EVERYDAY FOODWAYS AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS IN POMPEIAN HOUSES

INTRODUCTION

Eating and drinking practices are central socio-cultural activities, whose distinguishing characteristics provide important insights into social behaviour and cultural identities. The ‘daily routine of food consumption reflects and recreates social and symbolic codes of society’ (van der Veen 2003, 415; see also Bourdieu 1990, 250-2). Age, gender, and status hierarchies surrounding the preparation and consumption of food and drink, and their spatial relationships, are also signposts for socio-spatial organisation at both household and community levels (Delphy 2001). More specifically, eating and drinking are core domestic activities around which household social interactions and household space are often structured. Informed approaches to relationships associated with these activities, their hierarchies and spatial organisation in domestic contexts can assist in developing better understandings of social connectedness and disconnectedness in Roman society.

In recent decades there has been growing interest across the humanities and social sciences in foodways, in the social significance of differentiated consumption behaviours, and in gendered social space (Atkins and Bowler 2001; Miller 2001, 3; Delphy 2001; Zukin 2001, esp. 433-5; Bird and Sokolofski 2005; Avieli 2009; Graeber 2011). There have also been calls for spatial studies of consumption with more historical sensitivity and depth (Jackson and Thrift 2001, 408). These social theorists have argued that daily eating behaviours are governed by social codes and serve to recreate those codes and symbols. An understanding of these codes in different societies can lead to better understandings of these societies. I would also
argue that foodways are part of the iterative process for creating such codes.

Contextualised investigations of specific social interactions surrounding foodways can lead to more informed approaches to the development of such interactions and to better understandings of social relationships in the past.

While concern for food-consumption practices is growing across the archaeological discipline (Miracle and Milnor 2002; Dietler 2005; 2010; see Mullins 2011. See also Collard, Morris and Perego 2012, in which the only paper on the Roman world concerns grain processing and storage), there is fairly limited focus on the specific socio-spatial contexts of everyday foodways, on differentiating the daily activities of different groups of people within communities, and on providing spatial dimensions to these activities for insights into associated social interactions (see Jervis 2011). For example, Dietler’s study of the use of ‘tablewares’ in southern France, to investigate relationships between consumption patterns and colonisation, concerns ritual and festive eating and drinking (Dietler 2010, esp. 203-06, 244, 254). Lack of detailed and considered attention to everyday food consumption in general is particularly true for Roman archaeology. This paper outlines current approaches to Roman foodways and then demonstrates how a consumption-oriented, and more material-cultural, approach to the material remains in Pompeian houses can inform on everyday food consumption.² (See also Allison nd. Some errors in quantities (e.g. in the tables) in this conference paper are correct here).

FOCUS ON THE FORMAL AND THE FESTIVE

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented as a conference paper in 2012 (Allison nd.) The current paper is a substantially version and errors in the original paper (e.g. in quantities in the tables) have been corrected here.
Research on Roman eating and drinking is traditionally based on the perspectives of ancient authors and is driven by these perspectives to concern mainly the formal dining practices of male élites. The writings of ancient authors such as Plutarch’s *Table Talk*, Athenaeus’ *The Learned Banqueters*, Petronius' *Cena Trimalchionis*, and Juvenal’s and Martial’s satires, have done much to colour our perspectives and to focus scholarship on the often extravagant and sumptuous dining practices of the socially and politically important in Roman society, and on architectural and decorative evidence for the locations for formal dining, banqueting and festive eating events, largely ignoring other occasions and other status groups.

Thus, much has been written about the *cena* (the main evening meal), about the spatial provision for this meal in Roman houses, and about *convivia* (banquets and feasts (eg. Dunbabin 2003; Stein-Holkeskamp 2005; Leach 2004, 43-6). Such formal dining occasions were ostensibly settings for conspicuous display to enhance an élite male’s social standing and political recognition, with invited guests from outside the household. They were not intended as a focus for communal eating within the household and invariably involved no other household members beyond the house owner’s wife and possibly adult sons (See Bradley 1998, 38). Hanna Sigismund Nielsen argued that only in imperial families would other children regularly take part in the *cena*, seated on the arms of the dining couches or at separate tables, rather than reclining with the guests (Sigismund Nielsen 1998, 58. For further references see Bradley 1988, 46). As she pointed out, the focus of Roman literature on élite, politically-important practices limits its usefulness for understanding more general household eating practices of other members of these households, or on those of people from other social strata (Sigismund Nielsen 1988, 59. There are exceptions, eg.
on dining alone (Plutarch, *Lucullus* 41.2); on farm manager’s meals (Columella, *Rust.* 11.1.9). Little is known, for example, about how, where, and with whom other members of Roman households – non-élites, women and children – ate, or where household heads ate when there were no guests to entertain.

On the other hand, an overwhelming majority of Roman archaeological remains undoubtedly document the everyday activities of all members of Roman households. However, scholars have often used these material remains to support understandings the perspectives of ancient literature on the formal *cena* and festive occasions, and luxury dining, rather than as independent evidence for other foodways in other contexts (eg. Hudson 2010. See also Painter 2001, esp. 39-41).

**FOCUS ON FOOD PREPARATION AND DIET**

Recent foodways’ research in Roman archaeology has focused on the bio-archaeological remains of the food itself – to investigate nutrition, dietary practices and dietary choices – or on material-cultural remains, mainly ceramic, associated with food preparation – to investigate changing cooking practices – rather than the practices of eating and drinking (on food: King 1999; MacKinnon 2004; van der Veen et al. 2008; on food preparation: Bats 1996; Swan 1999; on the politics and economics of food supply and distribution see also Purcell 2003; Bakels and Jacomet 2003; Thomas and Stallibrass 2008. See also Cool 2006, esp. 56-128). While Marijke van der Veen (2003, 420) stressed the importance of food and diet in looking for ‘the ordinary in complex societies’, an emphasis on luxury and ritual eating has continued, with textual evidence driving the interpretation of material remains (eg. Robinson
2002; Lauwerier 2004). For example, Martin Jones measured bio-archaeological evidence from first-century sites in southern Britain against Petronius’ description of the dishes served at Trimalchio’s ‘cena’ to assess the ‘Romanness’ of consumption practices at these sites (Jones 2002, 131, fig.11.1). From the literary and pictorial evidence and from food remains we are indeed relatively well informed about the range of food products and the types of luxury foods that were available at different times and in different parts of the Roman world, and archaeological evidence has supplemented and illuminated this information. However, we are still relatively poorly informed about the range of social contexts in which people throughout the Roman world consumed these foods.

FOCUS ON THE EVERYDAY PRACTICES

While the cena, the convivium, and social performance may have been the main foci of the writings of ancient authors and have provided contexts for interpreting material-cultural evidence, other meals are also documented and probably took place in Roman households. Suetonius’ criticism of the emperor Vitellius for feasting three times a day – at the iantaculum, prandium, and cena – and often at a fourth drinking bout (Suetonius, Vitellius 13.1), indicates the three main meals in which many members of Roman households might partake on a daily basis. These everyday eating events no doubt left material traces. Analyses of such material remains and their distribution can inform on food-consumption practices in quite different ways from modern readings of ancient texts.
For Roman Britain, Hilary Cool has examined mainly finewares and glassware, but also other eating and food preparations utensils, to follow changing and diverse foodways throughout the Roman period in Britain (Cool 2006, 152-242). However, she lamented that the ways in which archaeological material has in the past been collected, quantified and published often frustrate inter-site comparisons of eating and drinking practices, let alone intra-site comparisons and investigations at the household level (Cool 2006, 159, 174, 177, 184 *passim*). She has been unable to differentiate everyday foodways from more formal dining practices through these material remains. Martin Pitts has investigated the clustering of different vessel shapes and fabrics among acknowledged ‘everyday’ assemblages of pottery, animal bones and brooches from a sample of Romano-British sites to identify differing foodways within a site (Pitts 2010, esp. 146-7; see also Pitts 2007). He observed that festive events could be identified among more mundane everyday practices, and, more importantly, that festive foodways needed to be studied in the context of the everyday foodways for more holistic understandings of Roman foodways (Pitts 2010, 146-47).

In Pompeian houses, sets of Pompeian Red Ware dishes, remains of foodstuffs found inside *terra sigillata* dishes, and the distribution of all ceramics give us glimpses of everyday practices but also show that our understanding of relationships of different vessels in Roman cooking and daily eating practices, and of communal and individual eating, is underdeveloped (Allison 1999, 68-72; 2009, 19-25). Our knowledge of the uses, and multiple uses, of different types of ceramics, of other types of dining utensils and of the range of furniture associated with food-consumption practices in the Roman world is still rather limited. This paper therefore investigates more specifically contextualised intra-site foodways among the relatively well-provenanced
artefact assemblages in Pompeian households. Because of the contexts of these assemblages and the depositional processes involved in their creation, even more so than the sites studied by Pitts, the foodways they document are unlikely to be focused on specifically festive or formal occasions. They are likely to have been associated with ‘everyday’ domestic practices in households that were not necessarily élite and whose membership consisted of various people from differing gender and status groups. Better understandings of daily practices in Pompeian households can influence our approaches to foodways and associated material culture in other parts of the Roman world, and provide source data for distinguishing between universal practices and practices with regional and social specificity.2

THE POMPEIAN EVIDENCE

This paper draws on data compiled from the excavation reports of thirty Pompeian ‘atrium’ houses and their contents, excavated between 1826 and 1977, that have been compiled and subjected to contextual study (Allison 2004, 2005), as well as data from a more detailed contextualised study of the artefacts excavated from the various establishments in the Insula of the Menander in the 1930s (for more details Allison 2004; 2005; 2006; see also Allison 2009, 19-25).3 Various types of artefacts potentially associated with eating and drinking – fittings from couches, other types of seating and tables, ceramics and probably also wall recesses – were recorded in these

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2 The AHRC research network, ‘Big Data on the Roman Table’, directed by Penelope Allison and Martin Pitts is currently investigating more coordinated material-cultural approaches to food-consumption practices across the Roman world.

3 See these publications for: lists of the buildings discussed here, with plans indicating their sizes (Allison 2004, ‘List of houses’; Allison 2006: fig. A); discussion on taphonomic conditions, and depositional situations (e.g. storage), on recording disparities (Allison 2004, by house; 2005, 28-42; 2006, 9-15); and on the reliability of individual findspots (Allison 2004; 2006, 289-370 by room and house); and for interpretations of the assemblages and their contexts (Allison 2005, 62-203: 2006, 289-405).
houses, to varying degrees of comprehensiveness given the excavation dates. A detailed interrogation of these artefacts and their spatial distribution, focusing on comparative assemblages and contexts, potentially gives insights into how daily eating activities may have been played out in these households, and into how and where household members might have eaten their meals, especially those not partaking in formal dining events. The following discussion and tables include Latin nomenclature such as ‘triclinium’ and ‘cubiculum’ following conventional uses of such terms, rather than necessarily as functional descriptors. The tables also include those architectural ‘room types’ which are conventionally associated with these Latin room labels (see Allison 2005, 63-4; for concurrence see Table 1). Of the main furnishings recorded within Pompeian houses and potentially associated with eating, many would indeed seem associated with formal eating and drinking.

**Wall Recesses**

As well as the remains of actual couches associated with reclining to dine (Figs 1 and 2), the material evidence in Pompeian houses includes recesses into the walls of a number of rooms (Allison 1995, 163-7). Long, low wall recesses are likely to have been used for the long sides of dining couches, as in room 6 of House VIII 2,26 (Fig. 3) and in room 17 in the Casa del’Efebo (Fig. 2).

Eight of this type of recess (average height c.50 cm-1 m; length c.2-4 m) were identified in four pairs in the sample of thirty houses (Table 2). Three of these pairs are found in so-called triclinia, traditionally identified as such on structural and decorative grounds (for further discussion the interpretation of these room types and their contents: Allison 2004, 43-48, 78-80, 92-94, 131-134, 168,170-171). This recess
type in this room type seems unproblematically associated with dining couches and
the *cena*, when the owner of the house, and possibly his wife and adult sons, may
have dined with guests from outside the household. As discussed below the recesses
in room 17 in the *Casa del'Efebo* indeed contained remains of couches. Whether or
not these rooms and fixtures would have been used by other members of the
household, and on other occasions, is difficult to verify. The fourth pair of these long
low recesses are not found in a so-identified *triclinium*, however. They are located in
what has been identified as a kitchen – room 7, in the *Casa dell'Efebo* (Allison 2004;
2005, fig. A.11; for a discussion of room 7 see Allison 2004, *houseid=7*#98); The
excavator argued that these fixtures identified this room as a *triclinium* for slaves
(Maiuri 1927, 38). This is a surprising interpretation given an assumed high-status
associations of reclining to dine within usual domestic contexts (Bradley 1998, 39-
40). For example, Dunbabin noted (2003, 11-13, 57), for example noted that it was
exceptional for slaves to recline (see also Bradley 1998, 39-40). It is conceivable that
these particular recesses were part of an earlier use of this room, prior to the
incorporation of this small *atrium* house into the larger *Casa dell'Efebo*. If these
fixtures were indeed from an earlier house, and designed to take dining couches, these
assumptions imply a need for, at least the potential for, elite dining
practices in a relatively low-status house. However, recesses have been considered late
additions to Pompeian houses (Elia 1932, 394), although this argument has not been
systematically validated (Allison 1995, 163-6; 2005, 47). Whether these recesses were
used by the former owners of a rather humble house, by household slaves, or by other
household members of the *Casa dell'Efebo* who ate in the kitchen, they present
aspects of Roman eating practices that do not conform to current perceptions of social
status and dining practices (Dunbabin 2003, 11-13). Rather, they potentially give
insights into food-consumption practices in a different social context. This sample of long recesses is too small to draw conclusions from but highlights the need for a more in-depth investigation of the associations of these types of recesses with eating activities and household hierarchies, and more critical approaches to current assumptions about Roman dining practices.

There were many low, narrow recesses in this sample of thirty houses – some thirty-six recesses ranging in height from c.0.35–1.35 m (Table 3). Some of these were also evidently used for bed or couch ends in supposed dining rooms, such as in room 9 in the Casa del Fabbro where remains of a wooden bed was associated with such a recess (Allison 2004, ph13_07; 2006, 342 and pl. 83). The height range among recesses of this type may relate to which end of the bed or couch a recess was used for, and perhaps the quality of the furniture. However, if these types of recesses were indeed associated with couches and eating, the locations of some of them present interesting perspectives on the identification of eating areas in Pompeian houses, and potentially on the daily eating habits of different members of the household.

Only six examples of this type of recess are found in rooms labelled triclinia or oeci, while nineteen are found in so-called cubicula. At least fourteen of these rooms were decorated, and so were not intended to be used as storerooms or indeed used as such at the time of the eruption (compare Table 3 here with Allison 71-73, esp. tables 5.4a-b). There is no apparent correlation between the heights of the recesses and these different room types, except that most of the highest ones were in room types other than supposed dining rooms and may have served other purposes (e.g. in the passage to room 14 in House I 10,8; see Ling 1997, 296). This distribution pattern, with the
prominence of this type of recess in so-called cubicula, has traditionally been used to support the identification of such rooms as bedrooms (Elia 1932, 399-411; Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 57). The presence of the same recess type in so-called triclinia suggests, however, that the same types of couches furnished both room types. Does this indicate that the same type of furniture was used for different functions, or that both kinds of rooms were used for similar functions? When not dining with invited guests, could household members have eaten in these small closed rooms? Such an interpretation might require us to change our perspectives on the social implications of reclining to dine? Can the loose furnishings and contents of these rooms throw further light on their use?

**Couch Remains**

More than 250 fragments from couches or beds, or evidence for where this furniture once stood (i.e. impressions in the volcanic deposit), have been reported from some forty-seven different locations in the sample of thirty Pompeian houses, including built structures in garden areas (Table 4). Some 115 of these recorded remains were from twelve different triclinia, such as in triclinium 17 in the Casa dell’Efebo (Fig. 2).

See also Allison 2004 – www.stoa.org/gallery/allison/ph20_18; 2005, fig. 6.4); seventy-eight, including a bed impression in room I, Casa del Sacello Iliaco (Allison 2004, ph24_05), were found in nine so-called cubicula; and some twenty-six in six so-called tablina. A number of the remaining reported fragments were found in odd spaces, including the remains of a bed in the rear atrium 41 of the Casa del Menandro (Allison 2006, cat. no. 721). Some twenty-eight fragments were recorded in the upper levels of the volcanic deposit, most notably in the southeast area of the Casa del Menandro (Allison 2006, cat. nos 960 and 966). Some of the upper-level
finds, including those above the atrium area of the Casa dell’Efebo (Allison 2004, houseid=7#136) were from identifiable upper-storey rooms in these areas (for the Casa del Menandro see Ling 1997, 316-17; Allison 2006, 322).

To my knowledge, there is nothing among the recorded remains that distinguishes the types of beds or couches in different types of spaces, or indeed how they might have been used. While more actual fragments were recorded in larger triclinia, relatively comparable numbers of cubicula (nine or c.19%) as dining rooms (twelve or c.25%) contained such remains. More interesting, perhaps, is that six of these rooms (c.12%) were tablina. Indeed, the most celebrated couch remains from Pompeii, constituting two highly decorated couches (Fig. 1; Allison 2006, cat. nos. 191-2) were recorded in the tablinum of the Casa del Menandro, and. Could these couches in this room indicate rather stately, singular or dual, eating in this room in this relatively élite house? While some of these couch remains could conceivably have been moved during times of upheaval, there is an identifiable pattern of their association with these three types of rooms – triclinia, cubicula and tablina. And they are closely associated with the same two kinds of rooms as the recesses, with no apparent distinguishable differences between the furnishing of these two room types. This seems to add further weight to the suggestion that so-called cubicula could have been for similar activities as triclinia? Might this give us clues to greater understandings how and where household members, not taking part in the formal cena, might have eatenate their meals? And might the owner of the Case del Menandro, and perhaps his wife or another close associate, have taken meals or snacks in the tablinum? The evidence of similar couch remains from relatively reliable identifiable upper-floor contexts is also
noteworthy, demonstrating that reports of such remains in upper levels of the volcanic deposit cannot all be considered evidence for disturbance.

Tables

Roman dining practices involving reclining required small and relatively low tables (i.e. probably less than 50 cm high), often moveable, on which courses would be set and then removed as required, individual diners sometimes having their own tables (Bradley 1998, 48-49; see also Hudson 2010).

From this Pompeian sample are some fifty-two reports of complete or fragmentary remains of what were most likely to have been wooden, stone or marble tables (Table 5). Sixteen instances (c. 30%) were of more certain remains of marble tables in the atria of thirteen of the houses, mainly in display situations as for example in the atrium of the Casa di M. Lucretuis Fronto (Allison 2004, ph20_19). Another sixteen, were from the garden areas of eleven houses, for similar reasons. Four triclinia and four cubicula had possible remains of tables. Fragments found in upper levels of the deposit potentially represent at least three tables from secure upper-storey contexts, for example above rooms 35-40 and the peristyle in the Casa del Menandro (Allison 2006, cat. nos. 921-92, 974), and above fauces 3 in the Casa di Julius Polybius. The evidence is slight but, putting aside the evidently often taller tables used for display in atria and gardens (Allison 2005, 69-70), these tables are as prominent in cubicula as in dining-rooms. If this distribution pattern supports the recognised use of tables in the social context of triclinium dining it might also be used to argue for a similar use in cubicula, as with recesses and couch remains. Some of those found in garden areas were may also likely to have been used for eating from, even if used for other
activities as well and irrespective of height. For example, one 91 cm high bronze and marble table from the ambulatory in the Casa del Menandro (Fig. 4) is too high for a reclining diner and may have been used for eating from by someone seated on a chair, or perhaps for placing food on for someone standing.

**Seats, Chairs and Stools**

Some members of Roman households reportedly sat on chairs while eating, notably women and children (Sigismund Nielsen 1998, 58; Bradley 1998, 47). However, there is little evidence in Pompeian houses for types of seating furniture that could potentially be associated with eating and drinking activities, other than couch remains. That said, it is conceivable that the excavators have been too quick to identify fragmentary furniture remains as belonging to iconic reclining couches rather than to other types of seating. An example is the remains of iron, bone-decorated, furniture legs, found in room 15 in the Casa del Menandro that could equally have been from a chair (Allison 2006, 76-77 cat. nos 296-7). Excluding fixed masonry seating outside or immediately inside the front entrances of these houses, evidence for bronze, wooden and stone seating potentially used for sitting, and potentially to eat and drink, was recorded in twelve locations in these houses (Table 6). Remains of wooden, stone and masonry seats were reported in three locations in gardens and ambulatories, and two other locations, and cannot be clearly connected with foodways. Conceivably associated with sitting and eating to eat, though, are one bronze seat and twelve small bronze feet from folding and portable stools, reported in eight different locations. These locations include two triclinia, two cubicula and one garden area. Another seven of these feet were recorded in three good upper-storey contexts, in the Casa del Menandro and the Casa del Fabbro. Thus, although the evidence is limited and the
use of these seats uncertain, the distribution pattern of these remains is comparable to that of other types of furniture associated with eating and drinking. These seats could be have been associated with the eating practices of other household members – possibly of women and children either taking part in the cena in the triclinium, or on other occasions. Again, an association with cubicula is notable here, but also with garden areas and possibly upstairs. Like some of the tables, these seats recorded in garden areas, could possibly have been used for outdoor, casual, eating.

In summary, in Pompeian houses, a certain preponderance of furniture and fixtures that could potentially have been associated with eating and drinking was found in rooms identified as dining rooms, although, mainly in those off the garden areas of these houses (room types 10 and 11), rather than in the corners of the atrium area (room type 6). This might be because this furniture and these types of spaces were indeed used for the formal cena, particularly in the summer – Mt Vesuvius having reportedly erupted in August (for argument for a later time of year see Pappalardo 1990, 209-10) – and that the furniture was moved around, seasonally. However, if we accept this use for these particular room types and their furnishings, then we need to be prepared to accept that these similar types of furnishings in so-called cubicula, and possibly also in tablina, and perhaps even in upper-level rooms, might have been used, at least on occasions, for food-consumption activities in these other areas. More detailed study of all the actual furniture remains from Pompeii could potentially throw more light on how these pieces of furniture might have been used in these different domestic spaces, and perhaps used differently in different houses.

Finewares – terra sigillata
The types of furniture discussed above are those likely to have been left in situ, at their place of end use, under some concept of normality (Allison 2005, 38-40). This is less likely to be the case for ceramics, particularly fine wares. Nevertheless, it is worth investigating the distribution patterns of these remains within these particular houses for any correlation between their distribution and that of these furnishings that might throw further light on the socio-spatial contexts of daily eating practices.

Because of their lack of intrinsic value, early excavators of Pompeii tended to ignore ceramic finds (Allison 2005, 31-2). Only some 660 reports of some 2,800 ceramic remains were made from some 453-259 different locations in all but one of the 30 ‘atrium’ houses sampled. Descriptions of these ceramics in the excavation reports are often limited (Allison 2006). Many of the reported vessels, including some from the *Insula del Menandro*, will never be able to be studied, however, as they exist only as brief entries in the excavation reports. Thus, it is not always possible to associate particular vessels with specific food-consumption practices, but eating, drinking and/or serving are the likely functions for many of the fine wares. Among these fine wares, remains identified as *terra sigillata* cups, bowls and plates were most probably associated with eating and drinking (Allison 2009, 23-4). In this sample only the actual ceramic remains from identifiable contexts in the *Insula del Menandro* have been studied. The artefact distribution patterns of the *terra sigillata* vessels from the *Insula of the Menandro*, excavated in the 1930s, potentially provide more specific information on the use of such vessels in daily eating practices than does the evidence from funerary contexts at other sites around the Roman empire (see e.g. Cool 2006, 193-9). The distribution patterns of these better studied finewares, examined together with those from across the sample of thirty houses,
suggest that householders may have eaten alone rather than together (Cool 2006, 193-99).

Some 128 *terra sigillata* finds were reported in thirty-nine locations in nineteen ‘atrium’ houses in the overall sample. None were reported in some of the earlier excavated houses, in Regions VI and VIII, none were reported but they may not have been properly identified. Although House VIII 5.9 is one of the thirty houses in this sample, the ninety South Gaulish *sigillata* cups (‘tazza’) stored in a wooden chest in the *tablinum* of this house are not included here as they were evidently in storage for commercial rather than domestic use within this house (see Pucci 1977, 16-17; Morel 1979). What is immediately apparent is the lower average number of locations within each house for this ceramic type, compared with the overall ceramic assemblage. That is, the average number of locations per house for all reported ceramic finds is over five eight locations, whereas *terra sigillata* vessels were usually recorded, on average, in approximately two locations per house. This is despite the fact that they were reported in fewer houses and also that excavators tended to focus on remains with inscriptional or decorative evidence, such as *terra sigillata* which often had a maker’s name stamped on the base or evidence for relief decoration. This focus means that the number of vessel fragments recorded is likely to be close the actual vessel count. This distribution implies that so-called tablewares were limited to specific parts of the house, and conceivably, although not necessarily, those in which they were used.

Graph 1 shows the overall quantities of *terra sigillata* remains according to the room types in Table 1 and excluding those –Not included in this graph are some fifty-three cups stored in a wooden chest in the *tablinum* of House VIII 5.9, which included *terra
The quantities of terra sigillata remains found in rooms of type 16 (other areas) are inflated by the fragments from seven vessels found with the famous silver treasure under the bath suite of the Casa del Menandro (Painter 2001; Allison 2006, cat. nos 407-56 (ceramic remains cat. no. 533)) and also by fragments recorded during re-excavation of room n of the Casa dei Ceii in the 1980s, conceivably thrown there during the early 20th-century excavations of this house (Michel 1990, 64). The quantities from room type 8 are also inflated, by fragments found in a cellar under corridor P1 in the Casa del Menandro (Allison 2006, cat. nos 571-9). Those reported in atria appear to have been either in storage, such as in a cupboard in the Casa dei Quadretti teatrali (Allison 2004, houseid=3#2), or were possibly hoarded during seismic activity, as in the case of has been argued for atrium 41 in the Casa del Menandro (Allison 2006, 326-7). This leaves only a scattering of such finds whose provenance may be significant for understanding the contexts of their end use. These finds were slightly more prominent in room types 4 and 12 (cubicula) and in type 14 (kitchens), with more limited evidence in so-called triclinia. This is not surprising given that one would not expect people to be partaking in a formal cena during an eruption and would expect that any such ‘dining sets’ would have been stored away, although we should might perhaps consider the, predominantly bronze, table setting reportedly found in situ in the Casa di Moralista (Clarke 2003, fig. 137), but the veracity of this photograph as documenting the actual findspots of these artefacts needs to be further investigated first. However, even in the few atria of this sample where such finds were indeed recorded in storage situations or conceivably fell from the upper floor, they are not reported in groups of more than six vessels (Graph 2).
This distribution pattern is emphasised by an analysis of the occurrences of *terra sigillata* in the more recently excavated dwellings – i.e. the houses, shops and workshops in the *Insula del Menandro* and also the *Casa di Julius Polybius*, excavated in the 1970s (Table 7). Of the twenty-six locations in which *terra sigillata* vessels were recorded in these more recently excavated houses, in only six were more than a couple of vessels recorded. Three of these are in the locations discussed above in the *Casa del Menandro*, and the other two are in the upper levels of the *Casa di Julius Polybius* and the *Casa del Fabbro*, respectively. Of the twenty locations with one or two vessels, eleven are upper-level contexts, and at least three are cubicula, although the latter was probably a storeroom (room 17 in the *Casa degli Amanti*; Allison 2004, houseid=12#260). Room 12 in House I 10,8 was also probably a storeroom as considerable quantities of domestic items were recorded there (Allison 2006, 354-5). That said, the remains of only three, or possibly up to five, *terra sigillata* vessels were recorded in this room (Allison 2006, cat. nos 1696-8), despite reports of numerous amphorae and other storage vessels (Allison 2006, cat. nos 1699-1702).

Notable, perhaps, is that some 38% of the reported *terra sigillata* from these better recorded and better studied dwellings were recorded from the upper levels of the volcanic deposit. Potentially interesting among these are the vessels reported from good identifiable upper-floor contexts, above room 7 in the *Casa del Fabbro* (Allison 2006, 346-7) and also above room HH in the *Casa di Julius Polybius* (Allison 2004, houseid=15#827). Seven *terra sigillata* plates (diameter c.170 mm) were found in a chest, 1m above the pavement of room 7 in the *Casa del Fabbro* (Allison 2006, cat. no. 1493), together with a collection of glass bottles and other glass vessels and also
further ceramic vessels including at least five cups (Allison 2006, 204-05). Unfortunately these vessels were destroyed when the Pompeii Antiquarium was bombed in the Second World War but this collection might have been, at least in part, evidence of a terra sigillata ‘dining set’, curiously packed away curiously in an upper room along with other chests of seemingly more personal items. The vessels in the upper-storey area above room HH in the Casa di Julius Polybius may also have been stored there, again along with other reported domestic paraphernalia.

These distribution patterns of terra sigillata show a relative lack of large collections of tableware that might have been used as dining sets despite these ceramic finds being limited to specific areas of the house. Larger assemblages occur in funerary contexts around the Roman empire. Eight of the twelve assemblages of ceramic and silver tablewares studied by Hudson were from what he called ‘live assemblages in that they were from ‘a single living use context’, consisting of floor deposits associated with destruction events at other sites (Hudson 2010, 673). However, Hudson does not identify the specificity of these-room level contexts is not clear of these assemblages. In the lived contexts of Pompeian houses terra sigillata vessels that were not evidently in storage seem to have been used on a fairly individual basis and are seemingly most evident in so-called cubicula and upper levels.

SUMMARY

Unfortunately the potential for the distribution of these material remains from a sample of Pompeian houses to provide understandings of the ‘everyday’ eating habits of Pompeian householders is compromised by the quality of the excavations and
recording. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some observations that may change our perspectives on how members of these households interacted in relation to food consumption and how household space was used for such activities.

The first observation is that recesses, couches and other furnishings potentially associated with eating practices are as evident in so-called cubicula as they are in so-called triclinia, an observation that may give clues as to the locations of eating practices of household members not partaking in formal dining – either family members at other times of the day and on other occasions, or other household members not invited to the cena – which would include women and younger children, and their nannies and tutors. Eating in such small locations would prohibit household members eating together in groups.

A second observation, in relation to this first, is that, if the recesses were indeed used for dining couches and these couches used for dining, then reclining to dine may have been a more widespread activity than is traditionally assumed. The evidence for recesses in room 7 in the Casa dell’Efebo, and couches and recesses in cubicula, suggests that our current thinking about who reclined where, and on what occasion, may be somewhat misled by readings of the literary evidence, and of paintings and mosaics, that focus on formal and festive dining.

A third observation is that terra sigillata pottery, traditionally called ‘tableware’, has no association with so-identified dining rooms but stronger associations with the same cubicula and also with areas on the upper floor. One could perhaps argue that this distribution pattern and lack of ‘dining sets’ reflects the lack of attention by past-most
nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century excavators of Pompeii to ceramic remains, or perhaps greater use of metal tablewares. As already highlighted, these excavators’ attention to inscribed and decorated ceramic vessels means that they would have recorded collections of terra sigillata had they found them, as in the cellar in the Casa del Menandro. In addition, this distribution pattern is apparent in the more recently excavated houses where more attention has been paid to ceramic artefacts. In regard to metal tablewares, with the exception of the silverware from the Casa del Menandro, metal vessels found in Pompeii were predominantly of bronze and predominantly ablution, food-preparation and serving vessels, rather than vessels to eat food off or drink from (Tassinari 1993).

These observations, therefore, suggest that household members rarely ate together, and then only in small groups. These remains provide material evidence in Pompeian households that there was little concept of a ‘family meal’, in the modern sense of a daily gathering of the household where the events of the day would be discussed and children would be educated in table manners. More significantly, they indicate that when household members did eat it was not necessarily in specified dining rooms, but that these meals might be taken in other parts of the houses, possibly in small closed cubicula but also in tablina, in upper-storey rooms, and in the garden area. The ceramic evidence reinforces the view that daily eating events were often rather casual, and that food might be produced, on demand and where desired, by household servants. Varro’s comment (de Ling. V, 162) that Romans started to frequently, or habitually, dine (‘cenitare’) upstairs, in rooms called ‘cenacula’, might refer to such daily and informal eating practices.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

The excavations of Pompeii provide a wealth of material evidence to help us better understand daily household practices in urban contexts in southern Italy during the early Roman empire. However, this study also indicates that there are still many lacunae in our knowledge about how household space in the Roman world was used on a daily basis, and that a more material-cultural approach to Roman eating and drinking practices might help address some of these lacunae.

For example, the observations above highlight some anomalies arising from current interpretations of structural remains of Pompeian houses. If most Pompeian household members did not take part in the formal cena, in formal dining rooms, why then did many of these houses have such a lot of space reportedly devoted to this event? Was the construction of such spaces an expensive status statement, related to annual climactic conditions, even in seemingly some of the more modest ‘atrium’ houses (e.g. the Casa della Venere in Bikini)? Or were these spaces used for other household activities, or by other household members when there were no guests? Eleanor Leach argued that the numerous different labels for dining rooms in the written sources (i.e. oecus, triclinium, cenatio, cenaculum) indicate the many different types of rooms for formal dining where Romans could entertain guests to dinner in different circumstances, grander or more intimate, or indeed in different seasons (Leach 2004, 46-7). However, she does not address the question of whether and how these terms might be used for spaces for other types of eating practices: dining when there are no guests; the eating practicess of household members not taking part in the cena; dining practices in smaller houses; or other events. Another anomaly is that Andrew
Riggsby’s study of the activities carried out in the *cubiculum* does not concern eating in so-named spaces (Riggsby 1997), further warning us to be wary of assuming a direct relationship between the concept of a ‘*cubiculum*’ and the small closed rooms in Pompeian houses (room types 4 and 12), or indeed that domestic activities in Roman houses were segregated along modern lines (see Allison 2004, 166-167, 171, 175-177).

There is not space here to investigate all Pompeian food-consumption material culture (e.g. metal and glass vessels and other utensils) that might throw further light on the socio-spatial characteristics of eating practices or to investigate such relationships between food preparation and food consumption (Allison 2009, 19-21. On spoons, knives etc. in Pompeii: Painter 2001, 69-70 cat. nos. M64-82; Allison 2006, cat. nos 446-49; in Roman Britain: Cool 2006, 54). Essentially, more informed and more holistic approaches to all household foodways, and to all types of evidence for these practices, are needed to better understand how all members of the household used and inhabited these spaces. And it is perhaps anachronistic to argue that, in Roman households, food consumption is a ‘principle arena for social interactions between individual household members’ (Allison 2009, 19). As stated in the introduction, eating practices are part of the iterative process for creating social practice. The observations in this paper point to the different ways in which members of Pompeian household were connected, and also disconnected, in their daily food-consumption activities. The apparent disconnectedness might give greater insights into Roman household, or family, life and how this was played out in physical space, at least in this Roman town. It is highly probable that such disconnectedness impacted on, and constructed, Roman social behaviour in wider more public and political contexts,
rather than the other way round. Better understandings of social interactions around food consumption in the Roman world can also give us insights into the development of status and gender relationships in the past which will have greater historical sensitivity and depth.
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