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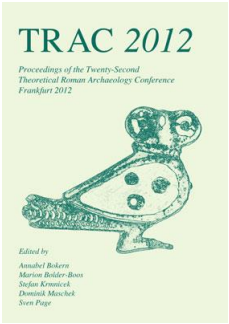


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# Secondary Doors in Entranceways at Pompeii: Reconsidering Access and the 'View from the Street'

*Evan Proudfoot*

## *Introduction*

It is commonly accepted (see below) that the typical Pompeian *atrium* house had only one set of doors to close its main entrance between the street and the *atrium*, and that consequently, when these doors stood open, passers-by were afforded a framed, axial view from the street into the house. But the evidence presented in this paper shows that an additional set of entrance doors was in fact common, often placed at the boundary between the entrance passage and the *atrium*. Combined with the other entranceway types already well known from the site, this finding calls into question the conventional labels used to identify entranceway spaces, and requires us to formulate a more nuanced, practical understanding of access, visibility, and expectations of public and private in the *atrium* house.

## *Background*

Many of the houses at Pompeii can be described as '*atrium* houses' – buildings with a group of rooms organized around and opening onto a central, covered 'front hall' (Allison 2004: 65–70). A second group of rooms is often located at the rear of the house, organized around an unroofed garden or peristyle. Modern scholars have assigned conventional Latin and Greek labels to these rooms based upon their internal proportions, syntactic relationships to other rooms, and whether they were open- or close-fronted (i.e. whether they had wide or narrow doorways) (Fig. 1). However, it is seldom possible to determine whether these modern labels correspond to ancient usage, in part because some of the labels (e.g. '*triclinium*') conflate architectural forms with presumed furnishings or activities. Moreover, to judge from extant literary and epigraphic sources, the words used to describe these spaces had a similar polysemy even in antiquity (Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, XVI.5.1; Leach 1997; Riggsby 1997).

Another notable feature of the *atrium* house is its axiality. The *atrium* is accessed from the street through a narrow entrance passage, conventionally labelled '*fauces*', or '*prothyrum*'. This passage aligns with the *tab*(*u*)*linum*, a wide-fronted room at the rear of the *atrium* which, in the A.D. 79 configuration of many houses, gives access through a further, wide-fronted aperture at its rear to a garden/peristyle complex. In some houses, the rear of the *tablinum* is instead a low wall, with a large window to provide a view into the peristyle. Modern scholars have repeatedly emphasized the potential visual axis created by this alignment of *fauces–atrium–tablinum–peristyle* (Le Corbusier [1923] 1958: 140–160; Drerup 1959; Bek 1980: 164–203; Jung 1984; Wallace-Hadrill 1988: 82, 88–89, *et passim*; Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 44, *et passim*; Clarke 1991: 2–6, 87, *et passim*; Hales 2003: 102–122; Nevett 2010: 65, *et passim*; Sewell 2010: 161–163). Even so,

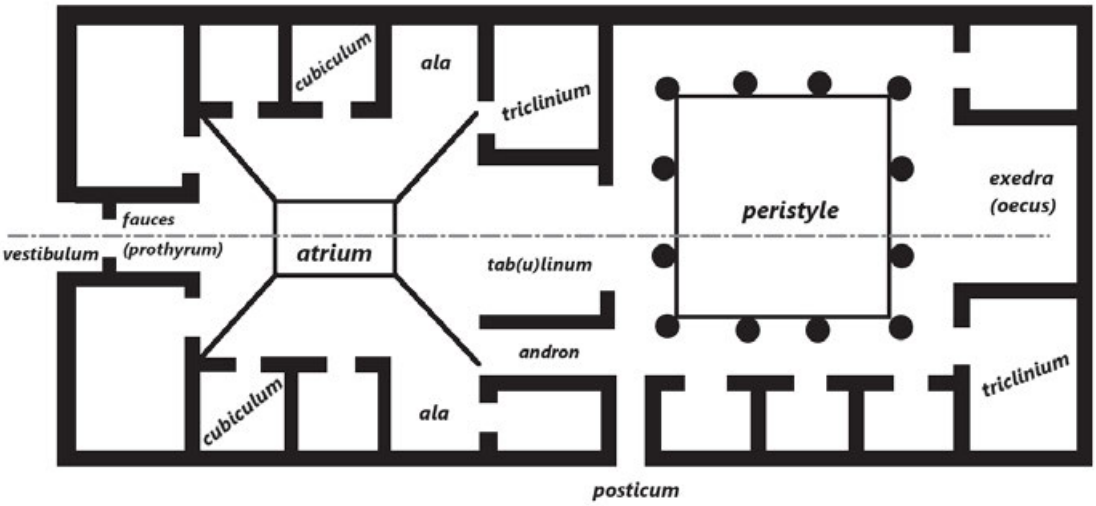


*Figure 1: Plan of an idealized atrium house, showing modern conventional labels for the main rooms and the axial alignment of fauces–atrium–tablinum–peristyle (dashed line). (Illustration by the author, after Mau 1899: 241 Fig. 110)*

the removal of the rear *tablinum* wall was a relatively late phenomenon, and in practice most *tablina* could be closed at the rear by folding doors, or separated from the *atrium* by curtains, or movable or structural partitions. By comparison, the narrow '*fauces*' entrance passage has historically been regarded as a space entirely open to the *atrium*, unfurnished with doors or partitions except for the main, front doors of the house which closed the doorway from the street (*cf. ibid.;* Ivanoff 1859: 82; Overbeck and Mau 1884: 255; Greenough 1890: 8–12; Smith *et al*. 1890: 669 *s. v. 'domus'*; Lauritsen 2011: 69). In this view, when the front doors stood open, passersby were purportedly afforded a framed, axial view from the street or entrance passage into the *atrium* and beyond (Fig. 2). More elaborate syntheses have taken this 'visual transparency' as a 'vivid sign of [the] lack of privacy […] of the Roman house' (Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 44; *cf.* Gell 1832: 152–153). Yet while perceptively distinguishing between planned ideals, built structure, and everyday practice, these characterizations fail to express the degree of structural control provided by architectural fixtures and furnishings. Instead, we read of visually arresting mosaics placed at the boundary between entrance passage and *atrium* (Hales 2003: 109–111), and of access controlled (perhaps figuratively) by visual surveillance and slaves who 'functioned like doors and partitions' (Clarke 1991: 6, 13; *cf.* Wallace-Hadrill 1988: 78). Such nuanced readings of domestic space are insightful, to be sure: the decoration and framed, axial alignment of the *atrium* house are unmistakably deliberate design features. But the evidence for closures has been downplayed to fit a preferred narrative of the public aspect of the Roman house, and this has inadvertently led to the mischaracterization of a diachronically and socially more complex situation.

The allegedly single set of entrance doors has long led scholars to see Pompeian entranceways as analogs for those described by Roman authors. This is particularly true in comparison to Vitruvius' (*De Architectura,* VI.7.1) description of the Greek

*Figure 2: An axial view through the Casa delle Nozze d'Argento (V.2.i) from the main entrance. In its A.D. 79 configuration, the entrance passage was closed by doors at both ends. The front jambs of the tablinum had possible curtain or partition fittings (a pair of figured bronze discs with protruding ship bows (Sogliano 1892: 274; Sogliano 1896: 424; Mau 1893: 33), and the rear of the tablinum was closed by a solid-panel, quadri-valve door (Mau 1893: 33). (Photo by the author)*

entranceway, which has been interpreted as an inherently contrastive statement with respect to putatively 'Roman' entrances:

> 'The Greeks, because they do not use *atria*, do not build them; but going in from the *ianua* [*ab ianua introeuntibus*], they make passages of not-so-spacious width [*itinera faciunt, latitudinibus non spatiosis*]. And from one part (they make) (?)stables [[*e*]*qu*[*i*]*lia*], and from the other part (they make) chambers for the doorkeeper [*ost*[*i*]*ariis cellas*]. And these passages end immediately with interior *ianuae* [*statimque ianuae interiores* (?)*finiuntur*]. This place between the two sets of *ianuae* is called (?)*θυρω*{*ρώ*}*ν* in Greek [*hic autem locus inter duas ianuas graece* (?) *θυρω*{*ρώ*}*ν appellatur*], and thereafter is the entrance into the peristyle.' (my translation; Latin text adapted from Choisy 1909; Ruffel 1964; Callebat 2004)

But there are several problems with this assumption, not least of which is that nowhere in the *De Architectura* does Vitruvius explicitly describe the layout of a

'Roman' entranceway. In a passing comment (VI.7.5), he nevertheless mentions that 'in Greek, the *vestibula* before the *ianuae* are called *πρόθυρα* [lit. 'the (space) before the doors']; we however call *prothyra* what in Greek are called *διάθυρα* [lit. 'the (space) between the doors']' (my translation). Problematically, this is the only recorded use of the word *διάθυρα* in all of Greek and Latin literature (Callebat and Fleury 1995: 355). Still, early scholars such as Desiré Raoul-Rochette (1828: 11–13) preferred to draw parallels between Pompeian entrance passages and Vitruvius' Greek variety. François Mazois (1822: 49, 52–53, 288–289) even imagined the entrance to his fanciful *Palais du Scaurus* with two sets of doors, and in the book's second edition he defended this reconstruction by appealing to houses at Pompeii:

> '*Quelques personnes, dont je respecte le savoir*, *ont paru douter de l'existence du* prothyrum *dans les habitations romaines. J'ai en conséquence fait graver la vue d'un* prothyrum *de Pompéi*. [...] *a fin d'exprimer clairement l'existence des deux portes aux deux extrémités du* prothyrum.' (Mazois 1822: 288–289, plate III)

Critically however, Mazois neglected to explain the evidence upon which this interpretation was based – even when the claim was reprinted two years later in *Les Ruines de Pompei* (1824, Vol. 2: 18–19, *et passim*). Soon afterwards, the English scholar William Gell (1832: 146) also recognized traces of an inner entrance door, this time in the *Casa del Poeta Tragico* (VI.8.3−5), but again, he failed to specify his evidence.

Not everyone agreed with the two door theory: in 1859, Sergio Ivanoff published an influential study entitled *Varie Specie di Soglie in Pompei ed Indagine sul Vero Sito della Fauce*, which included some of the first illustrations of plaster door casts, a preservation technique recently developed (Pagano 1994: 189). Although a noteworthy publication in this respect, Ivanoff tacitly assumed that all architectural doors required stone thresholds, and this led him to reject the earlier claims of Mazois and Gell:

> '[*I*] *moderni autori i quali pongono in mezzo altre porte oltre* [*delle ianuae principali*]*, sia tra le ante della strada, sia tra le ante dell'atrio, cadono manifestamente in errore.*' (Ivanoff 1859: 82)

This assertion was taken up by J. B. Greenough (1890) in what was to become an even more influential study of the Roman *fauces*. Recapitulating Ivanoff's arguments, Greenough asserted that the term '*fauces*' must refer to the entrance passage at the front of the house, rather than the side passage parallel to the *tablinum* as earlier scholars had argued (Mazois 1822: 87; Gell 1832: 159; Gusman 1899: 307). His identification found support in a seemingly backward definition of the word given by Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae*, XVI.5.12) and repeated by Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, VI.8.22). But it hinged upon an alternative interpretation of *De Architectura*, VI.3.6, where Vitruvius prescribed that a feature called '*fauces*' should take its width in proportion to that of the *tablinum*. Greenough's (1890: 8) reading relied especially upon the notion that the entrance passage was open to the *atrium*, and from this point on, the term '*fauces*' gradually became the standard term for entrance passages in the *atrium* house. Meanwhile, the myth that secondary doors in entranceways were rare or non-existent persisted, despite the many traces that came to light as major excavations continued over the next seventy-one years.

## *Definitions and Issues of Interpretation*

In broad terms, four categories of entranceway space (Fig. 3) are discernible for ground-floor domestic properties at Pompeii: (1) direct entrances, (2) entrance vestibules, (3) entrance vestibules with side rooms or side passages, and (4) entrance passages (with or without side rooms). These are etic categories, imposed arbitrarily upon the ancient remains to facilitate description. Whether they held any meaning for ancient Pompeians is open to further analysis. It is particularly important to emphasize that I do not intend an equivalence between the modern term 'vestibule' and its Latin cognate '*vestibulum*'. Much has already been written about the nature and arrangement of Roman *vestibula* (*i.a.* Leach 1993; Lafon 1995), but a full excursus is beyond the scope of this paper. It is clear, for example, that even Vitruvius (*De Architectura*, VI.5.2) sometimes opted for a more expansive definition of *vestibulum* than as a single room or space.

According to the above-mentioned entranceway spaces, we can classify the doorways within them by their relative positions: (a) outer doorways (fronting onto the street), (b) intermediate doorways (placed at a distance behind the outer doorway, and separating the vestibule from a subsequent entrance passage), (c) side doorways (perpendicular to the major axis of the entranceway, and leading into a side room, stairway, or wicket side passage), and (d) inner doorways (those located at the rear of an entrance passage, at the boundary with the *atrium*).

Each of the entranceway categories will be discussed in turn below, but the evidence for the closures themselves is not straightforward. There are several reasons why so few details have survived. Systematic excavations began at Pompeii in 1748, but illicit tunneling appears to have continued into the twentieth century (Varone 1994: 196; Allison 2004: 21–24), so many of the deposits were already disturbed when excavators

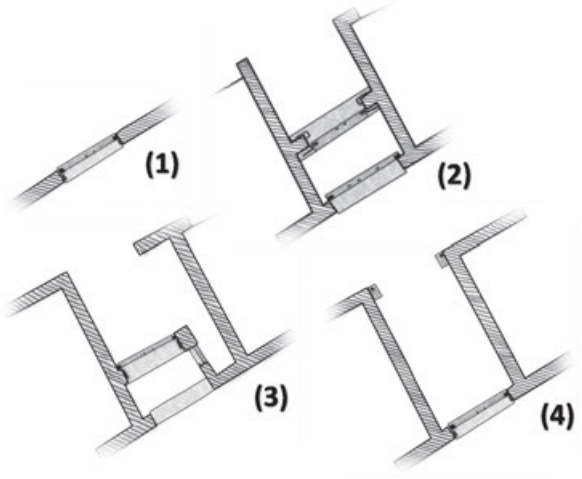


*Figure 3: The four main types of Pompeian entranceway: (1) direct entrance, (2) entrance vestibule (with subsequent entrance passage), (3) entrance vestibule with side room or passage (pictured: with a wicket side doorway), (4) entrance passage. (Illustration by the author)*

uncovered them. Published excavation reports from all periods, except Auricchio (2001), rarely mention impressions left in the volcanic deposits from decayed wooden doors, but metal fittings are noted frequently. Still, there are suspicious lacunae in the data which become particularly obvious when a report mentions only a single pivot socket or hinge. Reading between the lines, it appears that copper-alloy fittings were privileged in the excavation records, while iron fittings were often neglected. Many fittings must not have been recorded at all (for further discussion, Allison 2004: 30–32). As for wood, in a study of the A.D. 79 eruption by Luongo *et al*. (2003: 212, 219–220), carbonized remains were found to come predominantly from non-pyroclastic, basal strata of lapilli, and most preservation was believed to result from post-depositional mineralization (or microbiological degradation (Hatcher 2002)) rather than localized combustion, since the emplacement temperature of the deposits was relatively low (not more than 100° C). The basal layers were not conducive to the preservation of cavities from which plaster casts might be made, since the voids were eventually filled by the surrounding lapilli (Berry 2007: 293). Instead, void spaces were preserved mainly in hardened layers of '*tuono*', associated with the later phases of ash fall and pyroclastic density currents (Stefani 2010: 8–10; but see Varone 1994: 196 on secondary *tuono* formation). Moreover, the technique of casting objects in plaster was only developed in the mid-nineteenth century, and of the more than fifty door casts which I have thus far been able to identify, very few survive intact today. It appears that frequently, impressions of organic objects were only cast in plaster when the pace of excavations allowed it, and it is clear from more recent excavations that not all ash impressions could even be replicated in this way (Auricchio 2001). This is especially true for void spaces that were interconnected (Stefani 2010: 10) or too complicated in form, such as latticework and louvered closures. Indeed, one great irony is that the most complex forms of doors and windows from the Vesuvian sites are so rarely preserved to us, leaving the appearance that their doorways were not furnished with any closures at all. Finally, years of weathering, restoration work, and the aerial bombardment of the site during World War Two have all destroyed or obscured important traces of evidence. The installation and removal of modern gates has complicated the picture even further: threshold stones have occasionally been relocated to new doorways (*cf.* Staub Gierow 2000: 22), or lack clear stratigraphic relationships to their surroundings even when they appear to be *in situ*, and jamb holes have been newly cut or reused to fit modern gates, as in the inner entrance doorways of the *Casa del Torello* (V.1.7) and the *Casa del Gallo* (VIII.5.2). Some traces of modern gates may even date to the Bourbon era (Fiorelli 1862: 111).

## *Direct Entrances*

Direct entrances open immediately from the street into an *atrium* or courtyard without an intervening passage, and so, by definition, they have only one set of entrance doors. One example of this layout is *hospitium* VII.11.6, but the arrangement is relatively uncommon, and since the configuration of the doors is unproblematic, it will not be a

focus of this article. Nevertheless, many *postica* (back entrances) are direct entrances, and so are the main entrances to many civic and religious buildings.

## *Entrance Vestibules*

An entrance vestibule is a space open at its front to the exterior, but often furnished with an outer door. The space is flanked by two side walls, and the rear of the vestibule has an intermediate doorway that connects it to a short entrance passage. The entranceway of the *Casa del Fauno* (VI.12.2) exemplifies this type (Fig. 4): the outer doorway has a large, limestone threshold with settings for a three-leaved, folding door (a 'tri-valve door', Vitruvius' '*valvata*', *De Architectura*, IV.6.6). Two articulated valves folded together into the vestibule against the west wall, and a third, independent valve swung inward against the east wall (i.e. the right-hand side of the doorway for those entering from the street). At the rear of the vestibule, the intermediate doorway has a threshold for a smaller, bivalve door, whose valves swung outward, into the vestibule. This pattern is identical to many other houses, where the outer doorway was normally set for a folding door, e.g. tri-valve: *Casa del Gallo* (VIII.5.2), quadri-valve: *Casa di Arianna* (VII.4.51), while the intermediate door was more commonly a bivalve that swung inward. In some houses, the rear of the vestibule is instead a single step that leads up, into the entrance passage. The step normally lacks any sign of a closure, and instead the inner doorway at the rear of the entrance passage has stone side-plates with settings for a door, e.g. *Casa di Caecilius Iucundus* (V.1.26), *Casa della Fontana Piccola* (VI.8.24).

*Figure 4: The entranceway of the Casa del Fauno (VI.12.2) looking northwest into its vestibule (foreground) and entrance passage (background) with modern gates in place. (Photo by the author)*

## *Entrance Vestibules with Side Rooms or Side Passages*

Some vestibules have a side doorway that leads to a flanking room. Normally this room is a single space without connections to other rooms, but in a few houses, such as the *Casa con Ninfeo* (VIII.2.28), the side room acts as an alternate access route to the *atrium*.

A special sub-class of sixteen excavated entranceways warrants particular attention: the vestibule with wicket side doorway (Fig. 5). In these entranceways, the threshold of the main intermediate doorway keys into a smaller, side threshold to form an 'L'-shape. The small side doorway is functionally a wicket in the overall doorway, although in some cases the two doorways are physically separated by a narrow masonry pier. The wicket door opens into a narrow side compartment, and this compartment re-enters the main entrance passage at a point behind the intermediate doors of the vestibule, allowing one to enter the house without opening the main doors. Wicket side doors have received much scholarly attention (Overbeck and Mau 1884: 254; Noack and Lehmann-Hartleben 1936: 21, 137; Strocka 1991: 85; Dickmann 1999: 75, 81; Kastenmeier 2001; Lauter 2009), but a complete list has heretofore never been published (Table 1). An unresolved question is whether the entranceways with wicket side doors were also furnished with an additional set of outer or inner entrance doors. The streetside entrance to the *Casa di Epidius Rufus* (IX.1.20) was closed by a tri-valve door, to judge from the settings in its limestone threshold. But without reliable finds records, we can only speculate on configurations for the other entranceways.

*Figure 5: The entranceway of the Casa del Torello (V.1.7), showing its main intermediate doorway (left) and wicket side doorway (right) with modern gates in place. (Photo by the author)*

| Modern Entranceway Address | Conventional Name(s) |
|---|---|
| I.8.17 | Casa dei Quattro Stili |
| I.13.12 | Casa con Larario Isiaco |
| I.17.1 | —— |
| V.1.7 | Casa del Torello (di Bronzo); del Toro |
| VI.8.21 | Domus di L. Veranius Hypsaeus |
| VI.10.11 | Casa del Naviglio |
| VI.11.9 | Casa del Labirinto |
| VI.13.13 | —— |
| VI.15.1 | Casa dei Vettii |
| VII.6.3 | Casa della Diana |
| VII.9.47 | Casa delle Nozze di Ercole; di Marte e Venere |
| VII.14.5 | Casa del Cambio; del Banchiere; della Regina d'Inghilterra |
| VIII.2.14 | Casa a Cinque Piani |
| VIII.2.39* | Casa di Giuseppe II |
| IX.1.20 | Casa di Epidius Rufus |
| —— ** | Villa dei Misteri |
| N. B.: *Following Noack and Lehmann-Hartleben (1936: 21), scholars include VIII.2.39 in the list, but I am unable to verify it.; **The Villa dei Misteri vestibule leads directly into a peristyle rather than an entrance passage. | |

*Table 4: The sixteen excavated Pompeian vestibules with wicket side doorways*

## *Entrance Passages*

An entrance passage is a relatively long, narrow space that provides access from the street to an *atrium* or open courtyard. The passage is invariably closed by an outer door at the entrance from the street or preceded by a vestibule. Just like vestibules, entrance passages can be flanked by side rooms, passages, or stairways to upper floors, e.g. *Casa di M. Lucretius* (IX.3.5). It is the inner doors at the rear of these entrance passages that scholars have most often failed to acknowledge as a widespread phenomenon. To trace their existence, we must rely upon several different types of evidence. Table 2 (below) presents fifty examples drawn from across the site which demonstrate a range of diagnostic features, and include both well known extant houses and a few where the evidence has since been destroyed.

*Stone Thresholds* Some inner entrance doorways have a full stone threshold or a pair of stone side-plates with pivot socket settings. In these cases, it is clear that the inner doorway was furnished with a door. Although stone thresholds are relatively uncommon in this location, it would be a mistake to assume that all doors required them. Many Pompeian thresholds were actually made of wood and have since disappeared (Mau 1880: 217, *et passim*; L. Ling 1997: 337).

*Framing Holes* In other houses, the inner doorway is fitted with a pair of holes at the base of its jambs to accommodate a wooden sill. Another pair of holes is then situated

at roughly two meters above floor level for the insertion of a wooden transom. The entranceway of the *Casa di Cerere* (I.9.13) has one of the clearest examples of this system (Fig. 6), but other examples have been noted individually (R. Ling 1997: 299; Coarelli and Pesando 2006: 36–37; Verzár-Bass and Oriolo 2009: 39). The assertion by Overbeck and Mau (1884: 255), repeated by Maiuri (2000: 23), that curtains were commonly used instead of doors has never been supported with evidence, but neither can it be ruled out. It is at least conceivable that some doorways with framing holes were meant for curtains.

*Figure 6: The west wall of the entrance passage in the Casa di Cerere (I.9.13), showing a hole in the wall base for a wooden sill, and a larger hole at 2.10m height for a wooden transom. A plaster cast of the main, outer entrance door can be seen in the background (left). (Photo by the author)*

*Impressions of Wooden Jamb Casings ('Plaster Scars')* The entrance passage of the *Casa delle Nozze d'Argento* (V.2.i) has framing holes too, and the excavator, Giuseppe Spano (1910: 316), reported that a small, iron pivot socket for a door was found near the southeast jamb, containing substantial traces of wood. But the doorway exhibits another feature: long, vertical scars in the plaster on the inner, rear edge of each jamb, 2.35m tall and 0.12m wide on each side, deep enough to expose the underlying masonry. Spano (1910: 316) correctly deduced that these scars were the impressions of wooden casings, but he interpreted them as edge-guards for the plaster rather than the frame for a door. He found evidence for a similar casing in the entrance passage of house VII.6.7 (1910: 454), and in the *Casa di N. Fufidius Successus* (V.2.g), along with the plaster scars, he even observed holes for a wooden transom, but speculated that it had been installed simply to reinforce the jamb casings (1910: 330).

*Plaster Casts and Metal Fittings* Spano never reported artifacts or fittings from these doorways, but in 1914, Matteo della Corte (1914: 294) noted the discovery of another example, in the entrance passage to the *Casa dei Ceii* (I.6.15). This time, the excavators succeeded in making a plaster cast of a wooden transom, located two meters above floor level, along with the upper panel of the west valve of a tri-valve door and part of the wooden door frame (Fig. 7). Although the cast is no longer *in situ*, the inner edges of the jambs still preserve long, vertical scars through the plaster, two meters tall, which terminate at the top in a roughly triangular taper, marking the former location of the transom (Fig. 8). More remarkably, there are no holes in the masonry jambs into which this transom or the wooden casings could have been inserted. Nor does the doorway have a functional threshold: it is merely a narrow, rectangular strip of white marble set flush into the surrounding pavement with a shallow, rectangular cut at each lateral end where the uprights of the wooden frame once stood.

Although Della Corte did not report any fittings − even from this doorway − a reconstruction drawing made by Alberto Sanarica in 1927 represents all three door valves hung on hinges: two articulated valves that folded inward towards the *atrium* on the west side of the doorway, and an independent valve that swung inward against the east jamb (Spinazzola 1953: plate 4). Years after its discovery, Vittorio Spinazzola remarked upon the significance of this find:

> '*Il vestibolo* [...] *è terminato da una seconda porta che occupa il vano di accesso all'atrio per una altezza di 3 metri circa* [*sic*]*, con il suo architrave e i tre battenti, di cui i resti, rinvenuti gli uni in alto, gli altri sui pilastri dell'entrata e calcati, sono oggi visibili al loro posto* [...]. *È la forma classica di questa sorta di diaframmi, posti tra la porta di strada e l'entrata dell'atrio, e negli affreschi è costantamente ripetuta; non se n'era, però, sorpresa nè conservata alcuna, e costituisce col rimanente vestibolo un insieme – unico pervenutoci dall'antichità classica in stato di così chiara conservazione* [...].' (Spinazzola 1953: 258)

## *Tracing a Social Phenomenon*

As Spinazzola implied, many houses at Pompeii show traces of these inner entrance doors. The evidence has simply been overlooked because the scars from the jamb casings are susceptible to weathering, and so many of them resemble naturally incurred damage. Others have been consolidated or filled entirely with modern plaster, e.g. *Casa dei Dioscuri* (VI.9.6–7) (*PPM* Vol. IV: 868, figs. 12–13), while in an inestimable number of further doorways, the plaster scars have disappeared completely, leaving no trace of their former door. In these houses, we can only document the plaster scars when old watercolors, photographs, or written descriptions exist, e.g. *Casa degli Epigrammi Greci* (V.1.18) (Mau 1877: 18).

Because of these factors, we may never know precisely how many Pompeian houses had secondary entrance doors in A.D. 79. But where sufficient evidence exists to make a determination (a criterion that admittedly privileges affirmative answers), we can conclude

*Figure 7: Partial plaster cast of the tri-valve inner entrance door of the Casa dei Ceii (I.6.15). (Archival photograph; SAP photo inv. Pompei B/343). (Reproduced by permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali. Further reproduction or duplication by any means or methods is prohibited)*

*Figure 8: East jamb of the inner entrance doorway of the Casa dei Ceii (I.6.15), showing the approx. 2m tall vertical scar in the plaster on the rear, inner edge of the jamb left by the decayed wooden door frame. (Photo by the author)*

that most entranceways (across all three applicable entranceway types) did have settings for two doors. We can also talk about minimum numbers: across the 363 excavated Pompeian houses in a database compiled by Dr. Miko Flohr (Assistant Director, Oxford Roman Economy Project), there are 'almost 400' non-direct entranceways (a minimum of 393) (Flohr 2012: personal correspondence with the author). So even if we were to count only the evidence for secondary doors listed in Tables 1 and 2, that number would still account for roughly one-sixth of all excavated, non-direct entranceways in Pompeii − without even considering regular vestibule entranceways like the *Casa del Fauno* (VI.12.2). But what was the purpose of entranceways with these different layouts? Did all secondary doors serve a similar function? And how might we discern whether the front doors were left open, as scholars have so often speculated?

All four entranceway types existed from at least the late second century B.C., but it is less clear when inner entrance doors began commonly to be installed. In the early first century B.C., the main vestibule of the *Casa del Fauno* (VI.12.2) was outfitted with its limestone outer- and intermediate thresholds, and a second vestibule entrance, VI.12.5, was created (Hoffmann and Faber 2009: 48−52). Similar vestibules with limestone

thresholds set for outer tri-valve doors and intermediate bivalve doors – e.g. *Casa del Cinghiale* (VIII.2.26), *Casa del Gallo* (VIII.5.2) – must also date to this late First Style period. Nevertheless, tri-valve entrance doors remained in vogue even into the first century A.D. as clearly evidenced by the entrance to the Sanctuary of Isis (VIII.7.28), where the original bivalve was converted to a tri-valve, presumably following the earthquake of A.D. 62/3. In fact, it is perhaps to the outer, folding doors of a vestibule that Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, I.171–2) refers when he envisions the houses of the gods lined along the Milky Way, their *atria* thronged with visitors:

'[…] *dextra laevaque deorum atria*
*nobilium valvis celebrantur apertis*.'

Importantly, this is one of the few explicit references we have to a house's doors standing open. Tacitus (*Annales*, II.82), for example, reports that upon the death of Germanicus, the *fora* were deserted and the houses closed ('*clauderentur domus*'), but we cannot evaluate whether this statement is literal – i.e. the normally open doors to the houses were shut – or figurative: normal routines of visitation were suspended. Indeed, no classical source describes the kind of axial view beyond a vestibule from the street posited by modern scholars. So to resolve the question of whether and when élite Romans left their house doors open, we must turn to the archaeological evidence. Yet there is no guarantee that the remains of the Vesuvian towns buried in A.D. 79 provide a reliable comparison to practices at Rome or beyond at any given period. We must therefore be cautious about conflating different strands of evidence, particularly given the anecdotal nature of our literary sources, and the presumed disparity in size and social status between the residences described by Roman authors and the townhouses of a Campanian municipal élite. Nevertheless, when it comes to social practices at Pompeii *per se*, the material evidence can offer some informative clues.

The outer doors of Pompeian houses were routinely fitted with multiple security measures, from cross-bars to prop bars, drop bolts, latches, bells, and keyed locks, and this suggests a preoccupation with night-time security. In contrast, security devices for the lighter secondary doors have rarely been reported, which suggests that they were meant for a more quotidian purpose. The placement of figured mosaics behind the outer entrance doors further hints that the outer doors were designed to be left open during the day, and this is corroborated by the floor drains so often found directly behind them, e.g. *Casa di Octavius Quartio* (II.2.2), *Casa di M. Lucretius Fronto* (V.4.a)*, Casa del Poeta Tragico* (VI.8.5)*, Casa di M. Lucretius* (IX.3.5). In contrast, mosaics at the boundary between entrance passage and *atrium*, when not purely geometric, tend to precede the inner door, such as the '*SALVE LVCRV*(*m*)' of the *Casa di Siricus* (VII.1.47), or the fortified city walls of the *Casa di M. Caesius Blandus* (VII.1.40). This suggests that they were designed to be seen even when the inner doors were closed.

Taking these features into consideration, it is evident that the entranceways to Pompeian houses were no different than those used in many modern European churches, hotels, and restaurants. The houses were designed with a capability to be nominally 'open' while remaining physically closed at the same time. The outer doors might be

opened in the morning, perhaps at the start of the daily *salutatio*. On a normal day they would remain open during business and social hours, signalling to passersby that the house was open to visitors. The closed intermediate or inner doors served merely to screen the house from the public gaze and dissuade those without legitimate business from entering. The entrances with wicket side doors were in some ways the consummate solution in this respect, since visitors bypassed the intermediate doors entirely, without ever exposing the *atrium* to outsiders along its main visual axis. In formal situations, such as the admittance of a group of *clientes*, the main doors could be used instead. Yet the secondary doors of Pompeian houses could also be left open when desired, particularly during seasons with good weather, or on special occasions when an owner wished to display the full extent of his well-ordered home. Porters and guard dogs could be stationed at the entrance to watch over it when necessary or, in *lieu* of a real dog, a painted or mosaic one might symbolically be used (Stefani 2010: 2−3).

Heinrich Drerup (1959: 156−159) has signalled another important aspect of Pompeian entranceway design: the optimal position for viewing a framed, axial view through the house is from the inner edge of the outer entrance threshold. This suggests that the view was particularly targeted to visitors already inside the entranceway rather than to casual passersby. Specifically, it points to the possibility that the framing was intended to avail upon the *clientes* who might have gathered here before their admittance to the house (*cf.* Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, XVI.15.9). Indeed, Seneca (*De Beneficiis*, VI.33.4) describes morning clients, waiting before the closed *ianuae* of a house at the *salutatio*:

> 'Your friends are not those who, in a long line, knock at your door [*ianuam pulsant*], whom you distribute into the two classes of those to be admitted first, and those to be second!'

Elsewhere in the same passage, he writes of being granted 'permission to sit nearer the *ostium*', and of '*fores* […] opened grudgingly'. Given this varied use of terms, we might question whether Seneca actually envisioned more than one set of entrance doors standing between the assembled *clientes* and their *patronus*. Only once the inner doors were opened would a view into the atrium be revealed (and beyond, provided other doors along the visual axis were not shut).

Maiuri (2000: 20) noted the reduced size and frequency of vestibules constructed in Pompeii's later years, and attributed this to a gradual breakdown of traditional patron-client systems over the course of the early Empire, as well as a shift of household reception activities from the *atrium* to the peristyle complex. Indeed, it would appear that the heyday of vestibule construction occurred in the late second and early first centuries B.C. Hans Lauter (2009: 86) has observed that, '[*w*]*o positive Indizien vorliegen*', vestibules with wicket side doors also date to the late second century B.C. Yet clearly many vestibules retained their form, if not their relevance, well into the Flavian period (*cf.* Allison 2004: 65). However, the discussion of vestibule function has thus far not accounted for doors at the inner end of entrance passages.

It is unclear when doors of this type were first installed. Several inner entrance doorways on Delos have full stone thresholds, but these belong to a small number of large, late Hellenistic houses (Llinas 1973: 291–295). The inner doors of Roman

houses at Paestum also have full stone thresholds that were installed in a later, secondary period, e.g. Insula n-2, House C (Bragantini *et al.* 2008: 111−112). And at Pompeii too, a number of inner entrance doorways have full thresholds or side-plates of trachytic lava-stone. Although this material was used throughout the town's history, it was largely superseded by limestone and, later, marble for all but the most utilitarian doorways (L. Ling 1997; Staub 2009). The lava-stone side-plates in the entrance passage of the *Casa dell'Ancora* (VI.10.7), for example, tentatively belong to the house's 'late Samnite' second phase, '*intorno alla fine del II sec. a.C.*' (Coarelli and Pesando 2006: 227–228). The entranceway also has a vestibule, paved in the Second Style, with thresholds for an outer and an intermediate door. So it is possible that, from the late first century B.C., all three doorways had closures at the same time. Yet in general, side-plates and full stone thresholds appear to have been an early method for hanging the inner doors, superseded by framed and hinge-hung varieties.

An aesthetic shift may partly explain the transition from stone thresholds to framed pivoted and hinge-hung doors: in the period of the Third Style, the doorstop margins of many thresholds were re-carved to position the pivoted doors flush with the walls of the *atrium*, and Thomas Staub (2009: 211–212) has convincingly argued that this change was meant to accord with the flatter perspective systems used in Third Style wall-paintings. Still, this does not explain why *atria* decorated in earlier styles should have their entrance passages retro-fitted with hinge-hung doors. The *Casa Sannitica* at Herculaneum, whose entrance passage is decorated in the First Style, has the tell-tale holes for a wooden transom at the inner doorway of its entrance passage. In this case, the decoration alone is not a reliable dating indicator, even though the decoration event *per se* serves as a useful *terminus post quem*. The same applies to the *Casa di Cerere* (I.9.13), where the holes have been cut roughly through the Second Style plaster of the entrance passage, and must be a later development. The vertical plaster scars in the late Third Style entrance passage of the *Casa dei Ceii* (I.6.15) may be contemporary with the decoration, but it is in Fourth Style entranceways that we find unambiguous evidence for pre-planned, wooden frames. The most complete example survives in the *Casa delle Danzatrici* (VI.2.22) (Fig. 9), where the jambs are decorated as fluted, stuccowork pilasters with Corinthianizing capitals, and an area 2.09m tall and 0.16m wide (on both sides of the inner, rear edge of the jambs) is left unplastered where the wooden casings and transom once masked the underlying masonry. This style of decoration is common to many Fourth Style entranceways, and often the pilasters are mirrored by a second pair on the jambs of the *tablinum*, albeit without settings for jamb casings.

Since relatively few First and Second Style entrance passages survive with their original jambs and thresholds intact, it is difficult to ascertain whether the mid-first century A.D. witnessed a dramatic shift towards a more private, enclosed entrance passage, coinciding with the diffusion of closure systems in *alae* and *tablina* in this period, or whether the practice had already been widespread. Perhaps the Roman houses of Campania were tending towards an entranceway style already diffused in the eastern Mediterranean at centers such as Delos. Or perhaps, rather than a reduction in vestibule space as Maiuri had posited, the installation of inner entrance doors resulted from a

*Figure 9: Inner entrance doorway of the Casa delle Danzatrici (VI.2.22), showing the wide, vertical plaster scars on the Fourth Style fluted, stuccowork jamb pilasters. The scar on the south jamb (right) has been filled with modern plaster. (Photo by the author)*

desire to increase the capacity of entranceway spaces to accommodate visitors, even as traditional vestibules went out of style. In any case, more work is necessary to better understand this phenomenon.

## *Reconsidering the 'View from the Street'*

Not all doors obstructed a view into the house. In fact, rather than limiting a house's display potential, closure systems actually presented homeowners with a greater range of options for display. Gusman (1899: 291) claimed that an openwork gate ('*grille*') had been installed in the intermediate doorway at the rear of the vestibule in the *Casa di Popidius Priscus* (VII.2.20). Similarly, a few Second Style wall-paintings show openwork entrance gates in sanctuary scenes (Barnabei 1901: Fig. 14), although solid-panel doors are more commonly depicted. Even though the closures are a regular, full height, the space above them is left open, allowing the observer a partially obstructed view to a central *tholos*, tripod, or statue beyond. In some scenes, the entrance doors are even set back from the façade, leaving a vestibule space furnished with benches on either side, not unlike those flanking real house entrances at Pompeii such as the *Casa di M. Obellius Firmus* (IX.14.3), or the *Casa di Octavius Quartio* (II.2.2) (on the distribution and function of benches, see Hartnett 2008).

The *Casa dell'Orso Ferito* (VII.2.45), whose mosaic fountain was contemporary with the installation of its inner entrance door, clearly took advantage of these display

possibilities. Third and Fourth Style inner entrance doors generally occupied two-thirds of the height of their doorways, standing between 1.80m and 2.20m tall. The inner door of the *Casa dell'Orso Ferito* was at the lower end of this scale. At 1.75m tall, it could technically be considered a gate. But the low height was designed to give a specific effect: from the house's entrance passage, the gate perfectly framed the pediment of the mosaic fountain in the small garden at the rear of the house, while obstructing a general view of the *atrium* (presuming the gate was of solid construction).

Tri-valve doors could also be used to a homeowner's display advantage. With only the right-hand valve open, an off-axis view could be created, whereas if only the middle valve were open, it would narrow an observer's focus to the central line of the visual axis. This was the case in the *Casa della Fontana Grande* (VI.8.22) where the central, one meter wide valve of the outer tri-valve entrance door perfectly framed the mosaic fountain at the rear of the property, along with its two flanking columns. The same effect could be achieved for features in other houses by selectively opening the tri-valve inner entrance doors.

## *Conclusions*

Although direct evidence for secondary doors in the entranceways of Pompeian houses is relatively scarse, this lack of evidence can be attributed to the taphonomy, excavation, and post-excavation history of the Vesuvian sites. Much trace evidence still exists, and from these indications we can infer that many, if not most houses at Pompeii were furnished with secondary entrance doors in their final, A.D. 79 phase. Moreover, many houses – such as the *Casa del Fauno* (VI.12.2) − had been designed this way from their earliest construction. These secondary doors provided inhabitants with a greater degree of control over the privacy of their homes than has previously been assumed, and they challenge any notion that homeowners placed a greater emphasis on public display than on considerations of household privacy. Nevertheless, closure systems also provided inhabitants with flexible means to modify and enhance the display potential of a house. Ultimately, they played a significant role in the articulation of domestic space and social interactions at the boundary between public and private.

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| Modern Entranceway Address | Conventional Name(s) | Extant Dimensions of Inner Doorway* | Main Evidence**, *** |
|---|---|---|---|
| I.6.15 | Casa dei Ceii; di Fabia e Tyranno; della Regina Elena | height: approx. 3m; width: 1.62m | partial plaster cast of a tri-valve door w/ transom (no longer *in situ*); plaster scars (height: approx.. 2m); marble threshold |
| I.7.3 | —— | —— | transom holes (elevation: approx.. 2m); narrow plaster scars (height: approx. 2m) in front of jamb pilasters |
| I.9.13 | Casa di Cerere | height: 3.41m; width: 1.70m | transom holes (elevation: 2.11m; diam: 0.22–0.26m); holes at jamb base (diam: 0.11–0.16m) |
| I.10.11 | Casa degli Amanti | height: 2.84m; width: 1.55m (R. Ling 1997: 299) | transom holes (elevation: 1.85m; diam: 0.14m); holes at jamb base (*non vidi*) (R. Ling 1997: 299) |
| I.11.12 | House adjacent to the Caupona di Euxinus | height: 2.63m; width: 1.51m | two (alabaster (south) and limestone (north)) side-plates w/ pivot settings |
| I.12.11 | Casa dei Pittori | height: 2.30m; width: 1.64m | one marble side-plate w/ pivot setting |
| I.15.3 | Casa della Nave Europa | height: 3.67m; width: 1.96m | limestone threshold w/ pivot settings and two drop–bolt holes |
| II.3.3 | Casa della Venere in Conchiglia | height: 3.37m; width: 1.73m | one marble side-plate w/ pivot setting and rectangular casing slot |
| III.2.1 | Casa di Trebius Valens | —— | raised threshold; transom holes (?) (*non vidi* – destroyed) (PPM Vol. III: 345, Fig. 4) |
| V.1.7 | Casa del Torello (di Bronzo); del Toro | height: (?); width: 2.23m | transom holes (elevation: 2.15m) (authenticity uncertain; formerly used for a modern gate) |
| V.1.26 | Casa di Caecilius Iucundus | height: 3.77m; width: 2.21m | two marble side-plates w/ pivot settings |
| V.2.g | Casa di N. Fufidius Successus | height: 1.30m; width: 1.81m | transom holes (*non vidi* – destroyed); plaster scars (*non vidi* – destroyed) (Spano 1910: 330); vertical rabbet in masonry along inner corner of west jamb (preserved height: 1.30m) |
| V.2.i | Casa delle Nozze d'Argento | height: (?); width: 2.70m | transom holes (elevation: 2.20m); holes at jamb base; plaster scars (height: 2.35m); small, iron pivot socket w/ remains of wood (Spano 1910: 316) |

| Modern Entranceway Address | Conventional Name(s) | Extant Dimensions of Inner Doorway* | Main Evidence**, *** |
|---|---|---|---|
| V.2.1 | Casa della Regina Margherita | —— | two lava-stone side-plates w/ pivot settings |
| V.2.15 | —— | height: 2.59m; width: 1.58m | two pairs of transom holes (first pair elevation: 1.80m; second pair elevation: 2.04m); holes at jamb base |
| V.4.a | Casa di M. Lucretius Fronto | height: 2.36m; width: 1.29m | raised marble threshold w/ two casing slots and a central drop–bolt setting; narrow (width: 0.05m) plaster scars (height: 2.30m) in front of jamb pilasters |
| VI.1.10 | Casa del Chirurgo | height: 3.54m; width: 2.37 | plaster scars (height: 1.95m) |
| VI.2.22 | Casa delle Danzatrici | height: 3.25m; width: 1.50m | lava-stone threshold; plaster scars (height: 2.09m) |
| VI.3.7 | —— | height: (?); width: approx. 2.1m | two limestone side-plates w/ pivot settings |
| VI.7.9 | Domus e Officina Lignaria di Tullius | height: 3.38m; width: 1.52m | limestone threshold (confirmed to be *in situ* by adherent cocciopesto from the pavement of room (16)) |
| VI.7.18 | Casa di Adone Ferito | height: 3.575m; width: 1.73m | two marble side-plates w/ pivot settings |
| VI.8.5 | Casa del Poeta Tragico | —— | plaster scars (height: approx. 2m) |
| VI.8.21 | Domus di L. Veranius Hypsaeus | height: 3.15m; width: 2.46m | lava-stone threshold |
| VI.8.22 | Casa della Fontana Grande | height: 4.18m; width: 2.80m | transom holes (elevation: 2.20m); holes at jamb base; the masonry of the west, inner edge of each jamb is chamfered to a height of 2.06m |
| VI.8.24 | Casa della Fontana Piccola | height: 3.75m; width: 1.58m | two lava-stone side-plates; plaster scars (height: 3.16m) |
| VI.9.2 | Casa di Meleagro | height: 3.82m; width: 1.90m | plaster scar on south jamb (height: >1.73m (not preserved to full height)) |
| VI.9.6 | Casa dei Dioscuri | height: >3.23m; width: 2.05m | plaster scars (height: 1.82m) |
| VI.9.7 | Casa dei Dioscuri; Domus Cn. Gaetroni Eutychi | height: >3.24m; width: 1.84m | two lava-stone side-plates |

| Modern Entranceway Address | Conventional Name(s) | Extant Dimensions of Inner Doorway* | Main Evidence**, *** |
|---|---|---|---|
| VI.10.2 | Casa dei Cinque Scheletri | height: 3.37m; width: 1.87m (Coarelli and Pesando 2006: 37) | transom holes (elevation: 2.20m) (partly filled with later brick); holes at jamb base (mostly filled with later plaster) |
| VI.10.7 | Casa dell'Ancora | height: 2.83m; width: 1.85m | lava-stone side-plates w/ pivot settings (authenticity confirmed by relationship to later Second Style mosaic pavement) |
| VI.13.2 | Casa del Gruppo dei Vasi di Vetro | height: 3.77m; width: 2.20m (Verzár-Bass and Oriolo 2009: 39) | transom holes (elevation: (?)) (*non vidi*) (Verzár-Bass and Oriolo 2009: 39) |
| VI.16.7 | Casa degli Amorini Dorati | —— | two lava-stone side-plates |
| VI.16.15 | Casa dell'Ara Massima | height: 2.06m; width: 1.61m | two lava-stone side-plates |
| VII.1.47 | Casa di Siricus | —— | two lava-stone side-plates |
| VII.2.16 | Casa di M. Gavius Rufus | —— | lava-stone threshold w/ pivot settings and raised doorstop |
| VII.2.45 | Casa dell'Orso Ferito | height: 3.05m; width: 1.84m | plaster scars (height: 1.75m) |
| VII.6.7 | —— | —— | plaster scars (?) (*non vidi* – destroyed) (Spano 1910: 454) |
| VII.11.14 | Albergo dei Cristiani | —— | two lava-stone side-plates |
| VII.14.5 | Casa del Cambio; del Banchiere; della Regina d'Inghilterra | —— | two limestone side-plates w/ pivot settings |
| VIII.2.26 | Casa del Cinghiale | height: 3.50m; width: 1.86m | raised, masonry jamb bases w/ marble revetment |
| VIII.2.30 | Casa di Severus | height: 2.85m; width: 2.79m | two limestone side-plates |
| VIII.2.34 | Casa delle Colombe | height: 3.71m; width: 2.73m | transom hole in east jamb (elevation: 2.26m); marble threshold w/ pivot settings |
| VIII.5.2 | Casa del Gallo | height: 3.50m; width: 2.75m | transom holes (elevation: 2.07m ) (authenticity uncertain; formerly used for a modern gate) |

| Modern Entranceway Address | Conventional Name(s) | Extant Dimensions of Inner Doorway* | Main Evidence**, *** |
|---|---|---|---|
| VIII.5.5 | Casa del Gallo | height: 2.26m; width: 1.57m | lava-stone threshold w/ pivot settings |
| IX.1.22 | Casa di M. Epidius Sabinus | height: >3.63m; width: 1.64m | plaster scars (height: 1.91m (partly modern restoration)) |
| IX.2.16 | Casa di T. Dentatius Panthera | —— | transom holes (elevation: 2.13m) (repointed for use with a modern gate); plaster scar on west jamb (height: 2.21m) |
| IX.3.5 | Casa di Marcus Lucretius | height: (?); width: 2.38m | jamb holes (elevation: 2.83m); plaster scars (height: 1.90m) |
| IX.5.6 | —— | —— | plaster scars (not preserved to full height) |
| IX.6.3 | Domus di Q. Bruttius Balbus | height: 2.85; width: 1.74m | two lava-stone side-plates w/ pivot settings |
| IX.6.5 | Domus di Oppius Gratus e Quartilla | height: 3.56m; width: 1.87m | two lava-stone side-plates w/ pivot settings |

*Table 5: Fifty Pompeian entranceways with evidence for an inner door or other closure at the rear of the main entrance passage.*

N. B.: This is not a complete list. It is intended merely to demonstrate that inner entrance doors were common at Pompeii, and that their existence must be deduced from several types of evidence.

*Doorway heights are fraught with interpretive difficulties. I prefer to describe them 'as they are'. Each doorway has been measured to the ancient lintel elevation when known. Otherwise it has been measured to the maximum preserved or reconstructed height of the jambs.

**Unless taken from a referenced source, the elevation of each pair of transom holes has been measured from floor level to the center of the transom holes.

***Evidence from stone side-plates must be used with caution, since the stones do not always have a clear stratigraphic relationship to their doorway or surrounding pavement.