Work at the Ancient Roman Villa: Representations of the Self, the Patron, and Productivity Outside of the City

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Roman poet Gaius Valerius Catullus (84-54 BC) famously wrote, “otium, Catulle, tibi molestum est/ otio exsultas nimiumque gestis/otium et reges prius et beatas/perdidit urbes” (Catullus, leisure is a troublesome thing for you. In leisure you boast and you exult too much. Leisure destroyed both kings and blessed cities before).¹ These are the ending lines of Catullus 51, a poem that Catullus adapted from Sappho. In Catullus 51, Catullus expands on the themes that Sappho put forth. Catullus watches his lover Lesbia from afar and pines for her. Then, however, he breaks from the Sapphic verse and shifts course, ultimately spurning “otium.” He blames this concept for his own destruction, and the destruction of civilization. Too much otium, seemingly, damages both the private and public sphere of ancient Rome.

In this poem, Catullus was building on a previous tradition of what “leisure time” in ancient Rome meant. The earliest appearance of the Latin word is in Ennius' Iphigenia from 190 BC.² He uses the term within a military context. When soldiers are idle and bored during the winter months, without a war to fight, they participated in otium. When they are free to fight, not bound by

¹ All translations are my own. Throughout this thesis, for ease of understanding and constancy, I have largely translated the word otium as “leisure” or “leisure time.” This, however, as I will hope to show, is not necessarily correct. Translating the term as “leisure” is what is most commonly used in translation, although otium can mean many different things in different contexts and the translation is largely based on who is writing, whom they are writing to, and what they are describing in their writing. For the time being, when I refer to otium as leisure, what I mean is that otium is a separation from the demands of the city life marked by a transition into the countryside. Here, “leisure” refers to the lack of a city and the lack of logistical duties that are required in public life in Rome.
² Ennius' Iphigenia 241-248.
idleness, they participated in negotium. For Ennius, otium was largely a waste of time or at least a time of heightened inactivity. If soldiers were not able to fight or work then they couldn’t do their duty for the growth of the Roman state.³

The easiest and earliest definition for the Latin word otium can be understood through a direct contrast. If negotium means an active public life, otium means a quiet private life. Immediately this becomes more complex as Rome grew. A Roman citizen in the city of Rome could not have a quiet or private life. His world, his duty, was centered on constant connections between patrons and clients and defined by movement and business. Therefore, to access a form of private quietude, a Roman would have to travel outwards to the country, outside of the daily grind of life in the city. If negotium was defined by the city, otium was defined by everything outside of the city- the villas, the natural world, the land, and especially the type of people that have the economic ability to travel outside of the city. As a way of life, otium becomes intrinsically connected to the structures of the countryside and the elite persons that are able to access those structures.

Loosely, elite settlement in the countryside became synonymous with moral decay while productivity in the city became synonymous with action and moral acuity by the end of the Republic. This, however, is a paradox within itself. Since the beginning of Rome, the first sparks of the Republic, Romans had a deep connection to and respect of their land. The farmer was exulted again and again in poetry and prose from the start of the Republic all the way up to the end of the

Empire. The farmer, defined by the countryside, embodied Roman morality and Romanitas. He tilled the land and brings grain to the city. He worked when it was time to work. He was respectful and humble, honoring the natural world around him. It is curious, then, that an elite retreat back to the countryside would be marked with amoral activity while having a deep relationship to the land on the Italian peninsula was so integral to the Roman identity and the beginnings of an Empire.

Looking to Cicero can be helpful for an initial understandings of otium and a popularization of the term for a Roman reader. When Cicero writes about his own leisure time in Pro Sestio, XLV. 98, he writes that it is “otium cum dignitate” (leisure with dignity). Outside of his public life in Rome, Cicero retreated to the country and participated in a worthy leisure. He spent time reading, writing, and practicing philosophy. His personal otium was defined by tranquility outside of the city where he uses his free time to do a type of work or service. Even though he was separated from the city, the city was still on his mind. He wrote philosophy and letters that connected him to the Republic and sponsored the Republic. Overall, he was committed to otium as a reward: he could pursue the intellectual and philosophical life that he wants in the countryside. He was careful to delineate, however, that he was not spending his

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4 Ennius' Iphigenia 241-248.
5 Cicero, Pro Sestio, XLV. 98.
time in a selfish pursuit of his whims or revealing in his wealth. For Cicero, *otium* was active, intellectual, and of service to Rome.⁶

With the end of the Republic and the rise of Augustus, the fabric of elite Roman lifestyles shifted. No longer were aristocrats needed in the city as much as they once had been. At the same time, the wealth of the Empire and personal wealth increased in order to run the state. Elites began to push outwards, building and inhabiting villas in the countryside and the seaside. Villas in the countryside, which I will refer to as *villae rusticae*, were connected with production and the sacred Italian land. Conversely, seaside villas, *villae maritimae*, were more closely connected to luxury and showiness inspired by a superior, more perfect, or opulent mode of living.⁷ These typically held differences between *villae rusticae* and *villae maritimae* will be challenged and reconsidered throughout this thesis.

Elites who owned villas and who were concerned with their reception in the city must confront the integrated challenges that occurred when they moved to the country and moved, seemingly, away from Rome. They were under pressure to strike a perfect balance between participating in leisure while also maintaining a connection to the state. While avoiding a depiction of their lifestyle as strictly luxurious, they also must use the language of their property and the time that they spend away from the city in order to legitimatize their status and wealth within the eyes of the city. Overall, in this thesis, I will argue

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that *otium* cannot be separated from the ideals of the city and the city lifestyle. Rather, a dignified *otium* still sponsored the growth of Rome even though it is often seen as a rejection of the city life. Similarly, *otium* was not private as it is sometimes thought to be. Within life in the countryside, social dynamics that drove city life also drove country life. Overall, the language of the country was used to define oneself: elites worked to forge their own character through their country lifestyle.

There is often a difference between the literary understanding of *otium* and the archaeological or architectural understanding. Remains often do not correspond with the writing. Those writing about their villas face a specific pressure to control the narrative surrounding their leisure time, even if this narrative was not grounded in the reality of villa dwelling.

Three authors will be explored in order to understand the justification of *otium*, villa lifestyles of the elite, and how the language of a villa was employed to strengthen self-representation in the city. I will offer a close reading of the poetry of Horace, the poetry of Statius, and the letters of Pliny the Younger in order to explore these themes throughout chronologic stages of the early Empire. Although other orators and poets explored *otium* in their works, these three authors connect *otium* closely to the villa context. Thus, Horace, Statius, and Pliny, explore life outside of Rome through the architectural structure of a villa and use built spaces to define their versions of *otium*. When placed side by side, these three authors also offer changing versions of the villa context and a shifting moral code determined by the time period in which they produced their
work. *Otium* and self-representation in *otium* can be tracked throughout the earlier years of the Empire. The known archaeological remains of Horace’s villa and Pliny the Younger’s Tuscan villa will also be explored in order to reveal discrepancies between the literary and archaeological record.

The first author that I will discuss is Horace (65-8 BC). He represents a voice of the early Empire. He wrote from a new Rome, a Rome that has harnessed larger amounts of wealth under Augustus. Horace, a non-Roman from a lower social ranking, was new to the elite version of the countryside. While he grew up outside of the city, his fame as a poet has exposed him to a new social ranking and a new type of luxurious countryside. His *villa rustica* was in ancient day Tibur and was a gift from his patron Maecenas. In his poetry, Horace seemed to preach values of humility and rail against luxuries, especially luxuries that city life was defined by. He attempted to create a utopia at his villa, a place where he could enjoy the natural world, practice philosophy, and write poetry. His lifestyle at this villa, however, was still dictated by the demands of his work and urban social obligations to his patron. Further, the possible remains of Horace’s villa do not match up to the rustic site that Horace suggested. Horace used his villa poem to define himself for his readership and create a value system that would dictate more of his work to come. He was concerned with modesty, a type of modesty that was honored during the Republic. Digging past his claims of

modesty, however, can reveal systems of productivity and societal obligations that control his work. These systems centered on city dwelling. From the villa,

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Horace controlled his representation but could not escape the requirements of urbanity and, instead, used the villa to subtly justify his status in the eyes of Rome.

The second author that I will discuss is Statius (45-96 AD), writing in Domitianic Rome. Statius, unlike Horace, did not write poetry about his own villa. Through his villa poems, two of which I will close read, he defined the lives of his patrons while simultaneously strengthening his own ties to his patrons. First, Statius wrote about Vopiscus’ villa rustica in Tibur, where Horace’s villa rustica was located as well. Statius exalted Vopiscus’ wealth through the architectural elements that he described but his ultimate goal was to link Vopiscus, a senator, to the Empire and protect Vopiscus’ legacy. Statius riddled his poem with references indicating that even though Vopiscus was outside of the city, he still worked to honor the Empire. Statius’ second villa poem described Pollius Felix’s villa maritima in the Bay of Naples. In this poem, Statius challenged the rules: he was not writing about a Roman citizen and he was also writing from the hotbed of wealth in the Empire. Pollius was not as concerned with Roman morality or sponsoring the Empire, instead Pollius’ leisure time connected him to his philosophical practices and Pollius as a character was created. Through depiction of wealth, Pollius derived his morality and heritage. Ultimately, Statius exalted his patrons through the language of leisure time in order to strengthen his own working relationship with them but also to create identities for his patrons through the symbol of the villa.
Lastly, I will explore the letters of Pliny the Younger (61-113 AD), who wrote during Trajanic Rome and who is most well known for his detailed accounts of his villas. While Pliny had other villas, I will center my exploration on his Tuscan villa, a *villa rustica*, and his Laurentine villa, a *villa maritima*. Pliny detailed both spaces with high specificity, describing the architecture and natural world that surrounded him while he was at leisure. Like authors before him, Pliny forged himself and the tenets of his character in these letters. He struck a specific balance between showing his productivity and participating in leisurely behaviors: he simultaneously connected himself to a more Republican version of moralism while connecting himself to his elite status. Pliny was also concerned with ensuring his legacy - he attempted to create immorality for himself through the architecture of his built spaces.

**VILLA RUSTICA VERSUS VILLA MARITIMA**

Typically, scholars divide villas into two categories: the *villa rustica* and the *villa maritima*. The rural villa, the *villa rustica*, developed in regions not far from Rome, mostly owned by Roman elite who sought an alternative or additional income. The practice of owning a villa outside of the city started in the early Republic and was maintained throughout the Empire. Marzano writes that "the importance of agriculture in the ideology of the upper class was directly connected with the weight given to the idea of self-sufficiency: one should produce all that is needed on the estate, and this means an engagement in
agriculture to provide both basic- and less basic-foodstuffs." Her definition of a villa rustica centers on the ability for the villa to be productive. However, her idea of productivity can be extended past the agricultural pursuit and can include other productive work such as production or cultivation of the mind. Slaves and servants who maintained the villa while the master was away generally occupied the villa rustica year-round. The rustic villa had a close relationship to the progress of the Empire, as foodstuffs were typically produced, or at least perceived to be produced, at these villas. The connection between the rustic villa and luxury was not as strong as it was be with the seaside villa. Attacks on the lifestyles of those with rustic villas were not as common as attacks on those with seaside villas. However, luxury and leisure time was still sought after within the rustic villa. Even if a villa was a villa rustica by location alone, there was still a pressure to maintain that the villa was productive for the state. Therefore, the sense of the rustic villa became synonymous with the production of the mind. Going outside of the city and spending time studying, reading, writing, and philosophizing at the villa was presented as an act of production by writers that will be explored in later chapters. Some villas that are lumped in the villa rustica category are not agriculturally productive at all and rely on the productivity of the mind to avoid perceived trappings of luxury.

Villa maritima were along the seaside and have specific luxurious implications: members of the Roman elite built leisure retreats outside of the

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9 Marzano 2007, 83.
city.\textsuperscript{10} Commonly, the \textit{villa maritima} was considered to be the opposite of the \textit{villa rustica}, the countryside productive villa. By the late second century B.C., the \textit{villa maritima} became a symbol for \textit{otium} itself- seemingly, these villas were only locations for which the elite could carry out leisure without a relationship to production, utilitarianism, or social implications that related to political life in Rome. Until recently, the inclination to regard \textit{villae maritimae} as locations built for the pure pursuit of luxury and display of wealth was reflected in scholarship.\textsuperscript{11}

\textit{Villae maritimae}, however, could not exist without a relationship to city life even if they were a nexus for \textit{otium}. In fact, industry and production that were previously only thought to be connected to country villa complexes, such as fish-breeding, stone-quarrying, agriculture, and brick-making, all took place at villas along the seashore as well as villas in the countryside. Similarly, the idea of “productivity” could be stretched much further than what could be considered to be utilitarian just like it could be for the \textit{villa rustica}. Productiveness at seaside villas included more general economic growth. A villa on the seaside could be involved in sea-trade, investment in property, and cultivation of social status through the means of building property that symbolized wealth and status.\textsuperscript{12} The combination of luxurious environment and economic opportunity found at \textit{villae maritimae} increased their attraction and accounted for their abundance along

\textsuperscript{10} Marzano 2007, 13.
\textsuperscript{11} J. D’Arms, “Ville Rustiche e Ville di Otium,” in \textit{Pompei}, ed. F. Zevi (Naples 1977) 65-86. D’Arms is the first to fully challenge this notion, considering that \textit{villae maritimae} have economic reach and, perhaps, don’t just exist to fulfill \textit{otium}.
\textsuperscript{12} For example, Philostr. \textit{VS}. 2.23 sites the Damian, who owned a seaside villa, as having a small harbor that could secure anchorage for merchant ships.
the coasts of Italy. The villa outside of the city became a marker of status for the elite Roman in the eyes of the city community and, in this sense; the villa became a place that reflected a social and political hierarchy of the city. While the inclination to separate the villa from the city is potent in scholarship, these two spaces were not as distinct as they may seem. The villa, regardless of location, existed based on wealth, social standing, and economics of the city. Therefore, the villa could not exist without a relationship to the city.

Along with the rise of the villae maritimae as a site for elite luxurious practices came moral condemnations of these villas. Notably in 125 BC, censor Lucius Cadius Longinus Ravilla issued a censorial mark to the augur M. Aemilius Lepidus Porcina because his villa was too splendid. Here, as the two were political rivals, Porcina was punished for trying to claim symbolic power through building a large, sumptuous villa. As building luxury villas had social implications, the area in which one builds a seaside villa had specific social connotations. Typically, senators tried to keep people of new money out of their elite villa neighborhoods, such as Cumae and Tusculum. However, the drive for the elite nobility to place roots in these neighborhoods to maintain social status made these neighborhoods more crowded and forced social obligations to take place. Therefore, even though elite coastal neighborhoods were considered to be centers for rest and relaxation, these neighborhoods often would have bared

13 Marzano 2007, 15.
14 This censorial mark is known through Valerius Maximus, Val. Max. 8.1, Damn. 7: "crimine nimis sublime extractae villae in Alsiensi agro" (on a charge of having constructed a villa to an improper height in the territory of Alsiurn).
15 Marzano 2007, 18.
similar political and social commitments as being in the city would.\textsuperscript{16} While the perception remained that seaside villas were not involved in economic activity and were primarily pleasure retreats, the real productivity that the maritime villa provided cannot be overlooked, especially considering the social implications of owning a villa, the revenue that a villa could provide, and the intellectual production that could occur at the villa when pleasure and productivity were combined into one space.\textsuperscript{17}

Whether it was in the country or on the shore, the villa represented a center to re-enforce a certain privileged social identity. It was both divorced from the city and a representation of it- physically removed while also upholding the economic and social dynamics of a city. At the villa, the owner was in touch with the landscape but specifically in control of it, using the natural world for economic or philosophical enterprises. Outside of the city, the villa created a mythology for the owner and the owner could shape this mythology in order to shape his own characteristics.

\textsuperscript{16} Cicero \textit{Att.} 5.2.2. refers to Cumae, where he had a maritime villa, as “pusilla Roma” (a little Rome).

\textsuperscript{17} Unlike Cato’s Republican account of how a rustic villa based on agriculture should be run, no systematic written account for how maritime villas should be run exists. Varro and Columella conceive these spaces to be pleasure retreats connected primarily to luxury and lack of economic productivity. Going back to Cato’s writings, the rustic villa and the connection to agriculture led to a general ideology that created the rustic villa into an economic center based on fertility and wealth that comes from the ground rather than wealth that comes from elsewhere.
CHAPTER ONE: HORACE

Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65 BC- 8 AD), known as Horace, was born in Venusia, a military colony of Rome about 400 kilometers south east of Rome. His father was a freedman, whom Horace referred to in his poetry. After being freed, his father was given farmland and job as a revenue officer for the colony. 18 Horace’s father, however, had larger aspirations for Horace and believed that he deserved a better education than Venusia could offer.19 First, Horace went to Rome to study poetry and rhetoric but then traveled to Athens to study at the Academy, which was dedicated to Stoic and Epicurean teachings at the time. 20 After the assassination of Julius Caesar, however, Horace joined Brutus’ army for a brief period of time and then safely went back to the Italian peninsula in 42 BC. After returning to Venusia, Horace discovered that his father was dead and Augustus had confiscated his family’s farm in order to satisfy the war veterans’ craving for holding plots of land.

Augustus’ land confiscation displaced thousands of country-dwellers, who then entered the city for employment. Horace was among the many who began a new life in Rome and started to write poetry. Horace fell into Virgil’s literary society and was introduced to Maecenas, a supporter of Augustus and a patron of the arts. 21 Maecenas became Horace’s patron. Meanwhile, Augustus,

19 Sat. 1.6.77-78.
20 Wilkinson 1945, 7.
the first Roman Emperor, was changing the political and social landscape of Rome. The city that Horace returned to was encountering post-revolutionary changes. The Empire was beginning and this was reflected in the physical city through Augustus’ building reforms and moral reforms. Citizens were clamoring to find their place within the new political sphere.\textsuperscript{22}

The Roman Empire itself was becoming more worldly and international; goods, peoples, and new vehicles of culture were being brought into the city and these influences would come to shape Horace’s poetic modes. After the Punic Wars, extravagant goods from Carthage and Greece came streaming into the Empire and elite citizens developed a taste for Eastern practices of luxury.\textsuperscript{23} Augustus was transforming the city from mud-bricks to marble. Previously held tenets of moderation were being challenged in favor of grander tastes and opulence. Augustus was in charge of the city and the Empire: the Roman aristocratic class was no longer needed in Rome as they once were.\textsuperscript{24} Many elites decided to place roots in the countryside and practice otium outside of the city, away from a changing Rome.

In conversation with his humble beginnings in Venusia and working within a period of intense cultural transformation, Horace composed his first

\textsuperscript{22} For a more complete understanding of the physical and social changes that Augustus enacted on the city of Rome, reference Kathleen S. Lamp, \textit{A City of Marble: The Rhetoric of Augustan Rome}, ed. Thomas W. Benson (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2013).


\textsuperscript{24} To understand Augustus within context, reference Suetonius, \textit{Divus Augustus}. 
published work of poetry around 35 BC, the *Satires*.\(^{25}\) In the *Satires*, Horace considered what it meant to live a happy and contented life, addressing key questions of Greek philosophy that he encountered while at the Academy. He worked to question and address overlaps between traditional Roman morality, Greek Epicureanism, and a changing Roman cultural landscape.\(^{26}\) Horace mixed Roman and Greek themes and considers his place in a changing Empire in his first collection of poems.

Horace located *Sat* 2.6 at his Sabine farm. This was a country villa that his patron Maecenas gave him as a space to write poetry and produce art.\(^{27}\) Colloquially, Horace’s property within his poetic works is referred to as the ‘Sabine farm,’ although this title is perhaps misleading, bringing to mind images of agricultural practices or caring for livestock. Ackerman, distinguishing between a ‘farm’ and a ‘villa,’ writes that “a villa is a building in the country designed for the owner’s enjoyment and relaxation. Though it may also be the center of an agricultural enterprise, the pleasure factor is what distinguishes the villa estate from the farm.”\(^{28}\) Using Ackerman’s definition, Horace’s ‘farm’ is actually a ‘villa.’ A space for relaxation and pleasure is what Horace sought.

From the countryside, Horace critiqued the city and saw the city from the outside: he was detached from life in Rome and the new potential pitfalls of city

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\(^{25}\) The *Satires* were a series of satirical poems composed in dactylic hexameters. The first book of the *Satires* was Horace’s first work of published poetry, establishing him as one of the great literary talents of the Augustan Age.

\(^{26}\) Wilkinson 1945, 8.

\(^{27}\) Gaius Cilnius Maecenas (70 BC- 8 BC) was a political advisor to Augustus as well as a patron of the arts. Maecenas sponsored poets like Horace and Virgil. It was Virgil who introduced Horace to Maecenas.

dwelling. His Sabine farm was in conversation with his lifestyle in Rome, which created space for poetic comparison between the two. Here, he began to create the division between the country and the city: the countryside was an alternative landscape with innate morality that ran in contrast to luxury and avarice, which was found in the city. He painted his Sabine farm as humble and rustic, unconcerned with the ostentatious elite practices in Rome. While Horace used the landscape as a poetic device, he also used the Sabine landscape in order to define himself within the social and political sphere. In this sense, the villa and the city informed each other in Horace’s work. Comparing the potential archaeological remains of Horace’s Sabine farm to his written record of the space can illuminate Horace’s objective for Sat. 2.6. Horace used the language of his villa lifestyle to forge himself and his ideals into being, even if these ideals are not strictly reflected in the remains.

REMAINS OF HORACE’S VILLA

“Horace’s Villa” is the identification given to a Roman villa near modern day Licenza, 30 miles east from the center of Rome (fig. 1). For hundreds of years, the local tradition and early excavations have referred to this villa as Horace’s. The identification of this site is uncertain and controversial, however, and there has been no definitive proof that the villa did in fact belong to Horace aside from the fact that its location is consistent with what Horace mentions in

29 Barbara K. Gold, Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).
his poetry. Horace writes that his villa was in between two mountains, the Mandela and Vicovaro and the site that is known as Horace’s villa is in between these two mountains. Horace also reports in *Ep. 1.10.49-50* that his villa was near a shrine to the goddess Vacuna, who is identified with the goddess of Victory. In the nearby town of Roccagiovine, Italy, a wall inscription reveals that there was a shrine to the goddess Victory that was restored by the Emperor Vespasian. Using these three locations as markers for triangulation, scholars have traditionally named the site as being Horace’s Villa, as it is in-between those two mountains and near the wall inscription.

Excavations began in 1760-1761 by the Tuscan ambassador to the Papal Court, the Baron de Saint’Odile, and the abbot Capmartin de Chaupy, but they did not publish their findings. They dug about 300 meters to the west of the modern day archaeological site, exposing marbles, mosaics, and ceramic materials that continued to be removed from the site by locals and residents until the mid-eighteenth century, as remains from the villa were found in the nearby town of Licenza. Frischer’s work most fully documents the early excavation of the site and its early identification as Horace’s Villa. In 1911, Angiolo Pasqui’s archaeological work began on the site. His notes and drawings, however, have mostly been lost, aside from a few documents that are now in the Palazzo Altemps. These indicate that excavations continued into 1913. Mosaics, fragments of marble, architectural elements, and ceramics were found and

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33 Ibid. 250.
deposited into local museums. In 1930, Giuseppe Lugli and Romas Drees Price, fellows at the American Academy in Rome, began their own excavations. Lugli and Price restored walls and structures as they dug, further confusing the phasing of the site. However, they also provided a model of the condition of the site in 1931, which delineated the surfaces of the quadriporticus garden, and published images of their team in the process of restoration. Overall, it is important to keep in mind that the reconstructions that Lugli and Price completed in the early twentieth century do not necessarily present the true form of the villa and make phasing the site an even more difficult task.

From 1997-2003, Horace’s Villa Project sought to more fully understand the site within time and space. Noticing that scholarship surrounding Horace and the villa was largely influenced by a site that had been primarily excavated by Pasqui in 1931, who had left little documentation regarding his finds, and that the identification of the site as “Horace’s Villa” was tenuous, the project’s aim was to re-investigate the villa and understand the phases.

The Villa Project targeted three main sections of the villa: the residential space (fig. 2), the garden space including a pool and a colonnade (fig. 3), and the baths complex (fig. 4). The residential area was built on a small platform and was divided into two sections. The first section contained an atrium, off of which were bedrooms. The second section was a peristyle garden, off of which were dining rooms, servants’ quarters, and kitchens. These rooms were paved with

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34 Frischer, Crawford, and de Simone, 2006, 253-254.
marbles and mosaics in geometric black-and-white designs.\textsuperscript{35} A rectangular
colonnade that surrounded the garden space was decorated with sculpture and
had doorways leading outside. A pool was in the middle of the colonnade. The
Project attempted to identify these garden spaces and test cultivated soils.\textsuperscript{36} The
next section included the bath complex and the fishpond. In this area of Italy,
water was abundant and ran yearlong. As time went on, the bath complex grew,
but in this area especially, specific phasing and dating proved difficult.\textsuperscript{37} One of
the structures that was restored by Lugli and Price was a vivarium, or a large
fishpond (fig. 6). This structure was most likely an early-Imperial or mid-
Imperial addition judging from the original brickwork.\textsuperscript{38}

While previous excavation focused on built structures, the Villa Project
looked elsewhere to date and understand the site. It found two levels of
preserved soils, dating from the first century BC and the first century AD
according to ceramics. Datable brick stamps either referring to later owners of
the villa or earlier makers of the bricks date the villa from the late Republic to
the early Imperial period. Phases of the villa, especially the phase that would
correspond to Horace’s own lifetime, remain unclear.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{35} Frischer, Crawford, and de Simone 2006, 254.
    \item \textsuperscript{37} Frischer, Crawford, and de Simone 2006, 136.
    \item \textsuperscript{38} For more on \textit{piscinae}, reference James Higgenbotham, \textit{Artificial Fishponds in Roman Italy} (North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
    \item \textsuperscript{39} Frisher Crawford, and de Simone 2006, 136-140.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
It is still uncertain at what point the villa was expanded or restored within the century of ancient use at the site. Therefore, if the villa did belong to Horace, it is unclear what phase of the villa he would have inhabited. The villa, as it exists now, is large. While it is not the most enormous space compared to other elite Roman villas, it is still a substantial villa. It is unclear when, or if, the villa transformed from a modest establishment to a more sumptuous villa. This question becomes crucial if the villa is taken to be one that Horace potentially lived in for a period of time. In a surface reading of his poetry, Horace refered to the villa as being modest and comparatively small. The villa in question is not small or necessarily modest- the site includes a bath complex, a pool, a quadriporticus, a fishpond, and finds that include marbles, bronzes, mosaics, and sculpture- all of which are qualities of a sumptuous villa.

Marzano, writing in 2007 about five years after excavations on the site concluded, describes the villa as a villa rustica. The villa was connected to the act of production. At the villa, a considerable amount of loom weights, bone needles, and spindle-whorls were found. While the exact location of these finds is unclear, Marzano considers that textile production could have occurred at the villa. She, more generally, cites this villa as an example of one that offers evidence for textile production at rural villas. Further, the idea of production at a villa rustica can extend past strict utilitarianism. Villas and the lifestyle that they provided was idealized- a Roman could widen the idea of productivity to include

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40 Frisher Crawford, and de Simone 2006, 152.
41 Marzano 2007, 120-122.
production of the mind, where engaging in reading and writing counts as an element of production.\textsuperscript{42}

The discrepancy between preliminary readings of Horace’s poetry and the site in question- and the fact that the site is not definitively proven to be Horace’s- leads one to ask why the villa is referred to as Horace’s. The owners of Roman villas are rarely known and the history or ownership of any individual site is very difficult to trace.\textsuperscript{43} The drive, however, to align this space with Horace is prevalent throughout the early excavation and continuing into modern-day scholarship. The site does fall into Horace’s description of the land and location in his poetry. It is on a hill and commands a view of the surrounding village and fields. It is in the region that Horace mentioned in his poetry. The villa also corresponds to the local oral tradition, which maintains that the villa is, in fact, Horace’s Villa.\textsuperscript{44} As the New York Times boldly stated in a headline in 1913 after Pasqui’s excavation, “The Famous Sabine Farm of Horace Found at Last.”\textsuperscript{45} The Horace’s Villa Project, although careful to point out the lack of specific evidence linking the site to Horace, does market the space as being

\textsuperscript{42} Marzano 2007, 124.
\textsuperscript{44} Frischer, Crawford, and de Simone 2006, 350.
Horace’s Villa. In fact, the Villa Project made a small documentary, showing off the site and referring to the site as Horace’s.46

If the villa is taken to be Horace’s, many questions about the canonical reading of Horace’s poetry must be addressed. It is typically believed that Horace praised modesty and humble living. The villa, however, was large and was heavily decorated, which is an aspect of living that is not included in the definition of modesty. Secondly, if the villa is a villa rustica and a center for production, as Marzano claims, questions about what type of productions occurred within Horace’s poetic depictions of the space are raised. While Horace did generally praise modesty and reject city living in his poetry, other aspects than strictly the exaltation of his modest lifestyle may have motivated him. In this sense, other factors may have contributed to Horace’s portrayal of his country lifestyle as being modest. Similarly, it is possible that a deeper reading of how he describes his country villa may reveal that his villa was not as modest as a preliminary reading of his poetry would lead one to believe. Further, as Marzano posits, villae rusticae were dictated by their productiveness.47 Therefore, Horace’s lifestyle at his country villa was in conversation with productivity, whether that is utilitarian or creative productivity. Even if the exact villa in question is not Horace’s, the pairing of the villa and the poetry raises questions that must be answered within Horace’s poetry itself.

47 Marzano 2007, 124.
SATIRE 2.6 ON HORACE’S VILLA

Horace’s *Satire* 2.6 explores the space of his Sabine farm. He begins with a description of the setting in the country and an invocation to the Gods. He writes (2.6.1-5):

Hoc erat in votis: modus agri non ita magnus,  
hortus ubi et tecto vicinus iugis aquae fons  
et paulum silvae super his foret. auctius atque  
di melius fecere. bene est. nil amplius oro,  
Maia nate, nisi ut propria haec mihi munera faxis.

This was what I prayed for: a quantity of land not so large, where there may be a garden and a spring of ever flowing water near the house and a little wooded area above. The gods made it more abundant and better. I beg for nothing greater, son of Maia, except that you make these gifts last.

Horace is seemingly concerned with modesty: he states that his villa is not that large. Many scholars have considered this to indicate that Horace’s villa was not, in fact, large. However, Horace purposefully leaves out specific dimensions or concrete spatial analysis. The land is “not so large,” perhaps, in comparison to other villas in the area or Maecenas’ villa. This is consistent with Frischer’s findings: the villa at Frischer’s site is large but not as large as the most elite villas. In fact, Horace refuses to apply architectural qualifiers to his property, notably leaving out words like *villa* or *domus.*

Instead, he focuses on the land and centers his poem on the more natural quality of the countryside. While he does not indicate that his villa is, specifically, small, Horace is careful to seem modest and he understands his role within the social hierarchy. Maecenas, his patron, outranks him. Considering his social role, Horace plays the part of

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48 Dang 2010, 106.
humility and shows his thanks to Maecenas for the gift of the villa. Horace makes it apparent that his land is smaller than Maecenas’, but he has now forged himself as someone who does own a villa, which places him into a more elite stratification. This sets him apart from the lower-class citizens of Rome who do not have country plots for leisure outside of the city. Horace has begun to write himself into the elite class of citizens that do have places for *otium*, places in the countryside that are not only dedicated to the agricultural pursuit.

Horace creates an eternal utopian space, where everything that he has at his Sabine farm is enough for him and, because it is enough, it is bountiful. The gift of land is exactly what Horace wanted, no more and no less. The strict temporalities and obligations of the city landscape fade behind a perfect natural world, where his prayers are answered. Here, however, Horace’s pleasure in the countryside is focused on the land, the water, and the woods. He doesn’t discuss luxurious items, extravagant feasts, or splendid artistic feats inside of the villa. Instead, his country lifestyle is centered around the exaltation of perpetual perfection of nature and the internal perfection of the mind that nature can allow for.

The exaltation of the property—the gift from Maecenas—is layered and allows Horace to explore his relationship to his patron. Horace’s praise of the villa extends to Horace’s praise of Maecenas himself. Horace understands his

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50 Bowditch 2001, 32.
obligations to his patron. In exchange for the gift that Maecenas has given him—both the gift of work and the gift of property—Horace must produce poetry for his patron and must continue to publish. Horace’s leisure time in the country is not separate from his work even though he is physically separated from the city. Even in the country, Horace is constantly reminded of his reciprocal relationship to Maecenas: poetry is exchanged for land. Therefore, even though Horace describes his property without qualifiers of labor, his property itself is a constant reminder of the work that he must accomplish.

While Horace himself may not participate in agricultural practices at the villa, he still participates in the act of production. Instead of producing grain, he is producing poetry and producing the state of mind that allows him to cultivate his poetic practice. Horace indicates this by invoking the son of Maia. Maia is the Roman goddess of growth and earth, who also is associated with the spring and the plants. Her son is Mercury, who is associated with grain, luck, commerce, and communication. Horace calls upon this god in order to grow his own poetic works and bring himself financial gain. Horace, outside of the city, still engages in his work and is still essentially concerned with ensuring that his work continues to be received. He also calls upon Mercury, as the son of Maia, in order to further extend the utopian eternal quality of the land: at the Sabine farm, the natural world is in perpetual springtime and it doesn’t threaten Horace as the

51 Wilkinson 1945, 7.
53 Dang 2010, 165.
54 Bowditch 2001, 10-21.
owner of the property. While Horace respects the natural elements that combine to fashion his villa into a pleasurable space, he ultimately controls the land. Further, Horace’s request to ‘make these gifts last,’ refers to both poetic works and the more physical gift of the landscape. While Horace wants the spring to remain eternal, he also wants to be able to continue his working relationship with Maecenas and to continue producing poetry. Perhaps the productivity of his poetry at the villa is what contributes to the pleasurable aesthetic elements of his life at the villa and his separation from the city. While the villa may seem to be an independent entity separate from the work, labor, and commerce of the city, the villa exists because of work that is being done and the economic resources that only city life can provide.

After introducing the property of the Sabine farm to his reader, Horace further distinguishes between the city and the countryside by separating them physically. Horace begins to enter the sphere of mind that is needed to create his work. He writes: “ergo ubi me in montes et in arcem ex urbe removi/quid prius inlustrem saturis musaque pedestri?” (Therefore, when I withdrew from the city into the mountains and into a citadel, to what first should I illuminate in the Satires of my prosaic muse? 2.6.16-16). Horace continues the trend of qualifying his property within natural terms. For him, material or man-made trappings do not dictate the country lifestyle. He distinguishes his space by being high up on a mountain or a citadel. According to Oliensis, the mountain citadel signals

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56 Dang 2010, 104.
Horace’s social as well as geographical position.\textsuperscript{57} As Horace continues to write poetry for Maecenas, he continues to rise in rank and he continues to receive benefactions. From high up on the mountain, Horace can reflect and establish himself.\textsuperscript{58} Internally, he takes on a higher state of mind, entering the citadel of his mind. He is in direct conversation with the Epicurean ideal—the physical citadel extends to the mind. In the citadel of the mind, Horace can experience life without anxiety, taking refuge in this higher state. The higher state allows him to be able to write his works and inspires him to begin his creative process. Horace’s creativity and inspiration is able to expand—he more fully accesses his imaginative self.

Next, Horace solidifies the division between the city and the country and begins to establish his ethos between the two. He writes (2.6.59-62):

\begin{verbatim}
perditur haec inter misero lux non sine votis:
o rus, quando ego te adspiciam quandoque licebit
nunc veterum libris, nunc somno et inertibus horis
ducere sollicitae iucunda oblivia vitae?
\end{verbatim}

The daylight is ruined in between this misery, not without prayer: O countryside, when may I behold you and when may I be allowed, now with the books of the ancestors, now with sleep and inert hours, to consider the pleasant forgetfulness of life’s cares?

In this passage, Horace speaks from the city. He begs to escape to the countryside for a respite from the city, where he must work throughout the day in misery. He knows that he will be able to get out of Rome and go to the Sabine farm. After showing his reader the state of mind that being in the city brings on


for him, he introduces his daydreams about the countryside. He refers to this space lovingly, personifying the space with the second person singular pronoun ‘te’ rather than a harsher or more distant impersonal pronoun. He speaks to the countryside as if it were a lover, using language of longing, desire, and admiration. Within this strategy, he makes the reader become partial to the countryside. They, knowing what it is like to love something and crave it, now understand Horace’s drive to embrace his country lifestyle. The countryside, as the object of Horace’s affection, allows Horace to enter a dreamlike state. As he dreams of the countryside while in the city, the image of the countryside becomes part of his utopian ideal.59

Horace creates the mental environment that the utopian ideal of the countryside allows him to enter. This is a world in which he can rest, sleep, be free of his anxieties, and connect with an ancestral relationship to the land. Horace appeals to the ancient Roman ideal of a sacred landscape by calling upon the books of the ancestors. He connects his time spent outside of the city to past Roman traditions by honoring the land that Rome has conquered and also the common people that were a part of the growth of Rome. It is important to note, however, that Horace makes a specific connection to the ‘veterum libris.’ Here, he highlights that his time outside of the city is filled with the intellectual pursuits. In the countryside, he reads works of the past and writes his own works, adding to the written cannon. Perhaps Horace’s reference to the ‘veterum libris,’ refers

to his desire to produce a work that will one day become an old book or a book of the ancestors.

Horace states that in the countryside he will be free of cares. This, however, is realistically false. In the countryside, Horace still must produce poetry, entertain friends, and please his patron. The reality of Horace's lifestyle in the countryside is different than his daydream of the space or how he wants his reader to understand this space. In this daydream, Horace avoids discussing the economic pressures that come along with living inside of the villa. Even though Horace is in the countryside, he is constantly faced with living in a space that is dependent on his continued productivity. As Dang notes, “However much we wish to view this space as a private retreat and an alternative to the city, its very existence depends on the presence of the city and its economic resources.” While Horace attempts to draw a district line between the city and the country, or at least wishes that there was a strict line between the city and the country, the two spaces are intrinsically bound - the country villa cannot exist without Horace’s work, economic resources, and connections in the city.

Horace’s ideal Sabine farm is a fantasy.

Horace’s utopian vision of the countryside can be a state of mind rather than a physical place. While the countryside villa cannot exist as a place for only leisure, Horace can still hold on to the dream that a place such as this can exist. He attaches his vision of an abundant and restful utopia to the physical

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61 Dang 2010, 110.
space of the villa. He is inspired by the combination of the fantasy and the villa itself. This can also explain why this poem lacks concrete architectural or spatial elements other than vague signifiers of space. Horace is perhaps drawing more from the imaginative Sabine farm as a state of mind rather than the physical Sabine farm as a real space.\textsuperscript{63} Similarly, Horace more fully explores the idea of daydreams and fantasies. When he is in the city, pining for the country, the country lifestyle seems like an idealized version of itself and, in this fantasy, it more fully becomes the antithesis of the city lifestyle.

While Horace may conceptualize the Sabine farm as a place that exists both as an ideal and as a real physical space, he highlights the daily activities that occur when he is in the countryside. These activities center on topics of conversation that he has with his friends. He writes (2.6.72-76):

\begin{quote}
ne male necne Lepos saltet; sed, quod magis ad nos pertinet et nescire malum est, agitatam, utrumne divitiis homines an sint virtute beati, quidve ad amicitias, usus rectumne, trahat nos et quae sit natura boni summumque quid eius.
\end{quote}

We don’t discuss whether or not Lepos dances badly, but as far as other matters that concern us, and what matters are bad not to know, we turnover (in our minds), whether or not men are happy with riches or exellence, whether self-interest or uprightness leads us to friendship, and what is the nature of good and what is its highest form.

Horace describes the activity of philosophy in this passage: questioning the nature of what is good, what is known, and how to be happy. Here, in the

\textsuperscript{63} Eleanor Winsor Leach, "Horace's Sabine Topography in Lyric and Hexameter Verse," \textit{The American Journal of Philology} 114, no. 2 (1993): 279 Leach centers her argument on the fictive space and writes, "The space in which Horace’s valley exists is far less a geographically than an artistically conceived space, populated by figures drawn from the realm of literary allusion.”
countryside, he has the mental freedom to fully access his thoughts through leisurely conversation. Thus, in the countryside he cultivates his philosophical ideals - the ideals that will form his vision of the Epicurean lifestyle. His vision of the countryside includes conversation that inspires his later and current writings. Even though he views this as a leisurely pursuit, conversing in the manner that he describes ultimately has influence on his writings and, therefore, his villa is not separate from the work that he must do. Within this philosophical conversation, Horace describes his social circle. He surrounds himself with intellectuals who also have country villas nearby or are visitors that Horace has invited in. Even in leisure time, Horace is concerned with defining his social status and creating his identity as a citizen, as a poet, and as a philosopher. His circle of friends is learned and, in this sense, most likely exposed to the upper ranks of the Roman social sphere. Horace aligns himself with this type of elite group and creates his identity through the men that he chooses to spend his time with. Through the creation of the Sabine farm, Horace creates relationships that will further dictate the life that he leads in the city, since he has joined himself to the cultural elite, whose livelihood and capital created in the city allow them to access a country lifestyle. In this sense, the distinction between the city and the country is not as clear-cut as Horace wishes it to be. Rather, the social stakes and social groupings that Horace discusses exist

65 Dang 2010, 123.
in both the country and the city and are re-enforced by participating socially within both lifestyles.

While this passage addresses things that Horace does and thinks about while he is outside of the city, in order to understand what Horace does while he is in the country, one must consider what he does not do. Horace does not farm. He does not mention the practice of tilling the land, allude to signs of labor involved in weaving or fish farming that may go on at his villa, or discuss the harvest at his villa. While Horace is dedicated to portraying his space as modest and humble, he does not place agricultural practices within this sphere. While Horace enjoys the quietness of the country, he is still social and accommodating to his friends and his patron, Maecenas. He does not use time out of the city to engage in extravagances that border on luxuria or overindulgence. Horace doesn’t boast about the amount of land that he holds, the physical pleasures of his villa, or the aesthetic framework of his villa aside from his description and praise of the landscape that surrounds his estate. Within the facets of otium that Horace purposefully leaves out, he creates his ideal version of the countryside. This vision mixes together aspects of city life and country life. Horace maintains the social nature of the city while balancing it within a more perfect landscape. Perhaps Horace can more easily produce the work that he needs to produce from the country than from the city. Here, the countryside becomes a location of work that is enhanced by its more tranquil and peaceful atmosphere. While the
country is separate from the bustle of the city, it is not separate from the work and social obligations of the city.\[67\]

Horace uses this philosophical conversation held at his villa in order to introduce the story of the country mouse and the city mouse, one of the most famous stories from Horace’s works. As the tale goes, a poor country mouse welcomes a mouse from Rome into his home. The country mouse provides what he can for the city mouse, and then the city mouse asks the country mouse to follow him back to the city with the promise of city pleasures. The two mice enter a luxurious hall filled with decorations and huge feasts. The city mouse offers the country mouse presents and foods when, suddenly, a banging on the doors tumbles them both from their couches. Upon returning to safety, the country mouse denounces the city lifestyle and proclaims that a life of modesty was the one for him.\[68\] This is Horace’s final denunciation of luxury and his final statement that the lifestyle that he enjoys while at his country estate does not include extravagance in goods or feasts. Horace places the center of excess in the city rather than the country. He switches the nexus of extravagance: while usually it would be assumed that extravagance occurs in the country, Horace places the practice of unbounded luxuria in the city. While this is a condemnation against the city (and its pleasures or faulty promises of wealth), this is Horace’s attempt to create a new vision of the countryside. Horace shows the reader a final vision of the utopian fantasy countryside. Hosts are welcoming; they do not exploit the land or the people around them. They are comfortable

\[67\] Dang 2010, 113.
\[68\] Sat. 2.6. 77-117.
with what they own, don’t seek more, and appreciate what they have. Horace wants himself to be seen as the country mouse- he creates himself into the modest, welcoming host that denounces luxury, which he thinks causes ruin and decay.

Horace creates a standard for pastoral poetry- he uses the landscape of the countryside to explore himself as a poet and control his readership’s perception of his character. Ultimately, he uses poetry about his Sabine farm to solidify his relationship with his patron and his social circle, simultaneously forging himself into being as a writer and philosopher. He also uses this platform to express his philosophy and provide instructions for how to live- as he lived modestly, respecting the land and respecting those around him, his readers would want to do the same. Although on the surface Horace seems to fully reject city life and excesses, Horace’s lifestyle in the country is deeply rooted in the city life. Aspects of the city are easily separated from the country. Although Horace perhaps wishes that the two physical spaces exist in two distinct realms, Horace’s poetry and his ability to produce poetry is dependent on both the city and the country. Horace’s experience of *otium* relies on his productivity and recognition of his social position. Therefore, while it is tempting to divide the city and the country within Horace’s poetry, Horace does not access full leisure in the countryside, as he is constantly concerned with his poetic production and his social stakes.

Horace’s vision of the country, however, has specific implications for a changing empire. From the periphery, from outside of Rome, Horace can more
keenly address his view of the new opulence of the Empire. Perhaps his vision of the countryside, with the work and social structure inherently involved in country life, is Horace’s prescription for the city. Without rejecting the Empire, he does reject certain trappings of Empire, such as the influx of luxurious material and overindulgent feasts. Horace uses his pastoral landscape to comment on changes in Rome without making it clear that he is doing so and, in this way, he advocates modest ideals for his readers in hope that they will approach the city life in the same way that he has approached the country life. From outside of Rome, Horace can see the city more clearly and act towards creating his vision of a new Empire.
CHAPTER TWO: STATIUS

Publius Papinius Statius (45-96 AD), known as Statius, was a Roman poet writing during the Silver Age of Latin literature during the 1st century AD. What little is known about Statius’ own life is known through his own poetic works and from a brief mention of him in Juvenal.69 Although neither Statius nor his father was enslaved, Statius’ cognomen suggests that at least one of his ancestors was a freedman and had assumed the nomen of his master.70 His father, who was a Roman eques and also dabbled in poetry himself, educated Statius. While Statius was clearly well educated, he existed outside of the political rigor of the Roman aristocracy, having not been born as a citizen of Rome. Statius and his family did not live in Rome but, rather, Statius grew up and mostly lived in Naples. After his father died Statius moved to Rome around 90 AD. In Rome, he wrote the first three books of the Silvae, a collection of poetry in hexameter, hendecasyllables, and lyric meters. He then returned to Naples to finish the collection of poetry, where he wrote the fourth book and a fifth book was published after his death.

The Silvae were most likely composed from 89-96 during the reign of Domitian, whose death coincides with Statius’ own. This period of time is characterized by the strict authoritarian nature of Domitian’s rule: he often and

69 Juvenal 7.82-7.82
70 Charles Mc Nelis, “Greek Grammarians and the Roman Society During the Early Empire: Statius’ Father and His Contemporaries,” Classical Antiquity 21, no. 1 (2002): 67-94. Silvae 5.3 explores Statius’ relationship to his father. Statius’ father was a native of Velia who moved to Naples, where he taught and participated in poetry competitions. Mc Nelis posits that Statius’ father, whose nomen is unknown, may have lost his ranking due to money problems.
successfully attempted to overpower the Senate. Domitian saw himself as a new Augustus. He built public works in Rome, fought wars, expanded the borders of the Empire, and considered himself as an enlightened ruler who would bring Rome into a new golden age. Like Augustus he fostered moral reform by attempting to control both the private and public lives of people in his Empire.\textsuperscript{71} He regulated morality through his use of propaganda, military campaigns, and control of religion. In this sense, he endeavored to gain complete rule of both the public and the private lives of the Roman state. Like Augustus, he used the language of public works and building projects in Rome to promote himself and Rome’s status as the cultural and political center of the world.\textsuperscript{72} He attempted to dominate the physical landscape of the city and the provinces through building projects and the arts.\textsuperscript{73} Although he was popular with his military, the members of the Senate despised him and his court officials assassinated him. The Senate, ushering in the reign of the Adoptive Emperors, subsequently declared Domitian’s advisor, Nerva, the new Emperor. The Senate then declared \textit{damnatio memoriae} on Domitian.

\textsuperscript{71} Brain W. Jones, \textit{The Emperor Domitian} (London: Routledge, 1993).
\textsuperscript{72} Peter Stallybrass, \textit{The Politics and Poetics of Transgression} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986). Stallybrass considers Domitian’s imitation of Augustus within his moral reforms, attempts to control the Senate, expansion techniques, and public building programs in the city of Rome.
\textsuperscript{73} R. Sablayrolles, “Domitien, l’Auguste Ridicule.” \textit{Pallas} 40 (1994): 113. Sablayrolles points to a large number of lead water pipes inscribed with Domitian’s name that attest to the large number of public building projects Domitian sponsored. The majority of these structures were later destroyed. Domitian restored many Augustan structures and built a new Imperial palace on the Palatine Hill.
Modern reception of Domitian is based on senatorial accounts, which were biased against him. Some scholars believe that the citizens and the military did not view him as the hated figure that accounts published after his death by senatorial members posit him as. Regardless, by the end of his reign, Domitian was certainly operating from a place of concern- he was facing the possibility of a civil war and was fearful that he would not produce an heir. This caused general dynastic instability and succession anxiety throughout Rome.

This was the political climate in which Statius produced the *Silvae* and the state of the Empire during the last five years of Statius’ life deeply informed the construction of his poetry. The *Silvae* is a work whose purpose has been contested, and Newlands has most recently attempted to explore the work within the context of its production and its scholarly reception in her book, *Statius’s Silvae and the Poetics of Empire*. Statius, as a person living in the Empire during vast and rapid economic growth, was able to see how the riches of the Empire could be used to display wealth and luxury. Newlands writes that Statius “participates in and helps propel a shift in attitudes towards luxury. His

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74 Writers like Tacitus in the *Agricola*, Pliny the Younger in his *Epistulae*, and Suetonius in *De Vita Caesarum* for the most part paint Domitian as a negative figure. This has somewhat shaded the modern reception of Domitian’s rule and his place within the Empire.

75 Carole E. Newlands, *Statius’ Silvae and the Poetics of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8-9. Newlands considers the political climate within which Statius was producing work from.

76 Jones 1992, 71-103, offers analysis on the Roman economy during Domitian’s reign. He argues that Domitian’s tendency towards micromanagement was evident in his control over the economy but evidence indicates that the economy was stable.
poetry reflects a new confidence in wealth and the freedom to use it for private purposes as well as for civic good.”

Statius’ relationship with the Empire becomes an interesting question when considering his obligations to his patrons. The majority of his addressees were elite, landholding citizens, who were mostly politicians. It is difficult to separate Statius’ own views from those that his patrons required him to uphold. His work was often times ambiguous on account of this: either his entire work was carefully subversive and an evaluation of Domitian and the Roman elite, or each poem was meant to be read on its own, responding to more specific themes within its subject matter. Moreover, Domitian had a complex relationship with the Senate and the landholding elite—when their conduct proved to be inadequate, Domitian was known to exile them, execute them, or confiscate their property. Statius, who wrote about or to Roman elites, must carefully portray them in the eyes of Domitian and maintain that they were not subversive or threatening to his power.

The influx of wealth into the Empire and the increase of opportunities for people who were previously unable to access wealth created a space in which to

77 Newlands 2002, 5.
Ruurd R. Nauta, Poetry for Patrons: Literary Communication in the Age of Domitian (Leiden: Brill, 2000). Nauta, on the other hand, doesn’t see the work as entirely subversive. He calls for reading each poem on its own, as it may respond to specific concerns that don’t lend themselves to a general subversive reading. Rather, he argues that Statius was using the Silvae as a mode of self-representation.
80 Jones 1992, 169.
question what wealth meant; long held tenets of morality based on frugality were to be confronted. Statius challenged the concept that wealth caused the moral degradation, which Horace attempted to define, and instead favored a new notion that participating in luxury was an act of validation for the community, the sponsorship of the public good, and the praise of the forward movement of the Empire. Statius continually confronted ambivalences about displays and limitations luxury, thus, he encountered ambivalences about displays of and limitations on imperial power. The *Silvae* can be read as a work that engaged in the anxieties surrounding the growth of the Empire and the reign of Domitian. Statius’ poetry both carefully subverted the Empire while also celebrating the Empire along with his patrons.

Among the *Silvae*, two poems describe Statius’ experiences within luxurious countryside villas (*Silvae 1.3* and *Silvae 2.2*). In both of these works, Statius views landscape and villa lifestyle from the outside- he was not describing or praising places that he owned or produced. Through these poems, Statius was able to explore the new pastoral ideals that the Empire under Domitian was facing- these poems were not about the frugality of living or tending to the farmland. Rather, these poems were opulent and engage almost unapologetically in rich description and language. Ultimately, Statius confronted the paradox that exists at the heart of the experience of *otium*. While he recognized that he was working against the long held notion that richness led to

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81 Of which poets such as Horace in his *Odes* and *Epistules* and political figures such as Cato the Elder in his *De Agri Cultura* helped forge into the Roman ethos.
82 Newlands 2002, 8.
an anti-Roman decline in morality, he also understood that wealth and having the ability to spend time at opulently decorated villas was something to be desired.  

Experiencing *otium* was something that the Empire allowed for and something in which Statius’ patrons would have been active participants in. At the center of this issue stood the symbol of the villa as a place where conflicting viewpoints regarding wealth, luxury, social standing, morality, and a changing Empire come to a head. Statius seemed to confidently praise and celebrate luxury within the context of private villa architecture. In *Silvae* 1.3 and 2.2, virtuousness and morality could be achieved through luxury and viewing luxury. These works were both part of an ekphrastic exercise. Statius attempted to vividly describe a work of art, the villa. Therefore, as Statius saws and wrote about these rich villas, he allowed his readers to be taken through the same journey that he embarked on himself. Through the act of engaging with the text, his readers were taken on an imaginative path.

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**SILVAE 1.3 ON THE VILLA OF VOPISCUS**

*Silvae* 1.3 describes Vopiscus’ villa in Tibur. Vopiscus’ identity has largely remained uncertain in the historical record. Statius does not write about how he

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83 Sara K. Myers, "*Miranda Fides*: Poet and Patrons in Paradoxographical Landscapes in Statius’ *Silvae.*" *Materiali e discussioni per l’analisi dei testi classici* 44 (2000): 103, considers the representation of patrons and morals in Statius. She believes that wealthy patrons were attempting to justify their wealth by giving it a more important transcedent meaning.

got to this villa, why he is there, or who Vosipcus is. According to Hardie, Vopiscus was a poet and a patron of literature, living in the quietude of his villa at Tibur.\textsuperscript{85} He was perhaps a consul in 114, but it would be easier to take him as the father of a consul in 114 according to a Tiburtine inscription.\textsuperscript{86} It could also be the case that his political career was sponsored under Vespasian and later dropped by Domitian.\textsuperscript{87} It is also possible that he never made it past the \textit{praetorship}. However, Statius does not allude to Vopiscus’ political career or his life outside of the villa. The remains of this villa have not been recovered, although there is speculation that Vopiscus’ villa lies under the Villa Gregoriana in Tivoli.\textsuperscript{88} By location, this villa would fall under the \textit{villa rustica} classification.

Similarly, Statius does not delineate an exact floor plan or architectural understanding of the space. Instead, the reader is dropped right into the narrative, quickly perceiving that those details are not a primary concern to Statius. Rather, Statius favors heavily adorned language and artistic description in order to give a reader an understanding of the villa and what he values within this space as he attempts to reconsider the luxury within a new pastoral context. As Bodel aptly wrote, “the domestic environment in which a gentleman cultivated his leisure was itself worthy of poetic commemoration.”\textsuperscript{89} In his

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{85} Hardie 1983, 68.
\item \textsuperscript{86} Ibid. 68-69.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ronald Syme, "Spaniards at Tivoli," \textit{Ancient Society} 13 (1982): 241-63.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Higgenbotham 1997, 128.
\end{enumerate}
opening lines, Statius writes his thesis statement and lays out the guidelines of a new pastoral ideal (1.3.1-8):

Cernere facundi Tibur glaciale Vopisci
si quis et inserto geminos Aniene penates,
aut potuit sociae commercia noscere ripae
certantisque sibi dominum defendere villas,
illum nec calido latravit Sirius astro
nec gravis aspexit Nemeae frondentis alumnus:
talis hiems tectis, frangunt sic improba solem
frigora, Pisaemque domus non aestuat annum.

If anyone is able to discern the cool Tibur of eloquent Vopiscus, and the twin Penates with the Anio mingled in or know the fellowship of a kindred shore and the villas competing with themselves to defend their master, that man neither had Sirius with its hot star barked at nor the serious pupil of leaf-bearing Nemea observed in these quarters such a winter, so cruel chills weaken the sun and the home does not boil in the Pisan year.

As Statius begins with the verb ‘cernere,’ he immediately tells the reader how they should approach the act of reading and, thusly, how they should approach the act of understanding the villa. They should be perceptive-able to look with purpose and understand the signals that Statius will provide them with. This is the first indication that Statius will take the reader on a creative journey, allowing them to build the space of the villa within their own mind. Statius will give no details relating to the physical reality or more specific layout of the space in architectural terms. The reader will have to use what they are already familiar with to fill in the blanks of creating this space while also applying what Statius will write about the decorative program and the natural landscape.  

Similarly, Statius does not call out a specific subject or use himself as the subject. Rather,

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90 Hardie 1983 177, and Newlands 2002, 129 both consider the use of ‘cernere’ as well. They both consider perceptions of sight that can be found through acts of understanding.
the subject is ‘aliquis.’ This is general, anyone who is able to give their minds to
the creativity of considering a space they have never seen before can access and
understand the space.91 The reader is encouraged to take in Statius’ experience
at the villa, reveling in the beauty of the villa within the landscape and the
control that Vopiscus is able to enact.

Secondly, the reader notices how detailed and opulent Statius’ language is
in his opening passage.92 Nearly every noun is accompanied by a relating
adjective. Statius now introduces two of his crucial subjects- Vopiscus, who owns
the estate, and the nature of the Tibur region, where the estate is located. The
master Vopiscus is described as being eloquent, able to speak easily. This could
allude to his ability to deliver speeches or write poetry himself.93 The region of
the Tibur is described as being cool, icy. This pair of descriptions already pushes
against expectations: Vopiscus is not described as being rich or lavish himself
and the region is not idealized. This formation also forms a chiasmus, in which
the character of Vopiscus encases the region of the Tibur. This implies that
Vopiscus has ownership and control over the natural world of his villa.

The location of the villa in the Tibur region is important to consider.
Tibur, now modern day Tivoli, is 20 miles northeast of Rome and close enough to
tavel to within a day. The history of the area is rich, spanning back to ancient
Etruscan times. Tibur also has deep poetic roots. Tibur became part of Rome in

91 Newlands 2002, 129-130 characterizes the use of ‘quis.’
92 Ibid. 129, also believes that the opulence of the language matches the opulence of the
villa. Richly detailed Latin increases the visual effect of the villa.
93 Syme 1982 246, writes on Vopiscus as a patron, poet, and potential politician. He also
considers Vopiscus’ possible Spanish roots.
338 BC and inhabitants of the colony became citizens in 90 BC. During the height of the Republic, Tibur became a popular area in which to build villas, giving Roman elites the opportunity to escape the city for a night and rest in a place with good water quality and natural beauty. Horace referenced his own Tiburtine villa in *Epistules* 1.10, as previously discussed (Licenza, where Horace’s villa is located, is 24 kilometers from Tivoli). For Horace, this space provided him an exercise in modesty and poetic inspiration. His poetic Sabine landscape was influenced by this countryside, from which he was able to reap the modest virtues that inspired his work.

Regardless of whether Horace was modest in reality, he still took on the guise of modesty and preached humility from the Tibur. The emperor Augustus (63 BC-14AD) was known to have had a villa there as well.

Modern day Tivoli is best known for the ruins of Hadrian’s (76-138) expansive villa but villas inhabited the landscape of Tibur from the Republic well into the Empire. Therefore, connecting his work back to this ancient land known for housing villas accomplishes many tasks. First, Statius is able to both reference and challenge Horace. While they both use the same region for poetic inspiration, Horace focuses on modesty and frugality while Statius focuses on richness and opulence. Second, Statius is able to connect his work to a larger Imperial tradition - a reader is reminded of Augustus and other powerful political

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94 Horace *Epistules* 1.10.
95 For more on the history of the Tibur, the quality of the land, and accounts of villa building in Tivoli, reference Ella Bourne, *A study of Tibur - Historical, Literary and Epigraphical - from the Earliest Times to the Close of the Roman Empire* (New York: Palala Press, 2016).
figures that took their leisure time in Tibur. Statius connects his work intrinsically to the notion of Empire and has already evoked the words of Horace in order to re-write the origins of poetic inspiration, which is now connected to the language of luxury.

After enriching his opening line with the implications of these themes, Statius now situates the villa within nature. Vopiscus’ villa is divided by the Anio River into two parts. Vopiscus doesn’t just have a villa, he has two villas (villas rather than villam) that mirror each other- this is how wealthy he is and how he has used his wealth. Rather than writing about this more specifically at first in line 2, Statius uses the imagery of the penates, calling upon the domestic deities and domestic rituals to describe their first mention of the villa as a built space. The penates guard the home, and Statius has called upon this religious metaphor in order to create a relationship between the villa and sacred tradition associated with the home. Statius continues to elaborate upon this relationship in line 4, when he states that it is the villa’s job to protect and defend the owner. Here, he slides into personifying the villas, as if they had human capabilities to guard a superior master.

Unlike Horace before him, Statius does not elaborate on the lushness of the natural world aside from the most basic elements that the villa can offer for its master, such as the river and the shade. These elements are described in distinctly human terms- the banks of the river are sociable, the space that the

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96 Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2.68
twin villas inhabit interact with each other, creating room to exchange goods and conversation between themselves. This is a further personification of the villas; it can be understood that its human characters are doing the conversing and trading rather than the villas themselves. This creates a sense that these villas are populated and don’t just exist as empty spaces on their own even though there is no mention of other people in the region.

The way that Statius views the role of nature within this world begins to be defined in line 4 and lines 7-9. The first image of the natural world is treacherous. A master needs to rely on a built structure, his home, in order to be safe from these potential dangers. The ability for humans to build such structures marks humans’ control over the elements. Vopiscus trusts that his home will keep him safe and protected. It won’t collapse in a storm but, rather, it will remain stable and command the elements that threaten it. The natural landscape actually defines the way that the twin villas were built. The Anio River’s intersection between the two spaces reveals a level of respect for the topography of the land. Under the roof of the villa, the power of the sun is broken and shade is offered. Rather than focusing on the beauty and quality of the land or the ability for the trees to block the sun, Statius focuses on the idea that the villa creates ideal conditions, weather, and shade instead. The human creates the pleasantness of the landscape. This is another way that Statius challenges Horace’s notion that the landscape itself brings pleasure. Statius writes that it is

98 Myers 2000, 114, considers that a patron can gain power over nature through artistry and building projects.
99 Myers, 2000, 115.
the clever architecture and the technology of the roof that can allow for the
discovery of pleasure.\textsuperscript{100}

The question of the twin villas remains an interesting one: clearly
Vopiscus is extremely wealthy. He has the means to build two matching villas,
show them off, and pay Statius in order to memorialize them through poetry.\textsuperscript{101}
He could perhaps be in danger of being accused of reveling in too much luxuria,
extravagantly showing off what he is able to build and control. Statius carefully
and subtly challenges the assumption that Vopiscus is simply just showing off his
wealth through the character of the Anio River, which carries notions of the
Empire and a connection to Rome.

Statius’ verse in 1.3 is entirely concerned with the private sphere. There
is no mention of public life, the city, or work. Seemingly, Statius has separated
this poem and Vopiscus’ lifestyle from the idea of Rome as a whole. However,
Statius leaves clues that link his poetry back to notions of the empire. The Anio-
starting in the Apennines, running through the Tibur region, and joining up with
the Tiber River- ultimately flows towards Rome. The river provided water to the
city of Rome beginning in the third century BC: the Anio Vetus aqueduct was
completed in 270 BC and Claudius built the Anio Novus aqueduct in 48 AD. As
Rome’s population continued to grow from the Republic into the early Empire,
the need for water grew with it, and this rendered the river valley an important
region. Invoking a connection to a water source and an aqueduct, a structure
that Romans built in order to use the natural world to their advantages, connects

\textsuperscript{100} Newlands 2002, 131.
Vopiscus and his villas to the Roman tradition of creating buildings that both control and respect nature and the fact that nature, or water in this case, is needed for growth and survival. Aqueducts allow the Empire itself and symbols of the Empire to continue to develop.¹⁰²

If the Anio River is understood as a metaphor for the notion of Empire and control over nature, the fact that the villas are divided in two begins to take on new meaning. The Anio bisects the villas and becomes part of the entire villa complex as a whole. Therefore, the villas don’t exist without a connection to the Empire, which allows resources to be brought in to build the villas to Vopiscus’ liking. As Vopiscus separates his villas, he leaves room to praise the Empire instead of only praising himself. The idea of the Empire, even though there is no mention of the public sphere, is placed within the villa and the poem. Therefore, the natural world can be understood through lenses that combine to remind the reader of the power of the Empire, since the Empire both has strict command over natural resources while also respects natural resources for the power that these resources allow Rome to access for growth.¹⁰³ The scale of the villas, and the richness that their size allows for, is in praise of the Empire.

Throughout the rest of Silvae 1.3, Statius continues the themes that he has set forth in his opening lines. The interplay between the natural world and the constructed villas continues to be questioned within the understanding that

¹⁰² Trevor Hodge, Roman Aqueducts and Water Supply (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press 2002). Hodge discusses the aqueduct as a symbol of the state’s power and how aqueducts worked to service Rome more generally.
¹⁰³ Jones 1992, writes a detailed account of Domitian’s expansionist warfare. Wars were fought in Caledonia, in Gaul, in Dacia, among others.
humans are meant to both overcome and respect nature. Ultimately, Vopiscus’ personal relationship with nature as the master is addressed. Statius writes (1.3.13-23):

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quae mente reporto
  gaudia, quam lassos per tot miracula visu!
  ingenium quam mite solo, quae forma beatis
  ante manus artemque locis! non largius usquam
  indulsit natura sibi. nemora alta citatis
  incubuere vadis; fallax responsat imago
  frondibus, et longas eadem fugit umbra per undas.
  ipse Anien (miranda fides) infraque superque
  saxeus hic tumidam rabiem spumosaque ponit
  murmura, ceu placidi veritus turbare Vopisci
  Pieriosque dies et habentes carmina somnos.
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What joy I carry back to my mind, what such a great number of miraculous visions are carried to my weary eyes! What soothing spirits are in the soil, what a beautiful form of the place in the presence of the hands and the art (of the human)! Not anywhere has nature herself given way to such a lavish place. The high woods sit upon swift shoals; deceptive images reply to the foliage and the same shadow flees the long waters. The rocky Anio itself (amazing to believe) with rocks both above and below, here calms swollen madness and frothy murmurs, as if afraid to disturb the Pierian day of peaceful Vopiscus and sleep bearing songs.

Statius looks out onto the whole complex: the natural world and the villas combine to create one visual experience. Statius allows the reader to experience the positive restoration that he lives through when he views the space. As Statius himself sees the whole visual package, he considers the power of the earth that the villa is situated on.104 Aside from the landscape and the villas, the good spirits that come from the land are appreciated. Statius calls upon long-held

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104 Newlands 2002, 132, considers concepts of land and a new pastoral ideal. She writes, “The pastoral ideal of nature unadulterated by human intervention is assimilated here to a georgic ideal of an improved landscape through the willingness of nature to cooperate with human needs; the georgic ideal in turn is assimilated to the pastoral idea through a technology that celebrates art while occluding all notion of human nature.”
Roman ideals about the land that Rome controls. Land and soil, from the very beginning of the state, were central to the Roman identity. Like the waters, the land and soil of the Italian peninsula provide the city with a means for growth. To respect this tradition, Statius calls upon past agrarian ideals and the symbol of the *villa rustica*, imbuing the land with a more mystical and powerful quality.\(^\text{105}\) However, the soil and the land in this poem don’t provide a means to grow grain or grapes. Instead, the crops spring forth from Vopiscus’ villas and soothe Statius’ mind in the process. The landscape provides for the creation of the villas and the lands are still fruitful. This is the justification for the *villa rustica* classification. However, Statius has switched the product of their fertility. He doesn’t admire the landscape; instead he admires the beauty of the villa and the physical works of the human, who is able to create the splendor of the structure. Nature accepts the form of the villas and gives way to them specifically. Statius stresses this precise space; ‘*non usquam*’ is nature able to allow for this kind of manmade beauty. A reader who was previously described as ‘*aliquis*’ is now made aware of the ability of this exact location to speak to anyone. As the readership is left vague, the site is placed within more restrictive language.

It is important to note that Vopiscus does not farm. The need to justify time spent outside of the city by appealing to agrarian ideals or images of the

\(^{105}\) Hardie 1983, 170.
latifundia are not addressed. Signs of labor or slave quarters, that might indicate that the villa has a propensity to produce grain or wine for Rome, are also left out. Vopiscus’ contribution to Rome is his patronage of the arts instead of his direct participation in agriculture. This is a shift from Cato’s agrarian ideal, which praised the virtue of tilling the land. Statius rejects the notion that the aristocrat should have a tactile relationship with the land. Instead of Vopiscus dipping his hand into the earth to control the natural world through agriculture, nature yields to him almost automatically, creating quietude and a space for the poetic creation. For Vopiscus, productivity means sponsoring the arts. As nature is controlled to produce grain, nature is controlled to produce poetry.

Next, the landscape is described again in more detail. The relationship between what is natural and what is created is explored. The woods sit on top of treacherous waters, creating odd shadows and images. However, the Anio- the symbol for the Empire that flows through, connecting Vopiscus’ villas together- controls these shadows and calms the dangers of nature. The Anio acts in service of Vopiscus, who is sleeping. Statius now considers the way that nature sponsors the master. The Anio shelters Vopiscus from unknown dangers and deceptions that can exist outside and disturb him. Like the villa protects Vopiscus, the river protects him as well. Now, one may consider what is brought to Vopiscus when he is at his villas- when he is connected to but commanding of the natural world

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106 Newlands 2002, 143, considers the lack of shepherds and herdsmen within the description of the landscape. Working on the land does not define the experience at Vopiscus’ villa.
107 The image of the statesman tending to the land has roots primarily in Cato the Elder’s De Agri Cultura. Although he was a wealthy Roman elite, he fashioned himself as a farmer in this work.
and when he is away from the city. Vopiscus is able to sleep without being disturbed. The winds and the currents respect his peaceful slumber. While Vopiscus is able to sleep and rest in the villa, the implication is that he is not able to access these things while in Rome. The madness and the murmurs, noises and states that can be associated with city living, are tempered and hushed. Vopiscus can also get closer to the Muses and his own poetic inspirations. ‘Pierios’ refers to a house of the Muses, implying that the villa can also take on this quality. In his sleep- a sleep that the specific site of the villas has allowed for- poetic creativity and sweet songs can come to him.

Statius elaborates upon Horace’s idea that poetry comes from the natural countryside of the Tibur. For Vopiscus, the inclination towards poetry springs from being in the countryside, but it springs through the condition of being in the countryside within his villas, which are sites that honor the Empire, house the Muses, and temper nature. Statius creates new ideals for his patron and Roman aristocrats in general. Vopiscus is never seen doing work for the state, engaging in study, or making conversation with others directly. In fact, the villa is essentially devoid of other human life. He is shown either in slumber or in the act of being creatively inspired. His ability to rest, write poetry, or sponsor poetry is offered to him through otium. Through his own contemplation of his leisure and luxury, he can appreciate the wealth that the Empire has afforded him even though Statius doesn’t show him actively honoring the state. The new

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108 Words like tumidam, rabiem, and turbare have specifically negative connotations. These are used to create a specific antithesis to Vopiscus’ dwelling.
109 Myers 2000, 114.
imperial Roman aristocrat is allowed, therefore, to participate in his own luxury, as contemplating personal luxury is an act of contemplating a greatness that the Empire has allowed for. The villa, specifically a lavish and large villa, becomes a place for peaceful poetic creation and production. A reader, experiencing Statius’ experience and Vopiscus’ home, can access these movements of the Muses through the narrative as well. Perhaps Statius’ answer to bring peace to a turbulent Empire is to turn to poetry and the type of world that poetry can thrive in. The villa, poetic inspiration, and peacefulness all come together in *Silvae* 1.3 to form a utopian universe where there is harmony between what humans can create and the natural world. Statius’ answer to imperial anxieties is to take up the kind of lifestyle that leisure accounts for.\(^{110}\) Here, Statius has used imperial symbols ambivalently: while he has appealed to the power of the Empire, he has also used these symbols to create a new ideal for the Empire. This ideal is formed by means of familiar metaphors being brought into the private realm of a villa.

By creating a strictly private and indulgent landscape, the distance from Rome and city life becomes stressed. As only the imperial power had abilities to create public structures for the citizens in Rome, the wealthy elite looked elsewhere in order to build. The separation from the city is exactly what allows Vopiscus to indulge in this presentation of his wealth.\(^{111}\) Vopiscus’ way of making his private space public is through Statius’ writing. Through reading *Silvae* 1.3, Vopiscus’ wealth and legacy can be known and memorialized.

\(^{110}\) Newmyer 1978, 38.
\(^{111}\) Myers 2000, 110.
After establishing intrinsic implications of the Empire, having called upon the Muses, and having put nature under the control of humans, Statius finally invites his readers inside. The villa is dripping in beauty, and Statius’ language reflects this. He invites the reader to go on an imaginative journey with him and writes (1.3.34-42):

Quid primum mediumve canam, quo fine quiescam?
auratasne trabes an Mauros undique postes
an picturata lucentia marmora vena
mirer, an emissas per cuncta cubilia nymphas?
huc oculis, huc mente trahor. venerabile dicam
lucorum senium? te, quae vada fluminis infra
cernis, an ad silvas quae respecis, aula, tacentis,
qua tibi tota quies offensaque turbine nullo
nox silet et nigros imitantia murmura somnos?

What shall I sing of first or in the middle, with what shall I end this? What shall I wonder at, maybe the gold overlay on the beams, or the Moorish doorposts above everything, or the marble, shining with the colors of a vein, or the nymphaeum waters expelling from all the bedrooms? I draw my eyes to this, my mind to that. Should I speak of the venerable old sacred grove? Or this, you discern the ford of a river on the other side, or the wood which you look back at, or the courtyard, where for you everything is silent and night passing over in stillness, with no offensive whirlwinds, and murmurs mimic dark sleep?

The initial reading of this passage- keeping in mind that Statius has appealed to imagery of the Empire throughout the opening sections of this poem- allows for the reader to apply the same conception of Empire to their understanding of Vopiscus’ wealth. The visual experience that Statius is provided with when he steps into the interior of the villa represents key tenets of Roman interior design. Color, light, water features, and sound converge inside, creating one space of
beauty.\textsuperscript{112} There is an abundance of riches and beautiful building materials to behold. Statius does not even know where to look. The combination of ingredients that make up the interior can only exist through the power of the Empire. Materials and building styles from the far reaches of the Empire come together, creating one full experience. Colorful marble most likely from Egypt, doorposts crafted with Moorish influences, and gold remind the viewer of the far reaches of the Empire. By collecting these materials and using them to create something beautiful, Vopiscus participates in the exaltation of imperial power and he is also able to show off his own power, which has allowed him to build up this decorative program. Through his exercise in lavishness he reminds his visitors that he (through the extension of the Empire) has the means to collect products of nature and culture in order to bring them together into one private space that represents a new type of personal wealth outside of the public sphere.\textsuperscript{113}

Statius stands on a literal threshold in this passage. He faces the interior of Vopiscus’ villa and he stands with his back towards the natural world, to the river and the woods. Statius participates in the debate between art, nature, and written work. As a poet, his aim is to conquer both nature and art with his verse. First, he addresses the relationship between the natural world and the created

\textsuperscript{112} For a more general overview on the decorative features of a Roman \textit{domus} or villa, reference Shelly Hales, \textit{The Roman House and Social Identity} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

\textsuperscript{113} Myers 2000, 103, considers the ability of aristocrats to show off private wealth while taking the Empire into consideration. Because Domitian was not as inclined to allow elite Romans to build in the city or carry out public benefactions, elites turned inward to the private sphere in order to show off their reach and wealth.
world. The arts in this interior, specifically the marble, gold, and wood, are all produced out of natural elements. The human hand turns raw material into something of beauty. Artifice conquers nature. Then, Statius’ task becomes to conquer artifice itself through his poetry. He does this through his use of multiple techniques, as he tries to give the viewer the visual experience of stepping into the villa with the strength of his poetry alone. He uses second person singular verbs such as ‘cernis.’ This is a call back to his opening line- he started this poem with the same verb. Statius asks the reader to be an active participant in the act of viewing and looking, pushing them to see through his eyes and consider the implications of what they are seeing.\footnote{Chinn 2005, 247-253.} Through ekphrasis, Statius leads the reader around, pointing at what they should look at and locating them in the interior space. After decorative physical elements have been made from natural resources, Statius takes artifice a step further by providing the reader with a visual experience that they can use to understand Vopiscus’s power over nature, Statius’ power over poetry, and their own power to create the structure in their mind through the written word. By placing the reader within the narrative, the reader can experience luxury in the same way that Vopiscus does. They now have access to Vopiscus’ lifestyle and the utopian vision that it allows for.

Nature yields to the human. The villa is quiet, allowing for a peaceful and restful sleep. This is part of the splendor of the countryside- nature respects the wants and needs of the human body. In silence, without the commotion of
natural disaster or city life, restfulness can finally be welcomed. Nature is benevolent and creates the room for the architectural space to be safe. Harshness is removed. The reader - who Statius has invited inside - can gain power over nature and a peaceful state of mind through being in the countryside.  

A closer look into the passage can perhaps again reveal Statius’ own ambivalent feelings about the opulence when he enters the space. Instead of becoming calm and at peace, Statius becomes restless and almost anxious. He can’t take in all that he is seeing and is torn between where to look and what to consider. He loses sight of his own creation of poetry, stating that he doesn’t know how to structure his verse because so many visual elements are coming at him all at once. Statius is unable to participate in the mental state that he is promoting. Does this imply subversion against what he seems to praise? Is he undermining Vopiscus? Has Statius been launched into a state of overstimulation or is he in fact praising the luxury of the place, as he says he is? Regardless, he is calling attention to grandiosity. It is difficult to tease out Statius’ true meaning, especially when considering that his task was to please his patrons like Vopiscus, who were participants in the kind of lifestyle that Statius has delineated in Silvae 1.3. He also cannot write anything explicitly negative about Domitian or the Empire, for fear of being censored. Perhaps, here, he is reflecting generally felt anxieties about the current state of the Empire, about what will happen when

Domitian dies.\textsuperscript{116} The apprehension stems from the Empire being pulled in multiple directions, causing the idea of utopia, which is found in a balance of human creation and natural control, to be questioned. Statius is not strictly rejecting luxury, but, perhaps, he is subverting the current notion of the Empire and reflecting a state that is causing him and others to be overwhelmed as he questions where to look, where to turn his attentions to.

After introducing these questions to the reader, Statius continues to explore the vast decorative program and beauty of the space. He sets the villa within a mythological framework and then ultimately praises luxury for what it offers to the mind, completing his thesis that virtue and moral uprightness can be accessed through \textit{luxuria}. In his closing lines he writes (1.3.105-110):

\begin{quote}Digne Midae Croesique bonis et Perside gaza, macte bonis animi, cuuis stagnantia rura debuit et flavis Hermus transcurrere ripis et limo splendente Tagus. sic docta frequentes otia, sic omni detectus pectora nube finem Nestoreae precor egrediare senectae.\end{quote}

Worthy of the goods of Midas and Croesus, worthy of the treasures in Persia, hail the goods of the mind, where inundated fields ought to traverse by the Hermus with its golden banks and the Tagus with its brilliant muds. Thus often learned of leisures, thus having laid bare your heart from every cloud, I pray you may surpass the limit of Nestor’s old age.

Putting aside potential anxieties that Statius may have faced when contemplating the grandiosity of the space, he now ends his poem with an exaltation of what leisure can offer Vopiscus. He begins this process by justifying the wealth, though not exactly material wealth. He compares the wealth of

\textsuperscript{116} Newlands 2002, 45.
Vopiscus’ mind to ancient standards of actual material wealth and here he creates a link between experiencing and owning beautiful far-flung treasures to experiencing wealth and strength of the internal mind. Luxury on this scale is justified because it allows Vopiscus to fully access the wealth that can exist in his mind.\[117\]

Statius further drives this point, that luxury through *otium* can represent learnedness, in the final lines of *Silvae* 1.3. Lavishness becomes acceptable because it can be used as a tool to uncover a true heart and a clear mind. The luxury in which Vopiscus has placed himself resembles the luxury of his mind. Finally, the villa becomes a metaphor for Vopiscus’ state of mind and his place in the world. Being at his villas allows Vopiscus the ability to become himself more fully- what was clouding his mind and preventing him from reaching his potential for learnedness can now be removed and he can now step into what he is meant to be in the world. What is externally present in the villa reflects Vopiscus’ own self. After Statius expended many lines to create *otium* into a positive experience, the time spent at the villa continues to increase Vopiscus’ positive force in the world and, therefore, the forward momentum of the Empire. Statius enforces this point with his repetition of ‘*sic,*’ implying that this is his final thesis. After his entire poem, after walking the reader through so many visual experiences, Statius has proven that the ability to learn and grow can be found directly within the time that is spent outside of the city, reveling in how humans

\[117\] Newmyer 1978, 112.
can use and control nature. Statius uses a first person verb in his final line, ‘precor,’ for one of the first times throughout this poem, indicating that he truly believes this to be true. Increasing luxury and increasing the power of the mind knows no bounds and gaining learnedness through *otium* can take the participant into a realm that can surpass even the most brilliant epic heroes. The changed value system that the Roman elite is now concerned with is centered on accessing the potential of the mind and producing art. Through the symbolism of the villa - considering the villa complex to include both the actual villa and the natural world around it - new personal ideals for the Roman elite in their private realms are forged.

**SILVAE 2.2 ON THE VILLA OF POLLUIS FELIX**

Statius continues to explore the themes that he set forth in his first book of the *Silvae*, in *Silvae 2.2* he writes about the villa of his patron Pollius Felix and his wife Polla. The villa was in Surrentum near Naples, which is 225km south from Rome. Pollius was not a Roman aristocrat and did not belong to the social sphere of the Roman elite. Instead, he was involved in the Campanian society. In 2.2, Statius is writing about his own homeland as well, he grew up in Naples and was not Roman. Pollius’s villa is an example of a *villa maritime*; it is a seaside

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villa overlooking the Bay of Naples.\textsuperscript{120} Although attempts have been made to locate Pollius’s villa, ultimately the results are unconvincing.\textsuperscript{121} Statius does not shy away from exalting the luxury of his patron’s villa and embraces an opulent style. This is a clear departure from Horace’s poetry and Pliny the Younger’s prose, which will be explored later. The Bay of Naples was long regarded in Rome as a place of luxury and, as a result, moral degradation.\textsuperscript{122} The social system did not rely on hereditary principles or old money, as it did within the Roman hierarchy. Elites with money on the Bay of Naples represented a new type of wealth and a new type of aristocrat. Pollius was an example of social mobility— he was an entrepreneur involved in marble trade at a very active port at Puteoli.\textsuperscript{123} He was concerned with showing off his wealth and building his reputation and immorality specifically through showing off this wealth.

Statius approached Silvae 2.2 with the same structure and considerations that he approached Silvae 1.3 with. Applying the new rules that Statius set forth for the Roman elites’ experiences within otium and luxury, Statius attempts to unite Pollius’ experiences with virtue, philosophy, and poetry. Through writing outside of the Roman context, Statius is able to fuse Roman and Campanian (or Greek) influences together. As he created Vopiscus and his leisure time as a new standard for the Roman elite, Statius places Pollius, a non-Roman, within the

\textsuperscript{121} For the most recent attempts to locate the site, reference Mingazzini and Pfister, \textit{Forma Italiae Regio I}, vol. 2, 54-70.
\textsuperscript{122} Cicero famously referred to the region in Naples ‘cratera illum delicatum’ (that bay of luxury) in Ad Atticum, II.
new elite tradition that *Silvae* 1.3 explored. Vopiscus controlled nature, connected himself to the Empire, and reached philosophical ideals at his villa. Pollius does the same but to a greater extent. Statius uses the villa as a link to explore his new definition of the pastoral ideal: engaging in luxury at the villa site brings control and virtue and is justified based on its ability to bring control and virtue. The villa poem in the *Silvae* is not just an exercise in description of a villa and its surroundings: it becomes a social commentary.\(^{124}\)

Before beginning an analysis of *Silvae* 2.2, it is important to more completely consider the land of Naples and the traditions of villa building there. Naples began as a Greek colony, was coveted by the Etruscans, conquered by the Samnites, and then made a Roman colony near the end of the fourth century BC. The people of Naples largely retained their Greek language, customs, and traditions. Hellenistic culture flourished there. While the countryside and pastures were rich, many luxurious villas that commanded the seaside were not connected to agricultural practices. Instead, their use was for rest, relaxation, and recharging the mind and body. The area was especially known for the high amount of luxury villas that lined the coast in the Roman era.\(^ {125}\)

Statius begins by describing the villa briefly and succinctly, as he travels back to his homeland of Naples to visit Pollius. These opening lines will dictate

\(^{124}\) Bergmann 1991, 61-66, focuses on the architectural details of Statius' poetry. She relates Statius' ekphrastic poetic art to the art of wall painting in villas at the time, as wall painting often times reflected a perfection of the natural world. She argues that Statius' poem 'typifies and exalts a domestic contest in which architecture imposes order on the land and nature is shaped into perfect views.' While this is a compelling argument, Bergman ignores that Statius' poetry focuses more on the emotional response triggered by the architecture rather than the architecture of the space itself.

\(^{125}\) McKay 1975, 114-115.
the themes that he will continue to touch upon throughout the poem. He writes (2.2.3-5):

celsa Dicarchei speculatrix villa profundi,  
qua Bromio dilectus ager collesque per altos  
uritur et prelis non invidet uva Falernis.

A lofty villa looks down on the Dicarchaean deep, where the countryside is beloved by Bacchus, and the hills ripen with wine through the heights and the grape doesn’t envy Falernian wine.

In these opening lines, Statius calls the reader back to consider *Silvae* 1.3. He begins by describing the villa: this place is a departure from Vospicus’ twin villas nestled on the Anio. Pollius’s villa commands the landscape from the start. It sits high on a cliff, overlooking the surrounding seas. A reader initially considers the difficulty of building such a space- the amount of manpower involved in shaping the landscape would be vast. A visitor approaching by boat would be able to see the villa in the distance and understand the power of the owner, who could look down from a lofty position onto those coming forward.\(^\text{126}\) Statius builds Pollius’ power. The lofty villa allows for a metaphorical Epicurean reading. If the villa is an extension of Pollius himself- and, further, an extension of his mind- then the villa can be considered to represent the citadel of the mind, a key concept in Epicureanism.\(^\text{127}\) This villa becomes a physical place of refuge, where Pollius can release his anxieties and fears. When Pollius is at his villa, he can journey on a path towards enlightenment, as his philosophical safe-haven has become a

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\(^{126}\) Du Prey, 1994, writes about the tenets of villa building. He considers the ability to see and be seen as a key element of a villa.

\(^{127}\) Lucretius most fully describes the citadel of the mind, as he considered that the idea of philosophy as a private citadel or quiet refuge within a world of turmoil, pain, and anxiety was central to Epicureanism. Epicurean philosophy should fortify the mind against the everyday evils of the world. (*De Rerum Natura* 2.1-10).
physical location. Therefore, the villa symbolizes Pollius’ control over the landscape and his control over himself. At this villa, Pollius becomes the ruler of his world, both inside and outside the villa.

Statius then quickly switches the narrative into a consideration of the land. The land on which Pollius places his villa is connected to Bacchus, which bestows the location of the villa with two more important qualities. Bacchus, as the Roman god of agriculture, wine, and fertility is a complex figure. By invoking Bacchus, Statius connects the land to production. He highlights the richness of the land for growing wine and imbues the land with a mythical agricultural quality. The land becomes seemingly timeless and less explicit, creating a dreamlike space that only exists outside of the specificity of a city. Even though Pollius doesn’t engage in agricultural practices, the connection to mythical agriculture remains. The relationship to Bacchus also brings up a type of frenetic energy. Through dance and wine, his followers can be freed of their fears and anxieties. His cult represents freedom of the mind and body. Bacchus can represent the ability for worshippers to subvert restraints that may oppress them. Perhaps Statius is giving Pollius the ability to overcome idealistic restraints that the Roman elite should abide by. This allows him to experience luxury in full form, without being accused of having lax morals, going against previous long-held Roman standards. These connections to Bacchus relate back to the citadel of the mind that Statius first considered: the site of the villa can

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129 For more on Bacchus and Bacchnalia, reference Livy, *The History of Rome*, Vol 5, Book 39, IX.
harness the power of Bacchus and the philosophy of Epicureanism in order to reach a higher, more free, state of mind.

The contrast between Vosipscus’ villa, which is characterized by its respect of nature and allowances for the landscape, and Pollius’ villa, which is described as being imposing and commanding, is vast. Seemingly, Pollius is liable to be accused of disrespecting the sacred quality of the land and reveling in his ability to show off his wealth in a physically forceful way. As Purcell stated, this act of building a luxurious villa, one that can be interpreted as a symbol of human arrogance and moral degradation, was equal to the acts of tyrants, who wrongfully transgressed the boundaries of nature. What saves Pollius from being considered tyrannical is the Epicurean relationship that he has to his villa, which Statius continually highlights throughout the poem. Questions of tyranny remain; however, and Statius struggles to balance painting Pollius as someone who has the power to control nature and yet uses this power in an appropriate way.

Next, Statius introduces his patron and friend Pollius. Continuing his introduction, Statius contemplates the distance between Rome and Naples. He also builds Pollius as a character, stressing his similarities to Vopsicus in order to combat a negative reading of Pollius (2.2.9-12):

trans gentile fretum placidi facundia Polli
detulit et nitidae iuvenilis gratia Pollae,
flectere iam cupidum gressus qua limite noto

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131 Myers 2005, 104.
Appia longarum teritur regina viarum.

Across the sea I was carried here by the gentle eloquence of Pollius and the bright youthful goodwill of Polla, now to turn by steps eagerly to the Appia, the queen of roads, by which the route having been known is trodden.

Statius begins by creating a difference between the sea and the villa (or more precisely, a difference between the sea and the nature of Pollius as a character, as the character of Pollius and the character of the villa become synonymous). Here, the physical distance between Naples and Rome is stressed- this journey requires effort to undertake. The image of the sea and seafaring in the ancient world metaphorically represents those who are in emotional distress caused by desire, greed, or passion.\textsuperscript{132}The image of the tumultuous sea paired with the image of the villa as a citadel of the mind creates the understanding that the villa is a safe haven and refuge, guarding Pollius against the exact negative traits that a Roman readership could have been primed to apply to his character.

After establishing the Epicurean roots of Pollius’ character, Statius links him intrinsically to Vopiscus. The same adjectival qualifier, ‘facundia’ is used to describe Pollius. This places the patron within his own poetic realm: as Vopiscus wrote poetry and participated in Epicurean philosophy, so did Pollius.\textsuperscript{133} By forging this verbal link between the two patrons, Statius states that whatever held true for Vopiscus in Tibur also will hold true for Pollius in Campania.

Therefore, although Pollius exists outside of the politics and social hierarchy of Rome, Statius makes efforts to connect him to this tradition through defining

\textsuperscript{133} As an expression of being receptive to Greek culture, Pollius as other elites on the Bay of Naples likely participated in music, poetry, art, and philosophy.
Pollius with the new qualities of the Roman elite that he established in *Silvae* 1.3. Through participating in poetic pursuits and showing off his wealth, Statius attempts to write Pollius into the Roman social hierarchy.

In accordance with the structure of *Silvae* 1.3, Statius considers where to look and what to write. He writes: “quae rerum turba! locine/ingenium an domini mirer prius?” (What a crowd of things! Should I wonder at the nature of the place or the master first? 2.2.44-45). The notion of wonder, according to Becker, is what allows Statius to access the reader through ekphrasis. The emotional response of wonder in the reader, and Statius’ own response of wonder in the poem, pulls the reader into Pollius’ world, letting them understand the villa as a symbolic or metaphorical space.¹³⁴

Statius explores Pollius as a villa owner and his interactions with the natural world. Statius characterizes how he sees Pollius and how Pollius enacts control over the landscape in this passage. Statius writes (2.2.52-58):

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his favit natura locis, hic victa colenti
cessit et ignotos docilis mansuevit in usus.
mons erat hic ubi plana vides; et lustra fuerunt,
quae nunc tecta subis; ubi nunc nemora ardua cernis,
hic nec terra fuit: domuit possessor, et illum
formantem rupes expugnantemque secuta
gaudet humus.
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Nature has favored some places, in other places the conqueror surpassed it and nature has become tame through new and easy ways. Where there was a hill now you see a flat, and there was a bog, which now moved under a roof, where there was a forest now you discern a building, were

¹³⁴ Andrew Becker, *The Shield of Achilles and the Poetics of Ekphrasis* (Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995) 35. Becker writes that ‘the ekphrasis encourages both acceptance of the illusion that we are viewers and awareness of the desriber who creates that illusion.’
there was no land: the master subdued it, and the land rejoices as he forms the rocks and takes them by conquering.

First, Statius creates a balance between the natural world and the man-made. While Pollius is the ‘victa,’ he only conquers what the natural world cannot provide for in its most untouched form. Instead of directly overcoming nature, he expands upon what was already present in the land. He makes nature more beautiful, and therefore exalts nature, by using his human powers to improve the natural world. Pollius relies on the technological world that is afforded to him and, in this way; he actually does a very Roman action. The Roman project was centered on the ability to build, re-build, and systematically build across the entire Empire.\textsuperscript{135} Statius, who knowingly calls up an antagonistic tradition against luxury when he writes poems about villas, re-defines the concept of the luxurious villa to fit into essential Roman ideals. Statius evokes the Roman building tradition by writing about building the villa like it was a rational, thought-out process. He appeals to his readers’ inclination towards stability and balance. Therefore, the image that the reader is left with is not of Pollius as a tyrant over a sacred landscape. Instead, Pollius is created into a man who has used materials in order to increase natural beauty and place order into the world through human means. Through conquering the land, he respects the land. Nature is receptive, benevolently allowing Pollius to mold it.\textsuperscript{136}

Calling further upon Roman ideals, Statius uses militaristic language to evoke the power of the Empire and connect Pollius to the Empire even though

\textsuperscript{135} Newlands 2002, 156.
\textsuperscript{136} Bergmann 1991, 51.
Pollius lacks Imperial birthright. Newlands considers that Statius uses this effect in order to use the villa as a metaphor for Roman colonialism. Within this reading, the villa and the natural world surrounding the villa is the province and Vopiscus is the civilizer and conqueror. The province is willing and accepting, perhaps even eager, to be taken under the umbrella of the Empire. There is no war or destruction. The land is made receptive to settlement. The combination of the words ‘victa colenti’ implies the relationship between the two: peace, cultivation, and harmony can be reached through the act of conquering.\textsuperscript{137} Even though Pollius is not Roman and participates in potentially anti-Roman acts of opulence, he is now tied to the core Roman value of colonization. He is shown as a generous peace-bringer, and therefore aligns himself more deeply with the Roman code of morality, mimicking the earliest leaders of Rome.

Pollius seeks to bring together imagery from the far reaches of the Empire into one unified whole (2.2.85-94):

\begin{verbatim}
    hic Grais penitus delecta metallis
    saxa; quot Eoae respergit vena Syenes,
    Synnade quot maesta Phrygiae fodere secures
    per Cybeles lugentis agros, ubi marmore picto
    candida purpureo distinguitur area gyro;
    hic et Amyclaei caesum de monte Lycurgi
    quod viret et molles imitatur rupibus herbas;
    hic Nomadum lucent flaventia saxa Thasosque
    et Chios et gaudens fluctus spectaret Carystos:
    omnia Chalcidicas turres obversa salutant.
\end{verbatim}

Here are the rocks picked from the inside of the Grecian quarry, how many are sprinkled with veins from Syene, how many Phrygian axes dug out in gloomy Synnas through the fields of lamenting Cybele, where on the decorated marble areas of white are separated by purple circles; and

\textsuperscript{137} Newlands 2002, 180.
here is marble from the Amyclaean Lycurgus mountain with is verdant and mimics soft grass with rock, here the yellow stone from Numidia shines and the stone from Thasos and from Chios and those of Carystos rejoice to consider the waves. They all greet the opposite Neapolitan towers.

Following in the footsteps of the Empire, Pollius collects priceless marble from the far reaches of the Empire into his one space. Egyptian, Phrygian, and Greek stone all come together to form the decorative program. Combining physical parts of conquered cultures reminds a reader not only of the power of the Empire as previously alluded to, but also the decorative program of the city of Rome. In Rome, spectacles are made when foreign marble is brought into the city. Visually uniting materials from across the reaches of the Empire creates the notion of a singular Roman unit. Seeing spoils from the colonies in the city reminds the citizens of Rome of the power of the Emperor. Bringing in monolithic stones from Egypt or Greece would require a showing of labor (specially built ships and pulley systems were publically used to bring marble into the city); Statius has purposefully delineated the process of labor involved in the process of unifying this stone at Pollius’ villa.139

Unlike Vopiscus’ villa, this cliff-top villa was not intrinsically a part of the land. Instead, raw material have been taken out of the land and reshaped by the tools of humans for human consumption. However, both approaches- either showing the signs of labor or refusing to show signs of labor- end up re-

138 For example, Domitian placed an obelisk in the city of Rome that, curiously, had no relationship to ancient Egypt. Domitian’s use of Egyptian sculptural traditions to create the obelisk revealed his interest in using this culture to legitimize his position as an Emperor. Therefore, handling marbles in this way becomes symbolic for collecting and showing off power. For more on Domitian’s obelisk, reference Parker 2004.
139 D’Arms 1974, 119.
enforcing the respective villas’ relationship to the Empire. Vopiscus’ villa seemingly sprung forth from the land, respecting the sacred ancient landscape of Tibur. Pollius’ villa harnesses manpower in order to command the cliff-top of Naples: his villa exists outside of the sacred landscape of Rome. As he lives in a colony of Rome, he also lives on land that was meant to be used by the Empire. Exploring symbols of labor such as digging into quarries and using axes to take out part of the land is appropriate. Perhaps the concept of a sacred landscape doesn’t extend beyond the city of Rome and the most ancient areas (like the Tibur) that are connected to Rome. The villa is still shown within of the notion of the Empire, however, Statius doesn’t concern himself with ensuring that nature is respected in the same way that it was respected at Vopiscus’ Tiburtine villa. Pollius, who is not Roman and not involved in the Roman political machine, does not have to abide by the same natural laws that Vopiscus, as a political entity in Rome, had to follow. Pollius’ means of connecting himself to the Empire lies in his ability to command the land and show signs of labor that he was able to harness in order to collect goods within his villa. In collecting colored marble in this way, Pollius connects himself to the Roman impulse to conquer and reshape the land through collecting and displaying treasures from the reaches of the Empire.

Pollius’ display may seem like a transgression.\textsuperscript{140} Is he trying to play Emperor by showing off his wealth and symbolically conquering the land of the provinces? Is he exalting the Empire through his imitation of imperial practices?

\textsuperscript{140} Newlands 2002, 154.
Is he trying to usurp the role of Emperor through enacting his extensive power over the land? Pollius, from Naples, is connected with the Greek part of the Italian peninsula. His act of collecting stone from Greece and forming them into the decorative program at his villa also connects him to his own cultural identity. Pollius attempts to forge his legacy. Pollius lines his home with Greek marbles that connect him to a Greek heritage using the Roman practice of displaying ancestor busts (*imagines*) in the home to commemorate an ancient family legacy through the language of the decorative arts. Pollius was potentially a freedman; he had to forge his identity and connections to lineage himself. Statius uses this collection of Greek marbles to symbolically change the rules for the nobility. Artistic decorations and material displays create a familial legacy. What Pollius may have lacked in ancestral roots, he makes up for through the use of a physical display. Decorative modes connect Pollius to a civic identity in the same way that ancestor busts were used to connect a Roman to their civic identity. However, what qualifies as ‘civic identity’ shifts to now include the Greek ideals of a civic identity. Philosophy, poetry, and the arts are now valued as a part civic identity and are, therefore, connected to virtue.\textsuperscript{141}

This passage also explores Pollius’ connection to the natural world once again. Each marble is described within natural terms. The way that they were cut and their colors mimic elements of the land such as ‘lush grass’ or ‘undulating waves.’ The artifice or opulence involved in creating these decorations are in service of mirroring the natural world and placing it inside of the villa. Artifice

\textsuperscript{141} Newlands 2002, 185.
here is not a transgression against the moral inclination to honor the landscape or respect nature. Instead, Pollius exalts the natural world in his mimicry. Nature and decoration come to serve a single unified visual experience. Marbles that represent the land, the sun, and the sea, bring together all earthly elements into one space. Again, this may seem like a transgression or an overextension of enacting human power over the natural world. Even though the natural world is conquered by the human, through appreciating this decoration (which mirrors the most essential elements of nature), the natural world actually is conquered respectfully by a master who elevates and intensifies these earthly elements through artifice itself.142

Statius ends with a revocation of Epicureanism and he solidifies Pollius’ inner world as a man of poetry and philosophy. While he has forged connections between his villa, his legacy, and the Empire, ultimately his time at leisure in the Bay of Naples centers on his ability to calm and control his mind. The extravagant villa, a safe-haven against the threats of the natural world, becomes a metaphor for the ideal state of Pollius as a man in touch with philosophy. Statius writes (2.2.129-132; 2.2.139-142):

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    nos, vilis turba, caducis
deservire bonis semperque optare parati,
spargimur in casus: celsa tu mentis ab arce
despicis errantes humanaque gaudia rides.

    illo alii rursus iactantur in alto,
et tua securos portus placidamque quietem
intravit non quassa ratis. sic perge, nec umquam
emeritam in nostras puppem demitte procellas.
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We, the worthless crowd, prepared to serve profits and to always desire (more), we are scattered to chance: from the high citadel of your mind you look down on our wandering ways and you laugh at human pleasures... There, others are thrown into the deep again, and your ship enters a safe harbor and a tranquil calm unshaken. Thus go on; don't ever drop your worn out ship into our storms.

Statius creates a divide between Pollius and a baser crowd. Pollius is set apart both physically and mentally from those that are part of the ‘turba.’ Remaining in the physical villa- the physical citadel- is the material device that allows Pollius to enter the ideal state of his mind. The villa on the hill is not just a metaphor of Pollius’ mind; it is an extension of his mind. The physical and the mental cannot be separated. The ability to look down onto the masses- those that are tossed about by the sea and those that cannot access quietude- comes to Pollius through the means of looking down from the villa and knowing that the villa has allowed him to inhabit this ideal Epicurean state of mind.

Although Statius shows Pollius to be wealthy and ostentatious, at the end of Silvae 2.2 Pollius is not swayed by the materialism that the crowd below him seems to crave. He does not desire for more than he has; he does not even seem to recognize what he has. This allows for a variety of different readings. Perhaps the decorative elements that exist in the villa are part of this citadel villa complex; the opulent decorative elements exist intrinsically within the space. Therefore, Pollius’ interactions with his material wealth are justified: he, unlike the masses, is not swayed by greed, want for more, or ungratefulness for what he has and for what he has chosen to show off. His wealth has a place in his citadel
of the mind and contributes to his ability to access his citadel of his mind. Curiously, the first inclination a reader has when encountering *Silvae* 2.2 is that Statius has glorified riches and luxury and has posited Pollius as the ruler of everything. However, Statius pushes against this notion by stating that Pollius’ wealth is used as a means to reach the ideal Epicurean state and the supreme quietude of mind. Through Pollius’ control and use of nature, he ultimately controls himself. This interaction with a life at leisure and a life engaging in the material world is the very thing that pushes Pollius towards morality and virtue, rather than tugging him away from these ideals.

Finally, Statius ends with the image of seafaring. This imagery, similar to the seafaring imagery that Statius started with, reminds the reader that Statius himself is in a ship and traveling from Rome back to his homeland. For Statius, who is traveling both physically and metaphorically through treacherous waters, Pollius’ villa provides a safe-haven, a place to rest his mind, and a place to practice his own philosophy and poetry. As Statius himself gains mental peace and clarity through considering or entering the physical space of the villa, he leaves a door open for his reader to do the same. Statius may be slightly subverting Imperialism. Although Statius takes pains to connect Pollius to the Empire, he alludes to trouble ashore and suggests that the masses are too caught up in their own vain desires, desires that outwardly cause a general separation from the ideal state of the mind. Perhaps here, Statius provides careful instruction for how the Empire should move forth. Pollius represents a new

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143 Van Dam 1984, 227-228.
aristocratic ideal: a man who concerns himself with respectful control, philosophy, poetry, and calming the forces around him in order to calm himself. The character of Domitian perhaps stands in contrast to these ideals. While he exercises his control, he perhaps doesn't control respectfully. He is increasingly paranoid and suspicious, which is a weakness that Epicurean philosophy and calmness of mind does not allow for. Statius implores a reader to use the imagery of Pollius' villa and the way that Statius approaches the villa in order for the reader to harness their own ideal state.
CHAPTER THREE: PLINY THE YOUNGER

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (61-113), known as Pliny the Younger, was a magistrate, lawyer, and author. He was educated by his uncle, Pliny the Elder (23-79), who wrote the *Natural Histories* and was a naval commander under the Emperor Vespasian. Like his uncle, Pliny the Younger rose through the ranks within the Roman government system through the *cursus honorum* and held a sequence of civil and military positions. Pliny was born in northern Italy into the gens Caecilia, a plebian family. He arrived in Rome in his teen years for further education. His political career was illustrious and followed the typical course for his equestrian rank at first. However, he rose above the typical career course for those in the equestrian rank and was elected *quaestor* in 88. Pliny’s career is notable on many accounts: he both survived through multiple emperors, including the reign of Domitian, and also rose in office throughout his active years. In an exercise of *Romanitas*, Pliny constantly sought fame and immortality through his efforts to distinguish himself.144 His largest body of work was the *Epistulae*, published under Trajan between 96 and 108. These are collection of letters that he wrote to his friends concerning his life, government activities, and administrative history in Trajanic Rome. Pliny the Younger’s personal letters, although almost certainly written by Pliny for their later publication, offer a unique glimpse into the everyday life of a Roman male elite.

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144 Indra Kagis McEwen, “Housing Fame: In the Tuscan Villa of Pliny the Younger,” *Anthropology and Aesthetics* 27, (1995): 11. McEwen cites *Epistulae* 9.3.1-3. Here, Pliny discusses the theme of lasting renown and writes that a man can be happy only if he is able to enjoy the anticipation of a favorable and lasting reputation. McEwen argues that Pliny’s concern with fame is the theme that links his *Epistulae* together.
As the epitome of a Roman statesman, Pliny was especially concerned with his self-presentation and how his image was received both to those of equal rank and to those above him in rank. Therefore, his letters can be read as a work of historical writing, but they are a specifically personal and biased history. Pliny created an opportunity to control how others would see him through this greater history of Trajanic Rome. Pliny tried to establish and self-fashion his identity within his identity. He was able to control how he was viewed among both his contemporaries and his later readers. Pliny’s letters are unique because they are personal: although he was writing and editing his letters to be published, he was still writing under the guise of speaking directly to his addressee.¹⁴⁵

His letters are famous for their descriptions of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 AD and for their accounts of the Roman governmental administration under Trajan. They also offer an in depth discussions of villa architecture and lifestyles of the Roman elite in the countryside. Pliny wrote and published letters concerning two of his villas outside of Rome: the Tuscan villa, a villa rustica, and the Laurentine villa, a villa maritima. The power of these letters is twofold. First, Pliny established the tenets of villa building. In discussing his own villa and taking his reader on a literary journey through his estates and

¹⁴⁵ Sigrid Mratscheck, “Images of Domitius Apollinaris in Pliny and Martial,” in Roman Literature under Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian, ed. Christopher Whitton and Alice Konig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 208-211. Mratschek focuses on Pliny’s addresses and the how they inform the readings of particular letters. She writes, “the character sketches of Apollinaris should be understood not as depictions of an empirical reality, but as self-conscious reflections of the ways in which their authors identify themselves and the world around them” (208). She compares Pliny’s Epistulae 5.6 to Martial’s epigrams addressed to Apollinaris, of which he wrote 6.
their grounds, he revealed what he honored architecturally and artistically within his villas. Second, Pliny depicted his landscape as a self-portrait. He gave himself an opportunity to defend the time he spent in the countryside while he was at leisure and away from his senatorial duties. In doing so, he began a performance: the way he imposed himself upon his landscape revealed his voice as a Roman author and statesman. His values were exposed within his literary manipulations of landscape and discussions of productivity—both agriculturally and culturally—within his property. His two villas were a place of cultivation on many levels.146 Here, he could cultivate the physical fruits of his lands, he could have the space to produce literary works, he could shape himself as a Roman elite, he could reflect his values, and he could attempt to tie himself to a greater literary tradition spanning hundreds of years and into the future. In terms of his discussion of luxury, Pliny falls in between Horace and Statius. He did not preach his frugality but he also did not exalt his wealth. Instead, he struck a pristine balance. He used symbols of wealth to prove that he does have access to an elite social stratification, but he did not elevate luxury for fear of being accused of indulgence or egoism.

Pliny was able to increase his fame and other people’s memory of his legacy within the careful parameters of the letters on his villas.147 For Pliny and

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146 Sara K. Myers, “‘Docta Otia’: Garden Ownership and Configurations of Leisure in Statius and Pliny the Younger.” *Arethusa* 38, no.1 (2005): 103. Myers compares Pliny the Younger to Statius, who both seek to justify the pursuit of leisure, villa life, and the wealth involved in inhabiting a dwelling in the countryside, by giving this lifestyle transcendent value.

147 McEwen, 1995, 17-18, considers Pliny’s ability to derive fame and continue his reputation within his depiction of the Tuscan Villa and his architectural space.
the highly educated Roman men that he was writing to, memory and location had been elided. Pliny especially, whom Quintilian had educated, relied on the ‘memory palace’ technique. As Quintilian famously retold the story, Simonides was able to remember the names of dinner party guests who had been crushed beyond recognition by a ceiling collapsing by remember the location that each guest had sat at.\footnote{Quintilian 11.2.11-16, 11.2.46-48} Essentially, the memory of people and how they interact in the world was intrinsically bound to physical space and location.\footnote{McEwen, 1995, 14, writes that Pliny’s schooling would have included specific training in memory. As a successful orator, he would have attempted to deliver his speeches entirely and effortlessly from his memory. Pliny would have employed the “memory palace” in order to memorize large sections of speeches at a time. Cicero most famously and effectively used the technique.} Intel about one’s environment was used to effectively recall memory. The technique is described by Frances Yates, who determined that ancient memory training involved placing things, symbols, images, and words, in a series of locations. By revisiting or ‘walking through’ the series of locations in one’s mind, one can access the things or words that they had stored there.\footnote{Frances Yates, \textit{The Art of Memory} (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966). Yates revolutionized the understanding of how ancient Greeks and Romans trained memory. She coined the phrase, “memory palace,” and put words to Cicero’s and Quintilian’s tactic to create a memory system, which involved impressing “places” and “images” strategically within the mind.} Therefore, memory and oratory are specifically tied to architecture. For Pliny, as well, his villas existed as a way for him to tie his memory practice to these locations. Perhaps describing his villas in such a detailed fashion was also an exercise for his memory. Just as his readers perhaps would have been practiced in the ‘memory palace’ technique, they too would have combined notions of memory and architecture.
Pliny was solidifying himself in his friends’ memories by forging his identity through architectural description. Thus, Pliny was able to increase his fame and other people’s memory of his legacy within the careful parameters of the letters on his villas.\textsuperscript{151}

**REMAINS OF PLINY THE YOUNGER’S TUSCAN VILLA**

A reasonable link has been made between Pliny’s writings and the archaeological record at Pliny the Younger’s Tuscan Villa. The villa is in Tuscany about 250 km from Rome, near the mouth of the Tiber River and near the Apennine mountain range. Braconi and Uroz, archaeologists from Perugia, excavated the site that they believed to be Pliny’s Tuscan villa (fig. 7, fig. 8). The site is on the Colle Plinio of San Guistino, a few kilometers north of Citta di Castello. According to local legend, the area was believed to be the site of Pliny’s Tuscan villa since the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{152} The villa was in ancient Tifernum Tiberinum. Marzano posits that Tifernum Tiberinum was like ancient day Tibur-a retreat from city life for Roman senatorial elite.\textsuperscript{153} Most of the villas located near the urban center of Tifernum Tiberinum were considered to be mostly for pleasure. Moving away from the urban center, villas dedicated to agriculture were more prevalent. Closer to the urban center, villas were more densely packed together, less focused on agriculture, and most likely more populated by

\textsuperscript{151} McEwen, 1995, 17-18, considers Pliny’s ability to derive fame and continue his reputation within his depiction of the Tuscan Villa and his architectural space.

\textsuperscript{152} Paolo Braconi and Jose Uroz Saez. “La Villa di Plinio il Giovane a San Guistino” in *Mercator Placidissimus: The Tiber Valley in Antiquity* ed. Filippo Coarelli and Helen Patterson (Perugia: Quasar, 2008), 105.

\textsuperscript{153} Marzano 2008, 110.
the elite. These larger villas for the elite may have controlled agricultural production in the area and had their own agricultural system. They were, in this sense, separated from a pure pursuit of *otium*. Generally once again, *villa rustica* in the countryside are distinguished from *villa maritima* in the sense that they seemingly are not as connected to luxury and have a more direct relationship to production and utilitarianism.

In the early twentieth century, Giovanni Magneris began excavations on the site. He found columns, marbles, and mosaics, which could reasonably be linked to a sumptuous villa like that of Pliny's Tuscan. He also uncovered a brick stamp with the letters CPCS imprinted on the brick (fig. 9). These letters are thought to correspond to Pliny the Younger's full *nomen*, Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus. However, no regular archaeological excavations were carried out until the University of Perugia began digging at the site from 1986-2003. They concluded that the villa was actually built under Augustus by Marco Granius Marcellus, a senatorial elite, and remained in use by the Granii family from 2 BC-15 CE. M. Granius' building had a simple rectangular plan with a courtyard, bedrooms, two-stories, and most likely a granary.

At some time between the Granian villa and Pliny's intervention, the residential part of the villa was expanded (fig. 10). When Pliny took over the space, he added a bath complex and two new buildings to the southeast. These were most likely storerooms, farmhouses, or stables. More notably, he doubled the front, added an outside portico, and placed a small temple in the center of his

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new façade. The finds, however, were mostly utilitarian. A large mostly intact dolia marked with the stamp ‘GRANI’ allude to the villa’s original relationship to agricultural practices and storage spaces (fig. 11). Similarly, many locally produced Dressel 2-4 amphorae point to the production of wine on the villa for the urban market, which could have been both local and also regional. The amphorae found in Pliny’s phase of the villa also accounted for over 50% of the entire local amphorae finds. The Dressel 2-4 amphorae were smaller and suitable for both land and water transportation. Braconi indicates that the wine produced at Pliny’s villa was transported down the Tiber to Rome, which further demonstrates that the goods produced at the villa were potentially brought into the local market. However, these amphorae could have brought products into Pliny’s villa for his own use from similar, local Italian sources. Amphorae housing imported goods, like olive oil from the provinces, were also found at the villa and increase the understanding of the villa as a place for production and center for trade with multiple different local markets.

Braconi and Uroz further elucidated the productive aspects for Pliny’s Tuscan villa. They argued that Pliny was attempting to increase the utilitarian use of the space as he added about 150 square meters of working areas or storerooms when he took over the villa. Signs of spaces for labor, vessels for goods like garum and olive oil marking a forward motion of trade to Rome down the Tiber River, and wine produced at the villa create an image of the villa as a

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type of agricultural nexus in Tifernum Tiberinum.\textsuperscript{158} Although Braconi and Uroz argue that the villa that they found belonged to Pliny the Younger, they still acknowledge that this site may not be the specific Tuscan Villa that Pliny discusses in his letters, as it is less rich and sumptuous than Pliny makes it seem in his letters. They concluded that the property that they have excavated was a part of a larger villa complex of Pliny’s that they have yet to discover in the area.\textsuperscript{159}

While the archaeological record suggests a utilitarian reading of the space, reconstructions of the site and Pliny’s own letters tell a slightly different story and highlight a more luxurious narrative. Prussian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel's (1781-1841) perspectival reconstruction of Pliny’s Tuscan villa attempted to imagine the space as it might have stood in antiquity. Schinkel is only one example of attempts to pictorially think about the space that Pliny has written about. While many artists have attempted to reconstruct Pliny’s villas, Schinkel's recreations are particularly helpful because he was a neoclassical architect and approached these recreations from a more architectural standpoint unlike the majority of the other artists who tried to bring Pliny’s villas to life in drawing. His effort to translate Pliny’s writings into the visual spectrum reveals the discrepancies between the remains, Pliny’s words, and the expectations about Pliny’s villas that have underscored scholarship and interpretation of Pliny’s letters. Comparing his artistic representation of the

\textsuperscript{158} Marzano 2007, 112.  
\textsuperscript{159} Braconi 2008, 94.
space to the known remains is helpful in understanding how Pliny used his letters in order to define his Tuscan villa.

Schinkel produced both a floor plan and a 3 dimensional imaginative reproduction of the space. Looking at the floor plan, he stressed open space and movability (fig. 12). Through walkways surrounding atria, galleries, loggias, and porticos, Pliny would be able to move freely through his villa. This is largely consistent with Pliny’s literary record and the floor plan that Braconi and Uroz Seaz provide. In the main part of the Schinkel’s villa, the rooms open up to the atrium and onto a larger porticoed walkway. Schinkel, however, did not delineate storerooms, labor quarters, or areas for agricultural production. Instead, he stressed the dependent relationship between artifice and nature. Almost every room that Schinkel elaborated looks out towards a view of the natural world, opens onto an outdoor space contained within the villa structure, or leads to a controlled garden. Here, it is also interesting that Schinkel differentiated between controlled nature and uncontrolled nature. The gardens at the Tuscan villa are perfectly manicured, symmetrical, and artistic. Nature, outside of the parameters of the complex, is a more unruly force. While architecture and garden space come together in unity, nature outside remains less controlled.

Looking to Schinkel’s attempt to depict the three dimensional space is also fruitful (fig. 13). He more fully explored conventionally held and romanticized ideals about the villa lifestyle. The natural world seemed to bend around the monumentality of the villa, which was not in architectural
conversation with the natural world around it. Rather, the villa seemed to be
plopped down in between the hills, commanding and dominating the
surrounding area. Schinkel, however, depicted other villas in the distance, even
though he highlighted Pliny’s as the largest and most central. Notably, this is
consistent with the archaeological record and what is known about the
settlements in Tifernum Tiberinum. Pliny’s villa was by no means the only villa
in the area. One remarkable difference between Braconi’s findings and Schinkel’s
renderings is the lack of farm space or utilitarian qualities that Schinkel depicts.
In fact, he left out any element that could symbolize production. There was no
farmland, storage area, slave quarters, or room for livestock. Schinkel was
producing these images without knowing the archaeological record, implying
that he was visually copying down exactly what he thought Pliny was describing
through the lens of what he believed a ‘villa’ should be able to encapsulate for its
owner.

_EPISTULA 5.6 ON PLINY THE YOUNGER’S TUSCAN VILLA_

Pliny’s long letter, letter 5.6, concerning the description of his Tuscan villa
begins structurally as an answer and a defense. Domitius Apollinaris has asked
for details concerning the villa and has claimed that the air in Tuscany is
unhealthy for Pliny. Pliny uses this pretense as a launching point: he now has
free rein to discuss his villa in any way that he sees fit in order to prove that the
location of the villa is, in fact, healthy for him to inhabit. He can also use
Apollinaris’ stance- that Pliny’s villa, and perhaps all villas are unhealthy- as a
protection against the fact that he is about to spend quite a long time talking about the merits of the villa and the place, as he is about to expand on everything that does make his villa healthy. This will shield him against those who wish to hold Pliny’s musings on the villa lifestyle as a practice of luxuria, which holds specifically negative connotations.160

Now that he has set up this protective literary device, he presents the thesis of his letter. He writes: “Atque adeo ut omnem pro me metum ponas, accipe temperiem caeli regionis situm villae amoenitatem, quae et tibi auditu et mihi relatu iucunda erunt” (And now precisely so that you may place all your fear for me aside, learn the temper of the sky, the situation of the region, the pleasantness of the villa, which will be both pleasing for you to hear and for me to report, 5.6.3)161. Pliny elaborates on his relationship with the reader, as he speaks to all of his future readers through Apollinaris.162 He sets up the purpose of this letter to therefore release his friend from anxiety- the impetus of this letter is not for Pliny to brag about his estate. In fact, he lists his aims from general to specific. He begins broadly with talk about the sky- an entity that is universal, experienced by all. He then turns to the land, rooting the villa in

160 Brain Vickers, ""Leisure and Idleness in the Renaissance: The Ambivalence of Otium." Renaissance Studies 4, no. 1 (1990): 17. Vickers discusses the negative history of the terms luxuria and otium, which are concepts that have the power to corrupt body and mind. Engaging too long in activities of leisure, or taking too much pleasure in leisure can be seen to go against ideals of Romanitas.

161 Note on translation: the rhythmic quality of listing, the imperative verb, and the mirroring rhythmic language in “et tibi... relatu” re-enforces the reciprocal relationship between reader and author, as Pliny creates a pleasant reading environment for Apollinarus.

162 Christopher M. Chinn “Before Your Very Eyes: Pliny Epistulae 5.6 and the Ancient Theory of Ekphrasis,” Classical Philology 102, no. 3 (2007): 269. Chinn elaborates on the close conversational relationship between Pliny and his reader, who attempts to create the illusion that he inhabits the same space as the reader.
physical space. Pliny slips into highlighting elements of production at the villa. He will elaborate later that the land is arable and prepares the reader to embrace these favorable qualities of the land fully. Finally Pliny finally mentions the villa itself. Careful not to qualify it with any kind of possessive pronoun, he stresses the propensity of the villa to please rather than his direct ownership of the place. Elaborating on this peaceful quality, Pliny finally brings his authorial voice into the narrative. His relationship with the reader is reciprocal: his action of writing and his reader’s action of reading will yield a net positive. He softens Apollinaris’ concerns: as Apollinaris is able to release himself to Pliny’s literary description of the villa, he is now able to go on the journey with Pliny. This journey will grant him peacefulness and pleasantness much in the way that Pliny is able to access peacefulness and pleasantness when he is physically in his Tuscan villa.\footnote{Chinn 2007, 267, focuses his analysis of *Episulae* 5.6 on the significance of ekphrastic technique and states that Pliny’s use of ekphrasis makes the illusions that he describes physically present to the reader.} Finally in this sentence, the crux of the letter, Pliny addresses the second form of production that he will be performing; namely, the production of an experience for the reader through the form of writing. Pliny is concerned with controlling the way others read about him.\footnote{Andrew Riggsby, "Self and Community in the Younger Pliny" *Arethusa* 31, no. 1 (1998): 87. Riggsby states that Pliny seems devote more time to controlling what others think about him rather than controlling himself.}

Next, Pliny describes the neighborhood in which he chooses to spend his summer. It takes him a while to enter into the villa and instead he focuses on the qualities of the landscape. Pliny uses language that his reader - an educated Roman senator - would already be used to, specifically Arcadian and pastoral
language that can be found directly in Vergil’s Eclogues and Horace’s Odes. Pliny as narrator doesn’t introduce himself as a character in this narration yet; he is focused on entrenching the landscape around his villa within the utopian context. He employs the second person singular endings on his verbs. He is not the one looking around the landscape; he is requiring his reader to enact this performance of looking around and appreciating the land.

Apollinaris is brought to a past time, to an ancestral epoch when lands were lush and morality was intact. He writes: “audias fabulas veteres sermonesque maiorum” (You may be able to hear ancient stories and the conversation of the ancestors, 5.6.6). Pliny entrenches his leisure activities in the traditions of the past, moving beyond the chaotic reign of Domitian and connecting himself more deeply to the founding principles of Rome. He links his private arena to the active and general practice of honoring and accessing the ancestors. Pliny uses superlative and active verbs to make clear that his land is lush from the past up until his own day- the land brings forward the more ancient uses and bestows these traditions upon the current dwellers. In this perfect spot the soil is rich, the oxen are the biggest, the mountains are high, all sorts of animals for the purpose of hunting roam the land, the streams run endlessly, and the rows of vineyards are unbroken. Pliny describes this ancient land as ideal for human use, specifically the use of the aristocracy, and he does this all without inserting himself as character or exploiter of this land.165 The

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165 Eleanor Winsor Leach, 'Otium as Luxuria’: Economy of Status in the Younger Pliny’s Letters,” Arethusa 36, no. 2 (2003): 156. Leach states that Pliny the Younger, like his uncle Pliny the Elder, attempts to make otium a sign of civic and social status. Public
land exists perfectly from times of the ancestors with all the tools to be fruitful. Every part of nature described is in service of harmoniously making the land useful for human production.\textsuperscript{166} Pliny does not write humans into the equation or describe himself going out into the fields; rather, he focuses on the land’s propensity to fill specific needs of the Roman elite. There is game to hunt as a form of entertainment, there is soil to be cultivated, and there are endless grapes for wine.

The utopian nature of the quality of land starts with the ancestors and continues to flow into Pliny’s contemporary time—this is at the root of the land’s proclivity for agricultural production. Pliny, as the statesman, reminds Apollinaris that this land is always used for the purpose of bettering Rome.\textsuperscript{167} Pliny links this leisure time at the Tuscan Villa with service to the state. The waters that run around his villa ultimately flow into the Tiber and the produce of the land is transported into Rome during the winter and spring. This is consistent with the amphora found by Braconi and Uroz at the site. Although Pliny is engaging with the personal act of spending time at his villa and writing this letter, the larger action of maintaining his relationship with an ancient land connects him back to the city of Rome, back to his obligations to the Empire.

\textsuperscript{166} Mratschek 2018, 223, suggests that Pliny’s section on the oxen ploughing the land and the flowers springing up from the well watered land at the villa harken back to Pliny the Elder’s description of the Tuscan soil (\textit{Natural history} 18.181).

\textsuperscript{167} C.L. Whitton, “Pliny, Epistles 8.14: Senate, Slavery and the Agricola,” \textit{The Journal of Roman Studies} 100 (2010): 139. Whitton concludes his argument that Pliny’s \textit{Episultae} create him image as a writer, lawyer, politician, and poet. In this way the combination of his interests create him into the ideal Trajanic senator, one who serves the state throughout every facet of his life.
Within his time of *otium, negotium* and the Tiber are nevertheless on his mind and he is careful to make sure that his reader understands this.

After establishing the land’s ancient ties to production for Rome, Pliny addresses the reader and invites him to embark on a journey through the land. The reader is called into the narrative: he was already expecting to receive pleasure by reading the letter but now he will take great delight in figuratively walking inside of the land through Pliny’s eyes. Pliny seizes control of the narrative by controlling the viewer’s experience as a part of a performative element. The implication is that Pliny is presenting himself as the ‘good’ aristocrat, the one to model behaviors after. Apollinaris, and the broader readers, can see through Pliny’s eyes and insert themselves into the physical space described. Pliny reveals what he values in the space of his villa and therefore what others should value in this space.

In his volume on *The Villas of Pliny*, Pierre du Prey argues that there are four tenets of the architectural elements in Pliny’s villas and these four elements come to describe the modern conception of the Plinian villa. First is the ability to see and be seen. The Tuscan villa is on the slope of a hill, visible to passersby. The villa is placed there to benefit from the favorable breezes and the views of the surrounding hills. It is remote yet accessible. Second and third, since they are

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168 Mratschek 2018, 223, considers Apollinarus’s ability to walk into the narrative and gaze down on the landscape within a bird’s-eye view. Myer 2005, 105, writes, “the pursuit of leisure therefore becomes in the empire a powerful mode of aristocratic self-definition.” Further, in Pangeryics 82.9 Pliny the Younger writes “*otio prodimur*” (by leisure we are revealed).

170 Whitton 2010, 120, explores the elements that make Pliny an ideal example of the Roman statesman.

intrinsically bound, is the room to breathe coupled with openness and movement. Pliny only describes other humans- the older men in Tuscany- when it is useful to his utopian narrative. Similarly, the airs are beneficial to his health. Finally, the house and the garden are interdependent. The livable portion of the Tuscan villa exists within a dependent relationship to the quality of the land and what is planted in the land.\textsuperscript{172}

While du Prey's architectural analysis of Pliny's Tuscan space is accurate, he fails to consider the villa as a rhetorical device, which Pliny wields as a mechanism for his self-fashioning. Through his performance of acting in nature as a Roman elite should, he begins to talk about the more specific situation of his own villa in Tuscany. His reader is now standing on the low slopes of a hill, high enough to get a good view of the surrounding area, at the entrance and garden area of the villa. And here, after his reader understands the composition of the land, Pliny can now show the reader how to view the land from the inside. Rather, nature is always viewed from portals, is shaped according to the whims of the owner, and is used as an inspiration for decoration.\textsuperscript{173} The Tuscan landscape is always in the distance. The natural world is seen through the eyes of the human, for the use of the human, and for the control of the human. The rooms in the home engage in a dialogue with nature: "A capite porticus triclinium excurrit; valvis xystum desinentem et protinus pratum multumque

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\textsuperscript{172} Du Prey 1994, devotes an entire chapter in \textit{The Villas of Pliny} to detailing what he considers to be the four cardinal points of a Plinian villa.

\textsuperscript{173} Myers 2005, 105, discusses the separate realms in which the human world is divided from the natural world. The arts and nature have been in competition with each other-through landscape design and through viewing the natural world through portals, the human arts can memorialize themselves and win this competition.
ruris videt” (from the head of the porticus, projects a triclinium; it looks at the end of a shaded colonnade through folding doors and straight on to the large plain of the country, 5.6.19). Nature is seen through man’s created architecture — the doors and the rooms — and is placed under the dominance of man. Nature is still expansive, but it is expansive through the lens of man. As seen through the portal, nature is under the control of man but it still dictates Pliny’s descriptions of the structure. Pliny’s description of the architecture continues in this manner: nature acts as a tool for the primary use of the villa, as trees shade rooms, branches are interspersed with decorative elements, and the sound of the flow of water in fountains makes the overall experience more pleasant. Seeing the Apennines and the Tuscan mountains from his perch, Pliny is aware of the balanced relationship between the power of nature and the power he has to use nature as a tool. Pliny never writes about exploiting or destroying nature. His aim is to perfect nature within the understandable human realm.

In one of the few times that Pliny slips into describing the decorative elements in his villa—lest he be accused of engaging in luxuria—he describes decoration in reflection of nature. He describes one bedroom and writes: “marmore excultum podio tenus, nec cedit gratiae marmoris ramos insidentesque rami aves imitata pictura” (improved with marble as far as the balcony, and it does not give up attractiveness, there is a picture done in marble of a tree with birds sitting on the branches, 5.6.22). He extends images of nature into his created artificial world.

174 Myers 2005, 103, addresses displays of wealth that can overcome negative connotations of luxuria.
The description of the riding ground, his *circus*, is especially interesting as Pliny combines descriptive and design techniques regarding things that are natural and things that are made. He describes an open curved course—a course that was clearly created by man—within similar natural terminology discussed above: the course is shaded by trees, warmed by the glow of the sun, and a place where small flowers can grow freely. Nature plays staccato with the man-made elements (5.6.35-36):

> Alibi pratulum, alibi ipsa buxus intervenit in formas mille descripta, litteras interdum, quae modo nomen domini dicunt modo artificis: alternis metulae surgunt, alternis inserta sunt poma, et in opere urbanissimo subita velut inlati ruris imitatio.

Elsewhere in the little meadow other box shrubs crop up, in the shapes of a thousand different markings, which sometimes form letters such as the name of the master or the name of the artist: here and there little cones rise up, alternating with apple trees having been introduced, and now unexpectedly in the midst of all this urban artificial work you come upon what seems like a real part of the country placed there.

Pliny controls the reader’s experience— or how he wants the reader to view him in relation to this race course—on multiple levels.\(^{175}\) The first is the most obvious: Pliny’s architecture is inherently natural. Natural elements are copied and then reproduced within the context of design. For example, decorative cones mimic the shape of apple trees and are placed on the same level of design as the apple trees and, together, these two elements intertwined create the aesthetic approach. Through this reference, Pliny distinguishes between ‘artifice’ and ‘real.’ The artificial elements - the cones- are described with specifically urban qualities. It seems like almost a relief for Pliny to discuss the apple trees, which bring him

\(^{175}\) Riggsby 1998, 87, writes on Pliny’s awareness that the public will evaluate his actions and motivations.
back to the country and, therefore, to the natural elements at his racing course. His attention is brought back to the countryside- to where, perhaps, he can find truth. Therefore, if this decorative metaphor is extended outwards, Pliny is trying to articulate that he can find realness in the country and that the city is a place of the unnatural. However, he still stresses the interplay between the city and the country, as the country is still a place that must be controlled by the human. Looking at a planted and precise piece of nature is what pleases him the most. The ideal vision of the countryside is seeing a created version of the natural world.\textsuperscript{176} Ultimately, this reminds the reader of the way that Pliny described seeing natural vistas through the windows of his home. Nature is simultaneously framed through the man-made and the man-made is framed through nature.

The discussion of the shrubbery shaped into either Pliny’s name or the gardener’s name brings the reader into the next layer within which this passage concerns itself. As with the apple trees and the cones, Pliny brings the quality of man-made creation into the quality of what is natural. He uses the language of nature to actually make the artifice- or the design of the space- legible.\textsuperscript{177} By means of the natural world, Pliny is able to put his mark on the space and call attention to the interconnected relationships between man, the impulse of man to subject nature to what is ordered, and the more wild side of nature.\textsuperscript{178}

\textsuperscript{176} Myers 2005, 105, considers the image of garden to be a metaphorical representation of poetry, following a Virgilian tradition. Landscape architecture can be, therefore, thought to represent Pliny’s own literary pursuits.

\textsuperscript{177} Chinn 2007, 274, states that when Pliny describes places, he focuses on vivid and present narrative. In this way, he combines the visual and the textual arts.

\textsuperscript{178} Myers 2007, 116, asserts that Pliny gains power over his landscape through artistry.
implication is that when the natural world enters the realm of the home, it is put into a controlled system and then claimed by the owner.

The next aspect that the image of carved shrubbery brings up is the relationship between ‘read’ elements and ‘seen’ elements. Pliny, as author, has taken the reader into a more visual sphere. The reader is called out in the second person to walk through the villa as if they are seeing it through Pliny’s eyes. Pliny is blurring the distinction between reading and seeing. The viewer, seeing the racing course, must now read the written element within their imagined space of Pliny’s villa—this space that Pliny has created for the reader. Pliny as writer is subtly claiming this written sphere and the visual sphere completely as his own.

Within this context of combining visual and written elements, Pliny is engaging in an ancient debate. Does writing about art or nature compare to seeing art? Can the arts—either written or decorative—represent nature in a real way? Pliny would hope that Apollinaris, upon reading and traveling through the imagined reality of the villa, would feel that he has seen the villa in the flesh and also has accessed an understanding of Pliny’s experience inside of the villa.¹⁷⁹

After taking Apollinaris on a visual tour of the villa shown through particular literary devices, Pliny ends the letter curiously and long-windedly. First, he apologizes for expending so much space on description and, through this tactic, his aim is to humble himself before the eyes of the reader. He writes:

¹⁷⁹ Chinn 2007, 266, continues to emphasize that the purpose of Pliny’s Epistulae concerning villas is an ekphrastic literary technique, rather than the attempt to write about a specific floor plan.
“vitassem iam dudum ne viderer argutior, nisi proposuissem omnes angulos tecum epistula circumire” (Now a little while ago I should have finished, lest I may seem too talkative, if I had not proposed to encircle you through every angle [of my house] with this letter. 5.6.41). Pliny admits that he has rambled. This is curious, considering that Pliny carefully framed the viewer’s experience and clearly took time to stylize the letter as a systematic representation of the features of his villa lifestyle. Although this letter is one of the longest letters in his collection, overall it is not that long or difficult to read.\footnote{Whitton 2010, 119, considers that the longer the Epistula was, the more important it was for Pliny.} In this sense, Pliny is defending himself against those that may claim that he is bragging about his wealth or letting himself be taken over by self-indulgent opulence (\textit{luxuria}). In this same passage, Pliny solidifies his goal. He equates his verbosity to the enormity of the task that he set out to complete, which was to place the eyes of the viewer into his home and the surrounding areas in order to bestow upon them the experience of the place. Just as it may take someone a long time to walk around the villa, so too it may take someone a long time to read about the villa. Therefore, the physical sensation of viewing the villa is reproduced through the written experience once again.\footnote{Mratschek 2018, 213, writes: “Pliny’s readers are intended to visualize the ‘aesthetics of existence’ (a term coined by Foucault 2005, no. 357: 904, referring to the status-appropriate patterns of behavior with particular reference to the lifestyles of antiquity) as lived by the elites of Italy” (213).}

Pliny is only humble enough to not be accused of participating in too much luxury and he still allows himself to engage with his wealth and show off his wealth as a proper elite Roman should. He writes: “Praeterea indulsi amori
meo; amo enim, quae maxima ex parte ipse incohavi aut incohata percolui”

(Meanwhile I have been indulging in my love for the place, for I love it, whatever I have worked on myself or whatever someone else has started and I have finished, 5.6.41). Pliny makes one of his final arguments for the practice of going to his villa and the practice of writing about the villa. He connects the process to work and industry. He is appealing to the Roman tendency to build well and to build to completion, putting their architectural stamp on the places that they encounter. It is extremely unlikely that Pliny actually built any part of his villa, had any voice in the design of the villa, tilled the land, or planted any seeds in the grounds. He is creating the illusion of himself as producer and therefore he is tying the ending of his letter back to the beginning: the villa is a place for production and for work.\(^{182}\) He is not strictly participating in his work as a Roman statesman in this section; rather, he is participating in the work to build a place physically and literally. Both inside of the letter and outside of the letter, both in the city and out of the city, Pliny is practicing a version of negotium. His conception of what he loves becomes intertwined with his drive to always be producing something, whether he is producing something in his private villa life or producing something in his public life in the city.\(^{183}\) Perhaps, Pliny did not have a private life that can fully be separated from his public life or his work. Instead, his private life could have been a further performance of his public life.

The reader can’t accuse him of loafing about in the countryside when he has

\(^{182}\) Leach 2003, 161, considers that Pliny's motivation for spending time in the Tuscany is self-improvement and production. His past-times include studying and producing work. Here, otium and negotium are intrinsically bound.
carefully primed them to conflate his villa with images of work that demand to be written about in the way that he has written about them.

And now, Pliny readies himself to make his most bold- but also craftily modest- statement yet.\footnote{Whitton 2010, 121, writes on Pliny’s inclinations towards creating a modest image of himself.} He enters into a discussion about the act of his writing and talks about his subject matter in relation to the techniques that he has used. He writes, “Vides quot versibus Homerus, quot Vergilius arma hic Aeneae Achillis ille describat; brevis tamen uterque est quia facit quod instituit. Vides ut Aratus minutissima etiam sidera consectetur et colligat” (You see how long Homer was describing the armor of Achilles in verse, how long Vergil was describing the armor of Aeneas. Nevertheless both of them are short because the author establishes what he set out to complete. You see how Aratus hunts and collects the smallest stars; however he keeps his limit in mind, 5.6.43). In his essay on techniques of ekphrasis in Pliny’s letter to Apollinarus, Chinn considers this passage effectively through the more literary lens. Pliny latches onto the idea of epic shields as a way to catalogue the type of work that he was creating. If his letter belongs to a genre or has a comparison, perhaps it can be considered within the ekphrasitic tradition of describing shields. While Homer and Vergil both briefly wrote about the shields of epic heroes, they both attempted to conquer the visual arts with the written word.\footnote{Ibid. 133 provides more on Pliny’s Vergilian inspirations throughout the Epistulae, such as in Epistula 7.2 and 9.14.} Their goal was to place viewing and reading in the same category in order to allow the reader to encounter the physical presence of the description. In the same way, Pliny has led the eyes of
Apollinaris around the villa in a physical and tactile way. This could perhaps be read as hubris: is Pliny comparing his writing to the epic traditions? Is he claiming that his villa is equal to the scale and importance of epic shields? Or is he merely using known epic examples of ekphrasis to excuse himself for writing a lengthy account of the physical space? Most likely Pliny attempts to justify the length but the effect is slightly erroneous for the reader, who is left with questions about whether or not Pliny is trying to enter his own letter into the cannon of highly popular works like Homer, Vergil, and Aratus. Regardless of Pliny's potentially perceived boldness, he does claim to understand his limits and he knows where to stop.

Finally, at the very end of the letter Pliny brings in his own much more personal argument for the merits of the Tuscan villa: the boundaries of his own *otium*. This passage, the last passage of the letter, is worth quoting in full (5.6.45-46):

Nam super illa quae rettuli, altius ibi otium et pinguius eoque securius: nulla necessitas togae, nemo accersitor ex proximo, placida omnia et quiescentia, quod ipsum salubritati regionis ut purius caelum, ut aer liquidior accredit. Ibi animo, ibi corpore maxime valeo. Nam studiis animum, venatu corpus exercceo... Di modo in posterum hoc mihi gaudium, hanc gloriam loco servent! Vale.

For above that which I have already mentioned, here my leisure time is more fertile and more untroubled than anywhere else: no toga is necessary, no client from nearby calls, everything is peaceful and quiet, which adds to the healthfulness of the area and the purity of the sky, as the air is more clear. Here the mind and the body are most strong. For I exercise the mind with studying and I exercise the body with hunting... May the gods watch over my glory and this delightful place into eternity! Farewell.

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186 Virgil's *Aeneid* 8.617-731, Homer's *Iliad* 18.478-608, Aratus' *Diosemeia*
Pliny values this space for giving him a place away from the specific expectations for the Roman statesman. In Tuscany he is not only at leisure, he is at the best type of leisure. And, as similarly to earlier in the letter, not falling into the trappings of *luxuria* is important to Pliny. Connecting his language to agricultural cultivation, he stresses that, like crops can be grown in the country, his mind and body can be grown in the country.  

187 Partially through the reliance on language of the countryside, the differences between city and country are emphasized and delineated. At the villa he is not constrained by the rules and regulations of the city, which he must be complicit in for the success of his career. He doesn’t need to worry about donning his toga or constantly having to be aware of his clients, who are necessary for his political success. He can be free to put his mind towards other pursuits and implies that this freeness will help him be of full service at his senatorial job upon his return to the city.  

188 By saying that he spends time studying and hunting, the reader can clearly understand that he is still being active and of service although he is at rest. The pursuits of studying and hunting are inherently linked to stately affairs: Pliny’s knowledge and aptitude of body – even the aptitude of his body to restrain and overpower animals and nature- ultimately serve his overall image. He is learned, he is controlling, and he is never truly off the clock. Pliny paints an image of himself in the country that aims to tie himself to an overall created image of the ideal elite Roman. Then, he brings the letter full circle, referencing Apollinaris’ original

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187 Riggsby 1998, 85-86, considers that Pliny’s effort in leisure is dedicated to ensuring the cultivation of his mind and body, and that the mind and the body are in harmony. This kind of mind-body connection can only be possible in a more rural setting.

188 Leach 2003, 156, on *otium* as a sign of civic and social status.
concern about the quality of air. Pliny writes as if the healthful nature of the land is, perhaps, a result of the peace in mind and body that he gains from the country. Because his complete person is healthy in every aspect, the land, air, and sky must also be clear and peaceful. The land reflects Pliny’s internal life. Pliny’s final wish is for a healthy peace, where his internal world and external world combine. He connects his own glory to the glory of the villa as another move to coalesce his activities in the villa with his activities in the city: whether he is in Rome or away, his activities involve seeking glory for himself and for the greater Rome. Into eternity, his Tuscan villa is a perfect place to cultivate himself.

**EPISTULA 9.36 ON PLINY THE YOUNGER’S TUSCAN VILLA**

*Epistula* 5.6, the letter just discussed, is one of three letters that Pliny dedicates to the Tuscan Villa. He wrote two others to Fuscus about the space. In *Epistula* 9.36, Pliny further elaborates on what he does when he is at the villa. He writes this letter to Fuscus, a Roman lawyer, senator, and consul in 118 who was in Pliny’s close circle of elite and intellectual friends. Pliny wrote three letters to Fuscus and mentions him in three other letters. Similarly to *Epistula* 5.6, Pliny focuses on the nature of his villa production and how he conducts himself within the space. However, rather than controlling and leading the eyes of the reader through the villa, Pliny writes about the nature of his own eyes at

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189 Pliny *Epistulae* 7.9, 9.36, 9.40, 6.11, 6.26, 10.87
the villa.\textsuperscript{190} Pliny describes how he writes, thinks, and sees in the country at the Tuscan Villa. He keeps his windows closed in the morning and waits for the words to form in the eyes of his mind. He writes (9.36.1):

\begin{quote}
Clausae fenestrae manent; mire enim silentio et tenebris ab iis quae avocant abductus et liber et mihi relictus, non oculos animo sed animum oculis sequor... cogito, si quid in manibus, cogito ad verbum scribenti emendantique similis, nunc pauciora nunc plura, ut vel difficile vel facile componi tenerive potuerunt.
\end{quote}

The windows remain closed; for it is marvelous, when it is silent and dark and I am taken away from distraction and left free for myself, the mind isn’t led by the eyes but the eyes are led by the mind. I think, if I have anything in hand, I think to write down words and to correct similar things, now a few things now many things, so that either they will be able to make up more difficult matters or to hold more simple matters.

Although he lays in the dark still in bed and although he is not physically seeing the space of the country around him, Pliny’s mind and experience is still bound to the location of being in the country. He is able to take moments to himself to access his thoughts before opening his home to his clients like he would be obligated to in Rome. Without the sounds and images of the city, Pliny begins the process of getting closer to his own mind. He is able to see and trust the world clearly, without filters or false images dictating his thought pattern.\textsuperscript{191} However here, like in letter 5.6, he is connecting the fruitfulness of the countryside directly back to fruitfulness in the city. The word that he is undertaking is an editing process- a process that his job in Rome demands- within the comforts of

\textsuperscript{190} Chinn 2007, 223, describes the practice of merging visual and descriptive acts into a single perceptive experience for the reader. This allows the reader to be a present character within the narrative structure or description of a place.

\textsuperscript{191} Vickers 1990, 33, elaborates more on \textit{otium} as a part of Epicurean belief benefitting the mind. However, the Stoics would hold that \textit{otium} leads directly to degradation of the mind. Vickers holds that \textit{otium} is positive when connected to the wise man, or the man who is productive.
his bed and the comforts of the country. He completes his public duty within his private realm. Pliny’s powerful repetition of ‘cogito,’ his double infinitives, and his use of dual phrasing within his beautiful double synchysis (A-B-A-B word order) separated only by the brief ‘ut’ re-enforce the balanced life that Pliny is experiencing. His mind rests in harmony with his surroundings and, due to this internal peace of mind that he is accessing he is able to direct his mind more appropriately than he would be able to do with distraction. He celebrates his mind in equilibrium. His careful command over the Latin construction and presentation of himself as a free subject acts simply to confirm his point: at the villa he is in control of himself, his mind, and his writing.

After Pliny’s solitary meditation, he goes out for the day seemingly without plans. He rides in his chariot, hunts, naps, walks, reads, practices his speeches, exercises, bathes, converses with his wife, might perhaps read or listen to music with his guests, and then converse with his friends. This day in the life on the Tuscan villa that Pliny describes is distinctly active. He engages in appropriate equestrian activities that would be apt for the city. He dedicates no time to elaborating upon the luxuries, architecture, or arts, which makeup his villa. Rather, he depicts himself as a man of movement and motion and defines himself as a good aristocrat. His days, although dictated by his whims, seem to actually be scheduled and rigid. Therefore, his whims actually coincide with scheduled activity in service of his duties in Rome. He engages in activities

192 Hannu Riikonen, ”The Attitude of Roman Poets and Orators to the Countryside as a Place for Creative Work,” Acta Philologica Fennica (1976): 84. Riikonen states that a balances and considerate life in the country can becomes a mechanism for creativity.
associated with pleasure, such as hunting and taking long walks, but the state is always on his mind. In fact, he carries a wax tablet with him during his pleasure trips, and uses these walks and journeys to practice his writing and speech giving. There is no space left to criticize Pliny for indulging without cares or abandoning the rigors of his duties: the happenings in his private sector mirror those in his public sector, just without the added distractions or extraneous obligations. Within this context, his villa is an even better place to carry out negotium even though he is not in the city. Perhaps, his real duties and his best works are brought forth from the country, where he is not distracted and where his mind can access its true form.

At the ending of Epistula 9.36, Pliny brilliantly touches on the aspects of production and cultivation similarly to Epistula 5.6. He writes, "Venor aliquando, sed non sine pugillaribus, ut quamvis nihil ceperrim non nihil referam. Datur et colonis, ut videtur ipsis, non statis temporis, quorum mihi agrestes querelae litteras nostras et haec urbana opera commendant" (Sometimes I hunt, but not without writing tablets, so that if I don’t capture anything I won’t bring back nothing. And I give time to the farmers, although they think it is not enough time, for me their peasant-like complaints add freshness to my letters and to my work in the city, 9.36.6). Pliny effortlessly combines his duties as a countryman with his leisure time, as if one cannot exist without the other. Like in his previous

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193 McEwen 1990, 16-17 considers the wax tablets to be symbols for memory. Her argument is based on the fact that writing things down on wax tablets was a form of memorization for oratory. If Pliny’s description of his villa is partially meant to be an exercise of the memory palace technique, previously discussed, then these wax tablets, which are a physical object that symbolize memory, the places to be remembered are the places for memory to be kept.
lines, work is carefully balanced with leisure and the ways that he chooses to spend his time are strictly meant to be productive in some sense, whether the produce is game that he caught on his lands or writing that he has accomplished in his fields. The time that he spends doing any task does not take away from this level of productiveness. Even spending time with those under his rank, like the farmers that make requests of him, creates fodder for Pliny. He is self-aware of his task in publishing the Epistulae as a whole and takes source matter from his encounters even if they are unwarranted. These encounters also aid in his urban business, as he must consider the state of the countryside within his governmental affairs in the city. Therefore, Pliny perhaps never fully allows himself to engage in a strictly private space. His private space within his leisure time dictates his public space and vice-versa, as both city time and country time support each other and are in some ways dependent on each other. Pliny’s actions in Rome allow him to escape to the country and the strengthening of mind that Pliny is able to accomplish in the country allows him to perform his stately duties to a greater extent.

On the surface, Pliny’s descriptions of the Tuscan villa seem simple and almost didactic, as he mixes together his villa experience and daily activities while also describing physical landscape and the architectural makeup of the space. However, digging past the perceived simplicity of this letter, the reader is

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194 Vickers 1990, 9, considers Cicero’s use of the word *otium*. Here, Cicero practiced *otium cum dignitate* (leisure with honor). He considers *otium*, therefore, to be an activity that is good for the city of Rome.
195 Riggsby 1998, 83, considers Pliny’s conceptions of private and public life to be intrinsically blended.
left with an image of Pliny that Pliny himself fashioned through the means of describing and defining his leisure time. For Pliny, the villa is a tool used to capitalize on his relationship with his addressees in order to create a final image of himself. He is humble but in conversation with his elite-ness, he is at rest but always and consistently at work, he is alone yet connected with the ancestors and his readership through the land, he controls and leaves his human mark on the natural world while also speaking to its untouched beauty, he engages in literary traditions and uses the villa as a tool to practice his writing. The image that he creates of himself may sometimes seem to be contradictory or perhaps specious, but this multifaceted and shifting quality to his character allows him to simultaneously engage with the key aspects of Romanitas while continuing to ensure that he has literarily blocked the path of those that could accuse him on the grounds of luxuria.

**PLINY THE YOUNGER’S LAURENTINE VILLA**

Pliny the Younger’s Laurentine Villa was located near Ostia, about 20 miles west of Rome. This villa is considered to be a villa maritima, a coastal villa. Archaeologists have attempted to locate Pliny’s Laurentine Villa for many years. Their results are mostly speculative. Most likely, the remains of his villa have been swept away by seaside erosion. It is helpful to once again consider the fictive drawings of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, who produced a floor plan (fig. 14)

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196 Most recently, Ricotti, digging from 1983-1985, claims that the site known as the Villa Magna, or delle Grotte di Piastra, is Pliny’s Laurentine Villa. However, her claim cannot be proved. Regardless, her excavation and others in the area point towards the fact that the shoreline near Ostia was littered with maritime villas.
and landscape drawing (fig. 15) of the villa, working from the Pliny’s writings alone. His floor plan focuses on the beauty, pleasure, and order of the space: waves lap at the edges of the cliff, the gardens are manicured, and the space appears to be quite large. There is no delineation of a fishpond or other means of production. His landscape drawing of the villa is similar. A contemplative, orderly, calm space is depicted. The natural world and the waves don’t threaten the villa. Instead, the surface of the water is flat and the threats of nature are controlled.

In order to avoid attacks for immoral behavior, while writing about his Laurentine Villa, Pliny must strike a specific balance. On one hand, he must be careful not to exalt his wealth or luxurious practices too much for fear of being called amoral or too ostentatious while also showing that he is, in fact, wealthy and deserving of a seaside villa. On the other hand, he must appear to be productive and engage in some type of work that affects his city life. Even so, he must establish his wealth and power in a way that does not have a specifically negative effect. Therefore, Pliny’s writings about the Laurentine Villa must be specifically formulated in order for him to portray an image of himself that cannot be accused. Through writing about his villa, he must create his own narrative of the villa maritima- one that reflects his pursuit of relaxation while also maintains his relationship to the city and his political career.
**EPISTULA 1.9 ON PLINY THE YOUNGER’S LAURENTINE VILLA**

The first letter in the *Epistulae* that addresses Pliny’s villas appears in book one (*Epistula 1.9*). This letter is doesn’t describe physical elements at Pliny’s Laurentine villa, but it does address his lifestyle choices and creates a methodology for his readers, who may be reading the entire *Epistulae*, about how to consider the time he spends at his villas. Therefore, although this letter is brief, Pliny begins to create the world of the villa and define the rules of his *otium*. This letter is addressed to Minicius Fundanus, who was most likely a praetorian senator at the time.¹⁹⁷ Pliny wrote other *Epistulae* to him and others that mentioned him, which mostly discussed philosophy and public life in Rome.¹⁹⁸ Here, Pliny is writing to a Roman elite distinctly familiar with the public political circuit in Rome.¹⁹⁹ He is speaking to a peer who was likely to have experienced the same type of daily life in the city that Pliny experienced.

Pliny begins the letter by writing about the monotonous tasks that they, as politicians and patrons, must carry out everyday in the city. He compares the tedium of city life with that of life at the Laurentine and writes: “Si cotidie fecisse te reputes, inania videntur, multo magis cum secesseris. Tunc enim subit recordatio: ’Quot dies quam frigidis rebus absumpsil! Quod evenit mihi, postquam in Laurentino meo aut lego aliquid aut scribo aut etiam corpori vaco, cuius fulturis animus sustinetur” (If you remember that you do the same thing

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¹⁹⁸ Plin. *Epistulae* 4.15, 5.16, 7.6
¹⁹⁹ For more on the daily rounds of public life in Rome and the daily schedule for politicians, see Carcopino’s 1936, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome.*
daily, empty spaces appear especially when you have gone away from many activities [in the city]. For then a recollection comes: ‘How many days I have spend diminished with chilling things!’ That is what comes forth for me, when in my Laurentine when I read something, or write something, or even rest my body, which is sustained by the mind with pillars, 1.9.3). First, he asks Fundanus to reflect on his own life by using himself as the model. Because Pliny and Fundanus do the same things when they are in the city, Pliny maps his own experience participating in the political rounds onto Fundanus’s experience. Pliny’s private feelings about the tasks of the Roman statesman now become public and universally felt by those that participate in the same tasks. Pliny, now that that he has forced Fundanus into holding his belief that business life in Rome is tedious, is now able to dictate what the country life actually holds for him. As discussed previously, this is a tactic that Pliny will continue to use in later letters about villas. He artfully opens a space for the reader to willingly accept his opinions and hold them as truths, even if these opinions are personal. Pliny begins his journey towards creating his own definition of *otium*. For him, this leisure time involves distinct scholarly activity and preparations for when he does enter back into the political sphere in the city.\(^{200}\) A chance to rest and to think will ultimately aid him when he travels back to Rome. Like his mind is

\(^{200}\) Riggsby 1998, 75-77, considers that Pliny’s theory of self and his interaction with the world was dictated by and constructed under the gaze of the community (in this case the community in the city). Pliny’s life was given value through public reception, so it was never a consideration for Pliny to remain in the countryside and experience a life separate from civic duty.
connected to supporting his body, his time spent outside of the city is connected
to supporting his mind.\textsuperscript{201}

Pliny continues to briefly explore the solitude that allows him to write
and read freely. Here, he is not fearful, angry, or stressed by clients that demand
time from him. Instead, he is at rest. He writes, "O rectam sinceramque vitam! O
dulce otium honestumque ac paene omni negotio pulchrius! O mare, o litus,
verum secretumque μουσείον, quam multa invenitis, quam multa dictatis!" (Oh
it’s an upright and sincere life! Oh leisure is sweet and virtuous and nearly as
beautiful as all of the duties in the city! Oh sea, oh shore, Muses truthful and
secret, who come to me earnestly, who dictate many things for me! 1.9.6). While
Pliny clearly revels in the joy of the landscape and the villa around him, he now
brings in a succinct discussion of character and work into his writing. He creates
word associations for the reader that they will encounter later on if reading the
\textit{Epistulae} as a published work. The type of life that he seeks in at the Laurentine
falls carefully into the parameters of what Pliny’s values should be as a man in
his position. Rather than praising opulence and idleness, he finds honesty and
clarity at the villa.\textsuperscript{202} Careful not hold too many negative sentiments about city
duties, he employs a comparative in order to hold both city life and villa life
within a positive respect. Pliny still characterizes himself as someone who
participates in Roman politics, he just uses time in the country in order to do his

\textsuperscript{201} Juvenal writes in \textit{Satire} 10.356 ‘mens sana in corpore sano’ (a sane mind, a sane
body). This phrase generally refers to the belief that health in mind and health in body
are intrinsically related. For example, one that exercises regularly will be mentally and
psychologically well.

\textsuperscript{202} Myers 2005, 114, writes that "Pliny’s landscape reflects the virtues of self-
sufficiency, temperateness, and traditional rural values."
work more effectively and come back to the city well rested and ready. He classifies this time at the Laurentine as being almost mythological; he is able to access a deeper relationship with the Muses and is inspired.

Pliny has now set forth general concepts through which a reader should regard the time that Pliny spends at his villas. While he is physically and purposefully removing himself from duties in the city, these duties are not far from his mind. In fact, time he spends resting, reading, and writing, re-enforce and help him complete his *negotium*. The countryside is a place where he can access the beauty and the forces larger than himself, which strengthen his mind and body. Pliny purposefully pushes against the terms of laziness and extravagance that can be associated with *otium*, instead favoring industry and, here specifically, not mentioning luxurious items or activities of any kind. Lastly, he begins to establish his rhetorical method, as he questions the reader and compels them to think in the way that he does.

**EPISTULA 2.17 ON PLINY THE YOUNGER’S LAURENTINE VILLA**

In *Epistula* 2.17, Pliny addresses his letter to Gallus and begins a similar task to that discussed before. He describes his Laurentine villa. More so than the Tuscan Villa, Pliny’s description of the Laurentine in this letter has inspired more potential reconstructions. This is due to the fact that this letter focuses more closely on the building and the connections between views in the villa while the letters on the Tuscan Villa focus more heavily on location, grounds, and gardens. However, although this letter seems, at first read, to be a simple rattling off of
rooms and porticos, Pliny has employed the same techniques of self-fashioning that can be found in his descriptive letter on the Tuscan Villa. In reading *Epistula* 2.17, one must consider what Pliny leaves out with equal importance as one must consider what he writes in. Namely, Pliny devotes no words to describing the decoration or arts within his villa even though it can most likely be assumed that the villa was decorated with the same frescos, mosaics, manicured gardens, and water features that the Tuscan Villa was adorned with. The rooms are empty—Pliny instead focuses on the simplicity and frugality of the space. He controls the reader’s experience of imagining him inside the Laurentine Villa by connecting himself to a tradition of humble and plain living. Here like before, Pliny is presenting himself within the modest, unpretentious context of *Romanitas* and protecting himself from being accused of participating in amoral opulent activities that are closely associated with *villae maritimae*.

In 2.17 Pliny focuses on the interplay between the physical man-built structures of the villa versus dangers that can exist within natural hazards that have the power to threaten his home. He carefully constructs nature as an

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203 Myers 2005, 107, 116, states that Pliny lack of ornamental artistic description deprives the sites of the expected associative connections the readers would have held when considering these villas. Rather, Pliny favors discussing the architecture and the landscape at the Laurentine.

204 McEwen 1995, 20, considers the empty rooms to represent the ‘memory palace’ technique previously discussed. She writes, “The Laurentine… a series of empty places, whose relative position in an ordered sequence, and whose lighting, orientation, and views Pliny takes considerable pains to make as absolutely specific as possible. At the Laurentine, the architecture of a series of clearly defined memory loci, ideal because their owner is so familiar with them, was lodged in memory through writing.”

205 Riggsby 1988, 77, writes that virtue for Pliny was constructed through the eyes of his community and his peers.

206 Du Prey 1994, 12, speculates that Pliny downplayed the size of the Laurentine villa.
element to be controlled by man and, more specifically, an element that his villa is strong enough to overcome.\textsuperscript{207} He controls nature by controlling the way his reader is able to see nature, which is always through the lens of a built window or portal within the safety of the villa. Pliny also presents his vision of an intrinsic combination between city life and country life.\textsuperscript{208} He cannot view one without the other and these two aspects of where he spends his time aren’t as separate as they seem: visions of the city are seen through looking out of his country windows. Therefore, Pliny is able to purposefully and artfully fashion himself through his description of the Laurentine Villa as a humble, simple man who can also exert a special level of control over the natural world. He is powerful yet modest; images of the authority he takes over the natural world and how he allows the reader to see the natural world are subtle but omnipresent. Overall in \textit{Epistula} 2.17, Pliny’s description of his villa is a stand in for his description of himself. As he presents his villa as a place between modesty and luxury and a place in control of but respectful of natural elements, he forges himself as embodying these ideals as well. His aim throughout the letter is to prime his reader towards accepting him as the type of Roman that he wants himself to be seen as.

Pliny sets up this letter in a similar fashion to that of \textit{Epistula} 5.6. It begins as a defense, an answer to a question that his addressee had about why Pliny spends time at the Laurentine. Because he is answering this question, Pliny

\textsuperscript{207} Myers 2005, 117, considers that Pliny values both the views of nature that his has oriented his villa towards, but also the protection from the elements that the villa provides.

\textsuperscript{208} Leach 2003, 156.
protects himself from begin accused of talking narcissistically about his land holdings and developments. Pliny begins the letter by writing, “Miraris cur me Laurentinum vel (si ita mavis), Laurens meum tanto opera delectet; desines mirari, cum cognoveris gratiam villae, opportunitatem loci, litoris spatium” (Indeed you are surprised at my pleasure in my Laurentine Villa, or if you prefer, my Laurens with its so great structure; but you will stop to wonder about it when you become acquainted with the favorability of the villa, the advantageous location, and the space near the shore, 2.17.1). Pliny consciously removes himself as subject. Instead, he creates Gallus as the wonderer, the one seeking answers. The descriptions that Pliny is about to present center around fulfilling this promise to Gallus, which involves Gallus being compelled to a point of admiration. Pliny presents the villa and the space of the villa as one unit. The structure of the villa, the land that the villa is located on, and the beauty of the shoreline are conflated into one viewing experience. He wants to ensure that the reader understands the essential relationship between what is built and what is natural: it is the lands around the villa that exalt the villa, not Pliny himself. However, Pliny’s presented mock-modesty can be challenged within the text itself. He is sure that his writing strategy and his power of literary

209 Du Prey 1994, 14, further elaborates on Pliny’s strategy of removing himself as a character and removing a dimension of human animation in the space.
210 Myers 2005, 117, writes “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” (117). In this sense, the conflation into a single viewing experience can represent a singular and complete sense of Pliny’s character.
211 McEwen 1995, 11, states that, despite Pliny’s efforts to potentially appear modest, his life’s goal was to achieve fame in his life and after his death.
description are enough to prove to Gallus that the villa is pleasurable and that the villa will be considered in the way that Pliny requires it to be considered.

After briefly describing how to get to the villa from Rome- the journey is only about seventeen miles and can be completed after a day of work in the city- Pliny enters into a section that addresses key issues regarding the relationships between framing nature, controlling nature, and appreciating nature, all within the context of Pliny’s supposed frugality. The lines are worth quoting in full (2.17.3-5):

Villa usibus capax, non sumptuosa tutela. Cuius in prima parte atrium frugi, nec tamen sordidum; deinde porticus in D litterae similitudinem circumactae, quibus parvola sed festiva area includitur. Egregium hac adversus tempestatibus receptaculum; nam specularibus ac multo magis imminetibus rectis muniuntur. Est contra medias cavaedium hilare, mox triclinium satis pulchrum, quod in litus excurrit ac si quando Africo mare impulsum est, fractis iam et novissimis fluctibus leviter alluitur. Undique valvas aut fenestras non minores valvis habet atque ita a lateribus a fronte quasi tria maria prospectat; a tergo cavaedium porticum aream porticum rursus, mox atrium silvas et longinquos respicit montes.

The villa is large enough for its use and not too sumptuous for its upkeep. In the first part of the atrium, it is modest, however not mean; next there is a porticus shaped like a letter D turned around, which encloses a small but excellent area. This porticus give a place of refuge against harsh weather; for the porticus is protected to a greater extent by windows and many overhanging eaves. Facing from the middle there is a cheerful inner court, soon there is a beautiful enough dining room, which extends into the shore and also if at any time the south-west wind drives on, now as the new waves break, they are washed away lightly. From every side the room either has double doors or not and there are small windows with openings and thus, from the sides and the front, the atrium gazes out upon a view as if it were three seas. From the back the atrium gazes out upon the inner court and the porticus and the open space of the other porticus, soon the atrium gazes out at the woods and the far-out mountains beyond.
Pliny’s rhetorical strategy is concerned with maintaining the correct balance of things, both natural and man-made, in Laurentum. The villa falls somewhere perfectly between appropriateness and lavishness. While Pliny spends time ensuring that the reader knows that his villa is large, he qualifies this largeness by saying that every element within the space serves a purpose to the master or to the running of the villa.\textsuperscript{212} However, even though this statement seems specific, it is left intentionally vague. It is unclear what exactly the uses are that the villa fulfills or to what extent they are fulfilled. While Pliny answers this by saying that he is able to maintain the villa, he doesn’t discuss the exact resources that are used to keep the villa in shape. In fact, later in the passage Pliny touches upon the slave quarters that he has at the villa, which exist as a symbol of his wealth and the greater efforts involved in maintaining the villa.\textsuperscript{213} It is left unclear what Pliny considers to be too opulent for upkeep based on the fact that scales of resources are not discussed. Pliny dances around defining the exact size of the villa and what it means to be within the parameters that he sets forth. By removing exact symbols of work and scale, Pliny creates a purposefully hazy vision of the largeness of the space in order to protect himself from being accused of showing off his wealth while also ensuring that his readers know that

\textsuperscript{212} Hales 2003, 45. Hales considers that mixing reality and illusion together create the image of the master and the home as one single unit.

\textsuperscript{213} Du Prey 1994, 13, more specifically addresses signs of labor and slave quarters at Pliny’s Laurentine. He considers that Pliny, usually writing to citizen men of a similar status to him, would not have needed to explain the subject of staffing the villa. Perhaps he would have considered this letter an inappropriate place to write about his slaves to his addressee.
a space of some size and importance exists.\textsuperscript{214} Therefore, Pliny shows himself using his resources in an appropriate manner for his status as a Roman elite: he self-consciously tries to paint himself as a man who exists in between humility and using his advantages.

Pliny continues this trend of placing his villa between opaque parameters as he begins to describe the more specific structural elements of the space. The atrium is defined as ‘frugi’ and not ‘sordidum.’ Again, he refuses to be exact about what the reader is meant to take away here. Pliny creates the image of specificity by loosely qualifying aspects of his home. Yet, by not defining precisely what he is referring to, he allows readers to form their own image of the space. Now that the reader is able to grasp on to their own definitions of what it means to have a villa that is just apt enough for its own use, the reader can use their own scale to measure Pliny’s villa. By not dictating the scale, Pliny relies on the readers’ creation of space, which he will then fill in with architectural elements.\textsuperscript{215} This is another protective mode: the reader cannot accuse Pliny of an image of the villa they, as the reader, have built up in their imagination. The trend continues when Pliny describes the atrium as both small and excellent. Here, the atrium falls into a category of both being something worthy of praise but also something that does not overstep the boundaries of praise. Nothing in this world of description exists in its full glory; elements of the

\textsuperscript{214} Du Prey 1994, 12-14, addresses signs of labor and slave quarters at Pliny’s Laurentine. Pliny’s interest in downplaying the size and scale of his villa become interesting when considering the number of slave involved in living and working at the villa.

\textsuperscript{215} Ackerman 1986, 30, considers it to be within the power of the reader to reconstruct space.
villa are always qualified in order to undercut their potential glory. The dining room is beautiful ‘satis,’ which simply begs the question again: what does it mean to be sufficiently beautiful, no more and no less? Pliny allows the reader to fill in these ambiguities to their own appropriate fulfillment.

The discourse now shifts into addressing and defining the relationship between physical built rooms and the qualities of the land that the structures are built over. Here Pliny is more definitive and defines what the proper discourse between the built and the natural should be. In this way, he exalts the strength of his villa to handle the elements of nature while also appreciating them. Inside the atrium and under the porticus, Pliny is safe from threatening weather. He values the structure’s protection and its ability to stand strong against the elements. The built up human world cannot be brought down by the natural. Here, the villa can be seen as a symbol of Pliny’s own wishes for his legacy. He is stable and strong, unable to be brought down by a rogue storm. Man-made creations prevail over and temper forces of nature. Similarly, nature should be viewed and understood through the lens of what is created. Pliny uses a system of windows and doors to frame the narrative of the natural world. If Pliny fears nature, his villa and the ways that he allows himself to view nature can alleviate this fear. Pliny is able to stand in front of his window and remind himself of the vastness and power of the Empire: man supersedes the elements. Here, he elides the act of looking at an expansive landscape with the notion of his

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216 Du Prey 1994, 16.
personal power and control.\textsuperscript{217} Everything— the sea, the woods, the mountains, and further into his villa— can be seen through this porticus. Therefore, seeing both what is constructed and what is natural are equally important and, perhaps, they begin to become united. Having a one viewing spot to take in both the natural world and the villa allows a viewer to have multiple visions of many marvelous things wrapped up into a single experience. Pliny’s \textit{Epistula} 2.17, as something that has been constructed as well, allows the reader to have simultaneously many experiences through the single experience of reading one letter. Reading allows them to view and see the villa and the land that the villa commands.

Like in his description of the Tuscan villa, Pliny writes himself as the primary creator once again. After more descriptions of the quality of light, the air, and a more detailed floor plan, Pliny remarks that, “In capite xysti, deinceps cryptoporticus horti, diaeta est amores me vera amores: ipse posui” (In front of the covered walkway, next there is a cryptoporticus of the garden, this place is beloved for me, truly beloved: I myself built it, 2.17.20). In this short passage Pliny accomplishes two essential tasks. The first task hinges on his use of the word ‘diaeta.’ Although Pliny primarily uses this word in the same way that Statius in \textit{Silvae} 2.2.83 previously used this word to refer to a location or place,\textsuperscript{218} the word has a dual meaning. It can also refer to a diet or health regimen—a way of living prescribed by a doctor— as Cicero used it in \textit{Letters to Atticus} 4.3. For Pliny, his dwelling and the healthful activities that his dwelling

\textsuperscript{217} Leach 2003, 150-151.
\textsuperscript{218} Sherwin-White 1966, 187, 197.
allows him to participate in become merged together. Pliny once again places the leisure time that he spends at the Laurentine within a purposed space. Pliny’s regimen and structure does not lapse; he carries his dedication to order and his purposefulness with him into the countryside. He doesn’t allow himself to be fully at rest.

Secondly, Pliny brings his personal character into the narrative in a specific way. He says briefly and simply, ‘ipse posui.’ While the reader understands that the direct object of ‘posui’ refers back to the porticus, Pliny does not specifically delineate this. Leaving an accusative out, a reader also is left to consider, perhaps, that Pliny created or put together the entire space around him. It is remarkably unlikely that he built or designed the porticus himself. However, the effect remains- Pliny makes himself seen deriving pleasure from what he is able to create and what this creation allows him to accomplish. In this sense, Pliny uses signs of labor to create his character as a builder or an architect.\(^{219}\) Perhaps this is another method used to humble himself- he can show himself getting his hands dirty and building efficient structures as an expression of his Romanitas. But perhaps this is a method that he rhetorically uses to further indicate that the villa is a place that he goes to in order to be able to build more generally, looking beyond what he physically may or may not have built. Here, he can construct and produce the letters and speeches that contribute to his work in Rome.

\(^{219}\) McEwen 1995, 11, considers identity, places, and production of places, to be inseparable concepts.
Pliny continues his discussion of the views that the villa offers him and how aspects of the populated spaces, such as towns and cities, and the natural world begin to elide. Other structures outside of his own are brought into the narrative. As he looks out of a window from his bedroom, he describes the view that is offered to him. He writes, “a pedibus mare, a tergo villae, a capite silvae: tot facies locorum totidem fenestris et diestinguuit et miscet” (with the sea by the feet, the villas by the back, the woods by the head: so many views of the sights can be distinguished separately or mixed together in one, 2.17.21). Again, Pliny returns to the idea that constructed place and natural world are bound together as one, especially when viewed through the lens of the created world. However, he begins to populate the landscape, using a technique that was not used in his discussion of the Tuscan villa. Looking out, he can see other villas and dwellings along the shore and near the woods. These villas become a part of the landscape; they at one with nature and intrinsically part of the land even though they are not strictly natural. They exist without signs of labor or creation; they are simply there. Pliny counts his villa as one of the many, but he but also separates himself from the general mix of other dwellings. From his Laurentine villa, Pliny can see and be seen. Just as he can look out onto the nature that he commands, he can look out from above to see other villas that he metaphorically commands as well. Pliny doesn’t separate himself from the power of the Empire or his own personal power at the Laurentine villa.

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Now that Pliny has prepared the reader to look beyond the boundaries of his own villa and the natural world that it oversees, he begins to address the resources that the village and surrounding dwellings offer him. He says that there is no running water but he can draw his own water from his wells, the town of Ostia supplies his wants for wood, and there are a small number of baths in town for when he wants to bathe publically. Pliny writes, “Frugi quidem homini sufficit etiam vicus” (Indeed, the village provides enough for the frugal man, 2.17.26). The town offers him no more and no less than what he needs or what is essential and this satisfies him. He does not seek more; he does not wish to participate in luxuria. Instead, frugality and prudence are practiced. Frugality is a central Roman virtue, existing at the core of Romanitas. Pliny begins this sentence with the adjective ‘frugi,’ separating it from the dative noun ‘hominis’ in order to stress its importance. The idea of Pliny as a frugal man, one who doesn’t want for opulence or extremes, coupled with the idea of Pliny as a builder creates an image of Pliny that harkens back to the citizen/farmer ideals, perhaps reminding his reader of the legend of Cincinnatus.

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221 Sherwin-White 1966, 199.
222 By the time of the Empire, Cincinnatus was a legendary figure of Roman virtue, morality, and civic duty. He was a patrician military leader of the early Republic. Although previously wealthy, he fell into poverty due to his son’s political mistakes. The citizens of Rome called upon him while he was at his farm to take complete control over the state. After achieving victory, he gave up his power and returned to his farm. Most modern historians have rejected the idea that Cincinnatus became poor, as this part of the story could have been a device used to explain his poverty and, therefore, increase his virtues. For the Romans, Cincinnatus became the primary example of honorability, integrity, and frugality. Here, poverty or downplaying wealth is tied to virtue and morality. Pliny explores the close relationship between the two as he continuously attempts to restrain himself in his description of the Laurentine villa. While modern historians question some aspects of the story, Cincinnatus was most likely a figure who
himself from expectations that can be associated with *otium*. Here, Pliny makes a careful and exacting separation between *luxuria* and *otium*. *Otium* allows him to participate in the Roman project of protecting frugality and participating in acts of physical creation. Outside of Rome, he does not lose sight of his morality in a way that he could be accused of. In addition, the concept of a ‘frugi homini’ is general; Pliny doesn’t define himself as the subject. Pliny, therefore, is a general example of a frugal man and that those that also accept the way of life that he lives can also access ideals of *Romanitas*. Pliny constantly undercuts presentations of his own power, like the previous image of him looking out of his window onto the natural world and the small village that he lives above, by qualifying his character within the terms of frugality and good morality. He doesn’t threaten the power of those above him; he instead exhibits qualities of the ideal Roman statesman. Similarly to the way he is comfortable with ‘*satis*’ and makes efforts to make his world balanced throughout *Epistula* 2.17, he considers his position to be sufficient and doesn’t show himself reaching beyond what is appropriate for him. While the Tuscan villa gives him a space away from the ideals that a Roman statesman should uphold, the Laurentine villa provides him with a way to re-enforce and even practice those ideals and expectations.

Pliny ends this letter by inviting Gallus, his addressee, over to the villa. He has listed all of the reasons that the space is favorable and he now writes (2.17.29):

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Iustisne de causis iam tibi videor incolere inhabitare diligere secessum? quem tu nimis urbanus es nisi concupiscis. Atque utinam concupiscas! ut tot tantisque dotibus villulae nostrae maxima commendatio ex tuo contubernio accedat.

Is it not fair that now I seem to have reason to inhabit and to dwell in this selected retreat? Which except if you desire the urbane so much over the countryside. And if only you would desire this life! Because so many great charms of the little villa would be added to with your companionship here.

A rhetorical question is set up as another defense to guard Pliny against being accused of participating in activities that could be morally unjust- Pliny has just devoted his entire letter to praising his villa and the life that it offers him, while being sure to qualify it in terms that would be appropriate for reception of the state. He has primed his reader to be accepting of the lifestyle that he has so carefully crafted and wrote out. Although the villa is separate from the city, Pliny’s invitation to Gallus brings the city into the country. By requesting Gallus to wish for the type of life that Pliny lives at Laurens, he can craft other Roman men into the type of man that he has become, wanting and participating in the same activities. Now that Gallus has been exposed to the pleasures and productivity that Pliny’s lifestyle at leisure can bring, he can allow himself to want these things as well, which perpetuates Pliny’s way of experiencing *otium* to other members of the Roman elite. Pliny’s way of life would only be increased with companions, those who participate in the life of the city, which further blends Pliny’s private and public life into one complete whole, one does not exist without the other. Pliny attempts to create a community outside of himself and
his family at his villa.\textsuperscript{223} It is likely that he did have friends from his elite circle over to stay, making his villa a place where he could engage in intellectual and political pursuits. He makes one last attempt to define his villa by using the diminutive, 'villulae.' This could either be a term of endearment, a strategy to modestly downplay the actual scale of his villa, or a reflection of the potential true size of his villa.\textsuperscript{224}

This longer letter on the Laurentine villa comes before the more lengthy account of the Tuscan villa. Both letters end in similar but different ways. While the ending of *Epistula* 2.17 on the Laurentine Villa focuses on ideals of upholding *Romanitas* and creating a community based around the positive characteristics of his villa, the ending of *Epistula* 5.6 on the Tuscan Villa focuses on his more personal realm and how the world of the Tuscan villa has come to reflect his inner world. Together, these *Epistulae* form a single notion of the villa as a place of general cultivation on all accounts. For Pliny, the villa exists as a retreat where he can get closer to who he wants to create himself as, whether that is as a statesman, a model of *Romanitas*, a writer, or a builder. He can accomplish these tasks either alone or with company, preparing himself to enter back into the city, into his world of political duty, having gained the tools necessary to carry out the tasks that he must complete.

\textsuperscript{223} Riggsby 1998, 83-86 considers Pliny's creation of his community and how he considers himself to fit within the larger landscape of his community.

\textsuperscript{224} Sherwin-White, 1966, 107, considers the term to be an endearment. However, du Prey 1994, 12, believes that it was a term used to play down the size of the place.
CONCLUSION

Throughout this project, I found myself questioning whether or not the villas that Horace, Statius, and Pliny the Younger were writing about were real places. Even though evidence points to the fact that Horace’s Sabine farm and Pliny’s Tuscan Villa have been found, these spaces do not match correspond exactly to the written accounts of the villas. Looking at Horace and Pliny alone, their villas are easy to imagine - tangible and graspable. Statius, on the other hand, chose to write about two villas that are harder to imagine within the space of realness. His poetry about wonderful, opulent spaces forces Horace’s poetry and Pliny’s prose to be reconsidered and re-read. Namely, what is gained if these spaces are projected into real time and space and what is lost is these villas are simply assumed to be real?

Perhaps the villas discussed in this thesis were real spaces, actualized versions of the places that Horace, Statius, and Pliny the Younger wrote about. Then, what remains is revealing. Horace did not practice modesty to the extent that he preached it. Pliny hid a portion of his wealth but also hid a portion of his agricultural productiveness and utilitarianism. Each author faced the constraints of his time and tried to write himself into a specific narrative through the imagery of the villa. Horace lifted himself into a new social stratification while also carefully setting forth modest and moral values. He strengthened his ties to his patron and, thus, ensured that he could continue producing work and obtain immortality through his poetry. Pliny, the shrewd statesman, created his image as a balance. Re-embracing ideals of Romanitas, he exalted his wealth just
enough, he produced for the Empire, and he crafted his own legacy. Statius did not necessarily create his own image, but he created images for his patrons. Vopiscus respected the land while also controlled. He embraced the Empire above all and he used the language of his personal wealth to do so. Pollius Felix found his legacy and heritage through visuals and his philosophical state of mind was reflected in his landscape. Writing about villas was the means by which each author or patron sought to forge a legacy for himself. A visual architectural language was used to map onto the characters that each author wanted to create.

Perhaps the villas written about by Horace, Statius, and Pliny the Younger were fabricated, made up by each author. Writing about space and villas became a large, extended metaphor for the person that was being written about. The built space and the character became one intrinsically bound entity. Building spaces and writing about spaces that have been built were as essential to character building within a work of literature as the character themselves. Each author was dedicated to the art of ekphrasis and fought to conquer all realms of nature, art, and landscape through the precision of the written word.

The answer, most likely, is a combination of the two. Some type of villas existed for Horace, Vopiscus, Pollius, and Pliny. Poetry and prose were the mechanisms by which the spaces were brought alive and, through this art, each character was brought to life. Self-hood was explored outside of the city, outside of the public. A person could, perhaps, be defined by what they do in the private space when nobody is watching. Horace, Vopiscus, Pollius, and Pliny all brought this private life- the life outside of the city- into the public sphere. They showed
off what they do in private to the masses, and through making the private public, they defined themselves and created images of themselves. This was all contrived: each author donned the guise of privacy and created narratives of privacy for their readers, who existed in the public realm.

There was a difference between what was written and what was practiced. The villa structure, as an artistic point of departure, becomes a metaphor for the selfhood of the owner. Physical spaces and symbols of architecture, nature, and agriculture were used as a tool to project a created projection of the villa’s owner. Through this projection, authors and patrons not only controlled the narrative surrounding their time spent outside of the city, they also created images of themselves that transferred directly into the city and their jobs in the city.

*Otium* and the villa were intrinsically bound, with the villa acting as the primary location for leisure time. Our three authors worked to construct their own dignified versions of *otium* for themselves and their patrons. They harnessed the same type of symbolic language, using the metaphor of the villa, to dictate their versions of their time outside of the city. By describing their villas, they were able to describe themselves.

Symbols of wealth like the villa in ancient Rome and the narratives surrounding these symbols, the written works explored in this thesis for example, are still harnessed in order to control representation. In downtown Los Angeles, there is a high-end restaurant called Otium. It is in a distinctly busy part of the city. Just to get to the doors of the place, one must inch through Los
Angeles traffic, battle for a parking spot, and walk past the Broad Museum and Walt Disney Concert Hall. Otium is an energetic space, humming with people and different types of food all presented on small plates. The ceilings are high, dripping with modernist glass chandeliers. The experience of dining is sparkly and magnetic. It is one of the highest-ranked restaurants in Los Angeles.

I have often wondered what is gained by tying products and places to ancient Roman concepts that carry such a weight and a tradition. Patrons of Otium most likely do not know that they are actively participating in a long history of ideals surrounding leisure time and self-representation. They may have loose conceptions of the history that they are involving themselves in: otium represents a time of relaxation, a time away from the grind of their lifestyles. Even though the restaurant is busy and in the city, however, the space is more in-line with ancient Roman practices of otium than it appears to be.

Otium, although in one of the busiest public spaces in Los Angeles, is a strictly elite establishment. Patrons, simply, need to have enough money to enter, eat, and enjoy the space. Their act of dining in the restaurant places them within a specific social stratification in the city. This is reminiscent of Horace, who proved his social standing by stating that he owns a villa and has enough capital to control his villa. Diners at the restaurant engage in the private activity of dining, but they are in a public space, where they can see others and be seen themselves. Likewise, Pliny’s Laurentine villa is separate from the local town and other villas but he can see other people’s villas and they can see his villa. Dining is an activity that is separate from work obligations, but social and economic
relationships still control the performance of eating in a restaurant. On the top of the restaurant, Otium vertically grows their own vegetables and uses them in the dishes that they serve. They also use furniture that is handcrafted by local artisans. Like in ancient Rome before, the language of agricultural productivity seems to go hand in hand with wealth and luxury. The interior design is raw and rustic. Signs of mock modesty and humility are used to separate the restaurant from stuffy, luxurious, and blatantly upper class establishments in Los Angeles, even though the same clientele would frequent both types of restaurants. Otium has connected itself with local historic Los Angeles traditions like Horace, Statius, and Pliny all tried to do in their writings when they wrote about sacred landscapes of ancient Rome, spoke metaphorically of the power of the Empire, or tried to avoid accusations of luxuria. The land and the physical space of the natural world was honored and then conquered by the man to create something beautiful for man to enjoy, whether it is a plate of food or a physical villa.

Even today, functions that are seemingly separate from city life or work cannot exist without the structures that the city imposes. Although our authors may have craved a distinct separation between city and country, they were in constant conversation with their standings in the city and the political climate that they were producing from. A private narrative couldn’t have been established- the symbols and ideals that built the Empire was engrained within them such that the work they produced about their villas and the time they spent at their villas was public, on display, and used to mold themselves into the characters that they wanted the city to see them as.
Fig. 1: floor plan of Horace's Villa.
Image courtesy of B. Frischer and Horace's Villa Project.
Fig. 2: The location of Horace’s Villa as determined by The Horace’s Villa Project. The villa is in between Castagneto and Roccagiovane. Image courtesy of B. Frischer and Horace’s Villa Project.
Fig. 3: remains of the residential area of Horace’s Villa. Image Courtesy of B. Frishcer and Horace’s Villa Project.
Fig. 4: the pool at Horace’s Villa, picture taken in 1984.
Image Courtesy of B. Frischer and Horace’s Villa Project.
Fig. 5: piscine (fishpond) at Horace’s Villa. Image Courtesy of James Higginbotham.
Fig. 6: Aerial view of the bath complex at Horace’s Villa with the excavation area of The Horace’s Villa Project marked in black line, 1999. Image Courtesy of B. Frischer and Horace’s Villa Project.
Fig. 7: Braconi and Uroz's reconstruction of Pliny's Tuscan villa. Image Courtesy of Braconi and Uroz.
Fig. 8: Braconi and Uroz’s floor plan of Pliny’s Tuscan villa.
Image Courtesy of Braconi and Uroz.
Fig. 9: CPSC brick stamp found at Pliny the Younger’s Villa. Image Courtesy of Braconi and Uroz.
Fig. 10: floor plan of Pliny the Younger’s Tuscan villa with Pliny’s additions to the architectural space illuminated. Image Courtesy of Braconi and Uroz.
Fig. 11: grain dolia found at Pliny the Younger’s Tuscan Villa. Image Courtesy of Braconi and Uroz.
Fig. 12: Schinkel’s floor plan of Pliny the Younger’s Tuscan Villa. Image Courtesy of Duke University.
Fig. 13: Schinkel's reconstruction of Pliny the Younger's Tuscan Villa. Image Courtesy of Duke University.
Fig. 14: Schinkel’s floor plan of Pliny the Younger’s Laurentine Villa
Image Courtesy of Duke University
Fig. 15: Schinkel’s reconstruction of Pliny the Younger’s Laurentine Villa
Image Courtesy of Duke University
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