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THE ATRIUM AND MODELS OF

SPACE IN LATIN LITERATURE

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THE ATRIUM AND MODELS OF

SPACE IN LATIN LITERATURE

by

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to my parents, Mr. Clayton Sammons,

Dr. Rebecca Benefiel and Mrs. Cathy Scaife.

Gratias vobis ago.

Acknowledgments

Abstract

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

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This report examines all the occurrences of the *atrium* in Latin literature and the context for each occasion. It begins with an overview of the etymology of *atrium* and the development of the *atrium*-house plan then analyzes the use of the word *atrium* in terms of theories of spatial conception. The results are that the *atrium* as a cognitive model is restricted to an upper class, elite mindset and that the space appears to be more multifunctional in nature than is usually thought.

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Chapter One: The *Atrium*

The *atrium* is both a space and category that has transferred into English architectural vocabulary. In the modern sense the *atrium* is a reception area usually near the entryway to the space, and a term used especially in reference to public buildings. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as a "rectangular open patio around which a house is built" or a "many-storied court in a building usually with a skylight".[1] The modern characteristics of the *atrium* usually include its openness, connection to other passages, and height. The *atrium* of the Roman house cannot be so precisely defined. Seemingly one of the easiest areas of the Roman house for the archaeologist to identify in form,[2] the activities that took place in the *atrium* are difficult to determine. Similarly, the attitudes of the Romans towards this room remain largely unknown. It is recorded as prevalent at least by the 3rd century BCE and the ground plans of *atria* are even recorded in the 3rd century CE Marble Plan (Hales 2003; 28)

The purpose of this report is twofold. The first part of the report will be an analysis of the *atrium* using its known occurrences in Latin literature and comparing these results to known archaeological finds in order to construct a better picture of how the *atrium* worked in the Roman mindset. The second part will be a summary of current research in domestic space theory and its application to my findings as outlined

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1 "Atrium". Mirriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 2004
2   Allison notes that some rooms were more easily adapted to various functions (like small rooms off the front hall') while others, like the front hall itself, were not. (Allison 2004; 63)

in part one.

What is the *atrium*?

It is important to understand the root of the word *atrium* and how it might influence a Roman understanding of the space in general before undertaking a literary analysis. The etymology of *atrium* is discussed by many ancient authors. Servius, in his fourth-century-CE commentary on Vergil's *Aeneid* says: *ibi et culina erat: unde et atrium dictum est; atrum enim erat ex fumo* (and there was the kitchen: whence it was called the *atrium*; for it was black from smoke) [1.726] Servius suggests that the word was derived from *atrum* meaning black; the closeness in spelling makes the derivation seem possible. Varro proposes a different possibility in *De Lingua Latina 5.33* he says: *Tuscanicum dictum a Tuscis, posteaquam illorum cavum aedium simulare coeperunt. Atrium appellatum ab Atriatibus Tuscis* (The "Tuscan" style was named after the Etruscans, after they (the Romans) began to imitate the inner court (cavity of the house) of their houses. It was called the *atrium* from the Etruscans of Atria).[3] It is significant that the ancients themselves disagreed whether the derivation of *atrium* was something foreign or not. Additionally, or perhaps consequently, modern scholars are equally divided about the derivation of the form of the room itself, whether it evolved from Etruscan precedents or from architecture not native to that tradition. This is a topic to

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3   Varro uses *'cavum aedium'* instead of *'cavum atrii'*. Vitruvius 6.3 also picks up this terminology: *cava aedium quinque generibus sunt distincta, quorum ita figurae nominantur: tuscanicum, corinthium, tetrastylon, displuviatum, testudinatum*. It is clear that the room mentioned is the same architecturally as what we find in the *atrium*. However, the fact that Varro does not use the word *atrium* when describing the Etruscan room may imply two things. One, that the 'front hall' room is only to be associated with the word *atrium* when it has been appropriated by the Romans from the Etruscan precedent. Second, perhaps *cavum aedium* is used to describe the room of the Etruscans because the cognitive associations of the activities that occur in the later *atria* were not thought to have occurred in that earlier space. Therefore, a different name, the *cavum aedium*, is used.

which I will return later.

Unlike some other rooms in the Roman house the *atrium* is relatively easy to identify in terms of its architecture, especially because a number of features usually, or often exclusively, appear in this area of the house. Varro in *De Lingua Latina 5.33* enumerates some of these features: *Cavum aedium dictum qui locus tectus intra parietes relinquebatur patulus, qui esset ad communem omnium usum. In hoc locus si nullus relictus erat, sub divo qui esset, dicebatur testudo ab testudinis similitudine, ut est in praetorio et castris. Si relictum erat in medio ut lucem caperet, deorsum quo impluebat, dictum impluium, susum qua compluebat, compluium: utrumque a pluvia* (the roofed space is called the cavity of the house which was left wide open within the walls, which was for the purpose of communal use of all. If in this no place was left, which was under the open air, it was called a testudo from the likeness of interlocking shields, as it is in the general's tent and camps. If it was left so that it would seize light in the middle, where it was raining below, was called the *impluvium*, from where it was raining from up high, the *compluvium*: both from 'pluvia' : the rain).

Varro highlights several key features of the room: namely the *impluvium* and *compluvium* which allow light to enter the room, provide a source of water, and create a strong vertical axis within the space. Other features not included by Varro that are characteristic of many, but not necessarily all *atria*, are their large size, especially compared to the rooms immediately adjoining them, and connection to several adjoining rooms. The room is commonly entered off a *vestibulum* and forms part of the

fauces-atrium-tablinum which can be seen in many houses in Pompeii, a fact heavily emphasized by modern scholars.4

However, Wallace-Hadrill, in his case study of several houses from Pompeii and Herculaneum, has pointed out the presence of several houses with unroofed *atria.* (Wallace-Hadrill 1997; 223) In addition, he notes that only 40% of the houses in his study had *impluviate atria,* and most of them were in large houses. (Wallace-Hadrill 1997; 222) So, while the *compluvium* and the *impluvium* as defining features are present in many *atria,* especially as represented in literature like the Varro passage above, there are many remains of houses in Pompeii without them. Perhaps the only truly defining feature is its connection to other rooms and location near the entrance. I know of no example of an *atrium* identified by the literature or archaeologically that connects to only one other space, or an *atrium* located at the back of the house or separated from any entrance area.

Several authors have commented on the specific decoration types in the *atrium*. First, many mosaics distinguish between the *vestibulum* and the *atrium* by a strip of mosaic that separates the two rooms. Hales notes the mosaic patterns of the *atrium* promote walking around the *impluvium,* an activity suitable for clients waiting for the *paterfamilias.* Motifs appear at several different viewpoints which encourages circulation. (Hales 2003;111) Hales also notes the high percentage of *atria* decorated in the 'first style'; a style characterized by the presence of decoration painted to imitate

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4   Ellie Leach has emphasized, however, that this visual axis would often be blocked by people milling about in the house blocking the central view. (Leach 2004; 25) In a different article she notes the presence of door posts that may have blocked the view of the *tablinum*. (Leach 1997; 57)

masonry.5   This style connects the *atria* to the public spaces of the city commonly constructed with ashlar masonry.[6] (128) While this decoration may have been a subtle cue to visitors or inspired a feeling of public grandness it also may have been associated with traditions of the ancestors. (Flower 1997; 197) Therefore, it would be a style well suited to the place where *imagines* and other relics of ages past were kept. Flower also notes that perhaps the importance of the first style may have been that the *imagines* were displayed against a background of geometric hues to make them stand out. (Flower 1997; 199) Leach suggests that *atrium* decoration tends to be paratactic – motifs appear broken up into scenes and are not a unified decorative program. (Leach 2004; 25) In a different article she explains that the impossibility of viewing across a packed *atrium* may be the reason why there are no paintings at eye level in some houses. (Leach 1997; 56) However, none of these specific decoration schemes define the *atrium* by their presence or exclude the identification by their absence. Rather, they should be used as cues into how the Romans considered this space and from what models they were derived.

Development of the Atrium

The purpose of this section is to trace the development of the *atrium* house and the *atrium* within that house plan. The reason is two fold. Several scholars have suggested that the *atrium* increased or decreased in importance according to whether

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5   Andrew Wallace-Hadrill includes such a generalization. (Wallace-Hadrill 1994; 47)

6   Also Dwyer 2010 36

it was featured prominently in Roman house plans.[7]   Our understanding of the

atrium, if this is true, must be affected in some way by its necessity within the

Roman house at the time.   Further, some scholars have assumed that the early *atria*

contained all the activities of later Roman houses that were later assigned to specially

built rooms. (Flower 1997; 193) One important goal of this section is to determine

when this demarcation into separate spaces occurred in order to understand the

function of the *atrium* chronologically. It is important to note, however, that while

much scholarship has been devoted to the development and origin of the Roman

house type these queries have been biased by the archaeological evidence on Roman

households, which is mostly from Pompeii. Only recently has suitable attention been

paid to places like Roman Africa and Roman Gaul.

Origins

     The origin of the *atrium*-house type is a hotly contested topic.   There are two

basic camps of thought: one is that the *atrium* developed out of an Etruscan house

model, the other opinion does not accept this assessment and instead looks to a

development from native Italian models. The importance of this debate is its

implications about the way the Romans may have viewed this central room in the house,

as something native to Italy (though not necessarily Roman) or something entirely

different. J. Walter Graham discusses the development of Greek and Roman Houses. He

sees the findings at Marzabotto as clear evidence for an Etruscan prototype of the

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7   Flower, for example, suggests that by the 2nd century BCE the *atrium* was the most important room of the house within the *atrium* house plan. (Flower 1997; 189) By the Empire the *atrium* decreased in importance and by the high Empire could be excluded. (Flower 1997; 193)

Roman *atrium* house by 450BCE. In fact, he suggests that eaves, a common feature of Etruscan temples, would project over a central court, and by their gradual extension would cause the development of the court into a room with the resulting *compluvium*. (Graham 1966; 7) Simon Ellis disagrees and instead suggests that the excavations at Marzabotta, although they indicate the existence of central-courtyard houses with cisterns to collect rainwater, should not be compared to the Roman *atrium*. (Ellis 2000; 24)   For one, the central courtyards did not contain any embellishment architecture as seen in many later Roman *atria*. Secondly, the central courtyards did not follow the Vitruvian description of Etruscan *atria*. This second assessment is not a convincing argument against the possibility of an Etruscan prototype. As many scholars have concluded, Vitruvius' descriptions of architecture should be seen as a model, perhaps, but not a prototype from which any deviation is significant. Ellis, instead, sees the 'true *atrium*' as a room which developed in the third of second century BCE and that the Etruscan settlement at Marzabotto is too early to contain any semblance of the room seen later in the Roman settlements. Importantly, Ellis notes the paucity of evidence about how the central courtyards were actually used. Typological semblance to the later Roman *atria* is not enough to connect them. Similarities in usage are necessary to show a diachronic relationship between the two spaces. (Ellis 2000; 24) Ellis believes that the Etruscan origin of the *atrium* can only be proved when its form and evidence for how the room was actually used can be paralleled with later Roman *atria*. (28)

A separate hypothesis suggested by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill supposes a

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development of the *atrium* house form from a model based on a central court. (Wallace-Hadrill 1997; 234)   He eschews using the *impluvium* as a restrictive category for identifying the *atrium.*   His analysis of buildings in Pompeii shows that houses with *impluvia* were in the minority. The *impluvium* is a feature he connects with the elite. (Wallace-Hadrill 1997; 222)   Further he proves, from the evidence of Cosa, that the *compluvium* was not necessarily paired with the *impluvium* and that the *impluvium* could serve as a central collecting basin for rainwater falling from an open court. (Wallace-Hadrill 1997; 229) Thus, while the *impluvium* and *compluvium* became important

features in some *atria* after the 2nd century BCE, they should not be used as limiting

factors in identifying *atria* before that time.

Geographic Diversity

Besides noting the weight Romans and modern scholars give to the origins of the *atrium* it is also useful to examine the popularity of this plan throughout the Empire. As not all the authors used in this survey came from Rome, or Italy in general, the geographic spread of the *atrium* is important to note. Shelley Hales has recorded several areas of the Roman Empire where the house plan can be detected. She notices the proliferation of the *atrium*-type in Augusta Emerita, Spain. (Hales 2003; 172) The

city was founded at the end of the 1st century BCE and contained a theater and urban center.   She also notes the presence of the *atrium*-type in Vasio, southern Gaul, including the famous Masion du Dauphin. (174)   Ellis discusses the presence of an *atrium* house in Ampurias, a refounded Roman colony of 6th -century-BCE Phoenician

origin. (Ellis 2000; 29) However, Ellis concludes that in general, "few *atrium* houses have been found outside of Italy." (31) The paucity of *atria* in North Africa may be due to a local tradition of aristocratic housing which precluded the need for the Roman model. Conversely, the lack of a preexisting aristocratic housing model in Spain may have made the adoption of the *atrium*-house type more popular[8] In addition, *atria* vary by location within region. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill points out there is a great difference in the number of *atria* in Pompeii as compared to Herculaneum even though the two cities are very close geographically. (Wallace-Hadrill 1994; 87) In general, the *atrium* should be viewed as an Italian development whose spread was severely restricted, and even varied within Italy itself. Notably, nearly all the literary references to *atria* in my search described Roman Italy houses, houses of the gods or general non-specific *atria.* In no example from my study was a specific Roman *atrium* outside of Italy described.

The rise of the peristyle house is a debate as contested as the origin of the *atrium.* Many see the peristyle-house supplanting the *atrium*-house visible in Pompeii. (Ellis 2000; 31) This change is thought to have occurred around the first century CE, which accounts for the side-by-side presence of both styles at Pompeii. (31) This modification is important to note in discussions of the *atrium* in the literature, since

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8   Yvon Thébert notes the divergence between Roman Africa house types and those found at Pompeii (Thébert; 1993). He notes that some have considered the *peristyle* in the African house, a room entered directly off the vestibule, is the typical room used for receiving guests, while the *atrium* in the Pompeian house seems to fulfill that purpose. Instead, he shows that the distinction must be made between types of client. The *atrium* in the Pompeian house is used to receive clients while visitors would be received in the *peristyle.* The absence of the atria in Roman African houses suggests that the *atria* functions were given to other rooms like the basilica and the vestibule. The peristyle, by its arrangement, he suggests, limits its usefulness as a room for receiving clients.

many of the works I will cite were written after the first century CE.   The
introduction of the peristyle into the plans of the Roman houses and that of Greek
colonies in Italy had extremely different aims. The Greek colonies in Italy adopted
the peristyle as a main reception room in the house. This is exemplified by Megara
Hyblaea, whose citizens seem to have adopted the peristyle in the third century
BCE. (32) The Roman cities, on the contrary, seem to have merged porticos with
the *hortus* in the construction of the peristyle. (34)   Thus, the peristyle entered
Roman architectural vocabulary as a supplement and not as a replacement for the
atrium.

Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, in a particularly innovative hypothesis, has traced the
development and increase of the popularity of the peristyle in the Pompeian house plan
as a result of the change from open courts to impluviate roofs. He supposes that the
peristyle would have been an important light source for the home. The addition of
the compluviate roof made the *atrium* and house in general very dark, which made
the peristyle and its light-bearing capacity a necessity. (Wallace-Hadrill 1997; 239)

The end of the *atrium*-house type seems to have occurred in the first and
second century CE. No reception room replaced it until Late Antiquity. (Ellis 2000;
69) Some authors have tried to connect the decline of the *atrium* with a noticeable
chance in aristocratic social behaviors. Ellis notes that there is little evidence for a
correlation between the decline of the *atrium* and the decline of the aristocracy in the
first century CE. (69) Some authors have argued that the development of the 'vista'
from the street through the *vestibulum-atrium-tablinum-peristyle* access led to the

popularity of the peristyle house plan. (Hales 2003;119) The House of the Gilded Cupids in Pompeii is often cited as such as an example whose view of the *peristyle* is maximized at the expense of the *atrium*. (119) Elaine Gazda notes the general trend in the scholarship towards a rhetoric of decline from Vitruvian principles to the altered form common in the later Empire. (Gazda 2010; 7) This tradition is associated with the increase of wealth that flowed into Italy after the many conquests of the second century BCE. (7) Andrew Wallace-Hadrill sees the change in house plan as a function of change in reception and entertainment traditions in the second century CE.

Dwyer notes that the evidence from Pompeii shows that the *atrium* house plan remained strong until 79 CE, well past the date of decline some authors would like to see. (Dwyer 2010; 31) In addition, he cautions against using trends from cities such as Ostia and Rome to apply to the condition of Roman cities and towns overall. Dwyer notes that Pompeii may be more representative of general Roman housing trends than Ostia. (Dwyer 2010; 31)

In conclusion, the evidence for the development and proliferation of the *atrium* is scanty and debated. However, these considerations need to be kept in mind while examining the literary evidence. The *atrium* was a room whose existence as the main reception room of the house was for a period of about three centuries. In addition, the popularity of the *atrium* was largely restricted to Italy proper. Both of these considerations should be kept in mind while examining the literary evidence and the mental models of *atrium* they suggest.

Chapter Two: Literary Evidence

Methodology

For this paper I will combine the approaches of two scholars: Penelope Allison and Andrew Riggsby. Allison's approach concentrates on using the archaeological evidence, specifically room assemblages, as evidence for activity and room function. Riggsby's, by contrast, uses the literary record to understand the cognitive associations of Roman authors to room types as represented by extant literary sources. In this paper, I want to explore the possibility of connecting material culture to the literary record by combining their two approaches. While understanding that the literary record can never be a perfect correlation to the archaeological record, I feel that given the uncertainties and shortfalls of several of the theories of space syntax, which will be presented in more detail in Part Three, it is important to combine approaches. Lastly, I will include independent research on graffiti in the *atria* as another avenue of possible research.

Riggsby's paper on the *cubiculum* significantly altered the understanding of one of the most problematic rooms of the Roman house. He researched the instances of the *cubiculum* in the corpus of Latin literature and the context of each appearance, a methodology that this report follows. He found several patterns of association that are present in the literature including the *cubiculum* as a place of rest, adultery, and murder. (Riggsby 1997; 36-43) He extends these observations to the question of public and private in the Roman house as a whole. Riggsby's thorough study of the occurrences of the *cubiculum* in Latin literature has revealed some of the cognitive associations Roman authors have made about this room. I am interested to see if Riggsby's approach can be

transferred easily to other rooms in the house. While it was a successful approach to a room as nebulous as the *cubiculum* I am not sure it can be easily be transferred to a room whose identification, but perhaps not function, is less problematic.

My study of the *atrium* and its use within Latin literature started with a complete search of every instance of the word in extant Latins sources. To compile a list of all the instances of *atrium* in Latin literature I started with the computer program 'Diogenes', a search engine for the Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) database of Latin literature. The search originally yielded 183 results but several of those results were of 'Atrium' as a name so they were excluded from my project. The final number of references was 165. The range of authors is extremely diverse in both time period and genre. The most common were Ovid (24) and Seneca the Younger (10). They range in chronological date from Plautus to Justinianus. In addition to this search I also searched the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (CIL), the Oxford Latin Dictionary, and the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae (TLL) for additional instances. The authors with relevant passages are located in Appendix 1. After compiling these references I translated these passages and looked for patterns of association in their descriptions of the *atrium*. Specifically, I looked for places where the author expressed surprise or a something unexpected about this room, definitions of the room, and common trends. After completing this analysis I looked at Allison's research on room assemblages and what has been written about *atria* artifacts. The combination of this research will be documented in the Analysis Section. I have broken up the references to the *atria* into

five semantic groups: a place for ritual, a lofty place, a place of luxury, a place of activity, and a place of conquest.

Analysis

I. A Place of Ritual- Salutatio, Imagines, Marriage, Death

Salutatio

One of the chief functions of the *atrium* is as a place for the *salutatio* to occur. The *salutatio* was the morning greeting expected by the *patronus* from his various *clientes*. The origin of this ritual remain obscure but was well constituted by the 2nd century BCE. (Flower 1997; 218) It was part of the intricate patron-client relationship that was characteristic of Roman society. As the location for this interaction the *atrium* would need to have been big enough to accommodate the various guests of the *dominus*. There are several references to *salutatio* in Latin literature[9] but perhaps not as many as one might expect since the *atrium* is often labeled as the 'place for *salutatio* without any other nuances by many modern scholars. In fact, most references in the ancient literature criticize the *salutatio*.

Seneca in *De Beneficiis* connects a substantial change in the *salutatio* with Gaius Gracchus and Livius Drusus. (Flower 1997; 219) Gaius and Drusus separated clients and visitors, the more important of whom were allowed a private gathering. Others waited in the *atrium,* a practice which Seneca criticized. He picks this up again in *De Brevitate Vitae 14* and criticizes the social practice of *salutatio* and the patrons

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9   Horace *Epistulae* 1.5; Maurus Servius *Commentary* 2.453 (quoting Horace); Martial *Epigrammata* 9.10, 12.68; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 12.53, Seneca the Younger *Epistlae morales ad Lucilium 19.11* and *55.6.3; Ad Marciam De Consolatione* 10 ('ampla atria' with vestibules crowded with clients)

who ignore their clients in the atrium: *Quam multi per refertum clientibus atrium prodire vitabunt et per obscuros aedium aditus profugient, quasi non inhumanius sit decipere quam excludere!* (How many will avoid advancing through their atrium crammed with clients and will depart through hidden doors of the house, as if it would not be more rude to deceive than to exclude!) This passage fits into Seneca's general criticisms about social pomposity but it is important to note that he criticizes both the clients who run around at all hours to the homes of their patrons and the patrons who do a disfavor to these clients.[10]

The most common adjective that modifies *atrium* is *vacuum*, 'empty'. The sources in which this occurs are Servius' commentary on the Aeneid (2), Seneca's *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* 19, and Vergil's *Aeneid* (2). This initial finding is surprising given that the 'crowded *atrium*' is a common trope in the secondary literature. In fact, *frequens* modifies *atrium* only once, in Seneca *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* 76. Other adjectives meaning 'crowded', *densus, angustus, celeber,* and *creber* never modify it.

In contrast to the 'crowded' *atrium* several other passages refer to an 'empty' or 'lofty' *atrium*. Seneca's *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* 22 concerns Seneca's advice to Lucilius to withdraw from public life entirely. He explains that it would be easy to leave a life of business except for several factors which hold him back, such as an unattended litter and a *vacuum atrium: tam magnas spes relinquam? ab ipsa messe discedam?*

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10   Also, Seneca advises in *De Beneficiis* 6.34.5 and *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*. 19.11not to seek a friend in an *atrium*. Seneca's position against the *salutatio* is clear.

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nudum erit latus, incomitata lectica, atrium vacuum? (Shall I leave behind such great prospects? Shall I depart from the crop itself? Will my side be naked, my litter unattended and my atrium empty?) The *vacuum atrium* is one impediment that Seneca envisions will spring into Lucilius' mind at his suggestion of seclusion. The empty *atrium* in this reference symbolizes the household of a man unconnected with business and with the public sphere. The empty *atrium* is a thing to be abhorred unless he is willing to forsake a life of business for one of retirement and philosophy. The *vacuum atrium* symbolizes the opposite of a the *atrium* of a business and a politically minded *paterfamilias*.

I suspect the absence of positive or neutral references about the *salutatio*'s existence in the *atrium* has to do with its prosaic nature in the social milieu of Roman society. S*alutatio* is only commented on satirically. Its place was too common to require comment otherwise. In other references, the *atrium* is described as 'crowded' while not directly referencing the *salutatio,* like Ovid's Ex Ponto 4.4: c*ernere iam uideor rumpi paene atria turba et populum laedi deficiente loco* (already I seem to discern the *atria* nearly bursting from the crowd and the people hurt from the lack of space).[11] The *atrium* in these passages is a place of activity and a place where large crowds are able to congregate but not necessarily in reference to the *salutatio* event.

Imagines

There are multiple references to *imagines* in the *atrium* in Latin literature.[12]

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11   Ovid *Epistulae* 16.186, *Epistulae ex ponte* 4.4.2; Plautus *Aulularia* 3.5 (creditors in the hall of the debtor), Statius *Silvae* 1.2. Perhaps these authors are referencing the *salutatio* event but without any mention of that ritual it is difficult to be completely certain.

The time period and genres of the authors varies considerably.[13] This attests to the importance of the *imagines*, at least as a topic of conversation, over a wide period of time. The *imagines* were commonly located in the *atrium*, especially of the upper class. Flower asserts that their use seems to have been a response to the conflict of the orders in the third century BCE. (Flower 1997; 59). They were made while the family member was still alive to represent him after he had passed on. They represented members who had achieved the rank of aedile in the *cursus honorum*. (Flower 1997; 59) In general, the literary references are of two camps: those authors, particularly those of an early date, that applaud the *imagines* of a *nobilis vir* and those authors, particularly satirists, who deplore an *atria* crowded with them.

One author who emphasizes the *imagines* is Asconius in *Pro Milone 43*. He describes the break-in on the house of Marcus Lepidus: *imagines maiorum deiecerunt et lectulum adversum uxoris eius Corneliae, cuius castitas pro exemplo habita est, fregerunt, itemque telas, quae ex vetere more in atrio texebantur diruerunt* (they threw down the images of the ancestors and they shattered opposing little bed of his wife Cornelia, whose chastity was held as an example, and likewise they destroyed the fabrics which were being woven in the atrium according to the old custom).14 The

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12   Asconius *Pro Milone* 38.7; Juvenal *Saturae* 8.20; Laus Pisonis 9; Martial *Epigrammata* 4.40, 2.90; Ovid *Amores* 1.8; Ovid *Fasti* 1.591; Pliny the Elder *Naturae Historia* 34.17, 35.6; Seneca the Younger *De Beneficiis* 3.28; Seneca the Younger *De Consolatione ad Polybium* 11.14; Seneca the Younger *Epistlae Morales ad Lucilium* 44.5, 76.12; Statius *Thebais* 2.215; Valerius Maximus *Facta et Dicta* 5.8; Vitruvius *De Architectura* 6.3.4

13   The very first reference to *imagines* in Latin is from Plautus in the *Amphitryo* (Flower 1997; 46)

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murder of a Roman citizen, potentially by those associated with the praetor (Milo), would seem egregious no matter what the circumstances. This flagrant abuse is coupled by the deliberate insult to several of Rome's oldest institutions belonging to the *atrium*: the *imagines,* the marriage bed, and the weaving equipment. Asconius emphasizes this further by describing Lepidus' wife Cornelia in terms of her chastity, a virtue particularly admired in the republican period. Perhaps this passage should be thought of as an act of retrospection by Asconius, writing about 100 years after this supposed incident. He has implanted the characteristic features of a republican *atrium*: the *imagines*, *lectuli adversi* and loom in order to create the picture of a Republican house.

Pliny the Elder, writing at a slightly later date than Asconius, contrasts the decoration of *atria* in his day with that of his ancestors. In his discussion on portrait painting he says that: *apud maiores in atriis haec erant, quae spectarentur; non signa externorum artificum nec aera aut marmora: expressi cera vultus singulis disponebantur armariis, ut essent imagines, quae comitarentur gentilicia funera, semperque defuncto aliquo totus aderat familiae eius qui umquam fuerat populus* (among our ancestors these things were on view in the atria: not statues by foreign craftsmen nor bronzes or marbles, but the faces modeled in wax were placed in individual cupboards,15 so that there were *imagines*, which would accompany familial funeral processions) *[Nat. Hist.* 35.6]. This reference has many implications for the

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14   R.G. Lewis in his commentary on Asconius mentions that weaving was probably not unusual among aristocrats who harkened back to traditionalis and cites the actions of the Empress Livia as an example. (Lewis 2006; 249)

15   Flower highlights that the use of individual cupboards for the *imagines* instead of lumping them in one cupboard denotes the importance placed on display. (Flower 1997; 186)

concept of the *atrium*. It was, according to Pliny, a place where the *imagines* were kept- in *armariis*.[16] Interestingly, Penelope Allison's research on the room assemblages of Pompeii has confirmed the existence of many large cupboards in the *atria* of those houses. However, no intact *imago* has survived in the archaeological material, but that is perhaps to be expected if they were made as Pliny the Elder cites here, *cer*a (in wax), a material that would degrade over time, especially in volcanic eruptions.[17] There is limited archaeological evidence for *imagines* and their presence outside of the Roman aristocratic social milieu is hard to gauge.

Imagines belong in this room as a sign of the importance it held for the *paterfamilias* in a sociopolitical role. One purpose of the *imagines'* location in the *atrium*, instead of some private viewing area elsewhere in the house, was as an advertisement to those pausing in the room. Flower connects this purpose to a voting advantage;[18] those clients waiting in the *atrium* would be subjected to a constant reminder of their patron's heritage and the deeds done by those ancestors looking back at them.

They are also a part of a larger scheme of portrait art. Harriet Flower differentiates between the four types of *imagines* referenced by Pliny. The *imagines*

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16   Flower notes that the purpose of these cupboards may have been to protect the fragile wax *imagines* from heat and light. (Flower 1997; 186) One interesting hypothesis is that *imagines* were placed in the *atrium* as surrogates for burials in the Neolithic age. (Dwyer 2010; 26)

17   Other portrait-type art, bronze portrait busts and portrait herms, thought not *imagines*, have been found in the *atrium* sometimes in front of the *tablinum*. (Flower 1996; 40)

18   There are numerous ancient sources that support her assertion. One example is Suet. *Jug. 85 alii si deliquere, uetus nobilitas, maiorum fortia facta, cognatorum et affinium opes, multae clientelae, omnia haec praesidio assunt*

were images made in wax of dead ancestors, as mentioned in the passage above. Family trees are mentioned by several authors including Martial in *Epigram 4.40: Atria Pisonum stabant cum stemmate toto* (When the *atria* of Piso were standing with their whole family tree)19 as well as Pliny the Elder in *Naturae Historia* 35.6. In *Naturae Historia 36.7,* Pliny describes images of famous ancestors with trophies in a different part of the house, closer to the threshold. (Flower 1997; 41) Flower remarks that these trophies had 'pride of place' near the door away from "the common herd of ancestors in the *atrium*." (Flower 1997; 42)   Lastly there were *imagines* on shields (*imagines clipeatae)*. (41)

Some authors, specifically Juvenal and Seneca the Younger, differ from Pliny the Elder and disparage those who crowd their *atria* with images of their ancestors. Juvenal, in Satire 8.20-24, says: *tota licet veteres exornent undique cerae atria, nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus. Paulus vel Cossus vel Drusus moribus esto, hos ante effigies maiorum pone tuorum, praecedant ipsas illi te consule virgas.* (Although old waxes adorn atria in every part, virtue is the only and unparallelled nobility. Be a Paulus or a Cossus or a Drusus in character; put those (morals) before the effigies of your ancestors; when you are consul let those morals precede the fasces). Juvenal contrasts the bases for character- old ancestry and *nobilitas* versus *mores*. This is a common enough trope in the satires of Juvenal: that an old name and heritage are not the ultimate achievement.

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19   Soldevila remarks that in this epigram Martial criticizes the patrons' lack of generosity. His patrons, were Cn. Calupurnius Piso and Seneca, both killed for their parts in the Neronian conspiracy. Soldevila remarks that *atria* here is used metonymically to the powerful, especially in terms of patronage. (Soldevila 2006; 300) This interpretation is useful in discussing the *imagines* which are likewise used
   to symbolize power, wealth, and nobility.

The anonymous *Laus Pisonis* speaks of *imagines* in relatively the same terms: *Nam, quid imaginibus, quid avitis fulta triumphis atria, quid pleni numeroso consule fasti profuerint, cui vita labat?* (for what do *atria* supported by *imagines* and familial triumph profit, what do the annals full with many a consulate, profit him who has stumbled in life?) [verse 9]. Unlike Juvenal, who supposes that *mores* must supersede *imagines*, the author of *Laus Pisonis* sees *imagines* profiting only him whose life is on firm footing. The two, a fruitful life and ancestry, must complement each other.

It might be expected that the Stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger would shun the pretensions of the *imagines* and indeed he does. In several letters and dialogues Seneca warns his reader to avoid filling his *atrium* with the images of his ancestors. For example, in *De Beneficiis 3.28: Qui imagines in atrio exponunt et nomina familiae suae longo ordine ac multis stemmatum inligata flexuris in parte prima aedium collocant, noti magis quam nobiles sunt ?* (Those who display *imagines* in their *atrium* and set out in the first part of their house the titles of their family joined with many branches of their family tree in a long row, are they not more infamous than they are noble?) Seneca the Younger is clearly criticizing those who publish their heritage by means of *imagines* and *nomina* in the *atrium*. There was an ongoing debate, clear from Juvenal and Pliny, about the continued importance of the *imagines* in the *atrium* and in Roman social and political practice as a whole.

As far as the archaeological evidence is concerned Allison, in her study on the room assemblages of Pompeii, notes that *imagines* or portrait busts in general were

not reported in her sample (Allison 2004; 165). Perhaps these would have been treasured items that were removed in the eruption or post-eruption disturbance. It is more likely that the wax wasn't preserved and it is for this reason that no *imagines* have been found in Pompeii.

Rituals

Many rituals may have taken place in the *atrium*. One, which occurred when a child was born, involved the dedication of an altar to Lucina (goddess of childbirth)(Hales 2003; 2). The *atrium* was also the place of the opposite ritual: that of the funeral. The dead would be presented in the *atrium* in the ceremony of the *collocatio*.[20] One instance of this is from Asconius' Pro Milone 32, which describes the *collocatio* of the body of Clodius: *Perlatum est corpus Clodi ante primam noctis horam, infirmaeque plebis et servorum maxima multitudo magno luctu corpus in atrio domus positum circumstetit* (The body of Clodius was laid out before the first hour of the night, and in great grief most of slaves and lowly plebs stood around the body positioned in the *atrium* of the house). Perhaps a better source for this display than the literary testimony is epigraphical evidence that connects this ritual to the *atrium*. The tomb of the Haterii[21] in Rome, a freedman family, shows a *collocatio*. Flower believes the room that is

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20   Flower states the purpose of the *collocatio* was to provide time for the family to organize the funeral. (Flower 1997; 95)

21   Two points should be made in connection with this relief. One, the testimony of Asconius, and this tomb (likely of Hadrianic date) are far about chronologically, maybe they should not be connected. Flower states that the tomb is fashioned to show off the new status of the freedmen. If that is the case, the *collocatio* should be connected with something 'to be achieved' a ritual that is something not available to slaves. The *imagines* do not appear in the relief, which would be expected if they were freedmen and no relative had achieved the rank of *aedile.* Although, if the *imagines* were kept in cupboards perhaps this is not significant.

represented on the relief is the *atrium* due to the sloping roof indicated in the top border of the relief. (Flower 1997; 94) If she is right this relief presents a nice complement to the literary testimony presented by Asconius above. As recorded in Pliny, the dead would be paraded on the day of the funeral from the home with the family and the *imagines*. The *atrium* is also characterized as a place of general mourning.[22]

One observation is that most of the references to funerals/mourning behavior occur in an aristocratic or regal context. True, this may be more due to a bias of sources and author's socioeconomic bias than actual social practice. However, this trend may indicate that public mourning in the *atrium* as a social practice should be more associated with those with the means to carry out such an activity.   More about the *atrium* as a class-linked phenomenon will be said in the conclusions.

The *atrium* has also been thought to be the place of a different ritual: worship of the household gods, the *Lares*. John Clarke has characterized it thus (Clarke 1991; 8- 12). However, Allison concludes that the assumed prevalence of the *lararium* in the *atrium* is not represented in her results. In her study, seven of the thirty sample houses had *lararia* or *aediculae*. So while some *atria* have *lararium* it is not the only area where this feature can occur. Allison notes that perhaps Ricotti's hypothesis that *lararia* had been moved to the kitchen in the second century BCE is a correct one. (Allison 2004; 69) It is also significant that my study of the *atria* found no passages that referenced the *lares*. I suspect this is has more to do with the familiarity and

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22   Silius Italicus *Punica* 8.150; Statius *Thebais* 6.40, Thebais 10.567

ubiquity of this institution than with the decline of their presence in the *atria*. Likewise, I suspect that archaeology cannot identify rudimentary *lararia* that may have been set up in contrast to the monumental *lararia* that are recorded. In general, while the *lararium* may be found in the *atrium* (and indeed many highly decorated ones have been found there[23]) they do not seem to be exclusively found here.

Besides the funeral/funeral mourning and worship of the *lares*, ritual involving the marriage was also mentioned in connection to the *atrium*.[24] This is to be expected since the company of the bride and groom would have had to pass through the *atrium* in their itinerary between the two most important marriage areas of the home: the *limen* and the *cubiculum*. Flower suggests the marriage is a connection of two *atria:* the *atrium* of the bride's father to that of her new husband through the procession. (Flower 1997; 201) The marriage rites may have taken place in the *atrium* of her father, though there is no literary evidence for such an event. (201) In addition, the *imagines* of the wife's ancestors traveled with her and were placed in her new home (202) Other potential events that are attested in the *atrium* are whipping25 and the location of weapons which may or may not have been used in a ritual context.[26]

In conclusion, a variety of rituals occurred in the *atrium* that were related to the life cycle of the family. It was an important site to the head of the household in that it was the place of the *salutatio*, arguably one of the most important daily events

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23   I believe the discovery of these highly decorated *lararia* have led many to define the *lararium* as occuring in the *atrium*
24   Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5.3, 14.215
25   Suetonius *Vita Augustae 45.4*
26   Silius Italicus *Punica 10.599*, Vergil *Aeneid 2.528*

to occur in the political life of the family. The *atrium* was also the site of many ceremonial events, most of which, however, contained some aspect of the political as well. Marriage, for example, can be seen as a connection between two families, rather than a bond between individuals. The emphasis on the *atrium* as the public face of the *paterfamilias* should be clear from these examples.

II. A lofty place- alta, excelsae, vacua

The *atrium* is commonly regarded as a place that is full of guests in which the *paterfamilias* appears prominently. Conversely, it is mentioned in specific contexts as an empty or lofty place, mostly to create a contrast between it and a previous fullness. In other situations, the *atrium* is described as empty, mostly in order to emphasize loneliness or desperation.[27] In all of these situations, they describe a model of the room that was used frequently and often filled with guests; emptiness is not the norm.

One instance of emptiness is in the *Aeneid*. It describes Pyrrhus' pursuit of Priam's son Polites. As Polites flees Pyrrhus he transverses the empty halls wounded (*et vacua atria lustrat saucius)* [2.528]. The halls are especially empty at this point because in line 515 Queen Hecuba and her princesses took refuge at an altar fleeing Pyrrhus.28 In addition, the use of *atria* instead of an *atrium* emphasizes the expanse of

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27   Leach notes the, 'ephonic melancholy' of the *vacua atria* from Vergil. (Leach 1997; 58)

28   This particular altar was located in a place that reminds the reader of the *atrium*. It was located: *Aedibus in mediis nudoque sub aetheris axe ingens ara fuit iuxtaque veterrima laurus incumbens arae atque umbra complexa Penatis* [2.512-514]. It is unclear to what area of a Roman house this passage may refer to. Some commentators have proposed that it refers to the atrium because it is located

the palace and the long duration of his flight, although this may be a poetic plural.[29]

Lastly, the *vacua atria* emphasize the desperation in Polites' flight. The usually

crowded reception rooms are depleted of visitors, soldiers, and helpers in his pointless

flight.

The second reference to the *vacua atria* in the Aeneid is equally stimulating to

conceptions of the use of the *atrium*. Vergil likens Queen Amata's aimless wanderings

to a top's circular wanderings on the atrium floor: *Ceu quondam torto volitans sub*

verbere turbo, quem pueri magno in gyro vacua atria circum intenti ludo exercent

[7.379-380] Again, the emphasis on *pueri* in multiple *atria* perhaps points to an

aristocratic or regal activity.30 It cannot be extrapolated, from this reference alone, that

play time by children was a regular activity in the *atrium*. However, the effortless

reference to activities taking place in the *atrium* beyond the *salutatio* should point us

to a room that is multifunctional. By describing the *atrium* as *vacuum* Vergil contrasts

the usual use of the room, as one crowded with guests, to a room empty but with

children. In addition, the idea that the room could be used my multiple age groups

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under the open air. I disagree with this assessment because of the reference to a *veterrima laurus*. Gardens or trees inside the atria of Roman houses are an unattested Roman phenomenon. Instead, Vergil is looking towards the Italian villa type, with its large peristyle forecourt present sometimes in lieu of the atrium and often containing lavish gardens. Vergil may also be harkening back to Hellenistic types from which this house plan likely derived. (Conington 1876) Also (Horsfall, Nicholas 2008; 402) agrees that the house is *vacua* since the occupants have fled to the altar.

29   Poetic plurals seem to be used specifically describing regal or divine *atria* which makes me even more confident that the purpose is to indicate expanse.

30   It may seem from the multiple references just discussed of *vacua atria* that *vacua* is being attached to *atria* for metrical reasons as a sort of epithet. This could certainly be the case, and *atria* is always joined with a modifying adjective in Vergil. However, the adjectives vary. These two examples include *vacua* but others include *longa, ampla* and *alta* and always in the plural. While these adjectives could just be modifying *atria* for the sake of metrical reasons it seems significant to me which adjectives Vergil chose to modify the space. They all in one way or another emphasize spaciousness or emptiness.

should be something kept in mind for further study.

Another reference to children in the *atria* is from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* 4.400. In this passage he likens the movement of the sun to the spinning visions of dizzy boys*: atria versari et circum cursare columnae usque adeo fit uti pueris videantur, ubi ipsi desierunt verti, vix ut iam credere possint non supra sese ruere omnia tecta minari* (when they themselves stop spinning, it seems to the boys that the *atria* turn and the columns spin continuously, so that they are scarcely able to believe that the whole roof above them does not threaten to collapse on them).[31] This reference seems to imply children playing in the *atrium* and making themselves dizzy, an occupation out of character with the other uses of the *atrium*. It is not clear, from this reference, whether this is a habitual use of the space. However, the possibility of the multifunctional nature of this space will be a characteristic I will return to throughout this report.

The last reference to the *vacua atria* is in Statius' *Thebais* 2.48-49. In this passage Statius describes the underworld as follows: *loco pallentes devius umbras trames agit nigrique Iovis vacua atria ditat mortibus* (in this place a wandering path leads the ghosts and enriches the empty atria of black Jove (Pluto) with deaths). Again, this reference points to the 'emptiness' as a place empty of life and empty of friends. Like the passage in Vergil about Queen Amata, the empty *atria* are places to be avoided. Likewise, Statius describes the palace of Pluto using the plural, perhaps

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31   Cyril Bailey notes that this effect is more often used with drunkenness, specifically in Juvenal 5.304. (Bailey 1946; 407)

implying multiple *atria*.

A passage from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* echoes this connection between the underworld and emptiness. The passage describes Cerberus as a dog who lies in front of the threshold and black halls of Proserpina and always guards the empty home of Dis (*ante ipsum limen et atra atria Proserpinae semper excubans servat vacuam Ditis domum)* [6.19]. These references to the *vacua atria* of the underworld imagine a place antithetical of ideal living. The underworld is a dark place void of the company of family or guests. Thus, the sources that cite *vacua atria* do not cite them as a regularly occurring feature. It is a feature of only those who have removed themselves from public life or a feature of a house in which someone wanders, adding to their plight.

Another adjective that frequently modifies *atria* is *alta*, 'high'. This makes sense archaeologically as the height of this room is one of its defining features. Simon Ellis cites this as a principal distinction between this room and the *peristyle* (Ellis 2000; 35). The *atrium* had a 'vertical emphasis' due to the *impluvium-compluvium* axis that would be emphasized by falling rainwater and light.[32] The *peristyle*, by contrast, was a horizontal area. (35) The multiple columns of the *peristyle* emphasize extension while the tall columns of the *atrium* emphasize height. (35) The altitude is often emphasized by the use of columns which draw the eye to the ceiling. In addition, if there was a

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32   Knights connects the *impluvium-compluvium* axis to the surveyor's instrument called the *groma* which is used to measure the *cardo* and the *decumanus*. An instrument that, "simultaneously penetrating the earth and gesturing to the sky, a great vertical axis rooting the space, around which human beings may amble" (Knights 134)

compluvium/impluvium present, which as stated earlier is not an essential feature of the room, it would draw the eye between that axis, emphasizing the height of the room.[33]

One mention of the *alta atria* is in Martial. In two references to *atria* in *Epigrammata* he seems to be equating the altitude of the *atrium* with wealth and grandeur. Epigram 12.2 urges Martial's book to seek rich pleasures such as the entrance to the Suburra where, he says: *atria sunt illic consulis alta mei: laurigeros habitat facundus Stella penatis (*there are the *atria* of my consul: eloquent Stella lives in the laurel-covered dwelling). Martial is connecting the Suburra and Stella's wealth with a lofty *atrium*. The Suburra is commonly characterized as one of the dingy, crowded, and smelly sectors of the city (Platner 1929; 500). However, it was also an area that contained the homes of several distinguished aristocrats including Julius Caesar and the consul Stella mentioned here. The wealth of Stella's house is further emphasized by the mention of those with whom the book will circulate: the people, the senators, and the knights *(populo patribusque equitique)*.

Epigram 1.70 seems to follow the same exhortation. He instructs his book that: immediately on the left is the dwelling with its famous facade, and the *atria* of the lofty

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33   Interestingly, the aspect of light in this room is not mentioned by the Roman authors, although it is one of the aspects of the *atrium* most apparent to modern visitors. The *atrium* and the *peristyle* would have been the two principal light sources for the Roman house. The *peristyle* with its typical open court style offers a flood of light to visitors within the room and the surrounding rooms around it. If there was a central *compluvium* of the atrium it would offer a more directed central beam into the room. Knights connects this beam of light with the passage of the sun across the heavens. (Knights 134) While an attractive hypothesis, the absence of any mention at all in the literature suggests either that the aspect of light in this room was either so common to be unmentionable, it was a feature unnoticed by the inhabitants, or the presence of *conpluvia* with their light-bearing feature is not a widespread feature in the Empire and one not syntactically connected in the Roman mindset with this space.   The results of Wallace-Hadrill's study of Pompeian houses, and the results that the *conpluvia* is not an essential feature of this room makes me think that the later hypothesis might be the correct one.

home which ought to be approached. Seek this home: one should not fear contempt or an arrogant threshold (*Protinus a laeva clari tibi fronte Penates atriaque excelsae sunt adeunda domus. Hanc pete: ne metuas fastus limenque superbum).*[34] Although not directly modifying *atria*, using the literary device of the transferred epithet we should associate the loftiness with the *atria* and not the house itself. The lofty *atria* are connected with a 'haughty threshold' all denoting the home of an aristocrat. The reason why the book should seek the home of a wealthy person is explained: the doors lie open from the whole post, none do some more, nor is there one who Phoebus loves dearer and his learned sisters (muses) (*Nulla magis toto ianua poste patet, Nec propior quam Phoebus amet doctaeque sorores).* [1.70] This line implies that this home is particularly welcoming to the arts and thus will be hospitable to Martial's work. Both of these references in Martial's epigrams seem to point to a 'lofty' *atrium* as associated with wealth and to some extent artistic appreciation of the arts as connected to wealth.

Statius' *Thebais* 1.436 describes the fight between Polynices and Tydeus in the palace of Adrastus. The passage describes Adrastus' wandering through his palace looking for the fighting youths as: *isque ubi progrediens numerosa luce per alta atria* (and when he advancing through the multiple lofty atria with a light). This passage emphasizes the grandeur of the palace with the *alta atria*.

Another reference to the *alta atria* is in Aeneid 12.474. This passage describes the wanderings of the warrior Juturna among Turnus' men as follows: *nigra velut*

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34 Howell remarks that this was likely the area to the left of the Clivus Palatinus which has, unfortunately, not been explored well archaeologically He notes that the Palatine was a fashionable place to live especially since the emperor lived there. (Howell 1980; 270)

magnas domini cum divitis aedes pervolat et pennis alta atria lustrat hirundo, pabula parva legens nidisque loquacibus escas (just as when a black swallow flies through the houses of a rich master and circles the lofty halls with its wings, picking out small pieces of food and dishes for its talkative nests). This passage uses height in order to emphasize emptiness. In addition, this passage enlightens the reader on a common-sense but little understood aspect of many *atria*: environmental effects. The effect of animal life coming into the *atria* is something that is not discussed by many modern scholars or ancient authors. The *compluvium* would have made an excellent entry point for various birds to enter the *domus* as would the *ostium*, which was, according to some ancient authors, kept open during the day. However the presence of screens used to keep out such birds in modern Pompeii may have been a feature in ancient Pompeii; no screen has been preserved but their presence is possible. One literary reference to such a feature is Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 10.595 when he describes the flush on a girl's body after exercise as: *haud aliter, quam cum super atria velum candida purpureum simulatas inficit umbras* (not unlike when a purple awning above bright *atria* dyes it in simulated shadows). I see no other way to understand '*super atria*' as describing anything other than an awning over the *atrium*. Whether birds were thought to have been a nuisance as it might be thought in many modern domestic environments is unknown. However, it is useful to keep in mind the truly open nature of this room to the outside environment.

In conclusion, *alta* and *vacua atria* can be semantically grouped as one. *Vacua atria* are employed only in situations of despair or hopelessness or retirement from

public activity. Likewise, the *alta atria* are used in epic in order to emphasize the emptiness of the area. However, the references in Martial do point to the use of *alta* in order to describe the wealth of the homeowner. This trope will appear with other adjectives in the following analysis of *atria* and *luxuria*.

Another trend occurring in references to *alta* and *vacua atria* is that many of these references are from poetry, specifically heroic poetry, referring to royalty. I suspect the reason for this is because these authors include *alta atria* in order to emphasize the grandness of palaces. The stories that these epics refer to also include some element of loss, emptiness, and wandering which is the reason for the references to *vacua atria*. Perhaps the reason that *atrium* is used at all in these works is the ease with which it can fit into poetic meter- much easier, perhaps, than *peristylum* or *cubiculum,* though this must remain a hypothesis. Perhaps this is also why *atria* in the plural is used more frequently as well.

III. A Place of Luxury

The most common characterization of the *atrium* in Latin literature is as a place of *luxuria*. This is both applauded and derided by various authors depending on their viewpoint. The *luxuria* of the *atrium*, therefore, might be symbolically grouped with the *imagines* and, indeed, the authors who deride the *imagines* follow suit in their appraisal of the *atrium*.

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References to *luxuria* in the *atrium* are numerous.35 It is significant that the greater part of the instances occur in satire and in Ovid. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* describes, many times, the stories of divinities or demigods. The presence, then, of sumptuous *atria* is not surprising. One example of luxury is in Martial's Epigram 12.50: *et tibi centenis stat porticus alta columnis . . . et pereuntis aquae fluctus ubique sonat, atria longa patent. Sed nec cenantibus usquam nec somno locus est. Quam bene non habitas!* (a tall porticus with one hundred columns stands before you, and everywhere the flow of wasted water makes noise, boundless *atria* lie open. But neither is there a place for dining anywhere nor for sleep. How well do you not live!) Martial, in this epigram, comments on the house of one whose ornamentation denies functionality.

One aspect of *luxuria* that is commented on by several authors is the presence of objects of art in the *atrium*, including statues. Several authors comment on statues, most of them in a positive connotation.[36] Two other elements of the *atrium* that are attested in the literary evidence are marble and columns.[37] These elements are often connected to luxury. Wallace-Hadrill notes the long connection between columns and Greek public architecture and supposes that the affiliation continued for the Romans.

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35   Horace *Odes* 3.1; Juvenal *Saturae* 7.91, 8.20, 14.65; Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 5.41, Martial *Epigrammata* 4.40, 5.20, 12.50; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 2.114, 2.296, 4.763, 10.595, 13.968, 14.215, 14.260, *Fasti* 6.363, Lucan Pharsalia 10.119, 10.460, Varro Menippaea fragment

36   Pliny the Elder *Naturae Historia* 34.17, 34.19, 35.6; Suetonius *Vita Galbae* 2.1, 4.3

37   Columns- Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 2.4, (with statues) ;Asconius *Pro Scauro* 23.26 (and marble) Marbles- Ovid Metamorphoses14.260; Pliny the Elder *Naturae Historia 17.1, 36.6, 36.8;* Statius *Thebais* 1.146

(Wallace-Hadrill 1994; 20)

Marble, especially marble columns, is connected with luxury. This is especially evident in Pliny the Elder's discourse about the home of Crassus. He says that columns of Hymettian marble decorated his *atrium* even before it was used for public buildings. Pliny's bias against marble is clear in *Naturae Historia* 36.1*: secum quisque cogitet, et quae pretia horum audiat, quas vehi trahique moles videat, et quam sine iis multorum sit beatior vita*. (let each person consider, when he would hear what the prices are for these things, when he sees these masses carried and dragged away, and how much more happy life is for many without them).[38]   Pliny continues this idea when he discusses Marcus Scaurus, who procured several columns of Lucullan marble for a temporary theater, several of which ended up in his own *atrium*. (36.2) The connection between opulence, excess, and marble is clear in Pliny. Eugene Dwyer asserts that the principles of architecture, in the Roman mind, could not be separated from moral principles. (Dwyer 2010; 32)   Columns, especially of foreign marbles, were often criticized. (32)

Other artwork is mentioned as adorning the *atrium* in Apuelius' in *Metamorphoses* 6.29: *Nam memoriam praesentis fortunae meae divinaeque providentiae perpetua testatione signabo et depictam in tabula fugae praesentis imaginem meae domus atrio dedicabo* (For I will mark out the memory of my present fortune and divine providence in a everlasting testament, and I will dedicate in the *atrium* of my house an image painted on a panel of our present flight of my house). The

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38   See also Asconius *Pro Scauro 27*

use of *tabula* here in describing the *imago* makes clear it is referring not to an *imago* of an ancestor but rather to a painting.

However, not all authors comment on luxury in a negative way. Pliny in *Naturae Historia* 34.19 discusses artists and their famous works, praising the statues without, seemingly, any judgment about their inappropriateness: *fecit et destringentem se et nudum telo incessentem duosque pueros item nudos, talis ludentes, qui vocantur astragalizontes et sunt in titi imperatoris atrio - hoc opere nullum absolutius plerique iudicant* ((Polycletus of Sicyon) made both the statue scraping itself and the naked man attacking the two boys playing dice, likewise naked, with a spear, who were called the 'astragalizontes' and are in the *atrium* of the emperor Titus – many people think that there is nothing more perfect than this one). Perhaps the distinction that needs to be made is that statues that appear in a domestic context, especially in place of ancestral images, are inappropriate[39] but not statues that appear in an imperial or religious context.

In *Naturae Historia* 34.17 Pliny writes of portrait statues: *statuae ornamentum esse coepere propagarique memoria hominum et honores legendi aevo basibus inscribi, ne in sepulcris tantum legerentur. mox forum et in domibus privatis factum atque in atriis: honos clientium instituit sic colere patronos* (statues began to be used as ornaments, the memories of men to be propagated and honors inscribed on the

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39   In *Naturae Historia* 35.6, a passage which will be discussed later, he says that in the old days men did not put up *signa* (images) in *aera* (bronze) or *marmora* (marble) in the *atria* but had *imagines* instead.

bases to be read by the next generation, and not only on their tombs. Soon a forum was made in private homes and *atria*; the regard of the clients set up in this way to honor their patrons).   In this passage, Pliny connects the erection of public monuments in towns to their appropriation within the home by clients. Again, Pliny does not seem to disapprove of this. Perhaps these three passages, when examined together, suggest that statues' place in the *atrium* does not solicit Pliny's disapproval unless they replace the ancient custom of the *imagines*.

Notably, Cicero in *De Officiis* 1.138 sees the merits of a grand home for the head of the household who needs the space in order to entertain guests: *in domo clari hominis, in quam et hospites multi recipiendi et admittenda hominum cuiusque modi multitude, adhibenda cura est laxitatis* (In the home of a famous man, in which many guests must be received and a multitude of people must be admitted in every fashion, care for its spaciousness must be added). This is perhaps not surprising that Cicero, a *novus homo,* would support such a measure. Vitruvius echoes Cicero's sentiment in *De Architectura 6.5: nobilibus vero, qui honores magistratusque gerundo praestare debent officia civibus, faciunda sunt vestibula regalia alta, atria et peristylia amplissima* (But for noble men, who by holding public offices and magistracies should provide services to citizens, regal lofty vestibules must be built, and very spacious peristyles and *atria*). For both authors, however, the reason for spacious rooms is not for display but so that there is enough space to hold guests and perform their duties.

More evidence of the *atrium*'s connection with luxury is the connection between

atria and the homes of the gods.[40] Apuleius in *Metamorphoses* 2.4, in describing the home of Cupid, includes columns and statues, the luxuries expected in a home built for a divinity. However, as with the references to statues discussed earlier, I suspect opulence in the home of a god is suitable but opulence in the home of a private individual is not. One example of a divine residence is Ovid's *Metamophoses* 1.172*: Hac iter est superis ad magni tecta Tonantis regalemque domum. Dextra laevaque deorum atria nobilium* (this is the journey of the gods to the houses of the Thunder god and his regal home. On the right and left are the *atria* of the noble gods).[41] Statius describes the meeting of the gods in an *atrium: at Iovis imperiis rapidi super atria caeli lectus concilio diuum conuenerat* (and at the commands of Jove, the chosen succession of the gods convened in a council high above in the *atria* of the spinning sky) [*Thebais* 1.197]. In conclusion, these examples of divine residences described at *atria* shows the connection between this room and one associated with divinity and *luxuria*.

Further evidence of the luxury appropriated to this room is its association with kings and a regal context, an aspect that has been discussed earlier.[42] One example is from Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 26.27 which describes the fire of 210BCE: *conprehensa postea privata aedificia, neque enim tum basilicae erant, conprehensae lautumiae*

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40   Ovid *Fasti* 3.703,4.330; *Metamorphoses* 1.172, 13.968; Statius *Thebais* 1.197, 10.87, 2.49

41   William Anderson points out that the use of 'nobilium' humanizes the deities as aristocrats libing on the Palatine.

42   Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 26.7, 27.11; Martial *Epigrammata* 2.3, Scriptores Historiae Augustae 24.4, Punica 13.579. However this was not a feature used by all emperors. Shelly Hales notes the the "aversion to luxury" displayed by Suetonius' characterization of Augustus, "It was remarkable neither in size nor elegance; it had short colonnades with columns of Alban stone and the rooms were bereft of any marble or remarkable floors" (Hales 2003; 23).

forumque piscatorium et atrium regium (afterward the private houses were engulfed by fire – there were not basilicas then – the stone quarries caught fire and the forum of the fishermen and the *Atrium Regium*). The *atrium regium* here is most likely the Regia, the legendary home of the Roman kings. (Richardson 1992; 42)   In sum, specific references to the *atrium* as associated with kings or divinities shows the mental associations with rooms of grandeur or of important individuals, like gods.

Another facet of the use of the *atrium* that connects the space to luxury and grandness is the word's use to denote an open space in a public building, specifically the *atrium Publicum, atrium Vestae*[43] and *atrium Libertatis*.[44] The word refers to a place of auction in several authors as well.[45] It is associated with a public court by a couple of authors.[46] I suspect *atrium* is used in all of these instances to mean an open reception area – a place suitable for holding court and gathering large numbers of people. The *atrium Vestae* was the place where the Vestals lived,[47] possibly implying that the *atrium*, in its function as a multipurpose area, was a fitting name for this area. The *atrium Libertatis* housed the offices of the censors as well as their official documents. It also was the place of the first library established by Asinius Pollio and also housed busts of distinguished writers. (Richardson 1992; 41) Perhaps *atrium* was

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43   Aulus Gellius *Nocttae Atticae* 1.12; Ovid *Fasti* 6.263; Pliny the Younger *Epistulae* 7.19
44   Asconius *Pro Milone* 59; Cicero *Epistulae ad Atticum* 4.16; Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 25.7, 34.44, 43.16, 45.15; Ovid *Fasti* 4.624, *Tristia* 3.1.72, Suetonius *Vita Augustae* 29.5; Tacitus *Historiae* 1.31 Also *atrium* of the Palatine in Maurus Servius Honoratus *Commentary* 11.235
45   Cicero *De Lege Agraria* 1.7; Juvenal *Saturae* 7.7; Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 39.44
46   Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 24.10; Ovid *Amores* 1.13; Seneca the Younger Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium 90.6; Suetonius *Vita Caligula 41.2*
47 Richardson 1992; 41

used to describe this building because its empty area, suitable for housing a library, was similar to the empty *atria* of the domestic sphere.

IV. A Place of Activity

Although the *atrium*, as demonstrated above, had a very public function in the house, especially for the *paterfamilias*, it also served as a multifunction room for the other members in the house. Literary references and archaeological evidence point to a use of this room beyond the *salutatio*. Some authors attest that this room was used by different populations at different times, especially when the *paterfamilias* was attending to functions away from the house.

The place of women, children, and slaves in the archeological and literary record is notoriously hard to establish. Several studies have attempted to unravel the location of these 'invisible' participants in the Roman household.[48] It is important to remember that, as a rule, the literary sources were written by upper-class, elite males. However, there are a couple of instances that hint at the role of women and children in the room. The *Praefatio* to Nepos' *Vitae* is one such instance: *quem enim Romanorum pudet uxorem ducere in convivium? aut cuius non mater familias primum locum tenet aedium atque in celebritate versatur? quod multo fit aliter in Graecia. nam neque in convivium adhibetur nisi propinquorum, neque sedet nisi in interiore parte aedium, quae*

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[48] For slaves in the Roman household there are a number of studies. Notable is "Severus and Domus: the slave in the Roman house" by Michele George. For women see Rawson and Weaver especially. Lisa Nevett's study on women in the Greek household is a good comparison.

gynaeconitis appellatur (for what Roman is ashamed to bring his wife to a banquet? Or whose *materfamilias* does not hold the chief place of the house and move about in the crowd? But it is very different in Greece, for neither is she invited to the banquet unless it consists of family members, nor does she stay anywhere except unless in the interior part of the house, called the women's quarters). It is not my intention to enter into the debate about the presence or absence of the *gynaeconitis;* suffice it to say that in this passage Roman women are characterized as having the ability to take part in banquets and, to Nepos, are not confined like the Greek women. Another reference to children in the *atrium* occurs in the *Aeneid* 7. 379, which was discussed earlier. These references are frustratingly few, but they hint at the presence of members of the family whose unrecorded presence we must consider.

The archaeological evidence tells a different story. Allison has found a number of loomweights in her sample of the room assemblages of Pompeian households. Two literary sources attesting to of the *atrium* for weaving are Livy and the Asconius passage discussed earlier.[49] In the story of Lucretia and Collatinus the friends of Collatinus found Lucretia weaving in the house*: Lucretiam haudquaquam ut regias nurus, quas in convivio luxuque cum aequalibus viderant tempus terentes, sed nocte sera deditam lanae inter lucubrantes ancillas in medio aedium sedentem inveniunt* (they found Lucretia, not at all like the regal daughters-in-law, whom they saw wasting time in banqueting and sumptuousness with their companions, but she (Lucretia), devoted to her wool[50], was

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49 Also Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 7.31
50 For more on the importance of wool working for the Roman matron see Saller 2007 107

sitting among her maids in the middle of the house, burning the midnight oil) [1.57] While the passage does not explicitly state it was in the *atrium*, it can be implied that some central room was being used by Lucretia while her husband was away.[51]   In addition, this passage shows the use of different rooms according to the time of day.

Another passage indicating weaving activities was in Asconius' *Pro Milone 43* which was mentioned above and described: *telas quae ex vetere more in atrio texebantur diruerunt* (they destroyed the fabric which were being woven in the atrium according to the old custom). Both of these stories are of early Romans told by later authors, which may indicate that weaving was a custom 'of old' and not something practiced in the days of the authors. However, the archaeological findings of loomweights and weaving equipment in Pompeii does point to a use of the room in that manner at least until the 1st century CE.

A possible temporary function of the *atrium* is also echoed in *Aeneid* 7.379 and in the passage from Lucretius, cited earlier, which described the boys playing in the otherwise unoccupied *atrium*. The archaeological imperceptibility of organic items such as toys and the probability of their storage elsewhere limit our knowledge of the frequency of this type of activity.

Michele George cites double *atria*, a phenomenon attested in the archaeological

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51   George cites this passage but says that Lucretia weaves the *atrium*, an assertion that goes too far. (George 306) It is equally likely from the literary evidence she was weaving in a room off the atrium.

material from Pompeii, as evidence for multiple uses of the *atrium*. She cites the House of the Faun (VI.12.2) as a classic example with its monumental Tuscan *atrium* near the Alexander mosaic and the less decorated tetrastyle secondary *atrium*. She suggests that these less decorated, smaller *atria* were places the rest of the family could gather and work while the *paterfamilias* received guests in the monumental *atrium*. (George 307) Or, perhaps, as H. Lauter has pointed out, the double *atria* served different gradients of guests. (George 307) However, an argument that bases room function purely on decoration quality needs to be taken lightly.

Cooking and Dining

A couple of literary references hint of the possibility of cooking and dining activities occurring in the *atrium*. Servius makes several references in his commentary on the *Aeneid* that suggest that dining occurred in the *atrium*.[52] Servius comments that the Romans *duobus tantum cibis utebantur et in atriis sedebant edentes* (they only ate two meals and they sat eating in the *atria*) [1.637]. It is important to note that Servius is a fourth-century-CE commentator on practices he is imagining to have occurred in the distant past. The reason he glosses this line of the *Aeneid* in this way is to emphasize that this process was not occurring in his own time. Primitive Romans ate in the *atria*, but not the Romans of Servius' day. Later, Servius quotes Cato from a work no longer extant. In 1.726 he says: *nam ut ait Cato et in atrio et duobus ferculis epulabantur*

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[52] Servius *Commentary* 1.637, 1.726, 7.153; Ovid *Metamorphoses 14.215* (*ignibus atria fumant);* Silius Italicus *Punica* 11.312 (*Is variis oneratum epulis atque atria tardo linquentem gressu comitatus pone parentem).* Evidence for couches in the *atrium* include Servius *Commentary* 10.76; Statius *Achilleis 1.755*

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antiqui: unde ait Iuvenalis "quis fercula septem secreto cenavit avus?"(for as Cato says, 'the ancients dined in the *atrium* and with two courses: from whence Juvenal says, "what grandfather dined on seven courses in secret?").   However, these references seem to suggest that dining in the *atrium* was primarily a practice of the Romans of old and emphasized as such.

V. A Place of Conquest

The *atrium* could also be a place of danger. Valerius Maximus in *Facta et Dicta* 3.1 says of Cato: *cum salutandi grati praetextatus ad Sullam venisset et capita prosciptorum in atrium allata vidisset, atrocitate rei commotus paedagogum suum, nomine Sarpedonem, interrogavit quapropter nemo inveniretur qui tam crudelem tyrannum occideret* (when as a boy he came to the house of Sulla, to greet him, and saw the heads of the proscribed brought into the *atrium*, shaken by the atrocity of this thing he asked his teacher, whose name was Sarpedon, why no one was found who would kill so cruel a tyrant). Cato then proposes that this would be an opportune time to assassinate Sulla. Likewise, the assassination attempt on Cicero occurred during the *salutatio: constituere ea nocte paulo post cum armatis hominibus sicuti salutatum introire ad Ciceronem ac de inproviso domi suae inparatum confodere . . . ita illi ianua prohibiti tantum facinus frustra susceperant* (on that night, they decided to enter Cicero's house after a little while with armed men as if for the purpose of *salutatio* and to kill him unprepared suddenly in his own home . . . thus those (assassins) were prohibited at the

door, they had taken up the deed in vain) [Sal.*Cat.28*]. Likewise, the attack on the house of Marcus Lepidus was made on his *atrium*. Flower suggests that the increase of violence in this period should be associated with the increased political nature of the *salutatio:* "it (the *atrium*) had become the scene of political rallies and gatherings, with their attendant violence, rather than a room in which much of the family's domestic life still regularly took place." (Flower 1997; 220) In this point I think she goes too far. I believe that the politicized activities of the *atrium* were still taking place at very carefully designated intervals and times of day. For example, in the passage about Cicero quoted above the conspirators waited *post paulo*, most likely until morning when the ritual of *salutatio* would commence. The heads of the proscribed in the *atrium* of Sulla were seen in a negative light, a clear contrast to the *imagines*. (Flower 1997; 220) The home-invasion of Lepidus' house was seen as a severe affront against Roman custom. All of these examples prove that while the *atrium* was assuming a very political role within the house this role was restricted to certain times or events; any deviation beyond those rules was an *exemplum* of bad behavior. The possibility of several domestic activities still occurring in the house remains a real one.

Although some passages of literature present the *atrium* as a site of fighting and death, Eugene Dwyer has emphasized the element of 'security' found in the plan of the *atrium* house. The house had few outside doors; many Pompeian houses contain a front door only. There were not many windows and some houses may have had a hired *ianitor*. (Dwyer 2010; 28) The configuration of the house, when open in the day, allowed access to the *paterfamilias*, but at night it offered a great deal of security.

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Dwyer also concludes that the *armaria* was a way to secure objects in the *atrium* from outsiders. (Dwyer 2010; 28) Dwyer also notes that the greatest quantity of locks found in Pompeii were in the *atrium*, from which he concludes that it was the most secure area of the Pompeian house. (Dwyer 2010; 28)

V. Graffiti Distribution

One further avenue for exploring the function of the *atrium* is through research on the graffiti that describe or are located within the space. The Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (CIL) contains no reference to an *atrium* in any inscription or graffito that is not connected with a public building or temple, like the A*trium Libertatis*.

Although the *atrium* was not written *about* in graffiti it was certainly written *in* frequently. In my study on the location of graffiti from region IX in Pompeii I identified the *atrium* (50 instances) as the second most common location for graffiti, second to the *peristyle* (80 instances). Although the authorship of graffiti can never definitively be ascertained, this research proves that the *atrium* was a well-traveled room. The high occurrence of graffiti in the two rooms most often used in reception might indicate that the majority of it was written by guests or clients waiting for the head of the household. However, this claim can never be substantiated. In addition, the patterns of graffiti in other areas of the Roman world may be largely different. We have substantially less evidence from areas outside the bay of Naples. In conclusion, research on the graffiti can suggest that the *atrium* was a highly trafficked room and

one that individuals wrote in frequently.

Chapter Three: Research Methodologies

This portion of the paper will discuss the current research in space theory and its application to my results. The range of academic disciplines contributing to this topic creates a wide diversity of approaches and conclusions. These approaches will be contrasted against what my analysis of the literary sources has discovered.

Wallace-Hadrill's theories on private and public within the house focuses on architecture and decoration as a demarcator of space in the house. He notes that age and gender are virtually undetectable in the Roman house but instead the main demarcation is between social rank. (Wallace-Hadrill 9) He models these demarcations in his 'axes of differentiation'- public/private and grand/humble. (Wallace-Hadrill 11) The private-public axis runs through the main entrance of the home. The most public areas were closer to the entrance, while private areas were located farther away. The grand-humble axis runs horizontally through the home. Various visitors to the house would be allowed into the rooms suitable to their standing. The *clientes* would find themselves in a grand-public space like the *atrium* while a private-humble space, like the *cubiculum*, would be reserved for family and slaves. These axes, while known to everyone, are applicable mostly to the upper-class.[53]

Wallace- Hadrill marks several architectural features that helped to delineate public and private spaces. The features were borrowed from public architecture and

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[53]   Knights connects the axes within the Roman house, specifically the *fauces-atrium-tablinum* axis with the *cardo/decumanu*s and the orthogonality of the Roman town. (Peason 198) He also connects the perpendicular axis of the house to the street as evidence.

would be used to mark out 'grand spaces'. They include: columns that divide the space into a basilica like form, curved ceilings or walls,[54] and marbles, among others. These features mark the 'grand' space in that they associate the room with grand rooms of the public sphere which often include many of these architectural elements. Great importance is placed on depth, color, and perspective in this theory. Decoration, in this way, offered a twofold assistance to visitors of the house. It enabled the visitor to compare the house he was in to houses he had seen before and thus assess the social standing of the owner. In addition, specific decoration cues, in their allusion to public architecture, enabled the visitor to navigate where he was permitted in the home. (Wallace-Hadrill 1994; 23-27)

In general, Wallace-Hadrill's theory fits well with the results of my study. He identifies the *atrium* as a public-grand space which certainly fits the model of the *atrium* as a place of ritual, lofty grandeur, and ancestors' *imagines*. Wallace-Hadrill identifies specific architectural features that mark out grand spaces, like columns and marbles, which was echoed by several of the ancient authors when discussing luxury.

However, one aspect of my results does not fit into Wallace-Hadrill's model: the multipurpose nature of this room. Wallace-Hadrill's model leaves little room for re-purposing of rooms throughout the day or season. The grand architecture of the *atrium* was possibly not as well suited to the weaving activities I have documented above, for example.

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54   Curved ceilings or walls help to the frame the space. Wallace-Hadrill notes the apse serves to frame centerpieces, like the *labrum* in public baths. This is an example of private allusion of public architecutre. (Wallace-Hadrill 23)

Mark Grahame sees architecture, rather than decoration, as a more powerful and controlling feature that would enable or restrict entry of visitors. He proposes that decoration is only able to demarcate areas of the house that have already been separated by architecture. The public or private nature of a room is not delineated by its architecture or decoration but by how many rooms it is connected to or how close it is to an entrance. Instead of a public-private separation through decoration, Grahame suggests through the use of access analysis[55] that public rooms are those that enable free movement of guests and inhabitants. These rooms encourage socialization and encounters between people in them. Architectural restriction inhibits these encounters. Thus, for Grahame, those rooms that encourage social gatherings by means of their 'openness' and ability to be entered by the greatest number of rooms are those rooms that are most likely to be 'public'[56] spaces.[57]

Taylor criticizes Grahame's approach and its inability to characterize larger relationships of interaction within the home. The method "decrypts the general structure

55   Access analysis is an approach developed by Hillier and Hanson to understand and show how a building's design inhibits or promotes social interaction. In this methodology the plan of the house is mapped and each room of the house is coordinated according to how many other rooms it has access to. Using this approach on the House of the Faun in Pompeii Grahame identified several 'nodes' which he sees as the optimal space for 'occasions' or spaces for formalized assemblages of people. Areas of the house that do not connect to as many spaces are areas for 'gatherings' which are casual encounters.

56   Grahame identifies the idea of 'privacy', at least in the Western world, as a 19th century construct that evolved from the 'separation of spheres'. This included using the house as a mechanism to remove oneself from observation and public society. However, for Grahame, this 19th century construct should not be applied to investigations of the Roman world.

57   Rabun Taylor, in his review of this book, has pointed out several obvious flaws with using this model to come to terms with privacy in the Roman house. Namely, this model has no way to account for several known features of the Roman house like doors. The use of doors and folding screens is known from archaeological evidence, specifically from the House of the Wooden Partition in Pompeii. Beyond artistic or architectural constraints these physical barriers would have significantly limited visitor interaction within the home.

of the language of Pompeian domestic space, but not its 'words'" (Taylor 440).   His

approach only seeks to understand the syntagmatic relationships, how one room relates to

other rooms it connects to, and as a result loses all sight of the meaning of each

individual room.   Grahame's approach, furthermore, does not allow for the benefit of

archaeological findings in general discourse.[58]   This paper, by a different approach, seeks

to understand the paradigmatic relationships, one in which the viewer compares the room

to the the 'mental' room or a template room in his mind. The ancient literature I have

analyzed, usually, describes a non-specific *atrium*, one from the author's general mental

template of the room.   By analyzing these characteristics it is possible, at least

theoretically, to understand the general mental characterization of a specific room.

Grahame's model does not really apply to the work of this research project,

because, as stated earlier, I am more interested in establishing the paradigmatic

relationships as demonstrated by Latin literature, not the syntagmatic relationships.

However, Grahame's conclusions about the *atrium*, at least in Pompeii, as a site for

organized encounters seems to be confirmed by the literary evidence of the *salutatio*. In

addition, the *atrium*'s typical presence near the doorway increases the chance it was used

a reception space, which seems to be confirmed by the literary evidence including the

evidence from the graffiti.   However, like Wallace-Hadrill's methodology this only

accounts for one use of the *atrium*. None of the uses discussed earlier, most of them

informal occasions, have a place in Grahame's model, which cannot account for

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58   Taylor points out that in an imaginary Roman house the archaeological discovery of a latrine in
one room and broken tools in another significantly alters our understanding by whom and how often a
room was used. (Taylor 2000; 441)

archaeological finds like loomweights that might attest to a different use of this room.

Penelope Allison criticizes the use of the nomenclature from ancient literary sources in order to make assumptions about general room characterizations. (Allison 2004; 11) She also sees the combination of literary and archaeological material as a largely futile attempt because assigning room labels assumes a "direct and unproblematic relationship between Pompeian houses and the lived worlds of these ancient authors" (Allison 2004; 11). She asserts that using Vitruvian- derived room terms does not allow for a change of function in the room use. (11) Further, she claims that the only useful way to employ the literary record is by combining it with a full assessment of the decorative, architectural and archaeological remains. (Allison 2004; 163)

In her study of Pompeian room assemblages, Allison eschews the traditional Vitruvius-derived room names and instead assigns names based on the room's relationship to either the 'front hall' or 'garden complex'. She notes that some rooms' function, like those around the 'front hall', changed quickly and could be adapted, while other rooms, like the 'front hall', probably were not (63). Therefore, the *atrium* as the 'front hall', is not as problematic as the identification of the *cubiculum*, a 'small room off the front hall' in Allison's definition, since the function of the room off the front hall could change dramatically.

Allison defines the 'front hall' as a space usually entered from the main entryway and usually connected with adjoining rooms. She notes the general presence of the *conpulvium* and *impluvium*. In the front hall the most common fixture was the

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impluvium; the second most was the *lararium*, though still not in many homes in her sample.   Other common features include statuary, tables, basins, and cistern covers. The most frequent furniture identified in her sample was the wooden cupboard or chest. Previous excavators who had a mental model of the *atrium* as a reception room only concluded that these cupboards must have been moved from their original location. (Allison 1999; 61) Allison also notes that most cupboards contained domestic items while a few contained luxury goods. These cupboards were perhaps more numerous than can be known since they were made of organic material which was not uniformly preserved.   Further, they were probably not a priority for early excavators, whose inattention has led to non-representational preservation patterns. (61)   Joanne Berry, in a similar study of the household assemblage from the Casa di M. Epidius Primus, notes that there were many tools found in the atrium as well as the remains of a cart. (Berry 1997; 193)

Allison states that he absence of material in 60% of the houses in her sample proves a utilitarian nature of this room. (Allison 2004; 70) This, however, is one of the problems of her method. Not every activity that would have taken place in the Roman house would leave a representative room assemblage. There is no way to be confident that activities perfectly correlate to the room assemblages left in Pompeii.

Allison believes that the *atrium* served a largely utilitarian function. She notes that only 30% of the houses had painted decoration. (70) The remaining houses were either not plastered or painted very simply. Several of these undecorated rooms also contained cupboards, implying they were in use at the time of the eruption and not in the

process of being redecorated. (70) In addition, she notes the presence of weaving equipment including loom weights (69). These loom weights point to the industrial nature of the Roman home and the multifunctional use of the *atrium* itself.

Allison's approach is quite useful in showing the multipurpose nature of the room. Her evidence on loom weights complements some of the references from the literary record about weaving, which are usually overshadowed by the more common *salutatio* and *imagines* references. In addition, her information on the cupboards found in the *atrium* helps us to imagine the furnishings missing from the literary record. Her method fails, though, in its ability to detect any activities that would not necessarily have left room assemblage artifacts, like the *salutatio*.

In another paper, Andrew Riggsby has demonstrated the importance of time in conceptions of space-use in Roman houses using the letters of Pliny, – a dimension, notably excluded from Grahame's access analysis methodology. In his analysis, he points out that in some occasions Pliny describes the same room using two different size descriptions (small dining area or a big *cubiculum*) showing that there are different expectations for the same size room. (Riggsby 1997; 171) This proves the existence of size-typology in Pliny's letters. If Pliny is willing to regard the room in the villa as a 'big' *cubiculum* then his mental typology of *cubiculum* size is set from his collective experiences. Cognitive models are those that "condition and guide reaction to behavior in space" (Hiller and Hanson 1984; 7) I believe that these cognitive models can be detected in the way Roman authors characterize spaces in Latin literature. By identifying

these models and the cognitive processes which underly them we are able to understand the rooms of Roman house in their original intention.

David Montello, a cognitive psychologist, has also contributed to space-syntax theories as it relates to environmental psychology. In his article, "The Contribution of Space Syntax to a Comprehensive Theory of Environmental Psychology", Montello discusses several environmental factors that influence human behavior such as sensory information, attention, and affect. These influences, while difficult to account for in models of ancient behavior, point out some of the information that is lacking in most approaches that examine space construction of ancient societies.[59]

The point of this by no means exhaustive review of some of the current scholarship on spatial-cognitive theory and its application is to reveal the benefits and flaws in their approaches. To attempt to construct a perfect methodology to work with this material is futile. The archaeological, architectural, and literary material is diverse and often does not correlate in significant ways. However, by combining some of these approaches it is my hope that I came up with a significant understanding of the Roman conception of one room of the Roman house.

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59   Montello does point to research, however, that shows that differentiated environments are actually easier to navigate and suggests this is why rooms often have different decorative schemes. This would be a nice complement to the theories of Clarke and Wallace-Hadrill. Homeowners differentiate decorative schemes not only to code guests and visitors on appropriate places within the home but in order to help themselves navigate it as well.

Chapter Four: Conclusions

One of the most striking trends that has emerged in this project is the true multifunctional use of the *atrium*. Many modern scholars describe the *atrium* as the 'room of the *salutatio*' or the 'room with the *imagines*' without any further nuances. As has been proven with the research of Penelope Allison, the room served, as least at some points of the day, a function far beyond those political actions. However, the literary sources also contain hints of a multifunctional reality for this room. The possibility of weaving, children, women, cooking, dining and leisure in this room must remain a real one, given the archaeological evidence and the few literary references that hint at such an actuality.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the use of the word *atrium* also appears in very specific socioeconomic contexts. It appears frequently as a place for *salutatio*, where the *imagines* were kept, where rituals (especially important for the upper class) were held, as a home of the gods and of kings – all of these references point to an *atrium* that is specifically suited to upper-class activities and mentalities. In none of these references do we hear of the *atrium* of a poor person, or a common *atrium*, or a small and dingy *atrium*. I believe from this evidence it is important to separate the *atrium* title for this space, as one used in the literature, from a general room meaning 'front hall'. The *atrium* is not just any room but the room where specific rituals and activities of the upper-class occurred. If this is true, than this reveals one flaw of Allison's approach. In her approach, there is no way to identify which 'front hall's are *atria* and which are not.

Her approach has no way to identify these upper-class rituals (leave no room assemblage) so therefore she is unable to identify the spaces they would take place in. The cognitive associations with the '*atrium*' are only in upper-class, aristocratic homes. Guessing which homes are 'aristocratic and upper-class' from the archaeological findings is difficult and fraught with problems. Would the House of the Vetii, supposedly belonging to freedmen, be considered upper-class and aristocratic, and in that case have an *atrium*? Or, since as freedmen they may not have participated in the *salutatio* and would have had no *imagines*, would that cognitive association not be applicable?

Notably, one of the only pieces of literature written about a freedman, albeit satirically, the *Satyricon*, contains no mention of an *atrium*. These are questions that are likely impossible to answer fully but it is important to note the differentiation between the cognitive conception of the *atrium* as an upper-class phenomenon and the 'front hall' of the archaeological record, which is often middle-class in scale in decoration.

Lastly, the suitably of the *atrium* as a place of public entry and display was debated significantly after the 1st century CE. Several passages from Seneca and Juvenal show the continued debate about the use of *luxuria* and *imagines* in order to show wealth and heritage. There is increasing conversation about the appropriateness of gaining social advantage through these means. This might be seen as a strong reaction against the politicized nature of the *atrium* and the activities that were conducted within it. Instead, these authors see *mores* or a good life as more important than a noble heritage and long line of imagines in the entry hall. However, even these strong reactions against the politicized nature of the *atrium* still comment on an aristocratic mental model of the

room. Thus, is is possible to assert that the use of the *atrium* as an upper-class construct continued to the time of these writers in order for them to react against it.

The 'front hall' seems to have fallen away as the primary reception area in the first or second century CE – which may explain our lack of later literary sources that directly refer to an *atrium*.   Besides falling away as the main reception area it seems to have decreased in its importance as the room for many upper-class establishments. So while the *atrium* does appear only in contexts of upper-class mentalities, it did so only while it remained the primary reception area of the house.

The *atrium* is one of the most easily recognizable and celebrated rooms of ancient Roman houses. It is a place of grandeur and a glimpse at the Roman way of life. The study of the literary record has revealed several of the cognitive associations made with this room: grandeur, activity, and ritual. These associations, however, all occurred within upper-class contexts. The *atrium* should only be associated with areas within an upper-class home where specific upper-class rituals, like the *salutatio*, could occur. The archaeological material echoes what is hinted at by the literary record in some places, and hints at a multifunctional use of this room in others. The combination of these two approaches has led to a fruitful start at a reconstruction of the cognitive models and archaeological remains of this important room within the Roman house.

APPENDIX ONE: Authors and Sources

Apuleius: *Metamorphoses* 2.4, 4.6, 6.19, 6.29

Asconius: *Pro Milone* 32,43; *Pro Scauro* 23.26

Aulus Gellius: *Noctes Atticae* 1.12, 16.5

Cicero: *Commentariolum Petitionis* 3, *De Lege Agraria* 1.7; *Epistulae ad Atticum* 4.16;
   Epistulae ad Quintum 3.1, *Pro Milone* 59; *Pro Quinto* 12.7, 25.2; Horace:
   Epistulae 1.5, Odes 3.1

Justinianus: *Digesta* 7.1.13

Juvenal: *Saturae* 7.7, 7.91, 8.20, 14.65

Laus Pisonis: Verse 9

Livy: *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.57, 5.41, 24.10, 26.27, 25.7, 27.11 ,34.44, 39.44, 43.16, 45.15

Lucan: 10.46, 10.119

Lucretius: *De Rerum natura* 4. 400

Martial: *Epigrammata* 1.7, 2.3, 2.90, 3.38, 4.40, 5.20, 9.10, 12.2, 12.5, 12.6

Maurus Servius Honoratus: Commentary on the Aeneid 1.503, 1.726, 2.453, 4.82, 7.153,
   10.76, 11.235, 12.476

Nepos: *Praefatio* to *Vitae*

Ovid: *Metamorphoses* 1.172, 2, 114, 2.296, 4.763, 5.153, 5.3, 8.562, 10.595, 12.53,
   13.967, 14.9, 14.215, 14.260; *Fasti* 1.591, 3.703, 4.330, 4.624, 6.263, 6.363;
   Amores 1.8, 1.13, *Epistulae* 16.1, *Tristia* 3.1, *Epistulae ex Ponto* 1.7, 4.4

Plautus: *Aululari* 515

Pliny the Elder: *Naturae Historia* 14.1, 17.6, 34.17, 35.6, 36.6., 36.8

Pliny the Younger: *Epistulae* 7.19, 17.4, 5.6

Porphyry: 3.1

Quintilian: *Institutio Oratoria* 11.2

Scriptores Historiae 24

Seneca the Younger: *Diologus* 6.10, 12.6, I0.14, 11.14, *De Beneficiis* 3.28, 6.34, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* 19.11, 22.9, 44.5, 55.6, 90.6, 76,12

Sextus Pompeius Festus: *De Verborum Significatione* 241.31, 333.59, 352.22, 356.67

Silius Italicus: *Punica* 8.150, 10.599, 11.312, 13.579

Statius: *Thebais* 1.146, 1.197, 1.436, 2.49, 2.215, 6.40, 10.87, 10.567; *Achilleis* 1.755, *Silvae* 1.2

Suetonius: *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus*; *Vita Augustae* 29.5, 45.4; *Vita Caligulae* 41.2, *Vita Galbae* 2.1, 4.3; *Vita Vespasinae* 5.5

Tacitus: *Historiae* 1.31

Valerius Flaccus: *Argonautica* 7.31

Valerius Maximus: *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia* 3.1, 5.8, 8.15

Valerius Paterculus: *Historia Romana* 2.15

Varro: *De Lingua Latina* 5.161, 6.15, 8.29. 8.61, 10.44; *Menippaea*

Vergil: *Aeneid* 1.726, 2.483, 2.528, 4.666, 7.373, 12.474

Vitruvius: *De Architectura* 6.3, 6.5, 6.7, 7.5; *Instituto Oratoria* 11.2

Appendix Two

Tomb of the Haterii Relief

Rabun Taylor Collection, Digital Archive Services University of Texas at Austin

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