Style and Variety in the Art of the Roman Domestic Sphere

by

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Manet does not have a style, he has all of them.

-Jean Clay, “Ointments, Makeup, Pollen,” trans. John Shepley

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, George and Margaret Sachs:

for their endless love and unyielding faith in me.

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Abstract

My dissertation has several aims: first, to address the use and validity of August Mau's Four-Style system as a methodological tool for analyzing Campanian wall painting and the domestic space it adorns; second, to shine light on the processes of maintenance and repair, and also redecoration, in early imperial Campanian villas, in order to reframe earlier painting through this later lens; and third, to provide a more nuanced interpretation of Roman domestic decorations of the first-century CE, one that possibly arrives at a better understanding of the category of painting referred to as the "Fourth Style" and its variegated aesthetic.

In order to do this, I investigate how Romans themselves wrote and thought about style, a concept that was profoundly theorized in Graeco-Roman culture because of its value to rhetoric. Indeed, rhetorical training gave one the tools to communicate appropriately, whether in speech or writing, publicly or privately, and so in the Roman setting it became an essential part of education for men of a range of social backgrounds. By the first century BCE, there was demand for handbooks that explained this ancient technology, and the ones that have survived antiquity offer intriguing glimpses of not only how ancient people regarded rhetoric, but also painting and sculpture, which seem to have been perceived as parallel arts.

Such texts reveal a mentality quite different from how we approach ancient art in the present. The villa was not a museum: decorations were meant to serve particular functions there, especially in ways that reflected well on their owners. Today we might describe an object by its dating, its artist, workshop, or school, its specific medium (to scientific precision), and its provenance. In the Roman domestic sphere, even in opulent maritime villas, this kind of

information seems not to have been as prioritized; more important was whether the art was appropriate for display in its particular setting (e.g., library, garden, etc.) and whether it appropriately reflected the cultural values, education, or social aspirations of its owner. With this understanding of the value of decoration in domestic display, I propose a new interpretive model for assessing wall painting, one that prioritizes its visual function and not its dating.

I also explore *how* style was supposed to be used in the Roman context: with *varietas*, or variety, which in the rhetorical texts is a stylistic value that relates to the use of many different styles in a single composition. I show how even among non-rhetoricians, particularly Pliny the Younger, *varietas* was an important aesthetic of oratory and writing, and it also had meaning beyond rhetoric: as a significant aesthetic concept in Roman art and villa culture, signaling qualities related to abundance, security, and wealth of resources. I argue this is an overlooked but significant concept when we assess the visual experience of Roman domestic decoration, especially wall painting.

My final body chapter presents Villa A at Oplontis as a major case study, all the more useful because of the Villa's intense recent analyses by the Oplontis Project. Reinterpreting "style" as functional, rather than temporal, allows us to focus on strategies of display in the mid-first century CE, and perhaps helps us better understand the functioning of the category of wall painting referred to as the "Fourth Style" in a Campanian maritime villa.

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Rethinking Roman Style

> The period from 80 B.C. to A.D. 79 was as little creative in the field of painting as in that of sculpture. No new types appear, no improvements are worked out; the painter, as the sculptor, was an eclectic, who drew upon the creations of the past as suited his fancy, and contented himself with copying or imitating.
> -August Mau, trans. Francis Kelsey[1]

> But only twice on this globe, in ancient Greece and in Renaissance Europe, have artists striven systematically, through a succession of generations, step by step, to approximate their images to the visible world and achieve likenesses that might deceive the eye.
> -Ernst Hans Gombrich[2]

At the turn of the most recent century, China art historian James Cahill lamented that scholars of his generation failed to continue the great mission of his previous generation: to develop a "coherent art historical account" of early Chinese painting, meaning a stylistic, "step by step history," or "sequence of stylistic moves" of pre-Tang- through Song-Dynasty painting (dating from the late-sixth to the late-thirteenth century).[3] Ernst Gombrich was mistaken to exclude Chinese painting from his heavy pronouncement (above): Chinese painting, he argued,

[1] Mau 1899, 461.
[2] Gombrich 1982, 11.
[3] Cahill 2005, 19-20.

could have a "history as solid and detailed as has been done for European painting." At least, this is what he meant for *early* Chinese painting, up to the end of Song in the late-thirteenth century; *later* Chinese painting (of the Yuan Dynasty and later) had been interpreted by pioneer Western scholars as unimaginative, totally dependent on previous vocabularies, and essentially static. Cahill posited that perhaps the great, stylistic "macro-shifts" took place earlier in China, that the Chinese "arrived in their painting" by the end of the thirteenth century, and that what came after could be termed a "post-historical period," innovative and flourishing in its own way, but lacking the advancement of representational techniques that could be traced earlier.[4]

Scholars of Roman wall painting, material that is technically "Western" but pre-Western, might have much to contribute to this discussion, and mostly of the vein that the stylistic approach, at least the one developed post-antiquity, can only get one so far. The discipline, indebted to the foundational work of August Mau in the late nineteenth century, is built on a diachronic, stylistic account of wall paintings, ones that were executed by people who understood style differently. It could also be argued that an art historical account of Roman wall painting is even more elusive than the one Cahill proposed for Chinese painting, because many Roman frescoes decorated domestic spaces constantly in use over many decades; much of the earlier material was destroyed as generations of villa and house owners redecorated to suit their own tastes and needs. While a full picture of the earlier modes of painting is difficult to grasp, this paucity has also made them easier to assess with modern art historical methodologies. Confusingly, we have extensive and detailed studies of wall paintings of the First-, Second-, and Third-Period Styles, without anything comparable for the Fourth. Yet, the so-called Fourth-

[4] Cahill 2005, 17-18. In Cahill's account, stylistic "development" seems bound with realism: illusionistic devices that lent to the optical convincing of a painting – its treatment of space, light and shadow, etc. – reached their culmination in the tenth to eleventh centuries. See Silbergeld 2005 for a fascinating and instructive response to Cahill's 2005 essay.

Period Style, in its jumbled abundance, takes up the majority of the corpus, because it had been in fashion for over a generation when Vesuvius erupted in 79 CE.

In scholarship on Roman wall painting, and more broadly, in scholarship on Campanian domestic and public architecture, Mau's Four Period Styles have been mostly[5] uncritically accepted as chronological markers, indicating the earliest date of the structure (as corresponding to its earliest Period Style) and its subsequent decorative phases.[6] In this realm, style is used by art historians and archaeologists as a dating tool, a linear method of evaluating and classifying materials, in much the same way that Roman concrete (*opus caementicium*) or other building materials have been subject to diachronic analysis and ordering.[7] With this method, the concept of style is implicitly linked to perceived artistic ability – its arc of development, innovation, and "decline" – measured by Western aesthetic rules prioritizing realism. However, while we might expect construction technology to advance over time (the Romans were master engineers, after all), I would argue that painted decoration was inherently more subjective, dependent on the individual tastes of series of patrons who seemed to be more concerned about the appropriate setting of domestic decoration than its chronology or stylistic purity.[8]

Indeed, if the domestic display of sculpture may be considered a parallel phenomenon, the eclectic composition of collections such as those found at the Villa dei Papiri and Oplontis suggests that the stylistic categories – at least with the modern, art historical understanding of "style" – were often fluid, perhaps intentionally so. It seems evident that in the art of the elite domestic environment, notions of authenticity and faithfulness to an "original" had much less importance, if any at all. Some decorations were no doubt recognized as older, or referencing an

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[5] See Bergmann 2001 for an important exception.
[6] Many Campanian villas, for example, have been dated to the mid-first century BCE based on the presence of Second Style painting. See, for example, the work of the Oplontis project, e.g., Thomas and Clarke, 2007.
[7] See Mogetta 2013 for a recent discussion of the chronology of Roman concrete.
[8] See discussion in Chapter 4.

"older" mode of representation.[9] In Campanian villas, the careful conservation of first-century BCE paintings in first-century CE contexts indicates that villa owners recognized the value of the older paintings. However, the villa was not a museum. Each of its spaces had particular, appropriate uses, of which elite Romans were keenly aware. Sculpture and painting were specifically selected with their settings, and thus, their functions, in mind. While important scholarship of the last few decades, such as the work of Tonio Hölscher[10], have interpreted Roman sculpture style in this way – i.e., as corresponding to a particular function or "effect," and not to the fashion of a particular period – a parallel interpretation of Roman wall painting style has yet to be made.

Indeed, scholars of the discipline do not tend to think about function when evaluating Roman wall painting because we are so caught up with the chronology of Mau's Four Period Styles. In this dissertation, I use the term "Period Style" to refer to Mau's system to emphasize its chronological orientation. While there is some validity to Mau's relative chronology, and archaeological evidence suggests ancient awareness, and even manipulation, of the Four Period Styles, these are positivist categories invented post-antiquity (as I have suggested above).

In this work I propose a new interpretive framework, borrowed from ancient stylistic theory, with which to consider Roman wall painting: the three stylistic types of Roman oratory, which include a "plain" style, a "middle" style, and a grand or "elevated" style. This stylistic system first appears in Latin the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, although its invention is traditionally credited to Theophrastus, Aristotle's student and successor, whose many works on rhetoric have not survived antiquity. Cicero defines the three styles in his *Orator* (46 BCE), in which he describes their main functions: *docere* (to teach), *delectare* (to delight), and *movere* (to move,

[9] See, for example, Pliny the Younger's letter to Domitius Apollinaris (5.6) describing his Tuscan villa, in which he neutrally describes the atrium of the villa as "*ex more veterum*" (5.6.16), "of an old style."
[10] E.g., Hölscher 1987, Hölscher 2004, Hölscher 2014, Hölscher 2015.

persuade). With some variation, these three style types remained a fixture in Roman rhetoric until late Antiquity, when Augustine borrowed them to define the three levels of style in Christian oratory (book 4 of his *De doctrina Christiana*). Importantly, despite the reoccurrence of the framework, these three style types were probably not interpreted as strict categories, but rather as a set of guidelines to assist speakers and writers in navigating the art; here I follow von Albrecht when he remarks that – even for a purist like Cicero – the "three levels [were] no more than a means to find one's way through an infinite variety of stylistic shades."[11]

Following Michael Baxandall's concept of the "Period Eye,"[12] I suggest that this powerful rhetorical model colored the perception of early imperial Romans, particularly elite men, who would have been acutely conscious of the functionality of style since boyhood. Further, as it probably was for rhetoric, I argue that this model could have been a framework for considering an infinite number of painting styles, not simply three (or four).

Considering wall painting through this lens, outside of the discipline's traditional chronological interpretations, allows us to consider aspects of wall painting that have been sidelined by strategies avidly focused on defining the order of decorative phases. For example, Mau's Period Styles do not leave room for the consideration of the artistic economy of painting, an issue that would be extremely meaningful for its interpretation. The chronological work is interesting and useful, but it is not the *only* way to interpret wall painting, and it was certainly not the only way ancient people regarded wall painting.

Re-orienting this focus, I argue, helps us better understand an aesthetic principle especially visible in the domestic art of the first-century CE: that of *varietas*, or variety, which in ancient rhetoric was a stylistic value, as can be observed in ancient rhetorical writing (see chapter three). The term is also found outside of rhetoric, however, specifically related to nature and the

[11] von Albrecht 2003, 188 (note 41).
[12] Baxandall 1972.

experiences of early imperial villas in the natural landscape. The concept has been rarely applied to Roman visual experience, although Nicola Barham's recent (2015) dissertation is an important exception.[13] William Fitzgerald has recently published an entire volume on the concept of variety in Latin literature (as well as literature post-antiquity), but he does not consider its power as a contemporary visual concept.[14] Interestingly, *varietas* has been defined – particularly in the work of Mary Carruthers – as medieval aesthetic term.[15] In comparison, it seems that this aesthetic concept has been mostly overlooked by Roman art historians.[16] In this dissertation, my end-goal is to arrive at a more authentic understanding of how different modes of Roman wall painting were perceived and manipulated in the Campanian region, especially in the elite domestic settings of late Republican and early-Imperial villas. I argue that *varietas* was an important visual concept in this particular context.

The Problems with Chronology

> The method adopted is comparative. The dating of one wall depends on that of another and all of them hang together. Although it would clearly be unwise to rely on negative evidence alone, the fact that no evidence conflicts with the ascription of a given wall to a given date is sometimes as weighty an argument for that ascription as any positive proofs that can be adduced.
>
> -R. C. Carrington[17]

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[13] Barham considers *varietas* in a complementary but distinct way, not centering on the rhetorical evidence or the question of chronology, but rather exploring the use of pattern and color in abstract decorations. (see especially chapter 3)
[14] Fitzgerald 2016.
[15] Carruthers 2009 and Carruthers 2013 both frequently refer to Roman authors to define the concept.
[16] The scholarship of Francesca Tronchin and Ellen Perry have used the term "eclectic" to describe the stylistic variety commonly observed in Roman art. However, this word does not connote the same themes of richness, abundance, and access to resources, partly because it has too much modern baggage.
[17] Carrington 1933, 127.

In 1933, in his modestly titled article "Notes on the Building Materials of Pompeii," R. C. Carrington quite lucidly described the peculiar problems and task of dating building materials at Pompeii. Failing the help of inscriptions and pottery, he states, we are "thrown back on the walls themselves,"[18] left to the examination of their masonry techniques, building type, and decoration. Mau's study of wall paintings, he argues, was the most useful for dating construction, and he relies on it to propose a masonry chronology: since tufo walls are found decorated with painting of the First Style, for example, he argues that the transition from limestone to tufo construction must have taken place in the 2nd century BCE.[19] Furthermore, triangular bricks came into use as facing only by the middle of the 1st century CE because there is no evidence that they were covered with Third Period Style painting.[20] Carrington's work contributed to a system for dating Pompeian buildings, later refined by Maiuri[21], who interpreted a final building phase based on the documentation of a single earthquake in 62 CE.[22] While Carrington readily admits that his method is comparative, contingent on a system of relative dating, nowhere does he question Mau's stylistic chronology, a method of dating that itself seems to have emerged from observations of formal relativism and a healthy dose of Vitruvius. In his view the Styles came and went according to Mau's neat system, while the masonry, which he was studying more closely, revealed – particularly in the 1st century CE – signs of experiment and rapid change, recycled use and repair, highly competent concrete construction and also "jerry-building."

Apart from the very troubling fact that building techniques were once thought to be secure benchmarks for dating both walls and frescoes according to August Mau's chronology (which, in turn, provided benchmarks for Carrington's dating of Pompeian building techniques),

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[18] Carrington 1933, 125.
[19] Carrington 1933, 131.
[20] Carrington 1933, 133.
[21] Maiuri 1942.
[22] Tacitus *Ann.* 15, 22; Seneca *Natur. Quaest.* 6, 1, 2-3. For further discussion see Allison 2001.

the fact of the matter is that even in the twenty-first century, the external evidence that may provide "fixed termini" – verifying or disproving the validity of the chronology – continues to be extremely rare. Instead, the old chronology, constructed at the end of the nineteenth century, has persisted, built on ideas of evolutionary development and also decline. Roman art historians tend to express serious concern about the problems of chronology – really a fragile "house of cards"[23] – but most continue to assume a general accuracy of the relative dating. And the chronology continues to be taught, if only so that newer generations may understand older scholarship, and we continue to speak and write in terms of "Second-" or "Fourth-Style" as shorthand for much more complicated "categories" of material.

It is important to remember that the Romans did not think in terms of the Period Styles, which are modern inventions. Vitruvius focuses more on the content of depiction rather than its manner, color schemes, or general quality, and he is vague enough to have encouraged Style-obsessed scholarly debate over what he describes – whether the First, Second, and Third Period Styles, or just several categories of the Second and then the Third.[24] Later texts, even Philostratus' painting-focused *Imagines* (or *Eikones*), set in a Campanian maritime villa, do not suggest an awareness of anything like the Period Styles.

I do not intend to deny the existence of the Styles all together – in their most basic form, they do distinguish between different formal strategies. We may also add to the list garden painting (which scholarship seems to have attributed to the "mature" Second Style, despite the fact that it also may be found alongside the Third and Fourth) and the so-called *Pinacoteca* Style, which seems to allude to the practice of displaying "moveable" panel paintings – villa landscapes, still lifes, mythological scenes (also awkwardly straddling the Third and Fourth). However, I do intend to seek interpretations beyond the relative chronology, which seems partly

[23] Bergmann 2001.
[24] Beyen 1938; Leach 2004.

to blame for the unevenness of past treatment of the different kinds of painting, particularly the category of material sorted into the Fourth Period Style, which has resisted definition even into the twenty-first century.[25]

A particularly unhelpful feature of Mau's stylistic system is its narrative of stylistic evolution and decline, as mentioned above. Despite the fact that each Period Style, evaluated independently, developed "from simpler to richer and more complex forms,"[26] over time the aesthetic quality of the Styles apparently declined, due to a gradual exhaustion of resources and "lack of taste." So in Mau's system, the First or "Incrustation" Style represents the period at which "we may truly say that Pompeian architecture was at its best."[27] Unfortunately, according to his system, everything went downhill from there. From an archaeological standpoint, we must remember that *all* the wall painting that has survived witnessed, expressed aspects of, and possibly even influenced, daily activities and behaviors in the year 79. By then, regardless of their date of creation, the Four Period Styles were coexistent, and viewed not by late Republicans but by early Imperialists, who likely did not think their own painting was as bad as modern scholars have made it out to be.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter two reviews the extant Greek and Roman literature on style in rhetoric, from Aristotle to Isocrates, Cicero to Augustine; I provide my own translations of these Greek and Latin texts, which reflect an "evolution" of rhetorical studies, which was very much a communication technology in antiquity. I include the Greek sources because the Romans were very much responding to them. As I have alluded above, by the first century BCE, rhetoricians

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[25] Tybout 2001.
[26] Mau 1899, 462. This and the following citations are of Francis Kelsey's English translation. For Mau's original (German) work, see Mau 1882.
[27] Mau 1899, 41-42.

recognized three basic stylistic types, and these remained a fixture in Roman rhetoric through late antiquity. In this (rhetorical) context, "plain," "middle," and "elevated" styles corresponded to the three basic functions of the art: to teach, to delight, and to compel. In this context, style was not significantly a chronological marker, as art historians and archaeologists use it almost exclusively with wall painting. Instead, ancient conceptions of style had much more to do with functional and emotional impact on the audience. I conclude this chapter by suggesting that we might interpret Campanian wall paintings through the lens of the three basic stylistic categories.

Chapter three addresses *how* styles were supposed to be used in the Roman context: with *varietas*, or variety, which in the rhetorical texts is a stylistic value that relates to the use of many different styles in a single composition (as explained above). Close reading of the texts suggests that this was strictly a Roman concept, although there were less charged Greek synonyms (such as *poikilia*). I show how even among non-rhetoricians, particularly Pliny the Younger, *varietas* was an important aesthetic of oratory and writing. In this chapter I also show how *varietas* had meaning beyond rhetoric: as a significant aesthetic concept in Roman art and villa culture, specifically. We have the same sense of nature "delighting in her variety," signaling qualities related to abundance, security, and wealth of resources. In Roman imperial literature, *varietas* had these same associations, and I argue that, at least until recently, this is an overlooked but significant concept when we assess the visual experience of Roman domestic decoration, especially wall painting.[28]

Chapter four presents Oplontis Villa A as a major case study in which I follow the arguments I have made in the previous chapters. In this villa, there are only a few instances of crossing a threshold and encountering the same style of painting. The Villa was expanded in the mid-first century CE, and it seems safe to assume that at that point its owners could afford to

[28] See Barham 2015 for an important exception.

decorate exactly how they wanted. Past interpretations – mainly, the significant studies produced by the Oplontis Project – have focused on the major renovation phases of the décor. Reinterpreting the styles as functional, rather than temporal, allows us to focus on the strategies of display in the mid-first century CE, and perhaps gives us a better understanding of the functioning of the Fourth Period Style in a Campanian maritime villa.

My conclusion sums up the findings and points toward directions for further work, particularly the application of the interpretive framework to the decorations from the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale. This is both a material-based project and also a historiographic one, and through my analyses I hope to underscore what we can achieve with stylistic categories and what we cannot.

Contributions to the Field

Ultimately, my goal is to interpret how a diversity of wall painting styles came to coexist, function, and be perceived in Campanian houses and villas by 79 CE. August Mau's work was foundational to the field, and the value of subsequent style-based work (Beyen, Tybout, and others) is without doubt. But a great, unintended consequence of these typological analyses has been their tendency to decontextualize wall painting, treating it as an art form with a universal narrative, one that evolved and also declined. I hope to join the ranks of scholars who have started to recontextualize the painting as a brilliant, decorative form, a category of material that likely represented individual as well as cultural tastes over centuries of "use"; that expressed, and possibly enforced or encouraged patterns of activity around the house; and that revealed or followed broader cultural attitudes related to *decorum* (appropriateness) and function.

Chapter 2 – Redefining Roman Style: Interpreting Roman Wall Painting through Ancient Stylistic Theory

Ancient stylistic theory has been a subject of intense interest among Classical philologists, but a parallel discussion for the visual arts of the Roman world – particularly painting – has been virtually nonexistent.[29] This is despite the fact that August Mau's Four Style system has served as the foundation of Roman wall painting studies, is deeply embedded in current, significant work by prominent scholars[30], and continues to be used as a diagnostic tool for dating. There are good reasons scholars have not pursued ancient understandings of visual style: as I wrote in the last chapter, August Mau's stylistic categories are a product of the nineteenth century, not the first one, and they rest on a basic – if not outdated – assumption of *Kunstwollen*.[31] While the Four Styles are still taught to students of Roman painting, most scholars have a healthy skepticism of the stylistic system, a precarious "house of cards"[32], and some have even eschewed them completely[33], with mixed success.

And yet: recent work on ancient renovation and modification in the Campanian region has provided evidence that in part reinforces the Four Styles' relative chronology. For example, there are numerous examples of ancient modifications that required painting in two different Styles at the same moment in time: the Second-Style cubicula on the south end of the atrium at the Villa Arianna, for example, whose northern doors were filled sometime in the mid-first

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[29] Tonio Hölscher, Eugene Dwyer, and Ellen Perry have addressed the concept of style with Roman sculpture, not painting.
[30] E.g., John Clarke and Alix Barbet.
[31] This term referring to Alois Riegl's theory of "continuous growth" in art.
[32] Tybout 2001 and Bergmann 2001.
[33] See, for example, Bragantini 2015.

century AD, at which point painters imitated the Second Style on the south side of the fill while decorating the northern side with a black, Third-Style scheme.[34] Such contemporaneous differences are evidence of an ancient awareness of stylistic variation in painting, one for which we have not really accounted.

What did the Romans themselves think about visual style? How did they respond to different modes of painting and sculpture, and did patrons manipulate (or emphasize) those differences? Roman interiors of the late Republic and early Empire were packed full of vibrant variations of color and depictions of fantastical interior and exterior landscapes, nothing like the monochrome, uncluttered interiors we desire today. No two rooms were painted in exactly the same way. The same observations could be made about villa sculpture collections, such as that discovered at the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum: from the archaizing Athena Promachos, to the herm of Polykleitos' Doryphoros, to the Lysippean seated Hermes, diversity of style seems to have been cultivated. What compelled Campanian patrons to desire such richness, such variation, of style? While today, the term "eclectic" has negative connotations, might we understand a similar principle as a guiding aesthetic of Roman domestic decoration? These are not questions commonly asked, in part because the traditions of the fields of Roman wall painting and sculpture have encouraged diachronic, decontextualized studies to define individual styles, instead of synchronic analyses encompassing the entire decorative programs of houses or villas, *in situ*.

Roman authors writing about the visual arts – mainly Pliny, Vitruvius, Cicero, and Quintilian –are important for a historiographical reason: because they were essential to the work of August Mau, who had relatively limited means when he invented his stylistic system before the heyday of systematic excavation in the twentieth century. "Our chief sources of information

[34] Grimaldi 2007.

regarding the domestic architecture of ancient Italy are two: the treatise of Vitruvius, and the remains found at Pompeii," he writes, at the beginning of his chapter on the Pompeian house. "In essential particulars there is no disagreement…"[35] However, these ancient authors hardly express a coherent picture of Roman aesthetics.

While we must understand their writing as important evidence to answer the questions posed above, questions relating to a particular erudite, elite, Roman cultural mindset, they are imperfect sources. These learned, elite men, after all, were writing with the unique perspectives of individuals who at times did not understand art contemporary with them: Vitruvius, who provides more of an aesthetic evaluation than the other authors, abhors the painting style *en vogue* in his own day because its delicate painted architecture violates his own rules of proportion. (5.3) Pliny similarly provides a description of painting, once dignified, as an art in decay. (35.11) Surely the patrons who were commissioning such decorations in their homes, and the painters who were producing them, would not have agreed. Further, we cannot overlook that these authors were themselves drawing from earlier Greek sources, and much of the aesthetic principles they discuss are Greek terms (either in Greek or Latinized) invented before and outside the context of the Roman world, or late Republican/early Imperial Campania, more precisely. First, we cannot necessarily interpret what they write at face value: an honorific statue in Hellenistic Greece took on a whole different meaning in a Roman villa garden, where it would have been part of a connoisseurial discourse quite alien to its original social context of viewing.[36] Second, and perhaps more importantly, it might not be fair to expect these authors to express a clear set of Roman aesthetic principles when that was not the primary intention of their larger projects: Pliny, for example, describes his *Natural History* as essentially an encyclopedia covering many aspects of the natural world, containing information he collected from two

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[35] Mau 1899, 239.
[36] Ma 2006. Tanner 2006, 205-209.

thousand separate volumes by more than one hundred authors. (*NH* praef. 17) Vitruvius, who comes the closest to defining an aesthetics of architecture, often seems more concerned with presenting his learnedness and scholarly prowess – i.e., his knowledge of Greek doctrines and Greek terms – and synthesizing those sources, than he is in presenting a coherent set of neatly defined aesthetic principles.[37]

On style, however, we have a great deal more of ancient literature: not in art historical writing but in works on rhetoric and literary criticism, which for the Romans was essentially a rhetorical exercise, to train elites how to speak and write through critical analysis and imitation.[38] Indeed, ancient theories of style were formed around the teaching and evaluation of rhetorical discourse – its persuasive and aesthetic dimensions, its seductive power. As Jeffrey Walker has observed, "Virtually everyone who sang, spoke, or wrote in the public sphere had been trained in rhetoric."[39] Thus the scaffolding of rhetorical teaching should be extremely meaningful to us as scholars, because it also informs us of a particular elite, ancient mindset, perhaps one more universally shared than Vitruvius's architectural purism.

Aristotle's Virtues of Style

Importantly, Romans writing about style – Cicero, Quintilian, others (the lists do overlap) – were responding to Greek precedents. Although we should expect style, in Roman contexts, to have its own set of meanings and uses, it is important to review the origins of the concept as it was delivered – already intensely analyzed – to Roman authors. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* III has been

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[37] See, for example, his hazy definitions of *taxis*, *diathesis*, and *oeconomia* in 1.2.1. Granger 1931, 24; Pollitt 1974, 66-68. It should also be noted that not all of Vitruvius is based on purely Greek ideas: his principle of *auctoritas*, for example, has no real Greek equivalent. (Pollitt 1974, 68) See Nichols 2017 for a recent discussion of Vitruvius at greater depth.
[38] Clark 1951, 13. Perry 2002, 153.
[39] Walker 2015, 175. Put another way in Pollitt 1974: "Because of its importance in public life and hence in education, rhetoric was the most closely analyzed and evaluated of all the arts of antiquity." (58)

regarded as the earliest surviving systematic account of style in the Classical world, and more or less a self-contained treatise in its own right.[40] While *Rhetoric* I and II address what the orator should say, *Rhetoric* III addresses how the orator should say it.[41] "When making a speech one must labor at three things: first, the means of producing persuasion; second, the style [τὴν λέξιν, nom. ἡ λέξις]; and third, the proper arrangement of the parts of the speech," he begins. Prior authors (he cites Glaucon of Teos) have studied style in poetry[42]; he implies his is the first treatise on the art of delivery in rhetoric "since the matter of style itself only recently came into consideration." (III.1.5)

From the beginning of book III, Aristotle appears ambivalent about the study of style, describing it as "rightly seeming vulgar," (III.1.6) not as important as people would think, but nevertheless necessary: "it is not sufficient to know what one ought to say, but one must also know how to say it." (III.1.2) He essentially condemns it to a cosmetic role: "In every system of instruction there is some slight necessity to pay attention to style; for it does make a difference, for the purpose of making a thing clear, ... but all these things are mere outward show, meant to charm the hearer; no one teaches geometry with fine rhetoric." (III.1.6) Here he is likely reflecting the circumstances of fourth-century Athens: in the wake of the Peloponnesian War and the trial of Socrates, the honeyed words of demagogues could be considered dangerous for democracy.[43] Further, this also might reflect the influence of his teacher Plato, who criticized

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[40] Walker 2015, 179; Rapp 2010, section 8; Kennedy 2007, 193; Kennedy 1989, 190-194.
[41] The chronology is complicated and uncertain. The core of *Rhetoric* I and II (I.4-15, II.1-17) seems to have been written during Aristotle's first Athens stay (c. 367-347), as possibly a successive lecture series; II.23-24 contain references to his exile and second stay in Athens (c. 335-323), which could have been added to a later version. It is not clear whether III was conceived with I and II; there is no mention of it as part of the agenda until the final sentence of II. To further complicate matters, Diogenes Laertius (3rd cen. CE), in his record of the catalogue of Aristotle's works, mentions only two books on rhetoric, and two further books on style. Rapp 2010, section 1: "Works on Rhetoric." See also Chroust 2016 for a historical treatment of the *Rhetoric*.
[42] Walker 2015, 176-177, for Archaic precedents.
[43] Svoboda 2007; Walker 2015.

earlier Sicilian traditions of rhetoric as valuing persuasion over absolute truth.[44] In an ideal world, he remarks, cases should be fought with facts alone, and everything else would be superfluous. (III.1.5) Nevertheless, "due to the corruption of fellow citizens," the reality is that style is of the greatest importance, and those who use it properly are victorious in both dramatic and political contests. (III.1.4)

An important aspect of *Rhetoric* III is that it is prescriptive[45]: Aristotle tells us what good style *should* be. The virtue of style, to Aristotle, is above all clarity, since the function of speech is to convey ideas. Good style is neither lowly (ταπεινή) nor overly dignified (ὑπὲρ τὸ ἀξίωμα, above its worth), but appropriate to its subject. (III.2.1) In prose, it consists of a healthy variety of proper and "foreign" words, of steady but natural rhythm[46], and is neither too diffuse nor too concise. (III.12.6) When it sounds natural, it is persuasive, but not when it is artificially overdone. (III.2.4) One cannot help but read Aristotle's definition of good style and connect it to moral virtue. In his writings on ethics, virtue of character is defined in terms of a "golden mean" that lies between two extremes; the same might be said about the Aristotle's conception of good style, despite his misgivings about its innate artifice. Clear and "of the middle path," (III.12.6) it is suitable for sober deliberation that focuses on truth and logic – at least in prose.[47]

While Aristotle's style might seem less relevant to a discussion about Roman art viewed in Roman domestic contexts, it is intimately related to a concept that has been defined as an essential Roman aesthetic value[48]: appropriateness. Indeed, the concept of *decor* or *decorum* is

[44] E.g., in the *Gorgias*, which addresses the Sicilian rhetorician Gorgias, who was particularly concerned with examining how stylistic devices such as rhythm, word choice, and the balancing of phrases contributed to rhetorical persuasion. Pollitt 1974, 58-59.
[45] A point made in Pollitt 1974, 60.
[46] I.e., Aristotle says that prose should be neither "in meter" nor "without rhythm" (III.8).
[47] Walker 2015, 181.
[48] Perry 2002, 154. Perry 2005, 31. In Perry 2002, *decorum* is inaccurately described as a "peculiarly" Roman value.

central to Aristotle's definition of style: appropriateness (τό πρέπον) is the very key to using style properly, essential to presenting ideas persuasively. He writes:

> Τὸ δὲ πρέπον ἕξει ἡ λέξις, ἐὰν ᾖ παθητική τε καὶ ἠθικὴ καὶ τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις πράγμασιν 2ἀνάλογον. τὸ δ᾽ ἀνάλογόν ἐστιν, ἐὰν μήτε περὶ εὐόγκων αὐτοκαβδάλως λέγηται μήτε περὶ εὐτελῶν σεμνῶς, μηδ᾽ ἐπὶ τῷ εὐτελεῖ ὀνόματι ἐπῇ κόσμος· εἰ δὲ μή, κωμῳδία φαίνεται, οἷον ποιεῖ Κλεοφῶν· ὁμοίως γὰρ ἔνια ἔλεγε καὶ εἰ εἴπειεν ἂν "πότνια συκῆ." παθητικὴ δέ, ἐὰν μὲν ᾖ ὕβρις, ὀργιζομένου λέξις, ἐὰν δὲ ἀσεβῆ καὶ αἰσχρά, δυσχεραίνοντος καὶ εὐλαβουμένου καὶ λέγειν, ἐὰν δὲ ἐπαινετά, ἀγαμένως, ἐὰν δὲ ἐλεεινά, ταπεινῶς ... πιθανοῖ δὲ τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ ἡ οἰκεία λέξις· παραλογίζεται γὰρ ἡ ψυχὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς λέγοντος, ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις οὕτως ἔχουσιν, ὥστ᾽ οἴονται, εἰ καὶ μὴ οὕτως ἔχει, ὡς ὁ λέγων, τὰ πράγματα οὕτως ἔχειν, καὶ συνομοιοπαθεῖ ὁ ἀκούων ἀεὶ τῷ παθητικῶς λέγοντι, κἂν μηθὲν λέγῃ.
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> Style will have appropriateness if it expresses emotion and character, and if it corresponds to its subject, meaning we must neither speak casually about weighty matters, nor solemnly about trivial ones; nor must we add ornamental epithets to common nouns, or the effect will be comic, as in the poetry of Kleophon, who used phrases as absurd as 'Oh queenly fig-tree.' To express emotion, you will employ the style of anger in speaking of outrage; the style of disgust and reluctant discretion when speaking of things foul or impious; the style of exultation for a tale of things praiseworthy, and that of humiliation for things pitiable... Appropriate style makes the fact persuasive; for the soul misreckons that the speaker is truthful, so that he thinks (even if it is not the case) that things are as he represents them; and the hearer always shares in the feeling of the speaker who speaks emotionally, even if he really says nothing. (III.7.1-5; 1408a)

Here Aristotle underlines the power of appropriate style, which can have such an effect on the listener that he or she is compelled to echo the same emotions, even if the speech amounts to nothing.[49] (This imitative reaction can be explained neurologically, through the work of

[49] See Walker 2015, 179-180 for further discussion.

"mirror neurons."[50]) Aristotle concludes his entire discussion of style by again emphasizing the importance of appropriateness:

> Δεῖ δὲ μὴ λεληθέναι ὅτι ἄλλη ἑκάστῳ γένει ἁρμόττει λέξις. ού γὰρ ἡ αὑτὴ γραφικὴ καὶ άγωνιστική, ούδὲ δημηγορικὴ καὶ δικανική. ἄμφω δὲ άνάγκη είδέναι· τὸ μὲν γάρ έστιν ἑλληνίζειν έπίστασθαι, τὸ δὲ μὴ άναγκάζεσθαι κατασιωπᾶν, ἄν τι βούληται μεταδοῦναι τοῖς ἄλλοις...
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> But it must not escape our notice that a different style is appropriate for (ἁρμόττει) each kind of rhetoric. The style of written prose is not that of debate, nor, in the latter, is that of public speaking the same as that of the law courts. But it is necessary to know both: for the one is to know good Greek, while the other means you are not obliged, as you are otherwise, to hold your tongue when you wish to communicate something to others… (III.12.1; 1413b)

Here, his misgivings about the use of style almost fall away – it is necessary for both speaking and writing good Greek (a virtue impossible to overvalue) – but not entirely: later in the same part, he essentially accuses Homer of deception in his rhetorical use of asyndeton to describe the Achaean king Nireus (*Iliad* 2.671-673): "…by means of this fallacy (διὰ τὸν παραλογισμόν), Homer has made a great deal of Nireus, though he has mentioned him only in this one passage; he has perpetuated his memory, though he nowhere says a word about him after." (III.12.4)

In this final section, Aristotle makes his first and only reference to style in the visual arts. He does so when emphasizing his point (quoted above) that different styles are fitting for different kinds of oratory; in this way, a speaker distinguishes himself by one style, not all:

> Ἡ μὲν οὖν δημηγορικὴ λέξις καὶ παντελῶς ἔοικε τῇ σκιαγραφίᾳ· ὅσῳ γὰρ ἂν πλείων ᾖ ὁ ὄχλος, πορρωτέρω ἡ θέα, διὸ τὰ άκριβῆ περίεργα καὶ χείρω φαίνεται έν άμφοτέροις· ἡ δὲ δικανικὴ άκριβεστέρα. ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ἡ ἑνὶ κριτῇ· έλάχιστον γάρ έστιν ῥητορικῆς· εύσύνοπτον γὰρ μᾶλλον τὸ οίκεῖον τοῦ πράγματος καὶ τὸ άλλότριον,

[50] Rizzolatti, Fadiga, et al. 2002; see Sacks 2007 for a musical exploration of this effect, especially 285-295.

καὶ ὁ ἀγὼν ἄπεστιν, ὥστε καθαρὰ ἡ κρίσις. διὸ ούχ οἱ αὐτοὶ ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις εὐδοκιμοῦσι ῥήτορες· ἀλλ᾽ ὅπου μάλιστα ὑποκρίσεως, ἐνταῦθα ἥκιστα ἀκρίβεια ἔνι. τοῦτο δέ, ὅπου φωνῆς, καὶ μάλιστα ὅπου μεγάλης. Ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐπιδεικτικὴ λέξις γραφικωτάτη· 6τὸ γὰρ ἔργον αὐτῆς ἀνάγνωσις· δευτέρα δὲ ἡ δικανική.

Now the style of oratory addressed to public assemblies is exactly like scene-painting (σκιαγραφία, lit. "shadow painting"[51]): the bigger the crowd, the more distant is the point of view, so that, in both, high refinement in detail is superfluous and even a disadvantage. The forensic style is more highly finished, and still more so is the style of language addressed to a single judge, with whom there is very little room for rhetorical artifice, as a single mind can take the whole thing in better, and judge what is relevant and what is not... This is why the same orators do not excel in all the styles at once: high finish is wanted least where dramatic delivery is wanted most, and here the speaker must have a good voice, and above all, a strong one. It is ceremonial oratory that is most literary, for it is meant to be read; and next to it forensic oratory. (III.12.5-6; 1414a)

Isocrates' Art of Rhetoric

There is a dearth of citations in *Rhetoric* I and II; in book III, quotations prevail.[52] While most of the examples Aristotle cites are from poets, especially Homer and the tragedians, the Athenian teacher of rhetoric Isocrates, whom he cites (explicitly and implicitly) 27 times, is his chief example of good prose style.[53] This is quite remarkable: although Isocrates had a reputation as the foremost teacher of rhetoric in fourth-century Athens in antiquity and the Renaissance[54], the traditional view is that Isocrates was a rival of Aristotle and his teacher, Plato, as they taught

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[51] I.e., a sketch using shading. This term is thoroughly explored in Pollitt 1974, 217-224.
[52] For example, there are 8 quotations in total in book I. See also Veteikis 2011.
[53] In fact, Isocrates is the individual most referenced in the entirety of the *Rhetoric*. (Benoit 1990, 252)
[54] Wareh 2013, esp. "Isocrateanism in the Renaissance"; Gnoza 2012; Haskins 2006; Mirhady, et al. 2004, 3-4; Timmerman 1998; Benoit 1990; Usher 1973, 39; Cicero *De Oratore* 2.94-95; Dionysius Hal. *De Isocrate* 1.

at competing schools in Athens and seem – at least by extant works – to have had competing views of the meaning of philosophy and the purposes of rhetorical teaching.[55] However, on the subject of style, it seems that Aristotle owed a great deal of his thinking to Isocrates. In fact, Isocrates' work, which defends rhetoric as more or less a "practical" philosophy and a humanistic discipline in its own right, might be interpreted as a response to Plato's earlier criticism.[56] Cicero, much later, credits Isocrates with Aristotle's turn to style (through his character Crassus):

> *Itaque ipse Aristoteles cum florere Isocratem nobilitate discipulorum videret quod suas disputationes a causis forensibus et civilibus ad inanem sermonis elegantiam transtulisset, mutavit repente totam formam prope disciplinae suae versumque quemdam Philoctetae paulo secus dixit: ille enim turpe sibi ait esse tacere cum barbaros, hic autem cum Isocratem pateretur dicere; itaque ornavit et illustravit doctrinam illam omnem rerumque cognitionem cum orationis exercitatione coniunxit.*
>
> 'When Aristotle observed that Isocrates succeeded in obtaining a distinguished set of pupils by abandoning legal and political subjects and devoting his discourses to empty elegance of style, he himself suddenly altered almost the whole of his own system of training, and quoted a line from Philoctetes with a slight modification: the hero in the tragedy said that it was a disgrace for him to keep silent and suffer barbarians to speak, but Aristotle put in "suffer Isocrates to speak"; and consequently he put the whole of his system in a polished and brilliant form, and linked the scientific study of facts with practice in style.' (*De Oratore* III.141)

While it is not my purpose to assess the relationship between Aristotle and Isocrates, it is relevant to consider Isocrates' own conception of style, especially as authors in late republican and imperial Rome (Cicero, Quintilian, Vitruvius) held his teaching in such high esteem.[57] In

[55] Veteikis 2011, 7; Mirhady, et al. 2004, 10-11; Benoit 1990, 251-2.
[56] Pollitt 1978, 59.
[57] For a full treatment of the reception of Isocrates in Roman (and Renaissance) Italy, see the recent dissertation: Gnoza 2012.

general, Isocrates and Aristotle overlap in their belief in the importance of moral virtue as it mirrors style in rhetoric: an ethical person will naturally speak better, and good speaking produces wisdom and good character.[58] Isocrates condemns the practice of reducing political discourse to speeches at law courts because they are devoid of morality[59]; instead, he advocates for a type of discourse that more broadly addresses a common good (such as, in his view, Panhellenism[60]).[61] His kind of education, he claims, leads students "more speedily towards goodness than towards oratorical ability [i.e., victory in court or political assembly]."[62] Naturally, he is highly critical of sophists, a group from which he explicitly separates himself.[63]

When it comes to style, Isocrates argues for something similar to what Aristotle describes, but without his misgivings; his positive acceptance might be expected, of course, given the number of times Aristotle approvingly cites Isocrates in his own definition of good style. Isocrates, like Aristotle, emphasizes appropriateness of style: "oratory is good only if it has the qualities of fitness for the occasion, propriety of style, and originality of treatment."[64] Appropriateness for Isocrates is a fundamental and challenging prerequisite, emphasized elsewhere in his writing.[65] Like Aristotle, Isocrates implies that each style is to be used exclusively in its proper setting, not to be combined with any other.[66]

In his later work, Isocrates describes his own kind of writing and its characteristic style as follows:

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[58] *Against the Sophists* 15. *Antidosis* 276-277. Put succinctly: "In the hands of Isocrates, rhetoric is gradually transformed into ethics." (Marrou 1982, 89)
[59] He would know, as he was a logographer before he started his school.
[60] See his *Panegyricus*.
[61] Gnoza 2012, 8.
[62] *Against the Sophists* 21.
[63] E.g., "Indeed, who can fail to abhor, yes to condemn, those teachers, in the first place, who devote themselves to argument, since they pretend to search for truth, but straightway at the beginning of their professions attempt to deceive us with lies?" *Against the Sophists* 1-2. See also *Antidosis* 155-158, a late work in which he defends his pedagogical career and casts himself as a Socratic-like figure, at least as portrayed in the *Apology*. (Gnoza 2012, 50)
[64] *Against the Sophists* 13.
[65] E.g., *Panegyricus* 9; *Helen* 11.
[66] E.g., see the passage from *Antidosis* 45-46 quoted below.

> Εἰσὶ γάρ τινες οἳ ... γράφειν δὲ προῄρηνται λόγους οὐ περὶ τῶν ἰδίων συμβολαίων, ἀλλ᾽ Ἑλληνικοὺς καὶ πολιτικοὺς καὶ πανηγυρικούς, οὓς ἅπαντες ἂν φήσαιεν ὁμοιοτέρους εἶναι τοῖς μετὰ μουσικῆς καὶ ῥυθμῶν πεποιημένοις ἢ τοῖς ἐν δικαστηρίῳ λεγομένοις. καὶ γὰρ τῇ λέξει ποιητικωτέρᾳ καὶ ποικιλωτέρᾳ τὰς πράξεις δηλοῦσι, καὶ τοῖς ἐνθυμήμασιν ὀγκωδεστέροις καὶ καινοτέροις χρῆσθαι ζητοῦσιν, ἔτι δὲ ταῖς ἄλλαις ἰδέαις ἐπιφανεστέραις καὶ πλείοσιν ὅλον τὸν λόγον διοικοῦσιν.

> For there are those who…have chosen to write discourses, not for private disputes, but which deal with the world of Hellas, with affairs of state, and are appropriate to be delivered at the Pan-Hellenic assemblies – discourses which, as everyone will agree, are more like works composed in rhythm and set to music than to the speeches made in court. For they present facts in a style more imaginative and more ornate and seek to employ grander and more original enthymemes[67], and in addition they dress up the whole speech with many other striking figures of speech. (*Antidosis* 47)

Isocrates, much like Aristotle, advocates a prose style characterized by natural rhythm, having a poetic quality closer to music than legal argument. Like Aristotle, he also promotes for prose the poetic qualities of euphony, good diction and word order, and generous usage of figures of speech. Again, where he departs is that he has no misgivings about the use of style, but rather complete enthusiasm: for Isocrates, style is art, not artifice, and those who employ it well are not "deceptive," but creative and dedicated: "…to arrange [words] properly, and not to miss what the occasion demands but to adorn the whole speech appropriately with striking thoughts, and to clothe it in flowing and melodious phrase – these things, I hold, require much study and are the task of a vigorous and imaginative mind."[68] Isocrates' style is not a necessary evil, but a method of making oratory graceful and charming, assisting in the articulation of "grander and more original" ideas. In

[67] I.e., "argument" or "proof." See Rapp 2010, section 6, "The Enthymeme."
[68] *Against the Sophists* 17.

an early speech, he promises that his training can turn a highly capable student into a λόγων ποιητης, a "poet of words."[69]

The extant corpus of Isocrates does not include a prescriptive parallel to *Rhetoric* III, or a handbook that offers a formal definition of the rules of the style he advocates, although Quintilian, Philodemus, and Plutarch all mention one specifically.[70] In fact, Isocrates criticizes sophists who write handbooks because they "mistakenly attach the model of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative activity."[71] However, two texts that bookend his teaching career provide enough of a sense of his perspective, at least for my purposes: *Against the Sophists*, published around 392, when he opened his school of rhetoric in Athens, and the *Antidosis*, published about 355, three years before he died.[72] The former is a polemical, programmatic text that attacks his competitors, the class of travelling sophists, and markets his own theories of rhetoric and its teaching; the latter is a kind of retrospective work defending his school and his teachings.

These texts both describe the kind of style Isocrates taught, and provide abundant examples of it spelled out in poetic prose. Especially to the Romans, Isocrates was known for teaching his distinctive "periodic" style, characterized by long, smooth statements artfully constructed with balanced clauses, an organization that conveys a strong sense of steady order.[73] While he could not rely on the use of punctuation marks, he often employs the particles μέν and δέ to set up opposing clauses (usually translated "on the one hand"…"on the other," or "while"…"whereas").

[69] *Against the Sophists* 15. Although he stresses that the student's natural ability is a very necessary component, and that he will not make false promises – as sophists do – to gain wealth.
[70] Benoit 1990, 252. Cicero, *De inventione* II.5; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.1.14; Philodemus, *De rhetorica*; Plutarch, "Lives of the Ten Orators," *Moralia*, 838F. Cicero wrote: "We have not found an art [i.e., a handbook] which is agreed to be his. We have found, however, many [handbooks] of his students, those who set out directly from his teaching." (*De inventione* 2.2.8) Cahn 1989 argues that one never existed. See discussion in Papillion 1995.
[71] *Against the Sophists* 12.
[72] "in my eighty-second year," *Antidosis* 9.
[73] See Mirhady et al. 2004, 9 for an example from the *Antidosis*, in a translation that follows as much as possible the original word order.

Smoothness of diction is aided by his avoidance of hiatus through well-crafted word order.[74] Several centuries later, Dionysius of Halicarnassus remarks: "Whenever I read [aloud] the speeches of Isocrates…I become serious in character with a great steadiness of thought, like those listening to libation music or to Dorian melodies."[75] As Walker observes, this kind of serious, "moral" effect is also what Aristotle is getting at in his own conception of good style[76] – but seemingly with far more hesitation.

Before his death in 338, Isocrates was the subject of an attack by Aristotle, in his non-extant work *Gryllus*, apparently also his first significant literary effort.[77] Quintilian tells us that in this work, Aristotle argues that rhetoric is not an art (τέχνη), and this can be interpreted as a direct attack on the teachings of Isocrates, whom Aristotle names specifically.[78] Indeed, it is worth emphasizing that Isocrates considered himself teaching a kind of elevated art:

> Ἐγὼ γὰρ εἰδὼς ἐνίους τῶν σοφιστῶν βλασφημοῦντας περὶ τῆς ἐμῆς διατριβῆς, καὶ λέγοντας ὡς ἔστι περὶ δικογραφίαν, καὶ παραπλήσιον ποιοῦντας ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις Φειδίαν τὸν τὸ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἕδος ἐργασάμενον τολμῴη καλεῖν κοροπλάθον, ἢ Ζεῦξιν καὶ Παρράσιον τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχειν φαίη τέχνην τοῖς τὰ πινάκια γράφουσιν, ὅμως οὐδὲ πώποτε τὴν μικρολογίαν ταύτην ἠμυνάμην αὐτῶν, ἡγούμενος τὰς μὲν ἐκείνων φλυαρίας οὐδεμίαν δύναμιν ἔχειν, αὐτὸς δὲ πᾶσι τοῦτο πεποιηκέναι φανερόν, ὅτι προῄρημαι καὶ λέγειν καὶ γράφειν οὐ περὶ τῶν ἰδίων συμβολαίων, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὲρ τηλικούτων τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τοιούτων πραγμάτων, ὑπὲρ ὧν οὐδεὶς ἂν ἄλλος ἐπιχειρήσειε, πλὴν τῶν ἐμοὶ πεπλησιακότων ἢ τῶν τούτους μιμεῖσθαι βουλομένων.
>
> While I have known that some of the sophists malign my occupation, saying that it has to do with writing speeches for the courts, very much as one might have the brashness to call Pheidias, who wrought our statue of Athena, a doll-maker, or to say that Zeuxis and

[74] "Hiatus" meaning the repetition of vowels between successive words (in English we avoid hiatus by inserting an "n" between vowels, e.g., "an Athenian" and not "a Athenian").
[75] *Demosthenes* 22.
[76] Walker 2015, 181.
[77] Chroust 1965. Diogenes Laertius and Ptolemy-el-Garib include "*Concerning Rhetoric* or *Gryllus*" in their (later) catalgues of Aristotle's work.
[78] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* II.17.14. See other fragments listed in Chroust 1965, notes 4-5. Gryllus, the son of Xenophon, died in 362 BCE; it is uncertain to when the *Gryllus* dates.

> Parrhasius practiced the same art as the sign-painters, I have never stooped to defend myself against their meanness, because I consider it inconsequential, foolish babble; and I have made it abundantly clear that I chose to speak and write, not on petty disputes, but on subjects so important and so elevated that no one would attempt them except those who studied with me, and their would-be imitators. (*Antidosis* 2-3)

This passage suggests that, at least for Isocrates, there was a conscious, deliberate parallel between the verbal and visual arts, specifically those of Classical Athens. Interestingly, he compares himself to a sculptor and painters active in the second half of the fifth century, the time of his boyhood and youth (he was born around 436 BCE). At that time, the dominant mode of sculptural production was the so-called Classical Athenian style; its characteristics were mathematically defined in an artist's treatise, Polykleitos' *Canon*, and exemplified in a bronze youth which he sculpted (also called the Canon, although today later marble versions identified with this sculpture – without proof – are called the *Doryphoros*). This treatise, surviving in fragments but famous in antiquity, apparently dictated a strict set of proportions that sculptors should use in creating figures. Excellence was achieved through mastery of *symmetria*, the perfect balancing of all the parts of the statue with each other and with the whole.[79] Balanced proportions were meant to convey a sense of even naturalism and perfect harmony; these characteristics were not unlike the style Isocrates was advocating for prose. Perhaps he had Polykleitos in mind when he expresses hope that his *Antidosis* will be "a monument, after my death, more noble than statues of bronze." (*Antidosis* 7)

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[79] Pollitt 1974, 14-22. See Raven 1951 for an important discussion linking Polykleitos, Aristotle, and Pythagoras, identifying their doctrines as "parts of a single and consistent cosmology." (148) See Stewart 1978 for a discussion of the specific evidence we have of the *Canon*, which has only survived in fragments of quotations made by other ancient authors (and apparently embodied in the *Doryphoros*, a marble version of which was discovered in Pompeii).

Personal Style as Emulation

There were important contributions to stylistic theory from the late-fourth to the mid-first century BCE, although we have no complete text and only fragmentary knowledge of the rhetorical theory composed at this time. Writers such as Theophrastus, a student of Aristotle, active in the late-fourth and early-third centuries, and Hermagoras of Temnos, a sophist, active in the second century BCE, are cited and quoted by later writers, and so our understanding of their work must be understood as "filtered": presented out of context, and possibly reinterpreted. The big witnesses to the advances in stylistic theory understood to be initiated by Theophrastus and Hermagoras come centuries later: referenced in the *Rhetoric to Herennius*, falsely attributed to Cicero, Cicero's *On Invention* and other writings, the work *On Style* (possibly datable to 2nd century BCE) questionably attributed to a certain Demetrius, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, known as "the great stylistic theorist of the late first century BCE."[80] There is also the work of Philodemus of Gadara (a contemporary of Cicero, and whose work has been found at Herculaneum), as well as passages in Quintilian and other authors.[81]

Aristotle defined the two greatest virtues (or *aretai*, "excellences") of style as clarity and appropriateness. Theophrastus, his successor as head of the Peripatetic school, expanded the list to four virtues: clarity, appropriateness, ornament, and purity of language. These virtues, described in his treatise *On Style* (Περὶ λέξεως), served as a point of departure for many later writers on rhetorical style.[82] They also provided a standard by which individual orators – and the manner in which they spoke – could be classified and evaluated, particularly if they embodied a single Theophrastan virtue. In this way, (rhetorical) Hellenistic style was conceived as an individual's distinct manner of speaking and writing, in the sense of Buffon's "le style est

80 Walker 2015
81 Walker 2015, 183-4.
82 Pollitt 1974, 60.

l'homme même."[83] Scholars in this period compiled lists of earlier figures (orators, but also poets and historians) whose personal styles could serve as models to be emulated. By the second century BCE, canons of exemplary rhetoricians were formulated, and by the first century BCE, there was a short list of ten exemplary orators.[84]

Growing complexity of the concept of style could be understood as related to the advances in grammatical analysis and literary theory – in Alexandrian scholarship and elsewhere, beginning in the fourth century BCE. Throughout the Hellenistic world, Greek language instruction served as a political and civic necessity for elites; at the same time, Hellenistic kingships made the role of forensic oratory less necessary. Rhetoric became more of a "scholastic" discipline[85], central to a developing educational system based on values of shared Greek heritage, *paideia* (a value that had been strongly advocated by Isocrates).

Scholars in this period could explore style as part of an art of grammar, and style itself as a worthy subject of study, not a necessary evil for the explanation of truth, or a method of obtaining or expressing an ethical mindset. Accordingly, there was a growing interest in formally defining the discipline of grammar as separate from both rhetoric and philosophy: through systematic analyses of figures of speech, tropes, and styles, sorted into conceptual categories and subcategories that attempt to encapsulate – exhaustively – the rules of the discipline. These rules were explained with the aid of handbooks, also called Τέχναι γραμματικαι, the first extant (and most famous) of which has been attributed to the Alexandrian scholar Dionysius Thrax and is

[83] G. L. Leclerc de Buffon 1753.
[84] The earliest preserved "Canon of Ten Orators" is preserved in a treatise by Caecilius of Calacte, a Sicilian rhetorician active in the reign of Augustus. Pollitt 1974, 104 (note 7).
[85] Pollitt 1974, 60.

dated to around 100 BCE.[86] Such handbooks described exemplary personal styles (including diction and other unique linguistic techniques) of Homer and other writers.[87]

Typologies of Style

Another significant Hellenistic development understood to be initiated by Theophrastus (and his followers) is the exploration of the notion of "types of style," an idea that becomes very critical to late Republican and Imperial Roman authors (and, as I will argue, artists contemporary with them).[88]

Previously in this chapter, I have described what both Aristotle and Isocrates defined as "good" style (as opposed to "bad" style): Aristotle argued for a style "of the middle path," neither too humble or overdone (III.2.4), and similarly Isocrates advocated a moral, smooth, steady discourse. Neither of them described other stylistic options, despite their emphasis on appropriateness – a concept that implies the speaker must have a grasp of different kinds of style to be persuasive in different kinds of public discourse (legal, political, etc.).[89] In fact, Isocrates more than implied it, when he wrote "the student must not only have enough aptitude, but he must also learn the different kinds of discourse and practice their use" (*Against the Sophists* 17). Later in life, however, he seems to have become more of a pragmatist, acknowledging that writers master the style appropriate to the kind of research they undertake: "…there are no fewer branches of composition in prose than in verse, for some have devoted their lives to studies in the genealogies of the demi-gods; others have researched the poets; others have elected to compose

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[86] For arguments around the authenticity and dating of the work, see for example Di Benedetto 1958-59, Robins 1986, Householder 1995, and Law and Sluiter 1995. See Mitchell 2015 for its use into late Antiquity.
[87] The anonymous author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* criticizes the "modest" Greek practice of teaching with citations of passages of great authors (IV.1-3). Walker 2015, 182. On *technē*, see Pollitt 1974, 32-37.
[88] Walker 2015, 183-5.
[89] Kennedy 1957 argues that Aristotle, Isocrates, and others of the fourth century recognized three stylistic categories, though the evidence is not conclusive. (95-96)

histories of wars … I shall take up only that which is pertinent to me and ignore the rest." (*Antidosis* 45-46)

In the Hellenistic period and later[90], (rhetorical) style was reconceived in a sense different from personal style: not as a singular *modus operandi* but as existing in variety, as a set of types, to be used by an individual to convey a range of sentiments throughout a single composition. Again, Theophrastus is credited with this innovation, with the theory of the three types (or "levels") of style: the plain type of style, the grand type of style, and a "middle" type between them. This concept became a fixture of Roman rhetorical theory by the first century BCE[91], when it was essentially canonized by the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero.[92]

The three-type stylistic system first appears in Latin in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c. 100-80 BCE), the earliest extant Latin handbook of rhetoric.[93] Long attributed to Cicero, it shares a common approach with his *De Inventione*, and is even speculated to have been the model of that work.[94] The unknown "Auctor" of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* begins book IV, the book dedicated to style, with a critique of Hellenistic Greek stylistic theory, expressed in *technai grammatikai* and other, more theoretical writing. As discussed above, Hellenistic rhetoricians illustrated the use of different kinds of stylistic embellishments by citing the work of famous orators or poets. In this context the notion of "personal style" was born. Our Roman Auctor explains the justification for this "Greek" method of teaching through citation: first, it is

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[90] Here I would emphasize that my "period" designations are permeable, interconnected categories, with blurry boundaries mostly not apparent to ancient people.
[91] Kennedy 1957, 93; Walker 2015, 183.
[92] Cicero was known as such an authority on Latinity in his own time that Caesar and Varro dedicated entire works on grammar to him. Pompey is said to have consulted him when dedicating his theater, asking whether the inscription should read *consul tertium* or *consul tertio*. (He did not know, and instead suggested Pompey use the first four letters ("TERT") instead of writing the whole word, so as to avoid error.) Gellius 10.1.7; Von Albrecht 2003, 136; Powell 2013, 55. It is also important to acknowledge that Cicero did not always follows the rules he defined. See, for example, Fantham 1979, 442.
[93] Earlier Latin treatises on rhetoric are said to have existed but did not survive: by Cato the Elder (Quintilian 3.1.19) and M. Antonius. Cicero *Brutus* 163, *De Oratore* 1.94; Quintilian 3.6.44. See Connolly 2008, 141-144, for a discussion of the reception of Greek rhetoric in early Latin literature.
[94] Some scholars date these works as concurrent. E.g., Connolly 2008, 141.

“prompted by modesty,” because it seems ostentatious to teach by one’s own example. “That, they say, would be showing themselves off, not showing what the art is…for when we can take an example from Ennius, or offer one from Gracchus, it seems presumptuous to neglect these and present our own examples.” (IV.1) A second justification is that the citations of reputable orators and poets serve as “testimony” which lends more credibility to the grammatical text than simpler, fabricated examples alone. A third justification is that the writing of “prestigious ancients” serves to inspire students, as “it excites the ambitions and whets the zeal of all men when the hope is implanted in them of being able by imitation to attain the skill of a Gracchus or Crassus.” (IV.2) A final justification is that it reflects the height of technical skill to select a great diversity of passages from famous authors, and doing so is the “highest art”:

> *Quis est enim qui, non summe cum tenet artem, possit ea quae iubeat ars de tanta et tam diffusa scriptura notare et separare? Ceteri, cum legunt orationes bonas aut poemata, probant oratores et poëtas, neque intellegunt qua re commoti probent, quod scire non possunt ubi sit nec quid sit nec quo modo factum sit id quod eos maxime delectet; at is qui et haec omnia intellegit et idonea maxime eligit et omnia in arte maxime scribenda redigit in singulas rationes praeceptionis, necesse est eius rei summus artifex sit.*
>
> For who, unless he has a consummate grasp of the art of rhetoric, could in so vast and diffuse a literature mark and distinguish the demands of the art? Other men, reading good orations and poems, approve the orators and poets, but without comprehending what has called forth their approval, because they cannot know where that which especially delights them resides, or what it is, or how it was produced. But he who understands all this, and selects examples that are most appropriate, and reduces to individual principles of instruction everything that especially merits inclusion in his treatise, must be a master artist in this field. (IV.3)

The Auctor refutes these justifications one by one, in a remarkable set of passages about authorship and artistic originality, claiming that “we need not yield to antiquity in everything” (IV.2). First, the Auctor argues that the Greeks’ explanation of modesty should not keep one

from composing anything at all. He compares Greek rhetoricians to runners at the Olympic games, who stand on the racetrack and instead of participating, recount how famous athletes ran at Isthmia: "When they have descended into the race-course of our art, they accuse of immodesty those who put in practice the essence of the art; they praise some ancient orator, poet, or literary work, but without themselves daring to come forth into the stadium of rhetoric." (IV.3) The Auctor questions what Hellenistic rhetoricians actually accomplish by citing orators and poets, other than resting on their achievements: "You are writing a treatise of your own; you are creating new precepts for us; you cannot confirm these yourself; so you borrow examples from others. Beware of impudently seeking to extract from the labor of others praise for your own name." (IV.3)

The Auctor continues by questioning the value of the older works as "testimony" because their authors were ignorant of the rhetorical system their own words are being used to illustrate. He goes on to question the rhetoricians' own mastery of the art of rhetoric because any literate person can borrow passages as examples of style; far better proof of this mastery is to write artistically oneself. "Let them devote their artistic power to this purpose," he writes: "to win esteem as worthy models themselves, rather than as good choosers of others who should serve as models for them." (IV.4.1)

If examples are to be borrowed, the Auctor argues, they should be borrowed from one author alone, not many. When multiple authors are cited, the student would "be content with emulating only one author and distrust his own single power to possess the sum total of qualities possessed by all the authors." (IV.5.8) It is important the student of rhetoric understands that one person can attain the sum total of stylistic qualities, and not just specialize in a few of them. "Actually," he argues, "the fact that the writers on rhetoric have presented neither their own examples nor those of some single author, or even two, but have borrowed from all the orators

and poets, is a sign that they themselves have not believed that any single individual can be brilliant in all the branches of style." (IV.5) The Auctor, of course, believes the opposite – more on that in the next chapter.

He further states that an "example which is cited by a writer on an art should be proof of his own skill in that art." (IV.6) He compares the Hellenistic rhetoricians to merchants selling their goods, but offering a sample from elsewhere, and offers this striking comparison:

> *Chares ab Lysippo statuas facere non isto modo didicit, ut Lysippus caput ostenderet Myronium, brachia Praxitelis, pectus Polycletium, sed omnia coram magistrum facientem videbat; ceterorum opera vel sua sponte poterat considerare.*

> Not thus did Chares learn from Lysippus how to make statues. Lysippus did not show him a head by Myron, arms by Praxiteles, a chest by Polycleitus. Rather, with his own eyes would Chares see the master fashioning all the parts; the works of the other sculptors he could, if he wished, study on his own initiative. (IV.6)

This passage offers a window into the process of emulation of personal style, where stylistic imitation indicates artistic mastery and good training, not lack of creativity or skill.

The Auctor distinguishes the teaching of style in two ways: the three "types" of style, "to which oratorical style should always confine itself" (IV.7), and also the three qualities that characterize an "appropriate" and "finished" style: tastefulness, artful composition, and distinction. As with its Greek precursors, in the Roman setting, too, appropriateness and style are strongly connected. Appropriateness (*decorum*) determines what kind of style should be used depending on the subject matter and context of discourse. As Cicero quips, "How inappropriate it would be to employ … the grand style when discussing cases of stillicide[95] before a single

[95] Defined in the Loeb volume as: "The legal technicalities about water dripping from a roof on adjoining property." (359)

referee, or to use mean and meager language when referring to the majesty of the Roman people…" (*Orator* 72)

As we will observe, the Romans conceived of types of style quite differently from August Mau's formalist categories: they defined style not as a chronological designation (with an arc of flourishing and decline), or even as a method of recognizing workshops or individual artists' hands. Style, at least as it is defined by ancient stylistic theory, has a lot more to do with aesthetic effect, function, and intended impact on the audience. Even if they did not discuss painting style in exactly these rhetorical terms, there are enough references to visual art in stylistic theory to make it seem probable that there were at least some very strong parallels.[96]

The Auctor relies on long, exemplary passages to illustrate his characterizations of the types of style, but in the interest of brevity and clarity, I will not include them here. Instead, I will supplement his work with that of Cicero, who is (perhaps unsurprisingly) more verbose and expressive in his definition of the style types. Although Cicero's *Orator* dates to around a half-century later (c. 46 BCE), his descriptions are very consistent with those in the earlier work (which was, after all, once attributed to him). A noticeable difference is that instead of describing the stylistic categories, Cicero describes three fictional orators who embody each of the stylistic categories; this difference seems cosmetic, however, it constitutes a grandiose rhetorical device in itself.[97]

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[96] E.g., "For although the limits of propriety differ for each subject, in general, too much is more offensive than too little. Apelles said that painters also make this error, who do not know when they have done enough…" (*Orator* 72); "…in this way the painter who portrayed the sacrifice of Iphigenia, after representing Calchas as sad, Odysseus as still more so, Menelaus as in grief, felt that Agamemnon's head must be veiled, because the supreme sorrow could not be portrayed by his brush." (*Orator* 74)

[97] This personification is actually misleading, because Cicero also argues that mastery of all three styles should be the goal for any individual orator. (*Orator* 100-101)

Cicero neatly describes the style types' main functions as *docere* (to teach), *delectare* (to delight), and *movere* (to move, persuade). (*Orator* 69) Less neatly, he offers lengthy descriptions of each style:

Simple type

> *Summissus est et humilis, consuetudinem imitans… Itaque eum qui audiunt, quamvis ipsi infantes sint, tamen illo modo confidunt se posse dicere… Primum igitur eum tanquam e vinculis numerorum eximamus… in hoc omnino relinquendi. Solutum quiddam sit nec vagum tamen, ut ingredi libere, non ut licenter videatur errare. Verba etiam verbis quasi coagmentare neglegat. Habet enim ille tamquam hiatus et concursus vocalium molle quiddam et quod indicet non ingratam neglegentiam de re hominis magis quam de verbis laborantis. Illa enim ipsa contracta et minuta non neglegenter tractanda sunt, sed quaedam etiam neglegentia est diligens. Nam ut mulieres esse dicuntur non nullae inornatae, quasi id ipsum deceat, sic haec subtilis oratio etiam incompta delectat; fit enim quiddam in utroque, quo sit venustius, sed non ut appareat. Tum removebitur omnis insignis ornatus quasi margaritarum, ne calamistri quidem adhibebuntur; fucati vero medicamenta candoris et ruboris omnia repellentur; elegantia modo et munditia remanebit. Sermo purus erit et Latinus, dilucide planeque dicetur, quid deceat circumspicietur.*
>
> He is restrained and plain, he follows the ordinary usage, …Consequently the audience, even if they are not speakers themselves, are confident they can speak in that fashion. … First, let us release him from, let us say, the chains of rhythm… in this style they are to be wholly eschewed. It should be loose but not rambling; so that it may seem to move freely but not to wander without restraint. He should also avoid, so to speak, cementing his words together too smoothly, for the hiatus and clash of vowels have something agreeable about it and show a not unpleasant carelessness on the part of a man who is paying more attention to thought than to words. … While the short and concise clauses must not be handled carelessly, there is such a thing as a careful negligence. Just as some women are said to be handsomer when unadorned – this very lack of ornament becomes them – so this plain style gives pleasure even when unembellished: there is something in both cases which lends greater charm, but without showing itself. Also, every noticeable

ornament, such as pearls, will be excluded; not even curling-irons (*calamistri*) will be used; all dyes, white paints and red, will be rejected; only elegance and neatness (*munditia*) will remain. The discourse will be pure Latin, spoken plainly and clearly; propriety (*quid deceat*) will always be carefully considered. (*Orator* 76-79)

Middle type

Hoc in genere nervorum vel minimum, suavitatis autem est vel plurimum. Est enim plenius quam hoc enucleatum, quam autem illud ornatum copiosumque summissius. Huic omnia dicendi ornamenta conveniunt plurimumque est in hac orationis1 forma suavitatis. In qua multi floruerunt apud Graecos, sed Phalereus Demetrius meo iudicio praestitit ceteris; cuius oratio cum sedate placideque liquitur tum illustrant eam quasi stellae quaedam tralata verba atque mutata.

In this style there is perhaps a minimum of vigor, and a maximum of charm. For it is richer than the unadorned style, but plainer than the ornate and opulent style. All the ornaments are appropriate to this type of oration, and it possesses charm to a high degree. There have been many conspicuous examples of this style in Greece, but in my judgement Demetrius of Phalerum led them all. His oratory not only proceeds in calm and peaceful flow, but is lighted up by what might be called the stars of "transferred" and "borrowed" words.[98] (*Orator* 91-92)

In idem genus orationis—loquor enim de illa modica ac temperata—verborum cadunt lumina omnia, multa etiam sententiarum; latae eruditaeque disputationes ab eodem explicabuntur et loci communes sine contentione dicentur. Quid multa? E philosophorum scholis tales fere evadunt; et nisi coram erit comparatus ille fortior, per se hic quem dico probabitur. Est enim quoddam etiam insigne et florens orationis genus pictum et expolitum in quo omnes verborum, omnes sententiarum illigantur lepores. Hoc totum e sophistarum fontibus defluxit in forum, sed spretum a subtilibus, repulsum a gravibus in ea de qua loquor mediocritate consedit.

To the mean and tempered style belong all figures of language, and many of thought. This speaker will likewise develop his arguments with breadth and erudition, and use

[98] I.e., metaphor and metonymy.

commonplaces without undue emphasis. But why speak at length? It is commonly the philosophic schools which produce such orators: and unless he be brought face to face with the more robust speaker, the orator whom I am describing will find approval on his own merits. It is, as a matter of fact, a brilliant and florid, highly colored and polished style in which all the charms of language and thought are intertwined. The sophists are the source from which all this has flowed into the forum, but scorned by the simple and rejected by the grand, it found a resting-place in this middle class of which I am speaking. (*Orator* 95-96)

Grand type[99]

Tertius est ille amplus, copiosus, gravis, ornatus, in quo profecto vis maxima est. Hic est enim cuius ornatum dicendi et copiam admiratae gentes eloquentiam in civitatibus plurimum valere passae sunt, sed hanc eloquentiam quae cursu magno sonituque ferretur, quam suspicerent omnes, quam admirarentur, quam se assequi posse diffiderent. Huius eloquentiae est tractare animos, huius omni modo permovere. Haec modo perfringit, modo irrepit in sensus; inserit novas opiniones, evellit insitas.

The orator of the third style is magnificent, opulent, stately and ornate; he undoubtedly has the greatest power. This is the man whose brilliance and fluency have caused admiring nations to let eloquence attain the highest power in the state; I mean the kind of eloquence which rushes along with the roar of a mighty stream, which all look up to and admire, and which they despair of attaining. This eloquence has power to sway men's minds and move them in every possible way. Now it storms the feelings, now it creeps in; it implants new ideas and uproots the old. (*Orator* 97)

[99] Cf. the Grand style defined in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (which describes the other two styles only by example): "A discourse will be composed in the Grand style if to each idea are applied the most ornate words that can be found for it, whether literal or figurative; if impressive thoughts are chosen, such as are used in Amplification and Appeal to Pity; and if we employ figures of thought and figures of diction…." (IV.7)

The Auctor of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* further explains the styles by defining their negative counterparts: in contrast to the Grand type of style, there is the "Swollen" type, which uses overly inflated language in obscure vocabulary. In contrast to the Middle type of style is the "Drifting" type, "because it is without any sinews and joints…since it drifts to and fro, and cannot get under way with resolution and virility." In contrast to the Simple type of style is the "Meager" type: inelegant, "dry and bloodless…this language, to be sure, is mean and trifling, having missed the goal of the Simple type, which is speech composed of correct and well-chosen words." (IV.10-11)

The three stylistic types remained a fixture in Roman rhetoric into late Antiquity, when Augustine borrowed them to define the three levels of style in Christian oratory in book 4 of his *De doctrina Christiana*, citing Cicero himself as "the great master of Roman eloquence":

> *Ad haec enim tria, id est ut doceat, ut delectet, ut flectat, etiam illa tria videtur pertinere voluisse idem ipse Romani auctor eloquii, cum itidem dixit: 'Is erit igitur eloquens, qui poterit parva summisse, modica temperate, magna gran diter dicere,'*[100] *tamquam si adderet illa etiam tria, et sic explicaret unam eamdemque sententiam, dicens: Is erit igitur eloquens, qui ut doceat poterit parva summisse, ut delectet modica temperate, ut flectat magna granditer dicere.*

> For it is these three ends – i.e., teaching, giving pleasure, and moving – that the great master of Roman eloquence himself seems to have intended that the following three directions should serve: 'He, then, shall be eloquent, who can say little things in a subdued style, moderate things in a temperate style, and great things in a majestic style.' As if he had taken in also the three ends mentioned above, and had embraced the whole in one sentence thus: 'He, then, shall be eloquent, who can say little things in a subdued style, in order to give instruction, moderate things in a temperate style, in order to give pleasure, and great things in a majestic style, in order to sway the mind.' (IV.17)

[100] A quotation of Cicero, *De oratore* 1, 101.

It is worth mentioning that other theories of style developed concurrently or after the three-type one, although none were as standardized.[101] "Demetrius" in his *On Style* adds a fourth category by dividing the "middle" style into two: the elegant style and the forceful style.[102] Other scholars of the Hellenistic tradition went far beyond the three styles: Hermogenes of Tarsus, for example, recognizes seven major types of style and 13 minor types, for a total of twenty styles.[103] Importantly, while these systems continued to evolve in complexity, the basic understanding of "style" remained the same: defined by its function, level of ornament, and intended impact on the audience.

We also must account for the development of the art: just as the theory of style(s) in rhetoric was an evolving idea throughout antiquity, so too was the concept of style in visual art. By the mid-to-late first century CE, Quintilian tells us also that even the basic understanding of the three stylistic types had evolved, and that an *infinite* number of styles is possible:

> *sed neque his tribus quasi formis inclusa eloquentia est. nam ut inter gracile validumque tertium aliquid constitutum est, ita horum inter se intervalla sunt, atque inter haec ipsa mixture quiddam ex duobus medium est eorum. nam et subtili plenius aliquid atque subtilius et vehementi remissius atque vehementius invenitur, ut illud lene aut ascendit ad fortiora aut ad tenuiora summittitur. ac sic prope innumerabiles species reperiuntur, quae utique aliquo momento inter se differant: sicut quattuor ventos generaliter a totidem mundi cardinibus accepimus flare, cum interim plurimi medii et eorum varia nomina et quidam etiam regionum ac fluminum proprii deprehenduntur. eademque musicis ratio est, qui, cum in cithara quinque constituerunt sonos, plurima deinde varietate complent spatia illa nervorum, atque his, quos interposuerunt, inserunt alios, ut pauci illi transitus multos gradus habeant.*
>
> Eloquence cannot be confined even to these three forms of style. For just as the third style is intermediate between the grand and the plain style, so each of these three are separated by interspaces which are occupied by intermediate styles compounded of the two which lie on either side. For there are styles fuller or plainer than the plain, and

[101] Kennedy 1957.
[102] The dating of this is uncertain: 2nd cen. BCE to 3rd cen. CE.
[103] See Walker 2015 for more examples.

gentler or more vehement than the vehement, while the gentler style itself may either rise to greater force or sink to milder tones. Thus we may discover almost countless species of styles, each differing from the other by some fine shade of difference. We may draw a parallel from the winds. It is generally accepted that there are four blowing from the four quarters of the globe, but we find there are also a large number of winds which lie between these, called by a variety of names, and in certain cases confined to certain districts and river valleys. The same thing may be noted in music. For after assigning five notes to the lyre, musicians fill up the intervals between the strings by a variety of notes, and between these again they interpose yet others, so that the original divisions have a number of gradations. (XII.66-68)

Towards a New Interpretive Framework

In the ancient art of rhetoric, style was not a chronological tool. Instead, style largely corresponded to the function of the art – teaching, delighting, moving – and its impact on its audience. As I have suggested, these categories are obviously very different from August Mau's Four Styles of wall painting, which have encouraged primarily chronological interpretations of decorative programs. While the work of defining decorative phases is interesting and useful, it is not the *only* way to interpret wall painting, and certainly was not the only way ancient people regarded wall painting, and visual art more generally. Wall paintings would certainly have different kinds of meaning if we considered them from the rhetorical-stylistic perspective.

Here I would suggest that the rhetorical three-type stylistic system would be a useful interpretive framework through which to consider wall painting. I do not intend to argue that this system was *exactly* how Romans evaluated wall painting. However, this might be a more "authentic" way to consider the ancient material, at least as compared to Mau's positivist

categories, invented post-antiquity, with internal narratives of "bloom" and "decline" based on 19th-century aesthetic principles.

The categorization of wall painting according to the three (rhetorical) style types would emphasize its visual function and level of ornamentation, not chronology. Following these lines, the "Plain" type would correspond to wall painting whose primary function was to be instructive, to "signpost" movement, without any kind of embellishment. This kind of painting is often found in service areas; "zebra stripe" painting is the most obvious example, as it has been found to decorate the entire "slave's peristyle" of Villa A at Oplontis. The "middle" type would correspond to wall painting whose primary function was to be charming, pleasing to the eye, decorative without elaborate perspectival schemes (such as garden painting, although Livia's garden room at Prima Porta is a clear exception). This type of decoration could adorn the walls of grand peristyles and hallways, and the upper and lower registers bordering "grand"-style painting. These areas would have been subject to passing glances but not deep focus. The "grand" type would correspond to wall painting whose primary function was to provoke emotion and further thought (and possibly discussion). This kind of painting is often found in rooms for entertainment and cubicula, where viewers would have been settled on couches, stationary, with the opportunity to study the paintings around them while reclining.

Such a framework, which I explore in greater detail in chapter 4, could be useful to consider aspects of wall painting hidden by the chronological styles, such as the economy of decoration, including the use of skilled labor and the cost of pigments, which in itself could have been subjects of discussion. Painting of the "plain" type often employs inexpensive materials – white ground, black or red pigments – applied less precisely. "Grand" type painting, in contrast, exhibits expensive pigments (Egyptian Blue, cinnabar) which required careful, highly skilled labor. Further, the rhetorical-stylistic system would allow us to address the concept of function:

the visual function of the painting, not the specific function of the rooms they adorn. After all, we would expect the rooms to have had a variety of functions throughout the day, season, and also over generations. In the following chapters I will explore the usefulness of my proposed interpretive framework, presented in the chart below:

style type		***function***	***characteristics in wall painting***
Grand		to move, sway, compel	ornate, intricate, dramatic, meaningful highly illusionistic (requiring highly skilled craftmanship); can seem to extend space in a significant way includes mythological scenes and other large-scale figural representation use of variety of pigments and expensive mixtures of colors (cinnabar, Egyptian blue) expensive to execute; so probably more likely to be preserved
		(middle/grand)	
Middle		to charm or delight	pleasantly decorative and repetitive shallow illusionism extends visual space in a minor way (e.g., garden painting) intricately formulaic
		(simple/middle)	
Simple		to teach/convey information clearly	simple, clear, abstract schematic, not illusionistic use of simple pigments applied less precisely (white ground, black and red lines) inexpensive to execute; so probably more likely to be repainted

Table 2.1. Campanian wall painting sorted by functional, stylistic "type."

These categories roughly group the paintings into three social zones[104] of the villa, which may be represented graphically using Wallace-Hadrill's Axes of Differentiation[105]:

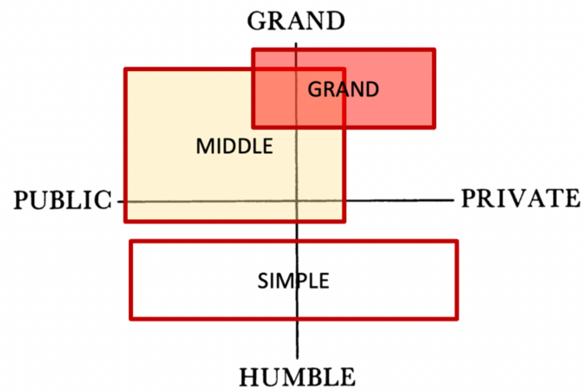

Table 2.2. Stylistic types charted onto Wallace-Hadrill's Axes of Differentiation.

In the fourth chapter, I will revisit these "zones" when discussing the painted decorations of Villa A at Oplontis.

[104] This term used to reference Lorenz 2014, 183.
[105] Wallace-Hadrill 1988, 50-58.

Chapter 3 – *Varietas*: An Important Roman Aesthetic Principle

> *Omnis enim motus animi suum quendam a natura habet vultum et sonum et gestum; corpusque totum hominis et eius omnis vultus omnesque voces, ut nervi in fidibus, ita sonant, ut a motu animi quoque sunt pulsae. Nam voces ut chordae sunt intentae, quae ad quemque tactum respondeant, acuta gravis, cita tarda, magna parva; quas tamen inter omnis est suo quoque in genere mediocris, atque etiam illa sunt ab his delapsa plura genera, leve asperum, contractum diffusum, continenti spiritu intermisso, fractum scissum, flexo sono extenuatum inflatum nullum est enim horum generum, quod non arte ac moderatione tractetur. Hi sunt actori, ut pictori, expositi ad variandum colores.*
>
> Every emotion has by nature its very own look and sound and bearing; and the entire body of a person, and his every expression, and all of his tones of voice, are like strings on a lyre, and sound like they are plucked by each emotion. For the tones of voice are stretched like strings which respond to every touch: high, low, quick, slow, *forte*, *piano*; yet in between there is also always a middle note in its own style; and also from these there are many styles derived: light, hard, narrowed, widened, *tenuto*, *staccato*, soft, shrill, *diminuendo*, *crescendo*. For here every style is handled with art and moderation; here are the colors available for the orator, as for the painter, to create variety.
>
> -Cicero, *De Oratore*, 3.216-217

In the last chapter, I attempted to define style as it was understood in ancient stylistic theory: not as a chronological concept, but a functional one, specifically chosen to convey certain meanings, and to evoke certain responses, from its viewers. I also showed how style was consistently linked to appropriateness in both Greek and Roman contexts (τό πρέπον or *decorum*), a value which initially carried moral overtones and, particularly in the Roman context,

also reflected aesthetic knowledge.[106] While Auguste Mau's Four Styles of "Pompeian" painting provide a useful (if precarious) diagnostic tool for dating buildings and phases of renovation, I argued that there are other ways to interpret wall paintings. Reconceiving style as the ancient style theorists defined it, in their own terms, allows us to interpret and compare wall painting separately from nineteenth-century, formalist, aesthetic theories of "flourishing" and "decline." The chronological information is important, but it is inexact and only a point of origin: just one aspect of the larger, complicated biography of a wall painting, one that includes generations of owners, viewers, and "use."

While the Latin works I cite in the last chapter – the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *Orator*, Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* – describe a typology of style, one that seems to have been a fixture in Roman rhetoric from the late Republic through late Antiquity[107], their authors also tell us *how* these styles are to be used: in a varied manner, following an aesthetic principle called *varietas*, or variety. While Aristotle and Isocrates warn of monotony, they did not specifically advocate stylistic variation[108]:– perhaps because, for them, and especially for Aristotle, rhetoric was more strongly linked to ethics than it was to aesthetics. By the first century BCE, however, and in the Roman context, rhetoric had developed into a sophisticated art, the appropriate use of which doubtlessly reflected erudition as much as goodness.[109]

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[106] See its important definition in Perry 2005, Chapter 1, "*Decorum* and Tradition: The Beginnings of a Theoretical Apparatus," pp. 28-49.
[107] Walker 2015, 183.
[108] Aristotle describes the appeal of *metabole*, change, in *Rhetoric* I.11.20-21 (1371a), but in his book on style, he advocates *metaballein* just once (III.12.3), and elsewhere uses *poikilos* as a negative concept. (III.12.3) Isocrates prefers *poikilia* (and related terms) to *metabole* because he is, as Fantham speculates, "more interested in poetic ornament within the sentence than long term variation." (Fantham 1988, 284-285)
[109] Although, in the Roman context, erudition and morality were related concepts: Cicero, for example, imagined his ideal orator in *De oratore* as the moral leader of the state; Quintilian also insisted that being a good man was a minimum requirement to becoming an orator. (*Inst. Or.* XII.1.1-12)

Indeed, while its etymology is uncertain[110], Cicero suggests that *varietas* has – at least at his time – no proper Greek equivalent. In a philosophical discussion about the meaning and forms of pleasure, largely a critique of Epicureanism, he remarks:

> *varietas enim Latinum verbum est, idque proprie quidem in disparibus coloribus dicitur, sed transfertur in multa disparia: varium poema, varia oratio, varii mores, varia fortuna, voluptas etiam varia dici solet, cum percipitur e multis dissimilibus rebus dissimilis efficientibus voluptates.*
>
> *Varietas* is truly a Latin word, and it is used particularly to describe diverse colors (*disparibus coloribus*), but it is applied in many diverse ways: we are used to saying a "varied poem, a "varied speech," "varied customs," "varied fortune," and even "various pleasures," when they derive from many dissimilar things producing dissimilar delights. (*De finibus*, II.10)

Some scholars have taken this definition to correspond to the Greek ποικιλία, "variegation," a word which originally described variation of color, as in embroidery.[111] However, if there were a clear Greek equivalent in Cicero's time, it is probable that he would have provided it, as he does elsewhere in the same book: for example, there are three instances in which he explicitly equates the Latin *voluptas* with the Greek ἡδονή: e.g., "Everyone uses the Greek word ἡδονή and the Latin *voluptas* to mean an agreeable and exhilarating stimulation of the senses." (II.3).[112] Here, I

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[110] Ernout-Meillet 1985, 713-714.

[111] The meaning of ποικιλία, or *poikilia*, seems to have shifted over time. Particularly in the Archaic period, it could refer to "finely-crafted, valuable objects – painted, sculpted, chiseled, or woven – that offer a fascinating show when their variegated surface is animated by…light." Greeks also used the term to describe three types of animals: birds with multicolor plumage, snakes with scaled, intricate skin, and animals with mottled coats, such as the panther or fawn. (Grand-Clément 2015, 406-407) Maria Rinaudo has argued that by the Hellenistic period, *poikilos* had lost its association with color and meant, more simply, "varied." (Rinaudo 2009, 59) See also Lather 2016, a recent dissertation which addresses its use in Archaic and Classical Greek literature. Fantham 1988 has argued that Cicero uses *varietas* as equivalent not to *poikilia*, but to *metabole*, describing change and transformation. (277) Indeed, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a generation younger than Cicero, prefers *metabole*; Fantham asserts that by his time, *metabole* and *poikilia* were interchangeable. (Fantham 1988, 285) Interestingly, ποικιλία and the Latin *pictura*, "painting," and *pingere*, "to paint," come from the same Indo-European root, **peik-*/*pik-*, "to prick, incise, mark." (Grand-Clément 2015, 406) See an exploration of this concept in the Roman domestic context in Barham 2015, chapter 3.

[112] Cicero also makes this equation twice in *De oratore* II.4. Also noted in Barham 2015, chapter 3.

think, we should take Cicero at his word, and consider that he believes he is describing a Roman concept, one which also has significant meaning outside of the rhetorical texts.

In the following pages I will explore *varietas* as both a rhetorical term and also an aesthetic one, specifically in the Roman context, where its usefulness has largely been overlooked by Roman art historians. My scope is intentionally limited to wall painting because a single dissertation chapter cannot explore the full extent of the concept's complexity; however, I will attempt to define, where I can, how the discussion may be extended in future research.

***Varietas* in Rhetoric**

Varietas, as it is defined by the rhetoricians, is a stylistic value: intimately connected to the three-style system, it exists almost as a condition of the system, the styles' primary organizing principle. In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *Orator* and other works, and Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*, the concept is so intimately linked to the three levels of style that it would be difficult to believe one could be trained to use the rhetorical styles without also learning about *varietas*. Its consistent textual proximity to discussions of the three styles, as shown below, is in itself strong evidence of their close relationship.

The earliest[113] extant mention of *varietas* occurs in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. While the term is used in book III (described below), in book IV it takes a prominent position just after the Auctor has defined the three types of rhetorical style[114]: "But in speaking it is proper to change (*commutare*) the style, so that the middle succeeds the grand and the simple the middle, and then again and again they are interchanged, so that easily, by means of variety, satiety may

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[113] If we accept that the text was written around 100 BCE. The adjective *varius* appears earlier, in agricultural texts beginning with Cato, who describes grapes ripening as becoming *varia*, or mottled in color: "*Ubi uva varia fieri coepit*." (*De Agricultura*, 33.4) See comparanda in Fitzgerald 2016, 204, note 7.

[114] The very first reference to *varietas* as an aesthetic in this work (and in extant Latin literature) occurs in book III: "Pauses strengthen the voice. They also render the thoughts more clear-cut by separating them, and allow the hearer time to think. Relaxation from a continuous, full tone conserves the voice, and the variety gives extreme pleasure to the hearer, too, since now the conversational tone holds the attention and now the full voice rouses it." (III.12.21)

be avoided (*ut facile satietas varietate vitetur*).” (IV.16) Here *varietas* is explained with a perceptual justification, defined in terms of its positive effect on the audience’s feelings: without *varietas*, i.e., stylistic variation, listeners might become bored. This explanation should be entirely understandable to an English-speaking audience, for whom “monotony” – literally, the state of being a single, unvaried tone – also means tedium.[115]

Relatedly, though separately, *varietas* is also frequently described as bringing pleasure to the audience. This attribute tends to appear in discussions about oratory that are more sound-oriented and less style-oriented. The Auctor *ad Herennium* makes his first reference to *varietas* in book III:

> *Intervalla vocem confirmant; eadem sententias concinniores divisione reddunt et auditori spatium cogitandi relinquunt. Conservat vocem continui clamoris remissio, et auditorem quidem varietas maxime delectat, cum sermone animum retinet aut exsuscitat clamore.*
>
> Pauses strengthen the voice. They also render thoughts more clear-cut by separating them, and they allow the hearer time to think. Relaxation from a continuous, full tone conserves the voice, and variety gives extreme pleasure to the hearer, too, since now the conversational tone holds his attention and now the full voice rouses it. (III.22)

Cicero describes this aural pleasure more vividly:

> *Volet igitur ille qui eloquentiae principatum petet et contenta voce atrociter dicere et summissa leniter et inclinata videri gravis et inflexa miserabilis. Mira est enim quaedam natura vocis cuius quidem e tribus omnino sonis, inflexo, acuto, gravi, tanta sit et tam suavis varietas perfecta in cantibus… quo magis naturam ducem ad aurium voluptatem sequatur industria.*
>
> He who seeks the greatest eloquence will strive to speak fiercely with a vehement voice, and gently with lowered voice, and to seem serious (*gravis*) with a deep voice, and wretched in a plaintive voice. For the voice has a certain wonderful nature, so that from merely three registers – high, low, and intermediate – it produces such a rich and pleasing

[115] Curiously, our word “monochrome” – consisting of a single color – does not have the same negative connotations; the Romans would likely have disagreed. (see, for example, *De oratore*, 3.217)

variety in song… Therefore, let careful art (*industria*) follow nature for the ear's enjoyment. (*Orator*, 56-58)

Cicero also agrees that a purpose of *varietas* is to relieve satiety. In his *De inventione*, he recommends the use of *varietas* to make an argument more effective: "To vary a speech (*variare … orationem*) should be the greatest necessity; for in all things, sameness is the mother of boredom (*similitudo mater est satietatis*)." (I.76) In his *De oratore*, also an earlier work (written in 55 BCE and set in 91 BCE, at the onset of the Social War), he provides us with a fascinating passage on the nature of *ornatus* – that is, what it means for oratory to be ornate and also excessively ornate – at the risk of satiety.[116] In order to hold the attention of the audience, his character Crassus states, speech should be variously embellished – not merely to give members of the audience pleasure, but also to give them *just enough* pleasure:

> *Ut porro conspersa sit quasi verborum sententiarumque floribus, id non debet esse fusum aequabiliter per omnem orationem, sed ita distinctum, ut sint quasi in ornatu disposita quaedam insignia et lumina. Genus igitur dicendi est eligendum, quod maxime teneat eos, qui audiant, et quod non solum delectet, sed etiam sine satietate delectet… Difficile enim dictu est, quaenam causa sit, cur ea, quae maxime sensus nostros impellunt voluptate et specie prima acerrime commovent, ab eis celerrime fastidio quodam et satietate abalienemur.*

> In order to embellish it with flowers of language and gems of thought, it is not necessary for this ornamentation to be spread evenly over the entire speech, but it must be so distributed that there may be brilliant jewels placed at various points as a sort of decoration.[117] So it is necessary to choose the style of oratory best calculated to hold the attention of the audience, and not merely to give them pleasure but also to give pleasure without satiety … For it is hard to say why exactly it is that the things which most strongly gratify our senses and initially excite them most vigorously, are the ones from

[116] See Fantham 1988 for a discussion of this particular passage and its possible Theophrastan origins. See also Fitzgerald's complementary discussion in Fitzgerald 2016, 48-50.

[117] Fantham 1988 argues that this metaphor refers to street decorations on public holidays. Cf. 3.92-93, in which Cicero refers to Caesar's future duties (as aedile elect) and his own past duties as aedile. (276)

which we are most quickly estranged by disgust (*fastidio*) and satiety. (*De oratore*, 3.96-98)

While previously, the Auctor has suggested that *varietas* relieves from the boredom of monotony, and elsewhere Cicero says that, too, in this passage Cicero suggests that *varietas* relieves from the boredom (and disgust) connected to the experience of excessive ornamentation.

He continues:

Quanto colorum pulcritudine et varietate floridiora sunt in picturis novis pleraque quam in veteribus! Quae tamen, etiam si primo aspectu nos ceperunt, diutius non delectant; cum eidem nos in antiquis tabulis illo ipso horrido obsoletoque teneamur. Quanto molliores sunt et delicatiores in cantu flexiones et falsae voculae quam certae et severae! Quibus tamen non modo austeri, sed, si saepius fiunt, multitudo ipsa reclamat. Licet hoc videre in reliquis sensibus, unguentis minus diu nos delectari summa et acerrima suavitate conditis quam his moderatis, et magis laudari quod terram quam quod crocum olere videatur; in ipso tactu esse modum et mollitudinis et levitatis…. vel ex poetis vel oratoribus possumus iudicare concinnam, distinctam, ornatam, festivam, sine intermissione, sine reprehensione, sine varietate, quamvis claris sit coloribus picta vel poesis vel oratio, non posse in delectatione esse diuturna.

How much more dazzling (*floridiora*[118]), in beauty of colors and in variety, are new paintings than most old ones! and nevertheless, even if the new ones captivate us at first sight, after a long while they do not delight us — while at the same time we are taken by that very roughness and decay (*illo ipso horrido obsoletoque*) in old paintings (*antiquis tabulis*). In song, how much more agreeable and charming are trills and falsettos than notes firmly held! Yet if the former are used too often, they are protested not only by those of austere taste, but even the multitude. This may be observed with the rest of the senses: that perfumes compounded with an extremely sweet and penetrating scent do not give us pleasure for so long as those that are moderately fragrant, and a thing that seems to have the scent of earth is more esteemed than one that suggests saffron; and that in touch itself there are degrees of softness and smoothness. … Thus we can judge from

[118] Roberts has observed that *flos*, used by Cicero frequently in conjunction with *color*, *varietas*, or *lumen*, always refers to variation at a minute scale. (48)

either the poets or the orators that a style which is symmetrical, decorated, ornate and attractive, but lacks relief or check or variety, cannot continue to give pleasure for long, however brilliantly colored the poem or speech. (3.97-100)

In this passage *varietas* could be defined as a regulating mechanism, one that tempers extreme ornateness to ensure that the entire effect is not cloying, and perhaps more "natural." This definition resonates with Cicero's passage from *Orator* 56-58, quoted above, which characterizes *varietas* as a pleasant outcome of the voice functioning according to its own nature. In both passages, real, sustained pleasure does not derive from art itself; but rather, it comes from art's ability to reflect nature. *Varietas* plays an essential function, and is also itself a desired outcome: it moderates the ornate, making it appear more natural, and in doing so it reflects the pleasant variation of the voice, which makes it appear more natural, too.[119]

Augustine exhibits close continuity of the rhetorical value of *varietas* in his *De doctrina Christiana*, albeit with different intentions for his Christian reader: his purpose is not to create persuasive orators as much as it is to create compelling Christian teachers, who may interpret and convey the Holy Scripture clearly and convincingly.[120] As I demonstrated in the last chapter, he defines the three levels of style in chapter 17, the one in which he directly cites Cicero. Subsequently, he echoes Cicero by explaining which style is important for different occasions (chapter 19), presenting examples of the various styles drawn from scripture (chapter 20) and from teachers of the church (chapter 21)[121], and then explaining the necessity of variety in style (chapter 22) and how variety may be achieved (chapter 23). In this discussion he explains the necessity of variety in terms of relieving boredom. He begins chapter 22: "We are not to suppose

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[119] One wonders if this value of the natural may be related to the concept of authenticity; in both cases, realness – or seeming realness – is an important value.

[120] For his justification, see *De doctrina Christiana*, IV.1-7. For him, perspicuity (or clarity) is the most important quality of style. (IV.24-25) This value is perhaps more aligned with Aristotle than Cicero.

[121] Cicero, in contrast, cites passages of his own creation.

that it is against the rules to mingle these various styles: for when we keep to one style, we fail to retain the hearer's attention; but when we pass from one style to another, the discourse is more graceful, though it is longer.” (IV.51)

In the Roman rhetorical context, *varietas* is also meaningfully related to the important cultural value of *decorum*, or appropriateness. The Auctor *ad Herennium* explains: “*Dignitas*, distinguished with variety, is what makes an oration ornate.” (IV.13.18)[122] As Mary Carruthers has shown, *dignitas* is a quality of decorum: close to the English “dignified,” it may be understood as expressing the essence of what is fitting or appropriate.[123] For the Auctor, *varietas* is crucial for appropriate ornateness. This statement highlights an important aspect of this kind of stylistic theory underlined in the last chapter: while art historians and archaeologists use style as a way to identify, categorize, and order visual material of the past, in this system style was meant to be manipulated, not passively created or received. Further, *dignitas* – at least in this context – does not come from the use of any single style, but rather from the use of several, in variety.

Cicero explains this relationship further in his *Orator*, in which he references *varietas* in a significant passage on the functions of the styles (partially quoted in the last chapter). Directly after defining the three levels of styles, he states:

> *Magni igitur iudici, summae etiam facultatis esse debebit moderator ille et quasi temperator huius tripertitae varietatis. Nam et iudicabit quid cuique opus sit et poterit quocumque modo postulabit causa dicere… Non enim omnis fortuna non omnis honos non omnis auctoritas non omnis aetas nec vero locus aut tempus aut auditor omnis eodem aut verborum genere tractandus est aut sententiarum, semperque in omni parte orationis ut vitae quid deceat est considerandum.*
>
> That man who moderates and arranges this tripartite variety (“*huius tripertitae varietatis*”) should be of great judgement and also of the best capability, for he will decide what is needed at any point, and will be able to speak in any way which the case requires … for not

[122] *Dignitas est quae reddit ornatam orationem varietate distinguens*.
[123] Carruthers 2009, 13-14. Both *dignitas* and *decorum* are related to the verb *decet*(*-ere)*, which describes something being fitting or worthy.

every fortune, not every honor, not every decree, not every age, nor truly every place, time, or audience, should be treated with the same style of words and thoughts; and always, in every part of a speech as in life, one must consider what is appropriate ("*quid deceat*")… (*Orator*, 70-71)

In this passage the concept of *varietas* is so intimately linked to style that Cicero uses it – by means of metonymy – to refer to the three types of style. He also explains why the concept is so crucially linked to *decorum*: style depends on the subject matter (fortune, honor, decree), as well as the context of the speech being made (its place, time, audience). *Varietas* encourages the speaker to speak appropriately by allowing him to change styles as the shifting subject and context may demand.

Amidst the chaos of the Late Republic, Cicero was proscribed and executed in 43 BCE. About a century later, Quintilian was born in Hispania (c. 35 CE), which was then part of the young Roman empire. Despite the changed political landscape, Quintilian professed to be a great admirer of Cicero, whom he called a "perfect orator" (*Inst. Or.* XII.1.19), and around 69 CE he opened a public school of rhetoric in Rome, where he is said to have trained Pliny the Younger and possibly Tacitus, among others.[124] In the context of the early empire, the practical oratorical needs of Quintilian's students were more narrow than had been Cicero's: in the mid-late first century CE, rhetorical training was more useful for courts of law than it was for participation in politics. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, his twelve-volume text on the theory and practice of rhetoric and its teaching, published around 95 CE, reflects a certain artful pragmatism reminiscent of Isocrates, or at least a keen sensibility about the teaching of oratory and the context of its use.[125] While the

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[124] Despite the chaos of the time: although he was part of the retinue of Emperor Galba, he survived his assassination only to witness the turbulence of the so-called "Year of the Four Emperors." In this year he also opened his school.
[125] For example, on the importance of clarity in style, he writes: "We must never forget that the attention of the judge is not always so keen that he will dispel obscurities without assistance, and bring the light of his intelligence to bear on the dark places of our speech. On the contrary, he will have many other thoughts to distract him unless what we say is

work's specific legal orientation makes it less evocative than other texts for art historians, it also includes powerful analogies to painting and sculpture, which provide an intriguing glimpse of an early imperial perspective on visual art.[126]

Quintilian emphasizes that the orator's job is extremely varied, ever-evolving, "so that the last word on the subject will never have been said." (II.13.17) In a passage on the natural ability of students (II.8.12), Quintilian as a pragmatist concedes that some students will be naturally better at one style and not as good at others. In this case, he says, teachers should not "attempt the impossible": these kinds of students must be allowed to follow their natural abilities and specialize. (II.8.13) However, more capable students should be trained in all subjects, equally, for:

> *Non enim satis est dicere presse tantum aut subtiliter aut aspere, non magis quam phonasco acutis tantum aut mediis aut gravibus sonis aut horum etiam particulis excellere. Nam sicut cithara, ita oratio perfecta non est nisi ab imo ad summum omnibus intenta nervis consentiat.*
>
> It is not enough to be able to speak with terseness or subtlety or vehemence, any more than it would be for a singing master to excel in the upper or middle or lower registers only, or in particular sections of one of these registers alone. Just like a lyre, oratory is is not perfect, unless all its strings from bottom to top are in tune. (II.8.15)

Here he vocalizes the principle of variety – and even includes the common allusion to music – without using the word itself. Later in the same book Quintilian explains why this varied eloquence can be so useful:

> *Erat enim rhetorice res prorsus facilis ac parva si uno et brevi praescripto contineretur: sed mutantur pleraque causis temporibus occasione necessitate. Atque ideo res in oratore praecipua consilium est, quia varie et ad rerum momenta convertitur.*

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so clear that our words will thrust themselves into his mind even when he is not giving us his attention, just as the sunlight forces itself upon the eyes." VIII.2.23

[126] See, for example, XII.10.1-12. In XII.10.16-26 he discusses the differences – as he perceives them – between the Attic and Asianic Schools (and also the Rhodian).

> If the whole of rhetoric could be embodied in one compact code, it would be an easy and small thing: but most rules are liable to be altered by the nature of the case, circumstances of time and place, and by hard necessity itself. Consequently, the most important gift for an orator is a wise adaptability, since he is called upon to meet the most varied emergencies. (II.13.2)

This is not a perceptual justification but a functional one: since legal cases do not neatly "follow the rules," eloquence enables the speaker to adapt, to address any number of circumstances, and to speak in a variety of contexts.

Quintilian argues that oratory does not have a rigid set of rules – in fact, he does not believe in universal rules, because most rules can be broken. (II.13.14) This is because, for the orator, two things are most important: appropriateness and expediency (*quid deceat et quid expediat*). (II.13.8) Variety is a key principle here, because it allows the speaker to stray from strict, traditional rules and prioritize appropriateness and expediency – with charming and novel artfulness. He states:

> *Expedit autem saepe mutare ex illo constituto traditoque ordine aliqua, et interim decet, ut in statuis atque picturis videmus variari habitus vultus status; nam recti quidem corporis vel minima gratia est: nempe enim adversa fit facies et demissa bracchia et iuncti pedes et a summis ad ima rigens opus. Flexus ille et, ut sic dixerim, motus dat actum quendam et adfectum: ideo nec ad unum modum formatae manus et in vultu mille species; cursum habent quaedam et impetum, sedent alia vel incumbunt, nuda haec, illa velata sunt, quaedam mixta ex utroque. Quid tam distortum et elaboratum quam est ille discobolos Myronis? Si quis tamen ut parum rectum improbet opus, nonne ab intellectu artis afuerit, in qua vel praecipue laudabilis est ipsa illa novitas ac difficultas?*
>
> It is often expedient to vary (*mutare*) somehow from time-honored order, and it is nevertheless appropriate: just as we see in statues and paintings, their dress, expressions, and positions are varied (*variari habitus, vultus, status*). The body, when held bolt upright, has little grace: for the face looks straight-forward, the arms hang by the side, the feet are connected, and the entire figure is stiff from top to toe. But that flexing variation (*fluxus*), I might almost call it performed motion (*motus*), with which we are so familiar, gives certain

impression of action and mental animation. For that reason, hands are not cast a single way, and their expressions are infinite in variety. Some figures are represented as running or rushing forward, others sit or recline. These are nude, those are clothed, while some are a little of both. What is more twisted and labored (*distortum et elaboratum*) than the *Discobolos* of Myron? Yet he who rejects the work because it is not upright enough, wouldn't he completely misunderstand the art, in which the very novelty and difficulty of execution is what particularly deserves our praise? (II.13.8-10)

He then brings the discussion back to rhetoric:

> *Quam quidem gratiam et delectationem adferunt figurae, quaeque in sensibus quaeque in verbis sunt. Mutant enim aliquid a recto, atque hanc prae se virtutem ferunt, quod a consuetudine vulgari recesserunt.*
>
> Indeed, a similar grace and charm is conveyed by rhetorical figures, whether they be figures of thought or figures of speech; for they vary (*mutant*) any [speech] from the straight line and exhibit the virtue of departing from common tradition (*a consuetudine vulgari*). (II.13.11)

In this passage we leave the courtroom for a moment and consider rhetoric as an art form, parallel to sculpture and painting. Here, variety allows the speaker and artist to be inventive, to stray from the traditional rules, the status quo. While the authors I cited previously in this section defined *varietas* as the antithesis of satiety, Quintilian takes a different approach, defining variety in opposition to strict order and "time-honored" tradition (*constituto traditoque ordine*). However, he does this conservatively, and is careful not to associate tradition with monotony.[127] Quintilian is not advocating a complete departure from tradition[128], but a variation from it, which he expects his

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[127] Monotony is a concern elsewhere in his work: "A worse fault is ὁμοείδεια, or sameness, a term applied to the style which has no variety to relieve its tedium, and which presents a uniform monotony of hue. This is one of the surest signs of lack of art, and produces a uniquely unpleasing effect, not merely on the mind, but on the ear, on account of its sameness of thought, the uniformity of its figures, and the monotony of its structure." (XII.2.52-54)

[128] For example, in the same passage, he warns: "He who thinks it an unpardonable sin to leave the old, old track, must be content to move at much the same speed as a tight-rope walker." (II.13.16)

readers to understand to be charming (II.13.11). Charm is not the only function of variety, however. The pragmatic teacher continues by exploring its more "expedient" function in the following well-known passage, which takes on some new meaning:

> *Habet in pictura speciem tota facies: Apelles tamen imaginem Antigoni latere tantum altero ostendit, ut amissi oculi deformitas lateret. Quid? non in oratione operienda sunt quaedam, sive ostendi non debent sive exprimi pro dignitate non possunt? Ut fecit Timanthes, opinor, Cythnius in ea tabula qua Coloten Teium vicit. Nam cum in Iphigeniae immolatione pinxisset tristem Calchantem, tristiorem Ulixem, addidisset Menelao quem summum poterat ars efficere maerorem: consumptis adfectibus non reperiens quo digne modo patris vultum posset exprimere, velavit eius caput et suo cuique animo dedit aestimandum. Nonne huic simile est illud Sallustianum: 'nam de Carthagine tacere satius puto quam parum dicere'?*
>
> In painting, the full face best offers a certain likeness (*speciem*). But Apelles painted the image of Antigonus only in profile, to hide the ugliness (*deformitas*) of a missing eye. So, too, in speaking, there are certain things to be concealed, either because they ought not be disclosed or because they cannot be expressed appropriately (*pro dignitate*). So did Timanthes from Cythnus, I believe, in a panel painting (*tabula*) by which he prevailed over Colotes of Teos. For while, in his sacrifice of Iphigenia, he had painted a sad Calchas, and an even more mournful Ulysses, he gave to Menelaus the greatest agony his art could convey. With his emotions spent, not knowing how to portray her father's [i.e., Agamemnon's] face as it deserved, he veiled the head and left his sorrow to be determined by the viewer.[129] Sallust did something similar when he wrote "On Carthage, I think it better to say nothing rather than say too little." (II.13.12-14)

In this passage, Quintilian explains how the function of variety was not simply to delight, or to relieve from satiety; but also, more practically, to allow the painter and speaker to be expedient in some way, to stray from the standard order, the traditional rules of their art, to compel them to innovate, and to enable them to express the inexpressible. Pliny, Quintilian's peer, also associates

[129] This work was also reported by Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 35.36.5. For more on the painting's description in text and as compared to the panel from the House of the Tragic Poet, see Bergmann 1995, 84-85.

this episode with innovation, and describes Timanthes as the "only one among the artists in whose works there is always something more implied by the pencil than is expressed, and whose execution, though of the very highest quality, is always surpassed by the inventiveness of his genius." (*NH* 35.36.73-74) Valerius Maximus, another early imperial author, also makes reference to Timanthes' depiction of the cloaked Agamemnon, although in his description (VIII.11.6) Iphigenia is described as *immolata*, which seems to suggest she has already been sacrificed.[130] These descriptions are also often associated with a fresco from the House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii (figure 1), although none of the textual descriptions seem to match perfectly with the image. Curiously, the inventiveness for which these authors are crediting Timanthes might not be entirely due to him: Euripides' Messenger, in his *Iphigenia at Aulis*, describes Agamemnon as holding his cloak before his eyes, ὀμμάτων πέπλον προθείς (1550), when he sees his daughter taken to be sacrificed.[131]

***Varietas* beyond the Rhetoricians**

Throughout the last section, the reader may have wondered – quite rightly – how much non-rhetoricians would or could have known about *varietas* as a rhetorical, stylistic value. In the present day, especially with the advances of information and communication technologies over the last three decades, it is hard to imagine how useful rhetorical training could have been in one's public and private life. However, in the Roman world, rhetoric was virtually the most useful technology available: rhetorical training above all allowed one to communicate appropriately, whether at a dinner party or on official business, through careful performance or a thoughtfully crafted letter. There was certainly a market for handbooks that exhaustively presented the rules of

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[130] Valerius Maximus does not mention Timanthes by name, calling him *ille alter aeque nobilis pictor*, "that other equally famous painter." (VIII.11.6)
[131] See also Perry's discussion of Timanthes' work in Perry 2002 and Perry 2005.

the art of rhetoric to men (and, possibly, women) who could afford them.[132] Unfortunately, there was not the same volume of need for explicit explanations of the rules of other arts. Young elite men did not have to investigate the history and technical rules of painting or sculpture, although they might have served as patrons to the craftsmen who knew these rules by some other means.

The *Letters* of Pliny the Younger, of which 247 survive – if we are to take all as authentic – offer a vivid portrait of the life of an elite male in the early Roman empire. Their author, born to the equestrian order around 61 CE in Novum Comum (Como, Italy), rose through the *cursus honorum*, a series of public offices for men of senatorial rank who aspired to political careers. As would have been typical for someone with his rank and aspirations, he received rhetorical training in Rome as a young man, notably from Quintilian.[133]

The letters undoubtedly reveal Pliny's understanding of varietas as a rhetorical and stylistic concept. For example, in 1.16, to Erucius, he effusively writes of his admiration for the verbal talent of Pompeius Saturninus:

> *Amabam Pompeium Saturninum … laudabamque eius ingenium, etiam antequam scirem, quam varium quam flexibile quam multiplex esset; nunc vero totum me tenet habet possidet. Audivi causas agentem acriter et ardenter … Adsunt aptae crebraeque sententiae, gravis et decora constructio, sonantia verba et antiqua. Omnia haec mire placent cum impetu quodam et flumine pervehuntur, placent si retractentur… Est ergo mecum per diem totum; eundem antequam scribam, eundem cum scripsi, eundem etiam cum remittor, non tamquam eundem lego.*

> I used to be very fond of Pompeius Saturninus…and admired his intellectual powers, even before I knew him – they were so varied, so adaptable, so many-sided (*quam varium quam flexibile quam multiplex*) – but now he has me, holds me, completely possesses me. I have heard him pleading in the courts, always keen and passionate…. He has an endless flow of apt sentiment; his style is weighty and appropriate, his language is sonorous and traditional

[132] Quintilian tells us that in his day (the late first-century CE), there were many rhetorical handbooks in circulation. (II.13.15)
[133] Another teacher of his was Nicetes Sacerdos of Smyrna, a Greek rhetorician.

(*antiqua*). All these qualities charm me immensely when they come pouring forth in a streaming rush of eloquence, and they charm me, too, when I read them in written form…. So he is with me the whole day long; the same Pompeius before I write, the same Pompeius after I write, and also the same Pompeius when I rest, but I do not read him as the same. (1.16.1-7)

In this letter, Pliny offers a laudatory portrait of Pompeius Saturninus, who excels in oratory, and he positively characterizes the man's rhetorical talents as various, many-sided, multi-dimensional – which was his impression even before he really knew him. However, he has since discovered Pompeius' written work, including his poetry, *nugae*, a literary genre of "light" poetry that Fitzgerald observes is itself characterized by variety.[134] So Pliny reads the same Pompeius (*eundem*) constantly but never reaches satiety – even though, as he points out, Saturninus is a contemporary author, not from a previous generation. (1.16.8)

In a letter to Vestricius Spurinna (5.17), Pliny similarly praises the literary talents of a young Calpurnius Piso[135], especially his varying use of style:

Scio … quantum gaudium capias, si nobiles iuvenes dignum aliquid maioribus suis faciant. Quo festinantius nuntio tibi fuisse me hodie in auditorio Calpurni Pisonis. Recitabat καταστερισμῶν *eruditam sane luculentamque materiam. Scripta elegis erat fluentibus et teneris et enodibus, sublimibus etiam, ut poposcit locus. Apte enim et varie nunc attollebatur, nunc residebat; excelsa depressis, exilia plenis, severis iucunda mutabat, omnia ingenio pari.*

I know … how delighted you are when young men of rank do anything worthy of their ancestry. That is why I am losing no time to tell you that today I was in the audience of Calpurnius Piso. He was reading his poem Οἱ Καταστερισμοί ("The Constellations"), and it was a learned and very excellent composition. It was written in fluent, graceful, and smooth elegiacs, even sublime, as the setting demanded. For his style was cleverly varied, in some

[134] See, for example, how Pliny describes Pompeius's *nugae* in 1.16 and Sentinus Augurinus' verse in 4.27. (Fitzgerald 2016, 92-95)
[135] Identified by Spawforth as possibly the one who became consul in 111 CE, or his brother. (Spawforth 2015, 1)

places it soared, in others it was subdued; passing from heightened to lowly, from thinness to richness, and from lively to severe, and in each case with equal genius. (5.17.1-2)

Pliny was very generous with his enthusiasm; similar praise may be found in other letters, including those to Maximus (4.20), to Severus (9.22), and to Sardus (9.31).

When it comes to Pliny's own writing, however, he explains his rhetorical use of *varietas* perhaps more modestly: not as a charming, or clever, or learned quality, in opposition to *satietas*, but rather as a practical strategy to engage a diverse audience. In a letter to Lupercus (2.5) that accompanies part of a speech he has composed, he writes:

> *Quod tamen si quis exstiterit, qui putet nos laetius fecisse quam orationis severitas exigat, huius (ut ita dixerim) tristitiam reliquae partes actionis exorare debebunt. Adnisi certe sumus, ut quamlibet diversa genera lectorum per plures dicendi species teneremus, ac sicut veremur, ne quibusdam pars aliqua secundum suam cuiusque naturam non probetur, ita videmur posse confidere, ut universitatem omnibus varietas ipsa commendet. Nam et in ratione conviviorum, quamvis a plerisque cibis singuli temperemus, totam tamen cenam laudare omnes solemus, nec ea quae stomachus noster recusat, adimunt gratiam illis quibus capitur. Atque haec ego sic accipi volo…*
>
> If there is someone who thinks that I have written more ornately than is warranted by the serious nature (*severitas*) of the subject, the remaining portions of the address should mollify its I have certainly made an effort to hold the attention of the widest possible diversity of readers by means of several kinds of style, and although I fear that some part may not appeal to particular readers because of individual taste, it seems that I can trust that variety itself will commend the speech as a whole to all. For at a dinner party, we may individually refuse several dishes but we will praise the entire meal, as the food which is not to our taste does not spoil our pleasure in what we do like. I want my speech to be taken in the same spirit… (2.5.6-9)

While Cicero and Quintilian agree that a single style of oratory is not appropriate for every case, audience, speaker, or occasion (e.g., *Inst. Or.* XI.1.4, which quotes Cicero), in their texts they generally treat their imagined audience homogenously, as a single body producing a uniform

reaction.[136] Pliny, on the other hand, explicitly defines the audience heterogeneously, as a collection of individuals capable of having a range of tastes and responses – at least when it comes to his own compositions. Variety, then, offers the speaker or writer (i.e., Pliny) the ability to satisfy a diverse audience in the same sitting, just as a variety of dishes satisfy a diversity of tastes at a dinner party. In another letter, to Paternus (4.14), he writes:

> *Accipies cum hac epistula hendecasyllabos nostros, quibus nos in vehiculo in balineo inter cenam oblectamus otium temporis. His iocamur ludimus amamus dolemus querimur irascimur, describimus aliquid modo pressius modo elatius, atque ipsa varietate temptamus efficere, ut alia aliis quaedam fortasse omnibus placeant.*
>
> You will receive with this letter my hendecasyllables, with which I pass my leisure (*otium*) pleasantly while in my carriage, in the bath, or at dinner. In these I joke, play, love, grieve, complain, or rage; I write here in a condensed style, there in a more elevated style, and try to make it so that, through variety itself (*ipsa varietate*), different things appeal to different people, some things perhaps to all.[137] (4.14.2-3)

Pliny continues this letter to Paternus asking for his frank opinion of his poetry; he concludes that he will not take criticism harshly, because, essentially, poetry is not his "day job."[138] Indeed, while Pliny elsewhere claims that composing poetry is harder than prose (7.9.12), he associates the composition of *nugae* strictly with *otium*, or pleasure, whenever he has a spare moment away from *negotium*.[139] This is not the only letter in which he refers to writing poetry while traveling: in 9.10, a letter to Tacitus, he tells us he wrote a few light verses on his way to his villa, where he is taking a summer holiday.[140] When he has nothing better to do at the villa (lit., when something else does

[136] See, for example, Quintilian's passage on making emotional appeals to judges: *Inst. Or.* VI.2.5-7.
[137] See also his letter to Arrianus (8.1), in which he describes a summer dinner party he hosts for his friends, at which he performed a reading of both serious and playful works. "My volume was a mixture of different subjects and meters," he explains, "for those of us who are not quite sure about our genius choose variety, in order to minimize the risk of boring our readers."
[138] "For if this little work were my primary or sole effort, it might perhaps seem harsh to tell me to 'find something else to do' ('*quaere quod agas*'); but it is gentle and kind to say 'you have something else to do' ('*habes quod agas*')." (4.14.10)
[139] Hershkowitz 1995, 168-169.
[140] See Edwards 2008 for an attempt at reconstructing the writers' relationship.

not please him, *cum aliud non liberet*), he continues to compose. However, he has also had to revise some speeches; this work he characterizes as resembling more the hard labor of the country than its pleasures.

While Pliny frequently refers to *varietas* in discussions of oratory and writing, he also refers to *varietas* in a non-rhetorical way: particularly in idyllic descriptions of his villas, their place in the natural landscape, and the life of *otium* associated with villa culture. Above, I described *varietas* as a rhetorical strategy allowing oratory to seem more natural; this corresponds to a common association of variety and nature outside of rhetoric. As Fitzgerald has shown, literature from antiquity and through the Renaissance describes nature as both rejoicing in variety (*gaudet varietate*) and playing with variety (*ludit varietate*).[141] Pliny famously describes his uncle's *Natural History* as an "expansive, learned work, not less various than nature herself." (3.5.6) Accompanying these topoi is an association of *varietas* with *copia*, or abundance, in rhetoric and also beyond rhetoric.[142]

No structure in the Roman world better conveyed the harmony of art, nature, and (the dream of) abundance than the late Republican and imperial Roman villa.[143] Peter Brown has characterized the late Roman villa as a "place of unproblematic abundance" (Brown 2012, 197), although a similar ideology existed earlier, especially in the region of Campania, which was famous in antiquity for its lush forests and fertile plains.[144] It has also been established that in

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[141] Fitzgerald 2016, 33-41.
[142] The connection of *copia* and *varietas* in rhetoric is outside the bounds of this chapter, but thoughtfully explored in Fitzgerald 2016, 47-50.
[143] Here I am not including the rustic villas of the Republican period (such as the one found at the Auditorium site in Terrenato 2001), although it seems that by the third-century BCE, such structures might have included well-appointed rooms for the use of the owner; Cato recommends that the villa be made a comfortable retreat so that its owners are inclined to visit more often, whereupon "the farm will improve, there will be less wrongdoing, and you will receive greater returns." Cato 6.1-2, referenced in Gazda 2014, para. 64. Varro, in the mid-first century BCE, tells us that in an earlier day, the farm on a villa cost more than its dwelling; however, in his present the opposite is usually true, because having as large and well-appointed living quarters as possible now takes precedent over agriculture. (I.13.6)
[144] Gazda 2014, 1-5.

such structures, agriculture and horticulture played a dual purpose: economic profit and also pleasure.[145] The mid-first century BCE antiquarian Varro, in a passage on apple varieties and their storage at villas in fruit houses (*oporothecae*), reports that in his present day, some people like to dine there, just as others dine in their picture galleries (*pinacothecae*). "If luxury allows people to do this in a picture gallery, where the scene is set by art," he asks, "why should they not enjoy a scene set by nature, in a charming arrangement of fruit? Of course, provided that you do not follow the example set by some, of buying fruit in Rome and carrying it to the country..." (I.59.2) In another passage, Varro describes the villas of Gnaeus Tremelius Scrofa, considered the Roman most skilled in agriculture: "because of their great cultivation, his farms are a more pleasing sight to many than the country seats of others, furnished in a princely style. When people come to inspect his villas, it is not to see collections of pictures, as at Lucullus's, but collections of fruit." (I.2.10) Bergmann has observed that the agricultural abundance at Scrofa's farms is described as a *spectaculum*, spectacle, which emphasizes this point: at villas, visual pleasure could be derived from the display of (local) agricultural abundance, and variety, as much as a collection of paintings.[146]

The letters of Pliny the Younger, a full century later, suggest continuity of this theme. In fact, I would argue that they define *varietas* as a concept central to the ideals of villa culture, at least as expressed and understood by Pliny the Younger. The villa's many abundances – of agricultural production, of vistas and visual pleasure, of different activities of *otium* – reflected access to rich resources: from different kinds of plants, to fish, to marble, to different techniques of painting, the intended message was that he or she could afford not just a small amount, but a great selection of its many varieties. As I describe above, Pliny extends the function of variety

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[145] E.g., Purcell 1995, Bannon 2009, 9-10; Pagán 2016, 3; Jashemski, Gleason, Hartswick, Malek (eds.) 2017, especially Macaulay-Lewis 2017.
[146] Bergmann 2002, 88-89, which also cites the two Varro passages quoted above.

not only as something that allows the flaunting of resources, but also as something that is guaranteed to give guests pleasure, even if they have varying tastes: "For at a dinner party we may individually refuse several dishes but we will praise the whole meal, and the food which is not to our taste does not spoil our pleasure in what we do like." (2.5.8)[147]

In his letters, which are some of our greatest literary sources on villa life, Pliny refers to *varietas* when describing the visual experience in his villas and the landscape around them. In his letter to Domitius Apollinaris (5.6), he sets out to describe the climate and charm of his Tuscan villa, which he describes as set back from the sea, close to the Apennines. While we usually think of maritime villas as structures built to take in the views, Pliny emphasizes the striking views of the lush landscape around this inland one, in a passage that could very well describe the Tuscan landscape today (figure 2):

> *Imaginare amphitheatrum aliquod immensum, et quale sola rerum natura possit effingere. Lata et diffusa planities montibus cingitur, montes summa sui parte procera nemora et antiqua habent. Frequens ibi et varia venatio… per latus omne vineae porriguntur, unamque faciem longe lateque contexunt; quarum a fine imoque quasi margine arbusta nascuntur. Prata inde campique, campi quos non nisi, ingentes boves et fortissima aratra perfringunt…Prata florida et gemmea trifolium aliasque herbas teneras semper et molles et quasi novas alunt…Magnam capies voluptatem, si hunc regionis situm ex monte prospexeris. Neque enim terras tibi sed formam aliquam ad eximiam pulchritudinem pictam videberis cernere: ea varietate, ea descriptione, quocumque inciderint oculi, reficientur.*

> Picture an immense amphitheater, such as only Nature can create, with an outspread plain ringed with hills, and the summits of the hills themselves covered with tall and ancient forests. There is plentiful and varied hunting to be had… Along the whole hillsides stretch the vineyards in an unbroken line far and wide, lined below with a fringe of trees. Then you reach the meadows and the fields, which only the most powerful oxen and the stoutest ploughs can turn… The meadows are bejeweled with flowers, and produce trefoil

[147] Cf. 4.14.

> and other herbs, always tender and soft, and look as though they were always fresh… You would be delighted if you could obtain a view of the district from a mountain, for you would think you were looking not so much at earth and fields as at a beautiful landscape painting of astonishing beauty. Such is the variety, such the arrangement of the scene, that wherever the eyes fall they are sure to be refreshed. (5.6.7-13)

Here is a landscape more lush than Livia's verdant garden paintings in her villa at Prima Porta. The role of *varietas* in this passage is not only to emphasize the abundance of hunting or the fertility of the meadows; it also describes the view itself, and Pliny's experience of viewing it as his eyes roam across the scene. In a later passage in the same letter he describes the villa's hippodrome: "It is quite open in the center, and the moment you enter your eye ranges over the whole of it." (5.6.32) He seems particularly conscious of eye movement; even at the end of this letter, he acknowledges its length (it is one of his longest extant) by stating: "I am not at all apprehensive that you will find it tedious to read about a place which certainly would not tire you to look at..." (5.6.41) The language Pliny uses resonates with Procopius' description of the visual experience of the Justinian basilica of the Hagia Sophia about five centuries later:

> ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ἐς ἄλληλά τε παρὰ δόξαν ἐν μεταρσίῳ ἐναρμοσθέντα, ἔκ τε ἀλλήλων ᾐωρημένα … μίαν μὲν ἁρμονίαν ἐκπρεπεστάτην τοῦ ἔργου ποιοῦνται, οὐ παρέχονται δὲ τοῖς θεωμένοις αὐτῶν τινι ἐμφιλοχωρεῖν ἐπὶ πολὺ τὴν ὄψιν, ἀλλὰ μεθέλκει τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἕκαστον, καὶ μεταβιβάζει ῥᾷστα ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτό. ἀγχίστροφός τε ἡ τῆς θέας μεταβολὴ ἐς ἀεὶ γίγνεται, ἀπολέξασθαι τοῦ ἐσορῶντος οὐδαμῆ ἔχοντος ὅ τι ἄν ποτε ἀγασθείη μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων.
>
> All these details, fitted together with incredible skill in mid-air and floating off from each other … produce a single and most extraordinary harmony in the work, and yet do not permit the spectator to linger much over the study of any one of them, but each detail attracts the eye and draws it irresistibly to itself. So the vision constantly shifts suddenly,

for the beholder is utterly unable to select which particular detail he should admire more than all the others. (*De aedificiis*, 1.1.47-49)

Indeed, Pliny's descriptions of the villa landscape – constructed or natural – involve a *varietas* in which individual elements are articulated distinctly and also mixed.[148] He avoids undifferentiated expanses and prefers punctuated, variegated routines. His life in the city, a life of *negotium*, stretches on, seamlessly: unending, unvaried, and unarticulated.[149] He describes his work in exactly this way, in a letter to his friend Caninius, who is staying at one of his villas:

> *Studes an piscaris an venaris an simul omnia? … Nam lacus piscem, feras silvae quibus lacus cingitur, studia altissimus iste secessus affatim suggerunt. Sed sive omnia simul sive aliquid facis, non possum dicere 'invideo'; angor tamen non et mihi licere, qui sic concupisco ut aegri vinum balinea fontes. Numquamne hos artissimos laqueos, si solvere negatur, abrumpam? Numquam, puto. Nam veteribus negotiis nova accrescunt, nec tamen priora peraguntur: tot nexibus, tot quasi catenis maius in dies occupationum agmen extenditur.*
>
> Are you engaged in *studia* or are you fishing or hunting, or all at the same time? … For the lake supplies fish in abundance, the woods that encircle its shores are full of game, and their secluded recesses inspire one to study. But whether you combine the three activities at once, or occupy yourself with just one of them, I cannot say "I begrudge [you]," although I am annoyed that I am barred from pleasures which I long for as ardently as an invalid longs for wine, baths, and fountains. If I cannot loosen the tight mesh of the net that enfolds me, shall I never break free? Never, I am afraid, for new business keeps piling up before the old is finished, and as more and more links are added, every day I see my work stretching out further. (2.8.1-3)

While his friend has a choice of various activities in the country, Pliny describes himself as caught in an ever-growing net, with undifferentiated *negotium* stretching on day by day. In another letter, to Minutius Fundanus (1.9), he describes the work of the city similarly: as an

[148] Fitzgerald 2016, 98.
[149] Here I follow the astute observations of Fitzgerald 2016, 97.

immemorable series of days, a frivolous waste of time. In striking contrast, in a letter to Fuscus (9.36), Pliny describes the time he spends at his Tuscan villa during the summer *by the hour*. Sure enough, his routine is characterized by variety, because he has no fixed plan every day, and "his concentration of thought is unaffected, or rather is refreshed by the change." He echoes this sentiment in a letter to Fuscus (7.9), who has asked for advice on how to pursue his *studia* in retirement. Pliny delivers a range of specific advice, and warns his friend from solely focusing on the study of oratory: "For just as the land gathers fresh strength from a change and variety in the crops we sow, so our minds are refreshed by change and variety of study." (7.9.7)

The visual experience of and from his villas is similarly articulated: not as an undifferentiated expanse, but rather as a multiplicity of views and sensory experiences. In his lengthy letter to Domitius Apollinaris (5.6, partially quoted above), Pliny describes his Tuscan villa and its landscape in a series of vividly described views, as if he is walking the reader through its grounds. The vividness of his description is amplified by his incorporation of other sensory experiences: the agreeable sounds of water gushing from fountains and being caught in marble basins; the presence of abundant sunshine and its warming power in the winter; the cooling Apennine breezes running through a triclinium; the acanthus, with leaves "so soft that I might almost call them liquid." (5.6.16) Clearly, however, Pliny privileges the visual, especially the series of views from villa windows, structuring or framing various elements of the landscape. In a lengthy letter to Gallus (2.17), he describes his Laurentine villa, which is situated on the coast, as visually and variously as he does his Tuscan one. Early in the letter he describes the scene approaching the villa as *varia* (2.17.3), but perhaps more evocative is his description of his favorite suite of rooms (which he calls *amores mei*). In the cubiculum he describes an alcove which holds a couch and two chairs and presents a series of views: "at its foot the sea, at its back villas, at its head the forests; the alcove both distinguishes and mixes (*et distinguit et miscet*) all

the views of the landscape with as many windows." (2.17.21) Here Fitzgerald argues – and I follow him – that the verb *distinguo* reflects the language of *varietas*, and that the windows frame different scenes "as though they were assembling a bouquet from flowers picked in a meadow." (99) Indeed, *varietas* characterizes how these itemized, varied views are experienced heterogeneously.

Varietas as an Aesthetic Principle in Roman Domestic Display

As I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, *varietas* was a significant concept in Roman culture as early as the late Republican period, one that had rich meaning within and beyond the rhetorical arts. In the last section, I focused specifically on its strong association with early imperial villa culture and the rich sensory experiences villas offered – at least as perceived by Pliny. In the conclusion of this dissertation I attempt to extend the concept further, suggesting its usefulness in interpretations of other kinds of Roman art.

While *varietas* might, in retrospect, be a glaringly obvious aspect of Roman visual experience, it has mostly been overlooked by Roman art historians.[150] There is good reason for this: art historians, especially of ancient material, generally look for patterns, references, and commonalities that help us construct a comprehensive, chronologically ordered narrative of the past. This has certainly been the case for Roman wall painting, with its division into four stylistic, chronological categories. Such methods of analysis produce interpretations that address the long life of the villa, its many phases of decoration. With such an approach, however, it is easy to overlook the lives of the people living in the villa in its final stage, when all of its decoration was experienced diversely and simultaneously. Surely the mid-first-century residents

[150] Barham 2015 discusses the relationship of *varietas* to decoration, particularly abstract patterns. Bergmann 2002 alludes to it throughout, and references the concept specifically on p. 96, where she underlines the rich (multimedia) variety at Oplontis Villa A.

of Villa A at Oplontis did not walk through the structure thinking about chronology, as some of us do. The many different kinds of painting in the villa, from its abstract "zebra-stripe" motifs to the interior garden paintings to its grand Second Period Style rooms around the atrium offered views and vistas that refreshed and delighted the eye with their variety. I will address this villa at greater depth in the next chapter.

In the field of medieval art history, in contrast, *varietas* is an established aesthetic principle, especially as defined in the work of Mary Carruthers, which adapts the Roman literature discussed above, including that of Cicero and Quintilian, and applies it to the visual experience of the art of late antiquity and later.[151] Classical philologist have written about *varietas*, too, especially recently[152], but in this scholarship the term is more narrowly applied to literature and music, not visual art. However, I would argue that the concept of *varietas* can be an incredibly useful one in our analysis of Roman art, especially because of its strong association – by Roman authors – with visual experience.

Within the field of Roman wall painting, Mau's Four-Style method of analysis has, until recently, discouraged the exploration of variety within any single stylistic category. The primary concern, as our field has attempted to grasp the material, has been to divide and conquer: to systematically lay out the differences of the painting that is left, and attempt to identify its origins and development, even though the older paintings are decontextualized remnants, selectively preserved by the generations of villa owners who came after the ones who commissioned them, and the newer paintings are the unfiltered products of an evolving art.

Further, we must also consider the development of the art: as I argued in the last chapter, just as the theory of style(s) in rhetoric was an evolving idea throughout antiquity, so too was the concept of style in visual art. While the Romans could consistently refer to the three basic

[151] E.g., Carruthers 2009; Carruthers 2013.
[152] E.g., Fitzgerald 2016.

stylistic categories, explored in the last chapter, Quintilian tells us also that even this basic understanding had evolved and that in his time (mid-to-late first century CE) there could be infinite types of style.[153] From his passage quoted in the last chapter we can surmise that stylistic variety in rhetoric became ever more complicated as the field developed; we should expect no less from other kinds of art.

While the Second Style paintings removed from the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor are considered a distinctive enough group in their palette, iconography, and depth of realism (or hyperrealism) to be attributed to a single workshop – the so-called Boscoreale Workshop – there are clear visual and functional differences of the paintings within the category. The recent (2013) study, edited by Barbet, Verbanck-Piérard, et al., identifies three basic types of paintings among those recovered, all considered "Second Style": simple decoration with a closed wall (e.g., fauces C, hall D, and exedra I); decoration that is grand but austere (peristyle E, oecus H); and decoration that is artistically innovative (triclinium G, cubiculum M). They observe that these types corresponded to functional zones within the villa: the first two categories, to passages, places of movement, or to more public hosting areas, where the owner wished to represent him or herself in some specific way. The third category corresponded to more intimate rooms, smaller spaces to receive friends, tucked away behind the more public areas. (vol. I, 101-102) They describe the so-called Hall of Aphrodite, room H, as falling between the second and third categories: as a larger room, it could hold more guests than an intimate cubiculum, but it is set behind the peristyle, and this suggests it was accessible only to special guests. It also could be closed off entirely by shutters and the door. Further, the scale of its megalographic paintings, divided into sections by a Doric frieze, would have been striking to visitors, and perhaps would have provoked conversations among connoisseurs in the same way actual sculptures might have

[153] See *Inst. Or.* XII.66-68, quoted at the end of the last chapter.

done. Although Barbet et al. do not discuss the economy of their decorative categories, it seems likely that when the paintings were executed, more resources would have been spent on the paintings of the third category: spaces where the owner would have hosted important guests, and also spaces the owner would have frequented regularly, likely to retire. Paintings of the first category, while very fine, did not require as intricate or inventive artistry as the paintings of the third category, because they would not have been "used" in the same way, along passageways, where they would (arguably) not have been subject to as close scrutiny.

It is very possible that Villa A at Oplontis, and the Villa of the Mysteries, both of which feature paintings attributed to the Boscoreale Workshop, could have had a similar assortment of paintings in the 1st century BCE. However, for whatever reason, those villas were renovated more than once in the first century CE. Because of their value and artistry, their owners were inclined to keep the paintings of the third category – e.g., room 5, oecus 6, cubicula 4 and 16 of the Villa of the Mysteries, and rooms 14 and 15, triclinium 23, and cubiculum 11 at Oplontis. The halls, and less important rooms, could be redone, and so they were, in what have been identified as Third and Fourth Style modes. At the same time, the repertoire of wall painting styles was expanding infinitely, similarly to how Quintilian describes the development of style in rhetoric in the passage quoted above (XII.66-68). As new architectural forms were added to Villa A, such as its grand peristyle, new kinds of painting were introduced to suit its new functions.

Here we can begin to grasp why Mau's Fourth "Style" has resisted definition as a single category: at no stage in the late Republican and early Imperial period was there ever a single "style" of painting. Second Style paintings, although they share a common palette and iconography, and a common allusion to a pristine (Hellenistic?) reality, existed in variety, as multiple types, such as the three identified by Barbet, et al. As the art developed, along with villa architecture, so the repertoire of appropriate styles expanded infinitely. In the following chapter I

look more closely at the paintings from Villa “A” at Oplontis and demonstrate specifically how this looked in reality.

Chapter 4 – Style and *Varietas* at First-century CE Oplontis

Villa A ("of Poppaea") at Oplontis offers an extremely rich assortment of wall paintings and other decorations preserved in the Villa's final phase, which ended abruptly in 79 CE. (see figures 3-4, its excavated plan and northern facade) In this chapter I attempt to approach the villa much as Pliny the Younger described his Laurentine and Tuscan villas in 2.17 and 5.6: as a series of visual experiences encountered as if the reader is moving from space to space, pausing every now and then to take in long stretches of scenery. As is customary in our field, most previous and current studies[154] have tended to interpret the wall painting at Oplontis through the lens of Mau's Four Period Styles: using style as a taxonomic, chronological tool to divide the Villa into a series of three major building phases. In this way, archaeologists have been better able to understand the complicated history of the complex and its development over time: from the earliest, Second Period Style paintings, which date the heart of the villa to c. 50 BCE, through the Third Period Style restoration, dated around 10-1 BCE[155], and finally to the Fourth Period Style overhaul, which occurred in several phases and included the east wing, datable to c. 45 CE and later.[156] I do not dispute this general dating, and will discuss how it has been supported archaeologically. Indeed, the closer one gets to the painted material, the more distinct Mau's categories seem (at least in terms of their palettes, iconographies, and scale of the architecture represented). However, my focus is the state of the Villa in its final phase of use, when these three decorative systems had come to adorn the Villa synchronically, alongside other

[154] For example, De Franciscis 1975 and the publications by John R. Clarke and Michael Thomas.
[155] Clarke 1987.
[156] Thomas and Clarke 2009.

modes of painting that do not fit neatly into the Four Period Style system. From this more cohesive perspective, through the lens of viewers in the final phase, the very idea of style at Oplontis might be interpreted as signifying more than a chronological designation, used by scholars to sort ancient material into distinct categories that might never have existed in antiquity. Instead, the rich diversity of painted motifs simultaneously on view at the Villa in the mid-first century CE suggest that by then painting style was a functional tool, and something to be manipulated, much like style in rhetoric. This might help us understand the later history of the Villa not just as the passive outcome of a succession of renovations, but also as a careful cultivation of *varietas*, similarly expressed in the diversity of the Villa's sculpture collection and gardens. Bettina Bergmann's 2002 study of the Villa's sculpture collection characterizes it as "self-consciously eclectic" (93), with variation in the "types of stones used, the styles emulated, and in their evocations of an iconographic repertory associated with famous artists of the 5th through 3rd c. BC." (94) Bergmann's 2016 study of the Villa's gardens and garden paintings similarly alludes to variation as a guiding aesthetic principle. (97-99)

Villa A at Oplontis presents us with an exceptional case study in which the Second-, Third-, and Fourth-Period Style painting generally correspond to its major phases of building. In this way, as established by the scholarship described below, the Villa has served to confirm the chronology of the Four Period Styles originally proposed by Mau at the end of the nineteenth century. However, the Villa also presents a number of remarkable exceptions: evidence of stylistic revival and conservation, renovations that incorporate different modes of painting in the decoration of a single room, instances in which newer paintings allude to earlier ones nearby. These examples document a conscious response to stylistic difference and the desire for variation in a single setting. While the meticulous work of Wolfgang Ehrhardt has documented the processes of retention and revival of wall painting as a widespread practice in the Bay of Naples

region, he has not gone far enough in his explanation of the agency of the painters and patrons promoting this phenomenon, and the aesthetic principles that guided their decorative choices.[157] Villa A, as I will argue, offers a rich portrait of mid-first-century CE aesthetic choices made by owners with substantial resources, who were actively modifying and expanding the Villa at least up until the 60s CE.

History of Research and Excavations at Oplontis

Situated in modern Torre Annunziata, ancient Oplontis was a seaside town located five kilometers west of Pompeii. The site received its name from a toponym on the Peutinger Table, a thirteenth-century rendition of a Roman road map. (figure 5) The map, marking Oplontis with the cartographic symbol of a square portico flanked by towers, reveals little about the ancient site, although its prominent placement between Herculaneum and Pompeii suggests that it was a not insignificant landmark along the coastal Vesuvian thoroughfare.[158] Villa A was discovered in the late sixteenth century with the construction of the Sarno Canal (1593-1600), cut under the direction of Domenico Fontana to provide water for an armaments factory in Torre Annunziata. The southern part of the east wing of the villa was partially explored – via tunneling – in 1839-40, during the Bourbon restoration, but this was by no means a systematic exploration of the structure.[159] Only in 1964 did the Italian Ministry of Culture decide to begin full-scale excavation of the villa, and this work continued until 1983, first under the direction of Alfonso De Franciscis and later under that of Stefano De Caro and Lorenzo Fergola.[160] Between 1974 and

[157] Ehrhardt 2012; 1987.
[158] As suggested in Bergmann 2002, while there is no mention of Oplontis in extant ancient texts, the name possibly derives from the Latin term for opulence – i.e., *Ad opulentos*. (91)
[159] Ruggiero 1888, 100-103, records the early explorations of the Custodian of the Real Museo Borbonico (today the Museo Archeologico Nazionale), Michele Rusca, who interprets the southern peristyle (40) as the peristyle of a large Roman house.
[160] Publications related to this early fieldwork include De Franciscis 1973, De Franciscis 1974a, De Franciscis 1974b, De Franciscis 1975a, De Franciscis 1975b, De Franciscis 1975c, De Franciscis 1979, De Franciscis 1980, De

1978, Wilhelmina Jashemski undertook study of the gardens of the villa; her findings revealed the structure of the gardens based on the root cavities of trees and bushes and also identified the kinds of plants growing at the villa in its final phase.[161] In 1974, approximately 300 meters east of Villa A, the construction of a school led to the discovery of another ancient structure, probably a wine distribution center, although it is conventionally termed "Villa B."[162] (figure 6) Remains of the porticus of possibly another structure – "Villa C" – have been found in the area between Villas A and B, but they have yet to be explored at the time of this writing.

Since 2005, the Oplontis Project, directed by John R. Clarke and Michael L. Thomas of the University of Texas at Austin, has investigated Villa A's construction and building phases more thoroughly than has yet been done for any other maritime luxury villa in the Bay of Naples. In this way, Villa A might be seen to exemplify building trends that would likely be observed in other Campanian villas that have not as yet been subjected to as thorough analyses.[163] Prior to the Oplontis Project, which began archival work in 2005 and field work at Villa A in 2006, no systematic study of Villa A had been done, despite the publications of numerous small studies and guidebooks since excavation under the Italian Ministry of Culture began in the 1960s.[164] While publication of the Villa – its architecture, sculpture, paintings, and small finds – was an initial, primary goal of the Oplontis Project, larger overarching research questions have pertained to establishing the construction and decorative chronology of the villa, including identifying and

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Franciscis 1982; De Caro 1974, De Caro 1976, De Caro 1987, De Caro 1988-89; Fergola 1988, Fergola 1996, Fergola 2001, Fergola 2003, Fergola 2004, Fergola and Guzzo 2000, Fergola and Pagano 1998. For an account of this work, see Clarke, "History of the Excavations 1964-1983."

[161] Jashemski 1979, 289-314; Jashemski 1993, 293-301; see Gleason 2015 for a thorough account of Jashemski's work. See also Jashemski 1987; Meyer 1988; Ricciardi 1988. Among other conclusions, Jashemski speculated that the remains of carbonized grape vines, olive branches, apples and pears were evidence of a vineyard and orchard, and that there must have been a wine or olive press in operation around rooms 82-83. (Jashemski 1979, 289-314)

[162] Thomas, van der Graaff, and Wilkinson 2013; Muslin 2016; Thomas 2016. See also Fergola 2003 and Lagi De Caro 1983, among other publications.

[163] See Gazda 2015 for a contextualization of Villa A within the Bay of Naples landscape and other Roman luxury villas that inhabited it.

[164] See work by De Franciscis, De Caro, and Fergola cited above. For other early analyses of the decorative program subsequent to the Italian excavations, see Clarke 1987; Clarke 1991; Clarke 1996; Bergmann 2002.

defining its two major phases of expansion and dating the Third and Fourth Style painting and the mosaics that accompanied them. With these redecorative phases casting a strong shadow, the excavators have also been interested in how the Villa was used and experienced over the course of its life, including its active renovation up until a very late phase in the 60s CE and the possibility of its abandonment by 79 CE.[165] The final e-book publication of Oplontis, produced in three volumes, also incorporates a 3D model of Villa A produced in collaboration with the King's Visualisation Lab (KVL) of King's College London; the model enables its users to experience the complex in both its ancient and modern forms and also provides access to the database of finds. The Oplontis team has conducted analyses of masonry and decorative systems in Villa A's 99 excavated spaces employing an array of methods, including stylistic identification reliant on the relative chronology of Mau's Four Styles. They have also undertaken stratigraphic excavation, as well as non-stratigraphic analysis of trenches dug in 2006-2008 by EEC-sponsored workers to fix drainage issues. The construction workers' trenches in particular yielded significant deposits of demolition debris, which suggest several phases of demolition and remodeling, much of it occurring after 45 CE, during the so-called Fourth-Period Style period.[166]

Interestingly, the findings obtained from excavation could in one case be used to confirm a hypothesis borne out of Mau-ian stylistic analysis more than a decade earlier: in 1987, John Clarke argued that room 8 had been renovated during the period of the early Fourth Style.[167] (figure 7) The room was originally a caldarium, decorated with Third Period Style painting. However, presumably when the room stopped functioning as a caldarium, its west and east walls were modified – the west wall cut with a larger doorway, the east wall configured with a rectangular niche – and redecorated with careful imitations of the original Third Period Style

[165] These goals are listed in Thomas and Clarke 2008 and described in Thomas and Clarke 2009.
[166] Thomas and Clarke 2009.
[167] Ehrhardt 1987 also notes a similar speculative observation. (p. 34, note 360)

painting in the middle zone, while the upper zones were decorated in contemporary Fourth Period Style.[168] (figure 8) During the 2007 field season, a fragment of the Egyptianizing frieze from the original Third Period Style decoration of either the west or east wall was found in a trench (designated OP3) at the southwest corner of the swimming pool, 100 m east of room 8. (figure 9) Thomas and Clarke concluded that demolition debris from room 8 must have been carted to the east side of the villa sometime after 45 CE.[169] This remarkable discovery is not just important in its confirmation of Clarke's original hypothesis regarding the decoration of room 8, which had bearing also on the dating of other Third Period Style rooms (25, 12, 10b, 30, and 17). This discovery was also remarkable for its implications for stylistic evaluation based on Mau's framework. Clarke's original conclusions were the products of his careful visual and stylistic analysis: the upper registers of room 8 bear a palette, miniaturizing architecture, carpet borders, and other decorative motifs characteristic of Fourth Period Style decoration, first appearing between 45-55 CE.[170] As discussed throughout this dissertation, my project was motivated by skepticism of the uses and abuses of Mau's Styles as they influenced scholarship over the twentieth century and up to the present. This particular case, however, suggests the potential usefulness and value of Mau's system (at least as an "archaeological" method).

As referenced above, the Oplontis Project identified two large-scale expansions, each around half a century apart. The Second Style decorations in rooms 1, 5, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 23 at the Villa's core are the earliest datable paintings in the villa, and so have been considered by most scholars to be its original decoration.[171] Accordingly, these paintings date the Villa's construction to around 50 BCE. Although Thomas and Clarke's study of a trench in room 15

[168] Clarke 1987.
[169] Thomas and Clarke 2009, 358-359.
[170] Clarke 1987, 293.
[171] While room 12 was redecorated in early Third Style painting, a trace of Second Style painting similar to that of room 11 is preserved on its south wall. (Clarke 1987, 279)

found what might have been an earlier pavement, this is the only evidence of a phase of construction dated earlier than c. 50 BCE.[172] Every wall of these Second Period Style rooms was constructed using *opus incertum* with volcanic stone, a method and material that correspond to other Pompeian construction of the mid-first century BCE. In the first decade of the first century CE, the villa's core was expanded and partly remodeled. This new, "Augustan" phase was constructed in *opus mixtum* or *reticulatum* with brick quoins, and sometimes with brickwork.[173] In this remodeling, rooms to the northwest of the atrium (8, 17, 18, 31) were added to form a bath complex around a small peristyle (16) with a fountain. Directly north of the atrium, the propylon room 21 was constructed with *opus mixtum*; curiously, while its Third Period Style mosaics are still in situ, no plaster survives on the walls, and it is possible that this room was undergoing renovation at the time of the eruption.[174] (figures 10-11) The spaces to the east and northeast of the atrium were also part of this early first century CE expansion: Clarke has dated the mosaics of the north-facing porticus 34, room 27, which contained the household altar, south-facing porticus 24, and rooms 38 and 41 to the Third-Style period, although their walls were repainted at a later date. (figure 12) Peristyle 32, the "service area" (figure 22) devoted to the domestic activities of slaves, was probably part of this expansion as well, given its proximity to and location between these spaces. While its so-called "zebra stripe" painting has been dated to the Fourth-Style period, one could speculate that these quarters could have been repainted frequently: apart from a simple white washing, the quick strokes of "zebra stripes" would likely have been the least onerous redecoration possible.

[172] Thomas and Clarke 2009, 355, note 3. De Caro also found traces of a *villa rustica* older than the Second Style core of Villa A in room 82 in the east wing, which he interpreted as a *torcularium*. (De Caro 2005) Presumably, the colonnade discovered under the mosaic pavement of room 16, published by D'Ambrosio, belonged to the Second Style version of the villa. (D'Ambrosio 1987) See also Clarke and Thomas 2008, 466-467.
[173] De Franciscis 1975c, 10; Clarke 1987, 290.
[174] Clarke 1987 speculates that – based on the evidence of its mosaics – the original wall decoration of room 21 must have been the "candelabrum style." (291-292)

Arguably, one of the most important contributions thus far of the Oplontis Project to the study of Villa "A" has been its conclusions regarding the Villa's second large-scale expansion, dated after 45 CE. This massive overhaul included the addition of the east wing, the transformation of the bath area (8, 16, 17, 18) into entertainment spaces, and a remodeling of the central axis of the Villa. Fieldwork conducted in 2007 and 2008 produced evidence of multiple phases of demolition and remodeling in this period; in fact, Thomas and Clarke estimated that the villa had undergone as many as three substantial structural renovations between 45-79 CE, and may have been undergoing renovation at the time of the eruption, if the villa had not been abandoned by this phase.[175] The team determined that over the course of these final decades, a wider pool was installed in the east wing, the large, octagonal *diaeta*, room 78, was constructed southwest of the pool, and significant Fourth Period Style renovations were completed throughout the villa, not just in the east wing – as suggested by a substantial number of fresco fragments in the demolition debris that could be traced to other parts of the villa.[176] (figures 13-14; see also figure 12) Thomas and Clarke suggest that at least part of this rapid rebuilding was the result of damage done by seismic activity – particularly the earthquake of 62 CE[177] – but this is not a conclusive explanation. There is no firm evidence for seismic damage in the Villa[178], and even if there had been damage, this building activity was not merely repair and modest rebuilding: the villa was actually being made larger and more luxurious over the course of its final decades. The newly constructed *diaeta* 78 was one of the most richly-decorated in the east wing, boasting a luxurious *opus sectile* floor[179] (as did room 69) and rich wood paneling in pine,

[175] Thomas and Clarke 2009.
[176] Such as, notably, the Egyptianizing frieze fragment from room 8 described above.
[177] Thomas and Clarke 2009, 364.
[178] Thomas and Clarke 2009, 361. See also De Franciscis 1975b, 6-7.
[179] As did room 69. See discussion in Barker 2016; Barker and Clarke 2015.

and possibly other woods.[180] Combined with its antechambers 79 and 66, and service corridor 77 (figure 15), it has been observed that the structure of these rooms is strikingly reminiscent of the layout of rooms to the east and west of the pool at the Villa of San Marco at Stabiae – 53, 50, 30 and 12, 8, 14.[181] (figures 15-17) However, the *diaeta* at Oplontis was possibly more luxe: its floors marble instead of black and white mosaic, and wall paneling of (probably) finely carved imported wood instead of wall paintings (although the paintings from the Villa San Marco are undoubtedly fine). Furthermore, the new pool at Oplontis, if the excavators' hypothesis is correct, would have been made approximately five times wider than its previous version.[182] (figure 18) To put this into perspective, the renovation made the pool approximately twice the width of the pools at the Villa dei Papiri and the Villa San Marco, and about half the width of the massive, encyclopaedic garden of the Villa Arianna. In other words, the mid-first century CE owners of Villa A were not just maintaining the status quo; they were expending resources to make their villa grander, and possibly even more magnificent than its peers.

An interpretation of the holistic experience of the villa in its final decorative phase has not been an explicit priority of the Oplontis Project, possibly because excavators have speculated that the Villa was abandoned by 79 CE.[183] While the renovations described above certainly testify to the investment of owners at a later period, there is also accumulating evidence that suggests the owners decided to liquidate the property by the time of the eruption. The Villa was probably not a primary residence, as a family wealthy enough to own such a place would likely

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[180] De Caro 2008, 23 suggests "cedar and other rare woods," but his evidence is comparative: a quotation of Cato the Elder, recorded by Festus (282 L). A recent archaeobotanic study – Moser et al. 2013 – tested a fragment of charcoal from room 78 and determined it was of the *Pinus sylvestris* group, which includes the species black pine and Scots pine: the former often found in the Mediterranean mountains, including the Alps and the central Apennines, and the later commonly distributed in northern Europe. The study concluded that the walls of room 78 were probably covered in planks of either species, probably black pine. (see especially 400-404)
[181] De Caro 2008, note 12.
[182] Thomas and Clarke 2011.
[183] See, for example, research question three in Thomas and Clarke 2007, 223. Regina Gee's more recent work offers the most holistic view of the villa's wall paintings. E.g., Gee 2016.

have had several others. De Franciscis discovered very few finds that would have served the needs of daily life: no tools, furniture, or dining-ware were found in the Villa. The kitchen, room 7, showed no signs of use, as it contained no dishes, cooking-ware, or utensils. Impressive, monolithic marble columns – which have not been observed in other Campanian villas – were found lying in room 21, and various decorative sculptures were found in situ in the gardens of the Villa and also grouped together in the corner of the porch 33.[184] The early excavators also found lamps stacked as if kept in storage.[185] De Franciscis notes that no human or animal remains were found at Villa A, but it is possible that the inhabitants – for surely there must have been someone looking after the Villa – fled 300 meters down the coast to Villa B, situated on the water.[186] Fifty-four bodies were discovered there gathered together in room 10, south-facing, on the ground-floor, probably in wait of a boat that never came.

While it is possible that this sparsity on the ground at Villa A indicates an ongoing large-scale renovation in 79 CE, some evidence seems more suggestive of abandonment. First, a recent archaeobotanical study of the north garden and *viridarium* 20 argues in favor of abandonment, but its results are by no means conclusive.[187] Second, by the final phase, the *opus sectile* floors in room 69 and the *diaeta* 78 had been or were in the process of being dismantled; their marble may have been sold or moved to a different villa or house. (figures 14 and 19) These floors, as part of the Fourth-Period-Style renovations, had only been in use for a relatively short amount of time, and the concrete that remains under the marble does not suggest any seismic damage.[188] While it is possible that a new owner in the 70s CE disliked *opus sectile* and preferred to change it, this

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[184] See Bergmann 2000, 92 (figure 2) for the findspots of the marble sculpture marked on the Villa's plan.
[185] De Franciscis 1975 makes these preliminary observations, though he hypothesizes that these were a product of renovation, not abandonment. (7-8)
[186] Villa A was on a bluff: see Di Maio 2015 on the geoarchaeology of the coast. Thomas et al. 2013 reports the discovery of numerous Neronian and Flavian coins at Villa B, evidence of continued economic activity up until the eruption. (7)
[187] Moser et al. 2013.
[188] Barker and Clarke 2015.

seems rather improbable: *opus sectile* is understood to have been a very rich form of decoration which few (if any) forms of pavement could surpass in luxury, especially in a domestic setting.

The Periodization of Style at Oplontis

While studies of other villas – and indeed, earlier studies of Villa A[189] – tend to date building phases in terms of imperial reign – e.g., an expansion in the Augustan period (as indicated by Third Period Style decoration), or a renovation in the Neronian/Flavian period (in the Fourth Period Style) – the publications of the members of the Oplontis Project identify the building and painting phases of the Villa strictly by their Period Style.[190] This strategy, aligned with previous wall painting studies of the twentieth century, encourages clear explanations of the chronological development of complicated decorative ensembles – such as that of room 8 (see figure 8) – but it also has yielded interpretations that are primarily chronological, implying a situation in which painters could *only* decorate in the Period Style most popular in the decades in which they lived and worked. This tidiness obscures the complexity of ancient reality, as several rooms contain a mixture of preserved, reworked, or replaced frescoes belonging to different periods. As the work of Regina Gee has shown, there is clear surviving evidence at Oplontis that at certain times different Period Styles were being produced simultaneously, which suggests that the Second- and Third-Period Styles never completely went out of fashion; paintings of both categories were actively preserved and even repainted by later workshops.[191]

This periodization of style at Oplontis has tended to turn the study of its wall paintings into a diachronic narrative of development that goes hand-in-hand with the expansion of the

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[189] De Franciscis 1975a, for example, dates the bath complex to the Augustan period, but describes its decoration as late-Second or early-Third. See also De Franciscis 1975c, 12.
[190] For example, the Second Style tends to be termed the "earliest phase" or something similar (e.g., Thomas and Clarke 2008, 466).
[191] Gee 2015a; Gee 2015b; Gee 2016.

villa, each Style "belonging" to a particular version of Villa A and so interpreted in that temporal context.[192] Up until very recently, as noted by Regina Gee, this approach has sidelined serious study of paintings at the Villa that do not fit into Mau's four stylistic categories.[193] The "zebra-stripe" motif, black and white striations which might represent Carrara (also called Bardiglio or Luna) marble, is painted extensively throughout Villa A with some interesting variation, but it has yet to receive serious analysis.[194] (figures 20-22) Likewise, the garden paintings visible along the north-south axis of interior windows in the east wing (figure 23), while they are certainly better known than the "zebra-stripe" decorations, have also until recently received little scholarly attention despite their prominent display[195], as have the garden paintings in the inner garden 20, which seem to have occupied very prominent real estate at the heart of the villa and on its central north-south axis. (figure 24-25) Bettina Bergmann has recently addressed the Villa's garden paintings, but notably, she does so in a chapter separate from Regina Gee's analysis of the rest of the Villa's paintings.[196] Another overlooked decorative scheme is the elegant "wallpaper" or *Tapetenmuster* design in room 31 (figure 26), comparable to the decoration of room 9 at the Villa Arianna at Stabiae, but this room is only partially excavated.

While we know the least about the earliest phases of Villa "A," its earliest extant decorations, dating to the Second Style period, have received at least as much or more scholarly attention than all of its later later paintings.[197] There is a good reason for this: the decoration of five rooms at the core of the villa, including the atrium (5), *cubiculum* 11, *triclinium* 14, *oecus* 15, and *triclinium* 23, have been considered brilliant exemplars of Second Style painting in its mature phase (1c according to Beyen's system), and they are undoubtedly of very fine quality.

[192] On a critique of narrative, see Gee 2015a; Gee 2015b; Gee 2016.
[193] Gee 2015a and Gee 2015b, for example.
[194] See brief mentions in Gee 2015a; Gee 2015b; McAlpine 2014; Laken 2003; Corrado Goulet 2001-2002.
[195] Bergmann 2002 is a notable exception, as well as Bergmann 2016.
[196] Bergmann 2016; Gee 2016.
[197] More recently, e.g., Clarke 2014 and Clarke 2013.

They have also been attributed to the so-called Boscoreale Workshop, currently the only identifiable Second-Period Style workshop, the same group that painted *cubiculum* m in the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale. Past studies have, accordingly, evaluated these rooms within first-century BCE contexts, thus segregating the core of the Villa from the rooms around it; these studies have prioritized questions about the origins of the paintings and their possible meanings when they were executed, and assess how they compare to other paintings by the same workshop or in the same Style, on the assumption that they date to the same period.[198]

Scholarly focus on these five rooms' "original" state is rather striking, considering that several subsequent modifications testify to their longevity. The doorway cut through the north alcove of *cubiculum* 11 is perhaps the most visible example of this. (figure 27) Although Clarke argued earlier that the doorway was part of the original plan, as suggested by painted plaster on the door jambs[199], this evidence is not definitive: painted plaster could have been applied at a later phase of redecoration. I would argue instead that this opening was probably not part of the original plan of the first-century BCE architect, but rather was made when the adjacent room 12 was redesigned. The best evidence for this later modification is the black and white mosaic representing a *scendiletto*, or bedside carpet, in the room's northern alcove, which strongly suggests that the alcove was initially meant to have accommodated a couch. Just as *emblema* are strongly suggestive of where couches would have been located in dining spaces, the function of *scendiletti* were to delineate where couches would have been located in *cubicula*.[200] A similar delineation of interior space may be observed in other rooms of Villa A: rooms 25 and 30, and

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[198] They are evaluated, for example, in the chapter "Decorative Ensembles of the Late Republic, 100-30 B.C.," Clarke 1991, 113-123, alongside the Second Style paintings of the Villa of the Mysteries, and in a separate chapter from Villa A's Third Style and Fourth Style decoration (126-140 and 166-170, respectively). Without mention of the villa around them, Leach 1982 cites the five Second Style rooms – and particularly the atrium – as the cornerstone of her argument for Second Style workshops. She interprets these rooms along with paintings from the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, the House of the Labyrinth, and the Villa of the Mysteries, to have been painted by the same Campanian workshop in the so-called "porticus" style.
[199] Clarke 1987, 279. He does not hold this opinion presently.
[200] Dunbabin 1999, 305-6.

the north alcove of room 41, although this may be observed in numerous other Campanian *cubicula*, including *cubiculum* 89 of the Villa Arianna, *cubiculum* 7 of the House of M. Fabius Rufus, and *cubiculum* z of the House of the Silver Wedding, among many others.[201]

However, in *cubiculum* 11 at Oplontis, the construction of the door transformed the alcove into a passageway, suggesting that different functions were required of the room at a later time. This particular modification is not unique to this alcove and actually can be observed elsewhere in Villa A – as in room 17, whose added door in the southwest corner provided entry to room 18, which was at a lower level and so necessitated the construction of stairs, and in the west alcove of room 41. We may also observe this change of function in the modifications of the double-alcoved room 4 of the Villa of the Mysteries, although in this case, doors were cut through *both* alcoves. Apart from the evidence of the *scendiletto* in the northern alcove of *cubiculum* 11 of Villa A, the painting of the northern alcove does not accommodate the doorway, which interferes with the otherwise careful pictorial symmetry of each alcove, and even appears to dismember the right hand of the sculpture of a goddess.[202]

Just as significant is the modification of the southeast wall of room 14. Sometime in the early-first century CE, the doorway between rooms 14 and 10b was either shifted southward or narrowed. This is evident from a vertical seam down the east wall of room 14 and a corresponding patch of brick wall visible on the northwest wall of 10b. (figure 28) As I have noted above, all the other Second Period Style walls were constructed using *opus incertum* with volcanic stone.[203] It seems this modification was not due to seismic damage because the seam

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[201] See Anguissola 2010, particularly chapter 3 – "L'architettura dei cubicula nelle case di Pompei" – for other examples, and a discussion of the delineation of space in cubicula in Pompeii. She observes that the mosaic *scendiletto* becomes an "obligatory" feature to mark off alcoves beginning in the Second Style. (71-73)
[202] The interruption of the painted composition in the north alcove of *cubiculum* 11 in itself is not definitive proof that the door was not original, however. The southeast doorway of room 15 also abruptly cuts off a column and the chin of a mask. The window in the far wall of *cubiculum* M of the Villa of P. Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale also seems to interrupt the room's otherwise careful symmetry.
[203] This modification is described in Clarke and Thomas 2009, 225, fig. 3-4; see also Ehrhardt 2012, 85-86, Abb. 51-56.

looks to have been cut deliberately to the right of the golden column (or *columna caelata*), entwined with golden vines and studded with blue and red gems, on the east wall of room 14. After the original doorway was filled in with brick, the side of the wall in room 14 was painted in "Second" Style, matching the room around it, and the side in room 10b was decorated in contemporary, Third-Period Style painting.[204] Here is a remarkable example of two different Period Styles painted in the same phase. While the later "Second"-Style painting in room 14 is convincing, it was clearly executed by a different hand than the one that painted the wall north of the seam. (figures 29-30) The first century CE painter carefully mimicked the scene on the opposite wall in mirror reversal: a gilded bronze incense burner with lion's paw feet perched in front of a porphyry red panel, the pink and blue frieze supporting a silver vessel above; the column in Numidian marble (*giallo antico*), and the low red-pink wall with receding golden pilasters peeking above. The painter also attempted to mimic the delicately-rendered bird perched on the projecting socle. (figures 31-32) The later, "Second" Style painting on the east wall of room 14 has clearly suffered more damage than the original Second Style painting on its west wall, so it is difficult to compare the quality of the paintings. For example, the detail of the eastern incense burner on the east wall has been mostly lost. Furthermore, it seems as though different pigments were used to depict the purple and red-pink panels: the coloring on the west looks to have been created with cinnabar, while the colors on the east wall seem to have been created with red ocher. Despite these differences, various preserved details from the east wall repair speak to the delicacy with which this painting was rendered: the sensitivity of the painter to the veins of the Numidian marble, for example, and the carefully shaded shadow of the bird, which conveys perhaps a bit more realism than the quick brushstrokes on the opposite wall. (see figures 31 and 32)

[204] Thomas and Clarke 2007, 225-6; Clarke and Thomas 2008, 466.

While room 14 offers an example of "Second" Style repairs executed relatively seamlessly in the early first century CE, the extant paintings in the atrium (5) present an even more striking example. A recent analysis by Regina Gee convincingly argues that the middle and lower registers of both the west and east walls of the atrium (5) were decorated with "Second" Style painting in the mid-first century CE, in the course of the renovations undertaken during the period of the Fourth Style.[205] (figure 33) Gee also identifies several fresco fragments from the upper register that were not reattached to the wall by the Italian restorers as examples of the genuine Second-Period Style painted by the Boscoreale Workshop.[206] It is unclear whether the later painters attempted to replicate or replace an earlier, original Second-Period Style scheme on the middle and lower registers. There is also the possibility, although it seems unlikely, that they replaced a Third- or Fourth-Period Style scheme that was no longer wanted.

It has been observed[207] that the paintings in the atrium are unique in that they present a closed perspectival system in its middle zone: in contrast to the Villa's other Second-Period Style paintings that break through the plane of the wall, offering the viewer scenes that stretch far into the distance, the atrium's extant architectonic paintings – at least in the middle and lower registers – offer only shallow illusionistic depth. On each wall, painted steps lead up to two grand (false) doors, yellow and porphyry red, decorated with winged victories and surmounted by landscape paintings above their lintels. Painted shields with expressive portrait heads (*imagines clipeatae*) – the only Second Style painting in the villa to depict human faces – are fixed on cornices while trophies or *cistae* are presented below. Gee observes that this is the only Second Style painting in the villa to present an iconography of agonistic victory, referenced by the shields, fillets draped on altars, and the trophies.[208] I would add that the perspectival system

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[205] See discussions in Gee 2015a; Gee 2015b; Gee 2016.
[206] Gee 2016, note 28.
[207] For example, in Leach 2004, 81-84.
[208] Gee Gee 2015a; Gee 2015b.

of the atrium is also unique: while the southern doors are painted frontally, the northern doors are depicted with dramatic foreshortening that only resolves if the viewer is standing in the center of the room, near the *impluvium*. In comparison, the perspective rendered on the east wall in room 15 is much more accommodating, as the podium seems to open up to the viewer wherever he or she stands in the room. The painting of the atrium does not offer an escapist, fantastical hyperreality, as does room 15: these paintings instead forcefully plant the viewer in the room, and surround him or her with a setting in which every detail asserts the wealth, nobility, and power of the household – just beyond the doors.[209]

These distinctions alone do not prove the later date of the atrium's paintings; far more convincing is the technical evidence Gee presents. A chemical analysis of the pigments conducted in the Second-Period Style rooms of Villa A revealed aspects of the singularity of the atrium: first, the use of cinnabar, a defining quality of the paintings attributed to the Boscoreale Workshop, is completely absent in the atrium, while it is lavishly used in the other Second-Period Style rooms, and also in the Second-Period Style rooms at the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, including rooms c, f, h, g, the upper register of peristyle e, *exedra* l, *cubiculum* m, and probably room n.[210] In Villa A's atrium, less brilliant (and cheaper) red ochre was used instead. Second, the painted alabaster in the atrium is depicted differently: chemical analysis indicated that the pink-grey color used extensively in the alabaster of the atrium is absent in the alabaster depicted in other Second Style rooms. In addition, the depiction of the atrium alabaster is more schematic, especially on the east wall, where the painter presents a busy pattern of horizontal lines with similar widths and a regular repetition of colors. A "cloud" on the far-right edge of the right column seems to wave at naturalism without getting all the way there. (figure 34) This

[209] The victory iconography calls to mind Pliny the Elder's anecdote that Sulla commemorated a military victory with a painting in his Tusculan villa, which was later owned by Cicero. (*NH* 22.6.12)
[210] See Vitruvius 7.8-9 for a description of the expense and challenges of preparing cinnabar.

approach to painted marble seems to be a characteristic of the Fourth Style period, at which time painters generally aimed to reference marble without necessarily prioritizing realism.[211]

Gee's argument, while initially controversial, is important in that it goes beyond stylistic analysis: as she proves, painting style was manipulated in this setting. Along with the modifications in rooms 14 and 11, Gee's work also serves as an important testament to the "impurity" of what remains of Second-Period Style painting. While the field of Roman wall painting has defined itself through the neat succession of the Four Styles, it has tended to take for granted that what remains of the First, Second, and Third Styles are remnants: not necessarily representative of all painting in Campania beginning in the second century BCE, but rather, reflective of what later generations chose to keep on their walls according to their own tastes, as though they were collectors. These were not paintings left in the quiet darkness of a tomb; rather, they adorned walls that were consistently in use for generations beyond their execution. While work at Oplontis has served to validate the chronology of Mau's Period Styles, it also highlights the filter of the first century CE through which scholars have assessed earlier paintings, and reminds us that the people of the first century CE retained only what they wanted, and were not afraid to modify the original painting to suit their needs.

This same kind of critical analysis may be applied to the villa's Third Style painting. Clarke's 1987 study of Villa A's Third Style ensembles offers masterful descriptions of Third Style decorations in six rooms at Oplontis, but also tends to decontextualize the rooms from the villa around them, interpreting them as they would have been seen by a viewer familiar with the Second Style.[212] But these Third Style rooms should not be taken as a complete portrait of the Third Style redecorative phase (or phases) at the Villa: these Third Style rooms (25, 12, 10b, 30,

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[211] See McAlpine 2014 for a study of painted marble in Roman wall painting.

[212] E.g., "In a word, the ancient viewer entering this room, just freshly painted around 10 B.C. – 1 B.C., was looking at the latest new fashion in wall painting of the time." (Clarke 1987, 272) "What remains of Room 12's early Third-Style decoration would have struck the ancient viewer with its novelty and daring." (Clarke 1987, 280)

17, and 21) had been cherry-picked, for whatever reason, in subsequent phases by the villa's later owners, who decided to keep the paintings of those rooms and plaster over the others, including the entire bath complex, the northern peristyles 63 and 34, room 27 with the household shrine, the southern peristyles 13 and 24, passageway 37, and rooms 38 and 41 – spaces that were redecorated in the Fourth Style period. If Clarke's dating of the Third Style mosaics is correct, at least 17 spaces were once decorated with Third Style painting, but his analysis can only evaluate six. Furthermore, one of these six has no painting left: propylon 21, while it was apparently not redecorated with Fourth Style painting, retains none of its plaster.[213] As I describe below, another one of the six, room 17, was partially modified at a later phase and adorned with a Fourth-Period Style socle.

More recently, Regina Gee has also made an important contribution to the study of the villa's Third-Period Style paintings. Again, she complicates the stylistic narrative, observing other instances of modification that blur the line between the Third- and Fourth-Period Styles and obscures the Third-Period Style redecorative phase even more. A set of rooms (17, 18, and 8) to the west of *propylon* 21 was originally painted in the early Third Style, also known as the "candelabrum style," possibly all by the same workshop.[214] At a later phase, each room was modified in a different way. Room 17 featured a middle zone of cinnabar red, delicate architectural elements and Egyptianizing motifs in pink, light blue, and green. At a certain point, the room was modified: a door was added in the southwest corner (as mentioned above) and the socle was repainted in a mode characteristic of the early Fourth-Period Style: black panels with

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[213] Clarke uses the candelabrum mosaic in the room to date its approximate decoration to the last two decades of the first century BCE and even speculates that its decoration must have been a refined version of the "candelabrum style" which had been dated to around this time. (292) Whatever the case, the room was modified at a later date, as suggested by walls of *opus mixtum* and the stucco revetments of the propylon piers that cover parts of the Third Style mosaic. (see fig. 5 in Thomas and Clarke 2008, 468)

[214] Mau proposed that the "candelabrum style," dated c. 20-1 BCE, was a transition between the Second and Third Styles. Bastet subdivided the early Third Style into 1a, 20-10 BCE, and 1b, 10-1 BCE.

white carpet bands, and plant motifs below. Gee observes that while this later socle harmonizes with the earlier, Third-Period Style decorations, a choice was made not to reproduce the original, more delicate motifs which can be observed in the socle of the "matching" Third-Period Style room 30, just on the east side of *propylon* 21.[215] Room 18, in contrast, was completely redone: its ceiling was lowered, and above it traces of Third-Period Style painting indicate that the room once had the same light blue and pink color palette as room 17. While room 18 also received a Fourth-Period Style black socle, its middle zone was decorated with alternating purple-red and black panels in the middle zone with yellow candelabra and brown *aedicula*, and its upper zone was painted with purple-red and yellow panels with white tapestry bands. The only remaining element of its Third-Period Style redecoration is its mosaic flooring, whose southeast corner was cut off by a later addition of stairs.

Room 8, whose decoration and redecoration has been described above[216], also had a palette of pink, light blue and green and a middle zone of brilliant, cinnabar red; its decoration, however, is remarkable for its large landscape scenes, including the scene of Hercules with the apples of the Hesperides in the east wall niche – the only extant mythological painting in the villa. The modification of room 8 (figure 8) involved transforming the space from a caldarium to a place for reception and entertainment. This remodeling was much more complex than that of the other rooms, requiring repainting the lower and middle zones of the east (and part of the west) walls to match those of the north and south, and repainting the entire upper zone of all four walls in a Fourth-Style mode. The most obvious difference in the later repainting is that the red in its middle zone is not a true cinnabar red but a cinnabar red wash over a yellow ochre field, which would have been less expensive to execute. Furthermore, the later frieze seems to have been painted black instead of a dark (porphyry?) red. (see figures 35-36) One wonders if the

[215] Gee 2016.
[216] And, of course, more expertly described in Clarke 1987.

difference in hue would have been noticeable without the aid of modern lighting, especially in the back wall of a relatively large room. It is also possible that whoever commissioned the redecoration did not mind the slight contrasts, and perhaps even appreciated them, especially with the contrast of the newly repainted upper register.

Gee's study again underlines the complexity of the longevity of wall painting at Oplontis. The three neighboring rooms painted in the same Period Style, presumably in the same phase, all met completely different redecorative fates: minor repainting (while its counterpart was completely preserved), complete redecoration, and a mixture of repainting and conservation of the original motif. While the periodization of style at Oplontis encourages us to consider these rooms under the umbrella of a single decorative phase, this is probably a tidier narrative than reality: these rooms, like many other spaces at the Villa, were all works in progress, frequently subject to repainting and repair, until the eruption of the volcano.

It is well worth wondering how sensitive to the sometimes minute stylistic adjustments of painting the first-century CE viewer would have been. In the case of room 8, for example, would the mid-first century viewer have recognized that the upper register did not stylistically "match" the middle and lower registers? It is possible that the most observant would have recognized the difference, especially in the class of villa owners and their families, who commissioned the same kind of redecorations in their own domestic environments. The range of styles on display in the collection of about 90 statues discovered at the Villa dei Papiri – from the archaistic Athena Promachos, to the severizing Peplophoroi, to the Hellenistic Drunken Satyr – suggests that the elite viewer was not only supposed to notice this variety of styles but also to appreciate their impressive range.[217] In fact, the composition of that sculpture collection suggests that the stylistic categories were often fluid, perhaps intentionally so. In the case of room 8 at Oplontis, it is

[217] See discussion in Mattusch 2004 and Mattusch 2010.

entirely possible that more sensitive viewers recognized the charm of the "older" (Third-Period Style) panel paintings and also appreciated that the upper register was "updated" in a new mode.

It seems evident that in the art of the elite domestic environment, notions of the "aura" of authenticity and stylistic purity had much less importance, if any at all. Some decorations were no doubt recognized as older, and valued much like antiques: the painstaking maintenance of Villa A's Second Period Style rooms seems to suggest this, as do the repairs of several rooms of the Villa Arianna at Stabiae, including *cubicula* 44 and 45 just south of its atrium (24).[218] In fact, in Pliny's letter to Domitius Apollinaris (5.6) describing his Tuscan villa, discussed in the last chapter, he neutrally describes the atrium of the villa as "*ex more veterum*" (5.6.16), "of an older style," although here it is not clear whether he is referring to the architectural form of the room or its decoration. Of course, the quantity of preserved Second Period Style painting could have been a matter of the personal taste of owners more than a cultural trend. The Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor's extant decorative program was almost entirely painting of the Second Period Style, despite evidence of several renovations – opportunities for repainting – in the first century CE. On a passage in which he discusses the challenge of identifying the best style of oratory, Cicero writes:

> *varia enim sunt iudicia, ut in Graecis, nec facilis explicatio quae forma maxime excellat. In picturis alios horrida inculta, abdita et opaca, contra alios nitida laeta conlustrata delectant. Quid est quo praescriptum aliquod aut formulam exprimas, cum in suo quidque genere praestet et genera plum sint?*
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> There are a variety of opinions (*varia…iudicia*), as there are Greek authors, and it is not easy to explain which type (*forma*) is the most excellent. In the case of painting, some like them rough, unpolished, and somber, while in contrast others prefer them polished bright, cheerful, and luminous. What is the rule or formula with which you make such a

[218] And possibly other rooms around the atrium, including 39.

pronouncement, when each one excels in its own style (*in suo…genere*), and there are many styles (*genera plura sint*)?[219] (*Orator*, 11)

Decorum and the Function of Style at Oplontis

When it came to decorating a domestic environment, it seems that a much greater concern than artistic originality or the date of a work's production was appropriateness.[220] Embedded in this concept was the close relationship between subject and setting; in chapter two of this work, I attempt to show that style, at least as defined in ancient rhetorical theory, was also intimately connected to this important ancient value.[221] While the Roman villa was certainly an environment for display, one that flaunted the owner's culture, education, and resources, it was a dwelling with spaces that had particular (if variable) uses, not a "museum" with a series of uniform galleries and a blandly chronological installation.

A set of ten letters (1.1, 1.3-11) Cicero wrote his friend Atticus reveal a collecting mentality that was, above all, specifically concerned about the setting in which art would be displayed appropriately in his newly acquired villa at Tusculum.[222] Atticus at this time (c. 68-65 BCE) was in Athens, "at the source," and sent back to Italy several decorative items for which Cicero paid him, including herms made of Pentelic marble with bronze heads of Athena (1.1.5) and Heracles (1.10.3); statues made of Megaric marble, which cost Cicero 20,400 sesterces (1.8.2; 1.9.2); images (perhaps medallions?) to insert into the walls of his *atriolum*, or secondary atrium (1.10.3); and two engraved well-covers (*putealia sigillata duo*, 1.10.3). Cicero does not tell Atticus exactly what to buy; rather, he tells his friend which spaces in his villa he wants to

[219] Of course, Cicero is undeterred by this challenge, insisting that "in all things there is a certain best, even if it is not apparent, and this can be recognized by one who is expert (*gnarus*) of that thing"…meaning, of course, himself.
[220] Gazda 2015, 8. See also Perry 2005, especially chapters 1-2.
[221] See also Perry 2005, esp. 50-52.
[222] Leen 1991 offers a good discussion of these letters and the art mentioned in them. See also the more recent discussion in Squire 2015, 592-3.

decorate, including his gymnasium and colonnades (*xysti*).[223] He does not specify artist or time period, the kind of information prioritized on a museum label; what seems to matter more is that the decorations will be appropriate in the spaces they adorn.

A later letter, to M. Fadius Gallus (*ad Familiares* 7.23), underlines this mentality in a contrasting way: Gallus, like Atticus, has bought Cicero a selection of items, but in this situation Cicero is less than pleased. Not only is their price too high ("one which I consider excessive for all statues everywhere," 7.23.2); Gallus has also bought the wrong *kind* of objects, both in terms of their subject and their medium. At his Tusculum villa, Cicero has constructed a new exedra which he was wanting to decorate with panel paintings (*tabellis*), a medium which apparently was not included in Gallus' selection. Furthermore, Gallus has purchased several sculptures of which Cicero disapproves: Bacchae, whose subject matter makes them unsuitable for any place in Cicero's residence, including (or *especially*) his library, and a statue of Mars, which subject matter is unsuitable because Cicero considers himself an "instigator (*auctor*) of peace." At no point in the letter does Cicero discuss the dating of the sculptures, although it is worth noting that his is a single perspective dating to about a century before Villa A's final phase of use.

In studies of wall painting programs, especially the highly periodized scholarship addressing the decorations of Villa A at Oplontis, the chronology of decoration has taken the focus of its interpretation; however, even if the Villa's residents regarded its Second Period Style painting as older or "old fashioned," this seems to tell only part of their story as domestic decorations. Mau's Stylistic system does not account for the setting of the decoration, its function, or its economy. Because of this, interpretations regarding setting, function, and cost have been completely sidelined.

[223] Marvin 1989.

Reconsidering the stylistic categories according to the interpretive framework I propose at the end of the second chapter might allow us to interpret this material differently, in ways that are perhaps closer to how ancient people might have regarded and used wall painting. The three-type of style model, borrowed from Roman rhetorical theory, is atemporal, and corresponds instead to the paintings' visual functions and level of ornamentation. From this we can also make additional interpretations about their economies of production, as I have already suggested.

I propose this framework at the end of my second chapter, and here I will discuss it specifically using the painted decorations from Villa A. The stylistic types are represented in the following chart (also presented at the end of chapter two):

style type		*function*	*characteristics in wall painting*
Grand		to move, sway, compel	ornate, intricate, dramatic, meaningful highly illusionistic (requiring highly skilled craftmanship); can seem to extend space in a significant way includes mythological scenes and other large-scale figural representation use of variety of pigments and expensive mixtures of colors (cinnabar, Egyptian blue) expensive to execute; so probably more likely to be preserved
		(middle/grand)	
Middle		to charm or delight	pleasantly decorative and repetitive shallow illusionism extends visual space in a minor way (e.g., garden painting) intricately formulaic
		(simple/middle)	
Simple		to teach/convey information clearly	simple, clear, abstract schematic, not illusionistic use of simple pigments applied less precisely (white ground, black and red lines) inexpensive to execute; so probably more likely to be repainted

Table 4.1. Campanian wall painting sorted by functional, stylistic "type."

As I wrote at the end of chapter two, these categories roughly group the paintings into three social zones[224] of the villa, which may be represented graphically using Wallace-Hadrill's Axes of Differentiation[225]:

[224] This term used to reference Lorenz 2014, 183.
[225] Wallace-Hadrill 1988, 50-58.

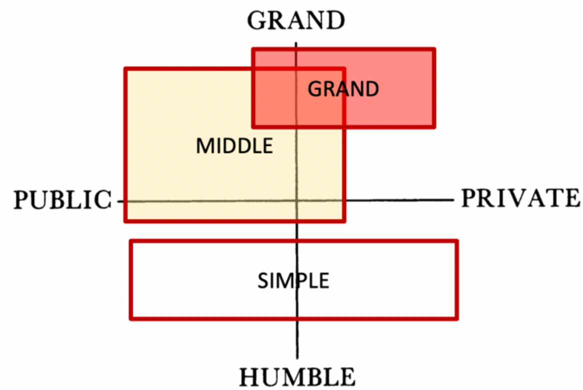

Table 4.2. Stylistic types charted onto Wallace-Hadrill's Axes of Differentiation.

In Villa A, the following could be categorized as decorations of a "grand" style:

-its preserved Second Period Style rooms attributed to the Boscoreale Workshop (rooms 14, 15, 23, 11)

-its preserved/repainted room 8 with its Third Period Style panel paintings

-possibly the wood panel decorations of diaeta 78

-69 and 21 (?)

The following could be categorized as decorations of a "middle" style:

-paintings along the walkways of peristyles (13, 16, 33, 34, 24, 40, 60)

-garden paintings in viridarium 20, and interior gardens 68 and 70

-Third Period Style cubicula and anterooms, such as 25, 38, 41

The following could be categorized as decorations of a "simple" style:

-"zebra-stripe" paintings encompassing the service peristyle (32)

-"zebra-stripe" paintings in the narrow corridors 3 and 6

-"zebra-stripe" paintings along the interior corridors 45 and 46

Re-sorting the painted material in this way provides some interesting contrasts, particularly pertaining to what must have been the Villa's finer entertainment spaces, both public and private. Early paintings of grander styles were painstakingly preserved in larger rooms, perhaps because they were still visually majestic, and perhaps because they had been more expensive to execute. This includes the Second Period Style decorations of rooms 14 and 15 and the intimate cubiculum 11, as well as the restored Third Period panel paintings in room 8. Interestingly, none of the Villa's Fourth-Period Style preserved paintings seem to be as elaborate as the decorations found in these older rooms. The walls of rooms 69 and 21, both larger spaces that looked into the Villa's northern gardens, were found undecorated; perhaps they were slated for new paintings of a grand style, similar to the grand Fourth Period Style of paintings found in the "grand triclinium" (3) at the Villa Arianna. (figure 37) It is also possible that they were slated for even richer decorations, such as actual marble paneling.[226] Whatever their decoration, these seem to have been significant spaces because of their sizes and other expensive decoration: the dismantled *opus sectile* floor in 69, for example, and the tall columns in 21 (figure 11), between which one could look through the central axis of the villa, including its atrium, and potentially see the bay, as Bettina Bergmann has suggested.[227] Along these lines, I posit that the wood panel decorations of *diaeta* 78 were considered a grand kind of decoration; the room also had once featured *opus sectile* flooring, which was dismantled however by the time of the eruption.[228]

Earlier paintings of middle and simple styles, in contrast, must have been updated in more contemporary modes, perhaps because they adorned long hallways and peristyles in what

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[226] Pliny the Elder reports that in the mid-first century CE, wall paintings fell out of popularity in favor of entire walls covered with marble, which could be carved to represent animals and other things; in Nero's time the marble itself was painted, with spots and veins to "vary the uniformity" (*unitatem variare*). (*NH* 35.1) Discussed in detail in McAlpine 2016 and Barker 2016.
[227] See a reconstruction of this view in the header image of Bergmann 2016, 96.
[228] See Barker and Clarke 2015 for more on the decoration of *diaeta* 78.

must have been common walkways of the villa. The original Second Period Style decorative program was probably once as richly diverse as the one found at the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor in Boscoreale. Accordingly, Villa A, in its late Republican form, once must have had Second Period Style paintings of a middle stylistic type that would have been appropriate for a peristyle, although we cannot know for certain where this peristyle once was located. A colonnade discovered under the mosaic pavement of peristyle 16, published by D'Ambrosio[229], might have been decorated in such a mode, comparable to the elegantly garlanded walls discovered around the peristyle (e) of the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor. (figure 38)

The abstract "zebra-stripe" painting must certainly have been of a more simple stylistic type. These paintings were located in less public areas of the Villa [i.e., its "service" peristyle (32)] and also very public areas: the broad space of corridor 46, for example, as well as its proximity to the Villa's latrine (48), suggest that it was not merely for slaves' use. So it seems this painting mode, although relatively cheap to execute, was not meant to be strictly "humble"; instead, it seems to have served the function of directing general foot traffic, or at least of identifying its corridors as "places of movement," as a similar motif demarcates some contemporary subway stations in New York City. (figure 39) Unlike in the subway, however, at Oplontis the pattern has variety; it is only rarely unidimensional (see, for example, figures 20 and 21). Studies dedicated to these paintings by the Oplontis team are forthcoming and promise to yield more specific interpretations about their uses.

Varietas at mid-first century CE Oplontis

From the section above we might surmise that although some paintings were probably recognized as older or "old fashioned," this seems to tell only part of their story as domestic

[229] D'Ambrosio 1987.

decorations: "on the ground," the setting of the decoration, its function, and its cost would also have been significant. This information, however, is bypassed by interpretations using the Period Styles, which shift scholarly focus to deciphering the intricate chronologies of decorative phases. This method is not very useful for interpreting the paintings of the final phase, which have little chronological information to yield. For this reason, the Fourth Period Style category of paintings, the majority of the corpus of extant Campanian paintings, has gone largely under-interpreted. Modern art historical criteria, such as its dating and executing workshop, is only mildly useful for this body of evidence. No scholar has been able to explain satisfactorily a single aesthetic principle underlying its tremendous variety of decorations.

While we cannot theorize a great deal about the cohesive decorative program of Villa A in the mid-first century BCE, we might begin to assess the decorative aesthetic that guided its first-century CE owners, particularly those who financed the phases of renovation after 45 CE, including the construction of its east wing. By this point, the villa's decoration was boldly diverse, and intentionally so. Mid-first century owners who could afford the construction of an east wing and overhaul of older parts of the Villa could have also afforded to replace the older painting, if they so desired. In fact, they often did, as evidenced by the numerous rooms around the Villa's core that have Third Period Style mosaics and Fourth Period Style wall paintings. However, first century CE owners at Oplontis also chose variation. Around the Villa's core, only two pairs of rooms painted in the same Period Style share a threshold: the magnificent entertainment rooms 14 and 15, and the decidedly more intimate anteroom 38 and cubiculum 41. The majestic quality of the frescoes in 14 and 15 allow one to speculate that the Villa's owners, while they preferred stylistic variation, valued these grand, "old-fashioned" paintings even more.[230] Yet this was not always true. Room 12, originally painted in fine Second Style similar

[230] Gee 2016 speculates that the Second Style frescoes might even have been associated with a famous workshop, perhaps the famous Boscoreale Workshop, and so valued even more.

to that in room 11, was repainted in the Third Style period, probably when the rooms were connected by the door through the northern alcove of cubiculum 11.[231] The renovation of rooms 17, 18, and 8, all of which share a threshold, follows a similar pattern: while there is evidence that these three rooms were painted in the "candelabrum" style sharing the same palette, a renovation altered their uniformity. When a door was built to connect 17 and 18, room 17 retained most of its Third Style decoration while room 18 was completely transformed with a different palette and bold Fourth Period Style motifs. Just over the southern threshold, the majestic Third Style decoration of room 8 was heavily restored – at somewhat great pains (as described above). While the paintings in room 31, just across 18's western threshold, might be categorized as "Fourth Style," it is in the intricate "wallpaper" or *Tapetenmuster* design, distinctly different from the decoration of room 18. (figure 26) While the Second Style rooms 11, 5, and 23 are technically adjacent, they do not share thresholds.

This intentional non-uniformity is striking if one imagines the visual experience of a mid-first century CE viewer, making his or her way through the complex and encountering series of views as Pliny the Younger envisioned. Apart from the two exceptions mentioned above, and the inner, zebra-striped, service peristyle, every single transition – exiting a room, entering a room, walking down a hall – provided an encounter with a different decorative scheme. A mid-first century CE visitor invited to dine in room 8 would have had such an experience: passing from the grand "Second Period" Style decoration in the atrium (5), she would have encountered peristyle 13, updated in the Fourth Period Style, then cubiculum 11. If invited in for a private, pre-dinner chat, she would find luxuriously intimate, "old-fashioned" Second Period Style painting, and if she went further she would encounter newer Third Style decoration in the next room (12). Exiting room 12, back into the updated peristyle 13, she could proceed to 15 and

[231] At the time of the eruption, it might have been undergoing additional renovation. Clarke 1987 provides a drawing of this decorative scheme, and also describes the Second Style fragment in great detail. (280)

marvel at its impressive Second Period Style paintings before reaching the small Fourth Period Style peristyle with a fountain. From there she could enter room 8 and admire its grand "Third Style" painting of Hercules on the eastern wall, as well as the room's updated upper register.

By the mid-first century CE, Second Period Style painting was framed by Third, Third Period Style by Fourth, and Fourth Period Style by Second. This variety of decoration must have seemed quite rich: the older paintings might have suggested an old lineage and old wealth, even if the current villa owner recently purchased it, and the diversity of Fourth Period Style paintings suggested access to many different contemporary workshops. Sculpture collections might have conveyed the same associations.[232] Like sculpture, these paintings had essentially been "collected," surrounded or reinstalled with newer decoration, in a certain sense "objectified."

Other stylistic amalgams, mixed idioms, or "reframings" can be found elsewhere in the villa. In the East Wing, the taste for non-uniformity described above might be observed in the Fourth Period Style wall decorations and also in the architecture itself, which in this case is contemporary with the painting.[233] Considered as a broad category, Fourth Period Style painting is defined by its eclecticism, and the wide spectrum of Fourth Period Style decorative motifs and palettes in the East Wing testify to this. The delicate foliage and birds on white ground in portico 60, overlooking the garden and massive pool, have no visual relationship with the solid red and black panels in the central and lower registers of the adjacent rooms 66, 79, and 81, for example. The architecture of the East Wing, linking together windows and doorways to create dramatic views that incorporate a variety of stylistic encounters, serves to emphasize these variations. The technique of Roman domestic architecture to frame certain perspectives through space was first noted by Heinrich Drerup in 1959, who coined the term *Durchblick* or "view through" to

[232] As suggested in Mattusch 2005.
[233] By this I mean the core of the villa dates to the late Republican period, even though its paintings might not.

describe the axial view that greeted the viewer entering a Roman house.[234] Drerup cites the House of the Menander as his primary example, but others have followed him in numerous studies of both houses and villas in the Campanian region.[235] The effect of *Durchblick* is that a progression of axially aligned frames was meant to accentuate the length and richness of the interior space, drawing the viewer's gaze forward and along the series of variegated surfaces of space.

Villa A has not only exterior windows looking towards inner peristyles (16, 32, 40, and possibly 60) and the bay, but also many interior windows looking towards other interior spaces. (see the site lines mapped out in figure 38) All the more significant, then, was the variety of wall painting decorating those spaces, creating a rhythmic complexity that enhanced the feeling of depth and richness. In contrast, this effect could only partially be achieved by the architecture around the villa's core, which – apart from the axial view through the atrium (5), *tablinum* 4, viridarium 20, and *propylon* 21 (figure 11) – has less alignment, and so fewer opportunities for axial views. When Villa A was constructed around 50 BCE, *Durchblick* was apparently not a decorative strategy. One hundred years later, however, the intention of the entire decorative program was to provide a rich diversity of visual encounters, an experience reminiscent of the series of views – and their *varietas* – described by Pliny the Younger in his letters.

[234] Drerup 1959.
[235] For example, Thomas 2016.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

My dissertation has had several aims: the first, to address the use and validity of August Mau's problematic Four-Style system as a methodological tool for dating and analyzing Campanian wall painting and the domestic space it adorns; second, to shine light on the processes of maintenance and repair, and also redecoration, in early imperial Campanian villas, in order to reframe earlier painting through this later lens; and third, to provide a more nuanced interpretation of Roman domestic decorations of the first-century CE, one that possibly arrives at a better understanding of the category of painting referred to as the "Fourth Style" and its variegated aesthetic.

In order to do this, I investigated how Romans themselves wrote and thought about style, a concept that was profoundly theorized in Graeco-Roman culture because of its value to rhetoric. Indeed, rhetorical training gave one the tools to communicate appropriately, whether in speech or writing, publicly or privately, and so in the Roman setting it became an essential part of education for men of a range of social backgrounds (including the elite, of course, but also slaves and freedmen). By the first century BCE, there was demand for handbooks that explained this ancient technology, and the ones that have survived antiquity offer intriguing glimpses of not only how ancient people regarded rhetoric, but also painting and sculpture, which seem to have been perceived as parallel arts.

Such texts reveal a mentality quite different from our own in approaching ancient art in the present. Art historians often prioritize the kind of information contained on a museum label: an object's dating, its artist, workshop, or school, its relationship to an original if it is deemed a

"copy," its specific medium (to scientific precision), and perhaps its provenance. In the Roman domestic sphere, even in opulent maritime villas, this kind of information seems not to have been as prioritized; more important was whether the art was appropriate for display in its particular setting (e.g., library, garden, etc.) and whether it appropriately reflected the cultural values, education, or social aspirations of its owner. Its cost mattered, too.

While appropriateness (or *decorum*) might not be the most stimulating criterion to a modern audience, in antiquity it was an important, precisely-defined cultural value with a tremendous scholarly heritage.[236] In the Roman context, it appealed to a particularly conservative Roman mindset and was extremely valuable to anyone with political or social aspirations.[237] The concept has many nuances, but a chief aspect of its definition is its public orientation: as Anne Leen has written, "it is a concept realized in the reaction of others."[238] Decorations could certainly have been privately enjoyed; but they were often commissioned, purchased, and updated with their social functions acutely in mind, especially in more elite settings.

The villa was not a museum: decorations were meant to serve particular functions there, especially in ways that reflected well on their owners. Domestic space was a canvas for self-representation, and its decorations facilitated self-definition. According to Cicero, the *domus* was virtually inseparable from its owner. In *De Officiis* he tells us that the primary function of a house:

> *…est usus, ad quem accommodanda est aedificandi descriptio et tamen adhibenda commoditatis dignitatisque diligentia… Ornanda enim est dignitas domo, non ex domo tota quaerenda, nec domo dominus, sed domino domus honestanda est.*
>
> …is use, for which the arrangement of the building should be adapted; and still, careful attention should be paid to its appropriateness/pleasantness/convenience (*commoditatis*)

[236] In chapter two I provide instances of its use by Aristotle.
[237] Cicero defines it in *Orator* 21.70: "*ut enim in vita sic in oratione nihil est difficilius quam quid decet videre. Πρέπον appellant hoc Graeci, nos dicamus sane decorum*."
[238] Leen 1991, 237.

> and appropriate distinction (*dignitas*). … For proper character (*dignitas*) must be furnished (*ornanda*) by the house, but not entirely obtained from the house; the owner should grace (*honestanda*) the house, not the house its owner. (1.138-139)

In this passage Cicero states that the relationship between a house and its owner is very close, but that the house cannot improve the man. This passage suggests, however, that the decoration of the house is strongly linked to its owner. His word choice heavily emphasizes appropriateness: both *commoditatis* and *dignitas* are nouns that convey a sense of *decorum*. Furthermore, *ornanda* and *honestanda* are gerundives that relate to decoration (furnish/decorate, adorn) as well as to *decorum* (properly equip, honor/dignify). He continues:

> *ut in ceteris habenda ratio non sua solum, sed etiam aliorum, sic in domo clari hominis, in quam et hospites multi reeipiendi et admittenda hominum cuiusque modi multitude, adhibenda cura est laxitatis; aliter ampla domus dedecori saepe domino fit, si est in ea solitudo, et maxime, si aliquando alio domino solita est frequentari. Odiosum est enim, cum a praetereuntibus dicitur: "O domus ántiqua, heu quam dispari dománáre domino!"*
>
> …as in other things, one must have regard not for himself alone but for others, also: so in the home of a distinguished man (*clari hominis*), in which numerous guests are received and crowds of every sort of person admitted, there must be concern for its spaciousness (*laxitatis*). On the other hand, a spacious house often discredits the owner if it has an air of solitude, and especially if at one time, it used to be filled with people. For it is odious, when passers-by say: "Oh good old house, alas! how different the owner who now owns you!" (1.139)

While this is the perspective of one (rather peculiar) man, and he is describing a *domus*, not a villa, still one gets the feeling that this description applies to domestic space more broadly, especially as he mentions villa decoration in the following passage. (1.140)

With this understanding of the value of decoration in domestic display, I proposed a new interpretive model for assessing wall painting, one that prioritizes its visual function and not its

dating. I do not dispute the relative chronology of Mau's Four "Period" Styles; the important work of the Oplontis Project has served to confirm a relative chronology of Second, Third, and Fourth Period Style painting. However, while first-century CE Romans could have regarded Second Style painting as "old fashioned," Mau's system is a modern construct applied to material created without the Four Styles in mind. In other words, it is an "etic" approach, useful to art historians and archaeologists for dating purposes, but not very useful if one is trying to decipher ancient perception. Pliny the Younger, for example, in his vivid descriptions that walk the reader through his villas, does not show any concern for the chronology of its decoration. He is much more interested in the view.

The stylistic typology model I proposed was one invented in antiquity, and for this reason it is more of an "emic" approach.[239] In the rhetorical context, "plain," "middle," and "grand" style types corresponded to the three basic functions of the art: to teach, to delight, and to compel. This seems to suggest that ancient conceptions of style had much more to do with functional and emotional impact, which also corresponded to the economy of the decoration. From this model one would expect paintings of an "elevated" style to be more likely to be preserved, while paintings of "plain" and "middle" styles to be more likely to be redecorated. This seems to have been the case at Villa A, where great pains were taken to preserve the decorations of rooms 8 and 14, despite architectural modification of those spaces. The scale of these rooms suggests they were used for entertainment purposes, and so it makes sense that their paintings were of an "elevated" style, more valuable and interesting enough to provoke conversation among guests.

My third chapter addresses *how* style was supposed to be used in the Roman context: with *varietas*, or variety, which in the rhetorical texts is a stylistic value that relates to the use of

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[239] See other "emic" approaches to the Roman house (although pertaining to use of space, rather than decoration): Riggsby 1997; Nevett 1997.

many different styles in a single composition. I show how even among non-rhetoricians, particularly Pliny the Younger, *varietas* was an important aesthetic of oratory and writing. In this chapter I also show how *varietas* had meaning beyond rhetoric: as a significant aesthetic concept in Roman art and villa culture, specifically. We have the same sense of nature "delighting in her variety," signaling qualities related to abundance, security, and wealth of resources; in Roman imperial literature, *varietas* had these same associations, and I argue this is an overlooked but significant concept when we assess the visual experience of Roman domestic decoration, especially wall painting.

My fourth chapter presents Villa A at Oplontis as a major case study, all the more useful because of the Villa's intensive analysis by the Oplontis Project (no other Roman villa has received the same level of detailed study). Reinterpreting "style" as functional, rather than temporal, allows us to focus on strategies of display in the mid-first century CE, and perhaps gives us a better understanding of the functioning of the Fourth Style in a Campanian maritime villa.

Future Directions

The work of this dissertation was limited in scope to the decorative program of a single villa, although it certainly may be applied to other domestic spaces. In the case of the decorations of the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale, we find another place where Mau's Stylistic narrative is limiting: the excavated paintings from the villa are all of the Second Period Style and so considered the same decorative phase, recently dated by Barbet and Verbanck-Piérard to around 40 BCE. This is despite the fact that the villa was renovated at least twice in the first century CE. Cubiculum m, now on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, shows

the same kind of ancient preservation as the Second Period Style paintings from Villa A; in fact, its back wall might have been redecorated with the addition of its window.

If we are left to interpret the Villa's decorative program by its Period Style, our analysis would be too simple. Éva Dubois-Pelerin's conclusion does not go far enough, suggesting that perhaps the older décor allowed the villa owner to assimilate himself to an elite to which he did not belong. This sounds like freedmen-blaming, a practice that goes straight to Mau, who explains the "barbarous" Fourth Style paintings at the House of the Vettii, for example, by blaming freedmen with "bad" taste.

Reconsidering the Villa's paintings according to their function, and not date of execution, gives us a lot more to assess, and perhaps the interpretive model works even better, because the decorations are contemporary. Although the paintings have been identified as belonging to the same period, they are incredibly visually diverse. While *varietas* might help us understand their collective aesthetic, the stylistic types might help us better interpret the paintings in their contexts of use.

Appendix: Figures

Figure 1. Fresco from the House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii. Naples, 9112.

Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 2. View of Tuscan landscape from Montepulciano, looking north.

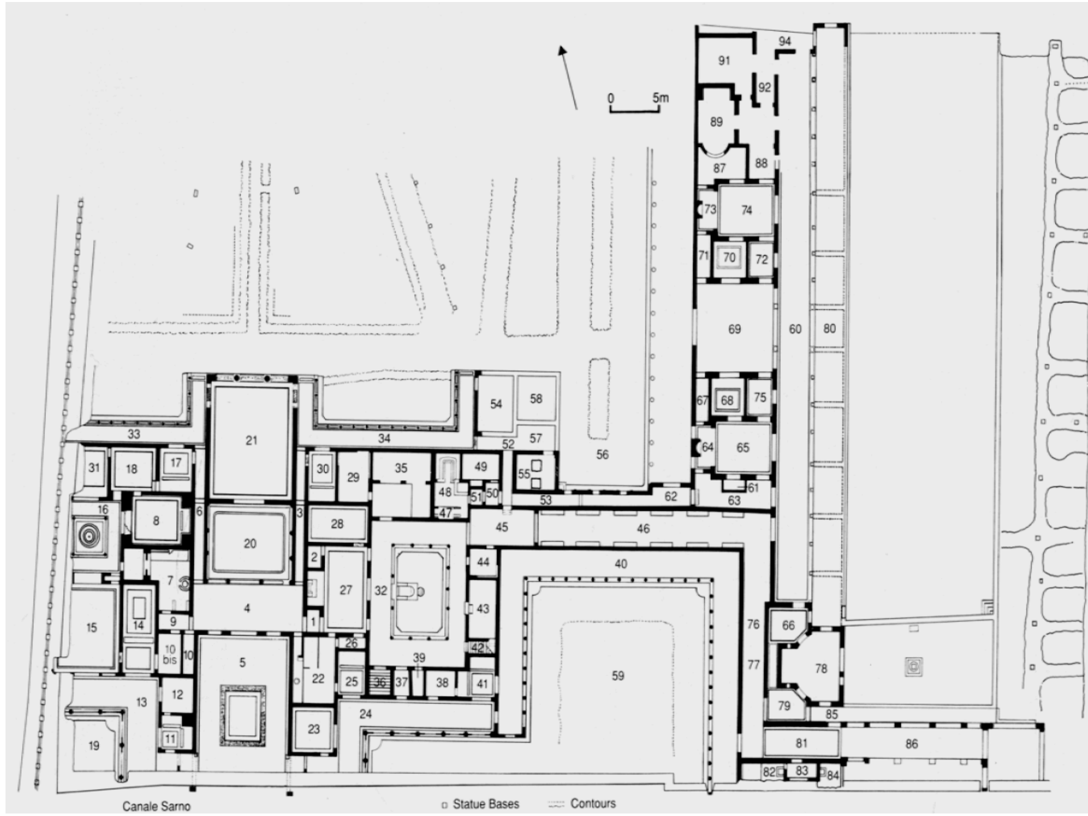


Figure 3. Villa A, Oplontis (modern-day Torre Annunziata), plan of excavated area.

Figure 4. View of northern facade and gardens of Villa A.

Figure 5. Peutinger Table, detail; Oplontis is marked with a red arrow.

Figure 6. Villa B, Oplontis, interior view looking southwest.

Figure 7. Villa A, Oplontis, view of room 8 looking east.

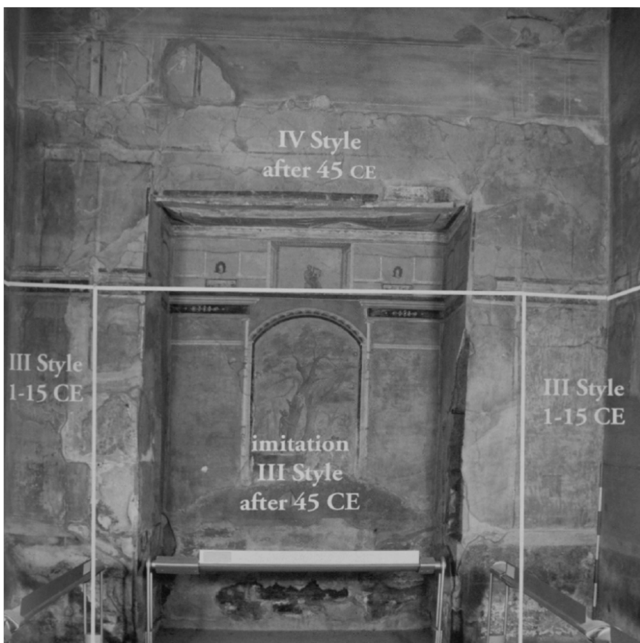


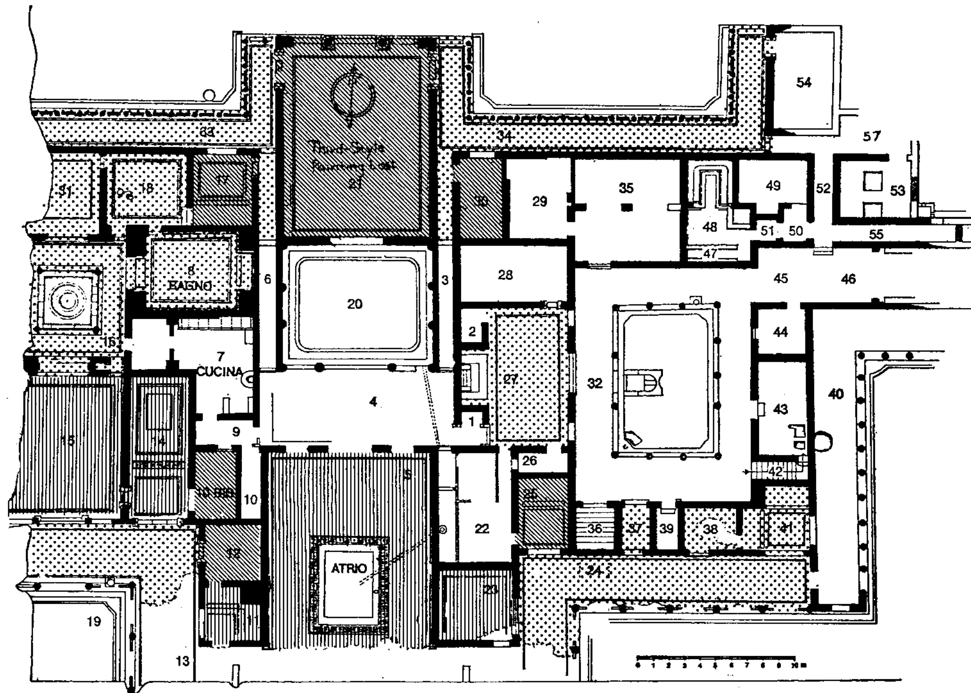
Figure 8. Villa A, Oplontis. Painting phases of room 8 as assigned by excavators.

(Thomas and Clarke 2009, 359)

Figure 9. Villa A, Oplontis. Fragment of Third Style frieze from room 8 found in trench OP3.

Figure 10. Villa A, Oplontis. Propylon 21, view south towards atrium (5).

Figure 11. Villa A, Oplontis. Propylon 21, northeast corner.



Plan of the villa, «Oplontis», Torre Annunziata, Via Sepolcri

Western Part After De Franciscis, 1975

Wall Painting and Mosaics:

Wall painting and mosaics of the Second Style

Wall painting and mosaics of the Third Style

Third-Style mosaics with Fourth-Style wall painting

Undated pavements

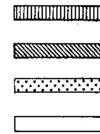


Figure 12. Clarke's plan of the central part of Villa A with period-designations of paintings and mosaics.

(Clarke 1987, 271)

Figure 13. Villa A, Oplontis. East wing, view looking south.

Figure 14. Villa A, Oplontis. Diaeta 78, view towards northwest.

Figure 15. Villa A, Oplontis. Room 66 looking south.

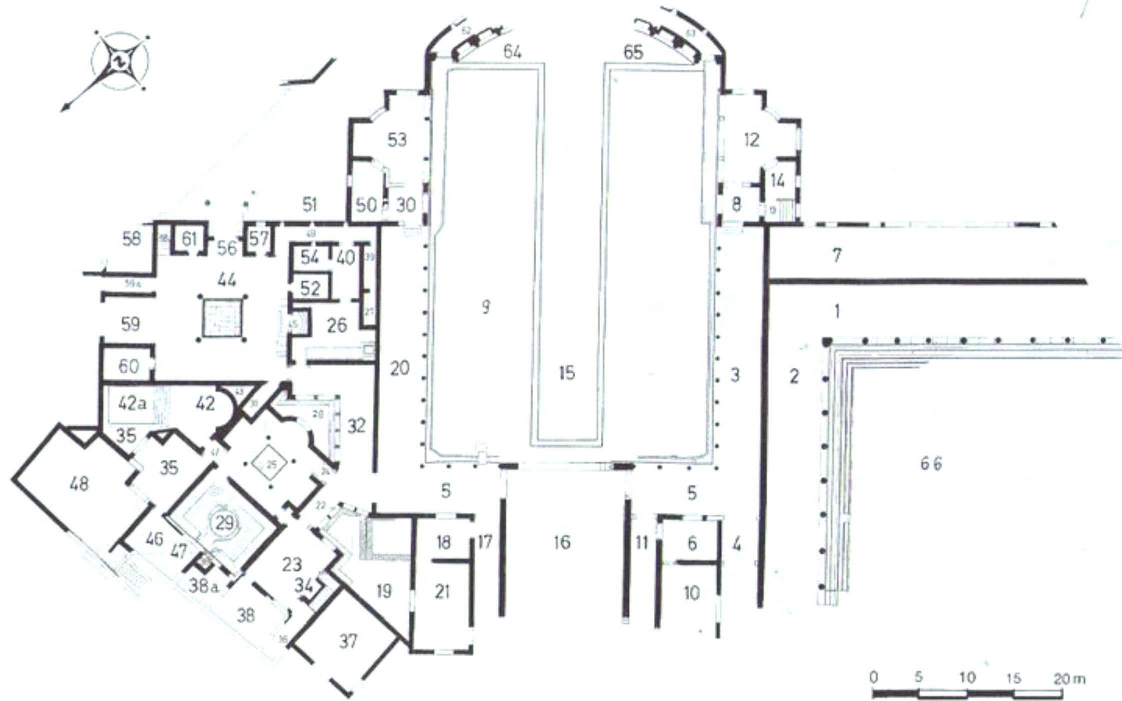


Figure 16. Plan of the excavated areas of the Villa San Marco, Stabiae.

Figure 17. Villa San Marco, Stabiae. View of 53 from 30.

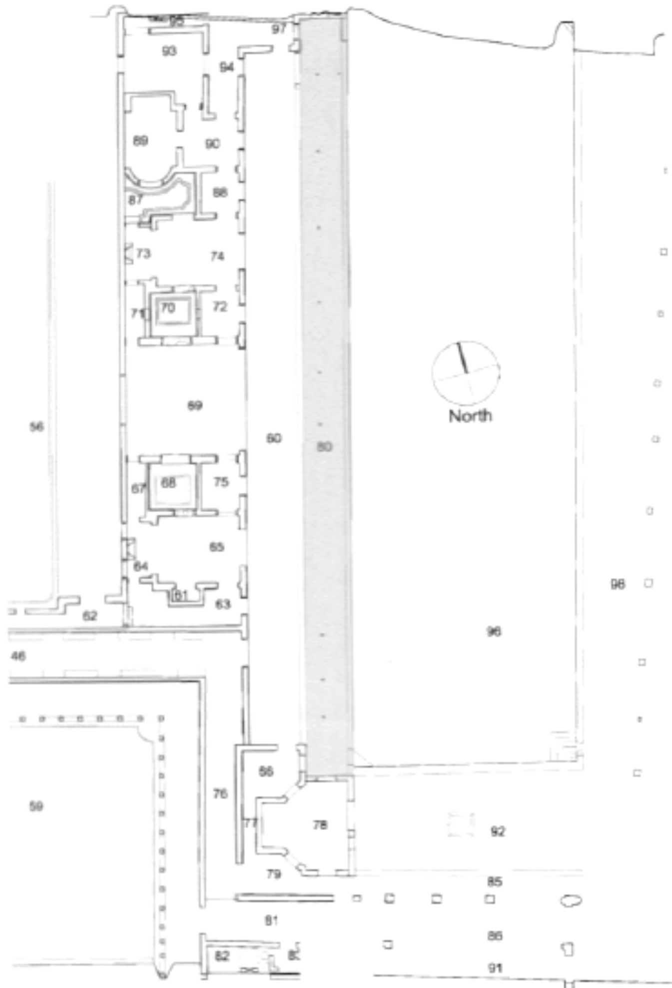


Figure 18. Villa A, Oplontis. Shaded area marks out hypothesized earlier, narrower pool.

(Thomas and Clarke 2009, 364)

Figure 19. Villa A, Oplontis. View of room 69 looking west.

Figure 20. Villa A, Oplontis. View of 97 looking south through the East Wing.

Figure 21. Villa A, Oplontis. View through 46 looking east.

Figure 22. Villa A, Oplontis. North-east corner of interior "service" peristyle (36).

Figure 23. Villa A, Oplontis. Room 74 looking south through 70, 69, 68, 65.

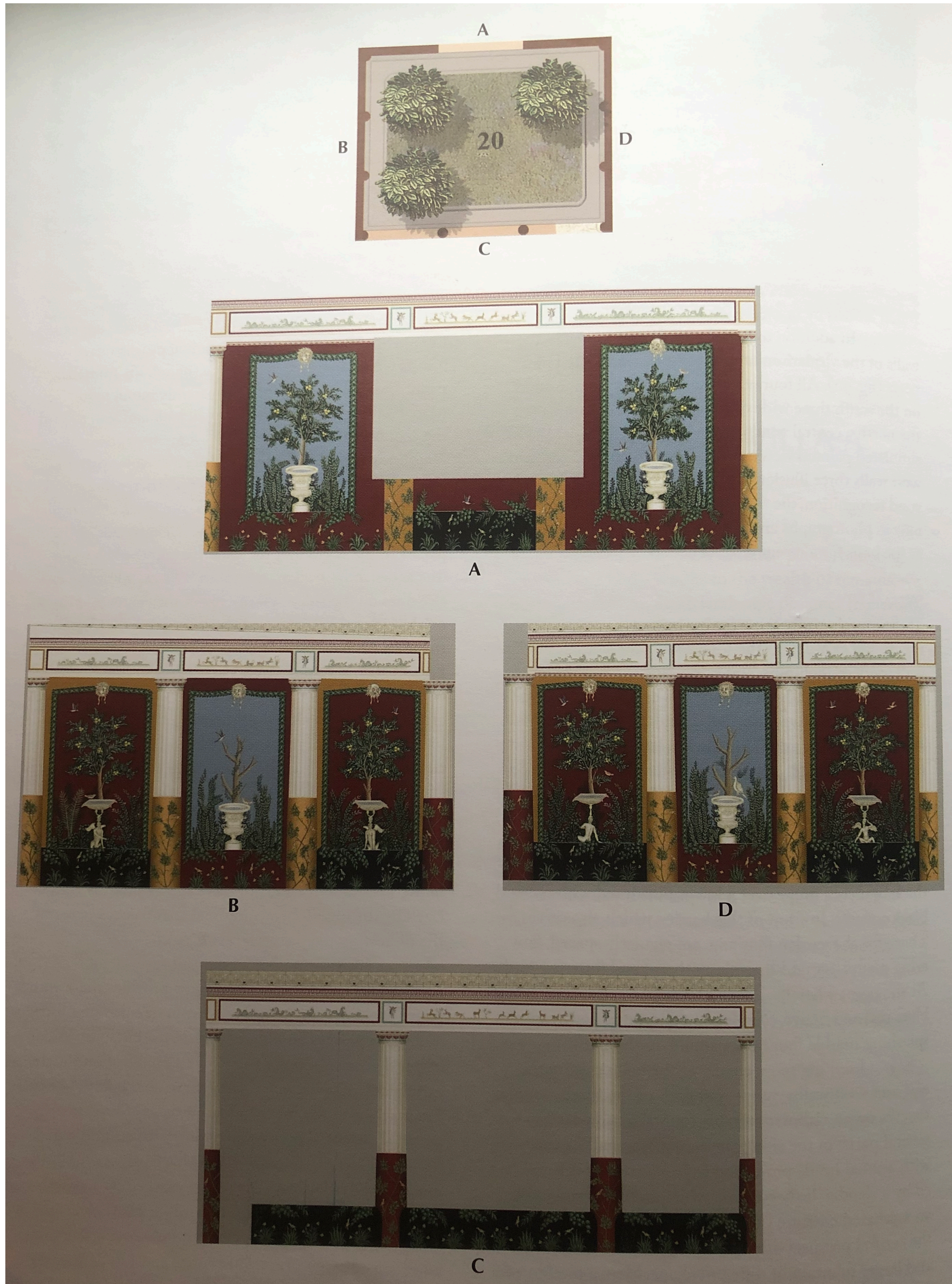


Figure 24. Composite of reconstructions of room 20 (by Paolo Baronio).

(Bergmann 2016, 98)

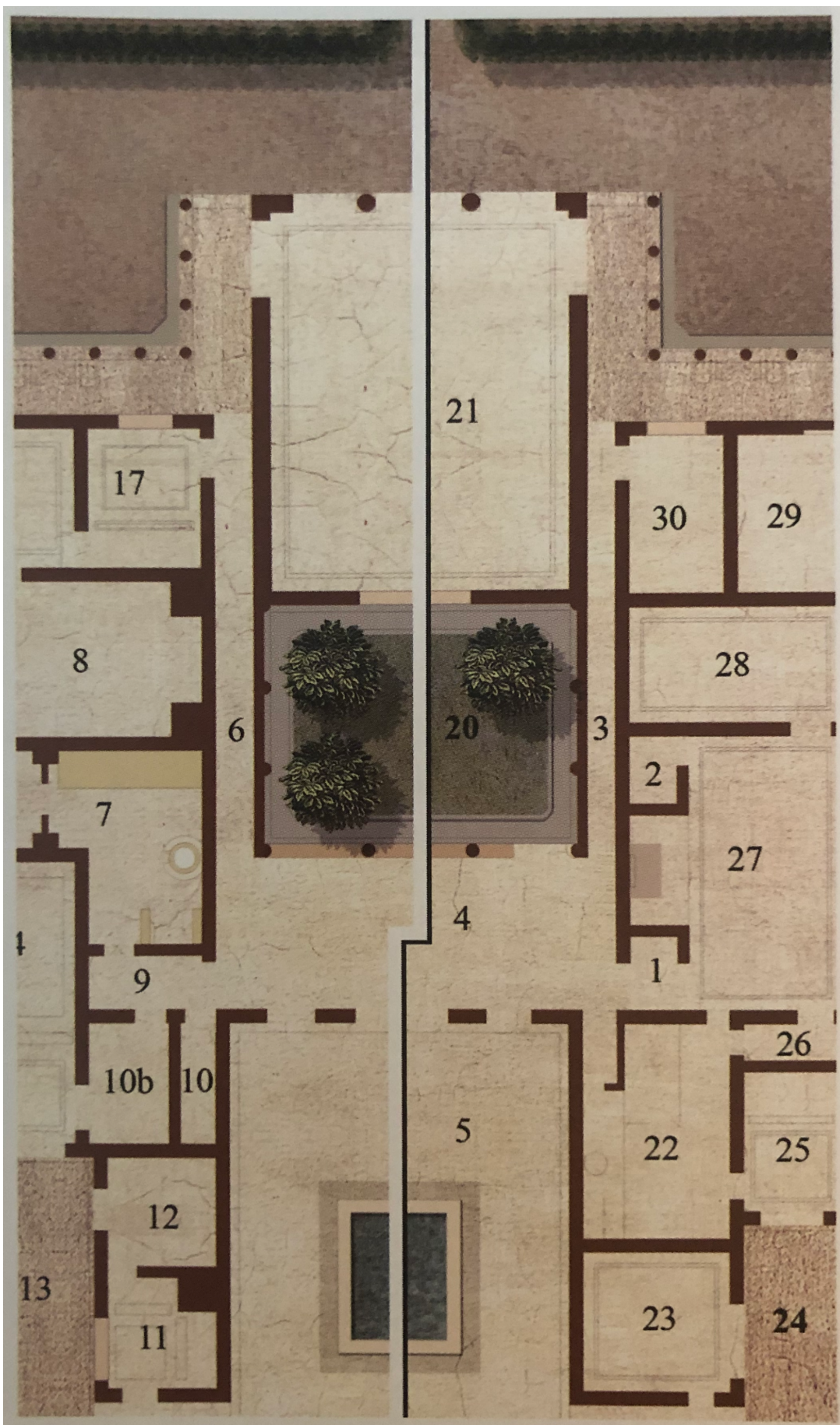


Figure 25. Plan of heart of Villa A, Oplontis, visual axis demarcated.

(Bergmann 2016, 99)

Figure 26. Villa A, Oplontis. Tapetenmuster *design in room 31, north wall.*

Figure 27. Villa A, Oplontis. Detail of cubiculum 11, northern alcove.

Figure 28. Villa A, Oplontis. Room 10b looking northwest.

Figure 29. Villa A, Oplontis. Detail of Room 15, east wall.

Figure 30. Villa A, Oplontis. Detail of Room 15, west wall.

Figure 31. Villa A, Oplontis. Closer detail of Room 15, east wall.

Figure 32. Villa A, Oplontis. Closer detail of Room 15, west wall.

Figure 33. Villa A, Oplontis. Atrium (5), west wall.

Figure 34. Villa A, Oplontis. Atrium (5), west wall, detail.

Figure 35. Villa A, Oplontis. Room 8, detail of northern half of eastern wall and niche.

Figure 36. Villa A, Oplontis. Room 8. Detail of southwest corner.

Figure 37. Villa Arianna, the “grand triclinium,” room 3, looking towards south wall.

Figure 38. Villa of P. Fannius Synistor, Boscoreale. Reconstructed view of peristyle (e) looking north.

Source: James Stanton-Abbott

Figure 39. Subway platform at Lexington Avenue/63rd Street.

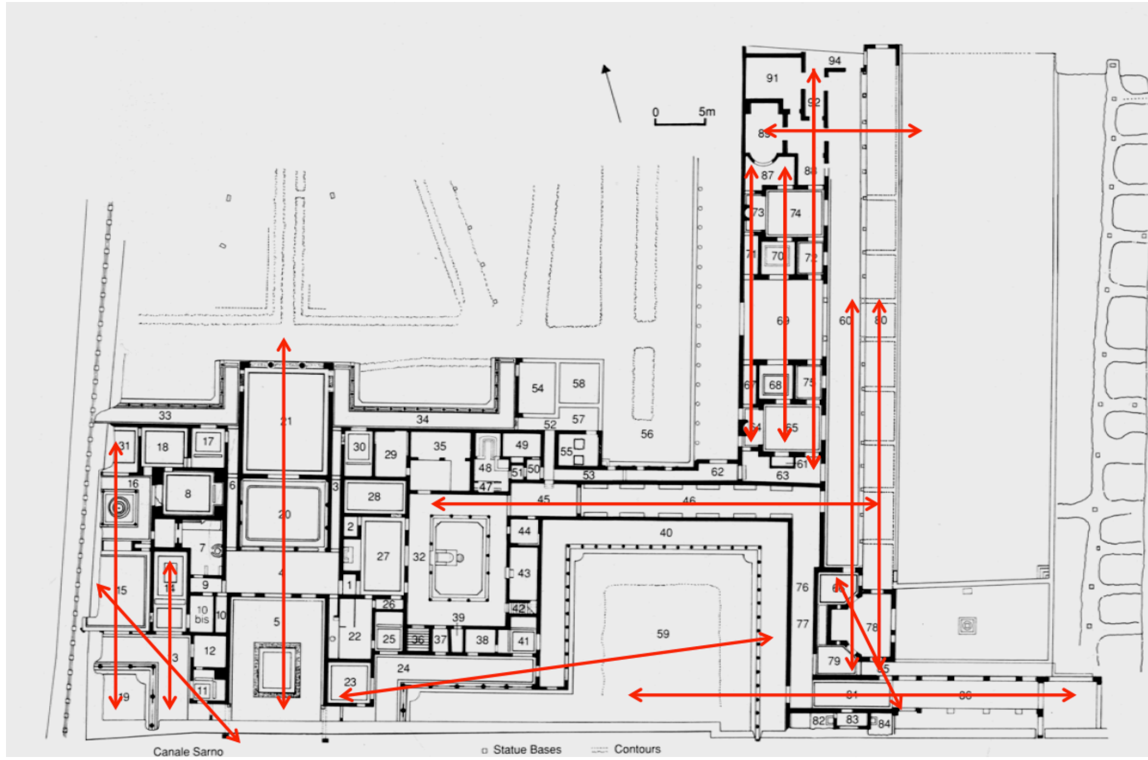


Figure 40. Durchblicke *traced through excavated area of Villa A.*

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