

Social Access in Two Pompeian Houses (VIII 2, 14-16 and VIII 2, 34)

Recent scholarship on domestic architecture in the Roman world has sought to better define space and its use by individuals in order to more fully explicate the social relationships amongst members of a household and between members and visiting non-members. It has long been understood that the latter relationship, between members and non-members, was one that existed predominately in elite households, where the householder was one who wielded power in the public sphere and carried that power home with him, thereby involving his house in the public sphere. A. Wallace-Hadrill has most succinctly defined such a house as a “powerhouse”, as the locus of a “network of social contacts” that assisted the householder in maintaining his public power position (1994, 12).

How, then, did a householder utilize his home as means of influencing his social contacts to maintain his power? How was public space defined within a private house? These and other related questions now dominate the study of Roman houses and a variety of methodologies have been developed to answer them. The aim of this paper is to test the application of two such methods – view-planning and access analysis – against the more traditional archaeological and literary approaches to understanding how space was defined within elite households, and in particular, to the ways in which space was used to define the relationship between householder and visitor with the purpose of maintaining the power of the householder.

The concept of view-planning has developed from the theories of H. Drerup (1959), who saw the *Durchblick*, from the main entrance through the house, as the defining principle in the relationship between the householder and his visitors. This approach has been further developed by J. Clarke (1991) and especially L. Bek (1993) to acknowledge that at least some visitors ventured beyond the foreparts of a house and that a householder’s image of power needed to be maintained throughout the course of the visit, not vanish once a visitor crossed the threshold, and therefore one should expect a series of impressive vistas to define the spaces in which visitors might be welcomed. The theory of access-analysis has been applied to houses in Regio VI at Pompeii by M. Grahame (1997, 2000). This approach attempts to quantify the nature of space within a house, without regard for artifacts, installations or decorations, by analyzing the relationship amongst different household spaces to define the relationships between individuals who make use of those spaces.

This paper presents an interdisciplinary inquiry into the construction of household space for the purpose of defining and maintaining power relationships between the householder and his visitors. Starting from the premise that such relationships existed primarily in elite households, which may be defined on the basis of their larger size and more elaborate decoration (Wallace-Hadrill 1994), two houses at Pompeii have been selected for analysis: the House of the Five Floors (VIII 2.14-16) and the House of the Mosaic Doves (VIII 2.34). In addition, both houses were included in P. Allison’s study of artifact distribution in Pompeian houses (2004), which allows for a more thorough understanding of what activities may have taken place in a particular space. Proceeding from the presentation of the application of view-planning and access-analysis methodologies on these two houses, this paper concludes with a discussion of the usefulness of

the two methods for understanding social relationships within the domestic context as isolated theories and in combination.

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