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The Pompeian Building Complex of 55 B.C.

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This thesis treats the architectural aspects of the massive building project in the Campus Martius completed and dedicated by Pompey in 55 B.C. and the historical and political context in which it was conceived. The complex’s buildings consisted of a public portico, a senate house, a residence for Pompey, and a magnificent new theater, Rome’s first, with several shrines and a temple to Venus Victrix attached to its cavea. Although there were several architectural predecessors in Italy, the Pompeian complex was the first of its kind in Rome, both in appearance and in motivation. The timing of the theater’s conception and construction helps illustrate that its construction was primarily political and that Pompey aimed first at reasserting and ensuring his own primacy on Rome’s political scene. The buildings were laden with Pompeian imagery, and this concentration of images made the building complex unusually effective. Not only did Pompey build a theater and a public park for Rome’s masses, he also attempted to display religious piety by building the temple of Venus Victrix. Both his new residence and the new senate house allowed Pompey to supervise the political situation and to demonstrate that he would be politically viable for years yet to come. The similarity of

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the subsequent imperial fora, which were modeled after Pompey’s complex, and the continued importance of the complex, particularly the theater, long after Pompey’s death demonstrate the significance of the Pompeian achievement.