OTIUM AS *LUXURIA*: ECONOMY OF STATUS IN THE YOUNGER PLINY'S *LETTERS*

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Among Pliny's more poignant tributes to deceased senatorial colleagues is that honoring C. Fannius, whose death curtailed his writing of a lengthy historical account of the Emperor Nero's victims and abuses of power. The three volumes completed were diligently researched and stylistically engaging, *inter sermonem historiamque medios*. Frequent, enthusiastically received readings fired the author's desire for further production. Pliny attributes the unfinished state of Fannius's book to his need to economize his time for writing it amidst a schedule of judicial obligations. That Fannius was a public man added value to his work even while impeding its progress. Thus Pliny meditates on the antithesis of *voluptates* and *opera* (*Epistles* 5.5.4):

> Nam qui voluptatibus dediti quasi in diem vivunt, vivendi causas cotidie finiunt, qui vero posteros cogitant, et memoriam sui operibus extendunt, his nulla mors non repentina est, ut quae semper incohatum aliquid abrumpat.
>
> For persons dedicated to pleasures live as if from day to day, and daily they terminate their reasons for living, but those who think truly of future generations and extend their memory by their works, for these persons there is no death that is not untimely, as always interrupting something just begun.[1]

1 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

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Pliny's dichotomy of lifestyles centers about writings, which, as material products, confer a measure of value upon time. Paradoxically, it is Fannius's prospective *immortalitas* that renders his death untimely (*immatura mors*). Fannius's ambitious perseverance in writing makes him parallel with Pliny, who closes the letter with reflections on his own mortality and that of his correspondent, Novius Maximus, both motivated by the aim of creating a memorial that death cannot remove. These reflections are paradigmatic of the phenomenon I will discuss in this paper: Pliny's construction of time within the field of cultural semiotics as a location for symbolic capital. Just as productivity is opposed to indulgence, Pliny positions *otium*, or luxury time, as an alternative to material luxury: a sign of status whose valuation is wholly dependent upon its modes of employment and display.

From its first extant mention in Latin literature, a soldiers' chorus in Ennius's tragedy *Iphigenia* (frg. XCIX Jocelyn), *otium* has defined itself by its separation from *negotium*, the precondition of its conceptual existence, but the relationship changes with the changing conditions of society. While the opposition between *otium* and *negotium* during periods of triumviral ascendency renders leisure an ambivalent condition for Cicero,[2] Pliny constructs this opposition as the reason for leisure to be prized. In his comprehensive study of the Roman intellectual history of *otium*, J. M. André traced (1966.531) Cicero's republican ambivalence into a downward spiral of pejorative associations with luxury among Augustan writers. Within this context, he judged Pliny's approach to temporal economics a republican throwback "showing the moral scruples of Cicero and a Catonian fear of wasted time" (535). This paper will take a rather different approach, invoking Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic capital" to argue that Pliny reinvents the Roman significance of *otium* for his social and political context, as luxury time, and associates it with cultural production in such a way as to confer distinction upon aristocratic life.[3] Cultural products gain value

2 As he writes to Quintus in 54 (*ad Quintum fratrem* 2.9*):* "Tu metuis ne me interpelles? Primum si in isto essem, scis quid sit interpellare otiantem," "Are you fearing to interrupt me? First off, even if I were in such as state, you know what interrupting an idler is worth"; or complains in addressing Book 2 of the *de Officiis* to Marcus *f.* of the time that forensic disemployment has set free for writing. Such *otium sine dignitate,* so to speak, is, of course, very different from Cicero's cherished earlier conceptualization of the *cum dignitate otium* resulting from an ideal *concordia ordinum* as set forth in *pro Sestio* 98.

3 Bourdieu 1991.105: "Symbolic power concerns the part played by words in the construction of social reality." Hoffer 1999.10–12 notes the applicability of this terminology, which he uses primarily in the context of exchanges of material and immaterial favors.

as symbolic capital through connection with a society in which they can figure as commodities of investment and exchange. This paper will sketch four aspects of Pliny's construction of *otium* as *luxuria*: 1, its difficulty to obtain; 2, its value in reciprocity; 3, its status as reward; 4, its significance for government and society.

To appreciate the significance with which Pliny infuses his configuration of *otium*, we need to place it alongside contemporaneous cultural valuations of material *luxuria,* a topic on which Pliny is curiously silent. I say curiously because other imperial writers, almost without exception, have words of praise or blame on the subject.[4] Having in recent years become the focus of considerable attention in Roman cultural studies, this Roman discourse of material culture, no less than that of *otium*, has a complex history whose variations are nuanced by its association with power.[5] To the Romans themselves, this association was a never-ending source of fascination, easily viewed in retrospect yet pertinent to contemporary mores. Valerius Maximus, for instance, traces many theoretically damaging customs and tendencies to their historical beginnings, and thereby becomes an influential source for contemporary and subsequent writers.

In its association with the private individual, luxury figures as a matter of opprobrium in the republic. Cicero's often quoted phrase from *pro Murena* 35, "the Roman people hate private luxury; they love public magnificence," is representative. Yet a variety of witnesses, including Cicero himself, reveal that a sparing of material culture was scarcely the rule by which large numbers of republican nobles governed their lives. Rather, their private expenditures often matched their public—and sometimes intermingled—as when young M. Aemilius Scaurus dragged home through the Forum some of the tallest marble columns that had graced the temporary three-storied stage erected for his aedilician games.[6] A negative association of material culture with *avaritia* seems to have been intensified by the Sullan

4 Pliny does, of course, have critical words concerning ephemeral luxuries, such as those of the table (1.15, 2.6), although his quite lenient view in 9.17 allows each person his/her own pleasure. In the area of material properties, Silius Italicus overdoes his collecting of books and literary statues, although for sentimental reasons, as does Attilius Regulus in the public extravagance of his memorials to his son (4.7), but even these instances of criticism are rare.

5 Edwards 1993.137–32, Dalby 2000.8–13.

6 Valerius Maximus 2.4.6; Pliny *NH* 36.114–15: "M. Scauri, cuius nescio an aedilitas maxime prostraverit mores. . . ." He goes on to describe the elaborate triple-storied stage built for his games.

proscriptions when the goods of those executed came up for auction, giving rise to the saying that a man's statues or villas might effectively become a cause for his death. Sulla's upstart henchman Crysogonus descends the Palatine from a house stuffed with Corinthian and Delian vases (*pro Roscio* 46). The swagger is implied. "What embossed silver, what embroidered coverlets, what painted tablets, what marbles do you think he has in his house?" But a noperson like Crysogonus had to have learned his taste from somewhere. Among those plutocrats of relatively legitimate prosperity, the name of L. Licinius Lucullus became a byword for exceeding senatorial decorum. Plutarch calls his table service and his banquets more appropriate for the newly rich than for a senator (*Life of Lucullus* 40–41). Although Plutarch wrote retrospectively, his assessment, much of it embodied in anecdotes, must reflect to some extent the attitudes of Lucullus's contemporaries. Even Cicero reproaches Lucullus for competing with a freedman in the magnificence of his villa building.[7] Vulgar associations devalue luxury. Claudius's freedmen are a real-life demonstration of this point, but it is Nero who brings serious vulgarity into the environment of royal power. Suetonius remarks, as if bedazzled, upon the wondrous opulence of gilding, gems, and sea-shells decorating the interior of the Golden House (*Vita Neronis* 31), but Tacitus diffuses the wonder of such trimmings; they are already so vulgarized across society as a whole that Nero's only monumental power play is his spatial appropriation of the park (*Ann.* 15.42).

Was Tacitus correct in declaring that the spread of material luxury throughout imperial society actually exceeded its republican high-water mark? As contemporaneous witnesses to the social contexts of luxury, both Seneca and Pliny's uncle give corroborative testimony, the one from a philosophical standpoint, the other scientific. Seneca, with predictable Stoic moralizing, paints a contemporary landscape where "houses and temples are gleaming with marble," while "massive stones are made round and smooth to form colonnades or support structures large enough to contain the entire populace" (*Ep. Mor.* 90.25). While many of his remarks carry the ring of the commonplace, his scene painting can sometimes be quite precise. Visiting the villa of Scipio at Liternum, whose utilitarian bathing quarters are admirably dark and cramped, Seneca describes in contrasting profusion of detail the modern thermal establishment whose walls gleam with large circles;

7 *de Legibus* 3.30–31, but Cicero is not always so critical and also praises the life-like statues at Lucullus's villa.

where Alexandrian marble (Egyptian porphyry) is set off with veneers of Numidian stone (*giallo antico*), embellished with intricate mosaic borders, while glassy ceilings, and gleaming marble-lined pools complete the whole (*Ep. Mor*. 86.4.6). Yet these are mere *plebiae fistulae* beside which, he goes on to say, the establishments of freedmen are even more luxurious with their plethora of statues and ornamental columns—superfluous because they are placed with nothing to support. Are these establishments public or private? Are the owners imperial freedmen? What rank of society "cannot endure unspotted marble"? Although Seneca was eyewitness to Nero's interior luxury, he never refers to it expressly, leaving us to conjecture to what extent his comments incorporate an indirect response. Tragedies, however, make the equation between luxury and tyrannical evil explicit. The messenger in *Thyestes* 645–47 who reports Atreus's butchery of his nephews describes the topography of the palace with its patterned columns—the word *maculosae* here invoking the blood-spotted history of the house. In the daily life images of the letters, however, no wickedness but rather adult childishness attaches to the passion for decoration. While speckled pebbles on the beach can satisfy children, their elders must have maculated columns dragged out of Egyptian sands or African deserts that support dining halls large enough to contain a whole populace (115.8). That Seneca himself was reputedly not untainted by such excesses seems not to inhibit his criticism.

From his Flavian vantage point, the Elder Pliny parallels Seneca's association between luxury and the ill-regulated life in remarking how the bad Caesars, Gaius and Nero, encircled all the city of Rome with their palaces, but he also, in the spirit of Cicero's *pro Murena* declaration, praises great public building projects such as the Forum of Augustus and the Vespasianic Templum Pacis as the most beautiful in the world (*NH* 36.112). Like Valerius Maximus, Pliny had an interest in identifying watersheds of cultural history. A scientific philosophy that favors man's rational, equilibrious interaction with nature[8] prompts him to inveigh against social excesses such as the bold violence of quarrying at the same time that he provides such valuable information as the catalogue of the names, the markings, and the provenance of colored marbles in *NH* 36. Inflating folly to epic proportions, he envisions whole mountain ranges, which Nature intended only to structure the land and resist the force of the ocean, being carried across the seas in costly ships designed expressly to allow perishable mortals to luxuriate

8 On Pliny's philosophy of man and nature, see Beagon 1992.75–79, Isager 1992.204.

amidst the variety of colored and patterned stones (36.1.3: "ut inter maculas lapidum iaceant"). Veneering, the invention of a "man of misdirected talent" (*importuni ingenii*) serves the craving for luxury by dividing it (sic) into many portions (36.9.51).

Such aspersions serve to highlight the frequently noticed moral and aesthetic shift that occurs with the forthright descriptions of material luxury in Statius's *Silvae*, poems often seen to exemplify a new imperial "culture of praise."[9] Individuals of different social provenances, from emperor to freedmen, populate each book, intermingling private with public places and making the diffusion of luxury across a spectrum of classes one of the most telling indications of its acculturation. Aside from the scale of the construction, it is only the degree of familiarity in the speaker's address that sets aristocratic villas apart from imperial palaces.

The artful selection of colored marbles enlivening the small and elegant baths of the prosperous imperial servant Claudius Etruscus, the equestrian son of an imperial freedman, admits no lower-class effects (*nil plebium est*). Approaching his *ekphrasis* of the bathing facility as a recreational exercise that gives respite from the burden of serious poetry, Statius transforms its chambers into another art grotto of the Muses. As Alex Hardie remarks (1983.133–34), this encomiastic rhetoric reinforces the poet's own discriminating Callimachean aesthetics by highlighting the owner's tasteful judgment, yet one finds little significant difference between the richness of these materials and those of Domitian's banqueting room where five kinds of stone are named, and columns numbering more than a hundred compete with Atlas in their ability to shoulder the burdens above. Often using place names, Numidian, Chian, Phrygian, as a codified reference to the marbles, the speaker shows that his *ekphrasis* is directed to a knowledgeable audience for whom these poetic allusions combine specific visual information with a sense of geographical command. Since the marble in both palace and bath emanates from the now imperially controlled quarries, the celebration of this opulence is also a celebration of Roman hegemony.

While Etruscus's particular access to colored marbles might be thought to indicate his privileged status as son of a highly valued imperial freedman, there is minimal difference, so far as the quality and costliness of decorative materials are concerned, not only between these baths and Domitian's imperial dining hall, but also between this venue and the homes

9 Hardie 1983.86–87 places *epideixis* within the rhetorical tradition.

of rich aristocrats both within and outside of Rome. Always using the narrative perspective of a visitor to dramatize spectatorship, Statius conveys images of Roman domestic interiors as a dazzle of light and a panorama of color. Reflections from metallic ornaments and gildings intensify natural light. Running water also sends back gleams and reflections of light. Such impressionistic descriptions that blur the sharp outlines of objects characterize the spectator's overall approach to the house. In *Silvae* 1.2, the epithalamion for L. Arruntius Stella, Venus enters the home of the bride Violentilla, whom we may picture as a typically elegant Flavian woman with high-piled hair. The opulent family mansion on the Tiber that she occupies extends its spaces into open-air gardens with fountains blending light and shade. Statius describes the colored marble decorations of Violentilla's reception rooms using a combination of geographical designations and natural metaphors. Onyx alabaster is textured like the white veining of the deep sea, and red porphyry shines out like the Oebalian cliffs. The array of columns looks innumerable; the ceilings are gilded, and marble basins give life to clear running fountains (155).

Window prospects especially distinguish a marble-clad *dieta* in the Sorrentine villa of Pollius (*Silvae* 2.2.83–95). Here again, patterns in the marble are mentioned together with provenance to combine visual with geographical exoticism. The Phrygian (*pavonazzetto*) has purple and white scrolling; the Amyclaean (Spartan) is as green as the grass on cliffs; Chian marble rivals the wavy appearance of Carystian. The pan-Mediterranean ambience Statius creates in this context pays homage through its framing to the window view of Puteoli, Pollius's homeland across the bay, but also stresses the interassociation between natural products and the owner's wealth.

The differences in details from one to another description argue that Statius does not merely use a conventionalized vocabulary for each exercise, but wishes to give as accurate an impression of each property as its owners might desire. Pollius's richly marbled villa differs from the Tiburtine villa of Manlius Vopiscus (2.4), which seems to have no marble room, but rather compels admiration for its channeled streams and miracles of running and spouting water within and outside the house.

Statius presents the owners of these commodious houses as creative men of letters. Passing by the Tiburtine villa of Vopiscus, the Anio checks its swelling current and quiets its rocky turbulence as if wary of disturbing the patron's Pierian days or his song-filled slumbers (1.3.21–23). At Sorrento, Pollius builds with Orphic magic and exercises the Pierian arts in drawing the Sorrentine Sirens to listen to his superior songs (2.2.116–20).

No less philosophically than artistically disposed, his cliff-commanding vantage point can be likened to a Epicurean citadel of the mind, with its elevated perspective upon the wanderings and the enthusiasms (*humana gaudia*) of men.[10]

In thus merging luxury with the intellectual life, Statius does what Seneca would never have done, but one might also think that the climate of values reflected by his incorporation of material culture into praise might have encouraged Pliny's similar exhibitions, especially in describing the two villas located on the shore near Laurentium and in a corner of the Tuscan hills somewhere near Città di Castello that are his most valued properties. No less than Statius's two *ekphraseis*, these descriptions elaborate the traditional identification of house and owner so as to make them, if not precise mirrors of their proprietor, certainly accommodations of his habits in such a way that describing the villa describes the rhythms of his life.[11] The texts have additional points in common. With comparable aesthetics, but slightly different techniques, both bring out the interactive adaptation of nature and architecture, Pliny only sparing the mythological affirmations. Granted that Statius writes with a spectator's point of view while Pliny describes spaces intimately known, Pliny also uses the premise of a visit to walk his correspondent through the house, packaging the vicarious tour as a possible preamble to a forthcoming invitation.

Since the Renaissance, the challenge of reconstructing the villas has fascinated both antiquarians and architects, with so great a variety of solutions that even the process of reconstruction has become a topic for study. Pierre du Prey, the author of the most recent of these, comments upon the difficulties posed by vague architectural terms incorporated into a run-

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10 Nauta 2000.308–23, however, distinguishes Statius's use of the term *quies* for the leisure of these retiring persons from the genuine *otium* that the Roman man of affairs enjoys.

11 Henderson (above, pp. 120–24), Riggsby (below). For the traditional identification of the house with its owner's public personality, see Cicero *de Officiis* 1.141, but, of course, Cicero is thinking of the very visible Palatine houses owned by himself and his fellow senators. Just as Cicero's house was purchased, so also were Pliny's villas, a fact that he himself seems to brush over lightly (5.6). The extent of renovation, however, is brought home by recent archaeological attempts to discover the villas: Ricotti 1989.42. For the hypothetical nature of these discoveries, based purely upon perceived correspondence with textual details, see du Prey 1994.78–82. Greater certainty attaches to the Tuscan villa at Colle Plinio where Braconi and Uroz-Sáez 1999 have distinguished four building phases before Pliny's proprietorship and additions. Even this Plinian phase actually shows a structure of far less complexity and size than the letters would give us to expect.

ning commentary on the use of spaces,[12] a practice that Andrew Riggsby further explains with reference to Pliny's manner of confusing the orientation of spatial nuclei. As Riggsby shows, Pliny's running narrative is no real itinerary but rather an illumination of the quality of spaces with reference to the qualitative value of time that they foster. Despite frequent attention to the architectural features of rooms, Riggsby notes the almost total absence of decorations, or even of furniture, within the rooms. Within the Laurentian villa, for instance, the more atmospheric portions of the description dwell upon natural advantages such as proximity to gardens and the orientation of windows towards prospects of sea and shore. These remarks give useful evidence of an owner's deliberate attention to the framing of prospects both interior and exterior. His dining room in Laurentium looks out on the sea and then backwards across the open interior prospect of the house. Windows in three walls of his favorite study chamber frame views of sea, land, and shore as the only wall decorations. Du Prey compares (1994.26) Statius's description of the tri-lateral views from Pollius's *dieta,* to which, he notes, Pliny from his childhood experience of Cape Misenum should be no stranger, but, at Laurentium, no exotic marble veneers frame the window prospects.

Does the lingering influence of Uncle Pliny's disciplined scientific morality cause his nephew to omit decorative specifications in order to conceal the presence of material luxury within his house? The one exception to the absence of luxurious furnishings is sufficient, I believe, to disprove intentional concealment. Generally, the Tuscan villa seems somewhat more opulent than the Laurentian, possessing more expansive grounds and gardens, but it is also distinguished by an installation of marble fixtures: a white fountain basin and a quartet of Carystian *columellae* whose practical function is to support a vine-arbor that shades a marble *stibadium* (5.6.36–40).[13] The greater part of the description represents the interplay of garden greenery and white marble within the enclosure, which is represented "as if one were reclining in a grove." This room is oriented towards a cubiculum with which it participates in a kind of reciprocity of ornamentation, being built of shining white marble that extends to the half open doors. Nearby is a fountain and seats made of marble with a small fountain beside each one. The singularity of this descriptive passage makes it the more conspicuous,

12 Du Prey 1994.26–28 observes Pliny's "professed unawareness of the conceptual difficulties his letter posed."

13 Tanzer 1924.126 and pl. 52 illustrates with Schinkel's 1841 reconstruction fantasy.

although a connoisseur might recognize that pure white marble occupied a bottom place in the status hierarchy. So it seems that Pliny, while his personal taste does not seem strongly inclined towards the deployment of marble, does mention its effects enthusiastically when it is used.

In *Language and Symbolic Power,* Pierre Bourdieu links symbolic capital with representation when he speaks of the construction of social space by the agents of cultural production as a space of lifestyles conspicuous for display (1991.238). Thus Pliny exhibits the spaces of his villas as locations for the consumption and further production of *otium*. He locates these spaces within an active schedule of goings and comings. The great merit of the *Laurentinum* is its accessibility from the city (2.17.2), while the drawback of the *Tuscanum* is its tendency to trouble its owner with financial concerns (4.6, 10.8). Within the villas, he tends to mark spaces by personal activities; this is one reason why hypothetical reconstructions assume such megalomaniac proportions. When he leads us into his little havens for contemplation, rooms removed from the noise and other occupants of the house, he seems constantly to be adding wings and corridors to a labyrinth. And it is the luxury of these spaces and the time spent within them that is the basis for Pliny's economics of *otium*.

Although the villas are the primary seat of *otium* throughout the letters, the topic recurs from beginning to end. How, at a young age, he had already learned to make studious capital of his time can be seen in the self-conscious proleptic of the Vesuvius letters (see Eco 1994). When Uncle Pliny offered him the chance to sail towards the erupting volcano, he held back pleading a wish to read and possibly to undertake the writing assignment he had been given (6.16). On what seems to be the following day, with tremors shaking Misenum, a family friend discovers him reading Livy *quasi per otium*. Whether from nervous energy or escapism, he has even begun to imitate his uncle by taking notes (6.20.4). This puppy-dog precocity foreshadows the mature man even as it stages the decorum of adolescent conduct. In later years, Pliny enthusiastically prescribes a regimen of studies for the *otium* of his younger friend Fuscus Salinator (7.9).

The mature Pliny makes *otium* a sign of civic and social status by highlighting its rarity in his service-driven life. He first sketches out the competition between leisure and public service vicariously in letter 1.3 to Caninius Rufus at Como, urging his friend to realize the full enjoyment of his villa by withdrawing there and writing something worthwhile. While Caninius's affairs are presumably those of the municipality, they are no less greedy of time and attention than Pliny's occupations at Rome. What

difficulty Caninius might confront in escaping them is unclear in the letter, but letter 1.9 makes Pliny's own entrapment by Roman occupations quite clear. In this letter, Pliny juxtaposes the two spaces, Rome and Laurentium, as antithetical areas of activity. Saying nothing here about the mechanics of transition between them, he contrives a sharp break that highlights his theme. First we see his day-to-day Roman calendar in terms of the occupations that consume it (1.9.1–3):

> Mirum est quam singulis diebus in urbe ratio aut constet aut constare videatur, pluribus iunctis non constet. Nam si quem interroges, "Hodie quid egisti," respondeat, "Officio togae virilis interfui, sponsalia aut nuptias frequentavi, ille me ad signandum testamentum, ille in advocationem, ille in consilium rogavit." Haec quo die feceris, necessaria, eadem in cotidie fecisse te reputes, inania videntur, multa magis cum secesseris.
>
> It's remarkable how, during single days in the city, there is some sense or appearance of sense, but the logic disappears when we consider the succession of days. For if you should ask anyone, "What did you do today," he may answer, "I attended the giving of a *toga virilis* or I was present at a betrothal or a wedding, that one called me for signing a will, that other into advocacy, another as a consultant." On the day you have done them, these things seem necessary, but they seem empty when you think how you have done them daily, and even more so when you are away in retreat.

Here Pliny treats urban activities as two sets of obligations defining his social position. First come the matters of civility that involve both social bonding and perpetuating the aristocracy: coming of age, betrothal, marriage. Then three legal *officia*.[14] The letter is programmatic in listing occasions that will subsequently figure as subjects of individual letters: e.g., seeking husbands, giving dowries, or arguing cases. Collectively, however,

14 Hoffer 1999.112–13 sees a climactic progress in this listing from "empty" social courtesies to Pliny's serious work, but, in my opinion, he overemphasizes the negative.

they are the antithesis of the cerebral space and time of *honestum otium,* ALMOST (*paene*) lovelier than all *negotium* amidst the landscape of sea and shore.

Similar spatial/temporal antitheses pervade the letters too conspicuously to need mention, as in another letter to Caninius at Como that both details the pleasant pastimes the place offers (along with abundant time to enjoy them) and explicitly compares the engaged life of the city to a sickness craving alleviation and to a chain that grows ever longer (2.8). A catalogue of deprivations opens letter 8.9 to Cornelius Ursus when Pliny apologizes that the *negotia amicorum* has kept him both from his studies and from leaving Rome. Clearly we should not take such remarks about the difficulty of obtaining leisure as complaints; they are only marks of value. Unquestionably Pliny regards his participation in public business as enhancing the status value of his leisure by defining who he is. In 7.15, comparing his agenda with the similar occupations of Pompeius Saturninus, he notes the scarcity of time for personal occupations, but also observes the hierarchic valuation of dedicating energy to public causes. "For attending to the affairs of one's own *res publica* is among friends the thing most deserving of praise." To Ursus in 8.9, he also observes that "no studies are of such value that they should stand before sacred obligations to friends." But Pliny has already introduced the connection between intellectuality and duty programmatically through his profile of the philosopher Euphrates (1.10.9). When Pliny complains of having too little time for his stimulating company and conversation, the sage reminds him consolingly of the attention that philosophy itself devotes to public duty and to the administration of justice.

Within the social framework of reciprocity, *otium* figures both as time and as product. Valuation of personal *otium* entails respect for that of others. How can Minicius Justus possibly say at one and the same moment that his time is wholly consumed in business but also that he would like to see Pliny's speeches (7.2)? At Rome, the ritualization of public recitations or readings is a form of social exchange that preempts the *otium* of some men in order to display the products of another's. Concerning the decorum of these events, Pliny is scrupulously courteous. "Who at Rome has the time free to attend recitations?" he writes concerning the three-day marathon presentation of his *Panegyric* to fellow senators (3.18). For Titinius Capito's reading from his writings on illustrious men, Pliny will give an entire day, led on both by the man's talent and by a reciprocal claim of literary service (8.12). These are bad times for readers, he notes in 1.13, when men of consummate leisure (*otiosissimi*) either ignore invitations or, having at-

tended, complain of a wasted day. Perhaps he will keep some new writings to himself rather than entangling friends within the bonds of reciprocity (1.13.6: "non auditor fuisse sed creditor"). Paying elegiac tribute to Martial, Pliny quotes the deceased poet's epigrammatic homage to his disciplined life (3.21). "Never knock tipsily at the scholarly doorway," the speaker instructs his Muse, "to interrupt days given to Minerva and the composition of speeches rivaling the papers from Arpinum. Rather, await the evening hour when even the upright Catones might be induced to crack a smile." Letter 7.3 is a variation upon the same category of reciprocity, chiding Praesentius for prolonged relaxation in Lucania and Campania, which is almost an offense to the dignity of his friends (7.3.2–3):

> Quin ergo aliquando in urbem redis? ubi dignitas honor amicitiae tam superiores quam minores. Quousque regnabis? quousque vigilabis cum voles, dormies quamdiu voles? quousque calcei nusquam, toga feriata, liber totus dies? Tempus est te revisere molestias nostras, vel ob hic solum ne voluptates istae satietate languescant.
>
> So when is it you return to the city, where *dignitas*, honor, and friendship are as important as lesser things? How long do you plan to rule your kingdom? How long to stay awake when you wish to, to sleep as long as you desire? How much longer free from your senatorial shoes, togate on festival days, free all the day long? It's time for you to see once again our petty concerns, even if for no other reason than how pleasures lose their savor with overindulgence.

While the tone of this letter is comradely, we might notice how Pliny enhances the *dignitas* of urban responsibility by characterizing the *otium* of the *mezzogiorno* only in terms of its social and physical freedom. Yet even he can admit an awareness that his own leisure might be squandered unprofitably. Without the reward of "everlastingness" before his eyes, he writes to fellow consular Valerius Paulinus, he might be content to indulge himself in an *otium* both *pingue* and *altum* (implicitly fat and soporific), as do men who have succumbed to their anticipation of mortality (9.3). In this respect, Pliny uses his concept of *otium* not merely to negotiate his elite social integration but also to underline the effort needed to stand out as a spokesman for society, an effort that is paradigmatic of Bourdieu's observation

that aristocracies must expend considerable effort to convince the elect of the need to accept the sacrifices implied by privilege (1991.122). In thus setting himself apart from many aristocratic contemporaries as a designated intellectual, he becomes, in a sense, what Bourdieu calls the "dominated" fraction of the dominant class (1991.168).

How appropriating this responsibility can program the nature of Pliny's communal participation appears in his single reference to spending productive solitude with his *pugillares et libellos* in Rome when the *ludi circenses* have halted all public business for the time being (9.6). Representing his absence as a matter of déjà vu—if you've seen them once, you've seen many—he comments on the childishness of the pleasure that some men seem to take in seeing the ponies run beneath the driver's lash. Even more astounding is the passion attached to team favoritism, the *auctoritas* of a tawdry tunic, not only among the vulgar but even among respectable persons (*quosdam graves homines*). In this case, however, the apparent intellectual snobbery may have political undertones. Circus attendance for the senatorial class was surely obligatory under Domitian, whose fanatic support of the Greens, the vulgar favorites, was notorious. Why, Pliny may be asking, do some of his fellow aristocrats keep it up?

In the competition for hierarchical status that Bourdieu posits among segments of a dominant class, the intellectual fraction always tends to set the specific capital to which it owes its position at the top of the hierarchy (1991.168). We can see Pliny's prioritizing slant in implicit or explicit comparisons of himself with some older men whose lives and achievements he describes. Uncle Pliny used to snatch time for his scholarly writing from a schedule of service to Vespasian (3.5). It is simply amazing how so busy a man could produce so many volumes. When using the word *otium* in connection with the Elder Pliny—and this only once in the letter—he explains that whatever of it his uncle could obtain (*quid otii*) he would spend reading and note taking in the sun. Indeed, he seems to have been busy excerpting at almost every waking moment of his life. In an ethic that did not allow for wasting a single moment, he even criticized his nephew for walking when travel by litter provided such an opportunity for study. Silius Italicus, on the other hand, having been tainted by his complacency in the Neronian era, needed to redeem himself by a productive retirement (3.7). While the close juxtaposition of these two portraits in Book 3 highlights their dramatic antithesis, neither is a viable role model. Pliny scarcely envies the loss of political credibility that gained Silius time for epic compositions, nor would he trade his senatorial/judicial engagement for the rigid temporal

economy that made upright Uncle Pliny so productive. Younger Pliny does often walk to his destinations, while he passes the time in litter travel by composing light verses rather than taking learned notes.

The senior citizens whom Pliny overtly adopts as models enjoy leisure as an earned reward. Pomponius Bassus, cos. 94, fulfilled military and civil offices under three emperors (4.23). During the transitional years 94–100, he was military legate in Galatia-Cappadocia. In 101, he was working at a civil post, overseeing the distribution of *alimenta* in central Italy (Sherwin-White 1985.301–02). Writing of this personality who "served the state as long as decorum allowed," Pliny observes how the laws properly grant *otium* to deserving old age, while, for himself, withdrawal must still be called laziness. Pliny sketches the occupations of Bassus's leisure in general terms. Amidst most delightful surroundings, he exercises, reads, and converses. Writing about a visit to Vestricius Spurinna, a veteran of military command who held three consulships under Nerva and Trajan (3.1), Pliny more explicitly details the daily round of activities, which, he says, would be trivial were they not a routine. Spurinna's program of healthy activities, alternating periods of exercise with repose, admits no cessation of intellectual occupations: reading, listening, conversing, composing (see Appendix A). The very fact that Pliny is, at the moment, so worn down by a thousand labors, as he says in conclusion, not only makes his visit a source of pleasure, but also constitutes his chief qualification for resembling Spurinna when a comparable career record will have granted him retirement as a reward.

We can usefully compare Spurinna's program for *otium* with that outlined by Pliny in letter 9.36 for his own periods of summer residence in Tuscany (see Appendix B). At first glance, his days and those of Spurinna appear similar in their alternation of sedentary and physical activities, including even the morning meditation in bed and the Roman upper-class ritual of the intellectually bracing *convivium* with reading or dramatic entertainment. But the programs differ on particular items, since Spurinna's rationale is self-maintenance and Pliny's self-improvement. Not only are the divisions of Pliny's day more numerous, but they also include more studious pastimes against Spurinna's greater proportion of recreational: his longer rides and walks, ball playing, and verse composition. While allowing for health-promoting activities on the grounds that they are mentally refreshing, Pliny emphasizes the dedication of his leisure time to productive work and thus to the interaction of *otium* with *negotium*. Even here, he cannot let his profile rest. Concluding Book 9 with another letter to the same recipient, he

explains the difference between summer and winter programs, bringing the collection full circle to Laurentum while also making it known that he works later in winter, pursuing his court briefs after supper into the night.

Not coincidentally, it would seem that the recipient of these two schedule letters is Pliny's ambitious young associate, Fuscus Salinator, to whom Pliny had earlier addressed an advisory letter setting forth a detailed agenda of vacation studies useful to the aspiring orator (7.9). The variety of practices incorporated *in studiis* include such exercises turned towards sharpening verbal skills as Latin/Greek translation, revising speeches already delivered, practicing letter writing, historical narrative, or even poetic description, with pithy poems for relaxation (see Appendix C). In sum, Pliny's investment schedule for *otium* aims towards the procurement of further *negotium* with a single-mindedness that many persons would not consider to resemble leisure at all.

One argument for the final conceptualization of the collection as a whole might be made from the positioning of letters highlighting the employment of extra-urban *otium* close to the beginning of Book 1 and the end of Book 9. Not only do the two scheduling letters of Book 9 provide an elaborated reprise of themes introduced in Book 1, but, in fact, the entire book seems to contain more references to the possession and disposition of leisure than any other. Returning in 9.32 to the topic of long letters vs. short ones, already broached in 9.2, he states in surprising superlatives that the current life he enjoys is *iucundissima* for the very condition of being *otiosissima*. Rendered *delicatus* by his relaxation, he is unwilling to write long letters at the same time that curiosity bred of disemployment makes him eager to receive them. And so he concludes, "nihil est enim aut pigrius delicatis aut curiosius otiosis." Sherwin-White has posited that this rural freedom may reflect actual periods of residence in Tuscany during the summers of 107, 108, and 109, and he further proposes (1985.56) that the contents of Book 9 show Pliny anticipating his departure for Bithynia with a hurried final packaging of the contents.[15] Hurried or not, the extraordinary, even for Pliny, amount of self-reflexivity in this book does seem to aim towards valediction. Among these portraits of the writer are his apology for short letters in 9.2 that contrasts the *frigida negotia* shredding his day-to-day

15 Sherwin-White 1985.80; this effort, as he would have it, accounts for the presence of numerous short letters in the book, but I am not at all in agreement with his notion that Pliny used these as filler because he was running short.

attention with the *varietas rerum* that nourished Cicero's greater and more abundant talent.[16] In the complementary 9.14 to Tacitus, Pliny enshrines for future ages the bonds of *studium* and *labor* uniting their friendship, to which 9.23 adds a final flourish with an anecdote relating a provincial tourist's inter-identification of the two, *Tacitus es an Plinius?,* which might seem immoderate (not to say immodest) were it not reported by Tacitus himself. Alternating with these brief glimpses are longer letters such as the retrospective account of Pliny's posthumous vindication of Helvidius Priscus (9.13); the poetics of oratory laced with Greek quotations in 9.26 (counterpart of an earlier such discussion directed to Tacitus in 1.20), and the elegant, subtly symbolic narrative of the dolphin of Hippo, playmate of boyish *otium et lusus,* whose negative picture of a Roman proconsular legate driven by *prava religione* might show us the kind of conduct Pliny will avoid as he anticipates his term of service in Bithynia (9.33).

The final question for this paper to raise is what bearing might *otium* have upon the political world of Trajan's principate? Is its significance consistently positive or is its symbolic import always to be entered on the side of capital gain? To appreciate the positive, ambitious face of Pliny's epistolary *otium*, we need simply refer to Bourdieu's characterization of the agents of political action as "those who produce and impose representations (mental, visual, verbal or theatrical) which may be capable of acting on this world by acting on agents' representations of it" (1991.127). Consider the difference between the life-patterns of Pliny's most admired elder statesmen and those men of the Neronian or Domitianic era whose later years were harassed or cut short by ideological persecution. The comfortable synchronization of labor and reward enjoyed by Bassus and Spurinna, and likewise by Verginius Rufus (2.1), betokens the benevolent security essential to Pliny's investment in his lasting image as a high-minded public official. Such an atmosphere brings out the best in men, as Pliny remarks of the Emperor Trajan himself when describing his judicial council at Centum Cellae when the *iustitia, gravitas,* and *comitas* of the *princeps* appeared even more pleasing than ever when removed from the business of Rome (6.31). With days devoted to work and the hours after dinner rewarded by entertainments and *sermones iucundissimi,* the *princeps* demonstrates his

16 Morello (below, pp. 187–95) observes the paradoxical twist of expression and thought by which Pliny's professed distance from Cicero constitutes this, the most Ciceronian of his letters.

respect for the senators, while the imperial villa symbolically resembles the safe, protected harbor where it sits.

All the same, this benevolent climate is recognizably the same as that amid which Tacitus's Curiatus Maternus observes that no person can at once enjoy great oratorical glory and great tranquility (*Dialogus* 41.5). What then for the hopes and energy that Pliny so assiduously invests in the preparation and revision of his speeches? In conclusion, we might view him from another angle, as suggested when Bourdieu comments on Marx's view of symbolic capital that the prevalence of a dominant culture may serve to create apathy in the dominated class (167). While Pliny easily agrees with Cicero that forcibly imposed *otium* is a consequence of tyranny, he shows a more immediate fear of apathy as a misuse of the freedom that imperial government releases from responsibility. Often Pliny expresses concerns arising from a callous non-engagement in public life. For rhetoric, apathy generates a most unfavorable climate, breeding audiences that do not listen or hirelings that come to clap for money (2.14). Pliny's solution is to make the dominated class appear dominant by constructing its empire within a framework of significant time.

APPENDIX

A. Daily Schedule of Vestricius Spurinna (3.1)
   1. 1 hour meditation in bed after waking
   2. 3 mile walk while conversing or reading a book
   3. Seated activity, either reading or conversing
   4. 7 mile carriage ride with wife or friends
   5. 1 mile walk
   6. Period of writing in seclusion: lyric poems in Latin and Greek
   7. Bath preparation
      a. Naked exercise in the sun
      b. Vigorous game of catch
   8. Bath
   9. Short rest with reading
   10. Formal dinner interspersed with performances

B. Daily Summer Schedule of Pliny in Tuscany (9.36)
   1. Early waking about sunrise; working out ideas in the dark
   2. Secretary enters; dictation period
   3. Walk on the grounds to continue thinking
   4. Drive and more concentration
   5. Short sleep
   6. Another walk
   7. Reading Latin or Greek speech aloud to improve digestion
   8. Another walk
   9. Oiling and bathing
   10. Dinner with reading
   11. Literary performance
   12. Another walk with conversation

   Schedule may be varied by substituting horseback for carriage ride or by hunting.

   Time may also be spent with tenants.

C. How to Capitalize Vacation Time
   1. Translate Greek into Latin, Latin into Greek
   2. Try a little *imitatio/aemulatio*
   3. Revise old speeches
   4. Write historical narrative
   5. Write descriptive letters
   6. Relax by writing a little light verse (but nothing heavy and professional)
   7. Read some selected passages of the choicest authors (read deeply, not widely)

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