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"Ceramic Reflections of Pompeii and Herculaneum"

A major indicator of the mania in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries for things Pompeian is the rise in imitations of classical subject matter found on ceramic wares from various factories in Europe. Some of the companies, such as Wedgwood in Staffordshire, Sèvres in France, and Capodimonte in Naples, gravitated to the wall paintings and sculpture that became available to them as sources through the publication, especially, of the *Antichità di Ercolano* (1759-1792); while other factories, such as Meissen and Delft, showed no interest in the recent archaeological finds from Pompeii and Herculaneum. The passion for Roman scenes from Pompeii and Herculaneum waned later in the nineteenth century, even for factories that had a tradition of classical subjects, in favor of imitations of Greek vases, of the sort preferred by Wedgwood and several Danish companies.

Many of the pottery manufactures were geared to the upper classes, or even to royalty, as witnessed by the *Servizio dell'Oca* ["The Goose Service"] for King Ferdinand IV in Naples or by Sèvres' pots made for Napoleon. Even small and little-known manufactures, such as Raffaele Giovina, joined the royal bandwagon. But Wedgwood, in particular, cultivated the newly burgeoning middle classes with his Pompeian themes. Even though he was busily employed making a spectacular set of largely scenic views for Catherine the Great, he was also wooing the British middle classes in a manner not seen before in the pottery trade. In fact, it was Wedgwood's genius for marketing that probably did more for the spread of interest in images from the recently excavated sites than anything else. His marketing schemes and his fashionable showroom on York Street in Chelsea (London) got his pots into the hands of people who otherwise might never have seen them.

One of the favored images among those in the upper classes who could afford to buy fine tableware was the dancing maenad who floats in mid-air. Another was the *Selling of Cupids* that so titillated eighteenth century sensibilities. It is interesting to compare such images on pottery or porcelain with the same images in other decorative arts, such as cloth coverings and upholstery and wallpaper. Such comparisons allow us to track the taste in Pompeian themes from medium to medium, and from one country to another, and show a relationship to the availability of the sources in printed books. Thus, pottery manufacture and sales serve as a kind of barometer for the popularity of Pompeian themes in European social circles, and can be measured most easily in the great houses where collections and records survive, or the wall decorations, such as those designed by Robert Adam, that correspond to the burgeoning taste in pottery.