter explains why the intentional visibility of the shrines was important to Pompeian patrons. I also revisit the two study areas and further my examination of their differences by exploring how the shrines in each area, as a group, were adapted to the particular conditions of each region of the city. My analysis of customized elements of shrines and their communication provides a new perspective on their use among the inhabitants of the city, and it also sheds new light on the attitude and focus of different regions of the city as a whole. "Neighborhoods" and their residents seem to have had an effect on the placement and imagery of the shrines used in that neighborhood.[2]

I. <u>Evidence for Customization in the Pompeian Shrines</u>

An important means of communication through the shrines was their customization: the manipulation of particular elements of a shrine in order to adapt its meaning to its particular circumstances and the goals of the patron responsible for its construction. I see customization as explaining the differences between the shrines, as patrons could freely choose how to construct their shrines.[3] It is through

---

[2] My thanks to Joyce Marcus for this statement.
[3] This is similar to my perception of space in general. Some scholars, such as Thébert (1987: 320-21), have argued that the organization of domestic space, for example, is a social product rather than a response to autonomous private needs. He comments that "the master's social requirements shaped the overall design" (384) in order to fulfill the responsibilities of his social role. I believe that there were basic standards in how space was organized (the repetition of certain design features makes this irrefutable) but that individuals could alter or deviate from the norm to suit their own personal

these differences that shrines were able to communicate different messages to various viewers. Several aspects of the shrines could be customized, but their architectural form and iconography were particularly suited for manipulation in this way.[4] This section discusses how we can recognize customization in shrines before exploring their communication in more depth in the next part of the chapter.

There are several ways to recognize customization in the shrines: through deliberate change to a shrine, and in unusual or unique details that set a particular shrine apart from other shrines. Deliberate changes to shrines are key to our understanding of them because they are what indicate that the specific details of a shrine *were* significant. The alterations show that the characteristics of a shrine were particular in some way and that the patrons wanted their shrines to look a certain way. Changes are evidence of different and evolving reasons why a person might choose to put a shrine in a particular location or give the shrine a particular appearance. The change indicates that the motivating factors behind the construction of the shrine have evolved.[5] It is important to note that since Roman

---

needs or the dictates of less-than-ideal space availability. Cf. Chapter 1. Other scholars who have accepted some degree of free choice in the construction of the shrines include Boyce (1937: 10); Foss (1997: 197), who has characterized the sacred space of the household as a "personalized ritual topography;" Stek (2008: 122) who describes the "freedom in the choice of what structure or place to use to celebrate the *Compitalia*;" and more recently Husser (2008), whose work on a community model of religion suggests each community (including households and groups of workers) could decide for itself how to express ritual action.

[4] One acknowledgement that I have to make, however, is that not every aspect of a particular shrine is necessarily customized – some aspects might be guided by standard conventions (which are in themselves significant) – but every aspect of a shrine has the potential to be customized, and in many cases, is. See below for further discussion of standardization.

[5] Unfortunately, because very few of the shrines have been dated, it is not possible to determine how often individual shrines were changed within a certain period of time. If changes such as repainting took place frequently, that repetition would suggest that a single patron was making successive changes and support my argument that they were intentional.

religion and ritual practice were quite conservative,[6] such modifications are not

likely to have been associated with a change in the performance of the rituals. What

would change is the significance to the patron of the physical shrine itself and the

message that it communicated.

In house VI.6.1/8/12/13, an earlier niche version of the shrine on the north

wall of the kitchen was covered over with a painting of the Lares flanking the *genius*

sacrificing at the altar accompanied by a *tibicen* and *camillus* (Figure 4.1).[7] Two

snakes approach a second altar in the lower register of the painting, while dead

animals, cuts of meat, and a sacrificial pig line both sides of the scene. Apparently, it

was decided at some point that a niche was not suitable, and that the traditional

painting was needed instead. It should be noted that the change was to a type of

shrine that was on the one hand quite standardized (depending on any no-longer-

extant imagery that might have adorned the earlier niche) – the traditional

paintings, after all, are defined by a common program of iconography. On the other

hand, however, the choice was perhaps all the more meaningful for that reason: the

painting, though representative of the standard traditional composition, was still

customized to the patron's goals for the shrine. These goals may have related to the

reconfiguration of the interior space of the *insula* over time, as the wing of the

property in which the kitchen is located had a changing relationship with the spaces

around it, perhaps at one point being part of a shop with entrance off the *Vico di*

---

[6] Cf. Schultz 2006: 12.
[7] Cat. no. 64.

Modesto.[8] At the time of the eruption, however, the kitchen and shrine were part of

the larger domestic property, and the shrine painting was contemporary with the

last phase of habitation, according to Giacobello. Fröhlich attributes it to the Fourth

Style.

In other examples, there are temporal sequences of shrines of the same type

in the same location. The owner of bar VII.15.5 inserted one new niche into the wall

where there previously had once been two old niches (Figure 4.2). Snakes flanked

the niche, and a figure reclining on a *kline* adorned its rear wall; a small altar stood

on the ground in front of the niche.[9] The patron wanted something different for

some reason worth making the effort to change. In this case, the stakes may have

been raised by the fact that the location is visible to those who enter the property to

approach the counter (which is not set directly on the street).[10] Sometimes a new

shrine niche was created adjacent to an old, blocked one, as was the case in both

houses VII.12.28 and IX.1.22/29, and the bar at I.17.3 (Figure 4.3).[11] The locations

of the old shrines were evidently considered appropriate, but not the old niches

themselves. Perhaps it was dedicated to one deity and the patron wished to have a

shrine dedicated to another. Because the new niches were in almost exactly the

---

[8] See De Albentiis (1989: 75 n. 134, 76), who comments that the exact relationship of the suite to its surroundings in the original phase of constructions is impossible to reconstruct without further excavation. Fiorelli (1875: 103) proposed that the wing was built on the foundation of an earlier shop.

[9] As described by Boyce (1937, no. 330), since the painting is no longer preserved enough to identify its subject. It is evident from an exposed portion of the sidewall of the earlier niche to the west that it was painted as well, but since it is filled in, the details of the painting are unknown. Neither earlier niche was visible in Boyce's time; the one to the east is noted by Ellis (2005: 459), however.

[10] Ellis (2005: 47) agrees that customers standing at the counter have a "good view" of the dining room and rear garden.

[11] I.17.3: cat. no. 34. Though it is possible that the unblocked niche in each case was used to hold a lamp or other supplies before its companion was filled-in, and that it continued to serve that purpose once the shrine was deactivated.

same location as the old niches, it is unlikely that changes in furniture placement or the architectural layout were motivating factors in the change. A less extreme example is the modification of the form of an existing shrine without obliterating it. The floor of the niche on the north wall of a corridor in house I.17.2 was raised (Figure 4.4).[12]

Furthermore, there are a number of paintings for which certain discrete elements were removed and replaced or painted over. In the *triclinium* at I.12.15 (a property of uncertain function), for example, the niche painting on the east wall was redone sloppily (the new coat overlaps the hand of the *Lar* on the right) and altered at some point (Figure 4.5).[13] Also, the two heads flanking the niche (at least one of which seems to have been set up as a herm) appear to have been inserted into the painting at a later date, as new modifications of the existing painting.[14] Similarly, bar I.12.5 around the corner contains a shrine in which the painting has been altered in subsequent versions (Figure 4.6).[15] The question is, why go to the effort of repainting a shrine or changing its form if the expenditure of resources did not have some purpose? It indicates that the altered aspects of the shrine were important to how the shrine operated and what it meant.

Other than the modifications that a shrine undergoes during its lifetime, unique or unusual details in the shrine's form or iconography also suggest the

---

[12] Cat. no. 33.
[13] Cat. no. 16.
[14] It is possible, as Fröhlich (1991, L27) suggests, that they were part of the original design of the shrine and valued as *spolia*. He attributes them to the Second Style, while the phases of the niche and painting he assigns to the Third and Fourth Styles.
[15] Cat. no. 12. Potentially more dramatic examples include the kitchen painting in VI.1.10/23 (cat. no. 47), and the street shrine at the northwest corner of *insula* I.11 (cat. no. 9), but it is not clear how much the original paintings were actually altered in the repainting(s).

customization of the shrine. Certainly, there were shrine paintings that reflected

their connection to the city and land itself, as does the painting of Bacchus standing

on the slopes of Vesuvius in house IX.8.6.[16] Other shrines indicate a more specific

connection, to the particular patron who commissioned them. One shrine that

represents several of possibilities is the traditional painting on the north and east

walls of the kitchen in house I.13.2 (Figure 4.7).[17] The north wall bears a niche

painted with a garland and black and yellowish-red flecks, surrounded by a snake

approaching an altar, and various cuts of meat. On the east wall, two large *Lares*

flank a group of people. To the left is the sacrificial group standing around an altar,

the *genius* and sacrificial attendants, but this time they are accompanied by the *iuno*.

Very few *iunones* are depicted in Pompeian shrine paintings.[18] To the left of the

sacrificial group are two rows of figures all making the same gesture: the other

members of the *familia* have gathered to participate in the ritual.[19] No other extant

or recorded shrine painting depicts the entire *familia* gathered in this way. The

presence of the *iuno* along with the *genius*, and the rows of participants, are two

unusual details that seem to relate to the particular importance of the rituals for this

specific *familia*.[20]

---

[16] Cf. Chapter 2.

[17] Cat. no. 20. This painting was discussed extensively in Chapter 2.

[18] The traditional shrine painting adjacent to the kitchen off the secondary atrium in house IX.13.1, 3 (House of Julius Polybius; cat. no. 69) also depicts the *iuno*, as does the shrine painting in a *villa rustica* in Boscoreale, and perhaps the ones in VII.15.7 and VIII.2.39 (Fröhlich 1991: 120 n. 162).

[19] If they have done so for the *Caristia*, as Jashemski (1979: 118-19) suggests, that would be another unusual feature of this shrine. Clarke (2003: 78) suggests that perhaps the scene "records a special sacrifice of thanksgiving or celebration."

[20] The scene cannot be taken literally since, at the very least, it is physically impossible for so many people to gather in the space of the kitchen: see the discussion of this shrine painting and others in Chapter 2.

This communication deepens when we look more closely at the depiction of

the *genius* and *iuno*. This *genius*, unlike others, does not carry a cornucopia.

Fröhlich suggests it is in fact the *paterfamilias* who is depicted, not his *genius*.[21]

Husser further points out that the female figure here appears subordinate to the

male figure, unlike with the *genius / iuno* pair in IX.13.1, 3, and thus is likely the

materfamilias, and not the *iuno*.[22] With the apparent presence of the other members

of the *familia*, this painting seems to be a ritual portrait of sorts, of the actual

participants, customized for them, by the inclusion or alteration of certain details.

A potentially rich source of evidence for the customization of the shrines is

the dedicatory inscriptions found on a number of them. The vows and prayers are

both customized, to whatever the dedicator wanted to immortalize about his (or

her) performance of ritual at the shrine, and personalized, in that they can reveal

the name and status of the dedicator. They convey this quality of customization to

the shrine by virtue of being made a permanent part of its form. The inscriptions

are a special example of customization because many of them are by slaves or

liberti.[23] This is why the inscriptions need to be studied in more detail, since they

represent a layer of meaning added by someone other than the *paterfamilias* in his

role as patron of the shrine. They can give deeper meaning to our understanding of

individual shrines. Certainly, the dedication by Theodorus, *magister familiae*, in the

shrine niche shrine over the *triclinium* in the garden of house I.13.2, gives extra

---

[21] Fröhlich 1991: 33. The other *genius* without a cornucopia that I am aware of can be explained in a
similar manner: cf. Chapter 2.
[22] Husser 2010; cf. Chapter 2.
[23] See Chapter 2.

weight to the emphasis on the presence of the entire *familia*, including slaves, in the shrine painting in the kitchen of that property.[24]

III. Communication through the Pompeian Shrines

This part of the chapter looks more closely at the communication of the shrines itself, and explores the different messages that shrines were conveying to different audiences. Customization in the shrines is one way that patrons communicated with viewers, but there are other ways. The shrines communicated through their appearance, location, and relationships to one another; they communicated through the exploitation of their specific context to nuance the messages expressed to particular audiences.

A. *The audience for the shrines*

The goal of this sub-section is to explore the different levels of audience towards which a shrine could be directed, that is, the different levels of audience for whom the customization or standardization of a shrine could have meaning. In each type of space, the innermost level of audience had access to all of the shrines, but as a viewer's degree of intimacy diminished – the further he or she was from the ritual participants who used the shrine – the fewer shrines he or she had access to. The outermost level of audience was the passersby external to a property.

There is something of a connection in how I envision the different levels of audience for a shrine, with Wallace-Hadrill's scheme of distinguishing different

---

[24] Cat. no. 18. No one has yet integrated this inscription into the study of the shrines in the household, and it is a prime example of why I intend to undertake a study of the shrine inscriptions.

categories of people (the owner's family, servants, and friends) who interacted in the space of the Roman house, as represented by his axes of differentiation between insiders and outsiders and the "grand" and the "humble."[25] An essential point, however, is that I see the shrines as taking advantage of the enactment of the sorts of social relationships that Wallace-Hadrill describes: they do not *guide* such enactment in the way that he interprets domestic architecture and decoration as doing. Similarly, there is a connection between my levels of audience and the "gradient of intimacy" described by Clarke, who sees the house as "a place of zones of intimacy opening to the visitor."[26] He imagines the variety of factors determining a viewer's place along that gradient, which affects his or her reaction to an image. He only considers the specifics of who a viewer might have been when discussing specific images, however. Before discussing specific shrines and their viewers myself, I think it is important to sketch all the potential viewers of shrines in the different types of space, to support my discussion of how the shrines are communicating to these different viewers (Figure 4.8).

One point to make is that the external audience for each type of space, the "outsiders" passing by who can see one or several shrines as they look into a property, would be the same. A passerby who could peer into a domestic property at a shrine in a rear peristyle or garden (or less often, an atrium), could just as easily walk up to a crowded bar, stroll by a bakery, approach the headquarters of their professional organization, or pause and contemplate a shrine along the street. The range of people who did these things might have been somewhat self-selecting– a

25 Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 38-39.
26 Clarke 2003: 222.

152

person looking for a bar is more likely to walk up to one, for example – but the

passersby encompassed the full scope of age, gender, status, profession, and

neighborhood affiliation.[27] They were pedestrians, and drivers of wheeled vehicles

carrying out industrial and commercial tasks or being used for personal

transportation; they were wealthy homeowners and lowly slaves laboring in

industrial establishments. There were a wide variety of street activities and

potential viewing contexts for the shrines,[28] and this would affect how each viewer

received a shrine and its communication.

1. Domestic space

In a domestic property, there are three levels of audience. The internal

audience is that of the patron of the shrine (the *paterfamilias*) and the intimate

familia. They all had access to all the shrines in the residence, even if some may

have been directed primarily to certain members of this group. This innermost

audience is also the only one to whom some of the kitchen shrines were directed

(the ones that were not visible outside of its confines). As discussed in Chapter 2, I

do not see the kitchen shrines as being proprietary to the slaves only – maybe on a

practical, daily routine basis, the slaves were the ones who would see and use them

the most, but they were surely commissioned with input of the patron

(*paterfamilias*) and seen by the other members of the household as they went about

their business, living, eating, using the latrine that was often in the kitchen.[29]

---

[27] See Hartnett (2003: 46-53) on the concern for universal access to the street in Roman society.
[28] Cf. Hartnett (2003: 38) on the range of activities performed in the street, and the juxtapositions found there.
[29] Latrines in kitchens: Allison 2004: 103, 136.

Furthermore, we cannot be certain that every house with a kitchen contained slaves; it may well have been the free members of the household who did the cooking in the kitchen with a shrine. A characteristic that sets this innermost audience apart from others, whatever the scale of the domestic space, is its likely ability to use the shrine or participate in the rituals performed at it.

The next level of audience is that of the invited guests, clients, friends, etc., who are allowed to enter the property and spend time inside it. Shrines in the "public" areas (like *atria* and gardens and other "green spaces") are particularly visible to them, as well as those in other areas they may have contact with, such as a *triclinium*. Even some shrines in areas unfrequented by visitors may have been visible to them, such as those shrines in kitchens that were directed out of them.[30] (There was probably a portable latrine for guests, at least during formal social events, to eliminate the need for them to actually enter the kitchen.[31]) Within this group of people, there was a degree of hierarchy, with friends being more likely to be invited into more secluded (though still "public") areas around the peristyle or a rear garden.[32] A different type of visitor from an invited guest is a workman, or someone providing a service to the *familia*, such as a tutor. Certainly the circumstances in which they viewed the shrines would differ, since their

---

[30] See Chapter 3.

[31] Foss (1997: 206 n. 32) is skeptical that guests would have entered the kitchen on a regular basis, except perhaps to use the latrine; he points out that the latrine is the only archaeological indication of their presence in this room, and there is no conclusive literary evidence to suggest that guests would enter the kitchen.

[32] Bassani (2008: 111) sees this as a process of "filtering" the visitors to the home. Even visitors for a brief amount of time, like messengers, would be able to see the shrines in the atrium (Husser 2008: 162).

relationship to the *paterfamilias* and the other inhabitants of the home was structured differently.

The domestic situation would be affected if the property were a rental and the shrine was constructed by the owner, because then the *paterfamilias* would be a member of the audience, instead of the patron of the shrine. He and his *familia* would be still be the innermost level of audience for this type of shrine, though, and if the *paterfamilias* was allowed to place his own statuettes or other artifacts in the shrine, that might make the shrine "his" in essence if not in fact. Otherwise, it is not clear that the property being a rental would affect the *viewers* – the same people would view it and in the same manner; it would just have a different meaning for them. A tenant is just another type of audience, after all. We can still investigate what the owner of the shrine is communicating through that shrine.

In the case of domestic space attached to or within the bounds of a commercial property, the innermost audience would be the same, though there would not be the same type of secondary audience. The shrine could perhaps be seen by customers of the bar or shop instead.

2. Commercial space

In a commercial property, the most intimate audience is that of the proprietor and perhaps the employees, who all are, as in domestic properties, the potential users of the shrine. They would have access to and be able to view all of the shrines in the space, including those shrines that were possibly associated with domestic living quarters within the establishment. Next are the customers of the business, who approached the counter; they had no personal connection to the

155

shrines, but likely could see almost all of them in a bar or shop. Bars and inns also

had another, slightly more intimate, group of viewers, who could enter further into

the property to dine or stay the night, and they would have access to more shrines

inside that they could potentially use, though these shrines would not represent

their interests. As with a domestic property, if the commercial space is rented, the

levels of audience would not be affected that much. The business owner would

become a less-intimate viewer than otherwise.[33]

3. Industrial space

Industrial shrines have a similar hierarchy of viewers. The innermost

audience is the potential users of the shrine and participants in the ritual performed

at it; in this case, the owner, manager, or employees. The only secondary audience,

though, would have been customers in the commercial space of the workshop who

could see the shrine from their location. Otherwise, there is only the external

audience of passersby that was the same for all types of space. One possible

difference, though, is that business associates (the agents from whom a bakery

purchased grain, for instance) are possibly an additional category that could be on

the level of either the employees or the customers.

4. Restricted and unrestricted communal space

The innermost levels of audience in a restricted communal space would the

members of the organization and its administration. The latter would likely

commission the shrine, and so it could be a means of communication to the

---

[33] Cf. e.g. Jashemski 1979: 120-21.

members of the group, who would be the most intimate audience. Guests would be

an outer level of audience that the shrines could address. Shrines in unrestricted

communal space would seemingly be addressed to all passersby equally, thus

having only one level of audience. However, since there may have been some

connection to the particular neighborhood in which the shrine was located, those

residents would be a more intimate level of audience for compital shrines. For

vicinal shrines, the near neighbors of the residence with which the shrine was

associated could be a more intimate audience.

B. *Strategies of communication*

Shrine communication can be thought of broadly as a customization to the

context of the shrine. This is why knowing as much as possible about the

appearance, location, associated artifacts, and setting of a shrine is important.[34] The

setting of a shrine, for example, could shed light on the patron of the shrine, and to

whom the shrine was directed. The appearance of the shrine, in its form or imagery,

might only have had meaning when seen in its total environment. In some cases, the

meaning of a shrine was constructed in relationship to other ritual or sacred spaces

in a property. Foss expressed the notion of a "ritual topography" in his study of the

relationship of the shrines to cooking and eating.[35] He did not use the term in quite

this sense, but it is perfect for describing how shrines could work together, and with

---

[34] Earlier work on the shrines has not always taken the artifacts associated with the shrines into account, but they are a crucial component of my interpretations. I consider the setting of the shrine at the time of the eruption in 79 CE. Ultimately, it does not matter if a shrine was built in an earlier period and preserved by later generations while changing the property around it. Whatever the message of the shrine was, whenever it was constructed, it was still appropriate and accepted by later inhabitants if the shrine was still in existence. Perhaps it was still accepted because changes in the room changed the meaning of the shrine for the later inhabitants and worshippers, viewers.
[35] Foss 1997: 197.

the other imagery in a property, to create deeper meanings and connections.[36] The

interrelationships of shrines is one aspect of the shrines and their communication

that my work pursues in greater depth than other studies.[37]

It is difficult to recover some details of the relevant context, however, such as

the identity of the patron.[38] We know of some from textual sources, but it is difficult

to determine the owner of a property by relying solely on archaeology.[39] Indeed,

Husser points out that we cannot always see the process or reasoning that led to a

choice made for religious expression.[40] Furthermore, the patron's intended

meaning may not necessarily be the one received by any particular viewer.[41] This is

another reason why it is best to think in terms of categories of viewers. I use all the

information I can gather, however; I think the exercise is worthwhile because it

pushes our understanding forward, even if it is not yet complete.

What follows is a discussion of a series of examples of how the shrines

communicated; it is not comprehensive, nor does it represent the full range of either

the form or the content of shrine communication. In some instances, my case

studies are more like examples of methodology, about how to think about the idea of

---

[36] Powers (2006: 107-17) is one of the few scholars to talk about how shrines could interact with surrounding imagery to create a religious atmosphere. Cf. also Platt 2002.
[37] Powers' analysis (2006: 112) that the two shrines in the peristyle of the House of the Gilded Cupids could work together to frame the peristyle as a ritually-charged space is a start in the direction of looking at shrine interrelationships. (Bassani [2008] does mark ritual spaces other cult rooms on the plans in her catalogue, but she does not investigate in detail their relationship because she focuses on the cult rooms.)
[38] Cf. Bassani (2008: 153-61), who is one of the few to have attempted to identify the patrons of houses with shrines (cult rooms, in her study), and who does so in the most detail.
[39] The names recorded in graffiti on facades do not necessarily refer to persons who lived in an adjacent property. Furthermore, even when we do know the name of an owner or resident, that does not mean we know anything about his or her identity, or even that his or her association with the property was contemporary with the shrine. (Thanks to Lisa Nevett for the latter point.)
[40] Husser 2008: 154 n. 172.
[41] Cf. Powers 2006: 22.

shrine communication, such as when we cannot be sure whether the property was occupied by its owner or a tenant. Unlike earlier discussions of shrine communication, however, my work does start to break down the different ways that shrines could communicate with viewers, to look for the bigger picture. The examples are organized according to the different aspects of the shrine that the patron most relied on for conveying meaning, though, of course, multiple features of the shrine could be employed in such a way, and there is overlap in the strategies thus used.

1. Iconography and architectural form

Imagery was a compelling form of communication. One strategy in which it was invaluable was to insert the patron himself into the depictions displayed on the shrine, in a form of self-representation. Several ways of doing this are demonstrated by the shrine on the rear wall of the garden in house I.14.7 (Figure 4.9).[42] The niche of the pseudo-*aedicula* contains an image of the *genius* sacrificing at a round altar. Plants surround him and starry rosettes dot the sides and roof of the niche, while dolphins adorn the edges. Two bronze statuettes of *Lares* were found in the niche *in situ* at the time of excavation, along with a bronze lamp and a terracotta dish. Below, on the front of the base of the pseudo-*aedicula*, there is a highly unusual painted scene of river trade. Next to the river god Sarnus, who pours out a stream of water from a jar, a shipment of what is probably fruits or vegetables is weighed and loaded or unloaded; the activity appears to be directed by the figure in the middle of the upper register, wearing partially blue clothing. The shrine is

---

[42] Cat. no. 28.

surrounded by a canal of water that seems to extend Sarnus' stream and bring his

waters into the house.[43]

The shrine becomes a means of self-representation with the identification of

the man directing the river trade with the patron, the *paterfamilias*, who apparently

had some concern for his commercial business.[44] Other elements of the shrine, such

as the dolphins and the canal of water, also refer to fluvial activities.[45] The workers

may be the slaves of the patron.[46] These strategies – the depiction of the

paterfamilias himself (or at least a figure representing him), his profession, and the

inclusion of symbols and features meaningful to him – connect the shrine to his

specific identity and lifestyle and that of his *familia*, and their reliance on Sarnus'

protection of their livelihood.

These strategies are also employed in other shrines. The shrine painting in

the kitchen of house I.13.2 even incorporates the profession of the *paterfamilias* in a

similar manner: the image of a man leading a train of two mules and a cow appears

below the traditional painting,[47] which, as discussed above, depicts the *paterfamilias*

himself in the guise of his *genius*. "Profession scenes" also appear on shrines in inn

I.1.8 and inn/stable IX.2.24.[48] The close connection between the subjects of these

---

[43] Cf. the discussion of dimensionality in Chapter 2.

[44] On this figure representing the *paterfamilias*, see Orr 1972: 165. That the *paterfamilias* was involved in maritime trade is accepted by Orr 1972: 115, 165, Fröhlich 1991: 263, and Giacobello 2008: 160; Maiuri (1958: 11-13) believes that the he was more interested in the product being shipped than the act of shipping it. If the figure is not the shrine patron, the patron at least had a vested interested in the trade activity depicted.

[45] Cf. Fröhlich 1991: 263. As far as I am aware, dolphins appear on only two other shrines, a niche in IX.2.18 and an *aedicula* in IX.2.26 (Boyce 1937, nos. 399 and 404, respectively). The canal is unique.

[46] As Clarke (2003: 81) suggests.

[47] Cat. no. 20. This interpretation of the lower register is accepted by Fröhlich (1991, L29), who has studied the shrine paintings intensively. Clarke (2003: 78), however, considers the lower register "probably the painter's attempt at a landscape-genre scene."

[48] Boyce 1937, nos. 2 and 403.

paintings (in the former, a man pouring wine from an *amphora* into a *dolium*, and a

man leading two asses in the latter) and the function of the property supports the

interpretation that similar scenes in residences also represent professions. Similar

details on a smaller scale include a *dolium* that is the only unusual detail in the

traditional painting in workshop / house IX.9.g, again perhaps a symbol of the

patron's trade, and likewise the gladiatorial arms on the *aedicula* in house VIII.5.37,

a reminder perhaps of a favorite spectacle, if not one that the patron himself or a

family member sponsored.[49] The presence in the House of Umbricius Scaurus

(VII.16.12-15), a local *garum* producer, of black-and-white mosaic depictions of four

fish sauce vessels inscribed with his own advertisements supports the association of

personal details in the shrines with the shrine patrons.[50]

   With regard to the pseudo-*aedicula* in house I.14.7, though, the way in which

the profession scene had to be seen connects it to another layer of representation.

In Chapter 3, I used this shrine as an example of a strategy of intentional visibility.

Because of the layout of the residence, it would have been impossible to place the

shrine in the garden and have it be visible along the central visual axis through the

fauces, so the pseudo-*aedicula* is instead axially aligned opposite the corridor

leading from the atrium to the garden in the rear. The strategy gives it the

---

[49] Boyce 1937, nos. 371, 469. A noteworthy observation is that these small details – the appearance of the *paterfamilias* himself, the "profession scenes," and the signs and tokens of the patron – are associated with traditional paintings. The standardization of these compositions makes them ripe ground for customization. Furthermore, it seems to be the case that when other deities appear with the *Lares* and/or the *genius*, they can be linked to the particular circumstances of the patron or the property they are protecting. Vesta, the patron deity of bakers, appears flanked by the *Lares* in bakeries. The traditional painting in which Vulcan accompanies the single preserved *Lar* in house VII.4.59 is appropriate for a bronzeworker (see Boyce 1937, no. 283), just as Mercury and Bacchus are suitable for the traditional painting in bar I.8.8-9 (Fröhlich 1991, L8) in which they appear. It remains to be seen whether all companion deities can be so explained.

[50] Cooley and Cooley 2004, H20-29. Actual vessels bearing Scaurus' s advertising slogans have been found throughout the region.

maximum visibility possible through this corridor from the front of the house so that it is still (partly) visible to passersby. A person standing outside the property would most likely see that there was a shrine, and they might catch sight of the statuettes of the *Lares*, whose bronze may have glinted in the light provided by the lamp. The details of the river trade scene near the bottom of the shrine, however, would probably not be visible from the main doorway of the house. Thus, they are accessible only to those inside the home, whether the invited guest, or the *familia*, to reveal something of the patron and his hard work that led to his success. These are also the people who would understand the reference, because they are already familiar with the patron, or whom he wishes to become acquainted with, and perhaps impress. Random passersby would not have as much of an interest.

Clarke suggests that the slaves of the household who viewed the scene would see themselves in the figures helping the patron in his duties, and feel pride in the association.[51] His assertion of pride on their behalf may be too simplistic, but the representation is an example of the shrine communicating with another level of audience, that of the servile *familia* of the home. The representation immortalizes their role in the functioning of the household and emphasizes their place within it.

The actual choice of a patron deity would only be visible to viewers inside the property as well. A common way that imagery in Pompeian shrines communicated was through the selection of particular deities to be depicted in shrine paintings and painted niches, since a patron could choose to whom he wanted to dedicate his

---

[51] Clarke 2003: 81.

shrine.[52] This means that the deity of a shrine was customized to the shrine, its

context, or the patron in some way. In the shrine in I.14.7, Sarnus, the god of the

river Sarnus that formed Pompeii's harbor as it emptied into the Tyrrhenian Sea,

was a fitting choice for someone who relied on it. As only the Lares would have

been visible from afar, the patron was advertising his traditional piety, and saving

his personal connections for more intimate associates.

The people who had access to this room would also see a connection

between the pseudo-*aedicula* and the other shrine in the garden. The niche of the

pseudo-*aedicula* contains an image of the *genius* holding a *patera* and sacrificing at

an altar. The square niche on the west wall contains an image of a figure reclining

on a *kline* while holding a *patera* (Figure 4.10).[53] There is possible evidence of an

altar in front of the niche. The reclining figure appears multiple times in the shrine

of Pompeii; its identity is debated and its gender is ambiguous.[54] If the figure is

male and a type of *genius*, as seems most likely, since the representation does not fit

the known iconography of other deities, then there may be some resonance with the

genius in the pseudo-*aedicula*. It is unusual to have two shrines in such close

proximity, especially when one is as elaborate as the pseudo-*aedicula*.

Genii are useful for injecting oneself into a scene because, as protective

spirits, they could stand in for the person whom they watched over. This is a sense

in which the *genius familiaris* also represented the *paterfamilias* of a household,

though a shop owner could also depict his own *genius* in his shop. The image of a

---

[52] Fröhlich (1991: 38-39) and Giacobello (2008: 116) agree that the deity of the shrine was in some
way the choice of the patron and reflective of him.
[53] Cat. no. 27.
[54] See Charles-Laforge (2007: 166 n. 117) for a brief summary.

genius can convey different things about its patron depending on the context and situation of the shrine. For instance, the *genius* watching Venus Pompeiana's entrance in to the city in the shrine painting between shop IX.7.7 and house IX.7.6 seems to indicate the desire of its patron to express his devotion to the city's patron goddess and to associate himself favorably with her.[55]

Orr suggests that the *genius* is reclining on the marriage bed that traditionally stood in the *atrium*.[56] The *paterfamilias* sacrificing at the niche shrine, on the altar before it, follows the model of his own *genius*. Or, if we accept another interpretation of the figure, the model of his deceased ancestor depicted in the shrine.[57] The ancestor looks out at him, perhaps encouraging him to follow in the footsteps of a good Roman head of household. Either way, there is a double emphasis on the essence of the patron of the shrine, the *paterfamilias*, that is also evident in the representation of his profession. The images depict his trade and the assistance rendered by his slaves, along with the performance of appropriate sacrifice, and they celebrate harmonious familial relations, whether between husband and wife or between *familia* members past and present. Together, they symbolize the smooth functioning of the household. Whether he was successful or not, the patron chose to present himself as such. Perhaps the intention was to compensate for the small scale of his house.

---

[55] Fröhlich 1991, F64.
[56] Orr 1972: 115 n. 86. I put emphasis on "traditionally" – note the lack of such a feature in contemporary Roman houses (for the finds in Pompeian *atria*, cf. Allison 2004: 65-70, 121-22).
[57] The identification of the figure as a deceased ancestor has been espoused most recently by Charles-Laforge (2007).

The form of a shrine could also have a particular meaning or symbolic valence. Altars, for example, are particularly representative of the act of sacrifice. The presence or depiction of an altar in a shrine emphasizes the ritual action that took place. *Aediculae* conveyed an idea of wealth and status, of vigorously displaying the religious feelings of the *familia* it served.[58] Other shrines tried to adopt some of the associations of the *aediculae* (their general status as "special" or "fancy" if not their specific connotation) by placing a stucco *aedicula* frame around a niche or painting, or painted one around the central image of a painting. Interestingly, *aedicula* façades, unlike the *aediculae*, are found not just in domestic space. There are quite a number in commercial spaces, for instance. A stucco frame with a column at each side surrounds the snake painting behind the counter in bar/inn I.11.10-11 (Figure 4.11).[59] The presence of an *aedicula* façade in a commercial establishment seems to support Ellis' tentative extension to shrines of Leach's analysis that some mythological paintings in bars lent an air of "social refinement" and were a "pretension to elegance."[60] The apparent absence of *aedicula* facades from shrines in industrial space provides further evidence. Only three shrines with *aedicula* facades out of the 64 listed by Boyce and Orr are located in industrial space.[61]

2. Location within a property

---

[58] See Chapter 2.
[59] Cat. no. 4.
[60] Ellis (2005: 68, 81), discussing Leach (2004: 258-60).
[61] Boyce 1937: 101, Orr 1972: 152-72. This is not a statistical measurement. Calculating the relative frequencies of shrine type for each space type throughout the city is beyond the scope of this project, though I hope to pursue such an analysis in the future. Twelve of the listed shrines are located in commercial space.

Manipulating the location of a shrine within a property further nuanced the shrine's meaning for viewers, adding to the communicative value of its imagery and form. I mentioned previously that the traditional paintings carried a particular significance, especially when found in a domestic kitchen.[62] Overall they seem like standardized, stock scenes; they all make use of some combination of the same main characters, and employ the same general arrangement. But even though the scene is standardized, the location in the property is manipulated to draw out a deeper meaning for the space. The traditional paintings in inn/bar VI.4.3-4 and bar I.8.8-9, which also contains space that might have been living quarters or an inn, demonstrate this manipulation. [63]

The painting in VI.4.4, the portion of the property that functioned as an inn, depicts the *genius* sacrificing at a round altar, assisted by a tibicen who stands behind the altar (Figure 4.12). Two snakes approach, one from each side, and hold their heads above the altar. Two *Lares* flank this central scene. Boyce speculates that the space below might have once contained other figures, but there are none preserved and there is no record of them in earlier reports. In the painting in I.8.8-9, the *genius* sacrificing at a tripod and the flanking *Lares* are accompanied by Bacchus and his panther to the right, and Mercury to the left (Figure 4.13). Two snakes approach a round altar below. Certainly, both are notable for being found outside of domestic space.[64] But additionally, their placement within their

---

[62] See Chapter 2.
[63] VI.4.3-4: cat. no. 58; I.8.8-9 (Fröhlich 1991, L8).
[64] Out of the 126 paintings listed by Fröhlich (1991: 343-48) as depicting only the *Lares* and/or *genius*, with or without *penates*, 28 are located outside of houses (not including fragments or crossroads shrines). Eight are located in space of unknown type.

166

respective properties is noteworthy as well. Some non-domestic versions of

traditional paintings are located in kitchens, because the property is a house

converted to commercial or industrial use and the shrine predates that conversion,

or because of the connection with eating and food preparation was important to the

patron.[65] Others are placed in additional locations within properties. The painting

in VI.4.4 is set on the north wall of the front room, a position visible from the busy

area around the fountain to the south.[66] Likewise, the traditional painting in the bar

I.8.8-9 is highly visible, in a particularly confrontational way. It is set at the end of

the bar, where its presence is impossible to miss. Only nine of the 28 traditional

paintings found outside houses are potentially visible from the street.[67]

These two shrine paintings are more aggressive about advertising

themselves. The painting in VI.4.4 is oriented counter to traffic in order to appeal to

the people gathered at the fountain at the south end of *insula* VI.3.[68] It has red

outlining to make the image stand out.[69] The painting in I.8.8-9 also has red

outlining, in effect. Nail holes in the fresco above the central image reveal that

actual garlands were strewn across it,[70] giving the shrine a depth of texture that

protruded into the space of the bar. Furthermore, both have *aedicula* facades, which

attract attention, but also add in that aura of domesticity and social refinement (see

---

[65] See Chapter 2.
[66] See Chapter 3.
[67] The visibility is only potential because I have not been able to check all of the sight lines on-site in person.
[68] See Chapter 3.
[69] See Chapter 2.
[70] See Chapter 2.

above).[71] As one of the first features of the establishments visible to passersby, the

standardized traditional painting sets up a promise of expectation. Common as

communication through images was, the imagery of a business was likely one of the

factors in a customer's decision to frequent it. Presumably the patrons thought that

the traditional image made their establishments more appealing.

There are a number of possible reasons why the traditional image was

desired for these two properties, several or all of which could have resonated with

different viewers. The traditional paintings in these properties could reveal the

presence of domestic space, making the customer the guest of the household. Or

perhaps they made the guest of an inn feel like he or she was at home. Another

possibility, since the iconography of the traditional paintings was standardized, it

that it sent the message that it was safe to eat the food for sale at the bar, as the

business was under the watchful eye of its tutelary deities.

In Chapter 3, I discussed how strategies of intentional visibility could use the

location of a shrine not just to make sure a shrine was seen, but to make sure that it

was seen in a certain way, or by a certain group of people. The shrine painting in the

bakery in the rear of VI.3.3/27-28 reveals how this relates to the communication of

the shrines.[72] Previously, I described how this shrine painting was most easily

visible to those inside the rear mill room or entering the bakery through entrance

No. 27, so that it was geared primarily toward the users of the bakery, not everyone

---

[71] In the two study areas, there is no statistical connection between traditional paintings and *aedicula* facades. They are independent choices made by the patron. Of the 18 shrines with *aedicula* facades, five accompany 'decorative' paintings; three, sacrifice; two, traditional; two, other types; two, uncertain types; one, snake; and three accompany niches with no preserved or recorded painting.
[72] Cat. no. 55.

passing by.[73] These users would be the employees of the bakery and the owner;[74] the shrine would have an intimate meaning for them. Because it was an industrial space, there was not the same inducement to use the shrine as an advertisement as in a commercial space. As one of the first features noticed, along with the mills, it sets the atmosphere for the room – when we think about what areas of the property could *not* see the shrine (the west, possibly commercial, wing), the viewshed of the shrine unites the industrial area in to a discrete space, and emphasizes its separation. The space, and the shrine, were for the workers, and reflected their concerns regarding the production of their livelihood; the shrine was a part of how they communicated with one another within their space.

Furthermore, the location of a shrine within a property could give the shrine a particular charge in its relationship to other features. The example of house VI.15.5 shows how different ritual spaces could work together, and also how consideration of the specifics of the display, the artifacts, and knowledge of chronological context can nuance communication to viewers. The house is laid out in a typical *atrium*/garden plan, with the garden lying crossways to the *atrium* area (Figure 4.14). There are two identifiably religious areas in the house, in the *atrium* and in the garden. These ritual spaces gave each other different meanings when viewed in the context of each other's presence.

The first is a shrine of unusual form on the east wall in the northeast corner of the *atrium* (Figure 4.15). A thick stucco *aedicula* façade frames three niches with two altars set before them. Allison believes that the shrine was not functional at the

---

[73] See Chapter 3.
[74] See above.

time of the eruption. I think it is more likely that the shrine was in operation, however, since it was plastered and painted even when the walls of the *atrium*, one of the first aspects of the house a visitor would see upon entering, were not. The shrine was a prominent element of domestic religion, and the times were uncertain; a functional shrine just might provide stability and calm.[75]

The shrine contained an iron razor, a bronze coin, and a small ceramic cup.[76] An interesting tension is the relationship of the nature of these finds to the shrine itself. While the coin and small cup are paralleled in other shrines, and could have ritual significance (though they just as easily may not have), the razor is not known elsewhere, and does not have any known religious or ritual significance in Roman society.[77] Apparently, even despite the apparent operation of the shrine, it was also used for a more utilitarian purpose. Perhaps the ritual use was structured by time, and the non-ritual object removed at the appropriate moments. Or perhaps the razor did have a ritual function after all. It could have been symbolic of blood sacrifice. The northeast corner of the *atrium* contained a cupboard with domestic objects that Allison comments are reminiscent of assemblages found in other *atria*. Any furnishings in that corner would be in very close proximity to the shrine; perhaps ritual paraphernalia was stored there along with other items.

Directly back from the main entrance into the *atrium*, along a central axis of sight, is a garden that once contained a masonry *triclinium* that was reputedly

---

[75] The *aedicula* shrine in the peristyle of the House of the Gilded Cupids (VI.16.7) was similarly kept-up and furbished, despite the disarray of the peristyle garden. Cf. Allison's (2004) description of the space: http://www.stoa.org/projects/ph/rooms?houseid=21#450.
[76] Unless otherwise referenced, all archival data about the house is drawn from the companion website to Allison (2004): http://www.stoa.org/projects/ph/house?id=19.
[77] For coins, cups, and other objects in shrines, see Chapter 2.

destroyed during the restoration of the house. Behind the location of the former

triclinium is a painted pseudo-*aedicula* built against the west wall (Figure 4.16).

Inside were a fluted marble puteal with a cover, on which stood a marble statuette

of a nymph, and two blue-glazed duck-handled vases. Mau has suggested that the

pseudo-*aedicula* was to be a mosaic fountain. According to Allison, "in front stood a

tufa altar, which had been plastered and richly colored. Nearby were found six

green-glazed vases: one goose-shaped, two duck-shaped, one in the form of a

rooster, another in the form of an elephant, and one in the form of a silen. Other

finds in this location included a small terracotta altar in the form of a vase standing

on a square tile, and terracotta statuettes of a drunken woman, and a woman

suckling an old man. In the garden area there were also two marble Bacchic masks,

a small glass bottle, a pastry mold, bronze tweezers, a bronze lamp-stand, and a

bronze ring handle. Three small fountains, with waterspouts in the forms of a lion, a

serpent, and a hare, stood near the columns in front of Room i. Nearby were two

masonry bases, conceivably for statues, and near the northernmost fountain a

circular marble table was found."

As Allison reports, the finds in and around the pseudo-*aedicula* appear to

have been part of a garden display comparable to that in other gardens, such as in

the House of the Gilded Cupids and the House of the Silver Wedding. These objects

seem to have been collected on one side of the garden, a conclusion prompted by the

fact that other sculpture displays in gardens are more orderly, such as those in the

House of the Silver Wedding (V.2.i) and the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1/27). The

other objects—vessels, lamp stands, and implements—could conceivably have

formed the contents of a cupboard in the ambulatory. The general impression is

that the garden was in disarray. The loose finds, the display sculpture collected up

together, a destroyed *triclinium*, and the apparently unfinished state of the porticoes

all contribute to this interpretation. Allison particularly wonders why the statuary

and ornaments would have been put back into a damaged garden that was being

restored after the 62 CE earthquake. It seems that the activity in the garden

suggests a mixture of partial uses and incomplete alterations, which are perhaps the

result of an overlap of different disruptions.

Nevertheless, the placement of the altar in the pseudo-*aedicula* seems

deliberate, since it just as easily could have placed around it with the other artifacts

if the primarily intention was to store it. It thus seems to signify some sort of

religious association, even if it is one that is only represented, and not actual: the

structure may very well have been intended to be a fountain, and been used for

other purposes. (For example, it could have had a religious significance as a

fountain, with the nymph statuette as the image of its deity.) The presence of a

second altar in the area adds more weight to the idea that the pseudo-*aedicula* was

intended to be religious.

The noteworthy aspect of the religious spaces is the way in which they

interact with and play off of one another. The *atrium* shrine had ritual form with

apparent non-ritual use; the garden pseudo-*aedicula* did not resemble a shrine but

was furnished as if it were one. Both most likely functioned as ritual space, but what

matters in this context is the initial impression formulated by the viewer, since the

patron of the shrine structured his ritual topography to play off the expectations of

those viewers. The garden pseudo-*aedicula* and the *atrium* shrine constitute

parallel expressions of religiosity; they are rather like opposites of one another.

Each can be seen from the perspective of the other; the garden pseudo-*aedicula*,

display and utilitarian, yet religious, looking out towards the *atrium* shrine,

religious, yet utilitarian, looking in; each a dual sense of space.

From the perspective of a viewer, the *atrium* shrine cannot be seen as he or

she enters through the main door, but the garden fixture can be seen on a direct

visual axis. Perhaps this is why the sculpture was kept in the garden despite its

disarrayed state; it came out of a desire to have some sort of display, even a

disorganized one, to greet the visitor, to draw attention away from the unfinished

atrium. It is the axial view that triggers the visitor to perceive the garden pseudo-

aedicula as religious, since he or she would be conditioned to accept something like

it at the end of a *fauces-atrium-tablinum* view axis. Those who entered fully into the

property could see the *atrium* shrine and perhaps appreciate it as an unexpected

manifestation and grasp the interplay between the *atrium* and the garden. The

patron was able to manipulate the furnishings of his residence so that some

evidence of religious activity appeared to be visible at all times, while also causing

visitors to wonder at the actual presence of ritual activity.

3. Twinning

'Twinning' (or 'mirroring') describes the strategy employed by patrons who

draw on similarities to other shrines for communication. There is something in

common between the two or more shrines that sets them apart from other shrines

and connects them. Furthermore, the 'twin' shrines are usually in close

geographical proximity to one another. More research is needed on this topic in

terms of tracing the construction history of the shrines and the properties, and who

their patrons were at various points in the city's history – in order to determine if

the shrines were perhaps designed by the same person – but, for now, the

possibilities are suggestive.

Both house I.11.5/8 and house I.13.2 have shrines with arched niches in

similar positions in the *atrium*, left of the *fauces* as one enters and level with the

floor.[78] These are the only two examples that I know of both in this position and

with this form, and both are located along the *Via dell'Abbondanza* within two blocks

of one another. House VI.5.3/22 and house VI.5.10 each have a stepped *podium* in

the *atrium*.[79] The houses are separated by five properties along the *Vico di Modesto*.

House I.13.12/14 and house II.9.4 have shrines with imagery of identical

conception, if not execution (Figure 4.17).[80] Both are painted niches with *aedicula*

façades, adorned with flowers and associated greenery, interspersed with attributes

of deities. The style of the two paintings is almost identical as well. It is possible in

this case that the same person painted both shrines, but there is a plethora of

potential motivations underlying that decision.

In other examples, the connection is amplified by the similar layouts of the

properties in which the shrines are located. House I.16.3 and house I.16.4 both have

aedicula shrines in the northwest corner of the *atrium*, by the doorway to a

---

[78] Cat. nos. 3, 19.
[79] Cat. nos. 61, 63. In the latter, the first room encountered off the street would have functioned as an *atrium* despite its peristyle form.
[80] Cat. nos. 22, 43.

cubiculum (Figure 4.18).[81] The iconography is deployed in similar compositions.

Both are low access and visible from similar types of spaces (the *atrium*, the

surrounding *cubicula*, etc). There are stucco snakes in both spaces; in I.16.4, the

heads of the snakes in the *aedicule* are stucco, while in I.16.3, there is a stucco snake

on the rear wall of the small *viridarium* at the south end of the *atrium*.[82] The

properties are laid out along similar lines. It is interesting that I.16.3 seems like a

smaller, more cramped version of I.16.4.

House I.13.11 and house I.13.12/14 exhibit a similar architectural interplay,

in that the layout of I.13.11 seems like a compressed version of I.13.12/14. Both

have niche shrines with vegetal motifs on the west wall of the *atrium*, and the

properties are located side-by-side on the *Via di Castricio*.[83] The vegetal motif in the

shrine in I.13.11 even seems like a reduced version of that in the shrine in

I.13.12/14. House VII.6.3 and house VII.6.7 are also side-by-side, with shrines

demonstrating the same positioning and relationship to the viewer (Figure 4.19; see

also Figures 3.4 and 3.11).[84] The former has an *aedicula* shrine, and the latter a

niche shrine, but both are located in the garden at the rear of the property, along the

southern wall, and both are off-center in the symmetry of the house but still on axis

with an outside viewer.

It is not clear what the significance of these parallels is, but there may be a

deeper meaning. In all cases, it is the geographical proximity that increases the

---

[81] Cat. nos. 30, 32.
[82] The latter is cat. no. 31.
[83] Cat. nos. 21, 22.
[84] Cat. nos. 67, 68.

potential import of the similarity. Does the layout dictate the shrine connection?[85]

Do the similarities reflect general preferences rather than direct communication

between the shrines or their patrons? An argument against the similarities being

the result solely of the architectural construction of properties might be the overall

differences in the shrines in bakery VI.3.3/27-28 and house VI.3.7/25-26.[86] These

two properties are separated by only one main entrance along *Via Consolare*; their

architectural similarities, however, do not result in similar shrines. The shrines

have different forms, different imagery, and completely different audiences and

viewing perspectives.[87] The shrine painting in the former is oriented toward

viewers inside the bakery (see above), but the shrine painting, altar, and niche in the

latter are set up to appeal to viewers outside of the property, as well as those inside.

 If the connections between the shrine pairs are real, what messages are the

shrines sending? The connection perhaps can be explained by one shrine being

influenced by or imitative of the other shrine, or representing competition between

patrons. Maybe one patron saw a shrine in another person's home and demanded

something similar but better. The similarity could also represent a less direct

relationship, such as the shrines being patronized or constructed by the same

person. These are a few of the many questions yet to be answered.

IV. <u>Neighborhood Customization and Different Audiences for the Shrines: the</u>

<u>Relationship of the Shrines to the Character of Areas 1 and 2</u>

---

[85] Cf. Geertman (2007) on the similarities in layout of properties in V.1 at the time of the eruption, even though they were originally laid out in a different configuration.
[86] Cat. nos. 55, 56.
[87] This could be because one of the properties was adopted for use as a bakery.

The previous section showed how the shrines were adapted to the property in which they were located or to the patron who commissioned them. In this section, I discuss how the shrines were adapted to the area of the city in which they were found. Chapter 3, in addition to demonstrating how the shrines were sited with the intention of highlighting their visibility, revealed characteristics that differentiate the two study areas. Area 2, in general, has more low-access shrines in each type of property and displays, overall, a character that is less "neighborhood"-like than Area 1. There seems to be less desire to interact with the community or attract the attention of passers-by in Area 2, and the commercial properties seem designed for people to spend more time mingling inside, rather than stopping only briefly.

This section examines how the shrines in each area differ from one another, and what factors are at work in shaping the role of the shrines in each area. Certain characteristics of the shrines reflect the form of customization in each region: as a group, the shrines in Area 1 can be described as more outward-oriented, while the shrines in Area 2 are on the whole more inward-oriented. The different character of social interaction in each area is reflected in the shrines. The shift in focus for the shrines from one area to the other suggests that they targeted different audiences. This is key to understanding the messages they are intended to convey. I will suggest which shrines might be geared to each audience, and explore where customization is most likely to be found in different types of space.

A. *Shrine location within properties*[88]

1. Domestic space[89]

        In analyzing the rooms in which domestic shrines were located, it is clear

that they conform to the general patterns observed for shrines throughout the city

as a whole in being located primarily in the circulation areas of the house.[90]

Gardens are the dominant location in both areas, followed by *atria* and kitchens

(Figure 4.20).[91] Taken together, the uncovered spaces with vegetation (gardens,

peristyles, *viridaria*) are the most common locations in each study area as well

(Figure 4.21). Furthermore, kitchens and/or *atria* are the second-most comon

locations for shrines in each study area, just as they are overall. In Area 2, it is *atria*

that are the second-most common, and there are so few kitchen shrines that there

are more shrines in *cubicula*. In Area 1, it is the reverse. The kitchens have the

second largest number of shrines, and the *atria* are far less popular.[92] Breaking the

room distribution of the shrines down by accessibility gives us a clearer picture of

what is going on.

        Perhaps unsurprisingly, in both Area 1 and Area 2, high-access shrines are

mostly in gardens and other uncovered green spaces. The main difference lies is the

---

[88] See the Appendix 1 for explanation of room labels.

[89] Only three of the five types of space (domestic, commercial, and industrial) are discussed consistently because the remaining two either had too few examples to be significant (restricted communal space) or were too different in nature to provide a consistently worthwhile comparison (unrestricted communal space). This latter space type, however, is brought into the discussion at specific moments when it may shed valuable light on the analysis of the shrines.

[90] See Chapter 2.

[91] This simply means that there are more shrines in gardens than in any other room; it does not imply that the garden would necessarily be the first choice of location for a shrine in any individual case.

[92] I leave aside the category of "other" in my interpretation of the data because it does not represent a single type of room, but rather a number of different rooms that do not fit into the traditional typology. If each of these unusual rooms were given its own designation, the percentage of shrines in each would be very low.

relative percentages of shrines in *atria* (Figure 4.22). This room is a more popular

choice for shrines in Area 2. Among the low-access shrines, Area 2 shows a

continued preference for *atria* and gardens, while patrons in Area 1 preferred

cubicula and kitchens. (These two spaces are the second choices for Area 2, after

atria and gardens.) There are, in fact, many more kitchen shrines in Area 1 than in

Area 2.

The key findings are that, first, Area 1 has the most shrines situated at two

extremes of the spectrum: high-access garden shrines in the "public" area of a house

followed by low-access kitchen shrines in the "private" area of a house; low-access

cubiculum shrines being not too far behind (see also Figure 4.23). Indeed, in Area 1,

gardens almost always host only high-access shrines, while kitchens contain only

low-access shrines. The fact that low-access shrines in Area 1 are the only category

in which gardens or "green spaces" are not the dominant choice of location supports

the connection between kitchens and low-access shrines, and the relative popularity

of kitchens as a location for shrines in Area 1. The preferences for the two extremes

are followed by a secondary preference for high-access shrines in "public" areas.

Low-access shrines outside of kitchens are the least popular type of shrine in Area 1.

The general pattern for Area 2, in contrast, is more moderated. There are more low-

access shrines even in "public" spaces such as gardens and *atria* as well as in

cubicula and kitchens. The number of these shrines is followed by a smaller

concentration of high-access shrines in "public" areas. Area 2 shows more of an

emphasis on the "public" areas of the residence, for both high- and low-access

shrines. *Atria* in particular are much more favored as locations for shrines in Area 2

than in Area 1, and they are equally preferred for high- and low-access shrines,

while in Area 1, they house more high-access shrines.

The differences reveal that each area is characterized by a different focus. In

Area 1, by concentrating on gardens and high-access shrines in "public" areas,

patrons chose rooms that were easily adaptable spaces for making a shrine visible

to those passing by outside the property. Certainly, these rooms were no doubt

popular all around because they were a location to which the *familia*, visitors, and

outsiders all had some degree of access, whether physical or visual. Gardens are

proportionally a more popular choice of location for high-access shrines in Area 1,

however, which makes sense if the main goal is to appeal to passersby in that area:

gardens generally provide the best view of a shrine from outside a property.

Patrons in Area 2 were more concerned with viewers once they entered the

property. Guests and other visitors who would be invited into the more publicly-

accessible areas like *atria* and gardens would be able to appreciate the high number

of low-access shrines in these spaces.[93] Certainly, there were high-access shrines in

gardens in Area 2 as well, but the proportions tell a clear story: in Area 2, 30% of the

shrines in gardens are high-access, and 70% are low-access, while in Area 1, 75%

are high-access shrines, but only 25% are low-access shrines (Figure 4.24). The

emphasis in Area 2 is less on using the shrines to call attention to a property, and

more on interacting with the viewers once they have arrived inside.

The preference among patrons in Area 1 for more kitchen shrines is also

significant, suggesting that, if we take into consideration the traditional association

---

[93] Note that there are far fewer low-access shrines in these rooms in Area 1, though there are somewhat more in peristyles.

of the hearth with the *Lares*, homes in this area were more "traditionally" family-oriented or at least presented themselves as such. "Invited" guests were less likely to visit the kitchen, and so their interaction with these shrines is not likely to explain their numbers. Indeed, perhaps part of the reason why there are fewer kitchen shrines in Area 2 is that residents in that area of the city preferred to locate their shrines in the "public" areas of the house where they were accessible.[94]

In conclusion, the emphasis in Area 2 is on locations which guests and other visitors accepted into a property were most likely to visit, while in Area 1 the emphasis is on locations that passersby were most likely to see, as well as on "private" kitchens. In Area 2, the concern for greater visibility is directed toward those who enter into properties, rather than toward those who pass by.

2. Commercial and industrial space

There is a telling pattern that emerges when we examine the relative popularity of shrines in all room types in each area, in all types of space (Figure 4.25). A significant quantity of room types is typically associated with commercial space: counter rooms and front rooms. There are a small number of industrial shrines in the latter room-type, but otherwise they are found only in commercial space. In Area 1, front rooms are the most common room choice for all shrines in domestic, commercial, industrial, and communal space. Counter rooms are the third-most common choice in Area 1. Given that kitchens are the second-most common choice in this area, Area 1 once again reveals itself to be a region of

---

[94] It is worth noting, however, that kitchen shrines could be visible from outside the kitchen, and a number – particularly the paintings – are rather prominently positioned as to seem deliberate; see below for further discussion.

extremes: the most common locations for shrines are highly-accessible (primarily commercial) counter and front rooms on the one hand, and on the other, secluded (primarily domestic) kitchen shrines. In Area 2, counter and front rooms are tied as the sixth-most common choice along with peristyles. It is telling that interior rooms, the category representing rooms in commercial and industrial space that do not have access the street, are the third-most popular choice. These rooms must be entered in order for the shrines in them to be seen.

When commercial space is examined separately in each area, further differences emerge. In Area 1, not unexpectedly, counter rooms and front rooms are the location of the vast majority of commercial shrines (Figure 4.26). In Area 2, however, while counter and front rooms are also the most common, there is more diversity in the rooms chosen for shrines. Here gardens are a close third in preference for shrine location. Interestingly, most of these garden shrines (and most of the shrines in locations other than counter and front rooms) are low-access, while the counter and front room shrines are high-access (Figure 4.27). (All but one of the commercial shrines in Area 1 are high-access, owing to the nature of the rooms chosen for them. This fact makes the association of highly-visible shrines with commercial space much stronger and more significant in Area 1.) Area 2 commercial spaces seem to focus on the rooms interior to its properties, such as gardens, where customers would spend time while eating or socializing. This tendency contrasts with that of the commercial spaces in Area 1, which are primarily focused on addressing people passing by or approaching the properties.

Based on the limited data that are available for industrial spaces, Area 1 has more shrines in front rooms and mill rooms, while Area 2 has more shrines in interior rooms and gardens (Figure 4.28). This is in keeping with the higher percentage of high-access shrines in industrial space in Area 1, where 50% of industrial shrines are high-access, as compared to 15% in Area 2.[95] Many industrial shrines in both areas, however, are low-access and located in rooms of indeterminate use in the rear of the property (Figure 4.29). As noted in Chapter 3, viewers were less likely on the whole to interact with industrial shrines; the industrial shrines are inward-oriented by nature. The high-access industrial shrines in Area 1 seem more prominent and deliberately placed, however, in lines of sight that reveal them. Insofar as we can judge from the limited evidence, the industrial shrines fit into the overall picture of Area 1 as more outward-oriented, and Area 2 as more inward-oriented.

B. The significance of shrine type in customization

As discussed previously, shrines took a number of different forms (e.g. niches, paintings, *aediculae*) and employed a number of features in various ways. For instance, a portable altar could be set on the ground in front of a shrine, or embedded in the wall of the shrine itself. I have also discussed how different forms carried certain associations. It is fruitful to explore these forms further – images,[96]

---

[95] The relationship between space type and shrine accessibility is statistically significant (chi-square 0.000).
[96] This category includes any sort of decoration, not just figures or even vegetation, but also niches painted in solid colors (which were more appealing to look at than plain white grounds) and images in mosaic or stucco. I have only taken into consideration the presence or absence of such decoration, however, not how much there is on any particular shrine.

aediculae, and altars for what they can contribute to our understanding of Areas 1 and 2.

1. Images

Images attract attention because of the interest they inspire in the scene represented and also because their colors engage the eye more than a niche with only a solid white ground. Overall, 44.6% of the shrines have some evidence for images (Figure 4.30).[97] More shrines in Area 1 have images than in Area 2 (Figure 4.31). This is unexpected. If anything, one would expect there to be more images in Area 2, since it has been more recently and better excavated.[98] The higher number of images in Area 1 might suggest that in Area 2 the shrine patrons were less concerned with attracting people's attention. Alternatively, or in addition, patrons in Area 1 might have adapted to their busier, more outward-oriented locale by including more evocative and communicative elements in their shrines in order to get people's attention.[99]

---

[97] An issue to keep in mind for analyses of all shrine types is that originally there most likely were many more examples of each. A number of natural and man-made processes have impacted the shrines and decreased their numbers (see Chapter 1). Some types, such as paintings, are likely more vulnerable.

[98] It is the case that there are more recorded artifacts from Area 2.

[99] One caveat is that we have incomplete data on other classes of evidence associated with shrines that might complicate this picture – particularly statuettes, which surely also would attract attention. At least 40 shrines have been found with artifacts and/or statuettes *in situ*, but at least 27 groups of artifacts have been found in the streets or isolated in other spaces in properties (data derived from Boyce 1937, Orr 1972, and Kaufmann-Heinimann 1998). These latter groupings were likely dropped as the Pompeians fled the city during the eruption (see Chapter 1). Proportionally, there are more niches in Area 2, and we cannot forget that there might have been attractive statuettes in all of these niches.

Several patterns support the latter suggestion. It is evident that high-access

shrines have images more often than low-access shrines (Figure 4.32).[100] We saw in

Chapter 3 that there is a connection between high-access shrines and busier streets.

Furthermore, the images are themselves connected to the busier streets (Figure

4.33); they are among the shrine types that cluster most often on busy streets. The

data seem to suggest that the images in these shrines were particularly good for

interacting with viewers.

There are more interesting patterns when we look at the specific spaces that

the images appear in. Most images appear in the form of paintings and painted

niches.[101] Overall, it seems that there are more painted niches in domestic and

commercial space, while industrial and unrestricted communal space have more

paintings (Figure 4.34). The percentages of painted niches and paintings in

domestic space in Area 1 are very similar, but including the factor of the

accessibility of the shrines into the analysis below sheds revealing light.

This balance between painted niches and paintings might suggest that

painted niches were preferred for communicating more than paintings, since, as

discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, domestic and commercial spaces both hosted more

interactions with viewers and visitors than industrial spaces, which were focused

more on the people who worked within the space. The presence of more painted

niches in industrial space in Area 1 than in Area 2 similarly ties into the greater

---

[100] The fact that images are the only shrine type to have a statistically significant relationship with accessibility only strengthens this connection.
[101] The images as a whole have a less statistically significant relationship with space type and accessibility than the shrine types that comprise them, painted niches and paintings, so I am discussing only the two imagery-related shrine types in more detail. It is not unexpected in this case that the images as a category of shrine type have a weaker relationship with space type since, beyond even the relatively small sample size, the shrine types that comprise it have diverging patterns.

tendency for the industrial shrines in Area 1 to be placed within lines of sight that was discussed in Chapter 3. While unrestricted communal space provided opportunities for the most varied range of interactions, I believe there is a reason why there are more paintings than painted niches in this type of space, as the analysis of the type of scene depicted in the paintings will show (below). Large paintings are also more suited to the open outdoor setting and groups of people that accompanied compital ritual.[102]

Including the accessibility of the shrines in the analysis reveals patterns that fit into the trends that emerged above from the analysis of the distribution of shrines by room. First of all, in Area 1 it is the number of domestic low-access paintings that causes the different overall relationship between painted niches and paintings in domestic space in; there are slightly more paintings in this category (Figure 4.35). (Further analyses below will suggest the reason for this.) Otherwise, painted niches are preferred for domestic and commercial space, especially for high-access shrines in Area 1, and especially for high-access commercial shrines in this area. The percentages of painted niches in high- and low-access shrines in Area 2 are less distributed; the percentage of painted niches in low-access commercial shrines in Area 2 provides a particular contrast to Area 1. These patterns further support the growing picture that shrines in Area 1 were more focused on passersby than those in Area 2, and that patrons of shrines Area 2 were more concerned with the viewers who entered and spent time in a property, especially commercial ones.

---

[102] That all of the unrestricted communal shrines in Area 1 have paintings, while some in Area 2 do have painted niches, is likely due to the absence of vicinal shrines in Area 1. Vicinal shrines were niches. They also seem to have been less elaborately painted than compital shrines, and thus traces of their images, if they existed, have not been noticed or recorded as diligently.

One final observation based on the specific rooms that the types of images are found in clarifies an aspect of the situation even further. In accordance with the overall findings for space type, in the different rooms in domestic and commercial space there are more painted niches then paintings (Figure 4.36). The big exception is the kitchens. Only one painted niche appears in a kitchen (in Area 2). The paintings in kitchens are those in low-access domestic shrines mentioned above.[103]

2. *Aediculae*

The distribution of the *aediculae* in the two study areas reveals an additional facet of the character of Area 1. There are no non-domestic *aediculae* anywhere, so they are intimately connected to the domestic sphere (Figure 4.37).[104] There are more *aediculae* in Area 1, in both high- and low-access domestic shrines. When *aediculae* do appear in Area 2, they are only in low-access spaces. Their suggestion of grandeur, availability of resources, and traditional piety seems to be more important to patrons in Area 1, because there are more of them there than in Area 2. In Area 1 they are located most often in peristyles and gardens, whereas they also appear in the *atria* in Area 2 (Figure 4.38). This shrine type thus is associated with the "public" areas of the house – those that people enter into in Area 2, and in Area 1, spaces that are most easily seen from outside the house. In both areas, though, there are overall more low-access than high-access *aediculae*, and so they can be likened in significance to the paintings in Area 1, which are predominately

---

[103] In the cross-tabulation of shrine type, room type, and accessibility, grouped by study area, paintings in low-access shrines in both areas are one of the few statistically significant correlations (Area 1: chi-square 0.048; Area 2: chi-square 0.007). In this analysis, 80% of low-access kitchen shrines in Area 1 have paintings, while 60% of low-access kitchen shrines in Area 2 have paintings.
[104] This is in accordance with observations by other scholars (see Chapter 2).

associated with low-access kitchen spaces and are associated with traditional

notions of piety, as an analysis of their scene type reveals (see the discussion of

below of the types of scenes in shrine imagery).

3. Altars

This facet of the character of Area 1 could perhaps also be related to the

patterns of altar distribution. Other than in the unrestricted communal shrines, the

two highest concentrations of altars are in high-access domestic shrines in Area 1,

and in low-access commercial shrines in Area 2 (Figure 4.39).[105] (Indeed, there are

no high-access commercial altars anywhere in Areas 1 and 2.) The sacrifice itself, as

represented by an altar, the most basic act of piety, is displayed as significant to the

(domestic) properties of Area 1. In fact, overall, there are equal proportions of

altars in domestic shrines in Areas 1 and 2, but when their accessibility is taken into

account, the predominance of altars in high-access domestic shrines in Area 1 is

unmistakable: these altars are more outward-oriented. Thus, there are more altars

in high-access shrines and in domestic properties in Area 1; in Area 2, there are

more altars in low-access shrines and in commercial properties. This also

corresponds with the general picture of the differences of emphasis in the

commercial properties of both areas.

There also seems to be a particular connection between altars and all "green

spaces," among both high- and low-access shrines, in domestic, commercial, and

industrial space (Figure 4.40). Very few altars are not found in these gardens or

---

[105] There is only one example of a low-access commercial shrine in Area 1, and there is some doubt that it is commercial, so the presence of an altar in this shrine is not significant enough for this analysis.

viridaria. Gardens are of course spaces that are easily visible and accessible from multiple perspectives, but one wonders if the fact that it is "green space" is more important. Altars, out of all the shrine types, are linked to the need for a suitable location for making burnt offerings.[106] Altars are appropriate in unrestricted communal shrines for this same reason.

C. The impact of the imagery associated with shrines

The type of imagery depicted in the painted niches and paintings can give us a more detailed impression of the significance of the shrines. Overall, non-figural and then traditional image types are the most common, followed by sacrifice and snake paintings, with other image types the least common (Figure 4.41).[107] Each study area generally follows the same distribution, except that there are more sacrifice, snake, and other paintings in Area 2 (Figure 4.42). These results are somewhat surprising. Non-figural and traditional image types, along with snake images, are seemingly the most standardized, while sacrifice and other image types are more varied, and would seem to allow more leeway for unique choices of content. The higher proportional numbers of these types of images in Area 2 would suggest that perhaps the shrines there are more customized than in Area 1. This appears counter-intuitive, given the greater focus of patrons in Area 1 on addressing the hubbub of people passing by a property rather than the more limited number of viewers entering one.

---

[106] Cf. Chapter 2.

[107] The relatively small size of my sample does not allow me to subject the content of the images to a more detailed analysis than that of their general type. See Appendix 1 for further description of these categories. The potential economic factors behind the choice of image type is worth investigating in more detail in a future study.

1. Domestic space

A look at the different spaces in which various image types appear adds detail to the picture. In domestic space, in both Areas 1 and 2, non-figural image types are the most popular, though there are more in Area 1 (Figure 4.43). In Area 1, this preference is closely followed by a secondary preference for traditional images, and sacrifice images are a distant third choice. In Area 2, sacrifice images seem to be the second choice, followed by the full range other possibilities. The choices are representative of the different interests of patrons in each area. The shrine patrons in Area 1 seem more interested in expressions of traditional piety, which echoes the patterns of *aedicula* distribution discussed above. It is interesting to note that there are no snake scenes in Area 1, but they are just as common as traditional images in Area 2. Perhaps this is further proof that the traditional *Lares* are not as important in Area 2. However, it is unfortunate that we do not have sufficient data on the artifacts associated with shrines to allow us to take into account the number of statuettes of the *Lares* in shrines in Area 2. Almost all of the other image types are in domestic shrines in Area 2, further supporting the sketch of that area.

When we consider the accessibility of the shrines in domestic space, the patterns support the general picture (Figure 4.44). The high-access shrines in Area 1 are particularly weighted to non-figural image types, while the low-access shrines in Area 1 are split between non-figural and traditional types. The concentration of traditional images in the low-access domestic spaces strongly corresponds to the

paintings in low-access kitchen shrines in Area 1 domestic space discussed above.[108]

In Area 2, there is greater diversity of image type particularly among the low-access shrines. The high-access shrines in Area 2 have more sacrifice image types, and, overall, the domestic space is more customized.

2. Commercial and industrial space

The distribution of image types in commercial spaces also strongly favors non-figural images, especially in high-access shrines (Figures 4.43, 4.44). The second-most common image types for high-access shrines are traditional and snake images, the two most standardized choices for image type. Patrons of low-access commercial shrines in Area 2 preferred a more varied range of images. Patrons' choices for image types in industrial shrines are similar to those for commercial shrines. Shrines in industrial spaces have only snake and traditional images (Figures 4.43, 4.44). It could be that the snakes are seen as protection for producing goods and foodstuffs – but, if so, then why do they not also appear regularly near food preparation areas in commercial spaces? It seems that neither the commercial nor industrial shrines are particularly customized.

This is unexpected, particularly for the commercial shrines, given the interest in highlighting them, especially in Area 1, as discussed in Chapter 3, and the

---

[108] In the cross-tabulation of image type and room type grouped by study area and accessibility, the low-access shrines in kitchens were the only ones statistically correlated with image type (Area 1: chi-square 0.042; Area 2: chi-square 0.011). In both Area 1 and Area 2, 100% of the low-access kitchen shrines with images were the traditional image type. This connection may be one reason why painted niches are more prevalent in other types of spaces – perhaps it is just because the paintings are so associated with traditional scenes that patrons did not think of using paintings for other types of scenes (see below for further discussion on the popularity of painted niches). These traditional paintings are also the ones that trend toward being placed in the kitchen so as to be visible outside of it, allowing them to interact with viewers other than those members of the *familia* that enter the kitchen.

cluttered visual atmosphere of the street from which they would have been viewed.[109] The painted shop signs on the facades flanking the entrances into commercial spaces were certainly tailored to the particular character of the business and its proprietor, and they often used religious imagery.[110] Why not also make the most of the prominent placement of the shrines in commercial space in order to communicate something about the establishment as well? Is it the simple presence of the shrine that mattered? Or were these shrines customized in more subtle ways? Since standardized images like the traditional paintings can include small differences that encode meaning, as discussed in the first part of the chapter, it is possible that the range of non-figural motifs had more significance than scholars have yet determined. The greatest diversity in commercial space occurs, again, among Area 2 low-access shrines: those located in places into which the customers of a commercial establishment would enter and presumably linger.[111]

3. Unrestricted communal space

The scene types in the unrestricted communal shrines are an interesting case. They are high-access by definition, but unlike high-access shrines in other types of space, they have a good number of traditional paintings along with other less variable types of scenes like snake and non-figural images. It should be noted that the non-figural images in communal shrines in the study areas are linked to vicinal shrines; compital shrines throughout the city are connected primarily to

---

[109] Cf. Kellum 1999, whose work is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, and Hartnett 2003, *passim*.
[110] Cf. Fröhlich's (1991) catalogue of façade paintings.
[111] The nicely-decorated walls that do appear in bars are associated with both larger examples and dining areas (Ellis 2005: 82) – assets which could encourage or accommodate lingering.

traditional and snake images. Other than in these communal shrines, traditional paintings are found most often in secluded kitchens. Unrestricted communal shrines, representing large groups as they do, can better appeal to everyone if they are more standardized.

4. The overall picture

The main patterns that emerge from my analysis, then, are that there was an association between high-access shrines and non-figural images, a greater diversity in low-access shrines (particularly in Area 2), and a connection between traditional paintings and low-access kitchen shrines in Area 1. The first two of these patterns apply to both domestic and commercial space. In contrast, the patrons of domestic shrines in Area 2 are the least interested in standardization. Area 2 domestic shrines have the lowest numbers of non-figural and traditional image types, compared to shrines in Area 1 domestic space, and even to shrines in commercial space in both areas. The image types in Area 1, however, privilege a smaller range of standardized images.

It seems that standardization was preferred in Area 1, in which shrines were outwardly-oriented, in order to accomplish the goal of appealing to viewers external to a property. Possibly a "norm" of expected imagery was more familiar to external viewers and functioned as an assurance that all was as it should be: for example, that the *familia* of the house was a proper Roman one, or the proprietor of the bar ensured that his establishment was a safe one to frequent. Patrons of domestic shrines, the heads of their households, also preferred standardized images in the domestic space traditionally considered the heart of the home and the *Lares* – the

hearth – that spoke intimately of the *familia* both to itself and, at times, to invited visitors.

Area 2 commercial space also contained high-access shrines with apparent standardization. Perhaps if the commercial property was rented from the owner of the house to which it was attached, and if that owner had the responsibility of providing the space with a shrine and maintaining it, then another explanation for a standardized image might be that it meshed with a series of business ventures that might occupy that location over time. A preference for standardization in these spaces may account in part for the fact that painted niches are more common than paintings, apart from domestic low-access shrines. Painted niches with non-figural images do not take up a lot of room, and are not as obtrusive as other shrine types with large paintings or *aedicula* facades or protruding altars. The proprietors apparently did not want their shrines to be *too* obvious or flashy; a degree of generic-ness was appropriate.

Conversely, in Area 2, in which shrines were more inwardly-oriented, domestic space and low-access commercial space accommodated more customizable images, especially in the spaces into which guests were invited, perhaps to express a sentiment particular to the patron of the property; they spoke to a more restricted, chosen audience.

V. <u>Summary and Conclusions</u>

Customization was a useful means for patrons to employ in using their shrines for communication. As changes to shrines over time, and unusual or unique elements in their construction or iconography reveal, particular details of shrines,

even small ones, were significant in constructing the meaning of a shrine. If the

form of a shrine or the scene that it represented did not matter in some way, there

would be no reason to make the changes that we can detect. Even if the changes are

due to shifts in prevailing trends throughout the city as a whole, that is significant

for revealing to us that the patron was interested in adhering to those trends.

Shrines communicated messages, and one facet of understanding that

communication is realizing that they were directed toward different audiences, and

that the messages might differ according to the audience. There were different

levels of viewers who interacted with the shrines in different contexts in different

types of properties. This is why patrons used the strategies of intentional visibility

discussed in Chapter 3: to make the messages of some of their shrines available to

the audiences who were not privy to the inmost recesses of a property. Various

aspects of a shrine could be manipulated for communication. A shrine's appearance,

location, relationships with other shrines, and iconography (both customized and

standardized) were the most common aspects employed in this way; a shrine's

interaction with its entire context was important.

Beyond being adapted to the specific properties in which they were located,

however, the shrines reflect trends related to the area of the city in which they

appear. The types of rooms the shrines are found in, and the types of shrines and

scenes present in each area, are revealing of their different characters. Area 1,

which has more images than Area 2, is an area of extremes, where the focus was on

outwardly-oriented shrines with standardized images, especially in commercial

space, and traditional paintings in domestic kitchens. The distribution of *aediculae*

and altars in the two areas strengthens the impression that the patrons in Area 1

placed more emphasis on traditional expressions of piety. Area 2, in contrast, is

more inwardly-focused, with more customized shrines in the inner spaces of

domestic and commercial properties. Even the industrial spaces in Area 2 are less

aggressive than those in Area 1. We also see that painted niches are more popular

than paintings, except for low-access domestic shrines. Essentially, we see more

customization in the shrines directed towards the audiences that are invited into

certain rooms in domestic space and that pass time inside commercial spaces.

These audiences are neither the most intimate to nor most removed from the patron

of the shrine, and they have the time to spend contemplating the shrines. The fact

that the details of the painted river trade scene on the pseudo-*aedicula* in the garden

of I.14.7 are reserved for those who are present in the garden is an example of just

this type of interaction.

The question remains: what accounts for the differences between the two

areas of the city? A change in ritual practice over time is not likely to be the answer.

Even assuming – in the most extreme scenario – that all the shrines in Area 1 were

original to the construction of the properties in that area, in the 4th century BCE at

the earliest, and did not undergo significant alteration during their entire existence,

and that all the shrines in Area 2 were redone at some point during the period of

earthquakes from 62 CE until the eruption in 79 CE, we are looking at most at a ca.

350 year difference.[112] It is highly unlikely that all, or even a majority, if any, of

shrines in Area 1 date to the early 4th century. Chiaramonte argues that the earliest

---

[112] See Chapter 1 for the chronology of the urban plan. Multiple earthquakes: Allison 2004: 17-19; Descoeudres 2007: 18.

date for houses anywhere in the site is 3rd century BCE, and Carafa states that "no standing Pompeian house is datable with certainty before the 2nd century BCE."[113] Furthermore, Jones and Robinson, who have conducted stratigraphic excavation in the area, date the large *atrium* houses VI.1.7/24-26 and VI.1.10/23 to ca. 200 BCE at the earliest, in line with their proposal that the terracing and plot division that preceded the standing architecture we see today date to ca. the end of the 3rd or the early 2nd century BCE.[114] The oldest shrine paintings catalogued by Fröhlich date to the early Augustan period.[115]

Moreover, Roman religion and ritual were conservative,[116] making it unlikely for there to have been a change in ritual practice *per se*. Nor is it likely that one area of the city would actually have worshiped differently from another area of the city, even if one set of shrines was constructed at a later date. If chronological development was a factor at all in the differences between the shrines in Areas 1 and 2, it would have to indicate a change in attitude rather than practice – a change in the interpretation of the ritual or the communicative use of the shrines, rather than in the performance of the ritual itself. Any such change in attitude would also have to be localized enough, or not important enough, to cause patrons in Area 1 to adapt their shrines to the changing times. Thus, the shift would have to be significant only to Area 2 patrons, or not be very significant at all.

---

[113] Chiaramonte 2007: 146; Carafa 2007: 66, citing M.T. D'Alessio, "La nascita della casa ad atrio in un centro italico medio-tirrenico: il caso di Pompei," in M. Tosi and M. Pearce (eds), *Papers from the EAA Third Annual Meeting at Ravenna* 1997, vol. II, *Classical and Medieval*, *BAR* i.s. 718, 1998, pp. 81-5.
[114] Jones and Robinson 2007: 391.
[115] Fröhlich 1991: "frühaugusteisch" (L29, L111) and "die frühe Phase Dritter Stil" (L25, L41b), so ca. 31-10 BCE.
[116] Cf. Schultz 2006: 12.

Rather, it seems most likely that the differences simply relate to the different characters of each area, such as those detected in relation to the traffic patterns discussed in Chapter 3, that encouraged shrine patrons to communicate the audiences that they wished to address.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The small-scale shrines of Pompeii were significant components in the network of social interactions that bound ancient Pompeians together. They were communicative tools, and two of the strategies by which they were used to communicate were intentional visibility and customization. In the process of transmitting a shrine's message to viewers, its content, including its appearance, location, and iconography, was filtered and modified by the circumstances of viewing. These messages of shrines provide a window for us into how shrine patrons constructed their identities, and what they considered important to convey to others. The use of the shrines in this way allows us access to the intimate role that ritual and religious values played in a variety of spheres of day-to-day life in an urban environment.

In this study of shrine communication, I have been more comprehensive than previous scholars who have dealt with shrines, and in my interpretations, I have employed the principles of social art history. The combination of detailed investigation of the physical situation of a shrine, with consideration of not just who interacted with the shrine but how they interacted with it, forms the framework of my approach. I see the shrines as one component of an active dialogue among patrons, viewers, and their surroundings.

Pompeian patrons participated in this dialogue by manipulating space to affect the way that shrines were seen: they intentionally made them visible to more than the core group of ritual participants. They also played with lighting and probably rearranged fixtures like doors, curtains, and furniture to control the view of a given shrine. Shrine patrons ensured that shrines were accessible in different ways by different groups of people.

The ways in which patrons manipulated space and their shrines were, in turn, shaped by the type of space in which the shrines were located. The strategies of intentional visibility employed by patrons, for example, related to the types of interactions that took place in each type of space, because each type of space hosted different types of social and commercial networks. The type of space indicates the potential range of persons who came into contact with the shrine. This is an important element of our understanding of the shrines' function as extra-ritual objects, and one that previous studies have tended to overlook by not studying the shrines in different types of space as a single phenomenon.

I have classified the shrines by type of space, not strictly by property type, to account for the sometimes multifunctional nature of properties in Pompeii; commercial and industrial areas, for instance, can exist in otherwise domestic properties and *vice versa*. I have used all available evidence in classifying the spaces. Such evidence includes the architecture and features in the room that suggest how the space was used, but also any known assemblages discovered in the space to suggest its use for multiple purposes or for a purpose other than what was primarily "intended".

Besides suggesting a distinct set of interactions with a shrine, each type of space also connects to a different type of patron, who had control over the creation of the shrine, though others most likely had some influence on its construction. In domestic space, for example, the patron was the *paterfamilias*, who had charge of the ritual activities of the household. In commercial and industrial space, the patron could be the proprietor of the establishment, or the owner of the property in which the business operated: but even in the latter circumstance the business owner most likely had some input into the appearance of the shrine. Patrons linked the shrines to themselves by customizing them to their particular identities and interests. We can detect customization in changes made to shrines over time, as well as in unique or unusual details. Such unusual details are the inclusion of references to the *paterfamilias* himself in the shrines in house I.14.7. The depiction of his profession and his servile helpers on the pseudo-*aedicula* in the garden was reserved for the eyes of his friends and favored guests who would understand its subject when they saw it. Along with the various depictions of *genii* in the garden, the shrine advertised the smooth functioning of the household.

Besides intentional visibility and customization, shrine patrons had other ways of communicating through their shrines. These might include selecting a form or image with a particular resonance. Patrons who installed traditional paintings in non-domestic contexts, in bars and inns for example, relied on the composition's association with domestic space to communicate a range of possible messages, from making the guest feel at home, to reassuring them about the safety of the

establishment and its food. In these instances, the standardization of the shrine images in itself provides the message.

Patrons could also use their shrines to communicate by placing the shrine in a significant space, or setting it up in relation to other features or shrines in the property, or referencing another shrine similar to their own. Context is essential for determining exactly what the shrine was meant to communicate. Although we cannot know everything about a shrine, we can learn much by reconstructing as much as possible of its original setting. My work takes a step forward in bringing together and integrating the different pieces of evidence for the shrines and their contexts.

There were patterns to shrine construction and location, but we must recognize the ways in which patrons used and played on the expectations generated by the viewers' knowledge of those patterns, for, in manipulating these patterns, patrons created and communicated their own individualized messages to viewers. Viewers' familiarity with seeing a shrine in the primary axial view from the *fauces* of a residence was integral to the manipulation of the patron of house VI.15.5 in blurring the boundaries between religious and non-religious display. The patron used viewers' impressions of both the shrines in the *atrium* and the garden of his house to evoke different notions of religiosity. The interrelated meanings of multiple shrines in the same property and how they nuance each other's messages is one issue related to shrines that I focus on here for the first time. Rather than interpret the presence of multiple shrines in a property as simply indicative of

different groups of worshippers, we can understand multiple shrines as indicative of the patron's desire to communicate different messages.

A type of shrine communication that merits further study is the phenomenon of "twinning." Piquant similarities between certain shrines in relatively close geographic proximity, which are unusual and thus connect them and set them apart from other shrines, suggest that shrines in localized areas were not created in a vacuum. Shrines may very well have been produced with the knowledge of other shrines in the vicinity, and with attention to those who might see them in this context, and also with awareness of the communal response to shrines. In designing their own shrines, ancient Pompeians engaged with, and were influenced by, the shrines they encountered in diverse contexts. Further study of this phenomenon might shed light on artistic practice and the role of the artist *versus* that of the patron in designing shrines.

The importance of context is also seen when examining the shrines in specific areas of the city. We can study the shrines' connections to the broader community, since they are in a sense customized to the character of each area of Pompeii explored in this dissertation. The patterns of their usage as communicative tools differ in each area, and reflect different intentions on the part of the shrine patrons.

In choosing the two study areas, I wanted to select areas in which there would have been a range of people who saw the shrines and received the messages that their patrons contrived. These areas are defined by groupings of properties, activities, and people who lived in, worked in, and visited the localized region: in

short, they were neighborhoods in the general sense of the term. The study areas

have spaces through which a number of people moved on a daily basis and include a

number of destinations that drew people (e.g. shops, bars, bakeries, brothels) and

thereby facilitated encounters with shrines. Rather than choosing only busy, high-

traffic areas of the city, however, I selected areas with both high- and low-traffic

streets. Both categories of street traffic are desirable for a comparison of the impact

of the level of activity on the accessibility of the shrines to ancient Pompeians other

than their creators, as this has implications for the use of shrines as communication

tools.

Basing my analysis on two distinct areas of the city also provided me with a

sample set of data for statistical analyses. I quantify the patterns I detect in the

placement, orientation, and accessibility of the shrines, and in their form and

imagery, in order to create a solid basis for comparing the two study areas.

Examining the use of the shrines in separate areas of the city allows us to see how

patrons in each zone interacted with their communities in different ways.

My findings reveal that the shrines in Area 1 are more outwardly-oriented,

and that this outward focus is facilitated by the more highly-interconnected physical

layout of the area, which allows for a greater degree of intervisibility between

shrines and people in different spaces. Area 2 is laid out on a grid-plan, which

affords less intervisibility. The focus of the shrines here is different in this area of

the city, as well – they are more inwardly-oriented. It is interesting to note that the

characteristic twists and turns of streets in Area 1 occur primarily along *Via

Consolare*, and that its relation to the other streets and spaces results from its path

being incorporated into later rectilinear construction in the area. The intervisibility

in Area 1 is thus a byproduct of the development of the urban plan. It shaped the

interactions and activities that took place, which in turn shaped how patrons used

shrines to interact with people who performed those activities. The different use of

shrines by patrons in Area 2 reflects the different nature of activities in that area.

In this dissertation, I have explored a number of factors that led people,

individually or collectively, to make decisions concerning their shrines. These

factors include, among others, the articulation of values in the shrines, the impact of

different types of space in which shrines were located on the statements made by

shrines (and on the shrines themselves), and the effect of the character of a

particular area or neighborhood of city (e.g. the level of traffic, or traffic circulation

patterns) on the similarities and connections between shrines.

The invitation for engagement offered by publicly visible shrines strongly

suggests that the ancient Pompeians intended their shrines to have an impact on

their community. Beyond being ritual objects, shrines represented a form of

personal expression and self-presentation. They comprised an interesting

juxtaposition of individualized meaning made manifest in objects built primarily for

ritual, an activity standardized by time and common usage that dictated a

overarching architectural language for the shrines. Shrines represented a way to

use the religious sphere to negotiate social position and interactions with peers,

superiors, and inferiors, under circumstances that were strictly controlled.

I argue that the shrines were communicative signs of shared culture. They

offered reassurances; they asserted the identity of the families, shop owners, and

workers who chose to worship the deities most pertinent to their respective concerns and interests; and they were indicators of piety; they perhaps even provoked competition among neighbors. Through the statements about the personal identity and religious and social values that they communicated, shrines provide a unique window into the mindset of individuals and social groups in a world of conspicuous large-scale, public religious rituals.

Figure 1.1

Painting of Venus Pompeiana on the façade adjacent to shop IX.7.7. The *genius* is the
figure on the right-hand side of the composition holding a cornucopia and *patera*.

Figure 1.2
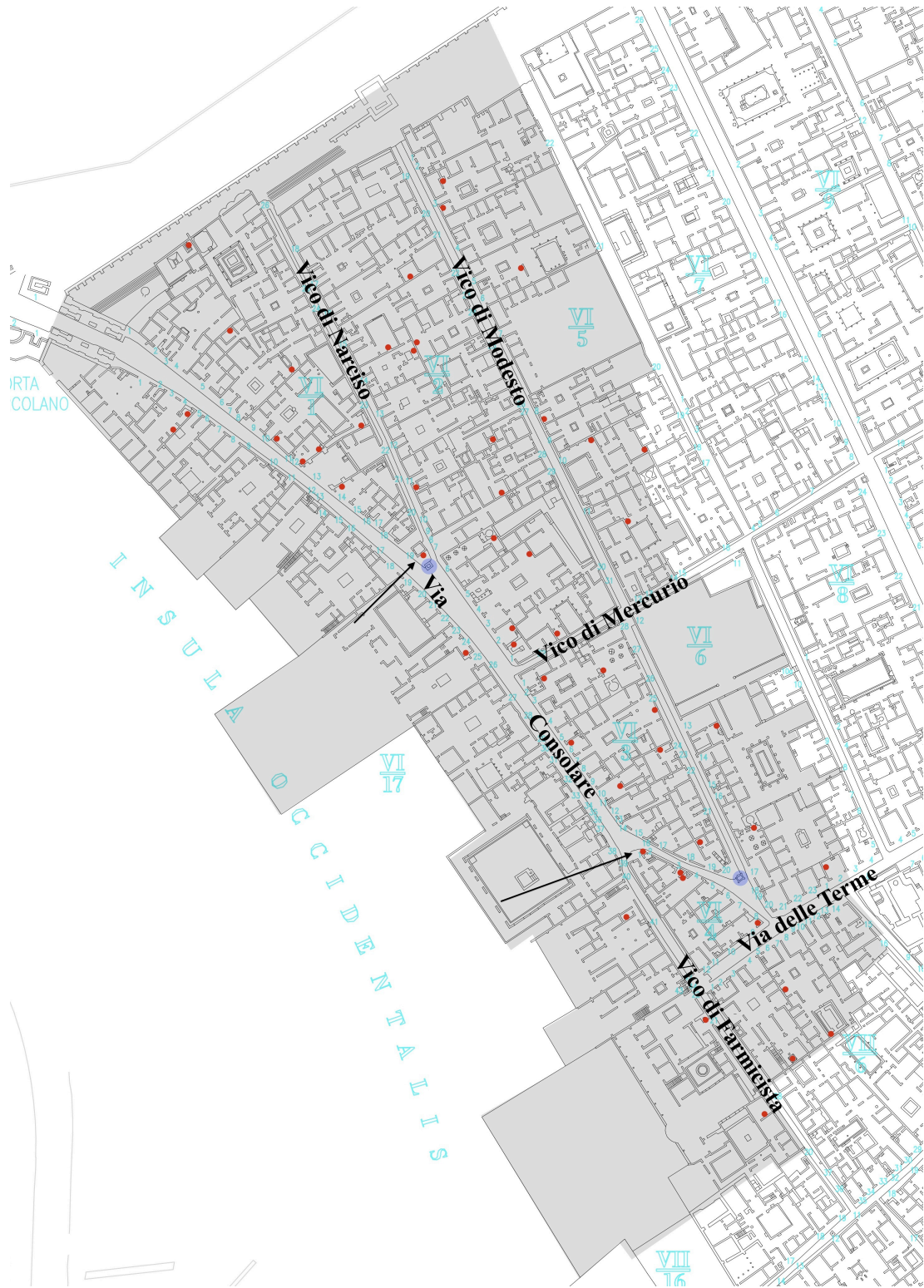
Plan of Area 1 with shrines and other features marked. The shrines are in red, the fountains in periwinkle, and the street shrines are marked with arrows.

Figure 1.3
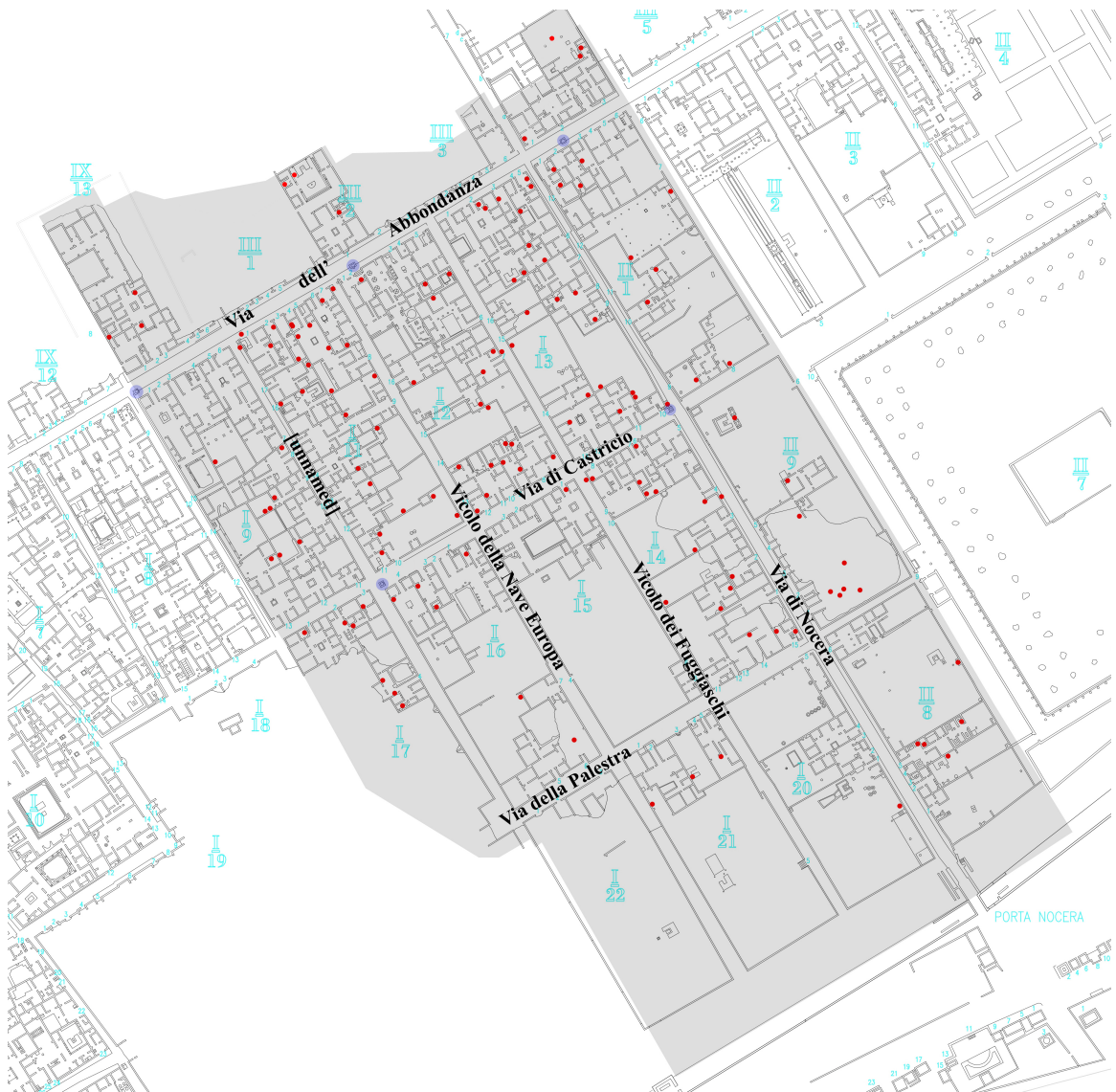
Plan of Area 2 with shrines and other features marked. The shrines are in red and the fountains in periwinkle.

Figure 2.1

Square, painted niche with protruding ledge and *aedicula* façade located in a room off the *tablinum* in house II.9.4 (cat. no. 43).

Figure 2.2

a: A*edicula* shrine in the *atrium* of house I.16.3 (cat. no. 30).

b: A*edicula* shrine in the garden of house II.8.6 (cat. no. 39). There is an altar in front of the *aedicula*.

Figure 2.3

Pseudo-*aedicula*, with altar, in the garden of IX.6.8.

Figure 2.4

a: Remains of the cult room in inn VI.1.1 (cat. no. 46). A bench lined the exterior wall of the shrine in the foreground of the photograph.
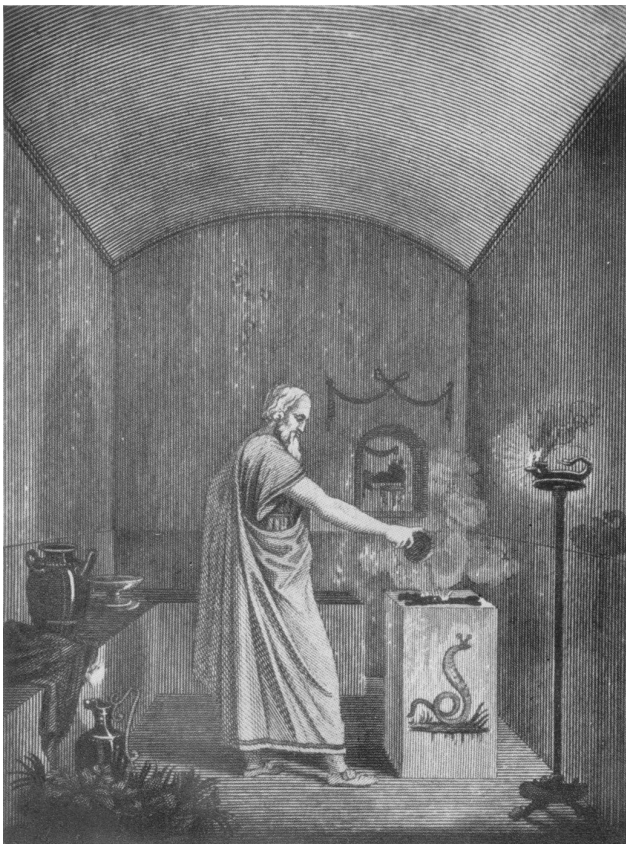
b: Reconstruction drawing of the cult room in inn VI.1.1. A bench runs around the interior of the shrine. (Mazois II, pl. 10, 1).

Figure 2.5

Snake shrine painting, with embedded ledge, in the kitchen of house I.10.7. Note the positioning of the snakes in relation to the ledge. (Boyce 1937, pl. 27, 2; American Academy in Rome, Photographic Archive).

Figure 2.6

a: Niche shrine with portable altar in the garden of bar II.8.2-3 (cat. no. 38).

b: Shrine painting with fixed altar in the garden of house I.11.15/9 (cat. no. 7).

Figure 2.7
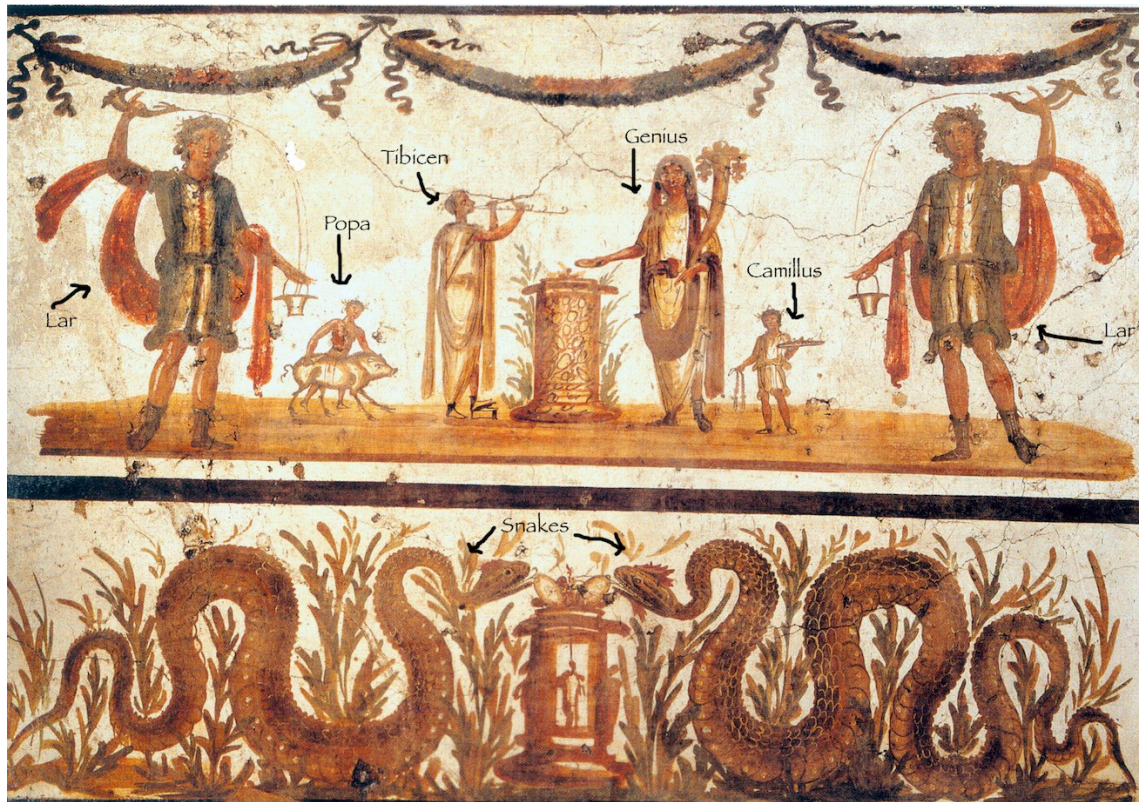
Traditional shrine painting without exact provenance, from *regio* VII or *regio* VIII. Note the "puppets" hung around the altar in the lower register. (MANN Inv. 8925, courtesy of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei).

Figure 2.8

Details of the *Lares* in the shrine paintings in house VI.15.1/27 (left) and bakery VII.12.11 (right).

Figure 2.9

Traditional shrine painting in the kitchen of bar I.12.3 (cat. no. 11).

Figure 2.10

A*edicula* shrine in the *atrium* of house I.16.4 (cat. no. 32).

Figure 2.11

Shrine in workshop II.1.8-9 (cat. no. 36). The painting of Hercules, now very faded, is to the right of the niche. The snake and altar are rendered in stucco.

Figure 2.12

Compital shrine at the northwest corner of *insula* I.11 (cat. no. 9). Note the traces of the shrine painting above the altar.

Figure 2.13

Vicinal shrine by the entry into house VI.2.16 (cat. no. 54). The niche, blocked in antiquity, was excavated by Anniboletti in 2005.

Figure 3.1

The axial view from the *fauces* to the garden. (After Allison 2004, fig. A.21).

a – fauces
b - atrium
i - tablinum
u - garden

Figure 3.2

a: The altar in house VI.3.7/25-26 as seen from the perspective of a person standing outside the property, on the street. Unfortunately, the gate lock is obscuring the site of the altar.

b: The altar in house VI.3.7/25-26 as seen from just inside the gate.

c: Plan of house VI.3.7/25-26.
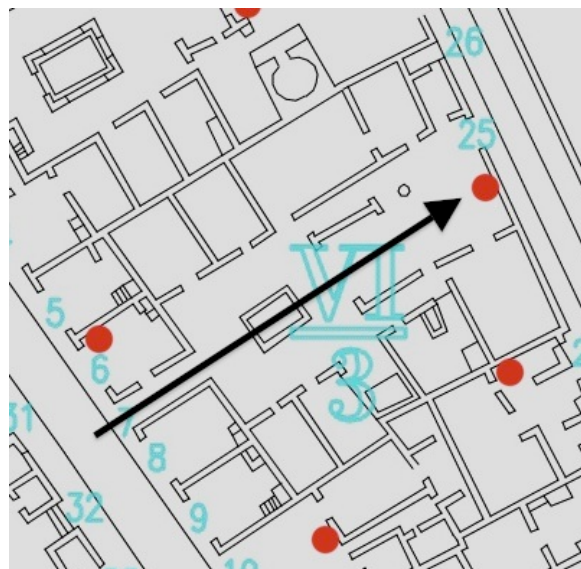
Figure 3.3

a: The niche on the rear wall of house VI.2.24, as seen in an axial view from the main entrance.

b: Plan of house VI.2.24.
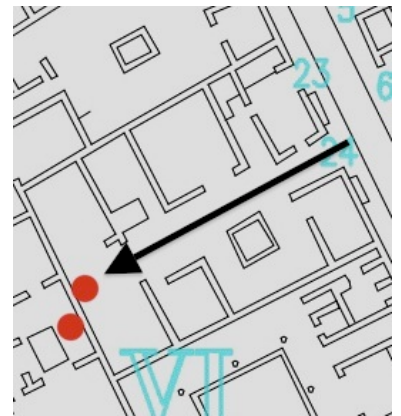
Figure 3.4
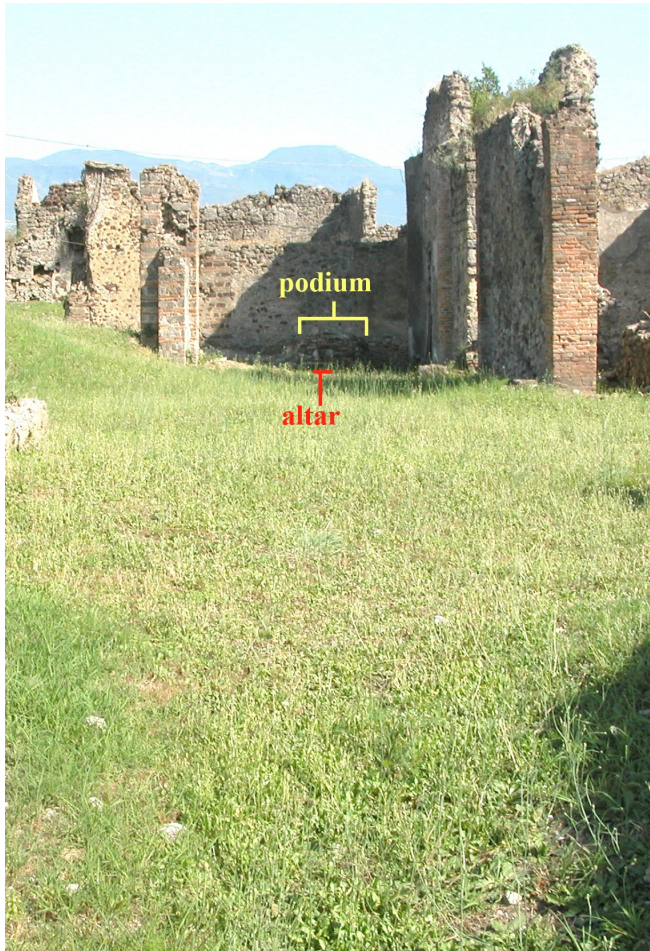
a: The *aedicula* shrine in house VII.6.3 as seen from the point of view of a person standing in the *fauces*.

b: Photograph of the shrine taken in 1910 before the bombing of the property during World War II. (NSc 1910, fig. 2.).

c: Plan of house VII.6.3.
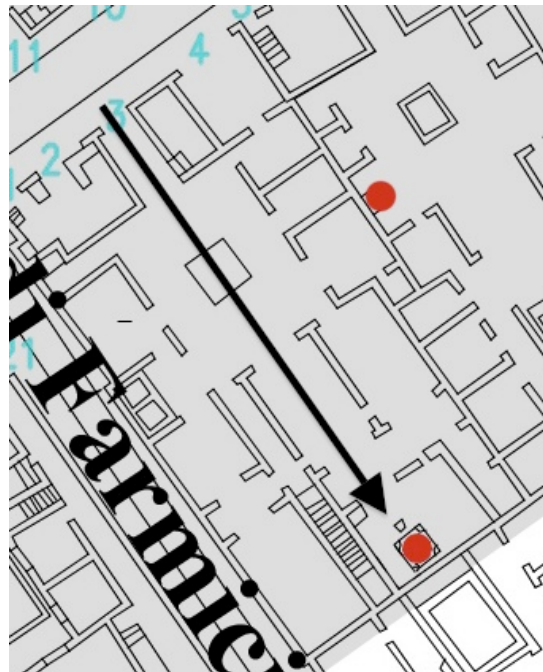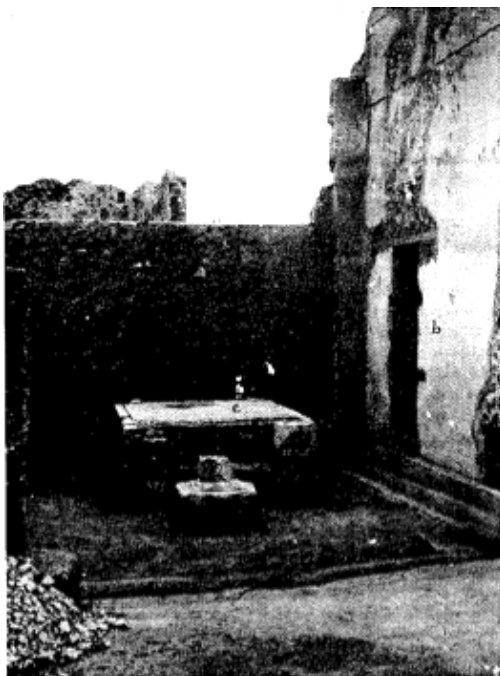
Figure 3.5
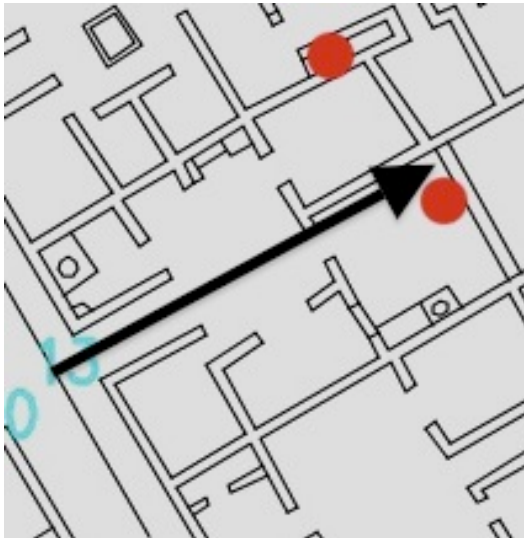
a: The niche in the garden of house I.11.13, as seen from the main entrance.

b: Plan of house I.11.13.

Figure 3.6

a: Ps.-*aedicula* in the garden of house I.14.7, as seen from outside the property, on the street.

b: Ps.-*aedicula* in the garden of house I.14.7, as seen from the *fauces*, without the gate obscuring the shrine. The shrine is only partially visible.

c: Ps.-*aedicula* in the garden of house I.14.7, as seen through the rear corridor. The shrine is fully visible.

d: Plan of house I.14.7.
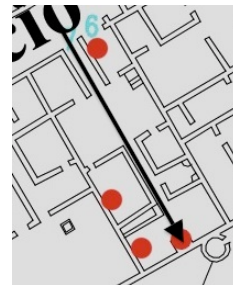
Figure 3.7

a: The view from the shrine painting in the garden of house I.11.15/9 to the rear door at No. 9. The view in from from No. 9 is blocked by the plaster cast of a door.

b: Plan of house I.11.15/9.

Figure 3.8

a: The niche in shop I.11.3, as seen from the street, looking straight through the center of the entry into the property.

b: The niche in shop I.11.3, as seen from the right-hand side of the threshold, just inside the property.
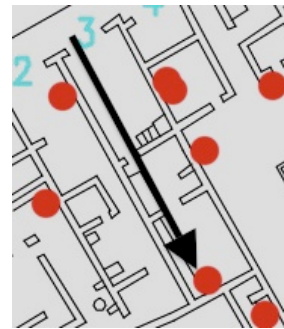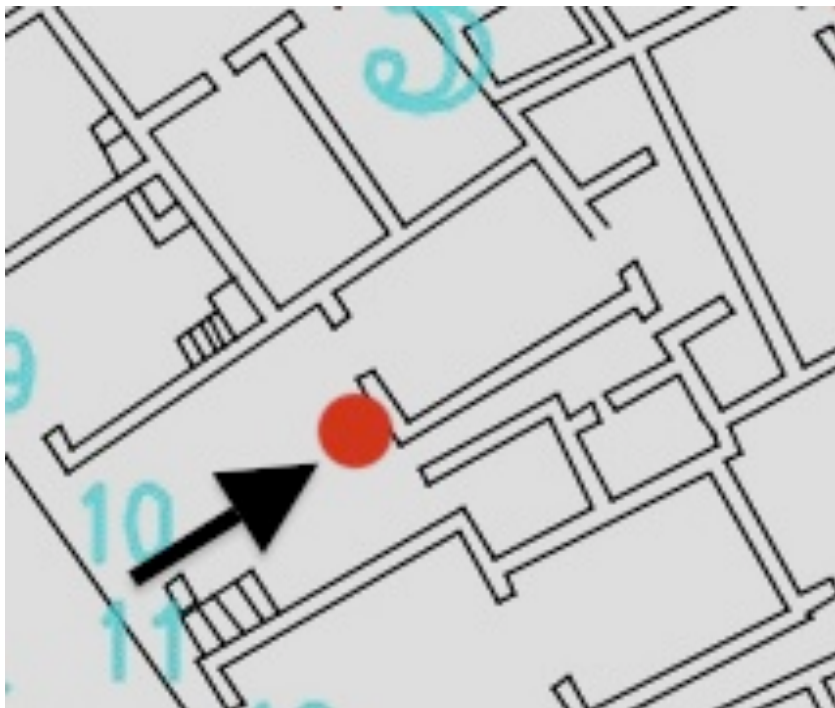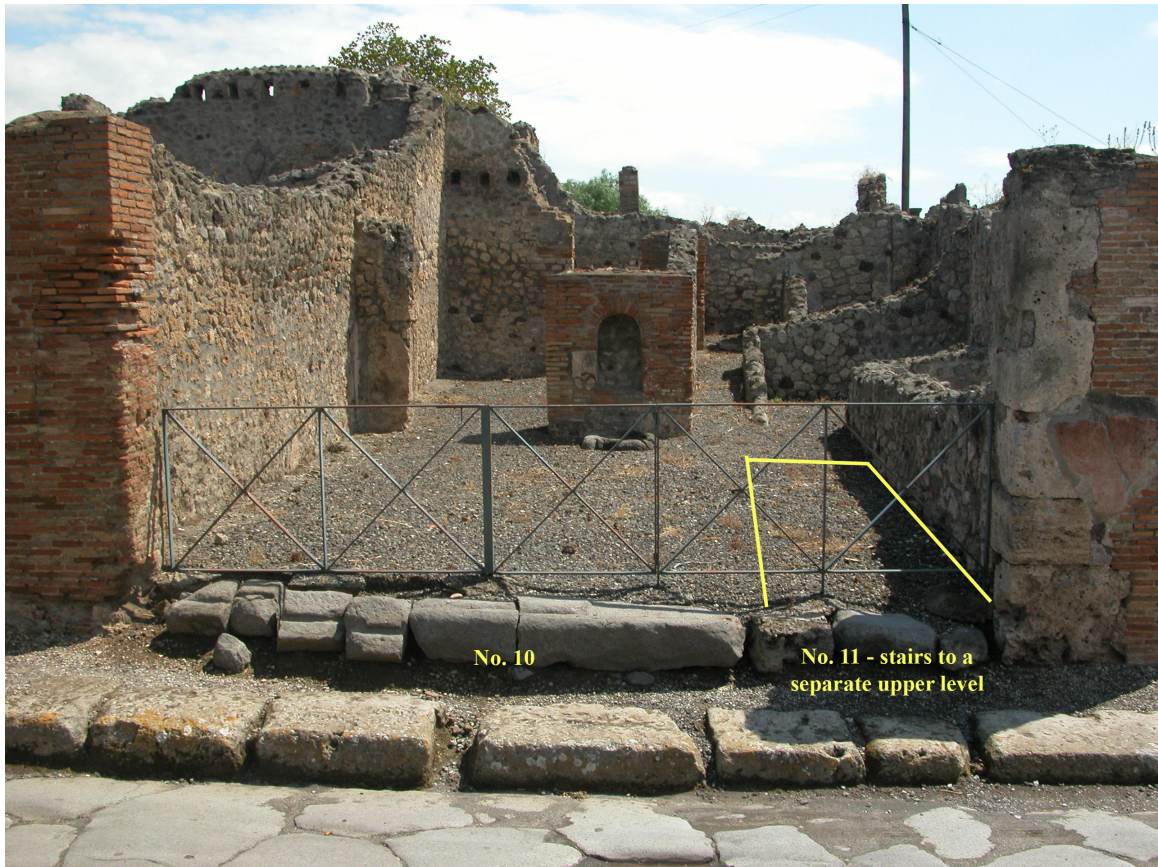
c: Plan of shop I.11.3.

Figure 3.9

a: The niche in workshop VI.3.10, as seen from outside the property.

b: Plan of workshop VI.3.10.

Figure 3.10

The niche behind the counter in bar I.14.15.