DOCTA OTIA: GARDEN OWNERSHIP AND CONFIGURATIONS OF LEISURE IN STATIUS AND PLINY THE YOUNGER[1]

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It is in the works of Statius and Pliny the Younger that we find some of the first full-scale literary descriptions of villas and their gardens. In the *Silvae,* Statius includes a number of encomiastic poems describing the extravagant private estates owned by his patrons (1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 2.2, 2.3, and 3.1), while Pliny composed two of his longest letters on two of his own estates (*Epistles* 2.17, 5.6). Both authors use these descriptions of extensive and elaborate estates as ecphrastic models of self-representation, literary programmatics and ideals, representations of patrons, and moral positioning. These texts reflect in important ways the circumstances of leisure and the pursuit of literature in their times.

The similarities as well as the differences between the two authors' literary treatments of estates are telling. Both authors seek to justify villa life and the wealth that makes it possible by giving it transcendent meaning.[2] As an admiring guest, Statius takes us on tours that expose the wondrous marvels of his wealthy patrons' estates while revealing the virtuous qualities of their owners, most of whom have retired from public affairs. Pliny, however, writes of his own estates in a manner that is meant to illustrate his

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2 Hoffer 1999.29, Newlands 2002.

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own qualities as both writer and aristocrat and to validate his leisure time—in opposition to his activities as an active and successful politician.

Through what could be called a "poetics of real estate" (Hinds 2001), the villa gardens of Statius and Pliny function as powerful displays of material wealth and as symbols of an acceptable form of intellectual and, above all, literary *otium* redefined to fit the new times as "learned leisure," *docta otia* (*Silvae* 1.3.108; Pliny 1.22.11: *studiosum otium*), which is distanced from suggestions of political disapproval or resistance. Many of Statius's wealthy patrons in the *Silvae* are themselves involved in literary composition and recitation, which is indicative of the high level of dilettante activity in this period. Pliny's letters confirm the importance of the pursuit of literature as a class responsibility (e.g., *Epist.* 1.13, 3.15, 4.3, 5.17, 8.12). Peter White suggests that, in the first century, the recognition of recitation as a new forum for self-advertisement led to literature being co-opted "as a manifestation of Roman excellence and integrated into patterns of social activity."[3] At the same time, both leisure and literature become more perilous under the empire. In the marginal domains of country villas, Statius and Pliny represent literature and intellectual studies as flourishing,[4] but on themes now increasingly limited in scope.

A shift in attitude towards leisure has been identified in the later empire. Already under Augustus, political developments encouraged more display of, and competition in, private luxury, as public opportunities for advertisements of social status were increasingly co-opted by the imperial family (see Eck 1984). A lavish way of life became a potent—and safer—way the elite could express social distinctions and power.[5] As traditional *virtus* became increasingly suspect (see Pliny *Pan.* 45.1: "priores quidem principes . . . vitiis potius civium quam virtutibus laetabantur," "previous emperors took greater pleasure in the vices of their citizens than in their virtues"), A. J. Woodman argues that there were "powerful reasons why during the empire men described their lack of ambition in terms of *otium.*"[6] The practice of leisure was safer than a political career (see Pliny *Epist.*

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3 White 1993.61. On the importance of the literary activity of the period, see also Roller 1998, Riggsby 1998.75–98, Fantham 1996.220, Cizek 1989, and Wallace-Hadrill 1983.26ff.

4 Bodel 1997.20, Roller 1998.282.

5 Gelzer 1969.159, Wallace-Hadrill 1988.72.

6 Woodman 1983.242–43, cf. Syme 1958.1, 19–20, 27. See, in general, on the changing attitudes to *otium*, André 1966, esp. 531–41 and André et al. 1996. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

8.14.7 on life under earlier "bad" emperors: "cum suspecta virtus, inertia in pretio," "when ability is suspect, inactivity is prized"; cf. Tac. *Agr.* 6 on life under Nero: *inertia pro sapientia fuit,* "to be inactive was to be wise"). Statius's villa patrons can be seen as pursuing this emphatically non-ambitious *otium*. Pliny, on the other hand, praises the Emperor Trajan for allowing the elite to enjoy their residences in peace and leisure (*Pan*. 50.4–7) and also pursues a public career. Yet leisure still attracted its traditional opprobrium as a locus for moral corruption, and, under unpopular emperors, retirement could be interpreted as political protest.[7] The pursuit of leisure therefore becomes in the empire a powerful mode of aristocratic self-definition (cf. Pliny *Pan*. 82.9: *otio prodimur,* "by our leisure we are revealed").[8]

It is significant that, in both Statius's and Pliny's villa descriptions, gardens and landscapes figure prominently, if not predominantly. As symbolically separate realms in which the relationship between human activity and the natural world is magnified and intensified, gardens are uniquely equipped to convey social, political, and literary messages. Literary representations of gardens and villas, as well as actual Roman estates, engaged in sophisticated play between the mimetic representation of the real (or natural) and the creation of the artificial.[9] Gardens can parallel the skill of the literary author in the design and disposition of his or her material in the composition of a work of literature. Vergil's representation of a garden in *Georgics* 4.116–48 is perhaps seminal to the development of the garden as a metaphorical representation of poetry.[10] The competition between nature and art (*ars* vs. *natura*), as represented also in landscape design, is a recurrent motif in Latin literature. Statius's and Pliny's literary portraits of estates vie in artistry with the actual physical structures they describe and highlight the importance of literature as a form of memorialization. In both authors, landscape architecture (*ars topiaria*) parallels their own literary endeavors.

Largely because of the ancient moralizing tradition that a man's character is reflected in his *domus*, Roman villas could serve as powerful

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7 On the potential dangers of *quies*, see Syme 1958.83: "even the practice of *quies* might be culpable under the inquisitive despotism of Domitian." Cf. the charges against the Stoic Herennius Senecio in Dio 67.13.2.

8 See Newlands 2002.6, Connors 2000.508, Toner 1995.23.

9 See my chapter on literary gardens (including Pliny and Statius), "Representations of Gardens in Roman Literature," in the forthcoming *Gardens of the Roman Empire,* vol. II. Cambridge.

10 See Thomas 1982.56–60, 1992, Clay 1981.

statements and symbols of the ethical, intellectual, and social position of their owners.[11] Catherine Edwards suggests that "Roman descriptions of buildings (much to the frustration of modern scholars) generally work not so much to give a picture of a building's physical appearance, as to evoke certain emotional responses" (1993.143; cf. Lefèvre 1987). Although the self-fashioning of a proprietor by and through his estate is already a development of the late republic, it is during the early empire that villas and their estates increasingly acquire an important symbolic function as architectural entities worthy of artistic commemoration and encomium (Bodel 1997.17). This development is related to changes in the socio-economic position of the elite at this time. Although the traditional censure of the private extravagance of the *aedificator* continued into the empire in the works of both Senecas, Pliny the Elder, and the satirists Persius and Juvenal, in Pliny the Younger and his contemporaries Statius and Martial, we find much of this kind of lavishness seemingly approved of and even praised.[12]

Statius's laudatory descriptions of the private domestic architecture and landscapes of his private patrons represent a poetic innovation.[13] There are a number of ways in which these poems represent important literary and cultural developments. John Bodel notes that "what was new was the notion that the domestic environment in which a gentleman cultivated his leisure was itself worthy of poetic commemoration" (1997.17). Statius's *Silvae* praise his patrons within the context and tradition of villa life as a manifestation of his patrons' investment in the aristocratic leisure activities of building, composing literature, and philosophizing.[14] In *Silvae* 1.3 (on a villa at Tibur [mod. Tivoli] belonging to Manilius Vopiscus that was built on either side of the river Anio [Aniene]),[15] 2.2 (on a colonnaded *villa maritima* owned by Pollius Felix located by the sea at Surrentum [mod. Sorrento]),[16] and 3.1 (on a newly constructed temple to Hercules belonging

11 See, e.g., Edwards 1993.137–72, Wallace-Hadrill 1988, 1998a, Bodel 1997, Hales 2003, Henderson 2004.

12 Edwards 1993.142. On changes in attitude to luxury and artifice, see also Pavlovskis 1973.

13 Szelest 1966, van Dam 1984.187–90. See Hardie 1983.91–102 on the influence on Statius of the epideictic and epigrammatic traditions of ecphrasis and Coleman 1988.103–04 on the encomiastic tradition of the description of constructions, landmarks, and terrain (cf., e.g., Menander Rhetor *Rhet. Gr.* 3.344.15ff. Sp. [country]; 3.351.20ff. [harbor]).

14 On the theme of *otium* in Statius, see Corti 1991.

15 See Cancik 1978.123–24.

16 For discussion about the site of this villa, see Mingazzini and Pfister 1946.54–70, 132–33, and Bergmann 1991.52, 66 n. 3.

to the villa in 2.2), Statius describes the elaborate villas and landscapes of two of his wealthy patrons (see also Myers 2000). These poems provide Statius's fullest descriptions of personal landscapes and the best parallels with Pliny's villa letters. As many have seen, Statius's villa poems function as encomia of their owners: the qualities of the landscape and architecture allude to the virtues of the owners (*dominique imitantia mores,* 2.2.29) and serve as symbols of their owners' character and culture.[17] They represent in their praise of architectural extravagance a dramatic departure from the traditional moralizing critique of the *aedificator.* While Statius's praise of the leisure and extravagance of his patrons is no doubt a reflection of his own social status, which made him more dependent on support than many earlier poets (cf. similarly Martial on villas, *Ep.* 4.64, 8.68, 10.30),[18] he also makes these descriptions function as models of his own poetry.[19] Statius's "poetics of excess" challenge Horace's earlier identification of his villa life on the Sabine Farm with his own literary style of moderation.[20]

Statius's patrons practice landscape architecture on an extravagant scale. The ornamental features of these pleasure gardens that Statius singles out are often precisely those that one finds condemned in the moralistic writings of Pliny the Elder and Seneca as unnatural perversions of nature. These features include building over water (1.3.64, 2.2.98), trees preserved in the middle of houses (1.3.59–63), the leveling of hills (2.2.52–62), plane trees (2.3), and baths on the water (1.3.44, 3.1.100–01).[21] The contrast in the poems, especially in 2.2 and 3.1, is between the untamed state of nature in the past and her present cultivated improvement: Pollius has changed *feritas inamoena,* "disagreeable wilderness" to *voluptas,* "pleasure" (2.2.30ff.). Statius is boldly challenging traditional categories of luxury,[22] and he specifies

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17 Szelest 1966.191–93, Newmyer 1979.40, 100, 107, van Dam 1984.190, Newlands 1988.96–97, Dewar 1996.297–313. All quotations of the *Silvae* are from the text of E. Courtney, *P. Papini Stati Silvae* (Oxford 1990).

18 Bodel 1997.16–17.

19 On poetic self-reflexivity in Statius's ecphrases, see now the important arguments in Newlands 2002 passim.

20 See Newlands 2002.130–42, Schmidt 1997.53–55.

21 See van Dam 1984 ad loc.; building on water (e.g., Sen. *Contr*. 2.1.13, *N.Q.* 3.17.2), trees in houses (e.g., Horace *Epist.* 1.10.22), leveling (e.g., Sen. *de Ira* 1.21.1), plane trees (e.g., Pliny *Nat.* 12.6, Hor. *C.* 2.15.4), baths (e.g., Sen. *Epist.* 86.6–7, 122.8, Mart. *Ep.* 9.75).

22 See Corti 1991.194–95, Newlands 2002.127. Cf. Edwards 1993.142: "This apparently new literary development . . . derived at least a part of its meaning (as indeed did those aesthetic preferences) from the more established literary tradition of invective against luxurious building."

that Pollius's landscaping is benevolent and approved of by nature (*gaudet humus,* 2.2.58).[23]

Statius describes the lifestyle of his wealthy patrons as one of cultivated and philosophical leisure (*fecunda quies,* "productive quiet"), which is distinguished from a luxurious existence (1.3.92–93: "sanusque nitor luxuque carentes / deliciae," "healthy elegance and pleasures lacking the taint of luxury"). The *voluptas* of their estates, a traditional attribute of villa life, is instead associated with the Epicurean philosophy espoused by both Pollius Felix (2.2.113; see Nisbet 1978) and Manilius Vopiscus (1.3.93–94). The association of the villa and its garden with philosophical and intellectual pursuits is conventional.[24] Villa culture traditionally made possible the *otium* necessary for literary composition and the cultivation of aristocratic culture (cf. Cicero's *otium litteratum, Tusc*. 5.105).[25] Cicero had set many of his philosophical discourses at villas and in gardens, revealing the "fusion of social and intellectual pleasure which had long enlivened the leisure of the upper classes in villas."[26] At his estate at Tusculum, he had built an "Academy" and "Lyceum" (*Tusc*. 2.9, Plin. *Nat.* 31.6–8). His works and letters were also instrumental in establishing the villa as a *locus amoenus*, an ideal setting for the production of literature.[27] The extravagant estates of Statius's patrons are, in fact, far removed from the traditional ideal of the Epicurean garden (see Morford 1987), but Statius boldly suggests that Epicurus would prefer Vopiscus's garden to his own (1.3.92–94). Recent work has shown that the philosopher Philodemus had already revised Epicurean economics to offer a new vision of Epicurean society suitable for the wealthy Roman aristocrats with whom he associated (Asmis 2004). Philodemus's advocacy of the wealthy Roman gentleman's estate as a retreat from political turmoil for people who have the leisure to share the pleasure of doing philosophy sounds very much like the model Statius makes of his patrons' homes.[28] Statius "redeems" the luxury of his patrons' estates and

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23 See Newlands 2002.158–59.

24 Epicureanism, too, is associated with the Bay of Naples area where Pollius's villa was located, see D'Arms 1970.55–58.

25 Drerup 1959.1, Lefèvre 1987.249; cf. Purcell 1998.

26 D'Arms 1970.55. See Linderski 1988.106–08 on Cicero's philosophical settings. On Cicero's gardens and estates, see Grimal 1969.71–72, 251, 359–65, Schmidt 1972.

27 Cf. on *amoenitas,* Cic. *Att.* 16.3.4, 4.81, 14.13.1; on literary composition, *Att*. 2.4.3, 2.6.1; see D'Arms 1970.55–61.

28 Asmis 2004.171–72; on p. 170 she translates *On Household Economy* col. 23.11–18: "It [provides] a delightful way of life, a leisurely retreat with friends, and an income that is most seemly among [temperate] people." See also Newlands 2002.138.

legitimizes their proprietors' chosen lifestyles by highlighting how wealth and villa culture make possible the *otium* necessary for the literary studies that both poet and patrons pursue.[29]

Statius's stress on his patrons' Epicurean sympathies may be understood as a mark of their cultural pretensions, but it also suggests that their withdrawal is politically acceptable, indicating acquiescence to the current political regime rather than protest.[30] The qualities most stressed in both landscapes and patrons in the two villa poems are those of quiet and peace, which corresponds to the Epicurean ideal of calm, *ataraxia* (*placidus,* 1.3.22, 2.2.9, 13, 140; *aeterna quies,* 1.3.29; *tota quies,* 41; *fecunda quies,* 91; *mira quies,* 2.2.26; *placidam quietem,* 140; *viri pacem* 3.1.66, etc.). Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (1998b) argues that private *horti* (large estates with gardens) in and around Rome from the late republic on frequently conveyed an implicit message of withdrawal from the political sphere. These Epicurean philosophical convictions should be viewed mainly as a "mark of aristocratic culture, of which philhellenic sentiments formed the central core" (D'Arms 1970.57) and seem not to have been suspect even during the reign of the Flavians, when philosophers were frequently expelled from Rome.[31] An especially apt parallel with Statius's patrons is the great Augustan literary supporter Maecenas, praised in the panegyrical *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.31–36 for having rejected ambition in favor of "composing poetry in his luxurious gardens," "Pieridas Phoebumque colens in mollibus hortis" (35–36).[32]

The patrons of Statius's villa poems pursue lives notably removed from traditional political careers.[33] We learn in 2.2.133–42 that Pollius Felix had pursued a political career in the past, but had subsequently seen the error of his former activities.[34] We know essentially nothing about Manilius

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29 Newlands 2002.125–26, 137–38, Nauta 2002.295, Myers 2000. For the opposite of this ideal, cf. Blänsdorf 1996.

30 See Nauta 2002.308–23 on *quies* in Statius. On Seneca's views on philosophical withdrawal, see Griffin 1976.315–66 and MacMullen 1966.46ff.; cf. Pitcher 1990.86–95 on some contemporary uses of such terms as *quies* and *placidus* in panegyric.

31 On the expulsion of philosophers under Domitian, see Jones 1992.119–24, Penwill 2003. For Epicureanism under the Flavians, see André 1987.41–44.

32 See André 1967.ch. 1 for a discussion of Maecenas's conspicuous Epicureanism. Seneca tried unsuccessfully to use Maecenas as a precedent for his own withdrawal (Tac. *Ann.* 14.53.3).

33 White 1972.191–92 observes that "about half the people in the *Silvae* stand under the banner of quietism."

34 On Pollius, see *PIR*^{2} P. 550, D'Arms 1970.125–26, 161–62, 220–21, 1974.111, Nisbet 1978.1–4, Nauta 2002.222–23, 317–21.

Vopiscus's career or his means of acquiring his vast fortune.[35] In *Silvae* 4.4, we find a more traditional contrast between a patron engaged in public affairs and the poet solely dedicated to the literary life of *otium* (49–50: "nos otia vitae / solamur cantu," "By singing, I console myself for my life of inactivity").[36] In this poem, Vitorius Marcellus is urged to take a "timely respite" from his duties (34: *tempestiva quies*) at his garden-estate near Rome (7: *suburbanis hortis*). Carole Newlands has recently argued that the luxurious country estates of Statius's villa poems are meant to represent ideal worlds in which friendship and virtue support literature—in contrast with the political and literary climate in Rome (2002, esp. 154–98). There is no question that this new emphasis on the private sphere reflects some of the tensions of Domitianic Rome and that Statius's *Silvae* expose many of the limits imposed on life and literature at this time.[37] By their very distance from Rome, Statius's patrons at these country estates are allowed to indulge in more ostentatious forms of display (Bodel 1997.20). By contrast, in *Silvae* 2.3, a poem in which Statius invents a mythological tale about a plane tree in the garden of a patron's estate on the Caelian hill in Rome, he refrains from an elaborate description of the estate. The mythological *aetion* of the poem serves as a birthday gift for his patron Atedius Melior and provides an opportunity to praise his lifestyle as occupying an acceptable position between leisure and duty (2.3.65–67).[38] Statius's qualification of Pollius's estate as *innocuus,* "blameless" (2.2.22; cf. 3.1.32–33) and Atedius Melior's home as *sine fraude,* "without guilt" (2.3.16) may, however, suggest the delicate negotiations involved in political life under Domitian.[39]

Statius's villa patrons share his pursuit of literary activities (Pollius Felix: 2.2.112–20 and Manilius Vopiscus: 1.3.99–104). Poets had long claimed *otium* as the realm of literary composition, yet this literary *otium*

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35 *PIR*^{2} M. 141; his identity is discussed by Cancik 1978.119–20 and Nauta 2002.226.

36 Cf. 3.5.85–86 where Statius describes his ideal life in the Naples area: "pax secura locis et desidis otia vitae / et numquam turbata quies somnique peracti," "there is untroubled peace in this region and the leisure of an idle life, quiet never disturbed and unbroken sleep."

37 Cf. Ahl 1984.85, Myers 2000, Newlands 2002.

38 Atedius Melior (*PIR*^{2} 1.260, A. 1277) is generally considered to be retired at the time of composition, but we know nothing of a possible career; see van Dam 1984.69, Hardie 1983.66–67. White 1975.272–75 conjectures that Melior may have been caught up in the scare of the Saturninus conspiracy in 88 and sees a hint of this in 2.3.66–67; see further the speculations of Nauta 2002.312–23.

39 Cf. *Silvae* 4.6.91–92, where Statius praises Novius Vindex's *casta ignaraque culpae / mens,* "a mind pure and blameless"; see Nauta 2002.317 and Fredrick 2003.

represented an ideal economic state that could, above all, be achieved through the acquisition of an adequate estate (cf. Martial *Ep.* 1.107.3–4,1.55, 8.56, 11.3, 18, Calp. *Ecl*. 4.132–55).[40] Statius is only a visitor to these realms of leisure, yet the landscapes he describes also serve self-reflexively as symbols of his own poems in the *Silvae*. The interplay between nature and art and Statius's privileging of the creation of illusion have long been recognized as prominent features of his aesthetic in the *Silvae*.[41] The comparison of Pollius to Orpheus as the mover of natural features at 2.2.60–61 and 3.1.17 makes the parallel between the architectural activities of the patron and the poetry of the poet explicit. The conscious artifice of the *Silvae* imitates the horticultural artifice of his patrons: *ars topiaria* and *ars poetica* are equated. It is this metaphorical quality of landscape description that Pliny will develop in his *Letters.*

While Statius describes the villas of his patrons, Pliny the Younger describes two of his own estates in his *Epistles.* In this collection, Pliny presents an unapologetically self-promoting portrait of himself as politician, patron, attorney, landowner, and, above all, literary author.[42] His two long villa letters are nothing less than stylized literary self-portraits that present his lifestyle as one of private and cultured *otium* very similar to that depicted in Statius's villa poems.[43] Villa life is fashioned as a literary life and, at the same time, it validates Pliny's literary activity as a suitable aristocratic occupation. For Pliny, however, villa life is always a privilege won from his hard work in his public career. This rarity gives value to his leisure (see Leach 2003), but limits the potential of villa life to express fully his character. Leisure makes possible the writing of his *Letters*, and Pliny will exploit the ecphrastic villa description to represent the very project of commemoration his *Letters* accomplish.

It is likely that Pliny was motivated by Statius's innovation to include the two extensive descriptions of his own villa gardens in his collection. It is worth remarking that Pliny's two villas correspond in type to Statius's two villa descriptions in *Silvae* 1.3 (maritime villa) and 2.2 (Tiburtine mountains). Pliny's most valuable house may well have been the one he

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40 See Saller 1983 on the economic implications of poetic *otium*; cf. Hardie 1983.55, and, on Horace and the Sabine Farm, Bowditch 2001.

41 Cancik 1965.20, van Dam 1984.3, 190, 369–70.

42 See, in general, on self-presentation in the *Epistles*, Shelton 1987, Radicke 1997, Henderson 2002.

43 On Pliny and *otium,* see Bütler 1970.41–57, Corti 1991.216, Leach 2003.

owned on the Esquiline Hill in Rome (3.21.5, Mart. 10.19; Duncan-Jones 1974.22), but it is his two favorite country houses that are the locations of his leisure and literary activities. In *Epistle* 2.17 (published around 104–05 C.E.), Pliny's villa on the coast of Laurentum on the beach to the south of Ostia is described.[44] This *villa maritima* (only seventeen miles from Rome at Vicus Augustanus 2.17.2, 24, 9.40) served as Pliny's winter refuge. *Epistle* 5.6 (written and published a few years later) contains an even more extensive description (it is the longest letter in the collection) of his estate in Tuscany at foot of the Apennines near the Umbrian town of Tifernum Tiberinum (mod. Città di Castello), which provided relief in the hot summers.[45] Pliny owned major estates in at least three locations in Italy (cf. *Epist.* 4.1; Duncan-Jones 1974.19, 23 suggests at least six or seven houses in all), but describes his ancestral estates at Comum only briefly (*Epist.* 9.7). Scholarship has long interrogated Pliny's villa descriptions for accuracy, and imaginative reconstructions have been attempted for generations.[46] Archaeological investigation continues, but more recent work has focussed on understanding these villa descriptions within Pliny's larger project of self-fashioning and self-advertisement in his letters. As Bergmann 1995.420 and others suggest, instead of dwelling on the "realism" of their archaeological and architectural details, we might understand the properties of Pliny's villas within an ideological and symbolical code.[47]

Pliny begins his villa descriptions in the ethnographic manner by situating them in ideal landscapes, as did Statius, stressing the variety of the landscape (2.17.3: "varia hinc atque inde facies," "the view on either side is full of variety") and praising his villas' excellent climate control (5.6.3: "accipe temperiem caeli, regionis situm, villae amoenitatem," "learn the temperateness of the climate, the layout of the region, the charm of my villa").[48] These landscape descriptions, like those of the *Silvae* (see Myers

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44 Two sites are currently in contention for the location of the villa: Grotte di Piastra and Castel Fusano; see Bergmann 1995.407, Salza Prina Ricotti 1984.

45 In the ruins of a villa found some 10 km north of Tifernum, on the so-called "Colle Plinio," excavators have found what are possibly Pliny's initials (CPCS) stamped on a terracotta drainpipe and roof tiles. See Champlin 2001.

46 See the fascinating account (with illustrations) by Du Prey 1994.

47 Cf. Lefèvre 1977.532. There has, of course, also been a long scholarly debate about the possible fictionality of Pliny's two villas. That they existed is clear, but Pliny's primary goal was not to describe them realistically.

48 I follow the Teubner text of M. Schuster, rev. R. Hansik (Stuttgart and Lipsiae 1992). See Maselli 1995.94–95 on Pliny's terminology.

2000.119), share affinities with the traditional *laudes Italiae*, which draw on utopian ideals of ethnography as well as the traditional literary *locus amoenus*.[49] Emphasis on the temperateness of the climate and the fertility of the soil are commonplaces of such ethnographic descriptions, as is the repeated stress on the marvelous, and on restfulness and peace. *Epistle* 5.6 begins with a description of the physical geography of the area, and comments on the mildness of the summer climate (5.6.5: *aestatis mira clementia*; at Comum and Laurentum there is eternal spring: 1.3.1: *verna semper*; 2.17.3: *tepore verno*), the natural resources and produce, including ploughlands, woods, vineyards, cattle, and the navigable river (5.6.7–13, all features which Thomas 1982, esp. 1–7, singles out as typical of the ethnographical tradition). The location of his Tuscan villa, Pliny assures his friend, is *saluberrimus* (5.6.2). Such reassurances also reflect the fact that, in Rome, topographical language, including garden descriptions, "had strong ethical elements" (Purcell 2001.554). Pliny's landscape reflects the virtues of self-sufficiency, temperateness, and traditional rural values. Both Statius and Pliny had an important literary precedent in the poetry of Horace, where similar ethnographic descriptions, especially of his Sabine Farm, serve to represent ideal ethical and poetical landscapes.[50]

The locations of both villas, one on the shore, the other on the slope of a mountain, command attention within their landscapes. Their towers look over and dominate the surrounding area, conveying a message about the proprietor's resources and ability to control and dominate the local environment.[51] He presents the surrounding natural landscape as a panorama to be enjoyed from the vantage point of his estate, which provides the pleased owner with a spectacle of productivity[52] (5.6.13: "magnam capies voluptatem, si hunc regionis situm ex monte prospexeris. neque enim terras tibi sed formam aliquam ad eximiam pulchritudinem pictam videberis cernere," "you will greatly enjoy the view of the surrounding landscape

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49 Hoffer 1999.30. The ethnographical habit was deeply ingrained in Roman ways of thinking about their environment and has been traced by Thomas 1982.

50 See Thomas 1982.8–34. The anonymous reader for *Arethusa* points out that Catullus 44 contains another connection between the ethnographic habit and literary style along the lines of the Horatian *temperies*. Catullus here is cured of a cold and cough caused by Sestius's bad style by retreating to his Sabine (or Tiburtine) villa ("me recuravi otioque et urtica").

51 Cf. Statius *Silv*. 2.2.3: *speculatrix villa,* "a lofty villa," i.e., "with a good view/easy to observe." On this aspect of villa ideology, see Wallace-Hadrill 1998a, Purcell 1987.

52 See Purcell 1995.159; cf. Mart. *Ep*. 4.64.

from the mountain, for the view seems to be a painted scene of extraordinary beauty rather than real countryside"). This exaltation of the artificial over the natural is typical of Pliny's view of nature and his treatment of his landscape. Pliny also describes the setting of the Tuscan villa as like an amphitheater (5.6.7: "imaginare amphitheatrum aliquod immensum, et quale sola rerum natura possit effingere," "picture a vast amphitheater such as could only be a work of nature"); the villa is a spectacle. The paradox of nature imitating architecture is indicative of the way in which landscape and art interact in Pliny's villa letters. While Statius stresses the amelioration (through domination) of the landscape by his patrons, Pliny plays throughout with the art of illusion, especially in the distinction (or the lack thereof) between the natural and the artificial. Romans liked their nature cultivated. As in Statius, Pliny's manipulations of his environment draw attention to his power over the landscape through artistry.[53]

However, while he positions his villas in ideal landscapes, in these long villa letters, Pliny is too intent on presenting a life of leisure to dwell at any length on the productivity of his estates, despite the fact that these landholdings would have comprised the main basis of his wealth. Duncan-Jones stresses that they would have contributed a substantial part of his yearly income.[54] In other letters, we hear details about some of Pliny's business affairs concerning the produce of his estates (8.2: grape harvest, 7.30: tenant farming). Pliny mentions an *apotheca* (probably for wine storage) and a *horreum* (for grain) at the Laurentine villa (2.17.13). He says that the mulberries and figs do well here, but does not detail the produce of his "fertile and rustic kitchen garden," "hortus alius pinguis et rusticus" (15). He boasts that the estate is largely self-sufficient (it provides adequate water, sole and prawns, milk, firewood). Elsewhere (*Epistle* 4.6), we learn that this estate in Laurentum, as opposed to those in Tuscany and Comum, was not a major source of income, but was used mainly for pleasure. It is probably significant, however, that Pliny's kitchen garden seems to have been prominently positioned near the entrance to the Laurentine villa, thus advertising the estate's adherence to the ideals of productivity traditionally associated with gardens and rural villa life. A number of recently excavated villas have revealed this same concern with displaying the productivity of their es-

53 See Bek 1976, Mansuelli 1978.68–69.

54 Duncan-Jones 1965, 1974.17–32, Garnsey and Saller 1987.65–69; cf. De Neeve 1992, on the productivity of the Tuscan estate.

tates.[55] Pliny's praise of the Laurentine villa's amenities and charm at 2.17.25: *haec utilitas, haec amoenitas*, echoes Varro's earlier villa ideal of combining productivity and pleasure, which he enunciated in his *Res Rusticae* (3.2.6–18). Bek 1980.179 argues that *amoenitas* here "comes to implicate its subject matter or figurative theme describable in the spheres of mythology, poetry or rhetoric." In his two descriptive letters, Pliny is clearly most interested in the artistic presentation of the villas' cultural symbolism and his own role as architectural and literary creator of his own estates. We hear little of other people in these letters, as the proprietor himself assumes the primary role of narrator, actor, and tour guide.

Pliny prides himself on his own hand in the layout and design of his estates (5.6.41: "amo enim, quae maxima ex parte ipse incohavi aut incohata percolui," "for I love these places that I have largely laid out myself or where I have perfected an earlier design"). In both letters, the villas' grounds are extensively described, with 2.17 having ten out of twenty-seven of its descriptive paragraphs devoted to its locality and grounds and, in 5.6, twenty-one out of thirty-seven. Andrew Riggsby has drawn attention to the enumerative quality of Pliny's villa letters. Rather than maps or blueprints, Pliny's descriptions follow a linear approach, providing a list of spaces or an itinerary, detailing "a series of isolated islands" (2003.169). The most characteristic feature of Pliny's villa descriptions is his emphasis on the landscape views framed by the architectural features of his house and the interdependence of garden and architectural elements. As in Statius's poems and Roman villa wall paintings, Pliny's descriptions celebrate a "domestic context in which architecture imposes order on the land and nature is shaped into a series of perfect views"[56] (cf. *Silvae* 2.2.72–74: "quid mille revolvam / culmina visendique vices? sua cuique voluptas / atque omni proprium thalamo mare," "Why should I recount the numberless summits and changing views? Each chamber has its own delight, its own particular sea" [trans. Mozley]).

There are throughout hints at the way in which the estates reflect

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55 See Purcell 1995, Jashemski 1987. See also Varro *RR* 3.2.6–18 for a discussion of villas, luxury, and productivity.

56 Bergmann 1991.66; see also Bergmann 1995.412, 2001.159, Bek 1980.170, Lefèvre 1977.521–23, Drerup 1959.147–74. See Horace's criticism of such proprietary villa vistas at *Epist*. 1.10.22–23: "nempe inter varias nutritur silva columnas, / laudaturque domus longos quae prospicit agros," "a forest, indeed, is nourished between the variegated columns and a house that overlooks distant fields is praised."

their owner's adherence to traditional virtues. In both villas, Pliny maintains an atrium in the old style*, ex more veterum*, as he terms it, while adding the porticos more typical of his period (2.17.4, 5.6.15). Pliny boasts that visiting his Tuscan villa is like returning to another age, there are so many old people there (5.6.6). The upkeep of his Laurentine pleasure villa is, he claims, not excessive (2.17.3: "villa usibus capax, non sumptuosa tutela," "the villa is large enough for my needs, but not too expensive to keep up").[57] Pliny famously mentions no interior furnishings of his villas (besides, significantly, some books and bookshelves in 2.17.8), gives no details about the decorations or contents of the rooms (except one small room containing a garden painting in 5.6.22), and describes no sculptures or artwork either inside or outside (although the extensive topiary may stand in for such external decoration). Pliny seems, in fact, to have had little interest in sculpture for his private use, thus forming a striking contrast with Statius's lavish elaboration of the costly materials, artwork, and decorations of his patrons' villas and with actual villas such as that at Oplontis, where over fifty garden statues have been found so far.[58] Pliny criticizes elsewhere the interests of Silius Italicus and Regulus in expensive artwork for domestic use (3.7.8, 4.2.5, 8.18.11), while, significantly, mentioning in other letters his own sculptural purchases for public buildings (1.17.1–4, 2.7.6–7; cf. 3.6.4: "neque enim ullum adhuc Corinthium domi habeo," "I still have no Corinthian bronzes at home"). The lack of any description of the decoration of Pliny's homes deprives these sites of the traditional associative connections of villas with myth and philhellenism, so prominent in Statius's poems. Instead, attention is focused on architecture and landscape, and Pliny's control of both.

The luxurious features of Pliny's estates are largely transferred to his elaborate ornamental gardens and their formal architectural features (Hoffer 1999.35). Why, then, does Pliny spend more time describing his gardens than his villa? First of all, it is not clear that he would have perceived such a distinction, as architecture and horticulture here are so

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57 Cf. 2.17.11: "duae cellae magis elegantes quam sumptuosae," "two chambers more elegant than lavish" and 2.4.3, where Pliny discusses his finances: "Sunt quidem omnino nobis modicae facultates, dignitas sumptuosa, reditus propter condicionem agellorum nescio minor an incertior; sed quod cessat ex reditu, frugalitate suppletur," "It is true that my resources as a whole are not great and my position is expensive to keep up; being dependent on the way my property is farmed, my income is small or precarious, but its deficiencies can be made up by simple living" (trans. Radice).

58 See now Henderson 2002 on Pliny and sculpture.

profoundly combined. Certainly it is true that Pliny can allow himself more detailed description of his plantings than of the decorations of his rooms, which could attract moral opprobrium, but more importantly, it is in the layout of the estates' gardens and garden architecture that Pliny can most forcefully articulate the imposition of his personality on the landscape. As demarcated and enclosed spaces where the intentions and abilities (*ingenium, ars*) of man come into contact with nature, gardens serve as powerful models for the "creative adaptation of natural order" (Purcell 1996a.135).

Pliny's description of his estates and gardens in *Epistles* 2.17 and 5.6 are elaborate and notoriously difficult to interpret due to his lack of precision and his use of many Greek terms, which serve to display his architectural and horticultural erudition and to indicate that these features of his estate "belong to the same lofty tradition as upper-class literature" (Hoffer 1999.38).[59] The grounds are characterized by extensive use of topiary and shrubbery and the close relationship between garden architecture and plantings. In Pliny's gardens, all is enclosed and artificiality is prized. Outdoor terraces, porticos, and promenades blur the distinction between interior and exterior, and nature is simultaneously included and excluded. His garden settings often sound like rooms without ceilings, and rooms continue the garden inside. Trees, shrubs, and groves serve as extensions of the architecture and are shaped accordingly. This process "was assisted by the widespread theory [Vitruvius 2.1.2] that the trabeated architecture of the orders itself derived from primitive adaptations of living or recently culled natural materials" (Purcell 1996a.144). While the rooms of the villa are oriented towards their views of nature, Pliny continually stresses the security the architecture provides against nature, especially at the seaside villa at Laurentum. Nature is enclosed within the architecture and seamlessly continued inside (cf. the garden painting at 5.6.22).

As one approached the entrance to the Laurentine villa,[60] one passed through the natural landscape, then the functional and formal gardens.[61] The atrium of the villa looked out in front on the countryside and led

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59 Cf. Varro's complaints about the proliferation of Greek features and names at villas in his time, *RR* 2 Intro. 2: "nec se putant se habere villam, si non multis vocabulis retinniat Graecis," "they do not think they have a real villa unless it rings with Greek names."

60 Reconstructions of the estate widely differ, but most reliable are probably those by Ricotti and Winnefeld; for illustrations see Förtsch 1993.Tafel 42, Bergmann 1995.414–15.

61 See Förtsch 1993.74f., passim, and Bergmann 1995.413 on the multiple vantage points of this varied landscape.

into a small colonnaded courtyard (2.17.4: *paruola, sed festiua area*) with an unusual D-shape, protected from the elements (4–5). At the front of the villa, the garden was surrounded by an encircling drive or formal walk (*gestatio*) and was sheltered from the sea by a two-story wing with a covered gallery (*cryptoporticus,* Pliny is the first to use the term) and towers (14). Pliny saves for the end and climax of both letters his favorite retreats at the two estates, which he calls *amores mei*. Here at the Laurentine villa, a suite of rooms at the far end of the *cryptoporticus* gardens (2.17.20–24) serves as a refuge where Pliny can in absolute silence pursue his *studia*, even during the noisy festivities of the Saturnalia (24).

At Tifernum, the long porticoed façade of the villa faced south toward the natural countryside of meadows, fields, and woods and was fronted by a decorative formal garden. Pliny claims that the view of a flower-filled meadow is no less pleasing than his formal gardens (5.6.18: "pratum inde non minus natura quam superiora illa arte visendum," "a meadow as well worth seeing for its natural beauty as the formal garden I have described" [trans. Radice]).[62] At the villa's entrance was a terraced formal garden (*xystus*) with box hedge topiary; a bank sloped down from this with more box hedges clipped into the figures of animals facing each other (5.6.16). Such *nemora tonsilia* represent a rather new fashion, introduced, as Pliny the Elder tells us, by Gaius Mattius during the reign of Augustus (*Nat.* 12.13). In the center of the villa was a small courtyard (*areola*) with four plane trees (something that seemed unlikely to earlier commentators, but which has been confirmed by Jashemski's findings of many large root holes in Pompeian gardens and courtyards, and which she identifies [1979.52–53] as another old-fashioned touch on Pliny's part). A fountain in a marble basin sprayed the ground with water, and the courtyard was faced by a suite of rooms, one with a fresco of birds in trees (22) that brought nature indoors (Lefèvre 1977.524). Covered passages or arcades (*cryptoportici*) at different levels led away from the villa in at least two directions and linked it to more rooms, some of which looked out on a vineyard near the villa, and to the adjacent hippodrome garden, Pliny's greatest pride.

This structure was one of the most remarkable features of the Tuscan estate, and Pliny claims that "it far surpasses the design and charm of the buildings" (5.6.32: "hanc dispositionem amoenitatemque tectorum <vincit> longe longeque praecedit hippodromus"). It was a garden in the

62 See Lefèvre 1977.536–38 on Pliny's aesthetic view of the natural.

form of a riding ground (*hippodromus*), imitating the grand form of public architecture, but entirely landscaped with intricate plantings geometrically laid out around several circuits of shaded pathways for walking outlined with clipped box hedges. The center grass lawns were planted at the top curved end of the hippodrome with roses, then followed box hedge topiary of many shapes, including the name of the owner and the gardener. Set off by low plane trees and behind them acanthus beds, the open space in the center was meant to evoke the rural countryside either by topiary or its simplicity, and by its "naturalness" to contrast with the artifice of the rest of the ornamental plantings (5.6.35: "in opere urbanissimo subita uelut inlati ruris imitatio," "suddenly in the midst of this ornamental scene is what looks like a piece of rural countryside")—an excellent example of Pliny's aesthetic of illusion. At the curved end of the course, cypress trees created shade for an outdoor dining area with a semi-circular white marble dining couch (*stibadium*) under a vine-covered pergola of four columns of green Carystian marble (36–37). A vine-covered room here (*cubiculum*) of white marble with an alcove, bed, chairs, and numerous fountains controlled by hand (37–40) provided a spot, says Pliny, where you could lie and imagine you are in a wood, but without the risk of rain (39). This imitation of large-scale public architecture, like the garden in the shape of a circus (17), bears out Pliny's emphasis on the monumental scale of his estate, which he had introduced at the opening of the letter by comparing its setting to an amphitheater (7).

Pliny's villa idylls eschew the practical and business aspects of his estates in favor of the master's use of its pleasures. Like Statius, Pliny depicts his villas as personal places of refuge (5.6.45: *placida omnia et quiescentia,* "there is complete calm and quiet"), but there is, however, very little description in these two long letters of any human activity at the villas, either of the human labor their upkeep requires[63] nor even of Pliny's activities, although a number are suggested by the architecture (there is one mention of his *studia* at 2.17.24).[64] Riggsby 2003.185 suggests that the villa

63 Pliny follows the widespread tendency of Latin literature to omit mention of the slave labor required in the upkeep of these large estates; see Fitzgerald 1996 and Purcell 1995.162 on how Cicero's and Pliny's depictions of villa culture are dominated by associations of leisure. Mentions of tenants and laborers do appear in other of Pliny's *Epistles*, e.g., 3.19, 5.14, 7.30, 9.15, 10.8.

64 Activities implied include reading (2.17.8–9), dining with friends (5.6.21, 37), walking (5.6.40), exercise (*gymnasia* 2.17.7, *sphaeristeria* 2.17.12, 5.6.27), and bathing (2.17.11, 5.6.25–26).

letters are meant to present "fairly abstract constructs of generic experience," reflecting the unstructured use of leisure time. Elsewhere in the *Letters,* Pliny stresses the importance of his literary activities pursued at the villas (e.g., 1.9, 1.22, 4.1, 9.36, 9.40).[65] The *otium* they provide is appropriately *studiosum* (1.22.11) and productive, devoted to the care and cultivation of Pliny's mind, body, and work (1.9.4: "aut lego aliquid aut scribo aut etiam corpori vaco, cuius fulturis animus sustinetur," "I either read or write or make time for exercise that sustains my mind for work"). Despite the traditional associations of villas and gardens, and Pliny's self-conscious association of himself with Cicero, it is notable that Pliny's villa letters do not evoke the philosophical associations of villa life such as we saw in Statius.[66] At the Laurentinum, he says, he cultivates himself rather than the land through his studies (4.6.2–3: "ibi enim plurimum scribo, nec agrum, quem non habeo, sed ipsum me studiis excolo; ac iam possum tibi ut aliis in locis horreum plenum sic ibi scrinium ostendere," "For there I do most of my writing, and instead of the land I lack, I cultivate myself through my studies so that I can show you there a full writing-case in place of the full granaries elsewhere"). In 1.6, we hear of Pliny filling his notebooks with his compositions as he sits by the hunting nets in Tifernum, and he tell us elsewhere that he never went hunting without his notebooks. He revised his speeches and took numerous walks on the many different pathways of his gardens, and read aloud for the sake of his digestion (9.36). His role as generous host is suggested by mentions of rooms at the villas devoted to dinner parties and guest quarters (cf. 9.36.4–6), but, for the most part, Pliny stresses his solitary and productive activities. At Laurentum, Pliny "communes only with himself and his books" (1.9.5: "mecum tantum et cum libellis loquor") as "the luxurious buildings, landscaping, baths, and banquet halls shrink down to the absolute minimum of sea, shore, and private chamber with books" (Hoffer 1999.116).[67]

Unlike Statius's patrons, Pliny was actively and successfully engaged in a political career and, throughout the collection, he constantly contrasts and compares his *otium* with his engagement in public life, *nego-*

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65 See Hoffer 1999.29ff. on "villas as factories of literature."

66 André 1975 argues that Pliny's *Letters* show a general knowledge of and sympathy with Stoic tenets. Hoffer 1999.119–40 discusses how *Epist.* 1.10 (on the philosopher Euphrates) reveals a certain disdain on Pliny's part for the serious practice of philosophy.

67 Cf. 9.36.1: *liber et mihi relictus,* "free and left to myself"; 2.17.24.

tium.[68] He justifies his leisure both by showing that it is not indolent or luxurious, but rather productive, and by showing how busy he is most of the time at his public career.[69] Leach 1990 points out that Pliny's letters reveal a preoccupation with the exposure of his private life, and she associates this with the intensive self-cultivation and emergence of the private individual identified by Foucault as a feature of the early centuries C.E. Certainly Pliny's writings disclose his concern for the interrelationship of public and private personality (Leach 1990.31), but, as Riggsby 1998 argues, even more prominent is Pliny's desire to validate his life by exposing it to constant public evaluation, thus revealing his more community-minded ethic. John Henderson most recently has (c)entered the debate by suggesting that we should view Pliny as constantly "calibrating political service against personal self-cultivation" (2003.125).[70]

Pliny's villa letters localize and distinguish his private *studia* from his civic and public *officia* (cf. 1.3.3, 5.5.4, 5.6.45, 9.3). While the composition and publication of literature, whether speeches, poems, or letters, was but a part of Pliny's busy life, it was one in which he invested a great deal of his reputation and hopes for future fame.[71] In *Epistle* 3.7, an uncharacteristically pessimistic but revealing letter about the current political situation, Pliny praises literature as a more secure bid for immortality than public life, where opportunities for advancement are now under imperial control: "si non datur factis (nam horum materia in aliena manu), certe studiis proferamus," "if we cannot prolong [our fame] by deeds (since the opportunity for these is under another's control) at least let us do so by literary works," 3.7.4.[72] Although throughout his *Panegyricus,* Pliny lauds the new security of new times under Trajan (e.g., 50.7: *tanta securitas temporum est*), there were still limits on aristocratic activity. In *Epistle* 9.2.3, Pliny contrasts the narrow limits (*angustis terminis*) of his political and literary situation with

68 Pliny was a successful advocate, entered a senatorial career, held many of the major positions, and gained the suffect consulship (briefly) in 100 C.E. and a governorship of Bithynia; see Sherwin-White 1966.72–82. On Pliny's *facta* vs. *studia*, see Guillemin 1929.13–22, Bütler 1970.22–27, Hoffer 1999.111–18.

69 On *otium* earned, cf. 2.8, 3.1.12, 4.3, 8.9.

70 See also Henderson 2002.13–14 and Gibson 2003.252.

71 On the importance of literature to Pliny, see Gamberini 1983.170, 489–90, Roller 1998, McEwen 1995.

72 Cf. 3.20.12, 3.21.3 on contemporary restrictions upon the acquisition of personal glory. See also Lefèvre 1989.124.

that of Cicero.[73] In *Epistle* 1.3.3, he urges his friend Cannius Rufus to retire to his estate and devote himself entirely to creating an immortal work that will survive him: "hoc sit negotium tuum hoc otium," "let this be your business and recreation."[74] The provocative equation of *negotium* and *otium* reflects the new emphasis of Pliny and his friends on the serious pursuits of private life.[75]

When Pliny returns to the villa theme in *Epistle* 5.6, he is more explicit about his literary aspirations for these monumental letters. While the villa letters have been viewed as exercises in rhetorical landscape description (*topographia*),[76] Pliny himself suggests at the end of 5.6 that they instead be understood in the tradition of poetic ecphrases, as descriptions of works of art, such as Homer's description of Achilles' arms and Vergil's description of Aeneas's shield (5.6.43). The villa letters contain a significant amount of poetic vocabulary and a number of literary echoes. Pliny allowed that descriptions and digressions might adopt more poetic ornamentation (2.5.5: "nam descriptiones locorum . . . non historice tantum sed prope poetice prosequi fas est"; see Gamberini 1983.504–06). The opening of 2.17, "Laurentinum vel, si ita mavis Laurens," may be meant to recall Catullus 44.1: "o funde noster seu Sabine seu Tiburs," an early villa description by a poet important as a model for Pliny's own poetic compositions. Pliny also defends the length of *Epistle* 5.6 with a quotation from Vergil's *Georgics* (5.6.44: *ut parva magnis,* "to compare small things with great").[77]

Pliny's evocation of the tradition of poetic ecphrasis suggests that his villa descriptions may also be read as self-reflective models of the text itself as a work of art. This is suggested when Pliny equates a tour on foot of

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73 See Riggsby 1995 on Pliny's public self-presentation in a Ciceronian mold.

74 On this letter, see Ludolph 1997.121–32. Cf. *Epist.* 4.3, where Pliny commends Arrius Arruntius for his successful political career (two consulships, governor of Asia), but reserves his greatest praise for his Greek compositions (1–2: "ego tamen te vel magis in remissionibus miror").

75 See Lefèvre 1987.252–53.

76 The garden description is a common sophistic theme and set-piece in the later Greek rhetoricians, see Libanius 8.485–86 F, Ach. Tat. 1.15, Apul. *Met.* 2.4. Quintilian 4.3.12 lists "praise of persons and places, the description of regions" in the category of oratorical excurses.

77 On poetic allusions in Pliny, see also Guillemin 1929.117–27, where she suggests a number of Statian echoes: *Epist.* 2.17.16 ~ *Silv*. 2.2.31, *Epist*. 2.17.21, 1.3.1 ~ *Silv*. 2.2.73–74; cf. Sherwin White 1966 on 2.17.12, 13, 5.6.23.

his Tuscan estate with the reading of his letter (5.6.41). He uses this letter to defend the self-serving project of the *Letters*, insisting on the equation of his theme with writing as commemoration (5.6.44: "totam villam oculis tuis subicere conamur," "I am trying to set my entire house before your eyes"). Thus he justifies the enumeration of the minutia not just in this letter, but in the collection as whole (5.6.42–43, 44: "non epistula quae describit sed villa quae describitur magna est," "it is the villa being described that is vast, not the letter describing it").[78] The desire to visit (or own) his estate created by reading the letter (2.17.29: "quem tu nimis urbanus es nisi concupiscis," "you are too sophisticated if you don't covet it") translates into an appetite for Pliny's writings.[79] Pliny writes his homes as images of his *Epistles*, and he "validates his life by reference to artistic cultural coding" (Henderson 2003.121).[80] The emphasis on the *variatio* of the landscapes and the *dispositio* of the estates coincides with rhetorical precepts and with the composition of his *Epistles*.[81] The estates are even signed; at his Tuscan villa, the box hedges spell out the names of Pliny and his *topiarius* (5.6.35). As in Statius, Pliny's villa descriptions reveal an association of domestic architecture with literary fame and immortality. Traditionally, literary commemoration and architecture vie for artistic superiority and the power to bestow immortality (cf. Hor. *C*. 3.30); for Pliny, "hedging" his bets for immortality, each serve to reinforce each other. As in Statius, the elaborate villas and their cultivated landscapes are validated through writing as works of art, while literature is visualized in a monumental setting and is endorsed by the social status of these wealthy estates.

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78 Henderson 2003.119 sees this passage as "definitive of the literary strategy of the corpus and also an ironic self-deprecatory hint at the magnitude of Pliny's ambitions for his mosaic *monumentum*." Cf. on Pliny's penchant for the monumental, *Epist.* 1.20.4: "bonus liber melior est quisque quo maior," "a good book is all the better for being longer."

79 For Pliny, his rare leisure is also something to be desired, cf. 2.8.2.

80 See Henderson 2002 on Pliny's self-portrait in letters through the analogy of the visual arts, esp. 15–17 on villas as monuments and "externalized analogues of the self." In *Epist.* 9.7.3, we learn that Pliny has two villas on the shores of Lake Como, one called *tragoedia* because of its lofty position, the other *comoedia* because of its situation on the beach.

81 See McEwen 1995. On variety as a goal of Pliny's poetry, see *Epist.* 4.14.3: "ipsa varietate temptamus efficere, ut alia aliis quaedam fortasse omnibus placeant," "I try through variety to appeal to different tastes and possibly produce a few things to please everyone" (trans. Radice); on *variatio* as a possible structural principle of the *Epistles,* see Sherwin-White 1966.46, 50–53.

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