III THOSE HAPPY FIELDS? DIY LANDSCAPING

nos campis nos montibus fruimur, nostri sunt amnes nostri lacus, nos fruges serimus nos arbores, nos aquarum inductionibus terris fecunditatem damus, nos flumina arcemus derigimus auertimus, nostris denique manibus in rerum natura quasi alteram naturam efficere conamur. Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.152

We enjoy the produce of the plains and the mountains, *ours* are the rivers, *ours* the lakes. *We* sow crops and trees, *we* give fertility to the land by controlling the waters. *We* contain, straighten, and divert the course of rivers, and so with *our own* hands *we* try to fashion a kind of other nature, within the nature of things as they stand.

Chapter II outlined how literary pastoral scenography makes for an often visually delightful but also heavily symbolic ethnoscape, ideally suited to the exploration of red-hot political, civic, and socio-cultural issues. The signs of pastoral provide props and a set for the rustic, artful, and occasionally (naïvely) politicized figures that populate and give Roman meaning to an imaginary and leisurely rural world, superficially very different from daily life. This chapter explores how pastoral imagery can also help us to think about a different aspect of what made for enjoyable Roman space: the sight of a productive agricultural landscape.

The practical realities of everyday life, shadowy presences for the most part in pastoral verse, strengthened family networks that linked city to countryside dynamically, connected family business to family smallholding, and plugged villa estates and farms into the rural economies and local politics.[1] The artificial quality of Latin literary pastoral's tropes encourages investigation of the semiotics of language and the values embedded in linguistic choices (Virgil's *Eclogues* present a Graeco-Roman scenography, scripted in Latin, whose protagonists answer to Greek names). Yet it also flags up the mechanics and implications of cultural change (why should Latin literature interest itself in forms rooted in the Greek world?), and what constitutes the daily grind of being Roman and working in the countryside in troubled times (from herding animals peripatetically, to knuckling down to plough, sow, and harvest, not necessarily inhabiting

[1] See Tacoli 1998; Scheidel 2004.

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a 'family' or hereditary property, right through to dispossession and economic migrancy). In this way, literary pastoral's landscapes engage with Roman experience and even demographic mobility much more vividly and complicatedly than we might at first imagine. They also mediate between the contrived extremes of agricultural and urban life so popular in late Republican discourse, where the contrast typically invokes disquiet at a newly mobile society, one insufficiently signed up to traditional values and customs.[2]

The nostalgic and conservative qualities of pastoral's evocation of a vanished world of natural harmony can invoke a sense of loss, as set out influentially by Empson in 1935. This reconfigures the hard work and sense of place associated with agriculture, smallholdings, and family farm as signs of a vanished, easy relationship with the natural environment that humankind can no longer access.[3] Golden Age imagery at Rome in the late first century BCE had its origins in the Hesiodic notion that if humankind works hard and behaves righteously, a (less god-haunted and mystical) version of a Golden or 'Saturnian' Age can be recuperated.[4] Once we shift genre, however, we can find out how this works in more practical terms. Humankind's relationship with nature as set out in Cicero's *de Natura Deorum* (quoted above) reinvents the natural world as a kind of DIY store – raw materials primed for the right, skilled, and equipped labourer.[5] The people best qualified to get the most from these materials are most likely to be those who inherited the land once worked by Saturn's people, the site of his ideal political state: Italy.[6] This way of thinking suggests (as we saw hinted at by Varro, in Chapter I) that, rather than struggling against the momentum of history to recreate a lost world of Golden Age leisure, Romans simply need to dig in, to develop a close working

[2] Chambers 1994: 5–6 defines migrancy as 'a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain…[a migrant is] simultaneously "inside" and "outside" the situation at hand'. Maggiulli 1995 painstakingly surveys the representation of vegetation and flora in Virgil; see also F. Jones (forthcoming).

[3] On loss in Verg. *Ecl.*, see e.g. Segal 1965. On their intertwining of politics and Arcadia, see e.g. Otis 1963: 135–6; Pöschl 1964; Putnam 1970: 20–81. Leach 1974: 113–42 reads *Eclogue* 1 lucidly in these terms. See also Wallace-Hadrill 1982.

[4] See Hes. *Op.* 116–19, 225–37; Pl. *Leg.* 4.713B–714A. Segal 1963 tackles the issues for Greece. Compare Verg. *Aen* 8.321–5 (and see R. F. Thomas 2004–5 on Saturn). R. Evans 2003 is the best introduction for utopian landscapes and Rome.

[5] Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.150–52 (cf. 2.87, 158 – on beauty and natural bounty). Nevertheless, 'natural' things are also better than things created by 'art' (2.87). *ANRW* ii.37 presents a wide range of approaches to Roman technology, science, land use, and more. Hughes 1994 introduces key themes for studying ancient ecology and human impact on the environment.

[6] Verg. *Ecl.* 4.6; *Aen* 8.329, 11.252. See e.g. R. F. Thomas 1982: 93–107; Zetzel 1997; Dench 2005: 63, 152–221.

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relationship with their ethnoscape and make the most of what a unified Italy has to offer.[7]

Livy's history of Rome provides excellent examples of how Romans saw their city and its site as a kind of time machine. His identification of contemporary sights and monuments deeply embedded in Roman history gave a sense of synchronicity to what counted as Roman space, and how one defined and inhabited it. This phenomenological quality, giving memory a tangible place in the cityscape, helped Livy to give physical reality to the relationship between history and contemporary life.[8] Livy tells how, after Rome's sack by the Gauls (390/389 BCE), the patriotic hero M. Furius Camillus successfully spoke against a proposal to relocate the community to nearby Veii. Camillus generates a complex historicizing scenography in order to show Romans that their city and its physical site are their identity: one cannot successfully separate the two.[9] As Livy's Camillus observes, the hills, plains, woods, and river that define urban Rome's site are just as significant as the manmade structures; moreover, the earliest Romans were a ragbag mix of exiles (*conuenae*) and shepherds.[10] Migrancy and shepherding were the two *authentic* rustic lifestyles that made Rome's foundation possible, but it was only when the soon-to-be-urban space they came to share was rewritten as fatherland or native soil (*patria*, *solum*) and motherland (*terra*, *mater*) that 'communities of shared memory' transformed the disparate individuals into a citizen-family.[11]

The politics of agricultural landscape

Roman legends and Roman institutions show a disposition towards a pastoral longing for nature in their idealization or preservation of associations with nature in the past. The founders of Rome were inhabitants of a pastoral world.[12]

[7] The vision set out at Verg. *G.* 2.173.

[8] Jaeger 1997 takes this approach; Spencer 2007 examines one example, Livy on the Lacus Curtius. For the key issues more generally, see Gowing 2005 and Stein-Hölkeskamp and Hölkeskamp 2006.

[9] Livy 5.32–55; Camillus' key lines: 5.51.1–54.7. On this episode, see e.g. Kraus 1994; Feldherr 1997; Jaeger 1997: 89–93.

[10] Livy 5.54, 5.53.8–9.

[11] S. Jones 1997: 1, part of an important discussion of how digging up the past, in various senses, contributes to nationalism. Moatti 2006 teases out some related issues for Rome.

[12] Leach 1974: 57.

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Pastoral symbolism continued to influence Roman responses to the natural environment, even when the focus was on the reality of a mixed agricultural community, a group of flesh and blood individuals who needed physical sustenance supported by hard graft in order to survive.[13] Varro, writing shortly before Virgil and Livy, and perhaps with tongue in cheek, is keen to scrutinize the 'strange hostility to civilization' that characterizes the nostalgic, ultra-traditional position whereby farmers are the only remnants of Saturn's race.[14] Rather than griping about how country values have been corrupted by urban sophistication, Varro foreshadows Livy by focusing on a different dichotomy: agriculture, the world of the farmer-colonist (*agricola*, *colonus*, and *arator* – farmer, cultivator, colonist, or ploughman), is set against, although still intertwined with, the world of pastoral (*opilio*, *pastor*, herdsman).[15]

Filtering through Varro's farming treatise we see an intense and close relationship between those cultivating the land (although his characters are what we might term 'gentleman farmers') and those working the urban, political, and commercial angles. Both constituencies are directly connected to the land and territory in ways that are quite different from the literary pastoral lifestyle – shepherds may have founded Rome, Varro observes, but it was only through combining animal husbandry with the organized and managed territorialism of agriculture (distinct from pastoral's 'range') that Rome became a city-state.[16] Varro's subjects – wealthy landowners (more or less involved in cultivating the fields) and city folk alike – behave inappropriately at times and need guidance if a balance between different kinds of landscape (subsistence agriculture, surplus economics and clearance for grazing, field systems, pasture, and woodland) is to be maintained. Nevertheless, he still makes an overlap between the two communities clear: socially and politically, territory defines them.

All texts, however apparently immersive or transparent, are **ideologically** framed in some way. This holds good for visual and representational depictions of landscape just as much as for literary ones, and as we investigate approaches rooted in Italy's landscapes we should briefly revisit how frames affect our understanding of space.

[13] Garnsey 2000 gives a sense of the Italian agricultural landscape. Linderski 2001 sums up how (market) gardening continued to figure in daily Roman life.

[14] Freud 1963: 24–5.

[15] Varro, *Rust.* 2 *Praef.* 4–5; 3.1.7.

[16] Varro, *Rust.* 2 *Praef.* 1–2, 4; 3.1.3–5; 1.2.12–28. Cf. Marx 2000: 22–3.

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At its most basic level, a frame delineates that around which it draws a line. The lines drawn by literary pastoral prioritize distance, both temporal and physical (pastoral scenography and points of reference are Hellenic, its world accessible primarily as an echo of what might once have been). The lines drawn by texts interested in agronomy are rather different. The world of Roman *labor* evoked in the late Republic is still typically imbued with nostalgic historical qualities, but its primary frame of reference is the here and now, and the questions it poses about cultural identity relate directly to developing interest in **praxis** (practical ethics and hard graft) in an intensely Roman way.[17]

Cities rely on surplus food, and prosper when linked directly to an intensively farmed landscape for supplies, but they also function as markets for (and therefore as suppliers of) manufactured and imported goods. Italy's countryside was thoroughly and successfully farmed, and 'city' and countryside were interdependent in practice, despite the oppositional quality that characterizes literary discourse.[18] As Roman power expanded through the Italian peninsula, Roman practice officially recognized distinctions in the rural landscape by categorizing arable and grazing land differently – in legal and religious terms centuriation was a feature of agricultural land only, leaving the pastoral landscape unmodified.[19] This sits well with the differences imposed by genre on verse pastoral and prose didactic agricultural vistas.

Even though Virgil found interest in pastoral's mobile scenography and transcultural archetypes (the cool breeze on a hot day; leafy shade; singing rustics; caves, hills, and streams) as a stage for posing Roman questions, there is also a sense that grappling with the really difficult dilemmas facing Romans as a community required a landscape defined by Roman power, knowledge, know-how, and hard work. Landscape, we might argue, '*circulates* as a medium of exchange, a site of visual appropriation, a focus for the formation of identity'.[20]

[17] Hes. *Op.* sits squarely behind Roman agritexts; in practice, see e.g. Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.150, *Off.* 1.69–73, 2.3, 2.60.

[18] Spurr 1986 draws together archaeological survey and detailed analysis of the ancient agronomists; on oppositionality, S. H. Braund 1989 is a good starting point.

[19] Centuriation marked up and divided out the land prior to the foundation of a colony. It started to become a feature of the Italian landscape in the late fourth century BCE. See concisely Gargola 2004. Nicolet 1991: 149–55 discusses the politics; Dilke 1971 is still useful, but see now Campbell 2000. Varro, *Ling.* (e.g.) 5.32–7, *Rust.* 1.9.2, and Frontinus, *De arte mensoria* (*On the Art of Surveying*) root surveying in the pre-Roman world. Cuomo 2000 shows the benefits of revisiting Frontinus, who flourished in the later first century CE.

[20] Mitchell 1994b: 2, emphasis original.

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Virgil went on to explore this in verse in his *Georgics*, but prose farming handbooks in particular offer an intriguing literary equivalent to centuriation's agenda. The ostensibly practical handbook, with its overtly organizational and didactic agenda, sets up a frame of reference for structuring and managing a farm, and offers the prospect of well-informed control over plantings, field systems, and accommodation. Centuriation's squared-off grids redefined space as cultivated Roman territory, and *limites* or survey lines running east–west and north–south generated ideologically framed scenes tagged to the relevant local Roman urban foundation. If land could not be cultivated, then the syntax of centuriation had no symbolic meaning or relevance as a way of demonstrating control over space. Conversely, if a farming manual could create an orderly frame for animal husbandry, then pastoral, too, could take root and be confined. The implicit yet commonplace frame for Roman agritexts is therefore that most characteristic Roman imperializing practice: centuriation.

Drawing on Said's postcolonial approach, Cuomo reads centuriation as an act of 'geographical violence'.[21] From the point of view of the 'colonized' or **subaltern** groups, this is surely the case: 'there is no document of civilisation that is not at the same time a document of barbarism', and the process of civilizing and rationalizing a landscape is never without consequences.[22] That these consequences need not be brutal nor destructive, however, is key to the conclusion summed up by Bergmann: 'productive villas belonged to a spatial and economic network, created by the Roman system of land-allotment (centuriation), combining town, suburb, and agricultural land'.[23]

Reading Varro highlights the diversity of the connections that were in play between place and ethnicity, and hints at another aspect of the tension between regional and citizen identity in the late Republic. Rome's foundation and success inevitably overwrote many local **ethnographic** traditions but, in the best postcolonial manner, Italy 'wrote back' in the first century BCE, just when what it meant to be Roman was being challenged by the increasing polyphony of an

[21] Cuomo 2000: 190, quoting and redeploying Said 1993: 271.

[22] Benjamin 1999: 248 (written in Paris, 1940). Compare this with the Highland Clearances in nineteenth-century Scotland, or the processes for allocating land to Native American peoples; for example, the General Allotment Act (1887) assumed that assimilation and civilization of native peoples would proceed quickly if individual ownership of land parcels was made the norm, and traditional activities such as of hunting, gathering, and fishing were discouraged.

[23] Bergmann 2007: 236. Terrenato 2007 emphasizes centuriation as a conceptual and physical imposition of meaning.

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empire that stretched beyond the peninsula.[24] From Varro (probably from Reate), through Catullus (Verona), and Cicero (Arpinum), to Virgil (Mantua), and Horace (Venusia), landscapes in the literature of the late Republic are always the product of a conversation (or even conflict) between different flavours of Roman identity. As Cicero expresses it, Roman citizens have two homelands: the city of Rome itself and their place of birth.[25] Virgil, too, has a go at interrogating and collapsing distinctions between core representatives of citizen ethnicity: Sabines, Etruscans, Romans, and Saturn's people.[26] These literary accounts seem to evoke a first-century-BCE Zeitgeist, exploring commonality between the Italian peoples as a whole, but also touting the idea of a broadly positive continuum, grafting a Romanized present onto the hardy 'native' stock of archaic, agricultural, ethnographically diverse Italy.[27]

Latin texts interested in farming juggle with pastoral and agricultural frames and thereby encapsulate a range of key issues, including the politics of allocation of Roman land and citizenship. The surplus farming model takes for granted a market economy, and so the city always lurks behind descriptions of pasturage, rows of vines, grids of olives, or fields of corn. In the most basic sense, then, such texts are documents of civilization because their end product (crops, meat, cheese) is what keeps the city or colony in business.[28] They are also documents of civilization in another sense: their alternative vision of what constitutes commercially savvy pastoralism (guidance on meadows, grazing, small-animal husbandry) implicitly points up the artifice of literary pastoral's shady afternoons and singing shepherds. In doing so, they remind readers that both didactic and pastoral are literary genres, and equally in the business of creating their

[24] Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002: 8–11. Key studies for postcolonialism include Spivak 1987: 197–221; Bhabha 1990a; Brennan 1990; Renan 1990; Said 1993; Bhabha 1994 (chapters 7, 9, 11); B. Anderson 2006. The Italian tensions of the early first century BCE form an important backdrop here: see Brunt 1965b; Oakley 1993; Gabba 1994; and (in detail) Mouritsen 1998. Jehne and Pfeilschifter 2006 present an array of up-to-date approaches.

[25] Cic. *Leg.* 2.5. Morley 2003 discusses migration to Rome as imperial capital; Farney 2007: 5–26 is useful on the dilemma of 'two homelands' for most Romans.

[26] Verg. *G.* 2.532–40. His *Aeneid*, of course, widens the scope by exploring Trojan and Greek origins as well.

[27] Zerubavel 2003 uses the term 'time map' to define this kind of strategy. On the Roman and Italian background in Virgil, see Toll 1997; Ando 2002; Witek 2006 (immensely detailed). On Italian ethnic diversity and the ethnographic tradition, see R. F. Thomas 1982: 1–7, 100–2; Zetzel 1997: 188–94; in detail, Dench 2005: 227–79; Farney 2007.

[28] E.g. Verg. *G.* 2.513–15. Cf. R. F. Thomas 1982: 51–60, drawing Horace (e.g. *Carm.* 2.6) and Virgil together; and on Verg. *G.* 2.458–540, see Kronenberg 2000.

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own agenda-driven universes. Just like literary pastoral, agronomic handbooks look to a literary form that flourished in the Hellenistic world.[29] Scripting farming as the ultra-Roman way of life is therefore also a way of writing into being a network of intellectual and cultural connections between Rome and the Mediterranean. In turn, the Italian communities fighting for full citizenship in the early first century BCE were themselves also struggling to maintain unique identities, including a significant Greek heritage, particularly in the south. This approach encourages us to keep in mind the close connections drawn between identity and ethnicity, and the concepts of landscape, land use, territory, and empire.[30]

The need to balance urban and rural modes of citizenship and cultivate lines of communication is reflected in day-to-day Roman experience. The urban religious calendar, full of rustic festivals, is one example. Archaeological studies now also emphasize how diverse and flexible the relationship between cities and countryside was, and Roman road-building practice was gradually shrinking the gap between capital, countryside, and other urban centres, making for what might be termed a new 'travelling culture'.[31] The result helped to transform the peninsula. The centuriated landscape, criss-crossed by local tracks and Roman road networks, opens up the subject matter of key Roman documents such as Cato's *De agricultura* (*On Agriculture*), Virgil's *Georgics*, and Varro's *De re rustica*. Virgil's *Georgics* in particular have become emblematic of a friction between nostalgic yearning for a simpler world of shared values (Rome's notional *mos maiorum*) and the intellectual fireworks generated by wealth, political change, and cultural exchange within a developing pan-Mediterranean empire.[32]

In Virgil's *Georgics* we see a spectacular demonstration of how stereotypically stolid Roman farming can also occupy the forefront

[29] For farm management texts, Xen. *Oec.* is always a key point of reference.

[30] On networks, settlement, and the environment in the Mediterranean, see Horden and Purcell 2000: 89–172. On archaeology's usefulness for understanding demography, see Gualtieri 2008; Pelgrom 2008 (especially on land division); Rathbone 2008; Witcher 2008; Yntema 2008.

[31] Clifford 1997: 17–46. On roads, see Laurence 1999. Dyson 2003 surveys trends in archaeological study of the city/countryside nexus. See also Purcell 1987b, 1990; Witcher 2005, 2009; Terrenato 2007. Two valuable case studies are della Portella 2004 (Via Appia) and Bjur and Santillo Frizell 2009 (Via Tiburtina).

[32] Hardie 1998: 28–52 introduces Verg. *G.* concisely. R. F. Thomas 1995 looks at city–country tensions. Batstone 1997 investigates how and why (teaching) farming moves to centre stage, and summarizes key bibliography. More generally, on nostalgia and religion with reference to literature of agriculture, see Feeney 1998: 133–66. On Rome's ancestors' everyday presence in Augustus' era, see Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 213–58.

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of Mediterranean intertextual culture.[33] Recent study of Cato's much earlier *De agricultura* shows Virgil's approach slotting into a developing Roman discourse linking the teaching of farming lore to cultural self-fashioning.[34] Reading Cato in this way we find an ideal figure for testing a nostalgic model of what landholding meant in the mid-second century BCE. What we find is that, a century before Varro, Cicero, and Virgil, Cato's addressee (the would-be landowner) still has to be pestered into getting his hands dirty.[35] Cato's rustic agricultural landscape of clearly defined estates is relentlessly communal in its frame of external reference ('*uicinis bonus esto*', 'be a good neighbour', 4); it is also curiously (and surprisingly) semi-detached, to the point of isolationism. Neighbours figure only as potential resources for the canny landowner, or as purchasers of his produce; the estate itself is populated only by slaves and functionaries.[36]

Cato's assumptions and advice conjure up a world perhaps just as imaginary as that of literary pastoral: one in which the familial and familiar qualities of the countryside are increasingly unavailable to many. In this landscape, transmission of land from father to son is not functioning smoothly, nor meshing with already nostalgic visions of how land and family inform on each other. The emerging agenda hints that the know-how of authentic rustic life has somehow come unstuck from a generation confronting a country scarred physically and culturally by war, even though the real paradigm shift in the balance between agriculture and warfare probably began in the fourth century BCE, when longer campaigns, farther from home, became more common.[37] We shouldn't read too much into it but, having emphasized the long-term investment in place required for successful cultivation of asparagus, Cato's closing apophthegm concerns curing meat: *Roman* salt (wit, or ingenuity?) interspersed with rigorous and

[33] Emphasized in e.g. R. F. Thomas 1988 and Farrell 1991.

[34] E.g. Reay 2005.

[35] Cato, *Agr.* 3, cf. 39. Reay 2005: 344–5 outlines the argument that the addressee in section 3 changes from owner to overseer, but rightly concludes that there is nothing in the logic or syntax of the text to promote this reading (2005: 346–9). The direct address to the overseer (Cato, *Agr.* 5) makes this particularly clear.

[36] Contrast Hes. *Op.* 343–60. Even Cato's lone designated female is a housekeeper (*Agr.* 143). The relentlessly masculine character of this imagined estate is surprising, too, in the context of one obvious model, Xen. *Oec.* (addressed to his wife – a topos picked up by Varro). Purcell 1995 offers a corrective vision of how things might have worked in practice.

[37] Rosenstein 2004: 35. Although Cato's agritext was probably completed not long before his death (149 BCE), his vision conjures up an ideally Roman world of earlier days. See e.g. *Agr.* 1.2, where the perfect paterfamilias is intimately acquainted with the minutiae of the villa estate, and is in a position to teach the overseer his job.

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regular arrangement and rotation of the hams, concludes with a kind of bathhouse treatment (chill them, scrape them, sponge them, smoke and oil them). The now impervious hams leave the hopeful landowner with a double vision of himself and his produce merging on the ideal estate. Consuming fertile Italy's produce means communing, in this sense, with a traditional farming ethos: a way of eating oneself victoriously into authentic Roman identity. Cato's envoi, thus, offers the ultimate in self-sufficiency, and self-care.[38]

Thoreau commented that 'A sentence should read as if its author, had he held a plough instead of a pen, could have drawn a furrow deep and straight to the end.'[39] Setting aside nostalgia, this remark suggests other reasons why agricultural landscapes were so interesting. Textualizing farmland (that is, turning it into something to be read and interrogated, and which generates meaning) is about exerting epistemological control over the source of production. Surviving texts show agriculture as a subject that allows and encourages investigation of how knowledge, and in particular the one right way of doing things, is transmitted. This does not just have to be about the mechanics of centuriation, measured fields, serried ranks of vines, or furrowed earth (as in Cato's exhortation not to introduce a varied pattern when ploughing, or Frontinus' detailed study of surveying practice); a more symbolic form of squaring off is also in evidence.[40]

Virgil starts his *Georgics* with a pun: by making it the song of (what makes) happy/manured (*laetae*/*laetamen*) fields (*segetes*), he personifies fields as participants in the poem's unfolding project of cultivating a shared Roman identity.[41] He seems to be making the agricultural landscapes of Italy complicit in their own Romanization, and hints of this recur in the opening lines of *Georgics* 3 (3.1–41). This well-known passage connects rustic and public cult deities (Pales, Apollo), the Hellenic landscapes of epic and Arcadia (Mount Lycaeus), the craft of poetry, Octavian, and his influential friend Maecenas, and makes all of them subject to an imperializing (poetic) gaze. Virgil gathers up a diverse array of keynote images, sites and places, and cultural touchstones and reorganizes them into one metapoetic

[38] Cato, *Agr.* 162.
[39] Thoreau 2004: 107.
[40] Cato, *Agr.* 61.2.
[41] Lyne 1974: n. 9 explains. Johnson 2004: 79, discussing Perkell 1989, comments that *Georgics* 4's gardener 'needs to create beauty, to make beauty', but without friendship (i.e. a social network) the scene remains sterile. On Virgil's agriscapes, see Leach 1988: 144–93.

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scheme given shape in the heavily symbolic marble temple that he writes into existence at Mantua (his home town) by the river Mincius. This notional temple's location is, we hear, a verdant plain (*campus*). Virgil has already characterized Mantua as unlucky in losing its plain to the programme of veteran settlement in the late 40s BCE (*G.* 2.198), and here we find a militaristic and triumphant temple replacing the food that the land might have produced. A back story of pre-existing patterns of land use or local cult is absent; instead, the plain is saturated in the civic Roman imagery of conquest and imperialism.[42] From a distant Roman point of view, of course, the kind of meaning generated by the imagined monument is far more immediately productive. It shows an extreme vision of the Roman operating system appropriating and silencing local Italian perspectives, and using a Hellenizing scenography to give weight to the new model of authority. Local boy Virgil has lavishly recoloured Mantua's productive territory as part of his literary career towards Rome.

Selling the idea of hard work

We tackle the other big names – Varro and Columella – in Chapter V, so let's see here how labour and agriculture feature in landscapes from two less obvious authors: Catullus and Lucretius. In Catullus 64 (as is also evident in Virgil's *Georgics*), even hard work is not always enough to guarantee nature's benevolence or even benign indifference to the human condition.[43] On display instead is a tension between Golden Age enjoyment of the land's natural bounty (by natural right, Rome enjoys the fruits of empire) and a post-Golden Age need for relentless *labor* simply to maintain it as a viable human environment. As in Lewis Carroll's 'Red Queen' hypothesis, one has to run as fast as one can just to stand still: simple survival takes up every joule of energy that humankind possesses.[44] Here, then, we see a highly mannered, literary response to what is overwhelmingly a Roman imperial perspective on how country and city relate to one another.

[42] Harrison 2005 succinctly introduces Virgil's 'temple' as an allusion to Augustus' Mausoleum. See now Meban 2008.

[43] See e.g. Verg. *G.* 3.478–566.

[44] L. Carroll 2007: 24–5. Cf. Van Valen 1973. Cicero's vision is different: *Nat. D.* 2.98–100, 131 makes the world of *labor*, a world conceptualized via Roman praxis, the ideal and, indeed, strikingly lovely state of affairs.

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Ultimately, attempting to recreate a Golden Age experience of the land results in a **simulacrum**, a fantasy version of an ideal countryside, not a return to a lost mythic world. The persistence of such fantasy landscapes in elite culture (see cover image, and Figures 6 and 10), combined with the reality of change in Roman politics and the city's demography, suggests at least two models for viewing the countryside: first, as a place where relentless hard work was the norm if any produce was to reward the landholder, but where 'bad' landholders (not 'people like us') were unwilling to accept the moral responsibility of the practicalities of estate management; second, as a place where *labor* was once not necessary (in a lost Golden Age), but which no longer sustained humans spontaneously or worked with them collaboratively owing to a decline in human morals (the wrong sorts of people gaining land and misusing the power it offered). Neither is wholly satisfactory, and these extreme positions hint at cultural stereotyping: the politics of land use as a weapon in a battle for authority. Hence, as Catullus 64's crisis point – Peleus and Thetis' wedding day – approaches, we find cultivation of the land abandoned, and for all the wrong reasons. The tone suggests that this is not a legitimate day off from the farming calendar but a complete change in lifestyle, with significant consequences.

> *Deseritur Cieros, linquunt Pthiotica Tempe*
> *Crannonisque domos ac moenia Larisaea.*
> *Pharsalum coeunt, Pharsalia tecta frequentant.*
> *rura colit nemo, mollescunt colla iuuencis;*
> *non humilis curuis purgatur uinea rastris;*
> *non glebam prono conuellit uomere taurus;*
> *non falx attenuat frondatorum arboris umbram;*
> *squalida desertis rubigo infertur aratris.* Catull. 64.35–42

> Cieros lies abandoned, they leave Phthiotian Tempe
> and the houses of Crannon and the walls of Larisa.
> Gathering at Pharsalus, they crowd out the Pharsalian roofs.
> Nobody tends the countryside, and the necks of the young bulls grow soft;
> the low-lying vines are not cleared with curved hoe;
> the bull does not shear the clod with angled blade;
> the sickle does not thin the shade of leafy trees;
> degrading rust attacks the abandoned ploughs.

This desolation is intensified on reaching the royal palace: opulent, gleaming with precious metals (including gold) and the regalia of monarchy.

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ipsius at sedes, quacumque opulenta recessit
regia, fulgenti splendent auro atque argento.
candet ebur soliis, collucent pocula mensae,
tota domus gaudet regali splendida gaza. Catull. 64.43–6

but in his residence, in whatever direction the opulent palace
stretches out, it glistens with dazzling gold and silver.
Ivory shines from the seats, cups add glitter to the table,
the whole house rejoices in the resplendent treasury of royalty.

Immediately after this description, Catullus segues into the famous **ekphrasis** that details the myth of Ariadne's catastrophic elopement and destructive passion.[45] These lines play to a reading of Catullus 64 as a closural narrative, where humankind finds out what happens when the productive struggle of cultivation is abandoned. Rather than ease and tranquillity, the end of *labor* signals civic and communal dislocation, destructive passion, families ripped apart and identities shattered. The conclusion of the ekphrasis ends the human celebrations, ushering in Catullus' gods (64.278–302) and with them a very different landscape: the palace becomes a pleasure garden. Chiron's 'woodland gifts' ('*siluestria dona*', 64.279) turn the produce of hills, river valleys, and fields into confused and disorderly garlands ('*indistinctis…corollis*', 64.283): must-have party accessories rather than practical equipment. The river god Peneus brings the signs of pastoral: an uprooted beech, a vigorous laurel, nodding plane, poplar, and high-flying cypress. All these he weaves lavishly around the house, enclosing it with constricting foliate swags.[46] Catullus' vision suggests that these gifts of the gods overwrite human achievement even as they set a scene of relaxation and plenty.[47] The luxurious landscape that the gods' control generates requires no *labor*, but it also leads to no optimistic outcome or fruitful future. In the poem's closing lines we hear that Tellus (the Earth) is 'steeped in impious wickedness'.[48]

Lucretius' philosophical poem *De rerum natura* (*On the Nature of Things*) is intensely interested in how humankind relates to nature, and presents a very different Golden Age prospect from what we saw in Catullus 64. Huge, tough figures rove the landscape like

[45] Krieger 1992 homes in on topographic ekphrasis. Elsner 2007 shows how Catullus' ekphrasis works in dialogue with contemporary Roman wall-painting.
[46] Catull. 64.278–93.
[47] Cf. the very different but contemporary take on a resolutely post-Golden Age world (where seafaring is highlighted as a key activity) at Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.151–2, 161–2.
[48] Catull. 64.397. Cf. Catull. 68b.51–72. Tellus' Roman temple is the setting for Varro, *Rust.* 1.

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wild beasts; the plough and agriculture are unknown, and instead humans nose out berries and snack on acorns washed down with draughts of river water.[49] The relationship between mortals and the natural environment in Catullus 64 straddled the worlds of *labor* and Golden Age bounty, encouraging us to recognize when we are well off. In Lucretius' scenography, the notion of Golden Age concord and freedom is taken to its unpleasant extreme: his archaic, anarchic, and instinctual humans cannot enjoy the harmony of their existence because they are barely conscious in human terms. This pre-laborious landscape is meaningless, a world without memory.[50] Inhabiting the woods, forests, and mountain caves, humans have no concept of time and are more likely to be eaten or die of injuries than of old age.[51] Even so, a kind of naturally inspired progress eventually makes humankind capable of ascribing names and agreeing on meanings.[52] Consciousness and memory together – and thereby humanity and, ultimately, Roman identity – are only possible in a laborious world where work depends on experience and therefore on knowledge and continuity of practice.[53]

To conclude with a return to the practicalities, by the time of Cato's youth, urban Rome was the symbolic and patriotic centre-stage of a state on the verge of radical imperial change. The iconographic and architectural forms that came to characterize 'Rome' and that rolled out across the landscape in the guise of Romanization were distinctly hybrid and semiotically Hellenistic in many respects.[54] Important studies emphasize how a symbolic tension between reality, myth, and culture underpins both everyday and literary experience of what the countryside represents.[55] The key feature of an explicitly taxonomized and Romanized landscape was its repetitive, sequential quality. All roads led to Rome in a more than literal sense: new urban foundations, a result partly of Rome's military success, altered Italy's geopolitics. Conceptually and structurally these new towns signalled 'Rome' by representing the idea of Roman urbanism in its purest form, and

[49] Lucr. 5.931–52. See Leach 1988: 122–43.

[50] A glimmer of humane consciousness flickers at Lucr. 5.948–9 (the woodland nymphs' appearance hints at more meaningful future engagement with the environment).

[51] Lucr. 5.955, 990–8.

[52] Lucr. 5.1028–55.

[53] We return to this in Chapter VI. On (the implications of) viewing humans as the exception to Nature, see Peterson 2001: 28–50.

[54] See e.g. Stamper 2005: 49–67, 105–29; Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 73–210.

[55] For a range of approaches, see Purcell 1987b, 1995; Rich and Wallace-Hadrill 1991; Ando 2002; Foxhall, Jones, and Forbes 2007; Wylie 2007: 139–86.

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rolling it out across Italy (and the empire).[56] Ideological, idealizing topography and political geography therefore intersect with a physical landscape that through the fourth and third centuries saw elite focus shift from working the country estate to jockeying for urban power, and an increasing opening up of the land to tenure by smallholders and tenants.

Aristocratic nail-biting about land use, common in the literature of the late Republic, reflects socio-political shifts already in progress two or three centuries earlier. Varro's *On Country Matters* keys into this when his characters cite the long-ago agrarian legislation (367 BCE) which made it (theoretically at least) more possible for plebeian families to hold land.[57] In the world of Cato's old age, Italian communities' interest in participating in the benefits of Rome's imperial project suggested a rural to Roman – and urban – drift in focus. This, meshed with the military repercussions of imperialism at home (in the shape of Hannibal's Italian campaigns in particular), brought about a conceptual shift in core Roman identity: the contemporary world was recast in conservative elite discourse as having lost touch with its roots. After the Social War's bloody drama of realignment between Roman and Italian peoples, the ensuing century saw a scramble to explain in writing what had happened, making political crisis the fallout from a disinclination to view the countryside as a source of food and produce, and a supposedly new preference for commercial gain and a consumer lifestyle.[58]

Taking Cato's pessimism at face value would therefore be a mistake, in particular his rhetoric of a 'lost generation'. Rosenstein argues that, even during and after the Hannibalic war, the effects of conscription on agriculture were less straightforwardly a drain on manpower than has traditionally been thought, and in fact may have helped make space for more small farms to prosper.[59] The artificially nostalgic quality to literary landscapes of the first century BCE also

[56] Morley 1997; Attema 2005 (early urbanization). In brief, see Purcell 2007: 191–4. Gruet 2006: 63–83 discusses Roma Quadrata, street grids, and the reality of Rome. Rome, of course, was *not* laid out on a grid.

[57] Varro, *Rust*. 1.2. On the agrarian laws, see Gargola 1995: 129–46. More generally, on the state land known as *ager publicus*, see Rathbone 2003; Roselaar 2008.

[58] For background, see Lomas 2004, and von Ungern-Sternberg 2004.

[59] Rosenstein 2004: 20–2. See also e.g. Rich 1993, Cornell 1996. On demography and landscape, see de Ligt and Northwood 2008. On farm size and ownership, see K. D. White 1967. Rousseau 2008: 229, 230 presents possible reconstructions of two villa types (one quite modest, one luxury) in the context of the wider debate on what constitutes appropriate reconstruction activities on archaeological sites.

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benefits from the persuasive argument, made concisely by Terrenato, that the (luxury) villafication of the Italian countryside did not gather pace until the years after the Social War.[60] Despite Cato's reactionary anxieties, lavish country estates were not devouring the agricultural landscape until rather later, and even then, such villas were always part of a landscape of production – at once farms and manufactories, increasingly part of a surplus economy linking city and countryside rather than a novel intervention in how the land was worked. Literary discourse, a product of elite concerns, may have been talking up a crisis in agricultural landscapes as part of a wider political debate about whether traditional Roman values continued to be fit for purpose. As Wallace-Hadrill pithily sums up, the Roman symbolism of the villa is what is primarily on display in literary texts, and this symbolic value is at the heart of 'the cultural polarities of town and country and of Greek and Roman'.[61]

We might therefore suspect that the major transition in viewing the Italian countryside as a venue for *labor* or *otium* is conceptual: from the first century BCE onwards, expansive villas were increasingly zoned *intellectually* as landscapes of cultured *otium* and self-display. Ploughing the 'happy fields', manufacturing, and laborious cultivation, all of which continued in the background (and on less prestigious properties), formed the white noise against which elite interrogation of what landscape represented (or symbolized) could develop. Indeed, as we will see in Chapter V, a good site for an *otium* villa is not necessarily in sync with what agricultural production (or year-round occupation) requires.

[60] 2007: 144–5; Terrenato also summarizes the current state of the debate. See also Kehoe 2007: 553–5.

[61] Wallace-Hadrill 1998b: 43.

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