

**SITES OF THE SEX TRADE:
SPATIAL ANALYSIS AND PROSTITUTION AT POMPEII**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the prostitution in Pompeii with a focus on the physical space in which this social phenomenon was enacted. Despite the negative attitudes by much of Roman society towards prostitutes, the sex trade in Pompeii thrived, with numerous venues offering the sale of sex. Prostitutes stationed themselves throughout the town and solicited customers inside buildings or out on the street in whatever limited privacy could be managed. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the manner in which prostitution was present in Pompeii through the spatial analysis of venues of prostitution in the town. Among other structures including, taverns and baths, I will make a close examination of the one known purpose-built brothel, its location and layout, in order to analyze the manner in which prostitute and client could interact in such a setting. The artwork and the graffiti found within the brothel will also be useful for this examination, and will provide further insights to the customer experience in the brothel. Although prostitutes themselves were disapproved of for their lifestyle and profession, society accepted the presence of prostitution as a whole. Customers readily paid for the services of prostitutes in various venues that each offered a different environment and thus a different experience. The enjoyment had by customers during their interactions with prostitutes ensured their return business and promoted the success of the sex trade in the service industry at Pompeii.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Arctos</i>	Arctos: Acta Philologica Fennica.
<i>Bdl</i>	Bullettino dell'Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica.
<i>CIL</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.
<i>CJ</i>	Classical Journal.
<i>ILS</i>	Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae.
<i>JRA</i>	Journal of Roman Archaeology.
<i>KolnJb</i>	Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor-und Frühgeschichte

DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The author declares that the content of this research has been completed by Amanda M. M. Devitt, with recognition of the contributions of the supervisory committee comprising of Dr. Michele George, Dr. Evan W. Haley, and Dr. Martin Beckmann.

INTRODUCTION

Aims and Methods

As the sex trade was spread throughout numerous venues in Pompeii, prostitutes (*meretrices*) and their customers interacted in a variety of locations.¹ Their interactions, while based upon a fundamental exchange of sex for money, were often influenced by the environment in which they took place. The most obvious venue in which sex was for sale at Pompeii is the brothel, or *lupanar*, although prostitutes could also be found elsewhere, whether working out of another smaller locale or on the street. In each location customers were able to identify prostitutes and solicit them. The examination of the physical space in which prostitution took place adds another dimension to our understanding of prostitution and the manner in which this social phenomenon was enacted. Through the spatial analysis of various venues for prostitution throughout Pompeii, this study will explore how prostitution was manifested in different establishments and how this might have influenced the interactions between prostitute and client.

While prostitution could be found in many Roman towns, its presence at Pompeii in particular has been a topic of much study due to the preservation of the site. Scholars have examined the content of the sexually explicit imagery found throughout Pompeii, and there have been numerous attempts to identify a number of definitive brothels among

¹ Singular, *meretrix*. While there were males who worked as prostitutes in the ancient world, the examination of prostitution in this study will be focused on the more common female prostitutes.

its streets.² Utilizing the groundwork provided by previous scholarship, this study will also draw on a variety of ancient sources in order to explore the manner in which prostitution manifested in the daily life of Pompeii. Although written sources of both a historical and literary nature are valuable in gaining an understanding of the perception of prostitutes in society, they come with biases on the part of their elite male authors. In order to enhance the picture provided by the ancient authors, this study will emphasize the analysis of material culture, with a special focus on the remains of structures at Pompeii. The spatial analysis of establishments associated with the sex trade will be utilized and applied to the examination of the interactions between prostitutes and clients, both in terms of the position of these structures in relation to other businesses and sites in Pompeii and the influence of the environment on the customer experience.

While a number of buildings will be examined, the one confirmed purpose-built brothel at Pompeii is of the utmost importance as an example of an establishment that functioned primarily as a venue of prostitution. The location of the brothel within the town and the design of the building, both its structure and layout, are important factors. The explicit sexual scenes depicted in wall paintings in the brothel will be used to provide insight not only into the style of decoration intended for the brothel, but also to the manner in which the sexual scenes were portrayed and how this related to the reality of the encounters between prostitute and client. Additionally, the significant quantity of graffiti found on the walls of the brothel represents informal testimony from the occupants of the brothel regarding their experiences in the space. Through an analysis of

² For instance, Clarke 2003b, 1998, and McGinn 2002, 1998. See also Wallace-Hadrill 1994 and Laurence 1994.

this evidence, alongside ancient sources and previous scholarship on prostitutes and Pompeii, this study will attempt to contribute to our understanding of the presence of prostitution at Pompeii and the dynamics of prostitute-client interactions throughout the town.

Prostitution in the Roman Era

Although prostitution is referred to in many Roman literary sources, formal definitions of the practice appear in second and third century AD texts, much later than can be applied with certainty to Pompeii.³ In order to encompass various aspects identified with prostitution, a modern definition will be used in this study. I accept the view of McGinn, who identifies three key characteristics of Roman prostitution: promiscuity in the choice of partners, some form of payment for sexual services, and emotional indifference between partners.⁴ It is possible that an emotional bond could develop between prostitute and client, yet such relationships were likely rare and cannot be generalized to include all prostitute-client relationships or be included in the definition of prostitution.⁵ The three key characteristics set prostitution apart from other forms of extramarital sex such as adultery and concubinage, and thus outline the type of prostitute that was found in Pompeii.

³ For instance, Ulp. *D.23.2.43.pr.* Although juridical sources such as Ulpian suggest that an attempt was made in the Roman era to formalize a definition of prostitutes, it is difficult to apply later definitions to prostitutes in Pompeii. Similarly, it is difficult to confirm whether prostitutes truly had the characteristics that earned them particular identifying markers or, through the perceptions of Roman society and not accurate observation, if such identifying markers were attributed to prostitutes.

⁴ McGinn 1998: 17-18. DeFelice 2001: 98 amends the first of these characteristics and specifies that it was a form of “commercial promiscuity”, in which, out of concern for the maintenance and safety of the business rather than the welfare of the prostitute, the *leno* or *lena* screened potential customers.

⁵ Cf. DeFelice 2001: 99.

Since there were few alternatives for poor women with a limited education to make as much money as prostitutes, freedwomen and possibly even freeborn women might become involved in the sex trade. These might include runaways, poor mothers, or daughters who were forced into prostitution to support their families. Even with free status, some women were probably desperate enough to ignore the practical concerns of pregnancy and venereal disease, and were forced to turn to a life built upon objectification and exploitation. Slaves were the most common prostitutes, whether in an organized form, such as in a brothel or other establishment, or prostituted out by their owner.⁶ Even a privately owned female slave was considered available to her master for sex.⁷ Although a restrictive clause, *ne serva prostituatur*, could be included in the sale of a slave to keep the purchaser from prostituting the slave,⁸ with the great demand for slaves and, more specifically, prostitutes, participants in the slave trade ensured the supply.⁹ Thus, the ethnicity of prostitutes varied, with slaves brought from around the Empire. The foreign origin of some prostitutes likely was an attraction to some customers, who might have been attracted by a prostitute's exoticism.

⁶ It is likely that the majority of prostitutes in the brothel were slaves, purchased as an investment for the business. While there is much evidence, including names of prostitutes recorded in graffiti, that identifies prostitutes as slaves or freedwomen, it is possible that some free women might have resorted to prostitution for income. Holleran 2011: 256 n.66 posits that freeborn people were more likely to prostitute themselves on the street and thus avoid dividing their profits with a pimp. See also Knapp 2011: 246, 259.

⁷ Bradley 1987: 116, Finley 1998: 163-4, and Pomeroy 1975: 192-3. However, as DeFelice 2001: 80 notes, this particular relationship was "legally and socially distinct from prostitution" in Roman society. The sexual abuse of a slave by her master was normative in the Roman era. This raises questions regarding the sexual availability of slaves in comparison to that of other women serving as prostitutes, but which are beyond the scope of this thesis. See also McGinn 1998: 196-7 and Bradley 1987: 118-19.

⁸ See Buckland 1969: 70-1, 603-4, and McGinn 1998: 288-319 for further discussion of *ne serva prostituatur*.

⁹ An inscription found in Benevento describes Vibia Calybe who, after working as a prostitute while a slave, managed her mistress's brothel as a freedwoman (*CIL IX.2029 = ILS 8287*). While this could be evidence of a trend that allowed prostitutes to rise to the managerial level of the sex trade, it is likely that the majority of pimps were simply opportunistic people who chose to participate in the sex trade.

Prostitutes carried a stigma in society that set them among the *infames*, a group that also included gladiators and actors, and which carried a degraded status and a lack of public honour or reputation.¹⁰ Prostitutes thus had some legal disabilities, particularly in the areas of marriage and inheritance, yet they did not face any legal punishments for their profession itself.¹¹ The business of prostitution was legal and was not strictly regulated. In A.D. 41, however, the emperor Caligula instituted the taxation of prostitutes.¹² Scholars suggest that there might also have been a requirement for prostitutes to register themselves at the office of the aedile,¹³ a policy which could have aided in the collection of taxes, although the details of how often and by whom the tax was collected remain uncertain and might have differed by location in the empire. While the collection of this tax might have become more strictly enforced over time, it is reasonable to assume that many prostitutes, particularly independent streetwalkers, were undocumented and were not sought out by officials for a portion of their income.¹⁴

Identifying exactly what Roman prostitutes looked like is problematic. While some scholars have asserted that prostitutes were required to wear distinctive dress to identify themselves as prostitutes, namely a toga,¹⁵ visual representations of prostitutes in

¹⁰ Edwards 1997: 66-76 and Kampen 1981: 29, 128.

¹¹ Knapp 2011: 238-9.

¹² See Fleming 1999: 54, McGinn 1998: 248-87, and Suet. *Calig.*40 for the taxation of prostitutes.

¹³ Decker 1979: 36-7, Edwards 1997: 81, Gardner 1986: 250-1, Pike 1965: 196-7, 205, and Tac. *Ann.*2.85.

¹⁴ The interest of the Roman government in registering prostitutes likely was not out of concern to maintain control over such immoral activities, as no other legislation appears to have been made to discourage them. Instead it represents an attempt to gain financially through the taxation of a successful business that was present throughout the Empire. Further discussion of the development and management of the registration and taxation of prostitutes cannot be discussed within the scope of this study. For further discussion of legal aspects associated to prostitution, see Decker 1979 and McGinn 1998.

¹⁵ Balsdon 1974: 252, Clarke 2003a: 227, Decker 1979: 37, Edwards 1997: 81, and Pike 1965: 198. Often these assertions are made through the association of prostitutes to women convicted of adultery and the

sculpture, relief, and painting instead show them in fine dresses or nude, occasionally wearing a *strophium*, or breast band. Although prostitutes in brothels might have been naked or scantily clad, and on display for customers, the nudity seen in paintings might have been intended more to emphasize the sexual nature of the scene and the prostitute within it. It is unclear whether or not there was any enforced dress code for prostitutes, but given the limited regulations imposed on other aspects of prostitution, it is unlikely that any official regulations were made regarding their apparel.¹⁶ At most prostitutes might have been kept from wearing a *stola*, a garment worn by respectable, modest women, although this would have been more of a socially enforced exclusion rather than an official governmental one. A prostitute must have been identifiable by her appearance in order to set herself apart as a prostitute and solicit customers on the street.¹⁷ However, descriptions of prostitutes are often focused on what they did not look like, rather than what they did, and their exclusion from the traditional clothing of proper Roman women.¹⁸ As prostitutes could station themselves in various locations, some of which might not have had a direct association to the business of prostitution, it is likely that it was not just a prostitute's physical appearance but also her demeanor that identified her

interpretation of ancient sources such as Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.63, 82, as making reference to a requirement for adulteresses to wear a toga. See Olson 2006: 192-3.

¹⁶ The ancient sources that are often cited to support the theory that prostitutes were forced to wear a toga, such as, Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.63, Mart. 2.39, 10.52, and Juv. *Sat.* 2.68-70, tend to refer only to adulteresses. It is assumed that prostitutes wore the same apparel yet it is not expressly stated.

¹⁷ Catull. 55.11-12, Mart. 1.36, 6.64.4, and Juv. *Sat.* 6.120-124. The type of attire associated with a *meretrix* was considered shameful and could be used to insult those who would wear such things (Tac. *Dial.* 26).

¹⁸ Knapp 2011: 260-1 suggests that, while prostitutes might have been prohibited from wearing the typical clothing of ordinary women, ordinary women dressed to display their status and differentiate themselves from prostitutes in order to avoid being harassed. Most descriptions of prostitutes' clothing distinguish them from respectable women, and thus put them in the same category as other disreputable women such as adulteresses. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if prostitutes did in fact wear the same clothing as adulteresses, or if they are simply considered morally and socially to be among the same class.

as such. In public spaces a prostitute would have maintained an extroverted and forward demeanor that was as necessary as her brightly coloured and alluring clothing and makeup in order to advertise herself to customers.¹⁹

Most evidence for the price that prostitutes charged for their services comes from graffiti, whether mentioned in an advertisement or in a customer's account of his experience.²⁰ A wide range of prices are recorded, indicating that they did vary. Although prostitutes could work independently on the streets, leaving the price of her services to her own discretion, most prostitutes, including those who worked in a brothel, were controlled by a pimp (*leno*) or madam (*lena*).²¹ In a brothel the *leno* controlled all aspects of the prostitutes' lives, not only determining the price for their services, which was hung on a sign outside each *cella*, but also dealing with clients and collecting payments.²² The most common price in graffiti is 2 *asses*, close to the cost of a loaf of bread or a cup of wine, while other graffiti report prices near 20 *asses*.²³

¹⁹ As the question of the clothing of prostitutes is outside the scope of this thesis, see Knapp 2011: 256-7 and Olson 2006: 192-200 for further discussion of the topic.

²⁰ See McGinn 2004: 40-55 and Varone 1994: 134-44 for a discussion of the price of prostitutes. Guzzo and Scarano Ussani 2009: 121 provide a table recording the cost identified in various graffiti from throughout Pompeii and include the name of the prostitute and service offered, when available.

²¹ Henriques 1963: 122 notes that a number of other participants could be involved depending upon the size of the brothel, including brothel-keepers (*lupanarii*), panders (*adductores* or *perductores*), and female 'go-betweens' (*conciliatrices* or *ancillulae*).

²² Hist. *Ap. Tyr.* 33-7, Juv. *Sat.* 6.116-32, Mart. 11.45, Petron. *Sat.* 1.7-8, and Plaut. *Pseud.* 172-93, 196-201. It is also possible that prices could vary based on the particular sexual services requested. For instance, Evans 1991: 138 posits that prices might vary if a prostitute catered to a select group of clientele with expensive tastes or unusual preferences that required additional cost.

²³ Duncan-Jones 1974: 246. Graffiti that identify a price of 2 *asses*: *CIL* IV.1307, 1969, 3964, 3999, 4023-4, 4150 (price given twice for two different prostitutes), 4441, 4592, 5105, 5206, 5338, 5345, 5372, 7068, 7764, 8185, 8224-5, 8454-5, 8465, 8511. Graffiti that attest to higher prices include: *CIL* IV.1751 (16 *asses*), 8034 (23 *asses*), 8812 (27 *asses*). A passage from Martial (10.75) suggests that prices could be negotiated, although this example may refer to a more high-end concubine outside of the normal ranks of prostitutes.

The prices of prostitutes were affordable for most men and, although Roman society generally disapproved of the immoral lifestyle of prostitutes, the purchase of a prostitute's services was not particularly shameful and was considered by some as a necessary tool to maintain a monogamous marriage.²⁴ Moreover, the laws of adultery made it possible for men to have extra-marital sex with women, including prostitutes, foreigners, and non-citizens such as slaves, without any repercussions.²⁵ In addition, prostitutes might offer more exciting or tempting sexual services that a proper Roman woman would not.²⁶ For instance, *fellatio* and *cunnilingus*, both of which involve the mouth, were considered degrading and improper;²⁷ men of both high and low status could have engaged a prostitute to experience the types of sexual activity they could not with their own wives.²⁸ Although much remains unclear regarding the clientele of prostitutes and how societal disapproval of prostitution affected the business, it is evident that the sex trade remained a profitable business in the Roman era.

²⁴ Hor. *Sat.* 1.2.28-36, 119-34. Cf. Gowers 2012: 98 (commentary of lines 31-35). See also Laurence 1994: 71.

²⁵ Gardner 1986: 121-125, Langlands 2006: 137-8, Rousselle 1988: 85, and Treggiari 1991: 262-298. See Richlin 1981 for a discussion of the sources on adultery.

²⁶ Knapp 2011: 257.

²⁷ Clarke 1998: 220-2 suggests that the negative view of these sexual acts developed from a concern for the purity of the mouth, the organ of speech. See also Knapp 2011: 257-8 and Parker 1997: 48-63.

²⁸ Although some scholars posit that those who frequented brothels were among the lower classes (Clarke 1998: 196, 199, Clarke 2003b: 63-4, McGinn 2002: 20, and Treggiari 1991: 301-2), upper class men would have had the financial freedom to spend their money regularly at such an establishment. They could thus prove to be more reliable customers than poor men, who could only afford to indulge their desires occasionally. The identification of the clientele of prostitutes and the social orders from which they came, is a complex issue that will not be dealt with in the scope of this thesis.

Prostitution at Pompeii

Most of the sources available for prostitutes and the business of prostitution come from Rome, yet it is difficult to apply Roman sources in a paper that is very site specific. Certain aspects of prostitution cannot easily be compared between the sites of Rome and Pompeii, and it is unclear to what degree the perceptions of prostitution that are shown in Roman sources also are apparent in Pompeii. Yet Pompeii offers evidence that does not exist at Rome, which can be used in the examination of prostitution. In particular, the preservation of the site provides the opportunity to examine the physical space of a Roman town and utilize the material culture found there.

As the one confirmed brothel at Pompeii, the *lupanar* is a key source of evidence for the study of prostitutes at Pompeii and prostitution in general. The first chapter will thus make a close examination of the structure, first in terms of its location, both in relation to the rest of the town and the neighbouring streets and buildings, in order to gain insight to the role of the physical structure in the area. The interior layout of the *lupanar* and the design of the structure will also be discussed in order to analyze the use of the space by employees and customers. A particular feature in the decoration of the *lupanar* is the series of erotic wall paintings in the corridor of the ground floor. The location and content of these images will be used to investigate the intentions of the artwork and the possible influence of the paintings on customers and the mood of the space.

Aside from the paintings that decorate the interior of the *lupanar*, there is another body of evidence found on the walls of the brothel that can be used to examine the use of the space. Over 130 graffiti have been found throughout the brothel and recorded in the

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.²⁹ Although often minimal, the records of these graffiti include brief notations of placement throughout the structure as well as an occasional drawing of a figural graffito. While previous scholars have studied the graffiti of the *lupanar*, the topic tends only to have been discussed with respect to the sexual content. Therefore, the second chapter of this thesis will be concerned with the analysis of this body of evidence with various points of examination, including content, meaning, authorship, audience, location, and patterns of distribution. By considering the informal testimony of the graffiti it is possible to gain a greater understanding of the daily function of the space and the use of the rooms by both prostitute and client, before, after, or during their meetings with one another.

The size of Pompeii provides the opportunity to not only examine one structure but also apply spatial analysis to numerous other establishments that might have been associated to the sex trade. The third chapter will move beyond the *lupanar* to consider the numerous other venues of prostitution in Pompeii and the reasons for such identification. As a report on all possible sites of prostitution is not viable within the scope of this study, the chapter instead will provide a survey of the sites, including the *cellae meretriciae*, or cribs, a selection of inns and taverns, and the Suburban Baths. The survey will be used to further the study of the relationship of prostitute and client, examining how their interactions might have differed at the sites, particularly in comparison to their interactions in the brothel. Much like the analysis of the location of the *lupanar*, the locations of these sites not only will be examined for their possible

²⁹CIL IV. 2173-2296.

influence on the public perception of the neighbourhoods but also for how the various locations could influence business for those involved in the sex trade.

Despite the negative view of prostitutes held by much of Roman society, prostitution was present in towns, including Pompeii. Numerous venues offered the sale of sex, serving customers from different levels of society. Prostitution maximized profits and the success of the business through the engagement of customers, whether new clientele or among the regular client base. The business was not segregated in a secluded portion of the town in an attempt to hide the immoral or deviant behaviour of its participants. Instead, the sex trade was woven into the streets of Pompeii, with prostitutes in any location that could prove viable to serve their customers. As a business, prostitution had a distinct presence in the life of Pompeii that was maintained by the unique interactions of prostitute and client in establishments throughout the town.

CHAPTER ONE

The Lupanar

Introduction

The number of brothels that have been identified in Pompeii has changed repeatedly as scholars have presented new perspectives on the sites.³⁰ In particular, perceptions of the erotic imagery found throughout Pompeii have changed significantly, thereby affecting the identification of brothels. Without a clear understanding of the reaction that was intended of a viewer, modern perceptions have been applied to the images, often with more sensitive or conservative attitudes. The content of the images seemed to reveal the purpose of the space and thus the presence of erotic paintings were believed to denote spaces used for sexual services. As a result, numerous buildings in Pompeii were identified as brothels, with the number at one time reaching a total of thirty-five.³¹ For a town the size of Pompeii, the existence of nearly three-dozen brothels seems high.³² Additional criteria were needed to distinguish brothels from other buildings that simply had erotic imagery in their decoration. A set of criteria presented by Wallace-Hadrill has done just that, reducing the number of brothels to one, apart from

³⁰ I support the definition of a brothel as a public space where the sale of sex is the primary, if not the sole function of the establishment, and in which multiple prostitutes can work at the same time. Cf. McGinn 2013: 612.

³¹ Laurence 1994: 73 and Varone 1994: 135 n.228. Both of these sources include nine *cellae meretriciae* and the Suburban Baths, with the largest compiled number of brothels (25), from La Torre 1988: 93 n.29.

³² Clarke 1998: 195 and Jacobelli 1995: 65 n.119 assert that the population of Pompeii was 10,000, thus creating a ratio of one brothel for every seventy-one men. Comparatively, the population of the city of Rome during the fourth century is suggested at one million, with only about forty-five or forty-six brothels in the city (Two Regionary Catalogues record the number of brothels in Rome, as the *Curiosum* records forty-six, and the *Notitia* forty-five). See Lazer 1997 for a discussion of the size and composition of the population at Pompeii.

the *cellae meretriciae*.³³ Wallace-Hadrill's criteria are: 1) evidence of a masonry bed; 2) the presence of explicitly sexual paintings; and 3) graffiti of the *hic bene futui* type.³⁴ As it has been shown that paintings with sexual subject matter alone do not denote a brothel, it is necessary for all three criteria to appear at one site. Wallace-Hadrill asserts that evidence of a masonry bed is the most essential criterion for identifying a brothel, although it does put limits on the search. For instance, it seems unlikely that Pompeian prostitutes only used masonry beds and never wooden beds or pallets on the floor.³⁵ While masonry beds are certainly a telling feature, their absence does not preclude the possibility of a brothel. The reliance on erotic painting as an identifying feature is also an obstacle as such imagery was extremely popular in Pompeii and throughout the Roman world.³⁶ Moreover, the anonymous nature of graffiti makes it difficult to identify the authorship and true intentions of the message, which may have been no more than a joke or insult, without a basis in truth. Despite these clear limitations, these three criteria represent the best system of identification available for identifying brothels. When taken together, they provide a starting point for the identification of purpose-built brothels and possibly other locations of prostitution.

In the study of prostitution at Pompeii, the most vital source of evidence is the *lupanar*, located at VII.12.18-20. The building contains examples of all three criteria

³³ The role of *cellae meretriciae* in the Pompeian sex trade will be discussed in Chapter 3.

³⁴ Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 52. Della Corte 1965 provides criteria for identifying brothels similar to those of Wallace-Hadrill, although some of his criteria are broader, resulting in upwards of nine possible brothels and one *cella meretricia*.

³⁵ Cf. McGinn 2002: 9-10.

³⁶ The presence of erotic imagery has repeatedly resulted in the false identification of structures as locations of prostitution. For instance, an advertisement for a prostitute at its entrance (*CIL* IV.4592), and a series of erotic images on the interior, led the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1) to be identified as a brothel. See Varone 1994: 133-4.

posited for identifying brothels, and it is this collection of sexual graffiti, erotic art, and masonry beds which has made it the only confirmed brothel at Pompeii.³⁷ While there were numerous locations at which prostitution took place in Pompeii, the sale of sex was often secondary to the other functions of the establishments. As the *lupanar* functioned solely for the sale of sex, the building stands apart in regard to the evidence of prostitution it can provide. The location of the *lupanar* within Pompeii dictated its accessibility to customers as well as its visibility to those members of society who would not have been interested in the services of the brothel. Its proximity to other structures or areas of the town can give insight to the perception of the brothel as a business and the possible influence it had on the sort of structures that were nearby. The structure itself, including the layout of the interior and the decoration within, will aid in the study of sites of prostitution as a well-preserved example of an establishment devoted to the sale of sex.

Location

The *lupanar* is located at the corner of the *Vicolo del Lupanare* and *Vicolo del Balcone Pensile*.³⁸ The position of the structure on an intersection ensured that the passer-by would see it. The brothel was not tucked away on a side street, nor was it relegated to the outskirts of the town. Instead, the building was clearly visible on two streets and was not far from the major through-routes of the *Via Stabiana* or *Via*

³⁷ The collection of graffiti of the ‘*hic bene futui*’ type within the *lupanar* is the largest cluster anywhere in the town. The verb *futuo* is used twenty-eight times in varying forms: *CIL* IV.2175, 2176, 2178, 2184-7, 2191, 2193, 2195, 2198-2200, 2203, 2217-19, 2232, 2241-2, 2246-8, 2260, 2265, 2274, 2288. For a close examination of the graffiti found within the *lupanar*, see Chapter 2.

³⁸ See Figure 1.

dell'Abbondanza. When entering the city, it would not have been difficult to locate the brothel. It was conveniently positioned directly between the *Porta Vesuvio* and *Porta di Stabia*, and not much further from the *Porta Marina*. Any traveler newly-arrived at Pompeii could reach the brothel in a timely fashion, without the need to venture onto smaller streets or alleyways. The local population also would have found the brothel with ease, due to its proximity to major streets and popular public locations such as the Forum and the Stabian Baths. The numerous electoral *programmata* and other notices along the *Via degli Augustali* to the north of the brothel suggest that the street was a popular route.³⁹ Those who walked down the *Via degli Augustali* would not have been far from the brothel, whether they intended to visit it or another structure in the area.

Directly to the west of the brothel on the *Vicolo del Balcone Pensile* is the *Casa di Narcisso*.⁴⁰ Another entrance to the same house opens immediately to the north of the brothel on the *Vicolo del Lupanare*. The house is quite large, with an atrium that contains the only *impluvium* in all of *insula 12*.⁴¹ The atrium was finely decorated with images of Nike, Cupid, and Leda, and the remnants of frescoes are present in rooms throughout the house.⁴² There are three other houses to the west of the brothel on the *Vicolo del Balcone Pensile*. The two larger houses are known as the *Casa del Camillo*, located at VII.12.22-24, and the *Casa del Balcone Pensile*, located at VII.12.28. Each had paintings

³⁹ Franklin 1986: 319-20.

⁴⁰ VII.12.17, 21.

⁴¹ Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 506-7.

⁴² Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 506-19.

throughout its rooms as well as a fine garden.⁴³ Another house, identified as having belonged to L. Cornelius Diadumenus, is located at VII.12.26.⁴⁴ Although it is not as large as the other houses, it is notable for the well-decorated walls throughout the structure. Among the wall paintings in the house, a depiction of the Ariadne abandoned by Theseus was found on the north wall of the *triclinium*, and a series of images were discovered in a room behind the atrium, including one of Artemis and the nymph Calypso.⁴⁵ North of the brothel at the intersection of the *Vicolo del Lupanare* and the *Via degli Augustali* there are two more large houses: the *Casa di D. Caprasius Primus*, located at VII.2.48, and the larger *Casa dell'Orso Ferito*, at VII.2.44-46.⁴⁶ A few metres south of the brothel on the *Vicolo del Lupanare* is the *Casa di Sirico*, another very large and well-decorated house with the main entrance located at VII.1.47.⁴⁷

Although the *lupanar* was the only brothel in town and thus was the most popular place to buy the services of prostitutes, there were numerous houses around it. Many of these houses were large and well decorated, and thus were likely not owned by members of the lower classes but rather by those who could afford such homes.⁴⁸ The area around

⁴³ VII.12.22-24: Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 540-564 and Richardson 2000: 97, 104. VII.12.28: Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 594-613 and Richardson 2000: 146. See Jashemski, 193 and 196 for a discussion of the gardens at VII.12.22-24 and 28.

⁴⁴ Della Corte 1965: 202. Pugliesi Carratelli, vol. VII: 565-593.

⁴⁵ Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 571-2, 579-80; Richardson, 146. See also Jashemski 1993: 196 for information on the garden at this house.

⁴⁶ VII.2.48: Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VI: 786-813. VII.2.44-46: Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VI: 742-785.

⁴⁷ Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VI: 228-353 and Richardson 2000: 40, 46.

⁴⁸ Other houses within an approximately 50-metre radius from the *lupanar*: VII.10.8 (rear entrance to house at VII.10.5), VII.10.12, VII.11.2, VII.12.9, VII.12.11, VII.12.12, VII.1.40. There is also a secondary entrance to the *Domus Veti Sirici* (VII.1.47) across the street from the brothel on the *Vicolo del Lupanare*. There are additional dwellings in *Regio VII* and the area surrounding the *lupanar* that are much smaller than those described here. The average property size in *Regio VII* is in fact the smallest of all the *Regiones* (Robinson 1997: 137-8).

the brothel does not appear to have been perceived as some form of red-light district which respectable citizens would avoid. Instead, homes were situated around the brothel with no apparent concern for their proximity to an establishment devoted to the sale of sex.

While there are some workshops in the vicinity of the brothel, as well as the houses noted above, the area appears to have been predominantly commercial. Numerous shops, taverns, and other customer-based establishments fill the streets surrounding the brothel. Across the street from the brothel on the *Vicolo del Lupanare* is the *caupona* and *hospitium* of Sittius, and opposite the brothel on the *Vicolo del Balcone Pensile* is the town's largest *hospitium*.⁴⁹ With such a cluster of customer-based establishments, it is no wonder that a graffito was left on the street urging loiterers to move along.⁵⁰ These streets would have been filled with foot traffic as people moved between the various businesses. North of the brothel along the *Vicolo del Lupanare*, there is a *caupona* and a *hospitium* at VII.12.15 and 16, as well as two *tabernae* where the street intersects with the *Via degli Augustali*.⁵¹ To the south of the brothel there are more shops and another *caupona*.⁵² The *Vicolo del Balcone Pensile*, west of the brothel, also contains a series of shops as well as two *hospitia* and a *popina* on the corner of *insula* 12.⁵³ The high number of commercial establishments is more noticeable as one moves closer to the Forum. *Insula* 9, which stands between the Forum and the *lupanar* in

⁴⁹ VII.1.44-45; VII.11.11, 14.

⁵⁰ *CIL* IV.813: '*otiosis locus hic non est. discedere morator*', "This is not a place to idle. Shove off loiterer" (trans. Foss, in DeFelice 2007: n.81).

⁵¹ VII.1.41, 42. There are a high number of shops along the *Via degli Augustali*.

⁵² VI.11.13. The Stabian Baths and a possible *cella meretricia* (VII.11.12) are also nearby the *lupanar* on this road, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

⁵³ *hospitia*: VII.11.6, 7; *popina*: VII.12.34. There is also a possible *cella meretricia* (VII.12.33) which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

insula 12, is almost entirely shops, with a *caupona* and a few *thermopolia* throughout. It is evident that, while houses and other structures were present, this area was focused on commercial activity.

The brothel was a business and thus was established in a location that would be beneficial to attract customers. It was positioned at an intersection, clearly visible to passing traffic, and was not far from major thoroughfares. A short distance from the *lupanar* was the Stabian Baths, located just a few metres south along the *Vicolo del Lupanare*. The brothel was not positioned away from this popular public site but rather was visible from the entrances to the baths on the *Vicolo del Lupanare*, and was conveniently located for anyone visiting both establishments. Although the *lupanar* is approximately 150-metres away from the Forum, there is a nearly direct route between the two sites along the *Vicolo del Balcone Pensile*. The open plot of land at the intersection of the *Vicolo del Lupanare* and the *Via degli Augustali* might have served as a space where the public could gather in the neighbourhood, a short distance from the brothel.⁵⁴ It appears that there was no intention to isolate the brothel outright from other sites or from the common public; rather it was a relatively prominent site at which sex was available for any who desired it.⁵⁵ Even without the intention to visit the brothel, a person going to any one of the numerous shops in the area would have had a difficult time avoiding the building itself. The *lupanar* certainly could have been avoided if

⁵⁴ Franklin 1986: 320-1 posits that this open space might have served as a social centre for the area with a *caupona* (VII.12.15) immediately adjacent to serve those who gathered. The rear entrance of the *caupona* is only two doorways from the *lupanar*. The second storey of the *caupona* was termed a *hospitium* by Della Corte 1965: n.393.

⁵⁵ See Fleming 1999: 45 and Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 39-62. The locations of the brothel and other sites of prostitution in the urban context of Pompeii will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

someone actively attempted to stay away from it; however, the *lupanar* was not hidden from view in a seedy corner of town where only those interested in the services of the brothel would ever go.

The objective of all businesses in the area was to serve customers, an intention no different from the *lupanar*. As the only brothel in the town, the *lupanar* would have had a strong customer base. Shops and businesses near the brothel might have embraced their proximity to the brothel and used it to their advantage by offering services to customers of the brothel who lingered in the area. Even if the customer-base for the brothel could be considered to have been disreputable or isolated from the rest of society, it did not mean that other proprietors would not want their business. Shops, taverns, and inns would not have been selective as to their customers, but rather would have accepted everyone who desired to pay for goods or services at their establishments. The brothel was simply another business in the area, and there is no evidence to suggest that the surrounding businesses were concerned that their proximity to a site of the sex trade would affect them negatively.

Structure and Interior

The *lupanar* stands on a triangular corner lot, which forced the construction of the two-storey building to fit into the narrow, angular space available.⁵⁶ The ground floor of the structure contains five small rooms of similar size that open off the hallway. There is also a latrine under the stairway, concealed by a partition wall. The hallway itself is

⁵⁶ See Figure 2.

decorated with a series of paintings, positioned high on the wall throughout the space, depicting a variety of forms of sexual activity between a male and female.⁵⁷ An additional painting of similar content is visible on the west wall above the entrance to the latrine.⁵⁸ An impression of a coin minted in A.D. 72 which had been pressed into the plaster when it was still wet, was found in the wall of one of the ground floor *cellae*.⁵⁹ It is likely the owner of the brothel had the walls repainted, including much of the wall decoration, in the years leading up to the eruption and possibly after damage from the earthquake in A.D. 62.

On the north wall between the doorways to rooms *c* and *d* there is a painting of the god Priapus, who is depicted with two phalluses.⁶⁰ The phallic symbol was not a necessarily sexual image; rather it often served as a superstitious charm.⁶¹ Some depictions of Priapus were placed in doorways or at crossroads to protect the boundaries, while others were symbols of good luck.⁶² If the image in the brothel had similar intentions, the double phallus surely would have increased the protection or luck the viewer was meant to receive from Priapus.⁶³ Of course, the erotic connotations of such an image can be associated to the activities taking place within the brothel, and a male viewer may certainly imagine the doubled sexual satisfaction of two phalluses. The

⁵⁷ Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 522-8. These paintings will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

⁵⁸ Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 529.

⁵⁹ DeVos and DeVos 1982: 203.

⁶⁰ Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 524.

⁶¹ Marcade 1965: 33-4 examines the appearance of the phallic image and its use as a superstitious token or charm, highlighting the role of phallism in early Italian religious cults. Johns 1982: 61-76 dedicates a chapter to the discussion of the phallus and its use as an apotropaic symbol.

⁶² Another image of Priapus is found near the entrance of the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1), presumably intended to protect visitors from the evil eye, while another from a tavern in Herculaneum may have been intended to provide good luck to the patrons.

⁶³ Cf. McGinn 2002: 14 and Clarke 1998: 199-201.

double phallus therefore may have been intended to hint at the great sexual pleasure a visitor would receive in the establishment. Reactions to this particular image might have included a sense of enticing excitement from the sexual image, or light-hearted humour from seeing an individual with two phalluses. In either case, the image set the tone for the experience in the brothel and invited the client to relax and enjoy.

Within each of the separate rooms, or *cellae*, there is a bed made of raised masonry as well as a masonry 'pillow' attached. These masonry beds use most of the floor space available in each room, leaving limited space for any additional furnishings. Windows are not a regular feature in the *cellae*, with only a few small windows high in the walls of three rooms.⁶⁴ As a result the rooms were regularly dark, and probably lit with the aid of oil lamps. The separate *cellae* likely each had a fabric curtain, or *cento*, that could be pulled across the entrance when a prostitute was engaged with a client.⁶⁵ Other brothel *cellae* might have also had a door closing off each room, although there is limited evidence to suggest doors in the *lupanar*.⁶⁶ The lack of a solid door has many implications for the limited privacy available in the brothel. A curtain would not close off the sounds of the activity within the *cella*, nor keep out the prying eyes of those who might peek around the curtain. As a well-established business, the clients of the *lupanar*

⁶⁴ There are two windows in each room on either side of the main entrance (rooms *d* and *f*) and one window in the second room on the left (room *e*). There are two more small windows by the latrine, one inside the latrine and another just outside the entrance.

⁶⁵ Juv. *Sat.* 6.121, Mart. 1.34.5, 11.45.3, and Petron. *Sat.* 7.

⁶⁶ On brothel *cellae* with doors: *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 34, Mart. 1.34, 11.45, and Ovid. *Am.* 3.14.9-10.

were clearly not concerned with such minimal privacy; repeat clients expected the limited privacy afforded to them at the venue, and accepted it.⁶⁷

On the second floor of the *lupanar* there are an additional five rooms that were accessible by a separate entrance and stairway at VII.12.20, as well as a balcony that ran along the perimeter of the building. These rooms do not contain masonry beds, nor is there any record of them containing sexual paintings such as those downstairs. In fact, the second storey contains none of the three criteria proposed by Wallace-Hadrill as essential for the identification of brothels. By the most rigid reading, this would suggest that the second storey, unlike the first storey, did not function as a brothel. However, the question then arises what function the second storey had. While both floors were likely owned by the same person, the owner could have allowed two separate people to operate individual businesses on the property and the separate street entrances may be evidence of two different businesses operating in the same structure.⁶⁸ However, little else suggests what business might have occupied the second floor.

While some literary sources remark on pimps sending their prostitutes home at the end of work, others report the possibility of prostitutes living in the brothel.⁶⁹ It is possible that the difference lay in the type of prostitute, as free or freedwomen may have had a separate home where they could go, while prostitutes who were property of the business owner were forced to stay where they worked. The sleeping arrangements for

⁶⁷ On the modesty of prostitutes: Ovid. *Am.* 3.14.9-10, Val. Max. 3.5.4, Sen. *Nat. Quaest.* 1.16.6, Mart. 1.34, 11.45, and Juv. *Sat.* 11.171-73. This by no means suggests that all Roman males were exhibitionists in their sexual activities, but rather that as every client who arrived at the brothel was there for the same purpose, there was not much concern to conceal their activities.

⁶⁸ Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 108.

⁶⁹ On sending prostitutes home: Juv. *Sat.* 6.127. On living in a brothel: Sen. *Contr.* 1.2 and *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 33-36.

prostitutes were not a vital concern of the brothel owner, but if any prostitutes were required to live on the premises, the upper storey could have been useful as a residential space. In order to serve the many visitors to the town and increase the opportunities for profit, brothels were open throughout much of the day and night.⁷⁰ Although it is unclear what sort of allowance for breaks or time off prostitutes had, it is possible that they received some allotted time 'off duty'. If so, prostitutes may have been permitted to withdraw to the second storey, using the five *cellae* as places to rest and sleep.⁷¹ McGinn refutes this possibility, arguing that the designation of a space as sleeping quarters for the prostitutes would be an uneconomical decision for a brothel owner, given the exploitative nature of the business. Instead, he suggests that the prostitutes slept downstairs in the beds in which they worked.⁷² While this too could prove uneconomical if the prostitutes rested in a space intended for meetings with customers, it is possible that the brothel did not stay busy at all hours, allowing the prostitutes time to lounge on the ground floor, waiting for customers, and to sleep. Moreover, if there was in fact no designated 'off duty' time beyond when the brothel was closed, prostitutes would have been available to customers at all times, resting in the ground floor *cellae* only when all customers had left. With the assumption that each prostitute was assigned a separate *cella* in which to work and sleep, there then could be no more than five prostitutes working at the *lupanar* in Pompeii. While this might have been a reasonable number when the brothel was

⁷⁰ See McGinn 2004: 149-150 for the hours of operation for venues of prostitution.

⁷¹ Depending on the number of prostitutes employed in the brothel, a sort of shift system could have been in operation in which prostitutes traded an upstairs room with another prostitute on her way down to work in one of the *cellae* on the ground floor.

⁷² McGinn 2002: 15. Cf. DeFelice 2001: 101.

established, as the town and the demand grew, the brothel might have needed to accommodate more prostitutes.

It is also possible that the second storey served the function of a venue for sex in addition to the ground floor. Whether it was a separate brothel accessed by the exterior entrance or an extension of the one below is unclear.⁷³ However, the space is not similarly decorated with explicit sexual imagery as on the ground floor, nor does it contain masonry beds, that one might expect in a purpose-built brothel space. There are also no examples of graffiti left by the clients or prostitutes, who would have occupied the space when it was in use as a brothel. The lack of masonry beds does not negate the possibility of its use as a brothel, as there might have been beds of wood or another material that has not survived. Even so, aside from its proximity to the brothel downstairs, there is limited evidence to substantiate a claim for the function of the space.

The rooms upstairs are of different size, which might suggest that a wider variety of activity took place on the second floor in contrast to the use of each small *cella* on the first floor by one prostitute. If the two storeys indeed functioned together as one brothel, multiple prostitutes could have shared the upstairs space, or the larger rooms could have had broader uses for entertaining visitors while the ground floor *cellae* were occupied.⁷⁴ It is also possible that at some point more than one of the functions theorized were in practice. If the second storey was under the control of the same proprietor as the brothel below, it might have remained for some time as an extra space used for the overflow of

⁷³ LaTorre 1988: 93 n.29 and McGinn 2002: 15.

⁷⁴ McGinn 2013: 627-8 is confident that sex was sold on the second storey of the *lupanar* but identifies some of the rooms as facilities for drinking, dining, and other entertainment.

customers from the ground floor. Also, if at any time the second floor functioned primarily as sleeping quarters, with prostitutes sleeping in beds or on the floor, the space could be appropriated for the use of clients. The brothel owner was interested in profits and likely had no reservations about making the rooms on the second floor available for use on busy occasions. At one time he could have converted the entire upper storey from residential space to accommodate more business, depending on the number of prostitutes in his employ, and offered food, drink, and other activities with the prostitutes. It is reasonable to believe that the entire building was run as a single brothel, with the use of the upper storey changing over time in response to the increase or decrease of business. The *lupanar* was the key established site of prostitution at Pompeii, resulting in numerous clients, visitors to the town and Pompeians alike, filling the brothel and enjoying the pleasures that the space had to offer.

Erotic Wall Paintings

Along the ground floor hallway of the *lupanar* is a series of paintings that each depict a man and woman in various forms of sexual activity.⁷⁵ Modern tour guides excite visitors by describing the images as a menu of sorts, representing what the prostitute occupying each room would offer. This theory is not entirely implausible, as a visual representation of information would prove useful for a foreign visitor or traveler who may have not spoken the same language or a customer who was unable to read. Even

⁷⁵ While there are six wall paintings that will be discussed here, there was an additional painting on the wall between the doorways to rooms *f* and *e*. However, insofar as too little of the painting remains to determine what the image depicted, the painting will not be included in the discussion that follows regarding the paintings in the *lupanar*.

still, there may be other more plausible explanations for the purpose of the images in the brothel. Insofar as not all of the paintings are positioned directly over individual doorways, it is difficult to maintain that customers would have been able to easily identify each painting as a label for the activities within the particular room. Another painting with a similar style and content to those throughout the hallway is positioned above the latrine under the stairway. This painting certainly did not serve as a visual cue for the activities taking place beyond the doorway, and it therefore seems inappropriate to assign such a purpose to the other paintings in the space. Moreover, these images were not the only painting in the space; the whole interior was painted in the Fourth-Style, and the erotic panels were only one element in a space that was fully decorated.⁷⁶ If there was a particular intention behind this series of erotic images, it is necessary first to examine the content of each image.

In the first painting which is located above the doorway to room *f*, the man is reclined on the bed with the woman straddling his legs.⁷⁷ The image contains many details including a lamp stand on the left of the scene, and what appears to be a pair of shoes that have been kicked off lying below the bed. The bed itself is finely made, with a headboard, decorative legs, and linens draped over the sides. There is some sort of striped pattern on the bolster pillow, although the dark colours make it difficult to determine. While the man is naked, the woman is depicted wearing a breast-band, or

⁷⁶ A painting of the god Priapus was also located on the north wall, as noted previously. Guzzo and Scarano Ussani 2009: 45-47 provide a series of photographs showing the interior of the *lupanar* and the painted decoration, including close-up images of the erotic wall paintings, the painting of Priapus, and other details.

⁷⁷ See Figure 3.

strophium. The couple is not in the midst of sexual intercourse. Instead the woman rests her buttocks on the man's left leg and leans forward on her right arm, staring at him. While the man is raised up on his right elbow, his entire body appears quite relaxed. The scene accordingly seems to depict a moment before or between sex acts, rather than an explicit moment in the midst of sexual activity.

The second image, on the wall to the right of room *f*, also depicts a bed that is richly dressed with a fine headboard and carved legs.⁷⁸ The linens are green with a reddish-brown striped pattern. Neither the man nor the woman is wearing any clothes, although the man appears to have some sort of garlanded headpiece. The woman leans back on her left arm while the man, crouched on his knees in front of her, holds her leg with his right arm. The woman's right arm is stretched out and wrapped around the man's back, pulling him towards her, possibly in the moments before penetration.

Further down the wall is a third painting above the doorway to room *e*. Although there is more damage to the surface of this third painting than the previous paintings, it is apparent that the bed is still finely made and covered with linens.⁷⁹ The green linens and decorative reddish-green stripes on this bed are similar to those seen in other paintings as well. In this painting the man is crouched behind the woman who rests on her hands and knees, facing the headboard and pillow. The man's arm is stretched forward pushing the woman down as he enters her from behind. Additional details decorate the scene including a golden dish and jug on the floor beyond the headboard.

⁷⁸ See Figure 4.

⁷⁹ See Figure 5.

The fourth painting is visible on the back wall, near the latrine and the doorway to room *b*. In this image the bed is again depicted with a headboard and pillow.⁸⁰ The drapes of fabric hanging from the sides of the bed that have been seen in the previous paintings are visible here as well. There is also some form of dish, similar to that seen in the fourth painting, near the foot of the bed. The man is reclined on his back resting on his right elbow, with his left arm above his head. The woman is straddled over his legs and is facing away from him. While her face is no longer clear, she appears to be leaning forward, braced by her elbows on the footboard. It is unclear whether the painting was intended to capture a moment just before or after sex, or if it was meant to depict the sexual act in progress.

The fifth painting located on the wall between rooms *b* and *c*, and is damaged to such an extent that the male figure is barely visible.⁸¹ It is clear, however, that the bed has a large headboard and is covered with linens including a large pillow with a striped pattern. The woman is crouched on the bed with her forearms resting on the pillow. The man is positioned behind her with his left arm raised and his right grasping her hip. Much like the last two paintings depicting a form of penetration from behind, the scene might be depicting a moment just preceding, or in the midst of the sex act.

There is very little detail remaining in the painting by the latrine door, thus making it difficult to distinguish the intentions of the scene.⁸² Once more the bed appears to be finely made with carved legs, a headboard, and linens. While the man is shown

⁸⁰ See Figure 6.

⁸¹ See Figure 7.

⁸² See Figure 8.

lying across the bed, seemingly naked, the woman stands beside the bed fully clothed in a green dress. The man's left arm hangs down the side of the bed and his right arm is raised gesturing to the far left. He is pointing toward a small painting of an erotic scene that both he and the woman are admiring. The two figures are clearly not in the middle of sexual activity, nor does it appear that the scene is depicting a moment immediately before or after. Instead, the man and woman are socializing and examining an erotic painting for themselves.⁸³

In each of the paintings in the hallway, including the image by the latrine, the bed is at the centre of the scene and is piled with blankets and cushions, many with a decorative striped pattern. The beds themselves are finely made with large headboards and fabric hanging over the sides in well-draped swags. Occasionally the paintings depict the room filled with additional items, such as dishes or other vessels, a lamp stand, or even another erotic image. In reality each *cella* was far more cramped, with space for little more than the masonry bed. These added furnishings could not be expected in the modest rooms of the *lupanar*, even if the brothel-owner was willing to spend money on such decorations. The beds themselves were simple and functional, without a headboard, footboard, or decorated legs. While the masonry beds likely had some type of cushion or mattress laid over them during use, it was not at all like the elaborate scene the paintings suggest.

The five paintings along the walls over the *cellae* doors depict forms of sexual activity, but not all are as explicit as what might be anticipated in a brothel. The scenes

⁸³ Varone 2001: 72-3 suggests that the man is directing the woman's attention to the painting in order to use the image instructively, depicting what he would like her to do for him.

do not portray sexual activity with much graphic imagery and the faces of the man and woman in each painting do not appear to convey much drama and passion, but rather display relatively subdued expressions. In two of the paintings the couples are facing each other while the other three depict the man entering the woman from behind. Sexual acts such as *fellatio* and rear entry sex were considered inappropriate by proper society and were offered instead by prostitutes.⁸⁴ These acts might then have been depicted in paintings to advertise that the services were available or to entice customers with the forbidden pleasures offered in the brothel. Yet a number of the images do not clearly depict the man and woman in the middle of sexual activity. Instead, while some of the scenes that are captured in the paintings depict a moment in the middle of sex, others are seemingly before or after. Customers of the brothel who viewed these images likely considered the moment that each painting depicted to be somewhat ambiguous in nature as well. It is not explicitly revealed to the viewer what the moment is that he is looking at and instead, each viewer must interpret the scene for himself. The allure and mystery of what cannot be seen could certainly be tantalizing for some viewers and possibly encourage others to conjure a more explicit scene in their minds. With the man and woman in a provocative position, it would not be difficult for viewers to imagine the rest of the scene for themselves.

The genitalia of both the man and the woman cannot be seen in most of the images, leaving it to the imagination of the viewer as well. The man is regularly positioned below or behind the woman, whose limbs hide any view of the man's genitals.

⁸⁴ See Knapp 2011: 257-8, Laurence 2009: 81, and Parker 1997.

The woman is similarly covered in most of the paintings with her leg raised or her body turned away. The breasts of the woman are also covered in most of the paintings, as she is bent forward, turned away, or even somewhat covered by a breast band, or *strophium*. The second painting is the only instance in which the woman's breast are fully on display, as she leans back on her left arm. The paintings themselves leave much to the imagination of the viewer. Nevertheless, the context of the images within the hallway of the brothel influences the scenes in the paintings without need for many graphic details. The mood of the brothel already was focused upon sexual activity; it was the business of the prostitutes who worked there and customers arrived intending to participate in sexual activities. The occupants of the space would have maintained this sexual energy moving to and from the rooms, whether anticipating sex or contented afterwards. Any who lingered in the hallway to examine the paintings would have had sex on their minds, and could likely hear the activities in occupied *cellae*. The paintings themselves did not need to project explicit sexual scenes as the viewers could easily develop the story behind the images for themselves and imagine what would follow the moment depicted.

The paintings in the *lupanar* do not depict the reality of the establishment. The plain interiors of the *cellae* are enhanced in the paintings, with large beds and fine bedding. In some of the images furnishings are added that enhance the elegant appearance of the room. Although such richly decorated interiors would not have been found in the rooms of the *lupanar*, the paintings include these details rather than attempting to accurately portray the spaces beyond the hallway. Moreover, the couples in the paintings demonstrate relationships outside of a brief sexual encounter, and include

more aspects of social interaction.⁸⁵ The average brothel did not afford their clients with such opportunities to romance and socialize with the prostitutes. Instead it was a business that left such elements to the imagery of the paintings.

The paintings engaged the imaginations of the customers thinking of the possibilities for their upcoming sexual engagements, and reflected the fantasies of the dalliance they were hoping to have.⁸⁶ The depiction of sexual activity likely excited visitors by increasing anticipation for their time with the prostitute, but the images are not particularly taboo. They depict couples in the midst of rather tame sexual encounters, some not even showing a scene of intercourse but rather showing the pair socializing before or after. The prospect of such a social element is against the norm of what is expected of a brothel. Although it is possible there was time before or after sex for a client to converse with the prostitute, it is unlikely this was the key aspect the proprietor of the brothel wanted to advertise. Instead the paintings that decorated the ground floor were selling something else. The scenes of companionship, in beautiful rooms with beautiful women, seized the attention of the brothel clientele. They were not meant to be realistic depictions or advertisements of what a customer could experience in the brothel in terms of the physical surroundings or the interactions with the prostitutes. On the contrary, the paintings sold a mood of pleasure, soliciting enjoyment from the viewer and enhancing what was available in the space.

⁸⁵ Clarke 2003b: 64-5.

⁸⁶ Clarke 2003b: 64 posits that the interior décor included in the paintings were intended to “pretty up the harsh realities of the establishment”.

Prostitution at the *Lupanar*

In every aspect the brothel was directed at engaging customers. The building was located in an area of the town that would be convenient for the local population and visitors to Pompeii alike. Easily accessible from various directions on a number of major thoroughfares of the town, the *lupanar* was not isolated or hidden from view. It held a prominent position at an intersection, making the building visible on the *Vicolo del Lupanare* and *Vicolo del Balcone Pensile*. Modern conceptions of prostitution tend to consider it as being on the limits of proper and moral society, relegated to a red light district; an area delineated from the rest of the urban environment which people could avoid. Yet these views do not correspond with the Roman perceptions of prostitution and the manner it was dealt with in Pompeii. If there was any stigma surrounding the brothel or the sex trade in general, it was not evident in the neighbourhood around the *lupanar*. Numerous large and well-decorated houses are located in the streets around the brothel, including one immediately adjacent to the brothel. There are also a high number of businesses, including inns and taverns, in the area, likely profiting from the business created by the brothel. The proprietors of establishments around the brothel would not have bemoaned the many men who purchased goods and services from them after their visit to the *lupanar*. While it is possible that not all the people in the area appreciated their proximity to a venue of the sex trade, there is no evidence to suggest that an attempt was made to hide the business or for others to actively avoid it.

Those who chose to visit the *lupanar* could have enjoyed what was available in the surrounding establishments before or afterwards. The neighbourhood was bustling

with businesses, including the brothel, offering their wares. Prostitutes might have loitered in the doorway to entice passers-by, and sound likely carried through the small windows of the building as another advertisement of what was available to those who were interested. Once inside the customer was greeted with a modestly decorated corridor. Although by no means a high-class establishment, the *lupanar* was well decorated in the Fourth Style with a series of paintings above the doorways in the hall. The paintings would have easily caught the customer's eye as he examined the scenes while waiting to enter one of the rooms with the next available prostitute. Although the paintings initially appear to simply be depictions of sexual activity, a blunt visual representation of the activities within the brothel, upon closer inspection they convey more complex scenes. The paintings do not depict the reality of what occurred in the brothel in terms of the appearance of the space or the interaction of the prostitute and client. Foremost, it is the décor of the rooms in the paintings that stand out, far more lavishly furnished than could be expected in a brothel like the *lupanar*. While the paintings depict finely made beds with pillows and linens piled on top, the reality of the brothel *cellae* was no more than a masonry bed, with the possibility of a simple mattress when in use. Despite the details of other furnishings in the paintings, the size of the *cellae* in the *lupanar* could not accommodate such additions.

The figures themselves also seem to portray something more in the scene than what could be expected in the brothel. Instead of explicit scenes of graphic sexual activity, the paintings select more subdued moments to depict. While a number of the paintings show the man and woman in the midst of sexual activity, others leave the

interaction to a moment before or after any sexual activity has taken place. The paintings that do depict the couple during a sex act do not show the scene as an overtly sexual moment. The intent is clear from both figures in the scene, but the rest is left to the imagination of the viewer. The paintings did not merely advertise the sexual services provided in the brothel, but rather set a mood for the enjoyment to be had in the space. Those who viewed the paintings likely already had sex on their minds and, as such, the images allowed for interpretation as viewers could fill in what was happening in the scene, possibly including their own fantasies or desires for their upcoming time with a prostitute. A customer could give a final glance up at a painting before entering one of the *cellae*, imagining the encounter shown in the image before beginning an encounter of his own.

As the function of the second storey remains unconfirmed, it is unknown if the space would have been open to customers. Many theories have been developed regarding the use of the space above the brothel, but the limited physical evidence hinders the investigation. Although the upper and lower storeys of buildings could be operated by different individuals and for different purposes, it is likely that at one time the second storey of the building served a function associated to the business downstairs. There is no evidence of beds on the second storey, a factor that has impeded the consideration of this space as part of the brothel. However, beds might have once been present in the space, made of wood or other materials that have not survived. A full bed is also not necessary for sleep or the services provided by the prostitutes; rather a simple pallet on the floor would suffice. It is then possible that the second storey did have beds, or some

form of them, to be used by the prostitutes either to rest or to engage customers brought up from the ground floor. If the two storeys were operated together, it is likely that the proprietor of the brothel employed the second storey as additional space to accommodate customers and increase the profits of the brothel. The rooms on the second floor are larger than those on the ground floor, which might have allowed groups of customers to lounge in the space together. Whether they were joined by prostitutes in these rooms or not, the possibility that customers could linger in the brothel suggests that the goal of the business was not simply to provide short encounters and a quick customer turnover. Instead the environment of the brothel sought to improve the customer's experience, both with the sexual scenes painted in the hall of the ground floor to engage the eyes and imagination, and the various spaces where a customer could be entertained by prostitutes or could even socialize with other customers who shared their use of the brothel.

CHAPTER TWO

The Graffiti of the *Lupanar*

Introduction

Many graffiti have been discovered throughout Pompeii, scratched into the walls of buildings in both public and private locations. The act of writing graffiti was by no means uncommon and the examples found at Pompeii account for nearly half of all the inscriptions found in that town.⁸⁷ However, the use of graffiti as sources of information can be challenging. Without a name expressly stated, the authorship of the messages often remains undetermined. Even when names are included in the graffiti, they are frequently the names of those to whom the messages are addressed, or the object of a statement, rather than the names of those who left the messages. Moreover, graffiti were written throughout the town, wherever the author decided to stand and leave a message. As a result, the possible readership for the graffiti is quite extensive and is not easily narrowed to an identifiable group, particularly when the graffiti are found in public locations. Similarly, the context of graffiti might prove to be irrelevant when authors chose the locations for graffiti at random. Yet despite these possible difficulties, graffiti are unique in the insights they can provide into the views and opinions of the people of Pompeii that cannot be gleaned from the texts written by elite members of society. The foremost collection of Latin inscriptions that can be used for such analysis is the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL), arranged by location and inscription type, with Volume

⁸⁷ There are approximately 3,000 separate graffiti at Pompeii (Mau 1899: 481).

IV dealing with graffiti from Pompeii.⁸⁸ With this collection of inscriptions available for study, numerous scholars have engaged with graffiti from Pompeii, examining messages from throughout the town in terms of content, context, use of language, and the implications of literacy in the town.⁸⁹

As the one known purpose-built brothel in Pompeii, the *lupanar* has proven to be a vital source of evidence for the dynamics of prostitution in the town. The ground floor has five *cellae*, each containing a masonry bed, in which the prostitutes met their clients.⁹⁰ Although there is little physical evidence with which to study the interactions of the people inside the brothel, there is an abundance of epigraphic evidence in the form of graffiti. Often the specific location of graffiti is limited in what it can tell us, however, the location of graffiti found inside the *lupanar* is useful in this case by identifying the authors and audience as being present within the brothel at some time. A particularly large cluster of graffiti is found inside the *lupanar*, with 134 graffiti marking the walls of the ground floor.⁹¹ Publications of the contents of the upper floor are limited and no graffiti have been identified in its rooms. Although this limits the analysis of graffiti in the *lupanar* to the ground floor, the study of the graffiti can provide a great deal of insight to the inner-workings of the brothel.

⁸⁸ While there have not been any collections made devoted to figural graffiti that are comparable to *CIL* in volume or organization, a significant source is Langner 2001, in which figural graffiti from throughout the Empire is recorded. Vivolo 1993 also examines figural graffiti, focusing attention on examples found at Pompeii.

⁸⁹ Wallace 2005 provides an introduction to the subject of inscriptions at Pompeii, while sources such as Kruschwitz and Hallo-aho 2007 and Varone 1994 examine particular aspects of graffiti at Pompeii, such as the content and language of the messages. Feitosa 2013: 28-53 as well as various papers in Baird and Taylor (eds.) 2011 and Humphrey (ed.) 1991 also examine aspects of Pompeian graffiti.

⁹⁰ See Figure 9 for a floor plan of the *lupanar* ground floor.

⁹¹ Although the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV (*CIL*) lists examples of graffiti numbered 2173 through 2296, several inscriptions are listed under the same number. For that reason, the total number of 134 graffiti will be used for this study, having counted each inscription separately.

Graffiti represent informal testimony from various authors about themselves and their activities as they scratched simple messages into the walls of the brothel while going about their business. The authors of graffiti, and the audiences who read the messages were among the clients who frequented the brothel, and possibly even the prostitutes themselves. The analysis of the content of these messages and their placement throughout the rooms can aid in the examination of client-prostitute interactions and the dynamics of prostitution at Pompeii. The graffiti found in the *lupanar* can be used not only to identify the occupants of the space, but also to explore the physical and social environment in which they were produced.

Time of Inscription

Although the location and content of the graffiti can be used to investigate the identities of authors and audiences, it is far more difficult to identify the time when the graffiti were made. One graffito from room *f* makes reference to a date, ‘seventeen days before the Kalends of July’, before going on to record the author’s sexual encounter at the brothel.⁹² On this occasion the author of the graffito chose to document his visit with specific mention of a date. Although the date might have been a random addition, it may have had a special meaning to the author or to his visit which made it important to include. Unfortunately it was not regular practice for authors to state explicitly the time of their writing in their messages. Instead other evidence must be gathered before any conclusions can be made regarding the time when the graffiti were written.

⁹² ‘XVII K JVL HERMEROS CVM PHILETERO ET CAPHISO HIC FVTVERVNT’ (2192).

It is possible to suggest a range of years within which most of the graffiti found on the ground floor of the *lupanar* were made. The impression of a coin minted in A.D. 72 was left in a wall of room *f* when the walls of the brothel were replastered, leaving approximately seven years after the coin was minted and before the eruption in A.D. 79 during which the graffiti in the brothel could have been made.⁹³ The work on the walls of the brothel was likely a result of the damage done by the earthquake in the years prior to the eruption, as the owner of the brothel deemed it a necessary investment to refurbish the interiors of his establishment. Such changes to the interior of the brothel have significant implications for the number of graffiti that remain for scholars to examine. While there are 134 graffiti currently visible, the number of graffiti and the content of the messages that have been covered over cannot be known. If the graffiti currently visible in the brothel accounts for seven years of graffiti writing at most, it cannot be known for certain how much graffiti accumulated on the walls before A.D. 72. It is reasonable to believe that there had been a significantly larger quantity of graffiti in the brothel in the years prior to the replastering of the walls. Thus it is possible that the walls were replastered to cover up the damage from not only the earthquake but also the numerous graffiti that were scratched into the plaster.

It is worth attempting to identify a more specific time within which prostitutes or their clients chose to leave graffiti on the walls of the brothel. As the prostitutes remained inside the brothel, it is difficult to define their movements through the activities of their daily lives. In turn, any graffiti that could be attributed to a prostitute cannot be

⁹³ The suggestion of seven years is likely a generous estimate given the time needed for a coin minted in A.D. 72 to circulate through public funds and then be used at Pompeii.

clearly associated to a specific time of writing. However, clients visited the brothel for a specific purpose and, as such, the time within which they could leave graffiti is much more easily defined. The time would fall either before or after their sexual activities with the prostitute. A particular type of graffiti, commonly referred to as the '*hic bene futui*' type, is the best source of evidence for this investigation. This type of graffiti is generally constructed with the past tense in order to identify a sex act that has already taken place. Graffiti of the '*hic bene futui*' type appear throughout the brothel with a name included in each example as the subject of praise for an enjoyable sexual experience.⁹⁴ There are many other graffiti that do not boast about the quality of the sexual experience but instead simply identify a completed sex act.⁹⁵ While these graffiti vary in their use of first, second, and third person to identify the subjects of the statements, they all constitute the act of leaving a graffiti after a visit with a prostitute.

While much of the graffiti in the brothel, particularly those that make reference to sexual activities, were written after the sexual acts had taken place, it is not clear how long after the sexual act the graffiti were written. As will be examined in more detail in the upcoming section, much of the graffiti were found inside the individual *cellae*. If graffiti were written after sex, clients must have lingered in the rooms in order to leave the messages. Whether the prostitute excused herself or remained in the room with the client cannot be determined. There is no evidence to indicate that this time was part of a prostitute's services, and a brothel owner looking for a high turnover of clients might not have appreciated men loitering after they paid their due. However, as the city's only

⁹⁴ 2176, 2178, 2185-8, 2193, 2219, 2246.

⁹⁵ 2175, 2191, 2192, 2195, 2200, 2203, 2217, 2241, 2247, 2257, 2258, 2265.

identified purpose-built brothel, the *lupanar* likely had a significant number of repeat clients, possibly even some who were regular clients of particular prostitutes. Therefore the proprietor of the brothel might have been lenient towards returning customers and the time they spent with the prostitutes or lingering in the room afterwards. Customers might have been invited to stay longer and even have paid for additional services from a prostitute. The length of a client's time with a prostitute likely varied, and was dependent upon many factors, including the client's desires, the number of waiting customers, and the policies of the brothel's proprietor.

Distribution

The graffiti in the *lupanar* are distributed throughout the ground floor, with examples in the hallway and in each of the five *cellae*; the graffiti in the *cellae* account for 88% of the graffiti in the *lupanar*. Taking into account the quantity of graffiti in each *cella*, room *f* has significantly more graffiti than all the others, with over half of all examples found in the *lupanar* on its walls.⁹⁶ However, it is unclear why this particular room has such a large number of graffiti in contrast to the other *cellae*. It is possible that this *cella* was used more often than the other rooms, resulting in a higher rate of graffiti writing. While not every person who entered the room left a graffiti to record a visit, the increased traffic through the room would in turn increase the opportunities for graffiti to be left on its walls. Room *f* is at the front of the brothel, immediately to the left of the main entrance from the *Vico del Lupanare*. As it is very close to the entrance, room *f* was

⁹⁶ There are 73 graffiti in room *f*, 54.5% of all graffiti in the *lupanar*.

one of the first rooms seen by those entering the building and in turn, would have been an easy choice for where to go upon arrival. Across the hallway from room *f* and immediately to the right of the main entrance to the brothel is room *d*. This room contains the second largest concentration of graffiti in the *lupanar*.⁹⁷ Although room *d* by no means contains the same number of graffiti as that found in room *f*, these two rooms, both located at the front of the building, contain the most graffiti in the entire brothel. As rooms *d* and *f* are the closest *cellae* to the main entrance, they might have been used more often than other *cellae*. If prostitutes did not occupy all the rooms, perhaps during slow business hours, it would be reasonable to keep the front rooms in use rather than have clients walk past empty rooms.

Unlike most of the other *cellae*, both rooms *d* and *f* have windows: one in room *f* and two in room *d*.⁹⁸ While oil lamps would have been available throughout the brothel, the presence of daylight might have increased graffiti writing due to the ease with which it could be done. The presence of natural light alone would not have made the rooms themselves more popular to clients, but it could explain why they contain the most graffiti in the brothel. With such a difference in the number of graffiti in the front rooms, particularly room *d*, in comparison to the rest of the brothel, it must be considered whether the rooms had a separate purpose. Perhaps the space was used as some sort of lounge where customers could wait and socialize with one another or with the prostitutes before adjourning to a private room. With such limited space in the hallway and only five *cellae*, clients waiting for their time with a prostitute must have been able to wait

⁹⁷ There are 24 graffiti in room *d*, 18% of all graffiti in the *lupanar*.

⁹⁸ There is also one small window in room *e*.

somewhere. However, the dimensions of both front rooms are not much bigger than the other *cellae*. In addition both rooms contain the same masonry bed as the other rooms and no other feature to suggest a different use. Indeed, a room on the ground floor could have been converted to a lounge or waiting area when needed, despite the use originally intended for the space. Even so, with only five *cellae* available in which the prostitutes could work, it might have been considered impractical or uneconomical for one of the rooms to be set aside for the sole purpose of allowing clients to lounge around.

Inside each of the five *cellae*, the graffiti are spread across the walls.⁹⁹ Room *f* contains seventy-three examples of graffiti, nearly half of which are found to the right of the entrance on the wall over head of the masonry bed. Although there are only fourteen graffiti in total in room *e*, five of them are found on the left wall over the masonry bed with another three on the back wall, against which rests the masonry pillow.¹⁰⁰ In room *d*, two graffiti are on the left wall where the masonry bed is positioned, and even in room *c*, which contains only five graffiti, there is one graffiti above the masonry bed. Although wall space near the masonry bed is not the most common location for graffiti in every room, it seems to have been a reasonably popular choice. This was likely out of convenience for the author who was lounging on or near the masonry bed.¹⁰¹ It is possible that customers lingered in the room after their allotted time with the prostitute and left a message for the next occupant of the bed to read.

⁹⁹ There is not enough graffiti in room *b* (two graffiti), or room *c* (five graffiti) to suggest a pattern of distribution within either individual room, although they can be used to explore patterns of distribution throughout the five *cellae*.

¹⁰⁰ The remaining six graffiti in room *e* are evenly distributed between the front and right walls.

¹⁰¹ Some of the graffiti are high up on the wall, requiring the author to have stood up from the bed to leave the message.

While most of the graffiti in the *lupanar* are distributed amongst the five *cellae*, there are also numerous examples spread throughout the hallway. The walls between each *cella* door have at least one graffito and as many as five. It is evident that people did not necessarily move quickly into the rooms but rather were able to linger in the hallway for at least a short period of time. Prostitutes might have loitered in the halls when not servicing a client, or a client himself might have stood there, waiting for his turn in one of the rooms. Social interaction is also possible if clients, and even prostitutes, stood in the hall of the brothel conversing with one another before moving into a *cella*. Despite the minimal evidence in the doorways for barriers, which would have limited the degree of privacy available for each room, the hallway does not appear to have been kept clear of traffic. Particularly on a busy day clients could have idled outside *cella* doors waiting for their turn with the prostitute inside. Moreover, as the latrine was positioned at the very back of the ground floor, all occupants of the brothel would have had to walk through the corridor and possibly wait in the hallway for use of the facilities. By the latrine on the back wall of the brothel there are five graffiti, one of the larger clusters in the hallway, perhaps left by those waiting there for the latrine.

Visitors could also have made graffiti in the hallway before or after they engaged with a prostitute in one of the rooms. As has been noted, a variety of graffiti employ the use of the past tense in order to refer to completed sex acts. Therefore it appears that the majority of the graffiti in the hallway were made after clients visited with the prostitutes. Numerous examples of graffiti from the hallway are found near the doors to the *cellae*, which might indicate the room from which the author had just exited. After having left

the room, the client might have turned to leave a message announcing his recent sexual exploits for the next visitor. Inside the entrances to three of the five rooms there is a small selection of graffiti at the doorway.¹⁰² Similar to the examples outside the doorways in the hallway, these graffiti were likely made by clients as they prepared to leave the room, scratching a message into the wall to record their visit.

In contrast to the plethora of graffiti found along the city streets of Pompeii and throughout other venues open to the public, the audience for the graffiti in the *lupanar* was limited. The physical space available in each room of the brothel would have restricted the number of people able to view the graffiti at one time. Even the hallway, however crowded it could become, could not support a large group standing back to examine the messages left on the walls. However, a large audience was not the goal of these graffiti. Although the messages were public, to the degree that whoever wished to visit the brothel could view them, they were also private and available to a particular group. The audience for the graffiti was limited to those who participated in the activities of the brothel, the prostitutes and their clients. Even so, the graffiti were left in places not with the audience in mind, but rather the author, who selected the location for a graffiti out of convenience for his own movements. Some graffiti are clustered by the masonry beds of the rooms where the client interacted with the prostitute, and by the doorways where they scratched a final message as they left. As both the authors of the graffiti and the potential audience were from the same group of people, they utilized the space in the same manner. Just as one client might have stood by the masonry bed and scratched a

¹⁰² Two in room *b*, three in room *c*, three in room *e*.

message in the wall before leaving, so too another client could stand in the same place and read the graffiti while preparing to leave the room.

The distribution of graffiti in the *lupanar* demonstrates movement throughout the ground floor without any apparent limitations. While examples of graffiti are minimal in certain rooms and indeed appear with much greater frequency in others, no space appears to have been off-limits, denied the opportunity to leave graffiti. Clients were allowed access to all areas of the brothel throughout which they interacted with the prostitutes and other clients. The location of the graffiti seems to have been of little concern to the authors, resulting in no overall pattern in their spatial distribution. The privacy of the brothel offered a more intimate setting than streets and public buildings for graffiti to be left. Authors could expect their messages to be seen with ease by any of the other visitors no matter where the graffiti were placed. The occupants of the space shared a common interest that brought them to the brothel, and the graffiti remained as informal testimony among them of their actions in the rooms of the *lupanar*.

Content, Authorship and Audience

A vital area in the study of graffiti is the subject matter of the messages themselves. While graffiti often appear as blunt statements of text, further analysis of the material can provide greater insights into the purpose or intended meaning of the messages. The content of the graffiti can be used to learn about its author and audience, and in turn, study the people who chose to visit the brothel. This information together

with the distribution of the graffiti throughout the brothel can contribute to an understanding of the use of space in the establishment.

i. Sexual Content

A common subject of graffiti in the *lupanar* is the explicit reference to sexual activities. On three occasions, such references are made with the identification of the amount paid for the sexual activity.¹⁰³ It is surprising that a price for sex is not frequently included in graffiti at an establishment intended for the sale of sex. The rarity of any mention of price in the graffiti suggests that there might have been set rates inside the brothel that made such announcements of price redundant. Of the three graffiti that do identify a price, one asserts that the cost for sex was one *denarius*, while another advertises the work of a prostitute for five *asses*. The third appears to report sexual services as having cost 12 *asses*.¹⁰⁴ Each graffito refers to a different type of sexual activity which might justify the varying costs appearing in the messages; however, all three are above the normal cost of a prostitute at Pompeii.¹⁰⁵ It is possible that these were inflated prices, charged to upper class customers who could afford the increased cost. The three prices mentioned might also be errors in the writing of the graffito or false testimony of the price by the author. An author might have intentionally recorded a false price in order to advertise the prostitute as an expensive or elite consort, and possibly in turn make the author himself seem impressive for being able to afford her.

¹⁰³ 2193, 2197, 2278.

¹⁰⁴ 2197. The translation of this particular graffito is unclear, although the cost of 12 *asses* for *pedicatio* is a possible translation.

¹⁰⁵ McGinn 2004: 40-55 examines the issue of prices. With sixty-six instances in which prices are recorded in inscriptions from Pompeii, the majority of examples suggest a cost of 2 *asses*, the same price as a loaf of bread.

Throughout the ground floor, five different types of sexual activity are mentioned in graffiti: *cunnilingus*, *fellatio*, *fututio*, *irrumatio*, and *pedicatio*. The references to these sexual acts range from the blunt statement of a completed sexual act to a congratulatory message regarding another person's sexual prowess. Sexual graffiti are found in the hallway and four of the five rooms. Although room *b* contains no examples of sexual graffiti, this space only contains two examples of graffiti and, as such, no conclusion can be made from its lack of graffiti on a particular subject. The remaining spaces each have from one to twenty-two examples of graffiti that contain some form of sexual reference.

Accounting for over 70% of the graffiti with sexual content, *fututio* is the sexual activity mentioned most often.¹⁰⁶ This term refers to a dominant male role in heterosexual intercourse and tends to have a neutral connotation, without any underlying rude or insulting connotations.¹⁰⁷ Used as a general term to refer to sexual intercourse, it is not surprising that *fututio* is so popular in the graffiti of the brothel. Often the term is used in the third person as a blunt statement of the completed sexual act in the form of "X fucked here" or "X fucked well". A male name tends to be included as the subject of the graffiti, most likely the author recording his recent activity. The second person is also used, adapting the usual structure of the phrase to "X, you fucked well".¹⁰⁸ While the subject of the message continues to be a male name, the author and the purpose of the

¹⁰⁶ The verb *futuo* is used twenty-eight times in varying Latin forms: 2175, 2176, 2178, 2184-8, 2191-3, 2195, 2198, 2200, 2203, 2217-19, 2232, 2241, 2242, 2246-8, 2260, 2265, 2274, 2288. The Greek variation of the term, *binew*, is also present, having been found once in room *e* and again in room *f* (2216, 2253). It is also the sexualized verb mentioned most often in graffiti throughout Pompeii, accounting for 78% of the total (see Laurence 2009: 79).

¹⁰⁷ See Adams 1982: 118-122 for a full discussion of the verb *futuo*, and the use of the term *fututio* in Latin sources.

¹⁰⁸ 2176, 2185-7, 2219, 2253, 2260, 2274. This formula also appears in combination with other sexual practices: 2266, 2268, 2273.

message is less clear. As graffiti were often spoken aloud by those who stopped to read them, it is possible that a man wrote the graffiti addressing himself in order that whoever read it aloud would be heard inadvertently praising the author.¹⁰⁹ Graffiti were often written as jokes at the expense of their readers and this may be no exception. Conversely, it could be that the other participant in the sexual activity, the prostitute, wrote the complimentary message.¹¹⁰ While the level of literacy among prostitutes was likely quite limited, the construction of such typical phrases in graffiti would not require much knowledge of the language. One could identify the characters in other graffiti and mimic what was seen. However, the authorship of these graffiti by prostitutes is difficult to confirm, as a female name is not present in any of the examples.

Although less common, *fututio* can also refer to male-male anal sex.¹¹¹ Two examples of graffiti from the brothel may have had such a meaning. One reads: ‘*Scordopordonicus hic bene fuit quem volvit*’, while the other reads, ‘*Placidus hic futuit quem volvit*’.¹¹² The formula of both is clearly similar, with only differences in the names and the use of a shortened form of the verb *futuo* in the first example. Of interest is the use of the masculine relative pronoun, *quem*, which suggests that those with whom the male subject engaged in sexual activities were also male. While male prostitutes were available, there is not enough evidence to suggest their presence in the brothel at Pompeii. A more likely explanation for the appearance of the masculine pronoun is

¹⁰⁹ The practice of reading graffiti aloud could also be used by an author of a graffiti to convey an insult, with the reader being either the victim of the insult, or an unwitting agent of the insult. Cf. Richlin 1983: 82.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Adams 1982: 120.

¹¹¹ Adams 1982: 121.

¹¹² 2188, 2265.

either a spelling error, as so often occurs in graffiti, or the purpose of the graffiti as insults, whether intended humorously or as genuinely offensive.

The sexual act of *fellatio*, describing oral sex practiced on a male, is the second most common in the graffiti of the *lupanar*. While there are only six references to this sexual activity, they are all located in room *d*. Five of the six graffiti each include a female name as the practitioner of *fellatio*.¹¹³ The sixth graffito that makes reference to *fellatio* could allude to a male practitioner of the act reading, ‘*vir...filas*’.¹¹⁴ However, as the practice of such an act by a man was considered inappropriate, it is more likely that this graffito was intended as an insult accusing a man of practicing *fellatio*.¹¹⁵ As has been seen, rude and insulting remarks were popular in graffiti, and the use of sexual subject matter in an insult would have been appropriate for the venue of a brothel.

There is limited mention of other sexual activities in the graffiti of the brothel. The term *pedicatio*, most often referring to male-male penetration and occasionally male-female penetration, is seen three times in the graffiti.¹¹⁶ While it is possible that this form of sexual activity did in fact take place in the brothel, it is more likely to have been mentioned in graffiti for other purposes. The mention of *pedicatio*, particularly with the more common male-male connotation, could certainly be considered an insult to those identified as participants.¹¹⁷ One example includes a male name in the first person

¹¹³ 2259, 2275, 2268, 2273, 2278.

¹¹⁴ 2266.

¹¹⁵ See Adams 1982: 130-134 for a full discussion of the verb *fello* and its use in sexual contexts.

¹¹⁶ 2194, 2210, 2254. See Adams 1982: 123-125 for a discussion of the verb *pedico* and its appearance in Latin sources.

¹¹⁷ Adams 1982: 124 suggests a hostile connotation in the mention of *pedicatio* in 2254, rather than a humorous insult.

statement, '*Phoebus pedico*'.¹¹⁸ Given the insulting connotation of such activity, it is unlikely that Phoebus wrote this message professing his own activities. Instead someone else left the graffito as a public insult to Phoebus. Similarly, while the graffito that reads, '*pedicare volo*', might have been a genuine statement by an individual about their activities, it is more likely to have been an embarrassing joke inflicted on whoever read the statement aloud.

The only mention of *cunnilingus* appears once in a graffito in the hallway of the brothel.¹¹⁹ The rare appearance of the term would suggest that *cunnilingus* was a sexual act not commonly performed in the brothel. Men who visited the brothel paid to have sexual acts performed for their own pleasure and therefore it is unlikely that an activity intent on the pleasure of a woman would be performed all that often. Moreover, on the rare occasion that *cunnilingus* might have been performed, clients would not have been eager to leave a record of their participation in an activity that made them appear submissive to the desires of the woman.¹²⁰ The one graffito that refers to *cunnilingus* reads, '*FROTO PLANI LINGIT CUNNUM*'. Although it is unclear to whom *FROTO PLANI* refers, the graffito is a blunt statement of sexual activity and could have been deemed insulting. It is difficult to determine whether this message, as with other jokes and insults in graffiti, was a simple humorous jab at another's expense, or genuinely offensive.

¹¹⁸ 2194.

¹¹⁹ 2257. See Feitosa 2013: 46-7 for a discussion of the practice of *cunnilingus* and its appearance in graffiti elsewhere in Pompeii.

¹²⁰ Parker 1997: 51 suggests that *cunnilingus* might have been perceived as the passive or negative side of vaginal intercourse, and that for a man to perform *cunnilingus* was "to be fucked by a woman". See Edwards 1993: 70-3 for a discussion of the male in the passive role in sexual practices. Cf. Laurence 2009: 79 and Richlin 1983: 65.

The sexual activity of *irrumatio* is also seen in only one graffito.¹²¹ This sexual term refers to the act of *fellatio* but with a more negative and hostile connotation as one person is forced to fellate another.¹²² Despite the evident insulting sense associated with the sexual act, *irrumatio* also could be referred to with a tone of humour by suggesting *irrumatio* as a way to quiet someone.¹²³ The one appearance of *irrumatio* in the graffiti of the brothel likely was not actually claiming the act to have taken place. Instead, as with so many other graffiti, it was intended as a joke or insult, although it is unclear at whom the message was directed.

It is likely that graffiti which describe sexual activities were left in the same room where those activities took place. It would have been far more convenient for a client to leave graffiti in or near the room he occupied with the prostitute rather than walking to a separate room and writing something there. Remaining in one room would have become more important if the graffito's author intended to mention his presence in a specific room in the message. The content of some graffiti makes this explicit by including the word *hic* to identify the location of the completed sex acts.¹²⁴ Graffiti that employ the use of *hic* are distributed throughout rooms *d*, *e*, and *f*, as well as one instance in the hallway between the entrances to rooms *e* and *f*. The single appearance of *hic* in the hallway graffito likely was not intended to identify the hallway as the location of the sex act, but rather to refer either to the brothel in general or the nearest room, standing outside of

¹²¹ 2277: 'IRRVMO SET V...K...AS'.

¹²² See Adams 1982: 125-130 for a full discussion of the verb *irrumo* and the act of *irrumatio*.

¹²³ Adams 1982: 126-127.

¹²⁴ 2175, 2178, 2188, 2192, 2193, 2195, 2200, 2203, 2216, 2217, 2241, 2246, 2247, 2258, 2265. Other graffiti use *hic* to identify the author having been present in the room without direct reference to the sexual activities that might have taken place (2218a, 2222, 2226, 2249).

which the author left his message. Occasionally graffiti referencing certain types of sexual activity appear to cluster. For instance, all the graffiti referring to *fellatio* are found in room *d*, and the single mention of *irrumatio*, an act associated with *fellatio*, is found there as well. This however does not prove that room *d* was the only room in which *fellatio* was performed, or that each room was used for only one form of sex act.¹²⁵ The act of *fututio* is included in the graffiti of rooms *c* through *f*, as well as the hallway, and *pedicatio* is mentioned in the graffiti of rooms *e* and *f*. The only mention of *cunnilingus* is found in a graffito in the hallway of the brothel, likely not the true location in which such activities took place.

While it seems that much of the graffiti with explicit sexual references were written in the same room where the acts took place, or at least in the hallway in proximity to the room, it does not demonstrate a division of uses in which particular sexual activities were assigned to specific rooms. Instead, the prostitute in each room seems to have been prepared to provide whatever services the client requested. Certain sexual practices do appear more frequently than others in the graffiti of some rooms, which might suggest that the practices were more common in those rooms, perhaps as a specialty of the prostitutes working there. The number of graffiti describing certain activities might not have to do with the popularity of the activities but with the authors who chose to describe them. It is difficult to ascertain what sort of person would be more inclined to leave graffiti over another. Therefore it might just so happen that a particular

¹²⁵ The theory that each room was used for particular sex acts has been seen previously in discussion of the wall paintings found in the hallway of the brothel. While these images decorate the walls above the doorways to each *cella*, they do not represent a visual representation or menu of the sex act performed per room.

person who engaged in one type of sexual activity wrote more graffiti than someone else, resulting in an uneven representation of certain sexual practices in graffiti.

ii. Names

Contrary to what might be expected from a venue such as a brothel, explicit sexual references are not the most common type of graffiti in the *lupanar*. Rather it is the practice of leaving no more than a name on the walls of the brothel that was the most popular, accounting for nearly forty-percent of the graffiti found.¹²⁶ Names are a common choice of content for graffiti, as seen in examples throughout the ancient world and in modern society. The author might have intended for the name to be recognized by the reader, possibly due to a personal connection to the author himself, or simply for the name to be learned and remembered in a limited sense of fame.

While many graffiti consist solely of a name, some include a name accompanied by a reference to sexual activities. Although such graffiti are categorized with those of sexual content, it is interesting to note the public association of one's name with sexual acts recorded in graffiti. It is clear that those who scratched their names into the walls of the brothel were not ashamed to identify themselves alongside the sexual activities in which they participated. All of those who visited the brothel did so with the same purpose, thus leaving little need to keep one's activities in the brothel secret. There was some degree of community among brothel patrons who shared a common desire. Many customers likely knew one another, whether from outside business or from frequent visits

¹²⁶ For the purposes of this study, any graffiti that include a name but with sexual reference (for instance, 2176: '*Felix bene futuis*'), is categorized as graffiti of sexual content and is therefore not included in this percentage.

to the brothel at the same time. Thus men could leave their names with some expectation of recognition and leave messages with the names of other patrons as a joke or insult.

There are also instances of female names in the graffiti of the *lupanar*.¹²⁷ As women were not among the clientele of the brothel, it is possible that the women named were prostitutes of the establishment. It was offensive to state or even insinuate that a woman was like a prostitute and in turn, such comments could be made as harmful insults in graffiti. However, while the appearance of a woman's name in graffiti might be due occasionally to offensive intentions, it is unlikely to be so for all the female names seen in the graffiti of the *lupanar*. Some of the names are found in graffiti inside the brothel as well as outside on the streets of Pompeii. While the name Restituta appears only once inside the brothel, it is seen in four more graffiti throughout the city, one of which offers *fellatio*.¹²⁸ The name Fortunata is found in three graffiti inside the brothel.¹²⁹ It is seen again in five graffiti outside the brothel, with a price for services given in two of them.¹³⁰ In one of these graffiti, which indicates the price of two *asses*, the name Fortunata is seen alongside Mula, a name also seen inside the *lupanar*.¹³¹ This recurrence of names in the context of the brothel and elsewhere with subject matter associated to sex and prostitution supports the hypothesis that many of the female names inside the brothel belong to the prostitutes who worked there.

¹²⁷ Twelve different female names are present in the graffiti of the *lupanar*: Nice (2178a, 2278), Panta (2178b), Beronice (2198, 2256), Restituta (2202), Mula (2203, 2204), Cressa (2215), Felic(u)la (2199, 2200), Victoria (2221, 2225-8), Marca (2235), Fortunata (2224, 2259, 2275), Myrtale (2268, 2271), Myrtis (2273, 2292, 2293). There are also two female titles: the daughter of Salvius (2173), a Conqueress (2212).

¹²⁸ In the brothel: 2202. Throughout Pompeii: 1374, 1631, 1665, 3951.

¹²⁹ 2224, 2259, 2275.

¹³⁰ 2310e, 8034 (23 *asses*), 8185 (2 *asses*), 8984, 10005.

¹³¹ Fortunata and Mula: 8185; Mula in the brothel: 2203, 2204.

Both Latin and Greek female names are present in the graffiti of the *lupanar*, demonstrating the various origins of the prostitutes, often as slaves of the owner of the establishment. While only a limited degree of literacy is required to write the few letters that make up a name, it is unclear why the prostitutes would choose to write their names on the walls where they worked. It is possible that a prostitute left her name as a way in which to claim the space as her own or to bear witness to her presence there. There might have been no deeper intention behind the graffiti than mindlessly scratching what little they knew how to write into the walls. Perhaps the prostitutes were not the ones who wrote their names at all but instead it was various clients who chose to mark on the wall the names of the prostitutes with whom they had already engaged.

Clients wrote much of the graffiti found inside the brothel, many of which referred to their interactions with the prostitutes who worked there. Yet there is at least one graffito that appears to have been written by a woman, which reads, '*fututa sum hic*'.¹³² The possibility that this first person statement was written as a joke must be considered. Someone who stopped to read this message aloud would have thus professed to be the submissive in sexual intercourse, the announcement of which likely would have garnered the laughter of anyone nearby. However, the form of the verb *fututio* is the feminine participle, suggesting that the subject of the action is female. While an error in spelling is always a possibility in graffiti, it is quite likely that the verb was intentionally written in the female form, by a female author. The formula of the graffito is not much

¹³² 2217.

different from the many other statements of sexual activity, and could easily have been written by a prostitute with limited writing ability.

As has been noted, the most popular subject matter of the graffiti found in the *lupanar* consists of nothing more than names. In these instances the author of each graffito is announcing his presence in the space without mention of his activities.¹³³

While the audience of the graffiti could attribute the female names to the prostitutes of the brothel, the male names were of people who came and went from the establishment. There is little purpose for a visitor to leave his name unless he expected it to be recognized. In this way there might have been a social aspect to the brothel visit in which the male clients knew one another and even interacted. Two different graffiti serve as greetings, as Sabinus greets Proclus in one, and Ias greets Magnus in the other. Such content indicates that the author and subject of each graffito expected the other man who was mentioned to read the message.¹³⁴ Perhaps these men were friends who each frequented the brothel. If one day one friend did not make the visit, the other left a jovial greeting on the wall for the next time his friend stopped by the brothel. Other graffiti are written with verbs in first person plural forms such as, '*vidimus hoc*', and '*venimus*', identifying a group at the brothel together.¹³⁵ Two additional graffiti are written in plural forms with names of men as the subjects of the activity. One announces that three men, Hermeros, Phileteros, and Caphisus, visited the brothel together, while the other

¹³³ For instance, '*SOLLIIMNES HIC*' (2218a), and '*ASBESTVS HIC*' (2222).

¹³⁴ 2208, 2231.

¹³⁵ 2211, 2238.

identifies a pair, Arphocras and Drauca.¹³⁶ These graffiti identifying groups of men together at the brothel imply an open, social experience, rather than a private, shameful activity. Men not only left their names on the walls for anyone to see, but also went to the brothel with their friends, interacted with one another, and left graffiti to document the visit.

The Informal Testimony of Graffiti

The graffiti in the *lupanar* serve as a rich body of evidence for various aspects of the inner workings of the brothel. Spread throughout the ground floor, there are examples of graffiti in each room as well as the hallway. Many graffiti announce completed sexual acts, often boasting the sexual prowess of the man involved. The authors of these graffiti asserted their presence in particular rooms of the brothel by leaving their messages in the vicinity of where the described activities took place. This was emphasized by the use of *hic* to identify specific places. Most of the graffiti appear to have been written after sexual activity, as is evident from the regular use of the past tense. It is possible some graffiti were written between acts, dependent upon the duration of a visit with a prostitute. However, if clients were permitted to loiter in the *cellae* after their sexual activities with the prostitute, it is unclear for how long the client could stay, or if the prostitute remained in the room with him. With only five available rooms and minimal space in the hallway, it is unlikely that the prostitute would be expected to leave the room and allow the client to linger within. Each *cella* was used by a prostitute

¹³⁶ 2192, 2193.

throughout the business day, and therefore it would have been the prostitute who lingered in the room as different clients came and went. If clients were allowed to linger in the rooms with the prostitutes, there might have been greater emphasis on return business rather than the efficient turnover of customers. Customers could take their time with the prostitute and, if they chose, mark a graffiti onto the wall before leaving.

Of course, the clients were not the only occupants of the space and in turn they were not the only possible authors of graffiti. As prostitutes spent all their time inside the brothel, it is not surprising that they might have chosen to scratch messages into the plaster walls. Although the literacy level of prostitutes was likely limited, it did not require much knowledge of reading or writing to produce simple graffiti. Even the more detailed graffiti messages could be mimicked from those seen elsewhere in the brothel without full understanding of their meaning. Various examples exist of graffiti consisting of nothing more than a woman's name. Although clients could have made these graffiti, recording the names of prostitutes with whom they had done business, it is equally possible that the prostitutes recorded their names themselves. The act of marking down one's own name does not demand skilled comprehension of language but rather the ability to recreate the appropriate characters. These graffiti appear throughout the five *cellae*, where the prostitutes may have spent their day between visits from clients.

Each of the *cellae* on the ground floor offered little privacy. There is minimal evidence for any form of barrier having stood in the doorway, from a sturdy wooden door to a simple sheet hung across it. This limited degree of privacy did not concern visitors to the brothel, possibly as it was an expected factor of the establishment. While it does

not suggest that customers were completely open about their sexual practices and acted as exhibitionists when with the prostitutes, the graffiti reflect the understood public nature of actions within the brothel. One graffito openly states, '*vidimus hoc*', "we saw this".¹³⁷ Although it cannot be known what exactly it was they saw, the graffito might refer to a particular sex act that the author of graffito and his companions observed. While the participants of the activity might not have welcomed spectators, visitors to the brothel understood the lack of privacy as anyone in the hallway could peek into the rooms.

Appearing to embrace this somewhat public atmosphere within the privacy of the brothel as a whole, visitors often included their names in the graffiti. By leaving their names, authors expected them to be recognized by an audience in the brothel. This could only be done if there was some interaction between clients for the author and audience to know one another. The extensive number of jokes and insults among the graffiti furthers this view, as many give the subject of the statement a name, often suggesting their participation in embarrassing or inappropriate activities. Even the graffiti that do not include names require some degree of socialization for visitors to engage with the graffiti and find humour in the messages, however crude they may be. These examples, while not directed at a particular individual, are intended for people to read aloud, thereby making the statement in the graffiti appear to be their own words. The reading of a graffito written in the first person such as, '*pedicare volo*', has the reader admit to participation in an unfavourable sex act, while the reading of one in the second person such as, '*Vitalio bene futuis*', gives inadvertent congratulations to another person. The

¹³⁷ 2211.

name included in such graffiti was likely that of the author himself, in order to add to his own enjoyment of the joke at its reader's expense.

With so much interaction visible in the graffiti alone, it is likely that there was far more interaction taking place among the clients of the brothel. A select number of graffiti include greetings from one man to another, and mention of activities done at the brothel with two or more men named. If men did not make outings to the brothel with groups of friends, they surely interacted once inside. Yet there is limited space on the ground floor of the brothel in which the men could have socialized. While most of the graffiti are found in room *f*, there are no features within the room to suggest that it served a function separate from the other four *cellae*. The masonry bed fills most of the floor space in the *cella*, which leaves nominal space for men to gather in a group within the room. It is possible that room *f*, or any of the other *cellae*, could have been converted into some form of lounge space based on the needs of the brothel at the time. However, if the brothel owner intended to allow clients to linger while maintaining the use of the five *cellae* for the services of the prostitutes, a separate space needed to be employed as the lounge area.

While there is limited physical evidence on the second storey to determine the function of the space, it is possible that, at least for a time, it was used to entertain customers of the brothel. The five rooms on the second storey are not all the same size as those downstairs; rather some are much larger and might have accommodated groups,

sitting and socializing with one another.¹³⁸ If the goal was to extend a client's visit rather than ensure quick turnover, the brothel owner might have welcomed this additional space. Clients who stayed at the brothel beyond their initial meeting with a prostitute might then have determined to pay more and visit another prostitute before leaving. While it is possible that clients and prostitutes were permitted to lounge around in any of the ground floor *cellae*, the upper storey would have provided a fixed location to which clients could retire, before, after, or between visits to the prostitutes downstairs.

The brothel at Pompeii is the one known purpose-built venue for the sale of sex in the city. Beyond the business of prostitution there was a thriving social aspect at the establishment. Men engaged with one another as well as the prostitutes, and left messages of their visits on the walls for other customers to see. The graffiti in the *lupanar* served as a vehicle for interaction beyond small social groups. Visitors to the brothel on separate days interacted with one another through the graffiti, reading about each other's experiences and offering up jokes and insults. Although graffiti are written as individual static messages, the cluster of graffiti in the *lupanar* represents dynamic communication within the community of brothel clients.

¹³⁸ McGinn 2013: 627-628 explores this possibility, identifying rooms on the upper storey that could have been used as additional space for prostitutes to meet with clients and other larger rooms that might have allowed for more social practices including drinking and dining.

CHAPTER THREE

Other Sites of Prostitution

Introduction

At Pompeii, many prostitutes worked on the streets, and either stationed themselves in one particular location or roamed the town soliciting men. While they could have visited busy areas of the town such as markets and major streets in order to find customers, a casual liaison between prostitute and client needed only a space out of sight from the passerby. The tombs and walls outside the town became known for prostitution, and literary sources mention prostitutes as often working in alleyways or other dark corners of the town.¹³⁹ Although many of these associations were based on the social perception of prostitutes, who were considered to be engaged in disreputable activities on the edges of society, there might be some truth to them. If a prostitute regularly worked in a particular area, the site could quickly become known for the presence of prostitution. This not only influenced the public perception of the area, but also it provided a form of advertising for prostitutes, as clients thus would know where to find them. Although prostitutes did not require a permanent structure to ply their trade, certain buildings might become closely associated with prostitution. These buildings might have been strictly establishments for prostitution, businesses that included prostitution as a secondary venture, or might have had nothing to do with prostitution in

¹³⁹ For tombs and walls as sites of prostitution see: Mart. *Ep.* 1.34, 3.82, 3.93.13-15, and Juv. *Sat.* 6.015-16. Prostitutes in alleys: Hor. *Carm.* 1.25.10. Prostitutes at cross roads: Prop. 4.7.19. In *The Little Carthaginian*, the prostitutes congregated at the Temple of Venus (Plaut. *Poen.* 265-270).

them except for the perception held by the rest of society of the activities that took place in the vicinity.

As the one known purpose-built brothel in Pompeii, the *lupanar* was the main site of prostitution in the town. It was established solely for the sale of sex and would have been known as such by the population. Moreover, all other sites established for prostitution would have been developed with the *lupanar* in mind, considering both its location and customer base. Numerous sites have been suggested as locations of prostitution but are unconfirmed. When discussing these sites, it must be determined to what degree prostitution was the primary function at each establishment. While some might have acted solely as a place of prostitution, others might have included prostitution as a supplemental aspect of their business. The difference between these establishments is of particular interest when discussing where and how prostitutes interacted with their clients. The environment in which any exchange took place could have had an affect on the dynamics of the interaction, including the mood, duration, and general tone of the experience. For instance, a meeting at a brothel could allow for a more drawn out engagement than a quick dalliance in the back room of a bar. Similarly, a brothel, in which all those present were there for the same purpose, might affect the mood in a way that differed from an inn or tavern, which could be occupied by people with a variety of intentions.

Cellae Meretriciae

As has been shown, the *lupanar* is the only building that was built at Pompeii to function solely as a brothel. However, in the attempt to identify brothels and other locations of prostitution, scholars have often discussed the presence of *cellae meretriciae*, or cribs. Found throughout the town, each crib consists of a single room and measures approximately three to four square meters, with a single doorway facing the street. In structures as small as the cribs it is often difficult to collect enough evidence to support the criteria for identifying brothels.¹⁴⁰ The presence of sexual graffiti or erotic paintings at these sites varies, although each crib does contain a masonry bed.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, it is difficult to hold cribs to the same standard of evidence as the *lupanar*, as their size does not allow the same quantity of evidence as that of a brothel. While in previous studies *cellae meretriciae* have been discussed in combination with brothels,¹⁴² it is for the purposes of clarity, and erring on the side of caution in regards to the criteria for brothels, that cribs will be discussed separately from the known brothel at Pompeii.

Despite the difficulties in applying the criteria for identifying brothels to cribs, some examples do contain instances of erotic painting or graffiti, which it could be argued were features of a brothel. However, even these examples are limited, leaving the masonry bed as the principal identifying feature. This in turn suggests that the criteria for

¹⁴⁰ See Chapter 1 for the criteria used for identifying brothels.

¹⁴¹ L. Eschebach and Muller-Trollius 1993: 492 add VII.16.8 as a possible crib despite the lack of a masonry bed.

¹⁴² Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 54 categorizes the *lupanar* and *cellae meretriciae* as “definite brothels”, while both Laurence 1994: 73 and Varone 1994: 135 n.228 count *cellae meretriciae* along with the *lupanar* when calculating the number of brothels in Pompeii.

cribs may be too broad, with the only viable criterion being a bed.¹⁴³ Even so, the presence of a masonry bed remains a key identifier for cribs, supported where possible by sexual paintings or erotic graffiti. In *Die Städtebauliche Entwicklung des Antiken Pompeii* (1970), H. Eschebach asserts the existence of nine *cellae meretriciae* in Pompeii, a list to which only two other possibilities have been added since.¹⁴⁴ Although, like the *lupanar*, they are intended solely for prostitution, cribs probably had a different atmosphere than a brothel. Consisting of only one room that opens directly onto the street, cribs provide no sense of privacy or any illusion of a more social experience. These spaces provide another dimension to the understanding of the meeting of prostitute and client, and the dynamics of their interaction.

Three cribs have been identified in locations near one another at VII.13.15 and 16, and VII.13.19.¹⁴⁵ The doorways of all three open onto the *Vico dei Scheletri*, a narrow alley surrounded by the rear entrances to houses and a small *taberna*. The crib at VII.13.19 is built into the back of the *taberna* at the northeast corner of the *insula*. It contains a masonry bed topped with a masonry pillow, and is decorated in a similar style of painting as the cribs at VII.13.15 and 16, with some sections of red, black, and cream still visible. The cribs at VII.13.15 and 16 are built into the back of the *Casa di*

¹⁴³ With only a masonry bed for evidence, it could be argued that these locations were used for activities aside from prostitution, such as a rest area for a watchman or other individual. Beard 2008: 106 suggests that it could just as simply be a tiny residence for a poor person. Although early scholars also used the presence of a stone phallus on the outer wall above the doorway of some *cellae*, such as VII.11.12 (Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 506-19), to identify sites with a sexual function, depictions of the phallus appear throughout Roman towns at numerous other venues. Cf. Kellum 1996 and Varone 2001: 15-27.

¹⁴⁴ H. Eschebach 1970: VII.4.42, VII.11.12, VII.12.33, VII.13.15, VII.13.16, VII.13.19, IX.6.2, IX.7.15, and IX.7.17. L. Eschebach and Muller Trollius 1993: 492 propose the addition of VII.2.28 and VII.16.8. See Figure 10.

¹⁴⁵ Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 652-654.

Ganymede, possibly constructed out of a space that was divided up from one larger room.¹⁴⁶ Both contain a masonry bed but no masonry pillow. The crib at VII.13.16 is also reported to have had a painting of a quadruped with phallic front feet, although it is no longer evident in the space.¹⁴⁷ Nearby at VII.13.14, by the rear entrance to the House of L. Caecilius Communis, a graffito reading '*libanis fellat*' and a large carved phallus were found, possibly associated to the activities of the neighbouring cribs.¹⁴⁸ A phallic amulet, a balance, and a wooden chest, are reported among the finds in VII.13.15, while the crib at VII.13.16 contained a dwarf riding a phallic horse, a bronze statuette, a phallus with ears and wings, and a phallic griffin with bells.¹⁴⁹ If these were the original locations of the objects during their use, they demonstrate a particular theme in the decoration of the space with what might have been an intentional association to the activities in the crib.¹⁵⁰ The evidence of different coloured paint on the walls of these three cribs suggests further decoration that could have been used to enhance the atmosphere of the small space.¹⁵¹ It is possible that cribs were maintained and decorated in a manner similar to other businesses that were intent on catching the eye of the customer and enticing them to come inside.

¹⁴⁶ The main entrance to the *Casa di Ganymede* is located at VII.13.4.

¹⁴⁷ L. Eschebach and Muller-Trollius 1993: 335.

¹⁴⁸ L. Eschebach and Muller-Trollius 1993: 335, *CIL* IV.2028

¹⁴⁹ L. Eschebach and Muller-Trollius 1993: 335-336.

¹⁵⁰ Care must be taken when identifying the appearance of a phallic symbol as having an erotic or obscene meaning. Although it is possible that the image of the phallus did have certain sexual connotations in the decoration of the cribs, an observer might also have perceived its meaning as a superstition charm to promote luck or avert evil. See Chapter 1, n.63.

¹⁵¹ The crib at VII.4.42 also contains remnants of paint on the interior walls.

Privacy in the cribs was limited, to say the least. Aside from the crib located at VII.4.42, which shows signs of holes in the entryway for the bolts of a door,¹⁵² there is minimal evidence for a door or other barrier in the entryways of most of the cribs.¹⁵³ While it is reasonable to believe that there was at least some form of barrier dividing the interior of the crib from the street, it is unclear what that might have been, or if it was the same for every crib. Even with the possibility of a door, there could not have been much privacy in a space that opened directly onto the street. In some instances masonry beds extend into the doorway of the cribs, making it possible for someone to sit on the edge of the bed with their legs out the doorway and onto the street.¹⁵⁴ Having chosen to engage with prostitutes in such a location, clients were likely aware of the limited privacy the space provided. Occupants of the crib could be heard from the street and seen by anyone who chose to peek past whatever limited barrier was in place in the doorway. This was an expected aspect of meeting with a prostitute in one of the cribs. Customers were likely not enticed by the idea of being seen and heard from the street, but rather were unconcerned, and focused more on the purpose of their visit. Unlike the varied possibilities in a brothel, interactions in the cribs were not long engagements but instead were quick meetings before the client was on his way. The cribs functioned solely for the purpose of prostitution, without much if any interest in the possibility of additional socialization, such as conversation or sharing food and drink, between the prostitute and

¹⁵² Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 2.

¹⁵³ As the entryways of many cribs are worn, some missing the upper portion of the doorway, it is difficult to ascertain whether there was some form of barrier other than a door, such as a curtain on a rod. Some ancient sources including, *Hist. Ap. Tyr.* 34, *Mart.* 1.34, 11.45, and *Ovid. Am.* 3.14.9-10 mention *cellae* that were closed by a door. These excerpts could also refer to the *cellae* within a brothel or have no association to the entryways of *cellae meretriciae* at all.

¹⁵⁴ VII.13.15 and 16.

client. The turnover of clients in itself would have been vital for prostitutes making a living by the business garnered in such a space.

Cribs were distributed throughout the town in areas that would best serve them, and are sometimes found in clusters. Two cribs are located at IX.7.15 and IX.7.17, and another three at VII.13.15, VII.13.16, and VII.13.19. Moreover, the crib at VII.11.12 is just down the road from the *lupanar*, while another two at VII.12.33 and VII.2.28 are not far from the brothel. McGinn suggests that, with these cribs in close proximity to the brothel, as well as the largest hotel, a tavern, and the Stabian Baths, all nearby, the neighbourhood surrounding the *lupanar* was an “unofficial centre of sexual activity”.¹⁵⁵ Whether it was perceived this way by the population or not, the density of the establishments in this area would have proven useful for business, giving cribs the ability to work off of the overflow business from one another. If one prostitute were busy with a client, another prostitute would be ready to lead whoever was waiting to her *cella*. Even the cribs that are not clustered are positioned in economically beneficial locations. The crib at VII.16.8 is near the town gate, a perfect location to attract visitors, merchants, and anyone else who might have been entering or leaving the town, and the crib at VII.12.33 has a small *hospitium* around the corner to the west, a venue filled with potential clients. The crib at VII.2.28 is one of the smallest and least well preserved, but its location could easily exploit the available customers at the adjacent *hospitium*, as well as any possible overflow from the nearby *lupanar*. The crib at VII.4.42 does not have bars or other hospitality establishments in the immediate vicinity, but instead benefits from other

¹⁵⁵ McGinn 2002: 15. DeFelice 2007: 476 notes that many inns gained a reputation for serving “less socially significant travelers”, and enabling a dark and dangerous atmosphere.

sources of clients, serving customers who might have lingered at the bakery, shops, and public fountains nearby. In every instance the *cellae meretriciae* are distributed throughout Pompeii in a manner that best would serve each independent *cella*. While it seems that at least some cribs were decorated to entice customers and possibly enhance the atmosphere of the small rooms, interactions between prostitute and client were brief and focused on the quantity of customers available. The locations of the cribs in Pompeii reflect this business focus and ensured the greatest access to clients for the economic benefit of the cribs.

Taverns and Inns

Taverns and inns often gained negative reputations due to the gambling and drinking that took place within them. The sex trade was easily tied to such disreputable activities and it in turn became associated with such locales.¹⁵⁶ Female tavern workers, however unfairly, were often associated with prostitutes and were believed to serve food and drink between sexual services.¹⁵⁷ In producing a legal definition of a prostitute, Ulpian writes that “a woman openly practices prostitution not only where she does so in brothels, but also where she is used to showing she has no shame in *caupona* and other places”.¹⁵⁸ While we must be wary about associating later legal documents with Pompeii, it is reasonable to assume that these attitudes towards prostitutes and women in general

¹⁵⁶ Hor. *Ep.* 1.14.18-25, Col. *De Re Rust.* 1.8.2, and Tac. *Hist.* 3.83. Kleberg 1957: 26-73 attempts to define four categories of hospitality businesses, including *hospitia*, *stabula*, *tabernae*, and *popinae*. These categories are explored in detail by DeFelice 2001: 18-22, but will be discussed more generally as taverns and inns here.

¹⁵⁷ *Codex Justinianus* 4.56.3, *Codex Theodosianus* 9.7.1, and Ulp. *D.* 23.2.43.1-9. See also Casson 1974: 211 and Evans 1991: 134-5.

¹⁵⁸ Ulp. *D.* 23.2.43.pr.

were part of society well before they were established in legal texts. Here it is useful to demonstrate the view which citizens, particularly male citizens, had of women working in inns and taverns.¹⁵⁹ Due to the other sordid elements that were often tied to the daily workings of such establishments, the female employees were guilty by association. It is unclear how many of these associations were made based on opinion and perception, and how many were based on fact.

While prostitution was not the main function of the space, prostitutes who were not associated with an established brothel may have frequented taverns and similar public places in order to find clients. Inns also could prove similarly useful for prostitutes who did not work in a brothel, or perhaps even on occasions when the brothel was overcrowded, as a place to take clients to complete their business. Eschebach (1970) identifies thirteen hospitality businesses as also serving as brothels; however, in almost every instance the three criteria for identifying brothels do not support the claim.¹⁶⁰ For instance, the Tavern of Asellina located at IX.11.2 on the *Via dell'Abbondanza* was identified as a *caupona-lupanar* upon its excavation.¹⁶¹ The evidence for this identification seems simply to have been the names of four different women on election notices on the front exterior of the shop, which are theorized as the names of prostitutes

¹⁵⁹ Even an occasional graffito asserts their sexual availability, such as one that reads, '*futui cuponam*' ('I had sex with the innkeeper [*fem.*']) (*CIL* IV.8442). Cf. *CIL* XIII.10018.95. However, it is uncertain whether this graffito, much like so many others, is a truthful account of an experience, or false testimony, possibly intended as an insult.

¹⁶⁰ Locations identified by Eschebach 1970 as *caupona-lupanar* or *taberna-lupanar*: I.2.18-19, I.2.20-21, I.7.13-14, VI.10.1.19, VI.11.4.15.17, VII.3.26-28, VII.7.18, VI.9.32, VII.11.11-15, VIII.4.12-13, IX.5.14-16, and IX.11.2-4. DeFelice 2001: 120 provides a chart of the sites presented by Eschebach and the criteria for identifying brothels. DeFelice 2001: 123-127 also provides additional possible sites.

¹⁶¹ Della Corte 1927: 23.

from the tavern.¹⁶² While a phallic lamp was found inside, the tavern offers no other evidence to support the claim of its use for prostitution. The *caupona* at I.2.18-19 has also been identified as a brothel.¹⁶³ There is no evidence of a masonry bed or examples of sexually explicit paintings, although there is a large cluster of graffiti.¹⁶⁴ However, the graffiti is not of a particularly sexual nature, with only one graffito utilizing an obscene phrase.¹⁶⁵

Although the criteria for identifying brothels are not of much use during the examination of taverns and inns, many of these sites, such as the tavern at VI.10.1, do contain paintings of erotic scenes. This tavern, located on the Street of Mercury, includes a large street-side counter section with three *dolia* and a stove, a dining space for customers who wanted to sit at tables, and two rooms in the back for guests. Five paintings were positioned on the back wall in view of the main entrance. The three centre images were of patrons eating, drinking, and playing dice, while the paintings on either end depicted scenes with sexual content. When excavated, only a limited number of the paintings were still legible. Engravings were produced from pen and ink drawings made by Henri Roux, and were subsequently published by Cesar Famin.¹⁶⁶ The paintings with sexual content have since been destroyed, making it impossible to confirm or even clarify the content of the images recorded in the engravings.

¹⁶² *CIL* IV.7863, 7864, 7873, 7862, 7866, 7221.

¹⁶³ L. Eschebach and Muller-Trollius 1993: 17 and Della Corte 1965: 272.

¹⁶⁴ *CIL* IV.2993a-z, 3200a-k, 3357-3365.

¹⁶⁵ *CIL* IV.3200, *felix felat* ('Felix sucks/gives fellatio'). Cf. Adams 1982: 130-133, which identifies a non-sexual use for the verb *fello*. DeFelice 2001: 106 thus suggests that the identification of the site as a brothel, particularly that made by Della Corte, was done so based on Petronius' *Satyricon* 7-8, which locates a brothel in a similar, remote area of a town.

¹⁶⁶ See DeFelice 2001: 111 n.339.

One of the paintings, now popularly referred to as the *Tightrope Walkers*, shows a woman bending down and a man entering her from behind, while both figures hold beverages in their hands and balance on tightropes just off the floor.¹⁶⁷ As the loss of the original image makes it impossible to verify current accounts, it is unclear whether or not this image did originally depict the couple on tightropes. Such outrageous performances were not unusual for the theatre. The *nudatio mimarum*, a sort of nude mime or striptease, was often presented as a short skit between main theatrical performances, and might be associated to what is seen in the painting.¹⁶⁸ If intended to depict a piece of theatre, however shocking or sexual, it fits with the relaxed scenes in the other paintings which depict customers engaging in various pleasures of daily life. There remains, however, the possibility that the tightropes on which the pair stand are simply an accidental addition, interpreted from lines of the floor or another element that was too damaged to read clearly. It is certainly unrealistic to expect the table, to which the rope is tied, to hold the weight of the couple throughout their activity.¹⁶⁹

Whether meant to reflect a theatrical performance or not, these images do not depict scenes that likely took place at a tavern. Similar to the paintings found in the *lupanar* which depict elaborate decorations and furnishings unlikely to be found in the

¹⁶⁷ See Figure 11.

¹⁶⁸ Clarke 2003b: 69.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Clarke 2003b: 69. The other image documented by Famin also depicts a man and woman. The woman stands on the left side of the image, the brooch on her left shoulder has come undone leaving her breasts exposed. Her left arm reaches across to the man on the right of the image who stands naked with his penis erect. The man leans forward, reaching toward the woman with his right hand and touching her hand by his shoulder with his left. This image is not as sensational as the *Tightrope Walkers*, aside from the large size of the man's penis. Similar to the issue of content in the *Tightrope Walkers*, it is possible either that it had theatrical associations, such as the large false phalluses used in performances, or that the size of the man's penis was incorrectly exaggerated.

rooms of the brothel, the paintings in the tavern do not seem to demonstrate the reality of what went on in the space; rather, they present images that convey a desired atmosphere or mood, of levity, leisure, and entertainment, in order to amuse the patrons during their stay. Some scholars have argued that the presence of such erotic images interspersed with the other relatively mundane tavern scenes was meant to inform visitors that sex was for sale in the bar.¹⁷⁰ Yet surely there was a better way to advertise such activities than to mix suggestive images with other paintings on the walls. Prostitutes could frequent these locations to obtain a customer or two, benefiting from the many men sitting and drinking at the establishment. It is not evident if the prostitutes and their clients stayed at the tavern, perhaps utilizing a back room or dark corner, or went elsewhere, but the paintings are surely not proof of the sale of sex being a primary service alongside the food and drink offered in the space.

In the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1) a room behind the kitchen was decorated with sexual paintings. It has been posited that a prostitute might have worked out of the house due to these explicit paintings, as well as a graffito outside the house advertising the price of a girl.¹⁷¹ However, the graffito does not establish that prostitution took place at that location, only that someone stopped to write a message there, and erotic paintings consistently have proved not to be strong enough evidence on their own. Paintings with a sexual theme are seen in both public and private locales throughout Pompeii, thus making it difficult to connect directly their presence with that of the sex trade.¹⁷² Moreover, it

¹⁷⁰ Clarke 1998: 312 n.19.

¹⁷¹ Knapp 2011: 248. *CIL* IV.4592 'Eutythis, a Greek girl with sweet ways, 2 asses'.

¹⁷² Clarke 2003a and Myerowitz 1992.

seems unlikely that a pair of freedmen like the Vettii would want to establish a business that was associated with the marginal and deviant aspects of society. It is more likely that the men sought to avoid such moral disapproval and to distance themselves from their servile origins.¹⁷³ The Vettii decorated their house with the same popular imagery seen throughout the town, likely intending to reflect an upper-class sensibility, and without the goal of developing a business of prostitution.

The possibility of prostitution on-site is far more likely at IX.5.16, a structure which, based on the erotic paintings in room *f*, was previously identified as having a brothel within it.¹⁷⁴ The building includes a kitchen, latrine, a large *triclinium*, and three smaller rooms around the atrium. Unlike the tavern at VI.10.1 on the Street of Mercury, the explicit images are clustered together in one of these smaller rooms, and are not interspersed with other scenes.¹⁷⁵ While there is no firm evidence that prostitution was officially offered at the establishment, it is possible that the room was made available for the occasional sexual dalliance.¹⁷⁶ McGinn posits that some taverns had a back room set aside for sexual activity, noting two examples at VII.6.14 and 15, which he identifies as a subtype of crib.¹⁷⁷ It is possible that this was the purpose of the room in the tavern at IX.5.16, although there is limited physical evidence aside from the sexual paintings.¹⁷⁸ If

¹⁷³ Clarke 1998: 174.

¹⁷⁴ Mau 1879: 209-210 asserts the structure was adapted from a house to a *caupona-lupanar* while H. Eschebach 1970: 149 identifies a small brothel within the house.

¹⁷⁵ There were originally five paintings in the space however, the last was destroyed.

¹⁷⁶ Clarke 2003b: 75 is also unconvinced.

¹⁷⁷ McGinn 2002: 13. I include this here rather than in the analysis of *cellae meretriciae* in order to explore the association to the taverns themselves, as the rooms were not accessible from the street and thus were closely tied to the functions of the taverns.

¹⁷⁸ No masonry bed or erotic graffiti are present, which could reveal further information as to the use of the space.

back rooms in these establishments were intended for prostitution, it is uncertain if prostitutes were employed at the tavern, if they had a business arrangement to use the facilities, or if barmaids were expected to fill the role in addition to their other duties.¹⁷⁹ As has been noted, serving girls were often associated with prostitution in ancient texts, although the accuracy of such comments is difficult to ascertain. The back room of a tavern certainly could have had purposes associated to the daily business of the tavern and might have been used for sexual engagements only occasionally. However, if the room indeed was meant solely for the sale of sex, it is more likely that at least one prostitute was stationed at the tavern to ensure that the service could be offered at all times.

It is reasonable to believe that prostitution occurred at a number of taverns and inns throughout Pompeii, but it is inappropriate to assign the activity to all such establishments. Although there is evidence of sexual activity on the premises or space available for such, it does not prove prostitution itself. It is equally as plausible to suggest that the back room was not meant for prostitution, but rather was set aside for couples to rent out for a quick tryst. Prostitutes could still benefit from this arrangement, and rent the space themselves, out of convenience for a customer at the tavern, or in lieu of any other available space to which they could go. Prostitution was not the main function of the hospitality businesses, but it could easily become associated with the status of customers they served or the atmosphere they promoted. While prostitution

¹⁷⁹ The bill from an inn in Aesernia shows that in addition to wine, bread, gruel, and fodder for a mule, the customer was charged for a girl (*CIL* IX.2689), which may further support the idea of the sale of sex as a secondary function in such establishments.

might have not taken place at every business, many proprietors of inns and taverns likely saw the benefit of allowing prostitution in their establishments. It could serve as an added attraction for customers, and the proprietor could share in the profits from the prostitutes or their pimps. He might even start to run a small one-room brothel inside his own business, as McGinn suggests. Although the number of taverns and inns that allowed the sale of sex remains unclear, it is evident that such activity was common in many businesses, in order to please their customers and benefit financially from such transactions.

Baths

A visit to the baths was meant for relaxation and respite from daily life, for socializing with friends, attending to personal hygiene, or for enjoying the other amenities of the facility. Ancient sources also identify an association between public bathing and sexual activity.¹⁸⁰ The high number of men visiting the baths could provide a perfect source of clients for prostitutes, making the baths an ideal place for prostitutes to work. Ulpian records that in certain provinces slaves were employed by the managers of the baths to not only watch over clothing and personal belongings left in the changing rooms, but also to offer sex to visitors.¹⁸¹ It is possible that similar arrangements were made at the baths in Pompeii although no sources make direct mention of it. Aside from such formally organized installations of the sex trade in the baths, prostitutes might have

¹⁸⁰ Amm.Marc. 28.4.9, Mart. 1.96.11-13, 9.33, 11.22.7-10, 11.47, Ovid. *Ars.Am.* 3.638-40, Sen. *Ep.* 56, and Ulp. *D.* 48.5.9.1.

¹⁸¹ Ulp. *D.* 3.2.4.2.

been there on a more informal basis, who used the space while not being acknowledged as an official service of the baths themselves.

While there are a series of bath complexes throughout the town, the Suburban Baths have been noted by scholars for its possible role as a location for prostitution in Pompeii.¹⁸² The Suburban Baths, located at VII.16.a, stand against the town walls, outside the *Porta Marina*. Evidence in support of the criteria for identifying brothels is scattered throughout and around the structure, including erotic paintings and sexual graffiti. However, as has been seen before, this alone does not definitively prove the existence of prostitution at the location.

Upon entering the complex, bathers could follow a long corridor to the changing room, or *apodyterium*.¹⁸³ No additional changing rooms have been found that could be identified as separate rooms for women; therefore, it is unclear whether or not the Suburban Baths permitted men and women to bath together, if each gender had a time during which they used the baths, or if it was a male only establishment. The mixing of genders in the baths did offend some ancient sensibilities, but this did not prohibit such activity.¹⁸⁴ While a separate section in the Stabian Baths is identified as strictly for the use of women, it is unclear how common such an arrangement was.¹⁸⁵ It is possible that mixed gender bathing was not very popular, that it only occurred in less respectable baths, or that it was practiced solely by prostitutes.¹⁸⁶ The mixing of genders in Roman

¹⁸² Clarke 2002: 151-55, Jacobelli 1995: 65, 97, and McGinn 2004: 282.

¹⁸³ See Figure 12.

¹⁸⁴ Quint. *Inst.* 5.9.14.

¹⁸⁵ Guzzo 1998: 131 and Koloski-Ostrow 2007: 228.

¹⁸⁶ See Balsdon 1969: 28. Cf. Fagan 1999: 27, 29.

baths might also have increased over time, beginning in larger cities. In turn, it is possible that women were permitted to bathe in certain bath complexes at Pompeii prior to the eruption of 79, despite the difficulty in identifying separate facilities.

Unlike other bath complexes at Pompeii such as the Forum or Stabian Baths, the changing room of the Suburban Baths had no niches for the bather's clothes. Instead, it appears that there was a shelf running around the room on which individual boxes could be placed after being filled with the personal effects of the bathers. Above the line of the shelf is a series of paintings that depict various sexual positions and activities. These paintings have been used to support the theory that various forms of hospitality were offered to visitors, including prostitutes working in the space.¹⁸⁷ While the location of the Suburban Baths would have been convenient for prostitutes to entice customers newly arrived from the nearby port, it has already been shown that erotic painting alone is not sufficient by itself evidence to identify the space as having been used by prostitutes.¹⁸⁸ The analysis by Jacobelli of the archaeological context in which these images were found has since given rise to an alternative view of the paintings. Jacobelli has been able to assert with reasonable certainty that not only were there corresponding numbers from I to XVI on the wall and the storage boxes, but that there was also a picture on each of the

¹⁸⁷ Guzzo and Scarano Ussani 2000: 25-26, Jacobelli 1991: 148, and Varone 1994: 135 n.229.

¹⁸⁸ Moreover, if the presence of erotic paintings denoted the location used for prostitution, it would suggest that the *apodyterium* itself was the place used by prostitutes. As it is unlikely that a room through which numerous people regularly passed could serve as a centre for the sex trade in the baths, another room needs to have been available. Other evidence to suggest the presence of prostitution in the Suburban Baths is minimal, and is scattered throughout the complex with no cluster of evidence to identify another area that was primarily used for the sex trade.

boxes which matched a corresponding image on the wall above.¹⁸⁹ The matching images would certainly have been a useful tool to remind visitors who might have forgotten the corresponding numbers. The same can be said for the subject matter of the images themselves. While any imagery could be used as a marker for identification, the artist instead chose to depict explicit sexual scenes. It certainly would have been difficult for bathers to forget such images over their own particular box.

The images might have also been intended to elicit a particular response from the viewers. The blatant sexuality of the images in a room where visitors stripped nude might have been intended to garner a smirk or laugh from the viewer.¹⁹⁰ As Clarke suggests, the high placement of the images, requiring viewers to stretch and strain to see them, was a scene deserving laughter in and of itself.¹⁹¹ Even if it was not the main purpose of the images, the presentation of sexual themes in the environment of the *apodyterium* surely engaged the imagination of the bathers as they removed their clothes in front of scenes of sexual activity. Paintings and mosaics depicting sexual scenes were common in private houses, in both public and private spaces. This popular style of decoration was seen throughout the town and as such would not have elicited much shock or surprise from the viewer. The sexual activities depicted in the paintings in the *apodyterium*, however, including *fellatio*, *cunnilingus*, group sex, and lesbian acts, were more taboo subject matter, and in turn, more exciting to look at in such a venue as the

¹⁸⁹ Jacobelli 1995: esp.92-97. Images provided in Varone 2001: figs. 25-32. Although no such containers remain, Jacobelli did find small metal reinforcements that were likely used on the containers. This hypothesis is supported by the depiction of similar reinforcements on the boxes in the paintings.

¹⁹⁰ Varone 2001: 39 suggests the contemporary Romans would have viewed the images as “merely superbly ironic cartoons, more likely to provoke laughter than lust”.

¹⁹¹ Clarke 2003b: 123. Clarke also posits that as laughter dispelled the evil eye, such a response to the paintings could serve as a form of protection for the bathers, who could be admired in the changing rooms.

changing room of the baths.¹⁹² It is not unreasonable then to suppose that, while it might not have been the intention of the artist, the paintings engaged the imaginations of the viewers, who became aroused at such scenes. After returning to the changing rooms and viewing the images one last time, men may have left the baths in search of companionship at the brothel or elsewhere.¹⁹³ Pimps or independent prostitutes might then have taken advantage of this result, making sex available much closer to the baths in order to profit from the available clientele.

If sexual activity did indeed occur in the vicinity of bath complexes, it must be ascertained whether or not it took place inside. Two graffiti from the Suburban Baths at Herculaneum provide an interesting account in reporting that two men, Apelles and Dexter, had sex with women while at the baths.¹⁹⁴ In one graffito Apelles is identified as a ‘chamberlain of the emperor’ (*cubicularis Caesaris*), suggesting that he and his friend Dexter were slaves. It is unclear, however, if these slaves attended the baths alone, or had the opportunity to engage with women while awaiting their master.¹⁹⁵ While Apelles and Dexter appear to be customers of sex, slaves might have been requested to perform sexual acts for their masters or other bathers. Slaves could be present at the baths to

¹⁹² Clarke 2003b: 116-117. See Knapp 2011: 257-8 for a discussion on the sexual acts considered inappropriate for proper Roman women and offered by prostitutes.

¹⁹³ Knapp 2011: 251 suggests that this could also result from instances where males and females bathed together, creating “a stimulant propelling clients towards willing sexual partners”.

¹⁹⁴ *CIL* IV.10677 ‘*Apelles cubicularius Caesar(is) cum Dextro pranderunt hic iucundissime et futuere simul*’; *CIL* IV.10678 ‘*Apelles Mus cum fratre Dextro amabiliter futuimus bis bina(s)*’. While it is possible the exploits reported in the graffiti are untrue or the women noted are not prostitutes, we will move forward under the view that these graffiti document actual events.

¹⁹⁵ For the topic of slaves as independent bath customers, see Fagan 1999: 200-206.

serve a variety of functions, including guarding clothes or tending to the bathers, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that more could be requested of them.¹⁹⁶

The graffiti found in the Suburban Baths at Herculaneum seems to cluster in a room adjacent to the vestibule, which could demonstrate that certain areas within the baths were restricted for sex.¹⁹⁷ However, the clustering of graffiti does not prove that sexual activity took place in the space; rather, it only confirms that the room had an open function in which someone could remain long enough to leave a message on the wall. It is unknown whether these messages were written immediately after a sexual encounter in the same space, or if the author left and wrote the message in another room some time later. The graffiti on their own also do not prove the prevalence of prostitution in the baths. Even if space was available for sex, it is unclear if a pair of lovers used it for the occasional dalliance, if prostitutes in the area used the space, or if the baths offered such services for the bathers. A graffito found outside the Suburban Baths in Pompeii advertises the services of Attica for sixteen *asses*, while another at the Suburban Baths in Herculaneum describes a pair who reportedly threw out their attendant Epaphroditus, and spent 105 ½ *sesterces* for sex while at the baths.¹⁹⁸ The cost noted in the graffito from Herculaneum is far greater than that found at Pompeii, but it is also the only graffito to suggest that the sexual activity had taken place within the bath complex. The example from Pompeii clearly advertises the price of sex with a woman but does not specify

¹⁹⁶ See Fagan 1999: 199-201, Knapp 2011: 251, and Ulp. *D.3.2.4.2*.

¹⁹⁷ Fagan 1999: 35.

¹⁹⁸ *CIL* IV.1751 'Si quis hic sederit, legat hoc ante omnia. Si qui futuere voluit, Atticen quaerat a(ssibus) XVI'; *CIL* IV.10675.

where the activities would take place. As the message tells its reader to 'look for' Attica, she might have been a prostitute who stationed herself nearby.

If there is a possibility that prostitution occurred within the baths, it is important to identify where exactly it took place. The function of the rooms on the second floor of the Suburban Baths at Pompeii remains unclear, with minimal evidence to provide an answer. Knapp asserts that the rooms above the baths were intended for the use of the prostitutes, with a separate street entrance for visitors to use if they came solely for the company of a prostitute.¹⁹⁹ These separate facilities, although part of the larger structure, could have been operated by another party, who gave a portion of their profits as a form of rent to those who ran the baths. McGinn posits that this second storey could be added to the list of brothels, thus separating its function entirely from the baths.²⁰⁰ Yet there are no rooms that can be identified as having been used specifically for prostitution anywhere in the complex. A series of four small rooms in the Stabian Baths have also been posited as spaces for sexual encounters, along with seven cubicles running east from the bathing suite of the Sarno Baths at Pompeii.²⁰¹ Although they have been suggested as rooms used for sex, no physical evidence is available to confirm such a theory.

The Suburban Baths had numerous amenities, including a heated swimming pool, a series of saunas, and various other rooms, all of which were well decorated. In such a well-outfitted building, it seems reasonable that if prostitution was an official service

¹⁹⁹ Knapp 2011: 252. Fagan 1999: 36 suggests that the identification of the rooms as such may have been based on the graffito (*CIL* IV.1751) found near the entrance to the second storey, advertising sex. Nielsen 1990: 124 also asserts that rooms could be set aside to be used specifically by prostitutes, although she makes no suggestion as to which particular rooms they might have been.

²⁰⁰ McGinn 2002: 12. See also McGinn's list of Pompeian brothels, McGinn 2002: appendix cat.32

²⁰¹ Stabian Baths: Koloski-Ostrow 2007: 228; Sarno Baths: Koloski-Ostrow 1990: 94-95 and Fagan 1999: 67. Cf. Ioppolo 1992: 72.

offered it too would be well defined. As there appears to have been no such attention paid to a location intended as a form of brothel in the baths, if any prostitution did take place in or around the baths, it was not a function originally intended by the owner of the establishment. Much like some taverns and inns which might have allowed spare back rooms to be used by customers for sexual activity, there might have been locations in bath complexes unofficially used for the same purpose. It is also unlikely that rooms in the baths were designated for this one purpose, but more probable that they served as private rooms for use at the discretion of the users, for bathing, relaxation, or sexual activities. Some of this activity might have been unpaid meetings between lovers, but it seems that while space for prostitution was not purpose-built in the baths, it could still be accommodated. A demand for something that could result in a profit was unlikely to be ignored. This does not mean that those who managed the various bath complexes were necessarily participants in such a business venture, but that prostitutes, pimps, or other enterprising individuals took advantage of available space and ready clients in the area of the baths.

It is evident that prostitutes worked on the streets looking for clients, likely taking up the area around the baths as well. However, it does not confirm that it was an accepted practice to have prostitutes working within the baths. There were clear associations between prostitution and bathing, but it is difficult to determine the accuracy of those claims. Perhaps prostitution and sex in general did become quite popular at the baths; however, it is not apparent how prevalent such activity was in the baths of Pompeii. It appears that sexual activity did take place in and around the baths, although it

was not necessarily an intended function of the baths themselves. Prostitutes lingered around the baths, waiting for clients to emerge, and took them to another location, including the *lupanar*, only a few blocks away. Space available within the baths could not have gone unnoticed, and whether these smaller rooms had been intended for another purpose, they surely were taken up for sexual activities at least occasionally.

Moral Zoning and the Locations of Prostitution at Pompeii

In the discussion of locations of prostitution, the theory of moral zoning has been raised repeatedly. Vital to this theory is the view that certain people, things, and practices were meant to be in certain spaces and not others, as determined by local standards of morality. While the definition of morality, what is acceptable and proper, can certainly differ in time and place, the premise of the theory of moral zoning asserts that notions of propriety were used to shield the rest of the community from the more seedy elements of the town. More specifically, the position of buildings could be actively zoned in order to deliberately set certain aspects of society apart. Moral zoning thus has been applied to prostitution, an activity regularly identified as one of low moral standing at Pompeii.

Two scholars who have applied the theory of moral zoning to their analysis of the locations of prostitution at Pompeii are Ray Laurence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill. Laurence recognizes the presence of moral zoning in Pompeii and suggests that brothels were intentionally kept out of the view of elite women and children in areas associated with deviant behaviour.²⁰² Wallace-Hadrill employs a similar view and argues that there

²⁰² Laurence 1994: 73.

is a clear pattern to the locations of brothels, which positions them on narrow back roads away from major thoroughfares, and generally keeps impure activities hidden in dark places.²⁰³ While both make a close examination of the geography of Pompeii in their respective studies, it is unsuitable to suppose that Roman moral values had an official capacity to define the use of space.²⁰⁴ Moral views are not valid factors to determine the location of businesses, and surely those who established more questionable businesses did not concern themselves with what was viewed as socially acceptable.²⁰⁵ Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that concerns regarding the morality of prostitution were reflected in any laws or administrative regulations of the period that could be applied to the locations of brothels or other sites of prostitution.²⁰⁶

A further concern in the application of moral zoning to Pompeii is that scholars remain unconvinced as to the number of brothels in the town. Without a complete list of locations at which prostitutes were available there is no way to prove the presence of moral zoning. Moreover, insofar as the sex trade could be present in an establishment where it was not the primary function, the idea of separating out the sex trade and brothels from other aspects of society is nearly impossible. In some instances, the presence of the sex trade might not have been so overt that the establishment itself

²⁰³ Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 51, 54.

²⁰⁴ If a geographical pattern can be identified that demonstrates how venues of prostitution are present in certain areas and absent from others, it remains possible that other factors influenced this distribution aside from moral zoning, such as property prices or rent (Beard 2008: 227).

²⁰⁵ Cf. DeFelice 2001: 100.

²⁰⁶ Both Laurence 1994: 80-81 and Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 45, 50-51 cite regulations associated to the control of *popinae* by aediles as a reflection of moral zoning and other similar restrictions. These regulations, however, are focused entirely on *popinae*, and while an association can and has been made between such establishments and the sex trade, it does not prove that there were official, legal procedures by which to define the location of prostitution in a scheme of moral zoning.

became associated with prostitution. Similarly, if the sex trade developed over time in a certain location, such as becoming an additional service at an inn or tavern, it is unconvincing that moral zoning could take effect after the primary business had already been established. It could not be expected that the business would move to a new location that was considered more appropriate for the services it now offered, or that the building of houses or other structures would be moved upon learning of this new addition to the business.

Moral zoning is based on the concept that the establishments in which inappropriate and immoral activities took place could be zoned, thereby keeping the activities in certain areas and away from others. However, prostitutes could solicit men independent of a brothel or any other permanent place of business. It is clear that there were prostitutes who were not employed at the brothel, but who instead worked on the streets, taking up their business in any secluded space that was available. Although prostitutes are popularly identified as having solicited men in alleyways, at the tombs outside the town walls, and other dark venues, prostitutes were also regularly associated with areas of public entertainment such as theatres, baths, and wherever else they could find a large gathering of potential customers. Even in neighbourhoods that seemed to be filled primarily with elite houses and or public buildings, individual prostitutes could still have been present. This presence of prostitutes throughout the town was fluid and could shift based on the time of day, events in the town, and whatever else would help or hinder the success of the prostitutes; it was not defined by moral zoning. Businesses too were located where they would best serve their customers and in turn the business owner.

Whether it meant identifying an available space that would fill a need, or profit from a high-traffic area, the concern in the position of any business was economic and not moral.

The position of the *lupanar*, located not far from the public sites of the Forum or the Stabian Baths, was also based in such economic concerns. The neighbourhood surrounding the brothel includes various houses and shops, not a space predominantly filled with businesses of an immoral nature that the majority of the population would seek to avoid. Positioned on a corner lot, the *lupanar* benefits from the foot traffic along the *Vico del Lupanare* and *Vico del Balcone Pensile*, where it was visible to passers-by. Although the building is not on a main thoroughfare, it is near major streets and is not hidden at the edges of the town limits. While the brothel could certainly be avoided if someone chose to do so, it is not intentionally hidden from sight and can be easily accessed, near to key sites of the town.

The cribs, sites which like the *lupanar*, were solely used for the sale of sex, are often close to many public sites as well. Although the eleven identified cribs are distributed throughout Pompeii, the majority of them are concentrated in the central part of the town, east of the Forum. The three cribs at VII.13.15, 16, and 19 are not only one block from the Forum, but also are easily accessed from major streets such as the *Via dell'Abbondanza*. McGinn (2002) identifies this clustering as an “unofficial centre of sexual activity”, and it is just that, unofficial.²⁰⁷ When a crib opened for business, its location was chosen based on economic factors rather than out of a conscious attempt to adhere to societal notions of propriety and stay away from certain areas of the town.

²⁰⁷ McGinn 2002: 15.

Even while the cluster of cribs near the Forum, and the public and religious buildings located there, are indeed out of sight on streets with less traffic, they could have been constructed much further from such a prominent area of the town if the moral implications were of great concern.

There are also numerous sites identified as cribs that were built into houses and businesses throughout the town.²⁰⁸ For instance, a crib located at VII.2.28 was built into the back of the *Casa di Mercurio*, while another at VII.4.42 used the available space in the back corner of the *Casa della Caccia Antica*.²⁰⁹ The fact that the entrances to such cribs are on streets without main entrances to large houses can be used to support the theory of moral zoning. However, while to some extent this has kept the venues of prostitution out of immediate view, they are not far away and are occasionally adjacent to a citizen's home. The cribs built into houses are indeed at the rear of the house, but this is not done out of a deliberate goal to hide prostitution from the view of upper-class citizens. The houses do not flaunt the brothels at the main entrances, but they are not hidden in the far corners of the town either. The *cellae meretriciae* are easily accessible from different areas of the town, and could even have been visited by residents stepping out of the back entrance of their house. The positions of these sites do not demonstrate a concern for moral zoning in the town. Rather, the locations are purely based on

²⁰⁸ While little evidence remains for the crib at VII.6.8, the remaining cribs are positioned under stairways to the upper floor of various structures, or built into the backs of houses and businesses.

²⁰⁹ It is also reported that the crib at VII.4.42 contained a painting of a couple engaged in sexual activity (H. Eschebach 1970: 139, L. Eschebach and Muller-Trollius 1993: 281, and Pugliesi Carratelli 1990, vol. VII: 1).

economic motivations, positioned in close proximity to areas that would produce the most clientele.

Due to the small number of brothels and cribs identified in Pompeii, it is easy to examine the position of all the sites and attempt to identify a pattern of distribution. It is not as simple, however, to observe a pattern in the locations of inns and taverns, which were distributed throughout the town. The high number of businesses makes it difficult to identify a concentration of these establishments in a particular area of the town that would suggest the effects of moral zoning.²¹⁰ All hospitality businesses, including inns and taverns, were located with the intent of gathering customers; many were positioned near the entrances to the town, capitalizing on the many travelers, merchants, and sailors who came to Pompeii. Others clustered around main thoroughfares, improving their visibility for potential customers.²¹¹ However, it is difficult to ascertain where prostitution could fit within this view of the urban landscape. While taverns and inns had the potential to accommodate prostitution, it is unlikely that all locations actively offered such services. The evidence in favour of prostitution at such locations is limited, often based in the interpretation of historical and literary sources, steeped in biases regarding the establishments themselves or the clientele, and the reading of what archaeological evidence remains. Insofar as it cannot be confirmed how many inns and taverns allowed

²¹⁰ See DeFelice 2001: 136.

²¹¹ See Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 43-45 for a map and discussion of the overall distribution of such establishments throughout Pompeii. See also Ellis 2004.

prostitution in their establishments, it is impossible to divide such locations into a scheme of moral zoning.²¹²

The baths at Pompeii also are difficult to define. Although the Suburban Baths stand out as the most prominent example that can be used to identify the presence of prostitutes in bath complexes at Pompeii, the evidence does not confirm or deny the possibility beyond a reasonable doubt. Similar to most of the inns and taverns of Pompeii, it is likely prostitutes were present at the baths at some point in time, at the very least roaming outside and waiting to engage with clients. There is certainly evidence to suggest that sexual activity took place in or around many hospitality establishments, inns, taverns, and baths alike. Nonetheless, the evidence does not demonstrate that prostitution was a main aspect of business in any of them. Prostitution may have been a supplementary business venture in some locations, or proprietors might have been willing to facilitate sexual encounters, paid or otherwise, by renting out a back room or other space. Even in cases where it is evident that sexual activity took place somewhere within the structure, it is difficult for modern scholars to ascertain if these meetings were part of the sex trade. A casual encounter at an inn or in the back room of a bar does not necessarily mean the woman involved was a prostitute, although such activities might earn the participants a negative reputation. Without a firm understanding of the activities

²¹² McGinn 2006: 163 identifies similar concerns in the identification of which establishments included prostitution as a service and which did not, and notes the case of the port city of Ostia which has only offered up one example of a possible brothel. Although there are numerous inns and taverns in Ostia, scholars have been unable to identify the sex trade at these establishments with much confidence. See also McGinn 2004: 226-231.

within each structure, and the degree to which prostitution played a part, it is impossible to identify a pattern of distribution among buildings associated with prostitution.²¹³

The difficulties in assigning prostitution to a particular area of the town do not stop at the identification of the activities that took place within various structures. Acts of prostitution, independent of a brothel or other permanent site of business, could take place anywhere in the town. Even if brothels were intentionally placed in certain areas, the business of prostitution was present throughout Pompeii, with prostitutes taking up residence near popular public locations, or roaming the streets and engaging with clients wherever they desired. Public solicitation was possible without a defined location of prostitution, and cannot be mapped in terms of moral zoning. It remains possible that as certain locations became associated with prostitution, residents with a moral concern could intentionally avoid a particular location.²¹⁴ However, it would have been impossible for the business of prostitution to be separated from other areas of the town in an official capacity. There are no identifiable regulations in Roman legislation to suggest that such action was practiced, and it remains unlikely that the moral leanings of the upper class could effectively relegate the sex trade to specific areas of the town.

²¹³ Moreover, even if it can be established that the sex trade was present at these establishments, it is unlikely that moral zoning could have influenced the locations of inns and taverns distributed throughout the town or of public buildings like the baths which was available to the entire community for purposes aside from the sex trade.

²¹⁴ Laurence 1994: 73 suggests that the population of the town “would not have to come into contact with prostitution unless they actively sought it out.” However, prostitution may have come into contact with residents as prostitutes roamed the streets, out of the control of the average resident. Moreover, many locations of prostitution were not entirely out of the way and residents would not have to actively seek them out to occasionally pass by buildings or areas of a less than reputable nature.

CONCLUSIONS

The many sites at which prostitution took place in Pompeii were spread throughout the town in a variety of locations in order to engage with the customers available in each area. In this way the proprietors of the sex trade strategically established business in locations that would bring the best economic benefit. As a result, citizens of Pompeii who had no association to the sex trade could still encounter it on a daily basis, either by walking past a prostitute herself, or by an establishment in which sex was offered. It would have been impossible to avoid the sex trade entirely, yet people could make attempts to do so, whether by avoiding certain streets known to be populated by prostitutes or by crossing the street to avoid the path of a prostitute. As there was no official policy of zoning prostitution and physically segregating it from the rest of society, those who disapproved of the activity had to avert their gaze and ignore it. It is evident that some areas of town or particular businesses became associated with certain practices, such as possibly identified by those with moral objections to those practices; however, their objections did not encumber the presence of prostitution in Pompeii.

Although early scholars misidentified numerous taverns and inns as also functioning as brothels, it is apparent that the sex trade was present in some of these establishments. In most of these businesses prostitution was not a primary function but rather was an additional service offered in the space. The interactions of a prostitute and customer in such venues were brief and relatively business-like, kept to an efficient transaction of sex for money. The environment of a venue such as a tavern could expand their interactions, as a prostitute could linger among the tables and attempt to flatter and

entice customers with her attentions. Whether the prostitute sought out a customer or waited for one to approach her, a small back room was available in many establishments for their meeting. Although this small room was not decorated in any specifically relevant way and would not have generated a particularly sexual atmosphere, such details were not of concern. The levity and enjoyment already felt by the customer was a vital catalyst for his interest in soliciting a prostitute. After hours of drinking and carousing there would have been little or no need to set the mood; the interaction was but a quick encounter and satisfying release among the other entertainments of the establishment.

This relatively quick and efficient interaction of prostitute and client is also apparent at the *cellae meretriciae*, or cribs. These small, one-room venues contained just enough space for a masonry bed and boasted little to no decoration. Much like the back rooms of taverns and other businesses in which prostitutes stationed themselves, the modest interiors of the cribs were not a problem for customers. Instead, customers of the cribs had likely arrived with their desires in mind and thus did not require interior decoration to set the mood. While most customers of the cribs came to these locations with intent, some clients might not have had such intentions, but rather were enticed by a prostitute who stood in the doorway of a crib advertising her services. Additional customers also could have been poached from other venues of the sex trade if all their prostitutes were busy or if the type of sexual experience available at the crib drew customers away from the other location. The number of cribs spread throughout the town allowed for greater availability and offered a degree of convenience to customers interested in a quick tryst. However, with only one prostitute working in each, the

success of the cribs relied upon the turnover of customers. Thus, for both prostitute and client, the relationship at the cribs consisted of little more than a business transaction. Both participants in the exchange had a goal of their own and, while it is possible that an occasional customer developed a deeper relationship with a prostitute, the majority of customers sought no more than the purchase of sexual services, which the attending prostitute readily supplied.

There appears to have been a greater opportunity for extended interactions between prostitute and client in the setting of the brothel at Pompeii. With multiple prostitutes employed on site, it was not as necessary to hurry customers through the brothel as other venues. While the proprietor of the *lupanar* likely was concerned with the quantity of customers in order to maximize profits, an established business like the *lupanar* also relied heavily on returning customers. Thus, customers of the brothel were allowed extended visits with prostitutes and could do as they desired during that time. The decorated corridor of the *lupanar* tells of a relaxed atmosphere that was focused on the satisfaction of the customer and his enjoyment of the experience. The paintings on the walls, while not depicting the physical appearance of the brothel, showed lavish scenes that conveyed a mood of pleasure to the viewer. This enhanced the dark and drab appearance of the *cellae* and directed customers to focus on the enjoyment of their interactions with the prostitutes.

The numerous graffiti scattered around the ground floor testify to the enjoyment had by customers at the *lupanar*. Customers were able to spend enough time in the brothel to linger in the hall or the individual *cellae* and leave messages on the walls for

others to see. Many of the graffiti recount the experiences of customers, sometimes including their names or that of the prostitute involved. A visit to the brothel was not necessarily a private or even secretive experience for individuals; rather, customers of the brothel left messages of greeting, jokes, and insults, throughout the interior of the building, openly acknowledging their presence in the space. These messages were regularly directed at specific individuals, each likely written with the expectation that the person named would read it on his next visit. Men also visited the brothel together and left a record of their exploits in the graffiti on the wall. In this way, the interactions in the brothel were not only between the prostitute and client, but also between fellow customers. Whether they only knew one another by their attendance at the brothel or if they came as friends, the customers of the brothel shared a mutual interest and could socialize with one another as they enjoyed what the establishment had to offer.

This study has included the examination of numerous sites of prostitution in Pompeii, but has been limited to a survey of permanent structures in which prostitution possibly took place. As such, the scope of this study could not include a close examination of all possible venues of prostitution, nor was it able to delve into the presence of streetwalkers and those prostitutes who stationed themselves in outdoor locales such as the town walls and tombs. A more detailed analysis of these locations would benefit the study of prostitution at Pompeii and the ancient sex trade in general. In some instances, the primary function of structures and the degree to which prostitution was present in them remains in question. Once the presence of prostitution can be identified further inquiries to the tone and dynamics of its presence can be made,

including how prostitution was integrated into the town, how this might have varied by location, and details of the daily functions of business at each location.

The best source of information for prostitution at Pompeii is, and will continue to be, the *lupanar*. The remains of this structure provide insight for the business of the sex trade as well as the people involved, namely prostitutes and their customers. In order to gain a better understanding of the inner workings of the *lupanar*, far more analysis of the second storey of the building must be done. Although some scholars have had the opportunity to examine the space and suggestions have been made as to its use, the second storey and its function remains somewhat mysterious.²¹⁵ The identification of the primary use for this space and ascertaining whether or not it was associated to the activities on the ground floor could have significant implications for understanding of the business of the *lupanar*.

Further examination of the graffiti in the *lupanar* could also prove valuable in the study of the participants in the sex trade. Graffiti is a rare source of evidence that can act as the informal testimony of average people, and, at the brothel in particular, of the customers and the prostitutes who worked there. While the content and context of the graffiti have been examined in this study, additional studies might pursue the analysis of attributes of the writing itself. For instance, a comparison of the handwriting of all the graffiti could be used to discern if any messages were written in the same hand. This

²¹⁵ This issue has recently been addressed by McGinn 2013. Among other topics discussed in the article, McGinn closely examines the function of the second storey. Although he speculates as to the function of the space, the evidence available in the rooms of the second storey makes identification difficult. Other areas of evidence must be considered including the examination of literary sources for possible references to similar structures and the comparison of other archaeological evidence to determine if other establishments in Pompeii or elsewhere in the Roman world display a similar interior layout.

information might provide new insights to the authorship of the graffiti, such as if a single author left multiple messages, or if the graffiti left by one author repeatedly dealt with the same subject or was consistently found in the same area.

It is also worthwhile exploring the presence of prostitution in other towns and cities at which the physical remains are substantial enough to examine the material culture in a similar manner to what was done in this paper. For instance, McGinn gathers evidence from throughout the Roman world and discusses the possible presence of brothels in various towns and cities, including Rome, Ephesus, and Ostia.²¹⁶ Ostia, like Pompeii, would have had many sailors arriving at the port who could have been potential customers for a brothel and, as such, it is possibly the closest comparable site.²¹⁷ Even so, scholars have had difficulty identifying a structure in which prostitution was the primary function.²¹⁸ The presence of prostitution in baths has also proved difficult to identify, although the evidence at Pompeii has provided possible locations for the sex trade in the Suburban, Sarno, and Stabian Baths.²¹⁹ Other Roman sites do not provide as compelling evidence for the discussion of sex at the baths as Pompeii, although scholars have attempted to identify the presence of prostitution in various locations.²²⁰ The

²¹⁶ McGinn 2004: 220-239.

²¹⁷ Although Herculaneum is nearby Pompeii and in a similar state of preservation, the size of the town is much smaller and thus, there is nothing that can be identified as having been a space dedicated to prostitution.

²¹⁸ The House of Jupiter and Ganymede (I.4.2) has previously been considered as a possible brothel in Ostia but the evidence has proven difficult to confirm such a function. Although Clarke 1991 theorized that the structure was used as a brothel, he has more recently rethought his interpretation in favour of the possibility of the structure's use as a hotel or some other hospitality establishment (Clarke 1998: 265-73).

²¹⁹ Fagan 1990: 94-5, Koloski-Ostrow 2007: 228, Koloski-Ostrow 1990: 94-95, and Guzzo and Scarano Ussani 2000: 17-25. Cf. Ioppolo 1992: 72.

²²⁰ Fagan 1990: 36 n.61 comments on sources that have examined the possibility of prostitutes in baths in Byzantine Palestine and Egypt.

identification of prostitution in baths elsewhere in the Roman world not only would expand our understanding of the sex trade in bath complexes in general, but also could be used to compare and contrast the evidence found at Pompeii. Such analysis could thus determine how much of what is seen at Pompeii might be common throughout the Roman world and what might otherwise be unique to the town.

Just like any other business in the town, prostitution in Pompeii sought to serve customers and maximize profits. Some venues of prostitution pursued these goals by catering to a customer's desire for a quick encounter with a prostitute; others promoted the option of longer engagements. The prostitute and client were connected by a business that, while considered immoral and deviant by many people, was tolerated by society at large and had many participants. Their bond allowed customers to employ the services of prostitutes and to satisfy desires that only fellow customers could truly understand, outside of the normal strictures of society. In this way customers found pleasure not only with the prostitutes who served them in the venues around town, but also among fellow participants who engaged in the thriving sex trade at Pompeii.

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IMAGE APPENDIX



Figure 1

Map of Pompeii and location of the brothel at VII.12.18-20.
(Westfall 2007: fig. 10.1)



Figure 2

Map of *insula* around VII.12.18-20.
(Guzzo and Scarano Ussani 2000: 10)



Figure 3
Wall painting in corridor of *lupanar*.
(Marcade 1965: 123)



Figure 4
Wall painting in corridor of *lupanar*.
(Marcade 1965: 120)



Figure 5

Wall painting in corridor of *lupanar*.
(Marcade 1965: 107)



Figure 6

Wall painting in corridor of *lupanar*.
(Marcade 1965: 117)



Figure 7
Wall painting in corridor of *lupanar*.
(Marcade 1965: 119)



Figure 8
Wall painting in corridor of *lupanar*.
(Marcade 1965: 117)

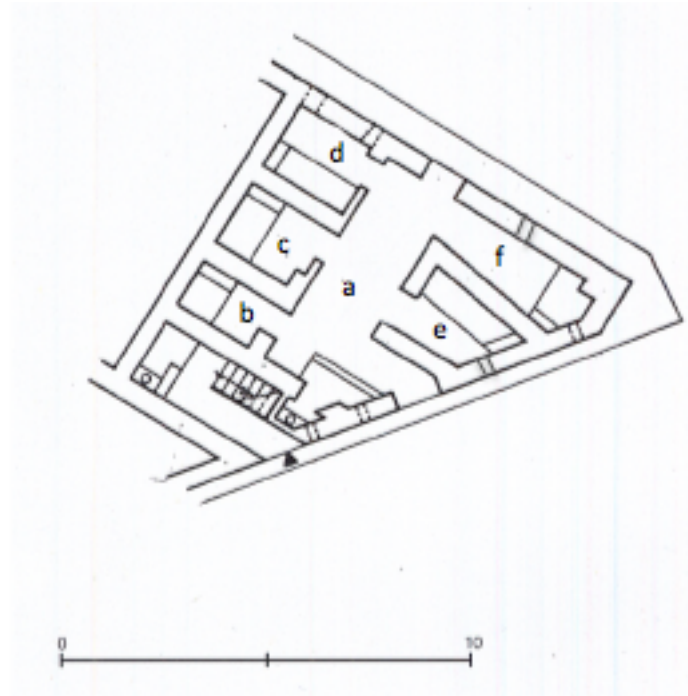


Figure 9
Floor plan of the *lupanar* ground floor.
(Guzzo 1998: 72)



Figure 10
Sites of possible *cellae meretriciae*, or cribs.
(Westfall 2007: fig. 10.1)

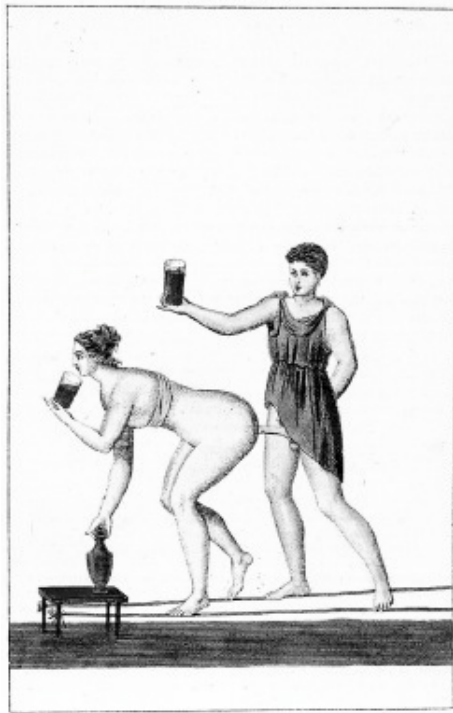


Figure 11
Painting of *Tightrope Walkers* found in tavern at VI.10.1.
(Jacobelli 1995: fig. 64)

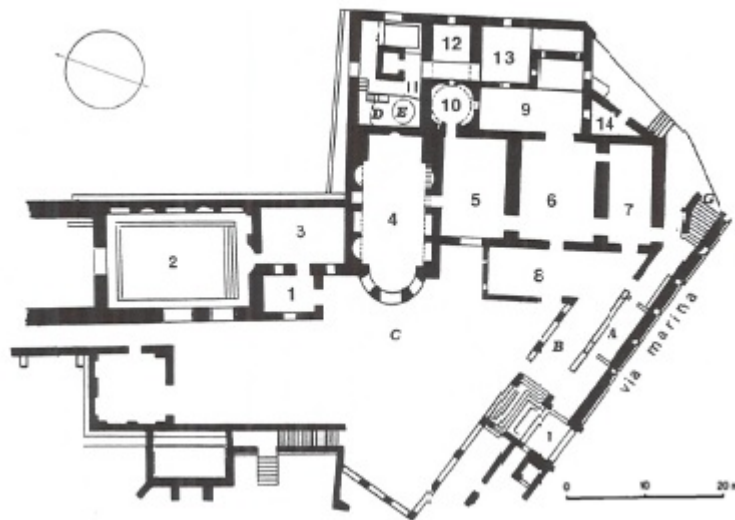


Figure 12
Floor plan of Suburban Baths at Pompeii.
(Clarke 1998: fig. 90)