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**Spectacle, Violence, and Viewership:
Paradeisos Scenes in the Pompeian Garden**

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**Spectacle, Violence, and Viewership:
Paradeisos Scenes in the Pompeian Garden**

**by
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Abstract

Spectacle, Violence, and Viewership: *Paradeisos* Scenes in the Pompeian Garden

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Paradeisos scenes, painted compositions featuring dueling wild animals, appear rather frequently in the gardens of Pompeii. Although these scenes have received some scholarly attention, there has been no attempt to definitively lay out the precise features that constitute a *paradeisos* scene. Further, the scholars who have dealt with these compositions have done so within a larger conversation about wall painting or garden painting as a whole. The present study attempts to define the *paradeisos* and treat these scenes as a phenomenon in their own right.

Chapter One opens the discussion by looking at the presence of wild animals in the triumphal procession and in the *ludi* of the Roman amphitheater, two highly visual occasions that would have informed a Roman conception of wildlife elsewhere in visual culture. Chapter Two takes an in-depth look at the *paradeisos* scenes themselves through four case studies, contextualizes these scenes within the larger framework of the home, and provides an updated, clear-cut definition of the *paradeisos*. Finally, Chapter Three expands the discussion to Roman gardens, tying the violent imagery of the *paradeisos* to these supposedly serene zones. Ultimately, this fresh approach to the *paradeisos* demonstrates that the violent imagery of these scenes reflect large-scale societal drives in the small-scale context of the suburban, Pompeian home.

Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	v
Chapter 1: Animals in Roman Visual Culture	1
Chapter 2: Towards a Definition of the <i>Paradeisos</i>	16
The House of the Ceii (Reg I, Ins 6, 15).....	18
The House of M. Lucretius Fronto (Reg V, Ins 4, a, 11).....	21
The House of the Epigrams (Reg V, Ins 1, 18, 11, 12)	24
The House of the Centenary (Reg IX, Ins 8, 6)	27
The House of Orpheus (Reg VI, Ins 14, 20).....	30
Conclusion.....	32
Chapter 3: Roman Gardens: The <i>Paradeisos</i> in Context.....	36
Roman Gardens: History and Cultural Significance.....	39
Roman Influence on Pompeian Gardens.....	42
The Garden and Kingship.....	44
<i>Otium</i> and the Garden	49
Liminality and the Garden	52
Figures.....	57
Bibliography	99

List of Figures

Figure 1: Pompeii, Amphitheater (II, 6), Parapet, drawing by Charles Robert Cockerell based on an excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, "Disegnatori," <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 11: 106, fig. 43.....	57
Figure 2: Pompeii, Amphitheater (II, 6), Parapet, excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, "Disegnatori," <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 11: 107, fig. 47	58
Figure 3: Pompeii, Amphitheater (II, 6), Parapet, excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, "Disegnatori," <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 11: 111, fig. 54.	59
Figure 4: Pompeii, Ampitheater (II, 6), Parapet, excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, "Disegnatori," <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 11: 110, fig. 52.....	60
Figure 5: Pompeii, Ampitheater (II, 6), Parapet, excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, "Disegnatori," <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 11: 108, fig. 49.....	61
Figure 6: Pompeii, The House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Entrance a. Façade of the House of the Ceii. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	62
Figure 7: Pompeii, House of the Ceii (I, 6,15), plan with illusionistic rendering of the <i>paradeisos</i> painting in the garden. After Pappalardo, <i>Splendor of Roman Wall Painting</i> , 208.....	63
Figure 8: Pompeii. House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Atrium b, southeast view. After Grant, <i>Eros in Pompeii</i> , 38.....	64
Figure 9: House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Andron k, southeast view. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	65
Figure 10: Pompeii, House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Andron k, west wall. Still-life painting depicting a drinking vessel. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	66
Figure 11: Pompeii. House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Garden h, north wall. <i>Paradeisos</i> scene. After Rabun Taylor Collection.....	67
Figure 12: Pompeii, The House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Garden h, west wall. Nilotic scene. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	68
Figure 13: Pompeii, House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Garden h, east wall. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	69
Figure 14: Pompeii, The House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Garden h, east wall. After Mazzoleni and Pappalarado, <i>Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House</i> , 393.	70

Figure 15: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Atrium 2, north wall. <i>After Pompeii in Pictures</i>	71
Figure 16: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Triclinium 4, east wall. Dionysus in a chariot with his entourage. After Rabun Taylor Collection.....	72
Figure 17: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Triclinium 4, north wall. Venus, Mars, and attendants. After Mazzoleni and Pappalardo, <i>Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House</i> , 287	73
Figure 18: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Triclinium 4, east wall. Painted architectural ornament. After Rabun Taylor Collection.....	74
Figure 19: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Plan. After de Vos, “V 4, a: Casa di M. Lucretius Fronto,” <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 3: 966, fig. 1	75
Figure 20: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, east wall. <i>After Pompeii in Pictures</i>	76
Figure 21: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, east wall. <i>After Pompeii in Pictures</i>	77
Figure 22: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, north wall. <i>After Pompeii in Pictures</i>	78
Figure 23: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, north wall. <i>After Pompeii in Pictures</i>	79
Figure 24: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, north wall. <i>After Pompeii in Pictures</i>	80
Figure 25: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, west wall. <i>After Pompeii in Pictures</i>	81
Figure 26: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, south wall. <i>After Pompeii in Pictures</i>	82
Figure 27: Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, north and east walls. Painting detail. After Rabun Taylor Collection.....	83
Figure 28: Pompeii, House of the Epigrams (V, 1, 18). Plan. After Mariette de Vos, “V 1, 18: Casa degli Epigrammi,” <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 3: 539, fig. 1.....	84
Figure 29: Pompeii, House of the Epigrams (V, 1, 18). Entryway a, west view. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	85
Figure 30: Pompeii, House of the Epigrams (V, 1, 18). Garden i, east wall. Reconstruction drawing by Preshun. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	86
Figure 31: Pompeii, House of the Epigrams (V, 1, 18). Exedra O, east wall. Reconstruction drawing by Preshun. After Mariette de Vos, “V 1, 18: Casa degli Epigrammi,” <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 3: 558, fig. 39.....	87

Figure 32: Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Plan. After von Sydow, "IX 8, 3.7: Casa del Centenario," <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 9: 903.....	88
Figure 33: Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Vestibule 1. Mosaic depicting fantastical marine life. After Clarke, <i>Black and White Figural Mosaics</i> , 89, fig. 10.....	89
Figure 34: Figure 34 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Atrium 2, north wall. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	90
Figure 35: Figure 35 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Triclinium 32, south wall. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	91
Figure 36: Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, east wall. After <i>Pompeii in Pictures</i>	92
Figure 37: Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, south wall. Detail of painting on the middle and lower registers. After Rabun Taylor Collection.....	93
Figure 38: Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, south wall. After Rabun Taylor Collection.....	94
Figure 39: Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, south wall. After Rabun Taylor Collection.....	95
Figure 40: Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, south wall. After Rabun Taylor Collection.....	96
Figure 41: Pompeii, House of Orpheus (VI, 14, 20). Atrium b, west wall. After John Clarke (private collection, DASE).....	97
Figure 42: Pompeii, House of Orpheus (VI, 14, 20). Peristyle O, west wall. Reconstruction drawing by Preshun. After Niccolini, "VI, 14, 20: Casa di Vesonius, Primus o di Orfeo," <i>Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici</i> , 5: 285, fig. 33b.....	98

Chapter 1: Animals in Roman Visual Culture

A discussion of *paradeisos* paintings might begin with a discussion of the Romans' conception of the foreign and domestic animals featured in them. In this chapter, I will explore Roman attitudes towards wildlife by examining two highly visual forms of civic ceremony and entertainment, the triumph and *venationes* or wild animal hunts. These two spectacles, deeply connected despite differences in form and function, featured animals prominently and, in the majority of cases, would have constituted an ordinary Roman's actual physical experience with exotic wildlife. Further, although triumphal processions took place far away from Pompeii, and Pompeii's amphitheater could not host games as elaborate as those in the Colosseum, these displays in the heart of the empire's capital probably had significant effects on the perception of animal life throughout the Roman world.

Before delving into a discussion of the presence of animals in military triumphs, an important distinction must be made between military animals, namely horses and elephants, and non-military animals such as cattle, sheep, boars, and exotic cats. Animals associated with the military have a long history of display in triumph whereas the history of the presence of non-military animals is sketchier and more complex.

Enemy horses captured by Roman forces and subsequently displayed in triumph appear early in literary records. Livy records that P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica's triumph of 191 BCE featured a large number of captured horses, which

appeared alongside high-ranking Gallic prisoners.¹ Although Livy mentions a number of instances in which Romans captured enemy horses, this is the only firm literary example of horses displayed in triumph, although it seems quite likely that other triumphs would have featured captive horses. Later in the second century BCE, Aemilius Paullus' Macedonian triumph featured a horse prominently dressed in military regalia.²

Although captured horses likely appeared frequently in the triumph, Roman familiarity with the animal would have greatly lessened their dramatic effect. In contrast, elephants, also associated with military action, shocked and amazed the Roman crowd. It is worth mentioning that elephants appeared in triumph as captives as early as 275 BCE in the triumph of M. Curius Dentatus. Elephants were also displayed as captives in the triumphs of L. Caecilius Metellus in 250 BCE, M. Claudius Marcellus in 211 BCE, and Scipio Africanus in 201 BCE. By the late-Republican period, the elephant's role as captive lessened, and in the triumphs of Caesar and Pompey the elephant seems to have taken on a more symbolic role as a representative of exoticism and foreignness. It is noteworthy that despite the extensive literary evidence for the presence of elephants in Rome, no elephants appear in any extant *paradeisos* scenes.

The earliest literary evidence for the presence of exotic non-military animals displayed in a military triumph comes from the Jewish historian Josephus, who described the elaborately adorned parade of animals in the triumph of Titus and Vespasian following the conquest of Judea. As Östenberg points out, however, there

¹ Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 36.38.6

² Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 31.8.12

is no reason to believe that the Judean triumph constitutes the first instance of animals in the parade and Josephus' account does not suggest that this is the case.³ In fact, from the earliest periods, it was common practice to display domestic, non-military animals in military triumphs. As Rome's military interests shifted eastwards in the second and first centuries BCE and ensuing triumphs became increasingly elaborate, the shift from domestic to exotic animals is quite logical.

Livy records that as early as 311 BCE, following a victory in the Samnite wars, the consul C. Junius Bubulcus Brutus brought Samnite cattle to Rome as booty, an act that would obviously have had a major adverse effect on the Samnite people.⁴ Whether or not he displayed these cattle in his triumph is unknown, although the idea is not unreasonable. Literary evidence supports the notion that the display of animals such as cattle and sheep was common triumphal practice around this time.⁵ Following a relatively small victory in the Spanish wars, L. Licinius Lucullus celebrated a triumph in 151 BCE in which he displayed little in the way of silver and gold but instead paraded enemy garb, hostages, and cattle.⁶

Evidence for the presence of exotic animals in periods before the Judean victory relies on inferential, yet reasonable, support. For instance, in order to determine the probability that victorious generals before Titus and Vespasian displayed exotic animals in their triumphs, Östenberg looks at the length of time between a general's triumphal procession and the games he would have then

³ Ida Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 168.

⁴ Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 9. 31

⁵ Florus, *Epitome Rerum Romanorum* 1.13-27

⁶ Appian, *The Foreign Wars, Hispania* 9.54.

sponsored. If the interim period lasted more than a few months, the likelihood that animals used for the games were also displayed in triumph dwindles, as maintenance of exotic animals for such a long period was enormously expensive.⁷

However, by the late-Republican period, the short lapses of time between triumph and *ludi* indicate that the same exotic animals were used on both occasions, enhancing the spectacular appearance in the most cost-effective manner possible. In 46 BCE, Julius Caesar celebrated an incredible four triumphs for his victories in Gaul, Pontus, and Africa.⁸ These triumphs were immediately followed by lavish games, which also inaugurated his new forum and temple to Venus. In 29 BCE, Octavian (just before he received the title of Augustus) likewise staged *ludi* mere days following his threefold triumphal procession. Dio Cassius records that Caesar's games introduced the giraffe to the Roman populace and that Augustus' *ludi* included hippopotami and rhinoceros, both of which had previously appeared in Roman games.⁹ In both cases, hostages displayed in triumph were subsequently featured in the games and it might follow that the animals present in these *ludi* also appeared in the triumph.

The practice of displaying exotic animals in triumphal processions flourished well into the late-antique period, demonstrating these creatures' ability to add a layer of novelty and drama to an event already filled with spectacle. Numerous accounts from the *Historia Augustae* indicate that by the late-antique period, the

⁷ Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession*, 169-170.

⁹ Scaurus in 58 BCE (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.40.96) and Pompey in 55 BCE (Pliny, *Natural History* 8.29.71).

practice of organizing animals by species was well established.¹⁰ The classification of animals demonstrates an important dichotomy in the Roman mindset – a deep fascination with the exotic coupled with a mitigating need to impose order on everything viewed as such. The practice of methodically organizing animals in groups rather than as a more naturalistic disorderly mass represents a physical manifestation of this impulse. Indeed the entire performance of triumph constitutes an important visual rhetoric in which the Romans imposed order on that which was untamed.¹¹ As Rome's militaristic interests expanded east beginning in the second century BCE, victorious generals capitalized on the striking visual power of novel cultures and exotic animals.

This penchant for imposing order on otherness consequently enhanced the Romans' view of themselves as civilized and well-ordered. Wild beasts like tigers and hippopotami contrasted greatly with the four white horses pulling the general's chariot as well as with the white oxen bred specifically to be sacrificed to Jupiter after the parade ascended the Capitoline Hill.¹² Sharp visual contrasts like these drew clear distinctions between themselves and others in the Roman mind. As the victors leading restrained exotic animals in triumph, this distinction validated the Romans as arbiters of civilization.

¹⁰ Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession*, 168.

¹¹ Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession*, 275.

¹² Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession*, 275.

Having said that, by publicly taming these wild forces and beasts, Rome not only demonstrated its own superiority but also symbolically harnessed the power of the “other.”¹³ In a similar manner to the Roman proclivity for incorporating foreign deities into their own religious milieu, the taming of wild natural forces also indicated that their powers could be brought into the fold.

It is interesting to note, particularly in light of this study’s main topic, that many of the exotic animals used in triumphal processions were actually gifts from the luxurious game preserves of Eastern diplomats eager to ingratiate themselves to Rome. According to Bodson, the practice of presenting animals as gifts dates back to a much earlier period, namely, the middle of the third millennium BCE in Egypt, with evidence for slightly later examples from ancient India, Assyria, and Persia.¹⁴

As Alexander the Great travelled throughout Indian and Persia, he received an enormous number of exotic animals as tribute from Eastern diplomats. These included elephants, tigers, lions, hounds, cattle, and sheep. These gifts were highly prized by rulers precisely for their novelty as well as for their symbolic power. The attributes of any given animal – strength, speed, bravery – are ones most rulers would have been eager to adopt. When Ptolemy II Philadelphus staged the Ptolemaeia, he brought in animals from every corner of the known world, including a great python, which was kept tame by depriving it of food. Many of the animals in

¹³ Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession*, 275.

¹⁴ Liliane Bodson, “Ancient Greek Views on the Exotic Animal,” *Arctos* 32 (1998): 70.

the Ptolemaeia were likely gifts from foreigners hoping to curry favor with the ruler, pointedly exploiting his love of hunting and interest in the natural world.¹⁵

That such a practice persisted into Roman times is hardly surprising. For example, Strabo records that a delegation from India brought gifts to Augustus that included tigers, elephants, a large serpent, a river hare, and an abnormally large partridge.¹⁶ As triumphs became more and more elaborate and incorporated foreign beasts largely for their curiosity value rather than their actual relevance to the lands conquered, the idea that tributary animals appeared with more frequency does not seem like an enormous logical leap. However, if these animals did appear they were not differentiated from conquered animals. In other words, there would have been no apparent hierarchical difference between captive animals from subjugated lands and animals received as flattering gifts. The lack of distinction between these two categories in the triumphal context says a great deal about the cultural ego at the heart of the procession.

There has been some attempt on the part of scholars to link triumph and *ludi* by tracing the two spectacles to a common ancestor in Roman history. These attempts have been met with varying degrees of success.¹⁷ However, the two events do share a number of thematic similarities that should not be overlooked. Games often accompanied the triumphal procession to some degree, often as an inauguration or capstone to the more formal procession. Further, both events utilized splashy displays to communicate messages of Roman domination and

¹⁵ Bodson, "Ancient Greek Views on the Exotic Animal," 72-75.

¹⁶ Strabo, *Geography*, XV 1. 73

¹⁷ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 281-285

control to the viewing audience. The use of wildlife in the arena mirrored the use of wildlife in the triumph; in each case, the animal's exoticism determined its curiosity value and in each case, the animal was exploited to convey Roman authority.

Further, violence featured prominently in both events. Violence was an inherent part of triumph in the sense that violent military engagement gave rise to the event itself; however, actual violence played a role in the procession as well. Prominent captives, such as kings or chiefs, were sometimes put to death towards the end of the procession. These include Samnite leader Caius Pontius in the triumph of Quintus Fabius Maximus Gurges in 291 BCE, Gallic chieftan Vercingetorix in Caesar's 46 BCE triumph, Adiatorix and Alexander in Octavian's triumph in 29 BCE, and Simon bar Giora in the triumph of Titus and Vespasian in 71 CE.¹⁸ Hundreds of white bulls were sacrificed to Jupiter once the procession ascended the Capitoline Hill. In *ludi*, violent displays were the main event. Though games could include relatively benign athletic contests, gladiator fights and beast hunts were the main event.

The origins of the *venatio* can be traced to the Punic War era, around the time when the first exotic animals were brought to Rome to be displayed in triumph. When L. Caecilius Metellus defeated the Carthaginian general Hasdrubal in 250 BCE, he celebrated his victory by staging an elephant hunt. The subjugation of Carthage during the succeeding wars resulted in an influx of exotic, African animals into

¹⁸ Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, 129-130.

Rome. In 186 BCE, Fulvius Nobilior, in conjunction with his triumphal procession, sponsored *venationes* that pitted lions and panthers against one another.¹⁹

From this point forward, beast hunts featured prominently in gladiatorial games. Linked to military victories in far off lands, the acquiring of exotic fauna soon became associated with influence and pedigree; a man's ability to sponsor games with increasingly exotic wildlife cemented his status. In 51 BCE, the governor of a Roman province in Southern Turkey, Caelius Rufus, wrote a series of letters to Cicero in which he beseeches him to ensure the delivery of panthers for his own *ludi*.²⁰

The *venatio* had two basic forms, one with human endeavor and one without. In the first instance, *venatores*, a specialized type of gladiator, engaged in a hunt with the animals in the arena. Often, the hunters were accompanied by dogs, which aided in exhausting the more exotic beasts until these animals became easier to slay.²¹ In instances where beasts were pitted against one another, another human figure, known as a *bestiarius*, also played a role. The role of the *bestiarii* (beast handlers) often involved chaining animals together. Bulls could be chained and forced to engage with bears; elephants could be forced into battle with rhinoceros. During these battles, the *bestiarii* stood on the sidelines with whips and hot irons in

¹⁹ Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 39. 22

²⁰ David Potter, *The Victor's Crown: A History of Ancient Sport from Homer to Byzantium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 202.

²¹ J.P. Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 37.

case the animals needed an extra nudge.²² Though this unpleasant work was fraught with danger, the *bestiarius* was viewed as inferior to the *venator* in terms of skill.²³

There is also ample evidence that these types of beast hunts took place in the amphitheater at Pompeii. A number of excavation drawings from the amphitheater depict hunting scenes in naturalistic, arid landscapes; these parallel *paradeisos* paintings of Pompeian gardens in both style and detail. One panel shows a group of humans (Figure 1). On the far left, a statue of Victory holding a helmet and a shield looms above two crouching figures. In the center, a gladiator with a trumpet faces a central, bearded figure who holds a long reed. Flanking this central figure to the right, a gladiator stands with his back to the viewer and holds a shield. Another figure stands next to him bearing a sword. A third figure, though mostly covered by the other two, holds up a feathered helmet. On the far right of the scene, another winged victory statue completes the frame.

Other panels from the amphitheater show the animals themselves: a lion chasing a white horse, a leopard in pursuit of a boar, a lion hunting a deer (Figures 2-4). Another panel actually depicts a bull and bear squaring off after a *bestiarius* has connected them with a chain (Figure 5). These scenes are separated by panels that feature herms with ribbons in their hair. Shields lean against these herms.

From a modern standpoint, the sheer violence of these beast hunts is staggering in its cruelty. However, for Romans, violence and violent spectacle functioned as a means to reaffirm and celebrate cultural beliefs. Toner writes that

²² Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome*, 38.

²³ Potter, *The Victor's Crown: A History of Ancient Sport from Homer to Byzantium*, 202.

the games “can be best understood if they are interpreted as acts which both encapsulated and succinctly summarized the important structural opposition of nature and culture which underlay the idea of what it meant to be civilized or human as expressed in terms of Roman thought.”²⁴ In other words, the visual spectacle of a triumph or *venatio* confirmed that violent engagement with opposing forces had given rise to Rome’s cultural dominance. Violence in the arena reflected the real violence that safeguarded the empire.

In the arena, animals also functioned as agents of execution. In these instances, condemned criminals could either be tied to stakes and left to be mauled and eaten or they could be lightly armed to feign battle before meeting their fate.²⁵ These executions took place at midday, between the *venationes* of the morning and gladiator games of the afternoon. Many Roman writers recount the intensely gory nature of these events; Seneca writes:

I happened to go to one of the lunchtime interludes, expecting there to be some light and witty entertainment, some respite for the purpose of relieving people’s eyes of the sight of human blood: far from it. In the morning men are thrown to the lions and the bears: but it is to the spectators that they are thrown in the lunch hour (Epist.7.3-4).

In fact, these events could be so bloody that many spectators, particularly upper class and female viewers, chose to skip the executions altogether and take a lunch break. Suetonius even comments on the emperor Claudius’ tendency to stay in the

²⁴ Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome*, 39.

²⁵ Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome*, 40.

arena during executions and points to this as evidence for his “cruel and sanguinary disposition.”²⁶

Often, the *damnatio ad bestias* took the form of a mythological reenactment, in which condemned criminals adopted the costume of a figure from myth and underwent an ordeal that obscured the boundary between performance and execution. Coleman has dubbed this binary genre “fatal charades.”²⁷ In the inaugural games of the Flavian Amphitheater, for example, Martial records that rather than charm the huge numbers of beasts in the arena, a slave dressed as Orpheus was instead mauled to death in a perverse staging of the myth. Martial writes:

Whatever Rhodope is said to have seen on the Orphic stage, Caesar, the amphitheater has displayed to you. Cliffs crept and a marvelous wood ran forwards such as was believed to be the grove of the Hesperides. Every kind of wild beast was there, mixed with the flock, and above the minstrel hovered many birds; but the minstrel fell, torn apart by an ungrateful bear. Only this one thing happened contrary to the story. (Mart. Lib. Spec. 21).²⁸

According to Coleman, the mythological component of the *damnatio ad bestias* provided a fixed and knowable orientation that everyone in the viewing audience to relate to and share.²⁹ From this reference point, deviations in the mythology itself were deemed not only permissible but also desirable, as deviation from the expected outcome only enhanced the dramatic effect of the spectacle. The

²⁶ Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 34.

²⁷ Kathleen M. Coleman, “Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 44–73.

²⁸ Kathleen M. Coleman translation.

²⁹ Coleman, “Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Reenactments,” 67.

unpredictable behavior of the animals responsible for ultimately carrying out the execution enhanced the attractive, unplanned element. By subverting the mythological narrative, the event achieves a second objective of humiliating the condemned and “[creating] a spectacle of suffering.”³⁰

As already elucidated, animals in the triumph and the arena functioned to astonish the viewing audience and to aggrandize the sponsor. However, despite the Romans’ marked penchant for bloodshed, there is a remarkable instance of general compassion for animals in literary accounts of *venationes* that commemorated the inauguration of Pompey’s Theater. Following a series of performances of Greek plays, Cicero writes:

The rest of the time was given to hunting, ten days of it – impressive – no man denies it – but what pleasure is there for a civilized man when either a weak man is mutilated by a very strong beast or a magnificent beast is transfixed by a spear? Indeed if such things must be seen, you have seen them; and we who watched saw nothing new.

The last day was a day of elephants, for whom there was great admiration among the common people but no pleasure in the hunt arose for the crowd. Instead there was a certain pity and this opinion, that there was a certain fellowship between these unfortunate beasts and the race of man.

(Ad. Fam. 7.1)

Cicero’s account demonstrates that despite the overt violence of *venationes*, the Romans had a capacity to feel sympathy for ill-fated animals in the games. Pompey’s

³⁰ Coleman, “Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Reenactments,” 69.

staged animal hunts, at least in Cicero's estimation, were a complete failure. If, as Potter suggests, games acted as a means for dialogue between sponsor and viewer, the sheer level of violence in Pompey's elephant hunt represents a serious miscalculation.³¹ Much of the interest inherent in the *venatio* lay in the pairing up of equal foes – a bull and bear fighting or a team of *venatores* battling a lion. It seems that in the elephant hunts at Pompey's inaugural games, the elephants appeared defenseless and therein lay the moral dilemma.

Cicero's account of these *ludi* is also quite telling for a different reason. Cicero's assessment that Pompey's games included "nothing new" suggests that in the late-Republican culture of one-upmanship, Pompey failed to achieve anything particularly noteworthy, despite the fact that he had clearly attempted to. As Potter writes, "there could be no more damning verdict."³²

Animals played a prominent role in the visual culture of Rome. In the triumphal procession, animals represented a powerful natural force that the Romans could tame, harness, and control. Displaying exotic wildlife in the triumph showcased the Romans' interest in all things foreign, yet this inclination was mitigated by the overt display of Roman domination. Exotic animals in triumphal processions also had royal associations because in many cases, their origins lay in the lavish hunting grounds of Eastern kings.

Given the context provided by the triumph and the games, a *paradeisos* scene placed prominently in the garden presented a wealth of favorable associations for

³¹ Potter, *The Victor's Crown: A History of Ancient Sport from Homer to Byzantium*, 205.

³² Potter, *The Victor's Crown: A History of Ancient Sport from Homer to Byzantium*, 205.

the homeowner. These included wealth, power, royalty, drama, entertainment, and a splash of danger for a glamorous touch. In the succeeding chapter, I will take an in-depth look at a number of examples of *paradeisos* paintings in order to explore these themes further and to demonstrate the extent to which the Romans' characterization of animals carried over when rendered in painted form.

Chapter 2: Towards a Definition of the *Paradeisos*

Scholars who have attempted to interpret painted *paradeisos* scenes in Pompeian gardens tend to fall into two camps. The first, and most common interpretation, unsurprisingly reads these scenes as direct references to the actual *paradeisos* of Hellenistic kings, which were copied in the extravagant homes of wealthy Romans beginning in the second century BCE. The second interpretation reads these scenes as reflections of hunting games in the Roman and Pompeian amphitheater.

Proponents of the first interpretation include Jashemski (1979), von Stackelberg (2009), Pappalardo and Mazzoleni (2004), and Zanker (1998). As evidence, these scholars cite the influence of Greek writers like Xenophon, who first introduced the concept of the Persian *paradeisos* to a western audience in the fifth century BCE. These elaborate royal gardens included ornamental trees and flowers arranged in an unnaturally ordered fashion and all manner of exotic animals. An important component of the eastern *paradeisos* was the hunting ground, where kings could leisurely pursue game in their massive, private zoological garden. Following military conquest in the East, Roman statesmen began constructing their own elaborate hunting grounds in luxury suburban villas. Pliny credits Fulvius Lupinus for introducing the luxury game park to the country estate and states that he was later imitated by men such as Lucullus and Hortensius.³³ For the modestly wealthy Pompeian, painted *paradeisos* scenes in the garden would have evoked the lavishness of the luxury villa, with all of its royal associations.

³³ Pliny, *Natural History*, 8.78

In *The Social Life of Painting* (2004), however, Leach refutes the assertion that *paradeisos* scenes reflect a desire on the part of the Pompeian homeowner to imitate the wealthiest members of Roman society. Instead, she argues for an interpretation with more immediate societal significance: namely *venationes*, or hunting games depicted in the amphitheater. As evidence, she cites the long temporal gap between the influx of Hellenistic culture into Rome and the emergence of *paradeisos* scenes in Pompeian gardens. Further, she believes the manner in which artists framed these animal scenes alludes to their theatrical nature and works against an interpretation of the illusionistic luxury garden. Leach goes on to point out that many of the known owners of homes with *paradeisos* scenes in the garden had political aspirations and that following the ban on *ludi* in Pompeii in 59, these painted scenes may have reflected the home owner's political platform.

Though these interpretations both have their merits, the scholarship on *paradeisos* scenes leaves something to be desired. In this chapter, I would like to treat these garden paintings as a phenomenon in their own right. The thematic and stylistic differences between the *paradeisos* and other garden painting types, such as sacral-idyllic landscapes and large-scale illusionistic gardens, necessitates such a discussion. In order to achieve this, I will present four case studies of Pompeian homes with *paradeisos* compositions in or near their garden spaces and contextualize these paintings within the houses as a whole. Based on these case studies, I will propose an updated, distinctly outlined definition of the factors that constitute a *paradeisos* composition.

The House of the Ceii (Reg I, Ins 6, 15)

Located south of the Via dell'Abbondanza, opposite the House of the Menander, the House of the Ceii gets its name from an inscription on the façade, which refers to Lucius Ceius Secundus, presumably the home's owner (Figure 6). In order to reach the home's garden space, or *viridarium* (Figure 7, plan), a visitor would have had to pass through the fauces to arrive at the atrium, decorated in Third Style with red and black grounds in the upper register and white ground in the upper register (Figure 8). The visitor would have then passed the *triclinium*, *tablinum*, and a series of cubicula via a narrow *andron*. The *andron*'s decorative system consists of a black central zone with still-life paintings (Figures 9-10).³⁴

Located on the north wall of the *viridarium*, the *paradeisos* scene from the House of the Ceii depicts a number of exotic animals hunting one another in various planes of a landscape. In the foreground of the composition, a female lion aggressively pursues a bull and appears to be on the cusp of seizing her prey. In the middle ground, two dogs attack a wild boar. On the upper right, a leopard lunges towards two rams and on the upper left a boar chases a pair of deer. The landscape in which these animals pursue one another appears to be quite dry and arid: a far cry from the coastal, fertile Bay of Naples. To the left of the two dogs and boar in the middle ground, a faint series of buildings dot the landscape. In the foreground, to the left of the lion and bull, a strange circular structure appears more clearly. The entire scene is framed by a large, curtain-like red border; two columnar stalks rise on

³⁴ Umberto Pappalardo and Donatella Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009), 208.

either side of the main *paradeisos* composition, meeting in the middle to "prop up" the window-like frame. Along the base of the hunting scene, painted vegetation appears against the red background. Next to this, on either side, two sphinx figures hold up a pair of water fountains, set against a yellow background. Small reliefs along this border depict a number of fantastical elements: priestesses holding votive plates, figures with human torsos whose lower halves are made of swirling vegetation, and griffins (Figure 11).

The west wall of the *viridarium*, to the left of the *paradeisos* scene, is painted with a Nilotic landscape, with many Egyptianizing elements including pygmies, crocodiles, and hippopotami. In this scene, a group of pygmies on a small island hold spears and shields while another pygmy climbs onto the back of a nearby hippopotamus; a crocodile lurks in the background. More pygmies appear in the upper right portion of the composition; here, they are depicted transferring amphorae on a ship whose prow is shaped like the head of a donkey. At the center of the composition, a sanctuary stands in the middle of an island, where an altar and gated structure are both discernable. In the central foreground, even more pygmy figures appear as travelers holding walking sticks (Figure 12).

Unfortunately, the fresco on the east wall of the *viridarium* is not as well preserved as the *paradeisos* and Nilotic scenes on the north and west walls. However, more Nilotic imagery is preserved on the lower portion of the east wall, where the Nile flows through the composition and reveals a number of banks, islets, and rocky details. In the upper left part of the composition there is a sacral-idyllic composition with human—rather than pygmy—protagonists. It is organized around

three buildings placed in a palm grove. Two women sit directly outside and an old woman with a walking stick strolls directly in front of them. The prow of a ship appears in the upper central zone. On the lower right portion of the composition, a lone figure with a walking stick appears. Above him, two seated female figures appear in front of a temple. A tall column topped with a sphinx appears outside of the temple. The border around these two scenes shares the same essential characteristics as the border around the *paradeisos* composition, although the base of the border on the east wall depicts a number of white birds gliding out of the vegetative motif (Figures 13-14).³⁵

Interestingly, the *viridarium* in the House of the Ceii is located at the rear of the house and is quite small relative to many Pompeian gardens that feature *paradeisos* scenes. Further, the *viridarium* is only accessible through a single door and a visitor would have had to walk through the *atrium* and *triclinium* before entering the *viridarium*, thus encountering the *paradeisos* fresco on its north wall before seeing either of the Nilotic scenes or the sacryl-idyllic scene.

Together, however, these three frescoes would have encouraged a sense of exoticism and wonder, particularly in this rather small, private, and secluded area. Moreover, the frescoes in the *viridarium* would not have been visible from any other area of the home so entering the garden space must have been an encapsulating experience. From a practical point of view, the decision to depict vast landscapes in

³⁵ Pappalardo, Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting*, 209-213; Mariette de Vos, *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana) 1: 407-482.

painted form may have functioned as a tool to give the illusion of greater space in the garden.³⁶

The House of M. Lucretius Fronto (Reg V, Ins 4, a, 11)

Located off of the Via di Nola in Pompeii's northeast sector, the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto boasts some of the most refined examples of late Third Style wall painting in Pompeii. In order to reach the garden space, a visitor would walk through the entrance into the atrium and the adjoining *tablinum*, adorned with mythological scenes (Figure 15). On the south wall of the *tablinum* is Dionysus in a bull-drawn chariot surrounded by an entourage (Figure 16); on the north wall Mars touching Venus' breast with a cupid figure in the center of composition (Figure 17). These paintings are flanked on either side by small paintings depicting villas; elaborate easels support these paintings, while the upper zone is filled with rich architectural ornament (Figure 18).³⁷ The imagery, subject matter, and artistic style of these scenes stand in sharp contrast to the Fourth style *paradeisos* composition of the garden. One could access the garden in the House of M. Lucretius Fronto directly from the atrium; the distinct change in styles, reminiscent of a temporal gap in decoration, perhaps also reflects a desire to create visual cues that distinguish the various zones of the home. The large peristyle garden of M. Lucretius Fronto reveals an elaborate *paradeisos* composition that covers the north and east walls of the space (Figure 19, plan).³⁸

³⁶ Wilhelmina F. Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii*, (Athens: Caratzas Brothers Publishers), 69.

³⁷ W. J. Th. Peters and Eric M. Moormann, *La casa di Marcus Lucretius Fronto a Pompei e le sue pitture*(Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers, 1993).

³⁸ Pappalardo, Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting*, 144.

On the east wall, the section of the *paradeisos* initially visible upon entry into the garden, there are two large framed panels. The one on the left shows a bear seemingly in pursuit of a fleeing bull (Figure 20). Both animals have exaggerated body language; their excessively curved backs indicate swift motion. Behind the bear, an exotic circular structure appears in the landscape, recalling the buildings in the *paradeisos* from the House of the Ceii. The next panel, to the right of this scene, is unfortunately faded to the point that the animals once depicted are no longer discernable. However, due to the stylistic congruity of the painting in the garden of the House of M. Lucretius Fronto, a *paradeisos* scene undoubtedly once occupied the space (Figure 21).

The north wall contains three panels with *paradeisos* compositions. The first panel, on the far left, depicts a lion resting while watching a deer drink from a rocky stream. In the foreground of this scene, a bear eats fallen fruit from a nearby tree (Figure 22). In the foreground of the central panel, a leopard confronts a running bull, which is also being chased by a lion (Figure 23). In the background of this panel, a deer and a gazelle run towards the right from an unknown foe to the left. The upper left side of the composition is badly faded, so it is possible that the pursuing animal is no longer visible or that the artist simply chose to leave the beast outside of the main composition so that a viewer's imagination could fill in the missing information. In the third panel, closest to the east wall, a large deer stands in the foreground at the left, overlooking the scene (Figure 24). To its right, a badly faded tiger attacks a bull, which bites aggressively at the tiger's feet. In the upper right corner, a lion runs forward, either with its sights set on the deer in the lower

left or eager to join the fight in the center of the composition. In the right foreground, a wild boar looks back at the action while lurking in a heap of thick plants, perhaps with the intention of concealing himself from the oncoming predators.³⁹

Part of the western wall of the garden also contains a *paradeisos* scene, in which a tiger pursues a deer (Figure 25); the south wall also contains a small depiction of a lion (Figure 26). The border that frames the entirety of the *paradeisos* in the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto is quite similar to the border in the House of the Ceii, though this one is far less ornate. Here, red frames detailed only with statues of nymphs separate the individual panels. The base of the composition contains depictions of exotic plants set against a black background. The upper part of the composition is embellished with a neatly arranged series of yellow, red, and green squares (Figure 27).⁴⁰

From the *triclinium* just south of the colonnade a Roman viewer would have had a clear view of the *paradeisos* scene on the north wall of the garden. Likewise, a viewer standing in front of the garden's north wall would have a strong view of the decoration along the south wall of the dining room. Though badly damaged, this room contained a decorative scheme in the Fourth Style similar to that in the winter *triclinium*. The unfortunate loss of detailed decoration in this space, however, does not negate the fact that Roman visitors would have once enjoyed the view of an illusionistic *paradeisos* as they dined in the *triclinium*.⁴¹

³⁹ Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii*, 71.

⁴⁰ Pappalardo, Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting*, 148.

⁴¹ Pappalardo, Mazzoleni, *The Splendor of Roman Wall Painting*, 144-149;

Experiencing the *paradeisos* scene in the garden of M. Lucretius Fronto must have been very distinct from the experience of the *paradeisos* in the House of the Ceii. First, the large, open garden lends itself to the entertainment of many people, a function that enhanced by the adjoining *triclinium*. Further, *paradeisos* scenes appear on each wall of the garden, rather than on a single wall surrounded by Nilotic scenes as in the House of the Ceii. This continuous decorative scheme, coupled with the colonnade at the south, would have given the impression of a large, open central peristyle.⁴² Further, the decorative border in the House of the Ceii possesses a greater amount of ornamentation and emits a greater sense of theatricality. Here, in contrast, the relatively minimal ornamentation compels the viewer to focus their attention on the main composition. The modesty of the border surrounding the composition indicates that for the artist or patron, the animals in *paradeisos* itself were the main attraction in the garden. Visible from the *triclinium* and set within the open, airy peristyle, the *paradeisos* in the House of M. Lucretius Fronto was clearly meant to function as a spectacular, dramatic display for guests.

The House of the Epigrams (Reg V, Ins 1, 18, 11, 12)⁴³

Another example of a *paradeisos* scene can be found in the peristyle garden in the House of the Epigrams, the entrance of which is located on the Via del Vesuvio. A visitor to this home could have easily accessed the large garden by walking straight through the entrance, atrium, and *tablinium* (Figure 28, plan). The decoration in these rooms is poorly preserved (Figure 29). Upon entry into the

⁴² John R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy: Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 158-163

⁴³ Mariette de Vos, "V 1, 18: Casa degli Epigrammi," in *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici* (Rome: Treccani, 1991), 3: 539-574.

peristyle, a visitor's gaze would immediately rest on the large *paradeisos* scene on the east wall.⁴⁴

This scene depicts a leopard attacking a bull, biting the animal's neck as he attempts to escape (For the entire composition, see Figure 30). The struggle between these two animals takes place in front of a body of water with a rocky shoreline. In the background, a white sheep stares towards the left. The landscape surrounding these animals is similar to the landscapes in the *paradeisos* scenes from the House of the Ceii and the House of M. Lucretius Fronto—rocky, dry, and arid.

The border framing this central scene is quite elaborate. Above the *paradeisos* scene flies a white bird. Above this, a small panel depicts a Triton figure facing a marine cow. On either side, two theatrical masks are set against blue backgrounds. Two semi-columns flank the *paradeisos*; these are painted yellow and decorated with a vegetal motif. Painted white birds sit amongst the leaves. The lower part of the columns are painted deep red and decorated with a slightly different vegetal design. Directly beneath the *paradeisos*, the vegetal motif with red background continues and a white Silenus figure relaxes amid the plants.

To the right of the *paradeisos* composition, another panel depicts a far more tranquil scene with a white fountain from which two peacocks drink. The body of the fountain is shaped like a swirling vine. On either side of and behind the fountain, a blue lattice fence separates the peristyle garden from the painted wilderness beyond. Wild bushes flank either side of a blank central panel; the reconstruction drawing by Preshun is blank so this central element must have no longer been

⁴⁴ de Vos, "V 1, 18: Casa degli Epigrammi," 3: 540.

extant by the time these drawings were done.⁴⁵ Above this, a lush tree emerges; birds nip at the tree's leaves, apparently trying to pick fruit. The entire scene is set against a yellow background.

Three exedrae on the north wall overlook the peristyle and the garden space. Unfortunately, the wall decoration in these spaces is not well preserved. In exedra n, slightly northwest of the peristyle, an illusionistic architectural design encloses the room; one of the walls includes a square panel depicting Venus with a number of attendants. The majority of the decoration in the room directly north of the peristyle, exedra o, is no longer extant although an excavation sketch by Preshun records a depiction of Venus with two winged attendants (one of which is clearly a Cupid figure, the other is female) from the east wall (Figure 31). Small details are all that survive from the room northeast of the peristyle garden, but these indicate that the overall decorative scheme in this space matched that of the other two rooms.⁴⁶

Despite the unfortunate loss of the decorative details in the exedrae that overlook the garden, what remains clear is the homeowner's desire to use the large peristyle space as a zone for conviviality and social gathering. In particular, the large *triclinium* p, directly outside the peristyle indicates such a function. Nevertheless, from such a viewpoint, the *paradeisos* scene on the east wall of the garden is not visible, calling its overall importance into question.

Nevertheless, the *paradeisos* scene from the House of the Epigrams would have been virtually unavoidable for a guest who wished to enter the peristyle in the first place. As previously mentioned, a visitor would have moved through the

⁴⁵ de Vos, "V 1, 18: Casa degli Epigrammi," 3: 547.

⁴⁶ de Vos, "V 1, 18: Casa degli Epigrammi," 3: 555-563.

atrium and *tablinium* to reach the garden and its nearby rooms. As the guest exited the *tablinium*, the *paradeisos* would have appeared before any other decoration; therefore, the *paradeisos* was placed in a highly prominent location, despite the fact that it does not retain visibility throughout much of the peristyle.

The House of the Centenary (Reg IX, Ins 8, 6)

Unlike the other houses, where the *paradeisos* scene comprises one or multiple walls of the garden space, the *paradeisos* from the House of the Centenary is found in the home's *nymphaeum*. In order to reach this space, one would enter through the *fauces* into a typical atrium. From there, one could walk around the extremely large peristyle, featuring an elaborate fountain. Across the peristyle, there is a large summer *triclinium* (32 on the plan, Figure 32); the *nymphaeum* (33) lies just behind this room. The home's entryway includes a black and white mosaic depicting fantastical marine creatures (Figure 33). Unfortunately, most of the decoration in the main atrium is no longer extant although it may be said that the frescoes were once painted on a red ground (Figure 34).⁴⁷ A visitor could stroll along either side of the peristyle in order to reach the *nymphaeum*. The walls surrounding the peristyle garden feature architectural motifs set against yellow and red backgrounds. Unfortunately, the decoration in the summer triclinium, which provides the most direct path to the *nymphaeum* from the peristyle, does not survive (Figure 35).⁴⁸

⁴⁷Max von Sydow, "IX, 8, 3.7: Casa del Centenario," in *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici* (Rome: Treccani, 1991), 9: 906-915.

⁴⁸ von Sydow, "IX, 8, 3.7: Casa del Centenario," 9: 993-995.

The *paradeisos* scene in the *nymphaeum* frames an elaborate fountain on the south wall. The east and west walls both feature more conventional garden painting types, with various vegetal motifs interspersed with painted images of humanoid fountains (Figure 36). Along a middle register, all three walls feature frescoes depicting realistic marine life. Along a lower register, all three walls feature a beige band decorated with sparse vegetation and a few random animals, such as lizards and birds, interspersed throughout (Figure 37).

The south wall's most striking feature is, of course, the massive fountain, which was painted to mimic the color and texture of rare marble.⁴⁹ When in use, water would descend down a series of steps made from actual marble into a large basin in the floor (Figure 38). To the left of the fountain, a rather fragmentary scene shows a cheetah attacking a horse; as the horse falls backwards, exposing its abdomen to the viewer, the cheetah clutches at the poor animal's body and bites into its neck (Figure 39). To the left of this scene, a wild boar looks on. Though half of the boar's torso is cut off, it seems as if he could be running towards the action based on the manner in which he extends his front legs. To the right of the fountain, an even more fragmentary scene depicts a lion attacking a large bull (Figure 40). The bull falls awkwardly to the ground with his limbs in disarray and his tongue protruding from his mouth as the lion latches onto his back, biting into the back of his neck. A subtle vegetal framework borders these violent scenes.

Unlike the other examples presented, the *paradeisos* painting from the House of the Centenary is not located on a wall in the garden space; instead, this particular

⁴⁹ Paul Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 189.

composition flanks an ornate fountain in the *nymphaeum*. What effect, if any, does this location have on the interpretation of this *paradeisos* scene? In the Roman period, *nymphaea* functioned primarily as recreational spaces and as the *nymphaeum* from the House of the Centenary connects so directly to the peristyle and summer *triclinium*, a recreational function seems quite likely.⁵⁰ This space, with its sumptuous water feature and decoration, must have offered guests an enjoyable respite during warm summer days without the need to sacrifice a pleasant view of the peristyle garden. Further, although the *paradeisos* composition is relatively distant from the garden itself, its location on the south wall of the *nymphaeum* puts the *paradeisos* on a direct axis with the garden zone of the house.

Despite the likely recreational function, however, the very idea of a *nymphaeum* encompasses some religious element—however small that element may have been in actual practice. For both Greeks and Romans, natural springs were worshipped in veneration of the nymphs; monuments constructed over these springs, *nymphaea*, originally functioned as religious zones. However, as time wore on, *nymphaea* were often incorporated into garden spaces as structures to cover artificial water sources. The religious function, therefore, was greatly diminished; however, because of the structure's known association with the nymphs, an element of sacred overtone must have persisted.⁵¹ Therefore, it is interesting to note that the *paradeisos* seems to have been an appropriate artistic choice for such an environment. That the owner of the House of the Centenary chose to flank the main

⁵⁰ Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*, 189.

⁵¹ A.R.A van Aken, "Some Aspects of *Nymphaea* in Pompeii, Herculaneum and Ostia," *Mnemosyne* 4 (1951): 273.

water feature of his home's *nymphaeum* with images of violent, exotic animals speaks to the broad appeal of this imagery as well as its suitability for a semi-religious zone.

The House of Orpheus (Reg VI, Ins 14, 20)

The previous examples have helped shed light on the definition of a true *paradeisos* painting. It may be equally useful, however, to examine in closer detail an example of what does *not* constitute a *paradeisos* scene, looking in particular at the mural in the peristyle garden of the House of Orpheus.

A visitor to the House of Orpheus would have entered the peristyle area in a straight line through the atrium and *tablinium*, in a manner quite similar to the pathway in the House of the Epigrams. The Orpheus painting in the garden is visible from the entryway, signifying its overall importance to the homeowner (Figure 41). The fresco depicts Orpheus seated on a boulder as he plays the lyre. He is surrounded by a number of animals including a deer, a boar, a leopard, a lion, and an eagle. More animals dot the grassy landscape behind Orpheus; these include (from right to left) a lioness, two bulls, two dogs, another boar, an additional lioness, and a lion. A river runs through the composition. As we know from the Orpheus myth, these animals all appear to be enthralled by his musical abilities.⁵² Beneath this composition, painted vines and bushes adorn a red border. Flanking Orpheus are two rectangular panels with a number of features typical for garden paintings including a number of bird species and uncultivated shrubs (Figure 42).⁵³

⁵² Apollodorus, *The Library* 1.3.2; Virgil, *Georgics* 4.453; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.

⁵³ F. Niccolini, "VI, 14, 20: Casa di Vesonium Primus o di Orfeo, in *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici* (Rome: Treccani, 1991), 5: 282.

Many scholars have classified this as a *paradeisos* scene, despite the fact that it contains few similarities to emblematic *paradeisos* scenes like those in the House of the Ceii and in the House of M. Lucretius Fronto.⁵⁴ In her discussion of the painting from the House of Orpheus, Jashemski calls to mind a passage in Varro in which the writer's friend Appius described the elaborate country villa of Quintus Hortensius. Varro writes,

"Why," said Appius, "I saw it carried out more in the Thracian fashion at Quintus Hortensius' place near Larentum when I was there. We were dining at a table spread out in the game preserve, to which he bade Orpheus to be called. When Orpheus appeared with his robe and harp, and was bidden to sing, he blew a horn; whereupon there poured around us such a crowd of stags, boars, and other animals that it seemed to me to be no less attractive a sight than when the hunts of the aediles take place in the Circus Maximus without the African beasts."⁵⁵

The presence of a crowd of animals on a large game preserve naturally calls to mind an image of the *paradeisos*. In this instance, Jashemski's assertion that the owner of the House of Orpheus wanted to channel the opulence of an elite villa through the medium of illusionistic painting is probably a valid one. However, the painting from the House of Orpheus does not constitute a *paradeisos*.

Archetypal *paradeisos* scenes feature an array of fighting animals set within arid landscapes. Further, true *paradeisos* scenes do not include any human figures

⁵⁴ Jashemski, *Gardens of Pompeii*, 73; Leach, *The Social Life of Painting in Ancient Rome and on the Bay of Naples*, 131.

⁵⁵ Varro, *De Re Rustica* 3.13.

within the composition itself, as the previously discussed examples in the House of the Ceii, the House of M. Lucretius Fronto, the House of the Centenary, and the House of the Epigrams clearly show. In the House of Orpheus, the animals are serene and inhabit a relatively lush landscape. Further, the presence of a mythological figure like Orpheus negates the categorization of this mural as a *paradeisos*; if the presence of animals is all that is required to define a painting as a *paradeisos* then these authors would have to expand their own typological discussions immensely to include depictions of Europa on the Bull and Diana with Acteon.

Conclusion

Visual evidence from The House of the Ceii, The House of M. Lucretius Fronto, The House of the Epigrams, and the House of the Centenary supports the notion that *paradeisos* paintings followed a consistent framework. Animals of widespread origin attacking one another and arid, exotic landscapes feature heavily in these case studies; the lack of human presence is also noteworthy. In particular, the representation of specific animals is also consistent; exotic animals like lions, cheetahs, tigers, antelopes appear quite often, as do animals like wild boars, deer, and bulls, which are more typical of an Italian landscape. Further, these scenes are almost always found in or within the view shed of the home's garden, a significant element that will be explored in depth in the succeeding chapter.

In terms of the animals represented, the mix of exotic and familiar animals is quite striking. As explicated in the first chapter, the Romans exhibited interest in the exotic in a number of ways as evidenced by lavish military triumphs and games in

the amphitheater. In each of these very visual media, exotic animals played a large and significant role, often functioning as representatives of their country of origin. At the same time, triumphs and *ludi* displayed exoticism in a Roman context and very much in the control of a Roman authority. The presence of animals common to the topography of Europe perhaps reflects a complicated desire to mitigate interest in the exotic with a strong sense of Roman authority and presence.

Additionally, the fact that these scenes always exist within an arid landscape—with and without the presence of manmade structures—points further towards a general cultural interest in exoticism and otherness on the part of the Romans and their Pompeian counterparts. One could argue that the otherness of the landscape detracts from a sense of Roman control that the examples previously discussed – triumph and *ludi* – in which foreign animals operate in an overtly Roman framework; however, when viewed in terms of their surrounding environment and neighboring decoration, *paradeisos* scenes function in exactly the same vein as other Roman displays of exotic wildlife. The strangeness of the environment on display in *paradeisos* paintings is lessened by the otherwise familiar context.

Finally, as elucidated in the example of the House of the Centenary, it seems that *paradeisos* compositions constituted appropriate imagery for religious or semi-religious zones, such as recreational *nymphaea*. Given the fact that *paradeisos* compositions function in a similar visual manner to the very visual spectacles of military triumphs and *ludi*, this added religious relevance is hardly surprising. As discussed in the previous chapter, the propagandistic dominance on display in triumph also contained an important element of religiosity. These two elements—

religion and violence—seem diametrically opposed. To a Roman, however, this contrast was less extreme; peace, victory, and war all had their own place in the religious climate.

The scholarly approach to the *paradeisos* thus far has assumed a correlation between these paintings and actual *paradeisoi*. In *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*, Zanker even writes that the *paradeisos* scenes from the House of the Centenary are “scenes of game parks,”⁵⁶ despite the fact that the visual evidence does little to support such an assertion. The common association between these paintings and large-scale hunting preserves of the elite seems completely overblown without solid visual proof. Leach makes a strong association between the presence of *paradeisos* scenes and homeowners with political ambitions; however, her assertion that *paradeisos* scenes must therefore reflect amphitheater games similarly lacks credence when faced with the visual material itself, which contains no overt references to *venationes*.

Of course, just because the visual material does not directly support an association between *paradeisos* paintings and actual *paradeisoi* or *venationes* does not mean that such an association did not exist. In *The Houses of Roman Italy*, Clarke alludes to the fact that, for the ancient viewer, the *paradeisos* likely evoked both the luxury hunting ground and the *venationes* of the amphitheater.⁵⁷ Based on the evidence, if there is a link between these topics, this two-pronged idea strikes me as the most likely by far, based on the fact that the visual material itself presents neither a *venatio* nor a game preserve in a straightforward way.

⁵⁶ Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*, 189.

⁵⁷ Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy: Ritual, Space, and Decoration*, 162-163.

The only thing that can be said with certainty about *paradeisos* compositions is that they represent fighting animals in a very distinct style, mixing foreign and domestic beasts in an arid, exotic landscape. These paintings exist at the intersection of domestic garden space and a larger societal relationship with exotic animals in elaborate displays; therefore, *paradeisos* paintings must be interpreted accordingly. The previous chapter explored the Roman relationship to foreign wildlife and how that relationship affected visual culture. The next chapter explores the context of the Roman garden and how the *paradeisos* both reflects and complicates our understanding of the domestic Roman garden.

Chapter 3: Roman Gardens: The *Paradeisos* in Context

Every *paradeisos* scene from Pompeii is situated directly within the garden space of the *domus*, with the notable exception of the *paradeisos* from the House of the Centenary, which is located in the *nymphaeum*. However, the *nymphaeum* connects directly with the garden and its elaborate fountain and adjoining hunting scenes run along a clear axis with the immense peristyle. Therefore, the garden context has very real bearing on the significance and interpretation of *paradeisos* paintings.

This chapter will examine the garden from a larger societal framework, first with an examination the history of gardening in Rome and then a description of the surprisingly complex nature of the Roman garden. From there, the chapter's focus turns towards placing the *paradeisos* within this collective, societal context and will attempt to bridge the seemingly vast disconnect between the lush garden and the violent imagery of its decorative paintings. Finally, a fuller understanding of the thematic overlaps between Roman gardens and the Romans' conception of animal life ultimately sheds a great deal of light on how the *paradeisos* may be interpreted.

The ubiquity of garden spaces in the cities of Rome and Pompeii attests to their popularity and cultural significance. In Pompeii, almost every building type—temples, shops, inns, baths, schools, theaters, and homes—includes a garden space of some sort. According to Jashemski, a garden or cultivated plot of some variety comprises roughly seventeen percent of the total excavated area of the city. This percentage is roughly equivalent to the area of land devoted to roads and public

squares.⁵⁸ The picture that emerges from Jashemski's two volumes is one in which small horticultural gardens flourished alongside the large, ornamental luxury gardens of Pompeii's elite.

The gardens in Pompeii that contain *paradeisos* scenes are accordingly quite varied themselves. In fact, all of the gardens in the case studies from the previous chapter are quite distinct from one another. The garden from the House of the Centenary is quite large and features a fully peripteral peristyle. The House of the Epigrams features a peristyle as well, although the *paradeisos* scene occupies a completely solid north wall. Further, the garden from the House of M. Lucretius Fronto sits along three solid walls, each featuring *paradeisos* compositions, as well as a colonnade along the south side. Finally, the tiny garden from the House of the Ceii, which features the prototypical *paradeisos* scene, adorns an open-air courtyard at the back of the home.⁵⁹

Other examples of homes with *paradeisos* scenes in the garden include the House of Ocatvius Quartio, the House of L. Caecilius Jucundus, and the House of Romulus and Remus. These three were not included in the previous chapter because the paintings are fragmentary or lost; however, their garden structures further attest to the variability of cultivated space in Pompeii. The House of Octavius Quartio features an extensive garden in the rear of the home, once complete with water features and elegant rows of statues.⁶⁰ The garden from the House of L. Caecilius Jucundus is a small, elegant space colonnaded on three sides. Finally, the

⁵⁸ Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii*, 24.

⁵⁹ For plans of these houses see Figures 7, 19, 28, 32.

⁶⁰ Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii*, 74

House of Romulus and Remus includes a contained, semi-peripteral peristyle garden space.

This immense variation in size, style, and placement within the home attest to the importance of cultivated space for the Pompeian homeowner; while it seems some patrons built homes with lavish garden space in mind, others fit small gardens wherever they were able. Despite these disparities, however, each of these gardens occupies a central role in the overall context of the home.

Whether consisting of a large central peristyle garden or a small garden tucked away at the back of the house, these spaces acted as “visual vectors” that would have guided visitors as they moved through the home and navigated public or private space.⁶¹ The activity of the garden—whether the sound of a splashing fountain, a chirping bird, or swaying *oscilla*—beckoned visitors outwards. Further, reception spaces with views of the garden encouraged visitors to enjoy the scenery despite the heat or rain. When used for dinner parties or other gatherings, these rooms also created the illusion of the garden as a theatrical space where guests could overlook the drama of the garden or the violence of a *paradeisos* composition from a comfortable distance.

According to Giesecke, “the ubiquity of gardens within extant urban dwellings of Roman Italy is the clear manifestation of a social ideal, a utopian impulse both forward and backward looking.”⁶² This ideal, which brought the

⁶¹ Annette L. Giesecke, *The Epic City: Urbanism, Utopia, and the Garden in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 103.

⁶² Giesecke, *The Epic City: Urbanism, Utopia, and the Garden in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 103.

natural world into the city,⁶³ attests to both the importance of agricultural space in the traditional Italic home and the evolution of this ideal into gardens built for spectacular display.

Roman Gardens: History and Cultural Significance

The history of gardening in Rome is quite complex, though it may be said that by the period of the Late Republic, the elite urban *hortus* developed out of two distinct traditions, the agricultural gardens of early Roman farmers and the luxury gardens, or *paradeisoi*, of Eastern monarchs. From its onset, the Roman economy depended largely on agriculture and in turn, agricultural production came to define traditional Roman value systems. Early Roman gardens existed for practical purposes—to nourish and sustain an individual family—and also took on religious, civic, and philosophical significance as time progressed.⁶⁴ In *Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society*, Von Stackelberg writes that all gardens, “share a basic set of requirements to fulfill certain, culturally variable, needs that may range from simple food production to spiritual epiphany.”⁶⁵

By the second century BCE, the small, traditional Roman garden gave way to the massive urban *horti* of elite statesmen. During this time period, staunch moralist Cato the Elder, perhaps aware of the garden’s impending shift away from agricultural necessity towards pretentious display, composed the *De Agri Cultura*, a treatise outlining proper techniques for husbandry. It is no coincidence that Scipio

⁶³ Martial’s *rus in urbe* (country in the city).

⁶⁴ Linda Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited 1998), 12.

⁶⁵ Katharine T. von Stackelberg, *Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2009), 7.

Africanus had established the first luxury *horti* in Rome shortly before Cato published this work.⁶⁶ The *De Agri Cultura* must have functioned in large part as a response to these *horti*, which Cato may have perceived as an explicit threat to the inherent virtue of the traditional Roman farmer and traditional Roman values.

Scipio developed his *horti* somewhere in the Campus Martius following his victory over Hannibal in the second Punic war and more generally during a time when Roman politicians began grappling with the potential advantages and drawbacks of outside, particularly Greek, influence. In one of the final speeches of his career, Cato lamented growing trends in villa decoration that privileged “Numidian marble” (*giallo antico*) over traditional, local building materials. As Welch points out, the content of this speech indicates that around this time, such decorative devices were both novel and for the unwaveringly old-fashioned Cato, deeply troubling.⁶⁷ Indeed, the propagation of the luxury *hortus* that began in Cato’s period reflected the general proliferation of Hellenistic culture and emerging inclinations towards the luxuries of the Greek world.⁶⁸

The pleasure gardens of the Hellenistic world, which had their origins in Alexander’s Persian conquests, undoubtedly inspired the creation of lavish *horti* in Rome itself. The actual Persian *paradeisos*, which inspired the name of the animal hunting scenes in the gardens of Pompeii, was comprised of two parts—an immense game reserve with roaming wild animals for private royal hunts and a large,

⁶⁶ Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II.4.1.

⁶⁷ ORF Cato no. 8, 185; Katherine E. Welch, “Art and Architecture in the Roman Republic” in *A Companion to the Roman Republic*, ed. Nathan Rosenstein and Robert Morstein-Marx (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing Inc, 2010), 514.

⁶⁸ J.J Pollitt, “The Impact of Greek Art on Rome,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 108 (1978): 155–74.

ornamental garden containing a wide variety of plant life. In Xenophon's description of the *paradeisos* of Cyrus, he specifically remarks on the precision of the garden's design and particularly commends the accuracy of the spacing between trees, plants, and flora.⁶⁹ Alexander's successors eagerly adopted the luxury and exactness of these garden spaces in their Eastern kingdoms as did victorious Roman generals in turn when military conquest brought them into contact with Greek luxury.⁷⁰

By the age of Pompey and Caesar, the lavish *horti* of the elite dotted the Roman landscape. Indeed, the majority of renowned statesmen from the Late Republican period owned a private *hortus* in one of the areas directly outside the *pomerium*. It seems the Pincian Hill and the area around the Campus Martius were particularly fashionable spots on which to position one's *horti*; Lucullus and Pompey both claimed gardens here and Sallust placed his own famed *horti* in the valley between the Pincian and Quirinal Hills.⁷¹ Caesar had *horti* on the Janiculum Hill, a less prominent location across the Tiber.⁷²

By the imperial period, many of these gardens were taken over by members of the imperial family. Early on in his reign, Augustus recognized the significance of public gardens and throughout the course of his life, opened his own private *horti*, the *horti pompeiana*, the gardens and groves surrounding his mausoleum and those surrounding the shrines of his grandsons Lucius and Gaius for the use of the Roman

⁶⁹ Xenophon, *Oeconomics* IV, 21.

⁷⁰ Farrar, *Ancient Roman Gardens*, 9.

⁷¹ Patrick Bowe, *Gardens of the Roman World* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004), 7; Kim Hartswick, *The Gardens of Sallust: A Changing Landscape* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), xii.

⁷² von Stackelberg, *Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society*, 73.

public. The *horti lucullani*, confiscated by Claudius from Asiaticus in 47, were the last of the private republican gardens to fall into the hands of the emperor.⁷³

Roman Influence on Pompeian Gardens

Briefly, I would like to draw attention to the influence of Rome on Pompeii, particularly in terms of societal beliefs and decoration. Prior to the Social War, Pompeii retained much of its Oscan autonomy despite deep ties to Rome. Wealthy Pompeians in this period owed much of their fortune to trade and accordingly came into contact with the luxuries of the Hellenistic East around the same time as their Roman contemporaries; however, the culturally autonomous Pompeians were also spared the ideological conflicts so characteristic of Roman attitudes towards the East, making their process of acculturation far more seamless.⁷⁴ Due to Pompeii's involvement in the Campanian uprising against Rome, however, the town was besieged by Sulla and subjugated to the will of Rome. Sulla rewarded his veterans with properties and displaced or proscribed many of the prominent Pompeians who had participated in the uprising.⁷⁵

The sudden transition from autonomous Italian town to Roman colony had significant effects on the societal makeup of Pompeii. Although Pompeii retained its Oscan legacy and the influence of prominent Oscan families ultimately was not lost over time, Roman values dominated in the early years of colonization.⁷⁶ The supremacy of Rome, coupled with the influx of luxury *villae* on the outskirts of

⁷³ von Stackelberg, *Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society*, 78.

⁷⁴ Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*, 32.

⁷⁵ Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*, 61.

⁷⁶ Henrik Mouritsen, *Elections, Magistrates, and Municipal Elite: Studies in Pompeian Epigraphy* Vol. 15 (Rome: Analecta Romana Supplement, 1988).

Pompeii, initiated a period in which abrupt societal change and the desire to imitate the wealthy converged, resulting in decoration that reflected culturally unified, conceptual ideals that privileged display, status, and luxury.⁷⁷ Complex Roman attitudes towards Hellenistic culture would have also seeped into the milieu.

In terms of garden decoration in particular, Wallace-Hadrill has demonstrated that the popularity of the urban *hortus* in Rome during the early imperial period was directly reflected in an upsurge in the construction of ornamental gardens in Pompeii around the same time.⁷⁸ Further, archaeological evidence from the gardens in Pompeii suggests that these plots functioned as loci of practical horticultural production as well as relaxation.⁷⁹ The House of Julia Felix, for example, featured an elegant ornamental garden in addition to a large fruit orchard. The dual capacity for recreational and productive use is a hallmark of the Roman *hortus* of the Late Republican and early imperial periods.⁸⁰ The typological similarities between Roman and Pompeian gardens suggest close interrelation and the influence of Roman trends.

Decorative trends in the Pompeian *hortus* also reflect the influence of the Roman luxury villa. Architectural details like peristyles and colonnades, illusionistic paintings that gave the impression of spatial extension, elaborate water features, and refined dining areas would have signaled great wealth and sophistication. As

⁷⁷ Zanker, *Pompeii: Public and Private Life*, 20.

⁷⁸ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Horti and Hellenization," in *Horti Romani* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1995), 7.

⁷⁹ Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii*.

⁸⁰ Wallace-Hadrill, "Horti and Hellenization," 9-10.

Clarke suggests, these types of features “were all ways of possessing a bit of the luxury villa.”⁸¹

The Garden and Kingship

As previously mentioned, the connection of the *hortus* to perceived Hellenistic *luxuria* perturbed the conservative Roman elite and the association between botany and monarchical rule unquestionably contributed to Cato’s anxiety over the advent of luxury *horti* in the second century BCE. Kings such as Cyrus the Younger of Persia, Attalus of Pergamon, and Mithridates of Pontus were known to have engaged in agricultural endeavors. Cyrus and Mithridates even recorded the results of their botanical experiments. As evidenced by the writings of Pliny, the Roman people were clearly aware of the link between kingship and the study of plants. Ironically, Cato’s *De Agri Cultura* functioned exactly like a kingly manifesto on cultivating land, despite his express intention to reinforce traditional, Republican values.

As previously mentioned, the Greek writer Xenophon praised the precision of Cyrus the Younger’s luxury gardens; further, in Xenophon’s account, Cyrus claims to have planted the trees of his *paradeisos* himself. The meticulousness of Cyrus’ garden, in Xenophon’s mind, correlated with his capacity to rule in an exacting, just manner. Pliny records that the early kings of Rome similarly sowed plants themselves; however, he treats this practice far less favorably. For example, both

⁸¹ Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.–A.D. 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration*, 25.

Livy and Pliny record that Tarquinius the Proud cut off the heads of his garden poppies in order to encourage his son to assassinate the leading men of Rome.⁸²

The Hellenistic kings Attalus and Mithridates famously planted herbs and studied their medicinal properties. Both Plutarch and the lesser-known historian Justin regarded Attalus' practice of botany with disdain. Justin, a Roman writer of the second century, writes,

With no regard for the administration of his kingdom, he began to cultivate gardens, planting various herbs and mixing together the poisonous with the harmless. He would then send assortments of all these, shot through with the sap of the poisonous ones, as special presents for his friends.⁸³

Clearly, Justin did not regard this behavior as fitting for a king. Of course, Attalus' overall reputation as a vain, despotic ruler does nothing to dispel this notion. The fact that Attalus tended to poisonous herbs rather than the welfare of his own kingdom resulted in the conflation of botanical enterprise with the worst aspects of despotism. This example, coupled with Tarquinius the Proud's symbolic decapitation of his own plants, cemented the association in the Roman mindset.

Like Attalus, Mithridates was a ruler notoriously obsessed with the medicinal power of plants, particularly in cases where plants provided antidotes to poison. Mithridates wrote extensively on the healing powers of certain plants and herbs and eventually concocted what was believed to be a universal antidote to all poisons.

⁸² Pliny, *Natural History* 19.169; Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.54.

⁸³ Justin 36.4.3; also recorded in Laurence Totelin, "Botanizing Rulers and Their Herbal Subjects: Plants and Political Power in Greek and Roman Literature," *Phoenix* 66, pg. 128-129.

Interestingly, however, the Roman treatment of Mithridates' botanical knowledge was not condemnatory as it had been towards Attalus. Instead, when Pompey defeated Mithridates in 63 BCE, he charged his freedman, Lenaeus, with translating Mithridates' works. In doing this, "Pompey appropriated for himself Mithridates' rhetoric of power, whereby political power and botanical knowledge are linked."⁸⁴

Further, Pompey famously displayed ebony trees in his third triumph. Interestingly, however, ebony is native to India and Africa and is not found in the Pontic regions that had been controlled by the vanquished Mithridates. However, ebony was used to make expensive furniture, had medicinal properties, and most importantly, had a history of associations with Hellenistic rulers.⁸⁵ In particular, ebony logs featured in the famed Dionysiac procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus; Totelin speculates that this procession inspired the lavish procession of Pompey's third triumph. The Ptolemaia, as the procession is more commonly known, featured ebony and all manner of exotic plant and animal life in order to emphasize Ptolemaic control over these natural forces. In a similar manner, the significance of ebony for Pompey likely lay in its connection to another venerable procession and its general exoticism rather than its specific geographical origins.⁸⁶ Like Ptolemy II, Pompey wished to emphasize his ultimate supersession over the exotic lands he had conquered.

⁸⁴ Totelin, "Botanizing Rulers and Their Herbal Subjects: Plants and Political Power in Greek and Roman Literature," 134.

⁸⁵ Totelin, "Botanizing Rulers and Their Herbal Subjects: Plants and Political Power in Greek and Roman Literature," 133.

⁸⁶ Totelin, "Botanizing Rulers and Their Herbal Subjects: Plants and Political Power in Greek and Roman Literature," 132; Ostenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession*, 187.

Moreover, Pliny also records that balsam trees were prominently displayed in the 71 CE triumph of Titus and Vespasian following the subjugation of Judea. According to the author, two royal plantations contained balsam exclusively; as Östenberg points out, the exact ownership of these gardens is the subject of much scholarly speculation.⁸⁷ However, what may be said with certainty is that the display of balsam in Titus and Vespasian's triumph functioned like the display of ebony in Pompey's. In both instances, victorious Romans used exotic and expensive plant life, already associated with kingship, to bolster the showmanship and spectacular quality of their triumphal processions; in this regard, their function is identical to that of exotic animal life.

Finally, in both instances, the display of exotic plants in triumph led directly to the display of exotic plant-life in public gardens. The garden of Titus and Vespasian's *Templum Pacis* was lined with balsam trees and while Pompey did not use ebony trees to adorn the portico of his theater complex, he did employ the "quintessentially Asian" plane tree.⁸⁸ Lucullus, Pompey's predecessor as commander of the Mithridatic campaign, also famously imported cherry trees to Rome from the Pontic region and while it is not known whether or not he planted these trees in his private *horti*, it seems a likely assumption. Pompey's decision to display the more luxurious ebony tree was likely an effort to trump this rival.

⁸⁷ Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession*, 187.

⁸⁸ Totelin, "Botanizing Rulers and Their Herbal Subjects: Plants and Political Power in Greek and Roman Literature," 134.

The overall picture that emerges from this assessment is one that ties the garden to some notion of royalty – whether in the sense of actual tending to plants or in the sense of the appropriation of plant life for the purposes of exotic display. The Roman attitude towards kingship was extremely complex and “deeply ambiguous.”⁸⁹ In the Republican period, as Rome came into increasing contact with Hellenistic rulers, powerful and charismatic Roman *imperatores* began to behave in ways that increasingly blurred the lines between appropriate behavior and behavior that suggested kinship too overtly. Pompey’s emulation of the Ptolemaia and his subsequent construction of Rome’s first theater complex filled conservative factions of the senate with a sense of impending dread. In the imperial period, the trend of increasingly ‘kingly’ display reached full force–yet the moralizing language against foreign luxury remained. Due to the connection between royalty and botany, the dichotomous attitudes towards kingship were reflected in Roman attitudes towards the cultivation of land.

Taken together, the treatment of both plants and animals in the Roman triumphal procession was almost identical. In both instances, the victorious Roman displayed a natural element, the properties of which were then harnessed for the benefit of the Roman state. Foreign animals represented sheer physical power in a visually interesting, exotic package. Plants like ebony and balsam, on the other hand, were valued and displayed for their luxurious qualities. These expensive materials presented the Roman people with a physical manifestation of the influx of wealth literally processing into the capital. Moreover, the display of plants and trees in

⁸⁹ Elizabeth Rawson, “Caesar’s Heritage: Hellenistic Kings and Their Roman Equals,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 65 (1975): 151

triumph functioned as way to symbolically substitute the very land that had been absorbed into the empire.

Additionally, in both cases, the Roman triumphator appears to have been disinterested in the actual connection between the conquered territories and the wildlife on display. For example, Pompey displayed both ebony and elephants in his third triumph over Mithridates, despite the fact that neither bears any particular association with the Pontic region. Instead, the significance of displaying these forms of wildlife lay in the explicit message of exoticism transmitted by them. The visual interest of the exotic further compounds its appeal.

All of this has bearing on the interpretation of the *paradeisos*, as these scenes combine imagery of exotic animals with the context of the garden zone. The *paradeisos*, in small scale, domestic form, reflects much larger societal concerns – namely, the harnessing the power of wildlife and displaying the exotic for self-advancement and notoriety. The patrons who chose to decorate their gardens in such a manner, perhaps armed with these alluring notions of royalty and exoticism, must have had a flair for the dramatic and a desire to assert their positions within Pompeian society. It is no coincidence that many of the owners of a *domus* with a *paradeisos* scene in the garden had political aspirations.⁹⁰

Otium and the Garden

The garden provided a perfect environment for the practice of *otium*, a rather vague Roman concept dealing with leisure and free time. Like the Roman conception of royal activity in the garden, the Roman attitude toward leisure

⁹⁰ Leach, *The Social Life of Painting in Ancient Rome and on the Bay of Naples*, 131.

vacillated greatly depending on the circumstances. For the elite moralist, leisure itself was not necessarily a vice; however, the way in which a person engaged in their free time mattered deeply. Leisure time spent gambling, drinking to excess, at the theater, or in otherwise idle pursuits induced laziness; these activities were met with contempt. On the other hand, when spent correctly, leisure time could actually be quite beneficial for the individual and for the state. Of his own relationship to *otium*, Cicero writes,

I took care that I should be seen personally every day. I lived in the public eye. I frequented the forum. Neither my door keeper nor sleep prevented anyone from having an audience with me. Not even when I had nothing to do did I do nothing. And what shall I say of my busy times? Absolute leisure was a thing I never knew. I have always thought that a sublime and noble sentiment which Marcus Cato expresses in the noble passage of his *Origins*, where he says that great and eminent men should attach as much importance to their hours of relaxations as to their hours of toil.⁹¹

In this passage, Cicero aligns himself with Cato by exalting the productive use of leisure time (a rather oxymoronic concept itself from a modern point of view). These valuable pursuits included the study of philosophy, meditation, and light physical exercise.

The garden, therefore, provided the ideal environment for the proper exercise of *otium*.⁹² Indeed, Aristotle's school included long, porticoed walkways for strolls along the garden. The lavish *horti lucullani* included a library so well stocked

⁹¹ Cicero, *Plancius* 66.

⁹² von Stackelberg, *The Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society*, 93.

and massive that it attracted many Greek philosophers to Rome. Pliny credits Epicurus with essentially inventing the use of the *hortus* for philosophical withdrawal. However, not all owners of a *hortus* followed the Epicurean ideals; the elite *hortus* became a symbol for “philosophical detachment from and superiority to the hubbub of the forum.”⁹³

Nevertheless, the “immersive experience of the garden” had the dual capacity to cater to the very sensory pleasures that moralists derided.⁹⁴ The layout of most Pompeian homes, for example, includes a garden surrounded by a series of rooms for the express purpose of enjoying food, wine, and restful sleep. These social activities, while sometimes associated with philosophical pursuit, traversed a dangerous line between erudite recreation and luxurious excess. During the imperial period, writers emphasized the garden as a locus for potentially degenerative behavior. Seneca writes,

It is a pleasure for you to make your carcass sluggish with ease, and to seek a repose akin to sleep, to lurk in deep shade and amuse the torpor of a languid mind with the most delicate thought, which you call tranquility, and in your garden lair you stuff bodies pallid with sloth with food and drink.⁹⁵

Further, in Tacitus’ account of the brief reign of Vitellius in the politically turbulent period following the death of Nero, the writer uses the emperor’s frequent jaunts in his gardens as evidence for his damagingly lethargic temperament. Tacitus writes,

⁹³ Wallace-Hadrill, “Horti and Hellenization,” 5

⁹⁴ von Stackelberg, *The Roman Garden: Space Sense, and Society*, 95.

⁹⁵ Seneca, Ben 4.13.1

He did not provide weapons, he made no attempt to rouse his troops by addressing them, nor did he make an appearance before the people. Instead, he kept himself hidden in the shades of his gardens, like those lazy animals that, as long as you give them plenty of food, lie still and never move.⁹⁶

Therefore, the garden could act as a locus for constructive philosophical pursuits yet the garden zone had an equal capacity to induce the wasteful luxury and sluggishness that could prove quite damaging for the state.

According to Toner, the Roman ruling elite had a vested interest in promoting the double-sided nature of *otium* because it reinforced Rome's deeply hierarchical social system. The elite deeply mistrusted the common people and in particular, were wary of their capacity to utilize free time in a productive manner; the fear lay in the potential to upset the stratified social order via a surplus of idle time. By moralizing the use of free time, the elite hoped to exercise a degree of control over the urban populace. Leisure and its proper exercise were absorbed into the territory of the aristocracy. As the excesses of imperial expansion and of autocratic rule flooded into Rome in the first century, the elite clamped down on their moralized view of *otium*. In the face of diminished political influence, leisure time was one of the only things that distinguished the aristocracy from the common people.⁹⁷

Liminality and the garden

Though the exact Roman attitude towards leisure remains somewhat ambiguous, the fact remains that the garden functioned as a locus for *otium* – in the

⁹⁶ Tacitus, *Historiae* 3.36.

⁹⁷ Toner, *Leisure and Ancient Rome*, 31-32.

best and worst sense. *Paradeisos* paintings, however, by their very subject matter and violent imagery, negate the garden's natural association with relaxation. How could one induce philosophical inquiry when confronted with the image of a tiger violently tearing at the throat of a bull, for example?⁹⁸ The garden certainly has very real and complex ties to notions of *otium*, yet the *paradeisos* calls this association into question and repurposes the garden as a zone where violent spectacle comesling with calm relaxation.

The union of these two seemingly binary forces actually fits in well with von Stackelberg's characterization of the garden as a permeable, liminal zone. For the Romans and their Pompeian counterparts, the garden provided the perfect environment in which to pursue worthwhile endeavors in one's free time; however, the leisure time spent in the garden could quickly deteriorate into wasteful idleness and excess. The space, therefore, was uniquely suited to traversing the delicate boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.⁹⁹ In other words, firm societal boundaries became permeable in the garden.

By the time Pompeian homeowners began adding *paradeisos* scenes to their homes, the garden had long been absorbed into the moralizing rhetoric surrounding the influx of foreign culture into the city. Therefore, the garden functioned as both a place for practical horticultural production and ostentatious display; philosophical meditation or luxuriating idleness. The *hortus* would have had a dual capacity to

⁹⁸ The House of M. Lucretius Fronto, see Figure 24.

⁹⁹ For information on liminality in more general terms see Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites De Passage," *The Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society* (1964): 4–20 and Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Abingdon: Psychology Press, 1960).

represent both practicality and profligacy, traditional Roman values openly comingling with philhellenism. This indefinite quality endowed the *hortus* with special meaning and an ability to function as an intermediary between dyads like public and private or aristocrat and common man.

Further, on a symbolic level, the garden's spatial relationship to the rest of the house implies liminality. A centrally located garden, by its very nature, traverses the boundary between indoor and outdoor space: the garden, while certainly a part of the house, is open to the air rather than enclosed by four solid walls. Also, with the notable exception of the House of the Ceii in this study, the majority of Pompeian gardens are centrally oriented and create uncovered passages between various aspects of the house. Movement within the garden, therefore, involved the negotiation between indoor and outdoor spaces whereby the garden becomes almost like a border zone between two definable rooms.

Humorous decorative elements like pygmies and Silenus figures also lend themselves to a characterization of the garden as liminal. The pygmies from the west wall of The House of the Ceii's small garden, for example, imbue the space with both a sense of humor and exoticism. Enclosed within the contained garden, the pygmies, alongside the paradeisos and sacral-idyllic landscapes, "perform for the amusement of the diners even while they symbolize the exotic life of luxury in Egypt."¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the Silenus figure that lies beneath the paradeisos in the House

¹⁰⁰ John R. Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 315* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 191.

of the Epigrams adds an element of humor to the garden and depending on an individual's point of view, may have encouraged or discouraged revelry.

Consequently, the garden would have actually been a uniquely well-positioned zone for the violent imagery of the *paradeisos*. Because of the garden's mysterious ability to break down boundaries, the violent imagery recalling the *venationes* of the arena did not necessarily detract from the garden's ability to incite quiet contemplation. The *paradeisos'* role within its garden context is one that highlights the characteristically intricate, indistinct nature of the space.

When looked at in terms of its garden context, the full nature of the *paradeisos* becomes clear. Exotic animals, set within foreign landscapes, recalled the majesty of triumphal processions and the violence of spectacles in the arena. That these animals had deep visual interest for the Roman people is well attested in literary records and this curiosity extended to the Pompeian population. Further, these animals had glamorous associations with foreign royalty and the alien civilizations brought under the dominion of Rome. Garden spaces also maintained this royal association. Moreover, the complex nature of Roman gardens allows for the dramatic and violent imagery of the *paradeisos* despite the garden's "ideal" use as a place for solemn, philosophical inquiry.

Of course, as previously indicated, the garden's use was far more varied than the elite moralist would have wished. Patrons used their gardens for parties, dinners, and political meetings with clients. In this much broader context, the *paradeisos* provided the homeowner with a visual prompt for all of the themes he wished to communicate; perhaps some of these themes were ones that he

particularly wished to communicate nonverbally. The overall impression created by the *paradeisos* is one of a small-scale spectacle. While a local Pompeian politician could never hope to achieve a triumph with the splendor of Titus and Vespasian's Judean victory, he could allude to the themes of royalty and exotic display inherent in these public shows. Further, as Leach has pointed out, these homeowners perhaps wished to emphasize their connections to *venationes* in the Pompeian amphitheater; the *paradeisos* would then take on the role of a billboard, advertising the spectacle and pleasure the homeowner had afforded the people.

The *paradeisos*, therefore, is a small-scale reflection of very large-scale, societal drives. The presence of animals naturally associates the *paradeisos* with lavish triumphal processions and *ludi* of the amphitheater. Further, the garden imbues the *paradeisos* with a complex nature and the idiosyncratic ability to infuse this sense of exotic spectacle and abject violence into the *hortus*.

Figures



Figure 1 – Pompeii, Amphitheater (II, 6), Parapet, drawing by Charles Robert Cockerell based on an excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, “Disegnatori,” *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 11: 106, fig. 43.



Figure 2 – Pompeii, Amphitheater (II, 6), Parapet, excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, "Disegnatori," *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 11: 107, fig. 47.

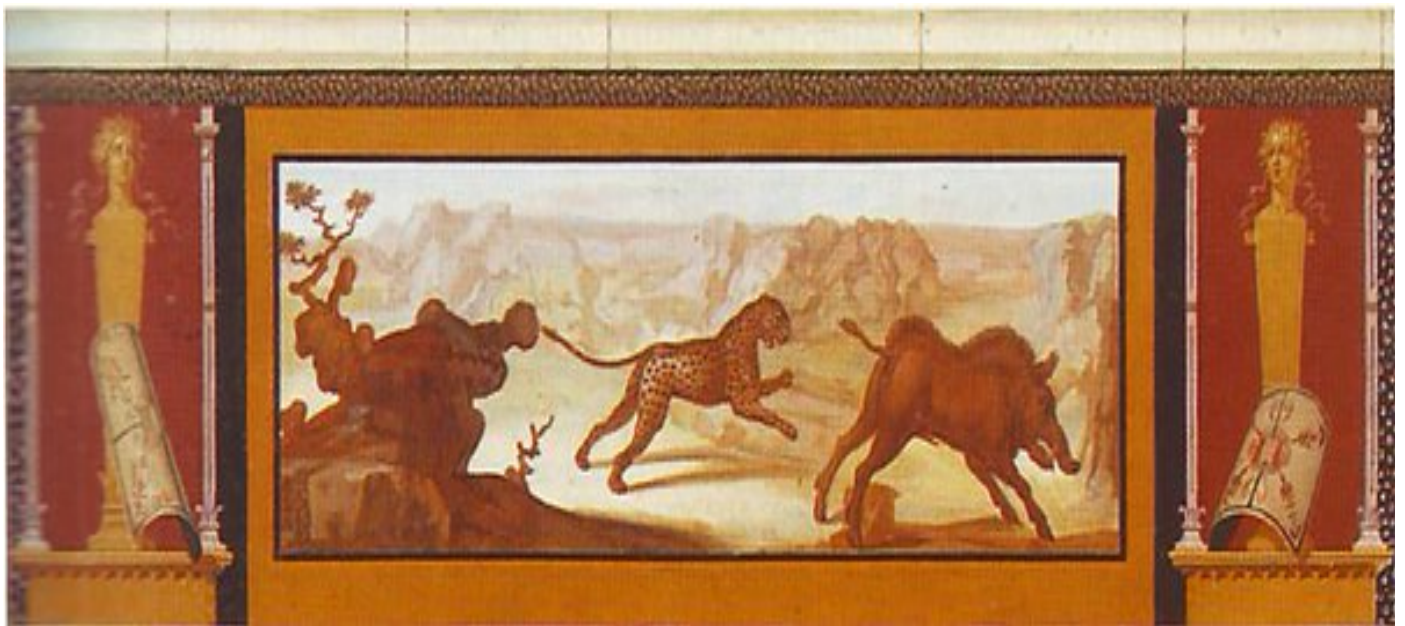


Figure 3 – Pompeii, Amphitheater (II, 6), Parapet, excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, "Disegnatori," *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 11: 111, fig. 54.



Figure 4 – Pompeii, Ampitheater (II, 6), Parapet, excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, "Disegnatori," *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 11: 110, fig. 52.



Figure 5 – Pompeii, Ampitheater (II, 6), Parapet, excavation drawing by Morelli. After von Sydow, “Disegnatori,” *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 11: 108, fig. 49.



Figure 6 – Pompeii, The House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Entrance a. Façade of the House of the Ceii. After *Pompeii in Pictures*
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R1/1%2006%2015%20p1.htm>)

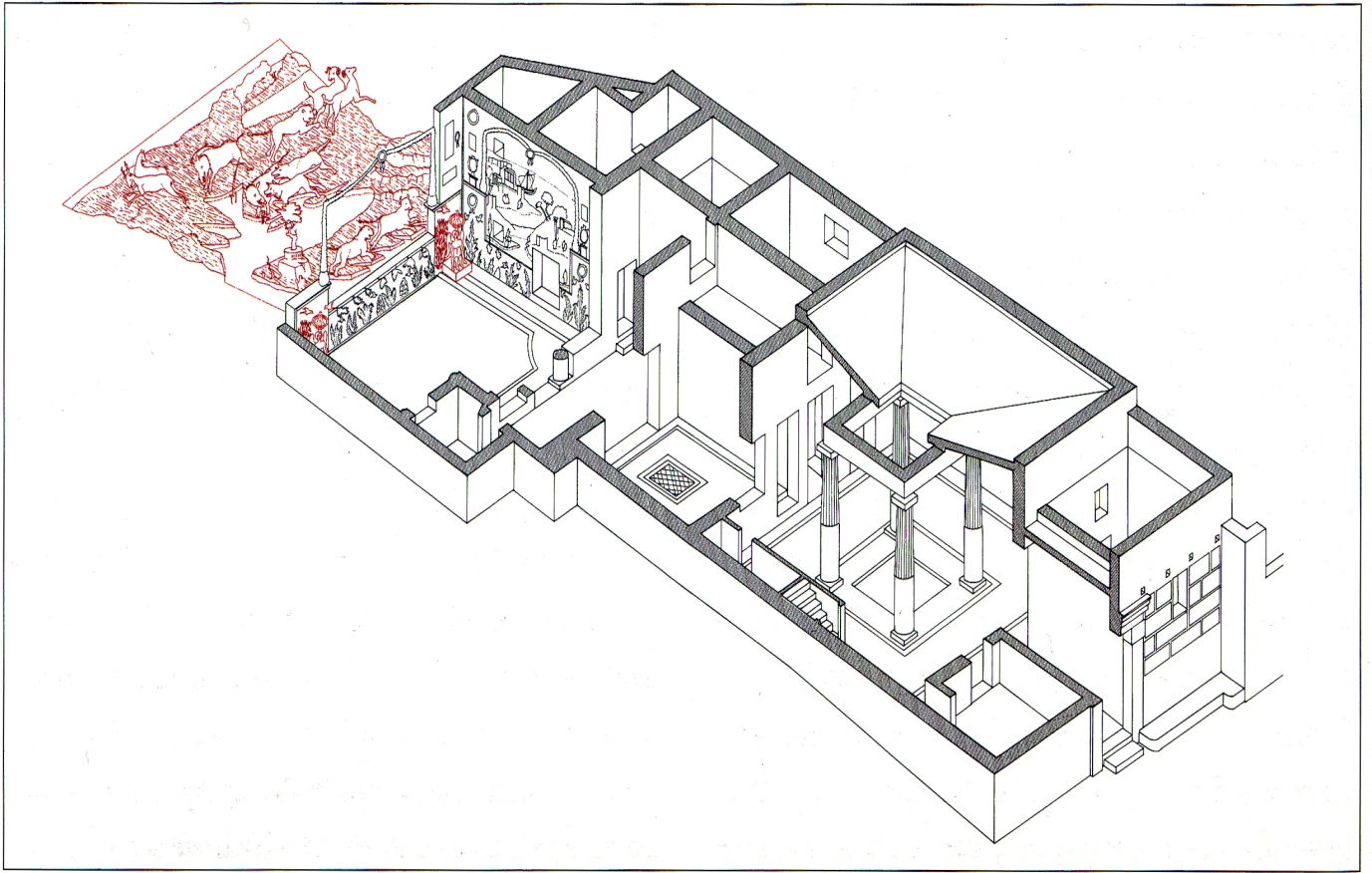


Figure 7 – Pompeii, House of the Ceii (I, 6,15), plan with illusionistic rendering of the *paradeisos* painting in the garden. After Pappalardo, *Splendor of Roman Wall Painting*, 208.

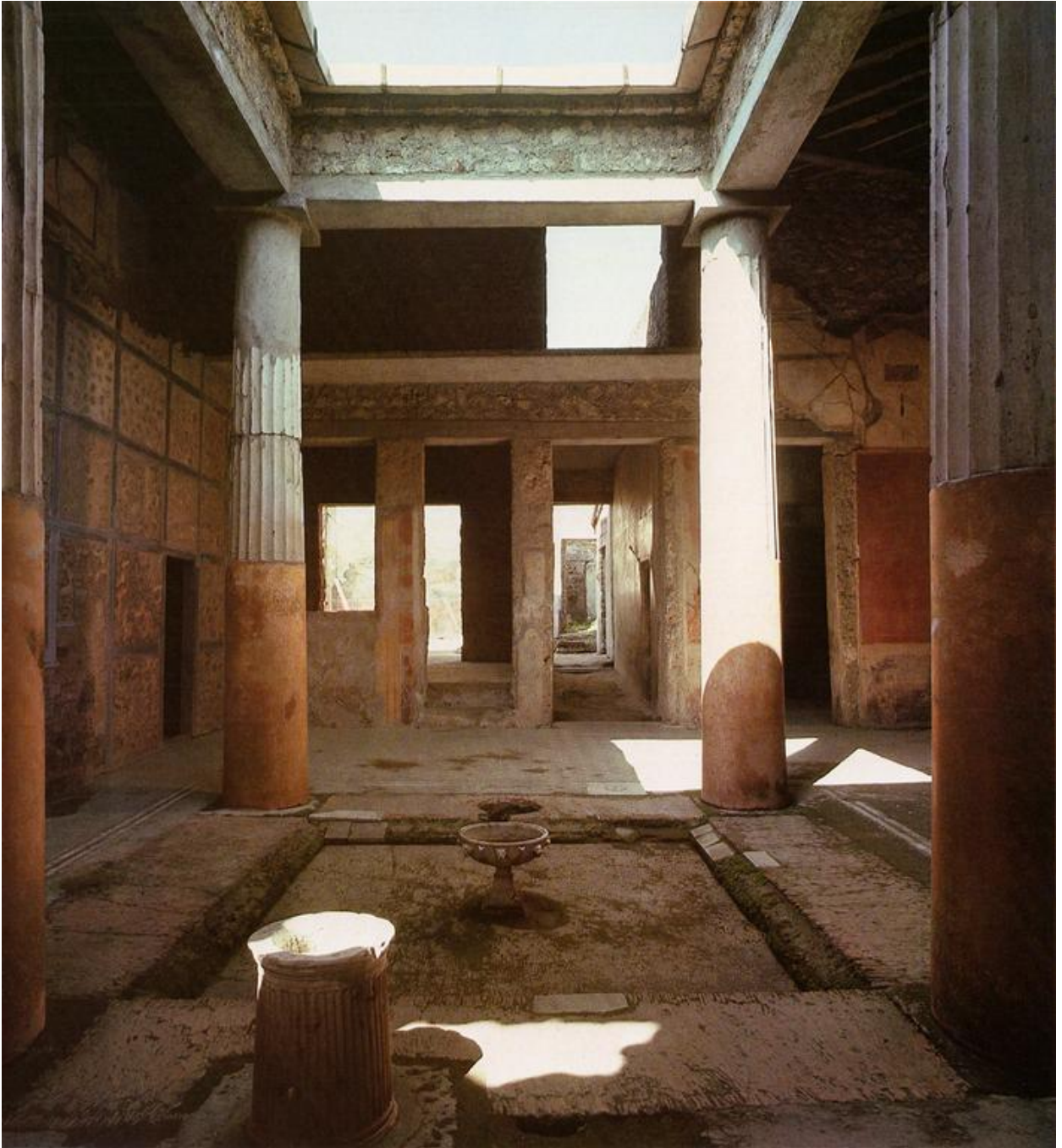


Figure 8 – Pompeii. House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Atrium b, southeast view. After Grant, *Eros in Pompeii*, 38.



Figure 9 – House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Andron k, southeast view. After *Pompeii in Pictures*
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R1/1%2006%2015%20p4.htm>)



Figure 10 – Pompeii, House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Andron k, west wall. Still-life painting depicting a drinking vessel. After *Pompeii in Pictures* (<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R1/1%2006%2015%20p4.htm>)



Figure 11 – Pompeii. House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Garden h, north wall. *Paradeisos* scene.
After Rabun Taylor Collection.



Figure 12 – Pompeii, The House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Garden h, west wall. Nilotic scene. After *Pompeii in Pictures*
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R1/1%2006%2015%20p5.htm>)



Figure 13 – Pompeii, House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Garden h, east wall. After *Pompeii in Pictures*

(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R1/1%2006%2015%20p5.htm>)



Figure 14 – Pompeii, The House of the Ceii (I, 6, 15). Garden h, east wall. After Mazzoleni and Pappalarado, *Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House*, 393.



Figure 15 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Atrium 2, north wall.
After *Pompeii in Pictures*,
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2004%20a%20house.htm>)

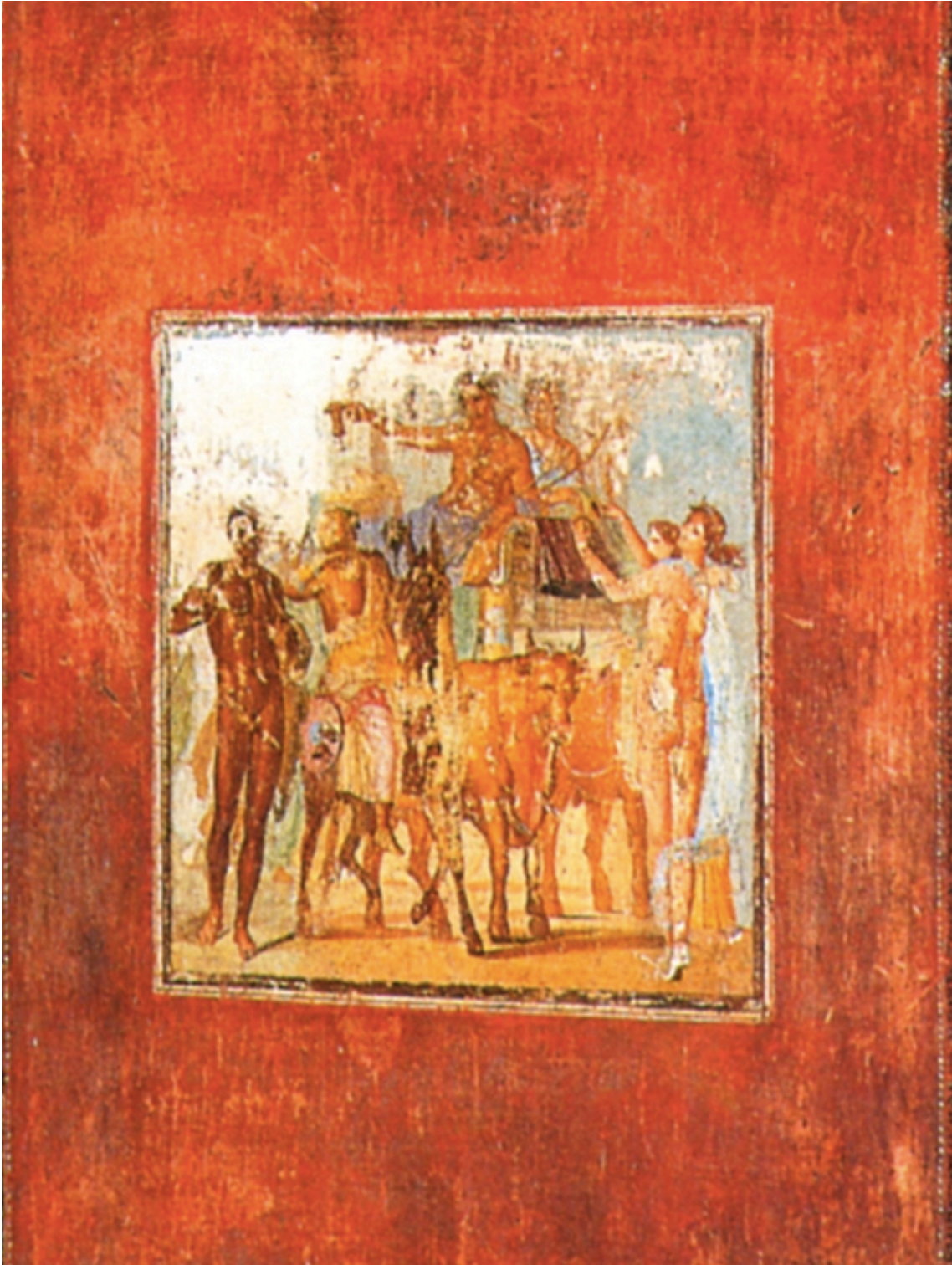


Figure 16 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Triclinium 4, east wall. Dionysus in a chariot with his entourage. After Rabun Taylor Collection.



Figure 17 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Triclinium 4, north wall.
Venus, Mars, and attendants. After Mazzoleni and Pappalardo, *Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House*, 287.



Figure 18 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Triclinium 4, east wall. Painted architectural ornament. After Rabun Taylor Collection.



Figure 19 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Plan. After de Vos, “V 4, a: Casa di M. Lucretius Fronto,” *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 3: 966, fig. 1.



Figure 20 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, east wall.
After *Pompeii in Pictures*
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2004%20a%20garden%20p2.htm>)



Figure 21 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, east wall.
After *Pompeii in Pictures*
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2004%20a%20garden%20p2.htm>)



Figure 22 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, north wall. After *Pompeii in Pictures* (<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2004%20a%20garden%20p2.htm>)



Figure 23 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto(V, 4, 11). Garden 10, north wall. After *Pompeii in Pictures* (<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2004%20a%20garden%20p2.htm>)



Figure 24 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, north wall. After *Pompeii in Pictures* (<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2004%20a%20garden%20p2.htm>)



Figure 25 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, west wall.
After Pompeii in Pictures
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2004%20a%20garden.htm>)



Figure 26 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, south wall. After *Pompeii in Pictures* (<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2004%20a%20garden%20p2.htm>)



Figure 27 – Pompeii, House of M. Lucretius Fronto (V, 4, 11). Garden 10, north and east walls. Painting detail. After Rabun Taylor Collection.

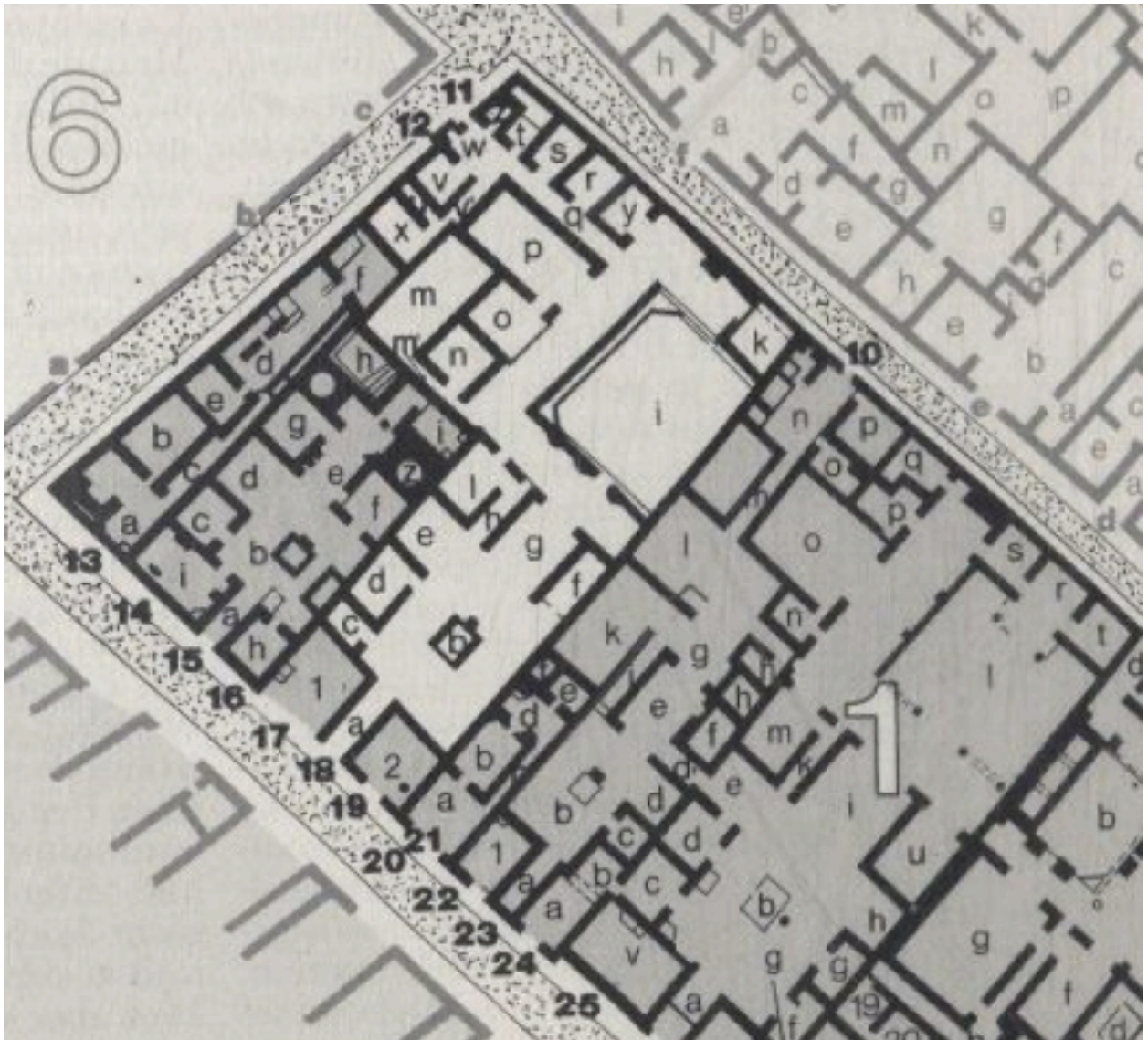


Figure 28 – Pompeii, House of the Epigrams (V, 1, 18). Plan. After Mariette de Vos, “V 1, 18: Casa degli Epigrammi,” *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 3: 539, fig. 1.



Figure 29 – Pompeii, House of the Epigrams (V, 1, 18. Entryway a, west view. After *Pompeii in Pictures* (<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2001%2018.htm>)



Figure 30 – Pompeii, House of the Epigrams (V, 1, 18). Garden i, east wall. Reconstruction drawing by Preshun. After *Pompeii in Pictures* (<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R5/5%2001%2018%20p5.htm>).



Figure 31 – Pompeii, House of the Epigrams (V, 1, 18). Exedra O, east wall.
Reconstruction drawing by Preshun. After Mariette de Vos, "V 1, 18: Casa degli
Epigrammi," *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 3: 558, fig. 39.



Figure 32 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Plan. After von Sydow, “IX 8, 3.7: Casa del Centenario,” *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 9: 903.

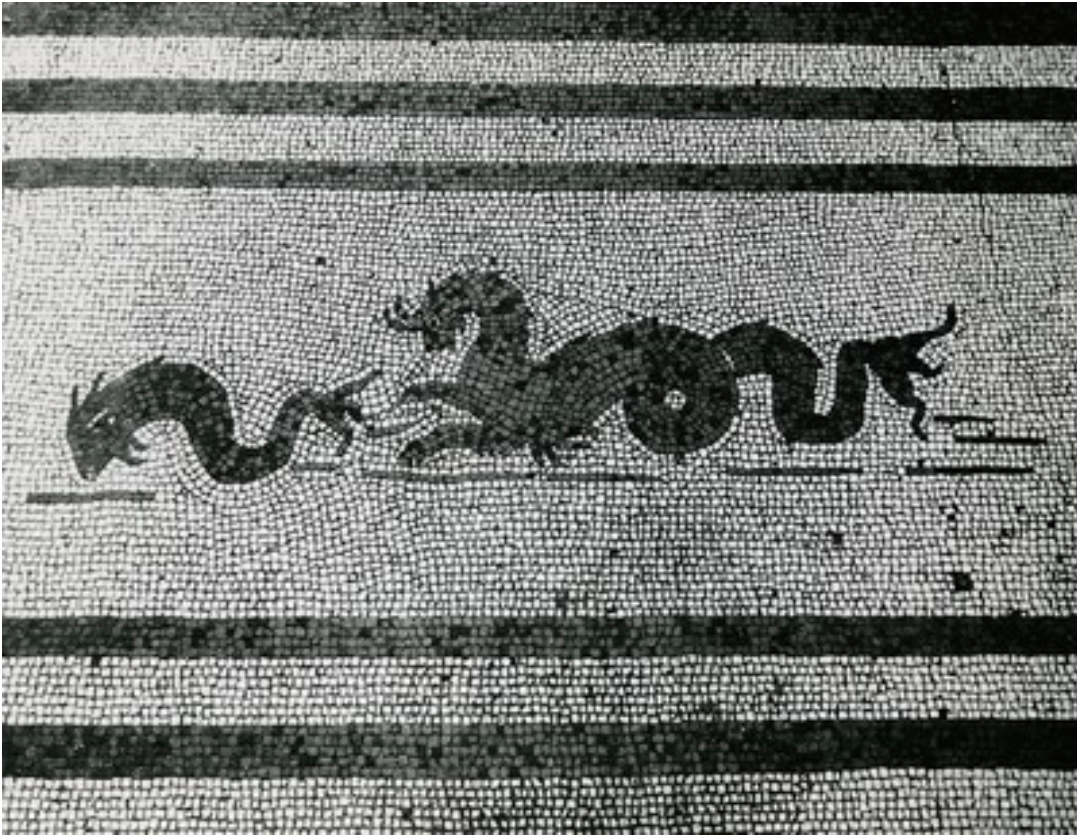


Figure 33 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Vestibule 1. Mosaic depicting fantastical marine life. After Clarke, *Black and White Figural Mosaics*, 89, fig. 10.



Figure 34 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Atrium 2, north wall. After *Pompeii in Pictures* (<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R9/9%2008%2006%20house%20part%202.htm>)



Figure 35 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Triclinium 32, south wall.
After Pompeii in Pictures
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R9/9%2008%2006%20house%20part%205.htm>)



Figure 36 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, east wall.
After Pompeii in Pictures
(<http://pompeiiinpictures.com/pompeiiinpictures/R9/9%2008%2006%20house%20part%205.htm>)



Figure 37 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, south wall. Detail of painting on the middle and lower registers. After Rabun Taylor Collection.



Figure 38 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, south wall. After Rabun Taylor Collection.



Figure 39 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, south wall. After Rabun Taylor Collection.



Figure 40 – Pompeii, House of the Centenary (IX, 8, 6). Nymphaeum 33, south wall. After Rabun Taylor Collection.



Figure 41 – Pompeii, House of Orpheus (VI, 14, 20). Atrium b, west wall. After John Clarke (private collection, DASE)



Figure 42 – Pompeii, House of Orpheus (VI, 14, 20). Peristyle O, west wall. Reconstruction drawing by Preshun. After Niccolini, “VI, 14, 20: Casa di Vesonius, Primus o di Orfeo,” *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, 5: 285, fig. 33b.

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