

DOMINATING NATURE IN VERGIL'S *GEORGICS* AND STATIUS' *SILVAE*

By

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To my dearest wife Erin:
Ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει.

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The *Silvae* of Statius, composed over the second half of the first century CE, is a collection of unique Latin poems that includes the first full-length epigrammatic ekphrasis of statues and private dwellings. The novelty of the lighter works of Statius presents certain challenges in interpretation. Modern authors question their place in the literary tradition, whether they are designed to promote Statius' own poetic agenda or subvert cultural beliefs, or if they are more valuable for studies of material wealth and social power than for their literary significance.

One quarter of the poems in the *Silvae* are lengthy ekphrasis of statues, villas, temples, and other structures. An examination of six of these poems (1.1, 1.3, 2.2, 3.1, 4.2, and 4.3) reveals that Statius categorizes large works of art and buildings according to the setting of their natural environment. Throughout the *Silvae*, man-made objects are seen to improve nature, and a personified nature shows appreciation for human endeavors. A close interaction between humans and their environment brings to mind a poem composed over 100 years before the *Silvae*. The *Georgics* of Vergil consists of four books of didactic poetry about agriculture and corollary practices. Although Vergil recapitulates information from his agricultural predecessors such as Cato and Varro, his primary focus is poetry, not farming. Books 1 and 2 of the *Georgics* are centered on agricultural practices and the significance of human interaction with nature; the

second half of the work is devoted to specific practices such as husbandry and apiculture. Thus it is possible to view the first and second books form a unit that serve as an interpretive lens through which the *Silvae* can be better understood. Agricultural practices of the former speak well to the landscape practices of the latter.

This dissertation evaluates *Georgics* 1–2 and a short selection from *Georgics* 3 alongside the six selected *Silvae* from three related perspectives before posing a new interpretation of ekphrasis in the *Silvae*. First, nature is shown to be a subjective construct, and the meaning of the term for each author, as well as their predecessors and successors, is distinguished. Vergil describes nature as the environment in its pristine form before any human intervention. For Statius, nature is a generative force, but he sees the role of humanity as an augmenting and synergistic engagement with nature. Both authors view nature as the initial process, but Vergil views human additions as external elements that transform nature into a diminished version of itself, while Statius sees a nature improved by human participation. The related but conflicting viewpoints are represented by the similar ways that the authors describe human interaction with nature. Second, both authors employ military language to describe this interaction, and the method by which Statius alters the language of Vergil forms the second line of inquiry. In the *Georgics* Vergil describes the farmer as battling with his environment as if in open combat and struggling for survival. In the *Silvae* the patrons and subjects of Statius' poems are viewed as holding military dominion over nature through technological innovation. Thus the desperate station of man in the *Georgics*, fighting without the possibility of victory, is rectified in the *Silvae*. Third, the rhetorical strategy that Statius adapts from his predecessor, namely ekphrasis, can be better understood as part of a new program and genre. While Vergil favored a didactic ekphrasis that explained truisms of life through the continual struggle of the farmer, Statius

instead adopts an ekphrasis of change by which he describes nature based on its mutable aspects. Both authors reject a detailed, propositional method of description in favor of an emphasis on the mimetic significance of humans, nature, and culture.

These three roads of analysis then point to the conclusion that the villa becomes a primary symbol for both authors because it lends itself to their purposes of explaining human life through agriculture and landscape. The ekphrastic poems of the *Silvae*, although they do not belong to the same genre as the *Georgics*, may be seen through their relationship to the earlier agricultural treatise to have a similar poetic program. The villa for Statius becomes a powerful symbol through which he demonstrates cultural realities. Vergil tells his Augustan readers how difficult life is, while Statius reminds the Flavians how pleasant life may be with the right philosophy and proper use of technology and wealth. Remarkably, both of these poets achieve this goal not through moralizing essays or philosophic treatises, but through descriptions of human domination of nature.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The Flavian poet Statius (ca. 45 – ca. 96 CE¹) likely began writing the *Silvae* during the final years of the composition of his epic *Thebais*.² The collection, comprised of poems commemorating public and private events, is unique in Latin literature.³ The first three books of the *Silvae* were published as a unit in 93; the fourth was published in 95; and the questionable fifth book was compiled and published after Statius' death ca. 96.⁴ While the *Silvae* cover a broad array of topics, buildings and statues are a recurring source of inspiration. After the Roman architectural landscape was altered by the fire of 64, invasion and subsequent fighting in 69, and a fire in 80, the emperor Domitian (81–96) was responsible for a number of major building programs, including his own colossal house on the Palatine Hill. This *tectum augustum* ('august edifice'), as Statius describes it (*Silvae* 4.2.18)⁵ looked upon another grand Domitianic building,

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all dates are CE.

² Statius at the end of his epic tells us that it took twelve years to complete (*durabisne procul dominoque legere superstes / o mihi bisseos multum uigilata per annos / Thebai?*, *Theb.* 12.810–812). We also know that he had completed the epic before publishing the *Silvae*: *Thebaide mea, quamvis me reliquerit* (*Silv.* 1.pref.7).

³ Before Statius we have no other collections of poems commissioned by multiple patrons, assembled, and published together. Lucan did compose ten books of *Silvae* according to Vacca (*Vita Lucani*). Harrison, 1990 shows that some of the problems in interpretation of Horace, *Carm.* 4.8 stem from the fact that the book may have had multiple patrons. The *Silvae*, though, are all assembled in this fashion, prefaced by a letter (see Pagán, 2010), and delivered as a gift, whereas Horace seems to have assembled previously published poems along with his new work to create his fourth book. Hardie, 1983, 154–155 and 159–164 discusses a number of poetic allusions to the *Odes* found throughout the *Silvae*.

⁴ These dates are approximate. Books 1–3 are typically considered a unit because of Statius' reference in the preface of Book 4: *reor equidem aliter quam invocato numine maximi imperatoris nullum opusculum meum coepisse*, 'I think indeed that I have never begun any little work of mine without invoking the divinity of our great Emperor' (*Silv.* 4.pref.2–3). Statius' mention of the Sarmatian victory by Domitian at 3.3.170–171 places the publication of Book 3 after January 93 (Jones, 1992, 152 and Syme, 1958, 33), but see Nauta, 2002, 285–299 on separate publication dates for each book. Book 4 can be reasonably assumed to belong to 95, as 4.3 celebrates the Via Domitiana, which was completed that year (Dio Cass. 67.14.1). Coleman, 1988, xviii–xix details the problems of inconsistencies along with evidence of later collation in Book 5; Gibson, 2006, xxviii–xxx argues that the absence of the typical introductory letter provides reason to assume posthumous publication of Book 5, but that the arguments laid out by Coleman, 2002 and Laguna-Mariscal, 1992 are not sufficient to discount the book as important or typical of Statius' poetry.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all translations for the *Silvae* come from Shackleton Bailey, 2003; the text is from Courtney, 1990.

the Circus Maximus. Similarly, throughout the Campanian region, private citizens constructed impressive urban buildings and grandiose coastal villas.⁶ Statius composed seven poems (1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 2.2, 3.1, 4.2, and 4.3) in which he praises some of these buildings and their owner or producer. A recurring theme in the ekphraseis of the villas and other monumental works in the *Silvae* is the domination of nature: cliffs are cut back (2.2.54), rivers are constrained (4.3.80–82), and the soil is mastered (3.1.125–126). Furthermore, nature is always easy to overcome and gratefully yields. The reader sees hints of the former Golden Age, when plants grew of their own accord and required no human labor.⁷ The control of nature through technology for safety and enjoyment gave Statius' audience the ability to enjoy a life of tranquility and philosophy apart from the distractions and vices of the city.

Written approximately one hundred fifty years earlier, Vergil's *Georgics* awaken memories of farm life and remind Romans of their rustic heritage.⁸ Vergil emphasizes moral virtues in his poetry, noting that the farmer toils but still must avoid too lavish a harvest: *luxuriam segetum . . . depascit*, ('he grazes the tender shoots . . . that grow in such profusion', 1.112).⁹ The farmer, a symbol of Iron Age man, must struggle to win a pyrrhic victory against nature, for even if he manages to grow crops in the difficult soil, he may lose them to storms, floods, or droughts. Only through new inventions and technology is man eventually able to produce crops, but nature must first be transformed. This theme challenges the moral implications of the gains that man is able to achieve at nature's expense. As Thomas notes, "it is

⁶ D'Arms, 1970 provides a thorough architectural and literary summary of these villas, their owners, and their societal roles. His study, especially the fourth and fifth chapters, which cover the coastal villas of emperors and wealthy citizens during the time of the empire, supplies an important historical framework for this project.

⁷ Baldry, 1952.

⁸ Suetonius reports that Vergil spent seven years writing the *Georgics*. Vergil and Maecenas took turns reading them to Augustus in 31 BCE during the return from Actium (Suet. *Vita Ver.* 27).

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations for the *Georgics* are from Fallon, 2004, and the text is from Thomas, 1988.

the nature or quality of success which Virgil calls into question, as well as the desirability of the products of the *labor*.”¹⁰ He goes on to say that Vergil draws on military language to express how man must control the plants:

tum *stringe* comas, tum *bracchia tonde*
(ante reformidant *ferrum*), tum denique dura
exerce imperia et ramos *compesce* fluentis.
(*G.* 2.368–370)

it's time to trim their tops, time
to crop their branches (prior to this they'll wilt before any iron implement),
impose your will and curb their wayward leaders.

The merit of progress in the *Georgics* encounters questions of ethics when nature is manipulated for human gain. In addition to the military language here, four passages from the *Georgics* typify the poetic representation of the human struggle against nature. The first and perhaps best known is Vergil's description of the unending toil required in agriculture (*G.* 1.143–180), and the well-known phrase *labor omnia vincit* ('work conquers all' 1.145) embodies the work as a whole.¹¹ While this line is often interpreted by some modern readers as a battle cry for hard work and productivity, its effect may have resonated differently with Vergil's audience. Enjambment into the next line reveals an unexpected modifier, *improbis* ('indomitable'), which casts some doubt in the reader's mind that the *Georgics* is a simple praise of hard work.¹² A specific example of this labor appears in the second book (*G.* 2.277–288). Here Vergil again invokes military struggles as he insists upon the careful arrangement required of vines. The pattern that Vergil

¹⁰ Thomas, 1988, 19.

¹¹ For a review of the various interpretations of this phrase, see Jenkyns, 1993. This project adopts his second interpretation, which he calls the "orthodox" and "pessimist" interpretation (243), though I hope to prove that pessimistic is not the best description. See also Bradley, 1969.

¹² Thomas, 1988, 92 translates this phrase as "insatiable toil occupied all areas of existence." Perkell, 1989, 6, on the other hand, notes that this passage should not be read as completely positive or negative, but considered as an ambiguous reference to the benefits and severity of the scene. Fallon, 2004, 14 gives the weak and inaccurate translation "hard work prevailed."

recommends is that of a quincunx, a battle formation of overlapped troops. The land that the farmer must deal with becomes one of his enemies. In a third passage (2.203–211), Vergil describes the difficult nature of the terrain and the amount of refinement required of the farmer, while elsewhere the fields no longer symbolize battle but become battlefields themselves, as the farmer plows up the bones and armor of his countrymen (1.493–497). In the fourth passage, Vergil departs from his description of the farmer’s struggle and crafts the ekphrasis of his own poetic temple dedicated to Hercules (3.10–39). This purple passage relies not on Vergil’s typical sources Cato and Varro but is steeped in the literary tradition of Homer and Callimachus. This temple gives Statius the opportunity for a direct point of engagement with the *Georgics* as he writes of a real temple dedicated to Hercules at the beginning of his third book (*Silv.* 3.1). Here Statius shows the superiority of his society’s command over nature. In this temple description along with five other poems, Statius proclaims specific differences between Vergil’s age and his own.

A connection between a didactic poem on farming and a collection of epigrammatic poetry about life during Flavian Rome is not immediate, but nevertheless it is significant. Recent scholarship has evaluated the *Thebais* in view of the *Aeneid*,¹³ and topics and themes concerning nature in the *Silvae* seem to indicate that Vergil’s epic was not the only poem that Statius read.¹⁴ Of the *Georgics* only half will be considered in detail. The importance of the relationship between this work and the *Silvae* becomes most clear in light of *Georgics* 1 and 2. Book 3 gives us details of farming life: caring for horses and oxen (49–208); rivalries between bulls and other dangerous animals (215–294); and pasturing (295–469). Rather than describing the interaction

¹³ See especially Ganiban, 2007.

¹⁴ Note the recent discussion of the relationship between the *Silvae* and *Georgics* in Newlands, 2010. She notes Statius’ method in recasting a well-known passage of Vergil into his own genre to “create a distinct and provocative literary persona” (115).

between man and nature, Vergil uses the tropes of agricultural writers such as Varro to paint a scene of an ideal Roman farm.¹⁵ *Georgics* 4 with the βουγυονία (4.283–314, 528–558) and the epyllion of Aristaeus (4.315–527) certainly address the theme of man interacting with nature, but on a more cosmic level. Nelson explains well the difference between the two halves: “In the first two *Georgics*, the farm was an element of the world, either removed from, or observed by, the violence that surrounded it. In the second two, the farm is a microcosm.”¹⁶ Statius’ villas are portrayed as elements removed from the life of the city. Therefore, while the whole of the *Georgics* addresses the human relationship with nature, the poetic and philosophical framework of the first half of the poem relates more directly with the outlook of the *Silvae*. Furthermore, because Books 1 and 2 center around the farming of land and the harvest, they are better associated with descriptions of the control of land and building programs in the *Silvae*. The military language of controlling, guarding, and taming nature is most comparable between the selected poems. Finally, the purpose of this project is not to provide a new analysis of the *Georgics*, but to create a better understanding of the *Silvae* through a reading of the *Georgics*. Therefore, other than a brief glimpse at Vergil’s poetic temple in Book 3, this examination is limited to the first two books of the *Georgics*, which focus on the strife between man and nature, to provide a better understanding of the *Silvae* and reveal an alliance between the two.

Throughout the *Silvae*, Statius describes villas and buildings that are not just impervious to the storms that the farmer of the *Georgics* fears; storms cease to exist around them as they do around the villa of Manilius Vopiscus (*Silv.* 1.3). The same calm distinguishes Pollius Felix’s villa, but an increased level of military supervision is required over the rough Surrentine terrain

¹⁵ For the prose and poetic sources of the *Georgics*, see Haberman, 1977, Thomas, 1987, and Thomas, 1988, 4-11.

¹⁶ Nelson, 1998, 141

(*Silv.* 2.2). Domitian sets the tone for this aggressive architecture, and Statius' presence at the banquet of the emperor (*Silv.* 4.2) impresses upon the reader the sense of the complete removal of a natural setting. The emperor also funds a new road (*Silv.* 4.3) and dedicates a new statue (*Silv.* 1.1). Both receive praise from Statius for their controlling influence over their natural surroundings. The moral tension caused by man's subjugation of nature in the *Georgics* is resolved through that same subjugation in the *Silvae*, as nature itself welcomes its conqueror. Many of the questions presented by Vergil regarding the manipulation of land and the pursuit of peace are answered in the pages of the *Silvae*, and moreover Statius adopts many of Vergil's own poetic devices to find those answers.

CHAPTER 2 THE NATURE OF PROGRESS

On June 26, 2009, the United States House of Representatives narrowly passed a controversial bill intended to “create clean energy jobs . . . , reduce global warming pollution and transition to a clean energy economy.”¹ The power over and responsibility for nature are fundamental to this bill and its efficacy. Similarly, many green enterprises and movements are concerned with limiting humankind’s impact on nature. The *Weltanschauung* that drives such campaigns originates from and helps shape the agenda of many environmental beliefs: humankind exists separately from but in symbiosis with nature, and therefore humans have a moral obligation to protect nature. In sum, man as an external agent has upset the balance of nature natural resources and now must use that same control to help replenish them. Planting new trees, harnessing wind and solar power, and harvesting hydroelectric power from rivers all create clean energy, but still require the exertion of control over the present natural surroundings. In essence, companies, organizations, and government agencies try to be more responsible but still must dominate nature to ensure human survival.

The question of the interaction between man and his environment is not unique to this generation. Sampling classical sources and other authors who write about the human role in nature allows the supposition that human morality may be judged by interaction with the natural world to become apparent across shifting ideologies of cultures, philosophies, and religions. While definitions and interpretations in society change, it may be seen that two seemingly unrelated concepts, the physical world and human morality, are often bound together.

First, a cross-section of Greek, Enlightenment, and contemporary philosophies reveals how theorists through history have interpreted the human role in Nature. This diachronic approach

¹H.R. 2454, 2009. American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, 111th Congress.

allows a definition of nature to emerge. Second, this definition leads to a consideration of moral aspects of humanity and nature. In each epoch there is an assumed relationship between humans and nature, and humanity works to improve that relationship, a process that is labeled progress, but the assumptions and the ultimate goal of this progress change according to prevailing cultural beliefs. For Statius, the ultimate goal is human domination of nature. This analysis will provide the framework for an examination of Roman views of nature in the next chapter.

The Term *Nature* in its Semantic and Cultural Context

By looking briefly at the history of the terms for Nature across a selection of ancient, Enlightenment, and modern literature, it is possible to see a consistent pattern emerge. While different cultures and different classes within cultures may hold divergent views about nature, man's dominion over nature, and theistic components of nature, these cultures still view their interaction with nature as indicative of their own human nature. The pattern is identifiable in the western use of terminology. The English term *nature* generally coincides with the semantic ranges of the Latin *natura* and the Greek φύσις. All three words can denote both a physical and a moral construct. Nature refers not just to the environment, but to moral disposition (e.g., human nature) and material constitution (e.g., the nature of a molecule). The modern western view of nature in many aspects resembles the ancient Greek concept of φύσις, for both terms describe physical nature, human nature, as well as natural or unnatural phenomena.² The root φύσ- is rare in Homer, appearing once as a reference to the make up or constitution of a plant (*Od.* 10.303).³

While neither of these connotes any interaction between humans and nature, one notes a

² On the evolution of the Greek concept of φύσις, see Lloyd, 1992. He focuses on the Aristotelian perspective of nature as fundamental particles or energy, areas we might qualify under metaphysics. Lloyd's view is that pre-Christian Greeks generally saw themselves as part of nature, not as a separate being. On normal and abnormal phenomena and beliefs in antiquity, see Dodds, 1973, 140–210.

³ The compound φυσίζοος appears three times, each time as part of an epithet for 'life producing earth' (*Il.* 3.243, 21.63; *Od.* 11.301), but this seems more closely related to the verb φύω rather than the noun.

constant: nature can refer to a physical force, separate from man and creative, and the structural makeup of individual elements within nature.

Lloyd posits an alternate perception of nature among the ancient Greeks.⁴ He states that the Greek concept of nature and physics—both translations of φύσις—also contains an idea of causality, origin, and metaphysics. He attempts to “recover some of the original . . . complexities of the subject of Greek views . . . about nature” by following three branches of nature: politics, natural science, and questions about the philosophy of natural science.⁵ He follows the logic of Aristotle, who wrote about “natural” occurrences as those that regularly happen. That a human begets another human is natural: κατὰ φύσιν. For that human to be deformed or exceptional is anomalous to nature: παρὰ φύσιν. Nature therefore is responsible for the production of typical humans. The pattern reappears in the works of Statius, who adopts a related view of nature as a generative force or even a goddess.⁶ In this sense, παρὰ φύσιν does not occur as something outside the control of nature but as something typically perceived as abnormal.

In Vergil’s *Georgics*, *natura* describes the structural makeup and the environment, but often with emphasis on the original quality and condition of the physical world. Personified nature dictates ancient laws for certain places: *continuo has leges aeternaque foedera certis / imposuit natura locis* (‘Right from time’s beginning, nature assigned these laws to last forever, / each in its specific place’, *G.* 1.60–61), and animals behave according to their nature: *Nunc age, naturas apibus quas Iuppiter ipse / addidit expediam* (‘Listen now, while I outline the qualities

⁴ Lloyd, 1992.

⁵ Lloyd, 1992, 2–3.

⁶ E.g., *Silv.* 1.6.58–59 on a band of dwarves: *quos natura . . . / nodosum semel in globum ligavit* (‘Nature . . . tied them once for all into knotted balls’).

bestowed on bees by Jupiter,' *G.* 4.149–150).⁷ Nature is therefore responsible for the natural world, but it is not the only creative impulse:

hos natura modos primum dedit, his genus omne
siluarum fruticumque uiret nemorumque sacrorum.
sunt alii, quos ipse uia sibi repperit usus
(*G.* 2.20–22)

These methods were first Nature's way for each and every tree in woods and sacred groves to thrive and flourish. Now there are other ways, found out by trial and error.

Nature is perceived as responsible for the wild plants, but man through experience (*usus*) creates cultivated plants.

In the villa of Pollius Felix, *natura* is the broad category that includes land masses, trees, soil, seasons, water, and other geological phenomena. At the setting of the villa, nature is said to bestow the scene around which cliffs, a beach, rocks, sea, and winds coalesce:

placido lunata recessu
hinc atque hinc curvae perrumpunt aequora rupes.
dat natura locum montique intervenit udum
litus et in terras scopulis pendentibus exit.
(*Silv.* 2.2.13–16)

Curving cliffs on either side pierce crescent waters, making a calm recess. *Nature provides space.* The watery beach interrupts the heights, running inland between overhanging crags.⁸

The area is home to a charming bathhouse (17–18) and pastoral scene, but the setting itself is made possible by nature.

Statius' *natura* also signifies a personified Nature, which acts sometimes on its own initiative and sometimes in obedience to man's will.⁹ The personified Nature is responsible for

⁷ Similarly, see 2.49 and 2.178, which refer to the *natural* fertility of the soil.

⁸ Courtney, 1988 prints *hinc atque hinc curvas perrumpunt aequora rupes. / dat Natura locum montique intervenit unum / litus . . . intervenit unum*. I defer here to Shackleton Bailey's text for the sake of continuity with his translation, but the argument does not rely on either textual possibility.

the earth and its people. *Natura* forms the shape of a child's face while still inside his mother's womb (*cumque tuos tacito natura recessu / formarit vultus*, 'When Nature moulds your face in her silent recess . . . ' *Silv.* 1.2.271–272) and, as Statius humorously describes, has caused the shape of dwarves:

hic audax subit ordo pumilorum,
quos natura breves statim peracta
nodosum semel in globum ligavit
(*Silv.* 1.6.57–59)

Here comes a bold string of midgets. Nature is cramped for them, finished in a trice, she tied them once for all into knotted balls.

Nature has also given the 'noble right of speech' to a parrot (*nobile fandi / ius Natura dedit*, 2.4.16–17) and determines gender in humans (3.4.76–77).¹⁰

In the mansion of Vopiscus, the subject of Statius' first villa poem, the beauty of the place was established by Nature and only accentuated by man:

quae forma beatis
ante manus artemque locis! non largius usquam
indulsit natura sibi.
(*Silv.* 1.3.15–17).

What beauty in the blessed spot *before* art's handiwork! Nowhere has Nature indulged herself more lavishly.

The reader sees the shifting emphasis on man or nature as a creative force, but in the description of the house of Pollius Felix, both agents are differentiated by the author: *his favit Natura locis, hic victa colenti / cessit* ('Some spots Nature has favoured, in others she has been overcome and yielded to the developer,' *Silv.* 2.2.52–53). The role of personified Nature is even loftier in *Silvae*

⁹ In a related but distinct use, *Natura* as a goddess appears twice in Book 5 (not discussed in this project). Both times she is seen mourning for individuals (5.3.71 and 5.5.22).

¹⁰ Statius' reference to Domitian's decree that men no longer be castrated underscores the perception of human roles, for we should not change our gender once Nature has decided. For more on Earinus, the eunuch referred to here and in Martial 9.11–13, 16–17, and 36, see Henriksén, 1997.

2.1, when *Natura* is supplicated as if a goddess: *tuque oro, Natura, sinas, cui prima per orbem / iura homini sancire datum* ('and do you, Nature, whose province it is to lay down primal laws for man throughout the world, give me leave, I beg', *Silv.* 2.1.83–84).

The uses of the term *nature* continued to evolve and become more complex after the Roman period, as nature became a scientific topic as much as a religious and philosophical one. Still, the relationship between physical and human nature is persistent in the new research and investigations of the day. The perception of nature in the Western world adopted strong Judeo-Christian undertones during the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment. Francis Bacon, the seventeenth-century Enlightenment philosopher, took his beginning from Aristotle's *Organon* as he investigated the relationship of humans, science, and nature in a way that marked a turning point in our understanding of nature as a construct.¹¹ Bacon's primary work, the *Novum Organum*, was an update of Aristotle's work on syllogism that has engendered the modernist approach to science and the scientific method.¹² Bacon believed that control of nature and harmony with God were taken from man when he was expelled from Eden.¹³ It is the obligation of man, therefore, to secure better standing with God through a better understanding of His

¹¹ Bacon and Vickers, 2008 contains a lengthy introduction, text, and bibliography on Bacon and nature. On Bacon's theological view of the language of nature, see Briggs, 1989. On the scientific developments of Bacon, see Altegoer, 2000. On a thorough summary of Western thought about domination of nature, including Baconian influences, see Leiss, 1972. Bacon is chosen here because his work represents an evolution from that of Aristotle. He is not seen in the present discussion as a philosopher to shine light upon the Romans but as a single example of the ubiquity and diversity of questions and answers about the interaction of physical and human nature in western thought. Rackham, 2001 summarizes environmental and human changes to the Mediterranean and shows that many modern perceptions of the ancient beauty are more fanciful than realistic. A diachronic analysis of this question across European and American thought would be a helpful enterprise, but the concept is not confined to the West. See, e.g., the environmental history of China and the dramatic influence on geography caused by people 4,000 years ago (Elvin, 2004).

¹² Bacon and Casellato, 1941.

¹³ Slater, 1995, 114–131 describes how the Edenic narrative is in many ways similar to modern interpretations of nature as something we have lost.

nature.¹⁴ Progress in modernist thought is objective and linear. Man, propelled by information he acquires, moves from an undesirable place to a desirable place and at the same time acquires virtue that accompanies learning. In postmodern thought, progress is relative and subject to individual interpretation, and the acquisition of information enables not virtue but power. Nature is seen not only as completely separate from man, but also abused and scarred by man. As a result, many new measures have now been taken to stop or reverse the exploitation of natural resources.

In his study on medieval constructions of nature, Murray develops a model that shows how the concept of nature is not static across cultures or even within one culture.¹⁵ This intricate approach can help one understand cultural differences in other periods as well. Murray calls the three divisions vertical, horizontal, and diagonal. Vertical differences are interpretations based on status, such as education and religion. Horizontal differences are based on the amount that people have learned and considered through philosophy or other information based on their different statuses. It is a difference that is completely a learned construct. Diagonal differences occur specifically within the vertical and horizontal dimensions within Christianity during the Middle Ages. While Murray's model applies to the medieval caste structure with state-sponsored religious prescriptions, it also informs a more complex and multidimensional paradigm that can be applied to other epochs. In addition to status, education, and differences between religious groups, we may add a fourth axis of multiple religious and social groups.¹⁶

Nature is not an objective concept, but a culturally defined descriptor of man and his world. Therefore, we are left with the question of how exactly to define nature. If one opens a

¹⁴ For the use of the term in the Middle Ages, see Murray, 1978.

¹⁵ Murray, 1992, 30–47.

¹⁶ On the evolution of the concept of nature and progress within nature, see also Williams, 1980 and Olwig, 1996.

book or clicks on a link about nature today, an array of potential options may appear. One may expect to read about plants, animals, or conservation; learn recipes for organic cooking; see pictures of dramatic landscapes or individual flowers; or contemplate stories about deadly storms and peaceful rivers. *Nature* is the title of a leading science journal and an educational program. The Latin and Greek signifiers of ‘nature’ that we are defining have a range of meanings as broad as the range found in the English term. Vergil and Statius both ascribe to a personified nature a role that the modern world might apply to the ideas of genetics or Fate. In Latin and Greek the term includes both the physical construct of the natural world and the innate characteristics of humans and animals. That the word may encompass trees as well as the size of dwarves demonstrates its broad scope.

While the very act of defining nature may require some level of semantic domination, it is important to consider the interaction between man and nature in order to present any framework of analysis for human views of nature. The following definition strives for the accuracy of a denotative definition but emphasizes more strongly the fluidity of a connotative definition. Nature is the culturally influenced perception of both the moral constitution of humankind and the physical world apart from the presence of humankind. This physical world includes perceptions of a generating force and environmental elements including plants, animals, land masses, and bodies of water. Ross gives a similar definition.¹⁷ He states that in Roman culture, *natura* emphasized “the farm, not the wild and terrifying world just beyond.” According to Ross, although Roman religion had a strong foundation in nature, it was not a worship of nature. While Ross rightly states that Nature-oriented worship is not the same as worship in the modern mind, he does not recognize that *natura* is a semantic category, not a static concept to which some

¹⁷ Ross, 1987, 19–24, quote on page 21.

people more or less ascribed. He captures the notion of cultural beliefs that impact the interpretation of nature, but he does this by creating a false paradox, stating that the *Georgics* differ from the typical Roman mindset by ascribing to Nature that which is wild and outside of the farm rather than the typical notion of that which is tame and on the farm.¹⁸ On the contrary, it seems that Vergil concurs with other Roman authors who view *natura* as an external creating element, involving both controlled and uncontrolled aspects. There are two primary elements to my definition that distinguish it from that of Ross and others: first, nature is culturally defined and culturally significant; second, the semantic signifier typically represents the physical world (natural) and the quality of a person or group (human nature).¹⁹

It is no more possible to ascribe an identical set of beliefs about nature to everyone in antiquity than to everyone today.²⁰ Even within one culture at one given point in time, worldviews concerning nature differ along social status, personal beliefs, philosophies, and experiences. This chapter focuses on differences that Murray would describe as vertical—cultural, religious, and philosophical—but cannot account for every horizontal difference. The goal, therefore, is not to assert the specific vertical or horizontal identity of each author, but to identify general trends that affect their writing and outlook, and then examine how those trends might differ from our own. If we seek to understand the implications of Statius' and Vergil's views on nature, it is necessary to consider their poems from an ancient perspective, in which

¹⁸ Ross, 1987, 23–24.

¹⁹ For a series of articles on the perception versus reality of man's place in nature, see Cronon, 1995. The fullest treatment of the use of these words is found in Lovejoy and Boas, 1935, 447–448. Blundell, 1986 summarizes the theories of the development of culture.

²⁰ On the lack of canonized scriptures in religious or secular documents, prescriptive moral teachings, and a disparity between internal and external religious behavior, see Dodds, 1973, 140–155.

nature is a broad category that encompasses not only the land and storms, but also questions of Fate, causality, and even divinity.

The Moral Intersection of Progress and Nature

Intrinsic to the question of the cultural construction of nature is progress, the force seen as assisting, harmonizing, or even countering nature. Progress, like nature, is culturally defined and culturally contextualized. Progress today is defined by fuel-efficient cars and the conservation of natural resources, while only fifty years ago it was defined by the level of income generated by the demand for fuel-burning cars and the consumption of resources. To understand progress fully, one must consider the ultimate goal. The Enlightenment—and later the Modernist—ideology that led to the transition from the ancient worldview held to the notion of an objective moral good. This led to an understanding of nature and progress in which there is some objective point to which progress aims as man moves farther from ignorance and closer to truth. This contention was challenged by Nietzsche and subsequent postmodern thinkers, who rejected the idea of an objective truth and, therefore, an objective good.²¹ Progress is relative to cultures, times, and religions and is therefore viewed in many ways as an expression of power rather than a move towards some objective good. While nature and progress are culturally defined, the ultimate manifestation of progress in nature may be described as domination. Whether it is for material gain or even for the preservation of the environment, man's ability to control the environment, harness nature's activity for his own good, or situate himself to have a commanding view of his surroundings, domination of nature is the fulfillment—or at least the perceived fulfillment—of progress.

²¹ Cf. Nietzsche's *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. Habermas, 1987, 85 describes the tension that Nietzsche sees in progress.

Interpretations of works such as the *Georgics* and *Silvae* often begin with the assumption that nature is a static construct. Therefore scenes of domination of nature are viewed as essentially similar in Homer, Hesiod, Vergil, and Statius. This is not to say that all scholars have the same interpretation of nature. Rather, they read ancient descriptions of nature through their own cultural framework. According to Bright, in the equestrian statue of Domitian in Statius' *Silvae* 1.1, "clearly the colossal scale not only rivals but redefines nature," as the sculptor has emptied Temese of its copper and the horse of Castor shrinks in fear.²² Bright focuses on the redefinition of nature as art as one of Statius' themes. Statius' poetry then is a praise of man's ability to suspend the rules of nature and enhance it.²³ Bright concludes that "Statius has returned constantly to the idea that nature in its pristine state stands in tension with man's efforts to alter, to improve or to destroy."²⁴ Bright is correct that man engages with nature through various construction projects, but in Statius there is not any concern of a "pristine" or Edenic type of nature.²⁵ There is no indication that nature as Statius perceived it was related solely to the natural size of a horse or the unspoiled shape of a mountain. If, however, we consider that Statius' perception of Nature is a productive force of which humans are a part, then Domitian's statue does not redefine nature. Instead, man takes a major role in the creative process, and the statue is a symbol of progress. In addition to considering the effect of religious, social, economic, and political factors in the poetry and symbolism, the reader should examine how these factors influence the author's definition of nature. The cause for many of the changing interpretations of Statius and Vergil stems from anachronistic assumptions about nature.

²² Bright, 1980, 43.

²³ Bright, 1980, 46. See also Newmyer, 1984.

²⁴ Bright, 1980, 49.

²⁵ Slater, 1995.

Contrasting views of progress in nature lead to one of two conclusions: progress separates man from nature, or progress draws man closer to nature. The separation between man and nature has been variously interpreted through the centuries. Present day environmentalist groups such as the Sierra Club and Earth First! tend to view nature as a divinity in itself, one which man has defiled through his presence. Dave Foreman writes:

Before agriculture was midwived in the Middle East, humans were in the wilderness. We had no concept of 'wilderness' because everything was wilderness and *we were a part of it*. But with irrigation ditches, crop surpluses, and permanent villages, we became *apart from* the natural world. . . . Between the wilderness that created us and the civilization created by us grew an ever-widening rift.²⁶

Humans lived as a part of nature until they began to use it for their own benefit. While Foreman's group, Earth First!, is viewed as extreme, the underlying assumptions still drive some economic, political, and academic viewpoints. Concepts of progress and control are often viewed cynically or at least with moral ambiguity.

In eighteenth and nineteenth century America, nature and wilderness were also perceived as something separate from man. Similarly, the moral imperative was to repair the division, but through different means of progress and control. Wilderness, the home of savages, wild animals, and the unknown held for man some level of moral ambiguity. Novels typically fixated on the wilderness as a place of "rugged individualism," and characters often escaped to nature to avoid civilized life.²⁷

This concept of nature and its relationship to mankind is not dissimilar from the Enlightenment interpretations. Thoughts on nature underwent a major shift under the early

²⁶ Foreman, 1991, 69. Emphasis in original.

²⁷ Cronon, 1995, 77 gives a host of examples that emphasize wilderness and individualism in and about this era from film, advertisements, and popular literature.

modernist thinkers. For Bacon, nature was wrested from mankind during the Fall, and mankind thereafter sought to regain control. He says in the conclusion to his *Novum Organum*:²⁸

. . . unde necesse est sequi emendationem status hominis, et ampliacionem potestatis ejus super naturam. Homo enim per lapsum et de statu innocentiae decidit, et de regno in creaturas. Utraque autem res etiam in hac vita nonnulla ex parte reparari potest; prior per religionem et fidem, posterior per artes et scientias.

(*Novum Organum* 2.52)

. . . For this reason it is necessary to pursue a correction in the position of man and an increase of his power over nature. Certainly mankind fell from its place of innocence and from authority to servility because of the fall. Each position, however, is able to be recovered in some measure during this life: the first through sanctity and faith, the second through arts and pursuits of knowledge.

Bacon viewed nature as a creation God who gave dominion over nature to humans then took it from them because of human sin. Man could, therefore, reclaim some measure of proximity to God by re-mastering nature. For Bacon, nature includes more than just wilderness, but also the “wild” side of man. By experimentation, discovery, and control of the natural world, humans not only improve quality of life, but their own nature as well. It is this direct relationship between human nature and physical nature that ties Bacon with the ancients and contrasts him with modern scholars. Because of Bacon’s expansion of Aristotelian thought and influence on modern scientific thought, he serves as an interesting complement for an interpretive model for Statius.²⁹

Bacon, speaking of cause and effect in his Aristotelian *Novum Organum*, notes: *Scientia et potentia humana in idem coincidunt, quia ignoratio causae destituit effectum. Natura enim non nisi parendo vincitur* (‘Pursuits of knowledge and human power converge into the same thing, for ignorance of the cause leaves one without the effect. Indeed, nature cannot be conquered

²⁸ This work comprises two books of the *Institutio Magna* and is an answer to Aristotle’s *Organon*. Bacon, like Aristotle, appeals to logic as the basis for understanding, but he expands upon his predecessor and sees logic as the basis for inductive reasoning. Text of Bacon from Casellato, 1941; translations are my own.

²⁹ The importance of the question of human interaction with nature and the epistemological assumptions behind the interaction makes it ubiquitous through Western philosophy, but Bacon is examined here because he describes explicitly the connection between religion or philosophy and how man should respond to challenges in nature.

unless obeyed', 1.3). Before Bacon's inductive method of thinking, scientific discoveries were made mostly by accident. Bacon sought a more intentional approach to discovery, which would enable one to become a better worshipper of God. According to Bacon, humans must therefore learn the rules of nature in order to conquer it and draw closer to God. Bacon points out that it was God who planted the first garden: *Deus ipse primus plantavit hortum. Atque revera inter solatia humana illud horti est purissimum. Etenim spiritus hominum maxime reficit et oblectat*, ('God himself first planted a garden, and in fact among human comforts, that found in the garden is the most pure. In fact, the garden chiefly restores and delights the souls of men,' *De Hortis* 1).

Westfall outlines four paths through nature by which Enlightenment-era thinkers arrived at their more scientific worldview. He states that nature was quantified, mechanized, perceived to be other, and finally secularized.³⁰ This process led to the development of instruments that could more accurately measure distance, weight, and celestial bodies. Regarding solar and planetary movements, as Westfall states, even the moderately accurate measurements were improved considerably by Tycho Brahe's inventions, which provided measurements more accurate by a full order of magnitude than earlier methods. A greater emphasis on the quantification of nature led to Brahe's emphasis on improving existing technology and quality of data through new inventions. Following this trend nature was mechanized—studied, tested, utilized—and perceived as “other.” The development of microscopes and discovery of single-celled organisms also revealed the smallness of the universe. The altered perception of the size of the earth led to a separation and secularization of nature as the connection that man felt with nature as a creative force began to dissolve.

³⁰ Westfall, 1992, 65.

In Statius' poetry, the gods abided in the very processes and identity of nature. Statius even speaks of gods and nature interchangeably (e.g., 3.1.123–124, 4.2.34–35). Nature was a plural category, as gods and goddesses were identified through their unique natural traits. Bacon, on the other hand, perceived nature as a single concept, the dominion of which was handed over to man and wrested from man by a single God. Nature is also symbolic of the fallen human nature, which men must also struggle to control.³¹ These two ideas have a significant common point that contrasts strongly with modern notions of nature. For the ancients and Enlightenment thinkers, man was a part of nature. Though tension and conflicts existed, man and nature were closely tied together. Nature imposes its unchanging laws (*G.* 1.60–61) and is responsible for our appearances (*Silv.* 1.2.271–272) but is also, if humans conquer their own nature, conquerable and yielding to man (*Silv.* 2.2.52–53). In some interpretations of our modern society, nature is perceived as an object in symbiosis with humankind, sometimes as part of us, sometimes as an outside influence.³² Domination, therefore, is seen as an act of hostility towards a nature that would be pristine apart from human intervention.³³

Many natural parks throughout the United States are intended to preserve a scenic, pristine natural surrounding, but all are maintained through government spending and oversight with the

³¹ While Bacon's religious views are made clear to us through his treatises, we are at a disadvantage dealing with Statius. This is not an attempt to establish an animistic worldview of the author, but an interpretation of the poetry, which does reflect an animistic—or at least polytheistic—worldview. On the belief adopted by Dante that Statius was a Christian convert, and therefore one of Dante's guides in the underworld, see Hardie, 1916 and Brownlee, 2007, 148–150.

³² Aboulafia, 1989 and Taylor, 1975, 546–558 emphasize Marx's critique that humans are alienated from the natural world. Frankenberry, 2006, 339, on the other hand, believes in an objective unity between nature and human nature: "Human nature is a factor within nature and not a mere spectator to it. The processes and events, the qualities and relations which constitute nature are objective in the twofold sense that nature is fully real in its own right and by its own operations, and is not dependent on any other order of reality; both in its parts and as a whole, it is independent to human thinking. Every item of the experienced world and hence every item of knowledge is an item in nature, a participant in natural processes, and dependent upon the reality of the external world for acquiring knowledge." Her assumption, however, is weak in that it assumes all knowledge is objectively acquired from an objective source (nature).

³³ On examples and problems with this view, see Cronon's Introduction in Cronon, 1995.

goal of maximizing human presence while minimizing the effect of this presence. For example, Niagara Falls, which is seen as an awe-inspiring example of natural power, was dammed and studied in detail from 1967 to 1974 so that a scale model could be built.³⁴ Political decisions factored strongly in whether the Falls should be diverted, whether the rocks below should be changed to make a more appealing and enduring structure, and whether buildings could be built within sight of the park. Natural parks today are a prime example of how much human involvement is present in projects designed to appear untouched by human hands. Fredrick Law Olmsted, the American landscaper who designed Biltmore, Yosemite, Niagara Falls, and Central Park, was a key figure in creating this perception in American parks. Niagara Falls park was designed with marked efficiency: paths directed the typical visitors coming for a quick visit to separate areas than visitors staying a longer time, picnic areas dispersed the crowds as they arrived by train, and treaties allowed more water to be diverted for hydroelectric power during non-peak visiting seasons.³⁵ Olmsted's desire in creating such natural-looking parks was to keep the land public, thereby allowing the average person a place to contemplate and experience nature. The underlying assumption is that the land must be dominated for the right purpose, because the land *will* be dominated by someone.

This brief cross section of beliefs and philosophies of nature illustrates the difficulty with which we approach the poetry of Statius and Vergil. Unique cultures and individual beliefs shape human perception of the generative, divine, and ethical aspects of nature. Statius and Vergil are united by their perspective that human morality is exhibited through progress and interaction

³⁴ International Joint Commission, 1975. *Preservation and Enhancement of the American Falls at Niagara*.

³⁵ See Spirm, 1995 for a discussion of this project, as well as the construction of other "natural" scenes designed by Olmsted.

with nature, but it is necessary to differentiate how Roman authors in general and Statius and Vergil in particular understand that interaction.

CHAPTER 3 THE NATURE OF ROMAN THOUGHT

After examining the development of philosophical and ethical perceptions about nature and man's domination of nature, it is possible to detect a widely varying array of moral beliefs about the interaction between the two. Though often antithetical, these beliefs reveal a constant: man's improvement of nature is a strong indication of his moral aptitude. Whether man is showing responsibility by reducing carbon emissions, growing closer to God through a better understanding of creation, or scaling back cliffs to show his physical triumph, it is how humans treat a culturally defined nature that reveals the degree to which they have acquired a culturally defined morality. The same questions explored by the Ancient Greek and Enlightenment philosophers were an important topic for Roman poets and moralists. Pliny the Elder (23–79) and Seneca the Younger (1 BCE–65) both posited an explicit connection between nature and morality. The naturalist Pliny appealed to a divine aspect of nature and felt that humans must work in concert with the environment. Seneca saw a definite correspondence between the nature or physical composition of a place and the moral quality of its inhabitants. Both authors argue from their unique beliefs in accountability in the relationship between humans and nature. Pliny's naturalist philosophy that appears in the *Naturalis Historia* and Seneca's Stoic beliefs described in his *Epistulae* make the prose authors an effective background in which the poets figure prominently. Vergil, whose perception of divine and creative characteristics of nature leads to moral concerns about agriculture and land use, prefigures the moralist writing of Pliny. Statius shares some of the presuppositions of his predecessor Seneca, but the poet seeks to redeem the qualities of luxurious areas that Seneca devalued.

Pliny The Elder and Seneca the Younger

For Pliny the Elder, *natura* was a category that, as Beagon points out, incorporates all of the physical world.¹ The method by which Pliny sought to display and achieve virtue was through inquiry into nature. According to Beagon, “The ambiguities of man’s intrusions into and alterations of the natural order are . . . a major and recurring theme in Pliny.”²

Beagon notes that one significant role *natura* plays in Pliny’s works is that of creator. The epithet *Natura Artifex* emphasizes the generative capacity of nature, especially in land and animals.³ In addition to its generative quality, nature is also recognized for its ability to harm humans. *Natura Saeviens* includes both the destructive and harmful aspects of nature. Some places in the world are condemned by nature to have climates and conditions that make the inhabitants’ lives difficult. To support this, Beagon adduces Pliny’s example of poisonous honey:⁴

Aliud genus in eodem Ponti situ, gente Sannorum, mellis, quod ab insania, quam gignit, maenomenon vocant. . . . quid sibi voluit, nisi ut cautiores minusque avidum faceret hominem?

(HN 21.77–78)

There is another type in that same area of Pontus, in the clan of the Sanni, honey, which they call ‘Rage’ because of the madness it causes when consumed. . . . What did it (nature) want for itself, except to make man more cautious and less greedy?

¹ Plin., Pref.13; Beagon, 1992, 26: “*Natura* is the world, both as a whole and as its separate components; she is both the creator and the creation. The comprehensiveness of Pliny’s analysis defies further elaboration: *Natura* is everything.” This section owes much to the work of Beagon, who studies in depth the origin and impact of Pliny’s beliefs about nature in his writings.

² Beagon, 1992, 42.

³ E.g., 2.166.1, *Quod ita formasse artifex natura credi debet* (‘That which Nature the Creator should be believed to have formed’). Beagon, 1992, 84–86.

⁴ See Beagon, 1992, 38. She notes the “Stoic tradition of exculpating Nature, for example by arguing that her evils were only apparent and were in fact beneficial to man.”

Nature is seen here from an anthropocentric point of view. Bees and other animals are viewed teleologically: nature created these plants and creatures to interact with her primary creation, man. By shaping the morals and actions of humankind, in this case by checking greed, nature in fact helps its stewards live more harmoniously with her. They cannot harvest at will, but must be guided by the Stoic *ratio*. In this way the farmer is made more prudent (*cautiorem*). By observing the rules of nature, he is better able to preserve both it and himself.

Volcanoes serve as an illustration of *Natura Saeviens*. Pliny tells of volcanoes that burn with an unceasing flame: Aetna in Sicily, Mount Chimaera in Phaselis, and the mountains of Hephaestus in Lycia (10.236). After describing the constant fires of Aetna, Pliny notes that other places are compelled by certain geological conditions: *nec in illo tantum natura saevit exustionem terris denuntians* ('and Nature does not rage in that mountain alone as it enjoins devastation on the lands,' 10.236.4). The harsh environment caused by these volcanoes ensured that the inhabitants of the land would be tough and vigilant.⁵

For Pliny, who viewed both the creative and destructive elements of nature as two aspects of the same pantheistic deity, humans do not exhibit their morality by controlling or interacting with an external force. The proper moral position for humans is to have a mutually beneficial relationship with a nature of which they are a unique part. This means that the actions performed by humans are less important than their motives, and those guilty of an improper treatment of nature were thereby suspect of other flaws. Nature's creative power causes Pliny to approach investigation carefully, especially given his religious reverence and pantheistic view of the natural world. Compelled by Stoic ideology, Pliny feels that investigating too closely the principles of the universe is dangerous. Rather, one who observes with reverence is less likely to

⁵ The concept that geography of a land influences the ways and morals of its inhabitants is certainly not unique to Pliny. On geographic determinism, see Borca, 2003.

breach moral guidelines. Pliny's rebuke of two groups of people in particular, magicians and philosophers, reveals his attitude about improper ways to interact with nature. Pliny feels that certain boundaries defined the parameters of the relationship between man and nature. Beagon points out that breaking these boundaries may lead to moral, religious, and intellectual transgressions.⁶

Pliny often censures magicians for their attempt to control the power of nature and therefore usurp the position of divine creator.⁷ Because of their attempt to change natural occurrences or force unnatural phenomena, they sever the ideal relationship that should exist between man and nature. It logically follows that Pliny would see a reliance on magical rites or spells as fear of the unknown. Such approaches attempt to manipulate Nature without studying or understanding it. Beagon notes Pliny's frequent use of the word *vanitas* to describe magic.⁸ Those who have not investigated nature properly through *ratio* are left with nothing but useless and, at times, dangerous remedies.

Pliny cites Hipparchus' attempt to number the stars (2.95) and Eratosthenes' attempts to measure the earth (2.247) as examples of looking too deeply into the causes and details of nature, but the moralist worried more about the intellectual immoderation of these attempts than their religious significance. Hipparchus is praised in the same breath by Pliny for his work and "is not to be regarded as a habitual attacker of religious concepts of the universe."⁹ This particular attempt to count every star, however, Pliny called *etiam deo improbam* ('immoderate even for a god', 2.95). Eratosthenes' grand attempt was also an overly bold undertaking: *improbum ausum*

⁶ Beagon, 1992, 44–47.

⁷ E.g., 30.1; 30.17; 30.19. See Beagon, 1992, 106–108.

⁸ Pliny, 7.188; Beagon, 1992, 106–107.

⁹ Beagon, 1992, 44.

(2.247). *Improbis*, an important concept to be examined in Vergil and Statius, typically refers in Pliny to something too grand. Beagon states, “Certainly the word *improbis* in these passages should be compared with Pliny’s general use of it elsewhere in the *HN* to denote something that is ‘too large.’ It may, for instance, be used of Nature’s power, in the sense that it is too large to comprehend.”¹⁰

If these undertakings are too bold, Pliny’s own methods of investigation—observing *Natura* and relying on reason—are taken to be the model. One example of virtuous interaction with Nature, according to Pliny, is tree grafting. This practice is separated from the art of shaping plants for aesthetic appeal in Pliny’s mind because he sees its utility. He distinguishes between the control of Nature for show and the control of nature to “form a partnership to further her [Nature’s] purpose.”¹¹

Pliny’s worldview leads him to consider the correlation between nature and morality as an example of the problems caused by humanity’s overinflated sense of importance, but other authors with different worldviews may have different agendas. Tycho Brahe and Francis Bacon are examples of thinkers with a strong emphasis on how careful measurement and experimentation on nature could be considered morally desirable. Through the sharp contrast in these two worldviews, a teleological aspect of the interaction between man and nature emerges. The supposition of a final purpose behind actions, events, or motives determines whether one sees *virtus* or *improbis*. Pliny himself makes this distinction as he considers tree grafting.¹² When man is a partner with nature in the growth of a tree, the tree can thrive and provide fruit

¹⁰ Beagon, 1992, 44–45.

¹¹ Beagon, 1992, 84.

¹² *HN* 14.1, 12.1; Beagon, 1992, 80.

beneficial to the farmer. Shade trees and ornamental trees, on the other hand, are shaped by man alone, apart from any relationship with nature.¹³

Pliny refers to *divina natura* often in his *Historia Naturalis* and sees it as part of the divine, intelligent, governing being. Seneca's Stoic beliefs shape a similar view of nature for him, particularly in its interaction with the divine *logos*. Seneca's epistles are a fertile source for any study of man's morality and interaction with nature.¹⁴ In Epistle 51, Seneca's explanation to Lucilius about why one should avoid certain geographic locations, the author gives an explicit account about his view of the relationship between nature and human nature. The theme of the letter is stated in a maxim from the author: *effeminat animos amoenitas nimia* ('excessive comfort weakens the soul,' 51.10). The location of concern is Baiae, the well-known vacation spot of Romans,¹⁵ and Seneca advises Lucilius to avoid this area as a vacation destination. The author reveals his belief that man can exhibit his moral excellence or deficiency by visiting some geographical locations and avoiding others.

“Quid ergo? ulli loco indicendum est odium?” Minime; sed quemadmodum aliqua vestis sapienti ac probi viro magis convenit quam aliqua, nec ullum colorem ille odit sed aliquem parum putat aptum esse frugalitatem professo, sic regio quoque est quam sapiens vir aut ad sapientiam tendens declinet tamquam alienam bonis moribus.

(*Ep.* 51.2)

“What then? Must your hatred be proclaimed for any place?” Not at all, but just as certain clothing is more fitting for a wise and honest man than other clothing, and he does not scorn any color but that one he thinks is not very appropriate for someone who professes to be frugal, this also is the direction which the wise man—or one directed towards wisdom—avoids as if a stranger to good character.

¹³ Beagon, 1992, 81–83.

¹⁴ For a thorough treatment of Seneca and his implications on modern environmental theories, see Heinonen, 2000. On morality determined through villas, see Henderson, 2004.

¹⁵ On Baiae in the imperial age, see D'Arms, 1970, 119–120.

The metaphor shows Seneca's belief that man and his environment can have a reciprocal effect on one another. Just as a certain appearance conveys certain traits, geographic locations have specific connotations. A person is more likely to conform to the behavior expected for the type of clothing he wears or place he visits. For this reason, and not because of expense, the wise man should avoid Canopus or Baiae (51.3).

Seneca cites the example of Hannibal, whose decision to winter in Campania weakened the man because of the vices of the area: *Una Hannibalem hiberna solverunt et indomitum illum nivibus atque Alpibus virum enervaverunt fomenta Campaniae* ('At the same time, the winter quarters of Campania away from the Alps and snow broke Hannibal and weakened that unconquerable man,' 51.5).¹⁶ The harsh climate of the Alps would have strengthened the resolve of Hannibal and his men, but they were undone by corruption: *armis vicit, vitiis victus est* ('he conquered with arms, but he was conquered by immorality,' 51.5). In this example the physical regions are not just representations of good or evil, they have an effect on those dwelling there. This imprint, Seneca notes, is a normal process and can even be witnessed in nature. The donkey's hooves are hardened by rough roads, but soon grow soft if the animal spends too much time in meadows (51.10). Just as the donkey should be kept from soft grass, lest his hooves grow soft and render him useless, man should avoid areas associated with vice. The relationship is reciprocal; nature impacts the character of humans, therefore humans should avoid some places and hurry to others. By guarding choices of residence and vacation, one is able to show his moral excellence just as he can by donning the right clothes.

Seneca explains to Lucilius that nature has an effect on human nature: *Non tantum corpori sed etiam moribus salubrem locum eligere debemus* ('we should choose a place that is

¹⁶ Cf. Livy, 22.13.1.

beneficial not only for the body, but also for the character,' 51.4); *Severior loci disciplina firmat ingenium aptumque magnis conatibus reddit* ('sterner discipline of the place strengthens one's nature and renders him ready for great endeavors,' 51.11). Combined with the negative example that luxury (*amoenitas*) weakens the soul, Seneca represents physical exertion against nature as beneficial for our character and morality. For this reason Seneca criticizes technological advancements as disrupting man's harmony with nature.¹⁷ In Seneca's view the rise of technology and culture is a departure from the Golden Age when men were stronger due to their reliance on nature. It is not the technology itself that makes men good or evil, but how they apply it. Seneca notes that earlier leaders had homes at Baiae, but they constructed their homes in such a way as to show their leadership, uprightness, and morality even in a luxurious place:

Illi quoque ad quos primos fortuna populi Romani publicas opes transtulit, C. Marius et Cn. Pompeius et Caesar, exstruxerunt quidem villas in regione Baiana, sed illas imposuerunt summis iugis montium: videbatur hoc magis militare, ex edito speculari late longeque subiecta. Aspice quam positionem elegerint, quibus aedificia excitaverint locis et qualia: scies non villas esse sed castra.

(*Ep.* 51.11)

Also those to whom the fortune of the Roman people initially transferred public works, C. Marius and Cn. Pompeius and Caesar, indeed built up villas in the region of Baiae, but they placed them on the highest cliffs of mountains. This seemed to be more warlike and to look out far and wide at the lands underneath from on high. Observe what place they chose, in what places they erected buildings and what sort. You will realize that they are not villas but fortresses.

The villas show the military control that the leaders dwelling within them exhibit. They are fortresses (*castra*), not guarding against some foreign enemy, but representing a place of strength and control in enemy territory. The location of these villas on mountains is also significant; it shows the ruggedness of the region away from the lush plains and allows the villa owner to look down as a Stoic sage from his fortress. Nature as revealed in this letter can control man and

¹⁷ See Heinonen, 2002, 70–73.

thereby either strengthen or weaken him. Man can show his moral excellence by dwelling in a harsh environment, thus allowing his body and mind to be developed and strengthened.

Statius and Vergil

The moralists use examples from nature, life, and history to reinforce their positions, but the poets Statius and Vergil are primarily concerned with the examples themselves. Still, as they focus on nature, life, and to a lesser extent history, they are able to create general impressions of morality. Statius does not see the human relationship with nature in the same way that Vergil does, but the distinctions between the view of nature expressed in the *Georgics* and *Silvae* are brought out paradoxically by the authors' similar rhetorical strategies.

Improving Nature: The Villa of Pollius Felix (*Silvae* 2.2)

Pollius Felix is a literary and philosophical figure of some significance, and Statius dedicates the third book of his *Silvae* to him.¹⁸ His villa overlooked the Bay of Naples in Surrentum, a location well known for its luxurious homes and subject to much censure during the Republic and early empire.¹⁹ The area was also used to showcase nature-domination; here Lucullus—who also built the large *horti Lucullani*—bored through a mountain so that he could have salt water near his home.²⁰ The life of Lucullus prefigures the coming shift in taste from republican Rome to the time of the Flavians. His Tusculan home was said to require more sweeping than ploughing.²¹ This censure reveals the predominant mindset of earlier Romans that the villa was to be a place of fecundity rather than a place of leisure. In the *Georgics*, one does not need a large home or grand gates, but room for cattle and *pietas* (*G.* 2.461–474). Lucullus'

¹⁸ On Pollius Felix, see Nisbet, 1978; Gauly, 2006; Newlands, 2002, 154–198.

¹⁹ Cic. *Att.* 2.8.2: *cratera illum delicatum*; also Varro, *Rust.* 3.3.10. See D'Arms, 1970, 40–42 and Newlands, 2002, 155.

²⁰ Vell. *Pat.* 2.33–34; D'Arms, 1970, 41.

²¹ Pliny, *HN* 18.32; Keaveney, 1992, 145.

villa, on the other hand, offered lavish banquets. The features of his home anticipate those that will be praised in Flavian culture: Domitian's banquet that is the focus of *Silvae* 4.2; a statue of Hercules, like that of Novius Vindex in *Silvae* 4.6; and a large, seascape villa near Misenum, like that of Pollius Felix in *Silvae* 2.2. An audacious display of nature-domination throughout a villa was perhaps the most visible way to display one's wealth.²²

The lavish villa of Lucullus reminds the reader that large homes and extravagant displays of nature did not begin in Domitian's time. Rather, Statius' poems reflect a shift in moral values: what was once considered excessive is now a symbol of devotion to a philosophical lifestyle. Lucullus' and Pollius' villas might elsewhere be considered extravagant, but it is important to remember the three axes along which individuals and societies might differ in their perception of nature. While owners like Lucullus and the moralists like Cicero who criticize them may be close to one another along the vertical plane—all are perhaps among the most learned in their society—the horizontal differences separate them a great deal. The social expectations of their different cultural environments, educations, and individual religious beliefs mean that we should not read Cicero's and Pliny's aversions to lavish displays of nature dominance as the morally righteous and canonical views. Therefore, when Statius praises the great homes, he is not deriding them in secret, but observing them from another point on the vertical and horizontal axis.

Statius sojourns at the house of Felix after the Quinquennial festival in Naples. Nature provides a dramatic backdrop, but the villa takes center stage. The villa with its jetties and shoreline (*hinc atque hinc curvas perrumpunt aequora rupes*; 'curving cliffs on either side pierce crescent water,' 1.3.14) lives in a divine symbiosis with gods and nature. Nymphs bathe where

²² Keaveney, 1992, 149–150.

the bathhouse releases its water into the sea: *levis hic Phorci chorus udaeque crines / Cymodoce viridisque cupit Galatea lavari* ('Here Phorcus' lightsome choir and Cymodoce with her dripping locks and sea-green Galatea delight to bathe,' 19–20). Poseidon himself checks the waves, and Heracles guards the fields:

ante domum tumidae moderator caeruleus undae
excubat, innocui custos laris; huius amico
spumant templa salo. felicia rura tuetur
Alcides. gaudet gemino sub numine portus.
(*Silv.* 2.2.21–24)

Before his house the cerulean governor of the swelling wave keeps ward, guardian of the harmless home; his temple foams with the friendly surge. Alcides protects the happy fields. The haven rejoices under its double deity.

This divine patronage gives joy to the harbor. While disagreement may persist as to whether the *domus* is part of Pollius' home, the bathhouse, or Hercules' shrine, the primary significance from the aspect of control is that the deity is able to preserve the area through a man-made structure.²³ Seneca's belief that one's virtue is affected by the places that he or she frequents visits is reversed here. The buildings built by man are actually able to influence the otherwise savage waves (*hic saevis fluctibus obstat*, 2.2.25).

Nature strives to move from chaos to order, but it requires human intervention to do so. In the next lines the waves and the winds abate, the winter is less harsh, and the sea is calm, all because they have an example of Epicurean *mediocritas* to emulate: *dominique imitantia mores* (29). The recipient of the title *dominus* here is uncertain. *Mores* are typically the habits of humans in Statius, but the house and its tutelage are the subject here, not Pollius himself.²⁴ Here,

²³ Shackleton Bailey, 2003, 124 argues that the *domus* must be Neptune's temple. Van Dam, 1984, 206–207 considers the possibilities of Pollius' house, the baths, and a pavilion but rejects these in favor of the small temple lying on the beach (2.80–85).

²⁴ *Mores* belong to human or anthropomorphic beings in the *Thebais*: 5.233, 7.30, 7.218. In the *Silvae* they often refer to the habits of the subjects of the poem (1.3.90, 2.6.104, 3.1.6) or their associates (2.1.103, 2.6.23).

however, the master is ultimately Pollius. It is uncommon for a *dominus* or *domina* to be anything but a person in the *Silvae*,²⁵ and Statius later emphasizes Pollius' mastery over the property: *locine / ingenium an domini mirer prius?* ('Should I marvel first at the place's ingenuity or its master's?' 2.2.44–45) Statius here underscores the significance of the relationship between man and nature through the ambiguity between the home and its occupant. Pollius is able to be the master of the place through the strength of the villa. The symbiotic relationship between man, Nature, and architecture allows each to benefit from the other. Pollius is able to enjoy an isolated, serene setting, while Nature is improved and is only now a joy (*voluptas*, 33). The building, however, receives much of its beauty from natural surroundings (*dat Natura locum*, 15).

The language of a god watching over the fields (*felicia rura tuetur / Alcides*, 23–24) brings to mind the first line of the *Georgics*: *Quid faciat laetas segetes* ('What tickles the corn to laugh in rows,' 1.1) and the all-inclusive invocation *dique deaeque omnes, studium quibus arva tueri* ('every god and goddess, whose devotion is to watch over the land,' 1.21).²⁶ Statius, however, sees the fields from a different perspective than Vergil. In the agricultural treatise, the author's imprecations aim attention only at the agricultural labor that must be done, but Statius' view of the divine protector colors the land as a medium subject to man-made improvements. The reader follows Statius' gaze as it moves inland towards the main part of the house:

inde per obliquas erepit porticus arces,
urbis opus, longoque domat saxa aspera dorso.
qua prius obscuro permixti pulvere soles
et feritas inamoena viae, nunc ire voluptas
(*Silv.* 2.2.30–33)

²⁵ The only exception I have found, *Naidas, undarum dominas* (1.5.6), does show the deities' mastery over the waves, but it is more an epithet than any statement of their power.

²⁶ Translation from *G.* 1.21 is my own.

From that point a colonnade creeps zigzag through the heights, a city's work, mastering the rugged rocks with its lengthy spine. Where formerly sunshine mingled with foggy dust and the path was wild and ugly, 'tis pleasure now to go.

The portico represents the benefits of overcoming nature. The goal is not destruction, but cultivation. Areas marked by uneven rocks, dirt, and wilderness are now tame. Furthermore, the building itself provides these benefits by subduing the nearby landscape. The reader takes the point of view of a visitor as the author walks along the portico, unhindered by the difficult terrain.

Statius remarks on the villa's architecture, which admits copious light and a panoramic view of the sea. In some areas one can hear the sea, while in others there is only silence (*haec pelagi clamore fremunt, haec tecta sonorous / ignorant fluctus terraeque silentia malunt*, 2.2.50–51). Marble and statues are present in every room, and colonnades remind one more of a city than a private dwelling (30–31).

Statius shifts the viewpoint of the audience to see nature from a visitor's point of view inside the house looking out at nature, rather than from outside looking towards the house. He explains that the villa outstrips any traditional poetic inspiration such as the Muses of Helicon, the Piblean fountain, Pegasus, Castalia or even a poetic fountain belonging to Pollius (36–42).²⁷ The shift from an external to an internal vantage point alters the reader's perspective significantly. Earlier, the house and its relation to nature were seen in their broad context; the sea, the major buildings, and the overall grandeur all contributed to the scene. Now, Statius begins to describe individual elements, though not in much detail. He says, instead, that he could barely stand to look upon the sights: *vix ordine longo / suffecere oculi, vix, dum per singula ducor, / suffecere gradus* ('My eyes scarce held out in the long procession, scarce of my steps, as

²⁷ See van Dam, 1984, 217–220, who explains the mythological and etymological significance of these poetic sources, primarily associated with the Muses.

I was led from item to item,' 42–44). These marvels, much like the waters outside (29), are a reflection of Pollius' character: *locine / ingenium an domini mirer prius?* ('Should I marvel first at the place's ingenuity or its master's?' 44–45). The author notes that the waves copy (*imitantia*, 29) the outside of the house and compares the character (*ingenium*, 45) of the location to the inside of the house. The first verb, *imitor*, almost exclusively means "to copy sensory perceptions" in Statius,²⁸ while *ingenium* is a word often paired with an adjective to describe the innate quality of a person.²⁹ In the *Silvae* the object imitated is regularly found in nature: eyes that shine like stars (1.1.103–04) and clothing that resembles the color of grass (2.1.133). Conversely, nature sometimes imitates humans, like Melior's parrot that can imitate human speech (2.4.2). Thus, nature's disposition is—at least from the human's perspective—both learned (*imitor*) and inherent (*ingenium*). Statius' language reveals a view of man's environment that has been domesticated and made useful to humans. The negative implication then arises that if nature were not submissive or man were not virtuous, life would be very different for humans.

Changing Nature: The Temple of Hercules (*Silvae* 3.1)

The second poem that commemorates a structure built by Pollius Felix celebrates not a villa but a temple dedicated to Hercules. The temple replaces one that was insufficient for the god (3.1.3–4). Not surprisingly, all of the hard work required for the construction of the temple was performed supernaturally. The only tasks of the many workers in unison (*innumerae coiere manus*, 118) are to fell trees, create a foundation, and construct bricks that will keep out forces of nature (118–122). Even the brick making, the only part of the process that describes the task of

²⁸ See, e.g., *Theb.* 7.263 (visual); 7.597 (auditory); 11.46 (change of appearance through dress). As a term for copying perceptions but onto a different medium, *imitor* becomes an important term for the discussion of mimesis in the next chapter. For example, the waves create a physical representation of the owner's mental state, and Statius copies into text the scene's visual characteristics.

²⁹ E.g., *Theb.* 2.482 (lazy), 3.153 (cruel), *Silv.* 2.7.73 (becoming).

controlling nature, is accomplished without a named agent. The significance of agency is a distinguishing factor between the two poems; Vergil describes the actions humans must do because of the will of the gods, while Statius tends to conceal human labor:

coquitur pars umida terrae
protectura hiemes atque exclusura pruinas
indomitusque silex curva fornace liquescit
(*Silv.* 3.1.120–122)

Damp earth is baked to fend off storms and shut out frosts and untamed stone melts in the round furnace.

The winter weather, which can damage trees and livestock (*G.* 2.291–294, 373–375), can be kept out of the villa. Wild rock (*indomitus silex*) becomes tamer in the furnace.³⁰ The remaining work, and the most difficult (*praecipuus labor*), is to carve out the crags and hills that hinder the workers. This is not a labor that humans need undertake, as the god himself digs up the ugly land (*solum deforme*, 126) and scales back the cliffs (*decrescunt scopuli*, 134), leaving the workers to marvel at the task they did not have to complete (*artifices mirantur opus*, 135). Hercules helps with the construction out of his own volition, as he tells Pollius:

nec te, quod solidus contra riget umbo maligni
montis et immenso non umquam exesus ab aevo,
terreat. ipse adero et conamina tanta iuvabo
asperaque invitae perfringam viscera terrae.
incipi et Herculeis fidens hortatibus aude
(*Silv.* 3.1.110–114).

And be not daunted because a solid hump of unfriendly mountain that measureless time has never consumed stands stark in the way. I myself shall be there to assist so great an enterprise, breaking through the rugged bowels of the reluctant earth. Begin; trust Hercules' urging and dare!

Statius depicts a new age in which the gods work to help man. Hercules, who represents new technology and progress, is ready to make the difficult project easy for the workmen. Vergil, to

³⁰ *liquesco* can have the connotation of “to become effeminate or tame,” e.g., Cic. *Tusc.* 2.52.13 and Sen. *Ep.* 26.4.2.

the contrary, focuses on the many steps involved in landscaping. He describes the difficulty with which the farmer irrigates his fields:³¹

quid dicam, iacto qui semine comminus arua
insequitur cumulosque ruit male pinguis harenae,
deinde satis fluuium inducit riuosque sequentis,
et, cum exustus ager morientibus aestuat herbis,
ecce supercilio cliuosi tramitis undam
elicit? illa cadens raucum per leuia murmur
saxa ciet, scatebrisque arentia temperat arua
(*G.* 1.104–110)

Need I single him for praise who follows
hard on the heels of setting seed by crumbling heaps of unreceptive soil
and steering into tracks streams to irrigate the plantings?
And when the countryside's aglow and all that grows is withering in the heat
see how he conjures water from the brim to spill downhill in sloping channels,
a flow that grumbles over gravel, gushing onward
to allay the thirst of scorched places.

Although the process is similar to that described by Statius, here the work itself rather than the result of the work is spotlighted. The actual labor and its benefit to man remains unchanged, but the morality of the landscaping itself becomes the primary concern. While man's interference with nature may be a significant moral question to the observer, it is incongruous to assume a moral defect in the observer who admires the effect. The focus in Pollius' villa and the temple he dedicates to Hercules is the product, not the process.

Pollius has been faithful to undertake this project for Hercules (*pietas*, 12), so Hercules willingly and lovingly assists in the construction (*erubuit risitque deus dilectaque Polli / corda subit blandisque virum complectitur ulnis*, 'The god blushed and laughed and stole into the heart of his beloved Pollius, embracing him in loving arms,' 89–90). The relationship with a divinity

³¹ Vergil's passage is, as Thomas, 1988, 84 shows, a reference to Achilles' struggle against Scamander (*Il.* 21.257–262).

and the significance of that relationship to nature shows a reconciliation with the harmful aspects of farming from descriptions in Vergil's *Georgics*:

pater ipse colendi
haud facilem esse uiam uoluit, primusque per artem
mouit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda
nec torpere graui passus sua regna ueterno.
(*G.* 1.121–24)

For it was Jupiter himself
who willed the ways of husbandry be ones not spared of trouble
and it was he who first, through human skill, broke open land, at pains
to sharpen wits of men and so prevent his own domain being buried
in bone idleness.

Rather than a god who helps mankind with his pious undertakings, Jupiter (*pater ipse*, 121) wanted to make it difficult to take care of the land. Vergil writes that Jupiter made life difficult to sharpen the wit of men (*acuens mortalia corda*, 123) and to discourage laziness (*nec torpere graui passus*, 124). Statius, on the other hand, emphasizes the piety and devotion of his patron Pollius, not the difficulty of his work. The next lines of the *Georgics* portray the Golden Age of mythology, the former days when men, gods, and nature lived communally with one another:

ante Iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni:
ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum
fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus
omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat
(*G.* 1.125–28)

No settler tamed the plains before our Father held his sway
and it was still against the law to stake a claim to part of them.
Men worked towards the common good and the hearth herself,
unbidden, was lavish in all she produced.

In this description, recalling Hesiod's Golden Age, man did not have to work the earth for it to bear produce.³² The negative implication is that man now marks his fields and protects his

³² Hes. (*Op.* 117–118). Nelson, 1998, 85–88 shows that while the Golden Age in *Opera et Dies* was the time before men were forced to work, the Golden Age in the *Georgics* is the “time before men had to fight, either nature or each other” (86). For Vergil's references to Hesiod, see Thomas, 1986.

property because the land does not “bear all things freely.” The vices of greed and theft are products of the present age. Pollius, however, escapes these vices and exhibits piety by defining his territory. Through technology he recreates a private Golden Age. His new age, often seen as a corrupt one by moralists, may be viewed instead as a logical and innovative step forward, progress. Because man was subjected by Jupiter to live in the Iron Age, he was forced to work hard. The eventual reward of this struggle was conquest, and man now redeems his former state in the only way possible—domination of nature.

Nature Lost: The Banquet of Domitian (*Silvae* 4.2)

Silvae 4 begins with a series of three poems devoted to Domitian. The first celebrates the emperor’s seventeenth consulship; the second recounts firsthand one of Domitian’s lavish banquets. The triad concludes with a poem celebrating the *via Domitiana*, a road connecting the Cape of Misenum to the Appian way.³³ In 4.2, Statius recounts the banquet as an amazing spectacle where the participants dine as gods. In one particularly grand scene, Statius describes the setting in which the guests not only dine with the gods but are served by the gods: *ipsa sinus accincta Ceres Bacchusque laborat / sufficere* (‘Ceres herself with her dress girt up and Bacchus toil to supply their wants’, 4.2.34–35). This banquet is portrayed as a reversal of the life described in the *Georgics*. Once again, Statius places the burden of production on the gods rather than on man. Bacchus is frequently associated with the viticulture sections of *Georgics* 2 (e.g., 2.113, 191), but Vergil writes that the farmer must labor continuously to persuade the grapes to grow:

Est etiam ille labor curandis uitibus alter,
cui numquam exhausti satis est
(*G.* 2.397–398)

³³ Domitian was a strong supporter of literature and studied rhetoric under Statius’ father. On Domitian’s literary significance and Statius’ interaction with the emperor, see Coleman, 1986; 2000; Damon, 2002; Malamud, 2007.

Still there's more to do in the upkeep of the vines,
the work that's never finished

Vitis, the grapevine, often receives the name Bacchus through metonymy,³⁴ and the god is mentioned by name only five lines above. However, in the *Silvae* Statius challenges the idea of constant labor. Man needs neither to plow, sow, tend or process the grapes; he only drinks the wine, which is served by Bacchus himself.

Ceres, who helps Bacchus serve Domitian's guests, has also suffered a role reversal. She was the goddess who first mandated that humans till the land with iron, and their amount of labor soon grew:

prima Ceres ferro mortalis uertere terram
instituit, cum iam glandes atque arbuta sacrae
deficerent siluae et uictum Dodona negaret.
mox et frumentis labor additus
(*G.* 1.147–150)

It was Ceres who first taught to men the use of iron plows—
that time wild strawberries and oak berries were scanty in the sacred groves
and Dodona was miserly with her support.
Soon growing grain grew into harder work.

Because of the difficulty of labor and the range of potential problems, Vergil warns the farmer that all of his work may not amount to anything and that he may be compelled to give up and search out acorns fallen from trees: *concussaue famem in siluis solabere quercu* ('you'll be raiding oaks for acorns to ease the ache of hunger,' 2.159). Just like Bacchus' grapes, the grain flows in such abundance at Domitian's banquet that Ceres must work to supply it. Statius' depiction of this banquet has moved beyond the picture of nature controlled by a building. The emperor's house has completely replaced nature.

³⁴ E.g., 2.228, 240, and 275.

Paving Nature's Way: The *Via Domitiana* (*Silvae* 4.3)

The next poem in the corpus, *Silvae* 4.3, completes the triad devoted to Domitian. The *via Domitiana*, which connected Puteoli and the Cape of Misenum to the Appian way, ran approximately forty miles, and its path still serves as a road today.³⁵ The poem, bookended with the typical grandiose praise of the emperor, begins with the laws and civil reforms enacted by the emperor and at the end sees the poet yield to the Sybil of Apollo, who has come all the way to see this road and offer her hymn of praise.

The description of the road, beginning in line 27, illustrates how difficult the route used to be for travelers. The road was previously impassable, marked by mud, dirt (*maligna tellus*, 29), ruts, and animals blocking the way; the new road is smooth, and takes but a couple hours' journey. The description of the earth, which reminds the reader of the type of soil good for olives (*difficiles primum terrae collesque maligni*, 'First that rugged country, those mean slopes,' *G.* 2.179), reinforces the shifting paradigm of virtue.³⁶ The same wasteland that the farmer praises for its limited value does not help those whose only purpose is travel. The former road was difficult, slow, and founded on earth; the new road is easy, swift, and founded on stone.

The task of construction begins with the earth, as the workers must plow and prepare the land:

hic primus labor incohare sulcos
et rescindere limites et alto

³⁵ Statius also wrote a poem, *de Bello Germanico*, about the military conquests of Domitian. Though only four lines of the poem remain (cited in a now lost *scholium* by Valla on Juvenal 4.94; see Courtney, 1993, 360 and Courtney, 1980, 195–197 on how Juvenal mocks Statius' poem in *Sat.* 4), it is generally thought to have celebrated Domitian's victory over the Chatti, giving it a *terminus post quem* of 83 CE (McDermott, 1970, 133–134), though it may have been composed about an earlier victory (Jones, 1971). In either case, it was composed well before *Silvae* 4.3 and likely served as a starting point. Also on the *Germanico*, see Nauta, 2002, 330 and Hardie, 1983, 61.

³⁶ Coleman, 1988, 111 emphasizes the differences between the two poems, noting that in the *Silvae*, the land is 'deliberately obstructive.' The different connotations of the word, however, stem not only from the anthropocentric viewpoint of the authors, but also the purpose of the literary personae (the farmer and the traveler). Nature is a different, culturally influenced construct for each.

egestu penitus cavare terras
(*Silv.* 4.3.40–42)

The first task here was to start on furrows and cut out borders and hollow out the earth far down with a deep excavation.

The passage, full of agricultural language, has caused difficulty for translators. Shackleton Bailey renders it ‘to start on the furrows and cut out the borders,’ and comments that the *limites* may be ditches along the borders, while the *fossae* refer to the road segments.³⁷ Coleman translates, ‘cut back the edges, and hollow out the earth far down with deep excavation.’ Nagle provides a more straightforward rendition: ‘starting work on trenches, cutting out a track, and digging deep within the ground.’³⁸ A reader of the *Georgics*, however, would not be surprised to see plowing and other agricultural terms, especially after the term *labor*. Trenches (*sulci*) are common for farmers, and Vergil teaches that digging furrows is one of the first jobs of the farmer as spring arrives (*G.* 1.43–46). Vergil also compares the digging of trenches to laying a road:

indulge ordinibus; nec setius omnis in unguem
arboribus positus secto uia limite quadret
(*G.* 2.277–278)

Be generous with room between the rows. Make sure that they run parallel
and still maintain right angles with the boundary lines

Vergil tells the farmer to allow plenty of room for the rows (*ordines*, a less specific synonym of *sulci*), to align the rows at right angles, and square the rows with the boundary marker. The phrase *rescindere limites* therefore carries the same denotation as Vergil’s *secto . . . limite*. The connotation, when considering the road, is less a technical term for a type of boundary and more a metaphor expressing the agricultural practice of furrowing brought to a new level. Statius

³⁷ Shackleton Bailey 2003, 259.

³⁸ Coleman 1988, 15; Nagle 2004, 129.

praises the difference between the two ages. Vergil's farmer worked the trenches alone, while Domitian's road is built with limitless manpower: *o quantae pariter manus laborant!* (49).

An unusual feature of this poem is the detailed description of the actual construction of the work that Statius commemorates (40–55). Statius describes how the topsoil was removed, a smooth bed was laid, and the blocks were set. After completion, the river god Vulturnus, whose marshes were bridged by the new road, rises from his banks and praises the work. He repents that he used to run wild and overflow his banks, but now he is thankful to be civilized by this great leader.

In addition to the detailed account of the labor required for the construction process, this poem differs from the previous nature poems in a number of ways. First, rather than a single villa or temple that has dominated nature in a single spot, the *via Domitiana* is a large-scale building project that tames nature for miles. Second, there are a number of detailed references to the former state of the ground, rather than brief mentions.³⁹ Finally, this poem differs in meter from Statius' and Vergil's dactylic hexameter. In fact, it is the longest of only three hendecasyllabic poems in the thirty-two poems of the corpus, and one of only six that are not composed in hexameter. It is also the only hendecasyllabic poem not to appear at the end of the book (as 1.6 and 2.7), though it does complete the Domitianic triad (4.1–4.3). As Coleman notes, its rapid pace is suitable for the rapid construction of the road.⁴⁰

The differences in form and content may be the natural result of a more practical building project. Rather than a villa or temple, which affect only a limited number of viewers, the road provided service from Naples to the *via Appia* and eventually to Rome, so it was useful to many.

³⁹ E.g., the former state of the land in *Silvae* 3.1.12–14.

⁴⁰ Coleman, 1988, 105.

The description of the former road begins:

Hic quondam piger axe vectus uno
nutabat cruce pendula viator
sorbebatque rotas maligna tellus,
et plebs in mediis Latina campis
horrebat mala navigationis;
nec cursus agiles, sed impeditum
tardabant iter orbitae tenaces,
dum pondus nimium querens sub alta
repat languida quadrupes statera.
at nunc, quae solidum diem terebat,
horarum via facta vix duarum.
non tensae volucrum per astra pennae
nec volucius ibitis carinae

(*Silv.* 4.3.27–39)

Here once the tardy traveler borne on a single axle would sway on a pendulous pole as the malignant earth sucked in his wheels, and the Latian folk feared the woes of navigation in the midst of the plain. No nimble runs; sticky ruts slowed the hampered journey, while the fainting beasts crawled beneath their high yoke, grumbling at too heavy a load. But now the route that used to wear out a day barely takes two hours. The stretched wings of birds flying through the stars will not go faster, nor ships either.

Statius is careful to emphasize time (*hic quondam . . . at nunc*) as he alerts the reader to the shift from the former state to the latter. Travel along the old road was a result of the weight of the cart along the earthen path: *piger, nutabat, maligna tellus, mala navigationis, nec cursus, tardabant, pondus*. The foundation of the new road causes no such difficulty, and Statius compares a journey along the surface of the road to flying in the air or sailing on a ship. The ancient traveler has the impression that any means of travel—land, water, or air—may be possible through the application of technology.

Just as the land benefited from man's control in the villa poems, the river god Vulturnus salutes the road and thanks it for its domination. His speech begins with a very flattering and submissive address: *camporum bone conditor meorum* ('Kind orderer of my plains,' 4.3.67). The name *conditor* is striking here. If the road—and its builder Domitian—is the founder of Vulturnus' fields, the implication is that the land had no value before the emperor's work. It is as

if no field existed because there was nothing useful to humans. By ascribing to the road the creative work of *Natura artifex*, the river god praises Domitian as a divinity. Vulturnus then repents of his wild ways (*turbidus minaxque*, 76) and admits that he used to tear up the lands and whirl around woods. Now, however, he yields:

sed grates ago servitusque tanti est,
quod sub te duce, te iubente, cessi,
quod tu maximus arbiter meaeque
victor perpetuus legere ripae
(*Silv.* 4.3.81–84)

But I give you thanks and my servitude is worthwhile because I have yielded under *your* guidance at *your* command, and because men shall read of you as supreme arbiter and conqueror of my bank.

The once wild river is grateful that it no longer lies in its filth (*sordere*, 86) while covered with barren soil (*sterilis soli*, 87). These strongly anthropocentric statements emphasize the moral excellence exhibited by Domitian. In contrast to others who consider the human role in nature, Statius does not hold a negative valuation of modification and improvement. Rather than the careful blending to which Pliny ascribes, man here shows his virtue through technology that helps overcome nature, as found in the later Enlightenment thought of Bacon. The statements emphasize the human ability and need to control the inconvenient aspects of nature. Humans needed to teach the river to stay in its boundaries: *ripas habitare nescientem* (74). Man has become the controlling force in his relationship with nature.

Conclusion

The uniqueness of the diverse collection of poems titled *Silvae* has led to a difficulty in the understanding and interpretation of Statius' work. As stand-alone ekphraseis they have no direct predecessor in Latin or Greek literature, and the author's praise of the same type of landscaping and architecture condemned by his literary predecessors further distinguishes the *Silvae* from any typical genre. His tone often suggests that humans must control their surroundings with military

force and precision for the sake of progress. This and the previous chapter, however, have described the significance of culture, philosophy, and individual morality hold towards the understanding of what nature and progress mean. A fruitful reading of the *Silvae* therefore cannot come from a seemingly objective moral interpretation of the human role in nature, and the *Georgics* of Vergil stand out as a work that can illuminate some of the difficult questions raised in the poetry of Statius. Vergil too describes the need for a military struggle against the environment but with different purposes and consequences. When the *Silvae* are read through the interpretive lens of the *Georgics*, some difficult areas of interpretation, while not answered, are able to be viewed in a new and informative light. The remaining chapters probe some of these lines of interpretation in the *Silvae* by pairing them with the *Georgics*. The authors' cultural representation of nature is revealed through their use of military language and ekphrasis, and thus the program, genre, and significance of the *Silvae* may be better understood.

CHAPTER 4 THE NATURE OF EXPRESSION

The military metaphors for farming and landscaping used by Vergil and Statius can be traced to the Roman traditions of Cato and Varro, who both spoke of farming in terms associated with the military.¹ In his *praefatio*, Cato states that farmers are the best soldiers: *at ex agricolis et uiri fortissimi et milites strenuissimi gignuntur* ('Farmers make the strongest men and most determined soldiers,' *Agr. Orig.* pref. 4).² Cicero speaks of agriculture as a source of *virtus* and *gloria*, attributes usually gained through heroics in battle.³ In agriculture and landscape, man digs up earth, reroutes water, and arranges plants in shapes best suited for his own purposes. In the *Georgics*, nature is the first and primary example of creation, but now humans operate in the present age, when they are forced to fight and work against a nature that no longer expresses its freely generative properties. The farmer's paradox, then, is that he must perform these acts of violence against nature—striking the earth, creating new unnatural forms through grafting, and changing the landscape—to survive, yet by every action he further strains the ideal Saturnian relationship. In the poetry of Statius, nature is instead an initial creative force and supplies a medium for man to prove his moral quality attained through work, technological progress, and philosophical thought.⁴

¹ Columella also follows this tradition, speaking of man's fight against nature (1.1.18, 11.1.17, 12.2.5). Gale, 1998, 102–03 provides a summary of Roman writers who liken farming to military or political authority. Haverman, 1977 analyzes two of Varro's military similes adopted by Vergil, the quincunx passage (*G.* 2.276–284) and a comparison of shepherds and soldiers (3.339–348). See also the study of military imagery in Plautus: MacCary, 1968. The connection is not, of course, a uniquely Roman concept; the reverse of the metaphor—language of nature used to describe battle—occurs frequently in Homer: θῆνε γὰρ ἄμ πεδίον ποταμῷ πλήθοντι ἔοικῶς / χειμάρρῳ ('For he [Diomedes] rushed across the plain like a river swollen by a winter torrent.' *Il.* 5.87–88). On water used as military imagery in the *Iliad*, see Fenno, 2005.

² On the military considerations of farming in Cato's preface, see McDonnell, 2006, 56–68.

³ See e.g., Cic. *Phil.* 11.18, *Red. sen.* 5. McDonnell, 2006, 58, n130 states that the combination of *gloria* and *virtus* is "almost always has a martial reference."

⁴ While the ubiquity of the metonymical connection between farming and fighting is too large to explore here, on the general use of military language in the *Silvae*, see Cancik, 1968, 69; Van Dam, 1984, 227; and Newlands, 2002,

Vergil pits man against nature in a morally ambiguous battle by using military diction and metaphor to describe the constant struggle of the farmer. Statius uses two primary methods to represent human morality through control of nature. First, like Vergil, he consistently shapes the moral value of the language but does so to depict man as a beneficent master over nature. Second, he employs military language in describing the relationship with nature but expresses man as a guardian of nature rather than a soldier engaged in a fight against nature. Whether Statius adopts his practice from Vergil or simply adapts the Roman connection between farming and battle, his use of military language to describe the landscapes, villas, and *vedute* of his patrons is more conspicuous than in the *Georgics*. The subtlety and ambiguity of the *Georgics* is lacking in Statius' laudatory descriptions, likely due to differences in genre. Statius does not have 500 lines, four books, and the structural unity Vergil uses in his *Georgics* to establish his theme. If he is to emphasize the interactions among mankind, landscaping, nature, and morality, the descriptions must be as grandiose as the buildings and landscapes he describes. Perhaps because of the lack of subtlety, the military aspects of Statius' diction have held less appeal for scholars than the carefully controlled and ambiguous metaphors of Vergil. Statius, however, adopts the motif of farming and fighting from the *Georgics*, then recasts it for different purposes. Comparison reveals the diverging morality as well as the political and cultural changes of the two epochs of the authors.

Vergil often uses language that connotes fighting or strategy to express the farmer's struggle against nature to maintain his farm and sustain his family. In Books 1 and 2 we read of hand-to-hand combat (*comminus* 1.104), a farmer's weapons (*duris agrestibus arma*, 1.160), the

154–198. On use in the *Georgics*, see Wilkinson, 1969, 88–89. While an important step in this chapter is to establish the type of military language that Vergil and Statius use (a foundation already well paved), the ultimate goal is to analyze the cultural shifts that become apparent by the juxtaposition of the two works.

destruction of homes (*antiquasque domos auium cum stirpibus imis / eruit* 2.209–210), and the use of imperial power (*exerce imperia*, 2.370). Such military language is no less prevalent in the *Silvae*, but in Statius' poetry buildings cooperate with man to exert control over the environment. Guardian villas protect rivers (*alternas servant praetoria ripas*, 1.3.25), others act as watchtowers (*speculatrix villa*, 2.2.3), and landowners conquer their land (*domuit possessor*, 2.2.56). Though both authors incorporate military language to represent the actions and accomplishments of man in his environment, Vergil's language includes terms of active struggle and aggression, while Statius uses the language of guardianship and oversight in the *Silvae*.

Farming and Fighting

The Latin noun and adjective *militia* and *militaris* hold semantic ranges similar to the English term *military*, which can be a noun or an adjective. The terms indicate an assembly of soldiers as well as events and elements belonging to soldiers or war. They may also be used in a more abstract manner to describe events that one identifies with a campaign or even attitudes such as courage.

The connection between plowing fields and going to war stems from the very origins and history of Rome.⁵ Landowners were responsible for taking up arms and defending their land, so they were at the same time farmers and soldiers. In Livy (3.26–29) Cincinnatus is a hero because of his devotion to his land and service to the military. When the Romans first approach the farmer, he is working in his field: *seu fossam fodiens palae innixus, seu cum araret, operi certe, id quod constat, agresti intentus* ('whether he was hunched over a spade digging a trench or plowing, it is at least agreed that he was engaged in rustic business,' 3.26.9). Soon, on the field

⁵ See Newlands, 2002, 180–181. She cites Pliny, *HN* 18.4.19, who notes that a piece of land was fertile because generals cultivated the land with the same attention that they used in war. For this reason the domination of nature is not destructive but a metaphor for creating social justice.

of battle, he gives the order to his troops to build a palisade: *clamore sublato ante se quemque ducere fossam et iacere uallum* ('[he commanded that] after a shout was raised, everyone dig a trench and put up the wall,' 3.28.2). Livy primes the battlefield account by his depiction of the dictator in his field. The trench (*fossa*) that Cincinnatus dug as a farmer becomes the trench he commands soldiers to dig. Thus, Livy not only infers the connection between Cincinnatus' two roles, he frames it explicitly in the minds of his readers.

In addition to Livy's historiographic sketch of a Roman hero, it is also helpful to consider the practical language of Caesar. One passage in the *Bellum Civile* in particular shows the close connection between farming and fighting. Preparing to attack the Gauls and Vercingetorix, Caesar exhorts his troops: *cohortatus ut aliquando pro tantis laboribus fructum victoriae perciperent* ('He urged them to collect the fruit of victory proportionate to their work,' *B Civ.* 7.27.2). The phrase *fructum percipere* appears at least eighteen times in Cicero to indicate the reward of one's efforts, and Columella uses this phrase about a literal harvest of fruit: *si latiores patentioresque feceris, laetiores uberioresque fructus percipies* ('if you make them more spread out and open, you will reap a very healthy and plentiful harvest.' 5.10.3).⁶ From both the agricultural and martial perspective of the soldier-farmer, labor is neither a means to some moral growth nor the source of some existential identity conflict. Rather, work is necessary for survival, and at times the laborer receives some benefit for his actions.

Caesar's war commentaries provide a cache for the military metaphors of Vergil and Statius. There are of course practical implements of battle-like siege weapons (*vineae*, *B Gall.* 2.12.3), guardian cohorts (*praetoria*, *B Gall.* 1.40.15), and ramparts (*aggeres*, *B Civ.* 2.1.4).

⁶ I find seven instances in Columella (*De Arboribus* 4.1.3, 6.1.4, *De re rustica* 1.3.2.5, 2.1.7.4, 5.10.3.5, 6.pref.4.10, 7.3.13.4, 8.16.6.6). See, e.g., Cicero, *Verr.* 2.3.227, 2.5.77, *Sen.* 70.9, *Off.* 1.59.6; cf. Columella 8.16.6, which resembles Vergil's instruction on the *quincunx* pattern for planting, to be discussed below.

Caesar also speaks frequently of drawing up a battle line (*instruit aciem*, e.g., *B Gall.* 1.22.3, 1.65.2, 1.70.3; *B Civ.* 2.26.4). In one description of the land of the Aduataci, he explains that it is well defended by nature.

cunctis oppidis castellisque desertis sua omnia in unum oppidum egregie natura munitum contulerunt. quod cum ex omnibus in circuitu partibus altissimas rupes despectusque haberet, una ex parte leniter acclivis aditus in latitudinem non amplius ducentorum pedum relinquebatur.

(*B Gall.* 2.29.2)

After all the towns and strongholds were abandoned, they [the Aduataci] brought all their things into one town that was especially fortified by nature. Because even though from all parts in a circle it had very tall cliffs and advantageous positions, there remained from one direction a gently rising slope not more than 200 feet.

Caesar paradoxically states that the place is well defended apart from human intervention, but it is only defensive in that it protects humans. The term *nature* is used to describe the creative force over which man has no initial control. He must therefore employ his own nature to gain this control. Caesar's men must adapt to the natural setting to besiege their enemy, Vergil's farmer must develop methods to gain control over nature, and Statius' wealthy patrons provide examples of those who have successfully gained control.

Only three times does Caesar use either a form of *dominare* / *dominus* or *domitare*, and the language is never self-referential. It is always used as a negative term, describing the habits of enemies, never himself. Once Caesar defeated the Aduataci, they pleaded with him not to take their weapons, lest they be killed by those they used to master (*quam ab his per cruciatum interfici, inter quos dominari consuessent, B Gall.* 2.31.6). In the *Bellum Civile*, Pompey diverts armies headed to Asia and Syria and brings them into his own power and control (*quas ab itinere Asiae Syriaeque ad suam potentiam dominatumque converterat, rem ad arma deduci studebat. B Civ.* 1.4.5). In a fragment of *Anticato*, Caesar also speaks of his enemy as one driven by control (*dominatuque mandatus, Anticatonis* 2.5).

In the *Georgics* and *Silvae*, the dominant agricultural metaphors depict man acting either as aggressor against nature or sentinel against it. This difference is slightly complicated by the fact that the poets—especially Statius—adopt at times the perspective of the land and at times the perspective of the human agent. Moreover, military imagery is by necessity metaphorical, for it is a poetic description of man’s interaction with nature. Thus, the metaphors range from abstract concepts or mythological references such as a deity (e.g., Mars, *Silv.* 1.1.18) to practical terms and physical objects such as weapons (*G.* 1.160).

Statius’s military diction includes the weapons and the people required to own and control the forces of nature. Rocks are hewn back by enemies with a sword (*labor est excindere dextra / oppositas rupes et saxa negantia ferro*, *Silvae* 3.1.123–124). *Ferrum* here could be taken as the literal iron rather than the metaphorical sword, but the terms *excindere*, *oppositas*, and *negantia* anticipate an image of enemies fighting with real weapons, though that image is interrupted by geographic enemies, cliffs (*rupes*) and rocks (*saxa*). The chiasmus of cliffs and rocks (*rupes et saxa*) interposes the geographic enemies and makes the image more vivid.

At the beginning of *Silvae* 4.3, Statius describes the construction of the *Via Domitiana* as a swift and industrious process. As the workers rush to complete the new road, the sounds of frantic construction and the din of battle are confused:

Quis duri silicis gravisque ferri
immanis sonus aequori propinquum
saxosae latus Appiae replevit?
certe non Libycae sonant catervae
nec dux advena peierante bello
Campanos quatit inquietus agros.
(*Silv.* 4.3.1–6)

What monstrous sound of hard flint and heavy iron has filled paved Appia on the side that borders the sea? For sure ’tis not the sound of Libyan squadrons, neither does a restless foreign captain shake Campania’s fields in perfidious warfare.

The sound of the iron and the sound of the sword are conflated here, as Statius asserts that the construction of this road is not a fight like that against Hannibal's armies (*Libycae . . . catervae*, 4), but against the sandy ground that made travel so difficult (*solidat graves harenas*, 4.3.23). Elsewhere, Statius describes the onset of nature's attacks in terms of battle formations (*agmina*). Storms will not terrify Domitian's equestrian statue: *Aeolii non agmina carceris horret* ('This work fears not . . . the troops of Aeolus' dungeon.' *Silv.* 1.1.92).

This sculpted horse advances through the captive Rhine (*captivi Rheni*, 1.1.51) in a static display of power of the emperor over both human enemies and the hazardous geography of the river. Statius and Pollius Felix ward off the sun's rays with the shade of a tree, using a plant as a defensive weapon (*patula defendimus arbore soles*, *Silv.* 3.1.70), and Manilius Vopiscus owns a pair of homes that defend him from the heat:

certantesque sibi dominum defendere villas,
 . . .
 talis hiems tectis, frangunt sic improba solem
 frigora.

(*Silv.* 1.3.4, 7–8)

the mansions that vie to keep their master each for herself . . . Such winter is in the edifice,
 unconscionable cools defeat the sun.

Often the earth, acknowledging man's authority, yields to his advances. The personified Vulturnus willingly yields to Domitian's road: *sub te duce, te iubente, cessi* ('I have yielded under your guidance at your command,' 4.3.82). In the *Silvae*, nature is alternatively described as a conquered enemy or a willingly submissive vassal. A defeated nature (*natura . . . victa*, 2.2.52) yields to the landowner and allows him to change the landscape as he sees fit. Human creations often act as a guardian over the forces of nature. Statius describes the villa of Pollius Felix as a

sentinel and a fortress (*speculatrix villa*, 2.2.3; *praetoria*, 2.2.49),⁷ and bricks in the temple of Hercules keep out the winter frost (*protectura hiemes et exclusura pruinas*, 3.1.121). The villa of Vopiscus acts as a reinforced rampart to the nearby water (*gemino . . . aggere*, 1.3.64).⁸

Perhaps the most striking use of military language is the frequent use of words with the *dom-* root. The land around the villa of Pollius Felix has been completely transformed:

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.

(*Silv.* 2.2.54–58)

Where you see level ground, there used to be a hill; the building you now enter was wilderness; where now you see lofty woods, there was not even land. The occupant has tamed it all; the soil rejoices as he shapes rocks or expels them.

Hills are leveled (54), land developed (55–56), and rocks removed (57). Statius summarizes this massive landscaping project with two words: *domuit possessor* (56). The tract is so overwhelming that Statius knows not whether he should praise the *ingenium* (nature) of the place or its master first (*locine / ingenium an domini mirer prius?* 45). Statius additionally charges the land to continue in its role as an obedient slave or servant:

Sis felix, tellus, dominis ambobus in annos
Mygdonii Pyliique senis nec nobile mutes
servitium

(*Silv.* 2.2.107–109)

⁷ On the use of these terms to describe the villa, see Newlands, 2002, 179, who shows that Statius recounts the estate of Felix in terms of an emperor governing the state. The *praetoria*, therefore, can be interpreted as Felix's headquarters of operation. She also rightly emphasizes (n75) that *speculatrix* does not indicate that man is ultimately victorious against nature (*contra* Van Dam, 1984, 196), but is able to mount a capable defense against the elements. Cf E.g., Cic. *Nat. D.* 3.47.1: *Furiae deae sunt, speculatrices credo et vindices facinorum et sceleris*; 'The Furies are goddesses, investigators I would say, and avengers of crimes and sins.'; C. Val. Flac, *Argo.* 7.190, *speculatrix Iuno*.

⁸ Masters, 1992, 30–39 explores the poetic implications of *agger*. Lucan describes Caesar's fortification as an *agger* (*B Civ* 2.678–679), an exaggerated metaphor that is symbolic of Lucan's poetry itself (Masters, 34). Lucan assimilates military terms to the *labor* of poetic composition.

Be fruitful for your lord and lady, earth, unto the years of the Mygdonian ancient and the Pylia, nor change your noble bondage!

Vopiscus' villa defends him as the *dominus* (1.3.4). He is also called the *dominus* of a tree on his property, which he has kindly allowed to live (1.3.61).⁹ If humans are the masters, then nature takes on the characteristics of a slave in Statius. The readiness of the earth to be transformed is expressed through the metaphor of a willing and unwilling slave. The notion of slavery further identifies the place of nature in the *Silvae*, for slaves are not standard opponents in battle but the reward of a victorious campaign.

The desire for human mastery over nature is no less prevalent in the *Georgics* than in the *Silvae*.¹⁰ Just as the *dom-* root appears repeatedly in Statius, Vergil's farmer also seeks to dominate the land. Vergil explains that the seventh day is lucky for domesticating cows (*felix . . . / domitare boves*, 1.285).¹¹ When the Iron Age began, Ceres forced man to turn the soil, which would soon become difficult and barren (1.147–154). The final symptom of this change in nature is that useless wild oats, not crops, dominate (*steriles dominantur avenae*, 1.154). Vergil next gives a list of difficult tasks the farmer must complete to escape from this ordeal: he must raid the grass (*herbam insectabere*, 155), frighten away the birds (*terrebis avis*, 156), cut back the

⁹ See also 2.2.21: *stagna modesta iacent dominique imitantia mores* ('the pool lies modest and untroubled, imitating its master's manners'), 2.2.81–82: *domino contra recubante proculque / Surrentina tuus spectat praetoria Limon* ('your own Limon is vexed that his lord rests opposite as from afar he views your Surrentine palace'), and 3.1.122: *indomitus silex* ('untamed stone'). Cf. the bachelor who chops down elm trees for a better view over the Lucrine lake (Hor., *Carm.* 2.15.1–5). Armstrong (2009, 89–90) cites the Horace passage in a useful discussion of the tension between public and private responses to displays of wealth and power.

¹⁰ See Gale, 2000, 23, for a summary of the role of agriculture and war at the end of each book of the *Georgics* and 32–35 for the ending of Book 1 in particular.

¹¹ The word *domitare* does not necessarily have military resonance here, as it is the typical word for domesticating animals. Vergil's use of the word here does however emphasize a strict level of control. Thomas, 1988, 117 notes the faint similarities between Vergil and Hesiod in this passage. Vergil departs from Hesiod's dates for the best time to plant or break in oxen, but he also—I believe significantly—expresses a greater level of control than his source. Hesiod states simply ἐπι ζυγὸν ἀχέειν θείναι / βοῦσι καὶ ἡμιόνοισι καὶ ἵπποις ὠκυπόδεσσι ('[Some say the 27th is the best] to put the yoke on the neck of cows and mules and swift footed horses.', *Op.* 815–816). As Thomas notes, Vergil copies the exegetical infinitives of Hesiod (*felix domitare*; ἀρίστην θείναι). This grammatical allusion that calls attention to the escalation of the language further reveals Vergil's poem as one of man's need to control nature.

overgrowth with a blade (*falce premes umbras*, 157), and even pray to the gods (*votisque vocaveris imbrem*, 157), lest he spends his day eating acorns (*concussaue famem in silvis solabere quercu*, 159). This is the bleak picture of the farmer's anxiety: he must dominate nature lest he be dominated by her.¹²

In the *Georgics*, a reader sees similar types of military language, but with a greater emphasis on practical implements and aggressive fighting. The most common use of military language involves the tools of warfare, such as swords (*ferro*, 1.50, 143; *ensem*, 1.508) and arms (*arma*, 1.160). Vergil teaches his reader to line up his crops like a battle line (*acies*, 2.281). The first book culminates in a real battle, after which farmers will plough up weapons. Here Vergil transitions from invoking farming through military language to describing the aftermath of battle through images of agriculture:

scilicet et tempus ueniet, cum finibus illis
agricola incuruo terram molitus aratro
exesa inueniet scabra robigine pila,
aut grauibus rastris galeas pulsabit inanis
grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulcris.
(*G.* 1.493–497)

Nothing surer than the time will come when, in those fields,
a farmer plowing will unearth
rough and rusted javelins and hear his heavy hoe
echo on the sides of empty helmets and stare in open eyed amazement
at the bones of heroes he's just happened on.

Vergil, lamenting the civil war that took many soldiers from their fields and reallocated fields to soldiers, mixes the implements of farming and fighting together in the same ground: the plow, spears, helmets, hoes and corpses are piled in one area of land completely robbed of its productivity and natural splendor.

¹² Gale, 2000, 255–256 lists additional terms in this passage such as *praetendere* (defend), *insidias* (ambush), *incendere* (burn), and *antes* (ranks).

In addition to the weapons and tools required for the farmer, Vergil speaks of the farmers' actions through martial language. A form of *ruo* appears four times in the first two books, describing twice the actions of a farmer against nature (1.105, 2.210) and twice the advance of nature against a helpless farmer (1.313, 1.324). In one of these attacks, the farmer even engages with his enemy in hand-to-hand combat:

quid dicam, iacto qui semine comminus arva
insequitur cumulosque ruit male pinguis harenae (1.104–405)

What am I to say of him who, once his seed is cast, launches a hands-on attack on his fields and thrashes the unfertile sand.¹³

The farmer is described in terms of a soldier, throwing down his weapons (*iacto*) and fighting in hand-to-hand combat (*comminus*) with his enemy, but the passage (1.104–110) also invokes a scene of the warrior Achilles fighting the river Scamander (*Il.* 21.257–262). As Thomas notes, this is typical of how Vergil poeticizes the *Georgics*: he adapts a Homeric simile to describe mundane activities.¹⁴ At the same time, he makes practical the mythical description of a literary hero. These lines therefore both elevate a common task through poetic description and diminish a legend by reappropriating it with the description of a farmer desperate to grow crops and ensure his own survival against famine. In the *Bellum Gallicum*, Caesar's troops also cast their weapons aside and fight in close combat: *relictis pilis comminus gladiis pugnatum est*, 'After the spears were left they fought in close combat with swords,' *B Gall* 1.52.4). Man is depicted without the inherent control over nature that one finds in the *Silvae* or epic poetry, but in a lowered position as he beats the ground with his fists to expel its barrenness. The comedic and futile image of a

¹³ The translation is my own, but relies on the notes of Page, 1898, 195, who explains *male* as negating the typically positive connotation of *pinguis* when describing soil. Cf. Keightley, 1847, 154: "The image is that of the Roman soldier throwing his *pilum*, and then attacking the foe sword in hand."

¹⁴ For the full discussion, see Thomas, 1988, 84–85.

farmer fighting his soil in hand-to-hand combat characterizes the intense need for control that may never be gained.

Because Vergil and Statius use military language in their works, they inevitably hit upon the moral value of warfare itself. Thus both authors position themselves in a tradition of warfare that in certain cases holds a negative value for domination. Through the interplay between the morality of farming and fighting, both authors reshape the tradition.

The cultivation of crops requires physical violence and careful control, as the farmer must strike the earth, bring supplies to the desired plants, remove the undesired, and arrange them all in proper rows. While it is possible to consider the farmer-soldier metaphor in a wholly positive light as the triumph of man over nature, Thomas questions this interpretation and points to moral ambiguity present in farming.¹⁵ Perkell demonstrates that military language appears throughout Vergil's description of Iron Age farming methods. She notes that verbs such as *captare* and *fallere* (139), *verberat* (141), and *scindebant* (144) are evidence that "the destruction and domination of natural things becomes a leitmotif of the poem."¹⁶ Similarly, in Vergil's description of taming the sea in 2.161–164, Perkell sees a reference to Xerxes' *hybris* in lashing the sea.¹⁷ The various methods (*artes*, 145) that the farmer uses are in fact destructive, but they

¹⁵ For a summary of the positive and negative interpretations, see Thomas 1982 and Cramer, 1998. Morgan, 1999, however, rejects the interpretation of Thomas and sees a thoroughly positive reading of the poem.

¹⁶ Perkell, 1989, 34. Pavlovskis, 1973, 1–53 shows how human control over nature is a major theme throughout Imperial Age literature and art. He traces these themes through later Latin poets until they "well-nigh disappear from literature" (52). Kenney, 1984, 192–196, demonstrates the important effect that Statius' descriptions of dominating nature held on the later poet Ausonius, as well as Rutilius Namantianus and Sidonius Apollinaris. Hulls, 2007 sees tension arising from military language used at a public banquet in *Silvae* 4.2.

¹⁷ Perkell, 1989, 105. See also Newlands, 2002, 291–292, 304 on the comparison of Xerxes' bridge with that of Domitian in *Silvae* 4.3. She notes that large building projects like canals were associated most often with tyrannical rulers, and there is always a danger in such projects of upsetting the gods. Voltumnus' speech, however, shows that he is in full approval of the emperor's plan, thus assuaging the possible fear of *hybris*.

are required for his survival. While the farmer may not attain moral benefit from his actions, he does gain that which can be measured as if on a battlefield.¹⁸

The moral ambiguity—perhaps phrased in military terms as a pyrrhic victory—present in the *Georgics* does emphasize the lost pleasures and toils gained since the Golden Age, but Vergil does not draw this to its logical conclusion and portray a pessimistic view of the present age. Instead, the difficult aspects of *labor* as presented in the *Georgics* require the reader to consider both their positive and negative impact. It would not be possible to appreciate the absence of agricultural labor unless one has been forced to farm, and the impact of peace and freedom cannot be realized unless one has seen battle.¹⁹ This same ambiguity lies in Vergil's conclusion that Jupiter forced humans to work in order to sharpen their minds (1.121–125). The toil has both positive and negative effects on man, just as his actions against nature have both beneficial and detrimental effects. It is only with difficulty that man attains virtue: *curis acuens mortalia corda* ('honing the hearts of men with pain,' 1.123). The view of the human struggle as an end in itself is perhaps the biggest point of departure for the poetic manifestations of military language from realistic descriptions such as that in Caesar. Vergil's farmer is not fighting a battle that brings some sort of victory; the successful outcome for him is survival. Similarly, Statius' language reveals his patrons not as destroyers but as governing provincials, securely positioned and prepared for attacks of nature.²⁰ Therefore, the military imagery cannot be taken too far, for the battle against nature is not towards some greater end. In both poets the teleological aspect of real military campaigns is lacking, or is at least less clear, in the human campaign to control nature.

¹⁸ See Perkell, 1989, 36.

¹⁹ This is perhaps the inverse of the argument of Perkell, 1989, 91: "The Golden Age functions as a praise of absence, the absence of certain humane values that create moral community."

²⁰ This guardianship, not victory, is emphasized by the description of the villa as a *speculatrix* and *praetoria* (Newlands, 2002, 179, esp. n75).

Gale furthermore shows that Vergil, through his interaction with Lucretius, advocates a life of reflection and meditation but acknowledges the reality that work is necessary.²¹ Poetry of the early empire does not reject warfare *in toto*, but poets do begin to question the concept of war as something good for Rome and for those she conquers.²² Vergil recalls Lucretius' view of culture and agriculture, that "natural processes provide the *specimen* or model for human creativity, and then the arts and sciences are gradually refined by a process of trial and error."²³ The difficulties that readers of the *Georgics* have faced over the years, such as the subjective moral value of agriculture and whether the farmer is a model or a reprobate, stem from ambiguities and fluctuations in the author himself.²⁴ Vergil has therefore changed Lucretius' paradigm. Peace is not isolation and the rejection of conflict, but the result of the necessary evil of warfare. Similarly, agriculture is not necessarily positive or negative, but the necessary result of labor imposed on men after the Golden Age.²⁵

Recently, Kronenberg has argued that Vergil in the *Georgics* not only removes morality from the practice of agriculture but also exploits the tension between religion and science.²⁶ The

²¹ Gale, 1998.

²² Gale, 1998, 101–102. On the ideal intention of war as a means to peace, see also Lyne, 1983. Lyne and Gale provide a helpful discussion of the oft-quoted advice of Anchises to Aeneas in *Aen* 6.851–853:

tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
(hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem,
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.

²³ Gale, 2000, 210, referring to Lucretius: *specimen . . . / ipsa fuit rerum primum natura creatrix* ('nature the creator herself was the first model of events,' 5.1362). See also Gale, 2000, 208–209. In Vergil's description, nature as the first model means that man must adopt the rules of nature in order to tame her. Statius, on the other hand, states that *natura creatrix* submits herself to mankind's governance.

²⁴ See Gale, 1998, 110.

²⁵ Gale, 1998, 116.

²⁶ See Kronenberg, 2009, especially 132–184 on the *Georgics*. The book is an examination of the morality of farming in three major treatises: *Oeconomicus*, *De Re Rustica*, and *Georgics*. She gives examples from each work that reveal the moral ambiguity of farming. In the *Georgics* she illustrates that Vergil redefines moral language, emptying it of traditional meaning. It is an overstatement that Vergil was able to achieve fully the result of removing

contrast of *natura* and *ars* or *usus* as a creative force reveals that man has the ability to compete with nature “in exerting control over the world.”²⁷ The type of *artes* that man must employ occurs both through reflexive and rational means. It is this interplay between sacred and secular—especially the recurring concept that neither can fully answer all of life’s questions—that Kronenberg argues dominates the first two books.²⁸ She concludes that “Virgil’s point is less to condemn the aggression of agriculture than it is to point to the conflicting forces at work in the creation of value.”²⁹

A dichotomous view of the *Georgics* sees either a quaint farmer calling Rome back to the country life and hard work or a pessimistic description of the burden of life and the horrors of Rome’s wars. Between these poles of interpretation lies the middle ground from which to appreciate the poem more richly. Neither a wholly positive nor negative, but a morally ambiguous depiction of agriculture emerges. The tension between man, nature, and man’s nature is quite clear in the practical, tiresome practice of farming. The question of morality of landscape in the *Silvae*, however, is more abrupt. Early villas served as fortified homes, but a retirement villa such as that of Pollius Felix does not lend itself freely to military metaphors. The image, however, created by Statius as he describes these homes as standing guard over winds, water, and land create a sense of a beautiful home, not a garrison. Statius, by adopting the same type of language and descriptions as Vergil, reconstitutes the moral connotations of fighting and landscaping. As Vergil’s language played upon the morally neutral aspect of agriculture, Statius’

“any inherent moral force” (145–146) from the concept of evil, but Kronenberg is certainly correct that Vergil toys with the subjective connotations of such terms as *improbis*, *labor*, *malus*, and *sceleratus* (144).

²⁷ Kronenberg, 2009, 136.

²⁸ Kronenberg, 2009, 137 calls these *religio* and *ratio*. She also discusses (157–62) the prevalence of *religio* as the “main ordering force” (157) of Book 1 and *ratio* as the concept that aligns Book 2. She rightly concludes that in Book 1 *ratio* leaves questions that can only be answered by *religio*, while the opposite occurs in Book 2.

²⁹ Kronenberg, 2009, 147.

use of military metaphors reorients the moral value of terms that convey the domination of nature, making man's control over his environment something ethically necessary for both parties.

The morality of men such as Felix, Vopiscus, and even Domitian is assimilated into their mastery and governance of nature. Man exerts control over a landscape by constructing it and maintains that control throughout. As an observer and chronicler, Statius has some level of control over the setting as well. He can treat the landscape as a work of art, and therefore he may look or turn away as he pleases. The farmer of the *Georgics*, and to a lesser extent the villa owner of the *Silvae*, has less control, as he cannot turn away.³⁰ Whereas for Vergil and Lucretius nature may have been the first creative *specimen*, for Statius nature is a creative force that offers to mankind the opportunity to prove its moral quality. Nature is a creative force lacking inherent morality akin to what may be described as fate, but it is a fate that affords man the opportunity to prove his virtue. The landscapes of Felix and Vopiscus are mirrors of the landscapers. The now straight, organized *Via Domitiana* is a public message of the emperor's ability to govern his empire. Although *natura* still retains its primary function as a creative force, man has the ability and obligation to control her.³¹ Rather than emptying terms of their moral value as Vergil does, Statius supplies morality to the landscaping projects.

Martial Language in the *Georgics* and *Silvae*

Two passages selected from the *Georgics*, the first from Book 1 and the second from Book 2, exemplify the theme of military control. The lines from one of the best known passages of the *Georgics* (1.143–180) explain the nature of the toil the farmer must perform and how the human

³⁰ On the experience of landscape, see Cosgrove, 1985, 18.

³¹ Newlands, 2002, 247 shows that man can have even greater control. In a discussion of the Saturnalia celebrated in *Silvae* 1.6, she demonstrates that "The emperor, it seems, can transgress the laws of nature itself." In a celebration of upheaval, Domitian is even able to supplant nature.

situation came to be the way it is. Through a systematic, line-by-line analysis of this passage, it becomes clear that Vergil calls upon military metaphors to accentuate the aggression required against nature. An extended metaphor from 2.277–287 serves as an example of how Vergil incorporates military language and the previous poetic tradition to create a scene of battle that more closely resembles epic than didactic poetry.

Unending Labor: The Introduction of Agriculture (*Georgics* 1.143–180)

Throughout the first book of the *Georgics*, the farmhand is depicted in constant struggle with nature. The following lines, which contain the enigmatic postulate *labor omnia vicit / improbus* (*G.* 145–146), have been called the “most crucial lines of the poem.”³² Thomas notes that these lines “have been made to say what they do not, so that the poem may say what it does not.” After listing a number of translations for the line he posits his own: “Insatiable toil occupied all areas of existence.”³³ The work, its moral implications, and its effects appear in a passage filled with martial language:

tum ferri rigor atque argutae lammina serrae
(nam primi cuneis scindebant fissile lignum),
tum uariae uenere artes. labor omnia uicit
improbus et duris urgens in rebus egestas.
(*Georgics* 1.143–146)

Then came tempered iron and the saw-blade’s rasping rhythm
(for earlier man was wont to split his wood with wedges).
All this before the knowledge and know-how which ensued.
Hard work prevailed, hard work and pressing poverty.

Iron (*ferri*, 143) recalls the Iron Age as a difficult season for man, but here it represents through metonymy both the farmer’s plow and the soldier’s sword. Page believes that *ferri rigor* “is

³² Thomas, 1988, 92.

³³ Thomas, 1988, 93.

intended to suggest ‘the sword’s pitiless nature.’”³⁴ Thomas notes that if Page is correct, the passage begins (*subigebant arva coloni*, 1.125) and ends with reference to warfare.³⁵ Here, through images of war, the line between soldier and farmer is blurred. In addition to iron, the farmer uses another implement that can be likened to a sword, the blade (*lammina*) of a saw (*serrae*). By delaying *serrae* until the end of the line, Vergil leaves ambiguous the terms *lammina*, which can also refer to the blade of a sword, and *ferrum*.³⁶ *Cunei* (wedges) were used to cleave wood,³⁷ but the term also describes battle formations: *agmen agit, densi cuneis se quisque coactis / adglomerant* (‘he forms a battle line; packed together, they all gather themselves into thick wedges,’ *Aen.* 12.457). In a passage already replete with terms for weapons and fighting, *cuneus* thus takes on a military connotation. By obfuscating the distinction between tools used in agriculture and warfare, Vergil can infer a connection without stating explicit examples like the moralists Pliny and Seneca.

Like the *artes* with which Aeneas must govern his people (*hae tibi erunt artes*, *Aen.* 6.852) and the *artes* with which Bacon says man can reclaim his governance of nature (*utraque autem res etiam in hac vita nonnulla ex parte reparari potest; prior per religionem et fidem, posterior per artes et scientias*, *Novum Organum* 2.52), the *artes* with which the farmer must govern his fields are methods that manifest his own nature. If he is lethargic in the application of *artes*, he will be homeless and hungry (*G.* 1.158–159); if he does not act with some violence and cut back plants, his crops will fail (2.368–370). He must have knowledge of when to plant and what types

³⁴ Page, 1898, 200.

³⁵ Thomas, 1988, 92.

³⁶ On, *lammina*, cf. *Ov. Met.* 5.173: *lammina dissiluit dominique in gutture fixa est*.

³⁷ Verg., *G.* 2.78–79: *et alte / finditur in solidum cuneis uia*; *Aen.* 6.181–182: *fraxineaeque trabes cuneis et fissile robur / scinditur*. Cf. 7.509 and 11.137.

of trees may be grafted (2.315–345, 302). If Vergil is promoting a back-to-farming movement,³⁸ then he stresses that only those who have the *ingenium* (innate nature) and are willing to use the *artes* (methods) will be successful.

Thomas is correct in rejecting any sort of optimistic interpretation of these lines, as there is no suggestion that the Golden Age will return if the farmer persists in his *labor*. As Nelson points out, “When the farmer of the *Georgics* is pictured in his most hostile relation to nature, imposing suffering on wild creatures who are both innocent and uncomprehending, it is nonetheless clear that his alternative is not to renounce violence and return to the Golden Age. It is, rather, to renounce control and starve.”³⁹ It has been repeatedly shown that the *Georgics* is not an educational handbook, but it is still impossible to divorce the poetry from the reality of the necessity of Roman farming.⁴⁰ From a practical standpoint, the difficult work does not contain any moral value; it is the only option for the farmer.⁴¹

The *labor* required in the application of the various *artes* is the general theme of *Georgics*

2. Putnam sees an ethical dilemma in the struggle, as man’s victory takes a toll on him and nature: “Book 2 cannot, then, be viewed merely as a demonstration of the successful application of *labor*; rather it presents, on a suggestive level, and in a complex manner, the notion that man’s

³⁸ This is the claim of Pavlovskis and of Lovejoy and Boas: “. . . the *Georgics* advocate a return to rustic simplicity” (Pavlovskis, 1973, 4, n16); “Virgil is engaged in the *Georgics* in promoting a ‘back-to-the-farm’ movement; in other words, he is expressing a mild form of cultural semi-primitivism.” (Lovejoy and Boas, 1935, 389).

³⁹ Nelson, 1998, 91.

⁴⁰ Putnam, 1975 delineates the differences between Vergil and his model, Varro. He notes that many themes have been reworked into poetry, so there is likely more literary than agricultural value to the work. Thomas, 1987, 236–238 demonstrates that Vergil not only selectively omits details Varro, but also discusses minor subjects from the *De re rustica* in detail, a practice Thomas calls promotion. Putnam, 1975; Miles, 1980; Ross, 1987; Thomas, 1987 and 1988, and Nelson, 1998 provide examples of Vergil’s allusion to his sources and how these references take on a new role in the poetic aspect of the *Georgics*.

⁴¹ Perkell, 1989, 10 stresses the moral ambiguity in this passage, a theme that runs throughout the poem. The farmer’s actions are neither wholly good nor bad, but have positive and negative implications.

activities in the age of Jupiter do not simply succeed or fail: success itself may cost a price.”⁴²

This interpretation relies on the assumption that man’s moral worth stems from actions he takes for or against nature, but does not consider that morality, success, failure, and nature are all subjectively and culturally defined. What Vergil fashions is not what constitutes the success or failure of farming and fighting, but the inescapable reality of their presence. He introduces man’s domination of nature as a difficult, continuous struggle that must be adopted. The present reality of farming shows to man that the cost of his survival may indeed be a contemplative, peaceful lifestyle, but that he may acquire some of that moral quality through domination of nature.

The prominence of everyday living in the poem rather than cosmological origins or mythical struggles invites readers to explore their own morality and the significance of their actions. Here lies the heart of Vergil’s theodicy; the story of a farmer struggling against his environment creates a more immediate impact on the reader than a mythical account of gods who bring suffering to mortals. Though Vergil through agriculture explains the divine significance of mundane events, his model differs from a traditional Hesiodic theodicy, as he places significance on human struggles, not divine vengeance.⁴³

A recurring notion of theodicy often drives the transitions in the poem and acts as a cohesive theme to the various agricultural topics. In critical junctures of the poem, Vergil often reminds the reader of the divine and mortal significance of daily life, as he does in this passage:

prima Ceres ferro mortalis uertere terram
instituit, cum iam glandes atque arbuta sacrae

⁴² Putnam, 1975, 21.

⁴³ On the *Georgics* as a theodicy as developed from Theophrastus, see Thomas, 1987, 257–258. For a discussion of divine justice in the *Georgics*, see Nelson, 1998, 111–113. Jenkyns, 1993, 243, n1 says that it is misleading to refer to the phrase *labor omnia vincit* as a theodicy because of the Christian connotations of the word and because the focus is on humanity, not divinity. The poem is, however, a description of how humans experience and cope with evil in the world, so it is difficult to find a more accurate descriptor of the poem.

deficerent siluae et uictum Dodona negaret.
(*G.* 1.147–149)

It was Ceres who first taught to men the use of iron plows—
that time wild strawberries and oak berries were scanty in the sacred groves
and Dodona was miserly with her support.

Vergil explains that because of Ceres, man must turn the soil with the appropriate material: iron (*ferro*, 147). The explanation is brief—three lines—and explains not Ceres’ motives but the impact on humans. Farmers were forced to plough their fields because the fruits of the Golden Age, acorns and strawberries, were lacking, and the oracle Dodona denied support. The gods may have decided that men must work for food, but there is little evidence or concern for *why* they decided this. For man, the more important question is *how* he can react and work to ensure survival and growth.

In the next description, Vergil militarizes the actions of the farmer, transporting him from an agricultural field to a battle field:

mox et frumentis labor additus, ut mala culmos
esset robigo segnisque horreret in aruis
carduus; intereunt segetes, subit aspera silua
lappaeque tribolique, interque nitentia culta
infelix lolium et steriles dominantur auenae.
quod nisi et adsiduis herbam insectabere rastris 155
et sonitu terrebis auis et ruris opaci
falce premes umbras uotisque uocaueris imbrem,
heu magnum alterius frustra spectabis aceruum
concussaue famem in siluis solabere quercu.
(*G.* 1.150–159)

Soon growing grain grew into harder work.
Blight rusted stalks, and thistles mustered into view to lord it over
all that you accomplished; crops began to flounder, a rough growth to advance-
goosegrass, or ‘cleavers’, and bristling burrs—while wild oats
and dreaded darnel ruled head and shoulder over your well-tended plot.
So, unless you’re set to spend the whole day hoeing weeds,
and making noise to scare off birds, and slashing back with hooks
the branches darkening the lands, and all your prayers for rain are answered,
alas, my friend, heaps of grain next door will stare you in the face
and you’ll be raiding oaks for acorns to ease the ache of hunger.

The enemy is legion. Evil blight (*mala . . . robigo*) rests on the stocks, and thistle (*carduus*) brings terror to the farmer as if he is facing a dreadful enemy.⁴⁴ The crops, the farmer's soldiers, perish (*intereunt*, 152), and darnel (*lolium*, 154) presses against the cultivated crops *nitentia culta*. We may compare Corynaeus in the *Aeneid*, who presses his enemy to the ground (*impressoque genu nitens terrae applicat ipsum*, 12.303). Vergil uses the same descriptors in an intense battle between enemies that he uses to describe man fighting nature. The hostile, unproductive (*infelix*) darnel and sterile wild oats (*steriles . . . avenae*) dominate the crops, and the emphasis on infertility points to a failure in the poet's desire to acquire the knowledge he initially set out to find: *quid faciat laetas segetes* (1.1). Now the useful crops are dying and infertile (not *laetas*) crops are taking over. This line is copied from the *Eclogues* (*infelix lolium et steriles nascuntur auenae*, *Ecl.* 5.37) with one significant change: the barren wild oats are not just born, they take over the field. In the *Eclogues*, Mopsus is singing of the fruitless plants that grow in place of barley after the death of Daphnis. The settings are similar, as fertile plants give way to infertile and man is affected by the change. The *Eclogues*, however, mourn the change. The event is the same, but in place of the detached description (*nascuntur*), Vergil describes the effect as a vacillating struggle between man and nature (*dominantur*). One who observes nature inherently experiences it from a more detached perspective than one who actively participates in cultivating the earth. Mopsus explains the metamorphosis from fertile to barren soil as a natural result of the death of Daphnis.⁴⁵ The emphasis is on the real-world impact of supernatural

⁴⁴ Cf. *Aen.* 3.655–661, where Aeneas meets Polyphemus, a frightful monster (*monstrum horrendum*, 3.658) in another scene full of agriculture (*pecudes*, 656, *pinus*, 659, *lanigeras . . . oves*, 660). The passage is a good example of the reaction that *horreo* signifies.

⁴⁵ Based on the interpretation of the role of Daphnis in *Eclogue* 4, the barrenness of the earth can certainly take on more symbolic force. The potential significance of each of these interpretations is certainly beyond the scope of this project, but I feel that the general idea is similar for any interpretation of Daphnis. In any case, the death of an important individual causes mourning and a sense of loss. The effect on nature may be symbolic of the effect on man's nature, real due to the changes to the Italian countryside, or both.

occurrences, as if answering the question, “What happened when Daphnis died?” Vergil illustrates that nature in both the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* is symbolic of the human condition, but he relies on the multifaceted relationship between man and nature to show how. The *Georgics* ask, “Why does man have to work so hard?” Just as a reader must resist seeking a purely teleological answer (“Why isn’t the ground fertile, and why don’t crops grow?”) in this theodicy, one must also take caution in asking solely moral questions (“Is farming good?”). As the moral quality of man’s interaction with nature is subjectively determined, Vergil’s use of a farmer-soldier metaphor allows his reader to consider the morality of both professions. The similar traits of farming and warfare draw upon the need and ramifications of both.

Once Vergil establishes that man must live in combat with nature, he next describes the tools that man uses in this battle. One of these tools, the *falx* (157) is used by the farmer to control the branches that darken the land (*premes umbras*, 157), but it is also used by the soldier to control an enemy ship or tear down walls (Caes. *B Gall.* 3.14.5–9). The violent campaign to control nature certainly involves a number of injurious practices: innocent bystanders—in this case birds—are terrified (*G.* 1.156), the farmer must face fearsome monsters (*horreret . . . carduus*, 151–152), and he must endlessly fight an enemy that appears stronger than he (*nitentia*, 153; *dominantur*, 154; *adsuduis . . . rastris*, 155). He views the morally ambiguous struggle of the farmer as a battle against monsters; these undertakings are the only alternative to living off of acorns while seeing another succeed (158–159).

Other tools aid the farmer defensively and offensively in his battle. Vergil even calls these farming implements weapons:

Dicendum et quae sint duris agrestibus arma,
 quis sine nec potuere seri nec surgere messes:
 uomis et inflexi primum graue robur aratri,
 tardaue Eleusinae matris uoluentia plaustra,

and still maintain right angles with boundary lines,
 the way in war you'd often see a legion massed in ranks,
 its cohorts standing – and standing out – on open ground,
 aligned and at the ready, the everywhere just like a glittering stretch of sea,
 and the flash of bronze, the clash of conflict still not started,
 though the god of war roams edgily, in and out among battalions.
 Let all the avenues be equal,
 not only so an idle eye might linger on the view
 but because no other method gets the earth to give in matching measures
 and grants the boughs free rein and run of air.

The pattern that Vergil advocates is suitable for plants and for the tactical formation of an army.

The pattern described is a *quincunx*, in which offset lines form overlapping groups of five plants (or soldiers).⁵¹ In the words of Thomas, “Through the simile the newly planted vine becomes a legion, waiting in formation for the battle which the *agricola* will wage with it.”⁵² The language is of a coming battle, and the image specifically draws to mind a pitched battle between two opposing armies on a field. Just as the Roman army marched towards a barbarian enemy with discipline and structure, the farmer lines his plants up in an orderly array against barren nature. Vergil emphasizes the anticipation and inevitability of the coming battle: *fluctuat omnis / . . . tellus* (281–282); *necdum horrida miscent / proelia, sed dubius mediis Mars errat in armis* (282–283). The farmer, like the commander, must prepare for battle with precision and a plan if he hopes to attain any measure of victory but still fears unexpected complications. This formation makes sure that every plant-soldier has equal footing and space to fight against such enemies as frost, wind, and parasites.⁵³

⁵¹ On Vergil’s adaptation of Varro’s metaphor of the *quincunx*, see Haverman, 1977, 54–55. On the *quincunx* in this passage, including diagrams, see Thomas, 1988, 206–207. The term describes plants in Cicero, *Sen.* 59.14, Varro, *R.R.* 1.7.2, and Columella 3.13.4, 3.15.1, 4.30.5. Kronenberg, 2009, 146 compares Cyrus’ trees arranged like soldiers, which Lysander praised as virtuous because of hard work involved (*Oec.* 4.21). Cicero uses the same anecdote as Cato when praising hard work (*Sen.* 17.60). Vergil replaces the morality of hard work and utility (*inanem*, 2.285) with the morality of discipline in his description.

⁵² Thomas, 1987, 253.

⁵³ Haverman, 1977 discusses this passage and *Georgics* 3.339–348, in which Vergil compares a shepherd to a soldier, as evidence of Vergil’s ability to adapt mundane, didactic passages from Varro into stylized metaphors. She

Thus far it is apparent that the language used in battle metaphors throughout the *Georgics* invokes images of war and combat in which the outcome is uncertain. While the farmer's enemy is formidable and unpredictable, the farmer has made certain advances in technology and understanding that allow him to prepare for battle. In the two passages that have been examined from *Georgics* 1 and 2, Vergil's language articulates battle as much as agriculture. He uses military language, Roman military formations, and even similes of battle to frame for the reader the sense of struggle that the farmer experiences (e.g., *exercet tellurem atque imperat arvis*, 'train the earth, command the fields', 1.99) In the first passage (1.143–168), the language does not specify battle but connotes the struggle (cf. *incendere agros*, 'burning fields', 1.84). The rapid succession of battle terms underscores the struggle between man and nature and shapes the interpretation of this conflict through the metonymical connection. In the *Silvae*, similar struggles occur, but not in pitched battle. In both denotative and connotative language, Statius describes the battle between man and nature not as a struggle but as vigilant protection of human control of nature. Two passages from *Silvae* 1 and 2 demonstrate how Statius uses similar methods as Vergil to achieve an entirely different effect. The first poem (*Silvae* 1.3) views man's struggle against nature as a battle, but a battle already won. A second passage from *Silvae* 2.2 shows marvel at the ability of human invention to tame natural turmoil.

Passive Control: The Villa of Manilius Vopiscus *Silvae* 1.3.20–33

If Vergil's farmer sees the struggle from a battlefield, Statius' sage sees it from a strongly fortified garrison:⁵⁴

notes the emphasis of the typical Roman as a soldier and farmer, especially for those who returned from the war to their fields.

⁵⁴ The difference between the villa of Vopiscus here and that of Pollius Felix in 2.2 is investigated thoroughly by Newlands, 2002. She contrasts the nature of 1.3, which cooperates with its owner and provides a ready canvas, to the nature of 2.2, which requires drastic changes for man to "dominate." Although the landscape and therefore required labor may change, I feel that the two poems are united by the primacy of human need for control. The

ipse Anien (miranda fides) infraque superque
 saxeus hic tumidam rabiem spumosaque ponit
 murmura, ceu placidi veritus turbare Vopisci
 Pieriosque dies et habentes carmina somnos.
 litus utrumque domi, nec te mitissimus amnis
 dividit: alternas servant praetoria ripas, 25
 non externa sibi fluviorum obstare queruntur.
 Sestiacos nunc Fama sinus pelagusque natatum
 iactet et audaci victos delphinas ephebo:
 hic aeterna quies, nullis hic iura procellis,
 numquam fervor aquis. datur hic transmittere visus 30
 et voces et paene manus. sic Chalcida fluctus
 expellunt fluvii, sic dissociata profundo
 Bruttia Sicanium circumspicit ora Pelorum.
 (*Silv.* 1.3.20–33)

Anio himself, wondrous to tell, full of rocks above and below, here rests his swollen rage and foamy din, as though loath to disturb Vopiscus' Pierian days and song-filled slumbers. Either shore is at home, nor does the gentle river divide you. Stately mansions keep either bank, no strangers to each other, nor complain that the river blocks them: let Fame now boast of Sestos' bay and the sea a swimmer swam and dolphins outmatched by a bold stripling! Here is eternal quiet, storms have no jurisdiction, waters never boil. Here view and voice may be passed across, hands almost, neither do tidal waves drive Chalcis away nor does the Bruttian strand gaze on Sicilian Pelorus, sundered by the deep.⁵⁵

The solitude that Vopiscus' villa offers is acquired through its master's control of potential natural disasters like floods (26), storms (29), and water boils (30). The home acts as a stronghold (*praetoria*),⁵⁶ checking the onset of the rivers (*non externa fluviorum obstare*

initial change was more drastic in the case of Pollius Felix, but ultimately it is the present architecture and architectural landscape that dominate nature. Statius' added emphasis on the poor terrain may therefore be seen as an additional level of praise for Pollius, whose work accomplished the same effect as that of Vopiscus but with more effort. The elevated language may also be due to Statius' depiction of Pollius as a true Epicurean and therefore removed an extra degree from the struggles of nature (van Dam, 1984, 191).

⁵⁵ The text and translation here are from Shackleton Bailey, 2005. His text differs from Courtney's at 21 (*saxeus* for *spumeus*; *saxosa* for *spumosa*), 24 (*nec te* for *tecum*), and 31–33 (*sic . . . sic* for *nec . . . nec*). The third and fourth emendations by Shackleton Bailey are due to his (mis)understanding of Statius' comments on the river. There is some difficulty in the interpretation of Statius' reference to the Euripus and Messinan Straits here, namely why Statius would mention these two navigational nightmares in reference to the calm Anio. Courtney (1984, 330–331) rightly points out that Statius is likely being loose with his metaphor here and wants only to give a general picture for the two banks cleft by water. For another viewpoint, see Shackleton Bailey (2003, 384), who emends the passage to emphasize that this strait is not like the other two (*nec Chalcida fluctus / expellunt reflui nec dissociata profundo*).

⁵⁶ The villa of Pollius Felix is also described with this term (2.2.49). See Newlands, 2002, 179. She comments (n76) that this term first appears in Latin literature as a descriptor for villas during the time of Statius and his contemporaries Juvenal and Martial.

queruntur, 26). The language dramatically articulates the control that man exerts over nature through building and technology. The defeated enemy, Anio, lays aside his madness (*rabiem*, 21) and roar (*murmura*, 22) out of fear (*veritus*, 22). The language is similar to that in Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae* 45.2. The conspirator Volturcius gives in when bested by guards (*praesidiis*) placed on either side of the bridge (*occulte pontem obsidunt. . . . utrimque*). After attempting to fight, he surrenders out of fear (*timidus ac vitae diffidens*, 45.4). Statius is not alluding to Sallust; rather he adopts the lexical terms of defeat and surrender to describe the villa's control over the water. It is surrounded on both sides and, like Vulturcius, has no option but to lay down its weapons.

Furthermore, the need for control is not just part of a contrast with the previous age when nature itself worked for man's benefit, for Statius' nature is not weak or powerless but has been compelled to abandon its violent temperament and submit to a stronger force. His historical and legendary references (27–28) reinforce the picture of complete domination over nature. Fame (*Fama*) can boast of the Hellespont, the bay of Sestos (*Sestiacos . . . sinus*) that Xerxes lashed and Leander swam (*pelagus natatum*), as bold attempts that did not succeed in dominating nature. Statius also says that fame may boast of a dolphin from Hippo that swam with the bold child (*audaci . . . puero*).⁵⁷ These examples at first glance seem to undercut Statius' boast of a villa that has conquered nature, but in reality they add realism to Statius' claims. Vopiscus is not committing *hybris* by lashing the Hellespont; he is not attempting to swim its entire width during a storm, and he is not attempting to extend his reach too far and make a pet of a wild creature.⁵⁸

In these examples the attempt to control nature lacks ethical consideration. It is Vopiscus'

⁵⁷ Pliny (*Ep.* 9.34) explains this story in detail. A dolphin was apparently carried into a lake through tidal changes in an estuary. A young boy began to swim and play with the dolphin. The popularity of the pair grew, and the dolphin began to permit others to swim and pet him until the local magistrates decided to kill the dolphin to preserve the quietude of the place.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Silvae* 1.2.87–89, where Statius also mentions Leander swimming the Hellespont. Statius acknowledges Leander's passion, but states that Violentilla's is greater (*minor ille calor*, 1.2.89).

morality that allows him to harness nature for his own benefit. The Anio, despite its previously swollen frenzy (*tumidam rabiem*, 21), is not the Hellespont. Therefore *Fama* can boast of greater deeds, and Vopiscus and his villa are in control of their surroundings.

Both Vergil and Statius create a picture of a nature that is potentially destructive and angry, but in contrast to Vergil's descriptions of man whose weapons and struggle have little efficacy, Statius emphasizes man's technological improvements that allow him to control the adverse and emphasize the helpful elements of nature. The predominant attitude towards nature in each poem marks a change in the perception of man's interaction with his environment. In the *Georgics* the reader sees nature as treacherous. The very act of farming relies on nature: soil, rain, and the proper climate are all essential for the farmer's livelihood but are all able to destroy his crops as well. The reader sees a powerful but controlled and cooperative nature in the *Silvae*, as the soil is moved to improve the landscape, the water is held by sturdy banks, and the homes are cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

In the case of Vopiscus and his villa, Statius has therefore made reality something greater than myth. The control of nature is a real action with real significance. Like Vergil who stresses the reality of farming and therefore reconstitutes moral language to indicate virtue as that which is good or bad for the farmer, Statius through similar methods has created a tone of morality in these building projects.

Active Control: The Villa of Pollius Felix (*Silvae* 2.2.13–35)

The villa of Pollius Felix is the subject of Statius' last villa poem to be discussed in this chapter (*Silvae* 2.2). Statius composed this poem soon after a visit to his friend's home.⁵⁹ Pollius

⁵⁹ See *Silvae* 2. Pref.13–15. He notes in his introductory letter that his friend Pollius forgave him for the poem's careless composition. The notion of modesty and hasty composition is common in Statius' prefaces (see van Dam, 1984, 58; Pagán, 2010, 196). On the differences between the *Silvae* as they were recited for patrons and as they were published, see Newlands, 2002, 35–36. On the preface to the fourth book, which was likely published separately

is apparently a patron significant to the poet, as Statius dedicates the third book of the *Silvae* to him. Statius explains the occasion for his visit: he sailed across the bay after competing in the Augustalia in Naples.⁶⁰ The scope of man's domination of nature is immediately apparent as Statius approaches the villa from the sea:

Sed iuvere morae. placido lunata recessu
hinc atque hinc curvas perrumpunt aequora rupes.
dat natura locum montique intervenit udum
litus et in terras scopulis pendentibus exit.
gratia prima loci, gemina testudine fumant
balnea, et e terris occurrit dulcis amaro
nympha mari.

(*Silv.* 2.2.13–19)

But the delay was worth while. Curving cliffs on either side pierce crescent waters, making a calm recess. Nature provides space. The watery beach interrupts the heights, running inland between overhanging crags. The spot's first grace is a steaming bathhouse with twin cupolas, and from land a stream of fresh water meets the briny sea.

Volpiscus' villa, marked by seemingly divine participation between nature and culture, easily blended into its natural surroundings. The terrain around Felix's villa, on the other hand, is barren and difficult. It is on the Neapolitan shoreline that human domination of nature is expressed at its fullest, and it is through this domination that Felix best displays his moral excellence. Statius describes the house in terms we might expect of a fortress.⁶¹ The first charm visible from the water is a set of twin baths described as the Roman battle formation of a *testudo* (17), a protective shell against the elements for the house.⁶² Even the descriptor *gratia* can describe a mutually beneficent relationship between parties that would otherwise be in

from the first three, see Johannsen, 2003. On the prefaces in general and their relationship to the poem as "paratexts" see Johannsen, 2006.

⁶⁰ For the location of Pollius' villa, see van Dam, 1984, 192–193; Beloch, 1964, 269; and Mingazzini and Pfister, 1946, 54–70. For the dating of this poem, see van Dam, 1984, 197–198.

⁶¹ See Newlands, 2002, 166.

⁶² On the use of this term as a technical term for a vaulted roof, see Vitruvius 5.10.1 and the summary in van Dam, 1984, 204.

building guards these fields from invasion. While guarding the land, he blocks the waves at the same time (25). Like an exhausted enemy, the natural forces concede defeat and conduct themselves in a way most beneficent, even convenient for man. Statius sums this up by saying that the pools of water begin to act more like their master: *dominique imitantia mores*. Finally, the colonnade that Felix has built overcomes the previously harsh rocks: *domat saxa aspera*. The sea, weather, and terrain have all acquiesced to Pollius' building project.

The resulting landscape, according to Pavlovskis, allows the owner to “enjoy nature in her pristine and her subdued state”:⁶⁴

his favit natura locis, hic victa colenti
cessit et ignotos docilis mansuevit in usus.
(*Silv.* 2.2.52–53)

Some spots Nature has favoured, in others she has been overcome and yielded to the developer, letting herself be taught new and gentler ways.

However, Pavlovskis' notion of a pristine nature, ground admired for its natural beauty, unspoiled by human presence, appears nowhere in this account.⁶⁵ Nature is not praiseworthy for its unspoiled quality, or even the imitation of that quality, but for its utility. The places that nature has favored (*his favit natura locis*) are those that are beneficial to man. In the *Georgics*, Vergil stripped military language of its moral quality, forcing *improbis labor* and the *arma* of the farmer in a context that connotes “bad for humans”; Statius on the other hand has injected

⁶⁴ Pavlovskis, 1973, 14.

⁶⁵ Nor, it might be argued, anywhere else in the *Silvae*. Words for *pristine* appear either as something of the past to be rejected or as a trope for old-fashioned virtues. Cf. Heracles' promise to dwell in his new temple: *nec mihi plus Nemeae priscumque habitabitur Argos* ('Nor shall Nemea or ancient Argos be my home', 3.1.182) and the final lines of the present poem addressed to the wife of Felix, *ite per annos / saeculaque et priscae titulos praecedite famae* ('Go through the years and centuries, outdoing to glories of ancient fame,' 145–146). The closest Statius comes to praising nature for its pristine value is when it coincides with buildings: *silvis demissa vetustis / frigora . . . versumque domus sibi temperat annum* ('Cool descends from ancient trees . . . The house tempers the changing year to its liking,' 1.2.154–155). Newlands, 2002, 179–280, describes the passage (52–62) as a metaphor for Pollius as a military general who has conquered nature, and van Dam, 1984, 229 sums up the scene well: “Nature and man both have a part in the beauty of the place.”

moral quality into his language, forcing phrases such as like *favit natura* to mean “good for humans.”

The claim that nature, once conquered, yielded (*cessit*) and acquiesced (*mansuevit*) to her master seems quite boastful, for Vesuvius, which had erupted only eleven years earlier, still loomed in the eyes and minds of residents there.⁶⁶ Whether Statius intends to show that human innovation has overcome even this most famous disaster or that the security offered by Felix’s home makes one forget the destructive power of nature, the effect is striking when the author claims that the owner compels the mountains and cliffs to obey: *nunc cerne iugum discentia saxa / intrantesque domos iussumque recedere montem* (‘Now behold the cliffs as they learn the yoke, and the dwellings as they enter, and the mountain bidden to withdraw’, 2.2.58–59).

Rather than for any pristine quality, nature is admired for its submissiveness to human intervention. This difference separates the *Silvae* from the *Georgics*. Nature is not to be seen as a residual of the Golden Age, something that has undergone a transformation, but a creative force that coexists along with human creativity. The result of man’s domination of nature, then, is essentially art; this art displays human achievements and humanity’s moral goodness. As Newlands states, “Relations of domination and subordination ultimately bring out the best in nature and create a self-sufficient world. The relationship between human and nature is represented here as a benevolent one.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Given the timing of the visit—after the Augustalia and before the festival at Actium that started in early September (2.2.6–8)—Statius was likely visiting close to the August 24 anniversary of the mountain’s eruption. The contrast of a calm harbor and violent mountain appear in Aeneas’ approach to Sicily and Mount Aetna (*Aen* 3.570–577) as well as the coast of Libya (*Aen*. 1.159–169, cf. Newlands, 2002, 165). Myers, 2000, 118, also compares this scene to Lucan’s description of the approach to Brundisium (*B Civ*. 5.442–444). On the *topos* of harbor descriptions, see van Dam, 1984, 201.

⁶⁷ Newlands, 2002. 154. She points out the shaping of the sea into glass (49), a typical possession of the wealthy. She additionally addresses the question of moderation concerning a villa that appears antithetical to typical Roman values: “Horatian moderation can be created without the harm to the landscape or to the owner’s character that Horace feared. Pollius’ villa is shaped by the Roman impulse to dominate nature, but this is interpreted as a positive, benevolent impulse, not a transgressive one.” (169)

Conclusion

Vergil's position in the *Georgics* that the storms, weeds, and diseases that plague the farmer is representative of the struggles that humans face is effectively communicated through his use of military imagery. The *Georgics* raises moral questions about the human need to control nature, but Vergil does not dismiss the reality of the necessity for that control. Rather, the reader sees that human actions have morally ambiguous repercussions. The farmer must treat the earth with violence in order to survive, but every blow emphasizes his distance from the Golden Age when humans did not need to dominate nature. Statius follows a pattern adopted from the *Georgics* and repeated in Latin literature but orients his use of military language to suggest human obligation to continue the creative work of nature through technology and control. Each author ascribes to nature a different role in the creative process and both see a different goal in humanity's interaction with nature. Still, both portray the interaction with similar rhetorical strategies. Statius embraces what Vergil was unable to escape, and despite divergent attitudes towards nature, both see that human control is necessary for survival.

Statius readily articulates the imperial control that his patrons exercise over their environment, but he sees that such a level of control has not always been possible. Many of Statius' ekphrastic poems, such as those commemorating the public construction of a road or the private residence of Pollius Felix, describe the state of the environment in terms of its previous disposition. His rhetorical methods in ekphrasis, like those in his use of military diction, also serve to differentiate his notion of control from the picture found in the *Georgics*.

CHAPTER 5 THE NATURE OF DESCRIPTION

The control of nature by humans has been shown to have moral implications in Statius and Vergil and is often phrased in military terminology. The vehicle for these metaphors and subjective constructions is an important aspect of poetic descriptions of dominating nature. While Vergil's *Georgics* are primarily didactic and Statius' *Silvae* relate closely to epigrammatic poetry, both poets raise questions about humans and nature through an epideictic ekphrasis of nature. In the *Georgics* ekphrastic descriptions tend to emphasize the constant, unalterable state of toil and the unalterable state of humans, who can only corrupt their environment through new enterprises. In the *Silvae* ekphrastic depictions of human interaction with nature, especially the element of change involved in that interaction, are one of the most salient aspects of Statius' new genre. Through an examination of ekphrasis and its mimetic function in each author, the means through which both manipulate the symbolic connection between works of art and poetry underscores their unique understandings of the relationship between humans and the environment. Statius distinguishes himself from his predecessor by returning to the epigrammatic foundation of ekphrasis and painting a more fluid interaction between human nature and physical nature.¹

Poets and scholars often explore the interaction between landscape and morality, but the nature of this relationship is not typically explained.² For instance, Horace condemns large, landscaped villas while praising his own moderate house, yet he offers not an objective but a

¹ Szelest, 1966 says that the poems are altogether unique in ancient literature ("Diese Art längerer deskriptiver Gedichte ist in der erhalten antiken Literatur eine durchaus neue Erscheinung." 186). Newlands, 2002, 38–39 states that "Statius makes a major innovation in the *Silvae* by devoting entire, full-length poems to the descriptions of works of art and building." Geysen, 1996, 10 calls the equestrian monument Statius describes (*Silvae* 1.1) the *raison d'être* of the poem. Similarly, see Hardie, 1983, 74; van Dam, 1984, 187.

² See, e.g., Newlands, 2002, 158. Because building and landscaping require great human effort but benefit nature, "Building therefore functions as a metaphor of human, ethical control over stubborn and resistant patterns."

circular philosophical explanation for the difference; Horace praises his modest home because it represents Epicurean values, which are good because they value modest possessions.³ Before Horace, Cicero threw reproach on Lucullus for his lavish villa that did not conform to the *mores* of the time. The deceased Lucullus was even Cicero's scapegoat for a new desire for luxury among society.⁴ In the wake of such condemnation, poetry like the *Silvae*, which extols patrons for their extravagant building projects, may seem bombastic or even false. Therefore, an approach that seeks to determine a moral agenda in the *Silvae* limits itself to comparison with other authors who had different concepts of nature, but an interpretation of Statius' ekphrasis of man-made objects that acknowledges moral suppositions while valuing the text as an artistic impression of artwork leads to a better evaluation of the poems.⁵

A first step in this line of interpretation is to distinguish Statius' ekphrastic narratives from propositional descriptions. A propositional description may be described as one that places the highest value on accuracy in the depiction of a certain object. Vergil's well known ekphrasis of the shield of Aeneas is an example of a highly detailed description of a work of art.⁶ Statius was not interested in the propositional quality of his descriptions except insofar as the details themselves serve as art. Statius' ekphrastic methods, when examined for their mimetic and not

³ See Newlands, 2002, 130–136 and Armstrong, 2009, 88. Horace's attitude towards excessive luxury appears throughout the *Carmina*, especially 2.10.5–8:

Auream quisquis mediocritatem
diligit, tutus caret obsoleti
sordibus tecti, caret inuidenda
sobrius aula.

⁴ Cic., *Leg.* 3.30–31. See also Keaveney, 1992, 152–154 on this and the rebuke from other orators and historians concerning Lucullus' corrupting influence.

⁵ Text as an artistic impression of art is called "mimetic function of ekphrasis" by Laird, 1996, 78.

⁶ West, 1990 mounts a convincing argument that Vergil's ekphrasis of the shield of Aeneas is propositional and attempts to craft "illustrations which would be conceivable and effective on a metal shield." (297). His argument fails, however, in that it creates dichotomous categories of propositional and mimetic (just as he notes that others have failed in rejecting any type of recreation of the shield). The effect of mimesis is not derived from the propositional accuracy, but from an artistic description that conveys a sense of reality.

propositional content, are seen to support the program of his poetry as an artistic description of human interaction with nature. Similarly, because agriculture transcends many cultural differences, Vergil's subject matter is a convenient way to explore struggles and virtues in life and is therefore best understood to be representative artwork rather than actual descriptions of agriculture.⁷ His descriptions of hard work and violence against nature represent actual toils, but their mimetic function is more important to the interpretation of the poem than their propositional representation of farming. Indeed, both poems are celebrated today not because they accurately describe villas or the landscaping and agricultural methods of their day, but because they speak to the social *mores* of their times through realistic and culturally relevant scenes of landscape and agriculture.⁸

Since Statius' ekphrastic poems, though self-standing, align closely with epic and epigrammatic models, it is necessary first to explore both types of ekphrasis and how Statius blends digressive and stand-alone models into a new genre. A recognition of Statius' development in ekphrasis then allows a better understanding of his description of the human desire for control through man-made art. Thus, the reader sees a new type of self-standing ekphrasis, and Statius' adaptation of a *topos* in his creation of a new poetic genre allows him to serve as an interpreter of social values the same way that ekphrasis allows writers of epic to interpret art and cultural *mores* in their poems. The theoretical approaches to ekphrasis and mimesis distinguish the uses of this poetic device in the *Silvae* and *Georgics*. Examples from the *Silvae* (4.3, 2.2) and *Georgics* (2.203–211) demonstrate the importance of change in the

⁷ Thomas, 1988, 27 describes this relationship well: “. . . the existence of the farmer is a metaphor for existence in general.” Batstone, 1997 examines the generalizing effect of Vergil's didactic tone.

⁸ For an excellent example of the significance of art for its realistic representation of truth rather than propositional truth value, see Halliwell's, 2002, 2–6, discussion of Goethe's dialogue in the first edition of his journal *Die Propyläen*.

representation of nature, and, finally, the temple of Hercules (*Silv.* 3.1) serves as a point of direct contact between the *Silvae* and *Georgics*. *Silvae* 3.1 echoes Vergil's description of a temple in his *Georgics* (3.10–39). The common subject, as well as the placement at the beginning of the third book in both poems, makes them an informative subject of comparison.⁹

Origin and Development of Ekphrasis in Theory

Ekphrasis is the rhetorical art of describing appearances, events, places, and times in such a way to make them visible before the audience.¹⁰ Such is the definition that Statius most likely understood through the rhetorical treatises known as *progymnasmata*. The handbooks, authored by teachers of rhetoric such as Aelius Theon and Nikolaus Rhetor, appear from the first to fifth centuries CE as segments of instructive manuals. Statius and his contemporaries were trained for rhetorical competition through these guides.¹¹ An understanding of Statius' training in this type of rhetoric is therefore as important to the interpretation of his poetry as are cultural and political influences. The *progymnasmata*, according to Hardie, are integral in the formation of ekphrasis as a standalone genre.¹² The most important element of ekphrasis according to these handbooks is the use of descriptive language that causes the object described to be “made manifest vividly before the sight,” a practice described as *enargeia*.¹³ Statius through his training and abilities in

⁹ On the placement of this temple in the structure of the poem, see Thomas, 1983, 81–85.

¹⁰ Adapted from Aelius Theon, 118.7–10:

Ἐκφρασις ἐστὶ λόγος περιηγηματικὸς ἐναργῶς ὑπ' ὄψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον. γίνεται δὲ ἔκφρασις προσώπων τε καὶ πραγμάτων καὶ τόπων καὶ χρόνων.

“Ekphrasis is descriptive language that brings the visible object vividly before the eyes. There is ekphrasis of persons, events, places, and times.” The translation is my own.

¹¹ On Statius' training see Duncan, 1913; Chase, 1961; Cancik, 1965; Dubel, 1997; Kennedy, 2003. On the rhetorical games founded by Domitian, see Hardie, 2003. On rhetorical competitions, see Lovatt, 2005.

¹² Hardie, 1983, 75.

¹³ On the *progymnasmata* and their stress on ekphrasis and *enargeia*, see especially Elsner, 2002 and Becker, 1992, 5–14.

the epic, epigrammatic, and contemporary rhetorical types of description creates a new genre of ekphrasis in the *Silvae*. The vivid, artistic descriptions represent change in a way unknown to his predecessors.

An ekphrasis becomes a work of art in text as it describes a visual work of art. The visual work described is often termed the “plastic” medium. The plastic can either refer to the actual object or the fictional work described. In the first poem of the *Silvae*, the plastic is the equestrian statue of Domitian. There is no doubt that this statue was erected, and numismatic evidence suggests that Statius was fairly accurate in his description.¹⁴ In fact, this poem is one of Statius’ most descriptive. He provides the location with some measure of exactitude (1.1.22–31, 67, 84–87), tells us of the occasion of its construction (5–7), and even identifies specific characteristics (43–51). This poem is rich in propositional content, but an accurate representation of the horse is not Statius’ primary purpose. He uses the visual characteristics to emphasize the moral implications of Domitian and his governance. So also do the descriptions of large villas offer Statius the vehicle to expound upon their virtue and governance of their land and lives. In both the *Silvae* and the *Georgics*, however, the most frequent types of artwork described are buildings or landscapes.¹⁵

The significance of the visual art underscores a fundamental distinction between Statius and his predecessors. The description of a mythical shield synthesizes the material object through verbal description. For Statius, the work of art already holds its own symbols, cultural

¹⁴ On the statue and its fate, see Geysen, 1996, 21. On the destruction of Domitian’s statues, see Pliny, *Paneg.* 52.4–5.

¹⁵ Cosgrove, 1985, 13 defines *landscape* in an overly general sense: “the external world mediated through subjective human experience.” I use *landscape* as an inclusive term for gardening, farming, and landscaping in the *Silvae* and *Georgics*. Though both authors describe man’s work on the land in different terms—in Statius’ poetry the work holds aesthetic value while need drives the work in the *Georgics*—the term *landscape* will suffice to describe man’s manipulation of natural resources for his own benefit.

expressions, and reality.¹⁶ Statius' ekphrasis in turn start from a previously created place or structure and then reconstitute the moral quality through poetic tradition and the expression of cultural values. Although this occurs in statues and villas, Statius' primary vehicle for this metaphor is nature and changes to nature. Through the description of landscapes, roads, and water passages, Statius interprets (or reinterprets) seemingly objective sites into new, textual *loci* with their own supplied truth value. Vergil crafts, describes, and offers interpretive guidelines through his ekphrasis of Aeneas' shield, but Statius in describing villas, temples, and roads, must compete with their intrinsic artistic and practical value.

As Statius departs from a propositional approach to ekphrasis, he makes effective use of mimetic descriptions that feature rhetorical strategies and emotional responses in an interdependent relationship. Mimesis is an artistic imitation of nature or real events in which the textual art becomes as significant as the visual. Ekphrasis is perhaps the most suitable genre for Statius to praise humanity for its control of nature, because his poetry mirrors the mimetic value of the very statues and buildings he describes. The *Georgics* are of the didactic genre, but in them Vergil uses ekphrasis in a similar manner as he imitates through ambiguous language the polyvalent implications of human mastery over its environment.

Descriptions of landscape in the *Silvae* and of agriculture in the *Georgics* sometimes depart from prose treatises on either topic, but while Vergil's adaptation of farming is often seen as something to be expected from the poet, the question of verisimilitude in poetry to historical objects is not typically a concern of scholarship on ekphrasis until the time of Statius. Bright states that "Statius has elevated the art of description (and the description of art) to a new level:

¹⁶ See Scott, 1991, 301. The reality of the plastic can also create a tension between art and poem as ekphrasis "ensures the permanence of its own composition at the expense of the art work; it disregards, and at times even delights in the ephemerality of the painted or sculpted image."

he had an unerring eye for visual detail and a rare ability to convey in verse what he saw.”¹⁷

Statius’ verses, however, give no detailed explanation of landscapes and villas, nor do they make any such claim. Even Statius’ description of the statue of Domitian captures only specific details that relate the programmatic message of the statue, such as the vanquished enemies he tramples (50–51). Despite their mythical nature, countless attempts have been made to recreate the shields of Hercules, Achilles, and Aeneas.¹⁸ The villas of Manilius Vopiscus and Pollius Felix, though, would be impossible to reconstruct through their descriptions in the *Silvae*. Although detailed descriptions of gardens existed by Statius’ lifetime,¹⁹ ekphrasis in the *Silvae* provides little insight to practical landscape questions. The poems do, however, offer a picture of Roman cultural understanding of landscape and control of nature. Statius in effect becomes an interpreter of nature and the verisimilitude of art to nature.²⁰

Statius was not unique among extemporaneous poets of his time in this approach to description, as the *progymnasmata* and other sources of instruction teach that a detailed description was not the primary aim of ekphrasis. For Roman poets contemporary to Statius, commissioned to describe art or compete in extemporaneous description, the “criterion for a successful description was vividness, not accuracy.”²¹ Quintilian describes the importance of a vivid description rather than a detailed summary:

¹⁷ Bright, 1980, 12.

¹⁸ On the shield of Achilles, see Becker, 1995, who devotes a monograph to this one instance of ekphrasis. He gives a full account of major interpretive theories on the shield before positing his own interpretation, a four-level reader-response interaction between the art, its creator, and its interpreter. On the shield of Aeneas, see West, 1990.

¹⁹ Columella (esp. *Rust.* 10) describes real gardens in some detail. These descriptions are also an important source for understanding ancient gardens since we have limited physical evidence (Pagán, 2006, 5).

²⁰ For a similar treatment of Ovid, see Armstrong, 2009.

²¹ Laird, 1996, 98.

Ornatum est quod perspicuo ac probabili plus est. Eius primi sunt gradus in eo quod velis concipiendo et exprimendo, tertius qui haec nitidiora faciat, quod proprie dixeris cultum. Itaque, ἐνάργειαν, cuius in praeceptis narrationis feci mentionem, quia plus est evidentia vel, ut alii dicunt, repraesentatio quam perspicuitas, et illud patet, hoc se quodammodo ostendit, inter ornamenta ponamus. Magna virtus res de quibus loquimur clare atque ut cerni videantur, enuntiare. Non enim satis efficit neque, ut debet, plene dominatur oratio si usque ad aures valet, atque ea sibi iudex, de quibus cognoscit, narrari credit, non exprimi et oculis mentis ostendi.

(*Inst.* 8.3.62)

The ornate is something that goes beyond what is merely lucid and acceptable. It consists firstly in forming a clear conception of what we wish to say, secondly in giving this adequate expression, and thirdly in lending it additional brilliance, a process which may correctly be termed embellishment. Consequently we must place among ornaments that ἐνάργεια which I mentioned in the rules which I laid down for the statement of facts, because vivid illustration, or, as some prefer to call it, representation, is something more than mere clearness, since the latter merely lets itself be seen, whereas the former thrusts itself upon our notice. It is a great gift to be able to set forth the facts on which we are speaking clearly and vividly. For oratory fails of its full effect, and does not assert itself as it should, if its appeal is merely to the hearing, and if the judge merely feels that the facts on which he has to give his decision are being narrated to him, and not displayed in their living truth to the eyes of the mind.²²

Quintilian here is applying the rules of poetic description to oratory. He considers the lesson from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, in which one sees the importance of a realistic representation.

Horace advises the Pisos to consider what response an incongruous painting would receive and apply that lesson to their poetry: *Humano capiti ceruicem pictor equinam / iungere si uelit*, ('if a painter wants to place a man's head on a horse's neck', *Ars P.* 1–2). The significance, as Horace states for poetry and Quintilian for oratory, is that the speech must relate something that can be clear and vivid to the audience. The additional process of embellishment, *cultum*, is the ultimate descriptive value of the *Silvae* as it converts a real work of art into a vivid text. It is not surprising, therefore, that Statius is consistent in his portrayal of man controlling nature, because a repeated emphasis on the governance of nature establishes the vivid picture in the audience's imagination. The poem is not strengthened or weakened by how well these buildings actually

²² Text and translation from Butler, 1976, 244–245.

hold up or fare against nature, but how well the poem itself succeeds in conjuring an image of control. Indeed, the lack of control would be quite like Horace's painting: an inconsistent element causing the entire scene to break down for the reader.

Laird notes that Augustan poets are less concerned than rhetoricians and aestheticians with pragmatic functions of art, such as elements of pleasure, illusion, and instruction.²³ Instead, they more often considered the elements of art as form and the interaction between art and text. Often poets even emphasize through mimesis the "incongruity of art and text."²⁴ For Statius, the pragmatic value of art serves as his entrance point into poetry. Because his ekphrasis are not of fictional artifacts but real homes and roads and temples, he is able to consider elements such as pleasure and instruction demonstrated by the buildings.

In the *Silvae* the unique function of ekphrasis requires a unique definition. Since an entire poem serves as a single description, there is no larger textual framework for interpretation. Second, Statius describes actual, not legendary, works of art. Still, Statius' ekphrasis is, on a fundamental level, similar to that of his epic predecessors. The description, though less systematic, has evolved from the earliest epic traditions of Homer and Hesiod and more contemporary examples such as Vergil. Hardie has even shown that Statius borrows specific *topoi* from the epic tradition, describing his own arrival and view of the villa of Pollius Felix (*Silv.* 2.2) just as Odysseus arrives and beholds the palaces of Alcinous and Calypso.²⁵ He uses ekphrasis as a way to insert his interpretive opinion, and the ekphrasis, while not situated within a narrative, do relate to the larger corpus of the *Silvae*.

²³ Laird, 1996, 76.

²⁴ Laird, 1996, 79. He additionally gives an example (77–78) of Vergil's use of ekphrasis in the *Aeneid* to emphasize art that cannot be described (*non enarrabile textum*, *Aen.* 8.626).

²⁵ Hardie, 1983, 129.

The digressive aspect of ekphrasis in epic poetry creates an opportunity for the poet to step into his own poem and affect its interpretation. The interruptive nature of the descriptions forces a pause in the narrative; the break in action can serve as a signal to the reader and provide a framework for interpretation.²⁶ In addition, the author signals his interaction with the poetic tradition and thus puts his own work on display for comparison. Digressive ekphraseis in epic are therefore carefully detailed; the poet is able to carefully control visual and interpretive elements of the medium in the readers' minds. The function of mimesis, however, for epic poets extends beyond the simple notion of description, as the symbols, rhetorical strategies, and interpretive clues speak to the inner nature of the object of ekphrasis, not its approximation to true shields or paintings.²⁷

The initial ekphrastic genre, as it developed from the epigram, was a means of allowing works of art to "speak out" to their viewers.²⁸ Whether announcing to the viewer who dedicated a statue or whose tombstone is beside the road, ekphrasis often served as practical and

²⁶ See Putnam, 1998, 23 on the example of Aeneas as an artisan who adds his interpretation of Dido's murals as a metaphor for the creative acts of Daedalus and Vulcan. Essentially through interpretation Aeneas creates and controls the scene.

²⁷ Ekphrasis and its mimetic function have been considered in relation to the style and interpretation of the overarching narrative. The seminal work, of course, is Lessing's *Laocoon*, 1984, which notes the different effect created by the Homeric description of Achilles' shield as the reader "watches" its very construction and how this differs from Vergil's description of Aeneas' already created shield. The difference, for Lessing, proved the Homeric description superior because the mimetic art of creation was more poetic than viewing (which is the domain of sculpture and painting). Auerbach, 1946 interpreted mimesis as a major component not only of ekphrasis, but the style of a description that might reveal the methods and purposes of the author. Halliwell's 2002 study takes an additional step by analyzing mimesis through the competing theories of Plato and Aristotle. He favors the Aristotelian view, which sees mimesis not as an imitation of natural objects, but an artistic work that speaks to the "shared conventions, traditions, and possibilities of a culture" (153). Concerning epic, Putnam, 1998 considers the many overlapping ways that ekphrastic digressions serve as metaphors for the narrative in which they appear. Smith, 2005 makes a similar contribution, but focuses on the importance of visual information on interpretation for the characters of the *Aeneid*. Becker, 1992, 7 sees ekphrasis as a metaphor for an audience's response to poetry. See also West, 1990; Fowler, 1991; Krieger, 1992; Barchiesi, 1997. Studies on ekphrasis in the *Silvae* include Hardie, 1983, 119–132; van Dam, 1984, *passim*. On 1.1, see Geysen, 1996, 10. On 2.3, see Hardie, 2006. Newlands, 2002 discusses ekphrasis in a number of poems: 3.1 (38–43), 1.3 (129–134), 2.2 (158–167). For the *Georgics*, see Rutherford, 1995.

²⁸ On self-standing ekphrasis, see Elsner, 2002, 9–13. He gives examples from early epigram and analyzes poems of Ausonius and Posidippus as examples of the interplay present in ekphrastic epigrams.

informative rather than artistic and interpretive. The epigrams would of course be inscribed on or nearby the artwork. In this use of ekphrasis, a detailed physical description of the object would have little function except to offer interpretive guidelines. Similarly, in poetic competitions or the *Silvae*, descriptions of artwork, villas, or statues may invoke the craftsmanship of the object and the social *mores* it exhibits rather than highlight material attributes. The lack of specificity in ekphrasis in the *Silvae* arises from the very fact that they recall real rather than create fictional objects. In an epic model the author must paint the work of art before—or while—supplying interpretive information, but in the epigrammatic fashion of ekphrasis, the visual art is present and prone to interpretation by the author.

Szlest states that the ekphrastic poems of the *Silvae* do not have a genesis in epigrams (“*Silvae* des Statius haben nichts mit Epigrammen gemein”), and Elsner believes that Statius adopts the epic ekphrasis, extracting it from the narrative as self-sufficient work.²⁹ Hardie sees the synthesis of epigram and ekphrasis occurring in conjunction with poetic competitions and the rhetorical handbooks.³⁰ While the genre of ekphrasis in the first century CE may or may not have developed from epigrammatic use, it is functionally much more closely related to these substantive descriptions than to its epic counterpart. Statius incorporates the mimetic attributes of digressive ekphrasis into the descriptive genre of epigrammatic ekphrasis. In the *Silvae*, the descriptions serve as interpretive models not only for the art but for the cultural reality behind the art.

Among the most significant of Statius’ standard poetic elements is his ability to describe scenes with wonder and his poetic use of the *locus amoenus* as a common trope. Newlands has

²⁹ Szlest, 1966, 188; Elsner, 2002, 9.

³⁰ Hardie, 1983, 129–130.

pointed out that Statius' use of wonder (θαῦμα) forges a bond between himself and his reader as Statius omits architectural details and emphasizes the "emotions and ideas evoked in an admiring guest by the estate."³¹ This method is central to Statius' use of mimesis and his ability to reshape the "inner nature" of nature through description. The poems succeed in representing virtue without sacrificing the vividness so integral to ekphrasis.³² Statius also refashions the typical poetic description of the *locus amoenus*.³³ Rather than using traditional pastoral descriptions of untouched land, Statius describes the *locus amoenus* as a blend between nature and technology.³⁴ Both wonder and a reshaped *locus amoenus* derive from a sense of drastic change to the setting. The emphasis is not simply on what is present, but how every element is an improvement over the former state. This attention to change allows the scenes to be incorporated into the reader's experience more easily, as if the reader witnesses movement rather than a static snapshot. Statius encourages his audience to see the change as an improvement over the previous way of life and rejects the typical assumption that morality and human life degenerate through the progression of time and demonstrates that the human situation is improving.³⁵

The precedence of vivid descriptions and improved virtue shapes one of Statius' primary rhetorical tools, which I have termed the ekphrasis of change. This method of description is

³¹ Newlands, 2002, 157.

³² Van Dam, 1984, 188 notes the contrast between villa descriptions in Pliny and Statius. Pliny seeks a "systematic and exact account," whereas Statius spends most of the poem considering the costly materials in the home. Sherwin-White, 1966, 187 notes that, unlike the villas in Pliny's letters, the villas that Statius describes could never be reconstructed from his descriptive account.

³³ On the poetics and social commentary of the *locus amoenus* in Flavian literature, see McIntyre, 2008.

³⁴ See Newlands, 2002, 132–33: "The villa landscape is fashioned in *Silv.* 1.3 as the new *locus amoenus*, formed uniquely and seemingly effortlessly from the resources of technology as well as the cooperation of nature; the ideal site for poetry and the practice of virtue is now centred on a luxurious house and its carefully landscaped grounds."

³⁵ Lowenthal, 1985, 87–88 calls the assumption that everything in the past was greater than everything in the present "decay." He gives many cultural expressions of this assumption (see especially 23–25). On this attitude in Roman thought, see Harrison, 2005. For a more general Western context, see Herman, 1997.

commonly employed in portrayals of gardens and landscape, and Statius adopts and expands it to new levels. Pagán, for example, describes the “then and now” effect in the poetry of gardens.³⁶ Through the use of temporal ekphrasis, the poet is able to emphasize that a landscape or garden, “although transformed, . . . always retains some aspect of its earlier appearance that can be recognized.”³⁷ The land has undergone a metamorphosis under the hands of its owner. Sharrock likewise states that in metamorphosis, a description of one side of the change hints at the other.³⁸ In this sense the *Silvae* with a constant emphasis on change and the glory of the present state of the land hint at the former state of nature, in which toil and struggle dominate human existence. In other words the ekphrasis of change is the method Statius uses to express the metamorphosis from the world of the *Georgics* to the world of the *Silvae*. Statius relies on ekphrasis of change in his descriptions and therefore focuses less on a meticulous depiction of elements on the property and more on reactions to his encounter with landscapes that bear the mark of change. With great excitement he sees a flat or terraced terrain carved out of a mountain (*mons erat hic ubi plana vides*, 2.2.54). The exiguous description succeeds in forming a reaction of awe due to the extent of transformation, even though the reader has no information about the size of the previous mountain or type of plain now visible.

The domination of nature, as Statius depicts it, does not require any detailed description. An ekphrasis that focuses on systematic representation of the scene would be of little use in Statius’ programmatic goals; rather, the ekphrasis of change is an effective method to convey control, for

³⁶ Pagán, 2006, 89–91; 129; *et passim*.

³⁷ Pagán, 2006, 129. She notes the temporal change in a poem by Forché (1994) about Hiroshima that reproduces Statius’ type of ekphrasis well, though to the opposite effect:

Where there is no teahouse I see a wooden teahouse
and the corpses of those who slept in it

³⁸ Sharrock, 1996, 107.

Stattus is able to hint at the shortcomings of past generations and leaders by praising the work of the present. For this reason the theme of dominating nature, though it previously appears in literature and art, is so highly developed and realized in the *Silvae*. Stattus emphasizes that these real villas, the subject of so much previous criticism in the prose of Cicero and poetry of Horace, displayed philosophical ideals and cultural virtue through their control of nature. In the past, says Stattus, man represented his excellence by how he mingled with the natural environment and he does the same today, though the result looks different. Stattus does not create the connection between man and his house but is stepping into a seemingly universal connection to assert the virtue of his own patrons.³⁹

Even the title of the *Silvae* compels an examination of ekphrasis, for it seems to reveal some level of relationship between visual and verbal art in Stattus' descriptions. Many have ventured a guess to the meaning of the peculiar title. Commentators agree that the term *silva* has some resemblance to the alternate definition of the Greek ὕλη. Most recently, Wray has explored the importance of the term *materia* as poetic source and inspiration.⁴⁰

Vergil, in *Eclogue* 4.3, sings *si canimus silvas, silvae sint consule dignae* ('Should we sing of *silvae*, let them be *silvae* worthy of a consul'). This passage has long been considered to have some importance to Stattus' title.⁴¹ Internally and externally the verse is best interpreted through its mimetic value. In Vergil's bucolic poetry, trees are a reasonable source of comparison to

³⁹ Van Dam, 1984, 19 lists connections between man and his house made by Stattus' predecessors and contemporaries.

⁴⁰ Wray, 2007, 132–133, explains the four-fold process through which the calque *silvae* becomes the Latin equivalent of ὕλη, correcting Hardie's, 1983 view that the connection is "probably coincidental" (76). Bright, 1980, 20–49 gives one of the first in-depth examinations of the term. Delarue, 1996 rejects this line of interpretation and proposes that the term *Silvae* should be seen as a "paradise" and imply a work of complexity.

⁴¹ Bright, 1980, 37–39, notes the use of *silvae* with a close connection to poems or songs, especially in the pastoral *Eclogues* of Vergil. Nature and poetry have a close association for many of Vergil's successors. Cf. Pagán, 2006, 5: "The gardens in Roman literature are art forms recast in poetry and prose." On a more general level, Davies, 1988 explores the cultural symbolism of trees throughout western thought.

poetry, and a straightforward metonymic interpretation may be possible: if we sing about nature, we should sing about it well enough for a consul to attend. Vergil himself may inform the discussion on the significance of the term when he describes the poetic material for his *Georgics* as *silvae* (*interea Dryadum siluas saltusque sequamur / intactos, tua, Maecenas*, ‘Meanwhile, we’ll trace the Dryads’ woods and virgin glades, . . . Maecenas’, *G.* 3.40–41).

For Statius, the plastic *materia* extends beyond nature, and he sings of topics beyond literal *Silvae*. The source material therefore functions primarily as a starting point for poetic exhibition, but Statius still hews close to Vergil’s topic of nature. The transformed interaction between visual and verbal art serves as a fundamental element of the relationship between the *Silvae* and *Georgics*. Certainly Statius looks upon Vergil as a model for epic poetry, but his adaptation of moral descriptions of nature in the *Silvae* is shaped by the didactic *Georgics*. Just as he changed the subject matter for his epic and wished for the *Thebais* to follow—but not too closely—the *Aeneid*,⁴² he takes on new topics as he adapts Vergil’s poetry and recasts this new genre as his own. Thus the *Silvae* take on the same relationship with the *Georgics* that the *Thebais* holds with the *Aeneid*.

The rhetorical competitions for which Statius and his father were well known, as well as the training in the *progymnasmata*, stress the importance of ekphrasis but place little emphasis on the actual item or event described.⁴³ Indeed, the competition arises from the ability to describe

⁴² *Theb.* 12.816–817.

⁴³ Much of our information on Statius’ success in rhetorical competitions is autobiographical. He states that he arrived at the villa of Pollius Felix after the quinquennial festival (2.2.6–8). On dating Statius’ competition at the Alban games and the Capitoline contest, see Gibson, 2006, 260–266. On Poplios Papinius Statius’ role as a rhetor and educator, see Gossage, 1965; Holford-Strevens, 2000; McNelis, 2002.

artistically any visual art. If Statius and Lucan in their *Silvae* are answering Vergil's call,⁴⁴ the title for this genre is ideal both for its emphasis on nature and mimetic interpretation of nature.⁴⁵ Halliwell repeats Goethe's explanation that mimesis is art that reinterprets nature from within itself. The resulting art, or "heterocosm," therefore exists as a work, or world in itself.⁴⁶ Although man through building projects must sometimes altogether tame nature as in *Silvae* 2.2 or peacefully coexist with her as in *Silvae* 1.3, Statius' description of the resulting interaction may be seen as artistic representations of different types of raw material. The poet redefines nature through its utility to his patrons. Just as a landscape painter uses similar methods to represent mountainous terrain or a meadow, a unifying factor of the *Silvae* is Statius' expression of a single set of ideas even when his source material changes.⁴⁷

Wray shows that the *Silvae* are Statius' opportunity to showcase his poetic *ingenium* in contrast to his poetic *ars* that appears in the *Thebais*.⁴⁸ After establishing the Aristotelian view that is present in the *Silvae*—that both humans and nature create artifacts—he notes that the term *silva* centers around the interaction between talent and art, raw material and crafts.⁴⁹ Wood that

⁴⁴ Vacca in the *vita Lucani* (6th century CE) states that Lucan wrote ten books of *Silvae*. Nothing else is known about the work, and Statius does not mention it in his *genethliacon* (*Silv.* 2.7) for the deceased Lucan. See Bright, 1980, 34–35. On Statius' interaction with Lucan through this ode, see Malamud, 1995.

⁴⁵ For a similar example of an author taking up a writing assignment from Vergil, see Pagán's, 2006, 31–36, discussion of Columella and the *Georgics*.

⁴⁶ Halliwell, 2002, 4. See especially n9.

⁴⁷ On visual aspects of landscape at its message about the owner's status, see Bergmann, 1991.

⁴⁸ Wray, 2007, 142.

⁴⁹ See Wray, 2007, 136–139. He describes Statius' poetry in terms of its "painterly," not "linear" aspects, for Statius emphasizes the emotional perceptions of the art rather than formal design. Paired with the tendency of Statius to avoid any sharp division between art and nature, one sees brilliant surfaces like marble and gilded beams described as artistic creations of nature herself. This connection is analogous to the *Silvae* themselves, poems that flow from Statius' *ingenium*. Wray also demonstrates (135) that elsewhere in Greek literature, ὕλη contains the idea of both material and finished product in poetry.

becomes lumber and thus material for composition is a perfect example of the vague line between art and nature, as well as the mimetic interplay between subject and style.

An example of this blend between the text and visual art in the *Silvae* appears in Statius' description of Domitian's banquet (*Silv.* 4.2). The occasion for this banquet is uncertain, and therefore little is known of its details.⁵⁰ Statius, who may himself have provided the entertainment at the banquet with this poem, extols the grandeur of the building as he begins its physical description:⁵¹

Tectum augustum, ingens, non centum insigne columnis
sed quanta superos caelumque Atlante remisso
sustentare queant.

(*Silv.* 4.2.18–20)

An august edifice, vast, magnificent not with a hundred columns but as many as might support heaven and the High Ones were Atlas let go.

The assertion that Statius and his guests are in a large building is understandable, and perhaps expected, but when Statius begins by describing the hall supported by more than one hundred columns, the reader's attention is captured. The reference, however, has troubled commentators, who often compare it to Latinus' palace in *Aen.* 7.170: *tectum augustum, ingens, centum sublime columnis*.⁵² Zeiner notes that this number far exceeds the number of columns that would have been present in the *triclinium*.⁵³ Others, citing the literary license of the poet, have suggested that

⁵⁰ For a summary, see Coleman, 1988, 82–84. See also Malamud, 2001 and 2007. On Roman public dining, see Donahue, 2003.

⁵¹ Coleman, 1988, 82–84 shows that Statius was likely present at the dinner rather than hearing about it later. Malamud, 2007, 224, n4 notes that the poem may have been delivered *ex tempore* at the banquet or composed afterward.

⁵² Malamud, 2007 notes this and many other epic references in this poem. She believes that Statius is contrasting instances of hospitality in epic poetry with that of Domitian, who consistently falls short of their example.

⁵³ Zeiner, 2005, 90.

it is not necessary to reconcile the archaeological evidence.⁵⁴ Statius' exaggerated claim here is far more than poetic license; it is both a claim to the greatness of the present age and a recognition of the importance of material art in his ekphrastic poems. The phrase *non centum* evokes the common *topos* of “not even with a hundred tongues,” which recurs from Homer through the Flavians, but the poet overturns it with the final word of the hexameter: *columnis*.⁵⁵ The “many tongues” refrain was adapted repeatedly and became common enough by Nero's time to be derided by Persius (5.1–2).⁵⁶ The “one hundred tongues” were reformed into “many tongues spoken by an unbreakable voice” (*Tr.* 1.5.53–56), and perhaps even adopted by Statius in the *Thebais* (12.797–799).⁵⁷ Vergil adapts the lines to the *Georgics*:

non ego cuncta meis amplecti versibus opto
 non mihi si linguae centum sint oraque centum,
 ferrea vox

(*G.* 2.42–44)

Not that I could ever hope to feature all things in my verses—
 not even if I had a hundred mouths, as many ways of speech,
 and a voice as strong as iron.⁵⁸

Vergil's “many tongues” cannot relate everything about agriculture to his patron Maecenas (2.39), so he must emphasize the most important elements and leave out long digressions (2.45–46). Flowery passages would not provide a realistic description of Vergil's day-to-day subject. Statius, however, affirms the importance of the material (ὄλη) and asserts the reality of ekphraseis, even in his title. The claim of Vergil that he does not have the talent or space to

⁵⁴ Gibson, DeLaine, and Claridge, 1994, 81n.

⁵⁵ For a similar interpretation, see Newlands, 2002, 270. She points out that the number escalates through time: ten tongues in Homer (*Il.* 2.488–489) to a thousand in Ovid (*Fast.* 2.119).

⁵⁶ Hinds 1998, 34–47.

⁵⁷ Hinds 1998, 45.

⁵⁸ He repeats lines 43–44 in *Aen.* 6.625 when he has the Sybil state that she is unable to recount the many sins of man.

describe fictional works of art underscores the gap between art and ekphrasis. Statius similarly claims that he is not able to verbally reconstruct the scene (*non . . . digna loquar*, 4.2.8–10) but emphasizes the effectiveness of the art to serve functionally and to defy explanation due to its grandeur. The resulting vividness of the description provides the audience not with any accurate visualization of the scene but an overwhelming sense of awe for the palace. Statius in this way affirms the value of art itself over pure poetic description and simultaneously shows the superiority of this hall over that of Latinus. Since one hundred columns would be insufficient to bear the burden, enough are present to hold up the earth itself. Nature is depicted as subservient to a man-made edifice. Statius foreshadows this ability of the building to uproot nature in the first lines of his poem by citing banquets attended by Aeneas and Ulysses, told in stories with verse that will remain, *mansuro carmina* (3).

Vergil's appeal for poets to sing *silvae* worthy of a consul also bridges the notion of visual and verbal art. Wood can describe the raw material or raw poetic talent as well as the artifact or poem. In the *Georgics* the reader witnesses a tension between the creative drive of humanity and the creative force of nature. Man must adapt his practices to the nature (*ingenium*) of the land (e.g., *G.* 2.177). In the *Silvae*, however, the raw material that nature offers works in concert with or is improved on by human talent. The materials and artifacts of nature and of man work in concert in this poetry titled by a word that incorporates all these elements.

Ekphrasis in the *Silvae* and *Georgics*

Change and its moral benefit appear throughout the *Silvae*, but two poems demonstrate landscape transformation to an extreme. *Silvae* 4.3 features ekphrasis of change across a large area through the publically funded *Via Domitiana*. The villa of Pollius Felix exemplifies a privately funded location of metamorphosis (*Silv.* 2.2). The soil itself, rather than man-made

objects, typifies the change in the *Georgics* (2.203–211), and Vergil’s poetic temple (*G.* 3.10–39) experiences metamorphosis into a new temple to Hercules (*Silv.* 3.1).

Ekphrasis of Change in a Public Work: The Via Domitiana (*Silvae* 4.3)

In his description of the *via Domitiana* (4.3), only a handful of lines actually describe the new road. Instead, the reader learns about the defects of the previous road (27–35), the speed with which the builders wrought the new road (40–60), and the new virtue that the road bestows to its surroundings (61–113). The road is only described through the ekphrasis of change:

Hic quondam piger axe vectus uno
nutabat cruce pendula viator
sorbebatque rotas maligna tellus,
et plebs in mediis Latina campis 30
horrebat mala navigationis;
nec cursus agiles, sed impeditum
tardabant iter orbitae tenaces,
dum pondus nimium querens sub alta
repit languida quadrupes statera. 35
at nunc, quae solidum diem terebat,
horarum via facta vix duarum.
non tensae volucrum per astra pennae,
nec velocius ibitis, carinae.
(Silv. 4.3.27–39)

Here once the tardy traveler borne on a single axle would sway on a pendulous pole as the malignant earth sucked in his wheels, and the Latian folk feared the woes of navigation in the midst of the plain. No nimble runs; sticky ruts slowed the hampered journey, while the fainting beasts crawled beneath their high yoke, grumbling at too heavy a load. But now the route that used to wear out a solid day barely takes two hours. The stretched wings of birds flying through the stars will go no faster, nor ships either.

After the deictic *hic* and temporal marker *quondam*, Statius transitions from a brief three-line (27–29) description of the area to a fuller account of the altered state of the land resulting from the new road. In addition to the temporal signifier, the language is decidedly negative as it describes the past: *nutabat* (28), *sorbebat* (29) *horrebat* (31), *tardebant* (33) *repit* (35), *terebat* (36). The farmer on his primitive vehicle struggles against the earth that is attempting to

overpower his wheels.⁵⁹ In contrast to the whirlpools and quagmires (*sorbebat*), the new road is marked for its utility to humans through the ekphrasis of change.⁶⁰ “Now,” as Statius emphatically announces (*at nunc*, 36), the inner nature of this formerly difficult ground (*maligna tellus*, 29) has been transformed into something useful. By describing the change rather than the physical appearance, Statius is able to attribute more virtue and morality to the road and its commissioner. Now, because of human control, the same earth is no longer *maligna*, as Statius in his apostrophe (38–39) states that it presently offers travel faster than the air or sea.

The birds and ships themselves symbolize another change. Previously the journey was accomplished by a four-footed beast (*quadrupes*, 35), tired, protesting (*languida*, 35; *querens*, 34), and hauling its too-heavy burden (*pondus nimium*, 34). Now the run seems almost magical, as Statius omits any beast or vehicle in his description of travel on the new road, stating only that it is faster than the flight of birds or course of ships. Unlike Bright’s conclusion that Statius “had an unerring eye for visual detail,” the poet omits any description of the appearance of the new road or its passengers, describing only the change that occurs.⁶¹ The closest he comes to an actual detailed description is of the construction of the road (40–55), but even this is a description of change as workers fill trenches (43), cut down trees and mountains (50), and alter the course of a river (54–55). Statius describes not the details of the location, but the significance of the change and the dichotomous characteristics of past and present. The theme of change is emphasized elsewhere in the poem with temporal markers. The river Vulturnus used to be wild and threatening (*turbidus minaxque*, 76), but now (*nunc*, 76) is bound by a bridge and crossed by

⁵⁹ On the type of cart, see Coleman, 1988, 110–111. Rejecting Vollmer’s four-wheeled *raeda* with one axle stuck in the mud, she believes it to be a two-wheeled *cisium* (Vollmer, 1898.) The *cruce pendula* (28) would therefore be the pole that linked the horse or mule to the axle. On the use of *cisia*, cf. Cicero, *Rosc. Am.* 19.

⁶⁰ Coleman, 1988, 111 defines *sorbere* as the actions of whirlpools.

⁶¹ Bright, 1980, 12.

pedestrians (78). The river used to tear up the land and woods (*terras rapere et rotare silvas / assueram*, 79–80) but now has taken the shape of a river (*amnis esse coepi*, 80).

A central distinction between the poet and sculptors or painters is the ability to depict metamorphosis. Statius' diachronic description allows him to relate more ethical information than a synchronic approach, which would lend itself to descriptive information.⁶² As Statius seeks to praise the new philosophical and technological virtues, his poetic agenda is altered. Because the programmatic nature of the poem is a description of the virtues of his present age, Statius is not attempting to recreate any exact representation of the road, for he is fashioning his own art. His descriptions are therefore realistic, but lacking indecorous details that one might otherwise expect.

The final metamorphosis, however, is reserved for the patron of the poet and the road, Domitian. The Sybil approaches the road as a prophetess of Domitian's lasting rule and deification.⁶³ In a poem that so strongly distinguishes past and present, the Sybil's first word is in the future, only the second time this tense appears in the poem.⁶⁴ Domitian will not only visit (*veniet*), but, in the next word the Sybil speaks, she commands the fields to await his approach (*manete campi / atque amnis*, 124–125). The prophetic future and command, as Coleman notes, are certainly expected diction of the Sybil, but the emphasis on Domitian, whose rule she predicts to be lasting, stands in contrast to the rapid change in the rest of the poem.⁶⁵ Domitian is

⁶² On the interplay between sculpture, poetry, and the poet's ability to relate metamorphosis, see Sharrock, 1996.

⁶³ The significance of the Sybil here perhaps lies in the use of visual propaganda, for Statius may have in mind a golden statue of Apollo on top of the temple in Cumae that was visible from the road and a statue of Domitian atop the Arco Felice. See Smolenaars, 2006, 235n. On the Sybil as spokesperson, see Coleman, 1999.

⁶⁴ The first, discussed above, is *ibitis* (39), but here Statius is prophesying that the boats will *not* move faster. *Tacendum est* (120) also appears, but the future is grammatical rather than functional.

⁶⁵ Coleman, 1988, 131.

identified as a better artist than nature (*Natura melior potentiorque*, 136) and brings rapid change to the land, but Statius is quick to note that he and his creation will last:

vidi quam seriem virentis aevi
pronectant tibi candidae Sorores.
(*Silv.* 4.3.145–146).

I have seen the procession of slow time that the white-clad Sisters weave for you.

Statius has vividly portrayed the land as subject to rapid development and swift change, but he also emphasizes that this is not a continuous metamorphosis. The new improvements will leave a lasting change.

Ekphrasis of Change in a Private Work: The Villa of Pollius Felix (*Silvae* 2.2)

While Statius hints at the theme of virtue on display through a construction project in his praise of the *Via Domitiana*, he states it explicitly when describing the home of Pollius Felix. In fact, Statius states that he has difficulty deciding whether to describe the inherent greatness of the place or the patron, perhaps because it is difficult to distinguish between the two: *locine / ingenium an domini mirer prius?* ('Should I marvel first at the place's ingenuity or its master's?' 2.2.44–45). The rhetorical question links human and physical nature but adds a third element, as *ingenium* is the primary mode of interpretation for the virtue and ingenuity of Pollius Felix and the land.

The description of Statius' visit begins with a brief geographic layout as he describes the natural jetties and resulting peaceful harbor (2.2.13–14). Statius states then that nature provides the space with the beach and cliffs (*dat Natura locum*, 15), but the place is offered for change through human agency. In fact, the first sign of beauty (*gratia prima loci*, 17) comes not from the natural recess, but from the baths built there (*gemina testudine fumant / balnea*, 17–18). Water and wind respond as nature begins to imitate and represent Felix's human residence, and they

undergo a change for the better as they lay aside their rage (*ponunt hic lassa furorem aequora et insane spirant clementius austri*, 26–27).

Statius leads us quickly from the shore to a walkway: *inde per obliqua erepit porticus arces, / urbis opus* ('From that point a colonnade creeps zigzag through the heights, a city's work,' 2.2.30–31). The rapid transition created by the abrupt transition *inde* signals both new location and a return to a physical description. The quick shift is matched by a terse description of the colonnade, yet the building itself stands in contrast to the rapid movements of the poet. The colonnade creeps (*erepit*) on an oblique path along the cliffs and it is of notable size (*longo . . . dorso*, 31). Statius is seemingly outpacing the physical art with his own verbal art. Before a mythical digression (34–42), however, Statius notes the change evident in the place:

qua prius obscuro permixti pulvere soles
et feritas inamoena viae, nunc ire voluptas
(*Silv.* 2.2.32–33)

Where formerly sunshine mingled with foggy dust and the path was wild and ugly, 'tis pleasure now to go;

The temporal adverbs make clear Statius' sense of amazement that the same place could appear so different.⁶⁶ The interlocked pattern in line 32 emphasizes the confused state of the ground, while tension between the first and last word of the phrase (*obscuro . . . soles*) exaggerates the disarray of the area. Nature left to its own devices created a *locus inamoenus* (33).

⁶⁶ Van Dam, 1984, 213, notes that this "is a favourite scheme in Augustan poetry," citing perhaps the most famous example, in which Evander points out the future site of Rome to Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.347–369). Cf. the metamorphoses of Priapus (Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.1–5) in Pagán, 2006, 41–56. This theme is indeed often used in Augustan poetry to describe the development and historical significance of the Roman cityscape. In this passage, however, the effect is much more localized and moralized; the reader sees not well-known triumphal monuments but a brief glimpse of the results of human improvement. Ekphrasis of change in Rome may be said to extol Roman magnificence, while these descriptions speak specifically to the virtue of Statius' patrons.

The improvement that occurs through the ekphrasis of change is ubiquitous in this poem. Statius notes that flat land has taken the place of a mountain, buildings stand where once grew a wild forest, and in turn a pleasant forest appears:

mons erat hic ubi plana vides; et lustra fuerunt,
quae nunc tecta subis; ubi nunc nemora ardua cernis,
hic nec terra fuit:

(*Silv.* 2.2.54–56)

Where you see level ground, there used to be a hill; the buildings you now enter was wilderness; where now you see lofty woods, there was not even land.

Although he uses the temporal adverb *ubi* (55) once, Statius primarily exploits changes in verb tense to create ἐνάργεια. Statius paints a still picture in the present (*plana vides*) for the reader but supplies additional ekphrastic information (*mons erat*). Next in the tricolon, Statius creates a moving picture as the reader enters one of the buildings, but not without imagining the boggy forest that used to exist there (*lustra fuerant*). Finally, the reader has a bird’s-eye view of the scene and wonders at the tall grove (*nemora ardua*), which Statius tells us to imagine sitting on an area that used to be void of land. The series of changes have resulted in the removal of woods that were wild and inconvenient to Pollius Felix and new woods that offer a civilized and inspirational benefit. The *feritas inamoena* (33) has been transformed into a place that is more visually appealing, more inspirational, and indicative of Felix’s virtue; in short, it is a *locus amoenus*. Like Manilius Vopiscus’ villa, this home is a *locus amoenus* through Statius’ ekphrasis.⁶⁷ Statius describes how the change has not only redeemed the physical properties, but also the character and literary value of the place.

The temporal emphasis is perhaps the primary element to the sense of wonder that is often sensed in Statius’ villa descriptions. Thomas notes that the “poetic ekphrasis from Homer to

⁶⁷ Newlands, 2002, 159, states that this poem, because of the significant change involved in creating the house, represents the poetic notion of a *locus amoenus* even more than 1.3.

Statius, and particularly from the Hellenistic period on, required two related features: first the claim, almost as a piece of advertisement, that the object in question is of outstanding artistry, and then the subsequent awe or amazement it evokes from those who are involved with it in the narrative.”⁶⁸ Three factors contribute to Statius’ descriptive methods to convey this wonder: his rapid transitions from place to place, his seeming inability to describe what he sees,⁶⁹ and the ekphrasis of change. Statius uses these rhetorical devices with such skill that the reader is left chasing the poet from the coast to a walkway and finally inside the home. As a result, even the lack of ability to describe the scene is transferred through mimesis to the reader, and the lack of any detail creates not a vivid description but vivid emotion.

Concluding his introduction and summarizing his wonder, Statius makes an emphatic statement that approaches his own typical use of mimesis in ekphrasis:

Hic praeceps minus audet hiems, nulloque tumultu
stagna modesta iacent dominique imitantia mores.
(*Silv.* 2.2.28–29)

Here the headlong tempest bates its daring; the pool lies modest and untroubled, imitating its master’s manners.

Statius’ use of *imitantia* links the virtue of Pollius’ quiet life and the quiet sea he lives upon, but the word also speaks to the mimetic nature of art. *Imitatio*, the Latin translation of mimesis,⁷⁰ appears in many of Statius’ ekphrastic poems, especially those depicting man’s control of nature.

⁶⁸ Thomas, 1983a, 109.

⁶⁹ See, e.g., 73–74: *quid mille revolvam / cumina* (‘Why should I rehearse the thousand rooftops’), 98: *quid nunc ruris opes . . . dicam* (‘Why now should I tell of rural wealth’).

⁷⁰ ‘Imitate’ is still a common but weak translation of the term in English. Halliwell (2002, 13–14 and 344–348) discusses the problem of using imitation as a translation for mimesis in the modern period due to its impoverished semantic range. While imitation may once have held a philosophical connection to mimesis that implied artistic representation, today it holds a connotation of copying, sometimes even with a pejorative undertone. Halliwell competently separates the value of mimesis in Plato and competing theorists, laying special significance on Derrida’s rejection of Platonism, which interprets mimesis as an inadequate representation of a true form. For a summary, see 37–71.

In *Silvae* 1.1, Statius' description of Domitian's equestrian statue, the work of art imitates not only the true statue but even its master's appearance (*at sonipes habitus animosque imitatus eriles*, 'but the charger in counterfeit of his master's mien,' 1.1.46).⁷¹ Statius later focuses on the excellent quality of the statue, which he compares to the colossal statues at Tarentum and Rhodes (103–104) and which has eyes resembling flames (*tua sidereas imitantia flammis* 1.1.103). Phidias himself, the sculptor whose work was praised because it featured beauty and the resemblance of reality rather than being realistic,⁷² would have also liked to create Domitian's statue: *optassetque novo similem te ponere templo / Atticus Elei senior Iovis*, 'the old Athenian would have longed to set your likeness in a new temple of Elean Jove,' 1.1.101–102. The force of *imitatio*, then, is not to be seen in the Platonic notion of how closely the statue depicts reality, but in the Aristotelian notion of how successful the statue is as art in its realistic depiction.

The transition from rough seas and a storm (29) to an untroubled pool show that through change, the artistic beauty is revealed in nature. The *mores* present in both villa and owner are gentleness (*gentile*, 9; *placido*, 13, 140), grace (*gratia*, 17), happiness (*felicia*, 23; *felix*, 107),⁷³ peacefulness (*quies*, 26), and mercy (*clementius*, 27).⁷⁴ The description seems fanciful and exaggerated, but the value of the ekphrasis does not stem from its propositional claims. Rather, the land and setting functions as a mimetic representation of the character of its owner, and the poet in turn seeks to create a vivid experience of the land for the reader. Were Statius to provide

⁷¹ The text is that of Markland, 1728, which Shackleton Bailey adopts. Whether *eriles* or *equestres* is correct, the emphasis is that the statue's appearance has some resemblance of the horse's master. Shackleton Bailey's translation of "counterfeit" is overly weighted. Professor Newlands has suggested to me the cognate "imitative."

⁷² See Quintilian 12.10.9.

⁷³ As most commentators have noted, this is likely a pun on Pollius Felix's name, though Shackleton Bailey, 2003, 124n seems skeptical. See also Nisbet, 1978.

⁷⁴ The list of examples is from van Dam, 1984, 201. See also Newlands, 2002, 169–174, on the Epicurean values of Pollius Felix and their expression in his villa.

a straightforward description of Pollius Felix himself rather than the representational qualities of the land and villa, the bombastic tones of Statius' poetry would become too whimsical and personal to appeal to a larger audience. Because Statius describes specific buildings or natural elements in such general terms, the reader better relates to the poem and even becomes incorporated into the scene. Just as Vergil dealt with the tension of specific political, ethical, or social issues by generalizing his topic to agriculture, so Statius broadens his poetry to reach beyond the immediate occasion for its composition.

New Soil: Different Types of Earth (*Georgics* 2.203–211)

Before considering the last example, a temple devoted to Heracles (*Silv.* 3.1), it is revealing to consider how Statius' ekphrasis of nature differs from Vergil in the *Georgics*. In Vergil's agricultural poem, the artistic representation of practical, daily farming life contains a mimetic resonance of political, literary, and military life.⁷⁵ Ekphrasis in the *Georgics*, however, is much less prevalent than in the *Silvae* or even Vergil's later *Aeneid*. As Barchiesi notes, didactic poetry lends itself more to the description of the "standard and repeatable," while epic—or in this case epigrammatic—poems are more suited to ekphrasis of the "unique and wonderful."⁷⁶ Indeed, because Vergil's ekphrastic passages vary in content so little from the rest of the poem, it is at times difficult to separate didactic and ekphrastic passages in the *Georgics*. For the sake of comparison with the *Silvae*, passages that describe the state of land or buildings, rather than those that describe the processes to cultivate them, will be considered ekphrastic.

After the lengthy praise of the Italian countryside, Vergil describes the many types of soil and how to best use their natural properties. The rugged, stony soil is best for olive trees (179–

⁷⁵ Thomas, 1988, 18. Cf. Miles, 1980, 77: "Once again we are confronted with the suggestion that agriculture itself contains the seeds of other more glorious expressions of the human character, that mankind's own cultivation is somehow implicit in his cultivation of the earth."

⁷⁶ Barchiesi, 1997, 271.

181), berries are best produced where oleaster grows (182–183), but the hilly land with plenty of grass and rain makes the best soil for a vineyard. As for grain, Vergil describes two types of land where one can successfully grow crops:

nigra fere et presso pinguis sub uomere terra
et cui putre solum (namque hoc imitamur arando),
optima frumentis: non ullo ex aequore cernes 205
plura domum tardis decedere plaustra iuuencis;
aut unde iratus siluam deuexit arator
et nemora euertit multos ignaua per annos,
antiquasque domos auium cum stirpibus imis
eruit; illae altum nidis petiere relictis, 210
at rudis enituit impulso uomere campus.
(G. 2.203–211)

As like as not, ground that's black when it's subjected to the share, whose soil is friable (the sort we aim to reproduce by turning it), that's best for corn; you'll nowhere see more waggonfuls dragged home by struggling bullocks; that, or lands from which a careless farmer carried timber off, laid waste to woods that had stood tall for years on year and wrecked the ancient habitats of birds by ripping up roots and all. Their nestlings left, their mothers made for high sky, but those once straggly acres blossom now behind your team.

This passage clearly describes the violence necessary in agriculture. It also contains an emphasis on change that comes with farming and husbandry, though without the purely positive connotations of the change so apparent in the *Silvae*. The ekphrasis, set off by vivid, visual language (*cernes*, 205), asserts that some soil is friable (*putre*, 204) by nature, but other soil must be recreated (*imitamur*, 204) by plowing. The verb *imitor* is conspicuous in this ekphrastic passage as Vergil is perhaps speaking to the weakness of mimetic representation. Just as the present soil is not as suitable as the original for grain production, so does the poetic representation of the toil required offers only a glimpse at the actual state of life. Becker states that the relationship of the text and work of art is analogous to that of the text and how the reader relates to the poem.⁷⁷ The imitation of good soil through labor in this way emphasizes for the

⁷⁷ Becker, 1992, 7.

reader the present reality of labor in day-to-day life in the present age. Before describing this soil Vergil has just noted the type present in Mantua: *petito . . . / et qualem infelix amisit Mantua campum*, ‘try the . . . rolling plains such as Mantua was misfortunate enough to lose’ (2.197–198). The sense of loss spills into the next portion, as Vergil reemphasizes the absence of good *natural* soil.

Vergil then describes what type of change the reader will see (*cernes*, 205). The land is noteworthy for the number of wagons (*plaustra*, 206) hauling away produce or plains left after a farmer has removed (*devexit*, 207) a forest (*silvam*, 207). Next, forests that have lain fallow (*nemora . . . ignava*, 208) are overturned (*evertit*, 208) and the homes of birds are ripped up by their roots (209–210). The scene in many ways uses the same ekphrasis of change present in the drastic landscape changes of *Silvae* 2.2, but through mimetic representation the action that will be given positive moral tones in the *Silvae* is imbued here with a detrimental overtone.⁷⁸ The clear shift from one scene of dominating nature to another underscores the poet’s central role as interpreter in ekphrasis. For Statius, ekphrasis of change is a means of showing the increased beauty and utility associated with innovation. The underlying motif of the *Georgics* as revealed through ekphrasis is that the fundamental human condition is unlikely to be altered by human advancement, and any change will likely harm nature rather than benefit mankind.

Vergil’s *Georgic* Temple: The Poetic Temple (*Georgics* 3.10–39)

While Statius often hints at and relies upon the connection between visual art and poetry, Vergil asserts the relationship explicitly at the beginning of Book 3 of the *Georgics*. His ekphrastic description of a metaphorical temple comes at the very center of his book, as do many

⁷⁸ See also Vergil’s instruction to farmers to cut out great mounds from trenches: *magnos scrobibus concidere montis*, 2.260 in contrast to Statius’ praise for Felix for leveling a hill, 2.2.54.

of Vergil's ekphraseis.⁷⁹ Octavian, as the central figure of the temple itself, thus occupies a prominent role in the description:

et uiridi in campo templum de marmore ponam
propter aquam, tardis ingens ubi flexibus errat
Mincius et tenera praetexit harundine ripas.
in medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit:
(G. 3.13–16)

and I'll erect a marble temple in a grassy meadow by the waters of the wide Mincius
whose ambling course flows this way and that, its sides tossing their fringe of wavy rushes.
At its center I'll place Caesar.

Vergil's temple serves symbolically as his adaption of purely Callimachean themes. He states from the beginning that stories have been well used, and now he will venture in another direction: *cetera, quae uacuas tenuissent carmine mentes, / omnia iam uulgata* ('They're tired themes that might have once engaged the lazy intellect in poetry,' G. 3.3–4). Vergil is announcing his new, epic style of poetry through visual stimuli and natural elements. It is unclear whether Vergil is referring specifically to the *Aeneid* as he had already envisioned it or is describing his epic in generic terms, but he is certainly prophesying a new poem that embraces Roman poetic ideals over Callimachean aesthetics.⁸⁰

Vergil's description relies heavily on visual language to construct the image of the temple but simultaneously contains traits that remind the reader that the poem is a metaphoric work of art and that Vergil is the artist. The ethical dative *mihi* (16) situated between *medio* and *Caesar* creates a metapoetic reference in addition to supplying visual information. Vergil reminds his

⁷⁹ Thomas, 1983, shows the importance of relative position of objects in ekphraseis. Details at the perimeter art often serve as boundaries to the visual and interpretive information, while the center often defines the crucial attribute of the art and its description. Nelis, 2004 sees in the temple Vergil's tension about his genre in the *Georgics*. On boundaries in ekphrasis, see also Newby, 2002.

⁸⁰ Thomas, 1983a, 92–101 and Newlands, 1991 discuss the close relationship, both linguistically and thematically, between this poem and Callimachus' *Aetia* 3, as well as Vergil's claim to Roman superiority in poetry. Vergil is in essence using Callimachus to reject him. Thomas and Newlands agree that Vergil here anticipates the *Aeneid*.

reader that the subject matter may change, but the art work is effected by Vergil's craftsmanship. Vergil thus distinguishes the interactive role between art and poet through this masterful line in which Caesar is the central figure but the poet is the master. Vergil uses poetic borders here to place Caesar at the center of *his* temple, a reference to the present poem, of which the temple description holds the central place. The reference also implies that Caesar will stand as the central figure in Vergil's new work.

Vergil next claims that the Greek festivals and games will be vacated as all will come to see him as *victor* (17). Rome, no longer Olympia and Nemea, is to become the new center for such contests:

cuncta mihi Alpheum linquens lucosque Molorchi
cursibus et crudo decernet Graecia caestu.
(G. 3.19–20)

Because of me, all Greece will leave the Alpheus and the cypress groves of Molorchus to compete in running races and bruising bouts of boxing.

The phrase 'groves of Molorchus' recalls the first labor of Heracles and the destitute craftsman who showed hospitality to the hero. Alluding to Callimachus' *Aetia* 3, Vergil begins his third book with this reference to Hercules. Statius picks up on this trend at the beginning of his third book: *pauperis arva Molorchi*, 3.1.29. He mimics Callimachus and Vergil with the reference to Molorchus, even placing the name in the final position like Vergil. His predecessor sought triumph through poetry, but Statius tells of a new, better temple at the beginning of his third book. Newlands argues convincingly *contra* Thomas that Statius has the *Georgics* in mind as he composes 3.1.⁸¹ Statius has often acknowledged his debt to Vergil, and the close relationship

⁸¹ Newlands, 1991. See Thomas, 1983a, 105.

between the two works, much less these passages, leads one to believe that his reference to Molochus is more than an acknowledgement of an “archetype” in epinician poetry.⁸²

In both poems there is an emphasis on the visibility of nature. Vergil says that he will place his temple in a green field near the water (*G.* 3.13–15), and the festivities at Pollius’ new temple to Heracles will be espied by green Nereids emerging from the sea.⁸³ Statius, however, emphasizes the former state of the land much more than he does the site of the new temple. Pollius has constructed the temple as a vow to the god after a small hut was unable to protect everyone from a rain storm (3.1.82). The former temple, which was small and built on rocky soil, was unable to protect against nature; it was a *Georgic* temple. Statius in fact spends 128 lines speaking of the change—from past to present and present to future—brought about through Pollius’ construction of the temple, and only twenty six lines to describe the present scene.⁸⁴

Pollius’ temple too defies typical ekphrastic language. Vergil, in his description of Aeneas’ shield, notes that the art cannot always be perfectly described, just as Aeneas is unable to explain fully the ‘structure’ (*textum*) of the shield: *hastamque et clipei non enarrabile textum*, *Aen.* 8.25). The temple described by Statius, however, is not just difficult to describe (*enarrabile*), but difficult even to behold with the eyes: *vix oculis animoque fides* (*Silv.* 3.1.8). Statius moves beyond the difficulty of representing an imagined work of art into text and states that this new temple is so well wrought that it is difficult for the eyes to comprehend. There is no surprise,

⁸² Thomas, 1983a, 105.

⁸³ Cf. the green (*viridi*) cave of Mars at the beginning of Vergil’s ekphrasis of the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.630). On the importance of color and vision in the shield of Aeneas, see West, 1990, 298–299.

⁸⁴ Lines 1–22 provide a preliminary description of the improvement the new temple has brought to the land; 49–138 tell of the past events that led Pollius to dedicate a new temple; 166–183 are Heracles’ prophecy of the future benefits Pollius and his wife will receive because of the change. Only 139–165 describe the actual scene and the festival to celebrate the dedication. The remainder of the poem, 23–48 serves as a kletic hymn to Hercules.

then, that Statius lacks any systematic description or emphasis on specific elements, for he states that the temple is a marvel far beyond that type of understanding.

Vergil continues to describe the temple in strong visual language. Although he digresses from the temple to a vision of himself victorious in a poetic contest, only to return to the temple when describing the doors (26), it is perhaps the case that Vergil is imagining the victorious progression of lines 17–25 as part of the temple itself. He uses future tense verbs (*agitabo*, 18; *decernet*, 20; *feram*, 22) to tie the scene together with his initial claim to construct a temple with Caesar at the center. He also echoes the ethical dative *mihi* (16) with a statement of advantage (*cuncta mihi . . . / . . . decernet Graecia*, 19–20). Vergil even sees himself inscribed on the temple (*ipse*, 21). He will happily observe the cattle brought for his own celebration (*iuvat caesosque videre iuencos*, 23). Here Vergil reemphasizes the visibility of the temple in his own mind. He is delighted to view these scenes and festivities engraved upon his temple. The preface to Book 3, which may have been added late in the poem's composition,⁸⁵ marks Vergil's ability to rise above the toil of the human condition. His first two books spoke of man's difficulty in controlling nature and the reluctance with which nature changed. Vergil at the beginning of the third book, through a rejection of both Hercules and georgic poetry, announces his escape—his metamorphosis into an epic poet.⁸⁶ The doors (*in foribus*, 26), symbolic of Vergil's change, are marked for their movement. Vergil points to the flowing Nile and rising columns:

atque hic undantem bello magnumque fluentem
Nilum ac nauali surgentis aere columnas.
(*G.* 3.28–29)

and, yes, the mighty Nile in the full flood of war, and columns springing up and decorated with bronze prows of battleships.

⁸⁵ Thomas notes that the possible references to the temple of Apollo on the Palatine (26) and the display of the *rostra* taken at Actium (29) put this passage close to the end of the publication date, 29 BCE.

⁸⁶ On Vergil's claim, see Newlands, 1991, 449.

The visual effect of a moving river on a temple is stunning, but even this is outstripped by the statues of the founders of Troy made from Parian marble that are so lifelike they seem to breathe: *stabunt et Parii lapides, spirantia signa*, 34). The vivid nature of the description supplies the sense of wonder, and the reader briefly forgets that the well-crafted work of art is not any real temple but the poem itself. Vergil, in typical ekphrastic fashion, has molded the physical, visual art through textual mimesis.

Statius in his account of a temple appropriate for the world of the *Georgics* reborn as a temple worthy of the *Silvae* mimics Vergil as he triggers his description through typical ekphrastic language, *cernere erat* (15). Unlike Vergil, Statius takes his beginning from a real temple and in turn proceeds a step further to create a moral identity for the work of art from his poetry. The quote from Vergil's description of Aeneas' shield (*cernere erat, totumque instructo Marte uideres / feruere Leucaten auroque effulgere fluctus. Aen. 8.676–677*), however, does not begin a detailed description of the many battles of Rome but falls at the end of the description of what the land used to look like:

o velox pietas! steriles hic nuper harenas
ad sparsum pelago montis latus hirtaque dumis
saxa nec ulla pati faciles vestigia terras
cernere erat. quaenam subito fortuna rigentes,
ditavit scopulos?

(*Silv.* 3.1.12–16)

O rapid piety! A little while ago all we could see here was barren sand and sea-splashed mountainside and rocks shaggy with scrub and earth scarce willing to suffer print of foot. What fortune has suddenly enriched these stark cliffs?

The wonder here finds its source in the rapidity and degree of the change that occurred. Statius uses *cernere erat* to the opposite effect of Vergil. The sense now is that these features are *no longer* visible. Whereas Vergil described static objects as though they were moving, Statius describes the effect of the movement, and the reader, having experienced the degree of change, is

left to imagine the new scene. The fertile soil that has replaced the barren is a testimony to Hercules, who, Statius informs us, was primarily responsible for transforming the land. Thus, as Newlands shows, through the poetry that Vergil rejects and the hero he dismisses, Statius depicts the new georgic hero Hercules.⁸⁷

Conclusion

Both poets use ekphrasis to greater effect than a simple digression. In the *Georgics*, ekphrastic descriptions of nature and human interaction with nature serve to underscore one of the central themes of the poem: *labor omnia vicit / improbus*. The change that man creates through his constant *improbus* labor seldom *improves* his position, but only ensures that he may continue to struggle against nature another day. Vergil's metaphoric poetic temple then stands in stark contrast to the somber reality he projects in the first two books. Statius uses ekphrasis in a manner different from Vergil, but with similar results. The author of the *Silvae* underscores the visual reality of the art he describes. To ascribe textual moral value to the existing plastic art as well as to write a poem both for a patron and a wider audience, Statius devalues any systematic description found in his epic predecessors and creates through ekphrasis wonder at the objects he describes while bestowing honor on his patrons. His innovative ekphrasis accomplishes this through mimetic representation and a sense of vividness. In the end, however, it is Statius' quickly composed poetry that survives the quickly composed art.

The morality associated with building projects also shifts through each author's use of mimetic representation. Statius and Vergil compose poems in which the specifics of political and social life yield to the generalities of landscape and agriculture. Through the ekphrasis of change, both authors move beyond the limits of individual homes or settings to express cultural and

⁸⁷ Newlands, 1991, 448.

universal truths. The shifting morality expressed in the ekphraseis of each author relies upon a fundamental assumption about the nature of a home. The descriptions of private buildings and homes rely on a fundamental assumption that these man-made constructions are a point of control over nature. The homes featured in Statius' poetry are therefore to be seen as the fundamental means by which man dominates nature.

CHAPTER 6 THE NATURE OF THE HOME

The changes in values, morality, and perspective on the interaction between humans and nature, as they appear in the *Georgics* and *Silvae*, are revealed through changes in moral connotations of nature, the use of military language to express the relationship, and the use of ekphrasis. After observing Statius' reappropriation of Vergil's representation of agriculture, the function of military language, and the ekphrastic method that Statius develops, the role of the villa in the *Silvae*, especially Poems 1.3 and 2.2, as the point of intersection between man and his environment emerges as a practical and allegorical tool for dominating nature and poeticizing the interaction between man and nature. This chapter explores this interstice from pragmatic and proprietary viewpoints. Statius' poetics speak to the societal function of the retirement villa (*villa urbana*) in contrast to farms (*villa rustica*) or city dwellings.¹

Cato is the first extant Roman writer to consider the ethical significance of villas intended to provide *quies* rather than *fructus*.² Moral condemnation of luxury suffuses the works of Cicero and Sallust³ until citizens began copying the building habits of their emperors by constructing large estates outside of Rome, especially along the Bay of Naples.⁴ By the time of Statius, the ability to display wealth through opulent building projects was a demonstration of true virtue, a

¹ On the distinction between these types of villas and their often overlapping function, see Ackerman, 1990, 42–43.

² On the distaste of Cato towards villas that express *delectatio*, see *de sumpto suo*, ORF 4.174; D'Arms, 1970, 9–11, and Corti, 1991, 195.

³ See, e.g., Cic., *Off.* 1.138, Sall., *Cat.* 12.3, 13.1. Corti, 1991, 195 notes the importance of Vitruvius in the evolution of literature on luxury, for he describes many ways that a villa owner can limit expenses while constructing a luxurious looking home (6.5).

⁴ The progression of course is not completely linear, and the Flavian age sees its own share of condemnation for large villas. For a thorough summary of the evolution of moral perception concerning villas in the second and first centuries BCE, see D'Arms, 1970, 9–72. Newlands, 2002, 121–127, provides a summary of the development of moral attitudes towards *otium* and the villa. Edwards, 1993, 137–172 examines the rhetorical strategies in moral texts of Roman villas. On Lucullus, a common target for his ostentatious villa, see Keaveny, 1992.

reversal in social *mores*.⁵ As argued in the second chapter, one constant assumption throughout these diverse viewpoints is that humans express their own nature by the way they interact with physical nature. In the *Silvae*, poems that constantly play upon the morality of this interaction, Statius capitalizes on the boundaries of the house as symbols of humanity's geographic and ethical limits to his dominion over nature. A moral benefit of successful control over nature appears through the descriptions of the expanding borders of the villa.

The villa poems of the *Silvae* thus represent successful domination of nature, for the capacity of the villa to control its immediate surroundings models and shapes the moral qualities of residents, culture, and politics. The villa becomes the most significant aspect in understanding domination of nature, for it is both a symbol and a forge of morality.⁶ Because the farmer builds his home to best accommodate his efforts, the natural symbol of humble design and productivity becomes the house and land of the georgic hero. In the Tiburtine and Neapolitan villas described in the *Silvae*, the primary function of the villa was pleasure, not productivity, but it is not possible to discount the need for the latter.⁷

Dominus, the master of a household, is the etymological junction between *domus*, the place and people that he oversees, and *domitare*, the labor for which he is responsible. In his study of *familia* and *domus*, Saller points out the distinguishing characteristics of the terms.⁸ He surveys the use of the words across Latin literature and concludes that *familia*, while carrying a broad

⁵ Zeiner, 2005, 75–107.

⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, 1998.

⁷ See Beagon, 1992, 79–91 for an insightful study on the pleasure gardens of Pliny. She examines Pliny's descriptions of his and others' gardens and the importance of a well-maintained, fruitful garden that is at the same time clean and attractive to look at.

⁸ Saller, 1994, 336–355. The close relationship between the two terms appears in Martial's description (8.36) of the palace of Domitian: *Haec, Auguste, tamen, quae uertice sidera pulsat, / par domus est caelo sed minor est domino*. ('This *domus*, Augustus, which touches the stars with its roof, is equal to the heaven but inferior to its *dominus*').

semantic range, most often refers to specific people in a household, whereas *domus* tends to include family members in a broad sense and the building itself. The term therefore has both a concrete and abstract sense, much like the English word *home*. The term *familia*, a specific and personalizing term, never appears in either the *Georgics* or the *Silvae*, which aim to generalize their subject matter,⁹ but the term *domus* appears seventeen times in the *Georgics* and in all but six poems in the first four books of the *Silvae*.¹⁰ The villa in the *Silvae* holds the same moral connotations as a *domus*, except for the distinction between a city and country home.

Accordingly, the *domus* is indicative of urbane ideals and the *villa* is often suggestive of a life of retirement.¹¹

The ordering of space inside the home speaks to the authority of the owner,¹² but Vergil and Statius show that the arrangement of space outside the walls of the villa likewise indicates power. The home serves as an ideal symbol for human interaction with the external environment because it is the connection point between man and nature. The human role as a *dominus* provides specific opportunities to control the environment. The nature of this interaction and the

⁹ Although *familiaritas* does appear in *Silvae* 2.pref.1.

¹⁰ In the *Georgics*, the term can refer to the house of man (2.114, 206, 443, 461, 511, 524, 3.96, 4.133) and beast (1.182, 2.209, 4.10, 159, 209) or a particular dominion (heavens, 1.371, of Arethusa and Aristaeus, 4.363, of Proteus, 4.446, and of Dis, 4.481). In the *Silvae*, the word *domus* appears forty three times in Books 1–4, absent in only 1.6, 2.3, 2.6, 2.7, 4.1 and 4.5; the incomplete Book 5 contains eleven instances of the term. *Domus* or a cognate (*dominus*, *domo*) appears ten times in 2.2 alone.

¹¹ Cicero uses these terms with location as the only distinction. See, e.g., *Verr.* 2.4.6; *Dom.* 62.3, *Mil.* 64.12. The term *aedes* also occupies a similar semantic range. It occurs twice in the *Georgics* (2.462, 4.258) and only once in the *Silvae* of a house (1.5.59). Twice Statius uses the term for a temple (1.1.53, 3.1.88). The use in *Georgics* 2.462 will be discussed below.

¹² On the importance of the layout of the villa for distinguishing public and private space, see especially Wallace-Hadrill, 1994. He explores the villa as a point along two continua: public to private and humble to luxurious. He differentiates the two to show that public spaces are not necessarily luxurious and private spaces need not be humble. He notes that “the function of decoration is to discriminate and to render the house fit for the pattern of social activity within it. The language of private decoration draws on the language of public life; it reflects the reception function of a house and the expectations of contact with visitors from outside” (149). For a similar study of Roman homes in Africa, see Thébert, 1987. On Nero’s home as a subversion of traditional villa *mores* of public and private, see Packer, 2003, 168–169.

ethical considerations that follow differ according to the purpose of the home. Through the home Vergil and Statius, noting the intersection between humans and nature, pick up on the themes and values of architecture for their own art. In the *Georgics* and *Silvae*, then, one sees the nexus of poetry, humans, human morality, and nature. As Vergil teaches his reader to arrange his fields in carefully organized rows (*G.* 2.277–287) and describes the farmer who must engage in hand-to-hand combat (1.104–105), and as Statius describes the theological implications of Felix’s temple to Heracles (*Silv.* 3.1.125–138) and Domitian’s road (4.3.139–163), their poetry expands the practice of agriculture and landscape, making the labor indicative of the rest of life in order to move from a specific story to a poeticized, moralized, general reality.

The *domus* and *villa* as symbols occur in a fluid sense, for the author can represent the ethics, values, priorities, character, philosophy, and political tact of the owner. Property boundaries allow the owner to control the environment in a limited framework because the *dominus* needs to control only his *domus*, not all of nature.¹³ Similarly, property ownership affords the *dominus* the legal right to alter nature and render it more useful for either *fructus* or *quies* and to forbid others from doing so. Borders were an important aspect of villa ownership, and Columella devotes the beginning of Book 5 to the legal and practical aspects of delineating one’s property.¹⁴ Boundary rights, however, were not completely exclusive of others, especially for a villa next to fresh water like that of Manilius Vopiscus. As Bannon has shown, servitudes offered legal protection for rural villa owners to access fresh water supplies through a neighbor’s

¹³ Edwards, 1993, 138 sees a rhetorical intersection here as well. A common strategy of the moralists was to condemn a person by condemning a parallel subject. Roman houses served as the best symbol for morality because they were the “single most important manifestation of their owners’ wealth.”

¹⁴ See Columella, 5.2–3.

property.¹⁵ In reality, then, farmers would have been concerned with productivity of their personal property and that of the neighborhood,¹⁶ yet Vergil and Statius describe settings in which the land owner rules or struggles alone. The poetic representation in the *Silvae* is of a hegemony over nature rather than a cooperative alliance. Maritime villas best illustrate the desire to push beyond these boundaries, for they look upon the seemingly limitless sea.¹⁷ Property boundaries, because they limit external impact and restrain the influence of the owner, become for the poets a simple yet effective metaphor of human interaction with nature.

While retreat in the *Georgics* and advance in the *Silvae* typify the interaction between man and nature, both authors hold up *quies* as a primary function of the villa. Villa ownership serves as a path to *otium* and life away from politics and the city, and Statius, along with his contemporaries, was careful to highlight the moral benefits of retired life.¹⁸ The descriptions of

¹⁵ On the legal system concerning servitudes as well as the social picture formed by Roman attitudes towards water rights and rural living, see Bannon, 2009.

¹⁶ See Bannon, 2009, 103–116 on examples from Pliny, Cato, and legal disputes that emphasize the importance of neighborhoods and cooperative improvements over nature. Frayn, 1979 describes the state of Roman farming before the development of latifundia-type agriculture. Cf. White, 1970.

¹⁷ Cf. Vergil, *G.* 1.30: *tibi serviat ultima Thule*, ('and the ends of the earth bow to you in homage'). Thule, a mythical island symbolizing the furthest extremes of the inhabitable earth, stands here also for the sea. Romm notes (1992, 159) that Thule is the epitome of the ocean and "like the Ocean, the greatest tribute such a wild and remote place can offer is to 'obey' (*serviat*) its master." On Okeanos as the ultimate boundary and primordial water, see Jones, 2005, 7. Purcell, 1987, 191–192 describes architectural structures that look over the sea as one of the three primary means by which villa owners most often landscaped their homes. The other two means (192–194) were through the manipulation of streams, rivers, and other bodies of water and the addition of "artificial altitude" (193). One could add height to a villa in a way that artificially represented mountains through structures such as a tumulus or turret.

¹⁸ For a historical summary of the distinction between *otium* and *negotium* through Latin literature, see Laidlaw, 1968. Woodman, 1983, 242–243 notes that *otium* and *quies* are only negative when they lack the balance of work. The terms seem to be morally neutral on their own, but take on positive or negative connotations based on the absence or presence of complementary qualities. Edwards, 1993, 143–149 points out the distinction between the architectural and rhetorical function of villas in moral discourse. She states that modern scholars cannot reconstruct villas with any certainty based solely on literary descriptions (143) because the author's intent was moral praise or condemnation. Connors, 2000 looks at the literary aspect of *otium* and shows the bulk of epigrammatic poetry aimed at redeeming *otium* speaks to the cultural educated elite. Pliny's aspirations for *otium* in his villas becomes integral to his *otium*, see *Ep.* 8.9, Nauta, 2002, 315; Leach, 2003, and Myers, 2005. Myers, 2005 identifies the changing societal norms that lead to an increased number of large villas outside of the city and the rhetorical struggle to either condemn or exculpate the owners of these villas from laziness.

homes in the *Silvae* speak more accurately to social and moral goals than the actual buildings. As the primary goal shifts from *fructus* to *voluptas*, so also the architecture and makeup of the house changes, but despite the insistence upon relaxation and retirement, the necessity of a productive farm and garden on the villa still appears in Statius' descriptions.

In addition to the necessity for productivity and pleasure in the countryside villa, its position away from city walls offers a better example of proper community to the poets. The villa limits human interaction with nature through its proprietary and restraining borders, but it also maintains a codependent relationship with neighboring buildings. In terms of domination or control of nature, city dwellings, on the other hand, exert control over nature through centralized building efforts, culture, and public safety. Vergil, through the world of the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*,¹⁹ speaks to morality, practices, and vices of urban life, but the city itself is generally absent from the agricultural poem. When Vergil does speak of cities in the *Georgics*, it is often as a foil to either the virtues of the country or as an idealistic departure from real cities. Caesar must decide at the beginning of the *Georgics* whether he will oversee the city or the country (*urbisne invisere, Caesar, / terrarium uelis curam*, 1.25), and the farmer rarely takes notice of the city except for trade (*lapidemque revertens / incusum aut atrae massam picis urbe reportat*, 'or [the farmer] comes back later from the town with a grinding stone or a supply of pitch,' 1.274–275) or disturbance and conflict (*uicinae ruptis inter se legibus urbes / arma ferunt*, 'neighboring cities renege on what they pledged and launch attacks,' 1.510). In the fourth book Vergil describes bee colonies as the standard for cooperative living (4.149–196). He gauges human labor against the never-ending work of the industrious bees. The bee-cities in which every member seeks the common good are characteristic of the age of Jupiter and therefore

¹⁹ One the distinction between metropolitan Rome and the pastoral setting of the *Eclogues*, see Skoie, 2006, 297–322.

symbolize not Golden Age ease but an idealized Iron Age.²⁰ Vergil in the *Georgics* sees the city as a corrupted version of its ideal. The city therefore has some potential towards the model for communal living and a center for the consorted efforts of its citizens, but unlike the community of bees, its citizens do not live as a unified body under the laws (*Solae communes natos, consortia tecta / urbis habent magnisque agitant sub legibus aevum*, ‘They alone share the care of their young and live united in one house, and lead lives subject to the majesty of law,’ 4.153–154) or with each other’s protection in mind (*sed circum tutae sub moenibus urbis aquantur*, ‘but near their safe city walls they collect water,’ 4.193).²¹

Statius, like Vergil, does not neglect the city in his verses. He attends banquets (*Silvae* 4.2) and spends time in Rome, but he prefers the *quies* and *otium* of the country.²² Even in praise poetry devoted to public statues in Rome, one sees Statius’ impressions of city life. He describes the consistent noise from the construction of Domitian’s equestrian statue drowning out the typical commotion of the city: *continuus septem per culmina Martis / it fragor et magnae vincit vaga murmura Romae* (‘The lofty scaffolding is loud with hammer strokes and an incessant din runs through Mars’ seven hills, drowning the vagrant noises of great Rome.’ 1.1.64–65). In his depiction of the city, Statius unmakes Vergil’s ideal society. The noise of the construction is

²⁰ Thomas, 1988, 176–177

²¹ Translation of 4.193 is my own.

²² The selection of the country by Vergil and Statius is not atypical among Latin poets. A description of a seemingly isolated villa allows poets to speak of social issues on their own terms, without the presence of class conflict (see Veyne, 1987, 117–119), economic realities, and absolute references. Horace’s garden poems are well known, and his desire for landscape and simplicity informs readers of his ideals for Rome. Like Statius’ description of the villas in the *Silvae*, Horace speaks to the coordination between *labor* and *otium* through his literature and garden. Statius will reshape this relationship but embrace the extravagance of both as he describes the villas of his friends. On Horace’s garden and Augustan politics, see Spencer, 2006, esp. 246 on the role of *otium* the garden. On Horace’s garden and the literary relationship between patronage and its economic benefits (viz. the ability to write poetry), see Bowditch, 2001.

distinguished from the general “buzz” (*murmura*) of the city, and for Statius personal achievement surpasses communal effort.

Varro’s *Scrofa* states that the protection of boundaries is one of the four essential elements of farming (Varro, 1.15) and explains how one can be a good neighbor by avoiding certain crops along the edge of his property (1.16.6). After Vergil, Columella describes in great detail the different shapes of land plots and how to measure them (5.2–3) but insists to his reader that this work is better done by a land surveyor than a farmer (5.1.3). Rather than describing boundaries, Vergil stresses the continuous number of tasks as well as the unending labor devoted to each task. Thus, he forces an image of a farmer trying to cultivate an undefined, unrestricted patch of land. Even the absence of neighbors in Vergil’s poem suggests unbounded land and work. In Vergil’s praise of the industrious farmer (1.104–117), the striking heterogeneity of the land impresses the notion of continuous labor for the farmer. His land includes unfertile sand (*male pinguis harenae*, 1.105), rivers (*fluvium inducit rivosque sequentis*, 106), dried fields (*exustus ager*, 107), hilly paths (*clivosi tramitis*, 108), and rocky ground (*per levia murmur / saxa ciet*, 109–110). Vergil transitions quickly to the plight of other farmers, who must battle nature even when it is productive. They must cut down grain and dry up wet areas:

quid qui, ne grauidis procumbat culmus aristis,
luxuriam segetum tenera depascit in herba,
cum primum sulcos aequant sata, quique paludis
collectum umorem bibula deducit harena?
praesertim incertis si mensibus amnis abundans
exit.

(*G.* 111–116)

Or indeed the one who, to ensure that stalks won’t lodge beneath
the weight of ears, grazes to the ground the tender shoots
that grow in such profusion as soon as they clear the furrow’s ridge,
or that one who drains swamp-gathers in a soak-pit,
especially in the course of those unsettled months when rivers burst
their banks.

Through the ambiguous transitions *quid qui* (111) and *quique* (113), Vergil obfuscates the distinction between one farmer and another. One must restrict the growth of grain (*culmus*) lest it become so thick it chokes itself out. Another drains a swamp (*paludis / . . . bibula deducit harena* 113–114) and battles floods (*amnis abundans / exit*, 115–116). Not only does the farm transcend borders, but outside creatures have no concern for boundaries that should be keeping them out. The goose (*anser*, 119), cranes (*grues*, 120), and endive (*intiba*, 120) all disrupt the farmer's attempt to control nature within his own property.

The farmer's difficult labors are necessary, but they also appear to violate the ancient law of boundaries. Exclusionary limits imposed by the villas stand in stark contrast to Vergil's idealized past:

ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum
fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus
omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.

(*G.* 1.126–128)

and it was still against the law to stake a claim to part of the fields.
Men worked towards the common good and the earth herself,
unbidden, was lavish in all she produced.

The divine law (*fas*) of nature prohibited the very function of the *domus*, because no domestication of nature was necessary. Vergil's language delineates the positive and negative aspects of this law: man did not partition land for himself, but, like the bees (4.149–196), everyone participated and strove for the common good (*querebant in medium*, 127). Vergil does not claim that man is violating the present laws of nature, but the contrast between the current and former states emphasizes the tension present in man's relationship with the environment. The transition from the past to the present then is marked not only by the addition of labor, but by a transition in orientation from coalescence to demarcation.

The military struggle that suffuses the *Georgics* finds its resolution in the *Silvae* through the controlling force of imperious homes that illustrate the successful result of demarcation. The villa, offering its owner a definable area of authority, functions in the *Silvae* in the same capacity as the *domus* in the *Georgics*. The nature of that authority, however, remains the primary difference between the two works. In the *Georgics*, control over the land afforded practical benefits and a livelihood; the villa culture in the countryside and particularly on the Neapolitan coast created a sense of competition among its inhabitants for demonstrable control over nature. The villas are often designed to stretch their visible boundaries, and Statius amplifies the aggrandizing effect in his ekphrastic descriptions.

Soft boundaries: The Villa of Manilius Vopiscus (*Silvae* 1.3)

Through a definable set of boundaries that afford the owner some level of control, the villa of Manilius Vopiscus (*Silv.* 1.3) provides retreat from civic life. The Anio river, flowing through the property, is a primary element in the scene, and Statius emphasizes the duality of the villa and its surroundings.²³ Placement of buildings on either side of the river blurs the notion of distinct boundaries that enclose the villa. A river, although often a practical border for property and even states,²⁴ has no such authority here. Instead, Statius emphasizes the continuity of the villa despite a natural boundary: *litus utrumque domi, nec te mitissimus amnis / dividit* ('Either shore is at home, nor does the gentle river divide you,' 1.3.25). Through this reference the villa appears to expand beyond usual borders. Statius creates counter-examples of river borders when he mentions the bay that Leander swam to meet his lover: *Sestiacos nunc Fama sinus pelagusque*

²³ There is evidence of other villa owners in Tiber receiving water from the Aqua Marcia (*CIL* 14.3676). On the plumbing by Vopiscus and use of illegal taps in the area, see Bannon, 2009, 78–79. Martial wrote a poem (9.18) asking Domitian for the rights to tap the Aqua Marcia.

²⁴ Cf. the boundary formed by Okeanos on the shield of Achilles. The water in fact forms a boundary between the graphic representation of city life and country life (*Il.* 18.490–589; Jones, 2005, 71–72).

natatum / iactet ('let Fame now boast of Sestos' bay and the sea a swimmer swam,' 1.3.27–28).²⁵

Leander swam to Sestos from Abydos across the Hellespont nightly to visit his lover Hero.

Leander defied the borders and eventually paid for it with his death, but Statius relegates his story to legend (*Fama*). Vopiscus has made both sides of the river his own. Statius then compares the scene to Euripus and the Straits of Messina (31–33). Euripus (*Chalcida fluctus*, 31) separates Boeotia and Euboea by less than 200 meters at the port city of Chalcis, and the Straits of Messina separate Sicily from Italy. In those bodies of water, well-known borders could not be crossed without peril or death.²⁶ The Hellespont, Euripus, and Straits of Messina remind one of noble but often failed attempts, while the present instance was successful through the application of technology.

Yet the mention of perilous bodies of water does detract from the placid villa. Newlands has pointed to a series of statements inconsistent with typical praise poetry and concludes that Statius uses a number of allusions to Horace to show his uneasiness towards Vopiscus' life and the superiority of his own poetic abilities.²⁷ Statius compares Vopiscus' wealth to that of the proverbially foolish Midas (1.3.105), and the poet's many references to Epicureanism in 1.3 clash with the depiction of the villa, which, despite Statius' claims to the contrary (*luxuque*

²⁵ See Ovid, *Her.*, 18–19.

²⁶ There is some confusion here as to why Statius would recall these notorious bodies of water mythologized for the disasters they cause when attempting to describe the unity of Vopiscus' villa. Phillimore and Courtney print *sic Chalcida fluctus / expellunt reflui? Sic dissociata profundo / Bruttia Sicaniū circumspicit ora Pelorum?*. Shackleton Bailey emends *sic* to *nec* and states emphatically (384) that no one "in his right mind would pick the two most notoriously turbulent narrows in the Mediterranean to liken to this profoundly peaceful stretch of river." Rather than a poetic aberration or moment of Statius' being "incautious in the actual selection of his expressions" (Courtney, 1984, 330), it is possible that Statius is making a reference to the notion of these bodies of water being the primary identifiable element of the lands they transect. The weight is not on the properties of the rivers themselves, but on their unifying effect on the visual quality of the land.

²⁷ Newlands, 1988.

caerentes, ‘sans luxury’, 92), are teeming with opulence and wealth.²⁸ Zeiner, on the other hand, argues that Vopiscus’ wealth is tempered by his discretion and thus holds on to moderation.²⁹ The same virtue allows Vopiscus through the intermediate agency of his villa to create expansive boundaries that control the natural surroundings. Progress, not transgression, describes Statius’ outlook of Vopiscus’ villa. The ancient rules of community that governed human interaction with the land have been replaced with the individual need for survival and comfort. The allusions to Horace and the praise of virtue through the house represent this epistemological shift in human understanding of the environment; the aesthetic of productivity, procured through the application of technology and agricultural improvements, gains more significance than a large yield of crops. Now, through the increased sense of personal authority and autonomy, man’s ability to expand his domination beyond his *domus* signals progress without the moral ambiguity expressed in the *Georgics*. The servitudes, the need for friendly neighbors with productive farms, and the reality of the need for combined labor are all diluted not in reality, but in the portrayal of a self-ruling villa.³⁰ Therefore the insistence of dominating nature informs us that the social definitions of luxury and *otium* cannot be resolved in their entirety in the *Silvae*. Rather, the pursuit for these comforts is to be understood as beneficial, restorative, and virtuous.

Not only are the external boundaries of Vopiscus’ villa blurred, but, as Statius describes, the boundaries between the culture of the villa and severity of nature also mingle harmoniously. The liminal Moorish doorposts are everywhere (*undique*, 35), but one frame causes Statius to examine the nature and culture in the villa simultaneously:

²⁸ Newlands, 1998, 97.

²⁹ Zeiner, 2005, 132.

³⁰ See Cato, 1.2, Bannon, 2009, 103–116.

huc oculis, huc mente trahor. venerabile dicam
 lucorum senium? te, quae vada fluminis infra
 cernis, an ad silvas quae respicis, aula, tacentis, 40
 qua tibi tota quies offensaque turbine nullo
 nox silet et nigros imitantia murmura somnos?
 an quae graminea suscepta crepidine fumant
 balnea et impositum ripis argentibus ignem,
 quaque vaporiferis iunctus fornacibus amnis 45
 ridet anhelantes vicino flumine nymphas?
 (*Silv.* 1.3.38–46)

Eyes draw me one way, mind another. Shall I tell of the venerable age of the groves? Of the courtyard that views the river's course below or that other looking back to the silent woods, where your rest is safe and night, impaired by no turbulence, is silent, or murmurs invite lazy slumber? Or of the steaming baths taken up by their grassy ledge and fire imposed on chilly banks, where the river linked to a vaporous furnace laughs at the Nymphs as they pant, though the stream be hard by?

Statius explores every boundary of the place (*huc oculis, huc mente*), and in each direction the distinction between nature and culture is effaced. Statius' eye, previously captured by the indoor plumbing of the home,³¹ now eyes the groves, which serve as an equal part of the setting. One courtyard looks upon the river below (*vada fluminis infra*, 39) while from another one espies the silent trees (*silvas . . . tacentes*, 40). The woods offer a layer of protection from the rest of nature and peace for the owner (*quies*, 41). The grassy bank (*graminea . . . crepidine*, 43) acts as an additional boundary between the villa and the river, but nature here too permeates the limits of culture as heat and cold mix and water nymphs occupy the scene. The coalescence between nature and culture here stems from the soft boundaries between the villa and its surroundings as Statius reminds the reader of the intended function of the villa, to offer security and thus *quies*. This rest is an important identifying element for Statius and his patrons, and it is a word critical to the Epicurean lifestyle of Manilius Vopiscus and Pollius Felix. Statius' only mentions of the

³¹ Newlands, 2002, 134–138 offers an insightful commentary on the indoor plumbing of Vopiscus' estate, esp. 64–69 and other technological luxuries unsuitable to Epicurean life. She notes a number of textual references to Horace's villa and points to the means through which Statius nullifies the negative overtones of technology and extravagant additions to the house. On the tension between the aesthetics of this villa and a concern for excessive luxury, see also Corti, 1991, 194–195.

philosopher come in the descriptions of the two villa poems dedicated to these men (*Gargettius*, from Epicurus' demos of Gargettus, 1.3.94 and 2.2.113).³² Laguna-Mariscal shows that Statius uses other key words such as *virtus*, *honestum*, *cura*, and *labor* often in these poems to emphasize the philosophical ideals of *voluptas* and *quies* (as translations of ἡδονή and ἀταραχία).³³ The villa as intersection between man and nature therefore affords the owner practical respite from nature while allowing him the ability to reflect on the significance of this interaction. In sum, the villa provides a delimited environment through which humans can control nature and shape their own nature so as to influence the broader world around them. The villa with its gardens and landscaping is the most identifiable indication of one's own nature as expressed by his interaction with physical nature.

At the end of *Georgics* 2, Vergil describes a fictional, idealistic scene in which crops are plentiful, the land is fertile, and the farmer enjoys peaceful and simple life with the rest of his family. The home, and by metonymy the master of the home, preserves its wellbeing (*casta pudicitiam servat domus*, 2.524). One characteristic of this utopian landscape is the productivity of the land:

uenit hiems: teritur Sicyonia baca trapetis,
 glande sues laeti redeunt, dant arbuta siluae;
 et uarios ponit fetus autumnus, et alte
 mitis in apricis coquitur uindemia saxis.
 (G. 2.519–522)

Come winter, and the best of olives run spilling from the mills,
 the pigs come back aglow on feeds of acorns, the arbutus tree

³² Laguna-Mariscal, 1996, 247.

³³ Laguna-Mariscal, 1996, 248. Although Statius never mentions any of the Stoic authors, their precepts equally inform his language as he describes these men (*labor*, *cura*). One must also consider that for Statius Epicurean and Stoic notions of virtue were more important rhetorically than philosophically. Laguna-Mariscal, 1996, 252 points to Statius' *lamentatio* in *Silvae* 2.6, in which Statius digresses on the nature of Fate and death not to add to the sense of consolation, but to "increase the pathos of his *lamentatio*."

refreshes its pale foliage – and in such ways the autumn serves its bounty,
while up on open ground the vintage baskets on boulders and ripens in the sun’s caress.

The cool weather seems to bring relief and the rewards for the never-ending labor, with the passage itself ending in a near golden line. The swine are happy and well fed on naturally produced food while the trees produce new fruit. The failure of the *arbutus* to bloom, as Thomas notes, is a common symbol in the *Georgics* of the introduction of agriculture and labor into the world.³⁴ Initially, one begins to wonder whether a new period in which leisure will reign has arrived. The sense of relaxation from labor though is interrupted when Vergil states that the scene is not the present or future, but the past: *hanc olim ueteres uitam coluere Sabini* (‘That was the life, and those the ways the Sabines cultivated in the days of old,’ 2.532). While the farmer’s ancestors were thought to have rest from labor, the reality for the laborer and Vergil’s contemporaries is the opposite: *nec requies* (516).³⁵ The sense of peace in the *Georgics* is an idealistic fiction. Rather than proscribing those who own pleasure villas for their lack of austerity, Vergil creates an image of an exemplary family home within a fictional setting that contrasts the theme of labor in the first two books of the *Georgics*. This poetic approach gives his reader the opportunity to question moral and social norms himself, rather than having them forced upon him.

Statius too attempts to redefine the cultural paradigms of his generation. Rather than authoring a treatise on the intellectual and ethical benefits of retirement and pleasure villas, his

³⁴ *G.* 1.148–149; Thomas, 1988, 259. The connection between the *Georgics* and the *Silvae* leads to the question of whether Statius picks up on this reference in his own title. If the *Silvae* represent to some degree a return to the Saturnian Age, then the blooming of the arbutus could be a source for Statius’ title.

³⁵ On the Epicurean desire for *quies*, see Johnson, 2004. He begins with a selection from Leopardi’s *Operette morali*, in which an Icelander seeks total withdrawal from life and nature, and contrasts this with the Epicurean life, marked by avoidance of suffering and an internal and external balance. He describes Vergil’s Corycian farmer (*G.* 4.116–148), as one seeking *ataraxia*, but through its acquisition ends up with a carefree life of beauty that he shares with no one.

status as a poet allows him to call into question moral concerns of these homes through narrative. In the *Silvae*, *quies* and *otium* are hallmarks of the lifestyle of Statius' patrons. The poet attempts to rescue the restful life of Vopiscus from the common ignominy of laziness and sterility. The flexibility of the home as a symbol now allows Statius to speak of the moral accomplishments of Vopiscus, for through him the villa achieves an integrated presence with nature because of an inherent fertility. The fecundity of the soil is not an active pursuit, but, like Vopiscus' own *quies*, is integral to a productive nature. Statius describes this as the basic nature of the land (*ingenium quam mite solo*, 'How gentle the nature of the ground!' 15), the natural fusion between the grassy land and the buildings (*graminea suscepta crepidine fumant / balnea*, 'the steaming baths taken up by their grassy ledge' 43–44),³⁶ and the impact that the good soil has on man-made items (*nitidum referentes aera testae / monstravere solum*, 'tiles reflecting the dazzle showed a bright floor,' 54–55). In fact, Epicurus himself would have preferred this property to his own garden *ipse suis digressus Athenis / mallet deserto senior Gargettius horto*, 93–94).

All of these qualities speak to the pleasure factor of the villa, but more importantly they impart the notion of an active, productive rest, a quality central both to the character of the villa and its owner. The ground's soft nature speaks of its potential yield; the grassy baths speak of the earth's readiness to mingle with human technology, and the pottery reflects nature's improvement on culture. While the fertility of the place leads to rest for the villa's owner, to focus exclusively on the *otium* of the villa is to overlook its function as a way to control nature.³⁷

³⁶ Shackleton Bailey, 2002, 65 translates the passage as if it contained hypallage. He is perhaps correct, but the notion of a grassy bath is certainly striking in this mingled scenario.

³⁷ I do not here disagree with the works of Newlands, 1988, 97, or Zeiner, 2005, 112 (who mistakenly cites Newlands, 1991), who note that the many fine objects in the villa "have created the impression of nothing but luxury" (Newlands, 1988, 97). Many of the extravagant objects do carry a sense of luxury with no underlying effort, but in addition to this effect—and perhaps in spite of it—Statius does not divorce the villa from its origins in productivity. Veyne, 1987, 119–121 describes the scorn of the social elite towards manual labor for wages, but also the acknowledgment of its necessity (129–134).

In the *Silvae*, the reader does not see a dichotomy between *labor* and *quies*. Instead, the seemingly contrasting terms exist concurrently. Just as a pleasure villa does not preclude the owner from meeting with clients and conducting business,³⁸ so it may allow basic farming or gardening by the owner or his slaves. The property itself demonstrates this relationship as the Anio river lays aside its frenetic pace:

ipse Anien (miranda fides) infraque superque
saxeus hic tumidam rabiem spumosaque ponit
murmura, ceu placidi viritus turbare Vopisci
Pieriosque dies et habentes carmina somnos
(*Silv.* 1.3.20–23)

Anio himself, wondrous to tell, full of rocks above and below, here rests his swollen rage and foamy din, as though loath to disturb Vopiscus' Pierian days and song filled slumbers.³⁹

Staius parallels the river's approach to the villa with that of Vopiscus. Both are able to lay aside the turmoil that they are known for and assist one another in a calm life. The scene is not one of total idleness or barrenness, though, for the river is still active below the surface: *algentesque lacus altosque in gurgite fontes* ('or cool ponds and springs deep under water,' 65). The springs percolate from the pools nearby and symbolize the constant renewal and productivity required for Vopiscus' rest and Staius' poetry.

The property around the villa exhibits productive rest, and the setting inside the *domus* likewise reveals the fruitful merger of nature and culture:

quid te, quae mediis servata penatibus arbor
tectae per et postes liquidas emergis in auras,
quo non sub domino saevas passura bipennes?
(*Silv.* 1.3.59–61)

³⁸ See Wallace-Hadrill, 1994, 51 and Newlands, 2002, 123.

³⁹ The Pierian days (23) refer to the poetry of Orpheus. Staius states in his other villa poem that Pierian strains are not sufficient to describe the house of Felix (2.2.43). The reference calls to mind Hesiod's narrative of the birth of the Muses, for Mnemosyne bore them on Mount Pieria to be goddesses associated with *quies*: κακῶν ἄμπαυμά τε μερμηράων ('rest from evils and troubles,' *Theog.* 55).

Why [should I marvel] at the tree preserved in the dwelling's midst, rising through ceilings and doorways to emerge in the open, sure to suffer the cruel axe under any other master?

The interlocked word order (*mediis servata penetibus arbor*) reflects the mingling of nature and culture within the house.⁴⁰ The tree is not just passively growing; it is actually protected (*servata*) by the same deities that watch over the house and its occupants (*penatibus*).

Furthermore, Vopiscus acts as the master (*domino*) of the tree just as he was the master over any family or slaves in the house. As the master and owner, he has the right to fell the tree, but chose to preserve it. Statius' claim creates an illusion of harmonious interaction with nature, but one must assume that other trees were removed and new ones were planted to landscape the area.

The preservation of this tree resulted not from a lack of brutality, but from the fact that it happened to blend well with the scene. Such is not Statius' aim, however, as he is concerned with presenting Vopiscus as *dominus* over this plot of nature. Indeed, Statius in another poem of praise for a building describes the axe (*bipennis*) not as cruel (*saevas*) but as an instrument of reform in the rough landscape in which Pollius Felix builds a new temple for Heracles (3.1.125–126).

Vopiscus is then the master of his house and of nature, but his control is grounded in the fertility of both, not just the sense of rest that the villa provides. The tree in the middle of the villa is a symbol both of the cooperation between nature and culture and the softness of Vopiscus' own nature: the tree identifies the house and its owner as having a good nature.

Odysseus, too, was recognized by his wife because he stated that their bed could not be moved

⁴⁰ Hardie, 1987, 178 sees these lines as a prelude to a passage that fits in with an “accommodation of nature” theme. In lines 62–63, Statius notes that some Nymph or Hamadryad may owe to Vopiscus its life thanks to him sparing the tree. Statius then goes on to list many local deities and in Hardie's terms, “seems . . . to be adopting the Virgilian posture” of Lucretian allusion. Vergil in *Georgics* 2.490–494 recalls Lucretius and the Epicurean tradition (*felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*, 490) and Statius recalls Vergil as he begins to list many of the same deities as his predecessor.

because it was carved from a tree (*Od.* 23.177–230).⁴¹ The olive stump that Odysseus had carved into their bed showed his strength and Penelope’s endurance. The home in both cases provides the opportunity for humans to express their own nature through the synthesis of nature and culture.

Many assumptions about the ideological function of the villa have arisen from both archaeological discoveries and literary sources, but Cornell has reminded us that despite the concentration on villas devoted to *otium* and leisurely life, one cannot completely divorce country villas from the role of the gentleman farmer.⁴² Vergil in the *Georgics* projects a picture of agriculture devoid of the slaves and other workers integral to actual farming, and Statius too describes this villa and others with idealistic qualities. The real land surrounding the villas of Manilius Vopiscus and Pollius Felix may or may not have supported farms. The bad terrain around Surrento made Felix’s villa more useful for viticulture than other types of farming. While we have no way of knowing if Vopiscus oversaw a farm or if Felix oversaw anything but vines, it is important to consider that Statius’ claims serve a literary purpose beyond straightforward description. Even if the homes of the two villa owners did not include agricultural plots, Statius’ wider audience would have included gentlemen farmers and men who owned slaves for farming, so the *Silvae* can be seen as an expression of these larger cultural values and desires for fecundity. Ekphrasis of change, rather than a propositional, detailed description has already been shown to be Statius’ primary method, and here too one sees literary value taking priority over accuracy.

⁴¹ On Penelope’s identification of Odysseus through his knowledge of the tree, see Zerba, 2009, 315.

⁴² Cornell, 1995, 167.

Status stresses not just rest, but productive rest (*hic premittitur fecunda quies, virtusque serena / fronte gravis*, ('here hides fertile repose and strenuous virtue with brow serene,' 1.3.91–92).⁴³ Statius echoes the attitude of Pliny when he describes Vopiscus' pursuit of philosophy through *quies*.⁴⁴ As Ackerman has noted in villas in general and Newlands in particular in Statius' villa poems, a primary function of the countryside villa is to serve as a demonstration of a life devoted to *otium*.⁴⁵ D'Arms has likewise commented that during the reign of Augustus, maritime villas along the Bay of Naples became primarily used for *delectatio* and *amoenitas*, not *fructus*.⁴⁶ He points to primary sources such as Cato and Cicero who have already begun to deride the new habit of purchasing these villas that are "beginning to function not merely as sources of profit but also as seats of pleasure."⁴⁷ Purcell, however, has wisely shown that authors also had a distaste for infertile villas.⁴⁸ Through an analysis of the architectural layout of the majority of Italian villas, he rejects Ackerman's typological interpretation of the Roman villa as solely an isolated retreat for rich families, noting that one must allow for the likely presence of the gentleman farmer as well.⁴⁹ The goal is not to create a sterile environment and destroy nature

⁴³ Cf. Corti, 1991, 192–193: "la *iunctura* mira a togliere all'*otium* epicureo di Manilio Vopisco ogni sfumatura negativa, precisa che esso non è torpore intellettuale né infiacchimento etico, bensì la premessa necessaria di una vivace attività spirituale." See also Grilli, 1953. He looks at the ideal of *tranquillitas* expressed through Hellenistic and Roman practices, especially Democritus and Panaetius, but he also examines the contemplative life of Seneca and Pliny (217–261).

⁴⁴ Cf. Nauta, 2002, 315–318. Statius consistently emphasizes the productive aspect of his patrons' retired lifestyle. He encourages Vitorius Marcellus, a man of senatorial rank, to take some rest (*quies*) so that he may be more productive later (*maior post otia virtus*, 4.4.34). He makes similar claims about rest for Atedius Melior (2.3.65–66, 70–71) and his own retirement (3.pref.23–25).

⁴⁵ Ackerman, 1985. Newlands, 2002, 121–127.

⁴⁶ D'Arms, 1970, 9–10.

⁴⁷ D'Arms, 1970, 12. See his full discussion on the reaction to the villa of Scipio Africanus as an archetype of the villa as a controlling force nature and a fortress (1–17).

⁴⁸ Purcell, 1995, 151–179.

for a life devoted exclusively to *otium*. Rather, the Roman villa “was epiphenomenal to the centuriated landscape which had already been divided and allotted.”⁵⁰

Expanding Boundaries: The Villa of Pollius Felix (*Silvae* 2.2)

If the villa gives its owner the ability to control nature in a specific, delineated space, then Vopiscus through his home shows the ability of man to expand his influence and control an ever greater expanse of nature through culture. The same effect occurs in the villa of Pollius Felix (*Silv.* 2.2). While the villa of Vopiscus was noteworthy for the harmony between man and nature, that of Felix is perceived as constantly exerting influence on the countryside in an attempt to keep nature subdued.⁵¹ Gaze is a primary component of Statius’ descriptions, especially in this ekphrasis of the Surrentine villa.⁵² When Statius describes the perspective of the villa as he approaches it by sea and then the sea as he views it from the house’s upper stories, his ekphrastic method tends to push the definable boundaries beyond the immediate confines. Hinds notes that the gaze in the *Silvae* is primarily characterized as proprietorial,⁵³ and through that view the owner of the villa seeks a metaphorical claim on his surroundings. The large complex consists of a building facing both east and west and thereby offers a view of the rising and setting sun:

⁴⁹ See Ackerman, 1990, 9–34 for the historical overview of villas that become places of rest and isolation through control of natural surroundings. Ackerman does not completely reject the notion of farm villas (15), but focuses in large part on the ideological function of the villa, which he terms as a myth ingrained in a cultural mindset to such an extent that it is assumed true. “The villa is in these terms a paradigm not only of architecture but of ideology; it is a myth or fantasy through which over the course of millennia persons whose position of privilege is rooted in urban commerce and industry have been able to expropriate rural land, often requiring, for the realization of the myth, the care of a laboring class or slaves.” (10). Bannon, 2009 studies property rights and responsibilities of a gentleman farmer and insists that the owners of the villa were more involved in daily affairs than is commonly represented in literature.

⁵⁰ Purcell, 1995, 168.

⁵¹ On the Bay of Naples as the ideal place for poetry of *otium* and luxury, see Connors, 2000, 499–501.

⁵² The emphasis on gaze began with Cancik, 1968. Hardie, 1982, 177 sees a link between the “privileged view” of Manilius Vopiscus’ villa (1.3) and *Georgics* 2.490 (*felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*), a clear nod to the Epicurean philosopher Lucretius.

⁵³ Hinds, 2002, 245.

haec domus ortus
aspicit et Phoebi tenerum iubar; illa cadentem
detinet exactamque negat dimittere lucem,
(*Silv.* 2.2.45–47)

This mansion faces sunrise and Phoebus' early ray; that detains him in his setting and refuses to dismiss the light now spent.

Shackleton Bailey states that the term *domus* (45), which he translates as *mansion*, is perhaps a flattering term for the various buildings that contribute to the villa complex, but Statius may instead be playing upon the role of both *domus* and *dominus*.⁵⁴ The master of the villa has constructed it in such a way that it controls Phoebus himself by holding the god back (*detinet*, 47) and forbidding his descent (*negat dimittere*, 47). Both buildings cause the *dominus* of the villa to seemingly expand his small intersection point with nature through the infinite view they offer. The relationship between the master of the home and nature is further strengthened after Statius summarizes the scene: *domuit possessor* (56). Through possession of the land, Felix has acquired the legal right and the implicit ability to change the land for his own benefit. Each horizon becomes subject to the control of the *dominus*, as the sea, land, and even the heavens seem to be directed by Felix.

While the baths of Vopiscus appeared grassy and thus blended well with nature, the baths of Felix, like the rest of his home, impose their authority on the environment. Statius comments that the first beautiful feature of the house is its bathhouse with twin cupolas (*gratia prima loci, gemina testudine fumant / balnea*, 2.2.17–18), but just as noteworthy is the stream that flows into the sea:

et e terris occurrit dulcis amaro
nympha mari. levis hic Phorci chorus udaeque crines
Cymodoce viridisque cupit Galatea lavari.
ante domum tumidae moderator caerulus undae

⁵⁴ Shackleton Bailey, 2003, 126–127.

excubat, innocui custos laris
(*Silv.* 2.2.18–22)

and from land a stream of fresh water meets the briny sea. Here Phorcus' lightsome choir and Cymodoce with her dripping locks and sea-green Galatea delight to bathe. Before his house the cerulean governor of the swelling wave keeps ward, guardian of the harmless home;

From the cultured land flows the fresh water into the brackish sea.⁵⁵ The interlocked word order spans two lines, and the juxtaposition of *dulcis* and *amaro* creates a visual demonstration of the fresh water attempting to subdue the sea. The nymphs, anticipated in Statius' metonym for the river (19), use this area as the bath house just as Felix uses the buildings above. The benefit experienced by the land thus extends to the sea and its inhabitants. Although the identity of the *moderator* may be uncertain,⁵⁶ he is acting in the role of *dominus*, keeping guard over the home (*ante domum*, 21), protecting it from the waves outside (*tumidae . . . undae*, 21), and safeguarding the morals inside (*innocui custos laris*, 22). The *dominus* not only shows his own nature through his control of nature, but also receives praise for imposing that nature upon everyone and everything he is responsible for.

⁵⁵ Two such baths are mentioned by Bannon, 2009, 231n, that of Pollius Felix and another villa near Pompeii belonging to M. Licinius Crassus Frugi (*CIL* 10.1063). See the description of Felix's home in D'Arms, 1970, 220–222.

⁵⁶ See above, 44n on whether the *domus* in question is Neptune's temple or part of Felix's villa complex.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Poetry of the countryside is for Statius and Vergil a convenient means of relating truths of not only rural but also urban life. Like the villa itself, the authors use a well-controlled scene to their benefit. They are able to emphasize and understate particular elements of the villa to infuse meaning and symbolism into landscape and agriculture. The villa, due to its practical function, ubiquity, and indication of status, becomes an accessible and manageable symbol. As the narrator, Statius is able to control the gaze by enhancing the features that bolster the image of his patron and by diminishing elements that are detrimental or incongruous. Vergil could have explained that the city showed the scars of Iron Age living and was a flawed version of a true city, but by depicting this through georgic scenes, he allows his readers to question his own life and the lifestyle around him. Statius could have praised Pollius Felix or Manilius Vopiscus with a straightforward description of their deeds, accomplishments, and beliefs, but these qualities are affirmed and therefore more believable through conquest of nature. While we have no biographical details of Vopiscus himself, *Silvae* 1.3 has generated questions of philosophy, architecture, and landscape, at the same time informing our understanding of the Flavian literary world.

To understand the villa and building poems in the *Silvae* of Statius as an expression of a culturally defined construct of nature allows a specified foundation for a practical reading. Common lines of contemporary literary criticism vacillate between seeing Statius as a bombastic poet who writes poetry void of anything but praise and a skilled poet whose poems need to be rescued from their primary purpose of praise. A majority of the scholars have taken an approach that examines Statius' allusion to earlier authors, subversive poetry towards Statius' own times or earlier poets, his careful control over his expression of wealth, his philosophy, and even his

personal anxiety. Although Statius is a gifted poet and these approaches have allowed for an increase in understanding his methodology, by reading the villa poems of the *Silvae* through the lens of the *Georgics*, one begins to see value in the Flavian poet not for poeticizing trivial subject matter, but for his ability to versify a divergent moral perception of a topic with the same tropes and methods as the very authors from whom he distinguishes himself.

The reader of the *Georgics* has a keen awareness of the comprehensive nature of the poem. The gnomic phrase *labor omnia vincit / improbus* rings true for most situations; the farmer's continuous efforts and dreams of a simple, virtuous life for himself and his family are just as applicable today as they were when Vergil penned them, even though specific practices, expectations, and frustrations would have been applicable only to Vergil's original readers. If one asks of Statius the same questions as Vergil—what nature is, what our role in it is, and what that role says of human nature—the *Silvae* can be better understood as poems that provide reflections and even answers. Statius sees physical nature as an unfinished work of art. In some parts of the canvas, like the land of Manilius Vopiscus (1.3), the scene is well crafted and near completion and thus requires a light touch by a delicate artist. Elsewhere, like Domitian's road (4.3), the scene is incomplete and crudely composed and in need of a strong leader like the emperor. Likewise, the land around the forum is busy and in need of a strong unifying element (1.1).

The domination of nature has a different function or cultural significance in each of these poems, but it is the geography of the Neopolitan shoreline (2.2, 3.1) that requires the most dramatic and extensive revision by the artisan. For this reason the villa of Pollius Felix (*Silv.* 2.2) best represents the domination of nature and has been, in many ways, the central focus of this project. A cognate of *domitare* appears ten times in this poem, and nowhere is the human need

and right for control over nature more apparent in the collection. This house exhibits what I would call *dominature*. The portmanteau, I believe, has an interesting resonance to the topic at hand while encompassing the reality that any interaction, philosophy, religion, or even definition requires some level of domination on the part of humans. In any poem of the *Silvae* in which a building or architectural composition figure prominently, nature and humans occupy a central position. The domination of nature for Statius is an important symbol to represent the morality of his patrons. Just as Vergil teaches through his depiction of nature that violence and labor are realities under the laws of Jupiter, Statius shows through his patron's interaction with nature that morality and philosophy shape and indicate one's own nature.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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