

## CHAPTER 5

# *Seeking the domus behind the dominus in Roman Pompeii: artefact distributions as evidence for the various social groups*

Bankers and tax collectors should have larger and more beautiful houses, safe from burglars. Public figures and speakers should have elegant and spacious accommodation to receive their visitors. For the true aristocracy who hold office and magistracies, and who must take on state roles, we must build high and stately anterooms, and very spacious atria and peristyles, along with wide groves and walkways completed in a majestic style; in addition we must build libraries, galleries and basilicas fitted out with a magnificence similar to that of public buildings.

Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.5.2–3

All members of a society are contributors to the matrix of actions that eventually becomes the archaeological context, and the variety of features is a product of this activity . . . many archaeological features are diffuse, mixed and difficult to interpret. Some, though, are more likely than others to provide information on small group activities; among these are features with rather structured event and/or episode sets, such as houses . . .

Brooks 1982, 68–69

## INTRODUCTION

In relative contrast with the houses discussed in the other chapters of this volume, those from the Roman town of Pompeii have been intensively studied for more than 200 years, and it is easy to see why they have attracted so much attention. The Campania region of southern Italy in which they lie was covered in volcanic material by the eruption of Vesuvius in August 79 CE. Today, excavation has revealed about two thirds of the entire town of Pompeii, and it is possible to walk through the streets, wandering in and out of both public buildings and private houses. Walls frequently rise at least one storey and often more, and although the roofs and upper floors

have collapsed, the ground floors are frequently relatively complete. The larger houses are adorned with wall paintings, mosaic floors and marble furnishings. Excavators have been able to locate an extensive array of the kinds of everyday items of pottery and metalwork normally present in archaeological contexts, and they have also been able to learn much about some of the fixtures and objects made of organic materials such as wood which are not usually preserved on archaeological sites. The covering of volcanic material at Pompeii is full of voids left behind as those materials rotted away, enabling their original forms to be reconstructed by filling those voids with plaster – a technique which has revealed not only items of furniture such as cupboards and doors, but also the grisly impressions of some of the unluckiest final inhabitants, animal and human, who failed to escape the town's destruction.

The earliest excavations in the houses here and at the neighbouring town of Herculaneum were primarily concerned with recovering mosaics, wall paintings and sculptures, and this, together with the richness of the material itself, encouraged a tendency to study the different architectural elements in isolation. But the Campanian evidence has also been used differently, as a tool for studying social relationships in Roman households, and this is the line of inquiry I want to focus on in this chapter, building on what previous scholars have already achieved. In a landmark paper first published in 1988, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill was one of the first to recognise that ancient houses could be viewed as occupied spaces rather than simply as architectural complexes (Wallace-Hadrill 1988). Since his article was published a generation of scholars have developed and elaborated on many of Wallace-Hadrill's ideas. His discussion builds on the work of earlier researchers who drew a connection between the layout of the larger excavated houses at Pompeii and the kinds of elite residences described by the architect Vitruvius (quoted above), who was writing in Rome during the first century BCE. Among the points Vitruvius makes, two in particular stand out. First, he claims that the type of house a man lived in was expected to be appropriate to his social status. A member of the elite who played a role in public life was expected to receive *clientes* (followers of lower social status, referred to loosely below as 'clients'), business associates and political supporters at his house, and he required a suitable space in which to do this. Second, Vitruvius distinguishes between two different areas of an elite house, one of which was the sole domain of the residents, while the other could be entered by outsiders who had not specifically been invited.

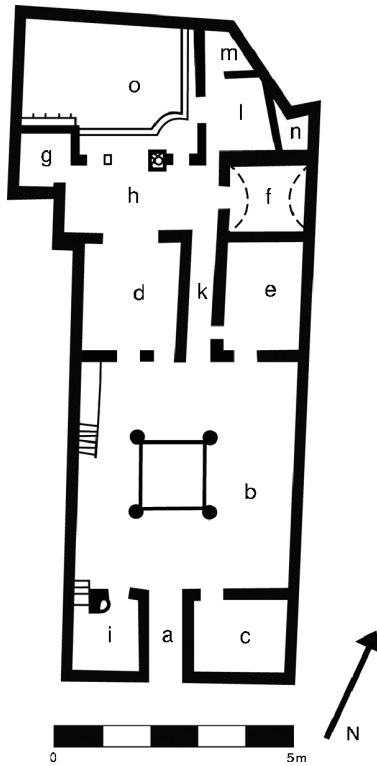


Figure 5.1 Plan of the House of the Ceii (House I.6.15)

Assisted by additional ancient textual sources, Wallace-Hadrill sketched a detailed model for the way in which Vitruvius' description may have worked at Pompeii, arguing that domestic space can be read as a physical map of social status distinctions. There is much variation in the scale and layout of the individual excavated properties, but the interiors tend to be arranged around two circulation areas, an outer hall and an inner garden (Figures 5.1 to 5.3). Like other scholars before him, Wallace-Hadrill viewed the hall as what Vitruvius called an atrium, but he also looked in detail at how it might have functioned as a space for the formal reception of clients, whose numbers at their patron's house for the morning *salutatio* or greeting were a mark of status and influence. The architecture of the atrium gave it an aura of wealth and power: the ceiling was high, and the decoration and architecture conjured up the impression of a public,

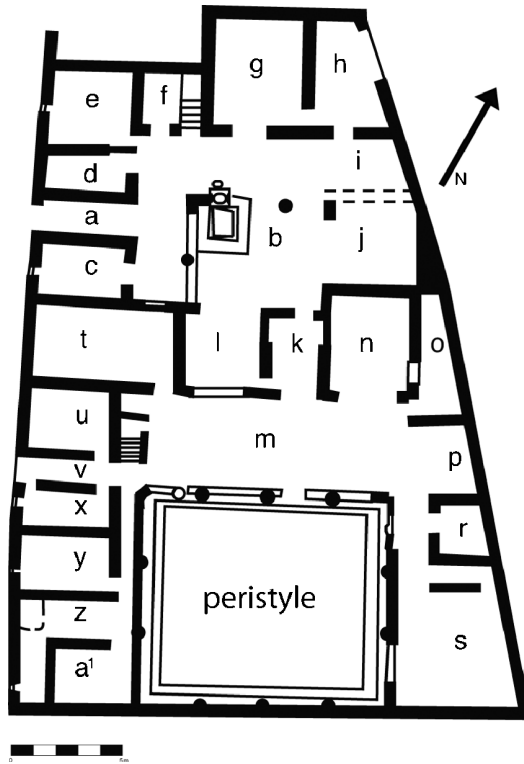


Figure 5.2 Plan of House VI.16.26

rather than a private, building (Plate 5.1). At the rear it gave onto a second room, traditionally referred to by scholars as the *tablinum*, which had a lower ceiling and sometimes also a raised floor. Here, Wallace-Hadrill suggested, the *dominus* (master of the house) would have been positioned to receive clients in an almost theatrical manner, framed by the architecture. At its rear the *tablinum* opened into the second circulation space, a garden which often took the form of a colonnaded peristyle. This, Wallace-Hadrill argued (again following Vitruvius), was a more intimate area into which only higher-status associates would have been invited to stroll in the porticoes or dine in decorated *triclinia* along its sides. He pointed out that service facilities such as storerooms and cooking spaces, which would have been used largely by slaves or servants, were pushed outwards towards the boundaries of the domestic complex and away from this main atrium–peristyle axis, thus marginalising their habitual users.

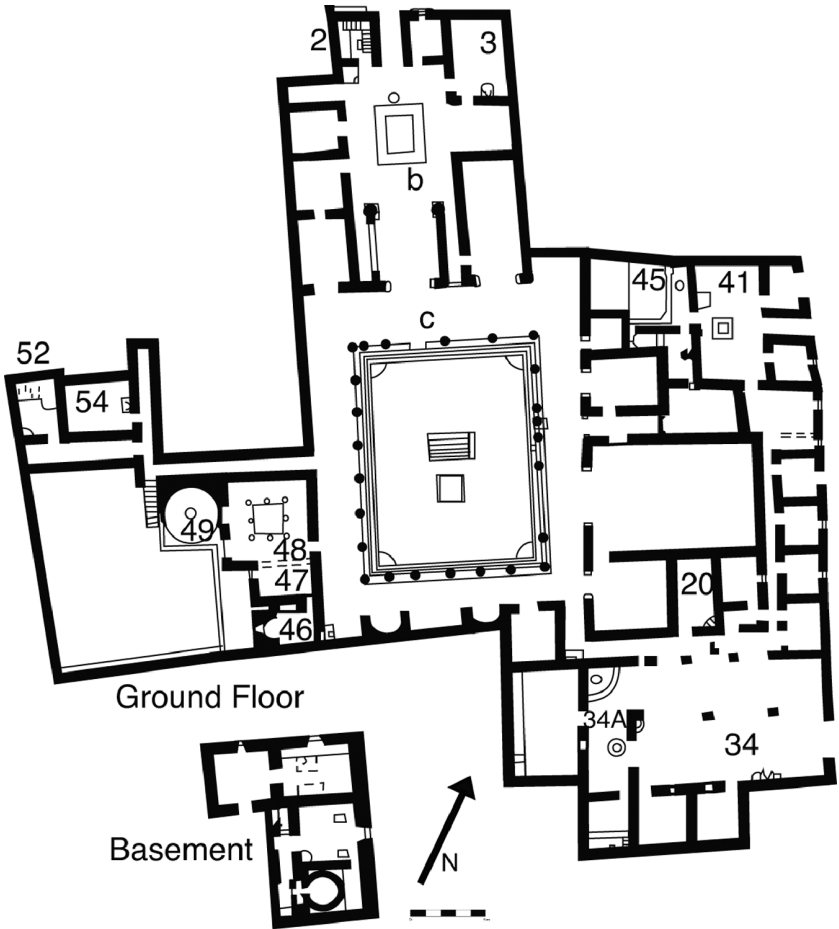


Figure 5.3 Plan of the House of the Menander (House I.10.4)

This interpretation of the atrium house-form is elegant and has held up well to scrutiny. It is, nevertheless, questionable whether approaching the archaeology through the framework of the texts produces a reliable picture. Several problems with this methodology have been pointed out. One is that, while archaeologists customarily label excavated spaces with Latin names, we cannot be sure that our definitions match those the Roman authors had in mind. This is certainly a difficulty with most room labels, although the identification of atrium and peristyle, on which Wallace-Hadrill's basic argument rests, is fairly secure, thanks to Vitruvius' detailed



Plate 5.1 View into the atrium of the House of the Menander (House 1.10.4), Pompeii

description of these spaces.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the fact that the model maps out a series of conceptual distinctions as well as spatial ones makes the precise identification of functional spaces less crucial to the overall argument. There is, however, a further consequence of using Vitruvius' description as a point of departure in this way that has been less widely acknowledged, but is more troubling, and that is that his particular viewpoint has tended to shape our whole understanding of elite Roman houses. His perspective – that of the *dominus* – is so overwhelming that it is difficult to find evidence anywhere in his text for the roles played by other members of the household,

<sup>1</sup> The dangers of using textual references, from Vitruvius or from any other ancient author, to deduce how rooms may have been used, have been discussed in detail (see Riggsby 1997; Allison 2004, 161–177). See Chapter 1 for further discussion of the potential problems in trying to use ancient texts to understand the use of household space.

including its women (compare Milnor 2005, 107). Of course, this bias is part of a wider cultural and social universe in which elite male discourse predominated. One strength of taking a material cultural approach to the social dynamics of Pompeian houses should be that we can look beyond that dominant discourse to explore alternative viewpoints and other social roles. The few attempts that have been made to investigate the activities of particular social groups such as women and slaves in these households have had mixed success. Viewing the household through the lens of Vitruvius, and hence from the perspective of the *dominus*, has led to the conclusion that the influence of these groups was relatively unimportant since they had little effect on the physical organisation of the central axis of the house (for example Wallace-Hadrill 1996; George 1997). From this perspective other members of the household are detectable only in the interstices of the *dominus*' world. But do we get a different view if we try to approach the archaeological evidence directly?

A major study by Penelope Allison was aimed at clarifying the way in which individual spaces in Pompeian houses were used (Allison 2004). A particular strength of Allison's work is that, as well as looking at the architecture and decoration of the houses, she also explored in detail the types and distribution of the many objects found in different rooms. Where sufficient information was available, she recorded where in the room each item was located and how deeply it was buried, important details which can reveal that objects may have been used or stored together, or whether they may have fallen from an upstairs room as the upper storeys of houses collapsed under the weight of accumulating volcanic material. Excavators must have missed some items and been selective about what they recorded, so that this kind of database can offer only a partial picture of what the houses originally contained. Even so, putting together a comprehensive list is a daunting task: in Allison's sample of thirty houses there were 865 rooms which together contained over 16,000 artefacts. Many problems and inconsistencies in the material emerged which are routinely overlooked: some houses showed evidence that redecoration or construction work was under way, hindering any attempt to understand how those properties functioned as living spaces; elsewhere, rooms with elaborate wall decoration contained mundane domestic artefacts, or no artefacts at all; and many spaces contained motley assortments of items with a wide range of different uses. For those accustomed to Wallace-Hadrill's *dominus*-centred model, Allison's study revealed some interesting results: for example, the atrium was shown to be not only a monumental reception space for the use of the *dominus* and his visitors, but also a location where a variety of domestic items such as loom weights and table vessels were kept, revealing the

presence of other members of the household here as well. Ultimately, however, the volume and diversity of information resulting from this study are difficult to digest, and Allison's complete renunciation of textual evidence made questions about patterns of social behaviour impossible for her to address (Allison 2004, 154–158).

A question that remains, then, is whether it is possible to use the material from Pompeii to build a model of domestic organisation which gives more weight to the other members of the household besides the *dominus*, and which combines the evidence of texts and archaeology in a more balanced manner. Recent studies in the archaeology of other periods and regions have pointed out that the best place to search for the influence of less empowered groups like women, servants and children is in the kind of artefactual material Allison has brought together, since this is evidence for the kinds of small-scale, short-term activities over which such individuals are likely to have had most control (Gilchrist 2000, 325–326). In both Greek and Roman contexts the focus of most artefact analysis has been on isolating the functions of different rooms, but to date studies of artefact distributions have often been seen as frustratingly inconclusive (for example Foxhall 2000; Cahill 2002, 70–72). Even where both architecture and finds have been well preserved and relatively well documented, as at Pompeii, the task of pinpointing a single dominant activity in a specific architectural space has proved difficult, and this has led some scholars to suggest that the individual room is too small as a unit of analysis (Berry 1997, 194), while others have questioned whether much at all can be learned about Roman society from studying artefact distributions (see for example the contributions in Vanhaverbeke *et al.* 2008).

One response to this problem has been a more critical approach to the natural and human processes which have shaped the archaeological site since the houses were left by their occupants (known as site formation processes). Even at a site such as Pompeii, which was rapidly abandoned, we cannot expect the distribution of artefacts to be unaffected by the circumstances surrounding the site's destruction. In fact detailed study of the architecture has revealed extensive evidence for re-entry to buildings during or after the eruption. Holes in many walls reveal escape routes or the passage of intruders, and messages scrawled on house exteriors indicate the activities of rescue parties or looters.<sup>2</sup> In addition, for some years before the final eruption in 79 CE there were earthquakes, including a

<sup>2</sup> For example CIL IV 2311, on the exterior of house VII.2.20, which reads 'House tunnelled through': Cooley and Cooley 2004, 40.



serious one in 62 CE which is known from preserved textual sources to have caused severe damage to public buildings and presumably damaged private houses as well. It has often been argued that earthquakes led to the repair, modification and even the abandonment of some houses prior to the final eruption, although Allison's analysis suggested that at least some of the properties in her sample were still inhabited at the time of the destruction (Allison 2004, 192–196). Whenever the houses were abandoned, it is likely that their inhabitants would have had an opportunity to store or to carry away some prized possessions, and we should not discount the potentially disruptive influence of these kinds of activities. The effect of the eruption in distorting (rather than reducing) the artefact assemblages should therefore not be underestimated, and study of a variety of houses at other ancient sites has found similar levels of apparent disorganisation, even though the circumstances of their abandonment were different. As with domestic structures whose occupants may have departed for other reasons and sometimes less hastily, some possessions may have been carried away from Pompeii by its fleeing population while others may have been gathered together or hoarded in the hope of an eventual return. Before using artefact distributions as evidence for patterns of activity, it is therefore important to ask whether we can make more sense of the objects that were found and recorded by thinking systematically and in detail about these and some of the other processes which may have structured their deposition.

#### FLEXIBILITY AND MULTIFUNCTIONALITY IN THE USE OF DOMESTIC SPACE AT POMPEII

The common focus on the role of the *dominus* in shaping the domestic environment at Pompeii has tended to emphasise a number of aspects of elite domestic culture which appear to be uniquely 'Roman'. Indeed it has been explicitly argued that the architecture of Pompeian houses, and others outside Italy in a number of the provinces, deliberately projected an image of the 'Romanitas' or 'Roman-ness' of their owners (Hales 2003, *passim*). In a variety of practical ways, however, Roman housing from Pompeii and elsewhere has much in common not only with that of Classical Greece but also with dwellings from a range of pre-modern and non-western societies which have been studied through archaeological, historical and ethnographic work. Such studies suggest that the present-day western concern for providing specialised rooms for particular activities and for allocating separate spaces to different members of the household

is a relatively recent phenomenon which has developed as a consequence of the rise of 'individualism' in western thought. In most societies, at most times, a single space has tended to be multifunctional and to be used by a number of different household members. At the same time, analysis of significant numbers of Latin, and also Greek, texts making reference to domestic activities suggests that in both Greek and Roman societies space was perceived as potentially flexible, its use changing dependent on a variety of factors. Among these seasonality was particularly significant since changes in sunlight and temperature had implications for how warm or cool rooms facing in different directions could be (Nevett 1997, Nevett 1999, 36). These characteristics of ancient domestic behaviour have been acknowledged by classical archaeologists looking at artefact distributions in both Greek and Roman contexts (for example Berry 1997; Foxhall 2000). Nevertheless, the extent, nature and implications of flexibility in spatial use in ancient houses have remained largely unexplored.

Here, then, my goal is to investigate evidence for flexibility in the use of space at Pompeii by identifying systematic patterns of variation which may underlie artefact distributions. These are used as a basis for detecting some of the relatively small-scale, short-term patterns of domestic activity which should tell us most about the less privileged members of these households. In the process I highlight some of the assumptions that need to be made about how artefact distributions are likely to relate to patterns of behaviour, and I make explicit use of some of the models for interpreting these relationships outlined by the anthropologist Michael Schiffer based on ethnographic studies (Schiffer 1996). Although the artefacts are the main focus, they are viewed as part of a wider complex of information which also includes the provenience (the location in which they were found) together with any architectural and decorative features which help to provide a context.

Three different aspects of the evidence potentially show multifunctional or flexible use of space: the first, and most commonly observed phenomenon in both Roman and Greek contexts, is the occurrence of artefacts and/or architectural features used for two or more different activities in the same physical area; this is balanced by a second, closely linked, phenomenon, more rarely discussed, which is that evidence for the same activity is sometimes found in two or more different areas and may indicate flexibility in spatial usage; a third and final pattern merits separate consideration, and that is an apparent incompatibility in the activities suggested by the architecture and decoration of a space, and the objects found there. These configurations result from the kinds of small-scale activities carried

out by individuals or small groups over a short period of time (Brooks 1982, 68). As examples through which to explore these indicators of the flexible use of space, I discuss in detail three specific atrium-type houses, the House of the Ceii (I.6.15), House VI.16.26 and the House of the Menander (I.10.4). In all three cases the excavators not only recorded many of the finds but also attempted to distinguish items that were in storage from those that may have been in use at the time of the destruction.<sup>3</sup> Although they are all atrium-type buildings they represent a range of different sizes, with ground areas of roughly 300, 600 and 1,800 square metres respectively. While these houses obviously do not constitute a statistically significant sample for generalising about the use of domestic space across the town of Pompeii as a whole, they do provide insights into multifunctionality and flexibility of spatial use, and there are some similarities between them which may be indicative of broader patterns.

In the House of the Ceii (named by modern scholars after two brothers whom they thought once occupied it) the major phase of construction is dated to the second half of the second century BCE, although the house incorporates earlier walls and also shows signs of some later modification (Figure 5.1). Eleven rooms are arranged around an atrium (b) at the front and a small garden at the rear (o) (Figure 5.1). Holes dug through the walls in several places seem to indicate the movements of escapees or looters at the time of the eruption. Allison comments that the assemblage is very mixed, containing relatively few movable finds and much evidence of empty storage cupboards, all of which she suggests are the result of events during the abandonment of the town, when items were carried away or salvaged (Allison, date unknown).

House VI.16.26 consists of twenty-two rooms organised around an atrium (b) and a compact peristyle (Figure 5.2). The atrium appears to have had an unusual design, with a large open area to the south-east, and porticoes to north and west. The peristyle has a deep ambulatory to its north side and shallower ones to its east and west, of which the western one was walled in to create a corridor. On the fourth, southern, side the central garden space is delimited by a wall, but engaged columns create the visual

<sup>3</sup> I build directly here on the information gathered and summarised by Allison, whose work provides the best picture we have of the artefactual contents of Pompeian houses and their spatial distribution. However, I do occasionally differ from her in interpreting the use to which an object may have been put (for example, I take small glass bottles/flasks to be toilet or table items, rather than transport vessels). Assigning functions to specific objects is not a scientific process since they may not always have been used for the purpose for which they were made, or indeed may have been made to cater to a variety of uses. Assessments of whether an item was being used, stored or discarded are also subjective, depending on interpretation of contextual information.

effect of a full peristyle. Contrary to the stereotypical view, in this house the atrium and peristyle lie side-by-side rather than one behind the other. Also, somewhat atypically, there is no evidence for elaborate wall painting. Allison suggests that the area around the peristyle may have been abandoned since it appears to have yielded few finds. A pile of roofing tiles in the atrium suggests that renovation work may have been planned or under way here at the time of the eruption. Moving between these two areas would have necessitated passing through one of the rooms facing onto the peristyle, since the large room 1, which is reminiscent of a transitional tablinum space, seems to have been walled in at the back with only a window looking out towards the peristyle. Both northern and southern areas of the building had their own street entrances, and it is therefore a possibility that the two were occupied separately, at least for part of the life of the house.

The well-known House of the Menander (named by modern scholars after a painting of the famous fourth-century Greek comic playwright on the wall of one of its rooms) is unusually complex in its pattern of organisation (Figure 5.3), owing to its large size, but its relatively recent excavation means that it provides particularly detailed information about movable finds. Like the House of the Ceii, in-depth study of the architecture suggests that this house developed into its present form over a period of several centuries. It also grew considerably, incorporating parts of neighbouring properties (Ling 1997, 52–59, 223–237). The original nucleus of the house, the atrium (b) and surrounding rooms, perhaps with a garden behind, has been dated to the late third to mid second century BCE. By the time of the destruction the property comprised some fifty different rooms, including additional courtyard and garden spaces to east, south-east and west of the main atrium–peristyle axis (b–c), a second atrium to the east of the peristyle (41), and a bath suite along with four basement rooms on the west side (46–49). In his published summary of the architecture and history of the insula Ling commented that there was extensive evidence of earthquake damage (Ling 1997, 234–237). Redecoration was evidently taking place in several rooms, and work seems to have been under way to modernise the furnace in the bath suite (Ling 1997, 135). There were, nonetheless, large numbers of artefacts in the house at the time of the destruction, suggesting that any interruption in occupation was not anticipated to be lengthy. In fact during excavation of the corridor south-east of the peristyle, skeletal remains were recovered from a group of at least nine individuals who included three children under five (Lazer 1997). It is unclear whether the owner of the house and his family were in residence at the time of the

eruption, whether these were slaves or servants taking care of the property while it was renovated or whether they were outsiders seeking refuge.

*Evidence for two or more activities taking place in a single space, and for the use of several different spaces for the same activity*

The characteristic mixing of material associated with a variety of activities taking place within a single architectural space is widespread in all three houses. As the work of Michael Schiffer suggests (Schiffer 1996), a first step in interpreting the artefactual evidence is to try to establish, as far as possible, whether individual items were left behind where they were actually used, or whether they were in storage or had been set aside for discard or recycling.

Refuse is the category of evidence most difficult to identify for a variety of reasons, not least because definitions of rubbish are subjective. Today an item of rubbish could be seen as something no longer needed or wanted by its owner. In pre-modern societies, though, rates of discard were much lower. This is partly because in such societies people had fewer possessions – particularly disposable ones (Deetz 1977, 59). But it is also because a scarcity of resources meant that items tended to be repaired, reused for other purposes or recycled to make new objects. Evidence of this in Greek and Roman contexts can be seen in the number of excavated ceramic vessels which have been mended in Antiquity. A couple of criteria can be used to define refuse: first, its context, which may suggest that objects had been gathered together to be discarded or that they had already entered a rubbish deposit; and second, its condition, which may have been damaged or fragmentary at the time it was deposited (although it should be borne in mind that ethnographic work has shown that broken items are sometimes reused for a different purpose: Schiffer 1996, 30–32).

At sites such as Pompeii, where many structures were excavated a long time ago and there was a wealth of architectural and other information to be recorded, fragmentary items and rubbish deposits have often tended to be overlooked or given low priority. Nevertheless, given the likelihood of the preferential recording of valuable items, one practice to look for is the hoarding of discarded items, which in societies where resources are scarce are often kept as potential raw materials for future reuse – a phenomenon that Schiffer refers to as ‘clutter refuse’ (Schiffer 1996, 66). The fact that such pieces should be categorised as discarded, rather than in use, is not necessarily always obvious because identification relies on precise and accurate information about their context and on a judgement about

whether or not any breakages occurred before the eruption. Nevertheless, there are a few instances in which the inventories of our example houses seem to include examples of this kind of clutter refuse.

In various locations in the House of the Menander and the House of the Ceii fragments of marble sculpture were found, apparently already broken before the eruption. Allison suggests that 'unless their provenances were the result of post-eruption disturbance, they are . . . evidence of pre-eruption dislocation and disturbance' (Allison 2004, 39). But this is not always borne out by their contexts. For example, in the secondary atrium of the House of the Menander (room 41) a marble arm seems to have been stored on a shelf along with a variety of other objects. This location, together with the fact that the room seems to have been a service area (see below), implies that the arm had perhaps been here for a while, possibly salvaged at some point by the users of this area for reuse or sale. A similar case in the House of the Ceii involves two broken pieces of marble sculpture found in room i, which seems to have been temporarily disused at the time of the eruption and might therefore have been particularly suitable for keeping such clutter refuse. A complete Egyptian-style marble figurine found in the fill of room z of House VI.16.26 may also fall into this category. The association between marble objects, often in fragmentary state, and cooking areas is in fact more widespread in Allison's sample. For example, the House of the Vettii, another large, well-decorated house, also contained fragmentary sculpture in hearth room w. The presence of such objects in these rooms reinforces the suggestion that they were being hoarded as a potentially valuable resource, perhaps having been scavenged by lower-status individuals working here.

A different form of recycling can be documented in relation to some of the large amphorae which were used to transport and store foodstuffs. Considerable numbers of these vessels were found in the House of the Menander, some bearing dipinti (painted lettering) which noted their contents. In one case a vessel whose original label stated that it contained local wine had been relabelled indicating that it had been refilled with vinegar. Another group of wine amphorae found in the secondary atrium on the east side of the house contained stucco, lime used for plastering, and signinum powder used for making floors (Stefani 2003b, 210–211). Even broken amphorae could be useful: Allison suggests that amphora toes were used to support round-bottomed cooking pots (Allison 2004, 101).

In addition to clutter refuse and recycling, there are also a couple of instances where excavators do seem to have been dealing with, and to have recorded, deposits of discarded refuse. These are a cistern beneath the floor

in the House of the Menander corridor l, and a walled-up ground floor space in the House of the Ceii (n). These structures contained a number of fragments of fine terra sigillata pottery and other ceramic vessels, as well as sherds from lamps and glassware, all of which had presumably been broken in use, cleared up, and discarded here. In the House of the Menander these were combined with plant matter, and even a coin and four finger rings.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast with the recycling and disposal of rubbish, which we can only glimpse occasionally in the recorded evidence, storage is the most widely represented activity: in the House of the Ceii, for example, evidence for storage of one sort or another was noted in six of the thirteen spaces. The atrium alone housed at least three separate storage structures: a set of shelves under the stairs contained a mixed assemblage including tableware and lamps; a cupboard in the south-east corner, preserved as a plaster cast, held toilet articles, while a chest in the north-east corner contained a single cup. A further concentration of stored items was located in room g, which was lined with shelves and cupboards or chests. Table vessels were found in this area, too, alongside iron tools and a casket for valuables. The varied collection of items in this room is in keeping with Schiffer's cross-cultural observation that storage areas tend to be cleared out relatively rarely, and that they therefore accumulate mixed assortments of possessions (Schiffer 1996, 68–69). In cases like the atrium of the House of the Ceii, such stored assemblages can account for a particularly wide range of objects with different uses occurring together in a single room. Storage patterns are not completely random, however: within the atrium a distinction seems to have been made between tableware and toilet items, and across the house as a whole there is some degree of specialisation in terms of what is kept where: tools are stored only in room g and toilet items only in the atrium, while tableware is kept in the atrium and room g. A similar pattern occurs in House VI.16.26, where evidence for food storage is found only in the atrium and peristyle, storage of personal items is located only in rooms e and k, and evidence for storage of table-ware is limited to rooms l and f.

<sup>4</sup> Room n in the House of the Ceii may have been linked with a toilet in an upper storey and was excavated in 1983 in connection with the publication of the house (Michel 1990, 63). House of the Menander corridor l is referred to by Ling as room P: Ling and Clarke 1997, 274. The presence here of whole vessels as well as fragments led Allison to suggest that it was not a rubbish deposit (Allison, date unknown). Whole vessels are sometimes found in wells and cisterns where they have been lost in the process of drawing water. The inclusion of a bowl full of hazelnuts is admittedly curious, but the amount of fragmentary material suggests that some of this deposit, at least, does constitute refuse. It is perhaps possible that some of the other items were left behind during the construction of the cistern or, as Allison suggests elsewhere, that it was some sort of foundation deposit (Allison 2004, 130).

The House of the Menander echoes these distinctions on a larger scale, although tableware and personal items are recorded only as being stored in a small number of rooms. An exceptional find came from the basement area on the west side of the house, where the remains of a wooden chest were found to contain 118 pieces of silver tableware which had been carefully wrapped for storage in heavy cloth and were hence very well preserved. In the chest with them was found a smaller wooden box containing some gold jewellery and gold and silver coins, suggesting that this was a hoard that had been hidden away with the hope of recovering it at a later date.<sup>5</sup> A group of bronze table vessels were found in a second chest on the other side of the room and additional bronze vessels seem to have been placed directly on the floor of the room.

There are a number of locations in each house in which evidence was recorded of storage structures but where only a few items are noted as having been stored, and sometimes there is no note of any stored item being recovered at all (for example, in rooms e and l in the House of the Ceii).<sup>6</sup> If we could safely assume that everything once kept in these houses is likely to have been preserved, excavated and recorded, then the amount of unused capacity would suggest that the occupants took away many of their possessions. But such an assumption is unwarranted: the relatively small assemblages of ceramic food preparation-, table- and cooking-wares recovered from all three properties suggest the possibility that some of the more mundane finds in these categories may not have been noted by the excavators if they were in fragmentary condition. (In the House of the Ceii, for instance, fewer than ten small, open vessels which could have been used for drinking are recorded from the entire ground floor of the house.) Finds of a limited number of complete vessels, together with the contents of the refuse deposits in the House of the Menander and the House of the Ceii mentioned above, reinforce the evidence for the use of fine terra sigillata pottery and other ceramic vessels in the two houses, and the sherds of such vessels, broken as the city was destroyed, may often have been disregarded by the excavators. It is also relevant to think about what kinds of organic materials are likely to have been in use in the house but will not have survived at all, since these may account for at least some of this empty

<sup>5</sup> The latest coins date to 78 or 79 CE suggesting that they were placed here at the time of the eruption or shortly beforehand, although this does not necessarily mean that the silver, which was on the bottom of the chest, had not been there for longer (Painter 2001, 12).

<sup>6</sup> These are identifiable as niches, remnants of fittings and fittings, or as casts, although items recorded as door fittings are excluded from my consideration on the basis that they could indicate room doors rather than pieces of furniture. My selection therefore represents a minimum number.



space. A major category of bulky item rarely recovered at Pompeii is cloth: woollen blankets would have been required for night-time use in winter, and these are likely to have been stored away at the time of the eruption in August, perhaps along with extra layers of warm clothing also for winter use.

A second type of organic material which may be under-represented in some of the houses is basic foodstuffs, both liquid, such as wine and olive oil, and solid, such as flour. There is evidence for large amounts of storage and/or consumption of liquids in the House of the Menander, where numerous amphorae were found in a variety of different areas including the stable-courtyard (34), rooms off the peristyle and the basement under the bath suite. Many of the shapes are those of wine amphorae and they show that the vessels had once contained both local wines and also imports from Crete and Rhodes. The dipinti carried by some of them specified that they also held other products including olive oil, honey and Spanish *liquamen* (a form of *garum* or fish sauce) (Stefani 2003b, 210–211). Liquids could also have been kept in smaller vessels, like the coarse ware jug, 25 cm tall, found in the secondary atrium and labelled with a dipinto giving its contents as vinegar (Fergola 2003, 165–166). These containers offer some indication of the variety of foodstuffs which might have been consumed in a household such as this, although the evidence for recycling, noted above, makes it unclear how many full ones would have been kept on hand at any one time. It is possible that at the time of the destruction some of them were clutter refuse. A likely example is a group of forty-three amphorae which were stacked together against the wall in a corner of the stable-courtyard in such a way that most would have been inaccessible had anyone wanted to get at their contents.

The household must have prepared and consumed staples such as grain, since several hand querns for processing it were found in the house. But this is likely to have been supplemented by pre-prepared foods, such as bread from local bakeries which were equipped for large-scale production. We currently know little about general consumption patterns and the balance between home-produced and bought-in products is likely to have varied between households. Direct evidence for storage of dry goods in the house is lacking, and these were perhaps kept in sacks or cloth bags which were not preserved. Comparable evidence for storage of foodstuffs is also present in House VI.16.26 in the form of amphorae and large dolia or storage jars, which were kept in the peristyle. In the House of the Ceii three amphorae were found in room i, and smaller vessels and/or dry foods in sacks or bags could have occupied some of the empty cupboard space in this room.

The smaller size of this house is likely to have meant that there were fewer people here to feed, and more limited space to accumulate clutter refuse such as empty amphorae, although more amphorae were present amongst material found above floor level in room d, which may have fallen from upper-storey rooms.

To some extent, then, recycling and storage patterns help to explain some of the mixture of activities apparently attested in many rooms. But this raises a further question: where were these stored items used? Of course, we cannot answer this for sure, but it is possible to make some suggestions based on the proximity to each other of items used for associated tasks and on the distribution of items which seem to have been left out in rooms, rather than stored away.<sup>7</sup> An example are the related groups of objects associated with storing, preparing, cooking and consuming food and drink already mentioned, which are relatively straightforward to identify even if it is not always possible to be precise about the stage (or stages) they facilitated in the journey of food and drink from store to table. Room i in the House of the Ceii, where the three amphorae were found, was also furnished with a fixed hearth which was probably used for cooking. In the House of the Menander a room in a similar location and with a similar structure (room 3) may also have been used this way. It is easy to see that, given the size and location of these rooms, the atrium was the convenient place to store bulk foods that could not be accommodated in the hearth room itself. A similar arrangement seems to have prevailed in House VI.16.26, where a hearth room (z) was located at the rear, opening onto the peristyle. An additional hearth which may also have been used for cooking was found in nearby room t.

A mystery is the lack of cooking pottery in or close to any of these hearth rooms: this could reflect selectivity on the part of the excavators, but, as Allison suggests, it could also indicate that none was actually being used for cooking immediately prior to the eruption. If any of the three houses was still occupied at that time, then cooking may have taken place elsewhere in the building. The House of the Ceii was equipped with a bronze brazier found in room l (off the garden) which could have been used for this purpose. Seasonal variation in day-length and temperature

<sup>7</sup> It is important to remember that the assemblages noted in the excavation reports as being in storage are likely to represent a minimum: at least some of the objects whose contexts are not noted or which were thought to have come from the floor may actually have been in or on pieces of furniture, the presence of which was not detected or noted. I am excluding from consideration objects noted by Allison as likely to have come from upper storeys: while these are important evidence of the kinds of activities which may have been carried out in upstairs rooms, their lack of context makes them more difficult to use for the questions I am trying to address here.

must have been a major influence on patterns of activity, even in the largest, wealthiest houses. In recent years mean temperatures in Campania have varied between a minimum of close to 0° C in January and a high of almost 30° C in July and August, and individual days can be somewhat hotter (or colder). The range in Antiquity is likely to have been similar. In the absence of effective artificial heating and lighting, the most efficient strategy for coping with this kind of variation would have been to use different rooms at different times of day and during different seasons. This would have enabled the occupants of the house to take advantage of the warmth and light provided by a low sun in winter, or exclude the hot sunlight and capture breezes in summer.

The importance of this kind of seasonality in both Greek and Roman Antiquity is supported by a variety of references made in the ancient sources to the need for adapting architectural design to take sunlight into account at different times of year (for example, Varro, *On the Latin Language* 8.29.4 and Cicero, *Letters to his Brother Quintus* 3.1.2). Since Pompeii was destroyed in August, it seems possible that hearth rooms were used more in winter months, when the heat would have been an asset, whereas during the summer food was cooked on braziers which could be carried to the best-ventilated locations and would not have overheated the interior. In the summer months, then, light cooking which did not require lighting a whole oven may have been the norm. Such meals could have been supplemented by baked goods bought from one of the many commercial bakeries in the town. The evidence from the House of the Menander suggests that this pattern may have been followed even in large houses where slaves may have been able to prepare food well away from the apartments occupied by the householder.

In the House of the Menander a decorative bronze brazier with lion feet and lion head fittings was found in the peristyle itself, and a plainer iron one in an alcove on its south wall. But the situation here was more complicated. As well as the front hearth room (3), several other spaces in the house were furnished with similar built-in hearth features (including rooms 20, 34A, 41, 45, 52 and 54). There has been some debate about how many were used for cooking and whether others may have had heating or craft purposes, but it may not make sense to try to separate these different uses too rigidly: a single hearth could potentially have been used in different ways. In most cases there was little trace of any cooking or food-preparation equipment associated with these structures, suggesting that they, also, may not have been in use in August 79 CE. Again, it is possible that during the colder winter months several of the ovens/furnaces operated at once to warm

different parts of the structure, and perhaps to cook food for different groups of occupants. Allison raises the possibility that the side atrium (41) and surrounding rooms may have been occupied by a household separate from the one living in main part of the house, although the overall pattern of organisation suggests that at one time, at least, the whole house did function as a single residential unit (Ling 1997, 105–118). Alongside the core atrium–peristyle axis was the bath area to the west, together with a hearth room which, during the winter months, may have served those who worked here. To the east, further rooms are arranged around the secondary atrium (41), the stable-courtyard (34), and the corridor which connects the two (1). These make sense as service quarters: the secondary atrium and surrounding rooms contained a variety of different artefacts, some, such as a decorated couch, seemingly quite expensive. But these were combined with utilitarian household items, suggesting that a few choice pieces may have been scrounged from the main part of the house when no longer required and hoarded by those whose lives were centred in these rooms. The stable-courtyard in this area, with its cart, was perhaps used for provisioning a large household, although Allison suggests that it may have fallen into disuse prior to the eruption.

How do patterns of consumption relate to this picture of food preparation? Vessels will be found where they were used, giving an indication of dining areas, only if the dishes from the last meal taken in a space were left behind and not cleared away. This means that in order to get a fuller picture it is helpful to look at how the distribution of any serving vessels from the house floors may relate to those in storage. In the House of the Ceii tableware stored both at the front of the house in the atrium and at the rear, in room g, is likely to indicate patterns of dining rather than food preparation: the shapes of the majority of vessels suggest they were used for drinking, and they are therefore likely to have been filled where dining was taking place. The binary pattern of storage suggests that, in common with cooking, dining may also have moved seasonally, or even at different times of the day, between the front part of the house and the rear.

In large houses like the House of the Menander, rooms with comparable dimensions which could have been used for dining are duplicated, with examples leading off both atrium and peristyle, facing in different directions, and varying in the extent to which they are open to the outside. In winter, those facing south across an open peristyle would have been lighted and warmed by the rays of the low sun for much of the day, while others on

the north side would have avoided the sun and remained cooler for summer use. Similarly, at midday during the summer the atrium may have acted as a reservoir for cool air, shaded and with the double height ceiling allowing hot air to rise. Rooms leading off here may have been cooler at this time of day than those giving directly onto the peristyle. Vitruvius specifically recommended using different rooms for dining at different times of the year.<sup>8</sup> A similar consideration probably also lies behind some of the more uncommon names applied to domestic spaces mentioned in the texts: for example, *hibernacula* (literally, little winter places), perhaps easier to heat than larger ones which may have been used in summer. Such a wide range of alternative venues would not have been available in smaller houses like the House of the Ceii; nevertheless, even the occupants of this house may still have had some choice of locations with different thermal properties which they could have used for dining and other activities. Decorated rooms (c) and (e), which opened off the atrium, perhaps provided warm, sheltered spaces in winter; a further, smaller, decorated room (f) faced west onto the ambulatory and may have received more ventilation from the garden; a larger, undecorated, room (d) faced north onto the ambulatory and looked out over the garden beyond (o) through a wide opening.

In the House of the Menander evidence for consumption in the form of serving vessels is widespread. Only in two rooms are caches of such items noted specifically as being in storage, as opposed to in usage contexts. One of these is the set of silverware and the bronze vessels from the basement mentioned earlier. The other consists of two groups of serving vessels of various types in glass, ceramic and bronze, which were stored on a shelf and inside a chest in the secondary atrium (41), along with various other kinds of objects such as toilet articles. A mixture of cooking pots and further serving vessels was recovered from the floor of the same room and may indicate the use of such vessels there. Serving vessels which appear to have been found where they were used are also noted from a number of other locations in the house. Of the rooms in the atrium complex facing either inwards into the atrium itself, or south into the peristyle, half had at least one such vessel: mostly these were small, isolated ceramic cups, plates or lids, although room 2 held a cache of sixteen ceramic dishes. A couple of bronze vessels also came from this area, but the amount of pottery is striking in comparison with what is recorded from the other two houses. Rather than representing a real difference, this may simply

<sup>8</sup> Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6.4.1–2.

suggest that greater attention was paid to recording such items on the part of the excavators of this house. It also seems surprising in the light of the concentration of bronze vessels which, although they might be assumed to be more valuable, were found in the secondary atrium (41), an area which may have been associated with food preparation by slaves and servants. One potential explanation for this apparent anomaly is that the cache of silver and bronze in the basement represents a collection of more valuable table items gathered up from the rooms around the atrium and peristyle, where they may have been used instead of, or alongside, pottery. In his publication of the silver plate, Kenneth Painter argues that the collection represented eight place settings, and points out that this number is suited to formal dining outdoors, rather than to indoor banquets, where couches were normally set up to hold groups of six or nine diners. Nevertheless, he also raises the possibility that there was a special dining set for the *dominus* himself, which may have included vessels of gold and/or precious stones, and which was not stored along with the silver (Painter 2001, 40–41). If this were the case, then a set of eight place settings to complement it would make perfect sense for dining indoors.

The small numbers and wide distribution of the ceramic items suggest the possibility that some may have been the residue of food and drink taken in different rooms and not cleared away before the abandonment of the house. (Comparable untidiness before the abandonment of a house has been observed in other cultural contexts: Schiffer 1996, 97–98.) Their widespread occurrence raises a question about modes of consumption in such large, wealthy households outside the formal banquet or *cena*. If they were resident at the time of the eruption, is it possible that the owner and his family may have eaten separately or in small groups, rather than together? Or were the dishes left here by caretakers or workmen taking refreshments as they redecorated or cleaned the rooms in which they were found? Again, our knowledge of the context and condition of these items, and of what may originally have lain alongside them, is not sufficient to justify a conclusion, but this is a question that might be addressed through future research into more informal patterns of consumption.

*Cases where the evidence appears to indicate incompatible activities  
taking place in a single space*

Another phenomenon which creates an appearance of disorder is the apparent incompatibility between different elements of the architecture of a space and/or the objects found in it. This can take different forms, and there

are therefore a number of potential explanations. In general terms, discussion of this phenomenon has often been focused on the effects of the eruption and preceding seismic activity, associating these events with structural damage and with consequent changes in patterns of use. While the consequences of such events must, of course, be considered, there are also other reasons why we might perceive the evidence as contradictory, some of which result from our own cultural expectations about what activities may share a single space, while others are linked to the way in which both the houses themselves, and the composition of the households occupying them, changed through time.

Perhaps the most commonly cited instance of this kind of contradictory evidence is where rooms whose décor suggests that they may have been intended as reception or living rooms contain items which are more mundane and functional. A striking example is the atrium. Superficially, if these spaces are viewed from the Vitruvian perspective as reception areas designed to fit the needs of the *dominus*, then the discovery of a piece of storage furniture together with an amphora in the atrium of the House of the Menander, alongside its carefully executed wall paintings, seems anomalous. Similarly anomalous are the three different storage features in the painted atrium of the House of the Ceii. As argued earlier in this chapter, however, storage was a major feature of these houses, and the presence of this and other forms of domestic activity pervades the atrium–peristyle axis just as much as the outer or rear ‘service’ areas. There must have been a practical advantage, in that the wide space of the atrium was suitable for accommodating large pieces of furniture and storage vessels. This must have been even truer of the peristyle and garden spaces, which were the only possible locations for keeping even larger storage vessels like the *dolia* in the peristyle of House VI.16.26. Storage in such visible locations might have been a deterrent against pilfering of food. The atrium was used for storage even in the House of the Menander, where the numerous rooms and variety of courtyards provided alternative space for such items.

It therefore seems that, contrary to what we might assume, amphorae, chests and other storage equipment were not something to hide away so as not to spoil the gracious effect of architecture and wall paintings. Instead it is likely that they were considered not to detract from the overall effect and possibly even to contribute positively to it in some way, perhaps as evidence to visitors that the house was well supplied and organised in an orderly fashion. Such an interpretation would be consistent with some of the symbolism attached to the atrium in various textual sources, where it is seen as the traditional core of the house, the main living space,

whose features accommodated some of the most important aspects of domestic activity. This, the writers claim, was the original location of the main domestic hearth and the room where the marriage bed of the *dominus* was placed. In addition it was a centre for domestic worship at the household altar, and the location in which a variety of events such as religious festivals, births, marriages and deaths would all have been celebrated or commemorated (Flower 1995, 194–203; Nevett 1997, 290). These sources may not necessarily give an accurate account of the historical origin of the atrium, particularly for this part of Italy, which became Roman territory only after the construction of some of the atrium houses standing in 79 CE, but the cultural attitudes they articulate and some of the symbolism they attribute to this space may still be applicable here. The functional character of the atrium in House VI.16.26, which lacks elaborate wall or floor decoration, supports the association of atria with more utilitarian aspects of domestic life as well as with reception of visitors. Similarly, the mixture of cooking and serving vessels, personal effects and clutter refuse in the secondary atrium of the House of the Menander may also reflect such a vision. In fact, it is interesting that out of Allison's whole sample of thirty houses, which together include thirty-five atria, only a minority – thirteen atria – have evidence for wall paintings.

In this case, then, it is our own cultural preconceptions that lead us to see an incompatibility between architecture and movable furnishings which the occupants of the houses would probably not have perceived themselves. But there are also instances requiring a different explanation. In the House of the Ceii, for example, the small room g, which had storage shelves fixed around its walls, was once decorated with wall paintings. These were damaged and obscured by the shelves, implying that what may originally have served as a small decorated living room had subsequently been converted for use as a store. Allison notes a similar instance of this kind of change (which she refers to as 'downgrading') in room i of the same house, where a fixed hearth suggests that the room was used for cooking, while the walls carry paintings. We should not assume a priori that such decoration was inappropriate to a cooking area, but the fact that, out of forty-four rooms with fixed hearths in Allison's sample, only one other example has wall paintings (House VIII.5.9) while the remainder are finished with plain plaster suggests that the combination of hearth and decoration was probably not intentional and that, like room g, it did result from a change in the use of space within the house.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In contrast, painted shrines are often associated with cooking areas: Foss 1997.



Seismic damage might have caused the reorganisation of domestic activity, either temporarily while repairs were undertaken, or permanently if parts of the house ceased to be used or the property was no longer considered viable for the needs of the original owners. But the adaptation of domestic space for use in new ways is also an integral part of the process of living, and given that the House of the Ceii was occupied for 200 years, it would perhaps be surprising if evidence for changes in the configuration and use of space were completely absent. Households grow and contract as available resources fluctuate, children are born and leave and partners marry, divorce and die (these patterns are all documented by Bradley for high-status Roman families based on textual evidence: Bradley 1991, 125–176). This domestic life cycle means that changes in the requirements placed on living space are part of a normal process as the architectural structure is reshaped to suit the requirements of new, or newly configured, households. The easiest elements of the domestic environment to adapt to these changing requirements are the movable finds and furniture. Aspects of the architecture, such as the location of doorways, decoration of the walls, and even the boundaries of the house itself, were altered during the lifetime of the houses, as demonstrated particularly by the House of the Menander. But this process would have been much more expensive and disruptive, and is therefore likely to have been relatively slow to catch up with the household's requirements. Such changes are likely, however, to account for the contradictory impression given in rooms g and i in the House of the Ceii by the décor and the fixtures and finds they contained.

The relatively long lifespan of these houses also raises another consideration, which is the need for on-going maintenance. In House vi.16.26 the stack of roof tiles in the atrium seems to indicate that repairs were anticipated or being carried out at the time of the eruption, and the various building materials in the House of the Menander suggest that redecoration was either planned or taking place here, too. It is possible that this work was being undertaken to repair damage caused by earthquakes, but work on the roof to remedy the effects of general wear and tear, and redecoration of rooms, must also have been a normal activity for residents of a building of this age. Some of the works which were being prepared for or were in progress at the time of the destruction might be the result of this kind of routine process. Evidence of the inhabitants thinking ahead to the need for this kind of maintenance can perhaps be seen in the form of three compluvium tiles found in basement room b of the House of the Menander.

CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A DYNAMIC AND SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE  
MODEL FOR HOUSEHOLDS AT POMPEII

The discussion of the three houses presented above provides a starting point for building a more complex model for understanding the distribution of artefacts in ancient domestic contexts and a variety of conclusions emerge which could be tested against a larger sample of houses. By distinguishing between items which may have been in use and those more likely to have been in storage or in refuse deposits, it is possible to explain some of the variability indicated by the artefact distributions in these houses. Selective discussion of examples of the three organisational patterns I have highlighted here shows that all of them contribute in various ways to an impression of confusion and ambiguity in the archaeological record and that this is unlikely to have been entirely due to disturbance caused by seismic activity. Even so, there is only limited spatial separation of objects and architectural features which are likely to have been used for different activities. Such a conclusion suggests not only that we cannot answer the commonly raised question about precise room function, but also that this is probably not the right question to be asking. Nevertheless, it does not mean that detailed study of artefacts and their spatial settings is unhelpful. On the contrary, by thinking in more detail about how our own cultural perspective affects our interpretation, and about some of the processes which may have created the archaeological record, it is possible to come to a better understanding of what multifunctionality and flexibility in spatial usage may actually have involved in a Roman household.

A major underlying feature of many of the patterns outlined here is an interplay between activities operating on different timescales. Lin Foxhall has pointed out how in Greek contexts archaeologists have tended to ignore short-term change which took place over days, weeks, months or a few years, and think instead on the scale of events taking place over the medium-term – a period of a generation or several generations (Foxhall 2000, 485). Indeed this timeframe has been seen as the one classical archaeology is best fitted to investigate (Snodgrass 1991, 69). Yet what we see in individual houses at Pompeii is the result of both medium-term and also short-term activities, taking place both in linear and in cyclical fashion. Rather than aspiring simply to characterise the house as a static entity frozen in time at the moment of its destruction, paying attention to these different scales can give us a richer, more dynamic and more socially inclusive picture. Distinguishing between interlocking timeframes of short duration is difficult or impossible to do based on the archaeological

evidence alone, but ethnographic parallels and ancient literary sources can assist by suggesting possible interpretations of the archaeological material.

The multifunctional and flexible use of space indicated by patterns of artefact distributions relate to the shortest timescales, and many of the activities they reveal may have been cyclical, with the same tasks ceasing and resuming in a particular location on a regular basis. At the scale of a single day, a formal atrium like that of the House of the Ceii may have seen a variety of activities at different times. Aside from the reception of visitors, members of the household might have come here to draw water, taking toilet articles from the cupboard in the south-east corner of the room to wash, or a cup from the chest in the north-east corner, to drink from. Here, too, tools may have been left as their users came in or out. Different members of the household would have passed through on their way to room i, perhaps to use the latrine, warm themselves by the hearth, or prepare or fetch food. At nightfall, lamps may have been taken from the shelves under the stairs in order to provide some light. On a seasonal basis the pattern might have changed somewhat: on summer evenings the focus of activity might have shifted more towards the rooms at the back of the house to take advantage of breezes around the garden. Meals might have been prepared on a brazier in a room adjoining the garden, and eaten off vessels taken from the shelves of room g.

On a longer timescale, the state of repair of a house must have echoed the fortunes, or the priorities, of its owners, as we see in the case of House VI.16.26. The property contains relatively little decoration, most of it consisting of styles of wall decoration traditionally dated to the second and first centuries BCE. The majority of the rooms, including the atrium, had only plain plaster walls, and in contrast with the Vitruvian model, the emphasis of this space seems to have been on functionality. The southern area around the peristyle may have fallen into disrepair, or even been converted into a separate unit, and work seems to have been under way on the roof. Here, then, was a house which does not seem to have attracted much care and attention from its owners for some considerable time before the eruption, possibly even for several generations if the wall paintings can be used as a guide. (Of course, the owners need not have been the same family throughout this whole period.)

Multigenerational time is seen even more clearly in the House of the Menander, at both small and large scales. On a small scale, in a wealthy household like this one the possessions of one generation may have represented an accumulation of items, some of which may have been passed

down through the family, while others may have been acquired at different times by the owners. The silver hoard found in the basement may be an illustration of this process since it consists of vessels made over an extended period between the mid first century BCE and the mid first century CE in different styles and with different designs, and is not a matched service which could have been purchased together. On a larger scale the structure of the house itself also shows the effects of change over time. The evidence for expansion of the property boundaries suggests a gradual increase in the wealth and status of successive generations of owners. The original core, consisting of the atrium and surrounding rooms, was comparable in ground area to the House of the Ceii, although there was also a garden whose size and layout cannot now be determined (Ling 1997, 223–225). In its final form, however, the house covered roughly six times that area. But while the overall trajectory during more than two centuries of occupation is one of dramatic growth, Ling's detailed analysis of the insula's building phases shows that there were periods of contraction. For example, for part of its history the house was also connected with its neighbour to the west, the so-called House of the Smith. The House of the Menander seems to have suffered, losing a room on its north-west corner, when the two were subsequently separated (Ling 1997, 134). Similarly, the provision of a separate stable-court, which may have served to bring large quantities of provisions into the house to supply the household, or may even have been part of a commercial or farming enterprise (as Ling argues: Ling 1997, 252), is an indication of a flourishing household, but there may have been a period of recession immediately before the eruption since the stable-court seems to have fallen out of use by then. While it is impossible to reconstruct the individual domestic circumstances which led either to periods of expansion or to setbacks, such changes are, again, an important reminder of the intimate connection between the physical structure of a building, its contents, and the fortunes of its owners. They also underline the way in which different timescales can offer contradictory information: short-term changes can move in a different direction from longer-term trends.

There is thus a tension between the conclusions to be drawn from the more durable evidence of longer-term behavioural patterns, and the less permanent material representing smaller-scale, shorter-term activities. These two different aspects of the archaeological record are likely to coincide to some extent with the perspectives of different social groups within the household. While the literary sources emphasise, and the architecture creates an appearance of, monumentality, this does not seem to have been the only, or even the main, consideration governing the organisation of the

contents of the houses. The presence in the atrium of cupboards containing household implements emphasises alternative uses made of this space by different members of the household. Unlike the monumental architecture which serves as a cue to signal its function as a reception space, these other roles were not, as far as we can see, made permanent in the architecture: aside from built-in shelves and cupboards they can be detected only through the more ephemeral evidence of the finds. The social hierarchy of the household is expressed through the durability of the material correlates for the activities of the different household members, reinforcing the dominance of the *dominus*. It is unclear whether the performance of domestic activities in the atrium was part of the ideological construction of the household as an institution, but this is a possibility. If the view of Augustan culture as manipulating the virtuous elite wife as a public symbol of a man's domestic probity (Milnor 2005, *passim*) can be extended to the Campanian context, one might infer that the presence of domestic equipment in the atrium during the *salutatio* formed part of a single larger rhetorical construction of domestic order.

Another component may have been a view into the atrium at other times of day, with household members visible, busily engaged in domestic chores. This possibility is perhaps supported by the artfulness with which the view of the domestic interior from the street is constructed: as Shelley Hales points out, while appearing to lay the house open to scrutiny, in fact the layout hides the majority of space, including the entrances to most of the rooms (Hales 2003, 112 and 119). To date most attention has focused on the way in which the fauces–atrium–tablinum alignment would have displayed the *dominus* to visitors. It would, nevertheless, have been equally possible to create a tableau of domestic industry in the atrium aimed at passers-by, without exposing activity elsewhere in the house to scrutiny; and in fact plaster casts of the main doors of the House of the Ceii show that at the time of the eruption they stood open, presenting such a view (Michel 1990, 18). (Of course, it is impossible to know whether the open doors may have been a response to the events surrounding the eruption, but if Pliny the Younger can be believed that the eruption began in the afternoon, falling debris may have prevented closure of doors which were customarily left open at that time of day.)

The patterns of flexibility and multifunctionality highlighted here show that there is also an additional reading of the evidence, which offers the perspective of the household as a whole, rather than that of the *dominus* alone, and the two perspectives could have co-existed: the arrangement of smaller-scale domestic activities suggests that in addition to keeping up

appearances, considerable attention was also given to practical issues such as the availability of space for large storage vessels, keeping things at or close to the places where they were needed, and ways of keeping warm or cool at different times of year. Thus, the comfort and convenience of the household as a whole were an important, integral part of its overall pattern of organisation. Studying the finds, which represent the result of short-term activities by a range of household members including women and slaves, alongside the architecture therefore produces a more deeply textured understanding of the household as a composite social unit with its own logic and agenda, and offers a new perspective which to some extent counterbalances the traditional image of the household as revolving around the requirements of an elite male *dominus*.