

FOUR

SIDEWALKS UNDER SIEGE

Houses, Owners, and Urban Context

WHEN HIS DE ARCHITECTURA TURNS TO DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE, Vitruvius first tackles the pragmatics of a house: its parts, their proportions, and their optimal orientation (6.3–4). Next, after generally categorizing the rooms of a house into public and private (the distinction lying in whether a visitor may enter uninvited), the architect concentrates on the particular rooms needed by different classes:

[T]hose who are of ordinary fortune do not need magnificent vestibules, tablina, and atria, because they perform their duties by making the rounds visiting others and are not visited by others.¹

Vitruvius then lists several occupations and their corresponding architectural needs. Those who resell country produce, for example, should have areas for livestock. Bankers need houses that are rather showy and safe, while advocates require elegant and spacious rooms. Ultimately, as though being an elite member of society were itself an occupation, the discussion returns to questions of status:

For the most prominent men, who ought to carry out their duties to their fellow citizens by holding offices and magistracies, vestibules should be constructed that are lofty and lordly, atria and peristyles that are very spacious, gardens and walkways that are rather broad and

¹ Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 6.5.1: . . . iis, qui communi sunt fortuna, non necessaria magna vestibula nec tablina neque atria, quod in aliis officia praestant ambiundo neque ab aliis ambiuntur.

appropriate for their dignity; moreover, there should be libraries and basilicas outfitted in a similar style to great public structures, because, in such men's houses, public councils and private lawsuits and hearings are quite often carried out.²

Vitruvius ostensibly writes about how to fulfill the house owner's needs, but this passage has much to suggest about how domestic architecture was viewed as a status symbol. Vitruvius is careful to draw an explicit connection between the public role of his *nobiles* – they hold positions in the political sphere – and their needs for architectural features reflecting their place in public life. Indeed, their houses are anything but refuges from the public sphere; if we believe Vitruvius (and there is little reason in this case not to), houses of the Roman elite could host civic events and were thus stages on which the master could perform his public roles. Others who do not have this status to uphold, to Vitruvius's mind, are defined by what they *lack* from the *nobiles'* position and, correspondingly, what rooms their lifestyles do not require. Throughout these passages, the fundamental assumption underlying Vitruvius's argument is that your house should match you and your status.³

This much has long been appreciated, and, over the course of the past two decades, our understanding of Roman houses has grown increasingly refined as new datasets and novel questions have been brought to bear on domestic dynamics. We now understand much more about how houses were repositories of (and agents in creating) family lineage, memories, and even identity. Examinations of houses' architecture and art (especially wall painting) have shed light on how these features shaped the experience of visitors and house dwellers alike. Facile assumptions about status and decoration – such as freedmen's supposedly poor taste – have been undercut, while domestic environments have proved fertile indices for the diffusion of taste across the economic spectrum. Finally, studies of artifacts and their distribution within houses have tempered with hard data the idealized view presented by Vitruvius and other authors.⁴

Yet, given how much Vitruvius emphasizes domestic architecture's importance for public image, something is odd in his account and in how the house

² Vitr. 6.5.2: ... *nobilibus vero, qui honores magistratusque gerundo praestare debent officia civibus, faciunda sunt vestibula regalia alta, atria et peristylia amplissima, silvae ambulationesque laxiores ad decorem maiestatis perfectae; praeterea bybliotheas, basilicas non dissimili modo quam publicorum operum magnificentia comparatas, quod in domibus eorum saepius et publica consilia et privata iudicia arbitriaque conficiuntur.*

³ At 6.5.3, the architect rounds out his discussion by addressing how to avoid unhappy clients. It is possible to escape from censure, he writes, if buildings are planned with a view to owners of different types – (*personae*) *singulorum generum* – a distinct reference to status. E.g., Livy 4.28; Ov. *Tr.* 4.4.2; Hor. *Epod.* 4.6 (setting *genus* in opposition to recently accumulated wealth).

⁴ Among recent scholarship on Roman houses, especially in Campania: Thébert 1987; Watts 1987; Gazda 1991; Clarke 1991; Wallace-Hadrill 1994; Berry 1997; Laurence and Wallace-Hadrill 1997; Dickmann 1999; Pirson 1999; Grahame 2000; Hales 2003; Allison 2004; Leach 2004; Hackworth Petersen 2006; Anguissola 2010; Joshel and Hackworth Petersen 2014.

has been studied. When Vitruvius gets specific about house forms, he launches his project by categorizing various types of forecourts – what we normally call *atria* and he termed *cava aedium*. He thus forgoes the façade, which was the house’s most public face, the first feature that a visitor would have encountered and the only aspect that many others would have been able to see. Although scholars, by considering how a domestic space was experienced, have counter-balanced Vitruvius’s builder-centric viewpoint, their locus of study has largely mirrored the architect’s focus on what was *inside* a house. We have been missing how the owner–house connection extended beyond interior rooms and their type, number, size, and decoration. This chapter shifts the inquiry outward and examines this bond from an exterior perspective, where the house, embedded in the urban fabric, met the street. To underscore the manifold discourse and pressures across the house–street boundary, I alternate in the following pages between the outlooks and actions of house dwellers and of streetgoers.

HOUSE EXTERIORS: DISPLAY AND ASSESSMENT

Ample evidence activates the area around a house’s doorway as a space where the achievements and characteristics of those who lived inside could be trumpeted by householders and questioned by passersby. In Rome, those who won enemy booty through military valor stuck it up outside their houses for all to see. After Fulvius Nobilior’s triumph over Ambracia in 187 BCE, for example, Livy reports what his colleagues were awaiting: “he will carry before his chariot and affix to his doorposts the captured Ambracia [a statue personifying the city], the statues which they accuse him of taking away, and other spoils of that city.”⁵ The practice was not restricted to triumphant generals or magistrates, for Livy reports that during the Second Punic War, when a depleted Senate needed speedy restocking, among those chosen were men who had spoils on their houses but had not held office.⁶ Polybius pushes the practice further down the social ladder to everyday soldiers who accomplished tremendous deeds. Explaining Roman military success to a Greek audience, he enumerates various rewards before ending domestically:

And in their houses they hang up the spoils they won in the most conspicuous places, looking upon them as tokens and evidences of their valor. Considering all this attention given to the matter of punishments and rewards in the army and the importance attached to both, no wonder

⁵ Livy 38.43.9–10: *Ambraciam captam signaque quae ablata criminantur, et cetera spolia eius Urbis ante curam laturus et fixurus in postibus suis*. Fulvius’s supporters would later arm themselves with those same weapons: Plut. *C. Gracch.* 15.1. In general on the practice, see Rawson 1990.

⁶ Livy 23.23.6.

that the wars in which the Romans engage end so successfully and brilliantly.⁷

While they motivated current soldiers, such displays also had power for future audiences, according to Pliny. Amid a discussion of how family lineages were visible in funerals, in portraits kept in houses, and in family archives and inscriptions, he writes that other presentations of those “mighty spirits” were present “outside the houses and round the doorways” in the form of spoils taken from enemies. He adds that:

even the buyer was not allowed to unfasten (them), and the houses perpetually celebrated a triumph even though their masters had changed. This acted as a powerful stimulus, since every day the walls themselves upbraid an unwarlike owner with encroaching on the triumph of another.⁸

Indeed, spoils survived into the Empire, according to Suetonius, who records that the great fire of 64 CE consumed “the houses of leaders of old . . . still adorned with enemy spoils.” He lumps together these sights with long-standing temples and “whatever else had survived from antiquity that must be seen (*visendum*) and was memorable,” which recalls other authors’ emphasis on these emblems’ impact on an onlooker.⁹ Augustus’s *Res Gestae* suggests the importance of such displays by reserving discussion of the *princeps*’ doorway decorations for the inscription’s final climax.¹⁰

Beyond the martial realm, other adornments on or around a house’s doorway marked out moments in a family’s life cycle: flowers or laurels for a baby’s birth,¹¹ greenery for a wedding,¹² and a cypress branch when a corpse was lying in state within a house.¹³ Appearances by individuals attached to a household, on occasions grand and quotidian, also visually linked household and street. Our sources routinely mention the sight of well-wishers or clients grouped

⁷ Polyb. 6.39.10–11: ἔν τε ταῖς οἰκίαις κατὰ τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους τόπους τιθέασι τὰ σκῦλα, σημεῖα ποιούμενοι καὶ μαρτύρια τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀρετῆς. τοιαύτης δ’ ἐπιμελείας οὐσης καὶ σπουδῆς περὶ τε τὰς τιμὰς καὶ τιμωρίας τὰς ἐν τοῖς στρατοπέδοις, εἰκότως καὶ τὰ τέλη τῶν πολεμικῶν πράξεων ἐπιτυχῆ καὶ λαμπρὰ γίνεται δι’ αὐτῶν. This right may have been earned by killing an enemy in one-on-one fighting, thus earning what Aulus Gellius (2.11.3) calls the *spolia provocatoria*. See also Livy 10.7.9 for a speech during the Struggle of the Orders that also implies this practice on the part of nonmagistrates.

⁸ Pliny *NH* 35.7: *aliae foris et circa limina animorum ingentium imagines erant adfixis hostium spoliis, quae nec emptori refigere liceret, triumphabantque etiam dominis mutatis aeternae domus. erat haec stimulatio ingens, exprobrantibus tectis cotidie inbellem dominum intrare in alienum triumphum.*

⁹ Suet. *Ner.* 38.2: . . . *domus priscorum ducum arserunt hostilibus adhuc spoliis adornatae . . . quidquid visendum et memorabile ex antiquitate duraverat.* Cf. Tib. 1.1.53–58; Prop. 3.9.26.

¹⁰ *RG* 34–35. Coins also depicted the doorway: Zanker 1988, 92–94.

¹¹ Stat. *Silv.* 4.8.37–41; Juv. 6.77–81. Cf. Macrobian *Sat.* 1.16.36.

¹² Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.231; Catull. 64.293; Juv. 6.227–228; Lucr. 2.354; Ov. *Met.* 4.760.

¹³ Serv. *A.* 2.714, 3.64, 4.507. Decoration could also mark gratitude and joy for someone’s safety: Tac. *Hist.* 3.84.

around the doorway as part of the *salutatio*. Their number offered an index of the householder's support. By contrast, Cicero insinuates that Clodius's nearly empty threshold signaled the scoundrel's loss of favor. And the link between inside and outside was clearer still when someone spotted the master of the house exiting his structure to lead his supporters to the forum.¹⁴ These actions all speak to the expectation of an external audience whose attention was focused on the doorway.

Strong attitudes toward housing – that a house reflected one's social standing, a splendid one particularly positively – fueled construction of progressively larger and more elegant houses despite an ethos of modesty.¹⁵ As the zeal for magnificence spread down the social hierarchy, one tactic of elites involved simply outbuilding their imitators.¹⁶ Lucius Lucullus, for instance, whose country estate was sandwiched between the luxurious villas of an *eques* and a freedman, thought that he should have the same privilege as his neighbors and defended the extravagance of his own mansion on those very grounds.¹⁷ Yet his example raises the question, in the face of escalating claims, of who deserved what. Cicero, as a new arrival on the political scene, dwelled at length on such outward signs of standing. In the *De Officiis*, he broadly echoes Vitruvius's sentiments about the correspondence between a man's house and standing yet also hints at the skeptical attitude Romans might bring to the assessment: "a man's dignity ought to be enhanced by the house he lives in, but not entirely owed to it; the owner should bring honor to his house, not the house to its owner."¹⁸ Cicero's *sententia* recognizes architectural posturing and also implies that one could overdo it: that to have a house too grand revealed a man too pretentious and something of an imposter. Appropriateness was not, as in Vitruvius, a matter of accommodating an owner's needs but was grounded in the *realia* of Roman social practice. In other words, the critical eye that Romans brought to other street presentations, as I discussed in the previous chapter, was equally active in questioning architectural claims.

Certain circumstances, such as when a property changed hands but not appearances, especially precipitated scrutiny of occupants and their status.

¹⁴ Visible supporters: Aul. Gell. 16.5.8–9; Sen. *Marc.* 10.1; Cic. *De or.* 1.200; Sen. *Ep.* 84.11–12. Cf. Cic. *Att.* 1.18.1; *Brut.* 2.4.1; Sen. *Ep.* 19.11, 22.9. Clodius' threshold: Cic. *Att.* 4.3.5. Processing to forum: O'Sullivan 2011, 54–59.

¹⁵ Pliny (*NH* 36.110) narrates the story, perhaps apocryphal but even if so quite telling, of Lepidus's house. In the year of Lepidus's consulship, 78 BCE, his was the most splendid house in Rome. Thirty-five years later, though, it was said not to be among the first one hundred.

¹⁶ Tacitus (*Ann.* 3.55.2) believed this strategy had negative effects. He conceded that such *studium magnificentiae* increased the public image and clientele of aristocratic families, but also contended that it led to their downfall.

¹⁷ To judge from our sources, many recriminated Lucullus and other *principes* for feeding this pattern of competitive construction: Cic. *Leg.* 3.30; *Off.* 140; Varro *Rust.* 1.13.7.

¹⁸ Cic. *Off.* 1.139: *Ornanda enim est dignitas domo, non ex domo tota quaerenda, nec domo dominus, sed domino domus honestanda est . . .* Cf. Cic. *Att.* 18.1.

Cicero gains rhetorical leverage in the *Philippics* from such a situation, since Antony confiscated and occupied Pompey's former home.¹⁹ Moral points are scored in diatribes about Antony's squandering of Pompey's assets, but more interesting is how Cicero depicts the general public's view of the house: "For some time no man could bear to look at the house, none could pass it without crying."²⁰ Partaking in a diachronic inventory of owners was quite widespread, if an anonymous snippet of poetry that Cicero quotes elsewhere is any indication:

For it is unpleasant, when passers-by exclaim:
 "O good old house, goodness how different is
 your old owner from your current one!"
 And these days that can be said about many houses!²¹

When Cicero's own house was destroyed at Clodius's hands, he appealed to similar logic. Prior to its demolition, Cicero had confessed to his brother that he bought the house to achieve a degree of public standing.²² Now, he asks, how can good men gaze at its empty site without continuous crying?²³ In the case of Pompey's former house, however, Cicero pushes this questioning still further by addressing Antony directly: "Do you, when you spot those ships' beaks and spoils in the vestibule, think you are entering your own house?"²⁴ The implication is that Antony himself would admit that he does not.

It is especially noteworthy that Cicero draws Antony's attention to specific features of the house, almost all of which would be visible from the exterior: among them the threshold and the ship prows displayed in the vestibule.²⁵ Such positioning, on the one hand, underlines the degree to which Pompey, like other victors in war, shaped his public image through emblems visible from the street.²⁶ On the other hand, a form of *praeterire* ("to go past") is employed both

¹⁹ Pompey's house on the Carinae: *LTUR* 2.159–160 ("Domus Pompeiorum," Jolivet).

²⁰ Cic. *Phil.* 2.68: *quam domum aliquamdiu nemo adspicere poterat, nemo sine lacrimis praeterire*. For a parallel situation, see Cic. *Off.* 1.138, where he contrasts two owners of the same plot: Cn. Octavius (a *novus homo* was thought to have won votes for the consulship in part because of the attractive and imposing house he built on the spot) and M. Aemilius Scaurus (who razed Octavius's structure a century later and built a new wing for his nearby residence there; yet, even though he was the son of a great man, he was met with disgrace and ruin).

²¹ Cic. *Off.* 1.139: *odiosum est enim, cum a praetereuntibus dicitur: "o domus antiqua, heu quam dispari / dominare domino!" quod quidem his temporibus in multis licet dicere*. Cf. *Phil.* 2.104.

²² Cic. *Att.* 1.13.6: *ad dignitatem aliquam pervenire*. Cf. *Dom.* 146, where Cicero describes the house as his *ornamenta dignitatis*.

²³ Cic. *Dom.* 101. See also Cic. *Dom.* 100: *... sin mea domus non modo mihi non redditur, sed etiam monumentum praebet inimico doloris mei, sceleris sui, publicae calamitatis, quis erit qui hunc reditum potius quam poenam sempiternam putet?*

²⁴ Cic. *Phil.* 2.68: *an tu, illa in vestibulo rostra [et spolia] cum adspexisti, domum tuam te introire putas?*

²⁵ Cic. *Phil.* 2.67–68. Also listed are the household's *penates*.

²⁶ The *rostra*, or ship beaks, must have held especial meaning, since they were emblems of public standing particular to Pompey, won apparently during the special command he was granted by the *Lex Gabinia* in the mid-60s to quash piracy in the Mediterranean.

in Cicero's speech and the poetic fragment, which shifts focus to onlookers in a kinetic street-based context, where viewing a house façade summoned appraisals of the owner's status and stirred strong emotions and memories. Such a reliance on a house's exterior is also apparent in the other discussions of housing and status cited earlier. Rarely are particular features of any house described, and those aspects that authors do mention would be discernible from the outside: location and size.²⁷ For the lived experience of the Roman city, Vitruvius was right in the sense that houses could be a measure of status, but a house's *outside*, in addition to its specific interior rooms, could forge claims and prompt those in the street to gauge, question, and react. These were no boring walls to contain an interior, but conspicuous elements of a public persona.

PAVING THE WAY (AND THE SIDEWALK)

Legal evidence about the seam between private property and the street's communal space further blurs this boundary by pushing owners' obligations and impact out into the street. Our best source for the property–street junction is the *Tabula Heracleensis*.²⁸ At the beginning of a section outlining regulations about public spaces, the text assigns responsibility over the roadbed to individual owners. All are to maintain the thoroughfare in front of their properties, ensuring that no water stand in the street (ll. 20–23). The arbiters for this work are the aediles, each of whom is responsible for the street's repair and paving in a different city sector (ll. 20–28). Similar language is later applied to sidewalks: owners are responsible for their paving, with the aediles again determining the work's satisfactory completion (ll. 53–55). Research at Pompeii appears to confirm that the city was subject to this text's principle, if not its direct application. In her intensive study of sidewalk construction, Catherine Saliou has shown that changes in curbstone material and quality often mesh closely with junctures between properties. She deduces that, although some degree of public control governed what was built, the responsibility for the space between the façade and the roadbed fell primarily to property owners.²⁹

Further archaeological evidence demonstrates that the sidewalk, more than a zone of individual legal duty, also afforded frontagers the opportunity to draw

²⁷ Cicero's comment (*Off.* 1.139) about the house of Cn. Octavius – that it was seen by all (*vulgo viseretur*) – advances the connection between exteriority and status still further. The punchline is that the sight of the house helped Octavius secure enough popular support for victory in the consular elections. Could Cicero have us believe that the interior was viewed by enough voters to swing the election? His description of Octavius's house as *praeclara*, an adjective useful in describing the physical beauty of the face and thus a likely reference to the house's façade (*OLD*, s.v. 1b; *TLL*, s.v. II.A.1.a; *Lucr.* 4.1033; *Sall. Jug.* 2.2), suggests that the answer is no.

²⁸ See “The Street as Corridor for Movement” in Chapter 1.

²⁹ Saliou 1999, 174–200. Flat stones set into sidewalks at apparent property joins reinforce this point: Saliou 1999, 169–171.



27. The sidewalk in front of the Casa del Fauno in Pompeii (VI.12.1–6) consisted of a grid of white marble chips set in a black matrix, along with a polychrome greeting, “HAVE,” spelled in front of the house’s main entry.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.

attention to and mark the space as their own. Across the entire front of the Casa del Fauno at Pompeii (VI.12.1–6), for instance, a grid-like pattern of white stones stood out from the sidewalk’s black background (Fig. 27). Colored stones in front of the main doorway aided in spelling the tessellated greeting “HAVE.”³⁰ The salutation makes explicit what was normally implicit; namely, that the house’s owner was communicating to streetgoers the extension of the house’s realm into the sidewalk. Other attempts to decorate and thus lay claim to the sidewalk give a taste of the diversity of sidewalk decoration. Along the main frontage of the Casa del Cinghiale (VIII.3.7–9), white chips form a lattice pattern of elongated diamonds against a *cocciopesto* background. Nearly next door, the Casa del Gallo (VIII.5.1–7) packed polychrome marble chips into a thick matrix along its lengthy frontage, while the Casa dell’Atrio Corinzio at Herculaneum (V.30) saw palm-sized slabs of imported polychrome marbles set into the red pavement at regular intervals.³¹ The use of such stones should not be overlooked: first, because of the rarity and expense of such materials even in a secondary market; second, because many properties lacked individualized

³⁰ Pesando 1996, 199–200; Zevi 1998, 24–26; Saliou 1999, 171.

³¹ Saliou 1999, 171, ns. 23–24 for more examples.

sidewalk decoration altogether; and, third, because of marble's strong associations with the civic sphere.³²

Indeed, the special charge of decorated sidewalks shines through most clearly in front of public buildings. Large marble pavers carpeted the area between the entrance to Pompeii's Stabian Baths and the roadbed, thus distinguishing it from its surroundings (VII.1.8; Fig. 11). Closer to the town's forum, the sidewalk flanking the Temple of Augustan Fortune boasted tightly packed fist-sized gray stones. That the sidewalk decoration here, as in front of houses, terminates at a clear property boundary makes obvious that sidewalk decoration, like curbstone construction, was closely tied to each parcel of land.³³ Those walking along sensed that the space immediately in front of a structure was not neutral turf; rather, they could have felt its connection to the building and, by extension, to its chief proponent. I will return to this issue and its connection to façade architecture in the next chapter.

Although sidewalk frontage offered opportunities to craft a showpiece, it potentially exposed owners to shame when their sidewalk or roadbed care was found lacking. If someone's efforts did not satisfy the aedile, the *Tabula Heracleensis* set in motion a conspicuous remedy (ll. 32–45). At the problem's discovery, the aedile was authorized to let a contract for maintenance. In a public poster erected in the forum or on his tribunal, the aedile served notice that he was contracting the work, and he named the street, the defaulting proprietor, and the date on which work would begin. Notice was also served to the negligent frontager at the address in question, and the contract was then let in the forum. In other words, the tablet's provisions outline a process that took one person's civic (ir)responsibility and opened it up repeatedly to public visibility, twice in the city's most visible spot and once at the property itself. For negligent frontagers, such publication of what was ideally an individual matter likely brought undesired notoriety, not to mention substantial fines for late payment (ll. 42–45). All in all, the tablet's remedy transformed the street and sidewalk's common space from a sphere of individual duty and display into a zone of civic intervention that highlighted the magistrate's clout.

SPEECH, SONG, AND ACTION AT THE HOUSE DOOR

Protecting the populace's passage was the nominal reason for a magistrate's intervention. Such a justification helps reverse our lens of inquiry and allows us to reconsider the house–street boundary from a streetgoer's perspective. Since

³² The secondary marble market: Fant and Attanasio 2009. Sidewalk decoration has only survived in about two dozen locations: Saliou 1999, 171, ns. 23–24. Curbstones frequently were homogeneous for longer stretches, which suggests a corporate effort of construction: Saliou 1999, esp. fig. 28.

³³ Sidewalks and property lines: Saliou 1999, 169–182.

the space in front of a building was linked to its owner yet also open to the urban populace, owners were exposed to the actions, whims, and (as we shall learn) voices of those in the street.

A graffito from a Pompeian façade furnishes a rare physical trace of this phenomenon. Along the busy Via dell'Abbondanza opened a towering doorway (I.4.25) leading to an enormous three-peristyle house that was apparently shared by two fellow freedmen, L. Popidius Secundus and L. Popidius Ampliatus.³⁴ In a message scratched into the plaster, the latter came in for written scorn: "Ampliatus, Icarus buggers you. Salvius wrote this."³⁵ Graffiti elsewhere in the city suggests that Salvius and Icarus skirmished repeatedly, with Icarus slandering Salvius's daughter and receiving a potential death threat in reply.³⁶ That the feud played out on the town's walls is interesting because it speaks again to individuals' desire to make public what we might consider "private" relationships. But what draws our attention is the slander of Ampliatus immediately outside his house's doorway, a space closely tied to him and therefore a particularly vulnerable spot for expressing personal acrimony. The nature of the insult is also fascinating. Because it cast Ampliatus as the passive member in a male–male sexual pair, this was no idle jest, but was a particularly charged kind of defamation. Taken literally, the accusation had teeth, for it accused the wealthy man of being sexually dominated by Icarus. For Romans, one's sexual role was more important than the sex of one's partner. Moreover, during the time when he himself was a slave, Ampliatus had likely been subject to his owner's sexual exploitation. The slur's more figurative sense, that Icarus was screwing Ampliatus over, was hardly rosier because it, too, cast down Ampliatus.³⁷ Overall, the graffito demonstrates how the edifice–street interface offered the public at large, and particularly those of lesser standing, a conspicuous stage on which to level personal rebuke toward a house and its chief occupant.

In the previous chapter, we encountered individuals seeking justice in the street by attempting to shame someone who had done them wrong. We may now revisit that line of thought in its legal and physical context. Roman law outlined remedies for speech that got out of hand. *Convicium* was the term for verbal abuse of someone in public, and it was classified as a subset of defamation more generally. The Praetor's Edict defined actionable *convicium* as shouting at

³⁴ Franklin 2001, 115–116, 169–71. The former was most likely a member of the *Augustiani*, a troop trained to clap rhythmically at the emperor Nero's artistic performances: *CIL* 4.2380, 4.2381, 4.2383.

³⁵ *CIL* 4.2375: *Ampliate, Icarus te pedicat. Salvius scripsit.*

³⁶ *CIL* 4.2173, 2175. Franklin 1986, 326–327.

³⁷ On the specific meaning of *pedico*: Adams 1982, 123–125. On the figurative readings of sexual language: Adams 1982, 132–134. Pompeians frequently named themselves as authors of graffiti (e.g., *CIL* 4.1842; Benefiel 2008), so Salvius's self-identification is not altogether puzzling if he indeed scratched the message.

someone, either by yourself or with a group, in a way that ran contrary to good morals.³⁸ When jurists weigh in, more points of interest arise, starting with the first location Ulpian mentions when he offers a possible scenario for *convicium* – the house. He writes: “If a person comes to your house while you are away, there is said to be *convicium*.”³⁹ Thus, if you wanted to vent about someone and if you did not or could not confront or pursue that person directly, another option was going to his or her house or workplace and expressing yourself there. This was apparently an old practice, for the Twelve Tables protected a Roman’s right to march up to someone’s doorway and to shout every third day if that person failed to appear as a witness in court.⁴⁰ But Ulpian’s discussion makes clear that solo haranguing was not the normal assumption. He offers an etymology:

The term *convicium* derives from a mob or crowd, that is, a combination of voices. For when several voices are directed at one person, that is called *convicium*, as it were a gathering of voices (*convocium*).⁴¹

Redress for *convicium*, to judge from Ulpian’s commentary, was meant to curtail a situation where a crowd was summoned at someone’s house to shout defamations that were intended to disgrace the person and that ran afoul of community values. The legal evidence, in other words, animates the area before a house as a zone brimming with potential for communication from aggrieved parties.⁴²

What motivated individuals who resorted to “house-scoring” (as the practice is called in other times and places) is rarely recorded, for typically the *protested*, not the *protestors*, left written records. The realm of Roman comedy, however, provides rich examples because it gives voice to nonelite characters and because its action took place in front of three façades in what was presumed to be the street. In Plautus’s *Menaechmi*, for instance, the narrator easily remembers one character’s name because he has seen him get roasted with shouts.⁴³ Moneylenders either threaten raising a ruckus outside a house – it will be loud and long, says one usurer⁴⁴ – or actually do so, repeating important words in a rhythmic chant: “My interest, give me back my interest, give it back,

³⁸ *Dig.* 47.10.15.2: *ait praetor: “qui adversus bonos mores convicium cui fecisse cuiusve opera factum esse dicitur, quo adversus bonos mores convicium fieret: in eum iudicium dabo.”* The following pages owe much to Lintott 1968, 8–21; Treggiari 2002, 95–102. See also Graf 2005.

³⁹ *Dig.* 45.10.15.7: *si quis ad domum tuam venerit te absente, convicium factum esse dicitur.* Cf. *Dig.* 47.2.54.pr.

⁴⁰ Tab. 2.3. Cf. *Fest.* 262L, 514L. Alternatively, it was possible to simply stand at someone’s door all day: *Plaut. Mostell.* 766–769. Cf. *Plaut. Merc.* 977.

⁴¹ *Dig.* 47.10.15.4: *convicium autem dicitur vel a concitatione vel a conventu, hoc est a collatione vocum. cum enim in unum complures voces conferuntur, convicium appellatur quasi convocium.*

⁴² The practice has parallels elsewhere. Some early modern examples: Cohen 1992; Shoemaker 2000; Dennis 2008–2009; Colleran 2010.

⁴³ *Plaut. Men.* 45–46.

⁴⁴ *Plaut. Pseud.* 556–557: *namque edepol, si non dabis, / clamore magno et multo flagitare.*

you two!”⁴⁵ Similarly, we seldom have accounts of how house owners responded, but revisiting another Plautine episode suggests the anxieties that doorstep episodes might arouse. In the *Mercator*, a householder will not think to let a handsome slave girl venture into the streets as a *materfamilias*'s attendant, for he fears the men of a city: “they would serenade the doorway; the leaves of my door would be filled by their love poems scrawled in charcoal.”⁴⁶ His worries about being accused of running a brothel not surprisingly entail the visual realm – the sights of the sexy slave girl, of the gathered crowd, and of the men’s literary detritus – but also extend to the noise created by the incident.⁴⁷

When we follow this episode’s cue and consider the sonic dimension of extra-residential uproars, the social dimensions of house-scorning become clearer. As the grammarian Festus discusses *convicium*, he first parallels Ulpian and defines it as the confluence of voices. He then adds a second etymology that emphasizes the range of protestors’ sounds, contending that the word could emerge from the convergence of neighbors (*con-vicus*). This chimes with his later connection of *occentare*, “rough singing,” to *convicium ferre*: “It happens loudly and with a certain chant so that it can be heard from far away. Because it is thought to happen with good reason, it is considered shameful” to the addressee.⁴⁸ Shouting protestors could raise a ruckus that drew the attention of streetgoers, and, because of sound’s ability to travel where architecture did not permit sight or access, the uproar also pricked up neighbors’ ears.⁴⁹ (Houses built around courtyards and the stone-lined corridors of streets helped sounds get heard.) A contemptuous rumpus gained greater attention by night, when the protestors’ identities were cloaked, when their inhibitions were eroded by drink, and when they caused maximum annoyance by waking the neighborhood.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Plaut. *Mostell.* 603: *cedo faenus, redde faenus, reddite!* Soon after follows the father of the money-ower (Plaut. *Most.* 615–617): *quis illic est? quid . . . praesenti tibi facit convicium?* Cf. Ov. *Ars am.* 3.449; Catull. 42. For an image of call-and-response, albeit in abusive speech in the forum, see Cic. *Q Fr* 2.3.2; Plut. *Pomp.* 48. Caesar was apparently delayed in leaving for his province because debtors were blocking his house: Plut. *Caes.* 11.1. The sting of such a charge is clear from Petronius (57), who has one freedman reproach the giggling Ascylos and claim to be an honorable man since, among other boasts, he has never been told publicly, *redde quod debes*, “give back what you owe.”

⁴⁶ Plaut. *Merc.* 408–409: *occentent ostium; impleantur elegeorum meae fores carbonibus.*

⁴⁷ Plaut. *Merc.* 408–411. See also Plaut. *Per.* 569–575, where a slave warns that, should a pimp secure a certain girl, the leading citizens of the town “will serenade the door by night, they’ll burn down the doors.” Cf. Plaut. *Curc.* 145–157.

⁴⁸ Fest. 190–192L: *occentassint antiqui dicebant quod nunc convicium fecerint dicimus, quod id clare et cum quodam canore fit, ut procul exaudiri possit. quod turpe habetur, quia non sine causa fieri putatur.* By contrast, if shouting is done without reference to a specific person, the charge of *convicium* is not considered justified: *Dig.* 47.10.15.9.

⁴⁹ Dennis 2008–2009, 15 on Renaissance Italy; “perhaps sound’s most potent ability . . . was that it allowed its creators to project themselves into a space to which their physical access was denied.”

⁵⁰ This is likely the concern in a situation described by Pseudo-Quintilian (*Decl.* 364) in which a poor man habitually jeered nocturnally outside a rich man’s house, until one night when the latter had had enough and ordered his slaves to remove the poor man, claiming he was insane.

It was not just that the sounds were audible; their break from the norm mattered, too. Scholars of urban soundscapes note how acclimated city dwellers become to their neighborhood's particular noises: its daily rhythm of voices, cart rattles, barks, and the like. Against this backdrop, they have adopted anthropologist Mary Douglas's notion of dirt as "matter out of place" to urban sounds, noting how unaccustomed noises easily gain notice.⁵¹ Singing or chanting like Festus and others describe was "sound out of place" and thus especially discordant for overhearers. Festus's second etymology even raises the possibility that neighbors, roused from sleep or distracted from their normal tasks, would join in, especially if they also had grievances with those being protested.

It is worth recalling that *convicium* was only actionable if the good morals of the community were violated. Recognizing the necessity of an exterior audience helps to explain Ulpian's initially odd statement that the object of *convicium* need not be home for an illegal event to occur. The legal provision therefore underscores the strength of the bond between a property and its chief resident – even if you were away from your house, everyone still knew you were the target. Also, you were not a suitable judge of whether something illegal had happened because you could consider any shouts and songs detrimental. Rather, the key audience of a rabble-rousing crowd legally (and socially) was composed of those who overheard the joining of voices and were disturbed by its content.

House-scorning is an example of what Natalie Zemon Davis has called the "social creativity of the so-called inarticulate."⁵² Weaker members of society hit the powerful where they were most vulnerable: their good name and personal reputations, which Cicero equated with life itself.⁵³ This is undoubtedly why Cicero states his abhorrence of rough singing (*occentatio*) and of composing verses about someone. Both, he notes, bring about disgrace for their target. He argues that magistrates and the lawcourts, not clever poets, offer proper channels for judgment, and he applauds the Twelve Tables for instituting capital penalties for slander.⁵⁴ His sentiments make internal sense because he was very much part of that official world of dispute settlement. In fact, Cicero's feelings were honed by his experience because, during a grain shortage, a crowd gathered by night, probably at *his* house, to demand a remedy.⁵⁵

That said, Cicero did not hesitate to make great rhetorical use of similar episodes at his enemies' houses. Near the end of his Verrine orations, the orator

⁵¹ E.g., Garrioch 2003, 14; Colleran 2010, 369 (both with additional bibliography).

⁵² Davis 1975, 74.

⁵³ Cic. *Quinct.* 49–50, 99.

⁵⁴ Cic. *Rep.* 4.12. Cf. Fest. 192L.

⁵⁵ Cic. *Dom.* 11–14. Cicero, of course, was careful to avoid characterizing the event as a popular uprising, but insinuates that it was spurred by Clodius. For a related example, see Cic. *Q Fr.* 2.11.

summons a powerful double image of Sicily's then-governor: while Verres engaged in a multiday bender, his equally profligate admiral was bungling a battle against pirates. The result was, in Cicero's words, a night during which the Roman governor burned with the fires of lust, and the Roman fleet burned with fires kindled by pirates. When news reached Syracuse – where Verres had processed home amid music and a female retinue – an initial crowd flowed to his house; when the ships' fires became visible, people rushed from all corners of the city to join in the shouting. Stirred from his drunken sleep, Verres emerged to confront a crowd that pelted him with taunts about his debauchments, with the naming of his lady friends, and with questions about where he had been while the fleet floundered.⁵⁶ Apparently to show how the matter could have ended differently, Cicero next describes two other episodes when mobs had also besieged the residence of a Roman provincial commander. When Verres was legate in the Hellespont, an outraged throng attacked his door with stones, iron, and fire. Meanwhile, a crowd in North Africa burnt down the house of a Roman official because of his avarice, Cicero says, and killed the governor inside.⁵⁷

In the end, the Syracusan crowd abandons their siege after remembering the threat at hand. Nevertheless, the episodes together make several points. First, although Cicero's rhetorical imagination is very active, his description grants a sense of how something like *convicium* functioned on a grand scale. Second, these events again document the street's role as an arena where political tensions were raised and at times resolved. Third, because the crowd concentrated attention at one house, it channeled attention toward a particular individual and transformed quotidian public space into an impromptu and intensely personal political forum.⁵⁸ Overall, “self-help” – whether political or social, and whatever its form (sung verses, a scrawled graffito, or walking in mourning clothes behind someone) – involved accountability-seeking. It reflects a society in which “the normal processes of law are defective” and “popular moral sensibility fills the gaps left by the law.”⁵⁹ Whether a verbal uproar simply crackled and smoldered or intensified to a fiery conclusion, the street and its informal “people's court” offered a key democratizing venue.

Romans had one other strong association with the area before someone's door – they connected it with affairs of the heart. Within Latin elegy,

⁵⁶ Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.92–95. We have few other examples of how victims (and neighbors) of house-scoring responded in the Roman period. The evidence is more ample in the Renaissance: Dennis 2008–2009, 15; Cohen 1992, 613–615.

⁵⁷ Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.69–70. Cf. Livy *Per.* 86.

⁵⁸ Lintott 1968, e.g., Cic. *Mil.* 13, 38; *Har. Resp.* 15–16; *Asc.* 33, 43. Conversely, when a politician's reputation was threatened, supporters could rally at his residence, as happened when Caesar was stripped of his praetorship by the senate in 62 BCE: Suet. *Iul.* 16. Further examples: Plut. *Caes.* 30.2; *Pomp.* 58.

⁵⁹ Kelly 1966, 22.

a particular motif gained popularity in the early Empire – the *paraclausithyron* – which was literally a poem “before the closed door.”⁶⁰ Its standard poetic conceits, born of Greek roots, are that the lover is closed out from the house, either by his beloved or by those wishing to protect her virtue, and that he thus pens a song describing his predicament.⁶¹ As such, *paraclausithyra* lob more messages at thresholds and populate sidewalks with additional people making appeals. At Herculaneum, we read “here love thirsts” outside one door, while at Pompeii, a full-blown *paraclausithyron* appears.⁶² Because the poems hinge on the inside–outside push and pull that has been this section’s focus, they get to that tension’s heart. No poem is clearer than the opening of Propertius 1.16, which plays with the genre’s tropes by letting the door itself speak:

Once upon a time I had stood open for grand triumphs, a door vowed to Patrician Chastity, whose threshold was crowded with gilded chariots and wet with the suppliant tears of captives. Now, wounded by the nighttime brawls of drunks, I often lament being beaten by shameful hands; disgraceful garlands are always hanging from me and torches never stop lying before me as symbols of the excluded lover. I can’t protect my lady from scandalous allegations, since I’m now given over, though I was once so noble, to obscene songs.⁶³

Positioning the poetic voice at the threshold allows Propertius to look forward and backward, Janus-like, in both space and time. A key concern is the household’s martial and moral reputation, much as we saw with war spoils and street protests earlier. Yet the poem also bewails the slippage from former august victories to present-day baseness. The stately and immaculate image is undercut by events beyond the house’s walls, as nocturnal rabble-rousers, wobbly lovers, and their leftovers now litter the doorway. Propertius’s speaking door thus offers a reminder: as much as structures sent forth messages, actions on the street were no less visible (or audible), and the sidewalk could teem with assertions over which the household had little control. Yet they, too, shaped public image.

In sum, my goal in this survey of doorstep activities is not to suggest that we should imagine every sidewalk crowded with lovelorn Romeos, scrawling Salvii, chanting crowds, or petty arsonists. It is enough to recognize that, for Romans, this space swirled with a host of associations across a broad range of contexts: religious, political, martial, and amorous. Despite frontagers’ legal obligations and

⁶⁰ Classic treatments of the genre: Copley 1956; Yardley 1978.

⁶¹ E.g., Prop. 1.16.17–26; Ov. *Am.* 1.6.

⁶² CIL 10.10562: *hic sitiet amor. Paraclausithyron: CIL* 4.5296, on which see Copley 1939; Milnor 2014, 191–227.

⁶³ Prop. 1.16.1–10: *quae fueram magnis olim patefacta triumphis, / ianua Patriciae vota Pudicitiae, / cuius inaurati celebrarunt limina currus, / captorum lacrimis umida supplicibus, / nunc ego, nocturnis potorum saucia rixis, / pulsata indignis saepe queror manibus, / et mihi non desunt turpes pendere corollae / semper et exclusi signa iacere faces. / nec possum infamis dominae defendere voces, / nobilis obscenis tradita carminibus . . .*

decorations, this space was neither exclusively within the house's domain nor even neutral turf. Rather, as Propertius suggests, a complicated set of exchanges criss crossed the threshold: the reputation, characteristics, or affections of the occupant could be presented, and these were affirmed or challenged depending on the reactions, imprecations, and remonstrations of those in the street.

REACHING BEYOND THE HOUSE

Because we have concentrated on the area in front of a property – governed by the *Tabula Heracleensis*, paved by the frontager, and occupied by many – our gaze has been static, fixed on one parcel with little consideration of its contexts: nearby properties and urbanites moving through the street. To borrow a cinematic metaphor, I now set our camera in motion, imagining a tracking shot from a streetgoer's kinetic perspective before zooming out to set the edifice–street boundary in a broader context. Doing so highlights owners' attempts at making their properties conspicuous along the street and amid the city largely by intentionally inconveniencing others.⁶⁴

A property on Pompeii's western edge offers a fitting starting point and will remain a touchstone throughout this chapter. Called the *Casa di Diana II* by its eighteenth-century excavators, the huge double-atrium structure boasted a *façade* (VI.17.32–38) that was extensively remade in the last decades of Pompeii's ancient life. I will return to its form shortly; I want to focus now on the property's sidewalk and the unusual elevation it traces⁶⁵ (Fig. 28; see also Figs. 33, 34). Pedestrians making their way northward in front of the house ascended a slope before reaching the southern of the house's two principal entrances (VI.17.36), where the sidewalk leveled out at its highest point.⁶⁶ They then walked upon the elevated footpath for roughly 20 meters until they reached the house's other main entryway (VI.17.32), where they again descended to a height more consistent with the city's other sidewalks. There was little, if any, practical reason for elevating the sidewalk in this way. In fact, the house's "ground" floor was raised artificially on subterranean rooms.

Such sidewalk ramping was not an isolated phenomenon. On the same street, the *Via Consolare*, five different structures manipulated their sidewalks over approximately 150 meters.⁶⁷ Unlike the *Casa di Diana II*, these properties did not level out their sidewalks for a sustained distance, but formed a peak immediately before the house's main entrance. Still more profound examples are visible elsewhere. Near the city's southern edge, the sidewalk's original curbstones are visible and consistent in height with their neighbors in front of

⁶⁴ This section draws on Hartnett 2011a.

⁶⁵ Long exposure to the elements has eroded the sidewalk's decoration.

⁶⁶ To create the incline, some curbstones were flipped vertically.

⁶⁷ VI.17.10, VI.17.13, VI.17.25, VI.17.27, VI.1.10.



28. Across the frontage of the Casa di Diana II in Pompeii (VI.17.32–38) ran an elevated sidewalk that lifted the house and caused an inconvenience for pedestrians.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.

the Casa di L. Caecilius Phoebus (VIII.2.36–37) (Fig. 29). Additional courses of stone were piled atop them to create a sidewalk that loomed 1.20 meters above the street's surface.⁶⁸ The apogee of slanted sidewalks occurred before the so-called Caserma dei Gladiatori (V.5.3), an enigmatic structure that apparently served over its lifetime as a residence and a gladiatorial training ground (Fig. 30). Across its façade's entire 28-meter breadth, the sidewalk was sloped, building from the lowest points at the property's edges to a peak of 1.30 meters (approximately chest height) in front of the main doorway.

Owners likely stood to gain from such sidewalk ramping in at least three related respects. First, our sources suggest that lofty entrances by themselves could bear connotations of wealth and power and might even engender awe and apprehension in onlookers. When Martial sends a poem in his stead to a patron's house, for example, he seeks to calm nerves: "Straightaway on your left, you must approach the shining façade and the atrium of a lofty house. Make for it. Do not fear arrogance or a haughty threshold."⁶⁹ Elevating the house did not end at the sidewalk. Both thresholds at the Casa di Diana II, for

⁶⁸ Such was the change in sidewalk height that, at one end of the property, stairs had to be built on the footpath to accommodate pedestrians.

⁶⁹ Mart. 1.70, 12–13: *protinus a laeva clari tibi fronte Penates / atriaque excelsae sunt adeunda domus. / hanc pete: ne metuas fastus limenque superbum*. Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 84.11–12; Verg. *G.* 2.461–462.



29. Additional courses of stone were added to the original curbstones in front of the Casa di L. Caecilius Phoebus in Pompeii (VIII.2.36–37), which caused stairs to be introduced into the sidewalk.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.



30. A ramped sidewalk ran across the entire frontage of the Caserma dei Gladiatori at Pompeii (V.5.3), reaching a height of 1.3 meters and causing passing vehicles to scrape their axles on its front. Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.



31. The Casa di M. Epidius Rufus at Pompeii (IX.1.20) was lifted above neighboring structures atop a temple-like podium, which supported a secondary sidewalk.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.

instance, were lifted still higher above pedestrians; an elegant travertine staircase precedes the north entryway, while the revetment on the southern entrance's steps has been lost. Such constructions, visible from the street, were common to properties with ramped sidewalks and further hoisted the house above those walking or riding by.

A threshold that loomed over the street helped to mark out a house from its neighbors. This point is made dramatically by a structure that took a more radical approach to its frontage. Located a block east of the Stabian Baths on the Via dell'Abbondanza, the Casa di M. Epidius Rufus (IX.1.20) had both a conventional sidewalk running along the street and a secondary sidewalk raised on a platform roughly 1 meter higher (Fig. 31). Along the plastered front of this quasi-dais ran moldings, an iron railing stood at its front edge, and staircases gave access at each end. Its lower form thus echoed temple architecture, such as the Temple of Castor in the Forum Romanum, which was also outfitted with an elevated podium, lateral stairs, and railing.⁷⁰ Visitors who reached the raised sidewalk faced two more stairs before accessing the house's ornate threshold. Thus, while the ground floors of nearby properties stood at the level of the sidewalk proper, the Casa di M. Epidius Rufus hovered above both action in the street and neighboring buildings.⁷¹ Although not a subtle form of image-crafting, having a higher and larger structure distinguished one's self from others nearby.

⁷⁰ Stamper 2005, 56–59, 144–149.

⁷¹ On this façade: Lauter 2009. The façade garnered additional attention by being recessed from the adjacent streetface.

If the structures' height above the roadbed marked out properties for those looking from afar, then a third motivation for ramp building was perhaps attracting the attention of those passing along the street. As we have seen, obstacles to smooth passage were many in Roman cities – from fountains in sidewalks to animals hitched to curbstones. Many nuisances were practical or relatively agentless, but not sidewalk ramps; they filled little discernable need and took shape in a space linked to a house and its owner. In that sense, the exertion that they required from a pedestrian – trudging up and then descending a not insignificant incline – clearly resulted from the whims of the frontager. It added a phenomenological charge to passage and thus extended owners' impact out *past* their façades, into the street's communal world. In brief, by shaping the urban fabric, owners shaped the urban experience.

A subset of the sidewalk ramps presents a clearer picture of efforts at and effects of interference by extending it to wheeled vehicles. Along the front of the Caserma dei Gladiatori, long scrape marks run horizontally across the ramp (Fig. 30). They were left by passing carts, wagons, and the like whose axles extended beyond the wheelbase and typically spun at heights between .45 and .75 meters above the roadbed.⁷² Because most curbstones were lower than this height, the axles usually glided above the sidewalk edge without incident. At other spots in Pompeii, however, curbstones were tall enough to scrape axles. Many of these resulted from local circumstances, as where a roadbed descended quickly to exit a city gate. But at the Caserma, and at least eleven other spots in Pompeii, owners did not continue the sidewalk at the same level or slope as adjacent properties, but exacerbated it by building curbstones that stood at least .50 meters above the roadbed.⁷³ Their intentional constructions thus threatened to scrape the axles of vehicles that passed too closely.⁷⁴

Like their pedestrian counterparts, vehicle drivers were inconvenienced in front of these spots. Just as importantly, the nuisances compelled actions from streetgoers, and, because it was clear who created the obstruction, they symbolically asserted a builder's control over the street. That is, a momentary sense of order was established and a hierarchy of sorts was set up that cast the ramp builders as the dictators of movement and streetgoers as those obliged to respond. Yes, pedestrians and drivers may have taken the initiative and avoided the

⁷² Axle heights: Poehler 2009, 72–74.

⁷³ Locations of intentionally raised curbstones: II.4.2–8, 10–12; V.5.3; VI.1.9–10; VI.11.18; VI.16.15–17; VI.17.10; VI.17.25; VI.17.27–30; VI.17.32–36; VII.7.19; VIII.2.23; VIII.2.36–37.

⁷⁴ At some properties, particularly those with high sidewalks, stones were set into the roadbed to create steps up to the footpath. In these circumstances also, a structure's streetward form required action on the part of those moving through the city. As a potential remedy to cart–curb collisions, small lumps of stone, which Saliou (1999, 164–165) calls “bornillons,” were occasionally placed at regular intervals along the front side of curbstones (Saliou 1999, table 2 for locations).

nuisances by crossing the street, walking in the roadbed, or steering away. But, in so doing, they nevertheless capitulated by recognizing the nuisance's potential power and reacting to it. However a streetgoer responded, a low-stakes dialogue about control and recognition was initiated when nuisances came into play.

Ramped sidewalks may have been within the letter of the law, which prohibited obstructing thoroughfares or impairing their usefulness, but they were hardly within its spirit.⁷⁵ Who would have been behind these efforts at interference and been capable of skirting legal principle and practical enforcement? The properties may hold a clue. Although the twelve locations display heterogeneity by encompassing houses, semipublic complexes (like entertainment complexes for rent), and other types of property, they share some telling features: first, the properties were sizable, averaging 695 square meters of ground area, which was nearly three times the average house size at Pompeii.⁷⁶ The properties' large size is a likely proxy for the wealth, if not the status, of their owners. Second, six of the twelve occupy prized Pompeian real estate; namely, those plots on the promontory's western and southern edges that enjoyed views of and breezes from the bay and mountains. The salubrious and comfortable settings place the owners among the city's elite. It is theoretically possible that they received special permission from the municipal authorities to build such obstructions, which would have been quite a statement in itself. Yet if they did not (as I think likely), the effects could have been still greater. Since Roman cities lacked mechanisms to ensure blanket compliance with laws, individuals had to bring suit to prevent nuisances like these. Personal standing and social connections were thus key to individuals' deliberations about whether to sue and to any legal action's success or failure. The ramped and axle-grinding sidewalks, then, with their effects on wheeled and footed traffic alike, may have constituted (or been perceived as) a statement about their owners' ability to marshal the social and political resources to evade the laws' enforcement; that is, to exist above the law. If obstructions were viewed in this way, then people physically experienced messages about position and prestige as they navigated the city on a day-to-day basis.

VISIBILITY AND INTRA-URBAN VIEWS

That architecture sought to impress, intimidate, or shape the experience of streetgoers is not surprising, given what we know about the many claims of

⁷⁵ *Tabula Heracleensis* ll. 68–72; *Lex Coloniae Genetivae Iuliae* 104; *Dig.* 43.8.2.32.

⁷⁶ See Hartnett 2011a, table 1 for the measurements of each property. Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 72–87, esp. table 4.2) surveys the floor areas of houses in two different samples from Pompeii. His Regio I sample produced an average house size of 266 square meters; that for Regio VI was 289 square meters. Even with the sprawling complexes eliminated, the houses remain squarely in the top quartile of Pompeian houses for ground floor area, averaging 558 square meters.

standing in this ambit, not to mention the house–owner connection. But, as we zoom out, we note, too, how urbanites took special care to shape views of their edifice within the broader urban context.

The power of a building’s visibility is widely attested, but Cicero seems particularly obsessed with it, and understandably so, given what he and his house underwent.⁷⁷ He refers to his house’s location or visual prominence no fewer than six times in the last third of his *De Domo Sua*.⁷⁸ At different points, he describes it as standing in full view of nearly the entire city and claims that Rome’s busiest and most important sections view its site.⁷⁹ Several decades earlier on the same spot, an architect proposed to construct a new house so it would be free from public view. To this his client, Livius Drusus, retorted, “If you have any sort of skill, build my house so that whatever I do can be seen by all.”⁸⁰ The architect correctly recognized Drusus’s concern for the public gaze, but did not understand that his client prized external views and the spotlighting they offered. When visually prominent within the city, a house projected its owner’s image far and wide. For Cicero, such visibility had also been a key aspect of the spot because it broadcast his status to the city, but the sword revealed its second edge after Clodius’s actions, when the site/sight became a prominent marker of his fall.⁸¹

When we shift from the hilly cosmopolis of Rome to other cities, we witness the pursuit of visual dominance playing out on the ground. The Casa di Diana II again offers a key example. Whereas the northern half of its façade appears minimally retouched after first-century seismic activity, newer construction techniques, including brickwork, intermingled in the southern half to form a striking array (Figs. 28, 32). A pair of engaged columns on rectangular plinths flanked the main door (VI.17.36). Neither column shaft is preserved to its full height: the 2.5 meters of the northern column soared at least a meter taller. The door–framing ensemble spread laterally, as the columns rested against walls of decorative masonry, and two shorter doorways were placed symmetrically to form an eye-catching pattern of solids and voids, lights and darks. The entryway’s particular forms carried further meanings. Its columns resembled the eponymous construction of the Casa del Gran Portale at Herculaneum (V.34–35), whose

⁷⁷ On the importance of visibility of statues: Stewart 2003, 136–140; Cic. *Pis.* 93; *CIL* 11.1421; *CIL* 5.532. On the *locus celeberrimus* in Roman thought: Newsome 2011, 20–26.

⁷⁸ Cic. *Dom.* 100, 101, 103, 116, 132, 146.

⁷⁹ Cic. *Dom.* 100: *in conspectu prope totius urbis domus est mea . . . 146: Urbis enim celeberrimae et maximae partes adversum illud non monumentum, sed vulnus patriae contuentur.*

⁸⁰ Vell. *Pat.* 2.14.3: *tu vero . . . si quid in te artis est, ita compone domum meam, ut, quidquid agam, ab omnibus perspici possit.* Cf. Sen. *Ben.* 6.34.1.

⁸¹ Cic. *Dom.* 100: *. . . sin mea domus non modo mihi non redditur, sed etiam monumentum praebet inimico doloris mei, sceleris sui, publicae calamitatis, quis erit qui hunc reditum potius quam poenam sempiternam putet?* Cf. *Dom.* 115, where Cicero paints Clodius as solipsistic by implying that he was primarily interested in the view *from* the property.

engaged columns stood on rectangular bases and were capped with sculpted capitals that carried an architrave (Fig. 34). Only a handful of similar entryways were visible on houses in Pompeii and Herculaneum, and their closest non-domestic cousins were found in public architecture, such as the exterior of Pompeii's Palestra, and grand semipublic complexes, like the Praedia of Julia Felix (II.4.6).⁸² Whether the columns at the Casa di Diana II supported an architrave or a pediment, they certainly formed a grand, rare, and visually distinct unit on its façade.

The new doorway's position made an even stronger impression within Pompeii's urban fabric. The owner of the Casa di Diana II, when remaking the façade's southern half, sited the entryway directly in line with one of the city's busiest thoroughfares (Figs. 32, 33). The Via Consolare here cuts diagonally across Pompeii's northwestern section and offered a well-traveled route to a city gate and other Campanian towns beyond. As many travelers moved along, they faced the elegant façade head-on. While the other structures lining the thoroughfare passed by, the Casa di Diana II stood at the street's visual focal point and dominated streetgoers' vision, thus extending the house's impression over a distance of some 70 meters.

A prominent example from Herculaneum suggests how much Romans coveted street-axis views. The first several decades CE saw a major reworking to *Cardo V*, the city's easternmost thoroughfare. On its east side, a monumental civic palestra was built (Fig. 35). Its colonnaded interior courtyard offered splendid amenities while a large structure – which housed shops, bakeries, and apartments – faced *Cardo V*.⁸³ Soaring to at least four stories and measuring some 100 meters in length, the complex's façade dwarfed neighboring buildings. But the structure's visual supremacy was enhanced by its position in Herculaneum's street network because it formed the endpoint of the so-called *decumanus inferior*, the major east–west route for wheeled traffic in the city's south. Directly on the street's axis lay the complex's entrance, which consisted of two large stone Corinthian columns *in antis* before an opulently decorated vestibule (Fig. 36). Tellingly enough, the propylon-style structure

⁸² E.g., Casa di Loreius (III.5.2). The form's popularity would increase significantly in the following years, as evidenced by its proliferation at Ostia: e.g., Casa del Pozzo (V.3.3: engaged brick columns on stone bases); the Horrea Epagathiana et Epaphroditiana (I.8.3: a similar ensemble crowned by a pediment); and the main entrance to the Casa a Giardino (III.9: free-standing columns pushed against a wall).

⁸³ On this building: Maiuri 1958, 113–143; Yegül 1993; Wallace-Hadrill 2011a, 271–285. The street-facing building was unquestionably conceived as a vital part of the palestra, for the groundplans and the wall-joins of the building's interior and exterior sections are interwoven. Some have suggested that the proceeds from the rental of shops and living units financed the public facilities inside. No explicit proof supports this suggestion, yet it has become a standard feature of the scholarly commentary since it originally appeared in Maiuri (1958, 116–117). See Yegül 1993, 390, n. 2; Pagano 1996, 243.

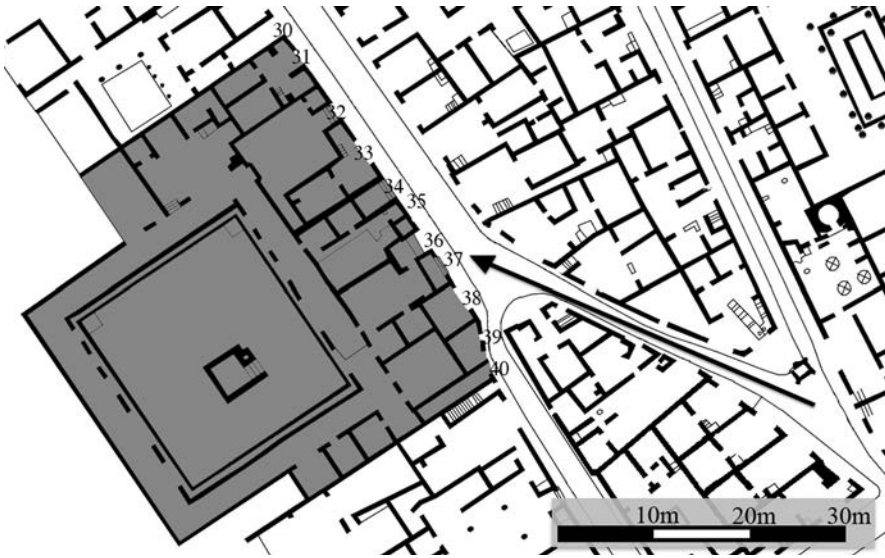


32. A streetgoer looking west along the Via Consolare in Pompeii was confronted head-on with a view of the framed entryway of the Casa di Diana II (VI.17.36). Arrows indicate the location of engaged columns.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.

was originally identified as a temple pronaos because of its size, architectural form, and rich décor.⁸⁴ Further excavation discredited the hypothesis, but the

⁸⁴ Maiuri (1958, 190, n. 63) quotes Weber's original description of this space as a temple on November 5, 1757. Ruggiero 1885, 233–234, pl. 8, fig. 3 shows the original document. The identification was aided by the discovery in this vicinity of an inscription marking Vespasian's restoration of a temple of *mater deum* after the earthquake of 62 CE (CIL 10.1406), now thought to have been carried here by the flow of volcanic material.



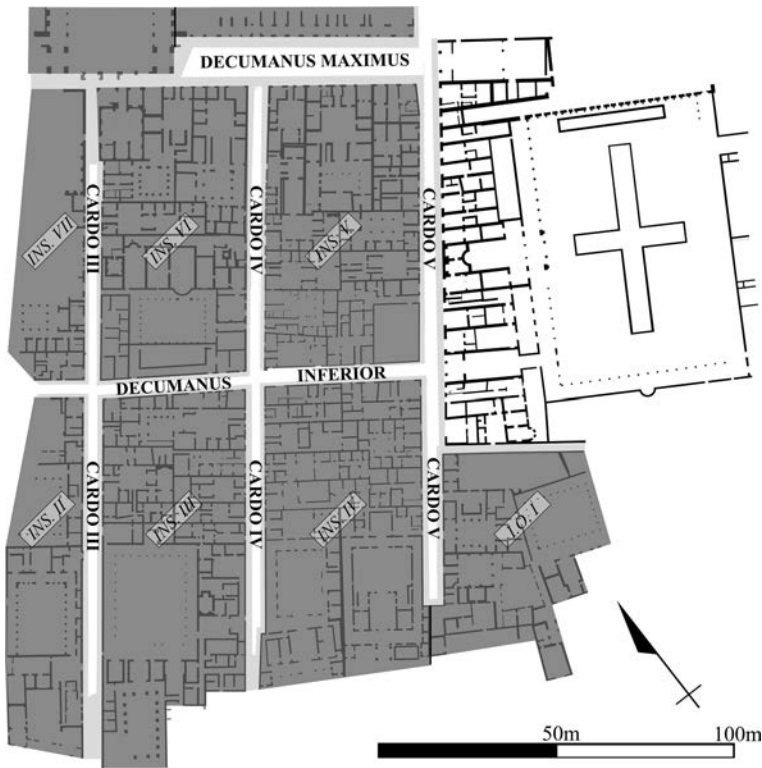
33. A principal entryway to the Casa di Diana II at Pompeii (VI.17.32–38) was constructed directly on the visual axis of the Via Consolare. The arrow represents the view of someone traveling west along the street.

Drawing: Ryan Cairns.



34. When the Casa del Gran Portale in Herculaneum (V.34–35) was carved out of an adjacent house, its presence was marked by a newly created sidewalk and a striking entryway of engaged columns, figural capitals, and a brickwork architrave.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.



35. The interior walls of Herculaneum's monumental Palestra (at right) were constructed to align with the *decumanus inferior*, rather than being square to *Cardo V*. Drawing: author.

entryway is indeed on par with sacred architecture, and it inevitably dominated the view of all those moving eastward on the *decumanus inferior*.

Achieving this street vista was a matter of considerable trouble. Herculaneum's city plan was nearly orthogonal, but the *decumanus inferior* ran slightly out of line with the rest of the streets. The evidence of the palestra itself makes clear that the building's designers, on confronting this unique orientation, prioritized maintaining the street's axis through the palestra's entrance. Rather than set the complex's interior walls perpendicular to its front face, they aligned them with the entranceway and thus with the cock-eyed street. As a result, the entire palestra complex was angled obliquely – a considerable architectural awkwardness to establish the building's commanding position at the street's endpoint.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Near the time of the building's creation, the segment of *Cardo V* in front of the palestra was repaved in white limestone, which marked the palestra's special status in relationship to the urban fabric. (A narrow sliver of the original volcanic stone remains visible on the street bed's eastern side.) The white paving also extended roughly 20 meters up the *decumanus inferior*, the street along whose length it sought to make a strong visual impression. The physical change



36. The view eastward along Herculaneum's *decumanus inferior* was dominated by the towering columns fronting the vestibule of the Palestra.

Photo: author. Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia.

The Casa di Diana II and Herculaneum's palestra are the most prominent examples of a widespread effort to marshal street-axis views. At Pompeii, the nearly rectilinear street network offered few circumstances for façade vistas along street axes. Nevertheless, of the thirty-six places in the city (as it is excavated thus far) where some version of this view was possible, a full two-thirds (24) have doorways aligned with the approaching street.⁸⁶ All manner of

likely marks the minimum streetspace meant to be affected by the axial view of the complex's entrance. On Herculaneum's street paving: Maiuri 1958, 33–43.

⁸⁶ Principal entrances to houses located on the axis of a street: 1.10.16; 6.17.36; 7.4.56; 7.4.62; 7.12.26; 7.15.11; 7.16.22; 8.2.21; 9.8.b. Shops appear to take advantage of visibility as well. Across the street from the Casa di Diana II, for example, stands a wine shop that stood directly in the sightline of anyone entering the city from the Porta Ercolano and moving south along the Via Consolare, which could only have aided business. This and other nondomestic examples (1.2.18; 1.7.18/19; 5.2.5; 6.4.1; 6.14.2; 6.16.22; 7.2.46; 7.6.34; 7.16.11; 8.7.10;

buildings sought to take advantage, from food and drink establishments to civic structures like the propylon of the Foro Triangolare, whose six columns were progressively revealed to those moving southward on the Via dei Teatri, thus creating a daunting sight. Yet the greatest portion of the twenty-four examples comes from domestic contexts. Typically, the doorway leading to the house's main interior space – that is, the entrance most closely tied to the house's owner – was featured as the visual focal point.⁸⁷ While most structures, because of streets' narrowness, were seen only from an oblique angle and could therefore be easily passed over by the eye, a façade at the endpoint of a street appeared to be its climax, so that other buildings lining the street – inferior in visibility and seemingly less important – were relegated to serving as an approach-way to the now quasi-monumental structure.⁸⁸

The frequency of such street-axis vistas (and the lengths builders went to achieve them) invites further consideration of their appeal and impact. Within the Roman visual and social sphere, face-to-face confrontations in scripted situations held significant power. Nowhere is this dynamic more obvious than the domestic ritual of the *salutatio*. When clients saw their patron framed by a carefully composed architectural ensemble, with everything aligned about an axis, his visual dominance and actual clout were clear.⁸⁹ That much has long been clear inside the house. But, in contrast to orchestrated domestic environments, the street was inevitably more spontaneous, contested, and public; many parties deployed diverse statements in an ongoing struggle for status and recognition. A street-axis view, then, influenced the street's dynamics by placing the house and its owner in a position of superiority over others.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter, our attention has ping-ponged between the perspectives of street denizens and house holders. We have seen how buildings were linked to their occupants who used the structures' exteriors to mark achievements and make claims. At the same time, the sentiments of Cicero and others – such as the anonymous author of *fullones ululamque cano, non arma*

9.4.8; 9.7.18) testify more generically to the importance, whether for spreading one's name or selling wine, that Romans attributed to conspicuous locations.

⁸⁷ See the Casa di M. Fabius Rufus at Pompeii (VII.16.22) for an example of the considerable architectural awkwardness endured to obtain such a vista.

⁸⁸ Augustus's decidedly modest house on the Palatine (Suet. *Aug.* 72.1; Tac. *Ann.* 1.5.4; Joseph *AJ* 19.103, 116, 214.), although it boasted a host of decoration around the doorway (*RG* 34–35), also benefitted from a similar relationship to its neighbors: Ov. *Tr.* 3.1.33–34; *Met.* 1.168–176; Wiseman 1987.

⁸⁹ On the patron's position in this ritual and his control of sightlines, see Wallace-Hadrill 1989. On the power of viewing within a Roman house as an inherently hierarchical act, see Elsner 1995, 74–87. See also Drerup 1959; Bek 1980; Jung 1984.

virumque – have made clear that passers-by brought a critical eye to such displays and took stock of how owners measured up to their abodes. As our gaze has flashed back and forth, the scope of our discussion has also rippled outward from the edifice–street boundary to encompass a broader domain. Sidewalks, which frontagers were legally required to maintain, offered owners a zone where they could shape the experiences of people passing through communal space. Yet the irony is that the outward blurring of boundaries also opened the space before a house to the population at large – those wishing to scorn or woo a house’s residents – with significant effects on reputations near and far. Finally, as we have just seen, owners positioned structures at critical points in the urban fabric to create vistas that had effects well beyond a building’s immediate vicinity.

On the one hand, these conclusions strengthen my original contention that buildings made an impact on the street’s social dynamics. Such pressure spanned multiple registers (visual, haptic, symbolic) as house owners endeavored to gain streetgoers’ notice, compel their movement, or dominate their view. On the other hand, the wide-ranging give and take between house and street, between resident and streetgoers, also highlights a key point – that the junction between these two realms was not a hard and fast line contiguous with a structure’s façade. Rather, social space did not map cleanly onto physical space. The sounds of protestors in front of a house poured into neighborhood windows, and a ramped sidewalk drew eyes to a house.

Romans endowed the edifice–street boundary with diverse meanings that were manifest in the charged communication at the threshold and beyond it. This much is supported by assessing houses’ *exterior shells*, on which I have intentionally concentrated in this chapter. Yet the actual *façade forms* of several properties we have examined – such as the Casa di M. Epidius Rufus that towered templelike above the street or the Casa di Diana II with its stately engaged columns – hint at a more involved relationship between the street and the specific physical shape given to façades that faced onto it. Chapter 5 takes up this negotiation of inside and outside: how particular architectural details aired additional messages to the street while simultaneously responding to the space’s dangers, threats, and social atmosphere.