CHAPTER 3

Republican Houses

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1 Introduction

In Livy's account of the sack of Rome in 390, the rampaging Gauls are temporarily overawed by the majesty of the elderly senators enthroned in their family atria, where they are awaiting death (V.41.1–8). The awe is momentary and the massacre is quickly underway but the moment is enough to show the importance of the house in Republican Rome. The domus was where the senator should be, where his roles as private paterfamilias and public magistrate were reconciled. It created his and his family's place in society. The degree to which the leading individuals of the Republic were associated with their homes is evident from their high profile: the house that Pompey built "like a tug boat" behind his Theater on the Campus Martius, the gable on Julius Caesar's house which proclaimed his authority – and foretold his downfall. Nowhere is the importance of the domus more painstakingly detailed than in the saga of Cicero's house, bought as a mark of his arrival at the heart of political life, lost to his arch-enemy Clodius at the moment of his exile and laboriously fought for on his return to Rome (Plut. *Pomp.* 4; *Caes.* 68.6; Cic. *Dom.*; Wiseman, 1987; Hales, 2003: 11–60). Elite houses were reflections of the success of the current, and past, homeowner and their families. Reminders of their success were draped around the façade and atria: Pompey displayed captured ship-prows in his atrium; Gaius Gracchus was struck down by spoils from the atrium of Fulvius (Cic. *Phil.* 2.28.68; Plut. *C. Gracch.* 15.1). And overlooking everything were the ancestors themselves, preserved in the form of the masks that paraded family history to the present generation (Flower, 1996: 93–7).

Houses also acted as the venue for two of the most important social traditions of Roman life, the salutatio and the convivium. Every morning the great atria of the elite

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were open for the salutatio, the ritual essential to the patronage network, when clients presented themselves to their patrons (Wallace-Hadrill, 1989: 63–88; Clarke, 1991: 1–29). In the evening, the good and the great, or those with pretensions to being so, entertained at home, sharing a meal with a few lucky clients, family members and political allies. In playing host to these daily rituals, the Roman domus became the medium through which the familia communicated with the wider community and expressed and justified their place in society.

In playing host to these rituals, houses should be understood as being just as important to understanding social and political discourse in the Republic as public monuments. Writing under Augustus, the architect Vitruvius must be drawing on Republican practice when he describes the ideal Roman house. In prescribing its layout and proportions, he conjures a home that is made Roman by being specifically the opposite of the Greek *oikos* and emphasizes its social role; the house should reflect the dignity and status of its owner and it should be engineered with an eye to his public display (Vitr. *De arch.* VI.5). The Republican elite home is not a domestic retreat but a building constantly penetrated by outsiders and it is for managing this penetration that the atrium domus was designed.

2 Where to Find the Republican Domus

Given the emphasis on the house as a socio-political tool, its immediate context was crucial. The quiet suburb was no place for the leaders of a Roman city to live. Politically advantageous house building entailed the acquisition of a highly conspicuous plot. The location of the house of P. Scipio Africanus, hero of the Battle of Zama in 202, behind the Tabernae Veteres next to the Roman Forum, is a reflection of how near the political action the elite preferred to be (Livy XLIV.16.10–11; *NTDAR* 134). The location of the house could also reflect ideological stances: both Marius and Gaius Gracchus lived around the Forum, a reflection of their popularis politics, while the young Julius Caesar lived in the great slum, the Subura, accruing "man of the people" status in the process (Plut. *Mar.* 32, *C. Gracch.* 12.1; Suet. *Iul.* 46).

The Palatine Hill, meanwhile, was the preferred location of the more aristocratic senator (Figure 3.1). Its associations with Rome's earliest settlement and heroes (the Hut of Romulus was a preserved heritage site) and proximity to the Forum made it very attractive to Rome's leading families (Dion. Hal. 1.79.11). Carandini's investigations have confirmed its dense occupation of substantial homes, dating from the time of the kings during the sixth century, at which point the lower, northern slopes of the hill were terraced. By the Late Republic, competition for space up here was intense and Royo's analysis of the names associated with the residences suggests the extent to which a few families had the area sewn up (Cass. Dio 53.27.5; Cic. *Cael.* 18 and 59; Plut. *Crass.* 2.4–5; Suet. *Aug.* 72; Carandini, 1986/8; Royo, 1999: 9–117; *LTUR* 4: 22–8 [Papi]). After his eventful consulship in 63, Cicero marked his elevated political profile by buying a prestigious house here (Cic. *Fam.* 5.6.2; Gell. *NA* 12.12). The house had once belonged to M. Livius Drusus, who had brought his political career right into the domus when he was stabbed there by an unknown assassin who concealed himself in the crowd of Drusus's supporters (Vell. Pat. 2.14). Among Cicero's contemporaries, Mark Antony, Caecilius Metellus Celer (cos. 60), Lutatius Catulus (cos. 78), the triumvir Crassus and

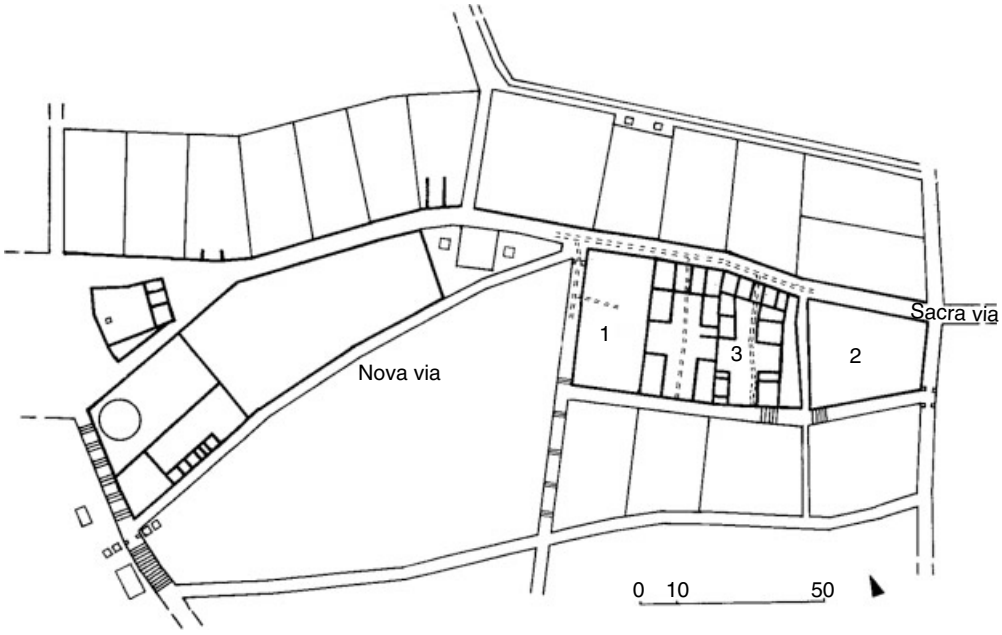

Figure 3.1 Plan of the house blocks on the lower slopes of the Palatine, Rome. (1) proposed house of Clodius Pulcher; (2) proposed house of Aemilius Scaurus; (3) third- to second-century atrium house. Source: Drawing by S.J. Hales, after Carandini (1986/8).

the orator Hortensius all had Palatine addresses, and Cicero's bitterest enemy, P. Clodius Pulcher, lived right next door (tentatively identified by Carandini as 1 on Figure 3.1).

Slightly further down the northern slopes of the Palatine lie the remains of another huge house (2 on Figure 3.1), which has become associated with M. Aemilius Scaurus (pr. 56). By securing a spot along the Sacra Via, the main ceremonial route through the Forum, these homeowners ensured their houses were visible and in view of the public monuments with which their family's exploits were associated – in Scaurus's case, the Senate House, and the Temples of the Castors and of Vesta (Cic. *Scaur.* 46–8). Across the road, too, the area now covered by Hadrian's Temple of Venus and Rome supported senatorial housing, the remains of one of which, in the tempting rush to match remains to personalities, have been assigned to Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, censor in 92 (Carandini, 1988: 370–1; see also Chapter 29).

The evidence of the Roman colonies reveals that this association between forum and aristocratic housing was not simply a Late Republican affectation but a strong ideological tradition, which could be carefully inscribed into the fabric of the city in new territory. At Cosa, the forum is surrounded by large, equal-sized atrium houses, which must have accommodated the city's leaders (Figure 30.1), while at Fregellae, atrium houses line the main streets entering the forum, including the Via Latina, which joined the colony to its mother city. In both colonies, the dimensions of these houses are similar, leading Fentress to expect that they are built of a standard pattern and size. Yet these central houses are almost double the size of the smaller houses in the insulae away from the forum at Cosa, which are presumably for ordinary colonists and are oriented on quieter streets (Fentress, 2003).

Figure 3.2 Aerial view of the insulae of Regio VI, Pompeii. Source: GoogleEarth.

At Pompeii, too, the owners of the bigger houses seem to prefer locations on busy thoroughfares. The façades of the Houses of the Faun (VI.12.2) and of Sallust (VI.2.4) are typical, both opening directly onto busy streets. Regio VI contains a number of old, grand houses (including the House of Pansa three insulae to the left of the House of the Faun) that enjoy close proximity to the Forum. Pompeii, however, is also a more realistic portrayal of the mix of housing in the urban landscape. A glance at the aerial view (Figure 3.2) shows the mix of housing stock even in this region of the city, with atrium houses of various orientations and sizes filling the insulae and smaller properties tucked around them. The colonies and the Palatine might be better understood as exceptions to this general rule and the rest of Rome better imagined as being a similar mélange of properties.

An inevitable result of hogging prime real estate in the city center is that, in Rome, much Republican housing is long gone. The disappearance of many senatorial homes under the palace structures of successive emperors is sign enough of the political reorientation of the city. Nevertheless, archaeologically, the Imperial buildings are also the mode of preservation. Substantial remains of the House of the Griffins, conventionally dated to the second century, and the later Aula Isiaca both survive because they became part of the fill for Domitian's palace. Scaurus's house too was a victim of Imperial overbuilding – this time, rather insultingly, nothing more glamorous than a Flavian horreum.

The best remains of domestic architecture are inevitably in places where life stopped violently and suddenly. When Pompeii was destroyed in 79 CE, the Samnite town had been a Roman colony for just over 150 years and still had a good deal of Republican-era housing stock. The sheer scale and integrity of the remains provide an unparalleled look

into Roman domestic life but, more recently, the excavation of purpose-built Roman colonies has made it possible to view the ideologies of Roman domestic space in sealed Republican contexts. Cosa, about 140 km from Rome, was founded in 273 and destroyed in the second quarter of the first century (see Chapter 30). Fregellae, in Latium, established and refounded in the course of the fourth century, was sacked after its revolt from Rome in 125.

3 The Layout of the Atrium House

Cosa and Fregellae have excellent examples of the ideal atrium house, arranged symmetrically around a strong central axis (Coarelli and Monti, 1998: 62–5). The House of Diana at Cosa (Figure 3.3), located on the south-western side of the forum and dated to the early second century, is entered via a narrow, steep corridor (A) flanked by rooms (C and D), recognized as having been independent tabernae, presumably let by the homeowner (Fentress, 2003: 14–26). The corridor space itself was articulated by a threshold, indicating that it was divided into a fauces and vestibule, a feature also seen at Fregellae. Marks on the opus signinum floor of the outer vestibule suggest that it once had benches. Benches are found outside houses in Pompeii and are usually associated with the arrival of clients, to wait for access to their patron. Given that the shops dominate the façade of the house, the entrance is crucial as the point at which the owner can project himself to the outside world. The two-meter-long limestone threshold of the later House of the Skeleton in Cosa shows the emphasis put on grand entrances (Bruno and Scott, 1993: 114). In Pompeii, where doorways are preserved to a much greater height, it is possible to observe impressive portals, like that of the House of the Faun, flanked by half-columns or pilasters. That house further lays claim to the public space in front of it through the Latin welcome, *Have*, set in the pavement.

The corridor leads into the main circulatory space of the house, the atrium (B), associated, in the texts, with the salutatio and display of family trophies. Its central feature is the impluvium, the pool which collects water from the hole in the roof, the compluvium, which admits both rainwater and light. In the House of Diana, the impluvium was clearly used for its original purpose since it was connected to a large cistern. Elsewhere, in Pompeii and in Fregellae, where water was available from aqueducts, the presence of impluvia is more a testament to the importance of tradition than functionality. The two recesses on either side of the atrium are conventionally known as alae (H and I) – in the House of Diana, ala I was perhaps used for storage which Fentress (2003) suggests may have been for holding ancestor masks. The suggestion is perhaps hopeful. Despite the prominence of ancestor masks in texts no evidence to suggest their presence in atria has ever come to light. At the rear of the atrium, and opening full onto it, is the tablinum (J), the most symbolic room of the house. It is thought that the tablinum was originally the master bedroom, placing the union of the paterfamilias and his wife literally and symbolically at the heart of the house. As the domus developed, it retained its connection with family history, becoming a depository of family records.

Around the atrium there are a number of smaller rooms, termed *cubicula* (E, F, G). Often translated as bedrooms, it is likely that the rooms served a variety of uses though, in this case, G showed the scars of where the bed couch might once have been placed. In

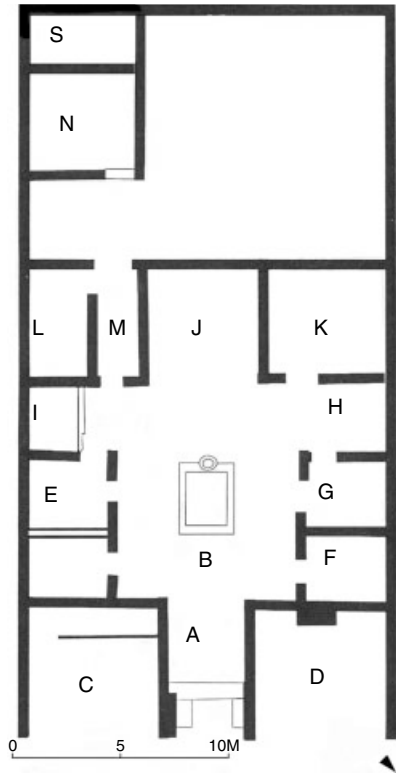

Figure 3.3 Plan of the House of Diana at Cosa. Source: Drawing by S.J. Hales, after Fentress (2003).

the rear corner of the atrium, the larger room K is identified as the triclinium, the room for the convivium.

Corridor M joins the atrium to the hortus, the garden, at the rear of the house. Room L is identified as a kitchen and bathroom space, since it had a drain leading to a soakaway pit. Combined kitchen and bathrooms, often indicated by hearth platforms, drains and even the remains of bath tubs, are well attested in Cosa (see also Bruno and Scott, 1993: 33–4, 67), though this house is unusual in that rooms S and N in the far corner of the hortus may have been a bath house. The garden itself was clearly tended as it had planting pits and a manure heap. Work on the garden of the early first-century House of the Skeleton also tells us something of the nature of the Republican hortus. It had planting pits and olive trees, and was embellished with pathways and a possible pergola (Bruno and Scott, 1993: 148–52).

4 Development of the Atrium House

Just when the atrium house began is unclear. Certainly the type was already well established in third-century Pompeii and the evidence from Fregellae may push that date further back. Though the majority of houses excavated there seem to be of

second-century date, the smaller house underneath Domus 7 clearly has an impluviate atrium along with opus signinum floors and First Style wall painting. Given that it seems to have been the earliest building on the plot it may well date from the first stages of the colony, at the end of the fourth century.

The excavations on the northern slopes of the Palatine may potentially push back the type still further (Carandini, 1990). The first houses here were constructed around 530/520 and developed until a fire destroyed them in 210, after which they were rebuilt. One of these houses (3 on Figure 3.1) has a typical long entrance between rooms that do not connect to the interior; these appear to be shops. The corridor leads to a large, roughly cross-shaped space, which could be imagined as a forerunner of the atrium with alae and a tablinum at the rear and which had steps to an upper floor. There is no trace of an impluvium but Carandini imagines it to have had one since there is a large cistern to receive water. The smaller side rooms to the front of the atrium may well be classed cubicula. To the rear of the atrium at either side are two distinct suites, one which he thinks is a dining room (imagined as a Greek-style *andron*) and the other the quarters of the materfamilias. There is a rough axial symmetry here (which Carandini interprets in terms of a gender division of the house) but nothing comparable to the vistas we meet in the developed atrium-peristyle house. Like the later House of Diana, the house has a hortus, this time arranged along the side of the plot.

The house plots on the Palatine, as laid out in the sixth century, seem to have been roughly equal. At some time in the third century, though, Carandini suspects that the entrance to the house we have been describing was deliberately widened, absorbing one of the tabernae to create a much grander vestibule and, by extension, to have a greater impact on the street outside. But that is nothing compared to the thorough rebuilding of the block after the third-century fire, when these huge houses (round about 700 or 800 square meters) received concrete walls, opus signinum floors and First Style wall paintings (*LTUR* 4: 22–8 [Papi]).

This kind of showy embellishment is seen beyond Rome, too. During the second century, two cubicula in the House of Diana were merged to create a more impressive room (E), perhaps for reception purposes. Alterations in Domus 7 at Fregellae achieved a similar effect. The wall between two cubicula is knocked down to make one larger room, the function of which as a triclinium is suggested by the design of the mosaic floor. At the same time, the alae were given smarter floors, including, in one, a mosaic with a representation of a city wall.

These changes are small but reflect a much greater change happening in domestic space, particularly evident at Pompeii: the arrival of the peristyle garden. Houses, like the Houses of the Faun or of the Labyrinth (see Figure 3.2), extended the axial arrangement of the house through the addition of a peristyle. Their appearance as an integral display feature is accompanied by an increased range of room types, such as oeci and exedrae (room types developed by the Greeks), which, like the new rooms in the houses at Cosa and Fregellae, seem destined for reception. Their exotic forms are usually understood as affectations appearing from the Hellenistic east, from other domestic buildings such as those on Delos, and ultimately perhaps from the palaces of Hellenistic kings (see e.g. Nielsen, 1994: 164–70 on palaces; Trümper, 1998 on Delos). They are taken to reflect the increasing influence of Hellenistic culture in Italy, the increased wealth to pay for it and the increased social competition to stimulate the need for it. But, if the source of the

fashion was Greek, it is clear that the ends to which it was put, supporting social rituals within the home and bolstering political careers, was entirely Roman (Wallace-Hadrill, 2008: 190–6). No second-century Roman house would have an *andron* or the type of gender division Carandini suggests for his sixth-century homes (contra Wallace-Hadrill, 1996).

At Cosa, the strict ideological arrangement of the colony begins to break down as market forces take over. The rear gardens of houses in the smaller insulae start to get gobbled up to provide new plots while other houses expand over neighboring space. This trend picks up in the early first century, when two anonymous houses are united to become the House of the Treasure and several back gardens are built over to create the House of the Skeleton, with the first impluviate atrium in these blocks (Bruno and Scott, 1993: 77–152). Changes are not always for the better: despite its apparent upward trajectory, Domus 7 at Fregellae had become a fullery by the time of the colony's destruction.

In Pompeii, the second century sees an explosion of elaboration and the emergence of super-sized houses (Dickmann, 1997; Nappo, 1997). The House of the Faun had already absorbed its entire insula by 180 or so (Pesando, 1997: 80, 267–74). Towards the other end of the century, the owners of the House of the Labyrinth, in the insula behind, bought up space from at least two neighboring houses in order to build an enormous peristyle, flanked by fashionable reception room types, such as the columned Corinthian oecus (Pesando, 1997: 78–80; Strocka, 1991). At Cosa, there is nothing so ambitious or early but, in the first-century phase of the House of the Skeleton, the tablinum-type space and the triclinium were opened onto a portico of three columns which looked onto the garden, in a manner that would be followed by the House of Diana in the Augustan era (see Figure 3.3). This trend is observable at around the same time too, in Pompeii, where smaller houses like the House of Sallust (VI.2.4) and of the Ceii (I.6.15) make an attempt to embellish their garden spaces with porticoes (Bruno and Scott, 1993: 137–42; Pesando, 1997: 267–74).

In Rome, more money and higher stakes might lead to much grander experiments. The grand, several-story houses built on terraces into the side of the Cispian Hill are testament to the possible scale of domestic architecture. The Esquiline Odyssey paintings belong to one of these houses and Coarelli suggests that the paintings were set as high as 4 m above floor level under a vault, which was supported by a colonnade on three sides (Coarelli, 1998a). Even (or perhaps especially) on the packed Palatine, homeowners were clearly making provision for peristyles and elaborate niched fountains and muscling into neighboring plots in order to make room for them (Papi, 1998). The most notorious example of such activity is doubtlessly that of Clodius in the first century, whose house became steadily bigger as he extended over other people's properties, perhaps occupying as many as eight units, most notably his neighbor Cicero's, whom he had forced into exile. Cicero's house was razed and a Temple of Libertas erected over it as part of Clodius's house (Cic. *Dom.* 62, 116; Carandini, 1986/8). The story receives most interest in terms of the political symbolism of the temple but its presence is also a great reflection of the tendency of domestic space to swallow public architecture, sacralize space and incorporate external landscapes (Royo, 1999: 21).

As houses grew, so did the household that served them. The basement of the House of Scaurus, preserved under its atrium, consists of about 50 tiny cubicles, presumably

slave quarters. That basements were a popular place to house a growing domestic slave population is shown by another house across the road, by the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, whose basement likewise consists of a series of small rooms with herringbone floors. The inclusion in the basement of Scaurus's house of a small bath-suite is further evidence of growing status differentiation. A far cry from the combined kitchens and bathrooms of the colonies, this house's suite imitated the sequence of the public baths (Claridge, 1998: 112; *LTUR* 2: 26 [Papi]; George, 1997).

5 Other Types of Housing

The atrium house is a privileged house type and its further elaboration increased the distance between it and other types of housing. At Cosa, the second-century houses in the smaller insulae, themselves of a divergent recurrent type, are clearly differentiated from the atrium houses in the forum, though they share some features (Bruno and Scott, 1993). Long entrance corridors, flanked by a room on either side, led to a large central area with a room in each rear corner, creating between them an open recess that could pass as a tablinum. Behind lies a transverse room with access to a lower garden. They have no impluvia and Bruno and Scott suggest they are roofed over to create a testudinate atrium, with water being collected not from a compluvium but from the eaves. It has been suggested that similar houses found at Pompeii should be ascribed to the presence of veterans settled at the time of the creation of the Sullan colony in 80 but Pesando thinks they are older and that the type is simply standard for lower-status housing (Pesando, 1997: 211–15; Zanker, 1999).

Pesando (1997) has attempted to articulate the Republican housing stock at Pompeii by creating a number of categories. At the top are the atrium-peristyle Houses of the Faun and the Labyrinth and slightly smaller houses, like the House of Sallust, which operate as the great houses on a strict symmetrical axis, with the atrium-tablinum complex, but retain a hortus. Between these atrium houses and the non-atrium houses, he places homes like the House of the Ceii, which in its earliest form was a small house built around an atrium, with just two cubicula in the front corners and in the rear corners, two rooms on either side of a corridor through to the hortus, which could have served as a tablinum and triclinium. The effect of this arrangement was that the axial view had little importance. As Bruno and Scott (1993) observed of their houses in Cosa, one of the most marked differences between these houses and the large atrium houses is the lack of attention given to the outside world. In this model, privacy is preserved, but the views are generally uninteresting and uninfluential. Of course, even these houses are not the smallest – Pompeii and Herculaneum also reveal multiple family dwellings. The smallest living spaces among our archaeological remains are the mezzanine levels in the shop units, witnessed by the remains of staircases in the shops in the front of the House of Diana and those at Pompeii (Fentress, 2003: 32). It is worth noting that the slave quarters of the Scaurus basement, apparently with signs of fabric nailed to walls and provision of drains, may well have provided a more comfortable existence than the life lived by many of the free poor (Carandini, 1994).

Any type of single property, whether small or large, was something of a luxury in a rapidly expanding city like Rome itself. There, the term "insula" takes on quite another

meaning of the rickety tenements in which thousands of the city's citizens lived. The multiple, high-rise dwelling is clearly a practical response to lack of space as it is not found in the colonies, and Claridge suggests that its appearance in Rome was a "natural" response to immigration during the second century, an indication of how all parts of Roman society were affected by Roman expansion (Claridge, 1998: 56). Architecturally, these blocks were a great feat and probably home to a people of a wide variety of income and status, like their Imperial counterparts (Vitr. *De arch.* II.8.17). Nevertheless, the poor condition of many insulae is a recurrent theme in the texts. Built close together, probably made mostly of wood and having perhaps as many as 12 stories (Augustus was the first to impose legal height restrictions), these apartment houses were often short-lived. The fact is that all remaining insulae date from the second century CE, testament enough to the inadequacy of their forebears. Cicero complains that even the mice have fled from his own rotten insulae; his neighbor Crassus, the wealthiest man in Rome, turned a profit on buying up burned properties (Cic. *Att.* 14.9; Plut. *Crass.* 2.4). Livy's story of an ox that escaped in the Forum Boarium, made its way into a neighboring insula and consequently fell out of an upper-story window, is a reminder of how we should slip these blocks into our imaginative cityscape of Republican Rome (Livy XXI.62). Insulae probably fitted wherever they could in the city. They jutted onto public spaces just as much as the elite domus; it was just that nobody was looking at them.

The idea that levels of privacy and public availability are tied to the acquisition and maintenance of status is clearly demonstrated in the look at these other house types. In many ways, the privilege of the richest house owners was to win more privacy. The poorer members of Pompeian society were doomed to live their whole lives in public, eating at taverns, bathing in the town baths and using the public latrines. The owners of a rich domus dined at home presiding over their own convivia and even bathed in private suites. But the privacy won by the elite was put to work to controlling a public view of themselves. The poor remained invisible and "private" even when living in public.

6 Spatial Syntax

By the Late Republic, many atrium houses were extensive, complex spaces that far exceeded the necessities of shelter and, as a result, challenge attempts to understand them. The names given to the new rooms both parade their exoticism and reflect their form rather than function. In asking what they were used for, we are reminded to interrogate more closely the functions of the atrium house's more traditional rooms – what exactly might an ala be for? (Leach, 1997: 50–72). The prompt to investigate the functionality of the Roman house, to consider how it marries Greek fashion and Roman ideology, formal social ritual and everyday life, has provided a major challenge that has been met by a number of approaches over the last 20 years.

In terms of understanding the functions of individual rooms, Allison's consideration of how the artifacts found in them tell us about the ways in which spaces were used has been particularly enlightening (Allison, 1993: 4ff; cf. Berry, 1997: 183–95). Very quickly, her technique underlined the multiple uses of an atrium in Pompeii. While smart decor and marble artifacts stress the display capacity of this important space, strongboxes and cupboards demonstrate its role as storage space and the many whorls

and loomweights attest to its use as workroom. As well as being the social and spiritual center of the house, the atrium was, clearly, at other times of the day, a center for the women and even slaves to work. The evidence suggests what Laurence has called the "temporal logic of space," by which the dynamics of the house changed during the day, with functions and status of spaces allocated by activities or people rather than by architectural type (Laurence, 1994: 154–66). Allison's work is hard to apply to Republican contexts since few artifacts survive, but her findings should inform the way we interpret the plans of these earlier houses.

Wider-scale spatial analysis has also been conducted in order to map movements of people around the house. Traditionally, the concept of the syntax of the domus has relied on readings of Vitruvius, who tells us the crucial, "public" rooms (the atrium, ala, tablinum, peristyle and triclinium, the rooms associated with male, social activity, in particular the morning salutatio and the evening convivium), leaving the rest to be assumed to be clearly unimportant and domestic. Several attempts have been made at a more sophisticated analysis by applying anthropological and sociological models of domestic space. Laurence, for example, with mixed results, applied the system devised by Hillier and Hanson by which the privacy or exclusivity of a room is judged by how many doorways have to be crossed to reach the room (Laurence, 1994: 126–9).

7 Decoration

Interior décor has proved to be a major focus in the investigation of the spatial syntax of the house. Art historians and archaeologists have considered the relationship between form and function, moving from analyzing subject (for instance, does an erotic painting signal a bedroom?) to consideration of how different styles of painting may suit different areas of the house (the difference, say, between the stern First Style in atria and the fantastic Second Style in reception rooms) or how the different schemes in wall painting and even patterns in threshold mosaics might act as signposts to differentiate space and guide people around the house (Clarke, 1991; Wallace-Hadrill, 1994; Swift, 2009: 28–104). These investigations have helped us understand the complexities of the house and have refined further the dogmatic view of Vitruvian public and private space, but they do have some shortcomings, not least because they can lead to circular argumentation: the use of space is determined by the mosaics, which are thus determined by the nature of the space.

Investigations into decoration have also informed our understanding of the types of second-century architectural embellishments we have mapped above. Textual evidence makes clear that interior décor became increasingly lavish as more exciting materials and objects become available during the first century. The houses of the stars of the Late Republic were luxuriously kitted out and Pliny blames a sequence of celebrities for turning up the heat. It is no surprise that Palatine residents lead the way, as the orator Lucius Crassus and Scaurus are both picked out for the installation of marble columns in their atria (Plin. *HN* 36.2.4–7; see Chapter 17). Such high-end decoration is intimated in some of the grander houses of Pompeii, particularly in the Nilotic mosaics and Alexander mosaic in the House of the Faun. As with the architectural embellishments, the ultimate source of these innovations is associated with the Hellenistic east. In Rome itself, the

popularity of Hellenistic culture is reflected in the famous Esquiline Odyssey paintings that deliver a continuous narrative of the Odyssey set in an extensive landscape and the extravagant Graeco-Egyptian motifs of the Aula Isiaca, perhaps painted around 30 (Iacopi, 1997; Claridge, 1998: 135).

But if the texts, reflecting the anxieties of the time, focus on the Late Republic as source of innovation, it is clear that the trends exhibited in them go further back. Unsurprisingly, the evidence of the second-century colonial houses is simpler but its study gives some intimation of the particularly Roman role to which such decoration was put. Floors are more likely to be of opus signinum than mosaic, usually red or sometimes black, and often packed with limestone tesserae laid to make regular geometric patterns. At Pompeii, there are many more mosaic floors – the simplest effects might be monochrome mosaic interspersed by irregular-shaped off-cuts of colored marbles or limestone, a technique also found in a Late Republican house under the Ludus Magnus in Rome (Dunbabin, 1999: 38–59; Welch, 2006a: 527–8). Black and white mosaics with pattern or vegetal borders were also popular.

All the wall paintings at Cosa and Fregellae seem to have been of the First Style, even in the later built houses. This style was common across the Mediterranean and imitates ashlar masonry. Walls are covered with stucco which is either molded or incised to give the illusion of being composed of individual blocks, which are painted to add variety and to give the illusion of different types of stone, particularly marbles. The houses at Cosa show color ranges of purple, yellow and marbling of green and yellow blotches on a yellow ground. Further architectural details might be intimated, particularly friezes – the House of the Skeleton's First Style triclinium included a green meander band and a painted garland, while at Fregellae it seems that terracotta friezes were inserted into the tablinum wall (Bruno and Scott, 1993: 133; Coarelli and Monti, 1998: 62–5). The sheer monumentality of the First Style is most easily shown by its coverage of atrium, tablinum and alae in the Houses of the Faun and of Sallust in Pompeii. Its application across Italy and across house types shows that painting was an accessible medium through which to promote the illusion of grandeur (Laidlaw, 1985; Richardson, 1988: 108–11).

The persistence of the First Style in Cosa is noteworthy because, by the time of its destruction, the so-called Second Style was well underway in Pompeii and Rome. Also heavily reliant on making an architectural impression, the Second Style does so entirely with paint and gives the illusion that the wall has been opened. The House of the Griffins on the Palatine has an early example, currently dated 110–100. The walls are painted to imitate a colonnade in front of a wall decked out in typical First Style fashion complete with marbling. From this rather somber beginning, Pompeian walls show the style's imaginative possibilities: golden, jewel-studded columns form colonnades behind which lavish sanctuaries open up with *tholoi* and tripods. The overwhelming effects of these paintings are exaggerated by the sophisticated ways in which such painting merges with the real architectural fancies of houses. The Odyssey Landscapes, for instance, are interspersed with painted pillars as if viewed through a colonnade, a colonnade that was probably duplicated by the real colonnade in front of them. The hefty columns of the Corinthian oecus in the House of the Labyrinth at Pompeii likewise mirror the columns of the painted colonnade that frames the temple precinct on the walls behind (Figure 3.4) (Strocka, 1991: 44–8). As with the architectural elements of these houses, real sources for these fantastical, painted scenes have long been sought: the Roman theater and

Figure 3.4 Second Style wall in the Corinthian oecus of the House of the Labyrinth, Pompeii. Source: Photo by S.J.Hales.

Hellenistic royal palaces are favorite candidates (Royo, 1999: 26–7; Leach, 2004: 93–122). But, like those architectural elements, they are probably better appreciated as fantastic subversions than faithful imitations of real elements. If there is a connection of Second Style painting to dramatic performance, it is perhaps best understood not as a direct reference to the theater itself but to the theatricality of Roman social interaction performed in the home. As such, the increasingly popular theme of theatricality could well be applied to the architectural substance of the domus as well as to its decoration (Bryson, 1990; Elsner, 1995: 49–87; Hales, 2003: 135–66; Swift, 2009: 81–5 extends these ideas to mosaic).

The decoration of colonial houses also shows a very different kind of Roman interaction with the Hellenistic east in showcasing the aggressive conquests which brought back its luxuries to Italy in the first place. The self-referential display of booty and trophies in urban atria and façades was a familiar sight in Rome and Sulla famously had his martial exploits painted in his Tusculum villa (Plin. *HN* 26.2.12). The houses at Fregellae show that such display was not confined to generals (Coarelli and Monti, 1998: 62–5). Several have revealed terracotta fragments which appear to allude to land and sea battles; among the most extensive are the remains of a frieze 18 cm high showing Victories, trophies and prisoners that was probably inserted into the First Style wall of the tablinum in Domus 2. It is a distinct possibility that some second-century settlers, veterans of the wars against

Antiochus III of Syria, were celebrating their part in the conquest of the east. At first sight, these decorations seem to offer a very different kind of aesthetic from the fantasies of the Second Style or the extravagances of domestic sculptural collections, but Welch's investigation into the Republican household reminds us of their interrelation and suggests that the aesthetics of the former are directly inspired by the display of captured Greek booty, another reminder of the very Roman nature of the display of Hellenistic luxury in the domestic sphere (Welch, 2006b; see Chapter 27).

8 The View

The syntax of the atrium house, however, is not dependent on architecture and decoration alone. Its axial layout and the eagerness of homeowners to seek out prominent locations remind us that the view was a major part of the domestic experience. The emphasis on claiming and becoming a view must offer further motivation for the acquisition of homes perched on the Palatine. The biggest house was a waste of investment if it was tucked out of sight. Velleius Paterculus (2.14) describes Drusus commanding his architect to maximize the visibility of his home and hence his own public profile. As with decoration, the power of the view is seen by the suspicion that it could engender. Public opinion forced Publius Valerius to demolish his home on the highest part of the Velian Hill in 509 and he was careful to rebuild his domus on a more equalizing level (Livy II.7.5–12). His story is a telling reflection of the perceived power of domestic display and the danger of overstepping the mark.

Drerup was the first to endow the view through the atrium domus with a life of its own and to explore its effects on the visitor (Drerup, 1959, developed in Jung, 1984). When the front doors of these houses were open, the viewer saw the sequential arrangement of fauces, atrium, tablinum. The view takes a highly symbolic, privileged path through the house, passing straight over the impluvium and onto the tablinum, the apparent center of the home and place of the paterfamilias, before continuing through the windows of the tablinum to the peristyle and even reception rooms beyond. The importance of the central axis along which this view travelled was such that key features, such as the exedra in the House of the Faun that contained the Alexander mosaic, are aligned along them. The strong, carefully planned axial view allowed sprawling houses at Pompeii, like the Houses of the Faun and the Labyrinth, to intimate the complete symmetrical arrangement of the houses at Cosa and Fregellae.

This penetrating view thwarts physical realities, gaining for the outside viewer symbolic access that cannot physically be enjoyed by the inhabitants of the houses who are forced to walk around the impluvium, around the colonnades of the peristyle and through the corridor(s) to the side of the tablinum. The central axis gives the impression to this viewer standing on the threshold that the whole house has been arranged around his standpoint. The house is apparently laid bare and made public. But of course, the house is anything but. The view is carefully contrived and privacy carefully regulated. That area of movement in the atrium, and the wall decoration which frames it, is largely lost to the viewer because the long vestibule walls act as blinkers, channeling the sightlines along the central axis and denying visual access to the areas of the house that flank it (Jung, 1984: 76, 78ff; Grahame, 1997: 163). And entry was not so easy to achieve in reality. Even without chained guard

dogs or scowling porters, the steep, narrow fauces create a highly restrictive, easily policed entrance. The interior looks as distanced and as superior as possible, making the paterfamilias in his tablinum who seemed so near both physically and socially remote.

This remoteness is confirmed by the priorities of sights inside the house. The central axis often loses its central importance as the wider context around that axis gains dominance. From within the house, particularly from the reception rooms around the peristyle, new concerns affect the viewer (Bek, 1983; Jung, 1984: 98). These privileged views reward that inside viewer with a spectacular picture to admire. The entrance from the street through the atrium to the peristyle extension of the House of the Labyrinth offers an axial view straight across the garden, through the colonnade and then between the columns in the Corinthian oecus. Inside that oecus, however, the axial view out of the room is only one of a series of views opening up on every side as the painted walls draw the eye into lavish temple precincts, which promise so much more than the mundane view of the street.

These views might explain further the articulation of the atrium house, which appears not to be divided tidily into public and private spaces, but between aspects of spaces available to outsiders and accessible to those inside, whether family or visitors. Inside the house, rooms of ambiguous function appear to have had the capacity to become public at any moment. Those members of the public who were admitted through the front door of the domus were faced with an impression of grandeur as they were brought into the owner's private world. The importance of these views is such that it is one of the major ways Bruno and Scott distinguish the gulf between the House of the Treasure and the House of the Skeleton at Cosa. While the latter does not have the axial symmetry of the House of Diana, the provision of a view from the triclinium across the portico to a garden which appears to have been landscaped deliberately to slope upwards, thus emphasizing its visibility from the house, shows a homeowner with an eye for the visual effects of his home (Bruno and Scott, 1993: 148).

9 Horti

From the second century, then, the atrium domus provided a powerful spectacle, pulling into its orbit exotic, civic, and even sacred elements and exploiting the view into and out of it. But urban houses remained restricted by space and by tradition. Other types of property were needed in order to exploit the principles of domestic display to a greater extent. The elite of Rome had always owned multiple properties in the country since the majority of their income was tied up in land ownership. Generally bigger properties, free of the restrictions of the city, country villas became favorite places for extravagant display but they were disappointing in one respect – they were invisible to the voting audience back in Rome (for the excavation of a villa very close to Rome, see Carandini *et al.*, 1997; see also Chapter 20). By far the most visible, and thereby effective, residences were the horti, the parkland residences that combined the landscape of the villa with the visibility of the domus. Neither in the city nor in the country, they sat in the liminal space of the *sub urbe*, sometimes literally straddling the city walls (Purcell, 1987). As with the domus, their elaboration probably dates back to the second century, since the Scipios seem to have owned them as early as the mid-century (Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.4.11).

Cicero himself tried to buy the Horti Drusi just as he had taken over the house of Livius Drusus on the Palatine (*Att.* 12.21.2). Caesar had two horti, one at the Colline Gate and one across the Tiber, so his name might be present at every stage of the journey to and from Rome (Obsequens 71; Suet. *Iul.* 83.2; cf. *LTUR* 3: 55 [Papi]). Though the horti are associated with otium and some were built by famous retirees, many others were certainly exploited by the politically ambitious as settings for public euergetism, particularly banqueting, on a scale that far exceeded the domestic convivium (App. *B Civ.* 3.14; Plut. *Pomp.* 44.4; Val. Max. 9.15.1; D'Arms, 1998; Wallace-Hadrill, 1998). By the Late Republic, these horti ringed the city. Lucullus had built his on the Pincian Hill and Sallust's, inherited from Caesar, were north of the Quirinal (Lucullus: *LTUR* 3: 67–70 [Broise and Jolivet]; Sallust: *LTUR* 3: 79–81 [Innocenti and Leotta]; Hartswick, 2004; Talamo, 1998: 113). The Horti of Maecenas were south of the Esquiline gate on the Oppian Hill while, over to the west, the Horti Scipionis overlooked the Campus Martius. Raised up on the hills and ramparts, many of these horti enjoyed a grand view, and could see and be seen across the whole of Rome and beyond to the surrounding countryside. The texts suggest they deliberately exploited the view, since they mention towers both in the Horti of Maecenas (from which Nero watched Rome burn) and of Caesar (struck by lightning in 17; Suet. *Ner.* 38.2).

Today, very little of the Republican horti remain. The majority of the remains date from alterations made when many of them had passed into the hands of the Imperial family. Plutarch, though, reckons that the Horti of Lucullus continued to hold their own (Plut. *Luc.* 39.2). The last remaining Republican vestiges of his horti are the remains of a terrace with a huge hemicycle, from where one could survey, as Welch suggests, the sunset, but perhaps more importantly the rest of Rome beneath it (Welch, 2006a: 517). The most well-known remnant of the Republican horti is the so-called Auditorium of Maecenas, perhaps better labeled a viridarium. It is a walled enclosure with an apse formed of steps which recall theater seats but were more likely steps for pots of plants or even a cascade. In its earliest form it also had an opening out of the flat side, which may have taken advantage of the view (Häuber, 1990: 62–4; *LTUR* 3: 74–5 [de Vos]). The horti became the setting for terraces, porticoes, pavilions, temples, water features and extensive sculptural arrangements. Of the many marble sculptures from the Horti of Sallust, the Gauls are now thought to have been arranged by Caesar, their new conqueror, as he rearranged the mighty displays of the Attalids (Talamo, 1998).

Various familiar sources of inspiration have been suggested for these first-century residences, from the Hellenistic palaces to the huge Italic sanctuaries. It seems better to suggest that, like the wall paintings and architectural details of the urban domus, they deliberately combined different elements to create fantastic settings for the performance of Republican life. The development of domus and horti alike reflect the extent to which Hellenistic influences infused Roman culture during the second century but the tasks to which these influences were put were decidedly Roman. In the last 20 years, our understanding of domestic space has increased dramatically with both the discovery of fresh material, particularly at Cosa, the application of new approaches to the atrium domus and renewed interest in other house types. Investigation of the houses has proven so rewarding precisely because the ultimate ambition of their owners was not to make them private retreats but public statements of power.

FURTHER READING

In terms of examining literary references to competitive, Republican domestic building, Wiseman's (1987) influential article demonstrates the importance of the domus in providing a public face for its owners. Edwards (1993) also has an extremely useful chapter on the morals of building. Wallace-Hadrill (1994) has done the most to pursue the sociological importance of domestic space and decoration, swapping emphasis from the literature of Rome to the archaeological remains of Pompeii and Herculaneum (see also Hales, 2003). Alongside Wallace-Hadrill, Laurence (1994) and Laurence and Wallace-Hadrill (1997) have analyzed the spatial syntax of Pompeian houses.

The houses of Pompeii are well examined and another important treatment is Zanker (1999). Pesando (1997) is rare in concentrating solely on the Republican buildings of Pompeii. The excavations of Cosa and Fregellae have added greatly to our knowledge of atrium houses. Bruno and Scott (1993), Fentress (2003) and Coarelli and Monti (1998: 62–5) publish the results. Carandini's excavations on the Palatine are published in Italian (1986/8, 1988, 1990) but a very brief English overview can be found in Carandini (1994). The other full account of the domestic houses on the Palatine is in French (Royo, 1999). Wallace-Hadrill (2008) and Welch (2006b) consider the ways in which new Greek influences emerging during the Republic come to serve a very Roman end in Republican houses.

The bibliography on domestic art is large and here I concentrate only on works that consider its relation to architectural space. For an overview of mosaic and wall painting, the principal media, see Dunbabin (1999) and Leach (2004), whose major study of wall painting is the first to break away from traditional, formal categorization and includes a whole chapter on the theatrical style. Bryson (1990) and Elsner (1995: 49–87) provide exciting ideas about wall painting's tendency to fantasy and subversion. Tybout (2001) considers the social role of wall painting. Clarke (1991) focuses on the ways in which decoration might react to movement around the Roman house and Swift (2009: 28–104) joins him in looking at mosaic patterns. Allison (2004) continues her approach of working with artifacts. Drerup's (1959) early work on the view was updated in English by Jung (1984) and Bek (1983).

The bibliography on horti is not too extensive. The remains of the Horti Lamiani published in Cima and La Rocca (1986) are highly evocative of the wealth of the horti though the remains are Imperial. Cima and La Rocca (1988) collect ruminations on the horti phenomenon in various languages. Purcell's (1987) essay on the nature of the suburbium is a very useful insight into the liminal nature of the space which the horti occupied.