

WOMEN IN THE CLASSICAL WORLD

Image and Text

Elaine Fantham
Helene Peet Foley
Natalie Boymel Kampen
Sarah B. Pomeroy
H. A. Shapiro

New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1994

*We dedicate our book to those scholars who have
played an important role in our lives and careers
and offer them our thanks. Elaine Fantham's
dedication is to Lily Ross Taylor, Helene Foley's
to Helen Bacon, Natalie Kampen's to the memory of
Raissa Calza, Sarah Pomeroy's to Barbara M.
Levick, and Alan Shapiro's to Erika Simon.*

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York
Athens Auckland Bangkok Bombay
Calcutta Cape Town Dar es Salaam Delhi
Florence Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madras Madrid Melbourne
Mexico City Nairobi Paris Singapore
Taipei Tokyo Toronto

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Copyright © 1994 by Elaine Fantham, Helene Peet Foley,
Natalie Boymel Kampen, Sarah B. Pomeroy, and H.A. Shapiro

First published in 1994 by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016-4314

First issued as an Oxford University Press paperback, 1995

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Women in the classical world : image and text /
Elaine Fantham... et al.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-19-506727-9; 978-0-19-509862-4 (pbk.)

1. Women—History—To 500—Sources.
2. Women—Greece—History—Sources.
3. Women—Rome—History—Sources.
- I. Fantham, Elaine.

HQ1127.W652 1994 305.4'09—dc20 92-47284

4

EXCURSUS AMAZONS: WOMEN IN CONTROL

In ancient times there were Amazons, daughters of Ares, dwelling beside the river Thermodon; they alone of the people around them were armed with iron and they were the first of all to mount horses, with which, due to the inexperience of their foes, they surprised them and either caught those who fled or outstripped those who pursued. They were considered men for their high courage, rather than women for their sex; for they seemed to outdo men in their spirit more than to be at a disadvantage in their form. Ruling over many nations, they enslaved those around them; yet hearing by report of the great renown of our country, they mustered the most warlike of the nations and marched them against this city for the sake of great glory and through high ambition. But having met with valiant men they came to possess spirits suitable to their own nature; the reputation they won was the reverse of their previous one, and by their disasters rather than by their bodies they were deemed to be women. They alone failed to learn from their mistakes, and thus to be better advised in their future actions. They did not return home and report their own misfortune and our ancestors' courage; for they died on the spot and were punished for their folly, thus making our city's memory imperishable for its valor, while due to their disaster in this region they made their own country nameless. And so those women, by their unjust greed for others' land, justly lost their own.

(Lysias 2.4–6, *Funeral Oration* [early fourth century B.C.E.];
Lamb 1960 modified)

The mythical defeat of the Amazons became in the rhetoric of Classical Athenian funeral orations one of the great achievements of the Attic past, which symbolized the rescue of the Greeks from slavery at the hands of foreign conquerors. In these funeral speeches Amazons were imagined, through their greed for fame and empire, to have fallen: the very kind of enterprise in which Athens itself engaged in the second half of the fifth century. Amazons played a central role in the art and ideology of Archaic and Classical Athens, but they were continually reimagined to serve a changing culture and politics. Amazon myths of a society

ruled by women are a case study in understanding ways in which gender was used to conceptualize central cultural issues and problems in the Classical period (for further discussion and interpretation, see Boardman 1982, du Bois 1982, von Bothmer 1957, Carlier-Detienne 1980–81, Hardwick 1990, Just 1989, Lefkowitz 1986, Merck 1978, Shapiro 1983, and Tyrrell 1984).

Our earliest representations of Amazons appear in Archaic epic and Attic vase paintings of the sixth century B.C. Epic views Amazons as a band of great female warriors. The tomb of the Amazon queen Myrrhina is a landmark (like the tombs of other heroes who died young and glorious) at Troy (*Iliad* 2.814). At *Iliad* 3.184–89ff. King Priam describes how he battled Amazons in his youth. Some of those Amazons came to fight on the Trojan side in the war at Troy, and their queen, Penthesilea, met her death at the hands of the great Greek warrior Achilles, who fell in love with his victim as he killed her. Battles against the Amazons were an important labor for the heroes Bellerophon and Heracles. In his ninth labor, Heracles captured the girdle of the Amazon queen and brought it back to Greece for the daughter of Eurystheus. Beginning at about 575 B.C.E. Heracles' battles with the Amazons, sometimes in single combat, became a popular subject in Attic black-figure vase painting. An Attic black-figure hydria, for example, shows Heracles and Telamon fighting Amazons dressed as hoplites (Fig. 4.1), warriors in heavy armor, and differentiated by their white flesh. Visually these Amazons do not differ from Greek heroes; they wear Greek armor, carry Greek weapons, and engage in pursuits typical of male warriors. Although their femininity is not stressed, the artist may dwell on the moment of defeat, as the Amazons fall to the ground in submission, their heads bent back.

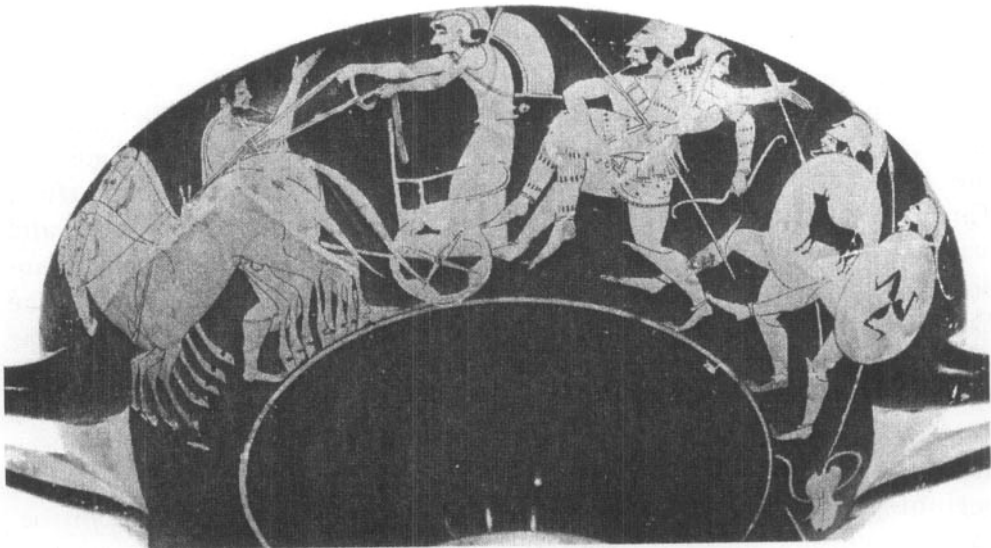
Yet Amazons were soon to lose their status as great, if somewhat exotic, warriors, a match for all but the greatest of Greek heroes. Athens repeatedly used Amazons to serve its own ideology. First the Attic hero Theseus appropriated some of the deeds of Heracles. At about 490 B.C.E. on the metopes of the Athenian treasury at Delphi, both Theseus and Heracles are shown involved in an expedition to Amazon country. In later Attic versions of the story Theseus, his friend Pirithous, and his charioteer Phorbas abduct an Amazon by trickery (Fig. 4.2, Theseus and the Amazon Antiope). The Amazons retaliate by invading Attica. Tamed by her love for Theseus, the Amazon intercedes in the battle and arranges a treaty (Plutarch, *Theseus* 26–28). Later the Amazon, abandoned by Theseus, was said to have interrupted his marriage with the Cretan Phaedra and to have been killed by Heracles, who was one of the guests. Yet the story of Theseus's engagement with the Amazons, which seems to have been promoted by the Pisistratid tyrants who ruled Athens for much of the sixth century, put the hero awkwardly at fault as the abductor of an innocent Amazon. As we saw in Lysias's oration at the beginning of this excursus, however, the ambitious Amazons soon became responsible for their own fall.

Shortly after the two Persian wars between the Greeks and the Per-



Figure 4.1. Vase (ca. 520–500 B.C.E.) in the black-figure technique with the heroes Heracles and Telamon fighting Amazons.

Figure 4.2. Outside of a cup (ca. 510 B.C.E.), on which Theseus abducts the Amazon Antiope; she wears the exotic garments of an eastern warrior to mark her difference from Greek women.



sians from 490 to 480 B.C.E., Athenian art made a point of suggesting analogies between the eastern Amazons and the defeated Persians.¹ Amazons, dressed in Eastern garb and carrying bows and arrows, by their defeat hinted at the feminized nature and the incapacity for self-control of the Greeks' barbarian opponents. A red-figure amphora, for example, shows a Greek warrior between two Amazons dressed in Persian style (Fig. 4.3). Paintings made in the 460s B.C.E. in the Stoa Poikile at Athens showed Amazons before the Acropolis, the Greeks and Persians at Marathon, the Greek capture of Troy, and Athens fighting the Spartans at Oinoe. Later artistic programs such as the metopes of the Parthenon linked the battle against the Amazons with battles between Greeks and centaurs, Greeks and Trojans (now viewed as eastern and barbarian), or Gods and Giants. Centaurs were mythical horsemen. Unable to control the violence and sexuality inherent in their half-bestial nature, they invaded the wedding of the Lapiths and were prevented from raping the Lapith women by the intervention of Heracles. Just as centaurs embodied masculinity out of control, in these artistic programs the violent, promiscuous, and war-loving Amazons became an analogous female challenge to the order of civilization. The centrality of the defeat of the Amazons in Athenian propaganda is confirmed by the fact that the battle against the Amazons appeared on the outside of the shield held by the statue of the city's divine protectress, Athena Parthenos, in her temple on the Acropolis (Fig. 4.4 shows a reconstruction of the shield by E. B. Harrison).

In particular, Amazons were viewed as hostile to men and marriage. The fifth-century historian Hellanicus, in a description that typified the views of his contemporaries, called the Amazons "a golden-shielded, silver-axed, male-infant-killing host." The unfeminine Amazons were said to cauterize their right breasts (the word *a-mazon* means "without breast") in order to remove any impediment to effective fighting (Frgs. 16, 17; F. Jacoby *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 3B 45–46); or they allegedly fed their female infants on horse's milk to prevent the enlargement of their breasts (Philostratus, *Heroikos* 330). Hence they denied the social function of Attic women as nurturers of their children. The tragic poet Aeschylus imagined the Amazons' defeat to have occurred at the Areopagus, the site of the first trial by jury for murder in Athens. In his play the *Eumenides*, the hero Orestes is exonerated from killing his mother Clytemnestra (a rebel against marriage who killed her husband Agamemnon and turned against her own son), and her female advocates, the Furies or Erinyes, divine spirits of familial vengeance, meet their defeat. Orestes' victory is linked with the earlier Greek victory over the Amazons. The god Apollo argues in Orestes' defense that Clytemnestra's crime against marriage is more serious than Orestes' killing of a woman who is not a true relative, since women simply serve to nurture the seed of their men. In Attic art and literature the taming of the Amazons by war or love, which returned these women to their "natural" state (see Lysias above), came to represent a renewal of the proper

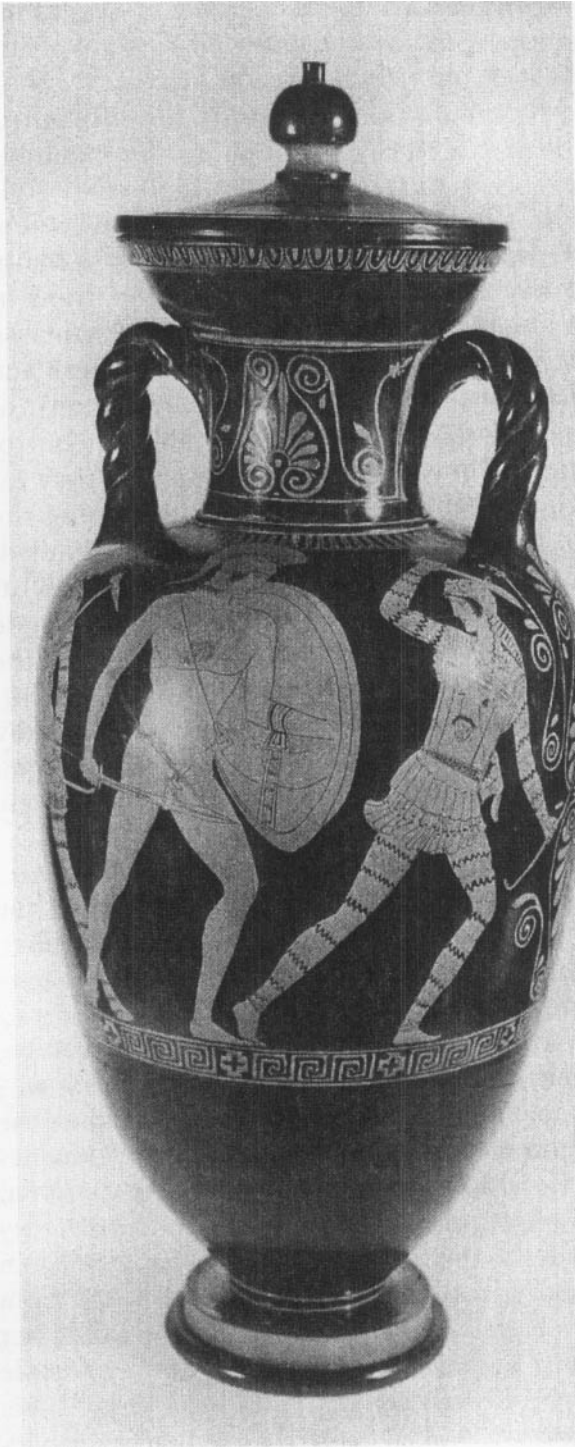


Figure 4.3. Attic vase (ca. 440–430 B.C.E.), with a Greek warrior between two Amazons; their Persian garments provided the Greek viewer during and after the Persian Wars with an image of the non-Greek that conflated foreignness, femininity, and moral laxity with defeat.

order of patriarchal civilization, in which women were subordinated to marriage to produce offspring who were certainly legitimate. In this respect the story of the Amazons' fall and ultimate extermination through their own errors was a "myth of matriarchy" that served to explain, by



Figure 4.4. The shield of Athena Parthenos from the gold and ivory statue (mid-fifth century B.C.E.) in the Parthenon in Athens, in this reconstruction drawing, the inevitable defeat of the Amazons is made clear by their falling and dead figures.

positing an earlier era in which women could dominate or exclude men, the inevitability and desirability of the civilized status quo.

Fifth-century and later Greek writers developed an entire ethnography for Amazons. These ethnographies sometimes represented Amazon “culture” as systematically inverting that of the Greeks, sometimes as a complex alternative to it. In the fifth-century historian Herodotus’s account of an encounter between Scythians and Amazons, the Scythian young men become enamored of the beautiful warriors with whom they engage in battle. When they wish to marry their sexual partners, with whom they have (typically of Amazons) mated at random outdoors, the Amazons refuse to become conventional wives: “We could not live with your women—our customs are quite different from theirs. To draw the bow, to hurl the javelin, to ride a horse, these are our arts. Of women’s work we know nothing. Your women, on the contrary, do none of these things, but stay at home in their wagons, and never go out to hunt, or to do anything. We should never get along together. But if you truly wish to have us as your wives and will conduct yourselves with strict justice towards us, go home to your parents, ask them to give you your inheritance, and then come back to us, and let us live together by ourselves.” (*Histories* 4.114, Rawlinson 1942, modified) Inverting the usual practice of Greek marriage, the Scythian husbands bring their goods with them (the equivalent of a woman’s dowry) and move to a place where the Amazons can continue to exercise their military ways. The Amazons are the dominant partners in these marriages, although they lose their language because they are quicker to learn their partners’ tongue than the reverse. In some versions of Amazon ethnography, Amazons live without men, except for periodic promiscuous forays to become preg-

nant. They keep their girl children, and kill, emasculate, or send away for adoption their male children. In Diodorus's first-century B.C.E. account, on the other hand, Amazon men in Libya live the lives of Greek women—they stay at home, weave, and tend the children, deprived of the right to govern—while the women fight and demonstrate a remarkable capacity for just and orderly rule.

Amazons are often envisioned as less civilized than the Greeks. They practice an orgiastic religion, worshiping Ares, the Phrygian Magna Mater, Cybele, and the virginity-loving Artemis in a fashion that recalls the dangerous attraction of Greek women to the worship of Dionysus. Although Strabo (*Geography* 11.5.1) has Amazons engage in agriculture, Diodorus makes them less civilized eaters of meat alone, and Herodotus's Amazons have not yet learned how to navigate ships. Amazons' weapons, the bow, the ax, and sometimes the javelin and the spear, tend to associate them with light-armed soldiers or with those, like bowmen, who had less military prestige than the heavy-armored hoplite. Amazon communities are typically located at the borders of the known world—for example, in the North East on the southern shore of the Black Sea on the Thermodon River or in the South West in Libya. Geographers and medical writers tried to explain the Amazon phenomenon by the inferior climate from which they come: for example, saying that the colder climates of the North West produced more virile women.

Insofar as Amazons are untamed, virginal, and aggressive, they could serve to represent a phase of life for both young men and women: the androgynous state of life between childhood and adulthood. Yet Amazons serve as important paradigms precisely because they generally fail to make the transition to "maturity." Both erotic and virginal, heroic on the Greek model and yet less civilized than their opponents, Amazons were a paradoxical mixture of youthful attractiveness and a danger that must be suppressed.

Although many later Greek writers scoffed at the unlikelyhood of Amazon myths (for example, Strabo, 11.5.3), the stories of Amazons were remarkably persistent. Alexander the Great was said to have been chosen as a mate by the Amazon Queen Thalestris, who approached his camp with the hope of conceiving an heroic child. Amazon myths, while largely imaginary, may have originated in Greek encounters with the nomadic Scythians in the area north of the Black Sea. Archaeological remains confirm that some Scythian aristocratic women, who were buried with horse trappings and weapons, rode horses and fought in war. Indeed, Plato uses the example of these Scythian women in the *Laws* (805A and 806B), when he wants to give proof that women are capable of fighting for their country.

NOTES

1. Amazons had also been depicted in eastern dress on black-figure vases (see Shapiro 1983). Boardman 1982 suggests that the equation between Persians and Amazons began after the Ionian revolt in the early fifth century B.C.E.

TRANSLATIONS

- Lamb, W. R. M. 1960. *Lysias*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass. (Originally published 1930)
- Rawlinson, George. 1942. *Herodotus: The Persian Wars*. New York.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Bamberger, Joan. 1974. "The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society." In *Women, Culture and Society*, edited by M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, 263–80. Stanford.
- Boardman, John. 1982. "Herakles, Theseus and Amazons." In *The Eye of Greece*, edited by D. Kurtz and B. Sparkes, 1–28, Cambridge.
- Bothmer, Dietrich von. 1957. *Amazons in Greek Art*. Oxford.
- Carlier-Detienne, Jeanne. 1980–81. "Les Amazons font la guerre et l'amour." *L'Ethnographie* 76: 11–33.
- du Bois, Page. 1982. *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being*. Ann Arbor, Mich.
- Hardwick, Lorna. 1990. "Ancient Amazons—Heroes, Outsiders or Women?" *Greece and Rome* 37: 14–36.
- Just, Roger. 1989. *Women in Athenian Law and Life*. London.
- Lefkowitz, Mary. 1986. *Women in Greek Myth*. London.
- Merck, Mandy. 1978. "The City's Achievements: The Patriotic Amazonomachy and Ancient Athens." In *Tearing the Veil*, edited by Susan Lipshitz, 95–115. London.
- Shapiro, H. A. 1983. "Amazons, Thracians and Scythians." *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*: 105–14.
- Tyrrell, W. Blake. 1984. *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Myth-Making*. Baltimore, Md.

12

EXCURSUS THE WOMEN OF POMPEII

In a grand house on the Bay of Naples, with servants tumbling over one another, luxury dripping from every wall, table, and couch, a banquet is being conducted among the extremely *nouveaux riches*. The lady of the house, Fortunata, the wife of the freed slave Trimalchio, is not eating: “not even a drop of water does she put into her mouth until she’s arranged the silver and divided the left-overs among the slaves” (Petronius, *Satiricon* 67.2; Arrowsmith 1959) Despite her domesticity, she draws less than universal admiration to herself; as someone at the banquet tells his neighbor:

. . . that’s Fortunata, Trimalchio’s wife. And the name couldn’t suit her better. She counts her cash by the cartload. And you know what she used to be? Well, begging your honor’s pardon, but you wouldn’t have taken bread from her hand. Now god knows how or why, she’s sitting pretty: has Trimalchio eating out of her hand. If she told him at noon it was night, he’d crawl into bed. As for him, he’s so loaded he doesn’t know how much he has. But that bitch has her finger in everything—where you’d least expect it too. A regular tightwad, never drinks, and sharp as they come. But she’s got a nasty tongue; get her gossiping on a couch and she’ll chatter like a parrot.”

(*Satiricon* 37.2–7; Arrowsmith 1959)

Rich, vulgar, yet practical, Fortunata comes into focus both through Petronius’s words, written about the time of Nero (ca. 65 C.E.) and through the preserved marvels of Pompeii, Herculaneum, and the other towns of the Bay of Naples that were suffocated by ash and lava in the great eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 C.E. (Fig. 12.1).

The excavation of these towns since the eighteenth century has permitted a clearer view of the lives of Roman women of every social stratum. Rather than dealing primarily with the texts of great authors, a discussion of women at Pompeii draws on inscriptions, architecture, painting, and the bits and pieces of daily life. At Pompeii and Herculaneum, not only can one see the food in bowls still on the table, find the

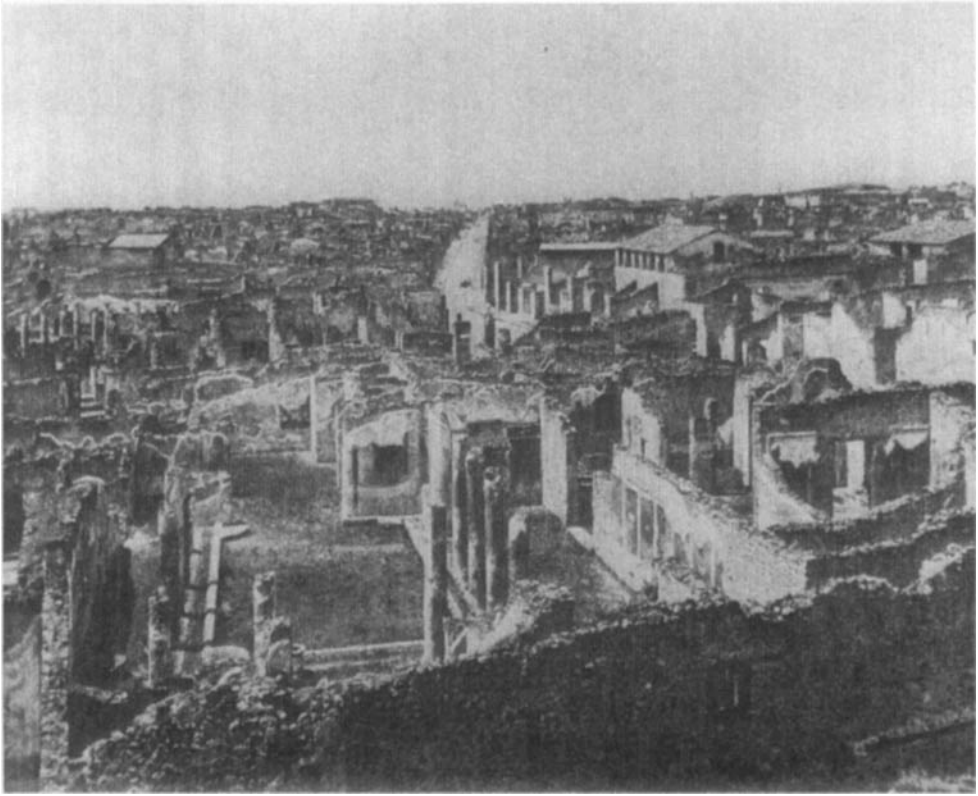


Figure 12.1. General view of the city of Pompeii.

jewelry women wore, study the decorations for their houses; one can even hear some of their stories.

Women of Property

At the opposite end of the social ladder from Fortunata were such wealthy and aristocratic women as Nero's wife, Poppaea Sabina, who had inherited property at Pompeii; like other aristocratic women with great villas around the Bay of Naples, she owned this property in her own right. Inscriptions on lead plumbing pipes like those found in the sea off nearby Puteoli testify to the ownership of villas by rich women; the sisters Marcia and Rufina Metilia (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X.1905) are a case in point. Their villas, like the well-preserved one that may have belonged to the empress Poppaea at Oplontis, just outside of Pompeii, had great gardens, extensive and richly decorated rooms of all sizes, even pools (Fig. 12.2). Although no evidence remains to indicate the empress's personal involvement in the arrangements and furnishings of the villa, Oplontis gives a splendid indication of the style to which people such as she were accustomed (De Franciscis 1975). Their villas

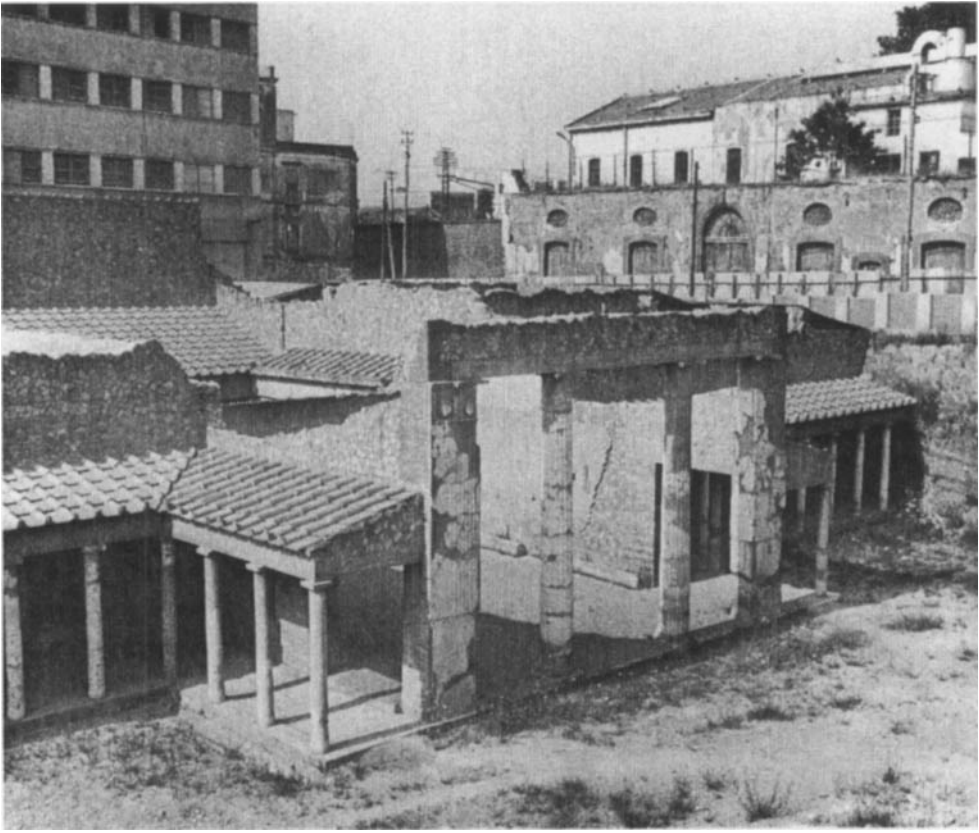


Figure 12.2. View of the villa (possibly belonging to Poppaea, wife of Nero) at Oplontis, outside of Pompeii. Dating to the middle of the first century C.E., the luxurious villa had long colonnades that gave onto gardens, as well as large numbers of richly painted interior spaces.

and houses, with wall paintings, mosaic floors, statuary and bibelots, resemble those of the rich hellenistic merchants of Delos (see earlier) more than the modest houses of Classical Athens; the parallel to the way the female owners themselves differed from Athenian women, perhaps now comparable to Hellenistic queens, is striking.

In the upper stratum of local Pompeian society, perhaps a step below that of the great ladies of the aristocracy, were other women who chose to use their wealth for the public good as well as for their own purposes. One of the most famous of these is Eumachia who, in the years before the earthquake of 64 C.E., paid for the construction of a huge public building in the most important spot in Pompeii, the Forum (Fig. 12.3). Around it were the markets, law courts, and temples of the town, and there the gathered populace might read on the building the inscription: “Eumachia, the public priestess (of Venus), daughter of Lucius, had the vestibule, the covered gallery and the porticoes made with her own money and dedicated in her own name and in the name of her son Marcus Numistrius Fronto, in honor of the goddesses Concord and Augustan

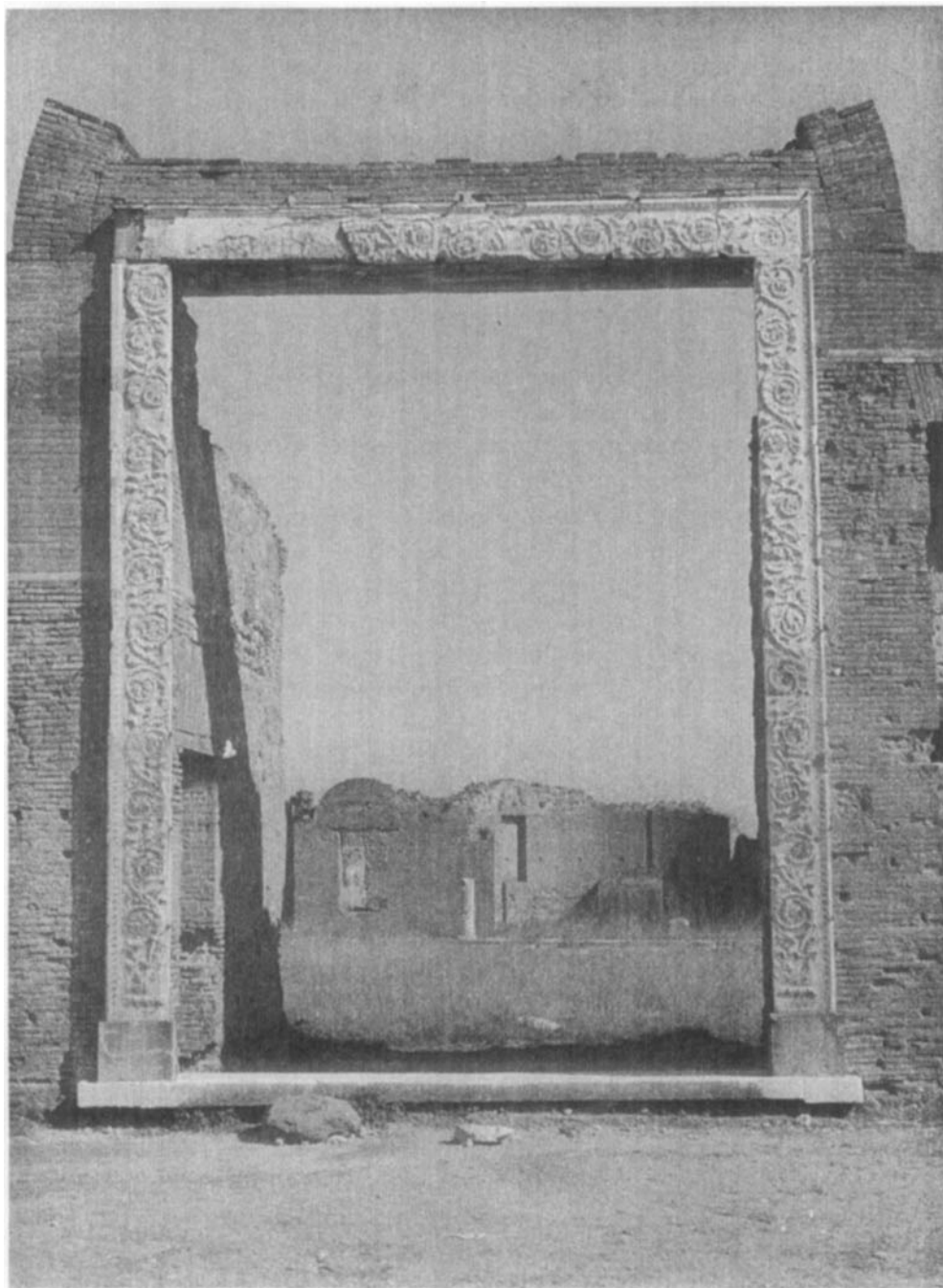


Figure 12.3. View through the main entrance into the building underwritten by the Pompeian priestess, Eumachia, in the middle of the first century C.E., in the Forum of the city. The entrance is marked by a delicately carved acanthus scroll in marble against the brick of the facade.

Piety" (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X.810, mid first century C.E.; trans. Natalie Kampen). A statue showing her in the usual pose and costume of a respectable matron (Fig. 12.4) stood in the building as a result of the generous gratitude of the cloth-cleaners; their inscription reads, "To Eumachia, the daughter of Lucius, the public priestess, from the fullers" (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X.811; trans. Natalie Kampen). Argument continues about the uses to which the building was put, textile warehouse, auction house, cloth-merchants' guildhouse, or even public meetinghouse; only Eumachia's role as sole patron is beyond dispute, as the inscription indicates (Moeller 1972: 323–27).

Eumachia was not only a rich woman, a holder of an extremely important public priesthood, she was also politically involved. The building's commission seems to have come at just the moment when her son was running for public office, and his mother's generosity would have served him well. She commanded far greater power and wealth than many other women in Pompeii, but that did not prevent some of the others from involving themselves in financial and political affairs. A large property with a colonnaded garden belonged to Julia Felix, who rented it out. A graffito dated between 64 and 79 C.E. (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.1136; trans. Natalie Kampen), tells us that

On the estate of Julia Felix, the daughter of
Spurius Felix, the following are for rent: an
elegant bath suitable for the best people, shops,
rooms above them, and second story apartments,
from the Ides of August until the Ides of August
five years hence, after which the lease may
be renewed by simple agreement.

Women and Work

Julia Felix was hardly alone in involving herself in financial affairs, since at every social level below the aristocracy, women in Pompeii seem to have handled money. Women are known from the wood and wax tablets that record money paid to sellers of goods by buyers through the agency of the banker Jucundus (Andreau 1974). Fourteen women are scattered through the more than 150 documents; they normally represent themselves in these transactions although they seem never to have acted as witnesses for the transactions of other people. In November and December of the year 56 C.E., Umbricia Januaria and Umbricia Antiochis, who may have been freed slaves of the fish-sauce merchant Umbricius Scaurus, received money for sales they had made. Umbricia Januaria's document tells us that:

Umbricia Januaria hereby attests that she received from L. Caecilius Jucundus 11,039 sesterterii, less a percentage [1–2 percent] as his commission, for the auc-

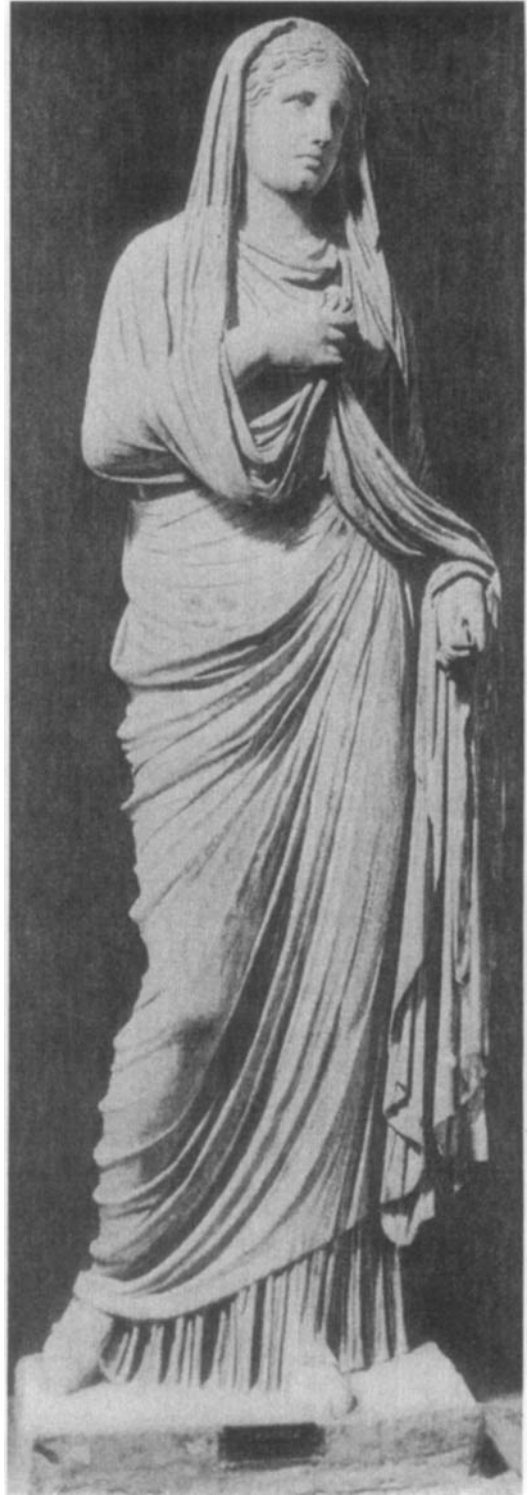


Figure 12.4. The statue of Eumachia, patron of the building in Figure 12.3. The statue was found in the building, having been given in honor of Eumachia by the corporation of fullers.

tion of goods on her behalf. This action took place at Pompeii on December 12 [56 C.E.], L. Duuius Clodius being the consul at the time.

(*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV, supplement 1, pp. 308–10; trans. Natalie Kampen)

A few years later, in a tavern in Pompeii, one perhaps similar to the setting for the four small paintings of gamblers and drinkers with their waitress at an inn (Fig. 12.5), a graffito on the wall says, “On the fifth of February, Vettia accepted from Faustilla fifteen denarii with eight asses (the *as* was a small denomination) in interest” (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.8203, probably after 64 C.E.; trans. Natalie Kampen), and Faustilla reappears, again lending money at interest, on the wall of the house of Granius Romanus (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.8204). That women lent as well as borrowed and engaged in business as well as philanthropy suggests their relative autonomy at certain social levels.

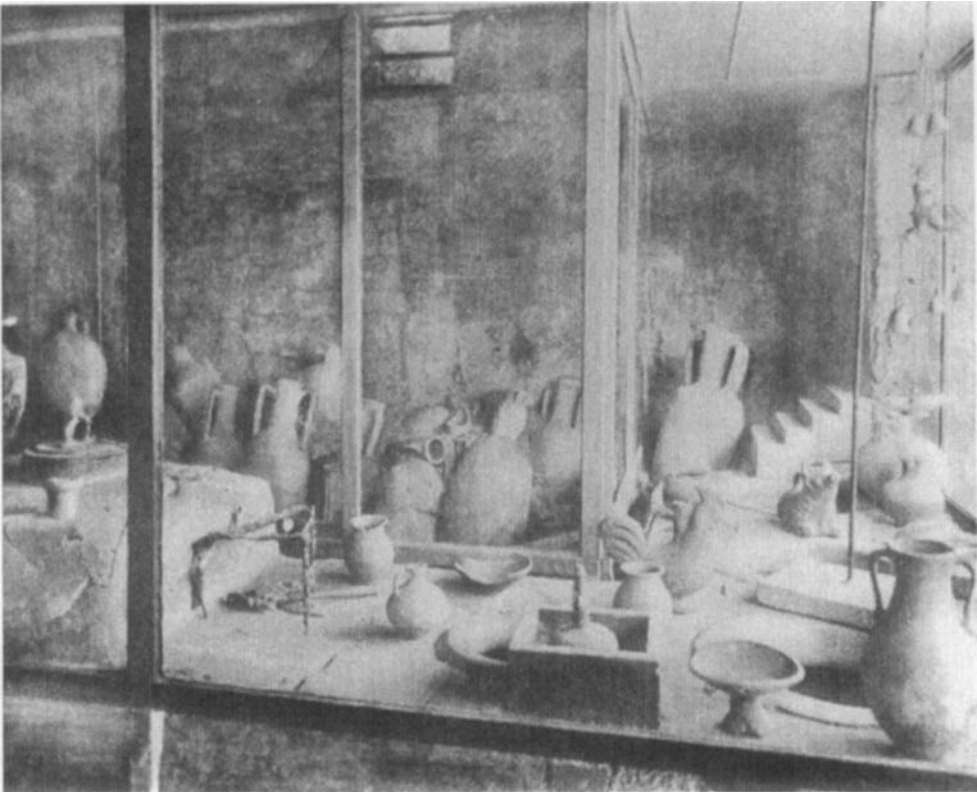
The world of taverns and cheap food shops saw other women at work as well. Asellina may have owned this tavern after 64 C.E. when

Figure 12.5. A waitress serves customers in a tavern at Pompeii in the mid-first century C.E. This is part of a set of wall paintings that include men playing dice and, perhaps as a consequence of the wine and the dice, getting into a fight.



earthquake damage necessitated so many repairs to buildings (Fig. 12.6), and its walls repeat her name as well as those of Zmyrina, Maria, and Aegle, who may have been waitresses; their single and somewhat exotic names as well as the content of the graffiti suggest that they were slaves, but they nonetheless engaged in the public world of politics as well as of work (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.7862–64, 7866, and 7873). The graffiti all use the word *rogat* and tell us that a candidate for office is being proposed for the consideration of the passerby. Men and women of the lower classes seem to have favored these public declarations as did respectable matrons such as Taedia Secunda, the grandmother of a candidate of the mid-first century C.E. (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.7469), even though it is clear that neither women nor slaves of either sex could vote (Franklin 1980; Bernstein 1988). At Asellina's tavern, one of the waitresses speaks to her customers in her own voice in a highly idiomatic Latin: "The lovely Idone greets those who will read this. Idone says that here you may drink for nine *dupondii*," and she tells us prices for better wines as well (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.1679; trans. Natalie Kampen).

Figure 12.6. View of the interior of the tavern of Asellina, a Pompeian woman known to have employed several other women as waitresses.



Love and Money

The graffiti on Pompeian walls (they date mostly from the mid-first century C.E.) speak of waitresses and other working people as well. In one (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.8259; trans. Natalie Kampen), Severus the weaver writes that his coworker Successus “loves the tavern maid whose name is Iris, but she really doesn’t care about him; even so, he begs and tries to get her to pity him. His rival writes this. Farewell.” The badly damaged frescoes from the workshop of the dyer Verecundus showing a woman selling articles at a table and the dyers at work let us know that men and women slaves and perhaps free workers might often have labored together and developed their friendships at work.

Words of love and admiration slid easily into obscenity with the aid of wine as some of the tavern walls tell us: “I fucked the bar girl” (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.8442; trans. Natalie Kampen) or “Here Euplia laid strong men and laid ‘em out” (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.2310b; trans. Natalie Kampen). A similar story appears on the walls of brothels in Pompeii, although the pictures use a romanticized language unlike these raw words. Above the cubicles (Fig. 12.7) in which undernourished and unglamorous slave prostitutes worked for equally unglamorous men, beautiful boys and girls frolicked in wall paintings. The pictures show clean and lovely young people in comfortable settings with bed linen and pictures on the walls; their varied poses as well as the idealization of the imagery tells the customers the lies they want to hear as they contemplate a few minutes escape (Brendel 1970: 61–66).

Occupying Public Space: Alive or Dead

Whether prostitutes or saleswomen, shoppers in the marketplace or high-ranking priestesses, Pompeian women moved freely through the town. In its public spaces they saw buildings constructed with women’s money, statues to women, women at work, and women commemorated even in death. The publicly displayed tombs and tombstones so typical of the outskirts of Roman towns and cities all over the empire bring us still more evidence of women. Here were funerary monuments set up by women for their husbands (Fig. 12.8): on the grave monument (first century C.E.), of C. Munatius Faustus erected in his memory by his wife Naevoleia Tyche, were a portrait of Tyche and a relief of a funeral ceremony (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X.1030; trans. Natalie Kampen). On the facade the inscription reads,

Naevoleia Tyche, freedwoman of Lucius, for herself and Caius Munatius Faustus, member of the Augustal priesthood and country-man to whom the decurions, with the consent of the people, granted a *bisellium* (an honorific seat) for his merits. When she was alive, Naevoleia Tyche had this monument built also for her freedmen and those of Caius Munatius Faustus.

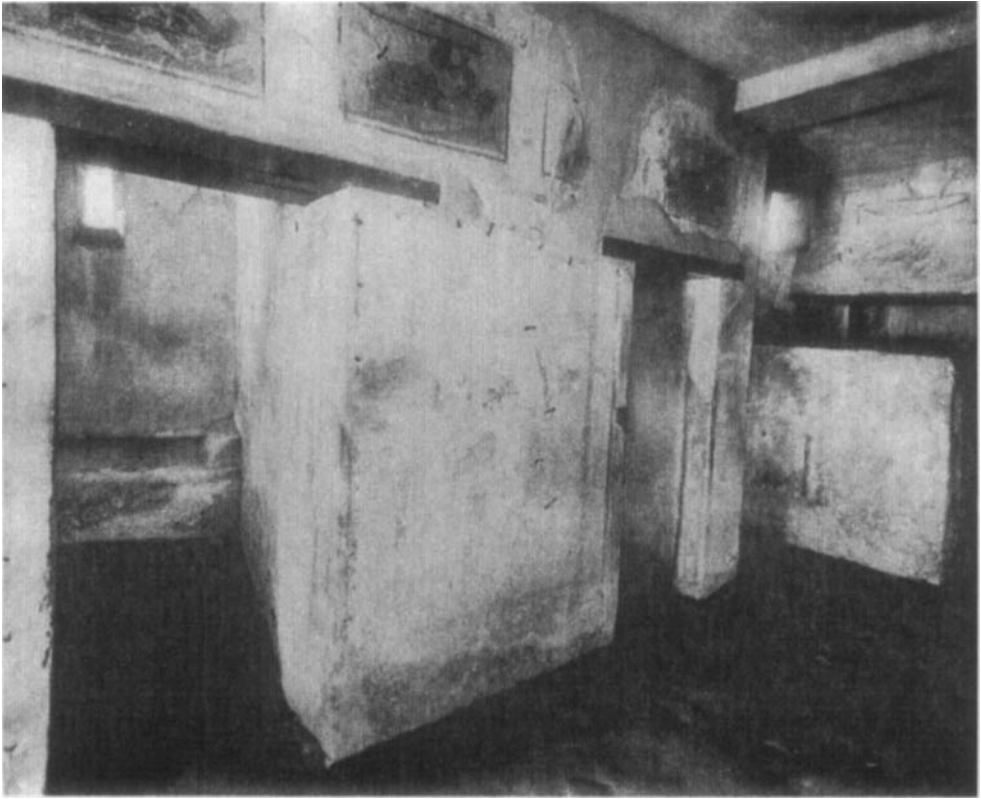


Figure 12.7. Interior of one of the several brothels in Pompeii, dated to the last years of the city, the brothel had small frescoes of heterosexual love-making painted above the entrances to the cubicles where the prostitutes worked. Whether these pictures tell us anything about actual sexual practices or are instead as "optimistic" as any advertising is unclear.

A travertine altar-shaped tomb (ca. 20 C.E.) erected by the Ceres priestess Alleia Decimilla commemorated her husband and son, both community officeholders (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X.1036), and a large tomb for Agrestinus Equitius Pulcher in the Porta Nocera cemetery was paid for by his wife Veia Barchilla (D'Avino 1967: 108). Eumachia's tomb stands nearby as does the tomb of M. Octavius and his freedwoman wife Vertia Philumene (Etienne 1977: 333). Upper- and middle-class tombs thus testify both to Pompeian women's use and even control of money and to the family relationships their social standing permitted them. Being honored by a funeral paid for with public money, as were the priestess Mamia and others, was the final testimony to their importance in the community.

Upper-class women lived with husbands, children, slaves, freed slaves, and assorted kin, in grand houses. How they used the space is by no means clear, however; nothing in the spatial arrangements or decorations reveals especially gendered places in the house. A few things are clear though: because ladies had slaves to do the domestic work, the

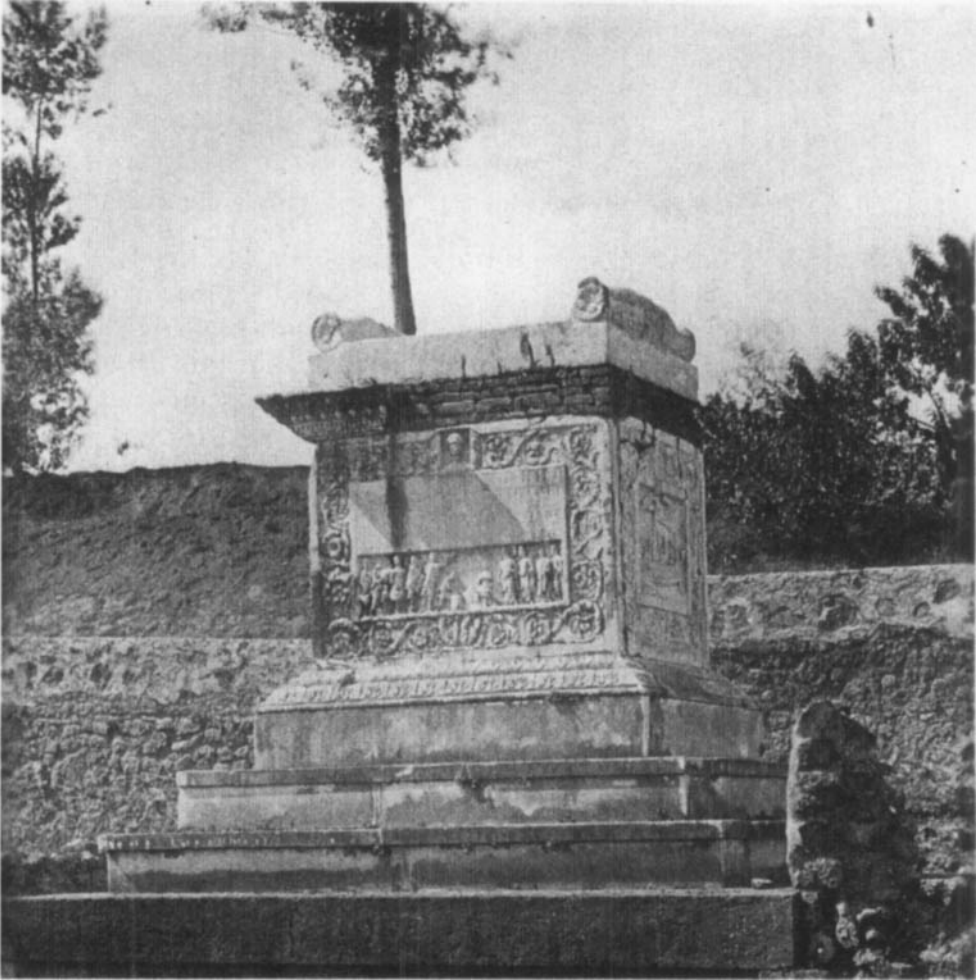


Figure 12.8. The first-century C.E., tomb monument of C. Munatius Faustus and Naevoleia Tyche in the cemetery of Porto Ercolano at Pompeii. The form recalls an altar, and many of the tombs at Pompeii incorporate reliefs with portraits or scenes of the occupations of the deceased.

kitchen was not the feminine preserve it became in modern times. Neither is there evidence for women's use of separate sitting rooms or dining rooms. Only when an area was given over to production work is women's presence attested to; thus the house of M. Terentius Eudoxus had a peristyle that was used as a weaving workshop. Graffiti in the porticus name men and women as *textores* (weavers) and *netrices* (net-makers) (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV.1507). Such use of space in a private house for production probably involved household slaves, and the finds of loom-weights in gardens and peristyles in other houses in Pompeii suggest that men and women slaves worked generating income for families all over town.

Houses for families of modest means were more the rule in some districts in Pompeii than the great mansions; with their smaller rooms

and more limited spaces, these two-story houses dominated residential areas such as the Via dell'Abbondanza. The main streets of these neighborhoods had shops to which women and their slaves could walk, and they could easily have walked to public baths like the Stabian and Forum Baths that had sections for women from the second century, B.C.E. on. The women's baths are discreetly tucked away in corners of the much larger men's bathing and exercise areas, an arrangement comparable to what one can still see today in old towns in the Middle East. In some middle- and lower-class districts of the first century C.E., houses contained small workshops for production by families, and one can even find one-room shops with what seem to be living quarters in small mezzanines that speak of meager earnings. Relatively few domestic articles remained for archaeologists in these modest houses, but beds, marble tables, and bronze lamps can be seen along with pottery for daily use and storage. As is the case in the houses of the rich, space use and use of many objects are not clearly gendered, nor can one tell from the way things look whether women or men had a greater role in decorating and furnishing the house.

Women did decorate themselves at Pompeii as elsewhere in the Roman world; both sculpture and paintings reveal norms for women's appearance, and cosmetic jars and jewelry, earrings, pins, and golden hairnets, provide specific evidence. A painting of a young couple, she with gold jewelry and holding a stylus and tablet, presents three important ideas: the representation of the couple, a woman's attractiveness, and female literacy (Fig. 12.9). Such an image locates a woman in a world that combines the very old traditions—marriage and female beauty as natural and necessary—with the notion of female competence; this last is hardly surprising as a motif in the Pompeii we have been exploring, a place where women own property, do business, pay for construction, hold honorific and cultic office, and go about in public.

The Limits of Archaeology

Images unfortunately cannot answer all the important questions about women in Pompeii; archaeological evidence fails to tell us just how much women could and did enter into public life and to what extent their physical mobility was limited by their sense of propriety and duty or by the intervention of fathers and husbands. Surely many of the aristocratic women of Rome felt little need to ask permission to move as they pleased or to enter into political negotiation and intrigue, but the same situation is harder to imagine for the wealthy and middle-class local families of Pompeii. Little information remains even to tell us about the involvement of such women in religious cult, although Mamia, a public priestess who erected a temple (early first century C.E.) "to the spirit of Augustus by herself and with her own money" (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* X.816; trans. Natalie Kampen), and Eumachia,



Figure 12.9. Wall painting of a couple from a house in first-century C.E. Pompeii; she holds a writing implement and tablets and he a scroll to testify to their learning and thus their status.

priestess of Ceres, indicate the importance of wealthy women as benefactors. Paintings in temples and houses document the presence of religious groups, such as that of Isis, that were especially popular among women (Fig. 12.10). A number of images of the Egyptian goddess and her rituals appear (see ch. 6 above), for example, at the estate of Julia Felix, but



Figure 12.10. Wall painting from first-century C.E. Pompeii, it depicts a ritual at the temple of Isis and includes the white-clad priests, priestesses, and followers of this Egyptian goddess whose cult had attracted women since the Hellenistic period.

there is no way to know if the owner had a special interest in Isis. And finally, the evidence fails to tell us enough about relationships among women, between workers like the waitresses who call on us to vote for their favorite candidate, between free women and their slaves, between businesswomen like the moneylender Faustilla and the women in debt to her.

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 C.E. covered the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum and the villas and farms around them. In one sense the eruption was one of the greatest tragedies of all time; in another sense, it did a great favor to archaeology in preserving, as nowhere else, traces of daily life for women and men in every social stratum.

Although the difficulties of interpreting this material are enormous, the reader of Chapter 13 will be keenly aware of the extent to which other periods in Roman history lack comparable minutiae about how people lived, ate, dressed, worked, and played.

TRANSLATIONS

Arrowsmith, W. 1959. *Petronius: The Satyricon*. New York.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Andreau, Jean. 1974. *Les Affaires de Monsieur Jucundus*. Rome.
- Bernstein, Frances. 1988. "Pompeian Women and the *Programmata*." In *Studia Pompeiana et Classica in honor of Wilhelmina F. Jashemski*, edited by R. I. Curtis, 1: 1–18. New Rochelle, N.Y.
- Brendel, Otto J. 1970. "Scope and Temperament of Erotic Art in the Greco-Roman World." In *Studies in Erotic Art*, edited by Theodore Bowie and C. V. Christenson, 3–69. New York.
- Castren, Paavo. 1975. *Ordo Populusque Pompeianus: Polity and Society in Roman Pompeii*. Rome.
- D'Avino, Michele. 1967. *Women of Pompeii*. Naples.
- De Franciscis, A. 1975. *The Pompeian Wall Paintings in the Roman Villa of Oplontis*. Recklinghausen.
- Digest of Justinian* 1985. Translated by Alan Watson. Philadelphia.
- Etienne, Robert. 1977. *La Vie Quotidienne à Pompéi*. 2d ed. Paris.
- Franklin, James, Jr. 1980. *Pompeii: The Electoral Programmata Campaigns and Politics, A.D. 71–79*. Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome 28. Rome.
- La Rocca, E., M. de Vos, and E. de Vos. 1976. *Guida Archeologica di Pompei*. Milan.
- Moeller, Walter. 1972. "The Building of Eumachia: A Reconsideration." *American Journal of Archaeology* 76, no. 3: 323–27.

FURTHER READING

- D'Arms, John. 1970. *Romans on the Bay of Naples*. Cambridge, Mass.
- Grant, Michael, et al. 1975. *Erotic Art in Pompeii*. London.
- Heyob, Sharon K. 1975. *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*. Leiden.
- Jashemsky, Wilhelmina. 1979. *The Gardens of Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Villas destroyed by Vesuvius*. New York.
- Packer, James. 1975. "Middle and Lower Class Housing in Pompeii and Herculaneum." In *Neue Forschungen in Pompeii*, edited by Bernard Andreae and Helmut Kyrleis, 133–47. Recklinghausen.
- Richardson, Lawrence, Jr. 1988. *Pompeii: An Architectural History*. Baltimore, Md.
- Ward Perkins, John B., and Amanda Claridge. 1978. *Pompeii A.D. 79*. New York.
- Will, Elizabeth Lyding. 1979. "Women in Pompeii." *Archaeology* 32, no. 5: 34–43.