GRASPING THE PANGOLIN: SENSUOUS AMBIGUITY IN ROMAN DINING

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An essential means of bringing the periphery to the center in any human community is eating. Through eating, the outside becomes inside, as pieces of the (sometimes very distant) exterior world are taken into the interior world of the body. At the same time, a boundary is drawn around those who share the same food, separating them from those who do not. The patterns of inclusion and exclusion established through food operate on many different spatial levels at once: between one family and the next, a village and its neighbor, one nation and another. A homemade apple pie, for a suburban American household, may express both national identity and an intimate sense of family togetherness. Since the recipe for the pie includes many imported ingredients, it also connects this household with the globe—from wheat fields in Nebraska to apple orchards in New Zealand, from sugar plantations in Haiti to cinnamon groves in Sri Lanka. This quintessentially American dessert thus manages to exemplify the nostalgic ideal of a simpler, small-town diet while participating in an immense international market. At each level in the food market, from the local to the global, crippling inequalities in access and consumption are found, inequalities that encode political relations powerfully on the body. Within houses, family members often control one another's behavior through food; in city streets, the homeless sift garbage invisibly behind postmodern restaurants; at the global level, some nations struggle with fast food and obesity while many others remain intractably malnourished. The world of food passing through the barrier of human teeth has a meaning at once symbolic and visceral, and some critics argue that it would be more honest to call the global food

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system a "hunger machine," as they attempt to understand why the food system of today functions—or malfunctions—as it does.[1]

The role of food in structuring social relations clearly depends not just on who eats what, but where. A suburban dining room, a high-end restaurant, fast food, or a stoop on a city street—each setting suggests a different "menu," different expectations of dress and deportment, diners of different classes. Few people expect their own dining room to look like Wendy's or L'Auberge, and they expect to be served different food in each setting, to dress differently for each, and to follow different rules for conversation, use of silverware, body posture, chewing, and physical expressions like belching and flatulence. Consequently, it would make little sense to interpret a microbrewery's cycling posters, the Ansel Adams prints in a family dining room, or the bizarre assemblage of tennis racquets, checkerboards, and shotguns on the wall of an Applebee's apart from the presentation of the food and the expectations governing dress and behavior in each setting.[2] Similarly, an analysis of the food apart from its architectural and decorative context would silence the play of signifiers that surround and shape its consumption. This suggests that the geography of eating—the location and décor of the dining environment—typically and almost by necessity participates in the essential issues of food consumption. In the lengthening shadow of Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* (1966), these issues continue to revolve around the question of the open versus the closed body, particularly as a reflection of the relative stability and closure of the social body.

Douglas stresses that many cultures strive to make eating clean by establishing rules about what may be eaten and what may not, so that clearly defined food may reproduce a well-bounded body. Conversely, animals or plants that cross cognitive boundaries (fish without scales, birds that swim) or foods from outside cultures are often rejected as polluting, mixing up boundaries and destroying the image of the body as a pure and intact container (Douglas 1966.7–58). The intact physical body functions, in turn, as a metaphor for the intact social body. As Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney notes in *Rice As Self*: "for this process of dialectic differentiation and representations of self and other, people select not just any food but important foods and

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1 For contemporary approaches to food consumption in cultural geography and sociology, see Beardsworth and Keil 1997, Bell and Valentine 1997, Falk 1994.

2 See Bell and Valentine 1997.124–28 for the importance of the "total consumption package."

cuisine as metaphors" (1993.4). It would be difficult to decide on a particular food for this role in Roman society—dormouse as Self? It would also be difficult to identify foods that were absolutely forbidden, since many Romans do not seem to have had much concern with boundary-crossing foods that were intrinsically polluting. However, it does seem that the entire dining experience functioned as an exemplary form of cultural behavior without necessarily depending on any one specific food or behavior.[3] *Triclinium* as Self.

The premise that décor has an important role to play in the "consumption package" of the *triclinium* is consequently the basis for this essay, which examines the cultural geography of Roman dining. In doing so, it proposes a synthesis of the stylistic analysis of Roman wall painting found in art history, the social history of the Roman house as evidenced in architecture, decoration, and literary texts, and approaches to dining found in anthropology and body history.[4] By combining these approaches, this essay refocuses the concerns typical of each. It is thus not primarily an analysis of the formal characteristics of the Fourth Style in painting, nor a survey of what the Romans ate. Though it makes use of literary evidence, it is also not primarily an analysis of the Roman moral discourse about food and corruption. Rather, it attempts to link the treatment of the wall in Fourth Style painting together with the treatment of food and the deportment expected in middle- to upper-class Roman *triclinia*, focusing on the thematics of surface and membrane: those of the wall and those of the body. The analysis is certainly not exhaustive. As the basis for further research, it explores the relationship between food and entertainment in *triclinia* and their wall painting schemes. Consequently, it is limited to two important, and familiar, texts (Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales*, Petronius's *Satyricon*)

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3 As Dunbabin notes: "When one visited a wealthy Roman in his villa, the main social events centred around dining. Guests might indeed spend part of their day riding or hunting, at the baths, in reading and discussion; but the crowning point was dinner, which began in mid afternoon and might last well into the night. . . . These concerns were not peculiar to country life; in town, too, dining was the central event of Roman social life" (1996.66). On the cultural centrality of dining, cf. Booth 1991.105–06.

4 Recent, accessible treatments of the Roman house, its decoration, and social history: Clarke 1991, Dwyer 1991, Fredrick 1995, Ling 1991, Nevett 1997, Newby 2002, Tybout 2001, and Wallace-Hadrill 1994 and 1996. On the architecture, decoration, and evolution of the *triclinium*, see especially Bek 1980 and 1983, Dunbabin 1991 and 1996, and Ling 1995. On Roman dining practices and behavior in the *triclinium* (generally apart from setting and decoration), see Booth 1991, Corbeill 1997, D'Arms 1990, 1991, and 1995, and Jones 1991. For the use of dining as a pervasive literary metaphor, see Gowers 1993.

and a small selection of representative Fourth Style schemes in *triclinia*. The Fourth Style has been chosen because it is by far the most common in our archaeological record, and because, in its eclecticism, it underscores a fascination with the play of surface and depth common in wall painting since early in the Second Style.[5] The central thesis is that the treatment of the surface of the body and the surface of the wall complement one another in suggesting a half-open container rather than a perfectly closed one. In suggesting this thesis, the article adopts Mary Douglas's notion of "pessimistic" cultures, cultures that embrace dirt as a necessary condition for living. The stress on the transgressive, half-open body in Roman dining reflects the middle position of the *triclinium* within the spatial sequence of the house, lying between front and back, public and private, visual exposure and visual concealment. Dining also lies in the middle of a temporal sequence that slowly unfolds the pleasures of *otium*: from bathing to dining to sex, and, finally, to sleep in the *cubiculum*.

As Douglas succinctly puts it (1966.164): "the body is not a slightly porous jug." That is, while many cultures construct an ideal, pure, and intact body as they create their system of rules about food and sex, the actual practice of living invariably—and often quite seriously and directly—contradicts the rules (Douglas 1966.164):

> Sometimes the claim to superior purity is based on deceit. The adult men of the Chagga tribe used to pretend that at initiation their anus was blocked for life. Initiated men were supposed never to need to defecate, unlike women and children who remained subject to the exigency of their bodies. Imagine the complications into which this pretence led Chagga man.

Douglas argues that cultures have a range of more or less optimistic or pessimistic reactions to the dissonance between their rules and lived experience. Consequently, her approach in *Purity and Danger* is not simply to abstract static rules for behavior based on oppositional categories (e.g., cooked/raw, right/left, dry/wet, penetrator/penetrated) but also to observe as the cultures obey. Some cultures optimistically assert that their rules are

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5 Clarke 1991.65–71, Tybout 2001.43–45, and Wallace-Hadrill 1994.29–37.

seldom violated, that the system is not impacted by natural disasters, accidental deaths, willful misbehavior, or even clandestine defecation. This is a situation that often involves them in denial or deception, as in the case of the Chagga. Other cultures more pessimistically acknowledge "dirt," those many violations, large and small, of the boundaries that keep things clean. There are dirt-rejecting cultures and dirt-affirming cultures. Some dirt-affirming cultures go so far as to build into their systems ritual practices that specifically violate the categories so neatly drawn and upheld elsewhere (Douglas 1966.165–80).

In the wake of structuralism and Bakhtin, interpretations of these practices generally take a conservative spin: rule-breaking rituals function in most cultures as a temporary holiday—the carnival—that only serves to affirm what the rules are.[6] This is not the position taken by Douglas. First, she notes that evaluating the balance between rule-making and rule-breaking in any given culture can be difficult. Second, she explores the possibility that rule-breaking, the affirmation of dirt, may lead in some cultures to a profound questioning of the worth of a pure body, using as an example the sacrifice and eating of the pangolin by the African tribe of the Lele. This gentle anteater violates all of the categories that otherwise define the edible for the Lele: a scaly, tree-climbing, lizard-like mammal that gives birth to single offspring (figure 1). Its consumption therefore exposes the participants in the cult to an intense and comprehensive violation of the purity of their own bodies and the cognitive stability of their world (Douglas 1966.169–73). While the Lele do take steps to manage and confine the resulting

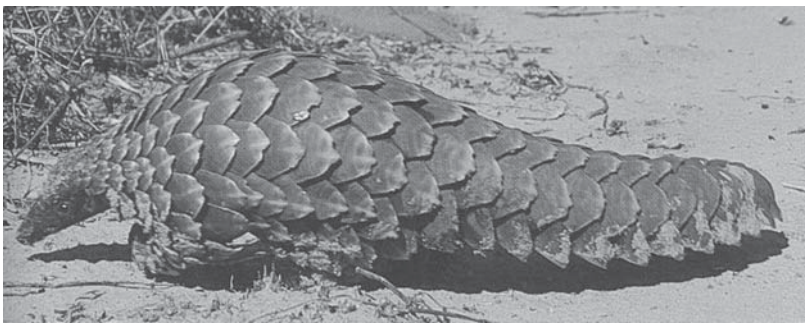

Figure 1. Pangolin, or Scaly Anteater. Photo © Penny R. Meakin.

6 Bakhtin 1984; for the use of temporary rule-breaking as a conservative cultural practice, see Detienne 1977 and 1979, Richlin 1992, Skinner 1993, Zeitlin 1982.

pollution, Douglas suggests that the pangolin cult is one of many rituals in the world that "invite their initiates to turn round and confront the categories on which their whole surrounding culture has been built up and to recognise them for the fictive, man-made, arbitrary creations that they are" (1966.171). Thus she maintains that rule-breaking rituals can fulfill an important epistemological role by allowing a culture to come to grips seriously with change, not as a kind of temporary dirt neatly defined and bracketed off in a static ritual space and time but as something characteristic of one's everyday cultural experience and tangible in the personal, non-vicarious form of one's own "polluted" body. The dirt-affirming sacrifice of the pangolin provides an apposite model for the *triclinium*, whose half-open body was useful for Romans to think with. After all, the jug of Roman society was, in the late republic and early empire, quite porous indeed. Returning to Ohnuki-Tierney, the *triclinium* is a metaphor for the self, but a peculiar kind of self that is both open and closed, where center and periphery are provocatively folded together without finally collapsing into one another. In this capacity, the *triclinium* reflects a culture with a comparatively high degree of social mobility.[7]

WHAT IS IN THERE?

Literary evidence from the early Roman empire suggests both a fascination with and a fear of the ability of dining to open up the body. Several of Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales* come to grips with this seductive threat found in the physical pleasures of food and drink, as well as the less tangible delights of music, theater, and dance. It is also found in the quasi-relaxation of social barriers that seems expected in the dining room. The result is an obsessive concern with finding the proper limits. For instance, in Question 7.5, Plutarch reports the strange effect that a virtuoso flute-player had on a dining party near Delphi. The host, Callistratus, brought this extraordinary player and his dancers before the unsuspecting diners. The performance was intense, and the guests eventually lost control (*Mor.* 704D):

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7 On the important role of freedmen in Roman society, see Joshel 1992, Koortbojian 1996, and Treggiari 1969. I raise questions about the absence of freedmen from the penetration model of Foucault in Fredrick 2002.241–43. On the relatively high degree of openness of the Roman senatorial elite to entrance from below during the early empire, see Hopkins 1983.120–200 and D'Arms 1990.319.

> οὐδὲ γὰρ κατακειμένοις ἔτι βοᾶν ἐξήρκει καὶ κροτεῖν, ἀλλὰ τελευτῶντες ἀνεπήδων οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ συνεκινοῦντο κινήσεις ἀνελευθέρους, πρεπούσας δὲ τοῖς κρούμασιν ἐκείνοις καὶ τοῖς μέλεσιν.
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> It was no longer enough for them to shout and clap as they reclined, but, in the end, most of them leapt up and began to dance, making movements unfit for a free man but appropriate for that beat and that kind of melody.[8]

After the diners settled back down, a discussion ensued of the dangers of acoustic and visual stimulation compared with the more physical pleasures of eating and sex. Plutarch's brother Lamprias eventually compares the citizen to a city under siege by the pleasures—those of the flute and the theater especially—which "melting with the charms of melody and rhythm, more piercing and subtle than those of any relish-maker or distiller of perfume, by these they lead us along and ruin us."[9] Plutarch therefore wonders whether the responsible diner should don earmuffs or depart whenever a lyre is tuned or a flute raised (*Mor.* 706D):

> "οὐ γὰρ οὖν," εἶπεν ὁ Λαμπρίας, "ἀλλ' ὁσάκις ἂν εἰς τὰς Σειρῆνας ἐμπέσωμεν, ἐπικαλεῖσθαι δεῖ τὰς Μούσας καὶ καταφεύγειν εἰς τὸν ῾Ελικῶνα τὸν τῶν παλαιῶν. ἐρῶντι μὲν γὰρ πολυτελοῦς οὐκ ἔστι τὴν Πηνελόπην προσαγαγεῖν οὐδὲ συνοικίσαι τὴν Πάνθειαν· ἡδόμενον δὲ μίμοις καὶ μέλεσι καὶ ᾠδαῖς κακοτέχνοις καὶ κακοζήλοις ἔξεστι μετάγειν ἐπὶ τὸν Εὐριπίδην καὶ τὸν Πίνδαρον καὶ τὸν Μένανδρον, ῾ποτίμῳ λόγῳ ἁλμυρὰν ἀκοήν,' ὥς φησιν ὁ Πλάτων, ῾ἀποκλυζόμενον.'"
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> "Not at all," said Lamprias, "but whenever we might fall in among the Sirens, it is necessary to summon the Muses and escape to the Helicon of old. For a man who loves a

8 All translations are my own.

9 *Mor.* 705E–F: αἱ δὲ παντὸς ὀψοποιοῦ καὶ μυρεψοῦ δριμύτερα καὶ ποικιλώτερα φάρμακα τὰ τῶν μελῶν καὶ τῶν ῥυθμῶν καταχεόμεναι τούτοις ἄγουσιν ἡμᾶς καὶ διαφθείρουσιν.

> high-class prostitute, it's not possible to bring Penelope on stage or have him play house with Pantheia. But it is possible to lead a man delighted with badly executed and tasteless mimes, melodies, and songs back to Euripides, Pindar, and Menander, 'washing away the brine-soaked sounds,' as Plato says, 'with fresh river water.'"

There are Sirens in the *triclinium*, then, and Question 7.5 identifies them directly and indirectly: sauces, perfumes, mimes, tunes, bad lyrics, prostitutes, dancing. As evident in the progression from earmuffs to the wax in the ears of Odysseus's crew to Plato's fresh water, there is a concern with plugging up the body or cleansing it of these guilty pleasures. Here the temptations are primarily acoustic and the opening is the ear, but the orifice into which the pleasure seeps is beside the point if it makes the man its slave. Thus Lamprias notes the observation of Arcesilaus that "it makes no difference if one is a *cinaedus* in front or in back."[10]

What Plutarch points to here is not the simple and unrepentant transgression of the body's apertures by pleasure but the dramatization of the half-open: of the mouth, ear, or eye that partly accepts and partly resists. This concern for the half-penetrable threshold of the body is matched, in Question 1.2, by a concern for the elasticity of social boundaries.[11] Plutarch's father argues that the traditional seating hierarchy for dining should be observed, while one of his brothers, Timon, argues that it should be relaxed. Plutarch himself attempts, somewhat unsuccessfully, to take a middle course, allowing for indiscriminate positions when dining with "young men, citizens, and close friends" (νέους . . . καὶ πολίτας καὶ συνήθεις, *Mor*. 616F) but a clearer hierarchy when dining with "foreigners, magistrates, or old men" (ξένοις ἢ ἄρχουσιν ἢ πρεσβυτέροις, *Mor*. 617A). Usually, according to Plutarch, it is easy to make the appropriate distinctions in honor among one's guests, but "if the distinctions of worth are difficult, and the men themselves are easily angered" (ἂν δ' ἄκριτοι μὲν αἱ ἀξίαι δύσκολοι δ' οἱ

10 *Mor*. 705E: οὐδὲν . . . διαφέρειν τοῖς ὄπισθεν εἶναι κίναιδον ἢ τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν.

11 For a survey of Roman literary evidence for this tension, see D'Arms 1990; as he notes: "it needs to be recognized that the broader context of some of these texts, where egalitarian or similarly positivistic principles are set forth, introduces us to the harsher social realities implicit in *clientela*, among them snobbery, sycophancy, and humiliation: these lurk menacingly in the background at *convivia*, creating an atmosphere of considerable tension" (314–15).

ἄνδρες ὦσιν, *Mor*. 617D), his strategy is to put one of his older male relatives in the most honored position, as no other guest could object to this, and thus remove a source of contention. The problem appears solved through a delicate mixture of foresight and tact, and the sigh of relief is almost palpable.

"Nonsense!" cries Plutarch's other brother, Lamprias. He accuses Plutarch of assigning positions at dinner as if for a theater event or by amphictyonic decree, so that "we can't escape affectation even over wine" (ὅπως μηδ' ἐν οἴνῳ τὸν τῦφον ἀποφύγωμεν, *Mor*. 618A). Instead, argues Lamprias, seating decisions should be made not with respect to reputation, but pleasure (πρὸς τὸ ἡδὺ). Lamprias does not, however, speak in favor of simple disorder, which, among men, reveals its depravity in hubris and other unspeakable evils, especially when the men have been drinking. Instead, he intends, if they will let him, to rearrange the guests according to a different principle. The guests agree, and, after dismissing the slaves from this evidently risky social experiment, he proposes, contrary to expectation, to have like recline with unlike: the unlearned with the learned, the mild with the sharp-tempered, the young with the old, the shy with the boastful, "so that an outflow as if from a full cup to an empty should take place" (ἵν' ὥσπερ ἐκ πλήρους κύλικος εἰς κενὴν ἀπορροή τις γένηται, *Mor*. 618E). He does, however, declare that he will put the serious drinkers (ποτικούς) together and also the lovers (ἐρωτικούς), claiming that they will share each others' company more intently, being heated by the same fire—unless, of course, they are in love with the same youth or girl.

With that, Question 1.2 ends, and we are not fortunate enough to see Lamprias's experiment in action. However, what this Question makes clear is that dining positions were often, if not always, an experiment, a balancing act between respect for social rank and the camaraderie and free conversation also expected at dinner.[12] In this respect, the dining room is viewed as a place *somewhat* distinct on the social map, lying at a certain undefinable remove from the rules governing the arrangement of bodies in formal public contexts. In arguing for a more traditional, hierarchical positioning of guests, Plutarch's father introduces the example of Aemilius

12 As Caesernius remarks in 7.6, concerned with the appropriateness of *umbrae* at dinner parties (*Mor*. 707E): "Isn't there the most abundant free speech mixed up with jokes in the conversation and behavior over wine? How, in this situation, might someone make use of himself if he is not there legitimately and lacks a direct invitation, but is rather something like a bastard fraudulently penciled onto the guest list of the party?"

Paullus, whose drinking parties were as well organized as his infantry divisions (*Mor*. 615E–616A). Conversely, in arguing for the suspension of hierarchy, Timon declares that "dining is democratic" (δημοκρατικόν ἐστι τὸ δεῖπνον) and has no concern with reputation like that found in the marketplace and theater (*Mor*. 616D–F). Finally, Lamprias, while leaning more toward Timon's position, imagines the social body of the *triclinium* along the lines of the properly maintained physical body, whose opposite qualities must be brought into alignment.[13]

The conclusion of Question 1.2 before Lamprias's experiment takes effect is, perhaps, a tacit acknowledgement that the search for the "right" balance in dining positions can find no clear resolution, and neither can the search in several Questions for the "right" type of dining entertainment. The case is made for and against flute players and dancers, for and against poetic and dramatic recitations, for and against philosophical mimes.[14] In the conceptual map of the city in the Roman imperial period, at least for men of Plutarch's class, what sets the dining room apart is not a simple opposition between *otium* and *negotium*, between a rigid pursuit of business and unbending assertion of hierarchy in the forum and an unrestrained pursuit of pleasure with little regard for hierarchy in the dining room. Nor, on the other hand, is the dining room characterized by a simple restatement of hierarchy in a new register, with obvious positions for each diner from the *locus consularis* on down, as if, as Timon observes, the *triclinium* were the agora with wine. Rather, concerning the *triclinium*, good men don't exactly know.

Given the lack of closure surrounding dining positions and entertainment in Plutarch's *Quaestiones*, we might look at the architectural evidence for Roman dining with new eyes. There are good examples of dining rooms laid out carefully with respect to peristyle gardens or atria to reward the upper left corner, the position of the most important guest and the host.[15] This could be taken as confirmation that, in general in the late

13 Cf. also 5.5, on limiting the guests to a manageable number and making their selection fit the theme of the party.

14 1.1, concerning philosophy in comparison with other forms of convivial entertainment; 7.7, on the appropriateness of flute-girls; 7.8, which begins with the appropriateness of philosophical mimes and then moves on to consider other forms of dramatic entertainment and music.

15 See Clarke 1991.16–19 (using as examples the *triclinia* from the House of Menander and the House of the Centenary) with references to Bek 1980 and 1983.

republic and early imperial periods, dining positions remained strongly hierarchical: the clear articulation of social status through dining positions corresponded to an equally clear attempt, through architecture and decoration, to reward those in the best positions with the best view. However, there are also many *triclinia* (or *oeci* or *exedra* used for dining) in Pompeii that do not respect this principle, many in which the *locus consularis* has no perceptible visual advantage over the other positions. For instance, in room n of the House of the Vettii (figure 2; the Pentheus room), the *locus consularis* looks out only on a little corner of the garden and then the wall of

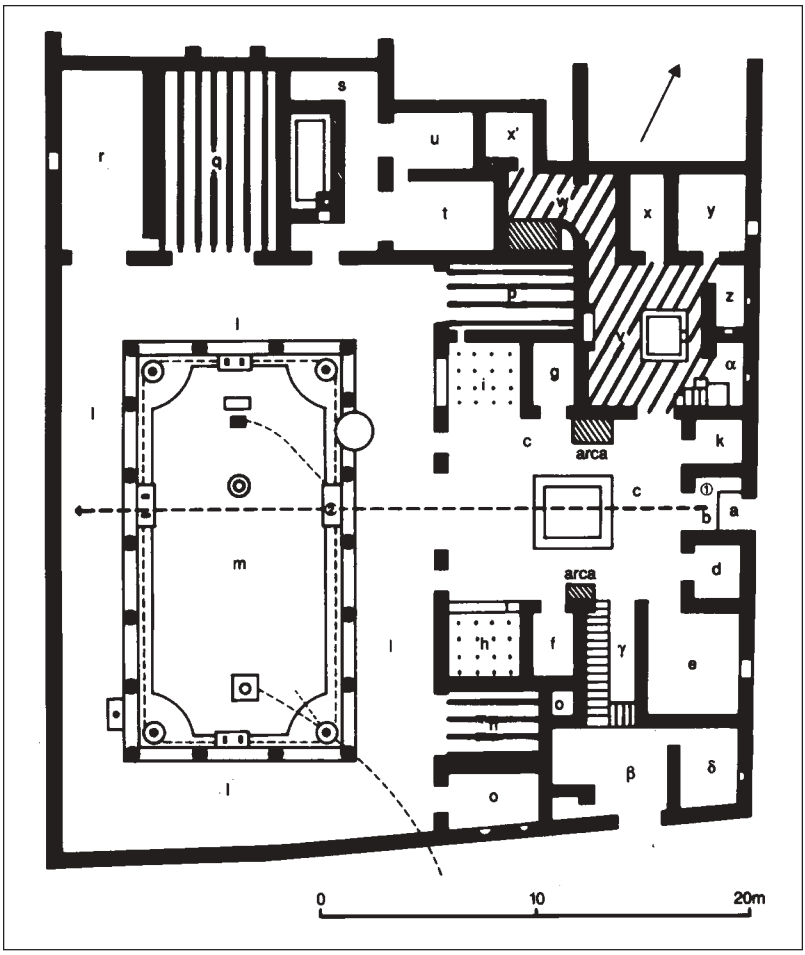

Figure 2. Plan of the House of the Vettii, Pompeii, VI 15, 1. Photo: Michael Larvey, Austin, Texas.

the peristyle.[16] Meanwhile, those on the highest couch (*summus*), on the right-hand side of the *triclinium*, if they were to look over their shoulders, would have a much better view of the garden.[17] Or we might consider the complex play of views out of the dining room in the Younger Pliny's villa at Laurentum (figure 3). The upper left corner does have an excellent view back over the villa to the woods and mountains beyond, but those on the highest couch also enjoy a vista over the sea through the large rear window,

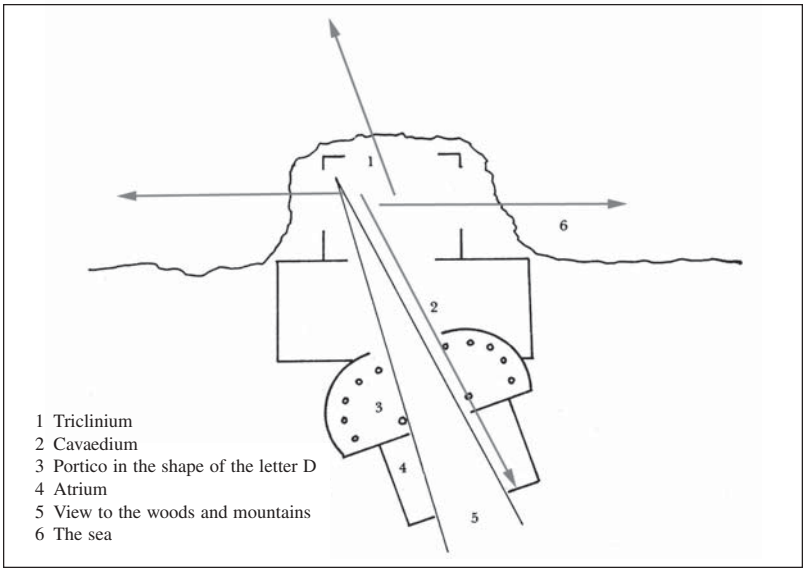

Figure 3. Views out of the triclinium in the Villa Laurentina, after the description of Pliny the Younger. Adapted from fig. 37 in Lise Bek, *Towards Paradise on Earth* © 1980 Odense University Press.

16 Bek 1980.185 and 192 notes that the columns in the garden of the House of the Vettii have been adjusted for the benefit of the view from the *locus consularis* in the large *oecus* (q).

17 Compare room t, an *exedra*, in the House of M. Lucretius Fronto, incomplete at the time of the eruption but most likely intended to become the primary room for dining in the house (see Clarke 1991.158–59). Here the upper right corner, rather than the *locus consularis* in the upper left, has a better view of the garden area. Other examples: the *triclinium* in I 13.2; the Corinthian *oecus* in the House of the Silver Wedding (V 2.i); the Corinthian *oecus* in the House of Meleager (VI 9.2); the large *exedra* in VII 6.28; the Corinthian *oecus* in the House of the Labyrinth (VI 11.9). For the Corinthian *oecus* in the House of the Labyrinth, Bek 1983.85 suggests that the wall paintings behind the columns may have been subtly adjusted with respect to the upper left corner, the *locus consularis*. Nonetheless, the view out into the garden from this position looks toward the peristyle wall, while the view from the upper right is not so constrained.

and everyone on the couches can look out the side windows for views of the seacoast.[18] Returning to literary evidence, at Nasidienus's disastrous dinner in Horace *Satires* 2.8, three relatively high-ranking literary figures (Fundanius, Viscus, and Varius) are seated together on the highest couch, while two "shadows" (*umbrae*) of Maecenas recline on the middle couch, and two lackeys of the host on the lowest. Maecenas occupies the *locus consularis*, but elsewhere the expected correspondence of rank with view is thrown into confusion. We have, then, a general tendency to favor the upper left corner but not an inflexible rule. Rather than being simply accidental and insignificant, the frequent violation of this principle in the architecture of *triclinia* may reflect the conflict over seating rules found in Plutarch and other literary evidence. At the very least, even if a given room for dining cannot, for practical reasons, do much to reward the *locus consularis*, the effect of this on the experience of hierarchy during dining should be considered.

Both Plutarch and the architectural evidence from Pompeii put forth the contradictory message that social hierarchy should be both expressed and relaxed in the dining room. This could be rephrased: in the dining room, the barriers of status separating one body from the next should be partly, but only partly, dropped. Petronius's *Satyricon* similarly explores the theme of half-open bodies and partly dropped social boundaries, albeit somewhat more pungently than Plutarch. The dinner with Trimalchio is more than a satire on the excesses of a wealthy but culturally clueless freedman. It is organized around staged events of concealment and revelation, of elaborate containers that suddenly open to reveal their surprising, sometimes grotesque, contents.

The majority of the *gustatio*, the opening course—olives, dormice, sausages, plums, pomegranate seeds—is brought in while Trimalchio is still absent (31.8). Consistent with both his own interest in reversing conventions and the general disagreement over dining positions found in Plutarch, Trimalchio has chosen not to recline in the customary spot: for him the "first place" (*locus primus*, the first position on the right-hand couch, *summus in summo*) has been reserved instead of the position *summus in imo*, next to the *locus consularis* in the upper left corner. The narrator observes that this is *novo more*, a phrase that is translated by Sarah Ruden as "a practice I had

18 See Bek 1980.175–77. While celebrating Pliny's ability to reward all of his guests with an outstanding view—a measure of his status as host—this dining room also reduces the ability of the view to articulate distinctions between the diners.

never seen before" and by J. P. Sullivan as "strangely enough." However, William Arrowsmith translates, "in the modern fashion," and if this interpretation of the phrase is correct, it suggests that there may have been a noticeable movement of hosts away from the upper left corner in the Neronian period. More importantly, whatever the translation of *novo more*, this passage confirms the testimony of Plutarch that guests in the early empire could expect to find the traditional hierarchy of positions both invoked and violated, depending on the host. Trimalchio himself eventually invites his slaves onto the couches (70.10–13), and Encolpius finds himself rubbing shoulders with the cook who, though he reeks of brine and sauces, takes the higher position.

After Trimalchio's grand entrance, a wooden hen is brought out, with wings outspread in a circle, brooding over a clutch of eggs. The eggs are distributed to the guests, while the orchestra blares (33.5–8):

> Convertit ad hanc scaenam Trimalchio vultum et "amici" ait "pavonis ova gallinae iussi supponi. Et mehercules timeo ne iam concepta sint; temptemus tamen si adhuc sorbilia sunt." Accipimus nos cochlearia non minus selibras pendentia ovaque ex farina pingui figurata pertundimus. Ego quidem paene proieci partem meam, nam videbatur mihi iam in pullum coisse. Deinde ut audivi veterem convivam "hic nescio quid boni debet esse," persecutus putamen manu pinguissimam ficedulam inveni piperato vitello circumdatam.
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> Trimalchio turned his face to this scene and said: "Friends, I've ordered them to put peacock eggs under a hen. And, by Hercules, I'm worried that they've already congealed; but let's test them anyway, to see if they can still be sucked." We received cocktail spoons weighing no less than half a pound each, and beat our way through the eggs, which were, in fact, fashioned out of rich dough. Indeed, I'd almost thrown mine away, because it seemed to me that the embryo had already formed. But then I overheard an old partygoer: "This ought to be something good," and attacking the shell with my hand, I discovered the fattest little figpecker, surrounded by a peppery yolk.

The host cheerfully suggests that inside his pastry peacock eggs there might be not just raw centers and whites but half-formed chicks. Disgusting to suck indeed! Yet once the shell is broken, Encolpius discovers inside a delicious surprise: the congealed embryo of his anxiety turns into a cooked figpecker, appropriately nestled in a peppered yolk. The pastry peacock eggs of the *gustatio* are a microcosm of Trimalchio's approach to food presentation throughout the dinner. After the *gustatio*, a dish is brought in whose lid portrays the twelve zodiacal signs, with tidbits of food that pun on their names. The guests are initially disappointed, but the lid is then removed to reveal a rich mixture of fowl, rabbit, sows' udders, and fish. Even more elaborate, the next dish appears to be a boar (wearing a freedman's cap) surrounded by newborn piglets made of dough. And yet the boar is still pregnant. The slash of the carver's knife releases a flock of living thrushes, promptly caught on limed twigs as they fly around the dining room. From this it is but a short step to the next course, an immense white pig, roasted, to the guests' surprise and consternation, in less time than an ordinary barnyard chicken. The ever-attentive Trimalchio spots a flaw—the pig, it seems, has not been gutted. The cook is stripped for a beating, and the guests plead for leniency (49.8–50.1):

> At non Trimalchio, qui relaxato in hilaritatem vultu "ergo" inquit "quia tam malae memoriae es, palam nobis illum exintera." Recepta cocus tunica cultrum arripuit porcique ventrem hinc atque illinc timida manu secuit. Nec mora ex plagis ponderis inclinatione crescentibus tomacula cum botulis effusa sunt. Plausum post hoc automatum familia dedit et "Gaio feliciter" conclamavit.
>
> But not Trimalchio, who relaxed his face into a smile and said: "OK. Because you've got such a bad memory, gut him right now in front of us." The cook took his tunic back, snatched his knife, and slashed the pig's stomach this way and that. Without delay, the wounds gaped open from the pressure inside and out poured sausages and blood puddings. The household greeted this trick with applause, and shouted: "Praise to Gaius!"

Consistent with the thematics of concealment and revelation are the cryptic tags for party favors distributed in chapter 56, as the identity of

each gift lies hidden behind a terrible (and, for us, untranslatable) pun that each guest must unravel as if tapping through textual eggshells. Trimalchio's play with mysterious interior spaces extends even further, to the architecture of his house. In chapter 60, the entire *triclinium* becomes an *automatum*, as the ceiling panels rumble and open up, and down drops a large hoop hung with golden crowns and alabaster jars of unguent for the guests. At the same time, a statue of Priapus suddenly appears on the table, surrounded by cakes, with fruits and grapes suspended from his enormous erection (*gremio satis amplo*). Under the slightest touch, this elaborate tableau ejaculates liquid saffron into the faces of the guests.

The presentation of food and gifts in the *Satyricon* revolves around the question, "what is in there?" Is there a chicken embryo inside this pastry? No, a plump figpecker. Are the diners expected to eat a leftover boar from yesterday's dinner? Inside its belly is a flock of birds. Are they soon to be swamped with the blood and intestines of an enormous half-cooked pig? Out tumbles a mixture of sausages and blood puddings ready to be enjoyed. Repeatedly the diners, together with the reader, wonder if the inside will match the outside, if they will be forced to eat dirt. The answer is "no"—sort of. The dirt, the matter out of place, miraculously becomes edible food, sometimes delicious, and far too plentiful. And yet, from the standpoint of moral writing and invective, it remains dirt because of its theatricality and excess.[19] This question reflects back on the diner: what are his insides, his corporeal desires, and will he be ruled by them? As the diner penetrates the layers around Trimalchio's tricks, he himself is probed, his insides teased open by visceral reactions of surprise and pleasure, or (more often) revulsion. Characteristically, then, the reaction of the diners to Trimalchio's theater of food is an emotional split, mirroring, in reverse, the split between outward appearance and interior "reality" that defines each trick: outwardly, the diners must feign delight, surprise, laughter, while suppressing disdain, disgust, surfeit.

HAVING YOUR *DURCHBLICK* AND EATING IT, TOO

At this point, we should turn to examine *triclinium* walls, as they, too, persistently explore the question, "what is in there," with respect to both

19 For moral invective aimed at convivial excess, see Booth 1991, Corbeill 1997, and Edwards 1993.173–206.

the wall surface itself and the mythological figures captured in it. By playing with the architectural perimeter around the dining experience, the decoration of Roman *triclinia* reflects the destabilization of the perimeter of the body of the diner through the positions for reclining, the pleasure provided by various forms of entertainment, and the presentation of the food. Ultimately, however, the *triclinium* is not the final resting point in the spatial hierarchy of the house. Beyond it lies the *cubiculum*, the place where the most intimate and unavoidable experiences of the body take place: sleep, sex, and death.[20] To penetrate the Roman house, then, is to move towards the body across the thresholds between *negotium* and *otium*, public and private, visual exposure and visual concealment, as one moves toward closer contact with the *dominus*.

For art history, the tension between the assertion of the wall as flat decorative surface and its dissolution into perspectival views has been critical for the typology and chronology of the four styles. The First Style creates, through painted plaster and stucco, the illusion of courses of marble blocks. It therefore relies on a flat surface, but one that constructs social importance for the owner by alluding to the use of marble in public buildings. The Second Style introduces painted columns that appear to be in front of the marble blocks. This gradually develops into complex architectural systems that open up the illusion of space between the columns into a view of landscape or architecture beyond—the *durchblick* or "view through." The Third Style then reasserts that the wall is a flat surface, articulated by panels and columns that have become too thin to convey the illusion of functional architecture. While treating most of the wall as a flat surface, the Third Style places in its center a new kind of perspectival slot or hole, a mythological or pastoral scene with its own recessional space. Finally, the Fourth Style makes eclectic use of the principles of the earlier three, combining the perspectival architectural systems of the Second Style with the central mythological scenes of the Third.[21] Over the last two decades, the close formal analysis of each style has become the basis for a social reading of the

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20 Riggsby 1997.37–42 identifies six functions for the *cubiculum*: rest, sex, adultery, the controlled display of art, murder and suicide, and reception; cf. Nevett 1997.290–91. In pointing out that many murders and suicides take place in *cubicula*, Riggsby observes of natural death: "dying in one's own *cubiculum* seems not to have had special resonance for the Romans" (1997.39). However, the larger point remains that particularly intimate bodily functions—among which is death, in whatever form—do cluster around the *cubiculum*.

21 This is obviously a simplified overview of the evolution of the four styles. Detailed overviews can be found in Clarke 1991.31–72, Ling 1991.12–100, and Tybout 2001.33–41.

Roman house that stresses how, especially in the Second through the Fourth Styles, the decorative scheme is adjusted to mark the place of a given room within a spatial hierarchy.[22] In general for the Second Style, the more complex the *durchblick*, the illusion of spatial recession through the wall, the higher the status of the room; only rooms of the highest status feature fully developed recessional views.[23] For the Third Style, the status of the room is conveyed by the degree of ornamentation and the presence of a central scene (and its genre) rather than the illusion of spatial depth. So a room with a great deal of miniature ornament and a central painting depicting a mythological scene would lie at the top of the spatial hierarchy.[24] Finally, the Fourth Style uses all three criteria (the illusion of spatial depth, ornamentation, central paintings) to articulate the house spatially, making it the most flexible and finely graded of all the styles. A high-status Fourth Style room would therefore have a high degree of ornamentation, recessional slots through the wall constructed through architectural perspective, and central paintings of mythological figures (rather than still lifes or genre scenes).[25]

Four general conclusions have emerged from reading the Roman house socially through its architecture and decoration. First, the house is divided spatially into three basic zones: the servile, the non-servile public, and the non-servile private. Although further refinement will be necessary, in the interest of simplicity, the "public" can be defined here as those parts of the house that do not require an invitation for entry and the "private" as those that do.[26] Thus this first conclusion can be restated using the common names given to the rooms: the *fauces*, atrium, and *tablinum* correspond to the non-servile public part of the house, while baths, *triclinia*, and many *cubicula* correspond to the non-servile private part. A second conclusion is that the most refined and complex decoration tends to mark static spaces (*tablina*,

22 Wallace-Hadrill 1994.38–61, Tybout 2001.42–53.

23 Tybout 2001.44, who notes for the more public rooms in the house: "however complex [the use of illusionary architecture] . . . the background is always a closed wall," and for the more private: "if we see Second Style paintings with prospects of any kind, we can be fairly confident we are in the part of the house intended for private reception."

24 Tybout 2001.44: "During the Third Style . . . the potential of wall-painting in underlining spatial differentiation is limited to subtle variations in color and ornamentation and, most important, to the inclusion or exclusion of a central figural painting." Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1994.29–30.

25 Tybout 2001.44–45, Wallace-Hadrill 1994.31–37.

26 Vitruvius 6.5.1 uses the requirement of an invitation to separate *cubicula*, *triclinia*, and baths from vestibules, *cavaedia*, and peristyles.

triclinia, *cubicula*) rather than circulation spaces (atria, peristyles).[27] The first two conclusions lead naturally to the third, that highly developed Second, Third, and Fourth Style schemes are typically (but certainly not exclusively) used to flag the non-servile, private, static rooms in the Roman house—primarily *triclinia* and *cubicula*. Finally, the subject matter for mythological central paintings in the Third and Fourth Styles is typically (but certainly not exclusively) limited to a small selection of myths. As Roger Ling notes (1995.248):

> the five most popular mythological scenes overall are all in our top ten for dining-rooms: Narcissus (38 + two?), Mars and Venus (35 + one?), Ariadne Abandoned (30), Perseus and Andromeda (26 + one?), Polyphemus and Galatea (twenty + one?). The inevitable inferences are: (1) that there were no consistent patterns of selection in Pompeian wall-decorations; (2) that there were no significant differences in subject-matter between dining-rooms and other sorts of rooms.

My 1995 essay "Beyond the Atrium to Ariadne," which also relies on the subject indexes in Schefold 1957, essentially agrees with Ling, but suggests several important adjustments to his inferences. First, I note that the most popular subjects in central paintings from Pompeii are strongly erotic.[28] This is especially true if all of the Daphnes, Callistos, Cassandras, Auges, and Amymones are grouped together under the single heading,

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27 Tybout 2001.45 asserts: "as in the case of the Third Style, it is evident that grand figural paintings are used to single out the main reception rooms throughout the house, not to set off its more private back section from the other part directly accessible from the street." However, Clarke concludes: "an enduring pattern in the houses of Roman Italy is that of functional hierarchy. From the early *domus* through the late *insula*, dynamic circulation spaces consistently receive simpler decoration than static rooms. Within the hierarchy, reception and dining rooms, meant to impress guests, received the best decoration" (1991.367). For the *domus* under consideration here, the *tablinum* is the only static, public room used for reception, as opposed to the *triclinia*, *oeci*, and *exedrae* found in the private area. Consequently, central mythological paintings do tend to set off the private part of the house from the public, for the simple reason that static reception rooms are more numerous around the peristyle.

28 My list matches Ling's quite closely, the major difference being the counting of the paintings of Ariadne abandoned with those of Ariadne and Dionysus, making her the second most popular subject.

"rape," producing over one hundred examples. Thus while it is true that there are not consistent patterns of selection governing the use of specific myths, the entire set of the most popular myths is quite well defined by a preference for erotic scenes, frequently including an internal viewer who helps guide the look of the external viewer toward the body or bodies on display.[29] Second, since central paintings tend to be located in static spaces (*tablina*, *triclinia*, or *cubicula*, primarily), and since *triclinia* and *cubicula* outnumber *tablina* by a wide margin, it might be more useful to say that there is no significant difference between the mythological subjects chosen for *triclinia* and those chosen for *cubicula*. This may reflect a conceptual rapport between the two spaces, which frequently appear as a set architecturally.

Central mythological paintings first replace (early in the Third Style) the space-ranking function of the *durchblicke* found in the Second and then appear together with *durchblicke* in the Fourth Style to create an even more flexible means for ranking space. It makes sense, then, that in the non-servile private rooms of the house (again, primarily *triclinia* and *cubicula*), the opening up of the wall in Fourth Style schemes is thematically related to the emphasis on erotic bodies in their central mythological scenes. We can posit, then, that the treatment of the surface of the wall as partly penetrable by the gaze is like the treatment of the surface of the body as partly penetrable: the *durchblick* is *both* a view through the wall *and* a view into the mythological figures in the central paintings.

A useful concept for thinking about Fourth Style walls in this way is Bettina Bergmann's "pregnant moment" (Bergmann 1996). Bergmann analyzes the three central paintings (of Helen, Phaedra, and Medea) in room E of the House of Jason, noting that each painting presents a moment at which the action stops as the heroine has an internal debate about what to do: abandon her husband, sleep with her son-in-law, or murder the children. The psychological and emotional space inside each woman becomes the object of the viewer's curiosity, and Bergmann argues that the Roman viewer was well prepared to fill that space with familiar lines from the treatment of these heroines in tragic, epic, and elegiac poetry. These paintings, then, invite the viewer into a feminine consciousness presented as the locus for uncontrolled, transgressive desire. As Bergmann notes, the setting of each painting on the wall acted to draw the viewer's eye across the actual surface of the wall into a deeper space beyond (1996.207):

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29 For this, and a more general consideration of the dynamics of the gaze in the light of reader response theory, see Sharrock 2002.

> Each picture was originally "enframed" illusionistically by an elaborate aedicula with a cassette ceiling shown in perspective, so that the architecture *within* the picture was recessed several planes back from the wall, thereby multiplying the planes between the viewer and the represented scene. This layering of frames and deepening of space, first experienced physically in the actual doorways leading to the room, ends visually in the depicted columns and doors behind the figures in the panels.

Bergmann's observation that, as the viewer's gaze is drawn into and beyond the surface of the wall, it is also drawn into and beyond the surface of the mythological figures, can be generalized for many Fourth Style schemes, particularly since these—unlike room E in the House of Jason—often feature a quite complex deployment of *durchblicke* around the central paintings. For instance, in the Ixion Room (p) in the House of the Vettii, we find the usual three paintings, centered on each of the three walls (figure 4). On the left-hand wall, narrative time has stopped in order to focus on Pasiphae's reaction to the mechanical cow. On the center wall, Ixion is

Figure 4. Triclinium p in the House of the Vettii. Photo: Alinari / Art Resource, NY.

tied to the wheel at left, but the focus of the painting is the contrast in emotional reactions between Hera and Nephele. Hera demurely pulls her robe up over her shoulder, while Nephele, the actual recipient of Ixion's love, looks at his punishment with dismay. On the right-hand wall, we see a frozen moment of erotic fascination, as Dionysus discovers Ariadne asleep (figure 5). The scopophilic interest of this scene is stressed by the removal of Ariadne's robe by a satyr in Dionysus's retinue and by the splitting up of her body between the gaze of Dionysus (front) and the viewer (back).[30] As with

Figure 5. Ariadne discovered by Dionysus, room p in the House of the Vettii. Photo: Michael Larvey, Austin, Texas.

30 See Fredrick 1995 for a use of film theory to address gender instability in the House of the Vettii and the House of the Ara Maxima, an approach also used in Koloski-Ostrow 1997.

Helen, Phaedra, and Medea in Bergmann's analysis, the viewer is drawn into the interior psychological space of Pasiphae, Hera, and Nephele; meanwhile, a different sort of "pregnant moment" is found in the representation of Ariadne. There is a similar temporal arrest, but the view through or around her clothing rather than into her inner psychology is the driving motivation of the painting.

In room E in the House of Jason, Bergmann notes that the gaze is drawn across the plane of the wall, the fictive plane marked by the back of the *aedicula*, into the space of the painting, and finally "into" the psychological space within the heroines. The three central scenes of the Ixion Room are similarly set within *aediculae* so as to draw the viewer's gaze across a series of planes (including the surface of the wall) and into the space of the painting. However, the process of drawing the eye in is multiplied across the entire room by the numerous perspectival slots opening around and above the central *aediculae* (figure 4). As Clarke notes, these *durchblicke* do not constitute a return to the comprehensive perspectival systems of the Second Style. Rather, such views "provide local, bracketed spatial release; they are not extensive enough to induce the viewer to believe she or he is standing in a portico looking out at the landscape or into a sanctuary. Assertively flat decoration interspersed among the aediculae—such as pictures in the central aediculae, stretched tapestries with flying figures, monochrome panels, and faux-marble socles—keep returning the viewer to the wall as a spatial limit" (Clarke 1991.69).

This perceptive assessment of the use of *durchblicke* in the Fourth Style can be developed further in two directions. First, in the light of Bergmann's analysis of the paintings of Helen, Phaedra, and Medea, the central panels should not be regarded as "assertively flat." They draw the viewer beyond the wall into their own quasi-perspectival space and, beyond that, into the space inside a given mythological figure or, as in the painting of Ariadne in the Ixion Room, to the scopophilic treatment of the half-revealed body. Thus the central paintings work together with the recessional slots to comprise two different, but related, kinds of *durchblicke* rather than acting as flat surfaces in opposition to the recessional slots. Second, while these recessional slots do not dissolve the wall into the comprehensive illusion of an open space bounded by a portico, their effect is not entirely local. The play between flat surfaces and recessional slots turns the entire wall into a kind of membrane through which the gaze of the viewer alternately penetrates and is turned aside. In this capacity, the Fourth Style wall, because of this unresolved play with permeability (unlike the open Second Style wall

and the closed Third Style wall), can function as a double for the frequently erotic figures found in its central paintings.

In this respect, it is interesting to consider a fourth mythological scene in the Ixion Room (figure 6). Above the door, Pan discovers a Hermaphroditus and pulls back its drapery, as the satyr does with Ariadne in the central painting on the right-hand wall. Much to Pan's surprise, however, the Hermaphroditus has awoken with an erection, and languidly wraps its arm up over its head, a gesture identified by John Clarke as the "come hither" pose. In response, Pan throws up his hand in dismay, a nice visual rhyme with Hermaphroditus's erection. Like one of Trimalchio's tricks, the erotic object is unwrapped to reveal a challenging surprise, and given the suggestion made in this chapter that architectural *durchblicke* and "views through" into central paintings reinforce each other thematically, Hermaphroditus's erection is no small thing. It lies as an exclamation point at the end of all the invitations to "look through" created in the Ixion Room—a point at which the expectations of a passive erotic object are suddenly reversed, and

Figure 6. Pan and Hermaphroditus, room p, House of the Vettii. Photo: Michael Larvey, Austin, Texas.

Pan finds himself to be the object of Hermaphroditus's desire (if not exactly its gaze, as Hermaphroditus looks off to the right, away from Pan).[31] Delicate as it is, Hermaphroditus's erection subtly fills a space that was expected, by Pan and the external viewer, to be open. As a result, and despite the averted gaze of Hermaphroditus, the direction of the look shifts back toward Pan, now rendered potentially penetrable by Hermaphroditus's erection. To the extent that the external viewer colludes in Pan's attempt to surprise Hermaphroditus and identifies with his point of view (much as the viewer is invited to identify with Dionysus as the internal viewer gazing at Aphrodite), the viewer finds that the gaze has turned back in his (or her) direction.

In a sense, then, the "gaze through" into the painting of Pan and Hermaphroditus is ensnared, reflected back on itself by the surprising revelation of Hermaphroditus's mixed gender. This can be compared to the effect of the most common mythological subject in Pompeian *triclinia*, Narcissus, here represented by the east wall of room r in the House of Queen Margherita (V 2.1, figure 7). The viewer's gaze is drawn into the pictorial

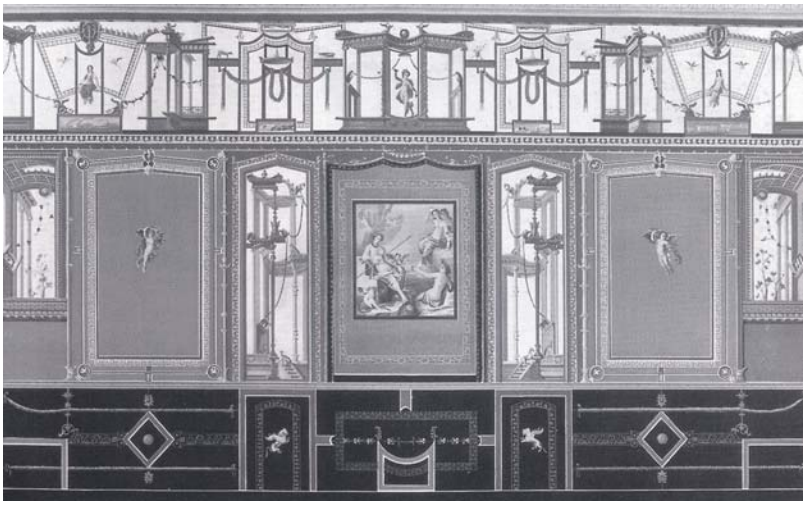

Figure 7. Triclinium, east wall (room r?), in the House of Queen Margherita, Pompeii V 2, 1. After a colored lithograph by P. D'Amelio, Department of Art History and Archaeology, University of Manchester, courtesy of R. J. Ling.

31 Fredrick 1995.281: "Hermaphroditus' erection produces a reversal in the role of Pan, from active penetrator to potential penetratee, both physically and visually." Cf. Clarke 1998.53–54: "the active viewer becomes an omniscient and passive voyeur, since he or she can see Hermaphroditus' combination of male genitals with a woman's body and breasts."

space and around the half-exposed body of the erotic object (again male but effeminate) and around the half-exposed bodies of the nymphs, scopophilically arranged for back and front views. The extended arm of the lower nymph then guides the external viewer to the gaze of Narcissus himself, a gaze then followed down into the pool at his feet. At this point, as in the painting of Hermaphroditus and Pan, the gaze meets an endpoint, the reflection of Narcissus. Narcissus admires and desires his own reflection as it seems to admire and desire him, and the direction of penetration is again confused. The little head of Narcissus bobbing in the water beneath his foot is, in terms of the viewing structure, much like the delicate erection of Hermaphroditus: an exclamation point where active desire looking in meets active desire looking back.

As in the Ixion Room in the House of the Vettii, the "viewing structure" here includes more than the central paintings. In comparison with the Ixion Room in the House of the Vettii, this Fourth Style scheme is somewhat more subdued: the central painting is not framed by an elaborate *aedicula*, and more of the crucial middle zone of the wall is occupied by the large tapestry-bordered fields. And yet the fundamental process of drawing the viewer's eye in through perspectival slots and returning it to the surface of the wall through flat panels, so well described by Clarke, remains. Again, however, the perspectival slots themselves are not strictly local in effect: in the middle register, they are arranged to suggest, without the possibility of realization, convergence somewhere behind the surface of the wall. The space behind the middle register of the wall is thus partially structured in a way that is neither simply local nor convincing and comprehensive. It is loosely presented as three-dimensional and given a relationship to the actual space of the room by the little staircases on either side of the central painting as these converge inward towards a center point in the real space of the room. In the upper register, meanwhile, the focus is much wider still, so that the idea of a center point somewhere behind its central *pergula* is much harder to grasp, since this central point would lie so much further behind the surface of the wall. Because this point is so far away, the sense of depth in the upper register is much less pronounced, and the effect of the perspectival elements is correspondingly closer to the local and bracketed "spatial release" Clarke attributes to the entire Fourth Style wall. The treatment of depth from the lower to the upper register thus acquires a recognizable progression: socle (flat), middle register (a medium field left out of focus), and upper register (a field so broad that the defining architectural elements threaten to drift apart from each other). In this way, the wall surface avoids

being absolutely flat, convincingly transparent, or penetrated only in isolated slots. Thus the flat surface of the wall is not comprehensively asserted, comprehensively dissolved, nor questioned only in bits. It is comprehensively questioned. The three registers of the wall give three distinctly different sets of cues about the nature of the space behind that wall, without any one of those sets amounting to a unified perspectival system—and yet the middle register is focused enough to imply such a system, partly by being noticeably more systematic than the upper register.

In the painting of Narcissus and the Nymphs and the Fourth Style wall surrounding it, we have more than a central mythological scene resting in a particularly complex frame. We have two complementary ways of structuring the gaze across and around frames towards an eroticized body, on the one hand, and the possibility of three-dimensional space on the other. Both the central painting and the "frame" rely upon strategies of deferral and reversal. Fourth Style central paintings often reveal the body in part, shown from the back or partially screened by clothing in the front, while the rest of the wall reveals space in part, but not *just* parts. The bits of perspective space created in the Fourth Style typically look towards an ideal of three-dimensional space that they cannot realize. The central paintings often include transgressions of gender or sexual roles, turning the active male gaze back on itself. The rest of the wall includes not only "assertively flat" decorations but often elements that seem to intrude out towards the real space of the room, like the little staircases converging outward on either side of the central painting of Narcissus and the Nymphs. These two themes can be simplified around a basic analogy between the use of clothing in the central paintings to call attention to, and thereby construct, the body as slot or penetrable surface and the use of fictive architecture across the rest of the wall to construct visually penetrable slots.[32] As noted above, however, visual penetration of the body behind the clothing, like a final realization of a unified three-dimensional space behind or through the wall, is deferred, and the movement in this direction often reversed.

A final example of this sort of close interaction between central paintings and "framing" architecture is provided by the decorative scheme

32 See Burgin 1992 for an analysis of a similar interaction between central erotic image and framing space in Helmut Newton's "Self-Portrait with Wife June and Model, 1981, Paris." Sharrock 2002.268–70 questions whether this particular photograph constitutes a serious challenge to traditional relations of power.

in room D of the House of Fabius Rufus (figure 8).[33] Against a stunning and elegant black background, a central painting is set back in a quite simple *aedicula* whose sense of structure is primarily conveyed by the *cassetto* roof. This roof then appears almost to merge with the roof of the framing architectural element to the right. And yet, as the eye moves down this element, the roofs and their supporting columns seem to stand out, Escher-like, in front of the wall rather than receding into it. Nonetheless, the two framing elements on either side do stand in a quasi-perspectival relation, so that the black slots framed by the columns and roofs must somehow recede, at least in imagination, to a three-dimensional space behind the surface of the wall. These slots set off the "slot" constructed by the scopophilic use of clothing in the central painting. Apollo sits behind Dionysus, standing on the left, and Aphrodite, standing on the right. While the mythological context is

Figure 8. House of Fabius Rufus, room D. Photo © Leonard von Matt.

33 See Wallace-Hadrill 1994.55 on the placement of this *exedra* to look over the western wall of Pompeii toward the sea.

not clear, a striking visual contrast is established between the nude body of Dionysus and the half-nudity of Aphrodite, who pulls her robe suggestively open just to the point of revealing her genitals. The eye of the viewer is thus drawn in, invited to peek around or over her robe, which nonetheless is not completely open. Whatever the myth, the treatment of the body in this fashion is repeated in central painting after central painting, and it forms a basic, and complementary, juxtaposition with the *durchblicke*, the slots through the wall found in the Fourth Style. The suggestive use of clothing to (un)wrap the body is like the suggestive use of fictive architecture to (un)wrap the wall.

Combining the evidence of Plutarch, Petronius, and these Fourth Style schemes, the "consumption package" of Roman dining appears to be defined by a transgression of surfaces partial in depth but comprehensive in scope: the physical surface of the body by the pleasures of the food and entertainment, the social surface of the body by the instability of the reclining positions, the surface of the food by its presentation inside (or as) deceptive wrappers or containers, the presentation of the wall as a membrane or wrapping that draws the eye through, and the presentation of eroticized bodies in the central paintings of *triclinia* as partly open to a penetrating gaze. As the room designed to stage these kinds of transgressions, the *triclinium* lies in an interesting position in the house. *Triclinia* are typically located around the peristyle and are listed by Vitruvius as among those rooms open to visitors by invitation only (as are *cubicula*). They are also, as Clarke stresses, static (as are *cubicula*); the dining experience typically began early in the afternoon and lasted for at least several hours. The *triclinium* and the *cubiculum*, then, share several distinguishing features: both are in the "private" section of the house, both are used as static rather than circulation spaces, and both are often decorated with central mythological paintings set in complex, status-bearing schemes. And yet the *triclinium* and the *cubiculum* are clearly not the same spatially, or socially.

To better understand the play with and across surfaces in the *triclinium*, it is worth briefly comparing it to the *cubiculum*, particularly in the light of Andrew Riggsby's analysis of the latter's relation to the categories "public" and "private" (1997.54):

> the *cubiculum* (and within it the *lectus*) is sometimes seen as the core of the house and as a special symbol of the domestic. As a matter of accepted practice the *cubiculum* is a place of greater secrecy than other parts of the house.

> This secrecy is significant because it enables part of the Roman public/private distinction. On the one hand, public activity (that is activity which interests the community *qua* community) in this private space is stigmatized. On the other hand, certain kinds of private activity (sex, violations of decorum in speech and dress) are restricted to that same space.

It is apparent that the *triclinium* is in a difficult position with respect to these categories. The *triclinium* is often—but certainly not always, as noted above—designed with a view out (and, later, in) in mind, and dining often took place in rooms where one wall was left completely open (*exedrae*). Though it is in the "private" side of the house, it is this side's most public part, defining, in many houses, a secondary visual axis from the *locus consularis* out across the garden.[34] In this regard, the *triclinium* is visually open rather than visually screened, and it does not share (at least to the same extent) the feature of "confinement" that Riggsby attributes to the *cubiculum* (1997.50). "Confinement" applies to the *cubiculum* because it is defined by both privacy (off the visual axis, narrow and screenable entrance) and openness to monitoring—the position of most *cubicula* around the atrium or peristyle means that one cannot leave them without a substantial risk of being seen. Riggsby consequently argues, quoting Grahame, that deviant behavior in the areas of sex, speech, and dress are hidden by the privacy of the *cubiculum* but also thereby minimized as disturbances of the established order: "it is through confinement that potential threats to the dominant structures of power are managed."[35] Riggsby compares this spatial containment of transgression within *cubicula* to the temporal containment of public obscenity within festivals, and transgressive entertainers (actors, gladiators, prostitutes) within the social limits of *infamia*. The privacy of the *cubiculum*, then, is conservative in function: "by permitting a certain amount of behavior that is disapproved of, that behavior is blocked from acting as a catalyst for more serious social disturbance."[36]

This is not so far from the solution of the Chagga regarding defecation, with secrecy in the place of denial, as the Romans grasp their

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34 Clarke 1991.14–19, Bek 1980.181–95 and 1983.

35 Riggsby 1997.50; the quotation is from Grahame 1997.146.

36 Riggsby 1997.52; cf. 51: "by containing rather than forbidding behavior, the norm of privacy removes the transgressive flavor of that behavior."

pangolin in the bedroom where it cannot cause much social harm. Indeed, Riggsby's interpretation of the *cubiculum* is consistent with his view of Rome as an "optimistic" or "dirt-rejecting" culture, in Douglas's terms. As he puts it, "the assignment of different activities to different areas, and particularly the requirement that certain ones must (or must not) be carried out in public, provided an ideal map for the behavior of the Roman aristocrat" (1997.53). Where to place the *triclinium* on this map? Riggsby himself notes: "the *triclinium* is itself a back region in some respects and therefore admits of a certain amount of deviant behavior."[37] This is true but reversible: dining and the *triclinium* are socially central, and therefore seem to have encouraged deviant behavior, or at least considerable testing of the limits of proper behavior. This testing process took place under circumstances neither entirely private, since the *triclinium* does not share the visual seclusion or confinement of the *cubiculum*, nor entirely public, as the *triclinium* does belong to the private side of the house.

Which is simply to say that back and front, private and public, must have a middle, and Riggsby's interpretation of Roman political life allows no such middle ground: "the primary tension in Roman politics was not between mass and elite, but among segments of the elite" (1997.52). True, perhaps, as an explanation of the expulsion of the kings, secessions of the plebs, or the conspiracy of Catiline, but Roman society did not consist of either mass or elite. It would be impossible to assign the majority of Pompeian domestic space, including the House of the Vettii, to one or the other, and the ranks of the elite were, as Hopkins has stressed, surprisingly open to penetration from below (Hopkins 1983.120–200, esp. 194–99). Social mobility was a daily fact for Romans, most tangible in the form of economically successful freedmen. If dining, through the presentation of the food, reclining positions, and decoration, challenges social surface, wall surface, and the surface of the body, it does not do so in the safe containment of a "back region." Rather, it does so in the half-public, half-private realm of the *triclinium*, constructing a self that does not square with the public ideal of the closed, aristocratic, penetrating, elite male body. By both encouraging and resisting the penetration of surfaces, the *triclinium* allows for a self and a society open to dynamic change.

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37 Riggsby 1997.50. He employs here Goffman's definition of a "back region" as "a place relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course" (Riggsby 1997.46, quotation from Goffman 1959.112).

It might be fruitful to conclude by returning to the notion of "the consumption package," which suggests that the dining experience is something to be (un)wrapped. Beginning with the intricate attention of Japanese culture to packaging ordinary goods, the anthropologist Joy Hendry (1993) has followed the theme of "wrapping" through gift-exchange, language, body, space, and time, focusing on Japan but with numerous cross-cultural comparisons. "Wrapping," in her analysis, refers not just to the physical layers of paper around a gift but to the construction of social space (or language, or dress) in layers of formality that decrease from the outside in: "just as parcels are often composed of several layers of wrapping material, personal presentation may embody several layers of politeness" (Hendry 1993.4). As the Roman dinner party is itself a kind of gift—a form of patronage in which dispensing food and other presents is central—it is a particularly well-wrapped social occasion. The *triclinium* is wrapped spatially by the thresholds a guest must cross to reach it, which may include, in Pompeii, boundaries between the immediate neighborhoods of one large house and another.[38] As Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales* suggest, as one crosses into the *triclinium,* the wrapping around conversation is gradually torn aside and the level of honesty is expected to rise as the level of formality decreases. The food in the *triclinium* may, as the dinner of Trimalchio illustrates, be wrapped in more or less elaborate "packages," in turn opening up the guest to more or less profound experiences of pleasure, surprise, or perhaps shock. Even the walls around the guests unwrap themselves to a point, as do the erotic bodies they frame. Penetrating the guest (or even the host), the dining environment necessarily exposes him or her to a considerable amount of "dirt," and yet without some degree of unwrapping, the experience remains too formal. Roman dining, then, builds a community around food by challenging (without discarding) many of the expectations for ideal elite behavior and bodies: it is perpetually grasping the pangolin. Thus it is not easy to conclude whether it is a place of containment, a finally conservative "back region," or finally transgressive. Perhaps this is where its utility as a metaphor for the self in a dynamic social structure lies.

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38 Robinson 1997.143: "Elite houses formed the social nexus of their regions, they had their own *territoria*, a fertile local ground for the cultivation and domination of tenants, clients, and perhaps most importantly political support. Indeed it may be suggested that the neighborhoods themselves were little more than 'extensions' of the elite dwelling."

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