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Response to the comments of B. Bergmann and C. H. Hallett (*JRA* 14, 56-57 and 414-16)

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My article on Roman wall-painting and social significance (*JRA* 14, 33-56) provoked two immediate reactions. I would like to show that both scholars misinterpreted my argument and intentions.

Bergmann's views are compatible in all respects with mine expressed in my article. In two introductory sections (33-42) I drew attention to some major misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the chronological model of Roman wall-painting developed by H. G. Beyen by scholars who have recently focused on paintings in their spatial and social context. B. agrees "that we lose much by neglecting the contributions of 19th- and 20th-c. scholars". Presumably she took offence at what she calls my "*ad hominem* recriminations". In order to state my argument clearly, I quoted from several recent studies, mentioning their authors and places of publication. I pointed out as straightforwardly as possible that some of their views expressed are demonstrably untenable or, in some cases, not as innovative as suggested. This was done not to incriminate the authors but to bring some clarity in a discussion which risks becoming embroiled. Unfortunately, Bergmann does not question the validity of any of my specific "recriminations", limiting herself to some general observations.

She defines as my "main concern (...) that current scholars do not find Beyen's methods (and [my] own) worth emulating", and prefer to employ other approaches "looking at paintings within larger ensembles and spatial networks" which "might shed some light on the rooms they embellished". Nothing is less true. I agree with her that scholars understandably "find the search for and understanding of these relationships as appealing as attempting to validate *Stufe C* of *Phase I* of Beyen's Second Style" — I would say "far more appealing". That is the reason why I relegated that specific validation to an Appendix (53-56), in spite of the perspectives it opens up for social history (56), and devoted my main section (42-53; discussed neither by Bergmann or Hallett) to the study of wall-painting in its spatial and social dimensions (cf. also *JRA* 9 [1996] esp. 366-74). Moreover, I stressed that "the basic concepts underlying this [new] line of research are sound and stimulating" (34); that "any comprehensive account of Roman wall-painting should transcend the level of specialists' chronological 'finger-exercises' and encompass the synchronic dimension"; that "actually, this is a *communis opinio* by now, and rightly so" (36); and that the contributions of social historians able "to introduce more appropriate and refined concepts and vocabulary ... can only be welcomed" (42). My real concern in sections 1 and 2 was to counter the current trend to 'throw out the baby with the bath-water', i.e., the diachronic with the synchronic dimension, since "a sound functional model of Roman wall-painting cannot dispense with careful attention to diachronic developments in both form and style" (36).

Further, Bergmann suggests that I made two "basic assumptions that current scholarship undermines". The first is that "terms long used to label living spaces ... have assumed new meanings in modern scholarship", which "removes from our understanding even those spaces whose functions we thought we knew because we had named them", and, as a corollary, the realization that parts of the Roman house are flexibly used, due to "the complexity of the Roman household with its variable constituents". In fact, these caveats are fully in line with what I wrote.¹ The point at stake seems rather to be that I do not share the minimalistic position of some scholars in this question, since I continue to consider "close examination of the literary evidence for the light it sheds on the use of domestic space ... the only way in which we might catch glimpses of the functional scale as a whole, even if we are not always able to assign to an individual room its proper ancient designation" (43). It is clear to both of us that "spaces cannot always be identified as either public or private, wealthy or poor, servile or 'seignorial'". However, this should not detract from the fact that a specific room in a Roman (especially elite) house can mostly be assigned a place on a scale somewhere between the extremes of the aforementioned categories *in relation to the other rooms* of the same house.

It should, of course, be borne in mind that categories like these are simplifying auxiliaries: they are part of a conceptual model, which as such can be validated, modified or falsified as our research proceeds. The main section of my article (42-53) is an illustration of how "basic assumptions" may be questioned: I argued that the concept of "public" versus "private" when applied to wall-painting seems to be much more relevant for

1 This might have been deduced from my words "Admittedly, Vitruvius' Roman house, with its neat distinction between areas accessible to the general public, on the one hand, and to people invited on the other, and its unequivocal allocation of certain room types to either of these areas, is a construct. Like so many other subjects in his treatise, it contains both prescriptive and descriptive elements. As such it may be at variance with the evidence in the field to a greater or lesser extent" (42-43); "Due allowance should also be given to the flexible use of space and to room functions changing over time" (43); or my cautionary note "The empty rooms of an individual Roman house resound with our ignorance" (53).