ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:	BETWEEN TEMPLE AND TOMB: *LARARIA,* THE *LARES,* AND THE DEAD IN ROMAN POMPEII (80 BCE-79 CE)
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The *Lares familiares* were a group of ancient Roman gods worshipped at *lararia*, the shrines that stood at the center of domestic religion. In this thesis, I revisit a century-long debate and present new evidence, derived from the close observation of the design and representational elements extant on the material remains of temples, tombs, and *lararia*, for the previously proposed but recently rejected theory that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of deceased ancestors. In opposition to the approach of previous publications, I place archaeological, rather than textual, evidence from Roman Pompeii in the forefront to examine what new conclusions might be drawn. In Part 2, I consider the elements of formal design that may connect *lararia* not only with temple architecture, but also with tomb design. In Part 3, I analyze a series of representational elements that may suggest a similar visual connection between the *Lares* and the dead.

BETWEEN TEMPLE AND TOMB: *LARARIA,* THE *LARES,* AND THE DEAD IN ROMAN POMPEII (80 BCE-79 CE)

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2018

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Part 1: Introduction

Today's commonly used phrase "it is a matter of life and death" suggests a stark contrast between the two concepts and reveals the deep-rooted fear of what happens to one after death. This question, too, troubled the ancient Romans.[1] For the Romans, an emphasis on the importance of place, ritual, and reverence for one's family history made the temple, tomb, and one's home three of the most important spaces in any Roman town or city.[2] Ancient Roman *lararia*, domestic shrines for the household gods, served as the center of domestic religious practices in Roman society and centered around three groups of divinities: the *Genius*, the *Penates*, and the *Lares familiares*.[3] These entities were regularly venerated by prayer, sacrifice, and offerings of food, drink, and objects such as garlands, flowers, and incense.[4] Although scholars generally understand the *Genius* to be the procreative force of the *paterfamilias* and the *Penates* are the gods of the storeroom of the home, the identity and nature of the *Lares familiares* remain unclear.[5] In this thesis, I will revisit a century-long debate

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[1] Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome, Volume 1: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 141.
[2] Beard, North, and Price. *Religions of Rome, Volume 1,* 168.
[3] David G. Orr, *Roman domestic religion: a study of the Roman lararia* (College Park, Maryland, Thesis, University of Maryland, 1969), 9-10.
[4] Alexandra Sofroniew, *Household Gods: Private Devotion in Ancient Greece and Rome.* (*Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum*, 2015), 10-11. "*Lararia*" will be hereafter be used interchangeably with "shrines" and "domestic shrines."
[5] For the *Genius*, see Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1972), 45. The *Juno*, on the other hand, was the female spirit of the household (Ibid., 101). Because scholars connect

and present new evidence, derived from the close observation of the design and representational elements extant on the material remains of temples, tombs, and *lararia*, for the previously proposed but recently rejected theory that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of deceased ancestors, who were reincorporated into religious practices and everyday life through domestic worship.

Because I hope to bridge the gap between the religious, domestic, and funerary realms in this study, it is necessary to look outside the city of Rome itself, where there is little, if any, extant archaeological evidence for domestic *lararia*.[6] This study focuses on Roman Pompeii from 80 BCE, the establishment of Pompeii as a Roman colony, to 79 CE, the year of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, totaling nearly 160 years of the town's long history.[7] Pompeii is an appropriate case study because of its high level of preservation. In Pompeii, there are approximately 200 preserved

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the human figure of the *Genius* in paintings with serpents, some have also suggested that the *Juno* may be one of the two snakes in *lararium* paintings, although there has been no scholarly consensus (Ibid.). There may be one be one painted human figure of the *Juno* in Pompeii alongside a *Genius* in house VII.II.39 (George K. Boyce, *Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii*, (*Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 14, 1937), no. 249, Pl. 19.2). For the *Penates*, see Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1969), 20.

[6] See Harriet I. Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2017).

[7] Pompeii's history pre-dated the Roman period by centuries. Based on the archaeological evidence of structures such as the Temple of Apollo in the forum and the Doric Temple in the Triangular Forum, Pompeii was settled by the 6th century BCE and did not become a Roman colony until after the Sullan invasion of the Social Wars in 89 BCE (Pompeii was settled as a colony officially in 80 BCE). During the centuries between, Pompeii was under the changing controls and influences of groups such as the Greeks, Etruscans, Samnites, and Oscans. Although Pompeii was technically "Roman" at the time of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE, it had only been in Roman control for about 160 years. For an extended version of this history, I recommend the third chapter ("Birth and Growth of a Roman Town") from Joanne Berry, *The Complete Pompeii* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007).

monumental tombs and over 300 domestic *lararia*.[8] No known monumental tombs date before Pompeii's Roman occupation and most *lararia* were rebuilt and redecorated after the earthquake of 62 CE.[9] In addition, there are at least eight temples preserved to some degree within the city walls, which may have influenced the designs of *lararia* and tombs and the shared rituals that occurred in each sacred space.

Historiography and Methodology

Despite brief and occasional mentions in primary sources, no extant source provides a sustained discussion of Roman household religious practice, the *Lares*, or their shrines.[10] Scholars frequently note the importance of household religion in their research, but there are few extensive discussions of these practices. To date, the most important works of scholarship related to the study of the household religion are by Ernst Samter (1901), Georg Wissowa (1902), George K. Boyce (1937), David G. Orr (1969/1972), Thomas Fröhlich (1991), Federica Giacobello (2008), Linnea Johansson (2011) and Harriet Flower (2017).[11]

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[8] Virginia Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii: Organization, Space, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2. See Boyce, *Corpus* for a catalog of the possible shrines.
[9] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 32.
[10] Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1969), 1.
[11] Ernst Samter and Alföldi Andreas, *Familienfeste Der Griechen Und Römer* Berlin: G. Reimer, 1901); Georg Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Romer* (Munchen, 1902); Orr, *Roman domestic religion (*1969); David Gerald Orr, *Roman domestic religion: a study of the Roman household deities and their shrines at Pompeii and Herculaneum* (College Park, Maryland, Diss. University of Maryland, 1972); Thomas Fröhlich, *Lararien- Und Fassadenbilder in Den Vesuvstädten: Untersuchungen Zur 'volkstümlichen' Pompejanischen Malerei* (Mainz: P. von Zabern, 1991); Federica Giacobello, *Larari pompeiani: Iconografia e culto dei Lari in ambito domestic* (LED Edizioni Universitarie, Milano, 2008); Harriet I. Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the*

In 1901, Ernst Samter began the century-long debate regarding the origin and nature of the *Lares* in modern scholarship. Samter theorized that the *Lares* were closely associated with the cult of the dead. He based his argument, in part, on a passage from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* stating that scraps of food should be burned before the *Lares* if they fell on the floor during a meal.[12] This passage has since been associated with the argument that the *Lares* were the spirits of deceased ancestors because the floor was the realm of the dead/ghosts, and therefore the food that touched the ground should belong to them.[13]

Georg Wissowa rebutted Samter's argument and became the leading voice among those arguing for the *Lares* as protectors of place associated with fertility. Wissowa argued that the *Lares* could not be the souls of deceased ancestors because the shrines were directly connected with the slaves of the house by their positions in and near kitchens and service areas.[14] Federica Giacobello has particularly pushed back against Wissowa's proposed hierarchy of space.

George K. Boyce's 1937 *Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii* is the seminal work that cataloged and described all extant household shrines in Pompeii in the hope of gaining a better understanding of domestic religion in the Roman world.[15] The goal of Boyce's publication was not to suggest the identity of the *Lares*, but rather to catalog all extant Pompeiian shrines in one publication and present a typology of

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Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner (Princeton: Princeton University, 2017).
[12] Plin. *Nat. Hist*. 28.27-28.
[13] Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1969), 10.
[14] Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Romer,* 166-174.
[15] Boyce, *Corpus,* 7.

lararia. His typology separates *lararia* into three categories: niches, paintings, and *aediculae*.[16] In addition to cataloging the shrines, Boyce described the representational elements found painted on each *lararium* and the physical objects found inside them.[17] As the canonical text concerning *lararia,* I have adopted Boyce's numbering system throughout this thesis.

David G. Orr wrote *Roman Domestic Religion: A Study of Roman Lararia* as his Master's thesis while a student under Wilhelmina Jashemski at the University of Maryland in 1969. In this document, Orr sought to collate the existing information on Roman domestic religion. Relying heavily on Boyce's work, Orr's primary contribution was his attempt to connect the literary with the physical evidence to understand the origins and potential identities of the various groups of deities worshipped in the home. Orr acknowledged Samter's theory that the *Lares* may have been the spirits of deceased ancestors, but he argued for their nature as protective deities through the use of the following passage from Plautus's *Aulularia* of the 2nd century BCE. The *Lar familiaris* delivers these opening lines of the play:

> *Ne quis miretur qui sim, paucis eloquar.*
> *ego Lar sum familiaris ex hac familia*
> *unde exeuntem me aspexistis. hanc domum*
> *iam multos annos est cum possideo et colo*
> *patri avoque iam huius qui nunc hic habet.*[18]
>
> So that no one may wonder who I am, I shall
> tell you briefly. I am the *Lar familiaris*
> of that family from where you saw me
> come. For many years now I have possessed
> this dwelling and preserved it for the father
> and grandfather of its present occupant.

[16] Boyce, *Corpus*, 10-18.
[17] See the particularly helpful index in Boyce's *Corpus*, 101-107.
[18] Pl. *Aul. prol*. 1-5.

In this passage, Plautus references the trans-generational presence of the *Lares* in Roman homes and suggests their protective powers. Although Orr used this passage to rebut Samter's claims, it does not negate the possibility of the *Lar*'s association with the dead. Orr's 1972 doctoral dissertation expanded his Master's thesis by providing a catalog of *lararia* found since 1937 in Pompeii and elsewhere in the empire. Orr's works have since deservedly become some of the most critical texts used in the study of Roman domestic religion.

Thomas Fröhlich brought *lararium* paintings to the attention of the art historical world in 1991. Although he was not explicitly concerned with the identity of the *Lares familiares*, he followed suit with Orr and understood them to be protector deities. Fröhlich's primary concern was with examining *lararium* paintings among houses of varying socio-economic levels. He sought to suggest stylistic and compositional developments in Pompeii.

The association of the *Lares familiares* as protective deities maintained scholarly authority until recent years. Federica Giacobello's *Lari Pompeiani* (2008) updates the works of Boyce and Orr. However, she argued in favor of *both* sides of the debate: that the *Lares familiares* were guardians of the *domus and* that they were manifestations of the family's ancestors.[19] In opposition to Wissowa, Giacobello suggested that the *lararium* found closest to the kitchen in a home should be considered the "primary *lararium*" of a home, while shrines found elsewhere such as in peristyles and atria are secondary.[20] In a short article titled "The Pompeiian

[19] Giacobello, *Lari Pompeiani,* 35-36.
[20] See Giacobello, *Lari Pompeiani,* Chapter Two. Her argument that *lararia* located near or in kitchens were not for slaves, but were, in fact, the primary shrines in the

Lararium as a Symbol for Commemoration" (2011), Linnea Johansson also argued in favor of the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of deceased ancestors.[21] Johansson especially focused on *lararia* in atria (what she called "small domestic museum[s]") and their consequent roles in familial commemoration.[22]

Harriet Flower recently published *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner* (2017). Flower argued against the identification of the *Lares* as spirits of the dead in favor of their identification as benevolent protectors of space.[23] Flower's publication largely used text as evidence. For example, Flower opened her book with the following passage by Varro, who wrote extensively about Roman religion in the mid-first century BCE. Varro suggested several possibilities for the origin and identity of the *Lares*, including that the *Lares* were the souls of the ancestors. This passage has unfortunately been lost and is transmitted to us through the writings of Arnobius, a late 3rd century CE Christian convert. Arnobius wrote:

> *Varro similiter haesitans nunc [Lares] esse illos Manes et ideo Maniam matrem esse cognominatam Larum, nunc aerios rursus deos et heroas pronuntiat appellari, nunc*

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home is a novel suggestion. Fröhlich's "Lararien- Und Fassadenbilder in Den Vesuvstädten" first argued the opposite and has been since maintained by scholars.

[21] Johansson additionally stated it was only in recent years that scholars began to again associate the *Lares* with the deceased, and that the general tendency before this was to argue that the *Lares* were more generic guardian gods. Linnea Johannsson, "The Pompeiian *Lararium* as a Symbol for Commemoration" in *In Memoriam: Commemoration and Communal Memory and Genders in the Ancient Graeco-Roman World*, ed. H. Whittaker (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 144-156.

[22] Johansson, "The Pompeiian *Lararium* as a Symbol for Commemoration," 150.

[23] Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden*, 5. Flower's Appendices are especially useful for scholars hoping to conduct more research on the *Lares*. They include a list of references to the *Lares* by Roman authors and a list of events on the Roman calendar that the various kinds of *Lares* were associated with.

antiquorum sentenias sequens Laruas esse dicit Lares, quasi quosdam genios, et functorum animas mortuorum.[24]

Varro is similarly hesitant, now saying that [the *Lares*] should be called the *Manes*, which is why Mania is called the mother of the *Lares*, then again gods of the air and heroes, now declaring the *Lares* to be spirits of the restless dead [*larvae*], following the opinion of the ancient writers as if they were sorts of personal protective spirits [*genii*] and the souls of those who have died.

Flower used Varro's various suggestions to argue against the validity of his statements and therefore against the identification of the *Lares familiares* as deceased family members.[25] I, however, wonder if Varro's multiple explanations are illustrative of the fact that there was confusion about the origins of the *Lares* even in the ancient world, but not necessarily of their nature or connections to the dead. Since their supposed arrival in the early years of Rome, the *Lares familiares* had become a part of daily life, so it seems natural that there may have been some confusion about their origins.

Considering the contributions of the scholars cited above to the study of domestic religion, some important issues come to the fore. There is a general lack of clarity in the ancient sources regarding the origin of the *Lares*, when they entered the home as *Lares familiares,* and their functional identity, which has caused scholars to use the same textual and archaeological evidence to reach divisive conclusions. There has also been a tendency in scholarship to more-or-less equate all types of *Lares* with one another, although they diverged into different areas of society, such as public life

[24] Arnob. *Nat*. 3.41, trans. Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner,* 7.
[25] Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner,* 7-10.

(*Lares publici)*, the crossroads (*Lares compitales*), and the domestic realm (*Lares familiares*).[26] This tendency has caused some scholars to resist arguing in favor of the *Lares familiares* as spirits of the deceased because they have not acknowledged the possibility that, over time, they may have developed other roles and associations. Moreover, scholars interested in entering the debate have indicated support either for Samter or Wissowa and have treated their arguments as mutually exclusive. These issues are problematic because they do not allow for the possibility of nuance and multivalence. Until the publications of some of the scholars listed above (Orr's particularly) most approaches have relied on text, with little or no mention of material remains. Material remains became supplemental to the argument rather than the basis for it. Furthermore, of those scholars who argued that the *Lares* were the spirits of deceased ancestors, none, from my research, have directly connected the shrines to the funerary realm. It is, therefore, perhaps worthwhile to place material remains at the forefront of research and to examine what new conclusions might be drawn by doing so.[27]

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[26] For a fuller and less general overview of the various origin stories of the *Lares*, see Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden*, 18-22.

[27] I have adopted the numbering system of Virginia Campbell's The *Tombs of Pompeii* throughout this study because it is the most recent corpus to date. Campbell's work is indebted to other scholars before her, including Jocelyn Toynbee and her seminal publication *Death and Burial in the Roman World,* which established the typology of Roman tombs, which includes, but is not limited to *aediculae*, or "little temple" tombs, house tombs, niches, vaults, and altars. J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World: Aspects of Greek and Roman Life* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1971).

The Case of Marcus Obellius Firmus

As stated earlier, I intend to enter the debate concerning the identity and nature of the *Lares familiares* by using a material approach that focuses on the remains of temples, tombs, and *lararia* in Pompeii. I have chosen to take this approach because most previous studies have relied primarily on text in lieu of material remains. Although I will certainly consider the voices of primary sources throughout this study, the materials themselves may, in fact, provide a new lens through which to view and interpret the identity of the *Lares familiares*. The best-case scenario would be to conduct this study in a location in which all houses and tombs under consideration were securely attributed to their inhabitants to examine the potential connections between their designs and representational elements, but such a body of evidence does not exist. Despite Pompeii's extraordinary preservation, relatively basic information, such as the names of the owners of many houses and tombs, is no longer extant.[28] From my searches through sources such as Campbell's appendix of Pompeiian tombs that details the information known about tomb inhabitants,[29] Boyce's *Corpus*, John Clarke's *Houses of Roman Italy,* and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill's *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*,[30] there seem to be only two securely attributed examples of houses and tombs belonging to the same person or family in Pompeii. The best-preserved example is the House and Tomb of

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[28] For naming homes in Pompeii, see Berry, *The Complete Pompeii,* 172.
[29] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 147-312.
[30] John R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991), Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Marcus Obellius Firmus (IX.14.2-4; PN1).[31] Moreover, this case study raises important questions regarding the relationship between tombs, temples, and *lararia* and introduces many of the architectural forms and representational elements that will be discussed as evidence throughout this study. As one final note, all visual elements are described herein from the viewer's perspective, e.g., "on the left" means "on the viewer's left." I have chosen this method of description because the interactions of the viewer with the design and representational elements of temples, tombs, and *lararia* were crucial to their functions for the Romans. As such, we should read them in this way.

First excavated in 1910, Obellius's large house dates to around the third century BCE. The house's attribution to Obellius derives from graffiti and election notices on and in the house.[32] Giacobello's statement that the Obellii family boasted pre-Roman origins and joined the Pompeian political elite in the age of Augustus corroborates the house's Samnite date.[33] This large home opened onto a tetrastyle

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[31] The other instance is that House and Tomb of Aulus Umbricius Scaurus (Altar tomb PE 7; House VII.16.15, linked to VII.16.12-16), although the *lararium* of the house (kitchen) is poorly preserved (Boyce, *Corpus*, No. 339).

[32] Inside: *CIL* IV 8970, *CIL* IV 8971b, *CIL* IL 8996. Outside (on this and neighboring homes): *CIL* IV 7806, *CIL* IV 3829, 6621, 3828. This appears to be a securely attributed home. One issue is that there are two Marcus Obellius Firmuses: a father and a son. It is, however, the electoral notices and the tomb belonged to the younger Obellius. See W.M. Jongman, "M. Obellius M.f. Firmus, Pompeian *Duovir*" (*Talanta* 10-11, 1978-9), 62-65. Jongman's report is outdated with regards to the dating of the tomb, etc., but it is helpful in distinguishing between Obellius the Elder and Younger. Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Reale Accademia d'Italia, and Reale Accademia dei Lincei. *Notizie Degli Scavi Di Antichità* (Roma: Tip. della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1911).

[33] Federica Giacobello, *Larari pompeiani*, 218-219.

atrium with Corinthian columns, in the northwest corner of which is an *aedicula lararium*. A second *lararium* is in the home's kitchen (Figures 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4).

The first *lararium* in the House of Marcus Obellius Firmus is a freestanding *aedicula* in the northwest corner of the atrium.[34] The *aedicula*'s two pediments, pilasters, and freestanding Doric column stand upon a masonry podium. The *lararium* is simply painted: the walls of the shrine are white with thin green and red bands and red pediments. A small arched niche, presumably for storage, is in the south side of the shine's base, and a low step, upon which three statuettes were found, runs along the interior walls of the shrine.[35] One of the statuettes was a herm made of white marble, although its surfaces were too worn, even at the time of excavation, to detect any features.[36] The second statuette was a worn terracotta bust of a male figure that stood upon a square terracotta base decorated in relief.[37] Descriptions of the statuette reveal that, although most of the statuette's features are indistinguishable, it has a pointed chin and clearly defined eyes.[38] The third statuette was another male bust with a pointed face, similar to the one just described.[39] In addition to the statuettes, a

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[34] Boyce, *Corpus,* No. 67, Plate 29.3.
[35] The first statuette described was discovered against the north wall at the westernmost end, to the right of which was the second statuette. The third stood against the west wall (Boyce, *Corpus*, 31).
[36] Boyce, *Corpus*, 31; See *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* (1911), 333-334 for descriptions of the three statuettes.
[37] Boyce and the *Notizie* both mention that a horn-like feature protrudes from the left side of this figure's head, which joins to the right side of the base. The suggest a similar horn likely could have been on the right side as well. However, I have not been able to locate photos of these statuettes (Boyce, *Corpus*, 31; *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* (1911), 334.
[38] Ibid.
[39] This statuette, however, did not have the horns associated with the previous statuette (Ibid.).

terracotta lamp, a coin dating to Caligula's reign (37-41 CE), a small terracotta altar, and an iron container for coals were found in the atrium shrine of Obellius's house.

The second *lararium* in the House of Obellius is in the kitchen, located off of the southwest corner of the small atrium in the service quarters (Figures 1.2-3).[40] The painting, which is on the kitchen's south wall, consists of an arched niche surrounded by a simple painted *aedicula* with slender columns supporting a red pediment, on which a sizeable green disc painted as marble rests. Thick spots of red, green, and yellow with a painted *Genius* holding a cornucopia in his left hand and a *patera* in his right adorn the inside of the niche.[41] A series of other figures populate the space beside and below. Two dancing *Lares* holding rhyta and *situlae* flank the niche. Garlands, typical decorations on both tombs and *lararia*, hang above each *Lar*.[42] A pig advances on the right below the niche, and a banquet of three men and three women lounge around a *triclinium* couch on the left.[43] One diner, a male, stands with raised wine glasses at the center of the scene. Between and slightly below the pig and the banquet, a snake slithers through simply painted vegetation. Finally, a painted

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[40] Boyce, *Corpus*, No. 68.

[41] The *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* (1911), incorrectly labeled the *Genius* as Fortuna (214). Based on the artistic tradition of men painted with dark skin tones and women painted with light skin tones, Boyce discerned that the figure was a man that conformed to the more traditional schema of the Genius (*Corpus*, 31).

[42] According to Boyce, the *Lares* were painted more than once on the basis that their previous iterations may still be seen (*Corpus*, 34). Because of the poor preservation of the *lararium* painting today and the low quality black and white photos of it from 1911 and 1937, I rely on the descriptions of the shrine provided by the *Notizie* (1911), 214, Boyce, *Corpus*, 31. Giacobello, who also described the shrine, also relied heavily on these descriptions because the shrine likely stood in a similar, if not slightly better, state of preservation (*Lari Pompeiani*, 218-219).

[43] The sex of the diners is discernable through skin tone color (Fröhlich, *Lararien-Und Fassadenbilder in Den Vesuvstädten,* 299).

figure of Hercules, holding a club on his shoulder, stands outside of the *aedicula* between the kitchen's entrance and the *lararium*.[44]

The Tomb of Marcus Obellius Firmus is a so-called house tomb made of lava and brick, covered in a layer of white stucco (Figure 1.6). The façade of the tomb includes a pediment, painted red and surrounded by a simple stucco cornice that has no structural bearing on the tomb itself (Figure 1.7). A marble *columella* and tiles covering a ceramic libation tube leading to a blue glass urn were found within the tomb during early excavations.[45] According to the marble inscription set into the pediment of this tomb, Marcus Obellius Firmus was a Pompeiian *aedile* and *duovir* (PN1) (Figure 1.5).[46] The inscription likewise reveals that the council of *decuriones* in Pompeii provided Obellius a funeral grant of 5,000 sesterces, which is more than double the traditional monetary grant.[47] In addition, non-Pompeian localities provided him with a number of gifts, including incense, perfume, and shields.[48] Some scholars

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[44] Boyce, *Corpus*, 31.
[45] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 206.
[46] *M(arco) Obellio M(arcio) f(ilio) Firmo aedile/IIvir(o) i(ire) d(icundo) huic decuriones loc(um)/ sepulturae et in funer(ibus) (sesteriums) <quinque milia> censuer(unt) Pagani/ thuris p(ondera) XXX et clupeum ministr(i) eor(um) in odorib(us) (sestertium) <mille> et clupeum* [To Marcus Obellius Firmus, son of Marcus, *aedile*, *duovir* with judicial powers to whom the *decuriones* gave this place for burial and five thousand sesterces for the funeral and the *pagani* gave thirty pounds of incense and a shield, and the ministers gave one thousand sesterces for scents and a shield.] (Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 207.)
[47] 2,000 sesterces seems to have been the standard funereal grant, awarded to magistrates including Gaius Vestorius Priscus and Aulus Umbricius Scaurus (Guy de la Bédoyère, *Cities of Roman Italy: Pompeii, Herculaneum, Ostia* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2010), 86-89.)
[48] Guy de la Bédoyère, *Cities of Roman Italy,* Ibid. According to the limited number of extant inscriptions stating so, awarding money for a funeral in Pompeii was limited to a small number of individuals [PE33, PE7 (Aulus Umbricius Scaurus), PV2, PV4 (Priscus), PN1(Obellius)] (Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 98). For Obellius's gifts: Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 97.

suggest that the tomb dates between 14 and 54 CE, while others, including the most recent excavators, date the tomb to after the earthquake of 62 CE.[49] The recent excavators favor the post-62 date because, among other factors, a coin dating between 66 and 69 CE was found among the grave goods in the tomb enclosure.[50]

Collectively, the visual parallels between the *lararia* and tomb of Marcus Obellius Firmus prompt questions about not only shared design but also about possible parallel uses of these built structures. After all, tombs have generally been considered as the homes of the dead.[51] It would be simple to connect the Tomb of Obellius to domestic architecture, but I wonder if its pediment, which is not necessary for the structural stability of the tomb, could also be read as a subtle imitation of temple architecture. After all, the gods, too, dwelled in temples. Could *lararia* be interpreted as the homes of the spirits of dead? Consider, for example, the *aedicula* shape of the atrium *lararium* and the painted *aedicula* on the kitchen *lararium*. Moreover, I wonder, if there is a visual connection between the shapes of *lararia* and

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[49] For the 14-54 CE date, see Campbell, The Tombs of Pompeii, 207; For the 62-79 CE date, see Stephen Kay, "New research and discoveries at the Necropolis of Porta Nola," *Life at the BSR: The Blog of the British School at Rome,* October 1, 2015, https://britishschoolatrome.wordpress.com/2015/10/01/new-research-from-the-porta-nola-necropolis-project-in-pompeii/ and personal correspondence with Dr. Llorenç Alapont Martin, one of the directors of the project.

[50] Stephen Kay, "New research and discoveries at the Necropolis of Porta Nola," (2015).

[51] For the tomb as the home for the dead, see Wallace-Hadrill, "Housing the Dead: The Tomb as House in Roman Italy," (2008), 39-77. Epigraphy is helpful in establishing the tomb as the eternal home (*domus aeterna)* of the deceased*,* although none of the extant inscriptions in Pompeii use this phrase. Scholars commonly use the following inscription from Rome to illustrate the point: *haec est domus aeterna, hic est/fundus, heis sunt horti, hoc/ est monumentum nostrum* (*CIL* 6.9583).

tombs, could some of the representational elements on *lararia*, such as figures and objects, also be interpreted in relation to the dead?

Aims and Evidence of this Study

The connection between the shape of *lararia*, tombs, and the representational elements depicted on and kept in *lararia* prompts a serious re-consideration of the previously proposed identification of the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of deceased ancestors. I have organized this study into two parts that rely on the material remains of, largely, tombs and *lararia* from Pompeii as primary sources of evidence. In Part 2, I consider the elements of formal design that may connect *lararia* not only with temple architecture, but also with tomb design. This connection may reveal a relationship between the *Lares familiares* and the dead. In Part 3, I analyze a series of two- and three-dimensional representational designs that may suggest a similar visual connection between the *Lares* and the dead. Some of the elements I consider are scenes of food and dining, Hercules, snakes, Mercury, and the *Lares* themselves. Throughout this study, I will refer to the following houses and tombs: The House of Marcus Obellius Firmus (IX.14.2-4), the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1), the House of the Flamen (V.4.3), the House of the Cryptoporticus (I.6.2), the House of the Menander (I.10.4), the Tomb of Obellius (PN1), the Tomb of Gaius Vestorius Priscus (PV2), the Tomb of Marcus Porcius (PE3), and the Tomb of Publius Vesonius Phileros (PNc50). I selected the homes listed above because, together, they exhibit a range of formal and compositional styles evident in the greater corpus of Pompeii's *lararia* and because they exhibit the various locations within a house *lararia* may be

found. I selected the tombs listed above because they are examples of the two most popular types of Pompeiian tomb (altar tombs and *aediculae*), which also closely mimic temple architecture and elements of religious practice.[52]

[52] One tomb type maintained its popularity throughout the entirety of Pompeii's Roman history: the altar tomb, which comprises 14% of the total tombs in Pompeii. Even though *aediculae* ceased to appear in the final one or two decades of Pompeii, they constitute an impressive 17% of the total tombs in Pompeii, and are, therefore, the most frequently used monumental tomb type (Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 40).

Part 2: Design

Domestic *lararia* were shrines dedicated to the household gods, including the *Genius*, *Penates*, and *Lares familiares*, and overt visual similarities between *lararia* and temples make it easy to infer that the design of the former was based, at least in part, on the latter.[53] Given, however, the possibility that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of deceased ancestors, it seems prudent to consider whether a connection might also be drawn between the design of *lararia* and tombs.[54] This proposed relationship does not deny that temple design was an influence on the design of *lararia*, but rather considers the possibility that there was an alternative source of inspiration.

George K. Boyce was the first to create a corpus of all extant *lararia* in Pompeii in 1937.[55] In the introduction to the *Corpus*, Boyce proposed a tripartite typology of *lararia*, dividing them into niches, *aediculae* ("little temples"), and stand-alone paintings.[56] Although not always permanent features of *lararia*, altars were critical to the performance of domestic rituals that often included the provision of offerings of food and wine (see, for example, figures 2.1 and 2.2).[57] In 1971, Jocelyn

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[53] For a well-illustrated introduction to the study of domestic religion, see Alexandra Sofroniew, *Household Gods: Private Devotion in Ancient Greece and Rome* (*Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum*, 2015).
[54] See Introduction, 2-8.
[55] George K. Boyce, *Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii*, (*Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 14, 1937).
[56] Ibid, 10-18.
[57] Domestic altars extant appear as either permanent masonry altars built into the ground or wall (see Figure 2.1) or as small portable altars (see Figure 2.2). The

Toynbee established the typology of Roman tombs that includes *aedicula* tombs, house tombs, niches, vaults, and altars.[58] Although the names of the kinds of *lararia* and tombs are modern attributions, there is something to be said for their similar names and forms. Moreover, it is curious that *aediculae* and altars (features most commonly associated with temples) are prevalent throughout the extant corpora of both *lararia* and tombs.

It would be simple to suggest a trickle-down effect between temples and tombs and temples and *lararia*. Although I do not deny the clear connections between temples and tombs and temples and *lararia*, there may be second way to interpret the design of *lararia.* This suggestion is borne out by shared elements between the designs of *lararia* and tombs. Keeping in mind the particularly strong case of Obellius discussed in the Introduction, in which a house and tomb are attributed to the same individual, let us now explore other examples that visually suggest connections between *lararia* and tombs. If there is a formal connection between the two kinds of spaces, there may be a consequent relationship between the *Lares familiares* and the spirts of deceased family members.

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portable altars were quite small and could easily fit into the niche of a *lararium* (see Boyce, *Corpus*, Plates 5.2 and 333.2).

[58] J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World: Aspects of Greek and Roman Life* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1971).

Aediculae

House of the Vettii (VI.15.1)

Although the names of most houses in Pompeii are modern inventions, there are a few homes securely named for their last inhabitants. One example is the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1), which received its name because of a combination of *programmata*, signet rings, and the records of the banker Lucius Caecilius Iucundus.[59] Aulus Vettius Restitutus and Aulus Vettius Conviva, two freedmen brothers, lived together in the House of the Vettii at the time of the eruption.[60] According to an electoral *programa* located in the vicinity of the house, Aulus Vettius Conviva was an *Augustalis*, or priest of the cult of Augustus in Pompeii, perhaps the highest status a freedman could achieve.[61]

The House of the Vettii was excavated from 1894-1895 and was the first house to be entirely restored in Pompeii (Figure 2.2).[62] Famous for its extensive Fourth Style wall paintings and statuary depicting mythological scenes, the House of the Vettii is considered by some to be the most richly decorated home in Pompeii.[63]

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[59] For naming homes in Pompeii, see Berry, *The Complete Pompeii,* 172; Mau, *Pompeii*, 322.
[60] John R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991), 208.
[61] Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy,* 208; August Mau, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, trans. Francis W. Kelsey (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 322; *CIL* IV, 3509; See Penelope Allison "Placing Individuals: Pompeian Epigraphy in Context" (*Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology*, 14.1), 11-13 for a discussion about the association of the house with the Vettii brothers.
[62] Joanne Berry, *The Complete Pompeii* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 174; Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art*, 322.
[63] Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy*, 208. Its plan is typical of a Roman house except for its omission of a *tablinum* (Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 51).

Scholars have also noted that the House of the Vettii is composed of two houses combined during the first century BCE.[64] The *lararium* is on the west wall of the secondary atrium of the house (Figure 2.3, *v,* and 2.4). This secondary atrium is, according to Wallace-Hadrill, located within the service quarters, indicated in Figure 2.5 by the diagonal lines (see also Figure 2.6). The room to the northwest of the second atrium is the house's kitchen (Figure 2.3, *w*).

One of the largest and finest *lararia* in Pompeii, this is one of three shrines on which a painting accompanies an *aedicula*.[65] The *aedicula* itself closely resembles the form and decoration of a temple and, like most of the visible iterations of *lararia* in Pompeii, dates to after the earthquake of 62 CE.[66] The *aedicula* appears as a rectangular niche supported by two Corinthian half-columns, which support the architrave and pediment. Decorated on three sides with triple bands of ornate red, blue, and yellow stucco, the pediment depicts in relief, a *patera* flanked by a garlanded *bucranium* to the left and a sacrificial knife to the right (Figure 2.7). I will describe and discuss these stucco elements and the *lararium*'s painting in Part 3, but,

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[64] Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy,* 208. The home's wall paintings were of interest to August Mau, who described them in his 1907 *Pompeii: Its Life and Art* as the most remarkable paintings found in Pompeii: Mau, *Pompeii*, 327; Also reference Mau's excavation reports from the House of the Vettii: August Mau, "Scavi di Pompei, 1894¬95, Reg. VI, Isola ad E della 11," Römische Mitteilungen 11 (1896): 3-97. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, too, characterized the home's frescoes as "richly colored and minutely worked masterpieces" (Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 166). Some examples of the paintings include the infant Hercules strangling the serpents and Pentheus torn apart by the Bacchantes, located off the large peristyle in the sight line of the house's front door (Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art,* 339).

[65] The other examples: Boyce, *Corpus*, the House of the Red Walls (No. 371, Pl. 31) and the House of Epidius Rufus (No. 385, Pl. 29.2).

[66] Mau, *Pompeii: Its Life and Art,* 328.

in short, the *lararium* painting is composed of a *Genius* and two flanking, dancing *Lares* in the upper register and a snake eating offerings from a round altar in the lower register (see Figure 2.4). The design of this *lararium* seems to be straightforwardly influenced by the design of temples. However, similar elements of the design appear in the funerary realm in Pompeii. I wonder if the design of tombs and *lararia* could also be in conversation with one another. In the pages following, I will discuss the two types of tombs that most closely resemble temple design (*aedicula* and altar), after which I will return to *aedicula lararia* from other homes and from the House of the Vettii.

Aedicula *Tombs*

The most popular type of tomb in Pompeii was the kind that most closely resembled temple design: *aedicula* tombs.[67] One of the best-preserved *aedicula* tombs in Pompeii is the Tomb of Publius Vesonius Phileros (Figure 2.8, PNc50).[68] The tomb, which is made of tufa and brick, was covered in a thin profile of stucco, little of which remains today. A niche topped with a pediment rests on a podium and is roofed with overhanging brick tiles to resemble the roof of a temple. Three now-headless tufa statues stand within the niche: a woman wearing a chiton and holding a torch

[67] *Aedes* is the Latin word for "temple building." *Aedicula* is its diminutive form. Even though *aediculae* ceased to appear in the final one or two decades of Pompeii, they constitute an impressive 17% of the total tombs in Pompeii. Virginia Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii: Organization, Space, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 40. The exteriors and interiors of tombs, their sculpted décor, and accompanying portraits may have been painted, so one must visualize necropoleis as more colorful than they appear today (Hope, *Roman Death,* 161).
[68] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 268-270.

flanked by two togate men (see Figure 2.8). Eighteen *columellae* surround the tomb.[69] The first of the tomb's two inscriptions embedded into the podium reads:

P(ublius) Vesonivs (mulieris) l(ibertus)
Phileros Augustalis
vivos monument(um)
fecit sibi et svis.
Vesoniae P(ubli) f(iliae)
patronae et
M(arco) Orfellio M(arci) l(iberto)
Favsto amico.

Publius Vesonius Phileros, freedman of a woman,
Built this monument for himself and his own,
To Vesonia, daughter of Publius, patrona, and
To Marcus Orfellius Faustus, freedman of Marcus, friend.[70]

This inscription reveals the identity of the three statues as Publius Vesonius Phileros, his patroness Vesonia, and his friend Marcus Orfellius. The inscription further reveals that Vesonius and Orfellius were both freedmen and that Vesonius remained close with Vesonia after obtaining his freedom. His ability to construct such an impressive funerary monument reveals his acquired wealth. His earned status and participation in Roman religion is evident through the later addition of the word "*Augustalis*," the highest status a freedman could achieve in Pompeii.[71] Prior to or anticipation of the addition of this title to his tomb inscription, it is possible that Vesonius decided to build his tomb in emulation of a temple in order to project his improved status.

According to Maureen Carroll, the popularity of altar tombs in Pompeii (discussed below) may have been because of their emulation of sacrificial altars.[72]

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[69] Ibid.
[70] *AE* 1986: 166, trans. Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 269.
[71] Berry, *The Complete Pompeii*, 96.
[72] Maureen Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 46.

Their use of the altar shape, which is clearly related to religious architecture and ritual, emphasized the sanctity of the burial site and "underscored the nature of the grave as a *locus religiosus* [sacred space]."[73] This statement is also likely true in the case of *aediculae* tombs, which are more numerous than altar tombs in Pompeii.[74] The *aedicula* tomb's extensive use and its connection to religious practices exhibit ways that tomb design, decoration, and ritual reinforced the sacred elements of Roman funerary practices.

The panel of the second inscription, located below the inscription just described, on the Tomb of Publius Vesonius Phileros was added to the tomb later. The inscription directly connects this tomb to the household gods and perhaps references the inclusion of deceased family members in the household cult:

Hospes puvllisper morare
Si non est molestvm et quid evites
cognosce. amicum hunc quem
Sperаueram mi esse ab eo mihi accusato
Res subiecti et iudicia instaurata deis
Gratias ago et meae innocentiae omni
Molestia liberatus sum qui nostrum mentitur
Eum nec di penates nec inferi recipiant.

Stranger, stop if it is no bother and know what to avoid.
A man I hoped would be a friend to me,
brought accusers onto me and instigated legal proceedings.
I thank the gods and my innocence,
I am relieved of all distress who misrepresents our case,
he neither the household gods or the gods of the underworld shall receive.[75]

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[73] Ibid. According to Cicero, *Digest* 11.8.1.5, as soon as human remains were placed inside a funerary monument, it becomes sacred (*religiosus*).
[74] Altar tombs comprise 14% of the total tombs in Pompeii, while *aediculae* comprise 17%. Unlike *aedicula*e, which did not appear within the last 10-15 years of Pompeii's history, altars tombs remains consistently popular up until the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE (Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 40).
[75] *AE* 1964: 160 = *AE* 1986: 166b, trans. Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 269.

This inscription is crucial to this chapter's argument that *lararia* and tombs (and consequently the *Lares familiares* and the spirits of the dead) may have been in conversation with one another through design. It would appear that Vesonius and Orfellius had a disagreement that involved legal action. Rather than removing Ofellius's name and likeness from the tomb (a *damnatio memoriae*), Vesonius added this inscription made from a dull gray marble slab, whose language imitates a curse tablet (*defixio*).[76] *Defixiones*, according to Beard, North, and Price, were formulaic texts created by living that invocated the supernatural powers of either the gods or the dead against others in order to win competitions, obtain revenge, or ensure love.[77] According to Carroll, a *damnatio memoriae* could only take place before interment of human remains in a burial area. After the burial, the area became a *locus religiosus* and could not be violated.[78] Recent archaeological work near the tomb revealed that the area intended for Orfellius's burial had been destroyed, including the erasure of his name on his *columella*, and the infilling of his libation tube and unused cinerary urn. More damning is that the burial area intended for Orfellius was sealed with plaster and embedded with black stones spelling out Phileros's name.[79] To deny one

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[76] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 72. For *defixiones*, see Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price. *Religions of Rome, Volume 2: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 266.
[77] Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome, vol. 2*, 266.
[78] Maureen Carroll. 2011. "*Memoria* and *Damnatio Memoriae:* Preserving and Erasing Identities in Roman Funerary Commemoration," in *Living Through the Dead: Burial and Commemoration in the Classical World,* Maureen Carroll and Jane Rempel, eds. Oxford, 75.
[79] William van Andringa et al. "Il riti e la morte a Pompei: nuove ricerche archeologiche nella necropolis di Porta Nocera," in *Nuove ricerche archeoloigiche nell'area vesuviana (Scavi 2003-2006),* eds. P.G. Guzzo and M.P. Guidobaldi (Roma: : "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2008), 282; Sebastien Lepetz and William van Andringa, *"Publius Vesonius Phileros vivos monumentum fecit*: Investigations in a sector of the

of a proper burial prevented one's soul from moving to the next world, and perhaps the second inscription on Vesonius's tomb may imply, through the mention of the household gods and the gods of the Underworld, a denial of one's entrance into the cult of the *Lares familiares* worshipped at *lararia*.[80]

Altar Tombs

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the altar tomb was the second most popular type of tomb in Pompeii after the *aedicula* tomb. Like *aediculae*, the shape of altar tombs recalls important design elements of Roman public religious spaces, such as the well-preserved altar of the temple of the *Genius Augusti,* on the east side of the Pompeiian forum (Figure 2.9). However, the shape of altar tombs may have also referenced the importance of altars in domestic religious practices. Just as altars were the most critical elements of temples for the provisions of animal sacrifice, food, and drink, altars were also necessary for similar rituals before *lararia* in homes and at tombs. The rituals at the tomb transformed the grave into a sacred space, and thus perhaps marked the deceased's transformation into a *Lar familiaris*.[81]

A famous example of the latest style of altar tomb is the Tomb of Gaius Vestorius Priscus (PV2, Figure 2.10), which consists of a small altar raised over an elaborately painted, unroofed enclosure with high walls. Based on the years Priscus

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Porta Nocera cemetery in Roman Pompeii," 119; William van Andringa et al. *Mourir à Pompéi: fouille d'un quartier funéraire de la nécropole romaine de Porta Nocera (2003-2007),* (Rome: Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2013), 428-431, figure 258b for the grave of Orfellius.

[80] Lucret., *De rerum natura,* 3.870-93.

[81] Cic. *Dig.* 11.8.1.5.

held political office as *aedile* and the style of the paintings and stucco work, this tomb is dated to 75-76 CE, in the very last years of Pompeii.[82] The upper part of the altar of the tomb is visible to passersby and is carved in stucco relief on all four sides with Bacchic figures, including a reclining satyr with a cornucopia and dancing maenads with *paterae*. Four merlons and *omphaloi* painted in red extend from the base of the altar. Serpents coil around the *omphaloi* (Figures 2.11 and 2.12). This representational grouping is also depicted on *lararia*, which I will discuss in Part 3.[83]

The interior of the enclosure is accessible through a small door on the west side of the tomb, which reveals the Fourth Style wall paintings that depict religious elements and scenes relating to Priscus's short life. Although I will discuss several of these scenes in Part 3, such as the dining scene (Figure 2.13, Wall Two), a silver service scene (Figure 2.13, Wall Four) , and a circular altar (Figure 2.13, Wall Six), I will discuss one scene here because it references an element of design relevant to the present discussion (Figure 2.13, Wall Nine).[84] Wall Nine of Priscus's tomb depicts an *aedicula*, painted with a vibrant array of yellows and whites on a red background (Figure 2.14). The *aedicula*'s triangular pediment, which includes a red circle in its

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[82] For the graffiti and *dipinti*, see: *CIL* IV.9160, 9161; The inscription on the altar reads: *C(aio) Vestorio Prisco aedili(i). / Vixit annis XXII. / Locus sepulturae datus et in / funere (sestertium) <duo milia> / d(ecreto) d(ecurionum). / Mulvia Prisca mater p(ecunia) s(ua).* [To Gaius Vestorius Priscus, aedile. He lived twenty-two years. The place of burial and two-thousand sesterces for the Funeral were given by decree of the decuriones. Mulvia Prisca, his mother, paid (for this) with her own money], trans. Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 202.

[83] Clarke interprets the four merlons as small altars resembling those found within Roman homes Clarke, in fact, explicitly stated that the serpents coiling around the *omphaloi* on Priscus's tomb are similar to serpents on domestic altars (*Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 189). The *omphaloi* and the coiled snakes resemble the *omphalos* from the *lararium* of the House of the Flamen (V.4.3).

[84] Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 188, Figure 102.

center, rests upon thin columns.[85] Curiously, the *aedicula*'s large, white doors are half open. According to Virginia Campbell, it was typical to depict life and death side-by-side in Roman art, linked by a half-open door symbolizing the transition between the realms of the living and the dead.[86] In ritual, too, it was the door of the house—a liminal space— that separated the living from the dead. For example, the living carried the deceased's body through the doors of the home to the grave during the funerary procession.[87]

Another example of half-open doors in Pompeiian funerary art is found in the Tomb of Naevoleia Tyche, an altar tomb that dates to 50-60 CE (PE13, Figure 2.15).[88] A small bust of Tyche, a freedwoman and the commissioner of the tomb, is depicted on the street-facing side of her tomb, framed by shutters. Although this feature may be technically characterized as a representational element rather than a design feature, I raise this discussion because it references elements of design by its use of half-open doors. Peter Stewart argued that this style of portrait frame sought to emulate the wooden cabinets used for the display of ancestor portraits in Roman homes.[89] Harriet Flower described the use of these portraits in funerary contexts as an attempt to publicly construct a family's heritage, similar to how this was

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[85] The red circle may represent a *patera*, which often adorns the pediments of domestic *lararia.*
[86] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 125.
[87] Valerie Hope, *Roman Death: Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London; New York: Continuum, 2009), 74-75.
[88] Ibid., 173.
[89] Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 92.

accomplished in the home through the display of images of the ancestors.[90] As a freedwoman, Naevoleia Tyche would not necessarily have had a large extended family of her own at the time she was buried, but the decision to depict herself framed by half-open shutters connected her likeness to the living, especially to the future generations of her family, who would have been included in this tomb and would have come to it for the performance of rituals throughout each year.[91] I consider this sentiment about Tyche's status as a freedwoman to be critical for understanding the *lararium* in the House of the Vettii, discussion of which began this chapter.

Considering the connections I have made between the designs of the *lararium* from the House of the Vettii, *aedicula* tombs, altar tombs, and the importance of doors as liminal spaces, I may be able to begin to debunk one of the longest-standing arguments against the identification of the *Lares familiares* with the sprits of the dead. In arguing against the *Lares* as the spirits of deceased ancestors, Fröhlich claimed that slaves would have used the *lararia* near kitchens.[92] However, there is only one *lararium* in the House of the Vettii. It seems likely that the shrine dates to after the earthquake of 62 CE, which renders its placement in the secondary atrium as unrelated to the first-century BCE combination of the two older homes that comprise

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[90] Harriet I. Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 258.

[91] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 126. Although Tyche commissioned this tomb for herself and her husband, Gaius Munatius Faustus, neither her nor her husband's remains have been found within the chamber of the tomb. Although several urns were discovered within the tomb, only two were accompanied by inscribed columellae: one for a 57-year old freedman of Faustus named Gaius Munatius Atimetus, and a six-year-old slave named Salvius (Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 172-174).

[92] Fröhlich, *Lararien- Und Fassadenbilder in Den Vesuvstädten: Untersuchungen Zur 'volkstümlichen' Pompejanischen Malerei,*

the house. If Fröhlich's suggestion is correct, I find it strange that a *lararium* so elaborately decorated would have been used only by the slaves of the home. Instead, this *lararium* provided an opportunity for the Vettii, two freedmen (just as Tyche was a freedwoman), to *create* their family's history and give themselves a past, a present, and a future, knowing they would be worshipped at their *lararium* by their future family members after their deaths.

Lararia ***and atria as spaces of commemoration***

Although the *lararium* from the House of the Vettii is in the secondary atrium of the home, its aedicular design and location within an atrium prompts discussion about the importance of the primary atrium in domestic religion in Pompeii. According to Orr, there are at least 56 *lararia* in the atria of Pompeii, and they most regularly appear as *aediculae*.[93] This count does not include the potentially large number of *aedicula lararia* made from organic materials (e.g., wood) that were destroyed during the eruption (see Figure 2.16).

The atrium **larariu**m ***in the House of the Menander (I.10.4)***

The location of *lararia* in the primary atria of homes, reinforced by their design, may offer another reason to associate the *Lares familiares* with the spirits of the dead. The House of the Menander was excavated by Amedeo Maiuri from 1926

[93] David G. Orr, *Roman domestic religion: a study of the Roman* lararia (College Park, Maryland, Thesis, University of Maryland, 1969), 81.

until 1932 (Figure 2.17).[94] This home is famous for its palatial size, wall paintings (Figure 2.18), private bath complex, and luxury objects, such as a hoard of silver dinnerware.[95] At its core, the House of the Menander, which originally dates to the third century BCE, assumes the form of a traditional Roman house with an atrium, *tablinum*, and peristyle on the same axis as the *fauces*; the plan's irregularity derived from the acquisition of neighboring properties in the following centuries.[96] Figure 2.19 marks the locations of the six *lararia* in the House of the Menander.[97] Two of the shrines are particularly helpful in connecting *lararia* with tombs and the *Lares familiares* with the spirits of the dead because of their locations in the home, contents,

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[94] Amedeo Maiuri, *La Casa Del Menandro: E Il Suo Tesoro Di Argenteria* (Roma: La Libreria dello stato, 1933).

[95] The home was perhaps owned by Quintus Poppaeus, who may have been related to Nero's second wife, Poppaea Sabina. A bronze seal bearing the name Quintus Poppaeus Eros, a freedman of Quintus Poppaeus, was found in room 43, part of the service quarters of the house (Salvatore Ciro Nappo, "Houses of Regions I and II" in *The World of Pompeii,* ed. Dobbins and Foss, 367; Bedoyere, *Cities of Roman Italy,* 70). The presence of this seal does not securely attribute the home to Poppaeus, although a house as palatial as this seems fitting for an individual of high status (Clarke, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 177). According to Clarke, the commissioners of the House of the Menander's decorative cycle reveal a predilection for highly dramatic pictorial cycles illustrated by the depiction of climactic moment in myths. For example, there are paintings of scenes from the Trojan cycle, such as Ajax dragging Cassandra from the Palladium and the Death of Laocoön, and other mythological stories such as Perseus and Andromeda and the punishment of Dirce (Clarke, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 177-185).

[96] Guy de la Bédoyère, *Cities of Roman Italy: Pompeii, Herculaneum, Ostia* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2010)*,* 71-72.

[97] The other four *lararia* in the house are as follows: 1. Kitchen *lararium*, no longer preserved. At the time of Boyce's 1937 *Corpus*, only the corner of a serpent's tail was once visible near the hearth (*Corpus*, No. 51). 2. A *lararium* and masonry altar with two cavities for offerings was found underneath a stairwell (*Corpus*, No. 50). 3. Arched niche with projecting floor, west wall of the small atrium on the east side of the house above a low hearth. Its painting is not preserved, but one small plate and three single-nozzle terracotta lamps were found *in situ* on the ledge (*Corpus*, No. 52). 4. A coarsely, yet brightly *lararium* painting of the *Lares* themselves on the west wall of another room located off the small atrium (*Corpus*, No. 53).

and levels of preservation. The *aedicula lararium* in the atrium will be discussed here and the *lararium* in the peristyle (the so-called shrine of the *imagines maiorum*) will be discussed in Part 3.

In the House of the Menander, a black dado zone, red and yellow paint, and panels depicting Nilotic and marine scenes decorate the walls of the atrium.[98] In the northwest corner of the atrium is an *aedicula lararium*, with a podium painted like marble; Tuscan columns painted like porphyry support an architrave and two pediments (Figure 2.20).[99] The architraves and tympana are surrounded by elaborate, polychrome stucco designs, although most of the stucco decoration has deteriorated. According to Boyce's description, two *hippocampi* between wreaths and *taeniae* once decorated the tympana in low relief.[100] According to Boyce, the low concave shelf running along the interior of the *aedicula* was once painted with white garlands, although they are no longer visible today.[101] Like a real temple, the "doors" of this *aedicula* could be closed, indicated by the plaster cast of a latticed wooden screen made during the shine's excavation.[102]

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[98] Nappo, "Houses of Regions I and II," 369. See Boyce, *Corpus*, 27 and Giacobello, *Lari Pompeiani*, 253 for fuller descriptions of this shrine. The information presented in this paragraph may be sighted to these sources and my own visual analysis.
[99] Boyce, *Corpus*, No. 48; According to Boyce and Maiuri, this *aedicula* was built against the already existing fourth style wall paintings in the House of the Menander. It is likely, then, that the *lararium* dates to after the earthquake of 62 CE (Boyce, *Corpus* 27; Maiuri, *Casa del Menandro*, 35).
[100] These were still visible in 1957 when Stanley Jashemski photographed the shrine (Figure 42).
[101] Boyce, *Corpus*, No. 48.
[102] According to Giacobello, the cast of the wooden screen is the only example of this in Pompeii (Federica Giacobello, *Larari pompeiani: Iconografia e culto dei Lari in ambito domestic* (LED Edizioni Universitarie, Milano, 2008), 232).

As argued above, the location of this *aedicula lararium* in the House of the Menander's atrium is significant and it may provide more evidence for a connection between the *Lares familiares* and the family's deceased ancestors. The atrium was the room in which guests were received, business was conducted, family rituals were performed, and reverence for a family's history was exhibited.[103] According to Johansson, wealthy Roman families (which certainly included the inhabitants of the House of the Menander) would have displayed the portrait busts of ancestors, military spoils, family heirlooms, and large and elaborate *lararia* in the atrium.[104] It was at the *lararium* of the house that a boy was recognized as a man in the *toga virilis* ceremony and it was at the *lararium* that a woman officially joined her husband's family through marriage.[105] In addition to the rituals celebrating such rites of passage, the atrium was also the location of important funerary rites and rituals of mourning when a person died. In the atrium, the body of the deceased was washed, anointed, laid on a bier, adorned with garlands and incense, and displayed for visitors to mourn.[106] By assuming the form of a miniature temple with cult statuettes and wooden doors to open during times of ritual, therefore, the atrium *lararium* became a place where the household gods were worshipped in the presence of the ancestral images surrounding them. The ancestors could better preside over important rites of passage for the living

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[103] Clarke, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 6-7; Linnea Johannsson, "The Pompeiian *Lararium* as a Symbol for Commemoration" in *In Memoriam: Commemoration and Communal Memory and Genders in the Ancient Graeco-Roman World*, ed. H. Whittaker (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 150.
[104] Johansson, Ibid.
[105] Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1969), 9-10, 81.
[106] Hope, *Roman Death*, 71-75. For washing and preparing the body for the *prothesis*, see Verg. *Aen*. 4.83, 9.486-489.

family and welcome the recently deceased into the family cult, while the *lararium* itself became a critical site of commemoration in the home.[107]

The lararia *of Marcus Obellius Firmus (IX.14.2-4)*

In the Introduction, I first discussed the two *lararia* from of the House of Marcus Obellius Firmus. One *lararium* is an *aedicula lararium* in the atrium, inside of which statuettes, a coin, and a lamp were found (see Figure 1.1). The second *lararium* consisted of an arched niche and a series of painted scenes. The *lararium* in the atrium looks similar to the atrium *lararium* from the House of the Menander (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). The *lararium*'s contents, which I will discuss in Part 3 in relation to the so-called *imagines maiorum* from the House of the Menander, may strengthen connections between *lararia* and the ancestors of the family, whom I interpret as the *Lares familiares*. On the kitchen *lararium* in the House of Obellius, a painted *aedicula* physically surrounds the representational elements, including the *Genius* holding a cornucopia, diners, a pig, a serpent, and the *Lares familiares*, who are the largest figures in the composition. Although I will discuss these figures in greater detail in Part 3, the fact that they are surrounded by a painted *aedicula* (which, to me, looks curiously like Obellius's tomb) supports the importance of *aediculae* in this discussion. The kitchen *lararium*'s *aedicula* design recalls the design of the atrium *lararium*, which itself seems to have served as a site of ancestral commemoration, thus connecting it, visually and practically, to the funerary realm.

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[107] Vitruvius said that the *imagines maiorum* were often displayed in the atrium at a height equal to the breadth of the *alae* (*De Arch.* 6.3.6).

A return to the Vettii

By way of conclusion, let us return to where this chapter began: at the *lararium* in the House of the Vettii. This elaborately designed *lararium* with accompanying painting may appear, at first glance, to be merely a miniature temple inside the home of two freedmen, one of whom was an *Augustalis*. Because of the debate concerning the identity of the *Lares familiares*, however, this and other *lararia* might reasonably be connected to the funerary realm. This interpretation is based on a careful consideration of the formal connections between the designs of *lararia* and tombs. I proposed that if there was a formal connection between *lararia* and some of the most popular types of tombs in Pompeii (*aediculae* and altar tombs), it might be consequently revealing of a positive correlation between the *Lares familiares* and the spirts of the dead. Not only were *lararia* intimately connected with important rites of passage, including those surrounding death and commemoration, but altars (permanent or portable) were critical elements involved in the practice of domestic religion. Altars, too, were critical for the performance of rituals at temples and tombs, and the form of the altar became a popular type of tomb in Pompeii. As such, the shared use of temple design elements on *lararia* and tombs aids in their respective identifications as *loci religiosi*, or sacred spaces. These shared elements, however, do not necessarily require a unilateral trickle-down of elements directly from the temple to the tomb and from the temple into the home. Instead, shared elements of design and the similar rituals and offerings may suggest that the designs of tombs and *lararia* may have also been in direct conversation with one another, supporting the argument

in favor of the interpretation of the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of the dead. This rethinking of the design of *lararia*, in turn, prompts a reconsideration of the character of the representational elements and figures that are present in the corpus of *lararia* in Pompeii, which I address below.

Part 3: Representational Elements

In 57 BCE, the politician, lawyer, and author Cicero (106-43 BCE) revealed the importance of domestic religion in Roman society after one of his political enemies destroyed his home. He writes:

> *quid est sanctius, quid omni religione munitius quam domus unius cuiusque civium? hic arae sunt, hic foci, hic di penates, hic sacra, religiones, caerimoniae continentur.*
>
> "What is more holy, what is more protected by every matter of religion than the home of each and every citizen? Here are their altars, here are the hearths, here are the household gods, and here all the sacred religious rituals are held." [108]

Especially for the wealthy Roman citizen, the home was a nexus of life, work, and religion.[109] In highlighting the altar, hearth, and household gods in the passage above, Cicero emphasized the importance of the home as a *locus religiosus*, or a sacred space. The *Lares familiares* were a group of deities worshipped alongside the *Genius*, or male procreative spirit of the house, and the *Penates*, the protectors of the home who took the form of traditional Roman and foreign gods on *lararia* as painted figures (Figure 3.1) or as plastic statuettes (see 3.2). The identity of the *Lares familiares* has been debated for the last 120 years, and the purpose of this study has

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[108] Cic. *Dom*. 41. Unless otherwise specified, all translations of Latin texts in the text or in a footnote are by Sarah Evans.

[109] For a worthwhile discussion of the layout of Roman houses, including their "public" and "private" natures, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

been to present evidence in favor of the theory that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of deceased ancestors.

My approach to the debate described above has been to place emphasis on material over textual evidence and to look towards the funerary realm to find connections between it and domestic religion. In this chapter, I will examine the two- and three-dimensional representational figures and elements on and in *lararia* to make such connections because they may illustrate relationships between religion, the *Lares familiares*, and the dead. I have divided this chapter thematically, including sections about snakes, peacocks, food (including dining and food rituals), Hercules, Mercury, the *Lares,* and the so-called *imagines maiorum*. I have chosen to discuss each of these elements because they each appear in more than one *lararium* in Pompeii and because, by considering the elements' potential associations with death and the funerary realm, there may be a different way to read them in addition to their traditional interpretations. The elements I have chosen to discuss and interpret derive from the *lararia* from about five different houses in Pompeii, including the House of the Vettii (VI.15.1), the House of the Flamen (V.4.3), the House of the Cryptoporticus (I.6.2), the House of the Menander (I.10.4), and the House of Marcus Obellius Firmus (IX.14.2-4).

Snakes

Snakes are some of the most commonly represented figural elements on domestic *lararia* and appear more than 140 times in Pompeii.[110] They appear in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and media. For example, snakes are most typically painted onto the walls of *lararia*, such as the snakes on the *lararium* from the House of the Vettii (see Figure 2.4), the House of the Flamen (Figure 3.3), the House of the Cryptoporticus (Figure 3.4), and on the kitchen *lararium* from the House of Marcus Obellius Firmus, which I described in the introduction to this thesis (Figures 1.2-3). However, as those examples illustrate, even the painted serpents vary significantly in appearance. Snakes also frequently appear in stucco relief coiling around altars or slithering throughout *lararium* compositions, such as on the *lararium* from the peristyle of House IX.2.21 (Figure 3.5). In the scholarship concerning *lararia*, serpents have traditionally been associated with the *Genius* as symbols of fertility.[111] However, it is possible that, along with their typical actions of slithering towards or eating offerings from altars or hearths, snakes may also be interpreted in relation to the dead. Because snakes appear so commonly on *lararia* in Pompeii, let us begin with my interpretations of them so that their presence on *lararia* may set the tone for the other representational elements subsequently discussed throughout this chapter.

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[110] George K. Boyce, *Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii*, (*Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 14, 1937), 105-106.

[111] See generally, David G. Orr, *Roman domestic religion: a study of the Roman lararia* (College Park, Maryland, Thesis, University of Maryland, 1969), 25-67 for the chapter that associates, at length, serpents with the *Genius* and fertility.

The House of the Vettii (VI.15.1) and the House of the Cryptoporticus (I.6.2)

In Part 2, I used the *aedicula lararium* from the House of the Vettii to lead a discussion about the importance of the design of *lararia* in relation to that of temples and tombs. The purpose of the following discussion is to incorporate the *lararium* painting's representational elements, particularly the snake eating fruit and eggs from a painted altar, into the discussion in order to expand upon the connections made between tombs and *lararia* in Part 2 (Figure 3.6). If this painting and others discussed throughout this chapter do indeed indicate visual connections with the dead, they may consequently support the identification of the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of those deceased family members who had been reincorporated into daily life through worship at *lararia*.

The composition of the painting may seem fairly typical of *lararium* paintings. A *Genius* and two flanking dancing *Lares* stand upon a white ground, outlined in red with three swags of blue, green, and yellow garlands lining the top of the painting (see Figure 3.6). The *Genius* wears a *toga praetexta* of white and red, his head is veiled, and he holds a *patera* in his right hand and an incense box (*accera*) in his left. Each *Lar* wears a tunic of the same colors, wears a wreath upon his head and open-toed boots and holds a rhyton in the shape of a goat in one raised hand, from which wine streams into the *situla* in the other. One red and yellow snake slithers through painted green vegetation towards a round altar to eat the offerings of eggs and fruits in the lower register of the panel. The painting may be read in one of two ways: as a composition typical of *lararium* painting indicating the purpose and

location of the shrine within the home, or it may be read in connection with the dead, specifically through the presence of the snake.

Although no ancient source directly discusses serpents in connection with the *Genius*, scholars have tended to relate them closely to one other.[112] Indeed, both figures have been described as symbols of fertility and the serpents have been described as the spirit of the *Genius*.[113] Their connection seems apparent when considering the most typical type of *lararium* painting, which I define as the most frequently appearing scene on *lararia* in Pompeii. Consider, as an example, the *lararium* that appears in the kitchen of the House of Pansa (VI.6.1). In this painting, two *Lares* flank a *Genius* holding a cornucopia while providing an offering on a burning cylindrical altar (Figure 3.7). In the lower register of the painting, two serpents confront a central altar topped with two eggs and a pinecone. Further mirroring the actions performed in the upper register from the House of Pansa, a garland, a decorative element common on Roman temples, altars, and altar tombs also hovers above the altar from which the two serpents eat. The *lararium* from the House of the Vettii is very close to this "typical" composition, although there is no altar present at which the *Genius* would provide offerings and there is only one snake instead of two in the bottom register. This reading of the House of the Vettii's shrine in relation to typical *lararia* depicts some of the figures worshipped at *lararia*, the

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[112] See, for example, Orr, *Roman Domestic Religion* (1969), 25-67.
[113] Small, "Urban, Suburban, and Rural Religion in the Roman Period," in *The World of Pompeii*, ed. John Dobbins and Pedar William Foss, (London: Routledge, 2007), 191; Harriet I. Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2017), 2; Orr, *Roman Domestic Religion* (1969), 25-67.

kinds of rituals that would have been performed in its presence, and the types of offerings that would have been given. However, it may also be read in relation to the dead, particularly by the figure of the snake eating offerings from the circular altar in the bottom register of the composition.

The House of the Vettii's snake slithers towards offerings of eggs and fruit upon an altar. These items indicate the offerings made by the *Genius* in the upper register and by the living at the shrine itself. Eggs, common funerary offerings and sometimes tomb decorations, could symbolize fertility, rejuvenation, and rebirth in the next life for the deceased.[114] The type of fruit painted on the altar is not distinguishable, nor do excavation reports identify it. However, because I am of the opinion that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of the dead, there may be a connection between fruit and the Underworld through the figure of Proserpina, the daughter of Ceres sentenced to spend half the year in the Underworld and half on earth.[115] The rape of Proserpina became a relatively common scene on funerary monuments in Rome, although there are no examples in Pompeii.[116] However, one

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[114] David Gerald Orr, *Roman domestic religion: a study of the Roman household deities and their shrines at Pompeii and Herculaneum* (College Park, Maryland, Diss. University of Maryland, 1972), 89, 92.

[115] Ovid wrote, "*…quoniam ieiunia virgo/ solverat et, cultis dum simplex errat in hortis,/ Poeniceum curva decerpserat arbore pomum/ sumptaque pallenti septem de cortice grana/ presserat ore suo.* [Since the hungry virgin had, while she wandered carelessly in the cultivated fields, reached for and picked a fruit from the curved tree and chewed seven seeds from the white rind in her mouth] (Ov. *Met.* 534-538). "*Pomūm"* does not necessarily translate to the now-canonical depiction of Proserpina with a pomegranate in the Underworld. *Pomūm* simply translates to "fruit," although scholars have clung to the pomegranate because it is a seedy winter fruit.

[116] There are no examples of this scene throughout Virginia Campbell's *The Tombs of Pompeii: Organization, Space, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

relief sculpture of Proserpina was found *in situ* on a *lararium* in Pompeii.[117] Although there is no funerary monument depicting the rape of Proserpina in Pompeii, several tombs are adorned with pertinent objects such as eggs. For example, consider that a stone egg rests atop the altar tomb PNc1 in the Porta Nocera Necropolis, which dates to 62-79 CE (Figure 3.8).[118] Eggs (and fruits) were common offerings at graves and *lararia*, and also appear as decorative elements in both the funerary and domestic religious spheres. The interpretation of eggs and the seeds of fruits and as symbols of rebirth and rejuvenation consumed by snakes may thus translate to prosperity for the living and for the dead in the next world.[119]

Despite significant compositional differences, the serpents on the *lararium* in the peristyle of the House of the Cryptoporticus also slither throughout the picture plane to eat offerings of objects such as eggs (see Figure 3.4).[120] The large House of the Cryptoporticus was first built in the third century BCE, and acquired the neighboring property in the second century BCE, although they were again separated into two different properties after the earthquake of 62 CE.[121] Although the bombings

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[117] Boyce, *Corpus*, No. 46.
[118] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 211-212.
[119] Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1969)*,* 58; Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1972)*,* 89, 92.
[120] The House of the Cryptoporticus is a large home located off the Via dell'Abbondanza and was excavated from 1911 to 1914 by Spinazzola and again from 1927 to 1930 by Maiuri (Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Reale Accademia d'Italia, and Reale Accademia dei Lincei. *Notizie Degli Scavi Di Antichità* (Roma: Tip. della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1914), 75 (*lararium*), 256, 259-62, 287, 365-368; Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Reale Accademia d'Italia, and Reale Accademia dei Lincei. *Notizie Degli Scavi Di Antichità* (Roma: Tip. della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1942), 150).
[121] Federica Giacobello, *Larari pompeiani: Iconografia e culto dei Lari in ambito domestic* (LED Edizioni Universitarie, Milano, 2008), 253.

of 1943 destroyed most of the elaborate decoration, some of the home's Second Style painting, stuccowork, and mosaics in the cryptoporticus, bath complex, and adjacent *oecus* are preserved. These decorations suggest a grand earlier phase of the home, presumably when the owners of the house had the resources to acquire and lavishly decorate their property.[122] Despite the now mostly bare walls around the peristyle, a *lararium* dating to after 62 CE located on the west wall of the north portico has survived and was recently restored (see Figures 3.4 and 3.9).[123]

The *lararium* painting is positioned above a black dado zone interspersed with thick green vegetation, yellow and white flowers, birds, and butterflies. On the left side of the painting, below three draping yellow and green garlands "suspended" by painted nails, is an arched niche with bands of red paint in and around it. A bust-length portrait of the god Mercury adorns the niche's interior. He wears a blue chlamys fastened on his right shoulder and a *petasos*, his winged hat, and raises a small green caduceus into the picture plane. Outside of the niche and to the left is, moving counterclockwise, a painting of a large yellow and red snake with a crest and beard coiling towards the ledge of the niche, a peacock, and a second, much smaller

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[122] Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society in Pompeii and Herculaneum*, 187; Volker Michael Strocka dates the decoration of this home to the Augustan period ("Domestic decoration: painting and the "Four Styles" in *The World of Pompeii,* ed. Dobbins and Foss, 306). See John R. Clarke, "Mosaics and Stucco," in *The World of Pompeii,* ed. Dobbins and Foss, 326-329 for a discussion of the House's mosaic and stucco decoration. See the pages of *Notizie Degli Scavi Di Antichità* (1914) indicated in note 13 for more descriptions and images of the home before the bombing of 1943.

[123] Giacobello, *Lari Pompeiani,* 253; The website of the Parco Archeologico di Pompei lists the aims of the restoration project: "House of the Cryptoporticus," Pompeii: Parco Archeologico di Pompeii, http://www.pompeiisites.org/Sezione.jsp?idSezione=1386, date accessed: 27 March 2018. For the *lararium* see Boyce, *Corpus*, No. 36 and Giacobello, *Lari Pompeiani,* 253.

yellow and red snake with a crest and beard coiling to the top of a yellow cylindrical altar upon which a shallow dish holding an egg rests. Tall, leafy green vegetation with red flowers and birds fills the background of the scene.[124] I will discuss the figures of Mercury and the peacock later in this chapter. The purpose of the present discussion is to point out that the smaller snake eats an egg from the painted circular altar, while the larger snake slithers throughout the composition towards the niche, where the statuettes of the *Lares familiares*, the other household gods, and offerings would have been placed. Despite the differences in their placement, the snakes from the *lararia* from the Houses of the Vettii and the Cryptoporticus perform the same actions by eating offerings of foods symbolizing rebirth and rejuvenation that are commonly offered to the household gods at *lararia* and to the dead at tombs. Viewing serpents on domestic *lararia* through this lens, then, renders their traditional interpretation solely in relation to fertility and the *Genius* insufficient. In both of these case studies, the serpents have been interpreted in connection with symbolic foods and rituals. Indeed, the importance of food, *lararia*, serpents, and the dead may be further illustrated by a consideration of the *lararia* from the House of the Flamen.

The House of the Flamen (kitchen) (V.4.3)

Having considered the possible connections between serpents and the dead on the *lararia* from the Houses of the Vettii and Cryptoporticus, the *lararium* painting from the House of the Flamen's kitchen may allow me to take the present interpretation of snakes in relation to the dead one step farther. There are two *lararia*

[124] Boyce, *Corpus*, 25; *Notizie degli Scavi Antichità* (1914), 75.

inside of the House of the Flamen, both of which were mostly destroyed by bombs in 1943.[125] The house itself, located near the Porta di Nola, was first excavated in the middle and late nineteenth century.[126] The house contained two *lararia*, one on the west wall of the atrium and one in the kitchen (Figure 3.10).[127] Both *lararium* paintings include snakes and although they may both suggest visual connections with the dead, they are rendered in two different ways.

The kitchen *lararium* of the House of the Flamen is on the east side of the portico before the garden. The shrine, now damaged, once covered the entire east wall of the kitchen beside the hearth.[128] The painting is composed of three registers and its top register, although not well preserved in 1901 based on extant photographs, can be reconstructed with some certainty (see Figure 3.3) as it depicts a common composition.[129] The *Genius*, who presumably holds either a cornucopia, *accera* (incense box), or a *patera* stands to the right of the tripod. The two *Lares* flank the *Genius* and the Tibicen, or the double-flute player, and the *Camillus*, the assistant to the *Genius*. Finally, at the far left, a small nude man leads a sacrificial pig towards the altar.[130] In the middle register of the *lararium*, a serpent glides to the viewer's right

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[125] See Joanne Berry, *The Complete Pompeii* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 60, for the bombing, which damaged many homes along the Via dell'Abbondanza.
[126] Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Reale Accademia d'Italia, and Reale Accademia dei Lincei. *Notizie Degli Scavi Di Antichità* (Roma: Tip. della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1899), 340-341.
[127] Boyce, *Corpus*, Nos. 118 and 119, respectively. Fröhlich, *Lararien*, L52-53.
[128] Boyce, *Corpus*, 40.
[129] See the above discussion about the "typical" *lararium* composition on page 4.
[130] Consider as a point of comparison, the *lararium* painting found in the House of Cipius Pamphilus Felix (VII.6.38), now preserved in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (Naples, Inv. 8905). In this composition, a *Genius* bearing a cornucopia stands next to a circular altar, upon which he places an offering. To the right is the *Camillus*, followed by a dancing *Lar* pouring wine from his rhyton into a

toward the kitchen's hearth, from which the serpent would appear to eat.[131] The objects of such rituals are depicted in the lower register of the *lararium* painting and include kitchen utensils, sausages, an eel on a spit, a gridiron, a hog's head, and birds. Below these objects is a flaming tripod, perhaps the same tripod painted in the upper register of the shrine.

This scene and others like it may read as such if we assume the *Lares* are the spirits of the dead: The *Genius*, Tibicen, *Camillus*, and the escort of the sacrificial pig together represent the living who perform rituals, including the provisions of offerings and sacrifices at the altar of domestic shrines and hearths. The offerings painted in the lower register are burned at the altar in the upper register and are consumed by the serpents in the middle. Although snakes, as discussed above, have been traditionally connected with the *Genius* of the house, they, too, are chthonic beings associated with the earth and, thus, the dead. In fact, Orr suggested that the serpent may have also symbolized the power of resurrection through the frequent shedding of its skin.[132] Finally, the *Lares familiares* rejoice in the multitude of offerings presented to them in ritual. In return, the *Lares*, who could be interpreted as

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situla. To the viewer's left of the *Genius* are the Tibicen, the assistant leading the sacrificial hog toward the altar, and a *Lar*, who mirrors the *Lar* on the right side. Festoons hang above them, while two serpents, confronted at a cylindrical altar immediately below the altar of the upper register, eat its offerings. Although the study of materials *in situ* is critical in the study of art history and archaeology, it is very fortunate that this *lararium* painting was removed from the house as it fell victim to the bombings of 1943.

[131] Boyce, *Corpus*, 40.

[132] Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1969), 40. Orr stated that he examined the "freshly sloughed off skins" of the snakes that inhabited the excavated areas of Pompeii and noted that the people living in the ancient city would likely have noticed such a phenomenon too (Orr, *Roman domestic religion* (1969), 40, note 68).

the spirits of deceased family members, may have ensured the protection and prosperity of the living.

I previously mentioned that the traditional scholarly interpretation of snakes has been to associate them closely with the *Genius*. This identification might have derived from a textual source, namely a passage from Vergil's *Aeneid*, published around 19 BCE. Having considered the visual evidence of serpents in Pompeii, which I have interpreted in relation to the dead, a reconsideration and reinterpretation of Vergil's text may be necessary. Vergil writes:

ille e concilio multis cum milibus ibat
ad tumulum magna medius comitante caterva.
hic duo rite mero libans carchesia Baccho
fundit humi, duo lacte novo, duo sanguine sacro,
purpureosque iacit flores ac talia fatur:
'salve, sancte parens, iterum; salvete, recepti
nequiquam cineres animaeque umbraeque paternae.
non licuit finis Italos fataliaque arva
nec tecum Ausonium, quicumque est, quaerere Thybrim.'
dixerat haec, adytis cum lubricus anguis ab imis
septem ingens gyros, septena volumina traxit
amplexus placide tumulum lapsusque per aras,
caeruleae cui terga notae maculosus et auro
squamam incendebat fulgor, ceu nubibus arcus
mille iacit varios adverso sole colores.
obstipuit visu Aeneas. ille agmine longo
tandem inter pateras et levia pocula serpens
libavitque dapes rursusque innoxius imo
successit tumulo et depasta altaria liquit.[133]

[Aeneas] left from the meeting with many thousands of people
in the midst of a great throng accompanying him to the tomb [of Anchises]. Here, according to custom, he poured onto the ground two cups of pure wine, two cups of fresh milk, and two cups of sacred blood as offerings, and he threw purple flowers and said such words: "Hello again, holy parent; Hello to you, ashes received in vain and to the spirits and to the familial shades. It has not been permitted to reach the lands of Italy, the fated fields nor the Ausonian Tiber (whatever that may be) with you." He had said these things,

[133] Verg. *Aen*. 5.75-93.

> when, from the innermost part of the tomb, a slithering snake spanning seven coils emerged, and slowly wrapped itself around the tomb seven times and coiled around the altar [used by Aeneas in the funerary rites]. [The snake,] whose glittering, bright scales were gleaming with [colors of] bright blue and gold, just as if a rainbow among the clouds gave off a thousand different colors reflecting from the sun. Aeneas was dumbstruck this sight. At last, [the snake], in a long train, slithering amongst the *paterae* and the empty cups, tasted the feast and, having consumed all of the offerings, harmlessly returned to the bottom of the tomb.

To begin this analysis of Vergil's passage, I must first note that the word "*Genius*" does not appear anywhere in this passage nor in the lines preceding or succeeding it. It seems, then, that this association between the *Genius* and serpents may have emerged because the snake appeared at the funeral of Aeneas's father Anchises, the *paterfamilias*. However, bearing the actions of the serpents that decorate domestic *lararia* in mind, Vergil's literary description of this gentle, brightly colored snake warrants a new interpretation directly in relation to the dead. According to the text, the serpent literally emerged from the *tumulus* of the deceased Anchises just after Aeneas provided the customary offerings of wine, milk, a sacrifice, flowers, and food specifically in order to coil around the altar to eat the offerings. In all instances of serpents on *lararia* discussed thus far and on nearly all other *lararium* paintings with serpents in Pompeii more broadly, the serpents eat offerings after having either slithered to or coiled around altars. Moreover, Vergil's passage stressed the chthonic nature of the serpent because it emerged from the earthy tomb of Anchises. This chthonic association is commonly rendered on *lararia* by the inclusion of painted vegetation around serpents, such as on the *lararia* from the House of the

Cryptoporticus, the House of the Vettii, and the kitchen *lararium* from the House of Marcus Obellius Firmus discussed in the introduction (see Figures 3.4, 3.6, and 1.3).

The House of the Flamen (atrium) (V.4.3)

The second *lararium* from the House of the Flamen is a visually rich shrine on the west wall of the atrium. Although the current analysis will focus only on the serpent and *omphalos,* I will briefly describe the entire composition now so that the reader may have a sense of context when I return to this shrine in subsequent sections. I hope that this serpent, along with many other of the representational elements discussed later, will continue to suggest visual connections between *lararia*, the *Lares familiares*, and the dead.

A vaulted niche surrounded by a simple *aedicula* made from stucco stands at the center of a *lararium* painting that is densely populated with animals, *Penates*, and other elements such as *paterae*, garlands, an altar, and an *omphalos* (see Figure 3.1). The niche at the center of the *aedicula* contains a projecting ledge, upon which the bronze statuettes of the *Lares* and *Genius* found in a storage room to the east of the atrium likely would have stood (Figure 3.11).[134] A stucco wreath of pointed laurel leaves is in the pediment and a stucco *patera* rests on the pediment's apex.[135] The composition may be separated into four registers. The lowest register is the dado zone

[134] *Notizie Degli Scavi Di Antichità* (1899), 206, Figure 1. In addition to the statuettes, the cupboards also contained 130 silver and 54 bronze coins. A small marble statuette of Venus Anadyomene was found nearby in the atrium, which Boyce suggests may have belonged to the shrine as well (*Corpus*, 40).
[135] Boyce, *Corpus,* 40.

and is decorated with four white-ground panels of plants and birds.[136] Four *Penates* occupy the zone just below the *aedicula* (Figure 3.12). Mercury stands to the leftmost side beside a tall plant.[137] He is followed by a chicken facing an *omphalos* stone wrapped by a serpent. The next figures are a winged Victoria in the process of crowning Hercules. A pig runs between Victoria and Hercules towards the altar at the far right of the composition. Minerva stands next to Hercules and she pours a libation onto a round altar with her right hand.[138] Finally, an owl perches on a podium to Minerva's left. Bacchus (who pours wine into the mouth of a panther), Venus *Pompeiana*, Fortuna, and an enthroned Jupiter once adorned the register on the same level as the niche, although they were all poorly preserved in the 1899 and 1937 photographs (see Figures 3.1 and 3.13).[139] Jupiter notably leans his head upon his left hand and casts his gaze down and to his right, perhaps towards the altar in the register below. In the uppermost register, two eagles, the birds of Jupiter, are in flight. A

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[136] The area surrounding this *lararium* in the atrium does not match the decoration of the shrine, which likely dates to after the earthquake of 62 CE based on the Fourth Style stucco work. The surrounding walls, just as poorly preserved as the shrine is today, were once yellows panels with a red dado zone (Boyce, *Corpus*, 40).

[137] Mercury, who will be discussed at length in a later section, is identifiable by his *petasos*, *caduceus*, and winged boots. He notably holds a coin purse in this composition, according to Boyce's description of him (Boyce, *Corpus*, 40).

[138] Hercules, who I will discuss in a subsequent section, holds a club and wears the skin of the Nemean Lion. Minerva wears a green and purple chiton, yellow mantle, a gorgoneion on her breast, and a helmet upon her head. A shield rests against one leg, while her holds a spear in her left hand.

[139] Bacchus was identifiable by his thyrsus and by his act of pouring wine into the mouth of the panther from a *kantharos*. Venus rested her left arm upon steering rudders and held an olive branch in her right hand. Amor holding a mirror stood to Venus's left. Only Fortuna's head and the top of her cornucopia were extant at by 1937. Jupiter is identifiable by the fact that he sits enthroned and because he is nude from the waist up. Moreover, he held a thunderbolt in one hand and a scepter in the other.

painted peacock perching upon a garland is in the panel above Jupiter (see Figure 3.1 and 3.13).

In order to begin interpreting this richly decorated shrine in relation to the dead in this and subsequent sections, let us discuss the *omphalos* and coiling serpent (Figure 3.14). The word "*omphalos*" literally translates to "navel" and came to represent that center of a sacred space.[140] *Omphaloi* wrapped by snakes appear on several other *lararia* in Pompeii, including a large *omphalos* that decorates the *lararium* from the kitchen of the House of Meleager (VI.9.2, Figure 3.15).[141] Two dancing *Lares* flank the *omphalos* and serpent in the House of Meleager's *lararium* and the entire group stands below a large, elaborate swag of garland. Notably, *omphaloi* with coiling serpents appear on at least one funerary monument in Pompeii: the Tomb of Gaius Vestorius Priscus (PV2) in the Porta del Vesuvio necropolis, which I first discussed in Part 2.[142] Four red merlons extend from the raised altar of this tomb. These merlons are topped with four stucco *omphaloi* around which are coiling serpents (see Figure 2.11 and 2.12). In fact, Clarke specifically stated that the serpents on Priscus's tomb looked like the serpents that wrap around altars on

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[140] See Pausan. 10.16, which recounts the founding of the *omphalos* at Delphi. In order to locate the center of the world (the *omphalos*), Zeus sent two eagles flying in opposite directions. The place at which they met indicated the center, the position at which the *omphalos* stone was erected, and the location of the sanctuary at Delphi. Although it is uncertain whether the owners of this home in Pompeii would have been acquainted with this story, especially since Pausanias, the Greek travel writer, wrote approximately one hundred years later.

[141] Boyce, *Corpus*, No. 174.

[142] According to Virginia Campbell's appendix, the only other funerary monument in Pompeii adorned with omphaloi and serpents is the tomb of the public priestess Eumachia (Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii*, 257-259).

domestic *lararia*.[143] Indeed, if *omphaloi* and their accompanying serpents symbolized sacred space, their appearances on Priscus's tomb and on multiple *lararia,* such as the atrium *lararium* from the House of the Flamen, reference that these two sites were sacred, and it especially connects the *lararium* to the tomb and, therefore, the potential for the *Lares* to be connected to the dead. Moreover, these two sacred spaces are visually linked by the use of this representational element that includes the potentially chthonic figure of the serpent.

Peacocks

Peacocks appear on at least seven domestic *lararia*.[144] Scholars have rarely provided interpretations for their appearances despite their sometimes large size and central positions in compositions (see Figure 3.4). Orr hypothesized that many of the birds on *lararia* either accompanied or stood in the place of the deities, or *Penates* in the context of *lararia*, and that they are typically associated with textual and pictorial traditions.[145] He suggested that chickens either accompanied or stood in place of Aesculapius, eagles for Jupiter, owls for Minerva, and peacocks for Juno.[146] However, like all of the other categories of representational elements I discuss throughout this study, there may be another way to interpret the presence of peacocks on *lararia* in association with the dead.

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[143] 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), 189.
[144] According to Boyce's 1937 count, peacocks appear on seven *lararia*: Boyce, *Corpus*, Nos. 36. 118, 141, 162, 182, 253, 318.
[145] Orr, Roman Domestic Religion (1969), 106.
[146] Ibid.

Let us examine the atrium *lararium* from the House of the Flamen (V.4.3, see Figure 3.1 and 3.13). If one were to follow Orr's hypothesis described above, the chicken standing near Mercury should reference Aesculapius, the eagles should reference Jupiter, the owl perching upon the podium should reference Minerva, and the peacock should reference Juno. Minerva's association with owls seem fitting in this composition, as does Jupiter's association with the flying eagles. According to Orr, the chicken should reference Asclepius. However, chickens were also attributes of Mercury and its presence near the god seems to allude to this connection rather than a link with Aesculapius, whose figure is not present in the composition. Consider that chickens were symbols of the new day.[147] Not only does the crowing of a rooster begin each day, but hens also produce eggs, common offerings for the dead and the *Lares* that symbolize fertility, rebirth, and rejuvenation (as discussed above).[148] Having considered three out of the four types of birds present on the House of the Flamen's atrium *lararium*, let us consider the peacock that perches upon a garland in the uppermost register of the composition (see Figure 3.1 and 3.13). According to Orr's hypothesis, this peacock should reference Juno despite the absence of her painted figure. Because of Juno's prominence in Roman religion, a reference to her would, at first, seem fitting. However, it seems strange that all other birds in this

[147] C. Scott Littleton, ed. *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology, Vol. 6* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2005), 859.
[148] According to Boyce's index, there are five certain instances in which chickens are present in *lararia* (Nos. 4, 118, 285, 318, 449, 479). Some of the chickens accompany Mercury while others appear on their own in the same composition as creatures such as peacocks. Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price. *Religions of Rome, Volume 1: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22 and note 56 for a discussion of the "sacred chickens" of Rome used for divination.

composition are accompanied by painted versions of the gods they are associated with, while only one bird—the peacock— is without Juno. For this reason, perhaps there is another way to interpret the presence of the peacock.

In the previous section, I discussed snakes on *lararia* and tombs. The serpent has traditionally been associated with the spirit of the *Genius* and the fertility of the house, but my method of interpretation has provided a new lens through which to read serpents in relation to the dead based on their nature as chthonic beings. I wonder if we may read peacocks on domestic *lararia* in a similar vein. Peacocks may have symbolized immortality, an interpretation that is appropriate if one would like to argue that the *Lares familiares* were spirits of deceased ancestors. This interpretation is supported by text, particularly a passage in the fragments of Ennius (293-169 BCE). In this passage, Ennius recounted a dream sequence in which Homer's soul had briefly migrated into his body. Homer famously stated, "*memini me fiere pavum"* ["I remember that I was a peacock"]. This line has since been used to interpret peacocks as symbols of immortality and reincarnation and, in this instance, perhaps the reincarnation of the dead into a *Lar familiaris*.[149] The absence of Juno on the *lararium* from the House of the Flamen supports this interpretation.

[149] Enn., *Ann*, 1.13. It is, of course, unclear whether the Pompeiians would have known of Ennius's text, but it is certainly possible that the symbolism of this creature had pervaded throughout the domestic sphere over time. It would be interesting to see how many peacocks were present in the *lararia* of cities such as Rome. For the interpretation of the peacock, see J.K. Newman, ""Memini Me Fiere Pavum": Ennius and the Quality of the Roman Aesthetic Imagination." *Illinois Classical Studies* 8, no. 2 (1983): 173-93.

Peacocks appear on at least six *other lararia* in Pompeii, such as the large and beautifully colored peacock in the House of the Cryptoporticus (see Figure 3.4) .[150] A reading of this peacock as a symbol of immortality and reincarnation is corroborated by the two large, coiling snakes discussed in the section above and by the bust-length portrait of the god Mercury, who will be discussed below. This interpretation of peacocks makes their presence on funerary art in Pompeii fitting. Let us briefly consider, for example, Wall 2 of the Tomb of Gaius Vestorius Priscus (see Figure 2.13 and 3.16). In this scene, five male diners recline around a sigma couch with one attendant while two large peacocks stand on flanking podia. Although the type of meal this scene represents is debated (and will be discussed in the section below), the presence of the peacocks as symbols of immortality in the funerary realm seems appropriate. In view of this interpretation, let us consider the importance of food, dining, and domestic ritual.

Food, Dining, and Domestic Ritual

Throughout this and the preceding chapter and the introduction, the importance of food in domestic and funerary rituals has been an underlying theme. The purpose of this section is to treat food in a more direct way, considering dining scenes, festivals, and the importance of kitchens in domestic ritual in order to draw more connections between *lararia* and tombs. The reader may immediately recall the *lararium* in the kitchen of Marcus Obellius Firmus, which included elements such as

[150] Boyce, *Corpus*, 25; *Notizie degli Scavi Antichità* (1914), 75

a scene of six diners (three men and three women), a sacrificial pig, and a slithering snake (see Figure 1.3).

Dining scenes and the provision of food and drink

Three of the walls of the Tomb of Gaius Vestorius Priscus reference the importance of food in the funerary realm, which may, in turn, translate into the realm of domestic religion (see Figure 2.13). The upper register of Wall Two depicts five figures dining on a sigma couch with one attendant (Figure 3.16). There is scholarly debate over what moment this scene depicts, but it is generally agreed upon that it may represent either Priscus dining as he would have in life, Priscus taking part in the eternal banquet after death, or a funerary feast, an event which would have occurred at the tomb.[151] The ambiguity of this scene of only male diners is especially evident when comparing it with the dining scene from the kitchen *lararium* of Marcus Obellius Firmus, which includes both male and female figures (see Figure 1.3).[152] Because the banqueting scene in Obellius's kitchen depicts men and women, the *lararium*'s scene may either represent a meal in the home or a funerary feast that would have taken place at the tomb. However, identifying the location of this scene may not necessarily be crucial in connecting the *Lares* with the funerary sphere. As

[151] For the argument that the scene in the tomb represents a banquet Priscus would have participated in while alive, see, see Mols and Moormann, "Tomba di Vestorius Priscus," 41-42. This chapter includes a helpful bibliography. Clarke has interpreted this scene as a funerary banquet (191). For another list of references to this debate, Katherine M.D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 226, note 40.

[152] The artistic tradition depicts men with dark skin tones and women with light skin tones.

my above analyses suggest, it might be possible that the spirits of the dead were present in both spaces, united through the provisions of daily offerings of food and drink, the practice of dining with the statuettes of the *Lares,* and ritual offerings provided on festivals for the dead and the household gods throughout the year. Regardless of which moment the dining scene in Priscus's tomb represents, it emphasizes the link between food, dining, and the dead.

Walls Four and Six of Priscus's tomb visually reference the practice of regularly providing offerings to the dead. Wall Four depicts scene of Priscus's family silver (Figure 3.17). According to Clarke, the paintings of the silver vessels, particularly silver pouring vessels, may indicate that the stone ledge covered in layers of paint and stucco below the painting may have been for the provisions of liquid offerings.[153] Moreover, food offerings likely would have been placed on the semi-circular altar on Wall Six, which is positioned below a painted altar topped with food, including eggs (Figure 3.18).

Bucrania *and sacrifice*

In addition to scenes of dining and the spaces for the provisions of food and liquid offerings at tombs and at *lararia*, both spaces required ritual actions, such as the offerings of animal sacrifices and participation in festivals involving the living, dead, and possibly the *Lares*. I have discussed all but three of the representational elements from House of the Vettii's *lararium*: the stucco *patera*, garlanded *bucranium*, and knife that adorn the shrine's pediment (Figure 3.19).

[153] Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans,* 197-198.

Bucrania are decorative elements common on the friezes of Roman temples and are interspersed with other elements such as garlands and *paterae* (Figure 3.20).[154] These elements depict the skulls of bovids, and reference the animals sacrificed and offered to the gods on altars.[155] The origin of the *bucranium* as a decorative element on temples seems to derive from sacrificial processions, such as the scene on the west side of the altar from the Temple of the *Genius Augusti* in the forum.[156] This scene depicts a ritual sacrifice (Figure 3.21). In the scene, a veiled priest places offerings onto a tripod, while the assistants behind him bear additional offerings. Two lictors and a flute player stand behind the tripod. In the foreground of the scene, the executioner, who is draped from the waist down and carries an axe, leads the bull to the tripod altar. Although pigs were the preferred animals for ritual sacrifice at the tomb and *lararia*, the *bucranium* as a representational element seems to have trickled-down onto funerary monuments and less frequently onto *lararia* in Pompeii.[157] The shrine from the House of the Vettii is, from my readings of Boyce, Orr, and Giacobello's publications, the only domestic *lararium* in Pompeii with a

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[154] The word *bucranium* derives from the Latin words *bos*, or oxen/cow, and *cranium*, or skull.

[155] Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 114-118. In Pompeii, *bucrania* and *paterae*, or libation bowls, are visible on the Temple of Isis, perhaps the best-preserved temple in the city due to its prompt reconstruction after the earthquake of 62 CE.

[156] Zanker, *The Power of Images*, 114.

[157] Peter Connor, "*Lararium*: Household Religion," in *Pompeii Revisited: The Life and Death of a Roman Town,* ed. Jean-Paul Descœudres, Penelope Allison, Derek Harrison, and Australian Museum (Sidney, NSW, Australia: Meditarch, 1994), 90; Hugh Lindsay, "Eating with the Dead: The Roman Funerary Banquet," in *Meals in Social Context*, ed. Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielson, (Oxford: The Alden Press, 2001). Valerie Hope, *Roman Death: Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London; New York: Continuum, 2009), 85.

bucranium extant as a representational element.[158] Four *bucrania* also adorn the corners of the Temple of the *Genius Augusti* in Pompeii, which Aulus Vettius Conviva, an Augustalis and co-owner of the House of the Vettii, would have interacted with on a personal level. The *bucranium* on the House of the Vettii's *lararium*, then, references ritual sacrifice and is further alluded to by the knife on the pediment.

The altar tomb of the Pompeiian *duovir* Marcus Porcius, which is poorly preserved today, provides evidence for the presence of the use of *bucrania* and *paterae* in Pompeii's funerary realm (PE3). A 1793 painting by Jacob Philipp Hackert illustrates the state of preservation of Porcius's tomb near the time of excavation (Figure 3.22). This altar tomb is among the earliest altar tombs in Pompeii and dates to 70-50 BCE.[159] Porcius appears to have been one of the original colonists installed in Pompeii in 80 BCE by Publius Cornelius Sulla after the Social War.[160] Porcius served as a *duovir* in the city, and inscriptions record him participating in important civic activities.[161] Because of Porcius's public munificence, it is no wonder that his tomb is in a prominent location.[162] The tomb itself was once entirely faced with

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[158] Pigs, however, adorn *lararia* more frequently.
[159] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 155-157.
[160] The inscription on this tomb reads: *M(arci) Porci / M(arci) f(ili) ex dec(urionum) / decret(o). In / frontem / ped(es) XXV / in agrum / ped(es) XXV (*Monument of Marcus Porcius, son of Marcus, by decree of the Decuriones, twenty-five feet in front, twenty-five feet in depth) (*CIL.*X.997).
[161] *CIL* X.00852. Porcius dedicated a new altar in the Temple of Apollo, built the Odeon and the amphitheater with his co-duovir Gaius Quinctius Valgus (For the altar in the Temple of Apollo: *CIL* X.800. For the Odeon: *CIL* X.844–5. For the amphitheater: *CIL* X.852.)
[162] Guy de la Bédoyère, *Cities of Roman Italy: Pompeii, Herculaneum, Ostia* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2010), 87.

travertine, a few panels of which are still *in situ* on the northeast corner of the substructure. Some of the tomb's other decorative elements are extant, including fragments of travertine *pulvini* on top of the altar, and four and a half metopes of what would have been a Doric frieze decorated with *bucrania* and *paterae* (Figure 3.23), which are decorative elements that directly echo the visual language of Roman temple architecture and decoration.[163] In Part 2, I discussed the importance of the altar in public religion, domestic religion, and in the funerary realm, which manifested itself in the design and popularity of altar tombs and the use of altars more generally at tombs. The presence of these similar representational elements in the home and at the tomb strengthens the visual connections made in Part 2.

The hearth as the "looking glass"

Just as altars were important for the provisions of offerings and sacrifices, the hearth maintained a similarly important position in domestic rituals.[164] Offerings of food and drink were regularly burned at the hearth for the household gods.[165] Hearths, moreover, are most typically found in kitchens and are often accompanied by *lararium* paintings. Consider again as an example, the kitchen *lararium* from the House of the Flamen, on which the slithering serpent has been painted to look as

[163] Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii,* 156.
[164] Pedar W. Foss, "Watchful *Lares*: Roman household organization and the rituals of cooking and eating," in *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond*, ed. Ray Laurence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (Portsmouth, RI: JRA, 1997), 197.
[165] Alexandra Sofroniew, *Household Gods: Private Devotion in Ancient Greece and Rome.* (*Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum*, 2015), 10-11; August Mau, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art*, Trans. Francis W. Kelsey (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 269.

though it eats from the hearth (see Figure 3.3).[166] The presence of this *lararium* and, for example, the *lararium* in the kitchen of Marcus Obellius Firmus, near the hearth of the house may, in fact, aid in connecting the *Lares* with the dead (Figure 1.3).

Pedar Foss called the fire of the hearth a "looking-glass."[167] Foss interprets this looking-glass as a method through which the mortals could connect with the divine household gods, but he denies its connection to the dead because he considered fire to associated with the living and specifically not with the dead because of its nourishing qualities.[168] However, because I seek evidence in support of the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of deceased family members, I wonder if Foss's idea of the looking-glass may, in fact, be interpreted as the communicative element between the (dead) divine and the (living) mortals.[169] I wonder, however, if Foss's argument for the importance of the hearth in domestic worship could make a point about fire more broadly as a point of communication between mortals and the deceased and divine.[170] Fire is what cremated the body of a deceased Pompeian during a funeral. The living dined with the dead at the funerary pyre. Fire is the medium through which food and liquids were burned as offerings at temples, tombs, and in the home. Fire, then, had

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[166] Boyce, *Corpus*, 40.
[167] Foss, "Watchful *Lares,*" 197.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Foss did not argue in favor of the *Lares* as the spirits of the dead. He suggested that it was, in fact, the *Penates* who were associated with the ancestral tradition of the family and hope for its future through their association with the storerooms of the house. He considered the *Lares* to be associated with the living family because, to him, fire represented life and the dead could not coexist with the living (198). I counter Foss's statement and, in fact, believe as stated in the text above, the dead and the living could and likely did coexist in Roman society. I agree with Foss that the hearth of a home represents a looking glass to the divine, but I argue that it, too, had the power to cross the boundaries between the living and the dead.

the power to cross the boundaries between the living and the dead. This idea is affirmed by the ritualistic use of altars and fire in both domestic and funerary contexts. Potential ritualistic connections between the *Lares* and the dead may, too, be made through a consideration of the practice of festivals at the tomb and in the home.

The Parentalia *and* Caristia *festivals*

The connections between the funerary realm and domestic religion in Pompeii through the shared use of ritual sacrifice, altars and fire, offerings of the same types of food and drink items, and the importance of dining more broadly suggests that food and the practice of dining may have served as mediators between the living and the dead. The practice of two particular festivals, the *Parentalia* and the *Caristia* festivals, defend such a statement.

According to Ovid's *Fasti* (8 CE), the souls of the dead could walk among the souls of the living during the *Parentalia*. Each year from February 13th through 21st, living family members would travel to their family's tombs in order to bring small gifts such as garlands, flowers, and simple foods, offer a sacrifice, and dine with the dead.[171] The *Caristia* occurred immediately after the *Parentalia* festival, on Februrary 22nd. According to Linnea Johansson, the *Genius* on *lararia* should be interpreted as a symbol of the procreative spirit of the family, specifically the *paterfamilias*, and

[171] Note that garlands and flowers are commonly represented in both religious art and the paintings in domestic *lararia.*

therefore as a symbol for the future of the family.[172] The *Lares*, on the other hand, symbolized the ancestors of the family, and therefore its past.[173] Their frequent appearance together, then, symbolized the importance of the family's past, present, and future. The commemoration of the past, thanks for the present, and hope for the future is precisely the purpose of the domestic *Caristia* festival. The *Caristia* was a day the living would again dine with the dead and provide offerings of incense and wine in the home of the living. The *Parentalia* and *Caristia* shared similar rituals, offerings, and purposes, but the major difference between them was that one festival occurred at the tomb and the other occurred in the home of the living and may have especially honored the deceased-turned-*Lares* in their two potential spaces of habitation.[174] These ritualistic connections are, in turn, bolstered by the visual connections made throughout this and the preceding chapter.

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[172] Linnea Johannsson, "The Pompeiian *Lararium* as a Symbol for Commemoration" in *In Memoriam: Commemoration and Communal Memory and Genders in the Ancient Graeco-Roman World*, ed. H. Whittaker (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 149.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Another ritualistic connections between *lararia* and tombs that does not concern food is one that is connected, in fact, through fire. Lamps have been found throughout *lararia* in Pompeii, including in the atrium *lararium* in the House of Marcus Obellius Firmus. The household gods, according to Cato, should be especially worshipped and shrines should be garlanded on the *Calends* (1st), *Nones* (5th or 7th), and *Ides* (13th or 15th) of each month (Cat. *Ag*. 143). Jocelyn Toynbee likewise revealed that it was standard practice for the living to light lamps at the graves on those same days (J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World: Aspects of Greek and Roman Life* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1971), 63, n. 259).

Hercules

While the previous section used food to illustrate connections between the living and dead, this section focuses on a single man and his potential connections to the dead: Hercules. Hercules was one of the most popular *Penates* in Pompeii, along with deities such as Fortuna, Vesta, Mercury, Bacchus, Minerva, Venus, Jupiter, and Isis.[175] In the Bay of Naples, Hercules acquired particular importance in mythology because he supposedly passed through the Bay and founded Herculaneum on the site where he killed Cacus, Vulcan's fire-breathing son, who stole the cattle Hercules took from Geryon in his tenth labor.[176] His connection to the Bay provides one explanation for his frequency on Pompeiian *lararia*. However, I wonder if I could provide a new interpretation by reading his appearances on *lararia* in relation to his connection to the funerary realm.

Hercules, the mortal man deified after accomplishing his labors, became important in Roman religious practices and funerary cult.[177] In describing the procession that preceded official games in Rome, Dionysius of Halicarnassus described the procession of the representations of deities, including more traditional Roman gods such as the Capitoline Triad, but also images of demigods such as Hercules, whose soul left his mortal body to become divine.[178] Hercules's deification

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[175] Boyce, *Corpus*, 104-107.
[176] Berry, *The Complete Pompeii*, 14-15, 27, 30-31, 70-71; Bédoyère, *Cities of Roman Italy*, 18.
[177] Donald Emrys Strong, J. M. C Toynbee, and Roger Ling, *Roman Art* (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), 190; Berry, *The Complete Pompeii*, 14-15, 27, 30-31, 70-71; Bédoyère, *Cities of Roman Italy*, 18.
[178] D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 7.73.13-14. This work was initially composed of twenty books, although only nine are entirely extant (Kenneth John Atchity and Rosemary McKenna, *The Classical Greek Reader* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 289).

became important for ordinary Romans in the funerary realm. Consider, as an example of a later date than Roman Pompeii, a marble sarcophagus from the mid-third century CE that depicts nine of Hercules's twelve labors (Figure 27).[179] Two important elements of this sarcophagus should be noted: first, the sarcophagus reads from left to right in chronological order beginning with the Nemean Lion and ending with the taming of the mares of Diomedes. As each episode unfolds, the figures of Hercules age, suggesting the temporal progression of the mortal man from young adulthood into manhood. Second, the face of the central "Hercules" who shoots arrows at the Stymphalian birds looks different and is carved more roughly than the faces of the other figures. It seems likely that this is intended to be the face of the deceased, immortalized on this funerary monument. The decision to present oneself as Hercules on a sarcophagus may suggest a victory over death.[180] This interpretation may, in fact, easily translate into the realm of domestic religion if one would like to interpret the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of the deceased. On the atrium *lararium* from the House of the Flamen in Pompeii, Hercules, who holds a club and the skin of

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Dionysius of Halicarnassus's (c. 60-7 BCE) objective, according to the preface of his text, was to acquaint the Greeks to the history and virtues of the Romans, and to suggest that the Romans, in fact, had deep connections and ancestry to ancient Greece (see D.H., *Ant. Rom.* 1.1-6). Dionysius was a Greek historian and rhetorician who moved to Rome and wrote during the Augustan period. His best-known work, Ρωμαϊκή Αρχαιολογία (*Roman Antiquities*) chronicles Rome's history from its mythological founding through the first Punic War.

[179] This sarcophagus may be seen today in the Palazzo Altemps in Rome as part of the Ludovisi Collection (Rome, Inv. 8642).

[180] For Hercules on funerary art and for depicting the dead on sarcophagi more generally, see Peter F.B. Jongste, *The Twelve Labours of Hercules on Roman Sarcophagi* (Roma: "Erma" di Bretschneider, 1992) and Verity Platt, "Framing the Dead on Roman Sarcophagi" in RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics (No. 61/62, 2012): 213-27.

the Nemean Lion, is in the process of being crowned by Victoria, which may symbolize his victory over death.[181] His presence on the *lararium* fits well with the other elements present on the shrine I have already discussed, including the peacock, the *omphalos*, and the pig. It is perhaps especially important that the scene of Hercules and Victoria appears immediately below the niche, upon which the statuettes of the household gods, including the *Lares*, who also may have conquered death if they are interpreted as the spirits of the dead, would have stood. Moreover, Hercules and Victoria stand in between Minerva providing offerings on the altar and Mercury, whose importance I discuss in the following section.

Mercury

Mercury assumed many roles in Roman mythology and religion. For example, he was the messenger god, the patron of travelers, tricksters, and thieves, and the god of commerce. Mercury's frequent appearance on *lararia* may reference these more traditional areas of his domain.[182] However, a consideration of two of his other roles as the *psychopomp*, the guide of the souls to the Underworld, and the mythological father of the *Lares*, may suggest an alternative reading of his appearance in support of the argument that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of the dead.[183] I will illustrate these reinterpretations of Mercury's presence on *lararia* with the atrium *lararium*

[181] According to Boyce's index, this is the only Pompeiian *lararium* painting Victoria appears on (Boyce, *Corpus*, 104-107).
[182] Boyce, *Corpus*, 104-107.
[183] Ov. *Fast*. 2.595-616.

from the House of the Flamen and his bust-length portrait in the House of the Cryptoporticus.

Mercury psychopompos *in the House of the Flamen (V.4.3)*

I have discussed the atrium *lararium* from the House of Flamen at length throughout this chapter, but I have not yet directly considered how one might interpret Mercury in this composition. Mercury is identifiable by his purple chlamys, *petasos*, winged boots, and by the caduceus that leans again his left shoulder (see Figure 3.14). A reading of Mercury as Mercury *psychopompos* may be illustrated best by a consideration of his position and by the representational elements that surround him (see Figure 3.12). He stands next to the chicken as a symbol of the new day, an *omphalos* stone wrapped by a chthonic serpent, Hercules conquering death, a sacrificial pig, and Minerva who provides offerings at the altar. These elements, particularly Minerva's provision of offerings and the sacrifice to the *Lares*/dead, renders Mercury's presence as the psychopomp and, as I will discuss next, the mythological father of the *Lares*, fitting for this composition.

Mercury as the father of the Lares

In addition to the coiling serpents and peacock that adorn the *lararium* painting in the peristyle in the House of the Cryptoporticus, a bust-length portrait of the god Mercury appears in the arched niche's interior (see Figure 3.4). He wears a blue chlamys fastened on his right shoulder and a *petasos* and raises a small green caduceus into the picture plane. As I mentioned in the Introduction, there is no firm

origin story in Roman mythology for the *Lares.* The *Lar* may have begun as a protector of the farm, but later entered an urban context, where it became the *Lar* of the crossroads, public life, and the home. One possible mythological origin of the *Lares* is in Ovid's *Fasti* (2.595-616, published 8 BCE), which tells of a nymph named Lara, who was impregnated with the *Lares* by Mercury as he led her to the Underworld after having her tongue removed for angering Jupiter.[184] Although Flower suggested Ovid's account should be read as a sarcastic parody of the account of the nymph Juturna in Book XII of the *Aeneid,* I wonder if, despite Ovid's tone, it was still an attempt to give the *Lares familiares* an origin myth.[185] This myth, moreover, strongly corroborates the argument in favor of the *Lares* as spirits of the dead. Not only did Mercury lead Lara to the Underworld in his role as *psychopompos*, but he also impregnated her with the *Lares* along the way. This account of the birth of the *Lares* by Lara and Mercury importantly appears in the second book of the *Fasti*, which details the festivals of February, the month associated mainly with the dead, such as the *Parentalia* and *Caristia* festivals I have already discussed.[186]

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[184] See Flower, *The Dancing* Lares *and the Serpent in the Garden,* 18-22 for the other potential mythological backstories. Consider as an example the account of Varro, who wrote decades before Ovid's mythology of the *Lares*. Varro wrote that the mother of the *Lares* was named Mania, whose name became associated with evil spirits (the Manes) by later Roman authors (Var. *De Ling. Lat.* 1.8).

[185] Flower, *The Dancing* Lares *and the Serpent in the Garden*, 20.

[186] It is important to note the difference between the various types of spirits related to the dead. St. Augustine quoted the second century CE Latin author Apuleius: "[M]en become *Lares* if they are good, *Lemures* or *Larvae* if they are bad, and *Manes* if it is uncertain whether they deserve well or ill" (*City of Gods*, 9.11). The *Lemures*, moreover, were souls of the restless dead that did not receive proper burial rites, from the home (Hope, Roman death, 99-102). The festival to exorcize the *Lemures* from the home of the living was the *Lemuria* festival that occurred on May 9th, 11th, and 13th of each year (Ov. *Fast*. 5.429-444). By Ovid's description of the *Lemures* as the insatiable and perhaps malevolent spirits of the dead who had not received proper

Finally, despite his relatively frequent appearance in and on domestic shrines, Mercury's bust-length portrait on the *lararium* in the House of the Cryptoporticus seems to be unique in Pompeii, according to my readings of Boyce, Orr, Fröhlich, and Giacobello.[187] Moreover, there were no portraits of the deceased on shrines, although statuettes of the *Lares* (again, presumed to the deified dead), frequently stood on the ledges of niches, which likely would have been the case on the ledge before the portrait of Mercury on this *lararium*. The portrait of the god, then, would have served as the backdrop for the statuettes of the *Lares* and could have reminded viewers of the

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burial rites and care from the family, it is possible that the *Lares* became, within the home, the spirits of the familial dead who received proper burial and attention from the living, having first been led to the Underworld by Mercury, the psychopomp. There was, too, the *Larentalia* festival, supposedly introduced during the reign of the Etruscan king Ancus Martius (r. 642-617 BCE). At this festival, which typically occurred in December, offerings were made to the *Lares* and the dead (Plutarch, *Romulus,* 4.3-5.1). According to the passage cited in the previous sentence, a servant of at the temple of Hercules invited the god to play a game of dice during the reign of Ancus Martius (r. 642-617 BCE). The servant proposed that, if he lost the game, he would provide the god with a beautiful woman, Acca Larentia. Hercules advised her to meet and marry a wealthy man, which she did. After both of their deaths, Larentia donated their property to the Roman people. Grateful for her donation, Ancus allowed her to be buried in the Velabrum and instituted an annual festival at which sacrifices were offered to the *Lares* and, presumably, the dead. However, according to Pliny (*N.H.* 18.2) and Ovid (*Fast*. 3.55), Larentia was the wife of Faustulus and the nurse of Romulus and Remus after they had been taken from the Lupa. Plutarch acknowledged that the two Larentias were different from one another, but writers have tended to conflate their stories, further complicating our understanding of the *Lares* and the *Larentalia* festival. More importantly, Larentia's association with the *Lares* is not apparent in the primary sources, although the Larentalia festival became associated with the household gods. Perhaps the association between Larentia and the *Lares* derived from their shared associations with the dead.

[187] Painted Mercury on *lararia*: Boyce, Corpus, Nos. 36 (House of the Cryptoporticus), 99, 118 (House of the Flamen), 129; Mercury as a statuette associated with *lararia*: 49 (House of the Menander), 64n., 108, 221, 299n., 371 (House of the Red Walls), 431 n., 434n., 445n. Mercury's popularity in shrines in *tabernae* may be linked more closely with his role as the patron of commerce.

deity who led the souls of their deceased family members to the Underworld during their transition into a *Lar familiaris*.

The *Lares*

Throughout this study, I have entered a long-standing debate concerning the identity and nature of the *Lares*. I have looked for visual evidence that might argue in favor of the identification of the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of deceased ancestors. In her recently published volume, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner*, Harriet Flower argued against the identification of the *Lares* as the spirits of deceased family members because of their jovial appearances in the visual record.[188] Although Flower has carefully combed through the textual record in support of her argument and although she has written said argument eloquently, I believe that some of her claims are subject to rebuttal on the basis that she has not seriously considered the possibility that the *Lares* of, for example, the home (*familiaris*), crossroad (*compitalis*), and city (*publici*) could have transformed into different entities over time, as I suggested in the Introduction. I do not deny that the *Lares* collectively may have shared the same origin story in early Rome, but I find it plausible that the powers, identity, and associations of the *Lares* in different realms of society could have developed new associations. For example, in the home, it is possible that the *Lares familiares* became associated with the deceased, while the *Lares compitales* remained the protectors of space and the

[188] Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner,* 9.

guardians of agriculture and crossroads. Flower began to consider these differences in *The Dancing Lares,* when she attempted to debunk the myth of the "spooky" *Lar* that may have been associated with death.[189] To Flower, it seemed superfluous to have shrines for the dead in every house and on every street corner, by which she insinuated, but did not explicitly state, that there must have been a divergence between the two groups of *Lares*.[190] However, in arguing against the *Lares'* association with the cult of the deceased, Flower did not consider the funerary realm in her argument. As stated in the Introduction, a lack of integration between the funerary, domestic, and religious spheres is, in my opinion, where a fundamental misstep in scholarship concerning the *Lares* has occurred. The visual approach to the question concerning the identity of the *Lares familiares* I have taken throughout this study has sought to begin to correct this misstep. By considering the presence of the *Lares* in the visual record in conjunction with the elements of design and representation that surround them in addition to the various texts about them, the character of the *Lares* may be better understood by scholars.

Let us return to the painted *Lares* in the *lararium* from the House of the Vettii (see Figure 3.6). Once again, each *Lar* wears a short purple and white tunic, a wreath upon his head and open-toed boots and holds a rhyton in the shape of a goat in one raised hand, from which wine streams into a *situla* held in the other. This pose is standard across both the painted and plastic versions of the *Lares*, with room for some variation (see Figure 3.11). This pose, too is standard in the other realms of society

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[189] Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner,* 10.
[190] Ibid.

where different kinds of *Lares* appear. Consider, for example, the *lararium* from the thermopolium of Lucius Vetutius Placidus (I.8.8, Figure 3.24). In the *aedicula* shrine, mostly painted with some stucco elements, a painted *Genius* places offerings onto a tripod and holds a cornucopia. He is flanked by a dancing *Lar* on each side, and painted versions of Mercury, who is, in this context, likely the patron of commerce, and Bacchus as the god of wine. The interpretations of these deities in the context of a shop that sells food and, indeed, wine seems appropriate. However, one could easily visualize this *lararium* in a home rather than in its very visible position in a public shop. The compositional similarities between *lararia* in homes and, in this case, shops is illustrative of the multivalent natures of *lararia* based on context. The *Lares* of the shop likely would have been the protectors of space and their visual similarities to the *Lares familiares* does not account for the possible divergence in their natures. Therefore, rather than using the *Lares'* appearances on domestic shrines as an argument against their nature as the spirits of the deceased in the home, I suggest that their appearance more simply *identifies them as* Lares.[191] Their location, the other elements depicted on, objects found around, and rituals performed at shrines are more telling of their associations with the dead. This said, understanding the typical gesture of pouring wine from *rhyta* into *situlae* by the *Lares* may help in providing future interpretations of them.

In the home, the living would have provided offerings to the *Lares familiares* (see above, 8-9 for the discussion of the House of the Flamen's kitchen *lararium*).

[191] Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner,* 9.

Because of the offerings given to them, it would seem most natural that the *Lares* should be in the act of receiving offerings, but their gesture of pouring wine into *situlae* does not suggest that they are receiving anything. Therefore, in the context of domestic *lararia*, the gestures of the *Lares familiares* pouring wine could be interpreted as their preparations for consuming the offerings provided to them, and perhaps their dancing pose may echo their pleasure in receiving such offerings.

The imagines maiorum *of the House of the Menander (I.10.4)*

Finally, there seems to be a shrine dedicated to the ancestors in the House of the Menander that may, in conjunction with the statuettes from the atrium *lararium* of the House of Obellius Firmus described in the Introduction, visually connect the *Lares familiares* with deceased family members.[192] The shrine stands in the southwest corner of a finely decorated exedra on the south side of the peristyle. It has a large, rectangular masonry podium and its shallow niche is set into the pre-existing Second Style wall decoration (Figure 3.25). Both the podium and the niche are painted in imitation of yellow and red marble. Five plaster casts of figures were made from a series of voids found within the niche during excavation (see Figure 3.26).[193] From left to right, the figures are as follows:[194] the first is a statuette of a youthful male who sits restfully upon a rock with one hand upon his knee. According to Maiuri, this

[192] For discussions of this shrine, see Amedeo Maiuri, *La Casa Del Menandro: E Il Suo Tesoro Di Argenteria* (Roma: La Libreria dello stato, 1933), 98-106, Figures 47-49, Plate 11 and Boyce, *Corpus*, No. 49.
[193] Boyce, *Corpus*, 28. Four of these are still visible in the shrine.
[194] For descriptions of the figures in this paragraph, see Maiuri, *Casa del Menandro*, 102 and Boyce, *Corpus*, 28.

statuette wore a garland upon his head and should be interpreted as one of the *Lares praestites*, or a *Lar* responsible for protecting the city; Clarke disagreed and considered it a *Lar familiaris* because it was found in a home.[195] The second figure is a herm of a small, bald male. The third is a larger male head with sketchily modeled facial features, set atop a tall cylindrical pedestal. The fourth is a bust-length portrait of a man whose facial features are nearly unrecognizable. The fifth figure is a small head on a square base; its facial features, too, are almost unrecognizable. These figures were likely originally made of wood or wax.[196] Since the discovery of the voids and the creation of the casts by Maiuri, these figures, except for the *Lar*, have been called the *imagines maiorum*, or the images of the ancestors. If, in fact, Maiuri's attribution of the figures as the ancestors is correct, their presence in the House of the Menander demonstrates the importance of establishing, maintaining, and displaying a long family history that I discussed in Part 2 in relation to *lararia* as sites of commemoration.[197] According to Clarke, each time the family grew in size, the ancient versions of the wood or wax masks were copied through a casting process, which made them smaller and smaller the older and larger the *gens* became.[198] Clarke's explanation would explain the small size of the so-called *imagines maiorum*. Their position, moreover, next to a statuette of a *Lar* physically, visibly, and, most likely, ritualistically connected the *Lares* to the dead.

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[195] Maiuri, *Casa del Menandro*, 104; Clarke, *Houses of Roman Italy*, 192-193.
[196] Maiuri, *Casa del Menandro*, 104.
[197] See Plb. 6.53 for a description of the use of wax death masks in patrician funerals.
[198] John R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 B.C.-A.D. 250: Ritual, Space, and Decoration* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991), 192-193.

The three statuettes from the atrium *lararium* in the House of Obellius are, once again, roughly sculpted, mostly bust-length portraits of men with no identifying attributes. In fact, the descriptions of these statuettes are not dissimilar to the plaster casts of *imagines maiorum* from the House of the Menander.[199] The visual connections between the casts from the House of the Menander and the statuettes from the House of Obellius bolsters the points made about the importance of the House of the Menander's *imagines mairoum* and the importance of the atrium and *lararium* in domestic religion, funerary practice, and the commemoration of the ancestors.

Summary

The long-standing debate concerning the identity of the *Lares familiares* has prompted a reconsideration of the representational elements present on the domestic *lararia* and tombs of Pompeii. By utilizing the material-based approach employed in Part 2, I proposed that if there were visual and thematic connections between the representational elements depicted on *lararia* and tombs, one could reasonably interpret the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of deceased family members. Through careful reinterpretations of snakes as chthonic beings, food, ritual, fire, and dining as mediators between the living and the dead, Hercules as a figure who conquered death, the peacock as a symbol of immortality and reincarnation, and Mercury as the

[199]The statuettes from the ancestral shrine in the House of the Menander were once likely made from wood or wax, but the statuettes in the House of Obellius were made from more durable materials such as terracotta and marble.

psychopomp and the mythological father of the *Lares*, it, in fact seems plausible to interpret the *Lares familiares* as the spirits of deceased family members.

Part 4: Conclusion

> "For it is a big mistake indeed to have elaborate houses for the living, and not to worry about the homes where we must live for much longer."[200]

By using the character Trimalchio in his *Satyricon*, the Roman satirist Petronius (27-66 CE) raised a serious connection between the homes of the living and the homes of the dead.[201] Trimalchio, a nouveau riche freedman with a taste for decadence, brought the seemingly disparate realm of the dead into the home through the spectacle of his premature funeral. Although Trimalchio's statement does not necessarily concern the practice of domestic religion, the *Lares familiares*, or *lararia*, his spectacle makes the point that houses were the homes of the living and that tombs were the homes of the dead in the Roman world. I hope to have illustrated through visual and ritualistic connections that both sites may have been critical sites of

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[200] *Valde enim falsum est vivo quidem domos cultas esse, non curari eas, ubi diutius nobis habitandum est.* Pet. Sat. 71, trans. author.

[201] Valerie Hope, *Roman Death: Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London; New York: Continuum, 2009), 69.
Although scholars are not sure of Petronius's identity, it seems clear that he had a taste for the dramatic in his writing and his own life. According to Atchity, Petronius committed suicide, although he made it look like a natural death, after being falsely accused of involvement with the failed conspiracy of Piso in 66 CE by Nero's guard. However, before his suicide, Petronius sent to a catalog of the emperor's male and female sexual consorts to Nero himself (Atchity, 267). The *Satyricon* is a fragmentary Latin novel that follows the adventures of a teacher of rhetoric, Encolpius, and his friend and former lover, Ascyltos through Campania and Magna Graecia. The two protagonists came upon the dinner of the nouveau riche freedman Trimalchio, from which the quotation at the start of this chapter derived. Kenneth John Atchity and Rosemary McKenna, *The Classical Roman Reader: New Encounters with Ancient Rome* (New York: H. Holt, 1997).

commemoration for the family cult of the dead, which may have included the *Lares familiares*.

In this thesis, I entered a 120-year-long debate concerning the identity and nature of the *Lares familiares*. One side of the debate theorizes that the *Lares* were the benevolent protectors of space, while the other side theorizes that the *Lares* were the spirits of deceased family members. Although my argument that the *Lares* were the spirits of the deceased is not new, my approach to the debate is. My work is indebted to the scholars who have studied this topic before me, but there seems to be a stalemate in the existing scholarship, by which I mean scholars, even those who do interact closely with material remains, have used the same body of mostly textual evidence to lead their discussions and analyses of the *Lares*. Although I have certainly referred to some of the extant primary sources concerning the identity and nature of the *Lares*, I instead placed the archaeological remains in the forefront to give these important pieces to the puzzle a voice, which may, in turn, provide a new lens through which to view and interpret the identity of the *Lares familiares*. Moreover, no studies I came across during my research directly connected *lararia* and tombs. Throughout this thesis, I have presented new evidence, derived from the close observation of the design and representational elements extant on temples, tombs, and *lararia*, that argues in favor of the theory that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of deceased ancestors, who were reincorporated into religious practices and everyday life through domestic worship.

In the opening paragraph of this conclusion, I mentioned that tombs were the home of the dead and houses were homes of the living. Temples were also the homes

of the gods. In Part 2, I discussed how the designs of *lararia* have traditionally been equated with that of temples, just as some types of tombs, such as *aedicula* and altar tombs, seem to have been influenced directly by temple design. Given, however, the possibility that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of deceased ancestors, I wondered if there may have also been a connection between the design of *lararia* and tombs. Through a consideration of *aedicula lararia*, such as the *lararia* from the Houses of the Vettii, the Menander, and Obellius Firmus, *aedicula* tombs, such as the Tomb of Publius Vesonius Phileros, and altar tombs, such as Naevoleia Tyche and Gaius Vestorius Priscus, there seems, indeed, to be a connection between the designs and rituals performed at tombs and *lararia*, which identifies both spaces as crucial sites of commemoration for the spirits of the deceased.

In Part 3, I considered the two- and three-dimensional representational elements on *lararia* and tombs and suggested that, if connections could be drawn between them, one might be able to draw connections between the *Lares familiares* and the spirits of the dead. Indeed, I reinterpreted various thematic elements, such as snakes as chthonic beings, food, fire, and dining as communicators between the living and the dead, Hercules as the man who conquered death, the peacock as a symbol of immortality and reincarnation, and Mercury as the psychopomp and the mythological father of the *Lares*. This evidence too seems to favor the theory that the *Lares familiares* were the spirits of deceased family members.

Collectively, the visual parallels between the elements of design and representation on *lararia* and tombs seem to be associated with one another and seem to suggest that the *Lares familiares* may be interpreted as the spirits of deceased

family members. In spite of the long history of debate surrounding the *Lares*, the study of them and household religion more broadly needs more scholarly attention than they have been given. This study and most others that interact closely with material remains are based in Pompeii. However, having established that there is a tangible physical connection between *lararia*, temples and tombs, future studies conducted will allow scholars to detect to what extent these visual connections are more widely observable throughout the Roman world.

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